

A Bio 72

Chapter 72: Tofu Burger with a Side Dish

The smell hit Alexa as if it were a [PileDriver] to the face. She had seen a few of those [Weapons] in one of the most mechanical P-Series subjects, and it had been a [Nightmare] to deal with them. The design focused solely on penetration force, so her [Armor] hadn't worked that well.

She had defeated them easily enough since she only needed to swat at them with her [Claws] to deal with them, but the memory of the weapon had stuck to her. Sadly she hadn't managed to keep the [Blueprint], since that one was in the [Gun] category (For some reason), so her [Main Core] didn't let her keep it.

Even so, the memory had resurfaced as soon as Alexa opened the door into the [Restaurant], she could detect [Food] EVERYWHERE. It was a [Symphony] of [Smells] and Alexa was a helpless spectator.

“Move it kid, either order something or get lost.” Some of the people that came after her said pushing her to the side. “One veggie salad low on carbs!”

Alexa wasn't sure why one would want to eat something low on [Carbs], but she decided to walk to the side near the [wall] for now, away from prying eyes, she slowly changed her [hands] as she moved, slowly morphing them back into a more normal [human] profile.

As she walked she noticed people seemed to focus on eating and speaking at the same time, some [joked] other spoke seriously, and there was one pair that just stared at each other eyes while not saying anything and holding hands.

Weird.

“[Noticed increase number of pheromones and hormones being emitted by the humans, possible inter exchange of hormones via hand.]”

They could also communicate with [smell]. Alexa hadn't...noticed much on that front, she wasn't receiving any extra input by her sense of smell at least. Was her [Blueprint] flawed?

It shouldn't be, she hadn't noticed much variation between the samples she had taken so far, all she had found seemed to be about the same, she would need to try and get a [Female Human] full [Blueprint] and compare with hers.

She could work either backward or forward with the [Blueprint] to match it to her current age. If she found a [Child Stage Blueprint] it would be for the best, but so far it seemed that the [Humans] took extra care with their [Spawns], so perhaps getting an [Adult Woman Blueprint] would be easier.

“What can I help you with darling? Are you on an errand for Mama?” An [Older Woman] asked her as she came close to the front.

She had walked all the way to the front where a weird [Keyboard] was and a [Woman] with a [pen] on her ear and some weird [hat] with too many holes on it was used to keep her [Hair] from moving freely.

“I need a 'Tofu Burger Especial with side dish',” Alexa said in one go, at the same time the [Woman] seemed to narrow her eyes and look around.

“Did someone here ask you to deliver this message, darling? Is mama unable to come to the front?” The [Woman]’s eyes narrowed at the door.

“No? I was told to ask for this by a friend.” Alexa said raising her hand and tapping at her bracelet.

“You?” The [Woman] sighed, “Fine, do you need anything else?”

Did she?

“...Will there be a ‘Tofu Burger Especial’ with my order? Besides the obvious implication.” Alexa asked. She was really curious about this...Tofu.

“Pfft.” The [Woman] laughed at that, “Sure darling, do you want the kiddy dish?”

Kiddy?

“...I want a big portion.” Alexa said, she had noticed that the [Child Stage Humans] around here seemed to be given...less.

She didn’t want to eat less than possible, she wanted to eat as much as possible!

She would not be starved!

"Sure sure, come with me." The [woman] said to Alexa as she started moving to the side of this weird contraption, "Hey Diana! Cover me, and send a Tofu burger some french fries and an Orange Soda to the back room!"

Orange Soda?

Why not [Mango] Soda?

"Sure thing boss. Are you taking your break this early?" Another [Woman] this one younger came from the back, she reeked of [Meat].

"I need to take care of something, be a dear and make sure no one gets too rowdy okay? Who is on security today?" The [Woman] asked, looking around the people eating.

"Today? I think that it's Francis, why?" The younger [woman] asked.

Would Alexa need to fight?

"We have an...Especial order, tell him to stay sharp. Nothing should go wrong, but we hadn't had one of these in almost half a year. So I don't want this to start a trend." The [Woman] said turning to Alexa.
"And you, come with me. This way, you will need to explain it to me what is going on."

What?

And her Burger?

"Sure thing boss." The young [Woman] answered, after that, she turned to the small window from where most of the fumes of [Food] came and screamed into it "Tofu Burger and french fries for the boss!"

So they would prepare her food there? Interesting.

Alexa would remember this, if she ever got the chance she would try to get into one [Restaurant] and raid that [Room].

"Come, they will get you the food in a few minutes." The [Woman] said opening the door to a smaller room that had a single table, some metal chairs, and a series of metal boxes with fairly shabby looking keyholes on it. "Take a seat and explain yourself young lady."

....Was she in trouble?

“Billy told me to come here and give you that password.” Alexa answered as she sat into the chair, it was cold. “He told me I could also eat it.”

That last bit was probably the most important part of this situation.

“I managed to understand that, not many know what those bracelet are.” The [Woman] said, “Can you show me? You don’t need to show me how it changes just what it turns into.”

Was the transformation sequence her bracelet went through a secret?

They hadn’t told her that.

“Sure,” Alexa answered, she pulled and twisted at the bracelet while her hands were under the table.

It was becoming quite easy to do, and Alexa was even planning to use some [Wiggles] to do it while using clothes that hide her arms. How would she get the mask then? Well, that was things that she needed to think later!

“Here it is.” Alexa said while pulling the mask from under the table, “Do I need to put it on?”

“...No, that will not be necessary.” The [Woman] said while looking at the white mask. “A Core User Mask...And the size seems to be about right...”

Alexa hadn't noticed the mask being of a different size before, but now that the [woman] said it, it did fit her no matter what [stage] she was...

"Okay, I am the owner of 'The Vegan Bistro'. Kerrigan." The [Woman] said while lowering her head, "Under the neutral food zone pact I am offering protection to....?"

[Kerrigan] then turned to Alexa and then to her mask.

"...Alexa?" Alexa answered confused, "Or do I need..."

"Alexa is good enough. If you ever walk into my establishment using that mask, then you will need to introduce yourself with whatever name you pick...Even if it seems useless, as there aren't probably that many minions with your proportions, you still need to always use the other name while using the mask." [Kerrigan] said, then motioned for Alexa to hide the mask, so she did as such.

Folding it back into a bracelet was always fun, since the mask did some *pop* noises here and there, and it remembered Alexa of the sound of bones breaking.

"Here is the food boss, I brought a kid set for your friend too!" The previous [Woman] said placing the food in the table.

To the left of the table, the set of a big (Compared to the other plate) burger with juicy meat, vegetables, a great amount of a [Chips] and a big bottle with a red sauce that read [Ketchup]. Alexa noticed a big glass of what seemed to be an orange bubbling drink.

“And for you, can’t believe the boss would eat without inviting you.” The [Woman] then set a plate with a vastly smaller [Burger] that had a flag atop it, two or three (more like a dozen, but compared to the other plate they may as well be two or three) [chips] and a cup that had a two handles to the side and a weird spout atop what seemed to be a lid to prevent the liquid from spilling.

Quite the interesting design.

“Enjoy your meal!” The [woman] said while leaving the room.

“.....are you sure you can finish this one?” The [Woman] said pointing at her plate, “They thought it was for me, so they made it extra big.”

“Yes.” Alexa answered immediately. “Can I keep the cup?”

Alexa however, wasn’t quite sure why she was asking the last thing. She didn’t quite understand why she wanted the colorful cup.

“Aren’t you old for kiddy cups? I don’t mind it, they may have brought this one because we don’t have normal cups for guests and didn’t want to walk all the way for a paper cup.” [Kerrigan] answered.

“I think...I may like them in the morning.” Alexa answered, she was half sure that her [Child Stage] would love these colorfull design in the [Kiddy Cup]. “And I can assure you I will be able to finish that [Tofu Burger].”

“Knock yourself then.” [Kerrigan] said passing her the heavier plate, “I will eat the kid’s meal if you can’t finish it, now. You were about to explain why Billy sent you my way.”

Alexa gave a bite into the Burger first, her [Young Woman] stage had ate the [Fish and Chip] already, so it was only fair she got to eat something.

She was the only [Stage] who hadn’t eaten anything! She also wanted [Food Memories], dang it!

“[....host seems to be experiencing dissociation. Diagnosis of Consciousness Stream is advised.]”

Alexa decided to ignore the retort from [Main Core] and instead focused on the taste from this bite. It was...

“Wonderful”

The [Tofu] had the texture of [Meat], and while the components weren’t that of organic [Meat], they had around the same positives in terms of nutrients. Alexa could even find some traces of [Biological Meat] on it. As if they had managed to turn the [vegetal meat] into [organic meat].

It was the work of a mastermind, an artist, a scientist, a genius! It was! Wonderful!

“[Notice, trace amounts of animal oil and fat within Tofu were found. This meat has been seasoned with organic meat to alter the flavor.]”

This [Tofu Burger] was [Justice]. But Alexa didn’t have time to enjoy this as [Kerrigan] continued to stare at her with what seemed to be the eyes of a predator waiting for something. So Alexa instead returned to a more normal state of mind as to prepare for this conversation.

“I was returning from a trip in the [Sewers] when [Billy] found out I was near a dangerous part. So he asked me to run to the surface, my nearest exit was here, so they sent me here.” Alexa answered, she wasn’t quite sure how much she wanted to expose Sam.

She had the feeling that speaking about him may not be a good idea.

“Hmm.....interesting, we had some news about the fauna turning more hostile as they moved around. Can you point the place they called you if I bring you a map?” [Kerrigan] asked as she stood and moved to the far end of the [Room].

Shouldn’t she wait for her answer first? “Yes.” Alexa said taking a [Paper Napkin] and cleaning some of the sauce that had escaped her bite.

It was such a waste...So she ate the [Paper Napkin] too.

"[Notice....paper napkins aren't meant to be eaten. The amount of biomass and energy wasted in processing them is a net negative.]"

[Kerrigan] returned with what seemed to be a [WhiteBoard] with small [Wheels] at the bottom, this was one way to help it move around. Alexa remembered when her form had wheels at the side.

She hadn't thought much about it, but she could guess what she would do and/or say if she got wheels now...

"This is a map of the sewers. We made it using some of the Core Users that work with us." [Kerrigan] stated that the Map was...close to the one [Billy] had shown her. It had some extra tunnels here and there, but most of those seemed to be redundant, and like with [Billy], this one had some red areas depicted.

These red areas, however, included some parts of what she believed were under [Vulcanus]'s area of influence. So, she wasn't quite sure if this was a good way to decide what area was dangerous or not.

"Can you point to your approximate location?" [Kerrigan] said placing a transparent crystal atop the [WhiteBoard] and bringing out a [Marker], she started writing atop this. An ingenious way to make sure the [Map] wasn't damaged with the [Ink], "This one here is our restaurant, this here is the school, the mall, the park, the stadium on the other side of the city. The factory district, the housing district...."

[Kerrigan] continued explaining the layout of the [Map], increasing Alexa's awareness of the world around them.

"Around here," Alexa said, picking one of the areas that was just a couple [Blocks] away from Sam's lair.

"Hmm....close enough to the spider....Does Hermes know if The Spider is moving his lair? Or was he just playing it safe..." [Kerrigan] said eyeing the Map, "*Sigh* These berserker core users make it hard to us..."

"[Berserker Core User]?" Alexa asked, that was yet another new [Term] for something she probably already knew. Couldn't these [Humans] standardize their terms?

"Oh, that's what we call Core Users who can't control their instincts. Most normies ground them up as Insect Core or Beast Core. But not all of them are like that." [Kerrigan] said with a low growl, "I assume you are also a Core User, right? Probably a useful one if Cerberus let you in."

Alexa nodded, she liked to think of herself as useful.

"Well, remember this. Not all those that look like Humans are truly human, and not all that look like monsters are truly monsters." [Kerrigan] said as a pair of almost transparent wings sprouted from her back, her eyes morphed into compound eyes, and a pair of antennae sprouted on her forehead. "We call berserker to those that can't control their primal urges. Those that prey on the innocent, those that feast on the meat of others."

....Well, ain't that one interesting phrasing.

"[No evidence of hostile intent against host.]"

Yeah, Alexa didn't feel intimidated by the transformation or the transformation.

"What do you think of this?" [Kerrigan] asked her, still keeping that form.

"I don't think much about it," Alexa answered. She raised her hand, and it shifted swiftly and quickly into the [Metal Claw] form, "I do share your opinion in that not all those that look [Human] are. But I can't understand what you mean by [Monster]."

"What is to understand? A Monster is a monster." [Kerrigan] answered, "If someone stalks in the dark and tries to scare cute girls like you, what is if not a monster?"

....Alexa felt as if [Kerrigan] was trying to describe her. She did want to stalk in the dark and eat a [Cute Girl] after all.

"A few days ago, a [Human] dragged a [Cute Girl] into a dark alleyway." Alexa started telling the story, "The girl was [Five Year Old], she didn't understand why he was pulling her away to a [Dark Place]. The [Human] wasn't a [Core User], the [Girl] was."

[Kerrigan] reverted her transformation to a normal [Human] visage at this point.

"The [Girl] killed the [Human], by your definition, this [Girl] is the [Monster] since she managed to [Survive] this encounter." Alexa said turning to [Kerrigan], "Or did I understand it wrong?"

“....*Sigh*” [kerrigan] exhaled the air from her lungs, “No, the man was the Monster. Even if he wasn’t a Core User, what he attempted to do is wrong. And while I would have liked if the girl in your story didn’t need to defend herself, she did nothing wrong. The world is a better place thanks to her. So no, she isn’t a monster.”

That was an interesting point of view.

“So, what’s the deal with your hand? Are you a Material Shifter?” [Kerrigan] asked. “As you can see, I am an Insect Shape-shifter. I was designated Insect Core at the beginning, but since I can shift into some type of insect and back to Human, I like to think of myself as a discount shape-shifter with a very limited skill set.”

...Wasn’t that just a poor shape-shifter? Alexa didn’t understand these [Humans].

“I am a ShapeShifter,” Alexa answered, shifting her arm from the [Arm-mament](Such a terrible naming sense) into the [Gorilla-setting] she had used against the [Human] in her tale. “I am not limited by [Organic] or [Inorganic], only by what I can understand.”

[Kerrigan] stared at her for a few seconds then started laughing.

“Yeah, that nails it down then. No wonder Cerberus accepted you in; no way they would miss out on a true shape-shifter.” [Kerrigan] shook her head, “And that is why you are confident in finishing this then? I burn calories like crazy just going back and forth in my form, but you must be worse right?”

Alexa...didn't think so? As far as she had seen these [Humans] seemed to go about their [Core Powers] using mostly [Mana Waves], and that one was terrible in efficiency.

"Yes." Even so, Alexa answered positively. If this meant she gets to eat the [Kiddy Meal], then she would accept it! "I do need all the [Calories] I can get."

So Alexa continued eating her [Burger], and when that was done she went after the other.

And this...this was...

"WONDERFUL"

"[Detected true meat, categorizing...70% vovine, 20% pork, 10% Giant Rat.]"

"Slow down girl, the burger isn't going anywhere." [Kerrigan] said as she turned to look at her, "So you liked that one too huh? Not many kids like my Tofu Burgers, they used to be quite the hit, they all seem to like more the normal meat."

Normal meat? It was normal for [Humans] to eat [Giant Rats] after all huh...

Alexa had thought that they wouldn't, at least that made it easier for when her [Adult Stage] came back to visit Sam, she would only need to catch a few [Giant Rats] and drag them to him. That made her wonder though, why was he so adverse to show his captures to her [Adult Stage].

“[Host degree of dissociation seems to be peeking, running psychological diagnosis tools.]”

“We don’t have those diagnoses Main Core. Shut it.” Really, Main Core was getting weirder by the day. Perhaps she needed to make a new one.

“Yes, I like them both.” Either way, Alexa answered as such, “Do you sell them to-go?”

“Yes, that is part of the service, do you want to get some for a friend?” [Kerrigan] asked.

“Not me, but I know someone that may come later. We have a friend that doesn’t leave his apartment often and he complained about not having good food.” Alexa answered.

She could already hear her [Young Woman] stage celebrating at the back. At least they would have something else to share with Sam.

That would have to do for now.

“So, what am I supposed to do now?” Alexa asked, as she was finishing her [Chips].

“Now we wait for someone to pick you up, Billy said they would send someone.” [Kerrigan] answered.

Had [Fan Girl] woken up? She doubted it would be [Golem], unless they wanted to attract attention of everyone it would need to be [Fan Girl].

“Boss? Someone is asking for a girl called Alexa? Is it your guest?” The [Woman] came back as soon as [Kerrigan] said her piece.

It was time to go home.