Number Two
by iheartsaiyangirls

Summary

The battle is over, Android 21’s reign of terror is finished...and the villains are back

...but for their effort in aiding the cause, Frieza has arranged to finally meet the soul that helped him out in person

Notes

This is all self-indulgent writing practice, but I left the soul character ambiguous so you can put your own hot wet ass in their shoes! :D

I kinda have no idea what I'm doing, but I've had a creative itch and figured something Dragonball related would be easy enough to start with. So here is my first posted written work for y'all to see (critique welcome!)

Not gonna lie: I was tempted to just put myself in there but that would just be selfish wouldn't it?
Fun Fact: most of the hits on the counter I realize now must have been by me (accidentally) by coming back to edit and write more to each new chapter chunk by chunk at a time...so yeah. I still encourage you to read and judge by its own merits as opposed to a stupidly higher-than-it-should-be hit counter XD
I could feel reality sinking in again. My eyes struggling to even open, not wanting to deal with adjusting to photosynthesis.

The smell has been the first thing kicking in every morning. Or rather, the lack of it. Embers and sweat. After that day.

The lack of certain sound. The sound of jet engines and of self-propulsed energy charging up. Ki they called it.

I instinctively rubbed my forehead, sliding the palm of my hand down my mug, letting my digits run through the features. Draping my eyelids, brushing my nostrils, cusping my lips.

I was yearning for that excitement again, and I knew I must be insane for that.

Its been days since that...larger-than-life journey I went through. I still can't believe what had happened. It was like some kind of epic adventure movie you only ever watched on tv.

The most sensational day of my life...and I don't even know if it really happened. I was not in my own body. I was...like a spirit. A ghost. A haunt possessing people whenever I felt like it.

Whenever I needed to.

Just a few days ago I was nothing but a citizen on this planet. Another cog in the machine of society. One that was merely content with how things were going, always secretly dreaming of being something big. Something I hadn't necessarily earned.

And just the other day I helped saved the world.

I was a hero...and a villain.

At first it was a nightmare. I wasn't in my own body.

I was trapped. As if by cruel fate, floating helplessly within a nightmare.

In that monster.

That voice...I'll never forget it.

That regal tone. The chill it sent up my spine.

Those eyes. With intent to kill if you so much as looked at him the wrong way.

His appearance. Sleek, yet deadly, with a posture that demanded respect. A sway that could kill.

He was a figment of my imagination, the deep, disturbing part that I think all of us humans possess. A figment made reality. Too real.

The Lord Emperor. The one and only. The self-styled ruler of the galaxy.

A terror in space. A living evil invading Earth itself like in old comic books.

Frieza.
And I was co-pilot with that evil.

An alliance of mutual interest: the survival of my world and the liberation of the galactic tyrant. Together, we rescued many strong fighters of different allegiances...and worked together to stop that scary pink lady.

At first I was petrified. I was in alliance with pure evil out of necessity. Although it wasn't necessarily my decision.

It was kill or be killed, so at least I was in command of the killer. Top of the food chain. I was in danger either way, so better the devil I knew then the demons I didn’t.

I couldn't help but think then; if only I had been in the body of the one known as Goku. He seemed like a decent guy. Or hell, even that Vegeta guy would have been better.

I was thrown into chaos without warning and all I could do was comply with my invader captor...

...but after awhile...

...it was thrilling.

The rush of the fight. The feeling of being in control of the world's most powerful fighters.

I could fly. I could throw fireballs from my fingertips. I could just look at someone and they'd dissipate into nothing.

It was terrifying...but also, oddly satisfying.

And Frieza, my new body, my fellow prisoner in this all, wasn't as enamored with the prospect as I might have been.

I couldn't really blame him. He was in this against his will, as much as myself. Although happy to be alive again after an apparent stint in the afterlife, he wasn't all too pleased to be just some character for me to control. Like I was playing some kind of video game.

At first, Frieza tried to kill me.

I was nothing but a dirt-eating Earthling to him. The only reason I'm even alive was I was needed. I was Frieza's tool, as he was mine. It worked out in the end, and together we worked to get myself stronger, and to restore Frieza's own strength.

Near the time it was over...I found myself his designated number two. Just like that.

It was weird. Knowing a murderous monarch like Frieza was damn near brought to jubilation by my ability to keep us alive. By my competence in the whole matter. I had even surprised myself, admittingly.

I'm half ashamed to admit: I was somewhat...excited. Knowing I was going to be somebody like that to a being like him, even if it was at beck and call of a terrible being.

...

...and now I'm back home...as if nothing happened. I was stuck in my now increasingly mundane daily life. The grind, which I had grown into before, the grind I had accepted with an air of dignity, was now something that made the air in my home to seem stale.
Nothing to do but to wake up, get ready for work and then after a few hours come home to fall asleep and repeat the process.

I was wishing for more time with them. I was wishing it was still real.

I enjoyed my time with all of them in the end.

Captain Ginyu. What a guy!

He was very stern, but fair. Respectful. He demanded perfection from me as if he would any of his men. What a bunch of rowdy guys they were too. They didn't seem all that bad for serving a tyrannical purple lizard.

He even ordered me to become the sixth member of the Ginyu Force. Sounded like that could have been fun, even if it was a bit silly. If Frieza kept guys like Ginyu and his merry troupe then surely they couldn't be all bad?

Nappa.

For a brute, he seemed pretty hurt about the whole ordeal. As if he had a lot of pent up anger towards most of those other guys. Like they had wronged him. I doubt that was the case, but I couldn't help but listen to the guy. He had a lot to say, and even offered me a partnership in conquering Earth if I really wanted to.

I feel like if I had taken him up on his offer I could have had the time of my life, but I didn't feel like wiping out my friends and family. So I didn't even bother giving him an answer in the end. Hope he forgave me. He didn't seem like the type to forgive, but I still hoped.

Cell.

Cell terrified me.

Of all the guys I encountered...something about him made my blood cold. He was very intense, and very disrespectful. His tone was a knife and the lot of us were warm butter. I was quite impressed actually, orally he held superiority over the group, coupled with his intimate knowledge over most of them. He seemed to bear the deepest of grudges, especially to Goku and his own son, the one known as Gohan.

He would surely kill me. I'm lucky to be alive right now. I was certain once this was all over he would have surely blasted me away right then and there.

Maybe he still means to...if he's still out there. But even he admitted...I was pretty good, labeling me a worthy opponent. I don't know if I should be as flattered as I am concerning it came from that guy.

I think...I think they would have fought, first chance they got. Him and Frieza.

Hell...I don't know what happened. It all ended with me finally being removed from Frieza and the others, as they faced off against those other guys, apparently Earth's own long running group of protectors. I had heard legends about them. And the last I saw, they were going to kill each other.

I don't know who won...if there even were winners.

Maybe they just blew each other up.

Did it even happen?
I mean...it had to have happened.

I still feel it...the power I had amassed. I could...

I could fly if I wanted to.

I can fly now.

I can feel the strength and agility I now possessed.

I could sneeze at the mountain nearby and it would just cease to be.

I felt like some kind of god.

Of course, other evidence suggested that what I had been through was in fact reality.

It was all over the news. Those shambling copies of the galaxy's strongest fighters wreaking havoc and attacking civilization. I had downed so many of them single-handed.

Well, at the wheel of someone powerful anyway.

Knowing I had that kind of power. Knowing that what was happening was real. It was intoxicating. I wanted to do something about it.

I was a whole new person and it felt rejuvenating. Like a puzzle piece of myself had been missing until now.

But for the past few days I've been too inept to act on it. I haven't been able to think straight.

A couple of thoughts ran through my head over these past few days.

I could feel the power coursing through me...but did it mean it was really there?

I had only just returned to my own body after all. Maybe I would still have to take an airplane if I wanted to travel.

I've been too shocked to test out my own newfound power. I was still trying to process the experience.

...for all I knew, I could still barely open a pickle jar.

...

I sat up from my bed, still in my unmentionables, alarm clock glaring 6 AM

I ran over to the mirror, honestly for the first time since the incident. I was myself, for sure.

But now, I had some tone to my body, some muscle to my description. I was still me, but stronger.

So much stronger.

I turned to my fridge, just a few feet over from my couch bed.

I made a quick power trip over, gripped the door handle and yanked, intending to grab my own store bought jar of dill pickles.

All I remember next was a loud sound of metal crunching and the automatic fridge light blasting in
my natural ocular devices, still sensitive from the morning.

I wasn’t even trying, but my fridge door was suddenly renovated to dangle a few feet in the air in my kitchen, still in my hand.

I was surprised I didn't just take the whole fridge with me, I'm lucky the door hinges were that weak.

And it was I who was strong.

The strength was still there.

Well, luckily I had very little in there. I hadn’t gone grocery shopping in awhile, obviously. But since I was not an expert at door repair, I was definitely going to lose what was in there soon. Too bad I didn't know anything about fridges and doors.

But I knew how to fight.

...

Oh holy heavens I knew how to fight.

I could still feel my teachings resonating within my muscle memory.

The lessons of that respect-demanding invader. The knowledge of the Namekian. The tutelage of the three-eyed master. The teachings of the Turtle Hermit School. The choreography of the fearsome five. The killer instinct of a perfect artificial predator.

I knew how to outsmart your opponent like a small fighter would know. How to stay calm and how to unleash your fury when its needed. How to look cool and look like a fool. To howl like a wolf. To scream my opponent away.

To fight like a man. To fight like a girl.

To fight like a Saiyan.

I finally dropped my fridge door onto the kitchen linoleum and ran for my dresser, putting on my favorite modest casual set.

...and a jacket. I had a feeling it was about to get cold.

I was outside now. I was outside my Capsule Corp brand home in the early morning chill.

The anticipation was killing me.

The cold wind slashing my face. The crunchy tree leaves like shurikens whizzing by. The sunrise ahead of me on the horizon.

A horizon now in my grasp as my gravity ceased to exist as I focused.

I was airborne within seconds, as I found myself one inch off the ground. It all felt natural, second nature. Like breathing.

The air itself seemed fresher as my senses overwhelmed me. Goosebumps exploded wherever they could.
I suddenly had no idea what I was doing as I lost my focus and began flailing my arms in front of my trying to grab something like an amateur.

I fell on my face, my nose now clumped with dirt and blades of grass jabbing my eyes.

Honestly, my ego was more bruising than the Earth was, as I righted myself up quick as if nothing happened, even though no one was around to watch. I was starting to feel really silly.

I knew how to do it, and I now I knew I had the power to do it on my own.

I don't know how, all I knew is why.

I was given a gift. And if I really wanted to...I could maybe even get stronger.

I...

...what do I do now?

Do I seriously live the rest of my life as per normal knowing I have these abilities now?

My thoughts rapidly returned to the people I had met that fateful encounter.

I could maybe seek them out.

I wanted to see them again.

I had questions, and they had answers. Although, could I see the Z Fighters again?

They knew I worked with Frieza. Maybe they wouldn't forget that fact, and feel as if I really couldn't be trusted.

I got to know all of them. They seem like a real swell bunch of guys.

But how could I be sure? They had so much history with Frieza and the other 'bad guys'. Maybe they knew better than to trust some henchman.

Was I a henchman?

Now I couldn't be sure if seeking them out was such a good idea.

No.

I was having a new thought. A riskier thought.

One would call it suicidal even, but I just couldn't sit still and live like this anymore.

I didn't even realize I was a few feet off the ground this time. I was very clearly weightless again and gravity was doing what it wanted with me until I righted myself up again in instinct. Instinct I didn't have before that day.

I was so deep in this scary thought that I had been floating.

My senses returned to reality as I gave out a hearty, self-congratulatory chuckle. The wind didn't feel as frigid anymore, and I was above the crossfire of the tree's ninja war.

I looked up into the sky. The orange was fading away and the bright baby blue was setting in.
Was I really thinking of this thought?

Of going to find these men serving a vile purpose? Conquering the galaxy?

Did they really do that?

I... I knew I had to do it. I had to find them anyway.

If I wanted to figure out what fate had in store for me next, I'd have to find Frieza.

I didn't know what to expect, but at the very least Frieza would probably not kill me on sight. Not saying the Z Fighters would, but at least I seemed to have Frieza's trust.

I felt more alive that day traveling with that alien than ever before.

I looked around me, wondering if I just flew long enough in one direction that I could pick up their power signature.

I sure did learn a lot of things recently.

I looked left, I looked right, I smiled to myself like an idiot and looked ahead.

What was I doing...? Was this really smart?

The energy was coursing through me as I brought my arms up, in the way they did.

The way they brought strength and speed to themselves.

By powering up.

The wind was starting to kick up again, as if destiny was providing me with some sort of artistic opening to my story. Fate had thrown me a chance to take upon my greatest chapter yet. Or my doom.

I'll never know, unless I try.

I picked a direction. Ahead.

I tightened up my muscles. My back, my arms, my legs. All coursing with power I never knew I was capable of.

I've heard legends. All kinds of bedtime stories.

Of the Piccolo Wars. Of the orange clad warrior. Of our own living legend Mr. Satan.

Could I be like one of them?

The ground beneath me quaked.

I was doing it.

My power. The power I had amassed that day.

It was rising. It was overflowing.

I heard myself scream. Louder and louder. It could probably be heard for miles.
My own little lonely plot of land in the middle of nowhere was experiencing an event and I was easily letting it get to my head.

The trees below were parting away from my direction. The force I was creating was enough to cause shockwaves.

I was so caught in it all. My screams sounding more and more like a mighty ancient warrior's, my muscles feeling like I've done nothing but train with bears my whole life, my disregard for physics mocking the Earth’s laws.

It was a sparking moment before I realized that this wasn’t the wind, or even myself anymore, doing most of the work.

I heard that ungodly hum first. Like an extraterrestrial machine beaming a command into my brain. Or a demon preaching its black mandate into my soul.

I felt it before I saw it as I had an urge to stop powering up. It was high above me, hovering over my domicile by a mile.

The vibration from its mere presence rocking the air.

A giant disk in the sky. An invader from another world. Something made by the hands of some sadistic engineer, to house a horror unlike the galaxy has ever seen.

My muscles turned into jelly. My strength into fear. My sweat evacuated my body.

I went from wanting to find it to running away. Flying away.

But I couldn’t.

My eyes were open wide, wider than ever.

My mouth hung open like a slack-jawed coward.

My movements inhibited by my brain refusing to process this further development on the new reality.

They found me.

Fate decided my choice for me whether I liked it or not.

I was about to be abducted. I was about to become part of something bigger than myself.

Or was I about to die at the hands of the most charming maniac I've ever met, as a shadow was cast over me and my home...
I hung there, still several feet up in the air. Staring up at the craft from another world. Another planet.

Okay, so aliens are real. Just take a moment and process that. You were recently in the company of several strange individuals, some clearly not human. Hell, those Saiyan characters didn't sound like they were really from around here either. Except for maybe Gohan, and those two tykes that performed a strange technique to fuse into some kind of super kid.

What else was I missing? What else was the whole world missing?

Just moments ago I had discovered that I kept the power I amassed in my adventure. I could still feel the techniques etched into my mind and muscle memory as if they were my own, practiced to perfection as if I was a pro with years of experience.

I felt as if I already needed them for this moment. I could feel several techniques, mostly the kind that make things explode, at my disposal, deep inside my subconscious.

I wonder if this was possible to do to others. To impart such powerful feats into someone besides myself. Was I really the only one? What made me so special?

Was that a good idea?

Was it even a good idea to give me such power?

I gained so much knowledge and experience that it was all starting to flood my now panicked chasm vacating the space between my ears.

I felt like my hands were going to burst into flames. The fear was causing my extremities to feel all sorts of tingles and sensations I never thought I could have. Do they all feel this way like me? It was almost too much for me. I felt like I could do a push-up that could very well push the Earth down, making all sorts of catastrophic changes to the world by changing the Earth's orbit. I really didn't feel like creating disaster after disaster caused by erratic tides and crops not getting enough sunlight.

I still had the feeling I was about to make an attempt to prevent a different kind of disaster here.

Did this flying saucer, from space no less, house the tyrant? Was Frieza in there? It couldn't be a coincidence.

But if so, how did they find me? All sorts of possibilities ran through my mind, and it was then that I had realized how slowly the world was moving for me...as if...

...was my brain also onboard the crazy train? Had all the neurons firing off throughout my internal network become supercharged?

I didn't necessarily feel like I could solve world hunger or create the formula for perpetual motion...but everything I could think of was in fact being thought at a much faster rate.

This was crazy.

Is it as crazy as the flying alien spacecraft still ahead of me? It looked straight out of some old cartoon where the hero wore a glass helmet and brandished an over-sized toy gun pretending it was a ray gun, all labeled as an 'action adventure in space' by your run-of-the-mill cigar chomping
Never has all that felt more phony then right here, right now. I mean, fighting the pink lady felt like a dream, one I was still wondering whether had actually happened or not.

Oh no...its all too real now.

I kept looking down at the ground, all in slow motion. Even sounds I had take for granted were all different in my ear canals. The wind echoing like a siren calling me to sea. The rustling of the trees sounded like a giant fire consuming the whole forest. The humming of the craft every now and then regaining my attention.

Every time I moved my gaze from my hands poised in front of me to the spacecraft still looming high above, it was a trip. I kept hearing whooshing each time I nodded up and down.

I am thinking too much, that was my damn problem.

Gotta think faster and smarter.

Oh yeah, how did they find me? Was that really important right now? One second I was charging up my power to see how far my new physique could go, all in the pure elation of it all. The high, the rush, it was all so exhilarating. Its a wonder I didn't attract any att-

...oh no.

That's how they found me. I gave myself away. Nice job idiot. I didn't want them to know where I was until I could find them first. I had a plan.

No you didn't. You had nothing! You were going to fly off into the sunset like some superhero to go reunite with the bad guy you should be bringing to justice! Instead you brought the bad guy here like a chump.

Come on, calm yourself.

Its okay, you got this. Look how strong you've gotten. If they are going to attack...maybe you have a shot at winning? At beating them?

But you've never fought as yourself a day in your life.

But, I have all that power now! I know the techniques!

But...what if you have to fight Frieza?

Frieza, I could feel the trace of his own power still inside me...it was monstrous. I knew his techniques. I knew the Death Beam. I knew the Death Ball.

I knew them all.

Maybe all I needed were the techniques. Besides, I knew how Frieza fought from the experience. I know how they all did. Its like fighting yourself!

But...what if Frieza also knows my own weakness somehow?

I don't even know my own. I've never fought myself.

Oh no, I've never fought...
I'VE NEVER FOUGHT.

I'm just a human! Am I really that powerful compared to these guys? Did I get so strong from that day that I'm really on par with these...THESE MONSTERS?

I mean Krillin, Tien and Yamcha could hold their own, but the playing field was more level then thanks to those damn waves! How would I fare?

By myself no less! Any chance the others caught onto what is happening here?

No. I'd have sensed them approaching by now.

The clock was ticking, whatever was going to happen with that saucer here was going to happen...

I could run. Yeah, maybe I could run.

...but, you wanted to find them...and they are here for a reason.

They were after me. It had to be that.

Maybe...I'm overthinking this, and they really do wish to have me as an ally?

That was when my time was up. It didn't matter now, as a huge door on the underbelly of the ship suddenly twisted open, shining down a huge light upon the land.

This was it.

A black shadow...a large one. Like a bat out of a cave, the unidentified mass dropped out in an instant. It covered the gap between the ship and my own level of vertical axis before I could even blink.

That's not goo-wait what?

ITS...

"Nappa?" was all I could say to the behemoth of a Saiyan.

There he was, the gargantuan leg-breaker of Frieza, former partner of Vegeta. The big guy once at my beck and call was finally here before me once more, hovering several meters away from my own dimension of airspace, with his arms to the sides in accordance to the unspoken code of the strong warrior.

I relaxed a little, exhaling my anxieties away as if I had just ran into a longtime friend I hadn't seen in years.

Frieza must have sent him to track me down. He was wearing some kind of eyepiece device fitted over his ear that was blinking all sorts of what looked like numbers and strange symbols. I didn't even notice the other soldiers of the Frieza Force slowly descending from the same exit as a wave of relief flooded into my veins, at least I hoped that was what I was feeling coursing through my arteries.

I had so many questions I didn't know where to begin.

Who won the battle between Frieza and Goku? What happened to Cell? Did everyone make it? What's to happen now?
And without the distraction of clones running amok I figured I'd start with a little how do ya' do.

"Man am I glad to see you!" I started off, eager to have conversation with the tower of a man with my arms outstretched in friendship, "I can't believe its you! What are you doing here? Did Frieza send you?" a huge guilt crept over me like a snake crawling along my spine, "oh...wait, you offered me a partnership to take over this joint, didn't ya?" I felt my hand sheepishly reach for the back of my head to scratch in embarrassment, "Uh yeah, eh he he, about that-

I only noticed it then that he was merely staring at me, with this sort of unimpressed mug. A grimace that told me he had in fact not found what he was looking for.

His voice, however, did catch me off guard. Hearing it in person, in my actual person, was something else after hearing it soulborne for so much conversation, "This can't be right. You don't look like a warrior at all!" he barked, immediately followed by his hand moving to press a button on his strange spyglass device.

Oh, that's right! They've never seen me before! I was just some blob of light the whole time.

Derogatory aside, it was nice to hear a familiar voice. I was quickly coming up with some words of my own, my world again in slow mo as his device beeped and booped in rapid calculation.

Frieza has some decent looking technology for his subordinates. Surely that was the sign of someone who was intelligent and not merely some murderous despot.

Surely?

I had a feeling I was just kidding myself. I had an even worse feeling that Nappa...

...didn't even recognize me.

But he had to know. Why else would he be here?

His device swiftly came to its sound conclusion and stopped beeping, and my thoughts were interrupted by a hardy boast, "No friggin way that is your actual power level!" he grunted in fury as he grabbed his device off of its place on his mug, immediately crushing it into sparking scraps...maybe even some dust frighteningly enough, "you can never trust these stupid things."

I raised an eyebrow in curiosity, "Uh...don't you recognize me? Its me! Your ally! The one who helped you and your leader out against 21?" I felt really stupid for speaking this way to Nappa of all people, but I couldn't help myself.

And then it was at this moment, I began to notice all the additional reinforcements...of all manner of humanoid alien races flying the Frieza colors.

Well this sucks.

I think I need to go now.

I knew exactly what was happening, and yet all my flapping mouth could say was, "Nappa?" like that was gonna change anything.

Nappa scoffed, gave a nasty grin, and brought his arms up into a nice fold against his chest, "If it's really you, the one I let writhe around in my body, then you better prove it sunflower!"

Oh you gotta be kiddi-
Nappa gave a mighty directional shrug of his shoulder, "All right, fellas! Its go time! But don't be afraid to smack em' around a bit first, I wanna see if the scouter ain't lying after all!"

The collective army, each wearing different variants of the same uniform Nappa had on, all gave out a battle cry. If I didn't know any better, I would have said the shout was incredibly joyous in tone.

*They were going to kill me...WHY?*

*So many techniques, so just pick one!*

*Should I use the Kamehameha? That's a good one! Its a great one!*

The closest row of opposition surrounding me all lunged at once.

*Oh crap.*

*Maybe I should use a Solar Flare and just book it?*

*Maybe I should...*

*...no*

*...DON'T*

"Screw this," is what came out of my scowl, before I gave out a battle cry of my own, as mighty of a one as my voice could muster from deep within my lungs.

The ki exploded throughout my body in an instant. I glowed a mighty yellow light as the energy swirled around me in a desperate instant.

I had not even realized that my shout blew away the first wave of about twenty or so, sending them flying a good several dozen meters away from my airspace tumbling end over end. They all cried their goofy woes before correcting themselves as the ones smart enough not to charge in headfirst, about another twenty or so goons, hung there and watched their compatriots make fools of themselves with silly looks of shock and awe of their own.

The tables had suddenly turned and now I was the scary one, but I hadn't even noticed. I was still screaming my lungs out, powering up as high as I could on short notice.

I quickly settled on a peak, and got myself ready with a quick sharpening of my gaze upon my opponents.

Nappa hung there with a perplexed look on his face, the kind only his meathead of a face could contort. His arms, no longer folded, were now shielding his face.

*EVEN HE HAD TO BRACE FOR THAT.*

I found myself smirking. I was ready for the battle now.

Nappa lowered his hands, feeling like a fool for even relying on them, gritting his teeth in anger, "wha-don't just stand there! GET EM' BOYS!"

The rest of the goons moved in on me with a far more furious effort and an angrier collective shout as opposed to the cheery one before, feeling more raw than excited.

*Well if they don't wanna talk it out...*
The closest guy to rush in got my fist in his face, more as if I had placed it there and waited for his profile to reach the knuckles. His features contorted around my dusters for a fraction of a second before returning to form, leaning backwards for a second rolling his eyes into the back of his head before falling face first to go kiss the soil.

The second guy directly behind me now got my footwear in his gut. This kick was a bit more timed than my fist to the face. His armor did him no favors as his eyes and tongue almost launched out of their respective hiding spots in reaction, as all of his strange alien organs must have been kicked up into his skull to share rent with the brain. He too paused for a second before gravity decided to stop giving him a pass as well.

Two more coming up from the rear, instinct kicked in like a cornered rat. I swung around from my previous kick to raise my right hand in the air, making a turkey hand facing the sun as I concentrated as quickly as I could.

Time slowed down again.

I closed my eyes, thought of the words, I could feel the way the ki crept through my arm and formed into any shape I wanted just above the palm of my hand.

I made a pizza of yellow ki, snapping into form with a sharp buzzing sound as it whirled its deathly dance, ready to be launched at some poor sap.

I screamed the words

"DESTRUCTO DIIIIIIIIIIISK!"

I unleashed Krillin's signature move upon the two attackers, the sound of it leaving my person created the most satisfying sound of energy whizzing through the air.

The two goons just barely registered their predicament and broke off to the sides, just in the nick of time as the bladed energy construct flew right between them and giving them each a souvenir in their armor, barely grazing their rib cages and sparing their lives for the effort with superficial scratches. It didn't scare them any less as the disk continued onward and nearly did the same to the trio of goons who were following suite.

The two vanguards didn't get any relief from me as I followed it up with a double clothesline, striking the two in their unarmored faces and causing them to flip up higher in the air against the fulcrum of my t-pose.

This was fun.

Another reckless mook rushed me, and in one quick motion of the wrist I slapped my palm across the man's incredibly alien facial features to flip him around by the snout so his back was now facing me, immediately followed up by that same hand gripping him by the face like a fishing hook wrapping around the side of his head, I could feel a finger or two going into the guy's non human nose. Yech!

I yanked my hand back as hard as I could like I was trying to start my lawnmower, forcing a rapid centrifuge and turning the man into a yo-yo. As he spun helplessly, I gave an intense kick delivered right into his ribs, throttling him into another goon and eliminating them both from the fray as they careened out of sight and into the thicket of the forest below.

From then on, each henchman dumb enough to attack me one, or even three at a time, got a strike here and a chop there, a kick here and a sweep there.
For the first time in my life.

I was the boss.

I WAS THE COOL ONE.

Especially true as before I knew it the second-to-last grunt was trying to pry my hand off his throat as I choked him silly, holding him away at outstretched arm's length...while his remaining friend made an attempt to circle around in a flash and give me a double hammer fist to my noggin.

I took it.

I DIDN'T EVEN FEEL IT.

Still turning the other guy blue, I turned my head to face the utterly mortified final goon with a smug stare.

He must have colored his trousers yellow right then with the look of a frightened dead man already accepting his fate. Not that I was specifically looking to kill any of these jerks.

And yet...I was feeling it, as if I had borrowed the attitude of Frieza.

I couldn't lie to myself...I enjoyed this feeling.

I took the poor gripped extraterrestrial and flung him over my shoulder with one arm headfirst into the last goon's scared expression, turning it into an unconscious gruff alongside his now limp fellow trooper. I timed the release of my grasp so the two pawns would launch like a pair of meteors into the Earth, planting some lovely pairs of legs in my now horrendously scarred landscape.

The whole scene was a mockery, as bodies were strewn about everywhere on my own lawn, some even caught in the trees or draped upon my roof catching some sun.

All I could hear was the wind and their moans of sore muscles and broken dreams.

That was satisfying.

THAT WAS SO SATISFYING.

Didn't have too much time to hail my own impressive mightiness, as a possible real challenge was now before me...the utterly confused and slack-jawed Nappa. He stared at me from across the airspace between us, haven't budged an inch during the whole, albeit brief fight.

I locked my gaze towards his, and realized how little fatigue I was experiencing.

That should have winded me, but I was ready to take on at least another ten-thousand of these guys.

Maybe a one-on-one with a powerful familiar would burn some of my now seemingly limitless energy.

But...I had to restrain myself, I had all but forgotten. I couldn't let myself go crazy in this situation. I could feel the adrenaline slowly working it ways out of my body as I eased my own breathing. I wasn't exerting, I was yearning for more. I was craving that rush.

Still, I didn't really wish to fight Nappa, as he was still a guy I fought alongside that day. I could even call him my thuggish friend. Maybe I could just end this with some reasoning...?
"Satisfied now? You understand its me?" I smiled as I began to relax, lowering my power down a bit and pointing at myself with a proud thumb.

I couldn't even believe I was letting myself take it easy considering the situation. Not minutes ago was I just chewing on my own last will and testament.

I didn't really have time to question it all at this moment, as the volcano making up my gray matter was already creating islands of new reality for me to exist upon.

However, Nappa continued to make borders for that reality as he tried to toughen up his ego once more, "You don't think I already realize that? Of course its you! I'm here to bring you back to Frieza, whether you like it or not," I perked up, for some reason that name brought me great joy, "but he didn't give me any rules on how I go about doing that."

His tone was that of a man with something to prove. And I was going to become his statistic apparently.

*Like hell!*

I was taken aback a bit. I honestly expected better of Nappa, believe it or not, "Are you kidding me?" I begged in slight annoyance.

Nappa clenched his gigantic fist shut with high tension, the impact of his fingers smashing his own palms created a significant reverberation in the air for a short moment, scaring away the rest of the brave woodland creatures that didn't immediately retreat from the previous battle.

"You don't understand. I've got a reputation to restore. Ever since I've been back, I've been nothing but humiliated. Left and right, people chopping me down on a block like some piece of meat. Vegeta. That Cell guy. Even that weakling who lost to a *Saibamen* somehow defeated me...you know what its like having to deal with that?!!"

It hit me that Nappa might actually be a big whiny baby in a giant's body, "And now all Frieza can do is yap about you," my eyes shot open from my humorous thought, "its all 'oh do bring that Earthling back, they'll make a marvelous asset to the Frieza Force oh ho ho ho!' *Oh god* do you not understand what I have to listen to?!!"

Something about Nappa's absolutely dreadful attempt at imitating Frieza made me laugh.

Also, did Frieza really say that?

...did he?

Nappa wasn't amused, "Hey! Knock it off!" suddenly his own ki exploded in righteousness, "don't you understand what I gotta do? I don't care about what kind of partnership you and I had," I suddenly had the feeling it was time to get a serious again, "I'm gonna knock your block off! I hope you like the taste of pain!"

The width between us evaporated in a second as his giant bulk now loomed over my own much smaller human frame.

*Oh.*

And before I could even gasp out a breath of despair, a backflip and a reverse kick to my shoulder sent me careening into the Earth with the rest of the defeated Frieza Force. The impact of my frame was enough to create a crater, further scarring the poor, innocent backdrop.
Looks like Nappa really didn't have any qualms about utterly wrecking the tiny human.

My world turned to black as the Earth became my...tomb?

...it took me a second to realize I was still conscious...

**I WAS STILL CONSCIOUS.**

All I could hear was the hearty, muffled laugh of the mighty Saiyan as my ears struggled to hear through the dirt stuffed in them, "Take that ya' weakling! Looks like you were just faking it this whole time! Nobody can defeat the great."

I took the opportunity to fly myself straight out of the dirt legs first, my momentum kicking up huge clumps of whatever Earth was in my path into the air as I flipped out of the crater and back onto my feet, leaving Nappa stunned and confused...eventually resorting to gritting his enormous chompers once more in the realization.

A single bead of sweat ran down his brow.

This was it...

"...WHAT?!!" his hands outstretched in a feeble gesture, as if asking me to *take it easy.*

I decided to play it cool. I looked at my shoulder, brushing off the dirt with my hand. After all...

*I was in charge now.*

I gave Nappa a smirk in his direction to let him know that, "You done?"

*Oh yeah, look at you now. You badass you.*

His pride got the better of him as he exploded once more, his ki rising even further and pushing away the brush of the forest, even some of his fallen men were uprooted from the ground by the strength of his mere presence, tumbling further away from the battle scene, presumably to their safety at the very least.

*As if that would have a chance at intimidating me anymore.*

**WHAT HAVE I BECOME?**

He pointed his giant fist at me, extending his index and middle finger together as if accusing me of a heinous crime, before rotating his wrist and bending his arm upward to point said two fingers towards the sky.

I could hear the energy imploding around me as I was suddenly engulfed in a huge cloud of yellow ki. A huge vortex of heat surrounded me, and for the briefest moment I felt as if I were actually done fore...

...still here.

Nappa, satisfied all too easily, smirked nervously as if even he didn't believe that would actually work.

*Oh Nappa, I'm truly beginning to understand you now, you poor oaf.*

I let the dust settle to have the result speak for itself, as my clothes weren't even damaged in the
slightest. They were getting pretty dirty though, which was starting to get annoying.

To think I was more annoyed than anything right now.

Nappa was more of a livid variety. He was probably experiencing his fight against Goku all over again, their first encounter where the middle class warrior was humiliated to the point of abandonment by Vegeta.

I weighed my immediate options. The guy had been through a lot, not like he didn't deserve it. But I was definitely feeling a little too proud today. It was creeping into my ego, that feeling of superiority. Did I really possess this quality?

I let instinct completely take over, quickly powering back up and zooming right up into his airspace...gazing into his petrified puss with my own a mere foot away from each other's visage, probably giving the poor guy a heart attack. Maybe that was my vindictive intent.

I allowed him a chance to rattle his bones for a second, my arms to the side, his in front of himself in a vain attempt to shield his everything from whatever wrath I brewed in the cauldron of my fury.

He had his chance.

I gave him little time to react to the situation as I brought up a classic double fisted hammer, winding it up overhead and bringing it down with just a fraction of my power as it connected with the Saiyan's chrome dome. He went straight into a tailspin, firing off like a rocket in the direction of my home.

My...oh

OH

Nappa's mass completely shattered the integrity of my capsule home, causing the main dome to explode into chunk after heartbreaking chunk, like a volcanic eruption of plaster and metal took place right where I used to sleep. After the crash, and the following echo of thunder had settled down in the region, I hung there for a good long while, contemplating what I had done. Not necessarily thinking of Nappa's concern, of course.

Well, that was my own fault. Oops!

After a good long moment, my defaulted domicile now showed signs of life, as the Saiyan squatter emerged from the wreckage. He was looking a bit scuffed up, mostly dazed and confused with a palm on his aching forehead, "You...you are gonna regret that!"

I about had enough of this already, Nappa wasn't even going to come close to threatening me. I quite frankly had better things to do than to indulge this man's fantasy of gaining back any sort of honor this way.

I folded my arms as I still hung high above, and decided it was finally time to let the euphoria wear off and switch tactics with the brute.

"Listen, Nappa," I sighed, "I just destroyed my own home, so I'm not really feeling like fighting you anymore right now? Can we just-

Nappa clenched, "Oh no you don't! Don't you dare ignore me!" He powered up again, as if this time he could muster even more strength. Maybe he could, but point was he wasn't going to come close.
Not to me.

Not to me. Was this really happening? Was I trouncing this elite warrior? This handymen of the galactic empire? Was I really just toying with him at this point?

Was I capable of toying?

WHY AM I TOYING WITH HIM?

Just end it already.

Time slowed yet again as he made a valiant flying charge in my general direction, bringing down a single, colossal fist my way.

Maybe that wasn't the best choice of words a second ago on my part. But I tried dammit.

I brought out a door stop in the form of a single palm, not even outstretched as I bent at the elbow at a sharp angle, my much smaller hand stopping the brute's fist dead in its tracks with no sell. The impact created a powerful shockwave that caused the already fragile airspace to shatter once more. If this went on any further, the sky itself could very well fracture into glass.

All Nappa could do was resign to his fate with a look of disbelief and terror.

I decided it was time to stop being even remotely nice.

Sorry Nappa.

"You really think you have what it takes to defeat me? To get back at Vegeta? At Goku...scuse me, Kakarot? I know what you are capable of already. I fought within all of you, including your master," Nappa winced in expressive rage at that last statement, his fist still throbbing in anxiety against my palm, the stinging reality setting in upon him, "you can't even go Super Saiyan yet."

I honestly don't know where that came from. I was starting to sound a little too cruel, and it hit me that I just crossed a line with the giant sap. I wasn't afraid for my own safety anymore, I was afraid I just irreversibly wrecked a friendship born of battle.

Then again, Nappa was trying to pull off this stupid stunt to impress his peers, seemingly not realizing that maybe Frieza wanted me in one piece.

However, I noticed that having used the word 'yet' might have averted this situation from getting any deadlier.

I wasn't quite out of the woodwork.

Nappa reeled his fist back in, feeling the seething embarrassment as he couldn't do a thing about the current situation, "I...you shut your mouth! I...I don't need to go Super Saiyan! I can do just fine without it!"

Our levels of power didn't even compare at this point, and Nappa was doing his best in trying to put out a fire that he himself had ignited and fanned to peak Fahrenheit.

"I...I had gotten so much stronger...I went to hell and back. Near death injuries are supposed to bring us Saiyans closer to achieving our true goal: to become the strongest warriors in the universe! HOW CAN THIS BE?!"
Nappa was babbling, I had to do something if I wished to be brought before Frieza without further incident.

"Then work harder for it, dammit!" was all I remembered shouting.

Even Nappa paused for a moment to process my outburst.

*Come on ya' thick-skinned debt collector, get it through your head.*

"Look, Nappa," I sighed again, "I don't know a whole lot about you *Saiyans* just yet, but if you are a Saiyan...that means you already have the power to get to the level of Vegeta and those other guys. You just gotta get yourself into battle more, maybe get yourself a new training partner."

Nappa looked at me as puzzled as I've ever seen the man, less enraged and more unsure than anything.

I continued my thought, "Not to mention, you just came back to life. Why not just enjoy that fact for a moment and catch your breath? You've got all the time in the world to fight now. You can crush fools later, you know?"

I honestly didn't know what else to say. That was all I had.

Nappa gazed down slightly for a second in contemplation, his embarrassment and fury seemingly subsiding.

Indeed, the next words outta his mouth seemed to suggest that, "Huh...maybe...maybe you got a point there," Nappa returned his gaze to me with a furrowed brow, "but you don't understand, I gotta keep dealing with Frieza, that fact ain't going away anytime soon. I'm still just an errand boy," he scoffed to the side, "I got no planet, no home, no money, no family."

*Oh yeah. That's right. Their planet blew up. I remember Vegeta mentioning something about that.*

Nappa sighed in defeat, "I don't even have a partner anymore, Vegeta made sure of that." the Saiyan clenched his fists as he went down good ol' Memory Lane.

I saw the opportunity.

*I might regret this later.*

I took a deep breath, exhaling as I resigned myself to fate, "Look, let me talk to Frieza. I could...maybe arrange that we could become partners for awhile."

*Was I talking out of my butt? Did I really have that kind of pull with Frieza?*

*The lord tyrant did say I was becoming quite important in his plans.*

*Was that really the case?*

*Or had Frieza merely put up a ruse out of convenience at the time?*

*All I remember was the way he looked at me.*

*That intense, judgmental stare.*

*Whenever he gazed at me, near the end, it lacked judgement.*
Was I still dreaming all of this? Was I just deluding myself that someone like me was really of any value to Frieza?

Nappa just stared at me for what seemed like an eternity. He was clearly struggling to process something but I wasn't quite sure what it was.

All I could hear was the howling wind and the sounds of Frieza's men shuffling back to their feet. Not to mention the huge flying pizza still humming away above.

Finally, mercifully, Nappa answered with a weird grin, "You know what? For an Earthling, you ain't that bad!"

Wow.

However, I noticed he beckoned me forward with the gesture of a hand as he gave a quick scan of the surrounding area, as if to see if his army of nine-to-fives were paying attention.

I cautiously floated towards his direction with a raised eyebrow.

He leaned forward, speaking uncharacteristically softly "But, if we're gonna be partners, its gonna be so on two conditions..."

I stayed silent, allowing him to propose terms. It wasn't very likely that this thug has ever negotiated for anything, preferring the Saiyan approved tactic of beating your opponent with a big stick over settling a dispute with a debate any day.

"We do things as equals...and you help me become a Super Saiyan."

I raised my eyebrows.

Well, that's quite fair actually.

"That's it?" I challenged, making sure we were on the same page.

Nappa narrowed his gaze, "Look pal, I'm used to taking orders from someone bigger and badder than me anyway, so if you get all assertive on me I won't bat an eye. But we share the battles, the glory and the loot. Frieza apparently has big plans for ya', and since you seem like you got what it takes...you might be going places. You just remember your buddy Nappa is all I'm really asking, ya' hear?"

Big plans?

I said nothing. Instead, after some initial hesitation, I reached out for a handshake with a knowing smirk.

Nappa reciprocated rather immediately, pounding his chest in agreement, "Ha! Now that's more like it."

Finally.

Well, I would have to return the favor someday surely, but at least the big ape was finally on my side.

He folded his arms, giving out a mighty huff as if this was all still a bitter pill to swallow, "All right men, you've all done your part! Now pick your lazy asses up and prepare the ship for the return home!"
Prepare the ship? Return home?

I forced a question out in a slight fit of panic as Nappa turned his mass around to face the ship, "Hey w-wait! What about me?"

Nappa turned back around, questioning to himself whether I really were this valuable asset to Team Frieza, "You kidding? Didn't you hear me? Get your ass on the ship before I change my mind. I could just say I never found you, y'know."

Once I got past the stinging embarrassment of my own anxiety, a final wave of satisfaction swept over me like I just took a hot shower after a long day of manual labor.

This was it.

I was going to go see Frieza.

And hopefully Ginyu and the gang. I loved those guys. I hope I could be still part of their squad. That sounded like more fun than anything.

Oh, and I guess become Nappa's partner.

I wonder what all of this entailed?

Would I get a uniform of my own? Did they have one in human size? What am I thinking, of course they did.

Let's save the thinking for later, I just got over one hurdle...meeting Frieza was possibly going to be a whole ordeal of its own.

I had to be ready.

"All right...take me to your leader...uh, I mean, take me to Frieza...I mean Lord Frieza."

Off to a great start me!

Nappa shrugged with his eyes shut as we and the rest of the merry out-of-action soldiers floated our way towards the ship, "To think someone actually wants to meet Frieza, you must be insane..."

I stopped to take one last look over my shoulder at my home, now reduced to the natural museum of history dedicated to yours truly. I felt stupid thinking about going back for a toothbrush or something, like a kid preparing for a sleepover.

No, come on. Time to go.

Goodbye home, sorry about what I did to ya'.

Was I about to leave my life behind?

Should I contact somebody? Let someone know I was taking a trip? Was I ever going to come back?

I was too excited to really care. Too excited about being somebody.

Somebody that mattered.

Too concerned with becoming Number Two...
"No, I felt it too! It was here one moment, and the next...gone!" Krillin exclaimed, lifting up a particularly large slab of debris upright from the wreckage of the capsule home.

A pile was already amassing just outside the doorway, what was left of it anyway, as the trio of longtime friends had long since caught wind of what was happening. They arrived within the hour, dropping everything immediately and arranging to arrive at this spot. Where Goku picked up the energy signature of none other than the Soul that had helped them during the clone crisis. The very one that originally resonated within Frieza.

Not to mention, the general action of ki exploding left and right always got the gang worried if they were able to pick it up. Now Krillin in particular was wondering if it was too late.

"Are you positive it was our friend?" Bulma replied worriedly, surveying the damage to one of her patents with a hand over her eyebrows in a binocular fashion.

The gang's resident genius wasn't concerned with the home of course, but for that of the well-being of the occupant. It was her after all that helped neutralize the drawbacks the gang encountered in the first place, even if it meant helping Frieza and Cell do it. It worked out in the end, more or less. In a way, Bulma was invested in the fate of this individual and wanted to see their safety through.

Krillin lifted the debris with little effort and tossed it aside rather forcibly, landing atop his already growing pile, "Yeah! No doubt about it!"

Bulma brought her hand down on her hip, and brought up a smart device residing within her other to study and scroll through, "This must be where they lived. Although I'm not getting any names from the serial numbers or anything."

Krillin noticed the refrigerator door on the linoleum, partially buried under plaster and dirt, taking a drink of his own spit in anxiety, "Where they used to live anyway..."

Shorty immediately got a concerned mouthful from his longtime blue-haired lady friend, "Hey! Don't say it like that! They could still be out there you know!"

Krillin carefully navigated his way back outside, tip toeing over debris along the way, "You know I didn't mean it like that, I hope they are okay too."

Giving a huff, Bulma turned her attention to their orange clad hero over yonder.

Goku was kneeling down near the edge of an impact crater, hands resting on his thighs in contemplation as his longest-running friend came over to maybe get some introspective, "Found anything big guy?"

Bulma's gentle hand on his broad shoulder didn't do anything to break his intense concentration as he brought his hand to his chin, rubbing it with the thumb and index, "This must have been one heck of a battle. I'm kinda sad I missed it!"

A huff from Bulma was what he got, "Of course you'd say that," she smiled, a little beat but assured that Goku wasn't worried. Usually that meant things were going to turn out all right, "but is there
anything you can gather from this? Where is the Soul?" she felt silly asking Goku of all people but *hey you never know, right?*

She removed her hand from his shoulder instinctively as Goku rose up, keeping his gaze trained upon the crater and folding his arms, "I don't know. But they were here, I'm sure of it. That soul, that power. It was all here."

Krillin sauntered over with a trademark nervous expression, "Do you think they made it out all right?" Goku hummed curiously, "I didn't sense any drop in power. So I think so!"

The other two collectively sighed in relief, they knew to trust Goku's instincts in this regard.

Bulma spoke first, "That's great and all, but...where are they now?"

"That's just it...I'm not picking up their power level anywhere around here anymore," he thought about it for a second, looking left and right as the other two looked at him quizzically, "I...I'm not sensing it up in any direction!"

Krillin's face tightened, "Wait...are you saying they...*left Earth?!*"

The trio looked up in unison, up to the sky. Beyond the stratosphere. It was quite a long passing before they finally relinquished their gaze and each began new trains of thought.

Bulma was off besides herself after hearing that, having a new, horrible thought. Goku took notice, "Hey, Bulma? Something wrong?"

*That soul...they were with Frieza when we first met them. What if...*

"What if we figured them the wrong way this whole time?"

Goku and Krillin eyed her intently, with the flared-haired wonder questioning her first, "What do you mean?"

Krillin figured it out immediately, "Wait, you mean? What if the Soul was actually a bad guy this whole time?"

"I...I don't know...I'm just thinking."

"No way! They helped us out more than Frieza and Cell were willing to! We'd all probably be food for Twenty-One if it wasn't for that Soul!"

Goku brought an arm behind his head to rub his neck, "I think Krillin is right. There is no way that person could be like that."

Bulma folded her arms, fearing the worst nonetheless, "I still think we should keep the possibility in our thoughts," she picked her next few words carefully, "I hate to say it, but...if that soul is still alive, and they somehow kept all that power..."

Both Goku and Krillin managed to get the gist as they each carried an expression of worry. There was a good long pause before Krillin decided to break the silence, "Look, I don't think the Soul would just do that. I mean look at what happened here, they must have fought. Would this have happened if they were in league with each other? I...I'm just taking a guess here, but I'm thinking the Soul was taken by force. Kidnapped, you know?"

Goku leaned in, "You mean by Frieza? But, what for?"
The thought was continued by Bulma, "If that's what happened here, than maybe its because Frieza wants that power for himself...one way or the other."

_One way or the other._

Bulma's previous worry was starting to echo within both of the warrior's hearts...maybe she did have a point.

"Oh man, wait...you mean Frieza would try to turn the Soul over to their side?"

Goku flew into a mild panic, "No way! That's not fair! They said they'd come over and spar with me sometime! I'm not gonna let Frieza get to have all the fun!"

Both Krillin and Bulma gave Goku a look of utter defeat. Krillin decided he'd be the one to say it, "Frieza might be trying to turn the Soul, and _that's_ what has you worried?!"

Bulma raised her arms in frustration, "Let's focus here guys," she dropped her arms to the sides, utilizing that powerful scientific brain of hers, "What do we do now? What are we gonna do about the Soul? In any case, if Frieza has abducted our friend..."

It was Krillin who finished the thought this time, "...we gotta rescue em'!"

Goku brought up the dinosaur in the room, "But how are we gonna do that? I can't sense their energy anymore. I wouldn't know where to look, even if I could just use the Instant Transmission and nab them myself."

The sun was high, and the wind began to howl again. The question went unanswered as the remaining leafage began to remove itself from the surrounding arbor colony.

They didn't have an answer yet...but they had to think, and fast.

_They didn't even have a description of their associate to go off of..._

Just then, an adorable little jingle was ringing from within Bulma's pocket. Retrieving her phone, she took a quick peek to see who it was, "Oh! Its Gohan!" she pressed the button and let the gang huddle around her to listen in, "go ahead Gohan, we're listening. How is Piccolo doing?"

The unmistakable voice of the Son offspring replied back in a soft manner, "He's doing okay, but he'll be out of action for awhile. He...got lucky..."

Bulma took a relieved exhale and smiled alongside her fellow listeners, "Well, that's a weight off. Glad to hear the big green guy is gonna make it at least."

Gohan didn't waste any time, "Yeah, I'd like to get give the bug a headache for trying to take him out like that...I'll keep an eye on him for now just in case...and hey, Krillin," he knew the tiny warrior was perking up on the other side, "Eighteen finally woke up, she says she can't really remember what happened to her. We got Doctor Briefs examining her just in case Twenty-One put another bomb in her or something. She says she can't wait to see ya' buddy."

Krillin brought a hand to his chest and took a much needed sigh of relief, "Oh thank you Gohan, I appreciate that. Please tell her I'll come see her right away, once we're done here!"

The phone snickered, "No problem Krillin. In the meantime, did you find our missing person?"

Bulma shook her head, mostly to reaffirm so to herself, "No, but we believe we found their home."
Krillin butted in, "We got signs of a struggle. A battle definitely took place here. We have reason to believe our Soul friend was...taken, by Frieza."

"That's not good," Gohan was quick to accept the reality of the situation, "we got a plan?"

Goku tried to put everyone at ease, "I'm sure we'll figure out something! In the meantime, take care of Piccolo. We may need his help soon."

A chuckle was heard on the other side, "No problem dad. But lets hope it doesn't have come to that."

A chime indicated the call was over, Gohan having hung up to immediately return to his caretaker duties, no doubt for the Namekian's sake.

Bulma quickly pocketed her phone, "I think we better head back, there is nothing left to do here."

Goku patted his belly, "Yeah, I'm starving anyway. Hey, you guys wanna come over to my house and enjoy a meal with me? I'm sure we can figure out something quicker with food in our stomach!"

Krillin snorted, "You know buddy, that sounds like a good idea. And hey, mind if I bring along 18? She's probably even hungrier than you after what she's been through!"

"Sure!" Goku patted his pal on the back before giving his girly friend a glance, "how bout' it Bulma? Wanna come by for lunch? You can bring Vegeta over!"

Bulma brought her hands up in acceptance, "Oh might as well...its not like we're gonna figure this out right this second," she gave a pleasant giggle, "not sure I'll be able to con my husband into it though."

"All right!"

I just realized something. Frieza hasn't seen the real me either.

What if Frieza found my appearance horrid?

He knew I was a human...but what if I wasn't aesthetically pleasing?

These were my thoughts as streaks of light zoomed past my gaze beyond the glass, as I stood there admiring the view from within a major anteroom onboard Nappa's requisitioned spaceship.

I wonder what rank Nappa actually held within this organization? Could Frieza really trust a Saiyan to still be loyal to him at this point? Yet here he was, with his own ship no less. Trusted with what seemed like a pretty big deal to the tyrant. Certainly a task you wouldn't expect a brute like Nappa to pull off.

A feeling of self-satisfaction crept in as I realized Nappa would probably get major kudos from his boss for actually managing it without any major hiccups.

Good for you, Nappa. Don't let it go any further inside that already deep ego.

A story was being told in my head, piecing it all together with the limited information I had been given to...conversing with the other souls.

I wondered if Frieza was merely getting desperate? All this loss, both in time and in resources, was starting to get to Frieza? The loss of his cool. His image. What if Frieza's gleeful lust for evil was
being replaced by an obsession for revenge? For being humiliated. For losing both his father and his brother...not so much out of sentimental attachment so much as clearing the family name of this dishonor. And he would stop at nothing to achieve this petty reparation to his life.

You know...I hate to admit it but...

...something about Frieza's determination to exact payment for the claimed wrongs done to him...I'll admit it...I found it pretty attractive in his character.

I shook my head from my little daydream, and refocused my train of thought towards something a little less unsettling about myself. I had already pushed the boundary of what I thought I knew about myself until earlier today.

I was so...devilish.

What was happening to me?

I'm not like this at all. I've been rather meek and uninteresting my whole life.

So why now? Has my new power made me this way? I mean I've been pretty much...me, until now.

This was not me...

...

The stars seemed so insignificant as I lost count of them. Didn't even matter as I found myself further and further away from Earth. We had already been flying for a few hours, I honestly wasn't keeping track of how many. I had no way to tell time at that moment. No watch, no phone. I had forgot to bring anything.

Not that Earth time was of any use to me right now.

...

...or was it?

Was this me all along?

...but, it couldn't simply be because I felt some adrenaline in my natural low gear state for once. There had to be more to it than that.

...!

Was it because...I spent so much time within Frieza?

Had I...

...wait.

Suddenly a huge burst of light and a booming reverberation rushed by the viewport, startling me as I found myself gasping for my Earth-grown oxygen back...only to be quickly replacing it with whatever processed air the fabulous engineering of the Frieza Force patented for this brand of vessel.

"What? You think a meteor is gonna destroy this ship?" the voice of Nappa scoffed from behind me, as he sat hunched over on a crate on the opposite side of the anteroom, "and here I thought you were this big, bad Earthling...perhaps I was wrong."
I rolled my eyes at him as he took a bite out of what looked like some kind of army-issued ration in the form of an unwrappable protein bar, and I returned my gaze to the stretching stars.

*Let him have his fun. The lug has been through enough today.*

...

...*maybe Frieza doesn't care about appearances...that much.*

*Heh, yeah. Maybe to him, looks don't even matter. Clearly Frieza was a man of class, another thing I had to admit I liked about him.*

...*uh, hey, hello? Earth to me?*

Another rather horrid thought came across my mind...

*What if its simply because I'm so strong?*

Of course I didn't think that was completely off the truth, Frieza valued power as long as it didn't tower of his...or if it did, maybe only if he had a way to keep it in check.

I wondered what if it did?

*How much stronger am I than Nappa? Waves aside, at his natural strength he doesn't rank that highly. Sure, he's strong and even fast, but he's low level compared to some of the other fighters I came across. Hell, the other Earthlings fighters were starting to outpace him drastically it seemed.*

...*so where do I stand next to Frieza?*

*And if that's why I'm too be recruited, what does Frieza expect of me?*

*Does he intend me to...*

...*intend me to fight...*

...*to fight Go-*

..........*TO FIGHT GOKU?*

The pit of my stomach was suddenly filled with cement. My hands felt like they were about to burst into flames once more. A cold sweat came over me.

Am I to become a thug? A hired assasin? A KILLER?

*What am I doing? You are willingly turning yourself over to a known galactic entity, one you didn't even know had existed and has been trying to conquer your home planet for decades, and for what? Frieza clearly wants to recruit you, he made that clear in your previous soul searching with him.*

...*oh crap.*

*What if I'm asked to help kill the others? To show them no mercy? To hurt them at all?*

*But you could if you had to.*

...
"I...what?"

"We should be there in just a few moments," Nappa's gruff voice startled the hell out of me, even at low volume, "wha-hey now. You sure you know what you are doing? Cuz' you are about to bow before the Emperor himself! You better not mess this up for me or-"

"OR WHAT?" I turned to face him, with a de-

...a deadly look in my stare...

I...

...I remembered seeing Nappa...get my point. He looked off to the side with a begrudged look, careful not to offend me any further. He knew he had no real power over me, and for now it was better to stay on my side.

"...yeesh, I get it. Just trying to make sure we both don't end up dead, y'know?" Nappa scoffed through his teeth and stood up, dusting himself off and trying to look presentable, although it was clear his armor took a few dings from...

...from when I toyed with him.

...

...what is happening?

"Hey...Nappa," I spoke, soft but not too much so as to appear meek in front of the behemoth, "look...no hard feelings, eh?"

Nappa gripped the collar area of his armor and tugged a few adjustments, "I get it, you gotta establishment your dominance over the lower class. Your gonna be too good for me here soon anyway, so why bother showing any respect, right?"

I tried to say something but was met with his raised hand, "...I have a feeling you'll pull through for me in the end, after all. I'm more useful to ya' if you keep me happy, that's the plan ain't it?"

This guy sure has been through a lot, huh?

As my hands rested on my sides, I felt my fists clench in reaction...not to him, but to my own attitude just a moment ago, "Its not gonna be like that, ya' hear me?"

Nappa looked down at me, confused as to my meaning.

"What I'm saying is...even if things get rough, I got your back...all right? Partner?"

I carefully raised my fist...and aimed it towards him.

There was a brief, albeit eternal pause between the two of us as the very hand that battered him just this morning was now offering some kind of social interaction. It was already getting awkward as I realized Nappa probably didn't know the meaning.

"...look, human. I don't really wanna fight right now," his words bore the soul of a wounded and tired animal more than a proud, Saiyan elite, "maybe later-"

"Just bump your fist with mine, will ya'?"
Nappa's eyes shot a little wider, not understanding the meaning but realizing I wasn't kidding.

He brought his arm up halfway, hesitating as it hung there bent at the elbow for a second, as if waiting for some kind of approval. I gave him an assured, slow nod as his mighty arm finished the trek. He poised his fist there, as if correcting its trajectory before committing to any single definitive action.

..and a set of knuckles was rather gently delivered to my own.

I smirked, satisfied with myself and feeling a small degree of good karma come back, "There ya' go!"

Nappa, keeping his fist connected with mine as I hoped he forget how that kinda went last time, was wondering what to do next, "Uuuh...I'm not getting it, are we like battle buddies or something now?"

"Its just a fist bump...enjoy it."

Nappa gave me the dumbest look, but his words were not what I was expecting, "I know what a fist bump is dammit!"

I retracted my arm halfway in immediate reaction, feeling like an idiot, "Oh...uh...well," all I could do was clear my throat and try to forget about this whole incident, "I was just trying to-"

"I get it, I get it...next time just tell me that! I thought you were doing some stupid Earthling thing there for a second." Nappa brought his fist back down to his side, and gave me a rather stoic gaze. It was another rather long, awkward moment.

Finally, he grunted to himself, a hint of amusement, as he turned to leave the anteroom, without the usual hint of disrespect in his posture doing so, for what I could guess was the navigation room to check on our ETA.

...well.

*ahem*

*That went over better than I had hoped.*

...

...DON'T LET THAT HAPPEN AGAIN.

The air was warm and friendly, everyone with full bellies and forgetting about the issue for at least a moment. The kids had long since finished their gross veggies and yummy steaks, now running throughout the Son household at top speeds. Maron in particular was gunning for Goten and Trunks as the two were playing an intense game of tag.

The Son household was bustling today. Empty bowls were already piled in front of the elder Son as he leaned back in his chair, beyond satisfied with his wife's absolute determination to quell that black hole in his stomach, "Thanks Chi-Chi, that hit the spot!"

His significant other was already hard at work removing the empty bowls from her guests' dining zones, "Your welcome honey," she spoke proudly, swaying over to him to give him a peck on the cheek, "its always a treat when you bring some company over."
The happy husband scooted his chair away from the table and stood with his arms reaching for his own tower of dishes, "I can get my own, since I got like...a hundred more than everyone else."

Krillin smirked to himself as he always got a kick out of seeing just how happy together Goku and Chi-Chi could be sometimes.

He got a strong, playful shove from his own muse, "I see you grinning over there, mister."

"What? Can't I be happy for other couples?" Krillin shrugged with a smug.

Eighteen leaned back in her chair on her elbow, giving Krillin a coy look of amusement and blinking her eyes in a teasing fashion.

Vegeta, sitting at the opposite end with his Bulma, leaned close to her, "Are we gonna make a play already against Frieza? I'm tired of watching these four make googly eyes at each other." She couldn't help but giggle at his woes, as well as the humorously utter revolt in his tone.

Nevertheless, he was right. She took a second to apply a napkin to her face and rest it next to her plate, "Look, I'd love to just hang out with you guys and relax for a bit, especially after we have already been through so much these past couple of days, but we got a potentially serious problem here."

Krillin had an idea right off the bat, "I thought I'd never want to say this, but I say we fire up that old spaceship we traveled to Namek in and track em' down," he glanced towards Vegeta, "hey, you know your way around the galaxy right? You have to know where at least some of Frieza's bases of operations still remain!"

The Prince scoffed, "His empire is more vast than you think. Mostly planets designated as way stations or housing garrisons. Nothing worth noting. I doubt any of em' would even have information we could use if we just raided each one. It'd be a complete waste of our time other than the satisfaction of crushing some of Frieza's bugs."

"Well we have to try! Its gotta be better than anything else we could think up!"

Vegeta insisted, "Do you really want to spend days, if not months, flying around in space asking for directions? We don't have the time for that. I'm not committing to something so asinine."

The argument compelled Goku to turn around from his dish duty, "Hey, I don't hear you coming up with any ideas Vegeta," any argument usually sounded sincere from him, as opposed to antagonistic, "I'll bet you could come up with something good if you thought about it!"

Of course he took it the wrong way, "Are you saying I'm not intelligent enough to come up with something a little more concrete than an Earthling?"

Bulma nudged him a tad roughly, "Ahem?" getting a snicker from Eighteen, receiving a glare from the increasingly annoyed Saiyan.

"Oh you back off you can-opener," Eighteen was amused, but Krillin grimaced with his arms folded, "you are probably still dizzy from your nap, so I don't want to hear it from you!"

"As a matter of fact: I think I have an excellent idea." was her smooth comeback.

Krillin's support came in for a greased landing, "Ha! I'll just bet you got something good. Hopefully better than my idea."
Eighteen closed her eyes in serenity, feeling her hubby's pure love, smoldering herself with a smirk, "I'm not saying you have a bad idea yourself Krillin, but as long as they are available; why don't we use the Dragonballs and just wish our friend back?"

Everyone gave her a look of triumph, Goku being the first to congratulate her, "That's a great idea! That'll be much easier than just going on another space trip. I'm not really a fan of those unless I get to train along the way anyway."

Bulma retorted, "That, and I'm pretty sure I wouldn't survive your..." she took a fearful sigh, "...gravity settings on the trip."

Her husband gave a short, boasting laugh, "That's your idea? Seems like a huge waste of a wish if you ask me."

His wife gave him a disappointed glare, "You think its a waste to use a wish to save this poor innocent bystander? In a way, its our fault this person got mixed up in this business, so its up to us to see this through."

"Firstly, I'm not saying that going after this Soul isn't worth doing, I'm just saying we need to consider other options with the Dragonballs. What if Frieza comes after us and someone is killed? Look at what Cell nearly did to the Namekian! And as far as we know that abomination is still out there as well," Bulma folded her arms with a begrudging scowl, giving him the benefit of the doubt, "and secondly, why do we owe this person anything?"

Bulma took a cheap shot, "So are you saying you are afraid you aren't stronger than Cell and we'll need the Dragonballs to revive you?"

She was already devilishly smirking as if before Vegeta even started barking, "DID YOU JUST SAY CELL IS STRONGER THAN ME?!!" the kids ran by, still being chased by Krillin and Eighteen's little one, "I'VE OBTAINED SUPER SAIYAN BLUE! I'VE COURSE I'M GONNA RIP HIM APART!"

Maron shouted as she ran by, more of a suggestion than a beg "Stop shouting so much Uncle Vegeta!"

As the Prince turned red from a mix of both frustration and embarrassment, Goku had just placed his last bowl in the giant strainer made just for him, "I say we go for the Dragonballs. It'll be the quickest way. Besides, we don't know for sure if Frieza even abducted them. They could be somewhere else for all we know!"

Goku made a surprisingly great point, but Vegeta added lovingly, "Or they are already dead."

"I mean...yeah, it could be that too. Either way, we'll need the Dragonballs for that. If we try and wish for something that's the wrong answer, Shenron will let us know anyway!"

Krillin scooted back in his chair to stand up without obstruction, retrieving his own phone, "I'll call the guys so we can make this go quicker."

It was perfectly timed as Goten and Trunks ran by still shouting like eager rascals, "CAN WE COME TOOOOO?!!"

Chi-Chi shut that down real quick, "No way mister! I'm not letting you go on anymore adventures after the other day! You could have been killed!"

Goten stopped right in his tracks as Maron smacked him in the back of the head, "Tag! Your it," and
continued running after Trunks.

"Aww! But Mooom!" the junior Son begged.

Vegeta folded his arms in agreement, "And I'm not letting you join in either boy! You've taken enough of my glory dealing with that pink android!"

Trunks stopped dead in place, horrified, "But, dad! Are you kidding me?! I don't get to go help you find Dragonballs?!!"

His mother stepped in proudly supporting Vegeta, as if he regained some points with her with that declaration, "Your father is right, now pack up your things and let's get ready to head home before your father and I go on an adventure."

"Aww laaaame!"

The two little ones ran off with grumpy expressions, Goten to his room and Trunks after him to retrieve his backpack. Maron scooted over to Krillin as he was still making his call, getting a pat on the head from him in return.

Goku shouted sympathetically throughout the house, "Sorry Goten! Maybe next time!"

Krillin jollyed over with daughter riding shotgun on his shoulders, "I got ahold of Tien and Yamcha! They said they would be glad to help, saying they want get to meet our mystery friend."

Bulma nodded, "I don't blame them. I hope our mystery friend is okay," her expression converted from enthusiasm to regret, "I feel terrible that they had to go through that terrible ordeal with us."

Goku pumped his fist in excitement, "Hey, it'll be no problem. If Frieza has a hold on our friend, then its just a matter of wishing their butt outta there. And if Frieza comes back looking for them."

Vegeta took it home, "We'll be ready..."

I found myself on a strange world I'd never even heard of before, not in any history book or any astronomy book...one very symmetrically alien, as I marched cautiously down the ramp alongside Nappa and the rest of the bruised entourage at his command and onto a metal rooftop of the compound, some kind of landing pad atop a much larger structure.

Nappa himself was still a bit worn from our encounter, doing his best to look presentable and strong nonetheless, but the crack in his armor gave him away as one who had a tough fight for a guy like him.

This planet, covered in what I'd describe as giant tectonic plates of white and blue crystals wherever I looked...I felt like I was on the set, and large cardboard tentacles operated by puppets and wires were going to appear from below the structure past the edges of the roof, and I'd have to fight them off with an adorned mop made to look like some kind of alien spear weapon.

What was the use of this planet for? Resources? Maybe just a convenient location for a staging ground?

My mind raced at the possibilities as I apprehended my anxiety. This was it. I was going to meet Frieza. For some reason, I was optimistic.
But still terrified. I couldn't shake it.

Distracting myself with these questions of the planet I now existed upon was helping a little bit.

Maybe I'll ask him what this planet is f-

No. Don't do that! That would just annoy Frieza. You know the kind of guy he is. You know very well! All it took was one day residing within in his body and mind.

Your dealing with one of the most egotistical, sadistic, power hungry monsters and you are trying to be its friend?

Your dealing with the one and only and you better treat him as such if you want to see yourself through this.

As long as you pet Frieza's ego, you should be fine.

...

Right?

A stronghold, looking like a metal bubble with smaller bubbles growing all around adorned with the Frieza colors, now bared before me. A red carpet leading to what appeared to be a direct hallway to the throne room stretched from the edge of the ramp to the structure housing the throne room ahead. This structure was gaudy, but towered over the planet like a blade erupting straight from hell, as if trying to pierce the heavens themselves.

Thunderstorms cackled on the horizon, laughing at my foolishness of my foreseen attempt at groveling.

...

...or maybe they were applauding my arrival? Heralding my ascension to power?

...?

...don't try anything stupid. It'll just get you cast aside, if not killed.

STICK. TO. THE. PLAN.

Nappa's diverse entourage remained behind on the landing pad, some going off in other directions to the compounds facilities, probably to lick their wounds.

Just me and Nappa now as we approached the spire to enter the large, demon-crafted entrance.

Ahead of me, there it was, just as I thought.

A throne room.

I saw him before anything else.

The dark red crystal throne walls, the spiked aesthetic to several adornments throughout the interior, the royal guard lining up the sides of the red carpet all leading...

To him.
Frieza.

He sat there, still the way I remember him. Except real. An abomination made physical before me.

In the flesh, my nightmare made real. My figment made reality. The monster under my bed now a threat...with my life in its hands.

I had no inclination to size him up either, to see if I had any chance of standing out on top should this turn deadly. He would probably pick that up in a heartbeat.

*That's it. Your thinking. Stay on your toes. Don't do anything Frieza could pick up on. Don't give yourself away.*

*Your fear. Your stupid questions. Your need for answers.*

*Nothing.*

As Nappa continued his march down the throne room's lane, slightly ahead of me, I stayed close in tow.

He quickly leaned over his shoulder to whisper, "Don't say anything unless he tells you to speak."

I nodded immediately back, appreciating the advice. Nappa picked up my appreciation and snorted confidently to himself as he returned his gaze to his master.

I noticed then that Frieza was smiling.

*That damn smile. The one that has been intoxicating me this entire time.*

Seeing the real article do it, however, was surreal.

Nappa than stopped his march just several meters away from the glistening golden throne, giving me just enough time to follow suite fashionably late.

He knelt upon the carpet, facing down and with one arm placed fist first upon the red velvet, and I did the same without hesitation.

Now Frieza has seen me.

I looked down at the velvet, as calmly as I could. I dare not look up without knowing whether it was disrespectful or not first.

Nappa's voice cracked the silence, "Your lordship, I bring you the one from Earth. The Soul who aided us on our recovery and subsequent return to the Empire..."

I couldn't look up...

I needed Frieza's approval so badly. I fought with every fiber of my being from looking up to see if Frieza was impressed.

Or unimpressed.

*But if I looked up...*

My heart struck with fear.
DON'T LOOK UP. JUST WAIT.

MY HEART IS RACING.

I'M CLOSE TO TREMBLING.

YOU CAN DO THIS...

Chapter End Notes

Honestly the hardest thing so far I've had to deal with in writing this, and its been driving me nuts, is how many times I've accidentally used both male and female pronouns. Luckily I'm 100 percent certain I've been editing them all out before I post anything, regardless of whatever I have to edit out upon further inspections after the fact. Lol

I'm more scared for some stuff I have in mind later, but extremely confident in other areas I'm proud to say, whether they turn out all right or not :)

Also, I am in fact taking on some 'lore-friendly' liberties here and there, including concerning some of the more subtle/not-so-subtle twists (if you can call them that) to the overall story/plot. Hopefully the writing is enjoyable enough to read that it doesn't take too long to reveal all what I have in mind...not to mention getting to what you are probably all here for in the first place: some good Reader x Frieza goodness ;3

This story got out of hand and I'm now writing about 12-13 Chapters at least, instead of the original 3 AT MOST I had planned.

Its gonna be epic :D even if its garbage in the end its just too much fun to write and even plan ahead for.
Chapter Summary

Finally, we meet Frieza...

As well as a brief intermission to see how Yamcha and Tien are doing!

Chapter Notes

Sweet baby Hay-Zooz if I posted this with 5 or more spelling errors again...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"So...this is the Soul from Earth?" Frieza's words echoed within my soul like the gospel of the devil.

Its eloquent demeanor did little to shield my heart from the dagger that was slowly, painfully, working its way to the center. If anything, the class in his voice nuked my enthusiasm to oblivion.

What's worse...

I couldn't pick up any hint...any clue as to where I stood with him, now that I have been seen in person. The real me.

Not a thing. Neither displeasure nor approval.

Just Frieza.

...

For all I knew, Frieza had just laid eyes on the most hideous creature ever to contaminate his sight. Maybe my stench was driving him mad. Maybe the way I wasn't sticking out a finger or didn't blink a proper way was tearing him inside and out. And any second now Frieza would make a simple hand gesture and some glorified over-sized goon would march out with an ax and execute me right here and now.

My eagerness to finally meet the despot in person did nothing to stifle my fear.

Stay cool.

I remained in my humble position, knowing it was most likely saving my chance at becoming something better...or at least it would save my skin. Nappa, still slightly ahead of me, was surely doing the same.

I just wanted to look up more than anything. I wanted this moment to feel much different. To be more like I ran into yet another old pal I hadn't seen in forever.

What were you thinking? You should have known how this would go once Nappa decided he'd
The chill of the throne room began to invade my senses. The presence of the royal guard, however strong or weak they may be, kept me further in line.

I just wanted this moment to end already.

"Yes, Lord Frieza." Nappa finally replied. Maybe he was even more terrified than I.

And for good reason...

"Care to explain why you appear before me then," Frieza's words, spoken with such regal flavor, "with your armor well below the acceptable threshold of integrity for appearing before me?"

Nappa must have tensed up in pure terror. His reckless need for satisfying his pride was probably about to become his undoing.

As much as I wished to take a sigh of relief...my mind scrambled at the thought that the poor Saiyan, one of the last of his kind no less, was going to meet his end like this.

I'm overthinking it. He'll be fine. Frieza is just going about routinely instilling fear into him.

The brute choked on his own attempt for an explanation, "Uh...w-well, you see Lord Frieza. I...we-my men and I-

"How about we have the Earthling explain it?"

...

And just like that...the spotlight shone upon me.

I froze like a deer in the headlights. A cold sweat swept over me. My instinct for survival began to fail me.

Would telling the truth be so bad?

Frieza might very well know exactly what transpired already, and was just fishing to see which one of us would bite first.

Or maybe he had no idea. I could tell him whatever I want to spare both of us.

Wait...had I done anything wrong? All I did was defend myself! At the very least Frieza would take my word for it. This was all more or less Nappa's fault!

But...I can't just throw him to the wolves like that. It wouldn't be right. Whatever kind of life I might be living under Frieza's rule from here on out; I'm not about to give up who I am.

What were your chances if Frieza decided to just start throwing lasers at you?

...

...why are you so afraid of him?

"...I panicked, Lord Frieza," my voice came out heavy, and it was then I realized my breath was a little frosty as a puff of cold air escaped the furnace in my stomach, "I...thought I was to be executed."
I couldn't tell if Frieza was buying it or not, but I persisted, "I came out swinging once I saw Nappa and his men," correction, "your men, approaching me...I felt as if you were to summon me, it would have been someone less front-line and more diplomatic...forgive me, Lord Frieza. I should have known better after our...last conversation."

That's it...nothing offensive about that explanation for Frieza to...get offended by.

I could feel Nappa's utter surprise, not expecting me to paint him in less of an incompetent light. Maybe he outright expected me to throw him to the wolves.

Another long pause as my skin crawled with worms. I began to wonder that if I knelt here long enough I would start to grow a sheen of ice all around me, maybe even a few icicles.

It was so cold in here.

So cold.

I was beginning to shiver. I couldn't help myself. It was almost unbearable. I was already daydreaming of ways I could simply warm myself up.

I was afraid my shivering would be taken the wrong way. A giveaway that I was lying.

Maybe there was a joke somewhere in there.

"...I see," Frieza finally replied, with absolutely no change in tone or octane, "then I suppose you have done your duty. You are dismissed, Nappa."

Oh sweet relief.

I could feel the Saiyan's large frame upright itself in an instant, followed by a swift change in the air as I could presume a bow had taken place before turning around to march past me.

If I had to guess, from my intense focus upon Frieza's taste in floor decoration, that Nappa smirked as he stomped past me, thankful that I did not sell him out when I probably had every right to.

"Oh," the master's voice caused Nappa to stop dead in his track, "...and one more thing."

The crunching sound, followed by Nappa's screams brought up by a mixture of pain and fear, suddenly echoed throughout the throne room. I felt his large frame whiz by me, hovering over in air and zipping toward's Frieza at such frightening speed.

My only reaction was to break my humility and look up at what was surely about to become carnage. I realized in an instant that I should not be doing that, but I couldn't help myself.

There Nappa was, hovering just a few feet in front of the now standing Frieza, as the tyrant held out an outstretched hand with his fingers gripping an invisible throat. Nappa was gripping his actual Adam's apple in a vain attempt to unclench his lord's telekinetic hold, gurgling for his life and his eyes damn near popping out.

NO.

NO NO NO NO!

"Just what kind of fool do you take me for, monkey?"

Please don't do it.
"Didn't I tell you to bring the asset back intact? Why do I keep you around if you are just going to take every little instruction I give you and put your own barbaric spin on it? Do you wish to mock the image that is my reign? To soil the very name I've worked hard to bring forth upon this galaxy?!

Nappa struggled to even breath, "I-I'm thorry Lord Freetha! Peeth forgive me!"

The guards surrounding us were visibly shook, apparently their presence was just for show. Frieza didn't need protecting.

Before I had a moment to even come up with a way to try and save my battle buddy, he dropped to the ground like a raging dinosaur brought down by a powerful sedative-laced blow dart. He collapsed onto the runway just short of Frieza's throne, on all fours choking out some saliva and gasping for air, gripping his neck with one beefy hand as if that would somehow make it feel less sore.

Frieza sat back down in his thrown with the grace of a satisfied King, crossing his legs and and resting his arms on the throne's rests in an amused fashion.

His next words we're spoken rather softly, as if teasing the giant underling, "You better be careful, Nappa. You have yet to prove why I should even retain you. You've yet to really show your appreciation for allowing you to grace us with your presence once more. Last thing you should be doing is twisting my instructions to suit your thuggish needs, hm? You are dismissed."

Nappa gave out a mighty cough to clear his throat in order to let himself reply, "Y-yes, Lord Frieza. Thank you, Lord Frieza!"

Oh thank the heavens.

The less-than-great yet grateful Saiyan shuffled back to his feet as fast as he could to deliver a rather undignified bow, feeling the sting as he shambled his way back towards the entrance as he had attempted before. But not before giving me a look of utter indifference as he passed by. I lowered my gaze back down to the ground before Frieza could take notice, if he hadn't already.

"Rise, my subject." was the master's next words.

My subject?

To be honest, I had a hard time bringing myself back to my feet...after that whole nightmare.

I stood, not too sternly as if to assert some kind of dominating presence, but not too meekly as if to cause Frieza to think he was wasting his time with me.

I could finally look ahead of me, yet I was careful not to gaze directly into the lord's eyes for fear of upsetting some sort of alien etiquette. Yet it didn't take me long before I found myself examining my potential new master...against my better judgement.

His frame...his surprisingly small stature, his sleek shape, his shiny white sheen, his purple highlights.

The lack of digits, the elongated prehensile tail.

Those red cinnamon dot eyes, those dark purple lips...

...hey, you are doing it again.
And yet I couldn't look away.

Although he may not have seemed to be that physically imposing, I knew all too well that this was a violent creature lying in wait. A sleeping dragon just waiting for a good excuse to come down from the mountain and burn the village to the ground...or maybe he didn't even need a reason.

...I had to say...I was speechless. Maybe even without thought for a moment as time was slowing down for me once more.

I stood there like an idiot, gawking at this dangerous monster.

However, it didn't take me long to realize that Frieza was in fact examining me in return.

I couldn't tell if he were *eyeing me up* necessarily, but I was definitely under a microscope. And the head scientist was most likely looking for signs of bacteria.

...I knew Frieza hadn't seen me before, and all we had was our previous conversations and the knowledge that I bore tremendous power.

My mind crawled back to a thought I had on the trip over, reassuring me that at the very least I was not here to become a public guillotine participant for some trumped-up charge.

I kept taking quick glances at his direct gaze, hoping Frieza didn't have some sort of mind-game trap lying in wait for me.

*Darn he's handsome.*

...

...*did...did I just think that?*

Frieza's highly-trained vocals broke my bizarre train of thought, "You know why I've summoned your presence, I presume?"

I decided to merely give a polite nod, damn near a bow the way I was overthinking things.

"My dear, I hope you understand I prefer to hear the words spoken out of that mouth of yours."

...*DAMN.*

I quickly took a deep breath, refreshing myself and preparing for what I was beginning to believe was going to become a gauntlet of court intrigue...

"Yes, Lord Frieza."

*Lord Frieza...I've officially crossed that line, haven't I?*

Frieza, amused, gave a soft snicker deep within his throat yet loud enough for me to hear, "That's better. I would trust that considering where we begin to conduct our business from here on out that you would be able to express any and all concerns of yours to your master."

*Just something about the way he talked...*

*Even though that last little line was total crap.*

'Be able to express any and all concerns'
...maybe, but it's a start at least.

You ain't dead, yet...so just roll with that.

"That's true, My Lord." I concurred, making a decent yet silly attempt to sound like the adviser to the king.

What are you doing you idiot?

Maybe he'd like that. Just be straight with him. Don't waste any more of his time.

YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE IS LIKE.

Sure enough...Frieza's smirk became more defined as the corners of his lips angled even more into it as if trying to outdo the devil for style points. Thankfully, I could tell I had pleased his need for efficiency and directness.

"Excellent. I shall ask again...there won't be a third time," YIKES "now...you understand why you are here, correct?"

Don't nod, "I believe-" 'believe', really? "-that I am...to...become your number two."

Whoa whoa whoa!

"HO HO HO HO HO-"

?! He...was laughing. Very haughtily with an arrogant air and a fist close to his chin in pompous poise.

"Oh...oh dear, my dear-" Frieza was struggling to keep his composure, even as he was already calming down from his haughty chuckle, bringing that fist to a hand close to his heart as if to let it out.

NO? WHY IS HE LAUGHING? WHAT DID I DO WRONG?

WHY DID I SAY THAT?!

I overstepped my authority. I blew it. WHY COULDN'T YOU HAVE SIMPLY SAID- "I'm absolutely ecstatic to find someone who just...understands my intent," !!! "and seeks to do so with such impressive prospect!"

...wait, what?

Frieza, now looking as if he had just caught lightning in a bottle, stood up from his throne proudly...arms behind his back in dignified posture, tail sweeping the floor and coiling around his ankles.

"I have such...aspirations for you." my lord spoke in a low, scratchy tone of malicious intent.

I...

I suddenly detected movement from the dragon in front of me as Frieza began to take a couple of delicate steps down the raised throne, and the sensation was registered in my conscious...instantly instilling me with dread.
I took a step back...ever so slightly, forcing my motor functions to cease immediately to avoid any accidental offense to the prince.

Realizing I had done this, my pupils dilated in shock...I was approached by a being that could possibly...and easily, overwhelm me if we had to fight, and my instinct was to express my concealed terror.

My heart raced.

_Had he noticed that?_

Did _he know it was not intentional? Did that even matter? Does this fact betray me in any way?_

I came here, as reserved as I might have been at times on the short yet eventful journey leading to this moment, to become somebody.

And that somebody was a servant of evil.

...why are you doing this?

The question was rhetoric. In a way...I knew exactly what I was doing.

I can't go back, let alone now...I was a nobody before that whole link business...and now I'm about to cross the threshold into greatness.

Surely, I shouldn't let that stop me?

_Am I so terrible for it?_

But my panic seemed to have been unfounded, and yet, further enhanced as Frieza kept his brisk march forward towards my person, stopping just short of me a few centimeters away with arms still behind his back.

My chest was about to explode. Any up-close examination from the dragon before me would betray my true inner turmoil over the moment.

Frieza made the situation somehow even crazier with the next few of the deadliest words I'd ever hear, as he leaned in...closer to my face...in for the kill...

"DO I FRIGHTEN YOU?"

_That voice...that attitude...that calling..._

I noticed Frieza's eyes shift upward, that smirk of his still in perfect bearing, and I realized he was eyeing the bead of sweat rolling down my brow...

"...yes." was the truth.

...
"...good." the word was slow, and with a hint of satisfaction, as I found myself internally losing my
sanity...

"Then on to business...shall we?" my new boss exclaimed, fixing himself back upright and unfurling
an arm from behind his back to stretch out the side, snapping a finger with poise to spare.

I-

A solid crystal door slid open from the side of the throne room, from the direction of the snapped
finger, and through the opening came a tall shadow emerging from a dramatically bright light source.

And then another figure came in behind him, a head taller!

...and then a third, a head...shorter?

And then a shadow two heads taller than the first??

AND THEN A SHORT LITTLE FIGURE???

My petrification evolved into jubilation.

It was them!

The Fearsome Five!

They maneuvered with perfect efficiency throughout the guard crowded throne room and lined up
single file upon the red carpet according the height, with the big blue guy in the back towards the
throne entrance and the little green guy closer to me, Frieza still behind me as I could not turn my
gaze away from the spectacle.

They were about to pose, I just knew it! One I had never seen before no less! One unveiled just for
me, as I had never seen one used in single file format before! Hell, I forgot how cold it even was that
moment as the blood rushed through my cardiovascular system in the euphoria of it all!

Why the hell are you so excited?

"Burter!" announced the Blue Hurricane, raising his arms to the ceiling with his legs spread, his arms
straight and narrow as if declaring a field goal. The movement so clean and precise that it sounded as
if the air itself was sliced with a sharp katana!

"ReeeeeeCOOME!" bellowed the big dancer, doing the exact same pose as Burter, legs spread but
with the variation of a more angled aim with the arms. He was too proud and focused to understand
that he had in fact sent the guards on his immediate sides to cannonball into the throne room walls!

"Ginyuuu!" battle cried the Captain, same pose but aiming his arms out straight towards the walls as
opposed to the ceiling. The guards on either side ducked for their safety!

"Jeice!" cheered the Red Magma, aiming his arms down toward the floor at an angle, causing the
guards at his side to tap dance their way outta there!

"Guldo!" squeaked the tiny green telekinetic invader, aiming his arms directly at the floor with no
angle...and hurting my neck as I had to stare down the quintet from head to head starting from the top
with each sudden unnatural drop! *Ouch!*

The Captain began the climax, "AND TOGETHER WE ARE."

The collective effort, ending in stardom,

"THE GINYUUUU FOOOOORCE!!!!!"

...as they now aimed their arms at me, and by proxy their Lord in perfect unison, timing the movement at the name *Ginyu*, and I swore I could hear cannon fire somewhere as well...somehow.

*OHMYGOSH*THEYDIDTHEPOSEJUSTFORMEWHYAREYOUGUYS SOAWESOME-

It was then I turned around to glance at Frieza with a big smile, too optimistic for my own good...when I had to do a double take.

Its...maybe it was the exuberance I was under the influence of, the kind that thankfully melted all my cares away for just a second, but I swear I could remember...

...Frieza...looking embarrassed. Absolutely rosey-cheeked and eyes shot unnaturally wide open, with an almost forced smile and a single uncommonly large tear drop journeying down his immaculate forehead.

I had the biggest urge to let the comedy overtake me and let out a laugh.

...a smirk was creeping across my face, my eyes wincing at the thought of welling up with tears.

*I have nothing to worry about, huh?*

I held it in, with sheer willpower, and resumed my gaze to the show in front of me. Not so much out of fear for retribution from Frieza, but more to spare the royalty further humiliation.

The Ginyu Force returned to their previous pose of hands behind the back at attention, still single file and each giving a confident smirk.

The Captain himself spoke with a humble yet stern aura, "At your command, Lord Frieza! Shall we prepare the banquet?"

*Banquet?*

**BANQUET?!**

Frieza delivered an answer with a rather indifferent expression, "And do make it snappy. I've been dying for a port since I've been revived...*for the second time.*" definitely a hint of contempt in that last line.

The Ginyu Force replied unanimously, "You got it, Our Lord!"

Ginyu gazed down in front of him, but kept his bearings while doing so, already spitting out orders, "Jeice," then back up, "Burter; you two report to the mess hall with a militia of Frieza's men at once! I except to see you two produce the FINEST Namekian Crab this side of the galaxy! AND DON'T FORGET THE RED WINE!"

The dynamic duo clicked their heels and sounded off a proud salute, "YESSIR!" before rushing off through a different revealed crystal side door.
Ginyu looked back up and down in rapid roll call, as if second nature to the experienced veteran, "Recoome! Guldo! I'll need you two to meet me at the armory. We need to outfit up our newest member, and ensure they not only have combat gear worthy of any member of the Ginyu Force, ensure that they are ready to \textit{class it up} with our Lord Frieza! Do you understand?!"

"Yessir!" the two near odd ones out rushed off into a different exposed crystal means of ingress.

...\textbf{NEWEST MEMBER!}

...is this really happening? I'm to dine with the monster that just threatened to erase me with subtlety? Or maybe I'm overthinking it again and Frieza is just making sure I know what's up...

...or he's testing to see if I was just going to be yet another boot licker?

......or maybe...he was seeing if I was brave enough to admit the truth: sure, I was afraid...

But you know what else I am? Powerful. I don't necessarily know how I stacked up against this fiend, but it had to have been enough to ensure that I stayed on Frieza's side...

...but...what if that was just it...what if Frieza was only doing this because...

...I WAS A THREAT?

...

...\textit{would that be so disappointing?}

...I...

...it kinda would-

Ginyu's voice broke my train of thought with a hearty welcome, "I just want to say, to you, our newest member," he approached me with a dignified, if not a bit over-rehearsed march, and reached out to shake my hand without hesitation, "welcome to the Frieza Force! The most illustrious army to ever grace the galaxy! And as a member of the decorated and battle-hardened \textit{Ginyu Force} no less! I'll bet your parents would be proud."

Oh gee...

Whether he knew my parents or not, and that was most definitely unlikely, I was still proud to hear that from him considering what it probably meant from the Captain!

And yet, all these happenings in such a short span of time was the realization I needed so desperately at this moment.

I was going to become an asset to Frieza. To become something bigger than myself.

"I...I'm honored, Captain!" I returned the handshake and bowed upon instinct, maybe a little too nice to the guy but I'm sure he appreciated it nonethe-

"OH no no no!" his sudden mild panic caused me to upright myself again, and I could feel myself blushing and thinking \textit{oh no what now}?! "Even though I shall henceforth be your leader once you are a Cadet within my squad, I am by no means your superior officer! Although there will be a...shall I say, trial...for you to partake in later in order to officially become a member of the Ginyu Force...you do not answer to me, you directly answer to the one and only Lord Frieza!"
I...what?

I turned to Frieza as the tyrant folded his arms and lowered his head in what appeared to be disappointment, but not the kind I thought it would be, "Ginyu, I know you are a bit...excited about all of this, maybe a bit too excited, but I was hoping to make that little detail a surprise for my new General."

...

Ge...?

General?

GENERAL?

"Upon your command," WHAT? "I shall make immediate arrangements to change the title of Ginyu Force to your liking," Ginyu humbly bowed before me...my senses were overloading, "and from here on out, citizens across the galaxy shall know that you mean business...IN THE NAME OF LORD FRIEZA!"

A single tear ran down Ginyu's cheek, but his expression remained stern and proud.

...oh for the love of-

"Whoa, wait! Look. I'll..." I swallowed hard, nearly choking on my own words as I couldn't believe them, "...be your General, if that is truly Lord Frieza's command..." I rotated at the waste to glance at my apparent newfound superior, receiving a curt nod yet laced with a poisonous smirk.

"...but I won't force such an unnecessary change to the group you worked so hard to build."

Look at you all caring about this guy.

Ginyu perked up at me, with an expression so grateful I thought I was going to burst from the self-satisfaction I was gaining from delivering it to him.

The next few words from me, I still couldn't believe I was forming them from within my mind, "I may command you from time to time as your General...but as far as I'm concerned; you are the Captain of the Ginyu Force, not the Captain of the me Force."

Ginyu looked up at me with near puppy dog eyes, while trying to retain his bravado.

"I...THANK YOU GENERAL!" he exclaimed with a kneeling bow. His own heart was probably somehow in worse turmoil than mine had been up until now.

I felt as if I was already on the right track with this whole General business.

Don't ever change Ginyu. I feel like you are the only one I can even keep my innocence around.

"It is good to know you don't have such foolish delusions of grandeur, my dear," Frieza hissed, more of a threat than a compliment, "I'd hate to think you had any...ambition...to change the status quo around here...wouldn't you agree?"

...I dared to even glare at Frieza with implied acknowledgement, out of fear, with my spine frozen solid after hearing that.

My lord then smoothly proceeded to clear his throat, "Well then, you heard your new commander,
"Captain...wow... "see too it that our guest here is outfitted with something appropriate. We've got a lot of work to do and I'd prefer if we got to it sooner rather than later."

Ginyu stood back up in an instant and gave a mighty heel click, "Yes, Lord Frieza! Right this way, General." he gleefully declared with an arm reaching in the direction of the door Recoome and Guldo had carted off through.

My nightmare had suddenly transformed into a dream. A dream with a lot of purple in it, but a dream nonetheless.

The relief flooding into my veins breathed new life into me, appropriately so as I was pretty much reborn this day.

All I had to do was not mess it up.

I made an enthusiastic start towards the door, when Frieza's coo hit me like a black hole preventing my escape, "I do hope your manners are in accordance, we have much to discuss."

I stopped for a second to look over my shoulder at the charismatic monarch, still glaring at me, bearing an implied contract for my soul.

I stared, maybe a bit longer than I should have, at this being...this evil being.

This charming monster...

The day had taken a nice surprise for the two Earthling martial artists, each one a former rival of Goku back in the day. Way back in the day. After receiving Krillin's invite how could they not be?

The Dragon Radar Bulma had provided was finally beginning to give off a crude, repeated electronic blip as Tien flew onward above the cloud layer, the wind furiously ruffling his attire, with Yamcha close behind. Taking a quick survey of the land, the three-eyed martial artist realized their prize must have been nestling somewhere in the mountain below.

He chuckled, "Look alive, Yamcha...we're going to be the first ones to find a Dragonball today!"

"Way to go man!" came a sincere cheer from his longtime tourney rival.

It was already dusk, the sun setting upon the horizon and mixing some tangerine smoothie into the cotton candy sky. Nothing but snowy mountains below for miles.

They adjusted their trajectory downward and flew towards the peak, deciding to work their way from there at the radar's insistence. Finding a relatively smooth surface, they gently landed and began a brisk walk around the jagged rocks, hoping the beeps would get nothing but stronger until they stumbled upon their treasure.

Yamcha, back to wearing his white jacket and black warm-ups, was already beginning to shiver at the high altitude, "Darn, should've brought some thermals."

Tien smirked to himself, "You can head back if you want to."

"Nah, I got nothing better to do."

They resumed their trek without incident as Tien marched with the fresh mountain air delivering him inner peace, enjoying the mountain air, as Yamcha was clutching himself and rubbing his arms to try
and stay warm.

"So uh," Yamcha began, without breaking Tien's focus, "...you think she's cute?"

Tien was already surmising he meant some new girlfriend he hadn't been introduced to, "Who are we talking about?"

The wolf sheepishly smiled to himself, "You know...our friend?"

All three eyes shot wide open as he stopped dead in his tracks, taking a moment to process Yamcha's way of thinking. There was a moment where Yamcha felt as if he just totally blew Tien's mind, and found himself already turning red. At least he was warmer that way.

Finally he turned around, with a perplexed expression to match the absurd question, "...wanna run that by me again, Yamcha?"

"The Soul!" Yamcha made it clear, "Do you think she's gonna be cute?"

_Oh Yamcha_, "Well...firstly, I don't think now is the right time to be asking that," the former desert bandit rubbed the back of his neck guiltily, smiling and trying to snicker away the awkwardness, "and secondly...what makes you think our Soul is a woman?"

Yamcha's daydream was already shattering, "I don't know! We had a lot of...like, deep conversation and stuff! You just don't really talk about that if there wasn't some kind of connection...I mean, right?"

Tien gave out a hearty laugh, causing an increasingly heated Yamcha to fluster, "Hey man! Come on! You know how long its been since I've had a date? Can't a guy hope?"

"I think you'd have a better chance with Frieza."

_Oh...he heard about that, huh? _"W-what? Where'd you get that idea?"

Tien shrugged his shoulders, "I hear things, okay? _Knew it. Just great._"

"Are you kidding me? First off, Frieza called me handsome! Can't help it if he's right," Tien's eyes narrowed in slight defeat, "and second; even if I was into that, Frieza is evil! I don't know about you, but I don't get along well with evil."

"I don't think that's ever stopped you before..."

"...you don't know that!"

Tien closed his eyes, already regretting this conversation, "No, yeah, I'm sure she's cute buddy."

The stoic human resumed his search, leading ahead as a clueless Yamcha stood there for a moment in thought, the cold wind rushing through his mountain of hair.

"...gosh, I hope so."

Tien had to admit; he loved adventuring with Yamcha. However, his own mind had also wandered to the Soul, "If you ask me, I hope our friend truly is powerful. It'd be nice to have a martial artist from Earth show that we aren't completely reliant on the Saiyans to win our fights."

"Wow, I know what you mean. But you know, in a way, Goku really isn't a Saiyan. I've always felt like he's been one of the guys you know?"
Yamcha had a point, "I know, but its like we just can't defend ourselves unless Goku is around," Tien insisted, "we can't even keep up with Piccolo."

"To be fair, we've never kept up with Piccolo. And besides, we've had our moments, haven't we?"

Tien was trying to search his history for what Yamcha meant, "Can't say I really recall the last great moment. I don't remember a I was truly helpful outside of cleaning up the mess."

Surely he was merely keeping his humble demeanor, but Yamcha was starting to feel a little guilty.

**Dammit Tien, give yourself more credit than that bruh!**

"At least you've been trying, which I'll admit is more than I can say for myself. Not to mention, remember when you stood up to Cell? Man, that was just the coolest! Putting him where he belonged, right in a giant hole in the ground!"

...oh.

Yamcha gave off a hearty laugh, "Yeah man, I'm sure its not over for us. Not by a long shot!"

Tien found himself trying to brush off the sudden surge of pride, humming in implied agreement, "You know, you aren't so bad yourself Yamcha. I may not say this a whole lot, but I'm glad we've known each other all these years. That whole clone business kinda reminded me of that."

Yamcha stopped in his own tracks as Tien went on a few more steps before doing the same, turning around to catch the wolf looking up to the sky with a hand upon his chin.

**Huh...I guess that's true. I'm pretty awesome, huh?**

He smiled and glared at Tien with a friendly familiarity, "Hey...thanks dude, that means a lot...really."

Tien smiled in kind, returning his focus to the march ahead, "Come on, let's go find these Dragonballs so we can make another friend, right?"

"You bet...buddy!"

...**General.**

The title kept ringing in my head. The way things were going I'd admit it was all beginning to feel like some kind of twisted fairy tale. I was merely trying to figure out my role in it.'

I gazed upon myself in the mirror provided with gusto by an enthusiastic Guldo, holding it up with a professional touch to get my good side.

There I was...bearing a custom-fit uniform made specifically for yours truly. A set made just for me. A chest piece, one hastily yet satisfactorily branded with the Ginyu Force brand at the last second as if to remind me it might not have been the Ginyu name for long.

The incredibly pronounced pauldrons, a part I admit brought out something...just so right in the image before me. I loved the pauldrons a lot.

A pair of white gloves and matching boots, I felt as if I were going to pilot some kind of one-man
spacecraft. I could feel my fingers snug in the gloves and my toes wiggling with room to spare within the boots. Everything just felt so perfected in the craftsmanship.

And...a cape. Just for my set, they gave me a cape. A long, rather large white one, clasped almost seamlessly onto my armor.

The armor itself was incredibly flexible and surprisingly comfy. I could fall asleep in it if I really wanted to.

And to top it off, a black body suit underneath that fit my form...almost too well. In a way I felt naked, and yet at the same time...it was flattering my form somewhat. Not to mention they decided to give me the briefs variant, which showed off more of my thigh than I may or may not have been comfortable then.

After a moment of shyness, especially with the eager little green alien mirror man and the carrot topped seamstress as my audience...it began to feel right.

And as I gazed into the transformed Earthling General in the mirror, I thought to myself.

...damn, I look good in this!

Recoome pumped his fist in excitement, "Come on, dude! ...uh, I mean General, dude. You gotta like, totally flex!"

...uuuuuh.

Guldo chimed in, "You gotta shake that money maker honey! The world has to know you've got what it takes to represent the Ginyu Force!"

They both gave me a toothy, yet genuine smile in encouragement.

*General dude? Honey?*

**Oh no...what have you gotten yourself into?**

I'll admit, I took a good long look at myself in that darned mirror, hands resting on the torso section of my in hesitation.

I was beginning to admire my...attractiveness in this set. It all just felt so...

Delicious.

I was instantly addicted to the sight of myself in this armor. The cape, the matching extremities, the brand logo. Hell, even my exposed thighs were looking nice today.

I turned around to check out my backside, hands on my hips in an uncharacteristically sassy fashion for myself, the cape just out of the way enough for me to get a good look.

...oh.

*I got a nice butt!*

**Are we done here?**

Recoome leaned past me, kneeling to level his head with Guldo's as if he were sneaking in a whisper, yet declaring it proudly, "I think our General likes it Guldo!"
"You'll make quite the attractive member to our squad if I may say so! You'll definitely want to be a front-and-center poser!"

**Will you guys stop being so awesome? I can only take so much!**

Ginyu, nestled in the corner of the armory at attention, brought in compliments of his own, "If I may say so, the cape just looks stunning. Truly our master shall be represented with the utmost respect and honor with you as the vanguard of our return to form!"

I just had one thing on my mind.

"Am I to dine with Frieza? Is...*that* what is happening?" I managed to ask, tugging the collar of my black undersuit in a bit of premature anxiety.

"Fear not, General! For you already have the most prosperous future imaginable with Lord Frieza intent on capitalizing upon your unique situation!"

*That was quite the sentence!*

But I reeled back, "Its just that...I'm not really an outgoing person. I uh...usually get take-out."

The three fellow comrades-in-arms gasped in complete disharmony, much to my dismay.

"Captain!" Guldo panicked, "We have a disaster to prevent!"

Recoome added, "You don't wanna like...*blow* this, man!"

Ginyu found his arms in an awkward position, as if he were carrying two invisible logs, "I...*we* must correct this, General! Come with me to the kitchen! I'll have Burter teach you some table manners right away before its too late!"

Dropping everything Ginyu frantically reached for my arm, and with a mighty yank, and the support of his underlings, I was mobbed away towards a deeper section of the crystal palace.

*Back to panickeing.*

**BACK TO PANICKING!**

Chapter End Notes

I have sort of found a perfect structure to base the rest of this story off of with all the little ideas I've pooled in my thinking bucket. Honestly, I'm so happy with myself on how much effort I've put, and am still planning to put into this sucker. I hope you have enjoyed reading my silly little adventure thus far!

This chapter was supposed to be much larger, but I found a way to sort of chunk it down in my head and I think I can pull it off the way I want to more easily, and hopefully it ends up better paced that way~
Chapter Summary

Are we capable of impressing Lord Frieza?

Also more thoughts on the Soul! This time from Krillin and Eighteen~

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"You must address him as Lord Frieza at all times. Refrain from putting your elbows on the table. Do not drink wine unless Lord Frieza already has a glass in his hand...trust me..."

I did, as Burter hovered over me with one leg atop a chair making a whole bunch of hand gestures as he spoke like the wind, wearing a rather clean apron while his best mate was behind a counter furiously seasoning away sporting a dirtier apron of his own.

Ginyu was at attention behind me, arms folded yet with a nervous expression. He really seemed to worry about the sanctity of the banquet...or quite possibly my safety.

Should I be worried for my safety?

Once Ginyu entrusted my table manners class to professor Burter, Recoome and Guldo had raced off to go prepare the dining room. Apparently it was to be a room somewhere within the compound being converted at that moment, with a nice greenhouse-glass walling on one side to get a view of the barren crystal basin below our elevation stretching to the horizon.

To me, that sounded like it'd be a bit...rad.

A view of the alien terrain comprised of beautiful crystal basins and plateaus?

So romantic.

...ahem.

I sat in a chair in a strangely warm cafeteria in this base, this stronghold that I was beginning to realize was more of a make-shift palace than anything that ever intended to grace Frieza's indefinite presence.

This whole place must have been cobbled together on short notice for such a task, as it originally seemed to have been a modest garrison for this part of the galaxy. Somewhere an army commander would point to on a map of the universe and ask if this section was even worth sending troops to, moreso done out of need for keeping the section's planetary citizens content and docile.

"Lord Frieza likes to interrogate his guests throughout the meal," interrogate? "so be ready to answer any and all questions. Don't stare at Lord Frieza when he's chewing his food...trust me."

Yikes.
I sat politely with my hands on my lap, like some kind of nervous student at middle school, my cape draping awkwardly between my rear and the chair itself and bunching up a bit. My only hope at settling my pre-dinner jitters was to listen and catch as much as I could from this critically vital lecture from the fine dining curriculum.

"Oh, and General...I-I can call you that right?" the blue serpent hissed with a hint of apprehension.

Listening to Burter politely and respectfully trying to avoid incurring any wrath I could be capable of was definitely a bit surreal, even more than bowing before Frieza.

*That* was terrifying...*this* was slightly worse for me.

Was I really going to command these men? Hold superiority over Ginyu outside of letting him call the shots of the squad? A task I was certain he could handle better than me, to be fair. Have my own personal Saiyan muscle break my rival's legs should they so much as look at me the wrong way? To unless the bees with the gesture of a hand? Let a swarm of Frieza's finest lay down their lives for me? To order the destruction of a village late on their taxes?

To wage war?

I forgot Burter was waiting hand-and-foot on me for a moment, only towering over me due to his sheer height unable to allow any proper groveling.

"Y-yes! Uh, Burter...in fact, I hereby **order** you to refer to me as such from here on out!"

*Huh, I don't think that was too harsh to ask actually.*

Burter took his foot off the chair and clicked his heels, "Thank you, General! Anyway, as I was saying-"

*Why would Frieza entrust me with this? I'm just a stinkin' Earthling!*

*Powerful or not...*

I was making a mental list of questions, were they to be asked at opportune times during the get-together with Lord Frieza, and now why making me General of all things was one of them. I realistically had no hope of getting to ask any of them, let alone receive any answers to them.

I had the strongest urge...an awkward one that would make no sense coming from someone of my sudden position of power.

I looked up at these strange, alien men. These fascinating and diverse merry men. These gaudy performers and thrill seekers. Someone even Frieza didn't mind having onboard for his overtly classy reign of terror.

They've been nothing but helpful for me in the hour or so I've gotten to be around them, and yet they were now under my command.

A huge wave of responsibility...and maybe even parental instinct, was revving its engine up inside me.

This urge was overtaking me, I felt I owed it to them for unanimously helping me in my journey to power without really asking for anything in return other than a chance at companionship.

There was something about this whole thing that was working its way into my bloodstream, forcing
my heart to beg for the adrenaline rush of being Frieza's right-hand.

Despite the terrors I myself might take part in, a fact I was working towards trying to minimize, I was feeling myself more and more anticipating the thrill of wrecking some fools for my overlord.

...I decided as much as I wanted to tell then, that maybe it'd be best saved for later. It would probably mean more then.

After we've had experience out on the battlefield.

Burter made a quick stop to lean over his shoulder towards Jeice's counter, as what looked like some kind of alien lettuce was being chopped. Or it could very well just have been stolen Earth lettuce.

"Jeice! How are you doing?" Burter shouted.

"Everything is looking all right," the handsome red alien squawked, with that thick accent of his, "I just need a few more minutes. You gonna help me move it all, I hope?"

Burter gave a thumbs up over his shoulder, "You can count on me, battle buddy!"

...I haven't forgotten about you Nappa.

The blue snake turned back to face me and Ginyu, "Well Captain, I believe I have done everything I could in the time we had. With all due respect, General, do you wish me to repeat anything for your convenience?"

Not really...I think I actually got it all! Fear will do that to you every now and then.

"I believe the situation is in order." I phrased in a steadfast, confident demeanor.

I don't ever remember learning the correct phrases or jargon...and yet I was using them, apparently in an efficient manner.

Hey, I'm kinda okay at this!

Still a little nervous, but we're getting somewhere at least!

Captain Ginyu finally relinquished his anxiety, sighing sweet relief and wiping his brow before returning to a more confident, dignified range, "Excellent work, Burter! You are hereby relieved of this duty and may fully recommit yourself to the culinary effort! Make us proud, soldier!"

Burter snapped to attention with a heel click and a bow, "Thank you, Captain!"

As the cobalt speedster dashed back to behind the counter, immediately knowing his place in Jeice's scheme of things within seconds, Ginyu shifted around my chairspace to meet my gaze at attention. He kept his space out of respect more than fear.

"I believe everything is in order! If I may," He stretched out a welcoming directional arm towards what looked like a hallway to another section of the compound, "This way, General!"

I stood from my seating with a...rather powerful stance, I remember puffing out my chest ever so slightly and bringing my arms to the side with fists clenched.

The General personae was already forming itself within me...
...whoa.

**We must be ready.**

I hesitated a bit with my response as I processed this miniature experience, further muddying the line between reality and whether I was in some kind of dream this whole time.

"...very well, Captain...escort me to the *soiree*."

*Did you just try to be cheeky?*

I swallowed my awkwardness as Ginyu simply went with it, as if it was an attitude the purple veteran were actually appreciating.

I strolled into a stride for the hallway, with Ginyu close behind to my right so as to keep delivering me the guidance I needed throughout this complex.

"And Captain," I started and stopped in my tracks for a second, just before leaving the cafeteria room.

Ginyu shorted his march just in time to avoid regrettably bumping into me on accident. He looked mildly perplexed, and maybe a bit nervous as if he were wondering if he had screwed something up.

And if he was, I hoped he'd understand I'm *not* that kind of General, or at least not really trying to be.

"Uh...yes, General?" he anxiously asked, respectfully yet still full of his natural bravado still there.

I looked over my shoulder, giving him a grateful smug, "Thanks for helping me. Let the men know I appreciate the warm welcome I've been getting since I've been your General...for, uh...the last hour or two."

...you could have worded that one better dumbass.

"Thank you, General!" was Ginyu's only response, as I hurried my return to marching ahead. Ginyu got the point, and I was too embarrassed to say anything else.

But at least I said what I wanted to say a few moments ago already.

Before long I found myself and Ginyu before a set of unassuming, generic steels doors. Some kind of *space titanium* no doubt. Not unlike the kitchen actually, although I was too busy trying to learn my dining etiquette from Burter to really notice that fact until just now.

Ginyu professionally navigated his way past me and opened the door for me.

"After you, sir." He rather calmly insisted.

Ajar, I could see through into the rather large room, complete with earlier mentioned reinforced glass viewing wall. A blue-tinged room, a distortion brought on by the mild glow emanating from the crystals of the outside planetside, one Jeice and Burter were now coming in from another entrance with the silverware and dinner platter full of crustacean dishes.

Frieza was already seated at the end of the modest dining table in the center of the room, with what could be described as the surprisingly decent adornment.

Guards in each corner, and if you payed attention you could tell they were on the brink of breaking a
sweat themselves. It ain't easy to be in the same room as Frieza after so many setbacks I guess.

"Good evening...General." Frieza spoke with a vaguely threatening tone, leaning forward on the table and resting on his elbows, fingers interlocked like a cunning business shark. A galactic tycoon.

This...consumer. Like a plague spreading throughout the galaxy. An eater of worlds. A devourer of time and space.

And yet, through sheer will, seeing him again provided me with less terror than I was anticipating. I was trying to get used to it already, for my own sake.

"Please, take a seat." Frieza invited with an outstretched hand. A mutual social transaction. A cordial request to allow myself to grace his presence in what apparently amounted to a much needed recreation for the Lord.

Ginyu bowed on cue and immediately turned back around to exit, closing the door gently behind me. An act I followed with a head turn, awkwardly. I made right to refocus my gaze upon the banquet before me, still be set upon and adorned by the Ginyu Force's very own red and blue caterers.

Frieza rested his arms back into his previous state of fingers interlocking, "We have much to discuss..."

The sun was finally setting upon the day as the happily married couple skimmed across the contents of the forest lake, several fish leaping above the surface, leaving a trail in anticipation as the mysterious guardians graced their habitat.

Eighteen had to comment as they flew over, "This is quite the beautiful lake...we should bring Maron here and just...have a picnic or something, you know?"

Krillin smiled warmly, Dragon Rader beeping intensely with the evidence suggesting their prize was in the waters below. He absolutely loved the fact he was having some time with her again after that whole clone ordeal.

He kept taking glances at her as she flew slightly ahead, remembering he had to keep an eye on her and keep up lest he lose sight of her. Not that he wasn't getting great at that, but every now and then would suddenly rocket off too fast with a sweet chuckle and he couldn't pick up her energy signature, losing track of her within moments.

She knew that, and it would become a game for her seeing if he could track her down again. She would even purposely find a random tree, or fence if flying over the city, and lean against it with her usual swagger...waiting patiently for him to win their game of hide and seek. He'd manage to find her every time so far, always leading to a silly moment of teasing and the eventual embrace from Eighteen for putting him through the effort.

Of course, she didn't have time to enjoy this personal past time they shared, as they were possibly racing against the clock. They weren't in too much of a rush...but if there was a chance the Soul was still alive, in captivity of that purple monster, then surely they would seize the opportunity to wish their living friend back if they could.

After all...they couldn't wish the body back to life and wish it to Earth in the same wish. A bit of a disturbing thought for them.

Krillin was remembering another terrible thought. The one Bulma had brought up back at the
wreckage.

What if Frieza tried to turn the Soul?

Eighteen took a glance of her own towards him, expecting to be lost in a daydream when instead she could tell something was wrong.

"Krillin? Something wrong?" she asked, making sure her voice could be heard over their constant breaking of the sound barrier.

He didn't hesitate to share his concern, after all it was his adoring significant other, "Yeah...I'm worried about our mysterious benefactor."

"I'm sure they are all right. They sound like one tough cookie."

Krillin had to remember that Eighteen never actually got to meet their guardian angel, "They sure do. But I'm not as worried about that as I am...something else. Like...what if that fiend Frieza recruits our pal?"

Eighteen took a moment to gasp under her breath, she knew he wasn't kidding about that. Wasn't like him to do so.

"I know, I'm freaking out too," Krillin continued, "that Soul gathered a lot of power. They spent so much time together in our little adventere, I'm wondering if Frieza hasn't brainwashed em' or something! I'm afraid Frieza would be too tempted to try and put a collar on it."

"Or a wedding ring..."

Krillin and Eighteen gave each other an awkward look after that little...joke?

Was she joking?

Only Krillin's sudden laughter reestablished communications between them. Eighteen realized he must have thought she was joking...something she tended to do, so she didn't blame him. Then again, she wasn't entirely she that's why he was laughing.

"Oh man, have you seen Frieza?" Krillin boasted, looking as if that little line had filled him with an odd sense of hope about the whole thing, "He's terrifying! He'd probably sooner cook our friend in a cauldron and try to brew a potion out of em' or something!"

Now it was the Android's turn to chuckle, her giggling as smooth as silk to shorty's ears, "Yeah...maybe we got nothing to worry about, our friend probably wouldn't be so easily bought out for the sake of Earth. Not without being wined and dined first anyway."

She no longer minded that her concern wasn't taken so seriously. To her, Krillin had a way of laughing off potentially serious matters just as much as he was willing to be the one to bring them up. It would always just work out in the end for him either way.

Eighteen quickly regained her cool, giving him a warm smile, "Well, in any case I'm glad to see you are starting to turn around. For a second there I thought you were going to explode from the anxiety."

Krillin smirked, as he wiped away the tears of joy from his cheeks, "Sometimes I got better things to do than keep worrying about something. I understand this is serious and am ready to help out. I always have!"
"I know Krillin...I know."

Eighteen took the opportune moment to reach over and grip Krillin's hand mid-flight, giving him more warm, fuzzy feelings.

"What say we try and hook up our friend with a special someone once we meet em'?" Eighteen suggested in kind.

His expression lit up with fireworks, "Hey! That'd be a great idea! We could even go on a double date!"

After a moment of laughter between the two lovebirds...a pause to take a second to appreciate each other.

Eighteen gripped his hand tighter in reaction, a huge surge of mutual affection domino effect was in motion and there was no stopping it.

They both gazed at each other, both changing from a smile that could lower one's blood pressure to a more confident grin. They knew what they had to do.

Gripping each other's hand tightly, they both went full power and blasted off at maximum speed, eager to get their hands on that Dragonball and bring their friend home.

Eager to welcome the Soul to their little family.

Krillin started welling up with more tears, still thinking of the absurdity of the thought, "Man oh man! Can you imagine Frieza putting the moves on our friend to try and coax em' into becoming evil? That'd be a sight to see!"

"I must admit, sending detachments to New Namek in order to secure the primary ingredient for this particular dish; has been one of my more..." Frieza daintily secured a portioned chunk of Jeice's handiwork upon his overly-priced elegant eating utensil, eyeing it intently as if reunited with a part of his soul, "...grateful decisions in life."

I sat opposite across Frieza at the table, not too far away from him but not too close either. Enough to see each other's expressions if need be, but not to invade each other's personal space.

I stared at the dish before me for the longest time. This mangled up crustacean delicacy imported from Piccolo's faux homeworld. The one that was created through the Dragonballs surely.

Not the one the avid restaurant-goer in demon form destroyed. Remembering hearing about that fact kept me from taking a bite more than anything.

That, and for all I knew this meal would kill me. Not like Jeice would have been ordered to apply an assassin's poison. Nor would Burter have spiked my portion of the wine placed before me.

Right?

I was honestly more afraid the garnished deceased crab upon my platter was riddled with bacteria my body wasn't accustomed to. Cosmic diseases that could very well cause my head to explode before I could say Kamehameha.
Then again...my body was pretty supercharged as of late. My immune system could be on overdrive as well. Maybe...

Maybe I could just have a bite? Take a sip?

Surely, there were some kind of medical trained personal onboard? Or some kind of space magic dunk tank for me to soak in and grow my missing legs back?

...RIGHT?

Taking part in the banquet had to be better than refusing the meal this curator of the finer things in life had arranged before us?

If anything, maybe I'll just throw up my meal and that would be enough to end this situation. The tension in the air was intense, despite Frieza's efforts to put me at ease...genuine or not.

He seemed cordial enough.

He seemed liked the kind of guy that would be rather courteous to those who served him...or at least served him well.

You know who he is. You just do.

You spent enough time in that thought bubble to gauge everything you could about him. Enough. Heard the stories. Listened to his side of the tale. Listened to anyone and everyone that had ever crossed paths with him.

Frieza was looking for an achiever. A go-getter. A champion to do his bidding.

You know Frieza demands perfection. Searching for someone who was going to get things done for him. Someone he could trust.

...maybe the least you could do is show you trusted him...terrified or not.

I worked for a solid ten seconds forcing the pistons in my arm to get going. To make a move.

Reach for the wine glass in front of you.

Every fiber of my being was screaming at me. To extend my arm.

I glanced at Frieza...still in the middle of his own meal. One little bite. Then one little sip.

Maybe he likes to soak his crab in that red wine with each bite? Get a nice little taste of it in his pallet to use like a paintbrush on each morsel.

To me he seemed more and more like a guy with a very strict regime for himself. He has to have it his way every time. He had to.

What was he going to expect of me?

I finally worked the courage to reach for that glass. Dark red liquid swirling in anticipation.

Still keeping my gaze upon the unsuspecting Frieza.

But I waited.
My hand was poised.

Something about this situation caused me to wait.

*Wait. Let him see you grab it.*

After a moment, Frieza finished his port endeavor, bringing his own glass away from those dark lips of his.

He trained his sight to me, moreso initiating a sort of inspection of the situation.

He stayed his gaze, locked eyes with me, registering my sudden interest in the same wine he had indulged in moments ago.

For some reason, I fought against the notion that what I was doing was awkward.

No...I wanted Frieza to witness.

I secured it between my middle and ring fingers, the stem nestled between while the bowl of the glass rested in my palm. Carefully I lifted it away from its secure place on the table, bringing the rim to my own lips.

Frieza never stop staring. His vision piercing me with precision lasers and making me forget my locker combination to my now probably destroyed personal safe back at my capsule home.

I kept my play in motion.

I swiveled my neck, rotating my head's orientation to face off to the right. Nothing in particular in that direction other than the unfortunately bland walling.

**The whole time, I kept my eyes focused on him.**

He was studying me.

**Or maybe he was admiring my boldness. This clearly daring maneuver of dining room etiquette.**

I finally committed, levering the glass to spill its contents, sliding down my throat with a pleasant sweetness to it.

A swig that still made a valiant attempt to flash dry my throat anyway.

**A strong, definitely foreign brand. But one not completely unfamiliar. Something about it seemed quite familiar indeed.**

**Familiar.**

Frieza's visage became a smolder, yet one with a hint of indulgent evil.

His smirk crept up into something sinister.

For all I knew, I had just signed my death warrant.

*Or...maybe he was pleased.*

**He enjoyed that little stunt.**
That's it...just play the part.

Having downed a modest sip, I forced myself to bring the glass down, keeping the same tempo I had relied on to retrieve it in the first place.

I never removed my gaze from him.

Not for one nanosecond.

... 

This isn't a game.

But it sure feels like one...doesn't it?

That little navigation of swagger seemed to make an impression on Frieza, as the next thing I knew he was delivering a modest chuckle as if to let me know to relax already. The guards in the room must have all sighed sweet relief then.

Or maybe it was the alcohol. For all I knew it was about to do all kinds of stuff to me I wasn't prepared for. I prayed it was merely similar to Earth booze.

"See now? Was that so difficult?" Frieza teased, yet with a huge tone of malice still lingering in that pie chart, leaving me wondering what to call the rest of the percentages.

I couldn't tell if Frieza were being sincere or keeping up the ruse. Or if being sincere was part of the act.

"You really think I'd have expended resources halfway across the galaxy just to...what, assassinate you?"

...perceptive.

"Then why did you send Nappa, of all people?" I asked, choking on my own words after the fact.

Did you just ask Frieza a question? Frieza asks YOU questions! Didn't you listen to Burter at all?!

Frieza very much refused to hesitate, his tone filled with acid, "I don't need to explain myself! Do you seriously suggest that my decision was the wrong one? You are sitting across from me at this very table aren't you? Alive? Perfectly healthy? Enjoying a meal my own men toiled to craft just for the two of us?"

Oh.

"What else could you do when you have nary a single outpost at your command with the rest scattered across the galaxy? I was certainly not feeling like dispatching the Ginyu Force, that much was clear. They would surely have made a spectacle of themselves for that filthy monkey and his pathetic little entourage to see and simply swoop in and destroy them without anything gained."

I suppose that is fair.

Frieza scowled at me for the longest moment. My motor skills virtually ceased to be.

However, after the longest moment of my life, Frieza unfurled his grimace and closed his eyes in what seemed to be exhaustion, releasing all the pent-up anger he had so quickly built, "But Nappa on the other hand, his power level is shockingly pathetic at this stage. I assumed correctly in believing
he would not draw any attention. Quite frankly, I'm amazed they did not find you first. That would have certainly thrown a spanner in the works."

That was quite a mood whiplash!

No kidding, you see what Frieza has to deal with?

...right.

I felt my fingers again and took the opportunity to repent for my sins, "Apologies, Lord Frieza. I did not mean to insult your intelligence nor belittle your rule."

That's it, keep it smooth. Keep talking like you know what you are doing.

But seriously, how am I doing this?

I've had no real lessons in the field of class, let alone dining with royalty. Never mind conversing with one.

Forget the fact that this was the most inhumane, vile being to ever exist.

And I wanted to get on its good side.

Frieza gave up an inch, "I suppose you don't have royalty where you come from on Earth. Truly saddening. Maybe when I grace that rock with my presence again...things will turn around for you humans."

That line turned my blood cold, and my sins indeed were crawling on my back.

"But...I find I must reciprocate. After all, your ignorance is not your fault. You seem to be handling your manners outside of this little moment with some degree of skill. So...no need to apologize."

...whoa.

Little moment he says.

Ignorance.

I made a foolish yet brave point to correct Frieza, carefully picking my next few words.

"Actually, we have plenty of royalty on Earth. But nothing I've ever really had any interest in."

Frieza smirked his usual smirk, a sight I was glad to see after the short-lived heart attack I had just gone through, "Well...we'll just have to fix that, won't we? Still...I must admit it was very unlike me to lash out so thoughtlessly over a simple question."

We'll just have to fix that...won't we...

He rested his elbows on the table and continued further, sounding dangerously close to gossiping, "Its just that I've been without my personal comforts for some time. After all, I spent my whole return to life on Earth until now."

Tell me about it...I miss my fridge.

"Oh but you didn't come here to listen to me prattle on, you came to discuss business...but then again, you have no choice, do you?"
I couldn't help but wince at that last part.

Frieza was good at the game, I'd give him that much.

"Eat up dear, don't wish to let excellent cuisine like this go to waste now, hmm?"

I politely did as he asked, my heart still beating from the reality of the situation.

I was more or less this man's prisoner. But then again, maybe not. I had no way of knowing whether I could take Frieza on in a fight or not. I didn't have anything to compare to.

However, I wasn't here to fight Frieza...was I?

I was here to serve. To seek out my own glory.

It might have even been fate. My destiny.

I grabbed what looked like the fork next to my plate, still steaming with a heavy seafood aroma.

It was making me hungry, for certain. Sending the contents of my stomach into a frenzy.

I hadn't eaten anything all day. I woke up, was ready to go out on some silly adventure...and the rest was history.

I methodically took the fork and gently pierced a carving of my serving, taking a knife with my free hand and carefully extracting a piece.

Frieza was still watching me, I could tell.

I was some sort of experiment to him for all I knew.

"Well, while you are busy taking your sweet time I ensure you know what your duties as General of my Army entails."

His voice caused me to hesitate bringing the morsel in for a goal, fork wavering just in front of my face with a delicious-looking section of pinkish-white fleshy material to consume.

I had to be honest, "Truth be told, Lord Frieza, I have a vague idea of what you expect of me. I've never..." I glanced at Frieza, who hadn't changed an iota of smugness, "...I've never held a command or anything like that. If anything, all I've ever had were bosses in my life. Things you'd find quite boring."

Cripes don't get snippy with him!

Frieza didn't take any offense, merely laughing off my comment much to my surprise, "Seriously, its not as difficult as you would make it out to be. I don't care what you do or how you do it...so long as you deliver results, and manage to do so without making a mockery of me."

...oh.

But.

What kind of results?

I decided now was the time to finish the fork's journey. I took a bite, careful as to not look like some kind of pedestrian eating a hamburger at some local diner, but instead as if I were some kind of
foreign dignitary being given the royal treatment.

"For starters, I'm placing you in command of the Ginyu Force. Captain Ginyu himself is an experienced commander and should have no trouble passing on some of his expertise to you."

Well that's a start.

WOW this crab is pretty good! I was expecting worse.

I chewed away contently, trying to keep my mouth closed and just enjoy myself.

"I expect you to be able to handle yourself in any given situation."

It was very savory, melting in my mouth with a hint of seasoning and just the right amount of saltiness.

"Let me put it this way...you don't want to let it get to the point where my presence is required."

...OH.

I just couldn't stop myself from refraining from further chewing.

Everything Frieza said just permeated a demand for subservience and respect. Everything he said would just destroy my confidence in feeling any sort of strength around him.

"In fact, I do have a task for you that I believe you can handle without much difficulty."

I braced myself, swallowing my morsel in a thinly-veiled attempt to hide my panic. My mind was racing with the possibilities of the horrors I would have to commit for this man.

Is there any hope he won't actually ask you to do anything terrible?

Maybe he just needs a good drill sergeant. You've seen how out of shape his lackeys are after all.

Or maybe he wants you to tackle a rival warlord? That could be less...scary in its own way.

"But we'll get to that in a moment. Firstly, I was wondering if you had any concerns to share?"

...wait. Frieza just asked me if I had concerns?

...as if he cared?

What...WHAT?!

"Excuse me, my Lord?" I dared to ask, knowing the answer full well already. My thought process was taking a nose-dive as this conversation was already defying a few of my expectations.

"You heard me. Don't make it a habit of having me repeat myself." Frieza's words lit a gunpowder fuse in my mind, and I found myself scrambling to get with the program or watch the fuse reach the comically over-sized barrel of dynamite.

Get professional dammit!

I cleared my throat in a mixture of bravery and shame, "I...uh," come on, think of something, anything! You are supposed to be Frieza's General...what should a high-ranking military official such as yourself be doing to better the Frieza Force?
"...actually, I wanted to speak about your Saiyan underling for just a moment..."

Frieza's eyes narrowed. The dragon had just made his mark.

"What about him?" was all he replied, more than a dash of contempt within his tone.

Oh Nappa, you are gonna get me killed.

**WHY DO I CARE ABOUT CAVEMAN?!**

I felt that lack of feeling again. My whole body shutting down in a panic freeze, arms resting on the table like some kind of groveling worm. The kind you see at the King's side trying in vain to impress him with worthless advice that would more often than not backfire.

*Was that what I was to become? A worm to the Emperor? Some kind of backstabbing advisory subsisting off scraps and the very notion that Frieza lets me live?*

I brought up something that was bringing disdain to Frieza as my opening concern and it was going to cost me something.

**Drive the damn point home at least.**

I brought myself to continue through sheer willpower, "I believe I know a way to make him far more useful to the cause, and become a more powerful asset overall."

Frieza's eyes shot open a little bit, "Are you serious?" he snickered, almost breaking into a laugh, "that monkey can't even go Super Saiyan. Not that I would welcome such a disgusting transformation to operate under my ranks in the first place. Do you intentionally seek to frustrate me?"

...shiiii-

*No. Stand your ground. You'll never prove your worth if you just grovel all the damn time. Unleash your true self...and sooner rather than later.*

"Uh...well, my Lord Frieza," the lord kept his disbelieving smirk.

**DON'T BE A WORM.**

My fists tightened up as the feeling came back to my appendages, the blood pumping through my system at Mach speed.

"Don't you see? That's just it, my Lord," Frieza retained his visual indifference, "to have a Saiyan under your ranks, a Super Saiyan no less, obedient and at your beck and all? It would make quite the statement to the galaxy if its own Emperor can tame one. Mold one of his own to do his bidding."

Like a beacon of hope, a chance at showing my true worth, Frieza's expression shifted ever so slightly to one of mild amusement.

*That's right.*

**Convince him.**

"Surely it would be better than just tossing him to the side or holding him in reserve. I could take him under my wing. Make him my official partner," Frieza perked up at that last part, more shocked than
anything, as I continued my cause, "and give me...maybe a month, and I could make him your very own Super Saiyan."

Frieza furrowed his brow, seemingly in disbelief, "And how exactly do you propose this?"

...a fair question, "I know how to unlock Super Saiyan. I could pass on the knowledge to him, given the chance."

Naturally my Lord's eyes shot wide open, yet still with a sense of odd serenity emanating from him, "And how exactly can you possibly do that? You aren't even a Saiyan yourself so how would you know?"

Frieza's words came off as that of a man completely disillusioned with my snake oil sales pitch.

But I knew the answer my answer was real, "Let me explain for a moment if you will, my Lord," Frieza narrowed his gaze again, feeling what I was going to say would be rich, "I can't go Super Saiyan, you are right about that. But I know what it takes."

I continued, "After spending so much time with the Saiyans as a Soul," Frieza reacted as if he realized immediately what I was talking about, eyes firing with the sudden bursting urge for knowledge of my supposed sorcery, "...I've learned some things. For every fighter I inhabited, yourself included, the more abilities I memorized...I can do anything you and the others could do. And that even includes how to go Super Saiyan if I were physically capable of actually doing it."

My superior pondered for a moment, hand brought up to contemplate with the chin in his usual way, "And...how am I supposed to believe that without seeing it firsthand? Do you have any way to prove such an...outrageous claim? Understand I am not a man whose time you should be wasting on a mere hunch."

I had to think for a moment in slight desperation. How would I prove to Frieza I knew what I was talking about?

That I knew exactly how to perform the Kamehameha. That I knew every single fighting pose the Ginyu Force had in their repertoire. That I knew how to power up past my limits.

That I knew how to...

...let me show you.

I brought my full visage to Frieza, narrowing my own gaze to lock with his.

I raised my right hand halfway, bending at the elbow and pointing a single finger upward.

I focused my thoughts.

I smirked...I don't know why I smirked...I grinned like I was possessed by the sum of all evil.

I could feel the electricity coursing through my hand and into my index with an all-to-familiar shock.

The noise of what sounded like some kind of laser cannon revving up to fire echoed throughout the dining room as the guards suddenly found themselves sweating in fear.
And in a short moment, I concentrated the energy in my fingertip to bring about a dense balls of bright purple ki.

Hovering there, emanating that intense synthesized buzzing hum Frieza had patented with pride.

A Death Beam...ready and waiting to commit an execution.

Frieza, the light of my purple ki gleaming off his features like an unholy fire illuminating a mad sorcerer learning yet another forbidden dark art...sat there stunned.

His mouth was caught hanging open slightly.

There truly was no way to describe just how much joy seeing that had brought me, along with some much needed hand in this game.

He looked...proud even, as a smile crept onto his face with all sorts of sinister intent behind its formation.

I allowed the energy to dissipate into nothingness above my finger before lowering my hand, regaining my senses.

I realized I had lost myself there for a moment. I forgot what I was even doing there.

...what even came over me?

Frieza finally broke out of his uncharacteristically child-like gaze, snapping back to his own reality and giving a quick shake of the head to make sure.

The guards had all retreated back to their positions, already having clearly failed their job to protect their master were I out to assassinate Frieza.

That was a bold, stupid move on my part...but one that seemed to work.

Because the next thing I knew...Frieza gave a dignified clap, the kind where your fingers slapped into your palm three times at low impact speed, "Simply marvelous! I think you and I are going to get along famously."

THAT'S RIGHT.

I could feel my body release all tension that had been building up, that anticipation for a fight. Even if I could defeat Frieza and his men in a daring escape, I wouldn't know how to pilot that ship back to Earth. I wouldn't know which direction to even go.

Then again...I could just use Instant Transmission.

In any case, I had to roll with this sudden change of pace in this game of courtroom drama. This shift in the battlefield.

But this wasn't a battlefield. This was a beautiful friendship in the making.

And unholy union. Man and monster.

I nonchalantly went for my glass of wine once more, taking a sip to calm my still-rattled nerves.
Frieza brought his elbows to the table and folded his arms, leaning forward to rest on them.

He eyed me with great interest. That damn smirk of his. It was enough to fill me with determination.

I lowered my glass once I had satiated my palette, bringing a handy dandy napkin to my lips to wipe off any unsightly leftover residue.

The tyrant before me seemed to be enjoying the sight of me clearly trying to seem bigger than I was.

**But you are big.**

"I must say," Frieza interrupted my self-indulgent thought, "surely you still have questions you wish to bring up. Don't be shy, my dear," something about the way he phrased my dear this time around was enough to hatch butterflies in my stomach, "tell me...is there anything you'd fancy to bring up? No time like during a sophisticated dinner, wouldn't you agree?"

He sure enjoyed being vaguely threatening...even during polite conversation. However, there was definitely more sincerity this time around, at least what I could gather was genuine Lord Frieza brand kindness.

*I'll take it.*

I did have one thought bugging me this whole time. Speaking of bugs.

One bubble hovering over me waiting for me to finally pop it.

I took a deep breath and carefully phrased my words once more, "I do, in fact, have a thought wandering my mind."

Frieza coyly retorted, "Do go on."

His voice carried his usual playfulness. I still felt like some kind of new plaything for Frieza to toy with.

"...what happened after I was ejected from the last time I was in your company. After we had finished off Android Twenty-One?"

I didn't expect Frieza to shift his sight off to the side after hearing that. He seemed to be off in his own world for the briefest moment.

That's what I would have thought until I realized he had kept his smile the whole time, "Well, other than the fact that I'm obviously still here should be at least some sort of indication?" *uh...yeah,* "my men and I couldn't secure a victory. But you know what? We'll get back to that in due time."

*I think I know what my first assignment is going to be.*

And the thought was still something I wasn't ready for.

But...still, my question...

"What happened to Cell?"

My question didn't even faze him, "He's gone. That's all you need to know."

*...just like that?!*
"How did he-" I tried to ask, but was stopped by a raised hand demanding my silence.

"Lets just say things didn't go as we had hoped. If you truly want an explanation, now is not the time for one. Neither party gained true victory that day. In fact, both sides suffered a casualty. Ours was Cell. I'll spare you the details."

...who was the other casualty?

Moreso...was Cell really dead? Just like that?

**WHAT HAPPENED AFTER I LEFT?**

I refrained from asking any further lest I faced off against an increasingly pained overlord, "Very well, Lord Frieza. Then may I inquire something else on my mind?"

Frieza lowered his silencing hand and resumed his dinner, gripping a fork and knife to indulge in more of the red and blue duo's painstakingly prepared cuisine, "Proceed."

"I was just wondering...why me?" I asked, finding myself afraid of the answer at that moment.

He didn't answer right away, instead slicing up more giblets of his meal in preparation, carefully cutting each morsel down to size one section at a time, "Isn't that obvious? You carry tremendous power. And I believe I perfectly explained this back when you resided in my person as a spirit, no?"

That he did, but there had to be more to it than that.

"Doesn't matter that I'm a human? Let alone one that might be interested in the safety of my planet?"

*That might have been a little too honest.*

Frieza immediately lowered his utensils, making a point to instigate a loud enough crash of silverware clanging upon the table.

Immediately I was wondering if I was merely frustrating him, or had outright enraged the sleeping dragon.

"You understand that in return for my hospitality and the chance at greatness I expect you to aid me in the destruction of Earth, don't you?"

**OH.**

**NO.**

**OH GOD NO.**

I could feel my face lose its color, my eyes shot wide.

"Do you not understand what is at stake here? Your planet must suffer for the indignities its inhabitants have caused upon my Empire! And if you aren't onboard than I will find a replacement and have you tossed out of an airlock!"

**I shot up from my chair, scooting it back violently and hearing the immediate sounds of wrist-mounted weapons clicking into action and training upon me as the guards finally looked useful for a change.**

Frieza did not move an inch, sitting there with a scowl that quite frankly...was breaking my
...why is Frieza angry over this?

My world slowed down again. This hellish nightmare I had willingly thrust myself into began to crawl as I thought as fast as I could.

I just made a grievous error. A heinous mistake. Frieza was surely going to swallow me whole unless I somehow twisted this situation into something positive for my master. Something that made sense for the both of us.

*Shouldn't this already make sense on my part?! I don't want to blow up my planet! I have friends and family there!*

*I'm not going to be party to...

...wait...that's it.

**THIS IS IT.**

I formulated the plan on the go, it was a longshot...but one Frieza would surely appreciate and I could walk away with the third rock from the sun intact.

"I'm saying you are making a big mistake, Lord Frieza!"

That got Frieza's goat, as now he snapped to attention and stood upright frighteningly fast, knocking his chair back off its legs violently, "Do you want to run that by me again?! GENERAL?!”

A vice grip clamped onto my spine. My muscles tensed in preparation for a conflict.

I was preparing for things to go south, but kept my composure for my sake. *Our* sake.

I shot for the gold medal, "I'm just thinking it'd be a waste to destroy such a precious resource, don't you agree?"

Frieza pounded his fists on the table in rage, possibly out of feeling as if he were going to lose this *precious asset* over something as *petty* as feeling homesick.

"*Precious resource,* what are you *blathering* about?! Other than for growing *Saibamen,* Earth has no inherent value in the grand scheme of things at all! No valuable fuels to siphon, no strategic inclinations to garrison troops there. Tell me, what good is it to *stall* like this in vain for your Earth to exist yet another miserable day?!”

Normally, I believed any other goon, any other lackey, would have folded under the pressure without argument. And from then on be remembered as just another maggot that tried to question Frieza.

But I did have one trump card, one even Frieza had to understand was a powerful one indeed.

"*The Dragon Balls.*"

Frieza stood upright in shock...as if he had forgotten those existed at all. But he knew they existed. He knew they could be a valuable commodity indeed.

He struggled to comprehend it seemed, "But...last time I tried that, I couldn't get them to work. And I already had my underlings use up the Dragonballs before to resurrect me the first time. Are you..."
saying you can...use them repeatedly?"

Frieza already knew this, yet I guess he didn't realize it until now. He had been brought back to life twice now.

I had him.

"Only if Earth remains intact."

The words hit Frieza like a truck, as he found himself looking down in intense concentration. His wish for the destruction of Earth was evolving into it's subjugation.

He paused for a moment, in what seemed like limbo, before slowly and methodically turning to the glass wall. With a regal air and filled with inspiration, Frieza marched over to take in the view of the crystal basin before us, bringing his hands behind his back and allowing his tail to coil around his legs.

I didn't know what to do as I remained standing at my end of the table. The guards were starting to sweat bullets as they kept their sights aimed squarely at me, wondering if it was time to execute me or not for my insubordination.

But I knew there was one thing I had going for me.

The one thing I could give Frieza with my plan...the thing he wanted most. More than anything else in the universe.

*Immortality.*

Frieza remained there, absorbing the sights his outpost planet had to offer for the longest time.

I made my own decision.

A declaration formed in my head, one I never in a billion years believed I would ever utter in a serious capacity.

I don't think any one in their right mind would.

**But I wasn't in the right mind.**

I was in an impossible situation. Trying to appease an alien overlord, one no one could have ever conceived in their darkest nightmares.

And I had a solution.

**One that could potentially satisfy us both.**

I took a deep breath, exhaling my next few words as profoundly as possible, "Let me conquer Earth...and let me do it my way. In your name."

*Conquer Earth...at least this way, the damage could be minimized. Lives would be spared. Maybe I could even pull it off without any casualties to speak of.*

My words got to my master, forcing him to look over his shoulder at me with a deadly visage.

One that turned into an unusually warm smile, "...you see, I knew you had it in you. You see all the angles, don’t you?"
...wait, is he really talking about me?

"To answer your question as to why I picked you, other than for your talents," thank you, ",...I saw someone who could lead that day...the day we were bonded for trial and tribulation. I saw a commander. My General."

I fought very hard to keep from turning red in the face.

I think Frieza noticed this too, even as he refocused his visage towards the crystal basin out yonder, "You showed a natural ability to handle yourself under pressure. Together, with your lead, we were able to defeat many of those abominable clones that day."

It sounded more like Frieza knew all the angles, if he truly had registered all of these facts that day.

But...I never thought I'd be painted in such a competent light, let alone as if I were some kind of legend in the making!

"You knew who to take control of, when to hold back, who to hold in reserve, when to strike, when to take up a defense, when to go all out. You displayed impressive skills, one a wartime commander should certainly possess."

My mind was racing at the craziness of this whole thing. Realizing how much it was beginning to make sense, and yet how it was already turning into something I could work with. Something I could do and still sleep at night. At least that was the hope.

"You said you've never truly experienced royalty on your planet?"

Oh yeah, I did say that huh?

"Well...I believe Earth shall finally have a worthy ruler."

Chapter End Notes

If it felt like this chapter took forever to come out in comparison to the short amount of time I've been spacing each chapter so far, its cuz' I in fact took my sweet time with it. I definitely write better when I take my time and proofread.

It definitely has been a bit of a hackjob and very well might continue to be XD

One thing I'm glad about is I was able to come up with a memorable enough 'nickname' for the Reader, one that would hopefully fit the theme of the story a tad bit, also easier than playing the gender neutral game lol. 'General' also just sounds cool, and I always felt like there should have totally been some Lee Ermey type Army Commander character commanding Frieza's armies. And easily Frieza's strongest underling~

Not saying the Reader has the personality of Lee Ermey necessarily unless that's how you think of yourself.
Chapter Summary

The Ginyu Force entrance exam begins...

...and hey! It looks like Gohan has a little surprise for his old man!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The stars were beautiful among the night sky...or maybe this planet was perpetual nightfall.

*It must be nightfall on Earth by now.*

My mind wandered back to home as I stared upon the crystal basin before me, standing upon the edge of the compound. A huge wave of guilt splashed my face like an unforgiving tidal wave, dragging me into the ocean of regret with the riptide of homesickness keeping me in as my thoughts returned to my busted capsule home.

Maybe when we head back to Earth I can pick out my stuff from the rubble and salvage something worthwhile.

After all, I couldn't live without my favorite pillow. And a couple other things I'd rather not mention.

*I wonder if Frieza will allow me to have my own pillow in my palace chambers...*

The spectating tyrant had retrieved his anti-gravitational seating device, surely something he liked to be seen in for public appearances. Or maybe he just liked how comfortable he was. Hard to tell.

*Frieza is just over there, maybe I’ll ask—*

...Holy crap you are going to become the ruler of Earth!

*THE RULER OF EARTH.*

*I know, I deserve it, but I didn’t think it'd be so soon.*

*Hang on now, nothing has been accomplished yet. You have a tremendous challenge in front of you. Several in fact.*

It was only then, just then, that I was starting to feel like...

...someone else.

Like someone else had been taking the reigns on my actions. Making decisions for me.

Or was I right before and this was me all along?
The ruler of Earth.

You have the entire Z Fighter roster to contend with. Maybe not necessarily on your own, but having the Ginyu Force, Nappa or even Frieza alongside you might not be enough.

Not at their current level.

I had concluded through all the stories I've heard that Ginyu, his merry men and Nappa have not had any sort of training since their demise on Namek and Earth respectively. No time to grow as fighters, whether they were truly capable or not.

Sure, maybe Nappa took a boost from his death thanks to his Saiyan heritage, but it was clearly not going to be enough. He wasn't even a Super Saiyan, as much of a stale thought as that was becoming.

I had to figure out a way to boost their strength.

If I am going to...face Goku, Vegeta, Gohan...any of them...

But at least I had time to figure that out. Plenty even. Its not like there were any sort of way for the humans to rescue me.

A part of me still felt like a bag of rotten tomatoes. Surely I had made many friends that day. Not just Frieza and his underlings.

Goku, that silly man with a passion for fighting. And boy was he good at it. He even claimed he couldn't wait to fight me...maybe that was a good sign. If a guy like him saw me as a chance for a good fight, surely I could give him one...

Krillin, the short little bald guy. Incredibly encouraging, and very positive about himself at times...yet humble. He clearly wasn't a powerhouse by any means, but he sure was smart. A clever fighter who know his own strengths and weaknesses. Not to mention quite the pal. I would have loved to be his friend...

Yamcha, a guy still trying to find his place in a world full of Saiyans, Androids and aliens. He had a lot to say, and you know what? I could admit I felt sorry for the guy at times. I sincerely hoped he could find a niche for himself, maybe even find some glory to be had once more. He definitely bared his soul to mine...they all did...

Tien, the stoic warrior. Something about his confidence in me filled me with a great sense of pride, one I did not know I could even possess. He was even ready to teach me martial arts alongside his fellow master. That would have been fun...

Piccolo, his history was obvious once you got to know him. Something about knowing someone so cruel could become so noble was rather heartwarming. Just that fact made me wonder if Frieza was capable of changing his ways...probably not.

And it was silly of me to even think that way for just a moment, let alone after what I had done today.

Vegeta, number one himself. Maybe he could never beat Goku in a fair fight, but if there ever was going to be anybody that could do it. Hearing about his family did put a positive spin on his whole routine, and I found myself enamored with that thought. Knowing even guys like him could find
their one true love and even have a family? *I wonder if Frieza was looking to...wait, nevermind.*

Goten and Trunks...well, Gotenks. I never did get to have much time with the dynamic duo as themselves. Instead I dealt with their fused personality, the hyperactive Gotenks. A nuclear power plant in human form. They seemed to really look up to me as some kind of *cool adult*. To be an idol for a kid, let alone some kind of super kid? It felt great.

Majin Buu, the happy blob of candy. Possibly. I wasn't sure what he was, but I knew that he was innocence incarnate when he didn't want to smash your *stupid face* in for something *naughty*. I don't know how Goku and the others were able to get a powerful being like him onboard, but surely it must have been quite the tale to tell.

Gohan, the son of Goku. Already grown into a powerful fighter himself. Easily the biggest potential out of all of them. He could maybe even outpace Goku after awhile if he cared to.

All these characters, some I had heard legends about...the Cell Games, the Piccolo Wars...these living myths wanted me to be their friend...make me one of them.

*Its a shame really...I never did get to meet Mr. Satan. Even Buu revered him. He must truly be some kind of god!*

But now they were going to become an obstacle. Adversaries for me to face. There was no other way.

*Were Frieza's words at the dinner true? Did one of them perish as well?*

*If so, who?*

*Was Cell really dead? Or did Frieza merely think he was dead?*

*Cell was hard to kill after all.*

*...*

*Nah, don't worry about that. Its Frieza we're talking about. Of course Cell was destroyed...*

*...I hope.*

Right now, I had bigger concerns.

I had a find a way to defeat them...without killing them.

And beating them was in itself a monumental task.

I made a choice...a choice based upon what I was concluding was insanity. Something within me had always been there, and it was bubbling to the surface.

And yet I was beginning to wonder my previous train of thought...had it something to do with being merged with Frieza? Had I resided within him for so long that I inherited a part of his soul?

*Did he even have a soul?*

*...*

*...why did I choose Frieza?*
"Are we going to have a match or what?" the voice of Nappa broke my waking nightmare, "I'm gettin' bored here."

He sat on the edge of the upper level basin next to me, watching down below at the warm-ups taking place as his legs dangled over the short cliff side with hands resting upon his thighs. Frieza's castle behind us a ways. We had made our way to a nice little plateau so as to keep the collateral damage to a minimum.

I folded my arms in annoyance, not that I was mad at the guy, but I definitely had to remind him who was in charge without reminding him physically.

"What, want your General to put on a show for you?" I gave him a knowing smirk as he looked up at me standing over him.

Nappa scoffed, "Did you enjoy your fancy dinner? I tell ya', you higher-ups don't know what eating is. If you want, I can take you to this one planet I know where they got good game. Tasty meat."

Something about Nappa now being my chum and suggesting sharing his favorite hunting spots with me just warmed my heart, which if I didn't look out was sure to become frigid in this game of death I now played.

"Thanks, partner." I smiled in whatever bliss I could muster at the moment.

"Hey, with all due respect, you know what I think? I still can't believe Frieza made you a freakin' General. I mean, how lucky do ya' gotta be to get that position without doing anything?"

I knew now why Frieza gave me such a prestigious promotion, but I decided to humor my new partner, "I don't know, maybe Frieza just likes my good looks."

Hehehe...

"Tch, if I didn't know any better, I'd say Frieza was just looking to replace that pretty boy Zarbon."

Wait...wait, what? Who??

My voice cracked, "Uhh...who are you talking about?"

The wind kicked up and gently gave my cape a little adventure as Nappa narrowed his gaze in confusion.

"Oh, right...forgot you are new here," Nappa scratched his dome rather primitive-like, "its been years since that guy has even been around. I heard he bought it on Namek while I was gone. Got done in by Vegeta, go figure."

Nappa brought himself to his feet, his might now towering over mine as we stood side-by-side still watching the pose rehearsal below. Not like he could overshadow my presence at this point.

"Guy named Zarbon. I swear, he was always around Frieza," he folded his arms, "the guy was a complete suck-up! A total brown nose! With the overly shiny hair of his and his wearing that ridiculous version of our armor."

I don't really know anything about this guy...but he sounded hot.

"Always hanging around Frieza and trying to score points with em'. Hell, if I didn't know any better,
I'd say Zarbon was trying to friggin' marry the guy!

...huh.

"I mean, gimme a break! That idiot had another thing coming if he seriously thought Frieza even had any interest in a snake like him. People like him make me just want to go punch rocks."

I chuckled and gave him a smug smirk, "Sounds like someone was jealous."

Nappa turned to face me, getting in my grill with a menacing lean in a vain attempt to seem intimidating once more, "Oh I am not jealous of that little twerp! I'm just saying its not fair he got to be top dog around here just cuz' of his good looks, or...whatever."

Something about the way Nappa was so easily riled up made it all the more fun to tease him.

I shrugged, "Relax, shouldn't you be happy right now? Thanks to you, you get to be the General's right hand man. I'll be counting on you, so why don't you show some gratitude?"

My words weren't harsh, yet I feared Nappa would take them the wrong way.

Luckily that was not the case as he stood upright, calming himself a bit from his rant "...yeah, I guess you did come through there," he gripped his neck, as if trying to ease the pain, "coulda' came through a little sooner, no?"

*I might not have, but I would have if I could.*

"Yeah...sorry about that." I scratched my neck, reliving the horror of Frieza's retribution.

Nappa paused for a moment, dropping his arm back to his side and giving me a quizzical look.

I raised an eyebrow, "Something wrong?"

"Nah...just...," Nappa closed his eyes, looking a bit relaxed, "...I don't know...I must admit I'm kind of glad to have a partner again. One who isn't such a jerk."

...oh Nappa...

...who the hell was Zarbon?

...what was I to Frieza?

I gave a shrug of feigned indifference while making an attempt to ignore my feelings, "Well...prove yourself useful and you'll find I can be a benevolent and generous boss."

"Don't worry about that," the mighty Saiyan got serious, eyes shot open and muscles pumping up as he hunched over, "I'm going to show you that I got what it takes."

I resumed my gaze to the try-outs below, "I suppose that means I'll have to show you how to go Super Saiyan...and get you strong enough to be able to wield it."

He looked at me with clenched teeth, "Hey...you serious when you say you know how? Even though you ain't a Saiyan?"

I brought my arms down to the sides, giving him a pretentious scary smile over my shoulder, "Just a matter of time."
Nappa could tell I was dead serious. I surely was.

I could feel it within me, without being able to use it. The golden aura. The overflowing emotion. It was enough to send me into a primal state if I thought about it for too long.

**Not like a really needed it.**

I cleared my throat and clasped my hands together with a mighty clap, "Anyway, I've kept everyone waiting long enough...time to show everyone what I'm capable of."

**Not like Nappa needed further proof.**

I hopped off the edge of the cliff and glided upright towards the squad lying in wait below. I could feel the cape flowing behind me, providing me with a flashy entrance appropriate for a wannabe conqueror.

They were getting ready, my next challenge. Five of the most elite warriors this galaxy had ever known. Their poses perfected and their bravado at maximum.

**They really think they have a chance, don't they?**

...I mean, maybe I can beat them. I'm pretty sure.

Ginyu was the first to notice me, looking over his shoulder with a smirk before he and his men instinctively lined up on either side, arms behind their backs out of respect for their commander.

I landed gently upon the crystal surface, glowing surprisingly less so the closer you got to it. I bent my knees ever so slightly upon landing, calmly righting myself up with fists on either side. The wind was still howling, Nappa returned to sitting over the edge of the basin, my Lord high above in his easy chair still anticipating my display.

I could hear my cape flapping behind me, in this calm before the storm.

The Captain greeted me heartily, "We've been waiting for you, General! I hope you enjoyed the rations my boys prepared for you?"

Coyly I patted my belly, my palms knocking against the surprisingly solid armor, "I sure did. My compliments to the chefs."

Jeice and Burter began to blush, as if their senpai just noticed them, glancing at each other in giddy acknowledgement.

Ginyu eyed my hands resting upon the stomach portion of my chestguard, "The armor suiting you well?"

"I've honestly never worn anything more comfortable." I continued my praise as I moved my hands to the shoulder pauldrons, adjusting them into further snug, noticing Recoome give Guldo a thumbs up with returned acknowledgement.

Ginyu lowered his head, feeling the moment, "Well then...there is but one thing left to do."

*I'm ready.*

"You understand...to become a member of the Ginyu Force is one of the greatest honors one could possess. Its not like joining any old Army."
Recoome stepped forward, keeping his arms behind his back, "The Ginyu Force always gives one-hundred percent!"

Guldo stepped in, "The Ginyu Force does not discriminate against race nor gender!"

Burter followed up, "The Ginyu Force looks out for their fellow comrade!"

Jeice took it home, "The Ginyu Force has the greatest health care plan in the galaxy!"

The Captain got intense, "And to become a member of the Ginyu Force is to pledge your undying allegiance to our one and only Lord Frieza!"

He continued his professional drill sergeant routine before I could even have a chance to process anything.

"We take our practice seriously! Together, we will form an even greater set of fighting poses unlike the cosmos has ever seen! It will be glorious! By the time we are through, EVERYONE in the galaxy will know of us, and of our master!"

... 

...HECK YEAAAAAAAAAH!!!

As my fists tightened in anticipation I made a quick glance up towards our idol, who was...blushing, but keeping that forced smile on his face out of what respect he could muster for the Captain.

Something about seeing Frieza blush just put me at ease about this whole thing.

Ginyu managed to regain my attention, "You see...this is merely a formality. To become a full-fledged member of the Ginyu Force, normally an exam must take place. You must show that you can at least match, if not overcome, one of our current members. In this case, your challenger would have been picked at random."


"But...since this is a special case...you will fight..."

*Was it going to be Ginyu himse-?*

"All five of us at once!"

...oh.

......OH.

"Including yours truly," Ginyu brought a proud thumb up to his chest, "for you see, I am Captain Ginyu! Frieza's strongest warrior! The best of the best! The cream of the crop! I have never known defeat in all my years of service!"

Jeice, his own number two man, pointed out with apprehension, "Well...as a matter of fact, that one guy did beat you up on Namek."

Ginyu's face turned red and his eyes exploded in shame, "...uh...okay, maybe one loss under my belt..."

I held up two fingers teasingly, "Two losses. Don't forget when Frieza had to give you a wake-up
call just the other day."

I could swear I heard Frieza chuckle under his breath high above.

The sweat ran down Ginyu's brow, "Errr-well," he coughed nervously, "in any case! You are our General! And Lord Frieza agrees its only fair to truly put you to the test!"

I glanced back up towards the Emperor in his imaginary owner's box, apparently looking forward to the gladiatorial exhibition with glee.

*Of course this was his idea.*

Ginyu wasted no time, "Ready men?!"

*This was going to suck, huh?*

**Look what you did to Nappa. Surely these guys aren't that much tougher, even if there are five of em'.**

A unified shout echoed throughout the land, carried by the increasingly howling wind under the eternal night sky of this foreign crystalline planet.

"READY CAPTAIN!"

"All together now!" a quick change in placement and the gang posed single file, spreading out with their arms behind their back. The sound of their collective stomps resonating upon the rock candy ground below us.

*Oh! OH! HERE IT COMES!*

They locked into place, their universally recognized group pose materialized before me as color-coded smoke erupted from seemingly out of nowhere behind them.

"THE GINYU FOROOOOORCE!!!!"

*Fireworks. Rainbows. Pure jubilation. Puppies and kitties-*

**Will you pull yourself together?!**

By the time I returned to reality I found my hands covering my mouth.

...I just couldn't help myself.

*You just couldn't help yourself, could you?*

Meanwhile Frieza, still looming above, enjoyed a thought to himself unbeknownst to me.

*At least someone can enjoy the Ginyu Force's antics without dying on the inside. That will be most useful during the boardroom stage of a planetary invasion.*

Me versus five of Frieza's elite Special Forces...surely I was still in no danger, even if they could pose a threat to me. But honestly, I had no real way to be sure. No way to gauge the power gap between us. I was still shaken to find that I dwarfed Nappa rather hilariously. I had no idea his real strength was unfortunately underdeveloped compared to the powerhousees running around.

Then again, after the clone crisis how could I know any better? Everyone was on an even playing
field then.

Now I was up against not one but a quintet of infamous bruisers. Battle-hardened and far more feared than any Saiyan back in their day. At least that's how I took it from the little information I managed to pick up and corroborated with others for any overlap.

Compared to Nappa, any one of them could be much stronger. Maybe even insanely so. Still nothing compared to Frieza of course. And of course Guldo wasn't strong so much as he was 'talented', maybe that'd be something I'd have to fix.

Nappa himself shouted from way back to my previous lookout spot, where he still sat on the edge, "Come on I wanna see some carnage! My ass is already asleep!"

All five of the colorful spectrum before sighed a tear, feeling unappreciated for their attempt at art. Frieza himself dug his mug into the palm of his hand in tranquil frustration.

I regained my commander's composure and braced for the chaos, putting myself into a fighting stance.

I didn't even realize it, but I had taken the stance of a fighter I had been linked with before as a Soul. But...it was Frieza's.

I found my hands on either side in that monstrous welcome, that chance to embrace your doom with open arms. One foot slightly behind the other, aligning my legs and lowering my gaze just enough to appear like a dragon in waiting. The fact that my cape was flying proudly in the rustling gale helped with this sincerest form of flattery.

_This was your instinct now._

...I...

...am I...?

I had another surreal moment. A cold sweat broke through my skin. I remember feeling like a walking sin. A living nightmare.

I was a terror immersing myself in darkness.

I could hear the piercing wail of madness spearing my heart.

The screech of insanity blanketing me in a thick coat of whale blubber.

_What had awoken in me?_

_HEY, KEEP IT TOGE-_.

Ginyu launched with varsity grade gusto, now rocketing towards me with intent to deliver a strong jersey. The other four split off in different directions, and for a moment I lost each of them as their rainbow separated and they became different colored blurs in the corners of my eyes.

_Slow down. You got this._

_Here he comes, the Captain. His cronies surely readying some sort of practiced maneuver just for me, something even the greatest football coaches of Earth wouldn't ever conceive. If there was one thing these guys excelled at without peer it was practice and application._
They mastered the basics and put it to practical, if not a bit flashy, use. Everything they did had to ooze glitz and glam, I wondered if I could take advantage.

Surely, I had mastered their choreography myself, so I knew how-

...I knew every one of their moves.

As my reality resumed its default speed, I brought up a single elbow to counter Ginyu's punch, utilizing some footwork to keep myself from being pushed back as I could sense Recoome's massive girth now behind me.

I catapulted myself straight up into the air before he could grab me, and his grizzly arms embraced nothing as Ginyu pursued me without skipping a beat.

As Recoome comprehended his failed grapple check surprisingly quick, I found myself much higher in the air and dodging Ginyu's upward scissor kick. Followed by a duck to avoid his horizontal karate chop. Then to the side to watch his straight right straight strike nothing but air.

Before we knew it, I was dodging strike after failed strike. The Captain was not able to land a single hit on me. I didn't even have to block.

I could see his teeth already gritting in anxiety, realizing he was going to have to change tactics quick to see if I wasn't just good at dodging.

Just at that moment, I brought forth a solid straight palm and smacked Ginyu directly in his face, delivering a restrained blunt impact. It was enough to stop him dead in his tracks, as I felt the surprisingly smooth features of his purple mug fill the space between my fingers like dough before the laws of physics kicked in, and the transferal of force sent him back a few meters through the air before he found himself hung on an invisible hammock trying to regain his orientation.

Before I had time to make sure I hadn't accidentally killed him, I instinctively brought my fists up and outstretched my arms at ninety degree angles, just in time to nail both Jeice and Burter in the gut and halting their sneak attack spectacularly.

They gripped their stomachs in short-lived agony when without warning my body shut down. I was caught in a mental spiderweb as I hung there in the air, unable to move my arms or legs. Before I could see if I could just break free from Guldo's telekinetic vice, I felt Recoome's strong grip around my ankles, exerting might as I could swear gravity forced my innards to lurch up into my throat from the sudden shift downward towards the planet.

He threw me down with the skill of a professional wrestler, letting me go at the last second as I found myself flying end over end backwards in a tumbling hairball, smacking into the hard, crystal basin and leaving a crack that stretched for several yards in many different directions like a crooked snowflake. A dustless explosion of jagged crystal rocks erupted around me from the impact, masking my presence from their sight for just a moment while I got a dextrose shower.

Recoome laughed mightily, "Ha ha! We got em' Captain!"

Guldo crossed his arms with a huff, "Your welcome!"

Jeice wiped the sweat off his brow, "That was it? Oi, Nappa!" the Saiyan brute still sat there a ways away, taking notice of Jeice's mockery, "Are you sure this is our mate back on Earth?! You didn't snatch the wrong human did ya'?!"

Burter snickered, "No way! This has to be a mistake. Our General should be a lot tougher than that!"
Against their expectations, Nappa gave a wry smirk.

**He knew I was just getting started.**

Maybe a little too well.

Ginyu knew too apparently as he regained his senses with a face rub to deliver some distress, "You idiots! Don't let your guard dow-"

I exploded through the rocks, my golden ki trailing behind me as I blasted off towards Recoome.

"What?!" was all he could react with before I delivered a solid right knee into his gut, his teeth almost falling out with his flailing appendages reaching past me in reaction. He didn't go flying, instead merely falling off my knee after a moment before I put myself back into a fighting stance appropriate for the sky.

Before Guldo could even realize his comrade was falling like an anvil, I charged the energy through my fingertips and rapidly formed a solid white ki ball in my palm, launching it immediately, as casually as one would throw a flat rock to skip across a lake, at the green short stack. He barely had any time to initiate a Time Freeze before he vanished into thin air, the ki ball imploding into a modest firework display where he once stood.

Surely the impact wouldn't have been lethal, anything bigger than of a simple energy blast would utterly annihilate the poor thing.

Having no time to relocate the gremlin before Jeice and Burter would come in flying, I prepared my next borrowed technique.

Timing it just right, I brought my arms to my chest in a crossing gesture and instantly gathered enough power, before throwing my fists up towards the heavens and screaming blood murder as pink ki exploded around me in an ever growing bubble. The shockwave once again prevented the dynamic duo from making any attempt at offense upon me effective, the outward force of the pink ki smashing into their everything and sending the hapless pair flying even further than the results of their previous attempt.

They could do nothing but grunt their silly woes, before I realized Guldo had materialized before me a mere couple of inches away from my face, delivering as mighty of a kick as he could muster into my cheek.

His foot didn't even leave any sort of impression, and a grimace of absolute consternation blossomed on the four-eyed invader.

He shuddered, his foot still resting upon my face, finally retracting it moreso out of fear than respect for his General.

I felt an expression of glee take over my face muscles, followed by my hand snatching Guldo's ankle and tossing the bugger over my shoulder towards Ginyu, who had been watching his team get torn apart.

Just before the alien projectile reached Ginyu, the Captain weaved out of the way in the nick of time to deliver a sleight of hand that caught Guldo's hand, having the courtesy to orientate the smaller teammate upright and pat him on the back for his brave effort.

Guldo rubbed the top of his head as his outer set of eyes had closed in exasperation, "Thanks boss."
Ginyu trained his gaze upon me, "I don't think we can take on the General individually!" he shouted for all his men around the battlefield to hear, "Ginyu Force! Attack!"

Jeice and Burter, finally coming to, sped towards me with a touch of blind fury. Within moments they were on either side of me throwing strike after strike, and I was effortlessly blocking with my elbows and knees. Our impacts were sending ripples through the chill air at breakneck speed.

Then Recoome joined in, forgoing soothing his bruised chest and rushing into the fray to start throwing his own punches and kicks. Even then, the additional four limbs flying at me weren't even close to a problem.

It wasn't quite like the melee I had back on Earth with the forty or so grunts, but the caliber of the men involved was definitely a far cry in comparison. These three men in particular definitely had strength and speed far greater than Nappa's, at least four times as much if I had to guess from the little amount of combat data I was gathering. Maybe I was a little off, but it gave me some clarity.

I was in a league of my own...even compared to these guys.

If Ginyu was a Captain, I really was a General, appropriate considering he wasn't joining the fray.

"Now!" he suddenly demanded of his green comrade, proceeded by my body shutting down yet again at Guldo's gesture.

For a brief moment, my three attackers backed off in slight surprise, not believing that would work again on me. However, their smiles confirmed their situation was indeed in their favor yet again.

Certainly, I had no movement once more, and I found myself beset upon by an absolute walloping as the three resumed their place in the previously futile skirmish. After a moment, I found myself trying to count all the times I had taken fist to the face or a kick to the ribs.

All I could hear was the sound of my body being beaten senselessly, gloves fists and legs pounding any weak point they could find, and yet I was barely feeling a thing. My head would rock back a tad and my chest would shutter a bit with each blow, but there was no pain to speak of.

Absolutely none.

They made their brave assault anyway, even though their expressions had quickly changed from joyous revenge to that of increasing vexation.

After a moment of futile flurries, they backed off across the horizontal axis and stopped short just a few meters away.

I heard Ginyu deliver mighty battle cry, catching my attention just in time to witness a large purple ball of hope for the Ginyu Force leaving his outstretched hand and bearing itself upon me, gapping the distance between me and Captain in a flash. After nearly being blinded by its intensity, I was engulfed in its fury as a cloud of purple ki and smoke surrounded my pocket of atmosphere. The sound of crashing thunder echoed throughout the airspace.

Ginyu, as serious as he'd been the whole fight, found himself with his mouth slightly open trying to catch his breath, the sweat beating down on him, a blood vessel or two swelling up around his cranium, one eye closed in anxiety. Finally said eye opened to try and see through the smoke.

Recoome asked first, "Did...did we get em' this time?"

Burter stuttered with his hands on his head in a panic, "We...we didn't kill our General, d-did we?!"
Funny how they can go from such confidence to doubting themselves.

...it was humbling to be sure.

I fanned the smoke away with a free hand in front of me, my armor hardly bearing any scuff marks to worry about buffing out later.

As the realization set in, Ginyu and his elite team each popped their eyes out of their skulls and shook in their skin as the wind blew the rest of the smoke away, my cape reaching out to try and go after it in pursuit along with it.

Frieza watched on, the spectacle more than pleasing him. Surely, to a guy like Frieza the Ginyu Force hardly had to be any kind of challenge, but certainly this was something that was reassuring the tyrant.

I knew it too, as I glanced up to see his amused expression and smug approval.

Guldo stuttered, "N-no way! The Earthling took a full blast from the Captain!"

Jeice shivered, "The...the General just took it!"

I didn't give Guldo any time to pull off any more tricks, fighting fire with fire with the wave of a hand. He was attached to my own strings now, and with an outstretched hand I held him in place as he spread his arms and legs against his will.

All he could do was yelp and quiver, and before Ginyu could react I threw down my hand, sending him like a skydiving piano without a parachute towards the surface and smashing him into his own little crater.

My three attackers each charged a powerful ball of ki in retribution, and within a microsecond I was beset by red, white and blue fireballs flying towards me.

I warped upward just in the nick of time as the three blasts collided and blossomed into a beautiful technicolor flower of smoke and fire.

Foolishly my opposition gave chase upon this vertical fight, sweating bullets as they remembered how that went last time. I could tell they weren't one to quit a situation like this just because they were outmatched.

I brought my hands in front of me, touching thumbs together at forty-five degree angles in conjuncture with my other four digits meeting their opposites, making a pretend set of triangle-shaped binocular...with them in my sights.

Ginyu pleaded, "Ginyu Force! Stand down!"

Too late.

I focused my energy, mixing in just the tiniest, easily-replaceable amount of my own life force with it, the power coursing from my hands towards the center of my gesture.

I screameded with might, "TRI-BEAM!"

As if I fired off an enormous cannon, an incredible and powerful sound blasted off complete a flash of light that reigned down below me. Through the triangle, I could zoom in on their hapless mugs of terror, as the three elite members of the Ginyu Force were met with my power and throttled by the
blinding force of Tien's most powerful technique.

As the report echoed throughout the planet like a crack of thunder, I struggled to see through the flash of my fury.

Once it had subsided, I could witness the carnage. There they were. Jeice, Burter and Recoome. Their armor completely demolished and down to some tattered black undersuits.

They laid there in a rather large, perfectly square cute hole in the crystal. Nary a crack to even speak of around the edges other than the ones their bodies made from their impressions in the crystal.

Swirls in their eyes and their limbs twitching in random places. Their kissers hung open unflattering-like with tongues sticking out of the corners of their mouths, moaning in complete soreness. They were all barely conscious, but definitely out of the fight.

I purposely held back of course. At full power, this technique would have surely and utterly annihilated them into oblivion...and maybe even reach the planet core and set off some sort of catastrophic chain reaction.

Not to mention I didn't wish to drain myself needlessly, as the more life force I stuffed into it, the more powerful the technique could get.

It apparently worked on Cell after all. And Cell was far, far more cogent then even Ginyu...who was the last man standing now.

Ginyu drove the last nail in the coffin of this futile fight, with a begrudging grit, "I...I've seen enough! Stand down men!"

On your feet might have been a more fitting order.

He dropped down to the planet surface in an instant, helping the dazed Guldo back up to his feet before doing the same to the for his more injured teammates one at a time. It took quite awhile, as they were all practically unwilling to even stand at this point.

However, after some coaxing and pats on the back, Ginyu was able to get them upright once more.

They all struggled to gather around Ginyu and lined up alongside him in a spread, hands behind their backs yet again and looking beat to hell. They could barely stay upright and looked like a line-up of zombies.

"We...we welcome you to the Ginyu Force, General. We...we knew there would be no other result."

I could hear the sincerity in Ginyu's tone...he was telling the truth.

They just didn't think it'd be that one-sided.

Why do I feel kinda bad about that?

Nappa leaned forward and rested his cheek on a stilted pair of knuckles, muttering to himself, "Damn...that was some show."

In a flash, the entire Ginyu Force somehow caught a second wind and broke bearing against the wishes of their bodies, rushing over to me and surrounding me with pats on the back and handshakes aplenty against my will.

The entire mood had changed from bitter defeat to pure camaraderie, starting with Burter's strained
introduction as he huffed and puffed, "Welcome...to...the Ginyu Force!"

"Boy...you sure ar...s-strong!" Recoome winced while holding onto his stomach.

"We're going...to make...quite...the team!" Jeice heaved while rubbing his arms.

"Earth's n-never gonna know w-what hit em'!" Guldo nervously chuckled while patting his bruised noggin.

Ginyu stood in front of me as the rest parted away with smiles aplenty, "If I may say General," he outstretched a hand of partnership, "chalking you up as my third loss is definitely worth it to have you on our side."

More fireworks lit in my adrenaline soaked heart and fired off into a dazzling cacophony of pure joy.

I didn't hesitate to shake his hand back, despite that I couldn't quite believe it all just yet. My own smile reaffirmed my situation, "Thank you, Captain..."

*I mean I feel like crap for practically destroying them and their pride, but at least I was one of them now.

I AM NOW A MEMBER OF THE GINYU FORCE!

A glorified almighty janitor maybe, but a mighty one nonetheless!

The sound of clapping above caught everyone's attention, including mine, and the Emperor of the sky laughed haughtily, "OH HO HO HO! Stupendous! Such an absolutely exquisite performance! My dear General, I do believe you have shown your worth today!"

I didn't say nothing...nobody did. We all just stared up at our master. As humble as we could possibly be.

I let the moment sink in, and I think everyone was on board with allowing that just for me.

After the long pause of pride, I straightened myself up as dignified as I could...and bowed before my lord.

"Thank you...my Lord Frieza."

Gohan felt a surge of pride with the Four Star Dragon Ball tucked in the pit of his right arm, wearing a nice tan suit to pose for the mirror. He happily adjusted his lapel and cuffed his links as professionally as possible. He wanted to make sure he made a good impression when he presented his father's particular favorite Dragon Ball to him, already in Gohan's possession before any of this had even began.

It was already getting dark, closer to midnight. The suit was going to be folded back up neatly and put away for the night until he was ready to wear it for the ceremony he had planned for Goku. He had gotten a call not moments ago that Yamcha and Tien managed to find one Dragon Ball, Krillin and Eighteen found one of their own, and Bulma's little group had yet to go searching. Something about her son having a nasty cold and, well...motherly duties came first.

Speaking of which, Videl wilted into view of Gohan's sight, catching her in the mirror before he felt her hair rustling against his shoulder affectionately, "Gohan, you look so handsome in that get-up."
The lucky half-Saiyan scratched his hair nervously, "Eh heh, you think? I kinda like it too. Yamcha suggested it to me actually."

Videl laughed, "Yeah, he's always dressed pretty sharp for a dork."

Gohan bursted out laughing, "Oh man, don't call him a dork to his face, he just might die of embarrassment!"

She delivered a strong brush of the knuckles across the fabric of his jacket, teasingly pushing him in the shoulder, "Hey, I wouldn't do that! I have more class than that and you know that."

He turned to face her with a warm smolder, bringing the Dragonball from the crook of his arm to in front of his chest with both hands, "Not saying you don't."

"So what were you planning on doing with that?" she asked, delicately resting a hand upon the all powerful sphere.

He beamed softly, "Well...I was thinking of giving it to Dad, for his next Birthday I mean. And then maybe we could have spent that day looking for the rest of them. Grant him a real birthday wish, y'know?"

Videl brought her hands to her mouth to keep herself from gasping too loudly, lest she wake their sleeping daughter, "Oh my gosh! Gohan! That's so sweet of you!"

Gohan's face turned into a cherry sundae, "You think so?"

She hummed like an angel to him, "I know so. But..." she brought an inquisitive finger up to her the tip of her nose, "...what would he wish for?"

He carefully brought the Dragon Ball to a hidden, spacious compartment in his closet before removing his tan jacket to hang up, "Well...that's kinda what I wanted to find out."

"If you had to guess...?"

He hesitated for a moment, looking somehow even more embarrassed, "I...you really wanna know?"

She placed her hands upon her hips in a demonstrably sassy demeanor, "Gohan..."

"Heh heh all right all right..." he looked at himself in the mirror, now down to merely a white button-up shirt and tan slacks to go with the jacket, "...maybe Dad would want to bring someone back..."

Videl sidled up next her handsome man, "Oh? Who?"

"...maybe Grandpa?" the answer brought Videl to a more somber expression, but not one without a sympathetic smile, "Maybe...I don't know..."

"I think I get it...maybe you could even suggest it to him."

Gohan frizzled a bit, "Oh uh...I don't know if that would be okay, y'know? Just ask to him like that?"

"You are his son and he loves you, of course he would at least listen to your idea."

Gohan knew that was all too true. Sure, Goku wasn't always there for him, but he he would die for him. Has died for him.

They would always go fishing together whenever there was some peacetime to do so. Goku even
wished he could train with his son, but Chi-Chi put a stop to that in favor of academics. Something even Goku had to understand was important.

And yet, Gohan wondered if his father maybe would like to fish with his Grandpa once more. And Gohan could help make that happen.

But now...there was someone else who needed this Dragon Ball more than anything. The person that helped him and his friends that day.

"Maybe next year...maybe next year I'll ask him..." Gohan was filled with inner peace, "...instead, I'm happy with saving another life using this. I'm sure Dad and the others will be happy to see that I had already found this either way. Makes things a little easier."

He turned to face her, giving her an opportunity to wrap his arms around his neck and shoulders, playing with the back of his hair.

"Oh Gohan...you are such a sweet young man. How'd I get so lucky?"

He didn't have time to react with his intellectual side, but more so with the romantic one, as instinct kicked in and he leaned in for a smooch.

That notion was struck down in a flourish as Piccolo, bandaged across the chest without a gi top to speak of, materialized in the adjacent doorway leaning alongside it with arms folded, "I hope I'm not interrupting."

They gasped in discombobulated attempts to appear nonchalant, causing the already smirking Piccolo to grin even deeper, "I'll come back later."

Gohan took a step forward as Videl smiled pleasantly enough to hide the fact that her cheeks were rosy, "No wait! How are you feeling?"

"Ha! You know I've had worse. Gonna take a lot more than some bug bring me down. I'll see you guys in the morning. Try not to wake me with your antics, will ya?"

The happy couple turned into living fire hydrants as Piccolo swaggered off to rest for the night, the moment too awkward to resume.

They both rotated their heads to meet each other's crimson expressions, both pausing to give off a mutually forced chuckle at each other.

Gohan cleared his throat, "Well...in any case, I'll surprise em' with the Four Star when they find the other six. Hopefully Bulma doesn't pick this one up on her Radar in the meantime. I guess I'm lucky my surprise is still intact since she's not out and about already."

Videl suddenly remembered, "Oh that's right! Her poor kid. Catching the flu at a time like this."

"I hope my little brother didn't also catch it. That would be terrible."

He received a snicker from her, "I'm pretty sure Goten doesn't need to be around Trunks to catch the flu," she giggled, "have you seen your little brother's outdoor habits?"

Another long, less awkward pause ensued.

Gohan brandished his phone, "I better call Mom and find out, just in case."
The locker room was somehow colder than the rest of the complex, the rest of the Ginyu Force having given me plenty of pats on the back and pep talk in celebration of my victory. Not to mention the induction into their ranks. Surely, no raw feelings were had, they were apparently glad to have been shown how its done by their new military commander. A sign that we had a lot of work to do to catch up.

The gang were toweling off and tending to their sores, getting ready to head off for their personal rejuvenation chambers. I found myself trying to hide my embarrassment as I sat on the bench in the middle of the room, remaining fully armored yet surrounded by damn near the entire troupe in the buff with barely a towel around their wastes and necks.

"Boy I'll tell ya," Burter stated, rubbing his shoulder while rotating his sockets, "having the General on our side is a nice start to restoring the glory of the Empire!"

"You got that right mate," Jeice concurred, washing his hands in a nearby sink, "why, with the General our enemies don't stand a chance!"

Nappa was also among us, although he was merely replacing his armor. Guy could probably use a shower, but maybe it wasn't time for his yet. He mentioned something about getting some training in as soon as he could.

He was already putting on a fresh gauntlet, "I'll tell ya this, you Ginyu Force chumps sure do talk a lot, even after getting smacked around."

Recoome pranced over and hovered over the Saiyan, "Hey dude, you got a lot of guts for a guy that got rag dolled by Frieza."

That comment got Nappa to tighten his muscles in contempt, leaning further down as he tried to ignore the mightier ballet dancer.

"Yeah, that's what I thought!" Recoome exclaimed, more of a brag than a threat.

Nappa looked defeated after that one. The sight of him no longer putting up a fight was refilling my guilt-brand gas tank all over again.

I need to get this guy's confidence back up somehow.

He won't become useful to the cause otherwise anyway.

Ginyu barked before I could from in the back as Guldo stood next to him atop a step stool to meet the mirror's level to inspect himself, Ginyu himself standing in front of the same mirror applying some kind of rub to his delicate facial features, "Recoome, knock it off! Show some more class than that, will ya?"

Recoome righted himself up straight, a silly sight to behold when you remembered he was still wearing nothing but a pair of towels, "Uh...yeah, sorry boss!"

The Captain nodded, "Thank you, Recoome. Its always important to show some class in order to have the galaxy truly appreciate us."

Nappa huffed a sigh of relief, already trying to forget this humiliation.

As sorry as I felt for Nappa, I couldn't really get mad at Recoome. Especially since the guy was just so gosh darn friendly to me. They all were.
These were all my soldiers now. Everyone in this complex was my soldier.

Last thing I wanted to do was waste their lives needlessly.

I felt compelled to make it a priority to keep these schmucks alive by any means possible, even if it meant from Frieza's retribution. I could certainly come up with some excuse to do so if needed, as I did with the Dragon Ball trump card in my argument to allow Earth to remain intact.

I still couldn't believe I was going to own that rock now.

I was wondering if I could even conquer it. I still had the Z Fighters to contend with if I made an attempt.

Would Frieza back me up? Or would he be leading the charge regardless of whatever plan I could come up with?

Did I even have a single plan?

Not particularly. My only idea was to subdue Earth's defenders and start from there.

Surely the military would resist. As they had with Cell.

Then again...maybe the military would remember what had happened that day and surrender without a fight if they witnessed the full might of the Frieza Force.

All of these things were on my mind, and I was going to be the one to solve these problems. It was all my responsibility.

I eyed Jeice for a second, Ginyu's own number two guy.

Unable to keep myself from asking, I whispered to the red devil under the mask of running faucets and manly story-telling rucking throughout, "Jeice, if I may ask, what's being the number two man, like?"

Jeice didn't even believe for a second that I would directly ask him a question so casually at this stage, "Oh...you wanna know what being right hand is like to somebody else? Is that correct General?"

Was that too silly to ask of me? "If its not too much trouble."

Somehow Jeice's cheeks turned even more red, purple even, "Of course!" he managed to exclaim in a whisper, "There really is nothing to it! All ya' gotta do is do what the boss asks ya'! But when the boss lets you run wild on your own, just do what you would do that they would want you to do. It takes some time to understand what your direct superior wants in general, but you seem to already got it down pat. I managed to understand the Cat'n crystal clear since day one if I may brag a peg."

I blinked in slight disbelief, "That's it? That's all there is to it?"

Jeice threw a friendly hand gesture my way, "Lemme put it to ya' like this: just be like Frieza when ya' can. Anything else ya' wanna know, General?"

I decided I had to go find Frieza.

I folded my arms from my sitting position, "No...that will be all Jeice. Thank you by the way!"

Jeice smirked with a hint of further blushin, "Oh no problem, General." He gave me a friendly
thumbs up and resumed his locker room rituals.

I brushed myself off and prepared to leave, "Carry on, troops," heh heh, nice one, "I'm going to speak with our Lord."

The sound of all five minus Nappa shouting, "Goodnight, boss!" definitely gave me some confidence to spare.

I was probably going to need it to as I stood from my bench, patting Nappa on the head along the way much to his chagrin as I made my exit.

The crystal and steel halls of the complex were already starting to become familiar as I marched through them casually, passing by my own batch of underlings from every corner of the galaxy. They were nodding in my direction, although if I had to guess it was mostly out of fear.

More of that foggy surrealist feeling clouded over me with industrial strength. Truly this was a daydream and I was going to snap out of it any second. The bubble would pop and all of this would cease to be. Maybe not the entirety of it, but definitely this portion. Hell, if the entirety was just a dream, that would be quite the downer.

I never wanted to wake-up.

But then again, this was dangerously close to becoming a nightmare.

At least I had a modicum of control. A degree of sway in the court. My mind raced to the type of meetings that would take place. The foreign dignitaries that I would socialize with. The political rivals I would have to dispatch. The rebellions I would have to snuff out.

Would I be some kind of executioner? An assassin? Or just a blunt instrument to wield upon whole systems, glassing continents with the point of my own finger?


Oh wait...didn't Frieza mentioned some family?

I shook my head, trying to reset my sights upon the immediate goal.

My first task now was to conquer Earth. Still sounding ridiculous the more I thought about it.

My own home planet!

But you were nobody on that planet. Why do you care?

Just yesterday, I was nobody.

Correction, before you became the Soul of Frieza, you were nobody.

You've always been somebody. You just didn't know it.

Not until I met Frieza.

I couldn't get over the sheer shift in fortune of my life. My mind was boggling with how the future was going to play out, as Frieza's right-hand. As his General.
"The pretty boy Zarbon."

I couldn't help but get whoever that guy was out of my head. And what it meant for me. Was Frieza interested in me for my power? Or was he seriously looking for some...new eye candy?

I kept my march in motion, trying not to get distracted by these rather mundane thoughts.

But I just couldn't help myself. I haven't been able to really help myself since Nappa's flying saucer loomed over my home this morning.

I buckled, just for a moment, no one else in the hallway coming my way in either direction. A fact I was thankful for as I registered such.

My knees weakened, everything finally catching up to me.

My heart turned on the nitro and the chain-reaction was set off. A thermal-nuclear destruction was initiated and my body felt ablaze with the heat of the utter intensity of it all.

I held my hand up to my heart, stopped only by the body armor I bore, still completely intact from my previous battle.

I began to exhale faster than I could inhale, and at any moment I would pass out if I didn't calm down.

The terror of it all. The guilt of not seeking out Goku and the others.

Or maybe the thrill was something you weren't used to. And you were free.

You are free.

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER...

YOU

ARE

FREE

...

...

...

...my focus returned, my heart slowed down damn near full stop.

My breathing regained its footing and my soul reconnected with my inner turmoil to calm it.

I looked behind me back down the corridor...not a soul in sight. Maybe it just so happened to be lights out for this planet's night and day cycle as well, and the troops were bunking for the night.

I looked ahead towards my destination, what I was told was the control room. Frieza's headquarters.

He was in there. He was in there and I was going to do business with the man.

...
Something was wrong with me.

...Or maybe everything truly was right?

For the first time.

Own it already. Be yourself.

You are the commander of Frieza's forces. So you damn well better act like one.

Be ruthless if you have to. Be the fierce warrior Frieza wants you to be.

Demands you be.

And maybe, all things willing, you too will be at his side...

AND BECOME HIS NUMBER TWO.

The door before me slid open ominously, breaking my inner conversation as a single, fish-like alien humanoid greeted me with panic, "General! There you are! We have a problem!"

The door opening allowed me to look inside to witness Frieza. Hands placed upon a high-definition console screen that made up the center table in the room full of electronic panels and other odd computing devices.

Frieza looked upset...and by that I mean he had a scowl that could murder. His eyes narrow and full of tranquil fury, his lips contorted into pure contempt as he stared at the hologram of what I recognized was home on his screen.

My heart was already returning to critical condition as my team of engineers were twisting every valve they could to bring the levels of my adrenaline back down. Something about this was going to deliver a bad end to the day, I just knew it.

The go-between reached for me to guide me gently yet sternly into Frieza headquarters, "Its Earth sire! Our spies there-" spies? "-have just informed us that the human defenders have begun the search for the Dragonballs!"

...no.

I gazed in horror at the hologram, now a mere couple of inches away from my face as the blue gleam of the hologram engulfed my features in a sheen of glow.

The informer finished his briefing, "And at this rate, they could have the rest of them as early as the next Earthen day. Three have already been located."

Frieza looked up at me, catching my own attention, and I could register his disappointment then.

My time was already out, and I didn't have a plan.

THINK DAMMIT.

None of us were ready. Hell, it would take a few hours just to get the Ginyu Force back into action, and at full peak they weren't ready to take on Earth.

Nappa was nowhere near a Super Saiyan, let alone a Super Saiyan Blue.
I wasn't sure I was even capable of standing a change against the might of Earth at all. For all I knew, I was nothing compared to them.

Frieza's gaze was slowly burning a hole in my will to endure with laser precision, as if he had already fired off a set of Death Beams from his eyes and I was now facing the Grim Reaping coming to take me to Hell.

He released the acid he had been building up, spitting it at me with a single question, "Tell me...GENERAL, what do you have in mind to resolve this situation?"

Chapter End Notes

Note: if I left any mistakes, even big ones, I'm content with just coming back and fixing them later lol

Also, yes...that is another two chapters now planned in the counter. Fourteen at the time of this typing.

...hehe yeah baby~
Chapter Summary

The Dragonballs are at stake! Frieza's wish is soon to evaporate! Can the General come up with a plan in time to keep this from happening?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The spotlight was upon me. Frieza's visage of judgement tunneled its way into my brain, ruining my ability to dream up some cockamamie solution to the Earth problem. It didn't help that a room full of support staff were drenching in their own sweat provided by the all-consuming mood Frieza was setting.

What was I going to do now?

My master folded his arms, keeping his scowl, "Is it too much to hope that you have an answer? As we speak that monkey and his flock of misguided fools are collecting my Dragon Balls. Let me inform you now: if this is to be a repeat of the Namek campaign...then I will have to...reconsider our arrangement."

Definite emphasis on the word reconsider...it never sounded so deadly than coming from his mouth.

Its my first day! How is this fair?

How was I supposed to know they would decide to gather the Dragon Balls?

Why now?

I tried to stall for time, at least enough to come up with some sort of plan to deal with this, "W-what do they intend to wish for?"

My answer was met with barely restrained shouting, "How should I know what they intend to do with the Dragon Balls? Probably something asinine like resurrecting their lost comrade! As if bringing someone unskilled enough to get killed in the first place back from the dead is an intelligent use of a wish..."

...that's a tad ironic, don't you think?

Yeah, don't say that to his face.

Frieza, keeping his gaze upon me the whole way, methodically began to creep around the projection of the doomed third rock and make his way closer to me, like a predator circling its meal with killer instinct. I had my fourth or fifth cold sweat of the day as this bird of prey loomed ever closer.

I found myself still in that doorway to hell, with the prince of demons himself staring me down.

I wondered how I wasn't dead yet.
Maybe I could use Instant Transmission and at least snatch of the Dragonballs? No...they would just track it with their Dragon Radar, and it would lead them to our location.

Or maybe I could just use it to bail out of here at the very least?

My return to that slow world I use to ponder in made its way back into my reality.

I could do nothing but stare at Frieza...myself slack-jawed and hands up in the air as if mildly shielding myself from the oncoming beast.

I put a stop to that once I realized it could only make things worse, returning to a posture of standing at attention and shedding my inner fluids over my brow in fight or flight mode.

I had a long shot in my holster, "Lord Frieza, if I may explain. Yes, the Dragon Balls may be used repeatedly. If they make their wish, it will be merely a year before you may use it again. That's what I was told about the Dragon Balls, and surely it fits in with the legends I've personally heard of back on Earth. We could simply wait a year and-"

Frieza slapped my case out of the air with frustration, "No! That simply will not do! I can't just sit around for a whole year and let them get even stronger! What kind of message would that send to the rest of the galaxy with such inaction?"

I found myself wincing back once more as his words sounded more like a mixture of annoyance and desperation than anything else, "I believe I possess more potential to deliver in terms of training myself and getting even stronger, strong enough take on those two Saiyans with an even greater form. Or at the very least I could perfect the Golden form if that is so my limit. But it would take time! And time is something I don't have right now! None of us do!"

He continued, bringing his hands behind his back and contemplating at the hologram of Earth, "My men simply aren't up to the task. I saw them go down in droves at the hands of even their weakest champions. The one called Goku and his entourage would tear us apart and we'd have to start from scratch all over again.

Oh...Frieza doesn't understand that the same wish can't be asked for twice.

"Even my Ginyu Force has to be leagues behind them by now and it would take too long for me to personally train them the same way I did with a previous underling of mine."

If he went down...he'd stay down.

I retorted as bravely as I could, fighting off the coming shakes in my legs, "But Lord Frieza," he reacted with a quick glare and his scowl growing nastier, causing my next few words to chatter, "I-I will have you know: if we made an attempt now, and you were to be killed again...n-not that it would go down that way...eh heh heh...uh, then I should warn you that the Dragon Balls cannot commit to the same wish twice. After all, the Dragon Balls were already used to restored you once, no?"

My argument was clear, as Frieza actually took a moment to evolve his scowl into curiosity, almost as if he just dodged a bullet thanks to me.

He narrowed his brow, "Is that truly the case?"

I was about to simply nod when I remembered his warning in the throne room, "Uh...if everything I've heard is true, then yes. That's why they went to Namek in the first place, to find that planet's Dragon Balls and make a wish to resurrect their...fallen warriors."
Frieza hummed to himself in thought, resting his chin upon his index and thumb.

*Its kinda amusing how he does that whenever he's thinking of something. Like its his crutch or something.*

"No," his answer destroyed my only pleasant thought about him lately, "its now or never. You probably don't understand so I'm not going to try and explain it to you right now, but I have an image to protect."

His words were full of sharp icicles dangling over me, "A name to maintain. A glory to restore. If I were to wait a whole year just to amass the kind of power I'd need to bring down that miserable rock in space then I would do nothing but damage my reputation. Even if I claimed victory in the end."

*Dammit. Dammit all!*

*It can't go down like this! I can't let Earth be destroyed just so I can have my fun playing dress-up!*

*Fun?! Was any of this really fun?!!*

*It sure is. You just gotta take advantage more.*

*But I'm not really that kind of person! Am I?!!*

*Relax. He's not just someone who murders people for fun...at least not anyone useful to him.*

...wait, what? What's going on?

*He is not mad at you...he's just mad.*

...no way, I've failed him and he's going to either kill me or make me blow up Earth and then kill me.

*Think about it. Would he really want to off you like this now? The way you imagine it to be?*

Frieza would murder anybody just by looking at him the wrong way! He's like one those ancient feudal swordsman you hear about! You don't bow in time and he'll slice your head off!

*Frieza isn't a barbarian. Frieza is a dictator. He dictates. He throws away the lives of pawns. Not his generals. Not for failure anyway.*

*He may punish you. But he wouldn't dare throw a precious resource like you away for no good reason.*

*Precious resource?*

*You have power. So much power. Untapped. Unbridled. Ready to go wild. You've been using it this whole time.*

*Ever since you were a Soul trapped in someone else's body.*

*Its part of you now.*

*However...*

*I like to think its always been there.*
...what happened that day?
...
...who are you?
...
...
...I'm you.

*He's waiting on you...*

Frieza's words broke my bubble with a whisper so sharp it slit my throat, "You understand...I want my Dragon Balls...I want my immortality. You better have an answer for this in the next five minutes."

He leaned in closer to me, like a snake slithering towards its prey, delivering an even more blood-dripped whisper, "...or is that too hard for you?

His whole face was uncomfortably close to mine, his elegantly-designed features darkened in shadow as the light source from the bright hologram was blocked from my view. It didn't help that view ports throughout the room bore the starry skies and crystal glow of the planet side.

His fiery eyes, so still. There was no refocusing of pupils, none of the natural shakiness that came from your focus instinctively wandering. They were dead set upon my own gaze, certainly moving all over the place as I took too long to observe my imminent threat.

A master possibly about to punish his servant. Slap his subordinate for failure. Blast me through the heart with his signature accusation finger of doom.

Or maybe he liked torturing me mentally this way. This was all a game to him. Something he did with every one of his cronies.

I took a moment to eye Frieza's frame, rather small in stature compared to some of the other bruiser-looking types around here. Even compared to the more noble fighters I met during that whole ride.

While toned and not lacking muscle to speak of, there was something so absurd to me about this being. That something like this creature could be so intimidating.

And have the power to back it up.

*To think such power resided in such a vessel.*

*With the point of a finger he could level a galaxy.*

*His arms...*

He had them behind his back, but this just made them sort of...flex, in this sort of intentional fashion.

And the more I looked the more I realized that this little lizard somehow had the power to obliterate a planet with a single punch if he really wanted to.

...why are you checking his arms out?
Of course, punching things wasn't his way. He preferred a more grandiose approach. Something theatrical. More destructive in nature than an earthquake or a tidal wave. He had to be the one who could destroy a planet with the flick of a wrist.

He loved to put on a show and declare his existence to nobody in particular.

It was impressive, even. He didn't just sit back and let the empire run itself. He'd get his hands dirty, even if he wouldn't admit it. He must had destroyed many foes back in his day.

And this small frame housed a colossus.

*You know, Frieza is actually pretty fit for an armchair monarch.*

...

**Stop checking him out you idiot! Give him the respect he deserves! Look at what he's put himself through just to make you his Number Two!**

*Come to think of it...Frieza has gone through some genuine effort just to retrieve me. To track me down and bring me before him. Let alone promote me to the commander of his forces.*

*It can't simply be because I'm powerful. Frieza would never be one to let someone who could even rival him get this close to him! Just look at what happened with Cell. That alliance was mutual at best. Two powerhouses ready to murder each other were it not for their common enemy.*

The moment came back to me.

Frieza still staring with venom dripping from his eyes. Me still frantically thinking of a way to save Earth and possibly myself.

*If only I had more time.*

...

*...wait a minute.*

*Time.*

*...THAT'S IT!*

"Wait, Frieza...I think I have a solution!"

My deadly prince righted himself back to a towering tyrant's stance, indignantly raising his nose up at me.

As if I did not really have an answer and was just stalling for more time.

*Time.*

*Give it to him. You wowed him with the bare-minimum idea to keep the Earth intact. And that was obvious.*

**This is a good idea. A chance to show you are destined to be his champion.**

*Show Frieza you aren't just some boot licker.*
Some parasite sponging off his glory.

You have your own glory to create.

I braced myself as I brought forth a bold idea to strengthen my case, "Before I explain, let me put one issue to rest...I have an idea to buy us some time...allow me to use another technique I have learned."

A technique I learned from possessing the Namekian.

Frieza stared for a frozen moment, not sure whether to trust me or not.

After a long staring contest, he thawed his arms to fold them in that way he did and tilted his head to the side, "Very well...proceed."

All right!

I went right to work as I stood there, focusing my thoughts and squinting my eyes.

Finally I closed them all the way as my face slightly scrunched up in anticipation and concentration, trying not to let Frieza's visage overshadow me and break my focus.

I stretched out with my feelings.

I could no longer feel my body where it stood in the headquarters of evil.

My soul traveled off planet. It crossed the galaxy at breakneck speed.

I was still there in the room with him, but my conscious was now elsewhere.

I was speeding through the void of space.

Towards home.

I was looking for him.

And before I knew it, there I was. The more familiar Earth sky was over me once more. It was both comforting and terrifying. A reminder that I was no longer there. This was no longer my home.

Instead it was something I was fighting tooth and nail for...in my own way.

There it was. A vision came before me. A lonely little capsule home out in the field. Laundry hanging out to dry. Buckets of water strewn about.

The crickets chirping away.

Was he still awake? Was he asleep?

My answer was founded immediately as I heard his voice, "Good night, Goten! Try to get some sleep, okay? The sooner you beat this fever the sooner you can get back to having fun and stuff!"

The man with the wild hair. The man in the orange jumpsuit. The man who could turn into a blonde at will. Or indigo if he really had to.

He stepped out into the cool moonlit air, stretching his arms high above his head with a yawn.
Surely he was getting ready for bed.

Come on...talk to him.

"Hello?"

He was caught off guard, mid-stretch. He lowered his arms and brought up his attention.

He heard me!

He looked left and right, and then up.

He heard it. He knew he did.

I tried again, trying to get him to recognize my voice, "Hello? Goku? Its me! Your friend!"

Seeing his reaction threw me off for a moment, I didn't think it would actually work.

He pumped his fists with an expression of utter shock, "Hello?! Am I really hearing this?! Is that you?!"

And just like that, I was a soul again. Talking with Goku like I did that fateful day.

It was an all too familiar feeling.

I had yet to personally meet the guy.

I couldn't contain my excitement, "Its me! Hi! How are ya’?!"

Come on, don’t get cute with him right now.

He stuttered, overjoyed and excited by this sudden development, "H-how are you speaking to me? Did...did you learn how to speak with your mind too?"

"Its a long story and I don’t have a lot of time to explain."

Goku frantically searched the cosmos, his head turning every which way, "But where are you?! Are you okay? Are you in danger?"

It didn’t bring me any joy to already begin twisting the truth to the man.

But it was for his own good.

"I'm fine! I'm currently somewhere in space!"

Goku's mouth hung open and his eyes were damn near popping out, "So you WERE kidnapped!"

They must have been worried for me this whole time.

"Listen! I'll be okay! But I don't have too much time! I need you to do something for me!"

"Hey look, its okay! We're already gathering the Dragon Balls to bring you back to Earth! Don't worry, we should have them soon!"

...oh.

...they were gathering them for me?
They were planning to use up a wish just to bring me back home?

Well...how sweet.

...if only they knew.

You can't let him do that.

...

I'm doing this for Earth. It's for their own good.

...

...if we had to fight...

"I need you to do something for me Goku, so pay attention."

"Y-yeah! Anything! What can I do for you?"

"Gather the Dragon Balls, but wait until the day after tomorrow to use them. Bring them to the Lookout."

"The day after tomorrow? The Lookout? But...I don't understand. If we get them right away, shouldn't we wish you back right then and there?"

My next words we're tearing myself apart, "It'll be all right. Trust me..."

After my spiritual reunion, I fled back to my own self as quickly as I could. I had mere moments to explain my plan to Frieza.

To save Earth.

I opened my eyes and turned to see Frieza, still there and waiting for my master plan.

"All right...I've bought us some time."

My master winced, confused, "...how did you-?"

Respectfully, "Trust me, my Lord. We now have two days to do what needs to be done."

Frieza scoffed, upturning his nose at me and returning to his disbelief, believing he was about to have an excuse to finally blow up that damned rock of mine, "Two days? That's all we have? You bought us an extra day at most? And even if that really is the case, what can we do with a mere two days?"

A fair question...let me ease your concerns.

"The Hyperbolic Time Chamber."

Frieza realigned his head to look at me straight on, dropping his dominant pretense for just a second. Not as if he understood what my words meant but more as if giving me a chance, "What of it?"

"Have you ever heard of it?"

Vegeta told me all about it, praised it as the perfect training ground. There were maybe a couple of
facts I had forgotten, but I got the gist of it.

"It's a place on Earth, where space and time don't comply with the rules of the universe. One or two people may enter at a time, and train for as long as their will endures. For every year you spend in there, a day passes in real time."

Hope shone in, Frieza's eyes widening slowly, "...go on."

Speak like a General.

"If they found three Dragon Balls in one day...then what's to say they can even find the other four within the next day? I suggest we leave as soon as the Ginyu Force are healed up, and we capture the Lookout Tower to acquire this chamber for ourselves. And we take the whole day to train ourselves. The chamber can only take on two people at once, so we'd have to take turns. By the time we are done...they will have gathered the Dragon Balls for us. And we take em'."

Frieza stared at me for the longest time, not sure what to make of it.

It had to have sounded good in theory at the very least.

Surely, Frieza must have been in critical thought, processing this new information. A strategy he could work with in this war room meeting.

I was a General consulting with his King, and I just gave him the key to the city.

Frieza finally narrowed his gaze, with an air of caution. He was giving me the benefit of the doubt, "How do I know you aren't just lying to me? And even if you weren't, how do I know what you are saying isn't some kind of fairy tail you are clinging on to out of desperation?"

I placed my arms on my hips, a little too proud for my own good, "Wouldn't that explain how they have managed to gather so much power over the years? Wouldn't you want to own that kind of resource? Think about it, with the Dragonballs to wish for anything you so desire once a year, and the Hyperbolic Time Chamber to train yourself and your troops with, doesn't owning Earth sound better than destroying it for once?"

My Lord was flabbergasted.

It was a chance, definitely some food for thought at the very least.

He was so shocked that he covered his mouth while lowering his gaze in thought of all those prospects. Yet another Earthen asset he could work with, another reason to keep the planet intact.

Frieza slid the hand down his mouth back to rest under his chin, hiding his amusement as he observed me.

His mind was running uncharacteristically wild. He was absolutely thrilled at the prospects of having such a fast thinker on his payroll.

I heard a mild giggle emanate from my Lord, at first very quiet, slowing growing in enthusiasm.

He was absolutely elated. He could see I wasn't just blowing smoke.

That I really was covering all the angles.

His giggle was rather intoxicating. On the outside, I tried to keep my stern expression expected of a high-ranking military official.
On the inside, I was melting. It was refreshing to see Frieza enjoy the moment. By my own handiwork no less. The other nervous men in the room surely appreciated it.

My Lord took a step forward. He brought himself even closer to me, "You really are full of tricks, aren't you?"

**Whoa.**

It took only another step before he was in my grill.

We were face to face, his smooth, sculpted features in my personal bubble.

**WHOA.**

He crept in with a smile. Not to try and put me at ease, but clearly to intimidate me.

At least that's what I thought.

His face was so close to mine I could feel his hot breath breeze across my own facial terrain.

**What is happening?**

**WHAT'S HAPPENING?**

He spoke softly, but nonetheless with a tone full of malevolence, "I must admit, your determination to do things your way is rather astounding..."

More sudden movement I could sense below. An arm manifesting, seeking its way towards my face.

I made sure as not to jump so suddenly from the sensation, as I felt his hand upon me.

!?!?

The back of his hand stroking down my cheek did little to put me at ease. It was surprisingly soft. Gentle even.

I wasn't sure what was happening. I was left dealing with a most unholy situation.

It got even more euphoric as his hand ran its way back up my face and working its way towards the top of my head.

He finally spoke, only further raising the tension with his honeyed word, "Tell me, do you like it here?"

My face was turning beat red. I was flustered beyond belief.

**Was this really happening? In front of all these men?**

They weren't even paying attention, probably not even realizing what was happening as they were ignoring the situation of a barely satiated Frieza.

"I do hope so. I'd loathe to see that I went through all this trouble only to have a problem on my hands in the end. You will certainly be a valuable asset to the Empire."

**Is Frieza putting the moves on me?!**

No...he wasn't, as the pain was the first thing I felt as the moment of strange tension fled
immediately and malformed into living terror...as Frieza's fingers, still running across the top of my head, gripped my scalp as tightly as was necessary to be me into agony.

I fought against my instinct, as hard as I could, to avoid any throe in pain or cry in feverish rebellion. To avoid showing any weakness, as the dragon's claw held his minion in place...to show me where mine was.

Frieza's murderous tongue soothed poison into my ear, "I must ascertain whether I can trust someone so...bold. So cunning. One such as you could become dangerous to my cause indeed."

Every fiber of my being was keeping me from throwing a fist or even reaching to pry Frieza's lone hand off of my head.

My knees buckled and I found myself collapsing on them. Indeed, there was pressure coming from my Lord's grip to instigate that, and he held me there in place.

"I want you to understand something, worm...I am the absolute supreme being around here, and what I say goes. You may have intelligence and even some ingenuity, but don't let it get to your head. You are here to serve me. Nobody but me. Do you understand?"

What did I do wrong?!

WORM?!

I desperately refused to bring my arms up in self-defense.

The men in the room having already witnessed the horror dared not rescue their General from this miserable scene, lest they buy it too. The chasms of my mind scorched with the idea that I was about to.

"You aren't just here to grovel for some scraps in my kingdom, are you? To whisper sweet nothings into my ears in the hopes that you'll be rewarded with riches and favor? To do the bare minimum and expect a share of the galaxy in return?"

I didn't scream, even as he tightened his grip.

Don't give in! Do not resist!

DO NOT SHOW INFERIORITY!

DO NOT REVEAL YOUR SUPERIORITY.

HE'S GOT ME IN A DEATH LOCK!

Frieza brought his head closer to mine as I winced in reaction, one eye open as the other was held shut in pain. A tear was already beginning to swell up.

He leaned into my ear, "...let this be a reminder, that while I may let you do things your way...you do them for me. Is that clear?"

And with that he released his grip, pushing me away as he did so and forcing me to wobble as I reeled back in relief, "We don't need another Nappa around now, do we?"

I found myself trying to calmly catch my breath, all too relieved my apparent punishment for whatever insubordination I had enacted was merely a physical one, other than the psychological
warfare that had just taken place.

I made a mental note to try harder in the future, to keep from displeasing Frieza any further.

*But you didn't displease him.*

*This was the one thing he truly knew. Intimidation. A game of putting you in your place whether you had deserved it or not.*

*You have yet to prove anything after all. This will all change.*

I refrained from reaching to rub my aching head in a show of weakness, and instead I focused my efforts on restraining myself from showing any anger.

Anger I was beginning to feel from being toyed with.

*Anger.*

.Drop the anger now. Don't let him know. Don't express your disdain.*

*Be humble. This is just par for the course.*

*This moment will pass.*

*This is how Frieza does business with everyone.*

*You are not Zarbon.*

I grit my teeth and did my best to slow my breathing, and returned with a steadfast confirmation and a hand upon my chest, "Understood, my Lord."

I bowed, as humbly as I could.

My hands trembled.

*Don't tighten your fists.*

*You'll get your chance in time.*

*Chance to what?!*  

*DON'T TIGHTEN YOUR FISTS.*

*That's it. Its not weakness. Its not groveling.*

*Its respect.*

*Respect is all Frieza wants.*

*Results is all Frieza wants.*

*He wants you.*

Another long awkward pause took place, as the goons in the room had long since returned to their duties as if nothing had happened for their own sake. The scary monster in the room was swept under the rug as far they were concerned.
Frieza stood erect proudly, with a swagger and a confidence that could take on the gods themselves, "Well then! We have maybe a couple hours to formulate a strategy. Join me, won't me?"

I looked up from my bow as Frieza towered over me, not sure if I had heard those words correctly. The whiplash from the change in mood was too jarring.

"We have much to discuss before the Ginyu Force have had time to heal themselves...and we must oversee this operation ourselves." He leered down at me with his patented vaguely threatening smirk.

"But Chi-Chi! I have to go find the Dragonball now!" he begged as a flying pan flew by his head.

Chi-Chi loaded her arm with another cooking instrument in protest, "Absolutely not! Not while Goten is sick! And especially not this late at night!"

He brought his hands together in a humble beggar's fashion, "But its for our friend! We wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for them!"

She cocked her pitching arm, "I don't even know who this person is! You seriously are going to go through all this trouble just for a stranger?"

Goku pouted, "Chi-Chi, they aren't some stranger! They are some poor soul that got caught up in this whole mess!"

He dodged her wrath with ultra instinct, ducking the pot's trajectory as it flew through a hallway and clanged upon the floor, "Oh you just want to have another fighting partner to distract you!"

"No I mean it, for real!"

Goten listened from his hiding spot, careful as to not be seen by his parents lest they realize he was perfectly healthy. Like a ninja, he bolted for his room careful to close the door as quietly as possible.

First thing he did was leap onto his bed with a mighty crash, embracing the sea of soft linen and swimming towards the opposite end where his phone lay.

Snatching it and rolling onto his back, he stuck out his tongue as he clacked his best friend's number.

After a few rings Goten whispered into his phone, "Yo? You awake Trunks? ...yeah? I think my parents bought it. Did your parents? ...ha ha awesome!"

"Yeah, I've pretty much mastered the art of raising my temperature. Ever since mom checked out the thermometer I've eating chicken noodle soup non-stop! I don't even think you are supposed to eat that when you got a fever."

Trunks kept an ear out for signs of his parents. Surely his father was getting in some training for the night and his mother making an attempt to get her stubborn husband to bed.

He kept the phone nestled upon his shoulder, "...anyway, that doesn't matter bruh. Whachu' calling for? ...really? Dude, of course I remember where that is! Why? ...oh no way! ...that's so not fair, why don't we get to help find the Dragon Balls?"

Trunks pouted and scampered over to his bed, sitting on the edge, "Well, didn't you say your brother has one kept hidden around somewhere? ...like what's he going to do with it anyway? ...well I say
we snatch it when he's not looking and take the credit! That way we can prove to our parents that we can find Dragon Balls! ...Yeah man its fool-proof!"

Chi-Chi rubbed her head gently to relieve herself, Goku rubbing her shoulders affectionately from behind, "I'll be okay Chi-Chi. I'm not going to go on any adventure right now. But what kind of guy would I be if i didn’t try to save our friend?"

His concerned wife exhaled, hesitantly resigned, "Oh Goku...I hope you know what you are doing."

Goku gently turned her around to have her face him, rubbing the back of his neck nervously, "I can't say that I do. Eh heh heh..."

She smirked, beat yet calm, "Well...can you at least wait until morning to go on out hunting for the Dragon Balls?" she sighed, reaching up to rub Goku's hands upon her shoulders, "Let's go to say goodnight to Goten and we can talk about it in a moment. I can look after him tomorrow for starters."

Peeking through the crack of his door, their youngest could tell he was out of time for the night, "I got to go! I'll see you then buddy!"

And with the click of the red button, the flicking of his bedroom light switch and a leap back onto his bed, Goten wrapped the covers over himself in rehearsed fashion and placed the bag of ice over his head once more.

Just in the nick of time as the grown-ups were already knocking on the door.

Goten immediately reinforced his sick personae, "Ooooh...come in..."

The door creaked open as both mommy and daddy peeked through the crack, Goku's head above Chi-Chi's.

Mother spoke first, "Good night, Goten. Get some rest, I'll see you tomorrow."

"Oh...good night mooom." Goten replied affectionately.

Goku followed up with a smile, "Good night, Goten."

"Daaad you already said good night...good night dad."

Goku grinned, looking down at at his approving wife as she carefully closed the door to give her son some rest.

Goten himself smiled wide in the dark, "Oh boy...I can't wait!"

"Where is it...where-is-it?"

I paced around the room, eyeing the hologram of my homeworld. I scanned as quickly as I could, looking for any clue as to where the Lookout Tower resided. I had only vague details to work with. There were many strange landmarks on Earth I never knew even existed until recently. Even plenty of scars from their previous battles. Mountains that should still be there that no longer stood, swaths of forests completely wiped off the map.

It's a wonder the Z Fighters themselves were never labeled as the monsters, they were easily capable
of impressive collateral damage themselves.

Then again, with guys like Frieza around, it was easy to see why that wasn't the case.

They were the super heroes, and Frieza was a big, bad showman making a statement. A diva wanting statues of himself erected in your town square. Or the ground beneath the statue destroyed out of sheer spite.

My scalp ached.

I still carried around a thought I was trying hard to get rid of.

*If I had resisted, could I have done so successfully?*

*Am I really just some pawn? Some piece on a board to be disposed of in order to allow the more powerful pieces to make their play?*

*Or was what happened just now truly his way of conditioning one of his own powerful pieces?*

*Was I really a powerful piece?*

Frieza was gazing out the view to eye the planet side, something about the crystal basin must have been quite the sight for the Lord. Something to fall back on when the going got tough.

I was beginning to wonder if the sight of the glowing landscape brought some sort of peace to the tyrant. He had been showing quite a lot of retribution around just today.

Nappa. Myself. Earth, if I wasn't careful.

For all I knew, Frieza really was carrying all this baggage...and was looking for someone to help remove at least some of it.

Plenty of baggage indeed.

Goku. His father. The disastrous Namek campaign. The fact that he still wasn't immortal.

He had everything he could possibly want...and it wasn't enough with these issues still lying around.

Honestly, I couldn't blame him on some of these issues, whereas others I had my own opinion. Opinions I dare not speak.

I was committed to this whether I liked it or not.

I wasn't going to let my previous humiliation ruin what could be a good thing.

*Was this a good thing?*

Just then I spotted it, "There!" I pointed at what looked like our prized asset, catching Frieza's attention, "Zoom in on that location!"

The technician followed my order without question as the hologram whizzed closer to stratosphere level, showing the absurdly tall Lookout for us to gaze upon.

Frieza casually marched over to get a better look.

I proclaimed our first victory in the intelligence game, "That's it...the Lookout. It has to be. And right
there," I stuck my finger through the transparency of the hologram, the blue light engulfing my finger in translucence and exposing my veins and finger bones, as I pointed out the structure sitting atop the flat surface of the giant bowl that made up the bulk of the Lookout, "that's got to be our Hyperbolic Time Chamber."

"Well, that's all fine and dandy," Frieza smugged, "but surely they wouldn't let us just waltz in there and plant our flags all over the place. Or allow me to replace the tapestry."

Its amazing how he can be so terrifying one second and then just a sarcastic little bastard the next.

"If we approach with our power levels suppressed we could sneak in and subdue anyone guarding it."

Frieza scoffed, "Subdue? Do you hear yourself? Why would I want to allow any of them to remain alive to cause me trouble at any opportune moment? And secondly, are you seriously suggesting I lower my power level and leave myself vulnerable?"

I found myself at a mental crossroads. I wasn't willing to get anyone on Earth killed because of me, but I wasn't ready to anger Frieza some more.

Then again maybe I hadn't really angered him in the first place, and his display of dominance was something I had to deal with eventually.

I needed sleep. I needed sleep badly.

In just this one day I had two fights, one humiliation and constant stress to please my new overlord. Although my body could certainly keep on going with my newfound power, I still had a ways to go before I could get used to it.

I still couldn't believe how much butt I kicked just this morning. I was a warrior, and the thrill was real. I never felt more alive. And alive I still was.

I had gotten this far.

Maybe Frieza would be willing to negotiate. To listen to the advice of his General.

If you must, you better speak like someone who knows what they are doing.

"Lord Frieza, certainly having hostages would benefit us? It could buy us some time if Goku and the others tracked us down before we were ready. Surely you understand that is Goku's weakness...mercy."

Its true...Frieza detested Goku's ability to grant mercy.

And what I was suggesting wasn't the same...nope. No siree.

Frieza darted his eyes off to the side, humming his conclusion, "I supposed you make a point. There is no guarantee we will be able to keep our cover for long. And a confrontation with them is inevitable."

I rolled with it, "If we can't overpower them at any point, the least we could do is bargain for the Dragon Balls with their lives."

Something about that statement brought Frieza to smile, still with a hint of sinister intent but genuine in its delivery, "Oh I do believe you are finally getting it, General."
I'm finally getting it...I'll take it.

I kept myself from reacting to eagerly, instead taking a moment to let it sink in and bowing before him, "I am certainly trying, Lord Frieza."

"Well, we'll graduate you from trying to doing soon enough. Practice makes perfect after all."

Even though the subject was a grim one, it was nice to hold a conversation with him like this again. Our dinner party was too short, in hindsight.

I had another thought, "Lord Frieza, if I may..."

I awaited for approval to speak further, receiving a curt nod and a smirk, "Do go on."

Every time he smiled at me in a way that didn't bear any ill intent, it brought me some strange warmth to my chest.

Focus.

"I believe we won't even need an army to conduct this operation. If anything, that will just attract more attention. I suggest we keep the raiding party to just a handful of us."

"Let me guess: myself, yourself, the Ginyu Force, and your little Saiyan pal?"

Right on the money...shocking.

I nodded respectfully, "They are the closest ones to standing any sort of chance against the defenders of Earth, and if we can raise their power level in the Chamber...then we will certainly have a fighting force to be reckoned with."

Frieza got the point, "I supposed a swarm of gnats to throw at them won't do any good, I've seen that take place firsthand."

"As for hiding our power level," I continued, "You'll just have to trust me."

I got a harsh, haughty laugh from the overlord, "Trust you? You think I am stupid enough to put my trust in someone who has only been in service to me for a mere day?"

Well, we did get through the clone crisis together.

"Its out of the question, General. You'll have to come up with something else."

But its the only way I can see it working!

Nevermind that, bring it up later. He won't budge now. Just think of a way to talk him into it between now and the time the Ginyu Force can heal up.

I closed my eyes in mild frustration, deciding to put a pin in the subject for the time being. I had maybe hours to changes his mind and I wanted to formulate a proper negotiation.

Get him to trust me? How as I going to do that?

Especially after he made you his plaything for a moment.

In any case, there was nothing further to discuss.
"I...believe that's all there is to it for now, my Lord Frieza."

Frieza gazed upon the hologram for an extended period, deciding if this undertaking was worth it.

I felt that chill again, that cold feeling. It was sweeping over me.

The reality of it all.

This was it. Our chance to conquer Earth and try to spare it in the process.

I was going to rule over Earth, upon Frieza's blessing.

And his blessing I received, as he made a sharp, commanding glare in my direction, "Very well, let it be so. I'll arrange several personal pods for departure within a few hours."

I reciprocated as professionally as I could, "Then I suggest we get to work on briefing the troops immediately. I'll go explain it to Nappa personally, if I may."

Frieza waved a hand gesture of indifference, releasing me from my commander's obligation for the time being, "You are dismissed, General."

After all that, it felt a little anticlimactic. But at this point I was happy to get the snowball rolling down the hill.

Frieza rotated to face the view of the planet once more, hands behind his back as usual.

I found myself with an urge. An even greater one than the one I nearly withheld from the Captain.

This one was different. A gamble. An unnecessary risk.

But I wanted it so bad.

I brought myself to speak once more before turning to leave, "...Lord Frieza."

The purple cobra looked over his shoulder to leer at me, bearing his hood with a vague warning to tread lightly, "Hmm? What is it?"

I found myself deadlocked in time. Everything slowing to a turtle's pace, while my heart was flopping around like a rabbit on caffeine.

Do it. It will be necessary. You have to at least try.

Try this? Are you insane? You realize you are dealing with Lord Frieza, right?

If I avoided this now then I'll end up avoiding it forever.

I took a sharp inhale, releasing the artificial oxygen with my next request, "After I've conveyed the plan to Nappa...could I speak with you...privately?"

Chapter End Notes

To those expecting something strictly about Frieza and the Reader, I do apologize that it hasn't been that way! I'm kinda getting there finally...
I set out rather early in the planning stages of this to make something a little bigger in scope than that, with the relationship between you and Frieza still taking center stage but not necessarily driving the entire plot. What can I say? I love fluff and I'm getting in some writing practice with the other characters.

To those waiting for the real good stuff...its coming~ (just a reminder: its all SFW!)

Despite all that I've gotten some rather nice comments on my ability to write, as I've definitely been reading other fics and writing in general here and there and man...I feel like I got a long way to go lol. Not that I'm letting it bother me, I am just starting out after all but I feel like my writing isn't going to get much better anytime soon. That being said all the compliments y'all have been giving me definitely reinforce that drive in me to want to keep writing :3 and even if my writing isn't actually all that terrible and comparing myself to others might not be fair to myself, its just the way I am about this sort of thing.

It IS a little awkward, but hey I'm committed to this and some other ideas I got going :) just got to keep plugging away.

Seriously, anyone reading this may feel free to critique me as it helps out tremendously!

And yes...I may have added another two planned chapters now. A total of 16 (if not more) at the time of this writing XD I'm having too much fun and I need to get all the ideas out there, even if I miss some details I'll regret forgetting later!

Thanks again for reading this so far everyone!
Stroking Egos

Chapter Summary

Can the General get Frieza to trust them in order for their plan to work?

Chapter Notes

Warning: entering some personal headcanon territory here!

I was too eager to get this out so if there are any mistakes left behind I'll get to fixing them a little later lol

ENJOY THIS EXTRA BEEFY CHAPTER YO! :O

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The longer Frieza veered over his shoulder at me, the more I felt my ask was a death sentence. I was at the bottom of a pit and the dragon was slowly climbing its way down to devour me whole, or rip me to pieces like a cat playing with its prey.

The men in the room experienced their fourth or fifth heart attack ever since I entered, monitoring their machines as best as they could and trying not to get involved.

It was heartwarming that somehow within the span of a week I would have been nothing to these diverse bunch of goons, and yet here they were worried I was about to bite the dust like I was one of them.

Always in constant danger.

Why did you put yourself in this situation?

Stop asking that question.

Oh man Frieza is still staring at me!

You just asked him if he could talk with you in private. That could be taken all sorts of ways!

What the hell do you mean by that?!

You realize that at this very moment Frieza is probably thinking about your question every which way?

All I did was ask to speak with him in private!

Where no prying eyes could judge whatever stupid thing you have to say? Where there was to be no surveillance and therefore the perfect opportunity to spring an assassination attempt?
Why would Frieza suspect me of wishing to off him?!

But then again, who would be the assassin...and who would be the victim?

YOU ARE NOT HELPING ME!

The Earthling is rather adorable when they are scampering for their lives.

Frieza, still keeping his deathly visage upon his newly-appointed General, enjoyed toying with his new protégé.

Protege? Listen to yourself, Frieza. You've been a without right hand for ages now, and here you are lowering your standards with this one.

Not that the Earthling had a problem with power so much as they had an image problem. Frieza had a long way to go with this Earthling before they were ready to become a gaudy mouthpiece with which to tell the galaxy of his third coming. To become a sword to rest within his arm and commit summary executions with.

Oh, but we'll mold them into a fine instrument of my destruction, won't we?

But what could they possibly wish to discuss that's so important it needed to be said in private?

My General sure has a lot of gall. First day on the job, barely fit into their own armor, and they are asking all the questions?

They even have a plan already on how to conquer Earth, which was against your initial projection no less. Destruction certainly makes more of a statement than subjugation if you ask me, but point is: how could I trust someone like that?

Their ambition, combined with their potential, is through the roof right now.

What could they possibly need to say to me away from the troops?

Do they not understand what I want? Do they have something stupid to ask about the plan? Are they going to try and get me to go along with their unthinkable plan to lower my power?

Why?!

So they can catch me at my most vulnerable and overthrow me?

I see your ambition, Earthling...

I see your intent...

You really think falling in line so readily, more readily than the most reluctant pawn, more readily than some of the most stubborn rivals I've tamed over the years, will bring me to lower my guard?

You really think charming me with your attempts at ballroom manners when you clearly have none will sway me?

If I didn't know better, I'd say I have nothing but another Zarbon on my hands. Just a much, much more powerful one. One with untapped potential. A black hole just waiting to swallow them whole.
...then again.

Maybe the Earthling could possibly be genuine in their attempt do nothing but please me.

Why is that?

As the human stood there, eternally dangling off an abyss as Frieza refrained from answering their question for the time being, Frieza found himself eyeing up the human for the sixth time that day. Of course, he wouldn't let them know that.

Normally, if something as weak as a human were caught in that armor he would have bisected them right then and there for their mockery of its majesty.

Then again, this human isn't so vile, are they? Crude, but at least not intentionally.

In any case...humans weren't completely unattractive to Frieza. Something about that one human, the one with the long flowing hair and the scars on his face, had caught Frieza's fancy at the time during the Clone Crisis. But their power level was treated as a joke, something that turned Frieza off right then. Surely, sometimes toys were amusing to keep around for any tyrannical purpose, but Frieza had enough of those already.

That, and the scarred human seemed very adamant on remaining so blindly loyal to the monkey. He was even wearing the same orange jumpsuit, clearly a lost cause.

And yet here was this human before Frieza, willingly bearing his armor. And looking rather majestic in it.

Wears it quite well. Something about this human...about all humans really, seemed to unique compared to the filthy monkeys.

All Saiyans look the same, how could anyone find their ilk desirable in any way when all they did was grow their hair out without tame and fight each other over their pile of bananas?

Yet every human he seemed to find just oozed their own style, something Frieza had to admit was a desirable trait amongst the species. And yet, it could be a deadly one.

Such a trait breeds ambition.

Frieza desperately searched within for a reason to blow up Earth, but the General had many good points that even Frieza was not about to throw away. Besides, with this exception here, humans didn't seem nearly as deadly to Frieza...other than the Soul of course.

This Earthling was rather clever.

Most importantly, Earthling humans didn't seem too concerned with instigating bar room fights and labeling them as glorious battles for the sake of their insane sense of honor, another trait Frieza made note of.

Maybe this human wasn't going to try anything so foolish as to rebel against me.

Maybe this Earthling really does just wish to make something of themselves, and sees servitude to me as the way to go about it.

...maybe I'm not giving my new General enough credit.

Maybe they've been intimidated enough. They've passed every game I've set before them.
This Earthling respects me...don't they?

Hmm...

Frieza resumed his gaze to the view of the planet, much to the Earthling’s dismay as their eyes were shot with blood.

This one is trying so hard to please me.

Trying so very hard.

The overlord found himself experiencing a strange sensation. He was momentarily short of breath, having to bring a hand up to his chest to regain his bearing.

As he was somehow losing his sense of dignity, even for just a moment, a smile crept up upon his face.

He let out a heavy, yet silenced exhale of relief.

This realization was all Frieza needed to finally come up with an answer.

It even sort of felt grand to finally drop the scowl for just a second and instead get to be a little courteous for a time. Be the host he always knew he could be.

...at least now that he found a worthy guest in his humble abode.

Not like I have anything more productive I can do until the Ginyu Force can rejuvenate themselves.

It was an excuse to have some private time with the General. The Earthling he had met on Earth. The Soul he spent so much talk conversing with.

And I didn't have to be the one to ask. The stars seem to be aligning in my favor.

Something inside Frieza had switched. Something he had been suppressing this whole time as he wasn't sure what it was.

It was a feeling he always associated with whenever he destroyed a planet or crushed a foe under his foot. The feeling he got when peons groveled before him, or better yet when a long-hated rival is at long last forced to do so in defeat to the tyrant.

No...this was even better than that.

Have I finally found someone? That special someone? An individual you could actually rely on? One who would do anything for you without the need for intimidation? Or the occasional slap on the wrist?

But instead they devoted themselves to you and your cause for the simple glory of it?

Everyone before me has either made pathetic attempts to sponge the scraps from my table or have failed to meet my expectations.


Or they have stood in my way.

Vegeta. The whole Saiyan Race.
Even the Ginyu Force had cause to momentarily rebel. That's not something I can forget, despite the fact they seem to be utterly at my service without question once more.

Nappa, of course he would try to rebel. But he's just a stupid monkey anyway, so of course that's to be expected. He seems to be in it merely for his survival now, which is enough for me at the moment.

They all made their pledge to me...usually out of fear, rightfully so of course.

Sure, the Ginyu Force have been in it for the glory, but they are just so focused they forget to conduct themselves upon maintaining my image and more so promoting their own. Not that I mind, they have always been amusing subject...if only they'd stop dancing.

This one doesn't do it for those reasons, do they?

If anything, instilling fear just seems to encourage clearer thinking.

But one thing this one also doesn't have as the others did is blind loyalty.

This one isn't just blindly loyal to me. They take my abuse yet don't let it actually get to them.

Are they just that determined to satisfy my desires for nothing other than my loyalty?

Oh yes...do reward your General.

"...if you so desire," Frieza finally, mercifully, responded, "meet me atop the palace spire in one hour. I expect my time won't be wasted."

I had to pause for some respite after hearing that answer, which whiffed under my nose like smelling salts and bring me back to some semblance of coherence.

My hope was once again restored, and I could feel my face return to its natural color.

At this point, ensuring Frieza wasn't disgusted by my actions was more of my fix than anything.

I had to stay positive. I can learn the rules, but that didn't mean I'd have to be broken in like some wild animal. To become something I'm not.

Sure, deep down you are enjoying this all. Its okay to admit that to yourself.

You've felt more alive trying to keep your life than you were going through the daily grind. Living too modest of a life.

You were given a chance and you didn't waste it. A chance to become what could arguably be called one of history's greatest figures.

And not just of Earth, but throughout the galaxy!

Provided I'd get to keep them alive through this whole Earth conquering business, my friends would be so jealous!

Uh...okay, childish power fantasies aside...

Despite the fact that I'm going though some kind of hell on an hourly basis, I feel more like a living, breathing human being than ever.
Ironic, considering my company is anything but human.

No nine-to-five was ever going to fix that. No repeat breakfast was going to fill that void. No uninteresting romantic adventure with a fellow human was ever going to really compare.

This is it. This is what I've been waiting for.

Some excitement.

Excitement from playing a dangerous game with an even more dangerous monster, but still...

I realized I was getting a little bolder with each move I had made so far with the tyrant until now. I pushed the envelope further. Explored more uncharted territory in this chain-of-command relationship I now was part of.

Three meetings, first day on the job no less, and I was learning the game. Its not like I haven't had any experience with the mad mob already.

I got plenty of time to get to know Frieza during that whole clone nonsense.

He shared so many things with me that day, and part of me knew...somehow knew...some of these facts weren't privy to anyone else until now. Anyone still living anyway.

The kind of things that would be valuable information for a rival. Potent dirt to commit blackmail with.

Maybe even hurt Frieza on an emotional level.

I found myself exploring that thought bubble for a moment.

Frieza was a spoiled child. A pompous trust fund kid. And he loved every bit of that.

He had no shame, and yet the things I knew could definitely bring some to the self-centered land shark if they were shared with the wrong people.

The more I think about it, the more I realize now how that must have been dictating Frieza's attitude towards me.

In a way, I am a liability. If that were the case, wouldn't it be better to simply off me? To vaporize the evidence?

And if anything being this powerful should definitely send off some warning flags within the tyrant's defense mechanisms.

See, you understand.

Frieza turned around and began to make his way around the hologram projection table, walking past me to leave headquarters as I stood there in a self-induced trance. He ghosted past me like a reaper searching for lost souls to ferry.

I exhaled, almost having forgotten to breath.

I had an hour to prepare my argument...but first I had to go inform Nappa of the plan. Maybe I'll go see to the Ginyu Force once I was done with Frieza.
The smitten tyrant took a clandestine look back.

That armor looks rather fitting on the General.

Cape looks good.

Though the rest of it doesn't leave much to the imagination.

...oh for goodness sake don't get caught now!

The happy pink blob in the big cape and poofy pants downed his gigantic sundae with great aplomb, lacking any sort of manners. It was still daytime where Majin Buu and his celebrity associate were, enjoying a Baseball game at a venue hosting Hercule's favorite baseball team, The Rockets. Bright blue sky, birds chirping, the crowd surrounding them deeply invested in this classic pastime...all the trappings of a jolly day to be had were aligned.

Hercule himself sat in the crowd alongside his corpulent companion, a hot dog in one hand and a bottle of cola in the other. Not part of his usual dietary regime, but he just had to indulge Buu a bit with his choice of food today. Something about frankfurters that made Buu laugh.

The World Champion was in a spirited mood, cheering on the Rockets with a mighty battle cry, "Get in there Rockets! Take those slugs down! They got no chance!"

Buu kicked his feet up and down like a kid, stuffing his entire face deep within his sundae bowl, delivering grunts of utter ravenous satisfaction.

Hercule gave him a brotherly elbow, tapping Buu twice to get his attention, "Come on Buu, you gotta show your support for the team!"

The befuddled wad of chewing gum retracted his face from within the bowl, his face contorted like molding clay in the shape of the inside of the bowl, chocolate and rainbow sprinkles stuck to his cheeks. His mouth hung open for a moment in confusion before a big floppy tongue emerged and shimmied his entire face all the goodies, leaving behind a fine gleam alongside his smooth pink surface.

He turned to face Mr. Satan with a smile, "Huh? You say something?"

"Chant with me Buu! Rockets! Rockets! Rockets-" Hercule pumped his fists with each chant.

"Rocket? What is rocket?" was his childlike question.

"Uh...the team we're rooting for?"

"But what's a rocket?" the emphasized word came out like a screech, his throaty vocals aggressively giving off a curious tone.

Hercule gave him a beat look, but was distracted by the sound of his phone beeping away his custom heroic tune.

He placed his cola down on the cement under his seat for a second and reached into his phone's personal hiding spot, answering the call over the cheering crowds and Buu's return to soaking up all the leftover ice cream in his bowl, "Mr. Satan, Champion of the World speaking!"

Goku's voice came in on the other line full of his trademark joy, "Hey, hi! Its me, Goku!"
Hercule went doe-eyed upon this over-the-phone reunion, "Oh, hey Goku...uh, what do you want?"

"Listen I'm about to head off to bed but I just wanted to ask ya' if Majin Buu was with ya' at the moment."

"Oh, yeah, he's right here," Hercule nudged his strange pal once more, "It fer' you Buu!"

Buu didn't hesitate to speak over the phone with the mystery caller with a big smile, "Hello?"

"Buu, hi! Its me, Goku!"

"Gokuuuu?"

"Yeah! Listen, I was just wondering if you'd like to meet our friend that helped us the other day!"

Buu interrupted with a pout, "Where is candy you promised me?"

"What?"

"Buu promised lots of CANDY! But Buu hasn't gotten any candy! WHERE IS CANDY?!"

Hercule shuddered at his side, keeping his distance so as to let Buu have his little temper tantrum.

Goku continued, "Oh...yeah, huh. Well...listen, we're going to meet with the Soul from before, when we fought all those clones?" Buu perked up with genuine interest, "And if you show up at the Lookout Tower the day after tomorrow, we'll bring you the candy. Sound good?"

Buu lit up, his face contorting to express sheer joy at remembering he did in fact have another best friend now, "The Soul? Oh yeah! Buu planning to have cookie party!"

A chuckle came from the other end, "That's the spirit Buu. I'll see you then, I guess!"

The happy Saiyan pressed the red button to end his pleasant call, sitting at the edge of the bed in a pair of baby blue briefs and a white tank top. He rested his phone atop his dresser as Chi-Chi lay on other side of the bed.

Goku thought to himself for a second, realizing he might have to make good on his promise, "Better call Krillin too, maybe he can pick up the candy for Buu while out looking for his second Dragon Ball."

Chi-Chi gave him an exasperated glare, flapping her husband's portion of the blanket over in invitation to join her, "Goku, let's go to bed, you can call him in the morning if you have to."

Goku rubbed the back of his neck, replying with respectful resignation, "Okay, okay."

He rotated himself to swung his feet over the edge of the bed and leaned back into his pillow with great interest.

Chi-Chi threw the blanket back over with him underneath, before he nestled himself in to get comfortable, "Thanks."

She gave him a quick kiss on the forehead, "Thank you for being patient."

Goku received the coveted smooch with a reactionary wink and smile, "Its okay Chi-Chi. I know I
get ahead of myself sometimes."

"And don't get me wrong; I do hope your friend is okay. I'm just...I just wish these adventures would sometimes not happen...and we could just stay together as a family."

"I get that, Chi-Chi. But I wouldn't be true to myself if I didn't get to fight, y'know?"

Chi-Chi sighed, but with more of an air of acceptance than resignation, "I know, and part of me still finds that part of you endearing...just please don't let anything happen to you, okay?"

Goku rolled over to face her, leaning on his elbow as he buried it into the pillow, eyeing her with pure satisfaction, "Of course not...well, I mean, I'll try not to let anything happen. I just can't wait to bring this person over and finally have someone else to fight. I mean, sparring with Vegeta and the others is always fun, but its not everyday you get to meet someone else maybe as strong as yourself!"

She couldn't help but be happy for her husband, "Well, at least its for a good cause I guess. If it means you are saving a life than I guess it would be unethical of me to get in the way of that."

"Aw you aint' getting in the way! Sometimes I understand why you get mad at me."

Chi-Chi narrowed her brow, "Wait...sometimes?"

His eyes shot open, regretting his choice of words but unable to backtrack, "Uh...yeah?" Not like he would dare to, whether it was his nature to or not.

Chi-Chi pouted, giving Goku a mild sweat and forcing him to deliver a sincere yet half-hearted attempt at defusing the situation, "Well...you see...uh..."

His wife was waiting, folding her arms and furrowing her brow.

"What I mean is, uh..."

"Good night, Goku." she wilted, moving over to her lantern to remove the only light source in the room, "Get some sleep, you got a big day tomorrow."

Goku sensed her sincerity, the moment had already came and went and he was in the clear.

He didn't dwell on it and rolled over to wrap an arm around her as his way of apologizing anyway. Even he could tell she was satisfied as she let out a fulfilled huff.

Goku couldn't sleep so quickly. He was too excited.

Too enamored with the prospect of having another strong fighter.

Although he loved to make friends, that's all he ever wanted. Strong people to fight.

Everyone in his life knew that, but they knew that wouldn't mean they'd be forgotten forever.

It was never taken personally if Goku didn't fight with someone as often as they used to. Most of them would be relieved of that fact anyway. Maybe a sparring match for old time's sake could take place, but unless you were Vegeta you were pretty much on the waiting list to take a shot at the heavyweight champion of the world.

The Soul...how strong were they in their own body?
Goku couldn't help himself, the smile he already held from holding onto his wife gingerly was enhanced further by the thought of having yet another fighter that could potentially give him his money's worth.

Sometimes he wished his wife would opt to get stronger so they could spend even more time together, but he understood it was not truly her way and wouldn't ask her to change that about herself just for him.

But this Soul, they got so strong so fast. His hope that they had retained that strength was his greatest desire at the moment.

Didn't matter who they were. Whatever they were before.

He was anticipating the thrill of the fight.

If only he knew.

"Two-thousand...Two-thousand and one...two-thousand and two..." Nappa was counting his crunches, hung off a sturdy beam within the fitness center the troops were given like an upside down bat.

I stared at him with arms folded, waiting patiently for him to finish his determination to achieve that next level, "Do you understand? Or do I need to repeat something?"

Nappa continued his crunches as I began to pace around the various treadmills organized throughout the space, "Well...I just got one question, if you don't mind."

I turned to face him, as dignified as I could appear, arms behind my back and my cape giving a slight twirl coinciding with my rotating maneuver, "Of course. Speak your mind."

*Having Nappa go from wanting to smack me around to having to ask me for my permission to even ask questions all in the span of twenty-four hours was certainly quite the trip.*

_Ironic, don't you think? How's that going for you and Frieza?_

_You be quiet._

Nappa lowered himself from the ceiling-mounted bar and stood upright to ask me properly, "If you are going to conquer Earth, does that mean you'll follow your end on our little arrangement?"

"Arrangement?" *Wait, what does he mean? His two conditions were treat him as an equal and help him reach Super Saiyan. Does the first condition entail something there?*

"Yeah, when you were stuck in my body. You said we'd conquer the joint together. Any position for a guy like me once you are running that rock?"

_Oh yeah, that's right. He really did hold me to that in the end huh._

_If only he was listening to you back on Earth._

Nappa looked at me, waiting for my answer.

If I were being honest, I was doing everything in my power to fight off the impending wave of spite I was feeling after what Frieza did to me. To do what Frieza did to me unto my own underling.
But I wasn't that kind of conqueror. Or I wasn't going to become that kind anyway.

**You really could be.**

*Relax you.*

**How about you get with the program?**

After a moment I formed a decent enough question to answer Nappa, "...what position did you have in mind?"

Nappa gave off a befuddled expression, as if I weren't going to answer him with such choice. At least, possibly.

A smirk crept up on his face and he brought his hands to his hips in what looked to be genuine confidence, "Well, whatever you want me to be. But honestly I'd prefer something more hands-on. I don't want to be stuck behind some desk or managing the friggin' sanitation if you know what I mean. I'm not cut out for that pedestrian crap! I was hoping I could be like...your royal executioner, or...something."

*Royal executioner...cripes Nappa.*

**You know maybe he'd be cut out for that.**

I closed my eyes in embarrassment, "I uh...wasn't looking for an executioner necessarily. In fact...I was never going to need one if I could help it."

Nappa lowered his arms and removed his smug, now bearing an unsatisfactory look, "Oh well you ain't fun at all. Come on, General. There's gotta be something for me on Earth."

*Actually...*

"I was maybe thinking of...assigning you the position of the court jester."

Nappa tensed up and lost it, "*COURT JESTER?!* You gotta be kidding me boss! Come on!"

Now it was my turn to smug, "Heh, relax big guy," Nappa looked at me with strained confusion, "I'm kidding. Really...I was thinking you'd make a fine Captain of the Guard."

"Captain? Of the Guard? You mean like...have my own squad like that Ginyu Guy?"

"If you want," I shrugged, "you don't have to have it *that* way but you would be in charge of the Earth garrisons we'll surely need to have on site. I'd give you plenty to do, don't worry. You'll be treated well."

Nappa stood up, staring upward in thought, "You know what," he trained his sight on me once more, "I think I'd make a great Captain of the Guard. Ha! *Captain* Nappa. I like the sound of that!"

"I thought you would." I continued my pacing with pride over my own decisiveness.

Nappa pushed his luck with the amount of his own pride surging within him, this big break giving him the boost he might have honestly needed lately, "Hey, speaking of the Ginyu Force...you think you can get me in their group? Hell, they are still Frieza's most prestigious unit, working alongside them would certainly give me a lot of rep."

I snapped my attention back to Nappa, unsure how to best let him down when I came up with the
perfect response, "Really? You really want to possibly have to spend hours upon hours going to rehearsal? To take orders from Captain Ginyu?"

No offense to Ginyu and his men of course, just playing the part.

Nappa folded, getting the point. "Yeah...I didn't think that through."

"You'll get there. In any case," I had one last point to drive him before I was done with briefing the enlarged Saiyan, "this will be the opportunity we need to have you unlock your potential. To become a Super Saiyan. And you never know! Maybe we could even get you to Super Saiyan 2 if we're lucky."

I had no hope of that, not in the short amount of time we'd have in the chamber.

The Hyperbolic Time Chamber.

The Saiyan prince just wouldn't stop talking about it in our own conversations that day I was a spirit. If my math was correct...I'd have about two hours to spend alongside each of us. One at a time. Two hours meant about a month's worth of training...training that would be gruesome.

Nothing to truly enjoy.

I could feel Frieza's golden teachings within me. A training regime he and the one known as Tagoma undertook.

But with Nappa, I knew I would have to employ some sort of tactic to get his emotions going. I felt like I had a solid gist to work with, enough information to play upon his feelings.

He certainly had a lot of rage to unleash upon several individuals in question.

A tactic I was not really looking forward to employing...but it was the only way.

I hope you can forgive me when this is all said in done.

Nappa was pumped, "I'm looking forward to finally catching up."

I wanted to make a certain reality clear to him, "Let me get this into your head right now Nappa...try not to get angry."

He was already snarking a nasty little look, but with a hint of already accepting whatever bad news I was probably harboring.

"You can't seriously expect to get strong enough to take on either Go...I mean...Kakarot. Nor Vegeta for that matter."

Nappa tensed up, ready to protest in futility, when I raised a hand, "However...I can promise you now, I will help you on the path to getting you there. But until that day, for the upcoming battle...just let me and Frieza deal with those two in particular."

The Saiyan scoffed, "And how can you be so sure you are even a match for them? Or Frieza for that matter?"

I didn't.

I sure didn't.
"Why? Do you doubt I stand any sort of chance?"

Nappa shuddered, relinquishing this foolish notion and looking down at the space between us, "Uh...forgive me, General...I-I didn't mean to imply."

No. Don't do that to him again.

"No, Nappa, its okay," he brought his attention back up to me, confused but relieved of his shame at least by the distraction, "I don't know how I compare to their natural strength. To you and the rest of us, I was your ace during the whole Twenty-One disaster...but for all I know, right now...I'm not as strong as Frieza assumes I am."

Nappa folded his arms, but with no disrespect to be detected, "Well...maybe Frieza is underestimating you."

Now that's a thought.

If only it were true...

...

...but I certainly want to find out.

I could see him up there.

A pixel of white and purple, standing atop the spire like a jewel set upon a scepter held up by the planet itself out of sheer respect for the lord.

I thought at any moment the tower would come to life and a violet laser would vaporize me where I stood in an instant.

He was the peak of the world. Higher than the food chain.

Certainly this was the only purpose the spire was built for, to hold up this creature of vanity.

Dominance. A statement.

Here I am galaxy. Bow before me and my giant phallic object.

I could barely see him stand proudly atop the flat surface of the spire, surely designed by some mad sorcerer of an architect that specialized in the style known as megalomaniac.

Scanning the horizon, something he was doing a lot of every time I saw him. Surely some kind of source of joy for the tyrant. It had to be.

The wind kicked up, flapping my cape in anticipation of my meeting with the boss.

It was a cold wind.

Except for when I sat in the kitchen receiving my dining lessons from the blue blur, I've been nothing but cold this whole damn time.

This cold planet.
Was this the intent?

What was the purpose of this planet anyway?

What was this overgrown geode called?

Didn't Nappa tell me what it was for?

I can't remember.

**Stop wasting your time and get up there.**

You don't understand...I'm not prepared to ask him.

**Ask him what?**

Don't you know?

Why Frieza brought you here? He needs the manpower. Plain and simple. Embrace the position already, will ya?

I want to, but I'm just not there yet.

You are here, right now. Wake up idiot.

I couldn't help but snap my eyes open upon the realization I was arguing with myself yet again.

**Arguing with myself.**

I was arguing with myself. How absurd.

So much has developed this day. I still had no real time to process it all.

Something had awakened in me and I was scared. And not just this power.

There was something in me. And it was familiar.

**So familiar.**

I was now a force of destruction, now bearing facts that I would have never believed to be anything other than fiction.

**Throwing fireballs? Flying through the air? Becoming my own legend?**

Even crazier, was that I was on the other end of it now.

I was becoming something gaudy. I was becoming a super villain.

I would have my own secret lair and a hidden trap door leading to pool of sharks.

Goons by the dozen would bow before me.

People would fear me.

**Conquering planets? Leading armies?**

**Relax, you are overthinking things.**
I can't even hold a thought for more than ten seconds. I can't finish a thought.

...and then there was Frieza.

I couldn't think about anybody else.

He invaded my thoughts like a proper extraterrestrial probing my mind.

This spoiled brat holding my leash.

He put a leash on me, didn't he?

Oh you liked it.

Excuse me?

Part of you liked being Frieza's toy. His plaything.

...

I slapped my temples with the palms of my hands, forgetting my own strength and giving myself an immediate migraine, all in the utter panic of it all.

Oh no...no no no no!

That's not me!

I'm not some toy for Frieza!

...

...am I?

Yep.

But...I didn't come here for that! I didn't come all this way just to be some source of amusement for him!

I...

You what? You want more than that?

...

I lowered my hands, my eyes still popping out of their sockets.

Every little thing Frieza does intrigues you. He is the whole reason you decided to show your dumb face.

Speak to me...what are you saying?

What you seem to be thinking.

What am I thinking?
That you have a crush on Frieza.

...NO WAY! NUH-UH!

Yep.

Are you seriously suggesting I have the hots for that monster?

Why are you so eager to serve him?

Because there is opportunity here for me! I feel alive here!

Even when under all this constant pressure?

...I mean...

Even after you were so humiliated not that long ago?

...well...

Yeah, even after all that you are willing to stick around. This isn't some job application. This isn't an interview for an office position.

You are determined to please Frieza. And not just for some scraps.

You want him.

How would you know? You are just a voice in my head! I'm just losing my mind is all.

I'm your real self.

I was a nobody until this day. Until the day I was a Soul.

Look...if you really want to woo that lizard, at least listen to me...

...its you, isn't it...

Whatever do you mean?

The way I've been talking lately. How many risks I've taken. My manners. My boldness.

...

...where did you come from?

You already know.

No. You weren't ever there before.

Something happened. Something from sharing a link with Frieza for so long.

Maybe. Do you want my advice or not?

I can't deal with this right now.
Cut the damn leash.

...what?

Show you aren't an animal waiting to be tamed.

You don't have paws, you have a pair of hands. With thumbs.

Use them to take the collar off.

Or pick the lock to your cage if you have to.

But I don't know how to pick a lock.

Ask your question if you must, but at least get something out of it.

I had no idea that my eyes were glowing red as my heated inner debate raged on.

What do you have to lose? At least this way you'll find out if you have a future here. Your proper one.

...what do you mean, proper one?

Oh please, you wouldn't be here if you weren't planning on overthrowing Frieza, would you?

...what?!

No! Why would I do that?!

Please, you have real potential here. And yet you waste it serving that bum.

I couldn't make out that my fists were tightening, engaged in my inner turmoil.

And better yet, he wants you. You could get so close to him.

Frieza is not a bum!

And...how do you even know he really wants me? That way?

Didn't that little brush on the cheek feel so good?

But...it was just a ruse, wasn't it? A show of power in front of the grunts? A reminder for me not to get any cute ideas?

We could be better than that! We could take everything!

But I'm happy to serve Frieza! Look at what he's done for me! He's made me his General! He'll let me conquer Earth, and even run it how I see fit!

AND WHO'S WE?!

I could feel myself boiling, uncomfortable in my own skin. Was it even my own skin anymore?

You wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for me. You've gotten this far. Just let me take over, I'll see you through to the top.
Let you take over? See this through?!

I'm not going to let you-

I'M NOT GOING TO DO THAT TO FRIEZA.

Yeah...you do care about him. More than he cares about you.

...

...

...oh.

And just like that my goal was clear.

I knew what I had to do. I was going to ask my question, and hopefully...it would earn Frieza's trust.

I still had a job to do, within hours we would be speeding back towards home. Towards Earth.

For the plan to succeed I needed Frieza to lower his signature. Otherwise, we could be picked up right away. We could be stopped.

I couldn't let that happen.

Frieza was too proud. He was too committed to his image.

And now I had this new problem, this ego manifesting itself.

It wasn't entirely clear what had happened, but something had taken place. Somehow, this whole link business came with another side effect, one that wasn't just stealing techniques or amassing all this power.

Had this other side really been subliminally injecting me with the knowledge I needed to get through this?

Would I have failed a thousand times over by now without this cunning side of me at the helm?

No...no way. I'm not letting you claim credit.

I've been doing just fine on my own.

You get out of here.

OH HO HO HO! You just wait. You need me.

...

Full control returned to me.

The feeling rising within me was worse than when Frieza brought me to my knees.

I had a problem. And I'd have to deal with it at some point.

I could feel the cold again, the wind rustling my cape once more. My internal heat sink finally released all of its pent up steam.
I looked down at my own chest, seeing the Ginyu Force brand proudly above the left breast. The pauldrons jutting proudly on my shoulders. My white-gloved hands trembling.

...what had I become?

At long last I looked up once more.

There he still was.


My savior.

...ahem.

Do I really have a thing for Frieza?

He's an alien!

Uh...not that I was against that sort of thing!

But...

...but even if it was true, and I really had a thing for Frieza...how would he think about me?

The way he brushed his hand against my cheek. That soft, white skin pressing up against mine.

For a brief, intense moment, it felt so...affectionate.

Like I was his prize.

I mean that's some kind of affection...right?

This wasn't how he treated Zarbon, was it?

Nah...didn't sound like Zarbon actually got very far if that was his intent.

Listen to yourself, you never even knew this Zarbon, so stop speculating will ya'?

You aren't Zarbon. You are you.

Damn what that other part of you thinks.

...well, actually, the other side even thought myself better than Zarbon.

The other side is getting some ideas, and I don't like them.

Was this other part of me really on my side?

Take on Frieza? I didn't want that!

The idea of Frieza lying dead at my feet as I took his throne?!

I...I can't bear that thought!

I need Frieza!
I-

....I...

...

...oh no...

It was true. I was infatuated with Frieza.

I had feelings for the dragon that was keeping me within its lair. I had feelings for my master.

Such forbidden taboo it would be.

I...I should just blot these thoughts out now.

I can't let that charming...handsome...

...monster...

...that beautiful...

...eexh.

...

...but did the dragon have feelings for me?

His knight? His vassal? His governor?

His General?

His proclaimed best shot at taking down Earth and its rugged defenders?

I had to go see him. I had to find out.

I defied gravity, finally with a purpose, rising above the surface level of the platform I stood on, the landing zone where Nappa's ship landed when I first got here.

I rose, gracefully gliding upright towards Frieza. Up to the top of the spire.

Ascending towards my destiny.

I got close to the spire, rising mere inches away from it, face to face with the black material it was built with.

Until I got to the top.

Frieza's calves were the first thing I saw as my sight finally peeked over the edge.

His thick, toned...

...OH COME ON NOT NOW.

His voice completely caught me off guard, "About time you showed up."

I grit my teeth and winced.
Of course he sensed me.

*Easy. Just play along.*

I landed gently atop the surface, the cape no longer abiding by the wind as it lay in rest behind me.

I brought my arms behind me, folding them behind my back.

Like a General ought to.

I cleared my throat, as nonchalantly as I could, "Sensed me coming?"

He turned to face me, arms at the side, tail mildly swinging along with the rotation.

Smirking that intoxicating grin, "You are pretty hard to miss."

*Go ahead. Lay on your own charm.*

*You got this.*

"Well...so are you."

Frieza tilted his head ever so slightly, refusing to remove his vaguely threatening smile, "Is that so?"

The howl of the wind rustled far below our altitude.

The stars were our backdrop. Crystal basin as far as our eyes could see.

My heart was pumping. My nerves were working overtime.

It was just me and him now.

I waited a moment to collect myself.

"In fact...you are so hard to miss...I'd be very surprised if Goku, Vegeta and the others weren't already waiting for us with a red carpet once we arrived on Earth."

Frieza didn't change his expression one bit, even as he retracted his head back to its natural orientation, "Still going to try and press that issue upon me? Didn't I make myself clear? I will not lower my power level, even for this plan."

*Just put on your best poker face,* "Well...I myself am a bit curious. I understand you have several forms. Maybe I'm just eager to see them."

His reaction was not one I was expecting at all, as I found myself in another long, deathly pause...

...*did...did the Earthling just express their wish to see another form of mine?*

Frieza found himself a little surprised by this sudden upgrade in boldness from his General.

*Shocked even.*

*But not annoyed.*

"I...why would you wish to see a previous form?" Frieza asked, sounding uncharacteristically
quizzical. For once he had a unique question for the Earthling, and he wanted the answer.

His curiosity was finally peaked for once in dealing with this Earthling.

Sure, his General had been showing promise, cunning...even great power. Passing all his little tests of resolve and dedication.

Each of those instances had definitely surprised Frieza, if only because he didn't expect the human to actually truly pass any of them.

But that was surely the point of those tests. If the Earthling couldn't pass them, then what right did they have to wear the armor?

Or even live?

The General kept their pacing around him, having just enough space upon the terrace to do so comfortably for both of them, neither one feeling their personal space was being violated.

They continued their obvious sales pitch, "I just wish to admire the full spectrum that is you, my Lord Frieza. Is there anything truly wrong with that notion?"

Frieza's eyes widened ever so slightly, and even he couldn't help himself there.

Is...this peon seriously trying to get me to go along with their part of the plan by...attempting seduction?

Of all the things I would hear from their mouth, and on the first day of their anointment no less.

Unthinkable!

Absolutely crass!

Completely and utterly revolting behavior!

...

...how very amusing.

Now the Earthling was attempting show off their silver tongue. And it was working far sooner than he'd ever admit to the Earthling.

However, Frieza wasn't going to be won over so easily, "A few things to consider, actually. For one: I don't see the point."

Frieza graced himself over to a different side of the terrace, peering out over the fresh edge as the General kept up their casual pacing around the area, arms still behind their back trying to look dignified.

This human think they can look the part? How quaint.

Certainly they are letting the position of commander of my armies get to their head. How pathetic.

Maybe I was wrong about them...
I remember Frieza mentioning something about a brother he really loves to speak rather disdainfully about. Maybe I should use that to my advantage.

"I wish to know your forms so I knew who I was dealing with at all times. After all, you wouldn't want me to mistake you for your brother, would you?"

I definitely did not expect Frieza to suddenly bust out laughing, and after a moment of haughty enjoyment he turned to face me yet again this time bearing his fangs with a mad glee, narrowing his eyes to try and avoid any tears of laughter that could possibly be produced.

Something about seeing those teeth was enough to break my brave facade for just a moment.

Frieza brought his laugh to a final ending with a deep sigh of genuine joy, "I heard that my brother had in fact perished not long after my own first demise on Earth, so you need not worry yourself about that anytime soon."

...oh...

...uh, wait...

"In fact, you just reminded me: I'll have to annex that territory sometime in the near future. Not like he'll be needing those systems anymore. Those troops still loyal to him might very well resist, so I'll definitely need your assistance in that regard...once this whole Earth business is over with that is."

Part of me realized right away how fruitless an apology over the death of his brother would be, even after my social faux pas of bringing it up.

At least it didn't ruin the mood like I thought it would.

If anything, it seemed to bring Frieza to a happier place oddly enough, "Oh but we'll get you to that point soon enough. I suppose Captain Ginyu will be in charge of instructing you in the finer points of galactic cartography. Plenty of territory to cover, and plenty of systems to pick and choose from..."

He's trying to distract me.

That's it...time to switch tactics.

Oh no...is that a good idea? Is going for this angle really that smart?

No...but I haven't really been getting anywhere playing it smart just yet.

I closed my eyes and smirked, bracing myself.

"Well...if the removal your own brother from the equation, a rival in blood no less, isn't enough to allow yourself to drop your fears," the cold-blooded despot dropped his smile in a heartbeat, as I could feel mine increasing rapidly before I fully committed and doubled down, "then I guess if you absolutely must remain in this form at all times...certainly it sends a message that you are ready for rivals to make a move, surely..."

What a pretentious little thorn in my side!

What a manipulative cretin!

What an absolutely preposterous excuse for a person of their current status!
Does this Earthling have a death wish after all?

I should kill them where they stand! I should just bring them to Earth and force them to watch as I blow up their planet right then and there!

I should just rip their heart out and show it to them! How dare they resort to such low tactics on myself?

And to think they are resorting to this crass under-handed move just to get their plan to work. How utterly insufferable.

How...

...stubborn.

Frieza counter-attacked, approaching the General in a very threatening manner, slowly circling after the Earthling like the aggressive serpent he truly was.

He let out a less-than-amused chuckle, heavily drenched in a tone of displeasure, "You think...preying on my stature is such a wise idea? You even think this will allow you to achieve your goal of getting me to lower my power? Even in my first form...I am a force to be reckoned with. No one would dare assault my person no matter which skin I wore."

The General kept their distance, keeping opposite in their own rotational pacing around the terrace. The stars spun around the two as the General now locked eyes with the Lord.

Frieza continued, making minor hand gestures with each emphasized point, "I've already agreed to your plan, and you should be grateful I even settled on that. You've been playing a dangerous game with me by focusing on the survival of that planet, good reasons or not. What's to say at the very least I wasn't planning on vaporizing half of its citizens anyway to serve as an example?"

Oh...I didn't think of that.

Damn.

My heart sank even as I kept up my General's pace while Frieza made his bullet point presentation, still trailing behind, "I could glass whole landmasses and just leave what's left for you to reign over. In fact, I hope you understand very clearly that at the very least...at the very least...I expect the deaths of Goku and his entourage during this campaign."

...dammit all.

Keep your pace up. You'll think of something to counter that later. You'll have to.

Be vague. Don't completely agree. He'll just hold you to it later.

Frieza wasn't necessarily a man of his word, depending on the subject.

I need every angle I can fashion.

I'll fight them...try and make them see reason if possible.

But I just can't bring myself to murder them.
Make an ultimatum he can agree upon. Now is your chance.

I stopped in my tracks, Frieza himself taking a few more steps to catch up before following suite. I rotated myself to face my Lord directly, letting him know how serious I was.

"If you expect me to neutralize them on your behalf...then we need every advantage we can get. We can't engage them like this, and not suppressing our power level will give us away long before we even enter Earth's atmosphere. They'll be ready for us. And we are not ready to overcome them."

I strained to deliver the next point, even as Frieza was in fact giving me his full attention, "...even you realize that."

_Ooo...poor choice of words. Nice going me._

And yet, I wasn't immediately turned into ash as I thought I would be for that phrase. Instead he merely glared at me, his face somewhere between stoic and scowling.

I wasn't entirely sure energy wasn't pooling behind his vision, but I didn't detect any at the very least.

I continued against my better judgement, praying he would forgive me for those choice of words later. "Besides...training in your base form works more efficiently, does it not? I understand transformations regardless of race, be it Saiyan or your own species," Frieza winced, and I realized I could have picked a better word there as well, "...er...always multiplies your strength. And training in your higher form would yield no resistance to the hardships we'd face. No pain...no gain they always say...eh heh heh."

_Oh you dumbass._

_He probably doesn't even get that phrase._

_No pain...no gain._

_I've never heard that one I think. Or maybe I have._

_So very pedestrian. So very droll._

_So...human._

_And yet, its simple because of it straightforwardness. An uncomplicated yet to-the-point phrase._

_In my own four months of training, I certainly did not gain power without suffering._

Frieza could tell his General wouldn't let this go.

Usually Frieza wasn't the type to allow the more unusual requests of his subjects to be fulfilled, but for this one...

...

...something about this one makes me want to say yes.

_They want things there way, but clearly wish to do so with my blessing._

_Why does this one need my approval this much?_
I don't know what to do with such loyalty.

How could I be so sure of this thought?

I mean look at them!

They are a human. A race known for their rather unchecked diversity if my experience with them is anything to go by.

Each one of them has drastically different personalities. Even each member of the Ginyu Force can just be the same thuggish buffoon standing next to the same thuggish buffoon, and I wouldn't be able to tell them apart if they weren't so wonderfully color-coordinated.

And yet if this human walked into the room you could know who they were instantly.

They weren't just the same idiot with idyllic notions of overstepping their station.

I suppose that is what happens when one day you are a nobody...and then the next you are given immeasurable gifts of power, and an opportunity to meet someone as prestigious as myself.

What an opportunity that must have been for the Soul.

Maybe this is why they are so eager to serve.

Perhaps...

...maybe this was fate even.

Not just for the human...but for myself as well.

Hmm...

My Lord closed his eyelids shut, lowering his head in what seemed like serene contemplation.

It was honestly a sight to behold, as I had never seen him so calm before.

It threw me out of my comfort zone harder than anything to see Frieza so calm.

It wasn't a look I was unfamiliar with...near the end of the day I was a Soul, I seemed to have seen plenty of Frieza in a relaxed state that day.

In spite of all the inconvenient reasons that were enough to give him an excuse to remain in a temper tantrum throughout.

But seeing it now, in person, was something else.

The most surreal thing yet.

And I wasn't sure what to make it of.

*Was Frieza finally done with me? Had I overstepped my boundary? Crossed a bridge too far?*

*Had he just come to the conclusion that he wasn't going to get anywhere he wanted to with me and so better to eliminate me now?*
I found myself slowly retracting my arms from behind my back, and making a half-hearted attempt to position them in a place where I could bring them up in a flash to defend myself.

This dread that had been hanging over me all day was finally at its peak, even more so than when he held my head in place like a ragdoll.

Not that I knew if I was in any real danger. I just did not have the will to fight for my own life at that moment.

Not for fear of my life, but for upsetting Frieza in any way...further so than he already was.

I felt my priorities were turned upside down over the last twenty-four hours, and it was only now beginning to wash over me that this was the new normal.

If I were to keep on living after this meeting.

Frieza reopened his eyes, those burning hot nickel balls mistaken for cinnamon dots staring into my soul. A tractor beam sucking out my brain. A fire yearning for more wood and coal to burn for fuel and keep on raging.

*Look at this creature. They are just so prepared to do whatever I want them to. Whatever I wish.*

*Within their own foolish reason, but nonetheless.*

*I'll fix that in time, on my own terms.*

*But how precious, isn't it? To see someone, not from any royal background or revered reputation of any kind, try so hard to...what?*

*Put a smile on my face?*

That feeling came back in Frieza's chest. At first it felt like a dagger driving into his own heart, and yet as he felt it he realized it was more like it was merely beating faster. Something he was just not used to.

The only other time he felt even close to like this was in the heat of battle against the monkey back on Namek, the fight for his life against the much-feared legend of the Super Saiyan made reality.

The fight for his life as he held back against the Spirit Bomb. And again as he found himself overcome with seething rage to destroy his newfound nemesis.

The one who beat him.

*What if this human was capable of doing the same? And worse...intended to?*

*I would never forgive them.*

But his heart was beating like this again not because he could feel that same sense of rage, or that same sense of the need for survival...

...it was just only that...overwhelming need.

He needed something. His heart was telling him that.
A craving. A mighty yearn.

A need so bad it was swelling inside him.

He needed to fend off the Spirit Bomb. He needed the destruction of Goku, and by his own hand.

So then what is it I’m needing now?

My master finally spoke, softly...but with no trace of the menacing tone as I was used to hearing from his careless whispers.

"If you truly think this is how the plan will work...then I will lower my power level before we depart."

My eyes exploded with all kinds of magical joy.

Oh sweet relief!

Now this plan has a chance to work.

I have to prepare myself. I maybe have a handful of hours left to-

"But you must do something for me now, right here."

Stay calm. Its probably something simple enough.

I stood at attention out of respect, trying my best to keep my commanding stature. Even if it was an obviously unpracticed one.

"Of course...my Lord..." I bowed before him.

Frieza extended his arm, hand facing down with his fingers dangling as if he were drying his nails after a fresh coat of glamour. His hand hung there, like a dangling spider, awaiting my next move...inviting me, tantalizing me.

"Pledge your allegiance...swear an undying oath to me, that whatever I wish...you shall deliver. Without question. Without hesitation."

I knew what this entailed...

"I'm entrusting you with my life."

...could I do it?

"I hope you understand the consequences of failure."

Could I look him in the eyes and do it?

"And I hope when the time comes..."

Could I kill Goku and his friends?

"You will make the right choice."

...
I shut my eyelids tight in fear of the consequences, not from the wrath of Frieza, but from my conscious.

I took a step forward, followed up by my second devolving into a humble kneel. I was close enough to Frieza to gently reach for his offered hand.

I rested it upon the palm of my hand, hunching closer as I leaned in to grace the back of his hand with my own lips.

The white skin, so slick and yet full of raw strength.

The breath of the human's lips upon his hand was a rather enjoyable feeling, he had to admit. The heat brushing upon his sheen was an absolutely lovely euphoria.

This living being committing itself to him.

Swearing fealty.

_Oh sweet heavens Freiza, don't go melting now._

_It's just a human._

...your own human...

My lips were stuck to his hand, an adhesive had hardened and my show of allegiance was frozen in place.

**Hey, let go now.**

**Stop kissing Frieza's hand.**

Just a little while longer...

_When is the General going to let go?_

...don't blush in front of the Earthling.

_Stop it, Frieza. This is beneath you._

_They are nothing. They are nothing but a worm._

_An instrument._

_You don't..._

...you don't want them that way.

_All they did was agree to help you slay your sworn enemy. Nothing about that at all is..._

...attractive to you in that way...
...none...no attraction whatsoever...

...

...stop BLUSHING Frieza!

I finally relinquished my royal signature and allowed Frieza to retract his arm. No hint of disgust in the movement. No speedy recovery as if he were glad the event was finally over.

I wondered how long I could have gotten away from that.

I looked up at him, only to catch a blur of what I could swear was a quick wipe of his own face, followed by Frieza looking off uncomfortably to the side.

He cleared his throat before I could process this phenomenon.

Think of something to say already! You are the Lord Emperor for heaven's sake!

"B-by the way...some advice for you."

The General stood, careful as to remain dignified in the movement, keeping their gaze upon the Lord, intently awaiting for his gospel.

"...you should really come up with your own repertoire..."

Oh that was a silly thing to say to the Earthling! What's gotten over you Frieza?

I was too stupid and flustered to understand his sage wisdom, "Uh...excuse me, my Lord?"

Did...did he just stutter?

"Your techniques. I understand its all you've had time to learn since you've been a soul, but do come up with your own set of skills, won't you? After all, no one likes an imitation."

...could I come up with my own moves? My own signature abilities?

I suppose maybe I can! Maybe I'll try to think of something while in the Hyperbolic Time Chamber.

I realized that any awkward silence that could have taken place was minimized with Frieza's suggestion, a fact I was all too happy to have.

Oh, wait! I still never asked my question!

The other reason I wanted to speak with him privately.

Might as well, considering I got the harder subject out of the way already.

I seized the opportunity to break even further away from the previous moment.

"I do have one more question, if you have time my Lord."
Oh? Even after such a risque turn of events, the Earthling is still willing to pursue further dialogue? 

...delightful.

Frieza awaited to regain his royal composure, returning his hands to behind his back and bringing himself to smile his way through the blush, "You may proceed."

The General, invigorated to receive permission, ventured forth with their question, "What planet are we on? How come you have such a..."

Come on, pick your words better, "...magnificent palace on this world of all places?"

Frieza, surprised at the lack of any sort of question that could betray the Earthling’s intent on any future endeavor, was taken slightly aback by my inquiry.

Not that it seemed to have touched a nerve or commit any sort of social faux pas for the tyrant, but more at the sheer randomness of the question.

"Excuse me?" Frieza asked, a sharp raise in tone indicating utter cluelessness.

"This planet...where are we?" I insisted, careful as to avoid sounding like an idiot.

I could tell Frieza has never heard such a personally inclined question, "Why do you wish to know that?"

I stuttered, faltering at the first sign of failure on this adventure, "I-I...am just curious."

Frieza stared at me with great interest, tilting his head in that way again, ever so slightly.

He took a moment to think before answering, delivering the goods with a hint of genuine pride, not the kind of pretentious pride one would expect from him.

"This is Cajo Two...the first planet I ever claimed in my own name...had to start somewhere after all."

...oh.

"But you'll see for yourself what that feels like...you'll figure out what you'll do with the worlds you conquer in your own time...I must admit: my anticipation to see what you have in mind for Earth is greater than you could imagine.

My heart was racing again. Going for the gold medal against all other feelings.

Fear could take silver for all my heart would care.

"I do hope you'll...impress me..."

Not ten seconds had passed before everyone returned to their normal power, negotiations breaking down immediately. Alliances of convenience ceased to be and old wounds were open once more.
The waves no longer inhibiting them and evening the battlefield between everyone. Saiyan, Android, Earthling...it didn't matter who you were or how hard you had trained, for the first time in a long time everyone was able to play the game again as utter equals.

Normally, this would be a seminal event for the Z Fighters, but it just made the job of saving the day harder, as not every fighter was necessarily able to help now. A sad thought, really.

Now...back to routine.

Goku was Earth's mightiest hero once more, and Vegeta by proxy, with their god ki now at their disposable as if they never lost it. They were probably all too happy to be back in their top physical condition. Maybe even those friends of Goku's nowhere near his scale were grateful on a personal level.

Gohan not falling too far behind without even having to remain in a Super Saiyan form. He always had incredible potential. Definitely proof that having a bit of Earthling in you didn't hold you back at all. If there was anyone else capable of becoming top dog again without the need for a handicap, it was him.

Individually, Goten and Trunks were powerful, but fused together as Gotenks they could do some serious damage if you could direct their attention deficit mindset properly. Imagine what they could do if they kept training and learned to take a fight seriously. Although they could hold the fusion for long, they were somehow able to stay as such during the entire crisis. It was only a matter of time now before they would return to a pair of Super Saiyans at best.

Majin Buu, a wild card but a monster of a one luckily on their side, just keep him happy and give him all the candy you could find. His true strength shone in the same field the pesky Twenty-One had, the ability to regenerate on the fly. Even if you had the strength to hurt him, you had to be absolutely sure in destroying every last cell to wipe him out.

Piccolo, their own former villain turned ally, strong enough to overcome a first form Super Saiyan. And who knows? There was probably potential still in there somewhere for the stalwart defender to discover. Some kind of Super Namekian transformation just waiting to be unlocked.

It was a bit of a toss-up where Krillin, Tien and even possibly Yamcha were at nowadays, but it was clear they were back to being stuck at the lowest tier. Not to ever say they were slouches nor were ever able to help anymore. Humans just still haven't discovered a way to achieve a scale-boosting transformation of any kind. Probably genetics, humans just haven't evolved or had achieved enough enlightenment to handle one. At least theoretically.

But then look at the Soul. Maybe these three did have a chance.

Frieza knew well that power like this would be wasted potential if it remained here on Earth. Better to allow the Soul to finally return to their own body. Retrieve them later for recruitment.

Now that the troublesome, sugar-toothed menace had been dealt with, it was time to see if now was the opportunity to destroy these fools once and for all. Maybe the little monkey and his posse weren't fully powered at this moment. Sure, he could at least go Super Saiyan, but why stick around until he can get his Blue back?

He believed it would have something to do with the Soul spending more time with Frieza and his own unholy union. They could all have gathered more of their former glory while Goku and his alliance might still be a bit behind. It was all Frieza had but it was enough to give him confidence against the odds.
However, maybe this was not the case and Frieza would have to give everything he’s got just to force a stalemate and make a tactical retreat.

Frieza couldn’t risk the Soul’s well-being here, better to spare them this battle they could no longer help with. Just in case Goku was in fact at his full power.

Never mind how many new and powerful allies Goku had since gained.

Father Cold always had warned Frieza of Majin Buu and here he was. Maybe not as powerful as Frieza anymore, but definitely still a dangerous asset to Earth’s defenders.

The two little runt offspring of both Goku and Vegeta of all people, fused together to become even stronger it seemed, were able to knock Tagoma out with a crass headbutt to his nether regions. That must have hurt. Frieza had personally trained him to be able to be as useful as possible against the rugged defenses of Earth and a couple of children took him down.

Not to mention everyone Frieza had ran into before just kept getting stronger and stronger. Sure, maybe Frieza himself could obtain more strength, but no time to find out.

No...better the Soul get out of harm’s way now. Too much time and effort spent to waste this precious resource.

Not mention, for Frieza personally...this Soul knew too much about the tyrant after everything they went through. Too many secrets. Maybe even weaknesses.

...intimate things Frieza recalled.

Frieza had a fleeting feeling of kinship. One he hadn’t had in...maybe ever.

And certainly, he wouldn’t want all that to go to waste with the Soul, even if they were an Earthling.

Once the Soul had been ejected, spiriting away back to their original body, Frieza and his fellowship of evil readied their power.

Cell, Frieza’s definitive strongest ally at the moment, if you could call him that, seemed even stronger than before. Maybe a little too strong, he did apparently reveal the Saiyan cells within him granting such power with each grievous wound, but no real time to ponder on what to do about that right now. He sets his sights on Gohan and Goku, feeling as if maybe he could take them on all by his lonesome. One self-destruct and one overkill Kamehameha by an enraged teenage half-Saiyan might just do that to ya’ when you have the same cells of both a Saiyan and a Namekian.

Captain Ginyu, Frieza’s own personal best warrior. Leader of the gaudy Special Forces unit with the Frieza Force, each a terrifyingly strong alien mutant on their own. On their own, however, there was a question if maybe the human fighters were only a little stronger or now leagues ahead of them. They were already planning a contingency to merely aid Lord Frieza as support with their unique talents instead of directly fighting should their opponents be at full strength.

Nappa, unfortunately it didn’t look to good for him. Sure, his rather explosive death at the hands of former partner Vegeta would have given him some incredible strength in return, but maybe not enough. For all he know, even the Earthlings had long since outpaced him. He was not about to let that rumor stay true, setting his sights squarely on them.

If the battle went south quick, Frieza had a plan, one he had already formulated with the group should it get to that. Even Cell knew what to do.
Goku made the first move, picking the alien tyrant as his personal opponent and dashing towards him with frightening speed. Frieza had just enough time to bring up an elbow and blow this daring maneuver.

Cell went straight for Gohan, locking arms with his half-Saiyan nemesis. Certainly, Cell had gotten stronger from his last death, and being a bit more in tune with the whole link business definitely left some impression. If Cell believed he was even more perfect, with enough power to have been brought up somewhere closer to Gohan’s level, it was then.

Piccolo had his sights set on the Ginyu Force, already picking them off one by one with a succession of kicks to either their ribs before having a rather short-lived, hilariously one-sided duel with the Captain himself.

Nappa got it rough, he exhausted the last of his Saibamen only for the human defenders to pick them apart with ease, and even Yamcha managed to overpower the last Saibamen with a Kamahemaha that brought the green plant monster over to explode in the giant Saiyan’s face, knocking him out for the duration nestled in his own crater of shame. A far cry from their last encounter on Earth.

Frieza was holding his own, but it wasn’t until Goku went Blue that forced Frieza to up his game. Going gold only delayed the inevitable as Vegeta joined the fray, completely overwhelming Frieza with their two-Saiyan barrage.

Cell had half of his body vaporized by Gohan's Kamehameha, and it was enough for Cell to realize he was still vulnerable even as he regenerated the lost bio-organic material. He knew the next attack would be the last if he didn't do something about it quick.

Piccolo was still wailing on poor Ginyu while Buu had skipped over to poke poor unconscious Nappa.

Cell looked over to see that the whole situation was already more or less this dire.

He had to think fast.

He seized the opportunity and took aim at the Namekian, who was distracted at the time holding up the purple horned Captain, and the buggy android fired off a single beam from his fingertip.

It ripped through Piccolo's stomach and left behind a bloody, purple hole with the circumference of a baseball.

It took Piccolo a moment to even register the pain as he dropped Ginyu once this process was finished, and the Captain scampered away to retreat and try to collect his fallen comrades.

Gohan was distracted for just a moment as he yelled out his friends name, leaving him open for a quick high kick to the young half-Saiyan's jaw and rocketing him back several yards.

Cell didn't waste any time as he could see Frieza being given the hazing of a lifetime by the wrathful apes, and knew what he had to do.

He rocketed up into the air and stopped completely after several meters, giving Gotenks a chance to come flying in an try to sneak him some of his own glory.

Cell brought his hands up to his forehead in a fanned pattern, just in the nick of time as a bright light flashed from his forehead.

"Solar flare!" Cell screamed at the top of his lungs, catching the attention of the reactionary crowd.
too unprepared for this daring strategy.

Gotenks, who caught the worst of it right in his face not a mere few feet away from Cell, was giving a strong chop down the shoulders from the towering bug bot and down several floors of the Earth's crust.

Krillin, Tien, Yamcha, Buu, everyone found themselves blinded by the unholy light and began to rub their eyes as fast as they could in a vain attempt to wear it off quicker.

Frieza was smart enough to realize what was going on and shielded his eyes, having prepared for that trick himself even if it came from Cell. However, both Goku and Vegeta weren't so lucky, and Frieza saw his chance to escape.

A quick, powerful side-swipe of his tail got a two-for-one as it collided into Vegeta's ribs, firing him off like buckshot as he smashed into the equally vulnerable Goku, both blasting off into a pile of rocks dotting the landscape in a spectacular boulder-flavored explosion.

He flew up immediately to meet up with Cell, quickly surmising what needed to be done with a quick nod of acknowledgment with each other.

Frieza raised a finger to the sky in desperation and quickly charged a patented purple sphere of fire, a large ball cackling with evil energy while it grew in size. After a few seconds, he scrounged just enough power for his purpose, and released the violet sun upon them as it slowly yet menacingly careened towards the surface of Earth.

The orange clad Saiyan recovered from his blindness first, just in time to see the Death Ball growing in size as it fell towards them.

Goku panicked and fired off a Kamehameha as fast as he could to hold it back, the blue and purple energies colliding with overwhelming force.

Frieza shouted as hard as he could over the cacophony of power levels clashing, "Everyone retreat!"

The Ginyu Force, each staggering to their feet, took off in a single direction.

Ginyu himself decided at the last second to pick up Nappa's sorry ass, perhaps even he realized it would mean hell to pay later if they just left behind such a staunch ally...even if it was a begrudging alliance.

Frieza and Cell fly off onto the horizon.

Looking over his shoulder at the scene he was fleeing, Frieza witnessed his Death Ball imploded under the stress of Goku's defensive move, and he counted himself lucky he and the others escaped just in time.

After several minutes of hasty retreat, they found a spot somewhere deep within a forest.

He believed himself to be safe for the moment.

They took stock of the situation.

It was evident that throughout the years the gap in power had definitely widened between the forces
of good in evil.

Cell broke the ice as Frieza's troupe leaned against the trees to catch their breath, "Well, ain't this just dandy?"

Frieza barked back, "Oh I don't want to hear it from you, Cell! Aren't you supposed to be the perfect warrior? I don't know about you, but I saw nothing perfect about your performance."

Cell marched over to Frieza, dwarfing the lizard with his height and fury, "You know I could just end you right here, right now."

The others jumped up in anxious preparation, unable to fathom that the battle was in fact not over.

Frieza didn't even flinch, looking up at the riled up cicada with a confident smirk, enjoying the idea of seeing the talkative Cell so riled up, "Oh...you think so?"

"I don't need your help," Cell uttered in a low, threatening exhale, "I can make it out just fine without-"

He was caught off by the sharp buzzing sound of a purple beam piercing through his chest, exiting out the back at an upward angle thanks to the difference in height between the two villains.

Cell looked down to see a pointed finger of the smaller villain, still sizzling from the discharge of the Death Beam.

Although certainly not lethal, as even Frieza knew what a hard-to-kill foe he was by now, it was enough to stagger Cell.

He reeled back a few steps, wobbling the whole way as he tried to regain his composure.

He had no time to react as Frieza turned his pointing gesture into a gripping one, catching Cell in an invisible marionette...one he was not strong enough to fend off with a hole currently in his chest.

Cell trembled, unable to fight off the powerful vice, and was brought to his knees under the increasing pressure.

He grit his teeth in the struggle, some of his own blood dribbling over his lips and onto his chin.

Frieza's smirk became a slasher smile, "Funny...I was just thinking the same thing about you."

The bug did not go quietly into the night, "Damn yo-"

His last words were cut off by his body inflating in an instant, followed by the sound of rising energy, before he imploded with reverberation into oblivion.

The trees were rocked back from the shockwave, and a large dance of smoke and dust took place as the others shielded themselves from getting bits of Cell all over themselves.

Once the show of power settled and they could witness the results, nothing they could see remained.

Frieza lowered his arm with great satisfaction, "Well...that's two problems I've solved today."

Ginyu, still in awe, was the first one to speak, "Lord Frieza...what do we do now?"

His lord graciously replied without hesitation, "Firstly, I'll be heading off into space. I'll make way towards Cajo Two, I believe its the nearest planet. I'll send a ship to come pick yourselves up within
a couple days...with any luck."

There was more to it than that...

Frieza would have to do something about the Soul and his remaining, more trustworthy inner circle.

The Soul. For all Frieza knew, they had even more potential. And considering how well they handled themselves throughout this whole ordeal, and all so willingly despite maybe some hesitation over morality, Frieza saw a few scenarios in his master plan where victory was foreseen.

He would have to train them and himself to even further heights. Even if Frieza couldn’t discover a new form, better to further master the Golden one at least. It definitely could keep up with Super Saiyan Blue. It just needed a further kick. Maybe even minimal effort could be enough.

The others, however, needed something more. He would have to bring up the Ginyu Force's strength as well, even if just by a little bit. Just powering himself up wasn't going to cut it.

Despite wishing for any Saiyan under his rank to achieve something tangible with which to think open rebellion was viable for Nappa, Frieza needed him to get stronger too. He could maybe even go Super Saiyan.

That Soul. It had to have learned much from residing within everyone at one point or another. Strengths, weaknesses, techniques.

Valuable secrets.

They could teach Frieza's men a thing or two. Maybe even help them step up their game.

Maybe they even retained the ability to link?

How devastating that could be!

Frieza just needed to see what the Soul was capable of, now that they had amassed such power...

"For now...you should find a place to hide. I'll contact you once I've obtained transport...in the meantime, prepare yourselves. We have still have a campaign to complete."

As the others hesitantly dispersed into different directions in the surrounding thicket, Frieza was about to fly off into the stratosphere when he noticed a wet, squishy sound coming from the movement of his foot.

He looked down, catching a bit of purple, pulsating flesh with some of Cell's blood still on it.

In disgust, Frieza flicked it off with the wave of his foot, in a rather unprofessional fashion as it wanted to stick to his skin and revolting the tyrant some more.

He managed to have it slide off, crushing it in short-lived anger into an even further unrecognizable pile of disgusting bio-organic mass.

He stared down at the mess for a second, satisfied with himself as he scraped the crap off his foot into the grass underneath him, and blasted off into space...

Chapter End Notes
I realized what was missing this whole time...Frieza's own viewpoint :D

GOSH I hope I did this chapter as much justice as I had intended, or at least put something competently together!

Also despite my valiant attempt at writing something that could feel like an episode of Dragon Ball, or even a Dragon Ball movie...this easily felt like the least Dragon Ball-y chapter I've written. I admit, I had a hard time keeping up with my intent on this chapter, but at the very least I finished this chapter.

Anyway, welcome to the halfway point! I can't believe I've written this much and I'm still only half done...well, for now anyway. And I know some writers probably write more densely packed chapters, but I have been keeping it easy on myself if that wasn't obvious.

This stupid thing should have ended forever ago!

I can't thank everyone enough all the kudos I'm getting and the couple of you even leaving comments. For my first outings its been very encouraging! I think I've said that once or twice before but its still true. I love you guys you make this so much fun for me~

Definitely learning a lot from my first fic so far.

For starters: its harder than it looks, but also easier than I thought it would be somehow. Maybe the latter only is so cuz' its a Dragon Ball fic, and in my mind Dragon Ball has never been Shakespeare (then again maybe it sounds way more intelligent in native Japan for all I know) so I figured that would make an easy first fic to write. Like I want to write a Mass Effect fic but I should seriously retake on all that media (games included) if I want to be able to write one with any sort of authentication.

Another thing I'm learning from writing this is that I'm lazy and yet impatient XD like I'm so lazy, I could write so much better and smarter if I just took more time to edit and proofread.

Also I do a crap job explaining things sometimes, like I keep going back and re-reading chapters and telling myself "wow you dropped the ball there!" or "wow you should have written this scene/explanation then!"

As I've said like 8 times now...this is how I learn

Btw...when this first fic is over, I'm gonna have a pseudo preview of each of the other fic ideas I now have on my mind, maybe even ask y'all in the comments what you'd like to see most :3 it would at least determine which ones I might focus on more first <3

I will take a short break before I even start writing the next chapter. Whether I'm actually halfway there or I add another five chapters or not before the end I have yet to see for myself, but I won't be long before the next chapter releases! (completely proofread or not :D) I'm too damn invested into this little thing~~~
Mission to Earth

Chapter Notes

I found like 3 really bad mistakes in the last chapter (fixed by now) so I hope there ain't that many this time around :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It must be morning by now on Earth.

The guards lined down the long and spacious corridor, about three-dozen pairs or so alongside the walls. No rhyme or reason put behind the pairings of all shapes, sizes and alien origin as each pair we marched past gave us a mighty Frieza-flavored salute. The glow of the crystal basin pouring in through the viewing panels lining the walls of the hall.

Ahead of us at the end was a large platform sitting at the base of what looked to be a launch pad on the upper level. I could just make out the tops of what looked like eight large spheres resting in a neat line across the horizon of metal.

I realized the platform at the base must have been some kind elevator. A silly thing really, considering most if not all of us were capable of flight. But then again, the Frieza Force was all about flashy entrances now, wasn't it?

The seven of us: me, the Captain and his goons, and my own personal Saiyan thug, swaggered our way down the absurdly roomy and well-lit hall like a group of astronauts. Frieza was taking care of something last minute, and instructed the lot of us to meet him at the launch pad.

Good thing this trip is going to take a few hours anyway, I'm tired. What a day it has been. I haven't slept since yesterday morning.

I hope those pods are comfy.

Ginyu himself led us in his enthusiastic stride, with me in the center of the rather coordinated blob. Jeice and Burter flanked me on either side, like an honor guard protecting their Very Important Person. Guldo was slightly in front, scampering alongside the Captain. Recoome and Nappa were behind me, the two giants making up the rest of the height ratio evident in the group composition.

Although, I couldn't see past Ginyu, as I found myself sheepishly leaning on one side to look past the taller Captain.

The Captain himself couldn't hold it in anymore, "I don't know about you men, but I'm excited at the prospect of finally conquering Earth in the name of our Lord, and putting this issue to rest once and for all!"

Jeice pumped his fist, "I can't wait to see Lord Frieza's face once the job is done!"

Burtex hissed with joy, "Imagine his face when we finally plant our flag on that planet. It will be such a beautiful sight!"

This is it...we're on our way to Earth...to conquer it. To actually conquer it.
I'm going to rule Earth in order to protect it.

And then who knows what! Was I going to commit campaigns across the galaxy?

Guldo huffed, "Just don't ask me to help hoist the flag up by myself again!"

Recoome boasted, "Oh don't worry little guy, I'm gonna be the one to get to plant the flag!"

"Oh like hell you will!" the little guy retorted, "I've changed my mind! I'll hold up the flag by myself just fine!"

Burter pondered at the ceiling, "Uh...are we even bringing a flag?"

Ginyu interjected, "Of course we are bringing a flag! What are we, amateurs?"

His four subordinates replied with gusto, "SIR NO SIR!"

I winced at the sudden shouting surrounding me, as Nappa kept a grimace of utter indifference in his own vain attempt to ignore the commotion.

Still, I couldn't help but feel a sense of pride.

I was this group's best hope...maybe even their final one. They were doing a good job hiding it, but these guys were probably getting desperate.

I had gotten to know each of these poor saps rather intimately since the moment I was trapped in that lab...trapped in that monster.

For years they've had to suffer personal indignities, setbacks, even post traumatic stress for some of them.

Jeice had to watch his battle buddy Burter go down in battle unceremoniously. Recoome was interrupted from performing his most coveted ultimate technique. Guldo was decapitated before he could even obtain any glory on the battlefield.

Ginyu, poor guy was trapped within the body of a Namekian frog for many years...who knows what sort of things that did to the man's state of mind. I was amazed he wasn't a mad man at this point in his life.

Surely, Captain Ginyu was to be admired for his utter devotion to Frieza.

I wonder if I could truly match such commitment? Ginyu may not be as strong as me...but he's definitely got more feathers under his cap in Frieza's name. How else would they get away with their ridiculously awesome choreography under a guy like Frieza otherwise?

Nappa interrupted the moment, "Do you guys have an off switch? I'm getting a headache over here!"

Burter took a chance to talk smack to the Saiyan, "What? Feeling left out? You know if you maybe made some small talk yourself you wouldn't feel so grumpy all the time."

Hahaha! Grumpy he says.

Nappa didn't appreciate the comment as much, "Grumpy? You understand I'm more than just grumpy! I'm seething! I've waited forever for my chance at revenge, and now that I have it I'm not going to waste it! Maybe you guys should remember your own failures as warriors and get serious."
Ouch!

Not that he didn't have no good reason to act this way. Certainly he had the biggest burn to heal himself, for a guy like him anyway. Imagine a middle class Saiyan matched by a lower class one, defeated even. And then thrown away at his darkest hour by his partner no less.

The gang didn't appreciate the Saiyan's comment either, with Jeice leading the charge in the name of the Force, "Oh, whoa whoa whoa, Nappa mate. What are you getting all bent out of shape for?"

Recoome backed his red mate, "Yeah, like, what's your problem man? You've been kinda a downer since we've been back!"

Nappa received support from an unexpected source in the form of Guldo, "Don't you guys understand? We've all been wronged by the same person! That Vegeta slaughtered nearly all of us! Even our Captain was humiliated by that princely bastard! I can't really blame this guy for wanting the same thing as us."

Wow Guldo, I feel sorry for tossing you around like I did during the exam now...I mean, more so than earlier.

Ginyu blushed to himself and looked off to the side, trying not to reply out of his sheer need for dignity in the matter. I couldn't help but notice even as the others did not.

Meanwhile, Nappa himself raised an eyebrow at the sudden support from Guldo, "The little guy is right. It's all Vegeta's fault. And none of us are going to even be able to do a thing about it. Not at our current power level."

Huh...Nappa is getting it.

Jeice concurred, "We can't forget about that other guy, that Goku bloke."

A wave of head nods and half-hearted grunts of agreement surrounded me that moment.

Recoome fired up, "Ooo I can't wait to get my hands on that guy! Sucker punching me in the middle of my move...like, who does that?"

Nappa grit his teeth, "Going all Kaio-whachamacallit and breaking my back, just cuz' I wanted to regain my honor by finishing off those weak little helpers of his!"

Eh heh heh...eeth.

Wait, Kaio-what?

Burter hissed more disdainfully, "Having to work alongside those guys was the absolute worst! Just because there were a bunch of clones of us running around, ruining our image!"

Guldo agreed, "Yeah, and killing off a few of those clones just didn't really scratch that itch I've been in need of scratching this whole time!"

Nappa added, "I gotta admit though...it was nice to smash in the faces of Vegeta and the others, even it wasn't the real deal."

Another wave of nods and grunts broke through, this time a bit more light-hearted in tone.

Boy these guys sure are pissed. Well...at least they are finally getting along?
Recoome chuckled, "Hey you know what? Maybe you ain't so bad for a Saiyan, baldy."

Nappa's face said it all, a mixture of confusion and disgust, but not one without some hint of appreciation, "Uh...yeah. Thanks...I guess."

Ginyu officially curb-stomped the idea before it left anyone's mouth, "Don't think that we'll allow you into the Ginyu Force just because we're chums now, Saiyan. Its gonna take a lot more than that to become a member of the prestigious elite!"

*Aww...kinda got my hopes up there for a second.*

*W...wait a minute. I'm the General!*

"Actually," my voice caught everyone's attention, bringing the entire shamble to a halt as I suddenly felt Nappa and Recoome crash into me without realizing, which of course I hardly felt as I continued to pull rank while the two big lugs took a moment to let out a cough or two and regain composure, "I felt maybe we could add Nappa as another member. Provided he passed his *exam* of course."

Nappa choked, he couldn't believe what he was hearing. None of them could. If I recalled, I had talked Nappa out of it just last night and now here I was promoting the big guy.

Ginyu turned around to eyeball me intently, keeping a respectful yet concerned expression, "Wha...bu...General, are you sure?"

No, he'd need training first. Guldo is the only one he's clearly stronger than, but the others could easily defeat him if they wanted to. Even Recoome had to be at least twice as strong as the Saiyan brute.

The Captain resumed his case, "He'd need special training, we'd need to design a uniform for him, and we'd have to come up with a seven man pose-"

I raised a hand, "I was just thinking out loud, Captain. Maybe the Ginyu Force could continue to expand its operations, grow even more in power. After all, we're not just out for the restoration of the Empire...but to further its glory, are we not?"

Ginyu's eyes widened, clearly seeing my point, "I...see," he brought a hand up to his chin, "You mean like...the Ginyu Force could...become a franchise?"

I pumped both of my fists, "Yea-" *wait what?*

The purple entrepreneur's eyes lit up with stars, "Just think, the Ginyu Force could take that next step. Become something even greater!"

Guldo brought his hands up in excitement, catching the attention of his commander, "We could make posters and slap them in cities under our control!"

Burter slapped his cheeks with both hands upon realization, "We could rake in tons of dough contracting mercenary work and gain prestige for our Lord!"

Jeice looked down at the floor in deep thought, "We...we could each have our own squad of men to do our bidding!"

Recoome stomped in giddy anticipation, "We could finally make a case to obtain funds to improve the recreation hall back at base!"
The Captain made a half-hearted attempt to contain his own excitement and calm the boys down, "Whoa, easy there! One idea at a time! We'll have to think about all of this later and present our case to Lord Frieza!"

Nappa placed a giant hand on my shoulder to catch my attention and leaned in close to me to whisper as the men shared their silly ideas, "Hey...I appreciate you looking out for me and all, but what happened to the whole oh you'd be posing all day long shtick you gave me yesterday to talk me out of it?"

I shrugged gently with Nappa's hand still resting upon my pauldron, "I don't know...maybe you deserve it, and hey look we'd still be partners and all, but this way its ensured we aren't separated. Besides, maybe posing ain't so bad, eh? You could use some lightening up."

Nappa grimaced through the redness swelling up across the bridge of his nose, "Yeesh, they better be some tough looking poses cuz' I'm not so sure about this now."

...would I still get to see Frieza while I ruled Earth?

I bravely wrapped my arm around the larger Saiyan's frame to pat him on the back, causing Nappa to retract his hand off my shoulder with a slight heave, "You got this buddy. Its not like you were getting anywhere by yourself...er, no offense."

Nappa gave another short cough from the impact of my hand slapping his back, "Yeah, yeah. Don't gotta bring that up y'know."

Recoome leaned over my shoulder, "Yo, General, when we conquer Earth and stuff...can I like...have dibs on the moon or something?"

Ginyu roused before I could answer, "Recoome! Mind your manners! If anything, that's for the General to decide. And even then only if Lord Frieza allows such an opportunity."

The voice of none other than our overlord echoed through the hall, "Very good, Captain," bringing our frantic attention behind us as the two big tag-alongs parted ways to allow us shorter people to get a good look at our lord.

There he was.

But wait.

"Its nice to see you still remember your place in all of this, as should you, General."

While it sounded like him and acted like him, he was in another form.

One I had never seen before.

Then again, I've never seen any form other than his stark, clean, nearly all-white vision.

This one bore horns, all sorts of salmon colored features and seemed even shorter, somehow, than I remembered.

Huh...he looks even more alien.

Those horns.

The color scheme.
That und-eeeh don't go there.

Wait, if he's wearing that in this form- SERIOUSLY DON'T GO THERE.

Ginyu was the first to respond as he broke through our ranks to present himself front-and-center to
our lord with a curt bow, "My Lord! Glad you could join us!"

The rest of us followed suit, myself the last one to do so. I had spent a little too much time observing
this new outfit of Frieza to react in unison with the group.

Once I dropped my gaze, it was then had I realized something else completely different about our
Lord, something more unfitting of Frieza.

*I can hardly sense his power level! He stuck to his part of the plan!*

*I better see this through. It would be catastrophic to drop the ball now.*

Frieza seemed to be in a hurry, "Yes, yes. Let's get on with it. We have a planet to bring to its knees,
plenty of resistance to put down."

I took a large gulp of anxiety as the rest of us returned to our upright positions.

"Very well, my Lord! Shall we proceed with Operation Frozen Over?"

*Operation what?! As in Hell has frozen over?*

...sheesh, I wonder who came up with that one.

However, Frieza clearly had something to say before said operation could officially commence, "If
you could just excuse me and the General for just a moment? We have grown up things to talk
about."

*Uh...*

I could feel a tear drop roll down my left temple as the group shuddered for the briefest of moments,
wondering what it could be about.

I looked over my shoulder to glance at the gang. Everyone was shivering for a split second in their
own little way.

Except Ginyu. Something about his rattle seemed more brought on by something other than fear for
my life.

If I didn't know better...I'd say he was feeling left out.

The Captain's stones were bigger than mine as he stepped forward with a hand on his chest,
"Uh...Lord Frieza? If I may partake in discussion the battle plan?"

Frieza barked back rather abruptly, "This isn't about the execution, Captain. I merely wish to instruct
my General of something before we begin our campaign. Is that too much to ask?"

Ginyu, looking more like the rest of the scared mice behind him, bared an expression of thinly-veiled
defeat as he lowered his hand back to his side, lowering his head with it, "Y-yes, Lord Frieza. As
you wish."

*Oh, poor Captain. You aren't getting replaced as Frieza's top man, are you?*
Am I replacing him?

I am replacing him, aren't I?

I have to do something to keep his spirit up, I'm not about to let his devotion and duty all this years go to waste!

"Captain?" I said, getting his attention just as he and his men were turning around, everyone except Nappa looking rather bummed about their immediate superior's sudden downgrade.

Ginyu looked at me with some anticipation, already feeling I was about to say something inspiration. I had to let him know this wasn't necessarily my intention.

"Y-yes, General?" he begged, as the others stopped dead in their tracks with him to witness whatever was about to unfold.

I returned my gaze back to the tyrant next to me, noticing the man in question already had a lone brow raised in confusion over my sudden behavior, "Lord Frieza, if I may. You don't really care about what I do with Earth and its properties once the mission is over, do you? As long as I keep the Hyperbolic Time Chamber and the Dragon Balls intact?"

"After I am done with it, I don't see why not." Frieza amusingly replied with a look off to the side before returning his eyes to me, surprising me as I figured he'd outright refuse me.

I completely turned to face my underling, "Captain, once we are done, I believe the moon should be good hands."

The rest of the gang went as wide-eyed as the next, their lids popping open at the generosity surging throughout the hallway.

Nappa muttered under his breath to himself, "Son of a bi-I thought I was gonna get the moon. Was gonna garrison my own squad there and everythi-"

I made my ask clear to the purple veteran, "Do you accept the responsibility, Captain Ginyu?"

Stars went supernova in his pupils as Ginyu smiled like a kid opening presents on his birthday, "I-I..." he stood perfectly upright with his hands slapping his thighs at attention, bowing with incredible precision and keeping his eyes down at all times as he screamed in victory, a single tear rolling down his face, "THANK YOU, GENERAL! I ACCEPT THIS GIFT AND WILL DO MY BEST PUT THE LUNAR COLONY TO EFFICIENT USE IN YOUR NAME...er, I MEAN IN THE NAME OF LORD FRIEZA!"

Uh oh.

I turned to face Frieza once more, who was forcing yet another smile completely out of place for a guy like him, his cheeks once more turning cherry-flavored.

I couldn't tell if he was actually mad or embarrassed, but I could safely bet it was the latter as he cleared his throat, "Well, that's enough excitement for now. I hope you are satisfied, Ginyu. I'll meet you at the pods in just a moment. Run along now." Frieza finished up with the a curt wave of the hand as if to say run along now.

Ginyu, having already righted himself up back to attention and wiping the tear off his cheek, hurriedly bowed once more, "Thank you, Lord Frieza! Let's go men!"
Jeice patted his superior on the back as they continued their march towards destiny, "You did it Cap'n! The Earth's moon will be the perfect place to build a resort for the Ginyu Force's new members!"

"That's exactly what I was thinking Jeice!" Ginyu replied without a moment of hesitation as Nappa brought his hands behind his neck to rest his head upon in exasperation.

As they walked away, Frieza stared on with a tear rolling down his own forehead, "I sincerely hope you know what you are doing."

"I do." I smirked, not completely sure of myself. Couldn't let Frieza know that, "It'll be good for his morale. After all, I wasn't going to do anything with it anyway."

"I suppose not. But you must be careful of your charity sometimes. It may get you nothing at all. In some cases, charity just delivers you more enemies. The jealous ones. The envious bastards who do nothing but take whatever offerings they can get from you and call it prestige."

_Frieza giving me advice...I really am going to be the ruler of my own planet, aren't I? Some monarch under the Emperor's service. A lord over my own people. One who has to balance the interests of its people and the interest of my own master._

_It won't be easy._

_And who is to say Frieza will be the only invader? Who is to say there won't be other rivals?_

_Maybe one day I'll have to deal with that._

Frieza sighed, "But I guess everyone seems satisfied with the current arrangement. Except for that overgrown monkey of course. Are you sure I want him under my thumb? As a Super Saiyan no less?"

I made my resolve clear, "Its not like he'll go blue anytime soon."

Frieza chuckled, a haughty little bout of joy, "Oh I'm sure of that. The man is too impatient at this stage. He might not even get to the first stage of Super Saiyan at his own pace. Not to mention he doesn't have any hair to work with, so who's to say we can even tell if and when he does obtain the form?"

Now it was my turn to giggle like an idiot, as I did a poor job trying to mask it with some imperial dignity, "He'll be of good use if we could even get him to stage one."

The gang stepped upon the platform, and within moments a technician pressed a button to cause it to rise up, elevating the group up to the launch pad.

Frieza maneuvered to my side and with the gesture of a nod invited me to stroll alongside him.

_Oh...don't mind if I do._

Frieza stepped forward first, keeping the pace incredibly slow. Still plenty of rows of guards to march past.

The sound of the rising elevator still way ahead echoed throughout the hall as my Lord began his inquiry, surely the one he had wanted to initiate with me in the first place, "On the subject of all that...I must ask you something a bit...related."
Ask me something...here it comes. Keep it cool, answer him efficiently.

His gaze went up to the ceiling as his head orientation remained fixed on the path ahead, "You've clearly been touched by each of our power signatures...and have managed to learn a few things in the process."

I was still wondering that myself, "I believe that's the case, Lord Frieza."

"Tell me, did you feel it then?"

Feel what?
The sudden tension?
No...don't be an idiot.

I stopped in my tracks, allowing Frieza to do the same as he turned to face me while I posed my question, "Feel it, my Lord?"

I was afraid Frieza would take offense at my ignorance, but this was not the case as he smirked and explained carefully, "The ki that comes from a Super Saiyan Blue...you claim to know what its like to go Super Saiyan...but do you know what its like to go Blue?"

...I did.

However, I was afraid to answer the question. I did not know what it entailed. What long term ramification it would deliver later down the road.

Would Frieza kill me for knowing what such power felt like? Was he merely asking me for any knowledge of how to overcome it?

Better to be honest I guess. Lying about something this important to Frieza wouldn't do me any good.

"As a matter of fact...yes. I know what its like to go Blue," as unnecessary as it might be, I decided to drive the point home, "I know how to perform all of everyone's techniques. I even know what feels like..." I looked down at the space between us for a moment, finally returning my gaze directly into Frieza's own, "...to transform through your forms, as well."

Frieza dropped his smirk, replacing it with the upturn of his nose, a sight I wasn't sure I could get used to or not, "Is that so?"

My skeleton was given too much caffeine as I felt like it was my first guest come to fruition.

Relax already, you may get slapped around but you won't get killed. Not for that.

Another excruciatingly long moment passed, as I knew only Frieza was allowed to speak next, "Well...what do you think of this form?"

I was thrown off that instant, my hands brought up in front of me in a needless, shielding fashion.

Did Frieza just ask me that?!

In...in what way?!
Like...do I look impressive?

Scary? Intimidating?

Regal? Dignified?

...

...handsome?

No. Not that one.

...

Again, lying to Frieza would be a bad decision.

"I...uh," I reevaluated that last thought for a second, "umm...I think you look...good?"

Oh you stupid idiot...you moron! You...imbecile!

What kind of answer is that?! Are you giving yourself away?!

Yes, I'm attracted to Frieza...what am I supposed to do about that though?!

CERTAINLY NOT THIS!

And even if that didn't give me away, how is saying something as easily said as GOOD going to pass for a compliment to someone as demanding of perfection as Lord FRIGGIN' FRIEZA!!

Good...they said I looked...good.

Is that a normal thing to say for humans?

Was my appearance appealing or not?

Oh whatever you do, don't ask the meaning behind the vague compliment. Don't ask the Earthling anything about it.

You can't ever let them or anyone else know how apprehensive you were in showing off this human your first form.

It would just be another tool in the arsenal of your enemies. Another knife to slit your throat with. Another rocket to load in the launcher.

...

...why do you even care? It's not like they have any other choice but to bow before your many appearances!

I mean, that's not what I was really worried about...was it?

No, I was apprehensive because I'd be put into a vulnerable state doing so at such low levels!

...certainly.
Oh dear the Earthling is starting to shiver again. I better relieve them of their burden.

...oh I might as well ask! What do I care?!

But...distract them with some terror first...couldn't hurt.

Frieza broke the uncomfortable silence, "Good? Only good?"

OH CRAP!

I made a hasty retreat as I backed up ever so slightly, tear dropping down while I formed a cobbled counter-attack with whatever conscripts my cranium could conjur in time, "Uh, I mean...you look magnificent, my Lord."

Is that not a fancy enough of a word? Or was it annoyingly too fancy?

You can't get too specific now. That'd be a death sentence for sure!

"I mean you look exquisite!"

Okay shut up now!

"I-I mean you look...distinguished!"

YOU CLOWN!

You can't tell him how you really think he looks. You gotta keep this relationship professional.

But I came here just for that...

...nnggh-h e's an alien!

...

...a very charming...

...charismatic...

....

...handsome...

...

Dammit.

OH NO HE'S LOOKING RIGHT AT ME!

Huh?

It wasn't a scowl that scrunched his face. It wasn't a blank expression to express apathy at my inability to socialize with the buttery.

A smirk crept across his face.
A grin.

A smile.

I was not prepared for that. I was prepared for a hand around my neck or being dangled over the floor by his tail.

And he was smiling.

Even more baffling were his eyes. They seemed wider, full of interest.

A completely new guise for the terror.

Instead of pure evil, I saw vanity. Not entirely without some form of vague intimidation, but rather sorely lacking just that.

It was instantly refreshing, if I could catch my breath for just a moment to appreciate it. And if it was genuine.

Off in the distance, the whirling of gears down the hall echoed once more as the lowering of the platform for our own arrival was underway.

Frieza puffed up his chest, hands still behind his back in royal dignity, "Well, you certainly know how to obtain my favor."

I must have looked like an idiot, and it was by good grace that Frieza hadn't noticed, or had but didn't really care, as he was too wrapped up in himself.

"Yes, I suppose I am all of those things, aren't I?" Frieza continued, placing a single hand upon his chest in self-reflection before returning it to its previous state.

YES! Keep on the offensive! Don't let this opportunity to socialize with him slip by!

I folded my arms, something his General would do. Should do.

Play the game. Go ahead. Maybe it will amuse him.

You got a second to enjoy yourself. Let the Ginyu Force just have a chat with themselves up there. Maybe even get chummy with Nappa. You still have at least twenty-four hours to get where you need to get before Earth's heroes deliver the Dragon Balls to the Lookout, and the Hyperbolic Time Chamber will help with that anyway.

It can't hurt, can it?

"Really? I thought it took more than that to convince you of these things."

Frieza tilted his head, eyelids slightly shut as he pierced me with an interested gaze, "Oh don't get cute with me, General. You let that power get to your head and you'll find yourself in a most unfortunate situation."

Oddly, there was no threatening tone to speak of within his delivery, more like a strong suggestion, "But still, I suppose its good to see you in such high spirit...you'll need it. We have quite a lot of work ahead of us."

He gracefully turned to face in the direction of our destination once more, and gave a dignified gesture of the head inviting me to follow. I followed suit, catching a royal stride to try and match
Frieza's as we made our way to the mission site.

My lord continued his thought, "You have contemplated what I've said then?"

What he said? About what exactly?

About avoiding ego? Avoiding ambition?

About...oh...

...it was that, wasn't it?

I calculated the most likely scenario Frieza was speaking of as we approached the platform, "...about what to do with Goku and the others?"

Frieza's tone dropped back down to optimum overlord, "I do hope you are ready to do what needs to be done. It's never easy to do what is necessary sometimes."

Somehow, against all odds, there was something strangely sympathetic about his word of warning. Maybe not intentionally, but nevertheless. Or maybe I was imagining things.

Is it necessary though?

I decided to play the part for the moment, shutting my eyelids in thought, "No...it won't be easy."

Frieza hummed in disinterested acknowledgement of my somewhat satisfactory answer.

I was going to have plenty of time to come up with something to avoid such a bloody future in that chamber, if a solution was even feasible.

Hell, I am going to spend quite a lot of time in there if what Vegeta blabbed about was true. Time to get to know these guys more. I was mostly likely going to spend a whole year in there. I was going to spend a whole year of anticipation waiting for the day I would have to fight the other half of new friends I had made that day.

If I had to trade blows...could I take them on? The big fish?

I still have no idea how I compared to Frieza.

Could I stand a chance against the likes of Goku and Vegeta? They were monsters in their own way!

Their power is ridiculous.

And even if I could somehow compare, who was to say the power I now held was permanent?

I did obtain it in a very odd way. Everyone else trained day in and day out from what I gathered, or their biology gave them some decent clutch.

I on the other hand was an Earthling. Who was to say my power was here to stay?

...I can't think of this right now. I'm just tired.

I'll get in a nice nap in that pod.

We stepped upon the platform, and within moments the technician above pressed the button and we found ourselves one step closer towards ascending to the stars.
Frieza brought his arms in front of him into a fold, "Well, in any case...I just wanted you to know...

Huh?

My Lord turned to face me, demanding I do the same without uttering a word, "...my hopes for success have been greatly restored after bringing you onboard. Consider this campaign your official initiation into the fold. I can promise you this: if you succeed...you'll be properly rewarded."

...re-rewarded?

Frieza returned his attention ahead as we continued to rise, the whirling of gears and electronic inertia surrounding my senses before I hesitated to do the same.

REWARDED?!

A blue haze clouded my sight as I tried to interpret this cryptic statement.

Oh...right! He must surely mean some kind of material reward...surely not like...what I was just...thinking...

Wait, isn't Earth my reward? Or does he mean something else?

Maybe another planet or two? Maybe I'm to be given an army of my own? A cool fortress in the bowels of a volcano on some hell hole of a planet to call my own?

...something like that right?

Surely not...like...a...k-ki...

I quivered at the thought as the platform continued to rise, not sure what he meant but getting an odd feeling in the pit of my stomach.

It wasn't an unwelcome feeling, but merely one I hadn't felt in a long, long time, if ever.

As our elevation rose, so did the pods enter our view as our heads peaked over the edge of the upper level, along with each of our hand-picked elite standing at attention in front of their own designated pods. Two unattended meant for us in the middle of the line.

I took a deep breath. I tensed my muscles.

The anticipation was overwhelming. I had been dreaming this whole time, feeling as if this moment was never going to arrive.

This was it.

This is it.

I am on my way back to Earth.

...

...I can figure out Frieza's idea of a reward later...

CRIPES WHAT AM I MORE WORRIED ABOUT RIGHT NOW? Conquering Earth or over-analyzing Frieza's idea of a reward?!
It was a beautiful day. A couple clouds crawling across the sky like zeppelins in their relaxed attempt at conquering the wild blue yonder.

The city below was bustling with productivity and commercialism. Lattes were drank, car exhaust made its way into the atmosphere, birds nestled with their young among the rooftops. Any damage that may or may not have fallen upon this town was either minimal or repaired in no time after the clone crisis.

I guess when you lived on this planet, where one day you are in peacetime and the next you had a stretchy wad of pink taffy eating half of your citizens, this was normal.

Just par for the course.

People on the streets went on their merry way. Happily enjoying their time without another great evil ruining it until some greater good could push it back.

Citizens were talking about the game last night, that lovely lady they met at the social, what they wanted to eat for breakfast. No real word about the clones or the scary pink lady...if she was ever even spotted during the whole soiree.

Now it was just a matter of time before the next bad guy would show up.

Not quite yet, as instead the good guys flew high above.

Bulma's ship, the very one she had relied upon during the whole crisis, the one that neutralized the link's drawbacks, hung above the skyline.

Inside, her two favorite Saiyans stood behind her trying to get a good look at the city below, the incessant beeping doing nothing to break their concentration.

"Its in the city somewhere," Bulma decreed, at the helm with hands firmly gripped upon the controls of the ship, "but...where?"

Her husband mused, "Maybe some punk in one of these buildings is using it as a paperweight."

His wife scoffed with great disgust in her voice, "I hope that's not true. To think some people don't know what they got until its too late."

Goku, ignoring their mutual agreement, peered onto the rooftops as he hovered over Bulma, wondering if the solution was as simple as their prize resting atop somewhere on a building, bathing every day in the sun and moon ever since the last wish and nobody had noticed a thing the day it landed here.

He smiled as he brought a hand over his brow to block the glare of the craft's windshield, "Maybe its just sitting on one of these roofs."

Bulma leaned in closer out of curiosity, buying into the idea, "If that's so then its a miracle no one else has simply found it!"

Vegeta leaned over the dashboard to get a better view of the city himself, "Even if someone did find it, what's stopping us from just taking it?"

His wife pouted up and turned to glare him into submission, "You can't...you can't just do that"
"Vegeta."

"Why not?" he retorted, incredibly annoyed at the prospect of having to be nice to a complete stranger, "It's our Dragon Ball, we need that wish more than they do! It's not like this person was going to find any of the others anytime soon and actually get a wish anyway."

"Vegeta, you oughta' be a nicer to strangers sometimes, y'know? It's not like they were capable of mugging you or conning you anyway."

"What, like the Soul? I still think we are wasting a wish by bringing them here."

Bulma brought a hand up to teasingly caress his chin, "We'll never know until we try now, will we? So learn to be nice for when we bring our friend over, okay sweetie?"

The prince shuddered in impotent rage, "Don't you try that sweetie crap with me!"

Goku stood upright and turned to face his best buddy with open arms and a warm smile, "Come on Vegeta, you spent just as much time with the Soul as we did! I'm sure you two became friends along our adventure!"

Vegeta grit his teeth, a cue for Bulma to retrieve her caressing arm as he turned to face his longtime rival, "First off, I'd hardly call that an adventure, Kakarot, and second...none of your damn business!"

Bulma lit up, suddenly interested, "Why? What did they tell you?"

"Nothing!" Vegeta froze like a bronze statue with a poorly hid guilt spreading all over his mug.

Goku merely looked on confused as ever as Bulma kept launching boulders from her catapult at the house of cards that was Vegeta's lie, "What did you tell them?"

"I swear to heavens woman if you do not relent right this second-"

Goku butted in, leaning in with heavy interest at the fidgety high class Saiyan, "Vegeta! You didn't tell them any fighting secrets didja'?! Come on, that's not fair!"

"Okay I've had enough of you two already are we gonna find the Dragon Balls or not?!"

Her siege routed by Goku's interference, Bulma relented to target another area of Vegeta's ego, "Well then, tell me Vegeta, what would you have wished for if you got your hands on the Dragon Balls?"

The orange clad warrior stood back upright and brought his arms to his hips in anticipation of his fellow Saiyan's insight, "I don't exactly have a wish in mind, why would I? Couldn't we come up with something then?"

"Yeesh," Bulma sighed, "You aren't prepared for anything, are you?"

Vegeta finally saw a genuine chance to regain some pride, "I'm ready for Frieza...and anyone else following his failed legacy at this point. It's about time we put Frieza down once and for all."

Bulma, admittedly thrown off by her husband teasing marathon, couldn't help but question with a sigh, "What's the point? Both him and Cell have managed to come back, and even if you guys can kick their butts again they could always be brought back again by the Dragon Balls."

Goku hovered over Bulma with a friendly gesture of assurance, "Nah! Remember? You can't make
the same wish twice!"

Her attention went to him with concern, "Huh? What are you talking about? I mean, yeah you are right about that now that I think about it, but when were the Dragon Balls ever used on Cell? I mean sure Frieza was apparently brought back once, and even came back with a shiny gold paint job, but-

Goku made his case, "I figured it had to be the only way Android Twenty-One brought them back to life in the first place, but with the Namekian Dragon Balls! Which if my guess is correct means we'd only have to beat Cell one more time after this once he's used up his wish with the Earth Dragon Balls, and we'll never have to see him again. Which means Frieza is already on his last run at this point if he's been brought back with both sets of Dragon Balls, awesome right?"

Vegeta winced at the sheer weight of the sudden revelation, but not over the point either of them would expect, "First off: that's exactly the kind of attempt at math I'd expect from you. And second: do you understand how insane that sounds? Who in the hell would ever want to wish Cell back to life?"

Goku stood his ground with pure innocence, "I mean he was just recently brought back to life, who is to say someone else wouldn't want to wish him back for whatever reason?"

"That's just about the stupidest thing I've ever heard!"

Bulma, having to side with Goku's convoluted line of thought that somehow made sense to the woman, brought a hand up to her right temple to rub the aching thoughts away, "It might just be exactly what happened...there really are some crazy people out there."

Vegeta tried to resume more rational thought on his own, "In any case, I still say wishing for something else should be considered. If Frieza got his hands on the Dragon Balls when none of us are looking, he doesn't need Namekian talk to activate them...does he?"

Seeing Vegeta's somewhat valid argument, Bulma continued this line of thought, "Maybe you might be right Vegeta, but if Goku is right and our friend really did contact him," Goku perked up, looking eager to say something in response to that last line, "then we at least have a wish to work with."

Goku finally interrupted, "Hey, what do you mean if I'm right?"

Bulma broke it to him gently yet firmly, as if she wasn't looking forward to re-evaluating this topic once more, "I'm just saying...what if it really wasn't our friend talking to you, and this is just somehow a trap? ...and maybe we should start thinking about another wish, just in case."

He saw her point and brought a finger up to his chin to give the matter some serious thought, "Gee...I hadn't thought of that. But, it has to be them! Who else could talk to us with our minds like that other than King Kai or Piccolo? And who is to say our friend didn't pick up a technique or two from me?"

Vegeta bit his tongue, "Oh I swear if our friend somehow knows how to go Super Saiyan-

"Nah, I doubt they could do that. They are a human after all. A really, really strong one now," he couldn't help but get pumped, "man, I can't wait!"

Bulma got a little worried, "Uh, Goku, be careful will ya? You can't get so excited all the time. You'll make mistakes that way."

"I'm sorry Bulma," Goku whined with sincerity, "but I can't wait to meet our friend! He sounds like a decent guy, and maybe we could become training partners!"
Bulma raised an eyebrow, "He? What makes you think our friend is a man?"

Goku shrugged with a child-like care, "I dunno, but I can't wait to fight em'!"

Bulma gave a smile laced with a woman's pride, "No way, our friend is a lady. I can tell, I have a sense for these things. I can't wait to meet them and finally have another pal of my own," Bulma began to fawn, "Someone I can just have a night on the town with! Oh, and we can get our nails done go shopping with, talk about stuff other than fighting?"

Vegeta brought in a huff from left field, "What?! Isn't it enough when I have to go do those things with you?!

"Aww, Vegeta...I didn't know you enjoyed it!"

"I don't," he flustered, "I'm just- anyway who cares if our friend is a man or a woman! If our friend seriously can fight that well, then we absolutely will have ourselves a new training partner. You'll just have to find someone else to have a manicure date with."

Goku looked at Vegeta with curiosity, "Wait...you get manicures? What for? Do they help you throw punches better or someth-"

"SHUT UP!"

Bulma leaned back in her chair, mentally exhausted as her head dangled over the back of her seat while crying to the heavens, "Agh...you guys..."

Her thoughts returned to their spiritual acquaintance once more. At the very least Bulma knew they had something of a working plan to bring the poor Soul back.

"Well...whatever we end up doing, whether its our wish or yours Vegeta," she leaned forward to resume her scan for the Dragon Ball, gaining their attention in the process, "at least its gotta be better than wishing for a pair of underwear."

The conditions were surprisingly comfortable as the cozy pod was surprisingly relaxing to sit in, even after the initial awkward position I realized I had to be in for it to work.

It wasn't any lack of comfort however that truly kept me from falling asleep.

We were pressing our way toward's Earth at breakneck speed. Eight pods in all. It was definitely an impressive craft to speak of, no guidance needed outside of some initial programming a chart out one's destination.

I was taking the time to think about everything. Every little thing that has happened since I was found on Earth.

I too was taking the moment to lower my power level, as for all I knew mine was just as obtuse as Frieza's. I'd certainly hate to be a hypocrite, or worse, the one that was the problem in the end.

That was the thing. I had confidence things were going to go well for Team Frieza.

But how bad were things going to be for Team Goku?

Even if I really could pull this off, was there any hope for their own survival?
Frieza seemed dead set on their demise.

And even if he really wanted to do it by his own hand, I would have to live with knowing that I had a hand in their doom.

I was trying to think of a solution, but really I have been saving that for the absurd amount of time I would have in the Chamber. Maybe even use my opportunity with Frieza to make a case. Or at least slowly work on him to seeing it my way.

*I truly hope there is a way.*

*I want this to work out so bad. I want to give Frieza what he wants.*

*He helped me out with a tremendous burden and I walked out of it a somebody.*

*Someone powerful.*

*Someone important.*

*Someone special.*

*Just how special am I to Frieza?*

It was clear I how much I meant to him, not to mention everyone else in his organization, but just what did that mean between me and him?

Did I mean anything that mattered to him?

The need for his approval was only growing within me, even as I tried to balance that with the need for Earth's survival, as well as the survival of its inhabitants.

And yet I felt as I only had so much ground to cover with the tyrant before it would find its plateau, and I'd be lucky to even keep it there.

At this point, I had to wonder why I was even doing any of this for that royal terror.

I was beginning to think that I was overthinking this whole thing, and I have been dealing with someone I didn't truly understand.

Dealing with that monster. That dragon.

Was there really any future for me? One that foretold a positive outlook?

Or was I just a pet to a glorified barbarian? To a false emperor?

Or worse. Had I instead entered a cycle of destruction that would end up with either of us dead, no matter how successful our current campaign fared?

Was I about to enter a life of constantly looking over my shoulder, not even knowing who my own enemy was?

For all I knew, I was infatuated with my worst enemy.

"*Maybe you should think ahead a bit differently.*"

The sudden pressure on my shoulder shook me awake, frantically forcing me to look all around me
in search of the intruder.

*What?! How could someone even fit in the pod with me?! I didn't see no one else get in!*

Within moments, I realized I was suspended without gravity weighing me down.

Floating in a void.

A nothingness. Dark and foggy would best describe it.

A pit of evil, raw and unrefined as it sweltered over me with its intensity.

I couldn't find the source of the intrusion, my perpetrator having seemingly vanished after the little love tap I felt on my pauldron.

*Where am I?!!*

*What is happening?*

"*It’s about time we had a talk, you and I...*"
Plucked

Chapter Summary

Time to get in touch with ourselves...

...also, is the concept of romance lost on Frieza?! 

Chapter Notes

Fun fact: I managed to write this whole chapter in one day! I even bothered to proofread it completely before hitting that post button :D seeing what a full chapter looks like written in one day, cuz' I have a problem remembering stuff when I write a portion of a chapter one day and then another portion the next, sometimes outside of the important notes I jot down when I write a scene I know is going to have impact later anyway lol

Basically: my short-term memory? Total trash~

I might also never try to write a whole chapter in one day ever again cuz' holy buckets...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

This is some kind of trick. Some hallucination. Some dream.

A nightmare!

This isn't happening and I'm not about to let it become some kind of reality now.

Where is it? This voice that has been subliminally suggesting me things this whole time?

I felt compelled to yell out my thoughts this time. I was here for a reason, and this thing was ready to listen to my voice instead of my thoughts.

Thoughts weren't going to get me anywhere with myself. Not that I felt it would really alleviate the more negative thoughts swimming around in my guilt-riddled conscious.

I was afraid, but I couldn't let it know that...if I still had any say in the matter.

Time to put on my best brave face.

"All right, I've had enough of this. Show yourself already! I know you are some part of my personality, and sure...lets talk. Its about time I got to know myself better."

I knew exactly how ridiculous that sounded.

The voice...my own, but with a more playful yet sinister tone, replied back, "Now you are getting it. Its about time you woke up from your little dream."
I folded my arms as I floated there in nothingness, now conversing with the landscape itself, "I'm dreaming right now. I have to be. This is merely the part where we finally have a heart-to-heart, right?"

The background laughed something nefarious, "Something like that."

There was no wind to twirl my cape, no footing for my boots to rest upon, no tangible evil for my gloved hands to smite.

And yet at the same time my armor did little to make me feel protected from this unseen threat.

"You know," the voice echoed, full of dark glee, "You really have a problem here, and its about time we address the dinosaur in the room."

I continued to spin in place, looking up and down, left and right, looking for it. I kept my arms folded in place in a vain attempt to appear in control.

I knew I wasn't, "And what kind of problem would that be I'd need to discuss it with you?"

The words came right into my ear as I felt its cold breath upon me, "We have to do something about Frieza." my only instinct was to fly away from the source by several meters to get out of harm's way.

In a cold sweat and gasping for air I rotated in a flash to finally get a good look at myself. There it was. It was me. Smiling like a devil, a very familiar visage no less.

One all too familiar.

It was Frieza's smile my own mug was making.

This version of me, hanging there like a rotten apple, smiled bloody murder with its arms folded with an air of superiority. It wore the same armor as me, had the same features, the same eyes, the same mouth...even the same cape.

But it was all different. It lacked color.

In fact the only colors I could distinguish were shades of gray, red, white.

And it looked just like me...as if I were one of those damn clones.

**IT'S A CLONE OF ME!**

"About time you figured it out. I can tell by that stupid look on your face that you finally put two and two together."

...yeesh, I really hate this side of me.

I fought off the sting of this clone's comment and forced a brave face, deciding it was time to get some answers, "What exactly are you, then? A...clone? I thought clones couldn't talk! Except for those of Majin Buu's child form."

My dark side's smirk became even more entrenched as it put its hands behind its neck, resting its head against them before smugly delivering its answer, "**Just think of me as the devil on your shoulders. That's something you can understand, right?**"
I clenched my fist at the vague insult, "You know I'm not a simpleton, right? Just because I was a modest nothing the other day doesn't mean-

The devil cut me off, "Just think of me as you, but perfected. I'm your better half and that's all there is to it."

Better half? Me, but perfected? Who does this clone think it is, Cell?

I found myself overcome with anger at my inability to obtain proper answers, "What the hell are you, really?!"

The devil dropped its arms to the side and gave me a beat look, more annoyed than enraged, "Maybe I don't actually have an answer myself, okay?" the clone looked off to the side in no particular direction, "Maybe I'm some sort of product of the good doctor. Some kind of contingency plan?"

Good doctor? Contingency plan?

Doctor Gero?!

I never even met him, yet I was to believe this whole clone business wouldn't even be possible without his meddling.

Was this somehow another aspect of his plan to create a Soul with immense power?

Its not like giving me, a random variable in the formula, all the power was a smart idea anyway.

Or did this devil mean this was somehow Android Twenty-One's handiwork and only hers? And she knew exactly how this was going to play out in case whoever ended up as the Soul tried to rebel like I did? Too little, too late, don't ya' think?

What is it about bad guys and coming up with such short-sighted plans?

In either case, what does it matter?

Was this thing supposed to take over me? If so, why not just get on with it already?!

"I like to think..." the devil's words brought me out of my train of thought, and I braced myself for another horrible possibility, "...that maybe I've just been a part of you this whole time, the real you...or I could just be a side effect of the good doctor's experiment, who knows? I don't really know, and I don't really care."

Back on this subject, huh? Except this time...

I had to wonder if there was some truth to the devil's words.

Was this me? Was this really me?

Had something awoken in me? Could I stop it now?

...did I want to stop it?

...

...I know I don't want this clone taking over me that's for sure!
For all I knew, this thing was conning me. Maybe it didn't know what it really was, or maybe it did. 

It didn't matter.

"Actually, I can't help but wonder if this is all Frieza's fault. Being merged with him for so long could have created what you see now. A healthy little mix of personalities. I guess I have something to thank that ungrateful lizard for."

...ungrateful?!

Now it was my turn to scowl.

"Take that back before I-"

The clone brought a hand to its face, taking a moment to nibble the fabric of its glove by the fingertip with its teeth, utilizing the bite to slowly slide the glove off as I found myself unable to continue my rant with the clone's lack of interest. Once the glove was off and nestled in its lips, it eyed the naked hand. Pale, lacking any real color. No sign of life.

It continued to rotate its bare hand to observe it with a sense of discovery and vanity, retrieving the glove with the other hand out of its mouth, "Think about that line for a moment...take that back? Frieza has been toying with you this whole time."

It took a moment to eye its own fingernails, as if it were drying them after a nail job, "I meanwhile have been giving you some pretty sound advice...most of which you've ignored....yeah, I think you might have to evaluate your own life choices."

I was failing to formulate my own case, but for all I knew this thing was manipulating me worse than Frieza, "B-but you said so yourself...Frieza wants me. Remember? What happened to that?"

The clone took the opportunity to casually toss the removed glove aside with a rather knowing expression as this thing's red eyes began to beam its logic into me, "Of course Frieza wants you. In every way you might be imagining even."

Within that moment I let my guard down to fight off the butterflies in my stomach at that last line. Yet before I could take a moment to process the meaning, the devil kept up its own presentation, "And he'll throw that feeling of his away like a sack of kittens first chance he can."

I winced at the clone, now using its bare hand to remove the remaining glove off its other and tossing it aside as well, "But...why would someone throw away a sack of kit-"

The sudden influx in the devil's vocalization throttled me back like a violent shockwave, "That's exactly my point you imbecile! Frieza cares about one thing and one thing only in the end: furthering his own power! And you seem to forget that, or more likely you never realized that in the first place!"

I fought tooth and nail with my senses to regain any feeling I could, not wishing to let this wave of accusation against my master stand, "N-no! You are wrong! Frieza has been treating me with about as much respect as I could hope for from him! M-maybe he would have killed me without a second thought at first, but now that he's seen my true potential."
The next interruption was far more subtle, but even more impactful, "he'll discard that potential once he's done with it."

Those words dropped on me like a dangling safe with nothing in it, and I would have to know the combination to the lock if I wanted to open the door from the inside and free myself. I brought my gaze down to the nothingness below. The endless void I still found myself stuck in, alongside this bearer of twisted logic...even if it was just using me itself.

The devil itself was starting to circle me, toying with me, having its fun. Keeping a safe distance away, but nonetheless with malevolent intent in its stride as it fluttered about.

The clone could tell I was taking its words at least somewhat seriously, "Think about it...are you seriously in that much denial? What...you want a romance with Frieza?"

I could tell I wasn't giving off an even remotely friendly expression in reaction.

"Don't give me that look. What? Do you really think Frieza even understands the concept of love? Do you really believe that? Even friendship is a lost cause on Frieza. Seriously, you should ask about his family sometime."

I smirked, for once the devil on my shoulder hadn't been paying attention, "Oh, I know all about that. Maybe his family wasn't the best source of positive reinforcement in his life...or something like that, but sometimes your own family won't even look out for you the way they should."

The clone halted its circumference, "Yeah? Well...you should listen to the advice of your own family sometime...I'm all you got, whether you realize it or not."

You? Nuh uh...no way. You are nothing but a bad dream.

I hung there, looking at this abomination made manifest, playing with its own cape with child-like curiosity as it waited for my response, keeping at least an air of undeserved royal dignity as it did so.

Is Frieza even capable of giving me the kind of life I wanted? Even if our relationship was mostly professional, what kind of life was I in for?

I was already in the middle of a difficult moral crisis as it was with this whole Earth conquering business.

I decided to at least humor the devil, "...what do you suggest I do about it then?"

"Look...simple fact is, I think I'm alongside you for the ride until you either win...or you bite the dust. I'd really hate to imagine what would happen to me if you croaked now."

So...its survival this thing seeks. At least for now.

"And the way I see it...you keep playing this dangerous game. And I haven't had any say in the matter. How selfish is that?"

Maybe it was a little selfish, but since when did I care about whether or not you of all things survived?

"So...I want you to consider. If I remember correctly, only two people should really be in that room of Spirit and Time. And you need just as much help powering yourself up as the others do."
I could see where this thing was going, but I was losing patience as I found myself unwilling to remain in this void any longer, "Can you get to the point?"

The clone took a step closer, walking on apparent nothing as it swaggered over to my location. It closed in on me with an air of playfulness, unable to contain its own excitement as it waved about gaudy hand gestures in accordance to its presentation.

"These guys...these other guys. They seem to really like you. They seem to trust you even. Sure, you had to smack Nappa around a bit, but even he is more than willing to work alongside you than you know who."

...its true. Their willingness to accept me has been nothing but heartwarming, whereas with Frieza I was praying for a positive outcome every time I so much as looked at the man.

"I say...volunteer to stay in the Chamber...the entire time. Take turns teaching each of these clods what we know in private..."

The entire time?!

What? Is this thing insane?! Because insane is the last thing I'd like to be! And if what I heard is true, that Chamber will test everything about me!

"...get them to trust you even further. Improve not only their power, but their confidence in you..."

My will. My endurance. My resolve.

"How exactly am I supposed to explain that? Haven't you been paying attention? Frieza sees everything! He'll think I'm plotting something if I suggested that!"

"If only two people can be in the Chamber at the same time, wouldn't this make everything more efficient?"

Efficient?

"Frieza is already counting on you to instill your knowledge into his men. Maybe even himself. You should be the one to take it upon yourself, let them decide the order of course..."

That...actually makes a lot of sense. This way, I could have a decent chance get a grip on my full power, whatever that may be, and get some quality time with my new comrades.

Something about this plan even appealed to me. That need for friendship. For camaraderie. This could be a great way to achieve that.

Of course, the clone had to ruin that, "...and once you've gained everyone's trust...brought your own power to peak performance...and its your time for Frieza to train with you...?"

I'm not going to like this one bit, am I?

"...you do what needs to be done."

I could hear Frieza's own words as the clone drew in ever closer to me.

"I hope you understand what needs to be done."
This thing, unholy as it was, clearly was the product of being merged with Frieza...but it created something worse.

It took the worst of him, and possibly the worst of me, and created this conniving little usurper.

And I was not about to entertain its unthinkable delusion.

"Think again, devil...I will never lay a hand on Frieza. Ever."

The clone, now directly in my airspace, seemed to relax.

It made a smug grin, nodding at my futile attempt to defuse this notion of a coup, "Oh but...you'll let him lay a hand on you all day long...won't you?"

The turbulence brought me out of my nightmare, my muscles tensed up at the shock of finding myself back in the waking world.

I clutched my armored chest and tried to slow my breathing, drenched in sweat from the experience.

I was still cramped in my pod, and I couldn't tell if my perspiration was from my extended time in the pod or from my dark experience.

I found myself wiping my forehead with a single gloved wrist, staring out through a red-tinted view port of the pod's hatch...

...and there it was. My home planet.

We were already here.

And if I hadn't restrained myself in time I would have just punched a whole through the pod, leaving me at the mercy of the vacuum of outer space.

It couldn't have been more than a few hours. Certainly not enough time to get some much needed sleep.

I'd have to make it up for that in the Chamber now.

*The Chamber...*

...*no. Don't even entertain that thought.*

I registered that what I had been through had in fact happened, even if just in my mind.

I had talked with that thing. That dark version of me.

That clone. That abomination.

That devil.

I hated it. I hated its guts with every fiber of my being.

I wanted to smash its face in if it ever had a face for me to smash.

Part of me really wanted that to be a reality just so I could do just that.
I could prove it wrong. I could show that I had no intention of bringing harm to Frieza, directly or indirectly.

*My Lord and I have a good thing going, and I wasn't about to ruin that now. Nor am I going to let that demon ruin it.*

_Frieza understands I have some apprehension, and seems at least slightly willing to give me some leeway even._

*Remember when Ginyu couldn't swap with Cell after his mental breakdown? Frieza can be the understanding type!*

*I wasn't going to just toss all that like some glove!*

*Hell, if I didn't know better I'd say Frieza even...*  
*...even...oh...*  
*...no...it can't be...*  
*...does Frieza not understand love?*

A static voice from somewhere within my pod broke my concentration, "Hey, General! You awake?"

It was Nappa's, sounding rather eager. I couldn't exactly tell where it was coming from.

Nor did I have any idea on how to respond.

I looked for the obvious button to press down, the one that let me send a signal.

"Hellooo? General?"

*Hang on I'm on my way just gimme a second!*

"Oh for crying out-just speak will ya?"

...oh.

"Uh, eh heh heh...sorry. Can you hear me now?" I managed to muster.

"Ugh, that's better. Anyway, get ready. We're going to enter Earth's atmosphere in just a moment. We'll be landing in just a moment. You sure we aren't about to get blasted out of the sky?"

_No, but as long as they weren't looking up we should be good._

I tried to sound like I knew what I was doing, be the General these guys needed, "What? You afraid?"

"No way! I'm as ready for this as I'll ever be. Its just...haven't had a whole lot of luck anytime I've been on this forsaken rock."

After the nightmare I just went through, I needed to have some fun, "That forsaken rock happens to be my planet, Nappa."

The Saiyan's voice was surprisingly steadfast, "Come on, General. Even you have to admit Earth is
nothing but a drag. You know how many more interesting planets I've been on?"

I didn't relent in my fun, "...not even a little scared?"

"Just because you are my General doesn't mean I gotta take this!"

The voice of Jeice came in through the comms, "Oi, you ain't about to wet yourself are ya' Nappa?"

I could hear Nappa pop a blood vessel on the other side, and within moments the outside of my pod was engulfed in a shield of fire.

We had entered the atmosphere.

The boasting voice of Recoome blasted through comms, "All right! Showtime!"

Burter joined in on the adrenaline rush, "Its the maaaain eveeeeeent!"

Ginyu tried bring some grace back to the group, "Cut the chatter men! For all we know, the enemy has a way of listening in on us!"

I wondered how Frieza was doing.

_Is it merely biding his time? Is he asleep?_

It was then that I felt it.

A familiar power level. A big one. A tremendous one.

I _realized_ it was actually two of them in fact.

_Goku! Vegeta!_

Then I noticed more power levels. Absurdly overwhelming in their own right.

They were everywhere. All over the planet.

But none were closing in.

None of them had noticed us.

_Its working!_

I wanted to reaffirm that with Nappa, but I made sure to keep to Ginyu's suggestion. For all I knew, they _were_ waiting for us anyway.

My mind wandered into even darker territory. A deep end.

_What am I gonna do when I see their faces? When they realize I'm not on their side?_

The thought was enough to distract me from the Earth getting ever closer as we proceeded through our orbital drop. Eight burning meteors raining down on the planet.

_Krillin...Tien...Yamcha...Piccolo..._

Eight heralds of doom.

_Gohan...Goten...Trunks...Majin Buu..._
Eight monsters waiting to be unleashed upon my home planet.

Goku...Vegeta...Bulma...

And I was one of them.

...what am I doing?

Still asking yourself that?

Before I could bring my hands across my face to hide my shame, the impact damn near rocked me through the glass as before I knew it my fire-warped view was now encased in a shower of green and brown terra firm.

The two-star Dragon Ball nestled in the crook of Yamcha's arm rather fittingly as he used his free hand to wipe the sweat from his brow. Tien meanwhile led the way through the sandy dunes, having gone from fighting off the cold mountaintop to fending off the sweltering heat of the rocky desert.

Not that the heat particularly bothered the former bandit, this was all incredibly familiar to him. He had made his bones out in the sticks in the first place after all. His three-eyed compatriot however was doing his best to hide his uncomfortable conditions, having taking off his top to tie around his waist in the hopes it would even things out. Nothing but sweat and scars to show for it.

The howling wind kicked up sand and dust, causing poor Tien to try and shield himself with a single arm brought up to his brow. His third eye in particular couldn't help but wince at the terrible conditions.

Yamcha noticed this all too well, "Hey buddy, you okay over there?"

The martial arts master picked up the coming tease storm in an instant, probably for his own teasing back on the mountain at Yamcha's expense. "Yeah yeah, not everyone is perfect."

"I'm just used to this. Like, I'm kinda glad to be out here. The humidity, the dry air...brings back memories..."

Tien could pick up the sentimental hurricane brewing within his pal, giving out single chuckle as he looked over his shoulder, "You miss all this?"

Yamcha shrugged, bringing up a hand to casually gesture throughout his explanation, "Nah. I mean, kinda...I don't know. I guess I'm just missing the glory days again. Its been a long time since I felt like a big shot, y'know?"

"You know, why don't you think about the future some more? We still gotta find this Dragon Ball, then we get to finally meet our friend tomorrow."

Tien's sincere suggestion got to Yamcha, reminding him of a certain something, "You know, I can't believe I'm asking this...but how come you are still single?"

The triclops planted his feet in the sand, and Yamcha instantly regretted his decision as he prepared for his own storm of excess perspiration.

Said storm came needlessly as Tien fully rotated to eye his buddy curiously. Yamcha didn't know what to say, let alone do.
"You know Yamcha...I'm not sure romance is cut out for me."

The wolf, holding the Dragon Ball to his chest with both hands in a desperate attempt to shield himself, now found himself overwhelmed with concern, "What? Aw, come on man! Tien? One of Earth's greatest fighters? Unable to find love?"

Tien blushed at Yamcha's insistence, "Cut it out, I'm serious. Its just been me and Chiaotzu forever now. I'm not really interested in a romance."

"Simple as that? Come on man, even a badass like you has to settle down at some point."

Yamcha's persistence was met with a serious glare, "Now that's a joke. Have you not been paying attention? How many times has Earth been in danger now? Someone has to keep putting up a fight. Can't just let those stronger than us do all the work."

The former bandit cooed with a playful tone, "Sounds like someone is just making excuses."

A vein or two popped across the triclop's dome, third eye wincing in disbelief, "That sounds like an excuse to you!?"

Yamcha backed off with the wave of a hand gesture in an attempt to excuse himself from the conversation, "All right! Chill! I didn't think you'd get this heartbroken..."

"I'M NOT HEARTBRO-" Tien didn't finish as he turned to continue their expedition instead.

The desert aficionado scurried to catch up, sidling up next to his warrior friend to match his pace, "Aww, its okay buddy. I understand what it's like to be single."

"Oh here we go..." all three eyes closed shut in exasperation.

"You see, I was thinking once we meet with our new friend," Yamcha placed a hand upon Tien's shoulder, "and provided her and I hit it off," Tien's eyes shot open and he found himself slackjawed, "maybe we could find you like...a date or something, y'know? We could go on a double date buddy!"

The suffering triclops brought a hand to his face and prepared himself for the worst of Yamcha's enthusiastically deprived ego.

A strong pair of hands was what I felt first as I came to, pulling me out from my enclosure and turning the brightness way too high as natural sunlight beat down on my eyelids.

I strained to open them, witnessing my savior was none other than the Saiyan brute as he shook me awake, "Aw cripes you okay?! Hello?!"

My limp body was pumped full of blood, returning my motor functions to peak capacity and giving me enough strength to push away the Saiyan.

"Agh! Hey, I'm okay I'm okay!" I gurgled as I now found myself on my own two feet planted into the soil.

Looking up I saw Nappa's genuinely shocked mug, which was rather encouraging, before I brushed myself off to finally get stock of the situation.

I then realized we were in a dirt crater, at least a Saiyan deep as I also realized a rainbow was
forming across the rim of the crater behind my savior, a very concerned spectrum no less eager to find out if I was all right.

I looked up to see the blue Earthen sky, overjoyed to be within a familiar atmosphere once more. As beautiful as Cajo Two was, I got used to it a little too swiftly. Once you saw one crystal basin you saw them all.

The big guy looked over his shoulder to shout, "The General is okay! Just a little winded!"

A wave of bending knees and hands to their chests commenced as the Ginyu Force took a deep breath, probably wondering if the mission had already met with disaster until now.

"Way to go General!" Guldo cried out with a raised fist.

Ginyu was still clutching his chest, apparently not quite past the initial potential horror of my possible death, but not apparently taking his own deep breaths.

Nappa huffed back in my direction, arms on his hips as if to hide his concern, "You lowered your power too much! You didn't need to go that low, all it did was make you easy to knock out upon landing."

I delivered a sharp exhale before giving proper credit, "Thanks Nappa," however, I noticed one head missing from the count, "where is Fr-Lord Frieza?"

"Wanted to see you as soon as you were not dead."

...wasn't concerned enough to see if I was okay, huh?

Removed of some of my will to keep this operation going, I wordlessly begged for Nappa to lead the way.

As we made our way out of the crater, the gang fanned out to give me room to make my ultimate entrance, and the view of the surrounding countryside was a welcome sight.

Before us, a large field of flowers of all shapes and colors was definitely the main attraction.

It made it sting all the more when I realized our pods had plopped all across the field, destroying large sections of flora. At least no fauna were injured.

A nearby hill caught my attention, covered in its own perennial blanket.

But the real attraction at the top of the hill was none other than the overseeing architect himself, no doubt plotting what to do with this planet once it was under my own thumb.

Or rather his.

He wasn't even looking in our direction. He was scanning the planet once more, perhaps making mental blueprints to sort through later.

A total land shark, obsessed with that one thing always on his mind, whatever that was.

Ginyu greeted me first once he had gotten over his heart attack, diverting my attention from Frieza's presence atop the hill, "Looks like everyone made it safe and sound. Before we commence our operation, Lord Frieza would like to have a word with you, General."

A gale broke through and swiftly rushed through the surrounding bloom, blowing my cape behind
me off to the side, eager to give chase to the wind.

My gaze now meeting Ginyu's, I gave a hesitant nod as I prepared to approach our Lord, returning my eyes to the king of the hill with a myriad of clashing emotions.

For a moment I had wondered, *did the impact of the pod crashing into my home planet knock some sense into me?*

I couldn't feel its presence.

No trace of the devil on my shoulders.

*Had I just imagined it thus far?*

*Am I losing my mind?*

...

*Frieza is waiting for me.*

The seven-star Dragon Ball flailed around in Goku's hands as a flock of protective birds attempted to peck at his face, forcing the hapless Saiyan to dance around the rooftop as the ship hung not too far high above him.

Vegeta, standing next to his wife looking from the view port with a pumped fighting stance, threw mock punch after mock punch as he cheered for his numb skull of a fellow warrior, "You gotta go for the wings! The birds can't peck your eyes out if they can't even flap up to meet your face! Come on Kakarot!"

Bulma's phone rang a jaunty little tune, giving her cause to retrieve it and see who was calling, "Oh! Its Gohan!"

She made her way to a quieter hemisphere of the ship to ensure Vegeta's antics wouldn't overpower her conversation, "Hey Gohan! Whassup? Is Piccolo feeling any better?"

His voice came through as friendly as ever, sounding less concerned compared to their last call at ground zero, "He's doing great! Even I have to admit, I was still worried there."

Bulma surged with pride and relief, "I knew he'd make it! Namekians sure are hard to beat."

"Yeah, but I'm still worried about Cell. You think he maybe teamed up with Frieza after all?"

The lady huffed, "You know, I'm not so sure. I doubt they could trust each other if they don't got someone else they hate even more in the room with them."

Gohan's gave an awkward yet stoic chuckle, "Yeah I'm counting on that myself. Hopefully one at least destroyed the other."

Bulma looked over at Vegeta, still throwing his fists in a vain attempt to encourage the lower class Saiyan to get serious against his avian foes, "Honestly? I'm rather hoping Frieza got to Cell first. If I remember correctly, Cell still has Saiyan blood as well. If he can't be killed, he's just going to get stronger each time. You already gave him everything you got once before, so who's to say he's not even stronger than before?"
"Cell still has a long way to go before he could completely reach our level. I'd say we're be fine. I personally took him on after we blew up Android Twenty-One. He's much stronger than before, but he's not much of a threat yet. If we could just take him and Frieza out before they do become a problem..."

Bulma sighed, "I hope you are right, I just hope if Frieza decided to make a move, he destroyed every last cell of him."

She could tell her caller was smiling confidently on the other end, "Don't worry Bulma, even if he got stronger than me somehow, there is now way he could beat Dad or your husband at this point!"

The proud wife blushed, something about the kid she watched grow up able to say that about her maniac of a significant other melted her heart, "Gohaaan...thank you."

"Heh, anyway. Not calling about any of that actually. I just wanted to tell you something...can you keep a secret?"

She couldn't help but enact her inner teenager, eager to possess such potentially juicy gossip, "Oh?"

Gohan's voice was notably full of apprehension, "Uh...well...I might already have a Dragon Ball in my possession."

Bulma couldn't distinguish the sensitive nature of this news but was nonetheless please, "That's great! But...how is that a secret? And why are you telling me?"

"Because I was going to give Dad the Dragon Ball for his next birthday. Its the four-star. Maybe use it as an excuse to...go on an adventure with him sometime. And I'm telling so you didn't come knocking to my door with your Dragon Radar beeping away and ruin the surprise."

Bulma had to put a hand to her chest to make sure her heart was still a solid as opposed to a liquid, "Oh Gohan...that is so sweet! I'm sure he'll be happy to hear that. And I getcha', that would have been awkward, huh?"

"I already called the others, but I know you and Dad started looking for them yourselves today so...could I ask you to-?"

She delivered her vocal thumbs up in total support of this loving son's plan, "-you can count on me buddy. I'll make sure to ignore any radar signals near your location."

"Thanks Bulma! I'll meet you guys at the Lookout tomorrow!"

Chi-Chi had already locked in on her firstborn's cheek with all the love in the world as Gohan hung up, "Heh, thanks mom, you think he's really gonna like it?"

"Honestly that is the sweetest thing I think you've come up with yet," his mother gushed after a big smooch on his baby face, "it would certainly be something fun for you and him to do," she furrowed her brow, "as long as it doesn't get in the way of your career any more than this whole clone business has already."

The prodigal son rubbed the back of his neck nervously, "C-certainly not! Gotta make time for the family after all!"

Goten, watching from his hiding spot around the corner and sporting a fashionable bag of ice on his
head for show in case of discover, calculated his next move. Like a diminutive ninja, he rolled across
the clearing unseen and made way to his own living quarters.

Rushing through the door he grabbed his phone off his bed, dialing as quickly as he could, "Come
on pick up the phone bruh!"

After a moment his best friend's voice came through with an air of grogginess, "Yeah dude?"

"What, are you still in bed? Come on Trunks its morning! And I got something to tell ya'?"

A moan came through the other side, one of pure agony as the Briefs son sounded as if he were on
Death's door.

"Uh...Trunks? You okay dude? Its me, Goten! You can stop pretending to be sick for a moment."

"I...I don't feel so good," came in a bile of sickness, sounding genuine enough to shock the Son
sidekick.

"What?! You got sick?! Like for real sick?!"

"I don't," his plea was interrupted by a groan of misery, "I don't think I'm gonna make it dude."

Goten stood atop his bed in determination to come up with a solution to this situation, bring his
unoccupied fist in front of him in righteous fury, "No way dude! You gotta get better right away! My
big brother is going to bring the Dragon Ball to the Lookout tomorrow! Sometime before noon!
Look, meet me at the ambush spot in the morning, I'm not sure I can do this by myself!"

The rays of the heavens poured through a passing cloud as I ascended the hill, careful as to mitigate
the trampling of flowers on my way.

So many different ones growing throughout this one meadow, I took a moment to appreciate it.
Normally I'd have to drive long distances to reach beautiful locations like this such as on Earth. Now,
I could just fly to one of these spots if I so wished.

I could fly to anywhere. I could go to the North Pole if I wanted to.

I could even use Instant Transmission if I so wished and be anywhere in the world. Maybe even
back to Cajo Two.

I wondered what other abilities I possessed? I could feel all sorts of techniques now housed within in.
I couldn't do it all thanks to biology, but there were so many flavors of fireball alone I could cast
from my fingertips now. I could even feel techniques I never actually witnessed against the clones,
but they were there.

What else could I do that didn't require me not being a human?

Many gimmicky strikes within my memory, the kind you saw in cheesy kung-fu movies where the
characters defied physics.

I was one of those characters now and so much more.

But I was the bad guy. I was the top henchman that showed up to fight the hero at the last minute,
working for the big bad. Working for a someone with a greater scope. Working for the final boss.
Was I going to be a joke? Or was I going to be the real challenge?

But in the end I was fighting another mental battle because of this train of thought.

I was wondering if it would be better to just run away while I still could. To just disappear from this situation and warn Goku and the others. I could use the Instant Transmission to just get away before Frieza had a chance to run me down.

But this need I possessed...this need to see this thing through. This thing I had started. This thing that Frieza sought me out for.

I wanted to see where it went.

I tightened my fists and psyched myself up.

I had a moment of inspiration when I saw a particularly red flora ahead of me. A rose. There were plenty of them. The whole bed of flowers seemed to be a mix of different breeds. An even more beautiful rainbow than the Ginyu Force could perform.

It was all a bit surreal to realize this field of flowers bared like a red carpet up to the tyrant of all people.

But how tyrannical could he really be? How cold and heartless was he?

Is there something to work with at all? Any chance to get close to the man that freed me from my boring existence?

The one that elevated me to something special?

I knelt down in my stride to keep pace and snatched the rose with quick tug at the stem, quickly resetting myself to my upright march and eyeing it closely.

A beautiful shade of crimson. Thorny all over, probably enough to pierce the skin even were it not for my gloves.

It reminded me of his eyes. Red as a rose, razor sharp.

Dangerous to handle.

I gapped the distance between myself and my Lord, and stood next to him to view valley ahead of us.

And up ahead was the Tower. So very far away, just beyond the horizon. Piercing the heavens. Our echo would certainly die out well before anyone living there could reach it.

Frieza didn't break focus from the valley before him.

I said nothing, merely standing there gazing at Mother Nature's creation resting daintily between my index and thumb.

I twirled it, not sure whether to smile or frown.

Smile, because I have hope? Or am I discouraged, afraid of how Frieza would react?

Its the oldest romantic gesture in the book. Handing them a flower, as some sort of token of appreciation.
I had a trustworthy inkling that nobody, not even Zarbon if he were the sort, would have been foolish enough to make such an attempt. So for all I knew, this was the perfect plan.

It was my only ace at the moment. My own ultimate technique. Maybe something Frieza could even appreciate.

I brought up the commander-in-chief personae to life, "A fine morning, wouldn't you agree?"

The arms at Frieza's side evolved into a conqueror's fold, and the blank expression became a smirk, ever so slightly in my direction, "I suppose it is a fine day. One trifling with possibilities."

I brought the rose in front of me, eyeing it once more. Hoping the aroma within scent's reach would be enough to get me to commit to the tactical move.

I went for it. If I was going to do this, it was only fair if I at least found out where my limit with this venture was.

I presented the rose in my hand, "I suppose it is...for you my Lord. Consider it a token of my appreciation, for allowing me the chance to preserve Earth...and its beauty."

Okay! That was pretty smooth!

...at least I think so!

My Lord stared at the gift, his smile dissipating and traded for what appeared to be curious interest.

"What is this?" he asked, less demand in his tone than I expected of such a question.

He wasn't taking it.

For a second I panicked, unable to come up with an answer.

"Uh...its...uh...rose."

"I can see that," Frieza replied with, dripping with attitude as if feeling sorry for my stupidity, "I mean why are you giving me that?"

What? Has Frieza never had a gift before?

This spoiled Emperor? The King's son?

Too focused on this thought, I failed to veil my intent with the next few words, "Because that's what people give up people when they-"

SHUT UP RIGHT NOW!

Within one exasperated moment, my first one ever dealing the tyrant, I made a fatal mistake.

Frieza trained his visage completely upon me, the deadliest sight I've ever seen, "When they what?"

A bucket of cold water splashed in my face. I was amazed I hadn't soiled myself.

His icy breath froze my bloodstream. My lungs became a vacuum and the contents thrown into outer space.

Unless I thought of something fast, I just gave myself away like a flare gun.
For all I knew, whatever my next few words were I was pretty sure they weren't going to only deepen the hole, and telling the tyrant I had a crush on him now was going to be death.

"W-when they want someone to know they...uh, I mean..."

Frieza's eyes widened.

**OH NO HE'S ONTO ME!**

My body quaked at maximum magnitude. My whole skin was covered in glistening animal fear, a whole waterfall's worth soaked my outer layer.

For the briefest of moment I considered using Instant Transmission and just teleporting somewhere...anywhere.

Had it not been for the fact that Frieza turned his gaze to the rose, throwing me off.

Only partially loosening his eyes, he reached for the Rose, an action I mistook for the telltale sign of a Death Beam if but for a microsecond.

He took it, his fingers gripping the more exposed area of stem as if to avoid making contact with my fingers.

I timed my release just in time for Frieza to avoid having to feel the tug of resistance, and the transfer was completed seamlessly.

I didn't say anything. I dare not. I was taking these actions as a sign that I did not just completely mess up. I dare not look behind me to even see if the guys were looking in our direction. I made no expression of any kind, just staring blankly.

Or at least keep the obvious terror in my eyes to a minimum.

Frieza kept his gaze trained on the rose throughout the exchange, twirling it between his own forefingers go get a good lock at every angle.

*Did I do it? Did I just get to Frieza?*

*Is Frieza interested-?!*

The shutting of his eyelids sealed my fate long before the rather abrupt, uninterested toss of the rose commenced and everything went black.

That was nothing compared to the dagger he drove into my heart that dug deeper with each following word, "If you think this is in any way a romantic gesture, then you are sorely mistaken."

*R-romantic gesture?!*

"Firstly: if you think plucking a flower out of the ground and delivering it to someone else is the Earthling ideal of love than you really are a fool...you fail to see the irony..."

*I just put myself out there for nothing.*

Frieza scoffed with a snotty snicker as he turned to face me, his death glare engaged once more, "...seriously? What does that represent? You took that out of the ground. It was growing just fine before you uprooted it, and all for the sake of what? To gain my favor in the cheapest way possible?"
My reality became bleak in an instant.

"Now the flower will die. It will rot away to nothing. Without its natural habitat you have brought doom to the flower."

I desperately wished this wasn't real anymore. That this had all in fact been a dream this whole time. And that I was still in my bed, about to wake up.

"If you truly loved the flower, and lemme tell you about love: its a waste of time. But If you did love the flower you would have let it be. Let it continue to grow and flourish on its own where it could gather sunlight and other nourishment. Or at least put the damn thing in a bloody pot of soil!"

*I wished I hadn't smashed Nappa into my roof. I wished I hadn't torn the door off my fridge.*

"If anything, you took that flower for yourself. Because you liked the flower so much you had to keep it in your personal diary or something so similarly childish. Which if you had simply put it that way, is something I can respect far more than giving me a piece of nature's so called bounty."

*I wished I had ran for Goku and the others instead.*

"I suppose I should be flattered, but do keep such nonsense to yourself. This is hardly the time or place anyway."

*I wished I hadn't given him the rose.*

"Try and be more like a General won't you? You serve me now after all. So you had better act like it if you want to remain in this organization."

*I wished I had-*

...wait a minute.

*WAIT A MINUTE.*

*DID HE-*

...

...

...

...*DID FRIEZA PLUCK ME FROM EARTH FOR HIMSELF?!!*  
Frieza eyed me quizzically, "Is something the matter?"

"N-no! Nothing! Nothing at all!"

"Then quit looking at me like a slack jawed idiot!"

In an instant Frieza turned to face the rest of the gang conversing among themselves, "Ginyu! Round up your men and achieve your objective. You know what to do."

Ginyu and his squad stood at attention before the Captain himself gave out the all clear, "Understood, Lord Frieza!"
Frieza resumed his gaze upon me, "Are you sure these Senzu Beans are worth acquiring for ourselves?"

I stood upright as proudly as I could, finding my second wind thanks to my self-realization, "Yes, my Lord!"

He continued his instructions while turning to face our Saiyan comrade, "Nappa, you come with me and the General to the Lookout. Let's make this quick and hit them before they have a chance to alert the others."

As the Ginyu Force flew past me, Nappa marched up to me, putting a giant hand on my shoulder as he himself moved on, "Let's do this, eh General?"

The brute took flight and began to hover his way towards the mighty structure ahead.

Frieza tried to follow before realizing I was still standing there, staring off where he once stood.

I had hope. It was a longshot, but it was my only chance.

*Its warped logic, but if Frieza did pluck me...you know what?*

*I'll take it.*

*If that's Frieza's logic...*

*Or maybe I'm just kidding myself. Either way, at least Frieza didn't kill me for the confession.*

I was at least relieved of my embarrassment for the moment. It came and went. No need to dwell on it.

Maybe I'd pay for it later, but not now.

I received the boost I needed with the idea that Frieza might actually be interested in me.

*Maybe its not over yet. Just put on your brave face and keep marching.*

It was then I felt it again. A familiar power signature. The feeling halted me in my tracks before I could take flight myself.

I turned to gaze in the direction of the far off source.

Somewhere in that direction he existed.

*Goku...*

*...how the hell is this Earthling onto me?!*

*What else am I supposed to do?!*

*Am I supposed to take this human's affection?*

*Is it even affection?! Was if I was wrong?! Did I just make a fool of myself assuming such?!*

*What is going on?!*
...and what in blazes are they doing now?!

*This was it.*

*This was my last chance to change my mind.*

*If I swapped sides now, I could warn Goku...if they could only forgive me for getting this far with Frieza.*

*If I went with Frieza, I would have to subdue him somehow...if I could only avoid killing him...*

...*no. I won't abandon Frieza now.*

...*AND I WILL CERTAINLY NOT LAY A HAND ON FRIEZA. DEVIL BE DAMNED.*

I turned to face my Lord once more, bowing before him with renewed focus, "Forgive me Lord Frieza...I thought I felt them coming."

I took to the sky after Nappa, flying past Frieza yet making sure as to not fly too fast with and give ourselves away.

Low power for now. No time to spare.

It was now or never.

*Time to be a General. Time to be a conqueror.*

*Time to be Frieza's right hand.*

*HIS NUMBER TWO.*

Chapter End Notes

Okay either I lied about reaching the halfway point already or this second half is going to be much longer~

BECAUSE 22 CHAPTERS BABY!!

Man my pacing does suck XD

Every time I get done with one of these newer chapters I realize I have to fit in another one to get in all the scenarios I want to fit in this thing! Maybe this will become a second act out of three as opposed to a second half. In fact I'm a bit certain of that now.

I brought the total number of chapters to 22 as of now after taking a moment to think how much space it would take to type it all out. I might have to even add another chapter or two down the road. I could just write beefier chapters but that takes too long for something like this, and I want to balance my time between this, work, hanging out with my friends and my own precious personal time XD
This friggin' thing...
Phase One

Chapter Summary

Its time...and time is short.

Can the General bring the Ginyu Force, Nappa, Frieza and themselves up to snuff?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"I'm telling ya' man! Like a bunch of meteors or something just flew by and landed somewhere out there!"

The portly samurai pointed off in the distance, pleading for his vertically-challenged feline superior to listen.

The air had gone still, and the birds ceased their chirping. Something terrible had happened.

Korin wasn't in the mood this fine morning to fall for another one of Yajirobe's attempts to sneak off with a Senzu Bean, a bag of the buggers nestled in his tiny paw as he bounced it up and down to tease the hungry swordsman, "I'm telling ya' you need to go get some real food already. Or at least go hunt for some! You've been getting a little too hungry for your own good lately and I'm not about to let you steal this batch."

" Didn't you hear it too?!" he slammed a meaty fist upon the railing, followed up by a mighty point in the direction of the perceived disturbance on the horizon, "I'm not trying to steal the Senzu Beans all right?! I think we might be in trouble here!"

"Maybe you need to go on a diet," decreed the cat, tapping his stick on the ground in amusement.

Yajirobe lost his breath, "Ah naw you take that back! I don't need to go on a diet or nothing!"

Korin was beat, "Look you know how much the others usually need our supply. And in case we get another visit or two from some very unwelcome visitors... yet again, I'd rather have these beans in good hands. Goku himself informed me that we've got a bit of a situation right now."

The corpulent underling stomped his foot down, "Yeah? Well what if those visitors were here, right now?!"

The cat hummed, seeing the possibility of sincerity within his friend, "We would see them coming, no?"

The plump tough guy went blank. A moment passed with no answer.

The furry sensei hummed curiously, "Hello? I'm listening to you now..."

Yajirobe continued to stare off into space, as if he were in a trance. However, the cat noticed his eyelids creaking open ever so slightly.
"Uh...you okay? What're you *that* hungry or somethi-?"

A flapping open gob and a wavering spine was what he was met with, prompting the elder to slowly turn, apprehensive to either fall for the prank or witness the real danger.

Unfortunately, it was the latter as Korin bared witness to the intimidating, sharply-angular, blue-tinted shadow rising to meet their elevation.

The bearer of Senzu Beans found himself backing up alongside his guardian, "I-I'm willing to listen to you now Yajirobe."

The quivering mess behind him concurred meekly, "I told ya' man," before taking a step back, "I told-" his second step was met with a halting bump into someone much, much bigger and scarier than him.

Yajirobe spun around to meet his aggressor, looking up to see the giant, carrot-topped monster looking down with a dirt-eating grin and a folded gun show.

He found himself backing into his feline superior as the two found themselves immediately surrounded by figures floating all around their elevated airspace, looking left and right to see two more figures flank their escape routes.

Instinct kicked in the swordsman as he frantically reached for his trusty blade, brandishing the dangerous end right in the approaching carrot top's grill, "Back off man! This sword has spilled Saiyan blood! What do you think it will do to-?!"

His brave attempt was met with harsh rebuttal as carrot top smacked the blade out of grip, sending it flying end-over-end over the railing as it made the long, long journey falling towards the forest below.

Yajirobe had nothing left to do but gawk at the thick, gloved hand now in his own grill, taking a moment to marvel at its mightiness before bringing his own meaty arms up in a surrender and grinning like a sorry fool, "Eh heh heh...nevermind!"

The doomed duo huddled back-to-back, awaiting their fate with roof-shattering levels of anxiety. They had no real hope of making out of this alive and instead relied on the hope that their friends could gather the Dragon Balls, and bother to revive them after this whole mess was done. Not the most graceful life, but at least it was a living.

However, that fate never came as the gaudy yet menacing troupe merely stood or hung there suspended in the air.

A gruff voice came from behind carrot top, "I'll take it from here Recoome!"

"Sure thing boss." bellowed the behemoth, stepping to the side to reveal the horned, purple devil approaching the pair.

"Good morning, Earthlings! This tower is now in the possession of none other than the all might terror of the cosmos, Lord Frieza! You will hand over any and all Senzu Beans in your possession if you value your lives, and henceforth find yourselves indefinitely employed under his majesty's service in order to produce further shipments!"

Korin, having turned to face the demanding mouth of Frieza, shivered behind his unarmed protector, "H-how do you know about the Senzu Beans?"
Yajirobe finished the thought, "T-they must have t-tortured the information out of Goku's mystery friend!"

Ginyu's smirk grew even wider, as did his cohorts as a storm of laughter erupted around the two. Something about what he said.

They certainly did not expect the collective guffaw that rang around their ears, confusing the poor unaware prisoners.

"W-what's so damn f-funny?!

The Captain himself roared joyously, "Oh have we got a surprise for you!"

"Aaaaand inhale through your nostrils." instructed the stout midnight caretaker, as the strapping young Namekian inhaled deeply as he brought up his arms to praise the sun.

Dende held his arms there, feeling a tad foolish for doing so as he hung onto his breath.

Mr. Popo, delivering visual aide, smiled with satisfaction at Dende's adaptability, "Aaaand exhale, arms back down to your stomach."

"Are you sure this is necessary?" the Namekian asked sincerely as he deflated, ceasing his salutation maneuver.

"Kami did so every day and look how he turned out. Age didn't slow him down one bit because he knew how to take care of himself every day."

"I'm not that old yet." Dende stated, more polite and matter-of-fact than with any hint of arrogance.

"No but it never hurts to start now, does it? Got anything better to do?"

Sass aside, the young Namekian got the point and shrugged innocently, straightening his posture for another rep.

"Actually yes," articulated pure evil, "you do have better things to do..."

The startled residents of the Lookout looked up to spot the hovering trio: the emperor, his Saiyan lackey...and myself.

"...namely you could do me a favor and just cease to exist if you know what's good for you."

Dende, still stuck halfway through a sun salutation, lowered his arms as slowly as possible. The darkest corners of his memories surfaced in a flash, remembering all too well the horrors he witnessed on Namek caused by the demon now existing in his field of vision once more.

The helpless Namekian shivered, his whole body erupted with dread. He never wanted to see this man ever again, and yet here he was. The maniac that nearly wiped out his people. The very embodiment of malice that had murdered him all those years ago.

And this time there were no Dragon Balls nearby to correct that problem.

He had no choice but to run for it as the fledgling screamed for their lives, "Get out of here Mr. Popo!"
Too late, as they ran headfirst into the burly, armored Saiyan now blocking their path. After a bounce back and the realization their escape was cut off, the two found themselves backing away from the lesser evil. They were doomed.

Dende, knowing he had but moments to live for all he knew, cast his gaze up at me. The one factor he had not counted on.

He didn't know what to make of me by the way he glared helplessly at me. Clearly I was some kind of threat to him as much as the other two. His face covered in sweat, his eyes full of hopelessness.

This was it for me. The real start.

*I'm officially the villain now.*

I had to mitigate that however I could, if but to keep myself from crossing over completely, "Remember Frieza, I don't exactly know how this Chamber works. For all we know, these two know how to keep the Chamber in its current condition. We may need them alive."

Still hanging there next to me and now giving me a cold look, I expected the tyrant to stifle me for ruining his fun.

However, I was granted further bleaching of my sins with his next words, "I suppose you may be right. Very well."

Oh sweet relief.

As I placed a heart upon my chest, keeping the spooks after my soul at bay, Frieza delivered his next orders, "No fatalities Nappa! Try not to cry over that will you?"

The blood-thirsty Saiyan peered up at his master, annoyed and arm's veining, "What? You know how long I've waited for some action?! And now you expect me to go soft on the Earthlings? You seriously expect me to j-

It wasn't the pointed arm of Frieza's threatening Death Beam he was met with, but the possessed twitching of my left eye and the steam emitting from my ears that caused Nappa to turn blue.

*NAPPAFORTHELOVEOFEVERYTHINGCALMYOURBIGHEAD-

I didn't give enough credit to Frieza as the tyrant chuckled, "What? The hundreds of clones you decimated the other day wasn't enough to satiate your pallet for blood? Patience, monkey. You'll be able to exact revenge to your heart's content in due time. We all will. But even you must understand we must as least see if this tower is of any value to us before we obliterate it from orbit, along with its inhabitants. Do I make myself clear?"

The Saiyan, still staring at me, cleared his throat "Uh...y-yes Lord Frieza!"

*You are so lucky Nappa you stupid idiot!*

Dende and Mr. Popo found themselves shaking at least a little less, relieved to hear of their salvation if at least for the moment.

*And the other two, thankfully.*

Out of nowhere, my Lord gave me a nonchalant whisper, "See what I have to deal with?"

I didn't know how to react to that sudden bout of warmth peaking into existence, as Nappa below
approached our two captives with a smirk and a menacing march, "Well you two, it must be your lucky day! Instead of death you get to live out more painful days!"

He delivered a mean, heavy and sudden right backhand, getting a double whammy by meeting both of the unfortunate recipients in their faces, first smacking into Mr. Popo as his face was smashed into Dende's, and the two met the crossed tiles of the Lookout paneled flooring. Out cold.

They lie faces contorted along the smooth ground, squishing their features together in unflattering defeat.

At least they were alive.

I observed these two. Never before had I met either of them, but heard about them as I shacked up within Goku and the others' conscious. Not enough to know them intimately certainly.

I was too relieved that the one called Dende, another Namekian, wouldn't try to contact Piccolo or anyone else at the moment without their minds awake to do so.

**Yeah, he could have given us away to the party crashers.**

...and I'm glad he's s-safe too.

Frieza's voice shook me awake, "That's that then."

The rest of the inner circle came into view as they hastily rose from far below, two more people I've never met before slung over the shoulders of Recoome.

Ginyu flew in to greet us, stopping just short of us a few feet with expertly trained air brakes and holding a bag out for his master, "The Senzu Beans, Lord Frieza! The Generals' information was accurate! Although I must report for the sake of posterity, your coordinates were a bit off."

Before Frieza could possibly give me a visible snare I found my hand over my back to pinch my own neck in the guilt of my failure, "Oh we-I-I didn't exactly know where it was. I just knew that we could get more of the beans from the place," my attempts at covering my own ass was probably obvious.

But I wasn't going to be defeated by this, "after all, my Lord, you've seen the short bald Earthling use these beans during out run ins with the clones. You know they have value to us. Yet another high value asset, wouldn't you agree?"

"I've seen them even before that, General. You wish to tell me other useless information? I could just take Earth from you when this whole thing is done and put it on the seller's market if you'd like to make pointless attempts to further deviate from the path forward."

I took the threat seriously, and shuddered to my own corner yet keeping my shoulders square to avoid tarnishing his image any further.

*Man. He's just all over the place. I can't pin him down any more.*

*Is he getting emotional? Or is this just how he his all the time?*

The bag of beans transferred hands to Frieza, "Thank you Ginyu. Well General?" he turned to face me as Recoome brought himself to the ground below, placing the portly samurai and struggling cat onto their butts with indifferent resolve, "the operation seems to be handled so far."
And with the flick of a wrist, the bag was tossed to me. I had barely enough time to catch it in my upturned palm with little to no dignity. "You may hold onto those. Guard them with your life."

I held the bag there before me for a second before instinct kicked in, and I peeked into to see four little all powerful beans nestled within.

*Only four huh? Krillin did say they take forever to grow and he had to use a lot during the crisis.*

I gave Frieza a confident nod, "Of course, Lord Frieza."

"Well, this is your show commander. Impress me."

I tucked the bag away in a safe, comfy place within my armor, and began phrasing instructions in my head, "Okay, we have captured the Lookout," I eyed over to the majestic structure over yonder as I stated the obvious, "and that must be the Hyperbolic Time Chamber."

The rest of the Ginyu Force herded the prisoners over to their own little huddled, makeshift area, keeping them surrounded to make sure the still-conscious pair didn't make a break for it. Yajirobe in particular was trying to wake up poor Mr. Popo while Korin did the same with Dende.

Frieza folded his arms, "And only two people can go in at a time?"

*I'm not entirely sure, but better safe then sorry,* "Well...I'm told a whole year passes in there for every twenty-four hours out here. So..." I tried to do the math in my head, trying to explain it in a way that sounded like I knew what I was doing, "...each hour we spend in there should be something like two weeks. I say we spend two hours each at least with whatever time we got left, that's a month's worth of training."

"Is that going to be enough?" The Captain rightfully asked, arms in front of him all hopeful.

I folded my own arms, trying too hard to look cool, "...with me it will be. I have a couple of things I could teach everyone present about our friends, in order to hopefully end our skirmishes with them quickly."

My Lord and the Captain looked at me intently, hanging onto my words and both seemingly intrigued in their own ways, "Their techniques. Their abilities. I might even have an idea or two on how to defeat them."

Frieza bursted out laughing, "Oh really?! You have an *idea or two*? Oh ho ho, look at you going for extra credit!"

Unable to tell if he was being cynical or not, I continued my plan of attack, "Lord Frieza, if I may. I'd like to go in there first...and take turns personally training everyone. I'll get each of us combat ready for when the times comes."

Before I could receive permission from my Lord, the Captain came to my immediate emotional aide, "General! If what you say is true about the Chamber, then can you stand to be in there for that long?"

The suspicious lizard beside me began his own train of thought, "And hog all the valuable training time to yourself?"

While it was refreshing to hear Frieza suspect me of something other than rebellion, I had to squash that notion quick before I continued with my plan, "My Lord, I wish to hone my own newfound skill and power. I had never fought a day in my life up until the day I was a Soul, and I've had even less actual combat experience in my own body. I want to know my limits and see what I can do."
"Are you saying I wasted my time recruiting you to the cause? Are you saying you will be useless when the times comes to take on those filthy Saiyan vagabonds?"

Damn. I just can't catch a break, can I?

"I...just don't know how I'll stack up to a Super Saiyan God, my Lord. I want to say I'm strong, but I just don't know how strong."

Ginyu floated a little closer to the two of us, "Lord Frieza, with all due respect, I believe this is a great idea! The General is willing to do most of the work for us, and it'll save us some wear and tear for the battle ahead!"

There was a moment where I could tell Frieza did not welcome Ginyu speaking on my behalf like that, raising his voice in some attempt to move this along. Not that I didn't appreciate his support, but I would hate to see him punished for speaking out of line.

But Frieza's words came billowing through the walls like a sinking ship filling up with water, "Whatever happened to no pain, no gain?"

He remembered that, huh?

I had to make one thing clear though, concerning Ginyu's words, "I'm not expecting it'll be easy for any of you either. We're gonna have to give it our all here. We have a long way to go before we can get you, the rest of the Force and Nappa up to snuff. If need be, we'll need you and the others to at least keep the other fighters busy, while Lord Frieza and I deal with the heavy hitters."

Frieza brought up a finger to his lips, now beyond amused by my willingness to tackle the true problem. "You make it sound so easy."

Knowing I had to ride that train for as long as I could, "I wish it were. Until then we use up as little energy as possible, and save the Senzu Beans for when we truly need them. We train, train and train. We formulate our counter-attack. They'll be coming with the Dragon Balls by sun up at the soonest, and at the very least we need to get our hands on those. If we can get even one of them, then they won't be able to make their wish either. We can stalemate for as long as we need to."

"I'd rather not let this drag out."

I shook my head, "Me either, My Lord."

My mind raced. I envisioned what a white-knuckled brawl with the Saiyans would play out like. Probably not in my favor if I went in guns blazing.

I needed every advantage I could get.

The Captain brought his arms to his hips while our overlord hummed to himself, "If that is what you believe to be the best course of action, who am I to judge?" more than a little playfulness in his tone, "I continue to stress the importance of a positive outcome. Failure is not a habit I wish to get used to."

Vague threat absorbed, "Then its just a matter of who goes in with me first."

Frieza sighed, "I'd rather not be the first to go in if I may. Someone decently powerful is going to have to play lookout until the rest of you buffoons can measure up. I'd rather not go in only to come out and find my men wiped out."
Hey. That works out for us, don't it?

I'm not doing that.

I cleared my throat to suppress my inner demon, turning to Ginyu as I did so, "Well then. I'll leave that up to you, Captain. Delegate the order in which your men and Nappa will accompany me in there."

"Why General!" Ginyu's voice was somehow even more full of that jovial yet professional attitude of his, "I have but the perfect solution to decide such matters!"

He dropped down in an instant to meet his men on the ground floor as Frieza and I watched down from our place in the sky, "Square up men! Nappa, keep an eye on the prisoners for just a sec!"

The hardy boys gathered around their fearless leader as Nappa hovered rather purposefully and proudly over the poor wretches. I half expected the Saiyan to feel left out.

Frieza sighed, "Oh if they are doing what I think they are going to do..."

Probably something cool.

Burter was the first to speak up, "What's the plan boss?"

"It appears our first phase of Operation Frozen Over was a total success, now begins phase two!"

Recoome pumped his fist, "Three cheers for the Captain yo!"

Ginyu brought up a wavering hand before a single hip could be uttered, "Uh uh, I will not accept responsibility for this victory. That belongs to none other than our esteemed General!"

Esteemed he says. First day on the job and things are going well at least.

As I was delivered a triple cheer from below my face began to swell with heat. I certainly was letting this minor victory get to my head, even as I was more concerned with the poor saps we've had to clobber so far.

Frieza must have noticed my pride butting in, "Getting a little ahead of ourselves aren't we? We still have much to do."

I shrugged off my warm and fuzzy feelings and put on a stern puss to give off the tough guy vibe he was expecting.

"That's better," Frieza cooed before turning his attention to the glorified hooligans below, "Carry on Captain! We're burning daylight here!"

The Captain stood tall, beaming sunshine up at his eager overlord, "Yes sir Lord Frieza," he turned to face his huddled elite, "All right men, next begins phase two! Its going to be a long and arduous training regime from here on out, and our General has graciously volunteered to be our teacher!"

Jeice got rowdy, "All right, way to go General!"

Smirking over the approval, the Captain continued his mission briefing, "They will teach us the enemy's weaknesses and their techniques, and ultimately...bring us on par with them! We got a long way to go, and by the General's estimations we will each take turns going through a month long training session. It won't be easy, and we'll need to bring in our A-game! Each and every one of us!"
Guldo found himself in intense focus, bringing his fists up to himself in an attempt to psyche himself up, "This is it. This is finally the day we ascend as a unit."

Recoome backed that statement up, "This will be the day we stomp those fools!"

Ginyu folded his arms, finishing the briefing, "We'll have to decide quickly who will be the first one to go in and receive the benefits of training, and after that...we'll decide the order in which the rest of us head in. Do you men understand?"

The sound of a throat clearing from near the prisoners was heard, and all of our attention was brought over to the Saiyan, left out of this conversation, "Uh...hello?"

Frieza bellowed impatience next to me as we still hung there high up in the air, "Oh what does he want now?"

I prayed Nappa didn't have something stupid to say, or if he did he would get over with it quickly.

The Captain delivered a harried tone as heads turned in the Saiyan's direction, "What do you want, Nappa?"

"What about me?" the Saiyan demanded to know, stomping a foot down and causing poor Yajirobe to scurry back slightly and dog pile over Dende's unconscious lump, "I've been waiting to get stronger myself for decades now! Am I gonna have a damn turn or what?!"

The Force collectively sighed in exasperation at the Saiyan's unreasonable demands, but the Captain knew my wishes well, "Tell you what, Saiyan. You really want to become a member of the Ginyu Force? You'll have to wait your turn and show some patience. You can go before Lord Frieza as he demands, but after me and my men! Is that clear?"

"Tch!" was all Nappa delivered, begrudgingly acknowledging the superior warrior's command.

Our overlord was getting impatient, "All right now let's get on with this! Decide the order you will all head into the Chamber so we can begin this already!"

Nearly thrown off his game, the Captain continued, "Uh, all right men! You know the drill! We will decide the the old fashioned way. By Rock-Paper-Scissors!"

Recoome immediately began rotating his arm, warming up his roshambo muscles, "All right! I'm gonna be the first one to go for sure!"

Guldo countered, "Over my dead body Recoome!"

The five got into power stances, readying themselves for the coming battle of wits.

I couldn't help but get excited for this tournament, even as Frieza buried his face into the palm of his hand.

Burter got a case of the jimmy legs as he threw one out and began shaking away the anxiety, "You guys are going down. I'm gonna get to be the one to train with the General first!"

Jeice was blowing some steam, "I'm going to go first and come out wicked strong! You guys are gonna be so jealous!"

The Captain restored order, "Can it men! Draw your weapons!"

"ROCK-"
The three-star Dragon Ball looked good nestled in her arm, thought Krillin as he gazed at the love of his life walking just ahead of him.

The beeping of the Radar had brought them to a woodland area. The thicket of trees and critter ambiance definitely got them in a pleasant mood.

That and not moments ago had they received the call from Bulma telling them to veer off course, avoiding an unnecessary trip to Gohan's location. The whole phone call was a delight for the couple.

Eighteen in particular was thinking how sweet it was of Gohan to do such a thing for his own father, and sacrificing his chance to give his old man a birthday wish in favor of rescuing their friend.

"You know, I can't wait to meet this mystery friend of ours. Sounds like they were a real help." Eighteen mused.

Krillin was in total agreement, "Oh you should have seen em'. They knew how to kick butt!"

The blonde beauty smirked and looked over her shoulder, "Better than me?"

"Oh, uh..."

"I'm kidding silly. You are too easy sometimes, you know that?"

Shorty shrugged with a smug expression, "I just didn't want to say yes."

"Oooh, ouch!"

"Hey you asked!" Krillin snorted.

The two marched merrily on their way, Krillin resuming the conversation in a more cohesive fashion, "In all seriousness, you should see them go! Even Goku got excited by the way they fought, even if they were just borrowing our bodies to do the deed."

Eighteen's eyes shot open uncharacteristically, "Goku? Excited? Okay, now that is a bit scary."

"That's what I thought! And get this, apparently our friend contacted Goku last night!"

"What? Really?" Eighteen gave off a more concerned tone, and stopped the march in its tracks.

Krillin caught the change in her voice, "Uh, something wrong?"

"How do we know it was our friend?"

"Me and Bulma already went over that. Its not something we haven't thought of, as much as I hate the idea."

Eighteen sighed in a mixture of relief and guilt, "Not that I don't want to have any faith in our newfound friend, but I'm glad to hear you guys aren't about to maybe fall for a trap or something."

Krillin approached her warmly, grabbing her free hand softly and looking up at her with confident
eyes, "I want this to work out too."

Eighteen eyed the Dragon Ball still safely in her other arm, a beam of light shining in through the foliage above and bouncing off the sphere, glistening a beautiful shade of orange reflecting upon her features.

Not to mention beaming across Krillin's own dome, forcing a smile to creep across her face.

"It will." was her reply, patting her hubby's equally shiny head gingerly.

Krillin's face scrunched, "I know what you are thinking."

Eighteen burst into a pleasant, wilted laughter, "I can't help myself sometimes, you just look good in orange."

A smooch on his head was enough to make him forget the teasing as she turned to resume the search for their second Dragon Ball.

I watched in awe as these men, these merry men under my command no less, each squabbled in their own way and gave this game of deception their best in order to be the first to train with me.

I had no idea what I was doing. Nor had I any idea on how I was going to do the thing I didn't know I was doing.

I had to keep winging it. Fancy speech and raw strength were only going to get me so far.

I must have known I've be out of my comfort zone accepting the invitation to join these guys. To join Frieza.

I glanced at the dragon next to me, realizing his face was still married to his hand at the moment. However I caught him just in time as he began the separation period to speak, "I honestly don't know how you find their unique tastes so enthralling, but I'd be lying if I didn't admit I find myself grateful that you can stand their antics."

I raised a brow, unsure if Frieza was giving me some sort of praise or merely taking the time to vent out some frustration.

Clearly he would never so casually discard the Force as long as they remained loyal and useful, yet it was an oddity to me to see him so willingly accept their antics. Or at least tolerate such. It gave me hope that my previous admission of attraction to the Lord was merely seen as another goofy quirk of yet another pawn under his command.

However, it was disheartening to know that any further attempts would most likely be treated as such.

But then again I had only know Frieza for so long now. Maybe the confession was just too soon?

I just couldn't read Frieza. He kept poise at all times. His face was always either a smirk, a scowl or something in between.

The tyrant continued to divulge, "I suppose your ability to tolerate their need for showmanship will be of great use. Sometimes it can make your mind stray off path when they are too busy performing calisthenics in the war room meetings and claiming it to be some form of representation in my name."
I shrugged, "I'll admit, my Lord...I'm a bit partial to their attitude myself."

As the game of janken reigned below, Frieza peered over his shoulder at me with an expression of utter concern, "Oh please don't tell me you intend to join in on their routine posing sessions?!

I was afraid to answer as I found my cheeks inflating and my eyes popping out.

"Oh my...you do, don't you?"

Frieza leaned his head back in defeat, letting out the most irritated exhale, "I'm surrounded by idiots! Why are all the good ones such classless, philistine pedestrians only interested in the most crude form of entertainment!"

*Hey I thought I impressed at that dinner!*

The Lord dropped his thinly-veiled temper tantrum and returned to his previous composure of only mild irritation, "I suppose its better than nothing. Please try to class it up a bit though, won't you? For starters, your table manners are *dreadful*."

...*did he just-WAIT WHAT?!!*

My instinct was to finally deflate my face and retract my eyes back into their optimum orientation, and shrug, "I thought I did just fine at the banquet."

My dining critic scoffed, amused at my defiant pride, "Oh *please*, you utilized the wrong utensils the whole time. You grabbed your wine glass with the wrong hand. You don't know how to make proper eye contact!"

*E-eye contact?*

"You are a mess! In fact I wouldn't be surprised if your fighting at higher levels was just as pathetic. Trust me, I've learned the hard way that raw strength just doesn't cut it."

It took me a moment to realize that this wasn't Frieza's way of insulting me or lowering me down a peg. He was giving me advice.

*He must be referring to Namek.*

Overwhelmed with the need to please in the most direct fashion possible, I puffed up my chest modestly and snubbed, "My Lord, you have nothing to worry about. The Earth's defenders are as good as defeated. Neutralized. I know every trick in their library as if I were the author of the books."

I figured I had delivered the kind of speech Frieza was looking for for once, but to my surprise he narrowed his gaze upon me, "Its not that I am having a hard time believing."

"Hmm?" was all that managed to utter in my vocal chords like the pretender I truly was, betraying my inner hapless stooge.

"Hmph?" was all that managed to utter in my vocal chords like the pretender I truly was, betraying my inner hapless stooge.

My conversation partner lowered his tone, becoming something sinister all over again, "You have no experience fighting a real battle. My army. Nappa. The Ginyu Force. The fact of the matter is they are nothing compared to you. What is going to happen when you fight a real opponent?"

Undeterred by his fair point, I countered with a simple fact, "Its not like I was doing nothing while I was a Soul. I gained plenty of combat experience that day. I threw every fist, launched every fireball.
That was all me."

A condescending chuckle was what I was met with, "Oh but...my dear, those clones? Not the real thing at all! They were nothing. Nothing but imitations and fodder. You may have killed scores of them, but you can't possibly comprehend what it's like to stare down a Super Saiyan. To look in the eyes of a worthy adversary that pushes you to your absolute limit. To engage in combat thinking you have the upper hand, and the next you are fighting for your very survival."

The intensity with which he spoke was enough to send shivers down my spinal column, even before Frieza's own muscles began to tense with utter suppressed rage just waiting to break out.

My bones were dipped in liquid nitrogen. My soul was battered with a siege engine.

And yet, something about Frieza ever so slightly flexing his muscles was where my mind was wandering.

This dangerous being. This unholy monster. This planet gobbling abomination.

This lethal killer who wouldn't think twice about scrapping me and putting me in a shallow grave if even that.

And I was checking him out once more.

The veins emerging from all over his arms as he tensed up. The way his teeth grit and his eyes screamed bloody murder. His tail was whipping back and forth behind him.

Against my better judgement, and remembering how my romantic attack squadron was shot down by flack just a few minutes ago, I wanted nothing more than to soothe the beast's anguish.

"My Lord...I'm not afraid to face them. I'll fight if I must. And knowing a thing or two on their fighting style-"

This time Frieza completely turned to face me in a flash, throwing me off my attempt at calming him down, "That's just it! If you go in there thinking you can take them on...and fail, what good does that do me?!

I found my hands sheepishly brought up to shield myself from an attack that never came.

"If you face those Saiyan monkeys and falter to their savage might, if you aren't prepared to stare down a Super Saiyan and come out on top, I'll never-"

He trailed off, unable to finish saying whatever had to say in the heat of the moment.

Never what?

I lowered my hands, feeling more and more foolish for thinking I need them brought up in the first place.

Frieza had flipped a switch, and his expression went from utter seething rage to one more in line with a horrible realization.

What that realization was I couldn't figure out.

Never WHAT?

He composed himself and cleared his throat, finally calming himself down, "Make no mistake, I
appreciate your willingness to serve me in a manner befitting my wishes. But if you die in battle, then not only will you have put the entire mission in jeopardy, but you will have wasted a valuable asset I quite desperately need in this return to power."

Never...

"So do me a favor...and by that I mean I command you to do me this favor: make sure you know what you are doing. Have a plan or two if need be. We have quite the battle ahead of us."

...FORGIVE HIMSELF?

"So be prepared, will you? We really only have one chance at this. I expect nothing but complete and total victory. And I have no intention of using the Dragon Balls to revive any fallen warriors on my side...not even you."

He resumed his own gaze to the shenanigans below, ending the conversation.

I found myself staring off for a moment before I own senses returned.

...

...

...HE DOES CARE!

Oh stop kidding yourself, will ya?

Not right now. Please.

If you think this monster has any feelings for you, you are sorely mistaken.

Maybe you are the one who is mistaken.

The voice of Guldo rang through the air in joyous celebration, "All right! I got first dibs for once!"
Recoome slapped his thigh, "Drat! I thought I had you there!"
"Heh heh not this time you big oaf!"

Have you thought about what I said?

Just because Frieza happens to be the last one going in, doesn't mean I'm going to take him down when its finally his turn to train in the Chamber.

Burter was the next one to cheer, "Yes! I'm second!"
Jeice tried to object, "No fair! You must have cheated!"
"I don't cheat, Jeice." the blue wonder hissed.

Ginyu cut the argument down before it got any worse, "I will not have accusations of foul play in my squad! Now the rest of you men get it together!"

You heard what he said. He ain't going to revive you if you bite the dust.

Maybe not, but that's only because he's got that image of his to protect. He'd wish for his immortality
first and then come back for me next yer.

You really are kidding yourself!

"Yes!" bellowed Recoome, "I got third place! I'll take it!"

Jeice winced, "Son of a-"

The Captain forced composure of his own number two man, "All right Jeice, its just you and me. Draw!"

Frieza is a complicated man. But he is a man of his word nonetheless.

I will not let you do something stupid.

...let me?

I will step in if I have to.

Jeice brought himself to his knees in overwhelming joy, "I did it! I'm not gonna be last! Yes!"

The Captain folded his arms, annoyed as his number two's unprofessionalism and lack of sportsmanship.

"Uh...sorry Cap'n."

Step in? I'm sorry?

You heard me.

My anger at the situation brewing within overrode my thought process.

No...I didn't hear that. You are just a voice in my head. A figment of my imagination. I'm just stressed from my new job is all.

New job. You really are an idiot.

Can you just not right now?!

"Psst...hey, Korin." Yajirobe whispered, just enough to avoid attracting the attention of the behemoth guarding over them, too preoccupied with spectating the game of wits taking place before him.

The cat master was trying to wake up poor Mr. Popo, "Kinda busy right now."

"Hey man, we gotta find a way outta here somehow. Or at least find a way to call for help!"

"The only one who could probably even do that is poor Dende, and you are sitting on him."

The overweight samurai rolled off immediately with apparent apologetic body language, "Well then let's wake him up!"

"They probably realize what he's capable of, they'll just knock him down next chance they get. And let's not do that to the poor kid, all right?"
"Then what? We just sit here and hope that help just happens to arrive?"

The cat sat upright, abandoning his futile attempt at waking up his turban-sporting friend, "They'll be here tomorrow, remember? We just gotta be patient."

"They are gonna head on into the Chamber and just come out stronger! We can't let them do that! And they'll probably kill us before they realize how useless we are in their whole grand scheme of things!"

"If you say that out loud maybe they will." Korin rightfully pointed out.

Yajirobe clenched his fists, "Come on man! We can't let them get away with this!"

He turned to look up at the newcomer, at me. Wondering who I even was.

It was only then that Yajirobe even realized I wasn't some kind of alien, or even a humanoid alien.

Maybe I was even a straight up human.

He shook his head, refusing to believe an Earthling would so willingly join a nut like Frieza.

Korin sat on his tail, beat and unable to think of anything to do but wait, "Even if Frieza and others do get stronger, relax will ya'? We have some pretty strong warriors on Earth's side at this point. They'll fix this mess."

"They haven't always been able to. Remember when the Saiyans first showed up. We barely got away by the skin of our hide! Hell, our warden here is one of the guys that showed up that day!" Yajirobe pointed a hammy finger at the oversized goon before them, back still turned, "Guess we didn't do a good enough job, huh?"

"Dragon Balls, Yajirobe. What else could have happened? And we can be saved the same way."

"If they haven't already been used on us. Remember that Majin Buu fella?"

The annoyed feline scrunched his face, "Dammit why do you have to be so negative?"

Keep it together, I got this. I've just got to train each seven men...one of whom is a freakin' monster, but still.

First Guldo, then Burter, then Recoome, then Jeice, then Ginyu, then Nappa and finally Frieza.

Whole weeks at a time.

That's a lot of time between now and the next time I'll get to see Frieza.

The sudden realization sapped me of some of my resolve.

I'd have to go months before the next time I'd get to see Frieza, even though the man in question would be waiting just outside that door for a few hours.

And then tomorrow, we'd have to face them.

The overwhelming realization on the reality of the situation was enough to rob me of some of my breath.
Phase Two of the plan was going to be rough. But it had to be done.

I had to prove to Frieza I was capable of being his number two.

I had to show that devil within me that I didn't need it to keep up this charade.

It wasn't even going to remain a charade for long. I was determined to figure this out and bring about a best case scenario.

I knew I was going to regret so much later down the road, but it was for the best.

But I had to admit to myself now, if I had known it would all start going down like this I might not have actually gone through with it.

I might have blasted Nappa off into space and blow his ship to smithereens.

Too late for regrets now. No chance for a do over.

I was still committed to this. Committed to be the best number two a boss could ask for.

And yet I wanted Frieza to be more than just a boss, and I didn't exactly know how to make that happen. How to achieve that next level in our relationship, if you could even call it that.

Frieza was putting up too stern of a stone wall, and that was okay with me. Even if I was in denial, at least I'd be somewhat aware of that. I still had control of my future to a degree, if not completely.

His voice demanded my attention, "Well then, General...are you ready?"

I turned to face him, as humble as I could appear yet as steadfast as I could be. He needed me to be his General, and it would be up to me from here on out. This operation was now in my hands, not just in the hands of his men.

Time to go to work.

The wind kicked up my cape just in the nick of time, "I'm ready...Lord Frieza."

Chapter End Notes

When you realize you've still had a typo or two remaining on your first chapter this whole time and have written 11 chapters now

FUUUUUUUUU-

(Personal stuff inbound, skip if you want)

To those who don't know, I dealt with the loss of a friend recently and it sort of stopped me dead in my tracks from writing this thing for a bit. He meant a lot to me. He always gave me crap for liking Frieza as much as I did in the end, but we loved giving each other crap like that for our weird hobbies. We played lots of Halo, watched lots of Dragon Ball Z together and all that jazz. He was the Tien to my Yamcha to put it in a way, a voice of reason to my eccentricity. And now he's gone, way too early. He didn't deserve it.
Just wanted to take a moment to vent out my frustration over that fact and pay a little more respect to my late buddy. Goodbye dude, I miss you so much already.

And thanks to everyone who already learned this on my Tumblr and reached out to me to try and get me out of my funk. That sucked so bad and all of your kind words really helped out.

I want to finish this thing and I've got a ways to go. I don't want nobody thinking they can go easy on critiquing my writing just cuz' of this. Gotta lift myself back up and writing this chapter was another good way to do that. Like even if this whole fic is utter crap at least I wrote something and its been fun, and I certainly have so much more to write on Dragon Ball and other fandoms.

If I am writing a bit slowly for awhile though this is why. The next chapter is going to probably be a gigantic one in fact so it may take some time to get out anyway what with my work schedule going ham lately anyway.
Phase Two

Chapter Summary

Can the General get over cold feet and commit to training the entire troupe?

Chapter Notes

A bit of a shorter chapter. Full explanation at the end!

So I thought to myself: the heroes always get to have makeovers and different haircuts...so why don't the villains get to have some as well? (Frieza don't count, he already got himself another transformation or two recently)

Pressure and time was all I felt.

Absolutely the strangest sensation. I was dreaming, and yet I was awake. Knowing that time was passing slowly in the outside world as I found myself in this strange room, which wasn't even a room at all, was the surrealist thing yet. Who knew such a place existed on Earth?

Was it really a part of Earth being so high in the sky? Dipping itself into the heavens?

Was I tainting it with my presence?

My mind was baking in a toaster oven. Now I had all the time in the world to process the events of the last two days. To evaluate my actions and ponder my next move. To take stock of past, present and future.

I was going to be in this room for months. I knew I was going to get sick of it quick. This wasn't a room, but a slice of time and space. Fog as far as the eye could see, stretching across the horizon.

I feared the consequences of venturing forth, opting to stay close to the entrance in case I needed to get out for one reason or another.

All the time in the world.

And yet, I had no time to spare. My first pupil stood before me, short and stout and crossing his arms, eyeing me with all four peepers.

Every time he blinked his two sets in unison I figured he'd be the first to speak. We just stared at each other for the longest time.

I didn't know what to say, and neither did he.

I looked around the room despite there being nothing to look at. After a quick, unprofessional glance left and right I realized I had to say something.
I had a bit of an epiphany and brought myself to raise my voice enough to break though the eerie echoes the void brought forth, "I suppose we should take off our armor. No point in ruining our sets since we didn't bring any spares."

I made my way over to the entrance to properly place my pile of gear out of harm's way as Guldo perked up attentively, possibly not prepared for my command at all, "Oh! Right! Yes, General!"

The little guy waddled over and struggled to slide his armor over his shoulders to plop onto the ground next to mine. Neat little piles of our armor resting near the large Chamber doors.

Within moments we were stripped down to nothing but our bodysuits, boots and gloves. Guldo himself was a bit of a portly little fellow, and yet he wore his weight rather well. He didn't seem to bear any body consciousness, surprising considering his pseudo status as a bit of a punching bag from time to time.

I myself felt weird to not be wearing a cape for the moment, if not for the next few months straight. I felt like I was demoted from General to Private. I felt even more odd knowing I was wearing nothing but a body suit with my thighs nearly fully exposed, in addition to the boots and gloves.

I expected Guldo would be more worried about impressing his General. Not the case as the proud homonculus stood at attention, the back of his hands resting on his hips and his expression bearing some genuine eagerness.

This was it. I had a job to do.

Frieza and Ginyu were trusting me with the raising of their men.

To get their power levels higher, to sharpen their abilities and techniques to their sharpest, to fill in any missing gaps. To teach them how to beat the enemy, to remove any of their own weaknesses and to come out on top in the end. To win the campaign at the end of the day.

I had all the time in the world to do it, and I had no idea how to start.

At least Guldo was my first student. Not that I would ever think of him as such, but it wasn't like they were expecting any miracles for poor Guldo. If anything, I was surprised they were giving him the time of day at this point.

Guldo was even worse off than Nappa. Hilariously worse. His best attribute was ironically also a mockery of Father Time as much as this Chamber was, and it wasn't going to be enough.

And yet I was struck with a different train of thought. Maybe they were expecting results from me here as much as any other member.

Maybe the fact that Guldo was at rock bottom and had nowhere to go but up was in itself another reason I had no time to goof around. I would have to take his training seriously. I would have to take all of their training as such.

I found myself observing this creature. This stout fifth wheel in the Ginyu Force.

What was this man's lacking? I mean besides everything?

He must have seriously gotten lucky to have the honor of joining their elite. Certainly Nappa was more qualified.

Then again Nappa was a Saiyan, and he was lucky to be allowed to live considering the overlord's
predisposition against the filthy monkeys.

**Guldo has a useful talent. An incredibly useful one. Maybe it won't work on Goku and the others as powerful as they are now, maybe it could.**

His Time Freeze and mastery of telekinesis was definitely a crutch, and enough of a reason for him to join the Ginyu Force.

I simply saw nothing else to do but teach him how to fight properly and hopefully bring his power level up in the process.

I wasn't too worried about raising my own power level for now. In fact, I realized I was still in screensaver mode since before I even entered the pod for Earth.

I was dormant, a volcano waiting to erupt. An isotope barely able to contain its immense radiation.

Maybe that was for the best, it would do me no good sparring with the little guy if he can't even keep up.

Now was the time. Guldo would be a challenge, but as far as proving I could teach them a thing or two I surmised I had little to worry about. Again, maybe they weren't expecting any miracles from him anyway.

Which is exactly why I suddenly had the urge to give it my all. To show them I could do the seemingly impossible.

Frieza was watching me, even if his eyes were no longer upon me at the moment.

"All right Guldo. You have the honor of being my first student. I congratulate you on a fine display of roshambo!"

Guldo's eyes shot open and his arms straightened to his side out of respect for my sudden General's speech, straightening his back and puffing his chest to a rather impressive degree all things considered. Definite experience from being under the thumb of Captain Ginyu.

**That's it, warm up the crowd.**

**Do we really need to waste our time on this one? He won't be of much use to us once we've replaced-**

"I JUST WANT YOU.-" I managed to stop shouting as I found Guldo leaning back as if being blown away by a wind tunnel, "-to know that I'm proud to be your commander-in-chief, and have the chance to train you guys in the finer arts of fighting!"

**Finer arts of fighting?! You haven't taught a class before!**

Guldo managed to shrug off my sudden shouting and was overcome with sudden patriotism, hardly processing the moment before bowing upon instinct, "Thank you General!" he screeched with a joyous tone. "I won't let you down!"

"Allow me to-" allow me? Come on, General, phrase it like you mean it, "-I shall instruct you on proper technique, how to throw a punch, how to dodge an oncoming blow, how to take a hit!"

My diminutive green pupil was turning pale as he did his best to upkeep his own bravado. He knew what he was in for. He may not have been ready, but it didn't matter now. He had to be ready.
At least I wasn't the only one. I had a horrible feeling this was going to be a long month.

I placed my hands upon my hips, trying to raise my pride. I was going to be this little guy's teacher. I was going to be all of their teachers.

Even Frieza's.

I figured I had to start somewhere, "Well it's clear to me that you are extremely gifted in one particular area. You have amazing time manipulation and strong telekinesis. And while we should definitely improve all of that, you are sorely lacking in one area..."

Guldo's eyes widened, awaiting the answer with a degree of dignity.

"...uh...well...everything."

His new expression, or lack thereof, said it all. He began to sweat bullets in conjunction with his rising humiliation.

*You could have said that a little less harshly.*

I resumed my instructions, "Now then Guldo, I want you to hit me as hard as you can." I brought up a fist to gently smack against my own cheek to signify my intent.

My underling immediately choked on the incredibly futile prospect of this, "Ugh! G-General?!"

I smirked guiltily, "Relax, I just need to gauge your strength is all. It's not like you can really hurt me anyway, even with my power level severely lowered."

Guldo relived a bit of the sting, "As a matter of fact...I...uh..."

The silliness of it all hit me like an irate goat impacting my gut, "I uh...right. You already hit me with your best in our last encounter, huh?"

The tiny low-tier warrior transformed into a puffer fish, turning red in the face thanks to feeling his own mediocrity.

I found my natural call of duty surfacing, "Oh, hey...listen, Guldo-"

"Will all due respect, General," Guldo twitched, "if it's okay, maybe it would be better if I just let one of the others go first."

*Oh no no no no no!*

"Nonsense! We're gonna get you up to snuff even if it kills me!"

*It just might. This isn't going to be easy.*

*Or maybe I should be worried about accidentally killing him?*

Guldo folded his arms, accepting the reality of his situation, "Look, General...I don't think I got what it takes. The others might be closer to what you are looking for for this operation. I don't know what I'm even doing here anymore. Lord Frieza is putting a lot of chips down for this one, and I don't want to be responsible for its failure. Sure, I may have been useful against a bunch of clones, but against those pesky Saiyans-"

*Oh to hell with it.*
I brought up a hand to respectfully bring silence, catching the melancholy extraterrestrial off guard, "Can I tell you something Guldo?"

He blinked curiously, unsure if my next few words were going to be some kind of much needed revelation or not.

I took a deep breath, building up resistance to the embarrassment I was possibly about to bring down upon myself.

I released everything in my lungs, as well as all the poison I had been letting build up these past couple of days, and collected myself.

"Frieza put a lot of chips down for this one."

I decided now was a good time to drop the General facade, "The fact of the matter is...I have no idea what I'm doing either. I don't know if I can really teach you guys anything."

"Wh-what?!" Guldo's stubby hands found themselves squishing his own cheeks in disbelief, looking like a squirrel storing nuts for the Winter.

Wow, did they really think I was some kind of professional? Had I fooled them that much? Surely they must know I was just some lowly working class stiff before all of this!

"In case you hadn't realized, I never even got into a fight before that whole clone business. I've never led a battalion of soldiers into battle. I've never even wore a uniform before."

"B-but you make it all look so easy!"

Heh, do I?

"That's because I have all this power. Power I don't think I've ever earned. Power I'm not sure I deserve yet. I was lucky to even become the Soul that day..." I stopped to look at my gloved hands, now trembling with the burden of knowing what was in store for me these next few months, "...truth is I've been winging it pretty good so far. Maybe I'm just a natural, but I don't know for sure yet. Come on, you were that fooled? You know I'm from Earth!"

Guldo, feeling as if any professionalism between us was gone, approached me with a sense of genuine interest, "Why are you telling me this then?"

Good question actually.

"Well, maybe you and I are in the same boat. You ain't alone in this y'know. Its not like this is necessarily a secret, but I figured I gotta tell someone," I shrugged, missing the weight of the cape on my shoulders, "maybe I just needed to confess to someone. Or at least remind you I was just some filthy Earthling before all of this. You were all pretty quick to forget!"

The green wonder examined me, utilizing that surprisingly sharp mind of his to good use as he knew I wasn't revealing everything, "That's it? You realize we maybe had some idea you've never done this before. None of us thought of you in a particularly high light until recently after all. There has got to be more to it than that."

I was a deer in the headlights. This little monster was waiting for me to spill the beans, even as I failed to pretend I didn't have a can in my hand to spill beans with.

Luckily, Guldo knew better than to prod his General with a stick, wannabe or not, "Oh well,
General, you know we don't really care about any of that! We like you because you are our best hope at making everything right! Without you, maybe we just don't stand a chance."

Yeah but still.

The words surely brought me out of my own case of apprehension, even though I was supposed to be the one cheering him up as opposed to the way around.

I cleared my throat, still happy to have heard such surprisingly kind words from the gremlin, "Ah, well...thank you Guldo."

The little guy batted his own chest with both hands, proudly psyching himself up, "Well, I get what you are trying to tell me General. Don't think I don't appreciate your intention. I usually don't get as much as a pat on the back for my troubles," here comes the expected rant, "always in the back of the photo opportunities, always cast aside whenever Vegeta was around...always treated like dirt!"

Huh.

A stomp of his little foot and a series of grunts were delivered as the invader went through his unfortunate mood swings, leaving me to wonder just how damaged the poor guy really was.

It was something to work with. He clearly had anger to work out, much like Nappa. No wonder the little guy stood up for the big guy earlier.

They all had a beef with our opposition. Mainly Vegeta.

Cripes, Vegeta. Fighting him is not going to be easy. He alone could wreck us all, maybe even all at once!

In any case I finally had some clay to work with, and it was time to mold a warrior or two.

I brought a mighty fist up in victorious celebration, "Well that's it then! If we're going to get you ready in order for you and the others to finally exact your revenge, then that's what we'll use during training. Your anger!"

Guldo tried to brush off this unwelcome psychological evaluation, "I'm not...angry..."

"Relax, Guldo," I gave a coy wink and a wry grin, "and that's an order."

My underling took a big gulp and went back to attention, as if continuing to respect my faux status as some kind of military official.

"We're going to get you into tip top shape! The fact of the matter is we're just going to have to wing it with some hardcore training! And we'll use your anger. It'll drive you to complete the training. You have a lot of retribution to achieve and if you want it you'll have to work for it. We both will."

I can feel it after all. Frieza's own training coursing through my veins. The brutality of it etched across the surface of my brain like an ancient manuscript.

Maybe a bit of of the Captain as well, cuz' damn am I suddenly feeling it!

"Are you ready?! Cuz' here I come!"

I brought myself into a fighting stance, having felt like I wasted enough time. Guldo was just going to have deal with it, whether he was ready or not. And so was I.
It was time.

"Y-yes, General," the green menace put himself into his battle pose, as ready as he could be for the brutal weeks of training ahead. He was already clouded in doubt but was at least now willing to try.

That would be enough for now, enough for me.

_Time...I was going to have quite a lot of it, huh? And certainly, training with these guys was going to be instrumental in helping me hone my own skills._

_Hey, I have been doing nothing but throwing fireballs and doing some punches and kicks, maybe I should get used to utilizing Time Freeze myself! It could be handy..._

Guldo's voice stilled my train of thought, "General?"

I hummed for an answer, awaiting my pupil's own words of impending encouragement.

"...thank you. I'm glad to know our General isn't such a bad guy...er, for a _bad guy._"

_Right back at ya' slick._

_Heh, we'll get you there buddy. Just you wait._

..._huh, a good bad guy._

_I can work with that._

**That's worse than being a good guy. Even a bad one.**

_You're hurting my brain._

Nearly two hours had passed since the General and the loose end had entered the Chamber, as the sun was already well on its way past noon approaching the horizon ever closer.

The league of evil found spots of their own across the platform, Nappa in particular still keeping watch over the prisoners.

A huge gurgle of oncoming hunger erupted from the pile of captives, prompting the bewildered Saiyan to look down at them with disgust, "Hey, pipe it down whoever is doing that!"

Korin, having gotten used to his predicament, looked over his shoulder to witness Yajirobe patting his stomach, "Yeah pipe it down will ya?"

The swordless swordsman wasn't having any of it, "Oh lay off!"

The alabaster overlord smirked to himself, pleased with the woes of his hostages and amused at his boorish subordinate's annoyance at the situation. Frieza himself was content to stare at the Chamber door from across the way, positioning himself to greet anyone who would wish to emerge too soon. Anyone willing to throw away any surplus training time would certainly be _rewarded_ for the trouble, and Frieza was all too eager to be the giving type today to someone foolish enough to refuse his generosity.

The Captain stood next his gracious master like a well-trained hound. He was busy constantly scanning the platform they stood on for any discrepancies, making sure Nappa was doing his duty as
warden and the boys awaiting their entrance into the Chamber were getting in their calisthenics. There would certainly be hell to pay were anybody to start slacking off now.

Frieza was deep in the web of thought, examining the strands he mentally spun over the past week. He had poured what he equated to as an overwhelming amount of faith into this gamble.

He was already wondering if he should maybe cut a spindle or two now while he had the chance. Cut some loose ends out of the equation.

The General had made a move on him.

*Did anyone else see? Did anyone else witness their foolish death wish?*

*What could they possibly want with me that they wish to try for such schoolyard shenanigans?*

He gave a covert peer in the corner of his eye to the loyal lapdog at his side.

*Who would I have to dispose of to keep this a secret?*

His gaze swathed throughout the platform, first catching the jumping jack session over yonder.

*Gossip spreads like wildfire, and the sooner one puts it out the less damage is done to the forest. Subordinates or not, they have shown willingness to rebel once before, even if they weren't in the right state of mind.*

He eyed the pituitary gland case eyeing the caretakers of the two towers.

*I don't really need much reason to wipe out the Saiyan while I still have a chance, whether he is privy to the recent faux pas or not. He seems to be getting a bit chummy with the General after all, for all I know they are plotting together.*

*I could just kill him regardless if I so please. Who really wants another Super Saiyan running around?*

The contemplative grunt of the Captain beside him caught his attention, "Almost two hours have passed, Lord Frieza. If time really passes in the Chamber the way the General has theorized-"

Frieza did not like that dreadful word one bit, "Theorized?"

After some intense blasting of flem out of his throat, Ginyu immediately changed tactics, "...er, then Guldo should be emerging any minute now!"

The tyrant disregarded the Captain's attempt to deflect attention from his blind faith in the General and began to observe the structure before them for the millionth time since the pair had entered.

The two enormous hour glasses on either side in particular seemed beyond tacky for his tastes. Provided they didn't mess with the Chamber's functions, he would surely demolish them and bring in some specialized architects to instill a tyrant's touch.

*All these clocks. What were the ancient humans thinking? What? They couldn't keep track of time?*

*I certainly hope the Earthling subordinate has a better grasp of the concept, otherwise I'm very much looking forward to nuking this site off the face of the Earth.*

Sure enough, like clockwork, the big doors opened. The sound of its majesty creaked aloud, catching the attention of everyone present.
The stout figure broke through the bright light as the doors slowly swung ajar.

Ceasing their calisthenics, Burter was the first one to approach in eagerness as it was his turn next, "Ay Guldo! You finally done? Is it now my-"

Everyone immediately noticed the differences, they stuck out like a sore thumb. Instead of a short little blob, there was a distinct lack of blubber. They were met with a leaner, more defined physique.

He was still green, still had four eyes, and although he was out of his armor which nestled in the crook of his arm he was still the tiny little guy they knew. But the bodysuit underneath bore a much thinner frame. Still definitely some weight there, but much of it had evaporated thanks to roughly a month's worth of training.

He even had some definitive muscle on his arms as he inadvertently flexed them while refitting his armor over his shoulders.

It became clear that the Chamber worked. Even Frieza's eyes were exploding with excitement. This was real, the results spoke for themselves.

Guldo himself took a moment to make sure his armor was back on snug, and even though the armor was meant to be incredibly flexible he couldn't help but notice how much more comfy it was with the lack of strain.

Patting himself down rather nonchalantly, he noticed then the eyes prying on him, "What? What're you all looking at?"

Recoome was the first to answer, "Dude! You look, like...totally fit bruh!"

Jeice found himself shuddering, "Its a wobbly miracle!"

Burtar was beyond shocked, "Is that even our little friend?!"

Ginyu himself ran over with unbridled glee, unable to present any level of professionalism as he stopped just short of him to admire the hard work of his weakest member, "Guldo! You look stronger than ever!"

The little guy was in slight disbelief as he apparently hadn't even noticed the changes he underwent, now taking a moment to look down at his own front side and the lack thereof, "Oh...wow. I did get stronger, huh?"

"Look Frieza!" shouted Ginyu over his shoulder in the direction of the visibly elated Frieza, "It works! The passage of time really does pass within the chamber! No way could these kind of results be achieved within the span of two hours!"

"I can see that, Captain," Frieza coldly stated the obvious, "I'm not blind."

This time the Captain wasn't deterred by his master's sour response as he returned his focus to his upgraded underling, kneeling down to place a pair of strong hands upon Guldo's shoulders, "I'm proud of you Guldo! You must have went through hell in there to achieve these results!"

The Captain's encouraging words were enough to fill Guldo with some genuine pride, if not for the first time in a long time. Pride he felt he had earned for once.

Ginyu continued his gushing, "You are proof that the Chamber, provided we do our part, will be beneficial in making this plan work. At the very least, you and the rest of the Ginyu Force will be
able to pitch in in the coming battle ahead. Even if you and I can't catch up to the Saiyans, at least we can catch up to the Earthlings, the Namekian and the others!"

Guldo fought very hard against the swelling in his eyes to avoid appearing weak in front of the Lord.

His superior smirked, "At ease, soldier."

Guldo didn't know how to respond as the words failed to exit his mouth while he stood their flabbergasted thanks to hearing such praise from his distinguished leader.

Fortunately, some bearing returned for Guldo to give a hearty salute, "Yes sir! Thank you sir! I owe it all to the General! The training sucked, but it was worth it in the end!"

Nappa, the only one not hanging his mouth open at the moment, fancied rubbing his defining mustache in confusion, "Wait, where is the General?"

Ginyu stood up and peered over his shoulder as Guldo ran past to join his comrades in an impromptu celebration, "Did you already forget Saiyan? We can't just go in and out of the Chamber as we please! The General was very specific about that!"

The Saiyan decided to argue against the notion, "What if the General is wrong about that whole only two can go in and only twice a lifetime thing?"

"Well, to be fair the General has stated they don't exactly know the specifics, but we can't take that risk now, can we? After all, this is their home planet. Who better than to take advice from on the subject than an Earthling?"

Yajirobe, still trapped in an invisible box behind Nappa and laying against poor Dende, perked up. Did he say Earthling?

Nappa grunted disagreeably, "I say we're wasting time. If it doesn't actually matter, then we should all be going in there! We'd get more than just a month's worth of training time! We don't have to try as hard to play catch-up! And-"

The levy holding back Frieza's exasperation broke and in a flash Nappa found himself squaring off against a verbal tidal wave of barely contained contempt, "If you intend to waste any more of our time than you better be prepared to face the consequences if we go through all this effort and still fail our mission to retrieve the Dragon Balls, conquer Earth and finally lay waste to those troublesome gnats! Or is that too difficult for your tiny filthy monkey skull to comprehend?!"

The whole gang was caught in a snare, and one wrong move could mean death for the offender at that point. Nappa almost melted into pudding as the bones in his knees might as well have dissipated more and more with each word Frieza spewed.

"Well, threats seem to pierce that thick head of yours," the angered emperor continued, "so since you can understand threats, why don't you put yourself to good use and actually utilize what little talent you do possess and be a good little thug already?! Find out what you can from the caretakers of these facilities if you absolutely must satisfy that curiosity! Or is even that too hard for you to do?! In the meantime, we will stick to the plan...do I make myself clear?!"

Unable to boil his blood as nature intended, the mentally battered Saiyan could do nothing but let his noodles cool down before the master, instead turning his attention and impotent rage towards the poor unfortunate souls behind him.

"Hey you," he pointed at the fat man below him, receiving a death rattle from both him and his feline
mentor, "let me know when either of the other two schmucks wake up, we have some questions for them about the Chamber."

Neither prisoner answered, instead unloading their surplus of sweat to cement their obvious terror.

Frieza, finished with his threatening tirade, turned his attention back to his Captain, "Let's get on with this already Ginyu! Send in the next man in queue already! The Chamber clearly has benefit I'll admit, so let's keep the operation running smoothly shall we?!"

Ginyu didn't wish to exasperate his Lord any further than Nappa already had, intending to finish this mission with more than a positive outcome to offset Frieza's upset disposition.

He turned to face the next man to have earned their spot, "All right Burter, hop to it!" the Blue Wonder hastily snapped to attention and begin to jog in place, "One, two, three four! One two, three-

As the alien serpent made his rounds past Ginyu towards the double doors of the Chamber, Frieza returned to his previous train of thought.

Having a new body is one thing, but how much more powerful exactly is Guldo now? He wasn't exactly a juggernaut before. Even if he powered himself up tenfold he will still hardly be that much of a variable in the coming battle. Maybe enough to distract the other Earthlings, if even that."

Still, its something at least. It goes to show that the Chamber will buy us some time. The General at least has shown competence in that regard.

I did much in four months of my own training. And certainly it was enough to get Tagoma up to a certain standard.

Will one month each be enough? With the exception of Guldo, the others certainly started out more powerful than Tagoma.

Certainly if the General's training methods are as efficient as mine then they could at least get Ginyu rather close to the same end result.

...do I really want to let someone like that training my men?

...their own brand?

Having enough time to imprint themselves on Ginyu and the others?

...and vice versa?

I sat there in the fog with my legs crossed, resting and readying for the next student. The month had been a long one, but not too difficult.

I was surprised at how quickly I was getting used to the Chamber.

Certainly there was something here. Some presence trying to invade my senses. Not unlike the devil on my shoulders.

I also wondered where said devil was. Not that I was upset by that fact. Last thing I needed was for
them to peek their head in and disrupt my train of thought any further.

Maybe that was the point. After all, the devil was a part of me, and whatever affected me affected them too apparently.

Keeping me content at the last had to be part of the master plan, whatever that was. Although they were doing a poor job of that. If I had my way I'd never see them again.

In any case, the Chamber was quickly becoming my new home. This empty expanse of utter nothing with a single structure for me to exit through in case it became too much for me.

More likely it was better to stay in here to finish the job. Leaving now would only infuriate Frieza.

Guldo was a surprisingly good student. But any moment now Burter was going to enter through those doors.

On the outside it was taking mere moments to make the swap, but it had already been an hour or two within my world while the brief exchange outside took place.

Why is it taking so long?

Maybe they are admiring my handiwork? Guldo came out looking much stronger certainly. It must have been jarring for the others to say the least.

Was Frieza as impressed as the others were?

Were the others even impressed?

...

Stop thinking about it. It'll be fine.

...

...it'll be fine...

Chapter End Notes

I've completely accepted the fact that I can't power this out as fast as I was when I first started writing a couple months ago when I wasn't damn near working every day. Heck I was getting chapters out every like 3 to 4 days at first! Been distracted/letting myself get distracted a lot, but I'm definitely not bored with writing. I don't even really have a writer's block yet. I'm just lazy and/or busy with a Summer workload.

Wait until Winter though, I'll have all the time in the world to write then, in fact I'm pretty sure that is when I'll start adding all my other planned projects on a regular basis~

Although I will admit taking time with this has let me get in some more planned goofy ideas for the rest of this thing in regards to filler and/or cool moments of my own.

I intended to just release one big chapter to cover the entire Chamber Arc but its just taking too damn long to even get this little bit I got out now so I'm gonna break it down
even further...I keep adding chapters to this damn thing @w@ but hey that's cool that
just means I get to work on it longer! :D I'm using the rest of this fic to learn how to
write at this point. This is my first venture after all and its quite the eye opener. Its nice
to know I'm not completely incompetent at it and at the same time I'm learning where all
my problems lie.

Things are going to continue to be slow for now, I'm planning a move in the next couple
weeks! Finally leaving my longtime homestead to go live with a good friend of mine
who offered me a roommate position <3
The training continues in the Hyperbolic Time Chamber.

Can the General keep their sanity waiting day after day for the devil to reappear? Or will waiting to reunite with their living demon break them instead?

WARNING: going into shipping territory...but with a certain dynamic duo <3 if its not a ship you approve of, feel free to stop reading. You wouldn't hurt my feelings one damn bit. If you ship em' any other way than more power to ya'!

Also this chapter is short in comparison, and the next few will be as well. It'll just be easier for me that way.

The Earthen sun was beginning to retire for the day, already setting its sights on the horizon. A celestial display Frieza had not yet seen before on this particular trip to the third rock, his fourth trip no less. Not that it particularly mattered to the galactic traveler.

He'd seen dozens of stars, some worshiped by the hapless indigenous populations of the many planets under his thumb as if the gargantuan glowing balls in their skies were in some way their god. He always relished correcting them there. For he was the only deity worth worshiping in the cosmos.

Some suns were considered objects of romanticism to some of the communities dotting the constellations. A feeble notion he thought, its not like you could literally pluck it out of the sky and hand it over to your beloved as some kind of gift like some silly flora. He wondered if the General was foolish enough to try to deliver him the yellow dwarf at this point.

Frieza merely basked in the heat, warming his cold-blooded hide the past few hours and delivering him some much needed relaxation from this whole trying endeavor.

Something was bothering him, and he couldn't quite put his finger on it.

Maybe it was the fact that the sky was so boringly blue. Maybe it was the overwhelming amount of dirt the planet was covered in, even if he were miles above it at the moment. It was reminding him of his time on Namek. Nothing but plateaus and green seas back in those days. At least Cajo Two held some measure of beauty despite its repetitive nature.

Meanwhile, Earth was just so very boring to him. At least there were different climates and biospheres. Maybe some value to be had in terms of resources, but its a wonder the Earthlings hadn't already stripped them bare and weren't already relying on equestrian-drawn carriages and geode-powered radios thanks to overconsumption.
What does the Earthling see in this planet so much? Dragon Balls aside. I'll bet they have never even seen a Dragon Ball before. They rely too much on second-hand rumor, from Goku and the others no less.

Still, what a turn of events that would be if it turned out that way. To know that their knowledge imparted to their beloved Earthling friend would become their detriment.

Oh, it would all be worth it just for that moment. To see the look on their faces knowing they trusted the wrong person. To see their hopes dashed. To know their supposed ally had in fact betrayed them.

I have to remind myself that the Earthling did voluntarily take my offer of servitude.

But what's to say this isn't all some kind of act? Goku certainly seems to have knack for taming even the most stalwart rivals over to his own cause. Just look at Vegeta. A family? Perish the thought. Probably wears pink when no one is looking.

Frieza had too much time on his hands. Nothing to do but to stand around for hours until it was his turn to enter the Chamber, nothing to do until then but collect his thoughts.

Maybe I'm overthinking it just this once. Its not every day you have someone so willing to join your cause for reasons other than fear and survival. My intimidation tactics have been entirely unnecessary to keep this one in line.

I wish I had brought my chair. Maybe a glass or two. All the more rewarding once we return for celebration I suppose.

Focus, Frieza. You have quite the lengthy road ahead of you. All this waiting around is starting to get to you. Don't allow it to sullen your poise now.

It's going to be a long, dreadful night.

...what is it about this Earthling and their foolish attempts to woo me? What's in it for them? They must know if I really wanted them, I could just take them!

I don't know whether to strangle them for their idiocy or pat them on the head for their bravery.

...what do I see in them? They don't even seem to know what they are doing!

Does the General really think they can gain my favor as easily as the rest of my subjects?

What do they see in my newest asset anyway? Middlemen are supposed to do all the work for me, but they seem to be getting a little too comfortable with the Earthling.

Frieza took further stock on the possible situation brewing in his subconscious with yet another quick survey of his strike team.

The gang were still busy gathering around the first test subject well after Burter had replaced him, still admiring that this was in fact their friend and he was ready to do his part in the upcoming struggle.

Recoome in particular was beaming with pride for his littlest squadmate, hunched over with genuine
camaraderie, "I'll bet you can do like...a million squats bruh! You and I should hit the gym sometime
and show me what you got!"

Little green certainly had little idea what to do with all this newfound attention and fame, the kind he
had been seeking for eternity now. He even had his overlord's attention, even if for just a moment.
Finally, being a member of the Ginyu Force was starting to pay off in a way that mattered to him.

Maybe his ego was starting to get the best of him, "Well, I certainly hope you can keep up with me
Recoome."

Jeice burst with amusement, "Oh man! He bloody murdered ya' there mate!"

"Oh pipe down, Jeice," Recoome smirked at his red companion, before returning his attention to
Guldo, "like, I'm proud of ya' and all little buddy, but don't think for a moment that you got what it
takes to stand with the big boys now!"

The Captain was starting to get irritated with Recoome's insistence on disturbing the peace for the
sake of short-term fun, "Don't you be starting any trouble now Recoome!"

Carrot top stood upright to peer at his superior officers, first proudly resting upon his hips, "But
Captain! How do we know the training in there even worked? Like, for all we know, Guldo just
went on a diet or something. Besides, he asked for it!"

Guldo screeched, "I'll have you know I worked my ass off in there! It was brutal! Trust me, you ain't
gonna like it one bit!"

Recoome bellowed, "Oh trust me dude if you can take it than so can I!"

"You don't understand, it was horrible in there," the green alien began to relive some of the horrors
he had gone through in the Chamber, remembering one factor in particular, "our General...there is
something about em'. They got like this on and off switch! One second, they are as friendly as we all
remember-"

Something about the use of that word that forced Frieza's brow to rise in a mix of disgust and
confusion, "-and the next minute they are like...this completely different person that puts you through
hell!"

It was Nappa who shuddered next, waitaminute...so its not just me that thinks that?

Ginyu threw in his two cents, "What? That doesn't sound like our General at all. They may be
powerful, but the Earthling is too docile to be like that. Maybe you are just still shocked. It must have
been rough in there regardless of your experience. The results clearly speaks for itself."

Recoome didn't give Guldo a chance to explain further, "We haven't even seen any results on
this hypothesis."

Jeice sidled up next to Recoome, "Uh, Recoome pal...not sure that's the proper use of that wor-"

Carrot top flexed his arms like a bodybuilder in exhibition, "I say Guldo shows me what he's got! If
he's as tough as he says he is, what's wrong with a little sparring then?"

The Captain pulled rank with a pair of crossed, flexing arms of his own, "Recoome! Stand down,
soldier! That's an or-"

Frieza's rank pulled further, "No," his aggressively lavender voice caused everyone to cast silence, "I
believe the philistine brute is onto something. I want to see the fruits of the General's labour for myself. Otherwise, what's the point of committing to the battle only to find ourselves out-manned and outgunned once more?"

The whole cast, conscious prisoners included, could do nothing but stare at Frieza awkwardly. Recoome himself seemed to utterly regret his decision to loud mouth off, now that he had gained the attention of his demanding lord.

The Captain, still at Frieza's side, was the first to speak, "B-but Lord Frieza! With all due respect, if we engage in battle upon this platform, won't we attract the attention of the Earthen defenders?"

"While I'm glad to see you concerned with upholding protocol, I doubt the power levels of either of them will be enough to catch their ire," Frieza presented his approving hand outward towards the grudge match brewing before him, "proceed. Show me why I should still have you around for the battle ahead, Guldo."

Guldo felt as if he were struck with a bucket of ice cold water, washing over him and freezing his nerves. At least he got some sympathy from his instigator in the form of a concerned glance, as Recoome suddenly feared he just got Guldo in hot water should he be unable to perform. He had no real notion of defeat against Guldo of all people.

The little guy was counting on that.

Recoome did his best to shrug off his worry, bouncing it off with a wry grin and a pair of proud, thick arms resting upon his hips once more, "Well then Guldo, gimme your best shot! I'll even let you get the first punch."

It was enough that Recoome re-enacted what the General had done inside the Chamber, a mock punch to his own cheek in invitation to test his meddle.

Jeice took a step forward, "Oh come on Recoome, I doubt he's gotten that strong. Can't we give him a break? I'm sure his Time Freeze will still be handy."

Recoome shot a feces-consuming grin at his red comrade, "What? I'm giving him the first blow! He's got a handicap and everything! Its not like he can-"

Guldo didn't hesitate, as he launched himself up in an immediate, almost desperate flash with a tiny gloved fist careening towards victory. It met Recoome's chin before the big guy had any time to properly react, and a loud crunching sound reverberated throughout the platform.

Jeice reeled back from the horror show as Guldo hovered in the air mere feet away from his as Recoome's mass was doing flips in the air, before plopping down onto the platform with an ungraceful landing. On his back, Recoome found his hands reaching for his face, rubbing the cheeks in pain as he whined out his woes hysterically.

Guldo landed on one foot first, bracing himself before gently following suite with the other and resting his arms upon his sides. His grin said it all.

"I don't need a handicap, Recoome."

Nappa, having watched the whole thing expecting a much different outcome, had already let his jaw hit the floor. Guldo just flattened Recoome. He had to repeat those words to himself in a vain attempt to make it real.

Frieza and Ginyu were spectating in awe, certainly they shared Nappa's sentiments if not to the same
The Captain himself assessed as he found his arms reaching for nothing in front of him, "I-Incredible! Guldo has reached a whole new level after all!"

Jeice's eyes exploded with the utter ridiculousness of it all, egg whites straining at the utter horror of the situation, "Y-you mean...right this very moment...Guldo is _stronger than us_?!

The little guy, no longer feeling so little, let out a huff as if he had just unloaded the world off of his shoulders, all before taking a peek at Jeice, whom was not-so-subtly backing away from the chaos.

The tyrant meanwhile was amused, but unimpressed.

_So what? Guldo was as low it got in my army. He had nowhere to go but up. Its a miracle he was even in the Ginyu Force to begin with._

His immediate subordinate turned to face his master and further his assessment, "Lord Frieza! Its just as the General has theorized! If Guldo was able to surpass my elite, think of where the General's training can take the rest of us!"

_I suppose that's a pleasant prospect. But results speak louder than words._

..._do I really want this Earthling training my men?_

"...very well. I have deemed this to definitively _not_ be a waste of our time," Frieza decreed, much to the smiling Captain's enthusiasm, "and have someone help Recoome back to his feet, he's next in line and I don't want this pathetic _conga line_ to slow down..."
one...when we're done," with a hint of fun, "...and chocolate parfaits!"

The tall speedster fought through the sweat engulfing his proud expression.

*Gotta promise the troops some kind of reward for their hard work.*

The speedster made an effort to stand at attention, the kind of attention any of them would give to the Captain, or even the Lord himself.

"General," he exclaimed, hands at his side out of respect, "request permission for an evaluation!"

**Evaluation eh?**

I cleared my throat and poised myself, "Well for starters, you are making excellent progress! Your speed has increased dramatically, your power level seems to be rising, and I've noticed improvement in your form. All good!"

The corner's of my pupil's mouth curled and the rubies resting in his sockets shined brightly.

I decided to begin a pace, circling my protege, "However, you could go even further. I was thinking before you put your armor back on...you remove the shoulder pads. You'll become even more aerodynamic that way."

Burter's expression exploded with all sorts of contortions to his features, as if he had just heard unspeakable blasphemy, "The *pauldrons*?! G-general! With a-all due respect, t-that's the best part of our armor! Its our pride," Burter puffed himself up, rather impressively I would admit, "a symbol that we support Lord Frieza and his empire one-hundred percent!"

I found myself behind Burter in my pace, "I'd argue that results supports the empire more, wouldn't you agree?"

My cobalt debate partner couldn't argue with that logic, "W-well-

I was circling back to his front, "Exactly, when you have a moment remove the pauldrons," *some flattery should help,* "show off them guns of yours some more."

Burter blushed beyond his beautiful blue mug, "Oh I guess-err I mean yes General!"

I parked myself in front of him once more, looking up at the insanely tall alien, another fact I still couldn't wrap my head around.

This tall, powerful extraterrestrial...and I was his superior. In more than just an official capacity.

I still felt like I cheated the system, even if it wasn't exactly my fault. I was an Earthling, a lowly nothing. And here I was training the elite forces of someone bigger and badder than me. The other Earthlings I had seen; Krillin, Yamcha, Tien...they weren't exactly powerhouses. A little Earthling blood didn't stop Gohan...or Cell for that horrible matter, from being the opposite apparently, but for the most part being pure human wasn't going to do you any favors against these monsters.

*So what made me so special?*

...

*probably nothing.*

...oh...its you...
...maybe...so why do I deserve this then?

*Maybe this isn't a reward. Maybe this is your punishment.*

*Like get out of here, will ya'?!*

Burter was perking up, apparently concerned, "Uh...General?"

I shook my head, hoping the devil was now flapping away like a startled bird, "All right! Let us continue our training!"

My tall student huffed, not looking forward to further bruising.

*Oh you know what? Maybe he could use a break.*

I raised my hand, "Actually, take off the rest of the day...or whatever you would call it in here. Gotta let the body get its rest after all."

The immediate happiness emitting from my student was enough to recharge myself, "Thank you so much, General!" I may not have been physically tired, but mentally I was on my way to empty.

Burter proceeded to squat into a comfortable kneel, letting out a satisfying groan as he relieved his aching joints, before leaning back and plopping onto his rump to let the legs stretch out.

I went ahead and sat across from him, deciding to give myself a break while I was at it, "Thanks for the dining lessons."

His cheeks become even more purple, complementing the bruising all over.

I was deep in my own thought, I hadn't even realized that Burter was contemplating a question on his mind.

"Uh, General?" Burter hissed softly, "can I...can I ask you something?"

I peered in his direction, awaiting his inquisition with an alchemy of apprehension and anxiety.

"Do you...think..."

 Uh oh, here it comes...

*I can't wait to hear this.*

"...do you think Jeice likes me?"

I choked on nothing as I found myself clearing my throat with a mighty, heaving series of violent coughs. I was unable to notice until it was too late that my actions had caused Burter to second guess his question as he panicked, "I-I-I just pretend you didn't hear that! I'm so sorry General I just figured-"

*Figured because you are such a happy little human with no violent tendencies-*

"Burter! Relax! I-I just didn't expect such a question from you!"

AREYOUKIDDINGMEBURTERLIKESJEICE THATISSOSWEET IDON'TKNOWWHATTO DOWITHITA.

I cleared my throat one last time, appreciating the situation as I formulated my opinion...and
hopefully some advice.

"It's just...I didn't see that coming! I mean I understand you two are a team but...I didn't realize..."

Burter adopted a guilty look in his eyes, "Being a member of the Frieza Force can be a bit stressful. Sometimes I wonder if I shouldn't have someone alongside me for the ride. Someone who can help me get through it all. I know he's like, technically my superior...being the Captain's right hand and all..."

I observed my student for a second, this non-human that has placed his future in my hands. All flustered and unprofessional, and yet trusting me enough to be like that around me.

It was then that it hit me.

They aren't even afraid of you.

Training the boots wasn't my real worry...

"...but him and I have been good friends for awhile now. We always look out for each other!"

...It was going to be training underneath the heel.

"And...I'm wondering if maybe I got a shot with a guy like him."

I took a deep breath, letting out my newfound anxiety before replying with my half-cocked answer, or rather my stalling question, "Well, what do you like about him?"

His shining rubies glistened with enthusiasm and his fangs bared with utter jubilation, which was enough to say it all well before he uttered a single word, "What is there to not like about him! His beautiful red features, his exquisite white hair, that lovely way he talks! Not to mention, an accomplished soldier, a powerful fighter...and through it all, he just...gets me!"

...does Frieza see anything in me?

Burter leaned in, completely at ease with me at this point, "...so...you got any advice?"

...the way I see whatever I see in him?

At that moment, I remembered my previous conversation with Guldo.

"Can I ask you something first?" I spoke, catching the attention of the relaxing serpent.

"Anything, General!" he lit up, eager to please his General.

His Earthling General.

I took another, deeper breath, trying to breach through the flem I had inadvertently created earlier.

You are not seriously going to ask him that are you?

"...what do you think about my chances...with..."

Burter became a bundle of dynamite with its fuse lit, awaiting the trail to reach the powder keg. For a second there, I was sure he even knew exactly who I was talking about before I dropped that name. The name I was having the hardest time in the world dropping.
Dropping such a name in the wrong context was an immediate guillotine dropping on my neck. I felt the back my neck already slicing across from side to side, as if I was losing my head.

**You might as well have lost your head! You seriously going to-**

"...with...F-Frieza?"

As if he immediately understood what had happened to me not mere moments ago, now it was Burter's turn to choke on a potato, "*L-LORD F-FRIEZA?!*" he barely managed to gurgle out as he scurried back in instinct before standing up on his feet once more in utter shock.

**Guess he's not that sore.**

I decided to keep putting coal into this furnace I had fashioned, wishing for the train to progress with the hope that it will reach a destination deemed safe, "I can't explain it. Ever since I met him, he's changed my life. Even though we didn't hit it off right away, he treated me like I was somebody in the end...during that whole clone business."

Burter brought his hands up to his face, before shifting them to cover his mouth.

*Oh my he is giddy about this isn't he?*

"You and Lord Frieza?!!"

I swallowed my anxiety, readying to shovel more into my furnace at the risk of derailing the locomotive, as my eyes closed to brace myself for the finalization of my intent, "...yes."

Burter lowered his hands to rub his chin in thought, taking my words seriously for a moment, "...I don't know...I don't think anyone has ever tried to go for Frieza in a romantic sense."

Still sitting, I looked up at the gargantuan alien with perplexity, "...haven't you or anyone else noticed my previous attempts?"

"Not really. Usually everyone acts like that around Lord Frieza."

*Son of a-

*Heh heh, see? You ain't special. You've done nothing Frieza hasn't already seen hundreds of times before.*

No...no you're wrong. Frieza feels something for me to. He has to. There is something there! He's just too busy playing mob boss in front of his men to do anything about it!

**Stop kidding yourself. Will you think about what I said already?**

"Is something wrong?" Burter asked, sincere in his concern. Or at least as sincere as a goon of Frieza could be.

...

...*results are what Frieza wants.*

...*so results are what I'll give him.*

I stood up, with a brand new idea to elevate Burter even further.
Frieza is counting on me for all the knowledge I possess of the opposition.

...well I got one all right.

Come on...what could you possibly have that could make Burter here valuable enough for the upcoming fight?

...

...oh...I have to admit, that's pretty good.

They aren't my troops...they are Frieza...

I'll admit, you got good ideas, but you'll see it our way sooner or later...

"Let's not talk about this for now," I asked, standing up to try and reclaim some lost dignity, "I have a lesson for you actually."

Burter sighed, disappointed but unwilling to argue, "O-okay. But...you sure you are all right?"

"Well, it's nice to know you think highly of my intent to woo our overlord, so that's comforting," I admitted, crossing my arms like a confident commander, "but we can talk about that some other time. Let's get back to you..."

The curious cobalt contender pointed a finger at himself, "...you mean, about me and Jeice?" his face turned red yet again, blending all the colors into a pleasant summer berry smoothie.

"I'm going to teach you a new pose..."

The bundle of dynamite finally set off, and he couldn't help but flap like a bird, with the energy of an excited child opening birthday presents, "A new pose?! From you?! I'm so honored, General!" he gave me a curt bow, arms locked on either side against himself as he did so.

"Yeah...one you and Jeice will learn together. I'll teach you one half of it, and then him the other. It'll make you even more powerful."

"A pose that makes me powerful? Like...actually more powerful?"

I extended both my arms to the right at a perfect ninety degree angle, my right arm extending out completely and my left crossing my chest in pursuit of the right.

"Now...pay attention closely...you don't want to mess this up..."

Chapter End Notes

Never before would I ever thought I'd say this about myself, but I felt like the last chapter was total garbage XD I felt I had to compensate for that somehow. Even if y'all enjoyed it, I wasn't very happy with how it turned out. Had way more fun at getting creative trying to write this chapter~~

Yes that was an Ace Combat reference if ya' caught it.
Thank you all for being patient if you continue looking forward to my next chapters! :w; it means a lot to me~
I just wanted to update everyone based on all the comments I've been getting lately with regards to lack of progress. I have had a whirlwind of life going on, both good and bad, so I've just been dealing with that...and for the most part I've been creatively too dead to write. But your comments have been noticed and I just want you all to know that I'm hoping to find the inspiration to come back and write more of this. I still had a lot in mind for this and how it was going to end and then some. I plan to make a move in a couple months. If I find the time to write before or after, I will make announcements.

Sincerely, the author

PS, it means to much to me that even after I sort of dropped the ball here you guys still find my writing fascinating ;w; thank you all so much! <3

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!