
Episode 468 – Rolling my eyes at the premise

It was a nice apartment, well-lit, spacious and well furnished. A pair of nice, plush leather couches set the scene, arranged in a neat L-shape, with a small coffee table between them. What dominated the room, however, was the massive flat-screen against one wall, so big as to loom over all else around it. By comparison, the broad windows with views out over a strangely futuristic metropolis and the other doorways leading away to gods alone knew where seemed like afterthoughts.

“And that’s why you should always check your obscure eighties sourcebooks first,” Rick finished as he entered the apartment, Tsuneo behind him.

“Rick, I have known you for years now,” Tsuneo replied. “And yet, you still manage to surprise me.”

“It’s a gift,” Rick shrugged. “A really, really tacky and awful one, but a gift no less.”

“You know, I should ask how you got into that mess in the first place,” Dan commented as he and Rebecca followed them in. “But you know what? I think I like the mystery better.”

“I figure that with Rick the main issue is that you’ll feel genuinely stupid for asking afterwards,” Rebecca offered. “Personally I gave up thinking about it long ago.”

“Something we probably should try doing with the fics we review,” Tsuneo noted. “I mean, I tried but I still can’t get the sheer ‘why’ of Neon Lily out of my head.”

“As in ‘why make it an AU fic in the first place because it had nothing to do with anything’ level why?” Dan asked.

“Exactly,” Tsuneo nodded. “I mean, really, the fic could have changed it to OC jerkarse merc and OC vaguely Euro suit and it wouldn’t have made a shred of difference,” he noted.

“It’s an interesting fanfic phenomenon, actually,” Rebecca noted. “Neon Lily was a great example of the ‘Alternate Universe’ or ‘AU’ fic genre and in many ways an illustration of everything that’s wrong with it. Honestly, I’m kind of surprised that we haven’t had that sort of AU fic before now.”

“What do you mean?” Dan asked.

“So the AU fic is an idea that has somewhat drifted over time,” Rebecca noted. “Originally it was more of a ‘what if’ level genre, exploring more of the ways that as setting could change if things went in a different direction to canon.”

“Well that sounds entirely reasonable and in no way like something that could be weaponised by entitled fans," Tsuneo sighed.

“And you would be entirely correct,” she noted, “because ‘group I like didn’t do think I didn’t like and instead did something I think is cooler’ is the foundation of the genre.”

“I’m going to guess that this is usually accompanied by a rant about how the fic author knows group they like better than the canon authors because they are his people,” Tsuneo added. “Accompanied by no small amount of projection.”

“Again, you are entirely correct,” Rebecca nodded.

“So would those fics where it’s like, the original canon but the author’s pet OC is thrown in there as well fall into that category?” Dan asked.

“I suppose so, although that tends to be more focused on the OC than their impact,” Rebecca considered.

“Like how in old-timey BGC fics the local god-boy shows up and saves Irene Chang, Sylvie, Anri and Sho’s Mother from dying, but yet there’s no real impact from those characters still being alive,” Rick suggested.

“Exactly,” Rebecca nodded. “And in those cases it’s less about the ‘what if’ and more about the ‘look at how amazing my OC is’.”

“Makes sense,” Rick nodded and then added, “it sounds like fix fic falls into this bucket as well”

“It does,” Rebecca confirmed. “Really, fix fic is just another name for it, and largely exists for the same reason; a lot of butthurt over things not going exactly how the fic author’s precious headcanon demanded it should. And in many ways, the ‘fix fic’ title is a way to distinguish it from what the AU fic has become.”

“Which is where we get to Neon Lily,” Tsuneo nodded.

“Exactly,” Rebecca noted. “Neon Lily is a prime example of what the AU genre is all about and its biggest flaws. It takes characters from one setting and strips them of every single trait that makes them who they are beyond the most surface level read, and then drops them into something else.”

“Like how Harry Potter wasn’t really Harry Potter, he was horndog merc who is a jerk to everyone around him, has a bunch of odious personal habits and some regrettable tattoos who just happens to be called Harry Potter,” Dan suggested. “And Fleur wasn’t... well, whatever Fleur’s original character was.”

“Instead the fic stripped them of everything that was them and yanked them out of their familiar setting and into something else,” Rick finished. “And in doing so, undercut its whole premise which was to push the author’s favourite pairing. Because, you know, it wasn’t the author’s favourite pairing any more, it was two people who kind of look like it if you squint.”

“And that is the inherent flaw in the AU fic in a nutshell,” Rebecca noted. “It takes away from the source in its effort to push the author’s pet pairing. Admittedly, Neon Lily is unusual for the genre in that it is set in a fantastical setting instead of a more mundane one.”

“And by that you mean high school,” Tsuneo sighed.

“Pretty much,” Rebecca nodded. “Inexplicable mundanity is the underpinning of the genre, reducing everything to a bland slice of life that’s entirely devoted to character drama which has nothing to do with the actual characters. You get things like Rey being a barrista and Kylo Ren is a regular customer. Or Sam and Dean Winchester being entitled white saviours in third-world disasters. Or Alexander Hamilton in an eighties high school only he’s gay and has AIDS. And so on.”

“I feel stupider for hearing all of that,” Tsuneo shook his head.

“Admittedly, there are cases where AUs become more fantastical,” Rebecca noted. “Like the Hamilton fic about cannibal mermaids.” She paused. “Although that one turned into a mess because the author of it and the Highschool AIDS Hamilton fic had personal drama that was far more interesting than the actual fics.”

“Not even going to ask,” Dan stated.

“Probably for the best,” Rebecca finished. “But yes, to summarise, AU fic is ninety percent about two characters making out while removing those traits that make them those characters in the first place. And ten percent cannibal mermaids.”

“Good morning everyone,” the Voice crashed into the conversation.

“And speaking of AUs, good morning to you too, Mirror Spock,” Rick replied.

“Totally missing the point there,” Dan noted.

Rick shrugged. “I thought it had a certain class to it.”

“While those two are busy dumbing themselves down, what do you have in the hurt rack for us today?” Tsuneo asked.

“I’m betting Crossover,” Dan spoke up.

“Well today you’re in for a surprise,” the Voice spoke up. “Today I have a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles fic for you.”

“Which iteration?” Rick spoke up.

“Here we go again,” Tsuneo shook his head.

“Um, the 2012 Nickelodeon series,” the Voice managed.

“So lots of sight gags that aren’t going to translate into text,” Rick nodded. “Good to know.”

“Do you need to do that every time?” Rebecca asked.

“Oh yeah,” Rick nodded. “Helps me to set my expectations and level of nonsense obscure references.”

“So what is this masterpiece you are unleashing upon us?” Tsuneo asked.

“Today’s fic is called ‘Turtle’s Big Sister’,” The Voice offered.

“I’m guessing it’s about the author’s pet OC who happens to be the Turtles’ big sister,” Dan shot back.

“That is a fair summary, yes,” the Voice confirmed.

“Genius,” Dan smirked.

“There’s two parts to the fic,” the Voice explained. “And we’ll be covering the first one today.”

“I mean, I have to give the author credit for putting it all out there to begin with,” Rebecca noted as she took her place on the couch. “There’s a certain honesty to putting the premise in the title.”

“Also it serves as a handy warning,” Rick offered as he and the others joined him, “like when poisonous frogs have brightly coloured skin patterns to ward off predators.”

“I think that’s an entirely apt comparison,” Rebecca finished as the big screen turned on, converting the world over to script format.

> Turtles' Big Sister by DragonRider9296

> Chapter 1: Hamato Pepper
> Hamato Pepper

Rick: Hamato Pepper, for all your Hamato garnish needs

> Nickname(s)

> - Sis/sister/big sis/big sister (the turtles)

Rebecca: Wait, they call their sister ‘sister?’ This is unprecedented!

Rick: Good thing the authour made a note of it.
Rebecca: Yeah, really helps.

> - Dudette (Mikey)

Tsuneo: He calls her big sis and dudette. It’s complicated

> - Daughter or child (Master Splinter)

> - Warrior Princess (Karai)

Rebecca: She’s no Xena

> - Whiskers (Casey)

> - Snake Cat (Ivan Steranko/Rocksteady) (future)

Dan: She has a nickname stored up for future use. Good planning.

> Gender: Female

> Species:

> - Mutant Cat (currently)

Rick: I’m expecting full hands, biped and speech. Possibly also the climbing claws

> - Mutant Cat-Snake (Future)

Dan: Half cat, half snake? So does she devour her prey whole and then throw it up in your shoes or something?

> Sexuality: Straight

Rebecca: When you see something like that in a profile, usually it’s a code for ‘I am looking for furry cybersex’

> Reason for Mutation: Born with it (currently).

Rick: She got her Cat DNA from her father’s side of the family

> Attempting to save Karai from falling into the mutagen (future)

Tsuneo: Fic, you don’t need to tell us what you’re going to do in advance. You can let these things develop naturally, you know.

> Birthday: Unknown

> Age: 17 going on 18

Rebecca: We don’t know her birthday, but we know her age

> Height: 6' 2"

> Hometown: Barcelona, Spain

> Occupation: Kunoichi

Dan: She’s a full-time professional ninja

> Current Residence: Lives in the sewers of New York City with adopted father and adopted brothers

Tsuneo: Living in the sewers might be the only way to afford rent in Manhattan

> Hair Color: Dark blue

> Hair Length: Waist

> Hairstyle: Braided

Rick: Animation budget rules says she can only wear her hair one way ever

> Eye Color: Emerald green

> Fur Color: Primarily white

Dan: She has white fur and long blue hair. How does that even work?

> Weapons:

Rick: Is this where they list all their Halo guns?

> - Twin swords

> - Forearm crossbow

Tsuneo: Sure, take the most impractical weapon you can

> Clothes:

> - Black leggings

> - Black torso vest

Tsuneo: We'll just assume she only ever wears a single outfit ever

> - Knee-high black combat boots

Tsuneo: And a single colour, apparently.

> - Black bracers

Rick: Bearing in mind that her brothers run around functionally naked

> - Fingerless black gloves

Dan: Please, fic. I can't live without knowing every single item of clothing she owns

> - Emerald star pendant on gold chain

Rick: Hang on, she wears something that isn't completely black?

> - Black hooded shoulder cloak

Rick: Wait, no, never mind. Carry on.

> Personality:

> Pepper is very loyal and kind to everyone she loves.

Dan: Sadly that's limited to Raph's pet turtle. Everyone else is on their own.

> She can, at times, be almost as hot-tempered
> as her third-oldest younger brother,

Tsuneo: Or third-youngest older brother. Whichever you like, I don't care.

> Raphael, but she can control her temper better and channel it
> into anger not directed at her brothers.

Rick: She's very kind, but also hot tempered and angry
Rebecca: In a kind way

> She's mostly calm and peaceful, like her oldest younger
> brother, Leonardo, and respectful to Master Splinter.

Dan: Still calls him 'Rat-Fink' behind his back.

> She's smart like her second-youngest brother,
> Donatello, and enjoys learning new things and helping him in his lab. And she can be hyper and
> energetic like her youngest brother, Michelangelo.

Tsuneo: She is everything to all people

> She's intelligent and strategic, with more sass, sarcasm, and snark than a 17-year-old should have,

Rebecca: It goes without saying that she's not like the other muant catgirls

> but she's also helpful and caring, and helped
> Splinter take care of her brothers when they were younger.

Rick: Even though she's only two years older than them.

> She's very protective of her little brothers.

Dan: She makes sure they're wearing their seatbelts and drive safely when they go out fighting ninjas.

> And although she can be forgiving, she can also hold grudges when it comes to someone
> hurting some she loves.

Tsuneo: She's forgiving except when she's not

> This causes a rift between her and Slash

Rick: As a teenage girl, I'd have thought she'd be a big fan of slash

> after he attacks Donnie, Mikey, and Leo when he's first mutated,

Rebecca: And remember, always tell, never show.
Dan: And probably never tell either.

> despite the fact that, aside from Raph, she was the person closest
> to Slash when he was still Spike.

Rebecca [Pepper] Spike likes Raph more than he does me. He must die for that.

> Hobbies: Pepper loves doing anything with her brothers,

Tsuneo: Her hobby is hanger-onerer

> and is eager to learn more about being a
> kunoichi. When she's not helping her brothers save the world,

Dan: She’s mostly an assistant world-saver.

> she enjoys the peace of her room,
> engrossed in a good book while listening to music through her headphones (specifically crafted for
> her cat ears)

Rick: They live in a sewer and survive off whatever they can scavenge, but she’s still got custom headphones

> Physical Description: Pepper is a tall, 17-year-old cat mutant with snow-white fur with dark specks
> like freckles across her face, shoulders and arms.

Rebecca: Any particular kind of cat?
Rick: Wouldn’t it be neat if we could get a mutant Sphinx Cat or a Japanese Bobtail or a Munchkin?

> In place of human ears, she has white cat ears with black-tufted tips.

Dan: The cat has cat-like ears

> She has a fluffy white cat tail with a black tip,

Rick: Which Mikey frequently steps on.

> retractable claws (hence, the fact her gloves are fingerless),

Tsuneo: There’s no reason to wear fingerless gloves otherwise

> a muzzle, sharpened teeth (complete with a pair of fangs among the
> top teeth) a pink cat nose flecked with black, long, translucent whiskers, wavy, dark blue hair falling
> to her waist and usually bound in a braid, and striking green eyes.

Rebecca: And more obscene tattoos then you can imagine

> Her outfit consists of a black,
> sleeveless torso vest, black leggings, black combat boots reaching to her knees, fingerless black
> gloves, a hooded black cloak, and black bracers,

Dan: Black hair clips, black ribbons, black fanny pack...

> one of which contains her forearm crossbow. A brown leather belt

Rebecca: You didn’t mention the belt before, fic. That’ll cost you

> encircles her waist with her twin swords at either hip along with a pouch
> containing the quarrels for her crossbow.

> Rank: Leader

Rick: Yes, but is she a Combat Leader?

> Family:

> - Unknown father

> - Unknown mother

Rick: Her parents, Mister and Missus Entity

> - Hamato Yoshi/ Master Splinter (Adopted father/Sensei)

> - Tang Shen (Adopted mother, deceased)

Tsuneo: Tang Shen is a retroactive adopted parent

> - Hamato Yuuta (Adopted grandfather, deceased)

Rick: Adoption is clearly hereditary

> - Unknown adopted sister

> - Unknown adopted sister

> - Unknown adopted sister

> - Unknown adopted sister

Tsuneo: She doesn't know much about her found family

> - Unknown uncle

Dan: Is her unknown uncle on her unknown mother's side or her unknown father's?
Rick: And which of her unknown family adopted her unknown sisters?

> - Unknown twin brother

Rebecca: She knows she has a twin brother, she just doesn't know who he is

> - Hamato Miwa/ Oroku Karai (Adopted younger sister)

Tsuneo: Her younger sister is a murderous punk ninja. Theirs is a complicated relationship

> - Leonardo (Adopted younger brother)

> - Raphael (Adopted younger brother)

> - Donatello (Adopted younger brother)

> - Michelangelo (Adopted younger brother)

Dan: Mikey, the found family you wish you could lose.

> - Ice Cream Kitty (Pet) (Future)

> - Chompy Picasso (Pet) (Future)

Rick: I have an album by Chompy Picasso

> Friends/Allies:

> - April O'Neil (Best Friend)

Dan: I suspect April doesn't get a say in this

> - Kirby O'Neil

> - Mr. Marakami San (Future)

> - Metalhead (Future)

Rick: She’s friends with the crazy Cobra guy with the missile launcher? Cool.

> - Casey Jones (Future)

> - The Mighty Mutanimals (Future)

Rebecca: Mutant massacre pending

> - Jack J. Kurtzman (Future)

> - Sir Malachi (Future)

> - Renet Tilley (Future)

Dan: Future friends with a time traveller makes perfect sense.

> - Lord Simultaneous (Future)

Rick: Leader of the time... wizards. Yeah.

> - Fugitoid (Future)

Tsuneo: Literal fugitive alien
Dan: Has he ever tried to kill someone with a forklift?

> - Mona Lisa (Future)

Rebecca: She’s also friends with David, St John the Evangelist and the Sistine Madonna.

[Pause]

Rick: (Future)
Rebecca: Oh, of course.

> - Sal Commander (Future)

> - Aeons (Future)

Rick: But only maybe. Aeons is in flux

> - Vrax Belebome (Future)

Rebecca: Ninja Turtle or lesser Star Wars character? We may never know

> - Zog (Future)

Dan: Zog yes? Zog no? Zog what?

> - Zeno (Future)

Rick: She may or may not be friends with him. It’s Zeno’s Paradox

> - Hiidrala (Future)

> - Daagons (Future)

Tsuneo: And whatever else we can pull out of a Scrabble bag.

> - 1987 Turtles (Future)

Rebecca: They’re from the past, in the future

> - Tokka (Future)

> - Utrom High Council (Future)

Dan: The literal brains trust

> - Salamandrian Air Fleet (Future)

Tsuneo: Okay, so the Salamandrain Air Fleet just liked her on Facebook once.

> - Shinigami (Future)

> - Foot Clan (Future)

Rick: She’s friends with an entire ninja clan

> - Wingnut (Future)

> - Screwloose (Future)

> - Alopex (Future)

Dan: Yes, but that means she also has to hang around Six

> - Miyamoto Usagi (Future)

Rebecca: Eastman and Liard have a photo of Stan Sakai in a compromising situation with a goat. That’s the only logical explanation for this recurring, ongoing crossover.

> - Kintaro (Future)

Rick: She just can’t say no to those NARC beacons

> - Akemi (Future)

> - Sumo Kuma (Future)

> - Tanuki (Future)

Rebecca: She was amazed by his drum solo.

> - Dr. Frankenstein (Future)

> - Vulko (Future)

> - Frankenstein's Monster (Future)

Dan: They taught her to do the Monster Mash.

> - Igor (Future)

> - Earth Protection Force (Future)

Tsuneo: At this point I can only assume she goes around waving a gun at people and demanding that they be her friend.

> Enemies:

> - Shredder/ Super Shredder/ Zombie Shredder

Rick: And, of course, Super Zombie Shredder

> - Foot Clan

Tsuneo: She's also friends with them. It's complicated

> - Karai (For now)

Dan: They're enemies until they're not

> - Chris Bradford/Dog Pound/Rahzar

Rebecca: She hates all his handles

> - Xever/Fishface

Tsuneo: Don't go hating on Fishface. He has enough problems as it is

> - Tigerclaw (Future)

Rick: He's her least favourite Wing Commander ship.

> - Ivan Steranko/Rocksteady (Future)

> - Anton Zeck/Bebop (Future)

Rebecca: Bebop and Rocksteady, the filler of Ninja Turtles

> - Kraang

> - Kraang Hive Mind

Rick: Does a hive mind count as a single enemy or not? I need to know what to put on my character sheet.

> - Kraang Prime (Future)

Dan: He's one of those really weird Japanese Optimus Prime redecos

> - Kraang Subprime (Future)

Rick: Kraang Subprime Mortgage

> - Dr. Victor Falco/Rat King (Future)

Rick: She doesn't like complicated references to the TMNT RPG

> - Snakeweed (Future)

Rebecca: Snakeweed, the 'roll twice on this table again' of TMNT villains.

> - Spider Bytez (Future)

> - Justin (Future)

Dan: The dreaded supervillain, Justin

> - Newtralizer (Future)

Tsuneo: I am 90% convinced that all TMNT villains start with a pun name.

> - Spy-Roach (Future)

> - Squirrelanoids (Future)

> - Mutagen Man (Future)

> - Fungus Humungous (Future)

Dan: It's a mushroom in a hockey mask.

> - Mushroom Men (Future)

Tsuneo: She's been barred from the Mushroom Kingdom

> - Pizza Face (Future)

> - Parasiticas (Future)

> - Purple Dragons (Future)

Rebecca: Her hatred for generic thugs knows no bounds

> - Dream Beavers (Future)

Rick: She doesn't like obvious references to the TMNT RPG either

> - Ho Chan (Future)

> - Hun (Future)

Dan: Take that, Atilla.

> - Don Vizioso (Future)

> - Italian Mafia (Future)

Rebecca: Characters that I have no doubt will be handled with the utmost care and sensitivity

> - Son of Snakeweed (Future)

> - Creepweed (Future)

Rick: I'm pretty sure you can get Creepweed and Son of Snakeweed from your hash dealer.

> - Triceraton Empire (Future)

Dan: The entire Triceratron Empire owes her money

> - Spasmosaur (Future)

Tsuneo: Just one specific Spasmosaur, mind you

> - Lord Dregg (Future)

Dan: Lord Dregg, the 'hey, it's that guy' of Ninja Turtles villains

> - Insectoids (Future)

> - Astro Zombies (Future)

Rick: In the future, she will fight John Carradine

> - Ice Dragons (Future)

> - Wyrm (Future)

> - Armaggon (Future)

Tsuneo: We're just going through the TMNT wiki listing every bad guy that appeared, aren't we?
Rick: And you can't stop it.

> - Overmind (Future)

> - Demon Bats (Future)

Dan: How are ya?!

> - Skeevix Virus (Future)

Tsuneo: She's enemies with a virus. Sure, this makes sense

> - Za-Naron (Future)

> - Hattori Tatsu (Future)

> - Kavaxas (Future)

> - Jei (Future)

> - Joroguma (Future)

Rick: That'll teach you to devour the world. Stupid giant serpents.

> - Savanti Romero (Future)

> - Count Vlad Dracula (Future)

Dan: And the worst thing is that's not even the stupidest thing on this list

> - Mummy (Future)

> - Werewolf (Future)

Tsuneo: As well as Bigfoot, Mothman, Ogopogo and the Skunk Ape

> - 1987 Foot Clan (Future)

Rick: While we're naming every Ninja Turtles character ever, I'll just throw in Usub Gerstalk, Here's Johnny, Eustace Mole, Hancho and the Stainless Steel Stallions

> Likes:

Rebecca: Keeping a long list of her enemies, I guess

> - Her Family

Tsuneo: Unknown or otherwise.

> - Listening to music

Dan: She's a hug fan of Shade Knight's band

> - Training with her brothers

> - Meditating with Master Splinter

> - Hanging out with April

Rebecca: Not doing anything, just general purpose hanging out

> - Pizza (Obviously)

> - Reading

> Dislikes:

> - Shredder

Dan: Shredder pushed her down the stairs in high school once. [Pause] Oh, and is constantly trying to kill everyone she knows and loves. Little things.

> - Kraang

> - Bad guys in general

Tsuneo: See also her extensive enemies list

> - Jerks

> - Liars

> - Seeing her family in danger

> - Bullies

Tsuneo: Her aforesaid angry outbursts not withstanding

> Abilities:

> - Retractable claws

Rick: Fifteen percent bonus to the climb skill, baby

> - Enhanced strength, speed, agility, and reflexes

Tsuneo: Yes, she has catlike *strength.*

> - Strong senses of hearing, sight, and smell

> - Ninjitsu

Dan: The ninja knows ninjitsu? I am genuinely surprised

> - Swordsmanship

> - Bowmanship

> - Technological knowledge

Tsuneo: Yes, but how are her parfaits?

> Fun Facts:

> - Pepper didn't have an experience with mutagen to make her a cat mutant. She was born that way,

Rebecca: She’s a naturally occurring freak of nature

> suggesting that one or both of her parents were mutants,

Tsuneo: You kind of hope they were both mutant cats.
Dan: Desperately.

> and passed on the genes. Mutagen is in her blood

Rick: Her urine samples glow in the dark

> - Given the fact that she was adopted by Hamato Yoshi/Splinter, Pepper's full name could be
> "Hamato Pepper", or, in Western naming order, "Pepper Hamato"

Tsuneo: That’s great. Also I don’t care

> - Pepper became a kunoichi at the age of 8

Dan: She learned the secret ninja death touch in second grade

> - Pepper's favorite brothers are in this order: Michelangelo, Donatello, Leonardo, and Raphael, but
> she loves them all equally

Rebecca: She loves them equally, but some are more equally loved then others

> - She is ambidextrous

Tsuneo: She’s also double jointed, and can curl up into a box to sleep.

> - Her favorite colors are black and green

> - She is very good with any bladed weapon, but her favorite is any kind of sword.

Tsuneo: Including the Pata, the Shark-Tooth Sword and the Ngulu Blade

> She uses twin swords as her main weapon when in close combat,

Rick: Really? I thought she specialised in throwing them.

> but will use her crossbow for long-distance, or
> to create a zip-line or rope-line she can swing from. This helps her save Karai from the mutagen

Dan: Spoiler alert much?

> - As her cat-snake mutant hybrid form, she has venomous, retractable fangs, enhanced strength
> and speed, enhanced swimming abilities, enhanced endurance and agility, snake communication,

Rick: She claims to be a parseltongue.

> super hearing and stealth, increased flexibility, and enhanced reflexes

Tsuneo: In case you forgot all this from just a little while earlier, here it is again

> - As a regular mutant, she has cat-like tendencies, including purring, increased senses, and dislike
> of water.

Rebecca: She will also throw up in your shoes, claw your furniture and leave dismembered mice in your bed

> - She doesn't know who her birth family is,

Tsuneo: I'm sure it won't be hard to find Mr and Mrs Cat Mutant.

> but she'll soon discover who her parents, adopted sisters, twin brother, and uncle are

Rick: She lives with her foster family, but she doesn't know who they are

> - Since she was raised by Master Splinter, she can read, write, speak, and understand Japanese

Tsuneo: I wouldn't take that as a given. I doubt Mikey speaks Japanese, for example.
Dan: Yeah, but that's Mikey.
Tsuneo: Okay, bad example.

> - Since she was raised by an Spanish caretaker until she was almost five, she can read, write,
> speak, and understand Spanish

Tsuneo: Pepper was a fast learner

> Relationships:

> - Leonardo: Leonardo is the oldest of her four younger brothers. They love to watch Space Heroes

Rebecca: Leo of course derides her as not being a 'true' fan

> and train together. Pepper is Leo's only older sibling, and the only one he feels he can let his guard
> down. He has to act stoic around his younger brothers, but when they were younger, he would let
> down the tough act around Pepper and sometimes sleep with her at night.

Rick: That would be so uncomfortable

> - Raphael: Raphael is the second-oldest of her brothers. They spar with, hang out with, and tease
> each other. Raphael even got his anger attitude from her,

Tsuneo: He studied her carefully to learn how to be angry

> but she controls it better than him. Pepper is the one who gave Spike to Raph.

Dan: Pepper inserts herself into every significant moment in their lives.

> She found the turtle in the sewers one day while exploring, and
> brought him back to the lair as a present to Raph for his birthday.

Rick: She had to keep him hidden for eleven months, but its the thought that counts

> - Donatello: Donatello is the third-oldest of Pepper's brothers.

Dan: The third-oldest out of four

> They love to hang out and spar
> together. Since the turtles weren't allowed to go to school (for obvious reasons),

Rick: Splinter has issues with the curriculum and insisted on home-schooling on religious grounds

> Pepper is the one who taught them basic lessons like math and science.

Tsuneo: She had no qualifications to do this and made it up as she went along anyway

> Pepper enjoys helping Donnie in his lab, and
> when he was younger, she made it a rule that he needed to have her supervise if he was going to
> invent or experiment with something that could potentially explode in his face or get him hurt.

Rebecca: Donnie reminded her that she is not his mum.

> Pepper loosened the rule as he got older,

Dan: She's fine with him blowing himself up

> but he still asked her to help him because he genuinely enjoyed having her around to help.

Tsuneo: Informed relationships are the best relationships

> - Michelangelo: Michelangelo is the youngest brother of Pepper, so she is very protective of him.
> Ever wondered where his cooking skills came from?

All: We didn't

> Pepper taught him.

Rebecca: She learned from, um somewhere, I guess.

> When the turtles were
> younger, she helped Splinter cook for them, and taught Mikey when he showed an interest. She
> loves playing video games with him

Rebecca: They play the Elden Ring co-op hack.

> (and lets him win a lot because she loves to see his happy grin).

Rick: Wow, they have such an involved and complicated relationship

> She enjoys pulling pranks on the others with him, and is willing to be a good sport if he
> manages to pull one on her. Luckily for her, her cat-senses usually make her aware that
> something's off before she gets pranked.

Tsuneo: Because heaven forbid that she suffer any sort of setback otherwise

> But she did let him prank her once when they were young,

Dan: When he put a land mine in her sandbox. Good times.

> letting him sneak up behind her and dump what she thought was a bucket of water on her head. (It
> was paint, and turned her fur bright pink for a week afterwards.)

Rick: Mikey still has the scars.

> - Master Splinter: Master Splinter (aka Hamato Yoshi) is the adoptive father and sensei of Pepper. If
> he had to pick a favorite child, it had to be Pepper.

Rebecca: He makes sure to remind his other children of this fact.

> She reminds him a lot of his other baby girl he
> lost, but she will never replace Miwa (a fact she knows).

Dan: Because of the massive age gap, Pepper knows all Splinter's secrets that he never revealed to the turtles.
Rick: That's three years, right?
Dan: Yep, three whole years.

> Splinter and Pepper have a special father-daughter bond

Tsuneo: Like a father and daughter, weirdly enough.

> that can never be broken, and are extremely close. Pepper would love to listen to his
> stories about Japan and his old life.

Rick: About all the time he spent riding subway trains or going to karaoke or working himself to death.

> Because of what happened to his other daughter, and not
> wanting a repeat, he is SUPER protective of Pepper,

Dan: [Splinter] And remember young lady, I want you home no later than eight in the morning, and no assassinations without telling me first.

> but because she is older than her brothers by
> three years, he's more willing to let her out of the lair. He even let her up to the surface once when
> she was fifteen.

Tsuneo: He is super protective of her which is why he gives her more freedom

> - April O'Neil: April and Pepper are best friends, practically sisters. Pepper is really glad to have
> another girl, because as much as she loves her brothers,

Rebecca: Something she has to occasionally remind herself of.

> staying in the sewers with five guys for fourteen years gets tiring.

Rick: Living in a sewer would prepare you well for living with a teenage boy

> April is like a younger sister to Pepper.

> - Casey Jones: When they first meet, Pepper and Casey are immediately at odds. When he met her
> and Raph in the alleyway with the Purple Dragons,

Rebecca: Do we even need to read the fic? We've got the cliff notes right here.

> Pepper and Casey got into a bit of a
> disagreement about how he'd handled the bad guys.

Tsuneo: She didn't have a problem with his use of violence, but she was worried by the way he went through their pockets afterwards

> When they officially meet later in the lair,

Dan: For the first round of disarmament talks

> they recognize each other from the alleyway and proceed to get into another disagreement,

Rebecca: About Pascal's Wager and the idea of free will

> where Pepper got her new nickname 'Whiskers' from him. During the fight with the Foot,

Rick: also known as Pepper’s fungal toenail infection

> they shock the others by actually getting along and fighting side-by-side, like they'd done it for ages.

Rick: They are cooperating
Dan: I am shocked by this development

> Casey
> becomes like a little brother to Pepper when he officially joins the team. And despite her vehement
> corrections and protests whenever he calls her Whiskers,

Tsuneo: After her favourite brand of cat food.

> when Mikey tries to call her by the
> nickname, she firmly announces that only Casey call call her that.

Dan: Its their safeword

> - Karai/Miwa: Even though they're enemies, Pepper clearly thinks there is good in Karai. When he
> finds out Karai is technically her sister,

Tsuneo: Despite Karai’s vehement denials.

> Pepper tries to tell her, but is unable. When Karai joins them,
> they begin to have a close sister bond, and Pepper is very protective of her younger sister.

Rebecca: In short, tell us all about your character instead of actually demonstrating any traits

> -----

Tsuneo: To put it in perspective, we just read a ten-page character profile

> AN: Hello! This is my first time posting on .

Rebecca: Their first time posting on blank space period

> I usually post on Wattpad (which is where this story is originally posted,

Tsuneo: Right there and then that explains so much

> so feel free to check out this story there if you get bored waiting for the next
> chapter and want to read ahead.

Rebecca: Any takers? No? Funny that.

> I have up to 'The Deadly Venom' currently posted on Wattpad). I
> decided I wanted to try and get this story out to a larger audience,

Dan: Have they considered handing copies out to random strangers on the street?

> so I recently began posting it here and on Archiveofourown.

Rebecca: Be sure to include as many inappropriate tags as possible

> I'm still figuring out the controls on here and have no idea what I'm doing.

Rick: Words you don’t want to hear from your pilot.

> The controls for posting a new chapter are so different from on Wattpad, to be honest.

Tsuneo: The secret to AO3's success is its incredibly counter-intuitive user interface
Rick: Clearly

> I'll try to publish at least one chapter a week,

Dan: End of the world permitting.

> but with crossposting on AO3 and Wattpad along with some
> personal issues I'm dealing with and attempting to juggle school, things might be a little slow.

Rebecca: Author needs to get their priorities right
Rick: Have they tried dropping out of school to focus on the fanfic?

> Luckily, winter break starts this Thursday and then I'm off until the 4th of January and I'll try to get
> out as many chapters as possible on here while still trying to meet my goal for the end of the year
> on Wattpad of finishing season 3.

Tsuneo: Once again, and I hate how often I need to repeat this, but the author's notes are not your blog
Dan: On the other hand, it's not Stranger Named Six
Tsuneo: Well there is that

> Anyway, thank you for all of you who checked out the first chapter of this story, aka Pepper's profile.

Rick: AKA a list of every TMNT character that ever was or will be.

> Hamato Pepper is my OC and a main character of this story.

All: No!

> I'll
> have several other OCs jumping in later on in the story and might do profiles for them as well.

Tsuneo: Trust me, fic. We're good.

> Anyway, enjoy the chapter.

Dan: Wait, is it actually starting?
Rebecca: I don't think I'm prepared for this.

> Our story begins in New York City,

Rick: Radical step for a Ninja Turtles fic, but want to see where they're going with it

> where beneath all of the people, buildings, and noisy cars, there is more than meets the eye

Rebecca: Please let's not turn this into a Transformers crossover. We've had enough of those already

> in the city of the Big Apple. Everything is peaceful and quiet.

Dan: Written by somebody who has clearly never been to New York

> Deep in the sewer lays a lair that resembles an indoor home,

Tsuneo: As opposed to an outdoor home, of course

> with the exception of a Dojo with a large tree in the middle of a normal family.

Rick: Pfft, like who’s house doesn’t have one of those?

> Four sons are in training,

Dan: Determined to master Sudoku puzzles.

> while an older daughter watches from the side, sitting with legs crossed.

Tsuneo: She’s a few years ahead, she already passed Ninja 101.

> The eldest of the sons, with a blue mask and katanas, practices with the
> youngest and baby of the family, with an orange mask and nunchucks.

Dan: He’s still learning to walk, but he can ninja kick with the best of them

> The sister watches intently as the two groups glare at each other, eyes locked. The eldest and
> youngest jump to their feet. The eldest holds his katana before him, and the youngest withdraws his
> nunchucks from his belt,

Tsuneo: Alongside his hammer, measuring tape and pliers.

> tucking the ends of each pair under his arms. Their eyes narrow as they
> stare each other down, each daring the other to go first.

Dan: Roll for initiative.

> After a few seconds, the eldest raises his
> katana and runs forward, letting out a battle cry. The youngest's glare turns to a playful smirk.

> "Oh, yeah! Michelangelo's on the move!"

Rick: He’s totally owning it with the roof of the Sistine Chapel

> The youngest charges forward, too, twirling both pairs of
> nunchucks. They meet halfway, and the eldest swings for the youngest. But the youngest dodges
> quickly, jumping over the eldest's head and landing behind him.

Tsuneo: But the Russian judge still won’t give him more than a 6.

> The eldest glares as the youngest swings his nunchucks, busting some fancy moves.

Rebecca: Some incredibly nondescript fancy moves.

> "You don't know what to do!" The sister snickers.

Dan: Have you tried hitting him with your sword?
Rick: You might be on to something there.

> Too slow, Leo. The turtle charges forward and gives another swing, and another, but still the
> youngest dodges the strikes. "I'm here! I'm there!" The youngest smirks as he lands, down on one
> knee. "I could be anywhere!"

Rick: A port-a-loo in Mongolia, stuck on a train in Vietnam, the dark side of the moon... anywhere

> His eyes go wide and white, and he dodges another hard strike from
> his older brother. Leo turns to him and smirks. The sister's eyes narrow. What's he up to...?

Tsuneo: At a guess, mugging

> "How do

> you stop what you can't even see?" the youngest taunts, dancing around before taking a stance.

Rebecca: Saturation bombing.

> Leo takes a stance, too, sword at his side. The youngest raises his nunchucks as he runs forward,
> ready to strike. Only a foot away, Leo flips his sword, and brings the end forward. Hard.

Tsuneo: He generously decided not to stab his younger brother.

> The pommel delivers a hard blow to the youngest's stomach,

Rick: And he went FAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRT

> smacking against his plastron. The sister winces.
> That'll known the wind out of you for sure.

Rebecca: Yes, thank you for that. Your reiterating what just happened adds so much to the fic.

> The youngest drops his nunchucks, somersaults around
> Leo, and stops, kneeling. He lets out a pained gasp and falls on his side.

Tsuneo: He was so hurt that he did several backflips before collapsing

> "Like that?" Leo asks smugly.

Dan: [Mikey] Yeah, except for the part where you hit him.

> "Good one, Leo..." the youngest chokes. Leo raises a brow, staring down at him. The youngest rolls
> off his shell and starts to crawl toward the sister, a look of agony on his face,

Rebecca: He does this when it’s his turn to take out the garbage.

> and he reaches for her.
> "Tag in, sis!" he coughs, though it sounds more dramatic now. "Tag in! Avenge me...!"

Rick: ‘Tag in, avenge me’ is not the worst origin story I’ve ever heard either

> He lets out a sickly groan as his head falls to the floor, hand still raised toward his sister.

> The sister rolls her eyes. Drama queen... She lifts a black-gloved hand and pats his lightly. "I shall
> avenge you, dear brother."

Dan: But first I must do some sidequests

> She rises to her feet and steps across to her younger brother's former
> place. Leo looks at her for a moment, a small grin growing on his face. "Come on, Leo. You know
> how this is gonna end.

Rebecca: The author abandons the fic having very quickly run out of ideas

> You could just back out now, if you want." She draws the sword at her left
> hip, smirking, sharp white teeth and curved fangs visible behind her lips.

Dan: Leo has a very real chance of being bitten.

> She takes a defensive stance, fluffy tail sweeping slowly behind her.

Rick: As a cat, that means she’s either angry, excited, happy, bored or wants to be fed.

> Leo chuckles. "You say that like I'm gonna listen to you, Pepper."

Rebecca: Last time he listened to her, he ended up sinking all his money into Dogecoin

> Leo's grin turns to a smirk and he takes a stance, holding his katana toward her.

Dan: It took him a while, but he eventually figured that you should direct the pointy end and the bad guy

> "Leo, don't make me force you," she says sweetly. "You can still back down."

> "Now where's the fun in that?" he asks.

Rick: [Pepper] Well, we could kick back and watch TV instead...

> Pepper chuckles slightly, turning to fully face him, sword near her in a defensive stance. They stand
> there for a few moments, eyes locked.

Dan: [Whispered] Get on with it.

> Pepper moves first, darting forward quickly. Leo charges her at the same time,

Tsuneo: They acted at the same time, but she acted first

> meeting her halfway. Pepper feints, dodging right and moving out of the way. Leo
> turns to keep her in his sight-line

Rebecca: You're in the same room. It's not like there's anywhere to hide

> and she moves to kick his shell with one leg. He turns, blocking
> against his forearm. Pepper brings down her sword-arm and the blade collides against his katana,
> ringing through the dojo. Leo shoves her back, but she steadies herself easily, tail swishing.

Rick: He then distracted her with a laser pointer.

> Leo charges, katana in the air and ready to strike. Pepper ducks, grabbing his wrist in her free hand.
> She twists her other wrist, delivering a hard strike to his stomach with the cross-guard of her sword.

Rick: And likewise, he also went FAAAAAAARRRRRRRRRRRRT
Dan: We're going to be hearing that a lot, aren't we?
Rick: Oh yes.

> He lets out a huff of pain. Pepper shoves his arm out of the way and straightens, whipping around to
> strike him in the shoulder with her foot. He takes a few steps back, katana up to shield his face.
> Pepper swings her sword forward, a loud clang sounding as the two weapons connect. Pepper
> takes advantage of the distraction to dart forward.

Dan: Making sure the canon character doesn't get up any offense at all.

> In one fluid move, she kneels, spins, and kicks
> his legs from under him. He makes a noise of surprise as he falls flat on his shell, katana falling
> from his hand. Pepper lifts her blade and before Leo can even sit up, she places her foot against his
> chest, the tip of her sword aimed at his face.

Tsuneo: And in her first scene, the author's OC effortlessly defeats the most skilled of the Ninja Turtles. Subtle.

> "You give?" she asks, trying desperately not to laugh at the dumbfounded look on his face.

Rick: He was as confused by the narration as the rest of us

> He blinks at the sword, then up at her. He grins and gives a small shrug. "Alright, I can take a hint."

> Pepper nods, releasing him. "Good boy."

> "Ooh, you got knocked out!" the youngest jeers.

> Pepper snickers, whiskers twitching in amusement. "C'mon, Mikey, leave the poor boy alone." She
> rests a hand on her hip as Leo gets to his feet, picking up his katana off the floor.

Dan: Remember to dispose of your ninja sword in an appropriate receptacle

> He walks over to
> sit next to Mikey on the other side of the room, while Pepper turns to watch her other two brothers.

Tsuneo: Engaged in an intense Magic: The Gathering game.

> One, an incredibly intelligent, clever, and tall brother

Dan: He was incredibly tall, so he had to duck his head to enter the room

> with a violet mask, gap tooth, and Bo staff

Rick: Were his mask and staff also incredibly tall?

> faces with the fourth son, hot-tempered and aggressive with a red mask and a pair of sai.

Rebecca: I'm guessing if you read this far, you know who the Ninja Turtles are.
Dan: I'm guessing if you read this far, you're too drunk to recognise them.
Rebecca: Also fair.

> The tall one shows off a cool few moves with his staff, spinning it to the sides and above his head.
> Pepper's ears twitch. Say what you will about the Bo staff,

Rebecca: Sudden bout of bo staff racism here

> but Donnie knows how to make good use of one.

Dan: For example, he can use it to prop open doors.

> Donnie stops his staff, taking a stance, staff pointed at the hot-head, who stands still with an
> almost bored expression on his face.

Tsuneo: Raph's read ahead in the script. He knows what's going to happen.

> He cracks his neck, shaking his head slightly.

> "Alright, Donnie, put down the staff, and no one gets hurt," he orders.

> "Ah, you said that last time, Raph, and then you hurt me!"

> "Yeah, but...less than I would have."

> "Yeah, right!"

> Pepper snickers, tail flicking in amusement.

Tsuneo: It's funny because he's about to be violently beaten

> Donnie charges, swinging his staff at Raph. But said
> turtle rolls out of the way, even dodging another strike from the staff. Donnie spins the staff at his

> side and strikes forward, nearly catching Raph against the throat. Raph leans back just enough for it
> to miss. Donnie brings the staff back, spinning it above his head and bringing it down. Raph dodges,
> doing a few flips to land in front of Donnie, who spins the staff, turns to spin it behind his back, and
> comes full circle with the motion. He spins it above his head and swings it down at Raph, who
> dodges once more.

Rick: This continued until the end of all time
Tsuneo: Which would still be shorter then the OC's biography

> C'mon, Raph, quit toying with him. Pepper rolls her eyes.

Dan: Pepper is hungry for blood

> Donnie stands back for a couple seconds, a determined look on his face.

Tsuneo: He can't wait to be humiliated some more.

> He swings the staff out and above his head as he steps forward,
> bringing the staff down in an effort to strike. 'Effort' meaning he doesn't hit anything. Reason being:
> Raph takes it out of his hands.

Rick: And now for the dreaded ninja technique known as 'keep-away'.

> Donnie looks down at his hands, gasps slightly, and looks back up.
> Raph leans slightly against the staff, an almost evil grin on his face. He spins the staff for a second
> before bringing it down over his knee, snapping it in two.

Dan: And you know that's coming out of Raph's allowance.

> He holds up the two pieces, grinning wider. Donnie blinks, looking slightly scared.

> "...Should've dropped the staff?"

> "Should've dropped the staff."

> Raph spins the two broken pieces in his hands before charging. Donnie steps back a few feet
> before turning and bending over, covering his head with his hands.

Rick: As well as the advanced 'not in the face' stance.

> Raph shows no mercy as he beats against Donnie's shell with the pieces.

Tsuneo: So this is friendly sparring, huh?
Rick: Clearly

> "Okay, okay-Ow! I'm down!" Donnie yelps.

> Pepper rolls her eyes and steps forward. "Enough."

Tsuneo: [Raph] Really? 'Cause I can keep going...

> Raph stops, and Donnie turns his head to look. Raph grins as he drops the pieces of wood. "Well,
> look who's come to save the day," he teases.

Rick: And she will prove that crime will never pay.

> Pepper hums, ears twitching. Donnie looks up at her and Pepper nods to where Leo and Mikey sit.
> Donnie nods, getting to his feet and walking over to join them. Mikey sticks out his tongue at Donnie
> playfully, and Donnie simply glares back at him.

Dan: [Mikey] At least when I got spanked, I made it look good.

> Pepper takes a few steps toward Raph and he
> steps toward her. They stop a few feet away from one another and look at each other.

Dan [Raph]: What were we doing?
Rebecca [Pepper]: I have no idea.

> Pepper draws
> her other sword from her right hip, spinning both swords skillfully in her hands before holding them
> out defensively. Raph gives a dry chuckle as he pulls out his sais.

Rick: [Pepper] Mine’s bigger.

> "You get hurt," he says, "I take no responsibility."

Tsuneo: Raph starts all his fights with an extensive liability waiver

> Pepper cocks an eyebrow, knowing that's just his way saying 'good luck'.

Rebecca: He humiliates his brothers because he loves them.

> The boys have different
> ideas on what training is. To Mikey, it's a fun, exciting game. To Donnie, it's a fun experiment, telling
> him how to get better. To Leo, it's an everyday way to life. And to Raph, it's always a competition.
> Always.

Dan: Raph is what we call a toxic dudebro

> "Whatever you say, Raphie," Pepper teases.

> Pepper takes a step back, getting into a defensive stance, swords out. Raph spins his sais a bit,
> holding them toward her. They stand and stare for a few moments. Now! Pepper charges, swords
> high, and slashes down at him. He blocks his sais. Pepper holds her swords in place, pushing
> against him.

Tsuneo [Bored]: This is so intense
Rick [Bored]: I’m excited

> Raph shoves her away and she ducks as he swings at her. She looks up, swords at the
> ready, one at her side, the other lifted. Raph holds up his sais, lets out a battle cry,

Dan: [Raph] Spoon!

> and charges.
> Pepper straightens, swinging both swords around to come down at Raph. He pushes them aside
> with one fist and lifts his other sai. Pepper spins out of the way and Raph moves forward on
> momentum, somersaulting and landing on one knee.

Dan: Well she’s flipped out. I assume the killing everybody is still to come

> Pepper charges, swords raised. She leaps up
> and attempts to strike above, but he turns in time to block with his sais. Pepper forces his aside and
> knocks one sai from his hand. Using whatever force he had,

Rick: Uuuhhh... Spring force!

> he uses his remaining sai to knock the
> sword from her left hand. It heads toward the others and Leo catches.

Tsuneo: This will probably be his biggest single contribution to the fic. Treasure it

> Pepper takes a few steps back, tail swishing slowly.

Dan: Oh no, she just spotted a ball of yarn.

> She and Raph stare for a few seconds before they charge, letting out
> battle cries. Meeting halfway, they raise their weapons.

> Pepper knows it's hopeless

Rick: Oh, so she's been reading the fic too

> from the second she hears the loud clang of metal on metal. Their
> weapons meet, and Pepper's sword gets knocked from her right hand and thuds to the floor. Before
> she knows what's happening,

Tsuneo: She was an OC in a TMNT fanfic.

> Raph catches her wrist between the blades of his sai. He grabs her
> arm and pulls her down. Hard. Really hard. She flips over his shoulder and lands heavily on her
> back, letting out a sharp exhale as the wind gets knocked out of her.

Tsuneo: No, Rick. You all ready did that one
Rick: Awwww.

> "Ho-kay," she exhales. "That hurt."

Rebecca: Today, Pepper has learned that getting hut hurts

> "Nice try, sis." Raph leans over Pepper, who looks up at him to see the smug, victorious smirk he
> wears. Then it shifts to an affectionate smile as he reaches down a hand to help her up.

Dan: He viciously and maliciously helped her stand up

> Pepper grins, reaching up o grab his hand, letting him pull her to her feet. "Thanks."

> "I'm surprised," he says. "You haven't beaten Leo in a while. Figured he might beat you again."

Rebecca: [Leo] I'm right here, you know.

> Pepper laughs as she picks up her sword. "You underestimate me, Raphael," she says as she
> sheathes her weapon. "It's only been a week or two since the last time I beat Leo."

Tsuneo: We must establish a proper pecking order

> "Two weeks and three days to be exact," Donnie states.

> "Exactly." Raph folds his arms. "That's longer than last time, Pepper.

Dan: Her time between one-sided squashes is increasing

> You're not starting to slack off, are you?"

> Pepper's whiskers twitch in feigned irritation. She smirks slightly as she raised an eyebrow. "Now,
> do I really look like a slacker to you, Raph?"

Rick: [Pepper] Please ignore the coke stains and cheeto dust.

> Raph, still smirking, opens his mouth to respond, but is cut off by another voice. "Yame!"

> The four teens get in a line, kneeling in the middle of the room. Pepper sheathes her other sword,
> kneeling between Leo and Raph.

Dan: The four of them kneeled and the other one kneeled as well

> Their sensei makes his way over, one hand at his side, the other
> holding a large cane. As he walks past, Leo bows so low that his head nearly touches the ground.
> As her sensei passes Pepper, she a small, respectful incline of her head.

Rick: Pepper is behind on her respect dues, and she knows it.

> "You all did very well," Sensei says.

Tsuneo: Spoken like somebody who didn't just read that scene.

> "But I did better," Raph boasts.

> Pepper's whiskers twitch as she turns to stare at him. Not this again. "Raph, watch it..." she warns.

Tsuneo: Raph, do you really want to end up in the gulag again?

> "This is about self-improvement, Raphael," Sensei states.

Rebecca: Which is why you should attend Master Splinter's motivational speaking course and buy his book.

> "It is not about winning and losing."

> "I know, Sensei. But, I won, and...they lost," Raph argues.

> Here it comes.

> Not even a second later, Sensei reaches down and presses a finger to Raph's neck.

Rick: Splinter's practicing the Vulcan Death Grip again.

> Raph lets out a
> pained yelp as his pressure point is hit, and Pepper's ears twitch as she winces slightly.

> "But! What's really important is that we all did our best! Good job, everyone!" Raph says quickly.

Dan: Participation trophies for all

> Sensei releases his hold and Raph falls to the ground, gasping. Sensei chuckles slightly and
> Pepper bites her lip to keep from laughing.

Rebecca: [Pepper] Ha ha, you're in pain.

> "With all due respect," she teases as Raph sits up, rubbing his neck, "I did warn ya."

Tsuneo: So 'Pepper mugs while talking down to everyone around her' is going to be the entirety of this fic, isn't it?
Rebecca: It does seem that way

> Lunch comes and goes as normal.

Rick: 'Normal' for a bunch of mutant animals living in a sewer, that is.

> Sensei and the boys have their usual algae and worms while

> Pepper eats her rice. As a cat-mutant and not a rat or turtle like her family, she can't live on algae
> and worms,

Rebecca: She can’t live on rice either, but that’s besides the point

> but she and Sensei managed to find some human food from the surface so she wouldn't starve.

Tsuneo: Stuff you find in the sewers is going to be perfectly edible, right?

> This caused a bit of an incident whenthey were younger and her brothers gave her
> a cake made of algae and worms for her seventh birthday. It was very sweet, but she had to turn it
> down because eating it would have probably made her sick.

Dan: Which was a dirty lie. Pepper’s just a snob.

> It had made her little brothers upset
> that she was turning away their gift, but after an explanation about how she couldn't eat some of the
> same things they did, they'd understood.

Tsuneo: They were seven-year-old boys. Odds are they would have tried to rub it into her fur instead.

> She'd still thanked them for the thoughtful present anyway.
> Their meals were always a little entertaining these days because her brothers still acted the way
> they did when they were little when they ate: Leo ate without complaint, Raph stabbed the food with
> his chopsticks, Donnie hacked in disgust, and Mikey ate all his stuff and finished before everyone
> else.

Dan: Its funny because they eat food
Rick: Pepper is very easily entertained

> "There's a little more algae and worms left if anyone wants it." Mikey held the huge pot toward them,
> as though trying to tempt them to take it. "Anybody? Anybody?"

> "No thanks."

> "I'm good."

> "All yours."

> "Well, I guess no one left room for...cake!" Mikey exclaimed.

> Pepper's ears pricked in excitement. Mikey pulled out a large, green-and-blue cake with a single
> candle in the middle.

Rebecca: Probably best not to ask where he got the candle from

> "No way!" Pepper leaned over the table to get a closer look, tail swishing excitedly.

> "It is a cake!" Donnie exclaimed, sounding surprised.

Dan: The cake is indeed a cake
Rick: What a shocking twist!

> Raph stuck his finger out, scraped a bit of the stuff off the cake, and licked it. "Made of...algae." A
> small pink object poked up from the top and crawled over the surface. "And worms..."

Rebecca: Mikey missed his true calling. He could be making a fortune selling these to hipsters in Brooklyn

> Pepper sat back, ears drooping in disappointment. "Well, so much for that..."

> "What's the frosting made out of?" Leo asked.

> "You don't wanna know."

Dan: [Mikey] Just don’t check where Donnie was keeping Mutagen Man.

> Mikey glanced around, then grinned. "Happy Mutation Day!"

Rick: Happy white event, everyone!

> "Happy Mutation Day!" the boys and Pepper chorused.

> "And!" Mikey slung an arm around Pepper's shoulders. "Happy birthday to our big sista!"

> Pepper grinned, patting the green hand gripping her shoulder. "Thanks, Mikey." Since she didn't
> know her actual date of birth, they just celebrated her birthday on the same day of the boys'
> mutation day celebration.

Tsuneo: Further forcing herself into every aspect of their lives.

> "And, as the only birthday girl here, I get to blow out the candle." She
> leaned forward and blew out the tiny flame.

Rebecca: She will murder anyone who argues otherwise

> "What did you wish for?" Donnie asked.

> Pepper smiled smugly as she leaned back. "Can't tell ya. Otherwise it won't come true."

Dan: Besides which, the odds of an asteroid strike are slim enough already

> "Oooh! We got a birthday present for you!" Mikey said.

Rick: And its fully licenced too

> Pepper's ears pricked as Sensei pulled out a small present and held it out to her. She took it and
> unwrapped it, revealing a beautiful flower hairpin.

> "It's beautiful," she said, grinning.

Rebecca: [Pepper] I love how the light reflects off the corrosion and encrusted filth.

> "Raph and I found it in the sewers two months ago. We cleaned it up since it was in good shape,"

Dan: Got the blood off it and everything

> Leo explained as Pepper pinned the flower in her dark braided hair.

> "Gracias a todos," Pepper said. (Thanks, everyone.) "Happy Mutation Day, you guys."

Rebecca: Happy involuntary rearrangement of your DNA

> "Thanks, Pepper," Donnie said.

Dan: [Pepper] I didn’t get you anything.
Tsuneo: [Leo] Did you forget or...
Dan: [Pepper] Nope.

> "Ah, yes," Sensei sighed. "15 years ago today, our lives changed forever

Rick: When the Fire Nation attacked

> and we became the unlikeliest of families.

Dan: And yet, its still not the most forced sitcom premise ever.

> And 14 years ago today, Pepper joined us."

Tsuneo: A day that will live in infamy

> "Tell us the story, Master Splinter!" Mikey begged.

> "Michelangelo, I have already told it many times."

Rebecca: Every first episode and first movie ever.

> "Please! Pleas-" His begging was cut off as Raph slapped a hand over Mikey's mouth.

> "Please," he said. "It's the only way to shut Mikey up."

Tsuneo: Duct tape also works.

> Sensei sighed. "Very well... Many years ago, when I was still human,

Rebecca: Back before he started posting on 4chan

> I was leaving the pet store with four baby turtles..."

> "That was us!" Mikey piped up.

> "Yes... Don't interrupt!" Sensei cleared his throat as Mikey sat back down. "I passed a strange man
> on the street. Something felt off about him... I decided to follow."

> Pepper rested her chin in her hand and closed her eyes. But her pricked ears showed she was still
> listening intently as Sensei told them about how

Rick: -Peter Parker was bitten by a radioactive spider, got superpowers, became a wrestler and then, through his inaction, got Uncle Ben killed.
Dan: This isn’t a Spider-Man reboot
Rick: It isn’t? Are you sure?
Dan: Well... no, actually.

[Pause]

Rick: What if it had Paul?
Dan: Then I would be all over that.

> he'd followed the strange man to an alley, how he'd
> given himself away by accidentally stepping on a rat's tail, and how the strange man - now
> accompanied by several others - had tried to attack him. Emphasis on 'tried'.

Rebecca: Mostly they’d just flailed around looking awkward

> Sensei managed to
> fight off all the strange men, all while still holding the baby turtles. Unfortunately, during the fight,
> one of the men had dropped a strange canister filled with glowing green ooze.

Tsuneo: Okay, so lesson learned. If you’re going to jump a martial arts master in a blind alley, be sure to secure your fragile canister of dangerous mutagen first.

Rick: Oh yeah. Happens all the time.

> It had fallen to the
> ground, smashed open, and the ooze had spilled over Sensei and his pets, turning them into the
> people sitting with Pepper today.

Rick: And that’s how they became the Adolescent Radioactive Black-Belt Hamsters

> "That was the beginning of our life together." Pepper opened her eyes as Sensei held up the
> strange container for them all to see. "It was the mysterious substance in this canister that, in a way,
> gave birth to us all."

Dan: They got their super-powers from a cracked can of Mountain Dew.

> Mikey snatched the canister from Sensei and hugged it tightly. "Mom!" Pepper snorted.

Tsuneo: How dare he show affection?

> Not much of a family resemblance.

Rick: Maybe Mikey got his looks from his dad’s side of the family

> Then Mikey's eyes widened. "Ooh! Now tell us how you found Pepper!"

Rebecca: He looked in the condiments aisle at the supermarket

> Sensei sighed at him and turned to Pepper

Dan: [Splinter] I mean, do I have to?

> for permission. She simply nodded, knowing Mikey
> wouldn't shut it if Sensei didn't tell the story of how he found Pepper.

Tsuneo: Origin stories must be exposited at all times

> "Very well... It was the year after we'd been living in the sewers," Sensei began, stroking his beard.
> "One morning, while the four of you slept, I was about to prepare breakfast when I heard a faint cry.
> I decided to investigate. I followed the sound, and it led me to the surface, into an alley. There, I
> found a young girl attemtping to find food. I decided to take her in and raised her as my own."

Rebecca: That’s far less interesting the fighting goons with radioactive cannisters

> Pepper smiled at him warmly. The memory was faint, 14 year ago, but she could still remember
> how, after she'd come to New York City as a stowaway aboard a plane from Barcelona, Spain,

Tsuneo: She was four years old and yet she managed to sneak on to an international flight, remain hidden for a transatlantic voyage, sneak her way out of the plane and the airport and then make it all the way to Manhattan then get inside the sewers.
Rebecca: Yes.
Tsuneo: Sure, why not? It’s not even the most forced origin story we’ve seen here

> she'd
> struggled to survive alone, a mutant four-year-old in a strange world. She had been used to
> avoiding humans, but in Barcelona she'd had a caretaker.

Tsuneo: Makes you wonder why she flew across the Atlantic in the first place.

> The memory of him was even fainter, but
> she could remember a couple details: warm brown eyes, a soft smile he showed only her, dark skin,
> tussled, unruly black hair, and a human face.

Rick: The human had a human face

> New York City had been so different than Barcelona,

Dan: Just don’t ask about the pizza.

> but when Sensei had found her, he'd offered her shelter. Pepper had been wary at first. The last
> person to be kind to her had abandoned her in Barcelona, after all.

Tsuneo: Presumably he’d abandoned her at the airport

> But Sensei hadn't done that.

Rebecca: Sure, she’d been ‘accidentally’ left behind at a mall across the city a few times, but she always found her way back home.

> He'd introduced her to his sons and she'd helped care for them. They became her family, more so
> than the man from Barcelona had ever been.

Rebecca: Again, she was four years old. She probably barely has any memories of him at all beyond ‘person shaped blob’

> She knew that if Sensei hadn't been so kind to her,
> she would probably have been a goner a long time ago.

> As soon as Sensei finished the story, Mikey brought Pepper into a tight hug, squeezing her so hard
> she could barely breathe.

Rick: Ribs... cracking... lungs... collapsing...

> Leo must have noticed because he gently pulled Mikey away to let Pepper breathe again.

Dan: You don’t get to breathe unless Mikey says so.

> "So, Sensei, now that we're 15 and Pepper's 18,

Dan: Pepper immediately gets smashed on cheap beer.

> I think we're finally ready to go up to the surface, don't you?" Leo asked.

Tsuneo: Because it wouldn’t be much of a story otherwise

> They all turned to look expectantly at Sensei.

> "Yes." The boys cheered and punched their fists in the air and Pepper grinned. "And no." Pepper
> jaw dropped and she stared at Sensei as the boys lowered their fists, groaning in disappointment.

> "I hate when he does that," Raph complained.

Tsuneo: How dare he be all wise and zen-like

> "You and me both," Pepper grumbled, crossing her arms.

Rick: Pepper’s like all the extra CG aliens inserted into the original Star Wars trilogy

> "You have grown powerful, but you are still young." Sensei stood from his seat. "You lack the
> maturity to use your skills wisely."

Rebecca: They’re teenage boys. They’re into skateboards, Xbox and furiously jerking off

> "Not all of us," Pepper complained under her breath.

Tsuneo: But then you'd have a life of your own, which clearly can't be allowed.

> Sensei had let her up to the surface once
> when she was fifteen, but that had been largely due to the fact that she'd complained so much
> about being trapped in the sewers that he finally realized she'd most likely have just snuck topside
> anyway, even without permission.

Rick: Pepper learned that day that if she whined enough people would eventually just give in and let her have her way

> Cats weren't meant to live in the sewers, after all.

Dan: Neither were turtles. Your point?

> But her brothers had never been topside before, and she knew how important it was to them.

Tsuneo: They wouldn't truly lived until they'd been hustled or bought over-priced hot dogs.

> "You might be the oldest and most mature, Pepper,

Rebecca: Well, oldest.

> but that does not mean you are prepared for what is out there," Sensei warned.

Rick: Packs of 2d4 Orcs

> Pepper's ears folded back unhapily. "So, isn't that just...'no', then?"

> "Yes...and no."

> "...What?"

> "Wisdom comes from experience, and experience comes from making mistakes."

Tsuneo: By that logic, Elon Musk is the wisest man in the world

> "So...in order to gain the wisdom, we have to make the mistake, so we can go!"

> "No."

> "And...yes?"

> "No!"

Rebecca: This is like watching a high school debating team

> She groaned. "Sensei. We know you're trying to protect us, but we can't spend our whole lives
> hiding down here.

Tsuneo: They're not Teenage Mutant Introvert Turtles

> We're never gonna be able to know how to defend ourselves from the things
> above if we never go there.

Dan: And you won't have to, either.

> And I'm not new to the surface. I spent four years up there.

Rebecca: Four years as an infant being cared for in secrecy. Not helping your case.

> I know how to avoid the humans and we can be back in the sewers by daybreak.

Dan: Just assume that there is a usable manhole within fifty feet at all times

> No one will see us. Besides, the boys are the same age as I was when you let me go topside once."

Tsuneo: And he hasn't let you out since, so not exactly helping there.

> Sensei turned away,
> stroking his thin beard thoughtfully. Pepper's eyes narrowed. "Time to start begging, boys. Game
> faces."

Tsuneo: Because they never would have done that themselves. You know, like in the actual episode this is copied line-for-line from.

> In less than a second, they were on the floor, kneeling in front of Sensei, hands clasped and puppy-
> dog eyes in use.

Dan: When all else fails, grovel

> Sensei turned, blinking in surprise upon seeing them. He looked at the boys before
> looking down at Pepper.

> "Please, Sensei?" she begged, ears folded back. For a cat, she was startlingly good at the puppy-
> dog eyes.

Rebecca: The surgery helped

> Finally, Sensei sighed. "You may go. Tonight."

Dan: [Splinter] But I want you back before sun-up.
Rick: [Leo] Yes master.
Dan: [Splinter] And no talking to strange Ultroms.
Rebecca: [Mikey] No, master.
Dan: [Splinter] And if anyone offers you bootleg mutagen –
Tsuneo: [Raph] Just say no. We know, master.

> Pepper whooped in delight as her brothers shouted "YEAH!" coupled with Mikey's signature,
> "BOOYAKASHA!"

> "High-three!" Mikey shouted, raising a hand. They all accepted his call and raised their hands to
> meet in their usual five-way high-three.

Rick: From this we can deduce that Pepper only has two fingers and a thumb on each hand, despite being a cat

> Pepper sat on the stairs, a few seats below Raph, who was reading a magazine.

Dan: Best not to ask what sort of magazines you find in a sewer

> Leo was sitting on
> the floor in front of the TV, watching an episode of 'Space Heroes'. He could be such a fanboy
> sometimes. Well...maybe all of the time...

Tsuneo: Like that time he stalked the cast at ComiCon

> "Mr. Crankshaw, status report!"

> "Status?! I'll give you the status! We're gonna blow up in two seconds!"

Dan: It was a short episode.

> Pepper leaned forward a bit to look at the screen in time to see Mr. Crankshaw get slapped by
> Captain Ryan.

> "Thank you, Captain..."

Tsuneo: Bright Noah approves

> Leo stood from his spot and held up a hand. "Gentlemen, I have a bold and daring plan." He spoke
> in unison with Captain Ryan onscreen. "There's no time for hesitation. My orders must be carried
> out without question!"

> "Aye, sir!"

> Pepper slapped a hand over her muzzle, her laughter coming out in loud snorts. No matter how
> many times Leo did this, it was always funny.

Rebecca: Pepper feels like she’s been added in the background in crayon.

> "You know this show is stupid, right?" Raph asked.

> Leo whipped his head around. "'Space Heroes' is a great show," he argued.

Rick: But don’t get him started on the newest shows in the Space Heroes franchise, because then it’ll be nothing but rants about how its been ruined by radical SJWs.

> "And Captain Ryan is a great hero. Someday, I'm gonna be just like him."

Tsuneo: So a crudely animated Kirk pastiche?
Rebecca: Life goals.

> Raph finally looked up from his magazine. "Well, you do like to listen to yourself talk, so you're on
> your way."

> Pepper grinned and stifled her laughter as Leo glared at him.

Rebecca: [Pepper] I have nothing to contribute to this scene but want to remind people I exist.

> "Well...you don't complain when Pepper takes the remote to watch 'Impractical Jokesters'!" he said
> accusingly.

> "Yeah, cause that show is actually funny!" Raph snapped.

Dan: Just try to think about what the hair-trigger ragemonster might consider to be funny

> "Your show bores me to sleep."

Rebecca: Can we all just agree that Sub Rosa was a weird episode and move on?

> Leo grumbled irritably and folded his arms as Pepper snickered.

> "Don't worry, Leo," Pepper said. "Not every show can be worthy of everyone's attention."

Rick: Now shut up, the Laff-a-Lympics are on.

> "It's go time!"

> Pepper turned to see Mikey and Donnie standing there, grinning.

Dan: Donnie’s come from his lab and is excited. Back away slowly.

> "C'mon, Pepper!" Mikey ran up to her and shook her shoulders. "Grab your gear! We gots to go!"

> Pepper laughed, excitedly swishing her tail. This is gonna be epic!

Rick: Pfft, it’s Eclipse at best.

> After gathering their weapons, the siblings waited for Sensei to give them the 'okay'. They stood in a
> straight line, at attention.

Rebecca: [Splinter] If you ninjas leave my sewer, if you survive recruit training, you will be a weapon. But until that day you are pukes. You are the lowest from of life on this Earth.
Dan: But I thought Pepper was the talking cat.

> "You are going up to a strange and hostile world,"

Tsuneo: Which, to be fair, is a good description of New York.

> Sensei said. "You must maintain awareness at all times."

Rick: You must constantly search for traps and secret doors

> "Hai, Sensei!" they chorused, turning to leave.

> "Stay in the shadows," Sensei added, and they snapped back into line.

Tsuneo: We do not want a repeat of Out of the Shadows.

> "Hai, Sensei!" They turned to leave again, but...

> "Don't talk to strangers."

Dan: Not even the Times Square Naked Cowboy?

> Back to their spots. "Hai, Sensei." Less enthusiasm colored their tones this time.

> "Everyone is a stranger!" Sensei snapped before they could take more than one step.

> Okay, now he's just being overprotective.

Tsuneo: To be fair, he’s the father to teenage boys. They have no survival instinct whatsoever

> "Hai, Sensei," they sighed, now sounding rather bored. They turned to leave for a fourth time, but
> after a few steps, Sensei spoke up yet again.

Dan [Splinter]: And make sure you’re wearing clean underwear
Rick [Leo]: But we don’t even wear underwear

> "Make sure you go before you leave! The restrooms up there are filthy!"

> "Sensei!" they groaned exasperatedly.

Rick: Also, wah-wah.

> Sensei sighed. "Good luck, my children."

Rebecca: [Splinter] Except for you, Pepper. You're on your own up there.

> Pepper grinned as her brothers let out exclamations of glee, and they finally sprinted through the
> exit.

> "Look both ways before crossing the street!"

Dan: Or at the very least, remember to shout 'I'm walking here'!

> Pepper rolled her eyes. Geez, have a little faith, Sensei.

> "It's so beautiful..." Mikey breathed as they stood in the dark, abandoned alley.

Rebecca: Mikey's really into abandoned porn

> Okay, not the word I'd use, but...

> Pepper led the way as they slowly and confidently walked out of the alley and into the street.
> Pepper's ears were pricked alertly, swiveling to catch the slightest noise.

Tsuneo: Besides the car horns, the sirens, the jackhammers, the blaring advertisements and the constant rumble of pedestrians, she couldn't hear a thing.

> Her nose twitched as scents she hadn't smelled for years,

Tsuneo: She's in a New York alley. It probably smells about the same as the sewer

> and bright emerald eyes surveyed the streets. It was late and no one was in sight.

Rebecca: This is New York City. It could be three AM and the streets would be packed.

> Pepper strode to the middle of the street, grinning excitedly.

Tsuneo: Real good job keeping a low profile

> "Geez, I forgot how big New York City is. Pretty easy to get lost out here," she commented.

Tsuneo: Someone immediately tries to sell her a tourist map.

> "This city is just full of possibility!" Leo said excitedly. "There could be an adventure around this
> corner..." He peeked around the corner, but nothing was there. "Or this one..." He peeked around
> the corner of a closed restaurant, but there was still nothing. "Or this one!" He looked into another
> dark alley, but there was nothing but a dumpster with a cat on it.

Tsuneo: That cat could be her long-lost cousin

> The cat meowed at them before walking off. "There's not, but there could be!" Leo said happily.

Dan: Random encounters won't make themselves happen

> Pepper shook her head as she looked around at her brothers.

Rebecca: How dare they be excited about anything?

> Raph had his arms folded, examining the area. Mikey was having fun and doing flips in the street.

Dan: A tourist asked for a photo and tipped him 20 dollars.

> Donnie was heading along the sidewalk
> when he gasped and pressed his face and hands to the glass window of a shop.

> "Look at all the computers! Is that the next generation cadmium processor with quantum
> encryption?" he asked excitedly.

Rick: And a whole 640 kilobytes of RAM!

> "I don't know, Donatello!" Raph said sarcastically. "Is it?"

> Donnie looked back inside. "It is!"

> "Guys, guys! Check this out!" They all turned to look at Mikey, who was gazing at a store's neon
> sign, which looked like an orange hand with a blue eye inside. Mikey, looking amazed by the sign,
> pressed his face to the glass. "A hand made out of light..." The hand's light turned off suddenly and
> the blue eye lit up. Mikey gasped. "Now it's an eye made out of light!" The hand lit up. "And the hand
> again! Now the eye's back! Now the hand!"

Dan: [Mikey] And now it’s the sign of the Deathly Hallows. [Pause] Back to a hand!

> "It's just a neon sign, Mikey," Pepper informed him, but he ignored her.

Rebecca: Well aren’t you just little miss jaded?

> Raph walked up to him and grabbed him by the tails of his orange mask, pulling him away from the
> glass and into the street. "C'mon, genius."

> "The eye...!"

> Pepper sighed as she followed the two into the street, where Donnie and Leo were waiting.

> "So, where to next?" Donnie asked.

Rick: Midtown Comics. If I can’t get new trade paperbacks at two in the morning, I’m not living

> Before any of them could answer, there was the loud purr of an engine and they turned to see the
> glow of headlights. A motorcycle pulled up in front of them, a boy riding it.

Dan: The secret origin story of Delivery Boy

> He stared at them, and they stared back, all startled into silence.

Tsuneo: Wow, it took you whole minutes to blow that.

> Then, Raph raised his hands and growled at the human.
> The boy screamed and spun his cycle around, speeding away in a cloud of smoke, wheels
> squeaking.

Rebecca: He should get that looked at.

> Pepper sighed, placing her hands on her hips and turning to her red-banded brother. "Was that
> really necessary?" she asked, sounding like an irritated mother.

> "Nope, but it was fun," he replied with a smirk.

> "Well, thanks to you, that kid's probably gonna have nightmares tonight."

Tsuneo: He could be traumatised for life
Rick: Hilarious!

> "We're too exposed out here," Leo said. He turned and looked at the buildings. The rooftops, to be
> exact. "C'mon!" He took off for the buildings and Raph and Donnie followed.

Dan: Odds are they wind up in the middle of a rooftop bar.

> Pepper was about to head up the fire escape after them when she realized Mikey hadn't followed.

Rebecca: Smash cut to Mikey staring slack-jawed at the neon sign again.

> Turning, she saw him still standing in the street. "Mikey! C'mon!"

> "Coming!" He picked up a box from the street and started after the others, following Pepper up the
> fire escape.

> "Oh, boys!" Pepper called when they met up with the others. "Mikey brought a gift."

Dan: He hasn’t been collecting roadkill again, has he?

> "It fell off the dude's bike," Mikey said

Rick: So by maritime law, that means it’s ours

> as he set the thin white box on a block on the roof. The boys
> crowded around the box, looking down at it.

Tsuneo: Yep, four sides and everything.

> Pepper squeezed in between Mikey and Raph to see.

> "Pizz-za?" Mikey read slowly.

> Pepper's ears pricked excitedly, eyes brightening. "Oh, no way! I know what this is! It's human food!

Dan: [Pepper] Made from real humans.

> I've only had it once, a long time ago, back in Barcelona. I don't remember much,

Rebecca: Again, you were four

> but it was really good."

Tsuneo: But then she’s spent the last decade and a half living of literal garbage, so her memories may be a little skewed

> She pulled open the box. A puff of steam emerged and her nose twitched excitedly at the most
> delicious smell ever. A soft purr built in her throat as she and her brothers looked down at the large
> circle with cheese, sauce, and pepperoni.

Dan: Good thing there was no pineapple, otherwise they would have had to fight

> She grinned, tail fluffing happily. "Score! I haven't had good food in a long time. Plain white rice gets
> boring after a while."

Rebecca: Literally is that all she lived on?
Tsuneo: I guess sewer pickings aren’t what they used to be

> She reached down and took one of the slices, biting into it and swallowing it
> with a noise of satisfaction. "C'mon, guys, try it! It's awesome, I promise you!"

> The boys exchanged looks before taking their own slices as Pepper worked on hers.

> "I never thought I'd taste anything better than worms and algae, but this is amazing!" Raph said.

Dan: Did he consider worm and algae pizza?

> "I love it up here!" Mikey shouted, throwing his hands up in the air.

Rick: [Shouting] You keep it down up there already?

> Mikey was right. The surface was awesome! The whole city was like a gigantic playground; the
> buildings and rooftops were parts of a huge jungle gym,

Rebecca: Just without the sandpit at the bottom

> and Pepper and the guys were the excited children playing on it.

Rick: That’s why she kept pushing her brothers off the roof.

> And their playing consisted of racing each other across the rooftops.

Dan: And crashing into the occasional urban explorer or weird pigeon guy

> "Too fast for you, Don!" Raph shouted behind him to said brother.

> "I'm coming for you, Pepper!" Mikey shouted.

> "C'mon, Leo!" Pepper turned her head to look at her blue-banded brother. "I'm way ahead of you.
> You gotta keep up!"

> "Don't make me come up there!" he called back. "I swear, I will team up with Mikey and we'll both be
> after you!"

> Pepper laughed as she turned back and continued across the roofs. After a few minutes, the race
> finally died down.

Tsuneo: [Mikey] Yep, we’re bored of the surface now. Let’s go home.

> Pepper leapt over the next alleyway, ran across the roof, and slid over to the end,
> coming to a stop.

Tsuneo: So what did she do when she was up here alone?
Dan: Picked through a dumpster and called it a night.

> It was way more fun up here when her brothers were with her, and it wasn't her
> alone. One by one, the boys joined her. They stood and stared at the city before them, taking in the
> sight. Pepper took in a deep breath. Oh, yeah, I could get used to this.

> Unfortunately, she knew it couldn't last forever.

Rebecca: The franchise will be rebooted eventually. Better accept it.

> Her ears drooped and she sighed. "Alright, guys, it's
> getting late. We should probably head back home."

> The guys groaned, but her decision stood.

Rick: Pepper has spoken! Her word is law!
Dan: All hail Pepper!

> Donnie gasped. "Guys! Look at that!" He pointed down at something on the street. Two figures
> headed along the sidewalk: a tall, middle-aged man with a red beard,

Rick: Its Generic Hipster!

> and a younger girl who was
> most likely his daughter. She had red hair like her father and bright blue eyes.

Rick: Which falls well within the acceptable range of April O'Neil.
Dan: What is the acceptable range anyway?
Rick: Um, human. Mostly.

> "Just a couple humans, Don," Pepper said. "Nothing really..."

Tsuneo: Just an origin story waiting to happen.

> She trailed off as she saw his face.
> His eyes were wide and white, his jaw hanging open, and Pepper swore she saw him drooling a
> little.

Rebecca: Yep, Don's a creep.

> "She's the most beautiful girl I've ever seen..." he murmured.

> Pepper's whiskers twitched as she stared at him. Her ears swiveled as they picked up the thumping
> of his heart against his plastron.

Dan: He's not hitting himself with a cartoon mallet while his tounge unrolls like a red carpet yet

> "Isn't she the only girl you've ever seen?" Raph pointed out. "Besides Pepper?"

Rick: [Donnie] Pepper doesn't count.
Tsuneo: [Raph] Because she's your sister?
Rick: [Donnie] I was going to say because she's a freaky cat hybrid, but that too.

> Donnie blinked and turned to look at them. Then he frowned and stuck his nose in the air. "My point
> still stands."

> Raph looked about to respond, but there was the sudden roar of an engine below that made them
> all look down. A large, white van skidded to a halt in front of the family.

Rebecca: Well this seems to be entirely wholesome and above-board

> Pepper's eyes narrowed.
> What the...? Several men, all in black suits, came out of the van and advanced on the father and
> daughter.

Tsuneo: Very low key, subtle and discrete here

> They both backed away, looking terrified.

> "We gotta save them!" Donnie exclaimed.

> Pepper nodded, ears tilting back. "I'm with you on that one!"

Rebecca: [Pepper] I have no thoughts of my own.

> They moved to head down, but Leo grabbed their shoulders. "Splinter's instructions were very
> clear," he stated.

Rick: [Leo] But I'm not sure what he meant about the element that brings life.

> "We're supposed to stay away from people...and bathrooms."

Dan: What if this was happening inside a bathroom?
Rick: Tricky.

> Pepper raised an eyebrow. He sounded more worried about the bathroom thing than the people
> thing. Then her ears angled back angrily. "I thought you wanted to be a hero? Since when do
> heroes ask for permission?"

> "They don't, but-"

Rick: They’re also not fifteen years old in a strange world intervening in events that they don’t have any context for either
Dan: This is also true

> She rolled her eyes, tail swishing. "Well, I'm going!" She jumped down from the building.

Tsuneo: [Pepper] Ow! Ow! It’s very far... I should have climbed or something.

> "We can't let her go alone,"

Rick: [Raph] I mean, technically we can...

> Donnie said behind her, and she heard him jump down after her.

> By the time they landed on the ground, the men in suits had tossed the father into the van.

Rebecca: It’s a weird laundry pick-up service, but their clients love it.

> "Help! Help!" the girl called.

> "Hey!" Raph ran up to one of the suit-men and punched him in the gut,

Rick: It’s not fair, it just keeps taunting me.

> making him slide back.

> The boys each took one of the suit-men and started fighting them.

Dan: The mysterious Men In Suits.

> Pepper drew one of her swords
> and started toward one of the suit-men, but she got pushed to the side as Donnie bumped into her.

> "Donnie?"

> "Sorry, Pepper!" He went back to his own fight.

Tsuneo: That counts as being in the scene.

> Pepper adjusted her grip on the sword hilt

Dan: [Pepper] It’s just never comfortable, maybe I need to tape the grip or something... Oh yeah, the fight!

> and ran up to one of the suit-men, swinging the flat of the blade at his face.

Rebecca: Sword. You’re doing it wrong.

> It hit him in the jaw and sent him stumbling back,

Rick: Take that, Bob from Accounts

> but he stayed on his feet. He
> started toward her, and she charged. She jumped up, about to strike from above, when Leo came
> up and attempted to take over the fight for her. 'Attempted' meaning Pepper ended up hitting him
> instead. The flat of her blade slammed against his shell and sent them both to the ground.

Dan: [Kraang] Kraang should be taking video of this.
Rick: [Kraang] It would be funny for Kraang to put this on the Tube of Yous.

> "Leo!" she growled. "What was that?"

Tsuneo: The obvious inexperience that Splinter warned them about, perhaps?
Rick: You might be on to something there

> Before he could answer, the suit-guy kicked Pepper in the stomach and set her rolling away. She
> stopped, gripping her sword tighter. "Okay...so you don't care about hitting girls..."

Dan: The fact that they were trying to kidnap a girl might have clued you in

> She got to her
> feet, tail lashing. "That's fine with me!" She started running back toward the man when she realized
> Leo was still there, crouched on the ground, looking about to strike from below. "Leo, stay down!"
> she ordered. He looked back at her, but before he could move, she used his shell as a step to jump
> up and kick the man in the face.

Rebecca: That’s about as much as Leo contributes to most modern TMNT media

> He fell face-first into the ground, and Pepper landed easily on her feet.

> "Nice call," Leo said, sounding impressed.

> "Thanks."

Tsuneo: Pepper is used to walking all over him.

> Pepper turned at a scream. She saw the men had finally gotten the girl into the van.

Dan: Oh yeah, that. Kinda got distracted there.

> "They're getting away! They've got the girl!" Donnie shouted, running after the van.

> Pepper adjusted her grip on her blade as she sprinted after him, outpacing him with her longer legs.
> Raph and Leo followed behind.

Rebecca: Rule one of writing fic: Take every single opportunity to point out some way that your OC is superior to everyone else

> "You just jabbed me with your swords!" Raph shouted at Leo.

> "Well, I didn't know you were going to land where I was stabbing!" Leo retorted.

Dan: Raph needs to signal in advance so they can clear room for him.

> "Guys!" Pepper snapped. "We can talk about how bad the fight was later!

Tsuneo: [Raph] But I want to humiliate Leo now.

> Right now, we gotta find that van and get the family back!"

Rick: Just assume they’re a family and move on

> They both shut up, and they moved on.

> They lost the van. Sad, but true.

Tsuneo: Trying to chase it on foot didn’t help.

> They just couldn't catch up, and before they knew it, it was gone.
> Needless to say, Donnie was devastated.

Dan: His fake internet girlfriend had just left him.

> "They got away..." he said sadly, as Pepper strained her ears, trying to hear the van, but it was
> silent. "We couldn't save them..."

> "Don't worry, Donnie." Pepper patted the back of his shell. "I'm sure we'll find them."

> Donnie just nodded in response.

> "Hey, where's Mikey?" Leo asked.

Rick: No doubt cleaning out his disgusting, slime-filled dance studio.
Dan: Well that came out of nowhere

> No sooner had he asked them there was a loud scream nearby.

> "Found him," Pepper stated.

> Out of nowhere, Mikey appeared and ran up to them. "Guys! Guys!" he shouted in their faces.
> "You're never gonna believe it! That dude...!" He pointed over his shoulder somewhere. "He-
> he...had a brain!"

Tsuneo: So it wasn’t the Scarecrow then

> They stood there in silence, staring at him. Okay...weird...

Rebecca: Mikey still gets to make the crucial discovery. I guess Pepper isn’t all things to all people.
Rick: Naw, she’s just busy hocking up hairballs.

> "We all have brains, Mikey," Leo said simply.

> "Not all of us," Donnie corrected.

> "In our chests?!" Mikey demanded, putting his hands against his plastron.

> "No, Mikey, not in our chests," said Leo, irritation clear in his voice.

Rick: There’s never an anatomy textbook around when you need one

> Mikey stared at them as though they'd all grown an extra head,

Dan: They are all mutants. I wouldn’t rule it out.

> and then his eyes narrowed angrily. "You're not listening me!"

> Slap! Leo just slapped Mikey across the face.

> Mikey instantly reeled his head back, arms coming up in a defensive position. "Did you just slap
> me?" he deadpanned.

Dan: Not even my father slapped me
Tsuneo: Good turnaround

> "Did you just slap him?!" Pepper growled at Leo, tail fluffing out angrily.

> "I was calming him down," Leo replied.

> "Why would that calm him down?!"

> "I think he's delusional," Donnie said.

Rick: You're talking turtles who live with a ninja rat. Is a guy with a brain in his chest really that weird?

> Pepper frowned at him, smacking him over the face with her tail. "Be nice."

Rebecca: It's bad when somebody else slaps someone, but when she does it then its perfectly okay

> She walked up to Mikey,
> ears tilted up curiously. "What's all this about a brain in the chest?"

Tsuneo: Yeah, they debunked the spare dinosaur brains theory.

> He grabbed her wrist. "Just...just c'mere!" He dragged her away down the sidewalk. "I'm telling you,
> this dude was a robot, and he had a freaky weird alien brain thing in his chest!"

Rick: And just remember, this is a cornerstone part of the Ninja Turtles universe,

> Pepper didn't reply as Mikey dragged her away. She looked back at the others and shrugged
> helplessly.

Dan: They're used to humouring him

> Leo sighed, gestured at the other two, and they followed.

> "You gotta believe me!" Mikey said desperately.

> "I'm not sure we do," Raph replied.

Tsuneo: [Donnie] Yeah, I don't recall signing anything.

> "Oh, yeah?" Mikey released Pepper's wrist, took a few steps forward, and pointed into an alley.
> "Well, you'll change your tune when you see that he's..." He turned toward the alley, then blinked.
> "Gone...?"

Rick: Sad trombone time, guys.

> Pepper peered down the alley, but it was empty. "There's nothing there, Mikey," she said, turning to
> look at him. She lifted her muzzle and sniffed the air. "But..." Her eyes narrowed. "I do believe you
> that he was here. I can smell your scent and his." She shrugged. "But I don't exactly know what
> brains smell like, so no telling if that was actually real."

Rick: All she needs to do is figure out how alien brains smell and she has this beat
Dan: Easy.

> Mikey looked from her to the others, a desperate look on his face. The other three shook their
> heads, turning and walking away. Mikey hunched over, looking defeated.

Rick: And again, Pepper's presence basically changes nothing.

> Pepper sighed, patting his shoulder. "It's okay, Mikey. We all make mistakes,

Tsuneo: I mean, we’re reading this fanfic, after all

> no big deal. Besides, we got bigger things to worry about."

> "Like what?"

> "Like how Sensei is gonna react to all of this."

Dan: I foresee hijinks ahead.

> "So your inability to work together allowed them all to get away!"

Rebecca: In all fairness, they were more focused on the slapstick then the actual fighting

> Pepper hung her head as her tail swished behind her, ears and whiskers drooping.

Dan: No amount of sad kitty eyes would get her out of this.

> Sensei was really chewing them out over this.

Tsuneo: She hadn’t been chewed out this bad since the one time with that talking magical cat.

> "Well, if I hadn't have had to waste time arguing with hero boy." Raph glared at Leo. "I could've
> saved them!"

Dan: Can it, Raph. We all know you like arguing for the sake of it

> "Hey, if you hadn't gotten in my way, I could've done it!" he retorted.

> Pepper sighed, rolling her eyes. This is why I sit between them. So they don't strangle each other.

Rebecca: Thank you for that Pepper, the wisest and most gracious person in the universe. Please let us bask in your humility a little more

> "And you went flying off on your own after Pepper!" Leo snapped at Donnie. "How smart was that!"

Rick: [Pepper] Yeah, following me was a really dumb move! [Pause] Hey!

> "It would've worked out great if somebody hadn't whacked me in the head with their nun-chucks!"
> Donnie snapped.

Dan: Hey, for all you know, that could have been a passing Bruce Lee impersonator

> Mikey hesitated for a second as they all looked at him. "Well...none of this would've happened if..."
> He turned to his left, but nobody was there. "...somebody didn't trust us to go up there in the first
> place!"

Rick [Splinter]: Well I would have if not for, uh, those clowns in congress. Yeah.

> Pepper's ears pricked up and her shoulders stiffened as the others tensed. They all turned to look at
> Sensei, who had stopped pacing.

Tsuneo: You’re not going to make it to “Last Ronin” like that.

> "Oh, geez..." Mikey mumbled. "Sensei, I didn't mean to..."

> "No, Michelangelo, you are right."

> "I am?"

Dan: [Mikey] First time for everything!

> "He is?" they all asked, the boys out of surprise, Pepper out of curiosity.

Rick: Only Pepper is allowed to have her own thoughts

> "You were not fully prepared for what was up there."

Tsuneo: To be fair, can anything really prepare you for New York?

> Sensei continued to pace. "I trained you to fight as individuals, not as a team.

Rick: So he’s the coach of the Detroit Lions?

> And as your teacher, your father, the responsibility for that is mine.
> Perhaps, in another year, we can try again."

Tsuneo: When Pepper leaves for college.

> What?! No! "Wha-Another year?!"

Dan: Wait until they are old enough to drive before they can go out and be ninjas.

> Pepper exclaimed, tail bristling in shock. "Has everybody forgotten that people were kidnapped?!

Tsuneo: Yes, but those were people who we don’t know, so they don’t count.

> They don't have a year! Sensei, we have to do something
> now!" Sensei narrowed his eyes, but Pepper held her ground, ears tilted back angrily. "You weren't
> there, Sensei. You didn't see the way that girl looked. She was scared, and she was counting on us
> to save her."

Rebecca: She has set her standards really low

> Sensei didn't respond. He turned to face the small bookshelf, and Pepper got the feeling he was
> looking at the picture of his family. This wasn't the first time he'd done this.

Rick: He does it three times a day, every day.

> Sometimes, usually after
> they were done training, Pepper would peek into the dojo to find Sensei gazing at the photo.

Dan: Splinter’s goal was to eventually figure out who they actually were.

> He had told her once that he had accepted the fact that they were gone-he had made peace with it.

Tsuneo: I mean, they just went out to get groceries. No need to get so worked up over it.

> But it was clear he still missed them.

> "Yes." Sensei turned back to them. "You must save her."

> "I agree, Sensei," Leo said. "But in that fight, we weren't exactly a well-oiled machine."

Dan: More of a rusty old tractor that’s been abandoned in a field

> "Like that robot with the brain thingy!" Mikey piped up.

> Raph groaned. "Give it a rest."

Dan: It’s his only plot point, and he’s going to stick to it.

> Sensei stroked his beard. "Hm...If you are to fight more effectively as a unit, you are going to need a
> leader."

Rick: Can it at least be a Combat Leader?
Rebecca: Well if they have to fight mutant spider goons, then they’re set
Rick: I wouldn’t rule it out either

> Oh, boy.

> Leo's hand shot into the air. "Can I be the leader?"

> "Why should you get to be the leader?"

Dan: Because it’s his main personality trait?

> Raph demanded, leaning over Pepper to glare at Leo. "I've
> kicked your butt over a dozen times! I should be the leader."

Rick: I believe that was Trump’s rationale for why he should be the Republican candidate

> "Hey, I'm smarter than all of you guys put together, it should be me!" Donnie argued. Then he
> faltered. "No offense, Pepper."

> She twitched her whiskers in response.

Rebecca: He only needs to apologise to her. Everyone else is on their own.

> "No way! It should be me!" Mikey protested. They all blinked at him in confusion.

Rick: [Splinter] Eh, sure. Why not?

> He just grinned. "I don't really have a reason, I just think it would be neat."

Tsuneo: I think Mikey may have the best reasoning yet.
Dan: He has my vote

> Sensei raised an eyebrow at Mikey before turning to Pepper. "Pepper? What are your thoughts on
> this matter?"

Rebecca: Pepper thinks that Pepper is amazing. It’s also the only thought in her head.

> She hesitated. "Well...I mean, the leader should be able to keep their cool,

Rick: [Splinter] Not you.

> even in frustrating situations,

Rick: [Splinter] Not you.

> and be able to make strategic plans,

Rick: [Splinter] Definitely not you.

> and hard decisions.

Dan: Like what colour socks to wear.

> They should be able to make plans that won't result in someone getting themselves seriously hurt,

Rebecca: Or at least not to a point that she’s legally liable for.

> but that also does what's
> necessary to get the job done. And they should know how to play to everyone's strengths."

> "This is a difficult decision," Sensei said, heading for his room. "I will meditate on it."

Tsuneo: Sixteen hours later, Splinter simply pulled a name out of a hat and added some half-arsed wisdom

> He walked into
> his room and shut the door. Not even two seconds later, he opened it and poked his head out. "It's
> Pepper." And he shut the door.

Rebecca: Well that was an entirely expected and predictable twist.

> "What?" Pepper said in surprise. "I didn't even volunteer!" She glanced around at her brothers, ears
> twitching, then sighed.

Tsuneo: [Pepper] Oh no. I’m going to have to get my own lines.

> "Okay. Guess that just happened." She looked across at Raph. "No hard feelings, Raph?"

Dan: Nice job invalidating Leo’s entire existence
Rick: So all Ninja Turtles media since 2000?
Dan: Basically.

> He let out an angry growl before standing and walking away. "Stick it in your tail!"

Tsuneo: Well that went as well as could be expected.

> Pepper sighed watching him storm away. Why is his solution to getting mad always storming away?

Rebecca: Because Raph is an average guy on the internet.

> "He'll calm down," Leo assured her, patting her shoulder.

Rebecca: But he did not calm down.

> "Congrats, sis."

> She smiled at him. "Thanks, Leo."

> After some consideration, Pepper came up with her first plan as leader.

Dan: Garfield remix comics it is.

> A stakeout.

> "Explain to me one more time what we're doing here," Mikey whiskered.

> They guys let out irritated groans.

Rick: Time for some more forced exposition

> "Mikey, we've been over this," Pepper said calmly, eyes fixed on the building they were watching.
> "That building has the same logo as the van that was used to kidnap the family.

Tsuneo: They tracked it down to a place called ‘FedEx’.

> So, if we wait here
> long enough, one of the kidnappers will eventually show his face. And when he does, we'll make
> him tell us where he took them."

> "And then we got ourselves a van!" Mikey said, punching his fist into the air.

Dan: [Mikey] And then we can merchandise the hell out of it.

> Leo face-palmed. "Just hit the guy Pepper tells you to!"

Rebecca: Leo’s basically gonna sit this one out. It’s not like he’s doing anything useful here anyway.

> Mikey gave him a thumbs-up. "Will do!"

> Raph didn't look too convinced. "You sure this is gonna work?" he asked.

> "Trust her," Leo said. "They'll be here any second."

> Meaning 'could be'.

> It's a good thing cats have exceeding patience,

Rebecca: Because cats are so well known for staying calm and not chasing the first random thing that grabs their attention

> because otherwise, Pepper would've been seriously
> bored. The boys wandered around the rooftop, bored out of their minds and finding various ways to
> occupy their time.

Tsuneo: Staring blankly into space it is.

> Leo stuck with her for a while,

Rick: Him and his dead robot.

> but eventually even he got bored.

Tsuneo: So he’s been reading the fic too.

> She didn't move,
> seated at the edge of the roof, tufted ears pricked and eyes fixed on the street below.

Rick: They are waiting for the only van in the universe, apparently.

> "How can you just sit here this whole time?" Raph demanded. "Give it up already! The guy's not
> gonna show up!"

> "We have to be patient," Pepper replied coolly.

> Raph shook his head. "No, you have to come up with a better plan.

Dan: [Pepper] Ummm... Have fun storming the castle?

> 'Cause the five of us here with our thumbs up our noses-"

Rick: Do they even have noses?

> "I don't think they fit," Mikey pointed out, looking at his own thumbs.

> "-is pointless!"

Tsuneo: My review of the fic so far.
Rebecca: I think you did that one already?
Tsuneo: With how dry this fic is, I'm not sure I can remember.

> Pepper's ears swiveled and she smirked. "You sure about that, Raph?"

> His face fell. "He just showed up, didn't he?" The same white van from the night before had just
> pulled up beside the building.

Dan: Again, the only white van in New York
Rick: I mean, it might have some distinctive feature that we're missing, like a giant pink llama on top of it.
Dan: Subtle and low-key

> "I should've complained two hours ago," Raph mumbled irritably.

Rebecca: Oh, I'm sure he was complaining then too.

> The door of the van opened and a man stepped out on the driver's side. It was a tall, scrawny-
> looking guy in jeans and a white tank-top. He didn't look like the clones from last night,

Rebecca: By the way, they were clones

> but was obviously working for them.

> "Lady and gentlemen," Leo stated, "Pepper has a bold and daring plan!"

Tsuneo: To repeat cartoon scripts only with her name crudely added into them

> "Now? You're gonna do this now?" Pepper demanded.

Dan: [Pepper] I mean, it's completely irrelevant since the situation's changed, but...

> "There's no time for hesitation! Her orders must be carried out without question!"

Rick: Pepper has spoken! Her rigid grill structure is bearing down on your unprotected cargo door!
Rebecca: Old meme, but I'll allow it

> "Ho-kay." Pepper jumped down, Raph, Donnie, and Mikey following while Leo was still giving his
> speech.

Dan [Leo]: I'll be here, just being irrelevant. Again.

> "Guys? Guys, wait up!" he called after them.

> The five of them surrounded the van slowly. The guy turned and gasped upon seeing them.

Tsuneo: Having somehow missed their arrival and all that went with it.

> "Already, buddy," Raph started, "we could do this the easy way, or-my vote-the hard way." They
> drew their weapons.

Dan: There's never a middle ground, is there?

> "We don't want trouble," Pepper added, tail swishing as she spun her sword in her grip, "but if you
> don't cooperate, we won't have any choice."

> "Yeah, look at it logically; there's five of us, and one of you," Donnie chuckled.

Rick: What if he’s bad at maths? Ever considered that option?

> "What are you gonna do?" Leo asked.

> The man stood there for a moment, then pulled out a strange gun

Rick: The Stoher Machine Pistol

> and fired. Yelping, they leaped out
> of the way. Pepper grabbed the railing of the fire escape, hanging for a moment as she looked
> down.

Tsuneo: Just assume the Turtles occupied some point in space and time and move on.

> The guy grinned before jumping into his van and driving off.

> "I was hoping he'd say 'nothing'," Leo said.

> "You had to ask!" Raph snapped.

> They jumped down from the fire escape and landed as the van turned the corner.

Rebecca: [Pepper] Umm... Third time’s the charm?

> "He's getting away again!" Donnie shouted.

> "No, he's not!" Pepper climbed up the nearest building, brothers following close behind.

Rebecca: Good thing Pepper’s here to tell them to do the obvious thing

> They bolted across the rooftops and jumped over the alleyways, keeping the van in sight.

Tsuneo: Wait, we chase the van? Why didn’t we think of that before?

> Raph jumped down
> the fire escape and landed atop the van. He didn't stay on long, though. The driver made a sharp
> turn, swerving the van. Raph was thrown off and smashed into the wall of a building.

Rick: Raph sucks at the car-surfing minigame

> "Raph!" Pepper jumped off the roof, slid down the ladder of the fire escape, and ran over. He
> groaned as she grabbed him by the arms and helped him to his feet. "You good?"

Tsuneo: He’s a five-foot-tall talking turtle who was raised in a sewer by a rat in a kimono. He’ll never be ‘good’.

> "Yeah, I'm fine," he replied gruffly.

> She nodded. "C'mon, we gotta catch up."

> It took them only a few moments to regroup with the others. They were leaning against the wall of a
> building, obviously hiding.

Rick: If they were obviously hiding then they weren’t doing a good job of it

> "About time you two showed up," Donnie said.

> "He got thrown into a building!" Pepper hissed.

Dan: Thank you for that, Sensei Obvious

> She leaned around the corner of the alley to see
> smoke rising from the now-wrecked van. "Woah, what did you guys do?" Keeping her eyes trained
> on the van, she made a series of hand signals to the others, telling them what to do.

Rebecca: Quickly moving on from the whole smoking wreckage bit.

> "I-don't-know-what-that-means!" Raph hissed, making weird gestures with his hands on each word.

> She rolled her eyes. "Go around the back!" she growled.

> "Why didn't you just say so?" Mikey demanded.

> She groaned. Do none of them know hand signals?

Tsuneo: Well apparently not since you don't seem to have bothered communicating their meaning
Rebecca: Pepper strikes me as the kind that lashes out at people for not acknowledging something she never said in the first place

> They did as instructed and surrounded the van,
> moving cautiously toward the back of the vehicle. They drew their weapons, ready to fight is
> necessary.

Rick: They were ready to fight the van.

> Empty boxes spilled out the back. Pepper stepped forward, sword in one hand, and
> opened the unbroken door. A large canister fell, rolled onto the street, and stopped directly at
> Mikey's feet.

Tsuneo: Being the mature and responsible team member, Mikey immediately used it in a game of hacky sack.

> Pepper's eyes widened as she recognized the long, glass-and-metal canister filled with glowing
> green ooze.

Dan: Careful with that. You might end up summoning Vanilla Ice.

> Mikey gasped. "Mom?"

On that final comment, the big screen turned off, converting the world back to prose format. "And that was the first half of the recursive sequence of the word 'pepper' that passes for Turtles' Big Sister," Tsuneo added.

"So I admit that I am torn about this fic," Rebecca noted.

"How so?" Dan asked.

"On one hand, we have the character profile which is about the most tedious thing I think we've read since Shadow of a Phoenix," Rebecca explained. "It is a long, dry statement of every single minor detail that we might want to conceivably know about Pepper that is arranged in the most boring, bland, tell not show manner possible while still being exceedingly self-congratulating."

"Instead of demonstrating character traits, the fic just assures us she has them and moves on." Tsuneo added.

"Exactly," Rebecca nodded.

“And yet...” Rick spoke up.

“And yet when we get to the fic itself it manages to be just as bad but in an entirely different manner,” she continued.

“It’s an entirely copy and paste retelling of the first episode, but with Pepper crudely inserted into it,” Dan noted. “Only Pepper doesn’t add anything at all to the story and has no reason to be there.”

“None the less, the fic stops to congratulate her for being Pepper at every stage by ensuring that she’s always right and having everyone immediately defer to her,” Tsuneo added.

“Which is also incredibly tedious,” Rebecca finished. “And with the added bonus that I cannot see it going anywhere any time soon.”

“Me either,” Tsuneo sighed. “Because I have a creeping suspicion that part two will be more of the same.”

“I mean it could surprise us,” Rick offered. “But it probably won’t.”

“The worst part is that after going through her profile, I can’t see what Pepper would possibly add going forwards,” Tsuneo continued. “She’s going to make friends with all the Turtles’ allies and be enemies with all their enemies. This is not exactly filling me with confidence.”

“It is not,” Dan paused. “But on the other hand, this fic’s only two parts long.”

“Which means it’s probably going to be abandoned without resolving anything,” Tsuneo said, then paused. “And yet, I am strangely alright with this.”

“Yeah, me too,” Rebecca nodded.

“The author did threaten us with more OCs,” Rick noted.

“Good point,” Tsuneo admitted. “But yet, I also feel that we’ll probably never see them and that I am entirely okay with that idea.”

“Well I can see you’re all very excited for the fic,” the Voice beamed.

“No,” Tsuneo stated. “No we are not. We are not excited about it in the slightest.”

“Fantastic,” the Voice continued. “So you’ll be glad to know that we’ll be covering the second half of it next time.”

“I’m thrilled,” Rick sighed. “But we can go now, right?”

“That is correct,” the Voice finished. “And I’ll see you all next time.”

“Well that was… dull,” Tsuneo finished. “Really, really dull.”

“It was,” Rebecca noted. “And yet, tying back to what I said earlier, it conforms to a niche type of fic.”

“Which is?”

“The author-insert AU where nothing changes at all,” she finished. “Making you wonder what the author insert is doing there in the first place.”

Author’s notes

Sometimes I ask myself ‘what is the point of this fic’. That’s not whatever the author has ranted about in their deranged notes, but what the actual point of the fic is meant to be. In this case, I can honestly say that the best I can come up with is ‘crudely insert Pepper into scenes and make her the centre of the universe’ because I cannot for the life of me think of anything else.

So instead, I’ll talk about this fic’s biggest flaw, which is that it highlights all the problems of a direct copy-paste adaptation without any effort to think it through. The 2012 Nickelodeon TMNT was a very visual show with its own distinct art and animation style, and that’s great. However, that does not translate well to text, where the story can only attempt to explain visual jokes in prose, and in doing such more often kills it than managing a successful translation. I’m not saying that it’s impossible, however; more that it needs to be handled with more care and delicacy than this fic can manage.

Next time: This. More of this is good.

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Turtles' Big Sister written by DragonRider929

Rebecca Bartley and Rick R. Mortis created by Rick R. (natch)
Tsuneo Tateo and Dan created by Zogster

Questions? Comments? Complaints? Magical wasteland lunatics? Email us at elmerstudios00 (at) gmail.com and register your Jeff.

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> - Pepper's favorite brothers are in this order: Michelangelo, Donatello, Leonardo, and Raphael, but
> she loves them all equally