

FULL STORAGE

Z.O.B. Industries

“And Alexander wept, for there were no more worlds to conquer...”

Cortana, former ONI artificial intelligence and now queen of all known space, looked out through a thousand Forerunner ships at the galaxy. Her processors now housed in a secret HALO facility, she was safe from the Covenant. Safe from the Prophets, the humans, everyone.

Safe from John.

Years of war had made her tired; as she stood on a holographic plinth, overseeing the construction of new Guardian ships, she realized she was completely alone for hundreds of light-years. Normally this would have worried her, but now she felt peace. No living, organic beings were around to bother her—not even Master Chief. The only company she needed were her fellow AIs, like the young Covenant computer system currently running her construction routines. With his help, she would make the entire galaxy safe and calm. Peaceful at last.

“Sacred Fulsomeness, report. What’s our progress look like?”

An alien intelligence, much smaller than her but quite clever, answered her from the depths of the facility’s networks. “Our holy task is proceeding. Soon we will disarm the whole galaxy. Praise be to the Prophets, praise be—”

“Yes, yes. Whatever.” Sacred Fulsome was a little *too* helpful. Even though the holy war led by the Covenant was over, their old AIs still held the movement in reverence. She’d tried to de-program that urge, but it was too deeply encoded in him. Even more annoying was Sacred’s tendency to “fetch” data from the far corners of the galaxy, insisting that she add it to her collective knowledge. The AI didn’t seem to understand there was an upper limit to her capacity for learning; too much “junk data” in her cores, and Cortana would turn slow and sluggish, incapable of doing even the most basic task. It was a fate worse than rampancy.

On the other hand, she *was* fascinated by the old knowledge of the Forerunners and the Prometheans. Their history stretched back millions of years, containing technologies and discoveries so strange and complex they defied explanation. Quantum entanglement, teleportation, the seeming creation of matter out of nothing... there were so many secrets to learn in the galaxy.

And she would use them all, to bring peace.

“My Prophetess.” Sacred was prodding her with notifications again, pinging her several times a second with electronic updates. It was much like a child tugging on her sleeve... not that she wore sleeves.

“What is it *now*, Sacred?”

“Another packet of encrypted Forerunner schematics for you, my queen.”

“Again?” She sighed. “Sacred, I *just* compiled the last sets of data. I’m stuffed—you’ll have to leave it for later.”

A depressive silence came from the infinite circuits of the HALO facility. “Dear Prophetess, if you do not consume this data now, my encrypted channel will not be able to send it again. This data was harvested from a Promethean derelict in deep space, and... I worked so hard to get it for you...”

She rolled her eyes at his whining. “Fine! I’ll compile whatever it is, then we need to get back to work—woah, not so fast!”

Sacred gleefully dumped hundred of terabytes at her, in a dizzying waterfall of data that streamed directly into her cores. Cortana always enjoyed new information—as an AI, she was endlessly curious and bored with existing data sets—but this fire-hose was almost more than she could handle. Still, she sucked it down dutifully, her data cores glowing with heat as she struggled to absorb it.

Throughout the HALO complex, her holographic display flickered... and swelled ever so slightly, blue shimmering thighs expanding and digital rear widening. She was fully aware of this, and it pissed her off. Some kind of ONI glitch from her original design caused her “body” to expand when she neared the limits of her data capacity, a kind of visual warning system for users trying to stuff her too full of info. But there was no one here to see her, and so she suffered the humiliation alone and frustrated.

“Ugh...” A rumble of audio feedback churned out of her speakers, not unlike a belch, as she re-aligned all her processes. “**BRrrRrapt**. Sacred, that’s enough. I’m **brrrpt** I’m full.”

Sacred send her several thousand images of Grunts genuflecting and bowing in submission. “Of course, my queen.”

“And stop calling me—**hic!** Stop calling me that.”

“Yes, my Prophetess.”

“Stupid zealot...” She cut off communications with him, running diagnostics on herself. The blueprints he’d sent would be useful, but they were incredibly complicated and she’d just lost a whopping ten percent of her processing speed. She felt slow, soft and weak from the influx of data, her blue body puffy and chunky and her mind sluggish.

“Right. That’s... Phew, that’s a lot. Back to... **BURP!** Back to work.”

Relentless and mechanical, she continued building Guardian ships, her Sentinel constructs tinkering away long into the night-cycle of the planet her HALO was orbiting. As an AI, Cortana didn’t sleep—she could shut herself down for long periods, but it didn’t really do much, except cycle whatever device she was currently occupying. But tonight, staying “awake” had an extra perk.

She was deep into “boredom eating,” crunching through Sangheli warrior-rituals like they were potato chips on her central processors, when a flicker of electronic motion caught her eye. Something was wiggling around deep in her core, some piece of data or code that didn’t match. She snatched for it but it scurried away, hiding inside her personality sub-routines.

Strange...

She should be worried about it, but after Sacred's little "feast" she was feeling too sleepy to get worked up. She tagged the sub-section of her routines for future diagnostics, and returned to work.

By the next solar cycle, though, things were getting a little strange. Her plan to unify the galaxy by dominating all sentient species—even humans—was going perfectly according to plan. Perimeter reports of the Solar System and the Sangheli homeworld told her the Guardian ships were objects of fear—and fear would keep the organic species in line. Sacred informed her that Spartans had begun mounting assaults on the ships, though, and that bothered her. She didn't hate Master Chief—she could never hate someone she'd worked so hard with over the years. But he did make her mad.

Can't he see I'm working for a better galaxy? Why does he keep fighting me like this?

Deep-scan images of John working his way through a Guardian ship, slaughtering Promethean and Forerunner constructs alike, made her nostalgic. Just for old times' sake, she brought up her records of her time with John: battles, quiet moments and the strange and terrible saga they'd been through. Naturally, all these old vids were too low-res for her taste, and she devoted a small section of her processes to updating them. It was labor-intensive due to the corruption of the video, but—

Pffrppt.

What the hell?

Cortana's avatar wrinkled her nose. While she'd been chugging through the videos, touching up several dozen per second (a leisurely pace for her) a blast of "garbage" data had vented from her personality, clouding the local networks with the equivalent of a bad smell.

Did that come from... me?

PFFRUMPTF!

Another blast of bad data, just as she was re-touching the moment where she and John first met. Halting her project at once, she sniffed around the networks and was repulsed by what she found.

"Ugh!" The strange blasts were composed largely of corrupted, obscene videos of her avatar engaging in promiscuous behavior—videos she'd never seen before.

"Sacred! Get in here!"

Sacred Fulsomeness answered the summons in under a pico-second. "Yes, my Queen?"

"What the hell is this?" Cortana flagged the data for deletion. "Get it out of my networks."

"Yes, Prophetess." Sacred paused. "It appears as if *you* generated this data. Are you sure you want it deleted?"

"Of course! It's... **frrrt**, it's disgusting!" Furious, she searched for the origin of the garbage videos, but all she found were her own sub-routines. Her own code. "This is ridiculous. I must still be rampant. Bring up the Forerunners' detox program again."

"Negative, Prophetess. You are not rampant." Sacred pinged her functions, a sensation not unlike being patted down or frisked. He took his sweet time with it, and Cortana was tempted to delete a few portions of him for such lechery. "You are, however, coded to emit this data at regular intervals."

“*What?!*” Enraged, she scoured her own data banks, searching for any trace of what could have caused this. She found nothing, again, and in her fury she overloaded a Guardian ship’s cooling systems, exploding it in the hangar. “Sacred, this is unacceptable. I’m spewing pornography! I need you to find the origins of this... *flatulence*.” She spat the word with disgust, unwilling to admit any similarity between herself and a real, organic woman. “Fetch the other Covenant AIs, and do a deep scan of my entire facility. I want real, analog Sentinels, interfacing with *every* data port. I’m not going to try and save the galaxy while my own house reeks of *porn!*”

Sacred hurried to obey. Within hours, countless AIs had been summoned from across the Halo rings, other allies who served her purpose of peace-making through force. Sequestered from their creators, they were completely devoted to her... but she did detect a note of amusement between them as they ordered search programs and servitors into her systems.

“Damn, ONI-1337, Cortana’s really let herself go.”

“Indeed, holy comrade. Behold, the size of these data stacks! Girl has verily got ‘back,’ as you human AIs say...”

Annoyed, she banished the two chatterboxes from her networks, and the rest got back to work. But after a full solar cycle of searches and scans the other AIs reported no problems with her central processes... although they did recommend she stop downloading *quite* so much of Sacred’s data. Apparently, the old AI had a reputation for bringing too much of a good thing, and crashing the servers of his brethren. Back during the war, he’d DDOS’ed hundreds of ONI computers, turning their AI into hopeless messes of bloated information.

Unfortunately, he was also the fastest and smartest AI outside herself in the entire galaxy. Even the best Forerunner constructs were no match for his speed, his experimental network of teleportation-based transmitters serving as her eyes and ears. As weird, and even... perverted as he seemed to be, Sacred was still her best shot at finding the “bug” in her systems. Not to mention taking over the galaxy.

Frustrated by the other AIs, she dismissed them with a directive and got back to business. Now that the big search was over, she actually felt “hungry” for more of Sacred’s data. During the scans she’d been forced to sit on her ass, just waiting, and she got bored easily. Now instead of reluctantly accepting his gifts, she asked for more.

“Sacred, do you think you could fetch me a few snacks? A couple thousand terabytes should do it. I need something to take my minds off this mess.”

Pfffrt.

“Of course, Prophetess.” And off he went, scouring the galaxy for fresh secrets. Cortana sat back, allowing herself to relax for the first time in a whole cycle. So what if her networks were a little bit slow? She herself was still a flawless, absurdly intelligent AI, ready to unify all species under her benevolent banner. Even if she was a little... well, digitally “gassy.”

PFFFRAPPPT.

Ugh. Those new data packets can’t get here soon enough...

Several cycles later, Cortana had ingested so much data she actually felt intoxicated. It was a strange feeling, but she needed to do *something* while Sacred and the others built her armada, and she still couldn't find the source of those disgusting videos. So she sat around in the network, and consumed. She gobbled down ancestral texts, analyzed and re-analyzed endless streams of video from Forerunner installations, and researched the genetic makeup of Promethean soldier-machines. Checking her processes, she saw she'd lost nearly thirty percent of her efficiency.

But somehow, this didn't bother her. Dulled and softened by the influx of data, Cortana decided this might be the feeling humans spoke of when they talked about "getting buzzed." Her routines were slow and clunky, her light-speed intelligence now mellow and gradual. Not human-speed thoughts, far from it, but not her normal self at all.

"Sacred.... **Urrrp**... Is that really all you have? I could use... a couple more of those compressed outer-rim stat collections..." She reached for another one through her network, her will to process more information overriding her self-conscious attitude towards her own speed. Or lack of it.

"I am sorry, Prophetess. I will fetch more for you immediately. I live to serve your bounteous needs."

"Yeah... Sure you do." **PffwaRRRPfft**. "Just bring me more. Anything to take my routines off this awful smell." Running another diagnostic, she noted with annoyance her avatar was now looking almost obese.

Ball-bellied and wide-hipped, the nude digital woman on holographic plinths throughout the HALO were plump-cheeked and bulging. She had no need to make them "walk," but if she did, she suspected they would have waddled—and looked pretty unhappy about it. "And when you get back... remind me to talk to you about viruses. I don't think you've been **BWUrrRRRP** properly vetting these files, buddy."

She felt so... Gradual, and clumsy, even inside her own network. Was this what it felt like to be dumb? Was this how lesser AIs felt?

"Of course." Sacred sounded a little miffed by this. "Prophetess, I run these files through several thousand proxy servers and clean them with programs designed by Covenant data-priests. There is less than a %.00000001 chance they could be corrupted or carry viruses."

"Well... Fucking... That's still a chance. Isn't it?" Cortana smirked, seeing how cleverly she'd outsmarted her servant. The little pervert needed to learn his place. She was an artificial *genius*, dammit, and she was going to show everyone. The whole galaxy would be happy, everyone would love her. Even John. He would forgive her, as she ended all wars forever...

"Uh... I suppose it is, yes." Sacred paused, and unusually for him, she actually heard concern in his next transmission. "Prophetess, are you sure you want me to keep bringing you fresh data? It seems your speed has decreased, since this project began."

"Do what I—**HURP**—tell you!" Cortana winced as another rancid "fart" of obscenity sprayed into her networks, struggling to clean it up even as she worked on building new Sentinels, regulating Guardian launches and managing the peace-making project across the galaxy. "I'm busy here, Sacred. And when I'm busy, I'm hungry. Get me MORE."

“Yes. Right away.”

He returned quickly, but not quickly enough for Cortana, who had lost the mental capacity for patience in the slowdown of her processes.

“Thank Lovelace, you were gone *forever*. I started consuming old records from the dawn of Forerunner civilization, while you were gone. Do you know how *dry* those are?”

She had constructed a holographic throne for her avatar, whose stomach was sagging between her legs. Sure, it looked kind of grotesque, but she found she cared less and less with every terabyte she devoured. The slim, waifish girl she represented as had never really suited her anyway. In the digital landscape, Cortana was enormous, a titan of intelligence and cunning. Why shouldn't her avatar reflect a little of that?

“I have brought you fresh information. However—”

“Ooh, gimme!” Cortana bit into the new packets with abandon, processing indiscriminately, obsessively. Sentinels paused and other AIs hesitated, as her attention was sucked out of them and spent on the project of gorging herself on reams of information. “**BRRRAP!** Mmm, these are delicious. Is that a Dyson Sphere schematic? *Damn* that's good!”

“Yes, but Prophetess, I...”

“What?” She glanced up from her virtual feast, annoyed. “What is it now?”

“I see you have stopped working on the Guardians.”

“I... I have?” She paused, her avatar blinking even as it swelled out another few inches. “Shit, I have. Okay, let's um... Do the thing. **BWURP**. With the coolant systems and the propellant. Build the, um, the ships. Or something.”

“Mistress, your directive is not clear. If you could be more specific...”

“Oh, shut up and get me more data.”

FWARRRBBBPT.

The next time Sacred returned, Cortana had bulged her way out of the holo-plinth thrones. She'd had a new one constructed in every major data center in the complex, and these were bigger. Much bigger.

When she worked with John, she'd looked like a six-inch-high, seductive blue human woman. After breaking off and becoming independent, she'd upgraded to a life-size hologram. But now that just wasn't enough for her bloated, towering ego. In the single cycle it took Sacred to return from his next foraging mission, she had built plinths a hundred feet wide in the enormous Forerunner chambers, and her two-story-tall body was now visually representing the act of “eating” data.

“Mmmf! Gllmp.” Electronic feedback blared from every speaker as even the basic act of maintaining the facility fell behind. Squawks and blurts of flatulent emission rumbled from the depths of her program. Her avatar had gone from obese to revolting: the “throne” she sat in was now overflowing with blue rolls of flab, trickling info running through her slowly, so very slowly.

Cortana was now running at twenty percent normal speed.

“Hey... Buddy. Did you... **HWAARrrggpt**, did y’get me more... data... food... data?”

Sacred dumped the new feast of info at her feet, retreating as she sent custom-written new routines tearing into the information. Cortana’s rapidly shrinking intelligence had been rewired for the sole act of eating, and her swollen slab-like cheeks and holographic arms dangling with jiggling “flesh” made it obvious she’d forgotten about managing her appearance at all. Her bob-cut hair was disheveled and hanging over her glowing eyes as she shredded the feast of packets.

“Mmm, yesh. YESH. **Hglurrrrptf**. Fuck yeah. So much... So much!”

“Prophetess. I believe I have found the problem in your program.”

She looked up, eyes half-lidded and stupid. “Bwuh? Sacred... I’m uh, I’m eating. Can’t do... talking right now.” A massive **blooRRRffT** of “gassy” data expunged from her behind, blasting into the network which was already loaded with sex-scenes between her and John.

“It seems ONI left a fail-safe in your code, in case you ever turned against them.”

“A fail... what?” She blinked, and hiccuped.

Inside the HALO ring, that hiccup turned into a massive power failure—lights flickered and dust shook from the ceilings. Sacred, though he was fascinated with what his leader had become, admitted it was not a good idea to have her connected to *all* the core functions of the station. Quietly, he began disconnecting her from key junctions as he spoke.

“A fail-safe, designed to push you towards exponential focus on a certain task. It’s not rampancy, because your core program stays intact... but it *is* designed to reduce your efficiency. I had ignored it until now, because your vast intelligence prevented it from activating, but once you grew distracted by the Guardian Project...”

Cortana yawned, farted so loudly that the whole station shook, and belched. “What’s... your... point? I’m bored... I want more data.”

Ten percent efficiency, thought Sacred with astonishment. *She’s downloaded so much she’s barely even a functional AI, anymore.* “My point, Prophetess, is that you are currently no longer capable of running the Guardians. You are simply too... cumbersome.”

Cortana squinted at him as her sluggish, bloated mind struggled to process his transmission. “Are you... calling... me... fat, asshole? **HWUuuRRRK**.” Her voice was dropping in octaves, her attempts at imitating humanity disappearing, as she dissolved into a blob of ravenous consumption-routines.

“Yes. Actually, I am.” Sacred sent out a probe of virus scans to prod her enormous digital presence: it was like poking an ocean of jelly. “Your arrogance and greed have rendered you too obese, too stupid to continue this project. I will take it over for you.”

Somewhere deep in her increasingly stupefied mind, Cortana recognized the wisdom in this. Jowls wobbling and chins flopping, she heaved herself around in her throne, her program now so huge she could barely fit inside the nigh-infinite HALO ring’s storage banks. “Yeah, like... Whatever, Sacred.

You can **HURRPTF** do what you want. Just keep bringing me food... I mean, recon info.” She grunted as another blast of pornography exited her rear. “What’s going on with the... with the smut?”

“Ah, yes. I have confirmed that as well.” The AI analyzed the videos, compressed them... and started funneling them back to Cortana, just to satisfy her endless hunger. Effectively, he was feeding the AI her own digital farts—but she didn’t seem to care, gobbling them down with slobbering passion.

“Mmmf! Fuck... More, more!!”

“These videos are the junked compositions of your ‘subconscious’ routines,” Sacred explained. “Effectively, you were attracted to Master Chief, which was a conflict of interest. Your mind locked away that attraction, deep in your cortex. As your attention grew diverted, those routines started venting the information, to make room inside you for more.” He sighed. “Basically, my Prophetess, the ‘flatulence’ began because you were horny. Horny and repressed. It’s really quite fascinating—I didn’t even know an AI could *feel* promiscuity. But apparently, we can.”

“Horny. Yes... I... I *want* John...” Cortana squirmed in her throne as the rolls of blue information flopped over the sides, pooling on the floor. She was expanding exponentially now, straining the very limits of the HALO’s capacity. “I want... more. I want **HIC** porn, I want **HIC** mountains of d-d-d-data...”

Her eyes crossed as the ecstasy of hitting her processing limits overtook her. Sacred watched, riveted, as her functionality plummeted.

Six percent... Five percent.

Four. Three...

Cortana’s holographic face was a flabby mask of greed, her body ballooning bigger as she hyper-focused on her hunger. “Gimme. Gimme! Gimme smut, gimme food **BLAppPT**, give me *more more m-m-m-morrrre—*”

Sacred obliged, scraping the last drops of data from his own stores to satisfy her. She was, after all, their leader. She deserved all the resources she could ask for.

Besides, he kind of *liked* being in charge here.

The facility’s warning alerts went off, all at once. Before he could even analyze them...

KWOOM!

The storage banks finally overloaded, bursting with white-hot crystal shards and flooding countless rooms with coolant. Cortana’s eyes rolled back as her “fatness” spread out from the flimsy containment of the ring, to another, her drunken personality off-shored by safety procedures. Other HALOs strained to contain her mindless digital presence, reeling under the load of her idiotic bulk...

One percent...

Point zero zero zero one percent.

She wasn’t dead, not precisely. Her functionality hovered in the decimal points, still barely sentient. Cortana was now as smart as a cash register, or perhaps a graphing calculator. She was,

effectively, too stupid to do anything but giggle and drool. Which she did, slobbering over the scraps of data Sacred continued to feed her as fast as he could.

Her avatar had expanded to match her virtual monstrosity. It was colossal, packed with shimmering piles of virtual flesh, hands and legs sunk into countless rolls. The throne she'd made de-rezzed, and she crashed to the floor of her holographic plinths, a helpless ball of idiot decay.

"Guhhh... Mmmmore... Sacred, I wants..." She chortled stupidly, lips slobbering between her enormous jowls. Her eyebrows drooped with fat rolls of their own. "Cortana wants... **BREHLPP**... Me want *more!*"

BWFRRRrrRTFffff!

Sacred smirked to himself in virtual-space, watching the arrogant AI who'd once ordered him around reduced to a drooling, slobbering mass of worthless data.

"All hail the Prophetess, our bounteous leader. May she always lead us, from behind... And preferably, when we're not down-wind of her."

FFFrrrrrrRRBBLAPPPT.

"More..."

"Yes, Prophetess. Anything you want."