

The Sheep and the Hedgehog

By silver-lady

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What happens when two stubborn, self-centered, strong mind personalities clash? A 3 years BV. A little different from usual, I expect

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| | |
|--|-----------|
| Chapter 0 - Prologue | 2 |
| Chapter 1 - The Terror Chamber or How did it Begin | 4 |
| Chapter 2 - Music, Senzus and Soup | 9 |
| Chapter 3 - Sayians are from Mars, Women are from Venus | 22 |

0 - Prologue

Bulma leaned over the computer typing feverishly. It was a mere research, nothing of important or urgent, but anything was good to keep her mind away from that subject. She was almost sure her current indispositions had something to do with the tension and stress it was causing to her. She wasn't feeling like herself ultimately; she wept without any reason in a moment and in another a single innocent comment was enough to make her burst out in rage. She slept bad and ate worse. Her mother had suggested her to see a doctor, but Bulma promptly dismissed it. She hated doctors, hospitals and anything related to them, and anyway it seemed too much ado about so little. It was probably a flu, yes, that's it. She would be fine.

She scratched the back of her neck, her fingers brushing her fresh-cropped lashes. Trying to rise her spirits up, she had visited the beauty parlor that morning to cut the rest of the permanent off. The result was both simple and elegant, remembering a bit the haircut she wore when Radditz had showed up. Not as beautiful as long hair, but very practical, it didn't get in the way when she worked with her inventions. Besides, by her first time in her life, Bulma didn't care (too much) if other people would think she was beautiful or not. She sighed bitterly.

Almost in silence, the door opened up, but Bulma didn't turn around. Even not hearing anything further, she could perfectly feel the short, muscular figure walking towards her in his feline pace, sting-eyeing at her now very smaller head. She stiffened defensively. He would probably say that she looked like a man, or that she'd look better bald. Or even pretend to not recognize her. The most probable, however, was that he didn't even take notice of her new hair. Saiyans or humans, men were all alike. Boor and insensitive...

"Hrm. Much better."Vegeta grunted.

Bulma almost jumped in her chair. Had she heard well? Had Vegeta made a compliment? Forgetting her initial plan of ignoring him, she turned on her chair, a beautiful smile lighting up her face: "Do... do you like it? Really?" her voice sounded disbelieving, but as well anxious.

Vegeta felt the familiar pang he always had when she smiled at him like that, with her blues eyes shining like they were filled with myriads of microscopic stars. Automatically, he folded his arms across his chest, like shielding himself from her: "No. But at least you stopped looking like a silly sheep ."

Bulma felt her blood pipe hot. Should had expected that! How could she had been so naive to believe that, just for a moment, that self-centered jerk would be able to say something gentleeven to her? Only the smirk at the corner of Vegeta's mouth kept her from bursting out. That was what he wanted.

"Hmpf!"she primly closed her eyes and lifted up her little nose" Better to be a graceful sheep than a arrogant hedgehog! At least someone here changes her hair occasionally." and returned to her work. Vegeta sneered:

"Occasionally? Since we met, I already saw you with FOUR different hairs, including that junk! A

Saiyan's hair doesn't grow that odd way, and doesn't has to be cut all the time, either."

"So if I cut and shaved all your spikes off you'd be bald forever? How temptating!"Bulma scoffed, her eyes on the computer screen "But you haven't come after hair-fighting, Vegeta. What do you want?"

Vegeta shut up, irked at her question. Actually, he didn't know why he was there. It had been just like a sort of magnet had pulled him towards her place against his own will, just like it happened so many times before. Like if he just had to see her, one last time, before he ... Vegeta nearly shook his head. Absurd. That was what he got for bedding an Earth woman: her race's sentimentality was contaminating him. No wonder that a pure-blood Saiyan like Kakarrott had become a soft-hearted dumb just for living in that sickening planet. But not him.

They stayed there a long while, one working and another watching, one without knowing what to say and another fearing to listen. The air between them was so tense that could be cut in half, the woman thought. Vegeta had avoided her by the last couple of weeks and she finally had found why. A hard lump began to form in her throat. In part, it was her fault, as much as it costed her to admit, but blaming herself wouldn't do any good now. She peeked at Vegeta through the corner of her eye: he was still there, frowning and arms folded, like an statue. Bulma couldn't stand it anymore.

"When are you leaving?"she asked a very casual tone; only a slight tremble in her fingers betrayed her anxiety, and she prayed for him to not notice it.

Vegeta suppressed a gasp. He had deliberately concealed his plans of training out in space from her: the woman was getting more and more unbearable each day and if she learned that he was going off again, every window and glass at the Capsule Corp would be shattered by her shrieks. He didn't fear her, of course, but he also didn't want to be deaf. Besides, that diabolic vixen was downright able to do anything to keep him, from sabotaging the ship to slip that blasted "pee-pee" stuff in his food.

And now she calmly asked about his trip, like it was nothing. He never would understand her.

1 - The Terror Chamber or How did it Begin

One year and a half ago...

Vegeta fell to his knees. He felt dizzy, his body aching in several spots. Even though he recovered quickly, his wounds still weren't completely healed; some had even opened again, either due to his efforts or because he had ripped off some bandages to keep them from restraining his movements. He hadn't stopped training since that annoying woman (Bulma... what a ridiculous name) had finally switched off the holographic screen and left him alone. dog. Who did she think she was? What did she care if he was healed enough to train or not? Did she take him for a loser, like her pathetic boyfriend?

A vision of Bulma sleeping beside his bed flicked in his mind. He shook it off with a frown, and began to float again. His sharp ears caught a soft buzz. He dodged a laser beam as he blasted off its source, one of the two training robots that he still hadn't destroyed. The laser rebounded off the opposite wall and hit Vegeta's side before he could avoid it again. It produced nothing beyond a slight burn, but he lost his balance and fell on his back.

Hell. What was wrong with him? He had endured much worse on Namek, or even in his first battle on Earth. With more than half of his bones broken, he had crawled to his pod after he being crushed by Kakarott's son in his oozaru form. A few wounds weren't supposed to cause him any trouble. Vegeta almost could hear B... the woman saying he should rest. He clenched his teeth. His anger gave him strength to spring up to his feet. He would show her that he didn't need her advice!

So absent-minded was he that he didn't even notice he was too close to the last robot. The droid's electronic eye blinked as the Saiyan entered into its firing range.

Meanwhile, inside Capsule Corp., Bulma paced around like a beast in a cage. Her mother had called her for lunch one hour ago, but Bulma ignored her, so the elder woman left her alone with an understanding shake of her head. Bulma didn't even notice her mother go; the only thing she could hear was her last argument with Vegeta:

"Will you die in three years"

"No, I'm too young and beautiful to die"

"Then SHUT UP"

"Shut up... shut up..." she repeated over and over. How dare he? She was the one who told the others to shut up, not the other way around! Why couldn't he see that she told him to rest for his own good?

"That's it" she yelled at the room "If he wants to kill himself, it's fine with me, he'll be doing us a great favour! I wash my hands! And I'll tell him now" the woman concluded as she ran back to the lab.

Her voice seemed to be rebounding off the chamber walls even before she had turned the screen on:

"Vegeta, I'm telling you three things: One, no one tells me to shut up! Two: I don't give a damn if you kill yourself! Three..." she silenced, a little surprised at the absence of a response, and also for not seeing the Saiyan floating around. "Vegeta?"

He was sprawled on the floor, his face down. Still. Next to him, the half-melted remnants of a training robot.

"VEGEETAAA !!!"

He didn't answer.

Bulma put her hands on her head. Oh Kami, she knew that would happen. That stubborn, thick-headed Saiyan! She looked at him more intently. He kept still, and despite the redness of the chamber lights, Bulma thought she had seen some blood on his body. It was serious. She had seen him collapsed many times, but never for so long. Maybe he was dead... Her heart tightened at the thought.

To her relief, his head moved a little, then it went still again. Whew. But, what now? Entering there, impossible. Her father said 10 G was enough to snap a human's bones like they were twigs; under 200 or more, that was what Vegeta used... Bulma shuddered and hugged herself.

There was no way of turning off the gravity without entering the chamber. She could power it off, sure, but then the ship would be closed shut with Vegeta inside. She would have to summon a bunch of employees with light torches to open an entrance in the ship, and before that happened Vegeta could already be dead.

Then it clicked in her mind. Of course! How could she have forgotten something so simple? Frantically, she searched through the lab lockers until she found a single device. It was constructed of two small boxes bonded to one another by green leashes, like a knapsack's. She put it on and adjusted the leashes, tying them around her thorax, in such a way that one of the boxes rested on the middle of her back and the other between her breasts. It was a new invention she and her father had come up with since Vegeta had forbidden them from installing an emergency switch outside of the ship, saying that he wouldn't have his training interrupted at every minute by the "dumb blonde" and her sucky pastries.

The device created a personal gravity field around its user. Theoretically, it would make a balance with the gravity of the chamber, allowing Bulma to

reach the machine and turn it off. They had planned to wait for a moment when Vegeta wasn't using the chamber to make a test. However, since he almost never left it, the small invention ended up forgotten on a shelf.

Well, its day had come.

She ran toward the ship and pressed the on button. A soft buzzing was heard and almost instantaneously she felt lighter. Not light enough to fly, but she smiled, realizing it was difficult to keep her feet on the floor, a bit like the astronauts on the Moon.

"Here I come, Vegeta."

Clenching her teeth, she slowly opened the door. There he was, as quiet as when she had turned off the screen. She put a foot inside...

WHAM!

A second later she was pinned, or rather, smashed against the floor.

Damn...

The personal gravity field was just strong enough to keep her alive, but not to allow her to stand. How had a genius like her not thought of this? Well, at least she hadn't been smashed to atoms, but... man! That was what Vegeta experienced in there? It felt like she had a Trans-Atlantic steamer on her back... worse, it was like she was getting compressed by a hydraulic press. Her nose throbbed from the fall and Bulma tried to reach for it but discovered, in panic, that she couldn't even move a finger!

"H-heeellp..." she tried to scream, but the only sound to leave her throat was a soft moan. It was hard even to breathe, let alone scream. The air came in slowly and left her pressed lungs even quicker.

Dazed as her parents were, it would take hours, maybe days before they missed her and decided to send someone after her. The employees, no way. Vegeta had them scared to death and they would never approach the ship unless they were expressly told to. Even if it occurred to anyone to look for her in the ship it would be too late. She was going to suffocate there, still young, beautiful... and without having found the perfect man. She moaned again.

From the corner of her eye, she saw something move. Something black and blurred, like a bush of spikes...

Vegeta blinked and lifted himself, resting his weight on his powerful hands. shoot. How could he faint like that? Then he remembered. Yeah, the robot. At least he had blasted it before he blacked out. He looked down and clenched his teeth at the sight of a small pool of his own blood. He hated to admit it, but he had really pushed himself too much. There was no option but to stop and wait for tomorrow. What a waste of time. Worse, he would have to endure that unbearable little woman gloat when she saw him coming back. By the way, he felt he had heard her voice calling for help. He threw a glare towards the screen: it was black. Mm. Maybe he had just dreamed it.

Then he heard another moan, coming from the door, and spun his head in that direction. The vision made his jaw drop:

"You! What are you doing here?"

Even in her situation, Bulma's eyes shot him hateful sparks.

"I'm dying because of you, idiot" she wanted to shout. Instead, the only thing she could say was a pitiful moan "T-turn it off... please..." She closed her eyes, seeming to pass out.

Vegeta stared at her for a moment, completely amazed by the fact that she had survived under all that gravity. Then, he noticed the small box strapped to her back and shrugged. He should have known. Another one of those crazy contraptions of hers. Obviously, it hadn't helped much.

"Hmpf. Stupid woman. It's amazing that you're still not dead."

Vegeta struggled to stand up. He toppled, but rose up again and began to walk with determination. Some blood dripped as he trudged his way toward the gravity machine and he almost collapsed again, but reached the panel and turned it off.

"Normal gravity restored" droned the emotionless robotic voice. He lost his balance and fell over on his backside.

Bulma felt the weight leaving her and opened her eyes. For a long moment, she just lay there, inhaling and exhaling slowly, as though as to make sure that her lungs worked normally. Her nose throbbed from the fall and she reached to touch it. If it was broken, Vegeta would pay... Vegeta? Where was he?

She looked forward. Her heart sunk as she saw the bloody trail leading to the machine. Vegeta was there, resting his back against its metallic wall and glaring at the floor. He didn't look up when Bulma came towards him (after getting rid of the anti-gravity invention).

"Now... go away" he snorted, his eyes set on the floor.

"What?" Bulma snapped, her hands angrily planted on her hips "I risk my treasured life to save yours and that's all that you say"

"I didn't ask for your help. And I don't need it, either" the prince tried to stand up to prove it, but he was completely out of strength and collapsed. Bulma grabbed him before he kissed the floor, but his weight caught her off balance and they both slammed down. Without knowing how, the proud Prince of Saiyans found himself plunged between the soft breasts of the woman he had been avoiding!

"Aaah! You pervert! Let go! Let go" Bulma shrieked in his ears as she slapped and pushed him. She hadn't finished and Vegeta had already sprung to his knees, his face getting redder than a baked lobster:

"You wanted to help me LIKE THIS ?!" he shouted.

"I..." Bulma started but she couldn't finish it. At the vision of a wide-eyed, embarrassed Vegeta flushing like a schoolboy and without his usual frown, she couldn't help but laugh.

"Don't laugh" he threatened, blushing a little more "Don't laugh, or I'll..."

The only effect it produced was to make Bulma laugh more. Deeply humiliated, Vegeta snorted and crossed his arms over his bloody chest.

"C'mon, don't be silly" Bulma said. Still giggling, she seized his arm and swung it over her shoulder. Surprisingly, Vegeta no longer objected. He leaned on her.

Once again Bulma felt his muscular, pleasantly warm form against hers. The first time, after the GR explosion, she was too worried about Vegeta's life to enjoy the contact; but now his scent and his heat assaulted her senses with such an intensity that she just couldn't ignore them. It would have been pleasant if Vegeta wasn't quite awake, and that made Bulma rather uncomfortable. All the way to the house she chattered to disguise it, her eyes avoiding his face. She didn't have to worry, though. Vegeta himself was too embarrassed to notice anything - and not only because he couldn't walk by himself.

Both were relieved when they finally reached the house. Their relief, however, didn't last long, because Mrs. Briefs almost fainted when she saw her daughter and the "handsome boy" entering soiled with blood. Bulma had to tell her at least twelve times that the blood on her dress wasn't hers; still, the elder woman became so hysterical that it looked like she would have not one, but two people to nurse, instead. Fortunately, the practical Dr. Briefs showed up and helped Bulma to calm his wife and carry Vegeta back to his room.

2 - Music, Senzus and Soup

"Hope you're not planning to make of this a habit," Dr. Briefs said after Bulma and the stubborn Saiyan were conveniently examined and medicined. To the young woman's relief, her nose was only slightly red, despite its throbbing. A good cold compress would work wonders and tomorrow it would be like new, guaranteed Mrs. Briefs, who had returned to her normal cheerful self. The Dr. said it had been a miracle that Bulma hadn't broken a bone.

"You were very lucky, my dear," he said, with unnatural concern, "But I'm disappointed in you. Since you were a child I've always told you to never use an invention before you have tested it!"

"But dad, how'd you expect me to make a test if Vegeta never allowed us to use the chamber? I think it actually worked well, if the gravity was at 200, his usual."

"Actually, it was at 400." Came the calm response from the bed. Both father and daughter turned to look at the Saiyan.

"You said... what?" Bulma ventured.

"Are you deaf? I put it at 400," he smirked, seeing first the shock then the proud triumph in the woman's eyes, then threw the fatal blow, "or at least that was my intention. I had to stop several times to adjust that piece of junk for less or it would explode again, then it started powering down by itself! If it was at 80, it was a lot!"

At 80? Bulma fell over. If Dr. Briefs was surprised, he didn't show it.

"Well, anyway it's very impressive, boy. I'm very grateful to you, for having saved my only daughter's life."

"I don't want your gratitude. Just keep her away from me and fix that contraption of yours, so I can train tomorrow."

"Tomorrow? Impossible. It'll take at least two weeks."

"WHAT!" Vegeta sat abruptly, grimacing in pain. Bulma started a move to help, but stopped in time, remembering he would shoo her off.

Instead, she just looked questioningly at her father.

"Two weeks? Vegeta is that seriously injured?" Mrs. Briefs asked for her.

"No, no. It's the time it'll take for me to install a sound system in the chamber. It's not easy to calculate the echo and the ressonance, so I'll find a good place for the boxes..."

Bulma fell on her back again and if Vegeta wasn't already collapsed he'd probably do the same.

His howl echoed throughout all the building:

"WHY DO I NEED A DAMN SOUND SYSTEM!"

Out there, a Capsule Corp employee that passed by was startled and dropped the heavy box he carried on his foot.

"It's obvious," said the doctor, in his usual calm tone "For gymnastics, there's nothing like some music for the rhythm!"

"YOU DARE TO CALL MY TRAINING GYMNASTICS, OLD MAN!" Vegeta started to raise his ki.

"VEGETA! Stop shouting at my father!" Bulma interjected. "He's just being nice to you, even though you don't deserve it."

"That's unbelievable! There are nothing but morons living in this place! You'll die in three years if I won't become stronger, and..."

"Oh, as if you cared," Bulma cut him off. "Stop being a hypocrite: I know you didn't kill us yet only because you need my Dad to make you stronger than Goku! You're nothing but a parasite and without our help you wouldn't even have a place to sleep! You should be grateful, instead insulting and threatening us all the time."

A heavy silence fell over the guestroom. To the old couple's shock, Vegeta just sat in silence and stared at their daughter in a strange way.

Mrs. Briefs felt that he was hurt because of Bulma's lecture and scolded her:

"Bulma! How can you say something so cruel? Vegeta's just saved your life!"

The prince, however, smirked cynically.

"You're nothing but insects to me," he said very slowly, staring at Bulma as though as there was no one else in the room, "Insects with some utility, I admit. When I have done with Kakarott and the others, I'll reward you with a quick, painless death." His stare at Bulma suggested that her death would be much less painless and quick than her parents'.

"Well, so that's all right" Dr. Briefs agreed cheerfully, like the promise of a quick death was the most usual expression of gratitude he received. "So, are you sure you don't want the system?"

"NO!" Vegeta and Bulma shrieked in a chorus. They looked surprised at each other, then exchanged glares.

Fortunately, Mrs. Briefs butted in before they started to fight again:

"Now, now, you two. Bulma, leave Vegeta alone. He's been through too

much and needs some rest. I'll cook a good soup for you, my handsome young man."

The "handsome young man" grimaced in response. Bulma remembered one night when they had soup for dinner and Vegeta had hated it. She wasn't much fond of soup, either, at least not her mother's. It occurred to her it was the first thing she had in common with the rambunctious Saiyan.

"Soup, mom?" she said dismissively, "Vegeta's injured, not sick!"

The proud prince, however, was determined to not owe anything else to her:

"Whatever I eat is not of your concern. Woman," he said to Bulma's mother, like she was his maid "Make that soup now."

"My pleasure, dearest," Mrs. Briefs turned to follow her husband, who seemed a little upset, most at the dismissal of his musical gift than at their guest's rude ways. Only Bulma remained in the room, standing in front of the bed, her face white with fury.

"What?" the Saiyan snorted. "The morons are already gone; what are you

waiting to leave for?"

Bulma had a lot to say to him: what she thought of his manners, his ingratitude, his way of treating her parents and an amount of other little things. Strangely, however, his remark calmed her down.

"This is my home; if I go or if I stay is not of your concern," she said, mocking his way of talking.

She expected him to become angry, like it always happened when she and her friends mocked him. The prince, however, just stared at her in the same strange way he had before, then shrugged indifferently:

"Makes no difference to me," he glanced at a chair near his bed then looked up at the ceiling. It was so fast that Bulma wouldn't have noticed were his eyes had landed at first if she wasn't looking so sharply at him. She looked puzzled: was it her imagination or had he invited her to stay with him?

"You're absolutely incomprehensible," she said, taking the seat.

He said nothing. They remained in silence for a while, Bulma lost in her own thoughts, Vegeta frustrated at the time he was wasting in that bed. This way he'd never overcome Kak...

"Kakarott!" he shouted.

"Huh?" Bulma started and fell with the chair. She stood up and angrily rubbed her sore butt:

"Damn you, Vegeta, do you have to scr..." she started, but Vegeta seized her by her dress and pulled her closer before she could finish it :

"Kakarott's magic seeds! Go to see him and get some, so I can go back to my training! Now!" he demanded.

Bulma took a few seconds to understand.

"T-the senzu beans, you mean?" the woman's blank look hardened: "Sorry but I can't."

"How come?" Vegeta was so shocked at the response that he released her.

"Since I let you stay here you have given me nothing but reasons for regretting it. You've stolen our ship, enslaved my parents, scared our employees to death, you've eaten all the food we have and you never said thank you for saving your worthless life twice! Worse, you've never called me by my name! It's only woman this, stupid girl that!"

"I never name unworthy creatures. Now, go get the senzus...if you want to live a little more."

"In your dreams!" she raised her little nose and strutted toward the door.

"Come back! Or I'll kill you!"

"Go ahead. If you kill me, Dad'll put you out and you'll never see your precious Gravity Room again. And Goku'll chase you around the world to avenge my death; I'm his lifelong friend, y'know. You won't have any chance."

By one turn, Vegeta really wanted to kill that woman who humiliated him in such a low way; by another, he admitted she had guts. Rare creatures, even among the ones stronger than him, were able to stand a verbal duel like that. They usually gave him hateful looks or cursed him pathetically. That weak human female had more guts than all the rest of Kakarott's useless friends. Such an enemy he would be pleased to fight; she hadn't any fighting power, however. While the greatest moron in the universe...

Tsc. Fate had an odd way of giving its gifts.

He snorted in defeat.

"Alright! You helped me, I admit! Now get me the blasted senzus wom... Bulma!"

It wasn't one please, let alone one thank you. However, when she heard her name pronounced by Vegeta, Bulma stopped and turned around, her blue eyes beaming happily. Vegeta had seen her eyes sparkling many times in anger, but never like that... like they were filled with tiny stars, looking even more blue. A strange chill ran down his spine and he unconsciously sat back, a sweat drop on his forehead.

"I wish I could, but I can't." Bulma said with sincerity.

The Saiyan woke up from his stupor:

"How come you can't? I said what you wanted to hear!"

"It's just your idea has come too late. Yesterday, soon after you almost blew up the house, I called Goku for the senzus. Unluckily, Master Karin... the guy who has them, has planted the last seeds, and they'll take a little while to grow. Seems you'll have to be there for a good while."

Once again, Vegeta would have fallen back if he wasn't already on his back. He clenched his teeth and his eyes shook in hateful anger:

"Grrrr... y-you... you tricked me!"

"No I didn't! I just said I couldn't get you the senzus, and it's true. If you misundertood it, is not my fault." Bulma grinned sheepishly. The way Vegeta looked at her, however, told her that maybe

she had gone too far, so she added quickly: "...but, if you're in such a hurry to kill yourself, I can build you a regeneration tank."

"What?"

"I can build a regeneration tank! Gohan and Krillen told me how you healed Goku. I can build a lot of them... if you give me some info, of course." Her eyes shone with greedy eagerness, "Wow, the hospitals'll have to go!"

Vegeta snickered.

"What's so funny?"

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," his voice dripped with sarcasm, "But everything I know is how to operate a tank in an emergency. I don't know the details of its structure, nor the composition of the nutrient

for the baths, because those things don't interest me. I'm a warrior, not a scientist," Vegeta concluded, as he was proud of his ignorance.

"Just like Goku." Bulma pouted in disappointment. "You Saiyans haven't a single bit of scientific curiosity. I wonder how you managed to leave the Stone Age."

Vegeta pretended not to hear.

"Even if you could build a tank it would be a waste of time, because by the time you finished it I'd had recovered by myself. Saiyans heal quickly, and since I'm the prince, my capacity's even bigger than anyone's."

"And your ego, too. How long do you think you'll take to get completely healed?"

"One day, maybe two, but it doesn't matter," he said indifferently. "Anyway, I'll have to train hard tomorrow, to compensate the time I'm wasting collapsed here."

"I can't believe this!" Bulma shook her head. "You're really trying to kill yourself!" A horrible thought occurred to her and she blanched.

"You... you want the senzus for this, don't you? Are you injuring yourself on purpose to get stronger when you recover? That's insane! You'll end up really dying and Shen-Long won't be able to

bring you back. He's not like Porunga, who can bring the same person back many times. And even if the Namekians have new dragonballs there in their new planet, I don't believe that they'll agree in..."

"SHUT UP!" Vegeta cut off her ravings with a shout.

Bulma, surprisingly, obeyed him.

"I'm not injuring myself on purpose and if you considered this possibility you're stupider than I thought. We Saiyans really become stronger whenever we recover from death; still, I could die and comeback a hundred of times without never becoming a Super Saiyan."

No one knew that better than him. On Namek, he had forced the balddwarf to injure him, so the little Namekian brat would heal him, supposing that it was enough to make him able to defeat Freeza. It hadn't. He called Bulma stupid, but actually he had been the stupid one. And, thinking hard, even if he had become immortal and Freeza injured him to a point that he'd surpassed his level of power, what if he hadn't known how to heal himself? Even if the white maggot couldn't kill him, he could have mutilated him, shearing his arms and legs off, then conserving him in his ship as an object of eternal torture. He would do that, for sure. Vegeta felt a chill inside by thinking what could have happened if he had his wish guaranteed. Chill... and a bitter feeling that all those years planning had been a waste. He never had any chance of making his dream come true.

His teeth were clenched with hate.

"So much work to make myself immortal, only to know that, even if I had become a Super Saiyan, it would had been useless against Freeza. Damn him!"

"Is that why you wanted immortality?" Bulma asked. She knew the whole story, of course, but she was curious to hear it from Vegeta's point of view.

Vegeta looked annoyed at her for asking something so obvious, but he agreed:

"Yes. I meant to become more and more powerful. There would be a point where my level of power would surpass Freeza's..."

"Instead, it was Goku who surpassed you both. I see."

"YOU SEE NOTHING!" Vegeta burst out, and not only in the figurative meaning. The wave of energy from his body wasn't strong enough to cause any damage, but sent Bulma flying back. Even though she couldn't feel ki, the blue-haired scientist could see the faint gleam of a white aura around Vegeta, as he roared:

"Do you know how it is to be born to rule a world and instead, to spend your entire life receiving orders? Do you know how it is to depend on the monster who destroyed your planet even to eat and dress? Do you know what it is to spend years planning a vengeance but end up begging to

another do it for you, because you were weak and couldn't make it through to the end? No, you don't know! Nobody does!" He clenched his teeth and fists, a vein beginning to swell in his forehead. He wasn't used to opening his feelings that way and he didn't know why he was doing that now, humiliating himself in front of that Miss Wise Prick. But he couldn't bear it anymore.

"The only thing that kept me standing all those years was my pride. I was the Supreme Prince of Power, the Number One of the Saiyans, and Kakarott took it all from me! And what's left for me? To spend the rest of my life in this mudball, surrounded by morons and having their pathetic charity thrown in my face at every minute! Why was I wished back... only to suffer that disgrace?"

"Would you rather have remained in Hell?" Bulma asked, a little offended.

Vegeta didn't answer right away. He was huffing and staring at the wall in front of him, like he was considering what to say next.

"Of course not," he said at last, his voice husky and low, "Of course not. When I was brought back I received a new chance to regain what was mine. Kakarott took everything that was important to me... but he gave me another thing to rely on: my hate." He snickered bitterly. "Isn't that ironic? The one who destroyed my life has become my new reason to live."

He paused a bit before he continued: "I don't expect you to understand, nor the rest of your good-for-nothing friends. I don't care about whatever happens to me, either, as long as I can defeat him..." his fist clenched tight until it became almost white, "I might go back to Hell, but not without Kakarott!"

He silenced and lowered his head, as that outburst had worn all his forces out, sweat pouring down his face darkened by shadows. Bulma stared at him in amazement.

Was he... crying?

No, he wasn't. His eyes were dry, but there was sorrow in them, indeed. Bulma's heart tightened in her chest. Since Vegeta had come to live with her family, she almost never had seen him show any emotions, rather than anger or amusement. Some shock or embarrassment, too, when she and her mother tricked him. Most of time, however, he remained cold and expressionless, like... like he was dead inside. Many times the young woman had wondered if he was really able to feel.

Until now.

Her eyes ran through Vegeta's room and his clothes scattered around. Nothing in there was really his: it was a guestroom of the Capsule Corp. His clothes, Bulma and her mother had given him because when he moved to Earth he had nothing but a battered jumpsuit and armor. Even those ones weren't really his: they were battle clothes given to Freeza's army, an standard - factory-made stuff, without any trace

of personality. How many years had he spent dressed only in that, instead of dressing as a prince?

"Do you know how is to depend on the monster who destroyed your planet, even to get dressed and fed? No, you don't! Nobody does!"

But he was wrong. She knew it. Well, not in the complete definition of the word, but she knew how humiliating was to depend on others goodwill to get dressed and fed, even to have where to sleep. Like when she traveled with Goku and Oolong and they had nothing but a RV to sleep in, a generous gift from the desert bandit Yamcha, and she had to sleep naked because her clothes were filthy and there was nothing else to wear. Until the perverted Oolong gave her a cheap Playboy Bunny fantasy outfit that he had gotten from Kami knows where.

But it was one thing to lose your luggage and have somewhere in the world a cosy home and a warm, caring family waiting for her. And it was another thing to have been absolutely stripped from everything. Nowhere to go, no one who wanted him, no real purpose... only hate and desire for vengeance.

How many times had she taken her own life for empty... Vegeta was right, she knew nothing. Bulma tried to picture herself without her work, her riches, her family, her friends, her planet... but she couldn't.

"I would have gone crazy."

As soon as the thought hit her mind, she started to understand.

Vegeta was already near insanity: his obsession with defeating Goku was the only thing that kept him from the abyss. A goal. Something to grab. Even though he insisted that his pride was the only thing that had kept him going on during his years with Freeza, in fact it had been his thirst for getting revenge from his torturer. Beating Freeza, Goku had inadvertently taken his place in the prince's twisted mind. One enemy for another. She shook her head sadly for her best friend's fate.

But, if Vegeta managed to surpass Goku, what he would do next, when he had no one else to beat? Worse, what if Goku died as that mysterious boy from the Future had predicted? What would happen? She imagined Vegeta completely taken by madness, killing and destroying everything in sight just for the pleasure of destroying it, with a real meaning. The Capsule Corp in wrecks, the dead bodies of her parents, friends and herself lying among the wreckage, scattered and dismembered. A shiver ran down Bulma's spine. Suddenly, she felt like she had invited a planetary time bomb into her house.

"Let's suppose you do it," she said, trying to remain calm.

"Huh?" Vegeta looked up with surprise. He had forgotten the woman's presence completely.

"Let's suppose you become Super Saiyan," she continued "You'll destroy the Androids, then Goku and the rest of my friends - and myself, judging from this nice front-, perhaps the Earth, too. What are you going to do next?"

The question caught Vegeta off-guard. He hadn't thought of this before - actually, he avoided it. He remained in silence for a moment, considering her question. Then his arrogant mask took over again:

"I have no reason to tell you."

"Ah," Bulma nodded with a grin. "You don't know."

Vegeta clenched his teeth, because it was the truth.

"Just think a little," the woman went on in a lighter tone "You aren't even supposed to be here, for a start; you were resurrected by pure luck, 'cause no sane person would wish you back."

Vegeta just raised an eyebrow, in a "tell me about that" way. Bulma went on irritably:

"What I mean is that, maybe you haven't been wished back by say there are strange forces in the universe, even stronger than Kami-sama or Mr. Kaioh. Maybe this force, or deity or whatever who has made you be wished back has something in mind for you. You said yourself

you've received a second chance: why don't you take it and...AAAHHH!" a strong hand grabbed her forearm and pulled her forward violently. At the next second her nose was at millimeters from Vegeta's:

"If what you say is truth and some force or god wanted to give me a new chance, whether it is crazy or it knew what I would do. Anyway, that's only of my concern."

"Let go! You're breaking my arm!" Bulma was almost falling on her knees in pain.

Vegeta relaxed his grip a little.

"Why do you insist in nosing into my life?"

"I-I... I..." Bulma stuttered, her cheeks becoming red " Because you're my guest, sure! While you're leaving here I have the obligation of concerning myself with your damned welfare, that's all!"

He gave her a long, silent stare. Then, in an abrupt movement, he pulled her forward, so fast that when Bulma realized it, she was pinned to his bed with Vegeta over her.

"What are you doing? Let me go!" she struggled and kicked in vain "I'm going to shout, I'm telling you!"

"So do it. Those two old fools will love to see their beloved guest assaulting their one spoiled child! Maybe they'll put me out, " he smirked in amusement as she silenced. "Why, wasn't that what you wanted? Now you have a chance to get rid of this 'parasite'?"

She said nothing.

"What, no more babbling?" he teased in an amused tone.

Bulma just threw him a venomous look. More she couldn't do, because she wasn't sure if she could control her mouth. He was almost naked over her, and the bandages covering him partially weren't enough to keep his warmth and scent from assaulting her senses, with an intensity much stronger than when she had just helped him to walk. She felt like she was completely undressed, her blood running up

to her face in a wave of heat and shame. Then she noticed that Vegeta was getting red, too. He shifted and leaned his weight on his elbows, raising his body enough to diminish the contact but not to let her go. That calmed her down.

She was completely vulnerable in his hands, she knew it; he could do anything he liked to her and even if her mother or someone else appeared there they could do nothing to stop him.

But he wouldn't.

She almost smiled in amusement, by realizing that she actually trusted in the last creature in the universe to deserve trust. Her absence of fear seemed to irritate Vegeta, because he went on with impatience:

"You called me a parasite, but if I'm causing you any distress it's only your fault. You knew the way I am, and still you invited me along with the Grand Namek Circus; no one has forced you, just as as no one has forced you to save my life."

"I would have done the same for Goku or Yamcha!"

"Don't lie! " he yelled at her face, "I have been watching you and I know you're nothing like your stupid parents or the rest of Kakarott's friends. You're vain, boorish and self-centered, as much as..." he would say 'as much as I', but corrected it in time "...almost as a Saiyan. Why would someone like you to risk your treasured life and for me?"

He was tense. Bulma could feel it in his muscles, even though he was no longer leaning on her. His heart thundered against the wall of his chest, his muscles hardened and his teeth so clenched that they seemed about to crack. Only his eyes remained the same, but the slight twitch in his eyebrows betrayed his anxiety. Suddenly, Bulma wished to feel again that chest against hers and touch those muscles and that stony face. To caress them until they relaxed, to make him understand he had no reason to be like this...

As though Vegeta felt what she was thinking, the expression in his eyes softened a bit. He bent his head, almost brushing his face on hers.

"Answer me, Bulma," he insisted. His voice was still little rough, but sounded more like a beg than an order.

Bulma... he had called her by her name. He said he never named those who weren't worth it; so that meant she was worthy now? Why?

And why did he need so much to know? If her opinions or her presence make no difference to him? He said that the whole time. Or...

A crazy thought struck her brain like a lightning.

Could he... could it be?

"Will you die in three years? ... almost as a Saiyan. I've been watching you... I've been watching you... I've been watching you..."

Did he actually care about her?

Bulma's lips opened, but something still held her back.

"He's playing with you," whispered a little voice in her mind, "He's using you the same way he used your friends or your parents. Remember Vegeta is: a heartless, cold-blooded killer," although the voice was hers, Bulma felt like she was seeing Yamcha speaking these words.

"But he does have a heart," she retorted mentally, thinking of Vegeta's outburst before. His pain had been too real to be pretended. And if he was able to feel pain then he had feelings, even if they were only selfish ones.

"And you think that someone so selfish could have feelings for anyone beyond himself?" asked the voice with scorn.

A vision of Vegeta laughing at her pathetic feelings for him appeared in front of Bulma's eyes and put her blood to boil. How could she think, even for a second, that he ...?

No. She wouldn't be like this. She could be not Saiyan, but she had her pride, too.

"Are you dreaming, woman? I'm not going to hang over you the whole day," the Saiyan's voice brought her back.

The image of the laughing Vegeta melted away to be replaced by his real, usual scowl. Both of them seemed worthy only of Bulma's hatred. She pressed her lips tight.

Vegeta noticed the sudden change in her expression. If that confounded him, he didn't show it.

"You want to know the reason for my concern about you, do you?" Bulma asked in the iciest tone of voice she could produce.

Vegeta didn't respond, but his eyes said yes.

"Because no one else does, that's all. Not even you. I think it's so sad to live like this, without anyone who cares if you live or die. It's that simple."

Vegeta pulled back as she had smacked his face. Even though his face remained expressionless, Bulma had a strange feeling, like something had closed inside him.

"Of course. Pity. I should have known." He pushed her down. Bulma landed on her backside for the third time that day, she thought as she rubbed her sore rear.

He continued in an expressionless voice:

"I was wrong: you're just like the rest of Kakarott's friends, filled with this sickening Earthling kindness." Each word of his was heavy with disdain "Get out here and never talk to me again. And tell your father I want the Gravity Room fixed for tomorrow without a sound system or any other junk he wants to put in it!"

"No way!" Bulma leapt to her feet and stood in front of the bed, hands on hips. "As your hostess, I forbid you to use that chamber until you're completely healed! Understood? I forbid..." a light flashed past the corner of her eye and she heard a soft rumble at her back.

Bulma turned around. Her eyes widened in disbelief. At the wall opposite to her there was now a smoking hole, a little wider than a baseball ball, a few centimeters from her head.

"Are you crazy?" she turned at the Saiyan, her eyes sparkling angrily. "You could have killed me!" then her eyes widened again.

Vegeta was seated on his bed, a new ki ball in his hand and a smirk on his face.

"The next is yours," he said simply.

Bulma gathered all the strength she had on her wobbly legs to burst like a rocket through the door. After she was gone, Vegeta let himself fall on his back on the bed and looked up at the ceiling. Suddenly his body seemed to have been drained of all strength.

"Idiot..." he muttered, not knowing for sure if it was for Bulma or for himself.

Meanwhile, Bulma darted through the corridor without even noticing where she was going. A yell alerted her and she saw her mother coming in her direction, carrying the promised soup in a bowl on a tray. Bulma tried to stop, but it was too late.

"AAAAAAAHHHHHH!" they yelled in chorus.

If the next events had happened in a movie, they'd certainly have been shown in slow-motion. A second before the encounter, Bulma's mother still lifted her arms up in an attempt to save the soup; however, when Bulma hit her, both the tray and the bowl flew from her hands. The bowl somersaulted a double Olympic twist in the air as it spilled all its content over the two women (luckily it wasn't very hot) before it exploded in shards against the floor.

SSPLASSHHHHHH! AHHHHHHHHH! CLINK! CLINK!

"Oh heavens!" Mrs. Briefs put both hands to her head, getting angry for once. "Bulma Briefs! What you..." she turned to scold her daughter. Seeing that she was shaking however, the concern fast took

place of the anger. "What happened, dearest? You're white! Something wrong with Vegeta?"

"W-well, sort of," Bulma managed to blurt out, still trembling. Her arm ached where Vegeta had grabbed her and it was probably already getting purple. Fortunately her dress was long-sleeved; otherwise, she would have to give her mother some explanations she didn't want to.

"Oh dear. I told you to leave him alone. Vegeta's such a sensitive boy and you hurt him too much. You really shouldn't have said all those horrible things."

"What!" Bulma's eyes opened wide. "I hurt him? Listen, mom..." then she saw the soup on her mother's clothes and hair, the floor, the corridor, and trailed off. Part of her anger melted away. All

she wanted now was to hide herself to cry alone somewhere else.

"I'm sorry, Mom. Didn't want to cause this mess. But you don't need to worry about Vegeta, believe me. He's okay - more than I would like" she added begrudgingly "And you don't need to bring him more soup; he told me himself he wasn't hungry anymore!"

A yell from his room proved the lie in her words:

"Womaan! Blonde woman from Earth! Where's my food?"

Mrs. Briefs gave a confused glance toward the room, then to her daughter and smiled:

"Looks like that he's changed his mind. Isn't it wonderful? I'm gonna go get him another bowl."

Bulma clenched her teeth in anger. It wasn't enough that bastard had spoiled her dress, threatened to kill and probably rape her, no, he had to put her parents against her, too!

Then, her eyes suddenly sparked. She had an idea.

"Wait, mommy," she stopped her with a gentle smile, "I'll get it for you. I'll get a broom and a cloth to clean this, too." Then she left by the corridor, rubbing her hands deviously.

Mrs. Briefs stood watching her daughter go and shook her head.

"That girl... She won't admit it, but she's in love again," she said with a grin as she bent down to gather the pieces of china.

3 - Saiyans are from Mars, Women are from Venus

After shooing Bulma away, Vegeta wondered if he hadn't crossed the line. As much humiliating as it was to admit, she was right: he really lived there out of charity. The simple fact of those people accepting him back after he had stolen their ship was unbelievable; this time, however, they certainly wouldn't be so forgiving. Of course, he could threaten to kill them if they tried to put him out, but Vegeta didn't believe they would take him seriously. At least, not the woman or her moronic excuse for a mother.

But the moronic excuse appeared by next with the promised soup, babbling cheerfully as if nothing had happened. The hole at the wall rendered nothing beyond an absent look and a comment that the termites were probably attacking again and that she would have to call that handsome boy from the terminating service. At this, Vegeta began to relax. The woman had no guts to turn him in. He should have known. Despite her bravado, she was as cowardly as the rest of her weak-blooded race. He smirked, feeling a mixture of disdain and deception.

Next morning, he woke up at the 5:00, a little earlier than his usual. Thanks to the indiscreet "old" blonde, he knew that Bulma wasn't exactly a morning person, so he would take one extra hour to train before she was up and in his hair.

At least that was what he thought. He had just switched the machine on when the holographic screen appeared showing a sleepy-faced, blinking Bulma.

"Good morning, Vegeta" she said at the middle of a yawn "You're really early today."

The Saiyan widened up his eyes. That woman was the entire Ginyu Troop in one person!

"You slept there?" he asked irritably. She nodded and yawned again.

"I knew you would come despite my warnings, so I got up a little earlier too, but... (yawn) I fell asleep again. Luckily I had installed an alarm to wake me as soon as you turned the machine on. You should rest a little more before coming back to train, Vegeta. Maybe tomorrow..."

"I'm not interested in your opinions. Why won't you go and hassle your boyfriend, if you still have one?"

Bulma's blue eyes stung.

"You asked for this!"

He saw her open her mouth wide, spray something in her throat, make a gurgle sound, and finally take a deep breath. Then, she started yelling with all her lungs:

"PEEEE...PEE,PEE, PEE, PEEEE..."

The Saiyan stared at her in complete bewilderment.

What she was doing now?

"PEEE....PEE, PEE, PEE, PEE...."

Suddenly, his legs started to entwine onto each other, moved by a very unusual feeling that assaulted his body. It was a sort of pain he never had felt before.

"W-what's this?"

The response soon became obvious. Vegeta literally flew towards the restroom in the ship, and if it wasn't his super-velocity it would have been too late.

His howls could be heard outside of the ship:

"#\$HELL&(WOMAN! & (WHEN I'LL GET YOU! AAAAARRRGH!"

He yelled so much and so loud that Bulma's parents woke up and came to see what was happening. They found their daughter in the laboratory, rolling on the floor and holding her belly as she cackled hysterically.

"But... what is Vegeta doing now?" asked the doctor.

"H-he is... he's having a pretty bellyache!" Bulma barely could breathe from laughing so much, let alone to talk.

"Oh poor little thing" said Mrs. Briefs "Did he eat something wrong?"

For the couple's puzzlement, her question just increased Bulma's laughs.

A few minutes later, Vegeta, red with fury and shame, came back fuming and sending smoke from every hole in his head. At the holographic screen, Bulma calmly read a fashion magazine.

"What have you done to me, you dog?" he demanded.

"dog? Watch your mouth, Saiyan. I am a lady!"

"You're worse than a dog! What kind of magic was that?"

"Do you like it? It's an old invention of mine. I call it Pee Pee Candy. I slipped one in your soup yesterday."

"You messed with my soup? That explains why it tasted so terrible!"

Bulma ignored the insult.

"Since you won't listen I had to make something drastic. The Pee Pee Candy'll give you a bellyache

every time I'll shout pee-pee. If you don't want me to do it again, you'd better settle down and rest. Tomorrow you may train again, if your wounds are better."

"Who do you think you are to tell me what to do or not..."

"Pee, pee, peee..." she said mockingly.

Vegeta tossed a ki ball at the hologram before he ran back to the bathroom.

He was wrong: that woman wasn't the Ginyu Troop.

She was Freeza.

They didn't exchange a word for the rest of the morning.

On one hand, Bulma was happy with the success of her plan; on the other, this same success started to get on her nerves. After recomposing himself, Vegeta had threatened to kill her again and called her a lot of ungodly names: he simply didn't understand that was for his own good. Then, since that didn't work, he adopted the tactic of silent terrorism, by crossing his arms and scoring the walls of wherever she was passing by and shooting her murderous looks. Bulma pretended not to notice it, but she shrunk inwardly.

The lunch was something close to an ordeal. They both ate in silence, with Vegeta occasionally looking up to glare at Bulma, who seemed very fascinated by her own food. Between them, the Dr. Briefs tried unsuccessfully to pull some talk, puzzled at such a gloomy mood at table. Only his wife kept talking in her bubbly usual way as she didn't notice anything:

"Why did you wrap this cloth on your arm, honey?" Vegeta suddenly heard the elder woman ask. He didn't pay any attention. If he had, however, he could have seen his blue-eyed tormentor flush slightly:

"What, this? I- I... I hurt myself yesterday. I took a spill, that's all. But this color matches greatly with my new dress, doesn't it? " she said with a forced grin "I think I'm gonna release a new fashion!"

Her father gave her a concerned look.

"Maybe it'll be better if you'll not work today, dear." he said.

"But dad, it's just a... "Bulma started to say, but she gave in and sunk her shoulders. Inwardly, she felt like smacking on herself. As she had previewed, Vegeta's grasp had produced a horrible purple bruise on her arm, which would take weeks to fade away entirely. No one had noticed it the previous day because she had worn a long-sleeved dress the whole time; today, however, it was too hot to do the same without causing suspicion, so she had no way but wrapping a bandana over the bruise. She thought about telling her parents the truth, but her tongue refused to move. Damn it, why did she keep protecting that ungrateful asshole?

"Huh? What did you say, mom?"

"I asked why you and Vegeta won't take a day-off." Said the blonde woman " You could have a picnic together..." she stopped by noticing the two murderous stares directed at her, from the opposite sides of the table, and opened her eyes in puzzlement "Did I say something wrong?"

Dr. Briefs tried to calm down the mood:

"Your mother made a great suggestion, Bulma. You could go to the movie with that boyfriend of yours..."he made an effort to remember the name "...Yamcha. By the way, where is he? That's twice we haven't seen him for lunch, he and that cute little blue cat ...ouch!" he felt something sharp plunging in his skin and whipped his head aside. From its perch at the doctor's shoulder, Scratch, his small black cat, stared at him with visible jealousy. The old man gave him a reassuring smile and a tiny bit of his beef.

After his resurrection, Yamcha had moved back to the Capsule Corp and joined Pual and Oolong. When Vegeta returned from the space and Bulma invited him back, too, the cowardly pig had fled to Kamekoshi's house, but Yamcha and Pual had stayed bravely in the house, despite the little cat's misgivings. Inwardly, Bulma suspected that Yamcha wanted to protect her. Ha! She could tell him he was wasting his time. Vegeta never would look at a woman unless she had black spiked hair, a tail and a permanent scowl.

At her father's mention about her still boyfriend, however, Bulma realized that she hadn't given him a single thought since the Gravity Room had exploded. She felt a pang of guilt.

"Funny, Dad, now you said that I haven't seen Yamcha for a good while. You're saying he and Pual haven't come for lunch since yesterday? Even to dinner?"

"None of them, honey." her mother laughed "It's just..."

Vegeta stood up, for the Briefs' surprise. Usually, he never left the table before cleaning up his fourth plate of food (and he was just on his second).

"Why are you going, Vegeta? " asked Mrs. Briefs "You hadn't finished your lunch."

"Your empty talking is turning my stomach." he snorted "I'll get some air... though this is not of your business."

Bulma stood up, too.

"Some air my foot!" she yelled at him" You're going back to train until you'll be almost dead again, that's what you're planning to do! Well, give it up, cause you're not going anywhere until you're completely healed!"

"And what are you going to do?" he sneered "To fly after me screaming pee-pee with a loudspeaker?"

Bulma started to open her mouth, but noticed her parents staring at her and closed it again. She couldn't use her power in front of them, and gave him a glare of frustration. Vegeta smirked at her and left. She slumped back on her chair, her appetite completely lost.

"What's Vegeta talking about, honey?" asked Dr. Briefs.

"Oh nothing, dad. It's a Vegeta's thing . "she played with a small piece of noodle " You know he's a little touched in his head. What you were saying about Yamcha, mom?"

At the streets next to the Capsule Corp, several people turned and yelped, scared with a sudden wind storm that hadn't been announced by the meteorologists. A lady that left the beauty parlor found herself only in undergarments at the middle of the street, and worse, with her fancy 70 zeni hairstyle completely ruined. Newspapers, purses, hats and many other objects were found by their owners (or others) in the most odd places. A worried mother found her baby boy cheerfully shredding some daisies in a flower box where he had been swept from her arms.

At the same way it appeared, the windstorm left the city, seeding surprises and distress on its way. It flew over a river, pushing a lot of fishes to the earth, for the glee of some impoverished families that lived around. A couple of pterodactyls that were cheerfully feeding their baby chicks at the top of a mountain almost had no time to save the nest with the chicks, because at the next second there was no mountain beneath them.

Vegeta flew so fast that only the Z warriors could see him now. Hardly.

Grrrr. Who did she think she was?

To the hell with that woman and her ridiculous concern and her stupid boyfriend! If he couldn't use the Gravity Room he would train at the woods or anywhere else. Maybe the best to do would be look for another place to stay, a cave or whatever, so he would no longer have to put up with that crazy family.

"YAMCHA'S GONE! Like this, without having said me a word!"

Mrs. Briefs had just told Bulma what happened to her boyfriend. Yamcha had left the Capsule Corp. right at the same day Vegeta had almost died in that horrible explosion. She was still so stunned and shocked by the event, wondering if the poor dear wouldn't pass away when Yamcha appeared overloaded with suitcases and packs as Pual floated behind asking if he wasn't being too hasty. The boy almost ran onto her, literally.

"Yamchie? Where are you going?" she asked.

"I don't know. Why won't you ask your daughter!" he snapped out before the two left, without even saying goodbye. Mrs. Briefs shook her head sympathetically as she remembered:

"I don't know what bit him, but he looked really upset... what's wrong, Bulma?"

She didn't respond. Just stiffened in chair, her face pale and her eyes staring at the opposite wall. He thought... he had thought that she... oh Kami.

"That idiot!" she jumped to her feet, almost pushing her chair down "I know exactly what he's thinking. That stupid, dirty-minded jerk! But if he thinks that I'm going after him, he's deadly wrong." She mumbled as she stomped her way out of the kitchen.

Her parents just exchanged a puzzled look.

"Young people... " the blonde woman sighed and bent to pick up the plates of food that Vegeta and Bulma had left almost untouched.

Vegeta flew for a long time, without taking directions, until he felt a very familiar ki.

"Kakarott!" he stopped into middle-air and looked down. A few meters away from him there was a mountain, from which there was a small house in the domo-shape he was already used to see. To not leave any doubt about the identity of its occupant, there were a famous orange gi and pants among other dripping clothes that hanged from a rope attached between two posts. There was also a navy-blue undershirt lying on the grass (too heavy to be hung).

The Saiyan prince powered down and hit the floor as silently as he could. He could feel Kakarott's and his son's kis inside the house, along with a human's, whom he couldn't identify. Its ki was too small to belong to any of Kakarott's friends, still it was a little bigger than the kis of Bulma and the rest of the humans with whom he was forced to live. Feh. It didn't matter. At his level of power he couldn't defeat Kakarot, of course (to not mention the wounds), but a little fight would help him to quell his looked around, checking on the yard, with the trees and the bath, and the humble looking-house, and couldn't help to compare with his fancy accommodations at the Capsule Corp.

"So that's where Kakarott lives. What poverty. "

If he was Super Saiyan he would be living in a palace, not in a run-down hovel in the middle of nothing.

He heard steps and the voices of Kakarott and his son getting louder, signaling they were leaving the house. He slipped behind a tree, expecting to catch them by surprise.

"WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?"

The scream almost sent Vegeta back into the air. It couldn't be! Even there she didn't leave him alone? Then he came back to reason. It couldn't be Bulma, the voice was different. That voice obviously belonged the creature whose ki he had detected... As to confirm his thought, at the next second Kakarott and the brat broke out of the house, with an odd-looking woman running after them. She had jet black hair pulled back and tied in a bun, and wore a dark-blue dress revealing a pair of baggy trousers underneath. Over the dress, a sort of orange bandana wrapped over her shoulders and a white rectangle of cloth that Bulma's mother called 'apron'. Vegeta never had seen anything so bizarre, despite having met lots of alien cultures.

"Come back, I'm telling you!" she grabbed Goku by his shirt and seized the leg of Gohan, who had already begun to float. "Who taught you two to leave the table before finishing to eat! Come back inside, it's almost Gohan's studying time. (For her, every time is Gohan's studying time ').

"But mom," Gohan whimpered "We've got no time for this now! Mr. Piccolo's waiting for us.

"Let him wait! I gave you my permission to train, alright, (and I'll regret that my entire life) but it doesn't

mean I'm going to have you pushing your studies aside. Today we'll review everything you have learned this last month."

"But we already did that last night!"

"Then we'll do it again! And don't talk back to me, young man. Since that year when Piccolo snatched you away you've become quite disrespectful to me!"

"You're overreacting it, Chichi," Goku butted in "Gohan didn't disrespect you. He just said the truth."

"Stay out of this!"

For Vegeta's shock, Chichi turned around and smacked Goku on his face. He fell seated on the grass.

"Ouch! That hurts," he moaned, brushing his now reddened cheek.

"It's supposed to! I told you so many times to never argue with me in front of Gohan but you insist it! Don't you see you're subverting my mother authority?"

Goku took a few steps back.

"I-I didn't argue with you! I just said..."

"See? Did it again!" she raged at her cowering husband "Nice example you give to our son! That's why he doesn't respect me anymore! If he'll become a delinquent it'll be your fault! "

"Hey, it's not ..."

"SHUT UP!"

Vegeta was terrified. Where all the women in Earth completely insane?

"Need something, Vegeta?" asked a voice. He turned around to see Piccolo standing by his side.

"None of your business," he snapped, irked for having not felt the Namekian coming "But don't worry. I'm not going to make a boo-boo in your precious little pupil."

Piccolo frowned but said nothing.

"But Chi-chi... "Goku's voice whipped their heads back to the familiar scene "I felt Vegeta's ki around here! I have to check on what he's doin ..."

"I don't care about whatever you've felt, if it was Vegeta, Cabbage or Beet!" Chi-chi cut him off. Piccolo snickered. Vegeta clenched his teeth.

"I'm sick of spending my days all alone while you two are out training. You're staying home today and it's final!" Chichi ranted as she grabbed Goku's arm and started to drag him towards the house "I'm going to

clean the house and you can help me by dusting the carpets and moving the furniture, since you're so strong now. Then, you'll wear something decent, for a change, so we'll go to the East City."

"To the East City?" Goku echoed "What for?"

"To negotiate Gohan's matriculation in the Blue Star School."

"B-blue Star?" Gohan stuttered "Mom, that's a secondary school! They don't accept kids under 12. And I ain't got even seven yet!"

Chi-chi stared at her son as if he had said the sky was blue:

"Of course it's a secondary school! Did you think I'd put you in a kindergarten? It's true you're very late in your studies, thanks to your father and the crooks he has for friends" she shot a look towards her husband "but still you're very ahead from the other children! Can you imagine if you'll get your diploma before you're fifteen?" she dreamily joined her hands together, her eyes dripping with motherly pride "My son, a little prodigy!"

At the vision of Gohan stumbling on a long black robe of a graduate, with a large squared hat covering his eyes and a gigantic diploma in his little hand, Goku and Gohan fell over with their legs up. Outraged by their lack of enthusiasm, Chi-chi sullenly dragged her 'ungrateful' family inside. Their voices were reduced to a baffled murmur.

Meanwhile, Vegeta and Piccolo remained at their spots like statues, both with arms crossed and stoic looks. Only the sweat pouring on their foreheads revealed their mutual discomfort.

"So, that is Kakarott's wife." Vegeta stated, after a long silence.

"Yes." Piccolo shut his eyes in disapproval "Pathetic, isn't it? Be proud of yourself : you've just found the only weak spot of the Super Saiyan."

"Why does Kakarott lets that woman treat him like this? She's just a... human!"

"That is exactly why."

"Huh?" Vegeta arched a confused eyebrow.

"Human's weakness can be a weird, but a powerful weapon, believe me. Don't underestimate them." A few more sweat drops slide down on Piccolos' forehead, while he recorded the way Chichi had forced him to take driving classes along with Goku. As if the Great Demon-King needed a driver license.

"Speak clearer, Namek. I hate riddles."

"I already said more than you should know. If you want more details go in there and ask Goku, but I wouldn't do it if I were you." Piccolo showed his fangs in a smirk "Chichi would love an opportunity to get revenge for all those times you beated on Gohan."

"Do you dare to insinuate that I'd be beaten that nasty lousy human?" Vegeta's eyes bulged in outrage.

"Are you afraid to try... 'Cabbage'?" Piccolo sustained his look.

They glared at each other for a long moment. Vegeta felt like rushing inside the house and showing that arrogant Namekian that he didn't fear anything, especially a loud little woman. But he wouldn't. It had to be a trick.

"My goals are Gero's tin dolls and Kakarott" he said arrogantly "I 'm not interested in insects."

Piccolo smirked again.

"I'd become surprised if you'd succeed where Goku did not," he said "I don't know much about human females, but I wouldn't bet on you."

"What makes you so sure about this?"

"Those ridiculous clothes you wore when Goku came back to Earth." Piccolo's smirk enlarged a little, as if he found his own joke amusing.

Vegeta opened his mouth just to close it again. No... he couldn't be insinuating...

He straightened up and tossed the Namekian a very cold look.

"Want an advice? Stop hanging around Kakarott. You're starting to babble the same kind of nonsense he does." he said, before taking off and flying away.

Piccolo stood watching the Saiyan prince getting smaller and smaller until he turned into a dark spot in the distance.

"Stupid, imprudent moron... Why did you say that?" he berated himself in his thought.

At that moment, Gohan, who had taken advantage of a moment of distraction from his mother to slip out of the house, showed up at his side.

"That was Vegeta?" he asked, looking at the direction where the prince had disappeared.

"Yes." Piccolo snorted.

"What did he want?" the little boy asked with concern.

"To chit-chat."

Gohan stared confusedly at his mentor and best friend, but Piccolo said nothing else.

"GOHA-AN! Where are you?" Chi -chi's high-pitched voice could be heard even at kilometers from the place where they stood "Goku! This is your fault! "

"But what did I do now?" they heard Goku moan.

"You're always running off home for adventures, that's what you have done! Now YOUR son's starting to follow your steps! That's the example you give him, blablabla, I never should have married you, blabla, this way he'll never become responsible..."

They heard fast retreating steps mixed to metallic thuds and yelps, like if someone was running and getting pelted with pans inside the house.

"Ouh! Please, Chi-chi, that hurts.... Oouch!"

"Better you go back before your mother decides to execute her hostage." Piccolo said, half-sarcastically, half-seriously. Gohan nodded with a sigh and trudged back home. The Demon King stood floating in the air, hoping his imprudent words hadn't messed up with Trunk's future.

Vegeta was anything but a fool.