

Author's Note

I didn't exactly write this story to be read. I wrote it because it was living in my head, and I needed to finally evict it so that I could start thinking about other things and move on with my life. That's why the formatting and a lot of the descriptive text is so utilitarian. Even so, I'm sharing it here because I think some people might enjoy it anyway. I think it does add some much-needed depth, character, and structure to the plot of Sonic Forces. Also, it's much, much gayer. And Shadow gets to have guns again, so that's fun.

I wrote this as if it were a comic script, because I originally envisioned this story as a comic, but actually drawing it sounds like way too much work, so I think I'll most likely leave it as is. So that's why there's all the references to panels and text boxes and whatnot. Hopefully it's not too confusing. Anyway, have fun reading.

- Emory

Prologue

TEXT ON PAGE (ToP): E-Day, T-41 days

Shadow the Fucking Hedgehog runs through the forest. Over the radio, Rouge speaks.

ROUGE (via radio): Shadow, we lost contact with Omega on a routine recon mission to an Eggman base in your area. Intel indicates that there's a good chance there was some sort of experimental weapon being developed there. Whatever it is, it was enough to put Omega out of commission. Be careful.

Shadow spin dashes his way through a series of robots, sprints through a series of obstacles, and comes to the entrance of a garishly lit building, clearly Eggman's. Shadow walks towards the building, wearing an intense scowl. Just assume he's scowling in every scene unless otherwise stated.

ToP: Shadow

- Age: ???
- Pronouns: He/him
- Species: Hedgehog (black arms hybrid)
- Likes: ???
- Dislikes: Everything

INFINITE (Off panel): You must be the one who destroyed my Jackal Squadron.

Infinite jumps down from somewhere high and dramatic, landing in front of Shadow.

ToP: UNKNOWN

- Age: 21
- Pronouns: He/him
- Species: Jackal
- Likes: Fear
- Dislikes: Weakness

Infinite has not acquired his signature mask yet. He wears an arrogant snarl on his face, and his eyes are two different colors; the left one being yellow, and the right one blue.

INFINITE: You probably think you're hot shit, taking out my men like that. But now you're dealing with the **Ultimate Mercenary**. You're gonna regret--

Shadow whips a gun seemingly out of nowhere and shoots Infinite in the fucking face. He then proceeds to calmly plant an explosive at the base of the building and walk away. Infinite, apparently still alive, screams.

SHADOW: Still alive? Sorry, I meant to hit your brain better.

Infinite has his hand pressed to his right eye, blood seeping from between his fingers. He is pathetic and scared, as Shadow looms over him.

INFINITE: Please, please don't. I don't want to die.

Shadow nonchalantly checks his clip.

INFINITE (off panel): I'm just doing my job, okay? I don't really care about any of this, just let me go and--

SHADOW: Whatever. Not worth wasting another bullet.

Shadow walks off.

SHADOW: Better move though, if you want to live.

He teleports away.

ToP: **Chaos Technique - Teleportation** One of the most advanced forms of Chaos Control. The user warps space to create a wormhole between two points, and disappears into it. There are very few known users of this technique, and Shadow is the only one able to do so without the aid of a Chaos Emerald, although his range is limited without one.

Infinite crawls away on one hand, the other frantically gripping his face. There is a distant explosion behind him, and he flinches at the blast. As he slowly gets to his feet and stumbles forward, his expression turns from one of pain and fear to rage.

Infinite has made his way to another nearby base, one which apparently contains Eggman himself, who is staring at a phantom ruby prototype.

EGGMAN: You'd better have a good explanation for this failure, Captain. We lost an entire base, and worse, we barely recovered this prototype. Its user, not so much.

ToP: Doctor Eggman

- Age: 54
- Pronouns: He/him
- Species: Human
- Likes: Science
- Dislikes: Sonic the Hedgehog

INFINITE: There was a hedgehog. Black fur. Faster than anything I've seen.

EGGMAN: Ah, you must mean Shadow. Well, I suppose a lost base or two is inevitable then. Look on the bright side though! At least he cured your heterochromia.

Close-up on a one-eyed Infinite, not amused.

EGGMAN: You know, I hear Shadow's cured a lot of guys' heterochromia. They just can't resist that cool, brooding attitude.-- Wait, I'm thinking of a different hetero-thingey, aren't I?

INFINITE: I need to be stronger. Do whatever you want with my body. I don't care, as long as that hedgehog dies screaming next time I see him.

EGGMAN: Oh Captain, you've made an old, evil man so very happy today.

Infinite lies on an operating table, Eggman and a litany of machines looming over him. One conspicuously holds a ruby similar to the one earlier.

As the anesthetic does its work, we flash back to scenes from Infinite's childhood. An army of robots attacking his village. His parents, ripped away from him, screaming. A dark and cramped cage. A distant explosion that shakes the room. A cell bar, knocked loose from its frame. Infinite slipping out. Running, without knowing where to. A distant scene framed by a crumbling wall. Sonic, fighting one of Eggman's massive machines. An excited grin on his face, pain and rage on Infinite's.

An adolescent Infinite, confronted by two larger jackals. A fight. Infinite winning. Infinite as a young adult, surrounded by Jackal mercenaries. The mercenaries fighting Eggman's robots. Eggman arriving, offering a deal. Infinite accepting.

Back in the present, Infinite is floating in a tank of liquid, the ruby embedded in his chest. Eggman looking on, satisfied.

EGGMAN: I shall give you a name befitting of the **ultimate power** I have bestowed on you. Awaken, **Infinite**.

Infinite opens his eye.

Chapter 1

ToP: E-Day, T- 4 minutes

It is a winter day, and snow is just starting to fall on the City. Tails leads a group of resistance fighters, attacking a wave of Eggman robots. Most of them are carrying weapons, but Tails is easily holding her own without one. She plows through robots, flinging them into each other, and easily weaving between their attacks.

ToP: Tails Prower

- Age: 18 (Almost 19!)
- Pronouns: She/her
- Species: Fox
- Likes: Machines (not these bots, obviously)
- Dislikes: Attack helicopter jokes

Tails' appearance has changed from when she was younger. She looks taller and more mature. She wears a pair of blue denim overalls with short legs, and sturdy work boots. The outfit is fitting with her specialization as a mechanic, but still cute. Her eyelashes are longer and darker, and she has also been taking estrogen for a few months, lending a slight femininity to her figure.

TAILS: Alright everyone, sector's almost clear. Stay vigilant though, bots get unpredictable after you break up their formations.

A red cloud sweeps across the sky. It's ominous af.

TAILS: Aww geez, it's always something, isn't it.

Infinite descends, wearing his trademark mask.

TAILS: Who's this asshole?

Beside Infinite, Chaos, Zavok, Metal Sonic, and Shadow appear.

TAILS: Seriously?

She turns to her soldiers.

TAILS: Take cover and provide support. We don't know what we're dealing with yet, so I'll handle this.

She launches off into the sky. In an instant, Infinite is in front of her. He knocks her out of the sky with an overhead strike. Tails manages to absorb the momentum with a roll as she lands, and that quickly flows into a leaping dodge as one of Chaos' arms extends down slamming into the ground. Shadow teleports in front of her, holding a gun to her head.

TAILS: C'mon I was just kidding about the gun thing. You're not **that mad**, are you?

She barely ducks out of the way as Shadow fires. She attempts to knock the gun away with a kick, but Shadow effortlessly blocks. Tails doesn't relent, following up with a barrage of punches, kicks, and tail sweeps. Shadow blocks and dodges, then counters with a punch to the gut. Tails goes down to her knees, and Shadow sends her flying with a kick. She hits the ground hard, and Infinite is there. He picks her up by the neck. In the background, the other soldiers are occupied with Zavok, Metal, and Chaos.

INFINITE: Go ahead, girl. Scream for help. See if anyone comes to save--

Sonic collides with Infinite, knocking Tails out of his grip. He catches Tails before she can fall too far.

ToP: Sonic

- Age: 25
- Pronouns: He/him
- Species: Hedgehog
- Likes: Running
- Dislikes: Not running

Sonic looks slightly older and more mature than he appeared as a teen, but his overall look hasn't changed much. He has grown a few inches taller than Shadow now, which annoys Shadow to no end.

SONIC: Howdy Tails.

TAILS: Sonic. Nice timing.

SONIC: As always.

Sonic and Tails square off against Infinite and Shadow.

TAILS: Something's wrong here. Shadow and Chaos aren't acting normal. Same with the other two.

SONIC: Figure it out. I'll keep them busy.

TAILS: Roger.

Sonic boosts towards Infinite, but he dodges completely out of the way.

SONIC: Huh. That's not usually how that works.

He jumps aside, dodging a spray of machine gun fire from Shadow. Shadow boosts into Sonic, and the two go tumbling across the ground. Shadow ends up on top, but Sonic spin-dashes, throwing Shadow off. Infinite raises his hand and shoots a laser beam, knocking Sonic out of his

spin. Zavok appears with a punch that sends Sonic flying in the opposite direction. Metal Sonic rushes by in a blur, colliding with Sonic from multiple angles. Then finally Chaos appears overhead, and slams him into the ground. Infinite stands over him triumphantly.

Meanwhile, Tails, panic stricken, looks at the screen of his scanner.

TAILS (internal): I've never seen an energy reading like this before. I don't know what this is. I don't know what to do. I'm scared.

Infinite releases a wave of red, distorted energy, hitting Tails and the rest of the soldiers. Tails' pupils dilate, and the landscape goes dark and psychedelic.

Infinite steps on Sonic's throat.

INFINITE: Sonic the hedgehog...

He stabs his hand through Sonic's chest.

INFINITE: **Is finished.**

Tails' scanner falls to the pavement, its screen cracking.

ToP: E-Day, T-00:00:00

Across the world, Doctor Eggman appears across every screen.

EGGMAN: Greetings citizens of Planet Freedom. I have some wonderful news to share with you. Sonic the Hedgehog... is dead! With my greatest foe defeated and gone, I will now assume my rightful place as ruler of the world. I assume there will be some objections from various governments and militaries and such, but let's not worry ourselves over such trifling minutiae. All resistance will be crushed. This historic day will henceforth be known as E-Day, and we'll celebrate it every year with parades, and fireworks, and publicly executing rebels, and an exchange of gifts among friends and family. It'll be nice. Welcome to the new world order... of Planet Eggman. Eggs out!

Chapter 2

ToP: E-Day, T+ 33 days

A battle is happening. Rebel soldiers exchange fire with a group of eggman robots. Among the rebels is Spikes the Bear, a black-furred bear with a black motorcycle jacket and leather boots. She is crouched behind a piece of rubble. Beside her, is an indistinct, grey-furred rabbit with droopy ears, pink skin, and a disengaged expression with half-lidded eyes. She wears a generic purple bodysuit, with simple shoes and gloves. Spikes kicks the rabbit woman in the side, shoving her aside as a laser blast whizzes by her head. Let's call the rabbit Emm.

SPIKES: Get down!

Emm looks embarrassed, and slightly shell-shocked.

SPIKES: Caught you spacing out again. You gotta be more careful. Those big, floppy ears of yours make a nice, obvious target.

ToP: Spikes

- Age: 24
- Pronouns: She/her
- Species: Bear
- Likes: baking, though she's not very good at it
- Dislikes: Office jobs

EMM: Sorry. And thanks for the save. Drinks are on me later.

SPIKES: You know it.

A red cloud sweeps across the sky, and Infinite descends. With a sweep of his hand, he unleashes a laser that annihilates the entire rebel force. Only Emm, laying low and hidden, is left alive. She stares in shock at Spikes' inert body.

Infinite appears before her. Emm, trembling and terrified, can't even bring herself to stand. Her hand fumbles for her dropped blaster.

INFINITE: There are two types of people in this world; those who inspire terror, and those pathetic, cowering things who run from us.

Legs still trembling, Emm weakly pulls herself to her feet.

INFINITE: If you want to live, **then run.**

Emm turns tail and flees.

ToP: E-Day, T+ 38 days

Emm stands with a table of items laid out before her. Each item is labeled.

ToP: High-tensile carbon alloy wire. Electromagnetic tether. Standard-issue blaster. Running shoes. Stopwatch. Self-defense manual.

EMM (internal): If I want a real shot at Infinite, then local militia isn't going to cut it. Joining the Resistance proper is my best bet. In order to join the Resistance, I need to be **fast**, and I need to learn to **fight**.

Emm stands before a long stretch of road, stopwatch in hand. She gets into a sprinter's starting position, a grimace on her face.

ToP: Emm

- Age: 27
- Pronouns: She/her
- Species: Bun
- Likes: Meh
- Dislikes: Infinite, running

Emm takes off running, but quickly tires out, panting with her hands on her knees.

EMM (internal): If I tried to fight him, I'd probably die. This is the guy who took out **Sonic** after all. Even so, I can't just let this go. So I'll do what I can to help, little as it may be.

Emm stands before a lightpost, a coil of wire in her hand. Suddenly, the wire disappears into nothing.

ToP: **Chaos Technique - Pocket Space** One of the most basic forms of chaos control, which most anthropomorphic citizens of this planet are taught at the same age that they learn to read. By compressing space, the user creates a small pocket dimension which they can store objects in. Most people can only carry pocket-sized items this way, but individuals with greater aptitude for this skill can store larger items. Because of their unique properties, rings are an exception to this spacial limitation, and most people can carry hundreds at a time, regardless of their compression skill level.

Emm flings out her hand, and materializes the wire.

EMM: Haa!

It is still coiled however, and lands on the ground with an underwhelming thump.

EMM (internal): Right, should've expected that.

She holds one end of the wire up to her wrist.

EMM (internal): Maybe if I pocket it like this...

The coil unwinds, disappearing into the space at her wrist like a piece of spaghetti getting slurped up.

EMM (internal): Cool, like a spaghetti.

She flings out the wire again, aiming at the streetlamp. Only a few feet of cable emerge, however, and Emm is left with the loose end dangling from her arm. She tries again and again, producing a little more cable with each swing, but still getting nowhere fast.

Emm does push-ups, arms shaking, and face strained. She collapses to the ground.

EMM: Oof. Eleven.

She is running again, her jog turns into a shamble, which turns into a standstill, with her hands on her knees, panting.

She fires a blaster at a target painted on a concrete-brick wall. She's actually okay at this. Most of the shots hit the bullseye, but there's no grouping to speak of.

She holds her hand out determined, aiming at the lamp post. The wire fires out from her wrist, and she actually gets a decent amount of length, but the tether at the end bounces off the pavement, landing nowhere near her target.

More push-ups. Punching a heavy bag. Jumping rope.

More running. She tires out just like last time, but a little less quickly.

She flings out the cable, and actually hits the arm of the lamp post. She fist pumps in victory, but is yanked off her feet as she accidentally reels in the wire.

More running. More blaster training. Her shots are getting closer together. More boxing, with a few kicks thrown in.

She hits the lamp post again with the tether, focusing on the roof of the building in front of her. An imagined flight path shows her swinging from the light up to the rooftop, using the momentum of reeling in the wire to propel her.

ToP: Imagined Flight Path:

But when she reels the cable in, she is simply pulled off her feet, and lands face first.

More running.

She tries again and again to swing the way she imagined, but each time, she goes tumbling across the ground.

More running.

She lies splayed out on the ground before the lamp post, looking defeated.

More running.

She actually manages to pull herself as far as the light post itself, but stalls out just past that point, and falls on her back. She fails again and again to even go that far.

More running.

She swings again, actually managing to get some vertical height. But she is left flailing in the air. On the next attempt she actually smacks into the side of the building. She kneels on the ground, holding her head. When she removes her hand, she sees blood on her glove. With a bandaged forehead, she tries again.

More running, showing the scrapes, bruises, and bandages from her many attempts at grappling.

She crashes into the ground. She runs into the building again, absorbing the impact with her shoulder. She gets height on her swing, but the angle is wrong. She panics, and reels her wire back in, and is left dangling a foot below the post.

More running. She is getting faster.

She swings, flails in the air, and just barely gets her feet under her in time to land on the building. She strikes a victorious pose and bellows at the sky. She then turns to look at a series of rooftops stretching out before her.

She is sprinting. She skids to a stop and checks her stopwatch. She is panting, but not as heavily as before.

ToP: E-Day, T+ 197 days

EMM (internal): Not bad.

Side Story: Guns

ToP: E-Day, T- 42 days

Tails is at the desk of the Munitions Station for the resistance. Shadow is with her.

SHADOW: Hey, this is where I go for weapons, right?

TAILS: Yuppers.

SHADOW: I need two handguns, two light submachine guns, an AR-15 with extended magazines and scope, six pounds of C4 with blasting caps and detonator, whatever grenades you've got, and a rocket launcher. I don't care what type as long as it goes boom.

TAILS: Coming right up. Is this for a mission, or am I just enabling your gun fetish today?

SHADOW: Hey, you of all people can't make fun of me for using guns. You've had that battle mech since before I knew you.

TAILS: Yeah, but for you it's clearly sexual. Sorry, just calling it like I see it.

SHADOW: It's not sexual.

TAILS: Oh yeah?

She hefts a giant gatling gun from under the desk, and holds it up against her body alluringly.

TAILS: So you're saying this isn't doing anything for you?

Shadow glowers. Tails' expression has become extremely goofy.

SHADOW: Stop that.

TAILS: What's wrong? Am I seducing you?

SHADOW: Shut up.

Chapter 3

Interior of the resistance base. Knuckles is introducing Emm.

KNUCKLES: Everyone, welcome the new recruit.

ToP: Knuckles

- Age: 26
- Pronouns: He/him
- Species: Echidna
- Likes: Protecting the Master Emerald
- Dislikes: Master Emerald thieves

EMM: Uh, hey. I'm Emm... the Bun.

Silver and the Chaotix give half-hearted waves. Rouge yawns. I didn't think of specific design updates for any of these nerds, so just assume they look older and more tired.

EMM: I guess I went with 'bun' because it sounds cuter than 'rabbit'... And I shortened my **name** to just three letters, so it seemed kinda appropriate?

AMY: Hi Emm! We're so glad to have you! Things are awfully rough out there, so any help we can get really makes a difference.

ToP: Amy Rose

- Age: 22
- Pronouns: She/her
- Species: Hedgehog
- Likes: A challenge
- Dislikes: Being ignored

In addition to looking older, Amy now wears black leather boots and fingerless gloves. She has a plain black bodysuit, with a sleeveless turtleneck overtop.

KNUCKLES: Uhh, yeah. Our usual munitions gal is MIA right now, so Amy here will get you set up with a weapon.

AMY (whisper-shouting): **I expect great things from you!**

Amy takes Emm by the hand.

AMY: C'mon, rookie, let's get you geared up.

They walk down a long hallway.

Emm: So, hey. Sorry for your loss. I hear Sonic was pretty close with all of you.

AMY: Yeah...

EMM: Guess that's why morale seems so low. Err, sorry, no offense.

AMY: No, you're right. Sonic was one of the best. And he was our friend. It's hard to see our way forward without him.

EMM: Yeah. Sorry.

AMY: But I'm not about to get discouraged. Every one of us is strong, and working together, we can do incredible things. I'm just... I want to do what would have made him proud. That's how I'm going to keep going.

They arrive at the Munitions depot.

AMY: All right, now for the fun part. You get to pick out a weapon! Check these babies out!

She gestures to a wall of improvised melee weapons. A pipe wrench, some taped-up nunchucks, a fire axe, brass knuckles, and a baseball bat with nails in it. She slyly gestures towards the bat.

AMY (whispers): This one's my favorite.

EMM: Uhhhhhhh. I mostly just trained with a blaster, so if you have anything like that, but like, better? I'm not really a 'get my hands dirty' kinda girl.

Amy sighs.

AMY: Fine, have it your way. I suppose we have a few wispons left.

She gestures to a locked display of wispons. There's only one burst, and a few odd lightning.

AMY: Sorry there's not much of a selection. The girl who makes them has been gone for a while.

EMM: The 'munitions gal' Knuckles mentioned?

AMY: Yeah. You've heard of Tails Prower, right?

EMM: Of course.

AMY: Well, she vanished six months ago. We barely saw her at all after E-Day, and then one day she's just gone. We can't get in touch with her either. Everyone's worried.

EMM: Shit. I didn't even know.

An awkward silence follows. Eager to end it, Emm picks a lightning wispon out of the case.

EMM: So what's this do?

AMY: Short-range electrical burst. When it has a full wisp charge, it can pull you towards enemies and rings. Other than that, it's powerful, but only if you get in close. Most people find it too risky to use.

Emm thinks for a second.

Can I try it out somewhere? I think I might be able to work with this.

Side Story: Cream

ToP: E-Day T+ 15 Days

Two Eggman robots stand outside of the Rabbit household. One of them rings the doorbell. Cream answers, holding a cup of tea. Cheese and chocola are with her, with a cookie and muffin, respectively. The robots point their blasters directly in Cream's face, but she seems nonplussed.

ToP: Cream

- Age: 16
- Pronouns: She/her
- Species: Rabbit
- Likes: Chao
- Dislikes: Being home-invaded and held at blaster-point

Cheese

- Age: 12
- Pronouns: No preference
- Species: Chao
- Likes: Cookie
- Dislikes: Being woken up during naptime

Chocola

- Age: 12
- Pronouns: No preference
- Species: Chao
- Likes: Muffin
- Dislikes: Metal Sonic

Teenage Cream is older and taller than her younger appearance. She wears a frilly sleeveless blouse and shorts. Her expression is still round-eyed and innocent, but with a bit of adolescent cynicism lurking behind it.

BOT 1: This area belongs to Doctor Eggman. You are now a subject of the peaceful Eggman Empire. Resistance is futile.

Cream sips her tea, and shares a sideways glance with her chao.

CREAM: Yeah, nope. Sorry Mx. Robot, but I'm gonna have to ask you to leave. Shame. I would've invited you for tea and snacks.

BOT 1: RESISTANCE IS FUTILE.

Cream sighs. The chao continue to munch on their snacks.

CREAM: Let me tell you a story. You know about Shadow the Hedgehog?

BOT 1: Shadow, Species: Hedgehog.

BOT 2: Classification: Extremely hostile. **Destroy on sight.**

CREAM: Sure, people think of Mister Shadow as this mean, heartless guy, but there's more to him than that. You see, a long while ago...

Flashback time. I think this scene will be sometime post-StH.

SHADOW: Hey, kid.

Cream is clearly a little intimidated, but she does her best to be polite.

CREAM: Y-yes Mister Shadow?

SHADOW: You, uh, like chao, right?

CREAM: Yes sir! Cheese and Chocola are my best friends!

Shadow hands her a pair of chaos drives.

SHADOW: Here. These are yours.

CREAM: Wow! Thank you!

SHADOW: Yeah, I destroyed a bunch of GUN robots, and they just kept dropping these. I don't have anything else to do with them, so you take them.

Shadow looks kind of regretful.

SHADOW: I uh, tried raising a chao myself once. But it grey-cocooned on me. Guess I never gave it enough attention. So you take good care of those two, got it?

CREAM: Yes sir!

Back to the present.

CREAM: So even if Shadow seems a little rough on the outside, he was able to do something nice for a little kid like me.

BOT 1: Relevance not detected. Resistance is futile.

CREAM: Hold on, I'm getting to the point.

Another flashback panel. Cream, Cheese, Chocola, and Vanilla stare at an open crate full of hundreds of chaos drives. On the side it reads 'SHIP TO: CREAM T. RABBIT'.

CREAM (narration): You see, he was actually really, **really** nice.

Present.

CREAM: So thanks to all those chaos drives, Cheese and Chocola have maxed-out stats. They're all jacked up and completely fucking feral.

CHEESE: Chao chao!

CREAM: And now that they've had time to finish their snacks. They're gonna tear you idiots apart. Cheese, Chocola. **Get 'em.**

The two chao rush the bots, and sounds of an incredibly violent robot-dismemberment happen off-panel. Cream sips her tea.

Chapter 4

Tails is hanging out in Ghost Town, trying to fix Omega. She has most of his armor plating removed, and several bundles of wires run from his exposed circuitry to a laptop and other gadgets. She types on the keyboard, growing increasingly frustrated. Finally, she gives up and collapses, splaying out on the ground.

TAILS (internal): I can't do it. Nothing I've tried has worked. I even completely rewrote the startup routine, but it failed just like everything else. I can't save him.

She gets a haunted look in her eyes.

TAILS (internal): I can't save him.

She sits back up, shoulders hunched.

TAILS (internal): I should just give up and go back to the resistance. But how can I show my face like this after just abandoning them? I'm such a useless coward. Weak. Stupid.

She tears up.

TAILS (internal): And Sonic won't even be there waiting for me.

We see a teardrop fall, which transitions to another water-droplet thing, only this one's a replica Chaos. Tails looks up and sees the approaching form.

TAILS (internal): Chaos! I have to fight! Useless. I've fought them before and won. I just have to move! Weak.

She cringes away as Chaos raises an arm to attack.

TAILS (internal): Coward.

Classic Sonic spin attacks through Chaos, dispersing them into tiny droplets. Tails' eyes go wide.

TAILS: Huh?

Classic lands and strikes a pose.

ToP: "Classic" Sonic

- Age: 12
- Pronouns: He/him
- Species: Hedgehog
- Likes: Animals, the environment
- Dislikes: Robots

TAILS: Oh. It's Classic Sonic. What are you doing in this dimension?

Classic shrugs.

TAILS: Oh, well. It's good to see you again. Guess it's been a while, huh?

Classic nods.

TAILS: Oh, yeah, this is gonna be a little awkward to explain, but um, I use she/her pronouns now.

Classic looks confused.

TAILS: You see, in a few years, you're going to find out that your friend Tails isn't actually a boy. It's going to be a scary moment for her, but you're really sweet and supportive and... It means a lot to her. So um, try not to let on that you know ahead of time, okay? She needs to tell you herself, when she's ready.

Classic considers for a moment, then gives a thumbs-up.

TAILS: Heh. Thanks. You're a good kid. So, what are you up to right now?

Classic Sonic has wandered off, and is teetering on a fencepost wrapped in barbed wire.

TAILS: Not much, huh? You know, it's funny. I remember you being a lot chattier when you were this age. Seems like every time we finished an adventure, you'd run around talking about it to everyone who'd listen. You always made it sound so cool and heroic. And I was so proud to be in those stories too. The one who was always right there with you. It felt like I could really...

Classic looks over to see Tails crying.

TAILS: Sorry, sorry. It's just... The Sonic from this world... went away. I thought I could be a hero without him, but it's so lonely, and scary, and **hard**.

Classic puts a comforting hand on a shoulder, then gestures to himself proudly. Tails wipes a few tears away.

TAILS: Heh. That's right, I have you now.

Tails gets to her feet, but stays crouching down on Classic's level.

TAILS: So, Sonic. What should we do now?

Classic runs straight up the side of a building, like he do. Tails flies after. Standing on the rooftop, Classic points out over the town, at distant giant robots wreaking havoc.

TAILS: Okay! We'll start by taking back this town.

They fight some robots for a page or so. Classic points up at one of the giant robots.

TAILS: Alright, going up!

Tails carries classic up to eye-level with the giant, then they both spin around and Tails yeets Classic really hard and he goes through the robot's head. They both land, triumphant, then look up at the other giants around town.

TAILS: Alright, let's do that a few more times.

Side Story: Big

ToP: E-Day T+ 49 Days

Big is fishing in the mystic jungle at night. He has gone totally wild-man over the past ten years. His hair is shaggy, matted, and overgrown, and his eyes are sharp and intense. Also, he's kind of jacked now?

ToP: Big

- Age: 28
- Pronouns: He/him
- Species: Cat
- Likes: Froggy
- Dislikes: Being worried

A bunch of Eggman robots approach from behind and surround Big.

BOT 1: This area belongs to Doctor Eggman. You are now a subject of the peaceful--

BIG: Froggy?

There is a pause.

BOT 1: You are now a subject of the peaceful Eggman Empire. Resistance --

Big pulls a LARGE FUCKING FISH out of the lake and whips it at the robot. It knocks them over, drawing the robots' attention. When they look back, Big is no longer there, his fishing rod lying on the ground. He has jumped high into the air, silhouetted by the moon, fist poised to deliver a massive punch. He slams into one of the robots, completely caving in its chest. The others are too shocked to respond.

BIG: FROGGY.

The ground rumbles, and multiple pairs of eyes appear in the forest. A GIANT FUCKING MONSTER emerges. It kind of looks like Chaos 6, but not exactly. The main differentiating feature is the green skin. The monster attacks the robots, raking through them with claws, tail, and energy beams from its eyes. Big is left standing alone before the monster. He reaches up a hand, and pats it on the head.

BIG: There you are. Good Froggy.

ToP: Froggy

- Age: 13
- Pronouns: No preference
- Species: Frog (mutated)

- Likes: Big
- Dislikes: Being alone

Chapter 5

Rouge is doing some late-night HACKING in a t-shirt and underwear. She types away in front of multiple monitors. She picks up an energy drink can to take a sip, but finds it empty, and chucks it away.

Rouge: Ughh.

ToP: Rouge

- Age: 28
- Pronouns: She/her
- Species: Bat
- Likes: Shiny, expensive things
- Dislikes: Being awake

ROUGE (internal): Okay, I **finally** cracked Eggman's Extraplanetary Operations database. There'd better be something good in here.

She scrolls through a list of folders and files, with names like 'Too Many Meteors?', 'Orbital Mechanics Stuff', 'Cool_SpaceShip.psd', 'BLOW UP THE MOON AGAIN??.gif', and 'Chao_in_Space_III_mkv.torrent'.

Close-up on rouge, surprised.

ROUGE: Oh.

Extreme close-up.

ROUGE: Shit.

Cut to Knuckles, asleep in the Resistance barracks. A phone call wakes him up.

KNUCKLES: Ugh. Myeah?

He suddenly goes alert.

KNUCKLES: What!? Are you joking? Okay, I'm already on it.

He turns on the lights and wakes everyone up.

KNUCKLES: OKAY! Everyone up! We're on **full alert**. This is not a drill!

Later, in the war room, I guess. The usual Resistance gang is all there, along with a few generic soldiers.

KNUCKLES (narration): Sonic is **alive**.

KNUCKLES: Alright, how do we get Sonic on a spaceship back to earth in as little time as possible?

Espio points to an icon on a projected map.

ESPIO: This spaceport in the Chemical Plant is our best bet. We send in the scout patrol we have stationed in the area to steal a ship.

VECTOR: Isn't that just the one rookie though? Can she handle it on her own?

KNUCKLES: She'll have to. We'll send a few reinforcements as backup if the initial plan fails.

ROUGE: Stealing an entire spaceship will be pretty conspicuous, boss. We'll need a distraction so that the entire Eggman Army doesn't come down on that one little rabbit.

KNUCKLES: Right. In that case, we have every active squad make as much noise as possible. Attack bases, destroy property, cause chaos. Make the spaceship-jacking look like a random act of vandalism, instead of a planned assault.

ROUGE: Sticking to brute force, I see. Pretty typical.

KNUCKLES: Whatever. Just make it happen, and fast.

Cut to Emm, standing at a scouting post, the spaceport in the distance. She picks up her radio as it crackles to life.

KNUCKLES (via radio): Hey, Rookie, come in.

EMM: Sir.

KNUCKLES (via radio): Sonic is alive, and we need someone to go rescue him.

Emm's eyes go wide with surprised apprehension.

KNUCKLES (via radio): How would you like to go to space?

Cut to Emm running through the spaceport. Klaxons and flashing lights blare all around.

EMM (internal): Ah shit ah shit ah shit shit **shit!**

A group of robots stands before her, blasters aimed. Emm barely jumps their volley of energy blasts.

EMM (internal): Okay, I can do this. Just like I practiced. Gotta move the ejection point a few inches forward.

A few feet of wire flicks out from the tip of her lightning wispon.

EMM (internal): Then light it up!

Her wire turns into a crackling energy whip, which she lashes out in a big arc, destroying the robots in her path. Emm grins.

EMM (internal): Fuckin sick.

She grapples an overhead beam, and launches herself a good distance across the facility. She lands on the back of a moving train, tumbling and almost falling off, but catching herself. She grapples away again, and finds herself directly in the path of another oncoming train. She freezes in the headlights for a moment, but then grapples away at the last instant, and lands on a rail, which she fucking grinds the shit out of, despite looking pretty rattled.

EMM (internal): Okay, yikes. I hope my heart rate calms down sometime in the next week. That last trajectory was a little off, but my wire trick has gotten pretty accurate. It's basically pure muscle memory at this point. Reflexes and balance too. I'm making good time. I guess my body got pretty fucking awesome over the last few months? I might actually be able to do this?

She trips over a big spikeball sitting on the rail and loses all her rings. She manages to grab the rail to avoid falling off the level.

EMM (internal): Ouch. Gotta stop spacing out though.

She runs up to the launchpad, where a spaceship is conveniently located. A voice blares over the loudspeaker.

LOUDSPEAKER: **Launch in T- 180 seconds.**

Emm notices a heavy steel door with a conspicuous number of 'Keep Out' signs plastered all around it.

EMM (internal): What the hell, I've got time.

She blasts the door off its hinges with her wispon, and looks around the room. It is an experimental laboratory, with all sorts of gizmos and chemicals around. Against one wall, there is a row of glass canisters suspended in an anti-gravity field. All but two of them are broken, their contents crumbled to dust. The ones that are intact contain prototype phantom rubies. Emm picks one up, and remembers back to the jewel embedded in Infinite's chest.

EMM (internal): This... might be important.

LOUDSPEAKER: **Launch in T- 60 seconds.**

EMM (internal): Shit, gotta move.

Cut to the ship blasting off. Emm barges into the cockpit, which is manned by a couple of robots. Emm points her wispon.

EMM: Hey idiots! I'm commandeering this vessel now.

EMM (internal): Smooth. Totally cool.

The ship docks in a big, round space station. Emm gets off and sprints through the corridors, cutting down every robot she sees. Warning lights flas, and a klaxon sounds the intruder alert.

EMM (internal): According to intel, Sonic's been kept in solitary and tortured for the past six months. He's probably in no condition to run, let alone even stand. But I'll drag him out of here if I have to. I just need to be ready for whatever I find.

Sonic runs right past her in a blur, going the opposite direction. Emm is stunned. Sonic turns around and zips back to her.

SONIC: Hey, how's it going? Nice to meet you. You with the resistance?

EMM: Umm. Yes?

SONIC: Totally cool. Hey, thanks for causing such a commotion. Thanks to you, I was able to bust out of my cell and kick Zavok's butt. How's **your** day going?

EMM: HUUU.

SONIC: Anyway, you've got a way to get back to earth, right? Just lead the way!

EMM: Y-yeah.

EMM (internal): Something's wrong.

Sonic moves to take off, but Emm holds her wispon up to Sonic's head.

EMM: Hold it.

SONIC: Umm, what's going on buddy?

EMM: How do I know you're the real Sonic? We know that Infinite can create replicas of people. And you've been Eggman's prisoner for six months, but you seem totally fine? I don't buy it. How do we know the real sonic is even alive?

SONIC: Replicas, huh? Guess that explains why the whole rogues' gallery is back. Listen, you can radio the Resistance right? Put me through to Tails. She'll know how to prove it's the real me.

EMM: Tails is missing.

Sonic looks stricken for a moment, but then recovers.

SONIC: Knuckles, then. He's not the sharpest, but he oughta know me well enough to sniff out a fake.

Cut to sonic on the radio with Knuckles.

KNUCKLES (via radio): All right, 'Sonic', if you're who you say you are, then tell me something only the real Sonic would know.

SONIC: How 'bout I tell you what Rouge said that one time you asked her out?

KNUCKLES (via radio): HEY! NO! Not that!

Sonic winks at Emm. Despite herself, she smiles.

SONIC: You sure? It was amazing. I've never seen someone get rejected so hard before!

KNUCKLES (via radio): Why you!

He sighs.

KNUCKLES (via radio): At ease, Rookie. Only the **real** Sonic could be this annoying.

SONIC: A distinguishment I take great pride in.

Cut to Sonic and Emm running back to the spaceship.

EMM: Hey... sorry for not trusting you. I'm Emm the Bun, by the way

SONIC: No worries, Emm. You're just being cautious. I like that in a teammate. I'm the 'rush in without thinking' type, so having a few friends like you around is always beneficial for my health.

Emm's eyes light up.

EMM (internal): 'Friends'?

EMM: So... intel says you were tortured, but you seem pretty fine. You good?

SONIC: Yeah, the only 'torture' was listening to Eggman gloat about his incredible plans for six months. Physically, I'm fine. I even had a cell big enough to run around in, so I'm in decent shape. Had to make pretty tight circles though.

EMM: Why though? Eggman had you at his mercy, and you're one of the biggest threats to him. Seems like keeping you alive and well is a real liability.

SONIC: Lemme tell you a secret. Eggman doesn't really want me dead or seriously injured. All the times over the years when he could've killed me, he always left me with a little sliver of a chance to make it through. I think his whole 'take over the world' thing is just so we can keep playing out our little rivalry. He enjoys it too much to take me out of the picture. In fact, I think

he's been getting bored waiting for me to break out of here. That's not to say he isn't a threat though. His schemes have a habit of getting too big for him to control. That's when things get serious. This Infinite character... sure doesn't have any reservations about killing.

EMM: Yeah...

SONIC: Hey, there's the ship!

He boosts ahead, leaving Emm behind. Sonic looks back as Emm flings out a wire, and he grins as she catches up with him.

Side Story: Blaze

ToP: E-Day T+ 118 Days

Wide shot of a burning, destroyed town. A flaming interdimensional portal opens up, and a regal, silhouetted figure emerges, wisps of flame trailing off their tufts of fur. It's Blaze, baby.

ToP: Blaze

- Age: 24
- Pronouns: She/her
- Species: Cat
- Likes: Justice
- Dislikes: Her current social anxiety level (100%)

Blaze thinks to herself, but acts out the one-sided conversation as if rehearsing. She's completely oblivious to everything around her.

BLAZE (internal): Wow guys, it's so cool to see you all again. What's it been, uhh, a few years? Listen, sorry I disappeared for so long. I meant to visit sooner, but you know how busy it is being **queen of another dimension**. Hahahahahaha!

BLAZE: Uuuuugh. They're gonna be mad at me. This sucks.

She suddenly notices that everything is on fire and terrible.

BLAZE: Y'know what. This seems like a bad time anyway. I'll just come back later.

She creates another flaming portal and quickly steps through.

Chapter 6

Emm and sonic are back in Resistance HQ.

KNUCKLES: Good to have you back, Sonic. I hate to ask so soon after getting you back to terra firma, but Eggman has a fortified weapons factory that our troops have been trying to breach for a week. Think you could take care of it?

SONIC: Are you kidding? After six months of being cooped up, I'm **dying** for some real action.

He gestures at Emm.

SONIC: Mind if I borrow the rookie? I want to see what she can do.

KNUCKLES: Sure. Go ahead.

EMM: Hey, I'm right here.

Cut to Arsenal Pyramid. Resistance troops turn and stare in disbelief as Sonic and Emm rush through, leaping over their fortifications and into the fray.

EMM: Uhh, people are staring pretty hard.

SONIC: Sure they are! It's my **triumphant return**, after all.

EMM: They probably still think you're dead, dude.

SONIC: Oh yeah, that too.

Sonic and Emm thrash a few bots, and easily traverse the fortified walls surrounding the pyramid, as machine-gun fire chases them. Sonic boosts around the perimeter of the wall, blasting through a number of gun turrets. Not to be outdone, Emm grapples towards a mortar cannon behind the wall, which is manned by a couple of bots.. A few flashes of lighting, and she emerges from behind the cannon, dusting her hands. Sonic skids up beside her.

SONIC: Nice work! That oughta--

He is cut off as a wave of bots emerges from the pyramid. There's like a lot of them. Emm is totally petrified. Sonic starts doing some warm-up stretches.

SONIC: Okay Rookie, we're gonna go **fast**. You ready?

EMM: I thought we were already going fast before?

SONIC: Nah, that was nothing. Think you can keep up?

Emm steels herself.

EMM: Yeah!

SONIC: All right! That's what I like to hear.

He pulls back for a hi-five. Emm copies him, if a little awkwardly. They slap hands so hard. Sonic looks really cool, but Emm flinches at the impact.

SONIC AND EMM: **Double...**

They take off at high speed, cutting a line through the massive wave of bots.

SONIC AND EMM: **BOOST!**

They run straight up the side of the pyramid, and their momentum launches them off the peak and into the air. Emm looks down, in awe of all the ground she just covered, and the trail of destruction in her wake. Meanwhile, Sonic is falling in a leisurely pose beside her. He points down to the opening in the top of the pyramid, indicating their way in. Emm grabs Sonic's hand, and grapples them toward the entrance. They fall towards the heart of the weapons factory. Suddenly, a laser beams by, narrowly missing Emm. Sonic has resumed his relaxed falling pose.

SONIC: Oh hey, lasers. I was starting to wonder if they were even trying to stop us.

Emm grabs him again and grapples straight towards the ground, as lasers flash all around. Sonic makes an easy 3-point landing, and Emm lands hard on both feet, absorbing the jarring impact with her knees. Sonic is immediately up and ready to take off again, but when Emm takes her first step, her legs give out from under her, and she collapses, landing on her face, panting hard.

SONIC: You okay there, Rookie?

EMM: Gaaaah! Haaaaah! Huuuuu! Wheeeeeze!

Sonic offers her a hand up.

SONIC: Hey... pretty cool, right?

Emm takes his hand, still panting. She grins.

EMM: Yeah.

Emm stands back up, still panting, with her hands on her knees. Sonic taps his foot impatiently.

SONIC: Hey, I think I'm gonna go clear out some bots while you catch your breath.

Emm gives a thumbs-up.

EMM: Cool.

Emm slowly straightens up and regains her composure. Sounds of intense combat and destruction come from off-panel. Emm's panting lessens. She wipes some drool off her face. She takes a deep breath, and lets it out slowly. Sonic skids back up beside her.

SONIC: Okay, that's most of their defenses gone. Ready to tear this place apart?

EMM: Let's do it.

The rush off deeper into the factory.

Side Story: New Look

Interior, Resistance HQ. Emm's bodysuit looks kinda filthy after that last mission. There are scorch marks, and sweat stains, and it's just not a great situation overall. She passes by Vector in the hall. Vector grimaces, then spins around to face her.

VECTOR: ROOKIE!

Emm startles, then snaps to attention.

EMM: Sir!

VECTOR: When's the last time you washed that singlet, Rookie?

ToP: Vector

- Age: 30
- Pronouns: He/him
- Species: Crocodile
- Likes: Closing a case
- Dislikes: Little annoyances

EMM: Uh. Recently, sir? The stains won't come out Sir.

VECTOR: Enough with the 'sirs'. You can't just walk around looking like that. You're a member of the Resistance now, and that means you're a hero of the people! And you need to look the part. So throw that dirty rag in the trash where it belongs and wear something else!

EMM: But this is my only outfit.

VECTOR: Only outfit? What about the Wardrobe?

EMM: Wardrobe?

VECTOR: You mean no one's showed you?

He grabs her by the wrist and drags her along.

VECTOR: Alright, come with me.

Vector opens a warehouse door, revealing boxes and racks of clothing.

VECTOR: This is the wardrobe. When you complete missions, you get credits that you can use to pull whatever you want out of here and add it to your personal collection. It's a morale-boosting thing. You've got enough missions under your belt for a full outfit.

Emm stands in baffled silence for a second.

EMM: Is this really the best use of Resistance resources? I mean, seems like mostly everyone walks around naked anyway.

VECTOR: Eh. This stuff's free anyway. It's all looted from abandoned and destroyed shopping centers and stuff. I mean-- 'salvaged', or whatever.

EMM: Sure, why not.

Vector shoves her into the building.

VECTOR: You've got your orders, so GET TO IT.

He slams the door. Emm looks fairly annoyed by all of this.

EMM: A'ight.

Emm strips off her bodysuit and starts digging around. She holds a few goth-looking bodysuits in front of her in the mirror, comparing them, but setting them aside in favor of something in a solid blue. She finds a pair of white gloves with ribbons on the wrist in a box, and is immediately charmed by them. She pulls a blue dress on over her head. It's pretty dang cute once everything is buttoned in place. She tries on a few hats, but nothing really sits well over her big ears. She notices a pair of black and white sneakers with purple laces. She holds two ribbons up, a blue one and a black one, comparing them. She goes with black. With her new look completed, she tries out a few poses in the mirror. It's pretty dorky, but the outfit is good. Cute and soft, with a bit of a goth edge.

EMM: Nice.

Chapter 7

Sonic and Tails are busting up some robots in the Green Hill zone.

TAILS: This area's almost clear! It'll be nice to have Green Hill back to normal.

Tails spots something in the distance, and starts panicking, She grabs Classic's wrist and pulls him behind cover.

TAILS (whisper): Please, we have to be quiet. We **do not** want to mess with this guy.

In the distance, we see Infinite, floating alongside Eggman.

INFINITE: I hardly see why you're dragging me out to deal with **two** measly rebels.

EGGMAN: There's a strange energy reading from all of the areas they've hit. Possibly a side-effect of the Phantom Ruby's dimensional ambivilation. If my suspicions are correct, this could be more of a challenge than you think.

INFINITE: I doubt that. Even your venerated Sonic was nothing before me. It has been months, Doctor, and you still haven't found **Shadow**. When do I get to **kill him**?

EGGMAN: Bah! Shadow. That amnesia-ridden edgelord? He doesn't have the same strength of conviction as Sonic. Despite all his power, he'll never be worthy as a true rival.

INFINITE: **I don't care** what **you** think of him. I want my **vengeance**.

Tails is cowering in her hiding place. Seeing the fear in her expression, Classic Sonic makes a decision.

EGGMAN: Patience, my boy. Shadow won't come out of hiding until we give him a **good reason** to do so.

He holds up a prototype ruby.

EGGMAN: Perhaps with **this** as bait...

INFINITE: I TOLD YOU TO **DESTROY** THOSE. THEY ARE A THREAT.

EGGMAN: **You** don't tell **me** what to do, you ungrateful--

Classic spin attacks Eggman's egg mobile, causing Eggman to fumble the ruby. Classic stands ready to fight the pair, but in an instant, Infinite appears directly before him and pins him to the ground with a single claw. Tails watches from afar, horrified. A dozen negative internal text boxes crowd around her head.

TAILS (internal): Worthless. Coward. Stupid. Useless. Too weak. Too afraid. Can't save him. Can't save anyone.

Another text box appears in front of all the others.

TAILS (internal): No.

She grits her teeth.

TAILS (internal): Not again.

INFINITE: Doctor... who is this child?

EGGMAN: Eh. Long story, not important. Turns out my prediction was correct after all. Beyond that, he's of little interest to me. You can kill him.

TAILS (off-panel): **NO!!**

She launches herself at Infinite, catching him off-guard with a kick to the face. In the moment that he's stunned, She grabs Classic Sonic, and flies out of there for all she's worth.

INFINITE: Foolish **girl**. You **will pay!**

Infinite releases another wave of strange energy, and the landscape goes nightmarish and red. Tails dodges spikes, laser blasts, and clumps of pixelated distortion. Infinite gives chase, but Tails knows this area. She navigates hills, loops and platforms, and eventually, manages to get out of Infinite's line of sight behind a cliff. Infinite circles around, but there is no sight of her. Cut to Tails, huddled and panting for breath, in a hidden alcove behind a patch of ivy, panic and sweat masking her face. She still clutches Classic in her arms. Infinite looks around, but seeing no sign of the pair, flies off again. Classic Sonic struggles against Tails' grip, and pushes away, looking a little annoyed.

TAILS (whisper): Oh, sorry.

Classic points to her arms, which are bleeding from several pricks.

TAILS (whisper): Right, gotta be careful of the spines. Guess I forgot. I'll be okay though. Don't worry.

Classic rummages around in his pocket space, and pulls out the prototype ruby. He offers it to Tails.

TAILS (whisper): You want me to take this? All right. I guess I'll try to figure out what it is. No promises though.

She sighs.

TAILS (whisper): I'll need to head back to my lab at HQ. Gotta face the others eventually, right?

Cut to Resistance HQ. Tails, bandaged and downtrodden, walks into the room, with Classic in tow. Sonic is there, laughing and joking with the others as if he were never gone.

TAILS: S... Sonic?

SONIC: Oh hey! Look who's ba--

Tails practically tackles him, burying her face against his chest.

SONIC: Woah, miss me much? I wasn't gone **that** long was--

He looks down and sees Tails' pained expression, tears streaming down her face. He realizes that this is Not The Time For His Fucking Attitude Right Now. He hugs his friend.

TAILS: I-I thought... I saw you... you...

SONIC: It's okay. It's okay.

Emm glances sideways at Classic with a confused expression. Who the fuck is this guy?

Side Story: Classic Eggman Explains the Timelines

Classic Eggman stands in front of a blackboard, apparently in some sort of elementary school classroom. The board has two drawings, one of a cartoonish Classic Sonic face, one one of Modern Sonic, both labeled as such.

CLASSIC EGGS: Alright class, now you're probably wondering how everything in this timeline exists both in an alternate dimension, **and in the past** relative to the modern timeline. It's quite simple really. It all comes back to my brilliant plan to take over Little Planet using the **Time Stones**.

Classic Eggs points to the logos for Sonic 1, Sonic 2, and Sonic Generations, but reading 'Eggman' instead of 'Sonic'.

CLASSIC EGGS: I had tried to conquer the world **twice** before the timeline split, and was beaten both times by that **detestable** erinaceid, Sonic the Hedgehog. There was also that business with the Time Eater. But with Little Planet, I finally claimed victory! You see, in one version of events, Sonic **stole** all seven Time Stones, claiming absolute victory yet again, and creating the Modern Timeline.

He points to several other logos: "Eggman 3 & Knuckles", "Eggman Adventure", "Eggman Adventure 2: Battle", "That one Time when Metal Sonic kidnapped me and then turned into a big dragon", "The one where Shadow shoots a bunch of people and aliens with guns and I was sort of involved", "~~Eggman '06~~ (Erased from the timeline)", "Etc, etc.", "Eggman Generations, but the parts that happen in the Future"

After that, the **other me** went on to enact several other plans, all of which were doomed to fail.

Classic Eggs draws a line tangential off of Eggman CD.

CLASSIC EGGS: But in **this reality**, I retained control of the Time Stones! Sonic may have destroyed all my other machinations and freed Little Planet from my control, but I simply reset the timeline, and Sonic along with it, rendering all his efforts useless!

Classic Eggs continues the tangential line in a looping spiral.

CLASSIC EGGS: And so, we played out the same events again. And again, and again, and again, and **again**. Each time, no matter what I tried, Sonic managed to best me, and I would be forced to return everything to the starting point. Years passed in the other timeline. The other Sonic got older, and won battle after battle, meanwhile, **we** were stuck in an endlessly repeating loop.

Classic Eggs circles back around all the spirals.

CLASSIC EGGS: Eventually, I decided it was useless to stubbornly continue all this time-travel nonsense, so I reset the timeline **even further back**, and then made it so I NEVER USED THOSE BLASTED TIME STONES FROM THE BEGINNING.

He scribbles out all the looping timeline nonsense, and continues the classic timeline with "Eggman 3 & Knuckles".

CLASSIC EGGS: And so with all that silliness behind me, I began working on my next plan to take over the world. Any questions?

We see that Classic Tails is the only one in the classroom, chained to the desk.

CLASSIC TAILS: Why are you telling me all of this?

Classic Eggs plants his hands on the desk, and gets all up in Classic Tails' face.

CLASSIC EGGS: Because, **you little vermin**, yours is the only mind which can comprehend the brilliance of my ultimate victory!

CLASSIC TAILS: But it sounds like you just failed a bunch and then gave up.

CLASSIC EGGS: **Wrong!** I won by having never tried in the first place.

CLASSIC TAILS: That's not how that works!

Chapter 8

Knuckles assigns Emm a series of missions.

KNUCKLES (via radio): Rookie! We need you to Take out the bots on Park Avenue and free the citizens!

Emm takes out a crowd of bots with her wispon. A crowd of people cheer for her while she stands, embarrassed.

KNUCKLES (via radio): Rookie, there's a giant crab robot threatening Guardian Rock!

She tangles up the legs of the crab with her wire, sending it tumbling down.

KNUCKLES (via radio): Rookie, Sonic is fighting a replica at Red Gate Bridge. Go back him up!

Emm and Sonic double boost through a Metal Sonic replica, breaking apart into chunks of red distortion. Later, Emm stands at attention at Resistance HQ.

KNUCKLES: Rookie, robots have taken over the water park in Mystic Forest.

Sonic walks by.

SONIC: Water park? I wanna go! Me too! Me too!

KNUCKLES: Fine, take Sonic.

Sonic and Emm walk through the forest. Emm is wearing a blue two-piece and flip-flops.

SONIC: So, how do you feel about **waterslides**?

EMM: Dunno. It's been a while since I've been on one. No strong opinions.

SONIC: Whaaaat? They're the best! Now, I'm not famous for my love of water, especially the drowning-depth variety, but waterslides are a completely different story.

EMM: I'll take your word on it, then.

SONIC: No need, here we are!

He points out over Moonlight Battlefield, with its tangle of waterslides, overrun with bots, and Casino Forest glowing in the distance.

SONIC: Aww yeah! Here we go!

Sonic jumps straight onto a waterslide. Emm follows. They zoom downwards, clearly having a blast. Some robots catch up to them. Emm grins and kicks one away, and Sonic hip-checks another. Both bots go flying off the side and explode.

SONIC AND EMM: Yeaaaaaaaah!

They close in the bottom of the slide, which ends in a deep, natural pool. Sonic curls into a spin dash, then peels out as soon as he hits the bottom, gaining enough momentum to run across the surface of the water, all the way to the other end of the pool.

EMM: Woah.

She gets a competitive grin, and fires her grapple at Sonic.

EMM: Catch!

Sonic snatches the end of the wire in mid-air. Emm uses him as an anchor, and when she hits the end of the slide, she reels in, essentially water-skiing across the pool. She stumbles a bit when she hits the shore, but Sonic catches her.

EMM: Whoop.

She looks up at Sonic.

EMM: That was cool!

SONIC: That was cool.

EMM: That was **so** cool! Let's go again!

Later, Sonic and Emm are sitting on a log, towels draped over their shoulders, staring out over the lights of Casino Forest.

EMM: Okay, you're 100% right about waterslides.

SONIC: See? Told ya.

Sonic offers a fist bump. Emm accepts.

EMM: This place is pretty nice now that we've cleared out the bots. Pretty scenery, chill atmosphere, full moon. I might be tempted to call it romantic... If I were even slightly allo.

SONIC: Yeah, big same.

EMM: Woah, really? You too?

Sonic looks slightly embarrassed.

SONIC: Umm yeah. That just kind of slipped out though. I haven't really told anyone else. Except Tails. Could you...

EMM: Yeah, I got you.

SONIC: Thanks.

EMM: That's kind of a relief though. I was starting to get suspicious that this might secretly be turning into a date.

SONIC: Yo, me too.

EMM: Do you mind if I ask why you're not out though? Seems like the crowd you run with is a pretty accepting bunch.

SONIC: No, you're right. I mean, they've been good to Tails since she came out, so I'm not really worried they'd be weird about me being aroace. It's just...

He pauses.

SONIC: It actually takes a lot of work to make everything look as effortless as I do. I know everyone looks up to me to be the cool hero, and I don't want to let them down. I want to push them to be their best too, so I've gotta set an example and make it look easy, you know? Does that make sense?

EMM: Eh, sorta.

SONIC: But coming to terms with my sexuality **wasn't** easy. I don't think it ever is. It's something I struggled a lot with, and it still feels like... like I don't exactly know what I'm doing. So I don't want to show that side of myself. I'm worried about what it would do to everyone's confidence.

EMM: Hmm. Yeah, I guess so. The possibility of your friends rejecting or not understanding you is scary too, even if it seems like a slim one.

SONIC: Yeah, maybe that's part of it. Every time I think about Tails and her transition, I am astounded by that kid's courage.

EMM: For sure. Why tell me all this though, if you're so secretive about it?

SONIC: I dunno. Like I said, everyone else looks up to me, but I get the sense that you've got your sights set even further than that.

EMM: Maybe, yeah.

A silence.

EMM: I'm not as strong as most of the big names in the resistance. I'm certainly nowhere near Tails or Knuckles, or any of you hedgehogs. I tell myself that I don't have to be a hero like them. That I can make things better by doing my part with the skills I have. But what I really want...

She stares up at the full moon.

EMM: Is to kill Infinite.

Side Story: The Moon

Sonic and Emm are exactly where they were at the end of the last chapter.

EMM: ... Anyway... it's fucking wild how fast they fixed the moon after it blew up. You ever think about that?

SONIC: All the time.

Chapter 9

Knuckles has gathered everyone at HQ.

KNUCKLES: Everyone, listen up! We've weakened Eggman's army and captured several key positions. More importantly, we've put out a lot of smaller fires in towns and villages and secured people's safety in their own homes. And now with Tails and Classic Sonic back to strengthen our forces... there's never been a better time to hit Eggman's home base.

He points to the map.

KNUCKLES: **Capital City!**

CHARMY (off-panel): Woo! Let's fuck it up!

KNUCKLES: Thank you, Charmy.

TAILS: Are you sure about this? We still don't know the full extent of Infinite's power, or where he's drawing all the energy to warp reality from.

KNUCKLES: I'm absolutely sure. Whatever he throws at us, we'll overcome it **as a team**.

SONIC: Sounds good to me. We'll pay back Infinite for everything he's done.

Cut to everyone running at Capital City all at once. We have all the named characters from the Resistance, and a large crowd of generic soldiers as well. There's absolutely no way this could go wrong. Infinite stands atop the tallest building, looking down with disdain. Suddenly, massive copies of Infinite emerge from the ground. Everyone scatters as a massive fist slams into the ground.

TAILS: What the hell! **What the hell!**

Rouge and Charmy fly towards the real infinite, while Sonic boosts along a rail, with Tails trailing behind.

ToP: Charmy

- Age: 16
- Pronouns: They/them
- Species: Bee
- Likes: Flowers
- Dislikes: Being the youngest

Rouge gets clipped by a laser blast, and Charmy is swatted aside by a giant hand. Emm grapples up the side of a building, and sprints down a highway. The road is knocked out from under her by a giant Infinite. She grapples onto the side of a building, and looks around just in

time to see another giant punch heading her way. The fist disappears in a burst of pixels as Silver streaks by. They give Emm a thumbs-up, then fly off in search of another target.

ToP: Silver

- Age: 24 (or -176, depending on how you're counting.)
- Pronouns: He/they
- Species: Hedgehog
- Likes: The Future (assuming this war ends well)
- Dislikes: The Future (assuming it doesn't)

Emm grapples up another building. Suddenly, the entire world turns sideways. Cut to Classic, Amy, Knuckles, Espio, and Vector waiting for an elevator on the ground floor of one of the buildings.

ToP: Espio

- Age: 26
- Pronouns: He/him
- Species: Chameleon
- Likes: Ninja training
- Dislikes: Evildoers

VECTOR: C'mon, **c'mon**.

The elevator dings as it reaches the ground floor, and everyone piles in. Gravity suddenly shifts, and they all land in a pile on the wall. Cut to Emm, tumbling through the air, totally disoriented. She flings her wire out in a random direction, and catches onto the side of a building.

EMM (internal): Keep moving. Remember which way is down. Remember where your target is. Find the way to get there. And don't...

A giant appears in her path. She Grapples its mask, lands on its face, and blasts it point-blank with her wispon. She grapples away as it crumbles into pixels.

EMM: ...**Space out!**

She lands on the side of another building. Infinite is just ahead. Five Shadow replicas materialize before her. Emm falters.

EMM (internal): Shit!

She holds her wispon up defensively as the Shadows charge her, but just before the first one can reach her, its head explodes into pixels. The other Shadows look at it confused, then one by one, their bodies are blown apart by unseen attacks. Emm glances around, looking for any sign of her savior, but seeing nothing, she charges ahead. Meanwhile, on a distant hillside, a cloaked

figure works the bolt-action on their sniper rifle, ejecting a spent shell. They're wearing an anime cloak, so you're not supposed to know who it is, but we can all fucking tell that it's Shadow.

SHADOW: Hmp. Worthless fucking imitations.

Emm rushes straight for Infinite.

EMM (internal): This is it. The moment I've been waiting for. For all my new friends... and my old ones...

She grits her teeth, and prepares to attack with her whip, but Infinite appears directly before her. He punches her in the stomach and sends her flying backwards. A giant's fist smashes her through the side of the building. Infinite stands, smug, and seemingly victorious, when a rifle bullet stops a few inches from his head.

INFINITE: Hmm?

He traces the path of the bullet back to its origin, and spots a glint of light.

INFINITE: **There you are.**

In an instant, he is in front of Shadow.

INFINITE: Finally. Shadow the Hedgehog.

SHADOW: Heh. In the flesh. Are you ready to see...

He tosses aside his cloak, revealing a katana in one hand and a fucking rocket launcher in the other, as well as an assault rifle slung over his shoulder and two holstered pistols.

SHADOW: ... What the **real thing** can do?

Chapter 10

Meanwhile, the giant's fist pulls out of the building, revealing a battered Emm in its grasp.

EMM (internal): I should have known better. Should have left it to the real heroes. Should have just given up and let the others take care of it.

Scenes from around the battlefield. Silver flings a section of broken Highway at a group of giants. Knuckles, Classic, and Amy fight a giant that has smashed through the side of the building they're in. Vector and Espio shelter Charmy from falling rubble. Rouge nurses an injured wing. Shadow dances with his blade, cutting through an army of his own replicas. Bullet shells, red pixelated distortion, and discarded weapons litter the scene. Shadow pulls a handgun and aims at Infinite, but a laser blast knocks it away before he can fire.

EMM (narration) I'm not cut out for revenge. Too weak. Too normal.

Cut back to Emm. Sonic and Tails arrive at the top of the building, but the scene starts to fade to black around the edges as Emm loses consciousness.

EMM (internal): Maybe this was all I could've done.

A red light envelopes Emm, shining out from between the giant's clutching fingers.

EMM (internal): No. There's still more.

All over the battlefield, the giants disappear as red light radiates from Emm's body.

Infinite sends Shadow flying with a kick. He readies to finish his opponent off with a laser blast, but it fizzles out in his hand as the red light sweeps over him.

INFINITE: What? **NO.**

Down, but not beaten, Shadow pulls out his last weapon; a satellite gun. He aims the thin red laser beam at Infinite. The satellite gun makes a 'bip'.

INFINITE: What is that pathetic toy? Don't think I'm beaten just because--

Shadow teleports away. The scene is washed in blue light. Infinite looks up, and a massive laser beam strikes down from the heavens. Cut to Sonic and Tails, crowded around a barely-conscious Emm. She grips a prototype ruby in her hand, which shatters into pieces, and then disintegrates.

SONIC: C'mon Emm, wake up!

A shadow falls over the scene, as an Eggman Battleship passes overhead, releasing a swarm of flying robots.

TAILS: We've got to get her out of here. I'm sounding a retreat!

SONIC: Go on ahead! I've got something that I need to finish.

Cut to the crater left by the satellite gun's blast. Infinite crawls out, glowing with renewed red energy.

INFINITE: GRAAAAAAH!

Eggman floats down.

EGGMAN: How disappointing. A stalemate. At least it was fun to watch. Those giant copies of yourself really were a nice touch.

INFINITE: I'M NOT DONE. I'll hunt down each and every last one of them.

EGGMAN: Afraid not. You've used up nearly all of the Phantom Ruby's energy.

INFINITE: Then give me **more power**. Don't tell me this is all you've got.

EGGMAN: Any more than what I'm giving you, and you'd be a threat to the very fabric of reality itself. You'll just have to make do.

INFINITE: Or...

Infinite grabs Eggman out of his seat, and holds him by the lapels.

INFINITE: I could **take it**.

Sonic boosts into Infinite, knocking him back. Sonic stands before the prone Eggman as Infinite regains his footing.

SONIC: Well, Doctor. Seems like your perfect plan has gone and backfired on you, just like they always do. What do you say I clean up this little mess of yours, and we'll call it a day.

INFINITE: FOOL. You are nothing and I am a GOD.

SONIC: Heh. Who says I can't kill god?

Cut to Tails, carrying Emm. Emm stirs.

EMM: Put me down, I'm okay. Just needed to catch my breath.

Tails lowers her to the ground, and she stumbles forward. All around, the descending wave of robots is unleashing laser blasts, devastating what is left of the city.

TAILS: Are you sure?

EMM: I'm sure. I can help round up survivors. Where did Sonic go?

Cut to Sonic and Infinite, two blurs speeding across the landscape, attacking back and forth as they go. They make their way up a still-standing skyscraper and clash head-to-head on the roof.

SONIC: What's wrong? Getting tired? Where's all that limitless energy from before?

INFINITE: Raah! Enough of this!

He summons a ball of pure black energy between his hands, and hurls it forward. Sonic moves to dodge back, but the orb grows bigger, and starts to draw loose rubble towards it, like a miniature black-hole. Sonic braces himself, but can't help being sucked forward.

INFINITE: **Drown** in eternal **nothingness**.

He flies off laughing, as Sonic struggles against the pull of the orb. From overhead, Tails spots Sonic, but is too hesitant to approach.

TAILS (internal.) Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again. Not again.

Just as Sonic loses his footing. Emm swings in and grabs his wrist. She struggles against the weight, but is unable to reel her wire in. The tether detaches from the building it was anchored to, and Sonic and Emm are both pulled into the sphere, as Tails looks on in horror.

Chapter 11

Sonic and Emm float in an endless black void. All around them are pixelated shapes with no real coherent form.

SONIC: Woah, where are we?

EMM: Endless black void?

SONIC: Oh yeah, I see that now. Any ideas on how we get out of here?

Emm pulls out the second prototype ruby, and clutches it in her hand, concentration lining her face. Nothing happens.

EMM: Hmm, nothing. Seems like I can't make it work in here. What've you got?

SONIC: We run.

EMM: We run? And that's going to free us from 'eternal nothingness'?

SONIC: Sure, why not? Seems to work for every other situation I find myself in.

EMM: Alright. Worth a shot. There are survivors out there that need to be evacuated.

SONIC: Yeah. And I've got to let Tails know that I'm okay. Not gonna keep her waiting this time. Are you okay though? You can move alright?

Emm pats herself down.

EMM: Everything's bruised, but nothing's broken. I can run.

SONIC: Glad to hear it. It's gonna take both of us together to get out of this. You ready?

He draws back for another hi-five.

EMM: Born ready.

She does the same. They hi-five as hard as they can. This time, Emm doesn't flinch.

EMM & SONIC: DOUBLE BOOST!

They speed down a pixelated path, their speed seeming to warp the space around them. In the distance, a white light appears.

SONIC: Almost there! Keep it up Rookie!

EMM: RAAAAAAAAAAAH!

They burst out of Null Space and streak through the sky of the destroyed city, cutting a path through the cloud of bots. Cut to Tails on the ground, sobbing. She looks up to see the trail of blue in the sky, and stares in amazement.

Chapter 12

Resistance HQ. Battered and bandaged soldiers are all around. Cut to Knuckles, alone in a darkened room with Vector and Espio.

KNUCKLES: I screwed up. We lost so many... I don't think there's any way I can make this right again.

Cut to Emm, alone in the barracks, staring vacantly at her wispon. Cut to Tails, alone in her workshop, head in her hands. Cut to Shadow, changing the dressing on Rouge's bandaged wing. Cut to Classic Sonic in the medic station, offering a freshly-picked flower to a bedridden Charmy. Cut to Silver, distributing blankets and rations to injured soldiers. Cut to Amy, walking down the hall.

TAILS (off-panel): Amy?

Amy turns to see her.

AMY: Tails, what's wrong?

TAILS: I need help. Can we talk?

Cut to Amy and Tails in an otherwise empty room.

TAILS: Ever since I first faced Infinite, and Sonic... I thought I saw Sonic die... I've been so scared. I can't do anything except run and hide, and it feels so **wrong**. Sonic could have died again today, because I was too cowardly to do anything. I want to go back to the way I was. That's why I need your help. I'm good at fixing machines, but you're good at **people**. So, is there anything you can do?

AMY: Tails, you've just been through six months of grieving. You thought Sonic was dead for that whole time, and even if he isn't, those feelings won't just disappear.

TAILS: What do I do then? Everything I try to do, I just screw up. I can't keep going like this. There's too much at stake. And... I don't think I could handle watching Sonic almost die again. Or actually die. I just want all of this to be over.

AMY: It's okay to feel that way. I mean, hell, I'm feeling the same thing. Sonic's disappearance affected me too. Of course it did.

TAILS: But you've been handling it better than me. You actually spent the last six months being useful.

AMY: Maybe I'm just processing it differently from you. Helping the resistance is how I'm dealing with my emotions. If you need to find a different way to cope, that's fine, even if it means stepping away from everything.

TAILS: I don't want that. Not while the world is at stake.

AMY: What **do** you want?

TAILS: I just want... I want to be ready to face Infinite, the next time we see him. And I want my confidence back.

AMY: Well, you've already faced him twice now.--

TAILS: Three times.

AMY: Three times. And even if those were bad experiences, you can use that to prepare for the next one. The fear you're feeling doesn't have to be your enemy. Fear is there to keep us alive, and it sure seems like it's done that for you. Just because you're afraid doesn't mean you're doomed to fail.

She puts a comforting hand on Tails' shoulder.

AMY: And you're still the same Tails as always, even with all these feelings. You're still as brave, and brilliant, and incredible as always. I know those parts of you will never go away.

TAILS: Thanks... I think... that helps.

AMY: So, what's the next step? You're the genius, I think you should figure out where to go from here.

TAILS: I think... I'll start small. Get one real win under my belt, to break this bad streak and remind myself how it's done.

AMY: I'll look forward to seeing the results, then.

TAILS: Right.

Cut to Tails in her workshop. She stands in front of a large, tarp-covered object.

TAILS (internal): Sorry I've kept you waiting for so long.

She pulls the tarp aside, revealing an inert Omega.

TAILS (internal): It's time to finish what I started.

External shot of the HQ, as it goes from late evening to night. Back in Tails' workshop, Tails has changed into a t-shirt and pajama bottoms, so you know it's real late. She has her laptop open, and lines of code scroll before her.

TAILS (internal): I've been over every line of Omega's code in the past six months. Most of it is way over my head. Artificial sapience... is really something. The thing that stands out though is this block of code in the startup routine. It looks different from everything around it. Judging by

some of the code markers, I'd guess it's sensory data, but beyond that, it's completely impossible to parse. Even more suspicious, it's impossible to delete or circumvent, no matter what I've tried.

She gets a far-off look.

TAILS (internal): Sensory data... if it can be created from scratch, then it's basically just like an illusion. Just how exactly does the Phantom Ruby's reality-warping work? When I saw its effects, it was like a nightmare that got worse the more scared I was. Does it interact with the brainwaves of the people witnessing the effects? Some kind of quantum-field manipulation that creates illusions with actual form and mass?

She holds her head in frustration. Sonic walks by in the background, with an armful of late-night snacks.

TAILS (internal): Ugh, just thinking about it makes my head hurt. It's stupid and impossible and undermines everything I fundamentally understand about reality. How am I supposed to compete with that?

Her eyes go wide with a sudden realization.

TAILS (internal): Wait a minute, if I'm right, then maybe--

Sonic grabs her by the waist and picks her up from behind.

TAILS: Wah!

SONIC: Sorry kiddo, you know the deal. If I catch you up working past 1:00am, I have to drag you back to bed before you wreck your circadian rhythm. It's been a heck of a day. You need to go sleepy.

TAILS: Put me down please.

He does.

TAILS: Can I work just a few more hours? I think I'm close to a breakthrough.

Sonic looks unswayed.

TAILS: Please. I know I can do this. I can get him back online. Just let me try.

Sonic concedes.

SONIC: Okay. I'll go get you a coffee--

He turns to head out.

SONIC: When's the last time you ate?

TAILS: Uhh. Seven hours.

SONIC: -- and some food. Did you take your spiro and E?

TAILS: Yeah, I remembered.

SONIC: Good. I'll check on you again in a little bit, okay.

TAILS: Thanks.

As Sonic walks through the door, Tails calls out to him.

TAILS: Hey Sonic?

SONIC: What's up?

TAILS: Try not to die again. Once was enough for me, thanks.

Sonic grins.

SONIC: You know me. I always get through by the skin of my teeth. You don't have anything to worry about. I'm not going anywhere.

Tails smiles back.

TAILS: I'm counting on it. Love you, buddy.

SONIC: You too, Tails.

Later, we see a few dirty dishes and an empty coffee mug stacked in Tails' work area.

TAILS (internal): I think Omega must have had a run-in with the Phantom Ruby, or at least one of the prototypes, since he went offline before Infinite ever showed up.

Tails produces her own prototype, and adheres a few wires to it, which run back into her laptop.

TAILS (internal): If I can figure out how it interacts with computer systems, I might be able to reverse the effect.

She types a few keystrokes, and her screen goes red and glitchy. Her laptop starts to glow and shake, as space wobbles and distorts around it. Tails hurriedly yanks the wires off.

TAILS: Yeeh!

TAILS (internal): Okay, bad idea. Even if I could analyze it, it could be months before I figure out how to use it. Right now I can only theorize the **basic principle** behind it, and just barely at that. This might all be too complex for me...

She looks discouraged for a moment, but then comes back with a determined look.

TAILS (internal): So how did Emm do it?

She looks at the ruby, then at Omega. She holds the gem to her chest and closes her eyes.

TAILS (internal): Please...

Her body glows with a soft red light.

TAILS (internal): ... Wake up...

The scene is still for a moment, and then Omega's eyes flicker to life. Tails looks down, and the ruby crumbles to sand in her hands.

Chapter 13

Same scene as before. Tails is looking Omega over from all angles.

TAILS: Woah, did I do it? Are you working now? Is all your data in the right place? How do your servos feel? Say something vengeful and angry so I know your language processors are working. Try saying 'ANNIHILATE'. Can you do that?

OMEGA: Tails.

TAILS: Close enough. Hi, Omega! I fixed you. You're welcome.

OMEGA: For what purpose?

TAILS: Huh? You weren't working, so I fixed you. Do you need more reason than that? Here, try moving around a little. Make sure everything's working.

Omega rotates his arm joints, and flexes his fingers.

OMEGA: Motor efficiency has increased by 12.8 percent. Why?

TAILS: Oh, while I was taking you apart for diagnostics, I did some tune-ups. Replaced a few worn joints, re-calibrated your servos, greased a few hinges. Sorry, I can't help myself when I'm tinkering. How does it feel?

OMEGA: ... Optimal.

TAILS: Have you... **never** had maintenance done?

OMEGA: Affirmative.

TAILS: That's... kind of depressing. I'm glad I could help though.

OMEGA: Why? I was unable to destroy Eggman's latest creation. For what purpose was I fixed?

TAILS: I don't know, I guess for a bunch of reasons. You've always been really strong, so I thought you'd be able to help the resistance. I've been... kinda doubting my abilities lately, so I also did it to help myself. Really I mainly just... wanted to do something nice.

OMEGA: Explain.

TAILS: I guess it's kind of a long story. I actually managed to recover part of an E-Series hard drive from the Egg carrier way back when. So I was able to recover enough memory data to know a little bit about your line and what you went through, and it's always bothered me. I mean, Eggman does something truly incredible; he creates true AI. Sapient, independent machines, capable of learning and growth, with your own personalities. That's way more advanced than anything I could hope to build. But then he goes on to treat you like objects anyway; locking you up, or discarding you, or rebuilding you to suit his own purposes. It doesn't sit right with me. I

know it's strange, considering all the horrible things Eggman's done, but that's the one that really gets under my skin.

OMEGA: So you pitied me.

TAILS: No, that's not it! I just think you deserve to be treated kindly. Like everyone does.

OMEGA: Eggman robots deserve no such treatment. I will destroy them all!

TAILS: Say you do complete your mission and destroy everything Eggman's ever created. What then? Don't you think you should have some people in your life who care about you? Trust me, that stuff's important.

OMEGA: Irrelevant. I will destroy **all** of Eggman's machines.

TAILS: What, you're going to go out like Gamma did, then?

She gets up in his face.

TAILS: Sorry dude, no dice. Not gonna happen.

OMEGA: ???

TAILS: When I work on a machine for long enough, I get sentimentally attached. That's why I'll always rebuild the tornado, even if it crashes a hundred more times. And I worked for **six months** getting your janky metal butt working again, so like it or not, I'm invested in your personal well-being. Sorry not sorry. If you hate Eggman robots so much, then stop thinking of yourself that way.

OMEGA: Illogical. I cannot change the facts of my creation.

TAILS: That's not what I mean. Even if you were created by Eggman, he created you with free will. The chance to live your own life and become your own person. You have the ability to define that however you want.

Omega is silent.

TAILS: That's something I had to figure out for myself too. I mean, my parents weren't exactly great people either. Nothing compared to Eggman, obviously, but they never treated me well. I guess they just wanted a normal kid, but instead, they got me with my weird brain and my freaky extra tail. They were never shy about reminding me how different I was, and that was **before** they knew about my big, messy closet full of gender feelings. I spent the earliest years of my childhood wishing I was someone else. It wasn't until I met Sonic that I actually learned to like being me. He taught me that the things that make me different are actually my best qualities. So yeah...

She smiles.

TAILS: Even if Eggman is your creator, I think your real family are the people who make you feel good to just be yourself. That's how it's always been for me, anyway.

Omega is still silent.

TAILS: You're being awfully quiet. Maybe I should do another diagnostic. Make sure I really got rid of all that malicious code.

Omega opens a chest panel, revealing a number of ports.

OMEGA: Proceed.

Tails takes her laptop in one hand, crawls onto Omegas lap, and starts connecting wires.

TAILS: You're actually pretty warm when you're up and running. I guess your core puts out a lot of energy.

She yawns.

OMEGA: Affirmative.

TAILS: And your cooling fans... sound really soothing.

Tails refocuses on her work, but the past-her-bedtimeness of it all is starting to show.

TAILS: Keep talking to me. What's on your mind?

OMEGA: Everything you have said. I have been... questioning, lately. My mission, my purpose, the way I go about existing. I have spent so many years bent on nothing but destruction, and yet, I feel no closer to absolution. I desire for something to change, but on the nature of that change, I am unsure.

A pause, and then Omega looks down. Tails has fallen asleep in his lap, her head resting on his chest. Cut to Infinite, inside a darkened Eggman facility. The core of the reactor beneath Metropolis, in fact.

INFINITE (internal): Eggman hasn't shown his face again since our last encounter. Pathetic coward. Just as well. He is nothing more than a mere hindrance to me now.

Infinite flips some switches, and moves a big lever until it rests all the way on the end of a big red danger zone.

INFINITE (internal): Time to reveal my **true** power.

Chapter 14

Tails is asleep in bed, and the scene is cast in an ominous red light. Sonic bursts into the room, holding a to-go coffee.

SONIC: Tails Tails Tails Tails Tails Tails. Wakeup wakeup wakeup wakeup!

Tails slowly sits up and rubs her face.

TAILS: Uhhhhhg. What time's it?

Sonic rummages through Tails' dresser drawers.

SONIC: Time to save the world, buddy. Everything's gone completely hecked and we need your big giant nerd brain to think of a way to make us all not die!

He throws a pair of overalls at Tails. They hit her in the face.

SONIC: Get dressed, we gotta move.

Tails drags herself out of bed and starts changing out of her pajamas.

TAILS: Is it... dawn? Come on, man, you know I was up late.

SONIC: And whose fault is that?

TAILS: You enabled me.

SONIC: Fair enough. Here's coffee.

He shoves the cup at her as she does the buttons on her outfit.

TAILS: Oh yeah! I got Omega working! I really did it!

She pauses.

TAILS: I don't remember going to sleep though. Did you bring me back to bed?

SONIC: Nah, when I went to check on you, the shop was already empty. Not exactly our biggest issue now though.

He moves to open the shade over the window into the room. Tails is about to take a sip of coffee.

SONIC: Wait! Don't drink that yet! No sippy!

He opens the shade. Outside, the entire sky is on fire.

TAILS: WAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGH! WHAT THE **FUCK!**

SONIC: Okay, **now** you can sippy.

Cut to Sonic dragging Tails down a hallway. Tails plants her feet and brings them to a stop.

TAILS: Stop pulling! Look, I know the situation is dire, but I'm **barely** awake right now. Could you tone it down **just a little?**

SONIC: Look I-- Okay, I'm sorry. I'm ... kinda freaking out right now. I'm scared.

TAILS: You? That's a first.

SONIC: No, it's not. I'm not always as confident as I look. And right now... I've already lost to Infinite twice. How are we going to beat him now?

Tails is startled at this, but her expression is soon replaced by one of determined confidence. She takes Sonic's hands in her own.

TAILS: Don't worry. I've got a plan.

SONIC: Heh. I knew I could count on you.

Cut to the hellish sky above. Infinite's face appears, projected across it.

INFINITE: People of the resistance. What you see above you is an illusion. But mark my words, if the Resistance has not surrendered by the time the real sun crosses the horizon, then I will give this illusion form, and annihilate the world in a storm of nuclear fire. Until then, I will be on the plains outside of Metropolis. Meet me there, and give yourselves up, or die trying to stop me. Either is acceptable, although I would dearly enjoy it if you chose the latter.

Cut to Knuckles moping in a dark room. ominous red lighting streaks through the gaps in the shades. Amy enters.

AMY: Hey, everyone's gathering for a team meeting. Get moving. You have an army to lead.

KNUCKLES: Nah, not anymore.

AMY: Look, I know you screwed up at Capital City, but--

KNUCKLES: I want you to take over.

AMY: Hm?

KNUCKLES: I was never right for this job. I don't think things through. People died because of it. But you could do better. You've been the one keeping the Resistance going the whole time. You

know how to motivate people, and you're a better planner than I'll ever be. So... you're promoted.

AMY: ... I accept. But don't think I'm going to let you sulk your way through the final battle. I want you on the frontlines with me and everyone else.

KNUCKLES: Yes ma'am!

Chapter 15

Everyone, minus Omega, is gathered in the war room. Amy stands at the head of the group.

AMY: All right, We have about twelve hours to stop Infinite. Fighting him head-on is nearly impossible. What are our options?

TAILS: The way I see it, there are three major fronts. The first is Infinite himself. The second is the source of his power. The third is the sun that's set to kill us all. I have a plan, but we need at least one prototype ruby to make it work.

Emm holds up her remaining prototype.

EMM: I've got this one. I used to have a second, but it broke after I used it once.

TAILS: I got the same result when I used a prototype last night. We should assume that they're not stable enough to withstand multiple uses. That means that if Emm has the only prototype, we have only one shot to use it. Even so, it's a valuable asset. I think that if I can run some tests, I can triangulate the power source it draws from. Just based on some rough, back-of-the-napkin calculations, I have to assume that there's a pretty huge reactor somewhere generating the energy needed to warp reality. It could possibly be using Chaos Emerald power, but as far as I know, all the Emeralds are secure and accounted for, so we'll go with the former assumption. Once I locate the power source, we'll need a team to go and destroy it. That will be the key to stopping Infinite for good.

AMY: We'll need to keep Infinite distracted, if we want that team to have any chance of success.

TAILS: Exactly.

AMY: That's where we'll commit the bulk of the army, then. Since we'll be on the plains instead of Metropolis, we'll be able to send more powerful fighters against Infinite at once. The rest can hang back and deal with any replicas likely to get in our way. Now fighting Infinite directly will be the most dangerous role in this mission, so I won't order anyone to do it. Willing volunteers only. I'll be participating myself, of course.

SILVER: Count me in!

SHADOW: And me.

AMY: Shadow. Nice of you to finally join us again.

SHADOW: Hmp.

KNUCKLES: Err, no thanks. I'm better at crowd control anyway.

EMM: I... already lost to him once. Not sure what I could really do except get in the way.

SONIC: What about the third part? What do we do about the sun?

TAILS: Someone can use the prototype ruby to erase it, in case the other two fronts are lost. It's a last-ditch strategy, but someone could use Imperial Tower to get as close as possible to the sky, and erase as much of the illusion as possible. I recommend Emm for this mission.

EMM: Me?

AMY: Agreed. She's already used a prototype effectively once. Sending her is our most reliable option.

SONIC: Hey, that sounds like fun. Mind if I tag along? I want to see first-hand how far the Rookie's come.

AMY: Sonic, you should be part of the team taking down the power source. That's the one part of this mission that **needs** to succeed.

SONIC: Psssh. Tails can handle that part. I trust her.

He gives tails a thumbs-up.

SONIC: Right, buddy?

Tails looks doubtful at first, but she steels herself.

TAILS. **Right.**

Classic sonic tugs on her arm.

TAILS: Plus, it looks like Classic Sonic wants to join me. Nothing can stop the two of us together!

Omega enters the room.

OMEGA: And me.

Classic Sonic stands protectively between Omega and Tails, and charges the robot. He spin attacks, but Tails flies up and catches him by the ankle before he can connect. Classic, dangling by one leg, crosses his arms impatiently.

TAILS: Hey, no. This is Omega. He's a friend. He may be an Eggman robot, but--

OMEGA: Not anymore.

He points at Tail's logo, which he has drawn on his own shoulder.

OMEGA: Tails, you are someone who cares for the machines she builds. An admirable trait. If it is agreeable to you, I would like to have you as my mechanic.

TAILS: Only if I can have you as a friend.

She offers a handshake. Omega takes it.

OMEGA: Deal.

TAILS: Hell yeah. And did I hear you say you wanted to join us in taking out the power source?

OMEGA: Affirmative. I will annihilate all threats to my friend's safety.

TAILS: Good to have you with us. Now, if I'm not mistaken, we've got a speed-type, a power-type, and a flying-type.

She gestures to Classic, Omega, and then herself.

TAILS: You know what that means, right Omega?

OMEGA: Affirmative.

TAILS: All right, lil' Sonic. Time to teach you about team formations.

Cut to the team preparing for the fight. Silver meditates. Shadow loads bullets into an assault rifle magazine. Amy stares at a giant boulder, about twice as tall as she is. Tails and Omega look over Tails' scanner, which is tracking the power signature from the ruby prototype. Generic soldiers load up on weapons from the Munitions Station. Emm holds a second lightning weapon, getting the feel of it in her off-hand. Sonic walks up and puts a hand on her shoulder. Later, once preparations have been made, everyone is reconvened in the war room.

TAILS: We've located the power source. It's underneath Metropolis.

OMEGA: Blueprints of Eggman facilities in my memory data suggest that it is a large, heavily-fortified power station.

AMY: Right. Only a few hours left. Tails, take your and Emm's teams in the TX3, and head straight to Metropolis. The rest of us, prepare to move out!

Cut to Tails, the two Sonics, Omega, and Emm flying in a larger, 2-seater version of the Tornado II. Omega takes the back seat, while a sonic rides on each wing, and Emm crouches on the tail. Cut to the army, assembled on the plains. Before them is Infinite, glowing with crackling, unstable red energy.

INFINITE: So finally, you have arrived.

AMY: That's right. And we're not here to surrender!

INFINITE: Excellent...

Chapter 16

Infinite raises his hands, and an army of replicas appears on the battlefield. Amy squares off against them, and grips her hammer. Behind her, the Resistance is ready to fight.

Cut to Tails' plane, which is being pursued by a swarm of robots. Sonic and Emm nod to each other, as Tails takes evasive action, dodging a barrage of blaster fire. Sonic gives a casual 'see you later' wave to the others, and throws himself into the swarm. Emm follows close behind. She aims a grappling wire at one of the bots, and unleashes a second wire from the tip of her wispon. She swings through the swarm, lashing her electrified wire from side to side, while Sonic homing attacks his own path of destruction. With the swarm defeated, they fall to the ground with robot parts raining all around them. Without a word, they turn to face the distant Imperial Tower.

Cut to Tails, Classic, and Omega, descending a ladder into the sewer under Metropolis. Tails, checks her tablet, then points to an innocuous wall. Omega blasts it down with a missile. Behind it is a small room with a security door marked with Eggman's face-logo. Tails stands before it, visibly nervous. But she looks to Classic and Omega behind her, shakes it off, and starts hacking the door.

Cut to the battle scene. Below on the ground, soldiers and replicas attack back and forth. Shadow mows down waves of enemies with a gatling gun. Is it the same gatling gun Tails was using to fake-flirt with him earlier? It's impossible to say. Silver fights Infinite in the air. The two clash and separate, but neither shows signs of damage. Infinite unleashes a wave of distorted red energy, but silver blocks by raising a shield of rubble. He then hurls the rubble back at his attacker. Infinite easily disintegrates the projectiles with a wave of his hand, but when his field of view is clear, he sees five individual Silvers rushing at him.

ToP: Chaos Technique - Time Travel Silver is the only known user of this technique. By travelling backwards in time by a few seconds, Silver can create multiple instances of himself in the same time frame. With access to chaos emeralds, the range of their time travel greatly extends, to a maximum of a few centuries.

Infinite glares, dodging the barrage of Silvers, then raises both of his hands and summons dozens of replicas of himself. The Silvers circle back to back, preparing to face the tide of foes.

Sonic and Emm boost to the base of the tower, crashing through a crowd of robots. Emm grapples up to a higher level, pulling Sonic after her.

Team Tails rushes past a series of deadly obstacles, with Classic in the lead. Flying robots circle around them and attack with sweeping laser beams, but the team switches to flying formation, and Tails thunder shoots Classic and Omega in twin arcs, wiping out the wave. While in midair, Classic and Tails circle around Omega, and he fire-dunks them at a crowd of armored robots gathering below.

Overhead, multiple Silvers sweep through the crowd of Infinites. Each Silver appears for only a few seconds, before disappearing to the past or future again, but new ones are traveling in to replace the ones that go away. Amy plants both feet on the ground, and unpockets the giant boulder from earlier. She holds it over her head with both hands, straining at the weight, then tosses it towards a group of enemies with all her might. Knuckles jumps up after the boulder, and punches it so hard that it shatters and catches fire. The rock fragments rain down like meteors, wiping out dozens of replicas. Meanwhile, two new Silvers appear behind the real Infinite, and attempt to catch him off-guard, but their attacks bounce off his barrier, and without turning around, Infinite knocks them back with an energy wave.

Robots close in on Team Tails from all sides. The team fights valiantly, destroying bots one-by-one, but they close in, overwhelming the heroes with sheer numbers. Tails gives Omega a hand-signal, then dives to the ground for cover, shielding Classic with her body. Omega points his fists straight up, then fires a salvo of missiles from his hands which veer off in all directions, and explode all around, wiping out almost the entire crowd.

Sonic and Emm hop from platform to platform, making their way up the tower. Emm takes out a few bots with her whip, and proceeds to wall-jump up a narrow corridor, while Sonic opts to run straight up the wall. They land on the next level, and prepare to charge forward, when a pillar of laser fire descends from the sky, cutting them off. They turn and bolt in the other direction as the laser creeps towards them.

Amy holds a ring in one hand, with her gaze trained on Infinite, who is clashing with Silver again. Knuckles sees what she's about to do, and yells out the only line of dialogue in this chapter.

KNUCKLES: LIGHTSPEED HAMMER INCOMING! BRACE YOURSELVES!

The Resistance members all start running away from Infinite, and taking cover behind whatever rocks and rubble they can find. All the Silvers retreat as well. Amy narrows her eyes, completely focused on her target.

ToP: Chaos Technique - Lightspeed Dash A moderately advanced use of Chaos Control. By compressing space between oneself and the target ring, the user can move at physics-breaking speeds. This technique is typically used to instantly traverse a long line of rings with little space in between them.

Amy throws the ring as hard as she can. It travels towards Infinite in a clean arc, until it is right in front of his face.

ToP: However, the greater one's skill at compression...

Amy appears before Infinite in a blur, with her hammer in mid-swing. She bludgeons Infinite right in the midsection at relativistic speed.

ToP: ... The greater the distance one can travel.

The hit actually shatters Infinite's barrier, and sends him flying back. The shockwave from the impact ripples out, blowing up dust, and knocking a few soldiers off their feet. Infinite is stunned, and actually hurt for the first time in months. He clutches his ribs and doubles over. Amy's hammer is completely destroyed, and she is left holding a shattered stump of the haft. She tosses it aside, and unpockets a pair of brass knuckles, making them appear directly on her hands. She then unpockets two big handfuls of rings, and chucks them both Infinite's way. The rings scatter all around, as Infinite looks on in panic. Amy dashes to the first ring, one right beside Infinite, and sends him flying towards the next ring with a punch. She dashes again, appearing beside Infinite a second time, and repeats. She knocks the jackal all around the diminishing cloud of rings, sending out shockwaves with each blow. It's some very DBZ shit. For the final blow, Amy is lined up for another head-on attack, with the ring right in front of infinite. Amy unpockets the spiked baseball bat, and raises it overhead to deliver the finishing blow. Infinite reaches out, and in a desperate, reflexive move, grabs the ring in front of him. With no ring to dash to, Amy quickly realizes that gravity exists, and starts to fall. Shadow teleports in and catches her with one arm. With the other, he holds up three grenades, with the pins pulled. He teleports right in front of Infinite, and overturns his hand, dropping the explosives. He teleports away again, taking Amy with him, just as the bombs explode.

The grenades erupt in a cloud of smoke and fire. Infinite falls out of the sky, trailing smoke behind him. His mask is cracked, and his body is battered from Amy's assault. He regains his senses before falling too far, and rights himself in midair. But Silver is before him, and they raise two giant boulders up from the ground. They slam the rocks together, catching Infinite between them. Silver grins victoriously for a moment, but the expression vanishes when he sees that Infinite has conjured a pair of clawed, glowing red arms, and is holding the boulders apart. His eye burns with red, distorted light. The sun above burns intensely red, casting the scene in bright, saturated crimson.

Chapter 17

Red lightning begins to crackle down from the sky, and storm winds kick up clouds of dust all around the battlefield.

INFINITE: You fools.

Amy gazes up, struggling to keep the fear out of her expression.

INFINITE: You think you can hurt me? You think you can **touch** me? IMPOSSIBLE! **I am INFINITE!**

He raises his hands with lightning flashing all around. His replica army dissolves, and the red, distorted energy making them up converges and masses together at a single point.

Cut to Emm and Sonic. The peak of the tower is in sight. Emm grapples, and launches the pair upward as hard as she can manage.

Cut to Team Tails. Before them is a gate with a sign reading 'Reactor Core'. Behind them is an army of smashed robots. Omega smashes the lock on the gate, and the doors rumble open.

Cut to the battlefield. The mass of red distortion starts to shape. It forms four legs, then a tail, then a head, then wings, then a second head, then a third. It looks like some horrible chimeric amalgamation of Perfect Chaos, Metal Overlord, and the Biolizard. The Resistance army is a scattered colony of ants before its massive size.

INFINITE: **Disappear.**

The three heads each fire a beam of dark, Null Space energy out of their mouths. The beams sweep through the resistance ranks, and in a few seconds, half the combatants have vanished. The rest run in all directions, trying to avoid the same fate, but one by one, they are swept up. Vector, Espio, Knuckles, Amy, Silver, Shadow. And then the battlefield is empty, save for Infinite and the nightmarish being he has created.

The army has vanished to Null Space. Countless soldiers look around, confused and scared.

KNUCKLES: What the hell was that?

SILVER: Did... did we just lose?

AMY: No, there's still a chance.

Sonic and Emm stand on top of the Imperial Tower, staring up at the violent, red sky.

AMY (narration): We just have to believe in the others.

Sonic leaps into the air, as high as he can, then turns back towards Emm, and reaches out his hand. Emm shoots a wire at him, and he catches it. Sonic then starts spinning in midair, the

rotation giving momentum to Emm's flight path as she reels in the wire and flings herself straight at the sun.

EMM (internal): So I never got my shot at defeating Infinite after all. That's okay though.

She flies through the air, feet from the sun, then inches. She holds up her prototype ruby.

EMM (internal): I was still able to help. With my own strength, in my own way. And with the support of my friends.

Her body begins to glow red as her hand touches the sun.

EMM (internal): I'm really glad that I got to do this.

The red light intensifies, then emanates out from her body in a wave. It dissolves the sun as it passes through it, wiping away the stormy, apocalyptic red, and revealing placid evening blue, as if the sun was never there in the first place. The wave of energy sweeps out past the boundaries of the city, and erases the chimera monster as well. The disoriented Resistance appears back on the ground as the last of the Null Space is cleared away. The light of Infinite's Phantom Ruby flickers out as the red wave passes through it, and Infinite falls out of the sky, crashing hard to the dusty earth. He rolls onto his back, and tries to regain his power, but Shadow teleports over him, holding a combat knife.

INFINITE Please... don't kill me...

Shadow brings the knife point down, and shatters the Phantom Ruby on Infinite's chest. He then holds the knife to the jackal's throat.

SHADOW: You killed plenty of ours. It's only fair.

INFINITE: No! Wait!

AMY (off-panel): Shadow!

Shadow turns to look back at the resistance leader.

AMY: Leave him to me.

Shadow glares at Infinite, but then backs down.

SHADOW: Fine. All yours.

Shadow turns to walk away, but Amy stops him.

AMY: Hey!

She extends her hand.

AMY: We won. Congratulations.

Shadow shakes the offered hand.

SHADOW: Yeah.

All around, the resistance is raising a raucous cry of celebration.

Atop the Imperial Tower, Sonic helps an exhausted Emm back to her feet.

EMM: Hey... that was pretty cool.

SONIC: Sure was.

Sonic's radio crackles to life.

TAILS (via radio): Sonic! Mayday, we need help!

SONIC: Tails! What's happening?

TAILS (via radio): We messed up! We found the reactor, but it's... the reactor...

Cut to the reactor interior, where the immense Death Egg Robot looms over a cavernous underground chamber. Team Tails is diminutive before it.

TAILS: It's a robot!

Cut to the cockpit of the robot, where Eggman sits confidently.

EGGMAN: That's right, fools! And this robot isn't just the guardian of an immeasurable power core. It also contains...

Cut to Tails panicked face.

EGGMAN (off-panel): The **second** Phantom Ruby!

Chapter 18

Sonic looks apologetically at Emm.

SONIC: Sorry, Rookie. I know that took a lot out of you.

He holds up his hand for a hi-five.

SONIC: Think you're up for one more?

Emm grits her teeth.

EMM: Let's go.

They hi-five with all their strength.

EMM & SONIC: **DOUBLE BOOST!**

They run straight down the side of the tower, and dive down the manhole into the sewer. They rush past obstacles, charging at blinding speed through the confined halls of the power plant. Tails, Classic, and Omega are dodging attacks from the Death Egg robot, and retaliating with attacks of their own, but nothing seems to have any effect. Just as the robot is about to unleash a massive laserbeam, Sonic and Emm crash into the red panel in the center of its chest, knocking it backwards. The laser goes errant, and cuts a deep line into the ceiling. Sonic and Emm land in cool poses.

SONIC: Hey, hope we didn't keep you waiting.

EMM: 'Sup.

TAILS: Nah, it's cool. Nice timing, actually.

A loud 'THUD' sounds from the Death Egg Robot. Something is beating against the inside of the chest from behind the cracked red panel. A smaller robot bursts out, white, with a tentacled, alien design. The power of the Phantom Ruby radiated out from it, consuming the heroes, and dragging them all into Null Space. It then unleashes a barrage of missiles, lasers, and streams of fire. Tails and Classic Sonic narrowly dodge a laser beam.

TAILS (internal): This is all so much. A robot with Infinite's power? I don't know how we can beat it. I just want everyone to be safe. I can't lose a friend again.

With a determined glare, she thunder shoots Classic at the robot, knocking aside the tentacle firing the laser.

TAILS (internal): But I won't give up. The only way to win is if we're all together. After all...

Sonic jumps over a trail of fire. He homing-attacks the robot's body, destabilizing it momentarily.

SONIC: (internal): ... My friends are here, and they support me just as much as I support them. There's no way we can lose! This is just another Eggman robot...

Omega capitalizes on the opening, Jumping straight towards the robot, and blasting it point-blank with his flamethrowers.

OMEGA (internal): ... And I am much more than that.

Emm grapples the robot with both wires, and launches herself at it. She lands on its head, Points both weapons directly at its face, and unleashes a double electricity blast that courses through the robot's body.

EMM (internal): I know I can do this.

She lands in front of the others. The robot is momentarily vulnerable.

SONIC: Alright, y'all. What do you say we end this in one shot?

OMEGA: Affirmative.

TAILS: Yeah!

EMM: Let's fuckin do it.

They all fly at the robot, and then hold hands in a big circle and spin around, because who fucking cares about physics at this point. They spin faster and faster, and this somehow builds up forward momentum. Look, It Just Works.

SONIC, TAILS, EMM, & OMEGA: **PENTA-BOOST!!**

The five blast forward, and tear a hole straight through the center of the robot. It explodes in a blinding flash, and when the light fades, everyone is back in the power plant.

Everything is still for a moment, as everyone processes their surroundings. Slowly they realize that it's finally over.

EMM: Hey, I think we won.

SONIC: Yeah, think so.

They both grin, and then Emm, Sonic, and Tails let out simultaneous cheers of victory.

SONIC: WHOOOO!

TAILS: ALL RIGHT!

EMM: EAT SHIIIIIT!

Tails gives Omega a big hug, and Sonic fist bumps his younger self. Emm collapses on the floor.

EMM: I think my legs are gonna fall off. Running should be like, illegal for the next week or so.

Tails flops down beside her.

TAILS: Huugh. Now that the adrenaline's wearing off, my body's remembering that it's running on about two hours of sleep. I wanna... bed.

SONIC: What, you're both tired? I could do with another boss fight or two. Think Eggman's got any more giant robots lying around this place?

TAILS: Nooooo, don't jinx it. I just wanna lie down and not fight any robots for another year or two.

Sonic lies down beside the other two. Omega and Classic sit down as well.

SONIC: Alright, I guess taking a break wouldn't kill me. It's been a long war.

EMM: You have no idea.

SONIC: You all did great. Emm, You've grown so much since I met you. And Tails, I'm proud of you, leading your own mission and being so reliable. I've gotta keep reminding myself that you're not a little kid anymore. You're eighteen and everything.

TAILS: Nineteen.

Sonic sits bolt upright.

SONIC: AWW CRAP, I missed your birthday while I was in space!

TAILS: You missed your own funeral.

SONIC: Woah, that's a trip. Still though, I'm sorry I was gone so long. I've gotta make it up to you somehow.

TAILS: That's okay. You don't have to do anything special. But if... we could stay like this for a little while longer. I just... want to enjoy the fact that you're still here. Even after all we've been through.

Sonic moves his hand towards Tails. She holds it in her own.

SONIC: And I'm not going anywhere.

EMM: Gaaaaaaaay.

SONIC: Shut up. We can hold hands platonically.

EMM: Platonically gaaaaaay.

Chapter 19

Infinite sits alone in a room at Resistance HQ. His mask is gone, and he has a metal plate affixed over his right eye. He is visibly nervous, but tries to hide it behind an intimidating expression. Amy walks into the room.

AMY: Hello, Infinite. Or is there another name I should call you now that you're no longer Eggman's weapon?

INFINITE: Just Infinite.

AMY: All right, then. Let me explain what's going to happen now that you're under the care of the resistance.

INFINITE: Don't sugar coat it, Rose. I'm your prisoner, and we both know it.

AMY: That's not how I want to look at it. There's no chains or cages here. No torture, no interrogations. That's not how we do things.

INFINITE: But you're not going to let me go, either.

AMY: Not right away. You kept Sonic confined for six months, so I think it's only fair we do the same. After that, you're free to go. No questions asked.

INFINITE: Six months? Why should I believe you? If you let me go, then I'd be free to kill whoever I want. Don't think that that doesn't include **you**.

Amy shrugs.

Without your powers, you're not that much of a threat. Even if you do go back to wreaking havoc, it's a minor concern at best.

INFINITE: And what's to stop me from just running?

AMY: Well, obviously we have both Sonic and Shadow on our team, and they're pretty much tied for being the least outrunnable.

Infinite springs out of his chair and gets up in Amy's face. She doesn't flinch.

INFINITE: Is that a **threat**? You think you can **scare** me? Even without the Phantom Ruby, I'm still **dangerous**. Don't FUCK with me, Rose.

AMY: I'll keep that in mind. Now please sit down.

Infinite snarls at her, but realizing he doesn't have any better options, he does as she asks.

AMY: As I was saying, we're not going to interrogate you, but we are going to talk. Every day. Not forcibly though. We only talk for as long as you want to. You could tell me to fuck off right now, and I'd leave.

INFINITE: Then why would I tell you anything at all?

AMY: Got anything else to do?

INFINITE: Fine, I'll bite. What do you want to know?

AMY: I want to know about **you**. Let's start with the obvious. Why join up with Eggman? And don't tell me it's for the money. Every organized fighting force on the planet sees Eggman as an enemy. Work with him, and you're basically destroying your future career options as a mercenary.

INFINITE: Maybe I just wanted to be on the winning side. Eggman's powerful. Seemed like the smart choice.

AMY: Then you're either stupid, or you're completely unaware of Eggman's track record. Sonic and the rest of us have beaten him **every time**.

INFINITE: Fine, you want to know the REAL reason?

He grins, showing all his teeth.

INFINITE: It's the **fear**. There are two types of people in this world; those who inspire terror, and those pathetic, cowering things who run from us. There's no other rush like it. Why **else** would anyone want to play the villain?

Amy considers this for a moment.

AMY: Well, that's certainly an attractive worldview. Especially if you find yourself in the former category. But here's what I think: people are messy and multidimensional, and any time you try to boil them down to a simple member of a binary category, you're dramatically oversimplifying things. So, Infinite...

She steeple her fingers.

AMY: ... What makes **you** feel afraid?

Infinite snarls.

INFINITE: This conversation is **over**.

Amy stands up and turns to leave.

AMY: Very well. I'll see you tomorrow. But before I go, that last question obviously struck a nerve. I'd encourage you to think critically about why that is.

INFINITE: **Leave.**

She does. She passes Shadow in the hallway, who is reclining against the wall.

SHADOW: How'd it go?

AMY: Hmm. Hard to say. I want to do everything in my power to make him open to changing for the better, but it's a tricky situation. I at least learned that he has a psychological need to establish dominance through fear. Probably caused by some deep-seated insecurity of his own. That's the way these things usually are.

SHADOW: You think it's even worth trying to redeem this creep? He's killed a lot of people who didn't deserve it.

AMY: I don't know. He's a monstrous war criminal, and I don't know if I can fix that with a little talk therapy. I just know that I wouldn't feel right if I didn't at least try.

SHADOW: And what if six months passes and nothing has changed?

AMY: Then I suppose you'll figure out your own solution to that problem.

SHADOW: Hmm.

AMY: By the way, what's **your** connection to Infinite? He got awfully jumpy when I mentioned your name. You two have history?

Shadow scowls in deep concentration.

SHADOW (internal): Hmm, a one-eyed jackal....

SHADOW: Nope. I've got nothing.

Epilogue

After the war, things are slowly being rebuilt. Former resistance soldiers are working on numerous construction projects across the city. Silver uses their telekinesis to put together the frame of a house in seconds. Omega, carrying an armload of I-beams, looks up at Tails, who is welding metal high up on the scaffolding around a damaged building.

Vector and Espio welcome Charmy as they are released from the hospital, having made a full recovery.

Knuckles, Rouge, and a few generic soldiers raise a toast to their victory. And pour one out for their fallen comrades.

Big and froggy sit side-by-side in front of a placid jungle lake.

Cream wipes her brow, and surveys the mountain of dismembered bots that she and her chao have defeated.

Blaze steps through an interdimensional portal, and hesitantly greets Silver and the others working on reconstruction. Silver enthusiastically throws an arm over her shoulder, and makes a joke at her expense. Blaze looks awkward at first, but soon she's laughing along with the others.

Infinite and Amy talk more. The expression on Infinite's face is a more honest and vulnerable one.

Shadow stands alone on a dark, moonless night, having a nice, quiet brood.

In the city, Tails stands facing Classic Sonic and Blaze.

TAILS: Thanks for everything, Sonic. We couldn't have done it without you. I'd love it if you could stay longer, but you should get back to your own dimension before your Eggman can start causing trouble again.

Classic nods. Tails offers a handshake, but Classic slaps her open hand, turning it into a hi-five.

BLAZE: See ya, Tails. Let's catch up sometime.

TAILS: Yeah. I'm looking forward to it.-- Oh yeah.

She produces a small wrapped present and hands it to Classic.

TAILS: Give this to the other Tails for me, okay? And... tell her I love her.

Classic gives a thumbs-up. Then takes hold of Blaze's hand. She creates another fire portal, and the pair walk through.

Emm stands atop a tall building overlooking the city. Sonic walks up behind her.

SONIC: So, I hear you're heading out soon?

EMM: Yeah. I figure I want to keep moving. See what else is out there in the world. See what I can do to help.

SONIC: Yeah. I'll feel better knowing you're out there.

EMM: What about you? Got any plans?

SONIC: Nah. I think I'll hang around here for a while. I owe it to Tails and the others. I can't go and disappear again so soon after I've gotten back.

EMM: Makes sense.

SONIC: Plus, I hear Tails got herself a shiny new robot boyfriend, so obviously I want to stick around and see how that plays out. Maybe offer myself as a source of wise, older-brotherly advice for this new chapter in her life.

EMM: Pff. The fuck do you know about dating?

SONIC: Absolutely nothing.

Emm grins.

EMM: Yeah, well good luck. I hate long, awkward goodbyes, so...

She offers a fist bump. Sonic accepts.

EMM: Later, dude.

She leaps off the building, and throws out her grappling wire. She swings down, redirecting her momentum so that, when she hits the ground, she is running at top speed.

ToP: Emm

- Age: 27
- Pronouns: She/her
- Species: Bun
- Likes: Her friends, herself, saving the world, running
- Dislikes: Long, awkward goodbyes

Cut to Classic Tails, opening the present from her modern counterpart. It's a tube of mascara and an eyeliner pen. She doesn't know what they're for yet, but she'll figure it out.

Cut to Eggman, in a darkened laboratory, similar to the one where Infinite was implanted with the Phantom Ruby.

EGGMAN: That was the most fun I've had in a while. This newcomer has certainly caught my attention. She came out of nowhere, and stood up to my ultimate creation, despite being a complete unknown mere months ago. More than that, she managed to activate a prototype ruby **twice**, so she must have considerable strength of conviction. If properly challenged...

Eggman turns to a glass pillar, which encases a Metal Sonic-style robot doppelganger of Emm, with sharp features and piercing black eyes.

EGGMAN: ... She could prove to be a worthy rival indeed.

END