<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Mature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archive Warning:</td>
<td>Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category:</td>
<td>F/M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandom:</td>
<td>Dragon Ball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship:</td>
<td>Bulma Briefs/Vegeta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character:</td>
<td>Bulma Briefs, Vegeta (Dragon Ball), Son Goku, Freeza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Tags:</td>
<td>Action/Adventure, Adventure, Adventure &amp; Romance, Romance, Character Development, Battle, Lemon, Smut, Fluff and Smut, Friendship/Love, Friendship, Angst and Tragedy, Tragedy, Thriller</td>
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<td>Stats:</td>
<td>Published: 2017-03-26 Updated: 2019-06-01 Chapters: 65/? Words: 292299</td>
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</tbody>
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**The Light to my Darkness**

by **SaiyanPrince541**

**Summary**

VegeBul Namek AU (minimal OOC) - What if Vegeta won the battle on Earth against the Z fighters, but at the last moment Bulma and the others arrived and she offered to help him track down the dragon balls on Namek, if he spared her friends?

Lots of thrill, adventure, heartbreak, tragedy, explosion and overall, a really fun and engaging read. You'll be sure to love it, I promise you that! :)
Chapter 1: Earth's last heroes fall

The heated battle raged on between the powerful pair of Saiyans, Goku and Vegeta.

As the two monumental beams collided, both fighters were stunned at the sheer strength, behind the other's blasts. Goku couldn't hold Vegeta off much longer, not unless he took it up another notch. But such a move entailed an enormous degree of risk. The Kaio-Ken times three was literally eating his body from the inside, so he couldn't even imagine the lethality, of a higher level!
He had no choice though! The whole world was at risk!

"KAIO-KEN TIMES FOOOOOUUUUUUR!" Roared Goku, as he fell back from the intensity of his own blast and barely managed to hold it in place.

Vegeta's Galick Gun was being overpowered by the mountainous force of the Kaio-Ken times four Kamehameha and eventually the blue beam broke through his best attack and began propelling him higher and higher, until he was completely blown out of sight. After a while, Vegeta was finally able to slip away, as the blast continued its trek into the empty void of space. Kakarot had surpassed his signature move. It made him boil with rage. How could he, an elite with royal blood, be bested like that?! It didn't matter! He had to keep pushing on! There's no way Kakarot could sustain this effort much longer. Although he'd never learned how to use power multiplying techniques himself, he knew of their adverse effects, since he'd faced one or two opponents that employed said techniques. After that last move, Kakarot had likely exhausted all his reserves. If not, he could always go Oozaru and obliterate him, but he'd only pull out his trump card if he had no other option.

With that in mind, he decided to return to the ground, landing gracefully on an arch, as he folded his arms and glaring disdainfully at his younger adversary.

Goku was fatigued. The Kaio-Ken times four had sapped away most of his remaining energy. One friendly slap on Goku's shoulder from Yajirobe was enough to make him cry out in pain. The samurai had come to congratulate him out of nowhere, but ran away the moment Goku had told him that Vegeta was still in the game. His only hope now was the spirit bomb, but he needed a distraction, any distraction to get Vegeta off his trail.

"Did you really think that blast was enough to finish me off, Kakarot?!!" The Prince snarled. "Fool! I am the Saiyan Prince! Now you will die for your insolence and when I'm done with you, this entire planet will be a memory and nothing more!"

Goku bared his teeth at his foe, as he shot up into the sky. Vegeta followed along. Little did the Prince know that he was being lured into a trap. The sun was positioned right behind Goku and the older Saiyan was unaware of its significance.

"If that's the way you want to play it, fine." Goku said dangerously, frowning at his older rival. "But don't say I didn't warn you."

Vegeta smiled maliciously, sensing the frantic tone laden in his voice. The other fighter was desperate and on his last footing. He could tell. Suddenly, Goku brought his fingers in front of his eyes.

"SOLAR FLARE!" He shouted, shutting his eyes tight.

Vegeta flinched as a powerful wave of light blinded him.

"AAAAARRRGGGHHH!!" He shouted. "BASTARD! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!"

Goku used the distraction to situate himself on a nearby pillar, hoping it would give him the time he needed to gather energy for the spirit bomb. He raised his hands towards the sky.

"I call upon the sun, the rivers, the trees, the wind and all living things in nature: please offer me your energy." He pleaded calmly, closing his eyes.

About half a minute later, Vegeta had recovered, red-hot ire coursing through his veins. He looked around and saw the young Saiyan with his arms lifted in an awkward manner and then noticed a
giant sphere of Ki hovering above him. So that was his plan all along? But how did he gather that much energy and in so little time, no less? It didn't matter. Vegeta knew he couldn't take an attack like that head-on. If it wouldn't kill him, it would most certainly put him out of commission. That much was certain.

Goku smirked at the older Saiyan before moving his hands back, ready to fire. Vegeta may have been evil, cold and heartless, not to mention the underlying reason for the demise of his friends, but he'd pushed him far beyond his limits. As a warrior, he respected his immense level of strength, skill, tenacity and relentlessness, but enough was enough. It was time to put an end to this ordeal, once and for all.

As Goku was preparing to launch his attack, however, Vegeta shot a swift Ki blast, aimed well below his rival, targeting the pillar where he stood. Before Earth's hero could fire, he slipped and fell on his back. A good portion of the gathered energy was lost, following the lapse in concentration. This was horrible! He never expected such an attack!

Just as Vegeta pounced at his foe, Goku used the Kaio-Ken to move out of dodge. He still had a lot of the spirit energy, inside him and just needed the right occasion to catch the Prince off guard. It was his only chance at victory. Vegeta quickly reappeared behind his rival and fired a double-axe handle on top of his head, causing Goku to nosedive into the rocks. Goku shot to his feet and fired a Kaio-Ken powered Kamehameha at his rival as fast as he could, but Vegeta easily deflected it. There was nothing more the Saiyan youth could possibly do. His body couldn't handle even the double Kaio-Ken, let alone the higher levels needed to defeat Vegeta. The Prince suddenly appeared in front of him.

"Well it was fun while it lasted, Kakarot." He smirked, before throwing a straight right to his jaw. Goku flew backwards and skidded along the dirt.

Before he was able to get up, Vegeta landed on top of him, pinning him to the ground firmly with his superior strength. Straddling his waist, he began pounding him to a bloody pulp. Goku tried using the Kaio-Ken once again, but it wasn't nearly enough to force Vegeta off of him. Vegeta grabbed one arm and knife-handed him through the elbow joint, snapping the limb in two.

"AAAARRRGGGGHHHH!" Goku howled in agony. The pain was horrible, but the cracking sound, made it far worse. Vegeta then lifted his other arm and did likewise, causing him to cry out, yet again.

"Did you take me for a fool Kakarot?!" Vegeta laughed maniacally, as he began pressing his shoulders to the ground. "With your arms immobilized, you won't be able to pull another dirty trick like that. You're as good as finished."

Vegeta then got up, aimed his right index finger at his enemy and fired two Ki beams, one on each thigh, rendering Goku stock-still. As the Ki seared through the younger Saiyan's flesh, he hollered in agony. The Prince then aimed a palm towards him, as he gathered up Ki to end the battle and with it, the pitiful life of his fallen adversary.

As he was about to finish off his rival, Gohan and Krillin appeared, completely horrified at what the scene in front of them. Goku lost. He lay on the floor, battered and broken. Earth's last hope was defeated! A strong feeling of despair, crept over the two fighters.

"It's a shame Kakarot." Vegeta sighed, a hint of regret in his voice. "You're one of the strongest warriors I have ever met. With your skill and power, you could have easily defeated any Saiyan
other than myself, even my father, the King. You should have joined me when you had the chance. I didn't want to end things this way, but you've left me no choice."

"YOU LEAVE HIM ALONE, YOU JERK!" Shouted the half-Saiyan.

"Gohan!" Krillin berated the young boy, knowing that if Goku, was unable to defeat Vegeta, then the two of them stood absolutely no chance. After all, Goku paralyzed Nappa in just two moves and the whole lot of them were totally helpless against the giant brute.

"Well, well." Vegeta said smugly, dissipating his Ki and lowering his hand, as he faced the duo. "It appears the cleanup crew has arrived. I'm not quite done yet boys, so you'll have to wait."

Gohan charged at Vegeta, without volition. The Saiyan Prince merely laughed as the demi-Saiyan boy approached him. Gohan vanished when he was a few feet from Vegeta and attempted to attack him from behind with a flying kick. Vegeta whirled around, caught the demi-Saiyan's foot and flung him away, before firing a Ki blast towards him. Just under the wire, Krillin quickly hurled a Kamehameha wave, redirecting Vegeta's blast, from Gohan.

Vegeta frowned at the bald warrior, who looked at him in a mix of disgust and horror. Yajirobe, meanwhile, was hiding behind an arch, but keeping a close eye on the battlefield. Unfortunately for him, Vegeta noticed his presence and the rotund warrior quickly moved back behind the arch and out of sight, clasping his shoulders, as he quivered in fear. Why did he have to be foolish enough to show himself? Now he was done for! Vegeta snickered and aimed a blast towards the arch. He fired and Yajirobe flew off as a result, waving his arms frantically, while airborne.

"Where are these cockroaches coming from?" Vegeta soliloquized.

"Yajirobe?" Krillin frowned at the sight of the fat, flying Samurai. "YAJIROBE!"

Krillin dashed towards his overweight comrade, but before he could make it Vegeta materialized in front of him. Darn it, he was so fast!

"Out of my way, you fiend!" Krillin demanded, gritting his teeth.

"Do you really think a worm like you is in any position to give me orders?" Vegeta smirked.

Krillin groaned fearfully. He then heard Goku's voice telepathically, imploring him to keep Vegeta occupied, but to avoid engaging him physically, at all costs. He assured him that he had a plan, up his sleeve. He knew that Krillin would barely last two seconds against the Prince, if even that. Krillin was gaping like a goldfish, when he heard Goku's voice in his head. Vegeta narrowed his eyes at the bald warrior.

"If you're done day-dreaming, it's time to attend to more important matters!" He stated in a firm tone, clearly insulted at Krillin's lack of attention to the imminent danger, before him.

Krillin knew what he had to do. Fighting wasn't all about strength, speed or power. It was also about strategy, thus he readily placed his trust in Goku.

"What do you want from us?!" Krillin hissed.

"Nothing much." Vegeta replied, smirking evilly and pretending to examine his gloves, as though the bald man wasn't even worth acknowledging. "Just your pitiful lives."

"Well," Krillin replied, looking pleadingly at the Saiyan. "Isn't there anything we can do that would make you change your mind?"
Vegeta peered at him, before snickering.

"W-W-What's so funny?" Asked an apprehensive Krillin, not liking the look on Vegeta's face, but trying his best to buy time, as per Goku's request, though it didn't look like he could last much longer.

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Earlier on, Gohan made his way over to his immobile father, deeply hurt and infuriated, as he saw the bloody mess Vegeta made, of his face.

"Don't be angry Gohan." Goku implored. "And don't do anything stupid, okay? You have to remain calm, if we're to win this."

Gohan's expression softened and he nodded his head in assent. Meanwhile Goku shut his eyes and sent Krillin his telepathic message, thereafter returning his gaze towards Gohan.

"Good. Now listen carefully, son." The Saiyan youth said. "We may still be in the game, but we only have one shot at this. Grab my hand."

The demi-Saiyan boy looked at his father, in confusion.

"Just do it Gohan." Goku frowned. "Please. It's our only hope."

Gohan gripped his father's right hand and after a moment, he felt an immense wave of Ki transfer to him. His eyes widened at the monumental power, within his grasp. Gohan looked at his hand incredulously.

"Now what dad?" He asked.

"What else?" Goku smirked. "Blast Vegeta. Show that evil bastard that no one messes with our planet."

Gohan smirked and nodded. Being under Piccolo's wing for all those months had gotten him well acquainted with foul words that would make his mother do a lot worse than throw, one of her trademark hissy fits. He concentrated and materialized the energy his father had given him, into a large ball of Ki, which he then fired at a distracted Vegeta.

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"And what use would I have with a do-gooder like you?" Vegeta scorned, clearly amused at the other man's desperate and pathetic attempt to save his useless hide.

Krillin smirked in triumph, as he saw Gohan's incoming attack, just in the nick of time. Vegeta noticed where Krillin's gaze was set and turned around in time, to see the blast heading his way, just a few meters off. He couldn't dodge, at this range. Dammit! He'd been such an idiot! The bald bastard had served as a diversion! But who could possibly have gathered up energy, for a blast so powerful?!

Krillin meanwhile, moved sideways, out of dodge, so as to avoid being hit by Vegeta, as the force of the blast took its full swing and launched the evil Prince into the sky.

Yajirobe recovered and found another arch to hide behind. The moment he saw Gohan blast Vegeta, his face lit up in merriment and he ran towards the rest of the crew.
Krillin, too, joined up with his friends.

"YAY! WE DID IT! WE DID IT!" Cheered the elated, samurai.

"You didn't do anything, you idiot!" Krillin castigated, as he grabbed the stout man by the collars of his hunting Gi. "Four of us died out there, did you know that?! While you were doing what exactly?! We could've used your help! I hope you're proud of yourself, you coward!"

"Hey!" Yajirobe yelled back. "Gimme a break! I was just about to join in on the action and surprise him- err- yeah…"

Goku couldn't help but laugh, at Yajirobe's claim and coughed up a glob of bloody phlegm, as a result.

"Dad, Are you alright?" Asked Gohan, his expression laced with concern.

"I'll be okay son," He assured. "That guy was incredibly powerful, more so than I was prepared for. Even a Kaio-Ken times four Kamehameha couldn't finish him off."

"Are you serious Goku?!" Exclaimed Krillin, goggling at his best friend, as he let go of Yajirobe.

Goku nodded weakly.

"I'm so glad you guys came." He sighed wearily. "I was right to give you both that senzu bean. We were lucky this time. I just can't believe how powerful he was. I must admit, I was scared to death out there."

"But dad, you're never scared."

"I know son," Goku replied. "But this time it was different. No matter what I tried, it wasn't enough. If I'd managed to hit him with that spirit bomb, the first time, I'd have won the fight, but when I lost my chance, he reduced me to this, just to prevent it from happening again. The spirit bomb I transferred to you was only about half as powerful as the original. I lost a lot of energy, while he was beating me up."

"That was only half?!" Asked Krillin, completely agape.

"Dad. Is that really true?!" Gohan asked, even more surprised, since he'd felt the true extent of the Ki, for himself.

Just then, Vegeta's seemingly lifeless body fell to the ground, marred with cuts and burns.

Krillin sighed in relief, before looking at him in pure revulsion.

"As evil as you were." He frowned. "I suppose the least we could do is build a grave for you."

"You mean a grave for yourselves?!" Vegeta exclaimed, grinning evilly at Krillin, as his eyes suddenly snapped open. The Prince sat up and staggered back to his feet.

"No!" Goku gasped, overcome with complete dread. Yajirobe instantly fled the scene, while Gohan got in a defensive stance, snarling angrily at the Prince.

"Well." Vegeta dusted himself off. "I must give you bastards credit. You did quite a number on me, but unfortunately it wasn't enough. Now you will all pay dearly."

Vegeta launched himself towards Krillin, who was frozen stiff in fear, disbelief and horror. He
punched him right in the face and as he flew forward he reappeared beside him and did a double axe-handle on his stomach that sent him diving, straight to the ground. How dare that little, cueball bastard? He conned him all along! Him, the Saiyan Prince, fooled by a lowly piece of Earthling trash! It was utterly infuriating!

Vegeta continued battering Krillin, purposefully drawing out his pain.

"Gohan. You have to defeat him." Goku pleaded. "He's badly wounded. You can do it. I know you can."

"I-I-I don't know d-dad." Gohan whimpered fearfully.

"You're my son!" Goku proudly exclaimed. "I believe in you. Piccolo believed in you. That's why he died for you! So did I and I'd do it all over again, if I had to!"

Beset with anguish and overwhelming resolve, Gohan made up his mind. His father was right. He wouldn't be a coward! Never again! He would make his father proud! He would make Piccolo proud!

The boy warrior headed towards the hotspot, watching as Krillin was being picked apart, piece by piece. Images of Piccolo dying and his father's marred face flickered through his mind. Suddenly, power he didn't know he had coursed through every fibre of his being, as he flared his Ki.

Vegeta was holding Krillin up by the collar, as he saw Gohan moving towards him.

"LEAVE HIM… ALOOOONNNNE!" Gohan yelled and charged directly towards Vegeta, catching the Prince off-guard with mind-boggling speed, landing a drop kick to the midsection that sent him flying. Krillin promptly fell to the ground. As the force of the attack was carrying Vegeta away, Gohan followed through with a hard punch to the jaw, increasing the momentum of his enemy's flight. He then powered up his Ki, even further.

"MASENKOOOO!" He shouted. "HAAAAA!"

Vegeta gathered his wits, before the blast hit and was able to block it off with his palms. Where did that brat get all that power?! Did that 'spirit bomb' attack of there's really wound him that badly? It took him a moment to redirect the Masenko, but in that moment the boy was behind him. The demi-Saiyan fired another Ki blast flush against the Prince's back, causing him to fly forward and skid along the dirt.

Gohan powered up again.

"MASENKOOOO!" He roared.

As fast as he could, Vegeta got up and appeared behind the boy almost instantaneously, before the latter had a chance to fire his attack. He landed a brutally hard punch on the back of the head, causing the half-Saiyan to suffer a concussion. He couldn't take any more chances with these people. If he continued toying with them, they may come up with yet another crafty scheme, to get rid of him.

As Vegeta was about to finish the boy off, Yajirobe lunged at him from out of the blue, sword held high above. His hunting and survival skills had taken Vegeta by surprise, as the sword cut him from behind, slicing through the evil Saiyan's armor and inflicting a deep wound on his back. The Prince fell to the ground. The fat samurai immediately began boasting and bragging about
defeating the most menacing threat the Earth had ever witnessed, being the best there ever was and all the rest of it.

Vegeta got up, grimacing and moving balefully towards the attacker, while the terrified Yajirobe waved his hands in surrender and offered to join forces with Vegeta, telling him how much he admired him and what not. Vegeta landed a hard spinning back kick right on the samurai’s left jaw, sending him flying and crashing into a large slab nearby. As he lay topsy-turvy, Vegeta began pummelling the tar out of his face, purposely holding back, just so he could make him suffer.

"Yajirobe." Krillin looked on despairingly. He had hated the way Yajirobe forsook his own friends, but attacking Vegeta from behind like that to help Gohan, without thinking about his cowardly self as usual, had largely redeemed the overweight warrior in his eyes- and it hurt to see him, in such pain.

'Gohan, get up.' Goku mentally willed his son. 'Please. You're our last hope.'

Goku repeatedly beseeched his son to battle on. By some miracle or other, the demi-Saiyan child made it to his feet and trudged towards Vegeta.

"Leave him- alone-" Gohan grimaced, between heavy breaths. "You- jerk…"

Vegeta stood up and whirled around.

"No more sneak attacks, no more scheming!" Gohan proclaimed. "I plan to fight you to the death. Head-on!"

"Brave of you, boy." The sinister Prince snickered. "But your father tried the same thing. He was much, much stronger than you are and look where his defiance got him."

"Enough talk!" Gohan spat, readying his stance, "Let's do this!"

Vegeta chuckled.

"You truly have the blood of a Saiyan." He smirked, before looking gravely at the child. "Your father refused to join ranks with me. He betrayed the crown Prince of his own race. What about you? You may be young, but you clearly have the potential to be a great warrior someday. As your Prince, I'm offering you a chance to live, if you kneel before me now and swear me your undying fealty."

"YOU'RE NOT MY PRINCE!" Gohan bellowed. "YOU HURT MY FATHER! YOU KILLED PICCOLO! I'LL NEVER BOW TO ANYONE, LEAST OF ALL, YOU!"

"Suit yourself." Vegeta scoffed nonchalantly, before zooming in front of Gohan and hoisting him up by the neck, as he squeezed the breath out of him. He punched the child in the head and ribs several times, wounding and dazing him badly, before tossing him like a rag doll towards his motionless father. Gohan could hardly do anything, after suffering those sustained blows. It was by sheer willpower that he was even able to stand. Vegeta limped over to the father/son duo. "Since you're both traitors, I suppose it's only fitting that you die together."

A/N: Interesting end to the fight, huh? Or has it truly ended? What happens from here? Is Vegeta going to kill the few remaining Z Fighters? With all of them out of commission, who is left to stop the evil Prince's path of destruction? Tell me your thoughts and review!
Chapter 2: Intercession

As Vegeta made his way to Goku and Gohan, he noticed that Krillin was already by Goku's side, having wormed his way over.

"How touching." Vegeta said in mock-affection, as he approached the group, "You all want to die together, is that right? Well, I am generous enough to oblige at least that."

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Earlier on, Bulma, Master Roshi, Oolong, Puar, Korin, Chi-Chi and Ox-King had all made their way towards the battlefield, on a CC airbus.

Bulma saw it with her very own eyes on television and later on Baba's crystal ball. Yamcha was killed along with Tien, Chiaotzu and even Piccolo, which meant none of them could be wished back, since Piccolo's life force was bound to Kami's and the eternal dragon to his.

She'd broken up with Yamcha a month or so before Raditz' arrival on Earth, after he'd stood her up to a concert, but even then, they'd always had an intermittent relationship and besides that, he was her closest friend, alongside Goku. Now it was all over for good and she'd never get to see him again. Never again would she lie in the warmth of his arms and feel his gentle caress, as he repeatedly told her how beautiful and special she was and how lucky he felt to have had her. Her lover was dead and gone for good. They would not get the chance to bury the hatchet and reunite as they always had. Her heart was shattered and it was entirely the fault of those evil Saiyans.

Her only hope was that Goku had defeated Vegeta. She hated him more than anything. He had caused all her pain. She was never one to wish death upon another, but this had to be one of the few exceptions.

Chi-Chi grit her teeth in anger and trepidation. Her little boy and husband were both in grave danger. She just knew it and she had to save them, no matter what.

The moment the plane landed, the raven-haired Princess bolted out, dashing towards the scene like a madwoman. Whilst preparing to finish off his adversaries, Vegeta noticed her heading their way. He raised an eyebrow curiously.

"Mom?" Gohan asked, confusedly looking in her direction, while holding his throbbing head. He was still barely conscious.

"What?!" Goku spluttered apprehensively and yelled as he turned and saw his wife running in their direction. "CHI-CHI! GET AWAY FROM HERE!"

Bulma was hot on Chi-Chi's heels. Though the others had tried to stop her, she forced her way out, saying that in the worst-case scenario, the entire planet was doomed and she'd die anyway, along with the rest of them and so had nothing to lose.

Vegeta grinned evilly at the two Saiyans.
"HAHAHAHA!" He laughed. "I must admit, you people are a brave bunch. That's something I have to admire, truly."

Just then Chi-Chi appeared in front of Goku, Gohan and Krillin, standing in front of her young son like a guardian angel.

"YOU LEAVE MY LITTLE GOHAN ALONE YOU MONSTER!" She shrilled.

Vegeta clasped his ears. Maybe he underestimated this harpy woman. Any louder and he'd probably suffer permanent hearing impairment.

The Prince aimed a palm towards Chi-Chi, ready to blast her, before Bulma appeared in front of him, with a look of unparalleled hate embedded on her face and her arms spread out wide. Vegeta gazed upon the aquamarine-haired woman before him and his curiosity got the best of him. He dissipated his Ki, opting to find out who these weaklings were, before slaughtering them. What nerve they must have had to interfere in the final moments of this great and hard-fought victory!

Chi-Chi began tending to her husband and child.

"Bulma!" Krillin reprimanded his friend. The bald warrior began worming towards her, with great difficulty. Vegeta had really done a number on him. "Get out of here!"

"Shut up Krillin!" Bulma turned around and yelled back at him, "If we're all going to die anyway, then what the hell difference does it make?!"

Krillin cringed.

"What the hell do you want?!" Vegeta asked the blue-haired woman, in a demanding tone.

"I want you to leave us alone!" Bulma replied, turning back in his direction and glaring vehemently, refusing to back down.

Vegeta laughed.

"That line's getting old, you know?" He responded, taking on an impassive expression and tone.

"You've done enough." Bulma said, softening her voice and looking at him pleadingly. "Please just leave us in peace. We mean you no harm."

"And I should care?" Asked Vegeta, his voice deadpan. "I kill when I please."

"Look." She took a sigh and shut her eyes for a moment, before continuing. "Please spare my friends and our planet and I promise, I'll do anything you want."

"Bulma?!" Krillin shouted. "Are you stupid?!"

"I thought I told you to shut up!" Bulma yelled back, whirling around, "Am I the only one here trying to save our hides or what?! Idiots! All brawn and no brains! Look where it's gotten us!"

Everyone cringed at Bulma's loud shriek. Yajirobe, meanwhile, had recovered and looked at the scene playing out, from afar.
"Enough of this crap!" Vegeta scowled, infuriated by the woman's shrilling voice. "I'm done playing games! There's nothing I want from any of you!"

Bulma turned back around and frowned at him.

"This is no game!" Bulma boldly exclaimed. "You have no idea what I'm capable of!"

Vegeta's eyebrow raised in intrigue.

"Oh?" He asked, deciding to humor her. "And what would that be?"

"I can turn any object into the size of a tiny capsule, for storage purposes." She replied. "That includes spaceships, hover cars, televisions, houses, you name it. You can carry any or all of the above in your pocket and bring them back into their original form, with the push of a button. And there's a lot more I have up my sleeve. Please, I'm offering you all my knowledge and skills, but only if you spare us."

Vegeta's eyes widened for a moment, as he contemplated. Could she really do something that extraordinary? It sounded surreal. But even if there were some truth to her claim, it was of no immediate importance.

"That means nothing to me." Responded Vegeta, eyes slit. "I came here for the dragon balls. That's all that interests me. If you can get me my wish, I'll hold up my end of the bargain and spare your worthless lives."

"That's… uh… that's not possible…" Bulma stated apprehensively.

Vegeta snarled viciously at her.

"Then you all die!" He shouted, raising his hand and charging up a ball of Ki.

"Wait, dammit!" Bulma yelled. "That ugly bald friend of yours is the only reason the dragon balls are inert!"

Vegeta dissipated his Ki and frowned curiously at her.

"Nappa?" He asked. "What do you mean they're inert?"

"He killed Piccolo." She answered. "The dragon balls were created by Kami, the guardian of earth, whose life force is tied to Piccolo's. When Piccolo died, Kami went with him, so the dragon balls no longer work."

Vegeta considered her words for a moment.

"Suppose they did work. How would you find them, then?" He asked.

"Well, with my dragon radar of course." Bulma answered.

'A dragon radar?' Vegeta mused. 'Must be some sort of locating device. Yes! This is perfect!'

"Fine. I'll spare your lives on one condition." He said, smirking and then pointing to Bulma, "You will travel to the planet Namek with me. There I will gather the Namekian dragon balls and make
"What? Planet Namek?" Bulma asked, completely baffled. "Namekian Dragon balls?"

"Yes." Vegeta replied. "The 'dragon balls' as you call them are the equivalent of the fabled 'wish marbles of legend' from Namek. That 'Piccolo' you mentioned, was a Namekian and I'm sure there're many like him on his home planet."

Bulma's eyes suddenly lit up with hope, but she averted her gaze, in order to prevent Vegeta from seeing it. This may have been the lucky break they had needed to wish the others back. She had never known about this. If there were other dragon balls, then Kami and Piccolo could be resurrected alongside the others, whereby Earth's dragon balls would shimmer to life once again. If all went well and she could swipe the wish for herself, that is. It was her best option. Even if Vegeta killed her, her friends could bring her back with Earth's dragon balls. It was make or break!

She faced the Prince solemnly.

"On those terms, I'm prepared to hand myself over to you." She sighed.

"Bulma, please." Goku looked at her concernedly, his eyes tearing. Bulma had never shown this kind of courage ever before, but he didn't want her fate to be in this villain's hands. He felt worse than ever. Everyone had placed their undying trust in him, only for him to botch this up completely. If only he'd been stronger! "You don't have to do this."

Bulma turned to face her best friend (A/N: Bulma and Krillin are both Goku's best friends in their own way, as far as I'm concerned).

"It's the only way Goku." She responded, smiling warmly at her childhood friend and hero, tears welling up in her own eyes. "You did your best and I don't blame you. As long as we're all safe, that's all that matters. Don't worry about me, I promise I'll be okay."

"Enough of this sentimental garbage!" Vegeta snarled. "Get me that 'dragon radar' and we leave, at once!"

"I-It's in my h-house." Bulma stammered.

"And where's that?"

"Well, I-I can get to it by airbus." Bulma responded, "But it'll t-take a few-"

All of a sudden, Bulma was airborne, with Vegeta holding her like a sack of potatoes.

"Put me down!" She screeched. "Put me down right now!"

"Shut up you insufferable wench!" Vegeta yelled. "Now tell me where that accursed dwelling of yours is!"

Bulma cringed at his harsh tone.

"I-It's about 700 m-m-miles th-that w-way." Bulma stammered, pointing westwards.

"Good." Vegeta responded and zoomed away, smirking evilly at her naivety. If she really thought
he'd spare her weakling affiliates and pathetic planet, she had another thing coming. The moment he discovered how to use this radar, he'd kill her and destroy this mud ball.

"Bulma." Krillin banged his forehead to the ground, his eyes glimmering with unshed tears, "Why? Why did you have to be such an idiot? No one asked you to save us."

By now, all the others had made it to the scene.

"If she hadn't done it, we'd all be dead." Stated a visibly distraught Master Roshi, his face downcast. "Honor her bravery."

"Shut up, you stupid old man!" Yelled Chi-Chi. "Bulma's going to get herself killed! How is that brave?!"

Everyone shrank back at the cutting-edge harshness of Chi-Chi's voice.

Korin let out a somber sigh.

"She won't be killed." The ancient feline sage stated. "Once the next batch of senzu beans is prepared, we'll get you all healed up, so you can rescue her." He then turned in Goku's direction. "Goku, that means you have to become much stronger than you are now, strong enough to defeat Vegeta and any other adversary that crosses you. We owe that brave girl our lives."

Everyone sighed despondently. Goku looked back at Korin.

"I will Master Korin. I promise." He said, but then furrowed his brows, as the most obvious question hit him, "But how do we know Vegeta won't go back on his word and destroy the Earth anyway? Plus, how will we travel to outer-space?"

"Whether or not he'll keep his word is beyond our control. We can only hope." Replied the old master. "And as far as going to outer-space is concerned, we'll work it out somehow. We have to."

"Oh no!" Chi-Chi exclaimed, looking at Goku accusingly, as she wrapped her arms around her little son protectively. "Gohan stays right here! It's your fault he got mixed up in this whole mess in the first place. I'm never letting my sweet little boy put himself in danger again!"

"But mom-"

"No buts, mister!" Chi-Chi interrupted her child, glowering at him, "No one's taking you away from me ever again and that's final!"

Gohan sighed despondently.

"Mom," Tears shimmering his big onyx eyes, "Piccolo sacrificed his life for me. I'd be dead if it wasn't for him. If there're other dragon balls out there, we have to wish him back. We just have to."

Everyone's eyes widened except those already aware.

"P-Piccolo d-did that?" Master Roshi asked.

Gohan nodded his head weakly.
"B-but he k-kidnapped y-you." Chi-Chi stuttered, looking at her boy incredulously.

"Mom," Gohan took a sigh and began explaining, "He only did that, so he could train me. Now he's dead and it's because I wasn't strong enough to protect him. I owe him my life. He's my best friend."

Gohan and Chi-Chi continued arguing, until the raven-haired woman finally relented. Everyone was surprised at the way Gohan defended and praised his mentor. None of them, save Krillin, had ever witnessed that side of Piccolo before. It seemed that the spawn and embodiment of the evil demon King had indeed changed for the better.

Soon afterwards, Goku and Krillin were loaded onto the airbus and the crew headed off towards the battlefield, where four of their closest friends and allies had met their ends so bravely and so tragically.

One by one, the very best fighters on Earth had fallen at the hands of the evil Saiyans and in the end, even Goku was unable to secure a win. They only thanked the lucky stars that Bulma had intervened when she did, but at the same time wished that they could've protected her from such an awful fate.

Once they were done collecting the corpses, they headed to Wukong Hospital, where the wounded veterans of this intense and heat-filled battle could finally rest.

A/N: It appears that Bulma has gotten her friends and planet of the hook. Or has she? Will Vegeta really go back on his word, the moment he gains the upper hand? Is Earth's fate sealed, no matter what? Or can Bulma find some way to avert his plans?
Chapter 3: Rubbed off

Bulma wound her arms and legs tightly behind Vegeta, as he flew off at astronomical speeds. She could barely stomach seeing him, let alone being in such close proximity, but had little choice except to hold on for dear life.

A couple minutes later, she felt blood leaking from his back and seeping into her dark blue t-shirt. Yajirobe had truly dealt him a critical blow.

"You're bleeding." She stated the obvious.

"So?!" He scowled back.

"Get down so I can patch you up." Bulma requested.

"Mind your fucking place-"

"Look, you've got my nice shirt all bloody and if you don't get down now, you could die!" She exclaimed.

"This is nothing but a flesh wound." Vegeta scoffed. It didn't take a genius to surmise that she was probably trying to catch him off guard. After all, if she were some sort of brilliant inventor and scientist, letting down his defenses could prove to be a decisive error. "This is mere child's play for me."

Bulma tried to protest, but Vegeta continued his flight. After about five minutes, it became too much and he unwittingly began descending downwards.

"Hey, are you alright?" Bulma asked out pure instinct and bit her lip afterwards. Why the hell would she ask him that?! She hated him more than anyone or anything!

"I'm fine!" He yelled back in a weak voice.

Bulma flinched and opened her mouth after a brief pause.

"Y-You're f-f-falling."

"Uhhh..." Vegeta was starting to black out, as he descended and finally hit the ground, collapsing face-first, as the world began fading around him. Bulma was stunned at this most fortunate turn of events and climbed off of him.

'Yech, what a goddamn mess!' She thought to herself, as she gazed upon her bloodied shirt. She then looked at the Prince, as he was passed out on the floor, the blood still exuding out of his wounds. She grit her teeth. 'Ha! Serves your right, you bastard!'

Bulma couldn't explain it, but she didn't feel any better now than she did before. Yamcha, Tien and Chiaotzu were still dead, Kami and Piccolo too. It didn't make sense. Shouldn't this fucker's demise offer her at least some degree of alleviation? If anything it was making her feel worse. Why was
that? He deserved to die, didn't he?

'No, Bulma, don't even think about trying to help him!' She severely castigated herself as the thought hit her, but no matter what her mind said, her heart kept throbbing as she saw the blood keep oozing its way out of his back. Whatever he may or may not have done, he was still a living being. Could she really leave him here to die? No, she couldn't. The mere thought of it made guilt claw its way up her spine.

'God, what is wrong with me?!' She self-chided. 'Stupid Goku! It's his fault! That idiot and his stupid mercy and compassion, must've rubbed off on me sometime!'

She sighed in exasperation and pulled out her capsule case. She pressed the plunger on her first-aid dynocap and tossed it nearby, before picking up the first-aid kit that appeared therefrom.

'Now, Bulma, think about what you're doing.' Her brain told her. 'He could still kill you and destroy the planet. Hmmm, actually, he won't. So long as I have the dragon radar with me, I'm too important to him. I know! I'll keep it with me and I won't let him touch it. As long as I can keep him in the dark, the dragon radar will work as my insurance. Besides, this may be my only chance to wish the others back!'

With that the heiress had made up her mind.

She went over to him, unable to fight it anymore, as her conscience took over. This was a big gamble on her part and she only hoped that it paid off.

'Now, how to take off this piece of junk.' She constantly tried tugging at his armor, but it wouldn't budge. She kept trying until he eventually woke up to an abrupt start. She yelped and ungracefully fell on her rear, the moment she sensed movement on his part. He forced himself onto his knees and began taking rasped breaths. Bulma was whimpering as her mind kept flicking through gruesome scenarios involving her painful end at his hand. Vegeta looked at her, totally bemused, before scowling.

"What were you doing?" He demanded.

"I… uh… I was… uh…"

"WHAT?!" He yelled, making Bulma cringe and clasp her ears.

"I was trying to take off your armor." She slurred.

"Why?!"

"Well… because… you're wounded…"

Now he was totally confused. Just what in the seven hells was she doing? Was she trying to kill him or something? It didn't seem that way. He narrowed his eyes at her, silently demanding an explanation.

"I…" Bulma looked at the first aid she'd left on the floor next to him. He followed her line of sight.

"What is this?!" He took the box and opened it. He closely scrutinized the medical and surgical equipment therein, before frowning at her. "What were you planning?! To experiment on me?!"
Oh, boy that totally struck a nerve! How dare that bastard?!

"What?!" She snarled. "How dare you?! I was trying to take your armor off, so I could get your wound fixed up!"

"And just why would you do that?!"

Bulma froze. That question totally had her stumped. Why would she have done that? Was it mercy, compassion, a chance to wish back her friends or perhaps all three? What could she tell him?

"I… Well…"

"Can't you give a straight answer for once?!

"Hey, stop yelling at me!" She growled angrily. "I don't know where you come from, but here on Earth when someone's wounded, we help them out no matter who they are!"

Vegeta scoffed.

"Is that what you'll have me believe?" He asked in low, distrusting voice. "That you were helping me out?"

"Believe what you want to I don't care." Bulma frowned dangerously at him, "But if you don't want my help, you're more than welcome to stay here and bleed to death."

Vegeta glowered at her, but after a moment of heated glaring, he shook his head and asked the one question that had slipped his mind.

"What happened anyway?!"

Bulma explained how he'd collapsed and blacked out and that she'd wanted to get his armor off of him, in order to get him patched up.

"Well, I couldn't get the darn thing off, no matter what I tried." She recalled, "So if you could just take it off, we can get on with our business."

"Forget it!" Vegeta decided resolutely and tried getting up, but was struggling badly.

"Look, if you don't want my assistance, I'll just leave you here to die all by yourself!" Bulma exclaimed, "I don't even know why I tried to help you in the first place!"

Vegeta winced as a new wave of pain washed over his back.

"Hey, are you okay?" Bulma headed over and sat near him, as her conscience took hold once again. Goddammit! Curse that Goku!

Vegeta scowled at the ground below him as if it were the source of all his problems.

"Fine, I'll do it!" He pulled his armor off with a degree of effort on his part and Bulma gasped as she saw his blue spandex shirt completely soaked in blood.
"Umm, could you take off your shirt too?" She drawled.

Vegeta grumbled curses under his breath. He felt like a total fool! He'd overestimated himself big time! The Earthlings had caused him far more damage than he'd ever have imagined! Now he was at the whim of some weak pathetic little female and she was right! It was either trust her or die! Goddammit! He couldn't die! He had to wreak vengeance upon Frieza, as was his birthright! With that in mind, he let out a sigh of indignation, before shedding off his upper garment.

Bulma was awed by his well-chiseled figure. Not even Goku had a frame quite as compact as his. She shook her head free of those disgusting thoughts. Fuck him! He was a bastard who deserved to burn in hell! Once again she sighed deeply, wondering why she was being so compassionate, to him of all people. Not only was he a heartless killer, but a total dick as well! She'd offered him help, despite all the detriment he'd brought to her life and he had the nerve to persistently throw it all back in her face! Her thoughts were averted, as she noticed the scars on his arms, chest and back. Those were some intense wounds if she ever saw any.

"Where'd you get those scars?" She asked curiously.

"From hell." He replied nonchalantly. Bulma frowned in intrigue, wondering what exactly he'd meant by that, but decided to drop the matter.

"Right." Bulma cleaned off the blood on the deep gash along his back, using a soft, moist towel, before pulling out a dry cloth and applying a good heap of antiseptic to it.

"This will sting a lot, okay?" Bulma forewarned.

Vegeta grunted in approval, prepping himself for what would come next. Bulma rubbed the cloth along the length of his cut a couple times over. It was only meant for minor cuts, but she had no other option, plus she figured he could take the pain and even if he couldn't so what? He deserved it anyway. He deserved worse, a lot worse.

Vegeta bit his lip to suppress a groan that threatened to escape, but for the most part, was able to maintain his composure well. The hydrogen peroxide solution did hurt, there was no denying that. However, compared to the abuse he oft suffered at the hands of Frieza, it was largely insignificant, as were the rest of the injuries he had suffered in battle, on this day.

Bulma was surprised by his resilience. Afterwards, she stitched up his wound using a needle and suture, before pulling out a gauze bandage roll. She wrapped it tightly around the deep cut, before taping it up. So caught up in the task was she that she'd momentarily forgotten just whose wounds she was ministering. Straight afterwards she pulled out a dynocap with another CC airbus in it.

Vegeta was still exhausted, but now that his laceration had been taken care of, he was no longer in danger of losing any more blood. Though his supply was somewhat depleted, it wasn't critically low and he knew that he could easily make it to Frieza's nearest base planet alive and then be healed up completely in a regeneration tank. His armor and shirt were a complete mess, so he decided to leave them as they were. He'd get a whole new set of training gear, once he left this mud-ball anyway.

Bulma realized that Vegeta had his mouth wide open and tongue slightly sticking out, as he breathed heavily. He was clearly dehydrated. She pulled out another capsule and tossed it on the ground.
'So she was telling the truth.' Vegeta thought, looking on in amazement, as he saw the refrigeration unit materialize from thin-air. 'She really can store anything in those capsules of hers. Maybe I shouldn't kill her. That would be a complete waste, especially if she has other tricks up her sleeve. But why did she help me though? It makes no sense.'

He'd never known anyone who treated enemies with kindness. Why had she? It was vexing him and a strong feeling of suspicion began engendering within.

Bulma opened the refrigerator and pulled out a glass bottle of lemon ice tea.

"Here, drink." She held the bottle out to him, with a scowl on her face, not looking him in the eye. She couldn't believe what she was doing! Helping him after all that he had done and why?! She was putting everything and everyone at risk, all for the sake of what exactly?! Quenching the stupid, irrational and unjustified guilt that kept plaguing her whenever she considered abandoning him to a dreadful, albeit well-deserved, fate?! Or was it something else? She had no clue exactly.

Then again, he was her only chance at reviving her friends. After all, Earth-engineered spacecraft barely allowed for travel beyond the solar system, let alone a planet that could've been located on the other side of the galaxy for all she knew. Moreover, if she could perhaps gain his trust, then maybe it would be easier to swindle him when the moment was right, so she could make her wish.

Vegeta looked at the bottle dubiously and then back to her.

Bulma groaned in frustration, opened the cap, sipped a mouthful and swallowed, before offering him the bottle, once again.

"It's not poisoned if that's what you were thinking!" She said, her voice clearly laced with aggravation. Why was he so distrustful for?! She'd saved his ass, when she should've just left him to rot! "If I wanted you dead, I would've left you here."

Vegeta reluctantly grabbed it and in about three seconds, chugged down all the contents in the 1.5-litre bottle, minus the sip Bulma drank. Within moments the cool, sweet beverage revitalized the Prince. He had to admit, he hadn't tasted a liquid quite so ambrosial since before he was given away. He swayed off those thoughts. No longer would he be a slave. He would be free, attain immortality, destroy his tormentor once and for all and reign as the supreme overlord of the Universe for all eternity! With that thought, he immediately stood to his feet and took a deep breath of relief. He felt a lot better now, but his mind kept wondering back to that one question: why on Earth had she helped him? There was absolutely no reason for her to have done that. His thoughts were cut short.

"We're taking the airbus." Bulma declared resolutely and pressed the plunger on the airbus capsule, throwing it a fair distance away before Vegeta could protest. She then grabbed his armor and shirt and went inside.

"What're you doing?" Asked the Saiyan, as he begrudgingly followed her in.

"Nothing, I told you I'm a scientist, so I might keep these, to study them later on." She'd recalled Vegeta taking off the armor and took note of its pliancy. Perhaps if she lived long enough, one day she might be able to find a way to recreate and perhaps upgrade it, for her friends.

"Whatever." He responded dismissively, before grumbling curses under his breath. She may have been right though; if he flew, his injuries could only get worse. He shouldn't have been so rash. He
had to hold out until he made it to his intended location: Planet Frieza No. 79.

A/N: Wow, now who would've seen that coming?! Goku's beneficence runs far and wide it seems! Have Bulma's actions doomed Earth, after she'd altruistically given her self away just to save it? Or does she have some sort of backup plan? Most importantly, what do you think?
About one hour later, the pair arrived at Capsule Corporation's residential complex and Bulma recapsulized the airbus. She found it somewhat difficult to avoid the urge to take peeks at Vegeta's flawless figure, but whenever the thought hit her, she reminded herself that he was a heartless animal and the cause of her misery. The Saiyan was stunned as he witnessed a humongous transport shrunk down to something handheld. Bulma walked over to the front door, pulled out her keycard, swiped it on the card reader besides the door and entered the 9-digit code to allow entrance into the house.

Vegeta was surprised at seeing how gigantic her 'dwelling' was, if it was even that. A place like this could probably house all of Frieza's army, well, perhaps not all, but still. As she made her way into her room, Vegeta was hot on her heels. Her mother was out in the back garden, while her father was in his lab, allowing her to slip by undetected. Upon reaching her room, Bulma packed away all her dynocaps into a capsule case and held the dragon radar out, as she turned to face her new captor.

"This is it." She said, holding it up for him. "The dragon radar."

Vegeta raised an eyebrow curiously.

"You mean this little thing's going to find me the dragon balls?" He asked dubiously.

"Of course!" She exclaimed boldly. "But here's the deal, I carry the radar and you carry the dragon balls, got it?!"

Vegeta scoffed.

"Whatever, but if this fails, then I will destroy the Earth." He threatened. He considered asking her how the gadget worked but then thought better of it. Doing so would immediately give away his plans of reneging on their little deal. He'd have to figure out a way to destroy this planet some other time, but he'd still keep her around. Her brilliant mind could prove to be a decisive asset to his new empire.

Bulma nodded her head weakly.

"I'm going to take a shower and change my clothes." She announced. "After that we can leave."

"Hurry up then!" The Prince was impatient, anxious to leave so he could finally attain what was rightfully his: immortality!

Bulma opened her cupboard, picked out a yellow sleeveless coat skirt, a thick black long-sleeve jumpsuit, a red headband, white socks and big red/black boots. She placed her clothes on her bed, before grabbing a casual plain white t-shirt and offering it to Vegeta.

"Here, you can have this."

Vegeta narrowed his eyes before grabbing the t-shirt and inspecting it for a moment, while Bulma
picked up her clothes and left to go to the bathroom, not wanting to stand a second longer near that disgusting, ugly, horrible, mouth-wateringly sexy-

'Bulma, get a fucking grip!' She mentally slapped herself a good couple times, as she headed for the shower. 'All right, so he's got a nice body! He's still your worst enemy, so quit letting your hormones get the best of you!'

God, it'd been over a year since she'd experienced release and the man she'd experienced it with was now rotting somewhere, all thanks to the bastard outside. She sighed dejectedly.

'Oh Yamcha.'

She stripped down, tossed her dirty clothes into a hamper and entered the shower, letting the warm water cascade down her body in fine thin rivulets, as she cried her heart out, not only for the man she loved, but also for Tien, Chiaotzu and even Piccolo. Yes, the Earth-born Namekian may have once been there enemy, but he'd died as their ally and for that, she was truly grateful.

After she was done showering, she sighed in consternation. This would be her final day on Earth. She'd never been in outer space for more than a few days, but God knows how long this trip would last.

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Vegeta donned the t-shirt he was given and sat on Bulma's bed, waiting for her to finish whatever she was doing. What was taking her so long? It had been fifteen minutes already. It only took him ten minutes, at the very most, to get himself cleaned up and clamber into a set of training uniform. As he was about to get up and break through the bathroom door, an intruder made their way into the room.

An attractive middle-aged blonde-haired lady stood in the doorway. She gasped when she looked upon the battered and bruised Saiyan. Who was he? What was he doing in Bulma's room and why was he looking so beat up?

"Wh-Wh-Who are y-you?" Mrs. Brief asked, her tone laced with trepidation. Bulma heard her mother's voice and a feeling of dread coiled in her stomach. What would Vegeta do to her? She quickly began rinsing off the soap from her body and the shampoo off her hair.

Vegeta furrowed his brows. His first instinct was to blast her to ribbons, but then he figured it'd be a wasted effort on his part. After all, he needed to conserve every ounce of energy he had, before his wounds were tended to.

"I am Vegeta, Prince of the Saiyans." He introduced without preamble.

"Oh, uh, o-o-okay!" Mrs. Brief stammered, beginning to fret that a psych ward escapee had somehow broken into her house. "W-W-What're you doing here?"

"I'm waiting on the blue-haired wench." He replied nonchalantly.

"Do not call me that you stupid jerk!" Bulma yelled from inside the bathroom, having heard her captor.

"Hurry up you fucking sloth!" Vegeta demanded, shouting right back. Who the fuck did that harpy
think she was, speaking to him like that, to him, the mighty Saiyan Prince?! Oh, he'd put her in her place, all too soon!

"Oh I get it." Mrs. Brief chirped. "You're her boyfriend and you two are having a little lover's quarrel. Oh well, I'll leave you-"

"Mom!" Bulma yelled, her cheeks flushed, as she left the shower and began drying herself. "It's not like that! Get your head out of the gutter!"

How dare she claim that when this was the same man who'd killed the only boyfriend she'd ever had?

Mrs. Brief giggled and pranced over to Vegeta, who had a blush smeared across his face. This blonde woman was, without a doubt, completely insane.

"Well young man." She offered, "How'd you like a meal, while you're waiting?"

"I'm fine!" Vegeta replied gruffly.

Bulma smacked her forehead, indignantly.

"Mom can you just leave, goddammit?!"

"Surely, a stud-muffin like you needs to be well fed to maintain his perfect figure." The exuberant woman argued, appraising his bulging shoulders and biceps and those delicious pecs protruding from his t-shirt. The young man was kind of short, but his immaculate body, handsome face and awesome gravity-defying hair, more than made up for it, as far as she was concerned. While she did find Yamcha great, this new guy seemed even better, in her eyes, at least in the looks department. "I'm known to be one of the best chefs on this planet."

"Mom!" Bulma berated, still in the bathroom.

Vegeta's blush widened for a moment or two, as he noticed the woman mentally undressing him. He was beginning to feel disconcerted, under her lascivious scrutiny. He let that thought go, instead considering the ditzy woman's offer. Well, he hadn't eaten a good meal since God knows when. Frieza had only given him the bare essentials needed to survive, some unappetizing slop that happened to contain everything required for his Saiyan metabolism to thrive and that if he'd been a 'good little monkey'; if not, he would be starved for long periods, as was often the case. The best meals he had were during purge missions, where he could hunt game or simply eat the enemies he defeated, provided they weren't Saiyanoids like him. As he was lost in his thoughts, Bulma exited the room, having changed into her new outfit.

Vegeta frowned at her a moment, before turning to her mother.

"So, where do I eat?" He demanded more than asked.

"Oh, just follow me, young man." She smiled, as she left the room, Vegeta beginning to follow along.

Bulma gaped on incredulously. She was surprised her mother was still breathing. Thank God for that! That was the last thing she'd have expected.
"Hey, Vegeta!" The heiress called out.

"What?!" The Prince asked, turning to face her.

"If you hurt her, the deal's off, I swear to God!"

"I'm just going to eat, dammit!" He snarled, before taking off.

Bulma bit her lip, as she considered her options. She could keep an eye on Vegeta, to ensure her mother's safety, but then, it didn't seem like he had any ulterior motive, plus she'd clearly emphasized her point. No, she wasn't worried about her mother. She'd be fine, so long as she could keep that bastard distracted with a nice, palatable meal or ten. Given that Vegeta was a Saiyan, he'd probably take a long time to eat, thus she decided that she might as well get a haircut appropriate for a trip to outer space. With that in mind, she beeped over a servant bot and sat in front of her mirror, as it tied a sheet around her and cut her a nice chin-length blunt cut with bangs fashioned on the front, covering her forehead. After it cleaned up all the mess, she put on her red headband and made her way downstairs.

Mrs. Brief had just finished cooking a nice chicken stir-fry for Vegeta, while the latter's acute sense of smell caused his mouth to water in frenzied anticipation. God, that aroma was second to none! She placed the entire meal inside a humongous bowl. Just then, Bulma came over next to her mother.

"Hey mom." She greeted.

"Oh hey honey!" Mrs. Brief instantly took note of her new look. "Nice haircut!"

"Thanks." She replied, forcing on a strained smile.

"Are you alright, darling?" Asked the older woman, concernedly.

"Yeah, I'm fine mom." She replied, adding more warmth into her smile as she averted her thoughts from the day's catastrophic events and instead focused on the sweet innocence and oblivion of her loving mother.

"Are you sure?"

"I'm all right, really. I'm sure our guest is hungry." Bulma's little ruse worked perfectly and her eccentric ditz of a mother grabbed the large bowl of stir-fry and skipped over to Vegeta. The heiress smiled. Distracting her mother was never all that difficult. Just point her towards the nearest hot guy and she'd start flirting, though it never went any further than that, thankfully enough. She knew exactly where she'd inherited her own fickle traits. She sighed despondently and went over to the table, taking a seat opposite the Prince, who was eyeing his meal suspiciously. What if that blue-haired harpy was luring him in a trap, so she could have him poisoned? No. That couldn't be. If she wanted him dead, she wouldn't have tended to his wounds. Still, her mother was creeping the hell out of him, what with that undying, perpetual smile of hers and the suggestive glances she kept casting his way.

"What's wrong young man?" Mrs. Brief asked. "Have a bite. I'm sure you'll love it."

"Oh, don't tell me you think it's poisoned!" Bulma scowled at him. "God, talk about paranoid!"
She roughly pulled the bowl towards her, grabbed a plate and a set of chopsticks, put some inside and began eating.

"See… not… poisoned!" She said between mouthfuls. Vegeta slit his eyes at her, before pulling the bowl back to him, snatching his own pair of chopsticks and ravaging his meal.

"Wow! You're just like Goku." Mrs. Brief commented, smiling, as she took a seat next to the surly Prince. "Such a vibrant young man."

Vegeta growled. He hated that name. Kakarot, the fool! He'd taken on an Earthling name and hadn't the slightest clue nor care for his great Saiyan heritage. But, that was his problem. He shrugged off those thoughts and continued enjoying the luscious meal before him, till nothing remained. Though it helped replenish his energy, he was still not sated. Saiyan stomachs were cumulative by nature, which meant that the hungrier he was, the more expansive his inner larder was and boy, he hadn't eaten this well in ages!

"I want more." He demanded.

"Hmmm." Mrs. Brief thought, placing an index finger on her chin. Aside from Goku, no one had paid her this level of attention and that truly pleased her. "Well, I can-"

"It's alright mom." Bulma intervened, "We can get a couple pizzas downtown."

"Pizza? What's a pizza?" Asked an intrigued Saiyan Prince.

"I don't have time to explain." Bulma replied, getting up from her chair and heading out the door. "But Goku loves them and I'm sure you will too, so let's get moving."

"Bye mom." The heiress bade her mother farewell as she tentatively left, knowing that this trip may well have been one way, "I'll be gone for a long while, but I promise I'll return as soon as I can. Tell dad, okay? Love you."

Mrs. Brief's eyes suddenly snapped open. What did Bulma mean by that? Where was she going? She began feeling disconcerted, but after a while, her worries eased, as she remembered that prolonged adventures were something habitual for her daughter. She was spot on of course, only this journey would take a far different course than those of its predecessors.

Vegeta followed Bulma's lead as she went out the door. Mrs. Brief was lost in her own thoughts. The Prince wondered how his trip to Earth had gone so awry. His mission was to make his wish and destroy this wretched planet, not be showered with healthcare and free meals. But, he wasn't complaining. He'd get what he wanted soon enough and then the Universe would be his.

*A/N: Mrs. Brief is just as exuberant and clueless as ever, right? And why didn't she know who Vegeta was, you ask? It's simple. She'd been too busy doing house chores and so hadn't seen his face on the newspaper or television, but she will eventually discover the truth. So, what happens now? Stay tuned for more and remember to review!*
Chapter 5: Departure

Bulma drove Vegeta downtown, as he sat next to her on the passenger seat. She ordered three family-sized meat lovers pizzas over the phone. Since Goku was always the avid meat-eater, she had guessed it was safe to assume Vegeta was no different, in that regard, anyhow. The journey was quiet went quite with Vegeta’s thoughts drifting off elsewhere. Strangely enough, he didn’t even have any further desire to destroy the planet now or to kill his foes as was intended. That same raw primordial impulse for blood that always blew like a hurricane within the burrows of his chest was largely silent. He correctly figured that it may have been due to his dwindled strength and the fact that his mind’s eye was fixated upon the bigger picture, i.e. destroying Frieza and ruling all the plains of existence from one end of the cosmos to the other, for all of eternity. The mere thought of it forced everything else to the back of his mind. No, blowing up this mud-ball was of no immediate importance, nor was killing the woman’s helpless friends.

Bulma, all the while, was wondering how on Earth she ended up here. She’d known the day of reckoning would arrive. She and the others had been forewarned, almost a year in advance. A multitude of scenarios had flickered through her mind over what those foreboding months would culminate to and yet none of them remotely resembled what destiny had, in fact, chosen.

‘I just hope I don’t end up being raped or killed or something.’ She glanced at Vegeta for a fleeting moment and noticed that he was musing, most likely about what he would do with the dragon balls. Her guess was as good as any. He’d probably ask the dragon for power, wealth, riches or something. She had no clue. Still, that didn’t make any sense. Why would he want any of those? He could get anything he wanted by force. No one could possibly stand in his way, if Goku and everyone else had suffered defeat by his hand. Oh well, it didn’t matter anyway. One thing she was sure of was that she couldn’t let him use the sacred gems for his own evil purposes. She needed her friends back. She needed Yamcha.

‘God, I miss him.’ She thought, unaware that a fresh batch of tears were cascading down her beautiful face. Vegeta smelled their salty scent and turned in her direction for a moment. He scoffed.

“You’re weak.” He stated.

“Huh?” Bulma said, turning in his direction.

“You heard me.”

“I am not weak!” She replied angrily, frowning and gritting her teeth, before wiping away her tears and by sheer will power alone, keeping them at bay. Vegeta turned towards her. That look! It was the same visage he had wore every time he glared at Frieza. There was something different about this female. The way she was so bold and vehement, even in his presence said pretty much everything. He wondered how far he would have to go to make someone like her back down in fear.

“You are.” He emphasised. “That’s why you saved me, an error that could cost you your life.”

“You’re making a big mistake underestimating me.” She responded. “I’ve been in bad situations
and I’m still standing.”

Vegeta narrowed his eyes dangerously at her and when she saw that scorching gleam of murder in his charcoal eyes, she instantly felt terror-stricken, quickly averting her gaze back in front of her, as she continued driving.

“Bad?” He asked coolly, before chuckling. “You don’t know the meaning of that word.”

They stopped at a traffic light and once again, she felt his eyes drilling holes through her soul. That sinister look of his made him appear completely deranged and it caused a wave of fear to wash over her. Vegeta smirked. That’s what he was after. Fear! He could see it on her face. He could smell fear that intense from a mile away and it made him effervesce with excitement.

“You… You won’t kill me… Will you?” She asked in a shaky voice.

“I don’t know. Will I?” Vegeta’s smirk transformed into an evil grin. Fear was emanating off of her in palpable waves and its blissful scent was springing zest into every fiber of his being.

“No… You need me.” She continued facing ahead of her, unable to bear his blood-curdling gaze. His visage alone made her feel like she’d been to the deepest layers of hell and back. She’d never seen a countenance so menacingly dark and evil. Of course it made sense though. He was the Prince of a bloodthirsty race of planet conquerors.

“I suppose I do.” He shrugged his shoulders, dropping his gaze and examining his gloved hand. “For now, anyway.”

“I’m not afraid of you.” Bulma stated, in a pretense of courage. But Vegeta could see right through her façade. Still, he felt a sense of admiration budding within him. She was scared to death, but still refused to admit it openly. There was more to her than met the eye. He’d always feared Frieza. Hell, he still feared him, but after a couple years under his service, he’d mastered the craft of masking it all behind a proud visage of pure hatred and defiance and that was precisely what made him Frieza’s favourite pet, that along with his callous cold-heartedness.

He was offered the greatest meals, wine, women and riches. It could’ve all been his, had he bowed his head before the lizard Lord, but he would not falter. Even when he was forced kneel before the tyrant, his eyes never ever left Frieza’s and that’s why he was ‘favored’ so greatly, why he was offered more sparring sessions with Frieza than every other member of the Planet Trade Organization. Of course, that was just a code word for ‘torture sessions’. But he wore those scars proudly! They were a symbol of honor that stated one thing: he’d never bow down before anyone. Even Nappa and Raditz had caved in soon enough and advised him on countless occasions to do likewise, but he adamantly refused and would give them a piece of his mind, whenever they dared to try and force the issue.

He wondered how much torture this audacious little female could endure before she finally broke. They all broke in the end, no matter how spunky they were, all but him. Would she ever be willing to bow down before Frieza? Nah, fuck Frieza! He would die soon enough anyway. If she was going to bow before anyone it’d be him and him alone!

“You should fear me girl.” He finally spoke, after all those long moments of musing in silence.

“Well, I don’t!!! And don’t ever call me that!!” She exclaimed emphatically. “Besides, I know Goku will protect me. He’s always protected me.”
“Really?” Vegeta smiled evilly at her. “You’ll be far from home where we’re headed and Kakarot won’t be there to save you. Even if he were, I would just defeat him again, only this time he’d stay down for keeps.”

“No you wouldn’t!” Bulma replied fervently. “When it really counts, you have no idea how strong he can be!”

Vegeta chuckled darkly.

“Tell me, have you ever fought your beloved Kakarot?”

“Umm… No.”

“Well I have and the only reason he’s still breathing is because I have greater use for the dragon balls than taking his worthless life.”

“He’s not worthless!” Bulma yelled at the Prince. “He’s kind, pure-hearted and selfless and he shows mercy and compassion to everyone, even his enemies! It’s hard to believe he’s even a Saiyan, considering what the rest of you monsters are like!”

“You’re treading on thin-ice, woman.” Vegeta spoke in a dangerously low tone as he furrowed his brows at Bulma. She instantly turned away, chastising herself mentally. What was she thinking?! More often than not, her big mouth would end up getting the best of her. Invoking Vegeta’s wrath was not exactly a wise move, on her part. She realized that by now they’d already made it to the downtown pizza store and so, parked the car next to a curb-side nearby. “Is that why you helped me? Mercy and compassion?”

Bulma scowled, refusing to face him. Great job reminding her of that! Maybe she shouldn’t have saved him, but her stupid conscience had to get the best of her.

“I didn’t ask for it!” He glowered at her, as though insulted deeply.

“You’d prefer bleeding to death?” She raised an eyebrow at him, her features still grim.

“I need no one’s help!” He ground his teeth together, as he barked out in fury. “I don’t want your mercy or compassion, ever, so you can go stick them right up your-”

“Fuck you!!” Bulma interjected. “I should’ve known better than to help a fucking bastard like you-”

Bulma gasped and instantly froze as Vegeta’s finger was pointed right between her eyes, a tiny purple kernel of Ki flaring out of it, mere inches away from making contact. She could feel its searing heat nearly singe her eyelashes.

“Listen and listen well, girl.” He dissipated his Ki and traced his finger along the length of her shoulder. “If you ever address me with such disrespect again, you lose a limb. Am I clear?”

Bulma shuddered and nodded her head up and down weakly. Her lips were pursed and quivering and tears were threatening to escape her eyes, but with determination she didn’t know she had, she managed to keep them at bay. She took a couple of deep rasped breaths to calm her nerves, but it just wouldn’t work.
“Well go on, get me what’s mine.” He ordered.

“R-R-Right.” She responded. “C-Could you w-w-wait in the c-car?”

“Why?”

“P-people will r-recognize you and I don’t want to attract any unwanted attention.”

Vegeta scoffed.

“I could just kill them all.” Bulma blanched the moment she heard that and Vegeta just chortled evilly upon seeing the color drain from her face, “I’m only kidding. It’d be a waste of energy, plus I’d rather not spend a second longer than necessary on this mud-ball, you call a planet.”

“Y-yeah o-okay.” Bulma stepped outside the car and headed over to the shop. Lo and behold, her order was prepared beforehand; perks of belonging to the wealthiest and most successful family on Earth. She came back to the car and Vegeta rapidly began devouring the pizzas. Meanwhile, Bulma sat in the seat brooding over why she had to throw herself into a pit. God, all that hard training and it still hadn’t prepared them for what the Saiyans had in store. And why, oh why, did she have to save this ungrateful bastard? And why did he seem so peeved about the fact that he’d needed saving, especially from the likes of her? She sighed in exasperation and folded her arms. She looked over to him, as he continuing to pig out. Vegeta turned in her direction and she instantly averted her gaze. He swallowed and chuckled slightly.

“Where’s your bravado gone now, girl?”

Bulma turned in his direction and frowned dangerously at him, the fire that had died out earlier, rekindling once again.

“Do not call me that!!!”

“Ahhh, there it is.” He smirked.

“What’s your deal?!” Bulma gave him a heated death glare. “I thought Princes were supposed to be decent and well-mannered, not disgusting, uncouth, obnoxious, pigheaded jerks!!!”

Bulma instantly clamped her mouth shut, with both hands. Oh God, he’d warned her! Oh no!! Why could she never keep that accursed trap of hers shut?!! Now what would happen to her?!

‘Please don’t take a limb, please don’t take a limb, please don’t take a limb!!’ She silently prayed.

Of course Vegeta would’ve done just that, but her mercurial mood reversal completely caught him off guard. This female was extremely bizarre. One second she was all spunk and the next, completely petrified. He wouldn’t say it, but she’d slightly sparked his intrigue, especially here and now. Bulma chanced a look towards her captor and was surprised as she noticed him peering at her. The Prince scoffed.

“Most Princes wouldn’t last a day if they lived my life.” Vegeta stated, unexpectedly.

“What do you mean?” Bulma asked, inquisitively.
“Nothing, forget it!” Vegeta responded indignantly, and began digging into his meal once again.

Intrigue overcame the heiress as she pondered over the Prince’s reply. Why did he seem so vexed by her question? His tone made it sound as though his life was horrible. If that were really so, it didn’t make sense. A person like him would easily have the power to choose their own destiny, ergo live the life they please. More questions continued racking her brain. Yes, she abhorred Vegeta with all her heart, but even then, it wasn’t wrong to be curious about him, was it? As the saying goes, ‘know your enemy’.

“Vegeta, what did you-”

“Quiet!” The Prince demanded exasperatedly, before she had the chance to continue.

“I-”

“Here.” Vegeta offered her the last slice of pizza. He figured it might serve as a distraction, since it always worked like a charm with Nappa and Raditz, whenever they refused to stop pestering him. Bulma was totally flummoxed. One second he was threatening to tear her limbs off and the next, he was being hospitable, well, by his standards anyway. “Eat.”

“I don’t get it.”

“Just fucking eat!” Vegeta glared at her.

“Hey, don’t tell me what to do!” She scowled, “I- hey wait!” Vegeta was about to put the piece into his mouth, but Bulma reached out for it, “Hey, give me that!” Now that she thought about it, she hadn’t eaten all day and was famished. She wanted that slice and she was going to get it!! Vegeta was enjoying seeing her fail miserably as she continued demanding that he hand it over. She tried reaching for it, only he was purposefully keeping it out of range.

“Here, have it.” Vegeta then shoved vertex of the pizza slice right into her open mouth, muffling any sounds from coming out, before retracting his hand.

Bulma took it out of her mouth and gave Vegeta a glare so intense that if looks could kill, he would’ve died on the spot. She was fuming! How dare he?! His face was as impassive as ever, but she noticed a hint of amusement dancing in his ebony eyes. He did that on purpose!!! Fucking asshole!!

“WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO THAT FOR??!!” She yelled to the top of her lungs.

“Quiet, demon woman!!!” Vegeta replied, clapping his ears, in hopes that he wouldn’t go deaf. Her tongue was more effective than a Ki blast from either of his two, late comrades.

“No!! Seriously, what the hell?!!” She seethed, baring her teeth at the Prince, “You didn’t have to do that you jerk!! You did it on purpose to provoke me, didn’t you?! And did you just call me a demon?! I’m not a demon, you jackass. I am Bulma Brief and no one…”

The heiress continued ranting, while Vegeta gaped at her in stunned amazement. Apart from a select few warriors more powerful than himself, no one had ever had the gall to address him with such flagrant disrespect!!

“… and if you ever do anything like that again, I’ll shove my fist down your throat!!” With that,
Bulma ended her tirade.

Vegeta looked into her azure eyes, completely inundated with blazing fire. God! How could someone so weak have such scorching eyes?! They looked brilliant. The red-hot ire burning within those deep pools of gleaming cerulean, could easily melt its way through the thickest of steel. It was truly fascinating, to say the least. He wouldn’t admit it, but he had a feeling he would like this one, in a way. He let out a tiny chuckle.

“Yeah, go ahead and laugh now, while you still can!!!” She smoldered. “You won’t be able to, when you’re biting down on my fist!!”

Vegeta chuckled a little more and that smug, idiotic grin of his was vexing Bulma to no end.

“You’re lucky I’m hungry or I’d kill you right now!” Bulma took a bite of her pizza slice and stared directly ahead of her. This woman may have been a feeble Earthling, but she had the fiery spirit of a true Saiyaness, not that he’d ever known any apart from his mother, but this is always what he imagined they’d be like. The heiress truly fascinated him. Apart from Frieza and his very strongest elite, everyone’s resolve crumbled to dust before the mighty Saiyan Prince, but not hers. This was going to be a much more promising little trip than he’d thought possible, with her here as his play-toy.

After a few moments, Bulma’s mind cleared a little and she properly registered what had just transpired.

“What the hell?!’ She thought, in sudden alarm. ‘Did I really just say all that?! How am I even still breathing?!’ She looked towards the Saiyan Prince and noticed him perusing every detail of her as if she were some sort of puzzle he was trying to piece together. She gasped and turned her head aside, tentatively taking a small bite of her pizza slice, as she began to feel perturbed under his intense scrutiny. Facing him once again, she felt a little more calm, due to the absence of that dark murderous glimmer within his orbs of ebony that would make even the bravest of men skedaddle to the other end of the Universe.

“What?” She asked through a mouthful.

“Yech! Swallow first, you savage demon!” Chided the Prince.

Bulma did just that and grimaced at him.

“I’m not a savage you jerk!!!!” She growled, “And I’m not a demon either, so stop calling me that!! I happen to be the most beautiful, intelligent and pure-hearted woman on this planet, if not the Universe. Hmph!”

She promptly ate the remainder of her pizza slice. Vegeta smirked inwardly. Such ego and such presumption! Surely, he’d have to bring her down a notch or two!

“At best, you’re slightly above average. I’ll give you that.” He taunted.

“Oh yeah?! And what’re you, Mr. Uppity ass Prince Vegeta??”

“I’ll tell you what I am!!” He smiled evilly at her and grabbed her chin, as he moved his face to the recess of her neck. “I am the plague of the Universe, the destroyer of worlds and the devil that haunts you in your nightmares.” He murmured. She bit her lip to repress a shiver of pure disgust
and revulsion, as her heart beat skyrocketed. Vegeta deeply breathed in her fear-inundated scent and smirked. There it was again. “Ahhh fear. Such an invigorating aroma.”

“I… I don’t… f-fear…” She gasped when Vegeta once again inhaled deeply and couldn’t help but shudder in repugnance, as he exhaled against her skin. It made her feel like she’d caught the plague.

“Smell does not lie, girl.”

Oh now he’d gone and done it!!

“I said, don’t call me that!!!” She yelled, pushing him away, as that flaming spirit of hers suddenly possessed her like a demon.

Vegeta was stumped! How was it that at one moment she could reek so strongly of pure unsullied fear and the next she was literally ablaze with rage?! This had to have been the most unusual and volatile being he’d ever come across and it truly flared his interest that much further. Though normally, he’d kill anyone presuming to show such blatant impudence, the desire just wasn’t there at this moment. Instead, he felt a teeny weeny bit of respect every time she stood up for herself. Perhaps it sort of reminded him of how he’d often act smug and refuse to cower before Frieza, despite the monumental differences in their powers. Oh, he could feel the fear coursing through every single cell in his body whenever he was in the lizard’s presence, but he’d never show it. In any case, he’d figure her out one way or another. Killing something this unique would be truly wasteful.

Bulma sighed.

“Look, if you’re done trying to scare me to death, how about we drive to your space-pods?”

Vegeta shook his head and pulled out a remote control, from his shirt.

“That is not necessary.” He stated. “With this device, I can have the pods sent to our current location within moments.”

Bulma gaped at him.

“Really?”

Vegeta nodded his head, in assent.

“Hold on. We don’t want them landing in the middle of a busy area.” She said and began driving straight ahead. “There’s an empty construction site nearby. The workers are on strike for some reason. When we reach, you can have them come over.”

“Fine.” Vegeta replied.

And so, a few silent minutes later, Bulma had arrived at her intended destination. She and Vegeta got out of the car and she capsulized it, tucking it into her capsule case immediately afterwards. Vegeta, meanwhile, used his remote control to direct both his and Nappa’s space pods to where he presently stood.

Bulma’s heart rate began spiking. This was it: the beginning of her journey to outer space. Hell, she
was the first human being that would get to travel beyond the solar system!!! As despondent as she was, a small intrepid part of her flared with the thrill-filled anticipation that always came before the commencement of a new adventure.

“How long will we take to get to “Namek” or whatever?” She asked.

“We’re making a pit stop on another planet, so I can have my wounds healed.” Vegeta answered. “That should take less than a month. From there, I believe it’s a week long journey to Namek.”

“Oh. I guess that makes sense.” She said. “So how big are these pods, anyway?”

“You’ll find out soon, now quit babbling!” He grumbled.

“Whatever.” She frowned, averting her gaze, before mumbling under her breath. “Jerk.”

“I heard that you stupid wench.”

Before Bulma could respond, the space pods had arrived.

She darted over to one of them and began rubbing the exterior. It looked amazing: so small, compact and practical. There was no doubt that it could travel significantly faster than the speed of light, given its interplanetary purposes.

“Wow.” She marvelled.

Vegeta shoved her aside.

“Hey!” She groused.

“I need to punch in the co-ordinates, so shut-up.”

Bulma huffed, and folded her arms, lips pouted and her head turned away.

Vegeta ignored her, pressed a button that opened the hatch and gestured for her to come close by, so he could explain how the controls worked.

He set in the co-ordinates for Planet Frieza No. 79.

“When you’re in, this button launches the pod and the one next to it, the stasis gas.” He said pointing to a red button and a yellow one beside it, respectively. Bulma was listening intently. “Five minutes before landing, a computerized voice will wake you up. There’s a safety belt inside too. Although I don’t need it, it does serve a purpose for weaklings like you.”

“I am not weak!” Bulma scowled. “I’m just not a freak like you.”

“Whatever. Now, one minute after I leave, you follow, got it?” Vegeta ordered.

“What?” She asked curiously. “How come?”

“If you arrive on the planet alone, you’ll be a sitting duck.” He answered. “That’s why I need to be there first, to explain that you’re my prisoner and under my protection. That way, no one will dare
lay a hand on you.”

“Oh, I see.”

“And don’t even think about staying here on Earth, because if my radar tells me that your pod’s not following mine within a space of three minutes from my launch time, so help me, I will return immediately and destroy this wretched planet.”

“I wasn’t planning anything, okay?!” Bulma exclaimed and was loathing herself for the brief instant where she felt somewhat flattered by his ‘protectiveness’, “I’ll keep my end of the bargain, so quit being such a dick!”

“Good. You’d better.” Vegeta said. “And mind you’re tongue, unless you wish to lose it.” Bulma paled. The Prince headed over to his space pod nearby, opening the hatch, closing it and launching off, waiting until he confirmed that she was following along, before releasing the stasis gas.

As he launched off, Bulma was glaring daggers at his pod, but after a minute was up, she went inside Nappa’s ex-pod and followed her captor, closing the hatch, putting on her safety belt and launching away.

This went differently than she had expected. She hated to admit it, but Vegeta did flare her interest. Other than the murderous genocidal barbarian she’d deeply come to execrate, he was a proud man, who respected strength and abhorred weakness in any form, which must have explained why he was so enraged upon learning why she’d tended to his wounds. And now that she thought about it, whenever she’d stand up for herself, she saw a smidgeon of admiration within his ebony eyes. If it were any other villain, she’d most likely be dead a dozen times over by now. That got her thinking.

Maybe it’d be a smart move not to be so sullen and grim around him and instead opt to behave in her usual wild and vivacious manner. First off, being moody and fearful all the time was unhealthy and plain boring and secondly, behaving in that usual spirited manner of hers would likely make it easier to distract Vegeta and catch him off-guard, since he seemed to show a twinkle of amusement and admiration, whenever she’d spout off at him. Perhaps then, she could use the dragon balls to make her wish. It may not end so well for her, but her friends would definitely wish her back, for saving their sorry behinds. If not, she’d make sure that her ghost would haunt them for all eternity. With that alleviating thought, she pressed the button to release the stasis gas, immediately going into hibernation, thereafter.

_A/N: Bulma says goodbye to Earth. Will she see her friends or family ever again? Or will she remain a captive of the evil Prince that has shattered her life? Earth has been spared for now, but what does the future hold?_
Plan

Chapter 6: Plan

At Wukong hospital, the survivors were recounting events and discussing what their next move would be, once they'd healed. No matter what happened, they had to rescue Bulma from the evil clutches of Vegeta.

"Master Korin. You really have to get those new senzu beans ready, as quick as possible." Goku said. "The doctors said it'll take at least three months for me to make a full recovery."

"I'll get working on it Goku." He replied, "But we also need to find a way to travel to planet Namek, so that we can intercept Vegeta and thwart his plans."

"I'm staying right here." Yajirobe declared, as he was sitting on a stool nearby. "You guys can go get yourselves killed, but that bastard's way out of my league."

"No one asked you to come, you tub o' lard." Korin commented, snidely.

"Hey, you take that back, fur ball." Yajirobe responded angrily, lifting his clenched fist.

"Idiot." The feline rolled his eyes. "Well if you're not going to be useful any other way, the least you can do is help me grow some senzu beans, got it?"

"Whatever." Yajirobe said, folding his arms, "As long as I don't have to do any fighting."

Goku let out a rasped laugh. His entire face was covered in bandages, save his right eye, nostrils and mouth.

A short while later, the group's eyes were glued to the television as the media was occupying the ruins of East city, where the two space pods lay. Out of the blue, the alien transportations launched off to an unknown direction.

"What the?" Yajirobe asked no one on in particular. "Where are they headed?"

"If my guess is right, they're headed towards West city." Master Roshi stated, frowning deeply.


"Why else?" Korin stated. "This is Vegeta's doing. My guess is that he's heading off to Namek now, with Bulma, of course."

"I have to stop him!" Shouted Gohan, immediately jumping out of the hospital bed.

"Gohan, get back to bed, right now!" Chi-Chi ordered.

"No!" He yelled. "She's in trouble! I have to help her!"

"Gohan, your mom's right." Goku tilted his head in his son's direction, frowning. "There's no way we can beat him yet. We're lucky we're still alive. Our best move is to bide our time and form a
strategy, before going on the offensive. Getting yourself killed won't help any. We're already short on reserves."

Gohan lifted his fist, looking at it, while growling angrily, but eventually eased up, tentatively nodding and returning to bed, feeling totally helpless.

"Good, first thing's first." Goku continued. "While Master Korin and Yajirobe harvest the next crop of senzu beans, we need to figure out how to get to Namek. We know that Bulma and Vegeta are going to be using the space pods he and Nappa came in. Gohan destroyed my brother Raditz' space pod, but I've been thinking for a while. Raditz told me that I was sent to Earth from outer-space and Master Roshi, you told me that when my grandpa first found me, I was all alone next to some sort of bizarre alien ship, is that right?"

"That's right Goku." Master Roshi affirmed, nodding his head in assent.

"Well, if that's the case, then it's obviously been abandoned for years, but unless someone else found it, it might still be somewhere out in the woods near Mount Paozu." Goku said thoughtfully. "It probably doesn't work anymore. It's a shot in a million, I know, but for now, that's the only thing we have to go on."

"Brilliant idea, Goku. That's a good start." Korin commented before turning to Yajirobe. "Yajirobe, you head over to Mount Paozu and scour the area. If you find Goku's pod, call us immediately. You have a cell phone and the hospital's number, I trust."

"Yeah I do, it's in my car." He affirmed. "But why do I have to go?"

"You're the least useful person here." Korin responded dismissively.

"What?!" Yelled the samurai. "How dare you?!"

The others all laughed at Korin's response, but eventually ceased, knowing that now was not the time for merriment. Five of their own had departed into the after life, many other innocents were killed in East City and Goku's very first and best friend had just been taken hostage.

"Yajirobe." Goku pled. "Please, just do as Master Korin says. We all owe our lives to Bulma."

The swordsman sighed in defeat.

"Fine, fine." He relented and left the joint. He knew where Mount Paozu was, since he'd attended Goku's wedding there, nearly six years ago.

After a while, a thought hit Master Roshi.

"Aren't those space pods one-seaters, though?"

"Of course!" Goku exclaimed. "Dammit! That means I'll have to go alone and that's assuming that it even works."

"Hmmm." The turtle hermit contemplated for a moment. "What if we have Bulma's father examine it. The things I've seen Bulma do are super-human. If her father's half as intelligent as she is, I'm sure he'll be able to pull something off."
Goku mused for a moment and sighed in relief.

"You're right master." He smiled. "Dr. Brief is crazy smart. If anyone can help us, it's him."

"I may also have an idea." Mr. Popo said, appearing out of the blue, outside the front window. He stood midair, on his magic carpet.

Chi turned around and shrieked, immediately backing up and pirouetting against the wall nearby, when she saw the creepy-looking pitch-black genie, with those nightmarish eyes of his and that bizarre expression on his face.

Goku laughed as he turned his gaze to his ex-mentor.

"Hey there, Mr. Popo." He said, jovially.

"Hello." Responded the genie, his expression unchanged, as he shifted his face to Goku, in an awkwardly slow manner that made Chi-Chi's lips quiver.

"What is that thing?!" She slurred, cowering in fear, as a look of horror smeared her otherwise beautiful face.

"Chi-Chi, show some respect." Krillin chided, frowning in askance at the raven haired woman. "That's Mr. Popo. He's Kami's assistant." He then dropped his gaze to the floor dejectedly. "Or was..."

"O-O-Oh." Chi-Chi stammered.

"Listen carefully," Mr. Popo began. "Kami's old space ship is located in Yanzabit heights on the other side of the planet. It's how he came to Earth about three hundred years ago, when his planet had suffered a major cataclysm (A/N: By this point, King Kai has already told the others about Namek's history). Right before Kami had passed away, he told me to help you all get to Namek, so we could wish him and the others back with new dragon balls. A while after he had perished I went to examine his ship. For the most part, it appears to be in working order and is voice controlled. Unfortunately, it only responds to commands in Namekian. Although I am not completely fluent, I did hear Kami utter some phrases in his native tongue from time to time and in the context he said them in, I was able to make out their meaning. The ship is still very fast. I was able to fly it to Jupiter in less than ten seconds."

"That's great Mr. Popo!" Krillin beamed. "Once Gohan and I heal up, the three of us can travel to Namek and rescue Bulma. Hopefully we can catch Vegeta off guard somehow."

"I'm afraid that's not possible, young man." Mr. Popo responded. "The rules strictly prohibit me from abandoning the lookout for extended periods of time. But I can help you translate key commands. If you can find someone who is able to reprogram the ship, so that it can respond to commands in the common tongue, you will be able to make your journey into outer space."

"Dr. Brief should be able to do that." Goku's face lit up with promise. "This is great! We've really gotten somewhere and in so little time! Meanwhile, hopefully Yajirobe will find that space pod that I came in as a child."

"I just hope this works." Krillin said, face downcast in concentration.
"Gohan, Krillin, both of you listen up." Goku instructed. "You might have to travel to Planet Namek alone. If my guess is right, it'll take at least a month or so for the next crop of senzu beans to be ready and I'll be stuck here all that time. If there are dragon balls on Namek, which there probably are, given what King Kai's told us, then no matter what happens, we can't let Vegeta get his hands on them. If he was powerful enough to defeat all of us, then with the dragon balls he'll be invincible. Do not, under any circumstances, engage him. If you have just one dragon ball, hide it from him."

"There's only one problem Goku." Krillin responded. "He'll already know where the dragon balls are. Don't you remember? He has Bulma's radar with him!"

"Dammit!" Goku exclaimed, "You're right! Why didn't I think of that?!"

The whole lot of them began contemplating a means to overcome that little impediment, until Master Roshi suddenly recalled something from the past.

"Goku." He turned in the direction of his former star pupil, "Do you remember that time you collected six dragon balls, but couldn't find the last one and we had to get help from my sister, Baba? Somehow, someone was able to prevent Bulma's radar from tracking that last ball."

"You're right Master!" Krillin beamed, recalling their little adventure years ago. "At the time, Bulma said that the dragon ball must have been enclosed in some sort of sealed off repository that was able to rein in the energy waves emitted from it. In doing so, the radar was unable to track the ball's location. If we can somehow collect just one dragon ball and keep it sealed in a container like that, we may just be able to thwart Vegeta's plans. Man, I guess poor old Dr. Brief's going to have his hands full. But we still have to figure out a way to save Bulma."

"For now, focus on that first objective Krillin." Goku enjoined. "Unless you're absolutely certain that you can rescue Bulma, do not attempt it. It's much too dangerous. When you're on Namek, wait for my arrival. Right now I'm no match for Vegeta, but if I can find a way to break through my limits, hopefully that'll change."

"Alright Goku." Krillin acquiesced. "First thing's first, we have to check out Kami's ship and get it to Capsule Corporation as soon as possible. Once we're healed, we'll be on our way."

"No!" Chi-Chi exclaimed. "No way! Going off on an adventure is one thing, but I'm not putting my Gohan at risk again! What kind of mother would allow that?! He's only five years old! I'm not letting him anywhere near that monster Vegeta!"

"Mom, I have to go." Gohan stated, brows furrowed. "If it wasn't for Bulma, we'd be dead. I owe it to her and to Piccolo. He died for me."

"Chi-Chi, I'll keep him safe, you have my word." Krillin stated solemnly. "If Vegeta comes anywhere near us, I'll get Gohan to safety and keep him occupied if I have to."

"If Goku couldn't beat him, what chance do you have?!" Chi-Chi growled.

"I have no chance, but I'd die before I let Gohan get hurt and that's a promise!" He declared, frowning adamantly.

"I don't want anyone dying for me!" Gohan yelled, his teeth grit, as he glowered at the floor. "I can't take it anymore! No one else dies!"
"Gohan, relax." Goku ordered in a cool and composed voice. "Don't be reckless. You have to be smart about this. If you let your emotions hinder your judgment, you'll only put yourself in harm's way."

"If Gohan's going, I'm going too, end of story." Chi-Chi declared.

"Mom?" Gohan questioned, his voice suddenly softening.

"Chi-Chi?" Goku asked. "It's not safe for-"

"I know it's not safe!" She yelled, causing everyone to cringe. Chi-Chi then sighed and continued, in a softer, yet equally fervent tone. "I will protect Gohan no matter what!"

Suddenly Chi-Chi felt a large hand clasping her shoulder.

"No, Chi-Chi." Stated the Ox King, "I'll go instead."

"Dad?" She turned around, looking at her father's dark brown eyes, wherein she could see the brewing solicitude.

"You're my girl." He stated. "I care about you just as much as you care for Gohan. I won't let you put yourself at risk, no matter what."

"No dad, that's not necessary." Chi-Chi protested, shaking her head.

"Both of you stop it!" Goku frowned. "Neither of you are strong enough to go. You'll only get in the way. If we do this, we do it right. We can't let our enemies use you against us. Vegeta may not be the only one that crosses our path, so we need to be prepared as well as possible."

After arguing for a while, Goku's wife and father-in-law had finally obliged and allowed Gohan to go on his own with Krillin.

A/N: So the plans have been made for the journey to Namek. Just what does the future hold for Earth's heroes? How do they intend to thwart the plans of the evil Saiyan Prince?

p.s. Wasn't it hilarious seeing Yajirobe get humiliated by Korin and Chi-Chi freak out when Mr. Popo showed up out of nowhere?
The next day, the crew had filled in Dr. Brief about what had taken place and told him that they needed his help, if they were to get Bulma back. The good doctor was stunned and distraught, after hearing what had happened to Bulma, but still proud of his daughter. He couldn't deny being infuriated at the Z fighters for failing to protect her, but decided that he needed to do whatever he could to assist in her rescue. He sent two salvage crews, one to Yanzabit heights and the other to Mount Paozu, where Yajirobe had found Goku's space pod some time yesterday. He had them both brought over to Capsule Corporation. While Goku's pod was completely out of working order, Kami's ship was largely functional and with Mr. Popo's assistance, Dr. Brief was able to translate key functions from Namekian, reprogram the ship to obey commands voiced in the English language and make several additional adjustments, with the help of several first class aerospace engineers. He also added a few well-stocked refrigerators inside, hooking them up to a long-lasting electrical energy supply unit. All in all, it took about five days.

He decided to keep his wife in the dark about what he had heard, saying that Bulma had simply gone on a dragon ball hunting adventure, which was technically true. He was forced to hide the shock on his face when she told him that she met a sweet young man the previous day, whose descriptions happened to match Vegeta's. He opted to keep his ebullient wife in the dark for the time being. Once Bulma was safe and secure, only then would he fill her in.

Unfortunately, since Vegeta's face was all over the televisions and newspapers, Mrs. Brief had eventually been able to deduce who her houseguest was. Her response, however, was starkly different from what Dr. Brief had ever anticipated. Although largely disappointed and distraught, she was convinced that Vegeta a nice person and that Bulma may be able to shed light into his heart. Dr. Brief shook his head in disbelief as he recalled his bubbly wife's reaction. He had always known her to be an idealist, but not a pipe dreamer.

It took less than a week for Gohan and Krillin to recover from hospital and prepare for their departure on Kami's ship, getting everything they needed, including a dragon radar, manufactured by Dr. Brief himself, who used the schematics he'd found in Bulma's lab, underneath a plethora of other blueprints. He also built a dozen anti-radar repositories, the extra five there just for insurance. In addition, he gave the two travellers a capsule case, containing several important devices and supplies that may turn out useful for the upcoming trip. He had also given them a list of key commands for the ship, which would be needed for piloting and navigation and forced both Gohan and Krillin to memorize each and every syllable.

Dr. Brief, all the while, was working diligently on refurbishing Goku's space pod into a humongous and high-speed ship, soon after prepping Kami's ship and getting together any additional supplies that Gohan and Krillin would need. The technology of the pod fascinated him greatly and using its material, along with other potent alloys, he estimated that it would take him a few weeks to build the perfect ship. Goku had also asked for an artificial gravity simulator that would allow him to train at up to 100 times Earth's gravity, in which case he'd surely be ready to take on Vegeta or any new challenger that happened to cross him. While all this was happening, Korin and Yajirobe were working fervently, in order to ready the next batch of senzu beans.

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The day after their recovery, Gohan and Krillin met up at Kame House in the morning.

Master Roshi was on the island waiting with Krillin and a short while later, Chi-Chi, Ox King and Gohan arrived in a red airbus. When it appeared as though Gohan was absent, Krillin and the old master looked at each other in worry. Chi-Chi then called him out and the boy begrudgingly exited the vehicle, dressed in a corny uniform, consisting of blue shorts, a blue coat, a white buttoned shirt and a red bow tie.

While Chi-Chi kept prattling on about how 'adorable' he looked, Krillin and Master Roshi clutched their stomachs as they guffawed, making the demi-Saiyan boy's mortification rise that much further. Chi-Chi had also brought with her a multitude of other extraneous supplies, including a myriad of study materials. Krillin and Master Roshi merely looked at one another and rolled their eyes. Chi-Chi could really be such a loon, all too often.

The ship, already sitting upon the island, was waiting for its crew members to come aboard.

"Open." Commanded Krillin and the disk-shaped hatch slowly made its descent to the floor below.

Chi-Chi knelt down and embraced her boy, making him promise to be safe, not to take any chances and flee if there were any possibility that his life was at risk. Gohan nodded in assent and after saying their goodbyes, he made his way to the ship, taking all the supplies he had with him.

Dr. Brief had already programmed the co-ordinates for Planet Namek into the ship and so Gohan and Krillin simply pressed the launch button and were free to engage one other in their mind training, as they began their fretful month-long journey to Kami's home world.

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Nearly a month had passed since Bulma and Vegeta had departed into space and they were fast approaching their destination.

"Prince Vegeta." The robotic voice jolted awake the Saiyan. "You are set to arrive on Planet Frieza No. 79. Estimated time of arrival: Five minutes."

"Good." The Prince responded. He then opened up the communicator to Bulma's space pod, waiting for her to wake from her slumber. She was a significant distance away, given the lightning speed at which the pods travelled, but time-wise there was little more than a minute's length separating the two.

She'd woken up to a start, in response to the computerized voice, only she was far more disoriented than Vegeta, who had long since been accustomed to travelling in space pods.

"Mmmm." She mumbled groggily.

"You're awake." Vegeta said. "Good. We land in a few minutes."

"Vegeta?"

"Of course." He responded.

It didn't take long until she gathered her bearings.
"Right." A feeling of consternation began rising within her. She was far, far away from home and the only one to protect her was Vegeta, her most hated and feared adversary, her captor. This whole dilemma reeked of death, despair, loss and dread. Now, of all things, irony had to be added into the mix too. Bulma soon began scanning her surroundings and recognized some of the functions on the pod, despite the alien symbols. She suddenly had the urge to just break this pod down into its tiniest components and absorb herself into studying, understanding and improving every single little detail, from the tensile alloys used in its production, to the very basic electronics and wirings. Whenever she set her mind on a task, there was nothing she couldn't accomplish. After all, she had the most brilliant and ingenious scientific framework engineered inside her since birth.

"God, this is some piece of hardware." She thought audibly. "The things I could do with this."

"If you're done ogling, we land soon." Vegeta goaded.

"I am not ogling, you jerk!" Bulma replied furiously, his voice shaking her out of her reverie.

The Prince merely chuckled and her face reddened with indignation. After a moment of silence, Vegeta spoke.

"I land within two minutes." He informed. "You'll arrive slightly afterwards and my pod will be exactly ten meters to your right. When you exit, head straight there. I'll be waiting."

"Why can't you come to me?"

"I come to no one." He replied resolutely.

"Funny, cause I have that same reputation." Bulma gloated, in a conceited tone, which did not escape Vegeta's attention.

"Oh, feisty huh?" He replied smugly. "If you prefer, you can stay where you are and deal with Frieza's soldiers all by yourself. You might want to know that most of them have pent-up sexual frustration, since there're no whorehouses on this planet and other than purge missions, their only means of release is via hand."

Bulma froze when she heard those last bits of information.

"Alright, alright!" She relented, waves of panic emanating from her. "I'll do whatever you want! Just don't let anyone touch me!"

"That's a good girl." Responded Vegeta, a self-satisfied smirk etched on his face.

Bulma shuddered, trying her best to avoid contemplating scenarios of her being taken against her will. Vegeta may have been evil, but she never once got the hint that he would ever even consider taking advantage of her. Maybe he just wasn't interested, maybe he didn't think she was pretty enough (though she seriously doubted that) or maybe he had at least some tiny shred of honor in him. Whatever the case, she couldn't deny being glad that he was here with her, much as she would otherwise have hated it. After all: better the devil you know than the one you don't know.

Vegeta had now landed and opened his hatch. Although he had lost a lot of blood already, the wound on his back was now closed up completely, thanks to Bulma's expertise coupled with his own superior Saiyan physiology. In addition, the food he had eaten before leaving had helped boost his strength and energy reserves by a certain degree. By his estimate, it would take a mere
Half-hour for him to make a full recovery in the regeneration tank, if that.

"Prince Vegeta." Saluted a soldier.

Vegeta ignored him as he stood up, waiting for Bulma's, or more accurately, Nappa's pod to arrive.

"Where's your armor sir? And what happened?" Asked another soldier, noticing the odd t-shirt he was wearing and several cuts and abrasions on his neck and forearms.

"It's none of your concern!" Responded Vegeta gruffly and the soldier gulped and pursed his lips. "Now out of my way, all of you!"

Not needing to be told twice, they backed away from him and after a moment of silence, Bulma's pod had landed. She unbuckled her seatbelt and opened the hatch immediately. Upon stepping outside, she saw a throng of soldiers surrounding her. They were surprised. They had expected Nappa to be there. Who was this woman? They had no clue, but her exquisite appearance and exotic coloring forced all questions to the backs of their minds. The soldiers leered menacingly at her, saliva shamelessly drooping from their mouths. Bulma blanched and held a fist to her skittering heart.

"The blue-haired woman's my prisoner!" Vegeta proclaimed loudly from afar, "She's under my protection and that means that if any of you so much as touches her, I will flay you, slowly and painfully. That's a promise!"

The soldiers suddenly had dread written all over their faces and gulped, before withdrawing and heading back inside the base. Bulma breathed a huge sigh of relief as the color returned to her face. She headed straight over to Vegeta.

"Who were those dirtbags?" She asked.

"Frieza's soldiers." He answered as he strutted inside the building, his captive hot on his heels.

"Who is Frieza, anyway?" She asked. "You mentioned him earlier."

"No one in particular." He responded. "Just the almighty overlord of the largest interplanetary empire the Universe has ever seen."

Bulma's eyes widened and her jaw dropped, as she unknowingly scooted over closer to him, only a small distance separating them. They may have been enemies, but he was her only source of protection here.

"And they have to follow your commands?" She asked.

"They do so out of fear." He answered. "That's essentially how Frieza's empire works. The strong have dominion over the weak."

"I see." She commented. "Exactly how high up the ladder are you?"

"Not high enough." He answered nonchalantly. "Not yet, anyway."

Bulma was suddenly transfixed, her heartbeat rising rapidly, as an imperfect blend of dread, horror and astonishment formed a harrowing amalgamate within the very depths of her soul. There were
beings out there stronger than Vegeta? How was that even possible? It frightened her to death. Vegeta was the most menacing threat the Earth had ever faced. Even Goku, with all his might, his enhanced strength and the aid of his comrades, was unable to stand in his way. For all Bulma knew, her juggernaut of a best friend was most likely still crippled in hospital and yet there were forces out there even more powerful than the one who put him there! It just couldn't be!

Vegeta turned around, scowling at her.

"Are you going to keep standing there like an idiot or what?!"

Bulma was jolted out of her trance and followed the Prince. She didn't utter a word as they made it to the medical room.

"Prince Vegeta." Malaka saluted. The green skinned, orange haired reptilian doctor had worked under the Saiyans for years, up until their home planet had met its unfortunate end as a result of a 'meteorite collision', but he knew better. He himself had witnessed the rapidly increasing powers of several esteemed Saiyan warriors as they continued engaging in battle after battle, thus it didn't surprise him much when their planet had conveniently been vaporized from the cosmos. He knew Frieza must have been afraid of the swift rise in the power of the Saiyan race and had a good guess as to how their planet had truly suffered annihilation. But he was loath to voice his thoughts. "Are you alright sir? Where's your armor?"

"I'm fine Malaka. My armor got damaged, so I left it behind." Vegeta responded, his voice not as stern as usual. He had known the doctor since he was first conscripted into Frieza's army as a five-year old child and respected him more so than anyone else that had served under the vicious tyrant, apart from Nappa and Raditz, that is. He did not belittle the Prince, nor did he cower before him. What he held for the royal Saiyan was true, genuine respect. "Get me healed immediately."

"Sure thing." He complied. "By the way, where's Nappa?"

"I killed him!" He answered brusquely.

Malaka's eyes widened.

"W-Why?"

"I do not wish to talk about it!" Vegeta exclaimed. "What's done is done!"

The doctor sensed an element of contrition in his voice, but decided to leave the matter alone. He had to admit, he wasn't all that fond of Nappa's reckless and rash behavior, but killing off one's own comrade didn't sit too well with him.

"Fine." He relented, nodding his head.

Vegeta took his shirt off and tossed it aside, before ripping off the bandages that Bulma had wrapped around him. His mind drifted off to that moment. She had helped him, out of compassion. No one had ever shown him that, apart from his mother. He shook his head violently, not wanting to go there. He'd decided long ago to cast aside such weak sentimental rubbish. It did nothing but bring him pain and misery. Being strong, cold-hearted, merciless, cruel and without even the slightest degree of penitence, was the only way he could achieve his goals. He'd long since accepted that and now he was close to his objective. All he needed were the dragon balls.
Both Bulma and Malaka wrinkled their noses as the rancid odor from his now closed-up laceration, lingered through the air.

Vegeta ripped his bandages off in one go, before quickly removing his gloves and boots and finally slipping out of his pants and underwear all at once, so he was completely naked. Bulma took one look at his figure from behind and a huge blush smeared across her face. Her eyes widened and jaw dropped. She immediately turned around to hide her shame.

'God, he has a nice ass.' She thought and mentally slapped herself thereafter.

'Bulma, what're you doing?' She reprimanded herself. 'He's a genocidal maniac and here you are drooling over him. What is wrong with you, girl?'

In a desperate attempt to neutralize her illicit, treacherous and morally reprehensible thoughts concerning Vegeta, she mentally conjured up images of Yamcha's nude body, but it just wasn't the same! With that simian bastard stripping right in front of her, even imagining Yamcha in all his naked glory, proved to be a daunting task. He wasn't nearly as toned, well-sculpted, vigorous or handsome as Vegeta.

'No, Goddammit, stop it Bulma!' She grit her teeth, in frustration. 'Yamcha's way handsomer! Just look at Vegeta's stupid widow's peak! Seriously, he looks like he has a big M above his forehead!' That thought kind of amused her. 'God, I could so imagine his face being franchised by McDonald's.' She unintentionally fell into a fit of giggles at the idea. 'Hahaha, how cute!'

She felt her cheeks flush and mentally chastised herself once again.

'Dammit, Bulma, will you get Vegeta out of your mind?!!' She self-chided. 'Yamcha's your boyfriend! Vegeta's your crazy kidnapper! Besides, if he knew what you were thinking, he'd probably put a hole in you, without a second thought!'

By now Vegeta was already inside the tank, glass walls surrounding him. He was wearing a breathing mask. The doctor punched in a few buttons, which gave rise to the synthetic healing liquid. The moment it had surrounded every inch of his body, Vegeta closed his eyes and opened his mind, sensing out surrounding Ki signals in order to get accustomed to this newly learned technique. Yes, the Earthlings had done it and it didn't take long to figure it out, however, he had yet to master it fully.

"So, who are you?" The doctor asked, frowning in Bulma's direction. The heiress was still lost in her own inner conflict, until the doctor's words jolted her out of her thoughts.

"O-Oh, I-I'm B-B-Bulma." She replied, facing the reptilian creature.

"You do not have to fear me, I'm no soldier." He said, giving her a reassuring smile. "I'm completely harmless; a mere scientist who happened to have found himself under the service of Lord Frieza, one day."

"O-O-Oh." Bulma took a deep breath. "So, how'd you end up here?"

"Same way most others did, I suppose." He replied. "Frieza conquered my home world and had the best and brightest among us serve in his ranks. That's about the gist of it. I was assigned to serve the Saiyans, but since they died out, or at least most of them did, Frieza had me serve him."
"I see." If he worked under the Saiyans, surely she could learn a thing or two about her captor. "What about Vegeta? How'd he end up here?"

The doctor shook his head.

"I cannot say anything about the Prince." He responded. "He's very reserved. What I do know, I keep to myself."

"Is that right?" She said, turning in Vegeta's direction. The tank covered everything below his chest. Upon scrutinizing him more closely, she once again noticed his scars. "Those scars, he told me he got them 'from hell' (A/N: Refer to Chapter 3). What do you think he meant by that?"

Malaka looked at her, raising an eyebrow in surprise.

"He told you that?"

Bulma nodded affirmatively.

"Some of them are battle scars." He told her.

"And the others?"

"I'm not at liberty to say."

His response only aroused Bulma's curiosity further. Why was Vegeta so detached? He was such a mystery and those scars of his only added more pieces to the puzzle. Her desire to discern him was becoming less and less a means of distraction from her grief and more and more a true, genuine interest. She had to find out about him. What she knew so far had triggered a strong sense of intrigue within her that was beginning to augment.

"I know what you're thinking," Malaka said, instantly recognizing the inquisitive look about her. "But I should warn you. Vegeta does not allow anyone to be close to him. It's a weakness as far as he's concerned."

"And why's that?"

The doctor groaned in frustration.

"I do not wish to speak about the Prince any longer." He stated adamantly. "You still did not answer my first question. Who are you and what brought you to this world, with Vegeta?"

Bulma furrowed her brows for a moment, lowering her head in thought.

"I'm his prisoner." She answered, looking Malaka dead in the eye. "I'm a highly skilled scientist. Vegeta attacked my planet and was about to destroy it, but I offered to serve him if he spared us and, well, I guess he agreed."

"Oh?" He began eyeing the Prince curiously. This was an unusual occurrence, to say the least. Vegeta was never one to make deals with outsiders and he'd never pass up the opportunity to get his hands bloody, no matter what. "How very strange of him."

"Why is that strange?"
"Never mind."

This woman must have been extremely talented for the Prince to exhibit restraint. A few moments of silence ensued, before Bulma made her way over next to the doctor.

"I was wondering." She began. "How does this thing work? Will it really heal him fully? How long will it take?"

"It should be less than a half hour before he is completely healed." He answered.

"Really?!" Bulma exclaimed, astounded.

"Not so loud." Malaka chided, cringing and shutting his eyes for a moment, before opening them. "And yes, really."

"Amazing." Bulma stared in awe at the controls below her. "This stuff is state of the art. Equipment like this would completely revolutionize medicine on my planet."

"Is that right?" The doctor asked curiously. Strange that someone of such a seemingly primitive background could sway her way into the Prince's employ, "This happens to be one of the more standardized regeneration units."

"Wow."

Malaka spent a long while explaining to Bulma how the regeneration tanks functioned: the controls, mechanisms, wirings, contents of the healing liquid and all the rest of it. Bulma was completely absorbed and knew that, given the right material, she could emulate this perfectly. She pulled out a capsule containing a portable computer device and pressed the plunger, tossing it into the air, causing it to materialize, before catching it and typing up a list of items she would need to recreate this unit. She knew that Earth would have substitutes for just about all the materials required, minus the bizarre healing liquid, but hopefully she could remedy that somehow. Assuming she survived this whole mess, another intergalactic adventure couldn't hurt, right?

The doctor was astounded when Vegeta's prisoner had somehow pulled some writing device out of thin air. Was she a scientist or a magician? He was frozen in silence, until she was done making notes.

"H-H-How d-did you d-do th-that?" He asked.

"Huh. Do what?" Bulma asked confusedly, before capsulizing her portable computer device and putting it back inside her capsule case.

"Th-That?" He asked, pointing to the case.

"Oh. Like I said, I am the greatest scientist on my planet." She said in a conceited tone. "Along with my father, that is. He invented a method that allows for any-"

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

Vegeta was done healing and Malaka pressed a button that drained the liquid, before opening the hatch, so Vegeta could make his way out. The Prince removed his breathing mask and was
instantly surprised at the newfound power he felt resonating through him. After healing completely, he was significantly stronger than before. This was great. Very often he was malfurnished under Frieza and as a result of that, Zenkai boosts would only allow for a minimal increase in his power level every time he was put through torture sessions under his tormentor. It was purge missions that really helped surge his levels of strength. He would always elect to partake in the most difficult assignments and Frieza was only too happy to oblige, unless of course, he was extremely pissed and wanted him punished. This was different though. The injuries he'd suffered on Earth were far greater than those of any purge mission. Loath as he was to admit it, he'd never been in a battle that difficult all his life.

The doctor went to a nearby room to pick out a newer set of armor and clothes.

Bulma averted her gaze away from Vegeta, electing not to look at the shameless Prince in all his naked glory.

"What is it with you goddamn Saiyans?!!" She scowled. "Who the hell walks around with no clothes on?! I mean seriously, what the hell, Vegeta?! Do you like flaunting yourself in front of other women?!!"

Vegeta felt his cheeks tint a shade of crimson or two.

"I never asked you to look at me!" He replied after a short pause, deeply insulted by her insinuation. "What are you, some kind of degenerate?!!"

"Am I a degenerate?!" Bulma was infuriated. What nerve he had! "I'm not the one who takes my clothes off in front of others!"

"I did it to get my injuries healed!" He exclaimed defensively. "Besides, its commonplace here and has nothing to do with whatever filth you're implying, you vulgar female!"

"Hey, shut up!" She snarled angrily. "I am not vulgar!"

Unbeknownst to the two of them Malaka had heard their little exchange and cleared his throat to garner their attention.

Vegeta exhaled indignantly and went to collect his new armor, which was essentially like the old one, minus the groin and hip guards. The new spandex pants and shirt too were exact replicas of his previous outfit. He clambered into his new uniform, all the while fuming. This crazy woman had some gall, trying to flatter herself! He wasn't some sick-minded hedonist!

"We're leaving!" The Prince ordered gruffly.

Bulma turned to him and breathed a huge sigh of relief, now that he was no longer naked. Still, she was pissed! Who did he think he was calling her a degenerate?! He was in no moral position to address her that way! Incidentally, for a mass murdering, genocidal, psychopathic maniac, he sounded awfully touchy and sensitive when it came to the subject of sexuality. Her lips quirked up slightly, at the thought. Wow! She felt her already overwhelming intrigue shoot up like a rocket!

"Oh, by the way, Vegeta." Malaka just remembered something. "I received word that Cui had arrived on this planet a few minutes ago on his way to the training centre."

"Cui, huh?" Vegeta said, heading out slowly. "I have no time to waste on that clown."
He then looked at Bulma.

"Hurry up or I'm leaving you behind!"

"I'm coming! I'm coming!" The blue-haired heiress was hot on the Prince's heels.

"Bye! Thanks for everything!" She waved to Malaka, offering him a warm smile.

The doctor merely nodded his head. There was something a tad bit different about Vegeta, at least when it came to that mysterious woman. He'd never known him to countenance any sass before, not like this. Any other person that addressed the Prince with such impertinence would be dead on the spot. There was a good reason why Vegeta had severed any and all emotional attachments. Re-establishing them was a dangerous move on his part; of that, there was no doubt.

A short moment later, Cui appeared, standing in front of Vegeta and the Prince stopped in his tracks, a distance of a mere few feet separating the two warriors. Bulma was close behind him, all along.

"What do you want Cui?!!" He demanded in his trademark baritone voice.

Cui chuckled a little.

"Getting bested by a third-class Saiyan must've been a big blow to that inflated ego of yours, huh, Vegeta?" He mocked, in a smug tone, a conceited look on his face and his lips quirked upwards.

Vegeta chuckled.

"For your information Cui, I left that so-called 'third-class' crippled and broken." He responded. "I could've destroyed him and everyone else on the planet had I so chosen, but I had other things in mind."

Cui laughed, disbelievingly.

"So you sneak off to Earth behind Frieza's back and all of a sudden, have second-thoughts?" Cui asked, jeeringly. "You don't really expect me to believe that, do you?"

"Enough of this crap!" Vegeta scowled. "Get out of my way this instant!"

Bulma quivered slightly at Vegeta's harsh tone.

"Hold on." Cui frowned in askance, as he pointed behind Vegeta, his smirk not faltering one bit. "I've been meaning to ask, who's that sniveling girl behind you?"

"She's my prisoner!" Vegeta responded. Bulma slightly leaned up against him in apprehension, in case this other alien attempted to harm her. Loath as she was to admit it, he was the only one who could protect her, at this particular moment.

"Under whose authority?" Cui asked.

"Mine." He replied and then growled. "Now quit wasting my time, fish-face!"
"You know as well as I, that you are prohibited from having cohorts with you, unless Frieza approves first, monkey." Cui reminded the Prince.

"Just let him try and do something about it!" Vegeta chuckled.

"You don't seriously plan to defy Lord Frieza, do you?" Cui asked, completely taken aback, "You should know better than anyone how powerful he is."

"Perhaps." Vegeta retorted confidently, "But he doesn't know how powerful I am, which gives me the advantage."

"Now, now, Vegeta." Cui smirked once again, "I received word a while earlier that Frieza had just arrived on the Planet Namek, on a little dragon ball hunting mission. If you're really foolish enough to challenge him, be my guest."

Cui finally gave passage, safely assuming that there was no way Vegeta would dare to cross paths with the autarch of the cosmos.

"What?!" Vegeta suddenly felt terror-stricken, but then grimaced and quickly picked Bulma up, as he ran back towards the medical room at full speed. "Goddammit! That bastard! How did he know?! No way! He is not stealing my wish! This is the only chance I have to finally be free of him!"

As soon as Vegeta picked up a scouter, he dashed past Cui, barely giving the purple skinned warrior time to think, as he whisked Bulma towards the space pod with him.

"Vegeta, get back here!" Cui yelled, as the Prince ran by him.

When he arrived, he quickly opened the hatch, sat inside and pulled Bulma onto his lap, despite her remonstrations, not wanting to waste a single moment dealing with that idiot Cui or wasting time setting up the other space pod. Each and every second that passed by, gave Frieza the advantage and he knew it. He closed the hatch and set the co-ordinates for planet Namek. Cui waved his arms about in protest as he watched him go. He should've stopped him when he had the chance! It wasn't too late though. He went to the nearest space pod, which happened to be Bulma's, formerly Nappa's and pursued Vegeta to Namek, intent on nipping this little problem in the bud.
“Hey, what’s the deal?!” Yelled Bulma as the pod launched off. Vegeta had his arms draped around her waist, as she sat on his lap. She detested being in such close proximity to the man behind the deaths of her closest friends and ex.

“Shut up woman!!!” Vegeta yelled back and was about to press the button for the stasis gas release, but Bulma grabbed his wrist.

“Uh uh mister!” She said in an assertive tone, a mulish expression engrained on her face. “Explain yourself!”

“I have to get the dragon balls before Frieza does!!” Vegeta elucidated harshly. “Now shut-up!!”

He wrenched his hand free, before pressing the button and winding his arm back around her waist. Before Bulma had a chance to protest, they were both completely engulfed in the stasis gas, inducing them into a comatose state.

XXXX

Meanwhile, Gohan and Krillin were nearing planet Namek. Dr. Brief had kept a hand-held communication device in his pocket every second of every day, in case the two warriors ever ran into any trouble out in space. The ship was set on autopilot, so there was little need to navigate it; on the rare occasions when there was a need, Dr. Brief did guide Krillin step-by-step, ensuring that he followed each command assiduously. The cutting-edge technology allowed for safe and simple travel and the demi Saiyan and his bald friend/companion had spent most of their day engaging in intense mind-training regimens.

XXXX

On Earth, Goku was caught escaping the hospital grounds to go and train, but ended up hurting himself badly and was returned to the premises by an enraged Chi-Chi and Master Roshi. Very frequently, the doctors caught him performing a set of intense physical exercises, much to their displeasure. After threatening to give him a shot the next time he disobeyed, however, he immediately ceased any attempt at insubordination, at least as far as they new; the tenacious Saiyan would still devote exhaustive amounts of time to his extracurricular activities, but was more discreet about it, so as to avoid rousing any suspicion. Unfortunately for Goku, it didn’t take long for Chi-Chi to find out about his off-the-grid training. She had strongly reprimanded him and told him that if she ever caught him redhanded again, the doctors would immediately be notified and she would personally see to it that he was injected. That little threat completely put an end to all his schemes.

Luckily for the Earth-raised Saiyan, Yajirobe had come bearing gifts the very next day: a sack of seven senzu beans. One was all it took and Earth’s hero was back in the game, reinvigorated and stronger than before, though it was still not enough, not if he wanted to surpass Vegeta’s strength. The doctors were absolutely flabbergasted when they saw their patient flip out of the hospital bed, land gracefully on his feet and shatter his casts just by flexing his muscles. It was the moment of truth. He would leave Earth for Namek. Dr. Brief had informed him that the journey would take a
mere six days. That was all the time he had to boost his power to whole new levels. His resolve was greater than ever before.

When he made it to Capsule Corporation, Mrs. Brief tugged his arm as she led the way to Dr. Brief’s recreated version of his original space pod. She continued prattling on about how handsome and dashing he was and that he should visit more often, which only added to his discomfort and embarrassment.

Goku was not pleased in the least when Dr. Brief told him that the ship still required work, but when learning that all that was left to install was a cappuccino machine, he fell on his back, anime-style. He didn’t care about coffee!!! Despite the good doctor’s insistence that he would regret his decision when he woke up in the morning, all dazed and stupefied, Goku was unwavering; he needed to train, get to Namek and complete his mission. He had no time to waste with any superfluous add-ons.

Dr. Brief soon caved in and explained to Goku, the inner workings of the ship, the gravity console and the zone best suited for training. After giving him a guided tour of the ship and explaining how to set up communication with himself as well as Krillin and Gohan, both of whom were nearing Namek, he was good to go. He'd already informed the two other traveller’s of this newest update, much to their delight.

After launching off, Goku began exercising under 20x gravity, building his way higher and higher as time passed on. Not long after, he’d nearly caught up to Vegeta’s power and was determined to surpass it, no matter what!! Though heavily taxing, his training was turning out to be a lot more fruitful than even he’d anticipated!! Perfect!! Everything was going as planned!!

XXXX

A few days had passed and Gohan and Krillin had finally arrived on Namek, after a month-long trip. Upon checking the dragon radar, they observed that four dragon balls were gathered together. Dammit!! Was Vegeta here already?? No, they didn’t sense him. What they did sense, however, was a lot worse. There were several evil forces out there and they were strong. But what had really alarmed them were two evil beings with powers similar to Vegeta’s and one with a signal far higher than even his. How could a force with such astronomical power even exist and why were they here on Namek?! Why now?! This had completely subverted any plans they’d had!! If they couldn’t take on Vegeta then how in the world could they even consider facing this new adversary?!!

They went back inside their ship to inform Goku of what they’d learned. Surely he’d know what to do!! Goku, too, was astounded at the revelation that there was an entity whose power trumped Vegeta’s. He knew one thing though: he had to train harder than ever before!! By now he’d nearly mastered 100 times Earth’s gravity and had come to learn that every time he healed from critical injury, his power level underwent a massive upsurge. He already ate two senzu beans since his departure from Earth and that, coupled with his arduous training regimens, had heightened his strength to whole new levels. He didn’t hold back at all during his training and even ended up breaking his bones and joints on one occasion, albeit unintentionally. Nonetheless, it all worked in his favor when he healed and his Ki took a huge spike!! Images of Vegeta punching the tar out of him, pummelling his son and best friend and most of all, taking away his dear Bulma, had flickered through his mind and constantly given him the resolve he needed to completely shatter his previous limitations!! He knew, however, that if he were to stand a chance against this new adversary, he would have to push himself harder than ever before!! And he was more than ready to do it!!
A short while passed. Gohan and Krillin ended up confronting two aliens with uniform and armor similar to Vegeta’s, though strength-wise they didn’t even compare. One was purple-skinned and excessively grotesque, with what appeared to be boils all over his skin and a fin-like mohawk. The other was blue-skinned with yellow-orange muttonchops, who looked more like a councillor or statesman than a warrior. Though dispatching those two goons was easy enough, their ship had regrettably ended up being demolished. It didn’t matter though!! Goku would be coming sometime within the next day or two and they could finally put this whole mess behind them!! If only it were that easy though!! No matter how hard their hero trained or how much his strength rose, it would take more than a miracle to face the monstrous power they’d felt earlier on!! They really needed to strategize! Jumping right into the lion’s jaws wouldn’t get them anywhere!!

XXX

The computerized voice in Vegeta’s space pod, woke he and Bulma to a start, five minutes before they were due to land on Namek.

“Almost there.” Vegeta said apprehensively.

“Mmmm.” Bulma mouthed groggily, still not accustomed to space travel.

“Frieza, that bastard.” Vegeta grated. “He must have somehow gotten the message from our scouters!!”

Bulma immediately gathered her wits. Vegeta’s hands were still draped around her waistline and only now did she realize that her hands were clasping his forearms. Just when did that happen? Her cheeks tinted red and she moved her arms on her lap, tapping her thighs awkwardly with her fingers. She wasn’t at all comfortable being in this particular position. Bulma quickly began to feel the tension resonating from Vegeta in palpable waves. She couldn’t even see him and yet she felt it, through every taut muscle of his. Then she remembered something her captor had said.

“Vegeta?”

“What?!” He asked, clearly not in the mood for any inane chatter.

Bulma bit her bottom lip, before asking.

“Umm, before we left you were saying that this was your one chance to be free of him, of Frieza.” She responded. “I don’t get it. What did you mean by-”

“That is none of your damn business!!” Vegeta exclaimed, taking insult to the invasion of his personal space. Who did this audacious woman think she was?!! She was just a stupid captive, a means to an end, who was beneath him in every way!! She had no right to ask anything!!

“Look, I’m not trying to overstep my bounds or anything, it’s just that I don’t understand.”

“Mind your place, female!!” He seethed. “Your job is to find me the dragon balls, nothing else! Got it?!! Frieza’s my business!! The moment I get my chance, I’m going to decapitate that ugly, horn-headed fucker!!”

“How come? I don’t get it.”

“What the fuck do you mean, how come?!” Vegeta snarled. “That bastard turned my life into a
Vegeta suddenly stopped. His mind was beset with such fury, that he didn’t even realize the information he began unwittingly spilling out! Dammit!!

Bulma’s eyes widened as she heard the words slipping out of her captor’s tongue. If she were eager before, her curiosity had now increased exponentially. Who could ever do such a thing to someone like Vegeta? Was that why he was always so aloof? As the ‘almighty overlord of the Universe’, in Vegeta’s own words, Frieza must have been behind everything the Saiyans did. And Vegeta clearly did not like it. That made sense, given his immense pride. What she didn’t understand was what he meant by his life being turned into a “living hell”.

Her eyes widened and her jaw went slightly ajar the moment it hit her. Hell! It was the same word he used to describe the scars on his arms and torso (A/N: Refer to Chapter 3). Did Frieza do that to him?!! Was that what Malaka was concealing from her?!! Was that why he was so secluded and reserved?!! No matter who Vegeta was and what he did, how could anyone deserve that?!! No one deserved that! Each scar looked as though it were carved out of a white-hot iron dagger and one that had caught her attention more than any was the deep, slanted scar, on his left pectoral. She needed to know the truth.

“Vegeta. What did he do to you?” She asked gently, her voice embedded with concern.

“Shut-up!!! I don’t want your stupid compassion, got it??!!!” Vegeta hissed, disgusted by that soft, solicitous tone of hers. “We land soon! You will say nothing more!!!”

Bulma sighed dejectedly. She felt horrible. He may have been her enemy and she still hated him for what he’d done, but as she considered the gruesome abuse that Vegeta was likely subjected to, her heart wrenched for the Saiyan! What could he possibly have done that would warrant such callous cruelty?!!

After a few short moments of silence, Bulma tentatively placed her right hand on his forearm, squeezing it lightly.

“What’re you doing?!” He scowled.

“Sorry.” Bulma quickly moved her hand back to her lap.

“Don’t ever touch me, understand?!!” He demanded in a rough tone.

“Hmmm.” Bulma softly replied, though it sounded more like a whimper.

He had just completely shut himself off when it came to his past. It was just as Malaka had said. He was extremely reticent and reserved, but Bulma was determined more than ever to break through that outer wall of his, not only for curiosity’s sake, but a bonafide feeling of solicitude.

‘Why should I care about him?’ She thought to herself. ‘I know he’s probably been through some bad stuff, but I can’t help him in any way, can I? He just sees it as a weakness. Besides, he doesn’t deserve my help!’

Vegeta was her bitterest enemy, after all. But she just couldn’t bring herself to hate him, not the way she hated him back on Earth. He’d had enough hatred in his life. But then what? He obviously loathed things like pity, kindness and benevolence. She was really giving herself a migraine just
thinking about it. Perhaps it was best to figure it out later.

After two silent minutes, the duo finally landed on Namek.

XXXX

Gohan and Krillin had sensed it, as they headed in search of a habitable location, where they could set up a capsule house. Vegeta was nearby on a space pod and there was a faint Ki in there with him.

“Bulma’s in the same pod as Vegeta.” Krillin noted.

“Yeah, weird.” Gohan commented. “And his power level seems so low. What’s going on?”

“I’m not sure. Maybe he’s still wounded from his battle on Earth.” He surmised. “Gohan, remember, keep your power level suppressed. We can’t attract his attention right now. He’s still too strong for us.”

Gohan grit his teeth and began growling.

“Gohan!” Krillin chided.

The boy forced himself to calm down a little.

“Remember what your dad told you!” He reminded. “Letting your emotions cloud your judgment will only get you killed! When you get angry like that, you’re attracting unwanted attention! Do not do that again!”

“Sorry Krillin.” The boy relented.

“Don’t be.” He replied, placing a hand on his shoulder and sighing. “Look, I understand that you’re angry. I am too. We lost our best friends because of him, but this is our only chance revive them. We’re already slim on hope, but if we act rashly, we’ll have none to speak of. You don’t want that, do you?”

“No Krillin.” Gohan shook his head.

“Good.” The bald warrior smiled, as he took his hand off the demi-Saiyan’s shoulder. “Now, we have to take this one step at a time. For now, we need to locate a place to set up camp. It has to be completely hidden and if the need arises, we have to be prepared to disperse at any moment. You with me, Gohan?”

“Of course.” The half-Saiyan responded solemnly.

“Wait, Gohan!” Krillin suddenly felt alarmed. “Can you sense it?”

Gohan’s instincts were immediately on alert.

“Yeah.” He affirmed. “Another high power level is following Vegeta.”

“Bulma, please be safe.” Krillin prayed, looking up in the direction where he could sense her and
Vegeta, before turning back in the direction of his young companion. “Gohan, we have to go now.”

“Shouldn’t we help Bulma?”

“No.” He responded. “As much as it puts a pit in my stomach to say it, Vegeta wouldn’t let her get hurt. She’s too valuable to him. We should get as close as possible though, just in case. But we have to keep our energy suppressed.”

“Right, let’s do it!”

With that, the two of them headed off.

XXXX

Frieza and his crew had four dragon balls within their grasp and were in a Namekian village, surrounded by several dead natives.

“Lord Frieza, Cui has just arrived.” Zarbon informed, “He’s been tracking Vegeta, so we should know his exact whereabouts soon enough.”

“Good.” Frieza responded in that syrupy, mechanical voice of his, “Anything else?”

“The two scouts I sent out earlier to search for those mysterious power levels stopped transmitting at the same time.” Briefed Zarbon. “I realize those scouts weren’t the best that we had, but it still worries me that they were defeated so quickly. Whoever’s responsible for this attack knows what they’re doing and they seem to have the ability to suppress their power.”

“Well, that’s very interesting.” Frieza responded lackadaisically, “But why are you wasting my time with these things?”

“The two unknown power levels came in at 1500.” Zarbon responded. “It’s possible Vegeta has brought with him some extra help.”

“Only 1500?” Frieza scoffed. “That means nothing to me, nor should it to you. Just concentrate on retrieving the dragon balls and we’ll be on our way. They’ll be dealt with when I destroy this puny planet.”

XXXX

Vegeta had finally landed on Namek, along with Bulma. He opened the hatch and the two of them made their way out.

“So what now?” She asked.

“Well.” Vegeta said, facing Cui’s direction, “For starters, we’re about to have company soon enough.”

“Huh?” Asked a flummoxed Bulma.

“Cui’s been following us.” He explained. “No surprise there. I’ll take care of that idiot first, but I need to make sure the pods aren’t damaged in the crossfire. Come on.”
He grabbed Bulma and flew off, despite her screams of protest and landed in the middle of a field of grass, not far away.

“Find a place to hide now.” He ordered.

“What? Why?”

“Just do it!” He reiterated more forcefully.

“Right, right.” Bulma relented. She found a narrow gorge nearby and immediately made a beeline for it.

That was Vegeta’s cue to move elsewhere. He zoomed over to a small grassy cliff nearby, awaiting his adversary’s arrival.

Alas, the purple-skinned alien turned up about a minute later, not too far away from where Vegeta had landed. He exited his pod and pressed the button on his scouter.

“Ah, there you are.” Cui looked over in Vegeta’s direction, disappointed by the low power level of the Prince.

“Hello Vegeta.” He greeted sardonically. “Do you read me? Fair warning, I’m coming for you and I’m bringing a little message from Lord Frieza!!!”

Cui bolted off in Vegeta’s direction.

“So you’ve been following me, have you Cui?!” Vegeta asked smugly. “Well I have a message you can take to Frieza: His days are numbered, as are yours!!!”

Bulma could barely see Vegeta’s figure from afar, but his baritone echoed through the wind. The way he said those words in that gruff, masculine voice of his, just made him sound so damn sexy!! Bulma cheeks tinted red.

‘Dammit, what is wrong with me?!!!’ She self-castigated. ‘Why do I always have to act like such an idiot? I can’t get over that voice though, and that body.’ Bulma slapped herself mentally a good couple times. ‘Dammit, can you just shut up already Bulma?! You do not have a crush on Vegeta!! You have a mission, so focus on that!!!’

“HAHAHAHAHA Take a good like at your scouter.” Cui laughed. “My power level is way higher than yours, you arrogant Saiyan. It’s about time someone put you in your place.”

Vegeta snickered softly. It was time.

XXXX

“That other guy’s stronger than Vegeta!” Krillin observed as they neared. “If he’s part of that group we sensed earlier, then no matter what happens, we can’t let Bulma fall into his hands! As much as I hate to say it, I think she’s most likely much better off with Vegeta!”

“So, what do we do then?” Gohan asked.

“We have to get her out of there!” He answered. “Hopefully we’ll have enough time, while the two
of them are fighting amongst themselves. With any luck, they’ll finish each other off!”

“That would be the ideal solution.” Gohan concurred, furrowing his brows.

“I doubt it though.” Krillin stated. “I still find it strange that Vegeta’s power level’s so incredibly low.”

“Hah, it’s about time.” Vegeta said to himself. “Took him long enough.”

Vegeta quickly shot up, evading an aerial blow from his adversary. He snickered as he saw his former colleague on the ground, with his fist extended forward.

The purple-skinned alien tilted his head sideways, facing the Saiyan.

“So nice to see you Vegeta.” He said smugly. “You have no idea how much I’ve looked forward to this: the day when I would get to wipe that smug little smirk off your face forever. By the way, where’s that blue-haired girl you brought with you?”

Cui turned around fully, facing Vegeta.

“Oh her?” Vegeta responded impassively. “She was no longer of any use to me, so I killed her.”

“Good! Saves me the trouble.”

That false information on Vegeta’s part, truly confused Bulma. Why would he say that? Well, whatever the reason, she was glad he did, because that other fighter clearly sounded like some sort of crazed bloodthirsty maniac, not that Vegeta was much different, but he was still the only thing keeping her alive, at this moment.

Cui looked at Vegeta assertively.

“You should have never defied Lord Frieza!”

“Oh we’ll see about that.” Vegeta chuckled evilly. “Cui, you just don’t get it, do you? I’m through taking orders! It’s time Lord Frieza started bowing to me!”

God! Why did he have be so daring, intrepid, stouthearted and have that incredibly handsome face, godlike figure and sexy, virile voice?! Goddammit!! The whole reason she’d fallen for Yamcha in the first place was his bad-boy attitude, but he’d lost that and become a domesticated goofball over the years. And even before that, she oft had him wrapped around her little finger. But Vegeta was something different entirely! His very demeanor screamed ‘hardcore’ and made even the ‘desert-bandit’ version of Yamcha seem mediocre at best! His robust voice alone, made her go all tingly!

‘No, no, no!’ Bulma chastised herself, ‘I’m a grown woman! I’m not a little girl anymore!! Vegeta’s my enemy and once I wish Yamcha back, it’ll just be the two of us, like always.’

“You’re old news Vegeta.” Cui remarked. “You turned on Frieza and you’ll pay for it with your life.”

“Maybe, yes. But not today!” Vegeta proclaimed, as he spread his legs out, fists placed by his
sides. The Saiyan Prince gnashed his teeth and began powering up slowly.

Bulma clasped her ears as the ground began quaking. After a while, Cui’s smirk was wiped right off his face.

“What?! My scouter’s going haywire!!” Fear began creeping in as he observed the numbers rise dramatically.

Vegeta growled slightly louder.

“That’s right! I’ve been suppressing my power!” He explained. “It’s a little trick I learned from Earth!”

“Impossible! Your power level was never even anywhere near mine!”

“Idiot!” Vegeta stated vehemently, “Do you really think that you can keep up with my experience in battle?! I’m constantly fighting on the front lines!! I’ve been to the brink of death and back again!!! Meanwhile, you’ve been hiding behind the shield of Frieza, growing soft!!!”

‘God, he’s such a badass and he’s so hot!!’ Bulma thought dreamily, before mentally cursing herself. ‘Dammit!! No more, alright?! No more!! Why can’t I just swoon over Yamcha or even Goku?! Anyone but Vegeta!!’

This whole inner-conflict within the chasms of her mind was frustrating her to no end!!

“22 000, I’ve never seen a reading that high!!!” Cui exclaimed, gaping at the Prince.

“HAaarrrGGghhh!!!” Vegeta roared, as his power continued rising steadily.

POOF!!!

Cui’s scouter suddenly exploded right in his face.

XXXX

POOF!!!

“Zarbon what happened?” Asked the spike-headed, pink tub of lard, Dodoria, as his companion’s scouter abruptly exploded.

“I don’t know.” Zarbon replied. “It must be some sort of malfunction. For a second there it registered Vegeta’s power at 22 000 and then it shorted out.”

“22 000?” Dodoria asked incredulously. “You’ve got to kidding me. It must be that older scouter model you’re using. Let me check it on mine.”

Zarbon peered at his companion, and the pink blob quickly had a horrified expression engrained on his face.

“The number?” Asked Zarbon.

“It doesn’t make any sense.” Dodoria was visibly shaking, “Stupid thing can’t be right. Now it’s
“Twenty four?” Zarbon frowned. “Are you sure you’re reading that thing right? It would mean Vegeta’s power level is even higher than ours.”

“I’m sure.” He affirmed. “It must be some kind of a trick. He’s never been above 18 000.”

“Is it really so surprising?” Frieza asked in his raspy feminine voice. “Don’t forget that Vegeta has been in heavy combat for a while now. With all the fighting he’s done, especially on Earth, he must have picked up some new techniques.”

“Yes, but-” Zarbon began.

“But nothing.” Frieza responded. “There’s no need for concern. It’s only 24 000 and while that may seem impressive to some, compared to me it’s still insignificant.”

Frieza laughed evilly.

XXXX

“Whoa!!!” Krillin exclaimed.

“Vegeta’s power level is spiraling like crazy!!!” Gohan said, wide-eyed.

“He’s even stronger than he was on Earth.” The bald man observed. “And here I was thinking he’d gotten weaker. Somehow he’s learned how to keep his power level repressed!! Just our luck!! How the hell can we face something like that and come out alive??!”

“Now’s not the time Krillin!” Gohan said hastily. “Let’s just hurry and get Bulma out soon! There’s no way that other guy can hold off Vegeta for long! Once he finishes him off, we’ll lose our chance to save her!”

“Right!”

The two of them rushed forward, keeping their power levels near 0, all the while.

XXXX

Cui put his hands up in surrender, trembling, as he desperately tried to snake his way out of his current predicament.

“Hold on Vegeta.” He pleaded. “I thought of a great idea. I could join forces with you. I never liked Frieza, anyway. And with both of us working together, we can take Zarbon and Dodoria, no problem. Think about it Vegeta, we fought so much. We’d make a fantastic team.”

“Stop blabbering like a pathetic fool Cui!” Exclaimed Vegeta as he slowly made his way toward his opponent, smirking. “You’re cowardice makes me sick!!!”

“Please! You’ve got to believe me Vegeta!”

The harder Cui tried, the less convincing he sounded. The purple-skinned warrior attempted to pull a fast one on Vegeta by looking over the latter’s shoulder and yelling ‘Hey look it’s Frieza’ and
simultaneously attacking the Saiyan with everything he had, as he rose into the air. After the smoke cleared, nothing was left and Cui began guffawing, believing he’d finally gotten rid of Vegeta. He landed back on the ground, saying that Vegeta should’ve listened to his advice back on Planet Frieza No. 79.

“Is that so?” Vegeta asked, suddenly appearing on Cui’s right, with his arms folded arrogantly. “Apparently your idea of advice is to submit to my adversary and you know I won’t do that.”

“How’d you escape that?” Cui asked, stunned to death.

“Once again you’ve underestimated your enemy Cui and you won’t be walking away from this mistake!” Vegeta stated with firm resolve. Cui then tried flying away as fast as he could, in a frantic attempt to save himself.

Vegeta flared his own Ki and shot up, appearing directly in front of him, before landing a hard blow on his midsection, piercing through his armor and a good portion of his flesh. Bulma gasped as she witnessed the ghastly display.

“Goodbye!” Vegeta grinned and immediately used his Ki to obliterate Cui, with only two fingers. “See you in hell, Cui!”

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Dodoria gasped as his scouter detected Cui’s power level disappearing. Frieza ordered him to drop the matter and continue the search for the dragon balls.

XXXX

By now, Gohan and Krillin had sensed that Vegeta had easily mopped the floor with his adversary. They continued heading towards Bulma, but stopped when they realized they were too late. Vegeta was already with her. They hid behind a cliff not far, as they looked on.

“We have to leave now.” Vegeta told a panicked Bulma.

Bulma was completely frozen stiff and cowering, after having witnessed that callous display of murder. He’d totally annihilated the other fighter, without a hint of regret or second thought, malignantly reveling in his demise.

Vegeta grit his teeth as he neared her.

“Listen woman!” He exclaimed. “Quit sniveling and get yourself together!!! We have to leave now!!!”

Bulma nodded weakly.

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Gohan grit his teeth and his Ki uncontrollably flared a little, after seeing Vegeta cruelly yell at Bulma.

“Gohan stop!!!” Krillin hissed.
Gohan instantly eased up, realizing his error too late.

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Bulma walked hesitantly over towards Vegeta, but he held his hand up.

“Wait, stop!!” He exclaimed and then began looking sideways, trying to locate the Ki signal he had sensed come and go.

“What is it?” Bulma asked, apprehensively.

“I sensed a minor power level nearby.” He answered. “It showed up on the scouter as well.”

“There’s someone else here?!” Bulma asked, worriedly. “Where are they?!”

“I can’t sense it any longer and the scouter’s showing nothing.” He replied. “It appeared out of the blue and vanished, just like that. It can’t be Frieza’s men. None of them know how to suppress their energy. Has someone been following us?”

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Krillin and Gohan immediately dipped their heads below, so they were out of sight. Dammit!!! As if knowing how to suppress his power wasn’t bad enough, now Vegeta could sense Ki as well?! This was terrible!!

“Now what?” Gohan asked in a low perturbed voice.

“Shhh.” Krillin responded in a hushed voice, holding his index finger to his puckered lips. “Gohan, get out of here. I’ll keep Vegeta distracted.”

“No way, Krillin!” The half-Saiyan frowned.

“I promised your mother I’d keep you safe and I will, no matter what!”

“He won’t find us.” Gohan argued. “You don’t have to worry.”

XXXX

At that moment a giant rodent-like creature leapt out of nowhere.

“Oh, it’s just a damn rat.” Vegeta sighed in relief. “I got alarmed over nothing.”

“Phew.” Bulma wiped a bead of sweat off her forehead.

“You can’t relax just yet.” Vegeta informed. “The little stunt I just pulled sent an energy beacon throughout the planet. Frieza and his men are bound to know where I am. That much is certain. I’m pretty sure I can handle the others, even his Generals, Zarbon and Dodoria, if I fight them one-on-one. But Frieza’s power still far exceeds mine.”

Bulma gulped after hearing that. She knew Frieza was stronger, but not that much.

“W-What’ll h-he do if h-he f-f-finds u-us?” She asked in dismay.
“Well he’s never taken kindly to treason.” He responded, smirking. “Which means I’d probably end up being tortured to death, nice and slow. As for you, given your scientific capabilities, he’ll make you part of his crew and may even hand you over to his most favored soldiers from time-to-time, just to appease them.”

XXXX

Gohan and Krillin released a deep breath, after that enigmatically large rodent had just saved their lives. It was a lucky break for the duo. So that gargantuan power level they sensed had belonged to a guy named Frieza, who from the looks of it, sounded far more evil than Vegeta. Perhaps they and Vegeta had a common enemy. Could they join forces? No. It just wouldn’t work. Vegeta wanted his own wish, plus he was their enemy! He’d kidnapped Bulma and was behind the deaths of their friends on Earth. But then, fighting this ‘Frieza’ would be no picnic. Even with Goku in the picture, they’d need all the help they could get.

XXXX

Bulma went limp, as Vegeta’s words sunk in. She’d much rather be his captive than someone like Frieza’s. She quickly ran up and grabbed his shoulders.

“THEN WE’VE GOT TO ESCAPE, NOW!!!” She shrieked.

Vegeta jumped at her abrupt high-pitched screech.

“Do not shout in my damn face, demon woman!!” He snarled. Bulma shrank back a little and removed her hands from his shoulders.

“Can we just leave?” She pled, ignoring his little insult. “I don’t want to end up being in that dirtbag’s hands.”

“I can sense his energy signal.” Vegeta stated. “He’s still far from here and so are all his lackeys. That fool probably doesn’t see me as a threat, despite knowing how powerful I’ve gotten. But it takes more than just muscle to win a game like this. By the way, check that radar of yours.”

Bulma pulled out the dragon radar from her pocket and switched it on.

“Hmmm, there’s four dragon balls gathered in one place.”

“Let me see that.” Vegeta quickly swiped it away from her.

“Hey!” She groused.

“They’re in that direction.” Vegeta said, pointing slightly to the left. “That’s where I sense Frieza’s Ki signal. If I can keep just one dragon ball hidden from him, the other six are useless, am I right?”

“Well, yeah, of course.” Bulma affirmed.

‘Frieza’s no fool though.’ He mulled. ‘He’ll try to protect the balls he’s collected as best he can. Hopefully, I can swipe them out from under him when he least expects it. Won’t be easy though.’

“All right, so what now?” Bulma asked, interrupting his thoughts.
“First of all, we need to set up a base somewhere.” Vegeta answered. “I can move fast enough if I keep my power level low, but not if I have to carry you at the same time.”

“What?!” She groused, folding her forearms, clearly taking insult. “Am I just baggage?! Is that what you’re saying?!”

“Shut up.” Vegeta responded uncaringly. “Surely you have some sort of vehicle in those capsules, right?”

“Oh yeah!” Bulma beamed. “That’s a great idea! I’m surprised a self-obsessed egomaniac like you came up with it.”

“Do not push your luck woman.” Vegeta threatened, in a deathly low tone.

“Right, right.” Bulma pulled out a capsule, pressed the plunger, threw it and out popped a pink hover bike. Bulma sat on it and looked at Vegeta expectantly. “Well come on then.”

“I am not getting on that thing!” Vegeta griped, folding his arms.

“And why not?” She asked, frowning.

“It’s pink!” He replied, as though the answer were obvious.

Bulma looked at him confusedly for a second, before burying her face in cupped hands and laughing boisterously. God, for a guy that purged planets for a living, he sure was picky!!

“Shut up!!!” Vegeta exclaimed, holding a fist up threateningly.

Bulma whipped her head around, looking at him, as she sniggered under her breath.

“Your scouter’s pink too for God’s sake.” She said laughingly. “I don’t see why you’re complaining.”

“That’s-” Vegeta paused for a second before coming up with a reason. “That’s a different shade. Yours is too feminine.”

“Come on, quit acting like a child and get on.” She said, a small smile of amusement playing on her face, as she patted the seat behind her.

Vegeta grumbled curses under his breath. He had to oblige her though. This was his only means of transportation.

“Gah, fine!” He relented, before muttering something under his breath about stupid Earthling females.

Vegeta went and sat behind her and she immediately sped off. The moment she did that, he snaked his arms around her waist, holding on for dear life. He never expected this silly contraption of hers to be quiet so fast.

“Yeah, now that’s what I’m talking about!!” Bulma cheered. “Woohoooo!!!”
“What on Namek, are you doing??!!” Vegeta objected. This woman was completely off her rocker!!

“It’s been ages since I’ve had a chance to ride like this!!” Bulma felt her tension and distress wash away, as the wind swept past her face. “Isn’t this fun??!!”

“Fun??!!” Vegeta had consternation writ all over his face. “You must be nuts!!”

“Come on, show a little excitement!!” With that Bulma pushed the engines at full throttle, finally able to get a true gauge on the maximum speed of Capsule Corporation’s newest hover bike, while Vegeta’s streak of yells and curses could practically be heard universally.

“Stop goddammit!! I command you to stop!!”

Bulma abruptly ceased in her tracks, causing Vegeta to crash against her from behind.

“What is it?” She asked.

“Are you out of your mind??!!” He yelled. “If you’re in such a rush to get yourself killed, then let me save you the trouble!!”

“Oh, come on!!” Bulma chuckled slightly. ”You probably fly a hundred times faster than this, so what’re you so afraid of??!”

“How dare you??!!” Vegeta exclaimed. “I fear nothing!!”

“Oh yeah, then why do I feel your whole body shaking?” She whipped her head around slightly, smirking at him.

“I- I-” The Prince sputtered incoherently, before averting his gaze to the side and louring. “I’m not afraid of anything you foolish woman! It’s just that I’ve never done something like this before! When I fly, I’m surrounded by a wall of Ki and have perfect control! Right now, however, my Ki is suppressed and you’re driving like a lunatic!!”

“Hahaha You fighters!!” Bulma chortled. “You have the power to destroy planets, but can’t even handle a ride with little old me. Guess I’m too awesome for you!”

“You will learn your place, female!!” He growled.

“Oh, I know my place and it’s obviously a league above yours.” Bulma crowed, flicking back her hair arrogantly, as if to demonstrate her point. Vegeta bared his teeth at her. How dare she speak to him this way??!!! This little minx was overstepping her bounds!!

“If you’re so great then why were you trembling like a little girl, when Cui threatened you back on Planet Frieza?” Vegeta smirked, as he reminded her.

Bulma’s cheeks flushed, embarrassedly.

“I- well-”

“You weren’t scared, were you?” He taunted.
“No!” Bulma objected, unconvincingly.

“Really? So you’re okay if I abandon you here, take your radar and search for the dragon balls all by myself?”

“No, please don’t do that!!” Bulma protested, in alarm. “I’m not that great, really!! I’ll shut up!! I swear I will!!”

“That’s what I thought.” The Prince chuckled. The heiress sighed in relief. This was so unfair!! She wanted to gloat and stick her superiority right in Vegeta’s smug little face, but the latter had too much leverage and she wasn’t at all happy about it!!

XXXX

Gohan and Krillin were eavesdropping, right before Vegeta and Bulma took off. They had heard the Prince’s plan and it seemed obvious that despite his mountainous strength, he wasn’t the real threat. Frieza was. As they continued listening, they were completely shocked at how deftly Bulma had handled the situation. Man, was she a feisty one! To their relief, she didn’t seem to be hurt or traumatized in the least. If anything, she was just as lively and animated as ever.

“How strange.” Krillin said in awe, before smirking. “Well that’s Bulma for you! You gotta love her!”

“Do we follow them or what?” Gohan asked.

“Not yet, Gohan.” Krillin responded. “I hate to admit it, but I think Bulma’s safe with Vegeta, at least for now. What we should do is find the closest dragon ball and hide it. After that we can figure out a way to rescue Bulma. Vegeta doesn’t know we’re here, so at least that gives us an advantage.”

“Right!” Gohan responded, nodding his head affirmatively.

And so the pair took off.

A/N: So Vegeta’s off to collect a dragon ball, but little does he know that he faces competition on both ends. And does the mighty Saiyan Prince seem to be slowly warming up to Bulma? The heiress seems to be in higher spirits than ever, despite her predicament. How will things go from here? Tell me what you think and please review and favourite!!! And remember: all recommendations and critiques are most welcome!!

p.s. Wasn’t it hilarious seeing Bulma swooning over Vegeta? Well, you can’t really blame her, can you? The girls just can’t get enough of him!!

Thanks NekoLover628 for being inspired to draw some nice fan-art of our favourite badass Tsundere xD:
Chapter 9: The Prince of Darkness

Soon after heading off, Gohan and Krillin had felt that cluster of high power levels headed the same way they were. They quickly took cover inside a nearby cave, as they watched them fly past. They took a good look at him, as he flew past: the white-purple lizard-like being hovering inside that strange dark throne of his, surrounded by his entourage. He was the most powerful of the lot. That must have been Frieza. As soon as they were out of sight, both Gohan and Krillin collapsed on the spot, panting for their lives. Sensing it from up close gave them a more accurate gauge of his almost horrific, godlike power.

"Gohan." Krillin panted, "Any ideas?"

"I'm fresh out." Gohan replied, but then thought for a moment, "Wait, no I'm not! What if we follow them?"

"Are you nuts, Gohan?!" Krillin chided.

"Hear me out Krillin." The boy said. "If we find out more about them, maybe we can catch them by surprise somehow, I'm not sure. But if they're headed for the fifth dragon ball, that means they'll only have two more to collect. We need to know exactly what's going on."

Krillin groaned, before sighing in surrender.

"Alright fine, but remember, don't do anything rash like before." He said in a firm tone. "I mean it Gohan! No matter what!"

"Okay Krillin." The boy complied.

The two followed the evil group, jumping from island to island.

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Bulma and Vegeta soon found a cave where she promptly set up a capsule house as their unofficial headquarters. Vegeta still felt thunderstruck upon seeing her materialize something out of thin air, as though it were nothing. This woman was truly something else, like no one he'd ever met before! Frieza would definitely be ecstatic at the prospect of laying his icy claws on someone as talented, bold and high-spirited as her, only so he could have his fun breaking her down inch by inch as he did him, but he would not allow it. She was his property and not the lizard's!

And so he made his way inside the Capsule House, hot on his captive's heals.

"You know, I wonder why my hair haven't grown." She mused, audibly.

"The stasis gas contains a substance called timoxidone, which inhibits hair growth." Vegeta answered.

"Oh wow." Bulma marvelled, "God, all this alien technology never ceases to amaze." She suddenly blanched at the implication behind those words. "Wait, does that mean my hair will never grow..."
"It's only temporary." Vegeta replied. "You've been in the pod for around a month, so the effects will last a mere few days, at the very most."

"Oh, thank God." She breathed a huge sigh of comfort, as the color returned to her face.

"It's customary for space pods to incorporate the substance, since certain species, for instance the Trigocians, grow hair much faster than normal." Vegeta added (A/N: Trigocians = Jeice's species).

"How fast exactly?"

"In their case, about 10 inches daily." He responded.

"Wow, insane!" Bulma gawked at him. She then mused for a while. "You know, Goku's hair never grew since he was a kid. I always wondered why that was."

"He's a Saiyan." Vegeta responded nonchalantly. "In the event that we happen to lose our hair, it only regrows back to level we were born with." (A/N: A lot of fics claim that Saiyan hair doesn't change at all since birth, but Mercenary Tao hacked through some of Goku's hair, yet it still reverted back to normal soon after).

"Really?" Her lips quirked up. She felt somewhat at ease, now that she was actually having a genuine conversation with him, as opposed to one involving death threats and what not. "Wow, now that's really amazing, Vegeta!"

"Enough of this!" The Prince grew agitated by this mundane chatter. "It's time I find the nearest dragon ball."

"Wait hold on." Bulma said. "Shouldn't we eat first? It's been a while."

"If you're asking me to go hunt, you can forget it." Vegeta declared resolutely, folding his arms.

"What?" She asked perplexedly, "Oh you don't have to. I have a well-stocked fridge here. You know, if you're hungry, we can both grab a bite, or in your case a truckload and then continue this little adventure of ours."

Bulma's face lit up into a smile, mid-sentence. Having a casual chat and seeing him so flustered, after driving her hover bike, really helped surge her mood, especially the way he'd latched onto her back then, as though he'd fall off at any moment! God, that felt empowering!

"This is no adventure!" He scoffed. "This is life and death!"

"Well, everyone's gotta die sometime." She shrugged her shoulders, before moving over to a cabinet door and pulling out a set of large trays. "Might as well have fun and go out with a bang, don't you think?!"

Vegeta's lips quirked up slightly, as her back was turned to him. Now she was talking! He was really beginning to like that intrepid, daredevil personality of hers. She was so brazen, carefree and straightforward! She didn't grovel before him, as most would, Nappa and Raditz included! Now this was the companion he truly sought! Of course that didn't mean she was of any significance to him, but even then, someone with her genius and candor could prove to be a decisive asset, as he
rebuilt the Saiyan Empire from scratch. He had to be circumspect about it though, since he was responsible for the deaths of her friends and she likely more than harbored a grudge against him.

"Alright, so I'm guessing the plan is to get a dragon ball and hide it from Frieza, right?" She asked, as she grabbed two marinated turkeys from the fridge, about twelve pounds each, carefully placing them atop two separate trays.

"That's right." Vegeta de-gloved and headed over. He was about to grab a bird, before Bulma slapped his hand reproachingly. "What're doing?!" He scowled.

"I need to cook them first, you moron!" She furrowed her brows in askance. "Seriously, were you brought up in a jungle or something?!"

"Mind your tongue, you little scullion!" He bared his teeth menacingly. "I am the mighty Prince Vegeta!"

"I am not a scullion!" She snarled at him, her voice rising an octave. "I'm the beautiful Princess Bulma Brief and even prehistoric cavemen know that meat has to be cooked before it's edible, Mr. Prince of savages!"

"I'm warning you, this is far as you go!" Threatened the Prince, holding a fist up menacingly. "You're only moments away from being blasted into oblivion!"

"Oh yeah?" She smirked, arrogantly folding her arms. "Who's gonna cook for you then?"

"Tch, watch this!" Vegeta scoffed, lifting up the turkey using Ki from his left hand.

"Hey what're you-"

"Shut up and watch!" The Prince placed his right palm half an inch away from the apex of the bird's chest and transferred a small amount of Ki into his hand.

Bulma watched in absolute awe as the bird began to sizzle midair, while its mouthwatering juices slowly dribbled. Within two minutes, it took on a rich dark orange-red hue.

"Give me a plate." Ordered the Saiyan.

"Uh- sure."

The Prince took a seat and voraciously attacked the bird, not wasting even a tittle, as Bulma gaped on, still trying to come to terms with what had just materialized.

After he was done, he made a move to grab the second turkey.

"Wow, that's a neat trick, Vegeta." The heiress beamed. "I've never seen any of my friends do that!"

"They've probably never had to." He replied, after swallowing a mouthful. "This doesn't taste nearly as good as bonfire though. I'm only doing it because I need to collect the dragon balls, posthaste."

Vegeta roasted the other turkey midair, as before, but this time he ripped off a good portion of the
left hind quarter and offered it to Bulma.

"Here." He said, his tone impassive.

"For me?" She asked, dumbfounded.

"Well, you're of no use to me if you starve to death." He replied, tone unchanged.

"Wow, thanks Vegeta." She said after a brief pause, her face brightening up. The Prince merely scoffed. He didn't do it for her and certainly didn't need her thanks.

She grabbed the quarter, put it in a plate which she placed upon the counter and grabbed a couple of bottles containing various condiments, from a cabinet door.

"You can try some of these." She set the bottles on the counter. "Let's see. We've got tomato, barbeque, garlic, mustard, chilli and uh, ultra hot peri-peri sauce."

"Put some in my plate." Vegeta ordered.

"Uh, okay, which one?"

"Some of each."

"Right." She complied, knowing he must've wanted to sample each one. Bulma then began digging into her own meal. Boy, was she hungry!

To her utter surprise, it turned out that Vegeta's favourite sauces were garlic and ultra hot, same as hers. (A/N: Well, those two are definitely my favourites).

"You know this tastes pretty good." Bulma said through a mouthful.

Vegeta gulped down his morsel, before responding.

"What did I say about swallowing first?!" He berated.

"Oh sorry." Bulma laughed sheepishly.

"Hmph. And you call me a savage."

The heiress just rolled her eyes and continued enjoying her meal.

After eating his share of the second bird, the Prince headed over to the sink. After washing his hands and rinsing his mouth, his scouter suddenly came to life out of the blue. Something major was going down.

"Dragon radar, now." He ordered.

"Hm? Okay." Bulma replied. She'd just now finished her sizzling hot meal and went ahead to wash her hands, before drying them with paper towel and handing the radar over to Vegeta.

"Just as I thought." He said knowingly. "Frieza's onto his fifth dragon ball already and is about to slaughter a village of Namekians, as we speak."
"He is?!" Asked an alarmed Bulma, feeling her heart wrench at the thought. She didn't know what the Namekians were like, but no one deserved to be slaughtered by a group of nasty, murderous, alien invaders the way her friends were. "Well, what do we do now?!

"I'm going to collect the ball nearest them." He replied and then smirked evilly to himself. "I can sense a group of weak and helpless power levels in that same spot, probably more Nameks."

He strutted towards the door.

Bulma bit her lip, her heart hammering in her chest as the full weight of his words sunk in.

"Wait Vegeta."

"What?!" He demanded, offhandedly.

"Don't tell your gonna," She paused a moment before continuing. "Do what I think you are."

The Prince smiled maliciously at her, knowing exactly what was preying on her mind.

"What? Kill every Namekian I find? Of course I will."

"But, you don't have to." Bulma countered, walking towards him and attempting to mask her emotions, though she failed miserably.

"Tch." The Prince smirked. "That's where you're wrong woman."

"Look, just hear me out." Bulma requested.

"I don't live by your moral restraints, never forget that!" Vegeta growled, beginning to grow impatient.

"That's not what I'm asking, just listen." She objected. "What if you allied yourself with them?"

"I don't need a bunch of weak, snivelling cowards at my side!"

"Look, I want Frieza dead too, but you said so yourself, he's too powerful!" She argued, gently placing her hands on his shoulders and trying to persuade him as best she could. "You need all the help you can get!"

Vegeta roughly shoved her forward, making her land ungracefully on her rear.

"Don't ever touch me!" He snarled, shades of the ruthless Prince that had killed Bulma's friends, beginning to reemerge. The heiress glared daggers at him.

"If you kill people indiscriminately, then you're no better than Frieza!" She yelled. The Prince scoffed.

"I never claimed I was." He replied stoically.

"But you can be." Bulma looked at him imploringly, tears brimming her scintillating pools of sapphire. She noticed a hint of emotion flicker through the Prince's charcoal orbs of endless ebony,
only to vanish as soon as it came.

"You know nothing!" He said brusquely, before flashing her a smile so sinister, she felt as though molten lava ate away her flesh from the inside. She could've sworn she saw his pupils dilate a deep and bloody crimson for just a flitting moment, making him look like the devil reincarnate. Just as quickly, Vegeta bolted out of the compound, out of the cave and out of sight, dragon radar in hand, still keeping his power level suppressed to a bare minimum, in order to avoid detection.

As he was travelling, he made sure to listen intently to the conversation playing out on his scouter, between the Frieza crew and their Namekian victims to-be. His thoughts went back to Bulma's plea.

'Silly female!' He thought to himself in rage. 'Who the hell does she think she is?! I am the Saiyan Prince! Once I destroy Frieza, I'll turn this entire Universe into a cesspool of blood and bodies that will put even his darkest deeds to shame! Then she'll know the real me!'

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Bulma felt her heart constrict, as Vegeta took off. Despite the short time they'd shared together, she was beginning to grow on him. Only now did she realize that in his presence she began feeling less and less like a prisoner and more like a companion, even a friend of sorts. He'd protected her from Frieza's soldiers and later, Cui and she couldn't deny enjoying their verbal sparring matches and the casual talk they'd had, as though there were no hostility between them. Somewhere along the line, she'd gotten acquainted with Vegeta and saw in him, a person other than the murdering beast who'd taken away her dearest friends, who'd taken away her Yamcha.

But now the beast had returned, if it had ever left in the first place and it seemed more wild and euphoric than ever, frenzied at the prospect of sinking its razor-like fangs into the flesh of innocence and relishing deeply as the screams of its victims reverberated through air that was flooded with the foul, yet intoxicating stench of death and gore. Her heart continued to throb as unruly tears streamed down her face in fine rivulets, not just for the natives of Namek, but for the Prince of Darkness, she'd come to befriend.

A/N: Suspense, suspense, suspense! Will Vegeta really go through with his plan to butcher the Namekians he is to encounter? If so, how will Bulma take it? Most importantly, what do you think? As always, please tell me your thoughts and hit the review button!
Chapter 10: Discovery

Vegeta was listening in on the exchange between the Frieza crew and the natives, until at some point the line just went dead. He suspected that the Namekians were likely behind this. He smirked at the thought. They’d just made his job a whole lot easier. The Prince made no longer made any efforts to conceal his power as he flew off in search of the next dragon ball.

On his way there, he sensed a familiar Ki signature, all by its lonesome, with no one around to protect it. His lips quirked up into a menacing smile.

Dodoria was completely oblivious to the imminent threat, instead thinking about how he and the others would be able to find the dragon balls without their scouters, in such a monotonous planet. As he was lost in his thoughts, he felt a change in the wind above him and just as he looked up, the heel of Vegeta’s boot landed straight atop his skull, sending him tumbling headlong into the water below.

As the blob surfaced and made his way up on the nearest island, coughing out water, Vegeta landed just ahead of him, standing with his arms folded pompously. Dodoria tilted his face upwards and was alarmed when he saw his ex-coworker.

Vegeta began chuckling evilly.

“You Saiyan trash!!!” Dodoria yelled angrily, with his fist raised. “It’s about time I taught you some respect!!!”

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Gohan and Krillin had just rescued a young Namekian by the name of Dende from Frieza’s goons, barely managing to escape with their lives intact. Not long after, they sensed out two awfully evil power levels in close proximity to one-another, both easily recognizable. Since they’d learned that the evil Prince could sense out power levels, the three of them had agreed to travel on hover-bike.

“Wait.” Krillin said, as he ceased his trek. “I can sense Vegeta in the same place as the guy who was just chasing us, what was his name again?”

“Dodoria.” Gohan answered.

“That’s the one.”

“What’s going on?” Dende asked. “Who’s Vegeta?”

“He’s the guy we told you about.” Krillin answered. “He defeated us on Earth and took out friend hostage. He’s incredibly powerful. But then again, so is Dodoria.”

“Who do you think will win?” Gohan asked.

“I’m pretty sure Vegeta will, but it won’t be easy.” Krillin answered.
“Yeah, I was thinking along the same lines.”

Dodoria began groaning as he held his fists by his side, elbows bent. He then smirked at his adversary. The blob offered Vegeta an ultimatum: hand over his scouter and leave the planet, or die.

“I see.” Vegeta replied smugly. “So you have lost your scouters? That’s terrible. How will you and Zarbon ever find Frieza’s backside to stick your noses in it?”

“Why you little-” Dodoria growled.

“Save it.” Vegeta cut him off and dropped his scouter on the ground. “You can take your little prize to Frieza. Far be it for me to stand in his way.”

Dodoria grumbled suspiciously, but then a smirk of approval lit his face.

“Hmmm.” He began walking slowly and cautiously towards the Saiyan. “I’m surprised Vegeta. I was almost certain I’d have to pry that scouter from your cold lifeless fingers. And to tell you the truth I’m more than a little disappointed that it didn’t come to that, but oh well. We had a deal.”

At that moment Vegeta crushed the scouter under his boot, as Dodoria looked on in shock.

“Are- you- insane?!?” He yelled. “Fool! That was the last scouter on the planet!”

Vegeta chortled.

“It was.” He confirmed. “And now that it’s gone I have the advantage.”

“Hah! What are you talking about?!” Dodoria replied angrily. “You’ll be more lost than I will. Now you’ll never find Frieza or the Nameks.”

“But you’re wrong.” Vegeta responded smugly. “You see I’ve discovered that it’s possible to sense power levels without a scouter. It’s one of the many things I learned during my time on Earth. Now I can feel the energy in the air as easily as the breeze upon my face, which means, I’ve outgrown these silly toys.”

“I get it!” Dodoria yelled, pointing a finger accusingly at his foe. “Those little brats I chased out here were Earthlings!”

“They were what??!!” Vegeta exclaimed in shock, his eyes widening.

Dodoria went on about how Vegeta must have used the Earthlings to lure him away from Frieza but the Prince said that there was no way they could’ve travelled to Namek, given their planet’s limited technology.

“You are lying!!” Dodoria alleged. “But guess what?! I killed your little friends Vegeta and if you stay I’ll do the same to you!!”

The blob stepped back a few paces, his legs quivering all the while. The Prince had long since second-guessed what had Dodoria so unnerved. He told him of how his newly attained powers put
his ex-General’s own strength to shame.

“You cannot be that strong!” Dodoria was visibly frustrated. “You can’t!!!”

Dodoria shouted the last two words and immediately began firing Ki blasts at Vegeta one after another, with everything he had. Vegeta easily dodged and was already behind him, before the smoke cleared.

“Are you ready to believe it now or do you still need more proof?!” Vegeta smirked, unshakeable confidence in his voice.

Vegeta grabbed both his arms and held them in a tight grip, as he began pulling them towards one another from behind. Dodoria howled in pain, as he felt his shoulders beginning to pop out of their sockets, while Vegeta laughed sadistically.

“It’s the true might of a Saiyan warrior!!!” The Prince chanted with pride. “The more we fight, the stronger our opponents, the stronger we become! I’m more powerful now than you can imagine!!!”

“Wait Vegeta!” Dodoria cried desperately. “Please don’t do this to me! I can help you! I know what really happened to your home world!!”

Those words immediately caught Vegeta’s attention.

“What’s this?!?” Vegeta demanded and Dodoria turned his head around and chuckled for a moment, thinking he’d found his opportunity to strike a bargain. “Planet Vegeta was destroyed, it’s gone forever! What else is there to know?!?”

“If you kill me now, you’re never going to find out!!”

Vegeta let go of his intended victim and Dodoria revealed to him the truth: Frieza destroyed Vegeta’s home planet, not a meteorite. He lengthily explained how, despite being an extremely productive asset to the Planet Trade Organization, what with their ability to transform during the full moon and all, the Saiyan race were growing stronger and stronger at an unusually alarming pace. They were also proud warriors who did not submit wholly to Frieza, as his other subjects had and so rebellion would be almost inevitable if the Saiyans had felt that they were strong enough to reclaim dominion over themselves and the Universe, in which case Frieza would have his hands full. And so he chose the safest option, which was to butcher them along with their entire planet and thus only three Saiyans remained.

He continued explaining how Frieza had taken a liking to the Prince and his prodigious powers and so had kept him safeguarded, while he destroyed Planet Vegeta with just a flick of his finger.

Vegeta listened on with his teeth gritted and fists clenched furiously. His tail uncoiled from his waist and bristled to three times its usual width, as it lashed about murderously behind him. All his life, he’d been lied to and used as a slave!! Him, a proud Prince of a race of brave warriors had been conned into a lie for all those years!! A lie he believed! What a fool he was! He had his suspicions from time to time but had always cast them aside, thinking that Frieza wouldn’t purposefully massacre a race as powerful as the Saiyans, not while he held their Prince hostage, giving him control over their every move, or so he thought. Everything was a lie! His eyes went pitch black, as a blinding rage began to consume him from within, though on the outside, his expression was as cold and blank as ever.
“Well there you have it: the awful truth!” An airborne Dodoria smirked. “And now that I’ve lived up to my end of the bargain, I’ll be on my way!”

Those words brought jolted Vegeta out of his reverie.

“You’re not going anywhere.” He said in a deceptively calm tone, a sinister smile of impending doom, aimed directly at Frieza’s left hand.

“W-W-Wait a second!” Dodoria protested in desperation, frightened beyond his wits.

“You’ll pay for your part in this, just as Frieza soon will!” Vegeta declared, his Ki spiking greatly. “But I want you to know: I do this not for my planet, not for my race, BUT BECAUSE YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD MAKE THE PRINCE OF SAIYANS, A SLAVE TO YOUR WHIM!!!”

As he bellowed his final sentence, he placed his fists by his side and a magnificent blue aura of Ki enveloped him. The ground quaked and rubble began rising from Namek’s surface.

“LORD FRIEZA!!!” Dodoria cried out, as he attempted to fly off, before Vegeta blasted him with a powerful energy wave that consumed him whole, disintegrating him into nothing.

“I promise you this Frieza!” Vegeta swore solemnly. “Your downfall will be at the hands of a Saiyan!”

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“D-Did you sense that G-Gohan?!” Krillin exclaimed, absolutely alarmed, as he stopped in his tracks.

“Y-Yeah.” He replied, completely in awe of the power he felt. “H-He completely w-wiped out Dodoria- l-like it was n-nothing.”

Dende gasped. What kind of beast was that? He didn’t know, but he didn’t want to be anywhere near him.

“Don’t worry Dende.” Krillin assured. “As long as Gohan and I keep our power levels suppressed, he won’t be able to get to us.”

“This is bad.” Gohan said, frowning as sweat beaded his eyebrows. “Vegeta’s so much stronger that he was on Earth and back then, he beat us all up, even my dad. And then there’s Frieza.”

“I know Gohan, but at least something good came out of all this.” Krillin said.

“What do you mean?”

“Our enemies are fighting each other.” He replied, narrowing his eyes, his face downcast. “We’re already standing on the edge of a knife by getting ourselves in the middle of guys like that, but the less of them there are, the better our chances of survival.”

“I guess so.” Gohan concurred, “By the way, I sense a Namekian village not far ahead. Should we stay with them?”
“Yes, that’s a great idea!” Dende’s face lit up.

“Agreed, it’s probably for the best.” Krillin nodded, but was suddenly struck by a fearsome thought. “Oh no! If Vegeta’s after the dragon balls, there’s a good chance he’ll go after them next!”

“You’re right!!” Exclaimed Gohan.

“We have to warn them!” Dende said frantically.

“Right, let’s go!!”

And so the motley trio took off.

After killing Dodoria, Vegeta felt his muscles pulsate with fury. Frieza!! For all those years, he’d conned him! If he’d known the truth, he’d have never served that abominable, lizard fucker! The Prince zoomed towards the village he was after, intent on unleashing his fury upon every single Namek scum he found!! After a good while, he’d finally arrived.

“Oh, no!” Krillin exclaimed, coming to a sudden halt. “It’s Vegeta. He beat us to the village! He’s gonna kill everyone!!”

Dende gasped and felt his eyes water.

“Please, do something Krillin!” He implored. “You have to help them!”

Gohan grit his teeth furiously, as Ki began to emanate off of him in palpable waves.

“Gohan, I know what you’re thinking, but it’s a bad idea.” Krillin warned, shaking his head. “If we go in after him, we’re gonna get ourselves killed.”

Please, I can’t let more of my people die!! Dende pled, tears streaming down his face.

The demi-Saiyan boy’s power spiked as he heard the Namekian child’s plea. Why?! It was so unfair!! The Namekians were harmless!! They didn’t do anything to Vegeta, nor did Piccolo, Tien, Yamcha or Chiaotzu!! Why’d they have to die for?! Why couldn’t he just leave them alone?!

“I’m going after him!” The half-Saiyan grit his teeth fiercely.

“Gohan, no!” The bald warrior tersely ordered. “You know you can’t beat him!”

“But I have to try!” He argued vehemently. “He can’t get away with this!!”

“Gohan, please, you have to relax.” Krillin implored in a calm, low voice. “Listen, we can move in a little closer and see what happens, but we have to keep our power levels suppressed, got it?!”

After a moment or so, Krillin was finally able to convince his younger companion to keep his cool. And so they headed near the village and lay low atop a cliff, to get a good view of the events that were about to unfold.
Vegeta stood midair as he surveyed his prey, engaging themselves in various activities, such as tilling the fields, planting seeds and educating their children. As he landed in the middle of the village, he instantly became the focal point of its inhabitants.

“It’s an invader.” A pointy nosed mid-aged Namekian surmised.

“What does he want?” Asked another older Namek.

“Which one of you is the elder?!” Vegeta demanded, adorning a hellish smile. “I’m here for the dragon ball! If you have it, get it!!!”

The Namekians began gritting their teeth at the intruder, growling at his overt impudence.

“I am the elder.” Declared the oldest of the group, holding a wooden staff, shaped like a warhammer on the top end. “Now I must ask. What use do you have with the dragon ball?”

“That’s my business old man!” Exclaimed the Prince, his evil smile not faltering one bit.

“I’m sorry, but I cannot give you what you are seeking.” Responded the elder. “Only those who are worthy may claim the dragon ball.”

“Wrong answer!” He snarled as he pointed his right index finger at the old Namek, his thumb pointing upwards, as he prepared to get his hands bloody. Something was wrong though. His composure was somewhat shaky and he felt slightly adrift! The parched bloodlust that only moments ago yearned to quench some of its undying thirst, by savoring in the sweet, inebriating fragrance of gory death, was not as effervescent as it normally was.

‘What’s happening to me?!’ He thought, in dismay, clutching his head with his free hand.

==Flashback==

“If you kill people indiscriminately, then you’re no better than Frieza!!”

“I never claimed I was.”

“But you can be.”

==End flashback==

How could she possibly think that?! Did she not know who he was?! Better than Frieza?! What did she mean by that?! Once he deposed Frieza, his entire plans revolved around being far more ruthless than the lizard ever was! It was in his nature as a true Saiyan warrior! He’d been in the tyrant’s shadow all his life, hated across the very ends of the cosmos, for crimes he’d been ordered to commit. Of course, he revelled in every second of it and his only regret was that he didn’t get to carry them out on his own accord. So why was some tiny part of him beset with hesitance and self-doubt?!

The elder noticed the alien warrior’s indecision and taking a gamble, he moved a few steps towards him, in order to try and capitalize.
“Elder!” One of the mid-aged natives chided, in an edgy voice. The village leader kept his gaze locked onto Vegeta and he merely raised a reassuring hand to the others, as he continued moving closer and closer to the apex of his destruction.

“Not a step closer!!” Snarled the Prince, whereby the elder stopped in his tracks. Vegeta gathered more Ki into his finger, ready to fire at any moment. Screw her!! He didn’t have any qualms about killing a swarm of repulsive bipedal slugs! And just like that, his dithering died away. As he was about to fire, the elder’s voice stopped him.

“Tell me, are you an affiliate of the group that has been attacking our planet?” He asked.

Vegeta narrowed his eyes at the old Namek.

“I am Vegeta, Prince of the Saiyans!” He responded boldly. “I work alone!” He then smirked. “Once I am done collecting the dragon balls and make my wish, I will annihilate Frieza!!”

“So you are not allied with the ones responsible for the demise of our people.”

“What of it?!” Vegeta frowned deeply.

“It would seem we share a common enemy.” The older Namekian stated. He had to protect the village at all cost!! He could sense the vast pools of energy latent within the Saiyan and there was little doubt that should he so choose, he could obliterate every one of them, with ease.

“Everyone is my enemy!!!” The Saiyan Prince gnashed his teeth. “Enough talk!! Now say goodbye!!!”

“Wait!!” The elder beseeched, a mere moment before Vegeta was ready to fire.

“I grow tired of this!!”

“If we give you our dragon ball, will you spare our lives?” He asked, his heart fluttering agitatedly.

“Elder no!!”

“We can’t give him our dragon ball!!!!”

“No!!”

“It’s okay.” The leader of the group assured them, before turning his attention back to the Saiyan. “What do you say?”

Vegeta smirked, before easing up his right hand and pulling out the dragon radar from his breastplate, much to the confusion of those gathered around him. After pressing the switch and checking for the location of the ball, he closed it and put it back inside his armor.

“The dragon ball is right there, am I correct?” He asked, pointing to a hut behind him with his thumb.

“How did you-” The elder was unable to complete his sentence, as a feeling of absolute dread and terror swarmed over him.
“There goes your leverage, old man!!” The Saiyan grinned and chuckled evilly, thereafter. The Namekians gulped as they saw the glint of murder in his deep black eyes. “Now prepare to be destroyed!!”

“Please, you don’t have to kill us!” The old Namek was practically begging. “We are not your enemy! We can help you!”

Vegeta’s grin widened, as he breathed in the redolent scent of fear emanating off of his victims-to-be.

“Oh really?” He chuckled. “And how is it you think you can help me?”

“We-” The elder hesitated for a moment, before begrudgingly playing his trump card. “I can help you make your wish, once you collect all seven balls.” He slurred.

“Elder, no!!!”

Vegeta’s broad smirk quickly faltered. Whatever did he mean by that?! He’d never considered the fact that a Namekian was needed for the wish to be made!! He’d assumed that one would simply gather the orbs, utter their desire and that’s that! Was there a series of steps that had to be followed, before making a wish?! Maybe the old geezer was trying to squirm his way out of this alive. But what if he wasn’t?! He couldn’t afford any errors on his part! He could decimate a bunch of feeble Namekians at any time! Destroying Frieza however, was virtually impossible, without making his wish for immortality!! He glowered at the elderly Namek.

“Fine!!” He growled out.

The elder breathed a sigh of relief and the fear began to palliate from his countenance. He turned to a young Namekian warrior and nodded his head. The warrior glared furiously at the Saiyan.

“Please, you must do as I say.” Implored the village leader. The other Namek let out a reluctant exhale, before getting the four-star dragon ball and bringing it over to Vegeta.

“So this is a dragon ball?” He thought, as he scrutinized the shiny orange orb, probably the finest looking gem he’d seen all his life and he’d seen just about all of them. Regardless, it was hard to believe that this orb, coupled with six others of its kind, could grant wishes.

“The moment I gather all seven dragon balls I will return!!” The Prince proclaimed, scowling fiercely. “And if I find out you’re double-crossing me in any way, you will all die painfully!! Keep that in mind!”

His eyes darkened with deathly promise for a brief instant, before he took off, headed straight back for the Capsule House to get some much needed rest. Loath as he was to admit it, he’d expended a great portion of his Ki, annihilating Dodoria, primarily due to the sheer lividity that had overcome him at the time. That’s right!! Vengeance would soon be his!! It wouldn’t be long before Frieza suffered an excruciating end at his hands!! That fucker would pay for all he did!

A/N: It seems Vegeta has discovered the god-awful truth and is bent on bloody retribution! Are the Namekians truly safe or is this just a reprieve from the hellish wrath of the Prince?! And what of Goku? If he does make it to Namek, will he be too late to save his friends and if not, will he be powerful enough to face the fraught danger awaiting him? Review and tell me your thoughts!!
Chapter 11: Jasmine

Soon after Vegeta had taken off, Dende dashed towards the others as fast as he could, Gohan and Krillin hot on his heels.

“Elder Tsuno! Elder Tsuno!” He beamed at the old Namek, running up and embracing him, by the waist.

“Hello, Dende!” The elder greeted back, patting the boy’s head. “How are you my son? What brings you here?”

Dende sighed dejectedly.

“My whole village was destroyed.” He whimpered. By now Gohan and Krillin were standing side by side, behind the Namek child. The other villagers, too, had gathered around. Dende stared down angrily at his tiny clenched fists. “It was Frieza and his evil men. They killed elder Mori and all the others, even Cargo.” He then turned in the direction of his new friends. “They would’ve killed me too, but Gohan and Krillin here rescued me.”

The elder looked to the two new arrivals in intrigue.

“Greetings.” He said, nodding respectfully to them. “You both have my deepest gratitude for saving young Dende.”

“It’s no problem.” Krillin smiled at the elder. He then sighed and frowned, his face downcast. “When we came to this planet, we never expected things to be this horrible.”

“I do not mean to pry young man.” The elder began, “But who are you and what business do you have on Namek?”

The duo explained everything as the elder listened intently.

“I see.” He sighed dejectedly. “Then you too have suffered at the hands of these villains. I’m afraid we cannot help you though.”

“I know.” Krillin nodded his head in understanding. “Vegeta took your dragon ball. We saw everything.”

“I’m deeply sorry.” The elder said apologetically.

“Don’t be.” Krillin replied, smiling comfortingly, before gritting his teeth. “If you hadn’t given it to him, he would’ve killed you all and taken it anyway! Damn him to hell!!”

“I’m glad you’re all safe though.” Dende twinkled. “I thought he would’ve killed you for sure.”

“That was some quick thinking there, sir.” Gohan smiled at the elder. “I was about to make my move, but I’m glad you were able to keep everyone safe.”
“I still do not understand how he knew of the dragon ball’s location.” Stated the elder, in a tense voice.

“This is how.” Krillin answered, pulling out Dr. Brief’s dragon radar from his shirt. “He was using one of these.”

“Why, yes.” Tsuno confirmed upon recognizing the gadget. “But what exactly is this?”

“It’s what we call a dragon radar.” Krillin responded. “It tracks down the location of dragon balls by detecting the unique energy waves they emit. Our friend Bulma invented this device.” He then gnashed his teeth furiously. “She’s the one Vegeta kidnapped!!”

“Extraordinary.” Tsuno commented in amazement, while the other Namekians peered at the little device, in absolute awe.

“Incredible.”

“Amazing.”

“Here, let me show you.” Krillin switched it on and tilted it so it faced the elder, who eyed it curiously, as the bald visitor pointed at the yellow spots on the grid. “As you can see, five dragon balls are gathered together. They’re the ones Frieza has. The one Vegeta has is moving away, which leaves this one here.”

“That is to the North.” Elder Tsuno observed. “That is where Grand Elder Guru is.”

“But we can’t collect it without Vegeta spotting us, since he can sense power levels.” Gohan said dejectedly. “And it’s so far away that it’ll take us ages to get there without flying.”

“Then I guess we’re out of options.” Krillin sighed in defeat. “All we can do is wait for Goku to get here and since our ship was destroyed, we can’t even communicate with him. I guess we’ll have to settle for hover bike.”

Krillin pulled out the hover bike dynocap, pressed the plunger and tossed it.

The Namekians stood transfixed when they saw the bike virtually materialize from thin air, save Dende, since he’d already witnessed it once. Gohan and Krillin merely chuckled and explained the super-human genius of the Briefs family.

“I just hope we can somehow manage to get Bulma away from Vegeta.” Krillin said, forlornly. “The guy’s still bad to the core.”

“It was unusual.” The elder stated, tilting his head downwards in deep thought. “I’m sure he would have killed everyone of us. What I sensed from him was pure evil, yet for a brief moment he appeared somewhat undecided.”

“What?!” Krillin’s eyes widened. “For real?!”

“Yes.” He affirmed, facing Krillin.

“What do you think that means?” Gohan asked his older companion, feeling completely at a loss.
“I don’t know.” The bald warrior replied. “I’m not sure I even want to know.”

“So what should we do now?”

“Well.” Krillin responded, “I guess the best thing we can do for now is to collect the last dragon ball, before Frieza or Vegeta get their hands on it.” He then turned to the Namekians. “By the way it’d be a good idea if you post some men around the outskirts of the village to keep their eyes peeled for any intruders. Frieza’s soldiers wear armor similar to Vegeta’s and the last thing you want is them announcing your whereabouts to their boss. The elder of the previous village destroyed their remaining scouters and they can’t locate power levels without it. That gives you at least some edge.”

“Mori did that?” Tsuno asked, looking at Dende.

“Yes.” Affirmed Dende, nodding his head weakly, his face downcast, in disheartenment. “But now he’s dead.”

“He was a true hero.” Tsuno said wistfully. “His actions have bought us a lot more time.” He then looked at the warrior Namekians, “Very well. Four of you travel to each corner of the village and keep notice of any arrivals from Frieza’s camp. We are a peaceful race, but that does not mean we will sit idly by, while our people are slaughtered. If you locate the enemies nearby, flare your Ki to alert the others. Take them prisoner and we will question them.”

“Yes sir.” Replied the five warriors. Four of them took off, while one remained in the village to defend.

“Dende.” Tsuno turned towards the young Namek.

“Yes, elder?”

“Accompany our two Earthling friends.”

“Are you sure, sir?” Gohan asked. “Wouldn’t he be safer here?”

“I have faith in the two of you.” The elder replied with firm resolve. “Whenever you are ready, take him and visit Grand elder Guru.”

“Oh yeah, you mentioned him before.” Krillin recalled, “Who is he?”

“He is the oldest and wisest of all the Nameks.” The elder answered and continued explaining in length how Guru survived the cataclysm that had afflicted Namek approximately 300 years ago and had long afterwards, repopulated the planet and dedicated himself to teaching the Nameks, the ancient ways. He also explained that all the Nameks on this planet are his children, which came as a total surprise to both Gohan and Krillin.

And so, after saying their goodbyes, the duo from Earth headed towards the last dragon ball with Dende, via hover-bike.

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Vegeta continued his trek to the capsule house, wondering just what had gotten over him. He’d never been out of touch with his killer instinct, yet back there, he’d felt slightly befuddled. Did that
accursed woman somehow shake his composure? It couldn’t be! He wasn’t weak enough to let an inferior cretin like her make him question his ruthless Saiyan ways! And yet she did, if only momentarily! That infuriated him, beyond measure! He couldn’t let this reoccur! Never again! The Universe had shown him no kindness, so why should he return the favor?! She needed to die!!

After a short while, he’d made it to his intended location.

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Several minutes after Vegeta had left, Bulma had seriously contemplated de-capsulizing the house and heading elsewhere, but decided against it, since doing so entailed far too much risk. Although heading towards the space pods and escaping to Earth seemed like a plausible idea, her entire mission rested upon reviving her friends, plus there was no telling what Vegeta would do if she’d reneged on their agreement.

She was shackled to the bloodthirsty fiend who’d shattered her world and was about to spill the blood of some Namekians just for kicks. It truly pained her heart, but how could she expect any different? This is who Vegeta was, a Saiyan, a beast with no conscience and yet for a passing moment, she could’ve sworn she saw a hint of emotion flicker through his dark eyes. There was something deeper in there. He’d exhibited several signs of normalcy in their time together. She refused to accept that he was nothing but a monster, driven by an insane lust for blood and power. Somewhere inside there was the Vegeta she’d grown acclimatized to, her friend and that was the only hope she could hang on to.

‘Dammit, stop it, Bulma!!!’ She self-berated. ‘He could be out there killing innocent people!! He’s not the man you think he is!!’

And with that, her sentiment fell into a deep bottomless ravine of oblivion.

Bulma made her way inside the bedroom next door, took off her garments and clambered into a lavender colored, V-necked, satin chemise with a lime-green stemmed, white jasmine illustrated on the front. It was sleeveless, seamless and ended a few inches above her knees. As she lay on the bed, staring aimlessly at the ceiling, her meandering thoughts made a good hour and a half or so, pass by like a flash.

Just then Vegeta made his way into the compound, four-star dragon ball in hand. He felt Bulma’s weak Ki in the bedroom and walked inside, intent on doing what he should’ve done the moment he figured out how to work that dragon radar.

Bulma heard footsteps headed her way and so she sat up and wiped her eyes clean, turning in Vegeta’s direction just as he walked in. She took immediate notice of the large glimmering gem in his right arm.

“Wow.” She stated in awe, somewhat glad for the distraction. “The dragon balls sure are big here.”

Vegeta said nothing and just stared at her blankly. What was stopping him?! He could do this anytime now!

“Vegeta?” She looked him in the eye.

“I’m here to kill you!” He frowned, masking any emotions behind a cold façade of indifference.
Bulma gasped and averted her gaze. She began to quiver as her gut clenched, trying her utmost to maintain her composure. Her heart rate practically doubled. Why would he want to kill her?! It didn’t make any sense! How could he?! He wasn’t being serious was he?! After all they’d been through together, was he really going to end it this way?! She turned in his direction once more. He was firmly rooted to the spot, his impassive expression giving away nothing. That deadpan look of his slowly transformed her fear into resentment. Who did he think he was?! After all she’d done for him!! She would not be controlled! She would not be pushed! Narrowing her eyes dangerously as her pride suddenly took hold, she stood up, boldly walking towards him, boring holes into his soul with the sheer intensity of her piercing gaze. The fragrant scent of her fear wafted through the thin air, making it as thick and sweet as corn syrup and yet the gleam of fire in those fathomless pools of deep blue, charred that sweetness into bitter, foul-tasting cinders that melted away any desire to spill her blood and savor in the taste of its innocence and purity. Vegeta didn’t know whether this infuriated or invigorated him, perhaps both.

“Then what’re you waiting for?!” She stood her ground, scowling, holding her hands out in challenge. “I’m right here!”

Vegeta was ensorcelled by those scorching oceans of cerulean! He’d never seen a look of such utter defiance, ever before! Why wasn’t she backing down?! It was making him lose his edge, his nerve!

“You need to die!!” He gnashed his teeth.

“Well then do what you came for!!” She practically yelled in his face, not giving an inch. “If all you’re good for is murder, then do it!!”

The Prince dropped the dragon ball in his grasp and suddenly closed the small distance between them, grabbing her arms.

“Do not tempt me!!!”

“What do you want from me, Vegeta??!!!” She snarled. “If you’re gonna kill me, do it!! If you’re not, don’t, but quit beating around the bush!!!”

At that moment, the Prince looked on in stunned amazement, as the flames burning in her oceanic eyes transformed into a firestorm and he couldn’t help it as his reverence towards this little female surged to new heights. It was those eyes!! They sparkled with such irrepressible life, life he was loath to take! How could a being like her possibly exist?! How had she beguiled him so?!

“Tell me something, Vegeta!!” She asked belligerently. “Did you stall this much when you butchered those Namekians in cold blood and stole their dragon ball from them??!!!”

The Prince snarled at her. How dare she remind him of what he didn’t do?! If he hadn’t hesitated in the beginning, that decrepit old fool would’ve been dead before he had the chance to slither his way out of his fated demise!! All of them would’ve been pieces of charcoal right now, if not for her!! And thus, here he stood!

“You didn’t do it, did you?” Bulma asked softly, the fire in her eyes dimming, as realization dawned on her, upon peering into his obsidian orbs, the only windows into his blackened soul, wherein she saw flutters of bitter resentment. “You didn’t kill them.” She phrased those last words more as a statement than a question.

Was she the undercurrent that prevented him from marring his hands a bloody crimson, or more
accurately, violet? Was that why he wanted her dead? If so, what did that mean?

“Don’t get the wrong idea, female!!” He growled truculently, shoving her aside, whereby she landed on her backside. He glowered down at her. “What I gave them wasn’t life, but a reprieve until I learn how to make my wish! Once I become immortal, I will destroy this planet along with all the scum residing on it!!”

He turned around, balling a fist and staring at it with unparalleled lividity. Why couldn’t he do this?! Just how had she made him lose his primacy?! His mind was in shambles and it was all because of her! She needed to pay and he couldn’t make her!

He decided it didn’t matter! If he couldn’t kill her, he’d make her suffer a fate far worse than death! He would make her watch as he set the Universe ablaze! He would look on gleefully, as the glamorous fireworks of death and destruction racked her entire being with anguish and despair so deadly, that it washed away the scorching brilliance in her eyes, replacing it with an emptiness that would make her rue her very existence. Then, when she became a mere shell of the harp that had stolen from him his killer edge, he would extinguish what little life remained in the hollows of her oceanic eyes.

‘Just like Frieza did to me.’ He thought, an alien feeling of disheartenment sprouting within him. Was that all he was? A broken shell of what could’ve been, had it not been for the lizard? An empty soul whose only means of satiation was drinking in the blood of lesser beings? He was giving himself a headache just pondering over all these divergent thoughts. What he really needed was rest! Breathing a sigh of resignation, he took off his gloves and boots, slipped out of his armor and removed his spandex shirt, ready to hit the bed.

Bulma was floored, literally and figuratively, unable to figure out her ambivalent captor. Why did he have to be like this? Why did he have to harbor such spite and malice? The moment he turned away she could literally see the conflict brewing within him. Regardless of what he may have said, some small part of him must have heeded her words and that is what truly unsettled him. There was a glimmer of light within his darkened soul! Now she was truly resolved to burn away that darkness and show him that there was another way, a better way! Wait, immortality?! That was his goal all along?! No way! She could not let him make that wish, no matter what!! She was loath to allow it! All her thoughts went flying out the window as she saw Vegeta’s bare back turned to her and those same scars marring his chiseled figure. She felt her eyes water, as she stood to her feet. All he’d known was pain and suffering and how to inflict it upon others.

As the Prince smelled the salty scent of her tears, he whirled around and upon noticing where her gaze was set, he bared his fangs in fury. In a flash he advanced upon her, grabbing her by the arms and glowering fiercely.

“Do not ever pity me, female!!” He snarled.

Bulma blinked several times, feeling dazed and speechless, as her heartbeat soared. She gulped, before her eyes unwittingly set themselves upon the deep slanted scar on his left pectoral. As if out of instinct, she daringly began tracing her right index finger along the span of that yawning chasm, not knowing whether to feel doleful or marvelled. Like him, it was so hollow, so empty and yet, a wondrous work of art, an enigmatic beauty she yearned to decipher.

Vegeta’s chest tightened at her delicate touch. He brought his face a mere few inches from hers.

“What do you think you’re doing?!” He demanded.
“S-Sorry.” She replied, her hand unmoving and her eyes fixed upon his chest. After a tense moment of silence, she continued. “It’s just- I’ve never seen anything like this before. It’s beautiful.”

Beautiful??!!! Whatever the fuck did she mean??!! Who did she think she was, touching him like this??!! It- it didn’t feel unpleasant. The Prince grit his teeth at that thought and narrowed his eyes at her but she wasn’t paying attention, her gaze fixated upon those scars. Each one must have had its own story to tell, stories of cruelty, horror and evil. Another wave of tears threatened to escape, but she kept them at bay.

She knew he’d felt disparaged at the mere thought of being pitied by another, especially one such as her. But it wasn’t pity that spawned her tears. No, it was something else entirely. It was woe, woe that something so beautiful had to be marrèd and blemished and woe that he was so withdrawn and reticent, so lonely. She looked up into his ebony eyes, brimmed with an amalgam of contempt, consternation and bewilderment.

“I don’t pity you, Vegeta.” She enunciated each word. “I could never belittle you like that.” She stated adamantly, as she placed her palm on his steel-like chest, shutting her eyes and exhaling as she lost herself in the rhythmic thrum of his heartbeat. “I know pride means a lot to you and I’ll always respect that.”

Vegeta felt the muscles in his chest turn into gooseflesh, his heart lurching in response to her words. Why was she saying all this? A feeling of warmth began budding within him, as he moved his hands down to her supple waist, gripping her tightly, as if he needed to know that she was real and not some figment of his imagination that would vanish at anytime, leaving him all alone. Alone! For the first time in his life he felt haunted by that nightmarish idea. It was never of any consequence before, but now, as he felt her touch and looked into her expansive depths of sparkling sapphire, he saw for the first time, something he’d never seen from anyone before: reverence, not for a cold-blooded killer, but for a living being. And he didn’t want to lose that!

Frieza had wiped away his entire race, after promising he wouldn’t. He had sent Raditz to his own graveyard, had murdered Nappa in cold blood and was betrayed by Kakarot and his half-breed child. He had nothing, nothing but her. Not that he cared about her or any of the aforementioned, but now he felt plagued more than ever, by the idea of being alone and that perturbed him. He’d never felt this way before, but he needed to know that at least she was real, that she was right here, within his grasp and that no one would take her away, his little spitfire.

Bulma was awed by the plethora of nuances flickering through his charcoal orbs of obsidian. Buried underneath all those conflicting feelings of hatred, anger, betrayal, regret and longing, she saw the nexus that loosely bound them all together, reined within a compact and infrangible inner fortification. However, his inner defenses were momentarily impaired, allowing her a fleeting glance at a smidgeon of the underlying pain and suffering, loneliness and sorrow, beyond comprehension. Tears threatened to make their exit in a torrential outpour, but with more strength than she could handle, she locked them inside, instead offering him the only thing she could: her warmth and acceptance.

Bulma smiled, as she moved her right hand up to Vegeta’s cheek and placed her left on his scalene, gripping him firmly by the shoulder.

“I’m right here Vegeta.” She told him reassuringly. “I’m not gonna leave you.”
The Prince felt a beast of a different kind surge within him, something unusual and primordial in nature, as he felt her soft and delicate touch. He moved his face closer to hers and she felt the hairs on the back of her neck rise, as he breathed against her lips. No, this wasn’t right!

“Vegeta, I-”

Before she could produce another sound, her words were swallowed as Vegeta pulled her flush against him and crashed his lips to hers, as their hips ground together feverishly. He felt his loins warm up, as he clasped her lithe body to his.

Bulma’s eyes widened before her lashes began fluttering like the wings of a butterfly. She was gobsmacked at the feel of his lips, so pleasurably soft and so unlike Yamcha’s. Yamcha!! She instantly pulled back and shook her head.

“Vegeta, I can’t do-”

Not another word was said, as the Prince growled in primal fashion and tossed her onto the bed, instantly straddling her hips, as he buried his face in the recess of her neck, breathing in her floral scent, before she had even a moment to sink it all in.

That jasmine-like fragrance of hers sent waves of pleasure coursing through every blood cell in his body, as the beast continued thrashing about violently within, desperately seeking a means of escape. He grazed his incisor against her carotid artery. One nip, just one little nip and a torrent of her blood would gush forth, ending her life there and then. Such a weak and fragile being she was and yet that engendered a feeling of protectiveness that he tried to repress. Suddenly, the taint of her fear began to blemish her perfect scent.

“You fear me.” Vegeta breathed against her neck, forcing her to clamp her eyes shut and bite her lower lip, to suppress a shudder of betrayal. Why was he doing this to her?! Why was she feeling so lightheaded? “You should.”

Bulma felt the panic course through her, but alongside that panic was an effervescence of frenzied anticipation that she couldn’t explain. What would Yamcha think if he saw her right now, trapped underneath the man responsible for his death and yet a strong part of her still stimulated by his wild and virile gruffness?! She wanted to deny it with every fibre of her being, but she couldn’t. The truth was clear inside her, clear as the crystal-blue water: she longed for him!

The heiress shut her eyes, as she let out a breath of resignation.

“I don’t want to fear you, Vegeta.” She stated, as she traced her fingers through his fiery mane of gravity-defying hair, startled and thrilled by its soft, feathery texture. The Prince lifted his face, peering at her with unparalleled intrigue.

“Why?” He asked.

“Because I’m all by myself in the middle of nowhere.” She replied, as she placed her other hand on his neck. “You’re the only person I know, the only one who can protect me. If I lose that, I’ll be all alone and I don’t want that.”

Vegeta felt his heart race, as that same protective urge within him took a huge spike. He shut his eyes and pressed his forehead to hers, their noses adjacent as he brushed his next words against her lips, in a breathy and desirous plea.
“I want you… Bulma.”

This time Bulma was unable to repress the shudder that escaped, her entire being freezing upon hearing her name escaping his balmy lips for the first time, making her wish she could hear him say it again and again in that husky voice of his, maybe forever. He wanted her, but he wasn’t forcing her. As revolted as she was by the thought, a strong part of her was wishing he did, just so she could lose herself in a rapture of much-needed pleasure, while knowing that she hadn’t betrayed Yamcha.

“Vegeta, listen, I—” Bulma made the fatal error of opening her mouth, as the needy Saiyan forced his tongue inside, deftly exploring every crevice of the hollow, yet fulfilling, sweet vault of perfection within her cavernous mouth, sending the heiress into a whirlwind of desire. Her taste was unique and flowery, the taste of innocence, greater than that of any woman he’d taken in the past. The beast began screaming for release from its captivity.

This was all wrong, so horribly wrong, so why did it feel so right?! Why did her stomach fill with butterflies, as she felt his tongue skilfully work its way inside her wet mouth?! No! She couldn’t do this! What about- what about- She couldn’t even remember his name! She couldn’t even remember what planet she was on or from, as her entire world filled with pure white. Almost absent-mindedly, her tongue began dancing with his, as she grabbed his face in her hands.

A/N: Caution!! Incoming smut!

Vegeta felt electricity shoot down his spine, as their tongues wrestled and the instant his olfactory senses detected the sweet musk of her arousal, the beast grew more volatile and nigh incontrollable. He pulled away and began leaving a trail of sensuous kisses down her neck and chest, before licking his way back up, causing her to moan shamelessly with want, as she felt his wet tongue glide along her heated skin.

As he looked upon her, he saw the ardor of pure lust glitter her azure depths and when she slowly nodded her assent, his own desire took a massive upsurge, as the beast began clawing its way out. In an instant he grabbed her chemise and ripped it open. Bulma’s eyes widened and before she knew it, he tore her cotton pink, lace bra, a predatory gleam burning in his obsidian eyes as they set themselves upon her exquisitely rounded, swelling breasts. He took a pert, pink nipple into his hot mouth, hungrily sucking and licking her hardened teat, causing her to throw her head back and arch against him, as she cried out euphorically. He brought a hand to her other perked-up nipple and began kneading it with his thumb and forefinger. A while later, Bulma grabbed a fistful of his hair, tugging at it with a nonpareil craving for more, as her arousal jumped to levels unprecedented.

The Prince lowered the hand that was ministering her nipple, down to her panties and slid it underneath. Using his conjoined index and middle fingers, he gently began to stroke her wet core up and down at a torturously slow pace, as she writhed beneath him. When he felt her inner muscles convulse, he began pumping his fingers inside her, as he pressed his teeth together on her nipple, causing her cries to rise an octave.

“Vegeta, please!!!” She implored, looking at him with such plea. She knew what she was asking, no, demanding of him. Her tunnel vision had now completely cut her off from the outside world, blinding her to everything except the heap of muscle on top of her. All she wanted now was him and nothing else.

The Prince glanced at her, as his chin rested on her bosom. He instantly recognized the need within
her eyes, the need for release. He sat up and as he roved her slender neck, voluptuous breasts and lithe abdomen with lust-filled fervor, the primordial beast within him broke free of all its restraints. Vegeta roughly yanked her panties off and without delay, clambered out of his spandex pants and underwear.

He instantly spread her legs, as he loomed above her. Bulma’s heart hammered against her chest, as she felt the tip of his leaking erection collide with her wetness, her entire insides turning to jello, as her skin began radiating with need. Upon entering her, he moved his face towards hers, but before he even had a chance to make contact, she pulled his head down and smashed her lips against his, sucking on his lower lip, as they swallowed each other’s pants and moans. Vegeta pulled back slightly and she wrapped her arms around his neck, clinging onto him fervidly. He didn’t break eye contact with her as he began sliding his shaft into her core, back and forth, at an agonizingly slow, yet gentle and graceful pace, as they breathily shuddered into each other’s mouths.

She wanted release, there was no denying that, but pleasure on this scale was unchartered territory for her and she also wanted to savor every moment of it. Vegeta grabbed her left breast with his right hand, squeezing it yearningly. The melody of her soaring heartbeat drumming in his head, in conjunction with the redolence of her heated arousal and lusty cries of pleasure, made him lose himself completely as he continued ramming his way inside her. As the Prince made his thrusts quicker and more forceful, she began to scream out his name, whereby his entire body went aflame.

“Vegeeeeeeetaaaaaaa!!!” Bulma lengthily screamed out loud one last time, as she climaxed, in an ecstasy of bliss and jubilation, her body beginning to quiver thereafter. Shortly after he felt her sweet orgasm envelop his phallus, Vegeta, too, reached the apex of his desire, moaning lustily, as his fluids gushed forth inside her. He felt his entire body convulse, his eyes fixated upon her petite, trembling figure, underneath him.

The instant she felt him about to pull out and leave her, Bulma wrapped her legs around his hips.

“Don’t go.” She entreated. Vegeta looked at her curiously for a moment or so. In his stupefied state, the pleading look in her eyes elicited a strong urge to just stay and hold her, to comfort her and lose himself in the warmth of her welcoming arms. The Prince rolled over onto his side, moving her with him, his member still wedged inside her, seeping out the remnants of his orgasm within her. He looked into her oceanic eyes, mesmerized by their limitless depths, as he began stroking the satiny blue strands of her teal hair with his left hand, while his right arm snaked around her waist.

She smiled warmly, as she wrapped her arms around his neck and pressed her body to his. He wasn’t rough or forceful, he didn’t hurt her and as they made love, she sensed a connection establish that was much deeper than the physical feel of their skins sliding against one-another, a connection that felt almost spiritual. Making love? Is that what it was? Is that how she felt about Vegeta? Her mind cursed her for even considering it and yet, in her heart, she knew it was the truth.

This man had turned her entire world into a complete ruin, but now she felt that flame of life rekindle within her and stronger than ever, all because of him. Something about being blanketed beneath those strong, steel-bound arms of his made her feel so safe and secure, as though nothing could ever hurt her. And yet, that thought frightened her. Was this just some sort of crazed Stockholm syndrome? She had no clue. All she knew was that she didn’t want to leave him and didn’t want him to let go, ever.

She no longer saw a bloodthirsty killer, without an iota of contrition in his heart nor a ruthless
Prince of a race of planet pirates. She saw Vegeta and only Vegeta, her friend and lover.

Vegeta’s heart skittered as he saw that beautiful smile of hers. She pressed her lips to his, causing his eyes to flutter, as his mind clouded in a blissful world of euphoria. If someone now asked him what his name was or who Frieza was, he wouldn’t know. The only name he knew at this moment was Bulma. The only sounds he could hear were her sensual moans of pleasure and ragged breathing, the only things he could see were the aquamarine of her soft, silky tresses and the endless cerulean of her perfect blue eyes, the only fragrances he could smell were her sweet, flowery scent and the pomegranate-like perfection of her nectar, the only things he could taste were her petal, cherry lips and wet mouth and tongue and the only thing he could feel was her soft, porcelain skin, sliding feverishly against his. He felt so enervated and yet so full of life, his emptiness vanished in the comfort of her slender arms. Never before had he felt this way.

Bulma pulled back, as she grabbed a sheet nearby, deftly covering up both herself and her lover, single-handedly, with minimal movement on her part. She was afraid that if she let go, he’d leave her and she didn’t want that, not after feeling him, tasting him and making love to him, the way she had, though, to be fair, he was the one doing just about all the work. In stark contrast to his impassive visage, his ebony eyes shone radiantly with life. They’d never looked so bright ever before and she didn’t have to survey him for even a second, to see, as plain as day, the peace, calm and serenity, within those fathomless gems of obsidian, more beautiful than ever before.

She planted a chaste kiss on his lips, her smile not faltering an inch. Bulma giggled as Vegeta rolled over on top of her and buried his face in the crook of her neck, his thick shaft still wedged within her. She kissed the side of his head, gingerly rubbing his bare back up and down and running her fingers through several of his numerous scars, while tracing the fingers of her other hand through his feathery mane.

“Goodnight Vegeta.” She whispered into his ear and the Prince shivered against her neck as he let himself go, her jasmine scent lulling him into a tranquil slumber.

Bulma’s soul glistered with life like never before. She hadn’t ever felt this way with Yamcha. Oh no, Yamcha!! He’d completely slipped her mind! She betrayed Yamcha!! Her heart hammered against her chest, as guilt began creeping its way in. Even though they still hadn’t patched things up between them, meaning they weren’t officially boyfriend and girlfriend any longer, she’d never been with another man and, to the best of her knowledge, he’d never been with another woman. Sure, she’d flirt with the occasional stud and couldn’t deny having had a crush on Goku time and again, plus, over the years, her scar-faced ex had developed a nasty habit of ogling and in his own way, flirting, much to her chagrin, but that’s about it. Yamcha. She could never look him in the eye, ever again, not after this.

Just feeling Vegeta’s serene body on top of her, relaxed and free of tension, as he breathed against her neck, made her forget about everything else, as her stomach tied up in knots. It’d been years since she felt that way with Yamcha, only she’d never felt it on this magnitude. Vegeta was such a fractured soul and she was overcome with the urge to just mend him anew. There was no denying it now: she had fallen in love with her greatest enemy.

‘I’m sorry, Yamcha.’ She thought to herself, as she tightened her hold on her new lover.

A/N: Wow, now who would have expected that, huh?! A little rushed I know, but it's all part of the plan. Keep in mind that Vegeta's still Vegeta and while he did share a searing moment of passion with Bulma, he was clearly in a fragile state of mind, what with learning about the demise of the Saiyans and being unable to fully quench his thirst for blood. He's not the type to instantly avert
his ways, just because of a heated bout of sex. What he did here was extremely uncharacteristic, but the fact of the matter is, his mind was in shambles. What happens when he wakes up and gathers his bearings? Also note that the issue of the dragon balls remains untouched, since Vegeta’s completely in the dark with regards to Bulma’s plans.

And in case you’re wondering about Yamcha, he has been with other women, but only after the break-up with Bulma, which technically means neither of them have cheated on one-another. That’s all for much later though!

What happens next? Tell me your thoughts, hit the review button and if you like this fic, follow/favourite! All critiques and recommendations are welcome and remember, the more reviews I get, the more likely I am to update within the allotted timeframe.
Chapter 12: The power within

The motley crew of three continued their journey to Guru's on hover bike. While Krillin drove, Gohan kept a close eye on any significant Ki changes nearby and around the planet. Over an hour had passed.

"Krillin, it's Vegeta's Ki signal." He said, suddenly on alert. "Do you feel it?"

"Yeah, it seems kind of calm, too calm." Replied the bald warrior, after stopping in his tracks and taking some time to sense it. "Pretty strange. I think he must be asleep or something."

"In that case, why don't we fly to Guru's?" Gohan suggested.

"Well, it is a bit risky." Krillin furrowed his brows, in contemplation. "But we might be able to chance it. Even if Vegeta does detect us, we can sense him coming and suppress our power again, plus we need to secure that dragon ball as soon as possible."

"Exactly." Gohan concurred.

"Alright then, let's go!" Krillin got off the bike, capsulized it, put it in the case, which he then tucked away, before flying with Gohan and Dende in tow.

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"Hmmm." Frieza sat on his black hovering throne, inside the throne room of his mega-sized, disk-shaped spacecraft. "We've still no progress collecting the dragon-balls, have we Zarbon?"

"No." Replied the blue-skinned reptilian humanoid to his right. "I'm afraid not Lord Frieza. But our men are working tirelessly to track down the nearest Namekian village and it shouldn't be long bef-
"

"Zarbon." Frieza interjected in that syrupy voice of his, "No need to stress. I have received word that soon the Ginyu Force is due to arrive very soon."

"L-Lord F-Frieza?" Asked Zarbon, as he goggled at his master, completely aghast. After gathering his bearings, he blinked a couple times, before continuing. "Y-You dispatched them? W-When?"

"Less than a week ago." Replied the universal overlord. "I figured that with them around, our progress here would be much quicker and I'm just dying to get my wish. I also had them bring with them a new set of the most advanced scoters, in order to speed things up. These older models have their flaws after all. I guess it was a lucky break."

Zarbon swallowed the bile rising in his throat. The Ginyu Force were a group to be reckoned with. While he and Dodoria belonged to the highest echelon of Frieza's elite forces, the Ginyus were his private army, mercenaries that were assigned the most secretive and perilous missions that even he
didn't know the full details of. Each and every one of them, save Guldo, had a power level significantly greater than his own maximum. They were infamous for being the most brutally efficient killers in the entire cosmos. But he still did not trust them. It was too late now though, plus those new scouter were needed posthaste.

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On his spaceship, Goku's training regimen was interrupted as he received a call from his previous mentor. Turns out his deceased friends were now training under King Kai, just as he did, Piccolo included. The news exhilarated him more than ever! The next time an outside party threatened the Earth, it would only be right that its unofficial defence forces be well prepared, in case he wasn't around or arrived too late, as was the case in his most recent battle.

Goku had trained fervently over the last couple hours and was now able to multiply his power tenfold, using the Kaio-Ken. But he couldn't stop there! While he knew he could handle Vegeta single-handedly by this point, this new threat looming over Namek, the one named Frieza, was a whole other story. King Kai had warned him not only to avoid a confrontation with this menacing force, but to do all that he could to get him and his friends off Namek, without delay! But he could not let down those who had fallen in battle, plus, the prospect of facing this new, seemingly indomitable adversary exhilarated him down to the very core! He would climb this mountain, even if he had to go through hell! He'd trained too hard to run with his tail between his legs!

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A good few hours passed and the trio was nearing Guru's place, though they were still a ways away. Gohan was beginning to tumble about, midair.

"Hey, Gohan." Krillin asked, raising an eyebrow, "What's up with you?"

"I'm kind of tired." He replied groggily, "And really hungry."

"Dammit Gohan, why now?!" Krillin sighed in exasperation.

"Sorry, Krillin." The demi-Saiyan mumbled sheepishly.

"Don't be." Replied Krillin, as he began looking around for a suitable place to inhabit and eventually found one. "There's a cave right over there. I guess we'll set up camp there."

"Thanks, Krillin!" Smiled the boy.

"No problem kid!" Replied the bald warrior, smiling back. "Just make sure you get your rest and something to eat. Dende and I will be at Guru's."

And so the trio came to a halt and went inside the cave, which was fortunately large enough to house their unofficial headquarters.

Afterwards, Krillin and Dende left, traversing over to their intended destination and arriving about an hour later.

Guru's house lay atop a large thick rocky pillar, several times the size of Earth's largest skyscrapers. Outside the dwelling, a young warrior, who looked like an exact replica of Piccolo, greeted Dende and Krillin. Nail invited the two of them inside, saying that Guru had been
expecting them.

Upon entering and going up a level, Krillin was flabbergasted as he saw the gigantic father of the Namekian race, his skin a lot more wrinkled than the other natives and a darker shade of green, resembling the rind of a pickle, a dead giveaway of his age and wisdom.

As they conversed, Guru eventually came to learn of a Saiyan who had defeated Kami.

"This Saiyan must be horrible indeed." Stated the Grand Elder. "What an awful power. One who could defeat a Namek like Kami must have been a Super Saiyan."

"A Super Saiyan?" A wide-eyed Krillin asked, completely overwhelmed with intrigue. "What's that?"

Guru had Krillin come close and placed his hand upon his shorn head, allowing him to look deep into his past, thereby solving their little mystery. It all made perfect sense now. It turned out Kami's powers were a mere fraction of what they should've been, had he not split in two. Had he had his true strength, no normal Saiyan would've held a candle to him.

The bald Earthling was flabbergasted. Was Kami really that powerful in his original form?! What a shame! If that truly were truly the case, he would've been of utmost help, given the grim circumstances they currently faced. His thoughts were interrupted.

"I have seen your mind." Stated the venerable Guru. "Your heart is pure and your intentions are true. You have proved yourself worthy to receive this dragon ball. It it truly your desire to have this sacred orb?"

"Yes, Guru!" Krillin stated adamantly, furrowing his brows. "No matter what happens, we can't let Frieza or Vegeta get their hands on it!"

"Frieza is blind without his Ki detecting devices." Replied the Grand Elder. "As for Vegeta, he has the same device you have, does he not?"

Krillin was completely taken aback. Okay, just how much did Guru know?! He shook his head clear.

"Look, that's no problem Guru." He argued. "We can hide it from him."

"But the dragon balls here are much bigger than they are on Earth." Countered Guru. Krillin thought about that for a moment.

"You're right!" He exclaimed and clenched his fists, his face downcast as he continued. "Dammit! We only had Dr. Brief make the repositories big enough to hold in the Earth's dragon balls! Darn, this is hopeless! No one can stop Vegeta now!" He looked concernedly at Guru. "If he comes here, you'll be in trouble."

Guru smiled at the bald warrior.

"Do not worry about me, son." He reassured. "While the Saiyan may be coldblooded and evil, he did not slaughter the Namekians in Tsuno's village."

"He's bad news Guru!" Krillin replied fervently. "And he's extremely powerful! You can't stay
here, please, you must leave!"

"I thank you for your concern, but as he stands, Nail's strength supersedes even Vegeta's."

Krillin gaped at the Grand elder and then at Nail, who stood almost regally, priding himself in his father and leader's words. While Krillin was marveling, Guru continued.

"However, the Saiyan's strength continues to grow rapidly." He elaborated, before sighing and taking a brief pause. "This dragon ball is yours to do with as you will. You can either leave it here or take it with you, the choice is yours."

Krillin mused for a moment, before an idea struck him.

"Wait, I've got it!" He beamed and turned his attention to Guru's bodyguard. "Nail, I think it's best you take Vegeta out now, before he gets any stronger! That'll ensure the safety of both Guru and the Dragon Balls!"

"I'm afraid I cannot leave my father's side." Nail replied resolutely. "It is my duty to stand by him at all times."

"What Nail says is true." Affirmed Guru. "But that's besides the point. We are a peaceful race and must never be the first to draw blood."

Krillin sighed in exasperation, his eyes downcast. He understood what Guru was saying. Strictly speaking, Vegeta hadn't harmed the Namekians as of yet, but neither he nor Nail were being prudent. It was only a matter of time before he headed their way and if his strength took yet another spike- Oh God! He didn't even want to consider what would happen then!

"You must let go of all your fears and misgivings, my son." Guru reassured, smiling at Krillin. "I can sense that I still have some time ahead of me. We must focus on the present. There is much strength in you, even more than you realize, for much of it is still sleeping. Allow me to awaken this power for you."

"What?" Krillin asked, bemused. "I don't understand."

Guru once again placed his hand on Krillin's head, as the latter prattled on about how he'd already trained past his limits and so did not have any sleeping power, however, the Earthling was nonplussed when he was suddenly engulfed in a clear, fiery aura and practically felt the power jolt right out of him. This was amazing! He was several-fold stronger than he was before! A thought hit Krillin! If Gohan too could have his true potential unlocked, the prospects of surviving this whole mess would increase greatly.

And so he said his goodbyes and took off, headed towards Gohan, leaving Dende and the one-star dragon ball behind.

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With his newfound speed, it took Krillin only ten minutes to reach the Capsule house, wherein he found his young companion sprawled out on the sofa, a puddle of drool underneath his face. Everything else was in order though. He'd eaten a meal fit for a Saiyan and like the well-mannered boy he was, had cleaned up after himself.
'So unlike Goku.' Thought Krillin with a smile. "Hey Gohan." The demi-Saiyan was unresponsive and so the bald man repeated more fervently "Gohan!"

Still nothing.

"GOHAN!"

"Wha-What is it?!!" Gohan abruptly awoke, sitting up and turning in Krillin's direction, gaping at him incredulously, "K-Krillin. What's up? Y-You're different somehow. You're so-"

"Strong?" Krillin finished, grinning at his young companion.


"Of course it's me you dope!" The bald warrior beamed. "I went to see Guru and he unlocked my hidden powers for me!"

"What?!" Gohan's eyes practically popped out of his head. "H-Hidden p-p-powers?!"

"Yeah!" He replied in exhilaration. "We have to get you there now. If I achieved this level of strength, just imagine how powerful you'll be!"

"You think so Krillin?"

"Listen Gohan, the things I've seen you do are unfathomable, especially for a boy your age." Krillin stated sanguinely. "You are Goku's son after all, so let's do this!"

"Alright, sure thing!"

On the way, Krillin explained the entire situation to Gohan and why their best option was to leave the dragon ball with Guru.

Twenty minutes later, as the eldest Namekian's hand was placed upon Gohan's head, the boy suddenly felt a great rush of Ki overwhelm him. He stared at his hands in awe, marvelling as his power skyrocketed to whole new levels. This level of strength far exceeded his expectations.

The duo then decided to stay with Guru and get some training done while Vegeta was still asleep. As powerful as they had gotten, the Saiyan Prince was still stronger and fighting him head on, entailed too much unnecessary risk.

The pair sparred for about ten minutes, with Gohan holding back a good amount of his true strength to allow Krillin to keep pace and in doing so, learning from the older warrior's battle experience. Nail, who had kept watch all along, then offered to teach them some of his techniques and assist their efforts, which they'd gladly accepted. They needed all the help they could get for this upcoming battle. Nail's strength, skills, battle aptitude and mastery of the ancient Namekian fighting style had astounded the two visitors from Earth. Seems Guru wasn't bluffing. His bodyguard really was even stronger than Vegeta! Who'd have ever thought?!

The Namekian warrior had then taught them a special new Ki technique, called the 'Wonder Blast'. Essentially one would hold their hands out in front of them, keeping them adjacent with one-another and holding them up vertically, palms facing outwards and the left thumb tuck underneath the right. They would then shut their eyes as they gathered an ample amount of energy
from the three suns of Namek.

"That's a lot like the spirit bomb." Krillin noted.

"The what?" Nail asked, raising an eyebrow curiously.

"It's a move my father learned in Other World." Gohan responded. "I don't know how to do it, but he tried using it against Vegeta. The spirit bomb gathers the energy from a planet and it's sun, but it can only be used by the pure-hearted."

"I see." Nail nodded his head in understanding. "The Wonder Blast is a little different though. Although it requires a user to be pure of heart, mind, body, soul and spirit, it can only be used on Namek, since it's specifically designed to draw energy from our suns."

"Wow, this is great Gohan!" Krillin beamed at his young companion. "Earth only had one sun, Namek has three. That means this new technique could be three times more powerful than the spirit bomb!"

"True, but you have to remember that the spirit bomb also collects some energy from every living being on a planet." Gohan argued.

"Don't worry about it." Nail replied, smirking reassuringly. "Our suns may not be very big, but they're a lot more potent than the average star. Their energy supply is so great, it makes that of the planet itself seem insignificant by comparison."

"That's amazing!" The duo from Earth gushed in unison.

Nail chuckled at their enthusiasm. These two certainly were quick learners and they had a lot of potential, especially Gohan.

About two hours into their training, Gohan and Krillin had learned how to use the Wonder Blast. It definitely wasn't a practical move, since it took at least a few minutes to get it completely charged up, but if one of them could distract their opponent long enough for the other to formulate the energy necessary for the attack, it could work well against superior adversaries. In addition, with Nail's help they managed to get a greater grasp on their newfound abilities. Initially, their control over it was slightly tenuous, since it was uncharted territory, but not anymore. They knew that at this point, they could handle most of Frieza's crew with relative ease. An hour later, their newly improved senses detected Vegeta's Ki signal as the latter re-awakened. They figured he'd soon be headed their way and so opted to wait until that moment, before heading off to rescue Bulma. If all things went as planned, hopefully Nail could eliminate Vegeta and they'd have one less enemy to deal with.

A/N: So how powerful exactly is the Wonder Blast? Guess we'll have see for ourselves, huh?

Vegeta's power level = 25 000 - 27 000. Nail's power level = 42 000, so yeah, Nail's stronger now. If Vegeta heads his way, he'll definitely get pummelled. But will he? Let's find out.

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Chapter 13: The unexpected

Vegeta's eyes fluttered a little as he began to wake from his stupor, before snapping open all of a sudden. He felt a petite body underneath him and as he brought his face up and saw her, the events from the previous night came crashing down like an avalanche! What the fuck just happened?! He was resolved to finish her, but not like this! He'd fucked her, when he was supposed to kill her! But, this wasn't like any other fuck.

The Prince had always devoted minimal attention to sex. The impulse rarely ever presented itself. The only times he'd engaged in the act was when his testosterone reservoir began to overflow. Whenever he did copulate, his style was rough and animalistic. Sure, he never took them against their will, but that was besides the point. Nappa was a lot different. Other than eating and any extraneous killings, his favourite pastime was fucking and the woman's choice in the matter was completely inconsequential to the Saiyan commander-in-chief (A/N: I base this on the fact that Nappa was elated at the prospect of using the human race to create a flock of half-breed Saiyans).

Raditz was a whole other story. To the low-level warrior, it was all a game. He'd win a woman over with his exquisite looks and charms, before fucking their brains out. While Raditz's abilities in combat were substandard at best, when it came to women, he was a virtuoso. Though handsome and vigorous like his third-class underling, however, Vegeta was never as good as him when it came to the female species, in some part perhaps due to his height or lack thereof, but primarily because because his pride forbade him from ever trying to woo or charm his intended prey. The Prince never beat around the bush. He was always straightforward. In the rare event that a woman said no, he'd kill them right off the bat. If they said yes, however, he'd fuck them and then kill them, simple as that. It wasn't that he saw rape as something morally reprehensible, since he had no real moral code to begin with. The fact of the matter was that if he did take a woman by force, it would mean he couldn't do it any other way and that truly wounded his pride. Thus, he refused to partake in such a shameless act.

He had a slightly similar outlook when it came to murder. Unlike his two subordinates and most other soldiers in the PTO, he never really got a kick out of destroying cities, blowing up worlds or slaughtering hordes of innocent people. Yes, he did derive pleasure from that to some level, but what truly appeased his thirst for blood was bringing the most powerful, relentless and tenacious warriors on a planet to their knees and breaking them down inch by inch, until they did not only ask, but begged, for death. Then, the moment he knew he'd crushed their spirits and that they'd wholly surrendered their lives over to him, he grinned wickedly as he wiped away all traces of their existence. His methods were so brutal that they rivalled even Frieza's. After all, he'd been the primary subject of the lizard's torture, time and time again. That, more than anything else, was why his diabolical name was infamous across the planes of existence.

But with Bulma, he'd been someone different entirely. She'd caught him in a fragile state and peered into the inner depths of his soul! She saw something he kept locked away from everyone, even himself! Moreover, he'd actually been relatively gentle with her and felt a connection establish, one that transcended any physical intimacy he'd had with women in the past. To make matters worse, he'd stayed with her, as though he were some sickly pup that needed shelter, in the arms of a weak, feeble Earthling woman, no less! He felt disgusted with himself and growled in fury. She needed to die, before this went any further!
"Mmmm." Bulma mumbled groggily, as she felt her lover's taut-muscled body on top of her. She opened her eyes and smiled warmly at him. "Vegeta."

The Prince felt his chest tighten at the sound of his name, escaping her petal lips. That same name struck terror into the hearts of men and women alike and yet it sounded so peaceful and serene coming from her, facets completely antithetical to him. Dammit! He was losing his focus! He needed to concentrate! Vegeta glowered down at her, causing her smile to falter.

"What's wrong V-"

Bulma hadn't the chance to finish her sentence, as the Saiyan pulled off her and sat on one side of the bed, clutching his head in his hands, as he his tail wound tightly around his waist. Dammit, he just wanted to end her life and be done with her, but something was stopping him! He'd done this many times before! Why now had he lost his killer edge?! What the fuck had she done to him?! It was vexing him to no end!

He felt her hand touch his bare back and instantly recoiled, as though it were made of poison.

"Do not touch me!" He growled.

All warmth instantly fell from Bulma's face. She didn't understand. Where did all the passion and affection he'd given her the previous night go? Why was he acting so callously all of a sudden? This was not what she'd expected.

"Vegeta, what's the prob-"

"Quite!" He snarled back at her. "You will not speak, unless I command it! You are nothing but my slave! Never forget your place wench!"

The heiress instantly had hurt writ all over her face. Is that all she meant to him? Just a slave he'd used and discarded like some piece of trash. Tears threatened to escape, but with pride alone she kept them at bay, instead glaring fiercely at her captor.

"I'm no one's slave, dickhead!" She snarled right back, as she hopped off the bed. Vegeta's tail unwound from his waist and lashed behind him, as he bared his teeth at her in fury. "I thought that maybe, just maybe there was something good between the two of us, but I guess I was wrong!"

"There is nothing between us, you lowly female, because there is no us!"

"Fuck you!" She yelled. "I don't know why I ever cared about you! Whatever Frieza did to you, you probably deserved!"

Bulma instantly regretted her words as she saw a flash of hurt flicker through his obsidian orbs, only to disappear almost instantaneously. The Saiyan's tail bristled to four times its normal width as it lashed furiously behind him. He ground his teeth together and clenched his fists so tight, droplets of blood began falling from them.

"Vegeta, I'm s-"

Bulma hadn't the chance to finish as she found herself pinned to the wall, an angry Saiyan pressing her shoulders against the concrete so hard, she practically felt the back of her humerus and scapular bones grind, eliciting a loud cry of pain from her, as she shut her eyes.
"How dare you say that to me, you fucking bitch?!!" He roared. "That bastard destroyed my planet and my entire race and made me his slave, since I was five years old!"

As he realized what he'd just unwittingly told her, Vegeta's eyes widened, his jaw slightly ajar and his hold on the blue-haired woman loosening. Bulma's eyes suddenly snapped open as the full weight of his words registered. She felt remorse claw its way inside her conscience. A boy. That's all he was, a boy Prince who'd lost not only his planet, kingdom and race, but also his most precious asset, his freedom. What could possibly be worse? An ocean of tears threatened to burst forth, but once again, she held herself together. She understood now why he was so distant and withdrawn. But last night, his need to connect with another was clearly at odds with his trademark aloofness.

"I want you, Bulma."

While he may have used the word 'want', his actions proved that it was more of a need.

"Vegeta, I-"

"Shut your fucking mouth!" He interjected. "I should kill you for what you just said!"

"I didn't mean it." She argued in vain. In all honesty she didn't. She was just furious at him for continuously insulting and disparaging her and dismissing the passion they'd shared together the previous night, as though it meant nothing. It was all so spontaneous. She really hadn't meant to hurt him.

"Quiet!" Bellowed the Prince, instilling a deep feeling of dread within her, as her heart hammered against her chest. Vegeta smirked wickedly upon detecting a blissful scent lingered through the air. He nuzzled his face into the crook of her neck and inhaled deeply, feeling his primacy return as the aromatic fragrance of her fear flooded through him. Bulma pressed her teeth against her lower lip and shut her eyes tight. While such a gesture would normally arouse her, now it only made her fear multiply.

Vegeta pulled back, his smirk transforming into a grin, as he felt his control and coherence return with her fearful aroma engulfing him. Yes, now he could kill her without hesitation, without regret! No more bullshitting! She'd brought it on herself, anyway! He stepped back and pressed his right palm against her abdomen, prepared to put a gaping hole through her at any moment.

Bulma opened her eyes and looked at him imploringly.

"Vegeta, I'm sorry." She insisted. "I really am."

"Oh, you will be." He responded, his grin widening. "When you're dead!"

"Please don't kill me, Vegeta." She wrapped her tiny hands around his right wrist, her eyes glistening with unshed tears. "If I'm gonna die, I don't want it to be by your hand."

Vegeta froze, the edge that had returned to him, beginning to burn away yet again at her plea, as those beautiful, blue pools of glimmering sapphire bore into his dark eyes. Why on Earth was she telling him that?!

"What the fuck are you talking about?!!" He growled.
Bulma paused a moment, and pressed her palms against the back of his right hand. She didn't know how to explain it.

"I just-" She paused a second before continuing. "I just don't want to be killed by you, anyone but you."

As the full weight of her plea sunk in, any desire to extinguish the life from her innocent, azure eyes vanished and was replaced by that same strong feeling of protectiveness, now surging through him. What the fuck was she doing to him?! No one had ever had such a hold on him! He snarled furiously and brought his right fist back, before launching it straight ahead. A terribly loud and sharp noise was heard, as the very foundation of the capsule house shook.

Bulma clamped her eyes shut, but after a while opened them one after the other and saw Vegeta's right arm next to her, smashed straight through the concrete wall. She was still breathing. He hadn't harmed her. Thank God! She wanted to make amends, to show him that she truly did care about him, but didn't know how. He probably wouldn't accept her anyway. He made it clear that she meant nothing to him. But if that were so, why couldn't he bring himself to end her life? It was obvious that he was lying, not only to her but to himself.

Before she could utter a word Vegeta pulled his fist back and brought his face an inch from hers.

"I will only say this once!" He began in a dangerously low voice. "If you so much as mention Frieza ever again, there will be nothing left of you, am I clear?!"

Bulma nodded weakly and the naked Prince drew away from her and went to grab his garments nearby, all the while smoldering. If only he could kill her! She was becoming the bane of his existence! As he picked up his spandex pants and underwear, Bulma regained some degree of composure.

"What're you doing?" She asked.

He partly turned his head towards her, giving her a nasty grimace, before getting back to his business. As he was about to put on his underwear, the heiress interrupted him yet again.

"Hey, you're not clean!" She chided, heading his way.

Vegeta looked at her confusedly for a moment, with a raised eyebrow, before his perpetual scowl once again embedded his countenance.

"I could care less!" He barked. "Now get lost!" Once again he was interrupted, as he tried donning his undergarment.

"No!" Bulma exclaimed vehemently. "You're covered in semen for God's sake!" She sighed before making a grab for his underwear, only he was keeping it out of range. "At least let me put your clothes in the washing machine, while you get cleaned up! Is that so hard?!"

"Back away!" Vegeta shoved her onto the bed and exhaled peevishly before continuing.

"For fuck's sake, you're not clean, you moron!" Bulma instantly got up and before the Saiyan knew what happened, she snatched his underwear from him and carelessly tossed it aside. The Prince let out an enraged snarl, but she stood her ground, not deterred in the least as she shrieked at him.
"Why can't you ever listen to me, goddammit?! Why do you have to be so stubborn all the time?!
Can't you just get it through your thick head?! You're not wearing that!" She enunciated that last sentence.

Vegeta threw her onto the bed, instantly climbing on top of her. He was truly vexed! What gall she had to not only bring up that bastard Frieza, but to hurl insults his way, throw away his clothes and on top of that, bark orders at him! She'd gone too far this time!

"What're you doing dammit?!" Bulma yelled, hammering her tiny fist against his sculpted chest. As he peered into those perfect pools of cerulean, all rage and exasperation towards her perished away into the abyss, replaced by the same primal need that had possessed him the previous night. Never mind her svelte, nude body beneath his, the furious inferno that lit her deep blue eyes alone, was enough to set his loins aflame. She continued yelling and hammering his chest between words, but to no avail. "Get- off- me- you big- stupid- idiotic- slab- of meat! Let- me- go! I-"

Bulma hadn't a chance to utter another word as Vegeta crashed his lips to hers, causing her eyes to widen a moment, before fluttering to a close, as he took her lower lip into his mouth and began licking it. She immediately wrapped her arms around his neck, losing just about all coherent thought as his hot tongue slithered inside her velvety mouth and attacked every nook and cranny it found, with an unparalleled vengeance. Bulma was completely intoxicated by his raw, masculine taste, as she wound her legs around his waist and began sucking on his delicious tongue, causing him to growl low in his throat in a manner that made electricity shoot through her.

Vegeta pulled back, peering into her lust-filled azure eyes. The blue-haired beauty bubbled with excitement as she saw the predatory gleam sparkle within his orbs of endless ebony. Oh yes, she was more than willing to play along and be his prey. Bulma brought her right hand to his face and began running the tips of her fingers along his balmy lips, loving their soft feel. Vegeta grabbed her wrist and surprised her as he took her index finger into his mouth and began sucking and licking on it. Her jaw went ajar, as that simple gesture alone made lust wash over her entire being. God, how was he so good at this? She began rolling her finger around in his mouth, exploring every crevice within, while tweaking her left nipple with her free hand. A moment or so later, Vegeta began swirling his tongue around Bulma's finger, eliciting a giggle from the blue-haired female.

"You animal." She said in a jovial tone, smacking his arm playfully with her free hand. He instantly took her finger out of his mouth and brought his face down, pressing his forehead to hers, as he knit his eyebrows.

"What did you call me?!" He demanded huskily.

Bulma shuddered in response to Vegeta's gruff, sexy timbre and instead of responding verbally, she planted several slow and sensuous kisses on his lips, while running her hands along the sides of his burly figure, giggling against his mouth as she felt his muscles turn into gooseflesh. It made her feel so authoritative!

"You think this is funny?!

"No." She answered as their lips brushed together. She kissed him once more before tightening her legs, still draped around his waist. "I think this is incredibly hot!"

A/N: Caution! More incoming smut xD!

Fire engulfed Vegeta's whole body, as he heard those words. He let out a growl and nestled his face
into the crook of her neck, kissing her in a torturously slow manner, before making his way down, leaving a trail of lengthy kisses at every stop, as she whimpered beneath him. He slid his tongue along her collar bone, whereby she bit her lip to repress a shiver of delight. He then licked his way his way down her rounded right breast, before reaching the apex and taking it into his wet mouth. He traced the tip of his tongue around her areola, before licking her puckered nipple. Her head instantly fell back as she arched against him, unable to help it this time as she let out an ecstatic cry.

The Prince deftly caressed her other pert nipple with the palm and fingers of his right hand. She continued groaning with want as her desire burgeoned. Vegeta pulled his mouth away and began squeezing both mounds with his deft hands, whilst leaving a series of hot kisses from the top of her sternum all the way down to her naval, before gliding his tongue back the way he came, setting off an even louder sensual cry from the lithe, little female trapped beneath his sturdy figure, as she grabbed fistfuls of his hair.

Bulma never imagined that foreplay could ever be more pleasurable than sex itself, but with Vegeta, it most certainly was. She could already feel the wetness pooling between her thighs. How could anyone possibly be this good? Yamcha didn't even compare. Oh no, Yamcha! How could she dishonor her dead ex like this, yet again?

The Prince hoisted her legs up on his shoulders and looked fixedly at her. Her thoughts came to a sudden halt as she felt his wet stiffness tease her centre, silently demanding entrance, making her insides liquify. God, she wanted this so badly! She couldn't think straight anymore!

"Do it." She nodded, her azure eyes completely clouded with a haze of lust. "I'm all yours."

The Prince pressed his teeth together as he let out a desirous exhale, the primordial beast within getting a firm hold. He inserted his hardened shaft into her inviting walls and as they closed around it, he began to slide against her at a graceful pace, while running his hands along the creamy skin of her long, slender legs.

Bulma's eyes fluttered as she moaned under him. She bit the little finger of her right hand, while tweaking her perky left nipple with her other hand at a slow pace that matched his thrusts. The moment Vegeta noticed her pleasuring herself, he growled and swatted her hand away, cupping both breasts into his spacious palms and slowly, but surely, increasing the force of his thrusts. Bulma dug her nails into his steel-like biceps and triceps, as her euphoric cries echoed through the air.

Vegeta moved his hands down to her hips, holding her tightly in place as he rammed inside her.

"Fill me Vegeta!" Bulma slurried out loud, causing a new wave of heat to surge through every fibre of the Saiyan's body, as he began to speed up his rhythm. Bulma took her mounds into her hands, squeezing them yearningly, matching the swift pace of his exhilarating thrusts. Vegeta ran his hands up her porcelain legs till he reached her shins that were positioned on either side of his neck. He gripped them firmly, as he continued drilling into her. It wasn't long at all, before Bulma's cries transformed into crescendos, as all rational thought took a leap out the window and she finally climaxed his name in a loud cry of jubilance, right before he roared thunderously, as he came into her.

Bulma brought her trembling legs down, grinding them against the sides of his torso. He stroked her thighs up and down pleasurably, his member still wedged inside her, as they both panted. She wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling herself flush against him, as she smashed her lips to his, savoring his raw, perfect taste. She brought her right hand to the back of his head, grabbing fistfuls
of his soft hair and playing with it. She loved his feathery mane, his soft lips, his deft tongue and his sculpted body. She loved his fiery, assertive personality, his pride and his resolve. She loved him. If only things could be different. If only he could rid himself of his evil desires and love her back. But that was fanciful thinking, to say the least.

It took Vegeta a moment or two to finally gather his bearings. Dammit, once again he'd fucked her, when he was supposed to kill her! This was the second time he'd lost his grip on reality and it was all because of her! Bulma felt his body tense up, every bit of passion lost as he shoved her forward callously and hopped off the bed.

Vegeta gave her a withering look as he saw the bitterness and rejection on her face. Her sentiments were no concern of his! She should be thankful he was even letting her live! She meant nothing to him! But then why couldn't he rid himself of her?! He mentally cursed himself for being so weak! No, her only purpose was to help him find the dragon balls and satisfy his carnal desires, nothing else! He took a deep breath, with that piece of reassurance in mind, as Bulma had her face downcast, clearly hurt by his stony display.

A/N: Oh no, things looks bad don't they? But it still didn't go quite as expected, right? Didn't think so! Hence the title! Though Vegeta's as callous and dismissive as ever, he just can't bring himself to end Bulma's life, can he? Guess not.
Chapter 14: Remorse

Vegeta gave her a withering look as he saw the bitterness and rejection on her face. Her sentiments were no concern of his! She should be thankful he was even letting her live! She meant nothing to him! But then why couldn't he rid himself of her?! He mentally cursed himself for being so weak! No, her only purpose was to help him find the dragon balls and satisfy his carnal desires, nothing else! He took a deep breath, with that piece of reassurance in mind, as Bulma had her face downcast, hurt by his stony display.

"Get my clothes washed and dried!" Vegeta ordered tersely. "I need to get cleaned up! Where do I shower?!"

'Should've known.' Bulma thought, as she sighed dejectedly. "Right there." She pointed straight ahead, not looking him in the eye. The Saiyan instantly made a beeline for the washroom. Why? Why did he have to be like this? She'd given him everything and was willing to give more. All she wanted in return was some affection, but as always, he gave her the cold shoulder. She sighed as she picked up his dirty uniform, minus the armor. Deciding that the outfit she'd donned during her journey to Namek needed a good wash too, she took them with her as she headed towards the laundry, with a pile of grimy clothes.

She flung them all in her own newly designed CC washer-dryer combo, for a quick and thorough ten-minute wash, followed by a ten-minute dry. When it came to being inventive, she was always number one. Smiling smugly, she continued her way inside her room, all the while pensive, her mind centred around one person and one person only. What was it that made Vegeta so closed off? Of course! His life had been nothing but pain, suffering and horror and wreaking them all upon others! It's all he knew! He wouldn't change overnight, that much was certain. Even then, she was intent upon showing him that there was another way, a better way! He must have had the capacity to care! She'd seen for herself the longing within his ebony eyes, the peace, calm and tranquility when he fell asleep in her arms. On top of all that, she was still alive! There had to be some hope for him!

Flinging those thoughts aside, Bulma entered the bathroom, washed her face and hands and brushed her teeth. She then pulled out a bottle of her favourite strawberry flavoured mouth bath from the vanity, opened it, half-filled the cap with the antiseptic content, before swishing it about in her mouth, gargling and rinsing. Perfect! She felt so much fresher now! She grinned wickedly, as a thought hit her! Vegeta wasn't too far away.

'Why not join him?'

The Prince, meanwhile, was brooding pensively for the last five minutes or so, as the warm water began cascading down his body. Just what was it about this little vixen that had stupefied him so much? Sure, she was excessively pleasing to the eye and even more so in bed, but he'd had plenty of women in the past, all of whom were now dead, by his own hand. What made her so different? He'd never fucked the same woman twice and definitely not so feverishly. His thoughts came to a grinding halt as the shower curtains slid open. He snarled viciously, prepared to blast a hole into the intruder, till he saw- her?!

"What the fuck are you doing here?!" He scowled, his eyes fixated upon her bare, svelte figure.
"Hey, I need to get cleaned too, you know!" She frowned back at him, placing her hands on her curvaceous hips. "You're not the only one who reeks of smoking hot sex!"

Vegeta turned beet red.

"You- vulgar- female!" He looked aghast, completely at a loss for words.

"Oh come on." She rolled her eyes, as she boldly walked up to him, barely an inch of distance between them. "We just had sex. Quit acting like a such a prude."

"B-Back away!" Vegeta took a step back as she drew closer, suddenly beginning to feel perturbed by her amorous advances. Dammit, she should be the one retreating, not him! What the fuck was going on?! Bulma smirked wickedly at him.

"You know, you didn't act this shy when you were putting that nifty tongue of yours to good use."

"H-How dare you?!" Vegeta bared his fangs at her, the blood rushing to his face as he reddened about a further ten shades of crimson. It took every ounce of effort the heiress had, not to explode with laughter as she observed his mortified expression. Vegeta let out a furious snarl. "Just leave! Shower once I'm done!" He finally moved towards her and began prying her out of his domain.

"Wait, hold on!"

Too late. Vegeta had already forced her out and closed the shower curtain. Bulma was livid!

'What right does he have to throw me out of my shower?!' She mentally fumed. 'I'll show him!'

Vegeta exhaled after finally getting rid of that idiotic female. However, seconds later he heard the shower curtains slide open yet again as she stormed her way back inside. He scowled, but before he could say anything, she daringly shoved him against the wall and pressed her hands against it, on either side of him, effectively trapping her Saiyan captor with her bare, petite figure. He goggle and began to tremble, feeling uncharacteristically skittish all of a sudden, as he felt his entire form radiate with heat at the proximity of her nude, supple body. No one had ever done that to him before.

"Who do you think you are, Vegeta?!" She shrieked right at his face, causing him to flinch and shut his eyes tight. "This is my shower! You hear me: mine! M I N E!" She spelled out those last four alphabets just to emphasize her point.

Vegeta continued trembling as he opened his eyes and couldn't get them off the puckered buds of her hemispherical mounds that were brushing against his solidified chest with each smoldering syllable. Bulma smirked inwardly, but on the outside appeared to be as enraged as ever.

She tucked her index finger under his chin, tilting his head up to meet her eyes.

"My face is up here, you pervert!" She instantly found herself on the other side of the shower, her upper arms pinned against the wall, by Vegeta's hands.

"You've crossed me for the last time female!" He roared into her face. "No one insults the Saiyan Prince!"
"Pheeuu!" Bulma wrinkled her nose, clamping it shut with one hand, while daringly placing the other on Vegeta's mouth. "You smell like a dead cat covered in manure!"

Vegeta batted her hand away and scowled furiously at her. He was smoldering! If this little minx couldn't control her tongue then he wouldn't hesitate to cut it off!

"Wom-"

"Please, don't talk." Bulma cut him off, facing away from him. God, baiting him was just far too entertaining! "Brush your teeth first, unless of course, you plan to kill Frieza by breathing on him."

Vegeta's jaw went ajar in disbelief at her flagrant boldness, but a nasty grimace instantly contorted his visage. The nerve of this female!

"Wow, a little excited are we?" Bulma hacked right through his irate line of thought, as she glanced low. Vegeta followed her gaze and as it suddenly dawned on him how hard he was down below, his face flushed once again. The heiress began to chortle and Vegeta glowered fiercely at her, before he picked up the scent of her arousal, causing his rage to dwindle as he smirked at her.

"I may be hard, but at least I'm not wet." He replied, his smirk widening into a wicked grin. "Add to that your erect nipples and overt vulgarity."

"Hey!" Bulma scowled at him, but hadn't a chance to mutter another word, her eyes widening as he pressed his hardness against her lower abdomen and smashed his body to hers, making her breath hitch, as lust deluged her every pore.

As he brought his lips towards her and exhaled into her mouth, she winced, his bad breath suddenly jolting her from her rapturous stupor as she turned away her face and pressed her palm sideways against his mouth.

"Hey! If you're gonna slobber all over me, at least clean your mouth first!"

Vegeta immediately pulled back and loured at her.

"Oh quit death staring me, Vegeta." She chided. "You're a Prince. It's only right that you smell good."

After glaring heatedly at her for a moment or two, curiosity got the best of him, as he leaned in and brushed the tip of his nose against her lips, sniffing them. Unlike him, she smelled extremely pleasant. Bulma giggled and playfully nipped his nose, before heading out, much to his confusion.

"Come follow me." She instructed.

Vegeta frowned at her a moment.

"Hey, it's rude to keep a lady waiting you know?!" She knit her eyebrows in a pretence of
indignation.

The Prince brought a fist up, baring his teeth menacingly at her, before exhaling in surrender and grudgingly following along. Bulma's lips quirked up, as she led him towards the vanity. Vegeta's gaze was fixed on her voluptuous ass, his member hardening further, as she deliberately sashayed her curvaceous hips in a blatantly provocative manner.

Bulma whirled around as she reached the vanity and as expected, caught Vegeta scrutinizing her hips.

"Something catch your eye?" She taunted, smirking coquettishly at him.

"Shut up!" His face abruptly turned several shades of crimson, as he averted his gaze. Damn her and her ostentatious wiles! She was always making a fool out of him! "Just do as you're bid!"

"Sure thing, you grouch!" Bulma rolled her eyes, before pulling out a new toothbrush, a toothpaste bottle and some oral rinse and subsequently running him through the whole wake up process. Vegeta exhaled and took a whiff of his own breath. It was so much better now! He'd never felt quite so refreshed ever before! He shook those thoughts away and headed back in the shower, to finish cleaning himself off.

A few seconds later the curtains slid open to once again reveal a naked Bulma, as she made her way inside.

"For God's sake, can you never leave me in peace?!" He snarled. "If I knew you'd be this bothersome, I would've just left you on Planet F-"

"Would you just calm down, Vegeta?!" She frowned in askance. "Quit being so uptight, you need to learn how to relax." The Prince glowered at her, as she leaned in and took a whiff of his chest, before wrinkling her nose.

"Eww, you didn't even use soap!"

"What the fuck is soap?!"

"You mean you don't know?!" Bulma squealed in absolute disbelief.

"Stop shouting in my damn face!" The Prince clasped his ears and shut his eyes.

"Man, this is ridiculous!" Bulma was dumbfounded. "You've got space ships, space pods, regeneration tanks and a multitude of other hardware that totally puts Earth's technology to shame, but you don't even know what soap is?!"

Vegeta paused a moment, before contemplating.

"Soap?" He mused audibly, before furrowing his brows at her. "If you're talking about cleaning gel, I didn't find any here."

"Oh that explains it." Bulma said, finally understanding. "You guys just call it something else. It's right here though." She headed over to the dispenser to the side of the shower.

Vegeta considered his options for a moment. He definitely reeked of sex and he wanted to rid
himself of that stench, before taking off and so he followed her lead.

"Here, take a look." Bulma pressed the button on the dispenser and gathered a copious amount of the foamy substance into her other hand.

"I see."

She then headed his way.

"What're you doing?" He asked in a dubious tone, raising his hands defensively.

"Take it easy, I'm just gonna lather you up."

"I can do it myself!" He growled back. "Just go away, already!"

"Oh come on, you're no fun!" Bulma pouted her lips petulantly. Vegeta continued baring his teeth at her, until she took a sigh and rolled her eyes, thinking of a way to convince him, until an idea finally came to her. She didn't want to stroke his ego, but if it was the only way, then so be it. She looked him in the eye. "I agreed to serve you, Vegeta. That was part of our deal, remember?"

"What of it?"

"Well, let me serve, your highness." She smirked coquettishly, rubbing her soapy hands together. Vegeta felt heat sear through his body, as those words escaped her lips and he finally let out a huff, before nodding in approval. God! Could this lusty wench never leave him alone? She was more trouble than she was worth!

"Perfect!" Bulma smiled as she headed his way and began sensually rubbing soap on those protruding pecs of his, loving how Vegeta unwittingly leaned against her touch. She made her way down to his hardened abs, before lathering up his sides, arms and hands, glancing at his pensive black eyes from time to time. The Prince, all the while, tried to pay as little heed to her as possible, instead contemplating on his next move.

'Without his scouters, it's unlikely Frieza will be able to track down the last dragon ball anytime soon.' He thought. 'Perhaps it would be wise if I collect it myself. Once I have two within my grasp, I just need to figure out a way to swipe the five balls he possesses. He's probably gathered them inside his ship. If that's so, I can sneak in and nab them before he even knows what's happened. He'll definitely see it coming though. If only there were some way to divert his attention elsewhere, but how?'

"Hey Vegeta." Bulma suddenly interrupted his thoughts, as she began to lather his back.

"What?!!" The Prince growled.

"I was just wondering, are you really going to wish for immortality?"

The Saiyan frowned and tilted his head back to look at her.

"Yes, so what?!!"

"Nothing, it's just-" Bulma stopped mid-sentence as she felt his dark eyes practically pierce her soul.
"What?! Tell me!" He demanded.

"I just-" She paused a moment, before considering her words. There was no way in hell she could give her plans away, lest he kill her on the spot! "I just don't think it's a good idea."

"Explain." He narrowed his eyes further, whirling around all the way to face her.

"It might not help, that's why." Bulma argued, furrowing her brows. "Give me a rough estimate, how much more powerful than you, is Frieza?"

The Prince brooded for a moment, before giving his answer.

"At the moment my power level is approximately twenty-five thousand, maybe twenty-seven at the very most." He responded. "Last I remember, Frieza sits at over five-hundred thousand."

Bulma's eyes widened in horror, her heart hammering so hard, it threatened to burst out of her chest.

"That's not all." Vegeta continued. "I don't know if there's any merit to it, but I've heard rumors that his true power level is somewhere in the millions."

Bulma's skin took on a sickly pallid hue and after a few tense moments of silence, the heiress finally spoke up.

"But- but if he's so m-much s-s-stronger than you, h-how will-"

"Reason's simple." Vegeta interjected. "If you must know, a Saiyan's strength soars after recovering from a fatal injury, which is why I'm more powerful now than I was on Earth."

Bulma nodded for him to continue.

"If I challenge Frieza as an immortal, each time he destroys this body, it will recover and my strength will take a huge leap, bringing him one step closer to his doom." He stated, smirking as he envisioned himself in all his glory. "Eventually I will have the power to ascend, to become the legendary Super Saiyan. Then I can obliterate that bastard."

"Super Saiyan?" Bulma asked, dumbfounded. "What's that?"

Vegeta huffed in exasperation. Why was he even explaining all this to her?! She could never learn her place and was far too nosy for her own good!

"Vegeta, tell me, this could be important." Bulma pled.

"Important?" Vegeta raised an eyebrow, confusedly. "How?"

"Just tell me what a Super Saiyan is first, I need to know."

"Fine!" The Prince relented and lengthily recounted the fable of the Super Saiyan, a legendary being with unprecedented powers that was unrivalled throughout the Universe and cleared away everything in his path, as he wreaked havoc upon planet after planet. Millions of stars were wiped away across the cosmos, only for the titanic being to eventually be consumed by such rage, that he
ended up destroying himself too.

"Wow, insane." Bulma was breath-taken. So that's what Vegeta was striving for?

"So?"

"So- so what?"

"You said this could be important, how?!" Vegeta asked.

"Oh." Bulma cleared her head and thought for a moment, her face downcast. "Well, I was thinking, instead of wishing for immortality, why don't you just wish to become a Super Saiyan or whatever?"

"Why?"

"Well." She looked up at him, frowning disapprovingly. "If you're immortal, you won't be able to die. What's the point of that? Sure, it might be good for the first few hundred years, but what about after that? Everything and everyone will continue dying around you and you'll be stuck here, unable to pass on and probably wishing you could. Where does that leave you?"

Vegeta spent several moments contemplating her words. He'd never thought of it that from that particular point-of-view. The mere idea of being the omnipotent overlord of the Universe had surged his thirst for power to such a degree that he didn't take the time to consider such obvious downsides. She was right. He most certainly didn't want to turn his glory into a never-ending hell. The Prince let out an exhale, before nodding approvingly.

"Alright, I'll wish for the powers of a Super Saiyan instead."

Bulma smiled brightly at him, before she noticed his attention drawn elsewhere.

"What's that noise?" He asked.

Bulma soon picked up a whirring sound coming from the laundry.

"Oh, our clothes are washed and dried." She said. "I'll go get them, while you get cleaned up." She smiled and gave him a quick peck on the lips, before heading out. That act was all it took for Vegeta's senses to fully re-awaken.

'What the fuck am I doing?!' He thought, beginning to feel unsettled as he took the time to assess her overtly familiar behavior towards him. 'She's making me go soft and develop some sort of attachment towards her!' He let out an angry snarl. 'She's a weak and frail Earthling, who should be kneeling before me, yet here she is behaving like some sort of consort! This cannot go any further!'

Yes, she was exquisite-looking and he respected her fiery-temper and there's no way he could deny the superlative pleasure she offered in bed, but he'd decided very long ago that he would not allow himself to fall into the trap of getting attached with anyone, lest they be used against him by his enemies, the way his- No! He didn't want to dwell on the past! No more! This would have to end here! It was bad enough that he couldn't kill her, but he was loath to allow her to alter his mindset, even to the smallest degree! He had to eliminate any regard he held towards her and be the cold-hearted and callous warrior he was born to be, Prince Vegeta of the Saiyans! With that in mind, the Prince quickly lathered his lower body up with soap and washed himself clean, before heading out
'Sorry Vegeta.' Bulma sighed in disheartenment, musing as she headed over to the laundry. 'As much as I want you to destroy Frieza, I really need that wish.'

Like her Saiyan lover, the heiress felt completely at odds with herself, more than ever before. Just how had the two of them reached this stage? The moment he'd declared war on Earth over a month ago, she and Vegeta had been sworn enemies and yet, somewhere along their journey together, he'd stolen her heart and that made it all the more difficult for her to have to betray him. One way or another, it was bound to happen though. It was either that or turn on her deceased friends and there's no way she could do that, not after they'd all died so chivalrously to protect the Earth! Their revival was of paramount importance! No matter what she chose, however, she knew she'd hate herself! Why, why her?! Why did fate have to curse her like this?!

If by some off-chance they did gather the seven dragon balls and she stole the wish from Vegeta, he'd most likely kill her. Then what? Would he head over to Earth and destroy it? Or would Frieza kill him before he had the chance? No matter what way she thought about it, she couldn't possibly envision even a semi-decent culmination to this whole mess.

'Unless.' She suddenly beamed as a thought hit her! It was simple: they could wish her friends at home back to life with Namek's dragon balls and since Piccolo and Kami would be revived, Earth's dragon balls could be used to turn Vegeta into a Super Saiyan! Better yet, since Goku was also a Saiyan and an extremely powerful one at that, they could use the wish on him too! That would double their chances against Frieza! Yes, that was the perfect idea and she'd be sure to run it by Vegeta! Even if he didn't agree now, she had plenty of time to persuade him otherwise and boy, she could be very, very persuasive! She smiled at that thought.

'Bulma Brief, you're a true genius!'

She quickly collected their garments from the washer-dryer duo and headed back to the bedroom, her face shining brightly with hope. She set the clothes down at the foot of the bed and made her way into the washroom. Just then Vegeta exited the shower and scowled, as he saw her.

"Hey Vege-"

"Where are my clothes?" He demanded brusquely.

'What's up with him?!' Bulma thought, knitting her eyebrows in aggravation. Did he always have to be ticked off for no apparent reason? "They're near the bed."

Without paying her a glance, Vegeta was about to walk by her, only she stood in his way, stopping him in his tracks.

"Hey, I- uh- wanted to ask you something."

"What?!" He growled peevishly.

"It's about the dragon balls."

Vegeta frowned suspiciously at her and she bit her lip for a moment, before continuing.
"I just had an idea is all." She began, her heart racing in anticipation. "It's about my friends who
died on Earth."

"What about them?" He asked in a low, distrustful tone. Surely, she wasn't suggesting-

"Well, if we collect the dragon balls and wish them back, Earth's dragon will come back to life and
we can-"

"No!" He answered resolutely, narrowing his eyes further.

Bulma's heart lurched at his abrupt dismissal. She shook her head and gently placed a hand on
shoulder.

"Look, I'm not asking you to decide now, just give it some-"

"I said no!" He snarled, batting her hand away, causing Bulma to shrink back. "Your weakling
friends don't mean anything to me and neither do you!"

Bulma looked at him with a pained expression engrained on her countenance. He hadn't a clue how
much those words stung her, but what was said afterwards, made them pale by comparison.

"You're a decent lay, nothing more." He stated in a low, heartless tone, his face and eyes
completely void of emotion. Her heart wrenched as tears glistened her azure eyes. Was that really
all she meant to him? "You're a whore."

Bulma froze as the tears now began cascading down her face in a torrent of pain and betrayal. If
he'd stabbed her through the heart a thousand times over with an icicle, it wouldn't have hurt nearly
as much as that cold and vile declaration. A wave of severe anguish like no other washed over her,
only to be quickly replaced by unparalleled incandescence, as he continued looking at her with a
masked expression of indifference. She clenched her teeth in fury and abruptly slapped him hard
right across the face with far more strength than she could muster.

Vegeta was astounded, as his head was knocked sideways and he felt a stinging sensation on his
cheek. She carried a lot more power than he'd ever have expected. He winced in pain as he touched
the reddened area. Upon turning his head her way, he quickly realized that so immersed was he by
the shock of it all that he hadn't noticed until now that she'd already left the washroom and
slammed the door behind her. He snarled angrily, before sensing her Ki in the bedroom and
heading her way.

The moment he entered the bedroom, Vegeta's heart dropped to his stomach, as he saw his little
prisoner lying naked on her stomach, her face pressed against a pillow, as she bawled her eyes out.
His lividity vanished away, as he was overcome by a feeling of disgust and self-loathing. This was
the only person in the Universe that refused to back down before his might and refused to show
weakness and now, by rejecting her, he'd destroyed her world. He'd reduced his fiery and assertive
vixen into a sobbing and writhing mess! For the first time since his mother's untimely demise,
someone had truly cared for him: a frail little human female whose life was reduced to cinders by
his hand and yet, she'd overlooked his dark and malevolent nature. She'd accepted and embraced
him, all the same and as ludicrous as it was, had even tried to convince him that he could be a
better person. And now, he'd thrown it all back in her face!

Each tear that escaped her beautiful eyes, felt like acid searing the hardened flesh of his stony-
Now, for the first time in his life, he could taste the foul bitterness of remorse, eating him
from the inside out and he hated it! He'd always hated himself for being too weak to rid himself of
his enemies, for letting himself be enslaved and tortured by a madman all his life and now that hate
had multiplied tenfold! He couldn't stand being here any longer! He was unable to stomach seeing
her this way and so he quickly grabbed his armor, uniform and the dragon radar that lay on a table
next to the bed, before changing and bolting away in search of the last dragon ball, all the while
trying to rid himself of this damned feeling!

Curse her! Curse her for making him so weak and disoriented! He hated her! She'd truly become
the bane of his existence! If only he'd killed her from the very beginning! But now it was too late!
He thought that by breaking her, he'd finally regain the edge he needed to finish her off, but that
just made everything worse! Much worse! He roared furiously, before turning up the speed as he
headed towards the final dragon ball.

Bulma felt regret, revulsion and desolation wrack her entire conscience, as she continued sobbing.
As she sensed Vegeta leave, she paid a fleeting glance at his ebbing figure, momentarily overcome
by surprise. She would've thought for sure he'd end her existence for daring to strike him, but he
hadn't. Those thoughts vanished away, as the stinging pain of hurt and betrayal seeped their way
back into her soul. Bulma clutched her pillow once again, as she continued to wail. She'd sold her
soul to the devil! She'd handed herself over to a heartless demon that loathed her and used her for
his own purposes, the same demon that had murdered her dearest friends! She began crying out
even louder!

'Yamcha, I'm sorry!' A fresh surge of anguish and despair attacked her. 'I'm so sorry!'

She had the sweetest and nicest man the Universe could ever give her and had taken him for
granted, constantly manipulating him at every turn by using his weakness for her to her advantage,
only to end up betraying him and all her friends as she'd twice given away her body and spirit to the
cold-blooded beast responsible for their demise. She'd even thought she loved that Saiyan fiend, no
she truly had loved him, if only for a brief interval and now she abhorred herself more than ever, as
an ocean of tears escaped her eyelids!

Bulma felt empty, soulless and cursed! There was only one thing she could do, only one way she
could truly redeem herself: by wishing back all those that had perished at the cruel hands of the
insensitive bastard she'd slept with! If she met her end then so be it! At least she'd die knowing
she'd done something right! Nothing else mattered! She sighed dejectedly against her pillow, her
tears slowing down, but still continuing to flow, as she turned her face sideways and stared
aimlessly at the wall, her heart aching with unbridled pain and remorse.

A/N: Now please, before you send me death threats and/or letter bombs, I promise you it won't
always be like this! This was the only way to allow for any proper character/relationship
development to ensue, so do not despair! They will eventually find a way around this whole terrible
fiasco, so strap yourselves in for more fun to come and remember to leave a review (even if it's
hateful or vulgar xD)!

Next chapter Vegeta searches for the last dragon ball!! Will he encounter Nail or will another foe
we are familiar with, be lurking nearby, thus thwarting his attention?! And what of Gohan and
Krillin? With Vegeta gone, will the finally make their move to retrieve Bulma? Stay tuned!
Chapter 15: Adrift

Back in Elder Tsuno's village a while earlier, a yellow skinned alien, with black pupils, red scleras and an elongated skull was lurking around in the air when one of the Namekian warriors had gotten wind of his Ki signal and surprised him by knocking him behind the head with a powerful double-axe handle. He raised his Ki, and the warriors quickly made their way over and secured his capture.

They didn't get too much out of him, since Gohan and Krillin had told them pretty much all they needed to know. The only useful piece of information they'd managed to divulge was that Frieza planned to destroy Namek after making his wish. Being the peaceful race that they were, the Namekians did not mistreat their prisoner. They didn't even bind or gag him, just kept him inside a hut, under close surveillance.

"Krillin, notice that?" Gohan asked, in the midst of their training, a good while passing since Vegeta had awoken.

"Yeah I do." The bald man nodded. "Vegeta's headed our way!" A galvanized smile lit his face. "This is great! We can go and rescue Bulma now!"

"Sounds like a plan!" Beamed Gohan.

"Alright Gohan!" The older warrior grabbed his young companion's shoulder. "We'll have to travel via hover bike once again. Remember to keep your energy suppressed, got it?"

The half-Saiyan nodded his assent and his companion checked the dragon radar.

"It looks like he's left his dragon ball with Bulma!" Krillin felt even more thrilled, his faded morale taking a huge upsurge. "Perfect! This'll lead us right to her! Man, won't Vegeta be surprised when he faces Nail?!"

After saying their goodbyes to their three Namekian allies, the duo left.

Vegeta was flying straight towards the dragon balls, trying his best to root out the regret that had embedded itself in every cell of his body. Now there was no doubt that Bulma hated him and that disgusted him! Why?! She reviled him from the very beginning, didn't she?! Perhaps, but somewhere along the line, she'd developed a sense of affinity towards him and as revolted as he was by the mere though of it, he had too! Only now, when he'd lost it, or rather, had thrown it away, did he realize that being cherished and accepted by another, wasn't really as unpleasant a feeling as he had imagined it would be.

'Fuck!' He mentally kicked himself. 'I'm acting like a fucking weakling! She means nothing to me!'

But if that were so why couldn't he just fucking kill her and be done with it?! Just how had she
managed to creep her way into the inner depths of his soul, where no one dared trespass?! He shook his head, deciding to dwell on it later. There had to be some way to root her out of his system, so he could think straight once again and be the cold, calculated and callous warrior he was from the very beginning.

'I have to be careful.' He warned himself. 'There's no doubt she's going to try and steal my wish. I cannot let her do it!'

He briefly considered what would happen if he did go along with her plan, i.e. reviving her friends and then using Earth's dragon balls to become a Super Saiyan. No, it presented far too much risk! Whether or not those weaklings lived was none of his concern! Becoming a Super Saiyan and destroying Frieza was all that mattered! If by some miracle he managed to collect all seven dragon balls on Namek, he couldn't waste his auspicious moment! If he outmaneuvered Frieza once, the tyrant would be on his guard the next time and that would make his quest all the more perilous! He needed to stay alert! The old Namekian fool he'd spared did hint that a specific process was required in order to make the wish. He hadn't considered it before, but since Bulma was from Earth and her planet had dragon balls, it would be plausible to presume that she was privy to such a process. Namek's wish-making process may have been different from that of Earth, but there was no point taking any chances. Once gathered, he needed to keep the balls away from her at all cost, lest she steal away his only chance at revenge!

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"Hmmm. The Saiyan's coming our way, Elder." Nail stated.

"So it seems."

"Nail, please be careful." Dende's heart rate began rising greatly.

"Don't worry, little brother, I'll be fine, I promise." He smiled back reassuringly, before knitting his eyebrows straight ahead as he readied himself.

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Just as Vegeta was minutes away from the final dragon ball, he sensed a high power level not far away, all on its own. An evil smile lit his face as he recognized the Ki signature as belonging to none other than the mighty Zarbon himself! The last dragon ball could wait! If he were to secure the five Frieza had collected, he needed as little opposition as possible! Taking care of his blue-skinned nemesis was a major step in the right direction!

'Perfect.' He thought, smirking wickedly. 'Another one of your lackeys is about to be crushed by my hand, Frieza. And soon, you'll be joining him in hell!'

The Saiyan promptly tucked the dragon radar into his breastplate and flew over to Zarbon, full-speed.

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"He's headed elsewhere." Nail stated, furrowing his eyes, before he sensed another power level. "I see. He's flying straight towards one of Frieza's men."

"Good!" Dende exclaimed furiously. "I hope they kill each other!"
"You must not wish such evil upon others, young Dende." Guru chided. "Even our enemies."

"But Guru, look what they've done to this planet!" His bodyguard argued. "We-

"I understand Nail." Interjected the Grand Elder. "However, the Saiyan has not yet spilled the blood of any of our people."

"He's still evil!" Dende grit his teeth as he brought both his fists up. "He killed Gohan and Krillin's friends on Earth and if it wasn't for him, Frieza would never have known about the dragon balls or come here, in the first place!"

After a tense moment of silence or two, Guru spoke.

"You are right, Dende." He affirmed. "However, I do sense some small change in his wicked heart." He let out a weary sigh. "I have a feeling that, like us, he too has suffered by Frieza's hand."

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"Vegeta's heading straight towards that other guy." Gohan said. He and Krillin were currently headed over in Bulma's direction, via hover bike. "Zarbon, I think his name was. There's gonna be another intense battle."

"Whoa." Krillin sensed it too. "I must say, knowing the way Vegeta annihilated Dodoria like that earlier on, I don't think this Zarbon guy will fare much better. That bastard's on a whole other level now."

"True." Gohan concurred, before brooding for a moment or so. "He's going to be distracted, so why not fly over to Bulma, lower our Ki signal and get her someplace safe?"

"You sure about that Gohan?" Krillin asked, raising an eyebrow. "If he senses us out, we're done for. Even with our new strength."

"I know, but what's more important to him?" The boy argued. "Getting rid of Zarbon or us? Besides, with our increased power, he may not recognize us. Trust me Krillin. We can make it to Bulma's in no time and then we can take her with us to Guru's."

"Alright Gohan." Krillin relented. "We'll do it your way then."

"Hold on." The boy said. "Let's wait until he engages Zarbon. That way he'll be distracted."

"Right!"

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Within roughly 15 minutes, Vegeta began nearing Zarbon and soon afterwards, the two ex-comrades faced off.

"Vegeta!" Zarbon growled.

"So." Began the Saiyan Prince, "We finally meet again Zarbon. What a surprise. I've already disposed of that useless Dodoria. Now I plan to do the same thing to you!"
"What?!" The blue-skinned alien exclaimed in disbelief. "There's no way you beat Dodoria by yourself! You're lying!"

The two continued exchanging verbal blows. Zarbon underestimated Vegeta's power and reproached him for having betrayed Frieza, while Vegeta went on about how, unlike his ex-comrade, he was never fitted to a life of slavery and now with the hope of the dragon balls, he could finally wreak vengeance upon him and Frieza, both.

"That's our cue Krillin." Gohan signaled. "Let's get flying. Vegeta's going to be engaged for at least a little while and we're not far from Bulma's. Remember we need to be at top speed!"

Krillin bobbed his head and de-capsulized his hover bike, putting it back in the capsule case, before the duo zoomed towards their friend.

"Frieza feared the Saiyans!" Vegeta proclaimed, "Which means he's afraid of me!"

"Don't flatter yourself." Zarbon responded smugly, "What Frieza feared was the entire Saiyan race rising up against him. All alone you're no threat to anyone."

Vegeta began attacking Zarbon without delay, outperforming him at every turn and even deflecting his most intense blast with ease, laughing all the while at his opponent's inferior strength.

The Prince continued toying with him. An inverted kick on top of the head from Vegeta, landed Zarbon straight to the ground and a side kick from behind sent him skidding ungracefully across the grass, marring the near-flawless features of Frieza's right hand man.

As Vegeta chuckled at his opponent's pathetic display of power, Zarbon got up and after a moment or so, his painful wheezes slowly began transforming into insidious laughter. Vegeta's mirth died out and began frowning dubiously at his older and bigger foe. That was not the response he expected.

"Well, I have to admit." Zarbon began, "You do impress me Vegeta. Your fighting skills have come a long way since the last time we met, but not quite far enough."

Zarbon got back to his feet and smirked at Vegeta, stifling a few laughs all the while.

"So I'm not strong enough to beat you huh?" Vegeta asked. "Funny because that's what I thought I was doing, unless you're trying to tell me you've been holding back."

"That's right." Confessed Zarbon.

Vegeta shook his head and chortled, foolishly believing that his opponent was simply getting desperate and/or delusional.

"Go ahead, laugh if you want." Zarbon said ominously. "I'm about to wipe that stupid smile right off your face. It's time I showed you my true power." He gently brushed away two thick emerald strands from his face, as he continued. "You ever hear the saying, 'beauty is only skin-deep'? Well
right now, you're only seeing the beauty."

"Is that so?" Derided Vegeta. "Well pardon me if I hadn't noticed. Let's see it!"

Zarbon sniggered, before spreading out his arms without warning. His muscles suddenly augmented to three times their normal size and soon his whole body dilated, becoming so much-uglier. He looked absolutely hideous. What manner of beast was this?!

"With great pleasure, I introduce you to the beast!" Zarbon proclaimed in a monstrous voice, completely antithetical to the beauty, elegance and finesse that were the blue warrior's trademark characteristics.

Zarbon landed a swift running knee-strike on Vegeta's midsection, knocking the wind right out of him, before the Prince even knew what had happen. He proceeded to land blow after blow and grabbed his face with both hands, head-butting him repeatedly on the forehead, so hard that the Saiyan felt his skull crack.

'What on Earth?!' Vegeta thought in dismay. 'I never knew he could transform! I can't toy with him! I must fight him at full power!'

The Saiyan quickly flared his Ki to it's maximum, as the two juggernauts clashed full force.

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"Zarbon's power spiked like crazy!" Gohan exclaimed, completely at a loss.

"Yeah, what the hell?" Krillin thought audibly, unsettled by it all. "He was holding back that whole time! There's no way Vegeta can beat him now!"

"This is bad Krillin!"

"What? What do you mean Gohan?" The bald man narrowed his eyes, disapprovingly. "It's just Vegeta. I say, let him die, for all we care!"

"I understand what you mean Krillin, but at least Vegeta didn't kill those Namekians." Gohan argued. "No matter how bad he is, he's still better than Frieza."

"Well when you put it that way, maybe." Krillin said, sighing and scratching his head. "Well, either way, let's get to Bulma as quick as we can. We've got a mission to complete!"

"Right!"

And so the duo continued their trek.

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Zarbon was repeatedly besting Vegeta, while the Prince was breathing in a rasped manner, had one closed eye and nasty bruises suffusing on his forehead. Things were certainly not going as planned. But he refused to give up! He was intent on destroying Frieza! Zarbon was nothing but a sycophant and he refused to be beaten by someone as detestable as that!

The blue fighter grabbed Vegeta from behind in a full nelson, midair, when suddenly, he caught
wind of a mild odor, submerged beneath the fragrant smell of lavender soap, yet unable to escape his highly sensitive olfactory senses.

"Goodness Vegeta, you reek of sex!" He stated in his monstrous voice. "I don't know it escaped my attention earlier hahahahaha!"

"Shut up!" Vegeta yelled back.

"So, who've you been fucking, little Prince?!" Zarbon chortled. "Please do tell! You know, I'd love a turn myself!"

"I said, SHUT UP!" Vegeta roared, managing to slip an arm free and use it to repeatedly elbow his opponent's midsection, until he was finally forced to let go. Zarbon clutched his aching ribcage, groaning painfully. The Prince was panting heavily. Shit! He couldn't let this bastard find out about Bulma! Damnit, why the fuck did he even give a shit?! Let him take her for all he cared! He snarled furiously! No, he couldn't let anyone touch her! The mere idea of it made his gut tighten in disrelish! She was his and only his! He'd never felt so possessive before in his life and as much as it sickened him, he was unable to suppress the feeling!

Zarbon wiped some blood off his lip, before smiling evilly at the Saiyan.

"You seem agitated, Vegeta." The elite warrior noted, furrowing his brows ominously. "Don't tell me you've found yourself a little fuck-toy and aren't willing to share?!"

"SHUT UUUUPPPP!" The Saiyan Prince bellowed as a magnificent blue aura, more potent than before, flared around him, overwhelming fury deluging every boiling blood cell in his body, at the thought of his beastly opponent getting his repulsive hands on Bulma! No, he wouldn't allow it! No one but himself, had any claim over her!

"What the?" Zarbon had disbelief writ all over his face, as his opponent launched towards him with newfound speed and strength.

With power he didn't know he had, Vegeta began ravaging Zarbon.

After taking a few blows, Zarbon powered up to his max and began trying to counter. The incensed Saiyan was much stronger than he had thought! He could no longer take him lightly!

Though briefly managing to tap into a hidden larder of strength, Vegeta's attacks weren't really affecting Zarbon as much as he'd hoped and he felt his reserves fade fast. He was on his last foot.

"Impressive Vegeta, you really have come a long way." Zarbon commented between slightly heaved breaths. He could clearly see his opponent's overt fatigue. "But you cannot keep this up much longer and you know it!"

"I WILL NOT LOSE!" Vegeta proclaimed in a blaring bellow of rage and resolve, as he barraged his opponent with blast after blast, exhausting the last vestiges of his energy. His breathing was more strained than ever before and his eyes widened in shock and horror as the smoke cleared and he witnessed a furious Zarbon, piercing his very soul with a deathly glare. The elite was not completely unscathed and was even having trouble breathing. Several bruises and lacerations were visible, violet blood oozed out of his wounds, but unlike the Saiyan, he was still in the game.

"BASTARD!" He yelled, as he rocketed towards Vegeta, ramming the top of his head straight on
the Prince's face, crushing his nasal bones and worsening a severe cut on his bottom lip, in the process. As Vegeta landed on the ground, Zarbon quickly straddled his waist and disfigured his face with wrathful blow after wrathful blow, before finally stopping and glaring at the Prince's battered form.

Vegeta's face was marred with injuries and completely bloodied. This must have been what Kakarot had felt like when he'd defeated him on Earth. He could barely help it as his lips slightly quirked up at the memory.

"What's so funny, monkey?!" Zarbon sneered.

Vegeta chuckled a little, barely able to open his better eye.

"You may have- changed form- Zarbon-" Vegeta rasped out and chuckled a little more, between breaths. "But- you still- hit like-"

Vegeta continued coughing repeatedly.

"Like what?!"

"A girl." He coughed out and laughed a little more.

"WHAT?!" The mutant roared in a mix of disbelief and rage.

"That's right." Vegeta said, in a drained voice. He knew when he was beaten and when to cut his losses. He realized now that there was only one chance for him, only one way out of this whole mess, though it presented a perilous risk. "You think you can hurt me- weakling?"

Zarbon snarled and punched him hard, right across the jaw. Vegeta let out a hiss of pain, before forcibly turning his bloodied and fractured face towards Zarbon once again.

"Fool- I've withstood the brunt- of Frieza's- tortures-" The Prince wheezed, his voice laced with pride, "And not once- did I- grovel- before him! What chance- does- a lickspittle like you- have?"

Zarbon roared angrily at him and again punched him hard in the face, but it wasn't quite enough to put his lights out.

"Go on- Zarbon-" Vegeta smirked as best he could, tilting his face up. "Wipe that 'stupid smile'- from my face."

Zarbon hollered as he continued pounding Vegeta, but that exasperating smirk of his was as perpetual as ever.

'That's right Zarbon.' Vegeta thought gleefully, drinking in every ounce of pain as though each one was a refreshing flute of blood orange champagne. 'Don't let up. The more you hurt me, the stronger I'll become once I heal. And when I do, you'll be the first person to taste the wrath of the Saiyan Prince!'

Vegeta knew he would soon end up in the heart of the enemy's territory, but it was bound to happen one way or another. At least this time, his powers would rise dramatically. He had formed the perfect plan, but had to act meticulously if he were to execute it. One wrong move and he'd be within the lizard's grasp, back to square one or worse. The Prince eventually lost consciousness,
but he was still able to retain his smug look, as he imagined Frieza's face contorted in absolute rage, shame and horror, once the lizard realized that the dragon balls he'd worked so hard to gather had slipped right through his fingers. And as for Zarbon, oh boy, his end would be one for the record books, he'd personally see to that!

Zarbon glowered down at him! He hated that look! It was aggravating him to no avail! If he killed Vegeta now, he'd be taking the easy way out! He said he would wipe that smirk off his face and he was intent on doing just that, no matter what! Vegeta was out cold! His best bet was to take him to Lord Frieza! Then he could torture him incessantly! Frieza would be most impressed! With that thought in mind, Zarbon reverted to his original form, hoisted Vegeta's unconscious body over his shoulder and headed back towards his master's ship.

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"Vegeta's Ki signal's vanished." Gohan noted.

"Yeah, my goodness." Krillin commented in disbelief. "Even with Goku here, how the hell can we beat some that powerful, not to mention Frieza?"

"I don't know." Gohan replied, shaking his head. "Let's not think about it now though! We have to rescue Bulma!"

"You're right!"

About fifteen minutes later, the duo arrived at their intended location.

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A long while after Vegeta had left, Bulma decided to hit the shower and rapidly began cleaning his infernal scent off of her, but not before spraying the room with an overdose of perfume that muffled the raw smell of sex permeating through the air. She hated him more than anyone, anyone other than herself that is! She'd willingly tainted her very being, by mixing her blood with that of a genocidal beast!

'How could I be so naive?!' She cursed herself. 'How could I give myself away to that fucking bastard and betray Yamcha like that?!

She'd damned her soul and over what? A good fuck? No, it couldn't be just that. She could swear she'd felt something more! The heiress shook her head fiercely. No, there was absolutely nothing between the two of them, except disgust and abhorrence! That fucker called her a 'whore'! She meant nothing to him! He could die and burn in hell for all she cared! In fact, the sooner the better!

She let out a somber sigh of despair, her shoulders slumping. As forgiving and sweet as Yamcha was, she knew he'd never let this go, assuming he was brought back to life and she couldn't blame him at all. She'd taken him for granted, assuming he'd always be there for her. Maybe she'd overreacted when she dumped him last year. It wasn't like he stood her up on purpose. Puar told her that he was just broke, but she didn't even want to hear his side of the story. Bulma let out another sigh, deciding not to dwell on the past. If she and Yamcha weren't over then, they certainly were now. Things could never go back to the way they were before. The best way she could make amends was by reviving him and all the others.

Her thoughts came to an abrupt halt as she heard footsteps headed her way, whereby a nasty snarl
Krillin and Gohan were now inside the bedroom of Bulma's capsule's house.

"God, I can't even breathe in here." Gohan wrinkled his nose.

"I know right?" Krillin did likewise and heard the shower running inside. A smile lit his face as he sensed his friend's Ki. Boy, wouldn't she be excited when she saw the two of them?! He knew he was!

He went over and knocked on the door.

"FUCK OFF YOU PIECE OF SHIT!" An angry and shrilling voice roared back, causing both Krillin and Gohan to wince and clasp their ears. After a moment's pause, the demi-Saiyan boy spoke up.

"Bulma, it's us." He used both hands to echo his voice. The heiress' eyes suddenly widened, her jaw going fully ajar, as recognition hit her like a freight train. "It's Gohan and Krillin."

"No- w-w-way." Bulma was completely dumbfounded. "B-But h-how?!"

"Come on outside and we'll tell you all about it!" Krillin grinned. "You have no idea how good it is to hear your voice again, Bulma!"

"Krillin, it is you!" The heiress twinkled, as she quickly began cleaning herself off. "How'd you guys get here?!"

"It's a long story." The bald man responded, "We'll tell you everything, once you're finished! We'll be waiting in the living room, so we don't suffocate to death." He quipped.

Sure thing!" She quickly rinsed off the soap she'd lathered on her body, before drying up with a towel and getting dressed in a pair of hot pink, silk pajama bottoms, red flip flops and a powder pink, cotton singlet. She immediately made a run towards the living room and the moment she saw the duo, she ran up to them, got on her knees and pulled them flush towards her, in a tight embrace, tears of joy brimming her eyes.

Krillin's cheeks flushed a deep shade of red. Gohan, on the other hand, felt extremely awkward. The only one who used to do that to him was his mother.

"I'm so happy to see you guys!" She gushed. "I can't believe you're here."

Krillin looked as though he was completely lost in his own little dream world.

"Err, Bulma?" Gohan broke the companionable silence that ensued.

"Sorry guys, it's just been ages since I've seen anyone from home." She said, as she withdrew, placing her hands on both their shoulders. "Let's go get comfortable and you can fill me in on everything, okay?!"

"Sounds good." Affirmed Krillin, perusing her closely, as he noticed hints of distress she was
trying to mask behind her overjoyed expression. "Is everything okay, Bulma?" He asked concernedly.

"Yeah, it's fine." She replied, forcing a strained smile. "Let's just sit down, alright?" She replied, her voice cracking slightly with the last few words, as she headed over to the sofa nearby, plopping herself in the middle and gesturing for the duo to sit on either side of her, as though she needed to be sheltered by their company, after all the time she'd spent with him.

"Alright." Krillin nodded weakly, deciding not to press the matter, figuring she may have been hurt and upset because honestly, who wouldn't be, in her situation? He began heading towards her, with Gohan hot on his heels.

As they sat down, Krillin and Gohan elucidated the situation to their friend, explaining how they'd planned to leave Earth to go rescue her and that Goku would be arriving in a short while, though they didn't know exactly when.

"Goku's coming!" Bulma beamed. "Wow, this is great! I already have a dragon ball with me now."

"Yeah we know." Krillin frowned. "We saw Vegeta take it."

Her expression turned somber as she heard his name.

"Bulma, you don't have to worry about him." Krillin reassured.

"Worried?!" She growled back, causing the bald warrior to cringe. "Who said I was worried?! I hate him! I hope he goes and gets himself killed!"

Krillin smirked.

"You don't have to worry about that B-"

"I told you I'm not worried!" She snarled, whereby Krillin cowered in his recess of his side of the sofa, holding his hands up in surrender.

"Umm, Bulma, what Krillin means is that Vegeta's gone." Gohan clarified.

All color fell from Bulma's face as she looked at the boy in horror.

"W-What?" She spluttered out, her hands trembling.

"He was fighting one of Frieza's goons and we sensed his energy disappear." Krillin elucidated further. "He's dead Bulma! He can't hurt you anymore!" He surmised that Vegeta must have been the reason behind her agony.

Bulma felt her eyes water as she unwittingly planted her palm on her throbbing heart. Dead? Was Vegeta really dead? Why was a wave of despair unlike any other, beginning to crash down upon her? Isn't this what she wanted?

"Bulma, are you okay?" Gohan asked solicitously, placing a hand on her shoulder.

"I need to use the bathroom." Bulma slurred in a broken voice, standing up as she dashed over to her intended location and locked the door behind her. She went over to the flush and began to
retch, tears beginning to spill rapidly, one after another.

'Why?!' She though in anguish. 'Why does it hurt so bad?!

Twenty minutes passed by as her mind continued flashing through the short memories of their time together, when she'd first seen him, a bloodthirsty fiend ready to finish off her friends, when they'd arrived on that Frieza planet, when he'd protected her from Cui and the others and when they'd made love the first time. At that moment she'd never felt happier all her life. It was as though he'd washed away all the sorrow and misery within her, as he constantly pleased her body and soul in ways she'd never experienced before. Soon afterwards he fell asleep on top of her, breathing raggedly against her neck as she held onto him firmly, never wanting to let go and wishing it would never end, hoping against hope that he'd shed away his husk of evil and let love prevail. She should've thought better.

Their second bout of sex was purely physical and he'd shoved her away soon after it was all over, as though she were a piece of trash. Not long afterwards, everything went downhill, when he'd declared his true feelings towards her. But was that really how he'd felt? He said as much, didn't he?! Then why?! Why could she still feel him inside her?! If was as though there were some sort of link binding the two of them together and as tenuous as it was, she could still feel it, as though he were still- alive?! No, it couldn't be! Gohan and Krillin sensed him go! He had to be dead! But what if- why did she even care?! Letting out a hiss of frustration, before sighing dejectedly, she rinsed her face clean before heading back out to her friends.

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Earlier, right after Bulma had left, Krillin and Gohan stared at each other incredulously, both nonplussed and completely at a loss for what had just materialized. After a while, the older warrior broke the uncomfortable silence.

"Gohan, I-I don't understand." He said, confused and solicitous at the same time. "I thought- I thought that news would've made her happy."

"I wonder Krillin." The half-Saiyan boy began, as he tried to piece together the disarrayed situation. "Maybe the two of them- well, you know-"

"Quite Gohan!" The bald warrior scowled, raising a fist up threateningly, whereby the younger boy flinched defensively. "Bulma'd never do that! She's with Yamcha for goodness sake!" He paused for a moment, glancing upwards. "Well, was. I know they broke up and all, but still." He once again frowned at his child companion. "Bulma wouldn't, okay?!"

"Uh- wouldn't w-what?" Gohan asked perplexingly.

"Well you know- what you were going to say."

"You mean she wouldn't make friends with him."

Krillin smacked himself on the forehead, blushing embarrassedly. Yep, training under Master Roshi certainly had left his mind in the gutter and he'd completely forgotten that this was Goku's son.

"Umm, well, is that what you think Gohan?"
"Maybe." The child answered, tilting his head downwards and frowning.

"But she said she hated him." Krillin argued.

"I don't know Krillin." The boy replied. "Piccolo always used to say the same thing about my father and me, but after a while I just stopped believing him."

"Well yeah, but- why would she?"

"I'm not sure." He sighed and recalled what that Namekian elder had told them. "You remember what Elder Tsuno said? That Vegeta seemed kind of undecided in the beginning, when he was about to destroy his village. Maybe it was cause of-"

"Bulma?" Krillin interjected, pausing awhile, his jaw hanging. "But- but that- that doesn't make any sense."

"I know." Gohan replied. "But- maybe he's not as bad as we thought."

"Gohan, he's our enemy!" The bald warrior growled, before his expression went blank. "Or was."

"Maybe we can ask Bulma about it."

"No Gohan, leave her be for now." Krillin shook his head disapprovingly. "She needs her space. Heaven knows what she's been through."

"Alright."

Many minutes passed by.

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Bulma headed out of the bathroom, having been able to clear her mind a little. Yes, Vegeta was still alive! Somehow she just knew it! Question was, why did it even matter to her?!

She went over to Krillin and Gohan and plopped herself on the sofa between them, as she let out a dismal sigh.

"Umm Bulma?" The bald warrior looked at his friend blankly. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine Krillin." She gave him a strained smile. "Sorry about that, but I'm okay now, really."

"O-kay." He replied, deciding to drop the issue. "Uh- well, I'm going to go collect the other dragon ball. You two sit tight, okay?"

Gohan and Bulma both nodded in unison and Krillin zoomed off. He was still more baffled than ever. What exactly had gone on between Bulma and Vegeta? Did they really befriend one-another as Gohan had suggested? Or was there something more? He shook his head fiercely.

'I'm being an idiot!' He self-chided, as he continued his trek. 'Bulma may act a little unorthodox sometimes, but she's definitely smarter than that!'

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Zarbon chuckled in glee as he headed back towards Frieza's spaceship with an unconscious Vegeta. Oh yes, he could just see the delight on his master's face!

About forty minutes later he arrived and had the Prince placed in a regeneration tank. He himself spent a good ten minutes or so in a tank himself. Loath as he was to admit it, Vegeta had caused him far more trouble than he would've expected. The Saiyan was alive, but he didn't know if he would be able to regain consciousness. He'd been beaten up really bad, after all. He shook those thoughts aside, as he reached the throne room.

"Lord Frieza, it's Zarbon."

"The door's open." Replied the Lizard Lord, as he peered out the window, his arms folded whilst he was still airborne. He floated back down and whirled around, staring at his right-hand man for a tense moment, before continuing. "So, did you find the village?"

"No, I've come to tell you that I was able to apprehend Vegeta." He informed. "He's currently in a regeneration tank, under the watchful eye of Appule."

Frieza chuckled slightly, before laughing hysterically with glee.

"My, my, this is good news Zarbon!" He commended. "Nice work! I'll finally teach that stubborn monkey of mine, to whom he belongs! I see you've been in the tank yourself. He must have caused you quite a bit of trouble. Did you not use your powers of transformation?"

"I did, but he was still a force to be reckoned with." Zarbon replied adamantly. "I don't know how, but he's much stronger than before."

"Hmmmm, sounds interesting."

"That's not all." Zarbon stated. "He said he killed Dodoria as well."

Frieza snickered as he heard that bit of news.

"Good riddance."

"My Lord?" Zarbon asked, wide-eyed. While he wasn't a big fan of Dodoria's rashness, he was still one of their own.

"Dodoria got what was coming to him." Frieza stated callously. "He was a waste of space and I would've probably killed him myself sooner or later. He was really beginning to grate my nerves. I suppose he underestimated Vegeta and paid the ultimate price."

"Not that it would've made any difference, Lord." Zarbon remarked. "Vegeta's power was far greater than Dodoria's. He even caused me trouble in my transformed state. His resilience is amazing. Oh and get this, Dodoria told him the truth about how Planet Vegeta met its end."

"I see!" Frieza scowled. "I must say, I am very disappointed, since I wanted to tell him myself and witness the look of abject despair in his eyes, right before killing him." He sighed in disgruntlement before shrugging his shoulders. "Oh well, I guess torturing him to death will have to do."

"About that, Lord Frieza-" Zarbon bit his lip.
"What is it, Zarbon?" The lizard narrowed his eyes.

"I don't know if he'll regain consciousness, but if he does, I was hoping I could have a stab at him first." Requested the elite warrior.

"Well." Frieza paused a moment to consider, before nodding in assent. "Since you have done me a great service, I give you leave to do with him as you please. But he must regain consciousness, no matter what it takes. If I know this crafty little monkey, he's likely to have found a dragon ball and hidden it."

"Yes, Lord Frieza." Zarbon mumbled nervously before bowing. Just as he was about head out the door, however, he swivelled around as he remembered something else. "Oh, there's one more thing."

"Yes?" The lizard asked impatiently.

"Vegeta smelled of sex." He stated plainly. "It was faint and I could tell he tried to clean it off, but you know how potent my sense of smell can be."

"Oh?" Frieza contemplated for a moment and soon recalled the little verbal exchange between Vegeta and Cui they'd all heard over the scouter. "It must be the one Cui had mentioned: some blue-haired woman, if I remember correctly. Vegeta claimed to have killed her, did he not?" (A/N: Refer to Chapter 8).

"Yes, now I remember!" Exclaimed Zarbon, as it suddenly dawned on him. "But why would he say something like that?"

"Hmmm." Frieza mused. "It does seem strange. He's never kept a woman around after a single fuck. He probably did not want us to catch wind. I did not pay it much heed at the time, but it is unlikely that he would bring some girl all the way to Namek, just to do away with her. Why he did bring her here is the real question. Vegeta is not the type to mix work and play. He's always been very dedicated to his craft."

"Yes and there's something else too." Zarbon continued. "Vegeta seemed very possessive of this girl."

"Really, are you sure?" The lizard asked, eyeing his underling with sharp scrutiny.

"Yes, I'm positive." The elite nodded.

"This is great news." Frieza suddenly grinned, as he felt a rush of crazed delirium resonate through him. "If she is still alive and he really was stupid enough to have formed an attachment with some worthless female after everything I've put him through, I can use her as leverage to make him mine once again, only this time he wouldn't dare to betray me, lest he wishes to look on as I skin alive his little whore and maul her to death, but not before I take my time ravishing her. Finding her should not be too difficult, I believe. I'll just have to beat it out of Vegeta. Though it won't be easy, he's always been quite the stubborn little monkey."

"Y-Yes, L-Lord Frieza." Zarbon stammered, forcing on a strained smile. "But I think I have a better idea."
"And what would that be?"

"You know how prideful Vegeta is and how good I am with women." He smirked.

"Ahhh you sly dog!" Frieza chuckled, figuring him out within moments. "Very well then, I suppose I'll leave everything to you. After all, you have demonstrated your worth. Consider this your reward for a job well done."

"Thank you my Lord." He smiled gratifyingly and bowed, as he left the throne room and headed over to Appule, in the recovery room. Unlike many of his affiliates, he'd never indulged in the rape or ruination of others. Being a great admirer of beauty in both males and females, the whole idea seemed extremely repugnant to him. Plus he knew that nothing would hurt Vegeta more than seeing that girl of his scream in ecstasy, as he had his way with her! His lips quirked up at the thought. He arrived in the room shortly after.

"How is he?" Zarbon asked Appule.

"He's holding steady." Replied the purple-skinned alien. "I've managed to stabilize his vital signs for now. But he's still in critical condition. He may never regain consciousness."

"He's got to make it!" Zarbon exclaimed. "You revive him at all costs, do you understand?!!"

"Yes sir." The doctor croaked out.

'If he truly has hidden a dragon ball, then we need him awake, no matter what it takes.' Zarbon thought in consternation.

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Gohan peered at Bulma for a few moments, unsure of what to say. The heiress looked at him confusedly before glowering, beginning to feel peevish under his scrutiny.

"What?!" She growled.

"S-Sorry, B-Bulma." The boy averted his gaze, scratching his head sheepishly.

"No, I'm sorry Gohan." She replied, her expression softening. "I shouldn't yell at you like that."

"It's okay." The demi-Saiyan shook his head. "It's nothing."

"So uh- how've you been?" She asked awkwardly, after a short while.

"Good- I guess."

After an uncomfortable pause, Bulma let out a dejected sigh.

"I'm sorry I'm such terrible company kid." She said apologetically. "Usually I'm not so glum all the time, it's just-"

"Just what?" Gohan asked, after she cut off mid-sentence and turned away.

"Forget about it."
"Bulma, it's okay." Gohan said, tenderly placing his small hand on hers, in a gesture of support. "I'll- I'll understand."

The heiress let out a wry laugh.

"You're a nice boy Gohan, but I don't think you will." She responded.

"I will, I promise!" The half-Saiyan said adamantly, tightening his hold on her hand. "I- I- I lost Piccolo too." He said, his face downcast, as tears brimmed his big eyes. "He died protecting me." The child whispered.

Bulma gaped at the boy, completely dumbstruck.

"He- what?"

"He died for me." Gohan repeated.

Bulma continued staring at her best friend's son incredulously. Piccolo, the same monster who was literally an inch away from ending Goku's life, who tried to kill everyone of them and take over the planet? Sure, she'd been saddened by his demise too, but the last thing she'd have anticipated was that in his dying moments, he'd do something so noble!

"I know what you must be thinking, but he changed Bulma." Gohan stated fervently. "And- if you feel the same way about Vegeta, I- I understand."

Bulma withdrew her hand from the child's tight grip, as a frown twisted on her face, her gaze averted from his.

"I don't!" She stated, in an enraged, dismal and aggrieved tone. "I hate him!"

"O-Oh."

"I wish he- I wish he'd never come to Earth!" She exclaimed in a broken voice. "I wish none of this had happened!"

"Did you mean what you said Bulma?" Gohan asked, after a brief pause. "Did you really wish him dead?"

"Can we not talk about him anymore, Gohan?!" She snarled at the half-Saiyan. "I just want to get him out of my system already and you're not helping!"

"S-S-Sorry." The child whimpered, shrinking back. Boy, Bulma was just as intimidating as his mother, if not more!

"No I'm sorry, kid." She replied, distress embedded on her countenance. "You're a good boy Gohan and I know you're trying to help but- he just- wasn't who I thought he was."

"You mean Vegeta?"

"Hmmm." She gave a half-hearted, mumbled reply.
"But he did spare that Namekian village." Gohan stated, whereby Bulma knit her brows at him, questioningly. "Did he- do it because of you?"

"I don't think so Gohan." She sighed. "They were a means to an end, just like I was!" She grimaced.

"Is that what he told you?"

Bulma didn't reply.

"Piccolo used to say things like that to me all the time, you know." Gohan smiled wistfully. "I never really believed him though, at least not after a while." Bulma gazed at the boy curiously, before he continued. "Maybe- maybe Vegeta was kind of the same."

"I don't know, you really think so Gohan?"

"I can't say Bulma, you knew him best." The boy replied. "Piccolo always put on a cold front, but as he was dying, he told me how proud he was and that I was like the son he never had." Tears began streaming down the child's cheeks at the memory of his dying mentor's very last words, a sombre look embedding his face.

Bulma was totally awe-stricken. Piccolo really did that?! Unreal! It was clear to her now, that the Earth-born Namekian was on their side! She smiled and wiped the tears off Gohan's face.

"Hey, it's alright, we're gonna wish everyone back kid." She vowed, her tone maternal. "Piccolo too, okay?"

Gohan's face flushed mortifyingly, as he realized he was crying.

"Alright." He smiled back and after a short pause continued. "And- if you want to wish Vegeta back with Earth's dragon balls once Piccolo returns, I- I understand."

"Gohan, I-"

"It's fine Bulma." He interjected reassuringly, placing his small hand on her shoulder. "I'm okay with it, trust me. And I know dad would be too, plus Frieza's really powerful and Vegeta was working against him. We need all the help we can get. Maybe he can join us like Piccolo did. I wouldn't mind."

Bulma's eyes began glistening, as she averted her gaze. Gohan was so forgiving, kind and innocent, just like Goku. But after what she'd done, she felt she didn't deserve his consolation. She'd betrayed Yamcha. If her friends knew about it, they'd most likely loathe her and rightfully so. The very thought of it made her want to burst her eyes out.

"You're a good boy Gohan." She looked at him warmly, as tears began cascading down her beautiful face. "I wish I was more like you and your father." She exhaled despondently, as her lips quivered and she continued in a cracked voice. "You're both so sweet and selfless. All I care about is myself and what I want. I never make room for anyone else."

The demi-Saiyan felt his heart constrict upon hearing that.

"That's not true Bulma, don't say that." He wrapped his small arms around her neck, as he embraced her from the side. "You saved all of us. We'd be dead if it wasn't for you."
The heiress felt guilt flood through her as she felt the skin on her neck and shoulder dampen from the child's tears and was unable to stop herself, as she turned his way and embraced him back, winding one around his waist and placing her other hand on the back of his head, as she began to cry on his shoulder, feeling more vulnerable and in need of comfort than ever before.

"Shhh, It's okay Bulma." Gohan crooned in her ear. "It's okay."

"It's not okay Gohan!" She sobbed. "I did something horrible! I can never forgive myself! Everyone will hate me now!"

"That's not true!" Gohan stated vehemently. He could no longer help it as Bulma's anguish passed onto him, as though it were contagious and he too began to weep. "We came here for you! Everyone was devastated when you were taken away from us! How could anyone ever hate you, after what you did for us?!" With those words he tightened his hold on her, as though needing to convey to her that she wasn't alone and that she would always be cared for.

"I'm so sorry, I'm sorry for everything." She said to no one in particular.

"Don't say that!" Gohan entreated in a pained voice, the tears cascading down his face. "I'm the one who's sorry! I was the one that failed you! I was too weak to protect you, just like I was Piccolo!"

"You weren't."

"I was."

The two continued wailing on each other's shoulders, solacing one another as they let out all their tears, sorrow and frustration. Long moments passed and neither one was willing to let go, as they held on fervently.

"Thank you." Bulma finally said.

The boy pulled away and smiled at her. Bulma smiled back endearingly, placing her hands on either side of the child's face and kissing his chubby cheek lovingly, causing a huge blush to smear across his face.

"If I ever have a kid, I hope he's just like you Gohan."

"Thanks Bulma." The half-Saiyan replied sheepishly, before looking at her in plea. "And uh-please don't tell anyone about this, especially Krillin."

"Only if you don't." Replied the heiress, smiling.

"Sure thing!" Gohan grinned.

Bulma felt a lot more inspired, her battered morale taking an upsurge, thanks to little Gohan. The child epitomized everything that was pure and innocent, everything she'd lost when she handed herself over to Vegeta. She shook her head, deciding not to dwell on it. There were more important things at hand and she knew that!

Krillin made his return about a half hour later, with the one-star dragon ball in hand.
"Hey guys!" He beamed as he opened the door. "Check this baby out!"

"Whoa, nice Krillin!" Gohan exclaimed.

"Good work!" Bulma gushed. The bald warrior explained to them that Namek's dragon granted three wishes instead of one.

"This is great!" Gohan enthused. "That means we can wish back everyone killed by the Saiyans and by Frieza's men, even Vegeta."

"Uh- you mean wish back the people Vegeta killed, well, technically he didn't kill anyone, but-"

"No I meant we can- uh- wish Vegeta back." Gohan clarified.

"Gohan, did you hit yourself on the head?!" Krillin scowled in fury. "Why on Earth would we want to do that?!"

"We'll probably need his help against Frieza." The boy argued. "Especially since dad's not here yet."

"No!" The bald man replied resolutely. "It's not happening, end of story!"

"But Krillin-"

"Guys, can you stop it already?!" Bulma growled at the two warriors. They turned in her direction, whereby she let out a dismal sigh, before louring. "Look, we can't make a wish with just two dragon balls and as for that asshole Vegeta, we don't even know that he's dead, anyway!"

The duo looked at her curiously for a moment.

"Bulma, we sensed his Ki signal vanish." Krillin stated. "There's no way-"

"I know that Krillin!" Bulma hissed back. "Look, I don't know how, but I just have a feeling he that he's still alive. Even if he's not, I could care less about him. Wish him back, don't wish him back, it doesn't matter to me, anyway!" She lied.

"But- didn't you say you wanted him d-"

"I know what I said Krillin!" She snarled back, causing the warrior to flinch. "I don't want to talk about him, alright?!" She continued in a softer voice. "Let's just focus on finding a way to gather the rest of the dragon balls."

"Sure."

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About an hour had passed, since Vegeta had entered the regeneration tank. He'd been awake for a while, but had suppressed his Ki, feigning unconsciousness, as he waited for the opportune moment to make his move!! Yes!! Soon six of the dragon balls would belong to him and he'd have just one more to collect!! Every fibre in his body was deluged with frenzied excitement at the prospects of finally attaining godlike power!!! He would become a legendary being, feared across
all plains of existence and Frieza would suffer and beg for mercy, before he ended his miserable life!!

A/N: Has Frieza caught wind of Vegeta's affinity towards his prisoner?! And if so, what sinister plans does the icy despot have up his sleeve?! Will Vegeta's plans to seize the five dragon balls in Frieza's possession, at last come to fruition?! And what of the Earthly trio?! Will he be headed their way, should everything go as planned?! Find out next time and please, tell me your thoughts!
Fruition

Chapter 16: Fruition

About an hour had passed, since Vegeta had entered the regeneration tank. He'd been awake for a while, but had suppressed his Ki, feigning unconsciousness, as he waited for the opportune moment to make his move! Yes! Soon six of the dragon balls would belong to him and he'd have just one more to collect! Every fibre in his body was deluged with frenzied excitement at the prospects of finally attaining godlike power! He would become legendary and feared across every plain of existence, but best of all Frieza would suffer and beg for mercy, before he ended his miserable life!

"Frieza's not going to be happy." Appule sweat-dropped. "At this rate, he'll never recover." He then took a breather and smirked arrogantly at his patient. "It looks like the high and mighty Prince Vegeta isn't so mighty after all, now is he?"

Vegeta was hearing every word of it and sniggering on the inside. These idiots had no clue what they were in for. Thanks to this newer model regeneration tank he'd recovered long ago, but they were completely oblivious. The moment he knew Frieza and Zarbon fully had their guards down, he'd find the dragon balls and make his escape. Knowing Frieza as well as he did, he surmised they were with him at all times. He needed a diversion. Luckily, he had the element of surprise was on his side. They were unaware of his ability to lower his Ki to an essentially nonexistent level, so they'd never anticipate such a move. The master and his lapdog were currently in the throne room, but their Ki signals indicated a slight degree of vigilance. No, now wasn't the right moment! To pull this off, he needed nothing less than perfection! That much was certain!

"I hope you do pull out of it." Appule grinned sadistically. "I'm going to really enjoy watching Zarbon torture you to death."

'That won't happen.' Vegeta thought wickedly. 'Consider yourself honored Doctor, for you'll be the first one to witness my new power.' He re-focused on the energy signatures of his ex-master and his lackey. 'Hmmm, Frieza and Zarbon's Ki signals seem completely relaxed now. Perfect! Here goes nothing!'

"I'm going to take a little break." Appule said snidely. "Just promise you'll sit tight till I get back. I wouldn't want you to wander off and get hurt."

At that moment Vegeta's eyes abruptly snapped open. The purple-skinned doctor was dumbstruck, a look of pure horror and disbelief plastered on his face. Before Appule could make a move, the Prince fired a powerful Ki blast that staggered the entire ship.

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Zarbon stumbled from the quake.

"What in the blazes was that?!"

"Find out!" Ordered Frieza.

By the time, Frieza and Zarbon made it to the recovery room, it was a complete ruin and Vegeta
was nowhere to be found.

"He must have flown off." Zarbon was staring dumbly at the hole Vegeta had blasted through the ship's exterior.

"Well go after him!" His master ordered. Any respect he'd attained for Zarbon was now beginning to fade fast and be replaced with contempt.

Vegeta was hiding behind a pillar, laughing at the two of them. This was just way too much fun.

'Excellent, Everyone's here!' He thought gleefully.

"If you do not find him within the hour, you'll wish you'd never been born!" Frieza shrieked.

'They're almost making this too easy.' Vegeta snickered inaudibly as he darted out of the recovery room and made a beeline towards the throne room, while Zarbon was aimlessly flying around the ship in a futile search for the absconder.

'Oh Frieza, you're so overconfident in your abilities that you've left even your precious dragon balls unguarded!' Vegeta chortled gleefully, as his obsidian eyes feasted upon the enthralling sight of no less than five glistering dragon balls, just waiting to be procured. 'Well, I assure you, it will be your last mistake!'

Vegeta chuckled wryly as he observed Zarbon's fruitless attempts at locating him. He then took on a pensive look, as he began strategizing.

'Yes, I suppose that should work.' He thought after a moment, a wicked smirk creeping onto his face, as he dashed outside the door.

"HEY ARE YOU GUYS LOOKING FOR SOMEONE!" He yelled out loud, catching both Frieza and Zarbon's attention, before quickly firing an intense Ki blast that landed flush on the ship's central radiator, which was almost filled to the brim with highly combustible engine coolant. What followed was a violent explosion that damn near destroyed the entire ship. As Zarbon tried to make his way inside, he was blown away by the turbulence.

The Prince then darted back into the room, firing another blast right out of the thick, rounded perspex window and tossing the five dragon balls away as far as he could, knowing precisely where each orb would land. This was perfect! His plan was coming to fruition at last! Zarbon had done him a huge favor! And he knew just how to thank him!

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Gohan and Krillin had both been catnapping, in order to recover their strength after all the onerous training they'd engaged themselves in, while Bulma was lounging aimlessly, only to eventually join them. A long while later, the boy's eyes suddenly snapped open.

"It's Vegeta!"

Bulma shot up.

"What?!!" She asked wide-eyed.
"He's back!" Krillin sensed it too. "What on Earth is going on?! I thought that Zarbon freak destroyed him!"

"He's alive?!" Bulma exclaimed, her heartbeat soaring. She was unable to help it as a huge flood of relief washed over her.

"Bulma, we have to get out of here and take the dragon balls with us." Krillin said frantically. "We're sitting ducks if he decides to come back here."

"We can't Krillin." Bulma sighed dejectedly. "He has the dragon radar with him."

"Oh no." Krillin said despairingly. "Dammit!"

"Hey, it's alright, maybe we can convince him to help us, you guys." Gohan argued.

"Gohan, not this again, he's our enemy!" Krillin seethed. "Why can't you get it through your head?!"

"We have no choice Krillin." Bulma placed a hand on her forehead, letting out a disheartened exhale, as she stood up from the sofa. "He and Goku may be our only shot at getting rid of Frieza. He said he has a plan."

The two warriors peered at their blue-haired friend.

"Listen carefully." The heiress began explaining. "The Namekian dragon grants us three wishes, you said. So we'll use one to wish back all the innocent people the Saiyans killed on Earth and the second to revive the people on Namek. That's only fair, since we're using their dragon balls. You said Goku gets here soon, right?"

"Right, go on." Krillin gestured for her to continue.

"Alright, I'm guessing neither of you two know what a Super Saiyan is, right?"

"S-S-Super Saiyan?" Gohan asked, completely bewildered.

"I heard Guru speak about Super Saiyans." Krillin reminisced. "He said they're extremely powerful. What exactly are they?"

Bulma had reiterated what Vegeta had told her of how the Super Saiyan of legend was the most formidable entity in the entire Universe and ended up destroying himself, due to the sheer magnitude of his overwhelming power.

"I see, so then what're you planning to do with that third wish?"

"I know you're gonna think I'm crazy, but the only chance we have of beating Frieza is if we wish for both Goku and Vegeta to become Super Saiyans."

"What?" Krillin hissed. "No way! If it's Goku I understand, but who knows the kind of damage Vegeta can do with power like that!"

"We can deal with him later!" Bulma shot back. "You don't know how strong Frieza is! From what I've heard, he may well be over a hundred times stronger than Vegeta!"
Krillin and Gohan both lost about a few dozen shades of coloring as they absorbed that overwhelmingly horrifying piece of information. How could strength like that possibly exist?! They knew Frieza was stronger than every single one of them, but one hundred times Vegeta or more was far greater than they'd bargained for!

"But-but- maybe we can just- use the wish on Goku- why Vegeta?!!" Krillin grit his teeth in frustration.

"I don't want to either, Krillin, but we have no choice." Bulma sighed in despair, before a thought hit her. "Wait, since Gohan's half Saiyan, maybe we can use the wish on him too!"

"You think that'll work, Bulma?" The demi-Saiyan asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I'm not sure, but we can at least try."

"What if Vegeta doesn't agree?!" Krillin protested. "He might just kill us, first chance he gets!"

"What other choice do we have though?!" Bulma countered. "Since he has my radar on him, we can't take the dragon balls with us! If we do, he'll most certainly hunt us down and kill us and I don't know about you two knuckleheads, but I'm not ready to kick the bucket just yet! Face it! Our only option is trying to convince him to give us the other two wishes, since he only needs one!"

After a moment or two, Krillin's shoulders slumped as he finally capitulated, but a while later, he remembered something important.

"Oh yeah, by the way Bulma, we forgot to tell you, but you're father built us a dragon radar too." He informed, pulling the device out of his belt and handing it over to his friend.

"Oh that's great!" She smiled and switched it on, looking at it in wonder. "What's this? The other five dragon balls have been scattered. What's going on?"

"Wait, what?" Krillin asked, poking his head forward to get a good look in. "You're right! What does that mean?"

"I'm guessing Vegeta's might have gotten ahold of them somehow." The smirk that lit her face at the thought died almost instantaneously. "If he took Frieza's five and we've got two here, then- that accounts for all seven!" She gushed.

"You're right!" Gohan beamed. "I can sense Vegeta around that area. This is great! We can wish Piccolo and the others back!"

"Maybe." Krillin frowned, before louring. "Darn it, if only Goku were here, he'd know what to do!"

"He'll be here soon." The half-Saiyan child replied adamantly. "I just know it! I can feel him somehow!"

"I hope so." Bulma smiled. "I miss him."

Several minutes passed in silence, as the trio were pacing about, frenziedly.

"Krillin! Do you feel it?!" Gohan abruptly asked.
"Yeah." The bald man affirmed. "It's Vegeta and Zarbon again!"

"What?!!" Bulma asked, suddenly alarmed, her heart racing.

Vegeta had gathered together all the dragon balls he'd flung from Frieza's ship. They were at a safe distance, many miles away. Not a moment later, he sensed Zarbon lurking about, all on his own. Oh, this was just too good to be true. Now six dragon balls were within his grasp! Just one more and he'd attain the powers of the legendary Super Saiyan. Everything would be his! The entire Universe would crumble before the might of the Saiyan Prince! He pulled out the dragon radar from his breastplate and tried opening it, but it wasn't working.

'Dammit!' He growled inwardly. 'The regeneration fluids must have tampered with the electronics!'

Oh well, it didn't matter. He'd retrieve the other two dragon balls after dealing with his dear old friend, Zarbon. He smirked as he sensed his ex-superior closing in and shot up into the air, facing him without a trace of fear in his eyes.

"It's you!" Shouted Zarbon as he saw his adversary and whisked straight towards him. "You're not getting away, Vegeta! Not this time!"

The Prince smirked at the oncoming adversary. Zarbon stopped just as he was about five yards away from the Saiyan and the two warriors faced off once again, midair.

"Vegeta." He said, smirking. "Did you really think you could escape me for long?"

The Saiyan chuckled in reply, a wicked grin etched on his countenance.

"Escape was never my plan you fool, at least not from you." He jeered. "Let's see how well you fare against me this time."

"You're a fool Vegeta." Zarbon responded. "You know you can't defeat me, so why not just give up while you have the chance? Perhaps you don't know this, but like me, Frieza has the ability to increase his power by transforming."

Vegeta huffed in exasperation as he took in that little tidbit of information.

"So the rumors are true then." He grit his teeth. "Frieza's power is greater than he was letting on."

"That's right." Zarbon smirked. "And since you can't even defeat me, you obviously stand no chance against him. You can do yourself a huge favor by surrendering and telling me what you did with the rest of the dragon balls." The blue alien demanded more than advised, in an arrogant and assertive tone. "Or I can beat the tar out of you once again and take you to Lord Frieza, so he can torture the information from you. The choice is yours and I needn't remind you that you're already treading on very thin ice."

"Your master's precious gems are right down there." Vegeta chuckled, as he pointed below him.

Zarbon warily lowered his gaze and his gold eyes suddenly dilated, as he gaped at the stolen dragon balls. He looked back up at the Saiyan, narrowing his eyes dubiously. Just what was Vegeta
"If you want them, however, you'll have to go through me first." Vegeta proclaimed, a superior smile embedded on his face. "Not that it'll make any difference, but I must warn you, it won't be quite as easy this time."

"We'll see about that Vegeta." Zarbon responded in smug overconfidence.

"Yes, we will." Replied the Prince. "If we fight here, however, the dragon balls will most likely be damaged and neither of us want that, now do we?" Vegeta gestured eastwards with his head and flew off, Zarbon close behind.

After stopping several miles away from the dragon balls, the two faced one another.

"You should have escaped this planet, the moment I seized the dragon balls." Vegeta said ominously, assuming his fighting stance. "That way you wouldn't have had to face Frieza's wrath or mine, but it's too late now, isn't it?!"

"You've always been a slow learner, Vegeta." Zarbon replied, sighing and shaking his head, before taking up his own stance. He smirked as he remembered their last conversation. "Oh and by the way, I just wanted to ask, where's that woman you fucked? Did you kill her like all the others?"

Vegeta growled, his body bristling as he recalled the last few moments before his adversary had rendered him unconscious.

"So you didn't, huh?" Zarbon frowned, his smirk turning into a wicked grin. "I told Frieza about it and he's just dying to get his hands on her. It shouldn't be long before we find her."

The Prince's bronze skin lost a good 30 shades as that piece of news sunk in and his heart rate practically tripled.

"Don't tell me you've actually found a lover Vegeta." Zarbon looked at him incredulously, as he noticed the consternation on his younger opponent's face.

"Don't be absurd!" The Saiyan snarled, livid with fury. She wasn't his fucking lover! She was just a prisoner and nothing more! But then why couldn't he stop the downpour of horror that was besetting him at the mere idea of Frieza taking her away, just like he took- No! Dammit, he couldn't be weak! He swore to himself that he'd never allow any such sentiments to put him at a disadvantage ever again!

"This is good Vegeta." Zarbon grinned. The Prince may have been able to lie to himself, but he could see right through it, having a good eye for this sort of thing. "I wonder how much damage that famed pride of yours will take, when I make you watch, as she puts her hands and mouth all over my beautiful, naked bod-"

BANG!

Vegeta reached his melting point and dove his fist straight in the middle of Zarbon's face, sending him flying dozens of yards away, before he could finish his sentence. The Prince reappeared above him and attacked with a descending elbow right on his midsection, causing him to plummet into the dirt of a nearby island. So brutal was that incensed attack that Zarbon's face was disfigured and his immaculate appearance, completely blemished.
The elite shot straight out of the ground, staggering about as he glared up at Vegeta.

"You're going to pay for that!" He roared and immediately assumed his true form.

"Zarbon transformed again!" Gohan exclaimed.

"Man, Vegeta's done for!" Krillin clenched his jaw. As much as he hated the ruthless Saiyan, it was just as Gohan said. A guy like Zarbon was a greater threat, without doubt! The two of them had witnessed that gruesome smile on his handsome face as he callously murdered one of the old Namekians. Moreover, he was part of the Frieza crew and Frieza was about as evil and heartless as it could possibly get!

Bulma was unable to mouth a word, as she stared ahead blankly with a dead look on her face, clutching her soaring heart with one hand. Her mind was clouded with all sorts of divergent thoughts. Why?! Why did the idea of Vegeta being murdered make her insides chill?! If only he could survive somehow, but it seemed unlikely. Her eyes began glimmering and soon she felt a small hand clasp hers. She glanced down beside her and saw Gohan looking up at her consolingly. That innocent and piteous look of his made her lips tremble, as the tears began descending down her face and she tightened her hold on his little hand, hoping against hope that Vegeta could somehow pull through. Krillin turned in their direction, staring at them in disbelief.

"Are- are you guys okay?"

Neither of them replied. Bulma's face was downcast and Gohan was looking at her solicitously, as he clutched her hand in both of his.

'Okay, seriously, what in King Kai's name am I missing?' Krillin thought, frowning in askance. 'Why does she care about Vegeta?! I thought she wanted him dead! Bulma's never been easy to figure out, but now she's downright impossible! Just what on Earth happened to her?!

He'd heard of situations where hostages developed a sense of affinity towards their captors, but Bulma was smarter than that, plus she'd made it clear that she execrated Vegeta, so what exactly was the problem?! He sighed and shook his head, deciding to solve this riddle sometime later, as he focused his senses on the battle, or more accurately slaughter, that was about to ensue.

Vegeta descended to the ground and smirked at his adversary.

"I can't tell which version of you is more hideous, Zarbon." Vegeta sniped, curling his lip in feigned disgust, "But, no doubt, you're both ugly enough to make me want to puke."

Vegeta's subsequent mock-gag drove Zarbon insane and he lunged straight towards him, but with his newfound speed, the Saiyan Prince vanished from sight and Zarbon just barely managed to follow his movement. He whirled around in an attempt to fire a hook punch his opponent, but Vegeta grabbed his wrist before the attack landed.

"Your power is pathetic, Zarbon!" He stated boldly. "I'm far stronger than you are!"
"You filthy little maggot!" Zarbon shouted as he shot his other fist straight at Vegeta's face, but the Saiyan easily caught it with his other hand. Frieza's lackey was completely flabbergasted. In his new form he should've been able to cut through Vegeta like cake, just as he had before! What was happening?!

"The first and last mistake you made was to underestimate the power of a true Saiyan warrior!" Vegeta declared. "You can bleed us to the brink of death, crush every bone in our bodies, it only makes us more powerful!"

Zarbon suddenly took on a pale blue hue, his gold eyes flooding with absolute dread and horror, as realization hit him like a ton of bricks.

"You played right into my little game, Zarbon." Vegeta had a sinister smile etched on his face. "There's a good reason why I tempted you into prolonging the beating you gave me during our last battle. Each and every blow I absorbed made my strength rise that much further, after I recovered! I suppose the results pretty much speak for themselves, don't you?"

Vegeta kicked Zarbon hard on the midsection, making the monster fly back several yards and collide hard with a mountain that collapsed around him on impact.

The Prince quickly vanished and reappeared a couple yards from him. Zarbon had trouble getting up and glared daggers at Vegeta.

"You disgusting monkey!" He snarled and fired a swift and powerful Ki blast at Vegeta, but the latter easily dodged and reappeared right in front of his foe, causing Zarbon to cower defensively. How did the monkey Prince become so fast?! It was unbelievable! At the very least, he should've been able to put up a decent fight, but he was absolutely no match against the might of the Saiyan!

Vegeta rammed his fist into Zarbon's gut, whereby the beast spat out a glob of blood, before being hook punched to the ground.

"Now six of the dragon balls are within my grasp!" Vegeta smirked. "Just one more and I'll make my wish and destroy Frieza! I couldn't have done it without you, Zarbon." The Prince aimed a palm towards his hapless opponent's abdomen and summoned a ball of Ki, preparing to blast the wretched alien. "Consider this my thanks."

"Vegeta!" Zarbon cried in a rasped voice, putting his hands up frantically, "I was just following orders! Please don't kill me! Have mercy!"

"For all those years you drove me like a slave, keeping me under your knee and now, I'm expected to show you mercy?!!" Vegeta spat back.

"Please, if we join forces, we can bring down Frieza, together!" Zarbon wheezed out in a desperate tone.

"Sorry, but I've always hated sycophants, like you and Dodoria!" Vegeta gnashed his teeth. "I've never loathed anyone as much as I did the two of you, not even Frieza and now, just like that pink tub of crap, you'll die for everything you've put me through, including whatever insignificant role you must have played in the annihilation of my people!" He then smiled devilishly at him, a scorching glimmer of grisly death burning in his deranged hematite eyes, turned bloody crimson. "But don't worry, you won't be alone! Very soon your master will be joining you in hell!"
"NOOOOO!"

Vegeta fired his Ki right through Zarbon's midsection and grinned evilly at his lifeless body, thereafter.

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"W-W-What on Earth h-h-happened?!!" Krillin stammered, completely stunned and at a loss.

"V-V-Vegeta did away with Z-Z-Zarbon, just l-l-like that." Gohan was equally astounded.

"You mean, he won?!" Bulma asked hopefully, the fear and dread flooding through her coming to an immediate halt.

"Yeah- and easily too." Krillin affirmed, much too shocked to register the overt relief on Bulma's face.

"But how?!" Gohan exclaimed. "Somehow he's gotten even stronger now- much stronger! It doesn't make any sense!"

"Tell me about it!"

"This is good news though, Krillin!" The demi-Saiyan enthused. "Now that Vegeta's taken care of Zarbon, even the two of us can defeat the remaining forces of Frieza's army- well, minus Frieza himself, of course."

"Best of all, this means the other five dragon balls are pretty much secured!" Bulma was unable to help the grin that lit her face. "Now all that's lift is convincing that douchebag!" She scowled.

Krillin shook his head, not feeling quite as jubilant as his two affiliates.

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After finishing off Zarbon, Vegeta focused on Bulma's minute Ki signal, but it was clouded by two other power levels with her, both very strong and very familiar. Could it be- them?

'No!' He thought, knitting his brows. 'There's no way they could travel all the way to Namek or be that strong! But what if it is?!

Dodoria did say that he'd killed two 'brats' that must have been Earthlings. He hadn't believed him at first, but it looked as though there may have been more to the story than he'd initially thought. Dammit, if they stole his dragon ball, he'd murder all three of them! He snarled, zooming towards his intended location at full speed, but his misgivings began to mitigate, as he realized that his targets were unmoving, as though awaiting his arrival. If they truly were the half-Saiyan brat and the bald Earthling, perhaps they were overconfident because of this newfound strength of theirs and so, may have foolishly believed that they could challenge his might! A smirk lit his face at the thought. How wrong they were!

A/N: Seems Vegeta just keeps getting more and more powerful, at every turn. And now, the Saiyan Prince is heading right towards Bulma, Gohan and Krillin! Just how will he deal with his former enemies?! Will this end badly or will an unholy alliance finally ensue? Tell me your thoughts!
Chapter 17: Uneasy Alliance

"Is Vegeta coming this way?!" Bulma asked.

"Yeah he is." Gohan nodded. "Now we have all the dragon balls! This is so great!"

"I don't see why you're so happy, Gohan." Krillin frowned. "I still haven't gotten over the fact that he's responsible for the deaths of our friends."

"Yeah, but we're about to wish them all back."

"That's assuming Vegeta doesn't cut our throats." Krillin flinched as Bulma smacked him across the head. "Hey, what gives?!"

"How dare you talk like that to Gohan?!" She shrieked. "He's just a kid! With your rotten company, I'm surprised he's still as well-mannered as he is!"

"You didn't have to hit me." The bald warrior pouted, rubbing his bruised head.

"It's okay Bulma." The demi-Saiyan smiled. "Krillin's been great! If it wasn't for him, I'd end up getting myself killed, for sure."

"See." Krillin taunted jeeringly. "It it were you, all you'd do is complain, gloat about your looks and smack him around every chance you got."

"WHAT WAS THAT?!" Bulma shrilled, as she raised her hand to deliver another vicious blow.

'Oh no, why did I have to say that?!' Krillin thought regretfully, cringing and shutting his eyes as he prepared himself for the brutally painful strike to come.

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A good half an hour later, Vegeta arrived at the Capsule House, having traveled at full speed. He dashed his way through the door and walked to the lounge, only for his suspicions to be confirmed. Therein stood the bald Earthling, louring at him as well as Kakarot's spawn, looking at him dubiously. Bulma was nearby, her gaze averted. By now, she'd already changed into the outfit she donned on her journey to Namek. He ignored her as he walked up to her two compatriots.

"So it is you." Vegeta narrowed his eyes and ceased his trek, a good seven feet separating them. "What are you doing here?! And how did you get here?!" He demanded in an offhanded tone.

"W-We- uh- we though we c-could- you know, j-j-join forces- w-with you." Gohan stuttered.

Vegeta eyed him curiously for a moment before turning in Krillin's direction.

"If you two are here, then where's Kakarot?" He asked, smirking. "Is he still recovering from the beating I gave him or was he just too much a coward to come face me a second time?"
"Hey you jerk, my dad's not a coward!" Gohan snarled, whatever tact he had vanishing as he heard the Prince deride his father. "He'll be here soon! Just you watch!"

"I'd mind my tone, if I were you, little punk." Vegeta responded in a dangerously low tone. "I can tell you've gotten a lot stronger somehow, but you know, as well as I, that I can still wipe the floor with you, without even trying."

"Look, we're not here to fight you, okay?!" Krillin grit his teeth.

"Good, because even together, the two of you wouldn't last thirty seconds."

"Enough!" Bulma finally made her way over, glaring heatedly at Vegeta. "Here's the deal! After we take care of Frieza, I'm done with you and all this bullshit! I'm returning home and so are the rest of us, got it?! We're free and you're never to come near Earth ever again, are we clear?!"

Vegeta gnashed his teeth at her. What nerve she had, speaking to him so presumptuously!

"What gives any right to barter with me, woman?!" The Prince growled, before grimacing at the three of them. "I should just kill all three of you, right now!"

Gohan pulled Bulma back and stood in front of her defensively, scowling at the Saiyan. Something about the sight before him made Vegeta's gut tighten. For some reason, he felt aversive at the idea of him being regarded as a force threatening the blue-haired female, especially after he'd been doing the exact opposite since his departure from Earth. Goddammit! She'd totally befuddled him!

"Gohan, relax." Krillin censured, placing his hand on the boy's shoulder, before glowering at Vegeta. "Look, Bulma's helped you come this far and we're willing to let you have a wish with the dragon balls, but only if you let us go, after all this is over."

"Excellent." Vegeta replied, his venomous visage easing up, as he smirked at the bald fighter. "That's all I wanted to hear."

"But you're only getting one wish and we're getting the other two, are we clear?!"

"There're- three wishes?" He asked, gaping at the bald warrior, before furrowing his brows heatedly at his captive from Earth. "Why didn't you tell me?!

"I didn't know!" Bulma shot back, forcing her way through Gohan. "This is what's gonna happen. We're using the first wish to bring back all our friends whom you killed on Earth." She glowered at him accusingly as she said that, whereby he just grunted indifferently. "With the second wish, we're bringing back all the Namekians that Frieza killed and with the third, we're gonna ask the dragon to make you, Goku and Gohan into Super Saiyans, so you can destroy that bastard."

"Don't be ridiculous!" The Prince snarled back. "It is said that every thousand years, only one Saiyan can achieve such legendary power! I have royal blood flowing through my veins! Only I have the potential to be a Super Saiyan and no other!"

"Maybe that's true!" Bulma replied. "And if the dragon only gives you that power, then so be it, but we're including Goku and Gohan in the wish either way, just in case!" She then went on in a softer and more cogent tone. "Besides, three Super Saiyans are better than just one and you've got nothing to lose."
"Tch, fine." Vegeta nodded in agreement. "It won't work on a pair of low class scum anyway."

Gohan growled and was about to fire back verbally, but Krillin held him back and shook his head, knowing it was best not to play with fire, now that they'd finally managed to strike a deal with the barbarous Saiyan.

"I suppose I'll let you weaklings live, in that case, but try anything funny and the deal's off, understood?!" He warned in a brusque voice.

"We won't!" Bulma knit her brows. "Unlike you, we never exploit others." She cast aside her gaze as she uttered that last sentence in a low tone, a gleam of hate and pain in her eyes.

Vegeta felt his heart lurch as those words escaped her mouth. He grit his teeth, shaking his head, as he let out a frustrated exhale, feeling peeved at her overt impudence and yet unable to do a single thing about it.

"I was able to secure Frieza's five dragon balls, which means six of them are gathered." He informed Krillin, an unmistakable edge to his voice that he tried covering. "Only more more is needed."

"Actually, we have two with us." Krillin corrected. "I got the last one just a little while ago."

Vegeta gaped at him, before smirking.

"Really?!!" The bald warrior nodded his head weakly. "Perfect!" This was great! Soon the power would all be within his grasp!

Gohan glared at Vegeta, still infuriated at his disdain towards himself and his father. Piccolo used to do the same thing, but not like Vegeta did. The Namekian still respected his father's strength, but Vegeta completely dismissed him, as though he were trash!

'He'll find out just how strong dad is, soon enough!'

"After we thought that Zarbon guy killed you, I went to collect the last dragon ball." Krillin recounted. "A long while after I returned, I sensed your Ki revive again and you just annihilated him, somehow. Now that's the part I really don't get." He said intriguingly, scratching his bald head.

"It's quite simple, really." Vegeta elucidated, a wicked grin on his face. "The strongest warriors among our race get major power surges, each time they recover from near death experiences. The worse the injury, the greater our strength upon recovery. That's why I deliberately provoked Zarbon into intensifying the damage he inflicted upon my person."

"I see." Krillin nodded in understanding. So that's why Goku always ended up so much stronger than all his comrades, that and his astounding natural abilities, of course. It all made sense! He just wished he could get here soon. Hopefully his training had paid off.

"So an actual dragon grants your wish, right?" Vegeta asked, raising an eyebrow at the bald man, after recalling what Bulma had said, before he left to hunt the second dragon ball.

"Yeah." He affirmed. "Once we gather the seven balls together and call upon the eternal dragon, the sky goes dark and he awakens and tells us to make a wish- only in this case he grants three
"Is that right?" Vegeta's deep black eyes showed a hint of curiosity, before he looked authoritatively at the weaker warriors. "You two runts get the two dragon balls and we'll leave immediately!"

Gohan and Krillin begrudgingly complied, leaving Bulma and Vegeta alone in the living room for a moment. The Prince surveyed for a few seconds, but she refused to give him an eye. This was it. One way or another, he'd most likely never see her again once this was all over and for some reason that thought made him feel so- empty. He kicked himself mentally for entertaining such foolish thoughts. He was never empty! He always had his drive to kill, until she took it away from him! That was all he needed and nothing else!

"Why does he keep looking at me?!" Bulma thought lividly.

"What?!" She growled, finally turning his way. Vegeta averted his gaze and just then Krillin and Gohan made their way back. The Prince walked towards the door and made his way out, the trio from Earth hot on his heels.

"I'm coming with you guys." Bulma declared.

"No, you're not!" Vegeta scowled. "You'll just slow us down!"

"Yes she is!" Krillin replied adamantly, frowning at the Saiyan as he daringly tossed the four-star dragon ball his way, barely giving him time to catch it. "She has a right to be there!" He then smiled at his friend. "Come on Bulma, it's okay."

She smiled back and walked up behind Krillin, wrapping her arms around his neck and legs around his waist, as he held her from behind in a piggy back, girding his arms under her hamstrings for support. Vegeta turned away from the scene in revulsion and sped off immediately, Gohan and Krillin in tow.

The Prince felt disgusted beyond words, a bitter feeling of jealousy oozing within. He wanted nothing more than to blast that little cueball milksop. His tail tightened around his waist, as he continued flying.

Almost an hour passed and they were nearing their destination. Gohan and Krillin were having difficulty keeping pace with the Prince, though the latter was only flying at less than half his full speed.

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Unbeknownst to the new group, the five elite members of Frieza's most powerful squadron had now arrived on Namek, ready to exact revenge upon the little monkey Prince. Vegeta had not only had the nerve to defy and openly rebel against his master, but to steal the dragon balls that he'd worked so hard to collect.

After their bizarre introduction, the Ginyu Force awkwardly stood fixed in their strange poses, before Frieza gave them 'leave' to ease up, assigning them their new mission to recover the dragon balls and the treacherous Vegeta.

"Stupid Saiyan." Commented Recoome, the orange-haired humanoid, smirking at another crew
"I always thought he was too cocky for his own good." Remarked the red-eyed, blue-skinned Burter, in his fizzled voice.

"You can expect resistance." Warned Frieza. "Vegeta's strength has grown considerably, since last you saw him."

The five crew members pressed their scouters and were slightly surprised by the power readings that appeared.

"Now, get those dragon balls and bring me the Saiyan." Frieza ordered. "Oh and before you get carried away, I want him alive."

"Consider it done Lord Frieza." Ginyu replied as he analyzed his scouter. "Vegeta doesn't appear to be making any efforts to conceal himself. He should be an easy catch. You'll have him kneeling at your feet within the hour!"

The Captain frowned in intrigue after a moment or so.

"What is it Ginyu?" The lizard asked.

"There are three other power levels with Vegeta." He observed. "Two of them are fairly significant, but the other is essentially nonexistent."

Frieza's eyes widened, soon followed by a sinister grin plastering his visage.

"That fool!" The tyrant cackled in delight. "If my guess is right, it's probably those two meddlesome pests we encountered earlier. Vegeta must have formed a little gang. As for the other 'power level', I'll bet anything that it belongs to the blue-haired woman Vegeta's been fucking."

"A blue haired woman?" Recoome asked, taken aback.

"Vegeta's girlfriend." Frieza explained. "He led us to believe that he'd killed her, after we learned he'd brought her here to Namek. What's more, Zarbon had sworn that he was quite possessive of her."

Ginyu grinned evilly, flashing his perfect, pearly teeth, and the others smirked at one-another, as a rush of thrill-filled anticipation swamped over them. Boy, this really sounded like fun!

"What of her and the others, my Lord?" The Captain asked.

"Keep them alive." Frieza responded. "I wish to find out what is going on."

The warriors appeared none too pleased at their liege's reply. They were looking forward to spilling some blood, after having spent a week cramped up in their tiny space pods.

"Do not despair." The despot reassured. "If all goes well and they have served their purpose, I will allow you to kill the two pests, as a reward. I may even allow you take turns torturing his woman. However, you are not to harm her unless I get acquainted with her first and give you my blessing thereafter. Disobey and the penalty will be severe. I trust I have made myself clear."
"Crystal-clear." The Captain responded, a slight degree of unease in his voice.

"At ease Captain." Frieza smiled malevolently. "You and your men have my word that should you succeed in this mission, the rewards will be beyond counting. I understand your desire for blood and you will have it, but for now, restraint is of the utmost importance. I want the woman to be in perfect condition, so that my audacious little monkey Prince can see her ravaged and ruined bit by bit, until she is nothing but an empty shell. I will make it all worth your while, I assure you."

"It will be our pleasure, Lord Frieza." Ginyu stated solemnly, placing a hand on his chest. This was an easy mission and once complete, they would be sure to reap every bit of reward they could.

Guldo, the stout, dwarfish four-eyed creature, began cursing under his breath, as he reminisced the debasing incident where Vegeta derogated him in front of Lord Frieza and when he was getting ready to make him pay, his master defended the Saiyan. He was still bitter about it and would make that piece of simian trash pay dearly for his insolence.

Jeice picked up a small briefcase and walked over to his master.

"Here you go Lord Frieza." The red-skinned Trigocian handed the briefcase to him, "The scouters you asked for. There're five of them in there, the newest models too."

"Ahhh, good work." Commended Frieza, before opening it up, donning a scouter and facing the Captain. "Note that Vegeta has somehow acquired the ability to suppress his power and those two runts may well be able to do likewise."

"No worries, Lord Frieza." Ginyu reassured. "The settings on these newest model scouters allow us to specifically keep track of any selected Ki signal. We can set them to stay tuned to Vegeta and each member of his little posse. Even if they suppress their power, the moment they flare it even in the slightest, the scouter will alert us immediately."

"Perfect." Frieza grinned before frowning in concentration. "My scouter detects a cluster of power levels gathered in one place. It's most likely a group of Nameks that have been fortunate enough to survive so far. There must be a dragon ball there, since Vegeta hasn't yet destroyed it." He then narrowed his eyes further. "There appears to be a red dot appearing on the scouter, somewhere amidst the heart of that village."

Ginyu checked his own scouter.

"Hmmm, you're right Lord Frieza." He nodded affirmatively. "That signal belongs to one of your men."

"What do you mean? How do you know this?" Asked the Lizard Lord, knitting his eyes.

"Well, each and every being in the Universe has a distinct Ki signal as you well know." The Captain elucidated, "And before joining the PTO, soldiers have their powers recorded and uploaded onto our central database on Planet Cold. Each and every power level from our database has been encrypted into these new scouters. Any signals belonging to the PTO are specifically identified in red. That, of course, includes Vegeta."

"Hmmm." Frieza smiled. "Interesting. Seems I've been so busy lately, I've been neglecting my duties." He let out a dull sigh. "I suppose I will have to await your return before I deal with those Namekians and that foolish soldier of mine, since I cannot leave my ship unguarded. As for the
rest of you, take off now and retrieve Vegeta and the dragon balls."

"But Lord Frieza." Jeice argued. "Surely one of us can take care of that village, while the rest handle Vegeta. Wouldn't that be faster?"

"Perhaps." Frieza replied. "But I underestimated him once and it cost me five dragon balls. That will not happen again. Before anything else, I want that crafty little monkey in custody along with those other two peons and his little whore. Bring the balls he stole and any others he may have collected, back to the ship."

"Yes sir!" All five men said in unison and gathered together, leaving an ebbing trail of fiery purple behind them as they flew off.

The motley crew of four was distracted the entire time, not paying heed as Frieza's elite arrived on the planet. Vegeta's mind was completely disoriented. He grit his teeth in smoldering frustration, wanting nothing more than to rip Krillin's balls off and shove them down his throat. He tried brushing such thoughts aside, but it just wouldn't work. If this went on any longer, he'd have to bite his tongue to curb the fury boiling within. He just wanted to be there and make his wish already!

Krillin felt Bulma's tears moisten his shoulders.

"Hey, you okay?" He asked.

"I hate him."

"Who?"

"I hate him!" She repeated, not answering the question, as she tightened her hold on her friend.

"Uh- you mean Frieza- or Vege-"

"I HATE HIM!" She shrieked, squeezing Krillin's neck so hard, he practically choked and was forced to cut off his flight, midair. Vegeta and Gohan's acute auditory senses caught wind of Bulma's loud shrill. The demi-Saiyan headed over to them. Vegeta stopped midair, bristling in fury as he began making his way over, ready to blast each and every one of them, once and for all.

It was then that the Prince sensed a group of enormous power levels headed straight towards them and his jaw fell, eyes widening in horror. He began visibly quivering, unable to mouth a word, as he recognized the oncoming foes.

"Krillin, do you feel that?!" Gohan asked, his stomach twisting as he too felt the imminent threat.

Bulma suddenly stopped choking the life out of the bald warrior and he coughed a few times, before a look of pure horror embedded his face.

"W-W-What the h-h-hell is that?" He asked in, a deep feeling of consternation beginning to seep within.

"It's- it's the Ginyu Force!" Vegeta exclaimed in perturbation, before snarling. "Dammit it all! Frieza's called in the Ginyu Force!"
"The- the w-what?" Bulma asked apprehensively.

The Prince looked at her and every trace of color left his face, as he immediately recalled what Zarbon had told him! Shit!

"You!" He pointed at Krillin, gnashing his teeth. "Take the woman, get to my space pod and leave this planet, right now!"

"W-What?" Krillin asked, completely at a loss. "W-What do you-"

"Listen to me, Frieza knows about her!" He explained, unable to keep the frantic edge from his voice. "He's after her and if he finds her, you don't know what he'll-"

The trio from Earth looked at Vegeta incredulously, their alarm at the quandary they currently found themselves in, replaced with feelings of utter shock as they observed the unmistakable dismay, etched in the Prince's tone and visage. It didn't make any sense. Did he actually care about the woman he'd stolen from Earth? Why would he?

Bulma was at a complete loss for words, as she saw the panic beset Vegeta's ebony eyes. Was there perhaps some truth to Gohan's intuition? Was her Saiyan captor's callous dismissal from before possibly just a cold front as the boy may have suggested?

"Take her and leave, now!" Vegeta commanded, pointing his palm towards Krillin and flaring a tiny sphere of Ki, whereby the bald warrior clenched his teeth, before exhaling reluctantly and looking to his young companion.

"Gohan, I'm leaving it up to you to wish the others back, got it?!" He ordered in the spur of the moment, not taking the time to consider that Bulma was the only one among them who'd actually witnessed the dragon being summoned.

The boy weakly nodded his assent.

"Let's go." The demi-Saiyan gestured for Vegeta to lead the way and the Prince instantly sped off towards the other dragon balls, Gohan close behind.

"WAIT VEGETA, COME BACK!" Bulma shouted in a desperate tone, holding her arm out and hoping he could hear her. He did, of course, but he brushed her plea aside, growling, as he zoomed his way towards the rest of the dragon balls. He needed to make his wish, so he could wipe away the Ginyu Force as soon as possible, before dealing with that bastard Frieza! Surely, as a Super Saiyan, he could rip them all to shreds and rid himself of any attachment he held towards that accursed female! Hopefully she could leave Namek and head back to Earth, so he'd never have to look at her ever again! He'd shed this weakness away around two decades ago, a short while after his planet's untimely destruction, only for it to return at the worst possible occasion! Dammit, he had to overcome this, no matter what it took!

Krillin winced as he heard Bulma shriek right next to his poor ear. After a moment he sighed in surrender, as he landed on a nearby island and repressed his Ki to a bare minimum.

"Bulma, we have to go!" He said frantically. "Each of these new guys seem to be about as powerful as Vegeta, maybe more and one of them is much stronger than even he is! It pains me to say it, but he's right! We can't let them take you!"
"We can't leave them Krillin!" The heiress argued in a rushed and pleading voice. "Please, we have to help him!"

"There's no way, Bulma!" Krillin growled, trying pry her off him. "You can't defend yourself and they'll use you against us, just like he said! We have to go! I can sense one of those goon's heading our way as we speak!"

"Please, I-I can't leave him." Bulma pled in a soft voice laden with desperation. "What if they-"

"That's enough!" Krillin snarled uncharacteristically, forcing her off of him, as he was overcome with sheer lividity. It was only right that she was concerned for Gohan's safety, but why Vegeta's, after all he'd done?! He swivelled around to face her and grit his teeth. "Look, by my estimate the two of them can just make it in time, summon the dragon and make the wish, so quit worrying!" He demanded. As Krillin saw his friend's eyes water, he was overcome with regret for being so crude with her. His expression softened as he continued in a much calmer tone. "Hey I'm sorry, Bulma." He grabbed her hand. "But really, you don't have to worry. Goku will be here anytime now. They won't be alone. Just let me get you to a safe place first and then I'll go join them." He smiled promisingly at her. "Everything will be fine, you have my word."

"But-"

"It's alright Bulma, we'll all go home soon enough, I promise."

Bulma sighed and nodded weakly, somewhat assured but still unable to quell the feeling of trepidation knotting in her stomach. What if something happened to Vegeta? Or to little Gohan? She couldn't bear the thought.

"Listen, I've suppressed my power level down to zero, meaning I can't fly or they'll detect my Ki signal." Krillin explained. "If you have some other means of transportation with you, now's the time."

"I do." Bulma exhaled, getting ahold of herself as she pulled out her capsule case and readied her hover bike.

"Perfect!" Krillin beamed, relief flooding through him as he immediately took the driver's seat and gestured for Bulma to come sit behind him. She complied, holding onto his waist as he took off at super speed.

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Elsewhere, a short while after Vegeta and Gohan headed off alone, towards the dragon balls.

"Hmmm, one of those high power levels just dropped down to nothing." Captain Ginyu observed. "But that puny one's still there, most likely, the girl Frieza mentioned. Burter, you go after her. The rest of us will follow Vegeta and his other feeble associate."

"Good devils, why me?!" Groused the blue-skinned alien.

"Well, are you or are you not the fastest in the Universe?" Ginyu smirked tauntingly, knowing exactly how to push his buttons.
"Ugh fine, I'll go." Burter relented, instantly taking off towards Krillin and Bulma's location.

"Haha, his loss." Recoome laughed. "I can't wait to go and stick it to Vegeta."

"Hey, who says you'll be the one?!" Jeice protested. "Gimme a crack at the little monkey. I'd like to wear his tail around me neck."

"No, he's mine!" Guldo loured, raising a fist. "I owe him one!"

"Oh, would you guys shut up?!" Ginyu berated. "You're acting like a bunch of children! You're elites belonging to the most esteemed fighting force in the Universe, for Frieza's sake. Keep behaving like this and I'll take them all on myself and make sure you idiots get nothing!"

The captain's threat did the trick and they all closed their mouths immediately.

"Now, that's much better!" Ginyu smirked.

A couple minutes later, Gohan and Vegeta arrived at the spot where the Prince had gathered Frieza's stolen dragon balls and hurriedly placed the other two with them.

"Quickly, let's make the wish!" He demanded, whereby the demi-Saiyan looked at him blankly. "Go on, call the dragon and make the wish!" Vegeta repeated more adamantly. "Ginyu and his men will be here soon! We don't have time!"

"I- I've never done it before." Gohan finally realized the error they'd made. "I- uh- I don't know how."

"WHAT?!" Vegeta yelled, whereby the boy flinched. "YOU IDIOT, WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO?!"

"I- I'm s-s-sorry, I w-wasn't thinking." Gohan stammered apologetically. "It- it all happened s-so f-f-fast."

"Stupid boy!" Vegeta scowled, but an idea suddenly struck him. He quickly picked up a dragon ball and tossed it as far away as possible, knowing that he had no other option now but to stand and fight! And fight he would, no matter the odds!

"W-W-What did you do that for?" Gohan asked, in confusion.

"This way, Frieza cannot have them all." Vegeta replied in a hushed tone. "Now be quite. They're closeby. We can't let them know we had all seven."

The child nodded.

"Hey, maybe, we should get out of here while we still can." Gohan argued. "We can't take them head on."

Just then, Ginyu and the rest of the crew, minus Burter, had arrived and were standing behind their Captain, in regal poise.
"You're not going anywhere." Captain Ginyu said, having heard the boy. "The gig's up Vegeta. You're coming with us, whether you like it or not."

Vegeta grated his teeth and placed his fists by his side, ready for action.

The Ginyu Force members all smirked at him, while Guldo took on a grimacing countenance.

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"Dammit, that guy's still following us!" Krillin grit his teeth, in frustration. "I've suppressed my power, how the hell does he know where I am?!"

"What are we gonna do, Krillin?!" Bulma asked in alarm, her heart racing.

It was then that Krillin realized what the problem was. He stopped the bike and looked at Bulma.

"What?" She asked, in puzzlement.

"Sorry about this Bulma, but there's no other way." He said and before she could utter another word, he struck her forehead with his right index finger, hard enough to knock her lights out, without causing any significant damage, whereby she slumped against him. As fast as he could, he positioned himself behind her, so he could drive off speedily, without losing hold of her unconscious body.

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The minute power level Burter was just following vanished into thin air and so, he quickly zoomed towards the location where he last detected the female. He saw nothing and grit his teeth as he began scouring the area, only to eventually find some sort of vehicle speeding away to God knows where. He frowned and instantly headed over to it.

Krillin was riding as quick as possible, but a little while later, a gigantic alien with creepy red-eyes, navy blue skin and a striated orange patch on his head, suddenly appeared several yards in front of him at supersonic speed, causing him to come to a sudden halt. Luckily he held onto Bulma firmly enough to prevent her from being propelled forward, a result of the abrupt pull-up.

"Ahhh, so Lord Frieza was right, it's Vegeta's woman." Burter observed, with an evil smirk on his face.

Krillin let out an exasperated huff. This fiend had somehow tracked them down. Just great! It didn't make sense! How did these jerks know about Bulma and why in God's name did he call her Vegeta's woman?! He shook his head, deciding that now wasn't the time to ponder such nonsense. He could not let Bulma fall into this monster's hands under any circumstances, even if it meant giving up his own life.

"Unfortunately, we've been ordered not to kill you." Stated Burter, in disgruntlement. "So I suggest you surrender peacefully." The venom in the alien's frizzled voice was evident, as he uttered that last word. He just wanted to kill them both and be done with it, but orders were orders.

'Dammit, what do I do?!' Krillin thought, frantically, 'There's no way I'm gonna let this guy take Bulma! But he's so damn powerful! I wouldn't last ten seconds against him!'
"How do you know about us?!" Krillin demanded. "How did you know about her?!!" 

"I am not here to answer your questions, little punk!" Burter snarled impatiently. "Let's get this over with now! I'm missing out on the action, so either you give up or I grind you to a pulp and take the two of you to Lord Frieza, by force! The choice is yours! You have ten seconds to make up your mind!"

'I've gotta think of something fast!' Krillin panicked. He began weighing his options. He couldn't run and he couldn't hide, especially with Bulma here, so what could he do?! Ahhh yes, that's it! Tien's technique came in handy when they'd escaped Dodoria, so there's absolutely no reason it wouldn't work now. He just needed to make a few adjustments. It was risky, but it was the best recourse he could think of!

"How about this?!" Challenged Krillin, getting off the bike, before gently placing Bulma on the ground. He closed in on his adversary till he was a few yards away from him. "We fight!"

Burter cackled.

"You wish to fight me?!!" He asked incredulously. "Do you have one clue as to who I am? I am Burter, a member of the elite Ginyu Force and the fastest being in the Universe!"

The giant Ginyu fighter struck a silly pose as he introduced himself, whereby Krillin raised an eyebrow, perplexedly.

"E-Err, o-kay."

"Now, prepare to be defeated!" Burter pointed to the bald warrior.

"Oh yeah?! We'll see who has the last laugh!"

"This is going to be fun." The giant smirked. "What do you prefer, ground or air?"

"Air." Krillin was so glad he asked.

Ginyu's crew member went airborne and Krillin followed suite, looking at him apprehensively.

"Are we going to fight or stare at each other all day?!" Asked an impatient Burter, scowling at his motionless opponent.

Krillin looked over Burter's shoulder and feigned shock.

"What?! Vegeta?!" He exclaimed.

"What?!" Burter impulsively swivelled his head around and not a second later, his scouter was destroyed by a Ki blast from Krillin, who'd taken advantage of his momentary lapse of concentration. He whirled back around and grimaced at his bald foe. "How dare you-"

"SOLAR FLARE!" Shouted Krillin, bringing his fingers in front of his eyes.

"AHHH MY EYES! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!!"

As quickly as he could, Krillin zoomed down, grabbed Bulma and took off at full speed. He had a
good ten seconds to get away and with his newfound speed, even whilst carrying an unconscious Bulma, he knew he'd be able to cover a lot of ground. Without his scouter, this warrior was blind, regardless of the whopping power he obviously possessed. Krillin needed to locate a hiding place posthaste! After zooming past a good few islands, he stopped and found a cave in one of them, instantly dashing inside and gritting his teeth, as he waited for his enemy to depart. That goon had made it clear that he was ordered to keep them alive, so he most likely didn't have to worry about him blowing up the surrounding area the way Dodoria had.

After regaining his sight, Burter roared in fury, hurling curses and demanding that his cowardly opponent show himself. He searched around the area, but was unable to find them! Dammit, if only he had his scouter with him, but that little bastard had the nerve to blow it up! Curse that gutless weakling! No one conned a member of the Ginyu Force! He would pay dearly for this!

After thoroughly exploring the surrounding archipelago for a good ten minutes or so, he sighed vexedly, deciding to give up, as he returned to Lord Frieza's flagship to get hold of a new scouter, so he could regroup with the others.

'Curses!' He chastised himself. 'How could I to fall for something so stupid?! I've been trained better than that! I really underestimated that runt, but I will be on guard next time!' He vowed, as he upped his speed.

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"Now, we can do this the easy way or we can do this the hard way." Ginyu told Vegeta, forebodingly. "The choice is yours. Personally, I would like to dish out some pain and pounding you has always been fun."

"Don't get too cocky Ginyu!" Vegeta exclaimed. "You haven't beaten me yet!"

Just then Guldo made his move, grimacing at his most hated enemy as he made his threats, challenging Vegeta to a one-on-one battle so the two of them could at last, settle the score.

Gohan looked at the little rotund alien in confusion. He didn't seem very powerful, at all. Even he could take him out, so what on Earth was he doing with those other fighters?

"Guldo, you're still a snivelling four-eyed freak." Vegeta taunted.

The pint-sized alien snarled viciously and was about to attack, only for Recoome to pull him back.

"Now hold up there Guldo." He reminded him. "Frieza wants him back alive, remember?"

Ginyu continued demanding that Vegeta give himself up, but the Saiyan refused and pointed his palm towards the dragon balls, threatening to destroy them if any of his enemies made one wrong move.

At that moment the six dragon balls vanished and suddenly materialized right in front of the Captain. Guldo had used his time-stopping technique and rolled the balls over to their side. It only took him three rounds to bring them all over. The little alien released a huge breath and collapsed on his knees, after he was done.

Gohan and Vegeta's eyes widened, as they noticed the dragon balls instantaneously shift from one location to another. At that moment, something instantly clicked in Vegeta's mind.
"So then it's true what they say!"

"W-W-What do you m-m-mean?" Asked Gohan, completely aghast.

"I never believed it, but it's been said that Guldo has the ability to freeze an instant in time." Vegeta answered, glaring angrily at the small green alien, who stood up and began chuckling between breaths. That little stunt of his took a lot out of him, but it was worth it, just seeing that look on Vegeta's face.

Goddammit! This was not good! Doubtless, the six dragon balls with them would now fall in Frieza's lap. Then again, the lizard had no clue how to find the last one, so that gave them a little time. Still, even if they managed to survive this whole mess, it was unlikely they'd able to retrieve the balls Frieza would soon acquire. After that last stunt he'd pulled, his former master would definitely keep his guard up! However, now wasn't the time for prudence, since they had a much bigger problem on their hands.

He noticed that Burter wasn't with them and concentrated on his Ki signal, suddenly feeling alarmed as he sensed the alien close to where he'd left Bulma, with that bald midget. He couldn't sense either of them! Did something happen, or did they manage to get the slip on Burter? Fucking hell, he needed to focus, but he couldn't get his mind off her! He sighed in exasperation, as he shut his eyes and focused more closely on Burter's signal. After observing his disorderly flight pattern and volatile Ki fluctuations, he surmised that the two of them had somehow outmaneuvered the speedy giant and had found a safe hiding spot. Yes, that could be the only explanation, otherwise Burter would be heading towards Frieza's ship with their dead/unconscious bodies. With that, he let out a sigh of relief and smirked.

"What's so funny, monkey?!" Guldo demanded.

"Oh, nothing." Replied a smug Vegeta. "Other than that disgusting pudgy little pile of glob you call a face, nothing at all."

The four-eyed alien looked like he was about to burst open from the inside-out, only for Recoome to once again remind him of their mission, whereby he begrudgingly kept himself in check.

"I'll handle Vegeta." Ginyu decided. "The rest of you can do that whole rock-paper-scissors drill, to decide who gets the kid."

His men protested.

"Come on Captain, let me have Vegeta." Guldo pleaded. "I owe him one!"

"Alright fine, you win." The Captain relented. "Have Vegeta, but you'd better make sure he's still breathing when you bring him back to Frieza. We clear?"

The men cheered wildly.

"And who are we?!" Ginyu asked, looking towards them.

"We are the Ginyu Force!" The three fighters said in unison, throwing their fists up in the air, like they just didn't care.
"And don't forget it or you'll regret it." Guldo added as an addendum.

The three of them continued playing rock-paper-scissors, until after a minute or so, Recoome finally won.

"Yeah, I get Vegeta, haha!" Recoome exclaimed, throwing up his hands up in victory.

"You always win." Guldo griped, folding his arms petulantly.

"Now if you excuse me, I have to take these dragon balls to Lord Frieza." Ginyu used his Ki to levitate the six balls in the air, before heading towards Frieza's ship, laughing victoriously, all the while.

"It looks like you'll be fighting Guldo." Vegeta informed Gohan, "You'll have to use your head. A direct assault won't work. Do you understand?"

The boy nodded.

"Kakarot is supposed to be coming here soon, right?" Vegeta asked.

"He is." Gohan replied, knitting his eyebrows.

"Good, we could certainly use that idiot's help right now."

"My dad's not an idiot!" The demi-Saiyan growled.

"Shut up and focus on Guldo, you brat!"

Recoome and Guldo began stretching in preparation for their fights.

A/N: Now the real action begins!!!! Things are quite different than they are from the original series, aren’t they?! Just how powerful is Vegeta?! It’s obvious that he fears the Ginyu Force, despite his pretentious show of valor!! And how will Gohan survive Guldo’s onslaught?! And what of Bulma and Krillin?! Are they truly safe or not?! Review and tell me your thoughts!!
Chapter 18: The battles commence

Recoome offered Guldo the chance to battle first and the latter readily accepted, wanting to get the 'trash' out of the way first, before Vegeta was dealt with.

"Alright, it's time to see what you're really made off, kid." Vegeta said and Gohan dashed forward facing Guldo, without delay.

The demi-Saiyan had his opponent on the run throughout the battle, however, he was caught off guard when the four-eyed alien decided to use his trump card. The next time Gohan neared him, he held up hooked hands and brought one knee up, performing his signature technique that had the boy frozen mid-air, completely motionless.

Gohan grit his teeth and tried his best to move, but just couldn't budge at all. Vegeta watched the scene before him in dismay.

"How do you like that trick?!" Guldo taunted. "It's a little something I like to call my mind bind!"

The young half-Saiyan continued trying to get free, but to no avail.

"Go on! Fight it! Struggle all you want! You're mine!" Guldo declared, laughing maniacally.

"Dammit!" Vegeta exclaimed. "That ignorant brat! I specifically warned him not to try a direct assault! He flew right into Guldo's trap!"

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By now, Burter was heading back towards Frieza's ship and so Krillin sought to get Bulma as far away as possible. Since Frieza's men were nowhere near and Burter had no scouter to speak of, he deemed it safe to take flight.

After a few minutes, he felt he'd covered enough ground and found a narrow gorge, wherein he placed Bulma's unconscious body. He sensed that Gohan was in trouble and Vegeta was not helping at all. He growled and took off towards the battlefield, begrudgingly leaving Bulma behind. He hated having to abandon her in the middle of nowhere, but had little choice in the matter. Though he stood no chance against the powers that Gohan and Vegeta were currently up against, he swore ardently to protect the boy, no matter what! Now was the time to make good on that promise!

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Guldo scorned Gohan as he pounded him, over and over again. However, after a little while, his team members were growing weary and threatened to kick him off the force, unless he ended the fight.

So the rotund fighter uprooted a tree nearby and carved it nicely using his Ki, making one end lethally sharp. He flung it straight towards the boy, completely forgetting his orders to take him alive. Just as it was about to impale Gohan, however, Guldo's head came clean off his shoulders,
allowing the young demi-Saiyan to move freely and evade the sharpened tree trunk headed his way.

Recoome and Jeice made o's with their mouths as soon as they saw their comrade get decapitated.

"No fair Vegeta, you cheated!" Guldo's head protested. "This fight was supposed to be just me against him."

Vegeta scoffed.

"There's no such thing as fair or unfair in battle," He countered smugly. "There is only victory or in your case defeat."

"You dirty Saiyan! Do you really think you'll get away with this?!" Guldo exclaimed. "You're nothing! Just a stupid monkey! I belong to the Ginyu Force!"

"Not anymore." Chuckled Vegeta, pointing his palm towards him. Guldo barely managed to get a scream out, as a Ki blast completely disintegrated his head.

Gohan walked up to the Prince.

"Thanks Vegeta, you saved me!" The boy smiled, letting go of any ill-will he held towards the other Saiyan.

"Keep your thanks!" Responded the Prince callously. "I had my own reasons for wanting to destroy that freak! I saw my moment to strike and I acted on it. That's all! It had nothing to do with saving your life!"

Recoome and Jeice had dread written all over their faces, as they realized that without Guldo in the mix, their entire pre-battle sync was ruined.

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"Whoa, Vegeta just saved Gohan!" Krillin exclaimed and then smirked. "Good thing! I hardly expected that!"

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Recoome made his way towards his ex-comrade.

"Alright kid, this fight's between me and Vegeta." He stated looking at Gohan. "But if you feel like jumping in to help him out, go ahead and try it. I'll take you both on at once."

"Hey, not so fast Recoome!" Jeice protested. "That wasn't part of the deal. I'm not just going to stand here and let you have all the fun!"

"Fine, fine." The larger warrior relented.

After introducing himself to the duo with his trademark, ballerina pose, Recoome began smirking at his adversary.

"You can sense how strong he is, right kid?" Vegeta asked Gohan, in a quiet voice.
"Yeah, to some level, I guess."

"I hate to say this, but I might not be able to defeat him by myself!" Vegeta confessed, gritting his teeth, hating having to divulge his self-doubt. "If I'm in a tight spot, I'll give a signal and you distract him, before I go for the kill, understood?!"

"Right, uh- so what's the signal?"

"I'll lower my Ki, so stay alert." He answered in a hushed tone so only the boy could hear. "When I do that, make your way behind Recoome and divert his attention. He'll let his guard down and then I can finish him from behind. These guys are extremely powerful, but they're arrogant. He won't even see it coming, I'm sure of it."

"Right." Gohan frowned, nodding fervently.

"Hello!" Recoome echoed. "Are you going to stand there talking all day, or are we gonna fight?!"

That was Vegeta's cue. He flared his Ki up as high as it could go, leaving Jeice and Recoome aghast as his power level shot up to almost 40,000. Seems the beating he'd gotten from Zarbon had given his Ki a huge upsurge, more so than even he'd anticipated. Hopefully it would be enough to defeat the giant fighter and he wouldn't require the brat's help. But hope appeared quite dim at the moment.

He charged straight towards the orange-haired humanoid, punching him right across the jaw, sending him flying off, before reappearing behind him thrashing his face in with a double axe-handle that sent him plunging down below. Vegeta then shot high up into the air, before swiftly descending downwards, ramming both his feet straight into Recoome's gut. He grabbed him by the ankle, spinning him around and around and throwing him towards a mountain. Vegeta then placed both hands forward and began charging up his most intense Ki blast, firing it straight at his adversary.

"SEE YOU IN HELL, RECOOME!" The Prince roared in a blaring baritone.

Gohan looked on in awe as he saw his new ally's power right before his very eyes. Vegeta was amazing! He didn't even need his help! This fight was over before it had even begun- or so he thought.

"Oh man, that was close." Said Jeice after the smoke began clearing. Those words immediately caught Vegeta's attention and as he looked more closely at the rubble, he noticed that his opponent was still on his feet.

Recoome was clutching his stomach and spat out a mouthful of blood, but afterwards moved his head side to side, cracking his neck joints. His armor was completely destroyed and his lycra unitard badly torn up, but he hadn't taken nearly as much damage as the Saiyan had expected.

"Wow, you're a lot tougher than I thought Vegeta." Recoome praised smugly. "That actually hurt quite a bit. I guess I can't take you lightly."

'Goddammit, I hit him full force and he's barely taking time for a breather! That attack used up more energy than I bargained for!' Vegeta thought, disconcertedly. 'Now what?!!'
Just then Recoome powered up to his own maximum and charged straight towards the Prince, ramming his knee straight into his jaw. Vegeta was able to land on his feet and charged right back. The two exchanged blow for blow, Recoome getting the best of him. The orange-haired fighter elbowed him straight to the top of the head, landing him on the ground, before leaping towards him with his fist held high. Vegeta dodged his blow and took to the air, but the Ginyu fighter lunged right towards him and after a little scuffle, Vegeta was sent plummeting straight into the sea below.

"Oh no! Vegeta!" Gohan yelled in fear of the worst.

"Come on Vegeta!" Recoome taunted boldly, after a few seconds of eerie silence. "I know you wouldn't die from an attack like that! Quit stalling!"

Just then the Prince shot out of the water and rammed headfirst into his much larger warrior's solar plexus. Recoome spat out a glob of blood as the wind was knocked right out of him. Vegeta continued ravaging his midsection as hard as he possibly could, drawing out copious amounts of blood with each brutal blow.

After gathering his bearings somewhat, Recoome used his humongous size to his advantage as he firmly grabbed Vegeta from either side of his rib cage. With all the power he could muster, Recoome lifted Vegeta up over his head and dove downwards as quick as possible, slamming his foe right into the ground, before stepping back and taking heavy breaths as he collapsed on his knees and clutched his stomach with one hand.

"Damn, Vegeta!" The big warrior remarked. "You're one tough cookie! You're just full of new tricks aren't you?!" He took a breather. "I must admit, that was a lot tougher than I expected. No wonder Frieza told us not to take you lightly haha."

Recoome got up and plucked Vegeta out of the ground, before tossing aside his seemingly unconscious body.

Just then Krillin made his way to the scene next to Gohan. Jeice frowned at the newcomer.

"Hey Recoome." He said, smiling sadistically at his comrade. "Looks like we have a guest."

Recoome turned and saw Krillin, next to Gohan.

"Hiiii." He said, waving to them before turning around and fixing his gaze back to the Saiyan. "I'm surprised you managed to make friends Vegeta. Too bad they're weaklings hahahaha."

Vegeta's eyes fluttered open and he managed to pull himself together, before taking a few deep breaths to refocus his energy.

"What's so funny, ugly?!" The Prince snarled, as he got on his knees, facing Recoome, palms still planted on the ground.

"Hey, now that wasn't very nice of you Vegeta." Recoome mock-pouted. "After all we've been through together, I though we were pals haha."

Vegeta realized that he was outmatched and so was left no other option, than to use his trump card. He barely had any reserves left as it was, though. Recoome's attacks had wounded him badly, more so than he'd expected. It was no wonder he was renowned for having the greatest brute strength amongst Ginyu's soldiers. Vegeta loured at his adversary, as he stood up with great difficulty.
Recoome smirked down at him arrogantly, arms akimbo.

"Face it Vegeta, you're done." He said. "You fought a good fight, but even you should know when to call it quits."

Vegeta let out an exhale and lowered his Ki, hoping that Kakarot's brat would remember the signal.

Gohan noticed what he did and his eyes widened in realization that this was Vegeta's last draw.

"Oh no, he's out of energy." Krillin looked on dreadfully, mistakenly associating the abrupt plunge in the Prince's Ki to the beating he got from his adversary.

"Krillin follow me, quick!" Gohan said abruptly and leapt behind Recoome, standing a few yards away from him, as he assumed his stance.

"Wait! Gohan!" Krillin exclaimed, but was too late. He reluctantly followed his young companion, scowling all the while. Why was the child being so suicidal?! If Vegeta couldn't handle this guy, then they certainly didn't stand a snowball's chance in hell.

"Hey, no butting in you two!" Jeice warned. "You're mine! Recoome's had his fun!"

Recoome turned around, dismissing Vegeta entirely, as he began snickering.

"You actually mean to fight me?" He laughed in that stupid signature manner of his. "Now that's funny. I won't even need to try to-"

KHRISHHHH!

Just as Recoome lowered his guard, the Prince infused a large portion of his remaining Ki into his right hand and forearm and before anyone knew what had happened, he zoomed towards his opponent from behind and impaled him right through the sternum, penetrating his heart, before the big goon even knew what hit him. Recoome's eyes widened as he saw an arm sticking out of his chest, cutting him off before he could finish his sentence. Vegeta withdrew his appendage almost immediately.

The orange-haired fighter collapsed face first on the ground and coughed out blood. The Prince stood atop his shoulder blades, preventing any movements on the large warrior's part, while Jeice gaped on in horror.

"You let your guard down Recoome!" Vegeta rumbled, smirking evilly at the fallen combatant. "Your strength made you arrogant, your arrogance made you blind and that was a mistake that cost you dearly!"

"V-V-Vege-ta." Recoome choked out his last word and gagged, spitting out another mouthful of blood, before Vegeta stepped off of him and quickly fired a Ki blast through the fleshy perforation he'd created, vaporizing his opponent's heart and killing him instantaneously. Yet another elite of Frieza's army fell at the hands of the mighty Saiyan Prince.

Krillin stared wide-eyed at Vegeta, while Gohan looked disgustingly at Recoome's corpse. The blood and gore itself was bad enough but the miasma that reeked therefrom totally made his skin crawl.
"W-W-What the?" Krillin asked, his expression a mix of confusion, disbelief and awe.

"This was the plan Krillin." Gohan informed, looking at his older companion.

"W-W-What plan?" Asked the bald warrior.

Gohan explained.

"I see." Replied Krillin, still stunned. Vegeta really was one hell of a battle tactician. "That was some thinking there."

"Now there's just one more left." Gohan said. "I don't think we can beat him, but hopefully we can hold out long enough, until my dad gets here."

Vegeta was breathing heavily, having expunged a large portion of his energy. He refused to give up though. He'd taken out all of Frieza's men he'd faced thus far and nothing would change that, even if the scales weren't exactly tipped in his favor!

"RECOOME!" Jeice yelled, before glaring angrily at the perpetrator. "VEGETA, YOU BASTARD! YOU'LL PAY DEARLY FOR THIS!"

Earlier on, the Captain of the Ginyu Force had arrived before Frieza and delivered the six dragon balls over to him.

"Once again you have outdone yourself, Captain Ginyu." The lizard commended. "When I am the ruler of the Universe, your efforts will be repaid tenfold. I can already see it now. Thank you my loyal subject, for a job well done."

"It was my pleasure, Lord Frieza. You know how much I enjoy serving your Lordship." Ginyu replied.

"Now, just one more dragon ball and I can finally make my wish." The lizard cackled.

"Lord Frieza, just give me one hour and I'll bring back that last dragon ball straight to you, gift-wrapped!" Ginyu offered.

"I appreciate your enthusiasm but I prefer to handle this myself." Frieza replied. "I've dealt with enough Nameks now and know exactly what buttons to push to make them spill their secrets. You stay here Captain Ginyu. I'm trusting you to ensure the safety of the rest of the dragon balls."

Frieza climbed into his hovering throne.

"Right! You can count on me, my Lord!" Ginyu saluted. "I'll guard them with my life!"

Frieza smirked and took off, in no real rush, ready to savor his time slaughtering every surviving Namekian, getting the last dragon ball and killing that idiot underling of his, who was foolish enough to let himself be captured.

A short while later, Burter had arrived on scene and informed Captain Ginyu that the two
Earthlings he was pursuing had managed to get the slip on him and had destroyed his scouter.

"You idiot!" Ginyu was livid. "You call yourself a member of the Ginyu Force?! You'd better fix up this little blunder or I promise you, you're off the team!"

"But Captain-"

"No buts!" Ginyu interjected furiously, before taking a breath. "Now then, let's see."

Ginyu switched his scouter on and frowned in concentration.

"Luckily for you, I'd adjusted my scouter to lock on to the power levels of Vegeta and his affiliates, right before we took off."

"Oh, uh- okay."

"So, it appears my men are still engaging Vegeta and the brat that's with him." He observed. "As for that other daredevil, he's heading straight into the lion's jaws hehe. But I can't seem to detect the girl's signal." He then snarled furiously at his subordinate. "My goodness, please do not tell me you killed her!"

"No, no, sir, I didn't touch her, I swear!" Burter replied, eyes widened frantically, as he waved his hands. "She was unconscious when the little bald guy had her! That must be why the scouter can't detect her!"

"Well then, why didn't you just say so, you halfwit?" Ginyu replied, before sighing in relief. "Anyway, our scouters allow us to backtrack the movements of any selected sources of power, from the moment we've locked onto them, except when they're repressing their Ki of course. I'm guessing that 'little bald guy' you mentioned knocked the girl out to prevent you from detecting her and then carried her someplace safe. Smart move. Vegeta's obviously chosen his allies well." He then looked at his underling condescendingly. "After all, the guy was able to make you like the dunderheaded oaf you are."

Burter grimaced, mentally vowing to make that puny punk pay dearly!

"Now then." Ginyu began to account Krillin's flight pattern, "Before making his way over to Vegeta and that little kid with him, that guy stopped for a good while, several dozen miles in that direction." Ginyu pointed roughly northeast. "He must have left her there before taking off. The exact location's on my scouter." He then reluctantly offered the device to his subordinate. "Take it and find her now!" He ordered. "Because of your foolishness, I'll be forced to get a new one from the ship. Remember, I'm only doing this because Frieza's specifically ordered us apprehend her!"

"That reminds me sir." Burter began, "Where is Lord Frieza?"

"He's gone to collect the last dragon ball." Ginyu replied, "Retrieve this girl and you can go and regroup with the others."

"Yes sir!" Burter saluted, put on the scouter and flew off as hastily as possible, once he got a fix on his intended location. He couldn't allow his remaining two comrades to have all the fun! He wanted a turn at Vegeta too and most of all, that audacious little trickster!

Burter quickly arrived at the spot where Krillin had hidden Bulma. He grinned evilly upon seeing
the unconscious blue-haired female, hoisting her over his shoulder, as he headed right back towards the ship.

Jeice began walking forward, glowering pointedly at Vegeta. Two of his comrades had fallen at the hands of a filthy monkey! This would mar the Ginyu name for decades to come! He'd make sure that dirty Saiyan never saw the light of day again!

Gohan immediately took up his battle position in front of Vegeta.

"What the hell are you doing kid?!" Vegeta hissed. "You don't stand a chance against him!"

"I don't care!" Gohan replied tersely. "I'm not afraid of anyone!"

Jeice snickered.

"Well, that's quite a bit of bravado kid." He applauded. "With an attitude like that, you'd make a fine addition to the Ginyu Force. Too bad, you're too weak."

"Shut up!"

"Gohan, are you stupid?!" Krillin exclaimed. "This guy's way too strong! Let Vegeta handle it!"

"But he's in no condition to fight!"

"Stop talking, as if I'm not here!" Vegeta scowled. "I can fight my own battles, thank you very much! Now move, brat!"

"Gohan, listen." Krillin said in a hushed voice. "If he needs our help, we can jump in afterwards, okay?"

"Alright." Gohan sighed in surrender and stepped aside.

"Oh, don't worry." Jeice smirked. "You two will get a turn as well, right after I deal with Vegeta!"

"Enough small talk!" The Prince spat, as his tail unwrapped from around his waist and began lashing about behind him, in agitation. "It's about time we got started. Do your stupid little sissy pose, so we can begin."

"Oh, how dare you?!" Jeice exclaimed in anger, holding his fist up threateningly. "Like you would know how to strike a pose like we can! You're just jealous because you could never match our flair!"

"Oh yes, I'm completely jealous of a bunch of ballerinas." Vegeta rolled his eyes, before smirking. "You should've dedicated more effort into working your brains, if you had any, that is. Instead, you waste your time learning how to dance like a bunch of pansies. Perhaps that's why two of your idiot crew members have been killed by my hand."

"Oh, you are so dead, Vegeta!" Jeice snarled lividly. "It's a shame Frieza wants you alive or I'd kill you where you stand!"
"You talk big, but last I checked the score's two-nil, my way." Vegeta fired back. "In fact it's five-nil, if we consider Cui, Dodoria and Zarbon."

"Gimme a break!" Jeice scoffed condescendingly, "You just got lucky, that's all. I could easily beat everyone of you, by myself." He then assumed his stance, smiling smugly. "Let's begin, shall we?"

"About time!"

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Burter had brought Bulma over to Frieza's ship.

"Ahhh, I see you've returned." Captain Ginyu said, smiling evilly. "And who's this lovely lady?"

"It's the one we were after." Burter replied, smirking complacently. "Vegeta's female. What shall we do with her?"

"Leave her here." Ginyu replied. "I'd like to have a little chat with her. You can go ahead and join Jeice and Recoome."

"Yeah!" Burter threw his fist up and flew off. Little did either of them know that by now, Recoome too, had perished by Vegeta's hand.

As Burter left, Ginyu had a new scouter brought over to him.

A/N: So I guess that answers some of your questions with regards to Vegeta's true power level. It's higher than it is in the manga/anime, simply because he got a bigger Zenkai boost from Zarbon in this particular version of the story. Isn't that awesome?!
Chapter 19: Surprises

Jeice and Vegeta began duking it out, but the latter found himself being bested at just about every turn. Add to the fact that his power level was slightly lower than that of his opponent, Vegeta was worn out from his battle against Recoome. Jeice landed a hard uppercut right underneath the Saiyan's chin and he was sent flying several yards back, skidding across the grass. By some miracle, he managed to get back on his feet, but was staggering badly.

"HAHAHA You're finished Vegeta." The Trigocian sneered. "You might have gotten lucky against Recoome, but you're no match for me, especially in your condition!"

Vegeta was taking rasped breaths and clutching his rapidly beating heart. These blows were really taking their toll, especially that last one. But he could not give up!

"I'm afraid if I hit ya any longer, I might kill ya." Jeice said snidely. "Why not just give up?"

"I never surrender- cough-" Vegeta spat out a glob of bloody phlegm, "before- anyone!"

"I guess that's just too bad then." Jeice dashed forward, but just as he was about to inflict the final blow, Gohan appeared beside him and planted a hard punch straight to his left jaw, sending him reeling several yards sideways. After regained his footing, he snarled viciously at the boy. "Why you little runt!"

"I've had enough of you, jerk!" Gohan yelled. While the child did harbor a feeling of distaste towards Vegeta, what with the Prince constantly deriding both him and his father at every turn, he couldn't help but venerate his tenacity as a warrior; he refused to capitulate, no matter the odds and that's something the half-Saiyan truly respected! On top of that, Vegeta saved him from Guldo and so he wouldn't allow the older warrior meet his end here, not after he'd been able to use his cunning and genius to finish off Recoome! No, he'd take the stand and fight hard until his father returned! He was honored to call himself the son of Goku and the pupil of Piccolo and he refused to cower before anyone! "Your battle with Vegeta's over! From here on out, I'm your opponent!"

The Prince looked at the boy in disbelief and couldn't help but feel awed by his spine! This was just like him! The fierce and determined look in the half-Saiyan's dark eyes said everything! It was that same look he'd proudly donned on Earth, when he stood by his comrades, in spite of the impossible odds he faced! Only now- he was intervening on his behalf! Why?! It didn't make sense! They may have been working together, but they were still sworn enemies, weren't they?! Yet here he was, fighting for his sake, as though he were one of his friends! He shook his head ferociously. They were all a means to an end, just like he'd proclaimed earlier!

Krillin went and stood by Gohan, both battle-ready.

"Wow Vegeta." Jeice smirked. "I mean it, I'm impressed. I don't know how, but you finally made some friends hahaha!"

"Gohan, this might not be such a good idea." Krillin warned, gritting his teeth.

"I don't care!" The child loured. "Everyone's counting on us and I'm not gonna let them down!"
The bald warrior sighed in defeat and the duo faced off against Jeice.

Gohan began powering up to his maximum and Krillin did likewise. He charged up his Ki and fired a Masenko directly at his opponent's chest, who knife-handed it away. Krillin promptly fired his most intense Kamehameha wave directly at the Ginyu fighter, only to have it deflected as well.

"Really, that's it?" Jeice asked disappointedly. "And you expect to beat me? Maybe in a hundred years hahahaha!"

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Right before the battle between Jeice and the others commenced, Burter headed their way and Ginyu lightly patted Bulma's cheek, rousing her awake.

The moment she woke up and saw Ginyu's face, she instinctively let out an extremely loud shriek to the top of her voice, causing the Captain to flinch and clasp his ears tightly.

"Oh, would you please shut up?!" The Captain yelled and she immediately quieted down and looked at the purple, horned mutant with absolute dread in her eyes. Oh shit, didn't Vegeta call Frieza a 'horn-headed fucker' (A/N: Refer to Chapter 8)? Could it really be- *him*? Oh God, anyone but *him*! "Now then, you're probably wondering why you're here."

"Wh-Who- who are y-you?" Bulma quavered, fear deluging her sapphire eyes as she sat up. Her entire body was trembling.

"If you must know, allow me to formally introduce myself." The Captain promptly stood up, dusted himself off and placed his arms by his side. "I am." He paused a few seconds for effect, before striking one of his top five signature poses, as he chanted. "Captaaaaiiiin Ginyuuuu!"

Bulma's fear dissipated and she looked at the mutant creature incredulously for a few moments, before falling backwards anime-style. This guy was clearly a nutcase, but he didn't seem harmless in anyway. Maybe this was all just some bizarre dream. She could hardly remember anything from before, anyway. She got up and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Oh, okay." She shook her head. "For a second there, I thought you were someone named Frieza."

Ginyu smirked, easing his stance.

"Oh no, I just work for Lord Frieza."

Bulma blanched as she heard that. Of course. Captain Ginyu! Her memories from earlier began resurfacing. The Ginyu Force! That's what Vegeta called them! Shit, how did she end up here?! If this guy was their Captain, what happened to the others?!

"Anyway, his Lordship's currently running an errand and he specifically ordered us not to harm you until he returns." Ginyu explained.

"Wh-Where're my f-friends?"

"Oh, my men are taking them into custody as we speak." Ginyu informed. Bulma had horror and trepidation writ all over her countenance. "But have no fear, they're also to be taken alive."
"What do you want with us?" Bulma asked, frowning and gritting her teeth.

"Well, you see, Lord Frieza informed us that you're Vegeta's lover." Ginyu replied. Bulma averted her gaze the moment he said that. "And as you may well know, that little Saiyan is guilty of treason and so we've been ordered to apprehend him and all his associates."

"I've got news for you then!" She scowled back at him. "I was never his associate or his lover! I was his prisoner! I hate him! I hate all of you!" She then continued in a softer tone. "I just wanna go home."

Ginyu narrowed his eyes curiously at her.

"Is that right?"

"That's right." She stated fervently, before looking at him imploringly. "Please, just let me go."

Ginyu perused her for a moment.

"Well, you sound convincing enough, but I'm afraid orders are orders."

"But I've got nothing to do with any of this." She argued.

"That may be so, but Lord Frieza came to learn that his Saiyan underling was highly possessive of you." He informed her. Bulma gaped at the Captain. "In fact, he's convinced that he may have even developed a fondness towards you. Personally, I find that hard to believe, but, hey, stranger things have happened."

Fondness? Possessiveness? Is that how Vegeta felt towards her? She immediately recalled her Saiyan captor's unsettled state, as he demanded that Krillin deliver her to safety. Was that truly concern she saw in his ebony eyes? But if that were so, why had he spurned her, not so long ago?! And how did Frieza come to know about any of this?! Why did he even care?! She loured at the Captain.

"Even if any of that's true, it still doesn't change the fact that I hate him!" She lied. "He killed my friends and took me from my home!"

"Did he now?" Ginyu frowned and paused for a moment. "Well, regardless, if he does truly hold any sort of attachment towards you, that makes you a very important person, whether you like it or not."

"Why?"

"It's simple." Ginyu replied. "Vegeta's always been kind of a loose cannon, ever since he was a boy, soon after his planet was destroyed."

"You mean, after Frieza destroyed it!" Bulma corrected, grimacing nastily at him.

"Oh, so you know about that?" The Captain smirked and when the blue-haired woman didn't answer, he continued. "Guess you do. Anyway, when Planet Vegeta was still around, Frieza had a vast extent of leverage to keep the Prince in line."
That really caught Bulma's attention.

"It was all quite simple really." He went on. "All he had to do was threaten to kill the little Prince's father and Vegeta followed his every move like a puppet."

Bulma's lips began to quiver, as tears flooded her brilliant eyes.

"But things changed." Ginyu continued. "Vegeta was never was all that amiable to begin with, but after the annihilation of his race, he became outright reclusive, even with his two subordinates, Nappa and Raditz. Since then, handling him had always been kind of difficult. While he was a brutally efficient killing machine, without anymore leverage, Frieza couldn't really keep Vegeta under control like he wanted to and as expected, that pretentious little Saiyan ending up rebelling against him." He stated, before smirking. "But now with you here-"

"So you're planning to use me to get to him, is that it?!" Bulma interjected, gnashing her teeth the instant she figured it out.

"Something like that, yes." The Captain affirmed.

"Why?!" She cried. "How could you ever treat someone like that?! What did Vegeta ever do to any of you?! Why can't you just leave him alone?! Haven't you put him through enough?!"

The heiress was unable to help it as a giant wave of tears burst forth, in the midst of her heartfelt tirade. Everything made sense now; why Vegeta was the way he was! By having nothing to care for, Frieza had nothing to take away from him and that was the only piece of reassurance he could hang on to, as he spent his days blackening his soul doing his master's dirty work! But the moment he began- caring for someone, he felt his tempo break! He saw her as a weakness, a liability and that's why he shunned her, not because he was a heartless bastard, as she'd thought the first time!

"You're besotted with him, aren't you?" Ginyu smirked, breaking right through her thoughts.

"I'm not!" Bulma hissed back.

"You are."

"I hope you all die and burn in hell!" She snarled viciously.

"All of us, but not Vegeta, right?" Ginyu asked, surveying her closely.

Bulma opened her mouth, but was unable to utter a word. No, she didn't want to say it again! She'd wished evil upon Vegeta just a while earlier and he'd barely made it out alive! She couldn't do it again! She couldn't bear the thought of him dying! If only he could survive! If only all of them could somehow make it out of this mess! Where was Goku, when they needed him?! Krillin assured her he'd come!

"That's what I thought!" The Captain smirked knowingly, before chuckling and exhaling. "Anyway, you shouldn't worry about him. He'll be dealt with soon enough, Miss uh-"

"Brief." Bulma answered in a low tone, knitting her eyebrows.

"Right, Miss Brief." Ginyu said. "Look, don't get me wrong, you seem like a nice girl and all and I don't like having to do this, but orders are orders. It's nothing personal, just business."
"It's entirely personal to me!" Bulma shot back. "You're using me as a hostage!"

"True, but that's just the way it's gotta be."

"You're all monsters, every last one of you!"

"And is Vegeta any different?" The Captain grinned. Bulma refused to meet his gaze, as he continued. "Other than Frieza, he's more ruthless than every single one of us. His name carries great infamy, even amongst the ranks of the Planet Trade. Man, woman or child, he could break a person in less than half the time it would take my men and I all working tog-"

"ENOUGH!" Bulma snarled aloud. "I'm not listening to you anymore!"

The Captain winced at her abrupt shrilling voice and grit his teeth, letting out an exasperated huff, before smirking.

"You really are taken with him, huh?" Ginyu chuckled. "Hate to be the bearer of bad news, but Frieza's definitely gonna look forward to interrogating you."

"He won't." Bulma stared him dead in the eye. "Vegeta and Goku will stop him, just you watch. I'd give up now, if I were you."

"Hahahaha, Goku huh?!" Ginyu laughed. "And who might that be?!"

"You're about to find out the hard way, unless you leave this planet immediately."

"Sounds fun!" Ginyu flashed his pearly teeth at her. "In any event, it's time you took a little nap."

The Captain gave her a tap on the temple that knocked her out instantly. If she was any bit as clever as Vegeta's other friend that had managed to fool Burter, he couldn't take any chances. He brought her inside the ship and had a soldier confine her to a room that was sealed with a circular Ki-infused padlock.

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"H-He just deflected our attacks- like they were- n-nothing." Krillin stuttered.

"Dammit, he's too strong!" Gohan hissed.

"Of course! I am a member of the Ginyu Force after all!" Jeice said smugly. Just then Burter arrived by his side and growled viciously, the moment he saw the bald warrior.

"Burter, it's about time you came." Jeice said, shaking his head. "What took ya?"

"That bald midget's mine, understood!"

"Hold on now, just wait a minute-"

"He's mine!" Burter interjected resolvedly. "He played me for a fool and he's going to pay for it!"

"He what?!!"
"Maybe if they keep arguing with each other, it can buy us a little time till Goku gets here." Krillin whispered to Gohan.

"Perhaps, but I doubt it." The boy shook his head dejectedly.

"Hey baldy!" Vegeta hobbled over near the two of them, grimacing.

"My name's Krillin." The bald warrior frowned in askance.

"I specifically ordered you to leave this planet, did I not?!" Vegeta growled at him. "What the fuck are you still doing here?!"

"If you're worried about Bulma, for whatever reason, don't be." Krillin replied, expression unchanged. "She's fine. I knocked her out and stashed her someplace safe."

Vegeta knits his eyebrows at the bald man for a moment, breathing an inward sigh of relief, before a nasty snarl twisted his features.

"I never said I was worried you idiot!" He exclaimed angrily, clearly insulted such a notion. "I need her alive for my own reasons, that's all there is to it!" He lied.

"Whatever." Krillin said dismissively. "In any case, she's alright, believe me." He then turned his attention to the two juggernauts in front of them. "I can hardly say the same thing about us though."

The Ginyu pair continued arguing, until Burter realized something was amiss.

"Where're Guldo and Recoome?" He asked.

"Vegeta killed them." Jeice answered, clenching his jaw.

"Impossible! How?!" Burter gaped at his companion.

"It was some nasty trick." Responded the red warrior. "Pure luck is all it was. And now he's gonna pay for it!"

"Your darn right he is!" Burter turned towards the trio, letting out a furious snarl. "You'll pay for this! Do you hear me?!"

"Dammit now what?!" Vegeta clenched his teeth. "Snow White was enough trouble on his own, now the giant anthropomorphic snake's joined him too!"

"Silence, monkey!" The blue-skinned shot back lividly, before turning to his comrade. "Step aside Jeice! These three are mine!"

"How about this?" Jeice asked tactfully. "You take the two runts and I get Vegeta. It's only fair."

"Fine!" Burter hissed back, begrudgingly. "But I go first, is that clear?!"

"Alright, alright." Jeice sighed in surrender.
"Prepare to die!" Burter faced the two Earthlings warriors and charged straight towards them without another word.

Vegeta looked on in awe as Burter's dazzling speed overwhelmed the duo from Earth. The Prince could barely do a thing, as they were being clobbered by their super-swift adversary.

'He's so fast!' Vegeta mentally noted, a frustrated look engrained on his countenance. 'It's unreal! Now what?! Even if Kakarot gets here, we're still screwed! But I can't let Frieza win! Not when I was so close!'

As Vegeta was lost in his thoughts, Gohan rammed into his chest out of nowhere, propelled back by a nasty blow from Burter.

"Hey Burter, quit reneging on our deal!" Jeice protested. "Vegeta's mine, in case you forgot!"

"Sorry, sorry." Burter smirked at his colleague. "Just a harmless mistake. It won't happen again."

"Be sure that it doesn't mate!"

The navy blue alien nodded before lifting a badly bruised Krillin by the collar of his Gi and head-butting him so hard, he crushed his nasal bone. The helpless Earthling cried out in pain, as blood began gushing out of his mangled nose.

"You little twerp!" He snapped furiously. "Did you really think you could fool a member of the Ginyu Force and get away with it?!"

He head-butted him again and again, before Gohan abruptly dropkicked him from the side. Krillin fell to the ground and moments later, passed out, the impact of those repeated blows to the head, finally taking their toll.

"Krillin!" Gohan yelled frantically, shaking his older companion in a vain attempt to rouse him. "Wake up Krillin, please wake up!"

Gohan pressed his ear against Krillin's chest and felt his heart beating, though barely. This looked bad!

"You stupid runt!" Burter yelled, dashing towards Gohan and backhanding him across the jaw. The demi-Saiyan flew several yards sideways, as Vegeta looked on in absolute disgust at the savage display, despite having partaken in much worse himself!

"You coward!" He yelled at the giant warrior.

"You want some too, Vegeta?" Burter sneered. "You're going to pay the ultimate price for turning tail on us, when I'm torturing that pretty little girlfriend of yours!"

"You'll never find her." The Saiyan smirked.

"Oh, but I already did." Burter responded, smirking right back, wiping the smug look right off Vegeta's face. "She's with the Captain right at this very moment."

"What?!" Vegeta snarled viciously and he tried sensing out Bulma's Ki. Dammit, of all the fucking times to be distracted?! He still couldn't sense her! What the fuck was going on?! Was she knocked
out or killed?! No! No, she couldn't be dead! Somehow he knew she was alive!

"I wouldn't worry about her though, Vegeta." Burter replied, folding his arms. He scowled as he went on."Unfortunately, our orders were to take all of you alive."

Vegeta let out a mental sigh of alleviation, before glaring daggers at his foe.

"Where the fuck's Frieza, then?!"

"He's on an errand."

Shit! If this bastard was telling the truth, then Bulma was in the heart of the enemy territory! He had to get her away from there before Frieza got back! Heavens knew what the lizard would do to her! He wouldn't let it happen! He couldn't! There was no fucking way!

Overcome with a sudden rush of resolve and fury, the Prince bellowed out loud, like never before. A new spark of energy ignited within him as he launched straight towards Frieza's ship. Jeice quickly appeared before him and punched him in the face, however the blow had little effect. Vegeta swatted the Trigocian's arm away and began attacking back ruthlessly: punches, kicks, elbows, knees and head-butts, until one final elbow to the top of the head, caused his opponent to crash straight into the ground. He then began charging up his signature attack, as Gohan looked on in complete awe, while Krillin lay unconscious. Just how on Earth was Vegeta able to summon such amazing strength, all of a sudden?

"GAAAAALLLIIIIICCKKK-"

BOOM!

Vegeta was interrupted mid-way, as Burter rammed his head straight onto his back, sending him flying several dozen yards ahead and crashing right into a mountain, whereby it collapsed. Dammit, he was so close to finishing off that bastard Jeice! The Prince exploded with fury and zoomed right towards Burter with ferocious abandon.

Using his superior speed, the blue giant blocked most of Vegeta's attacks, but was still left astounded by his combative prowess. No wonder he was able to do away with Recoome. Vegeta managed break through his opponent's guard, as he landed a vicious low punch to his solar plexus, knocking the wind right out of him.

Just as Vegeta was about to land another blow, however, Jeice appeared to his right and landed a hard knee to the Saiyan's gut, causing him to spit out blood. The red fighter followed through with a double axe-handle atop Vegeta's head, sending him hurtling down below. Burter was clutching his midsection in an attempt to catch his breath.

Jeice was readying a Ki blast to finish Vegeta off, but at that moment, Gohan suddenly caught him off guard, ramming his head right into the longhaired warrior's face. The demi-Saiyan was about to fire a blast flush on his adversary, before Burter dove his knee right into the boy's solar-plexus and elbowed him on top of the head, causing him to join Vegeta on the ground.

"Gee-whiz Jeice, these two are a lot more trouble than we bargained for!" Burter stated, completely startled by Gohan and Vegeta's respective abilities.

"You can say that again!" Jeice concurred. "It doesn't make sense! With the amount of blows
Vegeta took from both Recoome and myself, he shouldn't even be alive! Where's he getting such power from?!

At that moment Krillin managed to regain consciousness, but could barely move. He sensed that Gohan was in trouble. As he recalled his solemn vow to protect the boy at all cost, he stood to his feet with great difficulty and began charging a Kamehameha wave, however, the Ginyu duo caught wind of it on their scouter.

"Ahhh, it's the little pest." Burter looked on smugly, before yelling. "Back for more, are we?!!"

"KAMEHAMEHA!" Krillin quickly slurred and fired his most intense blast right towards his enemies with what little energy he had left, only for the blue-skinned giant to swat it away easily. Gohan sat up and looked on helplessly.

Burter charged towards the bald warrior ready to finish him off and just as Krillin was ready to bite the big one, a foot landed hard on his enemy's left jaw, sending him flying a dozen or so yards away. Since their scouter were adjusted to specifically focus on the adversaries before them, they were unable to anticipate the newcomer's arrival, a renowned warrior who moved as swiftly and subtly as the wind.

"Nail!" Krillin beamed at his friend. "Where'd you come from?! Boy am I glad you're here!"

"Hello Krillin." The Namek warrior greeted, eyes still fixed on his adversary. "Guru sent me. Said you folks might need some help."

"Well, that's for sure." Krillin laughed weakly.

Gohan stood to his feet and began tottering towards the powerful Namekian.

"Hey there, Nail!" He greeted. "It's good to see you again!"

"Likewise, Gohan!" Replied the Namek, looking at him for a fleeting moment before returning his gaze towards the blue giant.

"A Namekian?!!" Jeice looked on incredulously. "Where the hell did this guy come from?!!"

Vegeta sat up with great difficulty. Fuck! Bulma! He had to get her away from this planet, before she fell in Frieza's icy clutches! He rose to his feet and roared furiously, as he rocketed towards the distracted Jeice, ramming his head underneath the red warrior's chin before he even knew what had happened. He then punched him in the chest hard, forcing him backwards, as he continued his relentless onslaught.

"I've had enough of you, Saiyan scum!" Jeice yelled. While Vegeta's rage mode gave him phenomenal new strength, it didn't take long for the Trigocian to deduce that his state of hysteria together with his fatigue, were making his attacks were wild and uncoordinated. And so the red warrior decided to capitalize, by infusing a large portion of his Ki into his right fist and ramming it right into the Prince's midsection, the moment he found a clear opening. Jeice cracked through Vegeta's armor, piercing a good portion of his flesh. The Saiyan began spitting out mouthfuls of blood, as the life began draining from his eyes.

"VEGETA!" Gohan yelled out, but before Jeice could ram his fist any deeper into the Prince, Nail appeared behind him and wheel kicked him on the temple, sending him plummeting to the ground
Vegeta's eyes slowly drifted to a close, as his seemingly lifeless body began to fall. Nail managed to get ahold of the Saiyan and gently laid him out onto the ground.

"You Namek trash!" Burter hissed out as he dashed towards Nail and punched him right on the chin. The blow propelled the Namekian backwards and skidding along the dirt. As he saw Vegeta sprawled out on the ground, the blue giant smirked and planted a foot on his chest. The moment Gohan saw such shameless irreverence, he exploded with rage and dove straight towards Burter, ravaging the much larger warrior. His momentary advantage was short-lived, as the giant quickly regained his footing and attacked the boy's midsection so hard, he broke at least four ribs. Burter firmly grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and began punching the same spot over and over again, whereby a rib eventually pierced the young half-Saiyan's right lung, causing blood to bubble out of his mouth, as he cried out in pain. The boy was gurgling out his lifeblood, as Burter carelessly tossed him aside, as though he were garbage and the demi-Saiyan eventually lost consciousness.

The moment he saw the child's motionless body hit the ground, Krillin snapped and flew forward, catching Burter off guard as he landed a hard right, straight to his jaw. He attempted to follow up with a left hook, but the Ginyu warrior easily dodged the second attack and reappeared behind him, elbowing him savagely on the nape, resulting in a fatal spinal cord injury that paralyzed the human. Krillin fell face first to the ground and spasmed slightly, as the world began fading from around him.

Meanwhile, Nail was engaging Jeice. The two seemed just about evenly matched, much to the Ginyu fighter's surprise and chagrin. Nail was momentarily distracted, as he sensed his people being slaughtered afar.

'Oh no, Elder Tsuno's village is under attack.' He grit his teeth. 'It's the evil one.'

Jeice took advantage of his opponent's momentary lapse, landing a hook across his jaw. The Namekian snarled and fired a Ki blast flush against Jeice's midsection, whereby the Ginyu fighter was propelled backwards. Dammit, how did things go so bad?! Gohan and Krillin were both dead it seemed and so was Vegeta! Add to that, Frieza's assault on the last inhabited village on Namek! It appeared as though all hope was lost!

A/N: Oh my God! Things couldn't possibly be any worse, could they?! Bulma is in Ginyu's clutches, the remaining survivors of Namek are being butchered like cattle and it seems Gohan, Krillin and Vegeta are all dead, at worst or out of commission, at best! Where on Earth is Goku?! Is he too late to save his allies?!

BTW, I'm sure you all must've been really surprised when Nail made his way into the scene, right? As you already know, this fic will be at odds with the canon version and this is just one of a number of such occurrences taking place! I know you folks must be dying for an update! It will be up in about three days so don't fret!! Until then, let me know what you think and be sure to favourite if you're enjoying this so far!!!
Chapter 20: Timely Arrival

Goku had just finished his final bout of training at 100Gs and was prepared to arrive on Namek. He ate one more senzu bean to recover his strength and had pushed himself like never before during this last day or so. As a culmination to everything, the Saiyan from Earth launched two powerful Kamehameha waves, directing them to strike him from either side. The resulting damage was monumental, however, upon recovery his strength had just become that much greater! The Saiyan youth's powers were far beyond anything he'd ever have imagined, since leaving Earth! It was time to put it all to the test! Time to take on Vegeta, Frieza and whoever else stood in his path!

A short while passed and his ship finally landed. He stepped out, face wrought with resolve, as he tuned his senses and felt a cluster of power levels far off, quickly dying away. They were innocent people. He grit his teeth and the moment he sensed the one responsible, his eyes widened in horror: Frieza! Such raw evil! Such mountainous power! It was greater than he'd counted on! No wonder King Kai had warned him to avoid this monster at all costs! But he refused to flee! No matter the odds, he'd meet this challenge! He sensed another really high power level not too far away, but decided not to dwell on it. First and foremost, he needed to ensure that Gohan, Krillin and Bulma were safe! That was his main priority.

He shut his eyes and began concentrating. He felt three strong Ki signals ahead and three that were fading rapidly, much too rapidly! Two belonged to Gohan and Krillin and the other- Vegeta?! Just what in seven hells was going on?! With a stern and steadfast look of raw determination, he zoomed forward at full speed.

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Nail turned his head sideways as he saw a spaceship arrive on the planet.

"What is that?" He asked no one in particular.

Jeice frowned at him and he too turned his attention to the newcomer, whoever it was.

"Hey Burter! You mind coming over here?!" He yelled to his comrade.

"Sure, I'm done with these pieces of trash, anyway!" The blue giant promptly made his way over next to his colleague. "What's up?"

"I wonder who that is." Jeice folded his arms, as he perused the ship an island or two away.

"We're not expecting anybody." Burter frowned, before smirking. "Maybe some Nameks coming home from vacation."

"Poor dopes," Jeice snickered. "They have no idea what they're getting themselves into."

'His strength is unusual.' Nail noted, feeling out the presence of this new arrival. 'I can't measure his true level of power, but I don't sense even the tiniest trace of evil from him! But my people are being slaughtered! What do I do?! I know I was ordered to help the Earthlings, but I can't let Frieza get away with this! Once he's done with Tsuno's village, he'll head straight for Guru and there's
absolutely no way I can allow that!

Nail's eyes were hardly able to follow as Goku zoomed past him, Jeice and Burter, at supersonic speed and stood before the gurgling Gohan. Blood bubbles were oozing out of his son's mouth. He was barely alive!

"This guy's pretty good Burter." Jeice remarked. "That's quite an entrance he made. He's really fast, maybe even faster than you."

"Yeah right, give me a break." Burter smirked and clicked a button on his scouter. "Low fighting power. He's all show. You're too easily impressed Jeice."

Nail went and stood beside Goku.

"Do you know this boy?" He asked the mysterious man. "Do you know Gohan?"

"Huh? Yeah, he's my son." Goku responded, staring intriguingly at the Piccolo look-alike.

"Oh, I see." Nail nodded weakly, before letting out a dejected sigh. "Gohan said you'd be coming here."

"You're friends with Gohan?" Goku asked. The Namekian warrior nodded, before looking apologetically at the Saiyan.

"I'm sorry, I tried my best to help him and the others." He explained. "But these brutes are more powerful than I'd anticipated."

"Don't worry, he'll be okay." Goku smiled at Nail, who looked at him in disbelief. Surely he could see the boy wasn't going to make it! "You have my deepest gratitude for helping us."

The Saiyan bent down and pulled out his sack of senzu beans.

"It's okay son, I'm here now." He said solemnly. "We can fix this. You're going to be fine, don't you worry." He immediately placed a bean in his child's mouth. "Try to swallow this Gohan."

The demi-Saiyan was faintly conscious and as he heard a familiar voice urging him on, he forced himself to work the muscles in his windpipe, swallowing the magic seed. Gohan instantly shot up and spat out a glob of blood, still accumulated in his chest. Other than that, his condition was perfect now! All his faculties were back and better than ever!

"How do you feel?" Goku asked.

"Dad?" The boy looked at his father in awe, before grabbing his collar. "Dad is it really you?"

Nail goggled as he witnessed the child's injuries just vanish away into thin air.

"Hey, I thought you said you took care of that kid!" Jeice exclaimed.

"I- I did. I-It doesn't make any sense!" Burter replied, completely taken aback, just like his comrade.

"Dad, those guys are super powerful." Gohan warned.
"I know, we definitely have our work cut out for us, but I'm here now." Goku smiled reassuringly. "Just leave everything to me, okay?"

"Yeah- sure thing- dad." The boy drawled.

The Saiyan arrival then walked towards Krillin, his son hot on his heels. He noticed Vegeta unconscious and hanging onto life by a mere thread.

"Vegeta's almost dead." He observed. "I'm guessing your Namekian friend did that to him right?"

"No, he didn't." Gohan shook his head and began glowering icily at Jeice. "It was that jerk with the long hair!"

"What?!" Goku's eyes widened. "So then- Vegeta wasn't fighting against you guys?"

"No, dad." The half-Saiyan replied, his face downcast. "We were all fighting together, but I don't know if he or Krillin will make it now."

Goku looked at the child curiously. What exactly had he missed? He shook his head, deciding to ruminate some other time.

"This really is an unexpected turn of events." The Saiyan commented, as he went over to his best friend and knelt down next to him. "But in any case, let's get Krillin fixed up first. He's still alive, so he should be alright."

"Awesome!" Gohan beamed. His father had arrived! Just like he knew he would! With him here, he wasn't afraid of anyone! Everything would work itself out! He just knew it!

Goku put a senzu bean inside Krillin's mouth and forced it down his gullet by running his thumb along his throat. The human's eyes sparkled with life once again, as he shot up into a sitting position.

"Goku? GOKU!" Krillin beamed as he jumped his best friend. "I can't believe you're really here!"

"Hey Krillin, it's nice seeing you again!" Goku smiled, pulling his friend back by the shoulders.

"It's like- he just touches them and they're healed." Jeice looked on agape.

"Yeah, it's crazy, who is this guy?" Burter agreed, equally astounded.

"I'm so glad you came." Krillin laughed, but soon had his face downcast, sighing in defeat. "I don't mean to be pessimistic, but even with you here, I think the odds might still be stacked against us. We've never dealt with anything like this. Vegeta's stronger than ever and he just barely managed to finish off that big guy over there." He pointed to Recoome's corpse. "These other guys are about as strong as he was and then there's their Captain who's on another level altogether. On top of all that there's that Frieza monster, whose power I can't even begin describing!"

"Vegeta really defeated one of them, all by himself?!" Goku asked, wide-eyed. If that were truly the case, his rival had certainly gotten a lot stronger- more so than he'd have foreseen anyway.

"Well, Krillin and I did kind of help." Gohan explained, before looking imploringly at his father.
"Dad, if he's still alive you have to help him! We can't beat these guys all on our own!"

"As much as I hate to say it, Gohan's right." Krillin affirmed. "And uh- this might surprise you- but Vegeta's not quite as evil as he was on Earth. Don't get me wrong, he's still rotten to the core, but something's changed about him and for the life of me, I just can't figure out what exactly."

"Serious?!" Goku stared blankly at Krillin.

"I don't even know where to begin, it's been crazy here."

"Don't speak. This'll be a lot faster." The Saiyan placed a hand atop his best friend's glabrous head. "Just relax."

"Uh- Oh- Alright."

"What're you doing dad?" Gohan asked, confusedly.

"I'm going to read Krillin's mind." A few moments passed.

"Thanks." Goku smiled once he was done, "I understand everything." Yes, Bulma was safe and sound, or so he thought. They could collect her later, after dealing with Frieza and reviving the others!

"H-How?" Krillin asked.

"I'm not really sure." He answered. "I guess exercising at one hundred times normal gravity has its benefits."

"What?! A hundred times?!" Krillin exclaimed, completely flabbergasted. "How is that possible?! You'd be crushed!"

"Nah, I feel just fine."

"Wow." Gohan said in awe.

"I'm really proud of you guys." Goku smiled at the duo. "You've improved a lot since you left Earth. You fought well. I'll go get Vegeta fixed up now." He chuckled slightly. "If I make him wait any longer, he might just bite the big one."

"Right!" The demi-Saiyan nodded.

"I must leave now." Nail made his way over to the others. He gnashed his teeth. "Frieza's slaughtering my people and I know he'll go after Guru next! I cannot allow that, no matter what! I'm sorry, but you'll have to handle these men on your own!"

"Oh no, you're right! I can sense it too." Gohan exclaimed, dismayed. He looked to his father pleadingly. "Dad, we have to help them!"

"Let me get Vegeta healed first Gohan." Goku walked towards his rival. "Then we'll make our next move."

"Listen carefully, you two." Nail addressed Gohan and Krillin. "Once you manage to unite all
seven dragon balls, go get Dende to give you the password! It's the only way you can summon Porunga and make your wishes! I'll hold off Frieza and buy you some time!"

Before the pair from Earth could say a word, Namek's most powerful warrior took off bravely, to confront this new enemy and aid his people as best he could.

"What in the- get back here!" Burter snarled at Nail's receding figure.

"Never mind him." Jeice waved his hand dismissively. "We can deal with him later." Truthfully, he'd rather choose to avoid the risk of confronting that guy ever again. He was startled that a Namekian warrior had the ability to go toe-to-toe with an elite like himself! Not that it mattered! He stood no chance against Frieza or the Captain, so all was fine!

"If you say so." The giant shrugged his shoulders.

"Hey Vegeta, wake up." Goku knelt in front of his rival's unconscious body and tried slapping him awake several times, before pulling out a senzu bean and forcing it down his throat, like he did with Krillin. He barely anticipated Vegeta's next move, as the Prince sat up and instinctively landed a fist on his rival's chin, making him fall ungracefully on his rear.

"Ow." Goku whimpered, rubbing his aching jaw, before sitting back up and glaring at the Prince. "What was that for?"

"Kakarot?!" Vegeta asked, flabbergasted.

"Nice to meet you too." Replied the younger Saiyan, in a sarcastic and petulant voice. "Your welcome by the way- jerk!"

"Am I dreaming?" Vegeta asked, as he observed his now unmarred body. What on Earth happened?

"Well, I'm flattered, but no, this isn't a dream." Goku quipped.

"What?! What are you on about clown?!" Vegeta scowled at his rival, disgusted by his blatant misinterpretation! "And where did you come from?! What's going on?!"

"Hey, relax Vegeta, I was just kidding!" The younger Saiyan put his hands up in surrender, grinning in his signature goofy fashion. "Anyway, you're probably wondering why you're as good as new."

Goku went on explaining the powers of the senzu bean, while Vegeta listened on in complete bafflement. So that was it! Wow! A year ago, he'd learned about the dragon balls and now this! Earth sure was full of surprises!

"Anyway, it's time I deal with these lowlives." Goku stood up and began strutting over boldly towards Jeice and Burter.

"Where are you going?!" Krillin asked apprehensively.

"To teach these Ginyu guys a lesson!" Goku replied, ardently.

"What?! You're going to take them on all by yourself?!"
"I'll be fine." Goku stated in firm conviction.

"Be careful dad." Gohan said, worriedly.

"Kakarot is hiding some of his fighting ability." Vegeta observed, as he got to his feet. "But how much? Surely he senses how powerful these guys are and yet he's perfectly calm. What could he be hiding?" His jaw suddenly dropped as a thought hit him. "No is he- could he be- a Super Saiyan?"

That caught Gohan and Krillin's attention.

"What?!"

"He's just a low class warrior though!" The Prince scowled. "It doesn't make any sense!

"Hey, take that back!" Krillin demanded. Vegeta wasn't paying him any heed though. To have that kind of calm and composure, Kakarot's abilities must have taken a huge upsurge since the last time they'd met! But how much exactly, was the only question weighing on his mind.

Burter and Jeice smiled wickedly as their new adversary approached them. The blue giant clicked his scouter.

"This guy's power level is only five thousand hahaha." He chuckled. "He must be pretty brave challenging us. Must've hit himself in the head pretty hard when he landed here."

"Yeah." The red warrior concurred, smirking at his comrade. "How about we show him who we are?"

Burter nodded.

"Say hello to the Ginyu Force!" Jeice chanted. "I am the Red Magma." He struck a pose, "Jeice!"

"I am your worst nightmare!" Burter proclaimed, as he began his own awkward introduction. "Prepare yourself for the Blue Hurricane." He then assumed a pose of his own, "Burter!"

"You wanna dance or fight?" Goku frowned, not the least bit impressed.

"Do it- Kakarot." Vegeta grit his teeth, wanting to witness with his very own eyes what his rival had in store for these two ignorant fools.

"How dare you make light of the Ginyu Force?!" Jeice scowled, holding his fist up threateningly.

Goku quickly disappeared and with lightning speed, reappeared behind Jeice and Burter.

'He's fast.' Vegeta knit his eyebrows. He was the only one in the scene able to follow the young Saiyan's nimble maneuvers.

"Where did he go?" Burter asked, confusedly.

Jeice's scouter suddenly came to life. After Vegeta's defeat, he'd readjusted the settings to catch wind of any newcomers, since Nail was able to surprise them.
"What the?!" The 'Red Magma' and his comrade swivelled around, as Goku appeared behind him.

"How did you-" Burter was tongue-tied.

"What're you trying to pull?!" Jeice demanded.

"You guys have caused enough problems here!" Goku growled, before forewarning. "It's time for
you to leave! Go back to your ships and get off of this planet, otherwise you'll have to face me!"

The Ginyu duo began shaking in anger and attacked the brash intruder, only to hit thin air, as Goku
swiftly dodged and reappeared behind them once again, at speeds they were unable to follow.
Gohan and Krillin looked on in absolute wonder.

"Who- is this guy?!" Jeice asked no one in particular.

"Let's show him we mean business." Burter said.

"Sure!" The duo promptly travelled a good distance away, before flying full speed at Goku several
times, in a vain attempt to intimidate him. It wasn't working at all! When Goku didn't move an
inch, they began firing Ki blasts his way. He still seemed completely motionless and yet the blasts
weren't hitting him at all. The younger Saiyan evaded each attack so swiftly that he wasn't
surprised in the least when none of the other onlookers witnessed his movement- save, Vegeta.

The evil duo then landed on either side of him, not pleased at all.

"I'm sick of your little games. We are the Ginyu-"

BOOM!

Goku landed a left jab right on Jeice's nose and the red fighter began yelping and squealing like a
little girl.

"How- dare you?!" The Trigocian stared malevolently at his Saiyan opponent.

"How dare I what?" Goku asked, startled. "Weren't the two of you just trying to attack me?!"

"Why you-" Jeice grit his teeth before snarling, "I'll destroy you!"

The pair both attacked simultaneously, but Goku blocked their moves easily and threw them off,
before firing two powerful Kiais, that blew them away in opposite directions.

His adversaries charged straight towards him full force, but he was easily able to dodge each and
every attack directed his way.

"It's insane!" Krillin exclaimed. "They can't even touch him! His speed is incredible! I hardly see
him moving! Those two guys are about to find out how powerful Goku really is! The hard way!"

"I don't understand!" Jeice clenched his teeth. "His power level's only five thousand! I'm sure of it!
But my attacks don't even faze him!"

"It's obvious that Kakarot is raising his power level so quickly they aren't able to detect it!" Vegeta
observed. "It's unbelievable! How did he become so strong so fast?! If there is way to become a Super Saiyan, I must learn it!"

"Well, he said he trained under 100 times normal gravity." Gohan stated, inwardly proud at Vegeta's clear acknowledgement of his father's greatness.

"Really?!" The Prince asked, agape, before frowning in understanding. "That must be it then!"

Burter and Jeice attempted all sorts of maneuvers, even their esteemed 'purple spiral flash attack', but against the might of Goku, it was all for naught. A simple Kiai imploded each and every blast headed his way, before it could even land.

The blue giant formulated a new plan. He instructed his longhaired comrade to fire his 'crusher ball' at this mysterious new foe, while he rushed him from behind. This too resulted in a failure, as Goku simply deflected Jeice's signature attack and redirected it towards Burter, who'd barely managed to dodge it.

"Hi." Goku was already behind the 'blue hurricane'.

Burter began attacking with all his might but Goku effortlessly blocked each and every blow. Jeice soon joined in, only for their Saiyan opponent to eventually vanish once again, causing the duo to attack one-another by mistake.

"Hey guys! Yo!" Goku exclaimed from beside them, smirking and folding his arms pompously. "Well, do you wanna dance or fight?"

That did it! The duo charged him again, more furious than ever, only this time, Goku decided to go on the offensive, landing a flying kick right on Burter's sternum, breaking through his armor, as his comrade looked on in absolute horror. He followed through with an elbow between the shoulder blades, again smashing his armor from the other side. Just before Burter landed on the ground, Goku caught him with his left hand and tossed him onto the grass, a couple meters away from him.

"This fight is fruitless!" Goku loured at Jeice. "I'd leave this planet now if I were you!"

"Don't be a fool Kakarot!" Vegeta yelled. "He's destroyed more men than you can count!"

"Everyone deserves a second chance, just like you!" Goku responded fervently. "Why should I treat them any different?!"

Vegeta snarled viciously at him. What a fool! How could a Saiyan have such incredible power and yet operate under such pathetic feelings of compassion?! It sickened him to the very core! He could puke, that's how disgusted he was by Kakarot's absurd idealism! He was just like Bulma had described him back on Earth (A/N: See Chapter 5)!

Not needing to be told twice, Jeice quickly disappeared from the scene, headed towards Frieza's ship.

"He's running away!" Gohan looked on at his ebbing figure.

"Gosh, he's some friend isn't he?" Goku asked rhetorically.

"Hey- uh- you are Goku aren't you?" Krillin asked, still dazzled by his best friend's awesome
display of skill and power.

"Of course I am Krillin." Replied the Saiyan, chuckling slightly. "Don't be silly."

The moment Goku was distracted, Vegeta jumped over him and landed his knee right on Burter's throat, crushing his windpipe and killing him immediately. If Kakarot was too foolish and sentimental to finish the job, he didn't mind doing it for him!

"Hey stop!" Goku yelled in reproach. "Vegeta! What the heck?! I thought that after everything you'd have at least changed a little! Can't you even show a tiny shred of mercy?!"

"They don't deserve any favors!" The Prince spat back. "They're scum Kakarot, believe me! Would they have taken mercy on your son and your friend?! If you'd arrived ten minutes later, they'd be gone right now! You're too soft to be a Saiyan! That freak you let go could cost you your life!"

"What are you talking about?!" Goku retorted. "You saw how easily I handled him!"

"It's not always about strength, you fool!" Vegeta replied harshly. "He could take your son hostage and make you fall right into their hands like a lamb! These people do whatever it takes to win! Your stupid, senseless idealism is just a liability, nothing more!"

"We'll see." Goku replied, undeterred. "I don't think having a little compassion is a disadvantage. Besides, you're not perfect either! You've done horrible things yourself!"

"Of course I have!" He concurred, chuckling and smirking at his rival. "And if you have a problem with it, you're more than welcome to try and fight me, if it makes you feel any better."

"Stop it Vegeta!" Gohan reprimanded. "We're all in this together now, got it?!"

"Stay out of this brat!" Vegeta growled at the boy, whereby the demi-Saiyan instantly closed his mouth.

"As much as I'd love to settle the score on our last fight, there's bigger fish to fry." Goku responded ardently. "Once we take care of Frieza and the rest of these guys, I'd be more than happy to oblige you to a rematch."

"Hahaha Careful what you wish for Kakarot!" Vegeta chortled. "I'll only end up pounding you into the dirt like I did the last time!"

"Forgive me for interrupting, but you saw just how strong Goku is," Krillin made his way over between the two Saiyans. "You'd be stupid to fight against him now! Besides, we're better off focusing on bringing Frieza down, instead of squabbling amongst ourselves."

"I'm stronger than I was before!" Vegeta shot back. "Have you forgotten what I told you already, bald man?!"

"Forgotten?" Krillin asked, confusedly. "Uh- Forgotten what? What are you talking about?"

"Remind him Kakarot." Vegeta looked at his younger rival. "Based on your sudden rise in power, I'm sure you've noticed it too."

"I have." Goku replied, knowingly. "And I can tell you're much stronger than you were back on
Earth, but then, I've improved a lot myself!"

"Oh yeah!" Krillin recalled. "That power boost you Saiyans get once you recover from fatal injuries! But how do you know about that Goku?!"

"Well you see, during my training, I'd literally burn myself up till hardly anything was left and my only option was to recover my strength by eating a senzu bean." The Saiyan from Earth reminisced. "I started out with eight beans and ended up with only three when I arrived here. I ate one right before I left Earth and four during my gravity training on the spaceship, when I was on my way to Namek."

"So how long exactly did you train?" Vegeta asked, frowning in intrigue.

"Six days, give or take." Goku responded.

'Incredible.' Vegeta thought. 'Just six days and his power level's taken such a huge leap! After all this is over, I must get my hands on that gravity equipment somehow!'

"Who designed that gravitational system for you?!" Vegeta loured. "I demand you tell me!"

"It was Dr. Brief." Goku frowned. "Bulma's father."

"I see." Even though he had agreed to let his blue-haired prisoner go free once they'd disposed of Frieza, he needed to get ahold of that same equipment, no matter what it took! But where was she, anyway?! His memory was still kind of a little fuzzy. He couldn't even recall how he ended up unconscious. Last he remembered, Krillin said he'd safely stashed her away.

"Which reminds me, when this is over, she's coming home with us, got it?!" Goku narrowed his eyes at the older Saiyan.

"Tch, whatever." Vegeta growled. "Frieza has six of the dragon balls anyway! I managed to toss one of them away, before the Ginyu Force intercepted us, but securing the others will be damn near impossible now!"

"Hmmm." Goku thought for a moment. "I've learned that the dragon balls on this planet have some sort of password, anyway." That really caught Vegeta's attention. If Kakarot didn't know how to unlock the powers of the dragon balls, that meant the wish-making process on Namek was different. The younger Saiyan then grit his teeth. "And Frieza's out slaughtering the Namekians!"

"You're right, I totally forgot about that!" Krillin gasped. He'd been much too overwhelmed at witnessing his best friend's new power, as had the rest of them.

"We need to help them, dad!" Gohan pleaded.

"Wait, so if Frieza's not by his ship, that means the dragon balls are unguarded." Vegeta quickly put two and two together. "We have to secure them immediately, before he returns!"

"But what about the Nameks he's killing?!" Gohan argued, his tone disconcerted. "We can't just leave them!"

"Stupid boy, we can't take Frieza without making our wish first, remember?!" Vegeta countered, before staring fixedly at his rival. "Not even you, Kakarot, have what it takes to fight him head on,
never forget that!" He pointed to the younger Saiyan. "No matter how powerful you think you are, you're still nothing compared to Frieza!"

"You think so?" The younger Saiyan raised an eyebrow. "What if I told you that I could multiply my strength tenfold using the Kaio-Ken, though only momentarily?" Goku smirked as he saw his rival's eyes bulge like never before.

"You can really do that?!" Krillin asked, before grinning. "Oh, so that's how you made quick work of those Ginyu goons, right?! Boy, you're really something else, Goku!"

"No, I barely used my own strength for that, let alone the Kaio-Ken." Goku responded. Vegeta was awestruck! Kakarot wasn't kidding! If what he'd witnessed earlier was just a smattering of his true capabilities, even when factoring out his power-multiplying technique, the younger Saiyan was most likely stronger than himself! Damn it! He felt more infuriated than ever! No Saiyan had ever surpassed him before and now of all people, a fucking third-class had! He needed to find a way to reverse this as soon as possible!

"Wow, that's amazing dad." Gohan drawled, completely agape, just like Krillin. He beamed at his old man. "We won't even need a wish from the dragon in that case! We can take Frieza down all by ourselves!"

"Don't get ahead of yourselves, you fools!" Vegeta snarled, breaking Gohan's train of thought. The trio from Earth turned towards him, eyebrows knit. "If you really believe that what you sense from Frieza is his true power, think again!"

"What do you mean?" Goku asked, eyes narrowed.

"What you feel now is only the tip of the iceberg!" Vegeta answered. "His true power level is said to be somewhere in the millions! I never believed the rumors, until his minion Zarbon confirmed it for me! So even if you can multiply your power tenfold like you claim, Frieza's abilities still put yours to shame! Believe me when I tell you, he's not an opponent you can challenge! He'll slaughter us all like sheep, single-handedly!"

Goku, Krillin and Gohan stared at Vegeta in disbelief, panic-stricken. A moment or so later, the younger Saiyan clenched his jaw! Dammit! If he really stood no chance against Frieza, as Vegeta insisted was the case, then all his hard work was for naught! Maybe King Kai was right! No, he wouldn't flee! There had to be some other way! He let out a huff of frustration, before looking towards the other Saiyan.

"Alright, if that's the case, then what do you suggest?"

"Answer's simple, we use the dragon balls!" Vegeta smirked.

"I see." Goku nodded. Yes, from Krillin's memories he'd learned about the power of the Super Saiyan. That was obviously what his rival had planned.

"Never mind that, listen up!" The Prince levelled his gaze at Krillin. "Baldy, go fetch someone who knows the password for the dragon balls. I'll retrieve the ball I tossed aside and find a way to get the others. Then we can make our wishes and get rid of Frieza once and for all! Understood?!"

"Alright, got it!" Goku gave his consent, before turning in his best friend's direction. "Krillin do as Vegeta says and Gohan," He looked to his son, "Don't worry about Nail and the Namekians. We'll
Gohan paused a moment and eventually let out a dejected sigh of surrender.

"Alright dad."

Elsewhere:

"Are you saying that two members of the most illustrious fighting squad in the Universe have been defeated by a pair of monkeys?" Ginyu asked, absolutely furious at his Trigocian underling's unsatisfactory mission report.

"Y-Yes, I'm afraid so, s-s-sir." Jeice replied, voice laced with consternation.

"And where were you?!!"

"Well, I was right there with Burter- and then I uh- took off."

"You idiot!" Ginyu scowled. "You ran away didn't you?! You're such a disgrace! Have you learned anything after all this time?!"

"But this guy was unbelievably strong." Jeice argued. "I'm sorry Cap'n."

Ginyu growled, clenching his teeth as memories of his fallen comrades flashed through his mind. He threatened to kick Jeice off the squad for his disgraceful behavior, but then offered him a chance to redeem himself, provided he showed the band of soldiers nearby what it meant to strike a pose.

Together, he and Jeice struck their greatest poses, but moments later they stood transfixed, feeling far more adrift than ever. It just wasn't the same, not without the others! Vindictive anger soared through the livid Captain, as he vowed to wreak vengeance upon Vegeta and the other Saiyan! He immediately took off, Jeice following close behind.

"Alright, let's go over this one more time." Goku turned in Krillin's direction. "With our first wish, we're bringing back all our friends who got killed on Earth, with the second wish, we're reviving all the Namekians that've fallen victim to Frieza and his men and with the third, we're gonna ask the dragon to make Vegeta, Gohan and I into Super Saiyans."

"That's right." The bald warrior nodded.

"Though I do hate having to do this, I guess there's no choice." Goku sighed in regret. Dammit, even if he lost, a strong part of him wanted nothing more than to be able to use a foe as powerful as Frieza to benchmark his true strength! What were his limitations? How far could he push himself if backed into a corner with no way out? Would he be Frieza's toughest opponent thus far? Such questions would all be cast aside, in favor of cheating his way to victory. There was no honor in any of this, from a warrior's perspective.

"Don't stress yourself Kakarot." The Prince smirked at the younger Saiyan, as though reading his
mind. "The wish won't work on you and your son, anyway. Only I have the potential to be a Super-Saiyan. I have the right blood for it and the two of you don't. It's as simple as that."

"You sure are confident Vegeta." Goku smirked back. "At any rate, even if only one of us can pull this off, that's fine by me." He then looked more solemnly at his rival. "But remember: once this is all over, the bad blood between us ends! That means no more attacking Earth or kidnapping our friends, are we clear?!"

Vegeta was about to retort, when he sensed two threatening forces making their way over.

"Shit!" The Prince exclaimed and immediately glowered at the other Saiyan. "That fool Jeice, whom you let go, is returning here with Captain Ginyu! If only you'd finished him off like you were supposed to, we wouldn't have had to deal with this!"

"Hey shut up!" Krillin shot back, before looking at his best friend promisingly. "We're here for you Goku! You just tell us what to do and we'll do it!"

"There's nothing you can do you idiot, you're too weak!" Vegeta scowled derisively at the bald human. "Your time's better spent finding out what that password is, like I told you! Kakarot and I can handle these two fools, without your help!"

Just then Jeice and Ginyu had arrived on scene. Lo and behold, here they were, the last two fighters of Frieza's elite squadron!

"Meet the boss mate!" Jeice proclaimed, as Ginyu stood to his left, fists clenched and arms akimbo. "His name is Cap'n Ginyu and he'd like to have a few words with you, concerning our encounter earlier!"

"Goku, what do we do?" Krillin asked, frowning worriedly.

"Do you have your dragon radar?" Goku asked in a hushed tone.

"Well- er- yeah." The bald man affirmed, patting his belt in confirmation.

"Good!" The Saiyan nodded. "You and Gohan take off now and unite the dragon balls!" He then took on a sour look, as he continued. "Once you do, find Dende and make the wishes."

"Okay dad!"

"Sure thing Goku!"

"Alright, let's see." Ginyu observed the Ki reading on his scouter. "Power level: five thousand."

"That's impossible!" Jeice argued. "Somehow he can hide his true power from the scouter."

"Shut up Jeice!" Ginyu retorted, as he began surveying his new adversary. "Of course he's hiding his true power level, that's ridiculously obvious. A guy like this can quadruple his fighting power in an instant. I estimate when he really gets going, he'll have a power level of sixty thousand or maybe more."

"What?! Sixty thousand?!" Jeice asked, startled. "But no bloody Saiyan that we've ever met is that strong!"
"Well this one is, think about it. He might be a mutant like us."
Ginyu suggested, before grinning. "What a magnificent opportunity to reveal the full extent of my grandeur in battle!"

"Alright guys, it's time for you to leave!" Goku ordered his son and best friend in a quiet tone. "Go get the dragon balls."

"Right!" The duo said in unison, before zooming towards the ball Vegeta had hurled away, in a bid to nab it and unite it with the others.

Ginyu disregarded the two of them and continued scrutinizing that other Saiyan for a moment or so. Then it hit him! Was he the one that blue-haired girl had mentioned? "Hey, would you happen to be called Goku by any chance?"

Jeice gaped at his Captain. He didn't remember telling him that!

"Yeah, that's me." The Saiyan replied. "I take it your friend told you about me, right?"

"Actually, Vegeta's girlfriend was the one that told me." Ginyu chuckled, smirking right back. The Prince frowned at the Captain for a moment, before his jaw fell in horror, as the events before his defeat at Jeice's hands suddenly became clearer. He remembered now! Burter had abducted Bulma and left her with Ginyu! He couldn't sense her Ki though. He clenched his fists, glaring daggers at the purple-skinned alien.

"Where is she?" He demanded.

"Vegeta, you have a girlfriend?" Goku asked, disbelievingly, completely startled by that little piece of information. "Who is she? And how does she know who I am? Did you tell her about me?"

"Shut up you fool!" The younger Saiyan cringed at Vegeta's guttural snarl. The Prince then gnashed his teeth viciously at Ginyu. "Tell me where she is now!"

"Whoa, whoa, easy there tiger." The Captain sniggered. So it appeared Frieza was right after all. Vegeta truly did have a thing for that pretty little female. "If you must know, I stashed her aboard the ship."

The Prince let out an inward sigh of relief, before cursing himself for even caring! Her welfare shouldn't have been any concern of his and yet it was! Damn her for making him so weak! If Frieza returned to his ship, any chance he had of securing Bulma would be completely lost. He couldn't blow away this opportunity! Without a word, he zoomed off towards the lizard's spacecraft at full speed!

"Hey Vegeta, get back here!" Ginyu yelled, attempting to fly off after him, only for Goku to appear in front of him, blocking his path.

"Sorry, but if you want to get to Vegeta, you'll have to go through me first." The Saiyan youth smirked. "And I don't plan to make that easy." He may not have been Vegeta's biggest fan, but he certainly understood and respected his decision to rescue that girl before Frieza got ahold of her, though who she was and what she was doing here on Namek, was as big a mystery as ever. He shook his head, deciding it best to focus on the here and now, as he and Ginyu began to engage one-another in an intense and seemingly even battle.
A/N: So Goku's finally arrived and saved the day! Neat, huh?! What about Bulma though?! Vegeta's heading straight towards the ship, but is he already too late to save her?! And what of Nail and Frieza?! We're about to find out! Stay tuned for Bulma and Vegeta's fateful reunion! The next chapter will be the very best one so far, in my opinion, so be sure to strap yourselves in!

p.s. Now you may be wondering why I had Vegeta and Gohan decisively lose to Jeice and Burter earlier on? Answer's simple: it gave them a huge Zenkai boost (significantly greater than in the manga/anime, since their injuries were a lot severer). In other words, this fic won't be centred solely around one character (e.g. Goku or Vegeta) because the others will also be very powerful, as you'll find out in the later chapters! Thanks again for your support everyone! It truly means a great deal!
Chapter 21: Gift

Vegeta's face was wrought with bloody, vengeful resolve as he arrived at his destination in what felt like no time at all. He rapidly began firing well-aimed Ki blasts one after another, killing over a dozen men guarding the exterior of Frieza's spacecraft, before finally entering inside. Dammit, he still couldn't sense Bulma's energy signal!

Upon making his way inside, he eventually found himself surrounded by a legion of soldiers, aiming their Ki blasters at him and trembling all the while. He smirked wickedly.

"Listen and listen well." He began. "A captive of mine was taken hostage by the Ginyu Force and is being held prisoner here! She has blue hair and blue eyes!" He hardened his visage. "Take me to her now, or die!"

Vegeta aimed a finger at one of the soldiers, an anthropomorphic alligator-like being. The frantic alien gulped and began backing away, only to end up dead with a gaping hole through his forehead, not two seconds later.

"I've already killed Cui, Dodoria, Zarbon and 3 members of the Ginyu Force!" He informed the remaining troops, grinning maliciously as he observed the color drain from each of their faces. "You're all peons by comparison and I will not hesitate to make you suffer as painfully as possible, before I end you, so I strongly advise you tell me where-"

Vegeta cut off mid-sentence, as he suddenly sensed Bulma's re-awakened Ki nearby, flickering like crazy and shrouded by a much more powerful signal in the exact same location! Shit, shit, shit! His Ki quickly exploded around him, beams of energy shooting off in all directions and instantly killing each and every soldier in the vicinity. He made a dash towards Bulma, not wasting another moment.

XXX

Anorus was a lavender-skinned alien with an elongated skull, red beady eyes and green-spots covering his body. Captain Ginyu had assigned him the task of watching over this new prisoner, giving him strict orders not to harm her or rouse her awake, much to his chagrin. He'd also revealed to him that she was Vegeta's lover. But now that he knew the Saiyan Prince was on the offensive, without the Ginyu squad around, his death warrant was as good as signed.

Fuck this! Fuck Vegeta, fuck Frieza and fuck the Ginyu Force! All his life, he'd been the lizard's puppet, for everything to culminate to this! No, he couldn't let it end this way! He knew he was finished no matter what and since these were to be his last few minutes, the least he could do is get one delightful moment in his fucked-up life! The blue-haired female looked exquisitely delectable! Oh yes, he was definitely going to make a meal of her! He'd get the satisfaction of pouring cold water on whatever plans that bastard Frieza had cooked up!

But best of all, this was Vegeta's lover! That cruel Saiyan had killed his little brother, Zanooris! And why?! Simply because he tried to help get that ungrateful primate get to a regeneration room, after Frieza had dealt him a brutal beating, for some act of disobedience or other! Now he'd pay dearly for what he did! Before he died, at least he'd have the comfort of knowing he'd
psychologically scarred that simian abomination, as he devoured his female!

That in mind, Anorus quickly locked the door from the inside and crawled on top Bulma's unconscious body. He folded up his index finger and began stroking her warm cheek.

'Ahhh perfect.' He thought, licking his lips, as shivers of delirium bubbled through him.

She woke up to a start and let out a loud shriek, only for Anorus to clamp his hand over her mouth.

"You're going to make a fine meal, whore." He murmured into her ear. Bulma shuddered in absolute disgust and horror, feeling her skin crawl. What the hell was going on?! Last she remembered Captain Ginyu had captured her and they'd spoken in length about Frieza and his plans for her! Dammit, where were Vegeta and the others?! What about Goku?! Bulma's heart hammered against her chest and tears began to glisten her eyes. She tried pushing the perpetrator away, but he grabbed her left hand and began bending it, eliciting a muffled cry of pain from her. Just as he was about to snap her carpus, he noticed the reading on his scouter fly off the chart! 140 000?! 150 000?! His eyes practically bulged out of their sockets! Holy shit! How the fuck did Vegeta get so strong?! With power this immense, he'd exceeded Captain Ginyu himself! It was unreal! Last he heard, Vegeta's power level could barely scratch 20 000! Dammit, now what?! He glowered at Bulma and aimed his a palm at her face, ready to do obliterate her, but before he got a chance, the door smashed open and a powerful Ki blast blew the alien away, killing him instantaneously.

Bulma began breathing in a rasped manner, as she clutched her abused hand, pressing it to her chest. The very next moment she turned her head and saw- Vegeta?! The Prince had made his way over to her and got down on one knee as he appraised her figure, for any possibly injuries. She blinked a few tears out of her eyes, before abruptly launching herself right at the Saiyan and girding her arms around his neck. Vegeta's eyes widened and he felt his body stiffen, as the blue-haired female buried her face in the recess of his neck, sobbing against him. As he felt his skin moisten from her tears, his protectiveness towards her began to soar! He grimaced as that flawed sentiment consumed him and pulled her back by the waist.

"Quit groveling, you silly female!" He scowled. "You're fine!"

"I AM NOT FINE!" She shrieked back so loud that Vegeta almost fell over, from where he sat. He winced as she went on, holding him by the shoulders as tight as she possibly could. "You killed my friends, stole me from my home, made me betray Yamcha and then threw me aside like I was some disposable piece of trash you didn't want anymore!"

Tears gushed down Bulma's face in a torrential outburst as her shrilling voice attacked the Prince. After gathering his bearings, Vegeta looked at her dolorous expression for a moment. Yamcha?! Wasn't that the name of the weakling who got killed by a Saibaman?! He immediately put two and two together. Was that her lover?! His gut tightened at the mere thought of it. A nasty grimace embedded his face, as he glared heatedly at her, before releasing a frustrated exhale.

"Your idiot friends are going to revive that scar-faced weakling and your other worthless associates! Go back to them if that is what you desire!" He stood up and glowered down at her, more bitterness in his tone than was intended. Bulma's face lit up the moment his words sunk in! Gohan and Krillin were okay! She'd totally forgotten about them! Vegeta let out an exasperated sigh and before the heiress could ask about her friends, he proceeded. "I won't attack your planet once this is all over! Just leave and forget you ever knew me! I'm finished with you!"
Bulma's heart wrenched as she took in his words. He was finished with her?! That declaration should've flooded her with relief and yet- it only made her feel so much hollower than before, so much more alone! Why?! She was supposed to hate him for what he'd done to her and all the others! She grit her teeth at him, as her eyes glistened even further.

"Why'd you even come here Vegeta?!” She growled. "I never asked you to save me! Wasn't I nothing to you but a-"

"Enough!" The Prince interjected furiously, refusing to let her mouth that final word, as he turned around. "If you don't want me here, fine! You can find your own way back to your mud ball planet!"

"I didn't say that!" She retorted, before continuing in a softer tone. "I just want to know why you came for me. You owe me that much."

"I- I don't know!" Vegeta answered, balling a fist and staring down at it lividly. He refused to meet her gaze, his entire body shaking with barely restrained anger, anger towards her for making him feel weak and pathetic, but more so towards himself, for allowing it! How a feeble Earthling woman had managed to get such sway over him had been wracking his brain from the outset, but now that question was thrashing about within him, more violently than ever before!

Bulma surveyed him for a moment. He seemed so lost and out of element, as she saw the heated battle ensue within the chasms of his muddled mind. She immediately recalled her conversation with Captain Ginyu. He'd told her about how Frieza had used Vegeta's father to keep the Prince within his icy grasp. Her lips quivered and tears continued making their exit, as she scrutinized the Prince. Bulma stood to her feet.

"Vegeta, please look at me." She pleaded. At the soft tone of her voice, the Prince turned to her, expression as impassive as ever and yet a gleam of emotion sparkling in his onyx depths. "Stop lying to yourself and just tell me the truth."

"I don't know what you're talking about!" He replied gruffly, swivelling back around.

"Yes you do!" She shot back. "Why do you have to make things so difficult?! Why's it so hard for you to admit that you care?!"

Within a second Vegeta rounded on her and grabbed the back of her head, bringing his face over next to hers.

"I care about no one!" He whispered huskily, making her whole body tingle as his lips brushed the sensitive skin of her earlobe. "Never forget who I am! I am the Prince of darkness and the destroyer of planets!"

Bulma couldn't help but whimper as his gravelly timbre tickled her ear.

"Y-You- you didn't destroy m-m-my planet." She retorted softly.

The Prince growled as he grabbed her face in his hands and pressed his forehead against hers.

"Maybe I will."

Bulma trembled as the stimulating allure of his gruff inflection began to cloud just about all her
"Y-You c-can't." She breathed weakly.

"It's what I do." He murmured, a whisker away from her lips. Though his words carried deathly promise, that low, husky timbre of his eliminated any remnants of lucidity persisting within the crevices of Bulma's disarrayed mind, as a swarm of butterflies settled themselves in the pit of her stomach. She was completely at his whim and couldn't help it as she leaned in and pressed her lips to his, causing a wave of heat to coil within the Saiyan.

Bulma's eyes instantly began fluttering as he responded to her slow kisses. She shivered into his mouth and ran a hand through his gravity-defying mane, once again awed by its amazing, feathery feel, while placing her other hand on the nape of his neck. The Prince lowered his hands to her hips and pulled her flush against him. Vegeta felt pleasure course through him, as Bulma took his lower lip into her mouth. He instantly began to deepen the kiss, until-

"Owww!" The heiress withdrew, wincing as a sharp pain stung her right shoulder. Vegeta growled low in his throat at the sudden loss of heat, creasing his eyebrows at her. She looked at him for a moment, before her gaze moved to his broken left shoulder guard that had poked her deltoid muscle as he was moving in on her. Vegeta followed her line of sight and immediately figured out what had taken place. Almost instinctively, he made his way towards her and put a hand on her shoulder, tenderly rubbing the wounded area.

"It's alright." Bulma smiled at him and as he looked at her, he quickly realized what he was doing. He grimaced and pulled away, headed towards the locker room. "Hey, where're you going?"

"I need to change into a new set of training gear, obviously!" He replied in a peeved tone.

"Wait for me." Bulma was hot on his heels. He huffed and continued walking, the visible tension in his muscles betraying his ruminative state. All this time and he was still unable to figure out what it was about her that had him feel so numb in her presence! And why was she acting so clingy all of a sudden?! He'd subtly threatened to destroy her planet and what does she do?! She necks him, smiles at him and now starts chasing him around like a lost little kitten! He couldn't help but laugh inwardly at how easy it was to make her lose her grip on reality. He felt that he could do just about anything to arouse her, even if he whispered gory details of some of the most horrific genocides and tortures he'd partaken in. Maybe if they made it out of this whole mess in one piece, he'd test that hypothesis someday, if only to try and deduce how dense she could really be! But either way, a part of him just didn't want her to hate him again, as she had before.

Ever since spurning her, his mind had been one giant war zone and then when he'd learned that she'd been kidnapped by the Ginyu Force, things took a turn for the worse. Now that he'd finally been able to secure her, he just didn't want her out of his sight, until he'd gotten her to safety! Though he'd never admit it, he knew that he couldn't allow her to fall into the lizard's grasp! He needed to stay alert! That bastard could be returning any time now! Vegeta closed his eyes and locked onto the Frieza's Ki. Seems he was still busy butchering Namekians. Oh well, it didn't matter, since that fool Kakarot and his compatriots would revive them. A waste of a wish as far as he saw fit, but he only needed one, so it was of no real consequence to him, anyway.

Bulma felt a lot better. Even if Vegeta could never admit to caring about her, everything he did screamed the exact opposite- and that made a warm sensation bud within her. Why?! What was it about him that she just didn't feel with Yamcha?! By all accounts, she should dread him, detest him, after all he'd done- but she just- couldn't! Something about his raw, primal disposition drew
her like a magnet, equating her to an unsuspecting freshwater bream that was about to take a fateful bite of a succulent bloodworm, only to end upgetting hooked to a fishing rod, before being flung out of the sea and winding up in the jagged jaws of a vile and barbarous human. She quivered fearfully at the thought, suddenly feeling a burst of sympathy towards the hapless bream in the aforementioned analogy.

The Prince eventually made his way inside the locker room. He stood in front of a mirror, to survey any injuries he'd taken, only to find none. "Those beans really do the trick it seems." He thought audibly.

"Beans?" Bulma asked, raising an eyebrow. He frowned at her, already forgetting that she'd followed him here. "Wait you mean senzu beans?!" Her face lit up. "Oh, so Gohan and Krillin had some on them?! That's how you managed to beat those Ginyu dirtbags, right?!

"No!" He replied tersely. "It was that clown Kakarot!"

"Goku?!" Bulma twinkled, her heart racing as she ran up to him and grabbed his arm. "Goku's here! Are you serious?!"

The Prince scowled at her and wrenched his arm away, feeling vexed by her inordinately chipper attitude at the mention of the younger Saiyan.

"Yes he is!" He replied in the affirmative, before walking over to a cabinet, opening it and rummaging through an array of PTO uniform sets of different sizes, while Bulma sighed and placed a hand on her heart, staring at the ceiling dreamily, eyes glistening with tears of joy and relief! Goku arrived in time, just as Krillin had said! He'd saved the day, yet again! She knew she could always rely on him, no matter how bad things got! Vegeta found a lycra shirt his size, a darker shade of blue than the one he currently wore, as well as a matching pair of pants, plus some gloves and boots.

"Turn around so I can change!" He demanded, recalling the mortifying incident on Planet Frieza (A/N: See Chapter 7). The heiress broke free from her stupor and looked at him quizzically for a moment, before smirking.

"Why?" She replied, batting her eyelashes coquettishly. "You've nothing I haven't already seen before."

Vegeta's face flushed three shades of crimson, as he growled at her.

"Turn around now, before I blast a hole in you woman!"

"Alright, alright!" She relented, whirling around and scowling. "You're such a killjoy you know that?! And a prude!"

The Prince clenched his jaw, letting out an exasperated huff, as he took off his armor, gloves and boots, before clambering out of his old uniform and into the new. This little minx would be the death of him!

Bulma heard another cabinet door slide open violently and swivelled around almost on impulse. Vegeta was just about fully covered, as he sifted through for an assortment of body armor in search for one that would comfortably fit him. As the Prince was bent over, the heiress couldn't help but ogle. The lycra accentuated the outline of his ass so perfectly, he may as well have been naked. Her
'Get ahold of yourself Bulma.' She thought to herself cautiously, suddenly recalling the whole fish/fisherman analogy. 'You don't want to end up between his teeth, do you?'

That in mind, she cast her gaze aside, still at odds with her feelings. Just what was it that she had with Vegeta? And supposing they did succeed in their quest to defeat Frieza, what would happen? She barely knew him and yet for some reason, she felt so empty at the thought of never seeing him again. Maybe she could convince him to visit Earth or something?

'Likely story.' She scoffed inwardly. 'I'd have a better chance at getting an Eskimo to go live in the middle of the Sahara, for a year.'

The heiress let out a dejected sigh. There had to be some way! After all, if they were to triumph over Frieza, it wouldn't be right to just allow Vegeta to go about terrorizing the rest of the Universe, so long as Earth was safe! That would be extremely selfish of them!

'Maybe I can invite him to live at Capsule Corporation.' She thought jokingly. 'Wouldn't mom be thrilled?! Hahaha.'

As Bulma was lost in her own musings, Vegeta had finished dressing and headed over to her, expression as perpetually grim as ever.

"We're leaving." He informed her.

"Oh- uh- where're we going?"

"I'm taking you back to my space pod." He answered. "You're returning to Earth."

"What?!" She exclaimed, narrowing her eyes. "No I'm not!"

"I wasn't asking, woman!"

"Well, you can't order me around!" She shot back. "I wanna see Goku and the others!" He ground his teeth together at the mention of Kakarot's name, unable to repress the hint of jealousy at her blatant affinity towards the other Saiyan. "Plus, this is the only opportunity I have to witness Namek's dragon being summoned and all that! We're all leaving together and that's final!"

"You're a stubborn wench!" He growled as he grabbed her arms.

"I'm not a wench, you jerk!" She squawked. Vegeta cringed at her excessively loud treble. "I'm staying and that's that!"

"Curse you, female!" He stared heatedly at her.

"Curse you-" She paused a moment. "Alpha male!"

"You're so stupid!"

"You're stupid, you little hotheaded- shrew-faced, turtle-brained- dwarf!"

Not a second later, the heiress was flat on the ground, a livid Saiyan astride her hips. Her jaw hung
open in astonishment at the compromising position she suddenly found herself in! Vegeta pressed his forehead to hers.

"You never know when to shut-up, do you woman?!"

Bulma swallowed hard, upon feeling his hot breath and guttural voice tickle the insides of her mouth, making her anger melt away almost instantaneously, as a sudden rush of arousal began to prick at her.

"U-Umm- I-"

"Quiet!"

The heiress immediately clamped her mouth shut. Vegeta could hardly restrain himself from smirking, as she trembled underneath him, once again priding himself at how easy it was to use this obstinate female's tenuous control over her libido, to his advantage. His tail unwound from his waist and wagged about playfully behind him.

"Now what shall I do with you, hm?" The predatory sparkle in the Saiyan's eyes made Bulma's stomach flip-flop, as she lay stock-still beneath him in thrilled anticipation. Vegeta immersed his face in the recess of her neck and inhaled deeply, shutting his eyes as he was flooded with her blissful, floral fragrance. She barely resisted the urge to shiver as she felt her legs turn into jelly, making her feel like she weighted a ton. The Prince ran the tip of his nose up the length of her slender neck, before breathing against her ear in a near inaudible, yet deeply entrancing timbre. "What shall I do with you?"

Bulma whimpered at the tantalizing sensations prodding every cell in her body. She was completely under his thumb, never having felt so helpless and feeble, her entire life. She wanted nothing more than for him to tie her up and use his deft hands and hot mouth to pleasure every inch of her body, from head to toe. The mere thought of it was almost enough to kill her with a burgeoning overload of desire, as she felt the insides of her thighs dampen. She simply couldn't think straight in his presence. Her mind was inundated with a haze of pure white.

"Ve-Vege-"

The Saiyan once again leaned his forehead on hers, their noses adjacent, as he darted his tongue forward, through her lips and teeth, causing her eyes to roll back, as he probed every interstice of her velvety mouth, with his wet tongue. Bulma placed her hands on either side of his face, running them along the contours of his perfect jaw and cheekbones. His skin was unusually warm, enveloping every fibre of her body with blissful heat, as he continued pleasuring her mouth. Everything about him was so fascinating. She loved his wild and unpredictable nature and she didn't want this to ever end, no matter what! She knew now that she couldn't bear it if he just up and left her once they were done on Namek! Her future felt bland and meaningless without him in it! Her eyes began to glisten at the thought of never seeing him again.

The instant Vegeta smelled the saline scent of her tears, he was jolted from his stupor and pulled back.

"What're you doing?!!" He sneered down at her.

"Don't ever leave me, Vegeta." She entreated in a weak tone, her eyes half-lidded and watery.
"W-What?" The Saiyan choked out, eyes widened, as he stared at her in complete incredulity. Bulma placed a hand on his cheek.

"After you defeat Frieza, take me with you, wherever you go." She implored earnestly, her heart hammering against her chest as she peered into his bright orbs of limitless obsidian, awaiting his reply, hoping against hope that he would choose her.

Vegeta looked at her blankly for a moment or so, astounded beyond words. As he observed the pleading gleam in her endless sapphire pools, his heart staggered violently. An unfamiliar emotion began consuming him, warmer, brighter and more pleasant than anything he'd ever felt his entire life. But it didn't last long, the darkness returning and re-establishing its ugly foothold within the Saiyan's heart, as his eyes turned pitch black, betraying absolutely nothing.

"No." He replied in a low and stony voice, getting up off her and walking away. No one would or should want anything to do with an accursed bastard like him, let alone some feeble-minded Earth woman! This had to be some kind of trick! It was the only explanation! He was afraid! He'd never admit it, even to himself, but it was the truth! He was afraid of the feelings she was invoking within him! It could only mean bad news and nothing else! The last time he'd felt so strongly about someone was his when his mother and father were still alive! He could never allow himself to be overcome by such weakness ever again, not after what it did to him all those years ago!

Bulma's heart wrenched at Vegeta's cold dismissal, making her feel as though her entire world began to crumble right before her eyes. No, she couldn't allow this! She knew he cared about her! He was obviously at odds with his feelings and she had to discover some way to win him over! She just had to! That in mind, the heiress stood to her feet and hurriedly followed after him.

"Vegeta, wait!"

"What do you want from me?!" He instantly rounded on her, an enraged snarl contorting his visage, as he grabbed her arms. "I purge planets for a living! Is that what you want to be a part of?! Is it?!"

"N-No, b-but-"

"Exactly!" He released her from his tight grip and continued his way.

"Hold on, I'm not finished!" She called out to him, completely undeterred.

The Prince stopped in his tracks and tilted his head towards her.

"I already told you that your mud ball planet's safety is guaranteed!" He growled. "I'll give you nothing more!"

"Then let me give you something." She made her way towards him and he whirled around as the two came face to face, his expression cynical.

"And what, pray tell, would I possibly want from you?!" He narrowed his eyes.

"Me." She replied in an almost whisper.

Vegeta gaped at her in absolute disbelief, eyes as wide as saucers and mouth slightly ajar, as that familiar warmth began to augment within him, making his knees buckle. He tried fighting it, but it
became increasingly difficult.

"I- I don't understand."

Bulma took his hands in hers.

"I'm yours Vegeta." She surrendered, heedlessly disregarding every trace of logic screaming at her to stop, as she smiled brightly and continued. "I give myself over to you, wholly and freely: no strings attached."

The Prince felt a brilliant sun rising within him, pouring light over every darkened chamber in his body and every aperture of his debased soul, as that warm, fuzzy feeling began blossoming inside, curbing his darkness and impairing his judgment. As he peered into her beautiful and boundless oceans of unlimited cerulean, his heart threatened to break free from his chest. He felt so weak in her presence. He hated feeling week, but he felt- good. He could never remember feeling so good all his life, even before he was given away to Frieza.

"W-Why?"

"I want to."

"You- you shouldn't." He frowned at her. She moved closer to him, gripping his hands more firmly.

"It's already done." She murmured, pressing his hands against her soft bosom. "This is my gift to you." He felt the entreaty glimmer in her azure eyes pierce the very depths of his soul, creating an internal fissure that she quickly filled with her vivid presence, sealing her place inside of him and making him feel more alive than ever before. "Don't deny me again, Vegeta."

The Prince was losing control with every ticking second. Against his Saiyan heritage and against everything he'd taught himself over the course of gruelling decades under Frieza's command, he tightened his grasp on her hands, giving her the reassurance she needed, as she leaned in and brushed her lips with his.

Bulma's stomach did a leaping somersault, as he fervently responded to her kisses. She positioned their hands down besides her hips, as she shifted further, pressing her body against his and deepening the heartfelt kiss. Vegeta's eyes fluttered, as he gave himself into the powerful sensation flooding through him and mentally vowed that he would do everything he could to keep Bulma away from the Frieza's icy claws. She belonged to him now and he refused to fail her, like he did his father and his people!

Bulma smiled against his lips, feeling his thoughts as though they were her very own. Never in her entire life had she felt so deeply about anyone! The connection between them was more firm and potent than ever before!

Bulma's stomach did a leaping somersault, as he fervently responded to her kisses. She positioned their hands down besides her hips, as she shifted further, pressing her body against his and deepening the heartfelt kiss. Vegeta's eyes fluttered, as he gave himself into the powerful sensation flooding through him and mentally vowed that he would do everything he could to keep Bulma away from the Frieza's icy claws. She belonged to him now and he refused to fail her, like he did his father and his people!

"What?! Oh it's just your tail." The heiress let out a sigh of relief. Vegeta cocked an eyebrow at her odd behavior. She'd freak out over just about anything. Bulma hesitantly began stroking his shaggy tail, grinning from ear to ear and giggling inwardly at how soft it felt, like the fur of a newborn pup. The Prince froze, half his lifeblood rushing to his face and the other half down to his flaming loins, as he felt his energy drain. The moment Bulma turned in his direction, she saw him glaring
daggers at her, his face flushed about a dozen shades of crimson. She yelped and instantly let go of the fluffy appendage. Bulma found herself retreating, as he moved towards her threateningly, staring her dead on.

"Don't! Ever! Touch! My! Tail!" He snarled in pure primal fashion, pausing between each word for effect, his eyes scorching murderously. His elongated fangs made him look like a wild sabre tooth, getting ready to devour its prey, eliciting a fearful shudder from the blue-haired heiress.

"Um- uh- okay." She whimpered, as he continued advancing on her. "I'm sorry, I- I d-didn't know I- w-w-wasn't s-s'posed t-to."

Vegeta suddenly sensed something amiss, breaking him from his blind fit of crazed lycanthropy. Jeice was returning here to the ship with- Kakarot?! His rival's Ki signal was different and unbelievably weak. Ginyu seemed to be in the same spot as before. The Captain's Ki was fading and like the younger Saiyan's, it seemed highly unusual. What on Namek's three suns was going on?! What was that third-class clown doing with Jeice?! Bulma took notice of Vegeta's diverted attention.

"What is it?" She asked.

"Stay right here!" He commanded as he quickly vanished and headed outside the ship.

"Hey, where'd you go?!" The heiress looked this way and that way, but was unable to locate her crazy lover.

A/N: So Bulma's safe now and it seems she and Vegeta have finally come to terms with another? Or have they? Hehe.

Next chapter concludes the Ginyu Force saga! It won't be long till Frieza finally makes his entrance! That's when shit starts to get real, so be prepared for more action-packed scenes to come! I'll update again either this Sunday or the day after, cause I got an assignment due that week that I want to finish beforehand!

Thanks NekoLover628 for illustrating fan-art for this chapter. :)}
Gohan was carrying the dragon ball Vegeta had tossed away, as he and Krillin flew towards Dende. It didn't take them long to intercept the young Namekian. Guru had unlocked the child's hidden powers and instructed him to fetch out the two visitors from Earth, in order to help them summon the dragon and make their wishes.

"Hey, Dende, how're you doing, little guy?" The bald fighter grinned.

"Krillin, you're okay!" Dende beamed and then turned his attention to his half-Saiyan friend. "You too Gohan! That's great!"

"Yeah, we're fine!" The demi-Saiyan smiled, before frowning as he briefly explained the situation. "That's why we need to get to the dragon balls together, as soon as possible!"

"Right, let's do it!"

As the eclectic trio made a beeline for Frieza's ship, they stopped when they were about a dozen odd miles away, as Krillin and Gohan sensed something off.

"What's my father doing with that brute, Jeice?!" The half-Saiyan frowned dubiously. "And why's his Ki signal so-out of place?!

"Only one way to find out, I guess." The bald man sighed apprehensively, his shoulders slumping. Why could things never go as planned?

Krillin quickly taught Dende how to mask his energy, and enjoined him to stay where he was, before taking off with his demi-Saiyan companion, towards Frieza's ship. He left the Namekian child with the dragon ball Gohan had retrieved, assuring him that he was safe and that they'd both return to collect him soon enough.

Vegeta was outside the flagship, taking cover behind one of its serrated landing gear columns, as he sensed out his surroundings.

'The half-breed whelp's also heading this way, along with baldy.' He observed.

Just then, Jeice and Ginyu landed, the latter currently possessing Goku's body, having made good use of his bodysnatching technique, towards the end of their battle.

"Dammit!" The Captain scowled, as he observed the league of PTO corpses surrounding the ship. "Vegeta's been here! Just great! If that other Saiyan hadn't intercepted me, I could've stopped him!"

The Prince frowned, as he took in that bit of information. What the fuck was going on?! That didn't sound like Kakarot one bit.

"Goku!" Bulma yelled from out of nowhere, whereby Vegeta flinched. She immediately burst her
'Goddamn woman!' The Saiyan cursed mentally. 'I specifically warned her to stay inside!' "Goku, it's you, you're really here!" She darted towards the fiend she'd mistaken for her childhood friend, before Vegeta abruptly appeared in front of her, causing her to ram into him. The heiress fell back painfully, on her rear. She may as well have run into a brick wall.

"Ow." She whimpered, rubbing her aching behind, as she glared up at Vegeta. "What was that for?"

"You fool!" The Prince growled. "You just gave us away! Could you be anymore stupid?!"

Dammit, here he was trying to find out what exactly had transpired, but that accursed woman had to go and pour cold water over his plans!

"Ahhh- Vegeta!" Ginyu smirked. "Good thing, I came here just in time!"

"Time for what?!" Vegeta asked, whirling around to face the Goku lookalike, his idiosyncratic scowl plastered on his face. "You're obviously not Kakarot, so who the fuck are you?!" He demanded, teeth grit.

"H-He's not- w-what?" Bulma asked dumbly.

Ginyu and Jeice both smirked evilly at one-another.

Just then Krillin and Gohan arrived. They took in the scene before them and then landed in between both parties.

"Hey Goku!" Greeted the bald warrior, heading over to his alleged best friend. "Me and Gohan were really worried about you! What took you?"

The Ginyu duo began sniggering, barely able to contain their laughter.

"You must have taken care of that nasty Captain Ginyu, huh?" Krillin smiled, before frowning at him in bewilderment. "But why're you wearing a scouter for?" He then peered at Jeice. "And why's this other guy with you? Did he switch sides, like Vegeta did?"

"Krillin, that's not my father!" Gohan yelled.

"Huh?" The bald man looked at the boy perplexedly.

"LOOK OUT!"

BOOM!

Ginyu backfisted Krillin across the face, sending him flying back towards Gohan. Luckily, he was able to regain momentum and land on his feet, at the very last second.

"You're tougher than you look, but I'm not interested in either of you." Smirked Ginyu-in-disguise, much to the confusion of his foes. "Where's the challenge? I could easily dispose of both of you in an instant." He then turned his attention to the Saiyan Prince. "But Vegeta on the other hand:
"hmmm, now that really sounds like fun."

The Prince gnashed his teeth. This guy sounded an awful lot like Ginyu! He goggled at the Captain, wide-eyed and open-mouthed. Could it really be him?!

"Goku! Have you lost it completely?!" Bulma yelled in reprimand. "Why'd you hit Krillin for?!"

"Bulma, that's not my father!" Gohan told her.

"What are you talking about?!!" Krillin knit his eyebrows, totally at a loss as to why Goku had attacked him out of nowhere.

"Krillin, that's not dad, believe me!" The demi-Saiyan insisted.

"What do you mean?" The bald warrior asked quizzically. "That's obviously him Gohan!"

"No, it's not." Gohan shook his head, standing in front of his companion, battle-ready. "I can see it in his eyes and I can sense the evil brewing within him. It's not my dad, trust me!"

Ginyu laughed.

"Very perceptive kid." He affirmed smugly. "Let's just say, I'm taking dear daddy's body for a test drive."

Gohan's jaw dropped, as did Krillin's and Bulma's.

"It's Captain Ginyu!" Vegeta exclaimed, grounding his teeth together, as realization suddenly dawned on him. "It's his voice! I remember now! I've heard rumors that he possesses the ability to switch bodies with anyone!"

"WHAT?!" The trio from Earth scream in unison, staggered by the news relayed to them.

"Hahahaha Now you've got it Vegeta!" Ginyu laughed. "What say we get this little show on the road?!"

"Wait, s-so that means, m-my father-" Gohan stammered, unable to say the rest, unwilling to believe it!

"Oh, I wouldn't be too worried about him if I were you." The Captain smiled evilly, before turning to Vegeta. "Now then, are you ready little Prince?"

"What a waste of time!" The Saiyan sneered. "Your endeavors were wasted Ginyu! I could finish you off without even breaking a sweat!"

Gohan and Krillin looked at Vegeta in disbelief, jaws ajar.

"What?!" Ginyu roared, completely outraged at the Prince's flagrant contempt for the awesome power he now possessed.

"You're not even worth it." Vegeta replied, waving his hand dismissively, before turning towards Gohan and Krillin. "I'm sure the two of you can take care of this weakling by yourselves!"
"How dare you, Vegeta?!" The Captain snarled. "I'll show you!"

Ginyu pounced on the impudent Saiyan, who was rooted to the spot, arms folded pompously, only for Gohan to appear in front of him and kick him across the jaw, sending him skidding along the cloddy grass.

"What the?!" Jeice was immediately alarmed by what he'd just witnessed.

"Krillin, Vegeta's right!" The half-Saiyan exclaimed. "We can take him together!"

"A-Alright Gohan!" The bald warrior made his way over next to his younger companion and the two stood together, assuming their stances.

"Woman." Vegeta looked towards Bulma who was still having trouble digesting it all. She turned his way. "Find some place to hide, now!" He ordered in a hushed voice, so as not to draw attention.

"O-O-Okay." She instantly scampered away, not needing to be told a second time. Luckily, everyone's attention was diverted elsewhere and she was able to hide behind a slab, as she viewed the battle from afar.

Ginyu stood up and glared daggers at his Earthling adversaries.

"How dare you?!!" He scowled angrily. "I'll show you! With this new body, I estimate my fighting power to be 250 000!".

"That's where you're wrong Captain- Cocky!" Goku suddenly arrived on scene, clasping his wounded chest, whence purple blood was oozing. "I understand that body- a whole better- than you!"

"Kakarot?!" Vegeta looked at the younger Saiyan and Goku forced a strained smirk at his rival.

"Dad?! Dad, is that you?!" Gohan whimpered, as he envisioned his father in that repugnant mutated body, riding with him on Nimbus and eating dinner with the family. The thought nearly made him cry. "I can't stand seeing you this way daddy!"

"Oh, look what the cat dragged in!" Ginyu smirked wickedly at the young Saiyan, "I must say you're one tough customer!" He let out a mirthful chuckle. "Now then, it's time to unveil the true powers of Captain Ginyu!" The mutant chanted loudly.

Ginyu immediately began powering up, bellowing as a radiant yellow-orange aura flared around him. After what seemed like a few tense-ridden moments, he ceased charging his Ki and looked up towards his underling.

"Jeice, check out your scouter display and give me a strength reading!"

"R-Right." Responded the Trigocian.

Jeice froze in complete disbelief, as he observed the read-out on his Captain's power level.

"You're at- uh- 23 000." He answered in a quavering tone.

"YEAH!" Ginyu cheered and turned to Gohan, Krillin and Vegeta, "You three are toast! You pint-
sized pukes don't stand a chance against me!"

After a while his smug expression transformed into complete horror, as realization kicked him like a mule on steroids.

"Twenty-three?" He asked, completely dumbfounded.

"And- uh- getting w-weaker." Stammered the red warrior.

"Looks like you lose Ginyu." Vegeta chuckled arrogantly, before turning towards Gohan and Krillin. "Kick his fucking ass!"

"Let's do it, Gohan!"

Though reluctant to disfigure his father's body, Krillin eventually persuaded his little companion to fight on and the two of them began pounding Ginyu.

Goku walked over to the Prince.

"Hey Vegeta." He greeted in a raspy voice, clutching the bleeding dent in his chest. "Were you-able to rescue- that girl?"

The Prince cocked an eyebrow at the younger Saiyan, looking at him, as if he'd grown another head or two. He cast his gaze aside, grunting in irritation, as he finally figured out what his rival was referring to.

"Well?" Goku pressed.

"Mind your own business you fool!" Vegeta sneered at him, immediately changing the subject. "Thanks to your stupidity, Ginyu has control over your body! What a waste! I warned you something bad would happen if you didn't finish them off right away! But you didn't listen, did you?!"

The younger Saiyan looked guiltily at Vegeta and released a dejected sigh.

"Just as I thought!"

Goku scowled inwardly, mentally kicking himself. Vegeta was right! He had the chance to destroy Ginyu but he'd let it slide! As always, his conscience had gotten the best of him! Now he'd lost his body and couldn't possibly be of any help against Frieza! If only he'd heeded the other Saiyan's words!

"Jeice, don't just stand there!" Ginyu admonished. "Maybe you could help me a little bit here!"

"Right- uh- coming!"

Jeice began tottering towards the Captain, only for Vegeta to appear in front of him, blocking his path.

"Hey Snow White, how about you pick on somebody your own size?" He smirked.

Jeice snarled at him, infuriated by that nickname! He let out an exasperated huff, before composing
himself and smirking right back.

"I thought you'd learned your lesson the last time, Vegetable-breath."

"Apparently not!" The Prince tittered. "Care to teach?"

"Sure thing, monkey-boy!" Jeice lunged forward and shot his fist towards Vegeta's smug face, only to hit thin air. The Prince was already behind him and yanked him by his long hair, eliciting an acute cry of pain from the Trigocian.

"Hey Jeice, I think you're long overdue for a haircut!" He promptly sliced a large chunk of his hair right off, using his hand as a Ki blade.

The red-skinned warrior cried out, gasping as he patted the back of his head, only to find a large portion of his beautiful white hair missing. He whirled around, redder than ever before and prepared to destroy Vegeta, only to find that he wasn't there!

"What's the matter? Can't find me?" The Prince taunted, behind him yet again. Jeice cursed the Saiyan and attempted to attack him, only to hit absolutely nothing. This time Vegeta was floating above him. What the hell was going on?! How had that Saiyan rat gotten so quick all of a sudden?!

"Jeice you fool! Are you really so blind?! I'm just toying with you! I could've killed you ten times already!"

'Vegeta's amazing.' Goku thought as he observed the Prince make a complete fool out of his opponent. 'Maybe we have a chance against Frieza after all! But still, I need to get my body back somehow! There's no way I'm gonna live out my days inside this hideous abomination!'

The Saiyan from Earth then turned his gaze towards the bodysnatching Captain, who was beginning to gain momentum in his battle against Gohan and Krillin. Dammit! Ginyu was slowly, but surely, figuring out how to use his body!

Jeice grit his teeth as he saw a smug looking Vegeta towering over him.

"Take a look at your scouter." The Prince said, overweening smugness lacing his voice and expression.

Jeice switched on the device and immediately had sheer dread writ upon his face, as he read the display: 80 000! That was impossible! The scouter must have been malfunctioning!

"NOOOO!" He roared furiously, taking off the device and crushing it in his hand.

"I think you broke it." Vegeta laughed tauntingly, before smirking solemnly at his foe. "What you saw was a mere half of my true power." The Trigocian lost 2 or 3 shades of crimson as he saw no lie in his opponent's murderous, charcoal eyes. "And unlike that fool Kakarot, I get excited at the prospect of finishing off an opponent who's weaker than I! And needless to say, you're much weaker!"

"This- this doesn't make any sense!" Jeice choked frantically. "You weren't anywhere near this strong when you fought us earlier!"

"That's right! A Saiyan's strength soars after he recovers from a fatal wound!" Vegeta had the cat-got-the-canary grin on his face, tone beset with pure malice. "You, Recoome and Zarbon, all did
me a great service!"

"Z-Z-Zarbon?!!" Stuttered a confused Jeice.

"That's right." The Prince nodded. "Only a few hours ago, my power level couldn't have been above 27 000, but thanks to the three of you fools, I've now reached heights it would've taken many years to obtain, had I continued to serve Frieza!" He let out a gleeful chuckle. "You have my deepest gratitude!"

"I- will- DEFEAT YOU!" The Trigocian began blasting Vegeta with everything he had, only for the Prince to emerge from the smoky haze, complete unaffected, as he fired a left hook straight to his opponent's jaw, before throwing a right uppercut to his stomach, digging his way inside.

"Vegeta! NO! NO!" Jeice pled desperately.

"SAY GOODBYE!"

With those words, Vegeta blasted right through his foe, leaving not a shred of the last of Captain Ginyu's underlings.

'See that Frieza?!! The Prince thought to himself, overwhelmed with a rush of crazed euphoria. 'No matter whom you send, I will always emerge the victor! It won't be long now, before I have your blood on my hands!'

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Goku, Krillin and Gohan were all fighting a lopsided battle against Ginyu, now that he had increased his grasp on utilising some of the Saiyan prodigy's massive reserves of latent energy.

The Captain attacked Goku with an inverted kick straight to the top of the head, sending him plummeting and crashing into the ground.

The Saiyan then looked on as an intense surge of Ki illuminated the very atmosphere surrounding them. It was Vegeta! He'd just snuffed the life out of Jeice! Everyone observed the scene in awe. Ginyu was currently holding a helpless Gohan by the collar of his shirt.

"Vegeta, no!" Goku cried out in protest. "You didn't have to go that far!"

The older Saiyan placed his fingers on his his eyes, shaking his head, as he let out a wry laugh.

"You're a fool, Kakarot!" He smirked at the younger Saiyan. "If you'd finished that parasite off when you had the chance, I wouldn't have to do that! You see, unlike you, I have no qualms getting my hands dirty!"

A wave of nausea suddenly attacked the Prince, as he attempted to tap further into his Ki. He could feel the energy dwelling within, but couldn't spring it forth and the harder he tried, the weaker he got. Dammit! It was all that blue-haired vixen's fault! Her sensual ministrations on his tail had had adverse repercussions and now the effects were beginning to to kick in! (A/N: Refer to the end of the previous chapter). Just fucking great! Why now?! He breathed in deep, cooling himself off, before turning his attention to Frieza's only remaining subordinate.

"Brace yourself Ginyu, for the true might of a Saiyan warrior!" He chanted and lunged straight
towards the Captain. Ginyu threw Gohan aside and tried in vain to defend himself against the Prince's relentless assault. The royal Saiyan was ravaging him badly and with one final double axe handle to the stomach, followed by a volley of Ki blasts, Ginyu looked just about done. As Vegeta was about to dive in and finish him off, however, the shrewd Captain smirked, opting to use his ultimate technique once again.

"CHANGE NOW!"

The Saiyan frowned in bewilderment as a beam flew from Ginyu's mouth and headed straight towards his. He couldn't move! What was happening?! Fortunately, Goku had intervened a second before the beam collided and the switch was avoided! All was back to normal! Goku had his body back and Ginyu had his!

The Captain hit the ground with a nasty thud.

"What's this?! My own body?!" He appraised his hands in horror, before glaring accusingly at Goku. "It's you!"

"I did it." The young Saiyan released a difficult chuckle. "I've got my own- body back!"

"What's going on here?!" Vegeta asked no one in particular, as he witnessed the exchange that ensued. "Is that Kakarot or is it Ginyu?!!"

Gohan took a closer look and smiled, as he observed the light gleaming in his father's eyes.

"Krillin look, it's my dad!" He said cheerfully. "He's back in his own body again!"

Vegeta narrowed his eyes, as he locked onto his rival's Ki. Yes, it was indeed Kakarot! That could only mean-

"I need to find another body!" Ginyu huffed in frustration, clenching his teeth painfully, as he grasped his wounded chest. "I need Vegeta! He's the most powerful fighter here!" He then turned towards the Prince. "Come here hot shot! I want a piece of you!"

"Over my dead body!" Goku stood to his feet with great difficulty, breathing heavily as he attempted a Kamehameha. His vision began fading and he barely managed to fire the beam with what little Ki he had left. Ginyu easily evaded the blast and Goku gave into his fatigue, falling on his back, into the dry mud.

Vegeta powered up and dove straight towards Ginyu. The latter attempted to change bodies again, only for the Saiyan to vanish and rush him from behind. Punches, kicks, elbows and knees were all delivered spot on and with one final uppercut, Vegeta sent Ginyu propelling upwards and back, before landing a double-axe handle on his stomach, following up with a sickening blow from underneath to the vertebral column and finally stomping hard on his opponent's mid-section, causing him to nosedive. He then began firing blast after blast at the battered Captain.

Ginyu staggered as he got on his feet. His entire body was covered with bruises, burns and lacerations, but it was all part of the plan.

"Impressive." He said in a jeering tone, smirking at his Saiyan adversary.

The Prince snarled angrily and took it up a notch or two, pushing himself to his limit, as high
continued savaging Ginyu, only for the latter to taunt him further. Dammit, his power was only getting weaker!

Vegeta tossed Ginyu up into the air by his horns and rocketed towards him, ready to deliver the final blow. Just then the Captain attempted his body switching technique. However, as fate would have it, Goku had managed to spot a frog nearby. He grabbed it and threw it towards the beam emitting from Ginyu's mouth and just under the wire, Vegeta was saved and the flamboyant Captain had unwittingly exchanged body's with the tiny amphibian.

Gohan and Krillin tended to Goku, when Vegeta came by, demanding what had just materialized. As his son and best friend held his burly figure in place, the younger Saiyan explained how he'd been able to use the providential frog to prevent the switch that was about to Prince chortled, as sauntered over to the hapless Captain, contemplating whether or not he'd squash him under his boot, but eventually deciding that life as Captain Frog would serve as a crueler fate to the once proud leader of the most 'illustrious fighting squad in the Universe'. The idea of him hopping around in that amphibious body was nothing, if not hilarious. He picked up the frog, gripping it firmly.

"Stupid Ginyu." He scorned, amusingly. "Serves you right! What goes around comes around!"

Goku let out a rasped chuckle.

A/N: So the Ginyu Force has finally been defeated! But the most sinister threat still looms freely! What happens when Frieza finally makes his presence known? And what of the dragon balls? Six of them are within grasp and Dende has the seventh! Will Goku, Vegeta and co. be able to unite them on time, to summon Porunga?! And if so, will they finally attain the power necessary to destroy the menacing entity that has for decades terrorized the Universe?! Find out next time and be sure to review/follow/favourite!

p.s. In case you're wondering, Goku's stronger in this fic (power level 250 000) than he is in the manga (power level 180 000). The reason is because he pushed himself harder during his gravity training! Believe me, it's all part of the plan! Vegeta's currently at approximately 160 000, but can he catch up to his younger rival, especially now that the latter has endured fatal injuries and is set to experience another Zenkai boost, should he recover?! All will be revealed, as the Namek saga continues, so stay tuned my awesome readers!
Chapter 23: Impending doom

Bulma noticed that the fighting and explosions had come to an abrupt halt and so, taking a deep breath, she headed over to the others, heart racing.

Goku was having difficulty maintaining his balance and keeping his eyes open. Those injuries had more than taken their toll on his body.

"Goku?" Bulma asked hesitantly. "Is- is that- you?"

The Saiyan tilted his head up, only to see warm and familiar blue eyes looking back at him. As he recognized his childhood friend, he couldn't help it as his lips quirked up in a brightened smile.

"Bulma? Where'd- you come- from?" He began coughing violently.

"Shhh- Don't talk Goku." Bulma said gently, as she approached him and tenderly placed a hand on his forehead, wanting to be there for her best friend, just as he had always been for her and for everyone else!

"Enough!" Vegeta growled, feeling irked as he witnessed her touch Kakarot so intimately. "I think it's time we get this idiot inside a regeneration tank. Follow me."

"Wait, what's that frog doing in your hand?" Bulma asked. "Don't tell me that's-"

"Say hello to Captain Ginyu." Vegeta smirked, holding the amphibian by one of its hind legs, leaving it hanging uncomfortably in the air, as treacly tears spilled from its moist eyes.

"Gosh, I kind of feel sorry for the poor guy." Bulma couldn't help but giggle. "Still, he wasn't quite as bad as the others."

"What do you mean he wasn't as bad?!!" Krillin frowned in askance. "You do know that he tried to murder us! Not to mention, he stole our dragon balls!"

"Well yeah, but-" Bulma paused a moment. "I mean, he was more than a little eccentric, but he never really tried to hurt or take advantage of me or anything."

"Well, that's a relief." Gohan remarked after an awkward pause.

Goku furrowed his brows curiously at his blue-haired friend. Wait a minute! If she was here, did that mean she was the girl Vegeta sought to rescue?! But that could only mean- no way! Just as he was about to to ask her, he stopped and decided to keep his thoughts to himself, lest his morose rival blast a hole through him.

"Hey, I know!" Bulma smiled at Vegeta. "Can I keep him as a pet?" She looked at him entreatingly. "Pretty please?"

"Fuck no!" Vegeta growled back and promptly tossed the little frog all the way to the other side of the planet. Ginyu waved his legs about frantically and his croaky cries could be heard echoing
from the distance, instigating a series of jocular laughs from Gohan and Krillin.

"Hey, what gives?!!" The heiress scowled at the Prince. "You're such a jerk!"

"In case you forgot, he's a bodysnatcher, you idiot!" Vegeta glowered at her. "Would you like to have risked living the rest of your life out as a frog?!!"

"W-Well- of course not."

"Then shut-up!"

"You shut-up!"

Gohan and Krillin looked between the odd pair bemusedly, while Goku let out a stifled chuckle. This wasn't exactly what he'd expected, but it seemed Bulma and Vegeta had found their match in one-another.

"What's so funny, clown?!!" The Prince glared at his rival.


"Get this moron inside the ship."

"Wait a minute." Krillin frowned dubiously. "What exactly are you planning?"

"I already told you, cueball!" The Prince snapped. "He's in critical condition! We need him up to speed, if we're to face Frieza, so get him inside! And Hurry!"

"It's alright Krillin." Bulma smiled reassuringly. "Vegeta knows what he's doing."

"O-kay." The bald warrior cast a wary glance the Saiyan's way, before he and Gohan carried Goku aboard. Vegeta led the four Earthlings to the recovery room.

When inside, Goku immediately panicked as he spotted a needle lying on the table. The young Saiyan attempted to make a run for it, only for Krillin to allot every ounce of effort, as he struggled to hold him in place.

"I hate needles!" Cried the Saiyan youth. "Get me out here! Get me out of here! I'd rather be sick than get a needle!"

"Ugh, would you shut up!" Vegeta barked. "I'm not even giving you a needle! Idiot!"

"Oh, okay." The younger Saiyan sighed in relief.

'Oh man, how embarrassing.' Gohan thought, completely mortified by his father's childish behavior.

"Gosh Goku, you're such a crybaby." Bulma laughed and the young Saiyan smiled at her sheepishly.

Vegeta brought him inside the tank, attaching all the necessary wires to his vital areas, before closing it. Bulma then worked up the controls to activate the liquid and adjusted the settings so
they were just right for a speedy recovery. Given the extent of his injuries, Vegeta estimated it would take roughly forty minutes for him to fully rejuvenate.

"Hey, Bulma." Krillin came over to her. "How'd you end up here with that Ginyu jerk? I don't get it."

"You tell me." The heiress frowned at him. "Last I remember, you told me one of those soldiers was chasing us and then I woke up outside this ship." She then gave him a deathly glare as she put two and two together. "Wait a minute, you knocked me out, didn't you?!"

"U-U-Umm- n-n-n-no." Krillin lied, waving his hands frantically. "I-I-I s-s-s-swear."

"Oh you are unbelievable!" She shrieked, walking towards him threateningly, eyes burning with indignant ire that could easily melt through steel. She raised her hand up and Krillin flinched, shutting his eyes and praying to whoever was listening that he'd survive his maddened friend's wrath. Luckily for him, however, her expression immediately softened up and she placed her hand on his shoulder, smirking at his pitifulness. "But, you're lucky I happen to be in a good mood."

"W-W-Whaaa?" Krillin opened his eyes, never so much at a loss for words.

"We're all alive, so I suppose that's what really matters." She placed her hands on her hips, before scowling at her cueball-headed friend. "But you try pulling any funny business like that again and you'll regret it all the way to your grave and further, understood?!"

"U-U-Ummm, y-y-yes ma'am."

"Glad to hear it."

"Enough!" Vegeta growled, garnering everyone's attention. He glared at the bald man. "Frieza could be returning at any time! Take the brat and make the wish before he arrives!"

"Aren't you coming with us, Vegeta?" Gohan asked.

The Prince let out a hiss of pain, pressing a hand to his forehead. Oh, he was feeling it now! He'd really overdone it earlier, when he was fighting Captain Ginyu! Goddammit!

"Hey are you okay?" Bulma walked over to the royal Saiyan, extending her arm out towards him.

"I'm fine!" He scowled, batting her hand aside. She looked at him with an expression of hurt. "I just need a few minutes to recover my strength!" He said, turning away from her and looking heatedly at the other two Earthlings. "What're you waiting for?! Go! Now!"

"Uh- sure thing." The duo began making their exit, before the Prince stopped them once again.

"Wait!" He looked towards Bulma. "You remember where the locker room is, right?"

She nodded weakly.

"Get these little twerps some training uniform and armor and be quick about it!"

"Kay." Bulma nodded and scrambled off, Gohan and Krillin hot on her heels.
Vegeta sat down in front of the tank, sighing and shutting his eyes, as he tried to get some rest.

Bulma found appropriate sets of training gear for her two friends. Gohan's uniform and armor was an exact replica of the one Vegeta donned earlier. Krillin, however, wore a black lycra unitard, cut off above his knees and forearms, like Recoome's. His armor had shoulder and hip guards, but no groin guards.

After bidding her two friends farewell, the heiress headed over to Vegeta and sat down besides him.

"Hey, what's wrong?" She asked solicitously.

"Nothing, just go away!"

"No, it's not nothing!" Bulma pressed. "Just tell me!"

"Fine, I'll tell you what's wrong!" He growled, glaring nastily at her. "You putting your hands on my tail! It drained me of my strength!"

The heiress looked at him blankly, before her expression became apologetic.

"I'm sorry, I- I didn't know." She replied in a soft voice. "H-How?"

Vegeta let out an indignant grunt, not paying her any heed. However, a few seconds later, he sighed and responded.

"My tail's highly sensitive and extremely-"

"Extremely?"

"Erogenous!" He blurted out angrily, a blush smearing his face. He'd trained his tail to withstand any and all kinds of pain, but not eroticism!! Bulma's cheeks tinted many shades of red, as she finally realized the error she'd made.

"I-I didn't know." She mumbled, embarrassedly.

"Forget it!" Vegeta shook his head, averting his gaze and shutting his eyes, as he opted to continue resting. "Just go away!"

Bulma refused to heed his command, as she wound one arm around his shoulders and placed the other on his leg.

"Hey, I'm sorry, I really am." She crooned softly, as she rested her head on his rugged shoulder. "It won't happen again."

"Ugh- whatever." The Prince mumbled, his taut shoulders slumping, as he gave into his exhaustion, having neither the strength nor will to shove her aside. On its own accord, Vegeta's tail unwound from his waist and gently coiled around hers.

Bulma smiled at the sensation. That simple gesture made her feel so safe and secure, protected and cared for. She didn't regret her decision in the least. No matter what the future held for her, she knew she wanted, no needed Vegeta to be a part of it. Hopefully she could find a way to convince
him to live on Earth and rid himself of any nasty ambitions involving war, conquest and glory.

'Ha, wouldn't that be great?' She thought to herself, chuckling inwardly. 'Unlikely thing, though.'

But he had to know that purging planets was iniquitous! She was resolved to usher him towards a new life, a better life! He didn't have to be a monster like the rest of his race and Frieza! He could be different! After all Goku was a Saiyan and she'd never known a living soul more noble than he was! Not that she wanted Vegeta to be anything like her best friend, not at all! She liked him the way he was: bold, brash and brazen and she wouldn't have it any different! But that didn't mean he needed to continue pursuing an existence of evil and darkness, if he didn't have to! He'd demonstrated a hint of mercy once before when he spared that Namekian village and she knew he could do it again, if only for her sake!

The odd couple were completely unaware that Goku had his eyes open the whole time and was observing them closely from inside the regeneration tank. It seems that Captain Ginyu wasn't wrong after all. Bulma really was Vegeta's girlfriend?! How bizarre! Wasn't she with Yamcha?!

Last he remembered they were still together several years ago, but they did have a habit of breaking up a lot. In any case, it wasn't his place. Whatever happened between the two of them was their business, but he still couldn't help but smile inwardly as he witnessed this side to Vegeta. He'd really changed for the better it seemed, just as Piccolo had.

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Nail had arrived too late in Elder Tsuno's village, which had turned into a slaughterhouse. The villagers repeatedly insisted that they did not have a dragon ball, but Frieza just wouldn't take no for an answer. The five warrior-class Nameks were the first to go down, followed by the other elders. The lizard then turned his attention towards the children. That was where Elder Tsuno drew the line, unwilling to allow the young to suffer the undeserved wrath of this horrendous fiend. He was left with no choice, but to tell him the truth!

"The dragon ball's not here!" He repeated for the umpteenth time, but continued hesitantly. "I do not know where it is, but I know who has it!"

That aroused Frieza's curiosity.

"What do you mean who?!" He demanded, narrowing his eyes dangerously.

"I have it!" Nail suddenly appeared behind Frieza, determined to draw the beast's attention away from the village and towards himself. He needed to buy time for his Earth allies. Frieza turned to the newcomer, eyeing him with great scrutiny. His face was stone cold and his posture gave nothing away. Truth be told, Nail was deluged with fear through and through. Anyone would be if they had to face someone as monstrous as Frieza, but he'd managed to confine his fear deep within, for any show of it could be used against him.

"NAIL?!" Tsuno exclaimed wide-eyed. He spoke to him telepathically, 'What are you doing here?! Why have you left Guru's side!' He chided.

'It was on Guru's orders.' The last Namekian warrior replied mentally. 'I'd have to face Frieza one way or another! This is the very last Namekian village and if this fiend destroys it, the first thing he'll do is go after Guru! I cannot allow that! No matter what it takes, I must hold him off!'

"Excuse me?!" Frieza stared murderously at Guru's bodyguard. "My patience is wearing thin! Tell
me where you've stashed the last dragon ball, before I make you watch as I slaughter what remains of your ugly race, one at a time!"

"The last dragon ball is far away from here!" Nail hissed. "If you wish to know where, then face me in battle! If you can defeat me, I'll be more than happy to tell you whatever you want to know!"

Frieza smirked evilly at the dauntless Namek confronting him.

"You wish to challenge me?" He asked in a surprised tone, raising an eyebrow. "It looks as though someone's suicidal. Surely, you have heard of me, the almighty Lord Frieza?"

"Of course I've heard of you!" He growled. "You slaughtered my people in cold blood and now it's time I return the favor! You'll pay for your crimes Frieza! Come and let me show you the true power of the Namekian race and then you'll regret ever having come to our planet!"

Frieza frowned in appraisal of the warrior before him. He seemed starkly different to the others, from his very demeanor. He was a lot more more spirited and carried himself with such grace and pride, unlike any of the Namekians he'd encountered thus far. Breaking him would be fun and he had all the time in the world- or so he thought.

"Well, I suppose I'll oblige you," Frieza sniggered. "You may attack at your leisure."

"I do not wish to battle with these innocent bystanders in the way!"

Frieza let out a foreboding chuckle.

"Agreed." He aimed a palm towards the village and fired a humongous Ki blast, obliterating everyone and everything instantaneously. Nail looked on in horror as he felt the life force of Elder Tsuno and all the children dwindle away to nothing in that very moment, not having a chance to even scream as they were engulfed by a wave of Ki that reduced them to ashes. He snarled viciously at Frieza.

"YOU MONSTER!"

"There are no longer any innocent bystanders amongst us, is that not what you wanted?" Asked the lizard in his syrupy voice, full of deranged and twisted amusement. "Perhaps my methods were not to your liking, hmmm?"

Nail bellowed loudly, placing his fists by his sides as he powered up to his very highest. Frieza raised his eyebrows and his mouth formed an 'o' shape as he observed the Namekian's power reading rise to levels unheard of, amongst the people of this planet. Once Nail finished, he took up a battle stance and glared murderously at the fiend, who destroyed his people.

"Are you ready to lose?!" He snarled.

"Hmmm. It appears you weren't bluffing, after all," Frieza commented, as he read the display on his scouter. "Forty-two thousand truly is a power level worthy of high praise. With strength like yours, you could easily be ranked amongst my most powerful elite. How about you work for me? I will reward you with riches beyond your wildest imagination."

Nail expectorated sideways.
"I'll never join you, Frieza!" He growled irately. "I'm going to put a stop to you and your evil ways once and for all!"

The lizard cackled.

"As you wish." He let out a dismal sigh. "What a waste indeed." He shook his head. "You would have made a fine addition to my ranks, but it seems what you truly desire, is martyrdom." He shook his head wryly. "Well you shall have it. Before we proceed, would you like to know what you are up against? Hmmm?"

Nail let out a frustrated grunt, not looking forward to his adversary's answer.

"Allow me to reveal to you my fighting power: 530 000." Frieza stated, eyes glinting with sickening glee as witnessed the color drain from the Namek warrior's face. Nail knew all along that Frieza's power was horrific, but if those numbers meant anything, he was outmatched by a factor of more than twelve. How could any of them have ever hoped to defeat such horrible evil?! Dammit! No! He refused to let this deter him!

He knew from the outset that Frieza's strength far exceeded his own, but his primary mission was to keep him occupied for as long as possible, in hopes that his allies could make their wish!

After fighting with Frieza for a long while, Nail was completely spent, lying on his back, his large figure marred with nasty bruises, burns and broken bones. Violet blood was oozing out of the numerous gashes covering his body, as Frieza loomed over him, glaring imperiously.

"This is your last chance." The lizard glared at him. "Tell me where the dragon ball is, or I will cut you down inch by inch."

Nail laughed.

"You can kill me if you want- but I am the last Namek." He lied. "And I promise you this, Frieza: You'll never have the dragon balls or your wish."

The lizard gnashed his teeth viciously at his fallen foe and fired a Ki beam that seared his shoulder. Nail cried out in agony, before forcing himself to smile back at Frieza once again.

"Do your worst Frieza." He challenged, before continuing. "But know this: No matter what you do to me, you'll never find the last dragon ball, because I don't have it."

"What?!" Frieza growled angrily. "What do you mean you don't have it?! You said you did!"

Nail released a chuckle.

"Our little diversion worked perfectly." He smirked at the villain. "By now, our allies from Earth must have gathered all seven balls and are about to make their wish."

"WHAT?!" Frieza was suddenly overcome with dread. No! That lying scum! He was playing him right from the beginning! He shot Nail another nasty glare. "Mark my words: I'm not finished with you yet!"

The tyrant immediately zoomed towards his ship and pressed a key on his scouter.
"Ginyu Force, this is Frieza, come in, over!" The signal on the other end was dead, just like the rest of Frieza's most elite mercenary squad, minus their Captain who was reduced to a tiny amphibian. "What?! No?! There's no way Vegeta and those miserable little punks could take down the entire Ginyu Force!"

Frieza was livid, to say the least! This wasn't happening! He could not botch this up! There was no way he'd miss his shot at eternal life! He continued his supersonic flight with deathly resolve.

As ordered, Dende had not moved from his spot, so locating him was no trouble at all. Not five minutes after exiting Frieza's ship, they arrived.

"Hey, Dende!" Shouted Krillin, waving to him.

The young Namekian's face lit up as he saw his friends and flew towards them, handing the dragon ball he held, over to Gohan. On their trip back to Frieza's ship, the demi-Saiyan and his older companion informed Dende that they'd been successful in eliminating all of Frieza's men here on Namek and that only Frieza himself remained. It was then that Krillin sensed the impending threat.

"Dammit, Frieza's headed straight towards his ship!" He exclaimed. "We have to make it there before he does, so we can summon the dragon! Let's hurry!"

"Oh no," Gohan said in a despondent tone. "N-N-Nail."

"Is he okay?!" Dende asked frantically.

"No, but we can revive him with the dragon balls, Dende!" Krillin reassured, his teeth clenched. "We need to move fast though!"

The three of them upped their speed and arrived at their destination several minutes later.

Krillin checked the radar and quickly located the dragon balls, buried beneath a patch of dirt nearby. They dug them out and Gohan dropped the one he was carrying with all the others. At last all seven orbs were united.

"Hey, uh- should we wake Vegeta up?" Gohan asked.

"Nah, let him rest." Krillin waved his hand dismissively. "He didn't look all that well before and I'd rather be the one to wake up an angry Saiyan haha- no offence Gohan."

"None taken." The boy chuckled, before look towards his young Namekian companion. "It's time Dende!"

"Right!" Dende pointed his palm towards the glimmering gems as he chanted the password. "Takorat pao Porunga poparay para!"

A short while later the dragon balls began glowing and the sky darkened.

"What's happening?" Frieza wondered, glancing around as he stopped midair. "Why has the sky
Then it hit him! It was never dark on this worthless planet! It had three suns for heaven's sake! This could have meant one thing and one thing only! Nail said that those Earthling scum were making their wish! He snarled viciously, as he continued his flight towards his ship at tip-top speed.

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A rich orange ethereal light shot straight out of the dragon balls and up into the sky. Soon the light formed into the shape of a strapping, gigantic dragon with two horns on his head, bulky arms and a burly torso. The apparition starkly contrasted Earth's dragon Shenron, in both his sinewy appearance and heavily imposing demeanor. The motley trio looked up at Porunga an absolute wonder.

"You have collected all seven dragon balls!" The dragon chanted in his loud, authoritative baritone. "And now, as it is written, I shall grant you three wishes within my power! Choose wisely!"

"Alright! Three wishes, instead of one!" Krillin chirped, in exhilaration. "This is too good to be true!"

"Yeah!" Gohan concurred. "Porunga's awesome!"

"No please guys, don't disrespect the dragon!" Dende said worriedly.

"Alright, it's wish time." Krillin frowned. "For our first wish, we want to revive all the innocent people, including our friends, that died fighting the Saiyans on Earth. Can you please ask Porunga to do that?"

"I can try." Dende nodded, before chanting the wish in his native tongue.

"Your request is unacceptable." Replied the dragon. "I may only restore one life per wish!"

"Oh no!" Gohan looked completely frantic. What could they do?! Only three people could be brought back?! Damn!

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King Kai heard the news on his planet and informed his four new students. While Tien and Yamcha bickered amongst themselves, trading childish insults as they debated who should be revived, Chiaotzu suggested drawing straws. The three continued arguing amongst one another, but Piccolo dismissed them entirely and made it clear that he'd be the one to return. The Namekian from Earth requested King Kai to set up a telepathic link between himself and Gohan.

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"Krillin we need to hurry." Dende told his friend, feeling completely on edge. "Frieza's on his way!"

"Right, there's no time to stew over this Gohan!" Krillin ground his teeth together. "We have to make up our minds!"

The demi-Saiyan suddenly heard Piccolo's voice in his head and his mentor had instructed him to
revive him with the first wish and bring him to Namek with the second, much to King Kai's dismey. Tien, Yamcha and Chiaotzu on the other hand gave the Namekian their heartfelt support and bade him good luck in the battle against Frieza. 

Vegeta sensed Frieza coming and was instantly jolted awake. Dammit! Why wasn't he a Super-Saiyan yet? Hadn't those fools made the wish?!

"Woman, wake up!" He brusquely ordered Bulma, who was still clinging onto him. The heiress shook herself awake, but before she had the time to register a thing, Vegeta got up, wound his tail back around his waist and frowned at her. "Frieza's on his way! Stay where you are at all costs and make sure Kakarot recovers, as soon as possible!"

Bulma hadn't a chance to say a word, as Vegeta took off out of the blue.

As he was leaving the ship, he noticed the sky darken. That only meant one thing! The Earthlings were making their wishes without him! He saw it! They were outside and there was some sort of gigantic apparition looming over them! That must have been the dragon! How dare they?! If they even thought about double-crossing him, all the demons in hell put together wouldn't be able to save them from his wrath! He made a beeline for the ship's exit.

The second wish was now granted and Piccolo suddenly found himself in the woebegone heart of an expansive archipelago, a pitch-black sky doming over the dreary planet. So this was his home world! Upon taking in his surroundings, he felt a sense of familiarity and warmth bud within him, but a chill ran through him that immediately extinguished the warmth, as he sensed the scores of innocent lives vanquished by the icy invader. He began feeling out the colossal power of Frieza and his jaw instantly fell! It was completely off the charts, beyond anything he could have ever foreseen! It didn't matter! Now that he was here, he'd do exactly what he came for no matter the odds!

He grit his teeth furiously, zooming over towards the spot where he sensed Gohan and Krillin's energy signal as well as another diminutive Ki. And approaching them quickly was none other than Vegeta! He let out a snarl, as he upped his speed!

It didn't take Vegeta long to reach his 'allies'.

"You summoned the dragon without me!" His dark eyes pervaded with bloodlust and raw anger and betrayal. Krillin and Dende looked as white as sheets, while Gohan desperately attempted to curb the Prince's rage.

"No, Vegeta, you've got it all wrong!" Gohan waved his hands frantically. "There's one more wish and we were about to use it on you and my dad! We just didn't want to wake you up cause you said you needed some rest!"

Vegeta's fury dimmed.

"Good!" He smirked, before frowning. "Now make the wish! Tell the dragon to make me a Super
Saiyan this instant!"

"Right!" Gohan turned to the Namekian child. "Dende, tell Porunga to make Vegeta and my father, Goku, into Super Saiyans!"

"O-O-O-Okay." Stammered the Namekian child, before begrudgingly turning to Porunga and translating the wish into his mother tongue. Vegeta smiled gleefully. Yes! He would finally be a Super Saiyan and attain the power necessary to destroy Frieza! Victory was at hand and he could already smell its inebriating fragrance.

"This wish cannot be granted!" Stated Porunga and everyone's hearts sank. "To bestow such power is well beyond my grasp!"

"WHAT?!" Vegeta yelled at the dragon. The others flinched and Porunga's crimson eyes creased angrily at the Prince. He considered the massive entity's words for a few seconds. He only said that the power was beyond his grasp, but didn't say it was unattainable or nonexistent, meaning there had to be some way! "Tell me how I can become a Super Saiyan?! Quickly!"

"The power may only be summoned when the necessary need arises!" Echoed Namek's dragon, before roaring. "Tell me your third wish now!"

"Guys, hurry up!" Krillin yelled in disconcertment. "We need to do something fast! Frieza's coming!"

Curse that dragon! He couldn't possibly have given a more obscure answer! The necessary need?!! What need?? What in seven hells did that even mean?? Dammit, they were out of options! It was time for plan B!

"Tell the dragon to make me immortal!" Vegeta demanded, earning surprised looks from the others. "There's no other choice. If Frieza cannot kill me, I'll only get stronger and stronger with each blow, until I'm finally powerful enough to destroy him!"

Everyone looked at the Prince in horror and disbelief, before his patience ran out.

"HURRY UP! HE'S COMING YOU IDIOTS!"

"Do it Dende!" Krillin ordered the child. There was no other alternative! He hated this, but it had to be done. Frieza was closing in fast! Goddammit! An immortal Vegeta! Just great! Who knows what level of damage he could inflict?!

The moment Dende had finished translating the wish into his native tongue, the dragon began fading out of existence and his red eyes abruptly vanished. Porunga slowly started imploding and with one final boom accompanied by a blinding flash of light, he vanished into thin air. The dragon balls fell to the ground as ordinary pieces of stone, their lustre gone.

"What- what happened?!" Vegeta asked, gritting his teeth as he looked himself over. "I don't feel any different! Am I immortal or not?!"

"No." Dende collapsed on his knees as tears began cascading down his face. "You're not immortal."

"Dende, what's the matter?" Krillin asked.
"It's Grand Elder Guru." He sniffed. "He's- He's gone."

"Oh-" Krillin had his face downcast. "I- uh- I'm really sorry Dende."

"Guru, why?" Whimpered the young Namekian.

"What?!" Vegeta yelled. "So you're saying the dragon balls no longer work because some old geezer decided to kick the bucket at the worst possible occasion?!"

"He was my father and he didn't decide anything!" Dende yelled back, enraged at the Saiyan's callous insensitivity. "The dragon balls were a part of him!"

"DAMMIT ALL!" Vegeta roared.

"Frieza's approaching, you guys!" Gohan slurred perturbedly.

The Prince quickly collected himself and let out an exasperated huff, as he tried to regain his composure.

"We have to move away from here!" He instructed, teeth gnashed together in frustration. "Kakarot hasn't finished healing and the woman's still inside the ship!"

"Alright!" Krillin nodded and turned towards Dende. "Stay here and keep your power level suppressed, got it?!"

"R-R-Right." Stammered the young Namekian.

"Come on, hurry!" Vegeta blasted off towards an island not too far away, Gohan and Krillin in hot pursuit.

Once they landed, the Prince sensed Frieza draw nearer and nearer. He took in a deep breath and closed his eyes, in a steadfast attempt to keep his cool. He felt reinvigorated and his power had taken a huge spike. It seems that in the long run, carrying himself to the very extreme during his battle with Ginyu had done him more good than harm. Less than fifteen minutes of rest was all it took and he was now back and better than ever! But it still wasn't enough! It would take Kakarot at least twenty minutes or more to make a full recovery and until then, they had to hold off Frieza, all by themselves.

"H-H-He's here." Krillin's face turned a sickly blue, as he quivered and pointed to the almighty overlord of the Universe, standing atop a pillar of rock with his arms by his side. Gohan began to tremble as he sensed the overwhelming force of evil laid bare, right in front of them.

A/N: It's finally here! The crux of the story approaches! How will Vegeta and co. fare against the mighty Frieza?! And what of Goku and Piccolo?! Will they arrive in time to help?! Find out next time and be sure to leave a review and follow/favourite! There's a promising surprise awaiting for you in the chapter to come and believe me, it'll really make your hearts race many miles an hour!! Until next time, folks!

BTW, in case some of you are worried that the story's about to end, don't be!! This will extend all the way to the Androids saga, so don't fret!! The only question is what will happen between then and now and how will it differ from the original story?! I can tell you one thing: the differences
will leave you dumbstruck, so stay tuned, my awesome readers!!!

p.s. Didn't you love how Bulma asks Vegeta to let her keep Ginyu as a pet frog and he just says "fuck no" and tosses him to the "other side of the planet" hehe?!
Chapter 24: Reminiscence

"So you are the ones, hm?" Frieza smirked. "It truly surprises me that the most elite fighting squadron in the entire Universe met their end at the hands of two shrimps and a burnt out Saiyan!"

Vegeta released a chuckle.

"Oh, you find that funny do you?" Frieza asked, feigning amusement, as his insides boiled with rage and a thick vein protruded from his purple forehead, instantly betraying his ire.

"If only you could see Ginyu right now, I'm sure you'd feel the same way." Replied the Saiyan, hardly able to keep himself from chortling.

"Enough!" Yelled Frieza, letting out an angry snarl as he stared malevolently at his former underling. "I always knew that you would inevitably turn on me someday Vegeta, but I never knew when!" His expression became even more loathsome, as he shrieked in fury. "YOU STOLE MY ONE AND ONLY CHANCE AT IMMORTALITY! I HATE YOU!"

Krillin jumped to one side and Gohan to the other, so the Prince was left facing the icy villain by himself, hands fastened in undaunted resolve. The pair from Earth knew they couldn't handle Frieza head on and so opted it best to catch him by surprise, if their Saiyan ally happened to be in a tight spot!

"Like I care if you hate me!" Vegeta proclaimed. "I quit! I'm free now! Every single scum you've pitted up against me is dead and gone and now it's your turn to join them in hell!"

"That's right, let it all out!" Frieza snickered forebodingly. "Live boldly for whatever miserable few moments you have left!"

Vegeta grit his teeth. This was it! The moment of truth had finally arrived! Frieza moved his arms by his side, roaring, as he was engulfed by an awesome cobalt aura.

The surrounding terrain began quaking, as clogs of dirt levitated into the air. The tyrant's power continued to escalate and his Saiyan adversary braced himself for the worst. Vegeta formulated a plan. He would buy as much time as he could for Kakarot's recovery, by feigning ignorance with regards to Frieza's true power! With what he had in store, he knew that together, the two of them may well be able to destroy the lizard! No matter how strong Frieza was, there's no way he could make it out in one piece, if they played their cards right! Time was crucial though! Each and every second mattered!

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Bulma felt the entire ship tremble and a jar of some unknown chemical fell to the floor and shattered, eliciting a screech from the frenzied female, who immediately took cover cover behind the healing chamber.

'Dammit Goku, hurry up!'
What the hell was going on! Had the wishes been made successfully?! Were they currently engaging Frieza?! Most likely. That had to be it! It was the only explanation for those eerie tremors! Bloody hell! How did things go so awry?! She took a deep breath, deciding that the ship was the safest place for her, just as Vegeta had said, especially since Goku was here. That's right! Her darling little Goku wouldn't let anything happen to her! With that mental piece of reassurance, she took a deep breath to try and still her trembling body.

Outside of the ship, Dende enclosed himself within a large dent on a nearby mountain that had formed as a result of the preceding battle between Captain Ginyu and the fighters from Earth.

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The lizard charged straight towards Vegeta throwing a hard right hook, but the latter managed to grab his wrist just before the attack landed. Frieza was astounded, but didn't let it show as he launched his left hand towards his opponent. Vegeta caught the other blow too and held it firmly in place. Their respective powers continued to spiral as they locked horns. The ground cracked as tremors shook the island and a crater formed underneath the two juggernauts, getting deeper and deeper as both opponents were drawn into a stalemate.

"WHAT?!" Frieza was stunned as his scouter started beeping dangerously, the power display rapidly rising higher and higher. The very last reading he got was 250 000, before the device imploded in his face. Holy fuck! Vegeta wasn't bluffing! He was insanely powerful! But how in Cold's name did that happen?! It couldn't have been more than three hours since Zarbon had crushed him in battle and yet at this very moment, his power was many times greater than that of his late right hand man! It was surreal!

After a while, the pair withdrew from one another and stood on opposite ends of the crater. Frieza was completely flabbergasted and Vegeta too was surprised by the huge upsurge in his abilities! Such incredible power! If he could become this strong this fast, maybe becoming a Super Saiyan was still plausible. Apparently, it could only be summoned if the need existed. But what in the devil did that even mean?! Couldn't that cursed dragon have just have given a straight answer, or at least one that wasn't so starkly vague and ambiguous?!

"You seem agitated, my dear Prince." Frieza smirked.

"I'm fine!" Vegeta loured, taking on a battle stance, intent on buying as many minutes or even seconds as possible. Once Kakarot recovered, he could execute his backup plan perfectly, but not an instant before. He smirked inwardly at the fact that Frieza had underestimated him twice and paid the price for it and yet here he was again, digging his own grave by not finishing him off as hastily as possible. All the better!

"Hmph." The lizard readied his own stance. He wanted to test Vegeta's powers and see how great his ex-subordinate had truly become. The monkey Prince had no clue that his power was far, far higher than he let on, but he'd allow him to get his hopes up, only so he could grind them into the dirt, when the time was ripe!

Gohan and Krillin gulped, looking on nervously, as the two mortal enemies abruptly vanished and began battling midair, exchanging crunching blows with one-another.

"Err- Can you tell who's winning, Gohan?" Krillin asked nervously.

"I don't know." Replied the boy. "I can just barely follow their movements- a little. From what I
"God, I never thought I'd be rooting for Vegeta." The bald man shook his head wryly.

"Let's cheer him on Krillin!" Gohan exclaimed, before turning his head up towards the sky and vehemently booming. "Come on Vegeta! You can do it! You're the greatest!"

The Prince frowned, as he heard the boy. That moment of distraction was all it took for Frieza to land an elbow to his jaw. Vegeta was sent rolling backwards midair, but was eventually able to regain his footing. He glared daggers at the demi-Saiyan.

"QUIT DISTRACTING ME, YOU LITTLE WEASEL!" He snarled lividly and Gohan cringed. The young half-Saiyan couldn't possibly have been more mortified. His face turned beet red and Krillin tried consoling him, telling him that Vegeta was just a heartless jerk and unworthy of his support to begin with, but it did little to assuage the hurt Gohan felt at being rebuffed so crudely.

"Excuse me!" Frieza frowned, drawing Vegeta's attention back to him.

"Do forgive." Smirked the Prince. "You know how pesky kids can be."

"I'm glad we agree on something." Replied the lizard, chuckling. "Shall we proceed?"

"By all means." With speed that surprised the lizard, Vegeta appeared right in front of him and landed a low punch to his enemy's midsection, causing him to keel over as spit flew out of his mouth. The Prince followed up with an elbow atop his foe's head, sending him plummeting straight to the ground. He then turned to Gohan and Krillin, "Out of the way!" He yelled, as he began firing Ki blasts without warning. The duo scarcely managed to avoid being caught in the explosion. Vegeta ensured not to overexert himself as he had before. He needed to conserve as much power as possible to buy time for Kakarot! Dammit! If nothing else, he'd probably just succeeded in pissing Frieza off! He should've known better.

Frieza, completely overcome with rage, shot straight up towards Vegeta like a rocket, landing his head underneath the Saiyan's chin, before following up with a hard right to the jaw, propelling Vegeta many yards away. Before he could land another hit, however, Vegeta recovered and appeared behind him, punching him so hard in the small of the back that he put a dent on his armor.

"Filthy Saiyan!" Frieza snarled and whirled around, firing a powerful Ki blast at the Prince. While Vegeta was deflecting the attack, the lizard appeared behind him and grabbed him in a full-nelson, midair. The Saiyan kept kicking and struggling, but to no avail.

"Let go!" He demanded.

"Something wrong, dear Prince?" Frieza's mood brightened, knowing he had his insubordinate underling right where he wanted him.

"Oh no! Krillin, we have to help him!" Gohan exclaimed frantically, as he observed the situation. He was about to intervene when Krillin grabbed his wrist.

"No, Gohan!" He shook his head. "We can't charge him head on, remember?! We need to catch him by surprise. Let's move in behind him." He then smirked. "I think it's time we avenge Nail and what better way then by using his very best technique!"
Gohan lips quirked up, as Krillin's words registered! The Wonder Blast (A/N: Refer to Chapter 12)! The boy nodded and the duo took to the air behind Frieza, shutting their eyes and concentrating, as they held their hands out in the appropriate position. Together they began to gather large amounts of energy from the three Namekian suns. Since Frieza's scouter had imploded, he was completely oblivious to their presence.

"You know Vegeta, I am beginning to wonder where exactly you've hidden your whore."

The Saiyan bristled in rage, pouring every last ounce of effort he had into maintaining his cool. He could not let this break his concentration!

"I'm sure she must be absolutely striking to have won your favor." The lizard remarked. "Oh, how I'm going to enjoy breaking her down, bit by bit, right in front of your very eyes." Vegeta's furious growl did nothing but fill the tyrant with glee, as he decided to cross the limits. "You know I always did take a liking to your mother."

Vegeta's heart froze and his motions coming to a sudden halt. His mother?! Why the fuck did that bastard bring her up?

"Did you know, I ordered the King to hand her over to me?" Frieza was grinning, as he felt the Saiyan's body shake with unparalleled lividity and execration. He went on. "He bluntly refused of course, so I gave him an ultimatum: either he deliver her or I take her by force and so that same night, he poisoned his darling Queen and she never again saw the light of day."

Vegeta's chest tightened, as a surge of pain shot through him, having no connection at all with the hold Frieza had on him. No! It couldn't be! His mother died of natural causes! Father had always told him so! Why would he lie for?! Did he really murder her, to protect her from that bastard, Frieza?!

"The mighty King Vegeta was never the same." The cruel tyrant sniggered. "Not long afterwards, I offered him the same ultimatum when it came to you and well, I guess you know how that story went."

Gohan and Krillin were hearing every word, as they continued to collect copious amounts of energy. The duo grit their teeth, unable to help it as a flood of sympathy streamed through them for their former enemy and the bitter feeling of revulsion they harbored towards Frieza further augmented, if it were even possible. The pair from Earth continued pouring more and more Ki into their joint attack.

Heart-rending memories that had long since been sealed away began to resurface within the tumultuous burrows of the Saiyan's turbulent mind.

*The Queen sat on her knees, pulling her pint-sized cub into a maternal embrace, as she had every night before he went to bed, only now, he would wake up to see neither the myriad silken tresses of burnished black that gracefully flowed all the way down to her navel, nor the cosmic cassiterite of her boundless beaming eyes. He would never again feel the gentle touch of her soft, peachy skin or the soothing beat of her warm heart. He would never hear the melodic tune of her serene voice or smell the lingering fragrance of sacred lotus that effused from her everyday, whenever the bright, sangria sun of Planet Vegeta rose and he awoke to her blissful presence.*

*She pulled back and held her son by the shoulders, smiling warmly at him.*
"You're too soft, mother!" The miniature Saiyan groused, pouting indignantly. "I'm four years old now! I don't need to be coddled by you!"

The ravishing woman laughed at the peculiar petulance of her beloved boy and brushed a slender hand through his feathery bangs.

"No matter how old you are, Vegeta, you're still my little Prince and nothing will ever change that."

"I'm not little!" The morose child gnashed his teeth. "One day I will grow up to be the most powerful Saiyan who ever lived! You'll see!"

"Yes you will, my son." The queen lovingly planted a protracted kiss on the boy's forehead, before placing a hand on his soft cheek. "And when that day comes, you'll bestow pride upon our race and redeem all the sins we've committed."

"Sins?" The Prince narrowed his eyes quizzically.

"Vegeta, what the Saiyans do is wrong." She explained, letting out a dejected sigh, her expression glum. "It took me a long time, but I see it now and maybe one day-" She paused and smiled at her son. "Maybe one day you'll see it too."

With strength he didn't know he had, Vegeta held back the torrent of tears that threatened to burst forth. Severe anguish flooded through him, replaced by a wave of guilt for much of the unnecessary evil he'd committed throughout a dreadful life wrought with unparalleled darkness, only to be squelched and followed by an intense rush of raw and uninhibited rage and vitriol towards the dastardly fiend who'd stolen his mother, the only person who had ever truly cared for him and would have died a hundred deaths, before handing him away. With a thunderous roar of fury, Vegeta broke through Frieza's hold and instantly whirled around, landing a swift palm straight on the bridge of his opponent's nose, disfiguring it. The tyrant let out a shrick of pain, as he staggered backwards midair. Vegeta brought both hands forward and fired an enormous Ki blast, fuelled by the smoldering ire coursing through his veins.

Just then, Gohan and Krillin had finished charging up the Wonder Blast and unleashed it directly at the enemy.

"WHAT?" Frieza cried, too shocked to do a thing he was sandwiched between the furious forces of two intense powerhouses.

Vegeta took notice of what his two allies had done. Once the smoke cleared he capitalized by landing an inverted kick atop Frieza's head, followed by a series of flaming Ki blasts hurled at his plunging figure.

The tyrant was barely able to land on highly unsteady feet, his legs wobbling and body marred with searing burns and bloody lacerations. That was much too close for comfort. He was extremely lucky to be able to cling to life after having sustained such immensely powerful attacks.

"YOU MISERABLE FOOLS!" He yelled up at the trio. "YOU WILL ALL PAY DEARLY FOR THIS!" He'd grossly miscalculated the strength of his opponents! The Ginyu Force never stood a chance and neither did he, the most powerful being in the Universe, not as he was. Frieza placed his fists by his side and his power began skyrocketing. "AAARRRRGGGHHHHH!"
"We need to attack him now!" Vegeta yelled frantically at his two allies. "If he transforms we're history!"

Frieza smirked. So his pet monkey knew the truth about his transformation all along! Zarbon must have told him! He was purposely concealing such knowledge for some reason or other! Oh boy, now he was truly in for a surprise!

"Right, let's do it Krillin!" Gohan frowned as he began charging up a Masenko, putting a vast amount of energy into the attack, while Krillin flared a powerful Kamehameha wave and Vegeta poured his Ki into an intense Galick Gun attack!

By the time they'd launched their respective attacks, however, Frieza had already transformed. He'd shed his armor and grown about 8 feet tall. His horns curved up menacingly like the devil himself and to make matters worse, all the injuries he'd previously endured, had somehow vanished.

A/N: Don't you like it how I managed to make both Krillin and Gohan's efforts count and not just Vegeta's? Pretty cool, huh? That's why I added the 'Wonder Blast' technique into the story!

Truth be told, I made this different to the original story, mainly because I really disliked how Toriyama didn't give Vegeta a single moment of shine against any of Frieza's forms, when he could have and should have (heck, everyone else got at least one moment, even cueball Krillin)! That was grossly unjust, though I have to say he made up for it by having Vegeta kick Frieza's ass in Resurrection F, so credit where credit is due haha!

Most importantly, what did you think of Vegeta's memory of his mother? Really heart-wrenching, wasn't it? Remember to leave a review and follow/favourite!
Second transformation

A/N: This chapter's largely canon-based with several adjustments of my own, here and there. The next one will be a lot better, but the one after that will truly have every single one of you jumping out of your skin! Just you wait!

Chapter 25: Second transformation

As Piccolo was flying, the sky suddenly returned to it's usual seafoam green hue. He let out a huff of frustration! Just what on Earth was going on?! Had they made the third wish and if so, what exactly was it? He needed to know! Vegeta no longer appeared to be a threat, as he'd initially presumed. He surmised that the nasty Saiyan must have formed a desperate pact with the Earthlings, in a bid to try and defeat Frieza. Funny, here he was, assuming that those two brutes had been working alongside one-another. No doubt, an interesting turn of events.

A few minutes passed when the Namekian from Earth sensed a dying energy nearby and stopped midair. He zoomed towards the fading Ki and stood over its owner, only to see a bruised and broken replica of himself.

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As the dust settled, Frieza remained rooted to the spot, unscathed. He snickered and immediately flew upwards, facing his adversaries, all of whom were transfixed in absolute horror! They'd hit him full force and he didn't appear to have a mark on him!

"My, my, I'm impressed." Frieza smirked condescendingly, his voice a sickly, low-pitch version of the syrupy ring that struck terror into the hearts of incalculable souls. "You actually managed to give me a slight tickle hahaha!" He turned in Vegeta's direction. "I underestimated you greatly my dear Prince." He stated, expression unchanged. "I would never have imagined that of all people, you, would possess the strength necessary to force my transformation. I was still in my first form, when I single-handedly defeated your dear father."

"What?!" Vegeta asked, stunned. He snapped his teeth at the monster. "What are you saying?!"

"So you never knew, did you?" He grinned wickedly. "He and his royal guard, along with the most powerful Saiyan elite boarded my ship, right before I destroyed Planet Vegeta."

"Y-Y-You w-w-w-what?" Krillin was aghast as he took in that dreadful news. So it was Frieza who destroyed the Saiyans, not some meteor! Holy crap! Just what on Earth were they up against?!

"Why would he do that?!" Vegeta demanded. "Tell me now!"

"Is it really so hard to figure out?" Frieza let out a sigh and shook his head, before smiling evilly at the Prince. "At the time you were detained inside the ship. Your father made a valiant effort to try and extricate you, but it didn't end quite well for him and his band of monkeys."

Vegeta's heart reeled, as he was struck by another wave of anguish. For all those years he'd execrated his father, believing the old man had heartlessly abandoned him to an abject life of misery with a madman, just to protect his own cowardly hide. But none of it was true! He truly had cared about him and died trying to protect him! For all those years Frieza had hidden the truth from
him! The Prince's lip curled up in a rancorous snarl that made Gohan and Krillin shudder. With a resounding roar of rage, he brought both hands together and unleashed a super-powerful Ki blast inundated with raw fury, directly at the tyrant. His two allies covered their eyes with their forearms, as they were enveloped by a thick, cloudy haze of grey.

Once the smoke cleared, however, Frieza was only minimally injured and infuriated beyond words. He instantly shot straight towards Vegeta and punched him in the mid-section, before hammering his fist on top of the Saiyan's head, causing him to nosedive right into the dirt below.

"Oh no." Krillin was completely blue in the face, expression etching with dread as he trembled in apprehension. Frieza instantly turned his attention towards the bald man and at a speed no one's eyes could follow, he impaled his horn right through the unsuspecting human's midsection. Krillin choked and gurgled on his own blood, as Gohan looked on in complete horror.

"KRILLIN!" The boy yelled.

Vegeta shot back up into the air, ready to attack Frieza, when he was suddenly overcome with shock and alarm, as he witnessed his ally being skewered through one end and out the other.

"Shit!" The Prince's eyes widened.

The ruthless tyrant flung his victim into the sea, but his demi-Saiyan companion expeditiously rushed towards him, ignoring Vegeta's vehement protests that it was already too late. Frieza quickly reappeared in front of the boy, blocking his path.

"You should worry about yourself runt." The lizard said menacingly, an odious smirk magnifying the intense evil exuding from him.

"Move." Gohan was undeterred, his tone low and beset with deathly promise, his dark eyes flashing red, with bloody murder.

Frieza chuckled.

"I said, MOVE!" The child exploded, taking the lizard by complete surprise as he ravaged him with a series of punches and kicks that sent him plunging face-down into the dirt. Gohan followed through with a barrage of Ki blasts, as Vegeta looked on in absolute awe.

'The kid's powers are astounding!'

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As Dende felt Krillin's Ki drop to an all-time low, he made a beeline for the island, only to find him underwater. He instantly pulled him out.

Just then Frieza got back up on his feet, a deceiving grin embedded on his diabolical features.

"It seems I severely underestimated you kid." The lizard remarked, looking upwards, his beady red eyes portending doom."You actually managed to hurt me just a little bit, but unfortunately for you, your efforts only succeeded in making me angry."

Gohan was sweating profusely. Those attacks had damn near drained all his energy reserves. The ground quaked violently as Frieza powered up even further.
"Shit, he can control his power level!" Vegeta growled in dismay.

The lizard launched himself upwards and began attacking the boy ruthlessly. A kick underneath the jaw from above, sent Gohan crashing into the ground. The Prince tried to take advantage of the momentary distraction by attacking from behind, however, it did not have the intended effect.

"Don't be in such a rush Vegeta, for you and I will have plenty of fun once I'm done with your little friend." The lizard snickered, descending towards Gohan's battered form.

'Dammit!' Vegeta clenched his fists tightly. That attack didn't even faze him! There's no way we can hold out long enough!'

Down below, Frieza was clobbering his young opponent and as he stood over his defeated form, he viciously began lashing the child's back with his tail, cutting through his armor with each sharp blow. The demi-Saiyan cried out in absolute pain, tears stinging his big eyes. Vegeta clutched his head, as each agonizing howl from the demi-Saiyan began to bring to the surface, horrendous memories of his torture sessions with Frieza! He wanted the boy to just shut up! He couldn't stand his wailing any longer!

"HAAARRRRRGGGGHHH!!" The Prince roared furiously, his aura flashing around him, as he made a dash towards his mortal enemy!

"I said wait your turn!" The Lizard fired a Ki blast towards Vegeta. The Saiyan brought his hands forward in an attempt to block the attack and was struggling to keep it from consuming him. What Frieza wasn't counting on, however, was the Kienzan disk that headed his way, during his moment of distraction. At the last possible moment, he managed to jump out of dodge, but unfortunately for him, the flaxen saucer had still been able to slice off the end of his tail.

Frieza hissed in pain and was flabbergasted, as he turned in the direction of the assailant, only to see the the bald Earthling warrior.

"WHAT?!!" The stunned despot yelled out in disbelief. "HOW IS HE STILL ALIVE?!!"

Vegeta, who'd finally managed to redirect Frieza's blast elsewhere, made his way back into the scene and he too, was nonplussed, as he saw Krillin taunting Frieza, not a mark on him.

"How dare you cut off my tail, you puny Earthling?!!" The lizard snarled, suddenly in front of him.

'Only one thing I can do I guess!' Krillin thought, before shouting. "SOLAR FLARE!"

Frieza was instantly blinded by a powerful wave of light.

"Ugh! My eyes!"

"Hurry Vegeta, here's our chance!" He yelled towards the Prince. "Attack him now!"

The Saiyan, however, was too busy observing the Namekian brat that was tending to Kakarot's half-breed son. He took notice as the child began transferring some enigmatic light from his antennae onto Gohan and his eyes bulged, as the battered half-Saiyan promptly sat up with ease, his injuries gone. Then it hit him! That Namekian must have healed the bald fighter as well! It made perfect sense now!
"What're you waiting for?!" Krillin headed towards Vegeta, gritting his teeth at the opportunity that was being neglected.

"Why did you not tell me about that Namekian brat's ability to heal?!" The Prince growled.

"Hey, we didn't know about it!" Krillin replied defensively. "If we did, don't you think we would've had him heal Goku?!"

Gohan thanked Dende for healing him and told him get out of dodge, before making his way towards Vegeta and Krillin. Frieza had finally recovered and began glaring daggers at his opponents, till a look of pure shock engraved his visage as he gaped disbelievingly at the boy he'd just victimized.

'His power's risen greatly!' Vegeta smirked, as he perused Gohan. 'This is good!'

"How is he still alive?!" Frieza yelled in absolute shock, "He should be on the verge of death." The tyrant then grit his teeth. "If these no-good, conniving scumbags wished for immortality, I swear by my ancestors I'll make them suffer for all of eternity!" He levitated upwards and his trio of foes took up their stances.

Just then, a new and improved Piccolo was nearing and Vegeta sensed the ginormous Ki coming their way.

"A huge power level's headed straight for us!"

Before anyone else had a chance to speak, the owner of that high power appeared on scene, standing as a shield between Frieza and the others. A bright ethereal, white light enshrouded him, but after it dimmed, the super-powerful Namek could easily be made out.

"Piccolo! You're back!" Gohan cheered in glee. "I can't believe it! You're really back!"

"Good to see you, Gohan." Piccolo offered the boy a fleeting smile, before frowning and facing the icy tyrant in front of him, whose expression was as grim as ever. "So this must be Frieza. I've never sensed a power quite so- evil."

"I know you!" Vegeta exclaimed in recognition. "You're the Namek that Nappa killed on Earth!"

He then turned in Krillin's direction. "I can't believe you wasted a wish bringing him back! You're both fools!"

"Quiet!" Piccolo barked, not paying Vegeta a single glance. "After I destroy Frieza, you're next on my list, Saiyan!"

"Destroy Frieza, huh?" The Prince smirked, laughing in amusement at the new arrival's bravado. "Looks like someone's delusional." He then frowned. "But now that you're here, I guess you can be of some use." Now that he scrutinized him up close, he could tell the Namekian fighter's power had taken a huge leap, though he could not gauge his exact level of strength. Vegeta went on in a hushed voice. "We only have one shot at this and that's to buy time until Kakarot recovers. Once he does, the two of us can destroy Frieza together."

"Are you sure that'll work?" Krillin asked dubiously.
"I have a plan." Vegeta responded quietly. "But I need Kakarot's help, if I'm to execute it! It's our very best shot!"

"Listen and listen well!" Piccolo told his allies adamantly, his sharp gaze fixed upon the giant lizard. "Frieza's mine! I don't need any of your help! This is my battle period!"

"Are you sure, P-Piccolo?" Gohan asked worriedly. "He's v-very p-powerful."

"Trust me Gohan."

The demi-Saiyan hesitated for a few seconds, before frowning in understanding.

"Alright Piccolo, I believe in you!"

The Earth-born Namekian could hardly help it as a small smile graced his lips.

"Excuse me, Namek." Frieza said impatiently. "But you're interrupting a good battle." He then smirked maliciously. "Or should I say slaughter."

"Your battle's with me Frieza!" Piccolo snarled angrily. "The others are of no concern to you, got it?!"

'Something is different about this Namekian.' Frieza narrowed his eyes in close scrutiny of the warrior before him. 'He's far more imposing than the others. Even so, he'll meet the same fate as his brethren.'

"He looks just like Nail." Dende observed, from down below. "It must be the one they wished back: Piccolo."

The Namekian warrior rapidly descended to the ground.

"Take cover Dende, I don't want you caught in the crossfire."

"R-R-Right." The child stammered, before hurriedly speeding off to a safer location, whilst wondering how on Namek's three suns, Piccolo knew his name.

Frieza followed suit as he descended and stood atop a rock slab, smirking at the Namekian.

"H-H-He's n-nuts." Krillin said fretfully. "This is s-suicide!"

"Doesn't that fool realize how powerful Frieza is?!" Vegeta exclaimed angrily, letting out an exasperated huff. "Oh well, even if he does get himself killed, at least he'll have bought us all some more time."

"I don't know you guys." Gohan knit his eyebrows at his comrades. "Piccolo's not the type of person who'd jump into a battle he knew he couldn't win."

"Don't bullshit me, boy!" Vegeta growled. "He may have gotten stronger, but he stands no chance against Frieza!"

"We'll see." The demi-Saiyan frowned.
On the ground below, the tension was building.

"Namek scum." Frieza scorned.

Piccolo roared, lunging directly towards his opponent. He landed a hard right hook on the lizard's cheekbone, dazzling him with his swift speed and amazing power. Frieza was sent reeling, however, upon regaining his footing, he attacked back and the two formidable forces continued exchanging blows, while the trio above them looked on in sheer amazement.

"This is nuts!" Krillin's mouth was agape. "He's as powerful as Frieza!"

"He may be even stronger!" Vegeta grit his teeth. How could this be?! It had barely been over a month since Nappa destroyed him! What the hell happened between now and then that had made that damned Namek so powerful?!

"Yeah, Piccolo!" Gohan cheered, "I knew you could do it!"

Frieza frowned at his foe wickedly before abruptly landing a blow to his cheekbone without a hint of warning. The tide suddenly turned in Frieza's favor as he began pounding the Namekian with a string of punches and kicks. A double axe-handle atop the head sent Piccolo plummeting into the soil. His left eye was closed up and Frieza swiftly made his way down, looming above his opponent.

"Forgive me, my Namekian friend, but I had severely underestimated you earlier and was not fighting at full power." The lizard smiled smugly.

"I knew it!" Vegeta clenched his teeth. "If my guess is right, not even this is Frieza's complete power!"

"We have to help him!" Gohan looked on concernedly. He could not allow him to perish again, not after they'd wished him back! Once was more than enough for his taste!

"Not yet!" Vegeta warned. "Wait until your father recovers!"

Gohan huffed, but nodded begrudgingly.

Krillin surveyed Vegeta for a moment or two, wondering what on Earth he had cooked up. Well, whatever it was, he really hoped it lived up to his expectations!

Piccolo spat and promptly took off his weighted cape and turban, cracking his neck joints, before smirking.

"I suppose that makes two of us."

"What?!" Frieza was dumbfounded. "You're saying you haven't been going all out?!!"

"That's exactly what I'm saying!"

"Oh- Oh yeah!" Krillin smirked. "Piccolo was fighting with weighted clothes! Now, there's nothing holding him back!"

"Yeah, stick it to him, Piccolo!" Gohan threw a fist up in the air.
"This." Piccolo began forebodingly as he gathered an enormous heap of Ki into his right palm, before aiming it at a perturbed Frieza. "IS FOR ALL THE NAMEKS YOU SLAUGHTERED!"

He immediately fired. Gohan, Krillin and Vegeta looked on in amazement, believing that their Namekian ally had done the impossible, however, once the smoke cleared, the tyrant, though wounded badly, was still alive and fuming with rage.

"Im-Im-Impossible." The bald human stammered.

"Finish him off now!" Vegeta yelled towards the Namekian, who looked up at him, eyes narrowed. "Hurry up! Do it!"

"You've crossed me for the last time, Namek filth!" Frieza snarled in exasperation, garnering Piccolo's attention away from the Prince. "Now you'll die along with the rest of your ugly race!"

The Namekian snorted.

"Yeah right, you've barely enough power to stand, Frieza!" He stated in a calm and confident voice, his expression nonchalant. "I could finish you single-handedly now."

"It seems you have the wrong idea." Replied the lizard, smirking. "What you see now is but a fraction of my true power! You were not present when I transformed the first time. It seems Vegeta truly has chosen a fruitful bunch to align himself with, but no matter what you do, I've got too many aces up my sleeve for you to stand even an ounce of a chance!"

"Transform?" Piccolo asked apprehensively, as he sensed the tyrant's power already undergoing a swift rise and he was too shocked to do a thing about it.

"That's right." Responded Frieza. "Each time I transform, my power rises immensely and I still have two more forms remaining."

"No." Piccolo was aghast, his near inaudible voice laced with fear. "It- it can't be."

"FINISH HIM QUICKLY!" Vegeta roared to the top of his voice, but the Namekian stood transfixed, unable to make a move as he sensed the tyrant's Ki quickly surpass his.

"Too late!" Frieza yelled, placing his fists by his side, as his power took a sudden upsurge. He raised his arms up for a moment and the instant he brought them back down, spikes protruded out of his back, which was now slightly hunched. Not two moments later, the uppermost sections of the natural layer of armor covering his torso, jutted outwards into shoulder guards and finally his skull slowly began to elongate, several spikes projecting from the either side of his lengthy head. After letting out a slow exhale, he grinned wickedly at his stock-still opponent, who was trembling in complete horror.

'That fool, if only he'd listened to me!' Vegeta cursed mentally. 'Dammit, Kakarot, hurry up!'

A/N: Wow, things look bad! Piccolo was literally a hairsbreadth from victory, but unfortunately, fear and shock had gotten the best of him!

What exactly is Vegeta's plan?! Now that Frieza's transformed a second time, can he and the others hold out long enough for Goku to rejuvenate and if so, will the Prince's strategy work?! Stay
tuned, tell me what you think and remember to rate/review/favourite!
Chapter 26: Vegeta vs. Frieza Round 2

Vegeta had begun hacking away at Piccolo bit by bit, only for a rage-beset and power-ridden Gohan, to rescue him in the nick of time. Nonetheless, his mentor was injured gravely, clothes rugged and severe burns and lacerations covering his striated, sinewy frame.

"Hey, cueball!" Vegeta abruptly grabbed Krillin by the shoulders. "We have only one shot at this! You must blast me within an inch of my life!"

"W-What?!" The human was completely baffled. "W-W-Why?!!"

"Listen carefully." Vegeta began explaining. "The boy's abilities have increased greatly because he suffered a near death experience! If he can achieve such power, just imagine what I could do!"

"Err-"

"Killing you vermin in my current form seems simple enough, however, since you have surprised me greatly with your incredible displays of talent, consider this my final gift to you." Frieza spread his arms out, palms facing upwards. "My Ultimate form."

With that, his power began climbing at a much quicker pace than before. Vegeta gnashed his teeth at the lizard, letting out a vexed huff, before turning his attention back to the bald warrior before him.

"My defenses are down to the bare minimum!" The Prince informed, as he began instructing. "Blast me and I'll get that Namekian kid to heal me! It's our only option or we're dead meat, understand?!"

"I- I can't do that!" Krillin scowled. "As irritating as you can be, you did save our lives, more than once! It wouldn't be right!"

"This is no time for your sentimental garbage!" Vegeta snarled. "Frieza's transforming and that means his power will multiply again! There's no way I can hold him off right now, but if I can recover from another mortal injury, that may change!"

"But-"

"But nothing!" Vegeta interjected and backhanded the bald warrior hard across the face. Krillin was stunned at first, but soon felt indignation bubble through his skin. The Prince took notice of his ire and used immediately seized the moment. "What, you don't like it when I hit you, you hairless, spineless coward?!" He struck him even harder and the human looked uncharacteristically enraged. "Well then, do something about it, you little yellow-bellied bitch!"

Strike 3 was all the thoroughly pissed off Krillin could take, as he fired his intensest Ki blast through the Saiyan's midsection, creating a gaping hole the size of a softball.

Gohan and Piccolo witnessed the scene in complete shock and disbelief.
"VEGETA! NO!" The boy yelled, flying towards the falling Prince. Frieza was too preoccupied with his transformation to take notice, as Gohan caught Vegeta mid-way.

"Let go of me- you brat!" The older man coughed out blood.

"Hold on, Dende can heal you!" The half-Saiyan promptly rushed the Prince over to the Namekian child and Krillin descended to the ground along with him.

"Gohan, don't worry about Vegeta!" Krillin exclaimed. The demi-Saiyan turned towards him, with an angry snarl that made his baldheaded companion tremble fearfully. "L-L-Look, I know what you're thinking, but he asked me to attack him! It's part of his plan!" Gohan's expression went blank and he cocked his head sideways in confusion. "Go get Dende to heal him immediately! Piccolo's starting to lose consciousness, I need to get him over here!" Krillin promptly took to the air, headed the beaten Namekian's way.

Gohan frowned in confusion barely registering a word his comrade had spit out. He shook his head and sensing Dende in a cave nearby, made a beeline towards him, grabbing the child's hand thereafter and rushing him over to a now unconscious Saiyan Prince.

"Dende, you need to heal Vegeta, now."

"What?!
" What?!
" What?!
"What?!
" What?!
"What?!" The little Namekian grit his teeth. "I can't heal him! He's evil! Plus he insulted Guru! We should just let him die!"

"He's not as bad as you think, Dende, believe me." Gohan gripped his friend's hands, looking at him pleadingly. "Please, do it for me. We need his help or Frieza will destroy us all."

"Alright!" After a brief pause, the younger child relented. "For you, Gohan." He placed his hands over Vegeta's bleeding form and began concentrating his power.

"Thanks Dende!" Gohan smiled.

Right on cue, Krillin had brought Piccolo over and lay him on the ground, as the Namekian warrior too, slipped into unconsciousness.

Unfortunately for the gang, Frieza was settled on the neighbouring island as he underwent his final transformation, whilst carefully observing what his adversaries were up to. By now, Vegeta had already been healed, but the lizard surveyed closely, as the little child worked his mojo on Piccolo and his eyes bulged, upon seeing the big Namekian warrior sit up, not a scratch on him!

'So that's why they wouldn't stay down!' He thought, overcome with glee, as he figured it out. 'If I remember correctly, isn't that little cretin the same one those two brats rescued from the village?! But where did he come from?! I didn't see him before.' Frieza cackled malevolently. 'At least now I know those twerps didn't wish for immortality! It's time I exterminate this nuisance once and for all!'

Vegeta was scrutinizing his figure, feeling an enormous rush of power surging through him.

'Amazing!' He thought inwardly. 'My abilities have risen exponentially!'

A sudden explosion promptly shook the entire planet and Frieza's gleaming silhouette could be made out on the island.
Bulma barely managed to hold still as the ship trembled violently. The heiress leaned against the regeneration tank to keep herself from falling. In the eerie silence that followed, she could only clutch her heart and pray that her companions would make it out alive in one piece. She turned to face her rejuvenating friend, eyebrows knit and arms akimbo.

"You know Goku, I wish you'd hurry up about this!" She chided. "I don't know what's going on out there, but they probably need your help!" Bulma sighed in defeat. "Oh, who am I kidding? You can't even hear me, can you? Unless you're ignoring me." She then frowned peevishly. "Hey, are you ignoring me?!

Goku's eyes suddenly snapped open, the young Saiyan none too pleased at his blue-haired friend, for breaking his concentration. Bulma screeched in surprise and fell on her rear. The Saiyan was hardly able to stifle a laugh within the confines of the regeneration tank, at her silly antics. After all these years, she hadn't changed one bit, much to his delight!

"Jerk!" Bulma stood up and glared daggers at her best friend. Goku laughed inwardly and managed a mirthful smile behind his mask, before closing his eyes in concentration once again, as he felt Frieza's power undergo yet another dramatic increase.

"His power's far greater than before!" Piccolo observed, completely deluged with dread upon sensing Frieza's Ki. "Is there no end to this monster?!

"As a matter of fact there is!" Gloated Vegeta, standing pompously, with his arms folded and an arrogant smirk on his face.

"This is no time for games Vegeta!" Piccolo replied, turning towards him for a moment, before facing Frieza once again. "I don't know what we're gonna do!"

"You're going to do nothing!" The Prince stated. "Just sit back and let me handle this! It shouldn't be long before Kakarot recovers, but I highly doubt I'll even need his help now!"

Just then the smoke had cleared and everyone turned to face Frieza in his true form, not bothering to pay any attention to the Prince. All his previous forms were horrid and repulsive by comparison. He now truly looked like a work of art, only slightly taller than his first form. He'd shed his outer skin, taking on a more humanoid appearance, his body was completely bare, apart from a pair of shin guards and forearm guards and his skin now was mostly white with a few glossy purple patches, here and there.

"Dammit, we should've hidden while we had the chance!" Krillin clenched his teeth in regret.

"It wouldn't have made a difference." Piccolo argued. "Frieza would've just destroyed the planet. With the dragon balls gone, this place is no longer of any use to him."

The tyrant smirked evilly, as he lifted up a finger and fired a swift Ki beam straight towards the crew of five, aiming for none other Dende.

"NOOOO!" Screamed the boy, as the blast hit head on, killing him instantly.
"DENDE!" Gohan and Krillin cried out in unison.

"I didn't even see that attack!" Piccolo exclaimed, trembling in horror and disbelief. "He just lifted his hand up and there was a flash. How can he be so fast?!"

"Shit!" Vegeta exclaimed, as he looked at Dende's corpse. He should've stopped that attack, but he'd been too busy relishing his new power! Just great! "That bastard must've seen the kid's healing power, so he took him out first!"

Moving quicker than the eye could see, Frieza suddenly appeared before the others, smiling evilly.

"Now that the brat is gone, none of you can be revived, which means game over!" His voice was syrupy and high-pitched like that of his first form.

"YOU MONSTER!" Piccolo yelled and began attacking without volition. Gohan and Krillin soon joined in, throwing in everything they had, only for the monster to evade with minimal effort. Frieza took to the air and his trio of opponents fired Ki blasts his way, only for him to vanish at that same blinding speed.

"Where did he go?!

"Behind you!" Vegeta yelled, being the only one able to follow Frieza's swift movement.

The tyrant grinned evilly, as he fired two Ki beams, in close succession to one-another, both targeting Gohan. Vegeta moved in and kicked the boy away, before deflecting Frieza's attacks elsewhere. The lizard goggled at his ex-subordinate. He hadn't only seen, but had redirected his attack at an alarming speed. Okay, the Vegeta he'd fought earlier would definitely not have been able to do that! Just what was going on?!

"Thanks Vegeta!" Gohan smiled. "You saved me!"

"Don't get the wrong idea." The Prince snorted. "I only did that because I may need your help later, but then- maybe I won't!" He smirked at Frieza.

"You sure seem confident Vegeta." The lizard remarked. "But now you'll have to back up your foolish words."

"How did Vegeta see that attack?!" Piccolo scowled. "It doesn't make sense! He wasn't this strong before!"

Krillin explained what had transpired to his Namekian ally, who then nodded in understanding, before turning in the Saiyan's direction, eyes narrowed.

"Clear out!" Vegeta ordered right away and Piccolo and Krillin immediately shot up into the air, though Gohan stood his ground.

"Gohan, move!" The Namekian yelled at his pupil.

"But Vegeta might need my help!"

The Prince let out an exasperated growl, before grabbing the demi-Saiyan by the scruff of the neck.
and tossing him over to Piccolo, who caught him like a football. Gohan had never felt more humiliated all his life.

"Now then, here I come." Frieza lunged at Vegeta, throwing a powerful fist in his direction, only for the Prince to grab it.

"What?!" Frieza exclaimed in disbelief, his eyes widening. He cursed the Saiyan and shot eye-lasers aimed for his face, only for the Prince to nimbly move his head out the way. Frieza retracted his hand and jumped back a step or two.

"My God!" Krillin exclaimed. "I didn't even see either of them move, but Vegeta just blocked his attack!"

"Yeah, he did!" Piccolo concurred, completely at a loss for words. How did Vegeta become so powerful?! It was unrealistic! He had to have been at least ten times stronger than he was before, to be able to pull off such incredible feats!

"I don't think we'll even need my dad's help this time!" Gohan smiled at the thought.

"Maybe." Piccolo wrinkled his eyes in close scrutiny of the battle about to unfold.

"So it seems you've improved yet again Vegeta." Frieza commended. "I'm about to find out just how much."

"Yes you are." The Saiyan frowned, before boldly exclaiming. "The hard way!"

The Prince charged without warning. The onlookers were unable to follow the brisk movements of the two monumental powers, as they went head to head once again.

Frieza landed a hard knee to Vegeta's stomach, making him keel over. He was about to follow up with an elbow him behind the neck, only for the Prince to disappear and attack with a shuto from behind. The lizard dodged that attack, reappearing above his adversary and firing a Ki blast his way. Vegeta launched his own blast and the two continued trying to gain leverage over one another. After a while the intensity became so great that a huge explosion blew the super powers in opposite directions, Vegeta plunging right into the sea below and Frieza shooting upwards into the air.

'Dammit, I'm giving it everything I've got and Frieza clearly just toying with me!' The Prince thought furiously, whilst underwater. 'I guess it's back to square one then! I need to hold him off until Kakarot recovers!'

Frieza snarled furiously. Damn that monkey! He was more trouble than he was worth! Perhaps it was time to stop playing games! No, not yet! He decided to wait it out a little and if Vegeta continued proving to be too stubborn an insect, he'd summon a decent portion of his true power and grind him into the dirt.

"I know you're still here Saiyan!" He yelled lividly. "You'd better come out now, before I blast you out!"

'What should I do?' Vegeta pondered for a moment and not a moment later, an idea struck him. 'I've got it!' He formed a ball of Ki underwater, directly beneath where he sensed out Frieza, before stepping back and flinging it upwards!
"There you are!" Frieza observed the water begin to rattle directly below him, but his smug expression transformed into incredulity as he saw not Vegeta, but a sphere of Ki flying right towards him. He barely managed to dodge. The Saiyan had used the attack as a diversion to launch himself above Frieza at dazzling speeds, taking advantage of his opponent's inability to sense Ki. "Show yourself, vermin!"

"I'm up here freak!" Vegeta announced, swiftly landing both feet on the back of Frieza's head, before the tyrant knew what had happened. The blow propelled him at a downwards angle, smashing him into the ground of a nearby island. The Prince quickly descended towards him.

The lizard was fuming and glowering furiously at a grinning Vegeta, who had his arms folded haughtily, as he stood in front of him.

"My, my." He jeered. "You don't look too happy right about now, my Lord."

The tyrant bared his teeth at his former underling, before taking a breather to cool himself and smirking thereafter.

"You truly amaze me Vegeta." He applauded. "Other than my loving father, no one else has ever truly managed to hurt me while I am in this form. That being said, however, what I have revealed to you is a mere snippet of my ultimate power."

"What?!" Vegeta exclaimed, overwhelmed as a wave of apprehension suddenly coiled through him. "That's impossible! You're lying!"

"Believe as you wish, but either way, I'm going to end this little charade once and for all." Frieza placed his hands by his side, palms facing up, as his power began spiralling.

"N-No, there's n-n-no w-way!" Piccolo lost a good few shades of green, as his overly sensitive hearing picked up on the conversation between the two sworn enemies.

"What is it P-Piccolo?!" Gohan asked, in alarm. The Namekian paused a moment before gritting his teeth and answering.

"Frieza says that he's far stronger than he was letting on."

Gohan and Krillin paled.

"W-W-W-What? Krillin stammered, suddenly blue in the face, every shred of confidence crushed as the horrific news sunk in.

"Do you feel that power?!" Piccolo was terror-stricken.

"No, m-m-mommy." Gohan whimpered.

"I don't know h-how much longer I c-can hold my b-b-bladder." Krillin was jittering like crazy.

'Ahhh that should more than suffice.' Frieza gave himself a once-over. 'Twenty percent of my maximum.'

"Ready?" The lizard's voice now was more like that of his second form, though not quite as low-
Vegeta was tongue tied, completely petrified, upon sensing the god-like power of his ex-master.

"Oh don't be glum, Vegeta." Frieza smiled in a sickly manner. "You should actually be flattered, for you see, I've never had to summon this much power to defeat an enemy before." His crimson eyes flashed in twisted and murderous derangement. "It was fun while it lasted, my dear Prince."

Frieza launched himself forward and landed a hard elbow right on Vegeta's chin, sending him flying in a perfect horizontal path, past the sea and into a thick rocky pillar on the next island.

"My, my, sometimes I impress even myself." The tyrant thought gleefully.

'Kakarot, you fool!' Vegeta rubbed his aching jaw, as he forced himself to his feet, staggering. 'Hurry up, before he kills us all!'

XXX

As if on cue, Goku had recovered and the healing chamber started beeping. Bulma made a move to drain the fluid, but the Saiyan instead pressed his palm against the glass and fired a Ki blast right through it, stepping out immediately. The startled heiress fell on her rear, before getting on her feet and glaring heatedly at her childhood friend!

"GOKU!" Bulma screamed to the top of her lungs.

"Bulma, please don't yell at me." The young Saiyan pleaded, wincing and clasping his ears.

"You're such an idiot!"

"Hehehe." Goku grinned goofily, but quickly furrowing his brows solemnly. "Hey, stay inside the ship no matter what!" He instructed, staring at her fixedly.

"Uh- right." She replied, looking at him, in dismay. "Hey, is everything alright?"

"Vegeta's in trouble." He stated. Bulma gasped, clutching her heart, a bitter wave of fear washing though her. "I can sense it."

"I-I-Is h-he alright?"

"For now, yeah." Goku answered. "But I need to get there and lend them all a hand as soon as possible."

"Please hurry, Goku!"

"Of course!" The Saiyan embraced her for a second or two, before withdrawing and firing a hole through the top of the ship. "Take good care of yourself Bulma." He smiled and immediately flew right through the perforation, before making a swift dash towards the battle, at full speed.

Bulma trusted Goku with her life and everyone else's. She always had. In every hopeless situation, he'd literally create hope from thin air and would die many times over, to protect his friends. She knew she could count on him! She just prayed to whoever was listening that Vegeta could make it out of this in one piece! Nothing mattered to her as much as his safety and well-being.
A/N: Goku's finally here! Next chapter you'll all witness Vegeta's plan unfold! What exactly is it?! Will it really live up to the hype?! Stay tuned, leave a review and remember to give kudos!

p.s. I'm afraid none of you are on the right track with regards to Vegeta's plan! All the better, cause it'll totally blow your minds! Frieza is in for a cosmos of surprise as are the rest of you! That much is guaranteed!

Oh and just in case you're wondering, Vegeta's more powerful here than he was in the anime, otherwise Frieza would've beat him effortlessly!!

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Vegeta's ace in the hole

A/N: Watch closely, as our very favourite Saiyan Prince’s plan finally unfolds!!!

Chapter 27: Vegeta’s ace in the hole

Frieza’s tail was fastened around Vegeta’s neck, as he held him up from behind and repeatedly planted his fist in the unprotected area of his armor, where Krillin had blasted him earlier on. The Prince was choking on his own blood, whilst futilely clawing at the thick, ivory appendage.

Gohan was barely able to keep himself in check, seething with rage, as he witnessed his comrade being handled so brutally. He made his way down, ignoring Piccolo and Krillin’s protests, fists clenched and small frame shaking in barely contained fury, as he loured at the icy tyrant. His two allies followed suit, standing on either side of the demi-Saiyan.

“You don’t seem too happy right now, little runt.” Frieza turned to face Gohan, his lips quirked up in a malign smile. “You’re free to join in and help Vegeta any time you please.”

Taking full advantage of his opponent’s temporary distraction, the Prince quickly unwound his tail and thrust it underneath Frieza’s chin, causing the lizard to stagger back and release his grip on Vegeta’s throat. The Saiyan collapsed on all fours, coughing and greedily gulping in air.

‘Fuck you Kakarot!!!’ He cursed mentally, but at that very moment his eyes widened upon sensing the younger Saiyan’s Ki. His expression lit with glee, as a rush of feverish excitement poured over him. ‘Yes!!! He’s here!!! He’s finally here!!!’

He let out a rasped laugh of relief.

“What are you laughing at, monkey?!” Frieza narrowed his eyes.

“Look over- to your- left-” Vegeta replied, between breaths.

“What?!” Frieza turned left ways and saw a rocky pillar. Above it stood a frowning man, with jet black hair like Vegeta’s. He could’ve sworn by every member of the Cold clan that he’d seen that face before.

Gohan’s face lit up, as he followed Frieza’s gaze and saw his father. “Dad, you’re here!!!” He twinkled.

“What?! Dad?!” The tyrant paid a fleeting glance Gohan’s way, feeling astounded. Dad? He’d already established that this child was a Saiyan, given the unnatural rise in his abilities after rejuvenation!! Just who was this man, then?!? What in seven hells was going on?! All the Saiyans were supposed to be dead!! Vegeta and the brat were the last ones, were they not?!!

“Goku!!!” Krillin exclaimed, a surge of alleviation washing away his distress.

“It’s him!!!” Piccolo gaped at his former rival, before smirking, “Finally!!!”

Vegeta released another strained chuckle and after a few deep breaths, stood on wobbly legs, turning to face the lizard and letting out an allayed, lengthy exhale.
“Who is that?!” Frieza demanded, staring his ex-subordinate dead in the eye.

“You’re about to find out.” Replied the Prince. He turned to his fellow Saiyan and spoke telepathically. ‘Kakarot, get down here now!!!’

Goku, completely taken by surprise, gaped at Vegeta in disbelief, upon hearing the smaller Saiyan’s voice attack his mind.

‘Don’t just stand there like a gawking fool, hurry!!!’ He berated mentally. ‘I have a plan to defeat him, but I’m going to need your help!!’

Not needing to be told twice, the younger Saiyan hurried over by Vegeta’s side, standing several feet to his left.

Frieza’s eyes followed the new arrival, as he made his way down.

“You must be Frieza!” Goku exclaimed, not a hint of amusement on his face.

“Hmmm, I recognize you.” The lizard surveyed the interloper more closely and then it hit him. “Ahhh, that’s it!! I remember now!! Right before I destroyed the Saiyan home world, a feeble little insect calling himself Bardock, tried, oh so heroically, to stop me. He must have been your father, no doubt. The resemblance is uncanny hahaha. However, he met his end at my hand just like the rest of your abominable race of disgusting primates.”

“What?! You destroyed the Saiyans?!” Goku asked, completely taken aback by the unexpected newsflash. “I though that was- a- a meteor.”

“It was him!!! He lied to us for years!!” Vegeta snarled angrily, facing his most hated enemy with a look of pure rage that would make even the most abominable demons from the lowest depths of hell, shudder in fear. “We served him faithfully like dogs, working tirelessly to expand his empire and in return, he annihilated every one of us!”

“Oh, but that’s just it Vegeta.” Frieza scorned. “Your kind were never faithful. From the very beginning, the Saiyans were plotting to overthrow me, the moment they felt that they had gained the upper hand. Do you deny this?”

The Prince spat sideways.

“Of course not!” He raised a fist up in anger. “We were a proud race of warriors! Nothing shamed us more than being forced to serve a coward like you!!”

“Careful, Prince.” Frieza said in a deceptively calm tone wrought with death, his beady eyes creased dangerously. “You’re already teetering on the edge of a knife.”

“You talk as if everyone has to bow down before you like slaves!” Goku growled angrily. Frieza looked at the other Saiyan, his expression unchanged. “All you do is murder innocent people and force others to do the same, for your own greed and selfish ambitions!”

Frieza raised an eyebrow at the Saiyan, surprised that *that* of all things, had gotten him so worked up.
“Are Saiyans any different?” He countered. “Your bloodthirsty race were just as ruthless as I am, if not more.” He then smiled smugly at Vegeta. ”Just ask your dear Prince.”

“They paid for their mistakes!!!” Goku seethed. “And now, so will you!!”

“We’ll see about that won’t we?” Frieza lowered his power back down to the level he was at when he’d just ascended to his final form, figuring that this Saiyan pile of trash wasn’t worth any wasted effort on his part. He launched himself straight at Goku, but the latter vanished and appeared behind the lizard, landing a kick to the back of his head. Frieza was propelled about a dozen yards backward, skidding along the dirt face first. He was stunned beyond words at the skill displayed by this mysterious newcomer.

“Gohan, Krillin, we need to get away from here!!” Piccolo took to the air and Krillin followed, though the half-Saiyan remained rooted to the spot.

“Gohan, go with Piccolo now!!” Goku gave his son a reproachful glare. After a few tense seconds, the boy relented.

“Don’t lose dad!!!” He exclaimed and promptly flew over to his mentor’s side.

“You can’t beat him like this, Kakarot!” Vegeta said in a low voice. Goku turned towards him. “He’s just toying with you, now listen! I have a plan, but Frieza must not get wind of it! As you may know, I’ve set up a direct telepathic link with you. We’ll speak through there.”

“Err- o-kay-”

‘Listen closely.’ Vegeta interjected mentally and Goku couldn’t help but feel startled at the sound of his voice drumming in his brain, yet again. Thanks to his extrasensory Namekian abilities, Piccolo was able to pick up on every word. ‘You said you could increase your power tenfold, right?’ This news totally stunned Piccolo.

‘Well- uh- yeah, but only in short bursts.’ Replied the younger Saiyan. That made sense, Piccolo noted. King Kai had told him about the principal facets of the Kaio-Ken attack, though, unfortunately, he hadn’t the time to learn it, before deciding to leave for Namek.

Frieza stood up and rubbed the back of his aching head.

‘Good enough!!’ Vegeta nodded, before going on. ‘When I say the word, hit Frieza full force, understood?’

‘Uhhh- right.’ Goku assented. ‘But what exactly is your plan?’

‘You’re about to find out!’

‘Hmmm, this other Saiyan may well be as powerful as Vegeta, if not more.’ Frieza noted inwardly, as he made his way closer to the two warriors. ‘This is most unexpected.’

He stopped about 20 feet away from them, standing regally, with his arms by his side.

“You surprise me Saiyan.” Frieza acknowledged. “Your powers are amazing. Vegeta did not serve me loyally. How would you like to take his place, by my side? Better yet, you can be my new right hand man. It’s a rare opportunity you see.”
“And just what opportunity would that be?!” Goku grit his teeth. “Slaughtering innocents and purging peaceful planets, just so you can profit from it?!!”

“Well, that is the gist of it.” Replied the lizard smugly, before raising one finger and adding, “And as a bonus, you get ten vacant planets of your own choosing other than the ones already in my possession of course, plus a 20% cut for each world you purge. I’ve never given any of my underlings such a generous offer, but I see great potential in you, far greater than even Captain Ginyu. So what do you say?”

“Forget it!” Goku replied fervently. “You can offer me an entire galaxy and my answer will still be the same!! I may be a Saiyan, but I fight to protect the innocent, not hurt them!!! No one has the right to rule a planet, except the people living on it!!”


“Enough of this!” Vegeta growled and pointed his right index finger at Frieza. “You’ve shown me your true power and now it’s time I show you mine!”

‘True power?’ Piccolo thought, as everyone stared at the Prince in wonder. ‘What could he mean by that?! He couldn’t possibly have been holding something back against Frieza before, could he?!’

“What?!” The lizard was alarmed by Vegeta’s bold declaration and ground his teeth together. “What do you mean, true power?! You fought with everything you had and I was still wrecking you!”

“That’s where you’re wrong Frieza.” Vegeta smirked, before raising a hand, palm facing up towards the sky. He concentrated his energy and a few seconds later a mysterious ball of white light materialized right above his hand.

‘Vegeta, your power level just dropped.’ Goku sent a mental note to the royal Saiyan.

‘This is part of the plan, so shut-up and watch carefully!’

Goku did just that, more intrigued than ever. Whatever Vegeta was ploying, it must’ve been pretty major for him to sacrifice a fair portion of his Ki.

“Is that supposed to frighten me Vegeta?” The lizard snorted. “A harmless ball of light?”

Vegeta laughed.

“Oh, you have no idea, Frieza!!!” He smirked feverishly and launched the ball into the sky. When it was high enough, he clenched his fist, as he yelled. “Moon sphere, explode!!”

The power ball burst open and a blinding flash of light permeated throughout the land. Everyone flinched and covered their eyes, except for Vegeta who stared giddily at the fake moon he’d created. After adjusting to the brightness, everyone gaped incredulously at the garish globe of light in the sky.

“What?!” Frieza was totally stunned. “Where did that moon come from?!”
“Oh n-n-no.” Krillin stammered. “D-D-Don’t tell me.”

“Oh crap, Vegeta’s transforming!!!” Piccolo exclaimed in trepidation, as he observed the Prince’s eyes go blood red and his fangs lengthen. His size was growing rapidly and brown fur sprouted all over his face and head. His highly elastic training uniform too, expanded with his accelerating size.

“My God.” Gohan gawped. “W-What is that?!”

“It’s the Oozaru.” Krillin replied, gritting his teeth. “Saiyans transform into these giant monsters during the full moon!! And I don’t know how, but Vegeta just created a moon out of thin air!! I didn’t know anyone could do that!!”

“B-But what about- d-dad and m-me?”

“You need a tail to transform.” Piccolo replied, his jaw clenched. “And I sliced yours off, after you transformed the first time!! If I hadn’t done that, Earth would’ve been destroyed!” He then snarled. “Dammit, what is Vegeta thinking?!”

Gohan was dumbfounded by the news.

“B-But I-I don’t even r-remember-”

“That’s cause you lose your mind when you transform!!!” Krillin interjected, his entire being wracked with alarm. “Vegeta’s going to kill everyone of us!!”

“Hahahahaha, the only one who’ll die today is Frieza!!” Proclaimed the gigantic Prince, in his booming tone, having heard the bald Earthling. He’d just completed his transformation. “Behold!!! The true power of a Saiyan!!! The mighty Oozaru!!!”

Everyone was completely taken aback as the beast echoed its voice. Unlike Goku and Gohan, even whilst in this form, Vegeta appeared sentient, for the most part!! How very peculiar!!

“How?!” Frieza demanded, more stunned than ever. “There is no moon on Namek!! How did you do that?!”

“Are you so blind Frieza?!” Vegeta answered, in that same resounding voice. “The light reflected by the moon contains blutz waves. During a full moon those waves exceed 17 million Zenos and when Saiyans absorb them through their eyes, it sets a trigger in our tails and thenceforth the transformation commences. This you know.” He smirked forebodingly, as he went on. “But if you’d paid closer attention to the race you so feared, you’d know that some among us, like myself, can create artificial moons that emit the 17 million Zenos required for our transformation!!”

Frieza grit his teeth.

“No!!!” He yelled and promptly fired a Ki blast at the projection, but it passed right through it, as if it were thin air. “What??! It should’ve been destroyed!!”

Vegeta laughed wickedly.

“You fool!! That moon is just synthetic light!!” The Prince thundered. "It is impervious to any attacks other than my own, for I am its creator!!" Frieza was left open-mouthed and wide-eyed, as were the other bystanders. Why hadn’t Vegeta used this ability on Earth? “Now die, Frieza!!”
The tyrant instantly shot his power up to 20%, not having time to flare his Ki further as the Prince brought his fist down, like a hammer. He barely managed to jump out of dodge. Vegeta immediately shot his other fist out, but Frieza managed to catch it midair with both hands.

‘Now Kakarot!!! Attack!!’ Vegeta mentally willed his rival.

Goku was nonplussed, rooted to the spot, as he saw the Prince in all his glory. His power level was mountainous. He instantly recalled the untimely demise of his grandpa, Gohan. A monster had came out during the full moon and crushed him to death. It was him!! He was that monster; the same one that had destroyed Pilaf’s castle and wreaked havoc during the 21st World Martial Arts Tournament!! Everyone knew and yet, no one had said a word to him! That's why Kami had his tail excised!! He placed his fists by his sides, completely disgusted with himself and infuriated at the silence of his friends! They’d all concealed it from him! He felt betrayed!! How could they?! But then- could he really blame them?!

As Goku was lost in his own thoughts, Frieza was struggling to hold Vegeta’s giant fist in place. The lizard fired eye lasers towards the Oozaru Saiyan, but Vegeta blocked it with the palm of his other hand and out of nowhere, smacked Frieza across the head with his tail, sending his mortal enemy flying sideways.

“Kakarot!!!” Vegeta roared, scowling at his rival. “I told you to attack!!! This is our only chance to destroy him!!!”

Goku suddenly looked up at Vegeta and cast aside all his musings, before gravely nodding. Now wasn’t the time for grief and regret!! The moment he reunited with his grandpa in Otherworld, he’d apologize and seek forgiveness, for what he’d done!! But right now, he needed to help Vegeta bring Frieza down once and for all!

The tyrant dashed up off the ground and began powering up as quickly as he could.

“KAIO-KEN TIMES TENNNN!!!!” Goku shouted and charged straight towards Frieza, as an awesome fiery red aura engulfed him.

The lizard only managed to make a climb to 30% of his maximum strength, before Goku hooked him across the jaw. Frieza snarled wickedly and lunged forward, ramming his knee right into the Saiyan’s stomach, causing spit to fly out of his mouth, before elbowing him atop the head, whereby he was launched downwards. Damn monkey!! How was he able to hurt him, when he was at 30%?! It made absolutely no sense!

Vegeta used Frieza’s moment of distraction to zoom towards his left and land a hard punch to his side. The tyrant flew off several yards but recovered and charged right back, landing a hard drop kick on Vegeta’s midsection, causing him to keel over in pain.

‘Kakarot!’ Vegeta willed and Goku was on it immediately, shooting back up and landing a brutal uppercut right underneath Frieza’s chin, followed by a side kick to his solar plexus. Frieza didn’t take long to regain his footing and promptly fired a Ki blast at the Saiyan warrior, who was struggling to hold it in place, even with his increased power.

Vegeta, who’d just recovered, instantly grabbed Frieza’s whole body with both hands and began squeezing as hard as he could. Frieza cried out in pain, but struggled mightily and managed to stretch out his hands and feet, loosening the Saiyan’s hold. The moment this happened, Vegeta
abruptly let go and flung his tail underneath the unsuspecting lizard’s chin, causing him to fly upwards. He followed through beautifully, as he fastened his hands together and landed a powerful double axe handle from the top, downing his adversary. He brought his foot up and slammed it to the ground, but before he got the chance to stomp the lizard, Frieza jumped out of the way in the nick of time and fired a Ki blast at Vegeta’s left eye. The Oozaru howled in pain, clutching his incinerated eye. His behemoth size posed a huge disadvantage, since he was a much bigger target.

What Frieza hadn’t anticipated, however, was the powerful low punch to his gut, as Goku, who’d just managed to pry away his Ki blast, charged him without volition, causing the tyrant to spit out a glob of blood. The Saiyan proceeded with a hard left to the jaw.

“So that’s what they’re doing!” Piccolo marveled at the sight, as he figured it out. “Vegeta’s size prevents him and Goku from fighting Frieza together. So instead, each and every time that bastard gets the edge over one of them, the other one capitalizes, while he’s preoccupied!”

“Yeah, but- why didn’t Vegeta just transform to begin with?” Krillin asked, thoroughly confused.

“It’s because he knew Frieza may have had the upper hand regardless and as it turns out, he was right.” Piccolo replied. “This way, both he and Goku are able to unleash the optimal level of their respective strengths at the same time.”

“Oh- I see.” The bald man scratched his head.

“Not only that!” The Namekian went on. “In his final form, I suspect Frieza’s never once been on the losing end of a battle! Vegeta knows this and he’s using it to his advantage! By fighting together, he and Goku aren’t giving him any room to breathe. They’re putting him in a situation he’s never had to face before, getting him angry and frustrated and as a result, making him lose his composure. This impedes his judgment and so prevents him from utilizing the true extent of his powers!!”

“Amazing!” Krillin beamed. “So you’re saying Vegeta had all of that calculated from the very outset?!!”

“That’s exactly what I’m saying!” Piccolo affirmed, smirking. “His plan was nothing short of brilliant! I don’t know if I’ll ever say this again, but I sure am glad he’s on our side!”

“Yeah, me too.” Krillin concurred. His respect for the Prince had surged greatly!! Vegeta’s ingenuity had just saved all their hides!! Now they’d win this battle for sure! “These Saiyans are just amazing!!”

“I only hope he doesn’t turn on us, once this is all over.” Piccolo frowned.

“No, I have a feeling he won’t!!” Krillin disagreed, smiling confidently. “Strange as it may sound, I don’t think Vegeta’s all that evil anymore- at least not like he was on Earth!!”

Piccolo furrowed his eyes at the bald warrior for a moment, before turning his attention back to the battle.

“Hmmm, now that you mention it, you may be right.” The Namek observed.

Gohan was still struggling to come to terms with the fact that he was once some crazy-as ape monster.
Frieza was fuming, as he slipped one of Goku’s punches and landed an elbow straight to his chest. Vegeta, though gravely injured with that burned left eye, instantly took advantage by firing a Ki blast from his mouth at the lizard and Frieza only barely managed to dodge it. However, Goku launched an energy attack of his own from below that landed flush against the tyrant’s midsection and propelled him into the air. The older Saiyan added his own fuel to the fire, by unleashing another Ki blast from his mouth.

‘Kakarot, we must destroy him now!!!’ Vegeta ordered mentally. ‘On my mark!! We both attack full force, at the same time!!’

“Got it!” Goku cupped his hands together by his side and began summoning up as much Ki as he could. “KAAAAA- MEEEE- HAAAAA- MEEEE-”

‘Three, two, one and FIRE!!!’

“HAAAAAAA!!!!” Yelled Goku to the top of his lungs. At that exact instance, the two pureblooded Saiyans simultaneously hurled their intenselyst Ki waves, Goku’s Kaio-Ken x10 Kamehameha and Oozaru Vegeta’s most powerful blast, fired directly from the mouth. Fighting in that form was not an easy task at all, since he’d never experienced using it on such a grand scale. The Prince had exhausted nearly all his remaining dregs of energy with that last move. One thing was certain though: his greatest enemy was history!!!

Frieza cried out in agony, as the two monstrous powerhouse engulfed him completely, sending him flying off into the empty vacuum of space. No, he couldn’t meet his end this way!!! Not by the hands of a pair of filthy monkeys!! Not after he’d wiped out their entire race with just a flick of his finger!!!

Soon after everyone sensed Frieza’s Ki signal vanish, Gohan, Krillin and Piccolo rushed over to the two Saiyan victors, in a rush of thrill, jubilation and relief!!!

Vegeta turned his head towards the artificial moon he’d created and fired a Ki blast from his mouth directly at it, causing it to dissipate into nothing. He subsequently shrank down to his normal form and collapsed on his back, breathing a huge reposing sigh. His body was aching all over, his head was throbbing and his left eye impaired, rendering him half blind!! Fighting on that magnitude had really done him in and eating all those blows from Frieza before Kakarot arrived hadn’t helped much either, but in the end it had been far more than worth it!!

“Hey, Vegeta, are you alright?” Goku headed towards his rival. The Saiyan Prince sat up with great difficulty and couldn’t help it as he smirked at the other Saiyan. Goku smirked right back!! They’d done it at last!! And they didn’t need some stupid wish from the dragon! They’d avenged their race!! Mother, father and all the other Saiyans who’d perished at Frieza’s hands could now rest peacefully in the knowledge that the last two warriors of the mightiest race had prevailed over the most menacing force in the planes of existence!!!

The Prince had never felt more content and carefree his entire life. His tormentor was finally gone, never to return again!!! And strangely enough, he felt so much- at peace!! That word had always been foreign to him!! He hated the idea all his life and yet now that Frieza was defeated, every part of him wanted to do nothing but embrace it and cherish it to the fullest!! At this moment, war, conquest, riches and glory meant absolutely nothing to him!! Perhaps he was just too dazed and fatigued to think straight, or perhaps, somewhere along the line, as he’d constantly battled alongside his former enemies against common foes, a change had sparked within him! He couldn’t
quite place it, but was much too exhausted to ponder over such nonsense. Right now, all he wanted
to do was rest for an entire week. He felt he’d definitely earned it!!

“Dad, Vegeta!!” Gohan was excitedly running over to the duo and jumped at his father, catching
him completely off guard and embracing him so tightly, he took the breath right out of him.

“Whoa, easy there big fella.” Goku smiled at his son, pulling him back and holding him up from
beneath the shoulders. The boy’s eyes glistened with tears of joy. They’d destroyed the greatest
evil the Universe had ever seen, all by themselves!

“Goku.” Piccolo smirked as he came over to the Saiyan, who reciprocated the expression.

“Piccolo, I can sense your great power.” Goku stated. “I don’t know how you did it, but you’re
truly something else.”

“Heh, you’re one to talk.” Replied the Namekian, before gravely looking at his ex-rival. “You
know the last time we were together, I was still your enemy.” He then held his hand out to him.
“But no more, my friend.”

Goku said nothing, but smiled radiantly at the Earth-born Namek, as he put Gohan down and
shook the hand of his once most bitter adversary. The young boy looked between the two
confusedly, but soon, his own face lit up as well. His father and Piccolo were his two greatest idols
and nothing could possibly have made him happier than seeing them make their peace with one-
another!! How he’d dreamt of this day!! It didn’t get any better than this! This had to have been the
happiest moment all his life!! Even though they’d suffered drastic losses on their end, everyone
would be revived!! They did it!! They finally won!!

“Goku, Vegeta, you were both amazing!!!” Krillin beamed, making a dash towards the rest of the
crew. “I can’t believe you really did it hahaha!!”

“Yeah, well, I guess I owe you one for having blasted me earlier.” Vegeta recalled, donning his
most villainous smirk. Krillin’s face suddenly turned a sickly pallor, when the Saiyan aimed a palm
towards him.

“E-Err- V-V-V- Vegeta?” The bald man put his hands up in surrender, taking a step back. He was
trembling like a leaf and his bladder threatened to give out any second.

The Prince suddenly burst out laughing and withdrew his hand, unable to help himself. The look on
the petrified little human’s face was just priceless!! After a few hesitant laughs, Gohan joined in
as well and Piccolo couldn’t help but snigger under his breath. Krillin frowned and folded his arms
indignantly, turning away from the others.

“Hey, it’s not funny!” He chided.

“Wait, you blasted Vegeta?” Goku asked, in bafflement.

The bald warrior sighed and explained to his best friend, how his rival sought to obtain a Zenkai
boost, so he could fend off Frieza.

“Gosh Vegeta, talk about taking the easy way out.” Goku taunted.

“Hey, if I hadn’t done that, Frieza would’ve destroyed all of us and you’d be left to face him
alone!” Vegeta scowled. “Besides, it’s only fair, since you got to train at one hundred times gravity!!”

“You did what?!” Piccolo goggled at his former arch-enemy, completely stunned by that piece of information.

“Oh yeah, on my way to Namek, I trained for six days at intense levels of gravity, eventually reaching one hundred.” Goku informed a dumbstruck Piccolo and then turned back to his rival, smirking. “But I suppose you’re right Vegeta. I can’t wait for our rematch though.” He went on, laughingly. “Just try not to go all ape on me.”

“And just why not?” He argued. “You can multiply your power tenfold and by transforming, I can too. It’s an even playing field.”

“Well, maybe it's best if none of us multiplies our power, how about that?”

“As you wish, Kakarot, as you wish.”

A/N: So what did you think of Vegeta’s plan and the manner in which it was finally executed?? Is the battle with Frieza over at last?? Stay tuned, for the most amazing chapters in the entire story are soon to come and I mean that!!! You won’t want to miss them!!! Remember to review/favourite!! As always, looking forward to your feedback!!

Oh, and in case you’re missing Bulma, don’t!! She makes her appearance again in the next chapter!! Oh and there’s also going to be a scene involving the deceased Earth fighters (Tien, Yamcha and Chiaotzu) on King Kai’s planet! Just what exactly will it encompass?! Find out next time!

Now onto power levels!! Goku sits at 3 million (base level), just like in the manga/anime, whereas Vegeta’s at a very close 2.9 million! Piccolo’s at 1.25 million and Gohan at 200 000 (though it can shoot up greatly, when he taps into his rage). Krillin’s at around, say, 25 000 (I know Daizenshuu claims that his power level at this point is 75 000, but that sounds a little too farfetched, so I chose something more realistic for this story)!!
Chapter 28: The impossible

King Kai had sensed Goku and Vegeta's victory and merrily informed the others.

"Vegeta, huh?!" Yamcha raised an eyebrow quizzically, quite stunned, but still extremely distrustful. He furrowed his brows. "Well, I'll bet anything that he'll turn on the others, the first chance he gets!"

"No, I don't think so." King Kai disagreed. "Without his help, they would have all been doomed."

"You don't know Vegeta, King Kai!" Tien exclaimed furiously. "He was only looking out for himself! Yamcha's right! We can't trust him! They should just kill him right now, while they have the chance! It'll serve him right!"

The god groaned, frowning at his student in severe disapproval.

"You know, Tien, I can't believe that you of all people would ever suggest something so dishonorable!" He fired back in exasperation. "Both you and Piccolo were once sworn enemies of Goku and were resolved to end his life, am I wrong?!

"Well uh- no- but I-"

"Stop!" The god raised a hand, interrupting his three-eyed pupil. He let out a weary sigh, before looking off into the sky. "Believe me, if it were the Vegeta on Earth, I wouldn't have given it a second thought. But the five of them fought side by side and had each others' backs like true companions and despite the slimmest of odds, they emerged victorious against the greatest threat the Universe has ever witnessed."

"Vegeta's the reason we're dead though, plus he kidnapped Bulma and wanted to use the dragon balls to serve his own greed!" Yamcha countered, gnashing his teeth in vexation.

"I know Yamcha." King Kai nodded, still staring away into the distance. "He has a past filled with some of the most horrible sins imaginable, but there's no deed more honorable than forgiveness."

"How can we ever forgive him after what he did?!!" Tien felt aversive at the mere thought.

"I don't know, but Goku, Gohan, Krillin, Piccolo and even Bulma, all found it in their hearts to do so." King Kai answered, turning in the three-eyed warrior's direction. "And I'm sure that one day, you will too."

"What?!!" Yamcha yelled in a coalescence of disbelief and incense. "What do you mean Bulma forgave him?! How could she ever forgive him after what he did to her?! And to me?!" He almost sounded betrayed. Oh boy, he had no idea!

King Kai coughed and instantly whirled around. He'd overheard Yamcha speaking with Tien on numerous occasions and had learned that he and Bulma had been an item for years and that nothing mattered more to him than being brought back to life, so he could be reunited with her, once again. Although none of that romance stuff made the least bit of sense to him, he'd rather not be the one to
break the bad news to Yamcha that Bulma had fallen for someone else; someone he wasn't exactly very fond of. Since he'd closely observed what had transpired on Namek, whilst carefully tuning out all the vulgarity and obscenity, he knew about Bulma and Vegeta's union and wisely chose not to relay the information to any of his disciples.

"King Kai?" Yamcha raised his eyebrows. "What is it?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing all, why do you ask?" The god quickly swivelled back around and laughed sheepishly, scratching the back of his head. "Oh, look at the time." The god checked his watch. "It's almost nightfall."

"There is no night on this planet." Chiaotzu stated the obvious, before narrowing his eyes suspiciously. "What exactly are you hiding King Kai?"

Anxiety was writ on the rotund deity's face, as beads of sweat trickled from his temples down to the base of his jawline and he began scrounging his mind for some form of distraction or other, until a light bulb finally flashed within.

"Well you got me, Chiaotzu. I am hiding something: here." Out of nowhere, he pulled out a gigantic hammer made of kachin, the hardest material in the entire Universe. "This hammer weighs twice as much as the one before and I want all three of you to hit Gregory with it." He turned towards the grasshopper that was relaxing peacefully on the apple tree nearby. "Gregory, get your lazy butt down here right now!"

"Coming!" The flying insect immediately zoomed over to the god. "What is it King Kai?"

"Yamcha, Tien and Chiaotzu have been slacking off lately and you're going to help them get back into shape!" King Kai looked towards the trio and threw the hammer at Tien, who'd barely managed to catch it and was severely struggling to hold it in place. "Now, get to it!"

"But King Kai-" Yamcha groaned.

"No buts!" Growled the god, before using a more coaxing tone. "I still haven't taught you my very best technique, the Kaio-Ken. You remember that one, right?"

"Oh yeah, the technique you taught Goku, when he was here!" Tien recalled, having finally managed to steady himself to some level and get a decent grip on the kachin hammer. "It allows you to multiply your power, right?!"

"That's right!" The Kai confirmed. "You've already bested Gregory once, but this time it won't be quite so easy! If you prove yourself worthy, you too may learn the Kaio-Ken!"

"But, why can't you just teach us?!" Yamcha groused, folding his arms. "What good's it going to do, chasing a grasshopper?!"

"Hey come on Yamcha, where's your spirit?!" Tien smirked at his friend. "Don't you want to at least try to catch up to Goku?!!"

"Like that'll ever happen." The scar-faced fighter snorted.

"I should've known." The three-eyed fighter goaded. "You've become such a quitter these days."
"Hey, I'm no quitter!"

"Then prove it!" Tien smirked. "Let's show this little insect what we Earthlings are made of!"

"Alright, fine!" Yamcha sighed in surrender and the trio began their training exercise with Gregory.

'Perfect!' Thought a smug King Kai. His little ruse worked like a charm! His newest students may have been strong, but distracting them was as easy as pie. Piccolo was the only one among them, with some real wits about him. But onto the real matter: Goku and Vegeta had both come so far and in so little time! Frieza was much stronger than even he'd anticipated and yet, together, the powerful Saiyan duo had defeated him and in doing so, fulfilled the impossible! The entire cosmos was finally unshackled from Frieza's icy clutches and it was all thanks to those two! He'd never thought this day would ever come!

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"You know Vegeta, I really am glad you were on our side." Goku smiled at the Prince.

"Tch, don't get carried away you clown." Vegeta scoffed, still sitting down. "We're no long enemies as per our agreement, but that doesn't make us friends either, got it?!"

"Haha, should've known." The other Saiyan chuckled. "You've gotta admit though, when we fight together, nothing can stop us! We sure showed Frieza, didn't we?"

"Well, foolish as you may be, you still have Saiyan blood flowing through your veins." Vegeta acknowledged in his own way. He then smirked mirthfully. "But don't let that go to your head. If it weren't for your strength or battle instincts, you'd probably be living in the jungle, with a tribe of monkeys."

"Hey!"

"No offence Goku, but that's not very far from the truth." Piccolo snickered.

"Come on Piccolo, not you too!"

The younger Saiyan pouted indignantly, as his three allies, along with his son, guffawed at his expense.

"You're all such mean jerks!"

"Sooo." Krillin drawled awkwardly, as soon as the laughter eventually died down, "What do we do now?"

"I guess we all go home." Goku answered, before turning towards his rival. "How about you Vegeta? Where're you heading off to?"

"What I do is no concern of yours!" The Prince replied dismissively, clearly not deigned to give him an answer.

"Well, I was thinking you could come to Earth, with the rest of us."

The older Saiyan growled.
"Yeah, why not Vegeta?" Gohan concurred. "It'll be great there!"

"Forget it!"

"Oh come on." Goku coaxed. "There'll be lots of food, plus you could ask Bulma or her father to build you some of that awesome gravity equipment! The opportunities are limitless!"

The Prince suddenly assumed a look of indecision, his face downcast, as he considered those words. Yes, training and further enhancing his strength sounded favorable enough, without a doubt! After all, he had nowhere else to go. He could claim Frieza's vast empire for himself, however, after a lifetime of doing nothing but purging planets, he really felt he could use a break! Plus if he wasted his time away in outer space, his rival would undoubtedly grow a lot stronger than him! From his standpoint, they were relatively equal at this point in terms of base power, but he was determined to change that and knew he couldn't do it, unless he got ahold of that gravity equipment! Goku's face lit up, as Vegeta finally grunted his agreement.

"Speaking of Bulma, perhaps we should go give her the good news." Krillin suggested.

"Yeah, that's a great idea!" Gohan beamed.

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The explosions and tremors of battle came to an abrupt halt and Bulma stood transfixed apprehensively, tension and anxiety streaming through her veins. Two minutes or so later, an idea clicked in her mind, upon remembering that the butt-ugly soldier who'd tried to rape her earlier on, had a scouter on him (A/N: Refer to Chapter 21). She found his body and managed to extract the power-reading device from his ear. The heiress frowned, as she observed five stationary Ki readings appearing on the purple screen, one of them red.

'Now that's strange.'

Taking a gambit, she made a dash out of the spacecraft, before tossing a hover bike capsule from her case and levitating the vehicle high enough to get a god's eye view of her surroundings. She pulled out a set of mini-binoculars from her left coat pocket and focused the lens in the direction of the power levels, only to see: Goku, Vegeta, Piccolo ('Where'd he come from?' she thought), Krillin and Gohan, but no Frieza! Other than her grouchy Prince and the Namekian, they all looked ecstatic with joy. That only meant one thing! They'd done it! Yes, they'd done it!

"WOOHOOO!" The frenzied heiress cheered. "YEAH! YEAH! YEAH!" She revved up the engine and took off full speed towards the motley crew.

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"Oh, here she comes now!" Goku peered into the distance, only to see a radiant Bulma heading straight towards them.

"What?!" Vegeta followed Goku's line of sight and immediately caught sight of her. "What the hell does she think she's doing?!"

"Goku, Vegeta!" She waved and in no time at all, arrived on scene, skidding to a halt, getting off the bike and bolting towards the others.
"Hey Bulma!" The younger Saiyan grinned, while the older glared daggers at her. He'd strictly ordered her to stay aboard and as usual, she refused to heed his command!

Goku barely had time to think, as Bulma glomped him. Vegeta goggled at the sight before him, his jaw hanging stupidly.

"You did it! You actually did it!" She exclaimed, in jubilance.

"Whoa, easy Bulma." Goku awkwardly patted her on the back. She withdrew, holding him by the shoulders and grinning at him.

"You really defeated Frieza! I knew you could do it!"

"Thanks, but that's not true." He replied, grinning back. "Vegeta and I beat him together and it was his plan that really helped us win today!" He looked towards the other Saiyan, who began scaring the bejesus out of him with a chilling death stare that had the potency to freeze all seven hells, ten times over.

Bulma instantly turned in the Prince's direction and gasped, as she took immediate notice of his beaten and battered form. She ran over and sat in front of him, faster than he could blink, while he was left wondering how on Namek she'd been able to move so quick!

"Are you all right?!" The heiress asked frantically, wrapping her arms around his neck, in a light embrace. She'd been so caught up in the excitement that she'd totally forgotten about him!

"I'm fine!" He growled weakly, pulling her away by the shoulders, his cheeks tinting two or three shades of crimson.

"Let me look at you." Bulma grabbed his face and gently turned it this way and that, scrutinizing each wound. His left eye was totally shut, he had a cut lip, a nasty bruise on his right cheek and a frightful contusion that covered the entire circumference of his neck. She briefly gave the rest of his body a once-over, carefully observing the many burns and abrasions.

Vegeta bit his bottom lip to suppress a shudder when he felt her cool, soft hands rub against his searing skin, making him feel even more languid. The Saiyan's good eye fluttered and his burly figure abruptly collapsed to the ground, as the full weight of his exhaustion finally kicked in.

"Hey, wake up!" Bulma shook his shoulders, tears brimming her azure eyes. "Wake up, Vegeta!"

"Don't worry about him." Piccolo reassured stoically. She turned towards the Namekian from Earth. "He just needs some rest, that's all." His lips quirked up slightly as he continued. "We couldn't have done a thing if it weren't for him."

"Hm." Bulma nodded, giving him a brief smile before turning towards the Prince and brushing a slender hand through his feathery mane. "Hey, you did great and I'm proud of you. You're gonna be fine." She cooed. "You hear me? You're gonna be just fine."

"Stop- coddling- me!" The Prince protested in a weary voice, sewing his brows nastily at her.

The heiress let out a giggle and positioned herself behind him, promptly placing his head on her lap, in spite of his many remonstrations. She smiled inwardly, reveling in the feel of his gravity-
defying hair brushing against the clothing that covered her midsection. Krillin stared blankly at the scene in front of him and rubbed both eyes, just to be sure they weren't deceiving him, while Piccolo surveyed the dirt below his feet, as if it were the most interesting thing in the world. Goku and Gohan, however, smiled as they witnessed the unlikely pair. The Saiyan eventually caved in and let his muscles go lax, willingly resting his aching head on Bulma's soft thighs.

"Hey, Vegeta?" The heiress murmured.

"Hn?" The Prince opened his right eye. After a brief pause she continued.

"Could you- uh- come back to Earth with us- you know- now that this is all over?"

Vegeta took a deep breath, in order to gather some much needed energy.

"Build me- training equipment." He ordered, in a weak voice. Bulma looked at him confusedly for a moment before letting out a few chuckles.

"Here you are, almost dead and you're asking for training equipment?" She grinned, raising an eyebrow in amusement. Even in his greatest moment of vulnerability he hadn't lost a smidgeon of his assertive and demanding persona! It was just too adorable! Bulma ran a finger along his jawline, eliciting a low shudder from him, as she gave her answer. "Sure! As long as you come to Earth with us, I'll build you the best training equipment in the entire planet, scratch that, the entire Universe!"

"Hmph."

Bulma took that as a yes and lovingly placed her palm on his forehead.

"This is gonna be so great!" She exclaimed frenetically. "I'll tell mom to prepare a huge banquet of her finest delicacies just for you! You can stay with us at Capsule Corporation and-"

"Woman!" The Prince interjected, frowning in irritation.

"What is it?"

"Stop talking!"

"Oh- uh- right." She sighed. "You definitely need some peace and quiet, I understand."

"Hn."

They remained on the spot for a good minute or so, before their little moment of peace was interrupted by a sinister series of laughs that could just be made out, from afar. The eerie decibels of that cryptic and evil sound rose with each foreboding second that swam by.

"No- It's not possible!" Piccolo looked on in sheer disbelief, as he witnessed the evil tyrant standing atop a hill nearby, a malevolent smirk embedded on his wretched face.

"What?! No!" Goku yelled and he too gaped incredulously at the monster. Gohan and Krillin's expressions went completely blue, both whimpering, as they saw the lizard!

Vegeta tilted his head up, eyes widening in absolute horror, upon gazing in the same direction. No,
it couldn't be! How could they have failed?! They hit him with everything they had! It was virtually impossible for anyone to have survived dual energy attacks of that magnitude!

A good quarter or so of Frieza's tail was completely obliterated, cuts and burns marred his white-purple frame and his left eye was closed shut. But he was still alive, nonetheless and prepared to wreak vengeance on each and every one of his enemies!!

A/N: So Frieza's alive after all! What chance does anyone possibly have against this monstrous adversary?! And now that Bulma's part of the picture, will she be able to elude the icy tyrant's attention?! What will happen next?! More answers shall be revealed soon enough, so remember to review/favourite/follow! The next two chapters are the pinnacle of the story! Hold on tightly, for the turbulent events to follow!

Thanks so much, ShiiroHana for the mind-boggling fan-art, for this Chapter. I can never get enough of it!! :D

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Chapter 29: Final goodbye

"H-How?" Vegeta spluttered. Dammit, this couldn't be! Not after all that! Was there no end to this fucking bastard! He'd already drained most of his Ki! Now what?!

"F-F-F-Frieza?" Bulma whimpered.

"My, my, what do we have here?" The lizard leered maliciously, as he saw Vegeta resting on the blue-haired woman's lap. So it was her! The timing could just not have been better! His lips curled up in a sinister smile that chilled his prey to the bone. "So it's you. We finally meet for the very first and last time."

The Prince snarled in frustration and with newfound effort, forced himself to his feet.

"Vegeta-" Bulma stood up along with him, "Don't." She pleaded, her heart skittering fearfully at the thought of him going in there and getting himself killed. She placed a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"Leave the planet, now!" Vegeta ordered gruffly, shrugging off her hand.

"I'm not gonna leave you!" She protested vehemently.

"If you think your little bitch can escape me, you've got another thing coming, Prince!" The tyrant declared in a sickly voice. An evil smile graced his dark purple lips, as he aimed a finger directly towards Bulma's heart and fired a Ki beam. So quick was the attack that Vegeta didn't even see it coming!

Already powered up with the ten times Kaio-Ken, however, Goku's heightened senses caught wind of the beam and just before it reached it's target, he stood in it's path and knife-handed it elsewhere.

"K-K-Kakarot." Vegeta stuttered in awe of his rival's extraordinary abilities. All he saw was a flash and at blinding speed, his younger counterpart had been able to redirect Frieza's attack.

"Hmmm, it seems that unlike Vegeta, you still have some fight left in you." The lizard creased his eyes, before shutting them for a moment and releasing a mirthful chuckle. "Well, I suppose the rest of the pack can wait, while I deal with you, monkey."

"You're fight's with me and only me, Frieza!" Goku seethed. "The others are of no concern to you, got it?! Leave them be!"

Frieza narrowed his eyes dangerously.

"You arrogant fool!" He shot back. "Do not act so boldly just because you and Vegeta managed to catch me off guard earlier! That was nothing but a farce!"

"You talk big, but we've been besting you at every instance." Goku boasted smugly, clenching his a shaking fist, as his Saiyan blood boiled for the opportunity to test the true limits of his power. "I guess I'll just have to be the one to finish you, once and for all!"
Frieza released a death-ridden chuckle, so sinister that it made the young Saiyan's nerves rattle, in trepidation.

"My, my you truly are a brash little thing aren't you?" The tyrant released an exhale. "It's time I let you in on a little secret. When I fought you two earlier, I was using a mere thirty percent of my true power." Each and every onlooker blanched, upon taking in that terrifying piece of information. Frieza grinned, as he felt the deafening, yet intoxicating thrum of their heaving, horrified hearts. "In other words, I still hold quite a bit of leeway over you insects. Now that I've learned my mistake in underestimating you, I suppose I'll grace you with let's say- seventy percent of my maximum." After a sinister pause that seemed to echo for eternity, the icy Emperor gave each of his audience members a chilling sneer. "I must thank all of you, for I have never once felt this level of excitement my entire life. It's too bad, all good things must come to an end."

Frieza placed his arms by his side, palms facing upward and purple Ki flaring around his robust form.

"N-N-No- i-i-it c-can't be." Goku quivered, never having been quite so frightened before in his life. He quickly realized that the tyrant wasn't bluffing, as he sensed his Ki fly through the roof. "It- It's horrible!" He gnashed his teeth in aggravation and turned towards his companions. "Everyone go now! Head to my space ship and leave this planet immediately!"

Piccolo instantly grabbed Krillin and Gohan by the scruffs of their necks and began flying away full speed, only for Frieza to suddenly appear several yards in front of him, at a speed even Goku's eyes were unable to follow.

"How naïve. Do you really think I'm going to let you leave this place alive? You're all going to die miserably." He stated resolutely.

Piccolo moved Gohan and Krillin behind him and assumed a battle stance.

Goku suddenly shot up and tried to attack Frieza, but the latter vanished and appeared behind him, punching him in the small of the back, before winding his tail around his neck, midair. The Saiyan youth was rendered completely helpless as the appendage tightened lethally, constricting his airways. He felt as though his head would pop off any second now.

"Dad!" Gohan yelled, about to lunge at the villain, only for Piccolo to grab him underneath the shoulders, from behind.

"There's nothing we can do Gohan!" He exclaimed. "Don't get yourself killed!"

"No! Dad!" The boy continued struggling to no avail.

"You lot are beginning to bore me." Said Frieza in a lackadaisical tone, aiming a palm towards Piccolo, Gohan and Krillin, who were several yards away from him. He fired a sloppy Ki blast towards them, but luckily Vegeta had just been able to see it and fired his own blast from below, directing the attack into the vast emptiness of space.

Frieza frowned angrily at the Prince and Goku took advantage of his temporary distraction, by slipping his chin underneath the thick, white appendage and chomping down on it, as hard as possible. The lizard jumped and grabbed his tail, blowing roughly on the bitten area and gently rubbing it with his hand in an attempt to sooth the severe, stinging pain.
"Gohan, Krillin, listen." The duo turned in Piccolo's direction. "We may be unable escape him, but we can't stay this close either. Let's head to the island below."

"B-but d-dad." Gohan stammered.

"If he's in trouble, we'll intervene, but if we charge Frieza directly, we may as well be signing our own death warrants!"

"Alright." The demi-Saiyan sighed in defeat. And with that the trio landed on the ground, ready to watch the battle about to commence.

Goku was coughing and gulping greedily for air. Frieza snarled viciously at him.

"How dare you bite my tail?!"

Goku chuckled slightly, smirking at him.

"WHAT?!"

"You heard me!" He taunted his mighty adversary. "I've never smelled anything quite so nasty before in my life and coming from me, that's saying a lot!"

"First you bite my tail and now you have the gall to insult me?!" The tyrant said in a smoldering voice, before yelling furiously. "Just for that I will make your demise as painful as possible!"

'Shit, now I'm in for it.' Goku thought, perturbedly.

Frieza charged straight towards him, without a moment's delay. Yet again, Goku couldn't follow him at all as he felt a sharp pain on his chin, where Frieza rammed his fist. The Saiyan recovered quickly and saw Frieza use a Kiai that would've hacked him in half, had he not been able to dodge it at the last possible moment. Though he evaded, the entire planet looked like it'd been split in two. Such power was far beyond his dimension! With an elbow atop the head, the tyrant sent Goku hurtling down below! Not even his Kaio-Ken times ten stood a match for the overwhelming might of Frieza.

'I guess that only leaves one option.' The Saiyan thought, as he stood up with great difficulty.

"KAIO-KEEEEENNNNN TIMES TWENTYYYYYY!" Goku yelled, and his figure became burlier than it already was, as the fiery red aura around him, augmented further.

"Goku, that's too dangerous!" Piccolo yelled. Earth's greatest hero paid no heed, however and shot straight up towards his foe.

'He's fast!' Thought Frieza, eyes widened, upon quickly realizing that even at seventy percent he was having trouble warding off his opponent's sprightly and nimble maneuvers. 'This warrior is truly amazing! His abilities far exceed Vegeta's, even in the latter's transformed state! How could any Saiyan possibly possess such incredible power?!'

The lizard found an opening and landed a low punch to Goku's solar-plexus, before firing a left to
his jaw, followed by a right uppercut that sent the young Saiyan flying upwards. He appeared above him and landed a double axe-handle on his stomach that made Goku nosedive.

Goku felt completely drained and was taking rasped breaths. Each blow made him feel, as though a train had run over his head and body.

'It's unbelievable.' He thought in abject despair. 'Even with the Kaio-Ken times twenty, I couldn't even touch him.' He let out a dejected sigh. 'I just can't beat him. I don't think anyone can. How could a power this great even exist?'

Frieza descended downwards and loomed over Goku's fallen form. He stomped hard on his chest and pressed his foot down on it, eliciting a spine-chilling cry of pain from the Saiyan, as he felt his sternum being pressed inwards, dangerously close to his heart.

"DAD, NO!" Gohan yelled, running over towards the scene, only for Piccolo to hold him back again, with great difficulty.

"Don't go in there, Gohan!"

"Before I send you to hell, let me say that even though you stood no chance against me, you truly were a great warrior." Frieza praised, then pointed a portentous finger directly between the young Saiyan's eyes. "It pains me to have to put such incredible talent to waste, but you leave me little choice." He flared a kernel of Ki into the tip of his finger. "Die, Saiyan.

Just before Frieza unleashed his deadly beam however, a blast hit him flush on the back. He barely felt it, but fury surged through him, upon turning in the direction of the assailant, only to see Vegeta standing there, jaw clenched and dark brows wrinkled hatefully.

"You will spill no more Saiyan blood, Frieza!" The Prince vowed. "I will destroy you, no matter what it takes!"

"You filthy little worm!" The tyrant yelled, lunging straight at Vegeta and landing a hard punch to his solar plexus that knocked every bit of air out of his lungs and sent him careening a dozen yards or so along the grass, on his back. That one blow alone, literally purged away every last vestige of energy he had left and more. How his heart was still beating or how Kakarot could've lasted that long against this dreaded beast, he didn't know. The Prince's eyes were shut, as he lay flat on the ground, barely able to move or feel out his surroundings.

Frieza sauntered towards him, ready to do what he should've done from the get-go, until he suddenly felt a lemon-sized rock thwack him on the head.

"Leave him alone, you bastard!" Bulma yelled, from the side. Incense boiled through Frieza, as he set his death-wrought gaze upon the one that had dared to assault him. Bulma quailed fearfully, belatedly realizing that she'd only succeeded in drawing the devilish fiend's crimson eyes upon her.

"Run!" Vegeta shouted as loud as he could, but before the heiress could move a muscle, she found herself lifted off the ground, an ivory hand wrung around her lithe neck. Bulma's eyes bulged and she tried to pry those fingers off, but to no avail, as Frieza proceeded to squeeze the life out of her. "Stop! STOP IT!" The Prince yelled, doing his very best to get to his feet.

Piccolo, Gohan and Krillin instantly shot towards the icy villain, only to be blown away effortlessly with a wave of his free hand. He then turned towards his former subject, lips quirking
"Say goodbye, Vegeta." In slow-motion, the lizard pressed his claws against her abdomen, palm straightened and fingers conjoined, as she futilely continued her desperate struggle.

"NO, DON'T DO IT FRIEZA!" The Saiyan yelled frantically.

"Let this be a lesson to you, my dear Prince: In the end, all those you hold dear will suffer the same fate."

Frieza transfused Ki into his hand and slowly began sinking it into the aloft female's abdomen, taking his sweet time, as she cried out in agony, a glob of pain-ridden blood oozing out of her mouth, with each inch of her innocent flesh pierced by the merciless tyrant. The flame-haired Saiyan yelled to the top of his lungs, begging his former master to stop, but in absolute vain. Vegeta was forced to look on helplessly at the horrific scene before him, his paralyzed diaphragm preventing him from coming to her rescue.

With one final thrust, the lizard impaled her mid-section, smiling maliciously, as the Prince cried out in unbridled pain. He promptly withdrew his appendage and tossed the female's lifeless form towards the Saiyan.

A cold chill ran through Vegeta, as he heard the sickening thud of Bulma's body crashing on the ground next to him and new strength immediately dredged into his tarnished muscles. He promptly wormed his way over to her, unprecedented shock and dismay wracking his body and soul.

"BULMA!" Gohan and Krillin shouted in unison.

Goku's eyes shot wide open and he forced himself up with power he didn't know he had. A wave of panic surged through him and tears stung his eyes upon seeing his dearest friend lying inanimately on the ground, a puddle of sickly red dilating below her waistline. Vegeta was jiggling her in vain, trying to force her awake, as though refusing to believe she was really gone.

Frieza narrowed his eyes in close scrutiny, making sure to survey every detail of the scene before him.

"Wake up!" The Prince continued shaking her body, his voice hoarse and frantic. "Wake up, Bulma!"

The heiress coughed out a glob of blood, her body quivering. She was barely able to breathe and felt the sharpest of pains wrinkling within her searing abdomen. Vegeta's face lit up for a moment. Bulma took in the sight of the Prince looming over her and mumbled something inaudible, only for her Saiyan lover to cut her off.

"Shhh, don't talk!" Vegeta instructed in a calm voice, carefully placing a hand on her abdomen and turning towards Gohan and Krillin. "Get her to the regeneration tank, quickly! There may still be time if you close her wound!" He yelled in panic, tone raspy and laced with a fraught undercurrent of desperateness. It took the woebegone duo a few moments to register Vegeta's words and once they did, they made their move, until Goku stopped them.

"Vegeta- it- it won't work." He croaked abjectly, from afar. "I- I destroyed that tank."

"YOU WHAT?!"
"V-Ve-ge-ta." Bulma wheezed in a soft voice.

The Prince gasped, upon feeling her delicate fingers brush his cheek and was unable to help it as saline, dole-ridden rivulets slowly cascaded from both eyes down to the steely rim of his hardened jawline, for the first time in over twenty years.

"D-D-Don't- be- like- him." She rasped, looked at him solemnly, her eyelids fluttering, as she put every ounce of effort into clinging dearly to whatever little life she had remaining. "P-Promise m-me, V-Vegeta."

Vegeta nodded weakly, his chest tightening in despair and fresh tears brimming his deep black eyes. Bulma felt her pain dwindle away, as each droplet of the sacred liquid emanating from his onyx depths splashed onto her face, filling her entire being with calm and contentment. Seeing the unparalleled woe and suffering emblazon his normally impassive visage, she couldn't help but feel more endeared and cherished than she'd ever felt her entire life, making absolutely nothing keep her from uttering her final goodbye, in a soft and gentle lilt.

"I love you." She murmured, offering him her kindest and most radiant smile, as a culminating batch of tears escaped her eyes. Vegeta's breath hitched. He looked at her incredulously, her words striking a soft spot in his heart that he didn't know existed. The tormented organ betwixt his chest was fluttering out of control. All he'd ever taught himself was that love was a facade, concocted by the weak. But he was rendered helpless, that benign smile and those alien words making the light within him shine more luminously than ever before, only to be doused, as the brilliant sparkle of life began vanishing from her sapphire eyes. Her supple hand fell from his tear-swamped face.

"Bulma?!" He quickly grabbed her hand and gently placed it beneath her chest, before setting his gaze upon her cerulean eyes. "Wait, don't go!" Vegeta gave her another frantic shake. Unequivocal sorrow enveloped his sinewy frame, as he was forced to witness the fiery gleam of life finally disappear from her azure eyes, into the dark and dreary abyss, the same gleam that had enrapped him time and time again. "Don't go." He murmured. His bottom lip quivered, as a new batch of woe-engulfed tears streamed down his face. The Prince's heart was crushed to pieces. He clamped his eye shut and brought his face down to the recess of her neck, holding nothing back, as he released every bit of his agony into her soft skin, in a torrential outburst of grief and bereavement. He'd never before felt such painful pangs of anguish, not when his mother or father died and not even when his entire race was wiped away into oblivion. The one being in existence that he'd truly cared for, had given her life away, by trying to protect his!

A/N: Oh my God! Poor Bulma! She died such a horrible and cruel death! So what happens now?! Has Frieza finally pushed Vegeta over the edge?! Will the aggrieved Prince, at last, break through his limits and step into the realm of legend?! Or will Goku get there first?! Tell me what you think and be sure to review/follow/favourite for a speedy update, for the next two chapters are packed with unparalleled explosiveness!

p.s. So Bulma finally confessed her love for Vegeta, only to pass away in his arms, moments later! That was pretty powerful, right?!

Thanks so much lovelykotori, for drawing up the fan-art for this Chapter!! This one gets me every single time!! My favourite fan-art of the story!!!
"Bulma." Goku murmured gloomily, his expression dolorous and face damp with tears. Gohan and Krillin clamped their eyes shut, forcing themselves to look away from the tragic scene, as sorrow-ridden tears cascaded down their faces. Piccolo bared his fangs fiercely at Frieza, disgusted by the savage and merciless display. Just like Dende, she was innocent and defenseless!

Goku felt an unfamiliar spark of rage budding within him.

"Oh my, now isn't this one hell of a sight?" Frieza grinned wickedly, cackling at the unprecedented spectacle before him. "The proud and ruthless Prince of the mighty Saiyan race, reduced and broken down to a crybaby, over a mere woman! What a day this has turned out to be! Truly remarkable!"

Goku snarled venomously, as Frieza dared utter such heartless words, after taking away his very closest friend! The girl who'd told him and about the dragon balls and had shown him a whole new world beyond the forests of Mount Paozu. The girl who'd always placed her undying faith in him to protect her and the others, no matter the odds. Now, when it had truly counted, he'd failed her! The two of them were kindred spirits and in losing her, he'd lost an integral part of himself. Every inch of him wanted nothing more than to tear Frieza to pieces! A beast of unimaginable powers was taking hold of him bit by bit, the rage within threatening to blow full scale! He was trying his utmost to keep the monster at bay, but control was slipping through his fingers, with each passing second! No, he couldn't let this happen! He needed to placate his anger, before it consumed him and everyone around him! As he was struggling to reign in his fury, however, Vegeta was lost in his own thoughts.

Mother, father and the entire Saiyan race were all gone. All by Frieza's hands! But now he'd taken Bulma, a pure being who'd never stained her innocent hands and yet had exhibited kindness, mercy and compassion to the darkest of monsters! Why?! Why had she given her life away for his?! It made no sense! What right did she have?! How could he have let her die?! Why hadn't he been strong enough to protect her?! He'd vowed to keep her away from Frieza's icy clutches and yet he hadn't! She put her faith in someone who didn't deserve it! If only he'd been stronger!

Grief and despair transformed into an intense rush of fury that reached levels unforeseen! Fury at himself for having been so weak and helpless and at that coldhearted bastard, Frieza, for stealing away the one person he'd truly developed the capacity to care for, ever since his father's demise! The raw incense continued soaring and soon took the form of a golden dragon, from the heavens. He heard it's primal call from deep within his searing soul! It yearned to unleash itself and take ahold of him, promising him deific power beyond his wildest imagination! Power that would allow him to bring a final end to the evil tyrant who'd taken away his- his woman. He took another look at her and felt bile rising in his throat. Fury continued escalating at a dangerously swift pace!

With newfound strength he stood up and placed his fists by his side, as he welcomed the call of the dragon! Bolts of lightning shot out from the sky, with his spiraling power! Each and every onlooker turned in his direction, to see large chunks of rock levitating into the air around him, as raw and completely unfamiliar Ki engulfed his sturdy figure.

'How is he still standing?!' Frieza watched in consternation.
The moment he felt the dragon's claws touch him, his hair turned an awesome gold and his eyes went teal. Just as soon, they returned to their normal hue.

"What- the- fuck?" Frieza sputtered, as he witnessed the momentary, yet outlandish change in the Prince's features. He was suddenly feeling a sense of apprehension sprout within him. He'd never seen anything like this before!

'It can't be.' Goku thought, upon getting a feel of that familiar power. Yes, that was it! It was the same wild beast he felt raging inside him! He looked on in wonderment, as it continued possessing the Saiyan Prince. Gohan and Krillin stood agape, feeling the Prince's powers fluctuate in a completely wild and unrestrained manner.

Once again Vegeta's eyes went teal and his hair gold for a fleeting moment as the beast's razor-like talons made contact. It happened again, then again and then again. Back and forth, it continued.

"W-What's h-happening?" Frieza stammered, his trepidation climbing, as he witnessed this most unusual turn of events. Saiyans transformed into giant apes. What on Namek was this?!

"HAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHHHH!" With a bellow of fury so loud that it could be heard echoing throughout neighboring planets, a huge bolt of lightning shot down upon the Saiyan Prince. Everyone covered their eyes, as they were inundated with a blinding flash of ethereal light. Once it cleared, Vegeta's glowing silhouette could be observed, surrounded by an eerie golden aura. Moments later, the new and improved Prince was visible, his hair gold and eyes teal. A bizarre reverberation continued resounding from his magnificent aura. Slowly, but surely, as he transformed, his bad eye had begun opening up and by the end of the transformation, it was as good as new.

"He's done it!" Goku exclaimed in awe, his own fury all but curbed. "He's really done it!"

"What is this?!" Frieza trembled. He'd never ever felt fear his entire life, but out of nowhere it was beginning to fester its way inside of him. What manner of anomaly was this?

"What- amazing power!" Piccolo goggled at the Prince, unable to feel out the true extent of that gargantuan Ki. It horrified him to no avail.

"H-His p-p-power." Gohan was quivering, as he felt the sheer magnitude of Vegeta's Ki. It was far beyond anything he had could possibly fathom, so high that his senses could not even measure its exact scale! The word godly couldn't even begin describing this! No, this power was something else altogether! This power was titanic!

The Prince looked himself over.

'Amazing.' He thought, awed by the immense power within him. 'I've done it at last. But how?' He gasped, as he instantly recalled what had ensued.

He gazed down at Bulma. Somehow, as he was transforming, his subconscious had created a protective barrier around her. His woman. That was it! The power came in response to a need and he'd found his! The need to avenge her!
His father had once told him that nothing in this Universe came free. The legendary power he'd yearned for his whole life was now all his. However, it came at an exorbitant price. Was it truly a price worth paying?! His mind and heart were at odds with another, the former conflicted and the latter answering with a resounding no. His chest tightened, as he set his eyes upon her beautiful face, devoid of life and her sapphire orbs, no longer the refulgent gems that had inundated his soul with lustrous radiance, time and time again. He bent down and used his thumb and forefinger to shut her eyelids, before gathering up her lithe body into his brawny arms. Only now that he'd lost her did he realize how much she'd truly meant to him. He would have given away anything to attain this power- anything, but her.

"How touching." Frieza sniggered, taking in the sight before him, with sickening glee.

Vegeta narrowed his eyes in a deathly manner at the lizard, making him gulp, as dread crept its way in. The Saiyan's teal eyes flashed for just a nanosecond and Frieza let out a cry of disbelief, as the terrain surrounding him abruptly exploded, leaving him in the dreaded epicentre of an inverse toroid.

'How did he do that?!' The dismayed tyrant thought, in immediate alarm.

"Unreal!" Piccolo gawped at the scene, while Gohan and Krillin were left thunderstruck, unable to utter a single coherent sound.

Before the Prince proceeded further, however, his battered, bruised and fatigued rival trudged over to him, instantly garnering his attention.

"Hey- You did it." Goku let out a strained chuckle.

Vegeta frowned at him, feeling a sudden impulse to blow his head right off, his thirst for blood spiralling, as the flying beast from the heavens, continued its attempts at seizing control over every last iota of sanity he had left. Goku took on a more solemn appearance, his gaze shifting over to Bulma.

"Let me get her someplace safe." He said, holding his arms out to retrieve the blue-haired female.

The gesture towards Bulma immediately allowed the Prince to regain control over his newfound killer instincts. He stared at Goku stoically for a moment, before handing her over.

"She was my best friend, Vegeta." Dejection was writ all over the other Saiyan's face. He exhaled, then looked gravely looked at his legendary rival. "Avenge her!"

Vegeta said nothing and Goku immediately whirled around, headed over to Gohan and Krillin, who were nearby, both Frieza and Vegeta's eyes following him the entire time.

"Hey Krillin." The young Saiyan looked at his friend, who was still in complete shock at the abrupt surge in Vegeta's abilities. "Krillin!" He repeated in a firmer tone. The bald warrior shook his head and stared blankly at his best friend. "You remember where my spaceship is, right?"

"Uh- y-y-yeah."

"Good! Take Bulma there and keep out of sight!"

"B-B-But- why?"
"We can't wish her back, if she doesn't have a body."

"Oh." Replied Krillin, sighing in relief. "Shouldn't you tell Vegeta?"

Goku shook his head.

"He won't fight as hard if he knows she can be revived." He said in a low tone. "Trust me. Just do as I say."

"Sure thing Goku!" Krillin retrieved Bulma's body and gently cradled it into his arms, eyes tearing up wistfully, as a sea of memories flashed through his mind, involving her, Goku and himself, not to mention Yamcha, Master Roshi and all the others. No matter what happened, he would safeguard her body with his life! He refused to fail! His mind was abuzz with a plethora of questions. He looked at Goku and decided to ask the one at the forefront of the lot. "Can he win?"

The young Saiyan smirked at his best friend.

Krillin took that as a yes and let out an alleviated exhale, before nodding and taking off into the air, towards the ship. Frieza let out an amused chuckle that immediately caught the Prince's attention.

"Do you really think you can escape me?!" He smiled evilly, aiming his right finger towards Krillin's receding figure, as it flew off. "Goodbye runt!" Before he had a chance to fire, however, Vegeta abruptly appeared in front of him, blocking his path and towering over him menacingly.

"WHAAAT?!" The Saiyan grabbed his right hand and began bending the fragile bones therein with a furious grip. Frieza groaned, as he struggled against the hold in absolute vain. What the fuck was going on?! How was this bastard so fucking powerful, all of a sudden?!

"Arrrrrgeghhhhh!" Frieza cried out and fell to his knees, as Vegeta's hold tightened even further.

"You rotten piece of fucking trash." The Prince spoke in a threateningly low tone. "You'll pay for what you did to her!"

"Holy crap!" Piccolo goggled at the sight before him. Vegeta was subduing Frieza, with such ease! How was it even possible?!

"Whoa." Gohan too gaped, at what he saw. "Incredible."

Goku stood his ground, staring intently at the scene. He wanted so badly to have the chance to finish Frieza with his own two hands, but he supposed it was only right that Vegeta be the one! After all, no one had suffered under the tyrant's cruel hands more than he had! Besides, it was probably the first time that his rival was truly fighting for something noble: to right the wrong that was done to Bulma!

Vegeta let go and the lizard jumped back about five or six yards, staring incredulously at the Prince.

"How?!" He asked, voice and expression saturated with pure horror. "How did you get this incredible power?!

The Saiyan menacingly slit his eyes at his foe. Frieza shuddered fearfully.
So this was it! Fear! That fucker was experiencing it at this very moment! His eyes were evidence enough of that! For so many years, he'd dreamed, more than anything, to see that look on his hideous face! Now that he'd reached this stage, however, he felt nothing but revulsion that all his life he was forced to abase himself before a pretentious and abominable coward! He snarled in fury and like a wild predator, he pounced on his prey, landing a bone crunching right uppercut directly underneath Frieza's chin, sending his foe flying backwards. Mid-trek, Vegeta leapt again at dazzling speeds that no one could follow and grabbed Frieza's right hand and leg, ramming his knee up the lizard's spine. Frieza yelped painfully and the Prince landed a double axe-handle on his mid-section, sending him plunging to the ground below.

The tyrant erupted from within the rubble and ascended into the air, taking heavy breaths. He bared his teeth at his Saiyan opponent, before smiling evilly.

"Why do you loathe what I've done so much?!" He asked. "How many innocent and defenseless women have met their end at the hands of you and your brethren? How many children, you Saiyan scum?! Do you really believe that you're in any position to condemn me?!!"

Not deigned to reply, Vegeta continued eyeing him hatefully.

"Did you mourn over them too?" Frieza sniggered. "Did you shed tears as you watched the life fade from their eyes or make empty promises to be different?" He spat out that last word, as though it were cursed.

The Prince clenched his fists and his Ki exploded furiously, cracking the ground below him, as his tormentor dared remind him of her brutal murder! Frieza chuckled.

"Be sore all you want, but you and I both know you reveled in their demise." He stated matter-of-factly, "Each and every moment you stole a life, you felt invigorated. Your blood boiled with excitement. It instilled within you such a sense of completion. You'll always be a killer. You'll always be- like me."

"Don't listen to him Vegeta!" Goku yelled from down below, hearing everything. "You're not like him anymore!"

Frieza snorted at the other worthless Saiyan's remark. Goku's words were either unheard or ignored altogether, as the Prince's murderous gaze was set squarely upon his bitterest enemy.

"Face it Vegeta." The lizard grinned disdainfully. "If by some miracle you do make good on your little promise, not even a thousand lifetimes worth of contrition and atonement would be enough to save your doomed soul from the fiery pits of hell."

"Perhaps you're right Frieza." Vegeta replied, after a pause, smiling at him in a manner so diabolical that the icy villain felt fresh chills of fear run down his spine, wracking his elegant frame with unparalleled apprehension. "But after I'm done cutting you down inch-by-inch, you'll spend every second in the netherworld, dreading the moment I join you there!"

Frieza roared and fired a volley of Ki blasts at Vegeta.

"Take cover!" Piccolo yelled, rushing over towards Goku and Gohan, dropping both father and son to the ground, before they had a moment to register what had happened.

When the smoke cleared, Vegeta hadn't even a scratch on him. Frieza was completely aghast. What
manner of beast was this?!

"Are you done playing these silly games?" He aimed a palm at him and promptly shot a powerful Kiai that rolled Frieza a few dozen yards back, mid-air. The tyrant quickly reestablished balance, but was breathing heavily and glowering at his mighty adversary, in pure frustration.

Vegeta shot forward without volition, landing a hard elbow on Frieza's jaw, followed by a powerful left uppercut, propelling him a great distance back. Once the tyrant recovered, he bared his teeth furiously and attacked with every move in the book, only for the Prince to block each blow headed his way, with minimal effort on his part. After a short-lived and futile attempt at trying to shift the momentum of the battle, Frieza jumped back and fired his most swift Ki beam, only for Vegeta to evade.

"How?!" The lizard exclaimed, in dismay. "How could you possibly dodge at this range?!

Vegeta said nothing.

"Dodge this Saiyan!" Frieza fired a fusillade of Ki beams, each of which Vegeta evaded with ease.

'Dammit! One hit!' The lizard thought, in dismay. 'Surely if I can land just one hit, I can put this scum down for good!'

"Attack, Frieza." Vegeta challenged, as though reading his mind. "One free hit. That's all you get. You'd better make it good, because after that, you're mine."

Frieza snarled lividly.

"HOW DARE YOU PATRONIZE ME?!!" He instantly fired a beam that hit Vegeta right between the eyes, snapping the Saiyan's head back. The lizard smiled wickedly. Surely, that must've been it! Unfortunately for him, Vegeta brought his head back into position, cracking his neck joints a few times, before smirking wickedly at his terrified foe.

"That's your best?" He scorned. Frieza's jaw fell. Not even the tiniest hint of damage! "If that's the case, you'd better quit. But one way or another, I promise you one thing: your blood will soak the grounds of Namek today!"

"W-W-What- W-What are you?"

"I think you know, Frieza." Replied the Saiyan Prince. "I am the one being you've dreaded to meet your entire life, the warrior of legend that has time and again, given you sleepless nights." The lizard had terror writ all over his face. After a tense pause Vegeta gnashed his teeth and flared his Ki wildly, as he continued in an epic baritone that resounded across the worlds. "I AM THE LEGENDARY SUPER SAIYAN, VEGETAAAAAA!

A/N: So Vegeta's done it at last! What chance does Frieza possibly have against his titanic adversary?! What happens next?! As always, let me know your thoughts by reviewing! Two more chapters and I'll finally have this fight wrapped up, so stay tuned! Another major surprise awaits you in the proceeding chapter! Shit gets really heated then (and I mean really)! Till the next update, my awesome readers!
Thanks NekoLover628 for drawing fan-art for this Chapter! Loved it very much!

Also thanks mamon12345 for drawing up a cute-piece, for the chapter hehe.
Fatal error

Chapter 31: Fatal error

Krillin had finally reached Goku's spaceship. He made his way inside and headed downstairs, finding a busted up single bed on the corner. Beside it was a thick mattress, where he carefully laid down Bulma's body, looking her over wistfully all the while.

“You know, you’ve always amazed me Bulma.” He forced on a lopsided smile and gently stroked her satiny blue hair, splayed out over the plush pillow below her head. “I could never tell anyone this in person, especially you, but for the longest time ever, I’ve been smitten with you hehe.” His cheeks tinted a shade of crimson, as he scratched the back of his head sheepishly. “Truth is, I really envied Yamcha, hell, sometimes I even went so far as to resent him for being so much better looking than I am. I was always a step or two ahead of him, where training was concerned, but he had the one thing that I could never possibly have: you.” He sighed forlornly and continued. “And now there’s Vegeta.” A brief interval followed. “I still have no clue what happened between the two of you and I probably wouldn’t approve, but-” He paused a moment, letting out an exhale and continuing in a slow and calm, yet fervid tone, brows knit. “Seeing him actually shed tears for another person- it- it was just mind-boggling, to say the least. I never would’ve imagined such a show of affection from someone like that, but what’s even more amazing is that you, of all people, were able to melt your way through a heart as cold as his.”

Another short lapse followed, before he smiled at her in pure reverence and admiration. “You may not be a fighter, but you’ve always been one of us. We’d be nowhere without you, Bulma. It was you who brought everyone together, led the search for the dragon balls, saved all our lives, after the battle with Vegeta and-” Krillin shut his eyes, as he went on in a broken voice, “Died for us.” The bald warrior let out a dejected sigh and gazed upon her regretfully, eyes tearing once again. “You’re the last person who could ever deserve to be killed, so brutally. I truly wish it were me instead. I’m really sorry I couldn’t protect you. I tried my best, but we will bring you back no matter what happens! That’s a promise!”

XXXX

Beads of sweat rolled down Frieza’s off-white forehead, as he trembled in shock and alarm.

‘No, I cannot allow this to shake my composure!!’ He willed inwardly and took a deep breath, in an effort to calm himself.

“I suppose there was some truth to that little legend, after all.” He smirked at his former underling. “It does make sense that among the whole barrel of monkeys, you’d be the one to finally make good. Though I never would have guessed that the key to your ascension would lie in some worthless whore of all thin-”

Frieza choked on his last word, eyes bulging, as the Prince quickly appeared in front of him and wrapped his hand around his throat in a death-grip.

“Before you die, I want you to answer one question for me, Frieza.” Vegeta spoke in a deceptively cool tone, tightening his grasp even further, whereby the lizard began gurgling and vainly clawing at the Super Saiyan’s staunch fingers. “Was taking her life really worth it, given where we are now?”
Frieza continued struggling to no avail. Vegeta elbowed him atop the head, plummeting him right into the dirt. The Saiyan followed quickly and before his enemy had a chance to rise, he stomped on the upper incline of his back with one foot and roughly began pulling on his tail with both hands.

“What are you doing??!!” Frieza hollered in agony. “No!!! Stop!!! Aaaaarrrrrrrrrgggghhhhh!!!”

“YOU FUCKING PIECE OF SHIT!!!” The Prince roared, giving him a sharp jerk that had him howling even louder. “HOW MANY TIMES DID I ASK YOU TO STOP, WHEN YOU SLOWLY BURNED YOUR WAY THROUGH HER FLESH, YOU SICK SON OF A BITCH??!!” Vegeta tugged even harder, as he mentally relived that horrific moment. The Super Saiyan was intent upon making his quarry’s death as miserable as he possibly could!!

“PLEASE, STOP!!!!” Frieza besecheched, overwhelmed with searing pain, the likes of which he’d never felt before. “I BEG Y- AAARRRRRRGGGGHHHHH!!!”

“THAT’S RIGHT!!!” Snarled the Prince, yanking the thick appendage in such brutal fashion that he nearly pulled it right out of its socket. “BEGIN!! BEGIN FOR MERCY!!! BEGIN FOR YOUR LIFE, LIKE THE COWARD YOU ARE!!!”

Goku moved nearby and couldn’t help it as his conscience took over, feeling that Vegeta was about to fall over the fringe of reason!!

“Vegeta, don’t.” He said tactfully, frowning in askance. “I know this feels right but it’s not.”

“Back off you stupid fool, unless you wish to join him!!!” The older Saiyan snapped his teeth at the younger.

Goku couldn’t help the fear that coiled through him, at his rival’s overt belligerence. The Prince was in a fragile emotional state and his new Super Saiyan abilities were making him see red. If Vegeta let his power go to his head, things could turn out very, very ugly and he refused to allow that, after all the effort they’d put into finally reaching this stage!!

“This isn’t the way!” Goku looked at him imploringly. “Remember the promise you made to Bulma!! This isn’t what she would-”

Vegeta simply flashed his teal eyes at the other Saiyan before he could finish his sentence, launching him completely out of the scene.

“DO NOT EVER SPEAK OF HER, UNLESS YOU WISH TO DIE!!!!”

“DAD!!!” Gohan yelled, as his father suddenly skidded along the dirt next to him.

Goku sat up and grit his teeth, taking heaved breaths, while his son grabbed him by the shoulders.

“Goku, what’re you trying to do?!!?” Piccolo demanded, looming over him with a disapproving glare. “You know you can’t go in there!!”

“You don’t understand!” Goku struggled to his feet. “He’s slipping! If this goes on, he’ll lose every trace of sanity he has left and become a crazed killing machine! What good is his strength if he ends up using it to destroy everyone of us?!”
“But dad, y-you could g-get h-hurt.” The demi-Saiyan boy gave his father a concerned look.

“I’ll be okay Gohan.” He gandered promisingly at his son. “You and Piccolo stay here and keep out of sight.” Without delay, he headed back over to the scene.

Vegeta wrenched Frieza’s tail so hard that he ripped it right off, as the tyrant cried out in absolute pain, feeling the loss of the chunky protuberance.

“YOU FOOL!!!” He yelled, harrowing tears stinging his eyes for the first time, in his entire life. “HOW COULD YOU??!!”

Vegeta promptly stepped on the stub of the appendage he’d torn. Frieza howled agonizingly, as the Saiyan continued grinding his boot against the acutely wounded zone.

“GO ON, FRIEZA!!” Yelled the Prince, laughing maniacally, as the rapidly surging flood of crazed derangement possessed him from the inside, inch by inch. “SUFFER!!! BEG!!! I WANT TO HEAR YOU CRY FOR MERCY!!!!!”

The lizard continued yowling excruciatingly, as he felt the horrendous pain in the area, where his tail once proudly endured. Vegeta grit his teeth upon feeling his rival’s Ki returning to the scene. Frieza was still under his foot, desperately trying to scramble his way out to freedom.

The Prince glowered bitterly at the younger Saiyan standing before him.

“Vegeta, you can’t let this power consume you!!” Goku pled ardently. “You have to learn to control it, before it controls you!!”

Vegeta’s heavy gaze made Goku feel like a stick insect in the presence of a mammoth.

“You have ten seconds to disappear from my sight, before I vaporize you!”

“Vegeta, listen to me!!” Goku argued. “We can wish Bulma back to life!!” The sinister gleam of raw murder gradually vanished from Vegeta’s eyes, his expression softening, as the other Saiyan’s words sunk in. “After reviving Piccolo, Earth’s dragon balls returned, remember?!! Bulma’s body’s safe inside my spaceship. Once you’re done here we can head back to Earth, gather the dragon balls there and wish her back, but if you let your new power overwhelm your judgment, you’ll end up doing more harm than good and this’ll all be for nothing!!”

Vegeta blinked a few times and his shoulders slowly, but surely slumped, as sense and reason once again replanted themselves into the depths of his disarrayed mind. However, so lost in his own thoughts was he, that he hadn’t realized that Frieza’d already snuck away and was midair, as he fired a powerful Ki blast into the ground below him, immediately jolting the Prince out of his trance.

“What the?” Vegeta looked on at the gaping perforation nearby. Holy shit!!! He looked up to his adversary and snarled. “WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING??! ARE YOU TRYING TO KILL US ALL??!!”

“Ten minutes.” Frieza stated simply, the smug glimmer of victory sparkling within his beady red eyes, as his lips quirked up, in a malign smirk. “You and I are both experts in planet demolition. Ten minutes is all you have left, twelve at the very most, before Namek is history and you
monkeys with it!!"

Goku suddenly paled and his heart rate jumped.

‘Oh no!’ He thought in panic. ‘Darn it!’

“Vegeta, finish him now, so we can escape!!” The young Saiyan yelled.

Not needing to be told a second time, the Prince shot up into the air, fists clenched and battle stance, readied.

“So that was your plan all along, huh Frieza?!!” Vegeta asked scornfully. “You knew you stood no chance against me in battle and so you decided to destroy the both of us, along with the entire planet!!”

“You’ve got me all wrong, my dear Prince.” He countered, his smirk spreading into a wide and malicious grin. “I have no intention to meet my end on this godforsaken pile of piss!! A planet explosion is not nearly enough to destroy either of us, however, while I possess the ability to breathe in space, you do not!! In other words, no matter how powerful you may be, I will live on and you will die along with this worthless planet!!”

“There’s only one problem with your wily little scheme Frieza.” Vegeta smirked. “You’ll be dead and dismembered and I’ll have escaped Namek, long before it blows up!!”

“I’m afraid it will not be as easy as you think, Super Saiyan.”

“You’re not serious, are you?” Vegeta scoffed. “If you really still think you have any hopes of defeating me, you’re only fooling yourself!!”

“Hmph.” Frieza shut his eyes momentarily, before narrowing them gravely at the Prince. “As I am, I admit that I stand no chance against you, but what you seem to forget is that my strength has not yet reached its zenith.” He raised a clenched fist, as he promisingly continued. “At full power, I will most certainly grind you to pieces!!”

Vegeta took in those words and contemplated a moment, interest slightly piqued, as he frowned at the tyrant.

“Even if that is true, which I highly doubt, what makes you think I’ll give you the time you need to power up?”

“Oh, you will.” Frieza stated, knowingly. “A Saiyan elite such as yourself, thirsts for a true challenge in battle. And, doubtless, now that you’re a Super Saiyan, that thirst has only intensified further, am I right?"

“So you’ve got me all figured out, have you?!” Vegeta chuckled. “It makes little difference though!! The end result won’t change one bit!! Go ahead and gather your full strength!! I’ll crush you all the same, Frieza!!”

“As you say, my Prince.” The icy fiend placed his hands by his sides. Sparks of gold electricity frizzled around his figure, his muscles augmenting, as his power surged higher and higher. ‘Hahaha!! Like a true fool of a Saiyan, he’s fallen right into my little snare!!’
“Vegeta!!” Goku yelled from down below. “You can’t let him power up!! We might not make it in time!!”

“Quiet Kakarot!!” The older Saiyan yelled back. “I don’t recall asking you for your opinion!!”

“Look, I’m a Saiyan too and I know you want to defeat him at his best!!” Shouted Goku. “I understand that better than anyone else, but this isn’t just about you!! All our lives depend on this!! That includes Bulma!!”

Vegeta paused for a moment and let out a frustrated huff. He took a deep breath to calm his nerves and paid his rival a fleeting glance.

“Ten minutes is more than enough time for me to finish him off and escape this planet.” He stated earnestly. “Take the others and get out of here.”

“I’m not gonna leave you here, all by yourself!” Goku exclaimed, resolvedly.

“Enough of this sentimental crap!” The Prince snarled. “Just go!! I’ll find my own way out of here, once I destroy Frieza!!”

“No, I’m not leaving!!”

‘Excellent, the more they argue amongst themselves, the more time I have to reach full power!’ Frieza thought gleefully. His figure was a lot burlier and several veins began protruding around his head, arms and legs. A stunning ice-blue aura blazed around him, with a bizarre reverberation sound, distinct from that of Vegeta’s golden aura, yet with the same perpetual echo to it. Golden sparks shot from beneath the ground and right into his body, as he continued harnessing every bit of his latent energy. ‘Ninety percent!! Good, I’m almost there!!’

“Vegeta, now’s your chance!!” Goku yelled. “You have to take him out!!! Every second counts!!”

‘He’s almost at full strength!’ Vegeta thought, ignoring his rival, as beads of sweat fell from his forehead. ‘This is the defining moment!! It’s make or break from here on out!!’

“That’s right Frieza!!!” He growled, holding a fist up, “Do it!!! Show me your full power, so that once I vanquish you, you’ll know that even at your very best, you stood no chance against the might of a true Super Saiyan Prince!!”

Suddenly a large portion of the ground below Frieza exploded and Goku barely managed to jump up out of dodge.

‘Darn it!’ The Saiyan from Earth thought in dismay, teeth grit. ‘Vegeta, you idiot!! You should’ve beaten him when you had the chance!!’

“RRRAAAAAAARRRRRGGGGGHHHHH!!!” With a loud roar, the heinous despot finally reached full strength, a large explosion of blinding light deluging the surrounding area, for a good moment or two.

He breathed in revitalization, upon feeling the awesome new strength coursing through his veins.

“Now, Vegeta.” He began ominously, before gritting his teeth and snarling. “I will pulverize you into the dirt!!! ALL THAT YOU HAVE DONE TO ME, I SHALL REPAY A THOUSAND-
He instantly vanished and appeared in front of Vegeta, landing a low punch to his mid-section. The Prince’s eyes widened and spit flew out of his mouth, before the lizard continued rummaging him with attack after attack at full strength and landed one final punch right on his forehead, snapping his head back.

‘Oh no.’ Goku thought, jaw clenched, in desperation.

“What did you think of that Super Saiyan?!!” Frieza smirked wickedly. “That was but a taste of my true power!!”

Vegeta snickered slightly and snapped his head right back, letting out an invigorated exhale.

“Well, I’m glad.” He responded. “If that was your best, I truly would have been disappointed.”

Frieza grit his teeth menacingly.

“YOU DARE MOCK ME??!!” He instantly appeared behind him and attempted to punch him right on the spine. However, Vegeta whirled around, catching the blow before ramming his head right into Frieza’s face, crushing his nasal bone, as the tyrant winced in pain. The Prince followed through with an uppercut that sent Frieza flying sky high.

Frieza forced himself to a halt using his Ki, but upon looking down, he saw the Prince preparing his signature attack.

‘If that’s how he wants to play, fine!!!’ The tyrant placed his fists by his sides, powering up his legendary Nova strike. There’s no way that even a Super Saiyan could possibly survive this!!

“GALIIIIICK GUUUUUUUNNNN!!!” Vegeta fired the awesome purple beam at his adversary.

Frieza launched himself like a rocket straight towards the attack, arms held out straight and hands fastened, a purple Ki shield encircled around him. Vegeta’s Galick Gun was unable to penetrate through Frieza’s guard and the latter continued advancing forward. Just as the Saiyan intensified his attack, however, his icy foe tactically disengaged, flying around the blast and ramming his glossy head right into the Prince’s solar-plexus, whereby a whole heap of spittle flew out of his mouth and he was propelled almost a hundred feet back at a downwards angle right into the sea, crashing through an abrasion coast.

Frieza was totally overwhelmed with glee and snickered for a moment or two, before chortling in complacence.

“I did it!!!” He cheered, “I really did it!!!” The lizard grinned victoriously, as he scorned his former underling. “So much for the Super Saiyan of legend!!! Well congratulations Vegeta!! You acquired the power you sought out your entire life, only to die at the hands of the almighty Frieza!!! I am the most powerful being in the Universe!!!”

“NO!!!!” Goku yelled. He couldn’t sense Vegeta’s Ki!! There’s no way he could have lost!! It was just impossible!!

“Ahhh, one monkey down, one to go.” Frieza stared malevolently at the younger Saiyan. “So, how do you wish to die, insect?”
Fear and desperation wracked the young Saiyan’s burly figure. He frantically ventured to call upon the rage-ridden beast that had tried possessing him earlier, in a last-ditch effort to eliminate Frieza once and for all. But- the beast was silent!! He continued to try and summon it, but hadn’t the time, as the lizard appeared in front of him and with one flick to the forehead, sent him flying back towards Gohan and Piccolo.

Goku barely managed to land on his feet, jaw locked in frustration, as he clutched his throbbing head!! Goddammit!!! Frieza was so much more powerful at this level than he was at seventy percent!!

“Dad!!!” Gohan yelled, heading towards his father. “Are you hurt?!!”

“Gohan, you have to leave, now!!” Goku hissed through clenched teeth.

“None of you are going anywhere.” Frieza stated resolutely, making his way over. “You will all perish, just like that traitorous scum Vegeta.”

“There’s no way you beat Vegeta!!!” Piccolo growled. “It’s impossible!!”

“I’m afraid not.” He responded. “That little Super monkey should have known better than to mess with his superior.”

“God damn you, Frieza!!!” The Namekian readied his stance, valiantly taking a position in front of the father-son duo, knowing that Goku was too weakened and fatigued, to engage in battle.

“Big words, for such an overgrown slug.” The lizard snorted and cracked his neck several times, side-to-side, before abruptly charging right towards Piccolo and placing a hand over his mouth, gripping his jaw tightly, as muffled curses escaped his giant prey’s mouth.

“PICCOLO!!!!” Gohan yelled and glared murderously at Frieza. “LET HIM GO!!!” He demanded.

“Oh, I will, right after I put a hole through his skull.” The tyrant aimed a finger at Piccolo’s forehead and flashed a kernel of Ki.

“I SAID, LET HIM GOOOOOO!!!!” Gohan yelled, flaring his power wildly and assailing Frieza head on, without a second thought.

Frieza threw the Namekian aside and the moment Gohan was within reach, he roughly grasped the boy’s tender little neck and fired the beam of Ki initially intended for Piccolo, right through the child’s heart. Gohan’s body convulsed a moment or two, before sagging, as blood exuded from his mouth and his eyes stung with agonizing tears.

“GOHAAAAAAANNNNNNN!!!!!” Goku yelled out, in shock and dismay.

Not two moments later, an irate Vegeta was rushing back towards the battleground, only to gape in horror, as he laid his teal eyes on the horrendous sight of Gohan’s limp body held by Frieza, devoid of Ki. Shit!! He hadn’t made it in time and that fucking bastard had claimed yet another victim!! Fury contorted the legendary warrior’s visage, as he roared. “FRIEZAAAA!!!”

“WHAT????!!” The lizard was stunned beyond imagination, disbelief and apprehension writ all over his face, as he gazed upon the Super Saiyan Prince, alive and well. “HOW???? I DESTROYED
The heel of Vegeta’s boot immediately connected with Frieza’s cheekbone, sending him flying off. He caught Gohan’s body, before it hit the ground, gently laying him out on the grass and promptly dashing towards his much-hated adversary.

Goku and Piccolo hurried over to Gohan’s side, the latter kneeling down, his eyes watering, as he looked dolefully upon his only son.

“Gohan!! TALK TO ME GOHAN!!” Goku shouted desperately, tears gushing out his dark eyes.

“D-D-Dad?” The child wheezed tremulously, coughing out a mouthful of blood, expression marred with unprecedented pain. “I’m- s-sorry.” He croaked out and with those words, the prodigious demi-Saiyan boy breathed his last.

“Gohan, no.” Goku strained, before crying out. “GOHAAAAAN!!!!” The young Saiyan clamped his eyes shut and pulled the little one’s lifeless form to his chest, letting out one tear after another till they began streaming out his eyelids, like a waterfall, as a string of memories flashed through his muddled mind. He remembered the day his son was born and he held his tiny form in his arms. Since then, he watched him grow up day-by-day, learning things at a pace he never could and quickly surpassing his own intelligence. The boy ran to him for protection when Raditz had made his appearance on Earth. He was helpless before his evil brother’s might and had let his son be captured, only to now fail him again, just as he’d failed Bulma!! Not even six years old and yet he’d been murdered so cruelly!! How?!?! How could anyone be so heartless?!!

He put the boy down and stood up, placing his clenched fists by his sides and gnashing his teeth, as he felt the ire soar within him. Everyone depended on him, trusted him, clung to him as their last pillar of hope and he repeatedly let them all down!!! Logic, reason and self-consciousness were defenestrated as the heavenly beast returned, more alive than ever before. It quickly wrapped its sharp claws around the young Saiyan and at that moment his hair shimmered an awesome gold, as rocks began to rise and bolts of lightning attacked the surface of Namek.

Vegeta felt the abrupt rise in Ki and his eyes widened when he turned in his rival’s direction, taking in the sight before him, in complete incredulity.

‘Unbelievable.’

While the Prince was gawking at the younger Saiyan, a hard right hook to the jaw took him by surprise. The lizard followed through with a powerful left uppercut, sending the Super Saiyan flying up into the air.

As Vegeta was midair, Frieza fired a powerful Ki blast. The Prince halted his trek and moved his hands forward to block the incoming attack.

“YAAAAAARRRRRGGGGHGGHHH!!!” Goku bellowed out, as a scintillating golden aura enveloped his chiseled frame. His eyes were teal just like Vegeta’s and his hair took on an awesome and fiery gold color, standing up on end.

After a couple moments of struggling, Vegeta had finally managed to kick away the blast into the vast emptiness of space. He quickly made his way back and witnessed with his own disbelieving eyes, yet another Super Saiyan!! Kakarot had broken through the barrier, just as he had!! It was inconceivable!
Goku instantly turned his hate-filled eyes upon Frieza and the lizard cowered, gulping and taking a few hesitant steps backwards. He’d made a fatal error. By taking away those precious to these two Saiyans, he’d allowed them to reach the pinnacle of their power.

‘No!!’ He thought in dread and despair, frustration rapidly stocking every pore within his being. ‘There’s no way I can defeat them both!!’

Goku turned his steely gaze towards his son and cradled his lifeless little form into his arms. He was just a boy and yet his courage, valor and selflessness on the battlefield would put even great warriors, to complete shame. To say that he was proud of Gohan wouldn’t even come close to describing the high esteem the young half-Saiyan held in his eyes. He took on a stone-cold countenance, as he handed the boy over to his ex-rival.

“Take Gohan and get to my ship, now!” He ordered firmly, tone firm and of a lower pitch than it normally was.

The Namekian gathered his pupil’s carcass in his arms and shut his eyes a moment, as grief and sorrow flooded through him.

“Quickly!!” Goku repeated emphatically. “You’re the only chance we have of reviving him and the others!! You need to stay alive, for Gohan’s sake!!”

“Right.” Piccolo nodded fervently and grabbed the boy, before sensing out Krillin’s Ki and taking off towards him.

A/N: First Bulma and now Gohan too!!! Frieza needs to pay dearly!! He most certainly stands no chance against the heavenly might of not one, but two legendary warriors!!! It’s about time he gets his just dues!!! Brace yourselves, for the epic culmination to this explosive battle in this next chapter!!!
Chapter 32: A new race

Goku set his deathly glare back upon Frieza and the lizard could do nothing except tremble in sheer disbelief and apprehension. The Saiyan roared and sprang straight towards his detestable foe, relentlessly firing punch after punch, kick after kick, holding back absolutely nothing. Frieza was having difficulty blocking his attacks and several managed to slip through his guard. Eventually his defense broke temporarily and Goku landed a ferocious right hand on the lower left vertex of his opponent's chin, propelling him about two dozen yards back. Just as the younger Super Saiyan was about to continue his brutal assault, however, his older counterpart suddenly materialized in front of him.

"Back off!" Vegeta warned, eyes narrowed dangerously.

"Move!" Goku met his glare with one of his own.

"This is my fight, not yours!" The Prince stated unwaveringly. "I don't need your help!"

"And I don't need yours!" The younger Saiyan shot back, grabbing Vegeta by the front of his lycra shirt. "You're the one who let him reach full power! Gohan's dead because of you!" He seethed, accusingly.

Vegeta instantly reciprocated Goku's move, roughly grasping the collar of his Gi and pulling him down forcefully, so they were eye-to-eye.

"You've got some nerve, pointing fingers at me, you sanctimonious halfwit!" He spat. "I told you to take the others and escape while you had the chance, but you didn't listen, did you?!"

The legendary duo stared hatefully at one-another, before Goku's face sagged with guilt, as he properly took in Vegeta's words. He was right! Even if he didn't leave, he could've at least had Gohan and Piccolo get to safety, but he hadn't! He'd been caught up in the moment and his little boy had paid the price for his foolishness! Goku let go of the Prince's shirt.

"I- I'm sorry." He muttered in a subdued voice. Vegeta released his peer and scrutinized him for a moment, before averting his gaze.

"Tch, forget about it." He replied impassively. "He can be wished back, anyway, just like you said."

The pair looked around a moment and only now did they realize that while they were arguing, Frieza had craftily used the opportunity to flee, knowing he stood absolutely no chance against the overwhelming might of two Super Saiyans.

"Fuck!" Vegeta snarled in exasperation. "Dammit! Shit! Shit! Shit!"

"Calm down!" Goku chided, promptly shutting his eyes and focusing his Ki. "He went that way!"
The duo immediately shot forward, flying at full speed and catching up to Frieza within a few minutes.

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Piccolo was fast approaching the ship, carefully cradling his tiny pupil into his arms. His heart clenched, upon seeing the boy's innocent features contorted with such bloodcurdling agony. Before the whole Raditz debacle, his soul was nothing but a putrid pile of the ashes left behind by his father and predecessor, the cruel and demonic tyrant, King Piccolo. He cared about no one and no one cared about him. Everyone viewed him as a heartless monster out for hellbent conquest and bloody retribution. But in Gohan's naive and credulous young eyes, he was a living being with a conscience, just like any other and over the months they'd trained together, a formidable bond had unwittingly developed between master and student, which suddenly manifested outwardly the moment he saw Nappa fire a deathly wave of Ki meant to vaporize the demi-Saiyan. Staunchly defying the underlying foundations behind his very existence, he courageously moved in its path and let it consume him, knowing then that he had to safeguard the boy who'd become his foster son, no matter the cost. Now, it was little Gohan who'd so bravely laid down his life, for him.

As he neared the intergalactic transportation, he stopped a few seconds to wipe away the grief-swamped tears of sorrow that cascaded from his eyes, down to the hem of his steely mandible.

Krillin sensed Piccolo's Ki nearing.

"I'll be back in a minute, okay?" He told Bulma's body and went upstairs, only to gasp in horror, as he saw the giant Namekian warrior holding the small and flaccid carcass of his child companion.

"GOHAN!" He immediately ran over and Piccolo laid the boy's body on the ground. Krillin clamped a hand over his mouth, as he gazed upon the bloody perforation in the centre of the little demi-Saiyan's heart. "N-N-No- th-this can't be." He grit his teeth, kneeling down and placing his hands on the boy's drooping shoulders. He continued looking down upon Gohan with a hefty heart, face dampened with tears. His watery eyes shifted up towards Piccolo. "H-H-How?" Was all he could ask, expression marred with newfound pain and anguish.

Piccolo grievously relayed the events, which had come about, before explaining that, like Vegeta, Goku had broken past his limits and stepped into the realm of legend.

"There's no way that bastard Frieza stands a chance against the two of them." The Namekian furrowed his eyes, tone beset with firm conviction. "It's only a matter of time until they eliminate him and return here. Then we can all make our escape. This planet's about to blow, so they need to work fast."

The bald human gasped, staring wide-eyed at Piccolo.

"We can wish Gohan, Bulma, Dende and all the other innocent people Frieza and his soldiers killed, back to life."

"Right." Krillin concurred, upon gathering his bearings. He mused for a moment. "I have an idea. I'll try and get in touch with Dr. Brief and tell him to collect the dragon balls and make the wish just like you said- but we can't let them know about Bulma and Gohan. That's- uh- better left unsaid."
"Agreed." The Namek nodded his head, in assent. "They'll be wished back anyway, so all's well."

"If we do this, however, we can't wish Tien or Yamcha back." Krillin stated. "Chiaotzu's been revived once already, but-"

"We don't know that for certain." Piccolo interjected. "If all the Namekians are revived, surely one or two of them will have the ability to create new dragon balls."

"I- I see." That in mind, Krillin took Gohan's body downstairs, gently laying it down next to Bulma's and releasing a lengthy crestfallen sigh, before heading back up and looking over the ship's central console, in an attempt to try and figure out how to send a transmission that would reach Earth. Lo and behold, it took less than a minute to patch a communication signal through to Capsule Corporation, thanks to the straightforwardness of Dr. Brief's control panel design! Bless the good doctor's remarkable ingenuity!

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Goku quickly appeared in front of Frieza, halting his trek, while Vegeta was behind him, effectively trapping the evil overlord.

"Thought you could escape, did you?!!" Vegeta sneered. "Coward!"

The lizard whirled around, snarling at him, before abruptly launching himself his way. The fight started out relatively even, destructive blows exchanged between the two mortal enemies, as the ground exploded around them. After a good minute or so, however, the tide slowly but surely began shifting Vegeta's way. Frieza's energy was fading fast.

'Goku! Goku!' 

'Wh-What?! Who?! What?!' The young Super Saiyan mentally answered the voice in his head. 'Is-is that you King Kai?!!'

'Yes, it's me!' The god confirmed. 'Listen, why aren't you helping Vegeta?! You don't have time to just sit back and watch! This isn't a game, you know! The planet's about to blow!'

'You know I would King Kai!' The Saiyan replied, teeth grit. 'But he's too stubborn to accept my help! If I go in there, he'll just start fighting me and that'll only make things worse!'

'Darn it!' The deity huffed in frustration. 'Look, I know this is going to sound horrible, but if he's not going to let you fight, then you need to escape, before Namek explodes!' 

'Never!' Goku responded, fervently. 'I'm not just gonna leave him here to die!'

'I don't want it anymore than you, but-' King Kai cut off his words. 'Wait hold up, I'm getting a call from Kami. Be back in a moment.'

The young Saiyan shook his head and once again observed the battle before him, jaws and fists clenched, as rage boiled through his bloodstream at the sheer injustice of it all! Damn that self-oriented scumbag, Vegeta! This was so unfair! If the situation wasn't so perilous, he'd plough right through him and Frieza both, that's how pissed off he was! 'Probably couldn't do that though.' He thought to himself mirthlessly, all the while watching the now one-sided exchange. Another ominous minute raced by.
'Goku, listen up, I have good news for you!' The familiar voice returned.

'What is it, King Kai?'

'Kami's just informed me that Mr. Popo has gathered six of the seven dragon balls on Earth.' He answered. 'He suggested using them to revive your friends that are here with me, but I asked him instead to bring back to life, the innocent people killed by Frieza and his henchmen. Tien, Yamcha and Chiaotzu have all given me their blessing. I won't explain the details, but if this thing goes like I hope it does, Guru will return as well and there's still one more wish left on the Namekian dragon balls.'

'Right, go on.'

'We'll use that wish to transport everyone on Namek back to Earth, except for Frieza!'

'No!' Goku objected.

'N-No? Why not?'

'Make it everyone on Namek, except for Frieza and me.' Goku's heart thudded a moment in ambivalence, but his shoulders finally slumped, as he went on, in a softer, yet more reluctant tone. 'And Vegeta.' He figured that if the Prince found out that he was teleported to Earth and robbed of his only chance at victory, he'd be more than a little nettled and that wouldn't be too healthy for anyone nearby. The young Saiyan let go of his thirst for battle and decided to do what was best for everyone, albeit begrudgingly. He'd be sure to get Vegeta back for this, someday!

'Goku, I don't understand you!' King Kai protested.

'Look, King Kai!' The Saiyan argued. 'If we leave Frieza here and he survives, he'll continue terrorizing the Universe! I must see this through to the end, with my own two eyes! I need to know that he'll no longer be a threat!'

'But you're already short on time!' The portly god countered. 'You can take Frieza out later! For now, you have to survive!'

'I'm sorry, but this is the only way!' Goku's resolve was unshakeable. 'If you have us wished back to Earth, I promise that I'll never, ever forgive you!'

King Kai trembled in indecision. Why did this younger generation have to be so damn obstinate?! Seriously, no respect for the elderly, whatsoever! If Goku was this recalcitrant, he couldn't even imagine what a hard case Vegeta would be! Hopefully, he'd never ever have to disciple someone like that! His shoulders fell and he let out a dejected sigh.

'Fine.' He groaned. 'By the way, Earth's dragon balls are now ready.'

'Perfect, let's do it then!' Goku smiled. 'You're the best, King Kai!'

'Yeah, yeah, just shut up already, idiot!' The god replied, indignantly. 'You better not end up dying, or I'll personally tell King Yemma to send you some place else, got it?!

'Aw come on, that's not very nice.'
"Hello, Dr. Brief, do you read me?"

"Oh, Krillin, hi there." The good doctor replied, tone as carefree as always. "How are you, my boy? It's been a while. Have you rescued my little darling, Bulma, yet?"

"Uh- yeah." Replied the bald warrior, successfully concealing the guilty undertone to his voice. "She's uh- safe and sound. Anyway, listen up, I have a request."

"Gimme the mike, now!" Piccolo and Krillin flinched, as they heard a deafening voice on the other end, followed by a few gruesome bangs, thuds and clangs. "Krillin?! Where's Gohan?! What did you do with him?! TELL ME!"

The Namekian and his bald companion tightly clasped their ears, as they were assaulted full force, by Chi-Chi's ear-piercing shriek.

"Oh God, now I know why Goku was so eager to die, fighting Raditz." Piccolo wryly mumbled to himself, placing a hand over his eyes and slowly shaking his head.

"I-I-Is th-that P-P-P-Piccolo?" The raven-haired woman stammered, tone laden with horror, upon hearing the muffled and barely audible, yet all-too-familiar voice of the beast that'd kidnapped her only son.

"Uh- Hello." Piccolo greeted awkwardly, never before having spoken directly to this harpy woman. Much to everyone's relief, Chi-Chi went blue in the face and immediately fainted. Dr. Brief breathed an alleviating sigh, before retrieving the mike.

"Well, anyway." He droned awkwardly, then continued. "What was it that you wanted to ask me, Krillin?"

"Umm- Oh right." The bald warrior furrowed his brows. "As you know, we wished Piccolo back to life and he's here with me now."

"Uhh- okay." Dr. Brief remarked, an uneasy edge to his voice.

"Well, that means Kami's back as well and Earth's dragon balls with him."

"Right, right."

"We need you gather them, pronto, is that clear?"

"Sure thing." The doctor assented. Luckily, he'd built three spare dragon radars, just for insurance, so dragon ball hunting would be a cinch. "Is Bulma with you, by any chance?"

"Well- um- she's not with us right now, strictly speaking." Krillin answered in a slightly shaky voice.

Bulma slowly blinked several times, before abruptly sitting up and taking a few ganders, here and
there.

"B-Bulma?! Is- is that you?!"

She immediately turned her head left ways and her eyes widened upon seeing the boy next to her.

"G-G-Gohan?"

"Wh-where are we?" The boy asked, his voice innocent. "Are we dead? Is this otherworld?"

Bulma shook the daze out of her head and got a proper and thorough gauge of her surroundings.

"I- I'm not sure." She answered. "It looks like we're in a spaceship of some sorts. I don't understand."

Gohan frowned pensively for a moment, before an answer clicked in his head.

"Wait, I've got it!" He grabbed Bulma's hands, twinkling at her. "Someone wished us back to life! That has to be it!"

"Hold on, us back to life?!!" She frowned in confusion, but gawped at him, as it hit her. "You- you mean you d-d-died a-as well?!!"

"Yeah, uh- Frieza killed me." He looked down towards his chest plate and Bulma gasped upon seeing the hole in his armor, where Frieza'd fired a searing beam of Ki. Her eyes teared as she reluctantly ran her finger along the circumference of the bloodied orifice.

"Oh my God, that's horrible." She murmured weakly. What kind of hellish fiend could be so cruel to a sweet little boy like Gohan?! Who was she kidding?! This was the same heartless monster that had slowly pierced through her abdomen! She cringed at the severely painful memory, placing a hand on her midsection and feeling the tear in her clothing as well as the hoards of dried blood staining it. Thank God she was whole again, though! "Wait! What about Vegeta?! What happened to him?! And Goku?!!" Bulma grabbed the half-Saiyan's arms.

"I don't know." Gohan shook his head. "Let me check." The boy closed his eyes and focused his senses. His face instantly lit up. "Hey, Piccolo and Krillin are nearby!"

"Th-they are?!!"

"Yeah, we can ask them what's going on!"

"Right!"

The two of them stood to their feet and took a good look around, then made their way to the upper floor of the ship.

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"Krillin." An uncharacteristically dark edge laced the scientist's voice. "Where is Bulma?" He slowly articulated each word.

"She's um- downstairs- b-b-but she can't come up r-right now." Replied the bald warrior, knees
quivering and heart racing.

"Get her up here, immediately." Dr. Brief ordered coolly, growing restless and suspicious.

"I- I can't- umm- she won't listen to me." He answered, with a half truth.

The doctor sighed wearily and shook his head. That sounded just like Bulma: too stubborn for her own good! Oh well, as long as she was safe and sound, that's all that truly mattered!

"Tell her to call me, whenever she's free."

"Right, will do." Krillin was about to cut the line, until he recalled why he'd made contact in the first place. "Oh yes, once you bring together the dragon balls, ask Shenron to restore life to all the innocent people killed by Frieza, okay?"

"Who's Frieza?" Dr. Brief raised an eyebrow, confusedly.

"Look, it's complicated and I'll explain later, but for now, you need to gather the balls, understood?!"

"Umm- Right, right." The doctor paused a moment, before remembering something else. "What about Vegeta?" His tone flooded with venom towards the demon spawn that had dared kidnap his little girl.

"Well, let's just say that he's no longer a problem."

"Oh." Dr. Brief commented, brows raised in bona fide surprise. "Well- um- okay then."

"Piccolo! Krillin!"

The Namek and the bald human instantly turned in the direction of the voice, only to see- Gohan?! And Bulma?! Alive?!

"G-G-G-Gohan?!" Krillin stammered. At that moment, Chi-Chi abruptly shot up, as she heard her son's name.

"Gohan?!"

"Mom?!" The boy looked around apprehensively, knees shaking very visibly. "Wh-Where a-are y-you?!"

"Oh Gohan!" He heard the mewling voice of his mother, as she forcefully grabbed the mike on the other end, having shoved aside Dr. Brief. "Mommy was so worried about you! Oh, my sweet little sugarplum! I'm so glad you're okay!"

Gohan's cheeks tinted a good seven shades of crimson at the corny manner in which his mother was addressing him. Krillin and Bulma barely restrained themselves from bursting open in a fit of boisterous laughter. Seriously?! Sugarplum?! The abashed child was about to answer, until he saw Piccolo kneeling down in front of him, hands on his shoulders.

"Gohan, what happened?!" The Namekian asked gravely, yet with a soft and alleviated undertone to his voice. "How're you still alive?!"
"I- well- I'm not sure." The boy replied. "I was gonna ask you the same thing."

"Someone must have wished you back!"

"I was thinking along the same lines."

"YOU MEAN YOU WERE DEAD?!!" Chi-Chi shrilled, nearly rupturing everyone's eardrums. "Oh, my precious little Gohan was deeeeeeaaaad!!" She wailed a moment, before a loud thump was heard by all those on the spaceship, as the raven-haired mother once again passed out, struck with overwhelming shock.

"Riiigggghhht." Krillin drawled and looked towards Bulma, brows furrowed. "But how could anyone have wished you two back? That makes no sense."

"And now that I think about it, all the Namekians have returned to life as well." Piccolo added.

"You're right!" Gohan beamed, hammering a fist against his palm. "This is great!"

"This whole thing seems a little fishy to me though." The Namek remarked.

'What in the blazes is going on?!' Dr. Brief thought to himself, thoroughly perplexed. Wait a minute! Did Krillin just say that Bulma was "wished back" too?! Did that mean she was dead?! Is that why he sounded so nervous?! Not a second later, all those aboard the ship, along with everyone on the planet were abruptly teleported straight to Earth, all except three super powerful entities. Capsule Corporation's president repeatedly demanded answers from his audience, but much to his chagrin, no one was there to provide and after many long moments, he gave up, huffing peevishly and walking away, while poor Chi-Chi remained unconscious on the floor.

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Blows were traded from one adversary to the other, in the now blatantly lopsided battle. Frieza shot his right fist towards Vegeta, but the latter sidestepped, grabbed his wrist and quickly positioned himself behind his opponent, holding him in a rear armlock, while getting a vice-like grip around his neck with his other arm, all in one rapidly swift move.

"So tell me something Frieza!" The Prince continued tightening his hold, as the lizard cried out in pain. "How does it feel, being bested by your pet monkey?!!"

Frieza gnashed his teeth together, every part of him cursing the Saiyan. He howled in severe excruciation, as Vegeta pushed his arm up so hard that he dislocated his elbow joint. He abruptly released his foe, who gawked at his limp appendage in absolute shock and alarm, dumbstruck and not able to mouth a single word. The pain was bad enough, but the sight of his wilting arm right in front of him made it at least three times as horrendous. All hope was lost and he knew it now, as abject hopelessness swathed his quivering figure. He was soundly defeated and there was nothing at all he could do about it.

"It's over." Stated Vegeta, in a nonchalant voice, yet with a clear undercurrent of pride to it.

Frieza swivelled around, giving the Prince a foul glare, teeth bared menacingly, as a new rush of hate-swamped resolve overtook him.
"IT'S NOT OVER!" He roared and fired a Ki disk with his left hand that Vegeta easily caught between his thumb and fingers, much to the lizard's disbelief.

"Tch." The Super Saiyan scoffed, hurling away the rapidly rotating fuchsia saucer into a mountainside, hacking right through it. "That's all you have left? You just don't know when to call it quits, do you?" Vegeta infused a considerable portion of Ki into his right arm. He suddenly appeared right in front of Frieza and used his blazing appendage to hack right through his midsection with a fatal horizontal slice. The tyrant could only sputter incoherently, as his top and bottom half fell to the ground, along with his left hand, that was also amputated as a result of Vegeta's Ki-inundated knife-hand attack.

"Vegeta!" Goku flew over to his rival. The Prince turned towards him. "I just spoke to King Kai."

"King who?!" Vegeta asked, frowning bemusedly.

"Never mind." The younger Saiyan shook his head and continued. "Anyway, he informed me that a short while ago, Earth's dragon balls were used to resurrect all the people killed by Frieza and his men. That means Bulma and Gohan are alive again!"

Vegeta looked at his rival incredulously, his heart hammering against his ribcage with an overwhelming sense of relief and jubilance and soul lighting up with new radiance. He couldn't feel a smidgeon of her Ki, but somehow, he knew she was alive and well.

"Namek's dragon also came back and a wish was made to transport everyone on this planet back to Earth, except you, me and Frieza!" Goku continued. "Everyone's safe now!"

The Prince was dumbstruck and took a moment to collect himself.

"I see." His lips quirked up, as he descended downward till his feet touched the ground, Goku in tow. He gazed scornfully upon his beaten and broken adversary. "I ask you again, Frieza: how does it feel?"

The tyrant tilted his head up, giving his ex underling the blackest of looks.

"How does it feel, knowing that even in your weakest form you had the power to destroy our entire race with just the tip of your finger and yet even at your very best, the two remaining Saiyans managed to surpass you in every way imaginable?!" The Prince smirked. "How does it feel knowing that you're about to die and that when the ages pass, you will be a mere footnote in the annals of history, a glorified plot device to showcase the true magnificence of the Saiyan race- or should I say, the Super Saiyan race?"

Palpable waves of raw hatred emanated off of Frieza, as he snarled furiously at the Prince, but lacked the energy to do anything further. Curse these bastards! He could've destroyed them both a hundred times over! He'd gravely underestimated them at every turn and in doing so, given them the means to heighten their powers to such cosmic levels! He'd been a fool!

Goku smiled inwardly. Super Saiyan race! He liked the sound of that. It gave him pride, knowing that his people had now evolved into a new race and would no longer be the brutal, bloodthirsty beasts that they'd been for much too long! No, they would begin anew! They would be a force for righteousness in every corner of the Universe!

"Don't answer that." Vegeta waved his hand. The tyrant frowned at him. "But tell me one thing:
Was killing her really worth it?" He smirked as he went on. "Especially now that she's been wished back to life?"

"What?!" Frieza croaked out, eyes widened as another wave of shame and defeat coursed through him. "You lie!"

"It's no lie!" Goku responded. The lizard turned towards the other smug Saiyan. "Both her and Gohan were revived using Earth's dragon balls. So were all the other innocent people you killed. But it doesn't end there. Namek's dragon returned as well and a wish was made to teleport everyone here back to Earth, except the three of us."

"To put it simply, the only thing you accomplished by setting foot on this planet, was the destruction of your army and your defeat at the hands of a true Super Saiyan." Vegeta stated. He aimed his right palm a petrified Frieza's way, flaring a lethal sphere of brilliant blue Ki. "And now it's time I send you straight to hell!" He instantly fired a hole right through the middle of his lifelong tormentor's chest, despite his loud pleas for mercy. Frieza screamed, but immediately fell silent, eyes wide open, body limp and expression marred with transparent horror, in the aftermath of the attack. Vegeta let out an alleviated exhale. He'd done it at last! He'd killed the supposedly almighty and invincible Frieza with his own hand! He looked up into the sky, shutting his eyes and exhaling, as he took in the palatable fragrance of victory, lingering in the thickened atmosphere of Namek. He let it deluge every fibre in his body and every drop of blood flowing through his veins. A series of tremors and explosions immediately reminded him, however, that he hadn't a moment to celebrate! The Prince turned towards his rival. "I think it's time we leave. In less than two minutes, this planet's history." He promptly flew towards Frieza's ship, while Goku remained behind for a little while, looking disgustedly at the lizard's seemingly lifeless form, a bloody and gaping perforation in the centre of his upper thorax.

Though the younger Saiyan was deeply appalled by the savage and merciless display of his older counterpart, he'd kept silent on the matter, knowing that any objections would only waste precious seconds! If it were him, surely he'd have shown some mercy, despite all that Frieza had done. No matter what Vegeta believed, everyone deserved second chances. But now was not the time for regrets! He sighed and shook his head, taking off in the Prince's direction, without further delay.

Vegeta took a minute or so to arrive at the spacecraft. Knowing it was as good as useless, an idea clicked in his mind and he scavenged the area for the space pods of the Ginyu Force. They must have been nearby! Just as luck would have it, he located them quickly and went over to the closest one, opening the hatch, getting inside, closing it and setting the co-ordinates for Earth. He considered waiting for Kakarot, but ultimately decided not to take the risk, knowing that even if he didn't make it in time, his foolish friends could revive him. Not that he cared, or so he told himself, but he needed a powerful rival such as him, to stay strong, focused and determined. That in mind, he pressed the launch button, taking off immediately. As his pod was flying, however, a fateful explosion below impaired the hull of the vehicle. Vegeta cursed inwardly, but foolishly ignored the damage, powering down to his base form and wincing as a whole new set of injuries suddenly manifested themselves on every inch of his skin! Not wasting a moment, he pressed the yellow button that released the stasis gas, exhaling deeply, as he let some much-needed and well-earned rest, overcome him at last.

Goku had made it to Frieza's ship and was fumbling around with each and every button in front of him, but to no avail. Darn thing was completely busted! Frustration coiled through the young Saiyan, as the ground beneath the ship split and it began falling into the searing lava below.

"DAMMIT!" He roared aloud.
A short while earlier, back on Earth, Bulma, Gohan and all the others were more confused than ever, upon finding themselves in the heart of a beautiful and spacious savannah. Questions were traded back and forth, until a giant Guru sitting on the grass explained the entire situation.

"As of now, the Super Saiyans are still on Namek."


"What?!" Gohan exclaimed. "You're saying my father's a Super Saiyan now, as well?!"

"That's right, Gohan!" Piccolo affirmed, placing a hand on his pupils' shoulder and smirking down at him. "After he saw you die, he went insane! I'd never seen him so mad before in my life and it just happened. He transformed, just like Vegeta did."

"V-V-Vegeta d-did?" Bulma asked dumbly, unable to fit together the pieces. What exactly had happened?!

"Wow, he actually did it." The demi-Saiyan boy smiled with pride in his voice, tears of joy glistening his dark irises. "That's my dad."

"Wait a minute, time out!" The blue-haired female interrupted the child's moment of jubilance. "Aren't we forgetting something?! Why're Goku and Vegeta still on Namek?! Why aren't they here with us?!"

"They chose to stay behind, in order to eliminate Frieza once and for all." Guru answered.

"But that's stupid!" She protested, heart heavy with trepidation. "What if they don't make it?!"

"I'm afraid that is out of our hands now." The elderly sage let out a weary sigh. "We can only hope for their well-being."

After a fraught minute or so passed by, Guru's face lit up with contentment, as he sensed Frieza's final defeat on Namek and relayed the message to the crowd encircling him. Those gathered around cheered in celebration, until another grim announcement hit them from afar.

"Bulma? Bulma?" An all-to-familiar voice sprung within the burrows of the heiress' mind.

"Y-Yamcha?" She asked, wide-eyed. "Is- is that you?"

"Yeah it's me." He replied. She could see the grin behind his voice all too well. "I'm on King Kai's planet. I'm speaking to you telepathically."

"Oh- uh- okay." Bulma smiled. "It's so good to hear your voice, Yamcha!"

"Likewise." He chuckled a moment, before getting down to business. "Anyway, I'm afraid I have bad news for you."

"Bulma, is that Yamcha?" Krillin asked.
"Yeah it is, now hush!" The blue-haired woman replied. "Go on, Yamcha."

Gohan, Krillin and Piccolo made their way nearby, ears perked up.

"Well, King Kai briefed us about what's been happening on Namek." The scar-faced warrior stated. "Vegeta escaped safely and he's heading right towards Earth!"

"Vegeta escaped?" Bulma's face lit up in a beatific smile. She beamed at her friends. "Guys, Vegeta made it out alive!"

"That's great, but- what about dad?!" Gohan asked, heart thudding apprehensively.

"Yeah?" Krillin too, was as edgy as ever. "Is Goku alright?"

"I don't know yet." She shook her head, then looked back up into the sky. "Continue."

"Umm- well- wait a minute, Bulma!"

"What?"

"Didn't you hear what I just said?!" Yamcha exclaimed, as though she were an idiot. "Vegeta's headed for Earth!" He enunciated. "That's bad news!"

"Dammit, it's fine Yamcha!" She frowned, rolling her eyes, even though he couldn't see her. "I'm the one who invited him here!"

"You what?!" The ex-bandit hissed. "What in seven hells would possess you to do something that stupid?!"

"Maybe you ought to use your pint-sized brain for just one second, dumbass!" She growled lividly. "We can't very well leave him in outer-space! He'll just continue wreaking havoc everywhere he sets foot!" True as that was, the heiress craftily managed to cover the primary reason why she chose to invite him here, figuring that she'd cross that bridge at a more convenient juncture. "Here on Earth, we can keep him in check!"

"Keep him in check?!" Yamcha fired back. "He's not some circus rhino! Vegeta's a fucking Super Saiyan and he just wiped out Frieza! As in, the terror of the Universe, Frieza! There's no one who can possibly restrain him, now that Goku's-" At that point the scarred warrior cut off his sentence.

"Goku's what?" Bulma asked in a soft, unsettled voice. "Did something happen to him?!"

After a tense pause, Yamcha released a despondent sigh and answered.

"I'm afraid so, Bulma." He rasped gloomily, face downcast. "He- he didn't make it in time. And it only get's worse." He took a deep breath, before hesitantly proceeding. "King Kai says that since Namek's been destroyed, he can't be wished back either."

Stunned silence followed for a good while, before Bulma imparted the tragic news to those beside her, heart laden with gut-wrenching grief. As expected, none of them took it well. She knelt before Gohan and let the lamenting little child weep against her shoulder, holding him around the neck and caressing the back of his head comfortingly, as her own tears spilled in an ocean of sorrow and bereavement at the altruistic sacrifice of her precious Goku. Piccolo's head drooped dejectedly and
Krillen was on all fours, crying and slamming his fists against the lush grassy ground, making no efforts whatsoever to conceal his heartache at the loss of his dearest friend and companion.

A/N: So Vegeta's finally triumphed over his lifelong enemy and he's headed right for Earth! Will he make it there safely?! If so, how will things go down once Yamcha is revived and he discovers the truth?! And is Goku really dead?! Or did he manage to flee on time?! Let me know your thoughts and be sure to review/follow/favourite!

p.s. Weren't Vegeta's final words to Frieza totally epic?! I really loved writing that scene and also the Gohan/Piccolo flashbacks! Incidentally, I'm afraid I'll have to take several weeks off, in order to catch up on my writing! Remember, this story proceeds to the Androids saga, so there's still a fair bit left. Oh and just in case you're wondering, I will most certainly not include that Garlic Jr. crap in my story! That filler garbage was the very worst saga and has no place in DBZ, as far as I'm concerned!
Out of the fire and into the ice

Chapter 33: Out of the fire and into the ice

Although the Namekians had informed their Earthling allies that their dragon balls would regain their lucency in another 130 days and could restore life to a person, regardless of how many times they'd been revived, any emerging smidgeon of hope was crushed, as Piccolo properly elucidated the situation.

"The problem is that Goku died on the planet Namek, but that planet was destroyed by Frieza." He informed. "Even if we can revive him, his body will materialize in the void where Namek once endured and since there's no air to breathe in outer space, he'll just suffocate to death."

"I- I see." Krillin banged his elbow to the ground, in frustration. It was just so unfair! Why did this have to happen?! Why to Goku of all people?!

"Bulma, are you still there?"

"Y-Yeah, I'm here, Yamcha." The heiress replied, wiping her eyes clean and getting to her feet. Gohan didn't let go of her and wound his small arms around her waistline, nestling his face into her petite stomach, as he wept incessantly. She placed a hand on the back of his head, gently caressing his dark hair. Her heart wrenched for the child, who'd become like a son to her, in the short time they'd known one-another.

"I know this isn't the best bad time, but we need to be prepared for Vegeta." Stated the scarred fighter. "There's no telling what he'll do once he-"

"What the hell is wrong with you?!!" She seethed back. "Gohan just lost his father, for goodness sake! Can't you give us a moment?!"

"I know that, but-"

"I already told you, I'll take care of Vegeta!" She replied icily, before taking a breath and softening her tone. "He's no longer a threat, Yamcha. I know it's difficult to believe, but he's not the same person that attacked Earth."

"Bulma, you can't be-"

"I am serious! Dead serious!" She interjected loudly, whereby her ex cringed. "If Goku were alive, I can assure you that he'd vouch for him too!" Bulma paused a moment, then continued in an almost imperceptible voice. "And plus Vegeta, well- he- he- promised me he wouldn't be like Frieza."

Yamcha's eyes widened, mouth ajar and expression writ with sheer disbelief. Just what on Earth did she mean by that?! Why would a beast like Vegeta ever make such a vow?! Why to her?! An ugly, unsettling feeling began sprouting within the pit of his stomach. He needed to know what was going on and he needed to know now! As he was about to ask, however, his former lover cut him off.

"Look Yamcha, all Vegeta's interested in, is training and increasing his power." She stated
unwaveringly. "He won't cause any trouble, trust me." The ex-bandit frowned at that.

"You say that like it's a good thing!" The scar-faced warrior was as unconvinced as ever. "If his power increases further, that only makes things ten times worse! Need I remind you that this is the same person that had me killed and took you hostage!"

"I know, but he also saved our lives on Namek, many times!" She countered emphatically. "And I understand that you resent him for what he did to you, but we're gonna wish you back, along with everyone else!"

"That may be so, but I still think it's too risky." The scarred man shook his head. "Right now, the only one who has a chance to stop him is Goku, but he's gone!" Yamcha sighed wistfully.

"There's gotta be a way to bring him back!" Bulma remarked, her lithe frame beset with staunch determination. "I'm not gonna let Gohan grow up without his father." She looked towards Krillin and Piccolo. "Come on guys! Just think for a second, would you?!"

The Namekian mused a moment, before a thought hit him.

"I've got it!" He hammered a fist against his palm. Gohan tilted his head towards his mentor, a glimmer of hope rekindling within his onyx eyes. "Namek's dragon grants us exactly three wishes, right?!"

"Right." Bulma nodded affirmatively.

"Then we'll use the first wish to bring Goku's soul back to Earth." He explained. "That way, when he's revived with the second wish, he'll return right here!"

"That's- that's brilliant!" The heiress beamed, relief flooding through her. "Great idea!"

The green giant smirked inwardly and was completely caught off guard when his tiny pupil glomped him, not a second later.

"Thank you so much, Piccolo!" The boy cheered, girding his arms around the big Namekian's face. "I knew you'd find a way! I just knew it! You're the best!"

"Gohan, let go of me!" He chided, face flushed, as he unsuccessfully tried pulling his disciple away. Bulma giggled, her heart warming at the tender scene playing out. It was kind of cute seeing this other side to Piccolo. He wasn't anything like the big, bad super scary monster she remembered! Krillin lay flat on the grass and smiled up at the sky, hope and joy filling him to the brim. He couldn't wait to see Goku again! Hell, strange as it may have been, he was even sort of looking forward to the reunion with Vegeta!

'Haha, what on Earth's happened to me?'

The celebrations didn't last long, however, as the Grand Elder of Namek, content as ever, announced that his time had come, at last.

"You must remain strong, my children." Guru instructed kindly, in a serene and comforting lilt. "Live in harmony amongst one-another, help those in need and never shed the blood of the innocent. You are a race of paramount knowledge, who carry a prestigious legacy that shall persevere throughout the ages: the dragon balls. Use them wisely and safeguard them from the
hands of evil, as though they are your own children." He then turned towards the oldest of his offspring. "Tsuno."

"Y-Yes Elder." The Namek approached. Guru gently gripped his hand and imparted to him all the knowledge he'd acquired over the course of his lengthy existence.

"You are the Eldest now, my son." He smiled and looked towards his people one last time, as he slowly disappeared away. "Goodbye, my dear children. You've made me- so very proud."

Tears were shed and hearts, ground to pieces, as the revered father of the Namekian race, loved by so many, made his peaceful passage into the next world, never to return.

As the mourning finally died down, Bulma called her father and explained that her and the rest of the crew had been teleported straight back to Earth. She promptly invited the horde of Namekians to stay with her at Capsule Corporation, while they still resided on Earth, in exchange for the use of their dragon balls.

And so, an hour later Dr. Brief arrived on scene along with a highly unsettled Chi-Chi, who was resolved more than ever to see her child and ascertain the truth from Krillin and that dastardly Piccolo, even if she had to beat it out of them! The mad mother dashed out of the plane, the moment it landed. Her eyes watered as she caught sight of a little boy clad in Saiyan uniform, craftily hiding amidst a group of green aliens, whom she could safely assume were Namekians. Carelessly sweeping her way right through the astounded aliens, the Ox Princess got on her knees and squeezed the living daylights out of her son, in an air-constricting embrace.

"Oh, my poor little baby!" She mewled. "Mommy was worried sick about you!" Chi-Chi continued puling cacophonously, unaware of the multitude of eardrums that were a mere inch away from bursting apart.

"H-H-Hi m-m-mom." The boy stammered sheepishly, a profuse blush smearing his face.

"What's the matter Gohan?!" The woman withdrew, louring at her one and only child. "You don't look all that happy to see me!"

"W-Well, i-it's not that." He replied. "It's just-"

"Just what?"

"I- I forgot to do my h-homework." The demi-Saiyan admitted abashedly, tapping his index fingers together.

Chi-Chi paused a moment, frowning at her child, before grinning.

"Well, that's okay!" She shook her head. The gleam of hope that lit the demi-Saiyan's eyes vanished away, with his temperamental mother's next words. "That just means you have a lot of catching up to do, since you're going to stay at least three grades ahead of your peers."

"But mom, I don't even know any of my peers-"

"Don't 'but mom' me, mister!" She snarled back. The hapless child winced. "From now on, I'm going to keep my eye on you at all times, are we clear?! No more larking or fighting for you ever, period!"
That last word continued ringing throughout Gohan's mind like a plaguing bell. Strange as it may have been, he kind of enjoyed the time he shared with his father, Piccolo, Krillin, Bulma and heck, even Vegeta! Nonetheless, he supposed his mother was right. He understood that he needed to be a responsible young man, since peace had now prevailed and the Earth was no longer under threat. He looked up at his mother.

"Okay mom, whatever you want." The boy smiled kindly. "And it- it really is good to see you again- too."

Chi-Chi's expression immediately softened and she embraced her son once again, albeit gently this time.

"Hey, uh- Chi-Chi." Bulma headed over to the raven-haired woman.

"Oh, Bulma, I forgot all about you!" A broad smile lit the Ox Princess' face, as she stood up and took hold of the blue-haired female's hands. "I never did get to thank you, for what you did! It was really brave of you, saving us all from that godawful Saiyan!"

"Uh- yeah- well- um- I guess- that's what friends are for hehe." She let out a strained chuckle. None of them had an inkling that she and that godawful Saiyan had twice engaged in the steamiest sex she'd experienced, all her life! Searing heat rushed straight to her face, her legs weakening, as she was mentally reminded of those enthralling moments.

"What's wrong Bulma?" Chi-Chi asked inquisitively. "You look like a red pepper."

"Sorry." The heiress responded quickly, getting ahold of herself. "Just a couple of side effects- from- uh- being teleported here I guess, hehehe."

"Oh right." The oblivious mother nodded. "Your father told me all about that. Must've been pretty awkward, huh?"

"Uh- yeah, it sure was." Bulma scratched her head, laughing sheepishly.

'I don't think that's true.' Krillin thought inwardly, listening carefully to the discourse between the two females. 'It's pretty obvious now that something went on between her and Vegeta.' He recalled her final words to the Prince, right before she'd died. 'Great! Just what has Bulma gotten herself into?! How on Earth is she going to explain this to poor Yamcha?!'

"Anyway, Chi-Chi, I just wanted to let you know that you and Gohan are both welcome to stay with us at Capsule Corporation, until we wish Goku back." Bulma smiled. "You can invite your father over as well."

"Oh no, Bulma, I- I couldn't-"

"Please, it's my pleasure." The heiress prodded. "Plus, I can help with Gohan's homework, whenever I get the time."

"I don't know." Chi-Chi sighed. "You've already done so much-"

"I insist." She said fervently. "This is the least I can do, for all the times Goku's saved Earth. Think nothing of it."
"Oh, alright." The Ox Princess relented, smiling at her. "I owe you Bulma."

"No biggie." The heiress winked, before facing the Earth-born Namekian. "What about you, Piccolo? You can come too."

"Tch." Piccolo snorted, averting his gaze. "Forget it." This vivacious little female was acting much too familiar for this taste! He decided he didn't like it!

"Oh come on, don't be like that." The blue-haired woman pressed. "I'm sure Gohan would really appreciate having you there."

"Bulma!" Chi-Chi hissed in a low voice. "Are you out of your mind?!"

"Yeah, come with us Piccolo!" Gohan beamed at his mentor. "It'd be great to have you around!"

"What's the matter with you two?!" The raven-haired woman seethed.

"Chi-Chi, get with the program already!" Bulma rolled her eyes, at her cantankerous friend. "Piccolo's not a bad guy anymore!"

"I'm right here, you know!" The Namekian growled, indignantly.

A short moment of bickering later, it was agreed! All those present elected to stay at the Briefs' household, save Krillin, who flew back to Kame House to fill in Master Roshi about the craziest and wildest adventure he'd ever had.

Several days rolled by and Capsule Corporation was more lively than ever before.

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Elsewhere in the heart of space, a comatose Vegeta was completely oblivious to the true extent of damage his pod had endured. The oxygen concentrator was slowly leaking and not a week since he'd departed Namek, supplies were drastically low. Loud Sirens abruptly woke the hapless Prince.

"Code red! code red!" The pod's computer suddenly blurted out loud. "Oxygen level: near zero!"

"D-D-Dammit!" Vegeta cursed. What in the blazes was going on?! He turned off the alarm and checked the oxygen gauge. Shit! Given the leakage, there was scarcely enough to last him a half hour. The Prince switched screens twice and every bit of color left his face, upon seeing the ETA: 27 days! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! If only he'd taken time to observe the detriment his pod had taken from the very beginning! He could've gone to Planet Frieza No. 79 and either have this pod repaired or scrapped, in favour of a new one! No! He could not let this deter him! He needed to find a way out of this jam, before he suffocated to death in his own pod!

"What's the closest planet and how far is it?!" He demanded.

"Planet 7063XW, Kizdar." The computer answered. "ETA: Forty two minutes."

"Make for Planet Kizdar, immediately!" The Prince growled.

"Re-setting co-ordinates to 7063XW."
Vegeta let out a string of foul profanities! Now he was truly fucked and there was absolutely nothing he could do about it! But he needed to keep his cool! Taking a deep breath, he sifted through the pod's computer for information on Kizdar.

'Purged by: Zarbon?!!' He read to himself, frowning. Ah, yes, he remembered emerald-haired sycophant bragging about that little victory for weeks on end. Both Cui and Dodoria had failed, where he'd succeeded. The average power level of the natives was around 5000; not much, but they were known for attacking in large droves. His ex-superior was forced to employ his transformation technique in order to successfully wipe out the populace and after returning to base, he'd spent the entire day in a healing chamber. 'Tch. What a pansy. In my transformed state, I would have done away with them far quicker and with much less damage on my end.'

Luckily, the planet had a breathable atmosphere and- no buyers. 'That's strange. Why hasn't it been destroyed then?' According to the latest update, Kizdar was reaching the end of one of its notorious winters, where temperatures could fall as low as -45 degrees.

'Shit! This just isn't my day!' He shut his eyes and released the stasis gas once again, opting to rest for the remainder of the journey.

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A month and a half swam by pretty fast and Bulma was really beginning to fret. Vegeta should've been here by now! She hadn't yet informed Chi-Chi or her parents about the Prince's destined arrival. The heiress banged her fist against her computer desk, in worry and frustration.

"King Kai! King Kai!" She yelled out loud, in a desperate bid to try and ascertain that Saiyan's whereabouts! That little scoundrel better not have changed his mind, about coming to Earth!

"Stop shouting!" Came the god's reply. Bulma breathed an alleviating sigh. He'd answered her call! Thank God! The deity adjusted his shades. "Who is it?"

"It's Bulma."

"Oh, hi there." He greeted. "Can I help you with something?"

"It's about Vegeta." She replied, brows furrowed. "I don't know where he is."

"He's not on Earth yet?" King Kai asked incredulously. That was truly unexpected.

"No, he isn't." She affirmed, sighing dejectedly. "I don't know where he is. I was hoping you could tell me."

"Hmmm." The god tapped his chin thoughtfully. "I'll take a look." He shifted his antennae, so they were erected left ways. A few tense minutes passed. "It's strange but- I can't sense his energy. I don't understand."

"But that can only mean-" The heiress gasped, her sapphire eyes tearing up.

"I'm afraid so, Bulma. I'm sorry." King Kai nodded sympathetically. "But don't be too glum. You can revive him with the dragon balls, remember? Just ask Porunga to wish Vegeta and Goku's souls to Earth with the first wish, like Piccolo suggested. Then use the next two, to bring them both back
"I- I see." Bulma placed her elbow on the desk, palm under her chin. So Vegeta must've died in outer-space. How horrible. Her heart was crushed. "Thanks King Kai."

"No problem." The portly deity replied. "But try not to make this a habit."

"Sure thing."

Bulma shut down the computer, stood up from her chair and decided to add the finishing touches to the new gravitron. She had set about working on it, the moment she'd returned home. Since the original unit employed a bulk of material from outer space, she'd recruited a team of experts to salvage whatever scrap metal was still workable from the remnants of Raditz' space pod. Afterwards, she had it melted down and coalesced with a whole lot of aluminum steel and ferrotitanium, along with several other alloys. As fate would have it, the heiress ended up producing material even more tensile, durable, and corrosion resistant than that used on the first model, not to mention less inflammable. Lo and behold, a month later and she was nearly done: a spaceship and a gravitron, all in one! She'd put a lot of effort into this! Vegeta would be most impressed!

'Well, he better be or I'll rip him a new one.'

While Bulma was working on that, she had her father study the armor and uniform that Gohan donned on Namek. Using chrome steel and aluminum bronze, along with a tiny bit of the original material and some fire-retardant, a new armor/uniform prototype was successfully manufactured. Though Piccolo adamantly refused to 'dress like a Saiyan', one of the Namekian warriors present, begrudgingly agreed and Bulma was able to procure a true gauge of the prototype's practicality and success on the battlefield. Though not quite as tough and durable as the original set, it came quite close and was just as pliable, if not more, which was a lot better than she'd hoped for! With time, she knew she could further improve on it, but for now, she decided to complete the gravitron. All that was left was installing the plexiglas windows, wiring up the engine and framing the central console, before she was good for the go.

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The moment he arrived, he exited his ramshackle pod to inhale some much needed oxygen. He didn't know how long it had been exactly, as he aimlessly roamed the icy terrain of the frosty planet, no destination in sight. Hours turned into days and days into weeks. Well over a month had passed, as the half-blind Prince continued traversing the knee-deep snow, body drained, fatigued, frozen and long since devoid of Ki. The perpetual blizzard of Kizdar refused to show even the slightest hint of mercy. How ironic it was that after realizing the greatest victory anyone could ever hope to achieve, he would die in a barren wasteland, not a soul to mourn him or sing accolades of glory, in his honor. He'd annihilated all of Frieza's soldiers along with their dreaded leader and now here he was: starving, freezing, exhausted and- afraid.

He knew what it was like to be afraid. He'd felt it over and over again, every time he knelt before his late tormentor, awaiting one merciless beating after another. Yet with sheer willpower alone, he'd learned to bury it underneath a thick and unyielding stratum of raw hatred. Hate, anger, pride, vindictiveness and entitlement were all he had, all that kept him alive, where any other miserable soul would've rushed towards death's welcoming doors. Now, no matter what he did, he could not rein in his fear, fear not for his inevitable doom, but at the idea that he would never again lay his dark irises upon a certain blue-haired creature of mercy, peer into her endearing orbs of endless and
ever-so-bright sapphire, smell the blissful scent of jasmine exuding from every perfect pore in her lithe, fragile body, taste her soft, cherry lips and feel her glowing, ivory skin against his, instilling his entire being with overflowing warmth, light, acceptance and contentment.

In the past, fear alone would've driven him to his death within moments, yet it was now the only thing keeping him alive, when all else was lost. He needed to see her again, to know with his own two eyes that she was alive and well, to hear the serene lilt of her soothing voice, to drown in her flowery fragrance and to touch her one last time, before he was willing to take his final step through hell's blazing gates. His greatest weakness had become his greatest strength. And so, he waddled on and on, in a fruitless search for anyone or anything that could get him off this wretched snow ball.

Not long afterwards, he collapsed on all fours, his severely aching and exhausted muscles and joints, refusing to carry him any further. The Prince damned the Universe for giving him everything he had ever wanted, only to leave him with absolutely nothing but prolonged and unparalleled suffering, utter defeat and helplessness. In a fiery fit of fury, he slammed his fist down, unwittingly shattering the already weakened glacial surface below him and dropping 40 feet deep into an expansive icy cavern. He cried out in bloodcurdling agony, as a stout stalagmite skewered his lower leg, piercing right through his fibula. A horrid pool of crimson spread below his calf. All was lost. Even if the fall hadn't broken what little was left of his body, that accursed icicle had put the last nail in his coffin. If only it had impaled his heart instead of his leg.

He sighed wearily, as he lay on his back, staring up blankly, as unceasing droplets of snow continued descending upon him, more steadily now. At long last, his resolve was beginning to waver. This would be his final burial ground: a mound of hail to honor the mightiest warrior in the entire cosmos. He chuckled wryly and shut his eyes, as his thoughts drifted towards the passionate moments he'd shared with his feisty little enchantress. He allowed those warm memories to cocoon his trembling, freezing and fatigued figure, in a thermal layer of inner bliss, when nothing else could. A few hours passed by and the blizzard had belatedly come to a halt. Vegeta, however, was long since unconscious.

A/N: Things looks horrible for poor Vegeta, don't they?! With no hope in sight, he continued pushing himself through endless miles of ice, just so he could be reunited with the woman he'd grown, ever so fond of. Truly heart-warming and at the same time, heart-wrenching, wasn't it?

JIC you're wondering, Vegeta was alive when Bulma called King Kai. He simply couldn't sense his power level, because it was much too low, after all the injuries he sustained from Frieza, in addition to several weeks of traversing the snow!

In the next chapter, Bulma and co. will finally chant their wishes to our good old friend, Porunga! What exactly will they wish for and will Vegeta be okay?! What of Yamcha?! Find out next time and be sure to review/kudo, my good readers!! :D
A/N: If you don't laugh at least once while reading this chapter then I'm doing a terrible, terrible job and you need to tell me!

Chapter 34: Startling reunion

After finishing the graviton, Bulma informed her parents and Chi-Chi that Vegeta fought alongside them on Namek, but died on his journey back to Earth and said that they needed to revive him. Mrs. Brief smiled, seeing right through Bulma. She'd fallen for that charming young man, just as she'd anticipated! Her eyes easily gave away that much! Air-headed as she could be, the flaxen-haired woman knew love when she saw it!

"Bulma, are you insane?!" Chi-Chi excoriated. "Why on Earth would you ever want to revive that evil creep?!!"

"Don't talk about him like that!" The heiress yelled. "If it weren't for him, we'd all have been dead, ten times over!"

"So what?!" The raven-haired woman shrilled. "He was seconds away from murdering my son and my husband, just in case you forgot! And how can you defend him, after he kidnapped you and laughed, as poor Yamcha got killed?!"

"Because I know more about him than any of you!" Bulma countered vehemently. "He's not the same person anymore! He's changed!"

"You're crazy!"

"Everyone knows you're the crazy one!"

"Shut up!"

"You shut up!"

"ENOUGH!" Piccolo roared over the quarrelling females. "You two are driving me crazy!" The Namekian began making his exit, not knowing why that blue-haired vixen had summoned him to this damned room, in the first place.

"Piccolo, hold up!" His protege called after him.

"You can stay if you want Gohan, but I'm out of here!"

"Wait a minute!" The demi-Saiyan entreated. "I have an idea."

Piccolo swivelled around, frowning at the boy.

"How about we put it to a vote?" The child suggested. "All those in favor of wishing Vegeta back, say aye."

"Aye." Bulma quickly assented.
"Well, it's one, against four." Chi-Chi smirked, as a few quiet seconds ran by. "Guess it's safe to say that you-"

"Aye." Gohan cut his mother off. The Ox Princess gaped at her son in disbelief, before gritting her teeth furiously.

"Are you crazy?! What in the world is wrong with-"

"Aye." Mrs. Brief interposed.

"Mom?" Bulma gawped at her mother, eyes as wide as an open foyer.

"What?" The bubbly blonde shrugged her shoulders, beaming at the heiress. "I liked that boy. He was the sweetest, most handsome little-"

"HE KIDNAPPED YOUR DAUGHTER!" Chi-Chi shrieked, in anger, disbelief and frustration. She was convinced that that heinous Saiyan scum was some sort of magician and had successfully duped these braindead morons! There was no other plausible explanation for their irrational endeavors!

"Dear, you're not being serious, are you?" Dr. Brief asked his wife, after a tense moment of silence.

"I am." She bobbed her head emphatically, before looking towards her daughter. "You have my full support, sweetie."

"Thanks mom!" Bulma smiled beatifically. It seemed that being a ditz had its pros, in some situations. "I suppose that settles it. We're going to revive-"

"Not so fast!" Chi-Chi interjected, then glared at her child. "Gohan's under eighteen, so he doesn't get a vote!"

"That's not fair!" The boy argued, scrunching his dark brows, in demurral. "I'm the one who came up with the idea, in the first place."

"Yeah!" Bulma concurred.

"Are you questioning me, young man?!" Chi-Chi's black eyes burned with blazing, onyx flames that immediately incinerated any remonstrations on her son's part.

"N-N-No mom." The young half-Saiyan mumbled timidly.

"That's what I thought." She smirked, arms akimbo. "It seems we're at a stalemate then." Turning her face Bulma's way, she continued. "That can only mean one thing. We'll have to settle this with a good old-fashioned arm wrestle."

"I'm sorry, but that's not exactly fair!" Bulma exclaimed, mirroring the other woman's posture. "You could crush my arm in less than a second!"

"Chicken?"

"No, I just value my anatomy!" The heiress snarled, clutching her arm protectively, as if to
demonstrate her point. "And if you're so adamant about it, why not compete against Gohan instead?"

"Leave him out of this!"

"Why?! Scared of a five-year old?!"

"Why don't we ask Piccolo?" The child proposed placidly and turned towards his mentor. "What do you say, Piccolo? Aye or nay?"

"It's none of my concern!" The Namek seethed. "I don't even know what I'm doing here!"

"Come on Piccolo!" The demi-Saiyan spurred. "The sooner you cast your vote, the sooner we can get out of here!"

"Aye, okay?! Aye!" Piccolo snarled. "I'm off!" He promptly walked out the door and cursed himself for having partaken in something so frivolous! Stupid Gohan! He'd gotten much too soft around that puny little twerp!

While Mrs. Brief, Bulma and Gohan bounced around in celebration of their democratic triumph, Chi-Chi grew increasingly exasperated, refusing to cave in! This would not do!

"Hold your horses, this isn't over yet!" She obdurately objected, garnering the opposing squad's attention. "We still haven't asked my dad! Or Master Roshi and the others, for that matter! Oh and Piccolo's vote doesn't count either, since he's not even an Earthing!"

"So what if he's not an Earthing?!" Bulma countered ardently. "These dragon balls aren't even from Earth! They're from Namek, so if anything, a Namekian's vote should be worth five, at the very least!"

Chi-Chi could only sputter garbled words. Her fiery hostess had her cornered and she knew it. Wait a minute, no she didn't!

"Hold up!" The Ox Princess smirked, folding her arms pompously. "Technically speaking, Piccolo's only nine years old, so he's underage as well."

"What?! You cannot be serious!" The heiress smoldered. "Does he looks nine to you?! He has the same memories as his father, who was alive centuries ago! Piccolo's older than all of us put together!"

"Wrong!" Chi-Chi fired back. "Bottom line is that he was hatched nine years ago, so that's how old he is, wherefore he doesn't get to vote, end of story!"

"You have got to be the most annoying, obstinate, infuriating control-freak I've ever met!"

"Shut up! I'm right and you know it!"

"You're a stubborn idiot, that's what you are!"

"You're the idiot who wants to revive a genocidal maniac!"

The heiress turned towards the half-Saiyan boy, azure eyes flaring with a magnificent, ultramarine
"Inferno."

"Gohan, I swear I'm gonna kill your mother, if she doesn't shut that darn trap of hers!"

"You can try, but it won't end well for you!" Chi-Chi rolled up her sleeves, more than ready for a battle.

"Whoa, whoa, let's keep our heads together, now." Dr. Brief tactfully positioned himself between the explosive female duo, only to be shoved aside callously by the both of them.

"I've got it!" Gohan grinned, hammering a fist against his palm. "The Dragon Balls belong to the Namekians, just like Bulma said, so we'll let them decide!"

And so, a good while later, the crew stood before the recently appointed Grand Elder, Tsuno, discussing the situation at length.

"So you wish to revive the Super Saiyan who defeated Frieza?"

"That's right." Bulma nodded. "Can we, please? I know he did a lot of bad, but-"

"He did spare our village." Tsuno informed, cutting off his hostess. "Nonetheless, countless souls have suffered, by his hand. The moment he descended upon us, I could sense a great and horrifying evil within him, the likes of which I have never felt from any living mortal, other than Frieza himself."

"I agree!" Chi-Chi folded her arms, in front of her chest. "He's obviously bad news!"

"Who asked you, loudmouth?!" Bulma seethed. The Ox-Princess petulantly stuck her tongue out at her, however, she ignored the childish gesture and turned back the elder's way, a grave look, etched upon her bright features. "Look, I get what you're saying, but you need to understand that he's been a victim of Frieza his whole life. He was the one who made Vegeta do all those horrible things, after destroying his people."

Dr. Brief and Chi-Chi frowned curiously, as they registered that piece of information. So that's why Bulma was convinced that Vegeta wasn't all that bad. What she said made sense, but it still didn't change things! Bringing him to Earth was a terrible move that entailed far too much risk! What if he decided to finish what he started?! Who then, could stop him?! Goku, perhaps, but there was no guarantee and even if he did win, there would surely be a monumental level of collateral. Then again, any damage could easily be repaired with the dragon balls, but that was assuming Goku won. No, they were better off playing it safe! Even if that nasty Saiyan had changed, there was no telling whether or not he'd revert to the cruel ways of his past.

"Yeah!" Gohan nodded in agreement. "Vegeta's not a villain anymore! He saved us so many times! We all owe him our lives!"

"Hmmm." The Grand Elder contemplated a while, before frowning at the heiress. "Are you certain this is what you desire?"

"It is!" Bulma replied, in conviction. "He won't commit anymore evil! You have my word! And Gohan's too!"

"For the record, I think this is the worst idea ever!" Chi-Chi made sure to put in her piece.
"No one cares what you think, missy!" Bulma hissed.

"Don't you dare call me that, you spoiled brat!"

"And just why not?!" The heiress smiled condescendingly, arms akimbo. "Don't forget that you're still younger than I am, though you certainly don't look it!"

"Why, you dirty little-"

At least five people, including Gohan, had to restrain the raven-haired female from tearing Bulma limb from limb, as she snapped and frenziedly articulated every foul profanity she ever knew, her mountainous ire causing her to overlook the presence of her five-year old son. With strenuous effort, Chi-Chi was moved a safe distance away, kicking and screaming, while the heiress continued pressing her case to the Namekians.

"You feel deeply for the Saiyan." Tsuno asserted, rather than asked.

"I- I do." Bulma mumbled, with a light blush.

"Very well." The Grand Elder nodded, after mulling it over, a few moments. "You have our trust and our blessing."

"Really?!" She took ahold of the Namekian's hands. "That's great! Thank you so much!"

"Please." Tsuno smiled kindly. "It's our pleasure."

Over two months passed by and the 130-day mark had finally been reached. A magnificent, brawny apparition markedly took form, over the expansive backyard of Capsule Corporation.

"You have collected all seven dragon balls!" Porunga's heavenly voice soared aloud. "Now, as it is written, I shall grant you three wishes within my power! Choose wisely!"

And so Dende translated the wish into Namekian, asking the dragon to deliver the two missing Saiyans' souls to Earth.

"Such a wish is unacceptable, for I cannot separate a soul, from its living body!"

"Wha- What?!!" Bulma exclaimed disbelievingly, staring open-mouthed at the burly dragon. "Are- are you saying that they're alive?! Both of them?! Really?!!"

Porunga grunted indignantly, not accustomed to being questioned on the veracity of his pronouncements.

"Wow, Goku's alive!" Chi-Chi cheered ecstatically, tears of joy flooding out her gleaming eyes, as she knelt down and pulled her son into a tight embrace. Gohan laughed jubilantly, wrapping his arms around his mother.

Piccolo smirked to himself. He should've known those two hard-nosed fools wouldn't die so easily. No, they were much too stubborn for that!

"Uh- so what do we do guys?" The heiress looked towards her friends.
"Gee, Bulma, for someone claiming to be such a genius, you really are shallow." Krillin taunted. "Think about it. They're probably lost somewhere in outer-space, so we can just-

"Bring them back here!" She completed his sentence, smiling beatifically. "Great idea!" She shifted her radiant blue eyes, Dende's way. "Ask the Dragon to teleport Goku and Vegeta, to Earth!"

"Right." The little Namek nodded, before remembering what had happened back on his late home planet, after they'd revived Piccolo. "Should I ask him to wish them to this specific spot?"

"Yeah, do that!"

And so, the prodigious child chanted away, in his native tongue, while Chi-Chi, Ox King, Master Roshi and Dr. Brief all voiced their objections amongst themselves, but decided not to interfere, since the alien visitors had agreed to grant Bulma her wish. Their hearts hammered apprehensively, as they awaited Porunga's answer.

"The one called Vegeta, has been delivered."

Everyone gasped, cringing as they saw a man garbed in royal blue uniform, lying motionless before them. He had a sickly pale-blue complexion, his hair was swept up into a flame and his emaciated figure was marred with burns, bruises and what appeared to be dried or rather, frozen blood, covering his lower right leg, all the way up to his knee. His eyes were closed and he appeared all but dead.

"VEGETA!" Bulma yelled in panic and ran over to him, kneeling down and pressing a hand on his face, only to wince and pull away. He was colder than ice. How could he possibly be alive?! What in Kami's good name had happened to him?! She turned back towards the others. "Someone, please help him!"

"I'll heal him!" Dende immediately rushed over and sat upon his knees, placing his hands over the Saiyan. The child concentrated his power and an ethereal light transferred from his little palms, onto the Saiyan.

"Wh-What're you doing?" The blue-haired female asked, in wonder, eyes widening as she witnessed Vegeta's injuries, gradually disappear and his skin return to the beautiful olive tone, she loved so dearly. His work done, the small Namekian opened his eyes and looked on in alarm, as the Saiyan remained motionless.

"I- I don't understand!" He continued staring disbelievingly at the Prince's stock-still, skeletal figure. "Why hasn't he recovered fully?! My abilities have never failed me, before!"

"It's not your fault, Dende." Piccolo replied, moving forward, a few steps. "Physically, he's been healed, but his body's still starved and mentally, he's- different somehow, almost- broken. I don't know what's happened to-

"He's not broken!" Bulma hissed icily, grievous tears streaming down her face, as she dolefully, looked upon her lover. "You have no idea how strong he is! No one does! Nothing could ever break him! Nothing!"

An echoing baritone interrupted the heartfelt moment.
"The one called Goku refuses to return." Porunga proclaimed.

"Wait- WHAT?!!" Chi-Chi, all but shrieked. "What do you mean refuses?!!"

"He intends to come back himself, at a later time." The dragon answered.

"I don't care what he intends!" The raven-haired woman was not having it! She scowled and pointed a threatening finger, at Porunga. "You drag his sorry little behind right here, right now, or you and I are gonna have a major problem, is that understood?!"

Completely taken aback, the hulking figure sweat-dropped, before glaring heatedly at the Ox Princess, loosening her resolve. Okay, so maybe challenging a humongous dragon wasn't the brightest idea she'd ever come up with, but still! She sighed in surrender and looked back somberly, at Porunga.

"Look, I really miss him, so if you could bring him back here, I'd be most grateful."

"This cannot be done, since he is unwilling and his power, far exceeds my own!" The apparition was starting to grow weary.

'Dad, why?' Gohan thought, disappointedly. It didn't make any sense! Everyone he knew and loved was right here on Earth, thinking he'd perished, but he was out in space somewhere and disinclined to come back home! Why?! It was so unfair! Who knew when he'd make his return?! Everything felt out of place, without him in the picture!

Bulma looked at the dragon a moment, before her eyes returned to Vegeta. She lay her palm on his cheek.

"He's still cold!" She sniffled. "Why?! Why's he still cold?!"

"Like I said, physically, he's fine." Piccolo explained. "His mental wounds, however, are affecting his body. There's nothing we can do."

"We can ask the dragon to fix him!" The heiress looked towards the Earth-born Namek, eyes glittering with hope.

"I'm afraid that is not possible, child." The Grand Elder made his way over. "Soon after Guru passed, Mori and I decided to alter Porunga's powers. He may no longer grant any ill-ridden wishes and thus is generally forbidden from tampering with a person's mind."

"But this isn't a dishonorable wish!" Bulma insisted, in exasperation. "I just want to make him better, that's all!"

"That may be so, however, the rules are very specific." Mori spoke up. "We may change the rules temporarily, but it will take time."

"How much time?"

"One week, by my estimate and Porunga will not be around that long." He answered. "We can dismiss him for now and have him grant the two remaining wishes at a later time, however, he will require 40 days rest."
The heiress sighed wearily, overwhelmed with defeat and despair. How could this happen to someone as overwhelmingly powerful as Vegeta!?

"There's one thing we can do," Piccolo turned towards Krillin. "If you have a senzu bean, now would be a good time."

"But how will that help?" Gohan asked, dejectedly. He too, felt awful, seeing Vegeta this way, hardly even a shell of the greatest fighter he'd ever laid eyes upon.

"Senzu beans serve the dual purpose of both healing a person and satisfying their hunger." His mentor answered.

"I'm afraid I don't have any though." Krillin sighed, disheartened. "I spoke to Master Korin, a little while earlier. He said something went bad with the harvest this cycle and that he won't have any, for at least another month or so."

"Grrr… Speak your next wish!" A bellowing voice reverberated across the planes of Capsule Corporation.

"Would you give us a freaking minute?!" Bulma yelled back boldly, not intimidated in the slightest as the monstrous entity glared upon her, in a deathly manner. "Honestly, it's not like you've got anything going on!"

"Please, you must not be rude to the dragon, young one!" A panicked Tsuno exclaimed, waving his hands perturbedly. "You must understand that being summoned for prolonged periods, consumes an exhaustive amount of energy and he needs his rest! Porunga's never been kind, with those who try his patience!"

"Whatever!" The heiress snorted dismissively, her attention solely on the Prince. She looked towards Piccolo, expression grim. "Bring Vegeta over to the medical wing. I'll lead the way."

The Namekian nodded in assent, gathering the scrawny Saiyan in his arms. The two of them disappeared from the scene, while most of the others looked on in disbelief, wondering why Bulma appeared so distraught. Of course, Mrs. Brief and the Z warriors present on Namek, already knew the truth.

"So, um- what's your second wish?" Dende asked, breaking them from their respective trances.

"Hmmm." Krillin thought for a moment, placing his thumb and index finger across to his jaw, face downcast. "I guess we can revive two of our friends from Otherworld, but which ones?"

"We'll ask King Kai." Gohan beamed. "Hello, King Kai?!" He echoed, facing the sky.

"Who is this?! Gohan?!!" A voice replied.

"Yeah!" The boy affirmed cheerily and explained the situation.

On his home world, King Kai brought his pupils forward and let them talk amongst one-another. Since Tien and Chiaotzu refused to be separated, it was decided that Yamcha would return. After
all, it wasn't right to leave him here all alone, when he had a beautiful woman to return to- or so they thought. And thus, the second wish had come to pass and the scar-faced warrior's halo disappeared.

"I'll never forget you, King Kai." He bowed respectfully before his fifth and greatest mentor. "I'm truly thankful for everything that you've taught me."

"You're most welcome, my friend." The deity replied, in a sombre tone. "You have done exceptionally well. Your power is even greater than Goku's was, when he first left my planet. I couldn't be prouder, to call you my student. Goodbye, Yamcha."

"Goodbye, master." He smiled and turned towards his two goofy assistants. "Goodbye, Bubbles, Gregory."

"So long." The grasshopper nodded, while the monkey made a few whooping noises, eliciting a laugh from Yamcha. The former desert-bandit then faced his colleagues.

"Tien, Chiaotzu, I'll see you both again, real soon, okay?"

"Of course." Chiaotzu beamed.

"Go on now, Yamcha." Tien grinned. "Don't keep Bulma waiting too long or you just might lose her hahaha."

"As if." The scarred warrior chuckled and waved towards the lot one last time, before flaring his Ki and taking off, hurriedly flying along Snake Way towards the Check-In Station, aching to be reunited with his dearly beloved! For so long, he'd hankered for another chance with Bulma, so he could treasure her like the divine jewel that she was! Now that he finally got it, he refused to botch it up! No more fights, arguments or break-ups! He would marry the woman he loved, she would give him beautiful children and they would be one soul, bound together until the end of time! With that thrilling prospect embedded into his mind, he upped his pace.

"Wait a minute." Chiaotzu frowned, back on King Kai's planet. "Doesn't Namek's dragon grant three wishes?"

"Yes, of course." The god affirmed. "How could you forget something like that?"

"But then, couldn't they just wish us all back?" Tien asked, raising an eyebrow, in confusion.

"Hmmm." King Kai frowned, tuning his senses back towards Earth. "It appears that they already used one wish, before reviving Yamcha."

"Oh, I see." The three-eyed warrior nodded. "They were wishing Goku back to life or something, right?"

The deity shook his head and relayed the facts to his star, Earthling pupil.

"They delivered Vegeta to Earth?!" He yelled in complete shock, alarm and fury. "What the hell is wrong with them?! Do they have some sort of death wish?!"

"Calm down!" The god chastised, before sighing and continuing. "Vegeta's badly wounded. He can't even lift a finger, right now. I can barely feel his energy signal, but that's besides the point.
Point is, he's our ally now and you don't turn your back on your allies, no matter what!"

"No, he separated us from our *true* allies!" Tien clenched his fists, feeling utterly betrayed, though assuaged that that barbaric Saiyan was no longer a threat. But what if he recovered?! Damn them! They could've used those wishes to restore life to Chiaotzu and himself, but instead they brought that monster to Earth! How could they?! "I can't believe you're okay with this!"

He huffed and whirled around, returning to the hut he'd emerged from, to brood to himself.

"Sorry." Chiaotzu mumbled apologetically, before joining his best friend. Tien had a right to be angry, but it was unfair of him to lash out at their master. After all, he wasn't the one who made the wish.

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"Tell me your third wish, now!" The dragon demanded.

"Tien and Chiaotzu don't wanna be revived, so what do we wish for guys?" Krillin asked.

"I've got it!" Everyone turned towards the good doctor, who hadn't said a word, thus far. "Let's erase all the memories of Vegeta and his former minions, from the minds of all those on Earth, except for the people residing in Capsule Corporation."

"What?! Why?!" Chi-Chi seethed. "You're really gonna just whitewash his crimes, like they never even happened?! Wishing him here was bad enough, but this is-"

"It's not that, my dear." Dr. Brief placidly interjected. "It's just that if he's going to stay here and people recognize him, that would mean a whole lot of trouble for us."

"Hold on, did you forget?" Tsuno intervened. "Porunga cannot tamper with a person's mind. While your intentions are noble, your wish remains in violation of the rules. We may alter them for the time-being, in which case we must dismiss Porunga for now and summon him again in 40 days."

The Earthlings mulled it over for a while.

"Guess there's no other choice." Krillin shrugged his shoulders. "I can't think of anything else to wish for."

And so it was done! Porunga vanished from the sky and the seven mystical orbs scattered across the Earth! Meanwhile in CC's medical wing, with help from a grudging Piccolo, Bulma relieved an unconscious Vegeta, from his derelict armor. He looked horrible! His bones were protruding in such sickly fashion, covered with naught but skin and spandex! But she couldn't give up on him! There was still hope!

"We need to take his shirt off, as well." Bulma stated.

"Then do it!" The Namekian groaned. "Why do you need me for?!"

"It's practically stuck on his skin." She argued. "I can't get it off, by myself."

"Do I look like a damn nurse to you?!"
"This isn't a time for jokes!" The heiress yelled, in his face. "If he doesn't get some nutrition fast, he could die!"

Piccolo let out a few stifled curses in his native tongue and considered vaporizing this obnoxious female, but instead did as asked, gently peeling off the lycra from the Saiyan's upper body, taking great care not to damage his skin.

"Thank you." She smiled in appreciation.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever, I'm leaving now!" The Namekian growled, after he was finished, immediately leaving the premises and lifting off towards the skies, deciding to take a few quite days, for himself. If Gohan tried to pester him, he'd tell him to bug off and go bother someone else-like Vegeta- or perhaps Goku, if that moron wasn't out gallivanting across the heavens. As much as he cared for his foster son, he needed some seclusion, for just a little while.

Bulma readied a nasogastric tube for Vegeta, along with all the ancillary equipment. Just as she was dipping the end of the tube into a measuring cylinder comprising of water soluble lubricant, she heard a nigh inaudible rumble reverberate, beside her.

She gasped, chest tightening and eyes tearing up, as an all-too-familiar pair of ajar, half-lidded ebony orbs looked right back at her.

"Vegeta?"

A/N: So Vegeta's finally conscious! His once cosmic power level has now taken a huge tumble! Will he be able to recapture the overwhelming might that was once his?! What does the future hold for the Saiyan Prince?! How will Yamcha react once he returns to Earth, only to realize that his quest to recapture Bulma's heart has been jeopardized, by the most unlikely competitor?! Find out next time and be sure to review/follow/favourite!

p.s. I have to say, I really loved writing the Bulma/Chi-Chi bickering! Any scene with them together is just priceless if you ask me! After all, they are the two biggest shrews of DBZ haha!
Chapter Summary

Bulma & Vegeta are finally reunited. *squee*

Chapter 35: Not a dream

Vegeta squinted awake for the first time in two and a half months, eyes fluttering and centred upon a crown of silken blue, to his right. He groaned low in his throat and had he been able to, he would’ve reeled, when the petite, swivelling figure caught his attention and he saw symmetrical jewels of pure, luminous azure gazing back at him. He knew those eyes!! He knew them, but couldn’t quite place where!! Not giving him even a second to dwell on it, Bulma put the tube aside and immediately dashed over his way, leaning against the bedside, lifting his face with her hands and pulling it into her bosom, as she sobbed uncontrollably.

“You’re awake, thank God you’re awake!!” She could feel his hollow breathing, against her chest.

The Prince blinked slowly, several times, narrowly clinging onto what little consciousness he had. That voice, that scent!! It was all too familiar, but who’s was it??! He inhaled as deep as he could and a mere few seconds later, recollection finally hit him like a wave of warm light, in the middle of a cold, dark and lonesome night.

“B-Bulma?” He rasped, voice severely drained.

“I’m here.” She pulled back a little, looking him in the eyes, pools of bright cerulean, gleaming with joy and relief, as she held his face between her graceful palms. He tried lifting a hand towards her, but could hardly raise it an inch, his body scarcely responding to his mind. Seeing the movement of his arm, Bulma quickly realized what he was attempting and so, grabbed the back of his hand and placed his palm on her cheek, shutting her eyes and nuzzling against it. The Price sighed in contentment, reveling in the warmth of her soft, milky skin.

“Bulma.” He murmured. This must have been some sort of dream. If it were, he would give anything not to rouse awake in that icy hellhole. The heiress smiled tranquilly. Just hearing the sound of her own name escaping his lips, brought with it, a cornucopia of impassioned memories, from Namek. Joyous tears trickled down her face, as she grazed her lips against the calloused palm of her beloved, evoking a low, pleasurable shudder from him. Those soft, cherry lips were exactly the same as he’d remembered.

“It’s me.” She said assuringly, looking upon him, with an expression more radiant than ever. Bulma ran her free hand along his fiery mane, relishing in that soft, streamlined feel, not a kink hampering the path of her slender fingers. “We’re gonna get you all better, okay? Everything will be fine, I promise.” The heiress moved her face forward, pressing her lips against his forehead, before shifting downwards and chastely kissing his lips. The instant she made contact, he shuddered and parted his teeth as best he could, in a silent invitation to let her inside. Bulma smiled and steadily darted her tongue forward, slowly running it along each and every smidge of dryness, yearning to moisten his mouth with hers. The more she explored, the more she could feel his
salivary glands bring back his relishing taste, so palatably raw and potent, just like him!! It’s flourishing richness reminded her of garden-fresh guavas, with a tiny touch of bay salt and lemon balm. She found it just as galvanizing as she’d remembered, perhaps more. Waves of pleasure swooshed over her, as she continued probing him for long moments, until he finally found the strength to mirror her moves.

She sucked on his tongue and readily welcomed him, as he ventured forward. Bulma allowed him to traverse her at his own pace, swallowing a low growl, as an inferno of liquid fire deluged every blood cell within the Prince, slowly melting away the frigidity that had consumed him for an epoch. For so long had she ached for this moment and now that it was finally here, every fibre in her body craved to have him once again, so she could release all her amassed sorrow, stress, frustration and loneliness. However, with his condition as depleted as it was, that was out of the question. Summoning every bit of will she had, Bulma withdrew, heart clenching, upon hearing his muffled cry of protest at the loss of warmth.

“Hey, it’s okay, I’ll be right back.” She reassured, nestling her face into his neck and sighing blissfully, as she took in his rich, masculine scent. “Just let me get you something to eat. I was gonna hook you up to a feeding tube, but you probably wouldn’t like that hehe.” She kissed him again. “I’ll tell mom to make some soup, alright?”

“N-No-stay.” He objected weakly, as she pulled away. Bulma’s chest tightened so much so that she strained to breath, for just a few seconds. He appeared so lost and vulnerable, almost childlike. Just seeing her beloved Saiyan Prince, the strongest man she ever knew, reduced to this, made her want to burst her eyeballs out. The same question wracked her mind, again and again: what happened to him? She sighed and pressed a hand to his forehead, before smiling and taking hold of his hands.

“Alright.” She vouched, a soothing warmth rising between her chest, as she saw his hardened visage ease up. He looked incredibly gorgeous, without the perpetual tautness, marring his handsome face. A knock on the door, broke the heiress from her stupor.

“Who is it??” She asked, irritation lacing her tone.

“Can you let me in, dear?”

“Mom?” Bulma’s eyes widened a fraction, in surprise and she swivelled around, standing ramrod straight and hurrying towards the door. “Uh yeah, I’m coming.”

She turned the knob and pulled open the rouge door, revealing an ever-bright Mrs. Brief.

“How you doin’, baby?”

“I’m doing great.” The heiress smiled genuinely, for the first time in a long time and proceeded to empty the side table, for her mother. “So, what you got there?”

“See for yourself.” The ebullient blonde placed the tray on the hardwood surface.

“Ah, chicken corn soup.” Bulma grinned, as she carefully de-lidded the China pot and was greeted with the mouth-watering aroma of the dish before her. “Thanks a bunch, mom.”

“Your welcome, honey.” Mrs. Brief turned towards a deeply perplexed Vegeta, her own expression lit with glee. “And just how’re you faring, young man? I see you’re just as handsome as ever.”
“Mom!!” The heiress reproved, as she ladled soup into an empty, ceramic, breakfast bowl.

“Now, now, sweetie, calm down.” The bubbly woman said, reassuringly. “As tempted as I am, I won’t try to steal your man from you hehe.”

“Would you cut it out??!!! Seriously, have you no shame, whatsoever??!!!” Bulma’s face flushed a dozen shades of crimson, as she fixed a glare upon her ditz of a mother. The Saiyan wasn't paying any attention to the discourse, however, his ebony eyes set upon the innumerable strands of silken blue, right of him.

“Such a prude.” Mrs. Brief mumbled back, before once again looking the emaciated Prince’s way, grinning genially. “Anyway, it’s nice to have you back, Vegeta. My daughter was really glum without you here and I know you’ll keep her happy, so make yourself at home, darling.”

The Saiyan stared at her blankly, narrowly registering a word, mind still befuddled. The heiress couldn’t help but quirk her lips upwards, her exasperation towards her bubble headed mother, all but lost. Naive and eccentric as she was, Mrs. Brief was the gentlest soul on the entire planet, far more forgiving than anyone she knew, even Goku and she wouldn’t have her any different. Her support meant the world to Bulma and she couldn’t possibly find her more endearing than she did at this moment.

The flaxen-haired female skipped towards the door, humming a romantic tune to herself. She whirled around one last time.

“Oh and there may be other patients who’ll use this room later on, so don’t do anything naughty in here, you two, teeheehee!!”

“Mom!!!!” Bulma yelled, flaming heat rushing towards her reddened cheeks, however, the ebullient blonde had already left and closed the door behind her, giggling all the while. “Why does she always have to be such a crackpot?!!”

“Try some of this, Vegeta.” Bulma pointed towards the soup contents within the bowl. “You certainly look like you could use it.”

The Prince furrowed his dark brows at her. His olfactory senses were at an all-time high, the soupy aroma travelling up his nostrils and flooding his mouth with a sea of fresh saliva. He tilted his head a little, in assent. Bulma gave him a toothy grin and grabbed a soba spoon, gathering up a heap of the simmering fluid, blowing on it and bringing it over to the Saiyan, placing a hand underneath, for support.

Vegeta forced his mouth open and sighed gratifyingly, as the soothing liquid trickled down his throat and chest, scarcely beginning to appease his monstrous and starved appetite. Mouth watering for more of the finely seasoned meal, he gave his female an encouraging nod. Her smile broadened, as she continued servicing her malnourished Saiyan. His eyes never left hers the entire time. As she observed this, she couldn’t help but feel her heart submerge. It was as if he saw her as an apparition of some sort that would disappear the moment he looked elsewhere. She peered at him a moment too long.

“M-More.” The Saiyan scrunched his brows in objection, marginally increased vigor, in his voice.
“O-Oh, right.” The heiress gave him a lopsided smile and carried on with her task. Five minutes later, there was another knock on the door. “Who is it?!!” She scowled, not appreciating the interruption.

“Uh- It’s me, Krillin.”

“Oh.” Her eyes shot up in surprise. “Do you need something?”

“Mind if I come in?”

“Sure.”

The Prince grunted in protest, for more food, but to no avail, as yet another familiar figure walked into the room. Baldy?! What would that idiot be doing, in his dream?! The hairless human could hardly keep his lips from quirking, upon seeing Vegeta conscious.

“Hey there buddy.” He greeted. “It’s good to see you back in the game.”

“Well, he’s not in the game just yet, but we’ll get there.” The heiress smiled, placing a hand on the Saiyan’s forehead.

Buddy?! This weakling had some nerve!! He was no one’s buddy!! He was the Prince of all Saiyans!! Gritting his teeth, he emitted a low warning growl that told the human to back away, immediately!!! As susceptible as Vegeta was right now, Krillin still felt a cold chill run through him. Boy, he was just as intimidating as ever!!

“Vegeta, relax, would you?!!” Bulma chided, before turning her friend’s way. “Can I help you, Krillin?”

“O-O-Oh yeah, I just came to tell you that Yamcha’s on his way back to Earth, that’s all.” The bald man answered, timidly.

“He- he is?” The female’s heart thudded against her chest, in an incongruous amalgam of relief, anxiety and trepidation. She- she still hadn’t planned this out, not in the least!! Dammit, what would she say to him?!? How could she possibly explain this in a way that wouldn’t make his entire world crumble?!?

‘Yamcha?!!’ Vegeta thought to himself. Wasn’t that the beta male that got blown up by a Saibaman?! Wait a minute!! He was the female’s ex-lover, wasn’t he?!? Damn that coward!! The instant he saw him, he’d vaporize him!! It didn’t matter if this was a dream or not!! He hated that stuck-up, self-important, scar-faced snot from the very beginning and didn’t want him here!!!

“I just wanted to let you know is all.” Krillin back-pedalled towards the door.

“Wait a minute.”

“What is it?” The bald warrior asked, eyebrows raised.

“C-Could you- uh- n-not tell him about V-Vegeta?” She mumbled softly, then slurred. “You know- uh- about him being wished here and all.”
“Oh- umm- yeah, alright.” Krillin sighed. She was still covering the truth, even from him. Didn’t she know that they’d all heard her final words, right before she’d died in Vegeta’s arms? Things definitely would not end well. “But he will find out eventually.”

“I know.” The heiress whispered, more to herself than anyone.

As her friend left, Bulma helped Vegeta finish up his meal, before sighing, stretching out her tired limbs and adjusting his bed, so it was properly levelled. She looked towards the clock and realized that it was almost midnight. Time sure had flown by quickly: a little too quick, for her taste!!! Perhaps it was time to hit the bed and worry about Yamcha tomorrow. She had to cling to whatever little hope there was that he would let it go eventually and they would still remain close friends, as they had been for many years. Seeing her Saiyan, out like a light, Bulma quietly left and went over to the residential area of the premises, going into her bedroom, disrobing and donning a baby blue, woollen night robe with white spots imprinted all over. She returned to the medical wing and gingerly sauntered over the other side of the bed, lying down and gently nestling against Vegeta. She spread a soft quilt over the two of them.

“B-u-l-m-a.” He drawled, in his sleep.

“Mmmm.” The heiress crooned back, cozying up to him further, as butterflies filled her stomach. He was still cold, but a little less so and she was resolved to instil him with every bit of warmth she could offer.

After a long and restful sleep, Vegeta’s eyes fluttered open and he sceptically took in his surroundings. What the blazes was going on?!? He grunted taxingly, as he tried to force himself up.

“Oh hey, you’re awake!!”

He turned right ways and once again saw lucent pools of deep sapphire staring right back at him.

“Bulma?” He furrowed his brows, suspiciously. How could he wake up to the same sight twice?!! Last he remembered, he’d woken up here, after being stuck in that dreary snow ball. And now here he was, yet again!!! Perhaps this was hell and he was being lured into some sort of trap!! Yes, that had to be it!! He looked around and saw a whole bunch of tools, machines, fixings and other gadgetry that wasn’t there before. On the table lay a stack of blue prints and a slick, portable computer of sorts. This was most bizarre!!

“I moved all my stuff in here, so I could work and keep an eye on you, at the same time hehe.” She grinned. “I also took the liberty of stripping off your old pants and underwear and putting on new, comfy ones, while you were asleep. Man, your right leg was a total mess!! It took me a while to clean that up!! Where’d all that blood come from anyway??!” She glared, as he continued frowning her way, without an answer. “Hey, are you even listening to me??! Hellooooo!!”

“Quiet woman!!!”

“Don’t ever tell me to be quiet, man!!” She closed her laptop and stood up, moving towards him. He was taken completely off guard, as she sat on top of him, straddling his hips, arms akimbo. Vegeta felt a rush of searing electricity span from his thyroid, all the way down to his flaming loins. She pointed a thumb to herself. “This is my house and I’m the only boss around here, no one else, understood??!!”

“Y-Y-Your h-house??!!”
“That’s right.” She smiled, expression softening. Bulma placed her hands on his shoulders and nuzzled her face into the recess of his neck, sighing as she inhaled his raw, musky scent, spreading a glowing warmth through her, in spite of his frosty condition. The Prince shuddered, as he felt the tip of her nose and soft lips, graze his cool skin, further springing his desire. Her svelte frame was every bit as perfect as he remembered. “We wished you back to Earth with the dragon balls.”

What little strength Vegeta had, nearly gave out on him, upon taking in that statement. The dragon balls?! She brought him here?! No, it couldn’t be!!! There was no way!!

“I-I-Impossible.”

“No, it’s true!!” She insisted, pressing her forehead against his. “Earth’s dragon balls were used to revive all of us and the Namekian balls still had a wish left. That Dende kid explained everything. He asked Porunga, the Namekian dragon, to teleport us all to Earth, except you, Goku and Frieza. Dumb move by the way!!” She sat up and narrowed her eyes peevishly. “You morons should’ve just came back to Earth and left that bastard to rot on Namek, by himself!!”

Vegeta took a few moments to sink it all in. So then- this wasn’t just a dream?!? He stared up at her.

“You- you wished me back?”

“Mmm hmm.” She affirmed, face alight, as she brushed her dainty fingers through his feathery mane. “King Kai told us you were on your way back to Earth, but you didn’t make it, so we asked Porunga to teleport you to us.”

“Wh-Why?!!” He demanded, more than asked. Why would anyone ever use a wish to help someone as soulless and cruel as he was?! This couldn’t possibly be true!!

“Why?!” Bulma asked, indignantly. “What do you mean why?!! I thought you got killed in the middle of space!! I had to bring you back!! The Namekians agreed and so did Gohan and Piccolo!! You saved all of us from Frieza!! Do you really think, we’d just leave you behind, after that?!!”

“I never asked for it!!” He seethed, through clenched teeth. He couldn’t deny the relief that flooded him, as he realized that everything around him, including her, were part of a concrete reality, however it deeply wounded his pride that he’d required help from the dragon balls for something as elementary as being trapped on an inflated snow ball, when he’d been able to destroy Frieza, with his bare hands. “I didn’t need any help!!”

“Well, I don’t care what you think!!” The heiress moved down and embraced him, for all she was worth. “I needed you!! Can’t you understand that?!!” She sobbed against him, burying her face in the crook of his neck. “You said you’d come to Earth with us!! You broke your word and nearly ended up dying!! Seriously, what the hell happened to you, out there?!!”

“Quit snivelling!!” The Prince berated. What on Earth was wrong with her?!? She was acting like some helpless, whiny brat with a tantrum!!

“Shut up!!” She fired back. “I’m not snivelling.” Bulma sat up once again and wiped her eyes, with the back of her lab coat sleeve. A moment passed by, in taut silence.

“Stupid female.” Vegeta mumbled.
“Stupid male.” The heiress responded softly, placing her hands on his chest and smiling sadly, upon feeling his projecting rib cage, where a hardened pair of steel-like pecs, should’ve been. As weak as he was right now, he was still the Vegeta she remembered: excessively proud, hotheaded and with unshakeable resolve. She heard a weak rumble emanate from his stomach. “Bet you’re hungry, right?”

“Hn.” The Saiyan affirmed, after a brief pause. Hopping off of her lover, Bulma exited the hospital room and made her way into a nearby kitchenette.

While she was away, Vegeta looked over himself in disgust. How utterly disgraceful!! He was infinitesimally weaker than he was at his peak, back on Namek!!! Part of him was wishing he’d died in that frosty hellhole, but a stronger part was determined to regain the strength that was once his, and more!! He would shatter every barrier that stood in his path to greatness, no matter the cost!! He realized that he could move a tad bit better now. He was recovering pretty fast. Good!! It wouldn’t be long before he assumed control over his body and underwent bout after bout of rigorous training!! The woman had sworn she’d prepare suitable equipment for that very purpose, thus he decided that staying here would work in his favor!! Yes, all would be well!! He’d crush that fool Kakarot in battle and make him kneel before his Prince!! Wait a minute, Kakarot!!! He’d forgotten all about the third class!! If that clown was alive and at full strength, then he’d have absolutely no hopes of catching up to his power level!!! Damn it all!!

Just then, Bulma walked inside with a large tray, bearing a gigantic bowl of heated oatmeal, two jugs of fruit juice, a glass, a spoon and a folded handkerchief. Vegeta turned her way, a fierce scowl emblazoned on his hard visage, eyes burning with hellish, scarlet flames. The heiress nearly dropped the tray in her hand, as she saw the feral look about him.

“Where’s Kakarot?!!” He demanded, in a dangerously low tone.

“G-Goku?” She asked. “Oh- uh- he’s somewhere in outer-space.”

“Why isn’t he here?!!”

“Calm down, dammit!!!” She placed the tray on her chair and cleared a path on the table, before depositing it there. She turned towards her Saiyan, arms folded. “We were gonna wish him back here, but he refused to come. Apparently, he’ll return at a later time.”

“Why the fuck would he do that?!!”

“How the hell would I know?!!” Bulma growled, peevishly. “Ask him when he returns!! I didn’t do anything, so quit yelling at me, you jerk!!”

Vegeta gave her a hard glare and proceeded to utter foul and inaudible curses, under his breath. That bastard was probably out there getting stronger, while he was stuck here!! Curse him!! Curse everything!!

“I need to train!!!” He declared abruptly and tried sitting, but was barely able to move his body up, one foot.

“Whoa, whoa, just hold up there, bud!!” Bulma frowned, walking over and forcibly pushing him right back down, hand on his chest. The Prince snarled at her, but she was not deterred in the slightest. “You’re not gonna train for a single second, not unless I say so, is that clear?!!”
“You have no right-”

“I have every right!!” She chimed in, vehemently. “This is my house and you’re my guest!! That means I have a responsibility over you, period!!”

“Over me?!!” He hissed, indignantly. “How dare you patronize me, woman?!! I am the Saiyan Prince, the most powerful warrior that ever lived!! I destroyed-”

“Frieza, yeah, I know!!” She placed her index finger on his lips to shush him. His eyes narrowed into fine slits. “What you did was incredible, but even then, you have to remember that- OW!!!!”
He nipped the fiery female’s finger, cutting her off in the middle of her speech. Bulma winced and clutched the throbbing digit protectively, whilst glowering down at Vegeta. “What the hell was that for?!!”

“You deserved it.”

“For what?!?!” She exclaimed indignantly, stomping her foot on the ground. The Prince found her antics incredibly entertaining, to say the least. He decided that it’d be a good idea to fuel her ire, whenever the opportunity arose.

“For talking too much.” He replied placidly, smirking inwardly, upon witnessing the rising rage set her brilliant, azure orbs, aflame. Vegeta tuned her out, as she lividly began raving at him, instead considering his next move. Perhaps it would be auspicious to re-nutrify and rehydrate his body, before training. It may take a little while, but it was definitely for the best.

“Hey, are you even listening to me?!!” Bulma repeatedly poked his cheek, with her finger. The Saiyan growled and bit her again. “Ow!!! You beast!!” She punched him on the forehead, only to cry out and suck on her twinging knuckles. Even in his tarnished state, she may as well have struck a thick block of steel. “That hurt.” She whimpered, eyes watery.

“Some lessons must be learned the hard way.” The Prince remarked, cheekily, completely unaffected by the attack.

“Shut up!!!” Bulma loured. “You could at least show a little sympathy!!”

“Sympathy is for the weak.”

“You- you’re such a dick!!”

“Tch, whatever.” That blazing fire in her eyes, burned him down to the loins. Yes, provoking her was definitely worth looking forward to.

“Ungrateful prick.” She grumbled, before grudgingly reclining his bed up and feeding him his meal. The heiress had half a mind to pour it on his face instead, but decided against it, since she’d ultimately have to clean the mess herself, not to mention, prepare him a whole new Saiyan-sized serving. No, she’d find another way to get back at that jerk!!

The late morning and afternoon passed by relatively fast, with several make-out sessions that didn’t go too far, as per Mrs. Brief’s rules, Bulma working on a few projects and Vegeta frequently inquiring on the capabilities of the newly-built gravity equipment. Apparently, this unit could allow a user to train in up to 150 times Earth’s gravity. He’d also learned that the female had
produced some highly durable training bots and multiple new sets of Saiyan armor and uniform, even better than the old. He had to see it all with his own eyes, to believe it!!

The heiress had attempted to extract some answers from Vegeta, as to what transpired in the 130-day gap, on his end. He simply informed her that his pod malfunctioned during his journey to Earth and he was forced to land on a lifeless, ice-infested world, but didn’t say anything else, despite her insistence for details. The heiress stopped prodding him after a while, knowing that he probably didn’t want to relive such horror. She’d let it go for now, but eventually, he would have to confront it and when he did, she’d help him through it, no matter what. Yes, he was brave, proud and steadfast and she loved that about him, but that didn’t mean he had to face everything alone. Vegeta shut his eyes and opted to engage in some mind-training.

Hours later, the cobalt sky loomed over West City, the stars glistening, the crescent moon as luminous as ever and a multitude of sonorous crickets chirping away, as a very familiar arrival stood outside the humongous, rounded residence, itching and at the same time, hesitating, to make his way inside.

‘Come on, Yamcha, you can do this.’ The scarred warrior willed to himself. ‘Bulma’s gonna be thrilled to see you, so quit being such a wimp!!’

The door opened before he even touch the knob and he was taken aback at the sight of none other than Krillin. What could he possibly be doing in here?!!

“How’ve you been, bro?!!” Krillin asked. “Did King Kai treat you well?!!”

“Hell yeah, he did!!” Yamcha smirked. “He taught me some kick-ass moves and get this: I even learned the Kaio-Ken technique!! I bet I could take you any day of the week, now.”

“I'd have to disagree, buddy!!” Krillin smiled smugly. “I haven't exactly been lounging around either. I’ve been training hard with Master Roshi, plus I had some hardcore battles on Namek and even had my hidden-”

“Yamcha, my boy!!” Capsule Corporation’s president exclaimed, surprising the former desert-bandit, as he genially slapped his back. “How are you?!!”

“Oh, hey there, sir.” The scarred warrior smiled, turning towards the old man. “I guess I can’t complain. I am alive, after all haha. How about you?” Words were exchanged for a few moments,
but Krillin hadn’t the heart to tell either Yamcha or Dr. Brief, the truth.

“So- uh- where’s Bulma?” The scar-faced fighter asked, a light blush tinging his cheeks. “I kinda wanted to see her.” He then looked fretfully at the lavender-haired senior. “She’s not still mad at me is she?! Is that why she's not here to see me?!!”

“What makes you say that?” The good doctor raised a brow. “I’m sure she’ll be delighted to see you. She’s currently in the medical wing, room 47B.”

“Why?!!” The warrior demanded, grabbing Dr. Brief’s shoulders, alarm wracking his well-muscled figure. “Is she hurt?!!”

“No, no, of course not!!” The doctor reassured, concealing the part about Vegeta. He had a feeling there was more to it than met the eye, since his vivacious daughter was personally seeing to it that her ex-captor was nursed back to health. “Why don’t you go and see her?”

“Oh- uh- sure hehe.” Yamcha knew they were both hiding something from him. He didn’t know what exactly, but he was going to find out!!

A/N: All I can say is: Yamcha incoming!!! That and, needless to say, he won’t be thrilled, not in the least!!! Rate/review/favourite and await the rude awakening that follows!!

p.s. Vegeta’s still such a douche isn’t he? Hehehe, guess some things never change!!

Thanks so much, ShiiroHana for drawing the scene for the reunion. Love you lots, my dear friend!
Chapter 36: Rude Awakening

Bulma exited the hospital room, to prepare dinner for Vegeta and herself, when her bright blue eyes caught sight of a very familiar figure, sauntering in her direction, observing the numbers on each door he passed.

"Y-Y-Yamcha." Her heart rattled. She hadn't expected him to be here until at least tomorrow afternoon!

"Bulma?" The scarred warrior turned towards her in surprise. A beatific look graced his ardent features as he ran over and captured her in a tight embrace, for the first time in a very, very long time. "Bulma! I'm so happy to see you!" He practically cried. Oh how he'd missed her the feel of her petite body against his. Intense waves of pleasure swooshed over his burly frame.

"Uh- yeah- likewise." She rasped. "Can I please breathe?"
"Oh sorry." Yamcha chuckled, loosening his hold a little, but keeping it firm nonetheless, never wanting to let go, no matter what. For what felt like eons, he'd eagerly awaited the reunion with his beloved soulmate! They were truly meant for one-another! Things would be work out for the best! He just knew it! He drew his face back and smiled lovingly at her. "You look beautiful, Bulma."

"Th-Thanks." She mumbled, furtively looking between her toes and trying to cover the culpability in her voice. The heiress felt terrible. She'd never seen him this happy before, which made it all the more difficult to tell him the truth! How could she ever tell him?! It would destroy him and everything between them, likely forever!

"What's wrong babe?" Yamcha asked, gently tilting her head up, with a folded finger. He closed his eyes and moved his face towards hers. The heiress turned aside and the ex-bandit frowned, as he made contact with her cheek, rather than his intended target: her lips. "B-Bulma?"

"We can't Yamcha." She said quickly, sighing in dejection. "We- We broke up, don't you, remember?"

The scar-faced fighter immediately let go, gawping at her incredulously, his heart slowly plummeting down to his stomach.

"But- but Bulma, I- I don't understand, we- we always broke up." He argued, voice shaky. Perhaps she was just a little overwhelmed by his abrupt appearance, that's all. Yes that had to be it! With renewed confidence, he gave her a tender smile. "We can make this better, I promise! It'll only be the two of us! I love you Bulma! I can't possibly tell you how much! Let's just-"

"You don't understand, Yamcha!" She frowned, heart heavy and laden with layer, after layer of unadulterated guilt. Tears streamed down her eyelids, as self-condemnation flooded through her. Here he was pouring his heart out and yet she was refusing him, again and again! Yamcha was willing to give her everything and hadn't the faintest idea that she was in love with another! "It won't work! Don't you get it?! We'll just end up regretting it, for the rest of our lives! We'll be miserable! I know it hurts now, but we'll save ourselves a lot of pain in the future, if we just end it!"

The scarred fighter's heart submerged lower and lower, into a deep, dark and secluded ocean, with each word of his beloved. The mere thought of life without her, made his gut clench. Every moment spent in King Kai's world, he had envisioned his return to Earth, with her leaping into his arms and weeping joyously, as she professed her undying love! But- it had been over a year since he'd seen her and in that time, she slowly, but surely, drifted further away, while he'd naively been expecting, the exact opposite! Why?! Why did the Universe have to be so cruel?!

"Bulma- I- I know we haven't had the best history, but things can be different now!"

"Can we not talk about this, please?!" A few tense seconds later, her expression softened and she smiled, placing a hand on his cheek. "We'll always be friends. Nothing will ever change that, so let's just forget about all this. Look, why don't you stay over for a while and we can-

"What's the real reason?!" The scarred warrior hissed icily, brows scrunched, as he kept his tears at bay. "Tell me!"

"I already told you-"
"Not everything!" His eyes shifted towards the room labelled 47B, wherein he sensed another Ki. He gently moved Bulma aside, walking over to it, fists clenched, all the while. Maybe he'd finally get some answers! Who was it that had captured her attention all this time, so much so, that she wasn't even there to greet him, when he arrived?!

"Yamcha, wait!" She yelled, in panic. Too late. He opened the rouge door and his eyes widened, upon seeing a man he loathed more than any other, back leaning against the headboard. No, it- it couldn't be him! No way! He would've sensed his Ki from a galaxy away and even then, it would terrify the living daylights out of him! What he felt now was, by contrast, incredibly low!

The Saiyan Prince turned towards the door and his expression immediately hardened beyond description, as he saw that gawking, arrogant fool of a 'warrior' standing before him.

"What the fuck are you doing here, weakling?!" He growled, bitingly.

"You- y-you're- supposed to d-dead." The scarred fighter stammered.

"I could say the same thing about you." Vegeta fired back, then smirked as he figured it out. "Ah, those fools must've brought your useless behind, back to life." His mouth pressed into a hard line. "Tch, what a goddamn waste! Now get the fuck out of my room!"

"Y-Your room?" Yamcha shook his head and his lips curled into a ferocious snarl, as he took a few daring paces forward. "What the fuck do you mean, your room?!"

At that moment, Bulma walked inside.

"Yamcha, wait a sec-"

"Explain to me, what this bastard is doing here!" The ex-bandit seethed.

"Say that to my face, coward!" Vegeta challenged.

"Would you both shut-up and just relax?!" The heiress yelled over the two of them. She looked between her feet. "I- uh- well- you see- Vegeta was alive and we- um- wished him back to Earth." She slurred the last part of the sentence.

"You what?!" Yamcha practically roared. "Wh- Why in Kami's green earhole, would you ever-"

"What fucking business is it of yours, weakling?!" The Prince interposed. "She doesn't have to explain anything to you! You're nothing but a worthless scrub, a pansy-ass with no b-"

"Vegeta, lay off him, would you?!" Bulma grit her teeth at the Saiyan, in reprimand. She couldn't deny being a little flattered that he was getting all protective over her, but that was just a tiny bit overboard.

"I don't need you to defend me!" Yamcha seethed, coolly. Harrowing pain and fury coursed through his every vein. This couldn't be right, this just couldn't! How had things gone from terrible to nightmarish, in the mere blink of an eye?! The scarred man pointed a trembling finger towards Vegeta, eyes never leaving his former lover's. "Is- is he the reason you're breaking up with me?!"

"We broke up a long time ago, Yamcha!" She shot back. "He's got nothing to do with this!" The latter claim, of course, was a downright lie.
The Prince frowned at her, curiously. That was strange. Back on Frieza's ship, she'd categorically claimed that he made her 'betray' that pitiful excuse for a fighter (A/N: Refer to Chapter 21). But, if they were already separated, then why would she- Fucking hell! Why did he even care?! Their issues weren't his and he certainly didn't want to hear about it!

"Then why?!" The scarred man gnashed his teeth, an underlying despondence behind his indignant visage. "Why would you bring him here?! How could you, Bulma?! After all these years, I thought you'd at least have more decency than-"

"Shut the fuck up, already!" Vegeta roared, his patience now thinner than himself. "Go cry somewhere else, you miserable worm! This is my room and you're not welcome here, so flee!"

"Why don't you make me, you little freak?!" An incandescent Yamcha retorted. "And what the hell's happened to you, anyway?! You look like a fucking twig and your Ki's gone down the the toil-"

"Enough!" Bulma clamped a hand over her ex's mouth, glaring fiercely at him, then at Vegeta. "It's obvious that you two muscle-heads can't be in a room together, even for a few seconds! Seriously, you're like oil and fire!" She pulled her hand back, setting her eyes squarely upon the scarred warrior's. "Yamcha, go to the living room and I'll be with you, in a short while, okay?!"

"Fuck it!" He pushed his way, past her. "I'm leaving! I know when I'm not wanted!"

He didn't make it two steps, when he was shoved sideways, an unwavering Bulma pinning him against the wall with her forearm, on his chest.

"I said stay!" She ordered resolutely, radiant blue flames, burning fiercely inside her cerulean eyes. "You will go downstairs, sit on the couch and watch some fucking Netflix, are we clear?!"

Just like that, the ex-bandit's resolve evanesced into the winds.

"Y-Y-Yes m-ma'am." He muttered quietly. Well, at least she hadn't lost even a thimble of her assertive edge; no, if anything, she was more bullish than ever. He hardly knew whether that was a good thing or a bad thing.

"Glad we've got that out the way." The heiress released her ex and he dashed out of the room, without delay.

"Tch, what a wimp." Vegeta remarked, derisively.

"And you!" Bulma walked up to his bedside, not the least bit impressed. She prodded his chest, with her finger. "You've got some nerve, talking to him like that! What did he ever do to you?!!"

"His very existence, gets on my nerves!" Vegeta snapped. "His ugly face belongs in the dirt, right where my Saiyanman put it!"

"Shut up!" She gave him a slap across the cheek, intended to scold him, rather than hurt him. The Prince gave her a warning growl, but she paid it no mind. "He's not ugly! He's my friend and you have no right to talk about him like that!"

"He's the one who trespassed, in my domain!"
"Our domain, not just yours, so quit being so territorial!" The heiress corrected. "And besides, he didn't know!"

"I could care less!" He scowled. "Just keep him away! His mere presence, makes me want to eviscerate him and shove his bowels down his throat!"

"He's not that bad, dammit!" Bulma argued. "You don't even know anything about him! He's one of the nicest people, I've ever met!" She placed her fingers on her eyes, sighing wearily. "But fine, I'll keep him out of your hair."

"Good." The Prince was irked that she took a stand on the weakling's behalf, but it didn't show behind his stony mask of nonchalance. "Now get me my damn dinner!"

"Hush, you!" She reproached. "Don't talk to me like I'm your maid! I'll be back with dinner when I'm good and ready, so just shut up and watch some television or something!" Bulma grabbed a peculiar remote-control device and pointed to a bizarre screen attached to the wall, opposite his bed. She pressed the power button and some mysterious exhibition about toucans, began playing out on the display unit. "Here!" She handed him the remote and left, slamming the door behind her.

The Prince muttered a string of curses under his breath, but a few minutes later found that he was quite engrossed in the nature documentary, until-

"ARRRRGGGHHHH! TURN IT OFF! TURN IT OFF!" He freaked out, almost falling off the bed, when a cluster of slimy, putrid worms suddenly materialized on the screen before him, accompanied with some commentary in the background about 'annelids'.

Bulma walked into the lounge room, with a difficult smile loosely writ on her taut features. Her expression turned sour, as she noticed the opulent display on the television set.

"Aerobics?! Again?! Are you serious?!"

"O-Oh, B-Bulma!" The scarred fighter said in surprise and immediately pressed the power button to close the LCD. "I- I was just- uh- surfing through, you know and-"

"Spare me!" The heiress rolled her eyes, standing in front of him with a scowl, arms folded across her chest. "Honestly, Yamcha, what the hell?! After all this time, you still haven't changed one bit!"

"Why do you even care?!" The scar-faced man snorted. "Didn't you dump me, just a few minutes ago?!"

"Firstly, we were over long before that and secondly, that still doesn't mean you have to act like a depraved moron in my house, in the living room, no less!"

"You're the one who forced me to stay!" Yamcha ground his teeth together, exasperatedly. "Seriously, what the hell do you want from me?!"

"Well for starters, I want you to quit being such a jerk!" She seethed. "Honestly, one's bad enough! I don't need another!"

"Oh, would you, by any chance, be referring to the guy that had me killed, who just happens to be
living under your roof?!

"You don't even know the whole story!"

"Then explain!"

After a tense moment, Bulma released a sigh and plopped down on the sofa next to her frustrated ex. She set about recounting right from the very beginning, when she'd offered herself as a hostage to Vegeta, in order to protect the planet. Nothing new there. The heiress continued on, narrating the journey to Planet Frieza no. 79, conveniently omitting the part where she'd gotten a good, hard look at Vegeta's firm and exquisitely mouthwatering, behind (A/N: Refer to Chapter 7). It was then that she arrived at the focal point of the story: Namek. The deeper she ventured, the further her heart-rate spiked. And finally, she reached the tale's epicentre: the moment she'd gotten intimate with her captor.

Yamcha didn't take the news well, not at all. His wounded heart drowned inside an expansive body of stinging brine. He couldn't believe it! She'd betrayed him- for that fucking ruthless, genocidal barbarian! Anyone else and he may have forgiven it, but not him! He didn't want to hear another word! He stood up and trudged towards the door, taking labored breaths and pouring every ounce of effort he could summon, into restraining his tears.

"Wait Yamcha, where're you going?" The heiress went after him and grabbed his arm.

"Don't touch me!" He yelled in her face, whereby she fell over, in shock.

"Y-Yamcha, I-"

"Save it!" He croaked, voice packed with heady venom, unable to keep his eyes from watering up. "Every day in Other world, all I could ever think about was you, while you were off sleeping with the bastard that killed me and then adding insult to injury, by bringing him here!"

"I thought about you as well, but-"

"Enough lies!" He roared. "I never even want to look at you again, ever! We're through, for good! Just pretend you never knew me!" He shot her one last glare. "Have a nice life!"

As he made his way towards the front door, he saw Krillin standing there, biting his lip, with an unmistakable look of guilt, across his face.

"Umm- Yamcha, I'm- uh- sorry."

The scarred man narrowed his eyes a few seconds, a nasty look about him.

PAF!

Yamcha backhanded his bald colleague, right across the face, flooring him.

"That's for keeping it from me, you fucking asshole!"

He promptly opened the front door and closed it with a hard bang that shook the very foundations of Capsule Corporation. He flew off towards his house, feeling more outraged, hurt and betrayed than ever! He imagined this to have been the very best day of his life! He was planning to propose
to Bulma right there and then, but everything that he held dear was completely destroyed, all because of that fucking Saiyan scum! He had a sudden urge to murder whichever ratbag asked the dragon to lift his halo! He would've been a lot more content staying in Otherworld, training with King Kai for years on end, oblivious to the bitter truth that shattered his entire world and crippled his heart and soul beyond any possible recovery!

"Ow." An ugly bruise suffused on Krillin's cheekbone. "Guess he wasn't bluffing. He really has gotten a lot stronger. Hm? What's that noise?" The bald man heard muffled sobs and sniffles not far off and immediately dashed towards the living room, where he saw Bulma huddled against the recess of the sofa, covering her face with her hands. "Uh- Bulma?"

"Go away." She hissed, in a stifled voice.

"I-"

"You can't make me hate myself anymore than I do right now, so just go!" She shrieked, nearly sweeping him off his feet.

"Hey relax, that's not why I'm here." The bald man waved his hands defensively. Bulma sniffed and turned away from him, covering her eyes. She'd poured cold water over everything she'd had with Yamcha for so many years, all for a man who probably didn't even know the meaning of the word 'love', yet she couldn't hold it against Vegeta, only herself. She could practically taste Yamcha's hate and resentment towards her and it wounded her far deeper than she would've imagined, but she convinced herself that she deserved each and every bit of it, if not more. She flinched, upon feeling an arm gird around her shoulders.

"Come on, Bulma, don't cry." Krillin said soothingly.

"I'm not crying!" She seethed, averting her gaze. "Please, just leave me alone." She choked.

The bald warrior's chest tightened at the helplessness lacing her tone. This wasn't like her at all. He rubbed her shoulder up and down, in a comforting gesture. He was at a complete loss for what to say, so he just remained silent for a while, sighing dejectedly on occasion, surprised that Bulma hadn't shoved him away already.

"He hates me." She muttered, despondently.

"Who? Yamcha?"

"Who else?"

After a tense pause, Krillin spoke up.

"Bulma, I- I've known Yamcha for a long time, heck, I might even know him better than you." He said, smiling wistfully. She turned in his direction, blinking out her tears. "Believe me when I say this: Yamcha could never hate you, no matter what you do."

"You don't even know what I did." She frowned, casting her eyes aside.

"I know about you and Vegeta."

"Y-You do?" Bulma sucked in her breath.
"Come on, you make it sound, as though it's a big secret." He rolled his eyes. "We all heard what you said to him right before you died and now that he's here with us, you've barely left his side."

"Well yeah, but-" The heiress couldn't help but blush a little. "That still doesn't change a thing." She continued in a strained voice. "Yamcha trusted me and I betrayed him."

"You didn't betray him Bulma." Krillin shook his head. "The two of you weren't even tog-"

"It's not about that, Krillin." She sighed, desparingly. "He and I- well- even when we broke up, we never really broke up, if you get what I mean. It was always more of a time out, with us. We'd never been with anyone else before."

"Oh, really?" The bald man frowned. "Just how naive are you?"

"What's that supposed to mean?" She asked, brows creased.

"Well- uh- I swore not to say, but-"

"Tell me!" The heiress narrowed her eyes dangerously. Krillin let out a relenting exhale.

"Well, you know how we flew over to Yamcha's baseball game, right after Goku died?"

"Uh huh." She nodded.

"I saw a bunch of girls, touching and- uh- groping him and he was just laughing, letting them do whatever they wanted." He recounted. "I confronted him about it later and he admitted he had a few flings, after you, 'dumped his ass', as he put it."

"That- that jerk!" Bulma grit her teeth. "You should've told me, ass-face!" Here she was, loathing herself the entire time, while her ex was out, playing the innocent victim! But her outrage was hardly enough to alleviate the pain or guilt that beset her. She placed a hand on her head. "Still, that's a different story, altogether. All he did was spend the night with a couple of floozies. What I did was a lot worse. Yamcha died, trying to defend us and I disgraced his memory, by sleeping with the enemy."

"Is that really how you see Vegeta?" Krillin asked.

"No." She mumbled back. "But he does and-"

"Tell me something, Bulma and be honest." The bald man asked, looking her squarely in the eyes. "Do you regret it?"

"I- I don't know- I mean, I still love Vegeta, but-"

"Then stop hating yourself." He gave her an encouraging smile and massaged her shoulder. "To be honest, I still don't know if I condone what happened between you, but that's a whole other matter. What you had with Vegeta, wasn't necessarily bad." He paused a moment. "I didn't think it was possible for someone like him to change, not in a million years, but he did and it was because of you. No matter what anyone says, you were good for Vegeta and no one can take that away from you, not even Yamcha. After all, you're the reason he turned Super Saiyan and was able to defeat Frieza."
"Wh-What?!" She asked, eyes as wide as the sea and heart-rate mounting to new heights.

"No one told you?" Krillin frowned, taken aback. "You didn't even think to ask?"

"N-No, wh-what happened?"

Bulma perceived a hint of pride and veneration in her friend's tone, as he informed her of her Saiyan's legendary transformation, with great detail, recalling how he'd cried over her dead form and gathered her up in his arms, once he'd ascended. Here she was questioning Vegeta's capacity to love, but she should've known that for one such as him, actions spoke a lot louder than words. She no longer had any doubts that he did love her, albeit, in his own unconventional way. Of course, he'd rather jump inside a well of sulfuric acid than admit it, but that was besides the point. She barely resisted the urge to squee and make merry!

"Feeling better now?" Krillin asked, smiling benignly.

"A little, I guess." Her lips quirked up, slightly.

"Good." He stood up and stretched out his arms and legs. "Don't worry about Yamcha." Her face fell at the mention of her ex. "He won't stay mad at you, forever. Just give it some time. I'll go speak to him, okay?"

"You really don't have to any of this, Krillin."

"Hey, you sacrificed everything for us, Bulma." He smiled. "This is the least I can do. It'll take time, but it's all gonna work out eventually. Trust me."

The heiress looked at him a moment, before nodding.

"Alright, and- uh- if you don't mind, could you just- um- keep this between us- for now?"

"Sure thing."

"Thanks, Krillin." She smiled, in appreciation. "You're a great friend and I mean that."

"Don't mention it hehe." He laughed sheepishly, whilst mentally adding. 'Forever in the friend zone.' Sauntering towards the front door, his mind wandered towards his own ex, a Bulma look-alike, named Maron. Truthfully, he didn't find her quite as attractive as the former and on top of that, she was a total air-headed bimbo. He still liked her, nonetheless. She was incredibly animated and easygoing, without a clue or care in the world and had this constant cheery vibe, about her. Unfortunately, everything went downhill when she'd informed him that he was 'only' her three hundred and fifty seventh boyfriend and that she still had a few dozen others, whom she visited, every now and again. She equated it to eating a range of delicacies, depending on the mood and occasion, rather than tediously sticking with just one. He shuddered at that godforsaken memory. While Bulma was more than a bit fickle and flirtatious back in the day, she had a lot more self-respect than that. If only he could find someone like her: intelligent, strong-willed, driven, spirited and kind-hearted, when it truly counted. He sighed forlornly, as hezoomed towards Yamcha's house. He had a feeling, he wouldn't exactly receive the warmest of welcomes, but that was to be expected.

The heiress stood up, sighing wearily and proceeding back towards the medical wing, but not
before stopping at the kitchenette, to prepare another meal for her famished and hot-tempered Saiyan.

'Hm, now what should I put together for dinner?' She mused. 'Dammit, if only Oolong was here. Vegeta could definitely go for some pork chops.' She giggled inwardly at her own joke. Eventually she decided upon mild beef needle soup. As she cooked, her thoughts meandered from one place to another, but for the most part, centred upon a certain scar-faced ex-bandit. What could she possibly do, in order to make this right? There had to be some way, there just had to be! In the end, she opted to mull over it over the course of the next few days. It was late, she had an excruciating headache and a broken heart, plus waiting it out for a while, would give Yamcha time to cool down. She prayed to whichever deity was listening, that he didn't perform seppuku, before then.

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"Wat tha f-uck do you w-want, c-c-cueball?!" A drunken Yamcha yelled, sloppily hurling an empty beer bottle aimed for Krillin's head. It missed by a long shot, instead shattering on a portrait of a scantily clad model, eliciting a series of sporadic laughs from the scarred warrior.
"Hahahahahahaha, r-r-rite'n tha crotch! I got'er, rite in tha-"

"Yamcha, I really think you should tuck in for the night." An unsettled Puar meekly advised.

"Quiet f-f-fur-ball!" The inebriated man pointed an unstable finger at the hovering feline. "I- I'm tha only b-b-boss around-"

"Yamcha, would you calm down?!" Krillin exclaimed. "You're not acting like yourself!" The bald man tried forcing his scarred friend to sit, but he viciously resisted, much to the former's chagrin. Left with no other choice, Krillin landed a brutal low punch on the solar-plexus, causing the intoxicated Yamcha to double-over and barf all over the floorboard. Puar gasped, in shock and dismay.

"Sorry about this, Yamcha." He landed a knock-out blow to the nape and held him up by the scruff of his Gi, to keep him from falling into his own puke. Carrying him over to the bedroom, he gently laid out the unconscious man over his bed, Puar in tow.

"Will he be okay?" The drifting cat asked, solicitously.

"Yeah, of course." Krillin nodded, looking towards the feline. "Puar, maybe you shouldn't stick around here, you know, cause-"

"I'll never leave Yamcha!" She exclaimed, resolvedly.

"He's not himself." The bald man argued. "Look, just gimme a few days, so I can help him get sober."

"I'm staying right here!"

"Ugh- fine." Krillin's shoulders fell in defeat. Puar had always been loyal to a fault, constantly rooting for Yamcha at every instance, no matter what odds were stacked up against him. While that was truly admirable, it wasn't exactly the most fitting virtue, where self-preservation was concerned. He knew Yamcha would never touch a hair on his furry friend's body, but too much alcohol took its toll on any man. 'I guess that's why I'm here.' He thought to himself.
The next morning he called Bulma and told her about what had materialized the night before, only triggering her to condemn herself that much further. She suggested confronting Yamcha face-to-face, in order to straighten out this dreadful matter, but Krillin strictly forbade it, maintaining that the scar-faced man needed at least a few weeks to settle down and come to terms, with everything.

A/N: Poor Yamcha! Just when he thought life couldn't possibly be any better, reality crashed down like an anvil! How can he possibly recover from this mess?! And what of Bulma and her bed-ridden Prince?! More answers shall follow!

p.s. The next chapter will be a bunch of lemon-packed fun and I mean, real, hardcore-kinky-as-hell lemon, so be ready and keep a box of tissues with you and perhaps a blood supply unit hehe!
Acceptance (includes fan-art)

Chapter Summary

Really fun and kinky lemon in here, hope y'all love it!! :D

Chapter 37: Acceptance

Only a few days passed, since Vegeta's arrival, yet he could move his arms and torso easily enough by this point, so much so, that it was deemed okay to take him out of the hospital and into Bulma's bedroom, where she stayed by him, most of the time. The Namekians kept to themselves and a while earlier, the Son family had returned home, despite Bulma's insistence that they stay. Chi-Chi promised to visit every now and again and before leaving, advised her blue-haired friend, to be cautious around that nasty Saiyan. Bulma rolled her eyes at the memory. Gohan was reluctant to go, but caved in eventually, saying his farewells to both her and Vegeta, before departing, though the latter responded with a mere grunt.

Now, she would often find Vegeta practicing an array of hand and elbow-strikes, whilst seated on her new queen-sized bed, just to re-familiarize himself with some combative basics. All he needed was to get these darn legs functioning properly. It was disgraceful that one such as him required assistance going to the restroom, whenever nature made it's rattling call or whenever he needed a bath, neither of which occurred that often, thankfully enough.

Incidentally, the two of them hadn't yet copulated, since he was unswervingly determined to recover as quickly as possible and argued that sex would only impede his progress. While that was kind of true, it didn't irk Bulma any less. He was being distant and that made her feel insecure. "Hey, have you seen my socket wrench, anywhere?" She asked one night, a few hours after dinner, as she rifled through box after box, of tools. She'd already changed into her powder pink, buttoned night shirt, decorated with love hearts and a trigonal name tag embroidered on the upper left hand side, with 'Bulma' imprinted in the centre. At the last minute, however, she remembered that she still needed to complete the final adjustments on a vital component of a miniature spy drone prototype, before hitting the hay.

"Tch, how would I know?!" The grouchy Saiyan scowled. "Take care of your own mess!"

"Way to be supportive, jerk!" She glared back at him. "I don't just take care of my needs, I take care of yours too, so maybe you could show some freaking appreciation, once in a while!"

"I never asked you for anything!"

"Alright then, how about I just leave you here to starve and fend for yourself?!!"

"Go ahead, I don't care!"

"Fine, asshole!" She huffed, slamming her hands on the table, as she got up out of the chair and headed for the toolroom to find herself a new half-inch ratchet, all the while indignant. "That
loathsome little creep! He's got some nerve!"

"Stupid wench." Vegeta cursed, as she left. "Like I need her."

Growing weary of lying on that damned bed all day long, the Prince rolled off, his knees and carpals, landing on the plush carpet, below. He would force his legs to function properly, whether they wanted to or not. Vegeta grit his teeth, pushing his knees upwards, so he was sitting on all fours. A few heavy breaths later, he was balancing himself on both feet, knees bent, as he strained with the effort to stand up. This was a whole lot tougher than he'd anticipated! He progressed several inches, before he lost his balance and was back to square one.

"Shit!"

That was the sight Bulma walked into, as she opened the door and closed it behind her. Dropping her ratchet, she rushed over to the Saiyan, fell on her knees and placed an arm around his shoulder.

"Hey, you alright?!"

"I'm fine!" He hissed back. "Leave me!"

"You idiot, what the hell do you think you're doing?!" She berated.

"I need to train!"

"What you need to do is shut up and listen to me!" The heiress snarled. "You can't train like this! You've gotta heal, before-"

"No!" He fiercely interjected, gnashing his teeth her way, obsidian eyes burning with dogged resolve. "I have to do this! I must get my strength back!"

The heiress stared at him blankly and after a moment or so, she couldn't help but smile, forgetting why she was mad at him in the first place. His undying passion and determination, to break all bounds and limits, never failed to ensorcel her.

"You will get stronger." Bulma sighed, nuzzling into his neck and inhaling in deep. His musky scent always lit her up with joy, no matter how sour she felt towards him. "But for now, just rest."

"No- I must train." The Prince shook his head in protest. She gingerly rubbed his back up and down and placed a hand on his chest, relishing the euphonic staccato of his enlivened heartbeat. He'd regained some of his muscle mass, which was definitely a plus. Darn Saiyans! They could eat ten restaurant's worth of food and it wouldn't cause them a smidgeon of harm, just make them stronger! If only she were blessed with such transcendent physiology!

"Shhh, just relax." Bulma cooed. "It won't be long now. You're healing fast and I know you'll be a Super Saiyan again, in no time at all."

"How do you know about that?" The Prince narrowed his eyes, losing inch after inch of control, as she tended to his cool upper-body, with her warm, dainty hands.

"Everyone knows." She kissed his shoulder and smiled. "And I'm glad you did it because of me."
"What?!" He tightened his jaw. "Who told you that?!

"Krillin did." The heiress ran her nose along his cheek, eliciting a series of shivers from him.

"Damn that little, yellow-bellied scoundrel." Restraint was slipping, as Bulma continued snuggling against her Saiyan, creating goosebumps, everywhere her hands travelled. Ultimately, he gave in and allowed her to help him back on the bed. She lay next to him, resting her chin on his shoulder. He looked upon her gravely, faces, but a few inches apart. "You shouldn't have done that." The Prince mumbled.

"Done what?" She breathed, planting a chaste kiss on his lips.

"Interfered with my battle." He frowned, in askance. "You had no obligation to-"

"I did have an obligation." She interposed, expression solemn. The heiress positioned herself above him, straddling his hips. "And if I had to do it all over again, I would, without a second thought."

"Wh-Why?" He asked, baffled beyond words. How could a pure soul like hers be willing to sacrifice everything for a demon like him, who knew only how to inflict and endure pain, slaughter the innocent and destroy civilizations, one after another?!

"You know why." She rejoined earnestly, azure eyes beaming with radiant light from the heavens that shone brightly, within the depths of the Saiyan's darkened soul, re-invigorating him. "I'm yours, Vegeta." She took hold of his hands and leaned her forehead against his. "I'll always be yours."

The Prince blinked a few times, coherency escaping his cold clutches, as the seconds leisurely strolled by, in no real hurry.

"Say it again." He breathed into her lips, winding his shaggy tail around her bare thigh, right below the hem of her night shirt.

"Say what again?" She asked, eyes fluttering, as yet another strong surge of want, spiralled within her. She hadn't felt that furry appendage of his, in a long time. It only accelerated her desires further.

"Tell me you're mine."

Bulma smirked and moved her lips towards his ear, catching him completely off-guard with her ensuing reply.

"You're mine." She whispered.

Vegeta froze, overwhelmed with shock at the impudence of this little female. How- how dare she, a mere Earthling, profess any claim over him, the Prince of all Saiyans?! Did she not know her place?! The heiress heard a low, remonstrative growl emerge from the hollows of his chest. Oh, he definitely didn't like that! Her smirk widened into a broad grin.

"You're my Saiyan." She purred and kissed his temple. Her words reverberated throughout his mind, making his heartbeat soar, as an ocean of warmth ran through him, snuffing out the indignation felt at her initial remark.
"B-Bulma." He breathed, intertwining his fingers with hers, having not the slightest clue, how much his female savored the sound of her own name, in that gravelly voice of his. Bulma felt a kaleidoscope of butterflies, fluttering their magnificent wings and collectively humming a melodious, love-ridden tune, within the base of her stomach, making her legs lose nearly every bit of strength they had. She shut her eyes and pressed her mouth against his, opening it up immediately and letting their tongues dance together, with the captivating tune.

A/N: Hardcore, super-vulgar lemon follows, for a while so viewer's discretion is strongly advised for all those underage and/or hyper-sensitive!

Vegeta's tail ventured deeper and deeper, till it arrived upon its treasured destination. He scowled in exasperation, as her undergarments hindered him from reaching her most sacred region. Bulma's eyes widened, heart skipping a few beats and breath hitching, as she felt the furry appendage slip inside her panties, from the top and gently run up and down her cleft, rendering her legs void.

"Vegeta!" She gasped, as it pressed against her clit, hitting just the right spot, again and again, prompting her fragrant juices to escape on their own accord and intoxicate him with their sweet aroma that wafted through the air.

By God, she never knew that such a move could be ever so rapturous. The puppy-soft fur of his pecan, prehensile tail, within her, triggered her mind to leap straight towards the heavens and linger there for an eternity. She groaned in disgruntlement and hit him on the chest, when she felt the appendage slip away.

"Patience, female." He smirked, never having known a woman with a sexual appetite, quite like hers. The Prince slowly lowered her panties using his tail, purposefully taking his sweet time about it. Bulma growled in severe reprimand and struck him more forcefully. Growing weary, she hurriedly removed the confining underwear with her own two hands, before taking hold of the appendage and pleasuring herself with it. She'd never imagined that sexual gratification could reach such unforeseen heights.

Vegeta nearly reeled with shock, his lungs freezing, as she repeatedly pumped his tail inside her core, coating it's upper section with her sweet, enthralling fluids. He moaned and panted, his shaft as hard as a rock. Bulma shamelessly continued her lascivious maneuvers, until her climax crashed down like a bolt of thunder and her vibrant cries of ecstasy echoed through the halls of Capsule Corporation.

Her entire body lost sensation, as she collapsed on her Saiyan's chest, breathing raggedly against him, her disoriented mind amidst a cluster of jubilant clouds that reflected the warm glow of a smiling sun. Vegeta placed an arm around her waist, eliciting a honeyed note of approval, from his blue-haired female. That was definitely a whole new experience for the feisty pair, not that either of them was complaining. Only now did the Prince realize that his tail wasn't nearly as erogenous as it was before, else he would've eaten her alive by now; must've been some side-effects from Kizdar. Five minutes of companionable silence ensued, before Bulma's breath caught up to her and she finally regained the ability to speak.

"Vegeta?" She murmured.

"Hn?"

"You're amazing." She smothered his face with a plethora of protracted kisses. "I love you." Since
Namek, she hadn't vocalized those three words.

Vegeta suddenly broke free from his reverie, as her statement fell into place. He looked at her ambivalently, his obsidian eyes losing their shining gleam and turning stone cold, not giving away a shred of emotion.

"Hey, what- what's wrong?" Bulma asked hesitantly, her heart sinking, as she noticed his closed-off expression. He grit his teeth.

"You said the same thing to me, right before you died!" He hissed.

"Yeah, I know, but what does-"

"What the fuck were you thinking, going in there, provoking the likes of Frieza?!!"

"Hey, I thought we'd been over this!" She retorted, with a frown. "I told you that-"

"That what?!" He ardently interjected. "You're willing to die, for scum like me?! Just how stupid can you be?!"

"I'm not stupid!" She fired back. "And you're not scum! Why do you have to hate yourself, for?!" She cried. "I'm alive, you're alive and Frieza's dead, so why can't you just let it go?!"

"You don't understand!"

"What don't I understand?!"

"You're a weakness!" He blurted out, cutting right through her heart.

"Wh-What?"

"Do you know the first thing I was taught, when I was recruited by Frieza?!!" He asked, in exasperation and continued, without waiting for a reply. "Using your enemy's weakness against them! I learned that the hard way- twice! When that bastard killed my father and destroyed my home world and when-"

His words caught in his throat, lungs constricting so much, that he found it difficult to breathe, never wanting to so much as speak of that horrific moment, ever again. He cast his gaze aside, a few tense moments passing by. Bulma sighed and nestled her face into his neck.

"I'm not a weakness!" She contended, her voice, impassioned and tears cascading out her eyes. "You turned Super Saiyan, because of me! You beat Frieza, because of me! Why can't you just accept the fact that some things will always be out of your control?! Why can't you accept me?!"

"Stop blubbering all over me, stupid girl!" A vexed Vegeta chided, grabbing her by the waist.

"I'm not a girl!" She screeched, sitting up and punching him in the chest, with her tiny fist, to no avail.

"Then quit acting like one!"

"How about you stop being such a jerk?!" She shot back. "You're the one who started this!"
"Dammit, just shut up already!" He grumbled, wearily. "Stupid crybaby!"

"I'm not a crybaby, you dick!" She pressed her inner-thighs, against the sides of his torso, evoking a unwitting, low growl of pleasure, from him. Dammit, now that he thought about it, she wasn't wearing any panties. He could feel her lower lips brushing against his abdomen, as she ranted, vitalizing his erection, further and further.

"Woman." He shuddered, rubbing her glossy, silken legs, up and down. Bulma's stomach summersaulted at his touch and the corresponding gruffness of his sexy timbre. Her primal urges returned once again, causing any thoughts of their heated discourse, to gallop over a cliff. She moved her face a hair's breadth from his.

"Saiyan." She lilted, kissing his lips and parting her teeth, in a silent invitation to partake in yet another dance of tongues. Each party was prepared to engage the other for an eon, Bulma loving his rich, raw, masculine taste and Vegeta, unable to tire of the flowery, ambrosial flavor, dormant within the sweet boudoir of her mouth.

The Prince was about to flip over and take charge, but Bulma kept him down, with a hand to the chest.

"Hey, I'm piloting this one, understand?!" She narrowed her eyes, in protest. Vegeta grunted distastefully, at the blatant vulgarity of her statement, though it didn't fail to spark, yet another fiery flame of desire, within the pit of his stomach. He'd never copulated in this position before. He wondered what it would be like, with his sprightly, little female on top. "Just lie back and enjoy the ride, my Saiyan." She purred. Vegeta's legs suddenly felt a lot heavier, heart thrumming and soul vivifying, at her soft term of endearment. He released a breath of surrender, expression stoic, but ebony eyes, once again gleaming with life. Maybe this would be worth it.

A/N: More crazy lemon, so beware, O sensitive ones hehe!

Bulma smiled and unbuttoned her nightdress, then unhooked her light coral, half-cup bra, tossing both impediments into the laundry hamper, situated in one corner of the room. The Prince roved his calloused hands from her curvaceous hips, up her trim waist and onto her glorious mounds, closing his eyes and sighing, as he cupped them into his palms. The heiress placed her hands behind his own, arching her back and leaning into his blissful touch. Vegeta took her pert, pink nipples between his thumbs and forefingers, deftly kneading them, as she cried out, in joy. One hand travelled towards her centre, but she grabbed it before it landed on its target. The Saiyan growled, in protest.

"You're overdressed, Vegeta." She smirked. "Let me to unburden you."

"Lewd female." He commented.

"Oh, hush you." She drew backwards and slowly took off his pants and underwear, all in one bundle, flinging them into the hamper, thereafter. Her hazy, blue eyes feasted upon his proud phallus, regally upright and just waiting to be ministered, for all it was worth. The heiress gave him a mischievous smirk that made his chest tighten, as a deepened sense of alarm coursed through him.

"W-Woman, wh-what are you-"
Vegeta's tongue tied, as Bulma grabbed his hardened length within her hand and moved her face towards it, placing a prolonged kiss on the wide-open top. The Saiyan's eyes widened, heart cinching up and racing faster than ever before. He threw his head back, arching against her, as she kissed his erect shaft from tip to base, before gliding her hot tongue upwards and taking the entire organ into her mouth, vigorously sucking to and fro, while soothingly massaging his testicles, with her proficient fingers.

"Bulma!" He groaned her name, hardly able to take much more, his mind clouded with a haze of heavenly warmth and no longer in touch with his body. She shivered, as his husky tone reverberated in the heat-beset room. The heiress was effectively able to feel that gratifying timbre of his, vibrate all the way through to his exquisite erection. She thoroughly explored it with every aperture of her hot mouth, licking every patch of skin, with her adroit tongue.

Bulma sighed in appreciation, as a fresh batch of semen made it's way inside her mouth, flowing down her throat and into her chest. His deliciously piquant seed brought to mind, the juicy insides of a sour-sweet granadilla, freshly picked in a balmy, Spring afternoon, with a slight undertone of willow herb and anise. It's raw potency damn near drove her mad.

Feeling his climax about to erupt like a volcano at any moment, the Prince lifted her by the underarms, carrying her lissom frame towards to his upper-half. He brought her face down, smashing his lips to hers and relishing in her perfect, sweetened taste, together with tiny droplets of his own semen. Their tongues continued wrestling, but Bulma reluctantly withdrew, as she hoisted her legs back over him, in order to better her position. Vegeta tensed, growling in protest, but loosened up and sighed euphorically, once she took hold of his stiffness and covered it with her centre. She rode him up and down, maintaining a steady and refined tempo, while he clasped her hips firmly, in order to help her stay balanced.

"Remember- I- cum- first!" Bulma rasped, between pants and graceful, pelvic motions. The Prince grunted affirmatively and matched her movements, as their searing skin slid together, with impassioned ardor. He generously let her determine the pace and responded in kind, as his climax drew closer and closer.

"Wait, I cum first!" The heiress slurred desperately, upon sensing his imminent release. Using every bit of self-control he had left, the Saiyan kept his seminal fluids at bay, refusing to blemish the culmination to the most epic and ravishing tryst, he'd ever undergone. He patiently awaited her climax and once it descended downwards, he instantly fired his own, roaring in jubilation, while she ecstatically screamed his name. Bulma's strength gave out, as their orgasms met one-another and she fell upon his chest almost lifelessly, her petite frame trembling, as countless endorphins swam through her bloodstream. She would definitely struggle to walk in the morning, but this was well beyond worth it, as far as she was concerned. Making love to her robust Saiyan, easily rendered every other moment of carnal activity she'd experienced, null and void. She could feel his dynamic heartbeat and it only made her that much more content.

Vegeta lay motionless in the aftermath of this heavenly bout, occasionally letting out low growls of approval, as he felt his vivacious female's ragged breaths against his chest. He girded his tail around her thigh and wound an arm, around her supple waist. She smiled, moaning in approval and resting a hand on his right pectoral. Several serene moments passed by.

"You know, I've never done that before." Bulma softly confessed.

"Done what, before?" Vegeta asked, frowning curiously, neither party altering their positions.
"Oral."

"Why?" The Prince asked, after a moment's pause.

"Yamcha wouldn't." She replied, frowning. "He was too shy and said that he respected me too much." (A/N: I got this idea from the all-too-awesome, SilverLady7).

"Tch, what a moron." Vegeta snorted derisively, irked at the mention of the weakling. "That's to be expected of a coward like him."

"Hey, don't be a jerk." Bulma frowned, reproachfully smacking his chest. "Besides, he wouldn't do it for me, either."

"Enough about that wimp!" The Prince growled.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever, your majesty!" The heiress loured.

She still hadn't spoken to her scar-faced ex, all this time. Krillin assured her that he was slowly, but surely, recovering from his loss. He and Yamcha moved to Kame House, along with Puar and would engage one-another in intense spars and exercises, so the latter could use them as a healthy avenue for venting his pains, sorrows and frustrations, rather than turning towards alcohol, drugs and/or wanton females. That was a positive sign, she guessed, plus this way he could at least keep in-tune with his training. But she still wanted to get in touch with him. Whenever Bulma contacted her bald friend and requested that he get Yamcha on the line, her ex vehemently refused to speak with her, even going so far as to say that if she decided to visit Master Roshi, Krillin should tell him in advance, so he could move out, for the duration of her stay. Her heart sank with despair, as she became more and more convinced that their tattered friendship would remain in ruins, never to be rejuvenated, ever again.

Vegeta immediately sensed the stress and tension, effusing from her in palpable waves. His lips curled, in exasperation. He couldn't possibly get a moment's rest like this, but he didn't want to voice his objections, lest he appear weak or even worse, concerned. Dammit, he put far too much stake in this little female's wellbeing, but then again, she had rightfully pointed out that that was the primary success factor, in his ascension. Maybe caring for another wasn't quite as bad as he'd always been led to believe.

"Vegeta?" She hacked through his musings.

"Hn?"

"Do you think I'm a bad person?"

The Prince narrowed his eyes, wondering where on Earth that came from.

"Tch, bad?!" He seethed, clenching his teeth, as his muscles went taut, with derision. "What the Saiyans did was bad! Everything I've been doing since the age of five, is bad! What that bastard Frieza did to you, Gohan and the Namekian kid, was bad! Even if you tried, you couldn't come anywhere close to meeting the requirements!"

Bulma remained unresponsive, for a while.

"You're wrong, you know." She stated.
"About what?"

"About what you said." The heiress replied. She knew he was the last person who'd perk his ears up, when it came to discussing her troubles with Yamcha, thus she opted to avoid that subject altogether. Maybe he couldn't heal her inner wounds, but that didn't mean she couldn't heal his. "Not everything you've done is bad. Was sparing Earth, a bad thing? Was protecting me, a bad thing? Was saving Gohan and the others, bad? Was getting rid of Frieza and his soldiers, bad?"

"You- you talk too much!"

"All I'm saying is that you don't give yourself enough credit." She sighed sombrely, resting her chin on his sternum and gravely looked him in the eye. "I'm not trying to whitewash your past or anything, but what's done is done. You have your whole life ahead of you and- you- well, you have me."

"Tch, whatever." He scowled. "Now will you shut up and let me sleep?"

"Goodnight, jerk." She smiled and kissed his lips, before wrapping a sheet over their naked figures and nuzzling into his chest, letting his musky scent induce her into a reposing slumber, the very best she'd had, in months.

The Prince stayed awake for a while, pondering. He neither understood nor cared for that frivolous 'love' concept, but he still felt an undying connection with this silly female, which only deepened, as the days rolled by. She'd become a polarized figure of sorts, in that she was the primary facet behind both his weakness and his strength, with the two ends drifting further and further apart, the more their bond developed. But it was too late to turn back now. The moment his hellish soul had tasted an ambrosial slice of heaven, on Namek, he unwittingly ventured down a road he could never escape from. She had him trapped and there was nothing he could do, but travel on and on, down the ceaseless, entrancing path.

After finishing Frieza, he could've gone anywhere and not a single being could oppose his gargantuan might, yet he chose to go to her. Sure, he sought her assistance in supplying him with the necessary tools to accelerate his power, but there was a deeper reason behind his decision that he'd come to realize when amidst the chilling, merciless wastelands of Kizdar: he'd grown fond of her. As he wandered across endless miles of snow, he didn't think about the void he could've filled by claiming Frieza's cosmic empire, nor the strength he could've gained by training under high levels of gravity. No, the only thing that captivated his incoherent mind were the female's limitless pools of everlasting sapphire, her soft skin and flesh, the myriad of silky blue fibres on her head, her gentle voice and her sweet scent. Were it not for her, he would've likely collapsed within a few days, yet he meandered half-way across that ball of ice, for weeks on end.

Perhaps she was right and it was best for him to just let things be. He was still the Prince of all Saiyans and his first order of business was reacquiring his legendary powers. But for now, it was time to rest. That in mind, he wound both arms around Bulma's svelte waistline and tranquilly, dozed off.

A/N: So what does the future hold for Bulma and Vegeta?! And will the fiery heiress ever find a way to bury the hatchet, with Yamcha?! More drama follows in the proceeding chapters, so be sure to drop some feedback!!!

p.s. A little strong lemon there, wasn’t it?! I promise you it gets even kinkier later on!!
And thanks so much, NekoLover628 for drawing the steamy fan-art for this Chapter hehehe. Totally love it xD!!! :D
Nightmare

A/N: This is going to be a pretty powerful chapter, so be prepared!!

Chapter 38: Nightmare

An entire diddling week went by at snail-pace for the weary Saiyan Prince, before his obnoxious, blue-haired vixen had finally given him the green light to go ahead and train.

'Tch, foolish woman.' Vegeta thought to himself. He'd mastered the ability to track her minute Ki signal, no matter where it was. Thus, she hadn't the slightest clue that he had, in fact, been training for days during her absence, mostly working on a vast array of strenuous leg exercises. It wasn't that he entertained her counsel, but he did seriously heed her threat to put the gravity machine on lockdown for three whole months. In his experience, someone as stubborn as her scarcely made idle threats, though he'd never met anyone quite so stubborn.

Now, here he was, in the courtyard, done with his warm up and engaging himself in a traditional Saiyan Kata, consisting of fluid counterattack maneuvers. He'd learned the set from his father, when he was just a young boy.

"Hey there, handsome."

Vegeta turned towards the intruder's high-pitched voice and scowled, as he saw that crazy, scatter-brained blonde, clasping her hands together.

"What the hell do you want?!"

"Well, breakfast is ready, sugar cake and I just wanted to let you know." The middle-aged woman winked and let out a girlish laugh upon seeing his flustered face, before heading back inside the compound.

'Sugar cake?!' Vegeta cringed inwardly, disgusted by her schmalzy vernacular. He was highly tempted to blast her to smithereens, but if he did that, he'd probably get more than an earful from that highly capricious daughter of hers.

He followed Mrs. Brief inside and his mouth watered at the range of delicacies, gleaming before him, on the long, fine oak, trestle table: sausages, omelettes, fried eggs, brownies, an array of exquisite sandwiches, each sliced diagonally into four trigonal pieces of paradise, apple pie, krapfens, pretzels, waffles, chocolate croissants, mediterranean sweets, pancakes, a bowl of maple syrup, several jugs of fruit juice and an ornate, marble kyusu, filled to the brim, with fresh green tea. He was hardly able to keep himself from devouring everything, on the spot!

"Vegeta, you're drooling." Bulma giggled, handing him a handkerchief. "Here."

The Prince growled and snatched it off her, immediately wiping his lips clean and taking a seat.

"You're welcome, ass!"

Dr. Brief forked a waffle and took a small bite, warily eyeing Vegeta from time to time, as breakfast continued. If the Prince noticed his ganders, he didn't pay them any heed. Bulma and her
mother prattled on, during the course of the meal, though ninety percent of their inane blather was ignored by the males present. The Saiyan could not get enough of Panchy's perfect cooking (A/N: I just learned that Mrs. Brief's canonical name is Panchy)!

"So how's your training going?" The heiress smiled. No response. She scowled and punched Vegeta in the arm. The Prince swallowed and gave her an indignant glare.

"What are you doing?!" He snapped.

"I asked you how your training's going!" She said, expression unchanged.

"It would be going a lot better, if you'd activate the damn gravity room!" He promptly replied.

"Hey, you're not well enough for that!" She retorted. "Just give it a little time! You're healing really fast, anyway! It shouldn't take that long!"

"Tch, whatever!" They'd been through this at least a hundred times and he just couldn't be bothered arguing with this obdurate female, any longer. It was her prerogative for now, but soon that would change, once he figured out how to operate that accursed contraption, for himself.

"I'm glad you're so understanding." She drolly remarked.

"Shut up."

Post-breakfast, Vegeta was preoccupied with training and Bulma took the time to clear out her room of all the scientific tools and other paraphernalia, she'd been keeping inside, while her Saiyan was bed-ridden. Strange, as it was, she was already feeling nostalgic, as she laid eyes upon the large, empty bed, where she would often find a grouchy, or better yet, napping Saiyan. Whenever she would feed him, the butterflies would hymn sweet love songs in the base of her stomach and gods, his sleeping face was to die for. She'd taken several pictures and stored them on a private online gallery, not that he had the faintest clue. If he did, then she'd probably have to seize the spaceship and fly as far away as possible, in order to avoid his hellish wrath.

The heiress donned a formal business outfit, tied her hair back into a ponytail, with bangs fashioned on the front and twirly tresses, falling on either side of her face, before putting on hot pink lipstick and applying some makeup and mascara. She then drove to the central headquarters of the company, a few blocks down and proceeded to make her way inside her office on the top floor, in order to catch up on some administrative work that she'd been delaying, for a while. She hated being cooped up in that damned office, but it had to be done sometime. After all, she was Bulma Brief, vice-president of the world's most successful organization. Before long, her father would spend his days, dillydallying in retirement and she'd be at the forefront of Capsule Corporation, not that she looked forward to it, not in the least, but it was a responsibility that came with being as incredibly brilliant and talented, as she was.

At around four in the afternoon, Dr. Brief took an early day off, saying that he needed to take care of a few things, leaving poor Bulma in charge, for the two remaining hours, of operation.

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Vegeta was training in the courtyard, when he sensed yet another encroacher, heading his way. He frowned, as his dark eyes were greeted with the sight of the old man, who hadn't said a word to him, since his arrival. The doctor was a good seven feet or so from the Saiyan, when he abruptly
ceased his traipse and surveyed him, for a moment or so.

"Is there something I can do for you?!" Vegeta asked, peevishly.

"Yes, there is." He responded, adjusting his glasses a little. "Would you mind sparing a minute of your time?"

"Yes, I would mind!" He rejoined in dismissal and paid him no heed, as he continued his leg combinations. Dr. Brief remained unmoving and after a few minutes Vegeta grew weary. "Why're you still here?!" The Prince growled, starting to feel nettled.

"This is my house." The doctor replied, tone level-headed. "And I would like a minute from you, so I'll stay right here, until you-

"Dammit, just say what you've come to say!" Vegeta interjected. "One minute and not a second more!"

"Right." Dr. Brief nodded. "Well, let's get straight to it then." He cleared his throat and took a deep breath, before broaching the subject that had put a severe strain on his mind for days. "I've never been very strict with Bulma, since her adolescent years, always letting her take off on adventures and explore the planet, on her own accord. Nonetheless, she is my daughter and the most precious thing I have in this world."

"You're afraid, I'll harm her?" The Prince asked, knowing exactly where this discussion was headed.

"Do you blame me?"

"Of course not." Vegeta smirked. "After all, I am probably the single most dangerous person in the entire Universe, now that Frieza's dead." Dr. Brief narrowed his eyes. "But, bringing me here was her decision." The Saiyan snorted thereafter. "She's a foolish girl."

"Careful, boy."

"Or what?!" Vegeta sneered. This old geezer had some nerve! Everyone that had ever called him 'boy', were now dead and in ashes!

"Bulma would've fought tooth-and-nail, saving your life." The good doctor stated, purposefully ignoring the Saiyan's challenge. "I still don't know what she sees in you, but her choices are her own and I'll always respect them." A brief pause followed. "All I ask from you is one thing."

"And what's that?"

"A promise." He replied, gravely. "Swear to me that you'll never hurt my little girl, in any way."

Vegeta pondered a moment. He still loathed this weakness he felt around Bulma, but he accepted that it was a deep-seated part of him that wouldn't go away any time soon, if ever. His gut tightened at the thought of someone, so much as laying a finger on her, especially himself. She was his woman and he would always safeguard her, from anyone and everyone.

"You have my word." He assured in an even tone. Though he didn't meet the doctor's eyes, he sounded thoroughly sincere. "I believe it's been longer than a minute."
"It has."

"Good." Vegeta grunted. "In that case, leave."

"Very well." Dr. Brief sighed and went back into the compound, sitting on the love couch and musing to himself. While that Saiyan was aloof, taciturn, outright impudent and not very talkative, he was upfront and forthcoming, never beating around the bush. Bizarre as it seemed, he felt a smidgeon of reverence towards that boy, if only for that. Truth be told, his curt vow was extremely unexpected, but for some odd reason, he believed him. Malicious as he may have been, he could tell that Vegeta cared for Bulma, though he was doing his utmost not to show it.

Night approached and the Prince was in the midst of another Kata, when a certain blue-haired female came by, donned in a hot-pink, spaghetti-strapped singlet and lime green, flannel shorts, with wavy white lines across it.

"Vegeta?"

"Ugh, can you people never leave me alone?!"

"Hush up!" Bulma planted her hands on her hips, staring pointedly at him. "You've been training all day and it's eleven o'clock now! I wanna get some sleep!"

"Then go ahead and do it!" He growled. "I'm not stopping you."

"Come on Vegeta, I'll sleep a lot better if you're there with me." She smiled coyly, rubbing her sheeny, milky, toned thigh up and down with one hand and sensually massaging her breast with the other.

Vegeta immediately froze, his shaft steadily rising and pointing in her direction, as if that's where he needed to go. Bulma drank in the sight of his large phallus, protruding from those tight spandex shorts and licked her lips. The Saiyan snarled, growing jealous of her touching herself. How dare she? That was his job!

Half an hour later, the pair were in bed, breathing raggedly on each other's shoulders. Bulma was on top of Vegeta, following yet another mesmerizing tryst, only a sheet covering their nude bodies. The room was rich with the spicy, intoxicating aroma of sex. As usual, the heiress was playing with fistfuls of her Saiyan's hair, as his hands roved up and down her back, before finally settling on her voluptuous behind.

"Perv." She teased, moving her face up and kissing his balmy lips, earning a slow and lengthy grunt in response. "But I suppose, I'll let you off the hook just this one time." She smiled and kissed him again, before moving her lips to this ear. "Next time, you'll have to pay though." She whispered, whereby he shuddered, a rush of pleasure running through him.

"No, you will!" He growled and immediately turned their positions around, entering her once again, as a new bout commenced. Another twenty minutes passed, as the feisty duo panted into each other's mouths, bodies pressed together firmly.

"You know Vegeta, I've been wondering." The heiress said.

"About?"
"About you." She replied. "I mean, you've obviously got tons of experience, so tell me something: was there ever someone special, in your life, before I came along?"

"Tch, there's nothing special about you." He scoffed.

"Hey!" The heiress growled and punched him on the shoulder. The Prince smirked. Grating her nerves was much too easy, not to mention, amusing as hell. He would never grow tired of that blazing, blue fire that lit her eyes, every time he ruffled her feathers. "Anyway, you didn't answer my question. Was there another woman in your past? Someone you cared about?"

"No!" He seethed. "And I don't want to talk about it!" Other than herself, every woman he'd screwed was now dead, by his own hand (A/N: Refer to Chapter 13)! He didn't want to be reminded of that, especially with her bare form, right below his own. His chest tightened at the thought of treating her to the same fate, as he had the others.

"But-"

"Enough!"

"Fine." Bulma's shoulders slumped. Why was this such a sensitive issue?

A few hours passed by, as the odd couple lay in each other's arms, bare limbs tangled beneath the sheets.

Warning: The following scene is extremely graphic and likely to be a little too strong for young and/or ideologically sensitive viewers:

Vegeta had the silver-haired, lavender skinned beauty bent over, as he thrust his erected shaft inside her centre, again and again. She screamed for more, relishing in the sensation of his groin striking her sheeny, voluptuous butt cheeks, each time he ploughed into her. He firmly gripped her on either side of the pelvis, as he continued pleasuring her. As her climax erupted, so did the Prince's.

"Wow- that was- amazing." Sheela laughed merrily, between pants. "We should- do it again, some-

KHRISHHHH!

She hadn't said another word, as Vegeta grabbed her hair, roughly pulling her back towards his Ki-infused arm and lancing it right through her petite midsection. Her eyes bulged, tears streamed down the exotic woman's cheeks, her lifeblood draining through the spacious, flesh encrusted perforation.

"Wh-Wh-Why?" She cried, tone riddled with hurt and betrayal.

"Did you not think to ask who I was?" He malevolently breathed into her ear.

"Wh-Wh-What?" Sheela coughed out a glob of blood.

"I am Vegeta, Prince of all Saiyans and I'm on a mission to eradicate every bit of life, on this wretched planet." He smirked maliciously. Anguish, sorrow and regret coiled through the beautiful
young gem, as an ocean of tears flooded out her emerald eyes. "However, it never hurts to have a little pleasure on the side."

Two seconds later, her limbs dangled lifelessly and Vegeta retrieved his hand, unceremoniously letting Sheela fall into the grass, face-first.

"I have to admit, you're the best I've had so far." He chuckled evilly. As he always had, he knelt down and turned the woman around, to drink in the relishing sight of her dead emerald eyes, only— they weren't emerald. They were sapphire. And her skin was no longer lavender, but porcelain. Vegeta narrowed his eyes, taken aback at the anomalous change. Suddenly, as he witnessed her silver hair turn blue, his eyes widened, as a wave of memories shot right into his mind, like a rifle bullet.

"B-B-B-Bulma?" He whispered, his sinewy frame going limp in a trice. A terrifying bolt of thunder, struck his heart. Unprecedented shock, grief, pain and regret surged through his limp figure, upon recognizing the inanimate, yet everlastingly beautiful face of his little woman, her azure eyes lifeless and deluged with searing horror and excruciation. He felt as though a million knives were slicing up his stony heart, again and again and throwing each piece into a barrel of nitric acid, one by one. Chills of resentment, guilt, fear and self-loathing rushed through him.

"N-No, wh-what have I done?!" He uttered in abject despair, as droplets of contrite, doleful tears fell, one after another. He killed her! With his own accursed hand, he'd ended the blissful existence of the only being that had ever cared for him, since his planet's destruction! He betrayed and murdered her brutally, the woman he'd sworn to protect, the light of his life! How could this have happened?! He fell onto her chest and screamed aloud, as a sea of tears rushed out his dark eyes.

"Vegeta, wake up, wake up!" A solicitous Bulma shook the Saiyan's shoulders. Vegeta's screams and flails only mounted and he unknowingly grabbed his female's wrist, squeezing it, in an excruciatingly tight grip. The heiress cried out in agony, prompting the Prince to finally awaken.

"B-Bulma?" He asked softly, heart decelerating. He released her from his deathly grasp and the heiress shrank back, in fear. She whimpered and clutch ed her arm, looking upon her swollen wrist, with teary eyes. Vegeta gazed at her incredulously. Only moments ago, she'd been dead at his feet. He took in his surroundings and quickly realized that he'd had a nightmare, or more accurately, a flashback. Sheela. She was one of his earliest victims, a hapless girl, who'd so tragically fallen into his snare.

"Vegeta?"

The Prince stared blankly at Bulma, ebony eyes flooded with relief, yet a strong undertone of guilt and contrition.

"Wh-What happened?" She asked, eyes watery.

"I- I- killed-" His words caught in his throat. A mere second later, his expression hardened. He brusquely leapt off the bed and fossicked his side of the cupboard at super-speed, till he was able to dig out a pair of black, spandex shorts.

"Wait, where're you going?!" Bulma shot up, forgetting all about her pain, as she dashed forward and stood in front of him. "What did you mean?! Who did you kill?!"
"Move!"

"No!" She protested. "You were having a bad dream and then you started screaming all of a sudden! Just tell me what happened!"

"I can't!"

"Yes you can!"

"I killed you!" He blurted out, not looking her in the eye and immediately shooting past her, into the bathroom, opting to take a quick shower, before clearing his mind, via training. His entire body was trembling, his mind addled and his lungs struggling to capture some much needed air, in the aftermath of that bloodcurdling nightmare. He could still see her, dead eyes brimmed with tears that acidified right through his heart, an expression of unprecedented pain and betrayal! The Prince tried shaking those images out of his head, but they just wouldn't go!

Bulma was transfixed for several minutes, eyes widened, as she placed a hand on her skittering heart, refusing to believe what she'd just heard.

'Relax, Bulma, it was only a bad dream.' She tried reassuring herself mentally, but it did little to root out the trepidation that was plaguing her heart and mind. Vegeta could never hurt her, let alone kill her! She knew that, for a fact! He'd cried over her dying form, back on Namek, for heaven's sake! There had to be some plausible explanation behind the nightmare, she convinced herself! A moment later, her Saiyan came out of the bathroom, clad only in lycra that only covered his pelvic girdle and thighs, a few inches above the knees.

"Hey Vegeta, can we talk for minute?"

"No, I need to train." He replied, as phlegmatically as he could and headed out the door, ignoring her shouts that it was too early for training and that she wanted him back on the bed, by her side. Bulma huffed and folded her arms. She supposed she'd skip work today, perks of being vice-president. Thank God, she was up-to-date with all that administrative garbage. Nothing ticked her off more than that! She loved dabbling herself in the practical, inventive and creative side of the job, especially when she worked alongside her fabulous team, but negotiating with suppliers and clientele, signing contracts, dealing with negligent employees and managers and all the rest of it, never sat well with her. The business end of things was always such a darn headache! It only made Bulma loathe the idea of being President, that much further. And so she lay on her bed, hair unkempt, as she restlessly stared at the ceiling, pondering for several hours, until the sun finally rose up.

The heiress hopped off the bed and took a shower, being careful not to further damage her wrist. Afterwards, she dried herself, put on a pair of baby blue panties and matching bra, clambered into a cap-sleeved, floral sundress with a modest, U-neckline, over which she wore a casual, powder pink vest. Bulma subsequently applied some ointment on her wounded zone and bandaged it up, before taking a deep breath, stepping into a pair of white flip flops and heading towards her hotheaded Saiyan, taking a detour through her lab.

Not surprised in the least, she found Vegeta training rigorously in the courtyard, wreaking havoc upon the hapless concrete walls and ceramic tiles.

"Leave!" The Prince ordered brusquely, sensing her Ki, without having to look at her. He wanted to see her and touch her, he truly did, but he was afraid he'd hurt her, like before. And that pissed him
off, more than anything! He would not be able to grow stronger, with that 'fear' lingering in his jumbled mind! That was truly unacceptable! He needed space, till he could sort out all the mess within his cursed system. One thing was certain. He couldn't sleep on the same bed as her, not after the earlier debacle. She'd be a fool to ask him otherwise!

"Vegeta, I'm not here to-"

In a flash the Saiyan was upon her, grimacing deeply. She almost fell over, until a pair of calloused hands held her from either side of the waist, to keep her stable.

"Go, now!" Vegeta demanded, releasing her, after she regained her footing.

"No!" She scowled. "I don't know what the hell your problem is! I'm just trying to help you!"

"I don't need anyone's help!" He loured indignantly.

"Can you just listen to me for one second?!"

"No! Leave!"

"Fine then!" She retorted furiously. "I'll just shut off the gravity room for good! Let's see you catch up to Goku then, you goddamn-"

The very next millisecond she was pinned against the wall, Vegeta's hands pressed against her shoulders, tight enough to hold her in place, without causing any damage. He could never hurt her, no matter what she did or said! But he still had his limits and he wouldn't allow her denigrate him, in such a vile and uncouth manner!

"Never mention me in the same sentence as that foolish, third class, birdbrain!" He curled his lips, in the most feral of snarls. "I am the Saiyan Prince and the first among my race to reach Super Saiyan! I defeated Frieza, with my bare hands!"

"You did all of that, because of me, don't forget!" She rejoined, fervidly. "I'm not your enemy! All I want is to talk!"

"Why?!" He asked, vexedly. "You want me to pry inside my godforsaken head, is that it?! I don't need a damned confidant! No matter what silly threats you make, you'll never hear anything from-"

"No, that's not it!" She interposed, vehemently, before taking a sigh, and looking upon him squarely, features softened, as she took hold of his wrists with her small hands. Every time she touched him that way, Vegeta's heart would fly and his urge to protect her, would soar. He let go of her shoulders. "I won't lie to you. I want to know what's troubling you, but I won't force you into telling me. You don't have to say anything, unless you're good, ready and willing."

"Then what do you want?!"

"I've come up with an idea, to keep you calm, just in case you have anymore nightmares."

"I don't have nightmares!" He growled.

"Can you just shut up and listen to me?!" She frowned, peevishly. He ground his teeth, but after a
moment, grunted for her to go on. And so, she did. "Anyway, many years ago, Goku came over to Capsule Corporation, a little while after he married Chi-Chi." The Prince creased his brows at the mention of the younger Saiyan. "He asked me if I could build a device that would help him train, without Ki. He told me that having a strong foundation would help his power grow naturally and make his real training, a lot more fruitful. He was there to guide me of course, on how Ki works. It took me a few days to finally come up with an idea and a little while after that, I made a prototype of these." She pulled out an identical pair of what looked like manacle bands, from her vest pocket.

"What are these?" The Prince dubiously touched the unlinked contraptions.

"They're Ki restraints." She replied. "It takes about five minutes for them to boot, but after that, they absorb a user's Ki, while he or she, wears them. Ever since Goku learned how to suppress his Ki, he no longer needed them and gave them back to me."

"Your point?"

"These things are gonna help." She stated.

"Forget it!" He scrunched his brows, in resolute objection. "I'll never wear these!"

"Why not?!" Bulma frowned. "Goku used them and nothing bad ever happened to him. It's only during nighttime."

"It's useless." He shook his head. "Kakarot was a weakling back then. Surely, my power level's too high to be contained and it'll only accelerate, with time."

"Then suppress it, dumbo." She stated, as though it were obvious. "Not only do the restraints absorb Ki, but they send electric waves through your body that prevent you from raising it again, right until you take them off, of course." The Prince creased his eyes, for a moment.

"Suppose you're right." He somewhat entertained her idea. "How exactly are these stupid things going to help?"

"I did a lot of research, while I was making them." She responded. "There's a direct correlation between Ki and loss of sound judgment and control. That's one of the reasons why Goku's such an oddball. He always thrives for a challenge and the opportunity to test his abilities. With his increasing power, that urge only grows stronger." The heiress then scowled. "That also explains why you two knuckleheads decided to stay on Namek to fight Frieza, instead of coming back here."

"I didn't decide anything!" The Prince adamantly objected. "That was all Kakarot!"

"Oh?" Bulma asked innocently, pressing an index finger to her lips. "So if you were given the option, you'd choose otherwise?"

"Hell no! Frieza needed to die, by my hand!"

"And there you have it." The heiress smirked. "No matter how strong you Super Saiyans are, you're still the biggest idiots in the entire Universe."

"You-"

"Look, point is that with your Ki repressed to zero, your mind will be a lot more relaxed and in the
rare event that you have another nightmare, you won't react so strongly." She stated. "Even if you do, which I highly doubt, you won't cause nearly as much harm. It was lucky that you snapped out of it quickly or I'd probably have a robotic hand, by now." Vegeta gazed at her bandaged wrist and his dark, ebony eyes instantly flooded with remorse. He must've hurt her worse than he'd thought.

"I- I never meant to-"

"Hey, it's alright, I know." She smiled, placing her dainty fingers on his mouth. She gently embraced him, sighing into his neck, loving the musk of his rich, masculine scent and the feel of his bare, chiseled torso and firm hips, pressing against her petite body. "You don't have to tell me."

"Foolish woman." The Prince breathed into her ear, in a gravelly voice, girding his arms around her waist, as his tail wound itself around her slender thigh, making her legs tingle. A solacing warmth ran straight through her.

"Crazy Saiyan." She mumbled back. For long moments they stood together, relishing in the comfort of each other's arms, till Bulma broke the companionable silence. "So what do you say?"

"Are there any side effects?"

"No, none."

"Fine, I'll do it!" He eventually huffed and gave in. "But only while I'm sleeping!"

"Sure."

Vegeta was still strongly repentant that he'd harmed her. He wanted to apologize, he really did, but his pride was the only thing that prevented him from it. He'd never done so before, ever and he couldn't now! It just wasn't him!

The next day, Bulma's cell phone rang and on the other line, was the last person, she would've expected to hear from, at this time.

"Hello."

"B-Bulma?" A dejected voice replied. He was strongly considering to hang up there and then.

"Y-Yamcha, is that you?" An astounded heiress asked.

"Yeah." He murmured faintly. A few seconds of tense silence followed. "Hello?"

"I'm still here."

"Oh- okay, uh- well- I just wanted to apologize for the way I've been acting, since I came back." He mumbled, shamefacedly. "I mean, after everything you'd been through, it wasn't right for me to just-"

"Hey, it's alright." She replied, kindly. "You don't have to-"

"Please, just let me finish, Bulma." He interrupted. "I'm not gonna be a hypocrite anymore. I never told you this, but I had a few- uh- involvements myself, after we broke up."
"I know."

"Y-Y-You do?"

"Yeah, Krillin told me." She affirmed. "But it's alright. Let's just forget about the past. Listen, I'm kinda in the middle of a project right now, so could you run by here tomorrow afternoon. I'd really love to catch up."

"So would I." The scar-faced warrior genuinely replied. "It's just- I don't want to see, you know-" "Yamcha, just forget about him." She sighed, pressing the base of palm against her forehead. "All he does is train all day long. He probably won't even know you're there."

"I still don't get why you would ever-"

"Enough about Vegeta!" The heiress growled, causing Yamcha to flinch on the other end. She took a moment to collect herself. "Look, I won't lie to you. I love him, I really do but I love you as well, just- not in the same way."

Another taut moment passed.

"Yamcha, you there?"

"Yeah, I'm here."

"Well, uh- I'll see you tomorrow then?"

"Yeah okay, bye." He said quickly and hung up, before she had a chance to reply.

"Bye." She responded anyway. A huge weight had finally been lifted off her chest, after that phone call. For nearly two weeks, her ex had been distancing himself and by doing so, only deepening the wound in her heart. She really looked forward to spending some time with him. Perhaps he hadn't explicitly forgiven her yet, but if all went well, hopefully that would change and life would merrily go on. They would remain friends, until the end of their days and travel their own paths through life. She prayed that one day, Yamcha would find someone that made him happy the way she never could, just as Vegeta had done, with her. After all his misfortune, he truly deserved that much.

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A/N: Vegeta's nightmare was pretty intense, huh? Let's hope Bulma's plan works and he can overcome the horrors of his past and the paranoia that often impairs his judgment. Oh, and Yamcha'll be on his way soon! Let's see how that little engagement goes! I can say one thing: it might not go down as you would expect! As always, rate, review and favourite! I know this chapter lacked the lemony goodness you may have expected, but I promise that the next one will more than provide, so stay trapped, my friends!!! :D

p.s. What'd you think of Vegeta's exchange with Dr. Brief? And what about Bulma seducing Vegeta into her bed? Pretty funny, huh! ;p
Chapter 39: Confrontations

In Kame House, a certain scar-faced man garbed a casual, black muscle shirt and a loose set of tawny cargo pants, secured with a leather belt that was black on one side and white on the other. He was putting on a pair of red velcro sneakers, when an intruder made his way into the room.

"Krillin, did knocking ever occur to you?"

"Come on, gimme a break." The bald warrior frowned. "Anyway, I was just gonna ask if you wanted me to come with you."

"Nah, it's cool." He shook his head and chuckled. "I'm not going there to pick a fight."

"I know, but-"

"It's fine, Krillin." The scarred fighter rolled his eyes, before looking solemnly at him. "Anyway, you were right the whole time. You told me for days and I wouldn't listen. Bulma did sacrifice everything for us and it was horrible for me to just snub her like that. She didn't deserve it."

"Yeah, definitely not." Krillin agreed.

Yamcha sighed forlornly, still unable to acknowledge the fact that she'd left him for that loathsome Saiyan. It was truly heart-wrenching, though perhaps a bitter karma for his own liaisons. But why Vegeta of all people?! He'd be less disheartened if it were Krillin or even Master Roshi. Okay, maybe not the amorous and decrepit old turtle hermit, but still! He shook his head clear of all those resentful thoughts. No point pondering over what could have been. Bulma would only be his friend now and nothing more. A part of him still hated her for what she'd done, but another part, dreamt that she would see Vegeta for the monster he was and return to his loving arms, once again. Maybe it was possible, but for now it was best to simply keep his feelings at bay, till he could sort them out properly.

And so, a short while later, he flew towards Capsule Corporation, hoping that this little rendezvous would serve as a step in the right direction.

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As soon as the doorbell rang, Bulma made a dash towards the entrance.

"Hey Yamcha." The heiress beamed, startling him with a tight embrace, the moment she pulled the door open. She was wearing a loose, silken, light-ivory skirt, ending several inches above the knees, matching heels and a flaxen, spaghetti-strapped tank top. Her hair fell slightly below her shoulders, with bangs, covering her forehead on the front.

"H-H-Hey, B-Bulma hehe." The scarred man laughed sheepishly, a faint red hue flushing his cheeks.

"Come on in." She began leading the way to the lounge room. "Mom made some butter cake for breakfast, with lemon frosting. Vegeta ate most of it, but there's still a bit left."
"Bulma?" Yamcha stopped in his tracks, as he took notice of her right wrist, mottled a ghastly red.

"Yeah?"

"What happened to your wrist?" He frowned, staring gravely at it, almost afraid to hear the dreadful answer that would follow.

"O-Oh th-this, well- uh- it was just- it was just a l-l-lab accident- uh- yeah."

Yamcha's hackles bristled, searing rage boiling through him. He saw right through her little lie! How dare she cover for that vile beast?! This was not the fierce and assertive Bulma he knew! As if stealing her from him wasn't bad enough, he'd now hurt her and to top it off, reduced her, the most strong-minded woman on the planet, into a traumatized little house-cat! This was completely unacceptable and unforgivable! A nasty grimace contorted his features and at speeds the average human eye could never hope to follow, he raced towards the courtyard of Capsule Corporation, ready to slaughter the bastard that had the nerve to lay his detestable hands on the only woman he'd ever loved!

Bulma gasped, her nerves fraying. She quickly ran in Yamcha's direction, knowing exactly where he was headed.

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Vegeta was practicing a set of leg techniques, when an unwanted intruder sauntered towards him, fists clenched.

"What the fuck do you want, weakling?!" The Prince growled at the repugnant human. Not deigned to reply, Yamcha abruptly appeared in front of him and connected with a savage right lead on the sweet spot, the vertex of Vegeta's chin. The Saiyan was sent flying and smashed into the opposite wall, taking it down with him.

'Fuck!' He cursed inwardly. It appeared that the 'weakling' wasn't quite so weak anymore. He had to be nearly ten times as powerful as he was during their very first encounter! Regardless, he'd crush him all the same! No one attacked the Prince of all Saiyans, unprovoked, and lived to tell about it!

Before Vegeta could get up, however, Yamcha expediently pressed his attack, jumping atop him, reigning blow after blow, brutally pounding his face in, crushing his jaw and bloodying his nose and lips. Damn this scar-faced coward! He'd completely caught him off-guard, like the cheap opportunistic scum that he was! He should've seen it coming, but it was the last thing he'd have expected from someone as feeble-minded and weak as him!

Though exhausted from long hours of training in addition to the punishment he was enduring, he refused to be done in by this filthy recreant. Vegeta growled in fury and used a Kiai to blast away his adversary. He quickly appeared above him and landed an elbow to the small of his back. Spit flew out Yamcha's eyes, as he hurtled towards the ground. Blinded by rage, the Prince was damn-near ready to level the ground beneath him with a tumultuous barrage of Ki blasts, until a cry from below brought him back to reality.

"Vegeta, stop!" The blue-haired woman earnestly implored, looking upwards, having finally made her way towards the scene. The Prince dissipated his Ki, his rage placated by only a fraction.
Instead, he rushed towards the scar-faced warrior, ready to finish him off.

"Bulma, get out of here!" Yamcha scrambled to his feet, assuming his stance that very instant. The heiress yelled for the two of them to stop, as they flew head to head, exchanging blow after blow, neither holding back. Having trained with King Kai for almost four months and constantly sparred with Krillin thereafter, the human had a clear advantage over a frazzled and bloodied Vegeta that had spent months, starving and freezing in the snow, perniciously losing all but a tiny modicum of the gargantuan powers he once possessed and training a mere few days, since his return to Earth.

Minutes later, Vegeta was sent plummeting downwards, Yamcha landing several feet away from his battered, bruised and flattened figure. He was ready to fire the finishing Ki blast, until Bulma moved in front of him and threw a hard slap, right across his face, breaking him from his rage-induced lycanthropy.

"Get out!" She hissed, the poison in her voice, unabashedly laid bare.

"B-Bulma?" He stammered, heart dropping to his stomach. Why had she struck him for?! Here he was defending her honor, yet he was the one being told to leave, instead of the monster that had caused her injury! It didn't make the least bit of sense! "Wh-What do you-

"I SAID LEAVE!" She shrieked so loud that Yamcha abruptly fell on his rear.

Vegeta struggled to his feet, breathing raggedly, as he plodded forward, snarling deeply all the while. This bastard wouldn't escape with his head intact! He would die, right here, right now, for daring to spill the noble blood of the last Saiyan Prince, with his inferior, grubby little hands! The scarred warrior scowled and stood up, gently moving his ex aside, before readying his stance, yet again. As the two charged towards one another, Bulma swiftly raced her way back in between them with speed she barely knew she had. Yamcha unwittingly struck her left tricep and although the blow only managed to clip the edge of her humerus, it was far too brutal for her liking and resulted in a severely harsh fracture. The heiress let out a bloodcurdling scream, as agonizing pain flooded through the fragile bone in her upper arm. Yamcha's heart froze and almost instantly, he rushed towards her, forgetting all about the Saiyan. He heartily apologized and held Bulma around the waist. so he could get her inside posthaste, for some much needed medical attention.

As he saw the scarred fighter hurt his woman, all breath left Vegeta's lungs, his chest tightening in complete dismay and obsidian eyes, wide open in horror. Shock overwhelmed him, as he heard her simultaneous gut-wrenching cry of pain. He felt as though a thousands knives were carving their way through his heart from one chamber to the next. The ensuing motion to aid her, only added insult to injury. A surge of raw power suddenly coursed through his veins and his ebony eyes scorched with a murderous, crimson inferno that could melt an entire city block, with a single touch of it's flaring waves.

In that very moment, Yamcha found himself pinned against the wall, Vegeta's right hand crushing his windpipe, like a large pair of firm, unswerving pliers. The ex-bandit choked, gurgled and clawed, but to no avail. What the fuck just happened?! Mere seconds earlier he had the Saiyan on the losing end of a relatively lopsided battle, yet in the blink of an eye, his power had multiplied by a factor of at least twenty, if not more! The last time he saw Vegeta, the latter was frail and bedridden, with scarcely any Ki to speak of and in less than a fortnight, he'd reached a power well beyond his, despite months and months of rigorous training! Was he holding back such strength, the entire fight?! Was this the power of the Super Saiyan?! Even the Kaio-Ken was nothing more than swill by comparison! He had been foolhardy to even consider picking a fight with the likes of Vegeta! The scarred fellow hadn't the slightest clue that what had him unnerved, was hardly even a
droplet of the boundless power that the Saiyan had acquired on Namek.

"Vegeta." A soft voice entreated and the Prince felt a slender arm encircle his chest, from behind. "Please, let him go."

Together with her enthralling touch, her plea tore right through his bloody, vindictive resolve and he instinctively released the helpless human, who collapsed to the ground thereafter, in a fit of grating coughs and wheezes. Vegeta's legs suddenly felt a lot heavier. Summoning such monumental strength in his state had drained whatever vestiges of Ki he had left. Bulma held him closely, as he stumbled. She took control of his sturdy figure, letting it down slowly. His rear settled on the ground first, before the torso followed. Bulma cradled his head into her lap, gently placing the hand of her good arm on his cheek, eliciting a few shudders from him, as he nuzzled into her bare, porcelain thigh and waned into unconsciousness.

A throng of Namekians had now made their way over, Dende amongst them. The little lad quickly rushed over to his host.

"Bulma, are you okay?" He asked, solicitously.

"I'm fine." She nodded. "But Vegeta's not. You need to heal him."

"Wh-Wh-What?! H-Heal him?!" Yamcha exclaimed, in outrage. "He- He almost killed me and you wanna-"

"You attacked him first, dickhead!" The heiress interposed, azure eyes burning with fiery embers of rage.

"Only because he hurt you!"

"You hurt me a lot worse!"

"That was an accident!" The scarred warrior argued, voice smoldering. "He obviously did it on purpose!"

"He didn't do it on purpose, you stupid fucking asshole!" Bulma yelled, now truly incandescent. "He was having a nightmare!"

A tense pause followed, before Yamcha's shoulders sagged, his face downcast in shame.

"Wh-Why didn't you just tell me?" He asked weakly, not looking her in the eye.

"Why did you have to shoot first and ask questions later!"

"I did ask!" He countered.

"Whatever, just get out of here!" Bulma ordered edgily, as peeved as ever. "Do anything like that again and I won't stop Vegeta from killing you, understood?!"

Yamcha's heart was absolutely crushed. This couldn't possibly have gone any worse that he'd expected. Eyeing the Namekians with a frown, he flared his Ki and took off back to Kame House, without another word. He'd disgraced himself completely. As detestable as Vegeta may have been, he felt even worse, for the way he'd hurt Bulma. He'd never have done such a thing intentionally. It
was all that horrible Saiyan's fault! Who was he kidding?! This was entirely on him! He felt more
deeded and remorseful than ever. She hated him, that much was clear. She wouldn't give him a
second look now and he couldn't blame her. There was absolutely no hope for him and Bulma, any
longer, if there ever was. He'd come here to douse the flames that had burned away their
friendship, but had only succeeded in fuelling those flames into a mighty conflagration that left
behind nothing but ashes, in it's wake. If only he could take it all back, if only he'd never taken her
for granted.

Bulma regretted her words the instant she'd uttered them, but before she could say anything, her ex
had already zoomed off.

Unsurprisingly, when Vegeta woke up, fully healed by Dende, it was hard to get him under control.
A good twenty or so Namekians were needed to restrain him from flying towards the scar-faced
sop and making him choke on his own blood. He had half a mind to kill them too, only such an
action wouldn't have sat well with that blue-haired wench! Damn her! She'd rubbed off on him, big
time, a lot more so than even Kakarot, his son and the others! Moreover, life on this planet was
making him go a little too soft. His father would've spat down on him from a hundred feet high, but
then- maybe his mother wouldn't. All of a sudden, he remembered her final words to him, as though
they were uttered just yesterday.

"Vegeta, what the Saiyans do is wrong. It took me a long time, but I see it now and maybe one day
you'll see it too."

That long-forgotten memory had only cropped up during the first round of his fight with Frieza
(A/N: Refer to Chapter 24). He'd always been the paradigm of the wickedness and barbarism that
his race embodied, yet he had heard stories about pure-hearted Saiyans that died long ago, trying to
eradicate the cruel and evil majority that ruled over their planet, with an iron fist. He shook his
head, deciding not to waste time on such mundane thoughts. He'd let that impudent fool go for
now, but if he ever showed his detestable little face around here again, he'd stamp it under his
boot!. It was time for him to up his game! He needed the gravity room and he needed it now! He
would brook no more delays or arguments! If he had trouble facing such a coward, then it was
blatantly obvious that he was progressing much too slow!

Dende healed Bulma afterwards and the moment he and the others finally took off back to their
own domains inside CC's residential complex, Vegeta broached the contentious subject. Almost
ten minutes of ceaseless arguing passed, barbs and insults exchanged to and fro, before Bulma
offered an ultimatum.

"Fine, I'll start up the gravitron tomorrow morning, right after breakfast, but you're going to owe
me a favor."

"What favor?" The Saiyan asked, curiously.

"I've yet to decide on that." She replied, smirking coquettishly. Vegeta frowned, considering his
options. If he declined, he would have to wait for God knows how long. He couldn't afford that!
No way! He needed to pick up the pace, fast! That clown Kakarot could potentially return to Earth
at any moment and when he did, he wanted to make sure that he surpassed him, in every way!

"Fine." He agreed placidly, not knowing what exactly he'd get himself into, when the time came
for her to collect.

"Fine." She nodded her head. Oh yes, having a Saiyan Prince in her debt, certainly sounded
favourable. The heiress began drooling, as vulgar ideas popped into her head, left, right and centre! God, the things she could do with him!

Later that night, Bulma managed to bump into Vegeta, just as he was heading into their room.

"Hey there, tough guy." She winked, earning a peevish growl, in response, followed by a light smack on her rear, with his tail. She giggled and moved past him towards the kitchen, pouring herself a fresh glass of chilled orange juice.

A short while later, Vegeta was in the shower, letting the lukewarm water stream down his sinewy figure, as he was immersed in deep thought- until the curtains were abruptly pulled open. He jumped back, ready to blast the interloper, but was greeted with the sight of a completely naked Bulma shamelessly standing before him, smirking and chewing on her lip, as she took in his flawless, nude figure, seeing each droplet cascade down his projecting pecs, solidified abs and steadily rising shaft, in slow motion.

"Y-You- what- what the hell are you doing here?!!" He hissed.

"I need to shower." She shrugged and stepped inside, as though it were any other matter. Vegeta's shaft hardened, as he saw her curvaceous, mouth-watering hips sway with that single movement. By Kami, her supple, porcelain body looked like it were fashioned in the highest of heavens, by some upper echelon goddess of beauty. Her busts were so well-rounded, her arms and legs, slender, smooth and satiny and her abdomen, petite and perfect, but best of all was her rosy, racy centrepiece, below! Damn her! Could she never leave him be?!

"Th- There's at least a h-hundred showers h-here!" He protested, more flustered than ever. "U-Use one of them them!"

"I prefer this one." She replied, her confidence bolstering, with each step she took forward, awarded with a step backwards from her lover.

"Wh-Wh-Why?!" He stammered, now backed up against the wall with no way out! Damn her! He didn't like this! It was too much! Sex in bed was one thing, but this was something else altogether! He came here to get clean and then take a nap, not entertain her obscene provocations!

"'Cuz you're here." Bulma trapped him with her nude body, pressing it to his, as if he were the helpless prey of a mighty lioness. She placed a hand around his phallus, causing a rush of raw electricity to spiral through him.

"So how about it?" She murmured in his ear, rewarded with a barely suppressed shudder. Unable to take anymore, Vegeta immediately reversed their positions, with her pinned against the wall. Not wasting a moment, he took a pert pink nipple into his hot mouth, hungrily sucking it, while expertly massaging another in the palm of one hand. His free hand ventured towards her wetness and brushed it up and down, evoking a loud and joyous squeal.

"You're an indecent woman!" He growled, biting down on her teat, earning a high-pitched cry. He licked his way up the valley of her breasts and her throat, till he reached her bottom lip and took it between his teeth, eliciting a series of moans from the needy heiress. "I will punish you for your indecency!"

"Please, punish away." She regretted those words the moment they exited her mouth, as Vegeta snarled and grabbed her around her sacred centre, barely tracing the tip of his thumb around her
heated, ripened clit. It was, more or less, the equivalent of making a parched man dunk the tips of his toes inside an expansive lake of cool, fresh water. If this woman thought she could control him, she was sorely mistaken! He would make her regret being so impertinent, as to barge into his territory and subtly try to claim it as her own! Several seconds later, rage consumed the fiery heiress. "Wh-What're you doing?!" She demanded, roughly tugging his hair. Who was he to tease her like this?! He had no right! She would make him bring forth his A-game, whether he liked it or not!

Vegeta let out another growl and restrained her arms and body together, with just a single, girding arm, whilst caging her legs with his own. His free hand concurrently continued to torment her in the slowest, faintest and most sadistic manner possible. He smiled malevolently, fires burning in his ebony eyes, as she futilely squirmed within his unyielding clutch. The Saiyan moved his lips towards her ear.

"I'm going to make you pay." He whispered, sending tremors through her lithe frame.

"This i-isn't f-fair!" She bleated, which did nothing but heighten the stalwart Saiyan's mirth.

"No one asked you to cross that bridge." He countered, tone as placid as ever, craftily concealing the thrill soaring within him, as each second leisurely strolled by. "But you tried, anyway. Now you're stuck in the middle, with me."

Despite her agonizing predicament, the heiress couldn't help but giggle.

"What's so funny?!" The Prince scrunched his brows.

"Nothing, just what you said." She replied. "It reminded me of 'Reservoir Dogs'."

"What kind of dogs?" He asked in bafflement, wondering what relevance 'dogs' could possibly have, in such a sticky situation.

"It's a film, you dunce!"

"That does it!" Vegeta scowled, as he ceased his ministrations altogether, letting his fingers stagnate against her centre. Bulma nearly screamed at him. "I was going to go easy on you, but now you've crossed the line! I'll make sure you beg, before I'm done with you!"

"I'll never beg!" She vehemently declared, pride swelling in her chest, as she continued struggling against his steadfast hold.

"Hahaha, we'll see about that."

"Asshole!"

"Wench."

"I hate you!" She blurted out.

"Good." Vegeta smirked and added the icing on the cake, as he lightly brushed his tail against her inner thighs, slowly trailing it upwards and cruelly misleading her into believing that he was finally going to give her a tiny slice of satisfaction. How wrong she was! This was unimaginably difficult for him too, however, just seeing the excruciating agony befall her, was enough for him to keep his
own urges at bay. The heiress continued to writhe and wriggle, even trying to get her clit to rub against his motionless hand, but to no avail. A few minutes passed by and Bulma felt tears prickle her eyes, as she was damn near overwhelmed with defeat.

"Please, Vegeta." She softly beseeched, having to sag against him to support her weight, cheek pressed to his shoulder.

"Ah, that's what I like to hear." His smug smile widened and he rewarded her with a firm press on her clit, making it further blossom and redder, with increased vigor. Yet again, he got her hopes up for nothing, as he unceremoniously stopped.

"Hey, I though you said-"

"I recall precisely what I said." The Prince whispered in one ear, before moving his face towards the other one, deliberately tracing his lips on her forehead, making her tremble further. "I asked you to beg."

"And I did!" She irately rejoined.

"That's hardly begging." Vegeta chuckled. "Repeat after me, 'I beg you to fulfil my desires, O Mighty Prince Vegeta.'"

"Screw you, I'll never say that!" How dare he presume that she'd ever stoop so low, over the likes of him or anyone, for that matter?!

"Never can be a very long time, little woman and there's no way you can hold out for much longer."

Damn him! He was more right than he knew!

"I'll bite you!" She threatened.

"I'll bite back." He smirked. This was too damn hilarious! This obstinate female just didn't know when to call it quits! And that only spurred him, on and on!

"You wouldn't!" She exclaimed, in a quivering voice.

"Try me." The Prince challenged. Curse this cruel, wicked Saiyan! Yamcha would never have had the balls to pull off anything like this! She'd undoubtedly been the alpha of that relationship, yet here Vegeta was, taking charge and putting her in her place, as though she were any other woman and not Bulma Brief, the closest thing this planet had to a Princess! Being dominated in such fashion only spiralled her arousal further! He knew this and was deliberately welling up oceans of unfulfilled desire, just so he could intensify her suffering!

He lightly stroked his tongue against a perky nipple,—too lightly. If this continued further, she was afraid that she'd die an utterly miserable death, from the callous starvation of her sex drive!

"Why're you doing this?" She whimpered. Dammit, was there was no other way out of this peril?!

"So you can finally learn your place." He answered, a rush of buoyancy travelling through him, as he humiliated her further and further.

"I swear I'll get you back for this, if it's the last thing I do!" She vowed, no lie in her blazing
sapphire eyes.

"Hahahaha, maybe you will, maybe you won't." He smirked, knowing she'd definitely make good on her little threat, but looking forward to meeting it, nonetheless. "But for now, beg!"

Dithering for only a few moments longer, Bulma, at last, realized that she faced no choice, other than swallowing her pride and uttering the words, which signaled her loathsome lover's triumph.

"I beg you to fulfil my desires, O Mighty Prince Vegeta!" She practically spat, her peeved voice scurrying at a hundred miles an hour.

"Say it like you mean it." The Prince commanded, extracting every smidgeon of amusement he could, as he brought her down to Earth for probably the first time, in her entire life.

A/N: Beware, strong lemon follows for the remainder of the chapter!

"I beg you to fulfil my desires, O Mighty Prince Vegeta.” She repeated, faking an ingratiating smile, as if she were about to be granted the greatest honor ever bestowed to man, though cursing herself inwardly with each syllable that escaped. Dammit, just saying those words made her feel a new batch of wetness, grow between her legs! She hated the fact that a strong part of her was stimulated so strongly at the idea of being the Saiyan's quarry! She was Bulma Brief, always number 1! No one had any right to treat her like this! There would be hell to pay and she'd personally see to that!

A thunderous bolt of electricity ran through Vegeta, as he finally prevailed over the most obnoxious, insufferable and stubborn woman he'd ever met! Now, he could take her on his terms, not hers, just it was meant to be!

"As you wish." He said vibrantly and finally rubbed her budding clit with his thumb, while his fingers stroked her cleft, up and down. Bulma felt as though a dozen mountains had been lifted off her chest. She screamed with joy, unable to help but smile and moan in delight, as he tended to her needs, at long last.

"Yes, keep going, keep going!" She panted, without the least bit of shame.

"Tch, I don't need you to tell me!" He captured her lips with his own, swallowing her lusty, jubilant groans. He immediately went to work on pillaging her mouth with his wet tongue. He released her from his hold and she sighed into him, wrapping her arms around his neck and leaning her naked figure against his, adding even more gratification into this sublime tryst, as they felt their hearts race together.

Vegeta roved his lips down her neck, before nibbling her glossy, rounded shoulder. His free arm girded around her petite waist, sensually rubbing her back up and down. He then placed a hand on her cheek and Bulma nuzzled into his palm. The Prince slid his tongue across her collar bone, and up her neck, rewarded with a loud scream from the feisty heiress. He kissed her chin, before giving it a light nip and proceeded back downwards, until his mouth settled on the puckered, rosy bud of a soft, hilly mound once again. He moistened it with his tongue and in doing so, quenched a thirst that mortally needed to be quenched! His furry tail ministered her long, slender legs, all the while, sending a myriad of tingles throughout her svelte frame.

He accelerated the pace of his adroit digits, allowing sweeping bundles of inebriating, flavorful juices to gracefully gush forth and fortify his fingers.
"Oh, Vegeta!" She screamed. "Oh, my Prince!"

The Saiyan exhaled rapaciously through ground teeth, as she rightfully called him by his title, making his heart spring towards the skies, as a soft, fuzzy feeling engendered within the base of his stomach. He rewarded her by upping his tempo yet again, as he pumped into her and let his shaggy appendage trail up her lithe waist, and along her breasts, drawing forth a renewed cry of ecstasy.

"Yes, yes, more!" She yelled aloud, leaning further into his touch, her mind amidst the clouds.

And so he pleasured her and pleasured her, until her screams rose an octave and she finally fired away her juices. Bulma's trembling figure fell forward, kept firmly in place, only with his strong arm. A few minutes passed as she panted and breathed, before finally regathering her wits. Her eyes narrowed in exasperation, as she finally realized what a fool she'd made of herself, all because of this arrogant little prick! The irate heiress suddenly pushed him away and gave him a hard slap across the face, stunning him beyond words, as he gaped back at her in disbelief.

"Bastard!" She yelled. "How dare you?! Who the hell do you think you are?! I ought to…"

The Prince suddenly felt his breath catch in his throat, as he touched the reddened zone on his cheek. She knew damn well that he could end her life with a word and yet, she'd struck him, all the same and now continued hurling jibe after jibe, barb after barb. Her dauntlessness alone made his member stiffen to unforeseen heights, as a stream of blood rushed down to his burning loins. Not only was it the slap and ensuing insults that stimulated him, but also the firestorm within those endless sapphire eyes and of course, her perfect, petite figure.

Bulma was completely caught off guard, when he suddenly charged right towards her and swallowed each and every abusive remark hurled his way, by invading her mouth with his tongue. He took her breasts into his palms, squeezing them yearningly and placed a thigh between her legs, spreading them and instantly inserting his phallus into her centre, as her back was pressed against the wall. The Prince thrust into her, again and again. The heiress squealed and wound her lissom arms around his neck, her anger slipping away, as she grabbed fistfuls of his feathery hair and her inner muscles tightened around his firm shaft.

Vegeta placed open mouthed kisses along her jawline and neck. He roved his tongue across her collar bone and down her bosom, before ravenously licking her erect nipple upwards, as she released loud moans. Thank God, she'd thought ahead and sound proofed the walls and the door, else the whole of West City would stay awake, hearing her shameless cries. He placed his hands on either cheek of her ample ass, lifting her up, as she girded her legs around his waist. The Saiyan continued his relentless assault, repeatedly ramming into her. She held on closely, as though a cyclone was violently blowing around her and he was her last pillar. It wasn't very far from the truth, as far as Bulma was concerned. He was an absolute beast. He was showing no mercy, none whatsoever. And she loved it! She hated that she loved it, but she loved it, nonetheless!

Climax soon descended upon the two lovers and were it not for the top-notch sound proofing, their euphoric screams would certainly have echoed, all the way to high heaven. Bulma practically had tears in her eyes, after all the raw pleasure he'd given her. The Saiyan buried his face in the recess of her elegant neck, drinking in her scent as deep as he possibly could and Bulma sighed, unable to help but do likewise, as she inhaled his wild musky aroma, letting it sink through to her bones. She'd sold her invaluable pride for this and the worst part was that she'd do it again, a hundred times over! She cursed her own salacity!
Not long afterwards, the pair were in bed, a smug smile tugging Vegeta's lips as he stared at the ceiling. Prevailing over this recalcitrant little female, almost felt as good as defeating Frieza! He'd hardly felt this joyous, since that triumphant day when he'd exacted revenge upon the monster that had annihilated his race, amongst countless others! The heiress turned her back to him, on her side of the bed, hair completely disheveled. She was more indignant than ever, as a bitter frown plastered on her bright features. Vegeta didn't have to see it to know it was there. Her vexation towards him, only made him feel that much more complacent!

"I'll never forgive you for this!" Bulma abruptly announced.

"That's good." The Prince chortled. "You're finally learning something."

"And what's that supposed to mean?!" She demanded, sitting up and glaring at him.

"Only weaklings forgive." He replied stolidly and shut his eyes.

It didn't take Bulma long to decipher his words. He was challenging her, allusively encouraging her to take a stand for herself! In a way, he was even complimenting her, for not being so docile! If she wanted to be respected in his eyes, truly respected, she would have to earn it! And she would do just that, when the time came! It didn't matter how strong he was! His wits could never match hers and she would soon acquire her revenge, very soon! The ball was in her court now!

The heiress fell on his chest, nuzzling against it and sighing, as she felt his heart beat enliven.

"Don't think this means anything." She mumbled. "I'm still gonna settle the score. Just you watch!"

"Hahaha, we'll see woman, we'll see." Vegeta knew exactly what was on her mind. Oh yes, she would try and get square with him, but he'd be more than ready to put her in her place again. She wasn't one to give up that easy and it only made for a better contest. It wouldn't be too long, before he completely conquered her, in every way, making her know, without a spec of doubt, that she was his and his alone. The heiress, however, had other plans.

Midnight approached, as the feisty pair dozed off.

_A/N: Pretty wild, huh? Hehe!_

_Be sure to tell me what you thought about the whole chapter, especially the fight with Yamcha and the episode in the shower, from start to end!_

_Next chapter, Bulma will begin plotting her revenge! Let's see how that goes._

_Oh, and believe me, Vegeta may be pretty weak now, but he'll get much, much stronger, once he starts training in the gravity room!_
Chapter Summary

Insanely sharp lemon here so hone your tongues, ladies and gentlemen xD.

Chapter 40: Sweet Revenge

The Prince had just finished his workout at fifty times Earth's gravity and exited the large Capsule ship. Ever since he got his green card to train there, the audacious blue-haired wench re-configured the system, so it would lock down if pushed past level twenty. The outraged Saiyan demanded that she fix it, however, Bulma wouldn't have it, arguing that she would only be willing to shift the maximum gravity input by ten per day, at the very most. Apparently, if he trained too hard, he'd end up hurting himself! Curse her for being so overprotective! Perhaps she was getting back at him, after what had transpired in the shower, only days earlier. No, that couldn't be it. Knowing her, she had something else in mind for that, something that wasn't quite so mild or shallow.

"Hey, Vegeta!"

Oh, speak of the devil!

"What do you want?!" He hissed.

"Just wanted to invite over for a drink, by the swimming pool." She smiled sweetly, a tiny glint of mischief behind her deep oceans of everlasting azure. It was barely perceptible, but nothing could escape the hawk-eyed attention of the flame-haired Prince. "What do you say, my Saiyan?"

"Fine!" He huffed.

Bulma giggled and led the way. They sat down opposite each other, Vegeta's perusing gaze fixed upon her rather than his chardonnay glass filled with rich, golden wine and a succulent slice of lemon, wedged on top.

"What is it?" The heiress asked, feigning innocence.

"Nothing." He replied placidly, knowing that at least one of these drinks, was surely spiked, if not both of them. Not that any human drug could possibly cause him harm, but this went a lot deeper than just that. This was a challenge that he was loath to fail! His pride and sagacity were on the line here and he needed to choose right! Moreover, nothing would be more hilarious than turning her ruse, right back on her pretty little face.

"Look, Vegeta." She sighed, her shoulders slumping and her eyes shutting for a moment. Simultaneously, an idea hit the Prince and he surreptitiously switched the indistinguishable chardonnay glasses, before she could re-open her eyes. "If you think I'm trying to fool you, you've got me all wrong."

"Fool me?" He snorted. "As if you could ever fool me."
"I wouldn't be so sure." She furrowed her thin blue brows, cautiously sipping her glass and simultaneously, eyeing her lover. Vegeta's muscles tensed for a moment, as realization dawned on him that if she had indeed overdosed the drink, things could turn out real ugly for her! No, it would be fine, he reassured himself. The Namekian brat could always heal her. Besides, she'd only taken a tiny sip, so all would be okay and if not, they could always wish her back with the dragon balls, not that he'd let it come to that.

Bulma placed the drink back on the table.

"Why aren't you drinking, Vegeta?" She yawned, eyes half-lidded all of a sudden.

'Oh, so she did spike my drink!' He smirked inwardly, as he observed the visible signs of fatigue, etch her otherwise chipper features. 'That crafty little wench. She thought she was so clever!'

"W-Well?" She mumbled, voice scarcely audible. Bulma blinked slowly and her head wobbled a little.

"Oh, my bad." His lips quirked up and in one large swoosh, he guzzled the golden beverage, before him. The heiress suddenly gave him the most sinister of smiles and at that moment, alarm overtook him, setting root deep within. Seconds later, he felt his energy defenestrate, as he was assailed by an overwhelming rush of enervation.

The female quickly stood to her feet and approached him.

"Wh-Wh-What d-did y-you-"

Bulma grabbed Vegeta's head before it smashed through the aluminum table, smirking to herself, all the while. The plan worked! Yes! She would most certainly savor the sweet taste of revenge! It was time!

XXXX

A sharp, potent smell roused the Saiyan Prince awake. The first thing he saw was a bag of salt and holding it, a waggish blue-haired female, grinning widely and stupidly. He tried talking, but the gag around his mouth completely garbled his words.

"Rurr-ish-shish?!" He demanded, attempting to say "What is this?!". Taking in his surroundings, he realized that he was firmly secured to a quilted pad, attached to a long and wide wooden table, his arms horizontally aligned. His wrists were fastened on either side of him with thick, inbuilt, black leather straps and right above them, those infernal Ki restraints, which were glowing blue, signalling their activation. He tilted his head up, shifting his gaze forward. His waist was also tightly fastened in the middle, as were his lower shins, with two adjacent, unyielding straps. His tail was completely unresponsive, lying motionless between his legs. What the hell happened to it?!

Bulma laughed like there was no tomorrow, placing a hand on her forehead, as she heard his muffled curses. This was exactly what she'd anticipated. Her mirth only augmented, as he futilely attempted to writhe and squirm his way to freedom.

"Struggle all you want, tough guy, you're mine!" She proclaimed, arms akimbo and grin as prevalent as ever.
"Ruu-Rurrinn-Riiisssshhhh!" He snarled, prompting another lengthy guffaw from the heiress, to his complete chagrin. What he meant to say was: "You fucking bitch!".

As Bulma finally cooled down, she cracked her neck a few times and rolled her shoulders back, before climbing on the table and bestriding the stroppy Saiyan's naked chest, with her bare, porcelain legs, skin on skin. Vegeta's eyes widened and only now did he realize that she was dressed in naught but her underwear and a spaghetti strapped, lavender singlet. He instantly felt his member begin to harden.

"Mmmm, looks delicious." Bulma licked her lips as her eyes turned towards the leaning tower, protruding from his near skin-tight spandex shorts. Vegeta's cheeks instantly went aflame. Damn this wily little seductress! What had she done to him?! And what about his tail?! "Anyway." She turned her impish eyes back to his. "First of all, let me assure you that your tail's gonna be alright within a few hours. I just sedated it, is all." He let out an inwards sigh of relief at that. "Didn't want it to interfere, before I got my game going. That aside, however, you're probably wondering what this place is."

He frowned at her, in a silent gesture for her to go on.

"This is what I call my 'treatment lab'." She announced. "I seized one of the guest rooms for myself but don't worry, you and I are the only ones here. I've soundproofed the walls, the ceiling and the floor, so no one's gonna know what I'm about to do to you."

"Rrrurr?" He uttered, his attempt at asking "what?". A rush of unsettlement coursed through him, alongside a sense of thrill that he tried suppressing.

"But first of all, you're probably wondering how I managed to get you here." She went on. "You see, that wine you drank was completely non-alcoholic and roughly 70% Xanax powder. Normally that wouldn't be near enough to bring down the mighty 'Prince of all Saiyans'." She did her best Vegeta imitation, as she spoke his title, triggering an indignant growl from the lump of muscle, below her. Bulma laughed it off and continued. "But even you can only take so much, after training for hours on end." She ran a hand through her blue locks, as she continued. "I also know how shrewd you can be, since you managed to nab five dragon balls right from under Frieza's grasp, back on Namek and so, I didn't underestimate you. I knew full well that you'd switch those wine glasses, the moment I let my guard down. But, unfortunately, I've seen 'Princess Bride' one too many times, to fall for that one hehe." A short pause followed. "Delivering you here wasn't so tough either. I just tethered those Ki restraints to your wrists and afterwards, put you inside an oxygenated repository capsule that I just happened to have with me. I literally had you in the palm of my hand, the whole way here. The rest is pretty much, history."

That duplicitous wench! She'd tricked him all along! She was only feigning enervation after sipping her drink, so that she could dupe him into chugging down his own! Damn her! And damn him for falling for such a simple ruse! She'd even added insult to injury, by reducing him to a pint-sized capsule, if only momentarily! This was completely unforgivable!

"And now, it's about time we got started." She gave him her best cheshire cat grin and removed her silken shirt and her cotton bra and panties, without delay, giving him a full view of her sacred, florid centre and those perfect, perky mounds. The Saiyan's eyes gaped wide open, heart lurching and cheeks flaming ten shades of crimson, as his member became fully upright. Oh Gods he wanted to touch her so bad. "You like that, huh, you little pervert?!" She exclaimed puckishly, smirking as she spun the pink undergarments around her index finger. He growled louder this time, vexed that he was unable to respond to her jibes. Curse her! "Let's see how much you like this,
dirty Saiyan." Bulma placed her panties on his face, chortling in complacence, as she heard the smothered protests beneath, his voice as gravelly as ever. Unsurprisingly, however, the sounds slowly died down, and Vegeta shut his eyes, overcome with a surge of reinvigorated desire, as he inhaled deeply, flooding his nostrils with the sweet, entrancing fragrance, soaked nicely in the fine cotton. By the heavens, her redolent scent was truly exhilarating and mind-numbing. It ran it's way through every path within his sinewy figure, setting his blood cells, alight.

Vegeta's entire body sank downwards and was still as marble, making it appear as though he were an inbuilt part of the quad-legged table that he was tied to. He badly wanted a taste of the palatable, heavenly treasures within her! It made him feel so paltry and feeble, but he just couldn't help it any longer! She was driving him crazy! In all this time, he hadn't gone down on her! Why hadn't he?! For some stupid reason, it had always slipped his mind! Truth be told, he hadn't pleased a woman that way all his life. He'd always gotten it over as quickly as possible, till Bulma came along and added more flavor to the ride.

Within mere seconds of his silence, the heiress grew jealous of her own panties and decided that it was time to go to the next level! "Enough of this!" She pulled them away, earning yet another indignant growl from the Saiyan! She carelessly tossed her underwear behind her and placed her feet flat on the quilt, an inch above either of his brawny shoulders, offering him an even better view of her already moistened core. "Now then, I'm gonna take off your gag, but you have to promise to behave, understood?" She knit her brows.

A minute went by, before he nodded slowly, wanting nothing more than to rip through these blasted confines and put that mettlesome little vixen in her place, but the rational part of him urging that he play along with her lewd game, for now, since it would help secure his freedom in the long-run.

"Great!" Bulma tilted his head up and untied the gag from behind, before unwinding it and casting it away. The Prince licked his lips a few times, in a bid to rid himself of that horrid, cloth-like taste, before giving her a nasty glare. "So, anyway." The heiress interlaced her fingers and thrust her arms forward, cracking her finger and elbow joints, completely impervious to her lover's deathly stare. "You probably don't know this." She stood up, right above him, arms crossed beneath her chest, now giving him a direct view of her scarlet nub. "But I did gymnastics when I was a little girl and I even won the silver medal, back in high school." She divulged. "You know what my favourite move was?" Vegeta was hardly listening to her pretentious blather, his eyes roaming the insides of her exquisite legs and thighs, all the way up to the focal point, her rich, carmine wetness that was practically begging to be devoured. "The middle split."

"Wh-what?" Vegeta stammered, getting a good sense of where she was going with this.

A/N: Extremely sour lemon is about to follow, so if your taste buds are sensitive, you might want to avoid it's juice, 'cuz it's about to get real juicy.

"I've always wondered what it's like to have a Prince's face between my legs." Bulma slowly began sliding her lower limbs apart, cherry lips curling up further and further, with each inch of distance separating her aligned legs! Yes, this was it! She'd waited much too long for this! Vegeta gulped and his heart leapt to his throat, at her blatantly bold and utterly shameless remark, which only succeeded in tightening the spandex around his lofty member. If this continued, he was afraid that even his lycra training shorts would no longer be able to contain what lay within. Vegeta's breaths quickened, as she drew closer and closer, until finally her yawning cleft pressed against his balmy lips. He was completely frozen, unable to move an inch, as a whirlwind of raw lust, swept through him like a hurricane.
"Kiss me." She moaned softly, loving the blissful sensation of his breathy shudders, on her gaping nether lips. It deluged her with a batch of desire, like no other, as her stomach tied up in fine, nigh undoable knots. All remnants of cogency leapt out the window and Vegeta did as asked, kissing her hesitantly at first, before upping his game and sucking with unprecedented ardor, letting her succulent juices drip into his mouth and down his oesophagus. That flowing, flavorful liquid was just as tantalizing as he'd imagined, with a dazzlingly sweet and enriching taste, like a fresh burst of juicy pomegranate, blended with a faint, yet perceptible element of dainty, colourful lavender, plucked right beneath the warm glow of a smiling, sprightly, summer sun. The covetous Saiyan let it stream down his system, his kisses become hungrier by the second, drawing forth a high-pitched cry from the blue-haired heiress, as her womanly desires accelerated near light speed.

"Lick me, Vegeta! I wanna ride your tongue!" She puled, as she placed her hands on the table right above his head and began swaying her hips in levorotatory, backward and forward motions, grinding her heated folds against his mouth, with every turn. The sturdy Saiyan virtually exploded with desire at her brazenly vulgar comment and arched his neck upwards. Almost impulsively, his hot tongue shot forward and began journeying unrelentingly, through the sweet, delectable insides of her core, relishing the spurts of nectar gushing into his inviting mouth. "Yes, keep going, don't stop!" The heiress caressed her blooming, ripened clit with two fingertips, moaning and yelping in jubilation, as his adept tongue thoroughly explored her! This was a whole other dimension for her. Bulma was ensorcelled, stepping into this enchanting, resplendent new world, feeling as though she were surrounded by luminescent stars from the high heavens, inundating her supple body with their divine, electrifying light. She'd never felt so exposed before, yet she feverishly basked in each and every second of it. His tongue circling inside her, was all she could think of, as her loud screams evolved into ringing crescendos that reverberated through the heat-deluged treatment lab, and the fragrant nectar of her orgasm shot right into his mouth, in a flood of euphoric perfection.

Her legs were still split, astride his open mouth, as she fell forward and began panting aloud for dear life, in the aftermath of one of the very best, if not the best, ride she'd had her entire life. Vegeta drank in the remains of her sweet juices. It took her at least five minutes, before she finally gathered the strength to move again and shifted her legs back, so that they were bent, but still on either side of his face. The Prince's eyes were half-lidded with desire, as he breathed raggedly against her drenched lower lips.

"Vegeta." She smiled down at him endearingly. His brilliant ebony orbs and low, desirous grunts were evidence enough that he'd loved this just as much as she had. "You're so amazing!" Bulma's fingers gently roamed along his feathery hair. He used his tongue with such unparalleled skill! She wanted this again and again! His eyes darted forward momentarily, then back to hers. The heiress frowned questioningly and he did it again. She looked behind her and licked her lips, as she was greeted with the ever-so-pleasant sight of his throbbing erection. "Wow! It's so huge!" Raging heat rushed straight to Vegeta's face, at her overt and barefaced indecency. Bulma's mouth watered and she instantly stood up and moved down to relieve him of the lycra raiment, covering his best parts, pulling them down to his shins, before hungrily eyeing his swelling phallus, as her heart raced at the prospect of getting another taste. He hadn't let her finish the job the first time around, but nothing would be stopping her now. But, since he'd been so generous with her, she'd reward him with another round as well. She moved into position, once again placing her blossoming nub on his mouth, which he eagerly accepted. This time however, she faced the other way, bending over and taking his rock-hard shaft into her hand, rubbing it up and down.

"On Earth we call this the sixty-nine position." She informed, before licking the tip of his erection, invoking a desirous moan from the needy Saiyan, as he felt himself go even harder, if it were possible. He gently caressed her centre with his tongue and the two lovers continued to alternate
between tormenting and pleasuring one another. Bulma could scarcely fit half his stiff length into her mouth, it was so darn big and yet that made it so much better! She rotated her diligent tongue around it in smooth, graceful motions, that had him grunting aloud, as surges of raw electricity coiled through his veins, igniting them with red-hot magma. A burst of fresh semen instantly thickened the cloudy haze in Bulma's mind, as she recalled the sharp and pungent, yet immensely enlivening flavor of ripe, sour-sweet granadilla and gratified his erection, with renewed ardor. He attacked back vigorously, jabbing her florescent clit with the tip of his tongue, before inexorably venturing through the treasure trove of her sweet, ambrosial insides, lapping up every drop of the inebriating nectar that invited itself into his eager mouth.

Their minds were completely amiss, as they avidly indulged themselves in the respective tastes of their enriching, sexual juices. As expected, Vegeta climaxed first, roaring as he fired his piquant, palatable seed. The heiress did not hesitate to take it all in, swallowing deeply in complete contentment. The Prince had never felt so lightheaded, yet it didn't stop him from roving the barb of his blade along the bundle of nerves in her centre and readily welcoming each droplet of the rich, sweet reward he earned for his earnest efforts. He darted his tongue forward and continued pillaging her from the inside, until the decibels of her fiery screams were as loud as they could be and the Vegeta's mouth was once again streaming with the gold, ambrosial richness that he couldn't possibly get enough of.

A good half hour passed and the odd pair were in their room, dozing off after yet another heated romp. Bulma had agreed to release Vegeta, so long as he conceded this round to her and allowed a week-long truce, before they engaged in yet another battle of wits. Though the Saiyan's initial plan was simply to go along and violate his word, the moment he was unshackled, the heiress reminded him that doing so would only mean taking the coward's way out. Thus, he decided that after a week passed by, he'd beat her in her own game and show her what it meant to challenge a true Saiyan Prince.

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Five days went by normally enough, with Vegeta finally reaching 100 Gs in the gravitron. God, his strength was rising immensely now! By his estimate, it would be a mere few months, before he re-acquired the legendary power he'd possessed, when he'd put a hole through the almighty Frieza, himself! But he wouldn't stop there! He'd continue training relentlessly and surpass all bounds and limitations! No one would stand in his path towards true greatness! He considered taking the easy way out, by demanding that the Namekian whelp heal him, every time he pushed himself near death, thus taking full advantage of any Zenkai power-ups that were sure to ensue. However, his pride strictly forbade it! He didn't require anyone's help! The gravity room provided everything he would ever need!

As he was in the midst of a lengthy set of inverted sit ups, he picked up a notable Ki signal on the front door of Capsule Corporation. Rage boiled through him, as his senses identified none other than the scar-faced coward. How dare he presume to show his detestable face here, after what had transpired, just over a week ago?! He flipped off the pull up bar and went over to the central console, pressing the "off" button, before opening the hatch and heading out the gravity chamber to meet the inferior Earthling.

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Yamcha arrived at CC and timidly rang the door bell a good few times, before he heard the footsteps of a fuming Bulma, rushing down the stairs.
"Dammit, I'm coming, I'm coming!" She yelled.

The scarred man bit his lip nervously, as he awaited her. The heiress opened the door and her jaw fell slightly, as she was greeted with the startling sight of her ex lover, scratching his head sheepishly.

"Uh- Yamcha?"

"H- Hey, Bulma." He smiled tremulously.

"Umm- Hi?" She replied weakly, before shaking the dumb look off her face and repeating, with more poise. "Hi!"

"How are you?"

"I was fine, till you showed up." She japed.

"Huh?"

"It was a joke, stupid." She frowned, folding her arms. "Anyway, I'm glad you dropped by. So what's up? Did you come here just to see my gorgeous face or what?" The heiress winked.

"Hehe, w-well no." A mild blush tinted Yamcha's cheeks. 'Geez, same old Bulma.' He thought to himself. The scarred man suddenly knitted his brows, as he sensed an unwanted presence behind him and whirled around. All color drained from his face, upon taking in the sight of an incensed Vegeta, a feral grimace contorting his visage. That murderous look alone was darn near enough to chill him, right down to the bone.

"You." The Prince said in a deathly, low voice, as he clenched his fists. "You dare to step foot here?!"

"Vegeta?" Bulma put herself in between the two warriors. Oh shit! He was still pissed off about what happened the last time! "Hey, just relax, would you?! Don't do anything stup-

"Back away!" The Prince yelled, whereby the stunned heiress fell on her rear.

"Hey, leave her alone!" Yamcha demanded, taking a threatening step forward.

"Or what?!" The Prince smirked wickedly, keeping his Ki suppressed, just so he could lure the weakling into a false sense of security.

"Or I'll kill you!" He scrunched his brows, promisingly.

"That's just what I wanted to hear!" Vegeta's smirk widened into a sinister grin, as he assumed a battle stance, Yamcha following suite, though he was put off by the overtly confident demeanor, about the Saiyan. A few seconds ticked by, both fighters ignoring the Bulma's enraged protests. Luckily for them, the heiress was clever enough not to jump in the way this time, lest she sport another brutal injury or worse.

"We don't have to do this, Vegeta." Yamcha said tactfully.

"Yamcha's right, dammit!" Bulma cried. "There's no need for this!"
"Tell me something, weakling." The Prince smiled smugly. The scar-faced man scowled, taking great offence to the Saiyan's demeaning jibe. "When they wished you back to life, did you leave your balls behind in the afterworld?"

"Vegeta, would you shut up?" The heiress yelled. She looked towards her ex, observing his fury climb higher and higher with each passing moment. "Yamcha, just ignore him! He's an idiot! He doesn't know any better!"

"Well, eunuch?" Vegeta pressed on, cackling inwardly. Now pushed past his melting point, Yamcha roared loudly as his Ki flared around him, instantly going on the offensive, in spite of Bulma's loud and vehement objections. The Saiyan easily blocked the attacks headed his way, not even bothering to strike back.

"You know, I'm hardly even trying here."

"Fuck you, asshole!" The scarred man took it up a notch as they went airborne, but to no avail. A minute or so passed and he was already beginning to feel exhausted. Dammit, just what was going on?! The last time they fought, Vegeta was on the losing end, but now, he was just toying with him, as though here were nothing! How dare he?! Vegeta suddenly vanished and Yamcha was agape, as his foot hit the empty air, in front of him.

"Behind you, weakling!" Vegeta boldly exclaimed, folding his arms and standing pompously midair. The scarred man whirled around, in astonishment. "You know, I had no clue that losing your balls would effect your fighting capabilities, this much. Then again, you were never anything special to begin with, so I suppose I shouldn't be surprised." He jeered. "I mean, honestly, what could be more humiliating than getting killed by a Saibaman?! Hahahaha!"

"FUCKING BASTARD!" Yamcha bellowed, placing his fists by his side, as a fiery red aura enveloped him and his muscles augmented. He would no longer hold back! Vegeta's eyes narrowed in surprise. "KAIO-KEN TIMES THREE!"

The former bandit shot towards the Prince at supersonic speeds. Vegeta grimaced, as he was scarcely able to avoid a blow headed his way. It seemed that this human learned the same technique that Kakarot had, in Otherworld! He never knew he had it in him! Truly astounding! The Saiyan upped his game a little and vanished once again, appearing behind the scarred man and landing a hard knife hand, right on the nape of his neck. The crimson aura of the Kaio-Ken dissipated immediately and Yamcha fell towards the ground, barely clinging to consciousness.

'Impossible.' The scarred man thought to himself, as his body plummeted. 'I never stood a chance. How did he get so strong?'

Bulma let out a bloodcurdling scream and instantly rushed to Yamcha's side, as her ex landed in the dirt.

"Yamcha, Yamcha!" She yelled frantically, grabbing either side of his face, tears brimming her azure eyes. "Talk to me!" The scarred man forced his eyes open.

"B-Bulma?" His lips quirked up slightly. "Don't worry, Bulma. I- I'm okay."

"You idiot, what the hell were you thinking?!!" She shrieked. "I told you not to let his words get to you! Seriously, what is wrong with you?! Are you that bent on getting yourself killed?!! Again?!!"
"Well- uh- n-no." He mumbled, shamefacedly. He'd messed up big time! Surely that bastard Vegeta would have his head now!

The Prince landed nearby, watching the scene playing before him, with a glint of amusement in his ebony eyes. Now that he'd gotten back at that fool, he wasn't really interested in finishing him off, so long as he stayed out of his business. Honestly, why even bother? As far as he was concerned, he didn't deserve the honor of being killed by a Saiyan Prince! He walked over to the former lovers, looming over Yamcha's virtually limp, figure.

"Well, I must admit, you're a lot stronger than I expected, but don't let that go to your head, weakling." He stated. Both Bulma and Yamcha looked up at him with nasty glares. "I was barely even using a quarter of my full strength against you." The scarred man blanched, as he absorbed that horrifying newsflash. Surely Vegeta was bluffing. He had to be! However, what he heard so far was trivial, in comparison to the abrupt and utterly inconceivable statement that followed.

"Also, know this. As of yet, I'm not even one-tenth as powerful as I was back on Namek and that's before I transformed into a Super Saiyan."

Yamcha was speechless, stunned beyond words! Was Vegeta really telling the truth?! It couldn't be! If it were, then he could never hope to reach such monumental heights in strength, even if he lived to be a thousand years old! The gap between their powers was completely unbridgeable!

"You humans are weak!" The Prince scorned. "The Saiyans will always be the strongest, for our powers grow without end! Never forget that! Let this be a warning to you! Next time, I won't be so generous!" He promptly walked past him, deciding that he'd likely given the miserable human enough of a fright, for at least one lifetime.

"Hey!" Bulma stood up and strutted over to Vegeta.

The Prince turned around, only to receive a surprise slap, right across the face.

"Why, you-"

"Shut up, asshole!" The heiress shrilled, repeatedly prodding his bare chest with her index finger, whereby he flinched. "Never forget this, O Mighty Prince of morons! You're living on our planet, eating our food and using our training equipment to intensify that strength, which you happen to love so much! Pull a stunt like that again and I'll close the gravity room down for good, you understand that, buster?!"

"You wouldn't dare!" The Saiyan fired back.

"Try me, jerk!"

"I'll just fly the capsule ship somewhere else!" He threatened. "Then what?!"

"Oh yeah?!" Bulma challenged. "Who's gonna repair it for you, when it inevitably breaks down or runs out of fuel, huh?!"

"I- uh-"

"That's what I thought!" The heiress smirked, arms arrogantly akimbo.
"Damn you!" The Prince growled. "You always ruin the moment!" He promptly swivelled back around, hurrying towards the gravitron to continue his training, whilst brooding angrily about a certain insufferable, nosy, blue-haired wench, who felt the need to interfere with his affairs, at every turn!

Bulma giggled at his last statement and couldn't help it, as her expression softened. She just couldn't get enough of that moody Saiyan! He would definitely feel sour towards her for a while, but she'd make it up with yet another mind-boggling round of steamy love-making.

The heiress sauntered back over to Yamcha, who was looking back at her in absolute disbelief! Since when had Bulma grown a set of balls that big?! And was she really in any position to dub him as suicidal, given what had just materialized, before his very eyes? How on Earth was she even breathing, after addressing Vegeta so impertinently?! God, this was the Bulma he loved so dearly, only ten times more assertive and foolhardy! If only she could jump back in his arms and ditch the nasty Saiyan!

"Hey, hang in there, Yamcha, I'm gonna ask Dende to heal you, 'kay?"

"Uh- okay- umm- wait, Bulma!" The scarred man called out, just as she was headed inside.

"Huh? What's up?!" She walked back over to him, kneeling down.

"I wanted to give you something." He placed his hand in his left pocket and pulled out a beautiful, white gold bracelet, with triple diamond studs in the centre.

"Whoa, Yamcha, don't tell me that's-

"Yep, I found it in buried beneath the sofa, back at my place haha." He laughed, as he saw her eyes tear up. Her mother gave her that bracelet, for her eighteenth birthday, but she'd been foolish enough to take it off and lose it, a few years back. The loving and ever-so-kind Mrs. Brief had of course, forgiven her right away, but she'd never forgiven herself.

"Oh my God, that's so sweet!" She exclaimed cheerily and pulled her ex up into a tight embrace, while the latter grinned, loving the feel of her soft skin. Bulma pulled back and looked him in the eye, smiling benignly. "Thank you so much, Yamcha!"

"Hey, you know I'd do anything for you, Bulma."

"Yeah, I know." She chuckled. "Friends forever?" She asked him. His face fell at that. He'd truly been hoping for more. Then again, perhaps he could wait and bide his time. Surely, Bulma had to see that Vegeta was all wrong for her! She belonged with him and he refused to give up his endeavor to recapture her heart! "Yamcha?"

"Friends forever." He nodded and she smiled, enrobing him in another hug. Bulma truly felt her heart kindle with joy! She had Yamcha back in her life and she wasn't going to let him go! Of course Vegeta wouldn't be too thrilled at the idea, but hopefully, she could be the bridge between those two lunkheads! After all, she loved them both, only in different ways!

A/N: Seems Yamcha's determined to get back the girl he loves! But what will Vegeta have to say about it?! How will things fare from now on?! Guess we'll see next time, so remember to review/follow/favourite, my friends!
Thanks again, everyone! Much love to all of you!

**Power levels:**

Yamcha: 18 000  
*With Kaio-Ken x 3:*  54 000  

(Yep, that means Yamcha can defeat any members of the Ginyu Force, minus Captain Ginyu!)

Vegeta: 250 000  
*1/4 strength:* 62 500
"Hey Vegeta, can I tell you a secret?"

The Prince frowned, pausing midway, as he trailed his folded index finger, along the smooth, lissom, arm of his vibrant little female. Post-coitus was always so tranquil, as the vigorous pair felt the myriad endorphins leisurely frolicking through their respective bloodstreams, steadily cooling down their blazing figures, with soothing calm and comfort.

"What secret?"

"I have balls." She replied, chortling inwardly, upon seeing the incredulous, aversive expression, directed her way.

"Ha ha, stupid woman." He blankly remarked, following a brief pause.

"It's no joke." She insisted. "And I wasn't talking about the dragon balls, either."

"Oh really?" He played along with her silly little game and moved a hand down, cupping her wetness and exploring the general vicinity, with his avid fingers, setting off a few girlish moans and giggles. "You're obviously confused."

"Nope, you're just looking in the wrong place, stud." The heiress grinned, her own dainty hand travelling south along his body and pleasantly taking hold of the nicely encased twins, in question. "I was talking about these."

Were he not lying down already, the Saiyan would've tumbled head over heels at her ribald retort and accompanying action. Every so often, it seemed that she would startle him with a whole new dimension of sexual depravity!

"You're a sick woman!" He grimaced harshly, put off even further by that complacent look on her smug face and the blatant spark of mischief, within her skittish, everlasting, ocean-blue eyes. "Your indecency knows no bounds!"

"But it's the truth." Bulma responded, in earnest. "After all, I do have free reign over them." She impishly purred, deftly massaging the pair within her grasp, as if to demonstrate her point. A mortified Vegeta was forced to bury his face inside her bosom, in order to hide the many shades of crimson that flushed it, thereafter.

"Wrong, only I have free reign!" He growled, rubbing his first two digits, along her folds.

"I do- too!" Bulma childishly objected between a moan, swinging a leg over and winding it around his hip.

"Only because I allow it!"

"Oh shut up, that still counts, you know?!" The heiress argued. "I mean, who else can have you, the mighty Prince of all Saiyans, all to themselves, huh?!"
"No one." Vegeta smirked, bringing his face back up, so they were eye-to-eye. "Which is why you should feel honored woman, especially considering what a weakling you are."

"Yeah, well guess what meathead?!" The livid Bulma pressed her nose and forehead against his. The Prince scowled at the insult. "My strength lies here!" She tapped the side of her head twice, with her finger. "And it's been of invaluable use, time and time again! The Universe has enough hare-brained, muscle-bound morons, like you and Goku!"

"How dare you compare me to that third-class imbecile?!"

"Face it, brains and brawn complement one-another!" The blue-haired woman fervently lectured, disregarding his petty complaint. "One can't thrive without the other and I've always been the brains of the operation! That's my strength, so don't you dare call me a weakling ever again, you understand that, bub?!"

Vegeta remained silent, knowing there was absolutely no way he could refute or deny the truth behind her words. After all, the dragon radar and gravity machine had proven to be of invaluable use.

"Whatever." He shrugged his shoulders, before smirking teasingly at her, dark eyes glittering friskily. "Weakling."

"You jerk!" Bulma yelled, shoving him down and bestriding his hips, repeatedly slamming her puny, fragile fists against his rugged pecs. Before she even knew it, they were engaging in one of their trademarks bouts of rough, angry, hardcore sex, amongst her very favourite modes. Damn that Vegeta, always taking control of the situation! That sly little twerp riled her up for this very purpose- not that she wasn't loving every single second of it!

XXXX

In a guest room nearby, Yamcha covered his tormented ears, with a plush pillow. Ever since taking up Bulma's invitation to stay over at Capsule Corp a few nights, he'd fervidly aspired to win her back. However, all his endeavours had so far resulted in complete and utter failure, much to his misery and disappointment. Each night, he was haunted with the unrepressed sounds of that Saiyan fiend repeatedly violating his girl! Oh who was he kidding?! Bulma wasn't his anymore! The ex-bandit was heartbroken! Dammit, there had to be something he could do, some way to make her see reason! Vegeta wasn't right for her! He was simply using her for sex and enhanced training equipment! Anyone with half a brain could see that, so why couldn't she?!

The scar-faced warrior spent the next few hours, restlessly tossing and turning, whilst contemplating a potential solution to this mess.

'Hm, maybe that'll work.' He finally came up with a seemingly plausible plan, smirking to himself, thereafter.

The next morning, Yamcha invited Bulma over to West City Park, hoping they could talk alone for a while and enjoy a nice lunch together, his treat, of course.

"You're asking me out on a date?" The heiress asked, arms akimbo and one eyebrow raised, warily.

"No, not a date." He waved his hands emphatically. "Just a friendly get-together."
Bulma wrinkled her brows, a moment.

"Well- uh- fine, I guess." The heiress assented, after a brief pause. She knew what he was up to and she needed to make it clear that he had to let things go, but she didn't want to hurt him even further. The scarred man's face instantly lit up. "What about Puar? She coming?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you?" He replied. "She's staying over at Roshi's."

"Oh yeah." Bulma recalled. "Well, alright, just the two of us then. But it's not a date, just so we're clear, okay?"

"Right, right!" Yamcha nodded. "Thanks, Bulma!"

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That afternoon, the former lovers sat side-by-side on a bench, heartily enjoying some delectable Chinese takeout. Yamcha donned a black tank top, khaki pants and brown loafers. Bulma wore a lilac t-shirt, raspberry three-quarter pants to go with it and an exquisite pair of rhinestone sandals. She would often find her ex smiling at her, between mouthfuls, but pretended not to take notice. Honestly, he was beginning to creep her out.

"Well, that was great, Yamcha!" The heiress beamed, upon finishing up her meal, stretching her arms forward. "I really enjoyed it!"

"Thanks." He blushed a little, rubbing his fingers, against back of his neck.

"As shy as ever, I see." Bulma grinned.

"S-Sorry."

"Don't be, it's cool." She shook her head. "Sometimes, I like you better this way." She jabbed his chest with her elbow.

"Really?" He asked, tone almost hopeful.

"Well, yeah." She merrily replied. "Reminds me of the old times." Bulma giggled. "Gosh, you were such a dork, back then- but cute though, definitely cute."

"So, you're saying I'm not anymore?" Yamcha quirked an amused brow.

"Nope, now you're just a dork."

"Real funny, Bulma." The scar-faced fighter chuckled. "Anyway, speaking of old times, remember that tree over there?" He pointed ahead, to an oak tree, all by it's lonesome, towards the end of the park.

"Oh- uh- well- I'm not really-"

"It's where we first kissed, remember?"

Bulma's cheeks tinted a light shade of pink and she let out a few uneasy laughs, which caused
Yamcha's heart beat to quicken, just a fraction. Perhaps hope wasn't completely lost.

"Yeah well- you made me wait for more than a year, before you finally grew the nads to go through with it." She rolled her eyes. "I mean, really, all that time, for one teeny weeny little kiss?"

"Well, I guess I was sort of afraid heh." He sighed wistfully. "I gotta say, I really miss those times."

"You know, sometimes I miss 'em as well." She smiled, facing the tree, as she felt a hint of nostalgia, settle within her. Her childhood was truly one of a kind. Ever since meeting that little monkey-tailed rascal Goku, she'd often found herself in the propitious company of Earth's greatest warriors. Each and every day brought with it, a whole new level of excitement.

"You- you do?" The former bandit instantly turned her way, heart now thumping like crazy.

"Of course I do." Her eyes glittered merrily, as recollections of the past flashed through her mind. "We were all just kids. Half the time, we didn't even know what we were doing, but that's what made it so-

Her babble was cut off, as Yamcha's lips locked with hers. The scarred man shut his eyes, reveling in the all-to-familiar feel of her luscious lips. Gods, she was as enchanting as ever, if not more! Butterflies flooded inside his jubilant stomach, as he tasted her lower lip.

Bulma froze, her eyes shooting open in disbelief and heart racing. She remained transfixed for a good several seconds, till reality came crashing down. These weren't the soft, slick, balmy lips that had garnished her hankering soul and spirit, sending her floating atop cloud nine, for so many successive nights. Incredulity quickly transformed into searing incense and outrage. She crudely shoved him away.

"WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!!" She stood up, screaming aloud and hardly noticing that she'd attracted the unwanted attention of nearly everyone in the park. The heiress was furious beyond words! How dare he lure her here and try to take advantage of the situation?! She couldn't believe that he would ever stoop so low!

"Bulma, I'm sorry, I-

"Shut-up!"

WHACK!

She hooked him hard, right across the face, only to cry out as her knuckles throbbled in pain. The heiress swivelled around and tenderly caressed the aching zone, eyes tearing a little, as a result of the pain. She was truly peeved! This was a complete betrayal of their friendship! A true friend would never pull a cheap and sordid stunt like that!

"Bulma, are you okay?!!" The scarred man asked solicitously, rushing over to her side.

"GET LOST!" She yelled, elbowing him in the ribs and running off to her car, angered and hurt by her ex's audacious behavior. Yamcha sped towards her, taking hold of her forearm, firm enough that she couldn't pull away, but gentle enough that it didn't cause her any harm.

"Let- me- go!" She objected, futilely trying to get free.
"Bulma, just listen, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to-"

"I said let go of me, you bastard!" She spat right in his face. A stunned Yamcha instantly released her and blinked a few times, hardly noticing as she bolted and drove away, in a fit of boiling fury.

'Dammit, I'm such an idiot.' He mentally berated, wiping off the fresh spittle, from under his eye. Here he was trying to win back his girl, but all he'd managed to do was widen the rift between them! He blatantly mistook her words! How typical! Acting without thinking is what got him killed by an inferior opponent, a mere few months ago! 'Stupid, stupid, stupid!'

Cursing himself the entire journey home, the crestfallen scarred man decided that he had to let Bulma go for the time being, lest he destroy whatever few scraps of friendship they had left. Vegeta would inevitably leave her with a broken heart, it was only a matter of time. He was determined to rescue her from his evil clutches before he had the chance, but that seemed like a fool's errand now. He sighed despondently and walked into his apartment, more lovelorn than ever.

XXXX

About fifteen minutes after the debacle at West City Park, Bulma arrived home and marched straight inside, more ticked off than ever. She needed an outlet and knew just the place!

The shirtless Prince was in the middle of a set of planche push-ups, his tightly knit muscles rippling under the gruelling force of 150 Gs. He was wearing grey sweatpants and white joggers. Glistening beads of sweat trickled from his strapping chest, dripping onto the hard, tensile floor of the chamber. A harsh banging sound outside suddenly made him fall flat on his face.

"What the fucking fuck?" He irately cursed and blazed with white-hot fury, upon sensing the Ki of that annoying little blue-headed vixen! She had some nerve interrupting him in the middle of his training! He would make her pay! The fuming Saiyan turned off the gravity simulator and dashed towards the entrance, pressing the button to open it. "You-" He began hissing through grit teeth, but was immediately cut off as the heiress pounced without a second's delay, girding her slim arms around his neck and legs around his waist, while engaging him in a feverish kiss, all in one super swift maneuver. She attacked voraciously, amorously licking and nipping his soft lips, with ferocious abandon.

The dumbfounded Prince stumbled back a few steps, before gathering his wits and snarling, as he slammed her back into the metalled wall, quicker than she could follow.

"What do you think you're doing?!" He irately cursed and blazed with white-hot fury, upon sensing the Ki of that annoying little blue-headed vixen! She had some nerve interrupting him in the middle of his training! He would make her pay! The fuming Saiyan turned off the gravity simulator and dashed towards the entrance, pressing the button to open it. "You-" He began hissing through grit teeth, but was immediately cut off as the heiress pounced without a second's delay, girding her slim arms around his neck and legs around his waist, while engaging him in a feverish kiss, all in one super swift maneuver. She attacked voraciously, amorously licking and nipping his soft lips, with ferocious abandon.

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"What do you think you're doing?!" He demanded, enunciating each word.

"Shut up!" She growled, not deterred in the slightest. Bulma placed her hand across his forehead and roughly forced his head back, exposing his thick, olive-hued neckline. She licked her parched lips and assailed it immediately, planting a trail of hungry kisses along it's savoury, muscled length, before lapping up the streaming rivulets of fresh perspiration, relishing their piquant, enthralling taste. Her heart raced, as she reached his drumming pulse. Bulma shuddered with raw, primal desire, upon feeling its rapid beats against her warm, pink petals. The heiress adamantly began sucking the unshielded zone, for all she was worth.

Once again the Prince was totally caught off guard. This wasn't like her at all. Was she possessed by a hellish demon of some sort?! He barely knew, but he was turned on more than ever by her wild, animalistic exploits, sparks of red-hot electricity crackling each and every blood cell within him! The primordial beast inside quickly began to seize control of his mind, as he pulled her head
away, allowing him to straighten up and attack right back. With a searing vengeance, he crashed his lips to hers and compressed her against the wall, with his compact figure. Bulma instantly melted into his kiss and soon their tongues partook in a fierce battle for dominance. To any outsider, it would appear as though the zesty pair were literally trying to eat each other.

The rapacious Saiyan slipped a hand underneath her shirt from below, growling low as he felt her lace bra, obstructing him from getting a thorough hold of her soft, voluptuous globes. Consumed by fire, he tore her shirt in half, but was unable to proceed further.

"Fucker!" She hissed, roughly pushing him away and furiously lunging towards him, with vindictive resolve. How dare he spoil her relatively new shirt?! Yet again, Vegeta was completely unprepared as Bulma held him by the shoulders and using her calf, swept the back of his legs out from under him, landing him on the floor with an unforeseen thud that forced the breath right out of his lungs. The heiress was instantly on top of him. "You had no right!" She screamed, before taking off her ruined t-shirt and smothering him with it.

The Prince let out a muffled snarl and shoved her off, instantly assuming the dominant position above her, as was his birthright. "Crazy wench!"

"Boneheaded Saiyan!" She retorted and would've tried to scratch his eyeballs out, had he not restrained her arms and pinned them down beside her. That she still refused to surrender before his overwhelming might made her that much more ravishing in his eyes! This impetuous minx was truly one of a kind!

"I must say, you were right about one thing woman." Vegeta nestled his face against her neck, his lips quirking up, in a slightly faint smirk.

"Right about what?" She breathed, still struggling beneath him, yet losing inch after inch of resolve, her stomach knotting up tight at the low, virile inflection of his rough timbre.

"You do have balls." His smirk widened. Bulma growled and squirmed harder beneath her lover. "A human should know better than to interfere with my training!" He pressed his teeth against the juncture of her neck and shoulder, prompting an acute cry from the powerless female. He released her soon after and she moaned in pleasure as he used his tantalizing tongue to caress the swelling hickey that ensued.

"You don't understand." She objected, a hefty weight settling over her, as her struggles dwindled, little by little. Damn, he was so amazing! "I need this. I- I-

"Quiet!" The Prince gruffly interjected, trailing his warm lips a little higher till they reached her drumming pulse, then letting his eager tongue join the fray once again, as he ventured along her neatly defined jawline. Bulma whimpered, no longer persisting, the allure of his gravelly voice and the feel of his lips and tongue, re-igniting the scorching flame within her. She hardly knew why she was acting like such a termagant in the first place, but was certain that it had something to do with Yamcha's unprovoked move. Screw that! She didn't even want to think about that presumptuous fool, not when she had the greatest lover in the entire Universe!

Vegeta blitzed her with a barrage of raging kisses below the neckline, till he ripped off her saffron, cotton bra and cast it aside, immediately feasting upon her ample, sensuous mound, evoking a loud yip from the covetous female. Bulma moaned, as he continued pleasuring her.

"Keep going!" She brashly urged, eyes shut and chest rapidly rising up and down, as each
impassioned breath drew closer and closer to the next. "Don't stop! Don't ever stop!"

"Vulgar woman!" The Prince bit down on her puckered nipple, making her cry out in delight.

"More, I want more!" She fervidly demanded, as though she were the one holding the strings. As always, her shrewish demeanor only fuelled the Prince's desires further. He finally liberated her hands and forced her three quarters off, along with her panties. As he proceeded to pull his sweatpants and underwear, he realized that the impatient, raunchy female was already working on them and had them off, in no time at all. Their respective footwear followed suite.

An earnest Bulma placed her slender left leg on the Saiyan's shoulder, while the other was spread sidewardly, offering plenty of room for a perfect penetration. She hadn't tried this particular position before and that made her all the more feverish. As sadistic as ever, Vegeta began rubbing her wetness with the head of his hardened length, but made no further move to insert it into place.

"H-Hey!" The indignant heiress objected, lifting her leg up and slamming her heel on his shoulder. The flame-haired alien smirked, barely feeling a thing, but amused nonetheless. "Just put it in, you fucker!"

"Put what in?" He goaded, wrapping his fluffy tail around her right leg, spiralling her lust just a little higher.

"Dammit, stop teasing!" She mewled, hitting him again, harder this time.

"Tell me what you want." He smugly ordered in a low, captivating voice that enlivened the wild, unbridled butterflies within her stomach. The fiendish Prince used his tip to caress her folds up and down, whereby an explosion of arousal, flooded within her. She could barely mouth a few coherent words together.

"I want- I- I want your-"

"You want my what?!" She boldly slurred, without the slightest semblance of shame or regret.

"Fine then!" He jammed his member within, whereby a surge of blistering, hot lightning shot right into her glaring capillaries, setting them alight.

"Yes, give it to me, Vegeta!" She squealed. "Give me everything you've got!"

"Patience, wench!" He seethed, setting a slow and rhythmic pace at first. No matter how incognizant, the Prince always felt the need to start out with a nice, even tempo, as opposed to skewering her, like some sort of wild animal. Bulma smiled, reveling in the blissful sensation of his soothing back-and-forth motions. She got up off the ground and wrapped an arm around his neck, letting him continue his assault, as they shuddered in sync and eventually met lips. Their bodies conjoined, both parties felt their stomachs drop low, as their minds were consumed by a lusty haze of heavenly radiance.

Vegeta tilted his head sideways and planted a soft, sensational kiss on her lower leg still positioned on his shoulder, re-invigorating her randiness, while giving her room to attack his muscled neckline, with her ardent lips, teeth and tongue. The rugged Prince cupped her rounded buttocks within his rough palms, as he upped his pace, pounding her with steadily accelerating effort. Bulma
yelped in glee and grabbed his face, turning it back in her direction. He groaned pleasurably, as she took his bottom lip into her mouth, sucking and licking it, in earnest.

The flame-haired Saiyan ran his calloused hands up and down her bare, porcelain back, before steadily laying her down again and ramming deeper, harder and quicker, as he ravaged her enticing breasts, with his hot mouth.

"Oh Vegeta, oh God! I love you, my Prince!" She screamed, heart and mind enshrouded in pure, celestial bliss. "I love you so much!"

Vegeta's breath hitched, as her benign, hearty proclamation set his heart ablaze with a searing inferno, the likes of which he'd never felt. The Prince's soul lit up with radiant light and life. He bit down on her teat and continued drilling away, till they finally came together, in a thunderous climax of mind-boggling euphoria.

A few minutes later, Vegeta lay atop Bulma, face held within her lithe arms and huddled against her bosom, while his tail girded around her upper thigh. Their breaths were still somewhat labored, in the wake of this unexpected tryst.

"What the hell was that all about?" The Prince mumbled, finally breaking the serene silence that followed. Bulma giggled a little, as she traced little circles in his feathery hair, noticing that no matter how she toyed with those soft, raven fibres, they would immediately re-assume their upright position. Just like him, they refused to bend or bow, instead standing proud with regal poise, defying anything and everything. Gods, how could any man hope to compare to this perfect, hotheaded, screwball of a Saiyan?! The spoiled, entitled and inordinately rich Vice-President of Capsule Corp was rarely ever grateful for anything, but having her Prince here, inside her supple arms, made her feel like the luckiest girl in the entire cosmos!

"I'm not sure, I was just- uh- in a bad mood I guess." She smiled dazzlingly. "But I feel a whole lot better now." The heiress kissed him atop the head. "Thanks, lover."

The Saiyan's face reddened at the syrupy term. Damn woman!

"I'm a warrior, not a lover!" He growled peevishly, sitting up and staring her fixedly in the eye.

"Not just any warrior." Bulma placed a warm hand on his cheek, opting to stroke his ego. He'd definitely earned it. "You're a true Saiyan Prince and the most powerful warrior in the entire Universe!"

Vegeta was slightly taken aback, by her supportive words and felt his chest tighten, as his stomach lurched.

"Damn right, woman!" He nestled his face into the recess of her neck, drowning himself in her sweet, entrancing, floral scent.

"Mmmm." Bulma murmured, stroking the back of his head, as her heart blossomed. She loved when he scented her. It was adorable as hell. "You're also cuddly."

"Grrr, idiot." He growled, making her giggle, yet again.

An hour passed by peacefully and the heiress was reclining on the living room sofa, paying no heed at all, to the soap opera playing on television, as her tranquil mind sifted through the steamy
events that had transpired in the gravity room. Gods, that crazy Saiyan was just too much!

"WOMAN!"

Bulma cringed and clasped her ears, before turning in the direction of said Saiyan. His shadowy eyes were bloodshot and his jet black hair, outlandishly static. A crabbed grimace contorted his rough-hewn features.

"V-Vegeta?" The heiress stammered, before screaming. "Don't scare me like that, you asshole! What the heck?!"

"Curse you, female!" He lividly pointed an accusing finger at her. "The gravity room reeks of sex! I can't even train properly, all because of your decadence!"

"O-Oh- I- uh- I see." She mumbled, scratching her head and laughing sheepishly. "Sorry 'bout that Veg."

"Sorry isn't good enough, you goddamn-" His words suddenly caught in his throat. "What- What the hell did you just call me?!"

"Relax, would you?!" She frowned, folding her arms. "It's just a nickname, Veg!"

"If you value your existence, you would be wise never to use it again, am I clear?!"

"Yeah, yeah, whatever, Ve-Gee-Tah!" She articulated each syllable in his name, rolling her eyes and unfazed by his meaningless threat. Sometimes, he was far too sensitive and stringent for his own good. "Anyway, I'm sorry! I didn't mean to-"

"What the hell am I supposed to do now?!" He furiously interrupted. "Your pathetic planet's gravity is far too low for me to reap any benefits!"

"Then why not do something besides training for once?" The heiress tactfully suggested.

"There is nothing else!" He snarled, then looked at her pointedly. "And if you think you can weasel your way out of this with sex, you're sorely mistaken!"

Bulma's face turned beet-red. Damn! He'd virtually read her mind!

"Okay, okay, no sex." She sighed and mentally scoped through for something, anything that would placate her crazy Saiyan's anger. "Hmm, well, for starters, let's leave the gravitron open for the day and vent out the bad air."

"I already did that!"

"Oh, alright, well- uh-" Bulma pondered for a moment, before an idea clicked in her mind. "I know, maybe we can watch some of the matches from the old world martial arts tournaments."

"The what?"

"It's something we had here on Earth, where the planet's best combatants got together and duked it out, in order to determine who the greatest fighter was." She elucidated. "Goku participated in three of them."
"Forget it, that sounds lame and boring."

"It is not!" She objected. "Those guys were-"

"Weaklings." The Saiyan finished before she could even continue, waving his hand dismissively.

"Dammit, Vegeta, come on." She groused, lightly stamping the floor, in irritation. "You were much weaker than Frieza once, but you defeated him!"

"What's your damn point?!" He growled, irked that she brought up the lizard, but still glad that she reminded him of the greatest victory he'd ever accomplished, his life's dream.

"Point is, you should never underestimate others." She smirked, shaking her finger. "Everyone's a fledgling at some point. Just look at Earth's fighters now. They're much stronger than they ever were."

"Tch, they're still weak." He scoffed, but after a short pause, altered his approach just a little. "Though I have to admit, they do surprise me. I mean, not long ago the scar-faced weakling got killed by a Saibaman, but now he could defeat any member of the Ginyu Force, well- minus their Captain, before he decided to go amphibian."

Bulma chuckled a little at the memory of frog Ginyu.

"Well, see, there you have it." She smiled. "Let's just watch the good old stuff. I guarantee you'll enjoy it, okay?"

"I doubt it." He contended, but then shrugged his shoulders, as he finally decided to oblige her. "But I guess it'll have to do."

"Awesome!" Bulma threw a fist up, in triumph.

As they sat together and saw the tournament tapes, the heiress attuned herself to the occasional scoff, growl and condescending laugh, quickly realizing that she had her Saiyan hooked onto the screen.

"What kind of moron brings underwear to the battlefield?!" The Prince sneered, following the conclusion of the fight, between Krillin and Jackie Chun.

"Hahaha Don't ask me." She chuckled. "My friends are all kooks."

"Hmph, more like idiots."

"Hey, be nice!" Bulma playfully chided.

As they rolled through each match, Vegeta had to inwardly admit that he was quite impressed. In spite of their dismally low fighting power at the time, the Earthling warriors had excellent form, technique and discipline, in contrast to the vast majority of Frieza's army. The old bearded man, Jackie Chun, particularly stood out to him. It came as no surprise then, that Kakarot and his allies had nearly beaten him, when he'd planned to invade Earth. Weak, they have been, but their sense of purpose and communion, had always driven them to excel beyond their natural limitations, repeatedly granting them victory or near-victory, against impossible odds. He'd never say it aloud,
but perhaps these oafs were just a little praiseworthy.

A/N: So what'd you think guys? Did you enjoy it?
Chapter 42: The ones we love

A few more days passed by. The crescent moon cast its heavenly radiance on Capsule Corporation, as a certain dynamic duo lay fast asleep, in the early hours of midnight.

"I do not wish to serve that disgusting, lizard freak!" The young Prince objected. "I am the crown Prince! My place is here with my people!"

"I know that." The King knelt down and placed a hand on his son's shoulder. "But for now, we must obey Frieza or all will be lost to us, forever."

"That's ridiculous!" The irate child snapped. "We are the most powerful race of warriors in the entire Universe! Together, we can obliterate him!"

"No we can't!" The elder exclaimed vociferously. "We are not strong enough yet! You don't know how powerful Frieza really is! We must bide our time and strike when the moment is right!"

"You always say that father, but those are just empty words, nothing more!" The boy spat. "The right moment is now! You just don't have the backbone for-"

WHACK!

The sovereign backhanded his son across the face before he could finish, sending him skidding across the glimmering lapis, marble floor of the royal palace. Not two seconds later, the boy slowly began getting to his feet, all the while staring icily at his father, little obsidian irises flooding with spine-chilling betrayal and venom.

The King let out a frustrated huff, before sauntering towards him. The Prince averted his gaze.

"Look at me." He said, tone even-tempered, but the child didn't pay heed. He grit his teeth and lividly growled. "I said look at me boy!" The younger Vegeta jumped and instantly set eyes upon his father. The man knelt down once again and placed both hands on the little one's shoulders, looking at him fixedly, as he continued in a solemn voice."In over a thousand years, not a single Saiyan has been endowed with the natural abilities that you possess and it is only a matter of time before these abilities transcend those of every living Saiyan, including myself." He tightened his hold on the boy's shoulders. "No matter what Frieza puts you through, always remember what you are destined to be: the Super Saiyan of legend! But most of all, know that I will not abandon you! I would rather die than hand you over!"

"Then why don't you?!" The child shot back.

"Because he'll take you anyway!" The King replied vexedly, before sighing. "Listen carefully, my son. Strength is the only thing that matters, nothing else! Let go of any and all attachments you hold, even towards myself, for they will make you weak! Focus solely on increasing your power! It may take years, perhaps even decades, but one day you will destroy Frieza!"

Nearly a minute's pause followed, before the Prince nodded gravely.
Vegeta woke up with a deep gasp, eyes snapping wide open and breath quickening. Slowly, he closed his eyelids and let out an exhale, before taking in his surroundings. Bulma's slender arm was draped across his muscled chest and his ears picked up the soft, soothing sounds of her gentle snores. Yet, another flashback from the past.

'What am I doing?' He thought to himself, a feeling of inner conflict stewing within. Ever since landing on Namek, he'd repeatedly cast aside everything his father had imparted to him. How could he call himself the Prince of all Saiyans, when he'd developed such a deep and profound sense of affinity, towards this fragile, inferior little human?! Just imagine if the King, Nappa or Raditz could see him now! Pathetic, truly pathetic! Life had always been so clear and transparent, like pure, untainted water, till she came along and muddled his brains from the inside out. As the days proceeded, everything became more and more translucent, till it was damn near opaque. He quietly moved off and sat on the edge of the bed, pondering deeply.

That old fool had some nerve preaching what he couldn't practice himself! Was it not attachment that got him killed, as he foolhardily challenged the overwhelming might of Frieza, with absolutely no hope of survival?! Not that it really mattered! The Lizard would've destroyed him either way, yet that single question remained unanswered! Damn him! Damn them all, to hell!

"Mmmm, Vegeta." Bulma murmured, suddenly awake, eyes half lidded and brows creased in umbrage, as she saw his bare, olive back to her. "What're you doing? Get back here." She patted the spot next to her.

"I need some air." He responded nonchalantly, removing those infernal Ki restraints and proceeding to take off, paying no heed to her objections.

Piccolo sat in deep meditation, when he sensed the steady trajectory of a certain Saiyan, as he flew about here and there, the wild fluctuations of his Ki, distinctively conveying his deep frustrations. 'What could've caused that?' He wondered. Most curious. Normally, the Namekian wouldn't pay it any mind, but a little entertainment did appear welcoming, at the moment. Though loath to admit it, the fact was that he sort of missed little Gohan, but unfortunately his shrew of a mother had confined the miserable child to his quarters, until he was up to date with all his studies.

Vegeta flew around in no particular direction, garbing just his navy, cotton pajama pants and a black pair of velcro sneakers, mind completely disarrayed. Just what was that impetuous female to him?! A sex-partner, a lover, a companion?! Each and every moment that passed, he drew closer and closer to her, like a dog to a bone! He felt imprisoned! A great evil was still embedded within him, as it had always been; a vile, malicious force that could only be placated with the blood of other beings! Yet whenever he was in her presence and felt her soft touch, a divine light radiated within him, placating every bit of darkness and evil that had ever consumed him. Her benevolent smile was wrought with unparalleled warmth and adoration, acceptance and kindness. At times, he barely knew who he was, around her! It made no sense! Aside from the minutiae, she knew precisely who he was and what he'd been doing his entire life, so how could she possibly believe that one such as himself was entitled to her unreserved, unconditional affections?!

The Prince finally decided to touch down on an elevated, grassy hill that stood on the outskirts of a
small island, giving him an expansive bird's-eye view of the sparkling, oceanic horizon and the gleaming stars that giddily shone above. Had he so wished, it could all be his. Just months ago, dominion over the heavens was his sole objective, the only thing that drove him. Now, all he had left was surpassing Kakarot, but what then? In truth, ruling over an Empire sounded more like a headache than a dream. With Frieza dead, surely the colonies he left behind were in shambles, plagued with instability and mass rebellion. He huffed and shook his head. That was no concern of his. Who knows? Maybe someone else would come along and clear that whole mess, perhaps Kakarot, since that empty-headed, soft-hearted sap was somewhere out there doing god-knows-what.

"Girl trouble?" A deep, recognizable voice from behind, hacked right through his thoughts. Vegeta grunted and scornfully gandered at the intruder for just a moment.

"What the hell are you doing here, Namek?" He snorted derisively.

"I can ask you the same question, Saiyan." Piccolo replied indifferently. "It's a little past your bedtime, don't you think?"

"If you want to die, then you've come to the right place!" The Prince growled.

"Have I?" Piccolo smirked. "And here I thought you'd gotten all soft and mushy, ever since you left Namek."

"I'm warning you!" Vegeta whirled around, glowering fiercely at the imposing alien. "Leave now!"

"No." The Namekian rejoined, to the royal Saiyan's disgruntlement. A tense pause followed.

"Fine, let's do this." The Prince deadpanned, taking up his stance and immediately flaring his aura to it's highest, sighing as he felt the colossal waves of Ki pulsate through his sturdy frame.

"Impressive." Piccolo cracked his neck side to side, grinning as he assumed his own demon-style posture and charged his power to a level that was slightly higher than his adversary's, whilst taking into account the added effects of his weighted clothing.

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Krillin, Yamcha and Master Roshi were instantly jolted awake back at Kame House, eyes widening at the humongous powers they felt. The bald man, of course, wasn't nearly as surprised, since he'd witnessed such enormous Ki firsthand, back on Namek.

"Is- is that-"

"It's Vegeta and Piccolo!" Krillin interrupted his scar-faced colleague. "What the hell are they doing?!"

"Is it really them?!" Master Roshi asked, overcome with awe. "How can they be so powerful?! It's mind boggling!"

"What do we do guys?!" The ex-bandit asked.

"I don't know about you two, but I'm gonna try and put a stop to this, before they kill each other!" Without question, the short warrior took off.
"Krillin wait!" The old master's protests were dismissed. Yamcha dithered a few moments, before gathering up his courage and following after his friend.

"I hope I don't regret this!"

XXX

'Tch, fuck!' The Prince cursed inwardly. 'I'd forgotten how strong this fool was! This could get ugly!'

"Go ahead, attack." The Namekian challenged, his smug look irritating the Saiyan, to no avail. "I'm feeling a little generous right about now, so how about I give you one free shot?"

"FUCKING BASTARD!" A livid Vegeta yelled, outraged by the impudence of this green freak. He lunged at his foe and pounded his fist square into his face, sending him flying straight into a hard, rocky outcropping.

'Ow, that actually hurt.' The giant thought to himself, rubbing his bloodied nose. Steadily, he got up and took a breather, before dashing right back in. "Not bad. But you'll have to do a lot better than that." He taunted.

"HAAAAAARRRRGSSSSHHHHH!" Vegeta roared, rushing in and attacking with unbridled fury. Blows and blasts were exchanged for a good fifteen minutes or so, until an unwanted guest made his way into the scene, tailed closely by another.

"Vegeta, Piccolo! Stop!" Krillin yelled, but was either unheard or ignored altogether.

"You do know that so far I've just been toying with you?" The Namek gloated, before taking it up a notch and ramming his fist into the Saiyan's gut, as the two warriors were airborne. Vegeta's eyes widened and a bloody cough preceded an elbow atop the head, which sent him plunging right into the thick Earth, below him. "That all you've got?!" Piccolo echoed, in his rough voice. "You're weak, useless! You're nothing compared to me! Or Goku!"

Eyes a vengeful crimson, the Prince suddenly found himself beset with murderous resolve and stood to his feet, glaring at his foe, in a malicious manner that screamed death.

Krillin wisely chose to remain a safe distance away from all the action, but fervently voiced his protests, nonetheless. What the hell had rattled their nerves so much so that they were literally willing to kill one-another?! Yamcha, nearby, watched with anticipation, inwardly praying that Piccolo would finish off this Saiyan fiend! It astounded him that his ex-colleague had acquired such gargantuan strength, but he was thankful, nonetheless! The Earth would be a much better and safer place, without Vegeta in it!

The Saiyan continued his assault, mustering up every bit of strength he could, but still finding himself shorthanded against the other alien. It was infuriating to no end! Had he not lost all his strength on that accursed ice-ball, he could've finished off this overgrown slug, with nothing more than a thought!

Once again, he was sent plummeting, this time with a knee to the mid-section, followed up by a knife-hand to the nape that damn near knocked his lights out. Vegeta lay on his stomach, the few morsels of energy he had remaining just enough to scowl malevolently at the Namekian
complacently looming over him, with crossed arms.

"Tch, pathetic." He looked down condescendingly. "If you're this weak, how can you ever hope to protect that precious girl of yours?" The Prince instantly froze, his heart skipping a beat. "There's a good chance that Frieza wasn't the only evil force out there. Others may come to finish what he started and when they do, well-" He paused ominously for a few seconds. "You know best."

The Saiyan clenched his teeth together, as a new rush of power budded within him. Yamcha frowned. He didn't like where Piccolo was going with this. The scarred man was perfectly content with Vegeta enduring the thrashing he deserved, but bringing Bulma into this was way out of line!

"Why don't I just save you the trouble and give her a quick, painless death?" The green alien grinned, cruelly flashing his sharp fangs. "It's certainly a lot better than whatever your once-comrades have in store for-"

CRUNCH!

A savage low punch suddenly connected with his solar plexus, at speeds he could scarcely follow.

"You will not lay a finger on her." The Prince proclaimed, tone eerily calm and Ki surging, far beyond his current limitations. The Namek's eyes bulged, as the breath was purged right out of him.

"Wh-What the?" Yamcha stammered, upon witnessing the Saiyan's renewed power, stronger than ever. "How did he- it's- it's not possible." Then it hit him! Bulma! It was all about her! He recalled the first time he himself had confronted Vegeta in person and was on the road to a decisive victory, till he'd unwittingly hurt Bulma! At that very moment, their positions were reversed and the Saiyan was mere seconds away from crushing his windpipe (A/N: Refer to Chapter 39)! "He- he really does care." All along, he'd been sorely mistaken.

"Of course he does." Krillin stated emphatically. "I've told you that so many times." He turned back to the battle at hand. "But why the hell would Piccolo threaten Bulma?! He ought to know better, after what happened!"

"What do you mean?" Yamcha asked, still clueless about the horrendous tale behind Vegeta's Super Saiyan transformation.

"I'll tell you some other time." The bald man shook his head.

This time Vegeta had his opponent on the back-foot, as he battered him with an apoplectic onslaught of brutal punches, kicks, elbows and knees. A ferocious left hook forced the Namekian to the ground and the Prince aimed a palm towards him, ready to finish him off for good. Piccolo closed his eyes and snickered a little.

"Laugh while you still can, fool." The Saiyan jeered, flaring a sphere of glistening blue Ki.

"You don't get it, do you?" The Namek chuckled.

"Get what?!" Vegeta demanded.

"I'm still far stronger than you are." He announced, immediately drudging up a lot more power, getting to his feet and taking hold of the Saiyan's wrist, whereby his Ki dissipated.

"You're not the only one who's been training himself, near death." He stated, before letting go. Vegeta narrowed his eyes, teeth grit in frustration. "But that was hardly the point of this little exercise."

"Exercise?!" The Prince asked, thoroughly taken aback.

"Oh, now I get it." Krillin breathed a sigh of relief, wiping the sweat off his forehead. "Piccolo must've been testing him."

"But why would he do that?" Yamcha inquired.

"Beats me." The little human shrugged.

The Namekian nodded in assent, his expression solemn.

"You and I aren't very different." He asserted.

"You know nothing about me!" Vegeta snarled back.

"Is that right?" Piccolo asked. "I know this much: just like you, I was born to end lives and conquer." The Prince narrowed his eyes, peevled, but somewhat curious. "That is, until I met Gohan." He paused a moment. "At first, I hated it to the core of my being, this bizarre feeling I had, every time we trained together and every time I watched over him, while he ate or slept. I buried it deep inside, over and over again, but eventually I could no longer deny it." He reminisced, as Vegeta listened on, with feigned indifference. "I died to protect him and I'd do it again, in a heartbeat. Hmph, I still find it hard to believe that someone as evil as myself changed so much, all because of the snivelling, half-Saiyan spawn of my greatest enemy." He chuckled wryly, then went on with a grave expression. "But I accepted it, nonetheless. It's the one thing that drives me to become stronger, a lot more so than greed, revenge or hatred ever did." The Namekian took on a more solemn visage. "Sound familiar?"

"Tch, we're nothing alike, you fool!" The Saiyan fired back, after a brief interlude. "I train only for myself and no one else!"

"And that's what makes you weak." Piccolo responded nonchalantly. Vegeta shot an incensed fist his way, but Piccolo grabbed it within his large palm, before it could make contact. "Tell me something." He goaded. "Will you let her be killed again, before you finally come to accept the true source of your power?"

The Prince bellowed in a fit of re-invigorated fury, launching a series of wild attacks at his foe, only to have them warded off with relative ease. The Namek backhanded him to the ground.

"Remember this." He continued. "Goku's out in space right now and I'm nowhere near strong enough to face an enemy that's as powerful or worse, even more powerful than Frieza. It makes my stomach churn to even admit it, but fact is that you're the only one on this planet who has the potential to wield that kind of power."

Vegeta scrunched his brows, starting up heatedly at the Namekian for a few seconds.

"And what exactly is your point?!" He spat. "What makes you think that I won't kill you, once I'm
"I don't fear death!" Piccolo boldly retorted. "This isn't about me, it's about Gohan!" He professed, before continuing in a calmer voice. "You accepted the truth once and that was the key to unlocking your dormant power. Unless you do it again, I can almost guarantee that you'll never be a Super Saiyan, no matter what you try."

"And what 'truth' do you think you're referring to?!"

"That nothing matters more than the ones we care about." He sagely answered, whirling around and mentally adding. 'The ones we love.' The big Namekian was just about to take off, before he sensed Gohan zooming in his direction, having felt the vicious struggle all the way from his humble abode in Mount Paozu.

The boy didn't take long to reach.

"Hey Piccolo, are you okay?!" He asked frantically. "I sensed you and Vegeta fighting! What's going on?!"

"Nothing you should concern yourself with." Piccolo replied dismissively, before taking off, opting to continue his mind training. Indeed, this protective instinct he had, with regards to his foster son, had virtually allowed him to triple his strength, ever since he'd returned from Namek.

"Tch, idiot." Vegeta stood up and dusted himself off, cracking his neck and shoulder joints a few times. That pretentious imbecile was right about one thing. He needed to get stronger. The Prince glared in Gohan's direction, then at Krillin and Yamcha, both of whom backed up in fear. Deciding he'd had just about enough for one night, he flew off, back to Capsule Corporation.

"What was that all about, you guys?" The oblivious demi-Saiyan asked the two humans.

"Can't really say Gohan." Krillin scratched his head, in bewilderment. "Let's just hope it was for the greater good."

"Oh, o-kay." The boy blankly remarked.

Yamcha's shoulders drooped. So this was it, what he'd been foolishly overlooking all along. While that dastardly Saiyan may have not have been the most ideal fellow, his concern for Bulma was profound and unquestionable. He would always hate the man, no matter what, but the truth could no longer be ignored. It was a bitter pill to swallow, yet it had to be done. He had to let go. He and Bulma were over for good. He didn't like it, but he had to accept it.

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The Prince immediately sensed Bulma's Ki, wide awake. Damn female! Couldn't even so much as sleep on her own! How utterly irksome! He went inside their room and she instantly turned in his direction, the lamp light giving her a thorough view of all the nasty bruises, burns and cuts, he'd suffered. The heiress gasped and rushed over to his side.

"Are you okay?!" She anxiously cried, wrapping her arms around him. "What happened to you?! What did you do to yourself?!"

"I'm fine!" He gruffly replied, pulling her back. Darn her, always doting on him, as if he were some
helless child!

"You're not!" She protested. "Dammit, if you're not gonna say anything, at least let me get a first-aid kit, so I can fix you up!"

The Saiyan huffed and rubbed his forehead with the base of his palm. 'Guess it can't be helped.'

"Fine." He acceded, shoulders slumping.

"Fine?" Bulma asked incredulously. She was almost certain that he'd put up more of a struggle, the way he usually did.

"Yes, fine!" He growled. "Now hurry up, before I change my mind."

"Right, right!" She bolted away.

Not long after, the Prince lay in bed, nicely bandaged up. The burn gel, salve and antiseptic cream beneath the dressings, would mend him up good, in no time at all, stronger than before thanks to his superior, Saiyan DNA.

Vegeta's face was pressed against Bulma's bosom, as she firmly held him within her adoring arms. Her regard for his well-being ran deep, deeper than he could possibly fathom. He still couldn't understand why or grasp this sappy idea of love, but perhaps there was an avenue towards greater strength, an avenue that centred a little more around her, as opposed to his own selfish ego, just as that impudent Namekian had claimed. His father may not approve of such a method, but the man was clearly two-faced, not to mention, dead. He was the heir to the throne now and while the Saiyan race may have been extinct, he embodied everything that they were, not Kakarot and certainly not his brat! Things were in his hands and his alone! He would do as he damn well pleased! Fuck everyone else!

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The days flew by, pretty fast. A wish was made to the Namekian dragon to wipe out the memories of Vegeta and Piccolo, from the minds of all living Earthlings, except those in Korin Tower, Kami's lookout, Kame House, Mount Paozu and Capsule Corporation. Yamcha made amends with Bulma, fervently stating that he respected her decision to be with Vegeta. Despite his disapproval, he vowed not to get in their way any longer and the two remained close friends.

The ex-bandit eventually crossed paths with a young widow named Mirai. Her beautiful, flowing emerald hair were matched only by her sparkling green eyes. Her radiant alabaster skin and trim figure likened her to a goddess, among women.

Mirai was tragically orphaned at the tender age of four, following a merciless raid on her village by an armed, marauding band of thugs that would later help establish the sinister Red Ribbon Army. Ever since then, she'd struggled through life, until she met her high-school sweetheart, Shozo, whom she ended up marrying. Just over a year ago, however, Mirai had lost him and their five-year old boy, Shizu, to a plane crash and was on the verge of suicide, till Yamcha came to the rescue. Together, the forlorn pair comforted one-another, finding true solace and overcoming the pains and losses they'd suffered. With her, Yamcha no longer felt weak, useless, unworthy or inferior. His perpetual state of sombre had steadily dissipated and things finally began working out for the scar-faced fighter. For the first time in a very long time, he felt like a man, a real man and it was a good feeling.
Later on, Tien and Chiaotzu were at last, revived. And then came the hardest part of all: saying goodbye.

"I-I'll never forget you Dende." Gohan held the Namekian child's tiny hands in his, black irises brimming with hefty tears. "You'll always be a great friend."

"You too Gohan." Dende replied, fine rivulets streaming down his eyes. "I hope we meet again someday."

"We will guys." Krillin patted them both on the back, heart heavy. "I know it, so don't feel bad. Everything's gonna work out."

Bulma came forward and went on her knees, pulling both the little ones flush against her, in a heartfelt embrace.

"Goodbye Dende." She smiled sadly, stroking the back of his head. "I built you a spaceship, so can come visit us whenever you feel like it, okay?" The heiress withdrew and handed the capsule over to the child.

"I will." He nodded promisingly, forcing himself to smile. "Thank you for everything."

"You and your friends will always be welcome here." The heiress vowed, eyes watering up. "Always." She repeated in a soft, yet sincere voice.

Almost a year had passed since. The world thrived. Happiness, joy and contentment soared amongst the defenders of Earth, however, the most unexpected visitors would soon enter the scene and alter the course of their lives.

A/N: Suspense! Sorry 'bout that hehe! Next chapter, a series of surprises erupt! You'll see just what I mean! It's gonna be an awesome chapter, packed with thrill and excitement! It's already been written up and I'll be posting it in two weeks, that's a promise (need to enhance my schedule to make fortnightly updates)! 😊

As far as Vegeta goes, not to worry, he'll be far stronger, come the proceeding chapter!!!

BTW, with regards to Yamcha and Mirai, once I finish this volume of the story, I'll write a one-shot about them, with details on her history and how the two of them met and became an item! Be sure to check that out!

Power levels at the beginning of the chapter (descending order):

Goku: ?

Piccolo: 3 million (with weights)
3.5 million (without weights)

Vegeta: 350 000
2 million (rage boost)

For the most part, Piccolo kept his power slightly above Vegeta's, as they battled.
Gohan: 150 000

He was stronger on Namek, but since then, the boy's been studying his days away. Let's hope that changes soon!

Tien: ?

Krillin: 35 000
70 000 (Kaio-Ken x2)

Krillin learned the Kaio-Ken technique from Yamcha, but isn't quite as adept with it.

Yamcha: 20 000
60 000 (Kaio-Ken x3)

Chiaotzu: ?

Thanks ShiiroHana, for drawing a cute fan-art for my beautiful and lovely OC Mirai:

I drew some art for Mirai myself, though it isn't even in the same dimension as Shiiro's xD:
"Frieza?!!" The Prince gasped in disbelief, as he sensed one of the two cosmic energy signals, heading right towards Earth. "How the hell is that bastard still alive?! I put a hole through his fucking chest!"

"Are-are y-you s-sure it's him?!" Bulma stammered fearfully, the memory of her cruel and excruciatingly painful end, all of a sudden, fresh in her mind. She instinctively clutched her abdomen, a sick, horrific feeling brewing within.

"Of course I'm sure!"

"C-Can- can you b-beat him?" Yamcha was so petrified that he damn near crushed the bottle of barbeque sauce, within his hold.

"He's significantly stronger than he was on Namek." The Saiyan noted, frowning, as he concentrated more closely on the signals. "And there's a power level with him that's even higher. Who in seven hells could that be?"

"Does- does that mean, you- you can't-"

"Shut up!" Vegeta snapped, making the scarred man flinch. "Just stay out of my way!" He demanded, preparing to take off. The Prince was already clad in the newest set of Saiyan armor and royal-blue uniform. "I'll deal with this myself!" He gandered one last time at the blue-haired female. "And you, stay right here this time! That's an order!"

"Vegeta, wait!" Bulma gesticulated her arms about in protest, as he immediately zoomed away into thin air. "Gosh, darn it!"

"Oh man!" The ex-bandit was trembling like a leaf, stress and anxiety settling over him. "He wouldn't even answer my question! Oh God, is this really the end?! Is everything-"

"Yamcha, will you shut the hell up?!!" Bulma crabbily interjected, scowling at her ex. She sighed and went on, reassuringly. "Listen to me, Vegeta's gotten a lot stronger now. I don't know how strong exactly, but I'm sure he's got this, so quit panicking."

"But it's still two against one!" He fulminated. "Dammit, I wish Goku was here!"

"If you're so worried, why don't you go and help him?!!"

"What good will that do?!" The scar-faced warrior countered. "I'm all but useless against Frieza!"

"So what?!!" She retorted. "That doesn't mean you can't try! Seriously, grow some balls, Yamcha!"

"Hey, you don't have to say such nasty things!"
"Look, Krillin was no match for Frieza either, but he still helped the gang back on Namek!" She stated, arms folded and voice firm with conviction. "If he hadn't saved Gohan when he did, we'd have lost period! And you're much stronger than he was!" She earnestly continued. "What's more, you said you can even multiply your power, using the Kaio-Ken technique, right?!"

"True, but-

"Then that's gotta count for something!" The heiress pressed on. "I'm sure the others are gonna join in as well, so don't be such a pansy-ass!"

"Ugh, fine." He ultimately let out a relenting sigh. Truth is, he did sense Krillin, Tien, Piccolo and Gohan, now heading over towards the hotspot. Heck, even Chiaotzu was on the warpath! He needed to play his role, as one of Earth's primary defenders! It was his duty! 'This is for you, Mirai.' The scarred man vowed, a new resolve ushering within him. His girlfriend was currently renewing the registration on her late ex-husband's car, a modest tangerine sedan, heedless of the danger that the planet faced. It was a stroke of luck, as far as Yamcha was concerned. He didn't want to frighten the poor woman. She'd endured enough hardships, as it was.

Soon after her ex had left, the afro-haired Bulma mentally oscillated between staying in the safety of her residence or witnessing the battle of the century, with her own two eyes. Musing atop the backyard table, with her elbows on her knees and steepled fingers pressed to her lips, the heiress finally concluded that things would be fine, as long as she remained a safe distance away from the skirmish. And so, she took to her airbus and ventured forth, determined to see this thing through. Her scouter easily helped her locate the power levels of her friends.

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"Frieza, we're wasting time." King Cold remarked lackadaisically, seated opposite his son, with his palm underneath his chin. "We can just blow up this silly little planet, from right here."

The father of the icy tyrant had two upright horns, atop either side of his head. Towering to a menacing height of about eight feet, he was virtually identical to Frieza's second form. However, he was of a darker shade, with smoother skin, a navy blue patch atop his head, as opposed to a violet one and he donned a royal blue cape that was red on the inside. It hung off his shoulders, reaching his shin-guards and commanding respect from each and every onlooker.

"You don't understand father!" The lizard seethed, in rage. "They must all suffer, for what was done to me!"

A mangled, torn up Frieza was recently discovered, deep amidst the wreckage where Namek once thrived, hacked into three pieces and within an inch of his life, a gaping hole in the centre of his torso. Unfortunately for the ignorant Saiyan responsible, those of the Ice clan weren't so easy to kill. Unlike most other bi-pedal vertebrates, their central nucleus resided within the brain, not the chest and unless no longer functional, they would continue living on. Though mortally wounded and with a dying energy supply, Frieza's nucleus still endured, albeit barely. Having undergone a multitude of repairs and cybernetic upgrades since his retrieval, the lizard was back and better than ever, his power level higher and far more sustainable! He was now an indestructible force, ready to wreak havoc upon all his enemies!

"But Vegeta's already dead, son." Cold argued. "The space pod he escaped in, was tracked to the Kizdar system and has remained there, for nearly two years, according to our findings. An inferior
creature such as himself, couldn't possibly survive that long, under such a harsh climate."

"Don't remind me!" Frieza cursed indignantly. He wanted to break that traitorous little monkey in half, with his bare hands and now that opportunity slipped right through his fingers! He would give anything for a chance to spill Vegeta's filthy simian blood, one gruesome drop at a time, laughing as his pet cried and screamed for mercy! "I suppose the other Super Saiyan will have to do, as well as the rest of their allies! What I would give to get my hands on that insolent blue-haired bitch! Were it not for her interference, I could've finished Vegeta off, before everything turned to shit!" (A/N: Refer to Chapter 29).

"You know, sometimes I feel you're far too obsessive and vindictive, not to mention, demanding." The older creature sighed, rolling his eyes. "Perhaps I've spoiled you too much."

"Oh, don't worry father, I promise that it'll be a lot more entertaining this way!" Frieza smirked maliciously. "When Kakarot, or as he calls himself, Goku, returns to Earth, just imagine the look on his face, when he sees his planet reduced to nothing but ashes, along with his son and all his pitiful friends hahahaha!"

"Well, I suppose that does sound just a little appealing." The sovereign granted, lips curled fiendishly upwards. "Very well then." He stood up and shouted. "Prepare to land!"

"At once, your majesty!" A guard saluted and relayed the instructions to the pilots.

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"What're you lot doing here?!" Vegeta growled, as Gohan, Krillin and Piccolo landed by, followed soon after by Tien and Chiaotzu. Yamcha took a little longer, but eventually, he too joined the others. "I never asked you to follow me!"

"This isn't about you!" Tien snarled back, raising a threatening fist. He still hadn't forgiven Vegeta, for what had happened, in their very first encounter. Two years may have passed, but that scarcely mattered. The bad blood still simmered, as scalding as ever. "It's about protecting Earth! You can go die, for all we care!"

"A little waspish are we?!!" The Prince snickered in amusement. "Anything else you'd like to get off your chest or should I just vaporize you now, like the bug you are?!!"

"How dare you?!!" The three-eyed warrior fearlessly took off his shirt and flung it to the ground, prepared to engage this Saiyan beast, at any moment.

"Hey, shut up!" Piccolo yelled, silencing his former colleague. "We don't have time for this crap! Goku's not here and that means that if we're gonna have any shot at victory, we need to work together, is that clear?!!"

"Tch, don't ever presume to speak for me Namek!" Vegeta sneered. "I can handle this on my own! Why don't you weaklings do yourself a favor and go home to your mothers, where it's safe?!!"

"Uh- Namekians don't have mothers." Gohan rectified. The others couldn't help but snigger or roll their eyes, at the boy's innocence. Piccolo, however, was not amused.

"I don't know how powerful you think you are, Vegeta, but there's absolutely no way you can defeat the two of them, at the same time!"
"If you doubt my strength, then come try me for yourself!" The irate Saiyan challenged. "It won't end so well for you this time, fool!"

The giant clenched his jaw, in exasperation. He couldn't gauge Vegeta's true power, since the Saiyan was suppressing a lot of it, but if he was so sure of himself, then perhaps it would be better not to interfere.

"I'll take a rain check." Piccolo sighed, before turning towards his allies. "We're gonna do what Vegeta says, for now, understood? Stand back and let him handle it."

"You're just gonna trust him?" Tien asked in disbelief, disgusted by the very idea.

"It's not a matter of trust!" The Namekian shot back. "Vegeta's fought and defeated Frieza once before! I know the odds appear dimmer this time around, but he's our best shot!"

"No!" Yamcha spoke up, surprising all the others, Vegeta in particular. They all looked his way. "We're all here for a reason: to defend the planet and those dear to us! I'm no match for Frieza, I know that. None of us are." He brought a fist up, beside his face. "But we can still help bring down some of the soldiers he's brought with him!"

"But Yamcha-" Krillin protested.

"That's right, now you're talking!" Tien grinned at his scar-faced ally, a surge of pride and vigor rushing through him! "This is our fight as well! We have every right to be here!"

Piccolo turned towards Vegeta, who merely grunted in annoyance.

"Fine, do what you want, but try engaging Frieza or the other guy and I'll end your lives before they can, are we clear?!" He took off without delay, laying low atop a cliff, with his Ki repressed. The rest of the crew were on his tail. The Prince had to admit, he was kind of glad for the opportunity to partake in some serious action. Minus the gravity training and nightly rounds with a certain blue-haired woman, this past year had been extremely dull, to say the least.

"So- um- what's the plan?" Krillin asked.

"We wait." The Saiyan replied. "I want to see what they're up to, before encountering them."

"Uh- why?" Yamcha chimed in. "Wouldn't it be better if we just got this over with now?"

"Quiet!" Vegeta growled, in a low voice. "I'm trying to listen, you idiot!"

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"So this is Earth?" King Cold blandly commented, as he took in the barren landscape, around him. "A little dreary, if you ask me." He looked at his son, with one eye raised. "Hard to believe that a Saiyan raised on this rock actually managed to surpass you, Frieza."

"It was pure luck that saved him, nothing else!" The tyrant glared at his father. "I made the mistake of drawing out his punishment, that's all! This time, he won't be so fortunate!"

"As you say." The old man yawned, half-heartedly. He turned towards a band of high-level
soldiers. "Commence with the destruction of all life on this planet."

"Yes sir!" They chanted in unison, only to end up in pieces, before they were even three feet off the ground. Yellow boots touched down on the terrain, where their severed limbs, lay bleeding. A teenage-looking boy stood strong, his expression grim and hands gripped around the dark, striated handle of a gleaming broadsword. He wore an indigo jacket, barely covering his rib cage, beneath which was a black, tank top that accentuated his strapping torso. A metallic yellow belt fastened his baggy, grey pants and his straight lavender hair rippled with the wind, parted in the centre, along the top of his head and neatly hanging just above his ears. He immediately sheathed his weapon, inside the orange scabbard that was strapped to his back.

Father and son frowned curiously at the unforeseen intruder.

"So, you're Frieza?" The boy asked.

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"Who on Earth is that child?" Vegeta looked on, in astonishment. He and the others were about to intervene when that giant lizard issued orders to purge the planet. However, the mysterious youngster had already seen to it that they were stopped.

"I-I don't know, but he's definitely- strong." Gohan observed.

"Could be another enemy." Piccolo was instantly on guard. "Be careful, everyone."

"He's just a boy you idiots!" The Prince growled. His gaze shifted back towards the scene. "And he's obviously lacking in the brains department, if he thinks he can take on Frieza!"

"Why don't you give him a hand, then?" The demi-Saiyan suggested.

"Tch, I could care less about him!" Vegeta scoffed. "Besides, I want to find out how strong he really is."

"Dammit, why're we listening to Vegeta for?!" Tien objected. "We should be down there, helping!"

The flame-haired Saiyan ignored the human and continued to listen intently.

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"Well, well, what a surprise." Frieza haughtily smirked. "It seems my infamous name stretches far and wide." He looked squarely at the spunky interloper. "I'm afraid you've already signed your own death warrant, by slaughtering our soldiers, however, since you do appear to possess some talent, I may be willing to let you off the hook."

"Is that right?" The boy chuckled. "I must say, from everything I've heard about you, I hardly expected that."

"Believe it or not, I can be quite lenient from time to time."

"I see."

"Tell you what, kid?" The lizard proposed. "How about you join us and together, we can conquer
"By conquer, I take it you mean purge, right?"

"But of course." The tyrant's lips quirked upwards.

"Then I'm afraid, I'll have to say no." The boy sternly declined.

Both sovereigns of the Ice Clan were startled, by the reply. Appraising the boy for just a little longer, Frieza spoke up once again.

"As you wish, child." He shook his head wryly and turned towards one of his elites. "Eliminate him, at once."

"Yes sir!" The mercenary replied, activating his scouter. "Let's see here. Power level: 5. Well, this'll be a walk in the park."

"He's obviously holding back, you moron." Frieza jeered. "If he were only level 5, he wouldn't have been able to cut through all those men."

"Right, I understand, your Lordship." He took up a stance, facing his opponent. "You ready to die, little twerp?!"

"I'll only say this once." The unnamed lad warned, forebodingly. "Stand down or I'll be forced to finish you."

"Why, you impudent little punk!" The subordinate yelled, peevishly. "You're about to swallow those words!"

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"That does it, I'm going in!" Growing weary, Tien headed towards the centre of the battle zone.

"Tien, no!" Chiaotzu belatedly called out.

"Guess this is it!" Piccolo followed the three-eyed warrior's path, tailed by Gohan, Krilllin, Yamcha and after a while, a reluctant Chiaotzu.

"Freaking morons!" Vegeta cursed, deciding to stay put. Those clowns could go and get themselves killed for all he cared. He still wanted to observe that anonymous boy's powers for himself, before joining the fray. He couldn't quite place it, but the aura he gave off felt somewhat familiar.

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The elite charged towards the mystery figure, however another arrival barged in, punting him into the air.

"Dodon ray!" The three-eyed warrior fired a shiny beam of orange from his index finger, that pierced right through the mercenary's heart. A second later, the alien fell to the ground, lifeless, with blood spewing out of his perforated chest. Not long after, the rest of the crew joined Tien, standing in between the lavender-haired stranger and Frieza's goons.
"It's you!" Frieza growled, his teeth grit and a purple aura billowing around him, as he recognized three of the fighters that appeared before him. The human warriors gulped in fear, as they got a better feel of his colossal power level. It easily trumped their's, by far. "So it's true, after all! You really did survive the explosion on Namek! How dare you show yourselves here, you vermin?!

"We're not here to fight you Frieza." Piccolo stated phlegmatically.

"It wouldn't be a fight now, would it?!" The lizard grinned evilly. "More like a massacre that you'll never escape from!"

"That's not gonna happen!" The Namekian vehemently replied. "We might not be able to defeat you, but we can certainly overcome your men! So why don't you bring 'em all on, at once?!"

"How dare you presume to-"

"Now, now, son, you did promise me a little entertainment." King Cold chimed in. "So far, I must say, I've been rather disappointed."

"But father-"

"No buts." The towering menace interjected, before looking towards his remaining underlings, comprising of fifteen elite mercenaries and sixty-five soldiers, ranked mid to high-level. "Let's get on with it then."

"Fine!" Frieza huffed. "But should they survive, they're all mine!"

"Of course, my son, of course." Cold laughed.

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'What, no way, it can't be!' Vegeta was completely at a loss. He hadn't the slightest clue that Frieza's father was still alive! However, that certainly explained the high power level. 'Interesting.'

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"Wolf Fang Fist!" Yamcha launched a flurry of punches and kicks on one of the elites, propelling him straight ahead, before appearing behind him and elbowing him into the ground. It was enough to finish him off. "Spirit ball!" He hurled a white orb of Ki at another incoming elite, who barely dodged, only to be struck by it from behind, as the scarred man used two fingers to spin the homing energy sphere, right back around.

"Kamehameha!" Krillin fired an intense blast at twenty high-levels, wiping them all out with ease.

"Drill attack!" A spinning Chiaotzu swiftly ploughed right through twenty five mid-ranked soldiers headfirst, like a bowling ball and proceeded to finish them off with a broad wave of energy.

"Makosen Ha!" Piccolo roared.

"Masenko Ha!" Gohan attacked. Together, they obliterated ten elites and the remaining mid-to-high level troops. Though the gentle half-Saiyan held back greatly, the Namekian had no qualms about finishing off his enemies and so his pupil's restraint made no difference, in the end.
The three remaining elites were easily dismantled. A series of well-placed attacks by Tien and that's all she wrote. The Z fighters regrouped, in front of the unnamed boy.

"Man, that was way easier than I thought!" Yamcha grinned. "Those guys were nothing! We didn't even have to use the Kaio-Ken!"

"I know right?!" Tien concurred.

"Kaio-Ken?! Now why does that sound familiar?" Frieza suddenly seethed in fury, as memories of the young Saiyan called Goku, hit him right in the face. These bastards were no ordinary fighters. Each of them was worth at least two or three elites, probably more, if they could truly multiply their powers.

"Well, I must say, I'm impressed." King Cold lauded. "Brilliant performance, truly. You made my elites look like complete amateurs."

"Indeed." His son agreed. "You truly are a special bunch, you lot. Such a shame that you'll never get another chance to use that amazing talent."

"Hmph, that's what you think Frieza!" Piccolo retorted smugly. "But fact is, you'll never even get the chance to destroy us! You see, there's someone here who's just dying to get his hands on you!"

"Surely you jest." The lizard scoffed. "Or maybe you're referring to the boy behind you. Perhaps he has what it takes to challenge the insurmountable strength of the mighty Frieza hahaha, though I seriously doubt it."

"As a matter of fact, I do!" The lavender-haired youngster proclaimed, appearing in front of the startled Z warriors and clenching his fists by his side.

"Stay back, kid, this isn't your fight!" The Namekian cautioned. "I don't know who you are, but Frieza's no ordinary opponent, believe me! I fought him before and-"

"Enough!" A guttural snarl tore through the green alien's warning. At last, Vegeta made his royal entrance into the scene. He flew over and stood a few feet left of the child, grinning wickedly as he saw his former master turn cold with dread, at the mere sight of him. "The boy wants to take on Frieza, so let him!"

"F-F-" The young one sputtered, staring open-mouthed at the flame-haired Saiyan, before finally gathering himself, lest he spill out any ruinous, fate-altering information. This mystery fighter, who'd sustained a stolid, unyielding demeanor in the presence of Frieza, King Cold and all the others, suddenly found himself in complete awe, as Vegeta's heavy, obsidian gaze pierced right through his soul. That look alone made him feel like a helpless child, though he was far from it.

"What's the matter?" The Prince growled. "If you're having second thoughts, then back off and let the real warriors do the fighting!"

"Umm- n-no- I- I just-"

"Y-Y-You're s-supposed to be d-d-dead." Frieza stammered, consumed with alarm and trepidation, at the unexpected sight of his most feared enemy.

"I could say the same thing about you, coward!" Vegeta spat, whereby the lizard scowled angrily at
him. "I don't know how you survived, but this time, I'm going to wipe out every last trace of you!"
All of a sudden, his desire to see the boy's strength either disappeared or was forgotten altogether.
The Prince promptly placed his fists by his side and bellowed aloud, the thunderous echoes of his
mighty roar reaching the heavens, as the ground shook violently and chunks of rocks levitated into
the air. "HAAAAARRRRGGGGGGGHHHH!!"

Clouds gathered together to witness the breathtaking power and bolts of lightning shot down into
the Earth. The Z fighters present, as well as the stranger, fell back, as Golden Ki exploded around
the Saiyan, his energy skyrocketing to levels, unprecedented. Half a minute ticked by, till the
radiant haze of light dimmed down, just enough to make out the flaming silhouette of the legendary
Super Saiyan, gilded in pure gold, like the Angel of Death, himself.

"Wh-What a-a-amazing p-power!" Yamcha exclaimed, struck with wonder, like never before. So
this is what Vegeta had up his sleeve, what he'd been hiding all along! No power could ever hope
to rival this! 'Not even Goku can be this strong.' He thought inwardly.

"He's- he's stronger th-than he was- on- on Namek." Krillin stuttered.
"Far stronger!" Piccolo too, was overwhelmed by it all. The others, completely dumbstruck, could
do nothing but gawk and splutter at the unreal sight before them.

"H-H-How?" The lavender-haired lad was more at a loss than every single one of them. Something
was completely amiss and it had nothing at all to do with his presence!

Frieza took a few terrified steps back, whatever staunch bravado he felt, since acquiring his
upgrades, evanescing away, as he peered into the harrowing, teal eyes of his mighty conquerer,
gleaming horrifically with an unwavering promise of doom. Plagued with panic, the villainous
being could hardly help it, as images of his defeat and near-death, repeatedly flashed through his
mind. The frightening horrors he experienced in Namek mentally re-played over and over again,
accelerating the panic and dread, within his quailing mind.

Vegeta grinned evilly, feeling more privileged than ever, as he witnessed once again, the blatant
terror in his enemy's beady eyes.

"I'm going to enjoy this."

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Approximately two hours away from Earth in a superluminal space pod, sat a warrior with raven
spikes jutting in just about every direction. The moment Frieza's energy signal was within sensing
range, he'd jolted awake, in spite of the stasis gas that surrounded him. Immediately switching off
the gas, he remained in tune with the events down below. So far, all seemed well. Then he felt it:
the all-too-familiar power of his legendary rival. Indignant that he'd been robbed off his chance at
fighting Frieza back on Namek, the younger Saiyan decided to employ his newest technique,
placing his conjoined index and middle finger to his forehead and suddenly disappearing.

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"K-Kakarot?" The Prince asked, stunned and incredulous, as his rival abruptly appeared next to
him, dressed in the most outlandish uniform he'd ever seen.

"Hey Vegeta." Goku grinned, in that signature, goofy manner of his. "How've you been, my
"Where the hell did you come from?!" The older Saiyan brusquely demanded. "And how dare you presume to call me friend, you bungling oaf?!"

Before another word was said, Earth's hero was forced to undergo his own transformation, as he sensed an immense Ki blast headed their way. In the fraction of a second, he stood enshrouded in gold. Once the smoke cleared after impact, the legendary pair remained unscathed and severely displeased by the cheap, craven tactics of their enemy.

"It's- it's Goku!" Piccolo exclaimed in awe. "And he's already a Super Saiyan! How on Earth did he get here?!"

"D-Dad?" Gohan stammered.

"N-No damn it!" The tyrant hissed.

"So it's really you." Goku frowned his way, not impressed in the slightest. "I can tell you're stronger now, Frieza, but it still isn't enough, not by a long-shot. You made a huge mistake coming to this planet." He grit his teeth furiously, holding up an ominous fist. "No one threatens Earth, not on my watch!"

King Cold was too stupefied to get a single word out. It was as though, this newcomer had materialized out of thin air. It made absolutely no sense!

"G-G-Goku?" The lavender-haired stranger mumbled.

"You know Goku?" The Namekian frowned dubiously, at the teen.

"Huh?" The boy replied blankly, before shaking the daze out of his head. "Oh, uh- no, I've only heard about Goku, but this is the first time I'm actually seeing him."

"Well, if you're not careful, it may be the last time!" The green alien threatened, not-so-subtly.

"Piccolo!" Gohan reproached, knitting his brows disapprovingly. "You shouldn't say things like that! He's not a bad guy!"

"You don't know that!"

"Guys, can we discuss this later?!" Krillin counselled. "All hell's about to break loose and I don't know about you, but I don't want to end up as cannon fodder, okay?!"

"Right." Piccolo nodded. "Gohan, go with Krillin and the others. Get someplace safe, now."

"What about you?"

"I'll be fine." He shook his head. "I'm a lot stronger than you think. I can take a little heat."

"O-kay." The half-Saiyan hesitated, before doing as asked.
"Listen here, clown, I don't know where you came from, but no one asked for your assistance!" Vegeta snarled, vexedly. "I have this under control, now get lost!"

"No!" Goku fervently replied. "You got to fight Frieza the last time, so now it's my turn! It's only fair!"

"Your turn?!" The Prince grimaced. "What're you, five years old?! Get over it! I was here first, so flee!"

"There's one way we can settle this, Vegeta." The younger Super Saiyan tactfully offered. "Rock-paper-scissors."

"My God, you cannot be serious!" Vegeta scowled. "I refuse to engage in such a-

"So you're giving up then?" Earth's hero goaded.

"No, I'm not giving up you imbecile, I just don't want to-" He paused a moment, before huffing, as he obliged his chucklesome counterpart. "Fine, let's do it!"

"Rock-paper-scissors." They both chanted.

"Paper beats rock, I win!" Goku smiled from ear to ear, before facing his opponent. The lizard could hardly tell if he was baffled or unnerved, probably both. "It's time! Ready, Frieza?"

Infuriated, yet surprisingly sporting, Vegeta withdrew about a dozen feet back, brooding angrily.

'How can a fucking piece of paper beat a rock?!' He cursed mentally. 'Whoever invented that stupid game should be disembowelled!'

Two years ago, he'd never think twice about honouring his word, but it seemed as though Earth had changed him. Moreover, he had nothing to prove against the lizard. He'd already defeated him once before, redeeming within himself, the spirit of a true Saiyan Prince, while avenging his woman's demise and exacting all the humiliation he'd suffered, over the course of his life. However, it still irked him that he hadn't finished the job. Then again, perhaps he would get a chance to step in, if Kakarot was the same old wishy-washy do-gooder, he always had been. Only time would tell.

A/N: Sorry for leaving it there hehe, but very soon, the next update shall arrive, so no worries there (just got to do a request or two)!

Please review and tell me what you think and as always, if you're enjoying the story, be sure to favourite! Much appreciated folks!

Power levels (descending order):

The Super Saiyans/Mystery Kid: ?

King Cold: ?
Frieza: ?

I'll leave these for the next chapter, don't want to spoil the surprise!

Piccolo: 12 million (with weights)
15 million (without weights)

Piccolo's natural abilities are exceptional, as a result of the fusion with Nail. Conversely, however, this means that the Kaio-Ken technique is far too much for his body to handle, due to the extensive powers involved. Thus he cannot use it, though he's learned how, via interactions with the humans.

Gohan: 850 000
4.25 million (Kaio-Ken x5)

Since catching up with his homework a year ago, Chi-Chi gave Gohan permission to train 3-4 hours a day, with Krillin and/or Piccolo, provided it was under her supervision. He learned the Kaio-Ken, but isn't quite as proficient with the technique, as the human fighters are, with the exception of Chiaotzu.

Tien: 400 000
4 million (Kaio-Ken x10)

Trains all day, what can I say?

Krillin: 350 000
3.5 million (Kaio-Ken x10)

Yamcha: 320 000
3.2 million (Kaio-Ken x10)

Chiaotzu: 200 000
1 million (Kaio-Ken x5)

His size and stature makes it tougher to employ the higher levels of Kaio-Ken.

King Cold's elites: Range from 100 000 - 150 000

High-ranking soldiers: Range from 15 000 - 18 000

Mid-ranking soldiers: Range from 10 000 - 12 000
"DISAPPEAR!" Frieza roared to the top of his voice and fired an arsenal of Ki blasts at the Super Saiyan, however, Goku simply clenched his fists by his waist and yelled aloud. "YAAAARRRRRRGGGHHHHH!" His golden aura billowed around him, imploding each attack, before it came anywhere close to him.

'Dammit, why is nothing working?" The Lizard thought in deep-seated frustration, while King Cold too, was alarmed at the magnificent powers of the golden-haired warrior. This wasn't going according to plan!

"Just give up, Frieza!" Earth's hero demanded. "You can't win! Leave this planet and never return! This is your last chance!"

'Tch, just as I thought!' Vegeta grimaced.

"How dare you look down upon me?!!" The tyrant seethed, stomping his foot on the ground, as red bolts of electricity sparked about his cybernetic figure. "Me?! The almighty Frieza?! You are nothing but a monkey, a filthy, tailless ape! I wiped out your entire-"

"Planet, yes I know!" Goku interjected, in wroth exasperation. "And I don't care! The Saiyans got what they deserved! I made that clear, from the very beginning! They were evil, just like you are! I fight for Earth! This is my world and these are my people! I'm giving you one final warning! Go! Now! Or meet your end, right here!"

The icy fiend bristled in fury, fastening his hands tight enough to draw blood and shaking, with the sizzling ire that surged through him. He ascended high up into the clouds, teeth gnashed, his arm raised and index finger pointing towards the heavens.

"LET'S SEE YOU HANDLE THIS, SAIYAN!" He bellowed, gathering every bit of his energy into a giant supernova that shone a bright orange, like the sun. This was his last straw. The sinister sphere dilated rapidly, its girth equivalent to that of a small moon. "DIE!" He immediately launched it right at his enemy, hoping that this would finally be the end of it!

"You truly are incorrigible." Goku shook his head, in disappointment. Tensing himself, the stalwart hero infused his godlike Ki into his rippling muscles and proceeded to shoot upwards, tearing right through the supernova attack, causing it to detonate midair. Frieza could scarcely think, as a savage low punch connected to his midsection, impaling him clean. He choked and gurgled, before he was released and plummeted to the ground, in a bloody and virtually powerless heap, eyes wide open, as agonizing pain coursed through whatever organic parts of his body, remained. Goku touched down and stood, frowning over his fallen adversary. "I didn't want it to come to this, but you gave me no choice, Frieza. It's such a shame, really. I gave you so many chances and you deliberately blew them."

"You think you're so much better than me don't you, Super Saiyan?!" The lizard wheezed, tilting his head up and smirking. "You know nothing of the horrors of this Universe!" He hacked violently, before continuing. "Even as we speak, countless beings are out there, being butchered, raped, tortured, maimed and mutilated, in ways your puny mind cannot even fathom!" Another
bloody cough followed. "And no matter how powerful you are, there's not a thing you can do to stop it!"

"Maybe you're right!" The Saiyan replied, after a brief interval. "Horrible things do happen, I won't deny it, but there's a lot of good in this Universe, as well! And that's worth fighting for, till the very end!"

"Such a naive person you are." Frieza shook his head wryly, just then catching sight of a very peculiar spec in his peripheral, which his enemies had yet to notice. As recognition hit him, his lips curled up in the cruelest of grins that perturbed both Goku and Vegeta. "Alright, if you're such a paragon, let's see you protect your fragile, little friend."

He tenuously raised his hand, aiming it rightwards and hurling a good heap of Ki in that direction. The Prince was the first to realize what had caught his attention and instantly made his move.

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Earlier…

It took her a good while, but the heiress finally arrived near the battle zone and landed on a cliff that appeared to be a safe distance away. Thanks to her scouter and a set of binoculars, she located the heart of all the action, whilst inside the safety of her airbus.

'I wonder who that kid is.' Bulma wondered, as she set eyes on the lavender-haired mystery figure. 'Boy, is he cute or what?' She giggled. 'And he looks sorta familiar too.'

She hardly knew why, but she felt some sort of connection with the anonymous teen. It wasn't romantic in anyway, more like- fraternal or perhaps- filial. But that didn't make any sense at all! Just who was he?! She didn't know, but immediately took a liking to him and decided that he was one of the good guys! After all, a boy that gorgeous couldn't possibly be evil, could he?!

'So that's what a Super Saiyan looks like!' Bulma wondered in fascination, upon seeing Vegeta transform. 'Damn, he's even hotter than usual!' She looked on, raunchily. 'Definitely gotta try some of that Super Saiyan sex.'

The Prince had trained in outer space about half a year ago and came back a few months later, professing to be stronger than ever. Now, she truly understood that his claims weren't just empty braggadocio.

'Wow, Goku's here!' Bulma thought giddily, as she continued surveying the hotspot. 'Where on Earth did you come from, you big goof?!!'

The heiress chuckled, watching her two favourite Saiyans duke it out in a heated contest of rock-paper-scissors and her mirth only grew, as Vegeta lost and began scowling more viciously than ever.

'Man, what a sore loser.' She laughed.

With an amalgam of disgust and astonishment, Bulma saw her best friend tear through Frieza, like paper. However, her face turned a sickly pallor, as the cybernetic fiend turned in her direction and fired a globe of Ki.
"Shit, he spotted me!" Beset with horror, she covered her face with her arms, as the blast was flung and began closing the distance, much quicker than she could ever hope to follow.

Just before it hit though, a flame-haired figure appeared in it's path and deflected it sideways. After nothing happened for several seconds, Bulma chanced a brief gander and seeing the strapping frame of her savior, she threw her head back, breathing a huge sigh of relief.

"Phew, that was close."

Vegeta gave her a hard, withering look of askance and she nervously chewed her bottom lip. He didn't seem pleased at all and she knew just why.

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Goku didn't realize what his foe was aiming for until it was too late. Luckily, however, his rival had reacted, in the nick of time. Thank the good Kais for that! Frieza cursed, but was more determined than ever to seize this little victory, after such an ignominious defeat. His cruel smile grew wider, as he fired a multitude of Ki blasts in different directions, all of which swerved inwards and were intended to hit one spot in particular, Bulma's airbus, with her inside it.

'Ooh no, there's too many! Vegeta can't stop all of those and that airbus is too big a target!' Goku panicked and instinctively sprung into action, moving in and helping his rival deflect the incoming attacks.

The mystery child blanched, upon sensing the Ki of the blue-haired woman within the airbus. Immediately he powered up and a flaming, golden aura burst around him. He drew his sword out, while a nearby Piccolo was thrown back, physically and mentally, by the abrupt transformation.

'A- A Super Saiyan?!!' The gaping Namekian was well and truly lost for words.

Before Frieza knew it, his right hand was sliced clean off and he howled in severe pain and shock, the Ki blasts coming to a sudden halt. In front of him, stood another one of those- those golden-headed monsters! It was the boy! What in seven hells?!

"The kid can turn Super Saiyan, as well?" A wide-eyed Tien exclaimed in awe, from where he stood. "What on Earth is going on here?! Now there're three of them!"

"I know, right?!" Yamcha was equally astounded. "He doesn't even look like a Saiyan, either! It's radical!"

"Just be glad he's on our side!" Krillin remarked.

"Let's hope so." Chiaotzu put in.

"He is, you guys!" Gohan asserted, not a spec of doubt within him. He already felt a sense of veneration towards the adolescent Super Saiyan, for reasons he couldn't quite place. "I just know it!"

The golden-haired teen pointed the tip of his gleaming broad sword at the feeble lizard's face.

"No more, Frieza!" He ground out, through clenched teeth. "This ends here!"
"YOU FUCKING BASTARD!" The incandescent Prince roared over Frieza's figure, stomping down on his neck and crushing his windpipe beneath his boot, as the lizard choked and clawed, for dear life, thick globs of crimson oozing out of his mouth and trickling down his cheek. Vegeta was blazing with unabated rage at the fact that this bionic freak had the nerve to target Bulma, after what he'd done to her on Namek! "I'M GOING TO MAKE YOU SUFFER BEFORE I SEND YOU TO HELL!" He pressed down harder and harder, with each passing moment. Rendered helpless, the tyrant could do nothing but flail his limbs about, as he realized with utter despair that this was to be his excruciating end! He should've cut his losses after Namek, but instead he'd foolishly endeavored on a quest for vengeance, only to be crushed single-handedly by that third-class Saiyan Goku, lose his remaining biological hand to that damned boy and now endure a most cruel and agonizing end, under Vegeta's merciless foot!

Ever since he'd met the monkey Prince, as a helpless little cub, he had a sixth sense about him, but overlooked it time and time again, simply because he enjoyed watching him writhe and wriggle within his icy grip! If only he'd been smarter and killed that pretentious Saiyan, from the very outset! None of this would be happening! Now, it was all over! There would be no coming back, this time! Hell was to be his final abode! The cybernetic head was slowly and painfully severed from the rest of Frieza's body, thick blood pooling below it.

Remembering his vow to obliterate every last trace of the lizard, the flame-haired Super Saiyan picked up the amputated head, peering into his tormentor's horrified, pain-stricken, red eyes. He'd dreamt of this moment, ever since he was a boy, but now that his life's purpose had truly been realized, he found that he could reap scant pleasure from it. Unlike his triumph on Namek, there was little exultancy to be found here. Now, the lizard was scarcely more than a mechanical nuisance, a bothersome fly that he swatted just like any other, as opposed to the diabolical powerhouse that traumatized him throughout his existence. He snorted and flung the severed head into the air, before firing a Ki blast that disintegrated it, whole. The tyrant's body suffered the same fate.

The nameless Super Saiyan watched the gruesome display before him in disbelief, distaste and disconcertment. He knew little about Vegeta, except for the fact that he was proud, crass and callous, but had a smidgeon of benevolence, buried deep within him, which he never let show. It added up pretty well, except for the fact that he wasn't supposed to be this powerful- at least, not at this stage! And what had gotten him so riled up that he drew out Frieza's punishment in such gruesome fashion?! Was it because he'd targeted Bulma?! It couldn't be! Vegeta was supposed be cold and uncaring!

'Did mom lie to me or was her mind on the fritz?' He thought to himself. 'No, that can't be it!' His venerable mentor had affirmed the exact same thing! By all accounts, Vegeta shouldn't have the ability to ascend for at least another two years and yet here he was, radiating with all the might and glory of a true Super Saiyan! It left him in complete awe, his heart beat accelerating, as veneration soared, with each ticking second!

Meanwhile Goku helped his blue-haired friend disembark and brought her over to the rest of the Z crew, vigilantly maintaining guard over them, lest they become the targets of another sordid stunt. Frieza hadn't put up much of a fight and now Vegeta had already finished him off, much too brutally for his taste, but oh well. The other large creature appeared to be stronger, but not enough to pose a serious challenge. Thus, Earth's hero decided that it was best to sit this one out and so, took time to hastily greet his eager friends, all of whom were exhilarated by his serendipitous
arrival. Gohan asked how he'd suddenly been able to appear, as though out of nowhere.

"Well, I'll explain everything once we're all together, okay son?" He replied, mussing the demi-Saiyan's neatly combed hair. "It's better that I don't repeat myself, know what I'm saying?"

"Sure thing, dad!" The boy smiled, more joyous than ever. His father always had this benign aura about him that uplifted the spirits of everyone present, leaving them ecstatic with glee! He never wanted him to leave, ever again!

Vegeta tilted his gaze towards a fuming King Cold, whose eyes shone with a vicious, vindictive gleam. Scoffing, the Prince turned his attention to the boy, who for some reason, appeared to have the hair, eyes and power of a Super Saiyan. Clearly, he wasn't bluffing when he'd challenged the lizard. He hadn't paid it any heed before, but now that he'd wiped away every last shred of Frieza, his ire was placated and he sought to get a better grasp of this newcomer's strength.

"Hey, boy!" He growled, whereby the adolescent jumped and instinctively stood to attention.

"Um- y-yeah?"

"I command you to destroy Frieza's father, now, you understand me?!!" He pointed his index finger towards King Cold.

"Uh- wh-what?" The flabbergasted teen stammered. Vegeta appeared to be possess a much more imposing air to him than even his mother had described. Once again, he felt like a child in his presence. Even if the Prince ordered him to dance on the pommel of his sword, he wouldn't dare disobey, that's how frightening he was.

"You fool!" Cold arrogantly snarled at the flame-haired Saiyan. "Surely, you don't believe a mere boy can defeat me?! I'll crush every single one of you, for what you've done! Don't forget that I'm stronger than my-"

"Shut up!" A vexed Vegeta cut him off, before scowling edgily at the teenager. "Well?! What're you waiting for?!! A written invitation?! Go on! My patience is wearing thin!"

"O-O-Oh r-r-right." The teen stuttered uneasily, before adopting a grimmer expression and parting his legs, as he put his sword into position.

"Without any weapons." The Prince added, suddenly appearing next to the stranger and snatching away his sword, leaving him dumbstruck. How did he move with such startling speed? "Kill him and you get it back."

"O-Okay." The child hastily agreed and focused his undivided attention to the battle at hand. "I'm ready, whenever you are." He narrowed his eyes at his lofty foe, not bothering to take up a fighting posture, knowing that it was unnecessary and would only arouse suspicion. After all, his mentor was among those present on the battlefield. He just didn't know it yet.

King Cold roared and lunged forward. Vegeta smirked and leapt out of the way, sword in hand, watching with amusement and intrigue, as the teen easily blocked each and every, incoming blow. Whoever this unnamed youth was, he clearly had a lot of skill up his sleeve.

"That all you've got?!!" He uppercutted his taller adversary, landing him on his back, a few feet forward, with a hard thud. The young Super Saiyan aimed an open palm towards the monarch,
"W-Wait!" He pleaded, getting on all fours and looking imploringly at his foe. "Please, spare me! My son was evil, but not I! Have mercy! I beg of you!"

"Look at you, a snivelling coward, just like your son!" Vegeta jeered loudly from afar. "I can't believe we Saiyans bowed down before your kind, for so many years! It's sickening!"

"You don't deserve mercy!" The boy growled, flaring up a lethal sphere of Ki. "You need to be put down, for good!"

Vegeta smirked. He was starting to like this intruder, certainly more so than that flower child, Kakarot.

"Wait, stop!" Out of nowhere, said flower child materialized next to the teenager and grabbed his wrist, before he could fire. "You don't have to kill him! He asked for mercy!"

Earth's hero was suddenly grabbed by the back of his Gi and tossed away, by his incensed rival, skidding several yards across the dirt.

"Finish him!" Vegeta ordered the lad, who nodded gravely to the Prince and kicked his foe up into the air, before firing an expansive blast of flaxen Ki that completely enveloped the screaming King Cold, vaporizing every last chunk of his body. The heads of the PTO snake were officially cut, clean off!

"Amazing!" Piccolo exclaimed in wonder, not knowing what else to say. Despite the momentary win, however, he remained suspicious of the kid. Where had he come from and what was he doing on Earth?! Someone that powerful couldn't have been here for very long, else he or Kami would've have noticed!

The young man went back to his normal form, hair a straight, neat lavender once again. At the very last millisecond, he caught the sword that was tossed back towards him, hilt first, by the flame-haired Saiyan, who was unable to help but smirk in admiration.

Goku made his way back to the scene, irritated with his rival.

"Why'd you have to go and do that for, Vegeta?!" He frowned reproachingly.

"No one asked you to butt in!" The older Saiyan shot back in a dour tone, reverting to his base form. Goku did likewise. "Honestly, you should be ashamed of yourself, Kakarot! That child is a truer Saiyan than you'll ever be! He's not a soft-hearted, sentimental fool and knows better than to disobey a direct order from his Prince!"

"Come on Vegeta!" Goku whined. "You're better than that, I know you are! You were a bad guy too and yet here you are fighting on our side! Don't you think he deserved the same chance?!"

"No." The lavender-haired boy answered, before the Prince got a word in, acquiring the attention of his two legendary counterparts. "Vegeta's right, trust me." He said doggedly. "Look Goku, I know you're a good person, but you said it yourself: Frieza was irredeemable. His father was no different. There're some people that are past saving." Though a child that couldn't be beyond his teen years, the newcomer spoke with the wisdom of a sage. "Believe me, I don't like it anymore than you do, but it's one of the bitter truths of life. If I'd let that monster go now, millions, if not billions of
innocent men, women and children would've been slaughtered by him and his cruel army! I've seen more than enough carnage for a dozen lifetimes and it's my duty to do whatever I can, to put a stop to it!"

Earth's hero took a while, but eventually understood his point of view and relented.

"Yeah well, I guess I can't argue with that, but- wait a minute, how do you know my name?" He asked, scratching his head confusedly. "We've never met before."

"I know, but I've heard a lot about you." The adolescent smiled reverently. He looked around for a moment, before moving closer and speaking in a hushed tone. "Um- can we talk somewhere private?"

"And why would you wanna do that?!" Piccolo demanded, making himself known, as he joined the others. "What're you hiding?! Tell us now!"

"Um- I'm sorry but, I can't." He mumbled, face downcast.

"Oh and why not?!" Vegeta asked brusquely, only to receive a garbled reply. "If you refuse to answer that, then at least explain the color of your hair and eyes! It's a well-known fact that every Saiyan has a distinct, dark coloring! It's what sets us apart from other races!"

By now, the rest of the crew made it to the scene, with Yamcha carrying Bulma over.

"Well-uh- to be honest- I'm only um- part Saiyan." He replied, blushing and scratching the back of his head.

"You are?!!" Gohan asked excitedly. "Well, so am I! Wow, does that mean I can be a Super Saiyan one day, like you guys?!!"

"Well, of course you-"

"Enough of these half-ass replies!" The Prince growled, looking pointedly at the mystery child. "Nappa, Raditz, Kakarot and myself were the only ones to survive the destruction of our planet, so unless you're related to one of us, there's no way you can have Saiyan blood, flowing through your veins! If you truly are Saiyan, then tell me who your parents are, boy!"

'He did not just ask me that!' The timid teenager thought, an expression of panic suddenly crossing his handsome features.

"Vegeta, stop being rude!" Bulma rebuked, standing in between him and the lad, arms akimbo. "If he says he's a Saiyan, then I believe him!"

"Who asked you, woman?!!" Vegeta snarled, gripping her by the shoulders, barely resisting the urge to shake the life out of her. The anonymous Saiyan frowned at the sight, not pleased in the slightest. "You shouldn't even be here! I ordered you to stay back and like the idiot you are, you came along and nearly got yourself killed! Was dying once not bad enough for you?!"

'What?! Dying?!!' The lavender-haired child looked as though a star had just fallen on his head. 'What on Earth is he talking about?!!'

"Hey, I do what I want, you boor, so just drop it already!" Bulma fired back, slapping his hands
away, as though it were any other matter.

"You're going to regret this, stupid woman!" The Prince vowed, ebony eyes flashing with a promising look.

"Hey, easy there, guys." Ever the mediator, Goku separated the fiery couple, before looking gravely at his blue-haired friend. "Still, Vegeta's got a point. You shouldn't have been here Bulma. You know how dangerous it can be."

"Yeah, but I thought that if I-"

"It doesn't matter what you thought!" Vegeta snapped, shoving aside his rival and baring his teeth at the heiress. "I issued a direct order and you disobeyed it!"

"Shut up!" Bulma fired back. "You're not my keeper! I'm a grown woman!"

"You're a spoiled, little brat!"

"No, you're a spoiled, little-"

"Will the both of you shut up?!" Piccolo snarled, feeling a headache, starting to trigger. "There're more important things to discuss here than your stupid, senseless love quarrel! So either you settle down or go find a room!"

The feisty pair were left speechless at the effrontery of the Namekian, while the mystery youth found himself floored, yet again. Love quarrel? Find a room? Whatever did he mean? Surely, he must have been jesting. Yes, that had to be it.

"Hey, Goku, I really need to talk to you- in private." The teen quietly spoke up, garnering the attention of all those around him, before Vegeta could dish out a verbal lashing on Piccolo- or worse.

"But why?" Goku replied, still confused. "I don't understand."

"There's a lot I have to tell you, but it has to stay between us." He insisted. "Please, can you trust me?"

Goku surveyed the stranger for a few moments, before smiling.

"Yes, I can trust you." He nodded, unable to sense even a scintilla of deception or ill-intent from the lavender-haired boy.

"Thank you."

"Wait, just a goddamn minute!" Vegeta objected. "I demand answers!"

"Hey, you've no right to demand anything!" The heiress exclaimed, before grinning at the child. "Don't mind him. He can be a bit of pompous jerk at times, but he means well, believe me."

Vegeta nearly gagged at her ludicrous assertion.

"I see." The mystery teen smiled jovially. 'Man, this is way different than I imagined.'
"So anyway, you never told us your name, cutie-pie." Bulma winked, much to Vegeta's chagrin. She was getting a little too chummy with this stranger, for his taste. The adolescent blushed profusely.

"I- well- my name's- kind of a- secret." He mumbled bashfully. "Sorry."

"As your Prince, I command you to identify yourself, brat!" Vegeta pointed a finger at the teen.

"Prince of what?" Bulma chuckled drolly. "Three Saiyans?"

"You're trying my patience, woman!" The flame-haired Saiyan gnashed his teeth.

"You have no patience!" She retorted.

"You're the one who can't even-"

Deciding that enough was enough, Goku appeared beside his rival, placing a hand on his shoulder and teleporting him to Kami's lookout. He quickly returned back to the others, before Vegeta even knew what had happened. His newest technique truly did come in handy, just as he'd thought it would.

"Phew, glad that's out the way."

"How did you-" Piccolo began but was cut off.

"I'll explain later." He waved him off and turned towards the nameless youth. "So, anyway, what did you wanna talk to me about?"

"Uh- well-" The boy could hardly get a word out, stunned beyond imagination at Goku's surreal ability to phase out of one place and into another. Knowing there were more important matters to discuss, however, he brushed it aside and gestured to be taken somewhere more private.

"So what's so important that you can't discuss it with anyone besides myself?" Goku asked, once they were out of earshot.

"We'll get to that in a minute, but first," The teen transformed into a Super Saiyan. "I want to see if you're really as good as they say you are."

Goku raised his eyebrows, before his lips quirked up and he too ascended to his legendary form.

"Alright then."

The boy unsheathed his broadsword and attacked, without warning.

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"What the fuck is this place, Namek?!" The Saiyan Prince demanded of the wizened old prune that stood before him, sweating and quailing.

"C-Calm down Vegeta, I-"
"How do you know my name?!" He demanded, taking a threatening step forward. "Answer me, old fool!"

"I-uh-"

"Please, be courteous young man." Mr. Popo urged, ambling towards his master. "You are in the presence of Kami, guardian of Earth and creator of the Dragon Balls."

"Dragon Balls?!" Asked a stupefied Vegeta. "You?!"

"That is correct." Kami replied, gathering himself together.

'So he's the one.'

"Now, would you care to explain what you're doing here, Vegeta?"

"How do-"

"Kami knows all." The dark genie answered, knowing what the Prince was about to ask. "He carefully observes all the happenings on this planet, from high above."

"High above?!" Vegeta asked. "What do you mean?! Where am I?!"

"This is my lookout." The wise guardian answered. "Until of course, my time inevitably comes and it passes to another. Now, you still didn't answer my question. How did you get here?"

"That- Kakarot- he did something- the fool!" He replied, gritting his teeth, as a surge of blazing fury, boiled through him. "I'm going to murder that stupid moron!" The Prince abruptly took off, sensing his rival's power from a distance. He soon realized that the idiot had transformed into a Super Saiyan and was engaging the boy. The nerve of that goddamned, low-class opportunist!

"Oh my!" The genie exclaimed apprehensively.

"He's going to be a handful that one." Kami asserted, sighing thereafter. "I'm getting too old for this, Mr. Popo."

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"Wow Goku, that was amazing!" The boy smiled as he powered down and flung his sword into the air, letting it fall neatly into his scabbard, with perfect precision. "You're even better than I thought!"

It appeared Gohan wasn't exaggerating about the legendary prowess of his illustrious father.

"Thanks, but I could tell you were holding back."

"Goku, I feel that I can trust you, so I want you to promise me that what I say will remain between us, no matter what."

"Uh- okay, I promise."

"My name is Trunks." At last, the anonymous youth made his introduction. "I'm a Super Saiyan
"The- the f-future?" Goku exclaimed incredulously. How was that even possible?!

"That's right." Trunks nodded. "Around two years from now, I'll be born." He paused a moment, as Goku stared at him with gaping, black tourmaline eyes. "My father-"

"-is Vegeta." The goofy-haired Saiyan finished, knowing the answer just by looking at the young man's face. "And I'm guessing Bulma's your mother."

"What?! How did you-"

"Well, who else would it be?" Goku grinned, suddenly beset with glee. "Damn, Bulma and Vegeta are gonna have a baby! This is so exciting!"

"Goku please, you can't say a word, you promised!" The adolescent reminded him. "It could threaten my existence! I know it seems unlikely, but they will find each other, believe me!"

"Huh? What do you mean unlikely?" Goku scratched his head. "Bulma loves Vegeta. She said it herself, right before she died."

"Died?!" He suddenly recalled his father's words. "I don't get it. Mom never-"

"Yes, she did." Earth's hero interjected. "Frieza killed Bulma on Namek and that was when Vegeta transformed into a Super Saiyan. Didn't you know that?!"

Trunks took a step back, not knowing what to make of anything.

'This is crazy! This isn't how it's supposed to be?! Did mom and Gohan feed me a bunch of lies, my whole life?!

"Um- are you okay?!"

"I need to know exactly what happened on Namek, now!" Trunks dourly demanded, suddenly finding himself frustrated and peeved, beyond words.

"Uh- well- alright then." Goku shrugged and imparted all the details, since he'd arrived on the fecund planet, battled with the Ginyu Force and Frieza and witnessed Vegeta's ascension into the realm of legend, followed by his own after Gohan's demise.

"So you're saying Vegeta kidnapped my mom and took her to Namek?" Trunks asked. "That where they, uh-"

"I don't really know the details, but yeah, I guess they must've fallen in love or something- eventually, hehe."

"It's not like that in my timeline." He shook his head and explained to a confused Goku how he'd actually been the one to defeat Frieza and transform into a Super Saiyan and that Vegeta and Bulma coupled, long after the events on Namek. "Mom said he was cold and cruel, but that a tiny part of him did care about her and me."

"Well, he can be a little cold and cruel at times, but ever since Namek, I don't think he hurt anyone
who didn't deserve it." Goku assured. "And Vegeta loves your mother. Knowing him, he'd probably never admit it, but actions speak louder than words. Vegeta's bad days are behind him."

"It's so bizarre." The lavender-haired warrior said. "The man you're describing sounds like a completely different person than the one, my mom told me about." He shook his head and shoved those thoughts away, deciding to finally delve into the heart of the matter. "Well, in any case, that's not exactly what I came here to talk to you about."

"Oh?"

"Yes, you see three years from now…" Trunks explained how a horrendous pair of killing machines would rise up, with powers that exceeded his own and how all the Z-fighters had been murdered brutally, trying to defeat them. He told Earth's hero how his son Gohan was the sole survivor and had taken it upon himself to teach him everything he knew, but eventually, he too perished at the hands of those mechanical monsters.

"That's horrible!" Goku looked aghast. "What about me? I'm guessing I died, fighting them too, right?"

"No." The young man answered, stating that a radical new heart-virus had taken Goku's life, six months before the Android attack and that the real reason he'd travelled to the past was to deliver this warning, as well as a gift. "From my mother." He handed him a vial, explaining that within it was the cure to the sinister virus, which had been developed years after Goku had contracted it.

"Gee, thanks a bunch Bulma, even in another dimension I can still count on you!" Goku grabbed the vial, gushing with joy, relief and frenzy, before looking solemnly at the lad and placing a hand on his shoulder. "And thank you Trunks. You do your mother proud and your father too. You do us all proud." He said solemnly, whereby the boy's lips quirked up. "I'll make sure that every single one of us trains harder than ever."

"That's all I can ask of you Goku." Trunks replied, his smile broadening. "Once my time machine has enough fuel, I'll return to fight alongside the rest of you."

"I'm glad." Goku tightened his grip on the teen's shoulder. "No matter what happens, we'll stand with you Trunks. I promise you."

"Thank you, Goku."

"No, thank you, my friend." The Saiyan said. "For everything."

_A/N: I'm afraid that since I'm juggling two stories and job-hunting, while I'm at it, updates may be less frequent, but they'll still be coming, I can assure you, so stay tuned my friends and keep up the awesome reviews! Remember, critical reviews and recommendations always spur me on!_

_Next chapter, Vegeta's plan to confront Goku for his insolence, goes a little awry and Trunks returns to his own timeline and recounts his experience in the past, to an utterly dumbstruck Bulma. Be sure to stay tuned!_

**Power levels (descending order):**

_Goku: 5.5 million_  
_Super Saiyan: 275 million_
I'm assuming that Planet Yardrat has 10x Earth's gravity and Goku got a good lot of training there.

Vegeta: 5 million
Super Saiyan: 250 million

Even though Vegeta's body had atrophied, during his frosty deterioration on Kizdar, his power level quickly surged on Earth, as a result of Bulma's gravity equipment, especially after his bout with Piccolo, in Chapter 42. Catching up to Goku, however, will be extra difficult now. Can he do it?! Guess we'll know soon, won't we?!

Trunks: 4.8 million
Super Saiyan: 240 million

Very close to Vegeta's power, but not quite there. Having lived in an apocalyptic future, it would've been difficult to find time to train and avoid the Androids, at the same time, though his abilities as a hybrid Saiyan and his resolve to crush the mechanical villains, helped make up for such obstacles.

King Cold: 180 million

Frieza: 160 million
Chapter 45: Back to the future

As Trunks sat in his time machine, high above the ground, observing the inquisitive faces of the past, he felt a pang of longing bud inside him, knowing that he hadn't the chance to look upon his father one last time, the father he never had. Goku explained that he'd simply teleported him far away and as they conversed, he sensed the flame-haired Saiyan, rapidly closing in on their location. As tempted as he was to await his return, he knew that doing so, entailed far too much risk. After the stunt Goku pulled, Vegeta would be a ticking time bomb and Trunks didn't want to be around for the inevitable explosion, nor did he think he had what it took to deny his surly, short-tempered old man any answers, especially since he had a myriad of his own questions, himself.

It left a huge hole in his heart that all his curiosities would remain hanging in the air, for now. However, he couldn't gamble with his own existence, after having made this fate-altering journey. When he returned to this timeline again, he would properly get to know the father he'd come to revere, in this short trip to the past.

'Man, I can't wait to tell mom.' He grinned at the thought. 'Won't she be surprised?'

Giving a farewell wave to the Earthlings, with a warm smile specifically aimed towards his beautiful mother, the half-Saiyan prodigy vanished into a time vortex, along with his machine, returning to the apocalyptic world, whence he came.

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Goku frowned, facing the dirt below, as he contemplated the best way to warn everyone of the impending doom. They had to know, but he couldn't blow Trunks' cover. Darn it, this was tougher than he thought. Just then, his friends made their way over, eagerly jumping over one-another, asking what all the secrecy was about and what he'd been discussing with the lavender-haired stranger.

"Well- uh- I can't really say." He laughed uneasily, scratching the back of his head.

"That's too bad, then." Piccolo deadpanned. "I guess I'll have to tell 'em myself."

"Wh-Wh-What?! You heard?!"

"We Namekians have sharp ears, in case you didn't know."

"I know right?!" Yamcha suddenly laughed like an idiot. "Just look at 'em! You could probably skewer a guinea-pig with those things!"

"Shut up!" Piccolo snarled peevishly.

"Come on, you left yourself open for that one, big guy!" Krillin joined in, gaily.

"What I'm about to say could end up saving your meaningless lives, but if you'd prefer acting like a bunch of clowns, then I guess I'll just leave you idiots to die!" The Namekian threatened, whirling around and preparing to take off.
"Wait, wait, I'm sorry!" Yamcha insisted. "I was just kidding, I swear!"

"Hmph, fine." The giant alien snorted in disgust.

"Piccolo, wait!" Goku pressed. "You know it's important that-

"Don't worry Goku." The Namek interjected, reassuringly. "I won't say anything that'll jeopardize your friend's identity, but keep in mind that while he did exclusively speak with you, he came here for every single one of us."

The Saiyan sighed and nodded, understandingly.

"Wh-What?" A puzzled Tien asked. "I- I don't get it. What do you mean?"

"It's like this." Piccolo chose his words, very carefully. "That boy isn't from this world, but he's seen the future and came here to warn us about a sinister threat that's destined to wipe us all out in three years time."

"A threat?" Yamcha asked, quirking a sceptical brow.

"That's exactly right." Piccolo explained how Dr. Gero of the Red Ribbon Army was building a pair of crazed killing machines that would leave death and destruction in their wake and whose powers were dreadful, even by Super Saiyan standards. He went on saying that a short while before the Androids would make their diabolical debut, Goku was to meet his inevitable demise, as a result of a new heart virus and that the boy had left him an antidote, in order to neutralize that menacing obstacle.

"Wait, so who is that boy?" An intrigued Bulma asked. "Vegeta was convinced that only four Saiyans survived after Frieza destroyed his home planet, so-"

"What Vegeta believes is irrelevant!" Piccolo answered sternly. "That boy's a warner that was sent here for us, that's all you need to know! Who he is and how he came here, should be of no concern to you! What matters is that every single one of us is in danger, along with all living beings on this planet. We need to use these three years to prepare, so that we're ready to confront the challenge that awaits us!"

"But how could he see the future?" Chiaotzu asked, curiously. "Is he clairvoyant, like Fortuneteller Baba?"

"I've said all I needed to say!" Piccolo rejoined, dismissively. "The rest will be explained with time, should we survive. What you do with this information is entirely up to you. Believe it or don't believe it, it hardly matters to me. I, for one, plan to live and that means I'm going to train harder than ever before!"

"Piccolo's right, guys!" Gohan argued, fervently. "Think about it. What would anyone have to gain by spreading such misinformation? If we do train and nothing happens, there's no loss on our end. But if something does happen, at least we'll be prepared for it, as much as possible. We've nothing to lose, by training, but we've everything to lose, by being idle."

"Well, I'm not really sure about Androids and prophecies or whatever, but I'm not about to be left in the dust, anymore than I already am!" Tien declared, clenching his fists, resolvedly. "I'm in!"
"So am I!" Chiaotzu gave his vote of approval.

"Well, I suppose it's best not to take any chances, just like Gohan said." Krillin cracked his fingers and turned towards his scar-faced friend. "What do you say, Yamcha?"

"Sure." The ex-bandit nodded.

"You're all idiots!" Bulma reproved, folding her arms haughtily. "Honestly, all those muscles and not a single brain cell! There's a much simpler solution that you seem to be overlooking!"

"And that is?" Piccolo frowned, indignantly.

"We can gather the dragon balls and wish Dr. Gero right here in front of us, so we can take him out, before he can even build those nasty bots." She said, rolling her eyes at the exclamatory looks of her friends. "It's as easy as that. Why gamble with our lives, for no reason?"

"No, I don't think it's right." Goku shook his head. "Gero hasn't done anything wrong yet, so-"

"Didn't do anything wrong?!" An infuriated Bulma yelled at her outrageously tender-hearted, best friend. "He was the brains of the Red Ribbon Army, don't you remember?! They killed your friend Bora and god knows how many other civilians! Now he's planning to conquer the freaking planet and you say he hasn't done anything wrong?! I mean seriously, how thickheaded can you be?!"

"Come on Bulma, cut me some slack." He light-heartedly replied.

"No, I won't cut you any slack!" She growled, moving forward and prodding his hardened chest with her index finger. "This is the fate of planet, we're talking about, so stop treating it so lightly! We need to collect the dragon balls immediately and stop Gero, before he sicks his monsters on Earth, or else everything we know, is gonna be finished! You heard that boy! They're too strong, even for a Super Saiyan!"

"Is that right?!" Vegeta suddenly made his appearance, giving his rival a scathing look, whereby the other Saiyan winced. The Prince heard the latter half of Bulma's tirade and luckily for Goku, his curiosity got the better of his anger. "You're saying there're forces out there that possess more power than a Super Saiyan?"

"That's exactly what I'm saying and we need to stop them, before it's too late!" The heiress groaned inwardly, cursing her luck at the fact that Vegeta had arrived at the worst possible time. She knew what his stance would be, without even having to ask, thus she turned towards her fellow humans. "Come on guys, you agree with me, don't you?!"

"Well, I think Bulma makes a good case, so perhaps-"

"Perhaps, nothing!" Vegeta cut off the bald midget. "I want a detailed explanation of everything I missed. After that," He gave Goku a hard, ominous glare. "I'll decide just how badly I'm going to beat the living crap out of you."

The younger Saiyan cringed at his dangerously, low voice and suddenly began regretting his earlier move. Once again, Piccolo went over Trunks' recount, careful enough to omit details that would threaten the boy's existence.
"Interesting." The Prince faced Goku once again. "From what I gather, you want to battle these Androids, but these pathetic humans would rather take the safe route, like the weaklings they are!"

"Hey don't speak for me, you jerk!" Tien fired back, with impassioned fervor. "I wanna test my strength, as well! I'm not conceding to a bunch of robots!"

"Dammit, what is wrong with you morons?!" A vexed Bulma objected. "This is the whole world we're talking about."

"I say fight." The royal Saiyan made his opinion clear. "Anyone disagree?" He gave the other humans a menacing glare that could char an entire galaxy.

"Uh- on second thoughts, maybe Vegeta's- um- right?" Krillin gulped, judiciously siding with the crazy, loose-canon of a Saiyan.

"I agree." The big Namek stated. "I didn't train all my life, just to give up now!"

"I'm with you Piccolo!" Gohan agreed. "And you, dad!"

"I'm afraid I'll have to stick with Bulma on this one." Yamcha decided. "I'm not a coward or anything-"

"Yes you are." Vegeta interposed.

"...but this is about self-preservation." The ex-bandit continued, purposefully disregarding the rude Saiyan. "I mean, what if we all train like crazy, but it still isn't enough?! Then we'll die for nothing and leave the planet defenseless, in the hands of those two psychos! On the other hand, if we eliminate Gero now, there's no threat period!"

"Well, I guess you're right Yamcha." Chiaotzu conceded, not liking the fact that he was siding against Tien, yet seeing the obvious wisdom in Bulma's proposal.

"I- uh- can't really decide, c-cause-"

"Cause you're scared of Vegeta?" Gohan finished Krillin's sentence for him, after an awkward pause.

"Hey, I never said that!"

"Don't be such a wimp Krillin!" Bulma grimaced. "You have a right to your opinion, so just say it!"

"Um- well-" The bald man avoided Vegeta's death stare and gulped, before finding his voice once again. "I'm with Bulma." He slurred.

"Well, it's still 5 against 4." Goku grinned. "Guess we're doing this the good old fashioned way, then!"

"This is complete garbage!" The blue-haired woman protested, getting more and more ticked off, by the second. "Earth's welfare is more important than your stupid, respective egos!" She looked imploringly at Gohan and Tien. "Come on, you gotta see reason here, guys."

"I understand your plight Bulma, I really do." The three-eyed fighter stated. "But, as a warrior, I've
learned to better myself with each new battle, both mentally and physically. If these Androids really do exist, then I see them as an opportunity for us to test and further our abilities. I mean, what if we take the easy way out now, but later on, we have to face enemies that are just as strong or even stronger? Given our track record, that's more than a little likely. We can't always run from our problems, so it's better to face them like men."

Bulma was rendered speechless, by Tien's poignant words. She couldn't think of anything to counter that claim, thus she just gave a resentful humph.

"Fine do what you want!" The heiress whirled around and folded her arms, more sullen than ever. "I'll probably be the one to bury all of you, so I might as well start building tombstones!"

"You're better off upgrading the gravity chamber and building me some training bots, like you said you would!" Vegeta ordered more than advised, earning him an angry scowl. He ignored it and turned his undivided attention to Goku. "I'm feeling a little generous right about now, so I'm going to let you walk away from this, Kakarot! But mark my words!" He clenched his fist tight and brought it over, next to his face. "I will surpass you, in every way! I, Vegeta, last of my name, Prince of all Saiyans, will be the greatest warrior that ever lived! Bear witness, as I crush those Androids, with my bare fists!"

"Alright, alright, cut the theatrics already." Bulma pushed past him and appraised the giant Cold spaceship. A golden opportunity was ready to be seized, right there and then. "Well, since you guys are gonna train, I'll bet I can salvage a whole lot of parts from this ship, so I might as well get my team ready. I hope there're some regeneration tanks in there. We'll definitely need those. And I can probably bolster the capsule ship and up the velocity on it, as well."

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Trunks sighed desolately, as he returned to the despotic future he knew. The teen wished more than anything to simply remain amongst the great heroes of the past, but he had a responsibility to this world and especially, to the blessed mother that raised him. A smile lit his face, as he opened the hatch of the time machine and exited, before decapsulizing the inter-dimensional vehicle and carefully tucking it back into his capsule case. He then made his way towards the underground bunker, wherein he and his mother resided, for the last three years, ever since- He shut his eyes a moment and exhaled, not wanting to revisit the devastating demise of his chivalrous mentor, Gohan.

Taking a deep breath, the handsome young lad punched in the four-digit code, 4673, which unlocked the door. The password was chosen after the word 'Hope', which was the only thing that spurred the family of two, in their struggle against cruelty. Trunks entered, before closing the door behind him and proceeding downstairs.

"Mom, you here?"

The middle-aged Bulma's eyes shot up and she instantly bolted towards the source of the voice. Her aquamarine hair was tied back in its usual ponytail, her powder pink, half-sleeve, buttoned top, concealing the white undershirt beneath, for the most part. A pair of violet slacks and matching sneakers, completed the set below her waistline. She appeared worn, disheartened and sombre, yet that only ever strengthened her resolve. She worked tirelessly to save her world and made Trunks' seemingly impossible trip to the past, a reality. Nearing the age of 50, the Bulma of this time, looked at least ten or fifteen years younger than she was and resonated with a strikingly powerful aura of motherly love and benevolence.
"Trunks, you're back!" She darted forward and crushed her boy, in a tight, heartfelt embrace. "Thank God!"

"It's good to be back, mom." The young warrior held her around the waist. "Well- I mean, it's good to see you again. Honestly, I wish I could've hung out more with Goku and the others, but like you said, messing with the past, can cause problems." He pulled back and gave her a wide grin, firmly clutching her shoulders. "Still, you'll never believe the things I saw!"

"Well, I wouldn't say that." Bulma smiled a little, blossoming from the inside at seeing her son this way. He hadn't been this exuberant, since he was a little child. It truly warmed her heart. "I mean, I did live in that time after all."

"You're wrong, mom." Trunks shook his head. "I don't know how, but the timeline I visited is quite different from this one!"

"Different?" Bulma asked, lifting a curious eyebrow. "How?"

"There's so much I have tell you!" The adolescent gushed. "How about some coffee?"

"Sure thing, Trunks."

As they sat down and drank, the lavender-haired boy eagerly went over his remarkable experiences of the past, from the very beginning.

"At first I thought that you and Gohan got it wrong or something, but when Goku explained how father defeated him in battle, but that you offered yourself up to him in exchange for everyone's lives, how you fell in love with him on Namek and how your death at the hands of Frieza, made him transform into a Super Saiyan, I knew that it had to be a different timeline altogether." Trunks recounted. "There was no other explanation."

Bulma gaped at him, wide-eyed, jaw hung open in blatant disbelief. She'd never been more speechless, in her entire life!

"Dad was a lot like you said, hard, proud and with a strong, commanding presence, but deep down, very noble." The adolescent laughed a little, as he continued. "Though that still didn't stop you from sticking it to him. Oh and when Frieza almost killed you again, dad went completely berserk on him." He cringed at the memory of Frieza's grisly death. "Goku had me convinced that despite being a little cruel sometimes, dad was a good person. He seemed to respect him a lot, both as a man and as a fellow warrior. Uh- mom?" The teenager waved his hand in front of her incredulous face, as she rubbernecked him.

"Cut it out!" She chided, slapping his hand away, with a peevish frown, upon gathering her bearings.

"S-Sorry." He mumbled tremulously.

"Um- Trunks, are you sure you're not imagining all of this?" She asked, softly. "Cause that does not sound like your father, I can assure you."

"Mom, I know what I heard!" He pressed, emphatically. "You did say that he was really cold-hearted in this timeline, but it's different in the world I visited, I promise you! Even your younger
version said that dad was well-meaning, despite being rough around the edges. Of course, dad didn't agree, but-

"Wait a minute, you spoke with my counterpart?!" Bulma frowned, in askance. "Trunks, I specifically warned you not to meet with anyone but Goku!"

"It's not my fault, mom!" The young demi-Saiyan replied, defensively. "Frieza's soldiers were about to go on a killing spree! I couldn't let that happen!"

Bulma stayed silent a moment, before her stern expression dulled.

"I guess you can't help being a hero." She sighed, rolling her eyes. "You are Gohan's student, after all. I just hope your little trip didn't muddle up the timeline, too much."

"I'm sorry mom, I wanted to stay clear of all the action, I really did, but-

"It's alright, don't worry about it." She waved the matter aside. "The timeline's already different from this one, so there's not much you could've done anyway. That aside though, tell me about that other Vegeta. Are he and I already-"

"Yes."

"But what about Yamcha?"

"I'm not completely sure." The boy replied. "I just know that you and dad are together."

Bulma paused a moment, eyes glistening a little, as anguish pricked at her torn heart. What her son described to her, sounded like a fairy tail, a romantic fantasy that she could only ever dream of. Did that mean that there was hope for her and Vegeta, in this timeline? The heiress' mind revisited the past.

May 12th 767, 10:12am

Earth’s defenders were gathered together, six months after Goku’s demise, watching in horror, as two unidentified forces began butchering their way through a string of peaceful towns. According to the report, the attack had begun at around 10 am, on an island nine miles south west of South City. Bulma had summoned her friends, as soon as she heard the devastating news. Around ten minutes passed, by the time they all arrived.

"We need to act now!" Piccolo growled, clenching his fists. "They can't get away with this!"

"Your damn right!" Tien concurred, irately.

"Then let's move!" Yamcha said.

"None of you will do a thing!" Vegeta snarled. "You're all weaklings compared to me! I could annihilate everyone of you myself, so you better listen to what I say! I'll be the one to crush these things and no one else, got it?!"

"Hold on a minute tough guy, we don't even know what we're up against." Bulma frowned.

"To me, they just look like a couple of delinquents, who know how to use Ki." Krillin remarked.
"But they can't possibly be a match for any of us, can they? Especially Vegeta! He's a Super Saiyan now!"

"Spare me your flattery, little human!" Vegeta barked, before turning towards the mother of his purple-haired, half-breed. "Listen here, woman! I don't care one bit about this planet or the vermin residing in it! However, I will be the one to pulverize these two little upstarts! Anyone that dares to stand in my way, asks for death!"

He instantly took off and headed towards the hot-zone, with murderous abandon. Ever since Goku's untimely end, there was a gaping void within him. Anyone could see that, especially Bulma. He'd wanted nothing more to slay the younger Saiyan with his own two hands, but his primary ambition had been stolen by a damned heart virus of all things. He'd been more aloof and temperamental than usual and whenever she'd approach him, he'd give her the cold shoulder. As far as Trunks went, he wouldn't even so much as look at the infant child, for more than a second or two. In any case, commitment was the last thing she expected from a man as stubborn, cold and proud as Vegeta.

She hardly knew why she cared about that nasty Saiyan. Some crazy part of her insisted that there was good in him, somewhere deep down. It would just take time to bring it out.

The heiress sighed, hoping with all her heart that her friends would nip this problem in the bud, however, she couldn't help the ominous feeling that they were all about to fall into a trap, completely unprepared.

Of course, two hours later her inner fears were confirmed, by a bereaved Gohan. After Vegeta fell, the others followed on, like dominoes. The demi-Saiyan only managed to escape, due to Piccolo's bravery. After only the two of them remained, the Namekian furtively knife-handed Gohan on the back of the neck, before temporally blinding the two Androids, using Tien's solar flare-technique. With the few seconds he'd bought, he tossed his unconscious little pupil as far away as possible, before quickly meeting his end, at the hands of the deadly pair. After waking up, a sorrow-ridden Gohan headed towards the battlefield, only to find his mentor dead, along with all the rest of Earth's defenders. It was a sight more excruciating than any other. The burden fell on him now, to build himself up as a warrior, to follow in his father's footsteps and crush the menacing duo, once and for all!

Bulma cried hard for every single one of them, but mostly for Vegeta, because she knew, without a spec of doubt that he was in hell now, with no dragon balls around to save him. In the coming years, the human population was reduced to almost nothing and the heiress would often find herself wondering, whether or not Vegeta could've redeemed his malevolent ways, were he not taken away from her, so soon. The mere thought of him suffering, after having lived such an agonizing life of unending hardship, pained her far more deeply than she'd imagined. While there was no denying that he deserved every bit of it, there was still the question of what could've been.

With time, Bulma had managed to subdue her griefs and misgivings, convincing herself that there was no possible way Vegeta could've changed, but now, after Trunks' visit to a past so unlike her own, she felt the wounds in her heart, reopen. She envisioned this other Vegeta and the profound affection he must've felt towards her counterpart, to transform into a legendary being, after her demise. She wondered if, deep down, her own Vegeta felt the same way. Tears stung her sapphire eyes and slowly cascaded down both cheeks, as the beautiful heiress imagined his last moments. Were his final thoughts about her and Trunks? She always liked to think so, though she'd seriously doubted it, but after her son's tale, the possibility couldn't be ruled out entirely.
"Mom, are you okay?" Trunks asked, clasping her shoulder.

"Yeah, I'm fine." She forced herself to smile and wiped her tears away, before placing her hand atop his and giving it a squeeze. "I just- have a lot on my mind, you know."

"I understand." He nodded, before standing up and cracking his neck. "Well, I can tell you one thing, mom. Visiting the past, has really given me a lot of hope. If anyone can beat those Androids, it's Goku and my father! I just know it!" He went on. "As for me, I'm gonna train as hard as I can, till you refuel the time machine."

Bulma's smile slowly receded, at the mention of this Vegeta that her son venerated so greatly, as to place his name alongside Goku's. She wondered what he was really like, with her past self. Trunks' story seemed to suggest that they felt very strongly for one-another and that she was the only one among the crew that dared stand up to him. The smile that fell, graced her lips once again, as she imagined the other her bantering with the alternate Vegeta and how she'd had her fair share of arguments, with her own Vegeta. It may not have seemed like it, but the two of them did have their moments. It was nearly impossible to see through his perpetually stoic exterior, but there was something warm buried deep within him, surrounded by a cold, hardened shell. She decided that she would one day like to meet the other Vegeta, if possible. His Bulma was definitely much luckier than she was and she hoped, with everything she had, that it remained that way. At any rate, they had to take one step at a time, to make that possible.

"Alright Trunks, but not today." The blue-haired mother replied, at last. "Take a break and let things settle in. You've gotta wait at least a month, before I get the time machine recharged."

"Sure thing, mom!" The adolescent heartily agreed.

And so, mother and son spent the day together, spirits soaring higher than they ever had, since Gohan's tragic departure from this world. Things were finally starting to look up. The flames of hope kindled stronger than ever now. They would win this fight, no matter what it took!

Bulma prayed every night that the alternate world would never have to face the terror that her's did and that she and Vegeta would have a bright, lustrous future together, filled with joy and happiness.

A/N: So that's it for the future timeline, till I reach the Androids saga! What did you think folks?

The three year gap, now begins! I promise not to make it dull or repetitive, if any of you felt that way, with the post-Namek plot! And it's going to end with a really big bang that none of you will see coming, that I can guarantee! Just you wait! Till then, be sure to review and share your thoughts!
Chapter 46: The virtual reality simulator

Four months passed, since Trunks' departure from this timeline.

The wild-haired Saiyan was engaged in another epic spar with a being that was once his most formidable adversary. Goku was nonplussed at his ex-rival's rapid surges in strength. He could barely keep up, even with the triple Kaio-Ken and the Namekian had yet to de-garb his weighted cape and turban.

BANG!

A sharp blow to the jaw launched Goku several feet back, with a perceivable cut on his lip.

"If you really think that I'll be behind you Saiyans forever, think again!" The Namek smirked.

Earth's hero wiped away the ensuing trickle of blood with the pad of his thumb, smirking right back.

"Well- maybe not forever, but for now." He shot up to a whopping quadruple Kaio-Ken and landed a hard low punch to the gut, whereby Piccolo's eyes bulged out, a glob of sputum flying out of his mouth and over Goku's shoulder. "We're on top of the food chain."

The green warrior plummeted to the dirt, lying on his stomach, in a fit of bloody coughs. Goku landed before him, expression as smug as ever.

"Need a break, big guy?"

Piccolo groaned, before looking up at him with a snarl and struggling to his feet.

"Not on your life." He spat, shedding his weighted gear at last and cracking his neck and shoulders, thereafter.

Gohan watched in awe, as the spar continued and wondered if he could reach that colossal level, someday. Those two were magnificent! And in three years time they'd be far better! Best part was that no matter how much they roughed each other up, they could be healed in the regeneration tanks that Bulma had retrieved from King Cold's flying saucer. There were five tanks in all. Two were given to the humans training at Kame House, which now included Tien and Chiaotzu, two to the Son family and the last one, to Vegeta.

'It's just too bad that he refused dad's offer, to train with us.' Gohan thought resentfully. That man was just so stubborn and self-centred! Didn't he realize that he was an integral part of a greater
symbiosis?! Even the Earthling warriors decided to train amongst themselves, for whatever it was worth, yet Vegeta was far too narrow-minded, to see the obvious advantage! 'He and dad make the perfect team, as well! They proved it, when they fought together, on Namek!'

The aggrieved demi-Saiyan let out a wistful sigh, wishing that the surly Prince was more of a team player and not such a recluse. Of course, Gohan was quite wrong. Vegeta was about to commence training with all the Z fighters, except for himself. They just didn't know it yet.

XXX

"A virtual reality simulator, you say?" The Prince asked, raising an intrigued brow at the metallic purple, silver-accented, helmet-like gadget between Bulma's hands that had an antenna on the right-hand-side and a number of electrical ports, along it's lower semi-circumference.

"Precisely." She nodded. The heiress had recently gotten rid of her afro and opted for one of her more traditional styles, straightening her satiny, blue fibres and letting them flow nicely to her chest and shoulder blades, with a neat set of bangs, covering her forehead. "It's all in the mind. To put it in layman's terms, you can choose both your opponent and their power level. There're eight options for the former: Goku, Piccolo, Tien, Krillin, Yamcha, Chiaotzu, Kami and Jackie Chun. I could've added more, but it would've taken far too long, know what I saying?"

"That's fine." Vegeta replied. "Those are the only ones that really matter." He knew there were other esteemed martial-artists on the planet, but most of them were largely one-dimensional, for instance, the Indian fighter called Nam, who relied far too heavily on his 'aerial attack' and consequently lost to Kakarot in one of the older tournaments. "Does anyone else know about this?" He frowned warily.

"Nope."

"Excellent!"

"You really ought to be thankful, you know?" Bulma placed her hands on her hips, a complacent look gracing her features. "I literally had to go through all the tapes of the last three world martial-arts tournaments, breaking down, coding and encrypting every single move, into this device. Not so easy, considering that these guys could launch well over a dozen attacks, in less than a second. Moving on, however, eighty-percent of the simulator's made up of material that was salvaged and re-welded from the Cold flagship. Oh and luckily for you, I was smart enough to fetch scouter's off some of those dead PTO soldiers, which just happened to have all of the software inputs that I needed, in order to establish a reliable system for power calibration, not to mention, unique wiring mechanisms that were just fine enough, to condense everything down into something of this size. All in all, it took months of hard effort." She then gave him a discouraging frown. "But you should know that I'm still against this. After all, there is another way for you to get stronger."

"Yes, yes, you've made that abundantly clear for the millionth time, but it's not going to happen."

"Figures." She rolled her eyes, with a sigh. "But, like I said, the simulator only accounts for the stuff that Goku and the others learned, up until the end of the twenty third tournament." The heiress emphasised. "That excludes all the techniques that King Kai taught him and any other moves that he might've developed or is still developing."

"Doesn't make much difference." The Prince shook his head. "I've fought both against Kakarot and beside him. Other than his use of the Kaio-Ken attack and the Spirit Bomb, his fighting style is
very much consistent with what I remember seeing in the tapes. Once I familiarize myself with it, I'll be able to crush him in any battle." He smirked. "Besides, the Kaio-Ken was made obsolete, ever since we embarked upon the Super Saiyan transformation. The spirit bomb, on the other hand, requires far too much time and concentration to be of any use, against an opponent of my caliber. As for any newer techniques he might've acquired, I'm sure I'll have far more surprises up my sleeve than he will."

Bulma groaned, lips pressing into a hard line. She was unable to contend with any of that. In any case, once this stubborn, arrogant ass of a Saiyan had his mind made up, there was nothing that could possibly deter him. Vegeta was severely adamant in his refusal to train alongside Goku and Piccolo, much to everyone's dismay. It would've benefited them all greatly. But alas, Vegeta's benefit was all that mattered, in his egotistical, hyper-competitive mind. Though somewhat begrudging, as his significant other, Bulma felt the need to support the Prince, in any way possible, thus she endeavoured in this new, nigh-impossible task. That aside, however, she was extremely proud of her most recent accomplishment, which could very well be deemed her best, thus far.

"Well, anyway, it gets even better." The heiress went on. "Since it's all done through mind, you'll be able to improve your fighting ability, without sporting any physical injury on the outside. Downside is, however, that you won't get any of those Zenkai power-ups."

"That is of no consequence." The Saiyan folded his arms. "The Zenkai loses its potency after a certain level anyway. If it were that easy to get stronger, I'd simply ask one of your idiot friends to blast me, so I could get healed in a regeneration tank and repeat the process, again and again."

"I suppose so." Bulma chuckled uneasily, placing a hand on her nape. She wouldn't put it past Vegeta to take advantage of such a unique trait. After all, he did tell her a while ago, how he had Krillin fire a hole through him, back on Namek."Well, in that case, I guess it's practically flawless, right?"

"Hmph, we'll see."

"Well then, let's get started, shall we?"

After sitting Vegeta down and having him put on the simulator, she connected it to a handheld touchscreen, via USB port, which would allow her immediate, visual access, as though she were watching a live gameplay, in first person.

"Now, close your eyes and clear your mind, then hit the button, to your left." The heiress instructed and Vegeta did just that. Seconds later, he fell into some cryptic, white void of some sort, which didn't seem to end.

"What the hell is this?!" The overwrought Prince snarled.

"Relax." He heard Bulma's reprimanding voice and looked up, but there was nothing there, just a blur of pure white. He couldn't even see himself! What the fuck?! "Just wait a moment."

"Where are you?!!" He demanded. "Why can't I see anything?!!"

"Would you just calm the hell down?!!" Bulma chided, in irritation, before continuing in a calmer voice. "It'll take a minute or two to get started, okay? As for me, I've got a headset connected to my touchscreen that lets me communicate with you, from the outside."
"I- I see."

Approximately one minute later, the flame-haired Saiyan stood on a sturdy, marble floor that appeared to stretch on forever. A light blue sky loomed over him.

"Select your opponent." A computerized voice directed.

"Go on, pick a name." Bulma prodded.

The Prince weighed his options for a moment, before deciding.

"Jackie Chun." He answered with a smirk, to Bulma's utter astonishment. She was almost certain that he would've chosen Goku.

"Jackie Chun, seriously?!" The heiress gawped. "That old geezer?! I realize that he was tough, back in the day, but even then-"

"It's his skill that stands out." The Prince interjected.

"State your opponent's desired power level." The computer went on.

"Hmmm, let's go with-" Vegeta gave it some thought. "Five-and-a-half-million."

"Whoa, that high?" Bulma raised an eyebrow. "Don't you think you ought to-"

"It's around my base power, so I'd call it even."

"Well, if you say so." The heiress smiled smugly, knowing very well that he was overestimating himself, without the slightest clue of what he was getting into. She'd anticipated as much.

A second later, Chun's elderly, yet athletic figure materialized before the Prince and readied his turtle stance.

"Ready, fight!"

The old warrior instantly charged in at full power, ramming the Prince with a supersonic flying kick right in the sternum, throwing him backwards. A mouthful of bloody phlegm spewed from his lungs and straight between of his parted lips. Chun didn't let up for even a moment and continued his assault, battering the Saiyan with blow after blow, barely even giving him time to breathe.

"Does this guy ever get tired?!" Vegeta growled, irascibly. He was on the defensive, but was at least able to regain enough of his footing, to block and dodge most of the attacks, being hurled his way.

"Nope." Bulma laughed, knowing full well that this would happen. "He's got unlimited stamina. Unless you can kill him or incapacitate him, he's not gonna stop attacking."

"Damn you, woman!" He fumed. "You could've at least told me that!"

"Hey, don't get mad at me." She rolled her eyes. "You could've at least asked for some details, instead of jumping into into the fight unprepared, like the overconfident jerk you are. And besides, if you're finding it too difficult to face the old goat, just go ahead and give up haha."
"Tch, not on your life!" Vegeta was finally getting some of his own hits in, but the fluidity of the elder's movement, surpassed even his own, giving him the edge, despite their equal power levels. This was a much tougher battle than he'd anticipated. His Saiyan blood was boiling with frenzy like never before and as irritated as he was at being outshone by this geezer, he had to hand it to Bulma. She was absolutely right! Repeatedly engaging himself in a myriad battles of this magnitude was going to upsurge his fighting capability, faster than ever before. Part of him was against relying on a tool like this, but the other part was thrilled at the idea of expanding his horizon, as a warrior. He could already feel the refinement in his fighting style, with each and every passing minute. Over two-and-a-half years still remained, until the Android invasion, thus he knew that he had a whole lot of time to polish up his technique and once he did, no one could possibly stand a chance against him! No one!

Half an hour of ceaseless combat passed and the Prince felt his energy plummet. This old prune was certainly doing well, in keeping him on his toes, but then that was to be expected, given his renowned skill and prowess, not to mention the little factor of his unlimited stamina.

Vegeta swung his elbow right across Chun's wrinkled jaw, following up with a straight punch that broke his nose and a side kick that sent him flying backwards.

"GALICK GUN!"

"KAMEHAMEHA!"

The intense beam struggle that followed, tore away at every agonized muscle in the Saiyan's strapping figure, but he refused to let it hamper his resolve to win. He was the Prince of a great warrior race! There's no way he could lose, regardless of who he was fighting! And yet, he was losing! No matter how much power he forced into his attack, that Kamehameha was slowly overwhelming his Galick Gun! After all, he wasn't facing an ordinary foe! This guy never got exhausted and would keep on fighting, until he destroyed him!

"Damn it!" He growled and did his utmost to try and gain the upper-hand, but to no avail. The blue beam was forcing the purple one back, inch by inch, until it was a mere second away from vaporizing the Saiyan. As if on impulse, Vegeta's hair turned gold, eyes a gleaming teal and in that very instant, all of Chun's efforts were completely reversed. The Galick Gun easily swallowed up the Kamehameha and continued it's trek forward, obliterating every shred of the old warrior.

Vegeta fell on his knees, reverting to his base state, breathing severely hard and cursing the fact that he was forced into using his Super Saiyan transformation, in spite of all his endeavours at victory.

"Caution: Use of excessive force is not allowed, therefore you are disqualified and declared the loser." The computer proclaimed.

"What?!" Vegeta gave a nasty grimace. "That's bullshit!"

"Loser, loser, loser!" It repeated in that annoying, mechanical voice.

"How dare you?!" He randomly fired a Ki blast into the sky. "I'll destroy you, you filthy piece of trash!"

Bulma guffawed hysterically, as the Prince continued uttering foul profanities at the derisive
computer, accompanied with the occasional energy attack that did exactly nothing. The best part was that this went down, just as she'd envisioned. It seems that she knew her hotheaded, fiery-tempered Saiyan, all too well.

"Stop laughing, wench!" The Prince demanded.

"Loser!" Bulma shot back, petulantly sticking out her tongue, caring little about the fact that he couldn't see her.

"Curse you, woman!" Vegeta snarled. He should've known that the programming of this damned thing would reflect the infuriating, pompous personality of it's presumptuous, loudmouthed creator! "Just wait till I get out of here!"

The heiress continued to taunt him for a good while, riling up his anger just for the fun of it. When things finally cooled down, she explained to him how it was considered cheating, to use power that was more than twice as high as his opponent's.

"Like I said, you needn't fight someone on your level, since the bots don't run out of energy."

"Tch, screw that!" Vegeta grunted dismissively. "Anyway, how do I get out of this thing?"

"Well, it's pretty simple." Bulma replied. "You just say 'quit', then it asks you if you wanna quit and you say 'yes'."

"Hn."

"Oh and even if you die, you immediately regenerate to full strength and can choose to either vacate or to face the next opponent."

"Is that right?" The Prince smirked. If that were the case, then this little contraption was virtually flawless! As expected, he chose to continue, only this time, his opponent was none other than Goku.

An exhaustive seven hours passed, before the Prince finally decided to make his return to the real world. In just this short space of time, he'd already learned a great deal, having faced each and every opponent, at least once. Some battles he'd won and others he'd lost, but it didn't dissuade him, in the slightest! He was resolved to keep on practicing, every single day, till he reached the pinnacle of perfection!

Bulma disconnected her apparatus and neatly packed it away, before addressing her Saiyan.

"So what'd you think of my new gizmo?" She asked, beaming as she noticed the sparkling glint of exhilaration and excitement, in his deep, ebony eyes.

Vegeta looked upon her in awe for a few seconds, marvelled at her unparalleled ingenuity. He wondered how any single person could possibly possess the sheer will, tenacity and capacity, required to produce a training device that was this intricate and immaculate! Throughout his entire life, he could never recall feeling proud of anyone other than himself, yet that changed completely, after this little experience.

In that instant, Bulma found herself flat on her back, being repeatedly kissed with greater fervor than she could ever remember. Her mind was strolling away from her, as she was overwhelmed
with a gale of desire that began building and building, by the second. She returned his zesty kisses, with equal ardency.

Not bothering to deepen the kiss, Vegeta slowly made his way south, massaging her ample mounds with his deft lips, teeth and fingers, completely unconcerned with disrobing her. He was being far gentler than usual, treating her as though she were a prized jewel, with infinite value, the only one of its kind. Though she did, most often, prefer him being the wild and vigorous beast that he usually was, the heiress had to admit that she was flattered and even turned on, by this warm, compassionate side of his. He rarely ever let it show and never to this extent.

Down and down he went, till he carefully lifted up her powder pink, chiffon, miniskirt and began planting soft, lingering, butterfly kisses on her svelte thighs, evoking tender moans of approval from the blue-haired scientist.

"Feels good." She breathed, gasping deeply when he roved his cheek along her inner thigh, turning her storm of desire into a sweeping hurricane that was knocking down the last pillars of coherence within her mind, one at a time. "Feels so good."

His calloused hands worked diligently on the outermost part of her thighs, while his lips, cheeks and even his neck and throat, pleasured the heated, porcelain skin, within. Gods, this woman had the perfect legs: long, slender and shapely! He could savor them all day, without growing bored or tired! Bulma was hardly able to take anymore. Blazing surges of liquid fire coiled through her bloodstream and batches of wetness pooled between her legs, as she closed the trembling limbs around his face.

"Enough- foreplay- Vegeta." She panted. The Prince groaned in pleasure, when her smooth calf pressed against the nape of his neck.

"It's never enough." He exhaled and Bulma's lungs stopped functioning for a moment, as she felt his husky voice and strong breath, brush against the thin cotton material of her marmalade panties. God, the proximity nearly killed her! After a little more torture, Vegeta finally pulled down her skirt and soaked undergarments, taking a deep whiff of the latter. Such an obscene move deeply shocked and appalled Bulma, causing her heart to accelerate.

"You- pervert!" She lightly brought her knee up, barely grazing it beneath his chin. The Prince chuckled and ran his face up her thigh one last time, before spreading her legs and taking her rich, flowing centre into his ravenous maw, feasting upon her, as though he were born for it. "Oh God, Vegeta!" Bulma screamed, grabbing him behind the head and bucking her hips against him. She closed her legs around his face, once again, in order to try and still them. "Oh my God!"

Her fervid screams jumped several octaves higher, upon feeling the relentless assault of his hot tongue on her U-spot, sending streams of liquid gold into his eagerly awaiting mouth. The hungry Saiyan moaned, as he took a gulp of her sweet arousal, letting the pomegranate-like nectar, trickle down his throat, all the while continuing his voracious attacks on that sensitive, erogenous spot, driving the heiress into an impassioned frenzy.

"I'm gonna cum!" Bulma cried out, clutching his dark, feathery hair within her fists. "Oh my God, Vegeta, I'm gonna cum!"

Her words only empowered his desire for more of her perfect taste and so he increased the force, behind his assault. Seconds later, the heiress fell back and clenched her eyes shut, biting her lip, as a deluge of rich, flavorful liquid spilled through the gaping slit of her rosy walls and right into the
Saiyan's craving mouth. Her fists de-gripped Vegeta's soft hair, gently caressing it thereafter.

"God, that was amazing." She opened her eyes and stared aimlessly above her, seeing nothing but clouds, instead of the compact metallic roof of the gravity chamber. Vegeta's cheek soon settled against her groin. Regaining some coherency a while later, she chuckled. "You know, you have an odd way of saying thank you."

Vegeta gave a short laugh in reply.

"Hn."

She smiled and continued stroking his hair. Funny thing was that he hadn't even bothered to remove his armor and training uniform, this whole time. The heiress was lost in her own thoughts, until finally realizing that her lover had dozed off. He must've been tired, following that long, strenuous mental exercise, especially after he'd made a satiating meal out of her flowery nub.

"Vegeta?" Bulma looked down. "Hey, you can't sleep there." She protested, vainly attempting to force him up. "Come on, get off me, you ass!"

After a good five minutes of poking, prodding and even insulting and yelling, she gave up and lay back on the ground, arms folded in frustration.

"Stupid Saiyan!" She groused, miffed at his vastly superior strength. It was so unfair!

_A/N: Now I know that a lot of you might've preferred it if Goku and Vegeta trained together, but the main reasons I didn't take that route is:

1. It leaves very little room for later development, in Vegeta's character.
2. The virtual reality simulator's a pretty cool gadget, don't you agree?!
3. I've got something really awesome planned for the end of the three-year period and this was a necessary pre-requisite.

That aside, please review and tell me what you thought of Bulma's new invention. Will it really help Vegeta reclaim his place as the strongest Saiyan?! Stay tuned and share your thoughts, by hitting the review button!

_p.s. Try to imagine Bulma's touchscreen as the equivalent of an I-Pad! As for the simulator, just envision something similar to Gohan's "Saiyaman" helmet, but a whole lot cooler hehehe!_

Thanks so, so much _lovelykotori_ for the _adorable fan-art_ for this chapter! Love you so much! :D_
Trouble around the corner

Chapter 47: Trouble around the corner

A few months passed by and a certain, flame-haired Saiyan felt more empowered than ever before. Not only was the simulator improving his skills as a fighter, but these improvements made his physical training far more productive than ever before. Day by day, he would put his newly acquired abilities to the test, markedly refining and perfecting them. To his utmost delight, the Prince found that there was no real limit to his advancements. Although he'd quickly picked up on every technique he encountered, his mastery over them continued to surge and he often combined them with other techniques, in order to form deadly combinations. Not only that, but his fighting style before the simulator training, entailed a lot of wasted movements on his part. That was no longer the case. He now moved with the fluidity of a golden eagle. Everything came naturally to him and it was only a matter of time, before he became an indestructible force that went unchallenged, across the entire cosmos! No one would stand a chance against his might, not the Androids and certainly not that fool, Kakarot!

It was suppertime. The elders had decided to hit the hay early on, so it was just Bulma and Vegeta. The Prince stared curiously at his hostess-lover.

"What?" She asked, after taking a sip of chilled tropical fruit juice from the pink straw, submerged in her tumbler glass.

"I was just wondering about that simulator contraption."

"Yeah, what about it?" The heiress was cutting a slice of chocolate cake for herself, when an alarm bell suddenly rung within the burrows of her mind. She gave him a look of pure dread, as her heart pounded in trepidation. "Oh God, don't tell me you destroyed it!" She mistook the ensuing frown on his face as an affirmative, causing her to suck in a huge breath, before she dropped her cutlery and glared venomously at him. "DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW HARD I WORKED ON THAT THING, YOU UNGRATEFUL LITTLE BRAT?! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU! HOW COULD YOU-"

"Dammit, shut up, the device is just fine!" He roared back, deeply irritated by her premature assessment and the blaring noise that came with it. She was always trying to make him deaf!

"It- it is?" Like a fusing lightbulb, her thunderous temper, quickly dimmed down.

"Of course it is, you idiot!"

"Don't call me an idiot!" That peculiar temper returned, only it wasn't nearly as deadly as before. "You're the idiot!"

Vegeta rolled his eyes. This stubborn banshee always wanted the last word, when it came to exchanging childish insults. In some cases, it was better to just let her have her way, lest he engage himself in a pointless, eternal argument. 'Tch! And she has the nerve to call me a brat!'

"Could you listen to me for one goddamned minute?!" He seethed.

"Ugh, fine, fine, spit it out." She sighed.
"Do you have any video records of the battle between the Earthling warriors and Nappa, when I first came to this planet?"

Bulma involuntarily shuddered at the question, as she recalled what a different person her lover had been, during that dreadful stage of his life. He'd come so far, since then. The icy barrier around his soul had been thawed away, molecule by molecule and now he'd become their most powerful ally. Sure, he was still the biggest grouch in the Universe, but the heiress liked him that way - well, most of the time. She couldn't help but feel that out of all of her remarkable accomplishments in life, coaxing Vegeta out of the darkness and into the light, was her greatest. A benevolent smile lit her face at the thought.

"Well?" The Saiyan griped, wedging right through her trance.

"Um- uh- yeah, yeah, I've got the footage for that." She nodded, understanding what he was getting at. Although they'd asked Porunga to erase the memories of Vegeta, from the minds of most Earthlings, some of the higher-ups still had records of the horrors that had taken place, at that time. "Why? You want me to reprogram the simulator, to include those techniques, as well?"

"Could you do it?"

"Well, to be honest, I am kinda busy these days." She said, tremulously chewing on her lower lip, as he gave her a disapproving glare. That obviously wasn't the answer he sought. "Look, Vegeta, when I was building the simulator, I had to re-adjust my work schedule and cut out so much of my free time. Even then, it took practically everything I had. It wasn't easy and to tell you the truth, I still haven't caught up on a lot of the paperwork that I'd been neglecting. Initially, I wanted to incorporate all the techniques from that battle as well, but work just wouldn't allow it."

"But this is more important!" The Prince fumed, gritting his teeth. "I need to get stronger, if I'm to defeat those Androids or else-"

"I know, I know." Bulma interjected, with a sigh. "Listen, I'll do what I can, but I'm not making any promises, okay?" She smiled and took his hand in hers. "Just bear with me. I know how important this is, believe me."

Vegeta narrowed his eyes a moment, before standing up.

"You have two weeks." He declared and subsequently began to saunter back towards his beloved safe-haven, the gravitron.

"What?! Two weeks?!" She yelled, vexedly. "Didn't you hear anything I just said, you moron?! It took me four months just to-" He continued walking away, as though she hadn't said a word. "Hey, don't ignore me, you dick!"

The Prince turned to face her, with a smirk.

"Make that one week."

Bulma's face turned an indignant scarlet, as she was beset with mountainous ire. Picking up a glass bottle filled with water, she hurled it at him, only for it to pass through his after-image and shatter against the concrete wall.
"Ugh!" The heiress screeched, realizing that she'd have to clean up the mess herself. "I hate him!"

Later on in the night, Bulma faced the other side of the bed, as she tried to force herself to sleep. That jerk! How dare he treat her, as though she were his personal servant, bound to his whims and wishes?! He had no right! None, whatsoever!

A short while after she'd settled on the queen-sized mattress, the complacent Saiyan entered the room and plopped down on the bed, next to her. A slight tremor ran through the incensed blue-haired woman, upon feeling the Prince's lips press against the bare skin of her shoulder. She shrugged the joint into his face, letting him know that his gestures were unwelcome. Such a move, however, only spurred the Saiyan to continue his beguiling endeavours.

"Stop!" Bulma mumbled, in annoyance.

"Just pretend I'm not here." Vegeta replied in a low, smug voice, grazing his lips on her nape, making her anger wane just a little, as she felt a smidge of arousal prick at her, down below. Her desire spiralled quicker than she could ever hope to follow, as he continued teasing her with a string of soft, lingering kisses, which left tingling, dreamlike sensations at every turn. Damn him! He knew just how to jumble her brains! "It's better that way."

Pretend he wasn't there?! As if she could ever do that, with him slobbering all over her, while she was trying to get some shut-eye!

"I hate you!"

Vegeta chuckled in a low, sexy tone that instantly set her on edge. Bringing his lips right up against her ear canal, didn't help much either.

"I know." He breathed and Bulma's heart froze at that moment, a cloudy haze smothering her senses, as the temperature swelled between her thighs.

"A-Asshole." She stuttered.

"Wench." He took her earlobe between his teeth and repeatedly flicked his deft tongue against the sensitive spot, whereby she shut her eyes and released an irrepressible moan of pure bliss. The feel of that warm springboard and those sensual rapping sounds, were nothing short of torture, plain and simple. Little by little, she could feel her control receding away and knew that no matter how much she resisted, he'd end up swaying her- and she'd lustily indulge in every single second of it. Not a minute later, his soft, furry tail slipped into her panties, eliciting a loud gasp from the agape scientist. The shaggy appendage stroked her folds up and down, at an enticingly slow, titillating rhythm, breaking the last vestiges of willpower she had.

The whole of the next day, Bulma found it extremely difficult to walk on two legs, feeling more embarrassed than ever, as she hobbled her way through Capsule Corporation, as though she were an old lady. The worst part was hearing the titters of some of her employees. A few hard glares shut them right up, however.

She'd engaged in at least three rounds of fun with that audacious asshole of a Saiyan and that wasn't even counting the two, erotic bouts of tail sex, they'd had. If he thought she'd ever complete his simulator upgrades after his insolent, ungentlemanly behavior, then he had another thing coming! No! She'd hear him apologize to her and only then, would she be deigned to fulfil his unearned requests- on her terms, of course!
"You know Piccolo, at the rate we're going, I won't be able beat you, unless I go Super Saiyan."
Goku stated in marvel, between a mouthful of a giant sardine that he and Gohan had caught a while earlier, after training. As usual, they delivered it back to the Son residence and Chi-Chi transformed the marine cadaver, into a meal from the heavens.

"Tch, one day even that won't be enough." The Namekian proclaimed. "Just watch. I will surpass both you and Vegeta, no matter what it takes."

"Haha Good luck with that." Earth's hero smirked.

"Smile now, while you can Goku, cause I'm gonna wipe that smug look off your face." Piccolo said promisingly.

"Speaking of Vegeta, I still can't believe that arrogant man's willing to fight against those doomsday robots or whatever." Chi-Chi sneered. "He must have some sort of ulterior motive. There's no other explanation."

"Come on Chi-Chi, you still don't trust Vegeta after all this time?!" The Saiyan whined.

"Give me one good reason why I should!" The Ox-Princess scowled at her loopy husband.

"Well, you trust Piccolo don't you?"

"Hmph, barely." She huffed. "Besides, at least Piccolo's making an effort, with Gohan and all. I can say that much about him."

"Uh, I'm right here, you know?" The giant, Earth-born alien objected.

"Good for you!" Chi-Chi spat, before frowning at Goku, as she continued her tirade. "Anyway, Vegeta just keeps to himself and refuses to train with the rest of you. That obviously raises suspicions, don't you think? He's not a team player. He's only in this for himself. I mean, has he ever come around to ask you for a spar or just say hi? No, he hasn't! Not easy to trust someone like that, so don't expect me to do it!" She finally added. "Oh, and don't be surprised, if he happens to turn on you, once the battle is over or worse yet, half-way through it!"

Goku let out a sigh of surrender. He couldn't really argue with Chi-Chi. While much of what she said was undoubtedly correct, his shrewish wife just didn't know Vegeta, the way he did. Yes, he may have been a bit of a lone-wolf and he couldn't help but resent the other Super Saiyan, just a little bit, for refusing to train alongside him, however, that didn't automatically make him a bad guy. Despite his rough exterior, deep down, he was as noble as any of them and had repeatedly proven as much.

"He does care about Bulma though." Gohan chimed in, after a moment of silence. "A lot."

"Hmph, so what?!" The raven-haired woman sulkily shot her nose up into the air. She'd already heard the story of what had transpired on Namek, but for her it just didn't suffice. "I like Bulma, believe me, but I think she's got a horrible taste in men. I mean, first Yamcha and then Vegeta! Who's it gonna be next? Lucifer?!"
"What's so bad about Yamcha?" Goku scratched his head.

"Nothing." She replied. "I think he's a great guy, but he's obviously a terrible boyfriend. If he weren't so incompetent, he wouldn't have lost Bulma, to that nasty Saiyan."

"Geez, you never learned how to mince words, did you?" Piccolo chuckled wryly, shaking his head at the sheer crassness of the hotheaded harpy.

"Quiet you." Chi-Chi looked at him pointedly, whereby he zipped his mouth closed.

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A few days passed. Vegeta was preoccupied with his daily training routine, while Bulma decided to savor her day off. She was chilling at Kame House, laying back on a nice and comfy sun lounger in the backyard and sipping a cool flask of whisky, as the sizzling, morning sun loomed above, warming her sunscreen-covered, porcelain skin. She was wearing a hot pink bikini that she'd recently purchased and lying by her on a parallel lounger, was Yamcha's girlfriend, Mirai, dressed in a sea-green, halter tankini that really brought out the velvety fibres of her vivid, emerald hair. To her utmost chagrin, however, that disgusting, profligate Master Roshi would not stop leering at them, as though they were broiled pieces of meat, dangling off a hook and just waiting to be devoured. As if that weren't bad enough, he'd surreptitiously tried to get his wrinkled paws on the other woman, but Bulma quickly observed his unwanted presence in her peripheral and caught him with a hard, left hook to the jaw. Unlike Mirai, she'd been acquainted with the turtle hermit for many years now and knew just what to expect, from the wizened, old lecher.

"Asshole!" She scowled at the shameless, topsy-turvy debaucher.

"Bulma!" Mirai exclaimed in shock, stunned at her behavior, completely unaware of what had set her off.

"Oh hush, he deserved it!" The heiress growled.

"For what?"

"Seriously?! Didn't you notice?!" Bulma stared at her, incredulously. "He's been ogling us this entire time and just tried to grope you!"

"He- he did?" Mirai asked, wide-eyed. Yamcha had always told her how his mentor was a venerable old warrior that he looked up to and admired greatly, but said nothing about him being a pervert- although now that she thought about it, he may have mentioned that the old man was often a little 'eccentric'.

Bulma rolled her eyes. As beautiful as Mirai was, she wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed. But she certainly had a heart of gold. The heiress had rarely ever come across a soul, as gentle as hers. It truly warmed her heart to know that Yamcha had gotten over the entire post-Namek, trilemma. The ex-bandit felt jilted for the longest time, upon learning that she'd chosen Vegeta over him, but Mirai had been able to mend that gaping wound, over the course of their relationship. The heiress had never seen her ex in such high-spirits before and couldn't be happier for the pair.

When Tien and Chiaotzu finally arrived, the human warriors took off to some distant location, in order to commence with their morning workout. Bulma breathed a huge sigh of relief. Roshi had of course, been reluctant to go, saying that it would be 'rude to leave his lovely guests unattended'. 
Everyone except Mirai, however, knew the subtle implications behind those words and eventually, he was forced to depart with the others, albeit grudgingly.

The morning went on smoothly, with the two women gaily conversing about work, life, hobbies and all the rest of it. As it so happened, Mirai was an artist by trade, an underappreciated one at that, Bulma thought, as the green-haired beauty rolled through several snaps of the pieces that she'd drawn on her I-Pad, each one deeply vivid in its own right. They ranged all the way from cosmic entities and celestial beings of myth, to the tiniest macroscopic life forms, such as ants and gnats.

"What's with the insects?" The heiress chuckled, as she sifted through the unique gallery.

"Insects are far more significant than people give them credit for." Mirai replied. "Just look at how much damage they've caused throughout history, how many scores of millions have died because of malaria and the plague, for example. People always underestimate them, but mark my words: when all us vertebrates go extinct, those little guys will continue to thrive."

"Haha well, I guess so." Bulma scratched the back of her head, sheepishly. 'Man, this girl's nuts.' She thought to herself.

"We humans tend to see things, on a very superficial level." Mirai stated. "Insects are built to survive under conditions that we can't. For me, they represent strength, where we least expect it. Sometimes, the greatest power can derive from the weakest being and a lot of us don't know that or just choose to ignore it, altogether, so in a way, I try to showcase that, through my art."

Bulma raised her brows and instantly recalled her demise on Namek. An icy shiver ran down her spine at the memory, as she traced her fingers, along her bare midriff that had once been impaled by Frieza's cruel, merciless hand (A/N: Refer to Chapter 29). She'd never felt such searing, exploding pain like that her entire life, but the fact of the matter was that that incident substantiated the profound wisdom, behind the other female's words. Despite her immense inferiority on the physical plane, her sacrifice had triggered Vegeta's legendary transformation, bestowing upon him, an unprecedented power. It was thence that he was able to overwhelm a tyrannical force that had gone unchallenged, for decades. Perhaps her earlier impression of Mirai was premature.

"I never thought about it that way, but you're totally right." Bulma smiled. "You know, maybe you ought to be a philosopher."

Mirai blushed a little, at the praise, whereby the heiress' smile widened. A shy one, but definitely far more intelligent than she let on.

The rest of the day went really well. It'd been far too long, since she'd spent time chilling with her good old friends. She definitely needed that break and felt a lot more motivated now, to catch up with her work.

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After a long day at the office, Bulma purchased some groceries from the supermarket, before driving back home. She was dressed in a white, full sleeve, business shirt, a black pencil, mini-skirt that had a small cut above the back hem and matching stiletto pumps. It was dark and she took a detour through one of the most squalid neighbourhoods in all of West City, just wanting to arrive home and rest. All of a sudden, her engine broke down and the slick, metallic purple two-seater, slowly came to a halt.
"Oh fuck! Are you fucking kidding me?" The heiress snarled, pounding her fist against the steering wheel, before huffing and getting out of the car. Opening the hood, she peered inside and observed a leak in the oil pump. "God, of all the fucking times-"

"Hey, pretty lady, how about some help?!"

Bulma turned sideways and barely made out the figure of a tall, bald man, with a sound build, wearing a tank top and baggy, black jeans. What really made her pale, however, was that ugly, deranged smirk on his face.

"U-U-Umm, n-no thanks, I-I'm good."

"Haha, I don't think you understood me, girly." He replied, his expression becoming even more horrid. "I was asking if you could help me."

"O-Oh, w-well, as you c-can see, I'm quite b-b-busy."

"You hear that boys? She's busy hehehehe."

If Bulma wasn't horrified before, she certainly was now, as multiple, nerve-wracking sounds of cryptic laughter erupted from nearby. After it finally died down, three other figures emanated from an alleyway. It was a little difficult to tell in the dark, but they all seemed to have some distinctive, grisly red skull and swords sign, embossed on their white shirts, indicating that they were likely part of the same gang. She shuddered involuntarily, wondering what she could possibly do now. Dammit, she just had to take that goddamned detour, didn't she?!

"Too busy for the red sword clan, eh?!" One of the hoodlums proclaimed, strutting towards the heiress, whereby she placed a protective hand over her chest. "Come on, lovely lady, we're not asking for much." He inched his lascivious fingers, towards her face. "Just a little something to tide us-"

POW!

Instinctively, Bulma yelled and landed a punch square on the gaunt man's nose, eliciting a painful cry from the accosting male, much to the shock of everyone present, including herself. She winced and shook her hand and when she saw the seething face glaring back at her, the heiress bit her lower lip and shifted back.

"You fucking bitch!" He roared, as he carefully held his broken, bleeding nose.

As quickly as possible, Bulma forced herself out of her heels and ran as fast as she could on her bare feet, in no specific direction.

"After her!" The bald one ordered.

Soles aching and burning from racing through the rough asphalt, Bulma refused to capitulate. Nevertheless, the attackers were on her within no time at all and the heiress knew it. Just as one of them was about to make a grab for her, she side stepped and held her leg out, causing him to trip over it and skid along the road. He screamed, feeling his flesh tear and the hard gravel sting his exposed tissue. That man would not be getting up any time soon. His three comrades, however, were a different story. Desperate and on her last footing, Bulma dug for something, anything, in the
pockets of her miniskirt. A scintilla of hope kindled within her, as she remembered that her keychain was actually a tiny, pepper-spray canister. As the remaining hooligans rounded on her, she unleashed her weapon and spritzed it into the eyes of the closest attacker, before kneeing him right in the knackers as hard as she could, whereby he fell to the ground, a drooling mess, gasping, breathing and howling, for dear life.

'That's two down!' Bulma thought, gaining more confidence. Perhaps she could escape this mess, all by herself! The only disgusting ratbags left, were the guy with the broken nose and the big, bald man.

"Go on, what're you waiting for?!!" The bald one spurred his comrade on, who appeared reluctant to move forward, especially after seeing the blue-haired virago take down two of his buddies. Vacillating between following his superior's orders and taking off, the man eventually dared to make a slight move in Bulma's direction.

"Don't you take another step or so help me, I will burn your fucking eyeballs, right out of their fucking sockets, I swear to God!" She ominously held out the pepper-spray.

That was all he needed to see and hear, before he cut his losses and darted off, to who knows where.

"Tch, coward." The remaining gangster cracked his shoulders and knuckles a few times, before moving forward, with a malevolent grin. "You're a tough one. I like tough, little birds." The heiress issued the same threats and warnings, just as loudly and forebodingly as before, only this time they didn't seem to get through. No matter! Bulma sprayed away, however, the muscled figure quickly held a protective palm in front of his face and shut his eyes, blocking off most of the blinding, stinging vapour, while his other hand knocked down the canister.

Bulma gasped and any hope she might've had before, dropped to the ground, right along with her pepper-spray. She was all alone and defenseless. One brutal backhand was all it took to floor her, before the depraved lunatic straddled her hips and ripped away at her shirt buttons with one hard jerk and did the same with her bra. She struggled all the while, but could do nothing as her entire torso was exposed to his leering eyes and revolting touch.

"Please, stop!" She begged, tears rapidly cascading down her face. "I'll give you anything you want! Please, don't do this!"

"You are everything I want!" The man cackled evilly, having heard the same cries, countless times before. It just never got old.

The heiress whimpered, plagued with an ugly amalgam of panic and despair, as he began to unbuckle his black, leather belt. No, it couldn't end like this! No way! She'd rather die than be violated by this putrid pile of filth! Where was Vegeta?! Where was Goku?! They always arrived just in time to save her, right?! Why should now be any different?! They had to come, they just had to! She willed it, with every bit of strength she had! She refused to resign herself to such an ugly fate! And yet, there was nothing she could do! She was powerless against this heartless maniac and she knew it! As the fiend was finished unzipping his pants and she saw him pull out his ghastly erection, she came to the sinking realization that there would be no savior or hero, to deliver her from this perilous situation. Not this time…

_A/N: Oh God… I'm the worst person on this planet, aren't I? I'm sorry everyone, so sorry, but keep in mind that nothing major has happened yet and it may not happen! This isn't the end, so don't_
lose hope! Again, my deepest apologies, but this is an integral part of the plot and you'll understand why, later on, so again, do not despair!

And don't worry, I've written a lot of the next chapter, so the following update should come soon! I promise you, the next chapter will turn out very good! You'll see! So be sure to review and leave me your thoughts and I'll update ASAP!

p.s. And if any of you send me death threats, I totally understand! I quite possibly deserve them haha!
A/N: Here it is! Warning: It gets a little graphic here, but not in the way you think! This is a great chapter, I promise, so read on and enjoy! Some major changes are going to take place here and I would love to hear your thoughts/recommendations, so please review!

Oh and there's also some trivia at the end xD!!

Chapter 48: Changes

Vegeta was in the middle of a brutal training session, wearing just his spandex pants and a pair of training boots, when suddenly he felt something amiss, some prodding sensation in the back of his mind that quickly grew, until he came to the conclusion that something wasn't right. What was it?!

His heart felt heavier and heavier, with each passing second, as the internal tension brewed! Why?!

Wait a minute, where was Bulma?! Oh fuck, Bulma! Her teensy Ki signal was fluctuating erratically! That could only mean-

"FUCK! FUCK! FUCK!"

Powering up to Super Saiyan, he blasted right through the gravity machine, not caring in the slightest, as he made a speedy trek towards his companion. He could sense her in trouble! There was a far stronger Ki signal right there with her! A hellish inferno sizzled through him! No one had any right to lay a finger on his woman, ever! This bastard would pay dearly! Whatever miserable moments of his life remained, would be lived in utter humiliation and remorse, before he was sent to the lake of fire, to simmer painfully therein, till the end of time.

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Rape.

She'd seen it numerous times on television, read the darkest scenes in countless novels of many genres, heard the heart-rending recounts of scores of individuals, both men and women that had lived through the trauma, yet nothing could prepare her for the monstrous reality of what was about to transpire.

Cruel, malevolent and pure evil were the only words to describe the detestable grin, in front of her. The heartless beast shifted his pale face forward and Bulma decided then that no matter what became of her, she wouldn't go down without a fight! She'd been through much worse than him and still remained intact! Tightening her fist, with her thumb pointing outwards, she smooshed the end of the thick digit against the bald man's eye.

"ARRRRGGGGHHHHH!" The man screamed, clutching his injured black orb. "WHORE!" He seized her hand with both of his and instantly snapped her thumb. Bulma cried out like never before. Her hefty, heartrending yowls were not unheard, but even so, no one came to her aid. The pain was worse than anything she'd experienced, other than Namek. "Fucking slut!" He harshly grabbed her soft hair. "I was gonna make this quick and easy, but now- now you're gonna feel each and every ounce of pain, as I fuck every single hole in your body!"

He made his way down and ripped off her skirt and underwear, with sheer force alone, before tossing them away and roughly spreading her legs.
"No, don't, please!" The heiress implored, forcing her blue eyes shut, as she vainly tried to steel herself for the inevitable.

The second he was about to enter her, however, Bulma felt a strong gust of wind approaching and in that very moment, the weight was lifted, from above her. A few tremulous seconds later, she dared to take a peek, with an ajar eye. Standing above her and facing the other direction, was none other than her Super Saiyan seraph, his muscled frame taut and golden tail bristled, as it lashed behind him in tempestuous fury. The queasiness immediately decamped from her soul and her heart lightened, with the utmost relief, despite the excruciating pain in her broken thumb. It was all she could do to not throw herself his way, begging him to hold her forever and promise that he would never leave her side.

"What the fuck?!" The bald hooligan sat up, rubbing his aching head, in confusion. He scowled viciously, as he saw some shirtless, blonde-haired midget situated between him and his prize. Embarrassed at his state, he zipped his pants back up and stood to his feet. "Who the fuck are you?!" He snarled. "Get the fuck outta my way, before I kill you!"

The Prince was barely paying any attention to his blather, however. A raging conflagration burned within his blood cells, as he considered the most painful way to end the life of this unsightly neanderthal.

"I said, outta my way!" The thug began approaching him threateningly and Vegeta did likewise, till they were vis-a-vis. "The bitch and I were in the middle of something and you're interrupting, so fuck off, pipsqueak, before I-"

In the very next instance, he was on the ground, Vegeta's foot planted on his sternum, eliciting a series of pained grunts. He pinned him down so hard that he was unable to move an inch upwards. How was this little bastard so strong?! It didn't make any sense! Sure, he had an impressive physique, but he was at least a foot smaller than himself!

"You know, I've decided that I'm not going to kill you, after all." The Saiyan Prince asseverated, his tone menacingly low. "No, for a putrid parasite like yourself, death would be far too easy." He pressed down harder on the man's chest, turning his grunts into excruciating howls. A few seconds later, he abruptly lifted up his boot, much to the astonishment of the shameless reprobate.

The ruffian gaped at him, with evident fear, suspicion and trepidation in his eyes. Who was this guy?! Where did he come from and how did he possess such raw power?! Worse yet, what did he have planned?! The most crazed, merciless and hellish gleam, stormed within those diabolical, teal orbs of his, an utterly horrifying view, even by his own standards.

"Get up." The Prince ordered and the man hesitated. "I said, get the fuck up!" He repeated more forcefully.

After warily getting to his feet, the petrified gangster found himself rooted to the spot, his entire nervous system frozen, as Vegeta's deranged and penetrating gaze, pierced right through the burrows of his quivering soul- if he even had one.

"What's the matter?!" The Saiyan snarled. "You looked like you were enjoying yourself before, you fucking piece of shit!"

"I- I- I was j-just."
A low punch had him keeling over in pain, wheezing and coughing out blood, as he felt his ribs crack under the force of the blow. It would've easily punctured a bloody hole through his body, had the Prince not held back.

"Just what, huh?!" Vegeta forcibly gripped him by the throat and hauled him back up, so that they were eye to eye. "JUST TRYING TO RAPE MY WOMAN?!

Bulma's eyes bugged out and she felt her stomach fill to the brim, with soaring butterflies, at the warm, affectionate appellation he'd bestowed upon her. Not once had he referred to her in such a manner and just hearing it, made her heart slowly flutter towards the skies, momentarily allowing her mind to drift away from all her pains and horrors.

"I- I-

"Tell me something, coward!" He squeezed his vice-like hand around the hoodlum's thick, muscled neck, wringing it like a twig, causing his face to redden, as several long, ghastly veins protruded along his bald head. "Just how much do you enjoy fucking?!

"Wh-what?!" He rasped.

"You want her, don't you?!" He loosened his hold and gestured his face towards Bulma, who suddenly looked shocked and perplexed. The gangster took a few deep breaths, in a bid to gather some air.

"I- uh-" He looked over Vegeta's shoulder a while and quirked his lips, in a villainous smirk. Just seeing her petrified, naked and in tears, deluged the licentious thug, with depraved lust and frenzied euphoria, warping any sense of pain or doubt that a sane, rational individual would have, in his position. His member stiffened like a long balloon bloated with helium, at the prospect of finishing what he started, with the little minx. "Y-Yes, I wanna fuck her till she-

"Good, that's all I needed to hear." Vegeta interjected, smiling in the most sinister, vindictive manner, before flashing his teal eyes, thereby holding his victim firmly in place, using just his psychokinetic abilities. Completely dumbstruck and rendered motionless, the crook could only cry out to the top of his lungs and gape in pure horror, as the Saiyan materialized a deadly blade of violet Ki around his hand, slowly and painfully beginning to sever his rock-hard phallus, thereafter, right through the tough, cotton material of his dark jeans, one excruciatingly gruesome millimetre at a time.

Bulma gasped and whipped her gaze away from the horrendous scene, breathing hard and shutting her ears, as the man's bloodcurdling screams and cries, echoed across the neighbourhood. It was just too awful seeing her Vegeta being so cruel and cold-blooded, evidently reaping pleasure out of brutally tormenting another, in such gruesome fashion. Her mind ventured back to Namek, more specifically to Captain Ginyu and his description of Vegeta.

"Other than Frieza, he's more ruthless than every single one of us. His name carries great infamy, even amongst the ranks of the Planet Trade." (A/N: Refer to Chapter 19).

Was this the part of Vegeta that she'd been overlooking all this time?! There was no denying that he'd changed a lot, since she first saw him, but some hellish traces of his past were still embedded
within him and she got a firsthand glance at what they looked like. It made her cry.

Drawing out his punishment for well over a minute, the Prince finally grinned in satisfaction, for a job well done and released the bald man from his psychokinetic hold. He collapsed onto the ground, a grisly puddle of crimson, pooling beneath the large stub, where his pillar and stones, once endured. He screamed and screamed, like there was no tomorrow! He would've much preferred death over such a wretched fate! As the icing on the cake, the Prince kicked the amputated sex organs in front of his abhorrent victim's face, forcing him to look at them, as he lay in the fetal position, bleeding and in tears, pitifully howling and clutching the area where his manhood used to be.

"Just look at yourself now, you miserable fucker!" Vegeta sneered. "I hope this was all worth it! Enjoy the rest of your useless life!"

With that, he whirled around and headed towards Bulma. He smirked as he took notice of two other hooligans that were on the ground, groaning in pain. In his desperateness to save Bulma, he hadn't noticed them, but now, pride soared through him, knowing how well the little vixen had done, in spite of her physical limitations. It all crumbled, however, when he saw her flinching, as he closed the distance between them. He frowned at the estranged look she gave him, as though she scarcely recognized who he was.

"B-Bulma?" He asked, powering down to his base form.

She blinked a few times, glancing between him and the amputee. Only now that he'd regained some degree of composure, did the Prince realize what he'd done, right in front of her eyes. He hadn't meant for her to see that! His shoulders drooped and an expression of guilt and shame suddenly flashed across his features, much to his own shock and disbelief. Why should he feel guilty?! That bastard deserved every iota of pain he inflicted upon him, if not worse! Hardening his expression, he knelt down and carefully perused the woman.

She had a cut lip, her hair was mussed, her apparel was in tatters and her big, starry, oceanic gems were brimmed with tears. Her ashen soles were also bleeding, littered with nasty scratches and abrasions. Vegeta's heart lurched, seeing her this way and it only staggered further, as he noticed her clutching her right hand, thumb dangling, in a horrid manner. He must've been staring too long, because the heiress followed his gaze and winced hard, as the excruciating pain struck her, once again, full force.

"Hey, take it easy." The Saiyan said calmly, gently taking hold of her arms.

"It hurts, Vegeta!" She sobbed. "It hurts so much!"

"I've got a pack of senzu beans, at home."

"Hm." Bulma nodded weakly, still weeping and giving him a shaken look, but smiling a fraction through watery eyes, at the fact that he'd just referred to Capsule Corporation as 'home'. It warmed her heart, even if she did feel aversive towards him, for the cruel display.

"Wait here a minute."

"What are you-" She didn't get to finish, as he walked back towards his victim, aka her victimizer. "No don't!" She yelled, not wanting him to get any more blood on his hands.
"I'm not going to kill him, okay?!” The Prince shot her a glare. 'Only because he deserves to suffer.' He mentally added, before reaching over and roughly yanking off the man's navy blue, tank top, as he continued to ululate, like a bratty child that just had his favourite toy, taken away from him.
'Tch, fucking piece of shit!' Vegeta sneered down and kicked him in the head, knocking him out, but not killing him, just so he wouldn't have to hear that disgusting, ear-piercing racket.

He returned to Bulma's side.

"Is- is he-"

"He's just unconscious." Vegeta disdainfully interjected.

"O-Oh."

"Here, let me put this on you, so we can leave." He held out the shirt.

"I- I can't Vegeta, m-my thumb." She shook her head, in protest.

"You can't go home like this." He argued, once again lighting a tiny smile on her face, as he said it once again. Home. It sounded so foreign, coming from his lips and yet it soothed her, like nothing else could. "Don't worry about the pain. It'll all be gone, once you eat a senzu bean."

After a moment's hesitation, the heiress reluctantly nodded her head and despite a great deal of struggling and cries, Vegeta was eventually able to cover up her nude body. The shirt was humongous in comparison to her petite frame and travelled down sufficiently enough to conceal her rear and nether regions.

Gathering her up in his arms, the Prince flew back to Capsule Corporation. She tightly clutched him and nuzzled into his bare chest, whimpering, as tears of relief and pain, alike, streamed down her face. Landing on the balcony to their room, Vegeta carried her inside and gently placed her lithe form on the bed, before opening the drawer and grabbing the sack of senzu beans that Krillin had given him, back when Frieza and his father came to Earth.

He opened it and put one in her mouth, getting her to swallow it, thereafter. The very next instant, her eyes widened, as she felt all her aches, cuts and injuries disappear. She'd never before had the pleasure of recovering, via senzu bean and it was an interesting experience, to say the least, slightly similar to when she was teleported from Namek to Earth. She sat up on the bed, sighing in relief and after putting away the senzu-sack, Vegeta plopped down next to her.

"Thank you." Bulma whispered, through teary eyes and tightly embraced him, girding her lissom arms around his neck, as she sobbed. "I'm so glad you came! I was so scared, Vegeta! I thought he-"

"Shh, it's fine." Vegeta murmured back, awkwardly rubbing her back, as he held her for a while. He didn't normally do this sort of thing, but he supposed he could make an exception, just this once. He stiffened, however, as he detected the scent of that loathsome, recreant. It must've been because she was still wearing his shirt. "Wait a second." He gently pushed her back and began pulling it off.

"Vegeta, what're you-"

"You need to get cleaned up." He interjected, lips curled up in a snarl. "You've still got that
bastard's scent on you!"

"O-Oh." She nodded and let him remove the shirt. Vegeta grabbed it and went out the balcony, before tossing it into the sky and blasting it to smithereens. He then took Bulma by the hand and led her to the bathroom.

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"Mmmm, feels nice." Bulma sighed blissfully, a tranquil smile lighting up her face, as she lay in the pleasantly warm bathtub. Vegeta sat down on the opposite side. He was gently cupping her heel, as he cleaned the blood and muck off her sole, with a red rose bath puff that was immersed in her lusciously fragrant, strawberry shower gel. Her worries and trauma vanished away, with each gratifying stroke. "You know, I really feel like a Princess, right now."

"Tch, don't get used to this." The morose Saiyan grouched, with a faint blush. "This is a one-time thing."

"Aw, don't say that." The heiress mock-pouted. "I'm your woman, remember? You said so yourself."

"I- I said no such thing!" Vegeta vehemently denied, face flushing further. Darn her for having the gall to bring that up!

"Did too!" Bulma grinned friskily.

"Stupid human!" He grumbled.

"You know, you're really cute when you're angry." She winked teasingly.

"Wh-What?!" The Prince looked appalled, the tone and swathe of his blush growing profusely, till he looked as red as a cherry tomato, ripened under the sun. "H-How dare you call me that?!"

Bulma stuck her tongue out and continued to embarrass him further, much to his chagrin. Secretly, however, a part of him felt extremely relieved to see her in such high spirits, merrier than ever, in spite of what had almost went down, barely a half-hour ago.

"You know Vegeta, you still owe me a favor from way back." The heiress recounted. "Remember when I first set up the gravity chamber for you?" (A/N: Refer to Chapter 39).

"No."

"Hey, don't play dumb, of course you do!" She loured, lightly kicking him on the chest. "Anyway, so I've decided to cash in my cheque. I want you to treat me to a bath like this, every night before bedtime, for the next three months."

"N-No way!" He grimaced, vigorosly shaking his head. "If you really think I'm going to indulge you-"

"Oh come on." Bulma insisted. "I'll even throw in that simulator upgrade that you wanted."

Vegeta scrunched his dark brows, as he considered the offer. That upgrade did sound extremely alluring, but was he really deigned to become her manservant each night, for three whole months?!
"Three months is too much!" He objected. "I'll spoil you for two weeks, at the very most!"

"What?!" Bulma protested, indignantly. "That's practically nothing, no way! Two months, then!"

"Three weeks!"

"Eight weeks!"

They argued back and forth, till they finally decided on a five week period. Vegeta agreed to an offer of six or even seven, if she could do the upgrades within a time-frame of two weeks, but since that was impossible, given her work schedule, she grudgingly settled for five.

The odd pair lay entwined, within the sheets of the queen-sized bed. Bulma smiled, as she inhaled the wild, exotic scent of her man, her beloved Prince and saviour. She should've known from the start that he'd never let anyone hurt her, now or ever. That ugly, bald fucker was probably dead by now. She gasped at the thought, her heart pounding against her chest. Sure, he brought it on himself, but did that really make it right? Of course not!

"What is it?" Vegeta mumbled in irritation, as he felt her supple figure, tense up.

"I- I was just wondering, did you really have to- you know- geld that guy, right in front of me?"

She loosened her hold, on him. "Don't get me wrong, I know he was a sick, sadistic fuck, but wasn't it too much?"

Vegeta paused a moment.

"At the time, I wasn't thinking straight." He confessed, in a low, contrite tone. "If I'd known you were there, I wouldn't have-"

"Vegeta, this isn't about me." She cut him off, pushing him down, as she lay on top of him and looked him straight in the eyes. "I know you were raised to fight, all your life and I still can't even begin to imagine what you've been through, nor do I want to. But all that's in the past. You're different now. You don't have to be so cruel anymore. It's not who you are."

"Tch, not who I am?!" He sneered. "You have no idea who I am! And if you think that's cruel, then you don't know a damn thing!"

"I know that you saved me." She immediately replied, stroking his feathery hair. "I know that you're not the same person that came here to conquer us and steal the dragon balls." The heiress kissed his forehead. "You've changed so much. Just promise me that you won't-"

"I'll promise you one thing, Bulma!" He cuttingly interjected, peeved at her ridiculous and feeble attempts to foist her absurd notions of morality, onto a warrior of his ilk. "If someone deserves to suffer, then I'll make sure that they do and it won't be pleasant!"

Bulma couldn't curb the fear that overcame her, at his ruthless tone and the menacing look in his eyes.
"What, you're afraid of me now?!" The Prince seethed, as he took in the unmistakable scent of her fear.

"I- uh-" Bulma's heart skittered. "I'm sorry," She sighed, chewing her lower lip. "I- I don't want to be, but when you talk like that, I- I j-just can't help it."

Vegeta scrutinized her, with narrowed eyes and she let out another sigh.

"Let's forget about it, alright?" Bulma got up, off the mass of muscle beneath her and lay on her side of the bed, facing the other direction and shaking, as she tightly hugged herself. She willed so hard not to cry again, but less than a minute later, a river of tears were escaping her eyelids, as ceaseless doubts and questions assaulted her mind, from every direction. Why should she expect Vegeta to conform to her Earthly ideals? After all, he was a battle-hardened warrior from outer space, born and bred to kill. Was it unfair on her part, to try and force him to be someone he wasn't? Was it right for her to lie next to a man who wrought pleasure out of-

Her thoughts came to an abrupt halt, as she felt Vegeta's steel-like arms wind around her waist from behind, his sturdy form, pressing against her back.

"You don't have to fear me." He softly whispered in her ear and somehow, that was all it took to dispel her worries, doubts and misgivings, as warmth and solace blossomed through her. He'd never spooned her before and it felt really pleasant.

"I know." She replied, after a short interval, placing her hand over his. "I'm sorry."

Perhaps she shouldn't dwell on such silly thoughts. Vegeta was who he was and while he was unrepentant, he did vow only to be cruel, to those who deserved it. She was still fervently opposed to it, but she didn't want to create any sort of rift between them, especially now, when she needed him, more than ever. Besides, he'd changed a lot already, so who's to say that he would heed her words and show a little restraint, the next time?

"You know, if you were properly trained, you wouldn't need my help, in situations like that." Vegeta stated, wedging right through her thoughts.

"Trained?" Bulma raised a curious brow, shifting her position around, so she could face him. "As in, martial-arts trained?"

"What else?"

"Yeah, but how am I gonna find the time for that?" She asked. "I'm already hard-pressed enough, as it is. Plus who'd teach me? Everyone's off training for the androids."

"I could." The Prince mumbled. He was glad the lights were out, else Bulma would've seen the heat rushing to his cheeks.

"You?" Bulma's eyes widened. "You- you'd really do that?"

"Perhaps." He shrugged his shoulders.

"But- but what about your training and-"
"Let me worry about that." He interposed. "Just be prepared. You're free on the weekends, right?

"Well- yeah, most of the time, anyway."

"Good, we start this weekend, understood?"

"Uh, well- okay- I guess."

"And remember, I won't go easy on you."

"Uh-huh." Bulma nodded, feeling a little anxious. 'Man, what have I gotten myself into?'

This certainly changed things.

A/N: It does change things doesn't it hehe? So, in case you haven't figured it out, this was the primary reason behind the near-rape incident, but it's not the only reason. Just how successful will Bulma's training be? And what of Trunks? Stay tuned, to find out!

Last, but not least, here's some trivia, for you lot:

The now-dickless, hooligan that tried to rape Bulma is actually a DBZ character and not an OC. Can you guess who he is? Till next time, my friends! :D

Update: Thank you so much, annegoddamn for drawing the spooning scene, at the end of the chapter!! I really loved it, my friend!!! Be sure to check out her twitter and tumblr pages!
Not your typical catfight

A/N: First of all, congratulations are in order for ‘annegoddamn’ on fanfiction, for winning last chapter's trivia! Be sure to check out her stories too, especially ‘A Thrilling Chase’. She's a really good, up-and-coming writer, who could use some sweet lovin' xD!

So there's your answer. The now-dickless rapist was actually Yamu from the Buu saga, the guy working for Babidi, alongside Spopovitch. Of course this will have very significant implications for the future chapters, but no spoilers on my part, sorry!

I also want to give a huge shout-out to LVR4Trunks-n-Vegeta, on fanfiction, for her review! I completely agree! Rapists are dirty scumbags and totally deserve the Yamu treatment!

That said, let us move forward with the next chapter!

Chapter 49: Not your typical catfight

Five weeks passed since the near-rape incident. Bulma had long since gotten past it. However, the training that Vegeta was putting her through was extremely taxing, to say the least. So far, it was strictly physical.

"When are you gonna teach me how to fly and fire Ki blasts?" She pouted, as she stood on one leg, knee raised around mid-chest level and arms slanted diagonally, in a Shaolin crane stance. "You said you would."

"Fly?" The Prince scoffed. "You haven't even learned how to crawl yet, silly female."

Bulma grit her teeth, shooting him a hard glare.

"You know, I really feel like kicking you right now, but I'd probably end up falling on my ass and would have to start this silly exercise, all over again."

"Damn straight." He smirked, rapaciously drinking in the alluring sight of her long, shapely legs and supple midriff. For training, she usually wore a low cut sports bra and little gym shorts with small slits on the sides that didn't leave much to the imagination.

"Stop that, you pervert!" She seethed, cheeks flushing and a familiar warmth pooling between her legs, under his lascivious scrutiny. "I'm trying to concentrate!"

"A true warrior can concentrate, under any circumstance." The Prince replied, with an impish grin, his eyes glued to those enticingly toned, gleaming gams. "Besides, it's your fault for wearing something so provocative."

"Why you little- ugh screw you, I'm not gonna give into your bullshit! Not this time, hmph!" With patience and forbearance she'd hadn't know hitherto, the heiress swallowed her mounting wroth and let that insufferable lover/mentor of hers, have his pathetic victory. She knew that if she let him get to her, she'd end up on the ground and would have to repeat this vexatious drill. "How much longer, anyway?!" She hissed.

"Ten more minutes."

"I fucking hate you!"
"I know."

"Bastard!"

"Careful now, or I might just add another five minutes."

"Ugh- dammit, why must you be so infuriating?!"

Vegeta simply chuckled. He never imagined that training her would be quite so entertaining.

Standing on one leg for twenty minutes was much more difficult than it sounded and it did sound pretty fucking difficult. The Prince had recommended she practice in her own time. At first, she disregarded his advice, but afterwards learned that it was to her own benefit, since with each new session, Vegeta was increasing the intensity of her training, at a rate that was virtually impossible, to keep up with.

'Guess he wasn't kidding when he said he wouldn't be going easy.'

This barely scratched the surface, however. It was the sprinting, push-ups, sit-ups, chin-ups, pull-ups, deep knee-bends and back exercises, which wore out her hapless body so much that at times, she would end up in tears.

But when all was said and done, her pride, self-confidence and contentment would shoot right through the roof. And thanks to the training, her zesty sex life was far more vigorous than ever before. Most notable of all, however, was the toll it had taken on her personality. If she didn't notice it herself, those around her found Bulma to be more amiable, refined, elegant and disciplined in nature, as opposed to the typically spoiled, entitled and churlish heiress.

Nighttime marked the final bathing occasion with Vegeta, where Bulma could lay back and relax, while the Prince deftly scrubbed her clean, as per their little deal (A/N: Refer to previous chapter). 'I'm really gonna miss this.' She thought, wistfully.

Another week thereafter, Vegeta got her started on basic blocks, hand strikes and leg strikes, before moving onto locks, grapples, ground techniques and self-defence maneuvers.

Two months passed…

"Vegeta come on, there's no way I can spar with you." Bulma grumbled. "You'd mop the floor with me!"

"It's not a spar, because I won't be fighting back." He shook his head. "I'm simply going to evade and if you can land a single clean hit, you win."

Bulma chewed her lower lip, hesitating for a moment or two, before nodding her head, as she tentatively assumed her battle stance.

"Go."

She was instantly on the offensive, firing away with every strike in the book and hitting nothing but thin air, at every turn.

"Dammit, you're too fast!" She whined, already out of breath, after a mere two minutes.

"I'm keeping my power level even with yours." The Prince contended. "As long as I'm doing that, I can't move any faster than you can."
"Then why can't I hit you?!" She frustratingly demanded.

"You're not reading my movements properly, that's why." Vegeta stoically replied. "Your entire body is tense. You're overthinking. Loosen your muscles and try again. Remember, use your instincts, but don't rely on them too much, or else you'll be caught off guard."

"God, you make it sound so easy." Bulma groused.

"Stop complaining and start attacking!"

"Alright, alright."

Taking a deep breath and shaking her arms and legs out, the heiress leapt forward, with a fresh barrage of kicks and punches, doing better this time, but still nowhere close to reaching her target.

"Wait- just a- moment." The heiress strained, clasping her knees as she doubled over, greedily gulping the air around her. "Need to- catch my- breath."

"Oh come on." The agitated Prince pressed the base of his palm, against his forehead.

"Sorry, it's just- hard." Bulma stood straight. "You know- for some reason- I'm feeling- really heavy- right now." She slowly cupped her swelling mounds within her dainty palms, whereby Vegeta gaped at her, utterly dumbstruck, at the sudden, unexpected move.

That simple second of distraction was more than enough to catch the Saiyan off-guard. Vegeta hardly followed as Bulma swiftly spun around and landed a spinning wheel kick right in the face, the back end of her Saiyan, training boot colliding hard against his cheek bone.

He was forced a step or two backwards, trying to regain footing, but after a few seconds, falling on his back. The heiress was instantly on top, her bare, porcelain legs astride his firm, naked chest, as a smug smile of triumph glittered her features.

"I did it!" She cheered giddily. "I actually beat you!"

"You- that- that was plain dirty!"

"Come on, don't make excuses now!" She shot back, her eyes narrowed and grin, wider than ever. "You said that if I hit you once, I win. Well, not only did I hit you, but I totally floored your ass!"

"Bullshit, you said you were still catching your- mffhh-"

"Ah, ah, ah!" The heiress shifted her position forward, straddling his face between her legs and thereby smothering his objections, with her concealed centre-folds. Her bold, brash and brazen move instantly set him aflame, with desire. "You're the one who never stops preaching that all's fair in battle. It's not my fault, you fell for such a simple ruse, but I guess I shouldn't be surprised, given my flawlessly sexy anatomy."

She laughed, when she heard the Prince growl against her nub.

"Now then." Bulma abruptly stood over him and removed her boots, thereafter tugging at her little black gym shorts. Vegeta gulped, frozen stiff as she pulled them off and tossed them aside.

A/N: Warning: A tiny bit of lemon here, but nothing too explicit hehe. 😊

"Wait, what're you- mffhh-"
Not another word was said, as Bulma's wet, flowing nether lips ground against Vegeta's lips. Yet again, she bestrode the astounded face of the flame-haired Saiyan.

"See this, Vegeta." She complacently crowed. "This is what defeat tastes like." The Prince's chest rose and fell, in short and rapid, peaks and troughs, sweeping bundles of sizzling desire, possessing every inch of him, as his lusty female claimed her victory, in every sense of the word. "Now taste it!" Bulma fiercely demanded. He didn't need to be told twice and his voracious tongue immediately began it's covetous foray into the sweet, familiar territory within her moist, blossoming inner-walls, ravenously indulging in the tropical taste of her enriched, flavourful nectar. The heiress pressed down harder and screamed, as she felt him pleasure her with that entrancingly hot tongue, his muffled moans shooting from her genital nucleus, right up to the tips of her shoulders, deluging her every pore, with mind-numbing ecstasy.

A few months later…

"Hi Bulma- whoa, what the heck is going on?" Earth's dumbfounded hero asked, making a sudden appearance in the gravity room, while a certain odd pair were in the midst of an unforeseen training session. "What the fuck are you doing here, Kakarot?!" Vegeta brusquely demanded. "Get out, now!"

"Whoa, whoa, relax Veg, I'm just here to-"

PAF!

A right fist connected with Goku's jaw, sending him flying headfirst into the solidified wall, behind him. Bulma gasped, covering her mouth in shock, before hissing. "Vegeta!"

"Ow, hey, that wasn't very-"

"Call me that again and it'll be the last thing you ever say, clown!" The Prince snapped, cutting off his Super Saiyan colleague. "But- but Bulma said you loved that nickname." Goku pouted hurtfully.

Vegeta shot his blue-haired pupil a chilling glare, whereby she bit her lower lip and let out a few guilty titters. "Care to explain?!" He asked, or rather demanded.

"Um- not really." Bulma answered weakly, before wisely diverting her attention to the disgruntled encroacher. "So, what're you doing here Goku?"

"Who, me?" The Saiyan asked, pointing to himself.

"Well, I don't see any other Gokus around here, do you?" She huffed, arms akimbo, rolling her eyes at his subsequent blank look. "Anyway, why're you here?"

"I- uh- I- sorry, I can't even remember now." He laughed, placing two fingers on his forehead and abruptly vanishing. An awkward pause followed.

"That was weird." Bulma finally remarked in bewilderment, cocking her head sideways.

"You know, I don't appreciate you spreading such idiotic rumors, so just for that, you're going to do another eight-hundred push-ups, within a half-hour."
"Oh come on, no fair!" The heiress ardently whined, in protest.

"You brought it on yourself, so I don't want to hear a single complaint from you!"

"So, anything?" Piccolo asked. He and Goku had been expecting Trunks' conception, for quite a while now. That was the purpose of the rustic Saiyan's unwelcome visit, to Capsule Corporation.

"Other than a swelling jaw and a bruised skull, no." Goku replied, massaging the aforementioned areas, as he frowned pensively. "I don't really understand. Haven't they been- you know-"

"Stop, dammit, I don't wanna hear about it!" The Namekian growled, revolted at the slightest allusion to the humanoid mating process. He'd once mistakenly gone too close to Mount Paozu, during the night and heard the jovial Saiyan grunting and moaning, as he made out with that raven-haired banshee wife of his. "Ugh, disgusting!" He shuddered at the horrid memory. The noise alone was so nauseating that he'd been meditating for weeks, in a futile attempt to try and rid it, from his tormented mind. He couldn't even imagine how traumatized he'd be, had he gotten close enough to get a visual. Thank God, that wasn't the case.

"But still- Trunks." The Saiyan continued. "He should've been conceived by now."

"Maybe it's not supposed to happen, in this timeline."

"No way, that can't be right!" Earth's hero vehemently shook his head. "If I know Bulma-" He suddenly brightened up. "Oh yeah, speaking of Bulma, I saw her training with Vegeta! Isn't that exciting?"

Piccolo's narrowed eyes momentarily widened, just a tad.

"Not really." He eventually shrugged.

"Just wait till Chi-Chi hears about this!"

"I'd rather not."

A short while later…

"WHAT?!" The raven-haired woman shrieked, much to the distress of every living creature in Mount Paozu that wasn't already deaf. "Vegeta's training Bulma?!"

"Uh- yeah."

"That- that can't be right, why would he ever-"

"I don't know."

Suddenly, the Ox Princess began to curse herself, as internal doubts festered, with regards to her initial assessment of the regal Saiyan. She was utterly convinced that everything he did was purely out of self-interest, but- that couldn't possibly account for this. There had to be some sort of reasonable explanation.

"Did you actually see them training?" Chi-Chi inquired.

"Well- I only caught a glimpse, but Bulma's power level was way higher than the average human's." He recounted.
"I see." She mused for several moments, before smirking, as an interesting idea hit her. "You know, it's been quite a while, since I've trained myself and honestly, I do kinda miss it."

Goku toppled to the ground, anime-style. Since Gohan's birth, all his wife had ever done was gripe about how terrible martial-arts was and all of a sudden, she wanted to- wait a second what did she want?

The Ox Princess pranced over to the wall-mounted, home phone, pulling it to her ear and dialling CC's private number. A few rings later…

"Hello, Briefs residence, who am I speaking with?"

"Hi Dr. Briefs, it's me Chi-Chi." The Ox Princess answered.

"Oh hi, Chi-Chi, how are you, my dear?"

"I'm fine thanks, yourself?"

"Not bad, not bad." He replied. "Do you wish to speak with Bulma, by any chance?"

"I do."

"Well, I'm afraid she's- uh- in the middle of something right now, so may I ask her to call you back?"

"Sure."

"Alrighty then, bye-bye."

"Bye."

The very next day…

"You know, this isn't a very smart idea." Vegeta stated, while Bulma garbed her skimpy, unofficial training uniform, her aquamarine hair tied back in a pony tail, as she prepared to head to Mount Paozu.

"Oh give me a break, like you're one to talk about smart ideas." The heiress shot back, with a scowl. "Honestly, what would you do if someone asked you, for a spar?"

"Kakarot asks me all the time and I just say no."

"That's different, that's just your ego." She countered, before sighing. "Look, it's just a friendly spar, there's nothing to worry about."

Vegeta grit his teeth, vexed by her stubbornness.

"Besides, if you're that concerned, you can come with me."

After a short argument, the Prince yielded and took off, cradling Bulma, within his strapping arms.

"Hey, come on, I can fly on my own now!" She protested.

"You can't afford to waste any energy, before a fight like this."

"It's a spar, not a fight." She argued.
"Whatever the case, my point remains." He insisted.

When they were around two miles away from their destination, the Prince abruptly let go and Bulma nearly landed face-first into the grass, before firing up her engines and shooting towards the insolent Saiyan.

"Hey, what the hell?!" The floating heiress loured.

"A little flying should help you warm up." He shrugged and zoomed off.

"Ugh- that jerk!" She exasperatedly trailed after him, knowing exactly why he'd dropped her. He never wanted to be seen doing anything remotely affectionate, for another. Little did Bulma know the real reason behind his action, as she arrived and gracefully landed in the heart of the savanna landscape, before a gaping audience.

"Y-Y-You c-can f-f-fly?" Chi-Chi incredulously stammered, before shaking her head and glowering at Goku. "Hey, why didn't you ever teach me how to fly, you big oaf?!"

"Uh- w-well- you n-n-never asked."

"Did you ask Vegeta to teach you how to fly?" The raven-haired Princess looked pointedly, at her soon-to-be opponent.

"Well, I kinda did, but-"

"Goku, I better learn how to fly, by the end of next week, or else someone's gonna pay dearly!" She turned her fearsome attention back to her husband.

"Okay, okay." The helpless Saiyan waved his hands, in surrender. 'I just don't understand her. One moment she forbids me from training Gohan and the next moment, she wants me to train her. I love you Chi-Chi, but you sure are crazy, sometimes.' He drolly thought to himself.

"Tch, let's get on with this already!" Vegeta growled, from a distance.

"Okay, Mr. Impatient!" Bulma took a deep breath and began warming-up, with a few stretches, splits and high-kicks.

"You're seriously gonna wear that?!!" The raven-haired woman asked, scornfully appraising Bulma's attire, or lack thereof.

"Oh grow up, drama queen." The heiress rolled her eyes. She didn't understand why excessively-cultured, goody-goodies like Chi-Chi, made a big deal over such trifles. As far as she was concerned, she was adequately dressed, thank you very much!

"Hey Chi-Chi, remember what I told you." Goku gave her a knowing look.

"Yeah, yeah I remember!" She grumbled.

"Wait, what did you tell her?" Bulma warily asked her clownish, best friend.

"Uh- nothing, I just- asked her to do her best hehehe." Goku slurred, laughing and scratching his head, sheepishly.

"Whatever." Bulma shook her head, unconvinced, but not particularly concerned.

The females got into their battle stances, those in attendance giving them a wide berth.
"Ready, start!" Goku gave the go-ahead and the pair leapt at one-another, firing an arsenal of attacks. To the utmost surprise of all those around, besides Vegeta, it was the blue-haired woman who had a clear edge the entire time, landing clean hits, one after another.

A wheel kick from Bulma, struck Chi-Chi right on the temple, immediately flooring her.

"Come on Chi-Chi, I know you're better than this." Bulma goaded.

"Grrr, take this!" The other woman stood to her feet and shot a powerful overhand right, however, Bulma slipped to the left and took hold of her arm, swiftly tripping her feet out from under her her, with a leg sweep and instantly pressing her advantage, as she locked her in a lethal, jiu-jitsu arm bar.

"Ow, stop, stop!" Chi-Chi cried, as Bulma continued to bend her poor arm, her toned calf pressing hard beneath the raven-haired woman's chin.

"Submit?"

"Yeah, whatever, submit!" The Ox-Princess relented and Bulma let go. 'Damn, she's good!' She thought to herself, rubbing and rolling her aching arm, while a certain flame-haired Saiyan smirked, from the sidelines.

"You taught her really well, Vegeta." Goku grinned, suddenly next to the Prince.

"Shut-up!" The older Saiyan blushed, turning his gaze aside. "Mind your own business! Besides, shouldn't you be cheering for your harpy wife?"

"Hey, that's not nice." Goku grumbled. "Anyway, Chi-Chi might be my wife, but Bulma's still my oldest friend, so- it's kinda hard to pick a side, here."

"Tch, your indecision is a weakness." Vegeta disdainfully remarked.

"Guess Round 1, goes to me." The heiress smiled smugly, placing her hands on her hips.

"It's not over yet, Bulma!" Chi-Chi fumed, before taking a breather and collecting herself. She really needed to focus, lest she suffer another ignominious defeat.

The second round was better for Chi-Chi, but Bulma still maintained the upper-hand.

'She's really quick on her feet.' The Ox Princess thought in frustration, completely on the defensive, as she tried to evade those lightning-fast kicks, most missing, but some hitting their target. Having learned gymnastics as a girl, leg strikes were Bulma's favourites.

POOF!

A left knee landed right beneath the chin, forcing Chi-Chi back, before Bulma delivered a front kick to the mid-section and a side-kick to the jaw, all with the same leg, each blow landing less than a fraction of a second, from the other. The raven-haired mother snarled and rushed forward, only to be floored with a jumping roundhouse kick, right across the face that whipped her head sideways. Had she been an ordinary human, the move would've easily snapped her neck, but alas she was not.

"Wow, aren't I just awesome?!" Bulma preened, flicking her hair back and winking, as she held up two-fingers, in a peace sign. "Guess I'm the new champ."
"Alright, that does it!" An irate Chi-Chi stood up, dusting off her clothes and fuming with rage. "No more holding back."

"Wh-What, y-you were h-holding back?!!" The heiress stammered, before bitterly glaring at her opponent. "Why didn't you tell me that?!!"

"You wanna do this for real, then?!" Chi-Chi challenged.

"Fine!"

"Go ahead, give me your best!" She prompted.

Bulma did just that, charging in, with her right hand raised.

"No don't-" Goku objected, while Vegeta was preparing to intervene, at any second.

This time, Chi-Chi easily evaded the attack and landed a hard, right knee to the mid-section, whereby Bulma's eyes widened and she flew back, skidding along the grass, as she clutched her fractured ribs, coughing out mouthfuls of blood.

Instantly alarmed, Vegeta flew over to the heiress, watching in dismay, as she winced with every agonizing breath. Chi-Chi moved towards her, as well.

"Oh God, Bulma, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to-"

"Stay away!" The Prince snarled at the raven-haired woman, dark eyes flashing with a gruesome gleam of pure murder. "Stay the fuck away!"

Chi-Chi stopped in her tracks, gulping, face writ with remorse and contrition, as she observed her blue-haired friend, struggle for breath.

"Chi-Chi, I specifically told you to hold back!" Goku chided, standing next to his wife and turning her, so they were face-to-face. "Why'd you have to do that for?!"

"I- I'm sorry, I'm so sorry." She grievously muttered, placing a hand on her aching chest. "I- I don't know know what came over me, I-" A heavy feeling of guilt flooded through the Ox Princess, as her dark eyes glistening, with abject tears. She couldn't believe she'd done that to Bulma, of all people. The same Bulma that had protected them from Vegeta and Frieza, the same Bulma that saved her little boy's life and that of her husband. How could she?

"You- you knew- all along." Bulma gave Vegeta a look of betrayal that hacked right through his solidified heart. The Prince culpably nodded. She instantly figured it out. This whole thing was nothing but a masquerade. She stood absolutely no chance against Chi-Chi's real strength. Vegeta and Goku must've asked her to suppress her true power. Only now did she realize that even if she trained her hardest every single day, for the next ten years, she could never reach Chi-Chi's level. Vegeta knew it. They all knew it, but they'd kept it from her, the entire time. Her own weakness and limitations hurt far more than her physical injuries. "Wh-why didn't you- tell me?" The heiress asked, eyes fluttering to a close, as she lost consciousness.

"Bulma?!" The Prince gasped. "Dammit!" He seethed, before gathering her in his arms and hurrying back to Capsule Corporation. He was out of senzu beans, so he needed to put her in a regeneration tank, posthaste. The panic-ridden hysteria consumed him so much, he'd forgotten about Goku's instant transmission technique and the fact that the younger Saiyan, still had a few beans. Nonetheless, he arrived and delivered the immobile heiress, to the nearest healing tank.
Upon rousing, Bulma felt severely disheartened, like nothing but a fragile piece of glass that could be broken at any moment.

"Okay, she's stronger than you, so what?!!" Vegeta growled, peeved at seeing her, in such a pitifully dismal state. It wasn't like her at all!

"Hmph, that's putting it lightly." The heiress shook her head. "I'm nothing compared to her. I thought I could make something of myself, if I trained, but in the end, it didn't mean a thing."

"Look at it this way." The Prince contended. "Your technique is obviously far superior to hers. Kakarot and I merely asked her to suppress her power down to your level, to make it an even playing-field."

"Why?!" Bulma grimaced, her indignant words, wrought with poison. "You thought I was too weak?! Is that it?! Is that all I am to you?! A weakling?!"

"You're certainly acting like one, now." He muttered.

"Shut up, you lied to me, you asshole!"

"I warned you not to fight her!" Vegeta argued.

"Yeah, because you knew I'd lose!" She fired back, in outrage. "You should've fucking told me that!"

"As stubborn as- you?" Bulma finished, voice meeker than before. Taking several minutes to think it through, she came to the conclusion that he was probably right. If he had told her the truth, it would only spur her further, in a reckless endeavour to prove him wrong. In many ways, she was so much like him: rash, unwavering, competitive and egotistical. A hint of a smile graced her despondent features, at the thought. She still felt down, but understood now why he did, what he did. He was only looking out for her wellbeing. Even then, her pride wouldn't let it go, so easily. "Look, how would you feel if you were in my position? What if I knew Goku was stronger than you and I asked him to hold back?"

Vegeta thought it over, before placing a palm on his forehead.

"I'm different than you." He proclaimed. "I'm a warrior, born and bred. You're a scientist. Fighting isn't in your blood."

"What the hell's that supposed to mean?!!"

"You wanted me to cut the bullshit, so that's what I'm doing!" He growled. "I didn't train you, so you could be the most powerful warrior on the planet. Believe me, that'll never happen."

"Gee, thanks." She snorted glibly.

"I trained you, so you can defend yourself against ordinary humans, without my assistance." The Prince explained. "Your skills are far more than adequate, for that. Where you go from here, is entirely your choice."

"What're you saying?!" She asked, bitingly. "That I should just quit?!"
"The human-fighters will never be a match for us Saiyans." Vegeta countered. "And yet, they continue training, in the face of impossible odds."

Bulma peered into his obsidian irises, as she deciphered those words. Yes, perhaps her training could only take her so far, but that didn't mean she had to run away with her tail between her legs. No! That's not the type of person she was! Azure eyes glimmering with resolve, she nodded her head.

"Fine."

"Fine what?"

"I'll continue the training." She vehemently nodded.

"Hn." Vegeta took hold of her hands and pulled her, to her feet. Yes, this was just like her. He'd known her to be many things, but a quitter wasn't one of them. Now would be no different.

A/N: So basically, I didn't want to turn Bulma into a 'Mary Sue', by making her the top female fighter, because that'd just be plain boring. Yes, she can defend herself really well now, but her true strength still lies in her phenomenal intelligence. To put it simply, Chi-Chi's got the brawn, but Bulma's got the brains and at the end of the day, even though Bulma's my favourite, each deserves their just dues.

So what did you think of that? I trust you all enjoyed! So what happens now? Will Trunks' conception finally come to fruition? Will the Z-Fighters be ready to face the Android threat? Find out soon! Remember to leave your thoughts and hit the 'review' button, my friends! As always, thank you so much for the overwhelming love and support!

p.s. For those of you who may be wondering why Bulma's techniques are superior to Chi-Chi's, it'll be explained in the next chapter, but feel free to guess why!
Chapter Summary

So what's going on with Trunks' conception? Read and learn!! :D

Chapter 50: Transformations

The day following the catastrophic sparring session, Chi-Chi visited Capsule Corporation, heartily apologizing to Bulma and relaying her utmost gratitude to the other woman, for her altruistic display of heroism, in the face of death, which had ended up saving their planet, more than once. With a parting embrace, the hatchet was buried deep into the heart of the earth, never again to resurface.

Nearly a week passed by and it was the end of yet another gruelling, training session. As Bulma performed various stretches to extricate the soreness from her aching muscles, she voiced a curious thought that had been lingering in her mind, for quite a while.

"You know, something doesn't seem to add up." She noted. "Chi-Chi's been training all her life, but when we fought, I was completely dominating her, until she raised her power level. Shouldn't her technique have been far better than my own? I mean, I know she probably didn't train in a while, but even then, I didn't think she'd be so rusty."

"She's only learned one style." The Saiyan replied. "You trained under me and thanks to that simulator device, I learned how to counter the most advanced version of said style, used by Jackie Chun."

"O-Oh, I see." Bulma nodded, in understanding. A while back, Vegeta had figured out the true identity of Chun, as none other than Master Roshi, founder of the turtle school of martial arts. "That makes sense," The heiress smirked haughtily. "So what you're saying is that I owe my skills, entirely to my own genius?"

"It isn't only that." Vegeta continued, ignoring her complacent remark. "As you built the simulator, you became more and more familiar, with the turtle style of combat, yourself, since it was used by five of the tournament contestants."

"Hmm, that is true." Bulma placed a palm, underneath her chin. "Let's see, there was Master Roshi, Goku, Krillin, Yamcha and uh- Chi-Chi."

"Precisely."

"Man, I am such a genius!" Bulma exclaimed. The Prince paid her no mind, as she continued to gloat, without the slightest shred of humility. Of course, she had every right to preen. Before he'd set foot in the gravity chamber, his power level was only experiencing small titivations, but afterwards, it was all strength galore, especially now with the simulator.

As for Bulma, she was certainly a skilled fighter and with her lithe, pliable figure, her movements
were very nimble, with an almost-unpredictable edge to them, but her natural limitations would only let her reach so far. He estimated that within a year or so, her power level would reach it's peak. After that, she could retain hold over it, provided she continued training, but it wouldn't grow any further. Kakarot's wife was a different story, altogeter. Her strength was already far greater than Bulma's could ever be, but he could tell that even she hadn't realized her true potential. Truth be told, he felt that if she'd received the same training as the other human-fighters, she could possibly reach their power level or close, but sadly for her, maternal duties took precedence. Nonetheless, it was no concern of his.

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Around one month passed by.

'Man, what is going on with me?!' Bulma thought in dismay, as she ran to the bathroom, heaving the contents of her stomach, inside the toilet bowl and breathing hard thereafter, before closing the lid and hitting the flush button. Her recent episodes of nausea had become a real nuisance, especially when it came to her work life. After giving her hands a quick wash and rinsing her mouth, she returned to her desk, clutching her head and aimlessly sorting through the messy pile of papers thereon, all the while trying to mull over her present condition. It was almost as if she had-

"Morning sickness." A wide-eyed Bulma softly muttered to herself. Oh God, morning sickness? Did that mean she was- with child? No, it couldn't be! Ever since Vegeta had returned to Earth, she'd regularly been taking birth control pills. Is it possible that she missed a date? Or perhaps they'd romped so often that on one occasion, the pill proved ineffective. After all, there were rare cases of pregnancy, despite the use of contraceptives. Or was it possible that Saiyan sperm cells were more resilient than those of human's and as a result, the birth control wasn't quite as effective, as it should've been?

Shutting her eyes, the heiress concentrated hard. Maybe it was just her imagination, but she swore that she could feel a tiny trace of energy, inside her. Her Ki sensing abilities weren't completely developed though, so she wasn't fully certain. She decided to undergo a pregnancy test, posthaste! That in mind, she picked up the phone and rung her father's office.

"Hello Bulma dear, what's-"

"Dad, I think I'm pregnant, but I need to go and confirm with the doctor, bye." She slurred, at a hundred miles an hour, promptly hanging up and dashing out of her office, leaving her baffled father in a trance, for at least ten minutes, as the esteemed President tried to swallow that shocking newsflash.

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At Capsule Corporation's medical wing, the doctor extracted a sample of blood from Bulma's median cubital vein, thereafter bandaging the needle wound opposite her elbow and sending the vial to the laboratory, to have it tested for the presence of hCG.

"Fax the results to my office, as soon as you have them, alright?"

"Sure thing, Miss Brief." Dr. Fumiko nodded.

All of a sudden, the heiress pulled the doctor into an embrace.
"Wish me luck." She muttered.

"Uh- right, g-good luck." The bewildered lady replied, awkwardly patting Bulma on the back.

A few hours later…

Bulma was sitting in her office, when the results came in. All she had to do now was break the seal and pull them out. As she picked up the envelope, she realized just how badly she was fidgeting, overwhelmed with a rush of queasiness, from head-to-toe. This was far more difficult than she’d imagined. The answers that lay within these sheets of paper could potentially alter the course of her life. What would Vegeta do, if he learned that she truly were carrying? She’d repeatedly assured him that the birth control pills would keep her from getting with child. Would he be angry? Would he blame her and repudiate their baby, before the poor, precious thing was even brought into the world? Sure, she was Bulma Brief and had never depended on anyone before, but over the last three years she spent with Vegeta that had all changed tremendously. She’d grown accustomed to his presence in her life and the very thought of losing him, plagued her heart with an excruciating sense of pain and emptiness, like no other. The heiress jumped, as the telephone rang, axing right through her dismal thoughts. Reaching her shaky hand forward, she picked it up.

"H-H-Hello?"

"Bulma, are you alright, darling?" Dr. Brief asked. "Did you find out if you're uh- you know?"

"I- I have the papers here with me dad, but- I- I'm kind of afraid to see." She professed.

"Would you like me to come over?"

"Yeah sure, that'd be great."

"Alright, see you in five."

Bulma released a hefty sigh. With her father to keep her company, surely this whole ordeal would be much easier. Deep down, she already knew the answer, but the words inside that envelope, would make it official, leaving no further doubts. And for some reason, that sense of surety frightened her. She was at a crossroads and couldn't decide, which way to turn.

After approximately five minutes, which felt more like five hours, the good doctor reached Bulma's office and walked over to her. He placed a hand on his daughter's shoulder and she looked up at him, with a troubled countenance.

"Dad, I- I don't know what to do." She murmured dejectedly. "I- I just can't look."

"That's alright dear." The President offered her a kind, paternal smile behind his bushy lavender tash, which melted away some of her worries. "I can open it for you, if you'd like."

Bulma slowly nodded and so, the doctor grabbed the envelope and carefully broke the seal, with an Esselte letter opener, before pulling out the papers, wherein lay the answers that would alter the lives of their family. The heiress bit her lower lip, as she saw the slight bulge in her father's eyes, in spite of his obvious attempts at maintaining a well-guarded expression. That may have worked in the past, but having learned how to read through someone as stoic as Vegeta, her father's endeavours, were utterly futile.
"S-S-So d-details?" Bulma stammered, already knowing the answer to the unspoken question that should've preceded.

"Well, um- according to the results, you're at least- uh- four weeks pregnant."

"Oh." Bulma sighed, clutching her head, as the full, cumbersome weight of reality, fell upon on her.

"Don't stress yourself, Bulma." Dr. Brief gave another benign smile, moving behind her chair and massaging her trapezius muscles. "Everything will be just fine."

"I know- it's just, I- I'm not entirely sure about Vegeta." She meekly confessed. "I- I don't know how he's gonna take the news. Neither of us were expecting this."

"Don't fret, my dear." The doctor said reassuringly. "I'm sure he'll be delighted."

"Dad, you don't know Vegeta like I do." She frowned, her face downcast. "He's not ready for this, especially with the whole Android threat, on the horizon. I'm not sure I am either. I- I just- I don't know what I'm supposed to do."

"Well, first thing we're going to do is grab a nice, hot meal." Dr. Brief beamed, whereby the heiress smacked her forehead. Sometimes, she just couldn't understand the peculiar old man.

A short while later, Bulma was picking at her food, her free hand beneath her chin, as she stared at it, with a clouded expression. The blue-haired scientist's clashing thoughts raced between Vegeta, the Androids, her duties as Vice-President, her training and most of all, the teensy little life form, dwelling deep inside the warmth of her womb.

"You know, I wouldn't worry too much about Vegeta, if I were you." The doctor said, after munching through a spicy, steamed chicken and prawn, dumpling. "I mean, sure, he may be a little startled at first, but he'll come around eventually."

"How do you know that?" Bulma scoffed.

"I'll admit, I don't know the boy nearly as well as you do and he certainly has his fair share of flaws." Dr. Brief replied, before looking her squarely in the eyes, his expression solemn. "But there's one thing I can guarantee. He'd never hurt you."

Bulma's eyes momentarily widened, just a fraction.

"I- I guess not." She mumbled, smiling a little, in spite of herself. Yes, her father was certainly right and just hearing the words from him, made her feel so much better. Some of her friends still didn't consider Vegeta as part of their clique, but she was glad that her old man, was more accepting. She placed a hand upon her midriff, still as lean as ever. 'Yeah, you've got nothing to worry about, little one.' Her smile grew.

After chowing down, Dr. Brief drew his daughter into a tight embrace.

"Congratulations Bulma." He said, rubbing her back, up and down. "I'm really happy for you."

"Thanks dad." She twinkled. All would be well.
Not surprisingly, Mrs. Brief showered Bulma with a cornucopia of hugs and kisses.

"Oh, my beautiful little baby's gonna have a baby of her own!" The rambunctious woman squealed, as she clasped her daughter's cheeks, in a somewhat unpleasant pinch, dreamily staring up at the ceiling. "I can't believe it! I finally get to be a grandmother! Oh, but I still look so young and-

"Mom, can you let go of my cheeks?"

"No." Panchy replied. "Now where was I? Oh yes, me, a grandmother! How I've waited for this moment. A baby! It's absolutely wonderful! I bet he'll grow up to be as tall as Goku and as handsome as Vegeta."

"How do you nyow issh a he?" The heiress asked, through squeezed cheeks (translation: how do you know it's a he?).

"Oh believe me, I can tell." The flaxen-haired female winked. "It's gonna be a beautiful little boy and I bet all the girls will be jumping over each other, for a chance to canoodle with him teeheehee."

Bulma sweat-dropped. How utterly dense and single-minded could someone get?

With an exhaustive amount of effort, the heiress was able to convince her ditzy mother to keep the information to herself, wanting to maintain a low profile, so that she could, at least, take a while to adjust and come to terms with it, herself. Now, of course, came the most difficult part: telling Vegeta.

As the sky darkened, the Prince exited the gravity chamber, heading indoors to grab a quick dinner. Halfway there, however, he caught sight of an overwrought Bulma, traipsing his way. He raised a curious brow, at the unsettled look, about her.

"You look like you just saw the grim reaper." Vegeta remarked wryly.

"Uh yeah, nice to see you too hehe." Bulma let out a forced laugh, avoiding the imposing Saiyan's dark eyes. Half a minute of uncomfortable silence, followed, before Vegeta broke it.

"Spit it out, already." He rolled his eyes.

"A-Alright, b-but promise you won't b-be mad, okay?" She asked, timidly looking him in the eye.

"Grr, just tell me!" He growled impatiently, causing her to jump.

Bulma shook her head. Why was she even bothering? As if she'd ever get any such promise out of him.

"W-Well, um- it's hard to say." The subdued blue-haired woman finally replied, letting out a sigh and hesitantly placing a hand on her womb, before giving Vegeta a few brief glances.

The Prince frowned, trying to figure her out, until his senses suddenly caught on something that made his mind click. He gaped at the beautiful inventress, as though she were Nappa's ghost, instantly doing a double take. His ebony eyes slowly shifted towards her belly, wherein he sensed a
faint Ki signal, before returning to her. An unborn Saiyan child grew inside her and it was- his child. He took a step back, all the while staring at her, in complete horror.

The incredulous, disconcerted look Vegeta was giving her, only made Bulma feel that much more uncomfortable. Other than the obvious shock and deliberation, she couldn't read into him. Several strained seconds passed by, with nothing said between them, till the heiress took a chance and boldly decided to move towards him. Before she could take a step however, Vegeta suddenly flew off, without a word, leaving behind a shocked and appalled Bulma.

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Mere minutes later, the baffled Prince stood in the heart of a stark, sweeping desert, lost in a tumultuous series of clashing thoughts, each one like a billowing wave that inexorably perforated it's way through any sense of calm and quiet, within his jumbled mind. He was unable to soak in the reality of it all, crushing the evening blue granules of sand, beneath his boots, amidst the deafening silence.

A father? Him? How had it come to this? That damned woman assured him that it wouldn't! Had she deceived him? Or perhaps she'd erred, somehow? He tightened his fist, a vein throbbing, by his temple. This planet had already transformed him, there was no denying that. Before he'd come to Earth, he never would've imagined that sharing the warmth of a single woman's bedside, could be so much more fulfilling than reigning over a vast network of solar systems and that inciting her tempestuous wrath, deluged him with a far more vivid rush of frenzy than slaughtering civilizations, one after another. But most of all, he never imagined that bizarre, outlandish feeling of peace and contentment that overcame him, every time he made her smile. That warm smile would light his cold, darkened soul, every time he looked upon it. Bulma was the rope, which tied him to this planet and now, with his child inside her, the knots on that rope had become undoable.

What was he supposed to do, with a pint-sized weanling? He could prepare himself for many things, but being a father was definitely not on the list. He didn't know the first thing about it and he certainly didn't need any distractions. Curse that woman! A year and a half later, those Androids would allegedly make themselves known and now, of all times, she had to throw this little monkey wrench into the mix.

'Tch, more like half-monkey.' He thought, drolly, before grinding his palm against his forehead and glancing up into the sky. The Prince suddenly frowned, as he caught sight of the moon. Oh shit, he'd forgotten that it was a full moon today! His eyes widened in realization. A few months ago, Kami had wished the moon back, since Piccolo destroyed it, in the prelude to the Saiyan invasion. After consulting Goku, the Namekian deity deemed it safe to restore it, since Vegeta was the only Saiyan left, with a tail and he had control over his animal form.

The trigger was set and a rush of primal energy poured along the Prince's bloodstream, his eyes glowing a deathly crimson and fangs lengthening, as he began to grow bigger. Rich, pecan fur sprouted all over his expanding, burly figure and the lower half of his face projected outwards, into a sharp muzzle. Vegeta bellowed aloud, as he reached his full height, promptly hammering his fist down into the sand and completely disintegrating large portions of it.

It'd been over three years since he'd transformed into the Oozaru, yet he quickly re-acquired control over it and stood straight, promptly looking over himself. His upper body was uncovered, but he still donned his lycra pants and boots, which had easily stretched to accommodate his surging size. Clenching and unclenching his fist, the Prince shot a practice punch into the air, followed by another. Unable to return to Capsule Corporation in such a state, he decided to engage in some
unorthodox training, going all out, as he pulverized a range of dunes and rock formations, with both his fist and Ki, alike.

Many hours later, the Saiyan lay in the sand, a fatigued mess, back in base form. He'd never had a chance to train as a giant ape before and somehow, it really helped alleviate some of the stress and tension, allowing him to see things, with a clearer mindset.

A half-Saiyan child. When he'd heard about it the very first time, the idea revolted him, more than anything else, but that had changed fast during the battle on Earth. After witnessing the fighting prowess and sheer tenacity of Kakarot's offspring, he'd gone so far as to offer the boy a chance to join ranks with him (A/N: Refer to Chapter 1). Ever since then, he'd witnessed Gohan evolve greatly, as a warrior, standing up against the Ginyu Force, Frieza and even himself. He really had to hand it to the boy. Such recollections helped him come to a decision, regarding his own unborn half-breed.

But first, there was something he needed to do: fully master the Oozaru transformation. Somehow, he could still feel the vestigial powers from that form, flowing through his veins, as was never the case before. Perhaps he could attribute such an irregular occurrence to the monumental heights he'd reached, in terms of skill, strength and control. He was convinced that if he worked hard enough, he could gain access to all the Oozaru powers, without the need to transform into one and in doing so, offset Kakarot's advantage of the Kaio-Ken attack. True, he could always create blutz waves on his own accord, but the sheer size of his ape form, put him at a disadvantage. And yes, there was the Super Saiyan transformation that practically negated all of that anyway, but why not have something extra up his sleeve and save the best, for last?

This would certainly take a lot of practice, but it would be well worth it. Before that, however, he could really use a meal. The Prince forced himself up and zoomed off to the closest non-sentient Ki signals he could find. He spotted a pair of grazing, dama gazelle and approximately half an-hour later, the ungulate duo were tucked away into the vast pits of his sated stomach. Now, it was time to commence.

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It had been approximately one week, since Vegeta left Capsule Corporation and Bulma didn't know where he was. She considered asking Goku for help, but that would only lead to further inquisition from her rustic, dimwitted best friend and she didn't want to reveal the existence of her baby to anyone, just yet. Her mother ardently insisted that Vegeta was most likely blowing off some steam and would be back soon, but the heiress wasn't quite so sure and that sense of uncertainty was really eating at her. Was he having a string of dalliances, behind her back? She swore if that were the case, she'd personally spill his guts, all over the gravity room.

'Come on Bulma, he's not like that.' The blue-haired scientist mentally reassured herself. 'Quit overreacting.'

The last person that had flirted with Vegeta was Cassandra, a gorgeous young intern at Capsule Corporation, in her early twenties. The Prince had almost killed that woman, for her sordidly obtrusive behaviour, till Bulma intervened. Though her life was still intact, the heiress immediately ordered Cassandra to leave the company, threatening to file a complaint to her University, for workplace misconduct.

Rolling her eyes at the memory, Bulma's thoughts soon returned to Vegeta's current whereabouts. Where was he and what was he doing? He couldn't possibly be training, because the gravity room
and simulator were still here and she hadn't sensed his Ki on the premises, ever since he'd flitted. Damn that nasty Saiyan, for leaving her in the dark like this!

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Later on in the night, Bulma hit the shower. The moment she exited the bathroom, she gaped at the familiar, flame-haired figure, nonchalantly sitting on her bed, wearing the same tattered blue pants, caked with dirt, no shirt and that trademark poker face of his. Blinking a few times, the heiress' shocked expression instantly morphed into one of rage. She hurled a plethora of curses at Vegeta, furiously demanding an explanation for his shady behaviour. As she was finally done, Vegeta puckered his brows at her and articulated his reply.

"When a Saiyan learns that his woman is with child, he's forbidden to see her or speak to her, for at least seven days." He elucidated calmly. "It was a sacred tradition, on my home planet."

Bulma's demeanor instantly transformed at his reply, a light blush tinting her cheeks and her heart skittering. So that was it. That explained everything. She'd been fretting all this time, for absolutely no reason and should've known better. As if Vegeta would ever abandon her. He was merely preserving the last remnants of his nigh-extinct culture and she could most certainly respect that. In fact, it only made her adoration towards him, swell further, since he included her, as a part of that culture. His woman. Yes, that certainly made her feel like something special.

"Wow, I never knew that, Vegeta." She looked at him, with an endearing smile. "It sounds really beautiful."

Unable to hold it in any longer, the Prince abruptly burst into a boisterous fit of laughter, clutching his stomach all the while.

"What's so funny?" Bulma asked, suddenly feeling a little mortified and suspicious.

"Oh God, I can't believe you actually fell for that." He chortled, like a maniac. "Sacred Saiyan tradition? Oh please. The only thing sacred to us was spilling blood on the battlefield. Don't tell me you seriously bought that crap."

Face flushed a hundred shades of crimson, Bulma was plagued with utter humiliation, like never before, her teeth grit and several veins throbbing near her temple. She shut her eyes and clenched a fist, her thunderous fury mounting to new heights. That bastard! First he leaves her for an entire week, like a total jerk and now, he returns, only to make a complete idiot out of her! How dare he?! He had absolutely no right! She lunged at him and before she knew it, their royal rumble transformed into a torrid tryst.

Twenty minutes later...

"So why did you leave anyway?" Bulma spat, as she lay naked beside him, looking up at the ceiling, with a scowl on her face. "What were you doing, all that time?"

"I was mastering a new form." He answered, ignoring her first question.

"So, what now?" She asked, rather spitefully. "Are you gonna leave me, again? If you are, then don't bother coming back. I don't like being made a fool of, you fucking asshole!"

Vegeta chuckled. She'd embarrassed him on quite a few occasions, so giving her a taste of her own
medicine, felt somewhat pleasant.

"Well?!
" The heiress irately prodded.

"Hm." The Saiyan looked at her, eyes narrowed and expression grave. "You will raise the child on your own and once it's three years old, I'll begin it's training."

Bulma stared back at him, in surprise. That wasn't what she expected. Nonetheless, she found his proposal to be rather one-sided.

"What do you mean, on my own?" She frowned. "Aren't you gonna do anything with the baby, besides training? Honestly, I'm not expecting you to change nappies or anything. God knows that'll never happen, but still."

"But nothing." He riposted. "I've made my decision. In case you forgot, it won't be very long, before the Androids are at our doorstep, so I don't have time to play house with your brat."

"Firstly, it's not a brat you jerk." She punched him in the arm. "Secondly, it's not just mine, it's yours too and thirdly, you made time to train me, so why can't you make some for the kid?"

"Training you was essential, because you were too weak to defend yourself, before." He replied. "I'll do the same thing for the brat, but don't expect anything else."

"It's a baby, not a brat, so stop calling it that!" She punched him again, this time earning an indignant growl. Bulma laughed, in spite of herself, realizing that she'd inadvertently just busted out a neat little rhyme. "Besides, I think three years is a little too young for training, don't you?"

"No."

"Dammit, you're impossible!" The heiress loured.

Eventually, the argument settled down and the pair lay together, putting aside their differences, for the moment. Perhaps Vegeta did have a point. It was paramount to their survival that he and Goku defeat the Androids and in order to do that, they both had to devote their time and efforts to training. Once that was all over though, she wouldn't allow any neglectful behaviour on his part. This baby needed it's father and it certainly wouldn't be doing any training at the age of three. But she decided she'd have to cross that bridge, at a later stage. After all, there was plenty of time between then and now and perhaps he'd wise up, eventually.

_A/N: So there you have it, the conception at last! Yay! Finally, we'll get to see little baby Trunks and after that, is the prelude to the Androids saga. I've got something really amazing planned for that, so brace yourselves, awesome readers! BTW, what did you think of Vegeta's training as a giant ape? I kept it very brief, but has he really mastered the form, like he planned? Do tell me what you think and hit the review button hehe!_

_p.s. Wasn't it funny how Vegeta made a total fool out of Bulma, with that whole pseudo-Saiyan tradition? xD!_
Chapter Summary

Bulma and her favourite babies xD. :D

Chapter 51: The little baby and the big baby

As the weeks passed by, a certain half-Saiyan entity continued to grow, within the warm, cosy receptacle of Bulma's swelling womb. Despite her ceaseless nagging and futile attempts at wheedling the neglectful father-to-be, the heiress was unable to drag him along to the radiology department of the CC medical wing, whenever she'd undergo her weekly ultrasounds. The stubborn Prince insisted that he hadn't any time to spare, for 'foolish distractions' and so had no qualms about missing out on the early stages of the baby's development. His withdrawal really hurt Bulma, eating at her from the inside. She just didn't understand how someone who cared about her so deeply, saw their child as nothing more than a 'distraction'? Why couldn't he feel the same love and adoration that she felt for the precious little thing? She asked herself that question, over and over again.

Around the middle of her second trimester, she received a very unexpected visit, during the middle of the day. She was in her office, down at the main headquarters, collecting a number of documents from the fax machine, when a loud, familiar voice made her squeak and jump, in sudden fright.

"Hey, Bulma!"

"Goku, what the hell?!" The heiress whirled around, seething at her best friend and barely resisting the urge to clock him. "How many times have I told you not to do that?!"

"Uh- sorry, I just came to check if-" Goku stopped short, eyes bulging as he noticed the slight protrusion in Bulma's midsection. Taking a moment to confirm the presence of the minute Ki signal, the pure-hearted Saiyan looked at her, with a gigantic, feverish grin. "Oh my God, Bulma, you're pregnant! That's wonderful!"

"Uh- yeah, thanks." The heiress blushed a little, thereafter thinking to herself. 'Well, at least someone's happy.' Why was it that everyone, besides Vegeta, were thrilled at the news of her pregnancy? Not that many people were aware of the situation, but even then, it irked her. As the father of the child, he ought to have been more supportive and excited than the lot of them, yet his reactions were entirely nonchalant. Sure, he rarely displayed his emotions out in the open, but this ought to have been one of the exceptions. She let out a dejected sigh, but suddenly looked down in bewilderment, as a kneeling Goku pressed his ear up, against her stomach.

"Hey there, little fella, can you hear me?" The Saiyan asked, in a babyish voice. "It's your Uncle Goku."

"Goku, what're you doing?" Bulma mirthfully giggled. "Cut it out, you big weirdo."

"Shhh, can't you see we're talking here?" Goku looked up at her, with a mock pout, before
returning to his original position. "Sorry about that. Your mother just gets a little suspicious when we Saiyans, talk in private hehe. Isn't that right, little Tr- ow!"

The goofy Saiyan was abruptly hurled on his rear, prompting a hearty chuckle, from the heiress.

"Man, that kid, packs quite a kick." Goku remarked, rubbing his soar, right cheek. "Definitely not much of a conversationalist, either. Well, you know what they say: like father like son hehehe."

"Like father, like son, huh?" Bulma asked, raising an amused eyebrow, as she placed a hand on her belly. "And just how do you know, it's a boy and not a girl?"

"Uh- w-well, I- um- I- it's just a guess?" Goku tried weakly, earning a wary frown from Bulma, much to his dismay. He sifted through his mind for a hasty cover-up. Oh crap, come to think of it, he was awfully close to spilling the baby's name. In a way, that timely kick, closed a can of worms that he'd almost opened.

"Goku?" The blue-haired woman gave him a demanding look that made him flinch. "Anything you wanna tell me?"

"Um- well, no, not at all, I mean- if it kicks that hard, then it's gotta be a boy, right?"

"Okay, now that's just plain sexist." Bulma folded her arms indignantly, forgetting her earlier suspicions. Goku hardly knew if he should've been relieved or terror-stricken at the fresh ire, directed towards him. Either way, he felt that he'd overstayed his welcome.

"Well, anyway gotta run." He laughed uneasily, before pressing his fingers to his forehead. "Have a healthy baby. Oh, and tell Vegeta I said hi."

He promptly disappeared.

'Same old Goku.' Bulma rolled her eyes, sniggering to herself. Somehow his short visit made her feel so much better. He always seemed to have that effect, what with his innocent, childlike giddiness. Still, he was acting somewhat strange towards the end and she couldn't help but wonder, what that was all about.

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"By the look on your face, I take it, the deed's done." Piccolo assumed.

"Hehehe Yep, he's here alright." Goku gave him a toothy grin. "I know it's him, for sure. Man, this is so amazing! I can't wait until he's finally here!"

"Mind explaining the bruise?" The Namekian asked, observing the bluish-red hue mottled on his right cheek.

"Well- I got a little too close to the kid and I suppose at this point, he's somewhat irritable hehehe."

"Hmph, why am I not surprised?" The giant warrior shook his head wryly. "So- uh- you gonna tell anyone?"

"Nah, it's better if I keep it a surprise."
"Good, I could do without all the noise."

Approximately four months into the pregnancy, the heiress finally garnered Vegeta's attention, after half-heartedly informing his royal highness that the proceeding ultrasound, would determine the gender of the unborn child. The Prince immediately stood to attention and to her surprise and utmost delight, he agreed to attend the next session, by her side.

"Well, it appears you're going to have a baby boy." Dr. Lorenz informed, after closely examining the screen.

"Did you hear that Vegeta?" Bulma gushed, as she lay on the bed. "A boy! We're gonna have a little boy!"

Vegeta could hardly prevent a smirk from lighting his face at the revelation, barely noticing as Bulma took hold of his hand, mid-sentence. This is exactly what he'd been hoping for: a powerful son, who'd carry on his legacy, through the ages. For the longest time he'd been sure that he would be the last member of the royal bloodline, but no longer was it the case. He frowned at the thought that over the coming generations, Saiyan blood would inevitably dilute and his descendants would eventually be more or less human. There was nothing he could do about that, though. The Prince hoped, above all that they retained their Saiyan strength and a sense of awareness, regarding their great heritage.

Later that day, the heiress informed her lover about the hilarious incident involving Goku and their child. Though initially ticked off at the idea of his rival getting too familiar with Bulma, a strong surge of pride, soared through him, upon learning that his unborn had managed to bruise the mighty buffoon.

"Well, he is your son after all." Bulma laughed, glad to see Vegeta in such high spirits, despite his detached behavior, as of late. Perhaps this brief recount would make him see the child in a new light. "Where else do you think he gets his amazing strength from, not to mention that short fuse?"

"The strength is definitely mine, but his short fuse is entirely yours." The Prince smirked.

"What?!" Bulma growled indignantly. "Are you kidding me?! You've got a much shorter fuse than me and you know it!"

"Wrong."

"Right!"

"Yes, right that you're wrong."

"That's it!" Bulma immediately pounced and grabbed him, in a side headlock.

"You're just proving my point." Vegeta chortled at her expense, not even bothering to defend himself, from her pathetically weak grip.

"I am not!" She objected, squeezing even harder, far too irate to register just how much her actions belied her words.
That incident had inadvertently brought the odd pair closer together. It had been quite a while since they fought in such a manner and even though it was a lopsided victory for the Saiyan Prince, Bulma was more than happy that she'd finally managed to get through to him. Sure, he continued spending almost every waking hour training, but he often attended weekly ultrasounds and though very much silent, his presence and marginally increased willingness to pay ear to her inane chatter, evinced his growing attachment towards her and the child.

The days continued to roll by. Yamcha and Mirai got married and despite Bulma's persistence, Vegeta refused to attend the wedding, to her utmost chagrin, saying that he held no interest in the 'scar-faced weakling's petty affairs'. Yamcha didn't particularly care though and was glad that the rest of the Z-gang attended, showering the newly weds with a cornucopia of gifts, hugs and good wishes. Soon afterwards, the emerald-haired artist, was with child, just like Bulma and felt more jubilant than she ever had, since the untimely demise of her previous family (A/N: Refer to Chapter 42). She prayed that this time around, with Yamcha at her side, the tide would be much smoother. Mirai still held onto the precious family heirloom left behind by her late ex-husband, Shozo, a simple scroll parchment that read, 家先, the Kanji for "Family first". She would honor her first love and their deceased little son, Shizu, by preserving it and passing it along the generations.

Fortunately for Bulma, Yamcha's wedding had taken place, while she was still able to conceal her pregnancy, preferring to keep it a surprise, for now. After all, not everyone was as intuitive as Goku and her happy-go-lucky best friend was good at keeping secrets. He told her that Piccolo was the only one he'd informed about the situation and gave his word that he wouldn't be telling anyone else.

Time passed and the heiress was in her seventh month. It began to show, more and more. One tranquil night, Vegeta looked upon her belly, as she lay supine on their queen-sized bed, fast asleep. Moments after he was born, the crown Prince was widely acclaimed as the Super Saiyan, reincarnated, with a whopping power level that surpassed all Saiyans before him, for over a thousand years. And now, this fragile human by his side was gestating a half-Saiyan child, whose power already exceeded his own, at birth.

"Amazing." Vegeta thought in awe, before looking back up at the slumbering female, beside him. Gods, she exhibited such a warm, ethereal glow right now, unlike any other. The Prince stared at her, in pure wonder. There was something so eerily breathtaking about the motherly aura, resonating around her. He gently skimmed his rough hand, along her aquamarine hair, reveling in the smooth, streamlined feel of those soft, silky tresses.

"Mmm." Bulma's lips curled up, in a small smile and the Prince's heart thudded hard, against his chest. He couldn't help it, as he placed a tender kiss on her temple, lips lingering there for a moment, before his hand ventured downwards, and settled on her swelling midriff. He shut his eyes, familiarizing himself with the Ki signal of his unborn son, so pure and innocent, everything he wasn't.

"Caught you." The heiress' weary voice suddenly wedged through his thoughts and Vegeta looked at her, like a child caught with his hand in the cookie-jar. Suddenly, he felt her fingers interlacing with his. She gave him a sleepy smile, her big cerulean eyes half-lidded and radiating with affection, reflecting the celestial glimmer of the crescent moon.

"I- I thought you were asleep." The Prince hissed, irked, not only at his foolish sentimentality, but at the fact that he'd been discovered in such a vulnerable moment.

"Mmm, I was, but someone decided to wake me up." She said sluggishly, before shifting forward
and kissing the tip of his nose, much to his annoyance. Bulma giggled. "You know, I like seeing this other side of you." The heiress murmured, promptly capturing his lips with her own, before he could deny having 'another side'. She smiled, cherishing the serene, sanguine moment, with her introverted Saiyan. Bulma slipped her tongue inside, roving along the entrancing crevices of his mouth, as she intoxicated herself with his raw, virile taste.

Just over two months later, Bulma finally reached her due date. Vegeta begrudgingly sat by her, as she lay on the hospital bed, while Mrs. Brief was seated on the other side, placing a loving hand on her daughter's forehead. The Prince would've preferred steering clear of all this mess, but other than Kakarot and the Namek, he was the only person on this planet that was privy to the situation and at the same time, strong enough to handle the heiress. After all, her power level was well above most humans and despite being negligible compared to his own, he could feel the intense pressure on his hand, as she squeezed, with all her might. Had he left her crazy mother to deal with the situation, she'd surely crush every bone in her hand.

Bulma breathed hard and hurled a litany of unhealthy curses, hoping that these damned contractions would finally come to end. She really wanted this demon-spawn out of her, as soon as possible! No textbook or documentary could possibly render the true extent of pain associated with cervical dilation! Hours later, the contractions finally came to a halt and it was time to deliver Lucifer's lovechild. Bulma couldn't repress the tiny laugh that escaped her at the thought, but it only made her yowl in pain.

"Dammit, quit laughing and concentrate, you fool." Vegeta chided.

"Shut up, jerk!" Bulma snapped, squeezing his hand even tighter if it were possible. The Saiyan flinched. "You're not the one who's had to carry this little hell-spawn, for the last nine months! Do you even know how hard it's been?! Arrrggghhh!"

"Easy there, Miss Brief." Dr. Yasmin soothed. "And you." She looked pointedly at Vegeta. "Stop agitating her. She's in a very unstable condition, right now."

"Don't you tell me what to-"

"Vegeta!" Panchy glared at the Prince so hard that he instantly closed his mouth, more out of shock, than anything else. She'd never looked at him, in such a terrifying manner. The flaxen-haired female returned her attention, to her bedridden daughter, tenderly stroking her forehead. "It's okay baby, just stay calm. Mama's here."

"Oh mom, I can feel him!" Bulma panted. "He's trying to force his way out! Dammit, just get him out of me! It hurts so much!"

"I need you to calm down first, Miss Brief." The obstetrician encouraged. "Take a few deep breaths. It'll make this much easier, believe me."

"Okay." The heiress nodded, following through.

"Good." The doctor smiled. "Now tuck your chin beneath your chest, tighten your muscles and when I say push, push as hard as you can, got it?"

"Got it." The blue-haired woman strained.

"Here, bite down on this." Vegeta, now a little more sympathetic, placed a wooden object in front
of her face. "I infused my own Ki into it, so it won't break."

Bulma did as instructed.

"Okay ready and- push!" Dr. Yasmin urged.

Vegeta groaned, as the heiress' grip tightened two-fold. Despite the excruciating agony she was in, the soon-to-be mother was really thankful, for the stick in her mouth. Were it not for that, she was afraid she'd bite her own tongue off.

Roughly twenty, nightmarish minutes later, the child was finally out and its umbilical cord was snipped off, soon afterwards.

"Congratulations, Miss Brief." The doctor smiled beatifically. "Here's your boy, tail and all." She placed the bawling baby on her belly. Before the delivery, the elder Briefs had informed the doctors of the child's ancillary appendage, with corresponding ultrasound scans in hand, so that despite the overwhelming shock, they'd at least know what to expect.

"Aw, just look at it." A teary-eyed Mrs. Brief gushed. "Such such a cutie."

"Hey there, baby." Bulma cooed softly between breaths, a wide, yet weary smile of relief, spreading across her face, as she stroked his tiny head. "You've caused your mommy a lot of trouble, you know that?"

As mother and son bonded, the Prince looked on, from the side, in what could only be described as pure wonder. The scene before him was so surreal, so dreamlike, almost- magical. After all the horrors and atrocities he'd committed throughout his life, who would ever imagine that he could create such blissful peace and happiness, such- innocence. It was everything he wasn't.

"Come on Vegeta, meet your son." The heiress encouraged.

The Saiyan's eye twitched a little, before he hesitantly leaned forward and touched the newborn's hair, then pulled back, as though they were barbs.

"You wanna hold him?" The heiress asked, gripping her lover's hand once again, albeit gently.

The Prince grunted and shook his head, a resounding 'no'.

"Oh come on." She prodded, but to no avail. The last child Vegeta held was Kakarot's brat and that was by the neck, as he pounded the living crap out of him (A/N: Refer to Chapter 1). He obviously wasn't built for this sort of thing. He preferred keeping his distance, for a good while, at least.

Once the placenta was delivered, the baby was cleaned and wrapped in a shawl. Once Bulma's father was admitted inside, the Briefs were practically huddled together, as they tended to the newborn. With a little help, Bulma sat up and held the baby closely, caressing his little tummy. The infant's tiny tail, wound itself around its mother's index finger.

"Oh, that is so adorable." Mrs. Brief enthused, tears streaming down her face.

"Indeed, it is." Dr. Brief took off his glasses and had to dab his own watery eyes.

"Tch, you people are all soft." Vegeta churlishly remarked. "You're going to spoil the brat." He
shook his head. "I'm out of here."

Without another word, he exited the hospital, afraid of the uncanny feelings, festering inside him. It was just too much, being was surrounded by an atmosphere of such ravishing peace and happiness.

"Well, can't say I'm surprised." Bulma chuckled. "I'm glad he stayed here as long as he did. So- uh- what're we gonna name the little rascal?"

"Oh, I know!" Mrs. Brief clasped her hands together. "Why don't we name him Vegeta?"

"Hm, I think that's a little unoriginal." Dr. Brief rapped his forehead.

"I gotta agree with dad." The heiress rolled her eyes. "I think one Vegeta's, more than enough haha. Besides, all his ancestors were called Vegeta and so was his planet, so yeah, definitely not original."

"Okay, how about Trunks?" Panchy suggested. "I think that sounds wonderful."

"Hm, sounds okay to me." The good doctor assented.

"Trunks it is!" Bulma nodded, as she sat up and pulled the infant to her chest. "Aw, is someone hungry?" She cooed, as she noticed the babe sucking its lips.

Dr. Yasmin and the elders left their daughter, to breastfeed little Trunks. Over two hours passed, before it was finally over and Bulma, was an exhausted mess. This darn baby had a bottomless stomach, just like his father.

A few days later, the rest of the Z-Fighters came to know of the child's existence and readily rushed over to Capsule Corporation, delivering a whole range of gifts and congratulations.

And just like that, another three months passed. A certain Saiyan Prince, was extremely unhappy. With his daughter on maternity leave, Dr. Brief had little time to spare for Vegeta's ceaseless demands, regarding upgraded training equipment. As for Bulma, Trunks was occupying the entirety of her day. Even between breaks, she was so worn out that she could hardly concentrate on anything, besides the most basic activities. It was on one night that Vegeta decided he'd had enough.

Trunks woke up in a fit of tears, immediately alerting his mother, via baby monitor.

"Oh God, not again." Bulma sighed wearily, as she bookmarked the novel before her and left the room, so she could tend to Devil Junior. The heiress was on her way to Trunks' room, when the voice of her fuming lover, stopped her.

"Woman, I command you to build me new training bots, stronger and faster than the ones before!" He seethed. "It's been months!"

"Dammit, I can't!" Bulma tilted her head towards him, with a peevish glower. "Your little demon-child needs me!"

"No, I refuse to wait any longer!" The Prince growled, clenching his fists. "This is complete bullshit! Every since that brat came into this world, you've been spending all your time with him!
What about me?! I need to get stronger or did you forget about that?!

The heiress whirled around, staring incredulously at her surly Saiyan. Is- is that what had him in such a foul, bitter mood?!

"Vegeta, are- are you jealous of Trunks?" She asked, scarcely believing it herself.

"Wh-What?!" He stammered, looking deeply affronted. "Don't be ridiculous! All I want is-"

"Oh my God, you are jealous!" Bulma interrupted him mid-sentence, nearly falling over, in a volcanic eruption of laughter. "That is so freaking adorable!"

"Stop laughing woman!" Vegeta snarled, grabbing her by the shoulders, as she buried her face in his chest, barely able to hold herself together. "And quit spouting such meaningless drivel! I don't care where your attention lies, as long as I get my training equipment, understand?! Have you forgotten that the Androids will be here, in less than a year?!"

Finally able to regain some degree of balance, Bulma took a deep breath, before cupping Vegeta's cheeks in her palms.

"You're right, Vegeta, I'm sorry." She smiled with a mischievous glint in her eyes, earning her a suspicious look from the flame-haired Saiyan. "I've been absolutely horrible. I've been spending so much time with my little baby, that I totally forgot about by big baby."

Vegeta's reaction to her 'apology', was completely priceless. He could only garble, as the heiress continued patronizing him.

"But from now on, I promise that I'll make time for both my babies." She planted a condescending kiss on his cheek.

"You- how dare you call me that?!" The Prince seethed, a profuse blush reddening his cheeks, as he pulled away from her, teeth grit. "I'm training so that I'm strong enough to defeat the Androids and you have the nerve to equate me, with that snivelling brat?!"

"Regardless, you're always nagging me for attention." She retorted, with a teasing grin. The fact that he took her words so seriously, made it all the more laughable. "I mean, just think about it. Trunks always breaks his toys and cries, until I get him some new ones. You do the exact same thing, except in your case, it's with training bots, so how're you all that different?"

"I never cry!" He shot back, only to curse himself, mere seconds later. With such a bleak reply, he'd inadvertently ratified the veracity of all her other claims and comparisons.

After that incident, Vegeta avoided Bulma like the plague, for an entire week. When he did rejoin her, on their queen-sized bed, he had his back turned the other way. The heiress immediately figured out his game. He wanted her to beg him for attention, so that he could reciprocate her claims, from their last conversation and ordinarily, she would have. After all, she had womanly needs that had to be satisfied. However, there were other ways to remedy her primal urges.

"You know Vegeta, I've just thought of the perfect present, for your birthday."

'Does she even know my birthday?' The Prince thought to himself, apparently paying her no mind.
"A large, pink pacifier." She grinned, whereby his jaw fell open. "I mean, I know how much you love the color pink and Trunks has a blue one, so I guess it's only fitting, don't you think so, Vegeta?"

The Prince grit his teeth, muscles tensing in barely repressed rage. He had a growing urge to smite her, at this very moment. This is not what he expected- unless- oh crap, she knew his game, didn't she? Despite the monumental stress of motherhood, Bulma still had her wits about her. Darn it, he hadn't planned for this. All he could do now was ignore her, but that wasn't so easy.

"Hey, Vegeta?" Bulma asked, only to receive no reply. She childishly continued to jab him, her merriment burgeoning, as she observed his trapezius muscles tighten, further and further. "Vegeta? Vegeta? Vegeta? Vegeta? Vegeta? Vegeta? Vegeta? Vegeta? Vege-"

"WHAT?!" The apoplectic Prince finally barked.

"Shut up." She replied.

"Damn woman!" That did it! Now well past his melting point, the hotheaded Saiyan pushed her over and straddled her hips, as he placed his hands around her throat, only he couldn't find it in himself to squeeze. He was suddenly consumed by a different impulse altogether.

Fifteen minutes later…

"Wow, that felt amazing!" Bulma effervesced, more complacent than ever. "Gotta admit, when you're upset, you're a whole different beast hahaha."

"I hate you." The miserable Saiyan grumbled, facing the other direction.

"I know." The heiress smiled in triumph, as she inhaled the sweet aroma of sex, mingled with victory.

Around three weeks later, Mirai gave birth to a beautiful, green-haired baby girl, named Natsumi. The family often visited Capsule Corporation and around four months had passed. Trunks and Natsumi became good friends, often petting each others cowlicks and laughing together, as they indulged themselves in the playpen.

"Gosh, I can't wait until they're married." Mrs. Brief gushed.

"Mom, what is wrong with you?!" Bulma hissed. "They're just babies!"

"We were all babies at one point." The ditzy woman shrugged, placing a tray of freshly-baked cookies, in front of her guests.

"What about Vegeta?" Yamcha commented. "He was probably fighting, ever since he left the womb, so you could hardly consider him a baby."

"On the contrary, Vegeta's always been a baby." Bulma replied, with a chuckle. "In fact, he still is. A big, spoiled, attention-seeking baby hahahaha."

Everyone laughed at the expense of the proud Prince.

"Oh stop it, all of you." Mrs. Brief glared at the lot of them, arms akimbo. "That sweet boy's
training so hard, day in and day out, so he can keep us all safe and here you are, backbiting him, like silly little children."

"Oh mom, come on, we were just kidding." The heiress insisted.

"I wasn't kidding." Yamcha mumbled, receiving a punch on either arm, from Bulma and Mirai and an even meaner stare, from Panchy. "Um- On seconds thoughts, yes, I was kidding hehehe."

An excruciating cry drew everyone's attention towards the playpen and Bulma gasped, upon seeing a bewildered Natsumi, grasping Trunks' little tail.

"Oh no, Trunks!" Bulma rushed over and picked up her lavender-haired infant, as he wailed against her chest. "Oh hush now, it's okay baby." She cooed, but to no avail.

Moments after being separated from Trunks, Natsumi also burst into tears and Mirai quickly grabbed her, eventually able to calm her down. Her demi-Saiyan counterpart, however, was a different story. Soon afterwards, Vegeta entered the scene, prowling for a meal.

"What's with all the ruckus?!" He demanded.

"It's Trunks." Bulma replied, solicitously. "Natsu grabbed his tail and now he won't stop crying."

"What?!" Vegeta growled. "He was defeated by that weak human brat?!"

"Hey!" Yamcha exclaimed, taking offence.

"Now's not the time, you idiot!" The heiress hissed. "Look, if you're not gonna be of any help, just go!"

"Tch, pathetic!" The Prince clenched his teeth, glaring accusingly at the blue-haired mother. "This is all your fault! You've been spoiling the child, rotten, making him all soft and weak!"

Yamcha groaned to himself. Trust Vegeta to be more concerned about his machismo than his own son.

"He's just a baby, you moron!" The heiress riposted. "And besides, they weren't fighting. She just grabbed his tail, alright? I'm sure it won't happen again."

"Your damn right it won't!" Vegeta walked over and forcibly snatched the babe, from it's mother.

"Vegeta, what're you doing?!" A horrified Bulma demanded. "Give him back!"

Without a word, the Prince absconded the premises, squalling baby in hand.

"Oh my God!" Bulma gasped, pressing a palm to her hammering heart. "Trunks." She whispered, wondering what on Earth Vegeta was planning to do, with her sweet little child.

"I-I should call Goku." An astounded Yamcha suggested, weakly. Bulma stood there in complete panic and disbelief, wondering what on Earth just happened. Her baby had just been kidnapped right in front of her.

"Oh there, there, Bulma." Mrs. Brief held her daughter around the shoulders. "Vegeta's not gonna
hurt Trunks. You know him better than that."

A few seconds later, Earth's hero appeared on scene. As soon as he learned about the predicament at hand, he pinpointed Vegeta's energy signal and vanished.

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"Kakarot, move out of my way!" The Prince demanded, midair, as he held a blubbering Trunks, around the stomach.

"Vegeta, come on, you can't just steal the baby like that." Goku objected, shoulders slumping in disappointment. "Even I know that's wrong. Could you at least tell me what you're planning?"

After a little back-and-forth, the Prince decided to give an answer.

"Grrr, fine!" He begrudgingly relented. "Tell Bulma that I'm showing him how to protect his tail, alright? That way no one can grab it."

"Oh, er- okay, but why couldn't you tell her that?"

"Because she'd keep hounding me over it and I don't have time for that." He growled back. "I need to do this somewhere secluded, without distractions and I want to get it over with quickly, so it never happens again."

"Ohhh." Goku nodded in understanding. "Well, good luck."

With that, he teleported back to CC.

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Bulma nearly throttled her best friend for taking the situation so lightly.

"You're stupid Saiyans are all the same!" She spat. "My baby just got kidnapped! Doesn't that mean anything to you?!"

"Come on Bulma, you know Vegeta's not gonna hurt him." Goku insisted.

"I don't care, he has no right to take him from me!" The fiery heiress replied. "If he wants to spend time with him, fine, I'm more than happy! But he can't just pinch him from me and then run off!"

"I know, I know, but hey, I'm sure he won't be long." The Saiyan said, encouragingly.

"That's not the point, moron!"

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"Oh God, just shut up already, I'm not going to eat you!" Vegeta demanded, as Trunks sat on the rocky terrain, ceaselessly wailing. "QUIET!"

Trunks only cried louder.

'Dammit, how do I do this?' The helpless Prince thought to himself. Eventually, he remembered
what Bulma told him, a while ago. The brat loved animals, apparently. Recalling that bit of
total he gathered him in his arms and ventured about, until found a desert hamster.
Sitting Trunks down, he brought the puffball creature over and it began sniffing the baby. Almost
instantaneously, the half-Saiyan's cries died down and he began squealing and giggling, as the
hamster crawled around his little body.

The Prince felt somewhat proud of this small development.

"Alright boy, listen closely."

The baby turned his attention, to the towering figure of his father. Vegeta unwound his tail, from
his waist and moved it towards Trunks. The demi-Saiyan made a grab for it, but it was pulled away
at the last second, whereby he whimpered in protest.

"You need to learn how to keep this thing tucked away or it can be used as a weakness, against
you." The Prince cautioned. "Watch me." He wrapped his tail back around his waist, to
demonstrate.

Trunks looked at him confusedly, before reaching out once again. Vegeta grumbled a few curses
under his breath, then knelt down and shifted his hand towards the boys tail. The terrified child
moved the furry appendage, before it was grabbed.

"Good." Vegeta nodded. "At least you've learned a valuable lesson. That tail's your weak spot, but
it won't always be. Once you're old enough, I'll show you how to strengthen it, but until then, you
need to keep it out of reach, understood?"

Trunks stared blankly, however, after a number of proceeding demonstrations from his father, the
baby finally learned how to gird the hickory appendage around his pudgy waistline.

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An hour since flitting, Vegeta returned home with a jubilant Trunks, in his arms. The heiress was
about to walk up and slap him right in the face, till she saw how happy her child looked, as he
played with some sort of wild hamster.

"Here." The Prince delivered the baby to his mother and he was about to take off, until-

"Hold it!" Bulma exclaimed, with an exasperated scowl.

"Oh come on, spare me." Vegeta rolled his eyes, before she could say it. "The boy's fine and now
he knows how to protect his weak spot. I just did him a favor. And besides, I even gave him a new
playmate." He gestured to the hamster.

"That's all well and good, but if you even think about kidnapping him like that again, so help me, I
will rip off all your hair and make you eat it, understand?!" She simmered. "I was sick to my
stomach with worry! I'm stressed out enough as it is and I don't need you adding on top of that! So,
the next time you wanna spend time with our son, you better tell me first and keep it inside the
premises, or else!"

"Whatever." The Prince shook his head and then headed to the kitchen, to grab a meal.

"Gosh, your father's just too much, isn't he?" The blue-haired mother sighed, looking down at her
giddy child, relieved that all was well.

In the months that followed, Vegeta slowly began spending a little more time with Trunks and the two developed a sort of father-son bond, much to Bulma's delight.

It was around early April that an international announcement was made. The 24th World Martial-Arts Tournament was to be held on May 2nd, a mere 10 days before the arrival of the Androids. It was also learned that a self-promoted hype-job by the name of Hercule Satan, was the betting favourite to win the competition. Mr. Satan had quickly risen to stardom, after winning the world wrestling championship. He was known to trash-talk his opponents before fights and while that initially earned him a lot of hate, his ability to back it up, led him to where he was today. The moustached fighter had a sweeping fanbase, all across the planet.

When Goku announced his intention to participate, Vegeta immediately followed suite, determined to crush his rival in battle, once and for all, substantiating that he and only he was the single most powerful Saiyan, nay warrior, in the entire Universe. With the exception of Chiaotzu and Yajirobe, the rest of the gang quickly decided that they would sign up and spend this month, training their very hardest, until the time came to test the true depths of their abilities, to lay all cards on the table.

A/N: And so there it is! Trunks is finally here, but every moment that passes, brings us one step closer to judgment day. Before that however, the 24th World Martial-Arts Tournament shall begin! Who will come out victorious? Be sure to leave me your thoughts and hit the review button! And remember to check the fan-art for this chapter hehe.

p.s. I sorta got the tournament idea from the fan-fic, ‘A boy's training’, by darksupersaiyan, but I'll certainly be taking a much different route, around it, so brace yourselves for the awesome ride ahead. Oh and I'll try and update sooner, this time around. I won't be quite as busy now, just got a little Vegetasei one-shot to complete for my friend, annegoddamn and then I'll be right on it. 😊

Thank you lovelykotori for letting me use one of her arts, as an inspiration for one of the scenes, in this Chapter.
Lastly thanks Asumaaziz for helping me pick the name Natsumi xD and drawing the fan-art for her and Mirai.

I also tried my hand at some art, for this Chapter xD (not based on any scene in particular, just the title haha).
Chapter 52: The tournament begins:

Papaya Island, May 2nd. It was early morning and the motley crew of warriors, were gathered together, along with many of their friends and companions.

"So, everybody signed up?" Goku grinned feverishly.

"Yep, we're all in." Krillin nodded, in affirmation.

"Not all." The Z-warriors turned their attention to Bulma, spruced up in a pair of black, polyester
stretch pants, edging just below her knees, white joggers and a matching sports bra. She jauntily moseyed over to the rest of the crew, chest puffed up, her figure trim and athletic and her hair fastened, in a simple ponytail, with bangs on the front. "I've decided to enter as well."

"So have I." Chi-Chi followed closely behind, accoutring a cap-sleeved, light lavender qipao that hemmed mid-shin, with uniform slits, cleaving from either side, around upper-thigh level. The dress was ornamented with a number of orchid imprints and below were a gleaming pair of violet brogues. The only thing about her that hadn't changed, was her hairstyle.

"Uh- Chi-Chi, you do know that this is martial-arts tournament and not a fashion parade, right?" Yamcha remarked dryly.

"Oh, hush up." The Ox Princess rolled her eyes, though inwardly pleased that she'd already made quite the impression, having primped herself for nearly three hours.

"Hey, Bulma, where's Trunks?" Gohan eagerly inquired. He'd been unduly fond of the lavender-haired baby ever since his birth, mostly because he'd only ever associated with those older than himself.

"Oh, we decided to leave him back home, with my parents." The heiress replied.

Not long afterwards, the group entered the hall, where the preliminary matches would take place. As each participant drew their numbers, Piccolo made sure to rig the results using his psychokinesis, so as to ensure that none of the Z-Fighters faced off against one-other, just yet.

"Okay, will contestant Yamu please make his way over to the stand?" The blond-haired announcer requested. A moment or so later, a big, bald, brutish figure ambled towards the counter. Bulma inadvertently sucked in a breath, as she caught sight of him. Recognition hit her smack in the face. It was *him*, the son-of-a-bitch who'd nearly raped her (A/N: Refer to Chapter 47/48). A horrifying tremor kindled within her pounding heart, but she quickly doused it. No! She was stronger than that now! She refused to convey even the slightest inkling of fear, at the sight of that filthy savage!

"Bulma, who is that?" Chi-Chi asked, taking note of the eerie manner, in which she was eyeing the unfamiliar fighter. "You know him from somewhere?"

Vegeta frowned and followed Bulma's line of sight. The very next instant, he was overcome with an unbridled rush of red-hot fury. That motherfucker! How was he still breathing?! Barely able to contain his spiking rage, Vegeta's legs carried him forward, as if of their own volition.

"Hey don't." Bulma shook her head, grabbing his hand, before he could do something drastic. "Just forget about it, alright? Do anything stupid and they'll disqualify you."

"What's the matter guys?" Goku asked confusedly, making his way over.

"Nothing!" Vegeta brusquely replied, snatching his hand back, as he continued glaring balefully at the ruffian.

After picking his number, Yamu frowned as he sensed the piercing looks, directed straight at him. He slowly shifted his head sideways and was rendered motionless, upon meeting the hellish, infernal eyes of that *demon*, the one who'd taken everything from him, the one who'd robbed him of his manhood (A/N: Refer to Chapter 48). He hadn't expected to see him here, of all places. And right beside him was that fucking whore! What could she possibly be doing here?! He let out a deep, grisly snarl, clenching his fists tight, as he strode ahead, ignited by a sudden, unquenchable thirst for revenge. All the misfortune, suffering and humiliation he'd endured over the last year or
more, led right back to her!

Before he could reach Bulma, however, Vegeta stepped in between them and the bald man stopped in his tracks, growling in frustration. He knew firsthand, just how powerful this flame-haired midget was and so long as he was here, there wasn't a thing he could do. Regardless, he would figure out some way to wreak vengeance upon the both of them, no matter what it took. That in mind, his lips quirked up, in a malign smirk.

"Enjoy yourselves, while you still can." Yamu sneered, before stomping off.

Vegeta didn't say a word, and just stood there, seething to himself in silence, bristling tail unwound and thrashing about, behind him. Bulma placed a hand on his shoulder, in a bid to calm him.

"Care to tell me what that was all about?" Goku asked, raising a keen brow.

"No." Vegeta scoffed, before sauntering away.

"Bulma?" Chi-Chi creased her eyes. "What's going on?"

"I- It's nothing." She shook her head, not wanting to rehash those dreadful events. "I really don't want to talk about it."

Yamu, meanwhile, was secretly hatching a sinister scheme alongside a recent acquaintance of his, named Spopovitch, who also happened to be a tournament contestant. They decided to wait for the right opportunity to present itself, before abducting the 'blue-haired slut' and defiling her, every which way. Despite his severed member, the malicious street-thug had a few twisted ideas, in mind. He would bring ruin upon her. He would violate her irreversibly and then, only then, would she learn the true extent of his misery.

Once the tournament proceeded into the preliminary stage, a few familiar faces revealed themselves. For the third time in a row, Goku went up against King Chappa, in the very first bout. The ex-champion boasted that over the years since his embarrassing defeat, he'd been training arduously and crafted a flawless new technique, called the 'gatling-gun', a relentless onslaught of kicks and punches from every direction, which apparently left no room for a counterattack. Unfortunately for him, each movement was as slow and predictable as the next and within seconds, Earth's hero had him out of bounds.

"Why?" The King cursed his own bad luck, wanting nothing more to eviscerate the fatheaded buffoon, who came up with the line: 'Third time's the charm'.

Vegeta faced former quarter-finalist, Giran, in his first bout. The Prince recognized him from the twenty-first tournament, where he'd suffered defeat, at the hands of Kakarot. After toying around with Giran for a few minutes, just for the heck of it, the sapient beast discharged a strange, congealed substance at the flame-haired warrior, which wrapped around his upper-body and simultaneously coagulated, assuming the shape of twin toroids. It was just as Vegeta had anticipated.

"Hahaha, You may be stronger than me, but there's no way you can escape from my merry-go-round-"

CRACK!

Giran watched in dreadful dismay, as his opponent shattered the rubbery, purple confines, with one swift move, as though they were frail glass tubes. How?!
"My turn." The Prince smirked and promptly enclosed a ring of yellow Ki, around the beast's midsection, rendering him immobile.

"Argh, let me out!" Giran cried out, vainly struggling to free himself. "I give up okay?!

"Giran surrenders, which means Vegeta's the winner by forfeit." The referee declared.

"Hmph." Vegeta whirled around, just about ready, to take off.

"Hey, get this thing off me!" Giran demanded, with a mean scowl. The Saiyan gave him an icy glare and the very next moment the anthropomorphic dinosaur gulped and changed his tune. "I- I m-mean, p-please free me if you w-would, s-s-sire."

"That's more like it." The Prince extinguished the Ki and made his way back towards the others, whereby the liberated beast let out a huge sigh of relief.

"You know, that was just plain cruel." Bulma frowned askance, folding her arms. "You didn't have to do that."

"It's karma." Vegeta shrugged dismissively.

The preliminaries proceeded. Tien was set to encounter a familiar adversary: Nam. Upon seeing the monk, the three-eyed warrior's face fell, embedded with guilt and shame.

"I recognize you, Tien Shinhan." The Indian frowned. "After our last fight, many years ago, they told me I was unconscious for a week and barely clinging to life."

A short moment of silence passed, before Tien mustered up the courage to look Nam, in the eye.

"I- I'm really sorry," He muttered grimly. "I won't lie to you. What I did to you and many others, was deliberate. I was completely aware of my actions, but I'm not proud of who I was back then. I know there's nothing I can do, to take it back. All I can do is humbly ask for your forgiveness." He bowed his head low.

Taken aback by Tien's penitence and humility, Nam walked towards him and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"There's nothing to forgive." The monk smiled. Tien raised his head back up. "It was a long time ago and it's clear to me that you've changed much since then, not just as a person, but as a warrior."

"Thank you." Tien smiled back.

"All I ask is that you give it your all." "Well, I don't mean to brag, but I think you're asking a little too much there." The three-eyed fighter chuckled. "You remember Tambourine, right?"

"Of course, how could I forget?" Nam cringed, at the ghastly memory of his own demise.

"Well, over the years, I've fought and defeated enemies, far stronger than both him and King Piccolo." Tien stated, completely dumbfounding his foe.

"I- I see." Nam stammered, in awe.

The fight was practically over before it even began, with Tien advancing forward. Nonetheless, the two combatants shook hands in mutual respect, thereafter.
"Hey, I remember you." Bulma raised her brows, at her adversary. "You're the one who stripped in the middle of battle, back when you fought Nam, but you were still beaten."

"Shut up!" Ranfan yelled, blushing profusely. Despite the gaudy layers of makeup, she'd noticeably aged, since the twenty-first tournament, but was nonetheless, attractive.

"Hey, I'm not judging." The heiress laughed. "I probably would've done the same. It's not all that difficult to befuddle anything, with a third leg."

"Heh, glad we see eye-to-eye."

"Yeah, well, just so you know, that's not gonna work on me." Bulma maintained confidently, assuming her fighting stance. "I'm afraid I don't swing that way haha."

"Oh believe me, I wasn't planning on it." Ranfan lunged at her foe, firing a range of attacks, that were easily blocked or evaded. Bulma slipped beneath a right hand and swiftly locked the purple-haired woman, in a standing arm triangle choke. Ranfan tapped out within seconds and Bulma was declared the winner.

"Wow, nice move Bulma!" Chi-Chi exclaimed, with a grin.

"Thanks."

Once the prelims were over, the remaining combatants moved over to the new open arena, far more spacious than it's predecessor. The eight matches of the first round were determined, by draw:

1. Bulma vs. Yamu
2. Goku vs. Yamcha
3. Tien vs. Pintar
4. Krillin vs. Gohan
5. Jewel vs. Chi-Chi
6. Piccolo vs. Mighty Mask
7. Hercule vs. Spopovitch
8. Killer vs. Vegeta

Yamu's lips tore into the ugliest smirk, upon learning that he was to face Bulma. The big gangster took off his shirt and entered the ring, looking forward to shredding this bitch to pieces. This would be an easy win, of that he was certain. The heiress took a deep breath, clenching and unclenching her fists, before engaging herself, in a few warm-up stretches and exercises. There's no way she was going to lose this fight. She'd been trained by the very best. Her technique, mobility and dexterity was at it's peak.

"Let the first match begin!"

The bald brute was instantly on the offensive, hurling a spate of punches at the heiress, only to miss, on every occasion. Just as Bulma expected, all his attacks were telegraphed, not to mention snail-paced, at least by her current standards. She could see them coming, a hundred miles away.

"Keep still, you fucking bitch!" He simmered, in frustration. This wasn't how it was meant to go
down! She wasn't anywhere near this level, during their last encounter. What could possibly have changed between now and then?

"Sure I will, after you grow a new dick." The heiress scorned, fomenting her opponent's ire. Vegeta couldn't help but chuckle at the slight. Yamu was blinded by rage and frustration, which only made his performance that much poorer. After a few minutes of failed attacks, the exhaustion was quickly beginning to creep in. He was taking heavy breaths and despite the utter futility of his one-dimensional approach, Yamu futilely continued to fire wild, sloppy haymakers that repeatedly fell short of their petite, agile target. Eventually, he was so debilitated that he clumsily staggered forward, inside Bulma's attack radius. The heiress exploited the moment by smashing her elbow against his nasal bone, with an audible crunch that had those in attendance cringing. Yamu fell to the ground, involuntary tears gushing from his eyes and blood spurting out of his nose, blinded and howling in agony. Try as he might, he was unable to beat the ten-count and Bulma was pronounced the winner.

"Ladies and gentlemen, what a sensational upset!" The announcer declared. "With a single-blow, Bulma ends the battle, by way of knockout and makes her way to the quarter finals! Let's give her a huge round of applause, folks!"

The crowd erupted, instantly on its feet, cheering for the female underdog. No one had the slightest clue that Bulma Brief, vice-president of Capsule Corporation, possessed such startling athleticism. Was there anything this woman couldn't do?

"You're the bomb!"

"You're the sexiest woman alive!"

"Marry me, Bulma!"

"No, marry me!"

"Oh please, stop it teeheehee." The heiress blushed, smiling shyly to herself, before winking and giving them the peace sign, whereby they roared even louder. Bulma heartily soaked up all the praise, indulging her already inflated ego. Just then, however, Yamu managed to get to his feet and was about to sucker punch her, from behind.

"Hey, stop, the fight's over!" The announcer warned out loud, but his words fell on deaf ears.

Bulma immediately sensed the attack coming and shot her leg up, heel landing flush against the throbbing zone, where her elbow had been, not one minute ago. The hooligan fell to the ground, crying out in pain, as he held his disfigured nose.

"Cocksucker!" Bulma spat, repeatedly kicking the amputee, in the stump, where his member once thrived. "Motherfucker!"

Yamu screamed, as pain raced from his groin, up to his chest. It percolated through his entire figure, multiplying with each incoming blow. He couldn't help it, as he fell in a loud fit of pitiful sobs. The spectators were on their toes, gasping in frenzied anticipation.

"That's enough, Bulma!" The blond-haired announcer seethed. "It's over, okay?! Anymore and you'll be disqualified!"

At that, the audience began booing, seeming to enjoy the gruesome spectacle, before them.

Bulma stormed out of the ring, while her friends strode over to congratulate her on the win.
Meanwhile, two staff members rushed in with a gurney, in order to transport Yamu over to the hospital.

"Bulma, that was awesome!" Krillin exclaimed. "You totally nailed that guy!"

"Yeah, well, I knew he'd try and pull something dirty." She grit her teeth. "Fucking sleaze-bag!"

"Still, don't you think that was a little overkill?" Yamcha sweat-dropped.

"Believe me, he deserved it." The heiress replied, without a single shred of remorse. "You don't know that guy. But anyway, enough about that. You've got a fight with Goku to worry about."

"Gee, thanks for reminding me." He rolled his eyes.

"Sucks to be you, huh?" Bulma chuckled. "Never get to make it past round one."

"Yeah, well you're lucky you didn't have to face Goku, in the first round."

"True, but I'll definitely be facing him in the second."

"Wow, thanks for the vote of confidence." Yamcha sighed in despair, as he ambled towards the ring.

"Ladies and gentlemen, may I present to you the three-time quarter-finalist, from the turtle school of martial-arts, Yamcha!"

The ex-banded shyly waved at the crowd, earning a few mild cheers.

"And his opponent, also hailing from the turtle school, is a man who needs no introduction." He went on. "He is our reigning champion and my personal favourite to go home the winner, none other than Goku!"

At the very mention of Goku's name, the audience tore into a thunderous furore.

'Look at all of them fools, lauding that good-for-nothing phoney.' A jealous Hercule seethed to himself, from the sidelines. 'Just wait until they see me rip that title from him, with my bare hands. Then they'll know who the real champion is.'

"You know Goku, this may seem a little arrogant, but I'm not gonna make this an easy fight, I promise you that." Yamcha vowed, readying his stance. "I haven't exactly been resting on my laurels and I may have a few of surprises, up my sleeve."

"By all means, I'd love to see them."

The two fighters powered up, before charging at one-another and exchanging resounding blows that rung from one end of the arena, to the next.

"Wow, you weren't kidding." Goku smirked, wiping a trickle of blood, off his lip. "You're much stronger than before and if I'm not mistaken, those were some of Tien's techniques you used, am I right?"

"Right." The scar-faced warrior nodded. "Like I said, this won't be easy Goku, no way. I'm only getting started." Yamcha promptly began powering up further and a fiery red flame, burst around his stalwart body. "Kaio-Ken times ten!"

"Whoa, holy mother of-"
Yamcha's fist slammed across Goku's face, cutting him off mid-sentence. He continued his onslaught for a moment or two, till Goku finally gathered himself.

"Kaio-Ken times two!" The Saiyan roared, getting Yamcha on the defensive, in that very instant.

"Wow, what an extraordinary battle, folks!" The announcer exclaimed, in thrill and wonder. "It's obvious that both fighters have improved tremendously, since the last tournament, but it seems that Goku's got a slight edge over Yamcha."

He made haste towards the Z-Fighters, inquiring about the strange new maneuver, employed by the two warriors.

"Listen up, everyone." He garnered the audience's attention. "I've just learned that both Goku and Yamcha are using a special technique called the Kaio-Ken, a move that temporarily multiplies the user's power, speed and reflexes."

"No way."

"Unbelievable."

The thunderstruck audience members muttered amongst themselves, in disbelief. For several more minutes, the battle raged on.

"Didn't think you'd be this strong Goku." Yamcha clutched his pounding heart, as he struggled for breath, face littered with cuts and bruises. "I really thought I'd put up a better fight than that. Seems that no matter how much I try, I'll never be able to bridge the gap between us."

"Maybe so, but that's just it Yamcha." The Saiyan replied, his features bright and gleaming with veneration. He'd barely broken a sweat. "What really matters is that you do try. That's what makes you a true warrior, as far as I'm concerned. You fought a great battle, my friend. You've earned my respect and I mean that."

"Thanks Goku." Yamcha smiled beatifically, before his eyes fluttered shut, completely overtaken by fatigue. Just as he was about to collapse, face-first, the Saiyan caught him, in his chiseled arms.

"It seems that Yamcha's lost consciousness, which means that Goku's the winner by knockout." The announcer grinned. "Let's give both fighters a huge round of applause, for this spectacular performance."

In the ensuing battle, Tien knocked the breath straight out of Pintar's lungs, with a simple elbow to the solar-plexus and thus, moved on to the quarter-finals. On the sidelines, Hercule's mouth fell open, as he was swamped with fright and alarm. However, he quickly convinced himself that Pintar just let his guard down, which could happen to anyone- other than himself, of course.

Gohan fought a tough battle against Krillin. On one occasion, the demi-Saiyan was on the verge of defeat, after Krillin unexpectedly pulled a times twenty, Kaio-Ken. Unfortunately, his body was unable to retain such tremendous power and at the most critical moment, the dazzling red flames were doused, muscle-tearing agony supplanting strength. After that, the match was pretty much decided.

"Gosh, Krillin, that was amazing." Gohan panted, on all fours. "I didn't think I'd ever have that much fun, in a battle. For a second, you almost had me. You're super-strong!"
"Not strong enough, apparently." The aggrieved warrior sighed. Just when he was sitting on the edge of victory, it'd been stolen from his grasp. If he were able to hold on for a second longer, the match would've been his. Afterwards, the rest of the warriors, at large, commiserated Krillin, assuring him that he fought a wonderful battle and exceeded their expectations, by far.

"Greetings, my darling." Jewel carolled, in a sing-song voice, sifting a hand along his blond tresses. "What's a fair lady, like yourself doing in such a coarse domain?"

Chi-Chi looked at her pretentious opponent in disgust, barely resisting the urge to gag her lungs out. Was this moron seriously trying to woo her, right before battle?

"I insist that someone so beautiful as yourself, not be involved in such mindless brutality." He continued smooth-talking. "How about this? If you concede the match, I'll take you out on a romantic evening dinner, just the two of us."

"First of all, I'm happily married." Chi-Chi replied, rather indignantly. "Second of all, even I wasn't, I'd rather walk barefoot through a hundred miles of broken glass than have to look at your obnoxious face, for more than five seconds."

"Why, I never-" Jewel garbled in shock, before seething at her furiously. "How dare you, refer to my face as anything short of gorgeous?! Do you know, who I am?! I assure you that you will regret this!" Married or not, no woman had ever denied him before and she certainly wasn't going to be the first!

"Let the match begin!"

Jewel furiously leapt forward, only to miss by an extensively wide margin. Within one minute, the raven-haired mother roughed him up good, before hurling him out of the ring. She specifically targeted that prided face of his, till it look like a freshly-baked pizza. Though most viewers howled in laughter at the blond-haired man's ignominy, there were quite a number of devout female fans, who hooted a creative range of slurs at Chi-Chi, outraged at the 'cruel' treatment of their 'precious Jewel'.

Piccolo knocked out the unknown Mighty-Mask, with a single blow.

"So, Mr. Satan, what do you think of the contestants, so far?" The announcer asked the wrestling champion.

"Pft, they're nothing but a joke." Hercule asserted, with a smug smile. "They'll need a lot more than some light-shows and disappearing tricks, to square up against a man of my calibre."

"Well there you have it folks-"

"And I know you're betting heavily on that Goku chump." Satan interjected, brusquely plucking the microphone from the announcer. He looked towards the audience, with a giant, stupid grin. "But I'll tell everybody right here, right now that I am the champion. I am the man! Anyone who has the guts to step inside that ring with me shall fall, starting with you Spopovitch!" He boldly pointed a finger at his upcoming adversary.

Hercule easily dominated the larger, stouter fighter in the following match, with his superior technique, landing him out of bounds within two minutes, greedily absorbing the heartfelt praise of the crowd, thereafter.

'Tch, what a fucking joke!' Vegeta thought to himself, in revulsion. 'I can't believe these morons are actually impressed by that despicable performance!'
'Hmm, so it seems that I'll be facing either Killer or this Vegeta guy, in the quarter-finals.' The moustached fighter mused, observing the two warriors, as they faced off against one-another.

"I ain't never seen you in the ring before, man." The two-time Muay Thai champion raised a brow. His voice was extremely slurry. "How you make it, this far?"

"Hmph, you'll see." Vegeta replied, as laconic as ever, staring impassively at his opponent, until the bell sounded.

On the sidelines, Hercule watched aghast, as Killer was defeated in less than a second. He'd watched the kick-boxer's fight-tapes from time-to-time and merited him as a top-notch contestant. So how could he have lost so easily?! Who on Earth was this new guy?! All of a sudden, he began to dread the idea of having to face him in the next round. He shook his head, mentally cursing himself, for such unwarranted self-doubt. It didn't matter how strong that little wretch was, there's no way he could stand up to him! He would grind him to pieces, with his super megaton-punch!

And so, the four matches for the quarter finals were:

1. Goku vs. Bulma
2. Gohan vs. Tien
3. Chi-Chi vs. Piccolo
4. Hercule vs. Vegeta

A/N: Hope you all enjoyed this. Although this is a super-fun arc and a pivotal one at that, I don't want to make it too repetitive, so I'll have to wrap it up, within one or two chapters. Then comes the Androids saga and the return of Trunks. But before that, how will things go down? Who will emerge champion of this tournament? Be sure to voice your thoughts and hit the review button. :D
A new super-power

Chapter Summary

And so, we move on to the quarter-final matches of the tournament:

1. Goku vs. Bulma
2. Gohan vs. Tien
3. Chi-Chi vs. Piccolo
4. Hercule vs. Vegeta

How will things go down?

A/N: First off, thanks again Rainstar-123 for the awesome new cover-image!! It's been posted on the previous chapter, for those who want to check it out!

Anyway, this chapter holds some very profound and promising moments, so let us proceed!

Chapter 53: A new super-power

The four matches of the quarter-finals:

1. Goku vs. Bulma
2. Gohan vs. Tien
3. Chi-Chi vs. Piccolo
4. Hercule vs. Vegeta

Try as she might, the heiress was unable to land a single hit on her evasive best friend.

"Wow Bulma, your technique's just outstanding." The Saiyan commended, ducking below a swift, spinning wheel kick.

"Don't you patronize me, Goku!" She hissed back.

"No, no, I mean it!" He fervently maintained. "You've got a really good sense of rhythm and timing. If you were born with the same naturally ability as some of the other guys, I honestly think you'd've been a great part of the team."

"Ahem, excuse me, but last I checked, I am the team!" She fumed irately, whilst continuing her fruitless assault. "You seem to be forgetting that I'm the one who brought all you muscle-heads, together!"

"Of course, Bulma, I know." He tittered. "I didn't mean it like that."

"Well, good!" She huffed, taking a moment to catch her breath. "Man, this is so unfair. Why did I have to be matched up against you?!"
"Would you rather it be someone else?"

"Honestly, I was hoping for a rematch with Chi-Chi." She let out a longing sigh. "I think I'd put up a better fight, this time around."

"I dunno Bulma, she's been spending a lot of time training, these days."

"She has?"

"Yeah!" The Saiyan enthused. "She's stronger than she ever was!"

"Wow, guess I'll never stand a chance haha."

"Hey, don't beat yourself up about it." Goku grinned. "You've always been the brains of the operation. Without you, we'd be nowhere."

"Well, thanks." She smiled beatifically. "That means a lot, coming from you."

Soon afterwards, Goku advanced forward, landing Bulma out-of-bounds, with a simple Kiai. It was the next battle that had everyone standing on the tips of their toes, eager to see just who would emerge the victor.

Tien and Gohan started out easy, sizing each other up and testing the waters. As they took it up a notch, it was obvious that the half-Saiyan had a clear edge, due to the unmistakable difference, in their respective base powers.

"Wow, you Saiyans are unbelievable." The three-eyed warrior smirked, stance as strong as ever. "Your Kaio-Ken times five is superior, to my times ten."

"Maybe you should go for a times twenty then." The boy grinned. "Krillin did it and he almost won."

"Quite true, but I'm stronger than he is, so in my case, it won't be an almost.

WHOOSH!

Launching himself forward like a ballistic missile, Tien bombarded the young child, with a flurry of concise hits that landed dead-on. Just as he was about to deliver the knock-out punch, however, Gohan made a decisive gambit.

"Kaio-Ken times ten!" The boy roared, a flaming cyclone of crimson fire skirling around his miniature frame. Power pushed to new heights, Gohan parried the incoming attack, with a hard right-hand, straight to the gut. Tien's eyes widened and he coughed a glob of sputum, as he was hurled in the opposite direction. Gohan struggled to sustain his power, but eventually came to grips with it and charged straight ahead. All of Tien's progress was overturned and yet again, the demi-Saiyan had the upper-hand.

"Wow, Gohan, to be so powerful, at such a young age." Tien commended, breathing heavily and clutching his chest, heart pounding with a dynamic rush of thrill and battle frenzy. "It's something none of us could have ever achieved. I don't know why I'm so surprised, given who's blood you carry."

"Thanks Tien, you're really amazing yourself!" The boy smiled.
"I didn't think I'd have to use my ultimate technique." The three-eyed warrior smirked. "Truth be told, I was saving it for the battle with Goku, but I suppose there's no other way I can beat you."

"Ultimate t-technique?" The boy stammered. "Y-You don't mean the-"

"No Gohan, not the tri-beam." Tien shook his head, much to the relief of those nearby. "That's much too dangerous and besides, you'd most likely dodge it. What I have in mind is something special that I've been working on, for the last few months."

"Oh, really?" Gohan effervesced, more eager than ever to witness this new technique. "I'd love to see it."

"Alright, sure." The three-eyed man nodded. "But Gohan, I want you to know that you're an amazing warrior. Don't be discouraged by this defeat. Let it fuel you to train even harder. You have the potential to surpass every single one of us, a whole lot sooner than you may realize."

"Goddammit, enough with the pep talk! Just show us already, three-eyes!" A restless Vegeta yelled from the sidelines, only for Bulma to smack him upside the head. "Hey!" He objected.

"Manners, idiot!" She chided.

"How dare you, wom- mph-"

The heiress covered his mouth with her hand, pressing an index finger to her lips, in a gesture for him to be quiet. The other crew-members chuckled at the amusing scene that materialized, before them. No matter how bullish or imperious Vegeta was to everyone else, it seemed that Bulma held the whip, in this relationship.

"Hmph." The morose Prince whirled his head aside, cursing the onlookers. If those idiots weren't present, he would've nipped her intrusive hand. Then again, that hand did prove to be quite useful, when it came to certain, invigorating tasks. The Prince mentally cursed himself, for that lecherous line of thought. This blasted female had ruined him, with her shameful vulgarity!

Tien raised his brows in surprise, at the bizarre spectacle, before returning his attention to the battle at hand.

"Ready, Gohan?"

"Yeah!" The boy feverishly nodded.

"Here goes." The former crane-school student pressed his hands together, palpable waves of Ki exuding outwards, the decibels of his low grunt rising little by little, till he bellowed out, in a thunderous crescendo. "Haaaaarrggghhh SUPER KAIO-KEN!"

The fiery red aura condensed around him, till he was gilded with a concentrated, ethereal film of crimson that looked almost- godlike. Glittering red sparks, ignited about his stalwart figure, pupils shining, a mesmerizing gold.

"N-no way!" A dumbfounded Yamcha stuttered, while the rest of the cadre and surrounding viewers, looked on in pure awe and wonder, at the strikingly surreal sight.

"That's amazing!" An ebullient Goku acclaimed. "His power level's off-the-chart."

"What on Earth is this?!" Krillin gasped, completely taken aback at the phenomenal display. "He literally stands at fifty times his base power. It's more or less the human equivalent of a Super
Saiyan! How is that even possible?!

"What's more, that form isn't bound by the limits of time, like the normal Kaio-Ken." Piccolo noted, with corrugated eyes. "He has a sound level of control over it. It's as though he's taken the entire Kaio-Ken and absorbed it inside his own essence, making it an inseparable part of himself. Not even King Kai would've thought it possible, to use his technique this way."

'Interesting.' Vegeta thought to himself, with intrigue. This Earthling was truly something special, well above the others. In fact, with strength like this, he could even overpower Frieza, at seventy percent- in his organic form, that is*. Loath as he was to admit it, three-eyes could certainly prove to be a valuable asset, when the time came to battle the Androids.

"T-Tien?" Gohan stammered, instinctively backing up a pace. He'd never have expected any human, to reach such unprecedented heights.

"I'm sorry to have had to do this Gohan." The three-eyed warrior said, before lunging forward and battering the child with a series of precise, powerful punches. The half-Saiyan quickly found himself on all fours, exhausted beyond measure, as the larger fighter loomed over him. "You did well, little one."

"N-No, it's not over yet!" The boy panted hard, rubbing his aching head. Exerting more effort than he'd counted on, he forced himself to stand on wobbly legs.

"Gohan, that's enough, you hear me?!" Chi-Chi anxiously yelled, from the sidelines. "It's over! No more! Just give up!"

"No!" The boy protested.

"Don't be stubborn, Gohan!" Tien reproached. "Listen to your mother!"

"If I give up now, how will I ever have the dignity, to even look at myself?!" He emphatically argued. "I am a Saiyan, just like my father, just like Vegeta! They fought against impossible odds and they came out, winners! They came out, heroes! They never gave up and neither will I!"

'That's the spirit Gohan.' Goku thought to himself, an immense surge of pride gushing through him. He was moved greatly by the bravery and unyielding determination of his son.

"Hey, I'm no hero, you foolish brat!" Vegeta remonstrated, noticeably blushing at the unwanted acclamation. "And quit lumping me in, with your moron of a- OWWW!"

Once again, the Prince was cut off before he could finish, Bulma pinching his hapless earlobe and giving it a sharp twist.

"Release me, at once!" He commanded.

"What is wrong with you?!!" The heiress admonished. "Gohan clearly looks up to you, so quit being so mean!" The moment she let go, Vegeta turned towards her with a foul grimace, as the encompassing crew laughed boisterously. It seemed that even the mighty Saiyan Prince stood no chance against his whip-wielding woman.

"Tell me something, Tien." Gohan looked solemnly at his foe, steadily reassuming his fighting stance. "If you were in my position, would you throw in the towel?"

The three-eyed fighter let out a poignant sigh.
"I suppose I wouldn't." He answered, smiling reverently. "Very well. We'll see this through to the end, if that's what you want."

The battle raged on and the demi-Saiyan desperately held himself together. He knew he was stronger than this! Somewhere inside him was a beast, with anomalous might. He only needed to figure out how to set it free. His mind ventured back to Namek, to Porunga's sagely words and the explosion of power that virtually set the entire landscape aflame, when Vegeta first transformed. Grief! That was the key, but not just any grief. It was the kind that bore a vast hole through the soul, giving a wide berth to the undercurrent of power that lay beneath, allowing it to leap upwards and assume it's rightful place. That was what he needed! An upwards elbow strike landed Gohan on his back and the ten-count promptly began.

"… seven… eight-

"Not y-yet." With incredible willpower, the child scarcely managed to struggle back to his feet. "I- It's n-not over y-y-yet."

"Gohan, please, you fought a brave battle." Tien insisted, beset with concern, for the courageous boy. "Few could've held on, as long as you did, but if this continues, you could be in serious trouble. Concede the fight, I'm begging you!"

"Never!" The boy snarled back in deadset resolution, shutting his eyes, as his mind ventured deep into the heart of hearts, the cosmic well of power, caged within him. Resolved to crush the proverbial bars that stood between him and legend, he let himself be consumed with thoughts of the future: his mother, his father, Piccolo and all of his friends. Everyone of them would be butchered, without mercy, unless he became the fighter he was born to be! As he envisioned their lifeless bodies, lying in a grisly pool of their own blood, a sharp, icy pain pierced his heart and suddenly, the underlying beast rose up and grazed its razor-edge talons along the profiles of his soul.

"Impossible!" Vegeta gasped', as the half-Saiyan's hair turned gold, for just a fleeting moment. "There's no way!"

"Don't try and force it, Gohan!" Piccolo vociferated to his pupil. "Control your power! Let it come naturally, bit by bit!"

'Wh-what the h-hell's going on?' Hercule quivered, at the unfathomable sight of black repeatedly flickering to gold, on and off, like a fluttering lightbulb. 'It's gotta be a trick! This isn't humanly possible! He must have some sort of electrical device, buried in his scalp!'

"Come on son, you can do it!" Goku willed. "You're almost there!"

'Astounding!' Tien watched, in absolute awe. Just as Gohan was about to leap over the edge of his limits, however, his aura fused and he collapsed face-first, out cold.

"Ladies and gentleman, Gohan has just lost consciousness, making Tien Shinhan the winner by knockout!" The announcer declared. "But let's give the boy a huge round of applause for his valiant efforts, against the former Champion. What a fight folks, what a fight!"

The crowd roared and hooted, completely ensorcelled by the breathtaking talent of both contestants. This event had turned out to be far more invigorating than they'd ever imagined. It was truly a privilege to watch a performance of this magnitude.

Tien breathed a hefty sigh of relief. For a second there, he thought he was a goner and had Gohan
been able to tap into his legendary power, that would've been the case. The three-eyed fighter ambled towards the motionless child and gathered him up, in his arms. Many in the crowd teared up at the touching moment of sportsmanship.

A hysterical Chi-Chi bolted towards the stadium.

"Give me, my baby!" She cried out and snatched the boy from Tien. "Oh Gohan." She sobbed, cradling him against her bosom. "My poor little Gohan."

"You should be proud Chi-Chi." Tien smiled, in veneration. "You've got one hell of a son."

The raven-haired woman turned towards the three-eyed warrior, with a murderous glare. A rush of dread and horror washed over Tien, features turning several shades of blue, as he prepped himself for whatever diabolical punishment would ensue, at the hands of the tempestuous mother.

"You- how dare you hurt my sweet boy?!" The Ox-Princess hissed dangerously.

"Uh- Chi-Chi, maybe we should take Gohan to the doctor?" Goku strolled over, grabbing his wife around the shoulders and redirecting her towards the hospital grounds, while giving his friend a knowing wink. Tien nodded thankfully at him, letting out an alleviating exhale, as the family of three, began to take off.

"Hey Chi-Chi, what about your fight?" Bulma asked the other woman.

"I can't fight!" She hotly replied. "Gohan needs me!"

"Oh right." Bulma went ahead and relayed the news to the blonde announcer.

"It looks like Chi-Chi's unable to attend her fight, making Piccolo the winner by forfeit!" He pronounced. "Our next match features this tournament's betting favourite Hercule, pitted up against newcomer, Vegeta!"

"Oh God, why me?" The Prince soliloquized in disgust, wishing that he could face a true warrior, like three-eyes, instead of this bungling buffoon. Then again, he would be squared up against the Namek, in the semi-finals and that was truly worth looking forward to, not to mention the final battle, with Kakarot.

"Be careful not to hurt the guy." Bulma sniggered, as the two opponents proceeded towards the ring. On his way there, Hercule seized the microphone from the announcer, much to his chagrin. Seriously, this impertinent asshole had no scruples, whatsoever! This was the second time he did that (A/N: Refer to previous chapter)!

Hercule wore a confident smile and looked towards the audience.

"Everybody, listen up, this is the real champ speaking!" He gloated. "You see that man, before me?" He rudely pointed a finger towards Vegeta. "He's no fighter, just a weak midget, who happened to get lucky, in the last round. Well, this time, he won't be so lucky, I promise you that."

"Hey, who the fuck are you calling weak, you cocksucker?!" The short-tempered Prince snapped. "You want to die?!!"

"Whoa, you've got some mouth on you, little punk!" Hercule gave his foe a harsh glare. "Well, I promise you that I'm about to shut it, for good!"

Seeing red, the flame-haired Saiyan was just about ready to vaporize this pompous oaf in front of
everyone, till Bulma's voice instilled some sense of reason, within him.

"Don't kill him Vegeta!" She echoed, placing both hands on either side of her mouth. "If you do that, you'll be disqualified and won't get a chance, to face Goku!"

"Hmph, kill me?" Hercule scoffed, facing in Bulma's direction. "Babe, you've got the wrong idea. This man, if you can even call him that, doesn't stand a chance. You ought to shack up with someone like me instead."

"Oh please, I'd rather drink a gallon of my own vomit than go anywhere near you."

The audience tore into a blaring fit of laughter, at the witty reply, while Hercule seethed to himself. If there's one thing he couldn't tolerate, it was when his own fans made a mockery, out of him!

"Uh, excuse me?" The announcer frowned in irritation and held his hand out. Hercule looked at him a moment, before shaking his head.

"I just wanna say one more thing." He brought the microphone over to his lips. "I'll tell everyone right now that no matter what this man throws at me, he won't be able make a single dent, on my perfect body!"

The crowd was really amped up for this fight, especially after the heated verbal exchange between the two adversaries. This was definitely a grudge match, no love lost here.

"Are you done?" The weary announcer asked, not too impressed by that pathetic braggadocio.

"Yeah, yeah, I'm done." Hercule grudgingly returned the mike and smiled smugly, as he got into position.

'Tch, stupid piece of shit.' Vegeta thought to himself, rooted on the spot. As much as he wanted to grind him to a bloody pulp, he decided on something that would make him look like an even bigger joke than he already was.

As the bell sounded, Mr. Satan galloped towards his foe, like a warhorse.

"Super Megaton Punch!" He roared. Vegeta fired a minute Ki-blast, right below his feet and the wrestling champion squeaked, eyes comically wide, as he was launched upwards and out-of-bounds, unceremoniously landing on his chin.

The crowd instantly quietened down, unable to register the defeat of the highly favoured, Hercule. They were sure he'd be able to back up his hype, like he always had. What just happened? Mr. Satan was asking himself the exact same question, as he lay on his stomach, looking like a pretzel.

"My God, what- what an incredible upset, folks!" The awestruck announcer exclaimed, hardly believing it himself. "With a well-aimed Ki attack, Vegeta sends Hercule out of bounds, making him the winner, by ring-out!"

"Hey wait, just a minute!" An outraged Mr. Satan furiously strode over to blonde-haired man. "I demand that you repeal this decision immediately! Obviously that guy planted explosives in the ring and used some cheap, laser hand-trick to make it look like the real thing!"

" Boo!"

"You're a loser."
"Mr. Satan got robbed!"

"We want a rematch!"

"Vegeta, you're so hot!"

The audience members were torn between those pushing for a rematch and those who wanted the tournament to continue, without further delay.

'Tch, I should've just pounded him, with my bare hands.' Vegeta resentfully thought to himself. Now, that sore loser was creating unnecessary drama out of nothing, just because he couldn't swallow his own ineptitude.

"Come on ref, you heard the crowd." Mr. Satan persisted. "We ought to re-do the fight and bring a crew over to inspect the ring for any explosive devices and such. What do you say?!"

"Get off the stage, you bum!"

"Hey, how dare you talk that way about Mr. Satan?!"

A minor riot began to ensue and the panicky announcer, realized that he needed to do something, in order to cool things down.

"Alright, people, please remain calm." He said tactfully. "Although I personally believe that there was no misconduct on Vegeta's part, I'll launch an appeal on Hercule's behalf, with the tournament committee. Pending their decision, we'll have a five minute interlude. Snacks and refreshments are on the house."

"Phew." The blonde man wiped a sheen of sweat, off his brow. That little distraction worked like a charm. The viewers soon settled down, as staff members served them, with free treats.

Vegeta shook his head and hopped out the ring.

"God, that was hilarious." Krillin guffawed. "You should've seen the look on that guy's face, as he flew hahahaha! He looked like the biggest dumbass! Seriously, it reminded me of the time Vegeta threw frog-Ginyu, across planet Namek." (A/N: Refer to Chapter 23).

"Speaking about Captain Ginyu, does anyone know what happened to the little guy?" Bulma asked curiously.

"Well, I think he leapt off, somewhere in the forest." Krillin shrugged. "For all we know, he's snake fodder by now."

The heiress shuddered at the thought.

"Great, now I have to wait for my battle with Goku." Tien groaned impatiently, as Vegeta made his way over. "If you'd just knocked that moron out straight away, we wouldn't have to deal with all this drama!"

"Tch, don't remind me." The Prince spat.

"Maybe you can just knock him out now." Yamcha suggested. The scarred-man had regained consciousness a short while ago, after his loss to Goku.

"If he does that, he'll be disqualified." Bulma argued. "No fighting allowed, outside the ring."
"Maybe I can knock him out then." The ex-bandit chuckled. "Since I'm no longer participating and all."

"Yamcha, stop being such a child!" Bulma chastised, punching him in the arm.

"Well, since we're here, I wanna ask you Tien." Krillin frowned at the bigger warrior. "You've been holding out on us. Why didn't you tell us about the Super Kaio-Ken? You know we could use that sort of power, against the Androids."

"I- I'm sorry Krillin." The three-eyed man replied. "I was planning on showing it to you, but then the announcement came up, for the new tournament and I- kinda wanted to keep it a surprise."

"Come on man, that's not good enough." Yamcha folded his arms, indignantly. "We're fighting to save the planet, here. This is just meant to be a friendly exhibition. How can you compare the two?!"

"Oh God, quit bitching already!" Vegeta growled. "If you want something, go and reach for it yourself, instead of relying on others, like some helpless sheep!"

"Says the guy who uses Bulma's gravity machine." Yamcha replied drolly.

"Hey, don't forget about my virtual reality- mph-"

Vegeta placed a hand over Bulma's mouth, before she could finish.

"Virtual what now?" A baffled Krillin, asked.

"Virtual nothing." The Prince hissed, before looking gravely at the blue-haired scientist. "It was just a slip of the tongue, right Bulma?"

"Mm hm." The heiress nodded. She forgot that Vegeta wanted to keep that little secret between them, right up until the decisive moment of battle.

"Alright people, I've just received a verdict from the committee." Everyone stilled and listened intently, as the announcer imparted the news. "The folks above have denied Hercule's appeal for a rematch as well as his request to have the ring examined for any illegal explosives. The tournament shall proceed, as normal."

"Come on, that's bullshit!"

"Finally, we don't have to look at Satan's ugly face anymore!"

"This tournament's a fraud!"

"Shut up you dumbass Satan fanboys!"

"Vegeta, please marry me!"

The moustachioed fighter continued to object the decision and ultimately, a throng of security personnel had to escort him off the premises, for inciting disorder. A good many Hercule fans stormed out of their seats in protest, much to the relief of everyone else present. Although Vegeta said he was more than willing to undergo a rematch, management refused to bend the rules.

"God, I don't know who's worse, Mr. Satan or his fans?" Yamcha droned.

"How can those idiots believe that it's all just a trick?!" Krillin narrowed his brows, in revulsion.
"Are they blind, stupid or just in denial?!"

"I would have to say, all of the above." Bulma rolled her eyes. Just in time, Goku returned from the hospital, though his wife elected to remain behind and nurture their little boy.

"Hey guys, sorry I'm late." Earth's hero chuckled. "Chi-Chi wouldn't let me leave, till Gohan woke up."

"How is he?" Tien inquired, afraid that he'd inflicted too much damage upon the young warrior.

"He's alright, just a little dazed." The Saiyan answered. "He told me that he's sorry for losing and that he'll do his best not to let me down again. I dunno why he sees it that way. If anything, I'm extremely proud of him. He fought really well."

"Since we're on the subject, our fight's up next." The three-eyed fighter smirked, eagerly. "You against me, just like old times."

"No doubt!" Goku nodded, extremely excited for this battle. "Good luck to you, Tien."

"And you, Goku."

Meanwhile, Hercule decided that he wasn't going to remain silent about this. He would let the entire world know that this tournament was nothing more than a big sham and that he was the true, undefeated champion! While he was at it, he would train vigorously and be prepared, for any farcical laser-tricks, the next time around! He was severely disappointed by the outcome of this event, having wanted to return home with another world title to add to his collection, not just for himself, but for his little girl, who idolized him greatly.

A/N: So, we proceed towards the semi-final bouts! Goku faces off against Tien, while Vegeta's pitted up against Piccolo! How will those fights go down?! Who will emerge the champion?! What of Hercule's scheme to reacquire his lost publicity?! Find out next time and until then, review and leave your thoughts.


Power levels:

Goku/Vegeta/Piccolo: ?

Will be revealed later.

Tien: 1.8 million
18 million (Kaio-Ken x10)
36 million (Kaio-Ken x20)
90 million (Super Kaio-Ken)

*Organic-form Frieza at 70%, stands at 84 million, so yeah, fully-powered Tien is stronger than he is.

Gohan: 4.2 million
21 million (Kaio-Ken x5)
42 million (Kaio-Ken x10)
210 million (Super Saiyan - cannot use the form properly, just yet)
Krillin: 1.5 million
15 million (Kaio-Ken x10)
30 million (Kaio-Ken x20 - still needs work)

Yamcha: 1.3 million
13 million (Kaio-Ken x10)
Primal power

Chapter Summary

At last, we're about to reach the finals of the 24th world martial-arts tournament. Who will emerge the victor, in this colossal series of bouts? Will it be Goku or will it be Vegeta? Find out soon!

A/N: Sorry for the delay, but good news is that I've written over half of the next chapter already, meaning less time to wait before the next update hehe! Almost finished with the tournament, so hold on tight! That'll wrap up this volume of the story. After that the Android saga commences and I've got some really wonderful plans for that, so stay tuned! :D

Chapter 54: Primal power

Videl was avidly watching the tournament battles live on her 22-inch LCD, in her room at the Satan mansion. She was certain that her acclaimed father would emerge victorious. To her abject shock and horror, however, the esteemed wrestling champion failed to make it past the quarter-finals, having lost within seconds to an unknown, dwarfish opponent, named Vegeta. But- how was that even possible?! Her old man had never lost a fight in his life! He was the strongest person on the planet- wasn't he? It was nonplussing. Initially, the little girl was convinced that her father had gotten jobbed, but soon afterwards, a scintilla of doubt surreptitiously crept inside her aggrieved mind.

'What if they're not just tricks?' She wondered. Videl was no expert, but the fights she saw, certainly didn't look staged. 'Just think about all those bizarre laser attacks, auras and explosions.' Even putting all of that on film would require a fortune, so one could hardly imagine the exorbitant costs necessary to make it appear fully bonafide to the overwhelming crowd of first-hand witnesses. On the other hand, since Bulma Briefs was a member of that mysterious clique of fighters, could it be possible that Capsule Corporation was behind this alleged scandal? The Briefs were the richest and most prestigious family on Earth, after all. Even so, it wouldn't account for the other matches where laser tricks and such, hadn't been employed. 'Maybe those were just fixed.'

The little girl shook her head, at the bombardment of conflicting thoughts barraging her bustling brain cells, deciding that she'd have to delve deeper into the matter. For one thing, she would closely assess the tapes of the 21st, 22nd and 23rd world tournaments, keeping a keen eye open for any potential cases of fraud. Hercule had constantly dissuaded her from seeing those fights, claiming that they were a total waste of time, what with all that 'energy nonsense', as he often put it. Now, she wasn't entirely sure if that were so.

The mere thought that her father wasn't the combat colossus she'd always believed him to be, created a vast, unwholesome pit in the burrows of her knotted stomach. Were she any other ten-year old girl, she'd be bawling her eyes out by now. Even so, she felt that the bombastic old man often went too far, scorning opponents before battles, particularly in Vegeta's case. Maybe karma was finally biting him in the ass. In any event, she refused to remain in the dark. It was essential that she get to the bottom of this! If it were truly possible to acquire supernatural abilities such as levitation, plasma attacks and what not, then she was resolved to do just that.

There was also another matter that bugged her, namely, the little boy who was participating in the
tournament, alongside the others. That Gohan kid appeared to be her age mate, so why was she barred from entering, while he was there, happily duking it out with adults, three times his size? "It's so unfair!" Videl griped, petulantly folding her little arms. She was very strong and had she been allowed to join, there was a good chance, she'd make it past the preliminaries. "Next time, I'm gonna fight as well!" She fervidly promised herself, with dogged intent. "I don't care what daddy says!" For some reason, the girl was especially eager to square off with Gohan. After seeing him put up such a brave performance against former-champion Tien, she'd felt somewhat fond of the courageous boy. Plus, she had to admit that he was sort of cute. Videl blushed, at the thought.

XXX

"I'll promise you one thing Goku." Tien vowed, assuming his stance. "No matter what it takes, I will make you go Super Saiyan. I've trained way too hard to be defeated by anything less than your very best."

"Hmph, his new power's making him a little too cocky." Piccolo scoffed.

"That may well be the case, but what if he really can push Goku that far?" Krillin cocked his head sideways, rapping his forearm.

"Don't know why, but for some reason I'm rooting for Tien." Yamcha smiled, in veneration of his awe-inspiring colleague. "I mean, damn. A human Super Saiyan! That is so up there!"

"We ought to call him Super Tien, from now on." Bulma grinned. "What do you say, guys?"

"I'm down with that." The bald warrior nodded, in assent.

"Super Tien, it is." Yamcha followed suite.

"Let the match begin!"

Without preamble, the three-eyed fighter ascended to his new form. Eyes gold and figure alight with a breathtaking veil of crimson, he attacked with all the legendary might of the Super Kaio-Ken.

"Kaio-Ken times ten!" Goku powered up, instantly on guard, as Tien bombarded him with a flurry of brisk attacks, arms and legs working in tandem, like steel pistons. Tien's power wasn't the only thing that had improved, over the years. His technique was damn-near flawless. Goku could barely anticipate his movements. In less than a minute, the crane-master broke through his ex-rival's defense and connected flush, with a high kick beneath the chin. The Saiyan was hurled to the ground on his backside, able to mitigate the fall with the base of his right palm.

"Gosh, you're amazing Tien." Goku grinned, rubbing his aching mandible. "To think that after all these years, your drive to surpass me has never waned, not in the slightest. It's determination like that, which got you where you are today."

"Thanks Goku, but we both know it's not enough, not by a long-shot."

"Maybe, but like I told Yamcha, it's the effort that counts." He smiled. "The concept of surrender holds no place, in your heart. That's something I've always admired about you."

The battle raged on and eventually Goku obliged Tien. One second he was just himself and the very next, a stunning yellow flame burst around his robust figure, hair a shimmering gold and eyes, a vivid teal. Those in attendance were rendered motionless, by the uncanny change. It was exactly what Gohan was attempting earlier, only his father had complete control of this illustrious new
form. The power that resonated off the Saiyan was completely surreal.

"Man, I didn't know he was this strong!" Krillin exclaimed, in wonder. "Unbelievable!"

"Tch, disgraceful." Vegeta scoffed, in disgust.

"You'd have been forced to do the same and you know it." Piccolo rebuked, narrowing his eyes at the haughty, flame-haired Saiyan.

"So you think." Vegeta replied smugly.

With the unbridgeable difference in power levels, Goku quickly emerged the victor, scoring an easy knockout. Soon afterwards, Tien was roused awake and lauded by his friends, for his valiant efforts.

"Next up, we have Piccolo, the finalist from the previous tournament, up against Vegeta, a man who shocked many in the audience and infuriated others, with his stunning upset against Mr. Satan."

"Yeah, you can do it Vegeta!" An attractive brunette egged on. "You're the hottest."

A gaggle of vibrant young women joined in, merrily cheering for the discomfited Saiyan.

"Bunch of trollops." Bulma irately seethed to herself.

"Seriously, what do they even see in him?!" An envious Krillin grumbled.

"Wouldn't you like to know?" The heiress goaded.

"Hey, cut me some slack, would you?!" The bald man scowled. "It's not like I haven't had a girlfriend before!"

"I bet she was as ugly as a mule's butt." Yamcha laughed at his short friend's expense.

"Shut up!" Krillin fumed, holding up an incensed fist. "For your information, she was super hot! Sure, she was a bit of a slag and kinda scatterbrained, but she had the body of a-"

"Would you keep it down?" Tien reproached, cutting off his diminutive colleague. "The fight's about to start."

"Prude." Krillin muttered under his breath.

"Who do you think's gonna win?" Yamcha asked.

"Probably Vegeta." The three-eyed fighter grudgingly replied. He was no fan of the Saiyan Prince, but then he'd never been all that fond of Piccolo either, notwithstanding the fact that they'd trained together, under King Kai. Even still, after witnessing the power of the Super Saiyan firsthand, he seriously doubted that any mortal being could ever hope to reach that level.

"Let the match begin!"

In a flash, the two powerhouses shot towards one-another, exchanging relatively curbed blows and in doing so, gauging their respective abilities.

'His fighting style's not quite the same as I remember.' Piccolo noted to himself. 'I can't find any gaps in his defense.'
"Problem?" Vegeta smirked arrogantly.

The Namekian gnashed his teeth, deciding to intensify his assault.

"Wow, it seems that Piccolo's got the upper-hand in this battle, though I can't say I'm surprised."
The announcer remarked. "In the last tournament he was literally a hair's breadth away from
winning the championship."

"Transform." Piccolo commanded, downing his opponent with a brutal knee to the gut. "Fight me
at full strength." Vegeta was on his knees, gasping and wheezing for air, as he clutched his
pounding midsection.

"You're still holding back, yourself, Namek." The Prince chuckled, struggling back to his feet and
wiping off a bloody rivulet, from the juncture of his lips. With a deep, concentrated breath, he
regained his composure. "I want to see if you're even worth turning Super Saiyan."

"Tch, you're gonna eat those words, you arrogant fool." The Namekian seethed, before shedding
his weighted gear and gradually proceeding to power up.

"Does he really think he stands a chance against Piccolo, in his base form?" Tien lifted a
condescending brow.

"He must be nuts." Yamcha concurred. "Even Goku had to use the Kaio-Ken to beat me and
Piccolo's way stronger, so what other option is there, besides Super Saiyan?"

"Wait a minute, I think I know!" Krillin gasped, as realization hit him. "He may be planning to go
Oozaru! Holy crap!"

"Wh-wh-what?!" The ex-bandit turned towards him, with wide eyes. "B-But that's crazy." He
looked up into he sky. "Th-There's no moon, so how can he even-

"He doesn't need one." The bald warrior interjected, shaking his head. "Back when we fought
Frieza on Namek, he used some bizarre technique to transform, by creating an artificial moon. I
don't know how he did it exactly."

"Whoa, that sounds bad." Though Tien hadn't ever witnessed the transformation with his own eyes,
he'd repeatedly heard the tales from his friends.

"Well, he does have full control of the form, so I don't see the big deal." Goku shrugged
indifferently. "Besides, I doubt he'll use it anyway. That fake moon technique drains his power,
plus it won't be enough to beat Piccolo, not by a long shot."

"You really think so?" Krillin asked.

"Trust me, Piccolo's a whole lot stronger than you might think." The Saiyan replied. "Just watch
closely and you'll see."

Lo and behold, a thunderous explosion drew everyone's attention towards the battlefield. The
crowd sucked in a large, collective breath, as they saw the Namekian enshrouded with a dazzling,
ocean-blue aura.

"Holy shit, he's strong!" Exclaimed a wide-eyed Yamcha.

"No kidding." Krillin gulped. "He's more powerful than Goku and Vegeta were, back on Namek."
"And he's not finished powering up yet, either." Tien added.

'He's far exceeded my expectations.' The startled Prince mused, royal blood pumping with exhilaration, as his opponent reached the staggering summits of his strength. 'Seems I have no other choice.'

Hands clenched tight, Vegeta smiled in welcome, as he called upon the cosmic powers entrenched within him. One by one, each and every darkened alcove and lengthy route inside his soul, were quickly ignited with a celestial gold glow. The audience were ensorcelled by yet another preternatural metamorphosis of the heavens.

"Man, between him and Goku, it's hard to tell who's stronger." Tien commented.

"Tell me about it!" Krillin agreed. "Gosh, I'm feeling a little sorry for those Androids, right about now. I really wouldn't wanna face that."

Immensely reinforced with a fresh batch of power and vigor, Piccolo and Vegeta lunged towards one-another, in a stellar collision that shook the very foundations of the stadium. The fight went on, with the feverish audience hooting, every time a resounding blow landed from either party.

"My God, I never expected to see so much action in the span of an entire lifetime, let alone a single tournament." The announcer rhapsodized. "I must confess, people, this is turning out to be the greatest event, I've ever witnessed!"

Vegeta landed a right hook that propelled his opponent back several metres, midair. In an attempt to surprise the juggernaut Saiyan, Piccolo's left arm thrust forward, stretched to around twenty times it's typical length. He swiftly wound the pliant limb around Vegeta's torso, firmly binding his toned arms, before shooting straight ahead himself, in a bid to pummel the pinioned Prince, with a right hand of his own. To his utmost shock, however, Vegeta was able to catch the incoming attack from the Namekian, having rapidly materialized a new pair of arms, one from each shoulder blade.

"What the-" A flabbergasted Tien looked on from below. "That- that's the four fist attack! That's my technique!" He clenched his jaw, in wroth. "How on Earth did he learn that?! It's impossible!"

"There's something really fishy going on here." Goku frowned suspiciously. "Somehow Vegeta's mastered techniques, from both the crane school and the turtle school. It's very clear to me, from the way he fights. What's more, his form's completely revolutionized and his battle senses are heightened to whole new levels. I don't get it. How could anyone improve that much, in the space of a few short years?"

"I- I don't know." Krillin stammered dumbly, unable to make heads or tails of the mind-blowing phenomenon, taking place before his very eyes.

'They haven't seen anything yet.' Bulma smiled inwardly, proud to see the pungent fruits of her newest invention, rock everyone with their overwhelmingly sharp tang. She'd certainly worked wonders with the 'virtual reality simulator' (A/N: Refer to Chapter 46).

"Just when we thought we'd seen it all, shades from the 22nd world tournament, hit us smack in the face!" The blonde-haired man raved, with freshly fortified frenzy. "It appears that Vegeta has the edge now, folks! Can this newcomer beat the odds, yet again?!"

The four-armed Prince clobbered his foe, with a double axe-handle atop the head, plunging him towards the tiled floor. Free of his rubbery restraints, he absorbed the ancillary limbs back into himself, like a forkful of noodles, before rushing downwards. Under the thinnest of wires, Piccolo
jumped out of dodge, as Vegeta's knee rammed right into the ground, creating a sizeable crater, in its clamorous wake.

The Namekian fired a Ki blast, where the Super Saiyan knelt, but the Prince materialized out of the way, before reappearing behind Piccolo and delivering a cracking elbow to his nape. The giant howled in pain, as he fell on his face, barely clinging to consciousness. Damn, this Saiyan was good, a lot more so than he'd expected!

"... seven, eight, nine, ten and it's over!" The announcer declared. "With yet another stunning victory, Vegeta makes his unanticipated move into the final round, where he's set to face the current champion, Goku!"

The audience tore into a tumultuous clamor of cheers, for the awe-inspiring underdog.

"You okay Piccolo?" Earth's hero asked, as the defeated Namek exited the ring.

"Yeah, I'm fine." He shook his head. "But be careful in there, I mean it. You don't wanna underestimate this little bastard. It's not just his power, but his fighting wits that are without equal. Trust me when I tell you this: you're gonna be facing a lot of trouble."

"Gee thanks Piccolo, I'll do my best hehe." Goku replied, a tremulous undertone to his voice. He was a lather for the intense, action-packed battle, at hand. The Saiyan couldn't help but quiver, as he saw the fearsome gleam of surety, in Vegeta's deep ebony eyes. This would be no cakewalk, that was certain, but regardless, Goku was determined to see it through to the end, determined to balance the books on their last fight. He didn't care what it took. He would come out the winner!

"And now, the moment you've all been waiting for!" The announcer bubbled up. "Who will emerge victorious, as these two titans face off, in the epic climax of the 24th world martial-arts tournament?!"

"I hate to say this guys, but I really don't see how Goku can win." Krillin pointed out what most of the others were unwilling to vocalize. "Vegeta's fighting style's pretty much impeccable."

"Come on, Krillin, you make it sound like it's a bad thing." Bulma narrowed her eyes, at the bald man. "So what if Vegeta wins? It's not the end of the world. He's still one of us or are you forgetting that?"

"Hmph, hardly." Tien scoffed.

"And what's that supposed to mean?" The heiress loured.

"Well, I know he's a little different and all, but even then, I won't forget what he did to us, all those years ago." The three-eyed warrior replied.

"Oh, is that a fact?!" Bulma walked up, crabbily prodding Tien's chest. "And what about you?! Should I forget the time you broke Yamcha's leg on purpose or the time you tried to kill Goku?!"

"Come on Bulma, you know that's not the same thing as laying waste to countless civilizations."

"That was in the past!" She indignantly shot back. "He may still be a bit of a grouch, but he's nothing like he was, back then! And if you think otherwise, it just shows how little you know!"

"Bulma's right, Tien." Krillin intervened.

"Thank you!" The heiress said.
"Sure, he's not the most ideal person on the planet, but Vegeta's fought on our side, so many times." The bald warrior continued. "Goku, Gohan and myself owe him our lives. In fact, all of us do. If he hadn't beaten Frieza, who knows how many planets would've fallen under his thumb, Earth included." He went on. "Besides, I'm pretty sure everyone here was Goku's enemy, at some point. Heck, even Bulma tried to kill him when they first met. Seriously man, you've gotta let bygones be bygones."

"I dunno Krillin, I can't really argue with you, but I don't see why I should fully trust the guy either." The three-eyed warrior maintained. "Someday that may change, but until then, I'm gonna do the smart thing and keep my guard up, around him."

Yamcha glanced between the contentious parties. As Bulma's ex, he had more reason than any to despise Vegeta and yet, he had to go with Krillin on this one, though he wouldn't openly admit it. While the Prince could be a bit callous at times, with Bulma and Trunks in the picture, it was as though he were a whole new person. They'd truly changed him for the better.

"Let the final match begin!"

Goku leapt forward, like a ravaging lion, only to hit Vegeta's after-image. Senses alert, he whirled around, catching a right lead, from his deft opponent. Goku frowned. There was something suspiciously slow about that attack.

"Aren't we forgetting someone?" The Prince smirked.

"Huh?"

The very next moment, the wild-haired Saiyan tumbled to the ground, struck from behind, with a lower leg sweep, delivered by- another Vegeta?!

"That's the multiform technique!" Tien exclaimed. "What in Heaven's name is going on?!"

The flame-haired duo, each fired a Ki blast on their supine foe, before falling back and coalescing into one.

"Really Kakarot, for someone like yourself to fall for such a simple ruse." The Prince shook his head. "I seriously expected better."

Goku sat up, scowling at his complacent adversary. He should've anticipated that attack, but he was so focused on one Vegeta that he failed to notice another. Evidently, this clone had been suppressing his power, the instant he was formed. Goku realized that against an opponent of Vegeta's calibre, he had to rely on all his senses, lest he fall for such crafty ploys.

"Tell me something, Vegeta." The taller Saiyan smirked. "Have you been training with Master Roshi or something? Or maybe the Crane Hermit, Master Shen, cause you're using techniques, from their school of martial-arts."

"Not quite." The Prince replied, pouncing at his foe.

"Then how do you explain it?"

"Well to put it simply," Vegeta began, slipping a jab and simultaneously countering with an overhand right, across the jaw. "I've been training, inside a computer simulation."

"Whoa, really?" Goku asked, struggling to keep pace, with Vegeta's adroit attacks. "I still don't get it. What does that have to do with-"
"In a nutshell, it allows me to fight any adversary of my choosing, well- amongst that pitiful posse of yours, anyway." The Prince interposed, landing a resounding uppercut that dropped his opponent.

"How?" The other Saiyan asked.

Vegeta explained the distinctive hallmarks of the 'virtual reality simulator': how Bulma spent months of effort, inputting computerized data of the old tournament battles, into a handheld gadget and how it could be manipulated to choose the power level of an opponent.

"I can't even begin counting the number of times I've squared off against you and your chuckleheaded compatriots." The Prince laughed. "In other words, I've been able to break down the fundamental aspects of each of your respective fighting styles, piece by piece."

Goku gaped at his opponent, jaw hanging open in marvel.

"Bulma, what the heck?!" Krillin demurred, furrowing his brows at the heiress. "How could you come up with something that sophisticated and not tell us?!"

"Hey, don't blame me." She replied defensively. "It's Vegeta's fault. I only built that thing, cause he was too much of an ass, to train with the rest of you guys."

"Still, come on." Yamcha joined in. "It could've been really useful."

"I doubt it." Bulma shook her head. "You were all training together anyway, so I didn't quite see how it would help. The entire system's based on techniques you're already familiar with. Still, if you guys are gonna be a pile of wet blankets, I can make you some duplicates."

"Thanks, but no thanks." Tien scoffed. "I prefer learning the old-fashioned way, rather than relying on a computer."

"It's not that simple." Piccolo argued. "You can't just attribute Vegeta's newfound success to a computer. What you need to remember is that unlike the rest of us, he never had the opportunity to train under the guidance of a true master. What we're witnessing right now is his full-fledged battle potential."

"It still gives him an unfair advantage over all of us, including you, Piccolo." Krillin contended.

"You're right, it does." The Namekian nodded. "But you've gotta give credit where it's due. If Vegeta were just mimicking outdated techniques, it would hardly make a difference. He's adapted them into his training and added his own unique spin on each move, knowing just when to use the right one and creating flawless combinations that're extremely effective, not to mention unpredictable." He went on, more solemnly. "That being said, however, I wouldn't count Goku out of the fight just yet. He's had the odds stacked up against him many times before and still managed to come out on top. This right here is exactly the kinda of fight he needs, right now. He needs to be pushed into a corner and look for a way out. There's no better way for Goku to prepare himself, against the Androids."

"Kaio-Ken!" Goku lashed out, with a ferocious onslaught of hand strikes, since nothing else seemed to be working. Vegeta landed on his back, letting out a series of pained grunts that slowly morphed into unsettling laughs. "What's so funny?!!" The taller Saiyan demanded.

"You're far too predictable, Kakarot." The Prince rose to his feet, shaking the daze out of his head. He dusted himself off, before gazing challengingly upon his younger adversary. Goku hadn't a clue that this was just the overture. Vegeta had yet to unfurl the true flags of his power. "Try that
Without volition, Earth's hero rushed forward, engulfed in the crimson flames of the Kaio-Ken, only this time, Vegeta blocked his move with relative ease.

"What?!" The younger Saiyan gasped, as his older adversary countered with a hefty blow to the solar-plexus. Propelled backwards, Goku clutched his midsection, as unabated pain pulsated through his torso. "H-How?" He stared wide-eyed at the Prince, grimacing as he noticed a significant change in his demeanor. Vegeta's eyes were completely red, like those of an Oozaru. His muscles were observably larger and a cryptic, blackish aura, swept about his stalwart frame. "Is that a new form?!"

"Quite the contrary, this is my true form." He replied, voice more gruff and feral than usual, which was saying a lot. "It took me around a week, but I learned how to summon all the powers of the Oozaru form, without the need to sacrifice my own strength or rely on the full moon. This is what you might call, primal power." (A/N: Refer to Chapter 50). He let out a frightful chuckle, before adding. "And unlike your Kaio-Ken, it's not bound by the limits of time."

A/N: Wow, what a place to end xD. Don't worry, next chapter will be up within a fortnight and that's a promise, since half of it's done already! So, it appears that Vegeta's got the advantage against his rival, from just about every angle. Can Goku find some way to win? Who will emerge the champion of the 24th tournament? All shall be revealed, next chapter!

Power levels:

Goku: 7.5 million
11.25 million (Kaio-Ken - assuming it's a 1.5x multiplier)
75 million (Kaio-Ken x10)
375 million (Super Saiyan)

Vegeta: 7.5 million
75 million (Primal form)
375 million (Super Saiyan)

Piccolo: 220 million (full strength)

Super Tien: 90 million
Chapter Summary

The culmination of the championship bout, featuring Goku and Vegeta. Who will take the victory? And what of the Android threat, that's coming up?

A/N: Picking up immediately where we left off, Vegeta's engaged with Goku, in the blazing heat of battle, shocking his rival by dredging up the full might of his Oozaru powers, without even having to transform.

Chapter 55: Behind you all the way

"It looks like Vegeta's turned into some sort of crazy werewolf or something! Just look at those blood-red eyes!" The dumbfounded announcer cried. He ran over to the other Z-Fighters. "Will someone please explain this to me?!

"I-I- I hardly know m-myself." Yamcha stammered incredulously.

Krillin, however, took a moment to collect himself, before reminding the blond-haired man of the peculiar incident that took place during the 21st world martial-arts tournament, when Goku transformed into a Giant Ape.

"Basically, uh- people like Goku and Vegeta, become ten times stronger when they catch sight of a full moon- well provided they still have a tail." He elucidated. "But somehow, Vegeta's learned how to summon that strength, with very little change in either form or size. I'd honestly never considered it, but then again, these guys never fail to surprise."

"When you say 'people like Goku and Vegeta', what exactly do you mean?"

"Well, let's just say they were born with special abilities that normal humans don't have."

"Like that blonde-haired transformation?"

"Yeah, like that." Krillin nodded. "It's called the 'Super Saiyan' form. To be blunt, it makes them fifty times stronger than they are already. Tien can basically do the same thing, with his Super Kaio-Ken."

As the announcer relayed the baffling information to the anxious audience, a war of words erupted on the fighting platform.

"Face it Kakarot." Vegeta sneered. "No matter what tricks you pull, I'll still have the advantage and there's nothing you can do to change that."

"We'll see about that Vegeta!" Goku grit his teeth vexedly, shooting his power up even further. "Kaio-Ken times ten!"

WHOOSH!

The augmented assault from Earth's hero, bore little fruit. Vegeta's battle aptitude was sharper than
a freshly forged Damascus steel sword. He could see through his taller opponent's movement, clear as day, outwitting and outmaneuvering him, at every turn.

"My God, I have to say, it's rare to see the champion face this much trouble in battle!" The announcer vociferated. "What an honor it is to witness the rise of this astronomical new competitor! Ladies and gentlemen, this right here is what true martial-arts is all about!"

The stupefied spectators wholeheartedly hooted, in agreement with the blonde man. To hell with that pitiful loser Mr. Satan. He wasn't even worth the dust on Goku and Vegeta's boots, as far as they were concerned.

'This is insane!' Goku thought to himself, in sheer frustration. 'How is he so much better than me?! I never counted on this! Man, I really need to focus and get my anger in check! Looks like I have no other choice. I haven't had to do this, since the fight with Frieza and I don't know if my body can handle it, but here goes.'

"KAIO-KEN TIMES TWENTY!"

BOOM!

The Prince spat out a glob of blood, as he was struck with a crunching blow to the midsection. Goku didn't let up, continuing his assault, till his foe landed face-up, desperately gulping in the air around him.

"Vegeta, if you're as good as you say you are, surely you won't have to transform into a Super Saiyan before me, will you?" Earth's hero taunted. "Cause it seems to me that that's the only edge you have, right now. Or can you prove otherwise?"

"Just as I expected," Piccolo smirked, knowingly. "Goku's no simpleton either. He knows exactly how Vegeta's mind operates and he's using it to his advantage. For Vegeta to accept this proposal means putting himself at a major disadvantage. For him to reject it means setting aside his pride and that's something he'll never do. Nonetheless, there's no conceivable way he can handle the Kaio-Ken times twenty, not even in his primal form."

"Vegeta, don't fall for the bait!" Bulma called out in desperation, despite knowing that her warning would go in one ear and out the other.

"Wait a second, if Goku can use the Kaio-Ken times twenty, that means he could've beaten me without turning Super Saiyan." Tien gnashed his teeth, feeling severely demoralized, at the thought.

"Come on Tien, he knocked me senseless with the Kaio-Ken times two, so what're you so upset about?" Yamcha argued. "You ought to be proud, man."

"You don't understand, Yamcha." The three-eyed warrior seethed. "It's the principle of the matter. The only reason Goku went Super Saiyan was to make me feel better about myself, not because he actually needed to. Do you not realize how belittling that is?!"

"You know Tien, for someone who hates Vegeta so much, that sounds an awful lot like something he'd say." Krillin jested, but immediately closed his mouth and winced, as the three-eyed man sent a peevish glare, his way.

"Dude, take a chill pill." The ex-bandit remarked. "You're super strong, okay? Everyone here knows it."
"Tch, yeah right." Tien abjectly spat. "I'm nothing but a joke, compared to those damned Saiyans."

"Enough with the self-pity." Piccolo growled. "You're not the only one here who needs to play catchup, alright?! Now shut-up and watch the fight!"

As expected, the prideful Prince dauntlessly rose up to the seemingly impossible challenge.

"Well played, Kakarot." Vegeta smiled smugly. "But do not believe for even a second that it'll change the end result. While the Kaio-Ken times twenty gives you a clear edge over me, you know as well as I do that it's a double edged sword, in that it significantly exhausts your own energy."

"So, what do you say then?" Goku prompted.

"Very well, challenge accepted." The Prince nodded.

"Vegeta, it's not a freaking challenge, it's a trap and you're playing right into it!" Bulma objected, from ringside. "Don't be stupid!"

"You're wasting your breath." Piccolo chuckled. "He can't hear you. The only thing Vegeta can see right now is the man that stands before him, nothing else. He's a Saiyan warrior and if I know one thing about these stubborn bastards, it's that they never turn down a challenge."

The heiress muttered a string of livid curses under her breath, knowing that the Namekian was spot-on and that nothing could get through to that obdurate, flame-haired midget.

"Come on Vegeta, kick his ass!"

"Goku, you can do it, you're the greatest fighter ever!"

"You're both awesome!"

"Take off your shirts!"

The crowd was torn between Goku fans, Vegeta fans and feverish fangirls, who were desperately eager for a chance to eyeball more of the mesmerizing man-meat, in front of them. Just as Piccolo asserted, however, the gargantuan Saiyan duo were completely unmindful of the myriad distractions, surrounding them.

Fully charged up, the younger Saiyan went on the offensive yet again, bombarding his red-eyed foe with a range of blows, confident that he could force Vegeta to yield and transform.

"It appears that the tides are turning in Goku's favor now!" The astonished announcer remarked. "Keep in mind that this man's participated in every championship battle, for the last 3 tournaments. Time and again, he's had to overcome adversities, one after another, so this isn't something new for the champion."

As the swiftly sapping seconds ticked by, Goku began to notice that his attacks didn't have the intended effect. It made no sense! Anyone else in Vegeta's position would've fallen long ago!

"That all you've got, third class?" The flame-haired Saiyan taunted, riling up his opponent's fury. Goku indefatigably continued his reckless assault, paying little heed to the hefty toll it was taking on his rapidly deteriorating Ki.

"How- how can you still be standing?!" He demanded, breathing severely hard, while his self-satisfied opponent stood as tall as ever, in spite of his dwarfish stature. "It's not possible."
"You ever watched Ali vs. Foreman?" The Prince asked, earning a blank look from his younger adversary. "Didn't think so. The key lesson from that fight is that it doesn't matter how much stronger your opponent is, if his punches don't land properly."

"What're you talking about?!" Goku hissed back. "My attacks were spot on! You weren't able to block a single one!"

"You're right." Vegeta nodded solemnly. "Your attacks were delivered perfectly, there's no denying that. Physically I was unable to stop them, given the vast difference between us, where power level is concerned." He continued, with a smirk. "However, where my body lacked the necessary speed, my other senses were still able to perceive each incoming blow. Right before it connected, I quickly concentrated large portions of my energy around the targeted area, creating a buffer zone of Ki and thereby minimizing the impact of every single strike."

As his rival's words sunk in, the younger Saiyan looked as though he'd been struck atop the head, by a thunderbolt. How could anyone possibly have such fluid control over the flow of energy, across their body?! It was absolutely inconceivable!

"So needless to say, Kakarot, your little ploy failed miserably." The Prince quirked his lips up maliciously, bearing the sharpened fangs of his new form. Goku couldn't help but recoil in horror, at the ghastly sight of his feral foe. He looked like a wild sabretooth, thirsty for blood- his blood!

"Man, Vegeta's freaking awesome!" Krillin exclaimed. "No matter what Goku pulls, somehow he manages to get the upper-hand!"

"And Goku's far too exhausted to use the Kaio-Ken times twenty, any longer." Piccolo noted, with a frown. "He wore himself out completely, while Vegeta was able to absorb every single blow. Regardless, I have a strong feeling that Vegeta took more damage than he's letting on, though Goku's definitely the worse for wear."

"Does he have any real chance at victory, now?" Tien asked the Namekian.

"To be perfectly honest, I would have to say no." Piccolo sighed. "Every conceivable advantage that Goku could've had, Vegeta's somehow been able to offset." The green alien chuckled wryly. "On the battlefield, he's proven himself to be nothing short of perfect. On top of everything else we saw before, he's trained all his senses, natural and otherwise, to work together in perfect sync. Just look at Goku up there. I haven't seen such fear and misgiving in his eyes, ever since he fought Frieza on Namek."

"There's gotta be something he can do." Yamcha insisted, heavy hearted at the thought of his friend and hero being defeated. "He's Goku, darn it! He always comes through! He just has to! He can't lose, not like this!"

"What's the matter?!" Vegeta goaded. "Not feeling so cocky now, are we?!"

Goku was rooted to the spot, engulfed with doubt and raw terror, like never before.

"Now, now, don't lose heart, Kakarot." The Prince smirked. "You fought well, for a third class, but I'm afraid that this is where it ends."

He promptly pounced upon his younger rival, ready to deliver the knockout blow, only for Goku to turn Super Saiyan on impulse and effortlessly catch the attack.

"Looks like you transformed first." Vegeta laughed.
"Yes I did, happy?!" Goku scowled in resentment and jumped back a pace. "Go ahead and transform then. This fight isn't over yet!"

"As you wish."

A swarm of eyes were glued to the ring, as the flaming pair of Super Saiyans duked it out, to determine who would seize the win. As expected, the fight was very much one-sided. In addition to Vegeta's superior battle aptitude, Goku had lost a significant portion of power, following his reckless use of the Kaio-Ken times twenty. A roaring right hook, swung across the larger Saiyan's jaw, propelling him far sideways, landing him on his back and causing a gruesome maxillary fracture. All those in attendance grimaced at the sickly, bone-crunching sound that rung across the stadium. So ear-piercing was the blow that many viewers were surprised to see that Goku's head was still attached to his shoulders.

"... seven, eight, nine and what's this?!" The announcer gasped, in shock. "The champ manages to get up at the count of nine, despite the overwhelming fatigue, countless injuries and that fractured jaw! From where I stand, he looks pretty much finished already! As much as I love Goku, there's a thin line between courage and stupidity and I'm afraid to say, he's just crossed it."

"Stay down Goku, you're gonna get yourself killed!" Krillin yelled anxiously, from ringside.

"I told you, he can't hear you right now." Piccolo shook his head. "Besides, you know as well as I that Goku would sooner die than give up a fight."

"This is too much." Bulma felt her eyes tearing up. "I don't think I can watch." The heiress fell in Yamcha's arms, unable to control her sobs. Goku was her best friend and the last thing she wanted, was to see him get killed at the hands of Vegeta, of all people. The mere thought, plagued her heart with a sharp, piercing pang of sorrow. She knew her Prince wouldn't intentionally kill Goku, but when they were submerged so deep in battle that they couldn't even perceive anything on the outside, who knew what could happen?! If Goku took another hit like that, it would surely snap his neck.

"Kakarot, you know you're better off staying down." Vegeta arrogantly folded his arms. "There's nothing you have left."

"I'm afraid that's where you're wrong Vegeta." Goku replied telepathically, unable to physically speak as a result of the overwhelming pain. "We'll see Vegeta, we'll see." A blue orb of Ki materialized within his palms, dilating wider and wider, by the second.

The younger Saiyan shut his eyes, focusing every remaining scrap of energy he had, into a powerful Kamehameha, hands cupped by his side. It he were to win, he needed to time this final move, just right.

"You can't be serious!" Vegeta scoffed. "Even if you were able to pull that off, it's nothing I can't handle, especially in your condition. You know that, just as well as I do."

"We'll see Vegeta, we'll see." A blue orb of Ki materialized within his palms, dilating wider and wider, by the second.

"Fine, if that's the way you want it." The flame-haired Saiyan shook his head and rose into the air, readying his own special move. "Galick…"

The moment Vegeta's energy was fully concentrated on that one attack, Goku decisively used his Instant Transmission to vanish and reappear behind his thunderstruck opponent.
"What?!" Vegeta gasped.

Almost simultaneously, Goku released the entire force of his signature attack, giving his rival virtually no time to think, as he was struck up close, by an enormous wave of Ki.

"N-no, d-dammit!" The Prince was launched at a downwards angle, losing his Super Saiyan form, as he was engulfed by his rival's mammoth Kamehameha, unable to keep himself from smashing right into the blocks of solid concrete below. Vegeta lay there, mentally cursing the other Saiyan, as he desperately clung to the thin edge of consciousness. He'd played right into Kakarot's hands! That third-class opportunist had been waiting for him to focus all his energy into one place, so that he couldn't transfer it in time to create a barrier that would've otherwise defended against that Kamehameha! He'd never considered the possibility of the Instant Transmission being used like that, while in the heat of battle. It was literally the one thing he hadn't been prepared for!

"My goodness folks, in spite of his near-fatal condition, I don't know how, but Goku's once again been able to turn the tide of battle, in his favor, just like he did against Piccolo, during the last tournament!" The announcer exclaimed. "This is what a true champion is made of! And now to start the countdown: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven and now Vegeta's getting up folks! He's getting up! Unbelievable! Are these two persistent or what?!"

By this time, Goku had already descended to the ground, having lost the Super Saiyan form himself, after expending just about every remnant of Ki, within him. If Vegeta still had something left, there was absolutely nothing he could do. As he was, it took every ounce of willpower Goku had, to remain standing on two feet. When his enraged opponent got up, however, the younger Saiyan couldn't help but quiver.

"K-Kakarot, you b-bastard- ugh." Vegeta wheezed, before his charred body wilted and he collapsed on his back, completely motionless.

"And Vegeta goes down, yet again!" The blonde man declared, before restarting the count. "… nine, ten and that's it! The fight is over! After the toughest battle he's ever fought, Goku manages to emerge on top, winning by knockout and retaining his world title!"

As soon as the announcement was made, Earth's hero quickly lost consciousness, falling face-first onto the fighting platform. The Z-Fighters instantly rushed towards the ring, in a frenzy, trying but failing to rouse either of the two Saiyans.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I just wanna say that I've never had the privilege of witnessing a fight so spectacular as this one!" The blonde man gushed. "Even though Vegeta lost, he proved to us all that he has the heart of a true champion, when he got up, after eating a powerful Kamehameha from such close range! No one and I mean no one has put Goku to the test, the way he did. Let's hear it for both of these terrific fighters."

The audience tore into a frenzy of unbridled cheers, for champion and challenger alike.

"They need senzu beans immediately, both of them or there's good chance, they're not gonna make it." Piccolo stated.

"Of course." Krillin nodded, pulling out the senzu sack from his waistband and proceeding to insert one inside his best friend's mouth. Goku's eyes shot open and he sat up, taking a huge breath, his injuries all but vanished.

"Hey man, you did it!" Yamcha grinned at his roused friend. "That was freaking amazing."
"I- I won?" Goku blinked a few times, before grinning wide himself, overwhelmed with a rush of pride at the greatest victory, he'd ever achieved. "My God, I actually won! I beat Vegeta! God, that is just wicked!"

"Tell me about it." Tien laughed. "You were getting your ass kicked the whole way through. None of us thought you could pull it off, but man, that Instant Transmission Kamehameha was something else!"

"Guys, can you celebrate some other time?" Bulma frowned. She was sort of disappointed at the result, considering how well Vegeta was doing, but then Goku had always been like a little brother to her, so it wasn't too bad. "In case you forgot, someone here still needs a senzu bean."

The three-eyed warrior was about to retort "let him die", but then thought better of it. Besides, Vegeta was clearly a pivotal asset at this stage, what with the Android threat, looming over their heads. Plus he was the father of Bulma's child- however that happened.

"Right, right." Just as Krillin was about to walk over to Vegeta, Goku grabbed him by the wrist. "Wait a second." The bald man confusedly turned towards the wild-haired Saiyan. "Let me, Krillin."

"Uh- sure." He offered the sack to Goku, who grabbed it and ambled towards the prone figure of his fallen foe. "Here, Vegeta." The younger Saiyan popped the healing bean into the mouth of his older counterpart.

The flame-haired Saiyan jerked to a wake and immediately took in his surroundings, scowling as he noticed the idiotic grin plastered upon his rustic rival's features.

"Tch, you got lucky Kakarot!" He hissed, shamed more than ever at his defeat and humiliation at the hands of a third-class. Just as he was on the cusp of victory, it'd been stolen from his grasp. "I'll admit that was a smart move, getting me to lay my guard down like that and seizing the opportunity, but it won't be happening again, I can assure you!"

"I know, I know." Goku chuckled. "It was the only technique I had left, in my arsenal hehehe. Knowing you, there's no way it would work a second time around. I think it's pretty clear from this battle, which one of us is the better fighter, Vegeta. You had me on the losing end the whole way through and if it weren't for that trump card of mine, I wouldn't have stood a chance."

"You're goddamn right!"

"Yeah, but don't think I'm gonna be second best, forever." The younger Saiyan vowed. "I've learned a lot from this fight and I'm gonna train harder than ever now, mark my words! I guess the score's even now at one-all, but if the two of us make it through the battle against the Androids, I promise to give you a rematch. Then we'll know without doubt, which one of us is the greatest Saiyan of all."

"Hmph, of course." The Prince smirked. "I won't be falling for any of your tricks again. You can count on that."

"That aside though, I want you know something Vegeta." Goku said, voice unusually grave and sombre. He earned his rival's undivided attention. "No matter what happens, no matter who you face in life, as long as there's still breath in my body, I'll stand behind you all the way."

Vegeta gaped at him wide-eyed, as did the other Z-Fighters, incredulous at the heartfelt vow that escaped the younger Saiyan's lips and the unswerving promise, rooted within his deep black eyes.
There was no lie there. After a short lacuna phased by, Vegeta snorted dismissively.

"Well I am the Prince of all Saiyans, after all, so of course you owe me your-"

"It's not about that Vegeta." Goku cut off his rival. "Yes, you're my Prince, there's no denying that, but you're more than that, so much more. You're my friend."

The flame-haired Saiyan choked, at the unsolicited assertion.

"G-Goku?!" Tien sputtered, not knowing whether to feel incredulous or just plain disgusted. How could anyone call this pompous jerk a friend, especially given his history?!

"You don't have to accept me as a friend if you don't want to, but I still consider you to be mine."
Goku repeated emphatically. "And my friends mean everything to me. That's why I'll always have your back, Vegeta." A brief pause followed. "Always." He repeated.

"Goku." Bulma smiled benignly, tears brimming her oceanic eyes. She was deeply touched by her best friend's ardent words, to a man who was once his bitterest enemy. This is why she loved Goku, so dearly. He was inconceivably noble, forgiving, kindhearted and altruistic. His deific virtues were like the finest incense that would permeate through even the darkest and dreariest of surroundings, flooding it with a rich, divine fragrance, unlike any other. True, it was her that had ultimately transformed Vegeta's heart, foraging through layers and layers of ice, until she was able to help dredge up the warmth that lay beneath, but Goku had still played an integral role and she would never forget it.

Vegeta continued to rubberneck his rival. A friend? This oaf actually considered him a friend? Despite the absurdity of such a bizarre notion, for some reason it seemed so much more profound, real and uplifting than whatever mechanized authority he once held over Nappa and Raditz. The younger Saiyan's veneration was centred around neither Vegeta's position as a Prince, nor his colossal power level. It hadn't been programmed into him, but had steadily developed, right from the time they'd been sworn enemies on the field of battle, up until this very moment. They were the last of the Saiyans and had repeatedly shattered the odds, as they transcended into legend and toppled a mighty tyrant, who had the entire cosmos at his fingertips, for decades. Together, they'd inadvertently embarked upon a journey towards greatness. Their unwavering desire to surpass one another, led them to where they were now. Deep in his heart, Vegeta realized that such respect, reverence and acceptance was oddly fulfilling, as though he'd been searching for it his entire life and just didn't know it, until now.

"Tch, whatever fool!" The ruddy Prince groused, resenting the softhearted sentiments that were stirring about in the hollows of his chest. This darn planet was making him go soft and he didn't like it!

"Well, if you're both done with all the touchy, feely stuff, how about we not waste another second and get back into training?" Piccolo snorted, earning a bitter scowl from Vegeta and a sheepish look from Goku. "Remember, ten days is all we have. Like Goku said, use what you've learned here today and let it guide you towards greater strength, cause very soon we'll all be needing it, more than ever."

"I second that." Tien nodded.

Ten days later…

It was 9 a.m. at Capsule Corporation. In exactly one hour, doomsday would begin- or so it was said.
"Be careful out there, Vegeta." Bulma murmured, as she held a baby Trunks in her arms. The heiress was wearing a pair of white capris pants, fastened with a scarlet belt, a scarlet tube-top and an orange vest. Her silky aquamarine hair fell to around chin-level, with bangs fashioned on the front, much like on the Namek trip. "Please, promise me you'll be safe."

"I don't plan on dying today, Bulma." Vegeta replied, before pointedly frowning at her. "But just remember, you're not to show yourself anywhere near the battlefield, no matter what. Am I clear?"

"Yeah, yeah." She sighed. Initially, the heiress was deadset on going and getting a firsthand view of the Androids, but the Prince repeatedly demanded that she stay away, for her own safety and that of their child. Bulma walked over and placed a hand on his cheek. "Come back to us in one piece, okay?" She whispered softly. "We need you."

"Da-da-da." The baby whined, holding out his stubby little arms, as though in agreement with his mother.

"Hmph, of course." Vegeta scoffed. "Do you really think I'd let you raise the brat, to be a softhearted clown, like Kakarot?" Despite the teasing gesture, Bulma's heart warmed at the mellow, caring underdone beneath it all. The Prince held an index finger out and Trunks wrapped his tiny hand around it, grinning wide. 'No matter what happens, take care of your mother, boy.' Vegeta mentally enjoined and the one-year old's expression went blank, as though he'd heard the message, but couldn't quite understand it.

"I love you." Bulma smiled and pressed her lips against his for a moment, before they parted.

It was time, at last…

_A/N: Such a close battle, wasn't it? Hope you all loved it and Goku's heartfelt promise to Vegeta that followed. So now, the Android threat is here at last! How will things go down?! Find out next time and remember, all reviews, critiques and recommendations are deeply appreciated! :D

Thank you so much Sadara-sama, aka Jiitari, for drawing an awesome art-piece for primal form Vegeta!!_
Deadly duo

Chapter Summary

Thus commences Volume II of the story, with the beginning of the Androids saga. Hope you all love it!!

A/N: First of all, I'm really sorry for the lengthy delay. It's been well over two months! Just been so darn busy, with work, training and getting into a "Game of Thrones" reading/writing vibe. But rest assured, I'm still here and although updates may be a bit slower, I'll definitely keep 'em coming!

This here is officially the start of Volume II of this story!

Also be sure to check out the awesome arts for Chapter 48 and 55, kindly illustrated by my good friends Annegoddamn and Sadara-sama (you can see them here on Ao3 or my DeviantArt page, with the link back to the originals). Thanks so much my friends! :D

So now we commence with the Androids saga. Of course, I'll be doing things quite a bit differently than the canon and won't be going over every single scene, as you're about to see. Anyway, enjoy and be sure to leave your thoughts, my friends! :D

Chapter 56: Deadly duo

Vegeta carefully observed the battle, from atop a stocky crag. Before it had even begun, he'd noticed his rival's heavy breathing pattern. His performance was substandard at best and despite having a clear edge in the beginning, Kakarot soon found himself on the losing end against that corpulent, baby-faced oddity. It was obvious that some time after the tournament, he'd contracted the same virus, prophesied by that mysterious lavender-haired Saiyan. He wasn't anywhere near his best. Incidentally, the Prince was somewhat intrigued by that eerie Ki-absorption technique, employed by Kakarot's mechanical foe.

'Interesting.'

Very soon, his rival was sprawled on the ground, the Android's pale, meaty fingers locked around his throat, as it mercilessly siphoned energy, from the hapless hero. That was when Vegeta finally decided to intervene, launching himself directly into the hotspot and smashing his heel on the Android's cheek.

"It's Vegeta!" Gohan grinned. He and Piccolo were about to step in, but it no longer seemed necessary.

"God, I was wondering when he'd show up." Krillin smiled in relief.

"Kakarot, you idiot!" The Prince gruffly censured, looming over his rival's supine figure. "Who asked you to fight in your condition?! You're not supposed to die, until we finally settle the score, got it?!"

"It's- good to see- that you care- so much." Goku quipped between groans, letting out an agonized chuckle. "Ugh- God." He cried out loud, as he clutched his throbbing chest, having never experienced such acute pain, all his life. It felt as though there were a sharp set of teeth inside his
rib cage, chewing away his heart, from the inside.

"Go back home to your harpy wife, where you belong." An unsympathetic Vegeta sneered. "I'll take care of these Androids myself. Once you're fully healed and ready, I'll be dealing with you next."

The older Saiyan punted his rival towards the sidelines, where he was caught by Piccolo.

"Dad, are you okay?!

"Goku!"

The other warriors gathered around, fussing over their sickly leader, until Yamcha offered to return him to Mount Paozu. He was loath to abandon his friends, but Goku's health and wellbeing was paramount. The rotund Android was ready to give chase, until his taller companion told him to remain afoot, since Goku was clearly not a threat.

"Hmmm, could that truly be you, Vegeta?" The moustached monstrosity that went by the monicker 'Twenty', turned his attention towards the arrogant Prince. "Most interesting that you of all people, would come here to assist these pitiful warriors. According to our database, you were listed amongst Goku's enemies."

"Enemy?" Vegeta was slightly taken aback, by that. "So you've been keeping tabs on Kakarot and his friends, that much is obvious, but clearly your information isn't up-to-date, Android."

"What do you mean?" Twenty frowned.

"You must not know about the battles we fought, on the Planet Namek." Vegeta replied smugly. "That would explain your surprise, when you saw Kakarot transform into a Super Saiyan."

"It makes little difference." The mechanical being snorted. "You must have seen for yourself, just how easily Nineteen dispensed of Goku and now, with his energy safely assimilated inside, you and your friends pose no challenge to him, let alone myself."

"Oh, is that right?" Vegeta sniggered. This thing hadn't a clue that Kakarot was scarcely even a shell of his true-self, when he fought his portly associate. "I'll tell you what. Since you're so overconfident, how about I offer your fatheaded friend some more energy? Surely, that can't hurt." He promptly turned towards Nineteen, who'd long since gotten up. "What do you say, Poppin' Fresh? You want some of this?"

"Vegeta, are you nuts?!" Krillin yelled in alarm, while the Androids gawped at their supercilious, flame-haired enemy. Twenty creased his wrinkled brows, in suspicion. Was Vegeta planning something or was he just plain stupid? Chalking it up to a fortuitous bout of insanity, the taller Android gleefully quirked his lips up. If Vegeta was any bit as strong as Goku, this could most certainly work to their advantage, not that they really needed it!

Nineteen cackled voraciously before pointing his hands towards his foe, palms wide open. He was yearning for the chance to absorb Vegeta's energy.

"Dammit, what on Earth is wrong with this guy?!" Tien snarled. "He's gonna get us all killed."

"He knows what he's doing." Piccolo stated phlegmatically. "Vegeta's many things, but he's not an idiot. You just have to trust him."

"Hmph, you make it sound so easy." The three-eyed warrior scoffed, clenching his teeth.
The Prince cupped his hands by his waist.

"Ka-Me-Ha-Me-"

"So you learned some of Goku's techniques, did you?!
"Twenty grinned. "Well, it won't save you now, fool!"

"HAAAA!" The Prince fired the bright blue beam towards his eager opponent. It seemed only fitting that he destroy that robotic pile of trash with Kakarot's signature technique, following the latter's defeat and humiliation.

"Hahahahahahahahaha!" Nineteen hooted, as he absorbed the laser-like blast, through the scarlet suction in his palms and consequently felt his energy spiral to unforeseen levels. It was utterly invigorating. Very soon, he would be invincible!

"That's right, enjoy it while it lasts!" Vegeta looked just as jubilant as his stout foe, if not more. "Now let's see if you can handle this, Android! HAARRRRGGGGHHHHHHH!" He promptly shot up to full power, hair turning gold and eyes teal, as an enshrouding flame burst around his strapping figure. In that very instant the blue energy wave's girth quadrupled, the sheer force and intensity behind it, multiplying many times over. Twenty had to do a double take, watching in sheer horror and disbelief, as his companion was dangerously overcharged and blown to smithereens, as a result. Nineteen's head landed right by his feet, a giddy smile still plastered on his fleshy features. The taller Android couldn't help but gulp and back a few paces, as Vegeta took a deep, galvanizing breath and turned his attention towards him.

"Hmm, it seems to me that your associate bit off more than he could chew." The Prince chortled. "What about you? Think you can handle the energy of a full-fledged Super Saiyan?"

Twenty sputtered incoherently, unable to make heads or tails of what had just transpired, before his very eyes.

"So that was Vegeta's plan!" Tien was unable to keep the smirk off his face. "Man, I've gotta hand it to him, that was pretty freaking awesome! He's even stronger than he was at the tournament! Less than ten seconds and poof, that Android was scrap metal! Unbelievable!"

"Touché." Krillin nodded dumbly.

"I- I don't understand it." The mustached Android quavered. "Goku was a Super Saiyan and used that very same technique, but Nineteen was able to absorb it, so how-"

"The answer's simple." Vegeta interjected. "As it so happens, that fool Kakarot was afflicted with a heart-virus, mere moments before this battle." His expression suddenly darkened, opal eyes flooding with blazing vitriol. He didn't show it before, but he was incensed beyond words, at seeing a great warrior like Kakarot, someone he deeply venerated in spite of all their differences, suffer a beating at the hands of such a weak and unworthy sap. "Were he at full strength, neither you, nor your pot-bellied pig of a friend would've stood a chance against him! And needless to say, you stand no chance against me either- unless of course you'd like to prove otherwise!" He ended that last part, with a smirk that dared his opponent to make the first move.

'How did become this strong?!' A dismayed Twenty thought to himself. 'It's not possible! Even if I somehow manage to absorb energy from the others, I doubt it'll be enough. My only chance is to find a means of escape and reawaken Seventeen and Eighteen.'

"You know, I happen to be in the mood for a little game of hide-and-seek." Vegeta axed through
his petrified opponent's musings. "So I'm going to be generous and give you a head-start. I suggest you get as far away from me as possible, because after one minute's over, I'm going to hunt you down and grind you to pieces, like I did your fat friend."

Not needing to be told twice, Twenty immediately zoomed into the rocky outcrop behind him. Vegeta had unknowingly opened an avenue for him to reach his lab, where he could unleash the awesome power of the twins. Once the deadly duo awakened from their torpor, these fools wouldn't have a clue what hit them.

"You're letting him escape?!" Tien growled, in anger and disbelief.

"Oh trust me, he won't be getting very far." The Prince assured. He'd been eager to gauge his predatory skills and this seemed like a ripe opportunity, one he was loath to miss. Without a Ki signal to track, he'd have to rely on his other senses and that made the challenge, all the more fascinating.

"To hell with you and your game!" Piccolo growled. "If you're not gonna stop that thing now, then I am!" Just as he was about to make his move, however, Vegeta materialized in front of him, blocking his path.

"I suggest you stay put, Namek." The Prince warned dangerously.

"If he gets away, he's gonna kill more innocent people!" Piccolo snapped. "Or worse, he could find some way to upgrade himself and become even stronger! Do you not realize that saving the planet's more important than your stupid amusement?!"

"Like I said he won't be getting away." Vegeta resolvedly asserted.

"And you're gonna put all our lives at risk, just for that?!!" Krillin heatedly argued. "For Heaven's sake, think about Bulma and Trunks! If they've been observing Goku all these years, they obviously know about Capsule Corporation and for all we know, that Android could be heading there, as we speak!"

Even though a minute hadn't yet passed, the bald man's words struck so hard that Vegeta instantly disappeared from sight, in a bid to pursue the wizened machine, the rest of the fighters, not far behind. Dammit, he'd been so lost in the thrill and excitement of it all that he'd forgotten about his family and now began cursing himself for it! At times like these, part of him regretted the attachments he'd formed, since arriving on Earth!

'Darn it, I was sure I would've had more time than this.' The Android thought in frustration, espying his enemies from below. 'I need to find some way to reach my laboratory or else all my plans will have been for nothing.'

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Nearby, a certain lavender-haired teenager had arrived and stared open-mouthed at the incredulous sight, before him. A battle had raged here, that much was certain, but he couldn't quite identify the pale, sundered head of the Android that lay before him. Why in Heaven's name it was still smiling, he didn't know, but that nightmarish look sent shivers down his spine.

"I can sense father and the others up ahead, but they don't appear to be fighting anyone." He soliloquized, thereafter deciding to fly over to them and learn just what the hell was going on.

A short while later, Gero's eyes widened, as he saw the unidentified stranger join up with the rest of his adversaries. Who on Earth was that?!
"It's you!" Tien gasped.

"Uh- hi." The teen said shyly, before glancing between the rest of them. "What're you all doing here? And who was that other Android I found, back there?"

"What do you mean who?!" Vegeta gruffly replied. "He was one of the Androids you told us about, boy!"

"Uh- w-well- h-he um- wasn't-" Trunks stammered, unable to formulate a complete sentence, owing to the deathly manner in which his father was glowering at him. Suddenly, he caught sight of an airplane headed in their direction and easily recognized the driver. "NO, DON'T COME DOWN HERE!" He frantically yelled, to the top of his voice.

Capitalizing on the moment of distraction, Gero finally decided to reveal himself.

"Celebrate while you can, weaklings!" He boomed. "Once I release Seventeen and Eighteen, you and this entire planet will be a pile of rubble! Ahahahahahahaha!"

He promptly fired a humongous wave of Ki at the approaching vehicle and flitted the scene, using the subsequent cloud of dust, as cover.

Vegeta had managed to save Bulma in the nick of time, holding her tight, while the wide-eyed blue-haired scientist was temporarily frozen, in shock. Oh God, that was much too close, for comfort.

He set her on the ground and pulled her back by the shoulders, assessing her petite figure, for any possible injuries. Seeing none, he breathed an alleviating sigh, before giving her a withering glare.

"WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH YOU?!" He yelled, right at her face. Bulma flinched, shutting her eyes, as her poor eardrums were pelted, with each raging syllable. Suddenly, she remembered her baby.

"Oh God, Trunks!" She gasped in horror. "Where's Trunks?!"

It was the purple-haired adolescent who brought the squalling infant forward, handing him over to his mother.

"Oh, my baby." She gushed in relief, cradling the tiny bundle against her chest, before twinkling gratefully at the young man. "Thank you so much. I don't know how I can ever repay you."

"Please, it was nothing." The older Trunks waved his hands.


"I- uh- oh yeah!" Bulma suddenly recalled why she'd come here to begin with. "A short while after you left, I was reading a science magazine and happened to come across a profile for none other than Dr. Gero himself. So I had a look and found an approximate location for his lab. I figured I'd come here and tell you guys in person, so maybe you could."

"YOU CAME ALL THE WAY HERE, JUST FOR THAT?!" Vegeta roared. If this were anyone other than her, he'd have asphyxiated them on the spot. "ARE YOU FUCKING STUPID?! WHAT IF YOU AND THE CHILD GOT KILLED, THEN WHAT?!"

"Stop fucking yelling at me!" Bulma shrieked back, only for the terrified bundle in her arms to cry
louder. "There, there, Trunks. It's okay, baby." She soothed.

"Wait, what're you talking about?" The future-boy asked, trying to ignore all the cuss words being used around his hapless infant counterpart. "Gero's lab? You know where that is? You have to tell us now, so we can stop him!"

"Well, the journal said that it's somewhere in a cave on the outskirts of North City." The heiress replied. "I'm afraid it didn't go into any further detail, but that old guy who shot down my plane, looked just like Gero. Could that maniac have somehow transformed himself into an Android?!

"Well, from the way he spoke, he almost sounded as if he had a personal vendetta against Goku, so it's safe to assume that that's the case." Piccolo exhaled, before frowning at the lavender-haired lad. "Gero mentioned two others, Seventeen and Eighteen. I'm guessing they're the Androids you spoke of three years ago, when you came here to warn us."

"Yes." The boy nodded. "Wait a second." He suddenly appeared as though he'd been struck by lightning. "If he's going to activate Seventeen and Eighteen, then we have to stop him now, before he has the chance!" The young demi-Saiyan realized that something else was amiss. "Hold up, where's Goku? I don't see him anywhere."

"He's not here." It was Tien who answered. "Unfortunately, Goku contracted that heart virus you told him about, right before battle and Yamcha had to fly him back home. He's in no condition to fight."

"Oh no, that's horrible." Trunks' heart sank. They'd just lost their most valuable player. It couldn't possibly be any worse.

As if sensing his thoughts, Vegeta loured at the young half-breed.

"Oh for God's sake, get ahold of yourself, boy!" He spat. "Who needs Kakarot? He's obviously going to be out-of-commission for a while, so let him sit this one out. I can deal with these Androids myself."

"You don't even know how strong they are!" The boy frantically objected, overwhelmed with an all-encompassing rush of dread, as beads of sweat dappled his forehead. "In the world I grew up in, these things killed every single one of you, except for Gohan. He was the sole survivor, but thirteen years later they got him too! Well, I won't let it happen again, in this timeline! No matter it takes, I'm gonna stop Dr. Gero!"

He promptly transformed into a Super Saiyan and flew full-speed towards North City, while the rest of the crew, save Piccolo, appeared positively dumbstruck at the revelation. This whole time, they were under the impression that the boy possessed some sort of clairvoyant abilities, not that he was literally from the future.

"Wh-Who is that kid?!" Bulma asked no one in particular.

"There's no point hiding it any longer." Piccolo sighed. "That boy is Trunks, the very same Trunks you're holding in your arms." He pointed towards the babe. Everyone turned their astonished gazes towards the Namekian, completely slack-jawed. "He came back here from the future, in a time-machine, to warn us about the Androids."

"N-N-No way." Bulma stammered and held up her baby, in close scrutiny. "Oh my God, how could I have missed it?! It really is him!" She grinned widely. "I was almost afraid he'd end up looking all grouchy and sullen, like his father, but man. He is smoking hot!"
"That's enough bullshit from you, woman!" The peevish Prince snarled. "You're going back home this very instant and if I ever see you within two miles of a battlefield again, I'm going to chain you up and gag you!" Before Bulma could retort, Vegeta turned towards Gohan. "Escort her and the brat back to Capsule Corporation and make sure they don't fall."

"Sure thing, Vegeta." The demi-Saiyan nodded, in assent. "Come on Bulma, lead the way." He smiled at the blue-haired mother and took to the air. Dithering for a moment, Bulma begrudgingly left the scene, alongside Gohan.

"We need to move, now." Piccolo looked towards Vegeta and the hunt was on.

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"Wow, I still can't believe that Trunks is gonna grow up, to be so handsome." The bubbly heiress swooned. "I always knew there was something about that kid. The answer was right here, in front of my face the whole time, but I could never place it. And he's such a nice boy too. Come to think of it, he reminds me of you Gohan."

"You think so?" The half-Saiyan raised his brows, flying beside her.

"Oh, for sure." She beamed, earning a grateful smile from the boy. Like her, he felt a really good vibe from the older Trunks.

"He said I was the only one to survive this battle." Gohan suddenly looked perturbed. "What if-

"Oh no, don't even think that way Gohan!" Bulma softly rebuked. "Things are gonna be a lot different now. They'll stop Gero before he can unleash those deadly machines!"

"I hope so too, but we need to be prepared for the worst case scenario."

"Come on kid, I know how hard it is, but you've gotta think positive." Bulma insisted. "Things are different here, than they were in the- uh- future timeline, or whatever. For one thing, Goku's still alive. Plus, he and Vegeta have been training so hard for the last three years. When those two knuckleheads join forces, there's nothing they can't possibly overcome."

"Okay Bulma." The boy smiled at her, though inwardly he felt a little queasy. The heiress wasn't wrong. Together, Vegeta and his father made for an indomitable pair of warriors, but as of right now, the latter was tragically indisposed. Then again, the other Trunks was a Super Saiyan, plus Piccolo was very powerful too. Even so, if they came at this with all their strength, things would have been far better. Dammit, if only that nasty virus hadn't come along and ruined everything!

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"So, you're my son, huh?" Vegeta asked, having caught up with the hitherto stranger, from the future. It was hard to believe that he'd actually spawned this boy and he didn't really know how to feel about it. On the one hand, he was deeply impressed by the powers he'd acquired at such a young age, but on the other hand, he was just a lot different than he would've envisioned.

"Oh- uh- yeah." The teen timidly replied, blushing a little. "I'm sorry I didn't say anything before. It's just- I didn't wanna-"

"I wasn't really killed by a pair of robots, in your timeline, was I?" He cut him off, deeply ashamed at the mere thought of it.

"You were." Trunks sighed, in distress. "I was only a year old at the time."
"Kakarot's boy taught you how to fight, didn't he?"

"He did." Trunks let out another dismal sigh, not wanting to think about his dearly departed mentor.

"That probably explains why you're so soft." The Prince snorted. "But, at least you don't hesitate when it comes to killing your enemies, I'll give you that."

"Uh- thanks." The boy couldn't help but smile a little, at the faint praise.

"Your mother raised you all by herself?" As much as he wanted to, Vegeta couldn't quell the feeling of guilt that rose within him. For some reason, he felt responsible for the recklessness of his future counterpart that had left his family in tatters.

"Well, Gohan was sort of like an older brother to me and he used to spent a lot of time with us."

The flame-haired Saiyan wasn't even sure if he wanted to ask the unwanted question that suddenly popped in his mind, but- he felt he had to know.

"Did your mother and him ever-"

"No, no, it was nothing like that." Trunks quickly interjected, with a vehement shake of his head. "I mean, there was the obvious generational gap and everything, plus mom never really got serious with anyone, as far as I can remember. There was no time for that kind of stuff. We spent all our lives running and hiding, from the Androids. Whatever spare time we got, we used it to help survivors, train or work on the time machine." He grit his teeth. "I hate them so much! They're heartless monsters and there's not a thing I can do to stop them!"

"Hmph, we'll see if I can't change that." The Prince was barely able to curb his ire. Those artificial piles of garbage had brought ruin upon his family and even though it had taken place in another reality, he still felt the sting and bitterness, coursing through his veins. It was time to return the favor, time to balance the books. After he finished off those sons-of-bitches here, he'd travel to the future and destroy them in Trunks' world as well.

"Father, I know you wanna fight them, but it's much too great a risk." Trunks said, as though reading his thoughts. "If we let Dr. Gero unleash those things, we won't be able to defeat them, at least- not without Goku around. If worse comes to worst, we need to escape and regroup, once Goku recovers. With the three of us together, there's a good chance we can beat them."

"Tch, you can scuttle off if you want to, but I'm going to pulverize those fuckers, if it's the last thing I do!"

"You can't father, it's not-"

"That's enough out of you, boy!" Vegeta cut in. "A true warrior would rather die than run from a battle! Where's your Saiyan Pride?!"

"Pride?!" Trunks shot back, in a rare fit of anger. "I don't care about pride! Survival is far more important to me than pride! You say you'd rather die than run. But what happens, if you do die?! Who's gonna protect your son and his mother?! They'll spend their entire lives running and hiding, just like we do in my world!"

"I said enough!" The Prince snapped aloud, cowing his son into silence. "You'd be wise not to underestimate my strength, boy!"
By now they'd stumbled upon the secret hideout and flew over to the thick, steel entrance door, able to make out a distinct set of voices inside.

"Now then, Vegeta is on his way here, as we speak." Dr. Gero cautioned. "He was able to destroy Nineteen within mere seconds, so you mustn't take any chances against him. With the two of you working together, you'll be sure to win."

"Working together?" Seventeen jeered. "Sorry Doctor, but that's just not how we roll. We'll take care of Vegeta and his friends, but we'll do it on our own terms, not yours."

"Why you little- I am you creator and you will do as I command or else I will shut you down, for good!"

"Go right ahead." Eighteen laughed, calling his bluff. "But don't come crying to us, when Vegeta blows you to bits."

"Grrrrr." Gero gnashed his teeth, seething at the confounded predicament he found himself in. All of a sudden, there was an explosion at the door and the doctor scowled, as he realized that he'd been discovered.

"I'm sorry, am I interrupting something?" The Prince smirked.

"That's them!" Trunks gasped, as his teal eyes locked onto the terrifying twins. "Seventeen and Eighteen! Darn it, we were too late!"

"So you're the ones?" Vegeta frowned. They didn't look all that menacing, what with their juvenile appearances and casual attire, but he'd learned a long time ago that looks could be very deceiving. The amusement vanished from his face, as he realized that the Androids weren't paying him any attention, instead trying to open up some sort of porcelain repository in the centre of the lab. What could possibly be in there?

"No, you must not open that!" The evil doctor demanded, running over to them. "Number Sixteen is not yet fully functional."

"Sixteen?!" Trunks gasped, in horror. "Another Android?! It can't be true!"

Just then Tien, Krillin and Piccolo had arrived, to see Gero futilely urging his 'subordinates' not to unleash Sixteen. Eventually, Seventeen snuck behind the old man, swiping the shutdown remote from the his hand and crushing it.

"How dare you?!" The doctor barked. "I should never have created either of you scoundrels! You're nasty, conniving little- URGH!" Gero yelled in horror, as he saw Seventeen's arm protruding through his abdomen. "What have you done to me?!"

"It's time to put you to rest, you useless old windbag." The youthful Android smirked, before pulling his hand back and launching a jumping roundhouse kick across the back of Gero's neck, a move that instantly rendered him headless. The Z-Fighters could only gawk at the astonishing scene before them.

"N-no, m-my own creation." The doctor cursed his misfortune. "Wh-Why?"

No more was said, as Seventeen leapt forward and crushed Gero's severed head, beneath his shoe.

"Are you done?" The female Android jadedly asked. "I could use a little help here. I'm trying to figure out how to open this thing, without harming the big guy."
"Hmmm, let me take a look." Seventeen sauntered towards the large receptacle.

"If they set that Android free, it will be the end of all of us!" Trunks desperately roared, flaring a humongous globe of Ki in his palms, before firing it straight at the twins. "NOOOO!"

The other fighters rushed for cover, as the entire lab was levelled. However to the young half-Saiyan's dismay, the Android duo remain intact, having leapt away just in time, carrying the large chamber with them, wherein lay their inanimate colleague.

"Foolish boy!" Vegeta growled, at his son. "Did you really think you could finish them, with an attack like that."

"But- but that was my most intense blast!" Trunks cried.

"Then you still have a lot to learn." The Prince sneered. "Now stand aside and leave this to me!"

A/N: As y'all can see, I added my own twists here and there. Some of you may have noticed, but Vegeta's massacre of Android Nineteen was essentially the equivalent of how Goku destroyed Yakon, in the Buu saga. Since Vegeta's stronger here than he is in the canon, I figured that it's entirely plausible and that Nineteen would not have the capacity to absorb energy of that magnitude. And before you ask, Bulma was able to track down the Z-Fighters, by sensing out their Ki (she's a fighter in this story, remember?).

So, next chapter we'll have the epic showdown between the Z-Fighters and the Androids. How do you imagine it'll go down? Please leave your thoughts and hit the review button! We're nearly at 1000 reviews now! Thanks so much for bearing with me, my friends! :D
Blonde Beauty

Chapter Summary

How will Vegeta fare, when he's pitted up against the blonde beauty?

A/N: A super quick-update I know, probably not what you expected, but I felt I owed you folks, after the two-month delay, so enjoy! :D

Chapter 57: Blonde beauty

"Hmph, amateurs." Seventeen scorned, once the dust settled, in aftermath of Trunks' spontaneous Ki blast. The twins set down the roomy chamber of their comatose companion and eventually saw a small red button that awakened him, from his slumber. A humungous, burly figure sat upwards, his crimson mohawk rippling with the wind, as he turned this way and that, slowly taking in his craggy surroundings.

"Hello there, Sixteen." Eighteen impassively greeted. "Must feel good to finally be out of prison, huh?" An awkward pause followed. "What's the problem? Is your earpiece malfunctioning?"

"Maybe it's his voice box." Seventeen suggested, somewhat amused. "Hey Sixteen, nod if you can hear me." Still no response. The black-haired Android frowned. "Let's forget about him Eighteen. I think it's about time we track down Goku."

"Goku?" Came the deep, robotic voice of the large cyborg, as he tilted his head towards Seventeen.

"Well, what do you know?" Eighteen raised a brow, in surprise. "He really can talk, after all."

"Hey Sixteen. Eighteen and I are on a mission to find Goku." Seventeen briefed. "What do you say, big guy? Wanna come with?"

"Yes." He mechanically replied. "I will kill Goku."

"Sounds good to me." The female Android smirked. "Let's go then."

With that, the cybernetic trio leisurely flew towards the general direction of Mount Paozu.

"Oh n-n-no, d-d-did you hear that?!" A terrified Krillin whimpered. "Th-They wanna kill G-G-Goku!"

"So long as I'm breathing, they'll never get the chance." Vegeta determinedly vowed, ready to zoom off in their direction, till Trunks appeared in front of him, arms held out wide.

"No father, I can't let you do that." He fervently shook his head. "If you fall, then it's all over! We need you alive!"

"Out of my way." The Prince stoically ordered.

"Look, we have to plan this out!" The teen insisted. "We should get Goku someplace safe, before the Androids reach him, wait until he's fully recovered and then, come at them with everything we
"He's right." Krillin agreed. "That's a great idea! Look, I know you're insanely strong Vegeta, but there're three of them. It's too great a risk and like Trunks said, we need you with us."

"Move." Vegeta brusquely demanded, as though he hadn't heard a word. "I'm not going to tell you again, boy."

"I won't!" Trunks obdurately maintained. "I can't let you throw your life away, fath- UGH!"

The young demi-Saiyan was cut off by a brutal blow to the midsection, spittle flying out of his mouth.

"I don't plan on dying, Trunks." The flame-haired Saiyan adamantly assured, before intrepidly trailing after his enemies.

"Hey, are you alright?!" Krillin moved towards the arching teenager, as the latter struggled to catch his breath.

"Please- we need- to stop him!" He pleaded, clutching his throbbing abdominals.

"Would that I could." Piccolo growled, before looking gravely at Trunks. "Look kid, I can understand why you're worried about your father and all, but Vegeta's a lot stronger than you may think."

"You don't understand!" The demi-Saiyan emphatically argued, whipping his face up towards the Namekian. "In my world, Vegeta was the first one that got killed, fighting the Androids! I can't let it happen again!"

"Well, what do you suppose we can do about it?" Tien gnashed his teeth. "Even if we all work together, I seriously doubt we could stop the guy, when he's this hell-bent."

"But we have to try!"

"Grr, fine!" Piccolo huffed, throwing his arms up in surrender. "Let's go then."

"This is b-b-bad idea, g-guys." Krillin jittered, an icy hue spreading across his face.

"I agree, but there's no other choice now."

And so, the other Z-Fighters spooed Vegeta's Ki signal.

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"Seventeen, would you mind explaining to me why we're stopping in the middle of the road?" Eighteen asked, looking none too pleased.

"No particular reason." He shrugged. "I just figured that it'd be more fun if we jacked a car and drove to Mount Paozu."

"How original." The blonde-haired female rolled her eyes. "Seriously though, I'd rather we fly." She turned towards the laconic leviathan. "What do you think, Sixteen?"

"I agree." He monotonously assented. "Flying is a lot faster."

"Looks like we've reached a consensus." Eighteen smirked triumphantly, at her black-haired twin.
"Okay first off, we're in no rush. Whether we kill Goku now or in a year's time, it doesn't really matter, does it?" Seventeen retorted. "Secondly, this isn't a democracy. I'm the strongest one here, which automatically puts me in charge."

"Hmph, strongest my ass." Eighteen scoffed. "If Sixteen and I fought together, we could beat you, no question."

"You wanna bet?" The black-haired Android challenged.

"Sure." The female looked at the red-haired giant, who seemed to be engrossed in a nearby copse of trees. "Hello, you gonna lend me a hand here, Sixteen?"

"No." The big behemoth creased his bushy brows, at her. "I will only fight Goku."

Both Android siblings sweat-dropped, at the reply.

"Sheesh. And here I thought you couldn't possibly get any duller." Eighteen drolly remarked, earning her a hint of a smile from Sixteen, before the latter continued to survey the encompassing flora and fauna.

Just then, a certain flame-haired warrior landed by the artificial assassins, in all his Super Saiyan glory.

"Oh hello there, Vegeta." Seventeen narrowed his eyes, somewhat perplexed. "I seem to recall that you had black hair, just a few moments ago."

Not deigned to reply, the Prince closely scrutinized his foes, as he considered his next move. He was no fool. It was safe to assume that at the very least, each of these things were more powerful than Trunks, else the shaken boy wouldn't have feared them as much as he did, nor would they have survived his impromptu Ki blast. If he rushed them all at once, there was a good chance, he wouldn't make it out alive. Thus, he opted to face one of them, in order to get a good grasp on their key strengths and weaknesses, before moving on to the other two.

"Are you just gonna stand there, like a fool?" The black-haired Android asked restlessly. "State your business or get lost."

"My business is quite simple." Vegeta smirked. "I'm here to reduce the three of you back to the tin cans you were, before that fool Gero decided to transform you into Androids."

"Hmph, figures." Seventeen snorted, not particularly impressed. "I'll give you one thing. You're pretty bold, coming here and challenging us, all by yourself. I wouldn't expect any less, from the Prince of all Saiyans."

"So, who's it going to be?" The cautious Saiyan shifted his gaze, between the trio.

"Hmmm, well I was thinking about asking Sixteen over there, but apparently he refuses to fight anyone, besides Goku." Seventeen placed a contemplative finger on his chin. "How about you, Eighteen?" He looked towards his sister.

"Why not?" The blonde casually strolled forward, without a care in the world. "A little exercise could be fun."

"Ladies first, huh?" Vegeta took up his stance. "Works just as well for me, as long as the two of you don't interfere."
"By all means, you're more than welcome to test your strength against Eighteen's." The black-haired Android assented, before frowning towards the incoming crew. "Well, so long as your friends up there don't intervene, then neither will I."

Vegeta loured at the encroachers, as they touched down behind him.

"Hey, no butting in." He sternly warned, before gesturing towards the cybernetic female. "This is strictly between me and her."

"Oh- uh- alright." Trunks breathed a small sigh of relief. He was almost afraid his father would foolhardily charge them all without thinking, but a one-on-one, gave him a much better chance. Even still, he'd fought Eighteen before and lost. As much as he tried, he couldn't imagine his intransigent father, faring any better. For now, the least he could do is inform him what he was up against. "But just so you know, Seventeen and Eighteen are unlike anyone you've ever faced. Besides their incredible power, Dr. Gero designed them with perpetual energy cells."

"So you're telling me, they never run out of Ki?" The Prince asked, astonished by the baffling revelation.

"That's exactly right." The half-Saiyan grimly nodded. "So you'd better be careful."

"You seem to know a lot about us." Seventeen lifted a curious brow, at the lavender-haired teen. "But we don't know anything about you. Well, as much as I'd like to make your acquaintance, I suppose it can wait until after the battle."

'Interesting.' Vegeta set his eyes on Eighteen. 'This ought to be fun.'

"Hey, I know I'm pleasant to look at and all, but are you actually gonna fight or just keep staring at me?" The blonde Android goaded.

The Saiyan scowled and pounced straight at his audacious adversary. For a minute or so, the two opponents exchanged minor blows, getting a brief measure of their respective abilities, before backing off and appraising one-another.

"Wow, I didn't know dad was this strong." Trunks smiled, somewhat encouraged.

"This was only the warm-up round." Piccolo stoically informed the boy, whereby his jaw fell. If that were so, his father must've improved a great deal, over the course of the last three years.

Vegeta carefully considered his options. Given his adversary's limitless energy, he couldn't afford to turn this into a war of attrition, else he was bound to fail. Gero must've allotted a whole heap of time and resources on this Android, that much was certain. Her form was a remarkable amalgamation of all the Z-warriors, but it was by no means, flawless. In any longwinded battle, the ability to adapt, strategize and play on your opponent's weakness, often proved to be the decisive factor. He learned that the hard way, when he'd foolishly let his guard down against Kakarot, in their last fight (A/N: Refer to Chapter 55). That in mind, he decided that he would have to pace himself and capitalize on his mechanical opponent's every mistake. Her energy reserves might never run out, but she was a corporeal being nonetheless, which meant that he could still damage her, physically. And so Vegeta provoked the Android, into taking the offensive.

Another five minutes of action seemed to have passed by, in slow motion. Trunks and Krillin were deeply unsettled and taut with apprehension, while the carefree Seventeen languidly lay back against the mountainside, as he viewed the lopsided battle, from up on high. It was obvious to him that Eighteen had her flame-haired opponent on the ropes, almost smacking him around at will,
though it came as no surprise. What he didn't expect, however, was to see Vegeta persevere, despite being on the receiving end of a myriad blows. He sure was a glutton for punishment. But he was definitely strong and resilient, a lot more so than he'd expected from any of Earth's warriors, Goku included.

Unlike the aforementioned however, Piccolo and Tien intuitively exchanged a knowing glance. The shrewd Prince was up to something and they had a good idea, what it was. Eighteen hadn't the slightest clue that thanks to the virtual reality simulator, Vegeta already had ample experience, when it came to fighting opponents with everlasting energy (A/N: Refer to Chapter 46). Now, it was time to see just how well that experience would play out, in the real-world.

The Prince ducked beneath a left hook and countered with a left uppercut, followed by a right hook, both blows landing on-point and launching the blonde beauty, into the heart of a nearby hill that crumbled around her lithe form. Within moments, Eighteen erupted from the rubble and shot a peevish glare at her smirking adversary. That actually hurt her!

"Don't look all smug, just because you landed a lucky punch or two!" She spat. Vegeta's smirk widened into a maddening grin that only fanned the flames of her ire, making her want to squash his rakish little face. "You're still flesh and blood, nothing more! You'll never stand a chance against me!"

"Flesh and blood, huh?" The sneering Saiyan snickered. "Correct me if I'm wrong, but is that blood I see, trickling down your chin?"

Taken aback by the question, Eighteen hesitantly pressed a finger against the crease of her lip and gasped, as she pulled it back and caught the unmistakably viscous sight of fresh crimson, right in front of her.

"Or perhaps it's an oil leak." Vegeta laughed at his wroth opponent's expense, fomenting her fury, even further. The enthralling enchantress was instantly on the offensive, but her spiky-haired foe was fully prepared, for the apoplectic assault. It was a staggering reversal of the last few minutes, as the royal Saiyan blocked and evaded blow-after-blow, targeting her vital areas, whenever he found a clear opening. The moment he saw her bleed red, he knew without a doubt that this Android was once human and that meant that no matter what cybernetic enhancements she'd undergone at the cunning hands of Dr. Gero, she had the same basic weaknesses as any other human. And those weaknesses could be exploited, case in point. And so he hurled precise attacks, one after another, upon her vitals.

"I- I don't get it." Trunks gaped, at the unfathomable scene he was witnessing, firsthand. "Somehow father's winning, but he was being dominated by Eighteen, just a moment ago."

"Obviously, you've never seen him fight, up until now." Piccolo smirked. "It's not just his power, but his tactical ingenuity on the battlefield that make him incredibly dangerous. What you saw beforehand was just an act. Vegeta was only pretending to lose, so that he could get a chance to study Eighteen's movements and at the same time, give her a false sense of security."

"But what about all the damage he took?" The dumbfounded demi-Saiyan asked.

"It wasn't as significant as it might've appeared." It was Tien who answered. "He knows how to channel huge portions of his Ki towards any one part of his body, in order to defend himself against attacks from stronger adversaries. He did the same thing with Goku, when they last fought."

"That's not to say he didn't incur any damage at all." The Namekian added. "But it was a calculated
risk and proved more than worthwhile. The Android can't fathom how Vegeta suddenly managed to turn the tide on her, after she was pounding him earlier. Every time he lands a hit, it only adds to her confusion, which makes her angry and frustrated and therefore, more prone to error. And believe me, Vegeta's taking advantage of each mistake. She may have unlimited energy, but that doesn't mean she can magically heal herself and there's only so much her body can take, before it gives out on her."

'I can't believe my father is so powerful.' The transfixed, lavender-haired half-breed looked on in awe and veneration, marvelling at the legendary might of the Saiyan Prince. Piccolo was right. Eighteen's movements were much slower and sloppier, as a result of the ongoing damage. There were tears in her clothing, one eye was shut and considering the manner in which she was clutching her upper abdomen, she'd likely suffered a broken rib or two. 'He's far above what he was, in the future timeline! It's incredible! But if he can become this strong, then perhaps I can too!'

Seventeen grimaced at the display, jaw clenched tight. He was simmering, with fury. It was absolutely inconceivable for Eighteen to lose to this inferior little prick!

Though he tried not to show it, Vegeta was immensely exhausted himself. His knuckles were bruised, his joints were swollen and his breathing was much shallower. Whatever this Android was made of, it was extremely sturdy, to say the least. Her metalled exoskeleton had protected her from blows that would've easily felled organic adversaries, at her level. Even so, she was at his mercy, but he needed to finish this fast, before he ran out of steam. With a powerful Kiai, the Prince hurled her against a mountain wall and lunged forward, pinning her there, with his muscled forearm.

"I have you now, Android." He grinned maliciously and pressed his hand against her slender midriff, ready to fire a hole through her, at a mere moment's notice. Eighteen looked at him in pure horror, engulfed by an overwhelming surge of panic and dread - something she'd never experienced in all her life. "You were far stronger than I'd expected, but I'm afraid this is where it all ends for you."

Just as he was about to finish his terrified opponent, a hard punch landed on his maxilla, immediately flooring him. Vegeta shifted his gaze up and saw the black-haired Android, looming over him, fists clenched tight and trim figure shaking, in barely repressed rage.

"You said you wouldn't interfere!" The Prince growled indignantly.

"I said you could test your strength against Eighteen's and you did that!" He fired back, in exasperation. "I never said I'd let you kill her! You won, okay?! It's over! Now stay down!"

"If you wish to die with her, then so be it." The Prince struggled to his feet, spitting a broken cuspid out of his mouth and assuming a stance. No warning was given, as Seventeen assaulted the flame-haired Saiyan with an undying vengeance. Virtually depleted in the wake of his previous fight, Vegeta had no answer for the brutal onslaught that ensued. A resounding headbutt to the bridge of the nose, followed by an uppercut beneath the chin, saw Vegeta on the ground yet again, his hair reverting to its black hue, as he barely clung to the frail fringes of consciousness.

Trunks instinctively ascended to his Super Saiyan form and drew out his sword, holding it up high, as he pressingly rushed towards the battle.

"Leave him alone!" He roared, desperate to save his father, from certain demise. Seventeen creased his brows, at the unwelcome intruder. As Trunks brought the blade down full force, the Android singlehandedly caught it, wrenched it from his grasp and smashed the rounded, steel pommel, right across his jaw. That one move was all it took and the lavender-haired boy was out cold. Tien and Piccolo promptly charged in from either side, both powered up to their respective peaks. In one
incredibly swift maneuver, Seventeen ducked underneath the incoming attacks, all the while spinning in a half-circle motion and simultaneously ploughing his right elbow into the Namekian's solar-plexus, while his left fist struck Tien in that same, sensitive region. Both warriors fell and lost consciousness, within seconds.

"Oh n-n-n-no." Krillin stuttered apprehensively, trembling like a leaf in a storm. He was the weakest fighter here and the others were all incapacitated. Vegeta was the only one among them who remained conscious, albeit barely.

"You know, I could kill you now Vegeta." The Android cockily smirked, aiming a palmful of Ki at the downed Prince, eliciting a hateful glare from him. However, to Vegeta's utter shock, he abruptly dissipated the violet orb and withdrew his hand. "But that would be unsportsmanlike. You beat Eighteen, fair-and-square and I beat your friends, fair-and-square, so I'm going to go ahead and call it a draw." He then looked at him, in earnest. "But the next time we face each other, it'll be you against me and I'll win! Mark my words, Saiyan!"

Krillin let out a blaring yelp, as Seventeen suddenly materialized right in front of him. No, this couldn't be the end for him! It just couldn't! It wasn't fair! He'd never even had a girlfriend- besides Maron, of course, but someone as promiscuous as her, hardly counted. Why had fate dealt him such a cruel hand?! To his utmost astonishment, however, the youthful Android merely swiped the tiny beige sack from his royal blue waist belt, opened it up and pulled out a bean, all the while taking amused ganders, at his blatantly frightful reactions.

"Here." He returned the sack to the dubious, dumbstruck Krillin. "There're more than enough left over, for your friends and they certainly look like they could use them. But for their sake, I'd advise you not to give it to them until we've cleared out. If anyone of them tries to attack us again, well-let's just say I might not be so generous, a second time." Seventeen headed back down to tend to his wounded sister, while the bald man stood transfixed, unsure of what to make of anything. This guy was nothing like the monstrosities, whom Trunks had described.

The black-haired Android grimaced, as he perused his battered twin, up close. She sat with her back pressed against the mountain, deeply traumatised.

"Are you alright?" Seventeen knelt in front of her.

"He- he was gonna k-kill me." She stammered shakily, shuddering in unbound terror at the thought of how close she'd been to the unwelcoming gates of death. It was a concept she hadn't ever entertained, one that horrified her in ways she could never have imagined, up until a few moments ago.

"Hey come on, as if I'd let him." He placed a solacing hand on her shoulder, giving her a comforting squeeze and holding out the magical bean. "Here, take this." Eighteen slowly parted her mouth and her twin placed the senzu there, subsequently getting her to chew and swallow. Within moments, the blonde was as good as new, her bruises vanished, lacerations closed up and ribs mended back into place.

'Impossible!' Krillin observed the breathtaking scene, in complete and utter disbelief. 'She's an Android! How could she- it doesn't make any sense!'

"See, as good as new." Seventeen smiled encouragingly, getting to his feet and sauntering towards the other Android. "Hey Sixteen, you still with us?" He clicked his fingers at the mountainous figure, who promptly turned his tranquil gaze away from the soothing wilderness and towards his significantly shorter comrade. "We'll look around for another road, one that's not so desolate as this one. Hopefully those idiots won't be stupid enough to get in our way, this time." He tilted his head
back towards Eighteen, frowning at the bizarre spectacle he was met with.

'She's beautiful.' The beguiled bald man's heart fluttered like never before, ensorcelled eyes drinking in the mesmerizing sight of Eighteen's soft features: those silky blonde strands of hair, the creamy skin, those luscious lips and that graceful jawline. 'So beautiful. My God.'

'Why's he looking at me like that?' A florid-faced Eighteen thought to herself in alarm, unsure of how to react.

"Hey lovebirds, snap out of it!" Seventeen's unsolicited voice cut right through the tender moment. Upon hearing that, Krillin's head practically transformed into a giant, ripe tomato.

"Shut up!" The mortified blonde peevishly hissed at her insufferable brother, who couldn't help but chortle, in response. "And you!" She menacingly ground her teeth at the tremulous midget, making him jump in sudden fright. "Unless you want me to gouge your eyes out, I suggest you look someplace else, got it?!"

"Oh- uh- yes, yes- of course, don't mind me." Krillin chuckled uneasily, quickly averting his gaze. He sheepishly rubbed his smooth head, finding himself caught somewhere in the midst of fear and embarrassment. "I wasn't trying to be disrespectful or anything- I mean, I was just curious, you know- since you're an Android and I thought senzu beans only work on the living and-" His slurred sentence was abruptly cut off, as he furtively glanced up, only to see the twins eyeing him in a manner so terrifying, he felt as though the innermost depths of his soul were being penetrated. "Okay, I'll shut-up now."

"Hmph, let's get out of here, Eighteen." Seventeen rolled his eyes and took to the skies, Sixteen trailing after him. The female Android couldn't help but remain behind a moment, narrowing her eyes at the petrified human. The instant Krillin noticed her staring, however, she took off with the others.

"Phew." The bald man wiped a sheen of sweat off his forehead, sighing as if a mountain had just been lifted off his chest. 'Gosh that went down a lot smoother than I'd expected.' He mused. 'Still, with Vegeta out of the picture, that guy could've easily killed the whole lot of us. I wonder what made him stay his hand.' He shook those thoughts out of his head, instead ministering to his beaten allies. Once Tien, Piccolo and Trunks were back to full strength, Krillin had to convince them not to pursue the terrifying triumvirate.

"Seventeen explicitly warned me that if we crossed them again, he wouldn't show mercy."

"I can't believe we're still alive." Trunks pressed a palm to his forehead. "The Androids in my timeline would've eliminated us, without a second thought. But these ones- somehow, they're a lot more powerful than the ones I know."

"Wait, what?" Piccolo placed his hands on the teen's shoulder. "What do you mean more powerful?! Are you sure?!"

"Yes." He affirmed, with a disquieted sigh. "The Androids I fought were both stronger than I am, but not to this extent. At the very least I could last a few minutes with one of them, but just now, Seventeen took me out, with one clean hit. My father though, he- he actually defeated Android Eighteen." He perked up, at the memory. "I didn't think for a second that anyone besides Goku, could possibly beat the Androids in a one-on-one."

"You seem to have a pretty low opinion of your father." Tien snorted. "Don't get me wrong, I don't think very highly of him myself, but he's easily the best fighter we have. Even better than Goku."
"Are you serious?!" Trunks gaped at him. "I mean, you're not just saying that because of the heart virus are you?"

"Hmph, even before the heart virus came along, Vegeta was dominating Goku in the tournament." Piccolo smirked at the gaping teen. "He got cocky in the end and lost as a result, but he clearly demonstrated that he was the better fighter, by a long-shot. Goku even admitted so, himself."

"Tournament?" The half-breed had no idea what the Namekian was on about. How could this timeline be so starkly different from his own? Piccolo huffed and grudgingly explained everything, afterwards informing the humans how the events in Trunks' world contrasted with their own, starting with the outcome of the second Saiyan invasion. Once all the details were laid out, Krillin went over to unconscious Prince.

"Now listen up, guys." He cautioned. "Vegeta's first instinct will be to rush off, after the Androids. No matter what happens, we've got to prevent him from doing that."

"Okay, but the three of them are still trying to kill Goku." Tien argued. "What do you propose we do about that?"

"Don't worry, I'll try and look for a telephone booth and call Chi-Chi up, so she can fly Goku over to Kame House."

"Good thinking." The three-eyed warrior nodded.

As expected, once the Prince was awake, keeping him from going berserk, proved to be an incredibly onerous task.

"That son-of-a-bitch!" He growled. "If he hadn't interfered I could've killed that other-"

"Yes, you could have." Piccolo interposed. "And then he would've killed you. Trunks was right, from the very beginning. You shouldn't have gone in like that. You let your strength get to your head. If that Android decided to kill us all-"

"I'm not going to hear this shit from you, Namek!" Vegeta snarled, vexedly. "If you weaklings actually used your brains, I could've ended it for the both of them. You should've distracted him, while baldy here threw me a senzu bean! But no, you had to rush in and get your asses beat, like the morons you are!"

"Hey, fuck you!" Tien impulsively reacted, unwilling to tolerate such insults. The others gaped at him, in complete horror. Was he trying to sign his own death warrant?! No one in their right mind would ever speak to Vegeta like that. The flame-haired Saiyan directed his most baleful glare at Tien, boiling with apoplectic rage, as he struggled to rein in the killer instincts within him that howled for blood. The tension rose astronomically, with each sinisterly silent second.

"This one time, just this one time, I'll let that go, human." He warned, in a dangerously low voice. "Say it again and I'll carve out your entrails."

No one said anything for a while. Tien didn't utter a word, though he daringly kept his gaze locked onto Vegeta's. Finally, it was Piccolo who cut through the maddening silence.

"Do you think you can take on Seventeen?" He asked the Prince.

"If the others don't interfere, then most likely, yes." The Saiyan nodded. "He can't be that much stronger than blondey."
"That still doesn't account for Sixteen." Trunks stated. "I don't know anything about him and if he's anywhere near as strong as the other two, then even with Goku's help."

"Hey, call me crazy, but what if we're approaching this whole thing, from the wrong angle?" Krillin interjected, garnering everyone's attention. "What if the Androids aren't really all that evil?"

"Are you insane?!" Trunks all but yelled, deeply affronted at the mere suggestion. "Of course they're evil! Do you even know how much havoc they've caused, in my timeline?!"

"Look Trunks, I get what you're saying, but I'm talking about the Androids in our world." He tactfully replied. "You said it yourself. If they were as bad as the ones you knew, we wouldn't even be alive."

"I- I-" Trunks sputtered, having no answer for that one. "No, we can't take any chances!" He scowled. "We need to destroy them period!"

"But why?" Krillin argued. "They never killed anyone besides Dr. Gero and God knows, that old geezer had it coming from the get-go. Maybe- maybe we can talk to them and convince them not to murder Goku or something."

"Oh and I suppose next, you'll wanna hold hands with them and sing Kumbaya, by the fire." Tien scorned, never one for inane idealism. "I'm with Trunks, on this one. It's a risk that we just can't afford to take."

"I second that." Piccolo nodded, to Krillin's disheartenment.

The bald warrior knew what Vegeta would say, without even having to ask. Sadly, he was all alone on this one. But he knew he was right and was almost certain that both Goku and Gohan would agree. He'd seen the terror in Eighteen's blue eyes, in the aftermath of her near-death experience. He'd seen the way Seventeen had consoled her afterwards, vowing to protect her from harm. No coldhearted monster he knew, had ever demonstrated such care and compassion. Where was the wrong in any of that? And then there was the whole senzu bean conundrum, which he couldn't even begin to explain. God, this was all so confusing! If only there were a straight answer to this mess!

A/N: Neat, huh? I really enjoyed writing Vegeta's fight with Eighteen and showing Seventeen's tender side hehe. I plan to make the Androids far more interesting and give them more character-depth than the anime did hehe. Also loved writing the little Krillin/Eighteen moment towards the end (that was for you, Luz7 and also for you annegoddamn, since I know how badly you ship them xD, there's more to to come here haha).

So what did you guys think? Please let me know and hit the review button, as always! :D

Power levels (descending order):

Android 16: ?

Android 17: 450 million

Android 18: 420 million

Vegeta: 8 million
400 million (Super Saiyan)

True he beat Eighteen, despite the power difference, but that's a prime example of where brain
bests brawn.

Goku: 7.7 million
385 million (Super Saiyan)
180 million (transformed with heart virus - energy rapidly depleted thereafter)

Trunks: 5 million
250 million (Super Saiyan)

Slightly stronger than his first visit, due to a month of training, while the time-machine recharged.

Piccolo: 240 million

Android 20/Dr. Gero: 200 million

Android 19: 160 million
200 million (after absorbing Goku's energy)
300 million (when he short-circuited)

Super Tien: 100 million

Only mentioning the power levels of those who fought.
Mergers and Acquisitions

Chapter Summary

Vegeta being a douchebag,
Hercule playing with fire,
Piccolo feels that the situation is dire.

The Androids are coming,
So you better start running,
Cause Gohan, boy, they're after your sire.

p.s. Please ignore me xD.

A/N: Congratulations annegoddamn, for getting 100 reviews on your story "A Thrilling Chase" and for being the lucky 1000th reviewer on FFN hehe! You know what that means! ;) A little something or two in here for my friend "Ganymede Lullaby", cause I know you're a huge Chi-Chi fan and were eager for a tender GoChi moment hehe. :D

Chapter 58: Mergers and Acquisitions

"Oh Goku." The raven-haired woman wept profusely, unable to bear the agonizing screams of the man she loved. He was always the stalwart backbone of not just her own household, but the entire planet. She'd never seen him so helpless and vulnerable before and it was almost too much to bear. Chi-Chi placed a trembling hand on his swollen, pulsating chest, tears trickling even faster down her lachrymose cheeks, as she felt his palpitating heart. Such a gentle heart it was: kind, caring, loving, forgiving. And here it was, being shredded from the inside. How could someone so selfless, ever deserve to be in such pain? What grieved her even more was that he would be willing to endure all of it and so much more, if it meant that no harm came to the world. But he was her world and her world was crumbling, right before her streaming eyes. "Please, you have to keep fighting, I beg you."

"We need to give him two tablets, every twelve hours." Yamcha informed, sitting beside Goku's futon, opposite his wife. "Don't worry, Chi-Chi. He's gonna make it through this. He's the greatest fighter I know. There's no way he's gonna lose to some virus."

"He's in so much pain." The Ox-Princess sobbed. "God, why did it have to be him?"

Suddenly the phone rang, briefly interrupting the lamenting wife's moment of sorrow.

"Stay here Chi-Chi, I'll answer it." The ex-bandit sprang to his feet and let out a heavy, dolorous sigh, before heading towards the corded wall phone and bringing it over to his ear. "Hello?"

"Hey Yamcha, it's me." Krillin answered. "I've got a lot to tell you, but for now, you need to get Goku and Chi-Chi out of here and over to Kame House, got it?"

"Alright, but just tell me something. Is anyone hurt?"

"No, everyone's fine." The bald man spoke in a rush. "But the Androids are heading over to Mount
Paozu, as we speak! No matter what happens, they can't find Goku, understood?"

"Loud and clear." Yamcha nodded, hanging up and relaying the news to Chi-Chi.

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The Android trio continued their rigorous search for a nearby road, one that was neither too busy nor completely abandoned.

"I can't believe I lost to Vegeta." Eighteen mumbled glumly, no longer exuding that trademark poise and confidence she carried with her, everywhere she went.

"Hey come on sis, you let your guard down, that's all." Seventeen insisted, reassuringly. "It can happen to anyone. But don't worry. I'll get him for you, the next time."

"You fought well, Eighteen." The large Android remarked, in that mechanical manner of his, much to the surprise of the other two. Up until now, it took some mention of Goku or other, to evoke a response from the burly giant.

"Uh- thanks- Sixteen." The stunned blonde awkwardly replied, not entirely sure if she'd heard him right.

"See?" Seventeen smiled. "It's no problem. Besides, the rest of those fools aren't anywhere near as strong as Vegeta. I took them out, without even trying."

"But what about Goku?" Eighteen anxiously argued. "What if he's as strong as Vegeta or even stronger? And what if they join forces? It could mean bad news for us."

"What're you saying?" The black-haired Android frowned at her.

"I'm just wondering, is it- is it really necessary for us to go after Goku?" She asked timidly, shying away from her brother's intense gaze. "We'll only end up antagonizing his friends. Let's just forget about all of them and do whatever we wanna do. There's a whole world out there, for us to explore."

"No, Goku must die." The big Android unwaveringly declared.

"I know you don't say much, Sixteen, but could you please shut up for a minute?" Seventeen rolled his eyes, before turning back towards his unnerved sister. "Come on, Eighteen, this isn't like you. Look, you've nothing to be afraid of. With the three of us together, there isn't anything that could possibly get in our way."

The blonde looked at him a moment and sighed.

"I just worry, that's all." She dejectedly muttered, face downcast. "You guys are all I have."

"And we're all you need." Seventeen solemnly replied. "No matter what happens, I've got your back, okay?"

Eighteen offered her brother a strained smile, slowly nodding her head.

"Good." He smirked. "You don't need to worry about Vegeta. Like I said, I'll be teaching him a lesson or two, the next time we meet."

"Don't underestimate him." Eighteen cautioned, concerned for her stubborn sibling's wellbeing. "He's really strong."
"That may be so, but I'm stronger." He grinned cockily.

"Do not let yourself be fooled by his power, Seventeen." Sixteen cut in, voice as monotonous as ever. "My scanners revealed that it was slightly lower than Eighteen's and yet, he was able to defeat her."

"Wait- what?" The dumbfounded female looked at him, completely baffled by that startling information. "That can't be true. If I'm stronger than him, then there's no way he could possibly-"

"He is highly intelligent and cunning, a lot more so than I'd thought possible for any organic life-form." The behemoth interposed. "Vegeta knows how to spot an opponent's weaknesses and use them, to his advantage. He waits for his adversary to attack first and once he finds an opening, he strikes their unguarded areas. This style of fighting is completely at odds with everything Dr. Gero told us about Vegeta. It requires much patience and forbearance and is nearly impossible to overcome, especially against someone who can read an enemy's movements, the way he can."

"And how exactly were you able to pick up on all of that?" Seventeen crinkled his brows dubiously. "Last I remember, you were off eyeballing shrubs and squirrels, the whole time." It was back to silence for the laconic robot. Seventeen had to wonder if the big guy was just grasping at straws or possibly more observant than he let on. Either way, he needed to keep his guard up against Vegeta. He wouldn't allow his royal Majesty to dictate the pace of their upcoming battle, like he did against Eighteen.

Eventually the crew spotted a pink van, with the logo "Lucky Foods Company" imprinted on either side, in white. Not the ideal choice, but then again, as much as Seventeen wanted nothing more than to ride off in a high-performance sport's vehicle, it would probably take an eon for one of those to come by- plus there was no telling whether or not it would be able to sustain Sixteen's humongous size or mass. 'Such a shame, but oh well.' And so, they emptied and pilfered the van, before setting off towards Mount Paozu, having to face a number of incidents with law enforcement, along the way. All in all, it proved to be quite the adventure for the mechanical trio. Eighteen had to settle for a raggedy old country outfit that she found extremely unsightly, seeing as the previous one was a ruin, thanks to that pontifical Prince.

"I hope Goku's wife has something good stashed in that wardrobe of hers." The blonde scoffed. "But, I seriously doubt it. Bulma Briefs, on the other hand, really knows how to accessorize, from what I remember."

"You think so?" Seventeen raised a brow, in amusement. "In that case, what do you say we raid Capsule Corporation, after we complete our mission?"

"You know, that does sound kind of fun." Eighteen's lips gleefully quirked up. She was starting to feel a lot better already, her near-death at Vegeta's hands all but forgotten, as she was overwhelmed with a dreamy vision of fashion galore. "Why not?"

"Alright, but just don't take forever, picking an outfit."

"I'm not making any promises." The female replied, with an impish grin that her brother recognized all too well.

'Oh God, I wish I hadn't encouraged her.' He ruefully thought to himself, not at all looking forward to the nightmare that lay ahead.

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"What do you mean 'let things play out'?!" Piccolo fumed at the old man's vague half-heartedness. "They need to be destroyed! The Androids brought ruin upon the world in Trunks' future and slaughtered every single one of us!"

"And yet these Androids have not." Kami riposted. "I seem to recall that it was you and your associates who provoked them into taking action, in the first place and yet they did not cause you any lasting injuries."

"What about Goku, then?!" The younger Namek fired back, raising a clenched fist. "Are we just supposed to leave him at their mercy?!"

"If it reaches that stage, then I will most certainly be ready to co-operate." The wizened sage frowned. 'Do not forget that Goku was once my protégé, just as Gohan was once yours. He means a lot more to me than you realize. But before I decide to forsake my own existence, I need some form of certainty."

"Tch, you're a fool."

"There is something else that has been plaguing me, for some time now." Kami ominously continued, beads of sweat dappling his wrinkled forehead, as he peered off the edge of his lookout. "An obscure evil of sorts that I cannot describe, one that may be even more menacing than the Androids."

"Obscure evil?!" Piccolo narrowed his eyes, before scowling. "You're not making any sense, old man! What evil?!"

"I- I cannot say." The elderly Namek breathed apprehensively. "It was around four years ago that a strange feeling had awoken somewhere in the back of my mind. Up until this moment, I paid it no heed, but now it's almost unmistakable." A tense pause ensued. "There is an evil force at work and it needs to be dealt with, before it has a chance to grow, otherwise I fear it will be unstoppable."

"Then why in God's name are we standing around for?!" Piccolo snapped. "We need to merge now!"

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'Yes, I can feel it.' The Prince stood atop a jutting rock, overlooking the picturesque, mountainous landscape. 'A level beyond Super Saiyan. It's in here somewhere. The only question is how to spring this boundless well of power.'

'He's just been standing there for hours, like some freaking statue!' Trunks boiled restlessly. 'What on Earth is he doing?! Is he even alive, in there?!!'

"FATHER!!" He yelled to the top of his voice, having had quite enough of the silent treatment.

"Quiet boy!"

"You said you were gonna train!" He grit his teeth vexedly, stomping an angry foot on the ground. "This isn't training!"

"If you don't want to be here, go home to that loudmouthed mother of yours!"

"Fine, I will!" He shot back. "Anything's better than this!"

"Good, get lost then!" Vegeta growled. "You're too weak and foolish to handle my training,
anyway."

"You are so infuriating!" The half-Saiyan thundered, before flying off, all the while seething to himself about what an insufferable prick his father was.

'Tch, stupid brat!' Vegeta growled inwardly. 'No respect for the elderly!'

"He's finally starting to calm down." Chi-Chi's lips curled in a lopsided smile, eyes watering up, as she placed a towel on her sickly husband's damp forehead. "You're always putting everything on your shoulders, you big oaf." She lay her head on his chest, sighing as she felt the steady thrum of his beating heart. "You only ever think about others, never about yourself. I wish you realized how just much we need you."

"Hey Chi-Chi, as much as I hate to ruin the moment, it's probably not safe to get so close to Goku." Yamcha cautioned, timidly biting his lip, as the raven-haired Princess shot him one of her patent glares. "Look, I'm just saying. That disease might be contagious. In fact, we'd be wise to take some of the medicine ourselves."

"You're probably right." Chi-Chi released a doleful breath of surrender.

Soon enough, Gohan caught up to them and boarded the plane. He'd left Bulma and Trunks back at Capsule Corporation, a short while ago and headed straight home afterwards, only to find that the premises had been vacated. Fearing the worst, he scoured indoors until he discovered a note on the fridge, informing him about Krillin's phone call. After trashing the note to prevent the Androids from finding it, he trailed Yamcha's Ki signature over to the airplane.

The demi-Saiyan knelt before his immobile father, placing an arm around his wailing mother's waist.

"Don't cry mom." He soothed. "He'll be fine. I know he will. He's been through so much worse and has always come back, stronger than ever."

"Oh Gohan." Chi-Chi's face fell on the boy's shoulder, as she continued to bawl her woeful eyes out. She should be the one consoling him, not the other way around. She'd hardly noticed it, but as time swept past, her son had become so much stronger and not just physically. Little did she know that Gohan wanted to cry right alongside her, at the heart-wrenching sight of his sickly father. But years of toughening and hardening under Piccolo and his old man had made him more resilient than he'd ever thought possible. He needed to be strong and shoulder his courageous father's responsibilities, as Earth's hero, while he was still abed. It was his duty- his legacy.

"In any proper match-up, those puny, pint-sized weaklings wouldn't have stood a chance against a fighter of my caliber!" Hercule furiously proclaimed into the microphone, pointing a daring finger at the camera. "That's right Vegeta, Goku and all you punks! I'm challenging you to a battle on my home turf! We'll see just how long you can withstand the infernal damnation of Satan himself, when there're no bombs in the ring, to save your phoney behinds!"

"Um- Mr. Satan, wouldn't you say that those guys deserve at least a little bit of credit?" A dubious reporter asked. "After all, they did beat some prominent world-class fighters, without using any of those 'tricks', as you like to dub them."

"Oh flapdoodle, that was just plain luck, nothing more!" The wroth wrestling champion flippantly
asserted. "Anyone with a keen eye for martial-arts can see that, clear as daylight! Those guys are all amateurs! I'm the real champ!"

"Ugh- that fucking, miserable cocksucker!" An enraged Bulma shrieked, switching off the live broadcast, barely resisting the urge to hurl the remote at her LCD screen. "If it weren't for those fucking Androids, I'd go and kick his unhygienic ass myself!"

"Now, now dear, calm down." Mrs. Brief gently reproved. "You're gonna wake the baby."

"I can't believe there're people out there, stupid enough to fall for this horse shit!" The irate heiress hissed.

"No need to get all worked up over it, Bulma." The flaxen-haired woman wagged a disapproving finger at her hotheaded daughter, one hand firmly planted on her hip. "Someone like that clearly isn't worth your time."

"I know, but it still pisses me off."

Just then, the blue-haired mother received an unexpected phone call, followed by a faxed photo of a dilapidated transportation device she vaguely recognized, though she couldn't quite place where. A minute later, it hit her. That was the vehicle that the older Trunks travelled on during his first visit, only this one looked as though it'd been abandoned for years, to the point of disrepair. She was about to call Kame House and inform them of the startling discovery, until none other than her son from the future came knocking. She grinned, upon recognizing his Ki signature.

"Hey Trunks, what brings you-" Bulma opened the door and was surprised to see the morose look on the young demi-Saiyan's features. God, the sight of it almost made her burst into a boisterous fit of giggles. It was a picture perfect resemblance of his surly father- only much cuter. "What's wrong?"

"Oh- Hi- I uh- I take it you know who I am." Trunks' sour expression morphed into a bashful one.

"Of course I do, handsome." Bulma teasingly winked at him, laughing as her glamor boy blushed profusely. She gave him a brief once-over. "You know, I feel kinda dumb for not recognizing you straight away. I mean, the signs were pretty obvious."

"Well, to be honest, I'm glad you didn't." The youth let out an uneasy chuckle, sheepishly scratching the back of his head. "If you knew the truth, it could've jeopardized my existence and all."

"Oh, I don't know about that." Bulma replied, a sultry gleam flashing vividly in her half-lidded, azure eyes. "I mean, considering the amount of times your father and I-"

"Mother!" The revolted teenager exclaimed, ruddier than ever, unable to believe how shameless and depraved she was behaving, in front of her own son, no less. He could certainly do without any unwanted imagery of parental sex. "Can you please not?!"

"Fine, fine." She relented, before frowning at him, arms akimbo. "But where is Vegeta anyway? And what about the Androids? Did you guys beat 'em?" The heiress suddenly blanched, overcome with a surge of panic and dread. "Oh God, is he-"

"No, no, he's alright." Trunks quickly interjected, whereby the color returned to her assuaged face. He filled her in on all that had happened. "Afterwards, he just decided to take off and isolate himself from everyone. I don't understand it. Has he gone insane or something?!"
"Oh Trunks, your father was born insane." Bulma snickered a moment, afterwards giving him a solemn look. "But seriously, you don't need to worry about him. He's done this before and come back, a whole lot stronger. If I know Vegeta, he's probably working on some crazy new technique."

"I- I see." The lavender-haired teen sighed despondently. "But if that's the case, then why can't he show me? I wanna be strong like he is, but he says I'm too weak for his training."

"What?!" Bulma snarled indignantly, hands fastened tight and jaw clenched, as her maternal instincts kicked in, full force. The demi-Saiyan jumped in surprise, at the abrupt outburst. "How dare he?! Ugh, that jerk! Don't worry, Trunks. The next time I see him, I'll be sure to rip him a new one. But for now, there's something I need to show you." She led him inside, towards the fax machine and handed him the copy of the photo she'd just received.

"It- it can't be." The demi-Saiyan gaped at the unlikely image, before him.

"The caller said he found it in the 1050th district." The heiress relayed. "You wanna go check it out?"

"Yes, definitely."

"Alright then, I'm coming with."

"Mom, I don't think that's-"

"Now don't you give me any lip young man, I'm your mother." Bulma cut him off, with a finality that reminded him of her feisty future counterpart. He couldn't help but smile at the thought.

"Alright, mom." He nodded.

Once they were outdoors, Trunks nearly fell to the core of the Earth in disbelief, as he saw his ebullient mother begin to levitate. How in God's name- Wait a minute! Now that he actually thought about it, there was something eerily different about her Ki. It was many times stronger than the Bulma he knew, back in his world. It wasn't at all like this during his last visit, three years ago. Just how different was this timeline?!

'God, I'll never get used to this.'

Not long afterwards, mother and son came across the other time travelling vehicle. It was undoubtedly the same one that Trunks possessed. The letter "Hope!" imprinted on its body, beneath a congealed layer of moss was confirmation enough.

"The only explanation is that someone from another timeline stole our machine and travelled to this world." He surmised, not sure how it was even possible. "But who? And why? And- how?"

"Gosh, this whole parallel Universe thing is way over my head." A dumbfounded Bulma muttered, closely appraising the interdimensional object. She frowned and pointed towards the top. "It looks as if something or someone melted its way through the hatch."

The demi-Saiyan hopped inside and took a look at the screen. Apparently, it had arrived here about a year before the face-off with Frieza and his father and had departed roughly three years after he had. What was even more bizarre were the twin halves of a spiky shell, sitting on the driver's seat. After following a virtually faded, gloopy trail from the time machine, he discovered the exuvial remains of the largest and most grotesque looking invertebrate he'd ever laid eyes on.

Bulma squeaked in fright, as she too, witnessed the nightmarish sight. That- thing was gigantic- the
size of a freaking tiger.

"And here I thought, things couldn't possibly get any weirder." Trunks was at a total loss, blood running cold in horror and trepidation. "Whatever that- thing is, it's out there somewhere and God knows what it's doing."

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"It's horrible." Kami gasped, as he felt the countless mass of civilians perish, one at a time, each suffering the most gruesome and painful of deaths. "All those innocent people."

"Quit talking in riddles, old man!" Piccolo furiously demanded. "Tell me what's going on, now!"

"That won't be necessary." Earth's Guardian gravely replied, whirling around to face his other half. "It is time, Piccolo. Time for us to join and become one-being, time for the ultimate Namekian warrior to rise from the ashes once again and take his place amongst the living. Once we merge, not only will your power multiply, but you will acquire the centuries worth of knowledge and wisdom that I have gained. Use it wisely, for my time is at an end."

Piccolo stood speechless for a while, shocked that Kami had finally decided to give in, after hours of pointless procrastination. Still, it was an extremely difficult choice, one that he had to admire, no matter how much he disliked Kami.

"I- I will, I promise." The younger Namekian vowed, facing the tiled floor of the lookout. Kami's sacrifice wouldn't be in vain. He would make sure of that.

"Piccolo, you have changed much over the years." The old man shut his eyes and exhaled, tightening his grip around his walking stick. "The evil that once thrived, has all but receded, from your heart. Everything that I am, shall be yours, now and forever. Place your hand upon my chest."

A/N: So this marks the end of the chapter. Hope you all enjoyed it hehe. Seems Bulma's just a little unhappy with Vegeta's insensitivity towards poor Trunks. Watch out Vegeta! Bulma's wrath is coming for you and there's nothing you can do xD. And what is to be done about that prick Hercule? What of the Androids? :D

Hope you all enjoyed, 'cuz I'm really getting my writing vibe back hehe! Be sure to drop a review and I'll definitely try and update as soon as possible! Thanks everyone! Much love, as always! :D
Chapter Summary

You better watch out Vegeta, cause Bulma's wrath shall follow you to the ends of the Universe xD. And of course, a new foe appears, whom we know all too well!! :D

A/N: Okay, just want to address a query from "saiyan fan", with regards to Videl. Yes, she will definitely be part of this story, earlier than the canon, but I don't want to give away too much else xD. All I can say is that she'll have some promising moments. ;)

And as always, thanks everyone for the reviews! Reading them is such a joy! :D

Chapter 59: Monster Hunt

"What's this?" Vegeta was immediately on alert. 'I sense an incredible power level. It can't be the Androids. They don't have an energy reading, so who is it?! It feels familiar as well, but how?!

He was unable to identify it- but even so, it didn't appear to radiate even the slightest trace of evil. Most curious. Shutting his eyes, the Prince honed in on the mysterious force, but try as he might, he couldn't quite gauge its exact magnitude. All he knew was that it was somewhere up there with his. The only person who came to mind was Kakarot, but that rustic clod was a long ways away from a full recovery. Who else could it be though? Vegeta suddenly felt someone tap him on the shoulder, wedging right through his musings. Scowling, he whirled around. Lo and behold, it was none other than the obnoxious blue-haired wench and she looked far from pleased.

"What the hell do you want, wom-

THWACK!

A resounding slap virtually whipped his face right back around and the Prince's eyes widened in shock, a crimson hue suffusing fast over the stinging flesh of his cheek. He glowered at the tempestuous female, wondering what in hell's name had brought on such a bold show of belligerence, only to see the answer nearby in the form of that gaping lavender-haired pup of theirs.

Trunks gasped in horror, completely nonplussed by the abrupt and impetuous move. He gulped, stomach coiling up with a deluge of disconcerting dread, as he wondered how much longer his poor mother had to live. There's no way his father would ever tolerate such a brazen and hostile act from anyone, hot-tempered as he was.

"Now you listen to me, you little twerp!" Bulma peevishly prodded the Prince's breastplate with her index finger. "You're gonna march your sorry ass over to Trunks and apologize to him right now, you got it?!!"

"Like hell!" The flame-haired Saiyan stormed back, in outrage. "Over my dead b-"

THWACK!

Another slap, this time with the left hand. Trunks was even more flabbergasted, if it were possible, rubbernecking the incredulous scene materializing before his bulging eyes. How on Earth was this
crazy woman still alive?! Did she always behave this way?! Even at her worst, he could never recall her future counterpart being this suicidal.

"Now!" Bulma emphatically demanded. "Or so help me, I will slap you all the way to the next decade!"

Wincing at the very real threat, Vegeta realized that he would find no peace anywhere in the Universe, if he didn't do as he was told. He cursed under his breath and grudgingly made his way over to the demi-Saiyan, Bulma in tow. He shuddered at the way she was latching onto him, like a ghastly bloodsucker of some kind.

"Go on then, I'm waiting." She ordered restlessly, arms akimbo. "Or do you need another slap?"

"Okay, okay." A disgruntled Vegeta bore his teeth at her, before turning towards the meddlesome source of his present dilemma. "I'm sorry that you're too weak for my training- AAARRRRGGGHHH--" The Prince cried out in pain, as the blue-haired banshee grabbed his ear and gave it a sharp twist. "What the hell?! I did what you asked, demon woman!" He protested aloud.

"That is not an apology!" She lividly shot back. "Try harder! And don't you call him weak ever again! He is not weak, you jerk!"

"Um- mom, this isn't really necessary." Trunks tactfully cut in, scarcely able to keep himself from collapsing into an explosive gale of laughter, at the sheer hilarity of it all. It was astonishing to see his tempestuous mother succeed in subduing Vegeta so easily, where someone like Android Eighteen had failed. He stared pleadingly at the discomfited Prince. "Look father, I know that you're a whole lot stronger than I am and I don't wanna be pushy or slow you down or anything like that. You don't have to train me if you don't want to. I was just hoping for a chance to see you train, so that maybe I can learn how to become stronger on my own, you know?"

To Vegeta's utmost relief, Bulma finally released him. He cleared his throat and addressed the demi-Saiyan, but not before shooting his barbaric mother one last glare.

"Okay, so you want to learn do you?"

Trunks nodded, in earnest.

"Fine then, show me your stance."

"Alright." The thrilled boy nodded and did as directed, heart skittering with a zesty hale of vigor. Vegeta frowned in close scrutiny, circling Trunks and sizing him up like some sort of predator, much to the boy's growing discomfort.

"See, here's the problem." Vegeta said, firing a punch that fell an inch short of the half-Saiyan's spleen. "There're too many holes in your defence. If I'd hit you hard enough just now, you would die from exsanguination, within ten minutes."

"N-No way." Trunks stammered.

"Yes way." The flame-haired Saiyan jeered. "And I can assure you that the Androids hit even harder than I do."

"But you beat Eighteen, so how could-"

"Not everything's about power, you fool!" Vegeta growled.
"Hey, stop being so mean." Bulma ardently protested.

"Quiet woman!" The curmudgeonly Prince snapped. "If you wish to pamper the boy, then by all means take him home and train him yourself. But if I do this, I do it my way and that's all there is to it." Before his irksome female could respond, he addressed his son yet again. "Now then, I'm going to give you exactly three hours of my time. I suggest you make good use of every second, because after that you're on your own. If you properly grasp the techniques you learn here today, you'll be able to grow stronger by yourself, without my help. Once you reach a level I deem adequate, I'll decide whether or not you're worth my real training."

"Yes, father." The half-Saiyan beamed in excitement, overly eager to spend time with the father he'd never had. No matter what happened, he would not let him down. He was determined to prove himself worthy of the royal blood, pumping through his veins!

"You may leave." Vegeta sharply turned towards the heiress. "This is officially a human-free zone."

"Whatever, but you'd better not be too hard on him or else." The blue-haired mother gravely warned. She grinned triumphantly at her son, giving him a wink and a thumbs up, before making her departure. Three hours of training with Vegeta was probably worth more than three months with anyone else, as far as she was concerned. This was definitely a win, in her book.

"Okay, first thing's first." The Prince took up a stance. "We're going to spar."

"But-"

"No need to be frightened boy." Vegeta scorned. "I'm going to be generous and give you a handicap. I'll keep my power level even with yours. That way you'll realize for yourself, just how much your piddly skills pale in comparison to a true Saiyan warrior."

'Gosh, I guess mom and Gohan got at least one thing right.' Trunks rolled his eyes, assuming his own stance. 'The man's full of himself. Then again, maybe he has a right to gloat. No one I've ever known could defeat an Android in single-combat. '

"Your guard's down, fool!" A right fist landed square on the unsuspecting demi-Saiyan's face, hurling him back several meters. Trunks' robust figure skidded along the dirt.

"I wasn't ready yet!" He groused, louring up at his father.

"There's no such thing as ready!" The austere Prince barked, like a drill-sergeant. "An enemy's not going to do you the favor of waiting, while you primp yourself! Even when you're sleeping, you need to train your senses to be alert at all times!"

"Oh really?" Trunks asked wryly. "Is that why mom was able to sneak up on you from behind and slap the Saiyan out of you?"

"What was that?!"

"Nothing, nothing." The boy slurred, feeling extremely timid all of a sudden. "Y-You're totally right. B-B-Be ready at all times. I got it!"

"That's what I like to hear." Vegeta sneered. "Now get your ass up of the floor."

An hour passed by, when the Prince caught wind of that peculiar power level once again, locked in heated battle with another strong adversary, only this one resonated with an aura of pure,
uninhibited evil, the likes of which he hadn't felt since-

"Is it just me or am I sensing Frieza?" Trunks' face was scrunched up, in bewilderment. "And now- I'm sensing Goku as well, but it's from the same person. What on Earth is going on?!"

"I'm going to find out."

"Let me come with you."

"No!" The Saiyan resolutely commanded. "These two are way above your league and if anything were to happen to you, I'd never hear the end of it from your insane mother. Stay right here, understood? If I catch you following me, you'll wish you hadn't."

Trunks watched in apprehension, as his hotheaded father headed straight for the lion's den. He hated being left behind, like this. It inadvertently resurfaced a bitter slew of memories, from his dismal past. This was exactly what Gohan would do, every time he took off to battle the Androids. And of course that ended with the tragic demise of his beloved mentor and foster brother. His entire life, Trunks was forced to remain on the sidelines.

'No more!' He clenched his fists tight, staunchly determined to become the warrior he was destined to be. 'I'm not gonna stand back and let others fight my battles for me!'

That in mind, he quickly transformed and zoomed ahead, full speed.

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"Now that I've got my arm back, I'm gonna send you right back to whatever hole you crawled out of!" The Namekian growled at the winged abomination that called itself Cell. It was the most grotesque creature he'd ever seen, with a brittle green integument and black spots all over, a striated mahogany beak and two navy-blue bulges; one at the centre of the thorax and the other at the crest of its head. Most distinguishable of all, however, was the acute stinger at the end of its fleshy tail, a formidable weapon used to drain the life out of hapless living beings.

"No w-w-wait, l-let's talk about this." Cell fearfully stammered, backing up a few paces and desperately waving his hands, anxious beads of sweat rolling down his lime temple.

"There's nothing to talk about." Piccolo fumed. "You're gonna pay for all the innocent people you've hurt."

Vegeta suddenly entered the scene, touching down next to the Namekian and grimacing, at the unsightly insectoid.

"What the hell is this ugly thing?!!"

"Ugly?!" Cell fizzled in that serpentine voice of his. It was somewhat reminiscent of Burter. "How dare you call me that, you Saiyan scum?!" His meaty tail lashed behind him, creating a small fissure in it's waspish wake. "I am the most remarkable life form the Universe has ever seen, a perfect blend of the strongest warriors in existence, including yourself of course."

"I'm not entirely following along, but if you're as good as you say you are, then perhaps you might want to explain why your were just cowering before the Namekian here." The Prince scoffed, gesturing towards Piccolo. So now he understood why this misshapen deformity gave off an array of distinguishable auras.

"Oh Vegeta, how little you know." The giant insect sniggered. "What you see now is but a
fragment of my true self. Once I absorb Androids Seventeen and Eighteen, my power will be far beyond your grasp. None of you will stand a chance against me then!"

"Absorb the Androids?" The flame-haired Saiyan frowned. This creature was obviously the result of one of Gero's catastrophic experiments. "Well, pardon my say so, but if your true power hinges on the absorption of others, then it's not really your power is it?"

"You understand nothing, my dear Saiyan." Cell clucked his tongue. "I am the ultimate creation of Doctor Gero. The Androids are merely an extension of my being, designed for the sole purpose of assimilating into one perfect entity, that is myself."

"I'm afraid that's not gonna happen, you overgrown cockroach." Piccolo scowled. "As you are, either one of us would have no trouble defeating you and you know it."

"Yes, it appears that I've managed to hit quite a roadblock already." Cell growled, in frustration. "Given that you merged with Kami, your power does not surprise me quite as much as what I'm sensing from our Super Saiyan friend here."

'So that explains everything.' The astounded Prince gawked at the Namekian. 'Amazing. In terms of raw strength, Piccolo easily surpasses even myself, there's no question about that. I only met Kami that one time though and he was never all that powerful, so how could a merger with someone like him, transform Piccolo to a level beyond Super Saiyan? It doesn't add up.' (A/N: Refer to Chapter 44).

"Enough talk!" The Namek turned towards his flame-haired comrade. "Do you wanna finish him off or should I?"

"By all means, have at him." Vegeta smirked condescendingly. "I find that squashing bugs is a little below my pay grade hahaha."

Cell desperately scoured his surroundings, searching for some means of escape or other. There had to be something, anything that he could use to his advantage, a hostage perhaps. Lo and behold, he saw an all-too-familiar figure scrambling towards the hotspot. This was his one and only chance.

"Say goodbye to your precious son, Vegeta!" He promptly fired a humongous blast of Ki at the would-be intruder.

'Shit!' The panic-stricken Prince frantically rushed to stop the energy wave from engulfing Trunks, knowing that the latter wasn't strong enough to withstand such an attack, even as a Super Saiyan.

"You coward!" Piccolo snapped, lunging towards the insectoid. "I'm gonna end you once and for all!"

"SOLAR FLARE!" Cell quickly brought his fingers in front of his eyes, temporarily blinding everyone on scene and using the distraction to get as far away as possible, masking his energy thereafter.

"That bastard!" Piccolo snarled, once the dazzling light subsided. His fists shook with apoplectic rage, a pervasive blue aura skirling around his windswept frame. "I should've killed him, while I had the chance! Damn him! Damn him to hell!"

"What the fuck is wrong with you, brat?!" The Prince swivelled around and grabbed a petrified Trunks by the lapels of his indigo jacket, after having redirected Cell's energy attack into the skies. "I specifically warned you not to follow me! You're just as brainless as that insufferable mother of yours!"
"I'm s-sorry." The boy stammered.

"Oh, you will be sorry!" Vegeta pulled him closer, so that they were mere inches apart. "The next time you pull a stunt like that, don't expect me to save your useless behind!" He promptly dug his knee right into his son's solar-plexus, whereby he lost his Super Saiyan form and fell into a fit of bloody coughs, barely able to hold himself together. Vegeta wanted nothing more than to throttle the life out of Trunks, that's how irate he was. Were he not his own son, he might've done just that. "This is exactly why I told you to stay behind, dammit! I could've handled that fucking thing myself, but you just had to come along and get in the way, didn't you?!

"I-"

"If you say you're sorry one more time, I swear I'm going to rip your tongue out and strangle you with it!" The Prince cut him off, with a furious snarl. "Stupid boy! You don't know your own limits, that's your problem!"

"F-Father, listen to me." The half-Saiyan wheezed, still having trouble catching his breath. "That monster you just fought- I think it's the same one who stole my time machine."

"Stole your- what?!" Vegeta frowned, caught unawares by that startling tidbit. "Don't be absurd. If that's the case, then how were you able to travel back here in the first place?!

"No, not my time machine per say, but one from another timeline that presumably belonged to alternate version of me."

"You're not making any fucking sense!"

"He's not wrong." Piccolo validated from down below, feeling somewhat calmer now, though still vexed at having lost his opportunity. "That creature told me everything. It's name is Cell."

"It has a name?"

"Apparently so." Piccolo affirmed. "Tien and Krillin are due here any minute now. I'll explain further, once they arrive."

Father and son landed by the green giant.

"So it's true that you merged with Kami, isn't it?" Vegeta asked.

"That's right."

"Wait a second, doesn't that mean that the dragon balls no longer exist?!!" Trunks gasped.

"Unfortunately, that is the case." The Namekian grunted. "Considering the enemies we're up against, we felt that it was a risk that had to be taken."

"It still doesn't explain how you're this strong." An embittered Vegeta gruffly remarked, lip curled up in resentment. "Kami was a weakling."

"Be that is it may, our union was one of a kind." Piccolo smirked conceitedly, at the unmistakeable hint of jealousy in the other warrior's tone. "According to King Kai, before he separated into two beings, Kami was the last of a powerful bloodline of warriors, known as the Super Namekians."

"Super Namekians?" Trunks' jaw fell. He'd never heard of such a thing before, but if the energy resonating off of Piccolo was anything to go by, they would have to have been unduly incredible,
"Yes." Piccolo nodded grimly. "They were said to be the strongest warriors in the entire Universe and the protectors of planet Namek. Had any one of them still been around, Frieza's invasion of our home world would've ended before it even had a chance to begin." He went on. "I've yet to draw forth the latent depths of power inside me. That'll require a little time and meditation. But once it happens, I'll be completely unrivalled in all spheres."

"Tch, we'll see about that." Vegeta scoffed, determined to prove him wrong.

Just then Krillin and Tien arrived and Piccolo began recounting the story behind Cell.

"So my mother from Cell's future managed to create a remote controller, with which the other me shut down the Androids." The demi-Saiyan peered at the rough asphalt, between his feet. "But just as I was about to return, Cell killed me, took my time machine and travelled back here."

"Yes, but what I don't understand is how that timeline even exists." The Namek creased his eyes. "The original timeline was the one you came from, but when you travelled here three years ago, it created another timeline, namely the one we're in now. But how could a third one possibly come into being?"

"Something must've went wrong, when I returned to the future, after giving Goku the medicine." Trunks replied, after taking a moment to think things through. "Mom warned me about the risks involved with time travel. When I went back to my world, there was obviously a time split of some sort and a whole other reality was created, one in which I didn't return here straight away and instead waited until the Androids were dealt with. That other me must've wanted to come back here with a remote controller in hand, so that he could shut down the Androids and destroy them right away, rather than risk us fighting them head on." He grit his teeth, in exasperation. "If it hadn't been for Cell that plan might actually have worked!"

"Wait a second, if that happened, wouldn't there be two of you here, at the very same time?" A dumbfounded Krillin asked.

"Technically, there'd be three of him." Tien rectified. "You're forgetting about the baby."

"Right, right."

"But that second time machine was set to arrive, a year before the incident with Frieza and his father." Piccolo noted. "Why would the other Trunks choose to come here at that specific date?"

"Beats me." The perplexed lavender-haired boy shrugged. "But this might also explain why the timeline here is different than my own. My travelling here must've caused some kind of a ripple effect in the space-time continuum, which resulted in me being sent to an alternate version of the past rather than my own."

"Alternate version?" Vegeta frowned, in confusion. "What do you mean?"

"Oh yeah, I forgot that you and mom still don't know about that."

"About what?" The Prince narrowed his eyes and so the young half-breed explained everything. As expected, the flame-haired Saiyan was not pleased in the slightest. "What?! Kakarot turned into a Super Saiyan, years before I did?!" He spat in disgust. "And I was killed by that bastard Frieza?! No way! I refuse to believe that!"

"And apparently, you were even more of an asshole than you are in this world." Tien drolly added.
"What did you just call me?!" Vegeta held up a threatening fist.

"Hey, don't take my word for it." The three-eyed warrior scoffed. "Just ask Trunks, over there."

The Prince shot a glare at the half-breed boy.

"Well- I- I never used those exact words, but mom did say that you were kind of cold and uncaring." The demi-Saiyan quirked his lips up, in an uneasy smile. "But hey, you seem to be a lot different in this timeline and mom told me that if you'd lived, you may well have changed for the better."

"Oh spare me." Vegeta sneered. He couldn't help but wonder how much of an 'asshole' his alter-ego had to be. It made sense, considering the man's defeat at the hands of Earth's warriors, not to mention Frieza. Such events would've triggered a strong sense of bitterness and malice, which he himself didn't harbor, due to the fact that circumstances in this timeline just happened to be a lot more favorable- at least, from his perspective. Even so, he cursed the other Vegeta, for treating Bulma like a clog of dirt and then leaving her all alone, by getting himself killed. She deserved so much better! But more so, he cursed that bastard Cell! That ugly piece of slime-infested shit had murdered his son and stolen his time-machine. His chest tightened with a sharp pang of sorrow, as he thought about the boy's devastated mother and the heart-wrenching anguish she must've felt at losing her only child, especially after they'd lost virtually everyone else and barely managed to defeat the Androids, after struggling for almost two decades. She had no one left behind to console her, comfort her or protect her and it was all Cell's fault. Vegeta felt the ground beneath him quake, as his strapping figure bristled with unprecedented rage. He flew off before anyone could utter a word, engulfed with a vindictive surge of crazed bloodlust. Cell would pay dearly for what he'd done! He'd rip that fucker apart, limb from limb!

"What's gotten into him, all of a sudden?" Tien raised a bewildered brow.

"If I were to guess, I'd say he's on a monster hunt." Piccolo's eyes followed the Prince's receding figure. "He's going after Cell and I'm gonna join him. Between the two of us, we should have no trouble locating him and killing him. As for the rest of you." He looked between the others. "Cell's not an opponent you can stand up to. He almost killed Trunks with a single blast."

"So what should we do?" Krillin asked.

"I'm going to get Chiaotzu and bring him over to Kame House." Tien decided.

"Alright, I guess I'll go back to Doctor Gero's lab and look for a passage, leading to the underground bunker." Trunks said. "I may not be strong enough to face the Cell from the future, but I can kill the present version, while he's still stuck inside that incubator of his."

"I dunno, if Goku were here, he'd probably say that's cruel, since that particular Cell hasn't done anything wrong." The bald warrior chuckled.

"Well, it's a good thing he's not here then." Piccolo spat, in disgust. "Krillin, you should go with Trunks."

"Sure thing." The short man nodded.

A few minutes later…

"I never asked for your assistance." Vegeta growled at the giant warrior, flying next to him.

"Well, you have it anyway." The Namekian replied. "Like it or not, we're in this together."
"Tch whatever, but Cell's mine, you hear me?!

"I know you want to avenge your son." Piccolo stated knowingly, eliciting a grimace from the flame-haired Saiyan. "I've never particularly liked you, but that's something I can appreciate. I'm only here to help you track down Cell, that's all. Once we find that son-of-a-bitch, he's all yours."

Little did they know, their target was below them the whole time, suppressing his energy within the sewers and tracking their Ki signals, all the while.

"Once the two of them are a safe distance away, I'll resurface and look for another populated area." Cell soliloquized. "I'm still not strong enough to face either one of them yet. I am, however, curious about Vegeta. He wasn't anywhere near this strong, in my timeline. But it is of no consequence. Once I absorb enough humans, I'll kill the both of them and find the Androids." He let out a sinister series of serpentine snickers.

A/N: Aw Vegeta, you do have a heart hehe. Hope you folks enjoyed, especially the opening scene with our favourite tiger mom, Bulma xD. That's right Vegeta, you'd better do as she says, if you know what's good for you! Incidentally, there're some areas of "assumed knowledge" here and there that I didn't want to repeat (e.g. Cell's fight with Piccolo). I also borrowed the term "space-time continuum" from "Back to the Future" hehe. ;p

Thanks for reading everyone! Let me know what you think and be sure to drop a review! :D

Power levels (descending order):

Piccolo: 470 million (with a crazy heap of potential beneath the surface, that is yet to be unlocked; 450 million after his arm drainage)

Vegeta: 8.1 million
405 million (Super Saiyan - slight boost from Zenkai)

Cell: 380 million (340 million before absorbing the population of Ginger Town; 360 million, before sapping energy from Piccolo's arm)

Trunks: 5.2 million
260 million (Super Saiyan - slight boost from Zenkai)

Will reveal the human power levels, later on.
Chapter 60: Saiyan bond

Inside Dr. Gero's hidden lab…

"That right there must be the super-computer that Gero programmed to create Cell." The teenager looked in awe at the ten-foot tall machine, all wired up and most likely running on a perpetual energy generator, just like Seventeen and Eighteen. He shivered in disgust, upon seeing the accompanying perspex incubator, wherein floated a foetal creature that bore an unmistakable resemblance to Cell.

"He sure is ugly." Krillin shuddered in revulsion. "So, what do you say we get this show on the road?"

"Wait a moment." Trunks walked towards a table, on which lay a handful of schematics. He closely assessed the topmost diagram. "Whoa, check this baby out. It looks like the design for Android Seventeen."

"No kidding?" The bald man went over and had a look. "A human base?" Krillin frowned, as he skimmed through the data on the blueprint. "So they were once human, huh? That must be how Eighteen was able to heal herself, with a senzu bean. It makes so much sense now."

"I- I guess so."

'It might also explain why Seventeen cares about her so much.' Krillin mentally noted. 'They may well have been lovers at some point, before Dr. Gero got a hold of them.' He scowled, at the thought. 'Goddamn him! That monster!' The dwarfish fighter was further convinced that the two of them weren't inherently evil, at least not in this timeline. However, he wisely decided to keep his mouth shut, not giving voice to such contentious notions.

"We should probably take these with us." Trunks folded up the diagrams. Something suddenly clicked in the back of demi-Saiyan's mind. "Wait a minute. In the future that Cell emerged from, we discovered a way to destroy the Androids. What if it was because of these blueprints?" He quickly put two-and-two together. "What if mom's able to create another shutdown remote that'll allow us to finish them off? I know that if anyone can do that, it's her!"

"Well Trunks, to be honest with you, I think if we destroy Cell that might not even be necessary." Krillin opined, cringing at the subsequent glare he received from the half-Saiyan.

"Are you nuts?!"

"Just stop and think about it." The bald warrior cautiously went on. "Vegeta was able to beat Eighteen and Piccolo's even stronger than he is, now that he's fused with Kami. On top of all that, Goku's gonna wake up any day now. I seriously doubt that the Androids would hold a candle against those three, especially with the rest of us standing behind them."

"And you just wanna take that risk?" Trunks seethed. "We don't even know how strong Android Sixteen is."
"That's true, but-"

"Look I know you mean well Krillin, but you don't know what the hell you're talking about!" The young half-breed brusquely snapped, in a manner that was very uncharacteristic of the normally polite and placid teenager. "I won't allow this timeline to end up like my own and that's all there is to it!"

"Okay, okay sheesh." The bald man sighed in resignation. He couldn't really blame Trunks for not seeing eye-to-eye with him, given all the horrors he'd endured. The poor boy had suffered a life replete with death, destruction and desolation. He'd never known true peace. Krillin was almost glad that the future version of himself had been murdered by the Androids. The alternative seemed worse. Nonetheless, he just couldn't imagine their present counterparts doing anything so cruel, no matter how hard he tried. They didn't seem at all, like the sadistic sort and from personal experience, he knew that sort all too well.

Once again, he recalled the look of unabated horror embedded on Eighteen's beautiful face, at her terrifying brush with death. Was it really okay to put an abrupt end to her existence with the mere push of a button, an existence that she clearly valued? She hadn't even done anything wrong- yet. She was a person just like any other. So was Seventeen and the two of them clearly cared for one-another. Their lives weren't meaningless or worthless. If he could just find some way of dissuading the Androids from their ludicrous mission to kill Goku, then there would be no need for a bloody battle, which would undoubtedly end with losses on both sides. And since the dragon balls were no longer active those losses would be permanent.

Once the subterranean lab was destroyed, Trunks made a mad dash for Capsule Corporation in order to get his hyper-intelligent mother on board, while Krillin headed to Kame House to regroup with the rest of their allies.

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Three days had raced by and the hunt for Cell had been fruitless, thus far. The insectoid creature had proven itself extremely meticulous in covering its tracks. Scores of wretched individuals had fallen victim to this monster and whenever Piccolo or Vegeta would come within two miles of the carnage, he'd cleverly mask his energy and find a safe hiding spot, preferably underground, where no one would ever think to look for him.

"This isn't working." The Namekian growled, in frustration. "At this rate, he'll keep growing stronger and we'll never be able to catch him."

"Then what the hell do you suggest?" The Prince simmered, with exasperation. "He can't hide forever."

"That's just it, he doesn't have to." Piccolo huffed. "With his energy suppressed, he can't move as fast, but that doesn't mean he can't move at all. He's able to sense our approach."

"Why not just blow up the whole place then?"

"There're innocent people living here, you know?" The green alien glowered askance at the Saiyan.

"So?" Vegeta dismissively rejoined. "Better a quick death than having the life sucked out of you, one molecule at a time. Besides we can just wish them back with the- oh right, I forgot. No more dragon balls." He was suddenly struck with an idea. "What if you split back into two beings?"

"You'd like that wouldn't you?" Piccolo smirked knowingly. "What's the problem? Can't handle
being second best?"

"Tch, you won't talk so big once this is all over." The flame-haired warrior groused.

"Well anyway, the answer to your question is no." The Namek replied. "Once Kami and I merged, there was no going back. Both of us knew exactly what we signed up for."

"Then how'd you separate in the first place?" Vegeta lifted an inquisitive eyebrow.

"Kami was the one who did that and it took him many years of meditation." Piccolo answered. "In any case, even if there were dragon balls around, I couldn't just let you destroy a whole town. There's bound to be another way." Seconds later, a peculiar thought came to him. "Wait a second. I think I know just what to do." He ceased his flight and held his hands in front of his mouth, as he bellowed aloud. "CELL! GO AHEAD AND KEEP HIDING LIKE THE COWARD YOU ARE, BUT KNOW THIS! IF YOU DON'T SHOW YOURSELF RIGHT NOW, WE'RE GOING TO FIND ANDROIDS SEVENTEEN AND EIGHTEEN AND DESTROY THEM!"

Cell panicked from where he was stationed below ground, striated stomach folding up in dismay, as he was overcome with indecision. If anything were to happen to Seventeen and Eighteen, all his efforts would've been for naught. But if he revealed himself, he was a goner for sure. Dithering for a while, he ultimately decided that his only option was to continue playing hide-and-seek, until the meddlesome pair above ended their futile endeavours. After that, it was simply a race for time. He needed to surpass Piccolo and Vegeta, before they got the chance to confront the Androids, else everything could end in failure.

"As if he's going to fall for that." The Prince scoffed.

"Of course he's not." The Namekian smirked. "But believe me, he's gonna fall for something a whole lot worse. He just doesn't know it yet."

"What do you mean?"

"By my estimation, it'll take around a month or two, for me to realize my full potential." Piccolo began unveiling his plan. "But when I do, I'll easily be twice as strong as I am now, perhaps even stronger. Once that happens, all I need to do is flare my energy and get Cell's attention. He's gonna believe that we're engaging the Androids and he'll rush to try and intervene. That'll be my chance to take him out."

"You want to draw him towards you like a moth to the flame, huh?" Vegeta smirked. "What makes you think he'll let himself be snared so easily, considering the fact that he's not willing to risk his hide now?"

"By then, he'll have absorbed a lot more humans, enough to think that he has what it takes to overwhelm me." The Namek stiffly answered. "If I raise my power to my current level, I can lure him towards me and lull him into a false sense of security."

"So basically, your plan revolves around a large-scale massacre of the very people you insist on saving." The Prince grimaced, not looking too impressed. "And yet you're telling me that it's a bad idea to vaporize them right now, where it'll be far quicker and with fewer casualties?"

A lingering silence followed, wrought with unease.

"You make a compelling case, but what if we level the area and Cell still manages to survive?" Piccolo finally replied. "We'd be back to square one."
Vegeta couldn't argue with that. After all, Frieza had been able to persevere somehow, after the destruction of Planet Namek and Cell was much stronger than the lizard.

"Alright fine, have it your way." The Saiyan relented, before smirking at his green-skinned comrade. "But just in case you don't know, you're not the only one who has a mountain of power, lying beneath the surface."

"Is that right?" Piccolo smirked back. "I sort of figured as much. You Saiyans always look for a way to climb to the top, but it's not gonna happen this time around."

"Keep telling yourself that."

And so, Vegeta flew back to Capsule Corporation, while Piccolo sought out an isolated terrain, where he could train and meditate, without distraction.

Once he returned home, the Prince found his son's future counterpart inside the gravity room, donning a set of Saiyan uniform that Bulma must've given him. He was sweating profusely, having trained non-stop for hours.

"Hey father!" The teen jauntily greeted his old man. "How'd things go? Were you guys able to beat Cell?"

The moment he saw Trunks' face, Vegeta's mind abruptly conjured up images of his lifeless body. His gut-wrenching thoughts swerved towards the boy's *alternate-self* who'd suffered a gruesome end at the hands of Cell, before having his time machine stolen. The Prince's heart cinched uncomfortably, plagued with a deeply unpleasant amalgam of grief, malice and rage. He didn't want to imagine the horrified look on his son's innocent young face, as he inanimately lay in a dilated pool of horrid crimson. He quickly whirled around and proceeded back towards the exit, wanting to extricate the harrowing turmoil, brewing within him.

"Wait, where are you going?"

"We're leaving." The flame-haired forced himself to maintain a stoic facade, keeping his gaze averted from his son. "Cell's too close to West City. We can't be here."

"Oh." Trunks mouthed after an awkward pause, tacitly knowing that the mission hadn't gone as planned, though unable to read deeper into his phlegmatic father. "Well in that case, I guess we should probably make for Kame House."

"Hn." Vegeta muttered. "Take all the training equipment you need."

"Right, right." The young demi-Saiyan was eager for an update on Cell, but wisely decided not to press the matter. His father seemed more taciturn than usual, which was saying a lot.

Vegeta sensed Bulma's Ki signal, hard at work inside the giant complex. Curious, he followed after her and arrived just in time to see her complete the final touches on her newest gizmo.

"What is that thing?"

"Oh hey there, lover man." She grinned with weary, half-lidded eyes, eliciting a vexed glare from her grouchy Saiyan. "Didn't notice you come in. I've been working on this darn thing for the last three days and I was finally able to finish it. Here, take a look."

He moved forward and inspected the buttoned device, a little disenchanted by it's simplicity- at least on surface-level.
"What's it do?"

"What do you think?" The ebullient heiress responded, with a look of triumph that masked some of the underlying fatigue. "It's a remote controller that can be used to shut down the Androids."

"You're serious?" The Prince gaped at her incredulously. "How did you-"

"Trunks found a couple of blueprints in Dr. Gero's lab, with a whole bunch of information on Number Seventeen's cybernetic enhancements." She eagerly interjected. "Apparently he was once a human named Lapis and had a twin sister Lazuli, whom I can safely assume is Number Eighteen."

"Yes." Vegeta nodded, unsurprised. He'd figured out as much, in the midst of his battle with the blonde beauty. "What about Android Sixteen?"

"Well, I'm afraid I don't have any information on that one." She replied, yawning exhaustively thereafter. Boy, she sure could use a nap right about now. "What can you tell me about him?"

"Not much." The Prince shrugged. "All I know is that he wants to kill Kakarot and won't fight anyone else. Beyond that, he just keeps to himself and doesn't say a word."

"Is that so?" Bulma frowned. "So he was never hostile or anything like that? Never threatened you?" Vegeta shook his head. "An insult, maybe? Anything?"

"No." The Saiyan scoffed. "He did seem to enjoy birdwatching though."

"Well, that's uh- kind of unexpected." The heiress awkwardly remarked, clearly taken aback by the information. She placed an inquisitive finger on her chin. "Well, honestly, he doesn't sound so mean. If he weren't hardwired to kill Goku, he might actually come in handy." A lightbulb flashed in her mind. "Hey, what if I reprogram him or something?"

"Tch, as if he'd just let you."

"Well, it can't hurt to ask." Bulma chuckled. "Anyway, from what you've told me, he doesn't seem to exhibit the behavioural patterns of a normal human-being, the way Seventeen and Eighteen do. So I'm guessing that unlike those two, he's purely artificial."

"Maybe." If that were the case, he could potentially be a tougher adversary than either of the twins.

"What about Cell?" The blue-haired scientist asked, noticing Vegeta's face tighten with barely repressed vitriol. She understood why, exactly. Trunks told her everything and although the news deeply shook her at first, she eventually sobered up and took to the task of building the shutdown remote, knowing that the best way to honor the memory of her son's deceased counterpart, was to indefinitely put an end to Cell's sinister plans.

"I'm going to kill him, the moment he reveals himself." He dourly proclaimed.

"Good." Bulma nodded grimly. "I hope he suffers miserably for everything he's done."

Once ready, the family ventured towards Kame House. Bulma strapped the baby in the backseat of an airbus, before plopping down next to his future version and indulging in a much needed and well-earned power-nap. Earlier on, the heiress had tried to convince her parents to accompany them, but sadly they refused to budge. Dr. Brief maintained that his responsibilities to the company came first and foremost and his ditzy wife wouldn't leave his side. However, the elder Briefs did promise that if Cell showed up, they wouldn't hesitate to flit the premises.
Meanwhile, Vegeta flew ahead of them, by himself. There was something he really needed to do and he preferred doing it as soon as possible.

A short while later at Kame House…

Chi-Chi was seated by her husband's futon, as she had been for the last three days, when the most unexpected of visitors, walked inside.

"What the hell do you want?!" She whipped her head around, hissing upon seeing the unwelcome intruder.

Not deigned to reply, Vegeta closely eyed the supine figure of his ailing rival.

'Kakarot, Kakarot, can you hear me?' He spoke mentally, hoping to somehow patch through to the other Saiyan.

"I swear if you touch one hair on my Goku's head, I'm gonna-"

"Shut up!" The Prince peevishly cut Chi-Chi off. "I'm trying to concentrate, you idiot!"

"Why you!" The Ox Princess snarled, jumping to her feet and glaring daggers at Vegeta.

"Hey, what's going on here?" Gohan burst through the door, having heard the tumultuous commotion from next door. "Is something wrong?!"

"This monster came in here, uninvited." She indignantly growled, pointing an accusing finger at the flame-haired Saiyan. "I want him gone. I don't like the way he's looking at your father."

"Relax mom." Gohan said reassuringly, in an attempt to defuse the situation. "Vegeta's the one who saved his life."

Chi-Chi was momentarily rendered speechless by that startling newsflash. However, she quickly shook the daze out of her head and returned her attention to Vegeta. "Well thanks." She spat, as though the words were poison. "You can leave now."

"Mom!" The demi-Saiyan chided, narrowing his eyes disapprovingly at the raven-haired woman. For someone who'd taught him so much about having proper etiquette and conduct, she was being awfully rude right about now.

"I need some time alone with him." The Prince stated, earning a surprised look from Gohan and a bitter scowl from Chi-Chi.

"How dare you?!" She seethed icily. "That is completely out of the question!"

"Let's go mom." The young half-Saiyan grabbed her hand.

"Are you crazy, Gohan?!" The wary Ox Princess furiously ground her teeth at her son. "What if he hurts your father, while we're gone?!"

"Tch, if I wanted it, he'd be dead already." Vegeta's lip curled up, in umbrage. "He might be an idiot, but he's still the only living member of my race, besides myself. Now get lost. My patience is wearing thin."

"You'd better go mom." The demi-Saiyan took hold of her, before hell broke loose. "It's alright. I'll stay here with dad. Nothing's gonna happen to him, I promise you."
After a brief argument, Chi-Chi eventually relented, not wanting to scrimmage with her sickly husband so close.

"Fine then!" She glowered menacingly at Vegeta. "But you'd better not try anything funny or you're gonna regret it!"

The Prince tuned her out, his attention fixated upon his resting rival.

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Goku found himself plunging deeper and deeper into a dark, dismal abyss that seemed to stretch on forever, completely cut off from reality. It felt as if he'd been trapped inside this eerie limbo for eons- that is, until he heard a string of indistinct decibels that gradually became clearer. He knew that voice from somewhere! Then it hit him!

'Vegeta?!' He frantically looked around, but there was nothing but pitch black in every direction. 'Vegeta is that you?! Where are you?! Why can't I see you?!

'I'm speaking to you telepathically.' The other Saiyan replied, sighing in relief. At long last, he'd been able to establish a connection.

'O- Oh.'

'Do you remember what happened?'

A strained silence ensued.

'Wait I- I think so.' Goku harked back to his last moments of consciousness. 'I was fighting that Android and after that- I- I saw you. A while later I heard Chi-Chi crying. There was a lot of pain and it went on for hours, I remember that really well.' He shuddered at the horrendous recollection. 'After that I must've blacked out and ended up here.' Another short pause. 'I've been having these strange visions from time to time as well, but I can't make sense of any of them.' He hesitated a moment, before asking. 'Where- where am I now?'

'You're at the old man's house." The Prince answered. "Your wife and son are here too.'

'Old man?' If he were able to, he would've scratched his head in confusion. 'Oh, you mean Master Roshi. What about the Androids? Did you manage to beat 'em?'

And so, little by little, the Prince informed his rival about all that had taken place. Everything that Vegeta described was a perfect parallel with the bizarre visions he'd had. It all made so much sense now.

'So there's a level beyond Super Saiyan and you're trying to reach it, huh?' The younger Saiyan asked.

'Yes and I'm sure you must feel it as well.'

'I do feel it.' Goku gravely acknowledged, before sighing in dejection. 'But until I recover, there's really not much I can do. Right now I'm just a liability, nothing more.'

'Trunks says that it shouldn't take much longer.'

'Really? That's great!' Earth's hero suddenly found himself pumping with excitement, at the prospect of waking from his slumber and seeing everyone again. 'I can't wait to finally get out of
this place. And hey, thanks a bunch.'

'For what?'

'For taking care of things, while I was gone.' He reverently replied. 'It means a lot, my friend.'

'Tch, whatever.' The older Saiyan grouched, in embarrassment.

'Give everyone my regards okay?' Goku entreated. 'Especially Gohan and Chi-Chi. Tell them that I miss them a lot and that I'll try to come back as soon as possible.'

Vegeta groaned and abruptly cut off the telepathic link, irked at his rival's unwanted geniality.

"Wow, dad's actually smiling." Gohan gushed, as he saw the warm, endearing look on his father's face. It almost brought tears to his eyes.

The Prince grimaced, upon noticing the mawkish sight, irked doubly at the fact that he of all people had engendered such sick, slushy sentimentality from the clown. He stood up to take his leave.

"Hey wait." The boy darted in front of Vegeta, peering up at his hardened visage. "You were sitting by his side for over an hour. Did something happen? What was it?"

Vegeta's face scrunched up with indecision. He didn't owe this bothersome pup an explanation. However, he found that he couldn't ignore that longing look in Gohan's dark irises. It reminded him too much of his fatherless son, from the future. Dammit! These insolent whelps were making him go soft!

"Kakarot sends his regards to you and that harpy mother of yours." Vegeta sullenly slurred, as fast as he could. "And he says he'll be back soon."

"Really?!" Gohan grinned wide, eyes watering up, as he was overwhelmed with mind-numbing thrill and joy. "You spoke to him?! My God, that's wonderful!" He threw his arms around the Prince's waist, tightly embracing him, in spite of himself. "Way to go Vegeta!"

The flame-haired Saiyan went taut, eyes widening for a second, before narrowing dangerously at the boy.

"If you value your life, you'd better let go of me right now." The flame-haired Saiyan threatened, in a deathly low voice. Gohan yelped and self-consciously pulled away.

"S-S-Sorry." He stammered, letting out a few hesitant laughs, before racing out of the room, in a euphoric frenzy. "Mom! Krillin! Everyone, come quick! It's dad!"

"Stupid brat." The rubescent royal ruddily cursed under his breath, leaping out of the nearest window before he was flocked by the drove of foolish Earthlings that would soon be heading his way. What he really needed was some meditation, with no idiots around to disrupt him.

"Oh Goku." Chi-Chi released a stream of jubilant tears, twinkling at the soul-stirring sight of the smile she adored more than anything else in the world. She clutched her pounding heart.

"I wonder what could've caused this." A bewildered Tien rubbed his head.

"Well Vegeta was in here for quite a while." Krillin shrugged. "Maybe he did something."

"He spoke to dad." Gohan merrily informed, much to the shock of all the others. "It must've been
through mind or something, but he told me that dad's coming back soon."

A pregnant pause followed, until Master Roshi stood up and ambled towards the open window, peering out into the oceanic horizon. He could see the Prince's figure atop a tiny islet in the far distance, where he sat in meditation.

"Hmmm, it really is interesting how different Vegeta is to the monster who nearly killed all of us, at one point." The turtle-hermit remarked. "He may never admit to it, but he cares deeply for Goku. No matter how different they are, there's an inseparable force that will always bind those two together: a bond that only Saiyans have."

"I'm sorry, but I don't buy any of that." Chi-Chi snidely remarked. "Vegeta's just a rude and selfish individual. As far as Goku's concerned, he doesn't really care about him, beyond the fact that he happens to be the only other living Saiyan."

"Come on Chi-Chi, he's not as bad as you think." Krillin insisted.

"I'm not saying he's necessarily bad, at least not like he was before, but he's nothing compared to Goku." The Ox Princess rejoined. "Goku's a complete Saint."

"You know, if he didn't bang his head on a rock, that might not've been the case." The bald man sweat-dropped. "We've gotta remember that like Vegeta, Goku was sent here to destroy Earth, but both of them changed for the better."

"Don't you compare that lout to my Goku!" The raven-haired mother hissed.

"No one's comparing them, mom." Gohan frowned. "Look, I know Vegeta can be a bit of a hard case but deep down, I think he's as good as any of us."

Tien made a chocking sound at that. Chiaotzu didn't really know what to think. In any case, no matter their disagreements, one thing was certain: Vegeta was a very useful and reliable ally.

_A/N: Hope you guys enjoyed the bromance xD! Hide it all you want Vegetables, but you really do care about your best buddy haha! Thanks for reading everyone and be sure to drop a review! :D_
A hero's return

Chapter Summary

Goku's back folks... plus another new visitor from the past xD. :D

A/N: So the new chapter is here at last. Sorry that I'm a week late (I did plan on fortnightly schedules as I said before, but I was a bit hard-pressed last week). Anyway, I hope you enjoy it folks. Some nice, promising scenes herein! ;)

Chapter 61: A hero's return

Two days passed by. Goku's fever had quelled, his skin tepid and no longer coated with clammy layers of sickly perspiration. The signs were promising and it was clear that Earth's hero had just about reached the end of his rocky road to recovery. Chi-Chi grasped his calloused hand firmly, planting a chaste kiss on the base of his palm and gently brushing her soft lips against the steadily beating thrum of his radial artery, eliciting a gratifying note of pleasure from the sturdy, slumbering Saiyan.

Around that time, an unexpected visitor rode in on Kame House, guns blazing, her wavy blonde hair rippling with the whistling wind. Tranquilly sitting in the lawn in a deep state of meditation, it was Vegeta who suffered the misfortune of dealing with the heavily-armed encroacher.

"Hey you, furball!" She called out, sitting across from him and daringly placing a machine-pistol to his forehead. "I like that suit you got on!"

Irrked at the disturbance, the Prince's eyes flashed open in wroth.

"Who the hell are you?" He gruffly seethed.

"Name's Launch, short stuff and I'm here to collect." She smirked. "Now how's about you hand over all your money and I might consider goin' easy on ya."

"Launch?" The heiress opened the front door and did a triple-take, not believing her eyes when she witnessed the incredulous sight of her long-lost friend. "Oh my God, Launch, it's really you!" She dashed over and pounced on the blonde-haired bandit like a tigress, catching her completely off guard, as she straddled her lithe waist. "Where've you been all this time?!"

"Hey got off me, woman!" Launch protested, before recognition hit her smack in the face. "Wait a second, is that you Bulma?"

"Of course it's me, you crazy bitch!" Bulma grinned, pinning her friend down by the shoulders. "God, it's been years! What've you been up to?!!"

"Oh you know, just pullin' a few heists here and there." The blonde replied, all the while squirming about, in a bid to free herself. "I was gonna come visit, but I ended up doin' a few months in the can."

"A few months?" Bulma brows shot up, in astonishment. "You serious? With the amount of shit you've pulled, I figured they'd put you behind bars, for at least ten lifetimes."
"Well yeah, but I must've sneezed or something and they let the other me go." Launch shrugged.
"Those idiots didn't have a clue."

"Oh." Bulma mouthed in understanding, chortling at the fortuity of it all. "So I'm guessing that you're still on the most wanted list, right?"

"Yeah, but they ain't gonna get me again." Launch confidently averred. "Those chumps got lucky the last time, but from now on, I'm gonna keep my guard up at all times."

Vegeta harrumphed, casting a questioning gaze towards his female, who shook her head and stood up to introduce the two strangers.

"So, this squirt here's your baby-daddy, huh?" The blonde smirked, shifting closer to the Saiyan and once again, aiming a gun to his head. "Well, I was just about ready to empty his pockets till you showed up. That's right. You better pay up furball, before I do some major damage."

"Bulma." Vegeta growled in warning, not knowing if he'd be able to keep himself from murdering this maniacal intruder, especially after that derisive monicker. Were she not a friend of Bulma's, he might've done so already.

"Uh- say Launch, why don't you come inside and meet up with the guys?" The heiress offered between strained laughs, tremulously biting her lower lip. "I'm sure they'd love to see you again."

"Oh yeah sure."

Launch's unforeseen visit was met with confusion in some circles and ecstasy, in others. Roshi, in particular was unduly thrilled to see her.

"Hey girl, this wily old turtle's been so lonely without ya." His prurient palms steadily proceeded towards her bust. "You're in good hands now baby, hehehehe." Unsurprisingly, the lecherous goat's efforts only ended up earning him a volley of machine gun fire and he had to flit the premises, to save his depraved hide.

"Would you keep it down?!" An indignant Chi-Chi hissed, poking her head out of the room, where Goku was abed. "My husband's trying to rest!"

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Launch wasn't pleased in the slightest, seeing the supine form of her old friend. Even so, she was sure that if anyone could make it out of a jam like this, it was Goku.

"My boy's tough as nails." She vehemently insisted, voice laced with pride and veneration. 
"Nothing's gonna keep him down."

"Thanks Launch." Chi-Chi smiled.

Mid-afternoon, Earth's hero slowly stirred to a blissful wake, greeted by the welcoming sight of his beaming wife.

"Hey, Chi- ow!" Goku winced, unable to finish his sentence as the raven-haired woman pulled him into the tightest embrace he'd experienced, thus far. "Whoa easy there, Chi-Chi." He wheezed.

"Oh Goku, you're awake!" She cried, ignoring his pleas for a little breathing room, as she virtually squeezed the life out of him. "You're finally awake."
The other crew members rushed towards the room, the moment they sensed his Ki rouse to consciousness. For Goku, it was a huge relief, as he was finally free of his wife's lung-crushing embrace. His jubilant friends swarmed around him in a frenzy.

"Dad, you made it!" Gohan gushed, glomping his old man. "You really made it!"

"I sure did." Goku replied with a laugh, tousling the boy's unruly hair. "Say- uh- where's Vegeta?"

"Vegeta?!" Chi-Chi all but shrieked, causing everyone nearby to flinch. "You just woke up, you haven't seen your family for days and all you can think of is Vegeta?!"

"Relax babe." Goku tactfully implored. "Of course it's wonderful to see you and all, but we've got a battle ahead of us and we need to actually win, before we can celebrate."

"Oh no, no, no!" The Ox Princess waspishly prodded his chest, with her index finger. "You just recovered from a life-threatening illness. Don't you tell me you're gonna go run off and fight, because I won't have it, mister! You better lay your sorry butt down and rest for at least three more days!"

"Look, Chi-Chi, I know this might seem a little sudden to you, but I'm okay now, believe me." Goku vowed, as he held her at arm's length. He went on, more somberly. "The entire world's at risk and I have a responsibility to protect it. I know it's unfair and that I haven't been the best husband, but I'm doing this for you and Gohan. Your safety is what matters to me, more than anything else."

"But-"

"I'm coming with you dad." Gohan cut off his feisty mother. "Where you go, I go. I'm close to becoming a Super Saiyan now and I know I can help you guys."

Chi-Chi was rendered speechless and Goku looked at the demi-Saiyan in contemplation for a moment, before nodding.

"Alright, son." He smiled, before turning towards Trunks, who awkwardly stood nearby. "You're coming too. You need to get stronger yourself, if you hope to beat the Androids in your timeline."

"You really think I can do it?" The lavender-haired Saiyan asked, a warm kindle of hope brewing within his azure eyes.

"With the right training, yes, I'm sure of it." Goku nodded. "You are Vegeta's son, after all."

"With my dashingly good looks, I might add." Bulma gloated, nose held high. The group collectively chuckled at that, all except Chi-Chi, who was growing more and more irate by the second. Moments later, her proverbial volcano erupted with an unholy slew of blaring objections and accusations.

"Going out there and putting yourself in danger is one thing, but I am not gonna just sit here and let you involve Gohan!" She snarled in a roaring rush of raw rage, protectively seizing her child and glaring daggers at her husband, all the while.

"Mom." The mortified boy protested, ineffectually trying to wriggle his way out of her steadfast clutch.

"Come on Chi-Chi, he's in good hands." Bulma chimed in.

"Good hands?!" The raven-haired woman furiously shot back. "Really?! Is that what you call it?!
He's been kidnapped, brutally beaten and even- killed." She choked on that last word. "He's not even in his teens and he's witnessed so much horror! Yeah, that's right Goku!" Chi-Chi scathingly clenched her jaw. "Don't think I don't know about what happened to him on Namek, under your watch!" (A/N: Refer to Chapter 31).

Goku's face fell, as he was quickly overwhelmed with grief and guilt at the bitter, heart-rending memory. He hadn't even considered how devastated Chi-Chi must've been at the news of her son's gruesome demise. Sure, she'd most likely heard about it after he was wished back, but it would've still wounded her deeply.

"Mom, you can't blame dad for that." Gohan vociferously argued. "He tried his best to-"

"No, your mother's right Gohan." Goku interjected, eyes hazy. "I promised her I'd protect you and I- I couldn't live up to my word." He let out a dejected sigh, resolutely deciding that he had no right to put his son at risk ever again, not after he'd failed him. "You should stay here, where it's safe. This isn't your fight, son." He offered him a strained smile. "I'm the one who stirred the Red Ribbon's nest, in the first place and I should be the one to bring them down, once and for all."

"Come on dad, please." The boy ardently beseeched. "I don't wanna be left behind. I wanna help you."

"Now Gohan, you heard your father." Chi-Chi reproached, in a voice that brooked no further argument. She pressed him firmly to her chest, while mouthing a secretive 'thank you' to her husband and smiling lovingly at him. Goku smiled back, pleased that for once he'd done right by his wolfish wife. She deserved at least this much, for having the patience and forbearance to deal with him, all these years. No matter what happened, he would protect her and Gohan. He would protect everyone. It was his duty.

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"Look who finally decided to show up." The Prince dryly remarked, not even turning around to face his clownish rival.

"It's good to see you too, Vegeta." Goku laughed in that peculiar, goofy manner of his.

"Either get to the point or get lost." Vegeta rolled his eyes, curt as ever.

"Well, I've been thinking for a while and I don't know why this hadn't occurred to me before, but have you by any chance heard of the Hyperbolic Time Chamber?"

The flame-haired Saiyan frowned in confusion, tacitly prompting Earth's hero to explain further.

"To put it simply, there's a doorway in Kami's lookout, which leads to another dimension of sorts." He elucidated. "You can spend an entire year training in that dimension and only a day will have passed, in the outside world."

"Are you serious?!" The Prince's eyes bugged out, as he swivelled around, gaping incredulously at his rival.

"Yes, but there're conditions." Goku replied. "For example, only two people can go in at a time."

"I see."

"Now, I know what you must be thinking, but I want Piccolo to train there first, before either of us."
"What?!

"Look, just hear me out." The younger Saiyan insisted. "Right now Piccolo's stronger than the both of us and I venture, he's closer to unlocking his full potential than we are. It's safer to let him go in and get the training he needs, while you and I hold the fort."

Vegeta looked at him, dithering for just a moment.

"Fine." He shrugged. "But after he's done I go in next, are we clear?"

"Sure, but take Trunks here with you." Goku said, encouraging the lavender-haired Saiyan to step forward.

"Hmph, but of course." Vegeta grinned menacingly at his son's future counterpart, whereby the latter gulped and suddenly had second thoughts.

"Alright then, I'll go get Piccolo up to speed, so he can get started." Placing his conjoined fingers on his forehead, the other Saiyan vanished from sight.

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"Hey Kamiccolo."

The Super Namek nearly tumbled down the mountain peak, where he sat in meditation, before glaring daggers at his ex-rival.

"The name's still Piccolo and you'd do well to remember it!"

"Yeesh, okay, okay." Goku waved his hands in surrender. "Anyway, I came up with a plan to defeat our enemies." And so he explained.

"Do you really think it's a wise idea to use the time chamber?" Piccolo quirked an eyebrow, after hearing the rustic hero's proposal. "We might need it later on."

"True, but it's a risk we just have to take," Goku averred. "If Cell manages to absorb one or both of the Androids, we need to be ready. Don't worry, if we wrap this up fast, we'll have plenty of time to spare, should any future entanglement arise."

"Well alright, if you say so."

"Good, then let's get going." He placed a hand on Piccolo's shoulder. "We don't have time to waste."

"Right."

"Hey Mr. Popo, I'm sorry to be a bother, but do you have anything to eat?" Goku asked without preamble, the moment he and his ex-rival materialized on Kami's lookout.

"Of course, my friend." His former mentor smiled. "It's good to see you again, after all these years." He then turned towards the Namekian. "Everything is ready, Piccolo. I figured that some of you may have needed to use the hyperbolic time chamber, so I stocked enough food and water in there, for the next ten years."

"Food's not a problem." Piccolo snorted. "Not for me, anyway. I am a Namekian, after all." He looked down condescendingly at Goku. "But these Saiyans are a whole other story. You and Vegeta better learn how to temper your eating habits or you might end up starving, before you have
a chance to get anywhere."

"Well, I can't promise anything, but I'll try." Earth's hero laughed sheepishly.

"Anyway, I'm about ready to get this underway." The Namekian headed towards the large oaken door, pulling down the golden latch and entering inside. And so began his journey towards true greatness.

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Gohan felt guilty, he truly did, but this was something that had to be done. Inside him was a well of power ready to burst open at any moment, given the right trigger. He couldn't just ignore it. He was an invaluable asset to Earth's salvation and while his mother did have his best interests at heart, the woman was a little too one-dimensional. His participation in the upcoming battle may very well prove to be the decisive factor that could tip the scales in their favor. Deep in his heart, the preteen knew that he was destined to play a role here, one that he could not ignore.

And so, approximately ten minutes after his father had left, Gohan snuck out of the house and flew towards him at full speed. He could sense his Ki signal, in some far-off location.

"Where's he going?" Trunks confusedly eyed the boy's ebbing figure, mid-spar.

"Looks like the monkey's slipped his cage." Vegeta chuckled mirthfully.

"Gohan." Chi-Chi called out. "Gohan where are you? You've still got homework to finish." No reply, whatsoever. Heart-rate spiking, the raven-haired mother frantically searched every door of the premises, but was unable to locate her son. "Why that nasty, conniving little scoundrel!" She shrieked, knowing full well that he must've absconded while her back was turned. Darn it, she should've been more vigilant! 'Goku, you'd best bring him back here, right away!' She irately thought to herself. 'That boy needs a serious spanking!'

An hour later…

"Hey father, I've gotta use the bathroom." Trunks mumbled awkwardly. "My bladder's not feeling too good."

"Tch, you're as sensitive as you are soft." Vegeta scorned. "Go on then. I don't want you to end up pissing blood."

And so, the half-Saiyan gave a small bow and rushed indoors.

"Vegeta, you shouldn't be too hard on him." Bulma chided, standing up from where she sat on the porch and sauntering towards him.

"Tch, if anything I'm not hard enough." The Prince grumbled. Before Bulma could retort, three unwelcoming figures touched down on the Island and the heiress blanched, instantly knowing who they were.

"Hello there, Vegeta." Seventeen greeted, with a curt nod. "I didn't expect to see you here. What a pleasant surprise." He smirked. "You and I have a little score to settle."

"Bulma." The Prince whispered under his breath, so only she could hear. "Keep Trunks occupied, got it?" If the boy caught wind of the current predicament, he would rush towards a battle he clearly wasn't ready for.
"Alright." She slowly nodded, trepidation and terror writ all over her dismayed visage. "Be careful." The blue-haired mother grasped his hand a moment, before racing inside. Eighteen frowned in curiosity, wondering what connection Vegeta had with the Brief woman, if any. This could very well complicate her voguish plans- unless of course her brother dealt with the powerful Saiyan, where she'd failed.

A palpably tense silence followed, after which the human fighters were outside, standing behind Vegeta.

"Looks like the whole squad's here." Seventeen amusedly remarked. "Is Goku with you, by any chance?"

"No, he isn't." The three-eyed warrior brusquely replied. "And we're not gonna tell you where he is either, so you might as well get this over with."

"Tien." Krillin censured, before turning towards the mechanical trio. "Look guys, is any of this really necessary?"

"Any of what?" Eighteen frowned.

"This- hostility or whatever it is, between us." The bald man clarified. "It's pointless. Doctor Gero was the one who wanted Goku dead and you already took care of him, so I don't see any reason for us to fight."

"Rest assured my bald friend, this doesn't involve you per se." The black-haired Android replied. "My quarrel's with Vegeta over here and as far as Goku's concerned, well-" He turned towards his mountainous comrade, expectantly. "What is it that you always say Sixteen?"

"Goku must die." The giant monotonously replied.

"And there you have it."

"Hey." Overcome with a surge of indecision, the blonde grabbed her brother by the shoulder and gestured elsewhere. Seventeen begrudgingly let her guide him a little ways away, so they could talk in private.

"Maybe he's right." She spoke in a hushed tone. "Let's forget about all of this and get out of here."

"We talked about this Eighteen." The male twin furrowed his dark brows.

"Look, this whole thing is pointless." She insisted. "Either you'll end up killing Vegeta or he'll end up killing you. Why risk it?"

"No mortal alive could possibly kill me." He arrogantly asserted.

"I thought the same and I almost ended up-"

"If it's a fight you want, it's a fight you'll get." The Prince loudly vociferated and the matter was decided then and there. "Let's take this elsewhere."

"That's what I like to hear."

"Seventeen!" Eighteen's warning fell on deaf ears, as her stubborn sibling took to the skies, Vegeta in tow. "Dammit!" She grudgingly trailed along, cursing her brother's bullishness all the while. Sixteen soon followed after his cybernetic comrades.
"Oh no." Krillin gulped, deluged with mind-wracking dread and disconcertment. "What do we do now?"

"I don't particularly care about Vegeta." Tien spat. "In fact I despise him, but he shouldn't be fighting these guys all by himself. It's not right." He frustratingly clamped his teeth together. "Darn it, if only I were stronger."

Meanwhile, Bulma introduced Trunks to the "Virtual Reality Simulator", making sure that he remained oblivious to the commotion outside, as per his father's request.

'You'd better take care of yourself, Vegeta.' She placed a hand on her chest, feeling her heart-beat quicken with apprehension. "Wait a minute! The remote controller! I'd completely forgotten about it!" The frenzied heiress hurried towards the drawer, where she'd stored her belongings but to her utmost dismay, she couldn't find it. "Dammit, where are you?!" She'd worked on this cursed contraption for countless hours and now when it truly mattered, the sassy scientist couldn't find the darn thing. It had to be here, somewhere!

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It had taken the unruly demi-Saiyan a good half-hour to arrive at Kami's lookout and as expected, his father was not pleased.

"Gohan, your mother and I strictly forbade you from coming here!" He sternly berated. "I told you, this isn't your fight!"

"But dad-"

"No buts!" Goku testily interrupted, scowling. "You're gonna fly back to your mother this instant or I'll teleport you there myself."

Gohan's mouth pressed into a hard line, as he looked up to his father, dark eyes gleaming with dogged resolve.

"And what am I gonna do there?" He fired back. "Bury my nose in some biology textbook, reading about how life came to be, while Cell's out there destroying it?!"

"I told you already, we'll deal with him." Goku vowed. "But I can't put you at risk. You're my son. It's not right."

"And what if you can't deal with him?" Gohan asked. "If things go Cell's way, do you think he's just gonna stop with you? How am I gonna defend myself or mom, if I don't have the proper training?"

A pregnant pause ensued.

"I- I don't know." Earth's hero mumbled.

"Well, I do." The demi-Saiyan heatedly replied. "Think about all the times we've fought together in the past against guys like Nappa, the Ginyu Force and Frieza. If mom had it her way and I never learned how to fight, we'd all be dead."

"You shouldn't talk about her like that." Goku creased his eyes, in disapprobation. "She loves you more than anything else in the world."

"And I love her too, just as much as you do." The boy fervidly argued. "I know her heart's in the
right place, but there's a bigger picture here. In the future timeline, you were gone. After that, everyone got killed and I was left to pick up the pieces. But I couldn't do it- not by myself. It's different now. We're all alive and we have to make the most of it, before it's too late. Train me dad, please."

"Gohan, I-" Goku sighed in dismay. Everything his son said was spot-on and he had no answer to it- no answer, but one. "I- I gave your mother my word."

"I know." The preteen grabbed his hand and smiled up at him. "I'm not asking you to break your word, dad. All I'm asking is that you train me, so that if worse comes to worst, at least I'll be better prepared than I was in the Trunks' world. I promise you that once it's over, I'll keep studying, just like mom wants."

For long moments, the Saiyan hero peered upon his son's small figure, before smiling and firmly placing a palm on his shoulder, pride swelling through him. The boy was far wiser than anyone his age could boast.

"Alright Gohan." He finally assented, whereby the half-Saiyan looked at him in jubilance. "I'll train you." He nodded solemnly. "I'm warning you though, I won't go easy on you just because you're my son."

"Thanks dad, you're the greatest." He gushed, throwing his arms around his father's strapping frame.

"No, thank you Gohan." Earth's hero reverently replied, running a hand through the child's bushy, unkempt hair. "I couldn't be more proud to call you my son."

_A/N: Aw, such a touching final scene wasn't it? That's right Gohan. You just keep on preaching xD! Anyway, as you can see I did quite a major spin here, kinda swapping Vegeta and Piccolo's roles in the canon version. There's a good reason for all of it, as you'll find out soon. Things are going to play out quite differently here and the next two or three chapters will be packed with an awesome amalgam of action, explosion and emotion. I promise you'll love it. As always, please be sure to tell me your thoughts on what'll happen and hit the review button. Till next time, my friends! :D_
Chapter Summary

Vegeta faces off against Android 17, but little does he know that Cell is on the way. Will the two enemies join forces to fight against the common foe that threatens all of existence?

A/N: Happy new year everyone! I hope you all had a wonderful time!! Without further ado, let us delve into the seismic rush of action and emotion that follows!

Chapter 62: The fallen Prince

"Are we just gonna stare at each other, all day?" Seventeen taunted his golden-haired foe, as they stood opposite one another on the thick, grassy terrain of an island, not very far from Kame House.

"Feel free to attack at any time."

"Don't mind if I do." With that, the Android jumped forward, hurling a fist towards his opponent's face, only for Vegeta to slip and counter with a low punch to the midsection, followed by left-hook, right-hook combination and as the coup de grace, a side-kick to the chest. Seventeen was propelled towards a mountainside and barely managed to still his momentum, before impacting against the jagged slope.

"Not bad, your Majesty, not bad at all." The youthful Android smirked, dusting off his chest and leisurely making his way back over to Vegeta, without a care in the world. "I can see why you gave Eighteen so much trouble. Even so, this isn't a battle you can win. Why don't you try that again?"

The Saiyan snorted, but maintained his ground. Just as he'd thought, Seventeen's fighting maneuvers were more or less identical to those of his twin's. By his measure, the mechanical duo would slightly over-extend whenever they launched an attack, allowing him to counter; just one minor error, amongst several others. No matter how superlative Dr. Gero's programming was, nothing could overcome such deficiencies, aside from practice and proper training in the real world. It brought to mind his own simulation exercises. Had he simply relied on computerized combat, without reinforcing it on the outside, his fighting prowess wouldn't be nearly as distinguished as it was today.

"Why're they just standing there, like statues?!" Eighteen clenched her teeth restlessly, as a minute of awkward silence trickled by.

"Come on Princess, any time now." Seventeen goaded. That scathing slur was all it took to break Vegeta's placid composure and get him vexedly springing into action. This time, however, the Android sustained a solid defensive position. Some attacks managed to slip past his guard, but for the most part he remained untouched.

"That all you've got?" The Android smirked, before provocatively repeating. "Princess?"

The simmering Saiyan roared and in a calamitous fit of rage, intensified his assault, while his smug opponent continued riling him up at will. Beneath the blinding haze of fury, however, emerged a
hint of caution and alarm. Eventually he figured out Seventeen's ploy. The cybernetic warrior was staying on the defensive, all the while fomenting his ire, so he could needlessly exhaust his energy. Upon realizing this, Vegeta quickly drew back and pulled himself together.

"What's the matter, Princess?" Seventeen waggishly chuckled. "Don't tell me you're giving up already? We've barely gotten started."

"You know, it seems to me that between the pair of you, blondey is the one with the balls." The Prince sneered, deciding that two could play a game. "Not that it did her any good, of course."

"Haha." The Android rolled his eyes. "Very funny."

"Are you sure you're the male sibling and not the female?" He asked, donning a vexatious smirk. "Or perhaps your senile creator decided to swap a few pieces, when he turned the two of you, into the mechanical freaks you are."

"Shut up!" Seventeen snapped, any traces of amusement vanished from his handsome features, as disturbing flashbacks flittered across his mind, of him and his sister, strapped on Dr. Gero's operating table like a pair of human guinea-pigs. "You don't know anything about us or what that fucking bastard did to us!"

"I know one thing." He jeered. "Your sister, for lack of a better word, has a sizeable set of balls. I know, because I held them in the palm of my hand."

"You motherfucker!"

Just as Vegeta had hoped, his fuming foe attacked with reckless abandon and the Prince was able to exploit his openings, thereby scoring a number of key hits on Seventeen's vital points.

"Focus, you idiot!" Eighteen peevishly yelled, from the sidelines. "He's obviously trying to provoke you! Keep this up and I'm tagging in, got it?!"

"No, this is my battle!" Seventeen shot her a glare, as he staggered to his feet and took a deep, calming breath. "Stay out."

"Where's all your bravado gone now, hotshot?" Vegeta scoffed.

"You're pretty clever Saiyan, I'll give you that." The debonair Android expectorated a thick glob of bloody phlegm, from his mottled lips. "But if you think you can win this with mere words, you're a bigger fool than I imagined."

"Funny you say that, considering that you've yet to land a single hit."

"That's just it, I don't need to land anything." Seventeen averred, lips quirked up in a bumptious smile. "I'll admit that your fighting capabilities are beyond my grasp and while that is mighty impressive, you still suffer the unfortunate drawback of being an organic life-form. So long as I don't sustain any major damage, all I need to do is wait for you to burn yourself out and it's game over."

"A coward's move." Vegeta disdainfully remarked.

"Call it what you want." The Android snorted. "The end result is all that matters, your Highness. Counter-attacks are your forte, that much is obvious, but what if there's nothing to counter? As I quite aptly demonstrated, a defensive position leaves far fewer openings, than an offensive one."
"In that case, it seems we're at an impasse."

"Not quite." Seventeen smugly replied. "Unlike myself, I'm sure that blonde form of yours isn't designed to last forever. That would explain why you only use it during battle." At the slight twitch in Vegeta's eye, the cybernetic fighter smirked, knowing he'd guessed right. "Just as I thought. I can stand here for as long as I please. You, on the other hand, are bound to regress and once that happens, we both know you're done for."

Without warning, the Prince rushed forward, getting in as many hits as possible, before Seventeen put his guard up. The flame-haired warrior decided that his only chance at victory was to rain down blow after blow upon his mechanical adversary and crush him the good old-fashioned way, hoping against hope that he wouldn't run out of energy beforehand. Loathe as he was to admit it, Seventeen's stratagem was damn-near flawless and overcoming it appeared to be nothing short of impossible. But he was the Saiyan Prince. He'd overcome the impossible before and was resolved to do so again. For starters, he needed to utilize all his resources. Arms locked together with his opponent, Vegeta roughly jabbed the tip of his golden tail into the Android's left eye, in a sudden and unexpected maneuver that rendered Seventeen half-blind, thus giving the Saiyan a major handicap. As Seventeen cursed and howled in pain, Vegeta pressed his advantage, clobbering away at his disgruntled adversary. Yes, this would certainly shift the tide his way.

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"Darn it, this wasn't part of the plan." Goku seethed, fists clenched in frustration. "What the hell is Vegeta thinking?"

"We have to help him." Gohan vehemently insisted.

"I know, but- I'm just not strong enough yet." Earth's hero said defeatedly. "We were supposed to wait for Piccolo."

"But-"

"Don't worry Gohan." He cut off his son. "If Vegeta can just hold them off long enough for Piccolo to finish his training, we should be able to win this, without question. In any case, if the situation gets out of hand, I will intercede."

"Alright dad." The edgy boy nodded, somewhat placated.

Little did they know, however, that a certain biomechanical fiend was fast headed towards the hotspot.

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Somewhere in the midst of battle, the youthful Android's forbearance ran out and he abandoned his early game plan of staying on the defensive. They'd been fighting relentlessly for a good half-hour or so, both parties completely oblivious to the ghastly monstrosity that was viewing the spectacle from nearby, his Ki suppressed and a twisted twinkle of sickly amusement engraved upon his repugnant features. Seventeen and Vegeta seemed dead-even, trading crunching blows, one after the other. An ordinary viewer would likely imagine that the fight could go either way, but Cell knew better. While each opponent was breathing heavily, Seventeen's perpetual power was an obstacle that no one could overcome- no one besides himself, of course. Even so, Seventeen's left eye was completely shut and Vegeta was greedily grasping at every little advantage that came his way. If the black-haired Android made a fatal enough mistake, it could prove to be his undoing. Deciding not to take that chance, the insectoid creature made his presence known.
"Hello boys." He greeted, casually walking towards the scene.

With a sharp jerk of their heads, Seventeen and Vegeta turned towards the encroacher, in unison.

"What the hell is that- thing?!" The Android grimaced, at the gruesome aberration that met his gawping eyes. It was unlike anything he'd ever seen before.

"I do hope I'm not intruding." The monster grinned, meaty tail swishing behind him in excitement. Yes, his time had come at last. The dawn of a new, perfect era was right at his fingertips. He could practically taste its sharp, galvanizing tang.

"Cell." The Prince hissed, compact figure tightening with fearsome rage.

"You know this thing?!!" Seventeen asked his opponent, noticing his deathly scowl, fixated upon the hideous intruder.

"I should've known you'd show your ugly face here!" Vegeta's golden aura burst around his robust figure, its skirling winds whooshing towards his insectoid target. Cell, however, wasn't fazed in the slightest. "I ought to have killed you, when I had the chance!"

"Oh Vegeta, ever the blustering buffoon." Cell chuckled, pressing a folded index finger against his beak. "From where I stand now, you're nothing short on a measly little insect, so I'll give you one chance and one chance, only. Flee now and leave Seventeen and Eighteen to me." He smirked at the searing glare on the wroth royal's taut features. If looks could kill, he would've died instantaneously. "Of course, I'll still end up killing you no matter what you decide, but since I'm literally a hair's breadth away from perfection, I happen to be feeling generous enough to defer your inevitable execution."

Vegeta pointed a palm towards his hated adversary and flared a gleaming orb of yellow energy.

"Big Bang Attack!" He fired, only for Cell to effortlessly deflect the beam up into the sky, to the Prince's horror and disbelief. That was one of his signature moves. How could he have done away with it, so easily?

"You have no idea what you're up against, do you?" The monster fizzled, as he made his foreboding advance. "Have you any clue, just how many millions I've absorbed in the past day or so? I have come far, since the last time you and I crossed paths and shall only go further, hence."

"That's enough out of you!" Seventeen growled indignantly. "Whatever business you think you have with Eighteen and myself, we'll gladly take a pass. I suggest you get lost now."

"Oh, I'm afraid I must stay, brother." Cell sniggered. "I have what you might call, a date with destiny."

"Wh-What did you call me?!" The suave Android all but gagged.

"Seventeen, you must escape immediately." Sixteen cautioned.

"Tch, give me a break." Seventeen sneered, gandering at his much larger companion. "Escape is the last thing on my mind."

"Your friend's right." Vegeta grudgingly spat. "This creature before you is Dr. Gero's ultimate weapon. His name is Cell and he means to absorb you and blondey, over there."

"Absorb?!" The Android gasped, before huffing and shaking his head, as he took up a stance.
"Well that's not gonna happen, I can assure you."

"Come now Seventeen, do not resist fate." Cell maliciously smiled. "You are a part of something much greater than you could possibly imagine. You should feel honored."

"You should go fuck yourself!" Seventeen lunged at the insectoid and swung a right hand, aimed for his face. Cell easily caught the blow, with an open palm.

"Tsk tsk tsk." The monster shook his head in disappointment. "This was not the kind of union I was hoping for, brother." He promptly dug his fist into Seventeen's abdomen and slammed him to the ground, thereafter launching the tip of his stinger towards the dumbstruck fighter's torso. Right before it struck, however, Cell noticed a spinning saucer of flaxen Ki, closing in on him fast. He frantically jumped out of the way, but not in time to save the lower half of his spotted tail. "Arrrrggggghhhhh!" He howled in agony and turned his murderous gaze upon the complacent culprit. "You Saiyan bastard! What have you done to me?!

"I would call it an improvement, wouldn't you?" Vegeta chortled at the incandescent insectoid's expense. "Now you can't absorb anyone, you son of a bitch! Mark my words Cell! You're going to die right here!"

Seventeen meanwhile, threw the severed appendage off of him, shuddering in disgust at the purplish goo smeared all over his shirt. He fell back several paces till he was standing beside Vegeta. Removing his blemished garment, he used it to clean the muck off his chest, before tossing it away. As aesthetically alluring as his upper-body was, the Android hated being shirtless but under the circumstances, he had no other choice.

"Bray while you still can, my dear Prince." Cell hissed, before shutting his eyes tight and scrunching his face in concentration. Seconds later, he let out a grunt, as his tail regenerated.

"What the?!" Seventeen exclaimed, wide-eyed. "What the hell is he?!

"Tch, I forgot that you're part Namekian." The Saiyan spat.

"What do you mean he's part-"

"Not now." Vegeta gruffly interrupted. "I'll explain everything once he's dead."

"Right." The Android replied. "Thanks, by the way. I owe you big time. That bastard almost had me there."

"Hmph, whatever." The Prince scoffed. He couldn't help but feel somewhat surprised at the display of gratitude. Seventeen didn't seem at all like the fiend from Trunks' future. Perhaps baldy's hunch was right after all. In any case, there were more immediate concerns that required his attention. "As much as I hate to say it, our only chance is to take him together. I'll attack him from the left-hand-side, you take the right. And be careful of his tail."

"Got it." The cybernetic warrior readily nodded, in agreement.

"A Saiyan fighting alongside an Android?" Cell mirthfully laughed. "I never thought I'd see the day. Quite an interesting turn of events."

"Now!" Vegeta roared, and the two lunged towards their monstrous foe, shooting their best attacks. They were far from peak condition, but even so, Cell found himself experiencing quite a bit of trouble against the unlikely duo.
"Down low." The Prince enjoined, as he locked his opponent's wrist, giving Seventeen a clear opening to strike. Vegeta continued using an array of grappling maneuvers to temporarily immobilize the monster and Seventeen capitalized with resounding blows, each and every time. The odd pair worked in tandem, perfectly harmonizing their respective abilities and thereby achieving optimal results. Cell was growing more and more frustrated. In spite of their individual shortcomings, these puny weaklings fought together rather well.

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"Boy, Vegeta's something else!" Goku buoyantly grinned. "Cell's so much stronger, but somehow he and that Android, have him on the ropes."

"They need to finish it quickly." Gohan anxiously remarked. "Vegeta's been fighting too long and he's exhausted."

"I know." Earth's hero nodded solemnly. "Come on Vegeta, you're so close. You can't botch this up now." He willed. "We're all counting on you."

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"Curse you both to hell!" Cell hooked the Saiyan across the jaw, launching him backwards and off his feet, only for Seventeen to land a brutal uppercut to his solar-plexus in that very same second. Vegeta followed up with a Ki blast mid-flight, striking the insectoid square in the face and landing him on the ground, in a sharp hiss of pain.

"Fall back." The Prince vociferated and Seventeen did just that, trusting the Saiyan's battle instincts over his own foolhardy impulse to chase after Cell, all by his lonesome. He had to admit that fighting with Vegeta as both an enemy and an ally, had completely revolutionized his perspective on martial-arts and he couldn't help the burgeoning respect he felt for his former adversary. Of course that didn't mean they wouldn't finish their battle once they crushed the overgrown bug-man. That aside however, he no longer held any animosity towards Vegeta. Heck, he even considered asking him to join their little clique, as an honorary fourth member. The black-haired Android smirked at the thought. Yes, organic or otherwise, the Saiyan had definitely proven himself worthy in Seventeen's eyes.

"It's time to end this." Vegeta stated.

"What do you have in mind?"

"I know a technique that'll hold him still, for just a short moment." He replied, in reference to one of Chiaotzu's psychic abilities. Try as he might, he was unable to master it as the dwarfish Crane pupil had, but he still acquired a basic understanding that would hopefully be enough to neutralize Cell. "On my mark, I want you to go in there and blow that fucker's head off. I'm sure he won't be able to regenerate after that."

"Sounds good to me." The invigorated Android grinned.

"You bastards!" Cell blared and lunged towards his opponents.

"Now!" Vegeta held both hands out, freezing the overwrought insectoid on the spot, much to the latter's shock and horror. Seventeen simultaneously rushed ahead, right hand flared up with his most powerful energy attack.

"Die!" Just as he fired, however, Vegeta's Super Saiyan aura abruptly fused out and Cell was able to move again. By a meagre millisecond margin, the horrendous monster ducked beneath the fatal
blast, pulling himself away from death's door, under the flimsiest of wires. The Prince gasped, as he realized what had happened.

Cell furiously backhanded Seventeen away, before appearing in front of the perturbed, panic-stricken source of his troubles. This arrogant, inferior little shit had proven himself to be a major pain in the backside and it was high-time, he pay for his insolence.

"I hope you're happy Vegeta, to have come so close to keeping me away from perfection, only to fail miserably in the end." He seethed, pressing the base of his palm against the Saiyan's abdomen. "And now, without further ado, you shall join your royal ancestors in hell."

Cell shot a hole right through the Prince, hurling him afar. Vegeta's bloodied form submerged into the sea, all trace of his life force, vanished.

Seventeen apprehensively gaped at the display, overcome with dread, knowing that he'd not only lost a powerful ally, but his one shot at crushing Cell.

"You're a monster!" He furiously yelled at the insectoid, whereby the latter whirled around to face him.

"Now, now, Seventeen." Cell smirked complacently. "I was merely getting rid of a cumbersome fly, there's no need to be upset. Now, you and I can finally merge together and become one."

"I'll die before I ever join you!" The frenzied Android hissed, assuming a stance.

"So will I!" Eighteen flew over and stood by her brother's side, teeth grit and battle-ready. "You'll never get past the both of us. We're gonna finish what Vegeta started."

"No." It was Sixteen who spoke, sauntering towards the scene, with unflappable poise. The twins started, as he stoically made his way between them. "You two must get out of here now and leave Cell to me."

"To you?" Eighteen creased her eyes. "No offence big guy, but if Vegeta or Seventeen couldn't beat him, what makes you think you've got a chance?"

"My scanners indicate that I am just as powerful as Cell." He casually responded, to the astonishment of both his cybernetic counterparts. "Moreover, since he is damaged from his previous fight, it is likely that I have the upper hand. If he acquires either of you however, that will no longer be the case. Please, I urge you to leave now."

"Well hello there- uh- who are you, exactly?" The insectoid frowned in confusion. "I don't recall you being listed on Dr. Gero's files." He smirked, as he put two-and-two together. "Oh, I see now. You must be one of those failed projects that were filtered out of the good doctor's databank."

"You are correct." Sixteen confirmed, features contorted in a rare expression of disgust. "However, Dr. Gero is dead and I shall see to it that you join him- monster."

"And I look forward to seeing you fail- failure."

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"I- I don't understand." Bulma pressed a hand against her anguished heart, as her glistening, blue eyes watered. "Vegeta was winning- wasn't he?"

"He was, but- something happened." Krillin shakily answered. "He- he must've run out of energy
and Cell- he uh-

"He killed him." Yamcha finished, shutting his eyes tight at the loss of their mighty champion and dare he say- hero. Yes, Vegeta had indeed died a hero's death.

"No, it- it can't be true." The heiress clenched her teeth, as a batch of tears streamed down her face. She'd sensed it herself, but refused to believe it. Something inside her told her that he couldn't be dead. He just couldn't.

"I- I'm sorry Bulma." Krillin mumbled.

"It's not true dammit, it's not!" Bulma furiously grabbed the bald man by the shoulders, digging her nails inside his flesh, earning an acute cry from Krillin. "It's not true." She whimpered, her excruciating hold loosening, as she fell on all fours and wept profusely, heart throbbing with unyielding pain and sorrow. "Vegeta, you can't be gone. It's not possible." He was the father of her son, he was her life, her everything. He had to be alive, he just had to be. This was all her fault for losing that stupid remote controller. If they had it with them, they could've destroyed the Androids without garnering Cell's unwarranted attention. And then there was Trunks. How could he ever forgive her, for keeping him away from the battle?! Krillin knelt beside her, arm wrapped around her shoulders as he vainly tried to comfort the sniffling, sobbing mess of a mother.

Tien gnashed his teeth in self-abasement, lip curled up detestably, as he was beset with a surge of abjection, directed solely towards himself. How could he have allowed this?! How could he sit back like a coward, when someone like Vegeta fearlessly stood on the front lines and gave his life away?! Where was he, in all of this?! Where were Goku and everyone else?! Unable to contain his blistering fury at Bulma's dejected cries of anguish, the three-eyed warrior let out a thunderous bellow.

"I can't take this anymore!" With the crimson flames of the Super Kaio-Ken billowing around him more potently than ever before, Tien sped towards the skies as fast as he could, before anyone could get a word out. He didn't care what happened to him. He would give his life away, just as Vegeta had, if it meant stopping Cell once and for all. It was time for him to join the fray.

"Tien, no!" Chiaotzu protested, but his best friend was already a dot in the distance.

"That guy is just as awesome as ever." Launch swooned, smirking at the three-eyed man's ebbing figure.

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"Goku please, you must stay put." Mr. Popo ardently pleaded with the outraged and frenzied Saiyan. "I know he was your friend. I know how difficult it is to lose someone, but if you go now, Cell will undoubtedly destroy you."

"I won't let him get away with this!" Goku swore, as sizzling fury swept over his stalwart figure. "I can't! I have to go!"

"Please, think about Gohan." His former mentor entreated. "He needs you to train him, so that the two of you may be ready to face the challenges that lie ahead. You must not throw your life away, young one. Cell's madness will not stop here. Once he's finished with Earth, he'll continue unleashing hell upon the entire Universe. Countless innocents will perish. With Vegeta gone, you're our greatest hope and we need you at your best, if we hope to stop this menace, once and for all. "
Gohan was on his knees, features lachrymose and tense with barely repressed rage and bereavement at the loss of a man he'd come to admire and revere, as long as he could remember. He too sought to rush towards the action, boots on the ground, wanting nothing more than to rip Cell's vile heart out and crush it within his palm, but the genie's sagely counsel struck deep and made him stay his wrath.

"We can't fight Cell, not yet." The demi-Saiyan stood to his feet, spitting the words out like they were poison, as he wiped his eyes clean. "Mr. Popo's right, dad. We need to train and become stronger. We'll find a way to wish Vegeta back, I don't care how we do it! I won't let him stay dead!"

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Atop a cliff, Tien repressed his energy and watched the explosive action unfolding before his incredulous eyes.

Cell found himself in a serious pickle. Sixteen was a troublesome adversary to say the least, despite his normally tranquil temperament. The gigantic Android introduced him to an unwelcoming assortment of techniques, each involving it's own special variety of pain. As it turned out, Sixteen was purely artificial unlike the others, which ruled out any possibility of cellular fusion. What a darn shame, given his considerable power. Even so, he had more pressing matters to be concerned about, namely, getting ahold of one of his unruly siblings.

The fight went on and Cell ended up being hurled beneath the ground. Sixteen removed his detachable hands and pointed his lasers towards the general direction of his insect-like adversary.

"Hell's Flash!" The giant roared, firing his most powerful Ki blast, causing vibrant tremors along the ruined landscape. So intense was the plasma attack that ample bursts of it shot out from below Earth, stretching across a half-mile radius. It was a volcanic light-show of unprecedented energy that would've obliterated the entire planet had it not been properly timed and controlled. A horrifying scream of agony was heard from within the vast burrows and it appeared that the monster had finally met its end.

"Way to go, Sixteen!" Seventeen lauded, once the noise died down and an eerie sense of calm swept over the placid island. "You sure showed him."

"Sixteen you're- you're amazing." Eighteen mumbled, in awe.

"Why're you still here?" The giant Android vociferously rebuked. "Leave now! Cell may well be alive and if he absorbs you, no one will be able to defeat him!"

"Come on, there's no way he would've survived that." Seventeen smirked, arrogantly folding his arms. "Besides, if that monster's still breathing, I'd like to put an end to him myself." He let out a wistful sigh. "I came pretty close the last time, until Vegeta wasted away."

"Oh don't you worry about Vegeta." Came the fizzled voice of none other than Cell, emerging through a perforation, behind the youthful Android. The insectoid was singed and burned horribly, but alive nonetheless. Seventeen gasped and whirled around, but not in time, as the abhorrent creature's stinger dilated and enveloped the upper half of his trim body. "Unlike that annoying interloper, you shall live on, as an eternal part of me. And very soon, our sister will join us and we will be united into a single perfect being, like no other."

"Seventeen, no!" Eighteen frantically shrieked, as her twin cursed and vainly struggled to try and escape. She attacked Cell with everything she had, but the latter simply backhanded her away,
callously telling her to 'wait her turn'.

Sixteen leapt forward, unable to do a thing, as his comrade's small, squirming stature was sucked whole, his muffled screams of horror and disgust, receding into a gaping abyss of nothingness. A demonic, evolutionary process had begun, which one could only imagine in their very worst nightmares. Cell's figure glowed, power spiralling through him, as a hellish metamorphosis began to transpire. Those present could only watch, frissons of spine-chilling terror coiling through them, as the monster transformed and the entire archipelago shook, in seismic dismay.

A/N: Oh nooooo, poor Vegeta! Is he truly dead or is there more to Bulma's gut feeling, than everyone thinks? And Cell's about to reach his second stage. It's all up to Piccolo now, but can he come out of the time chamber in time? And will he be strong enough to face the infernal menace that threatens the world? Please leave your thoughts and review, my friends! :D

Power levels (descending order):

Piccolo: ?

Android 16: 550 million

Android 17: 450 million

Vegeta: 8.5 million
425 million (Super Saiyan)

Spent the last day or so in meditation, springing some dormant energy

Android 18: 420 million

Goku: 8 million
400 million (Super Saiyan)

Zenkai boost, after recovering from the heart virus

Super Tien: 105 million
As Cell attempts to hunt down Android 18, little does he know that a certain someone will soon be paying him a visit...

A/N: Apologies for leaving you good fellas hanging, but sadly I'd managed to get myself tangled up in an unfortunate case on influenza last week xD. Anyway here's the next update at last! May all doubts and misgivings be quelled!

Chapter 63: Come forth Piccolo, proud son of Namek

A foreboding silence ensued, as Cell stood on the spot, looking himself over in wonder. His physicality had undergone quite a remarkable alteration, particularly his more humanoid facial features and the reinforced layer of black enamel greaves and vambraces. But it was his colossal new power that struck him hardest. He could feel the palpable waves of Ki, exuding off of his new form. He brought a hand in front of his face, clenching and unclenching his fist.

"We must escape now!" Sixteen grabbed his petite comrade's wrist and sprinted off as fast as he could, only for the dreaded villain to appear before them a split second later.

"Going somewhere?" Cell smirked, voice much deeper than before, with none of that ghastly fizzle laced beneath it and yet all the more foreboding. The duo came to an immediate halt, teeth clenched in trepidation. "As much as I'd love to do nothing but stand here and revel in this newfound power of mine, I'm afraid I have a job to finish." He promptly faced the blonde Android. "Eighteen, please make this easy on yourself. Do not resist."

"Fuck you, you sick bastard!" She snapped, her ire soaring. "I hate you! I hope you burn in hell!"

"Oh Eighteen, you wound me deeply." Cell was ostensibly shocked and affronted by her remark. He quickly dropped his act and snickered. "Nonetheless my dear, you will join me, willingly or otherwise." He offered her a hand. "So what's it going to be?"

Sixteen's right fist connected on the flattened patch of ebony, where the monster's nose would've been. Cell remained rooted to the spot, not budging an inch. Astounded at the might of the fiend before him, Sixteen was transfixed with terror, as Cell held an open palm to his petrified face and fired.

The giant was hurled back a dozen or so meters, a good chunk of his head blown away by the blast, exposing the now-damaged circuitry within. With a horrified gasp, Eighteen instantly rushed to his side, while Cell looked on in twisted amusement.

"Sixteen, Sixteen, talk to me." The blonde-haired Android frantically shook him, her heart racing as she feared the worst. "Come on! Talk to me! Talk to me, goddammit!" She repeatedly hammered his muscled chest, with a series of anguished, frustrated fists.

"I- I'm sorry Eighteen- I tried." The large Android defeatedly muttered, mechanical voice saturated with a wretched miasma of remorse and despair.
"No, I don't wanna hear that bullshit, not from you!" Eighteen cried. "We're gonna make it out of this! I don't care what it takes! We're all we've got now!"

"Oh my, now that is truly touching." Cell laughed, sauntering towards the pair ever-so-slowly. He smirked sadistically, as he saw the withering glare of raw and unbridled hatred on Eighteen's vitriolic visage. What caught his attention however, were the very real tears streaming down her gorgeous face; a truly incredulous sight to behold- but not altogether unpleasant. It must've been Frieza's cells within him that practically bathed in her tears, relished her unforeseen misery. Even so, he wasn't complaining, nay, this was a most welcoming scene that he would lock into his memory banks for years to come. After all, these were to be his final moments with his sweet, sweet second sibling.

"You son of a bitch, what did you do to him?!!" Eighteen lividly snarled.

"Oh there's no need to upset, my dear." Cell callously chortled. "He was nothing but a failure to begin with; a wasted effort on the part of our otherwise brilliant creator. You, on the other hand, are an elegant, wholesome slice of perfection." He leered at her, licking his lips ravenously, as a sizzling surge of grisly excitement coiled through him. "Yes, you will make a fine meal Eighteen, even finer than our late and great brother, for now I shall realize my full power."

"Not if I have anything to say about it, monster!" Came a booming voice from above. Those present set their eyes skywards and saw the bristling figure of Tien Shinhan, irises gold. A glistening layer of blood red Ki swirled around him, shooting out in every direction.

Cell narrowed his eyes a few moments and then let out a few derisive sniggers.

"Well well, what a pleasant surprise." He grinned. "There was a time when your power would've frightened the living daylights out of even the very bravest and strongest. But now Tien, now you're just a nobody."

"Not yet." Tien rejoined, pressing his palms together and grunting, as he lethally immersed his Ki into the vast pools of his own life-force. He winced, the process even more painful and taxing than he'd imagined. Even so, the fearless hero endured it all and once ready, he connected his thumbs and fingers symmetrically, in a terrifying triangle of death, aimed squarely at Cell. "I will be soon, but until then, I'm gonna PUT YOU THROUGH HELL!" He materialized a trigonous prism of potent Ki. "TRI-BEAM HAAAAA!" The intense beam struck on point, creating a cavernous, quadrilateral crater in its vibrant wake. A wide-eyed Eighteen looked on speechlessly. Tien glowered at her in exasperation, breathing raggedly, as racing rivulets of sweat trickled down his temple. "Get out of here, right now! I don't know how long I can hold him!" Just then, a maddened Cell zoomed out of the yawning perforation, storming with apoplectic rage. "HAAAA!" A second powerful burst of Ki, once again saw him plummeting below Earth.

Taking advantage of the tiny window of opportunity, Eighteen forcibly lifted her bulky companion up off his feet, winding his arm around her shoulders and supporting his hefty mass. "Can you fly?" She asked him.

"I- I don't think so, no." He shook his head. "You must leave me." The red-haired Android despairingly muttered. "Cell is only after you. I am of no concern to him."

"No, screw that!" She shot back, indignant. "It's just us now and I'm not giving up on you, so you'd better pull yourself together and get those darn gears rolling, before I kick them into place myself!"

Sixteen knew there wasn't a moment to waste. The blonde would brook no argument and so he let out a sigh of surrender.
"I will try, Eighteen." He gave her a kind smile.

"Good, then let's get out of here." With a slight degree of effort, the pair took off, covering as much distance as they could, as fast as they could. Tien intrepidly kept Cell at bay, losing sizeable slivers of his life force with each and every attack, unbridled pain tearing his insides apart. And yet, the dauntless hero forcibly sustained his altruistic efforts for a good two minutes or so, until his body finally gave out on him and he plunged to the ground, in a hapless heap.

'I did my best.' He thought to himself, knowing his life was as good as forfeit now. Despite everything, he had no regrets whatsoever. 'I just hope it was enough. It's up to you now, Goku. I know you won't let us down. You never do.'

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As if he'd heard his ally, Earth's hero stood to his feet.

"You're not gonna die Tien, not today." He resolvedly vowed, pressing conjoined fingers to his forehead. "Not after what happened to Vegeta. You can count on that, my friend."

"Wait Goku." Before Mr. Popo could stop him, the Saiyan had already vanished.

"Good luck dad." Gohan willed.

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"Goku?" Cell gasped, gawping at the flabbergasting sight before him. He'd been just about ready to end the existence of that trifling human, who dared to interfere with his plans, until Earth's tight-lipped hero abruptly materialized, as if out of nowhere. "It really is you." He enunciated slowly, awed by his mere presence and the fiery aura of resolve that resonated off of him, in near palpable waves. "Incredible." It seemed that Dr. Gero's mortal enemy had somehow survived in this timeline; a most pleasant and welcoming surprise indeed.

"Mark my words, Cell." Goku vowed with dogged intent, compact figure bristling with barely-repressed rage. "You won't get away with what you've done and you won't so much as touch a hair on my friend's body."

"G-G-Goku?" The three-eyed warrior looked up questioningly. "I-Is that really you?"

The Saiyan knelt down, expression softening, as he placed a comforting hand on Tien's shoulder.

"Yeah Tien, it's me." He answered, smiling reverently. "I'm gonna get you out of here okay?" He frowned a moment as he picked up a scant life-force. He gasped, upon recognizing the unmistakable Ki signature of none other than his fearsome rival. "Vegeta!" As quick as he could he teleported himself and Tien before the semi-conscious Prince, washed up on the shore. He was lying on his belly, fists clenched and a searing hole punctured through his bloodied midsection. A horrid pool of sickly red oozed around him and dilated wider and wider by the second. He placed two fingers below one end of the older Saiyan's jawline and released a hefty sigh of relief, as he felt a faint pulse. "Thank God, you're still alive."

Cell didn't know what surprised him more, Goku's abrupt appearances and disappearances or the fact that that audacious fool Vegeta had somehow been able to survive his finishing blast. "I should've aimed for his heart, instead of his belly." He grimaced, before smirking. "Oh well, it's not too late, is it?" The monster promptly rushed towards the trio of Earth's defenders, but not in time. The last thing Cell saw was the promising look in Goku's ebony eyes, before the altruistic hero suddenly vanished along with the gravely wounded pair. Cell just stood there, baffled beyond
words. He made a mental note to inquire about Goku's distinctive new ability at a later stage, but before that he had a mission to complete. Eighteen couldn't have gotten far, not with the lumbering oaf Sixteen, slowing her down. Her unfounded sentimentality towards that deadweight, failure of an Android would prove to be her inevitable undoing. That in mind, he took off and began his search.

Minutes later on Kami's lookout…

"Okay, I know we've never really been on speaking terms before, but how in seven hells were you able to survive that?" Tien asked the Saiyan Prince, both of them back and better than ever, thanks to a nice and wholesome pair of senzu beans. Try as he might, the three-eyed warrior couldn't suppress the awe and veneration that soared through him, in spite of his characteristic enmity towards the flame-haired fighter. "We were all certain that you'd been killed."

"Let's just say I refuse to die, until I've obliterated every last living scrap of Cell." Vegeta rejoined with a shrug, facing the general direction of his most hated enemy. Indeed, his malice towards the monster ran deep, deeper than anything he'd experienced, since Frieza.

"Man, only you could be that stubborn Vegeta hahaha." Goku laughed, exhilarated just to hear the older Saiyan's voice; for a while there, he thought he never would. He placed a firm palm on his rival's shoulder. "I'm glad you're okay, buddy."

"Don't call me that." The Prince spat, callously shrugging off Goku's unwanted hand.

"It was amazing what you did back there, Tien." Gohan smiled wondrously at the three-eyed man. The crane fighter was truly something special. "None of us could've held off Cell, the way you did."

"Thanks kid." Tien replied, with a fleeting smirk. "It might not've been enough, but I'm just glad I played my part. Cell's still after that other Android though. His power's overwhelming enough as it is, but if he gets his hands on Eighteen, I fear he'll be unstoppable."

"I was less than a second away from finishing off that fucking cockroach!" Vegeta peevishly growled. "This whole Super Saiyan transformation is unreliable, if it can't even last long enough."

"Well, make it last." Goku argued. "You've still got time. I'll bring Trunks over here and once Piccolo exits the time chamber, you two can go inside and get all the training you need."

"So, what's the plan?" Tien asked. "I did manage to buy us a little time, but eventually Cell's gonna find Eighteen. Say what you want about him, but that bastard's pretty damn good, when it comes to sniffing out his prey. He's proven that much and even if Piccolo gets out in time, I doubt he'll be strong enough to stop him. Our only hope is that Bulma can somehow find that remote controller."

"I wouldn't underestimate Piccolo." Earth's hero frowned. "But in any case, we won't know for sure, till he's finished."

A short while later, at Kame House…

After conducting a rigorous search of his premises, the Turtle Hermit had at last stumbled upon the missing remote controller. However, in a bizarre turnout, the older Trunks had disappeared from sight, with a note from Goku sitting on a nearby desk. Roshi's eyes widened as he read through it. The old man instantly bolted towards the others.

*Master Roshi.*
I just wanted to let you know that I was able to rescue Tien and Vegeta and teleport them to Kami's lookout. It was a close call, but I was able to get there in time. They're good as new, so you needn't worry about them. I'm gonna take Trunks with me now, so that he and Vegeta can train in the Hyperbolic Time Chamber. You might've guessed already, but Cell managed to absorb one of the Androids and the other two are on the run. It's imperative that you find that remote controller and get to that last Android, before he does. No matter what happens, we can't let him reach his perfect form. Bring everyone up to speed and best of luck.

Goku.

Bulma's breath hitched and she placed a hand over her mouth, as she skimmed over the words, an intense wave of emotions surging through her. She kissed the letter and looked skywards. "Thanks, Goku." The heiress smiled, copious tears of relief flooding her glistening blue eyes. Her heart was rejuvenated with a fresh batch of warmth and life, swelling with overwhelming adoration for both her hotheaded Saiyan as well as his goofy rival. She should've known that her best friend would never give up on any of his comrades, no matter what.

"Alright, now that those two are in the clear, which one of you wants to go hunting for that last Android?" Roshi asked.

"I'll go Master." Yamcha promptly decided. "I haven't had occasion to do much of anything during this whole entanglement, besides get skewered by the freak Dr. Gero." He shuddered at that horrid memory. In retrospect, he should've been better prepared to handle the nasty old geezer.

"No Yamcha, you can't." Krillin shook his head and resolvedly took the remote controller from his master. "You've got a wife and daughter and they need you whole. You can't put yourself at risk."

"Oh come on man, that is such a lame argument." Yamcha shot back. "Goku and Vegeta have families and they're always-"

"You're not Goku and Vegeta." Krillin interjected, in a manner that bore a hole right through the ex-bandit's fighting spirit- or whatever was left of it, in these dark, dismal times.

"Well neither are you!" Yamcha heatedly replied. He was no slouch. He was a warrior and had as much of a stake in this, as any of them.

"No I'm not, but I've still got far less to lose than you do." The bald man stated fervently. "Mirai's already had to grieve the loss one family. Do you really think she can handle losing another?"

(A/N: Refer to Chapter 42)

Yamcha's entire demeanor transformed at that, his shoulders sagging. Mirai was the most amazing and wonderful person he knew, but she was also extremely fragile and sensitive when it came to the safety and wellbeing of her loved ones. No, he just couldn't do that to her, no matter how much he hated lodging himself in the back seat. His life was no longer just his, to gamble with as he pleased.

"Alright Krillin, you win." He sighed in surrender. "But you be careful out there too, okay? And needless to say, don't go anywhere near Cell. After that wild stunt Tien managed to pull off, I'm sure he'll be raging mad."

"Understood." The two shook hands and nodded to one-another in mutual understanding, before Krillin departed. Little did his friends know that while the short man had meant every single word he'd said to Yamcha, he also had an ulterior motive behind his decision, one that involved trying to
save the two remaining Androids from Cell, as opposed to destroying them. Nonetheless, he knew his duty to the planet came first and foremost. If he were forced to choose between finishing off the Android and allowing Cell to acquire him/her, he would make the right call. Just then, something else came to mind. Goku never specified which Android was absorbed. As much as he wanted to deny it, the answer to that question could very well impede his judgment, especially when he envisioned the soft, blonde tresses of a certain someone. 'Dammit focus Krillin, focus!' He chided himself. 'Now's not the time for any mushy stuff.'

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Trunks was not pleased. In fact, he was seething at his father's unwarranted deception. What right did he have to keep him holed up like some helpless child, who couldn't fend for himself?!

"I told you, I can't fight at my fullest, when you're there!" Vegeta growled for the umpteenth time, growing weary of his son's temper tantrum. "Last time you interfered, Cell managed to escape and nearly killed you in the process!"

"What am I to you exactly?!!" The lavender-haired Saiyan ground out, through clenched teeth. "Chopped liver?! I can fight my own battles! I've been doing it my whole life!"

"Doing what?!" Vegeta sneered. "Failing??"

Oh boy, that stung deep and Trunks couldn't hide the expression of hurt that marred his handsome young features.

"Vegeta!" Gohan censured, moving protectively in front of the other demi-Saiyan. He wasn't going to stand by and let Trunks be insulted like that. It was plain wrong! "How can you say that?! Trunks is your own son and he saved all our lives, by coming here! We owe him everything!"

"He doesn't understand his own limits!" The Prince averred, before turning towards the teenager. "Until and unless you overcome your weaknesses, you're not to go anywhere near Cell or the Androids, you understand me?!"

"I understand that you're a hypocrite!" Trunks furiously replied. "You preach that same nonsense the way Gohan would, but you only ever apply it to others."

"You'd better watch your tone with me, boy." Vegeta warned, in a deceptively calm voice.

"Both of you stop it!" The younger demi-Saiyan cried, in vehement protest. "What's wrong with you?! You're family, for God's sake! How can you talk to each other like that?! Trunks' expression softened at the poignant words of the child warrior, though Vegeta remained as phlegmatic as ever. "We can't fight amongst ourselves, not when Cell's still out there!"

"I- I'm sorry Gohan." Trunks mumbled shamefacedly.

"That's right, apologize." Vegeta jeered, curling his lip in disdain. "It's what you've been doing your whole life, instead of manning up and getting stronger, like you should have. No wonder you're so weak and pathetic."

"I've had enough of you!" Unable to reign in his mounting fury, the lavender-haired teen pushed right past Gohan and launched towards his father, with a fist held high. Vegeta easily caught the incoming attack.

"Hmph, a pitiful excuse for a Saiyan and one with royal blood, at that." He sneered, before backhanding his son across the tiled floor of the lookout.
"Vegeta, stop it!" Goku demanded.

"Damn you!" Trunks growled and clutched his swollen jaw, as he attempted to get to his feet. "I hate you!"

"Tch, stop feeling sorry for yourself and grow a pair." The Prince spat. "You're not a child anymore and I won't apologize for your inadequacies. If you still can't understand why I kept you in the dark, then you're an idiot and you're not worth my time. Why don't you do yourself a favor and scuttle back home, with your tail between your legs? Oh I forgot. You don't even have a tail."

"What is wrong with you Vegeta?!" Gohan hissed, before kneeling by Trunks' side. "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine!" Trunks snapped more harshly than he'd intended and stormed off to the other side of the lookout, in a haze of shame, embitterment and indignation. Why couldn't he have had someone like Goku for a father, instead of this crude, hateful, overbearing schmuck?!

"Vegeta, that was seriously uncalled for!" Goku rebuked, in a low voice so only he could hear.

"If he's going to act like a brat, then I'll treat him like a brat!" Vegeta resolutely rejoined, not the least bit repentant. "At least your son's not stupid enough to jump into a battle he has no hope of winning."

"Oh really, are you forgetting about the time he got killed on Namek?" Earth's hero countered, face twisting at the heart-rending memory. (A/N: Refer to Chapter 31)

"I remember all too well and that's exactly why Trunks needs to learn his place, until he's ready." Vegeta retorted, with a huff. "Even if he hates me for it, I won't have him suffer the same fate. The boy needs to understand the full gravity of his mistakes, so that he doesn't repeat them. It's the only way he'll break through his limits and become a true warrior."

"Vegeta-" Goku tried, but let out a resigned sigh, realizing that he couldn't argue with that. While his rival did have a bizarre and unconventional approach towards fatherhood, he wasn't entirely incorrect and he was looking out for his son's wellbeing- although that jagged slew of hurtful remarks was completely unnecessary and unjustified. He figured the Prince was still frustrated at his failure to finish off Cell. Regardless, he shouldn't take it out on his son. "I- I'll try and talk to him." The younger Saiyan sauntered towards Trunks, who sat on the edge of the lookout, sulking all by his lonesome. Goku settled himself beside the lavender-haired teen and placed a hand on his shoulder. "Hey Trunks, come on. Don't be upset."

"How can I not be, with a father like that?" The boy fumed. "He doesn't even try to hide his disgust for me. He treats my entire existence as some kind of walking, talking curse. Sure I'm not anywhere near as strong as you guys, but he never even gives me a chance to fight! Do you have any idea what that feels like?!"

"Trunks, you've gotta understand why Vegeta's holding you back." Goku replied. "It's not out of spite, I can assure you. The man's lost everything since he was just a child: his planet, his race, his Kingdom. You and Bulma are all he has left. If something were to happen to you, he could never forgive himself."

A short pause ensued.

"That's the same thing Gohan used to tell me." Trunks' lips trembled, in sorrowed bereavement. He let out a dolorous breath and gulped. "But then he got killed because of me and to this day, I
haven't been able to forgive myself and I never will; not until I destroy the Androids once and for all."

"In time, you will be strong enough, believe me." Goku proclaimed. "But you can't rush things. Take one step at a time and it'll all come to you naturally. You and Gohan are amazing fighters and the two of you have the potential to surpass both myself and Vegeta." Trunks stared wide-eyed at Goku, sputtering incoherently at the preposterous claim. "I know it for a fact and so does your father. I see it in his eyes."

"I- I can't, there's no way." The half-Saiyan adamantly shook his head. "The things I've seen father do- how- how could I ever reach his level, let alone surpass him? It's not possible."

"It is for you." Goku adamantly asserted. "But only if you sharpen your focus, realize your true worth and rebuild your foundations, from the ground-up. Cover all your bases and remember who you are Trunks: you're a Saiyan Prince."

"Hmph, my father doesn't see it that way." Trunks' face scrunched up, in resentment. "As far as he's concerned, I'm a waste of his blood."

"And?" Goku prodded. "Are you gonna let his words demoralize you or will you use them to fuel your resolve to become stronger and prove him wrong? Believe me when I tell you this, but Vegeta of all people is hoping for the latter. He wants you to realize the true depth of your power. He wants you to surpass him. While I definitely disagree with his approach, he's not doing it to put you down, but to give you incentive to become stronger. I know it's weird, but I've known him for a long time and that's just the way he is. Trust me."

"I- I never thought of it that way." The demi-Saiyan mumbled, ashamed of his petulant behavior all of a sudden. It was very unbecoming of him. He understood then that his father's respect didn't come freely. He had to earn it and to do that, he needed to suck up his pride, forget old wounds and show patience and perseverance, like never before. From now on, he would endure anything and everything, without allowing his discipline or composure to falter. He would be the warrior he was born to be: a true Saiyan Prince.

A good half hour later, the crew's eyes shot towards the door of the lookout, from where they sensed a staggering power level emerge. An audience had gathered around the reinvigorated Super Namek, when he exited the Hyperbolic Time Chamber, all gaping at him with hanging jaws and widened eyes. Could- could that truly be Piccolo? It seemed impossible. He'd been inside that eerie dimension for little over two hours, or one month, by Earth's standards. How could he have gotten so ridiculously powerful?!

"Did I miss anything?" Piccolo smirked. At last, it was time to unveil the full, unbridled might of the Namekian race, time to bring a final end to the evil that threatened to consume the entire Universe.

A/N: So, I guess that's it for now. So what'd you think of Vegeta's parenting methods? A little too tough, perhaps? Oh well, you know him. He never compromises for anyone xD. Anyway, next chapter's going to be packed with a ton of action and emotion, just you wait! As always, please leave your thoughts and be sure to review.
Cell is presently on the hunt for his ravishing young prey, Android Eighteen, having failed to grasp the blonde beauty after Tien's valiant intervention. He hasn't the faintest clue though, that a powerful adversary is heading his way: None other than Piccolo, the Super Namek warrior, who is now fully trained after spending over a month in the Hyperbolic Time Chamber! Will the reinvigorated Namekian have what it takes, to deal with this menace? What of Vegeta and Trunks, who have now entered the Time Chamber, for their own training?

So sorry, it's taken so long!! I will try and answer comments tomorrow!!

A/N: Oh boy, it's been well over a year, I'm so terribly sorry! I had little time to spare since my last update, due to an internship I had begun, which desperately needed my full commitment. Thank God that's all worked out and I was finally able to acquire a degree-related, full-time job position, after so long! And seeing as how my life is in order at last, I shall grace my fine readers with this much-needed update! But before that, I would like to leave you all with some much-needed advice:

Do not give up! If you give up on life, life will give up on you, but if you continuously strive hard, you will achieve your dreams, without a doubt! Believe in yourself, work as hard as you can and invest as much time as you can, for every second you invest will be returned to you, many times over!

Summary from the previous 2 chapters: After exhausting each other through tireless battle, Vegeta and Android Seventeen decided to work together against their common enemy Cell, in an unlikely alliance that nearly saw them prevailing over the fearsome creature. After losing his grip on the Super Saiyan form at the last second, however, the Prince was fatally wounded by the insectoid villain and left to die. Thanks to Goku's intervention, he is now safe and sound, but Cell is ever stronger, having absorbed Android Seventeen. The dastardly creature is presently on the hunt for his ravishing young prey, Android Eighteen, having failed to grasp the blonde beauty after Tien's valiant intervention. He hasn't the faintest clue though, that a powerful adversary is heading his way: None other than Piccolo, the Super Namek warrior, who is now fully trained after spending over a month in the Hyperbolic Time Chamber! Will the reinvigorated Namekian have what it takes, to deal with this menace? What of Vegeta and Trunks, who have now entered the Time Chamber, for their own training?

Chapter 64: A Saiyan Prince

Mentally mapping out Cell's general trajectory against the geography of the archipelago, Krillin deduced that if the Androids weren't on the run, they were most likely holed up in one of the fringe islands, towards the North-East. And so, that's where he headed, all the while maintaining a fair distance between himself and the dastardly villain, so as not to draw attention. The bald man winced as he heard an explosion not too far from where he was. Cell wasn't pulling any punches it seemed. Krillin's stomach twisted as he sensed the myriad medley of innocent life forces burn away into oblivion, not even having a chance to scream as they met their miserable ends at the cruel hands of that heartless monster. 'Damn you Cell!' He seethed inwardly and resumed his trek.
towards the Androids. It was crucial that he find them before Cell did. And after that- and after that what?

'Darn it, if only there were an easy answer to this whole Godforsaken mess!'

After rigorously searching the farthest bordering Island for a good while, Krillin didn't know whether to thank the Kais or curse his own luck, as he happened to spot Android Sixteen, slouching against a rocky slab, face badly disfigured. Sitting beside him was none other than the gorgeous, blonde-haired Eighteen. The very sight of her entrancing frame had the bald man quaking with indecision. Well, it was the moment of truth. 'Now or never Krillin, now or never'. Cell was fast closing in on their location. As much as he wanted to do otherwise, he had an obligation to protect this planet and that could only mean the tragic forfeiture of Eighteen's life. Just as Krillin was about to make his move however, he found himself frozen on the spot, as he drew closer and took ear to the heart-rending words of the ravishing cyborg.

"I can't believe he's gone." The blonde abjectly muttered, lips quivering as her harrowed mind shifted back a few days prior to when Seventeen had saved her life from Vegeta and ardently vowed to protect her.

"Are you alright?" Seventeen knelt in front of her.

"He- he was gonna k-kill me." She stammered shakily, shuddering at the thought of how close she'd been to the unwelcoming gates of death.

"Hey come on, as if I'd let him." He placed a solacing hand on her shoulder, giving her a comforting squeeze and holding out the magical bean. "Here, take this." Eighteen slowly parted her mouth and her twin placed the senzu there, subsequently getting her to chew and swallow. Within moments, the blonde was as good as new, her bruises vanished, lacerations closed up and ribs mended back into place. (A/N: Refer to Chapter 57)

The soothing lilt of her brother's smooth, euphonic timbre felt like a series of soft, solacing wisps that receded further and further away with each passing instant, unable to shelter her or comfort her any longer, now when she needed to hear him more than ever. The Android's mind drifted back to the moments they'd shared, since their reawakening. Eighteen smiled wistfully, recalling that teasing smirk of his and the ceaseless cycle of banter between the two of them. Just as suddenly however, she was reminded that she would never again see that cocky smirk or hear his heartfelt promises and reassurances that never failed to uplift her, in her moments of doubt. It crushed her broken spirit down to the very core. Neither of the twins had any real recollection of their lives before Gero had abducted them for his twisted, malignant purposes. Flashes of intermittent memory existed here and there, never quite potent enough to get a firm grasp, but enough to know that it had always been them against the world, an everlasting bond prevailing between the two siblings, which not even the dastardly doctor was able to sever, try as he might. And now Seventeen was gone forever and nothing could fill the gaping hole he'd left behind in her forlorn heart.

"I couldn't save him." She let out a dejected sigh, voice drenched in sorrowful guilt and remorse. The blissful memories they'd shared quickly vanished and in their place emerged Seventeen's frantic screams and cries, as his life was ever-so cruelly stolen from him. Doleful rivulets of tears slowly trickled down the blonde's beautiful face as she reflected on her brother's last living moments, spent in indescribable pain and agony, pain that he'd done nothing whatsoever to deserve.

"It wasn't your fault, Eighteen." Sixteen placed a firm, solacing hand on her shoulder. The blonde blinked at him for a few seconds, before falling onto his chest, in a woebegone fit of grief-stricken
sobs. Sixteen placed his other arm around his lithe counterpart, shutting his eyes as he closely embraced her, doing his very best to provide her comfort. Damaged and impaired as he was, the robot saw himself as her last sanctuary and the chief purpose of his existence now was no longer smiting Goku, but safeguarding his crestfallen companion at any cost. He would be her shield and protector until his very last moment. No matter what happened, he could never allow Gero's evil agenda to succeed.

Krillin visibly trembled as he witnessed the harrowing, heart-wrenching scene before him, touched so deeply by the soul-stirring display that he felt his own eyes moisten with unshed tears. How could he possibly find it in himself to hurt this angelic creature after she'd suffered so much already, first under Gero's cruel, maniacal hand and now Cell's? Any lingering doubts that he might have had with regards to Eighteen's humanity were immediately dispelled and replaced with an ever-stronger conviction to do all that he could to defend her from her terrifying tormentor, fruitless as it may have seemed. It quickly dawned on him that he could never so much as lift a finger against the entrancing beauty. He just couldn't. She, Seventeen and even Sixteen were all hapless victims, caught in the middle of the sinister schemes of a mad doctor and his vile creation. Cell was the true villain here- him and his malevolent maker. And so he rashly made a move that could very well endanger the entire Universe, but one that he knew was right, from the innermost depths of his heart: He crushed the remote controller within his grasp.

The monster had run out of Islands to destroy and as fate would have it, he stumbled upon the last one, almost certain that he would finally discover and claim his delectable prize. He found himself caught in a moment of indecision, however. Should he destroy this Island like all the rest or prowl around for his target, the good old-fashioned way? After all, these were to be his final moments before his glorious destiny was at long last realized. Even in his semi-perfect state no one could possibly stop him, not Piccolo, not Vegeta, not Goku and certainly no one else amongst their trifling team. Why not savor the thrill of the hunt, one last time?

Goku smiled at the ebbing figures of Vegeta and Trunks as they ambled towards the chamber door, silently wishing them the very best and hoping for a much healthier rapport between father and son as they relentlessly worked together to achieve greatness.

"You ready for this, Piccolo?" He turned towards the revitalized Namekian once the royal Saiyan duo exited the scene.

"As I'll ever be." The giant replied impassively, placing a hand on Goku's shoulder.

"Give him hell, Piccolo." Gohan smiled, unequivocally confident and assured of his mentor's newfound abilities.

"Don't worry kid." He smirked at his pupil, ruffling his dishevelled hair. "Soon enough, he'll be nothing more than a bad memory."

"Alright, let's do it." Goku vanished from the spot and immediately teleported in front of an astounded Cell on the other end of the planet.

"G-Goku, it's you, a-again?" The monster stammered, unable to make heads-or-tails of the eerily redundant situation. "Oh, I see you brought a little backup this time." Cell smirked, appraising the
stalwart figure of the accompanying Namekian. "You seem a little different Piccolo, compared to the last time our paths crossed." He chuckled. "But then, I too have experienced a few remarkable changes, as you can see quite clearly." The monster gestured towards himself as though he were the scarcest specimen that ever existed.

"You can cut the small talk." Piccolo scornfully sneered. "I'm here to rid the world of your filthy stench, once and for all."

"You fools never learn, do you?" The insectoid cackled. "First Vegeta and now the two of you. Is it not painfully clear that I cannot be defeated? I am the very embodiment of-"

POW!

Tired of hearing his monstrous adversary's obnoxious, headache-inducing babble, the Namekian ploughed his knuckles right into Cell's flattened face, sending him careening and crashing into the midst of a rocky hill.

"Good luck Piccolo." Goku nodded before teleporting back to Kami's lookout where he would stay tuned to the battle from afar.

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Down below, the fraught, mechanical pair were awaiting the inevitable until two unlikely candidates arrived at the last minute- not that it would mean much against this revamped monstrosity, who called himself Cell. At least that was the general consensus, until-

"Did Piccolo just manage to hurt Cell?" Eighteen gasped, her glacial eyes ridiculously wide as she watched the unfathomable. "How is that even possible? Seventeen beat him singlehandedly."

"My scanners tell me that Piccolo is immensely superior to the fighter he was before." Sixteen averred, brows creased in concentration.

"But how?!" The flabbergasted blonde exclaimed. "It's barely been a few days since we fought those guys. How could anyone possibly become that strong, that fast?!"

"I do not know." The giant shook his head, unable to make any sense of the inexplicable scene before them.

"Well- I don't care how he did it, as long as he kills that son-of-a-bitch!" She grinned, suddenly getting her hopes up.

"I concur." Sixteen smiled in agreement.

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In an explosive burst of power, Cell emerged from the outcrop, wherein he was buried.

"You filthy little man-slug, how dare you?!" He snarled at the Namekian, as he pounced forward. "You will pay dearly for your insolence!"

"Just try and make me." Piccolo taunted, simultaneously de-garbing his weighted cape and turban, prompting the incandescent insectoid to attack him without a moment's preamble. Unfortunately for Cell, his nimble opponent was too quick and dexterous for his rash maneuvers. The wicked creature was quickly wrought with frustration, wondering how on Earth Piccolo had acquired such unprecedented skill. It was impossible! Even his fusion with Kami could not have accounted for
such a alarming power increase. "You look surprised." The Super Namekian smirked, before countering with a crunching knee to the midsection, followed by an overhand right.

"H-H-How?!" The monster wheezed, clutching his abdominals, as he tried to catch his breath. Those two blows were far more painful, than he'd expected. "H-How could he be so strong?! He's just a Namekian! I should be ten times mightier than he is!"

"You say that, like it's an insult, but truly you know nothing about us." Piccolo spat in disgust. "Saiyans, Namekians and humans alike have produced a proud generation of warriors that've far surpassed any and all expectations and do you know how?"

Cell gaped at him in horror, sputtering inaudibly.

"It's because we fight to protect, not to destroy!" The Namekian zealously vociferated, fists taught. "Time and again we've overcome the impossible, crushing enemy after enemy, even when the odds were against us. Your power comes from absorbing others. Our power comes from within and that's something, which can never be conquered or defeated, not by you or anyone else!"

"You're wrong!" Cell belligerently barked in response. "You may act all high and mighty, but you know nothing of true power, you fool! In my perfect form, there are none who can ever dream of challenging me!"

"You can take that thought with you straight to hell, you freak!" Piccolo fervently declared, taking up his stance. "And when I send you there, be sure to give Dr. Gero my regards!"

"You haven't won yet Namek!" The monster grit his teeth, attacking with reckless abandon, employing every ounce of energy he had into overcoming this unforeseen obstacle. He had to get through this somehow! Dammit all! He was always a step shy from achieving perfection, when some uninvited cretin decided to meddle, where they didn't belong.

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"Woohoo, you can do it Piccolo!" An effervescent Gohan yelled, throwing a triumphant fist, high up in the air. "You're the greatest!"

"He sure is!" Tien concurred, grinning at Goku. "You know, as strange as this may sound, I'm glad to finally see someone on top who isn't a Saiyan, even if it is Piccolo. And who knows? Maybe one day, I'll surpass him and leave you all in the dust!"

"Unlikely, but you keep thinking that." Earth's hero chuckled. "In any case, I doubt you'll be so happy, once Vegeta and Trunks are finished in there." He eye-gestured towards the Hyperbolic time-chamber.

"Call me crazy, but I can't see either of them reaching Piccolo's level, let alone surpassing him, no matter how hard they train." The three-eyed fighter laughed. "He's in a league of his own now and Cell has no answer!"

"We can't celebrate just yet, Tien." Goku creased his brows. "Cell's been able to pull a fast one on us before and we've gotta be prepared for anything."

"Piccolo won't let anything bad happen, I'm sure of it!" Gohan adamantly declared. "I believe in him!"

"So do I son, so do I." Goku smiled at the young half-breed, gripping his shoulder. Truth be told, the warrior's blood within him boiled for a challenge. He wanted to find out just how strong Cell
really was, but of course, he wasn't prepared to face him just yet. Anyhow, Earth's welfare was a lot more important than his own amped-up Saiyan testosterone- or Vegeta's, for that matter.

"My God, I've never seen anything like it before." Trunks marvelled, mouth ajar, as he stared dumbfounded into the boundless plains of this eerie new dimension. "There's no end in sight here. Do you really think we can- hey where're you going?!" The purple-haired boy chased after his legendary father as he saw him casually wandering into the vast vacuum. "Hold on, wait for me!"

"I don't have time for baby-sitting, boy!" The Prince scowled at his half-Saiyan son.

"But I didn't even say any-"

"And I'm not here to give you a pep-talk either." Vegeta interjected. "If you want to train with me, be serious about it, otherwise you're on your own!"

"But I am serious!" The demi-Saiyan contested. "I wanna get stronger, so that I can defeat the Androids and Cell in my timeline."

A short silence followed.

"And is that all you want?" The flame-haired Saiyan folded his arms, staring pointedly at the half-breed child.

"Well- yeah, I guess." Trunks scratched his head in confusion. Was this a riddle of some kind?

"Then you're not truly serious and you're a waste of my time." Vegeta disdainfully spat, turning away from the young warrior. "Come back in three weeks and let me know if you have a different answer."

"But father, I- oh come on, not this again!" The lavender-haired teen growled, as he saw Vegeta drop to the floor, legs crossed and eyes shut. "You're seriously giving me the silent treatment?! What the hell, father?!"

Nothing Trunks said got through, as the Prince fell into a deep state of meditation.

"You think you're too good for me, fine!" Trunks grumbled. "I'll show you just how strong I can be!" With that, the young demi-Saiyan went elsewhere, resolved to show his hotheaded father that he could be every bit as strong as he was.

A week later…

Trunks was infuriated. Ceaseless training had bored the socks off of him and the sad, demoralizing truth was that he hadn't made that much progress. What the hell was he supposed to do all by himself?! Apocalyptic gore, bloodshed and horror aside, at least he had his mother and a handful of survivors to keep him company in his own timeline, not to mention Gohan when he was alive. Here, he only had an extremely obstinate, boorish and quick-tempered father, who'd spent an entire three days doing exactly nothing, besides sitting down and staring into the empty, as though he were a robot. After that he began training all by his lonesome and whenever Trunks got within a hundred-foot radius, the old man blasted him away.

After a while, he stopped trying to approach him altogether, instead opting to gain progress in his own training- only it was severely boring, not to mention the results were extremely dissatisfying. He needed a guiding hand here and his father clearly wasn't it. The frustration was tearing him
apart from the inside.

'Maybe I should've just waited and trained with Goku instead.' He crabbily thought to himself, thoroughly embittered. 'Now I'm stuck with this stubborn old geezer.'

"You do realize that I can read your thoughts, don't you?"

An astounded Trunks jumped in surprise, as he heard the unexpected voice of the geezer in question. He turned around very slowly, biting his bottom lip, an unpleasant tightness settling over his stomach as he felt a dreadful deluge of unease and trepidation, wash over him. The blazing, teal-eyed glare of his Super-Saiyan father nearly burned him alive on the spot.

"I- uh- I didn't know you were-"

"Quiet, boy!" The Prince roughly yelled, whereby his future-son flinched and immediately sealed his mouth shut. "So you wish to train with Kakarot, is that right?"

Upon hearing that, Trunks had an abrupt mood-reversal, somehow able to steel himself and glower heatedly at his father.

"Well it's either that or nothing, considering that so far I've been doing exactly nothing!" He vexedly fired back. "If you didn't want me in here, you should've just told me to fuck off, from the very beginning!"

The Prince frowned at him for a moment then chuckled, thereby fueling the lavendered-haired warrior's ire.

"What's so funny?!"

"You have balls but you don't have a warrior's spirit, that's your problem." Vegeta gravely noted.

"What the hell does that even mean?!" He irately demanded, irked at his father's inane riddles, never mind the constant snubbing. What on Earth did he even want from him?!

"Only you can answer that question." The flame-haired Saiyan replied, promptly turning around and beginning to wander off, until-

"No fucking way!" Consumed with rage at the highhanded dismissal and condescension of his father, Trunks ascended to his Super-Saiyan form and sprang forward, without volition. The Prince quickly turned around, easily catching the much-anticipated blow headed his way. "I've had enough of your bullshit!"

"You have, have you?" Vegeta smirked in amusement, setting off the teen even further and inciting him to lash out with everything he had. It was all for naught however, as the Prince effortlessly evaded each and every incensed attack heading his way. "You'll have to do better than that boy."

As he heard those words, a disturbing flashback suddenly sprung from within the confines of Trunks' mind, spiralling his rage to levels unforeseen:

Eighteen laughed, as she dodged a telegraphed wheel kick that was meant to rip her head right off her body.

"You'll have to do better than that boy." She taunted, an evil smile spreading across her face, glacial eyes gleaming with sick, sadistic amusement. "Unless you want to end up like your dearly deceased master."
That was when Trunks' fury had finally reached its melting point and something terrifying and unbridled snapped within him, something he didn't even know existed, pushing him over the edge, like never before.

"I am not a fucking boy!" The teenager roared back, the aura around him suddenly swelling to five times its normal expanse, a blistering new fire burning within his petrifying teal-eyes, as the floodgates of power blew wide open. "I AM A SAIYAN PRINCE!"

Vegeta's eyes widened, overcome with such shock at the bold and abrupt proclamation, that he barely saw the thunderous right fist that broke straight through his impenetrable defences and caught him flush on the vertex of his chin, propelling him nearly a hundred feet back and skidding along a countless array of white tiles.

A few seconds later...

"Oh crap!" Trunks audibly gulped, his rage quickly forgotten as he reverted to his base form and found himself panic-stricken all of a sudden. "What have I done?!" Now he was truly in for the thrashing of a lifetime! His instincts screamed at him to run away as far as he possibly could, out of the time chamber and out of this timeline, in order to escape the hellish wrath of his father, which would inevitably follow him wherever he went- only, he found himself immobilized with unabated fear.

Vegeta propped himself up on one elbow, rubbing his aching jaw and spitting out a mouthful of blood.

'Kid packs quite a punch, when he really means it.' He smirked inwardly and for the first time ever, felt an irrepressible rush of pride soar through him, knowing that this promising young warrior was indeed his son, the bearer of his blood, title and legacy. The Prince released a hefty breath before slowly getting to his feet and strolling towards the quivering teenager, noticing the boy's increasing apprehension with each step he took. He was right to be afraid, but his reasons couldn't be more wrong.

"It seems you really do have something going for you, after all." Vegeta stoically remarked. Trunks gaped back at him incredulously, not at all expecting such a subdued reaction. "A few days ago, a blow like that could very well have rendered me unconscious or worse. That right there is exactly what I was waiting for."

"Wh-Wh-What?" The boy stammered, utterly baffled. Here he was, entirely certain that he would have the living daylights knocked out of him. Instead, he was receiving an astronomical abundance of praise and approval that he'd yearned for, ever since he first came to this timeline and met his morose father. It was as stupefying, as it was gratifying and he felt a surge of reinvigorated breath, fill his lungs.

"That's right, but don't let it go to your head." The Prince squared his gaze. "You clearly have a lot more power than you can fathom, but you still don't know how to use it."

Trunks shook the daze out of his head, eventually finding his voice.

"But that's what I've been trying to do, this whole time!" The half-Saiyan huffed in disappointment. "I still don't feel that much stronger."

"And yet you were able to deliver a solid and decisive hit just now, one that was far beyond your usual capacity."
"Well yeah, but- I- I still don't understand how I did it." Trunks said, more to himself than anyone else. "In fact, now that I think about it, I can hardly believe that was even me."

"A Saiyan's power often resides in places that're difficult to reach, only springing to the surface during moments of crisis or moments of unprecedented rage." Vegeta earnestly explained and looked intently upon his son. "What you felt right now was more than just ordinary power; it was living power. For the brief moment it possessed you, it took on a life of its own, which is why you didn't quite feel like yourself." He gravely continued, further steeling his gaze. "Only with the right training, can it be properly controlled and that's what you need."

"You- you mean you're gonna train me?!" Thrilled and overjoyed, the teen lit up with frenzied fervor, a glorious gleam of excitement dancing in his brilliant, azure eyes.

"Wipe that smile off your face!" The flame-haired fighter dourly demanded and Trunks did just that. "This isn't a game! You're the last Saiyan in your timeline and that means you carry the legacy of our people! I will not allow you to disgrace it!"

"I- uh- okay, but why train me now and not before?" Trunks frowned, still somewhat miffed at being continuously cast aside for the past week or so.

"I needed to know if you were serious and you've shown me that under the right circumstances, you can be." Vegeta candidly replied. "You've seen a glimpse of your true power. Now you need to learn how to control it. Keep in mind, however, that this training won't necessarily make you stronger. Only you can do that."

"I will do that." Trunks vociferously responded, tightening his fists. "I'm ready, father!" All of a sudden, however, he found himself intrigued by something else. "Oh by the way, you said you were able to read my thoughts? How'd you manage that? I've never come across any such technique, in all the years that I trained with Gohan."

"Another lesson for another time." The Prince stolidly replied, assuming his stance.

"Alright then, let's go." The purple-haired lad smirked. Father and son charged towards one-another. At last, it was time for the real training to begin!

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**A/N: Pretty wild, huh? Poor Eighteen, losing her bro like that. They truly were tight! I humanized Eighteen a lot more so than the canon, because it makes for a more compelling storyline and opens up a proper avenue into her relationship with Krillin. Piccolo's really whooping ass, isn't he? I really felt he was sidelined in the canon and deserved far more shine, especially as a Super Namekian! The Vegeta/Trunks moments in the time-chamber, were my favourite scenes to write. That was one hell of a punch! Looks like the kid's finally demonstrated his true worth and earned his father's respect!**

*Hope you all loved it and hope I can make up, for all the lost time! Be sure to leave your thoughts and hit the review button!*

**Power levels (descending order):**

- **Piccolo:** 1.5 billion (with weighted training gear)  
  1.8 billion (without weighted training gear)

- **Semi-Perfect Cell:** 1.5 billion

- **Vegeta:** ?  
  *To be revealed later.*
Android 18: 420 million

Goku: 8 million
400 million (Super Saiyan)

Android 16: 300 million (post-damage)

Trunks: 5.5 million
275 million (Super Saiyan)
750 million (berserk mode - temporary)

Super Tien: 105 million
Chapter 65: No more tears

"I must say, Vegeta pulling through from an injury that severe, was nothing short of extraordinary, if not miraculous." Master Roshi frowned pensively behind his red-rimmed shades, pressing up the curvaceous bridge against the apex of his nose. "That boy's as resilient as it gets, though it goes without saying. Those Saiyans truly are an incredible bunch."

"Yeah and now Piccolo's tearing Cell to pieces!" Yamcha grinned euphorically, muscled figure quaking with jubilant excitement. "Things are really looking good, right about now!"

"I'd say this definitely calls for a celebration." The elderly warrior turned his prurient gaze towards the blue-haired scientist, a routinely debauched expression plastering itself on his jaunty, geriatric features. "What do you say, Bulma? How about you finally give this old man some sweet lovin'? Hehehehehe."

Bulma sighed and rolled her eyes, not the least bit surprised by his perpetual perversity.

"You wanna take this one, Launch?"

"With pleasure." The zesty blonde grinned like a Cheshire cat and promptly opened fire. For the next ten minutes, Roshi was nowhere to be seen.

Meanwhile, Chi-Chi was fretting, the raven-haired mother's tempestuous heart pounding hard with anxious apprehension. Gohan should've been back by now! What the hell was going on?! Why did that unruly child have to take after his obtuse oaf of a father?! Why couldn't they just be a normal family?! Goku promised he wouldn't let their sweet boy get mixed up in any drama, so where was he?! Bulma took notice of the younger woman's dreadful dismay and knew exactly what had her nerves meandering about, in a fluttering frenzy. She cautiously traipsed over to her.

"Hey Chi-Chi, relax." The heiress murmured, tentatively placing her hands on her friend's shaky arms and rubbing them up and down. "Gohan's gonna be fine. He's tougher than any kid I ever knew- well, aside from my gorgeous little Trunks of course hehe."

"That's not the point!" The Ox Princess hysterically hissed, grabbing Bulma by the lapels of her orange vest. "He's supposed to be in here studying, not out there fighting! He has a bright future ahead of him, which doesn't involve putting his life on the line, every time there's danger on the horizon! It's horrible enough with my idiot husband throwing himself in the fire pit every so often, but now my baby has to jump in there too?! Just how much more of this am I supposed to take?!"

"I hear you Chi-Chi, I'm pretty much in the same position as you are." Bulma soothed, tactfully wrapping her hands around the other woman's invasive wrists. "Having a Saiyan family is far from easy, I know that first-hand." She paused for a moment, steeling her gaze. "But it's what we chose. And I for one, don't regret it one bit. Do you?"

"Of course not!" Chi-Chi fervidly fired back. "I love Goku with all my heart and I can't stand the thought of losing him or Gohan, not again." At this point she was almost in tears, dark eyes
glistening. "Do you even realize how painful it was the first time?! I still have nightmares about it!"

"Right, I get it but all this worrying isn't gonna solve anything, okay?" Bulma evenly replied, sympathizing deeply with the raven-haired Princess. "Besides, just a short while ago, I really did think I'd lost Vegeta." She released a pained sigh, heart staggering at the awful memory and face downcast as she softly continued. "I know how much it hurts, Chi-Chi. Believe me."

Chi-Chi regarded her friend for a few moments and soon afterwards, her fiery expression went lax.

"Hey, it's okay Bulma." She placed her hands on her friend's shoulders in a supporting gesture, smiling reverently. "I'm certainly no fan of Vegeta's, but I know he means something to you and I never want you to experience pain like that, ever." She candidly spoke. The heiress lifted her head in a strained smile before setting her sheeny azure eyes back to the oaken floorboard, still caught up in the harrowing recollection of her beloved Saiyan's brush with death. "Regardless of what I think about him, I want you to be happy." Chi-Chi tightened her grasp on the other woman's shoulders. "I owe you so much Bulma, for everything."

The blue-haired scientists perked up at that, shaking her head in contention.

"Come on Chi-Chi, you don't owe me any-"

"Of course I do." The Ox Princess gently, yet forcefully interjected. "You've saved us more often than I can count and you even built a time-machine to warn us about the Androids. You brought Goku the heart medicine and without it, he wouldn't even be alive. I can't possibly thank you enough."

"Well, technically that was an alternate version of me but hey, it's my pleasure." She benignly replied, smile broadening and brightening, her distressing memories all but forgotten. "Goku's like family to me and so are you. I'd do just about anything for you guys."

"Oh cry me a river, you two." Launch sneered, rolling her forest-green eyes.

"Hey, like you're one to talk." Bulma goaded, turning towards the blonde sociopath with a teasing grin. "When we thought Tien was a goner, you practically looked like a zombie."

"Well, at least I didn't cry like you did, with your furball baby-daddy!" Launch shot back.

"Shut up, psycho!"

"You shut up, crybaby!"

"Both of you shut up!" To the utmost surprise of the two females, the intruding voice belonged to none other than Yamcha. Strange, seeing as he'd never before had the spine to address any of them in such a brusque manner. Perhaps fatherhood changed a man. "Seriously, there's no time for this crap." He vehemently insisted. "Our lives hang in the balance right now, so please, let's just focus on what's important okay?"

"Fair enough." Bulma let out a sigh of surrender. A year or two ago, she would've given him an earful for daring to speak to her that way, but perhaps motherhood had changed her too.

"Did you just tell me to shut up?!" Launch asked in a slow, frighteningly calm voice, glaring death at the ex-bandit, who subsequently blanched in absolute horror. The blonde promptly pulled out her submachine-gun and began spraying her scar-faced target with a blistering barrage of belligerent bullets, whereby he took after his master and flitted the premises.
"Launch, you're so crazy, I swear!" Bulma practically collapsed on the other woman in a hysterical gale of laughter, head on shoulder and arms wrapped around her neck. "My God, you'll never change." Launch's erratic behaviour always whisked her mind back to the old times, when things were so much simpler. Oh how she missed those blissful days.

"Damn right." The wanted-woman smirked, blowing the smoking barrel of her semi-automatic weapon.

'Gohan, you better be okay, I swear to God.' Chi-Chi pressed a hand against her chest, still on edge, but feeling somewhat placated after Bulma's succour. Just as the heiress had pointed out, they were both in the same boat, with their loved ones at the forefront of battle. The raven-haired Princess prayed that all of them made it back in one piece, even Vegeta whom she eminently despised, if only for Bulma's sake.

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'Piccolo's amazing!' A jubilant Krillin gleefully thought to himself, profoundly positive that the colossal powerhouse of a Namekian would be able to pull through and finally purge this malignant menace that threatened the well-being of the entire cosmos.

"Makosen Ha!" The green giant yelled, blasting Cell to the dirt. He promptly lunged downwards and jammed his knee right into the grounded monster's spine, eliciting a sharp cry of pain.

"Damn you Piccolo!" The frustrated insectoid grit his teeth as involuntary tears of agony, dripped down his eyelids. "Damn you to hell!"

"You first, bastard!" The Namekian rejoined, punting him back up into the air and firing a Ki blast that struck him square in the face. At this point, Cell was practically putty in his hands. A prudent voice in the back of his mind urged him to finish this posthaste, as opposed to toying with his dastardly foe and while he was somewhat inclined to listen to it, the greater part of him wanted Cell to suffer just a tad more, for all the pain and misery he'd caused. And so he charged upwards and began pummelling the living life out of the biomechanical menace. A knife-hand to the neck almost ripped Cell's head clean off his body. He definitely felt that one.

"Take this!" The insectoid fired a gigantic wave of Ki from his mouth, which Piccolo was able to deflect with little effort. His monstrous adversary was getting weaker and weaker by the minute. The Namekian dashed forward and dug his elbow right into Cell's solar-plexus, whereby the monster's eyes bulged out of his sockets. He almost felt like puking, not knowing how much more punishment he could possibly take. Cell breathed raggedly for several seconds, before looking up at Piccolo with a bitter snarl, expression laced with unabated vitriol.

"I HATE YOU!" He roared to the top of his voice, a turbulent purplish aura flaring around his bristled figure.

"No, you just hate losing." The green giant contemptuously replied, lip curling up in sheer revulsion. "All this time, you've been used to getting your way, brutalizing those who're weaker than you and reaping pleasure from all the needless suffering you create. Now that you're up against someone who's immensely superior to you in every conceivable way, someone who refuses to be bullied and intimidated, you can't handle it, can you?" He spat sideways. "Well that only goes to show that just like Frieza, in spite of all your power, deep down you're just a weak and insecure coward. And that's something that'll never change, no matter who you absorb or how strong you become."

Cell's rage soared with each new insult. How dare this inferior parasite speak to him this way?! He
was the ultimate being, the epitome of perfection! If only he had a little more time to search out Eighteen, he could claim her and finally ascend to his true form. Then he would make this filthy Namekian slug, swallow his asinine words!

Piccolo landed a double axe-handle atop his opponent's navy-blue crest, sending him nosediving yet again. Cell was able to land on all fours atop a tapering inselberg, breaths laborious. There was nothing left to do, no maneuver left to curb the unanticipated hailstorm of his insurmountable adversary- at least those were his thoughts, until his line of sight suddenly revealed a serendipitous spectacle that was indeed most welcoming. An evil smile tugged across his foul features, a steady stream of saliva, hungrily dribbling down the corner of his mouth. Licking his purple, parched lips, he dashed forward without a moment's delay, ready to seize what was rightfully his.

"Shit, he's spotted us!" Eighteen exclaimed, glacial eyes agape and heart-rate spiking in panic and terror. She looked towards her large comrade. "Come on Sixteen, we need to go!"

"I cannot." He shook his head, teeth grit. "I will only slow you down. You must leave me!"

"But."

"GO NOW!" The gigantic Android yelled at her and with great difficulty, he stood to his feet, protectively positioning himself in front of his comrade, fists by his side.

Piccolo narrowed his eyes as he saw Cell depart. At first he thought the monster was attempting to flee with his tail between his legs, but a more discerning look revealed something far worse. "No!" The Namekian zoomed forward at full speed, desperately determined to stop Cell in his tracks.

"Hey Cell, why don't you try this one on for size?!" An unexpected voice boomed, a little ways away. "Kienzan!"

The monster tilted his head leftwards, only to see a spinning saucer of flaxen Ki hurtling towards him fast. Just under the wire, he halted his trek to avoid being sliced in half, however as was the case in his battle with Vegeta, he was unable to save his meaty tail from being severed. "Bastard!" Howling in excruciation, he saw red and leapt straight towards the audacious bald midget, who'd dared to meddle with his plans. Where'd he come from anyway?! It was as though these pests were slipping up out of nowhere, like cockroaches! Damn them all! Before he could reach his destination, however, Piccolo blocked his path and the instant he saw the green giant, he didn't dare move an inch further, knowing that this was a foe that he couldn't overcome- at least, not as of yet.

"Good work, Krillin." The Namekian praised his diminutive colleague, letting out a hefty breath of relief. "I'm not exactly sure what brought you here, but whatever it is, I'm glad. That was much too close. If you hadn't pulled that off, I might not have reached him in time."

"Hey, anytime big guy." The bald warrior earnestly nodded, glad to have done his part, however little that may have been. His distaste for Gero's putrid abomination ran deeper than ever.

'So close, goddamn it I was so close!' The monster cursed inwardly.

"It seems you've run out of tricks now." Piccolo sneered at his fuming foe. "You're not gonna be absorbing anyone today, Cell! Not on my watch!" Yet again, he assumed his stance. "It's time for you to meet your maker."

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"Eighteen, please you must go." Sixteen pleaded, down below. "Cell is unpredictable. Your
presence here endangers not only yourself, but everyone on the planet. If he acquires you, no one can possibly stop him, not even Piccolo."

"Calm down, big guy." Eighteen reassuringly smirked back at him. "I mean yeah, for a second there I was worried, but it looks like everything's under control now." She couldn't help but look at the little bald human, in pure veneration. For a fighter with such a measly power level, it must've taken a hell of a lot of courage to stand up to Cell and he deserved all the credit in the world for that. If it weren't for his valiant intervention, she could very well have been insect fodder by now. The same was the case with the three-eyed warrior Tien Shinhan, not to mention Vegeta. Perhaps mortals weren't so bad. After all, she was one until that twisted creep Dr. Gero stole away her humanity, right along with her brother's. It was thoughts of her cybernetic twin that made her clench her jaw and square her feet in deadset determination, glaring hatefully at the vile creature responsible for his demise. "Besides, after what Cell did to Seventeen, I wanna see an end to that coxswoman with my own eyes."

"That is very unwise Eighteen." The large robot shook his head, askance. "I urge you to reconsider. Please."

"Sorry, no can do big fella." The blonde grinned, any semblance of reason overruled by her vindictive desire to bear witness as Cell was torn to ribbons.

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"Krillin just jumped in, didn't he?!" Gohan anxiously asked.

"Yeah it looks like it." His father disconcertedly nodded, himself deeply concerned about the wellbeing of his dwarfish friend. "This isn't good. If Cell gets his hands on Krillin, he'll use him as a hostage and-"

"Enough of this!" The three-eyed fighter scowled at his ex-rival. "Stop treating us like a bunch of laymen, just because we're human! We have a responsibility to defend this planet just as much as you do, so I don't care what you say! Krillin did the right thing period!"

"It's not that, Tien." Goku placidly argued. "I'd say the same thing if any one of us were in his position, including myself. Let's face it: we're not strong enough to take on Cell yet. We'd only get in the way."

"Sorry Goku, but I wholeheartedly disagree." The former crane disciple huffed and folded his arms in resentment. "I for one am sick of lounging around and letting everyone else fight my battles for me. I know we're not anywhere near as strong as you, Piccolo or Vegeta, but we have as much at stake in this as any of you. We're all in this together."

"Tien's right, dad." The half-breed boy fervently insisted. "Of all the great battles we've won, none of them would've ended well, without everyone giving it their all. Heck, if it weren't for Tien, Cell would've gotten his way already." He adopted a more solicitous tone, as he went on. "I worry about Krillin too, but he's in it to win it, just like the rest of us."

The three-eyed warrior smiled reverently at Gohan, really taking a liking to the young demi-Saiyan prodigy. Though not even an adolescent, he was certainly wise beyond his years. One day, Gohan would make a great leader and when that day came, he would be honored to stand behind him in any battle.

"I- I get what you're both saying." Goku ground his teeth together in frustration. "It's just- I feel terrible, knowing that Krillin's out there fighting, while I'm up here watching. I just- I just wish
"The best thing you can do Goku, is to remain right here." Mr. Popo emphatically replied. "You have a responsibility over Gohan. Without you, he cannot achieve his full potential and something tells me, we'll all be needing it more than ever."

"I know." Earth's hero sighed in resignation, shoulders slumping. It wasn't until today that he truly realized how terrible it was to be lodged in the back-seat. Only now did he understand what the rest of his comrades must have felt like, for years. And it was a feeling that was far from pleasant.

"Hey, lighten up Goku." Tien smiled, placing a firm hand on the Saiyan's shoulder. "If I came off a little aggressive, I apologize. It's not what I meant." He earnestly continued. "You saved my life and I can't thank you enough for it. And as much as I dislike Vegeta, he's proven himself to be a great ally and you saved him too." (A/N: Refer to Chapter 63)

"Hey, I'd do anything for my friends, you know that." Goku smiled back, ebony eyes gleaming. "Yeah, I know."

Two weeks of arduous training within the eerie expanse of the Hyperbolic Time Chamber had left a certain royal pair significantly stronger than they were before they'd entered the boundless dimension. After a particularly gruelling sparring session, father and son sat down together, engaged in a rather one-sided conversation- at least it was one-sided until Trunks had somehow spurred his old man into recounting the awe-inspiring, cataclysmic events that had materialized on the Planet Namek and forever shaped the history of the entire Universe, for the better.

"Wow, that's quite a story." The ensorcelled young Prince remarked, deeply marvelled. Though Goku had briefly informed him of what had transpired since his arrival on the lush green planet, he hadn't known the broader context up until now. "But there's one thing I don't understand." He frowned inquisitively. "You said you used the Oozaru form against Frieza, but why didn't you use it earlier against the Ginyu Force, if you knew they were too much to handle?" (A/N: Refer to Chapter 27)

"It was my only other trump-card besides the Dragon Balls, that's why." The flame-haired Saiyan explained. "If Frieza's lackeys caught wind, he'd quickly learn about it and I'd no longer have the element of surprise up my sleeve. But more importantly, once a Saiyan regresses from the Oozaru form back to his base form, he is unable to transform for another three days."

"I see." Trunks set his eyes low. A brief pause followed, before the young demi-Saiyan lifted his gaze. "Then why not stay Oozaru?"

"It drains your power and the longer you use it, the less control you have over it." Vegeta succinctly answered. "Even for a super-elite like myself, it's difficult to retain consciousness in that form for more than a few hours."

"But that's no longer the case, is it?" The half-Saiyan smirked. "You can control it now, like you did against Goku in the World Martial-Arts Tournament." (A/N: Refer to Chapter 55)

The Prince narrowed his eyes, gazing upon the tiled floor. That was a question he'd been asking himself for the longest time, but it wasn't in regards to the primal form. He recalled the brief verbal exchange he had with his younger rival, soon after the latter had intrepidly rescued him from Cell:

"I was less than a second away from finishing off that fucking cockroach!" Vegeta peevishly
"Growled. "This whole Super Saiyan transformation is unreliable, if it can't even last long enough."

"Well, make it last." Goku argued. "You've still got time. I'll bring Trunks over here and once Piccolo exits the time chamber, you two can go inside and get all the training you need." (A/N: Refer to Chapter 63)

'Make it last, huh?' He mused inwardly. Perhaps that was the key here. Although he and Trunks had by now ascended past the standard Super Saiyan form, there was an obscure feeling lingering in the back of his mind, telling him that there was a much greater power lurking somewhere deep beneath the surface, just waiting to be unearthed. But tapping into that gaping well was damn near impossible. By his measure, not even a year's worth of training would likely be enough for him to reach the end goal of such a painstakingly difficult journey. A thought suddenly struck him and he promptly turned his ebony eyes towards his son's future counterpart. Yes, there was enormous potential in the boy, potential that was significantly greater than his own. As of yet, Trunks was nowhere close to his power level, but perhaps if he invested more effort into his training that could change.

"What is it, father?" The teen raised his brows, as the Prince closely appraised him.

"Change of plan." Vegeta tersely announced. "We're no longer using that muscled Super Saiyan form." (A/N: Officially called Super Saiyan Second Grade)

"What?" Trunks exclaimed, shocked by the abrupt decision. "But why?! That form's so powerful! With it, even I can easily defeat both the Androids and Cell!"

"That means nothing!" The flame-haired Saiyan brusquely snapped. "What about the next adversary or the one after that?! Haven't you learned a damn thing, after all this time?! When Kakarot and I became Super Saiyans, we had every reason to remain idle and assume that nothing could possibly stand in our way and yet we didn't! If you place a limit upon yourself, you'll remain stuck within the confines of that limit and never grow out of it!"

"Fine, fine, I get it!" Trunks huffed in frustration. "But that form's still the best thing we have so far. I don't see what's wrong with it."

"Tch Of course, you don't." Vegeta disdainfully spat. "You seek out the easiest path and then pursue that path, closing yourself off to anything outside of it. You still have the mind of a child."

"You know, I don't understand what you get out of insulting me all the time." Trunks seethed in resentment, baring his teeth. "Why don't you just get to the point already?"

"My point is that that form significantly drains your energy." The Prince explained. "I hadn't considered it before, but something Kakarot said, really had me thinking." He creased his brows pensively, face downcast.

"So- uh- what was was it that he said?" Trunks queried, after a short period of silence.

"Something about making the Super Saiyan form last." He rejoined. "If one is able to control that form to the extent that it becomes as normal as breathing, there may be a possibility of opening an avenue to an even more powerful form, one that puts that muscled mess to shame."

"Are you sure about that?" The lavender-haired Saiyan asked dubiously.

"Of course I'm sure!" The Prince growled at him and he immediately winced and sealed his mouth. He should've known by now never to doubt any assertion that came from his short-tempered father. "Now listen closely." Vegeta gravely instructed, shifting himself closer to his son. "From now on,
we're going to remain in our Super Saiyan form at all times."

Trunks was about to object, but then thought better of it.

"Even when we eat and sleep, we'll do so as Super Saiyans." Vegeta enjoined. "If you follow my instructions to the letter, without doubt, without hesitation and without question, then by the time we leave this place, you will have easily surpassed me."

The lavender-haired Saiyan felt his breath hitch, baffled beyond words. Were his ears deceiving him somehow?! There's no way he could possibly surpass his legendary father!

"Concentrate!" The older Prince's irate voice snapped him out of his daze. The half-breed boy blinked at him for a moment, before finding his voice again.

"S-S-Surpass y-you?!!" He stared at him dumbly. "But how?! You're way stronger than I am!"

"For now, yes." Vegeta bobbed his head. "But that needs to change." He got to his feet, walking a short distance away, back facing the younger Prince. A brief pause followed, before he spoke up. "I don't know if your mother knew this, but in over a thousand years, there wasn't a single pure-blooded Saiyan who was born with a power level that could match my own."

"Really?" The teen's eyes widened, a strong sensation of pride running over him. He couldn't say he was surprised though. This man was nothing short of extraordinary, beyond words. "That's amazing!"

"Yes." The flame-haired Saiyan gravely nodded. Another short lapse of silence followed. "When you were still in your mother's womb, however, you had already surpassed my power level at birth."

"Wh-What?!" To say that Trunks was flabbergasted by that little newsflash, would've been a gross understatement.

"You and Gohan both, have latent abilities that're far greater than those of Kakarot, myself or any other pure-blooded Saiyan in all of history." Vegeta solemnly pronounced.

Trunks gaped at him a moment, before the name of his late, great mentor brought with it a tragic slew of heart-wrenching memories.

"And yet, I couldn't take down the Androids in my timeline." He grit his teeth, beset with resentful indignation at the countless losses he'd suffered, throughout the course of his wretched existence. "Our world got destroyed, all because I wasn't strong enough. I failed." He let out a heavy, dolorous sigh. "Gohan died because of me."

An uncomfortable silence ensued, not even a glance exchanged between father and son for an entire minute or so. The Prince felt his eye twitch, as his mind ventured towards the abysmal dystopia that was the future world. If things had been different, their family would've still been intact and none but a handful would've had to die. He thought of Gohan, the prodigious son of his rustic rival. Despite their rocky beginnings when he'd first arrived on Earth as a would-be conqueror, for some odd reason or other, the boy had come to idolize and venerate him greatly, seeing in him an iconic hero to be revered, as opposed to a bloodthirsty villain to be reviled, which he had been, for almost all his life. He grimaced, expression contorting with something akin to remorse as he thought of the child-warrior's future counterpart, who'd fostered Trunks, trained him relentlessly, endured years of pain and hardship and died miserably, at the hands of the Androids. None of it would've happened, if it weren't for the drastic decision that his own alter-ego had made. His son wouldn't have had to
grow up in an apocalyptic hell-hole, wrought with death, destruction and desolation.

"It was I who failed you." Vegeta finally voiced his reply. His back was still turned on Trunks. "Had I not rushed into battle and gotten myself killed, things might not have played out for the worst. Had I been there for you and Kakarot's boy, the Androids wouldn't have had their way for long."

An unpleasant tremor racked through his strapping figure, voice cracking just a tad, despite all his efforts at remaining stoic. "Neither you nor Gohan should have had to bear this responsibility to begin with- at least, not by yourselves."

Gifted as they were, without a guiding hand to point them in the right direction, the two half-Saiyans were unable to salvage the true depths of their latent power, especially when both were so young and inexperienced. And then there was the matter of Cell, the cursed abomination that murdered his son in cold-blood, in yet another future-timeline-turned-to-hell.

"Father." Trunks murmured, a powerful surge of emotions stirring about within the hollows of his chest and steadily springing towards the surface. In all the time he'd known him, he never would've imagined his father being so open-hearted and so- shaken up. It touched him to the very core.

Involuntary tears welled up in his aquamarine eyes, as he thought about all that could've been, had his father survived in his home world. They would've been a family: Mother, father, Gohan and himself. One family: Safe, sound and happy, not having to spend every living moment in hiding, wondering whether or not it was going to be their last. It was the dream he'd never dreamt of: A world without fear and pain, a world without tears and sorrow, a perfect world. If only-

A firm hand grasped his shoulder, suddenly jolting him out of his wistful thoughts.

"No more tears." Vegeta firmly ordered, his stony expression belied only by the intense wave of emotions flooding within his own deep, dark, obsidian eyes. "A Prince does not cry."

"R-Right." Trunks sniffled, mortified at the streaming rivulets trickling down his eyelids, but hardly able to help it. He quickly wiped away his tears, with the back of his gloved hand. "Sorry-father."

"A Prince does not apologize either." The flame-haired Saiyan tightened his grip on his son's shoulder, narrowing his ebony eyes. "He learns from his mistakes, conquers his fears and overcomes all those who stand between him and his destiny." A short pause ensued. "I lost my mother and my home planet, Trunks and yet I never faltered once, from my quest to destroy Frieza. You still have both." He intensified his gaze. "You understand what I'm telling you?"

"Y-Yes father." He let out a heavy, wavering breath. "I understand." Even with nothing left to fight for, his father had taken a firm stand against the-then most powerful being in the Universe. He, on the other hand, still had something to fight for. He had a responsibility over all the disarrayed fragments that were left of his shattered world, to safeguard them and to build a new life with them, a better life. He needed to forge his own dream, instead of pining over what could never be, a father he could never have. And he would do just that, when the time was right. But it wouldn't end there. The purple-haired warrior was determined to pass on a legacy that would ensure everlasting peace and security, a legacy that would never allow heartless monsters like Seventeen, Eighteen and Cell to lay ruin upon the lives of so many. No one would ever have to experience the horror and agony that he'd experienced.

"Good, now clear your mind and get some rest." Vegeta enjoined, voice even. "We start again tomorrow."

"Yes, father." Trunks smiled radiantly, whereby his father's heart froze. That smile, it was just
like hers, the one who was stolen away from him, when he was only four years old, the only person he truly cared for until Bulma came into his life: his mother, the last Queen of the Saiyan race (A/N: Refer to Chapter 24).

He growled inwardly and shook those thoughts out of his head. He needed to stay focused on the here and now. Just as he’d told Trunks, the past could not be changed. It was the future that mattered.

"Go on." The older Prince gestured towards the bedroom and the lavender-haired teen nodded and headed there, hoping that come morning he could sharpen his focus and live up to his father’s enormous expectations. There was no room for regret or remorse, only ambition and action to ensure that future generations would never have to suffer the sorrows of their predecessors. His timeline may never be like this one, but he would still try his damnedest to make the very best of it and he would succeed.

A/N: Oh boy, Cell seems to be in quite a bit of a pickle, doesn’t he? Will our boy Piccolo finish him off or will he manage to cheat death and get his way, yet again? Only time will tell. What of Vegeta and Trunks? It seems the bond between father and son has grown ever-closer. Will their training truly be for the best? Find out next time and until then, please leave your thoughts and hit the review button!

p.s. Really loved writing the time-chamber scenes, the battle scenes and also the ladies at Kame House. People often despise Chi-Chi, but this chapter takes a closer look at her point-psyche and why she acts the way she does, as most mothers would tbh. Also, Vegeta and Trunks not taking their canonical route of the Super Saiyan Grade 2/3 must've come as a surprise to many, huh? xD I hope you loved that!!!

Big shout out to Flameraven on Fanfiction for the suggestion of Krillin's Kienzan! That was one heck of an idea, thanks so much! :D

That said, I wish you all well and look forward to hearing your thoughts on this chapter! Till next time, peace out! :D

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!