**Truer Than Love**

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**Truer Than Love**

by [MariekoWest](http://archiveofourown.org/users/MariekoWest)

**Summary**

It's Piccolo’s 18th birthday. Gohan finally makes his lifelong feelings for his best friend and mentor known, and felt. Along with a very special present that will change the Namek’s life forever. (Continues where *[Eyes Only For You]* left off.) [4th Revision 2019/05/09]

**Notes**

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**Map of DRAGONBALL(☆)RETRO**

**Legend:**

[!!] Has *very* important related events to current story
As with all my stories: **Headcanons Abound** (which is kind of a given by now). You might want to read "**Eyes Only For You**" before this (if you haven't already), because it will shed better light on the events that are about to take place here. This is a belated offering for Piccolo-san’s hatchday of 2016 (May 9th), and an advance offering as well, for Gohan-kun's birthday (which based on my headcanon date is) also this month. Cheers! ♥

See the end of the work for more notes.
Gohan and Piccolo spend their birthdays together for the first time.

Sometime during the peaceful interlude that came after Freeza’s defeat; in that elusive transition between spring and summer…

Son Gohan Jr just turned six years old. And as the humble party of three at the Son Household came to an end, he quietly snuck out to meet someone…

“‘Happy Birthday’, is what I believe you Earthfolk say.”

A gift-wrapped package “poof”-ed out of nowhere and landed on the soft grass with a hefty thud. Gohan’s eyes grew wide with unbridled excitement. But it wasn’t because of the gift…

Magic was something that never failed to captivate him; that was something that only Piccolo could do. No matter how strong Saiyajins were or how much they trained, they could never move objects with their minds – let alone make things appear out of thin air the way his Namek friend did.

Laughing, Gohan pounced on Piccolo who had been levitating in his usual lotus posture and
hooked his arms around that strong neck. Purple-tinged green cheeks were nuzzled against and kissed. A few of those kisses unintentionally strayed and landed on the corner of shiny mauve-stained green lips. Piccolo’s cheeks tinted a shade darker, though he said nothing.

“*Doumo arigatou gozaimasu, Piccolo-san!”* Gohan chirped, hopping down from his perch on the Namek’s lap to sit on the ground and inspect his “magical” gift, the giggles unbroken.

The Earth-born Namek wanted to laugh too, as unreservedly as his little friend. He settled for a smile instead. Even if for the life of him, the heat blossoming in his chest felt like it was going to melt him whole…

He never expected the boy to get so worked up over something so trivial. But then again, Earthlings did tend to get excited over the silliest things. He remembered the first thing he saw the day he emerged from his egg…

*A family of three, celebrating with cake and presents for their offspring.*

He didn’t know why he found the sight so vexing then, that he barged in and terrorized the humans as he saw fit.

Gohan had already been given cake, food, and presents earlier that day courtesy of his mother and grandfather in one of those so-called “parties” that Earth’s inhabitants were so fond of – that much Piccolo knew. Since he couldn’t conjure edible things yet, food wasn’t an option. The gift he had prepared was the only thing he was confident enough to go with.

The boy often came to see him mid-afternoon, several hours before the sun began to set. He would excuse himself from the lunch table, saying he needed to study and that he didn’t wish to be disturbed. *It wasn’t exactly a lie.* He would, in fact, be studying; just not in his room for the most part… In the woods or by the waterfall, that’s where he would usually be. Simply put: *wherever Piccolo was situated meditating for that day.*

Chi-chi would always be too busy cleaning up, washing so many dishes and doing other household tasks– that it would be nightfall by the time she completed all of her chores…

As long as Gohan was back in time for dinner, his absences (often) went unnoticed.

Gohan was opening his present very carefully now with almost heart-stopping precision. Piccolo’s ears twitched in curiosity. The boy simply ripped the wrappers off his gifts earlier at his party… *Why was he being so meticulous now?*

“Why don’t you just rip it open?” Piccolo finally blurted out.

“Oh no,” Gohan muttered, still transfixed on the task of unwrapping his present with as little injury to the simple brown paper as possible. It wasn’t taped up like conventional gift-wrapped presents of Earth but folded magically in on itself in such an intricately seamless way that it impeccably concealed the object within; it was like unwrapping a puzzle.

“If you like the wrapper that much, I can easily make you one that’s still perfectly intact,” Piccolo offered, doing his best to mask his impatience. It was the first time he actually gave this human ritual of ‘present-giving’ serious thought and he was very anxious to see how it was going to be received.

Gohan looked up from the almost entirely unwrapped present, a big smile on his face, cheeks
flushed pink. “I want to keep this wrapper as a memento! Piccolo-san’s gift is special and…” The young demi-Saiyajin trailed off as his trembling fingers finally extracted his prize from the nest of creased paper and brought it up to eye level…

It was a parchment-bound sheaf, clearly a tome—a manuscript of some sort—with unfamiliar writing not of any language he knew (well, not until recently). A buzzing energy sparked through his fingers where the aged material touched him; heart pattering like a furious barrage of raindrops within the confines of his chest from simply being in contact with it. He forgot to breathe for some subdued seconds, unable to pry his eyes from the object as it continuously magnetized him…

Finally, he looked up to find his mentor’s expectant face—which quickly turned to worry when their eyes met.

“Gohan?”

“*Hontou ni arigatou gozaimasu, Piccolo-san!!*”

“*Hai…*?” Gohan gasped, not realizing right away that his cheeks were wet and his vision blurry on the edges.

“What’s wrong?” Piccolo’s normally composed tone was riddled with concern.

“T-this is… a book about… about Nameks… isn’t it? This is… very important to you…” Gohan murmured, voice quaking.

Piccolo tried to dismiss the fuss over it, confused by the boy’s reaction. Gohan seemed to like his gift but… He wanted to be sure…

Dropping to the ground, he got on one knee and faced the boy. “Do you like it?”

“I love it! I’m so happy!” The little halfbreed had already reattached himself to Piccolo’s midsection for another brief but emphatic embrace. “*Hontou ni arigatou gozaimasu, Piccolo-san!!*”

“Well,” Piccolo huffed, secretly pleased. “You’re always asking me so many questions about Nameks! That should be able to answer you better than I ever could; keep you preoccupied for a while and grant me a decent amount of undisrupted meditation!”

Gohan chuckled as Piccolo gave him an impish grin with the jest.

He brought the book to his chest and hugged it tightly. The tears kept coming even if he didn’t understand exactly why he was so moved. It was as though his soul understood the weight of the treasure entrusted to him even if his mind has yet to gain the wisdom required to fathom it. Somehow, he just knew…

*Piccolo had just given him something so precious—a piece of his physical soul!*

More fits of irrepressible sobs and laughter gripped his tiny frame. His heart was bursting from so much happiness and gratitude – he wanted to repay Piccolo somehow—make him happy too!

“Ne, *Piccolo-ojisan, when is your birthday*?”

“I do not have one.”

“That’s impossible! Everyone who’s ever lived has a birthday. When were you born?”

“I did not think it important a detail to remember what exact date it was when I hatched from that
egg… All I know is that it was ten years ago.”

“Ten years ago??” Gohan cried, jumping to his feet. “I thought you were as old as my father! You’re just a kid like me!”

A vein twitched in Piccolo’s temple, not particularly flattered by the use of the word “kid”; but he bit back a growl of annoyance and stated as grown-up-esque as he could muster:

“I aged myself.”

“I see… That sounds fun! I wish I could do that too…”

“I only did it because I had no choice. It’s not as fun as you might think.”

“Then, why don’t you reverse the process?”

“It’s not that simple.”

“But Piccolo-san’s magic is uhh-mazing! I’m sure there is nothing you can’t do if you really put your mind to it!”

Piccolo fixed the raven-haired boy with a scrutinizing stare. The child’s acuteness of mind and pureness of heart never failed to surprise him. Sometimes Gohan seemed to know more about him than he did himself. While he felt that his friend’s exaltation for him was often out of proportion, he had grown accustomed to being showered with the boy’s praises—even allowed himself to be flattered every now and then.

“Retrogression spells can be easily accomplished, if only for a limited period of time.”

Gohan’s eyes twinkled as a small pouch appeared and landed on his lap.

“Transfiguration type magic is one of the most complicated. Which is why I use magic bean pots to experiment first. I cast a spell on a pot filled with seeds that automatically reverse magic after a given time. When the seeds have soaked up the magic, they will mature. I can then ingest it to safely check if the spell works before actually casting it.”

“Wow…!”

“I’ve tried aggrandisement, transmogrification, reconfiguration, transmutation, and several others…”

All the while Gohan was excitedly rummaging through the different coloured beans. “Hey! This one looks like a senzu!” he declared, holding up a sickly-green coloured bean.

“That is a senzu.”

“Oh.” Gohan dug inside the pouch once more and fished out a shiny cobalt blue bean.

“That’s for permutation, look for the red-brick coloured one.”

When Gohan had found it (though he was very curious as to what all the other coloured beans did), he slipped it into his pocket and beamed up brightly at his green friend whose lips tugged upward at one corner in response.

“Use that wisely. Don’t use it until you have amply aged, otherwise you will be reverted to infancy.”
Gohan gave a spry nod. “I’m really happy that we’re almost the same age, Piccolo-san! That means we can be special friends!”

“*Special friends…?*”

“Yes. We’re already bestest friends, now we can be bestest special friends!”

Piccolo’s brows furrowed, not quite comprehending.

“You need to have a birthday too, Piccolo-san! How about sharing mine? That way we can always celebrate it together!” Gohan looked thrilled at the prospect but then after some consideration added, “Though since you’re older than me by four years, maybe your birthday should come earlier! A day, no—maybe two weeks apart? Yeah! That way, we can look forward to celebrating our birthdays at the same time, twice!”

“I really don’t think that will be necessary…”

“It’s settled then! Starting next year we’ll celebrate your birthday before mine! But for now, let’s celebrate your birthday today too!”

“It really is of no consequence to me…”

“It is to me!” Gohan insisted as he dug into his knapsack and proffered a book about insects. “I wasn’t able to prepare anything for you since I didn’t know… But this is my very first and most favourite book. I want you to have it, Piccolo-san!”

It’s true that in all ten years of his existence, Piccolo has never been given anything out of goodwill, let alone friendship…

And so, even if he was doing his best to act like the grown-up that he prided himself to be, he didn’t know why as he took what was to be his very first present from his *bestest special friend*— he was feeling a most peculiar twinge in his heart that he couldn’t yet describe.

“Happy Birthday, Piccolo-san!”

End of Prologue.
Continued in Part 1: “First Date & Flower Beds” …

Chapter End Notes

*Doumo/(Hontou ni) arigatou gozaimasu – Thank you very much.*

*Piccolo-ojisan – In this context, means “mister” not “uncle”. Gohan drops this later after learning his real age.*
First Date & Flower Beds

Chapter Summary

Gohan has prepared something very special. After all, it wasn't just Piccolo's 18th birthday, but quite possibly– also their very first date. (Hint: It's lemony.)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes


Dearest Gohan,

You are the reason I have come to love the sunrise.

You are the reason I see it at all.

I am not sure I understand everything there is to understand about love, but I am certain there is no one else in the world I have felt it for.

I love you. I always have.

Thank you for letting me love you. And thank you for loving me.

Yours truly,
Piccolo

- 17-year-old Piccolo Daimaoh Jr’s response to Gohan’s letter (May 770)

Four years after Cell had been defeated…

Piccolo Daimaoh Jr waited with bated breath at the Kami no Shinden. His chest swelled as his friend’s Ki steadily closed in and finally entered his field of vision. Before he could even open his mouth in greeting, Gohan was already bounding for him, satchel discarded to one side and both arms wrapped fiercely around his midsection.

“Piccolo-sama…!!! Piccolo-sama, I missed you so much!!!”

The demi-Saiyajin was a young man of fifteen now; and perhaps it was the two-year absence that brought about the passionate sentimental outpour, but it has been a long time since Piccolo had been made to feel Gohan’s affection this way… He had almost forgotten how the boy made his heart want to catapult itself out of his chest.

“Gohan. I missed you too.”

That soothing deep rumble that was so familiar to him plucked at Gohan’s soul, making him grab
onto the Namek fiercer than ever. *Kamisama, how he missed that voice! Just being near Piccolo this way – feeling him speak, feeling him breathe! It was all so surreal all of a sudden, like he had taken everything about the man for granted all his life. But now, as he deeply inhaled that comforting scent that he missed terribly, finally! after two long years…*

*All was starting to feel right again with his world.*

Gohan looked up at his friend beaming brightly, breathless with uncontainable happiness and cheeks blooming roses.

‘*Tadaima.*’

‘*Okaerinasai,*’ Piccolo returned warmly into their mental link.

That singular elusive lopsided smirk ghosting over the Earth-born Namek’s lips once again reminded Gohan of how rowdy the butterflies residing in his stomach could get (said butterflies have been in hibernation for most of his two-year hiatus from Piccolo). He leaned back into his companion’s chest, sighing in contentment, secretly wishing time would stop.

The peaceful silence stretched on with only the sound of the rogue breeze in the distance and the rustling of leaves to compliment it. Gohan, pacified within unimposing arms, listening to Piccolo’s trenchant heartbeat; and Piccolo, content to be trapped in Gohan’s possessive embrace; both basking in the familiar steadfast vibrations of each other’s Ki. They stayed that way for some minutes more—they knew they had so much to make up for. Now that the Earth was relatively at peace, they had time on their side.

‘*Ne, Piccolo-san,*” Gohan finally spoke up. “I got taller, haven’t I?”

“A lot taller.”

The half-Saiyajin chuckled heartily; but pouted the next second. “You’re still taller than me.”

“I will always be taller than most everyone.”

“I’m still growing!” Gohan found imperative to point out (utterly failing to sound not sulky).

‘*Aa.*”

Piccolo never really understood the boy’s obsession to gain on his height, but he humoured him nevertheless. It was kind of cute, in a silly childlike way. Then again, he secretly found everything that Gohan did endearing (though HFIL would freeze over before he readily admitted it).

“I’m really glad it’s not just Piccolo-san’s obi that I can reach now.” Gohan shifted, fidgeting a bit. “I-I’ve waited so long for this day…”

Piccolo peered down at him, unsure if they were still on the same topic. But he wasn’t kept in the dark for long…

Taking a deep breath, Gohan tiptoed as high as he could manage, reaching up to hook his arms around Piccolo’s shoulders (feeling a stab of frustration that he still needed to crane his neck) to plant a chaste kiss—lips lingering longer than intended—upon the other’s cheek. The unmistakable colour spreading across his mentor’s cheeks was noteworthy (not to mention unbearably cute).

“The day I would be tall enough to do that…” Gohan breathed, “…without hovering.”
It was a simple and fairly innocent gesture. Yet his pulse was skyrocketing, his cheeks burned bright and his lips buzzed with static; even his lungs were refusing to release the air it had taken in. Gohan pushed his breath out in a careful protracted puff in an effort to calm his nerves.

It’s true whenever Piccolo’s so-called birthday or “hatchday” came about, the Namek would be extra lenient and Gohan usually got away with more than what his master already allowed him—which was no small feat considering this was Piccolo, after all.

However, this year was promising to be very different from all past birthdays they’ve celebrated together. With everything that has happened between them... The poems, the *letters... And of course, there were the confessions... The prospect of romance promising to spice up their already special friendship brought about a sort of tension—a sexually charged energy suffused in the air.

“Happy Birthday, Piccolo-sama,” Gohan said, sotto voce, elated when his master didn’t flinch at the kiss or their current closeness but even kept those deep-blue eyes fixed on him, regarding him with attentive silence.

This was usually the part where Gohan unveiled his birthday present as part of their yearly ritual. If it wasn’t a book, most of the time it would be something he made, like little wooden carvings, human garments, or *home-cooked food.

Gohan untangled himself from Piccolo’s frame, arms aching as they forlornly dropped to his sides, instantly missing the contact. “I- I actually have... uhm... a very different present for you this year…”

“I told you,” Piccolo huffed, “I don’t need anything... As long as you’re happy.”

“Right... As long as I’m happy, huh…” Gohan rubbed his nape, feeling his face grow hot. Piccolo says the same thing every time, but it still always makes his heart do cartwheels. “W-what if... What if what would make me happy—happiest of all, even—might make you feel uncomfortable?”

“I don’t quite follow,” Piccolo said as Gohan looked away, index finger absent-mindedly scratching his cheek. “I think it’s absurd that you would concern yourself too much with my discomfort now when you were less reserved about it as a child. Thanks to you, I’ve already habituated to all the ways you and your kind make me feel ‘uncomfortable’.”

The ebony-haired teenager gave a nervous bubble of a laugh. Of course, his lovesick mind couldn’t help toying with the idea of Piccolo being used to that. He laughed again, earning him a slight lift of a green brow.

No matter how many simulations of this day Gohan ran in his head, it never got any easier. Confessing your long-standing feelings vis-à-vis to your childhood best friend and mentor who happened to be an alien of a different race, and also quite possibly, the most naïve eighteen-year-old grown man on the planet, simply wasn’t easy... But he wasn’t about to back down. Not anymore. Gohan loosened his shirt collar, sucked in a breath, and cleared his throat; mentally tearing at his hair and screaming at himself to quit stalling and get it on with already...

Ever since the letters, he had been bracing himself for the inevitability of the moment of truth. He promised himself that if he didn’t feel the same anymore when that day finally came then he would simply forget. But if the opposite were to happen—if his secret feelings of undying first love for his mentor didn’t fade away but burgeon into something so much more than just a stupid childhood crush or some manic adolescent phase... Then he would act on it like the mature young adult he was striving to be; and this day— was slated to be the culmination of all his efforts at “acting on it”.
No, he couldn’t afford to back down now.

“Well…” Gohan heaved as an incoming stampede of emotions threatened to inundate him. After Piccolo himself had made a conscious effort to reach out to him—no way he was going to let himself mess this up!

He was the only one who ever looked forward to—the only one who remembered without fail—this day which he himself had proclaimed: Piccolo's birthday. And yet, on this day, every year since, Piccolo would always say the same thing: That he didn’t need anything. As long as Gohan was happy.

Why…?

Why was it still always his happiness on the forefront? That wasn’t why he wanted his best friend to have a special day in the first place. Well, he wasn’t having any of that this year, not anymore! He wanted to repay Piccolo for the all the kindness and friendship that he had so selflessly given all these years; for the one who always puts his friend’s happiness before his own to be the one happy for a change…

He wanted more than anything to make Piccolo happy.

“What would make me happy is your happiness, Piccolo-san,” he finally declared. “Which, I guess, leaves us in a loop, huh?”

Piccolo grinned wolfishly at that. And Gohan couldn't help but mirror it. They held each other’s gaze for what seemed like time refusing to move forward; until the halfbreed teenager bent down to pull something out of his satchel…

“I think I've finally figured out a way to beat that loop.” Green brows arched slightly. “There's something I've always wanted… For as long as I can remember—maybe even longer. But I never pursued it, thinking it might be against your happiness...”

Though visibly confused, Piccolo remained patiently waiting and all ears. Gohan took that chance to hold up a freshly picked tulip blossom clipped short at the stem, and lightly grazed it over Piccolo's lips.

“Do you trust me, Piccolo-san?”

Piccolo blinked somewhat sceptically, still staring at the boy, and then at the vermillion-coloured flower. “Aa. You know I do.” There was no one he trusted more, really.

Balancing on tiptoes once again, Gohan ceremoniously lessened the distance between their faces. His hand moved with him to pin the tulip behind one of his Namek friend’s big pointy ears… Then, finally finding Piccolo’s lips with his own, he gently pressed into it…

Eyelids fluttered shut at the unexpected rush of pleasure. Piccolo's lips were… impossibly soft and supple—beyond anything he’s experienced or ever dared imagine. The feeling of kneading delicately into such velvety smooth plumpness was addicting; breath hitching as those lips parted and soft gasps tickled his hyper-sensitized lips. All rational thought completely dissolved when he received tentative presses back.

Piccolo was kissing him… Dear Kamisama!

How long they indulged in the kiss was lost to them at that point; they couldn't stop. Soon, they were panting subtly, unable to process anything except the mind-numbing sensation of their joining
lips. Piccolo reflexively bit down when Gohan pushed a little too forcefully, causing sharp fangs to snag and break skin—only then, did the halfbreed realize that his lungs were bursting from lack of oxygen. He gently withdrew, taking huge gulps of air; trying to blink away the dizziness to keep from crumpling to the floor in a weak-kneed heap. He didn’t even remember that his lips were torn and bleeding… *Piccolo-san kissed back!* That was the only thing looping in his hazy love-struck mind.

They had barely gained on their pulses but a scorching desire to feel each other’s kisses again and again had already been awakened in them and was proving far too great to resist. Gohan practically jumped his mentor and pulled him down to recapture his mouth. This time, he gave in to the urge to flick out his tongue when those sinful lips pressed and moved against his, parting ever-so-slightly. He was rewarded with a low moan which he readily interpreted as approval, obligingly forcing those lips to open wider to admit his intrusions deeper.

His hands which had considerably behaved up until that point (save for the languid caressing of Piccolo’s nape), moved down to capture long elegant fingers—the touch so much more electrifying than he anticipated… To be able to hold hands with Piccolo; it was easily among his most coveted fantasies. The last time he was given the pleasure was when he was a young child marooned in the wastelands, training for Earthkind’s survival. It was hard to appreciate back then, when each instance Piccolo offered his hand for Gohan to take was usually preceded and quickly followed by a punch to the face…

Wasting no time in thoroughly exploiting the access he was being granted, his tongue traced and probed every nook and cranny that it could reach within that delightful cavern, fully intent on feeling and tasting more of Piccolo. Once again, time seemed non-existent. When they were finally forced to pulled apart, they were too overwhelmed to do much else than allow their lungs to replenish air and their minds to recalibrate.

Reeling as he was, Gohan didn’t miss the chance to drink in the breath-taking sight of Piccolo’s expression: one of dazed arousal and awakened need. And just like that, he found himself dying to see just how much more sublime the beautiful Namek could look when driven over the edge of sexual pleasure. It was like a Pandora’s Box within him had burst open and all the pent-up want he had pushed down all these years had finally broken free. Every part of him ached so badly to touch Piccolo again and again…

Before he knew it, the tips of his fingers were petting Piccolo’s lower lip. He watched for any sign of discomfort or unwillingness to continue as he indolently traced the shiny curves of that delicate mouth that he was going crazier for by the minute… Contrary to what a part of him expected, lust-fogged amethyst orbs bore into his hazy mud-browns, unfazed—brazenly communicating that there would be no backing down. If anything, it was soon made explicitly clear how badly those lips were begging to be kissed some more when a succulent purple tongue lapped at his fingers in response…

Gohan swallowed a shaky breath as electricity shot up his spine, nearly collapsing in shivers when the tip of his index finger is lightly suckled on. “P-Piccolo-san!” he choked out, belly tightening into a knot, toes curling inside his well-worn coal-black bit loafers. Pulling out his finger as gently as his impatience would allow, he hungrily recaptured Piccolo’s mouth with his own, angling and anchoring to get in deeper; challenging the Namek’s tongue to clash with his own—which more than willingly obliged.

His was much like a human tongue, only fuller, slightly more textured, and seemingly longer. Gohan shuddered every time it managed to slide all the way in, nudging the very back of his throat before pulling back out, making him feel full all at once and wanting the very next moment. With
every squirming push and pull, tiny white lights exploded behind his eyelids and the world spun a bit faster… *An incredible feeling,* Gohan decided, wanting to see if he could make Piccolo feel it too. So when he managed to bait Piccolo's tongue halfway in again, he sucked. *Hard.*

He almost cried out as the Super Namek's fingers twitched and tightened around their still connected fingers with each furious suck. A particularly powerful squeeze shot lighting pain up his arm. Gohan cringed inwardly, chuckling into their kiss, thoroughly enjoying Piccolo's involuntary reactions along with the maddening combination of intense pain and building arousal that accompanied it. The demi-Saiyajin felt the strangest urge to swallow the entirety of that luscious tongue. The mere idea made his spine tingle.

Piccolo kept filling his mouth again and again, until he was gasping and groaning, eyeballs practically rolling off its sockets from the jolts of pleasure repeatedly being ignited in his loins. With each bout, the duration of their lip locks kept getting longer and longer. Finally, after having pushed their lungs to the very limit— they relented, panting hard and caught up in the magnetic pull of each other's flaring Ki. Neither of them had enough sense left to bother wiping the trail of mixed saliva and blood dribbling down their chins, bodies suddenly feverish and perspiring profusely.

Their kisses went from “innocent” to “anything but” so fast that Gohan was still having trouble trying to process what had happened (heck, he was too heady at the moment to even think straight at all!). He didn’t dare imagine that things would progress so quickly even in the most optimistic scenarios in his mind. Since when did Piccolo get so bold when it came to romance? *How in the world did the most oblivious individual he knew on the subject ever learn to kiss like that??* Well, he himself learned mostly from books and television, and of course— his unending fantasies, but he doubted very much that Piccolo had any of those things as reference…

Gohan was almost afraid to ask.

‘*P-Piccolo-san... W-was that your first kiss…?*’

‘*…Is that what it’s called?*’ Piccolo sent back after a pregnant pause.

*Could someone have taught Piccolo to kiss and… do other things??*

He found himself feeling jealousy for the very first time in his entire life. *Crums, he wasn’t even sure yet if they were officially an item and he was being jealous already…?*

‘*H- have you ever done this … with… anyone else before today?*’

Another smaller pause. ‘*No.*’

‘*Kamisama…*’

‘*…Did I do it wrong?*’

‘*Oh, holy HFIL, no! You were… That was– just… wow.*’

When the Namek only regarded him with an uncomprehending stare, Gohan laughed out loud. If Piccolo was going entirely by instinct with that kiss, then it would seem that what he lacked in knowledge and experience, he made up for superbly with pure natural talent. The raven-haired teenager did not think it possible, but at that moment, he found himself even more utterly *gob-smitten* with his life-long crush.

Staying there and kissing each other senseless was to Gohan, the perfectly perfect way to spend the entire day (and his entire life) with Piccolo. But he remembered that he had prepared a very special
birthday surprise; and it was one surprise well worth momentarily putting off that perfectly perfect activity for. He grasped his mentor’s gracefully long fingers tightly again and tugged. “Come with me, Piccolo-san!” Practically dragging the towering Namek over the edge of *Kami no Shinden, to be suspended in mid-air only for a second before blasting off in joined flight.

They travelled far and beyond the outskirts of town, a whole new thrill coursing through their being as they flew hand-in-hand for the very first time as a budding couple. Their lips were still thrumming and swollen – a blissful reminder of their first real kiss. Both of them chose to enjoy the silence for the entire flight, soaking in their newfound bliss.

After some minutes of flying at breakneck speed, they landed within the border of a familiar mountainous region. Gohan excitedly led Piccolo down the rocky cliff, through a series of winding grassy slopes, across a flowing brook, and just beyond a curtain of thickets and foliage…

As they emerged in a clearing, a nostalgic redolence met Piccolo’s nose. Gohan halted and allowed Piccolo’s fingers to slip free as the taller of them advanced forward several paces. As soon as his mind had taken it in, Piccolo knew from that moment that it was a sight he was never going to forget…

Sparkling golden sunbeams filtered through the highest treetops, perfectly illuminating the sprawling glade before them that was lush with flower beds that swayed in unison with the reckless breeze. A light sprinkle of colourful insect life (mostly spritely bright yellow butterflies) here and there completed the grand picturesque scenario…

For some moments, Piccolo remained mute and completely awestruck. Then slowly, his eyes grew wide in *recognition.

“Do you… Do you like it?” Gohan had stepped up to right beside him, a nervous blush ghosting over his fine features. When he got no answer, he peered up and found the answer written all over his companion’s face. He didn’t think he remembered any other time he’s witnessed Piccolo gripped by such hushed wonderment.

“Gohan… How…? When did you…?” was all Piccolo managed when he was finally able to speak.

“I couldn’t let leave it the way it was…” Gohan said wistfully, remembering the day he found the flowers burned to the ground. “I know how much you love this place. Especially the tulips.” Gohan read about how to some Nameks certain flowers can be like what catnip is to cats; after he caught Piccolo in a rare albeit on the sly moment of “repose” amidst the flower beds, he immediately realized it. *His master had a secret soft spot for tulips*! A fact that he was very proud to know. Piccolo was not expressive of the things he liked, so whenever Gohan was lucky enough to learn of his master’s predilections, he was sure to take it to heart.

The Earth-born Namek finally tore his gaze from the sight and turned to the boy next to him, cheeks faintly dusted purple and a secret smile at the corner of his lips…

“I like it… very much.”

“Ahh, *yokatta!*” Gohan allowed a pent-up sigh of relief to roll off his chest along with some jittery titters. “I’m so glad you do!”

“I feel…”

Gohan found himself holding his breath all over again. It wasn’t everyday that his usually sullen friend began his sentences with ‘I like…’ or ‘I feel…’.
“I think, I feel… happy. Thank you, Gohan.”

The demi-Saiyajin searched Piccolo’s eyes, and sure enough, there was an unmistakable glimmer of exhilaration there. It caused Gohan’s heart to do elaborate somersaults and a big sunny smile to break across his face.

“Happy Hatchday, Piccolo-san!”

To Gohan’s further astonishment, Piccolo leaned down and nudged his lips into a gentle kiss. It was brief. But enough to knock his head back into the clouds.

“Don’t stop,” Gohan murmured shyly as soon as he recovered his powers of speech. He draped his arms over broad shoulders and wrapped his legs around chiseled hips, locking Piccolo securely in a koala-hug.

Piccolo’s arms which had reflexively moved up to support Gohan from the back, moved down to under his seat, lifting him up so that their mouths were at level. Their lips aligned and leisurely indulged in each other for as long as they could. Only when the planet felt like it was going to spin itself right off its orbit did they reluctantly pull apart, severely out of breath.

The lack of air proved no hindrance to Gohan’s hands, as they quite impetuously hoisted the heavy mantle off Piccolo’s shoulders, the weighted turban coming off with it. He buried his nose in the crook of the Namek’s now exposed neck, revelling in the nostalgic clean nature-sweet smell of Piccolo that brought with it only the fondest, sweetest memories of his life. Now, the scent had become so much more… It was like a drug – a most potent aphrodisiac… And the more his senses became infused with it, the more he found the luxurious Namekian skin beckoning to him, possessed of an irresistible urge to taste and adorn that elegant neck with a choker of love bruises.

He took his time as he licked and sucked every inch of the lush green skin; the tantalizing noises rumbling from Piccolo’s throat slowly becoming too seductive for Gohan to resist. Finally satisfied with how his Namek’s neck looked even prettier with angry purple blotches all over, he found those lips once more and greedily helped himself, letting his tongue tease Piccolo’s fangs for some moments—which he found to his delight were actually ticklish. His hands were likewise busy touching another ticklish area: the Namek’s long antennae. His fingers tangled and fondled – diligently rubbing and pinching the base all the way to bulbous tip, purposefully stroking the length of it.

At that point, Piccolo was much too dazed to even notice the steady stream of pleasured groans and tremors racking his body. Tiny electric shocks fizzled up the length of his spine and molten heat repeatedly erupted in his core from how fiercely he was being kissed and how indecently those adroit fingers molested his antennae. Heated hands cupped his face, pulling him deeper into the searing kiss, his young lover’s persistent tongue pressed daringly much farther in than it had ever done so far, making him see stars. He instinctively leaned in, wanting to feel more, but in the next minute, the world was flipped upside-down!

Petals and leaves (along with some disgruntled insects) flew high up and away from them as they crashed into the flower beds.

“G-Gohan!”

“Piccolo-san…”

“Are you alright?”
Light-headed giggles were expelled from Gohan’s chest before he was able to look down at his friend’s worried face atop him. The mid-afternoon’s benevolent sunbeams and colourful tulip petals descending in slow motion around them gradually came back into focus, serving the perfect backdrop to Piccolo’s stunning ethereal face.

‘I’m more than alright,’ Gohan purred breathlessly, reaching up to bring his Namek’s lips crashing down over his all over again. ‘As long as you’re with me.’

And this time, Piccolo easily met him with equal fervour.

-x-

They lay side by side among the flowers, staring up at the late afternoon’s cloud-littered sky, bathed in each others reassuring Ki and lost in their own thoughts.

“Is… this what you wanted that you feared might cause me discomfort?”

Gohan turned to stare fondly at the face of what for him came to define what angels looked like. After so many sleepless nights of worrying about what the world and Piccolo himself would think; after all the doubts that threatened to crush the pure feelings he’s always had in his heart; and despite all the chaos that was his life– Piccolo was always there for him. Their friendship was one made in heaven. And now, having Piccolo right beside him, clinging to his hand just as passionately as they crossed over to the next stage of their relationship…

Nothing had ever felt more right in his world.

"Mn. It’s because I love you, Piccolo-san,” Gohan replied, embarrassment staining his cheeks. “I can’t help but want you.”

‘‘Want me’” Piccolo echoed, leaving the words suspended for some seconds.

Without a doubt, Piccolo’s heart soared at the thought of being ‘loved’ and ‘wanted’ wholly by none other than Gohan. Yet, this romantic concept of love was something so completely new and unexpected to him. He was mildly confused, yes, but not altogether unhappy… All he understood up until that point was Gohan’s happiness; he was still in the process of learning to distinguish his own.

“Do you mean that… you want to copulate with me?” Piccolo ventured.

Gohan blushed madly. Piccolo’s guileless, unobtrusive manner was such a stark contrast to the unapologetically risqué words he had just uttered—it was so shocking that the halfbreed couldn’t help it as he broke into a fit of uncontainable, high-strung laughter.

Piccolo waited patiently for the somewhat unnerving chortling to abate but was already feeling quite mortified that he might have gotten ahead of himself so opted to say nothing more, not quite ready to risk making a bigger fool of himself.

When the hybrid had finished laughing himself quite literally to tears, he finally looked his companion in the eye, a shy smile on his face. ‘‘I’m sorry for laughing, I just never expected you to say something like that… But to answer your question…” Gohan took a deep breath. Since his mentor was being straightforward and candid anyways, whattheheck, he might as well be too…
“Yes, Piccolo-san… I actually do.”

It took some moments for it to sink in, but when it did, the Namek flushed. It was one thing to ask it and another thing entirely to hear it affirmed.

“Of course, that’s not the only thing I want from you! I’d be lying if I denied wanting to own your body as much as the rest of you, heart, mind, and soul. But you’re beautiful, Piccolo-san! I didn’t even know it, I just realized one day… That everything you are is constantly on my mind. So… do I want to have sex with you? How do I even answer that…? Honestly, I can’t imagine anyone who wouldn’t—hell, I think it would be the greatest honour in the world!”

At that point, they both had to look away; too flustered to keep holding each other’s intense stares.

“But…” Gohan smiled, unseeing eyes trained on clear skies high above them. “More than that… I want you to want it too, Piccolo-san. Because, well… I love you. Your happiness is so important to me. I want to make you happy—no, I want to be your happiness – if you would let me. And if you’re going to say that your happiness is defined by my own… Then allow me to define very precisely what happiness is for me…”

Slightly wide ruby-tinged amethyst eyes met his as he sought it out.

“What would make me truly happy—happiest of all… is for us to be together, always. It doesn’t have to be as lovers, if that’s not what you want…” (A *involuntary wince in his left eye distracted him for a split second but he recovered quickly.) “As long as I’m with you, Piccolo-san.”

Having become quite breathless from the impassioned proclamation, Gohan gave way to silence for the next minutes, letting the implications of his words sink in for both of them.

*What is this?* Piccolo didn’t know why, but his heart was beating so fast and so hard that his ears were going deaf. It was so different from all the times he experienced the adrenaline-rush of battle—a whole other dimension of nervous excitement and emotional exuberance; yet another in the plethora of extraordinary sensations deep within him that he didn’t even know he had or was capable of feeling… Feelings in him that only Gohan could ever stir.

*If this is what being in love is… it’s kind of nice.*

Those were Piccolo’s first coherent thoughts that surfaced then, which surprised even him. The sudden warmth spreading from where Gohan’s hand had protectively wrapped around and affectionately squeezed all three of his four fingers made more curious tingling sensations linger in his chest to spread all over his body and nestle in his cheeks. It felt unnerving, but not at all unpleasant…

“Ne, Piccolo-san… When you said in your letter that you loved me too… was this what you had in mind? Is this what you wanted as well? Because if I were to go with the way you were kissing me…”

“I never imagined anything like this,” Piccolo admitted when the sentence was left hanging. “But everything you said… I think…”

“I want it too… very much.”

Gohan turned just in time to catch Piccolo’s gaze, one of absolute trust and open vulnerability. Smooth slender fingers broke out of burly calloused ones to entangle each of their fingers more securely together and give an emphatic heart-stopping squeeze.
“If being in love is what you said, then…” Piccolo’s cheeks burned even brighter. “I believe… I am… in love with you too.”

Gohan hiccupped. After some moments of shock wherein tears instantly flooded his eyes, he abruptly rolled over and propped himself up on his forearms to lean over and kiss the Namek with trembling lips. “Piccolo-san…!!! I’m so happy…! I love you…! I love you to death!!!”

“I love you too, Gohan,” Piccolo replied, breathless, after his lips had finally been released.

The demi-Saiyajin closed his eyes as fragile beatitude washed over him literally breaking his heart in two and bringing an onslaught of delirious laughter and tears. When he felt gentle fingers daub at the wetness on his cheeks, he cradled the said hand and pressed Piccolo’s soft palm against his face, kissing and leaning into it as more tears spilled forth. Gohan could almost feel a shift in the world… As though everything had always been perfect.

Piccolo-san loves me back! Piccolo-san loves me…!!! Kamisama, arigatou gozaimasu!!!

Gohan inched closer and Piccolo met him halfway. At first, feather-light touching of lips then tentative presses. Soon tongues were wooing each other as breathless mewls and soft smacks filled the air. Not long after, Gohan pushed himself off the ground to move atop and straddle his newfound mate properly, palms flattening over the neatly fastened obi around that enticingly narrow waist. In one smooth motion, he pulled up the tucked-in part of Piccolo’s deep-purple gi top and slid strong hands underneath, feeling up the row of tight abdominal muscles to the sculpted chest.

Piccolo sucked in a breath, cheeks instantly tinting a shade darker; flinching slightly at the ticklish sensation but not breaking eye contact with his halfbreed lover. Gohan’s cheeks weren’t trying to be any more modest either as he allowed his hands the pleasure of caressing that body that was the object of his sweetest, most unrelenting fantasies.

The first time he saw it as a young teenager when they were bathing together, he affirmed what he had thought for the longest time: *that Piccolo Daimaoh Jr was the most bedazzling creature he has ever seen!* His many beautiful colours and contours, grooves and patterns constantly pervaded his dreams. He had always wanted to trace it with his fingers, longing to feel what it was like; an undisclosed curiosity that had possessed him, even as a little child.

Then as he grew older, he found himself haunted by the same—though greatly evolved—fantasies as he lay in bed staring out his window during many a sleepless night. His hand would lift up to trace imaginary constellations in the night sky, pretending they were the ridges and lines on his Namek friend’s body, marvelling at the wonder of nature’s flawless design… He imagined how delightful such multi-textured skin would feel on the palms of his hands—against his entire body… How it would taste…! He shivered with feverish want each time, trying his best to piece together in his mind– all the parts and pieces of Piccolo’s design from what little glimpses of it he could remember from when they used to bathe together and his friend would be completely naked.

“You are so perfect,” Gohan whispered, thirstily drinking in the enraptured expression on Piccolo’s face that his exploration was causing. Unable to help himself any longer, he gripped the hem of his love’s gi top and pulled it off completely. Piccolo was panting shallowly by then, chest rhythmically undulating, abdomen flexing and unflexing; the sight too mesmerizing for Gohan who felt his manhood stiffen further in total approval.

Piccolo’s sylph-like clawed hands reached up to deftly loosen his lover’s coal-grey necktie, making the white dress shirt underneath unbuttoned next. Gohan couldn’t believe how turned on he was, as though his arousal was on fire and actually ascending to advanced levels of Super Saiyajin on its
own. Once open all the way, he hurriedly pulled down his shirt and slid it off one wrist; not even having enough patience left to completely free his other arm in his haste to re-entwine their fingers and pin his lover’s wrists out of the way on either side.

Piccolo fought the urge to resist the domination out of habit, not one accustomed to subjugation. A loud moan is ripped from his throat, scattering all other thoughts except the feel of Gohan’s mouth on his chest and the weight and friction of that perfectly toned Saiyajin body pressing and moving over his. Each deliberate grind of the young man’s skin against his own repeatedly ignited fantastic sparks in his veins until slowly but surely—his body felt like a blazing furnace; the resulting wildfire enough to short out all rational thought.

Both their Ki signatures were spiking drastically by then, and yet, so used to each other’s energies emanating at high levels that in their current befuddled state they had overlooked the irregularity entirely. Their only saving grace being their current location which was quite a ways from where the rest of the Z-Senshi were, that at such a distance, it arrived to the others like faint energy spikes that could be easily associated with their usual intense sparring sessions.

And it was all good as well, because as the normally more sensible one of them lay there, all sensibility spiralling beyond his usually expert control from all the new sensations he was being made to feel, the younger of them was even more far gone to even be aware of how his hair was flickering with golden lightning or how flecks of luminous green were permeating his eyes the more he succumbed to his basal Super Saiyajin instincts.

Sure enough, almost purely primal and instinctual movements took over as Gohan’s entire body became the living conductor of hybrid Super Saiyajin Ki currents. He barely even registered that he was thrusting his hips very slowly and deliberately into his mate’s tight, smooth stomach muscles. His tongue had travelled north thoroughly anointing a pointy ear with licks and kisses, and was now flicking out all over Piccolo’s antenna, suddenly finding the perky protrusion mouth-watering. Catching one, he easily popped it halfway in his mouth and sucked with gusto…

His reward was a very sexy unreserved moan from its owner. Deciding that he liked the sound very much, he made sure to stimulate more; unrelenting until his master was a sweaty, incoherent mess beneath him; his name, the only semi-coherent thing spilling from lovely green lips. Predictably, such provocative sights and sounds caused Gohan’s “discomfort” to increase exponentially. His fingers grabbed and pulled at the still secure obi around his love’s waist, desperately tearing at it—ruthlessly ripping it apart eventually, along with everything else that was in the way of his prize. Piccolo’s quaking thighs are hastily moved out of the way and both groaned loudly as their aching groins brushed against one other.

Hungry Saiyajin lips claimed the Namek’s mouth again, tongue plundering as far as it would go. Gohan revelled in the sharp buck of hips beneath him when he managed to hit the very back of his mate’s throat, so absorbed in finding that hidden gland that he knew was present in almost all Nameks that he didn’t even feel it when talons dug into his shoulders and reflexively tried to push him away.

Piccolo’s head jerked back involuntarily when his lover repeated the action with more speed and force. His eyes scrunched up and breathless grunts of discomfort pushed past his captive lips. He could do nothing but try to outlast the sensory overload as Gohan persisted in attacking that hypersensitive spot deep in his throat that he didn’t even know he had. Drool ran copiously down his chin, mouth completely held hostage by the boy…

‘G-Gohan!’ Piccolo wheezed into their mind-link.

‘Does it feel good, Piccolo-san?’ Gohan queried with genuine concern despite the cold, unyielding
tone his voice usually assumed when he was engulfed in his more advanced Super Saiyajin form. ‘Do you want me to stop?’

‘I-it feels good… but strange… It feels like… my body is going to explode…’

Gohan pulled back, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, giving them both the much-needed pause to catch their breaths—his Super Saiyajin second form unfaltering. ‘It’s kind of hard to explain…’ he returned through their mental link, quite sure that explaining to his innocent lover that he was on the verge of what was most likely to be his very first orgasm wasn’t going to ease his sexual unease. ‘I think it would be better if I just showed you…’

“Trust me, Piccolo-san.” Gohan susurrated confidently against Piccolo’s slightly parted lips. “I promise, you’ll be great.” To which he received a furious blush and shaky nod in response.

The hybrid teenager resumed kissing him, starting out gently, allowing Piccolo to actively kiss back. To his surprise, silken palms and clawed fingers moved over his chest, mirroring what was being done to him earlier. His breath hitched when those fingers snagged pert nipples, making the liquid fire in his belly churn much faster. His partner’s kisses only grew more assertive, his caresses bolder by the minute… Gohan knew he would not be able to hold out for much longer.

His Namekian lover was an incredibly fast learner. Going by his own actions and reactions, his chest was palmed with sure strokes until his teeth chattered from how pebble-hard and tender his twin nubs had become. The halfbreed struggled to draw enough air into his lungs, the escalating tension in his veins threatened to burst. His Ki levels were nearing critical and he was just barely managing to keep it together… If he didn’t do something quick, he would go over the edge before he could do Piccolo that honour! He vowed that he was going to put his beloved Namek’s needs before his own for a change—there was no way in HFIL he was going to let it be the other way around again on Piccolo’s special day!

Piccolo’s hands are (ruefully) disengaged from his lover’s chest and coaxed to keep his thighs where Gohan had pushed it – daringly far apart, fully baring his intimates. All the while, their lips struggled to stay connected—although it was more of arbitrary snaps and bites and swirling of tongues now—both of them too far gone to keep their concentration on the kiss; the painful throbbing in their groins much too distracting. The alien sensation of fingers slowly sliding into the moist sensitive slit in-between his legs forced a violent gasp from throat, lips parting and eyes widening in shock.

“Gohan!” Piccolo’s eyes brimmed with wetness when his opening is forced to sheath more of those stout fingers.

“P-Piccolo-san!” Gohan grunted through clenched teeth, concentrating with all his might to keep from just plunging in right there and then with reckless abandon; his own need pulsed even harder in protest from being ignored for so long.

They clumsily found each other’s lips again (though, it was more of Gohan who found Piccolo’s to resume kissing because the Namek was unable to do much, other than whimper at that point). The spearing fingers had built into a steady pumping rhythm now, gradually increasing the depth of each calculated thrust; all the while, careful not to dive in too deep too fast. The halfbreed vigilantly gauged his lover’s reactions while interspersing gentle rolling and twisting motions with each plunge, massaging Piccolo’s pulsing inner walls until the Namek was soaked and shuddering senseless. Breathless moans and incoherent pleas spilled from bruised green lips as semblances of his Saiyajin lover’s name melded in and out of the euphony.

At the very precipice of losing control, Gohan mustered all his will and concentration to keep
himself from coming right there. He bit his lip hard as his bursting arousal continued to pulse wildly for attention and he silently begged it to hold out… just for… a little bit… more…

“Aaahhh-nngh!!!”

Piccolo’s voice is ripped from his chest in a hard, drawn-out howl. Blinding white fireworks erupted in his vision when those fingers hit a hypersensitive nerve inside him; violent spasm after another shook his entirety from that one spot… Gohan aimed for that pleasure point again and again, and pressed *hard*. He watched with heavily hooded eyes as his mate’s willowy frame arched off the ground perilously, just as his deeply impaled fingers are deliciously squeezed and clamped in place by that wonderfully wet heat. Wave upon wave of pleasure racked his lover’s breathtaking body over and over again until all energy and resistance from it had been spent.

Piccolo collapsed back down, spineless and out of breath. Gohan was panting just as heavily, unable to stop the generous amount of precome he released just from witnessing and feeling his Namek climax hard around his fingers. He retracted ever-so-gently, his Super Saiyajin form cancelling out. He pursed his mouth slowly around his sodden digits and savoured the titillating taste of his master’s nectar on his tongue, causing him to harden and throb and come a little more. He then leant up to plant tender kisses on lovely drool-stained lips, feeling a resurgence of warmth flood through his being when his gesture is reciprocated albeit weakly.

*Piccolo-san… I love you…!*

**End of Part 1.**
Continued in Intermission 1: *“Our Destiny”*…

Chapter End Notes

* **Tadaima** – (Japanese culture/expression) I’m home.

* **Okaerinasai** – (Japanese culture/expression) Welcome home.

* **Ne** – (Japanese culture/expression) *When at the beginning of a sentence or name, roughly equivalent to “hey” or “uhm”.*

* **Aa** – (Japanese, informal usage) roughly equivalent to ‘yeah’.

* **love letters** – From my *“Eyes Only For You”* story.

* **home-cooked food** – Heck, in the canon even at a very young age he is very neat and organized, he can sew his own clothes, do house chores well, repair machinery, and build things (like a raft) from scratch. Why not throw in cooking skills to the whole genius & perfect guy package? It’s not such a stretch to imagine for me and my muse; his mother is an excellent cook after all. (We do think Gohan is the most perfect darling Saiyajin in this series.)

* **gob-smitten** – You won’t find this in the dictionary, hehe.

* **Kami no Shinden** – God’s Temple / Kami’s Temple. I retained it because it’s a play
of words. ‘Kami’ is ‘God’ in Japanese, and (as you all surely already know) is also the name of Nameless’ pure soul counterpart.

*recognition – The significance of the tulip beds will be explained in my future stories.

*yokatta – Roughly “thank goodness”, or “that’s great/good”.

*involuntary wince – A headcanon from “Eyes Only For You”. Gohan’s “lying tic” if you will.
He was lost, tired, and hungry after being chased by the Earth's inhabitants again. Four long years of nonstop training and playing hide and seek with his hunters, and he was just about fed up with boredom. Even if it was fun at first—using the puny Earthlings to test his skills and watching them scamper away in fright, he eventually got to thinking that surely—surely, there was more to being alive than that? What was so rewarding about wanting to get stronger just to bully the weak? He couldn’t fathom what real satisfaction was to be gained from such frivolity in the long run.

Was this really what his sire lived for—what was destined for him as well?

Oh, how he hated his life! All he ever did was train, run away, and wander aimlessly. The world had nothing he was interested in; all its riches never held any meaning to him, all their weapons never good enough a challenge. He knew it well, of course. That he was brought into the world for but one purpose, and that purpose wasn’t to amuse himself. But it didn’t alter the fact that his existence was a mundane and meaningless one.

Why was he born so small and so weak? Why was it taking so long for him to grow up? So many unanswered questions relentlessly harangued his mind. He knew his powers were far stronger than all his erstwhile brethren and yet he didn’t understand:

Why didn’t his sire simply birth him big and strong like the rest of his brothers?

It took him more than two years—two and a half long and arduous years of training, just to be able to master a highly advanced ageing technique that temporarily allowed him to gain a more formidable appearance along with greater strength and power. He thought that he had finally reached the apogee of his powers and was finally ready to achieve his goal— but he had disgracefully been proven wrong…

It still wasn’t enough to defeat that accursed monkey boy who had slain his sire!

He begrudgingly glared up at the darkening sky as if the perpetrator of his prolonged misery was skulking behind the innocuous-looking camouflage. After his humiliating defeat at the *Tenkaichi Budoukai Tournament he tried maintaining his adult form for the weeks that followed. But the tremendous strain it required proved too much for his still weakened state and he eventually collapsed out from exhaustion. He woke up days later—much to his frustration—reverted to his three-year-old body, greatly etiolated and mockingly imprisoned in some scientific facility where upon he spent what little energy he had left breaking free and escaping from.
He had no memory of everything in between or what was done to him; but finding that he still hadn’t recovered his strength forced him to resort to what he used to do before the induced ageing process: staying out at sea in order to recuperate. That was the only way he could steer clear of the Earthlings and other predators who wished to harm him in times when he deemed fighting futile. The boats that drifted idly in the middle of the sea had relatively laissez-faire occupants and provided the ideal sanctuary as long as he stayed in the shadowy parts of their vessel. The Earthlings on board usually fished, drunk, and slept, nothing more. They couldn't care less about little green pointy-eared goblins and their kin, and simply left him to his devices.

That night, however, it seemed that there would be no rest for him.

The farther the sun sunk into the horizon, the deeper he found himself lost in some dense forest, driven far away from his usual turf. He supposed he could scare off a bunch of humans from their dwellings to scavenge for anything to appease his hunger—not having had any proper nourishment since his capture. Famished and badly injured, he was too weak to hunt. (Being an Earth-born Namek and hybrid like his sire required that he consume something more substantial than pure water to aid in his recovery and growth from time to time. Besides, Earth water never seemed to satisfy him.)

He had been trekking aimlessly for some hours already when his ears began to itch. It was picking up a sound beyond his tolerance, stentorian and quite poignant; an atrocious stridency he was well acquainted with by then: the noise of a crying infant.

One of the noises he abhorred the most.

Normally, his reaction would have been to fly as far away from the source of the noise as fast as possible. But, where there was an infant meant that there was also a house nearby— with occupants, and almost assuredly, sustenance. Earthlings with offspring usually took minimal effort to scare off —which was just the amount of effort he had to spare at the moment. Peculiar as it may be, there was something about this specific infant’s vocal register that vexed him more than usual—something so inimical and lacerating to his acute sensibilities that he found himself zeroing in on it at top speed the very next moment, fully intending to mutilate the little monster’s larynx for good.

Soon he emerged in a clearing and spotted the pram that carried the culprit, conspicuously all by its lonesome in the middle of a spacious glade– that his approach was easily accomplished without any deterrents. At that point, his ears were pulsating and numb from intense pain and the only thought that possessed him then was stemming the source of the infernal upheaval. He was at the edge of the carrycot in one bound, claws diving towards the creature below the canopy with the speed of a striking snake. But right before his lengthened talons could cut into flesh, something made him stop.

As if stirring from a trance, he blinked, disorientated; surprised to see his own lethal dagger-like nails hovering a millimetre away from his tiny victim’s neck, not remembering why nor comprehending what compelled him to halt. It was then that he realized that he was distracted from his undertaking by one most riveting detail…

The small Earthling had stopped crying!

The infant, presumably a human—judging by its appearance alone—had indeed fallen perfectly silent. Its big and very curious eyes were fixated on him, twin trails of wetness glistened down its cheeks and nose. It was a bizarre scene. A Namekian child and an Earthling infant frozen in each other’s stunned gazes as though that moment in time itself had been freeze-framed. But what followed shortly after that was even more shocking…
The human baby began to smile.

First, the corner of its lips slowly turned upwards then its maws parted wide, exposing pink tongue and gums with a single emerging tooth. Next, its chestnut-brown doe-eyes lit up like a shimmering pool of constellations—completing a very odd (and rather hideous) picture of what the Namek surmised was mirth. He had never seen anything like it nor had he foresaw such a reaction. He remained unmoving, utterly (and quite horrifically) spellbound…

He had only ever seen Earthlings joyful from a distance, partying and being merry, doing stupid Earthling things. But the moment those celebrating simpletons caught sight of him, their smiles would transform into frowns and their laughter to screams.

Fear, terror, dread, and hatred…

Those were the only emotions he had ever managed to garner from Earth’s inhabitants all his life. Thus, seeing an Earthling infant smile so gleefully at the sight of him was a very strange and suspicious thing to behold indeed. And as if that wasn’t insulting enough—as though the insignificant and infinitesimal bundle of “human” understood his befuddled predicament—

It began to laugh!

High-pitched hearty chortles rose up from its bellows, curdling his mood into an even sourer state than it had already been minutes ago. But surprisingly, he could no longer back up that knowledge with conviction. He felt irritated, yes; but he was no longer angry nor feeling threatened enough to pursue his original objective of maiming the insufferable creature’s vocal cords. His hand pulled back a smidgeon, but a horrible ominous fog lingered in his mind, as though he had just narrowly escaped being manipulated by a force outside of himself into doing something that he normally had no desire to.

A force that had no qualms about killing a defenceless child.

He knew he was born for less than noble reasons—but all the same, senseless killing was beyond someone with superior intellect like him. No, that wasn’t how he operated. Whether it was a flaw in his sire’s Pokopen process or something intentional, he didn’t know yet. He was born with his own will, that much he knew. And that unique will of his never relished the idea of bullying the weak the way his sire did. He shuddered inwardly at what could have been had he not broken free of what he now recognized as his sire’s bloodlust. It surfaced from time to time, usually when he was being threatened. It served him well when he needed to defend himself but never before had he lost himself to it—overcome by it so completely for a good number of minutes as it did now.

While all those thoughts and feelings were running through his mind, his eyes had half-consciously remained locked on to the infant’s, watching its every move in case the smiles and laughter were a ruse to throw him off guard and spring an attack. (He had never been curious enough to approach Earthling babies before, and even if he knew they supposedly had little to no power at all, most Earthlings—regardless of age, size or shape—had only ever been hostile towards him. It was for that very reason that he was always vigilant, regardless.) The thrilled warbling giggles went on and off but the smile never wavered even for a heartbeat. The child was staring at him like it had no idea what angels or demons really looked like, nor did it seem to care. Somehow, the idea made him pull away a little bit more, but the action was stopped short, and this time, the Earthling’s latest antic left him positively scandalized…

Two of his fingers were suddenly enclosed within the infant’s own!

The strength of the tiny tyke’s hold was shocking. But more so— was the warmth flowing all over
his body, one he’s never felt before. It was the very first time he’s ever been made to feel a welcoming touch; the first time he had ever been this close to another living thing and for this long without being harmed or hated. A maelstrom of entirely alien sensations and emotions inundated and blanketed his being along with that heat– and all because of that singular contact. He knew he should pull away and flee, but he was too thunderstruck. Was this creature truly delighted to see him? So much so, that it even went as far as to make physical contact with him? Surely, that was preposterous, right? That’s how he forced rationale upon it, but all the same… He couldn’t find the strength to pull away. He stayed like that for a while, heart anxiously hammering in his chest; and for the very first time in nearly four years of his life, he felt a most peculiar chaotic but peaceful emotion washing over him like…

_Tiny balls of light in his chest— swirling, dancing, and colliding; bursting into spectacular fireworks, repeatedly stoking and igniting the embers already burning there…_

‘Could this feeling be what they call…’ he thought to himself, ‘Am I actually…’

‘…Happy…?’

Reluctantly, and with more effort than he thought the action would require, he pulled away and quickly fled from the clearing back into the shelter of the woods. No sooner had he concealed his presence behind a tree did the source of the grating noise that had alerted him of an approaching Earthling make itself known…

_A female Earthling_ whose screeching rivalled the ear-splitting wails of an enraged banshee. It was so painful to his ears that that he couldn't even bring himself to look at the owner of the voice; reduced to a curled ball of agony on the forest floor. He realized after a while, that the infant too, had resumed its accursed bawling as soon as he had pulled away and left it, except that its cries were much louder and more vehement than before.

He wasn’t sure if it was just his imagination playing tricks on him, but the creature’s wails also now sounded absolutely grief-stricken and he did not know why it shook him deeply—made him feel as though he had swallowed a whole anvil that was now wedged in his chest. The comforting flames there only moments ago were snuffed out completely by the alien kind of pain settling along with it.

That very ache in his chest that he didn’t quite understand no matter how hard he endeavoured to, compelled him return to that glade more times than he deemed reasonable; but only after several long months wherein he tried his best to stay away and forget everything that had occurred that day… without success. More often than not, he would find no sign of the infant and he would leave right away, fooling himself that the disappointment he felt was actually relief.

In one of those chance visits, after he had seen the field empty and turned to leave, he was stopped dead in his tracks by the sound of squeaking wheels moving at terrific speed…

There was barely enough time to ascertain what it was and what was happening, but he managed to fly in the nick of time to stop the pram’s downhill plunge right before it smashed into a thickly packed boscage of trees. By the time he managed to haul the vehicle to safety, his tiny human acquaintance was crying so hard and so loud that tears pricked his eyes. He braved the pain whole
time until he had climbed up the carrycot to peer at its occupant, who amazingly— stopped crying as soon as it assimilated the sight of him.

After witnessing, and luckily, managing to intervene in some three or more near-fatal accidents like the one he had managed to prevent then—with still *no sign of the infant’s parents to be found—he decided that it was no random mischance but the result of appalling negligence. Owing to that discovery, he felt obligated somehow, to watch over the child ever since. He didn’t appear unless the baby started crying or was in imminent danger from its parents’ absence—which shockingly, happened too often. He had managed to convince himself that he only approached the baby and showed his face each time, not because he wanted to see the thing smile, but because it was the only thing that placated its distress without fail.

Inevitably, soon after, he discovered the boy’s true identity. Naturally, the knowledge that the first creature who had ever seemed to like him was the son of the one he was destined to kill had shot down whatever hopes and aspirations he had of a more fulfilling existence. If anything, the discovery caused his heart to sink back into that abysmal darkness and caused him to be even more resentful of his fate. Of course, he redoubled his efforts to stay away after that— to no avail.

And so, their curious encounters went on, until the toddler could walk and explore the forest on its own. He continued to watch over him from afar, faithfully coming to his aid whenever necessary. He managed to accomplish that while gradually diminishing his visible presence to the child. Remarkably, he sensed that the child knew that he was there all the same because he didn’t cry as much anymore and his keen ears often caught heartfelt ‘thank you’s seemingly babbled to the wind.

One day, while he was training nearby, he heard the boy accidentally knock down a beehive he was examining, instantly earning the wrath of a swarm of bees. The bees, unlike snakes or tigers, were harder to eliminate from a distance—they weren’t only fast but attacked in great numbers—thus, more difficult to scare off with energy blasts…

The five-year-old Namek reacted before he could think.

He jumped out in front of the boy and whisked him away from danger. But a tug at the hem of his tunic kept him from retreating out of sight after his rescue. He cursed his rashness, noting instantly how the boy was much faster and stronger now, going by how efficiently he had been detained. Unable to move, he soon found himself face to face with the boy for the first time in many months, only this time, the boy didn’t smile or laugh. Instead, those brown eyes and red lips wore an expression of utter confoundedness.

*Of course,* he grimaced inwardly. *The boy was a clueless infant no more. He was no longer ignorant of what belligerent and dangerous creatures lurked the earth—of what angels and demons looked like.*

He felt his heart clench, knowing that with his inhuman and menacing appearance, being feared and shunned by everyone was inescapable. The boy was going to yell for help and call him a monster any minute now like everyone else always did… He squeezed his eyes shut, and braced for the worst…

But nothing happened.
No shouting, screaming, not even crying.

He dared open his eyes for a small peek…

And found the boy still gaping at him in…

…Not fear, but…

…Awe?

“A-are you an elf…? Or—or maybe… a faerie?!!”

His eyes slowly opened wide in disbelief. He was still trapped in the boy’s hold, only it had moved more securely to his wrist.

“I knew it!” The boy’s eyes lit up suddenly. “You’re… my guardian angel, aren’t you? I knew you were real! I can’t believe I’ve finally caught you!”

He panicked a little at that and attempted to break free, but the hand gripping his wrist is reinforced by another.

“Oh, no! Please! Don’t be afraid! I- I’m not going to hurt you! I- I just want to, to thank you! for… uhm, always saving me… T-thank you very much, err—kind sir.”

The boy was bowing his head low before him, but his fingers did not loosen its hold. Then it happened. The boy looked up at him…

And smiled.

That old familiar heat was back, making a hearth of his chest and his cheeks. He hadn’t seen that smile in such a long time that he was caught completely off-guard, disarmed by its sincere ebullience.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you! My name is Gohan—Son Gohan Jr! What’s yours?”

When he could give no immediate response, the boy called Gohan cautiously looked around, leaned in then whispered, “It’s okay, I understand.” He tensed all over, flinching slightly at the boy’s breath in his ear, never having been touched or this close to any non-hostile Earthling his whole life. “I know guardian angels need to keep a lot of things secret, right? For now, I can just call you, hmm…” The boy peered down at the symbol on his tunic. "Hmm… ‘Ma’…? Okay, Ma-chan! Is that okay with you? You can call me Goh-chan or Han-chan—or just Gohan; whatever you want!”

Before he knew what was happening, the boy was running, pulling him along. His breath hitched as the feel of lissom lips tenderly pressing against his cheek arrested him when they arrived in the glade where they first met. A searing warmth from that area began to spread all over his body as
tingly currents, throwing him into an even more flustered state – that even when the boy had finally released his wrist and pinned a blushing orange tulip behind his ear, he remained rooted to the spot, unable to do much else but be absolutely stupefied.

"I really like you, Ma-chan! Can we please be friends?"

End of Intermission.
Continued in Part 2: “Of Dreams & Forever”…

Chapter End Notes

*Tenkaichi Budoukai – The Japanese name of the martial arts tournament which means something like: “Number One(Best) On Earth(In The World) Martial Arts Meet”.

*no sign of the infant’s parents… – This is canon-compliant (to some degree). Gokuu and Chi-chi actually forgot about baby Gohan in his crib and caused him to nearly smash into a tree. Also, in one of the movies, a toddler Gohan is seen wandering the forest unattended (and yeah, I consider those movies canon, I enjoyed the lot of them even if I came to somewhat detest them later on… Meheh).

Just one final chapter to go…! (^3^)♥
Chapter Summary

Two destined souls finally consummate their love (properly), for the first time.

**Warning:** Explicit overdoses of sap, sentimentality, and smex ahead.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Nameks are soulful creatures.

*This is what makes their godlike mystic powers possible and no less than remarkable. They uphold soulful practice in everything they do. This is why they cannot commit themselves to anything with less than their full soul. The only time a Namek gives their body is when they wish to give their soul.*

*Soul-giving is not essentially a mutually interdependent practice.*

A Namek may choose to devote themselves to a cause or to one who is already devoted to another. This is by no means considered a loss but a privilege. To be able to offer oneself is of the highest honour – one that demands no reciprocation.

*The concept of Namekian love is one consummated by the act of giving in itself. Wholly and faithfully; without conditions, validation, or guarantees.*

*That is all and everything there is to it.*

*That, to a Namek, is what it means to love.*

- *Excerpts from the sacred Namekian codex that was once lost in time.*

Swaying canopies overhead cast a shimmering halo of muted sunbeams over the amorous face above him; a kaleidoscopic mesh of butterflies gathering behind strong shoulders formed smouldering wings.

Piccolo Daimaoh Jr. knew his eyes were already open. But he blinked again – once, twice, for good measure.

…

*Not elf nor faerie…*
But demon.

A demon destined is to crush your father and claim the throne as rightful king of this world.

If you knew the truth…

Would you still have wanted me as a friend?

…

“Welcome back, Piccolo-san.”

Waking up to a lover’s greeting: The sunny smile just for him and the feathery nudge of lips punctuated with an Eskimo kiss—

“Gohan.”

It wasn’t bad at all. There was a part of him already looking forward to it and it terrified him somewhat… How that part was growing, reshaping him… rearranging the very structure of his world

Could it be…? That someone like him was meant to have something like this?

A wonderful destiny.

…

Am I truly awake?

…

Nameks did not normally dream. Sleeping was not a prerequisite for Nameks to develop, function, or regain strength. Even when they did sleep, they never did so long enough nor deep enough to experience it. Typical Namekian sleep constituted entering a brief hibernation-like phase where special brain waves that placed the mind in a deeper state of rest without going into REM were put into play. Dreaming to Nameks was quite like what unicorns were to humans…

Stuff of folklore.

Being an Earth-born Namek, Piccolo knew how to sleep the way humans did. He just never found much practical use for it. The rare times he did sleep (often when passed out from extreme exhaustion or knocked unconscious in battle), his dreams were passive, lucid ones—ones he was always fully aware of. For some reason—the only dreams Piccolo ever had were of long-forgotten memories, as clear-cut and vivid as waking reality itself. Never an assemblage of arbitrary albeit somewhat cohesive symbolisms; altogether whimsical and fanciful, though every bit real enough in their own right. Put simply:
Nothing at all like human dreams.

Generally, those memories he dreamt were echoes of Kami’s or his sire’s past—of a life and time much older than his reborn soul. Sporadically, one or two of Nail’s would get thrown in. Whatever it happened to be, he was forever an outside spectator to it, even if they were as good as his. The only dreams that belonged to him—the only memories that he knew for certain were his own—were of Gohan. Often before, that’s the only way Piccolo could discern that he was “asleep”. Those were the closest thing to human dreams he ever had…

Ironically, even when awake, everything to do with the boy felt like a dream; if not a more breathable, tangible surreality…

A reality forever beyond his reach…

Being bonded to Gohan was like severing that already nebulous distinction in his mind between wakefulness and dreaming. So much so, that he strongly suspected his present reality might just be part of one long-winding and intricate dream that he would eventually wake up from…

To find himself lost and alone all over again…

As was his morose, lacklustre world, pre-Gohan.

Bonded…?

Piccolo sat bolt upright, barely avoiding a forehead collision with his companion who had fallen on his rear in startlement.

“P-P… Piccolo-san…?”

The Namek remained silent for some suspended moments, adorning a faraway look… Before he finally turned to his partner and said:

“We… have not yet performed… sexual union.”

At that, Gohan’s jaw fell slack. The hybrid teenager was about to pinch himself in the cheek to reaffirm that he was awake, when his lover beat him to it. Only– it was a little off the mark.

“Waaaahh!”

The ebony-haired youth’s legs snapped together in reflex as his still very much unresolved (and very tender) rock-hardness was cupped and squeezed.

“P-P-P-P-Piccolo-san??!!”

“I knew it!” was all the Namek had to say after his deed, even as the halfbreed’s teary eyes addressed him in shock and confusion.

Fully intent on attending to his beloved Namek’s pleasure before all else, Gohan’s own “need” had been left unattended since Piccolo had drifted off over thirty minutes ago. Normally, that specific “problem” could have been easily resolved with a dose of good old-fashioned “self-help”. But it was pointless. Not while his beautiful Namek lay there sound asleep, looking for all the world like a fallen angel. It was too rare a treat to pass up! Piccolo hardly ever opted to sleep on his own if
the situation didn’t enforce it. And although he didn’t look any less enchanting to Gohan then, this time, as opposed to all the times the green-skinned warrior blacked out from battle injuries, he looked so serene and peaceful. To the Super Namek’s number one and most avid admirer in the world, the sight was no less than thrilling to behold!

It has, after all, always been one of his secret guilty pleasures to watch Piccolo sleep. Thus, no matter how many times he tried to “relieve” his need, the mouth-watering visage of his reposing lover so vulnerable and sinfully naked was going to keep him turned on anyway.

Said mouth-watering, naked lover blinked up at him, before pointing to the angry bulge standing tall and proud in his crotch area and saying matter-of-factly:

“You need to put that inside me to complete the act, am I correct?”

Thankfully, he wasn’t as prone to it as his mother, but Gohan felt like he was on the verge of a bite-size mental breakdown, unable to process how to respond to words he least expected to hear from Piccolo, of all creatures.

Just as off-kilter, his mentor continued to pay little heed to his befuddlement. True, Piccolo was still being attentive to his favourite pupil like he always was—just not to him per se, but more specifically, to an area of him down below…

The Namek’s antennae twitched minutely, seemingly engaged in some secret form of communication with his lover’s prominent “hardship”, which bounced friskily in response to the naughty touch it received earlier from the green apple of its eye. It valiantly tried to burst out to meet its mate from the now frazzled school slacks that Gohan had kept on as he waited for—

“Did I fall asleep?”

Gohan managed a dumb nod.

“Crud,” muttered Piccolo to himself. “It’s these flowers…”

Maybe he was still adjusting to this uncharacteristic new “sultry” side to his mentor’s personality but all the same, Gohan couldn’t help but worry. Did the sexual experience they shared just minutes ago cause Piccolo’s behaviour to be altered somehow? Was the pleasure too much for his beloved’s reserved mind? He was sure he hadn’t read anything about physical intimacy having drastic or adverse effects on Nameks (because he had, in fact, done his research beforehand). The last thing he wanted was for his beloved to get into anything he didn’t want to; the last thing he expected was Piccolo more raring to have a go at it than him. (He suspected that this was just one of those “too-good-to-be-true” situations giving him a wild case of paranoia because he was having so much difficulty believing that Piccolo was even still here and eagerly participating at all)…

Gohan knew that with the less complicated option of asexual reproduction available to Nameks—intraspecific sexual intercourse was not a requisite. Sex was almost exclusively a method of reproduction dedicated to complex interspecific breeding when combining and passing on genetic attributes of another outside their species to their offspring was the goal. Furthermore, unlike the bigger part of the hot-blooded galaxy, Nameks weren’t libidinous creatures by nature—therefore, weren’t exactly adventurous nor reckless with whom they “blended” with. Sexual intimacy was preternatural of the Namekian race’s traditional customs and—depending on whom they were mating with and why—could have a broad range of possible repercussions – most of which have yet to be documented, simply because it has likely never yet been done before.

Even for the highly adaptable and versatile race of Nameks or for the aggressive spacefaring and
indiscriminately miscegenetic Saiyajins, it could be said that theirs was a maverick of interspecific unions. How often do a Namek and a Saiyajin—both highly-evolved super hybrids of their kind—fall in love and decide to shake up the already diverse evolutionary gene pool? If they mated and successfully produced offspring, a combination as unheard of as theirs would undoubtedly be the first in the history of time—and quite possibly also the last. Therefore, there was no way to predict the outcome of such a mating, not with no antecedent to go by…

Gohan wasn’t even thinking that far into the future. All he was really concerned about then was his dearest Namek’s well-being. Of course, the half-Saiyajin also considered that this could simply be how Namekians normally behaved when stricken with the biological imperative to mate (as equally unbelievable to him as it may be)…

A timid hand reached out to feel Piccolo’s forehead for a fever, even if the owner of the hand knew that Nameks’ temperatures were almost always perfectly regulated and that they were almost never afflicted with any of the most common illnesses. That hand was promptly grabbed and deftly pulled closer along with the rest of the demi-Saiyajin until their noses were lightly touching.

“Shall we pick up where we left off?” Piccolo murmured huskily.

“P-pick… u-u-uhhh…”

“I’m sorry for falling aslepp. We can have proper intercourse now.”

“P-pro… uuuhhh…?” Gohan swallowed with some effort as his erection painfully stiffened further. “O-o-okay…”

“Are you alright?”

“Huh… Me?? Y-yeah, I’m great! Heh! Everything’s great! –More than great! Ha-ha!” Truth be told, he wasn’t feeling much like himself either. He had not imagined how superlatively inebriating so much ecstasy could be, and it was taking no less than all of his conscious effort to stay sober enough to be intelligible. “I just… didn’t expect you to be so… forthright.”

“I’m always forthright,” Piccolo stated, nose crinkled slightly as he second-guessed himself, “Is that… a bad thing on Earth… when it comes to mating?”

“What? Oh! No, not at all! At least– I don’t think it is, especially since… we’re lovers now.” The sentence ended in a breathy whisper as tinges of excitement travelled up Gohan’s spine. He grinned up at his mate goofily, eyes half-masts and cheeks on fire. “It’s actually darn-awfully cute…”

Running the gamut of all names he’s ever been called, Piccolo still couldn’t comprehend where “cute” figured into the general picture of him. He’s established that “cute” was a term Earthlings used on kittens, bunnies, and new-born babies… He’s never heard anyone use it on green-skinned giants before… But, he supposed that if Gohan used it on him…

“Cute is good… right?”

“Uh-huuuh…” Gohan practically drawled.

They moved in, decreasing the space between them until there was none; their mouths grazed and melded, tongues eagerly meeting and frolicking. Gratified hums and grunts vibrated off their chests as tongues probed, fenced, and twirled. All the while, their hips ground none-too-gently into each other’s already aching, hypersensitive groins.
“Piccolo-san…” Gohan panted as Piccolo drew back for air. “Are you… are you really okay with this?” Fiery pools of lapis lazuli possessed of steely determination bore into mud-brown counterparts, instantly absolving him of all apprehension.

Gohan’s breath is stolen from him as he kissed all over again and slowly pushed onto the cushy ground. Piccolo’s pliant lips moved over his so expertly and confidently, as though it hadn’t just learned what a kiss was only a few hours ago. It felt so incredible that the half-Saiyajin was hard-pressed to keep up, so utterly floored by this new come-hither assertive side that his lover was exhibiting. He was still, in fact, trying to wrap his head around it… Was this really the same Earth-born Namek who has, and in many ways, always will be, the most naïve of all the grown-up Z-Senshi when it came to romance?

Of course, it really wasn’t so implausible at all. Gohan knew well that unsophisticated naiveté didn’t necessarily equate to ignorance. Even for ordinary people, it was possible to know things hypothetically without first-hand experience; instinct was a terrific repository of boundless knowledge when harmonized with intellect. For all his inexperience, Piccolo was a genius in his own right; sagacious beyond his years and having access to wisdom as far-reaching and infinite as the cosmos itself. It should not really come as a surprise that his brilliant lover suddenly knew things he did not only hours ago.

Notwithstanding the fairly logical premise, he still couldn’t shake off his unease. The halfbreed was discovering many things about himself as well – things he wouldn’t have believed before if he were not experiencing it at present. He never thought himself a jealous and paranoid type of lover, but when it came to his lifelong infatuation, he realized how impossible it was not to be…

In his mind, there was no other creature more alluring and more desirable than his dearest and most revered Piccolo-sama.

“I have not been sexually involved with anyone else, if that is what you’re thinking,” Piccolo said with an impressively straight face when he unhooked his lips to stare at his lover.

“Gah!” Gohan reddened. “P-Piccolo-san! Don’t randomly read my mind like that! It’s embarrassing!”

“I didn’t.”

The hybrid-Saiyajin knew Piccolo cared about him as much as any former megalomaniac ever could about anything. But reformed as he was, being attuned to the mood of the battlefield always came more naturally to the taciturn warrior than being perceptive about people’s feelings, and yet, just now…

Gohan couldn’t stay flustered for long—not when his darling dearest kept blowing his mind. His Namek was just so full of surprises today!

“You’re amazing,” Gohan cooed, crushing purple-hued green lips in a bruising kiss, pouring into it what he could of his inexhaustible, undying adoration for the man.

‘I just… can’t stand the thought of you not being all mine—and only mine.’

Piccolo blushed heavily underneath the combined assault of kisses and adulation, still not quite used to it enough to remember to counterattack.

“I can’t imagine…” Gohan continued in between languid lip smacks, “…anyone who wouldn’t want… someone as perfect as you.”
“Well,” Piccolo scoffed. “I for one, can’t imagine any other Earthling dotty enough to want me—the way you do.”

“You might be surprised,” Gohan refuted meekly, eyes burning something fierce.

“I would,” Piccolo quipped with one of his (indecently sexy) signature impish smirks.

Whether the Namek knew that he looked inordinately boner-worthy whenever he did that, Gohan couldn’t tell— but he wasn’t about to take the blatant seduction sitting down…

The demi-Saiyajin made sure to squelch it with vengeful open-mouthed kisses over the expanse of his lover’s gracefully corded neck; deeply inhaling, tasting, and suckling— painting the smooth jade flesh with more bruises and bite marks; inwardly rejoicing when his cheeky Namek was reduced to reticent groans and whimpers.

Soon their mouths gravitated back to each other as hands persistently roamed, tongues slow danced, and lip-locks intensified; all amidst the stifled moans and breathless utterances of each other’s names. Bleeding, angry patterns of crimson-violet formed beneath Gohan’s nails as he wrapped his arms around the robust body atop him, grabbing on with even fiercer possessiveness.

“Piccolo-san, all mine.”

‘Gohan…’ Piccolo’s deep rumbling purr tickled his mind. ‘It’s irrelevant to me whether there are others who desire me or not… Because I don’t want anyone else…’

“…I never have.”

The statement was poignant enough to freeze time for Gohan. He stopped and stared at his most exalted mentor, dearest friend, and one truly adored love of his life.

“Stop fretting now,” Piccolo whispered, affectionately wiping a stray tear travelling down his lover’s flushed cheek.

Gohan slowly sat up and flung his arms around Piccolo to softly sob against his chest. The Namek soothed the boy as best he could – petting unruly ebony locks amidst gentle pats.

Finally, Gohan resurfaced and cradled Piccolo’s face, smiling reassuringly and stroking with heart-stopping gentleness.

“I love you.”

The Earth-born Namek’s own hands went up to cup the demi-Saiyajin’s fingers.

“I know…”

…

There is only one thing that I have always been sure of in this life…

…”

“I love you, Gohan.”
There is nothing else in the world I could love more.

Piccolo let himself be pushed down and straddled against the soft grass… Let his lips be claimed and kissed as his body was touched and revered…

It wasn’t so much as fulfilling a destiny as it was surrendering to it…

Wasn’t as much of destiny as it was fate.

I never dreamed that someone with as soul as beautiful as yours could desire someone like me.

You gave me the chance to be something more than what I was meant for.

I don’t have much to give, but let this be my humble gift to you.

My body. My soul. All of me… And even more, if I could.

Thank you, Gohan.

Perhaps with this…

I can make the dream last forever…

Consummating their bond, with all of Gohan’s faculties intact, was an intense cathartic experience.

That was all Piccolo knew as they continued to indulge in each other in that paradisiacal flower bed within that sacred forest. He had meant to give without expecting in return but was so thoroughly worshipped instead; kissed and held so tenderly that his heart ached from being made to feel such a fragile kind of love – a love he knew he didn’t deserve.

But Gohan loved him. The boy’s touches left no room for doubt. Everywhere those lips perched and nestled, every sigh that tickled his skin, every breath that carried his name like it was the only thing that mattered—like he was truly the most precious thing to Gohan in the entire world…
The Earth-born Namek has only ever cried out of anger, sadness, and frustration. The only time he had ever shed tears for other reasons before, he didn’t understand what they were. Relief, gratitude, and even joy—feelings that transcended everything that he believed his former self was capable of—was all because of Gohan. Since then, his tears, and all his emotions have always been because of and for only Gohan. Even now...

Piccolo has never experienced happiness so devastating that hot tears wouldn’t stop filling his eyes and spilling down his cheeks; utterly lost as to why being loved so dearly by this one person could make his heart ache even more than being unloved and even reviled by the rest of the whole world. But what mystified him the most was why those tears were reflected on his lover’s sweet, beguiling face...

Everything about those moments seemed magical and perfect, as though their bodies were performing a ritual that they had known since the beginning of time, and yet, was only about to have their first experience of. The lingering fragrances of the tulip beds, suffused with their mixing scents and arousals, all coalesced into an intoxicating ambrosia that more thoroughly submerged their minds in wild currents of untamed desire and unbearable bliss.

And somehow, though unspoken, they both knew it then... The tears in their eyes were their reunited souls rejoicing. They were the two star-crossed soulmates who were always meant to bond as lovers one day. And that day has finally come...

*Everything was as it was meant to be.*

Only when every inch of rubicund-crested, verdant skin had been lavishly caressed by Gohan’s doting lips did the youth sweep aside Piccolo’s long legs to join their bodies in the most intimate way. He palmed his lover’s inner thighs, assiduously petting the flesh there like a sculptor moulding a masterpiece; fingers teasing so close but not quite close enough. It made Piccolo’s head spin faster and his limbs quake harder, so feverishly aroused by then, that he could no longer hold back the delirious moans.

Barely being able to keep his eyes open only magnified the sensation of one stout, calloused digit as it slowly but surely entered him; rolling gently and twisting from side to side until it was deep inside him, before it moved out and then back in again. Piccolo’s breaths quickened as the finger kept repeating this action with painstaking deliberation, attempting to widen the narrow aperture and entrench itself deeper within him each time. When his lover was able to complete the movement with relative ease, a second finger aligned with the first one before once again, plunging inside him. The same measured process commenced, only this time, it took a little longer—which was long enough—before a third finger joined the pair.

The Earth-born Namek was sweating all over and incoherent by then. Blood steadily oozed from growing puncture wounds in his lips where his fangs were embedded—which only dug in deeper when the fingers resumed its slow pumping. This time, along with the action, Gohan’s mouth enfolded his love’s most sensitive external part—which had now bloated to the size of an adult thumb. Piccolo’s uninhibited cries only rose in volume and intensity at the amplified torment. He clenched his jaw and gnashed his teeth when his opening gushed even more to compensate as it was repeatedly forced to accommodate another of his lover’s thick brawny digits; all the while, his sensitivity continuously swelled in size as it was fervidly slurped and sucked.

The Super Namek knew that his hybrid Saiyajin mate’s size defied even “above average”, but he
began to wonder just how wet and wide his half-Saiyajin lover needed him to be; and more importantly– if he was even going to be able to last for much longer. He all but wanted to beg his partner to get it on with already or he was going to go over the edge (and quite possibly—very much unintentionally—fall asleep) again, before they could fulfil their union.

Just when Piccolo thought his head was going to explode from overstimulation, the fingers leave his fleshy depths at last... to finally be substituted by the tip of the demi-Saiyajin’s redoubtable hardness poised at his entrance. He was easily coaxed into a tongue-filled kiss which proved an effective momentary distraction for the impending entry—a mental preparation to go hand-in-hand with the extortionate physical one... All of which unfortunately turned out to be—much to the green-skinned warrior’s chagrin—not nearly enough...

Gohan’s first experimental push compressed his body hard into the semi-solid ground, yet only succeeded in wreaking incredible pain to his core which caused fresh tears to prickle his eyes and his thighs to quake uncontrollably.

“P-Piccolo-san, are you—?”

“I-I’m f-fine…! Just— haah… k-keep going.”

The truth was, Piccolo’s words were big for his bravado. He was disorientated and uncomfortable, and of course, unbelievably aroused. All that impressive patience in making sure that he was richly lubricated could not help the fact that his sinewy lover was deceptively well-endowed; and at that moment, for some reason, Gohan’s manhood seemed even hulkier than Piccolo remembered—something he didn’t think was even possible. All the alien feelings and sensations clashed and crashed together in one daunting wave after another in his muddled consciousness, rendering his usual equanimity momentarily out of reach...

But he was not some feeble, squeamish mortal who made a fuss in physically trying situations—not any ordinary Namek either who couldn’t withstand punishment (even if he was still fairly new to this kind). He was a seasoned warrior who was no stranger to pain. He may be on the receiving end now, but no, Piccolo certainly wasn’t about to back down and succumb to the same trifling pain and suffering that typical weak-bodied *female Earthlings did. He was determined to brave Gohan’s affection in its full force and in all its glory. He trusted Gohan. He was going to accept the boy’s love.

Piccolo grimaced when the boy finally managed to breach past his entrance and sheathe a little more of himself than just the very tip in their second attempt, but had only managed to progress farther in by a fraction. After trying several more experimental thrusts in vain, Gohan collapsed on top of his Namek.

Getting the brunt of the ridiculously drawn-out foreplay had Piccolo dizzy and drained. He too, had done what he could to assist his lover but after what seemed like endless gruelling hours of overly cautious thrusts wherein he felt that Gohan hesitated more than necessary, he began to feel frustrated—slightly peaky and even a tad peeved. He knew he wasn’t the more knowledgeable one when it came to this particular activity which is why he let Gohan take the lead. But in the back of his mind, Piccolo couldn’t help thinking that his partner was being compulsively fastidious with minimizing his discomfort in spite of how long the boy had already been enduring his own.

*How could Gohan even hold out this long?*

But Piccolo already knew the answer to his question. Gohan was simply being the way he has always been. *The boy was too soft when he was sober.* The same ever kind-hearted, gentle, and self-sacrificing little boy he knew had simply grown into a young man. The world may not see it
the way he did, but he knew: *that was where the lad’s true strength lay – in his pure and kind heart.* Even when they had been more of enemies and short of friends, despite all his cruel provocations, it was always the hardest thing in world for Gohan to do anything that he perceived would harm him… Now that they were lovers, he should have known better than to expect any less than obsessive solicitude.

Elfin ears and purple-blood stained lips were courted with hushed supplications of adoration and reassurance after Gohan’s failed initial attempts which left them both light-headed and fairly winded. The half-Saiyajin had tried pushing from every angle available to him in their current position—even lifting his lover’s hips a little higher and pressing his thighs further away. But Piccolo’s muscles down there just refused to yield to his overtures. They were locked in a stasis, with no choice but to take a well-paced breather before any more reattempts.

Neither of their inexperienced minds imagined that the act of penetration alone could be as arduous and drawn-out as this – it was beginning to feel like some form of insane sensual torture. Piccolo was already sopping wet, but Gohan was having second thoughts about trying to manually stretch his lover some more before attempting the real thing… He made to pull out when the action is stopped by exquisitely powerful fingers suddenly clamped bruisingly around his forearms.

“D-don’t—!” Piccolo wheezed. “…D-don’t pull out. L-let me adjust!”

“O-okay…” Gohan obeyed, cheeks tinting. He nuzzled his lips and nose against his beloved’s handsome chiselled face. “Piccolo-san… relax.”

“I am relaxed!” The Namek groused, cheeks and ears colouring even darker as his thighs were anchored over his lover’s sturdy shoulders and fingers reached up to massage one of his erect antennae.

“Well, then…” the demi-Saiyajin grunted as he added the tiniest pressure in an attempt to deepen their connection. “You need to relax some more.”

“Just do it, Gohan,” Piccolo rasped hoarsely, claws involuntarily digging deeper into the boy’s shoulders. He felt so woozy and enfeebled that he couldn’t tell anymore if they were still lying down, standing up, or if gravity was still working the right way.

“O-okay, b-but—”

“Stop pulling out!”

“I’m not—” Gohan set his jaw hard. It was taking all his will power to stay focused. “It’s just… You’re so… ahh- tight and– slippery, ngh! I’m getting… pushed out!” His arms which were now firmly planted on either side of them for support were shaking badly; intermittent beads of sweat cascaded down the bridge of his nose. But still, he afforded his partner a weak smile. “Honestly, Piccolo-san, I don’t think even my four-year-old self would fit inside yo—ow!”

Gohan rubbed the sore spot on his head where Piccolo’s fist had clunked him.

“Stop dawdling and just get on with it!”

“I’m not dawdling! I just don’t want to make you bleed—aaahhh!”

They both cringed as tiny shocks shot up their loins from their point of connection.

“D-don’t squeeze me, Piccolo-san…! Or I’ll die!”
Piccolo growled in sensual agony.

“Uhhh, Kamisama…” Gohan swooned as the vibrations travelled from his embedded tip down to his painfully taut sacs. “D-don’t do that either, please? If you don’t want me t-to f-finish right now…!”

Piccolo groaned, letting his head fall back to the ground as the world continued to spin while Gohan slumped forward onto his chest. They stayed that way for some seconds.

“Ne, Piccolo-sama… You can stretch certain parts of your body at will, right? Can’t you… you know… will yourself to get even just a little less tight down there?”

Piccolo grit his teeth. He knew that it was a harmless question—a sensible one even—and that Gohan was just trying to help. But he felt exasperated that it was even being brought up…

Sure, he can generally increase his mass and overall size—even elongate his limbs, but that required preparation and rigorous conditioning. Besides, he only acquired those skills for practical application in battle, it’s not like he practiced enlarging his sexual organs individually as part of his training (what in Kami’s balls would he have needed that for in the first place? He didn’t even know that body part existed until recently…!).

“If I could do that, don’t you think I would have done it by now?” the Namek grumbled.

“Oh… You make a good point, love.” The halfbreed lifted his head to his lover, a sheepish grin already in place. “Well, at least, I have a more defined picture of what I’m working with now…”

“It’s not my fault you’re monstrous!” Piccolo narrowed his eyes, cheeks ablaze. “How did you get so huge anyway? It wasn’t like that when you were younger.”

“S-sorry! It’s not like I can help that part of me!” Gohan pouted. “I can’t control my growth the way Nameks do either.”

“That’s why you should just stop hesitating and shove it all in already! I’m no frail princess! I’m not breakable!”

Light-headed laughter vibrated from Gohan’s chest down to his semi-impaled hardness making Piccolo groan again.

“Uhh, Gohan… Please—ahh!” Piccolo choked on a whine when Gohan pulled out of him all of a sudden.

He was all but ready to chuck out his pride and beg further when in one swift manoeuvre, he was turned over, positioned prostrate on all fours, and straddled from behind.

One pearl of sweat after another trickled down the fine tip of his nose as he felt his mate’s rock-hardness make contact with his throbbing heat. He was then teased and probed and rimmed by that hardness for what seemed like an eternity until his limbs violently shook; practically going deaf from how loudly his heart pounded in his ears, involuntary moans spilled unabated from his parted, quivering lips amidst stuttering breaths and clipped gasps.

Burly hands flattened over and stroked his contoured hips, giving his perfectly shaped globes a meaningful squeeze, before travelling down then high up between his thighs to pry both his legs farther apart. The abrupt action forced most of Piccolo’s weight on his forearms and incidentally with his rump stuck higher up in the air, shamelessly bared for his lover to exploit. Those possessive hands moved back to his fully exposed buttocks, fondling and squeezing while his
mating’s pulsating erection continued to torment his weeping crevice—nudging and rubbing against it without actually invading.

Piccolo chewed on his lip to keep from crying out loud, talons ruthlessly raking into the ground beneath him for any sort of purchase... Whatever Gohan was doing to him, it was causing an unfamiliar pressure to build up into a rage in his core—causing him to ache desperately for a release that continually eluded him. It was maddening.

The boy’s Ki which was fragmented and vacillating, had now consolidated into a stream of concentrated, commanding pulses – a mere heartbeat away from ascension. As much was confirmed by the strong fingers now cinching his hips like a vice. Piccolo shivered as the stern display of dominance is starkly contrasted by a trail of moist kisses delicately traced up the his spine.

“Piccolo-sama...” Gohan mewled low and breathy against his skin. “You’ll always be my princess.”

The wind is knocked out of Piccolo’s system the very next moment as the demi-Saiyajin’s impossibly thick girth barrelled into him and filled him to the brim in one swift and blindingly punishing thrust.

A soundless scream rent his throat as everything whited out in a brilliant explosion of stars. By the time the white spots cleared from his vision, it was blurry with hot, stinging wetness; saliva steadily trailed down from his lips, as he was, for some time, unable to close his mouth. Gohan was an obedient lover; he did exactly as he was told and didn’t hold back the slightest.

In those time-stopping seconds, the Namek’s mind went completely blank. All he could register was the glorious feeling of fullness intermingling with searing hot pain scorching through every fibre of his being. Involuntary tremors racked his entire body, teeth chattered, and lungs laboured for air like he had just dived a hundred miles underwater and back in one short breath. The demi-Saiyajin was buried so deep and stretching him so spectacularly that his groin area had gone partially numb—every space in him felt occupied to bursting that even oxygen couldn’t find its way to his lungs.

Even then, he wanted to turn around and grab his lover to remind him to cut to the chase already, when he was suddenly mollified with soothing kisses to his ears and nape. He could do little in protest as his body still reeled with aftershocks from the mind-numbing force of the intrusion. He could barely move, let alone make demands; he was entirely at the mercy of his Saiyajin lover.

With the kisses to his back and neck unabated, one of Gohan’s muscular hands palmed his chest while the other slinked down to zero in on their point of joining. Piccolo’s eyes scrunched up as fingers richly lathered itself in his dribbling silky dew before moving to his engorged nub which had now grown significantly larger – a Namek’s version of a penis.

Gohan ensconced the organ in his hand and massaged the ribbed length of it; his thumb delicately kneading the hyper-sensitive tip. He continued this, building into a rhythm, as he eased out of his beloved’s body and squeezed back inside to the hilt, synchronizing his movements and slowly escalating into a frenetic tempo.

“Nng-ahnnn!! Aaaaahhhhh!”

The noises from Piccolo’s mouth sounded so needy even to his own ears that it made his cheeks sizzle, and yet— he was helpless to stop the steady stream of frenzied grunts and bleats that were being forced out of him with every yank and stab of that delicious thickness into his prone,
accepting body. His sobs lose all modesty when his lover pumped more enthusiastically, intensifying the friction on both of his focal points being stimulated.

Gohan only seemed to get bigger, longer, and harder as he impaled himself faster and deeper within his mate’s heavenly tightness. Their visions pulsed and their breaths crescendoed as all of their senses were propelled higher and higher to the very zenith of their threshold.

“Aaaahh!”

“Nng… uhnn…! P-Piccolo-s-sangghh!”

“Unnhh… G-Gohannghh!”

“Y -you feel… so good…!”

Gohan made sure to prolong their joining for as long as he could, until the relentless pistoning finally reached its denouement when he slammed all the way in one final bruising time. Piccolo’s convulsing heat closed in on him like a molten steel trap, keeping him firmly buried inside him to the hilt.

They both went over the edge, one long mind-numbing release after another, until Gohan had injected every last drop of his seed deep within Piccolo’s belly and their mixed essence overflowed and pooled on the ground…

Too exhausted to do much else, they collapsed, still connected, onto the cushioned earth.

Piccolo’s body buzzed with aftershocks from his string of powerful orgasms while Gohan clung to him from behind – both completely spent and contentedly surrendering to the relaxing albeit enervating afterglow. Spooned together with arms and legs tangled, mumbled endearments were exchanged, and soon—beneath the dimming tranquil skies and surrounded by the sweet aroma of tulips, earth, and each other—they slumbered.

…

I have never thought myself worthy of the honour of being able to live for another, much less receive such devotion in return; someone like me who was born into this world for no other purpose but to serve as a vessel of my sire’s revenge.

That was all I was then—all I knew.

But somehow, a part of me always felt that there was more…

I thought that it was a simple restlessness of youth—a lack of discipline that could be corrected by training of mind. I was convinced that it would go away once I had fulfilled my mission to kill my sire’s archenemy…

I was wrong.

I met you and you brought a stillness and quietude to my heart that I didn’t know possible.

Despite who I was and what I was born to do, you welcomed me into your life and compelled me to stay. Before I knew it, you had warmed my cold and barren heart and made it your home. You built the foundations so sound and so deep that it rooted onto my soul—ramifying and nurturing,
until I could no longer drive you out…

You became my world.

The deeper meaning and purpose of me.

Even if I did not know it then, what it was to love as a Namek does, my soul that has lived a hundred lifetimes, already did.

…

-X-

All the stars were already in their positions in the inky-night sky when they awoke.

After a quick dip in the nearby lake where they kissed and appeased their sore bodies with more love-making, they were snug in fresh new garbs again. Sprinkles of fireflies made up their enchanting entourage as they walked through the forest hand in hand, basking in the hallowed silence of their newfound idyllic sanctuary.

Piccolo found himself mesmerized by their glued hands and interwoven fingers—at how Gohan was squeezing every now and then, clasping him so tightly as though he never intended to let go—and he secretly hoped Gohan never would.

He had known it all along, even if he never really understood how or why—even before he knew what love was:

Gohan chose him; loved him.

Gohan was so easy to love – there was no mystery there. But for anyone to love someone like him, much less choose to love him this way and above everyone else? Even for a soul as wise and timeless as his, it remained one of the universe’s greatest mysteries.

The Earth-born Namek knew little to none yet of what rituals humans or Saiyajins upheld to bond with another, but the soul, unlike the mind, didn’t need words nor reasons to understand… Having experienced that ultimate sacred spiritual bliss together with his mate had not only reinforced their already special bond but, more than anything, helped Piccolo affirm in his heart what his mind didn’t understand; it helped him awaken to the reality that he was loved and wanted as someone’s mate—that he was now directly responsible for Gohan’s happiness. It helped him feel what it was like to be touched by a soul so pure—to become one with it…

To belong to Gohan…

The one he cherished most of all.

…

You’ve always had me. All of me. Didn’t you know it? I may not be good at showing emotions yet, but you need not ask, I will always be yours.
I know that even everything that I am is not enough remuneration for the one who has saved my soul; I do not know what else I could give to be able to show you my devotion. But know this:

I chose to live for you; that I may die for you.

And for you, I would live and die again, as many times as this body and this world would permit.

I wanted to protect you and keep you safe—be a part of your life, no matter how insignificant. You allowed me to be that— and so much more. You gave me a reason to want to exist; a reason that was entirely my own.

It's more than I ever dared dream of; never had I dared dream of more.

I will always be here for you, Gohan.

And I will continue to be.

For as long as you need me.

…

“Are you happy, Piccolo-sama?”

“Aa.”

“If Piccolo-san is happy, then I am the happiest of all.”

Piccolo laughed.

Happiness. Something that he was completely inept at being or even understanding before. But it wasn’t so difficult now—being on the receiving end of Gohan’s kisses; being filled with Gohan’s essence; being able to taste Gohan’s tears…

If anything, it was impossible to not be happy.

Was it possible to be more than happy?

Because now the word “happy” didn’t seem to suffice. Now that he knew what happiness was, he was convinced that what Gohan made him feel…? It was something even better…

“Happy Hatchday, Piccolo-san,” Gohan breathed with a kiss to what part of his jawline the boy could reach, smiling up at him afterwards with bleary eyes. “I’m so happy you were born.”

Piccolo drew him close, feeling Gohan hiccup against his chest as his gesture is reciprocated with a crushing embrace. After a long moment, the boy leaned up for a bout or two of more unhurried kisses; then he shrunk back down and burrowed deeper into his mentor’s body.

“Piccolo-san…” Gohan began after some silence.

“Mn.”
“I know my birthday is still over a week away but… I was hoping that maybe… you could grant me an early birthday wish…?”

Piccolo’s heart swelled. “Anything that I can give you, Gohan, you know I gladly will.”

The boy exhaled an airy, giddy chuckle.

“I wish… that Piccolo-san would always be mine and only mine. For always.”

“I already am, Gohan,” Piccolo said with some confusion. “You need not ask.”

“I didn’t mean it the way it’s always been… With you on the outside looking in, and me on the inside looking out… I don’t just want to share my world and my happiness with you, or for you to simply share yours. Do you understand what my wish is, Piccolo-san…? I want no distinctions this time…”

“No… distinctions…?”

Gohan tilted his chin up until their noses were touching, searching those scarlet lapis lazuli orbs with his glistening russet-browns, and then, mouthing words that seemed to ride the wind like the last vestiges of a receding dream…

“My wish is…”

Words that the wind might have easily blown away off to the skies or some distant land, forever to be forgotten or dismissed as a folly of his imagination – words that Piccolo Daimaoh Jr never thought he would hear in this lifetime or the next…

“…For Piccolo-san to marry me.”

End of Part 2.
The final chapter Intermission 2: “Graveyard of Memories” is up next.

Chapter End Notes

*female Earthlings* - I’m not being sexist here, because I certainly don’t mean that *all* females are weak-bodied. This is a sublimated response to some stories I’ve read waaaay before that portrayed Piccolo a little too Mary-Sue for my taste – whiny and fussy like a weak little pussy during sex. In short, not at all like a “man”. (Yes, he’s got a “v” but he’s still technically more male than female.)

If I had to pick which chapter I had the most difficulty writing, it’s this, hands down. This was very ambitious of me I will admit. I wanted it to be so many things at the same time that I wasn’t so sure how to pull off. For one, I don’t usually write full-blown romantic sex scenes graphically (I’d rather let the lovers have their privacy, if you know what I mean)… But I also wanted to see if it could be done – a love scene that was both erotic and sexy, and still artful and cute (HanP just makes me want to so
badly!). At the same time, I wanted Piccolo’s emotional reactions to Gohan’s confession and their first romantic sexual encounter with regards to his internal and very personal existentialism crisis, thus far. I don’t really know if I accomplished all that since I always feel inferior as a writer (haha), but I did what I could. Merp. Hey, if you enjoyed it, then I’m one happy camper!

We only have the final intermission and epilogue to go before this story wraps up. As always, cheers for the R&R, lovelies!
Chapter Summary

"If not that, what else is there?"

Chapter Notes

**Chapter Warning:** Implied Underage Violence!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There once was a castle, as grand and majestic as a mountain. In it, dwelt a fair princess who lived a happy life. But not many years after she was born, her freedom was snatched away by a vicious dragon who decided to make her home its territory.

For many years, there came no one brave enough to attempt to cross the moat of flames surrounding the castle to slay the fearsome beast…

For many years, the burning landscape and the cold isolation was all she knew…

My wish is… for Piccolo-san to…

-x-

…

…

“Marry me!”

It took the lot of his will power and full aggregation of “happy thoughts” not to shrink from the dark foreboding halations of his green-skinned playmate’s most withering death glare to date. He was, after all, supposed to be the “brave knight” (even if he was only two years old).

“Why.”

“Huh?” Said brave knight fidgeted on his pretend-horse. “Err, well, b-because… t-the knight just s-saved you from the dragon…?”
“Why?”

“Uhh, uhm… B-because… that’s how the story goes… Remember?”

“Why!”

At that point, the “brave knight” looked about ready to throw in the towel being the brave knight…

“Zurui yo, Ma-chan. That’s not how a game of make-believe is played. That’s why it’s ‘pretend’. You’re supposed to just say ‘yes’, not ask why…”

“WHY.”

The corners of his eyes began to prickle. He always did his best not to get unnerved whenever his best and only friend got querulous; and on most days if he concentrated hard enough, he often succeeded. But of course, even two-year-old prodigies had their off-days…

“The princess has to marry the knight for the story to have a happy ending, you see…” the young boy tried once more. “It’s custom—”

“It is customary for all knights on this woebegone planet to marry everyone they save from dragons?”

“Err, well, n-no—”

“And furthermore—!”

“—but…”

“—Why the devils do I have to wear these ridiculous twigs on my head??”

Petals flew as the daisy chain was unceremoniously ripped off and discarded; to which he failed not to grimace.

Alighting from his pretend-horse—a dried up tree branch uncannily shaped like the animal—he got down on his knees to pick up the now mutilated prop.

“This is your pretend-tiara, Ma-chan. You need to wear it because you’re playing the role of the princess.”

“See, why in Kami’s unholy name am I the princess?? I’m the one always rescuing your helpless arse! I’m stronger than you, so I should be the knight!”

His pout lengthened, brows meeting in a pensive crease on his young forehead as he got back on his feet. For a moment of weighted silence, it seemed that he would actually cry – all the precursors were already present on his face: the shiny moisture budding at the corners of his eyes, the heaving shoulders, the quivering downturned lips…

But no.

The young demi-Saiyajin didn’t. Instead, he wiped his face on his sleeve, squared his shoulders, and put on a steely expression.

“That’s exactly why, Ma-chan.” He chewed on his already bruised lip to forestall all the tears bearing down on his fragile resolve. “You’re always the one rescuing me! For once, even if it’s only
pretend for now, I want to be the one rescuing you!”

He courageously met his friend’s scarlet orbs which for the life of them could never look as terror-inspiring as he knew Ma-chan wanted them to be—at least, not to him. While naïvety was a crime he could not be held liable for at two years of age, he was, to some degree, guided by an instinct sharper than most others…

After more than a year into their friendship, the young hybrid had gathered that Ma-chan was no sunshine faerie—definitely not among any of the cheerier bunches of their kind. His best guess was that Ma-chan was more of a dark faerie, perhaps a *moon elf… Not that he knew enough about faeries or sprites in general to be more certain. (There wasn’t enough reliable factual material about them written yet; most of them were fictional.)

Which kept whatever speculations Gohan had about Ma-chan remain speculations for a very long time. His sullen friend never affirmed nor denied it – quite possibly because he’s never dared ask. Much of what he thought he knew of his enigmatic friend was left to his uninitiated imagination. Ma-chan never spoke about himself, period. But he liked Ma-chan, regardless. That was the one thing he knew for sure.

The truth of the matter was that he liked Ma-chan so much, that everything he didn’t know about him didn’t matter—it didn’t even matter if Ma-chan liked him back. Although, surely, the fact that the sullen faerie stayed even if he didn’t have to, had to count for something, right? It could very well mean that his feelings weren’t completely unreciprocated… At least, that’s how the young halfbreed liked to believe it so…

Perhaps, a little too much.

“I know that I’m small and weak now. But when I grow up I’ll get bigger and stronger– then, I’ll be the one protecting you! Besides…” He gave a small smile, hoping to come off as completely sincere without sounding ingratiating, “Princesses are brave and strong too, you know.”

The daisy chain gets some quick repairs before being replaced atop the head of his “princess” who rewarded him with a most un-princess-like, not-half-bad-attempt at a murderous scowl, which he did his best to deflect with a nervous titter.

“C’mon, Ma-chan… If the princess and the knight don’t live happily ever after, their story will be a sad one…”

“…Don’t you want a happy ending?”

…

…

“Truer Than Love”

Intermission 2: “Graveyard of Dreams”

“I can’t believe you, Gokuu-sa!! How can you just ignore this?”
The strapping man being addressed, surfaced from the almost entirely obliterated breakfast spread, and blinked dumbly at his wife’s back as she soaked dish after another in warm soapy water. He had actually been trying to say something along the lines of ‘Huh? What are we talking about again?’, but ended up spraying rather large particles of half-chewed food in all directions instead. Chi-chi took the time to deliberately wipe her hands on her apron and regard him with arms akimbo and a weary look of disapproval in her big brown eyes.

Contrary to popular belief, the Earth-grown Saiyajin did pick up quite well when the situation called for it. He knew by now that his wife’s nettledmood was his cue to stop masticating and start paying full attention to her (*if* he wanted to keep eating decent home-cooked meals three times a day, that is). The picked-clean dinosaur bone gets stuffed in with the rest of the gluttonous amounts of food already in his maw and chewed in record speed. After one mighty swallow, he wiped his mouth clean, pounded his chest to help ease the half-chewed cud down the right pipe, and a contented sigh later, tried again:

“Uhm… Isn’t it a bit too early for you to be all worked up, Chi-chi?”

“It’s never too late or too early for a parent to be concerned about their child! Really, Gokuu-sa!!! You’re his father! It’s your responsibility! You should be keeping a closer eye on Gohan-cha! If only you helped me actively parent our son more, these atrocious anomalies would not be happening!”

The Saiyajin did his best not to flinch or slink away from his wife’s jarring reproachful vocalizations. Instead, he followed the distressed woman’s smouldering glare to the countertop where lay…

…Gohan’s drawing pad?

“Wait a minute… Does he know that you have that? Shouldn’t we return it?”

“That’s beyond the point!” Chi-chi snapped. “You should be more concerned about what’s in it!”

Deftly catching the sketchbook as it is tossed his way, Gokuu reluctantly opened it and paged through at random… Doodles of nature and some interesting-looking creatures filled the pages… He scratched his head, honestly not understanding what was so wrong about it. Certainly, he had no problem if his son had an artistic streak; quite the opposite, he was rather proud even – the sketches were pretty darned good for a two-year-old.

What’s so anomalous about this? he wondered. Gokuu looked up at his wife unsure of what reaction she expected from him. The tempestuous former princess of Mount Frypan was tapping her foot impatiently, clearly greatly displeased at his less than definitive response so far.

“Well…???”

-x-

Before turning one and a half, not very long before he mastered verbal communication, Son Gohan Jr had successfully learned how to read all by himself—and by the time he turned two, was in fact, already a voracious reader. His parents didn’t know it— but by then, he’s already read all the
schoolbooks in his bookcase more than a dozen times over; inadvertently memorizing the contents of every single one – verbatim.

When he could bear it no longer and hungered to read more (for he read much faster than Chi-chi and Gyuumaoh could replenish his supply of new books), he learnt the way to the nearest library in town from a map; and with help from Nimbus, made a secret trip there, where he was rewarded with the joyful experience of being able to read his very first book of “made-up” stories.

Atop an isolated hillock beneath a lone tree’s expansive shade is where he would read with Ma-chan, getting lost in imaginary worlds that made them long for better realities. In a lot of ways, Gohan could relate to the princess who had spent most of her life in a tower locked up by her overprotective mother; while Ma-chan envied the space pirates who had not a care in the world, exploring vast galaxies and doing whatever they pleased, living for no one else but themselves.

But Chi-chi didn’t need to be let in on her son’s “little secret” to keep him indoors for days on end when she deemed it necessary. She didn’t need a reason – she was his mother after all; and whatever she did was for him and his future. Even the finest of days held no sway over Chi-chi whenever she wanted to use her “mother” card – which, to Gohan’s disappointment, became increasingly frequent. The more he tried to reason with her, the more inexorable she got. And so, he was left with virtually no other option but to yield…

Absentmindedly, Gohan turned a page, not really seeing any of the letters or diagrams. It was the fifth consecutive day of non-stop studying in his room. Chi-chi had been diligently keeping tabs on him lately, checking regularly if he was hitting the books as hard as his father threw punches. She was adamant that he stayed indoors to devote the entire day to studying more subjects; he was already levels ahead of children his age and she intended to keep it that way. Thinking that average lessons no longer challenged her son’s genius-level intellect, hence his distractedness, she decided to up the ante to keep him on his toes… While it was true that the brilliant toddler was bored, the reason behind it was something that Chi-chi could have never imagined…

‘Our baby must be feeling ill, Gokuu-sa!’ Gohan had “overheard” Chi-chi in one of her morning fulminations the day before. His father’s excessive training and fighting is what she used to endlessly badger her husband for, but nowadays, the main focus of their “lively discussions” have shifted to their “wayward” son and his less-than-ideal behaviour of late. His worsening bouts of torpor even in the early hours of day was getting harder and harder to hide from Chi-chi, and Gokuu’s efforts to conciliate her usually fell on deaf ears. Weirdly, Gohan felt proud that he was able to relieve his father of some of the pressure in some way; he always felt bad that his mother was constantly on his case. (Though, he wasn’t so sure if the switch in target made a difference at all, considering that Chi-chi’s agitation over the matter at hand anything but diminished.)

The clock bemoaned another hour of the waning morning – all of that fine morning of that said fine day being spent pouring over his textbooks, hunched over his desk for so long that he was falling asleep all over it. His forehead would hit the pile of open books on his desk, startling him into sitting bolt upright, which would then be followed by a vigorous shake of head – poor half-hearted attempts to dispel the fog of drowsiness and boredom from his mind.

The semi-unintelligible discordance outside his bedroom door was commonplace by now. It served nothing more than a minor distraction, if not a more effective waker-upper. His parents’ one-sided arguments usually made his heart palpitate the same way it did when under ambush by a rabid animal. These days, however, the commotion was just white noise, faded into the background by a most pressing concern bogging down his mind…
Resisting the urge to lean his head upon the flat surface, the young halfbreed blinked and yawned and rubbed his eyes for the umpteenth time after many a repeat of the aforementioned cycle to dutiously resume “studying”. And right on schedule only moments after the clock made its pronouncement, the door to his room silently opened a sliver. It remained that way for precisely five seconds, then just as quietly clicked shut. His mother was satisfied that he wasn’t “snoozing” and promptly left him be to return to her chores (and apparently, to rattle his father some more with her quibbles). He had survived another hour.

-x-

“I don’t see anything wrong with Gohan drawing once in a while, Chi-chi…”

“You call that ‘once in a while’?? One doodle is bad enough! But more than that?!” In one bound, she had the item in her hand, hastily leafing through the pages for him for effect. “All these pages are used up on both sides! And for what? For non-school-related… creepy… nonsense!”

“‘Creepy’…?”

“I knew I should never have let him get any presents from the others that weren’t books! If I’d known that Bloomer-san would slip in a sketchbook with those bundle of books, I never would have allowed it! Now my once perfect angelic baby is growing up to be such a disobedient renegade!”

“Now, Chi-chi. Don’t you think that you’re exaggerating a little?”

“‘Exaggerating’?? Have you seen what’s in these pages??”

“Chi-chi, Gohan is a good boy. He’s two years old and really curious about the world, that’s all. If only you eased up on him even just a little and let him play every now and then like normal ki—”

“What are you saying, Gokuu-sa?” Waving the sketchbook in the air, Chi-chi began pacing back and forth. “These doodles are irrefutable evidence that he’s been slacking off! That’s all he ever does now! He even does those Kami-forsaken horrid doodles on his books and notebooks, did you know? His books and notebooks! which are supposed to be for studying! Not doodling! Oh, it’s just awful! If he continues down this path, he’ll never be a useful member of society when he grows up!”

“Ehhh… I don’t understand which society you’re talking about…” Gokuu scratched his head. “Doesn’t he study too much already? I don’t think doing too much of one thing is good for anyone, no matter what civilization—”

“Oh, I agree! Just like all you ever do is eat, sleep, train, fight, and eat some more! You’re absolutely right, Gokuu-sa! That’s not a good thing, no matter what planet!”

“Heeeyy—hold on a sec… That isn’t one thing, that’s four!—err, five,” Gokuu grumbled, as he counted off his fingers. “Aren’t you supposed to be good at adding numbers—wait, are you lying again, Chi-chi?”

“How many times do I have to stress the fact that if he doesn’t study well, he won’t be able to build a good future! There is no way in hell, heaven, or this green earth that I am going to allow him to grow up to be a layabout like you who knows nothing else but brawling and getting into
trouble! How will he learn anything from just fighting and playing and drawing all the time?”

“What do you mean? I learned everything I ever needed from fighting… Well, except marriage… I had no idea it was going to be so complicated…”

“*Mouuu! You are hopeless, Gokuu-sa!!*” The sound of tableware rattling and squeaking grew incessantly louder as Chi-chi furiously soaped and scrubbed by the kitchen. “That just won’t do! I can’t be the one always doing all the parenting!”

“Aww, c’mon, Chi-chi, you worry too much…”

“It’s my job as Gohan-cha’s mother to worry! As it is yours! So—”

The former princess’ words abruptly died down in a strangled sob– and for a few fragile moments, her stern façade broke and betrayed her raw anxiety, that it actually did make the Saiyajin worry – as seeing the proud and strong Earth woman that was his wife unintentionally show weakness always did. He was by her side at once, squeezing her hand in reassurance.

“There now, Chi-chi. It’ll be okay. I promise.”

“This is serious. Gokuu-sa…! G-Gohan-cha has been acting weird e-ever since some weeks ago… I can feel it… I just feel like something has changed… And I don’t like it!”

“Changed’? How do you mean?”

She turned to face her husband and he could see clearly – the tears she was fighting not to shed, the uncharacteristic trembling of her lips, and the raw fear in her eyes.

Gripping his shirt tightly, she heaved, “Like the way he hasn’t stopped talking about… about that imaginary friend of his! It’s really starting to scare me! Have you seen what that friend of his looks like? Those sketches, it really give me the willies! If I didn’t know better, I’d think his imaginary friend was…”

“What? Was what, Chi-chi??”

“Gokuu-sa… I really think Gohan-cha is friends with…”

“…A demon.”

-x-

…

…

“No! No! S-stop! Stop!!! Waaahhhhh!!!”

“Why?”

“Haaah-haaaah… B-because—! As the dragon, you’re supposed to let me defeat you!”
“Hmm… How ‘bout if ‘as the dragon’, I’ll just do what dragons do and char you good before making you my meal, rrraarrrgghhh!!!”

“Waah! No! Don’t do that, please!”

Just barely, he managed to dodge his green-skinned playmate’s “fire breath” blast. He fell hard on his rear as a result, but otherwise, remained relatively unscathed.

“Not bad.” His playmate dropped the dried up branches he had been holding up by each ear (his supposed ‘dragon horns’), to do some proper gloating. “The grovelling was shameful, but you’re learning to move like a proper knight.”

“Great,” the boy huffed, doing his best not to wince as he got back to his feet and dusted his bottom. “Now…”

“Ohhhh no! I refuse to wear that again!” His antennae’d companion balked at the fresh wreath of daisies he had whipped out.

“But why?” he frowned. “As the dragon you need horns, just as the princess you need a tiara. Every proper princess has one.”

“Because I look dumb in it! It gets tangled in my antennae and—”

“Heeey… Whatchaguysdoin’? Can we join?”

They both turned to find a small group of kids who looked roughly a little older standing there, all eyes on them.

“Hi.” The girl among them waved.

Eager to show off his faerie friend, the “brave knight” reached back to grab Ma-chan’s hand – only to find that he was no longer standing there. His friend had slunk behind him and was hiding as much of himself as possible.

Chuckling at the adorable idea that Ma-chan was shy, he tightly clasped Ma-chan’s wrist and tugged, carefully easing his friend back into full view.

“Ack!”

“It’s alright,” he smiled sweetly at his companion’s squirming form. “We’re going to make new friends. It’ll be fun!” (Of course, Ma-chan wholly doubted that anything to do with other Earthling lowlives could be “fun”; but it made no difference as he was unable to reclaim his hand and break free.)

The young hybrid gave the newcomers a big smile and bowed.

“*Hajimemashite! I’m Son Gohan. And this is my best friend, Ma-chan! *Douzo yoroshiku onegaishimasu!”

After the new arrivals did their round of self-introductions, he briefly explained what they were playing.

“Cool. A pretend game! So what’re we gonna be?”

“You can be the evil sorcerer who kidnapped the princess,” he answered the boy with silvery-grey neatly cropped hair called Bluer. “And you can be the dragon.” This time, he was addressing the
tallest boy of the group with flaming red fuzzy hair whom they referred to as Stilts. Which left—
“And you can be—”

“I’m the princess, of course!” said the only girl of the group of three. She looked to be around no
more than five years old, with flaxen hair neatly ribboned in high twin ponytails, and golden
freckles atop her upturned nose.

“Ahh, I was actually going to make you the loyal sidekick because Ma-chan here is already the
princess…”

The three newcomers’ stares fell upon “Ma-chan”, who at that moment, had defensively put on the
fiercest, most un-princess-like game face in an effort to salvage his pride as future king of Planet
Earth (and hopefully, not soon after, the entire galaxy); so flustered that he had completely
forgotten that the daisy chain was back on his head after he had been successfully outmaneuvered
only moments ago.

The trio’s faces began to crack the longer they stared… until they finally broke into a fit of raucous
laughter.

…”

…”

-x-

-Snap!

-Whirrrrrr…

Like clockwork, the freshly beheaded pencil is fed into the electric sharpener. From the graveyard
of pencil stubs piling up at the edge of his desk, a lone pencil stub breaks off and begins rolling
away. But along with his mother’s early morning tirades and other normally attention-grabbing
discordances, it went unnoticed. Only when the woeful pile finally collapsed and clattered onto the
floor did the young demi-Saiyajin snap out of his trance, albeit only tepidly.

Half-finished topographical maps of clustered areas of Mount Paozu and the surrounding forests
that he had been trying to plot out were scattered pell-mell atop his desk. He hadn’t even realized
when he had switched to his cartography side-project in the midst of his “studying”. He usually
refrained from plotting his nightly course in the daytime, not wanting to risk cluing his mother in
on his overnight expeditions (even if he knew he could easily pass off his sketches as advanced
Physical Geography)…

Rubbing his eyes, he sighed and slid out of his chair to gather the objects that had scattered on the
floor. Exhaustion was fast catching up to him from last night, as was the sleeplessness from the
night before–on top of a week’s worth of waking nights preceding all that… One to two hours a
day of sleep, that was it. It’s been almost a month since he’s had any substantial rest at all. Even
during nights when he was unable venture into the forest he would lie in bed wide awake,
wondering what had become of his friend and thinking of ways to track him down…

His parents had their suspicions, but Gohan was always extra careful to throw them off his track.
They would be sound asleep when he left and still be sound asleep when he got back before the
crack of dawn; both of them slept like logs. As much as he hated keeping secrets from his parents, he just couldn’t let them find out, especially his mother; he would be lucky if she simply grounded him for the rest of his life. Chi-chi would never forgive him if she knew that he had been disobeying her by devoting a huge chunk of his time and energies to something other than his studies—much more, to finding his secret friend.

His searches only used to take place when whatever opportunity during the daytime became available. But when his mother started locking him indoors for whole days at a time, he began to venture the wilderness at night. It was scary at first, going out into the woods beyond daylight. But his fear of losing what he valued the most nullified the fear for his own safety. The darkness and unknown were like old friends when compared to how his heart plummeted into a bottomless chasm of sorrow and despair each time the thought of never seeing his friend again crossed his mind. It was only because Ma-chan hated it when he cried that he was able to keep the tears at bay. Besides, crying meant that he was giving up and he wasn’t quite there just yet.

At first, his desperation had actually led him to try and seek help from his parents, starting with his mother. He wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt but, wary of her unaccommodating strict and conservative principles— simply alluded to the matter without actually going into unnecessary detail. After which, he decided that all the joys, woes, and heartache of his adventures with Ma-chan should be his and his burden alone… ‘Little boys aren’t supposed to be out playing with beings of questionable origin!’ That was all his mother had to say about it…

His father, on the other hand, offered a more open yet less helpful discourse:

“You want me to help you hunt down your faerie friend?”

“No… We aren’t going to ‘hunt him down’, Father. We’re going to find him.”

It was as ridiculously easy to open up the topic to his father as it was difficult to do with his mother; Gokuu had no trouble at all believing him. But in the end, the senior Saiyajin thought his involvement would just complicate things. If Gohan simply wanted to hide a stray cat he wished to secretly care for as his pet, it would be much easier to aid him. Heck, even an injured dragon would be much easier to keep from Chi-chi’s watchful prowl… But to help him find and hide an actual faerie…? Even if Gokuu was all for it, he was conflicted due to a couple of quite valid reasons…

“I’d like to help, son, I really would. But this isn’t a pet we’re talking about… I don’t know much about faeries, but what I do know is that they are very secretive and independent creatures. If this Ma-chan faerie isn’t lost… but then, he isn’t showing up either… that just means that he doesn’t want to be found, right? So, if we try to find him when he doesn’t want to be found— doesn’t that mean that we’re hunting him down…?”

Gohan had not thought about it that way but found himself conceding. As much as he hated to admit, his father’s argument made sense.

“I don’t know if I can even help you ‘find’ him,” Gokuu whispered in his ear, as soon as Chi-chi had stepped out of the house to check the laundry outside. The older Saiyajin had done so in such a superfluously conspiratorial manner, as though his wife had super hearing like Piccolo— that Gohan found himself following suit even if he felt utterly silly and even more conspicuous hunching
downwind. It was a Saturday morning, the day after their “private” little conversation. Breakfast had just ended and they were tasked with tidying the table.

“If your friend is anything like a real faerie, there’s a reason you’re the only one able to see him. You’re not supposed to tell anyone or he might run away—or worst! put a curse on us! Imagine what would happen if Chi-chi found out about him!”

That was to be the second time that Gohan found, both to his amazement and frustration, that his father’s words made perfect sense.

... 

The young demi-Saiyajin did his utmost not to be selfish. He knew that if his first real and only friend wanted to leave him to go home to wherever faeries went home to, he had every right to. Painful as it may be, thinking that it was his friend’s choice to do so, was far more comforting than the worst-case scenario for his nonappearance: *that something bad might have happened! And that was the only reason he felt compelled to know firsthand; he needed to make sure that Ma-chan was alright—whether his elusive friend liked him snooping about it or not!

He plucked several pieces of rolled-up parchment and stuffed it in his knapsack which was already filled with everything he needed for that night. Carefully tucking his pack far under his bed, he slid back into his chair and resumed “studying”. Just then, the clock struck the hour of eleven, the door to his room once again opened ever so slightly, and after a few seconds of quiet observation, clicked shut.

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“H-how is that – freak show! your princess??”

“He’s so ugly!”

“Yeah, on this planet, princesses are supposed to be beautiful! —Like me!”

The two-year-old hung his head low until long bangs overshadowed his eyes, his hold on Ma-chan’s wrist only strengthened when his friend doubled his efforts to break free as the trio continued to snigger derisively at his expense. That grip only grew steelier the more he struggled that Ma-chan couldn’t believe that it was still a frail-looking, minuscule human holding him and not a solid wall of reinforced concrete; *he has never met a human this strong before...!*

But then, as tiny pebbles and rock particles at his feet began to vibrate and slowly levitate, he sensed a Ki level with it spiking so drastically that he began to seriously doubt that the boy was indeed *just an ordinary human... Could this seemingly weak little child possess the same monstrously inhuman strength and fighting potential as his father...?*
“What a joke!”

“What-wait! Is he like– a princess who got turned into a beast? You’re not going to make us kiss him are you?”

“That’s cute! You’re such a load of laughs, Gohan-chan!”

The said minuscule human didn’t even seem to notice that he was close to crushing his companion’s wrist, voice compellingly authoritative as he finally spoke through clenched teeth in slow and deliberate, almost painfully enunciated staccatos.

“Take it back.”

“Huh? Hey, we’re just telling it like it is!”

“Apologize to Ma-chan, now. Take it back!”

“Whu-? Are you for real??”

“He may not be ugly to you, but he’s no princess, that’s for sure!”

“Yeah, how’s about he stays the dragon, and you just let Queenie here be the new and improved prin—!”

“SHUT UP!!!”

The hybrid finally looked up, posture rigid and ready for battle, deep brown eyes blazing – a stark contrast to the moisture budding at its corners. The trio could do nothing but stare, frozen where they stood.

“If you won’t apologize to Ma-chan, then go find somewhere else to play! GET LOST!!!”

The newcomers took a step back. They weren’t sure if they just imagined it, but were those sparks of electricity emanating from his body? Somehow, something told them that it wasn’t going to be worth sticking around to find out…

“Geez…! Okay! No need to go gonzo! We’re outta here.”

“Yeah, you’re no fun.”

Shaking their heads, the two boys turned tail and ran off. Ma-chan, too, had long stopped struggling in his friend’s hold. He just stared wide-eyed and mouth agape at his normally mild-mannered playmate.

“My grandpa told me all about you and your kind.”

The girl who was curiously called Queenie, though visibly shaken only a moment ago, has recovered her bearings and was intently studying the amusingly small yet mettlesome boy that was Gohan.

“You don’t look it but you’re one of them, aren’t you?” Her eyes flitted from the boy’s face– to his monkey tail which hard bristled during his outburst and was swishing back and forth in silent aggression. “…The ones who don’t belong on Earth because they aren’t even human or animal– or anything in between.” Her finger went up and pointed at him in accusation. “You’re an invader.”

“*M-my parents are Earthlings and so am I! A-and Ma-chan i-is a…*” He paused, knowing he
couldn’t reveal that his friend was a faerie.

“...A demon. Obviously.”

At that, Ma-chan’s heart skipped a beat. That all-too-familiar sinking sensation was taking up all the space in chest again... He wanted nothing more than to run away then; he fiercely renewed his efforts to free his arm.

“I don’t care what he is. Ma-chan is my friend and he belongs here, with me.”

At that moment, the Namek’s hand in the young halfbreed’s grip went slack.

“You seem alright, Gohan-kun.” Queenie said as she turned to leave. “But if you keep hanging out with demons, you’ll never have any friends...

“You know that, right?”

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-x-

“'A demon’...??”

Gokuu picked up the sketchbook from where Chi-chi had dropped it on the countertop, unconsciously stepping back as he scanned the contents again, giving his wife some moments to recompose herself.

“That can’t be right…” he muttered. “Gohan told me his friend was a faerie…”

“What?!”

“Uhhhh-err... what I meant was—”

“SO YOU DO KNOW ABOUT IT!!!”

“H-hey, Chi-chi... Relax...!!”

“How can I relax when my little angel has been drawing fiendish creatures instead of studying! And you actually condoned it???”

“Gohan was pretty sure it’s a faerie…”

“Of course it is! It can be anything he wants it to be since he just imagined it! And it doesn’t matter what he says or thinks, I know what that is! My father has dealt with demons and their kin many times! I know what demons look like, Gokuu-sa!!”

“Well, I just think you can never be too sure which is which... *demons, devils, aliens— they all kinda look alike to some degree (well, maybe demons are just a little more stylish?)... Besides, you said so yourself, it’s only ‘imaginary’. We should just leave him be, he’ll outgrow it eventually.”
“Regardless of what you think or what he thinks, this is wrong! Gohan-cha is not supposed to be involved with demons, devils, faeries, or anything out-of-the-ordinary—much less obsess over them! Figment of the imagination or otherwise! It just isn’t healthy!”

“Uhm, but I heard that having an imaginary friend is a perfectly normal thing for kids to have.”

“And just where did you hear that??”

“Gohan told me.”

“Oh, Gokuu-sa! Paracosms are not normal and have no place in the practical world! End of discussion!”

“Uhh— Varicoses—whut…?”

“—So you can either do something about it or find some other place to have breakfast, lunch, dinner, and everything in between from now on!”

“Eeeehhh!!!”

“You heard me, mister!”

“But that’s not fair. What would you have me do?”

“Be a father to him and exercise your right to forbid him to do things that are completely pointless and only distracting him from what he really should be doing! I won’t stand for being painted the bad guy in our son’s life all the time, Gokuu-sa! Put your foot down for a change!”

“But-but–!”

“You heard me!”

“C’mon, Chi-chi…”

“No more interacting with imaginary whatevers!!!”

…

His “imaginary” friend, that’s what his mother called Ma-chan… It was one of those not-so-late-into-the-night-after-supper evenings when Chi-chi or Gokuu had already tucked him in bed an hour ago and presumed him to be asleep, which is why his mother didn’t bother talking about him in loud whispers anymore.

*He’s not a figment of my imagination,* Gohan was sorely tempted to correct her. Shame that he couldn’t very well do so while he was feigning sleep. “My friend is real,” he mouthed against the pillows, fists clenching against the blankets. But the warm wetness at the corners of his eyes and the anvil wedged in his chest served a cruel reminder of the truth… That it wasn’t really his mother’s words he was trying to rectify, but his own afraid heart.

*Ma-chan is real.*

*And I am going to find him.*
As soon as he heard the door to his parents’ room close, Gohan’s eyes flew open and trained on the moonlit space beyond his window. He lay awake for the next three hours making sure their house stayed submerged in absolute silence…

It’s been twenty days over a month since he last saw Ma-chan, but already, it felt like ages. Time moved much slower, almost sluggishly, without his dearest playmate—as though time itself was mocking him of Ma-chan’s haunting non-existence and sentenced him to this dismal state. Reruns of their most recent times together played in endless loop in his mind. He mentally scoured those memories, magnifying what he could of the events that had transpired, trying to recount if he had done something—anything at all—that might have offended Ma-chan and driven him away…

Maybe it was the daisy chain, he thought dolefully. I never should have forced him…

All the dread, sadness, and regret ripping up cracks and fissures in his heart– he tried not to entertain it… He forced himself to be tough even if his fears swirled like grim vulturous cyclone storms in the landscape of his mind and only made him want to cry even more.

Maybe Ma-chan hates me for being so weak…

He strove to fight the tears budding beneath his eyelids, ignoring the sniffles piling up in his weighted chest. He buried himself deeper inside the covers and pressed his face into the pillow; maybe if he only cried quietly, it wouldn’t count, right?

I’m so sorry.

Please come back.

-x-

…

…

“She’s right, you know.”

“…Huh?”

“If you stick with me, you’ll never have any friends.”

The young Namek’s voice pinged in the stillness of the forest. To the demi-Saiyajin it was like a gunshot fired at close-range within a sealed chamber– but he heard nothing of it, deafened by its sheer loudness. He remained standing motionless and staring off into space, exactly as he had been since the barefaced trio of kids had left the two of them bathed in silence.
“Who needs them?” he finally spat.

“Listen… There’s something you should know…”

“I don’t need friends.” The halfbreed already had a smile at the ready when he finally faced his companion. “I just need my princess.”

“But they were right, I am no princ—”

“PUT THAT BACK ON, RIGHT NOW!!!”

Ma-chan’s hand froze midway down his head, a garland of bright yellow trapped in his fingers.

The two-year-old hybrid sighed deeply, then tried again with a bigger smile this time, “I’ve read that people who see faeries are good souls! If they don’t see you for who you really are, then it just means they’re bad people. And I don’t want them as friends.”

Ma-chan’s eyes welled up and he immediately ducked his head to hide it. He didn’t even know why he suddenly felt compelled to tell this human—the only Earthling who has ever been kind to him—the one reason they can’t and shouldn’t be friends. All he knew was how wrong it was to have let this go on for so long…

“No, you little dork…” he sighed heavily, “Listen to me! The truth is—”

“I don’t care what they think. You’re my princess, my happy ending. You’ll always be. End of story.” He moved closer to ease his friend’s “tiara” back on. “I don’t care about having more friends. You’re the only friend I need, Ma-chan.”

Before his green friend could open his mouth to say anything more, he’s captured in a crushing embrace. Ma-chan would have squirmed, violently protested… But he couldn’t this time, not when he realized that the body wrapped around him was trembling pitiably.

“It’s all my fault… I’m sorry that you had to go through that…” The fragility in the two-year-old’s voice suddenly betrayed his true age for once in all the time that Ma-chan had known him – soft and tiny, and shockingly vulnerable. “I- I should have done something—anything…! I should have defended you better…”

You did…! Ma-chan practically shouted in his mind but the words failed to make it to his lips.

“You were right after all… I’m no brave knight…”

Yes, you are…

“I’m so sorry, Ma-chan... I wasn’t able to protect you...!”

…

…

-X-

But you did…
So please, don’t cry anymore…

Gohan.

-x-

“Gohan-cha! It’s time to rise and shine!”

He was pretty sure he just closed his eyes to sleep. But in the literal blink of an eye, it was another
day, and once again, he had to no choice but to “wake up” – lest he rouse his mother’s suspicions
further. Chi-chi, who was still none the wiser about her son’s exploits into the woods after
sundown, never missed an opportunity to reprimand him for oversleeping even just over a minute.
Chi-chi tirelessly reminded him of his routine as she sashayed into his room to sweep the floor and
wipe the surfaces: Wake up, wash up, have breakfast, clean up, and ‘study-study-study’!

“That’s my good little boy, Gohan-cha,” she would croon in approval whenever she came in at half
past nine to check on him with a glass of fresh milk and a plate of freshly sliced apples.

It’s been two full months since Ma-chan’s “disappearance”. Dispirited after yet another long night
of fruitless searching, Gohan was at his wit’s end, wanting nothing more than to just get through
the day without incident as much as possible. He didn’t dare bring out his maps or notes—not
today, well-aware that he was too mentally fatigued to juggle too many things at the same time; he
wasn’t about to risk slipping up and ruining everything he’s worked so hard for.

He was functioning on autopilot now, almost completely depleted in mind, body, and spirit,
forcing himself to plough forward on nothing but fumes. The sleeplessness and exhaustion did
wonders in numbing his heart and helping him focus what little of his remaining mental and
physical energies to his “extra-curricular” activities; even forgoing his trips to the town library to
avoid being reminded of his bereavement…

But no matter how hard he worked, lamentable as it may be, no amount of will power of his could
stop the world outside his window from being perfect…

Twittering birds beckoned him to join their merry little game of chase. The picture-perfect tufts of
clouds taunted him with nostalgia of better-spent days and re-populated his thoughts with endless
daydreams. Soon, his mind was but a severed kite, carried away and caught up somewhere in its
wispy fringe; his astral body already long lost in secret places off-limits to the corporeal form…

Averting his gaze from the window, he once again forced himself to abandon the unreachable, and
resigning himself to his fate, returned his attentions to his books. But stare as he might, the text and
images refused to make sense to him and it wasn’t long before they were reduced to squiggly lines
on soaked paper. His eyes began to droop as his head grew heavier…

The wondrous world outside his window continued its torment of his soul. Without regard for his
ail ing heart, the silvery chirping of birds bouncing from treetops continued to serenade him; gusts
of wind carrying the aroma of earth and leaves and bittersweet memories ruffled his hair; and
lambent beams of mid-afternoon sunlight tap-danced upon cheek…

In the space between his unseeing eyes and his books, rose half-formed images of tulip fields and
faerie friends (who all looked exactly like Ma-chan) which he welcomed and finally allowed to lull him into a doze. His head rested upon the page of his open book and unconsciously, his head turned towards the window once more... The greens, whites, and blues in his periphery bled from the trunks of trees, dripping leaves, and shifting skies to the foreground of his window— to form a nebulous outline of the one thing he recognized with utmost and exclusive fondness...

A smile rippled upon on his face, heart rejoiced instantly in spite of knowing that the apparition was a mere folly of his restless and lonely mind. It was not so uncommon an occurrence, after all. Gohan often dreamt of his magical friend, whether in slumber or in wake. He could not bear the mirage now, however, and the cruel trick brought just as much real pain to his heart as much as it did false joy.

“Why are you crying?”

Gohan’s sagging eyelids shot open.

His “hallucinations” were not usually accompanied by sound; especially not one as realistic as what he had presumably heard. He sat bolt upright, blinking many times.

The white curtains still flapped and rustled against the window panes unperturbed...

Then, as if orchestrated by some invisible grand maestro, everything beyond and around that portal in his room settled down to a ringing silence. He was fully awake now, but he reckoned he must be more dead beat than he thought because he was quite sure that he had lost his sanity if only for a heartbeat a moment ago...

In fact, his heart was still trying to beat itself out of his chest, so sure that he had seen and heard Ma-chan...!

But there was nothing there now, not even a playful breeze... He swallowed hard as he stared at the spot, almost certain that he could still feel his friend’s presence. A part of him wanted to believe as much yet another part was positive that his brain had just pulled one over him. The need to be assured of either fact made him wheel about to scan his room, and what he saw actually caused his heart to shoot out of his ribcage...

There on his bed, a fondly familiar green-skinned being was seated cross-legged, in a meditative posture...

Ma-chan was perched on his bed!

How can it be...? Gohan’s mind all but screamed, a hyperventilation attack away. This Ma-chan—or the image of him—did not not dissolve or fade away no matter how many times he blinked or rubbed his eyes. The green-skinned “faerie” just continued to sit there, stoically still, arms crossed, and eyelids drawn, like a perfectly photographed moment in time.

After a full minute of mute shock, Gohan inched down from his chair and cautiously approached the statuesque figure, eyes not releasing the presumed spectre, not even to blink. When, at last, he
reached his bed, he nervously clambered up to kneel beside the figure, index finger outstretched and carefully reaching… The tip of his finger made contact with the Namek’s cheek and his eyes grew wide. It felt solid and alive enough to prove that it was no apparition nor figment of his imagination.

“M-Ma-chan…?”

*He wasn’t dreaming! Ma-chan was really here! Rather…*

A bigger, older version of him.

The young hybrid didn’t even notice the change at first, because he had no doubt that this was indeed Ma-chan; it still felt every bit like him – his eyes, his face, his posture and general aura… only, in a completely new light… Gohan’s cheeks turned pink as he marvelled at his friend’s new appearance—or perhaps original form. No longer chubby and pint-sized but slender and tall—no less than double his three feet, with a lean, well-knit body of a young man; his arms, which were now bared, had filled out nicely and overall, every part of him had taken on stronger, more elegant angles and shapes… He didn’t think there was anything unusual about this new Ma-chan… Faeries had magical abilities after all and it wasn’t so farfetched for them to take on many forms… But he never imagined that his cute little faerie friend had such a stunning grown-up form! All in all, with the new getup highlighted by the pristine flowing mantle and turban, Gohan was utterly spellbound.

The wetness that had been welling up at the corners of his eyes finally cascaded down his cheeks. It was hard for him to believe that everything was not still some kind of dream or illusion… Ma-chan had never come to his house to see him before.

“Ma-chan…!!” Gohan finally sprang forward to hug his friend.

While the Namek undoubtedly had no sympathy reserved for the rest of Earthkind, he had been watching this one Earthling long enough to know that the boy never got to play with anyone other than him. His father spent most of his time training which he was not allowed to participate in, while his mother did household chores and related errands day in day out. He did nothing but study and play alone or whatever else he could to amuse himself when he wasn’t pouring over books…

The sad truth was that Piccolo Daimaoh Jr knew, more than anyone, that the solitary young Earthling led a pretty monotonous life—perhaps even more than he thought his own had been—which was likely the subliminal reason he even allowed this whole “faerie friend” business to go on for as long as it did…

“You… Y-you came back!” Gohan choked against rumpled fist-fulls of clothing after some muffled sobbing. He vowed not to show weakness in front of his faerie friend, but now that Ma-chan was here, the tears just wouldn’t stop. Luckily, his usually aloof and dyspeptic—now grown-up—friend had no objections so far, and even seemed to be making concessions as he wept and sniffled on his cape. Finally, he managed to pull himself together enough to look up, and with much trepidation, asked in a small voice, “Y-you came to visit me…?”

The fact of the matter was Piccolo found himself where he was without preamble nor premeditation. He did not know or understand the logic or feelings that backed up his actions but he did know one thing:

*Being with the boy made him forget how dull his life had been staving off the rest...*
Being with Gohan made him feel—if even just for short while—that he was free.
And maybe this was pity or gratitude or even both; the funny thing was, he didn’t think the reasons mattered…

“I came here to do whatever you want.”

It was an honest enough answer.

“What would I want?...?”

Piccolo nodded.

-x-

“...Don’t you want a happy ending?”

-x-

“Eight... Seven... Four... Two...!”

“Hey, Stilts! Quit cheating! Do it over!!! Count the way the rest of the world does!”

“Yeeeahh, that might be asking too much. The oaf can’t even count normally, much less backwards! (Though, you’d think he’d know how to by now, this is all we ever play...)

“I didn’t ask for your input, Bluer, thank you very much! Hey, Stilts! I can see you peeking from over here!”

“Why’d we always make him the seeker? Better question, why can’t we play something else for a change?”

“What? You’d rather play a sissy game like ‘pretend’, is that it?”

“Actually..........? Yes! I would!”
“Hah!” Queenie scoffed.

“I don’t get why you like this game so much! It’s boring! Making Stilts the seeker makes it twice as boring!”

“It’s either this or tag. You know I hate getting all sweaty!”

“He’s the dumbest seeker on the planet!”

“That’s not true, he found that demon invader that scored us major points with your dad…”

“More like the invader tripped him and broke his arm while it was unconscious.”

“Give ‘im a chance, he’s getting better at it,” Queenie yelled with a giggle as she broke off in the opposite direction. “Don’t hide too hard!”

“‘Getting better’? Right. It took him only until nightfall instead of dawn last time…”

Bluer slid down an embankment and ducked into a low opening in the rock face obscured by a dense layer of overhanging vines. The sun was starting to lean towards the West and the lower it got, the more his apprehension grew… As soon as he had stepped into the damp and dim cavern, a chill rattled up his spine; it was eerily quiet inside. There was barely enough headroom for him at the mouth but it gradually opened up as the passage stretched on into blackness. He could very well be in the entrance of a long tunnel but he couldn’t tell; the deeper in it went, the darker it got. Every small scuffle of his shoes and every breath he sucked in through his nostrils made otherworldly echoes bounce back at him from all directions. It was like the enclosure itself was alive and breathing, and just waiting to devour him whole.

Bluer leaned against the jagged stone-cold walls and scrunched his eyes in an effort to calm his nerves. His breath begun to labour, seized by a sudden fit of claustrophobia. The son of a decorated lieutenant general would rather die than admit it to anyone… But if there was anything he hated, it was being alone in the dark… Being alone in the dark out in the wilderness? That was the only thing he hated more. Which would account for why playing hide-and-seek came in a close second in that list. He was the one all for finding other kids to play with since they never played anything else because hide-and-seek was Queenie’s “favourite” game.

Bluer took out his bronchodilator, gave it quick judder, uncapped it, and took a greedy breath. It wasn’t normal for him to come undone so easily – it wasn’t just the current situation he was in that got him so skittish… He’s been on edge ever since they met the plucky little boy and his green-skinned friend with a scary face whom Queenie insisted was demon-kin. He didn’t know why something about the pair bothered him so… Being only twelve, he didn’t know much about other Earth races, but he was educated enough on demons to know that they weren’t only always bad news but also pure evil.

How did a such a seemingly nice guy like Gohan get mixed up with demon-kin…? Maybe his strange behaviour was precisely because of his friend—what did he call it again… that “Matcha”…? The intimidating outburst and the bioelectrical field… Could he have been possessed by his demon friend? Is that why he was so attached to him?

It didn’t matter. At least, it wouldn’t for long. That boy, Gohan, will be rid of his demon-kin woes very soon and will be able to operate by his own free will again…

Roughly a year ago, he and his friends were lauded honorary scouts of a well-known paramilitary organization when they helped their fathers fetch a rare catch… An extremely strong as he
was cunning ruthless invader known as Piccolo the Demon King, who incidentally had been in that organization’s radar for decades now as one of the prime targets for their “politically-relevant” experimentation projects. Their valuable find put his father in a more favourable position within their ranks, and the string of successful projects that followed revolving on their prized lab rat even got Queenie’s grandfather promoted to senior research scientist in one of the newer divisions. Bluer couldn’t help wallowing in vainglory knowing that his recent report about “the little demon” of Northwestern Mount Paozu forests would bring pride and glory to his father all over again.

While the runt of a demon may not be a notoriously wanted criminal like the Demon King, he was still a demon nonetheless. Any scruples or compunctions he may have had about turning in a child to a bunch of mad scientists were quickly put to rest by Queenie’s confident assertions that “Matcha” was no helpless child, but a demon. A menace who posed a grave danger to society and the entire planet if left unchecked; and whatever purpose it will serve in their father’s noble organization was for none other than the greater good of their kind. If anything, he was nothing short of a hero, safeguarding the rest of the Earth’s inhabitants from future threats… That boy Gohan owed him his life!

A cold breeze blew in from under the drapery of foliage, snapping Bluer back to reality. The rustling leaves stilled just as suddenly as it started up, and once again, he felt that ominous icy touch crawl up his spine, as if something was skulking within the cave’s impenetrable shadows, watching him…

“What’s the matter, afraid of the dark?”

Bluer jumped in fright. That wasn’t his imagination—someone spoke! Or at least, some thing… It sounded like a low unearthly growl—which was hair-raising enough, but his senses were slammed almost simultaneously with terrific amplified echoes of it that he actually wet his pants.

Not daring to move, he twisted his neck to peer around, huge drops of sweat after another formed at his brow. Almost sure that it came from somewhere close behind him—only deeper within the belly of the cave, he tensely scanned the pitch-blackness, straining his eyes for anything out of place—but he saw nothing…

“W-who’s there!!” He had scrounged up all the courage he could to throw that one line hoping to intimidate… But his voice still cracked and snuffed out too many times to sound convincing.

“You see, boy…” The voice spoke again. This time there was a lilt of maniacal laughter in the speaker’s tone, as if it could smell his fear and was feeding off of it. “It’s not the darkness outside of you that is to be feared…”

From out of the shadows, a pair of glowing red orbs materialized, giant diamond-sharp incisors glinted in the slivers of sunlight slicing through the wall of vegetation as whatever being owned them flashed a diabolical smile. The twelve-year-old was a corner away from soiling himself.

“The human heart is the birthplace of hell…”

The young boy’s legs finally gave beneath him. He landed on his bottom and frantically tried to
scoot away as fast as possible, kicking and flailing as the creature— in one commanding, measured step after another, came closer and closer… He couldn’t remember how to run or where the exit was; his back hit a rocky barrier and he desperately flattened himself against it. The entity was now close enough for him to make out all his facial features… And it was at that moment that the twelve-year-old did soil himself.

“Y-you…??!”

No…! It can’t be…!

Bluer always thought that he knew enough about demons to survive an encounter with one… But as inescapable doom loomed over him and every single neuron of his brain is flooded with sheer terror… He finally understood…

How wrong he was.

…

…

-x-

What if not all stories were meant to have a happy end?

-x-

The sun was low in the horizon, casting the world in sombre orange hues… Son Gohan Jr found it almost painful to watch. He was hoping against hope that day would never end…

“The sun is starting to set… I’ll have to go home soon…”

Piccolo didn’t squirm or protest when Gohan flung himself at him and clung tightly for one of his famous possessive hugs. The boy didn’t move from where he was, face pressed so hard against his Namek friend’s midsection – it felt like he was actually petrified of letting go.

“Gohan.”

The boy looked up suddenly. There was surprise on his face. And also tears. “Y-you’ve never called me by my name before…” he said quietly, voice wavering.

“Do you really dislike going home that much?”

Gohan looked down and fell silent for some time; arms still protectively enveloping as much of his friend as they could.

Piccolo supposed it was the monotony of his existence. He could relate to the problem more than
he liked to admit. *Playing make-believe games, running away from predators, learning the different flora and fauna, trying out different kinds of wild mushrooms and berries, sleeping under the same shade, and of course, reading quietly side-by-side or to each other...* Even he never imagined he would look forward to such trivial activities compared to the dark and gloomy destiny that was his mundane life.

“I don’t dislike it... I’m just... afraid, I guess...”

“Afraid?”

Gohan tilted his head upwards again, searching his companion’s face, wetness still flowing down his cheeks. “We will see each other again, won’t we?”

“Yes.”

It wasn’t exactly a lie. But it wasn’t exactly the truth either.

The small demi-Saiyajin gave a sad smile. “I’m glad!”

“Hm. You don’t look glad.”

“I just... I missed you so much, Ma-chan! And now that we’re together again, I don’t know... It kind of feels like a dream, that’s all.”

Piccolo harrumphed. “Well, it’s because you wanted to end the day doing something odd... Watching the sunset.”

“Actually, I’ve always really wanted to watch the sunrise with you...” Gohan murmured wistfully. “But I can’t...” His mornings were usually spent studying; his mother would never allow it. Not that Chi-chi would have allowed what he was doing now... She would never approve of him spending time doing anything with his “imaginary friend”.

There were many things Piccolo still didn’t know and understand about human emotions. But as he watched his first (and quite possibly, his last and only) friend looking so crestfallen, a part of him he didn’t know existed seemed to understand... Humans are born mournful creatures and subliminally desire nothing more than to escape that... Perhaps he wasn’t so different from them as he always thought...

And it only fortified his resolve to give Gohan something they both wanted but that he could never have.

“Tell me, does it really matter that much?”

“Hm?”

“This game you play of princess and knight and ‘happy endings’... Is it really that important? Happy endings...”

Gohan’s face was turned up to the sky. There wasn’t much sun left now, and the melancholy of it was settling in his mind.

“I think... Like the sunrise, happy endings just give us something to look forward to... It gives us, hope... Don’t you think?”

Piccolo said nothing.
“I mean, if not that, then what else is there?”

“I see.”

Against his will, one by one, Gohan's fingers gradually came loose from his friend’s clothing. He struggled to keep holding on but was completely helpless as he felt his body plop down limply into his friend’s strong arms and it made panic rise rapidly in his gut. Gohan didn’t know what was happening. He felt so enfeebled and tired all of a sudden; his heart pounded madly from a fear he did not understand.

“M-Ma-chan…?”

Piccolo stood up, Gohan still cradled in his arms.

“W-what are you doing…? Ma-chan…?”

“What if not all stories were meant to have a happy end?”

“Wha…?” Gohan’s eyelids felt like lead, he could feel his body falling asleep against his will. He wanted to thrash and scream but his body remained unresponsive and there was a heavy fog fast blanketing his mind… Why was it so hard to stay awake all of a sudden? The halfbreed had never felt so scared of falling asleep in all his life…! “Ma-chan… I- I don’t… understand.”

“Maybe happy endings are different for everyone.”

“W-what are you saying…? …Ma-chan?”

“I am saying…”

…

That perhaps the only way for you to have your happy ending is if I was not a part of your story…

…

'I am saying…'

…

That tomorrow when you wake up, you will no longer be burdened by my existence. All your memories of me will be washed away to forgetfulness; I myself, shall not remember, no longer will I even be aware of doing this…

…

'I am saying…'

…

I’m neither elf nor faerie.
But demon…

…

“Ma-chan…?!!"

…

A demon not destined for happy endings.

But you, Gohan?
You are.

…

“Ma-chan… No…”

…

I’m grateful I met you.
And for the gift of dreams.

…

Ma-chan… Please…!
Don’t…

…

Until we meet again for the first time…

…

-X-

Good-bye…
There was nothingness at first… Everything was deathly silent and empty. He didn’t want to leave that peaceful void just yet. But then, soon the sound of his own breathing reached his ears and the feel of hands gently shaking him pulled him back…

“Gohan, wake up!”

He opened his eyes. At first he couldn’t make out what was in front of him, but then there seemed to be a familiar jumble of words and pictures… *Books*… He had fallen asleep on his desk.

“Mmm…” Groggily, he sat up and looked around.

“Hoo boy! You’re lucky Chi-chi went out to buy something! Come to think of it, we both dodged a bullet there…! Whew!”

“…Father?”

“Heeey, little guy. Is everything alright?”

“Mm, why wouldn’t it be?” Gohan replied nonchalantly, voice still heavy with sleep.

“Well…” The senior Saiyajin looked away, as if feeling awkward for unintentionally intruding. “You were crying in your sleep.”

“I… I was…?”

Gokuu bent down with the hem of Chi-chi’s apron that he was wearing and wiped some of the moisture glistening on his son’s cheek.

“I was…” Gohan said, bewildered.

“Why were you crying?”

*Why*… There were remnants of a familiar ache in his heart but think as he might… “I… I don’t remember…”

Gokuu knelt down in front of his son, genuine concern etched all over his face. “It was probably just a sad dream.”

“A sad dream…?” Gohan echoed. He racked his mind once again, but just like his first attempts, came up blank – only a lost feeling lingered. “No, it’s not that…” He didn't know why but he just
knew it. "It feels like I just had the happiest dream of my life…"

“Oh?”

“…Only, I can’t remember…” Gohan sighed. “That’s what makes it sad, I guess?”

“Sounds complicated…” The Earth-raised Saiyajin scratched his cheek, as he shifted his sights to the wooden beams above them. “It must have been a really nice dream if it made you that sad to forget about it… Was it about your faerie friend?”

“Hm…? ‘Faerie friend’…? What faerie friend?”

Gokuu had to do a double-take; he wasn’t sure he heard right. “Yeah, you know… Your ’friend’…” he said in hushed tones making invisible quotation marks with his fingers.

Gohan just stared at his father quizzically.

“You don’t remember…?”

“Remember what, Father?”

“Your friend, Ma-chan…! You were calling his name in your sleep.”

“I was…?”

Gohan looked so confused that Gokuu couldn't help but believe that his son had somehow forgotten about his precious friend even as he couldn’t get over his own disbelief.

“That’s weird… You really don’t remember anything…”

“It’s not that weird, Father! People forget their dreams all the time!” Gohan chuckled as he slid off his chair and into his slippers. “I’m thirsty, I’ll just go get some water.”

The young halfbreed stopped midway at the sound of the rustling breeze. He turned his attention for some moments to the windblown pristine white curtains; heart leaping up to his throat for some reason. It was as though there was a greater significance to the flapping drapes, like it signalled that something was about to happen—

But nothing did.

Gohan shrugged to himself and continued walking towards the door. He was being silly. Curtains were just curtains.

-x-

Gokuu watched his son make his way out of the room, unable to shake the feeling that something in Gohan’s carefree smile was so strangely out of place… Did his son hit his head or something and forget all about Ma-chan like he forgot his own birth planet? It would continue to baffle him for the weeks to come but for now, the Earth-raised Saiyajin thought that maybe it was for the best that Chi-chi hid all of Gohan’s sketchbooks… For now, Gokuu allowed himself to feel some measure of relief knowing that at the very least, his son would finally get a good night’s rest.
End of Intermission 2.
To be concluded in the Epilogue: “The End”…

Chapter End Notes

*Zurui yo – Roughly something like “That’s not fair” or “That’s cheating” in this context.

*moon elf – Since we have quite the motley congregation of “Earth”lings in the Z-Universe, faeries and such being among them, I felt it canon-compliant for Gohan to mistake Piccolo for a faerie when they first meet at a very young age. My headcanon would be that very little is known about faerie-folk since they’re incredibly secretive and what little books have been written about them are mostly fiction. On a side note, why didn’t Gohan think Piccolo was a demon right away? Well since it’s also Akira Toriyama’s canon that beings in hell are called devils and the ones from the “Dark Realm” are the demons (clearly showing a distinction), I imagine it isn’t everyday that “normal” Earthfolk get to meet them and know for sure what they look like (plus, they do crossover in certain features with other beings so…). I don’t mean that no one has seen them though. But like the faeries, they’re extremely rare to come across, so even less factual material has been gathered to back up any study on them. On top of that, it isn’t in Gohan’s nature to think the worst of others. Even when he first saw Piccolo after he was “kidnapped” he didn’t freak out like most Earthlings have been shown to do. (Of course, there's also Chi-chi, who would shield Gohan from anything she deemed detrimental to his development, even if it were scientific fact.)

*Hajimemashite – Japanese expression/culture roughly equivalent to “It’s a pleasure to meet you/make your acquaintance”.

*Douzo yoroshiku onegaishimasu – Japanese expression/culture, literally “Please be good to me/remember me”.

*Mouuuu! – Japanese expression/culture similar to “Enough!” or “That’s it!” in this context.

*just an ordinary Earthling - Piccolo at this point is just relearning and rediscovering most of what his sire already knew and has yet to benefit from Kami’s boundless knowledge. As mentioned in the note about moon elves, Earth’s inhabitants don’t all look like typical normal humans. There’s the anthropomorphic types, the alien-looking ones, or just the outright out-of-the-ordinary humans (like Chaozu and Tenshinhan). Not all non-human-looking types are exceptionally powerful. So even if Piccolo knows of Gohan’s powerful father and that typical humans don’t have tails, he didn’t jump to conclusions. Especially since in all the time he has been with Gohan, the boy has never shown much potential by way of strength and fighting.

*My parents are Earthlings – Gohan doesn’t know that he’s Saiyajin because naturally, Chi-chi hid the fact that his father is an alien. Raditz hasn’t arrived here and dropped the bomb on everyone yet.
End Notes

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