Antoine D'Coolette and the AFFs: Diplomatic Mission.

by usuario99

Summary

Dear Reader, I invite you to follow the adventures of the new team of Freedom Fighters,
consisting of: Miles Prower, the scientific genius with his Armor of Advanced Technology; is parents, the expert Colonel Amadeus Prower and the agile and undetectable agent Rosemary Prower; the beautiful and electrifying -literally- Tails' girlfriend, Fiona Fox; the strong and determined Bunnie Rabbott, and her boyfriend, Antoine D'Coolette, a young Mercia soldier with great potential and many tricks up her sleeve. Accompany the Alternative Freedom Fighters while they, joining forces with GUN and their "Team Dark", fight all kinds of enemies: ex-boyfriends with a desire for revenge; criminals from parallel universes; evil versions of Mobius inhabitants; conspirators who seek to awaken ancient wicked and very powerful magicians; the Dark Egg Legion, and one of its leaders, who is also associated with one of the members of the AFF. Meanwhile, controversial data will be revealed about King Maximilian Acorn, as well as several negative aspects of General Armand D'Coolette, Antoine's father.

Notes

This is the second part of my series on this team of Freedom Fighters. I recommend reading the first part, "Origins", before reading this story. Please comment on this story.
Chapter 1: Holidays and Mercenaries, Part 1.

It's 11:00 AM in Station Square, and the passenger ships take off and land at the Airport. This is one of the city-states that make up the United Federation, which is one of the main nations of Mobius, and now the only one made up mainly of humans instead of mobians.

12,000 years ago, the planet Mobius was known as "Earth", and humans were the dominant species on the entire surface. Their technology wasn't as developed as it's now, but nuclear power was already being used for electricity, and the fastest ways to travel were either through trains capable of traveling at 300 kilometers per hour, or through airplanes that worked with turbines and could travel at speeds several times greater than that of sound. Not counting the billions of animal species on the planet, there were almost 8 billion humans, distributed in approx. 200 completely independent nations. By convention, most humans were governed by a calendar where each year was divided into twelve months that coincided with the cycles of the phases of the Moon, and according to which were approx. in the year 2000, although humans had already begun to exist at least 100 thousand years earlier.

Shortly after the year 2000 in the ancient human calendar, a powerful alien race called "Xorda" had come to Earth to establish contact with humans. However, one of the scientists, Dr. Ivan Kintobor, came up with the idea of taking the Xorda ambassador and "studying" him. When the Xorda learned of what happened, they decided to give an unjust punishment to the entire human race: the Earth was bombarded with "gene bombs", customized to exterminate the human race exclusively. As a result, not only did this breed almost disappear, but many animals evolved and became the various races of the mobian species. Despite the deadly bombing, some groups of humans survived: some groups mutated and became the aggressive Overlanders, while several other groups were sheltered in special shelters...

"The humans of these shelters created the city-states that make up the United Federation today."

Tails is narrating, as briefly as he can, the story of the most recent 12,000 years of Mobius's history, and explaining the origins of the United Federation and its inhabitants. His audience are his parents, Amadeus and Rosemary, and so are his girlfriend, Fiona, and his teammates, Bunnie and Antoine.

"Central City, which is the capital, Empire City, Westopolis, Spagonia, the Duchy of Soleanna, Apotos, Shamar, Chun-Nan, and the Republic of Station Square, which is where we're now."

That group of six mobians, the Alternative Freedom Fighters, are walking through the central hall of the Airport, after arriving from the Kingdom of Acorn. The two-tailed fox carries several backpacks, bags and suitcases, all of which are full, and some of them are carried with the help of their teammates, who also carry their own luggage with them.

"A year ago, that is, six months before you arrived, we went on a mission to Station Square, where a destroyer god named 'Chaos' was destroying the city." Bunnie continues the story, being heard by the Tails' parents. "The monster was powered by the power of the Super-Emeralds, which previously supplied electric power to the city. Therefore, Sonic, Tails and an echidna named Knuckles used the original Chaos Emeralds to transform into their respective Super forms, and thus defeated Chaos. When Eggman resurfaced, the then President of Station Square pledged to help us in the war, and now the rest of the Federation is considering joining us as well, especially now that the President of Station Square became the President of all the Federation. The Heritage Project was also launched, thanks to which the Overlanders became citizens of the Federation's city-states, especially Station Square. This was how Commander Abraham Tower became the Chief of GUN, the Guardian Units..."
of the Nations, which serve the role of the Armed Forces within the Federation." Bunnie turns and speaks to Antoine. "Regarding Chaos' attack, I must mention that Antoine did an excellent job at that time, by assisting and evacuating the people of the city."

"Oh, allons donc, Bunnie... I didn't do a very important job..." the coyote responds modestly.

"I still have a question: How did our calendar originate?" Rosemary asks. "According to the calendar we're using, it's now the year 3237, and our year isn't divided into months."

"Our present calendar was created by the Echidnas." Says Antoine. "According to how little I know about Chaos, the Echidnas were the first to worship him. From them emerged the Brotherhood of Guardians, to which our ally Knuckles belongs, and who's in charge of protecting the echidnas of all Mobius, as well as guard the Master Emerald, which is a powerful magic artifact, similar to the Chaos Emeralds, which is stored on Angel Island. In short, it happens that there were a series of cataclysms that, supposedly, happened throughout the twelve thousand years of Mobius' history. The echidnas called 'Days of Fury' to each of them, and they count the years from the most recent event; they count the days one by one, without dividing the year in the form of months. And that's the origin of our current calendar. We are only counting the last 3237 years, being twelve thousand years in total; therefore, when a new 'Day of Fury' is to occur, the account should be reset to zero and the calendar should be restarted, theoretically. Am I right, Tails?"

Tails smiles, satisfied by the "lesson" of the coyote. "If I were a teacher, I would approve you with a grade of 10. Look, there are the GUN agents that the President sent to receive us."

Tails points to one of the gateways to the airport. Indeed, there are a group of humans, three men and three women, waiting for them. The six agents wear tag suits, guns and GUN plates.

When the AFFs arrive, they and the GUN agents shake hands. "Welcome to the United Federation." Says one of the female agents. "The President has provided this car to transport you six safely to Soumerca Grand Hotel, where you will meet with him." The agent shows them a huge black limousine, which is parked in front of the entrance of the Airport, and is large enough to transport the six mobians, in addition to the driver and his companion in the front seats; the limousine carries, in the front part of the hood, two small flags, which undoubtedly are of the United Federation: each flag has a dark blue stripe on each side, and a crimson stripe in the middle; at the same time, in the crimson strip, there are eight white stars that surround a sort of cockade, which consists of a white ring, a blue ring next, and a large white circle in the center. There were two more cars as an escort, one ahead of the limousine, the other behind it. The AFFs are surprised by this.

"He sent us... his presidential car?" Says Fiona in disbelief. "This is incredible! What kind of things will be inside?"

While the group of mobians is heading for the limousine, one of the male agents tries to help them with their luggage and take a part to the trunks of the two escort cars. However, the two-tailed fox prevents it.

"Wait, please. We trust you, but some suitcases have things of a particularly great importance and we prefer to take them ourselves." Says Tails, holding with him some of the bags and suitcases, while giving another piece of luggage to the agents. "These others only have clothes, toothbrushes, toothpaste and stuff like that. Take them to the escort cars and put them in their luggage rack."

When the AFFs enters the car, they find something more like the room of a house than the interior of a car: the seats, covered with red velvet and very fluffy, are located around a small table, where there's a great variety of foods, both sweet and salty, and different drinks, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic. In the front of the "mini-room", there's a small computer connected to the Data Network of
the United Federation, and there's also a music player, along with several CDs of different types of music, mostly with songs of the human civilization previous to the Xorda attack.

The car starts its trip to the Soumerca Grand Hotel. While everyone eats and drinks, Antoine checks the CDs, until he grabs one and addresses his teammates. "Alors, What do they want to hear? Je found this. I've heard music from this band before, and it's of excellent quality." Says the coyote, showing a CD of a rock band called "Queen".

"That's what I call "good taste" in music, Tony." Says Fiona. "I'm more attracted to heavy rock, but that band of humans is great too."

"Queen?" Amadeus asks as he looks at the CD. "What's that?"

"You'll see. More precisely, you'll listen." Says Tails, while putting the disc in the music player.

[Soundtrack: Another one bites the dust – Queen]

When the music starts to sound, Tails and Fiona begin to sing along with Bunnie, and Antoine also sings with his Mercia accent. Despite the genre of music, the young soldier sings with considerable talent, and even finds this activity pleasurable.

Meanwhile, Amadeus and Rosemary listen to the music and keep looking at that quartet, finding this situation strange.

"Confirmed: I'm getting old." Amadeus says to himself.

Half an hour later...

In the central hall of the hotel, the President is sitting, waiting for someone. As part of the security measures, there are GUN agents stationed on doors and windows, watching everything with great attention.

Finally, their presidential limousine arrives, and the AFFs are present in the hall, carrying all their luggage with them. The President sees them and walks towards the team to receive him.

"Antoine! Tails! It's a pleasure to see you!" He says, shaking hands with them.

"Au contraire, monsieur le Président. Honor is ours." Antoine answers as he curtsies.

"Reverence isn't necessary, Antoine. I'm not a king. And you can call me "João" or "Falcão", if you want."

Next, President João Falcão and the AFFs, with their luggage still in hand and accompanied by two agents of GUN, go to a closed room, where there's a circular table and several chairs.

Meanwhile, they're observed from different places of the hall by other mobians: a purple weasel, a green duck, a polar bear, a gorilla, a lynx, a blue hawk and a frog dressed as a pilot. The seven individuals seem to be coordinated. When the President, his escort and the AFFs enter and lock themselves in the room, the seven mobians begin to move.

Another two hours later...

"So you take your guns and your uniforms in those suitcases." Says the President to the AFFs. "That was the reason you kept them with you in the car."
"That's right, monsieur João." Antoine replies.

"Honestly, I think this issue of maintaining secret identities is very complicated. Sooner or later, in one way or another, some enemy will know who you are and will spread that information or sell it to someone else."

"Alors, is there any job you need us for?"

In response, the President gives some files to the team. "These are your goals, the Kingdom of Acorn was already chasing some, and the King gave us some of the information about them. GUN will give you everything you need."

The AFFs grab the files and open them, reading the information written on them. Fiona reads some of the files, and addresses her teammates.

"Ha! Look what the wind brought..." The vixen says, proceeding to read to them what is written in those files:

**Hooligans: team of mercenaries specialized in thefts, with little success in the work they do, led by Nack Weasel, aka "Fang the Sniper"; they've performed works in the service of various subjects, including the magician Mammoth Mogul and Doctor Eggman.**

**Current members of the Hooligans:**

**Nack Weasel, aka "Fang the Sniper":**

*Age: unknown, estimated in about 20 years.*

*Gender: male.*

*Place of origin: unknown.*

*Species: mobian, weasel-wolf hybrid.*

*In addition to being a thief, he's also a treasure hunter.*

*Described as someone who's not very intelligent, he has a very low success rate, both solo and in work with the Hooligans; despite this, he's still very dangerous, besides being expert in shooting and riding.*

**Bean, aka "the Dynamite Duck":**

*Age: unknown, estimated in about 15-20 years.*

*Gender: male.*

*Place of origin: unknown; some sources cite an experiment of the Battle Bird Armada as the origin of Bean.*

*Species: mobian, duck.*

*He usually works as an associate of Bark Polar Bear. He's a deserter of the Battle Bird Armada.*

*Described as a clumsy, talkative, mocking and especially crazy; despite this, he's still dangerous because of his talent for handling explosives, which includes the ability to make bombs appear, apparently, out of nowhere, as well as the ability to control their detonation, by methods still
Bark Polar Bear:

Age: unknown, estimated in about 25 years.

Gender: male.

Place of origin: unknown.

Species: mobian, polar bear.

Generally, he works as an associate of Bean, alias "the Dynamite Duck".

Described as someone calm and of few words, very different from his associated Bean; his physical strength makes him a formidable opponent.

Fiona finishes saying aloud the data of her three files.

"When I was a criminal, I worked with those three. In fact, those 'Hooligans' are useless." Says the vixen.

"Eh bien, these others seem to be more worthy rivals for us." Antoine says, reading another group of files:

Destructix: team of mercenaries specialized in thefts, although they also carry out various types of work, acting as a command group. Originally, they were the "Fearsome Foursome," a group of subordinates from Mammoth Mogul, who gave them new abilities or enhanced abilities already in them. After the fall of Mammoth Mogul, the composition and alignment of the team changed several times, as well as their employers, among which we can mention the echidna Doctor Finitevus and Doctor Eggman as the most important of all.

Current members of Destructix:

Lightning Lynx:

Age: unknown, estimated in about 20-25 years.

Gender: male.

Place of origin: Dragon Kingdom.

Species: mobian, lynx.

Formerly, he was a ninja of the Raiju Clan, one of its fastest and strongest members, until he was defeated in a duel by the leader of the Clan, and expelled accordingly.

Described as someone very loyal to his team and a follower of a "Honor Code"; he’s very fast, being this ability enhanced by Mammoth Mogul later, and thanks to his training like ninja of Raiju Clan, also has great ability in the close combat; he also has a refined sense of hearing, which allows him to even detect chameleons and other objects and beings that wouldn’t be visible to the naked eye.

Sergeant Simon Simian:

Age: unknown, estimated in about 25-30 years.
Gender: male.

Place of origin: Gorilla Colony, Northamer Great Jungle.

Species: mobian, gorilla.

He left the Gorilla Colony for differences of opinion with his compatriots: Sergeant Simian wanted to participate in the war against Eggman, unlike the other members of the Colony, who initially refused to abandon their traditional pacifist policy. Occasionally, he has performed functions comparable to those of a leader in Destructix.

Described as someone very loyal to his team, and a fighter very focused and disciplined, but at the same time very careless. In addition to having his great physical strength, enhanced by Mammoth Mogul later, he's dangerous in close combat, being able to repel the "Spindash" attack of Maurice "Sonic" Hedgehog, and also carries with him, at all times, an arsenal consisting of ammunition, grenades and various utensils; he has extensive knowledge of weapons and is a great tactical mind.

Predator Hawk:

Age: unknown, estimated in about 20-25 years.

Gender: male.

Place of origin: unknown.

Species: mobian, falcon.

He was one of the best soldiers of the Battle Bird Armada, but he was dissatisfied with his work and he deserted; later, he was united to the group "Babylon Rogues", deserting later by the same reasons.

Strategist and most unpredictable member of Destructix, he's described as cold, arrogant, exclusively loyal to his team, who believes in personal merit, and who always seeks challenges that motivate him; added to his natural ability for flight was enhanced by Mammoth Mogul, he's also a specialist in assassinations and hunts, because of his strong love of hunting live prey; as a former soldier of the Battle Bird Armada, he's versed in tactics and in the use of firearms, although he prefers quick air strikes in combat.

Flying Frog:

Age: unknown, estimated in about 20-25 years.

Gender: male.

Place of origin: Mercia.

Species: mobian, frog.

He was a buffoon in the Kingdom of Mercia. He usually terrorized residents by attacking them and even entering their homes, committing several murders during their "games."

Described as someone malevolent, mad, sadistic and without moral limits, he's mentally unstable, becoming the most dangerous and violent member of Destructix; he can plan in the air with the folds in his arms and legs, he has a flexible body that allows him to contort and enter into confined spaces, and has great ability in using his tongue as a weapon and as a tool.
"I also worked with them." Says Fiona in a bored tone, when Antoine stops reading. "They're better than the Hooligans, but not much better."

Meanwhile, Bunnie is reading another file, and then shows it to Antoine.

"This guy is a lot like you, do you think he has anything to do with you?" Says Bunnie, pointing to a photo. In it, a robian (robotized mobian) coyote is shown, leaving a castle with a platoon of SWAT-bots accompanying him; he was the High Sheriff of Snottingham, Grand Master of the DEL (Dark Egg Legion) in Mercia.

Antoine looks at the photo, and is stunned. He then gives the file to the other team members.

Fiona sees the High Sheriff in the picture. "This robian is the Mercia guy who claimed to be Robotnik's successor. His robots almost caught me, especially because my ex-boyfriend ran away and left me alone." The vixen ends, being evident her annoyance.

Then Colonel Prower sees the picture, and addresses to Antoine. "Tony, you know who he is. Do not you?"

"Oui, I know." The coyote says in a serious tone, then pausing. "He's General Armand D'Coolette, my father, robotized."

The other four members stare with surprise, especially Fiona.

"I'm sorry, Tony, I shouldn't have said that about him."

"You don't have to apologize." Antoine answers.

"If you want, you can let someone else handle him." the President proposes.

"No." The young soldier responds immediately. "We'll handle the High Sheriff. Are you agree, mes amis?"

"If it doesn't affect you..." says Tails, who then resumes the reading of the files, until he finds someone in particular, and approaches the President to speak in his ear.

"Mr. Falcão, is this guy really committing crimes right now, here in the United Federation?" Asks the child prodigy, showing the file to the human.

"Here, and everywhere in Mobius." responds Falcão, also quietly.

"And how serious are they, in exact terms?"

"The worst crimes you can imagine. They're written right here."

Tails then turns to his girlfriend, speaking still in a low voice. "Fiona, there's something I must show you." Then, he gives her the file.

When Fiona sees it, she maintains a "frozen" face. "Tails, are you serious?"

Her boyfriend nods. Fiona, disturbed, drops the file on the table. All this catches the attention of Bunnie.

"Fiona, is something wrong?" Then the cyborg rabbit grabs the file, and she and Antoine read it together. "I get it..." she says, giving the file to Tails's parents.
"Who's he? He looks like Sonic." Says Rosemary, looking at the photo. Next, the Prowers start to read the file:

Maurice Hedgehog, aka "Anti-Sonic", aka "Scourge" (don't confuse with Maurice Hedgehog, aka "Sonic"): 

Age: 16 years.

Gender: male.

Place of origin: Moebotropolis, capital of the planet Moebius, somewhere in a parallel universe.

Species: mobian, hedgehog.

He's originative from a parallel universe, which is a sort of mirror of our universe. In this universe, the planet Mobius is named "Moebius", Dr. Robotnik's counterpart is benevolent and never develops his empire, the robotizer has never been invented, and the Freedom Fighters are replaced by the "Suppression Squad", a group of juvenile evildoers, associated with the Moebius Monarchy, who seek to make disorder and chaos by any means, and whose leader is "Scourge" Hedgehog, the counterpart of "Sonic" Hedgehog in Moebius.

"Scourge" is the son of "Anti-Jules" Hedgehog, a Moebius aristocrat who theoretically would be the counterpart of Jules Hedgehog, the mobian warrior who was the father of "Sonic"; however, in Moebius, "Anti-Jules" totally ignored his son, which surely was the motive of his murder, of which "Scourge" is the main suspect today. Unlike other members of the Suppression Squad, "Scourge" seems to have ambitions beyond the universe of which he's native, which leads him to commit the most aberrant crimes in several parallel universes, including the universe where we find ourselves; for this reason, this criminal is sought not only by GUN and the Acorn Kingdom, but also by the "Zone Cops Corps", a security corps operating in interdimensional space, and whose jurisdiction ignores the boundaries between parallel universes. He's accused of murder, collaboration in genocide, armed theft with hostage-taking, kidnapping, rape, fraud, terrorism, vandalism, involvement in acts of corruption, extortion, and various minor offenses. He also temporarily led Destructix, so this team was his accomplice in several of his crimes.

Described as egocentric, violent, volatile, manipulative, contemptuous and disrespectful towards his subordinates, he's known because he tends to "use" his romantic partners, showing them as "trophies" when he compares himself to other men. "Scourge" Hedgehog shares with "Sonic" Hedgehog the ability to run at close to light speed, and at first, "Scourge" looked exactly the same as "Sonic", until his pelage's color changed from blue to light-green, as a result of an accident in the handling of the Master Emerald, a year and three months ago; in fact, the DNA of "Scourge" and the DNA of "Sonic" still coincide in a percentage of 99.99%, and to find the difference between them, it has been necessary a careful examination of the elementary particles of their atoms, thanks to which it has been discovered that the origin of "Scourge" is in a universe different from ours.

Because of how dangerous this individual is, it's recommended to use lethal force against him.

"This guy, Scourge, seems to be a quite... important criminal." Rosemary says as she finishes reading the file.

"Fortunately, we're prepared to face these people." Says Amadeus, showing his saber.

Meanwhile, Fiona is staring at the floor, while Tails wraps a hand on her shoulder.

"You don't know what Scourge is capable of doing." She says in a low voice.
"What do you mean?" Asks the Colonel.

"I was his girlfriend, Mr. and Mrs. Prower." Says the vixen. "Scourge is the ex-boyfriend I told you about." Fiona's voice begins to choke, while she does her best to not look at anyone in the face.

"Fiona..." The fox tries to calm his girlfriend, hugging her tightly and caressing her. "Don't worry, we'll find him, and we'll give him an exemplary punishment. Right, friends?" Says Tails, now addressing his teammates.

"I'll do what you say, Tails." Says Bunnie.

"Me too. Fiona's enemies and your enemies are also my enemies." Says Antoine.

"We would love to accompany you, son, but..." says his mother. "Are not you planning... to kill him?"

"You've read the file, Mom: we must use lethal force to defeat him."

"Your son is right, Mrs. Prower." The President intervenes. "He has escaped even the highest security prisons, both those of GUN and those of Zone Cops Corps. Scourge Hedgehog is too dangerous to let him live."

Meanwhile, one of the two GUN agents takes a call to his cell phone. Then the agent shuts down his phone and goes to the President.

"Sir, something is happening in the central hall of the hotel. It seems that a group of mobians attacked our agents, and now we're surrounded. We can't get out."

Upon hearing this, the President makes a phone call through a landline phone inside the room, activating the speakerphone mode.

In the central hall of the Soumerca Grand Hotel, all the access doors are closed, GUN agents guarding the place are unconscious, unarmed, tied and leaned against the walls, and there's a group of seven mobians surrounding the room where the President and the AFFs are in. These are the Hooligans and Destructix, who, for some reason, are together for the first time.

Suddenly, a landline phone rings. It's the phone at the front desk. Sergeant Simian answers the call.

"Who are you?"

"The President of the United Federation."

Sergeant Simian hands the phone to someone else. "The President is calling, Weasel."

"Give me the phone." Orders Nack. When he has the phone in his hand, he's about to speak to the President.

"Hi, Mr. President! Are you enjoying this?" Nack's greeting is heard inside the room.

"Who are you?"

"Nack Weasel & Associates- Auch! Okay, okay, I got it, Hawk... Hooligans, Destructix & Associates- Auch! Okay... Destructix, Hooligans & Associates."
"What is this about? Now you work as lawyers?"

"We come in search of Fiona Fox. If they don't deliver to her, Bean will blow up that bunker where you are."

"Great. Just great." Says Fiona sarcastically. "What do you want from me, losers?"

"I would love to answer you, but we can't do it, because we haven't the slightest idea. You'll have to ask our client, Mr Scourge, who seemed very eager to see you and kept calling you 'doll' when he mentioned you."

"Oh, yeah? Well... Tell 'Mr Scourge' that he will have to settle for another 'doll'. Although, now that I remember, he was always dating some other 'doll' while he said that I was the only one; therefore, my absence shouldn't affect him. In short, tell him 'f*** you' from me, ok?" Immediately after this, Fiona ends the call. Tails sighs after hearing all this. "Destructix and Hooligans, together on a mission to the service of Scourge. This will be interesting."
Chapter 1: Holidays and Mercenaries, Part 2.

Second part of "Holidays and Mercenaries". Will our new heroes get out of this mess?

It's 1:30 PM in Station Square. In Soumerca Grand Hotel, in an isolated room, the AFFs, the President João Falcão, and two GUN agents are enclosed. Seven mercenaries, mediocre but dangerous, surround them outside the room.

"Sir, I've managed to call the reinforcements, but they'll arrive at 2:00 PM." One of the agents says.

"Will they take half an hour to arrive?" Fiona asks, almost screaming. "By then, those mercenaries will surely have made the whole city explode."

The others present remain without saying a word, until Antoine breaks the silence.

"It seems we'll have to say 'adieu' to our secret identities."

"I already told you my opinion about that." Says the President. "In addition, you can remain excellent as agents and as Freedom Fighters, despite not keeping their identities as a secret."

"Okay. If our identities must be revealed, so be it." Says Amadeus, while taking one of the suitcases. The suitcase in question has a large size, is of metal and has, embedded in the lid, a small sphere of amber glass.

The other team members also do the same, each with a different suitcase. Like Amadeus' suitcase, the other five are quite large, made of metal and have a small colored glass sphere embedded in the lid. The Tails' suitcase has a light green sphere; the one of Fiona, one of red color; the one of Bunnie, one of magenta color; the one of Antoine, one of purple color; the one of Rosemary, one of yellow color.

Antoine opens his suitcase and pulls out metal rods and an extensive and thin fabric, and so does Bunnie; both of them arm, with these pieces, a bracket for a curtain, which they install in the room in improvised form; then they both hide behind the curtain, and take with them their respective suitcases, which still have things inside. The President looks intrigued.

"Let me clarify, Monsieur le Président, that we do this because of a matter of modesty." Antoine's voice is heard from behind the fabric.

Less than a minute later, it's seen how the coyote's uniform hangs on the transverse rod of the support, confirming his sayings.

In the meantime, the same thing happens with the suitcases of the Prowers, who also arm the support for a curtain and then hide behind it, taking with them their respective clothes.

As for Fiona, she opens her suitcase and takes out the cloak she wears on her missions with the AFFs, and then she gets dressed with it and hides her face with the hood. Some sparks coming out of the surface are visible: now, there are electrical circuits built into the cloak, and Fiona is able to electrocute at any time anyone who touches her. Then she takes her electric weapons: a pair of
gloves with EM pulse cannons and Taser pistols, and an electric whip.

Finally, Antoine, Bunnie and the Prowers leave their respective "clothes testers", already dressed in their AFFs uniforms: Rosemary, with the "invisible suit", which she starts to check; Amadeus, with his uniform invisible for infrared sensors; Antoine, wearing a purple kevlar waistcoat with red touches, matching trousers and matching glasses, and his hair a little disheveled; Bunnie, with an one-piece fuchsia uniform with golden lines whose design imitates computer circuitry, and also completely covers her arms and legs, hiding her body's robotized parts.

"How do I look?" The cyborg asks.

"Eh bien, you look..." The coyote is surprised by his girlfriend's uniform.

"Exaggerated?"

"Actually, you look extravagant. But you're still very beautiful."

"Aww, how sweet..."

Then the Prowers and Antoine take their weapons out of their suitcases. The Colonel wraps his modified saber in his belt, although he's still confused by what's stored in the suitcase: small quantum reactors.

"What should I do with this, son?" Asks the Colonel, holding one of those mini-reactors in his hand.

"You have to connect it to the saber." Tails tells him. "Insert the reactor into the tip of the handle, as if it were the plug of an electrical appliance."

Amadeus obeys, connecting the reactor to the handle, and then the filament embedded in the saber heats up, even beginning to emit reddish light.

At the same time, Rosemary grabs her electro-bullet pistols and puts them in her holsters. As for Antoine, he prepares his modified sword as Amadeus did, but also puts on his back his quiver full of arrows with tricks, and prepares his bow to shoot them.

When Tails opens his suitcase, all he takes out of it is something similar to a very full schoolbag, which he puts on his back.

"All ready, team?" Asks the fox.

"Ready." His five teammates say.

"I confirm what I said: you'll be excellent agents, even without secret identities." Says the President.

The seven mercenaries of "Destructix & Hooligans" are waiting in the central hall of the hotel, facing the isolated room. Finally the door opens: it's one of the GUN agents, raising a hand.

"We're going to give you Fiona Fox."

Suddenly, Bean starts screaming in terror. When his six teammates see him, he's being dragged down the floor by... no one, it seems, until he's finally thrown to a window by... no one, again.

"There's someone there." Says Lightning Lynx. "I can hear it."

Without anyone, not even Lightning, realizes, a rabbit leaves the room and flies to a balcony, holding
a coyote by the hand.

"We all know there's someone there, genius." Says an angry Nack. "Tell us something we don't know-"

**BOOM!**

An explosion, produced in the space between the mercenaries and the room, disperses the remaining members of Destructix and the Hooligans, and in turn produces a large dense cloud of smoke in the middle of the central hall.

At that moment, Amadeus, Fiona and the two GUN agents leave the room, ready for combat. Meanwhile, the invisible presence is revealed as Rosemary Prower. Antoine appears on the balcony and shoots two more arrows with smoke bombs, and Bunnie steps down from that same balcony, flying with the rockets on her legs and carrying the plasma cannon of her robotized arm ready.

Amadeus advances and confronts Flying Frog, avoiding the clever tongue of the psycho frog. In a moment, Flying stretches his tongue and tries to steal the sword of his opponent, but the filament's tremendous heat makes him howl in pain. The frog's tongue releases the saber, and the veteran fox exploits the opportunity.

"You like games. Is not that right, jester?"

"Yes, but not this one." The frog babbles furiously.

"What a pity, because I love it. Let's play..." That said, Tails' father grabs his tongue, which already has some dead parts and other charred parts, and drags Flying to a well hidden place.

"You have no right to do this!" Flying babbles. "I want my lawyer!"

"Your lawyer will take a while to arrive."

After this, Colonel Prower, while keeping his face serious, prepares his modified sword, while holding the tongue of the famous murderous buffoon of Mercia.

In the central hall of the hotel, the AFFs continue to fight against the mercenaries, while the two GUN agents open fire. Rosemary activates the invisibility and dodges the blows of Bark, while she also gives some blows to him in sensible parts of his body. Lightning locates her with his audition and runs towards her, but ignores Amadeus, who makes himself present and advances towards him, being about to cross him with his saber. The ex-ninja takes advantage and hits his hand, leaving the fox incapacitated to wield his weapon. Then the lynx gives several strong and quick blows, leaving the Colonel lying on the ground, but when Lightning is about to deliver the final blow, Bunnie shoots her plasma cannon from his right side, knocks him against a wall and knocks him out.

"Are you alright, Colonel?" The rabbit lifts Amadeus off the ground.

"I'm fine, thanks. And you don't have to call me by my rank- Behind you!"

Automatically, the cyborg girl turns and gives an impressive kick to whoever is behind her. When she notices, she sees Nack Weasel, knocked out by her attack.

"You can tell that this guy has very little success, Colonel."

Meanwhile, Bunnie detects Predator Hawk darting over her, and escapes flying. Predator manages to
avoid the clash against the ground and begins to chase the cyborg.

"Antoine, do you hear me?" Says Bunnie.

"Loud and clear, mon amour." Antoine's voice is heard through the communicator.

"Did you see that blue bird chasing me?"

As she flies, she shoots the hawk a plasma bullet, which he dodges while continuing his pursuit.

"I'm seeing him, Bunnie."

"Do you think you can shoot him down?"

"Probably. Anyway, if I fail, I have more than a hundred arrows to try again."

"Okay, when you shoot, use some trick that won't allow him to use his wings later."

"Your wishes are orders."

While flying, Predator prepares a weapon, stolen from the Battle Bird Armada and specially designed to shoot while he's still flapping his wings. When he's about to shoot the rabbit, an arrow hits his body, exploding a capsule with a toxin. Suddenly, the hawk loses control of his muscles and falls into free fall to the ground.

"Well done, sweetie."

"You didn't do it bad either, Bunnie."

On the ground, Bean re-enters through the window, and throws small bombs all around. Fiona detects it and shoots lightning at all bombs, detonating them early, when they're still far from the AFFs; later, she fires an EM pulse at the same Bean. The duck feels nothing, but when he tries to throw more bombs, he finds that his mechanism no longer works and won't explode.

While everyone is distracted, Sergeant Simian manages to evade the two GUN agents and goes into the room, looking for Tails and the President.

When he enters, everything is dark, until a faint green light shines in the distance.

5 minutes later...

The hotel doors are open. The vast majority of members of Destructix & Hooligans are tied and leaning against a wall, while Bunnie, Antoine and Fiona release the GUN agents that were tied down earlier.

"We've defeated everyone, Rosemary." Amadeus tells his wife.

"Where's Flying Frog?"

"Don't worry about him. I've given him an exemplary punishment."

"Don't tell me, you've cut his tongue lengthwise to torture him."

"What? No! I didn't do that. I just tied his tongue to a column."

"Okay. And Sergeant Simian?"
"I think he's in the room... with the President and Tails."

Tails' parents start to worry, but they're surprised by the same Sergeant Simian, who rushes out of the door of the room, roaring, and crosses quickly the central hall, the entrance door, and also the square in front of the hotel.

When the Prowers look at the room, they find the President coming out the door, safe and sound. He's accompanied by the two-tailed fox, who has his hands covered with part of his ATA suit, or Advanced Technology Armor, which now begins to progressively cover the rest of his body.

Finally, the child prodigy is totally protected by his ATA suit, which has several green lights shining on him, which shows that he's using his Chaos energy.

"What did I miss?"

His parents, as well as the rest of the AFFs and GUN agents, stare at him.

"S'il vous plait..." Antoine breaks the silence. "Can we continue with our vacation?"

International Airspace, 10 km altitude, 2500 km northeast of Station Square.

Flying destroyer "Ο κηδεμόνας" ["O kidémonas", "The guardian"], GUN Navy aircraft.

5:00 PM, Station Square Time.

The immense ship goes to Spagonia. It has been traveling since 2:30 PM. Along with the humans of the GUN Marine Corps, there are AFFs as guests, and they also take the members of Destructix & Hooligans as prisoners.

However, even though life in the staterooms is quite dignified and the trip doesn't produce dizziness, not all Freedom Fighters are enjoying it...

"My biological clock is totally altered."

"I thought you were accustomed to being awake at any hour, like the other Freedom Fighters."

"Yes, but that's not what happens. The thing is, at Knothole, we went on night missions, but at least we were always in the same time zone. But now that we're traveling, I barely have a vague idea of what time it's at Station Square, and I no longer know what time it's at Knothole, or what time it would be at Spagonia at this time... nothing. Someday, because of this, it will be night and I won't know if it's dinner time or breakfast time."

"Speaking of food, we could go to dinner now. I think it's 5:00 PM in Station Square."

"This ship and its crew are, technically, citizens of Apotos, where it's later. I don't know what time is there, but it's surely bedtime, so the restaurant is already closed."

"I was thinking about the time zones, and I thought I remembered that the time is four hours later in Apotos than in Station Square, so it's already about 9:00 PM. I think you're right, I doubt they'll keep the restaurant open for so long."

"I'm so hungry... I'll have to do something I'll regret later."

"I know what you mean. Let it to me."
The door of a stateroom opens. The corridor, completely empty and silent, is illuminated by a dim light. A vixen starts to walk stealthily.

Fifteen minutes later, the same vixen returns and enters the stateroom, carrying a bag full of food. Inside, there's a two-story bed, a wardrobe, a bedside table with drawers, and a small window, which is closed. A golden fur fox with two tails is waiting on the bottom floor of the bed.

"Dinner is ready, Tails. It's not much, but it will allow us to survive." Says the red vixen.

"Fiona, you know that stealing is wrong, right?" Says Tails.

Fiona keeps her face "frozen", and starts to get nervous. To her surprise, Tails starts to laugh out loud.

"You should have seen your face!" He says in his own laughter.

"You'll pay for this, Miles Prower." Says Fiona, trying to sound serious.

In the location of the "O kidemónas", above the clouds, a little light is still perceptible, although the sun has already set. This is evident in the bridge, where there's a window that allows to see all around, and through which is visible, to the West, a long orange strip on the horizon, contrasting with the rest of the sky, which already looks dark blue and in which the stars shine. Added to the cloud mattress beneath the warship, the view is breathtaking.

"I don't wanna be a nuisance by asking this question, but what do we do with the prisoners? Do you think they can tell us something?" Says Bunnie.

Antoine, Bunnie, Rosemary and Amadeus are seated around a table, with the ship's captain watching them.

"To begin with, they told us they work for Scourge." Says Rosemary. "On the other hand, I can bet that hedgehog knew that his Destructix & Hooligans team was doomed to failure, and he would have planned everything based on that. Surely, he only ordered them to capture Fiona and bring her to him, and he didn't tell them anything else, so we won't be able to extract more information from these mercenaries. For now, all we can do is prepare ourselves and wait for the hedgehog to make his next move."

"Anyway, Rosemary, there are still some bad guys to capture. We won't lack work." Says Amadeus, pointing to a stack of files on a table.

"And not to mention that we still have to handle my father." Says Antoine.

Everyone is suddenly silent.

"Is something wrong?" Asks the captain intrigued, with Apotos' accent.

An hour and a half later...

In the stateroom of Tails and Fiona...

"God, what a bellyful... Of course, this isn't dietary at all. In the end, I'll lose my figure, and I'll turn myself into a ball of red hair, weighing 250 kg, and with very very high cholesterol."

The two foxes are lying on the ground, both covered with food wrappers.
"What time is it, Miles?"

"I think it's already 6:30 PM on Station Square. In Spagonia, I think it's already 10:30 PM."

Fiona remains silent, thoughtful.

"They're about 4000 kilometers of travel to Spagonia, and this ship travels at about 1000 kilometers per hour. So..."

Somebody knocks the door.

"Με συγχωρείτε, κύριε Προυερ, δεσποινίδα Φοξ..." ["Me synchoreíte, kýrie Prouer, despoinída Fox...", "Excuse me, Mister Prower, Miss Fox..."]

He's a crewman of the ship, originative from Apotos, like all the others.

Tails tries to talk to him. "Στα... στα αγγλικά, παρακαλώ;" ["Sta... sta angliká, paralakó?", "¿In... in English, please?"]

"Ehm... We are... we are coming to Spagonia." The crewman replies with a notorious accent.

Tails and Fiona open their eyes wide, and quickly rise from the ground.

[Soundtrack: Nel blu dipinto di blu – Domenico Modugno]

Two transport ships land in the crystalline waters of the city-state of Spagonia, while the destroyer "O kidémonas" continues its journey, heading for Apotos. The light poles are shining on a boulevard, which runs parallel to a rocky and sandless coastline.

Within one of the transport ships, several GUN agents guard the seven mercenaries arrested, while the captain communicates with the other ship by radio.

"We'll transport the prisoners to the prison of Elba."

"Agree." They respond from the other ship.

While the prisoners' ship is diverted to a fortified island far from the coast, the other ship enters a river and begins to sail upstream. In this ship are the AFFs, who unfold the roof and observe the picturesque buildings of Firenze, a district of Spagonia with great cultural wealth. In the ship, Tails wears a white shirt with long sleeves, and long and wide pants; Fiona is wearing a light blue dress that reveals her cleavage and back; Bunnie wears her traditional pink leotard, while Antoine is wearing only a red T-shirt and blue shorts; Amadeus is still wearing his Coronel uniform from the Royal Acorn Army, and Rosemary wears her purple long dress.

Antoine addresses the captain, a human. "Capitaine, could you get the ship up in the air for a moment, s'il vous plaît?"

The captain raises the ship above the level of the roofs of the buildings, and the other five mobians gape: overhanging the other buildings, there's a gigantic red dome, illuminated by some lights.

"The Duomo of Spagonia. I've always wanted to see this merveille." Says the coyote.

Around 11:00 PM, Spagonia Time, the AFFs are located in Milano Hotel and they're spread over three luxury rooms, all of the expenses paid voluntarily by the Commander Tower.
Tails and Fiona are in one of the bedrooms, lying in bed, kissing each other frantically. However, a ringing phone interrupts them.

The fox leaves his girlfriend panting and with her dress indecently open, while he answers the call.

"Hello?"

"Tails? C'est moi, Antoine. Commander Tower phoned me. He wants to arrange a meeting with us. He asks where and when we meet. I had planned to visit Ponte Nuovo tomorrow afternoon, so we could meet there with Tower."

"Tell the Commander that I like the idea. If possible, the meeting should be between 5:30 PM and 6:00 PM approximately."

"D'accord, I'll tell him. Wait a minute." The coyote leaves the fox waiting for a few seconds, then returns to the phone. "He says he wants to meet us there, but then he wants to take us somewhere else, where we can talk without anyone interrupting or listening to us."

"Okay, tell him we accept."

"We'll do what you say. Jusqu'à demain, mon ami." The call ends.

"Was he GUN's Chief?" Asks Fiona.

"Something like that. He called Antoine, who later called me. He wanted to arrange where and when we would meet."

Fiona gets out of bed and goes to the bathroom, undressing at the same time. Tails stares at her, but he isn't surprised, he only arches an eyebrow.

"Are you gonna take a shower, my dear?" Says Tails.

Fiona looks over her shoulder, squinting. "Do you wanna join me?"

"Why not?" Having said that, Tails disconnects the phone from the room, and enters the bathroom with Fiona, locking the door.

In a palace in Moebotropolis, there's a male squirrel, of advanced age, very gray-haired and with a thin mustache. The anti-mobian, or "moebian", wears a cloak of skin, luxury clothes and various jewels, holds a golden staff, and has on his head something vaguely similar to a "crown": a ring with three large prongs in the front, all made of iron.

The door of the palace opens, revealing a light green hedgehog with two scars traversing his chest, wearing a leather jacket with flames on the sides, sports shoes in green and black, and sunglasses with red frame. The hedgehog walks toward the old squirrel.

"Hey! His Majesty, King Maxx Acorn of Moebius. How are you?"

"For now, I'll ignore your lack of manners, Scourge. What do you want?"

"Don't worry. I'll not ask you for something too big."

Suddenly, Scourge grabs Maxx by his neck and raises him into the air. The King, surprised, tries to get out of the grip of the hedgehog, but he starts running out of air.
"Wanna two things only: your throne, and this." Scourge snatches the crown from Maxx and puts it on his own head. "Is it too much to ask?"

Finally, Scourge throws Maxx and sends him outside the palace. The deposed King crashes into a wall, dying instantly from the blow to the head.

Meanwhile, twenty guards advance towards Scourge with their spears pointing towards him, but the usurper spins and turns into a tremendously fast green ball, then colliding with the guards. After easily defeating them, the green hedgehog sits on the throne.

A group of moebians are present a few minutes later. This is the MSS (Moebotropolis Suppression Squad), made up of the counterparts of the KFFs: Princess Alicia Acorn, Maxx's daughter; Miles Prower, known for using his magical powers to brutally attack those who call him with the nickname of his mobian version; Patch D'Coolette, who has an eye that is covered but actually remains functional, and Boomer Walrus, with his body full of cybernetic implants.

"What is this supposed to be, Scourge? What did you do with the King?" Asks the legitimate heiress of the crown.

"At last you've come, Princess. I'm sorry to have to give you some news: the throne is already occupied, and your daddy is resting in peace."

Anger starts to take control of Alicia. "Your relationship with the crown has long since ended, and even if you were still my boyfriend, you deserve to be executed for the crimes of high treason, regicide and usurpation of the throne."

"Alicia, you also wanted to dethrone Old Maxx."

Alicia tries to respond, but Miles intervenes. "We've had enough of you, Scourge. Suppression Squad: Attack!"

The four moebians rush toward the usurper hedgehog, but he grabs some Anarchy Beryls he had kept, and he becomes his Super form; his body becomes violet, and his eyeballs turn black with the red iris. This done, Super Scourge fires energy spears towards the MSS members, who fall defeated in front of their feet.

Before Scourge makes his next move, the two-tailed moebian fox performs a magic trick, and the four MSS members vanish from the palace.

"Miles, after all, you're a coward." Says the new King, who then turns on a hologram generator, which shows him images of the members of Hooligans & Destructix, on the one hand, and images of the AFFs, on the other.

"Those guys have proven to be useless, as always... No matter." The hedgehog turns to the AFFs images. "I still have plans for you six."

After turning off the hologram generator, Scourge gets rid of his Anarchy Beryls. When he returns to his normal form, he suddenly begins to feel weak physically and with little energy, causing him to collapse, but remaining conscious.

"Jeez... I should have read the prospect of these things before stealing them from O'Nux."

Chapter Notes

First part of the second chapter, a story about dysfunctional families, with the stellar participation of new AFFs co-workers.

It is 4:00 PM in the Ponte Nuovo, one of the most attractive architectural works of Spagonia. In essence, it's a bridge of medieval style, made of stone, built on the Spago river, which crosses the district of Firenze. However, this bridge also has several shops installed at the edges, and there's also a corridor that has one of its sections passing over the bridge, so, in practice, it has two floors.

The AFFs are in a modest coffee shop on the Ponte Nuovo, seated by a window overlooking the river.

"So, what are we here for?" Amadeus asks, holding in his hand a cup of coffee, a coffee with a very intense and bitter taste, without a single gram of sugar.

"We had agreed with Commander Tower that we were going to meet him here." Says Bunnie, who then drinks a sip of squeezed orange juice. "Actually, he will surely bring a car to take us somewhere else. What he wants to talk to us is something too secret to talk about in a place like this." Complete the cyborg rabbit, making a gesture to point to the crowd within that trade.

"Fiona, where are you staying?" Asks Rosemary, as she grabs one of the croissants from a basket to eat it. "I don't remember you booked a room."

The vixen drank a sip of her lemon-lime soda. "I share the room with Miles." She answers naturally. After hearing this, the Prowers stare at Tails and his girlfriend, which creates nervousness in the two-tailed fox nervous, who was drinking his "submarine" chocolate milk.

"Ehh... Dad, Mom, are you guys thinking what I think you're thinking about the two of us?"

"What do you mean?" Amadeus asks, confused.

"C'est évident, Colonel." Antoine intervenes, taking a sip of his cappuccino. "You and your wife believe that Tails and his girlfriend do... How to say it? Indecorous and / or indecent things."

"What? Of course not!" Says Amadeus flatly. "We trust our son."

"Anyway, Mr. and Mrs. Prower..." says Fiona. "If someone had to touch me in... some intimate place of my body, I'd rather it were Miles who did. I trust him."

"Speaking of unseemly things..." says Tails. "I would like to ask Antoine and Bunnie to stop making such loud noises at night. You all know very well what I mean."

Because of the child prodigy's sayings, the rabbit and the coyote begin to blush.

"Colonel, madame, I can explain everything." Says the soldier, who starts to get nervous, although the Prowers don't seem to be scandalized or upset.
Suddenly, a GUN agent enters the coffee shop and stands by the AFFs table. Antoine and Bunnie exhale relieved.

"Commander Tower wants to see you." Informs the agent. "We've already talked to the owner of the coffee shop. You can take what you bought."

"Great! We'll be able to eat these croissants that were left." Says Fiona, showing the basket, which is still full. "By chance, where are we going?"

It is 4:30 PM. The trip turns out to be longer than expected, though not much longer. The AFFs are taken to Guardian Mountain, located between Spagonia and Central City. When arriving at destination, the car where they travel enters the mountain, and ends inside a high-tech facility that's hidden there: the GUN Headquarters.

After entering the mountain, the AFFs are taken to a conference room, where several individuals are present. One of them is Abraham Tower, who immediately greets the newcomers.

"Good afternoon, Alternative Freedom Fighters. It's a real pleasure to have you here."

"Honor is ours, monsieur le Commandant." Antoine answers, while the six mobians, one by one, shake hands with the Chief of GUN.

"Let me introduce you to the team of agents with whom you'll work, if you wish." At that moment, two mobians and a robot enter the conference room.

One of the mobians is a male hedgehog with black fur with some red lines, and has thicker white hair on his chest. He wears a gold ring on each wrist, and his shoes consist of black, red and yellow shoes with rockets on the sole. Except for Fiona and the parents of Tails, the other mobians recognize him instantly.

"Shadow Hedgehog, I didn't expect to see you here." Tails and the hedgehog greet each other, shaking hands, the hedgehog still with his serious face.

"The same can be said of you, Tails. I thought you'd still be Sonic's # 1 Fan, that falsification of myself."

Shadow addresses to Antoine. "Monsieur D'Coolette. Some say you've changed a lot, and that you've changed for the better."

"Certainement, monsieur" Shadow. At another time, I can prove it, if you want."

"It's not necessary. It's enough that you don't have the same attitude as Sonic."

"Compagnon Shadow, remember that Sonic is fighting on the same side as you and me."

"Don't worry about that. My stupidity isn't so great as to start a civil war over a matter like this."

The other mobian is a female bat of golden fur, with white hair on the head, whose eyelids are painted in light blue, as well as wearing a rather provocative outfit: a tight black uniform in one piece, with a large pink heart on the chest, revealing a large neckline. In a case similar to the case of Shadow, Tails's parents don't recognize her, but Fiona does know who she is.

"Rouge Bates, it's been a long time." Fiona receives the bat woman.
"Fiona Fox, how's your life together with that green idiot who's your boyfriend?"

"I left Scourge. I found someone a lot better. I bet you can't guess who it is."

Tails patiently watches the two girls, while Rouge tries to solve Fiona's riddle, until she finally seems to have found the answer.

"Sonic? Fiona, you know: he's a mirror of Scourge, and vice versa; there are many things that the two of them have in common."

"No, it's not him."

"So it's not him, huh? And who's it?"

"I'll give you some clues: he's intelligent, reasonable, astute, gallant, good-hearted, cheerful, and he's also strong and very agile." Fiona approaches the bat to speak in her ear. "He's also great in bed. You know what I mean."

"Although that man lacks money, we're already talking about someone perfect." Replies Rouge, when Fiona finishes speaking in his ear. "No man is like that."

"Believe me, Rouge. Perfection exists."

"I give up. Now tell me who it is."

In response, Fiona heads to Tails and speaks to his ear. "What if we give her a demonstration?"

"Of course." Having said that, Tails takes flight with his two tails, grabs Fiona at her waist, and gives her a big kiss. Rouge can't believe what she's seeing.

"No way. Is Tails your boyfriend?"

"Is there a problem with the fact that I'm the girlfriend of a nerd?" The red vixen answers.

"The KFFs told me what happened: you rejected it, and even gave him a slap that left him lying on the floor, plus you went on dates with Sonic, first, and with Scourge, later. Maybe I had a shady past, but now I care about people, especially Tails. How do I know you're not playing with the poor kid again?"

"I can guarantee you that Fiona isn't betraying me." Says the two-tailed fox, who then tells the bat girl the whole story about how he and Fiona became boyfriends. When they finish, Rouge is thoughtful.

"I admit it: you two surprised me. Sincerely, I wish you a good time as a couple."

As for the robot, it's a walking arsenal of the E-100 series. It's painted in red, yellow and black tones, having written, on each shoulder, a red Ω (omega) letter drawn on a black background. Except for the fact that the AFFs had seen the E-100 robots before, this particular robot is totally unknown to them.

"Are you an Eggman robot?" Asks Rosemary.

"No, I'm Crimson Dynamo." The robot answers sarcastically. "Let me introduce myself to you, Alternative Freedom Fighters: I am E-123 Omega, a walking arsenal serving the Guardian Units of the Nations, the Armed Forces of the United Federation. Don't expect to find a better robot than me."
"Here we go..." Rouge says, while Shadow just rolls his eyes.

"We weren't aware that GUN had captured and reprogrammed an E-100." Says Bunnie. "I thought Tails had destroyed them all."

"Actually, the story hasn't been as simple as you think." An Overlander girl, about 14 years old, blonde, is present in the conference room. "I apologize for my lack of courtesy. My name's Hope. Hope Kintobor. And I know that my surname doesn't inspire much confidence."

"Don't worry, mademoiselle." Says Antoine, shaking hands with the girl. "I totally trust you. I also know what it feels like to have to fight against relatives."

"Good to know, Mister..." D'Coolette. Antoine D'Coolette. You can call me 'Antoine' or 'Tony', if you wish, mademoiselle Kintobor."

Hope starts to laugh. "Oh, please do n't start with 'Miss' and all that... Just call me 'Hope', okay?"

"D'accord. So, how did you get this E-100 to start fighting on our side?"

"Before, we had the E-102 Gamma, which was also the E-100 series. That robot wasn't as powerful as Omega, but its programming was so complex that it gave free will to it. In a way, Gamma had something like a 'soul'. When Eggman ordered Omega to destroy it, Gamma was defeated, but managed to unload its own programming on Omega, and the result was that the programming of both merged into one, giving free will to Omega. Then Shadow had a conversation with him, and... well, the end of the story is already quite obvious."

"Agents Shadow, Bates and Omega are the Team Dark." Adds Commander Tower. "Hope is the team's technical assistant."

"With only fourteen years?" Asks Rosemary.

"In this world, there are many more nerds than people usually believe." Tails Replies. "I met Hope shortly after Fiona started being my girlfriend. At that time, I collaborated with her and several experts from the Spagonia University in an investigation of Moebius and its inhabitants. It was in that investigation where we managed to identify Scourge and differentiate him from Sonic."

"Okay, let's talk about what's important." Amadeus intervenes. "What did you call us for, Commander?"

"I was going to tell you about it. Take a seat, please."

The AFFs, the Team Dark and Hope occupy their places in the conference room, the lights go out, and a screen lights up and starts to play images, while Tower makes his presentation.

"Recently, the Dark Egg-Legion has attacked several GUN bases in recent times. These attacks were carried out by the Eurish chapter, composed of former GUN Special Forces agents who were brainwashed by Doctor Eggman, and led by his Grand Master, Hugo Brass, who was Commander and Chief of GUN before his memory was erased. The attacks were aimed at stealing weapons, ammunition and also battle drones, but all this is actually provided to another chapter of the DEL, the chapter of Mercia. As far as we know, the mastermind of this operation is the Grand Master of the Mercian chapter, General Armand D'Coolette. General D'Coolette was formerly the Chief of the Royal Acorn Army, but is now robotized by Eggman and is the de facto ruler of this nation, named himself 'High Sheriff of Snottingham'. The Resistance in Mercia is carried out by a Freedom Fighters..."
team led by the legitimate ruler, Robert O'Hedge, aka 'Rob', son of the overthrown King O'Hedge of Mercia."

The AFFs and the Team Dark listen carefully to the Commander. However, Antoine begins to feel bad when he hears information about his father.

"Your mission is to collaborate with the MFFs, the Mercia Freedom Fighters, to disrupt the chapter of the DEL in that nation. The primary target is the High Sheriff of Snottingham, since if he's captured or eliminated, his DEL chapter will be disorganized without its leader. This will allow the final victory of the MFFs within their nation, as well as the restoration of the Royal House of O'Hedge on the throne. That's all. I wish you good luck."

When the Commander finishes speaking, Antoine retreats quickly from the conference room, avoiding to look at anyone. Bunnie realizes this and has a feeling of what happens, so she decides to follow him.

Finally, Bunnie sees Antoine locking himself in the bathrooms of Headquarters. As she enters, she finds him with his arms resting on the sides of one of the pools, with his head down. 

"Antoine, are you okay?" Bunnie asks, but Antoine doesn't react.

"It's about your father, is not it?" She still has no answer.

"I must kill him." The coyote finally responds.

"No. If there's any chance of avoiding that, it won't be necessary to kill him."

"I don't know what to do, Bunnie. I knew that the war was going to be difficult, but I never thought it could be so complex. And with 'complex', I mean that there are these kinds of problems." Antoine looks at Bunnie. "Maybe I shouldn't participate in this mission."

"Antoine, the AFFs need you." Bunnie knows that she can barely think of ways to convince her boyfriend. "Have I ever told you about my uncle?"

"No. What happens to him?"

"In the Southern region of the Kingdom of Acorn, which is where I come from, he was one of the most important Barons. After my parents had died, he took good care of me." The rabbit pauses. "Some time ago, I learned that he's now a DEL Grandmaster, just like your father, and he also leads his own chapter, the chapter of the Northamer Great Desert."

Antoine is silent, listening to the story of his girlfriend. "I'm sorry, Bunnie. Now sorry to ask you, but what are you trying to tell me with this?"

"Did you not hear me? Having a relative on the enemy side... I know how that feels. Mighty, the armadillo that is part of our allies in Chaotix, has a sister who's a member of that same chapter, so he's also in the same situation. Listen to me: what would your father tell you to do? I don't know what his personality was like, but surely he would tell you to kill him if necessary. He would understand you, he would realize that you do it for a good cause and because you've no choice. And if he, robotized, tells you that what you're doing is wrong, don't listen to him, because that will be the voice of the High Sheriff, the voice of the programming installed by Eggman, not the voice of your real father."

Antoine raises his head and nods as he looks into the bathroom mirror. "You're right, Bunnie." The coyote turns to the cyborg. "I'll fulfill my duty as a Freedom Fighter."
Then the young soldier leaves the bathroom, but then stops.

"By the way, do you know where the others are?"

Half an hour later...

"These are blueprints provided by Rob O'Hedge and his team. The High Sheriff will most likely be in the throne room, in the very center of the castle."

The Team Dark, including Hope, and the AFFs, including Bunnie and Antoine, are gathered inside a room at GUN headquarters. Rouge is showing them some plans of the Castle of Snottingham, the seat of government of the Kingdom of Mercia. Along with the maps provided by the MFFs, there are also some images obtained by GUN, whether they’re photos taken by drones with infrared cameras and photos taken by satellites.

"Considering how usually these castles are, we assumed that there are secret passages under the surface. Thanks to the satellite and drone images, the MFFs have already found and blocked the exits of the passages, to prevent anyone from sneaking out when we make the attack, and also to avoid surprise attacks through these secret passages. At the same time, GUN will send airplanes that will prevent the passage of any ship that tries to escape by air. Colonel Prower? Tails?"

The glances go towards Amadeus and his son. The Colonel takes the floor. "The Primary Attack Team, or PAT, will include Rouge, Antoine, Rosemary and me, and will team up with Rob O'Hedge and his MFFs. With this team, we'll attack through different routes simultaneously, to disorient the enemy, and we'll do it quickly, not giving them time to respond. Tails?"

"The rest of us, namely Shadow, Omega, Bunnie and me, will be the A-Team, and we'll keep waiting hidden in the vicinity of the castle. First, before the attack, we'll distract the robots, and we'll destroy all that the High Sheriff has sent for us. Then, if the situation gets complicated during the attack, whether by the arrival of reinforcements from the Eggman Empire or by a trap that the High Sheriff has planned, we'll intervene as a reinforcement of the PAT. Until the PAT requests our help, the A-Team's involvement in the plan will remain in the absolute secret for the other GUN soldiers, as well as for Rob O'Hedge and the MFFs. The purpose of this is to minimize the risks of our involvement being known by any spy, either one sent by the High Sheriff or one sent by another Eggman subordinate."

Before continuing, Tails takes a sip of water from a bottle. "Fiona will act as a liaison between the PAT and the A-Team. First, she will participate in distracting the robots as part of the A-Team, and then she will join the PAT. The only thing we'll reveal to the MFFs will be Fiona's participation as a PAT member, since, as I said, no one else should know anything about the A-Team, except us and Commander Tower."

Amadeus takes the floor again. "At 2:00 AM, the PAT will meet with Rob O'Hedge and the MFFs in the Deerwood Forest. At the same time, secretly, the A-Team will take their positions in other places in the forest. It is 5:00 PM, so I recommend you go and prepare everything, and then take this time to take a nap. Any questions?"

Shadow raises his hand.

"Shadow?"

"What do we do if we're discovered by a spy?"

Amadeus and Tails think and look at each other for a moment.
"Eliminate the spy immediately." Tails responds coldly. "Especially, if that spy discovers anything about the A-Team."

In response, Shadow nods. Meanwhile, Bunnie raises her hand.

"And what do we do if that spy isn't a robot itself? It could be a robian, or even a mobian that wasn't robotized."

"In that case, you must capture him and hold him captive until the mission is finished." Tails replies. "If the mission fails, we must take him with us and keep him prisoner, at least, until we finally defeat the DEL in Mercia. Moreover, as long as that spy is a prisoner, we must take away all that can serve to send a signal to our enemies."

"While the Kingdom of Mercia remains under the control of the Eggman Empire, we must do all the necessary missions to liberate that nation. And while we're planning and executing all these missions, the enemy must know as little as possible about us." Amadeus adds. "¿Anyone else want to ask any questions?"

Everyone is silent.

"All right, that's all. You can all leave."

Then the AFFs and the Team Dark leave the room. Meanwhile, Tails addresses his father.

"This has been a nice 'father and son moment', don't you think?"

Amadeus laughs at his son's words. "Do you call this 'a father and son moment'? To plan, together, the attack on the castle of an important lieutenant of Eggman?"

"Let's see... What's your concept of 'father and son moment'? Let me guess: Going together to eat an ice cream? Playing the merry-go-round? Sitting in a hammock, with you pushing me, while I sing the musical theme of 'Heidi'? Dad, I love you and I love Mom, really, and I'm so glad to have you two back here, but I'm too old to do those things. I don't wanna be ashamed, much less in front of my girlfriend, who, as you can see, is already a real seventeen-year-old lady."

"Miles, I wouldn't mind playing the merry-go-round." Fiona appears next to Tails and Amadeus, after hearing their conversation. "I don't know if you remember, but I've hardly been able to enjoy my childhood."

"Anyway, those things no longer amuse me." Tails replies. "I know: since I'm still a child, supposedly those things should amuse me, but the reality isn't that."

"But then, what do you enjoy?" His father asks.

Tails is "frozen", glancing at Fiona for a moment, while she looks at him, looking worried. All this is detected by Amadeus.

"Oh, I see... Tails, could we talk in private?"

"Uhh... Yeah, why not?" Tails gets even more nervous.

Amadeus and his son retreat to a corner of the hall, away from the rest of the people. When they're sure that no one listens to them, the Colonel addresses Tails, but doesn't seem angry.

"No need to lie: you dream that you make love to her."
"What-?!" Tails realizes he almost screams, so he lowers his voice. "What are you saying?"

"And I'm sure you also masturbate."

Tails' nervousness increases. "Dad, you got the wrong person. I am not so."

"Hey, calm down, it's normal for that to happen to you. The same thing happened to me at your age."

Tails rolls his eyes. "Yes, all the fathers and mothers of the planet repeat that phrase, as if they were reciting a mantra."

"But that's the reality, Tails. You can't be someone totally pure during the whole of your life. Listen to me: if you ever want to make love to her, do it, but remember to do these three things: ask her in a kind way, don't force her, use protection. I trust in your good judgment, my son."

The Colonel walks away from the two-tailed fox, but he grabs his arm. "Wait, Dad, I have something to tell you."

"What?"

"Fiona and I..." Tails starts talking shyly. "Well, we both... we've already made love... on several occasions... I hope you don't get angry."

Amadeus is speechless, with his face remaining serious. "How is it possible? When was the first time you two have done it?"

"I'll explain: a month and a half after Fiona returned with us, Scourge kidnapped her, and I went to rescue her; when I found Fiona, Scourge had raped her and was preparing to do it again; we exchanged some blows, but I managed to defeat him, and I gave him to the Zone Cops Corps. It was after the rescue when the romance really began. Two weeks later, Fiona was already recovered from the emotional trauma and we had managed to take away any venereal disease that she could have infected. At that moment, she confessed that she loved me and regretted everything that had happened between us; then we kissed, one thing led to the other, and... Well, the end of the story is already quite obvious, as Hope would say."

"At the time, you were ten years old."

"In fact, it was only two months before I was eleven."

"How was this possible?"

"Consequences of being an Adept to Chaos. Don't worry, Dad. After all, I followed your tips. Although, at that moment, you hadn't yet given me those tips... You know what I mean." Tails starts to walk towards Fiona. "Ah, there's another matter: don't start to protest with that matter of the difference of age. I don't know if you remember, but you're nine years older than Mom."

"If Rosemary finds out about this..."

Half an hour later, in one of the guest rooms...

"Did you tell your father about ours?"

"Yes, Fiona."
"I don't want to be annoying, but, how much did you tell him?"

Tails and his girlfriend were lying on a bed, covered by a blanket. The two-tailed fox was hugging Fiona from behind, his hands around her abdomen.

"I told him we had sex, that I rescued you from Scourge when it was too late..."

"Don't say that, Miles. You did what you could, and you even righted your wrong, by cleaning me of the pests that green hedgehog transmitted to me."

"Okay, if you say so... Anyway, I also told him that we did it several times, and that we've always used and still use protection. Other than that, I didn't tell him anything else. He did not get angry. Rather, he was surprised."

"Do you remember what I told you a few weeks ago, after the Sonic's rescue?"

"Yes, you said that I wasn't bad, considering that this was the first time..."

"Speaking of which, I seemed to hear that same day, you told Sally that we had sex for the first time."

"Yes, I forgot to mention that this was the first time we had sex... while I was in charge."

"It seems that, after seeing how well the 'Turbo Control System' of your armor worked, you felt motivated to take the initiative."

"It's possible."

Both remain silent.

"Miles, what if...?"

"I'd love to, Fiona, but I don't think it's the best time. You have to be well rested for this mission. We'll do it when we get back, I promise."

"It's okay. However, I can now give you a small advance of what we'll do later..." Having said this, Fiona hides under the blanket.

"Wait, Fiona, you're not forced to do it if you don't wanna- Ahh... Fiona, I... Okay, go on... If that's what you want..."

Chapter Notes

The end of the second chapter has come. Will the liberation of the Kingdom of Mercia be successful? What will happen to Antoine's mysterious father?

It is 2:00 AM in the Deerwood Forest. The climate is temperate, and a gentle cold wind runs through the trees.

Three individuals descend from the sky, one of them is holding a fourth individual in its arms. When descending, they hide among the treetops, and then land on the ground, almost without generating noise.

"Here, Agents A-Nerd and A-Spark. Does anyone copy us?"

"Here, Agent A-Steel Lady. I copy you."

"Here, Agent A-Ammo. I copy you."

"Come to our location."

A few minutes later, the four agents meet in the forest: Tails (A-Nerd), in his ATA suit; Fiona (A-Spark), with her electro-weapons; Bunnie (A-Steel Lady), preparing the plasma cannon on her arm, and E-123 Omega (A-Ammo), filled with ammunition for his weapons.

"Where's Agent A-Man in Black?" Says the child prodigy.

Suddenly, next to them, a silhouette made of green light appears out of nowhere. Then, that silhouette stops shining, identifying itself as Shadow.

"Is it really necessary that we're using these stupid codenames?" Says the black and red hedgehog.

"You're supposed to know this, considering your career as an agent."

"Okay, shall we start?" Asks Fiona.

"Affirmative." Omega responds, then begins firing some of its weapons into the sky.

At Snottingham Castle, a series of explosions and shots are heard in the forest. The sound comes from the Southeast. Several robots hear them, and one of them appears in front of the High Sheriff, who wears a purple cloak over him and is in the throne room.

"Milord, we have detected large explosions produced in the Deerwood Forest, at approx. one kilometer away from here, to the Southeast. The Local Resistance doesn't use this type of weaponry. Can I send tanks to investigate?"

"Do it, take fifteen of the twenty-five tanks that the Eurish chapter has provided, and also take ten of our twenty Hover ships. And order your robots to kill those responsible and leave their corpses"
displayed on the Royal Road. We won't let anyone come with some heavy ammunition to provoke us or frighten us."

A few minutes later, the High Sheriff's forces arrive at the Forest, finding nothing.

"Check the area carefully." Orders the robot that commands one of the tanks. Some SWAT-bots leave the tanks, starting the search in the forest. Meanwhile, a miniature missile quickly enters the cannon of that same tank.

**BOOM!**

In the explosion of the tank, the boss of the robots is also destroyed. For a moment, all the robots are disorganized, until finally is appointed a new boss.

"If something or someone moves, shoot!" Orders the new boss.

The robots continue to advance, until they find a mobian woman dressed in a cloak.

"Identify yourself."

The she-mobian simply looks at them and shoots an EM pulse that manages to deactivate the tanks, in addition to making the SWAT-bots "confounded". Meanwhile, she reveals herself as Fiona, Agent A-Spark.

"Actually, these robots lack ingenuity, they lack grace... In short, they lack spark. Agents! All ready!"

Then the other members of the "A-Team" descend from the sky or appear from inside the treetops. Tails stands next to Fiona and generates his Chaos energy shield, and then causes it to expand rapidly, hitting and destroying several robots. Then the two-tailed fox destroys five of the tanks with his railgun, and then fires his laser machine gun at the SWAT-bots.

At the same time, Omega fires its weapons at five other tanks, and Bunnie fires her plasma cannon at the last five. Then, while Omega uses its machine guns against the robots, Shadow executes a "Spindash" maneuver and destroys several SWAT-bots.

When the ten Hover ships launch into the attack, Tails fires his repulsor cannons with Chaos energy and deactivates their shields. Then, Omega rises flight and shoots some missiles that intercept to two of the ships; at the same time, Bunnie destroys a ship with her plasma cannon, and then, with her robotic arm, hits and crosses two other ships. From the surface, Shadow throws a Chaos spear from each hand, destroying two other ships. As for Fiona, she fires a lightning from each hand, being two ships reached by these lightning; when the last ship goes to attack her flying fast and very low, the red vixen grabs his electric whip and uses it to cut the ship in two, ending the battle.

"Agent A-Nerd, your robot is awesome." Says Omega.

"Thanks, A-Ammo, but this isn't a robot." Replies Tails. "It's just a simple suit."

"How did you manage to do that?" Shadow asks.

"What, the suit?" Says Tails. "I only used my knowledge of mechanics, and I also took advantage of my invention of the quantum reactor to."

"I don't mean that. I mean the cannons of your hands. They fire Chaos spears similar to mine."
"It's a long story. I prefer to tell it in better circumstances, Agent A-Man in Black."

This time, hearing the codename from the two-tailed fox, Shadow doesn't even pissed.

"Agent A-Spark, go and join the Primary Attack Team. Now, your codename is PAT-Vixen." Tails tells Fiona, who leaves immediately.

Meanwhile, somewhere else in the Deerwood Forest ...

A group of four mobians walks along one of the trails. The mobians in question are: a male coyote wearing a black overcoat, a purple kevlar waistcoat with red touches under the overcoat, black pants, military boots of purple color, and a red Basque beret, carrying a bow and arrows and also a saber; a fox and a vixen who wear green robes, and a female bat wearing a tight black dress with a large pink heart on the chest.

"We've been informed that this area has many traps." Says the bat. "So move carefully."

The four mobians continue to advance.

Meanwhile, someone, hidden among the trees, watches them, and then runs away. The vixen hears when he leaves, and makes a signal for the group to stop.

"I heard something." she says.

"Moi aussi, madame." Says the coyote.

The group remains static for one moment.

"It's gone, whoever it is." Says the bat.

"Just in case, prepare your weapons." Says the fox, taking out a modified saber. His vixen couple unfolds two guns with electro-bullets, the coyote takes out his own saber, and the bat woman unfolds two guns with common bullets. The foxes and the coyote are placed in a circle and behind the other two, so as not to be surprised, while the bat woman rises in the air and keeps flying over the heads of her three companions; the four keep their senses on alert and their weapons prepared.

For the next minute, nothing happens. Remaining in that sort of improvised "turtle" line-up, the foursome resumes their advance.

Suddenly, they're surrounded by four other mobians: a male quail wielding a mandolin as a weapon, a muscular male rat that is intimidating by just seeing him, a male sparrow ready to shoot an arrow, and a female rabbit in an obvious position of combat; the four wear medieval-style clothing.

"Identify yourself." Says the sparrow.

"As we understand it, you're the Mercia Freedom Fighters." Says the fox. "We want to talk to your leader, His Majesty, King Robert O'Hedge. Tell him we're the Foreign Legion, he will know what it means."

"Lower your weapons, everyone." A female voice is heard, which happens to be the voice of a red echidna woman, with a long hair in addition to the typical dreadlocks-like thornes. "They're allies, sent by GUN."

"I suppose His Majesty has told you about us, mademoiselle. Who are you?" Asks the coyote.
"Mari-An, the wife of Rob O'Hedge."

"It's an honor to meet you, Your Highness." The coyote leans before the echidna, who makes a small laugh.

"Forget the formalities and protocol here, call me by my name."

"Then, you know what we're here for." Says the vixen.

"That's right. Now follow me." The echidna, accompanied by the other members of the Resistance and the so-called "Foreign Legion" that GUN had sent, were advancing along the path.

15 minutes later, they arrive at Hideaway, a hidden village in the Deerwood Forest, which is used by the MFFs as Headquarters. The group of nine mobians heads towards one of the cabins, and Mari-An goes ahead of them and enters. A few seconds later, she gestures to the others to come too.

When the MFFs and the "Foreign Legion" enter the cabin, they encounter a cyan hedgehog that is hooded, although his face is visible and his ears protrude through holes in the hood. The hedgehog is sitting in an armchair along with Mari-An, while holding in his arms a baby who has a great resemblance to the female echidna.

"Your Majesty..." The coyote leans before the hedgehog, and so do his three companions.

"No need to do that." Says the hedgehog. "You can call me 'Rob', okay?"

The members of the "Foreign Legion" stand up. "Pardon, it's the custom." The coyote says embarrassed.

"As a courier has told me, you're GUN's Agent Rouge Bates, and three of the Knothole Freedom Fighters: Rosemary Prower, Colonel Amadeus Prower, and Antoine D'Coolette." The hedgehog mentions the names, looking at the bat woman, the fox, the vixen and the coyote. "Fiona Fox should be here at some point, if I'm not mistaken."

"In fact, we're no longer of the KFFs. We continue to fight for the cause of the Resistance, but we're members of a different team." Antoine answers. "And Fiona Fox will arrive here at any moment. She was busy with another mission elsewhere."

"Speaking of Knothole, do you guys know anything about my cousin Amy Rose?"

"Oui, she's training to be a Freedom Fighter, and she's also become Sonic Hedgehog's # 1 Fan."

"Well... at least she's fine."

One of the villagers, a friar deer, enters the cabin. "Sir, a mobian woman has arrived who claims to be a member of a 'Foreign Legion' sent by GUN, and says that you know what she means."

"How is she?" Asks Rob.

"A red fox, with a purple red cape with hood. She carries weapons I've never seen in my life, weapons that aren't even used by Eggman's forces."

"Let her in, and bring her here."

"Yes, Sir." The friar leaves the cabin.

"She's surely Fiona Fox." Says Antoine, who then looks at the baby Rob is carrying in his arms.
"And what's the little prince's name?"

"He's our little Jon." Says Rob, looking at the baby and smiling. "Anyway... How will we attack the castle?"

"It depends on how many and who participate in your team."

A red vixen enters the cottage. "Good night, Your Majesty."

"Welcome, Fiona Fox. No formality is required, you can call me 'Rob'. Here, your friends from the Foreign Legion sent by GUN told me about you, and now we were planning the attack to the castle." Rob goes back to the rest of the team of newcomers. "Concerning those we'll participate, it will be me, Mari-An, and the four companions with whom you met a while ago: Alan Quail, Munch the son of the miller, Bow Sparrow and Thorn Lop. The gentleman whom you've seen recently, the friar Buck, will not participate for religious reasons, but he has prepared traps in the exits of the subterranean passages of the castle. So, when the robots try to escape, they won't only be unable to do so, but they won't be able to return to the castle to fight against us, since they'll be locked in the tunnels."

Fiona approaches Amadeus, saying something to his ear. When she finishes, Amadeus addresses Rob.

"Rob, can we five talk in private?"

"Of course, Colonel." The hedgehog answers.

Then the five mobians leave the cabin, and they come back in a minute later.

"Alright." Says Amadeus. "We'll organize in pairs, although we'll surely make some exceptions, given the odd number of participants in the attack. What we should still do is select the pairs."

Snottingham Castle. 4:00 AM.

In the castle's vicinity, after the distraction made by the A-Team, there are few SWAT-bots standing guard. These robots fall simultaneously, because of an EM pulse.

[Soundtrack: Musical Theme of "Mission: Impossible" TV series – Lalo Schifrin]

Two mobians shoot an arrow each; then one of them enters the castle by sliding through a rope tied to an arrow, and the other, using a steel cable originally wound on the other arrow.

Using the rope and the steel cable, Antoine and Rob enter through a window.

"Your arrows are interesting." Says the hedgehog. "I also made them with tricks included."

"The tricks of my arrows don't only include rolled steel cables." The coyote responds. "You will see."

At the same time, eight mobians, organized in four pairs, silently advance towards various accesses of the castle: Amadeus and Bow Sparrow enter through a window, Rouge lands on a terrace while holding Mari-An, Munch opens a large hole in a wall and enters accompanied by Thorn Lop, and Rosemary becomes invisible and infiltrates to give access to Alan Quail. Fiona keeps waiting nearby, ready to call the A-Team in case the PAT and MFFs have problems. All the members of the team
advance quickly and stealthily through the corridors of the castle.

Amadeus and Bow leave the room through whose window they entered. The fox has his sword ready, and the sparrow has his bow ready to shoot an arrow.

"So, do you guys in the Kingdom of Acorn use firearms?" The sparrow asks.

"No, the prohibition still applies, and you?"

"Here, too." says the sparrow. "The O'Hedges cared for their people, but they were also quite stubborn. I was one of Rob's father's most loyal guards, and I witnessed the King making irrational decisions in certain cases."

"Has anyone ever proposed to create a democratic government of some sort? For example, a parliament that limits the King's power."

"People trusted the King. In addition, everyone believed that the people wouldn't know how to choose a government that acts correctly."

"Well, they could have taught Politics to the people, instead of keeping them ignorant. Of course, the fact that there's an educated people would be a threat to the Monarchy."

"In some respects, we have to recognize that humans are better. Yes, the way they live is harmful to nature, but they have a democratic government that works well."

The two Freedom Fighters remain silent for a while as they walk down the aisles.

Bow resumes the conversation. "I remember the origin of the prohibition of firearms in your Royal Army: an incident with the eldest son of King Theodore, less than a century after the founding of the Kingdom of Acorn, over a thousand years ago. At that time, the Kingdom of Mercia still didn't exist, not even Snottingham had been founded, as I recall."

"Because of that single incident, King Theodore completely prohibited the firearms' use in the Kingdom." Says the Colonel. "That's one of the things for which I'm now beginning to distrust the Monarchy: the fate of the nation depends on the King's personal feelings. It depends on that, and it also depends on the relationships between the members of his family. In addition, there's always the risk that, when the King dies, the successor is an inept one who obtains the crown for the mere fact of being a relative of the deceased King or being married to a member of the royal family. There's also no guarantee that the King, possessor of the totality of power, will benefit the people with his way of governing. Anyway... I hope that, by the end of this war, we can make a change of government. The world has already changed a lot."

In one of the hallways that were at ground level, a squadron of SWAT-bots fire their laser weapons. A few seconds later, a column of the castle is thrown towards them, destroying them. Munch and Thorn advance down the open corridor, and reach a door.

The duo opens the door and finds a weapon inside the room. Except for the fact that it's high-tech, the gun looks like a cannon of the type mounted on tripods on light warships, although it's of considerable size anyway.

"Do you have any relationship with the High Sheriff? You two have a great physical resemblance."

Faced with Rob's question, Antoine is silent for a moment. "He's my father, robotized."
Rob doesn't know what to answer. "You know that, at any moment, you'll be forced to fight him."

"Maybe. However, anything that happens will be only a fight, without any dead. With this thing..." Antoine then shows Rob a small container with water, which in turn retains a power ring inside. "...my father will recover the memory."

In one of the towers, Rouge and Mari-An find an arsenal full of armaments stolen from GUN. Then, in other towers, they encounter a similar scene. Faced with this, Rouge calls Fiona through her communicator.

"PAT-Vampire calling PAT-Vixen. Do you copy me?"

"Here, PAT-Vixen, I copy you."

"We've found the arsenal of stolen weapons. They're in the highest rooms of the palace towers."

"Could we take them?"

"I don't think so."

"Then destroy them. I will warn the others to escape."

"I warn you that the castle could also be destroyed."

"Don't worry about it." Mari-An intervenes. "To be honest, Rob and I would rather stay in the woods. We won't bother waiting for a new castle to be built."

Then the echidna takes her communicator. "PAT-Thornes calling to other agents."

"We've found the weapons stolen from GUN. We're going to install explosives to destroy them, which could destroy the castle as well. Get outta here ASAP." The Mari-An's voice is heard by the communicator of Thorn.

"Here, PAT-Celtic. Wait a moment before installing explosives. We've found a strange weapon here." Says the rabbit girl, with an accent from the Highlands of Mercia.

"Could you send us a photo?"

"Of course." Thorn takes a camera and takes a photo, sending the image to the other agents.

"Here, PAT-Vampire. That cannon is one of the most powerful weapons they've stolen. Dr. Fukurokov, a scientist who works for the Battle Bird Armada, developed it as a prototype. GUN was able to get hold of that weapon a short time ago." Now, Rouge's voice is heard.

"What do we do?"

"As far as I can see in the photo, the weapon has been improved." Rouge pauses. "Destroy it. Install explosives, install them inside. Let no trace of the weapon remain."

"Here, PAT-Archer." Rob's voice is heard.

"Wait for me and Agent PAT-Frenchy to come out. He still has an issue to attend to."
Rob and Antoine arrive at the entrance to the throne room, and the coyote activates his communicator.

"PAT-Frenchy calling PAT-Vixen. Do you copy me?" Says the coyote quietly.

"Here, PAT-Vixen. I copy you. If you're trying to confront your father, in a 'Luke Skywalker Vs. Darth Vader' style, you're doing a real madness."

"I would be crazy if I acted like Sonic usually acts: alone, without a Plan B, and without even a Plan A that is well elaborated. I would also be crazy if I let my own father die when the castle is destroyed. I need you to do this: come here, entering where I and Agent PAT-Archer have entered, and place yourself in a good position. If he defeats me in a fight and is about to kill me, deactivate him with some of your electric weapons, so that later we can take his body elsewhere and try to restore his free will."

"And why do you think we can free your father?"

"Sonic tried it on Sir Charles Hedgehog, his 'Uncle Chuck', and he succeeded. A robian's liberation is possible."

"Ok, there I go. But I warn you: if you don't die, Tails will kill you for having endangered me, others, and all our plans; and if you die, I'll see to it that your creator gives you your due when you meet him."

The huge entrance gate to the throne room opens. The High Sheriff, sitting on the throne and not looking surprised, observes the way a young coyote, very similar to him but with the difference that he's organic, walks towards him with a military bearing, wielding his modified saber, which is warmed and ready for the fight.

"Who are you?" Asks the old robotized coyote. Unlike his son, he doesn't speak with Mercia's accent.

"Tu ne te souviens de moi?" ["Don't you remember me?"] Says the younger coyote. "C'est moi, Antoine D'Coolette. Je suis ton fils." ["It's me, Antoine D'Coolette. I'm your son."]

"Je comprends votre langue. Mais votre nom ne signifie rien pour moi, ni ce nom de famille." ["I understand your language. But your name means nothing to me, and neither does that surname."]

"Vous vous souvenez, je sais. Vous êtes Armand D'Coolette, général et chef de l'Armée Royale du Acorn, mon père." ["You remember, I know. You're Armand D'Coolette, General and Chief of the Acorn Royal Army, my father."]

For a moment, the High Sheriff seems to be hesitating. "Vous feriez mieux de renoncer, que mes SWAT-bots prennent soin de vous, dégoûtant insectes." ["You better give up, my SWAT-bots will take care of you, disgusting insect."]

"En fait, ces SWAT-bots sont fournis par le Dr Eggman. Tu ne te rends pas compte? Il a été utilisé-vous pendant tout ce temps." ["Actually, those SWAT-bots are provided by Doctor Eggman. Do not you realize? He's been using you all this time."]

"Vous ne pas accomplir convaincre de commettre une trahison. Je suis le plus fidèle de tous les membres des Forces Armées de l'Empire. J'étais fidèle à Robotnik, alors même qu'il était mort, et je vais rester fidèle à Eggman pour le reste de ma vie." ["You'll not convince me to commit treason. I'm the most loyal of all members of the Armed Forces of the Empire. I was loyal to Robotnik, even
while he was dead, and I'll remain loyal to Eggman for the rest of my life."

Antoine remains silent. "D'accord, si vous le mettez comme ça..." ["Okay, if you put it that way..."]

That said, the soldier coyote is put into combat position. "En garde." ["On guard."]

"Vous dites que vous êtes mon fils. Voulez-vous vraiment à lutter contre votre père?" ["You say you're my son. Do you really want to fight your father?"] His father asks.

Antoine remains in combat position, without showing signs of doubting. "Je combattrai contre le Haut Shérif, contre une réplique de Eggman. Je ne vais pas être la lutte contre mon père." ["I'll be fighting the High Sheriff, against an Eggman's replica. I won't be fighting my father."]

"Vous aurez ce combat, mais je ne vais pas avoir pitié." ["You'll have this fight, but I won't have pity for you."]

That said, the High Sheriff turns his right hand and right forearm, robotic like the rest of his body, into a saber and throws himself on Antoine, raising his saber over his head to cut the coyote vertically. In a swift movement, Antoine interposes his own saber, stopping the attack of his robotized father; then he moves his sword in a circle, making a cut in the arm where his father's sword was, and disables it, but he avoids amputating that arm; finally, he puts the hot tip of his weapon only a couple of centimeters away from the robian's chest.

Suddenly, the High Sheriff grabs the saber and throws his opponent effortlessly, taking only a few burns in the hand at the end. After smashing into a medieval tin armor, Antoine rises from the ground, but finds his father launching a direct hit. The soldier, holding his arm firmly, intercepts the metal fist of his aggressor and holds it in hand, and then applies a martial arts technique, keeping his opponent lying on the ground, holding his arm firmly.

Despite this, the robian is released from his grasp, escapes and grabs a blaster pistol he had at hand, firing at his son. However, because the ammunition is technically not made of light and doesn't travel at the same speed, he manages to dodge the shots, and reaches his father, grabbing the gun. Both of them struggle, and his father tries to get rid of his grip, but when he tries to shoot, the particles of the blaster pistol are not fired: in the struggle, with so many confused movements, his son had deactivated the weapon. Antoine throws himself at him, causing them both to fall, and then grabs his Power Ring and puts it in his father's hands.

"Rappelez-vous. L'anneau de pouvoir, l'invention de Nate Morgan." ["Remember. The Power Ring, the invention of Nate Morgan."] Says Antoine.

His father begins to relax. "Fils?" ["Son?"]

"Papa?!" ["Daddy?!"]

Suddenly, General D'Coolette struck Antoine a hard blow, leaving him lying on the ground. Armand, again controlled by Eggman's programming, grabs his son, but he reacts and hits his father in his metallic head. His hand is sore, but his father seems to be dizzy and doubting what's happening.

After this, Armand again assaults Antoine with both fists, but he stops the blows firmly. Nevertheless, the forces of the young mobian begin to be overcome by the extra force that the robotization gave to the old robian. While Antoine holds Armand's arms, his father warms his fingers' tips, and with both thumbs glowing red, he burns the eyes of his son.

The young coyote screams in pain and falls to the ground, but the High Sheriff doesn't get to kill
him, since Fiona shoots his Taser weapon from a balcony. The robian begins to overload, and finally falls to the ground. His eyes, like any robian's, are turned into two black orbs, but the red light that usually replaces the pupils is no longer there.

While the other members of the PAT and MFFs are already out of the castle, Fiona and Rob are in the throne room, attending to a blind Antoine, but who soon returns to walk normally, almost without having to carry a cane or be accompanied by nobody. Thanks to his training with Colonel Prower and the Wolf Pack, he had learned to be guided by sound.

"I believe my blindness can no longer be cured." Says the coyote.

"Of course yes." Fiona activates her communicator. "PAT-Vixen calling the A-Team. We've defeated the High Sheriff and we're about to destroy the arsenal stolen from GUN, but there are wounded. Agent PAT-Frenchy has his eyes burned and badly damaged. We need Agent A-Nerd to come here to cure him. No rush."

"Here, Agent A-Nerd. We'll be there in a minute or two."

"Received." Fiona turns off her communicator and walks toward the inert body of the High Sheriff. Antoine captures this.

"Grab the Power Ring I brought. Surely, if we activate my father now, using the ring as an energy source, his system will restart, and there will be no trace of the High Sheriff’s programming. He will again have free will."

Fiona does what Antoine says, opening the body of Armand D'Coolette and inserting the ring inside.

(Armand D'Coolette vision)

The screen is black, until red letters appear.

_Restart._

The image appears in red tones. A text, in white letters, passes through the screen, and then appear other letters, white, larger.

_Armand D'Coolette._

_Robotized in the year 3227, with 50 years old._

_No directives recorded in memory._

_Status: FREE._

"It looks like he's reliving." Says Rob, watching the red lights come back into Armand's eyes.

"¿Antoine? Où es-tu, mon fils?" ["Antoine? Where are you, my son?"] Says Armand, looking around. Antoine appears in front of him, blind, with burned eyes. "Mon dieu..."

"Salut, papa. Vous rappelez-vous ce qui est arrivé?" ["Hi, Daddy. Do you remember what happened?"] Antoine replies.

"Oui, je me souviens." ["Yes, I remember."] Armand pauses. From his features, one may realize that
the old robian would cry if he could.

"Malheureusement, je me souviens... de tout..." ["Unfortunately, I remember... everything..."]

Finally, Armand begins to cry really, but without tears. "Pardonnez-moi, mon fils... Je t'en prie..."
["Sorry, son... I beg you..."]

Antoine hugged her father tightly, crying too. "D'accord, papa... Je te pardonne. Vous ne me fait pas de mal volontairement." ["Okay, Dad... I forgive you. You haven't hurt me voluntarily."]

A subject approaches a side door of the throne room.

"Merci... Je t'aime, Antoine." ["Thanks... I love you, Antoine."]

"Moi aussi." ["Me too."]

As father and son embrace, Fiona looks around, until...

"Watch out!"

The red fox runs and pushes away the coyotes and Rob. Then a ball of red energy hits the site where they were, creating a big explosion.

When they recover from the explosion, the four, hidden, look where the shot went, and find, in a side door of the throne room, a mobian cobra, in a uniform of green color and very similar to Eggman’s costume. The subject in question has legs thanks to Legionization, the process by which the original Dark Legion implanted cybernetic improvements in the bodies of their members, a process inherited by the Dark Egg-Legion. The cobra holds a cannon of energy similar to the one Munch and Thorn had found.

Knowing who the snake is, Rob communicates with his companions. "Here, PAT-Archer. That guy is Mordred Hood, a former assistant of my father. Disappeared during the Robotnik's coup d'etat."

Armand grabs Antoine's communicator. "Here, Armand D'Coolette calling the red vixen who shot me with a Taser."

In another corner of the room, Fiona answers the call. "What's going on?"

"Get out of here. I know this guy, he can use his cobra hood to hypnotize his opponents. Only a blind man or a robotic organism can fight him."

"Then let Rob go. I'll stay. With my EM pulse cannon activated on a specific frequency, maybe I can interfere with the cobra's hypnosis signal." Fiona turns off her communicator and waits.

"Dad, I'll stay, too. I can fight blind." Says Antoine.

"Are you sure?"

"I've continued my training."

"D'accord, let's get this over with."

In the Deerwood Forest, the A-Team is waiting to intervene. At that moment, they receive a call from Fiona.

"Agent PAT-Vixen calling the A-Team. I need Agent A-Ammo. We're facing a mobian cobra with
the ability to hypnotize. Agent A-Ammo is immune to hypnosis, thanks to its robotic nature.”

"Here, A-Nerd. I'll go too. With the technology of my glasses, I'm also immune to hypnosis."

That said, Tails and Omega take flight and head for the castle.

Armand y Antoine D'Coolette aparecen en la sala del trono, frente a Mordred Hood.

"Milord, what happened to you? Did that creature try to seduce you, the High Sheriff of Snottingham, to betray Eggman?"

Armand, in response, removes the purple cloak and throws it to the ground. "The High Sheriff you met was destroyed, Mordred. And very soon, you'll follow the same fate."

"Force me."

Mordred charges the weapon and prepares to shoot, but Antoine, knowing the source of the sound, quickly advances and cuts the weapon, rendering it useless. The cobra retreats and, through a remote control, deploys two other similar cannons, firing at the coyotes, as they escape.

Finally, father and son get together.

"Daddy, face the cobra. I'll take care of the cannons." Says the young soldier.

That said, Antoine destroys a cannon with an arrow, and then goes to the other cannon and destroys it, cutting it with his saber.

Meanwhile, Armand transforms his left arm into a circular saw and tries to cut Mordred, but the ophidian eludes the maneuvers of the old robian, and then gives a blow that manages to disable the circular saw, so Armand returns to use his fists to punish Mordred. In one of his maneuvers, the coyote grabs the snake by the neck to asphyxiate him, and he strangles the robian with his tail, while Armand smiles.

"Imbécile. I'm a robian, you can't asphyxiate me-" Then, Armand ceases to feel the rest of his body, while the cobra tightens tightly his neck until this one begins to dent and to release sparks.

When Mordred is about to leave the Robian definitively paralyzed, Omega arrives and strikes Mordred. The cobra is thrown to the ground, and then gets up, activating hypnosis to try to control Omega.

"Whoever is inside that armor, I command you to surrender to me. I'm your superior-" Mordred doesn't finish speaking, as Omega grabs him with his hand's claws and starts to hit him on the ground. However, the snake manages to activate another of his guns by remote control, which shoots at Omega and leaves him so damaged that he can barely stand on his legs. The cobra takes advantage and escapes, but encounters Tails.

Mordred activates hypnosis to control Tails. "On your knees, fox."

"Thank you for trying to hypnotize me. Do you have the frequency, dear Fiona?"

Suddenly, Fiona appears, and Mordred tries to hypnotize her. But Fiona, avoiding looking directly at the ophidian, shoots her EM pulse against him, using a frequency that nullifies his hypnosis signal. Trying to hypnotize the vixen, Mordred starts to get tired, so he unfolds another one of his cannons, which shoots Fiona. Tails manages to approach his girlfriend and tries to project the shield of Chaos.
energy, but he's late: the red energy ball hits the shield while it's still in the process of formation, and Tails is unconscious because of the explosion. Fiona collects his body and escapes, knowing that they can't fight in these conditions.

Now, inside the throne room, which already has several holes in the walls, Armand and Omega are lying on the floor, and only Antoine is still standing. At this sight, Mordred unfolds all the cannons stored on the walls and on the ceiling, causing them to point at Antoine.

"After all, my hypnosis wasn't necessary to defeat you all, don't you think?"

Antoine doesn't respond.

"Hey, rodent, I'm talking to you. You may be blind, but you're not deaf."

"I'm not a rodent, I'm a coyote. And also, above all, I'm a mobian."

"Oh, I beg you to forgive me." Mordred speaks in an effeminate way. "Have I hurt your pride?"

After speaking, the cobra, brazenly, starts to laugh out loud.

He doesn't realize that Antoine is preparing to shoot an arrow.

Antoine tense the bow, and puts the arrow in it. He doesn't need to see his goal, he just needs to know where that loud laugh comes from.

When Mordred opens his eyes a little, after laughing, he has no time, not even to shout. The arrow shoots out, moves toward him and enters his mouth.

Now, a rod of carbon fiber crosses his spine, and the cobra can't move. He keeps looking at the situation, helpless.

Antoine, with the lost glance, walks directly toward him, while preparing his saber.

The cobra looks, desperate, when the coyote finally arrives.

"Dear Mordred, you'll serve us well to give Eggman a message. It's time for him and his Armed Forces to start being afraid of us."

The soldier wields his saber.

"This is for Mercia..."

Quickly, the filament, red hot, cuts the snake in half.

"... and this is for Dad."

Finally, Antoine beheads the ophidian, putting an end to his life and Eggman's rule over the Kingdom of Mercia.

Chapter Notes

The third chapter arrives, and is the ideal time to celebrate. We must think that the liberation of an entire country is a very important achievement. Besides, it's just a party. What could go wrong?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Snottingham Castle, Kingdom of Mercia. 4:15 AM.

Almost all the participants of the mission are gathered in the forest, near the castle, waiting to destroy the arsenal stolen from GUN. Antoine and Omega haven't yet returned, and Tails, after regaining consciousness, had gone to look for them along with Fiona. Meanwhile, reinforcements begin to arrive, in the form of SWAT-bots and Hover ships.

"PAT-Vampire calling PAT-Frenchy. Eggman's reinforcements are coming, and I wanna blow the f***** castle through the air once and for all. What the f*** are you doing in there together with the Agents A-Ammo, A-Nerd and PAT-Vixen?"

"Mademoiselle Rouge, I'm blind. You should have a little more patience with me." A voice with Mercia's accent rings from behind the bat woman.

"What?!" Rouge turns around and meets Antoine, who now wears a bandage covering his eyes and has bloodstains on his uniform. The coyote is accompanied by his father Armand, Tails, Fiona and Omega.

"Agent D'Coolette, what the hell happened?" Then Rouge sees the High Sheriff. "And what does that criminal do here, without the handcuffs on?"

"Réassurance, Agent. My father's mind has been freed from Eggman's control."

"Is that possible?"

"Check it out for yourself."

"Okay, I'll trust what you say-"

"ANTOINE!" Bunnie comes running after seeing her boyfriend blindfolded and wearing bloody clothes. "What happened to you?"

"Ne t'inquiète pas, mon amour. The blood isn't mine."

"And the blindfold? Let me check you."

"Don't bother, Fiona already checked me. You don't have to-"

"Oh my God!" Bunnie interrupts Antoine, after seeing the severe damage in his eyes. "Antoine..."

"It's not that bad. Tails will heal me soon. I must admit, I'm anxious to regain the ability to admire..."
your beauty."

Armand looks surprised, while Fiona seems to be annoyed.

"Tony, stop being so cheesy." Says Fiona.

"Anyway... How's Omega?" Rouge asks. "I hope you give him back to me in one piece."

Omega becomes visible. He's standing, but he's still pretty run down.

"Sorry, Rouge." Tails says. "It was difficult to repair. At least, I managed to get him to stand on two legs and walk."

"Okay, let's get this over with. Ten of the stolen tanks are already coming."

"Those are the only ten left. Me and A-Team have destroyed the other fifteen."

"We also have booty." Antoine intervenes, while Armand shows one of the cannons manufactured by Mordred Hood.

"The stolen experimental weapon..." Rouge looks at the gun, and then at Antoine. "Well done, Agent."

"The weapon has improvements, courtesy of Lord Mordred Hood." Says Armand.

"Later we'll test those improvements. Now I'll program the explosives to detonate them in a minute, and we'll leave. The tanks will be destroyed, along with the guns and the castle."

A minute later, a GUN transport helicopter, with two rotors, flies out of a clearing in the Deerwood Forest. In the distance, they see the Castle of Snottingham, destroying itself in an immense explosion.

"Breaking *bzzzt* News: It's officially confirmed that *bzzzt* the Kingdom of Mercia has been *bzzzt* freed from the rule of the Eggman Empire *bzzzt*"

"Rotor, the TV is malfunctioning again!"

It's 8:30 AM in Knothole, and Sonic, while having breakfast, is watching Central City's Channel 12 on television. It's already 1:30 AM in the capital of the United Federation, so the blue hedgehog is watching the noontime news.

Well... he tries. Because of the lack of resources, both to capture a signal of a fairly good quality as well as to repair the obsolete TVs existing in the village, there are usually several problems, such as the problems Sonic has now: the transmission is interrupted several times, the image appears with ghosting, and there are even times when the image appears in black and white, among other things.

Rotor enters the cabin where Sonic looks at the TV, and gives a sudden blow to the top of the device, causing the image to reappear.

"Thanks, Rotor."

"Almost 7 hours ago, in a secret operation by GUN and the MFFs, the Mercia Freedom Fighters, Snottingham Castle has been destroyed." Shown are images taken with the infrared camera of a drone, and in them appears the castle exploding.
"Some of the main leaders of the DEL, the Dark Egg-Legion, have died in the explosion. One of them is Mordred Hood, a former assistant of the dethroned King O'Hedge, disappeared after the Robotnik's coup d'etat. The High Sheriff of Snottingham, illegitimate ruler of Mercia, whose identity is still not well known, is probably dead too." Two photos appear on the screen: on the left side, a painting showing the mobian cobra known as Mordred Hood, portrayed in a military uniform full of medals; on the right side, a poor quality image, in black and white, showing a robotized coyote wearing a purple cloak and walking through a military camp.

"Hey, Rotor! Look at the photo on the right side. That guy looks familiar."

"You're right, Sonic. He looks a lot like Antoine. With the difference that he's robotized, and he looks older."

New Castle of Acorn, Knothole.

King Maximillian and Queen Alicia are in their room, eating a cake while watching TV.

"Currently, the disorganized forces of the Dark Egg-Legion are withdrawing from the territory of this nation. Meanwhile, Robert O'Hedge, the eldest son of the last King of Mercia, now legitimate ruler and leader of the MFFs, founded a village on the shores of the Neverlake and established the temporary capital of his Kingdom in that city, as well as surprising many through his speech."

It starts playing a recording of the speech of Rob, the new King of Mercia, who now wears the crown and royal robes, and is accompanied by Mari-An, the new Queen Consort.

Rob approaches a microphone and begins his speech. "Both Mercia and the whole world have changed a lot, even before the Robotnik's coup d'etat. In addition, during my years as a guerrilla, I've seen how ordinary citizens, by their own means, can organize themselves, and I've also seen what they can achieve. In fact, my current wife belonged to these people, she didn't belong to the Nobility. For these reasons, we've decided to call elections for a National Constituent Assembly, which will elaborate a democratic Constitution for our beloved nation, in addition to creating a Parliament that genuinely represents the interests of the inhabitants of Mercia-"

Maximillian suddenly spits out a piece of cake. "WHAT?! How dare he!?"

"I and my wife have decided that the vote is direct and secret, and that the votes of all citizens have the same value. We know that the most reasonable would be for citizens from 18 years to vote; however, given the current situation and the fact that I myself am under 18 years, we've decided that all the inhabitants will vote from the age of 14. And since voting is a basic right of citizens, we'll enforce that right, making the vote mandatory and equal, regardless of sex or religion or economic or social position-"

"This inexperienced ruler and his wild wife are doing outrages. They're ruining the effort that my grandfather, King Sebastian, made to bring peace to Mercia. That young hedgehog forgets that it was my grandfather who put his family on the throne, and that now he should be honored and his legacy should be continued."

In the speech played by television, Mari-An takes the floor. "When the Constitution has been approved and the members of Parliament have been elected according to it, the first bill we'll send them will be to lift the existing prohibition on the use of firearms in our Armed Forces. In this way, we'll take a fundamental step to achieve the final victory over Doctor Eggman-"

"And they continue, they continue doing stupidities. Now the Civil War will again break out in
"We invite the other mobian kingdoms to allow the existence of some kind of representative of the people in their respective governments. We know that this idea may seem nasty or absurd to you, but we assure you that this will improve the welfare of the population, and it will also benefit your nations in the long term. On the other hand, we think that the creation of representative institutions of the people is fundamental to differentiate us from Doctor Eggman's tyranny."

"Is he insinuating that I'm a tyrant just like Eggman?"

After this, the King of Acorn grabs a medieval sword and tries to use it to cut the television in half, but barely manages to make a small crack in the surface, and the television continues to operate. Tired, Maximillian drops the saber and sits down.

"I'm already too old to do this... By the Source of All, I swear that brat will pay me."

Meanwhile, Sally, who had seen and heard everything from the door, enters the room. "Dad, Rob is the ruler of a sovereign nation. He's not accountable to you, or Eggman, or anyone. You have no right to tell him what to do. Besides, the oath by the Source of All is no longer of much value now."

"But did not you see what that guy did, my daughter?"

"Yes, I already saw it. And I think he acted well."

"How can you think that?!"

"Max..." Alicia intervenes. "The new Kings of Mercia are right: the world has changed, and something must be done about it."

The King, giving up in the debate, turns his attention to the television.

Returning to Sonic's cabin...

With the recording of Rob's speech completed, the newscaster is talking again. "GUN has released very little information about the mission. However, it's known that there was intervention of the AFFs, the Alternative Freedom Fighters, a Special-Ops Team that is part of the Resistance against Eggman, which operates in conjunction with other various rebel groups depending on the case. Antoine D'Coolette and Bunnie Rabbott, spokespersons for that team, have approached to provide information to the media."

At that time, another recording begins to play: Antoine is walking along the Piazza della Federazione, in the district of Firenze. He shows a serious face, has a lost look, is dressed in formal clothes and wears sunglasses. Bunnie, who also wears formal clothes, is accompanying him, holding his arm. At the same time, both are surrounded by reporters.

"It looks like Antoine and Bunnie are famous now." Says Sonic.

"Mr D'Coolette, under what circumstances have the AFFs decided to intervene?"

"The MFFs called GUN, and GUN hired the AFFs. That's all I'm going to say about it."

"Mr D'Coolette, there are rumors that GUN developed weapons of mass destruction and that these weapons were stolen by the DEL, which forced GUN to intervene in Mercia. Is there any truth in that?"
"We all know how damaging the rumors are. They're like the game of 'broken phone': unconfirmed information is being transmitted by word of mouth, and each person makes minor modifications, until the final receiver receives a message rather like a conspiracy theory. This is what really happened: it was the DEL, not GUN, the organization that developed a weapon of mass destruction, which could allow the Eggman Empire to destroy any enemy, including both the MFFs and the United Federation. This was the reason for the intervention, which not only benefits GUN, but also MFFs and other Resistance groups in Mobius."

"Wait, Mr. D'Coolette! I have a question about something different."

"D'accord, I hear."

"What's the opinion of the AFFs regarding the Democratic Opening of King Rob and Queen Consort Mari-An?"

"I must admit that the Kings of Mercia have been right when they made that speech: the world has changed, the total prohibition of firearms in the Armed Forces is absurd, and the existence of a Parliament, elected by the people and with which the Crown must share power, will be beneficial. Personally, I believe in the importance of the Monarchy, I think it's important the existence of a strong figure representing the whole of a nation, and I don't like violent rebellions to overthrow their monarchs. However, I also acknowledge that a monarch, as well as its predecessors, possesses the crown because the people chose the monarchical system in the first place, and consequently, the Monarchy is indebted to its people. A rebellion against a Monarchy isn't necessarily produced by the existence of an "undisciplined people," but it can also be produced by a succession of rulers who ignore the debt they owe to their people. There can also be a rebellion because of a Royal House that maintains its family traditions and that, in making political decisions, repeats that conservatism, ignoring the changes that inevitably happen, either within the nation, in other nations or in society in general. To prevent this from happening, there must be a Parliament that somehow reminds the Crown of its duty. Regarding the call made by the Kings of Mercia to form institutions of democratic government in other countries, I would like this proposal to be considered by His Majesty, the King Maximillian Acorn. If the Democratic Opening is held in the Kingdom of Acorn, the people will have more confidence and respect for the Monarchy."

Antoine enters a taxi, being followed by the reporters. Bunnie is also about to enter.

"Mr. D'Coolette, I know they're rumors, but is there any truth in the rumor about the missing High Sheriff of Snottingham and his possible connection to a member of the AFFs?"

"No comments about that." Bunnie replies.

Having said this, the rabbit girl enters the taxi, and both she and Antoine greet the cameras, each making the "V for Victory" gesture with one hand.

"Well said, Antoine. Well said." Says Sonic.

"NNNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!" There's a shout from the New Castle of Acorn.

Returning again to the New Castle of Acorn...

"Please, Max, calm down. You must take care of your blood pressure."

"Alright, Alicia, I'll reassure myself, I'll do as you say... I'll do it the day that second brat apologizes for what he said about me!"
"Dad, can you stop thinking about this whole thing as a personal matter?"

"Sally, Antoine is supposed to be the most loyal of the Freedom Fighters. He comes from a family that has always served the Crown. And now he has become a subversive, a traitor."

"Dad, the only thing he said was that the Democratic Opening would also be better for us. He didn't demand that you abdicate. And he's still fighting for the Resistance's cause, so it would be unfair to call him a 'traitor', don't you think?"

As the Royal Family argues, Sonic arrives at the castle and enters the King's room, running with his super-sonic speed.

"Something wrong?"

"Sonic Hedgehog..." Max addresses the sprinter. "Bring Antoine back here, and I'll give you the title of Sir."

"Dad, you can't arrest those who don't behave just the way you want to."

"I am the King. I can do it, and I will. Sonic, do the same with Colonel Prower and his family. I know you've always been friends with little Miles, but I have to get his mind corrected. His parents came to make absurd propositions about creating a Parliament, talking as if they had the right to tell me what to do, and their son had been seduced by those ideas and tried to seduce me as well. He was very convincing."

"Anyway, Your Majesty, I thank you for entrusting me with a mission that is so important to you." Says Sonic, trying to contain his anger. "But I'm not interested in having the title of Sir. I give my most sincere apologies." Having said this, the sprinter leaves the castle.

"Sally, I have to tell you the truth: Sir's title would be very cool if I got it." Sonic tells Sally as they wander around Knothole. "But I would prefer that the King doesn't give it to me just for arresting allies whom he considers 'rebellious'; I wanna get the title of Sir for having defeated Eggman."

"I understand you, Sonic."

"Really? Because I think there's still something you don't understand: Someday, you'll have to say 'fuck you' to the King."

"Sonic! You're talking about my family, don't forget."

"I haven't forgotten, Sally. And I haven't forgotten what that old guy said about Tails. The next time the King speaks about him in that way, treating him as 'an influential child whose mind must be corrected', I swear I'm gonna throw him out a window and I'm gonna pee on his throne."

The couple is silent.

"Even so, we should communicate with them." Says Sally. "To know if they're enjoying their trip."

Seven hours later...

"Hello? Antoine, are you there? It's me, Sonic, your favorite archenemy."

Sonic and Sally are making a video call to the coyote. When the image appears, they see a party hall in a tower, in Empire City.
Antoine appears on the screen, without the sunglasses he had before, and with his normal eyes. "Salut, dear archenemy. How are you guys out there in Knothole?" It's not easy to hear his voice, because of loud music.

"We're fine, Antoine. It's getting cold in here. And how are you?"

"Oui, We're très bien, Sonic. Is not that right, Bunnie?"

Bunnie approaches Antoine to talk to Sonic and Sally, who appear on screen in a video call. While it's 3:30 PM at Knothole, it's 9:30 PM in Empire City.

"Hey friends! Yeah, we're having a great time here. Is there anyone else with you?"

"No, no one else. Why do you ask?"

"It happens that I was gonna tell you about Tails and Fiona."

"How are they doing?"

"Well..."

Tails and Fiona quickly enter one of the bath cubicles while they kiss, and close the door behind them.

"Are you gonna keep your promise, Miles?"

Upon hearing this, Tails opens Fiona's dress in a single pull.

"Of course, and I'll be happy to keet this one." Says the fox, smiling broadly.

"I could say that they're a happy couple."

"You could come here someday, if you want." Says Antoine.

"We'll go there when we can. Remember that, without all of you here, the only ones who can defend Knothole are two of us and Rotor." Says Sally.

"Call Knuckles."

"Great idea." Sonic says sarcastically. "I'll do it the day the cows fly."

"Méfiez-vous, Sonic. Your wishes can be fulfilled."

"In fact, my wishes are always fulfilled. Moving on to another topic: today you were famous."

"That's right, we were famous." The soldier answers, looking at his cyborg girlfriend.

"And you've also been very controversial."

"What do you mean?"

"Rob O'Hedge made a speech in favor of Democracy, and you spoke in favor of him. Now, both you
"and Rob are in the King's sight."

"I don't care. I have friends who support me."

"Well, he also has rage over Tails' parents, so those allies won't serve you against him."

"No, huh? Okay..."

Then, Antoine goes away for a while, and later returns accompanied by his father.

"Let me introduce you to Armand D'Coolette, my father and the former leader of the Royal Army of Acorn."

"Bonsoir, monsieur Hedgehog. I met your parents and your uncle. Other than that, I knew about you thanks to my son. He speaks very well about you."

"Really?"

"Why are you surprised? Were you two at odds?"

"The world is not perfect, you know."

"C'est certain. If the world were perfect, I-"

"That's enough talk for today, don't you think?" Bunnie, somewhat nervous, interrupts Armand. Antoine's father seems to understand what the cyborg girl is referring to.

"I was going to say that if the world were perfect, I wouldn't be robotized now." Says the old coyote, giving a look of complicity to Bunnie and Antoine, who catch that look and give it back.

"So what do you think of Antoine's rebellious speech?" Asks the blue hedgehog.

"I wouldn't make a drama about it. He really is someone reasonable." Armand answers, putting a hand on his son's shoulder. "Besides, the King used to have his moments. Sometimes, obeying him blindly, as I had done, wasn't for the best. For example, firearms were indispensable on many occasions, but they forced me to command my troops without firearms, because the King forbade them."

Rosemary enters one of the bathrooms cubicles. When she comes out, she hears moans from one of the cubicles.

"Hello?"

The moans stop. After hesitating, Rosemary leaves the restrooms.

A few seconds later, Tails and Fiona leave the cubicle.

"That was close, Miles."

"If my mother finds out about this..."

[Soundtrack: Money for nothing – Dire Straits]

"Antoine, how can all your friends endure this music? How can you endure this music?"
"Dad, if you don't like this music, you should listen to Sonic's music."

"Hey, Antoine! Why do you have to say that?"

"Son, both things are the same: rock."

"There's good quality rock and poor quality rock. Good quality rock is what I hear occasionally. Poor quality rock is what Sonic does: he thinks he knows how to play an electric guitar, but when he starts playing that instrument and singing, his music seems more like the music of the folk or country genres, with the difference that the electric guitar replaces the common guitar."

"I heard you, Ant. I heard you."

Armand looks skeptically at Antoine, ignoring Sonic.

"Dad, trust me. Good quality rock exists. It's not very common, but it exists."

Tails and Fiona appear next to them. The two-tailed fox can see Sally on the screen.

"Fiona, could you wait me here for a moment?"

"Okay." The red vixen answers, letting Tails walk away and meet his father.

Amadeus and Commander Tower are talking and drinking champagne, while Tails approaches them.

"Is General Armand having a good time?" The Commander asks Tails.

"Apparently, yes."

Tails grabs a sandwich from the table next to them. "Dad, Mom was just about to discover me and Fiona."

Amadeus looks at his son with wide eyes. "Did you two do it in the bathrooms?"

"Dad, it's not that bad. We weren't doing it in public."

Amadeus remains silent, staring into nothingness.

"You were lucky. When your mother gets angry..."

"Is she unstoppable? Yes, many say that about me."

"You inherited it from your mother."

"It seems so."

The two-tailed fox and his father remain silent.

The Commander addresses Tails. "Do you and Fiona...?"

"Yes."

Tower looks into nothingness, incredulous.

"Back to the topic of Antoine's father..." says Amadeus, in a low voice. "Commander Tower and I were talking about some things that Armand did. Very bad things."
"Dad, don't talk to me like I'm a five-year-old. Anyway, if Antoine's father committed any crime, he did it when he was the High Sheriff. The judge will say that his personality had been annulled at that time, and will absolve him."

"We're referring to things he did before he became the High Sheriff, at the time of the Great War." Says the Commander.

"What kind of crimes do we talk about?"

"Aberrant crimes, equivalent to what we call 'crimes against humanity', and several other war crimes." Tower takes a sip of his glass of champagne. "When I fought in the Great War, I controlled my soldiers not to commit such crimes. However, there were soldiers who obeyed other leaders of our Army, or who directly obeyed Charlemagne, the Overlord who ruled our nation at that time. These soldiers committed war crimes, and their superiors incited them in a certain way."

Amadeus takes the floor. "In response, General D'Coolette, who led the Royal Army of Acorn, urged our soldiers to do the same. He was very vengeful when he had to fight the Overlanders. He told our soldiers not to have mercy. I told my soldiers to disobey him, but those who obeyed Armand directly..."

"Absolute hypocrisy." Tails says. "The Kingdom of Acorn didn't permit the use of firearms, but allowed such crimes. What exactly did Armand's soldiers do?"

"Crimes against innocent Overlanders civilians." The Colonel replies. "Cold-blooded murders, torture, rape, looting... He wanted our soldiers to show the Overlanders what we were capable of."

"Son of a b****." Tails says to himself. Then look at Antoine from afar. "What do we do with him? Will we tell him? When, how, who should tell him?"

"I'll tell him. I'll find the best time to do it."

"Okay, Dad. As for you two, please don't fight."

"Don't worry, Tails." Says Abraham. "On behalf of my people, I apologized to your father. And he, on behalf of his people, apologized to me."

"Ok, Sonic. See you at Christmas."

"All right, Fiona. Give my greetings to Tails. Bye!" The transmission is interrupted.

"Antoine, I must speak with you." Armand tells his son.

"About what?"

"Let's go elsewhere."

Antoine and his father are on the terrace of the tower.

"Are you interested in any woman?"

"Actually, I already have a girlfriend."

"Congratulations, son. Who's she? Princess Sally?"
"Not really."

Armand is silent for a few seconds. "Okay..."

"She doesn't love me. There's not much to deal with."

"But why don't you insist to be her boyfriend?"

"Because Sally doesn't love me, nor will she in the future. She prefers Sonic, and the two really love each other."

"And who's your girlfriend now?"

"Bunnie Rabbot."

"That Southern girl? The daughter of Baron Beauregard?"

"Do you have any problem with that?"

"Antoine, you have to choose better. We're talking about the woman with whom you'll live the rest of your life, the woman with whom you'll form a family. Although, in her case, you may not be able to form a family. You'll have to adopt."

"I don't care, I love Bunnie. And if you don't agree, you can deploy that circular saw you keep on your left arm, cut me into bits and let Tasmanian devils eat me, but you don't have the right to tell me whom I should love. Besides, I was loyal to Sally, but only because I was her soldier. Leaving that motive aside, I've never truly loved her."

As he speaks, Antoine starts to shake. "I remembered a little of my past, and I remembered that when I was a child, I didn't court the princess the way I did it later. And I also remembered that you urged me to be Sally's boyfriend, with the only excuse of 'giving prestige to the surname D'Coolette'. The only thing that mattered to you was that there was a member of our family inside the King's Court. And in addition to all that, trying to attract Sally while my military training was very scarce and outdated, I had no choice but to boast of false achievements, and I was unsuccessful, especially because Sonic. Despite his idiocy, he made real achievements in the War against Robotnik and he had even managed to defeat him definitively. In fact, because of my failure, coupled with remembering your insistence on getting Sally's love, I started having mental problems. If Colonel Prower, his family and Bunnie hadn't helped me, I would have committed suicide someday."

Armand stares at his son, surprised by his last sentences. However, Antoine doesn't stop.

"And besides, when you started my military training, you formed around me a fantasy world, where everything was perfect. You said such stupid things like 'Fear is a sign of weakness', or phrases like 'Attacking from behind is an act of cowardice', etcetera. I could never see the reality, and when I saw it, I wasn't prepared, and everything went wrong. And it was all your fault."

"Antoine..."

"No." The soldier's voice begins to sound choppy. "Nothing justifies what you did to me."

"I know."

"Really? Prove it."

"I can't. I would like to show you that I accept your decision to be with that girl, and that I regret
having raised you that way, I regret making you almost kill yourself. But I can't do it. I have no way to prove it to you."

"Well, you'll have to pay the consequences."

Antoine walks away from his father, heading for the stairs. Armand tries to reach him.

"Mon fils, please wait..."

"Assez, papa. Stay away from me and my friends."

Antoine continues advancing towards the staircase of the terrace. Meanwhile, without him noticing, a red dot of light appears in his head.

"ANTOINE!"

Armand runs to his son, pushes him to the ground and holds him underneath himself. At that moment, a rain of bullets, coming from a GUN military helicopter that has approached the terrace, strikes against the metallic body of the old coyote, without causing him any damage. When it finishes firing, the aircraft is directed towards the lower floors of the building.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes, but keep this in mind: this doesn't compensate for what you did."

"I know. But I've made progress, at least."

"If you want to make progress, let me get off the ground. There are lives at risk."

"Colonel Prower, I heard a little talk about you during the Great War. You remind me of an old legend, about a human military leader. Says the Commander. "He's known only as 'the Marshal'. He worked for a bloodthirsty empire, which devastated everything in its path in its conquests, and was xenophobic and intolerant of other political ideas. However, unlike other military leaders in his own country and even in other countries, the Marshal didn't inhumanly treat his own soldiers or his rivals, but acted like a gentleman: he respected the rights of prisoners of war, directed his troops from the front line even though his life was at risk by doing so, and when his troops was about to be defeated, he preferred to withdraw them instead of sacrificing them. He remained isolated from politics and didn't join the political party that ruled at that time in a dictatorial fashion, and he even insubordinated himself against the orders issued by his supreme leader on several occasions, but the Marshal's military achievements made him continue to be respected."

"Interesting story, Abraham. I don't know if you've noticed, but you yourself would fit with that description of that 'Marshal'. And what happened to him?"

"When his country was about to be defeated, his supreme leader, who was very irrational, was already starting to freak out, and was leading his own country directly into the abyss; At that time, an attack was committed that almost killed him. Although it was never proven conclusively who was the mastermind, the Marshal was accused of having planned that attack, and forced him to commit suicide."

"Well... We could toast the Marshal." That said, Amadeus raises his glass to toast.

"Tails, a GUN helicopter will attack you all." The two-tailed fox hears Antoine's voice through his
communicator.

"Received, Antoine."

The child prodigy presses a button in his hand, and his ATA suit, activated by remote control, flies towards him and wraps him. Once this is done, Tails activates his shield and gives it the right shape to protect everyone present at the party.

The GUN helicopter appears in front of the window of the floor where they were, and starts to shoot them, but the bullets are stopped by the shield. Meanwhile, after seeing the GUN logo on the fuselage of the helicopter, Tails rises on the floor, grabs Commander Tower by the neck, and activates the speaker of his suit.

"Hey, you! The helicopter pilot! If you don't leave us alone, I'll kill your boss."

"Tails!" Tower shouts. "I didn't send that helicopter."

"Try to convince me."

"The Commander is right, imbecile. We're from the DEL." A voice sounds from the helicopter, through a loudspeaker.

Tails stares at Overlander war veteran. "I'm already convinced." That said, the fox loosens his neck.

"Give us Bunnie Rabbot, right now."

"Incredible: people are coming to command us to surrender one of us. Again." Says Fiona. "What will you do if we don't obey?"

"We'll tear down the building."

"Okay... And what do you want Bunnie for?"

In response, the pilot makes the helicopter rotate and set on its side. When the aircraft finishes turning, the door opens, revealing a male mobian rabbit. He wears a brown coat with a red ribbon tied on the neck, wears a brown hat that makes his ears bent back, has yellow fur and bushy eyebrows, and his right arm is cybernetic. He also has, under his coat, a uniform similar to Eggman's uniform, his trousers visible, and he's escorted by two soldiers dressed in traditional robes of the Dark Legion.

Bunnie recognizes him instantly.

"Uncle Beau?"

After a few seconds, the rabbit grabs a megaphone, activates it and prepares to talk.

"Please, I just wanna have a family reunion. I hope that's not too much to ask." Says "Uncle Beau", with a pronounced southern accent.

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:
V for Victory: It's a gesture in which, while the thumb, ring and pinkie fingers are bent, the index and middle fingers are extended and separated from each other. As a result, a letter V, the initial of the word "victory", is formed.
Chapter 3: More Family Meetings, Part 2.

Chapter Notes

Let's see what it was sooooor important thing that "Uncle Beau" wanted to talk about.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

"What do you want from me?" Bunnie asks.

"Help. Help from you and your friends, the AFFs." Responds the "Uncle Beau".

"Go and ask your new boss, Eggman, for help."

"He doesn't know about this, Buns."

"Don't call me by that nickname, traitor!"

"Please, niece, let me tell you why I've allied with Eggman."

"Let's see... What do you have to tell?"

Beau sighs. "A year and a half ago, when Robotnik was defeated, the robians of Sandblast City, in the Northamer Great Desert, attempted to return to their hometown, which had resisted during the War against Robotnik. However, Jack Rabbit, leader of the Freedom Fighters of that city, treated the robians as inferior beings, and he threw them into the Badlands. I gathered them together and tried to take care of them, but the only alternative available to me was to ally myself with Eggman, forming a new chapter of the Dark Egg-Legion, which is now under my direction."

While Uncle Beau finishes his explanation, Antoine and Armand come down from the terrace and make themselves present.

"Baron Beauregard, you've not changed much." Says Armand.

"And you're still as slavers as your ancestors, D'Coolette." Responds the Baron.

"It's said by someone who became an ally of Mobius' worst shit, with the sole purpose of maintaining his power. I wonder what you were planning to do with your daughter Bunnie. Were you going to turn her into a Robotnik soldier?"

"Messieurs, s'il vous plaît..." Antoine intervenes. "Don't ruin the moment."

"You know nothing of this, Armand!" Beau keeps talking, not paying attention to the soldier. "Besides, you didn't take very good care of your son, who has now become a coward, as I've heard him speak."

"Remove what you said! Right now!" Antoine shouts, after listening to the old southern rabbit.

"Fine. Sorry for damaging your stupid family honor."

"At this moment, honor matters little or nothing to me." Says the young coyote. "Besides, what you heard about me is no longer true. Now I'm a thousand times better than my father."
"What are you going to do, young man? Cut me with your little sword?"

"Uncle Beau, that's enough." Bunnie intervenes.

"Bunnie, don't defend that inexperienced soldier."

"If I were you, I would be more careful with what I say. That 'inexperienced soldier' is my boyfriend."

"SILENCE!"

Everyone looks at Rosemary, who doesn't seem very calm. In fact, when she breathes, she seems to be growling, and her hair is disheveled, with a strand of hair lying on her face.

"Can we, for a minute, agree and resolve all this?"

"Confirmed, Dad: Mom is unstoppable when she gets angry." Tails tells his father, then turns to Beau, while scanning his helicopter. In reality, the aircraft had only its machine gun, and there were no rockets or any weapon capable of demolishing the building.

"For the time being, Baron Beauregard, I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. However, if you try to do some trick with us, you won't come out unscathed." Meanwhile, the fox deactivates his shield, but still keeps his weapons prepared. "I guess you won't mind, Bunnie."

"Truthfully, if he's a real traitor, I don't care what happens to him."

Conference room, GUN Headquarters. 10:00 AM.

"So, Beauregard isn't Bunnie's father?" Armand asks his son.

"No, he's her uncle. Bunnie's parents died in the Great War."

"What do you wanna hire us for, Beauregard?" Asked Tails.

"I heard about the AFFs, and I figured you guys would wanna help people in my situation."

"We won't help you. What you want from us is that we defeat the SCFFs, the Sandblast City Freedom Fighters, to allow Eggman to have full control of the Great Desert, through you and your DEL chapter."

"I want you to deal only with Jack Rabbit. With his leadership, he impedes the dialogue between Sandblast City and our chapter. At the very least, remind him what it really means to be a Freedom Fighter."

"Baron, you should also learn what it really means to be a Freedom Fighter." Says Antoine. "It means staying loyal to your ideas, even if your relationship with your teammates isn't very good."

"Considering what I heard about you and the KFFs, anyone could deduce that your relationship with them isn't very good either." Beauregard replies. "What do you plan to do? Suicide you?"

Antoine is silent, looking poker face.

"Where's Sandblast City?" Amadeus asks.

"In the Northamer Great Desert, the same region where my DEL chapter operates."
"Okay, we'll go there. If Commander Tower allows it, we'll take the Team Dark and a GUN contingent."

"Look what you need from us, and tell me." Says the Commander. "I'll tell you what you can take and what you can't take."

Fiona makes a big yawn, resting her head on Tails's shoulder.

"Gentlemen, can we go to sleep? Tomorrow we'll continue to trap malefactors members of the Nobility." Says Fiona, ignoring intentionally a look that the Baron gives to him.

"Fine." Says Tower, then turning to two GUN soldiers guarding the door. "Take Mr. Beauregard to a guest room, and watch him closely."

Tower's Residence, rural area near Central City. 3:00 AM.

A seemingly endless meadow, with a few trees, in a rolling terrain where some hills rise a few meters above the ground. As there isn't the same light pollution that is in the capital of the United Federation, thousands of stars are visible.

There's a mansion in the middle of the countryside, the Residence of Abraham Tower. On the other hand, a few miles to the north, the lights of Central City are perceptible. To the South of the mansion, several tens of kilometers away, the Guardian Mountain, where GUN HQ is hidden, is also visible.

Within the Tower Residence, not only is the Chief of the United Federation Armed Forces. Here also lives his daughter Amanda, who's the Chiefess of the Aerial branch of GUN. Hope Kintobor is also staying here, although she lives most of her time in HQ; something similar happens in the case of Shadow.

On this occasion, the AFFs and Antoine's father had been invited to stay there for a few days. Rouge was also invited, although she was previously forced to swear not to steal any valuables from her boss' house. As there were plenty of rooms in the mansion, the issue of available space was no problem.

In the kitchen, Tails, dressed in a robe, opens the refrigerator door to take a soda bottle.

Suddenly, his ears move, and he stops, crouched, his head in the refrigerator, and his hand about to grab the bottle.

"Are you here for any particular reason, Rouge?"

Tails grabs the bottle and raises his head above the refrigerator door, watching Rouge. The bat woman is standing at one of the entrances to the kitchen, still in her usual dress.

"I came only for a drink, to quench my thirst."

In response, the fox grabs another bottle of soda and gives it to Rouge.

"I was thinking that I, you and Fiona could... you know, hang out together." Rouge winks at Tails, who seems to know what she means.

"Let me guess: When Fiona told you about us, I started to be irresistibly attractive to you, and you started to feel jealous of my current girlfriend?"

"I acknowledge that I have a little envy because of the relationship between Fiona and you. But I'm
willing to make peace with her."

"Anyway, I don't want."

"Why not? Are you 'too young' to make a threesome? As Fiona told me, you two make love whenever you can, and have days of very intense activity."

"No, I don't wanna do the threesome for these three reasons. The first, and most important: I'm loyal to Fiona. If you want, call me 'traditionalist' or 'an old man in a young man's body', but I'll always be loyal to her. The second: if you and Fiona try to share me, probably this will end in a fight where I'll be the casus belli. After all, you two were already fighting over the treasures you were looking for, as far as I know. And the third reason, a reason quite obvious: despite the fact that I'm an Adept to Chaos and I have amazing super-powers in the style of comic superheroes, I'm still a man like any other, so, like other men..." He points to his own crotch. "I have a one-barrel pistol, if you know what I mean. Personally, I don't know how a single man could make love to more than one woman simultaneously. What I know can happen is that a man has a romantic relationship with more than one woman simultaneously, something that Sonic did several times during the months after the Robotnik's Fall."

Rouge stares at Tails, drinking a sip of her soda. "Fiona is lucky to have you. In this world, there are few people left with as much loyalty and integrity as you."

"That's said by someone who invited me to be part of an orgy."

Rouge makes a little laugh. "I was testing you, to see how you reacted. Although I must admit, when Fiona betrayed you, I felt sorry for you."

"Were you planning to start a relationship with me to 'cheer me up'? Rouge, romantic relationships can't be based solely on the sorry one person feels for the other. There must be something more, it must be something more 'serious', or finally it will be something similar to the relationship between Sonic and the girls: a weak relationship, easy to break, a relationship in which both people can easily commit infidelity because of that weakness in their relationship. Do you understand?"

"Yeah, you're right." Rouge drinks another sip of her soda. "Considering that you're a nerd, how do you relate to your parents?"

"We do the best we can. We're not a model family, but we're a happy family. Anyway, we've met again just over six months ago."

"And do they know about your relationship with Fiona?"

"They know she's my girlfriend. As for that other thing, only Dad knows. I didn't tell Mom, she has strong character."

"You know that she will find out about this, sooner or later."

"I know, Rouge." Tails stares at his bottle. "Can you think of something or someone for whom we can toast?"

"I would toast for you."

The fox remains thoughtful. "Let's toast to Antoine and Bunnie. So that he resumes his relationship with his father, so that she can solve her problems with her uncle, and so that both continue having a strong and healthy relationship as a couple."
Rouge and the child prodigy make their bottles collide.

"Amen, Tails."

"Amen?"

"I know, it's totally absurd what I said." Says Rouge, in her own laughter.

"Speaking of Antoine, don't you think that you have exceeded, by rebuking him that way in Mercia?"

"Tails, what he did was very risky."

"You also do risky things, Rouge."

"What I do is different."

"How is it different what you do?"

"When I take the risk, I do it in a planned way."

"As Antoine told me, he also acted in a planned way."

Rouge is silent for a moment, looking at Tails. "How clever you are..."

General D'Coolette walks down the aisles. As a robian, he doesn't need to rest, just as he doesn't need to feed himself and his body doesn't suffer from aging. Coincidentally, the old coyote passes near the room where Antoine and Bunnie are lodged, and quietly enters the room. The young soldier and the cyborg girl are sleeping, hugging, very disheveled and perspiring. Seeing this, and after his sensors detected the characteristic biological fluids, it's evident to Armand that the couple had made love.

They had made love before they got married.

"Well... I just hope they've used some contraceptive method." He tells himself.

After this, the General approaches the bed and, very delicately, grasps the edge of the blanket and slides it to cover the bodies of Antoine and Bunnie a little more, leaving only their heads exposed. Immediately after, he leaves the room.

Commander Tower appears in the kitchen, dressed in his uniform, surprising Tails and Rouge.

"Commander, do you get up so early to go to work?" Asked Tails. "Wait, I'll guess: when you can't sleep, you go to the HQ so you don't get bored. I understand what happens to you, the same thing happens to me sometimes too."

"Tails, I'm doing this as an exception. I've received a call from the President: Jack Rabbit will come to meet him, and I must make sure that everything is in order when the meeting takes place."

"Commander, I think we've been talking about him a few hours ago."

"Yes, and I've told the President about this. However, Rabbit is the leader of the Resistance in the Southern Baronies, and since Baron Beauregard works for Eggman, he's the current legitimate representative of the Southern Baronies versus the rest of Mobius' nations."
"This is intolerable." Says the child prodigy, indignant.

"Regarding this issue of diplomacy: the President agrees with us on our plans to break relations with the SCFFs and lure Baron Beauregard as an ally, but he prefers that we first draw up a plan. If we reveal this in haste, there will be a scandal."

"Shall I call the others?"

"Not necessary. Later we'll think what to do. You can go on sleeping."

Having said that, Tower grabs his briefcase and leaves, leaving the mansion in complete silence again.

"This was... strange." Says Rouge. "At least you'll be able to sleep with Fiona for the rest of the night. Speaking of the subject, what sexual positions do you two?"

"Oh, come on... Why do you have to ask me those uncomfortable questions?" Says Tails. "It's supposed to be a private matter."

Two days later...

It's 11:00 AM. A limousine, escorted by police, travels on a trail in the rural area around Central City. A few minutes later, the limousine enters a wooded area, and finally arrives at a clearing, where's the "White House", the official residence of the United Federation President.

The ground floor, which is about two meters high to the ceiling, is surrounded by a corridor whose ceiling is supported by columns; in front of the main entrance, the hallway has an extension whose roof, also supported by columns, coincides with a balcony on the first floor, and there's a mast with a flag on each side of that extension. The first floor is twice as tall as the ground floor, and in its center is a large room that the President uses as his office; the room has the front open, allowing access to the aforementioned balcony, and there's a flag on the wall at the other end, at the back of the room; on either side of the balcony, there are large lattice windows. Above the first floor is the terrace, in the center of which is a semi-spherical dome, which isn't very large nor does it protrude much above the terrace when the White House is seen from the front. The building is surrounded by many trees, whose tops are so high that they reach the terrace.

When the limousine stops in front of the White House's entrance, the door opens, revealing a mobian gray male rabbit. His left eye is covered by a patch, which is attached to his skull by a series of screws around the edge, and he lacks a small piece of his right ear, apparently detached by a bite. He wears a deteriorating dark blue uniform with seemingly made gold shoulder pads, plus gloves, a belt and heavy boots.

The President leaves the White House to receive him. "Welcome to the United Federation, Mr. Rabbit. I hope this meeting is an opportunity to strengthen our alliance."

"Ditto, Mr. Falcão."

A few minutes later, both are inside the White House, surrounded by bodyguards so that no one can see from outside. Jack Rabbit enters an elevator to go up to the first floor, but the President doesn't enter.

"Something wrong, Sir?" The rabbit asks.

"What if we ignore protocol this time, Jackie?"
Suddenly, a bodyguard puts his head in a black bag, and another injects something into his neck with a syringe.

"Auch! Mr. president! What the f*** is all this?! I feel... dizzy..."

Finally, he falls unconscious.

An hour later...

"What happened? Where am I?"

Jack Rabbit wakes up slowly, and someone takes the bag from his head. He's seated at a large circular table, in a large room of a mansion. On the wall to the left of Rabbit, there's a large window, through which sunlight enters. In front of him, on the other side of the table, is seated the last mobian that he would want to see: Beauregard Rabbot, the Baron.

"What are you doing here, robotic worm? Is this a trap of Eggman?"

"Eggman is not responsible for this, Rabbit."

Jack finds, on his right, the President, who's looking at him patiently.

"What's this supposed to be? I'm outta here."

"Asseyes-vous, dégoûtant peste."

Jack tries to get out, but General D'Coolette, standing behind Rabbit, prevents him from standing up, violently leaning his right hand on his left shoulder and forcing him to sit down again.

"I think you have exceeded, Papa. Anyway... No one will leave here until we've finished this conversation." Says Antoine, appearing leaning against the wall, next to the window.

"President, the people in the White House will begin to suspect if we're not there." Says Rabbit.

"Don't worry, Jack. We're being replaced by stuntmen. They're waiting for the outcome of our negotiations."

"So..." Jack turns to the Baron. "What do you wanna talk about?"

"He and his DEL chapter are willing to make peace with you and your SCFFs." Says the President.

"I can play the role of referee." Says Rosemary, who's next to the President, also accompanied by Amadeus.

"What are the agreement's terms?" Jack asks.

"I want you to treat the robians fairly." Says the Baron. "If you don't wanna do it, you can give up your team's leadership. Surely, your successor will be more willing to dialogue. I'm willing to break my alliance with Eggman, although we must keep my betrayal a secret as well as the trafficking of military material from the DEL to the SCFFs."

"And what will happen to me if none of the SCFFs is willing to make peace, huh?"

"In that case..." Commander Tower intervenes, making himself present in the room. "GUN will take over the situation in the Southern Baronies. Baron Beauregard has given us permission to intervene."
"He has no authority to allow the intervention of another country in ours. He's one of the leaders of the DEL."

"Unofficially, he already betrayed the DEL. In addition, he previously allied with Eggman for a good cause, and also because of you. He has as much authority as you do, at least for the moment."

"Commander, we're talking about robians. They followed orders from Robotnik, and now they follow orders from Eggman."

"Robians have their personality nullified by obeying Eggman, so they don't deserve the mistreatment you give them, because they're innocent of their actions." Says Antoine.

"Antoine, you're a Freedom Fighter. You're not the most skilled, but I know that you're the most loyal. How can you ally with these people?"

"That robian behind you is my father. Do you think he voluntarily decided to serve Eggman?"

Rabbit hesitates for a moment. "Maybe he didn't, but I know people who do."

"You mean those mobians that disappeared a month ago and came back two weeks ago, mysteriously de-robotized?" Asks the Baron.

"They voluntarily underwent the process of Legionization and joined your Legion."

"They did it because you kicked them out of Sandblast City, even though they had organic bodies again. Among those mobians there was a child, insensitive idiot!"

"Uncle Beau, take it easy." Bunnie appears behind the Baron, putting a hand on his shoulder. "We're supposed to be negotiating a ceasefire."

Jack is surprised by the appearance of the cyborg girl. "Bunnie? He's your uncle?"

"That's right, Rabbit. Do you have any problems?"

"None. You look..."

"Partially robotized?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Gentlemen, can we continue with the peace treaty?" Says Fiona, apparently appearing out of nowhere, just like everyone else did before.

"Commander, you must remember that the Southern Baronies are legally part of the territory of the Kingdom of Acorn."

"I doubt that King Maximillian cares much for this whole thing." Says the Commander.

"I don't think so, Abraham." The President replied. "Since the Robotnik's Fall, the King of Acorn has been obsessed with restoring and maintaining total control over his nation."

"Anyway, he's aware that he shouldn't repeat what his ancestors did." Says Amadeus.

"What do you mean, Colonel?"

"I'll explain you: There were two leaders who made serious mistakes in their respective reigns, which
were avoided by later kings. George, the great-great-great-great-grandfather of King Max, assumed in an era where the Kingdom was prosperous, and believing himself infallible, he attempted to accumulate all political power in himself and even declared war on the Overlanders; seeing that he had fallen into madness, the Court dismissed him, and assumed his son Abraham, who created the Southern Baronies as a way of restoring confidence in the Monarchy. On the other hand, Silvanus, the great-grandfather of King Max, carried out a campaign to unify the Kingdom of Acorn and to subordinate to the Southern Baronies, that had enough power and had become a threat for him; unlike what happened with 'the madness of King George', which is universally recognized and despised, Silvanus' actions continue to generate controversy, and there are still some people who claim him and defend him and others who consider him a tyrant.

"And what do you think about this, Colonel Prower?" Asks the Baron. "You're someone with good judgment, unlike others..." concludes Beauregard, giving a look at Armand.

The Colonel pauses, thinking his answer.

"To be honest, I think these problems would be solved with a democratic government. In a Monarchy, the Kings and Nobles are practically 'owners' of the territories and citizens that they govern, reason why they're able to do anything that pleases to them, without limit. This produces, for example, that the Kingdom of Acorn and the Southern Baronies fight in a war, only because their respective leaders have personal ambitions and because they see the other as a threat to be destroyed, without taking into account the desires of both peoples nor the possible consequences of these absurd confrontations."

"Colonel, many other countries have tried to establish democratic governments, and failed." Says the Baron.

"But that doesn't happen because the people are wild, or suicidal, or disorganized, or violent by nature, or anything like that. It happens because the people who usually had the power, like the nobility or aristocracy, don't want to get rid of that excessive power and, on the contrary, uses that power to restore their own anti-democratic dominion."

The Baron is silent, with his serious face.

"Anyway... We're supposed to be here to make peace between the SCFFs and the Beauregard's Legion. So, what if we continue with the peace negotiations?"

White House. 2:30 PM.

The President is in his office, along with Jack Rabbit.

"I hope this meeting has allowed for an approach to peace, Jack."

"Don't worry, Mr. President. Soon, the SCFFs and the Great Desert's DEL will fight together against Robotnik, and the robians will be welcomed in Sandblast City."

"I hope so. And you can call me 'João', if you want."

Some reporters are gathered outside the door, along with their respective cameramen and the vans of various television channels. One of them prepares to speak in front of the camera of Empire City's WXHVZ, having the President's residence behind him.

The red light on the camera turns on, indicating that it's already recording.
"Good afternoon, we're in front of the White House. President João Falcão has just completed a meeting with Jack Rabbit, the leader of the SCFFs, the Sandblast City Freedom Fighters." The reporter turns around for a moment, while João Falcão and Jack Rabbit appear on the balcony. "Apparently, we can already talk to them."

Tower's Residence. 9:30 PM.

The AFFs, Shadow, Rouge, Hope Kintobor, Commander Abraham Tower, Amanda Tower and Baron Beauregard Rabbot are dining in the living-room of the mansion; E-123 Omega and General Armand D'Coolette are also with them.

The Baron raises his glass with champagne. "For our secret peace treaty!"

"For the secret peace!" They shout, some of them laughing, and raise their glasses with different drinks.

"For the AFFs and another mission accomplished more!" Fiona proposes.

"For the AFFs!"

"Son, what's that 'AFFs' thing?" Armand asks.

"I'll tell you." Antoine replies. "It happens that, after the Robotnik coup, several Resistance groups, known as 'Freedom Fighters', formed in different places of Mobius..."

A GUN military helicopter flies over the rural area around Central City. The aircraft is piloted by a mobian lizard in a worn uniform, and heads for the Commander Tower mansion.

"Leader 'King of Spades' calling Agent 'Horse of Spades'. You copy me?" A voice is heard through the radio.

"I copy you, Leader. Ready to shoot. Activating invisibility system."

The helicopter becomes invisible.

"Excellent, Agent. You have 'thumbs up' to execute Operation Vendetta."

"Within our team are also Amadeus and Rosemary Prower. The two, along with Tails and Fiona, are the team's top tactical minds, especially Amadeus, thanks to his military experience."

"This is very interesting, Antoine."

"They also have their own powers and equipment. For example, Tails developed a suit that allows its wearer to be invisible, and Rosemary is the wearer of that outfit today. Along with her agility, she's excellent for spying and infiltrating." Antoine addresses Rosemary. "What if you make a demonstration, madame Prower?"

"It will be a pleasure." That said, the adult vixen, who wore his uniform from before, puts on his gloves and balaclava, and then becomes invisible.

"Incredible..." says Armand, astonished, although this isn't noticeable at first glance. "However, being a robian, I can see her with my infrared sensors."
Armand activates his infrared sensors and detects Mrs Prower's body heat, but the Colonel doesn't appear.

"Amadeus?"

"Dad, that's Colonel Prower's ability: his uniform is impregnated with a special dye, with which his body heat can't be detected. It doesn't seem much, but it has been useful on many occasions."

"This is surprising, I mean it sincerely." Says the robian, who then takes his gaze to the window. At that moment, the old coyote finds something: a typical heat signal from a machine, flying through the sky.

"Could someone turn the lights off, s'il vous plaît?"

Hope turns off the lights, and then a dim light is visible in the sky.

"What is that? A drone?"

Armand uses his robian optics to better see the point of light.

"Commander, is it normal for GUN military helicopters to fly over this region?"

The Commander comes to the window and uses binoculars to see the point of light, which effectively is a GUN military helicopter.

"This isn't normal." Tower grabs his cell phone and calls the GUN HQ. "Here, Commander Tower. There's a military helicopter of ours that is flying near my house. Do you know anything about it?"

"No, Sir." A soldier answers from the phone.

Armand tries to see better, and finds that the GUN helicopter is preparing its weapons and aiming for the mansion.

"TAKE COVER! EVERYONE!"

Everyone present moves away from the window and tries to protect themselves, but two rockets hit the mansion.

**BOOM!**

The explosion destroys the entire wall, while another rocket runs at full speed towards the mansion.

**BOOM!**

Several more rockets hit the Tower Residence for the next five minutes, until the building is in ruins.

With his task completed, the helicopter pilot turns and leaves.

"Well done, Agent. The True SCFFs are proud of you."

Chapter End Notes
Glossary:

King of Spades and Horse of Spades: playing cards of the Spanish deck.

Chapter Notes

After what happened, something big is probably going to be prepared in this seventh chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It's 11:00 AM in a room in Central City General Hospital. The sunlight enters through a large window, and the TV, suspended from the ceiling, is on.

"Breaking news on Central City's Channel 12. We're receiving a statement from a new Resistance group against Eggman."

It begins to play an audio recording, in which the voice of Jack Rabbit sounds.

"This is a statement of the Commonwealth of Southern Baronies, a nation integrated in the Kingdom of Acorn and faithful servant of His Majesty, King Maximilian. We're the Sandblast City Freedom Fighters, true defenders of this nation. In recent days, a conspiracy, planned by several enemies, has been started: the disgusting humans of the United Federation; the Alternative Freedom Fighters, a group that seeks to create disorder in the Kingdom of Acorn, attracting followers through the Lie of Democracy; the Dark Egg-Legion chapter in the Great Desert, who pretends to have betrayed Eggman, and a faction of our team that has made an alliance with all those people, calling themselves the Official SCFFs. But don't worry, mobians from all over the planet, because we, the True SCFFs, will do away with the enemies of the King and of our species. In representation of the Commonwealth of Southern Baronies, and in defense of the interests of the House of Acorn, the True Freedom Fighters of Sandblast City and of the Entire planet Mobius declare war on the United Federation and condemn the AFFs to death, for their covert alliance with the Eggman Empire. God bless the King."

The recording is over, and the newscaster returns to take the floor. "In a separate statement, the 'True Freedom Fighters of the Sandblast City and the Entire planet Mobius', as this new rebel group of dubious affiliation has called itself, claimed responsibility for the attack last night at the Residence of Commander Abraham Tower, Chief of the Guardian Units of the Nations."

Fiona, lying on a stretcher inside the room, begins to wake up, opening her blue eyes. Sunlight, coming from the window to her left, prevents her from seeing at first, but finally she recognizes the place and situation in which she is. She feels that her bones have been broken at some point, but now her body seems to be totally healthy, and she has no part of her body plastered or hanging from a metal bar; she only has a serum connected to her arm intravenously, plus some bandages covering wounds that have already healed.

"You woke up."

Fiona looks to her right, searching for the source of that voice, and finds Tails on a corner, sitting on a chair.

"I guess I'm still alive."
"I healed your wounds with Chaos energy, and I explained to the doctors what I did. You had quite serious injuries, including a broken spine in the lower back, which would have left you with paralyzed legs if I hadn't healed you. Anyway, what I did was something that only complemented what the doctors did, they also did a great job."

"So, I really had my bones broken." Says the red vixen to herself, then turning to the two-tailed fox. "And what happened to the others?"

"Armand protected Hope, so both were unharmed. My parents and Bunnie aren't very well, although I've managed to improve their situation quite a lot. Now Antoine is taking care of the three of them, but he's not very well either: Baron Beauregard managed to survive without serious injuries and was discharged, but when he tried to visit his niece, Antoine frightened him with a quite explicit animal growl, as if he were a mother caring for her puppies... or so I heard speak. Regarding the Team Dark, Rouge flew off, Omega opened a hole in the wall to escape along with the Commander and his daughter, and Shadow... well, he's indestructible.

"And I guess you healed yourself."

"Not entirely. I took care of you first, your injuries were much more serious than those of others."

Fiona stares at the sunrise, shining through the window.

"Thank you, Miles. I really appreciate what you did for me, both now and during this last year we were together." Fiona says in a serious tone, addressing her gaze to her boyfriend afterwards. "I wouldn't know what to do without you."

"You don't have to thank me."

"I think it's quite the opposite, Miles. Do you remember how badly our relationship started?"

"I remember it as if it had been yesterday."

"Well, what you did deserves fair compensation on my part. In spite of everything that happened between us, you helped me anyway. Even today I wonder how you did it, how you decided to take care of me, considering the damage I did to you."

"I think I've answered that question on other occasions. I did it, and I keep doing it, because I love you."

Fiona starts laughing softly, but not mockingly.

"You're so cheesy, Miles..."

"Well, I'm sorry to be so cheesy, but I have no other way of telling you. What I did was a demonstration of love rather than a charitable act."

"Well, what you did was a demonstration of love. Now, if you agree, when I'm discharged from the hospital, I could... you know... make a demonstration of love from me." Fiona turns and sits sideways on the stretcher, lying on her right side, and then slides the sheet to expose the lower part of her body.

"Remember, Fiona, you're not forced to do this."

"Remember, Miles, I wanna do this with you voluntarily. Of course, I also respect your decision-"
Fiona is interrupted by a quartet of mobians, who open the door of the room suddenly and fall on the floor, one on top of the other: first, an adult vixen falling sideways, implying that she had an ear stuck to the door, listening in secret; then, an adult fox who appears to be her husband; third, a coyote with dark circles in his eyes, as if he had stayed awake the whole night before; finally, a cyborg rabbit. Fiona covers herself with the sheet immediately, while the four unexpected visitors rise awkwardly from the ground.

"You..." says the adult vixen, pointing to Fiona. "What did you do to my son?"

"Mom! What's wrong about Fiona?" Tails asks.

"You know very well what's wrong about her, son. Amadeus, that rascal who's your father, has tried to hide it from me all this time."

"Sorry, son." The adult fox tells Tails, embarrassed and lowering his head. "I did the best I could, but your mother knows how to get information from someone."

"It's all right, Dad." Tails looks at the quartet. "Wait a second: How did you three get up from your beds?"

"Miracles of Modern Medicine, Tails." Antoine answers.

"Don't get me off topic!" Rosemary says, pointing her finger at the coyote, then turning to Fiona again. "Admit it: you had sex with my son, with my Miles. Cheap w****!"

"ENOUGH!" Tails screams. "Mom, apologize to Fiona."

"Son, she sexually abused you!"

"I decided to have sex with her. And I don't regret it."

Rosemary is speechless.

"Besides, Mom, we use protection, so you still won't have grandchildren. This isn't as serious as you say."

Rosemary is still quiet for a few seconds. "How did this happen?"

"I would tell you what happened, but it's a long story and we have work to do."

Meanwhile, a GUN agent appears at the door of the room.

"Honorary Agent Miles Prower, the Commander wishes to see you and those members of the AFFs who are able to work."

Rosemary looks at the agent, then looks at Tails.

"The bell has saved you."

GUN HQ. One hour later...

Commander Tower is meeting with the AFFs in the conference room.

"Are you sure the six of you are able to work?"
"Absolutely, Commander." Tails responds.

"Tails, the physical damage suffered by your team members isn't the only reason I ask you. I'm also concerned about mental damage." Says the Commander, looking at Antoine.

"Regarding that, monsieur le commandant, I want to apologize for what happened to Baron Beauregard. I swear it won't happen again."

"You need not apologize, Antoine. Anyway... the President has given us permission to intervene."

"Has King Max also authorized it?" Tails asks.

"Actually, we've not even asked, but it doesn't matter. He will surely give us the reason, he won't be able to tell the people that he agrees with Jack Rabbit."

"What exactly will we do?"

The Team Dark, Hope Kintobor, Armand D'Coolette and Beauregard Rabbot enter the room. The southern male rabbit takes a look at Antoine, who picks it up. Next to them are three GUN members who seem to be quite important, and Amanda Tower, the Air Force leader, is one of those three.

"I introduce you to Army and Navy's Chiefs. You know my daughter Amanda, the Air Force's Chiefess. Now, I would like all of you to take a seat."

As the lights go out and a display lights up to show a series of images, the present subjects sit in front of Commander Tower, who starts his report.

"The self-styled 'True Freedom Fighters of Sandblast City and the Entire planet Mobius', or TFFsSC&EM for short, are led by Jack Rabbit, who in a secret agreement with Baron Beauregard and our government, had promised to give up the leadership of the Sandblast City Freedom Fighters, or SCFFs. He currently has on his side most of what used to be the original SCFFs, including his two most important subordinates: Tex Lizard, with great physical strength and the ability to replicate the 'Spin-Dash' maneuver of Sonic Hedgehog, and Avery Bear, specializing in mechanics. This team managed to expand its dominion over the outskirts of Sandblast City and several sites of the Great Desert, stole a large amount of military equipment and technology from Beauregard's Legion, and took control of the oil refinery installed on the coast of the Great Desert, which ensures the supply of energy for their vehicles and machines, mostly obsolete technology. Faced with the lack of resources, staff and suitable leaders in the OSCFFs, the Official SCFFs, I've decided that GUN will intervene in the Great Desert. OSCFFs can't contribute much at the moment, because Jack Rabbit has most of the original SCFFs fighting for him; therefore, Amadeus Prower, Colonel of the Royal Army of Acorn and honorary member of GUN, will be their new leader and will be in charge of turning them into a team that can help in the fight. As for the GUN contingent, I'll have to stay in Central City and I won't be able to lead it, so we still have to find a suitable leader for this mission."

Amadeus raises his hand.

"Do you have any questions, Colonel?"

"Commander, I would also like to lead the GUN contingent. I believe that I'm also in a position to bear that responsibility."

Those present, including the AFFs, stare at each other, surprised by the Amadeus proposal. However, the Commander still keeps his serious face.

"Alright, Colonel. You'll lead GUN's operations in the Great Desert."
Now the leaders of the three branches of GUN are even more disbelieving.

"Dad- Sorry..." Amanda says, embarrassed that she forgot the protocol. "Commander Tower, are you sure of what you do?"

"Totally sure, Amanda. Colonel Prower is a decorated military man, someone with prodigious intelligence and memory, with great wit and sagacity. He's the perfect leader for this."

"But he has trained in the Kingdom of Acorn, with obsolete techniques."

"When I was in the Great War, I saw him in action, planning astonishing and shrewd attacks, using very few resources and with small armies carrying primitive weapons. And I'm sure he's also seen in action to the Overlanders, our modern weapons, our tanks and airplanes. I know he has the military training necessary for this, and I know he will get the victory against those rebels."

The next day...

Central Sea, 2000 km west of Spagonia.

Aircraft Carrier "Ιδιοκτήτης των θαλάσσων" ["Idioktítis ton thalassón", "Owner of the Seas"], flagship of GUN's Navy.

7:00 PM, Apotos, Spagonia and Central City Time.

The warship, with 1,000 stockpiled fighter planes, advanced on its journey from the port of Spagonia to the Southern Baronies, along with a large fleet consisting of: another 2 aircraft carriers, with 1,000 fighters in each; 2 dreadnoughts; 5 nuclear submarines; 8 battle cruisers; 300 boats carrying 30 light tanks and 20 medium tanks in each, along with 300 other ships carrying 30 trucks each, and 150 destroyers escorting these transport ships. There's also an air fleet, consisting of: 25 aerial destroyers of the Navy; 50 aircraft carrying supplies; 20 heavy transport ships with 10 heavy tanks each; 10 fuel-filled tankers, and 20 bombers, all these aircraft being escorted by 200 fighters, whose pilots land on aircraft carriers and are replaced by 200 other pilots every so often. The 50,000 soldiers of the Army are distributed in another 1000 small transport ships, with 25 soldiers each, and 1000 light transport aircraft, also with 25 soldiers each. The trip began at 3:00 PM; the fleet is traveling at about 500 kilometers per hour, thanks to the powerful engines, but there are 4000 kilometers to go, so there are still 8 hours to reach the destination.

Most of the soldiers and inactive pilots are taking advantage of this moment to sleep. Meanwhile, on the flagship's command bridge, Colonel Amadeus Prower observes a series of lists and maps. Now he wears the gray uniform and military cap worn by GUN's hierarchs, all these clothes are made to measure, and he also wears, attached to a blue ribbon with white edges that is tied around his neck, a decoration obtained during his military career in the Kingdom of Acorn: the Cross of Merit. It's a Maltese cross made of gold and painted blue, with small acorns, also made of gold but painted red, between the arms; the cross has a letter S with a crown -the royal monogram of Silvanus Acorn, creator of the decoration- on the upper arm, and the phrase "Pour le Mérite" ["For Merit"] is written on the other three arms. On the left side of the chest, Amadeus has a blue ribbon with white borders, which has two small silver Maltese crosses added, marking that he was worthy of the Cross of Merit on two more occasions after receiving it for the first time.

"What are you planning to do, Dad?"

Amadeus looks up and looks at the door in front of him, finding Tails. "Hi, son. I'm already designing part of a plan, although I would need to be in the Great Desert and recognize the terrain to
better develop the strategy... Tails, are you listening to me?"

Tails is staring at his medal, startled. "Did you win the Cross of Merit?"

Amadeus grabs his medal and looks at it. "You're right. I won it for the first time when I was just a Lieutenant."

"Great... Speaking of prizes, Rob O'Hedge has rewarded us, the Team Dark members, Hope Kintobor, Commander Tower and the President, appointing us as members of Mercia's New Legion of Honour, for releasing the Kingdom and for bringing our ideas about the Democracy. Look what he sent us."

The two-tailed fox grabs a large box and opens it, displaying twelve flat rectangular containers each bearing a badge of Mercia's New Legion of Honour. Each badge consists of a white star, surrounded by laurels, whose arms have a shape similar to that of the arms of a Maltese cross; in the center of the star, there's a blue medallion that has a drawing of Mari-An, the Queen Consort of Mercia, wearing a Phrygian cap on her head, symbolizing the Democratic Opening that the monarchs of that nation plan to perform; in the medallion, also the phrase "Freedom and Democracy" is written in different languages of Mercia, including the maternal language of Antoine.

*Freedom and Democracy.*

*Saoirse agus Daonlathas.*

*Saorsa agus Deamocrasaidh.*

*Rhyddid a Democratiaeth.*

*Liberté et Démocratie.*

*Vrijheid en Democratie.*

*Frijheid en Demokrasy.*

*Fräiheet an Demokratie.*

*Freiheit und Demokratie.*

Each badge has, attached behind it, a disk divided into eight eighths, alternating garnet parts and gold-yellow parts. In addition, for each badge, there's a red pin with a drawing of it.

"So this is the Legion of Honour..." says Amadeus.

"As far as I knew, King Max was also planning to reward us for that first mission where we succeeded in destroying Eggman's nuclear arsenal and weakening his robot army almost a month ago. However, after we went on a trip, I have not received any news."

Tails is silent for a few seconds.

"Do you remember when we went to propose to Max a Democratic Opening?"

"Yes, son. Why do you ask that?"

"I think he didn't like the idea, and now he tries to push us away, so we don't get in the way. Don't you think so?"
Amadeus remains thoughtful. "Maybe you're right."

Central Sea, near the coast of the Southern Baronies.

3:00 AM, Apotos, Spagonia and Central City Time. 11:00 PM, Southern Baronies Time.

GUN's fleet is about to disembark. On the command bridge of the aircraft carrier "Owner of the Seas", Colonel Prower meets with the Chiefs of naval, air and ground forces involved in the intervention. The AFFs, the Team Dark, Hope Kintobor, Armand and Beauregard are also present there.

"I've received reports from OSCFFs, and they're not good." Says Amadeus. "Sandblast City has definitely fallen under the control of Jack Rabbit's rebels, and our only remaining allies are Beauregard's Legionaries, who are waiting for us in the Great Desert. Now Jack Rabbit has a large army and plenty of armament, which will make it more difficult to defeat him, not to mention the fact that we have no way of knowing where in the Great Desert we should attack."

"We could launch the nuclear missiles from the submarines." Shadow proposed.

"I'd rather not use the nuclear arsenal. Also, since we don't know exactly where they are, we would have to carry out a massive atomic bombardment covering the whole territory, which I don't want to do under any circumstances."

"So what will we do?" Tails asks.

"Don't worry, I've already made much of our plan. And we'll start executing the plan right now."

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:

"The bell has saved you": It means that someone can survive or avoid something, thanks to a fact that is a product of chance and/or that happened at the last moment. This phrase refers to the bell used to mark the end of a round in a boxing match.
Half an hour later, on the coast of the Southern Baronies, 500 of the Army's 1,000 transport ships have landed, and the 12,500 soldiers traveling on them are moving westward into the Great Desert, using the trucks to transport themselves as well as supplies discharged from the aircraft, and being accompanied by: 2,000 of the 9,000 light tanks, 1,500 of the 6,000 medium tanks, 50 of the 200 heavy tanks, 5 of the 25 air destroyers, 200 fighters and a tanker aircraft. Colonel Prower travels in a jeep along with them, accompanied by Beauregard, Armand, Antoine, Shadow and two GUN soldiers.

"Soldiers, we'll be the Land Arm." Amadeus tells his soldiers, using a megaphone. "We'll meet Baron Beauregard's Legionaries at a camp in the Great Desert. Meanwhile, the Sea Arm will be made up of those who are going by sea." Says Amadeus, noting the rest of the Navy's forces, including the ships with the other 12,500 soldiers.

On the other hand, all the ships in the air fleet, including the 9 remaining tanker aircrafts, the other 20 air destroyers, and with the addition of 2,000 of the 3,000 aircraft that were in the aircraft carriers, are divided into two halves and take different courses: one of the halves goes North, and the other half moves swiftly over the sea heading West, overtaking the Navy fleet. The remaining 7,000 light tanks, along with the remaining 4,500 medium tanks, are unloaded from the ships, and then loaded onto the transport aircraft; once this is done, these ships are divided into two groups and do the same as the aerial fleet.

"The Air Force and the remaining tanks, both divided into two parts, will surround the Great Desert, wrap it in a sort of bag, and take charge of Jack Rabbit's Army's groups within the territory. Before we lose contact, I want to tell you that any crime of any kind, whether against prisoners of war, or against innocent civilians, or against GUN's other soldiers, or against our robian comrades of Beauregard's Legion, will be investigated and severely punished."

Oil Ocean Refinery, Great Desert of Northamer.

12:00 PM, Southern Baronies Time. 11:00 PM, Time of the Great Desert.

One of GUN's transport planes flies over the Great Desert in the middle of the night, at a height higher than the few clouds there. The gate of the cellar opens, and two mobians jump from there: a two-tailed fox and a female bat; each one of them has a very full backpack, as well as equipment and clothes specially made for this type of jumps, but neither of them has a parachute.

Then the bat propels herself with her wings, and the fox flies by spinning his double tail. Finally, both land softly and silently on the roof of the refinery.

"Rouge, I'll go to the oil extraction plants, you'll go to the refinery itself. You know what to do." Says the fox.
"Got it, Tails." The bat responds. "See you."

Rouge and Tails separate, stealthily heading to their assigned targets.

Somewhere else in the Great Desert...

"Soldier, there's the base of my Legion." Beauregard tells the driver of the jeep, who turns to the right, arriving at a large camp populated by 25,000 robians.

When the jeep, accompanied by the whole Land Arm, stops in front of the camp, Beauregard gets out of the vehicle and activates a megaphone.

"Legionaries, I must make an important announcement: we'll no longer obey the Eggman Empire. I've made an alliance with the Alternative Freedom Fighters and with GUN to defeat Jack Rabbit. We're gonna run a campaign to occupy Sandblast City, and in that campaign, Colonel Amadeus Prower will be in charge, so all of you must obey him for now. That's all."

Sandblast City. 12:00 PM, Time of the Great Desert.

Near the door of a room, there are ten mobian bears working as security guards. Suddenly and quietly, the ten bears are incapacitated by a group of six subjects.

Then, an invisible presence advances and opens the door, while Fiona, Bunnie and three GUN agents guard her rearguard.

The subject encounters a control panel, so it deactivates the invisibility system in its clothing, revealing itself as Rosemary, who then activates her communicator.

"I found the control room. At any moment I will deactivate the shield, which will cause all the alarms to sound."

Tails and Rouge are moving away from the refinery, heading for the coast, and when they arrive, they submerge in the sea.

A few moments later, both arrive at the GUN submarine "Υποβρύχιο" ["Ypovrýchió", "Submarine"], which is submerged after the duo enters through the hatch.

Once inside the submarine, while Rouge is changing clothes, Tails addresses to the captain of the submarine.

"Captain, send this message to Colonel Prower urgently: the explosives are installed in the refinery and we're ready to destroy it."

"Got it, Agent." The captain says, then going to send the message.

On the border of the Great Desert, the territory is already surrounded by all Air Force planes, air destroyers, tanks, and behind them, soldiers, who wear extra coat, due to the low temperatures that, paradoxically, occur in deserts like that. E-123 Omega is with them, leading them.

"Remember: if any division finds any group of subordinates of Jack Rabbit as it advances, call the nearest division so that we can subdue our enemies before they receive reinforcements."
In the Great Desert, Colonel Prower is receiving a transmission in Morse code, coming from the submarine "Ypovrýchio".


Then he receives an Omega transmission.


After seeing both transmissions, Amadeus addresses his comrades.

"Gentlemen, the time has come. Let the soldiers prepare everything. Let them do it as quickly as possible, but not too fast. I don't want them to forget anything."

A few minutes later...

In the submarine that sails near the refinery, Tails and Rouge prepare to press two remote controls.

When they do, both the refinery and the extraction plants explode at the same time on the continent.

In Sandblast City, Rosemary presses some buttons on the control panel, and finally the shield is deactivated. Of course, the alarms are activated, and she hides there along with Fiona, Bunnie and the three GUN agents, waiting for anyone to try to reactivate the shield.

On the Great Desert's borders...

"Here, Tails, from the Demolition Brigade. It's done."

"Here, Rosemary, from the Team Virus. It's done."

"Received." Says Omega, through his built-in communicator. "We'll start the breakthrough."

That said, 20 air destroyers, 2,000 fighter jets, 20 bombers, 7,000 light tanks, 4,500 medium tanks and 150 heavy tanks, along with 25,000 soldiers and several supply trucks behind the tanks, 9 tankers some distance from the other aircraft, and E-123 Omega begin to move, fast and steadily, into the Great Desert.

On the coast of the Great Desert, and on the coast near Sandblast City in particular, the Navy fleet is stationed.

Meanwhile, the transport ships, with a total of 12,500 soldiers, are directed towards the coast, escorted by several destroyers. GUN's soldiers carry machine guns with laser ammunition, but they
also keep a gun of common bullet for use when the situation requires it.

"Ετοιμάστε τα όπλα και αεροσκάφη. Ένα εχθρικό στόλο αέρα μας πλησιάζει." ["Prepare the weapons and the planes. An enemy air fleet is approaching us."] The voice of the captain of the aircraft carrier "Idioktítis ton thalassón" resounds on the decks of all ships.

The ships prepare their weapons, while 1,000 fighters start to take off gradually from the three aircraft carriers.

The ships arrive at the coast, and the soldiers begin to advance by defenseless beaches. However, a fleet of 15 air destroyers, bought from the Battle Bird Armada, is present; Together with them, there are 1,500 airplanes that, despite running a propeller engine, are still very effective, and fulfill both the functions of a fighter and those of a light bomber.

The captain of the aircraft carrier looks at everything from the bridge.

"Αυτό είναι σοβαρό." ["This is serious."]

He then activates the microphone to speak to his pilots.

"Ακούστε, όλοι οι πιλότοι: προστατέψτε τους στρατιώτες που έρχονται προς την ακτή. Προς το παρόν, σε σύγκριση με τα πλοία μας, οι στρατιώτες έχουν προτεραιότητα και είναι πιο ανυπεράσπιστοι." ["Listen, all the pilots: protect the soldiers who are arriving at the coast. For the moment, they have more priority and are more defenseless than our ships."]

At the entrance gates to Sandblast City, the guards prepare to stop anyone approaching, since the shield is off and apparently no one has even made an attempt to reactivate it.

They start to hear a dull noise apparently coming from all parts of the desert. The guards are starting to fret.

Finally, from behind a few hills, there are 2,000 light tanks, 1,500 medium tanks and 50 heavy tanks, followed by an army of 12,500 GUN soldiers and 25,000 robians who run towards them furiously and uttering war cries; among them is Colonel Prower himself, carrying his modified sword and an ionic ammunition gun. At the same time, the city is quickly and surprisingly overflown by 5 air destroyers and 200 fighters.

The guards begin to panic and try to prepare their weapons.

The air destroyers continue firing their guns towards the ships, while the anti-aerial defenses of the ships fire against them, illuminating the night sky in each shot, as if they were lightnings; in spite of this, the ships start to receive much damage, and GUN's fighters don't manage to make an attack to the enormous aircrafts, because of the airplanes of the forces loyal to Jack Rabbit.

The captain of the "Idioktítis ton thalassón" despairs. The only reassurance for him is the fact that the fighters are achieving the most important thing: the Army's soldiers cross the beach and advance towards Sandblast City.

"Πού είναι οι γ******* ενισχύσεις;" ["Can anybody tell me where the f******* reinforcements are?"]
"Pardonnez-moi, monsieur le capitaine. I was a little bit busy." Antoine's voice rings on the radio.

Before he could find out where the transmission came from, the captain sees lights on the horizon. These are 5 air destroyers and 200 fighters, all belonging to GUN.

"Finally... When this is over, tell your boss, that 'Prauer', to warn about delays."

"I don't know if you're aware, but the Colonel is making a great sacrifice, fighting in the front row, along with the rest of the soldiers, so he doesn't have time to handle administrative matters."

The air destroyers of GUN, in their advance, meet with the enemy ships, that surpass them in a proportion of 3 to 1.

Antoine, from one of the planes, activates the radio and calls to the captain of the destroyer "O kidemónas".

"Leader Pilot to the captain of the 'O kidemónas'. Prepare the surprise."

"Received, Leader Pilot."

The captain, on the bridge of command, goes later to one of his men.

"Prepare the Cannons of Accelerated Hadrons."

A few minutes later, the 5 GUN's ships each deployed 15 cannons. It's the weapon created by the Battle Bird Armada, obtained by GUN, stolen and improved by Mordred Hood, and recovered by the AFFs. Each ship aims one of their cannons at Jack Rabbit's forces, and then fire spheres made of subatomic particles, accelerated almost at the speed of light, glowing with a blinding red light. After atomizing any aircraft that crossed their path, 15 bullets hit the hull of the enemy ships, crossing them from side to side; one of the Jack Rabbit ships is shot in the reactors that propel it, and another ship is impacted in the main weapons hold, exploiting both ships.

The enemy air destroyers, although each have a gigantic hole in their hull, don't retreat, but point their guns at the beach, where GUN's ground forces are disembarking, while the planes prepare to plummet and drop their bombs on them.

"Here, Leader Pilot. All the fighters of my squadron: protect the Army at all costs. Navy Fighters: we'll leave you free to attack the rebel air destroyers."

Then Antoine and his squad of 200 fighters launch into the attack, firing at the TFFsSC&EM's fighters attempting to unload their bombs.

While 500 enemy planes are targeting GUN's soldiers to bombard them, the other 1,000 are focused on GUN's fighters, whose pilots turn out to be more skilled than the pilots of Navy planes.

One of GUN's fighters is headed for a rebel plane that is about to drop a bomb, but another enemy fighter goes after him. However, when the latter launches a rocket, GUN's fighter dodges it, and the rocket hits the rebel bomber. Meanwhile, Antoine, who pilots a fast delta-winged fighter plane, dodges with great speed and agility the rebel fighters, simultaneously knocking down several bombers.

Five minutes have passed. Jack Rabbit's forces have already lost much of their aircrafts, leaving them
only 400 of their 1,500 aircraft and 4 of their 15 destroyers, the latter being badly damaged. On the other hand, GUN only lost 3 destroyers and 150 of the 1,000 pilots in the Navy, as well as 40 of the 200 newly arrived pilots, but not even one of their air destroyers was knocked down, thanks to the use of the Cannons of Accelerated Hadrons, nor did any Army soldier perished on the beach. Desperate, the insurgents make both airplanes and air destroyers begin to fall toward the beaches in an attempt to carry out a kamikaze attack, but GUN's forces avoid that, destroying everything before they hit the ground.

Antoine makes his plane land and, preparing his bow, his arrows and his modified saber, joins Army's soldiers in their advance towards Sandblast City. When they arrive at the city, they advance quickly, finishing with any defense, and finally they enter. When they arrive, they find that the combined forces of GUN and Beauregard's Legion have already advanced considerably and have controlled most of the city.

Amadeus is fighting on one of the streets, sheltered behind a car along with a mixed squad of robians and GUN's soldiers, and Armand is doing the same on another street along with another mixed squad. Upon seeing this, Antoine climbs to a balcony and shoots explosive arrows at the rebels against whom his father and Colonel Prower are fighting.

In another area of the city, Rosemary, invisible, enters one of the tanks, incapacitates their occupants with her electric bullets and takes control, firing and destroying nearby rebel tanks.

At the same time, Fiona incapacitates several tanks with her EM pulse cannons, Shadow destroys others with his "Spin-Dash" and his Chaos spears, and Bunnie flies through other tanks by hitting them with her robotic arm.

The young soldier enters the territory still controlled by the rebels, and five minutes later, he arrives in a hangar and, hidden in a scaffold, sees that Jack Rabbit preparing is everything to escape along with Tex Lizard and Avery Bear. Seeing this, the coyote destroys, with an explosive arrow, the aircraft that Rabbit was going to use to escape, but it catches his attention.

"Look who arrived! Antoine D'Coolette, one of the Great Traitors. I wonder why you're here."

The soldier presses a button hidden in him.

"I don't come for any important matter, I just come to make you pay for your actions. After all, you're the real traitor."

Jack sighs. "You know what? I'm not going to spend my precious time in these utterly useless debates." Then he addresses his lieutenants. "Tex, Avery, you know what to do."

Immediately, Tex makes a "Spin-Dash" and leaps towards Antoine, but Tails appears and, flying with his ATA suit, hits the lizard from the right side, while Rouge appears and does the same with Avery, making him lose his balance through a rugby tackle. At the same time, Antoine shoots Jack with an arrow that unfolds a net, but the rabbit quickly pulls a sharp machete and cuts the net before it covers him, which allows him to remain free, get on a military helicopter and take off; instead of destroying his target, the coyote shoots an arrow with a tracker activated.

Meanwhile, Tex fights Tails, until he manages to catch him and begins to squeeze him, denting his armor. To get rid of him, the fox activates a repulsor cannon in his chest, larger than the ones he has on his hands and feet, and using all the Chaos corporal energy he can gather, he fires a powerful beam of green energy, throwing Tex toward the wall.
After a few seconds, the lizard recovers from the hard blow and prepares to attack Tails with his own version of "Spin-Dash". In response, the fox gets rid of much of his armor, leaving only the pieces of his hands and feet and his high-tech glasses, but revealing that his entire body, including his head, his ears and the totality of his two tails, is covered by a metallic mesh, very flexible and at the same time very resistant, similar to the chainmail used by medieval knights; once this is done, Tails also prepares to make a "Spin-Dash".

When both of them take up enough speed to spin, Tex and Tails attack each other. Finally, they collide. The fox continues to advance, only slowing when he reaches the wall; when he looks at his tails, he sees that they're stained with blood, and then, looking at the lizard, he finds that he's lying on the ground with his spine exposed and shattered.

Rouge approaches Tails, dragging an unconscious Avery Bear, and she's impressed by what happened.

"Do your tails have multiple functions, Tails? They function as helicopter blades, as a fan, and now also as a blender."

"Yes, I still don't know exactly how I'm capable of it. Without this metal mesh, I could still cut the skin and some blood vessel, and could also kill someone if I attack the neck, but I wouldn't be able to make cuts as deep and neat as the ones I would do with the mesh."

Antoine steps off the scaffold in a single jump, then to Tails and Rouge.

"I'm tracking Jack Rabbit's helicopter. I don't think he can go very far, considering that the entire Great Desert is surrounded by GUN's forces."

20 minutes later, somewhere in the Great Desert...

Jack Rabbit leaves his military helicopter after making it land near a small military base. In a courtyard in the center of that base, there's a rocket-powered aircraft mounted on a launching ramp, which is inclined and pointing upwards at a 60-degree angle to the ground.

The TFFsSC&EM's leader now walks through the halls of the base, along with one of his subordinates.

"Sir, GUN's forces are advancing fast. They took control of all the bases with which they crossed, as well as defeated our soldiers. They've distributed themselves along the entire border of the Great Desert, they've begun their advance from those positions, and now they come to us from all directions. In about five minutes, they'll have arrived here. According to the little information that we've been able to obtain, it's a gigantic army, where the tanks act like 'spearhead' of the invasion, instead of the soldiers; they're accompanied by an equally large air fleet, consisting of air destroyers with very advanced weapons, bombers with incendiary bombs, fighter jets, and even some airplanes with paratroop regiments. We won't be able to defeat them here and now."

"Then, prepare the shuttle, and tell the staff of all our bases that they must resist to the end."

The soldier begins to doubt what he heard, while they both stop walking.

"Uh, Sir... Are you sure it wouldn't be better if-?"

"What did I just say to you? Are you not able to understand a direct order?" Jack Rabbit takes a threatening glance at his subordinate. The soldier is silent for a long time.
"It will be done as you order, Sir." He replies, and then he leaves while Rabbit keeps moving toward the shuttle.

"Our data indicate that Jack Rabbit is in that outpost."

Omega is in the Great Desert, showing a holographic map to a group of GUN's soldiers, and pointing to a spot on that map.

"I want to be accompanied by half of each type of ground forces and half of each type of air forces: half of each type of tank, half of each type of aircraft, etc. However, I don't want bombers: dropping bombs on that base won't help us, and with the air destroyers will be enough. I also want only a quarter of the soldiers on foot, it isn't good to have too many people."

5 minutes later...

GUN's ground and air forces have already surrounded the TFFsSC&EM's outpost, and they're moving towards that outpost.

"Prepare your weapons, let no one leave that base." Orders Omega.

A few seconds later, a rocket-powered aircraft, inside which is Jack Rabbit, takes off from the ramp located in the center of the base, making a flash that illuminates the entire night sky. An air destroyer tries to block the passage, but the small aircraft crosses it from side to side. While the air destroyer falls into free fall to the desert floor and their escape pods are thrown, Jack's ship remains unharmed and escapes in an easterly direction.

Suddenly appear in the sky something that seems to be a group of objects. These turn out to be Tails, Bunnie and a GUN fighter piloted by Antoine.

In his airplane's cockpit, the coyote activates the radio. "Omega, can you join us? Let's get rid of Jack Rabbit."

Omega takes off and positions himself next to the three AFFs in the air.

"I guess this must look like an accident."

"That's right, Omega."
Chapter 5: The Final Hunt.

Chapter Notes

In the ninth chapter, Antoine, Bunnie, Tails and Omega set out to capture Jack Rabbit once and for all. But the coyote has a volatile behavior, and the rebel leader is able to use it to do what he wants.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Border checkpoint near Furville, Western Border of the Kingdom of Acorn. 1:00 AM.

A forest covers the whole landscape. A control tower protrudes above the treetops.

At the top of the tower, a female mobian mink finds a signal on the screen of her radar.

"Sir, there's an unidentified aircraft coming from the West, and it's moving very fast."

His chief, another mobian mink, male in this case, heads to the radio after hearing this.

"Here, Furville border checkpoint. Identify yourself."

Suddenly, Rabbit's rocket-powered aircraft appears, crosses the border and passes to the side of the control tower in the blink of an eye, ignoring the command.

The chief addresses the other employees. "Warn all of the defense posts about this."

"Sir, four more aircrafts are approaching." Says the mink woman. "One is GUN's fighter, the other three haven't been identified. The four don't seem to be accompanying it, they're flying at a slower speed."

"Here, Pilot D'Coolette, Freedom Fighter and GUN Honorary Agent." Antoine's voice is heard on the radio. "We're chasing that aircraft that just crossed the border."

"Wait a moment, Mr. D'Coolette-"

"Je suis désolé, honnêtement, monsieur, but the four of us can not wait."

Antoine's fighter, speeding, passes swiftly next to the control tower, along with Tails, Bunnie and Omega. A minute later, another flying object passes behind them.

"You may have to explain this later."

"Whom, Bunnie? To Colonel Prower? To my father? To Commander Tower?"

"My dad, your dad and the Commander know we're doing this in a justified way. It's King Max who can get angry over this."

"If you don't believe me and Tails, remember what Sonic told us a few days ago. He will have no consideration for you, even if you're one of the most loyal to the Crown."
"En tout cas, what could happen?"

As the quartet flies over the forest, an anti-aircraft gun bullet fires from the treetops and explodes near Antoine, who loses control of his plane for a few seconds, retrieving it later.

"C'est une merde." Antoine, from his cockpit, looks down. "Hé, gunners! Shoot the rocket-powered aircraft, not us!"

"Don't be so hard on them, Antoine. We should congratulate them."

Another anti-aircraft gun bullet explodes near Antoine, who manages to dodge it.

"Why, Tails?"

"At last, King Max has authorized those clumsy people to use real weapons."

"Don't ever call me clumsy again." Says Antoine, sincerely offended. "And I carry real weapons."

"Well, sorry, comrade, but that's the reality." Another anti-aircraft gun bullet explodes near Tails, without hurting him. "There were only a few exceptional people who managed to do something productive as Royal Army members: Mom and Dad; the members of his Special Ops team, which were just the two of them, Sonic's parents, Rotor's father, and the mother of that spy cat named Hershey; your father; yourself... The rest of them, including King Max in his role as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, have left much to be desired, just as it does now with those guys from Geoffrey's new Secret Service."

Another more bullet explodes next to Tails, without hurting either. "On the other hand, the weapons that you and my father carry are real weapons, but only because we've modernized them and because you two are experts in the use of those weapons."

Meanwhile, Bunnie dodges the explosion of another anti-aircraft gun bullet.

"Bunnie!" shouts Antoine scared.

"I'm fine, Antoine. But my patience is running out. Can we stop arguing about the Royal Army and focus on capturing Jack Rabbit?"

Omega also dodges a bullet that explodes. "You're absolutely right, my dear cyborg maiden."

"Omega, be careful what you tell Bunnie."

"Antoine, don't let your jealousy drive you crazy." Says Bunnie.

A missile is then fired from the forest. It travels directly to Antoine's plane, who dodges it when it's about to reach it, letting the missile pass by. The guided projectile turns around and advances towards the coyote again, but Tails finally destroys it with a shot of a repulsor cannon.

"I'm tired of this. I want this to be recorded: I'm solely responsible for what I'm about to do. Tails, Bunnie, Omega: keep chasing Rabbit."

Having said that, Antoine starts to descend to the ground with his airplane, displaying its weapons.

"Wait, Antoine. You won't achieve anything, and you'll end up destroying the forest." Says Bunnie. "I'll take care of this. Continue to follow Jack Rabbit."

She flies to the ground, between the treetops, and starts to destroy the anti-aircraft guns, firing
controlled shots with the plasma cannon on her arm. In doing so, she's ahead of her three companions.

Meanwhile, Armand, piloting his own fighter, appears along with Tails, Antoine and Omega.

"Dad! What are you doing here?"

"I only came to give my help. I think my robian strength might be needed to apprehend Jack Rabbit."

"Alright, Dad. Welcome."

In her advance, Bunnie encounters an airfield, where a capsule has just landed with a parachute. It's the cockpit of the rocket-powered aircraft, from which Jack Rabbit comes out. Two Royal Army soldiers escort him to the entrance of the airfield while they converse with him.

"Welcome, Mr Rabbit. His Majesty, King Maximilian Acorn, wishes to notify you that you'll receive political asylum."

"Good to Know."

"Amazing... Now it will be King Max who will have to give explanations about this at some point."

"Antoine, can we talk through a channel of communication that only you and I can hear?"

"I don't know, Dad. ¿Tails?"

"Just a moment..."

Tails is silent for a while.

"Ready."

"Okay, Dad, what do you want to talk about?"

"I just wanted to tell you that, if you had sex with Bunnie before marrying her, there's nothing wrong with that, as long as you two have used protection."

"How did you know about that?!"

"Parents realize these things."

"You mean, 'Parents are good spies', right?" Says Omega, annoying Armand.

"Dad, what does Omega mean?"

"Uh..."

"Gentlemen, sorry to interrupt... whatever you're doing, but I've found that Bunnie is issuing a signal from that airfield." Says Tails, through the free radio channel.

"Received, Tails. Let's go there."

"Not so *bbzbzt* fast, gentlemen." Jack's voice is heard on the radio. "I think it will take you a while to see your beloved again, frenchy traitor."
Antoine's face is "frozen".

"Jack, if you dare touch Bunnie..."

"Yes, I know, you'll cut me in a thousand and one pieces with your super-sword. Everyone always says the same thing."

Jack Rabbit is sitting in the airfield control tower, along with the bodies of the two Royal Army soldiers, killed by a shot in the head. Elsewhere in the room, Bunnie has her robotic limbs immobilized by a series of electromagnets.

"Let us return to the subject that matters to us: surrender, and command GUN and Beauregard's Legion to withdraw from my country."

"And what will you do if we don't obey your conditions?"

"I'll keep your beautiful damsel in my possession, and I'll also sell Knothole's location to the highest bidder."

"QUOI?!"

"Just like you heard."

"And you say I'm a traitor."

"You vowed to fight for the Kingdom of Acorn and for the freedom of all the mobians, and you didn't keep your oath. On the contrary, I vowed to defend the interests of the Southern Baronies, and I'm doing so."

"What you're doing is the same thing Baron Beauregard did, don't you see?"

"First, neither I nor my Freedom Fighters team have surrendered; second, I can sell Knothole's location to someone other than Eggman; and third, Baron Beauregard is a traitor who allied with Eggman when he could still have fought against him. So don't tell me I'm doing the same thing as him, because you don't understand anything at all-"

"Antoine, destroy the airfield!" Bunnie yells with all her strength. "Don't worry about me!"

Rabbit tries to give her a threatening look, but it has no effect on her, and he turns his attention back to the radio.

"I think your girlfriend deserves to be congratulated: she just gave me a good reason to sexually abuse her and also to sell Knothole's location once and for all."

Having said this, Rabbit turns off the radio, without waiting for an answer. He then grabs a briefcase and opens it, revealing a laptop.

"Don't worry, Bunnie. I'll take care of you soon."

Meanwhile, in Sandblast City...

"Honorary Agent Miles Prower calling Colonel Amadeus Prower. This is an urgent matter."

Colonel Prower runs to his jeep's radio and picks up the call.
"Son, what happens?"

"Jack Rabbit will reveal Knothole's location, Dad. I want you to move all the land, naval and air forces there. Do it as fast as you can, please."

"I won't fail you, son. I swear." Amadeus ends the call and leaves to mobilize GUN's forces under his charge.

"It's a pleasure to do business with you, Mr Rabbit."

"Idem, Snively."

Rabbit ends his video call on his laptop, and turns to Bunnie, who's still immobilized.

"And how's the damsel in distress?"

"You're a son of a b****."

"Hey! Didn't your traitor uncle teach you manners? And the other traitor, that clumsy soldier who's your boyfriend, didn't put you in your place?"

"You'd be surprised how much 'that clumsy soldier' loves me, even though I have what you call 'lack of education'. He knows I have as much right to insult as a man."

"Well, you two are wrong." Rabbit caresses Bunnie's face, but she bites him hard.

"AAARRGH!" Jack grabs his aching hand. "I'll have to make you learn what a w**** like you should do."

**BOOM!**

Jack turns around, seeing an explosion in the hangar. Then, a GUN fighter with the weapons deployed passes over the place where the explosion occurred, flying west-east.

"I'll be right back, doll."

"I'll be waiting for you... to break your teeth, for calling me 'doll', idiot."

At Bunnie's response, Jack grimaces in disdain, and then he withdraws.

While Rabbit leaves, Tails lands silently on the ceiling, takes off his suit and, flying with his two tails, descends and enters the room, meeting with Bunnie.

"I know: it should be Antoine who comes to save you, as if he were your knight in shining armor. But he's busy, distracting Jack Rabbit. Besides, I wear the shining armor, and he doesn't."

The child prodigy deactivates the electromagnets, leaving Bunnie free.

"All right, Tails. Thank Antoine for my part."

"Later you'll thank him personally." Tails says as he climbs to the ceiling and dresses in his ATA suit. Bunnie activates the rockets on her feet and takes flight.

A large hatch opens on the ground of the airfield, and a fighter plane takes off from a small hangar
hidden underground.

"You'll pay for this, Frenchy." Says the rabbit leader of the rebels, who's in the cockpit. It's a super-fighter: it's larger than a GUN fighter, has more powerful reaction engines that compensate for its weight and also allow it to fly faster, and contains more weapons.

The engines of the super-fighter light up, propelling it to the East. However, without him noticing, he's followed by a GUN fighter, which has activated a system that makes it undetectable for thermal sensors and radars, and which has Armand as pilot.

Half an hour later, at Knothole...

Tails and Bunnie land in the central square of the village and go to Sonic and Sally's cabins, respectively. To the Southwest, GUN's Air Fleet, which is about 100 kilometers away, is visible. Anyway, some divisions of GUN's soldiers had already moved ahead and had come to the village to wake up the villagers, who now, under the leadership of Princess Sally, are already performing the evacuation neatly.

Bunnie addresses to Sally, who's standing on a tree stump.

"Sally?"

The chipmunk turns her gaze to the cyborg girl. "Bunnie? What are you doing here?"

"The AFFs are part of this mission. Can we talk for a moment? You need to know what happens."

The princess looks at Sonic.

"Sonic! Could you take my place for a moment?"

The blue hedgehog, running with his supersonic speed, appears on the same tree stump where his girlfriend is.

"Of course, Sally."

Meanwhile, somewhere in the Northamer Great Forest...

A GUN fighter flies at full speed, passing near the treetops, pursued by a super-fighter. The pursuer launches two guided missiles, but the smaller and more versatile GUN's fighter eludes them and causes the missiles to collide and destroy each other. The chase resumes, but GUN's fighter brakes suddenly and lets the super-fighter continue to advance, now positioning behind him. Knowing that the super-fighter is more resilient, the GUN's fighter's pilot, a mobian coyote, fires with all his armament, both machine-guns and missiles; the larger plane, now pursued, receives a lot of damage, but it isn't destroyed and manages to land in an abandoned military base that happens to be near there.

The only crew member of the super-fighter, Jack Rabbit, quickly leaves the cockpit and enters the base, which is of the Royal Army and dates from the time of the Great War.

A few seconds later, GUN's fighter also lands. His pilot, Antoine, activates a tracker in his fighter and then he leaves, waiting in the outskirts of the abandoned base, with his saber ready to defend against any unexpected enemy.
A few minutes later, his father and Bunnie arrive.

"I already informed Sally about everything that happened, Antoine." Says Bunnie.

"I've sent that android, Omega, to help GUN's forces." Says Armand.

"Fine. Now, let's go and capture Jack Rabbit once and for all."

Antoine, Bunnie and Armand are walking down the aisles of the abandoned military base. The three are already about ten meters deep. Finally, they reach a large section, whose roof is a floodgate on the surface.

"Welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen." Jack Rabbit's voice rings from an adjacent room, separated by an armored wall. He's talking through a window.

"Surrender, Rabbit."

"And what will you do if I don't surrender?"

"You'll feel the blade of my sword."

"I think there's one of your friends who deserves it more than I do."

"Don't start with riddles, or you'll give me more and better reasons to violate the protocol and murder you in cold blood."

"What I say is the reality. Your father urged his soldiers to commit war crimes."

Antoine is incredulous, speechless.

"You're lying, Rabbit."

"Non, mon fils." Armand intervenes, lowering his gaze to the ground as Antoine turns to look at him. Bunnie watches the situation and looks at Jack Rabbit alternately. She's intrigued, something strange is happening.

"Quoi? Is that idiot telling the truth?"

At the question of his son, Armand is silent for a moment.

"Je suis désolé, mon fils. I should have told you about this before."

Without warning, Bunnie activates her thrusters on her feet, trying to penetrate the armored wall. She crosses it, but finds no one: Jack Rabbit had escaped once more.

Then the rabbit girl goes to Antoine, who still looks, fiercely, at her father.

"Antoine, this is a trick: Jack wants to divide us. You two must accompany me."

While still looking at the Robian, the soldier hands a pendrive to his girlfriend. "This is a copy of a computer program created by Tails. If you connect it to any of the fighters that are outside, it will work as if there's a real pilot inside it, and it will do what you tell it to do. That will serve as a reinforcement."

"Antoine, I need your help."
The coyote turns and looks at Bunnie. "Mon amour, I would be a nuisance to you. Besides, I have a matter to settle, and I wouldn't like to leave that matter pending."

Finally, Bunnie turns her back on him and flies away, knowing that she couldn't change the attitude of her boyfriend. Father and son are alone now.

"Pourquoi as-tu menti?" ["Why did you lie?"]

"Pensez-vous que je veux payer pour un crime que je regrette d'avoir commis?" ["Do you think I want to pay for a crime that I regret having committed?"]

"Maintenant, vous regrettez? Oui, bien sûr... Je ne te crois pas." ["Now do you regret it? Yeah, right... I don't believe you."] Antoine turns his back on his father.

"Je dis la vérité, mon fils. Je vous jure-" ["I'm telling you the truth, my son. I swear-""]

Suddenly, the young coyote looks at his father, his eyes watering.

"Être sincère. Juste pour cette fois." ["Be sincere. Just for this time.""]

"J'entends votre question." ["I'll listen to your question.""]

"Mademoiselle Kintobor est Overlander. Elle est une excellente mécanique et une très bonne personne. Voulez-vous la tuer?" ["Miss Kintobor is Overlander. She's an excellent mechanic and a very good person. Would you kill her?"]

The old coyote is silent for a few seconds.

"Non."

Antoine hesitates for a moment. "Vous mentez." ["You're lying."]

"Non, mon fils. Quand Jack Rabbit a essayé de nous tuer, pourquoi pensez-vous que je suis allé à la protéger?" ["No, my son. Why do you think I protected her when Jack Rabbit tried to kill us?"]

"Vous avez fait de faire une bonne impression devant moi." ["You did that to make a good impression in front of me."]

"Êtes-vous en train de m'appeler un 'hypocrite'? Antoine, vous savez très bien que je déteste ce genre de personnes." ["Are you calling me a 'hypocrite'? Antoine, you know very well that I hate those kind of people."]

The young soldier draws his modified saber and activates it.

"J'ai vécu avec des hypocrites pendant dix ans. Je sais comment les reconnaître, et je les hais plus que vous ne les hais." ["I've lived with hypocrites for ten years. I know how to recognize them, and I hate them more than you hate them."]

"Fils, s'il vous plaît..." ["Son, please...""]

"TAIS-TOI, SALAUD GÉNOCIDAIRE!" ["SHUT UP, YOU GENOCIDAL BASTARD!"]

Antoine screams at him with all his strength, his eyes full of tears, and then he throws himself on his father, with his saber in his hand. Armand turns his right arm into a saber and stops his son's attack.

"Je ne sais pas si vous êtes au courant de cela, mais vos crimes ne prescris pas. Peu importe les circonstances, peu importe le temps écouté. Vous devez être condamné avec tout le poids de la loi."
"I don't know if you're aware of this, but your crimes don't prescribe. No matter the circumstances, no matter how much time has elapsed. You must be condemned to the fullest extent of the law."

Meanwhile, at Knothole ...

The village had already been destroyed, and now it's only a clearing in the Great Forest, delimited by a ring of fire. At hundreds of meters in height, the Egg-Fleet is being repelled by GUN's airships.

Several individuals collaborate with GUN: Tails is wearing his ATA suit; Knuckles, the male red echidna who usually protects the Master Emerald on Angel Island, uses his flying ability, which he has as part of his powers as a Guardian; Sonic is transformed into Super Sonic, thanks to the Chaos Emeralds brought by Knuckles; Rouge is using her wings to fly up to the ships and infiltrate them; Fiona has incorporated her electric weapons into a GUN fighter and she's flying on it; Julie-Su, the pink female echidna that was once Dark Legionnaire and is now Knuckles' girlfriend, is piloting her own plane to fight against Eggman's forces, although, from time to time, she chases Rouge for some strange reason; Rosemary is piloting a GUN fighter, and her husband Amadeus is in the air destroyer "O Kidemónas", commanding the soldiers, gunners and pilots of the United Federation.

On the surface, the ex-Knothole inhabitants make their exodus, walking steadily in a Northeast direction, while GUN stops the Egg-Fleet with great success. Sally, who heads the villagers, has her handheld computer with the artificial intelligence "NICOLE", who in turn is present in its holographic lynx form.

"NICOLE, we have a shipment of stolen nanites. Do you think they can serve us anything?"

"We can build a new city with them."

"We lack building materials, NICOLE."

"I think I haven't explained it well. Nanites can be our building materials."

"What? NICOLE, we don't have enough nanites."

"Our nanites are more than enough, Sally."

"What if Eggman hacks them?"

"I'll control all the nanites of the new city. No one can hack me, I can assure you."

"Vous avez essayé de contrôler mes sentiments depuis que j'avais trois ans! Tu as ruiné ma vie à travers votre monde chevaleresque de fantaisie!" ["You tried to control my feelings since I was three! You ruined my life, through your world of chivalrous fantasy!"]

Antoine and Armand continue fighting in a duel of swords. In a quick maneuver, Armand manages to have his son lose his grip on his weapon, but he puts his hand inside his father's forearm and pulls out wires, making him no longer able to use his own guns. The old coyote kicks his young son, but he catches his foot and, using all his strength, breaks his knee.

"Maintenant, vous allez payer pour ce que vous avez fait. Nemo me impune lacessit." ["Now, you'll pay for your actions. Nemo me impune lacessit."]

Armand, trying to stand on one foot, runs and charges against his son, then picks up his neck.
"Ne me faites pas brûler les yeux à nouveau." ["Don't make me burn your eyes again."]

Before running out of air, Antoine hits him on the head. His hand hurts immensely, but his father is dizzy, with his metal head dented. Antoine begins to beat his father' face, making his own knuckles bleed, until finally Armand falls to the ground by a left hook.

Taking advantage of the occasion, the young soldier grabs his saber from the ground and prepares to thread him, but when everything is ready, he does nothing, just stares at his father, holding his weapon up.

**BOOM!**

A piece of roof falls. Then, Bunnie comes down from the hole in the roof, very hurt and furious. Antoine sees her and runs towards her, leaving his sword nailed to the ground.

"Bunnie! What happened?"

"What happened? It happened that I was fighting Jack Rabbit and I lost, while you and your father were discussing about something that you two could have discussed later."

"I'm sorry, Bunnie. I'll kill him personally this time-"

**BOOM!**

Another piece of roof falls, appearing a mech manned by Rabbit.

"You're insistent, Jackie." Says Antoine, grabbing his saber again and running toward him.

In response, Jack prepares a cannon and shoots the coyote, who dodges the first two shots. Before the third shot, Antoine draws his saber, prepares his bow and shoots an explosive arrow right towards the entrance of the cannon. The weapon explodes, but the mech remains standing and functional.

Bunnie activates the rockets of her feet and, with her metallic fist, tries to take advantage of the distraction to drill the mech. However, Jack reveals an EM pulse cannon, with which he shoots Bunnie and disables her robotic limbs, causing her to fall to the ground and lose her ability to move. Despite this, Rabbit can't move his mech's arm to crush her, because an arrow with an acid bomb sticks to the elbow joint, while Antoine runs to Bunnie and takes her out.

After arriving at a corner and leaving there his girlfriend, the young soldier turns towards the mech to face it, but sees his father standing in front of it, ready to fight.

"Dad, let me confront Jack."

"Don't worry about me, son. Take care of Bunnie."

Having said that, Armand runs towards the mech.

"Hey, Armand! Welcome, let me crush you." Says the rabbit through a megaphone.

Without giving Jack time, Armand leaps straight into the cabin of the mech, clings to the metal surface and opens the cab with a single pull, leaving Rabbit surprised and helpless.

"I think we have unfinished business, traitor."

"NO!"
Then Armand grabs Jack, pulls him out of his cabin, lifts him up like a rag doll, grabs him tightly from his shoulders and starts pulling in opposite directions, gradually tearing the rabbit's muscles, crunching his bones.

"AAAAARRRGH!"

Finally, with a last, quick pull, Armand rips Jack Rabbit's chest in two halves, separating each side of the rib cage, leaving the head attached to only one halves. The rabbit dies instantly, and Armand, spattered with blood ejected under great pressure, drops the wrecked corpse to the ground.

After ending the life of the rebel leader pursued with so much effort, Armand slowly turns to Antoine, who's helping Bunnie to reactivate her robotic limbs.

"Are you two okay?"

"Oui, très bien..." says Antoine, engrossed in his work.

Armand stares at the couple, and bows his head. "Good to Know..."

Antoine and Bunnie finish the repairs, and she's back to stand.

"I guess I deserve some punishment." Says the young coyote.

"Why do you say that?" Bunnie asks.

"What happened while you were fighting with Rabbit. You know..." Antoine, with a movement of the head, points to his father.

"Oh, well... just... concentrate more next time, will you?"

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:

"Nemo me impune lacessit": latin phrase that means "Nobody offends me with impunity", phrase used as motto in Scotland.
An Egg-Cruiser class battle ship, belonging to the Egg-Fleet, explodes hundreds of kilometers above the Knothole ruins. From the ship wreathed in flames, a two-tailed fox in high-tech armor flies off.

"Well done, Tails. It was the last ship left, the others are retiring."

"It's good to know that you appreciate my skills, Sonic."

"Hey! Don't act like Antoine."

"Sonic, let him act as he pleases."

"Fiona, you say that because Antoine is a friend of yours and a member of your team, and because you wouldn't feel affected if 'your beloved Miles' acted just like him. But Antoine's personality annoys me, and if my brother became a clone of him, it would be the Apocalypse."

"So, those apologies you gave him almost a month ago have no validity?"

"Tails, you know how reliable my words really are."

"Great..." Tails says sarcastically. "Topic Change: Does anyone know what Sally will do? I don't know if you've seen it, but Knothole is now ashes."

"Here, Sally. Meet me so we can talk. I'll send you the coordinates."

In a camp northeast of the Knothole ruins, Sally is seated in a folding chair, next to a tent. In that camp, the former Knothole villagers try to continue their lives, while GUN's Air Fleet protects them. Sonic, Tails and Knuckles land alongside her, and Fiona and Julie-Su's airplanes land in the vicinity of the tent. Also Amy Rose and Rotor walk up there.

"I have to announce something to you: NICOLE has a plan to rebuild our village, using our nanites."

"In reality, it would be something larger than a village." NICOLE intervenes, making his hologram present. "This new city could serve as the new capital of the Kingdom of Acorn, replacing the old Mobotropolis, and remain thus in definitive form."

"And how long would it take to build that new city?" Sonic asks.

Three days later, the city made of nanites is already built in the same place where the camp was. Surrounded by a wall and protected by a shield, The city of New Mobotropolis also has forests and huts, as does Knothole Village, but the green spaces, located in the most peripheral areas of the city, are more differentiated from urban areas, which also have more organized houses and streets and
more defined boundaries. With the exception of trees and grass, everything is built with nanites, which proved to be very versatile in the construction of the city. The city also has several other things: a new Lake of the Rings, a new castle for the King of Acorn, a hospital with the highest technology, a huge school...

"Dad! Mom! We're back!"

It's 11:00 AM. Tails enters, along with Fiona, in the cabin of his family, closing the door behind them. Each of them carries a folder and a pencil case with school supplies. Amadeus appears to receive them.

[Soundtrack: The baby elephant walk – Henry Mancini]

To the surprise of Tails and Fiona, the Colonel is ridiculously clad in a kitchen gown that, with its light colors and flower pattern, contrasts with his military uniform.

"Hi there! How was your first day of school?"

"Dad, technically we don't have the normal classes you know." Tails replies, still recovering from the surprise.

"Actually..." Fiona intervenes, while she and Tails leave their things on a table. "... what we're doing is to present ourselves before the evaluation commissions every certain amount of time, to take the exams in free format; anyway, we were already presenting ourselves to these commissions for a few months. It's the most convenient: many of us, at best, were living in a village, in the midst of war, learning by other unconventional ways, and there may also be inequalities. Therefore, the students stay home, studying all the subjects of the school program, and we only present ourselves to take the exams in free format, at least until the war is over and everything is back to normal."

"I get it... Rosemary will be here in a little while, but I'm already making lunch."

"Are you making lunch?" Says Tails, trying to hide his laughter.

"Yes. *I am* making lunch." Amadeus replies, speaking effeminately and pretending to be outraged. "Do you have any trouble, young man?"

"*I heard you, Colonel Amadeus Prower. And I don't talk like that.*"

The three of them turn to the window and find Rosemary. She looks serious and is looking at her husband, who swallows.

"And when I cook, I don't dress like that either." Says Rosemary, looking at the Colonel's kitchen dressing gown.


In one of New Mobotropolis's many parks, Armand and Antoine are seated on a bench, side by side, without looking at each other.

"*Alors, vous rendez-vous à la justice?*" ["So, will you surrender to justice?"]

"*En effet, Antoine.*" ["Indeed, Antoine."]

"*Eh bien, je vous souhaite bonne chance. Je vais vous rendre visite quand je pourrai.*" ["Well, I
wish you luck. I'll come and visit you when I can."

Both are silent.

"Je dois exercer un meilleur contrôle sur mes émotions. Je suis comme une bombe à retardement, papa. Je pourrais exploser à tout moment." ["I must exercise better control over my emotions. I'm like a time bomb, Dad. I could explode at any moment."]

"Aucun guerrier est parfait, mon fils. Au début, j'avais aussi un caractère volatil. Mais c'est quelque chose de typique de la jeunesse, il est corrigé avec le temps." ["No warrior is perfect, my son. At first, I also had a volatile character. But that's something typical of youth, it corrects itself through time."]

Antoine looks at his father with a serious face.

"Papa, ne commencez pas à gronder les jeunes." ["Dad, don't start nagging young people."]

Armand turns to his son. "He! ne me confonde pas avec le Roi Maximilien! Je reconnais aussi les aspects positifs de cette étape de la vie." ["Hey, don't confuse me with King Maximillian! I also recognize positive aspects of that stage of life."]

"Ah oui? Pouvez-vous citer un aspect positif?" ["Oh yeah? Can you mention any of them?"]

"La vitalité, une grande détermination... Ce sont deux choses très importantes." ["Vitality, a great determination ... These are two very important things."]

Father and son go silent again, looking at the landscape.

"Parlant de mon comportement, je devrais parler à ma petite amie." ["Speaking of my behavior, I should talk to my girlfriend."]

"Bien, qu'attendez-vous? Allez et gagnez l'amour de Bunnie à nouveau!" ["Well, what are you waiting for? Go and win Bunnie's love again!"]

Antoine stands up and starts to walk away from the bench. "N'exagère pas. Nous n'avons pas encore terminé officiellement notre relation." ["Don't exaggerate. We've not yet officially terminated our relationship."]

"Bunnie et vous n'avez toujours pas de relation officielle, Antoine." ["Bunnie and you have no official relationship yet, Antoine."]

The young coyote begins to laugh as he walks out of the park. "Tu as raison." ["You're right."]

KNOCK KNOCK

"Who's there?!" Bunnie asks, as she combs her hair in front of a mirror.

"C'est moi, Antoine. Let me in, s'il vous plaît." Says the soldier from behind the door, speaking pitifully.

"Of course you can come in!" Answers the cyborg girl, intrigued by the tone used by her boyfriend.

Antoine opens the door and slowly enters the cabin of his girlfriend. "I hope I'm not bothering you.

"Antoine, you know that you're welcome in my house." Bunnie leaves the comb and goes to the
coyote. "Something wrong?"

"Why you ask?"

"It's nothing. What happens is that you sound... weird."

The young soldier is silent for a while.

"I'll go straight to the point: I want to apologize for the way I behaved while chasing for Jack Rabbit."

"Antoine..."

"I know: I must control myself. At any moment, I can get out of control, and when that happens, I could do something I wouldn't normally do... I could hurt you..." The coyote's voice begins to crack.

"I don't want to be a monster, Bunnie. If I hurt you because I got out of control, I would never forgive myself..."

Bunnie puts a hand on his shoulder. "Antoine, it's all right. I know you wouldn't hurt me, you're better than other men."

"How do you know it?"

"I know it because, unlike many of them, you recognize that you can get out of control and hurt me, and you warn me about it, as well as try to prevent it from happening. Other men don't do any of that, and when one of them mistreats his girlfriend or wife, he blames her for provoking him."

After listening to Bunnie's words of encouragement, Antoine makes a half smile.

"That's the main reason." Bunnie continues. "The other reason is the fact that, if someone mistreated me, I would be able to produce a blunt trauma in him with just a slap."

The coyote swallows. "I'll keep that in mind, ma chérie."

"I have something to show you." Rosemary tells Amadeus, Tails and Fiona.

The members of the Prower family, including Tails' girlfriend, are sitting around a table. They had finished eating spaghetti with bolognese sauce and grated cheese. Rosemary gets up from the table and leaves, and then she returns with a box in her hands.

"Commander Tower came here at dusk the day before yesterday and will leave for Central City today at the same hour. I met him in the middle of the road, and he gave me all this. It isn't a very elegant presentation, but it still has validity."

Then the adult vixen opens the box and gives her husband a small rectangular container, with a medal in it, and two rolled papers, similar to diplomas.

"This is for you, my Colonel."

Amadeus grabs one of the scrolls, opens it and begins to read it. The paper has GUN's symbol -a letter G surrounded by laurels- engraved on it.

We, the Guardian Units of the Nations, in fulfillment of the orders of João Falcão, President of the United Federation, of Commander Abraham Tower, Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and of the
members of the Federal Assembly of the States that make up our nation, grant you, Amadeus Prower, Colonel of the Royal Army of Acorn and Honorary Member of our organization, the Knight Cross of the Steel Cross, as a reward for the successful planning of the Mercia Liberation Operation, the Operation in the Great Desert, and the air defense systems of our allies in the Kingdom of Acorn.

In the rectangular box that accompanies the roll, there's a pattée cross with arms in a concave shape. The cross has a red border, there's another white border inside it, and the cross' interior is painted in a blue color of a dark and slightly greyish tone, with GUN's symbol painted in white in the middle. There's also a ribbon whose arrangement of colors -equal stripes of blue, garnet and blue- imitates the flag of the United Federation, and which is attached to the cross through a small metal piece in the shape of a letter K -the initial letter of "Knight"- Next to the Knight Cross of the Steel Cross, there's a service ribbon, with the colors arranged in the same way as in the United Federation flag, with the addition of a white letter K in the center of the garnet central strip.

"And what does the other roll say, Dad?"

At the question of Tails, the new Knight of the Steel Cross opens the other roll and begins to read it.

*We, the Guardian Units of the Nations, in fulfillment of the current military regulations and of the express request of the Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Commander Abraham Tower, grant you, Amadeus Prower, Honorary Member of our organization and Colonel of the Royal Army of Acorn, the rank of Field Marshal, which will be valid whenever his participation in future operations of the Guardian Units of the Nations is required. It's remarkable that you're the first foreigner who's an Honorary Member and is granted a military rank pertaining to the Corps of Chiefs.*

"Glickwünsche, Generalfeldmarschall." ["Congratulations, Field Marshal."] Says Fiona.

"Vielen Dank, Fräulein." ["Thank you very much, miss."]

Amadeus then ties the Knight Cross of the Steel Cross to his neck, now carrying it next to the Acorn's Cross of Merit.

"He has also given each of us several Medals for Bravery. There are some made of bronze, and some made of silver."

Rosemary then shows several medals of both types. The Bronze Medals for Bravery consist of a five-pointed star made of bronze, surrounded by a pair of laurels of the same material; each medal is suspended from a white ribbon, with very thin garnet edges, and with a thin dark blue strip with garnet edges in the center; each award is accompanied by a service ribbon with the same color scheme as the suspending ribbon; the repetitions are marked in the form of bars on the suspension ribbons, and in the form of oak leaves clusters on service ribbons. The Silver Medals for Bravery are almost equal to their bronze equivalents, with the differences that the medals themselves, including the star and the laurels, are made of silver, and both the suspension ribbons and the service ribbons have a different color scheme: dark blue, with a thin garnet line on each side and a thick garnet-white-garnet stripe in the center.

"For the liberation of Mercia, we were given: a Bronze Medal for the Field Marshal; one made of Bronze for me; one made of Bronze for Tails; one made of Bronze for Fiona; one made of Bronze for Bunnie, and one made of Silver for Antoine, for fighting personally against the High Sheriff and against Mordred Hood. For the campaign in the Great Desert, we were given: one made of Silver for Amadeus, for going to fight along with the soldiers in the first line; one made of Silver for me, one made of Silver for Fiona, and one made of Silver for Bunnie, for the infiltration in Sandblast City and the deactivation of the shield; one made of Bronze for Tails, for the mission in the Oil Ocean
Refinery; one made of Silver for Antoine, and one made of Bronze for General Armand D'Coolette. In addition, Antoine, Bunnie, Armand and Tails each received a Bronze Medal for defeating Jack Rabbit. Also the Team Dark's members received several medals, but that remains a Secret of State, obviously."

Rosemary begins to distribute the medals, reserving the ones destined for Antoine, Bunnie and Armand.

"These medals will match my Royal Red Cross." Says Fiona as she puts the two medals on the left side of her chest.

"Your Royal Red Cross?" Amadeus asks.

"It's a prize awarded for services in Military Nursing, Dad."

"Yes, I know him, son. Were you a nurse, Fiona?"

"That's right. Technically, she was the KFF's field medic, before I... left. Then, when I returned, Tails got me a job as a nurse at Dr. Quack's hospital, and then I became the field doctor again. In return for my services, I received the Acorn's Royal Red Cross."

Fiona then pulls out the Royal Red Cross from a pocket and puts it on the left side of her chest, higher than GUN's Medals for Bravery. The medal is a pattée cross made of triangular arms, made of gold and painted red, with the words "Fidem" ["Faith"], "Spero" ["Hope"] and "Caritas" ["Charity"] written on the upper, left and right arms respectively, The number 3073 -year in which King Silvanus created the medal- written in the inferior arm, and a medallion with the royal monogram of King Max -the reigning monarch when the medal was given- in the center. The Royal Red Cross hangs from a gray-blue ribbon with thick red edges.

"I'll never forget Sally's reaction when she saw me with the medal."

Almost a year ago, three months before the Prowers' return to Mobius...

It's a sunny noon in Knothole, which is rare on a winter day like this. Fiona and Tails walk through the central square, holding hands discreetly, with Fiona carrying the Acorn's Royal Red Cross. Along the way, they meet Princess Sally.

"Good morning, Princess!" Greets Fiona, smiling. "Are you taking advantage of this sunny day?"

Sally looks at the medal on the left side of Fiona's chest, and she's incredulous.

"Auntie Sally? Something wrong?" Tails asks.

"No, it's all right, Tails..." the chipmunk answers, almost stammering. "Will you two wait a second, please?"

"Of course." The red vixen answers.

Sally retires, walking swiftly toward the Great Forest, until she's out of sight of the villagers.

"Something is happening with your boss." Fiona tells Tails. "These things always happen when she meets me."

" NNNNNOOOOOOOOOOO!"
Fiona and Tails get their hair on their toes when they hear Sally scream furiously from the Great Forest, causing a flock of flickies to fly off the treetops.

"Motherf****** ! You f****** vixen! You and your f****** medal!"

"A scream as strong as that is hard to forget." Says Tails.

**KNOCK KNOCK**

"Who's there?!" Rosemary asks.

"It's we." Say Antoine and Bunnie simultaneously, from behind the door.

"And me." Says Armand.

"Come in, I have something to give you!"

The trio enters the hut, and Rosemary gives them their medals for the three newcomers.

Along with his two Silver Medals and his Bronze Medal, Antoine grabs Armand's two Bronze Medals, looks at them, and then looks at his father, who catches that look.

"I regret to tell you, madame Prower, that I must reject the two Bronze Medals." Says Armand. "I'll surrender myself to justice."

The other six stare at him, although they're not surprised. Rosemary knew, like her husband, about Armand's war crimes, and Tails had told Fiona about it.

"Okay, it's your decision, General." Tails' mother answers.

"Also, I'm a robian, so I'm more resistant to attacks than any other mobian. The organic mobian warrior, including the private, is braver than someone like me, who went to fight taking advantage of having a more resistant body. It would be fair for the medals to be received by all of you and even by the soldiers under my command."

"Well said, General." Tails says.

"Oh, I almost forgot something!" Rosemary intervenes. "I heard that Prince Elias has been found, and will return today at 2:00 PM."

Tails, Fiona, Antoine and Bunnie arched their eyebrows, looking at Rosemary. Amadeus and Armand are astonished, but their reaction isn't as evident as the four young mobians.

"Who's Elias?" Fiona asks.

"I think we forgot to tell you: Sally has a brother, who's called Elias and is about four years older than she, since she's seventeen and he's twenty-one, if my calculations are correct." Says the fox, veteran of war. "Anyway, I didn't know he was coming back. Shortly after the start of the Great War, we had all considered him dead, including King Max."

At 2:00 PM, a jet lands on the runway of the newly inaugurated New Mobotropolis Airport, named after King Frederick Acorn. Once the jet has stopped, the door opens, and a family of mobian chipmunks down the stairs. The husband is red-haired and wears a Royal Army uniform and a red cloak; the wife has brown hair and is wearing a lilac old dress, and she also has a baby girl in her
Lady Alicia, Queen Consort of Acorn, appears to receive the family, runs excited and about to cry.

"Elias, my son! You're back!"

"Mom!"

Elias runs to his mother and hugs her, while both are watched by his wife.

In the New Castle of Acorn, Commander Tower is waiting in the throne room. Meanwhile, General Armand D'Coolette appears there.

"General, are you ready?"

"Oui, monsieur. I deserve to be judged for my aberrant crimes."

"This doesn't usually happen, I must say. Usually, a genocidal always claims to be innocent of their crimes, or tries to justify them. Can you tell why you're doing this?"

"Monsieur le commandant, it's a complicated matter-"

"Commander Tower!"

Tower and Armand turn to another door and see King Max.

"Your Majesty, I thought you would be receiving your son, Prince Elias." Tower says.

"I was planning to meet him later. I was very busy with bureaucratic matters at the moment."

"Okay, if you say so..."

"Votre Majesté, I suppose you're here because of the subject of my surrender and my judgment." Armand intervenes.

"That's right, old friend. Legally, you must be judged in my Kingdom, since you're a subject of mine."

Armand is confused. "Mon Roi, I committed crimes against the Overlanders, and these people were integrated into the people of the United Federation, a nation that also inherited the legal personality of, among other nations, the Overland. Therefore, technically, I should be tried by the Federal Supreme Court of that nation, not by the Royal Court of Acorn."

The King stares blankly at General D'Coolette, then walks over to him and puts a hand on his shoulder. "Armand, can we talk for a moment?"

Guided by the King, Armand begins to move away from Tower.

"Armand, I don't know what you're playing..." says the King, whispering. "... but if you're judged by my Court, I can get my courtiers to realize that you're innocent. Those dead Overlanders were only... collateral damage from the Great War."

Armand opens his robotic eyes to the max.

"I can assure you that, if your judgment is made here, you'll be acquitted-"
"Quoi?" Armand, surprised and indignant, interrupts the King. "What did you say were the deaths of these innocent Overlander civilians? Collateral damage? No, what I did were tremendously serious war crimes, and they must be punished."

The robian coyote walks away to Abraham Tower.

"I insist, monsieur: I want to be tried in your country."

The Commander gives an act to Armand, which he signs, recording his surrender. Meanwhile, GUN's Joint Chief of Staff makes a sign with his hand to two of his agents who were waiting at the main entrance. Without the opposition of the robian, one of the agents proceeds to open a gate in his metallic chest, revealing the power ring whose energy keeps him functional; The other agent carries something like a bucket filled with water, specially made to preserve the Power Ring without losing its energy.

"Wait a minute." Says Armand.

In the eyes of General D'Coolette, a series of white letters appear, superimposed on the screen of red tones.

**CREATING BACKUP OF MEMORY...**

Then Armand approaches the King.

"Don't worry about me, Votre Majesté. I won't be sentenced to death."

"How are you so sure?"

*Première:* The death penalty isn't applied in the United Federation. *Deuxième:* Even if the death penalty were applied, they would surely be indulgent with me, because I voluntarily surrendered and recognized that I had committed a monstrosity. *Troisième,* the most important: we both know that you also urged soldiers to commit war crimes, and you did it in an even more explicit way, ordering it also to me and your Royal Army's other hierarchs."

King Max begins to get nervous, while Armand smiles confidently.

"I can assure you: I will fall, and you will fall with me, mon vieil ami."

After talking to Max, the old military leader moves away from him, still holding his smile.

In Armand's eyes, an inscription reappears.

**BACKUP OF MEMORY SAVED.**

Then, he forcibly removes the Power Ring from his chest, while the screen goes off.

Armand collapses and falls to the ground when his connection to his power source is broken. GUN's agents store the Power Ring and proceed to lift the temporarily inert body from their prisoner. As is obvious, the two agents and Commander Tower are forced to join forces to raise that metal body.

While Tower and his agents are taking Armand, the King stares at the robian they take. When he's alone, the leader of the Kingdom of Acorn growls and kicks a chair that was nearby. This time, the...
chair flies about ten meters, and he doesn't experience tiredness of any kind.

Geoffrey St. John, the mobian skunk who heads the new Royal Secret Service that was created after Robotnik's Fall, walks the corridors of the New Castle of Acorn. He has black and white body hair, typical of a skunk, and his hair on his head is white; he wears a uniform consisting of: a purple strap, arranged diagonally over his left shoulder; a belt with several weapons, utensils and electronic devices; a glove, also purple and with a crossbow, in his right hand; boots of the same color, and a green neckerchief tied around the neck.

Suddenly, a small electronic device on his belt begins to vibrate. Geoffrey hides in a utility room, and when no one sees him, he picks up the device, revealing a cell phone.

"Here, Geoffrey St. John." Says the skunk, with a certain Downunda accent in his voice.

"I need you to do me a favor, Apprentice." A hoarse voice sounds on the cell phone. "Armand D'Coolette will testify about the war crimes committed against the Overlanders in the Great War, and there's a possibility that he blames Maximillian Acorn for what happened. I want you to keep an eye on him and keep me informed."

The skunk begins to doubt what he has just heard. "Lord Naugus, I don't want to offend you, but it doesn't make any sense. If Maximillian is found guilty, you could access the throne. After all, his son Elias is young and inexperienced, and he wouldn't serve as his father's successor."

"I'm supposed to have the experience, and you're also supposed to obey me. Is not that right, Geoffrey?"

"I... I get it, Milord, and for the record, I'm still loyal to you and I believe that you would be a better ruler than the members of the House of Acorn, but-

"Well, would not you do all that was necessary to have a truly able ruler in your nation? Would not you do anything to avenge your father Ian or your wife Hershey?"

Geoffrey is silent, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath.

"Yes, Milord, you're quite right. I'll do whatever you say. Ave IXIS."

"Ave IXIS."

"I HAVE A BROTHER AND YOU NEVER TOLD ME ABOUT HIM??"

It's 3:00 PM at Sonic's Uncle's Restaurant, Sir Charles Hedgehog, aka "Uncle Chuck." From the women's bath, Sally's voice sounds, who's arguing with her mother, Lady Alicia.

Meanwhile, Elias and his family are reunited with Sonic, Rotor, a pink hedgehog in a red dress named Amy Rose, the echidnas Knuckles and Julie-Su, and the AFFs; The latter are wearing all their decorations, and in the case of the Bronze and Silver Medals for Bravery, they carry only one medal of each type, indicating the repetitions in the form of oak leaves clusters on the ribbons. In addition, Tails and Bunnie have the Anti-Robotnik Resistance Commemorative Medal: a circular piece of gold with a red drawing of two crossed rifles, hanging from a ribbon of orange and black vertical stripes, which was delivered to all members of the Resistance, both in the Kingdom of Acorn and in other countries of Mobius, after Robotnik's Fall. Antoine had also received the medal and used to show it on many occasions, including sometimes in the street; but when he decided to be a pupil of Tails's parents, he no longer wore the medal, not even at official events.
While everyone is chatting, the music sounds in the restaurant.

[Soundtrack: Smoke on the water – Deep Purple]

"I don't know if you noticed, Julie-Su..." says Amy. "... but this reminds me of the discussions between you and Rouge because of Knux's supposed infidelity."

"Don't remind me that." Julie-Su and Knuckles say in unison, looking at each other afterwards.

"Well... It's obvious you two are made for each other." Bunnie adds. "With such synchronization..."

"What medals, my friends!" Sonic tells AFFs, pointing to their medals while eating a chilli-dog, the weakness of the "Hero of Mobius".

"Where did you get them?" The blue hedgehog asks.

"Commander Tower has given them to us personally, Sonic." Says Rosemary.

"So is." Adds Antoine, bringing out his chest and taking an exaggerated military posture, all intentionally. "These medals... were given to us... by acts of the most conspicuous gallantry..."

Sonic tries to hold back the laughter, but Tails realizes it.

"Hey, Sonic! It ain't easy for GUN to give one person two Silver Medals for Bravery."

The blue hedgehog regains his composure... or at least try to do so. "Fine, I respect that they've given these medals to you, honestly."

"Anyway, we're still waiting for King Max to give us a Cross of Merit to each one." Says Fiona. "Or a third repetition bar, in the case of Tails' father."

"They already owe me the Cross of Merit with five repetition bars included." Adds Tails.

"What kind of things have you done, Miles Prower? Why do you think you deserve that award?" Asks Megan, the mobian chipmunk who's the wife of Prince Elias. When addressing to Tails, she does it with a slightly infantilizer tone, which bothers to the two-tailed fox and also annoys to his girlfriend.

"Didn't you hear about someone nicknamed 'Tails'?" Fiona asks.

"Tails? Are not you the boy that accompanies Sonic in his exploits?"

"Ha!" Tails makes a sardonic little laugh and looks at the others. "The boy who accompanies Sonic in his exploits. Have you all heard that?"

"What? Is not that true?"

"Well..." Sonic intervenes. "To be fair, he's-"

"A great inventor, mechanic, scientist, Freedom Fighter, hero and comrade." Antoine interrupts to Sonic, reciting all the attributes of his comrade-in-arms, using a solemn tone of voice. "The only ones comparable with him would be his parents Amadeus and Rosemary, his girlfriend Fiona, and my girlfriend Bunnie, of course." The coyote hugs the cyborg girl when he finishes speaking.

"Antoine, why are you doing this?" Sonic asks, pretending to be annoyed.
"Quoi? I didn't do anything wrong."

"You interrupted me."

"That's right, Antoine. What you did was a very bad action." Says Tails, approaching his ear discreetly afterwards. "What you did was excellent, comrade." He whispers.

The young soldier smiles and continues talking. "I've also heard that the ladies consider him 'the most handsome, intelligent, respectful, sympathetic and strong boyfriend a woman could have'. In fact, I used to envy Sonic in the past, but now, I'm more envious of this kid."

Everyone laughs at the last sentence, including Tails and Antoine himself.

"Okay, sorry for what I said, Tails. I didn't know you did so many things." Says Megan, speaking to Tails as an adult now.

Meanwhile, Sonic is the only one who's serious... or seems to be serious, at least.

"Folks, let's leave Miles 'Casanova' Prower alone and change the topic: what's that rare cross that Colonel Prower has on his neck, along with the Cross of Merit?" The sprinter asks.

"It's a Steel Cross. More exactly, a Knight Cross of the Steel Cross." Amadeus answers. "When someone devises a successful military strategy or performs a meritorious act, they give the Second Class Steel Cross to it, and each time it's again worthy to receive the award, the prize winner is promoted. I developed successful military strategies on three separate occasions: the Liberation of Mercia, the subjugation of the rebels in the Great Desert, and the defense of Knothole villagers while they were making the exodus. Therefore, they decided to skip the Second Class and First Class Steel Crosses, and directly give me a simple Knight Cross. There are still five other categories, higher than this."

"Interesting..." Sonic says in a bored tone. "You six know that you'll not be able to bring medals from foreign countries in King Max's official ceremonies."

"Why not?" Fiona asks.

"By a new Royal Decree."

"If you, Sonic, believe that showing these GUN medals is a daring too big..." says Amadeus. "... then I could introduce myself by wearing the GUN Field Marshal's epaulettes, to see what the King thinks."

Sonic is silent for a few seconds. "Field Marshal? That range no longer exists."

"In the United Federation, yes."

"But you're only Honorary Members, and you ain't even citizens of that country." Rotor intervenes.

"I don't like to boast, but the reality is that I'm the first in history who, being precisely a foreign Honorary Member of GUN, has received a rank of the Corps of Chiefs, that is to say, the rank of Colonel or another superior to that."

Suddenly, Sally's discussion with her mother in the baths captures the attention of those present in the restaurant again.

"You and Dad are the worst parents I could have ever had."
"But, my daughter..."

"No buts, Mom. Neither of you have the moral authority to speak of these things. You've not even married for love, but for the opinion of a magical water fountain whose credibility can not be confirmed."

"You also made mistakes, like mistreating Antoine."

"Mom, don't start mixing things of different topics. I don't care what the Source of All could have said, I ain't gonna marry him, although I'll respect him as a member of my team."

Antoine is surprised by what he heard. "Did the Source of All say I should have married Princess Sally?"

"Okay, this is the End of the World." Says Tails.

"Anyway..." Sonic addresses to Prince Elias. "What was in your life, Prince? I think I deserve to know a little about my future brother-in-law."

"What?! Are you my sister's boyfriend?"

"Is there something wrong?"

"Not at all! Me and my wife have heard a lot about you. It's good to know that my sister has someone like Sonic Hedgehog in her life."

"Prince Elias..." Tails intervenes. "Not all that glitters is gold. Yes, he takes the trouble to behave moderately well in front of a lady, but in terms of rationality, maturity, good sense and that sort of thing, the 'Hero of Mobius' leaves much to be desired. Believe me, I know him well."

"Tails, why are you doing this?" Sonic protests at the words of his friend.

"In fact, you, Prince, just solved a problem we had. If you hadn't appeared, King Max had died, Sally had been the only successor available and Sonic had been married to her, what would have happened? Sally would have been the new Queen, and Sonic would have taken over as the new King by marriage, having no merit except as a hero. The problem with Sonic is that, although he knows how to motivate people and soldiers, he doesn't know how to think with his head cold, he's not very skilled in analyzing a situation and planning strategies, whether in the military or in any other field, and he's especially resentful and capricious." As Tails talks, Sonic starts to get annoyed. "If you don't believe me, pay attention to his discussions with Antoine: Sonic discusses with him to the point that both seem to be married."

"TAILS!" Sonic and Antoine scream in unison.

"Sorry, Antoine."

"Hey, bro! What about me?" This time, Sonic is the only one who protests.

"What I mean, Elias, is that you would surely be better than Sonic in the King role. You've not lived in the luxury of a castle, nor have you been a hero of world fame, so you know the real world better and you don't have the delusions and vices that others have." When he finishes speaking, Tails makes subtle movements with his head and eyes, pointing to Sonic.

"Besides, Prince, we want to make some proposals." Rosemary intervenes in her son's conversation with the Prince. "I assume you're aware of the Democratic Opening in Mercia."
"Yes, I'm aware of that, and I was considering doing something similar. But I still have to think about many things: what I'll do now, Sally, Megan, our daughter Alexis... and it would also be good for me to make a journey through the Kingdom of Acorn. I'll deal with matters related to the government and the succession of the throne at another time."

A door opens abruptly: the door of the women's bath. Sally is quickly leaving Uncle Chuck's restaurant.

"Sister, wait..."

When Elias tries to speak, Sally has already left, walking towards New Castle of Acorn. The Prince stares at the restaurant's exit door, and sighs.

"This won't be easy."

Megan puts a hand on his shoulder, while the baby girl, Alexis, approaches and grabs the muzzle of the male chipmunk.

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:

To think with the head cold: to think about a situation in an objective, cold and rational way, without being influenced by emotions, feelings, the subjective, whether of oneself or others.

Infantilizer: a way of speaking to someone as if it were a child, or in a way that denies their maturity in age or experience.

Chapter Notes

In the eleventh chapter, thanks to a small accident, Tails will finally clear the great mystery: he'll tell the story, divided in several parts, about how he and Fiona became such a stable couple.

It's 10:00 PM in New Mobotropolis. The singing of the crickets is quite noticeable and easy to hear.

Tails enters his workshop, rebuilt just like the cabins of all ex-Knothole villagers. He's carrying Fiona into the bridal style, making a great physical effort. She wears a pink shirt and jean shorts, both of which are tight.

"Miles, you don't have to charge me. I can walk on my own."

"But... Okay, as you wish."

The two-tailed fox lets Fiona make contact with the ground and stand up. Once he released her, he dropped his own body on an armchair, resting his arms.

"We had a great afternoon. Did not we, Fiona?"

The red vixen had gone to a room, and now she comes out dressed only in a robe, without even wearing underwear under it.

"No doubt. You were very brave when you turned on a music player and started singing in front of me."

"And what do you think of my talent as a singer?"

"I think that, with a little practice, that 'Songoose' would have envy for you."

Fiona sits down on Tails, wrapping her legs around his waist and facing him.

"Fiona, my arms are tired. I would love to do that to you, but I don't think I'm in the right conditions."

"Don't worry about it. I'll take care of everything."

"Are you sure?"

Fiona starts to open her robe.

"Miles, it will always be my pleasure to do that with you."

"Son, sorry to wake you, but- WHAT THE F***?!"

Fiona and Tails stare at the workshop door, and there they find Amadeus Prower, staring in amazement. Fiona covers herself with her robe immediately, frightened by the situation.
Shortly after, Rosemary also appears, and she's also surprised by this.

"Not again..." says an annoyed Tails.

"I'm sorry, son." Says the Colonel. "We'll let you carry on with your business."

"Anyway, I remember you had to tell me what happened between you." Says his wife. "When you two finish with your... business, we'll talk."

"We'll probably end at 7:00 AM the next day." Tails answers, much to Fiona's surprise.

"Okay, we'll talk about it tomorrow."

The next day...

Tails is sitting on his bed, and his mother is sitting on a chair in front of him. Meanwhile, Fiona is in the bathroom next to that room.

"I warn you, Mom, this will be a fairly long story."

"I have plenty of time."

"Alright, here we go..."

More than a year ago, six months before Mr. and Mrs. Prower's return...

Tails, using his two tails and carrying something similar to a school bag, is flying over Mercia at noon, and finds a couple of subjects on a road: on the one hand, a green mobian hedgehog, with a black leather jacket and black and green sports shoes; on the other hand, a red mobian vixen with reddish-brown hair combed in the shape of spikes, including three large pointed tufts of hair leaning forward, wearing a black artificial leather top and trousers, two metal belts crossed at the hip, and fingerless gloves; both are teenagers about 16 years old, and both are very familiar to him. The child prodigy descends and hides among the trees.

"What are they doing here?" He tells himself.

Suddenly, in the distance, a group of SWAT-bots appears advancing towards that pair. Tails gets to see that the green hedgehog escapes running at supersonic speed, leaving the red vixen at the mercy of SWAT-bots.

At that point, Tails doesn't know what to do: he wants to save the vixen, but he has known her before, and he has no good memories of her.

"I must save her. It's the least I can do."

The vixen tries to resist, destroying a pair of robots with her martial arts techniques, but gets some wounds and blows, and is finally caught.

"Let me go, damn it..." she demands, exhausted.

Suddenly, Tails appears in the sky, dressed in a series of metal pieces that cover his hands and forearms, his feet and legs -except thighs- his chest and the upper part of his back, and with a metallic mesh covering the rest of his body, including his head and his two tails.
The fox falls on a SWAT-bot, crushing his head with his metal-covered left fist, and then points toward another SWAT-bot with his right hand open, firing a beam of light that destroys the machine. He then turns and uses his two tails, covered with metallic mesh, to cut off the arms of the robot that has the vixen. Then, she's quickly grabbed by Tails, who takes flight and takes her away from there.

The vixen wakes up slowly, and realizes that she's lying on the lower floor of a small two-story bed. The room where she rests is more like a loft, and is also very modest: in addition to the bed, there's only a small table attached to the wall by brackets and it has a lamp over it, a swivel chair in front of the table, and a small skylight. It seems to be dawning.

"Where am I? Uhhgg... My head..." she tells herself.

The vixen tries to rest, but Tails appears at the door, carrying a pill and a glass with water.

("It can't be true...") She thinks. ("Of all the mobians, he has to attend to me...")

Tails approaches slowly, keeping a serious face, and offers her the pill and the glass with water.

"It's ibuprofen, it will help you with the headache. But I guess you already know, having been a nurse."

The vixen makes a face of contempt, but not at the medicine, but at the one who gives it to him. The two-tailed fox realizes to whom that gesture is addressed to him.

"For now, forget what happened between us, and take this."

Defeated, she grabs the medication, takes it along with the water, and rests again.

"Don't worry, Fiona. Soon you'll recover."

Then Tails leaves the room and down stairs, arriving at his old workshop in Knothole. The place is well lit thanks to the windows, the walls are made of wood, and a clock on one of the walls indicates that it's 9:00 AM. The boy sits down on a chair and starts working on the metal pieces he was wearing in Mercia, extracting a quantum reactor from the center of the metal piece corresponding to the chest.

"It seems to still have a lot of energy... Excellent."

In one move...

"OUCH!"

Tails cuts himself in the right hand with a piece of rusty metal.

Tails withdraws his hand immediately, and takes off his glove.

"I'll have to change it."

In his work within the workshop, Tails usually has some cuts and burns, all of which are very mild in general. The fox is already accustomed, so this already causes little pain, and usually hide these wounds with his pelage or his gloves.

The fox washes his hands, wraps his right hand in a bandage, puts a new glove on it, and continues working, while also thinking.
A few hours later, at 1:00 PM, Fiona, the girl rescued by Tails, leaves the room and down the stairs.

"This nerd hasn't changed at all." She says with disdain, watching the workshop, where now all things are disordered and there seems to be no one.

"I'm here, Fiona!" Tails's voice is heard from behind a door.

Fiona heads there, opens the door and finds a luxurious kitchen, similar to that of a decoration magazine and that contrasts with the rest of the workshop: the walls and floor are made of concrete and covered with white tiles, the roof is made of slab and its ceiling is painted white too, and there's a small circular table with a chair in the middle of that kitchen, with a large mozzarella pizza leaning on the table. Tails is putting some dishes in a dishwasher built by himself.

"I beg you to forgive me for the disorder in my workshop." Tails says in a friendly tone, without looking at her. "I know it's hard to understand, but I manage to work with that mess anyway. It's something like... organized chaos. Yes, that would be the correct term. An organized chaos." Then he turns and looks at her, smiling. "If you want, you can eat all the pizza, I'm baking another one. Fiona..." His tone suddenly changes to a worried tone. "You really need to eat, you're very skinny."

In fact, Fiona is so skinny that she seems to be ill, her pelage is very deteriorated, and even her face looks emaciated.

"Why do you do this? What did you do to me?" Fiona asks defiantly.

"Modesty aside, I saved you from a SWAT-bots squad sent by the High Sheriff of Snottingham, while your boyfriend Scourge was escaping."

"Modesty aside, I could have solved it myself, and my boyfriend is out of the question."

"Regarding your boyfriend, I warned you how he was, and as the saying goes: who warns, doesn't betray. And returning to the question of whether you could have saved yourself: I totally disagree with you."

"So what?"

"Tell me: How would you've freed yourself from those robots if I hadn't rescued you?"

Fiona hesitates for a second. "That's none of your business."

"And what if you give me a little more solid excuse?"

"SHUT UP!" The vixen finally breaks out in anger. "I didn't ask for your help! Why do you insist?! You're the most despicable being I've ever known!"

"Am I even more despicable than Robotnik?" Tails asks, maintaining his composure.

"YES!"

Fiona is silent, after realizing what she said. "You pursued me only because you had fallen in love with a robot that imitated the appearance and behavior I had when I was ten. And now you're trying that again."

"Fiona, I didn't ask you to love me. In fact, you could have ignored me when I was trying to date
you." Tails takes a deep breath, relaxing. "Was it really necessary for you to play with my feelings? We could have been just friends, and when you were to betray us, at least you wouldn't have done me the emotional damage you did to me. Now, was it really necessary for you to hurt me that way?"

"Tails..." The vixen tries to avoid the question.

"Answer me. Just for this time."

The vixen goes quiet and lowers her head, avoiding looking at the little fox.

"I thought so." Tails grabs a rag, goes to the oven, opens it and, with the protection of the rag, pulls out a hot circular dish with a large mozzarella pizza, then takes the pizza to the shop.

("He's right... That stupid nerd is absolutely right...") Fiona thinks.

"AAARRGH!"

Fiona listens to Tails's voice, and then a thud of something slamming into the ground. She goes to the shop, and finds Tails lying on the floor, involuntarily twisting, with the glove of her right hand stained with the blood of a wound.

"MILES!" Fiona runs to the boy and tries to control his movements, but she doesn't succeed.

"AAAAAAAAHHH!"

"Hold on, Miles. I'll get a medication."

Then Fiona leaves, returning a few minutes later with a syringe and a small bottle full of a serum. The red vixen fills the syringe with the contents of the bottle and, with great precision despite the Tails' spasms, introduces that serum into his bloodstream.

About twenty minutes later, Tails is resting on his bed, in the workshop's loft. Fiona is at his side, taking care of him.

Tails opens his eyes and sees Fiona.

"You should take better care of those wounds." she says.

"I have a job that requires a lot of effort. I don't have time for those things."

"But It's about your health, Miles. Speaking of which, what happens to your immune system?"

"Nothing. What happens is that I couldn't get many vaccines."

"Well, you should do it."

"Wait a minute..." Tails sits on his bed. "Why are you doing this?"

"I'm doing it because you had an infection and I'm a nurse. Why else do you think I do this?"

"But I didn't ask for your help."

Fiona opens her mouth to answer, but gives no answer, and goes to the door of the room.

"If you didn't want my help, I'm sorry." She says, getting out of there.
The vixen goes down the stairs and sees the pizza on the workshop table.

"I can't leave this like this..."

Another ten minutes later...

Tails opens the door to his loft/bedroom and down the stairs. Upon entering the kitchen, he surprises Fiona, who's eating a slice of pizza.

"Hi, Tails." She answers, with a piece of pizza in her mouth. "Are you better?"

Tails looks silently at the scene for a few seconds. "Yes, I'm better."

Both stay in their places, quiet, looking at each other, without saying anything.

"I think I've not treated you well, a while ago." He breaks the silence.

"Don't worry about it. I think... I think I deserved it." She says, timidly, which makes Tails raise his eyebrows, as a sign of slight surprise.

"I suppose I deserve, as punishment, that you eat my pizza. After all, I could have died if you hadn't attended to me."

"Actually, your pizza, which you left on the workshop table just before you had the spasms, is inside the oven, warming again. The pizza I'm eating is the one you offered me half an hour ago."

Tails looks at the oven and finds that Fiona tells the truth.

"Thank you."

"Don't thank me, you deserve to eat."

"Regarding that, it seems that you decided to follow my advice." He says, as he walks toward the oven.

The two-tailed fox opens the oven and, with the aid of a rag, removes the pizza, hot and with the cheese melted again. Then he leaves the pizza on the table, brings a chair from the shop, and sits down at the table to start eating his lunch.

"You were right." Says Fiona, eating another slice of pizza.

"About what?"

"I couldn't have freed myself from those robots." She looks at Tails, and he realizes that her gaze isn't "seductive".

"Thank you. Honestly, I thank you for saving me."

"You're welcome. In fact, considering your help a few minutes ago, we could say that we're even."

"It's possible..."

Tails extends a hand. "Friends?"

"Not yet." Says Fiona. "But we ain't enemies either. Is it a deal?"
"Done deal."

They both shake hands, and then continue to eat the pizza.

"I know you don't have a place to sleep, so you can stay here. As you've seen, I have a two-story bed in my room. What happens is that Sonic stays to sleep sometimes, but now he's on a mission abroad. Anyway, if you feel more comfortable being alone, I have an armchair saved. I could sleep there, while you occupy my bed, at least until you have your own hut or until you wanna leave."

("What the hell have I done?! This nerd is probably a better roommate than Scourge! So calm, so meek... He even offered his bed even though he was forced to sleep sitting! But what am I thinking?"

"Tails... Why are you doing this?"

"I think we've talked about this before, Fiona."

"I mean why did you help me, despite the damage I've done to you."

The child remains thoughtful.

"I wouldn't know what to tell you. I guess I did it because it was my duty."

("This child surely still has feelings for me. But he doesn't seem to be the same naive love-sick I met months ago.")

"I get it... You won't need to sleep sitting. We can share the two-story bed."

"Okay, if that doesn't bother you... But with one condition: sleep on the floor below."

The next day...

"No... Wait... Scourge, why...? I love you... Wait... Leave me... No...! Don't do that to me... NO!"

"AAAAHHHH!"

Fiona stands up suddenly, shivering, panting, her face sweaty, her eyes wide and filled with tears.

It's 3:00 AM. Fiona tries to sleep again, but she can't.

"Are you okay?"

Fiona recognizes the voice of Tails, who's descending through a ladder attached to the foot of the two-story bed.

"Yes, I'm fine." She says, as she wipes away tears and sweat, trying not to be seen by Tails.

"You had a nightmare."

"Well..."

"A nightmare about Scourge."

"No!" She, defiant again, turns to him. "It's none of your business. Now, go back to your bed."

"Alright, whatever..." Says Tails, climbing the stairs. "But I know what I heard."
Fiona lies down but still keeps her eyes open.  

"And what do you think I've dreamed about?"

"I'll be honest: I think your nightmare was a rape, a brutal rape made by your boyfriend."  

("This child is almost like an adult, and I've ignored him, favoring that bully Scourge... I'm a s***.")

"You and all the rest of you were right: Scourge is violent, abusive, has bad temper... It seems that both of us are violent with each other in our relationship, but on an intimate level, I'm practically his slave. I don't know if I should tell you this..."

"Fiona, I'm a nerd. I'm not the kind of kids who torture their moms and dads, posing embarrassing questions about how babies are made." Tails says, making Fiona smile once. "In fact, Sonic had sex with Sally in my own room a couple of times, taking advantage of the fact that I was busy working in my workshop. I understand these things, and they don't impress me as they do impress a normal ten-year-old. Besides, I ain't as childish as I was before, now I'm the embodiment of discretion. You can tell me everything you want."

"Alright... What happens is that Scourge and I have sex whenever he feels like doing it. It's true that I like being... you know, 'perverse'... but I prefer to have a 'consensual perversion', or that my boyfriend had at least a minimum degree of concern. Instead, Scourge..." Tears begin to rise in her eyes, and her voice begins to crack. "... He hurt me, and he didn't care." Fiona breathes deeply, trying to relax and hide the fact that she's about to break down emotionally. "He didn't even use protection. Now, I have several Sexually Transmitted Infections, which I'm trying to keep under control with drug cocktails, since I can't get decent treatment in a hospital. The only reason I ain't pregnant is because I was almost compulsively consuming the morning-after pills, which is now starting to cause a hormonal imbalance in me, since it ain't the same as consuming the true contraceptive pill, from which a woman takes certain pills from a blister pack, following a calendar..."

Finally, after her monologue about the pills, Fiona begins to cry in silence. Tails realizes this, descends slowly from the top floor of the bed, and hugs Fiona, who puts her head on his shoulder.

"I'm an idiot..." she babbles.

"No, Fiona, don't say that. Scourge took advantage of you, that's all."

"You don't understand it, Miles."

"Then explain to me, so that I can understand it."

"He cheated on me, he slept with other women, he was still a womanizer, at the same time he told me that I was the only one for him. And I, because of my idiocy, was still his girlfriend."

"This is your chance. You can leave him, forever."

"I wanna change, Miles. I really wanna change, but I can't. Complying with the rules has never served me, it has never benefited me. What you told me after I healed you... This ain't the first time it has happened to me. I never had any retribution for my good actions."

"Now, you'll have it. Tomorrow- No, today. Today, in the morning, you'll go to the hospital and start the treatments you need to be totally healthy again. When the doctors allow you, I'll get a job as a nurse for you. You'll be able to live quietly, doing the good, and receiving what you deserve for your effort."
Fiona wipes away tears.

"Thank you, Tails- Sorry, Miles."

"Don't worry about my name. You can call me whatever you want, or call me with a name once, and call me by another name at another time. And if you're still worried about your 'bad girl' image, I promise I'll not tell anyone about this."

Tails continues to hold Fiona in her arms, until she falls asleep again. Then, Tails lets her rest and returns to the top floor of his bed.

Chapter Notes

In the twelfth chapter, Tails and Fiona will participate in a mission to save the world, which will have interesting consequences.

[In the present...]

Fiona comes out of the bathroom, casually wearing the hairstyle and the clothes she used to wear when she started her friendship with Tails, with the difference that her artificial leather top has the phrase "I like nerds" written in white.

"Shall we go out, Miles?"

"Of course."

At 10:30 AM, Tails, Fiona and Rosemary are walking slowly, strolling through a park in New Mobotropolis.

"Well... In a way, what I told you has been the true beginning of everything between Fiona and me."

"But you hadn't officially started your relationship with her yet."

"No, but we started something that could enter the category of 'friendship', which is a good start. Don't you think, Mom?"

[In the past...]

"NO! Why did he do that?"

"These guys are useless, Miles. What can you expect from them when they attack?"

"But Fiona, they always do it so many times. They're supposed to be prepared, they're professionals."

It's noon. The two young foxes are seated on a sofa, watching Station Square vs. Shamar, a soccer match of the United Federation Great Cup, through Central City's Channel 12. On a little table, between the foxes and the TV, there's a bag full of chips and a big bottle of orange flavored soda. Both Tails and Fiona wear scarves with green and blue cross stripes, the colors of the Station Square's National Soccer Team.

"Miles, in each national soccer team, players come from different clubs, so they don't really know each other and can't coordinate an attack. If the team were all the forwards of a club together, all the midfielders from another club together, and all the defenders of a third club together, at least there would be some coordination between one forward and another, between one midfielder and another, and between one defender and another, because they would know each other and know where their partner will kick the ball."
"You're right, look at the Station Square's National Team." Tails replies indignantly. "The forwards are the star player of Real Soleanna, the star player of Westopolis Juniors, and the star player of Internazionale Spagonia. In their respective clubs, they play great, because the players collaborate with each other. But in the Station Square's National Team, the team looks more like a disorganized group of ten guys chasing a ball, each on its own, plus an eleventh guy who protects his team's goal; when someone crosses the center line of the field to try to score a goal in the opposite goal, nobody accompanies him, and in addition he runs in such a way that he looks more like a cow trotting than a trained athlete. So he's immediately surrounded by the defenders of Shamar, as you're seeing now."

Tails serves soda in his glass, and then also serves soda in Fiona's glass.

"Speaking of a nicer topic: You've been lucky, Fiona. You don't have HIV or herpes, nor do you have diseases that prevent you from working in the hospital."

"Regarding that, thank you for looking for a job for me, Miles."

KNOCK KNOCK

"Tails! It's me, Knuckles!"

"Hey, Knux! Come in!"

Knuckles enters and walks to the sofa.

"Tails, I need you to accompany me. We have serious problems-" The red echidna stops talking as he arrives at the sofa and sees Fiona, while she and the two-tailed fox look at him quite naturally.

"What's she doing here?"

"Don't worry about me, Guardian. I'm on the good side now." She responds.

"She's right, Knux." Tails adds. "Trust me."

"Alright, I'll get to the point: Mammoth Mogul has returned, and I need your help."

Tails remains calm.

"You need my help for... What?"

"I need your help to defeat him! Are you making fun of me, like Sonic does?"

"I mean how am I supposed to beat him."

Knuckles, with his rage in crescendo, pauses.

"It's obvious that you're making fun of me-"

"I ain't making fun of you-!"

"You're doing it right now-!"

"Can you just answer my question a f****** time?!"

Both the Guardian and Fiona are gawked, but Knuckles soon regains his composure...

"You must become Turbo Tails to defeat that prehistoric super-elephant before he becomes
invincible!" In other words, he speaks again in the same alarmist way that he was previously using. After hearing the echidna's response, the fox relaxes again and sits on the sofa, watching television.

"I can't believe it. Will you sit there while Mogul returns to rule our world?"

"Knux, you know: I'm a scientist, I ain't a religious. I don't like to commit to magic, I prefer to live life in this dimension, surrounded by things that can be explained in a scientific way."

"Well, I don't know if you've noticed, but you're an Adept to Chaos, like Sonic and I, and that implies a responsibility. I know you've not chosen this, and I know you're usually someone responsible. But the same thing happens to me and Sonic... except for the relationship between Sonic and the word 'responsibility'. In short... we're in a situation similar to yours, but we also use our magical powers to save the world."

"Miles, think about what that echidna says." Fiona says.

"That echidna has a name, vixen." Knuckles tells her.

Fiona turns to the Guardian. "Can you let me solve this, creature that lays eggs?"

"You better apologize now, b-!"

"Knux! Fiona!" Tails intervenes in the discussion. "That's enough. Fiona, stop provoking people. Knuckles, forget for a moment the matter of defending your masculinity."

"Hey! What did you mean by that?" Knux protests.

"The one who's talking now is me! If you two fulfill my conditions from now on, I'll go to Angel Island."

Angel Island. 6:00 PM, Knothole Time.

The two foxes are already on Angel Island, a piece of land that was originally part of the Southeast of Downunda and is now kept floating in the air thanks to the Master Emerald, which is stored in a temple. The island moves in a circular orbit a few kilometers high, crossing the Equator at that time.

Fiona is in the temple of the Master Emerald, looking at the altar. The great gem seems to have been fragmented, and Knuckles is gathering its pieces on the platform.

Meanwhile, Tails, a little distracted, enters the temple and stands to the left of Fiona.

"Hi, Miles, you're back... Are you okay?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah, I'm fine... Do you need anything?"

"Now that you're asking... I have a question: exactly, how was this thing created?" Fiona asks, pointing to the gem.

"The Master Emerald? Well... A few months ago, with the help of Knuckles and the Brotherhood of Guardians, I defeated Mammoth Mogul. He had succeeded in being omnipotent, as a god, gathering a total of twelve Chaos Emeralds. He also got a more Chaos Emerald in a pocket dimension called 'the Zone of Silence'. In addition, there was a Chaos Emerald that was already embedded in his chest for millennia. For the record, he's a very powerful magician, and can stay alive for that amount of time and much more as well."
"Wait a second: *Fourteen* Emeralds? I thought there were only seven."

"In fact, there were fourteen Emeralds apart from the seven Emeralds we all know, and there were also more emeralds throughout the universe. Anyway... When we defeated Mogul, the Guardians merged the fourteen Emeralds into one, the Master Emerald. Regarding the seven known Emeralds: I had to transform myself into Turbo Tails, while Shadow, one of our colleagues, also transformed into his own Super form. The two of us gathered all the Chaos Emeralds of the universe and stored them in the Zone of Silence, which was later restructured and renamed 'the Special Zone', in the absence of better names. Of course, for us to use them, we left seven Chaos Emeralds here in Mobius."

They both remain silent, seeing how the gem is rebuilt.

"Fiona, when all this happened, where were you? As far as I knew, you were with us. However, you don't remember anything. What were you really doing? Stealing a jewel in Station Square? Doing a 'spiritual introspection' seminar in a monastery in the Far East of Yurashia? Going on a safari in Efrika?"

"I can't tell you."

Tails realizes that Fiona tries to avoid the question.

"Fiona... there's nothing to be ashamed of. Tell me... please."

Fiona, in silence, turns around to avoid facing him.

"I was with Sonic. And to tell the truth, we weren't doing something useful for the team."

"So what?"

Fiona turns to Tails. "Don't you realize? You were saving the world, and I was sleeping with a guy!"

"And you think I'll be offended by that? You're free to love whoever you want, and you're also free to enjoy your life, although you must be careful not to relate to guys like Scourge."

"Yeah, sure... Moving on to another topic: what were you doing recently? You were absent for hours."

"I spoke with two mobians of some importance, very wise mobians. One of them is Guardian Athair, Knuckles' grandfather. The other of them is the sorcerer Merlin Prower, who's also my uncle and my father's younger brother."

"Your uncle?"

"My family exercised magic for generations, and my uncle Merlin followed the tradition. When Robotnik's coup d'état succeeded, he helped several mobians to escape, and then he voluntarily disappeared to further develop his skills."

"And your parents?"

"My father, Amadeus, was a Colonel of the Royal Army and a leader very concerned about his soldiers, which meant that he didn't follow the tradition of training himself in the control of the mystical arts; my mother, Rosemary, was a writer. Both were very astute, as were the leaders of a highly respected Special Operations team that operated during the Great War. Their closest friends, including Sonic's uncle Chuck, say that they were very anxious to have a child when the Great War ended, and they also believe that the two of them would have been excellent parents."
When finished speaking, Tails' voice becomes lower and dim. Fiona catches that, and wraps her left arm around his shoulders.

"Hey! Don't get depressed. I'm sure they would be proud of you if they saw you. Think about it."

"In fact, I still hope to meet them again. Merlin got some information: contrary to what many believe, they've not died. Nor are they robotized, nor do they work for Robotnik in any way."

Tails approaches to admire more closely the Master Emerald, already rebuilt completely, while Knuckles leaves the temple.

"Athair also told me about the situation. He and Merlin convinced me: I’ll become Turbo Tails, and I’ll fight Mogul once more. It seems that both are aware of the Theory of Parallel Universes, and gave an excellent explanation of the magic. I don't know how it never occurred to me."

"And what did they say?"

Tails turns to Fiona.

"Simply, magic is what happens when something or someone from another universe, ruled by other physical laws, enters ours. If a thing or a being of our universe, ruled by our physical laws, enters a universe parallel to ours, surely that universe's inhabitants will believe that this is magic, since they'll not be able to explain it according to their own physical laws. When a magician makes a spell, there are forces coming from parallel universes that intervene."

Fiona is silent, as if she's expecting something.

"Something wrong, Fiona? Have not I explained it well?"

"Yes, you explained well, but... Is that all? A simple matter of logic?"

"What did you expect? A super-elaborate formula, related to quantum mechanics? An incomprehensible reflection that seems to be said by a philosopher wandering? A quote from a verse of a religious book? A speech about something based on faith?"

The red vixen nods in response.

"Anyway, I must admit I didn't have the wit to realize it, Fiona. It was something so simple..."

"Miles..." She begins to speak in an intimidating tone, which seems very real. "If you're gonna keep complaining about your mistakes, it would be better if another mobian comes to save the world, because I don't know if you can do it after I shut you up."

"Okay, okay, I'll stop complaining..."

"Also, if you think your mistakes are important, you should look at me."

Tails arches an eyebrow.

"Hello?! I had to serve clients of sex tourism since I was a child, Robotnik held me prisoner for years and used me to build a robot, I betrayed your team, I have a reward on my head for stealing valuables, and I was tricked into becoming a slave to a power-hungry motorcyclist. Do you think there's something worse than that?!"

The fox is horrified and speechless.
"Since you were a child? That's..."

"I know, it's horrifying. But I had no other way of getting money to live, and I wasn't yet very skilled at treasure hunting or stealing."

"Tails!"

A burly male mobian crocodile, visibly angry, appears at the door. He wears a gold chain around his neck, and he also wears a pair of headphones.

"Can you continue your marital discussions with Fiona at another time and place? You have work to do."

"Vector, don't say that again." Tails says.

"What do you mean? Did you know you had a job? Because I thought you didn't know and I would have to remind you. And you know what I mean." When he finishes speaking, Vector makes his fingers crunch, but Tails isn't afraid.

"First: what I wanted you not to repeat was what you said about 'marital discussions'. And second: be careful with your threats, because I ain't me when I get angry."

"Wow... And who are you when you get angry? The Incredible Hulk?"

"Something like that. If you don't believe me, ask Sonic: he knows it very well, and will advise you not to mess with me when I'm angry."

"Anyway, you have to accompany me. If you want, you can bring your new friend."

Vector steps away from the temple. Tails follows him, but turns around when he reaches the door.

"Will you come, Fiona?"

"Why not?"

As Tails leaves the temple, Fiona goes to the door to follow him.

"Are you Fiona Fox?"

Fiona looks to her left, and finds a male mobian fox who wasn't there before. The fox has brown fur, gray beard and eyebrows, and a blue cloak. She's familiar with his face.

"You're Fiona, right?"

"It depends on who's asking."

"My nephew has already told you about me."

The fox takes off the hood that is part of his cape, leaving his head exposed.

"Merlin Prower, at your service."

"Prove it."

"Tails was in love with you, and you slapped him. Even so, he took care of you."

"Okay... How do you know it?"
"Tails told me."

As they converse, Fiona looks closely at the facial expressions of that adult fox, but she finds that he tells the truth.

"For the moment, I'll believe you. What are you here for?"

"What am I here for? To talk to you! Is not that obvious?"

"Don't start with riddles, sorcerer. I don't like being spoken to in riddles, I prefer people to be direct. Remember it."

"I just wanted to say that I give you my full support, miss."

Fiona begins to exhaust her patience. "I repeat: no riddles, or our conversation will end."

"You've made mistakes, and now you want to correct them and not make them again. Am I right?"

"You're right, Sir."

"Please, just call me Merlin."

"And you, just call me Fiona."

"Agree... I also want to tell you that my nephew is still in love with you, Fiona."

"Is not that Miles' personal information, Merlin?"

"It's very obvious, it isn't necessary to have magical powers to know it. If you paid attention, you would notice."

"I think... I think I've noticed. Anyway, he tries to keep it a secret, he doesn't wanna make any progress now, and I do not plan to force him to do it."

"And what do you plan to do?"

"What do you mean?"

"There's another thing that is also obvious, although it's not as obvious as my nephew's feelings. You also feel something for him."

Fiona sighs, looking away.

"When you have so little, as it happens to me, you start to see things that you wouldn't normally see. However, that would have happened no matter who had rescued me. If Sonic had rescued me, it would have happened exactly the same: I would have begun to have feelings for Sonic, and maybe I would have started a relationship with him, even though I would regret it later, having seen what he really is like."

"But these feelings you have for Tails are not just a consequence of him being your savior."

"You're right, Merlin. I also feel guilty for what I've done to him. And now I've realized that he's a wonderful person, and he deserves to have a happy life and to be loved. But that doesn't mean that I must give him that love."

"Fiona? Will you come with us?" Tails' voice rings from a distance.
"Wait a minute!"

"Okay, I'll be waiting for you!"

"I'm sorry, Merlin, but our conversation is over."

"Wait, Fiona. I want to give you some tips. I assure you that they'll be very useful."

"Alright, I'm listening. But be quick."

"First, look more closely at Tails, his personality, and ask yourself this question: Do you feel anything for him only because he has rescued you, or is there any characteristic of him that you like?"

The red vixen looks at the door where Tails is gone.

"Agree. What's the second tip?"

"Surely, Mogul expects to be attacked in a certain way, and he knows how to defend himself against such attacks. You should attack him with something to which he's not prepared, something for which he has no defense."

Fiona turns to Merlin.

"Mogul has a great dominion over magic and the Force of Chaos, to the point of being almost a god, as I heard. How will I be able to attack him without him being able to defend himself or cure himself?"

"Don't try to damage him, try to change him."

Merlin begins to fade.

"Mr Prower, I've told you that this would be over if you started talking to me in the form of riddles."

"And you were right."

"But what should I do?"

"I know you can solve it, miss. For some reason you're a doctor."

Finally, Merlin disappears completely, and Fiona, full of questions, goes in search of Tails.

"HAS MOGUL FOUND KNOTHOLE?!"

"Sorry, Tails, but that's what our reports say." Says a male violet chameleon.

"Calm down, Tails." Julie-Su tries to massage the little fox's shoulders to reassure him. The female echidna has her left arm and one of the spines of her head legionized, has the ends of her hair more violaceous than the thorns and the rest of her body, wears a top that has the right half black and the left half turquoise, wears a golden belt, carries a double-barreled proton gun for multiple uses, wears white gloves that have separated not only the thumb but also the index finger, and wears turquoise boots. "We still have the Chaos Emeralds, you can beat him."

Tails begins to relax, although not thanks to the massages. "Mogul must be neutralized immediately, Espio. Does anyone have that Warp Ring yet?"
"Of course." A male bee in pilot's uniform answers, who flies away and returns with a gold ring similar to the Power Rings. Tails grabs him and raises a bag with the seven Chaos Emeralds.

"Thanks, Charmy." Answer Tails, activating the Warp Ring, which expands and opens a portal. Tails, Fiona, Knuckles, Julie-Su, Vector, Espio and Charmy enter the portal and appear in Knothole.

"Now evacuate the whole population." Tails orders the others, who run (or fly, in the case of Charmy) in different directions, except for Knuckles and Fiona.

"Knux, I already have the seven Emeralds. Do I need a special ritual of some kind for me to become Turbo Tails?"

"To my knowledge, no."

"So what are you waiting for?! Be a good boyfriend and help Julie-Su!"

Knuckles retires in the direction in which Julie-Su left before. Then, Tails takes the Emeralds out of the bag and his body absorbs them. His gloves turn red, there's a red cape hanging from his shoulders, an aura of light begins to surround him, his facial features and body begin to look more developed, and Tails himself starts to rise a few inches above the ground without the need to use his double tail.

Fiona looks, astonished, at the new form of the fox: Turbo Tails.

"Tails?"

"I know, I'm looking ridiculous when I dress like Superman. But I didn't choose it, so you'll have to endure it."

"Actually... You know what? Stop complaining, and go to save the world, that's all I ask. I'll go to the hospital to evacuate the patients."

That said, Fiona leaves for the hospital.

At 10:00 PM, a mobian mammoth appears out of nowhere near Knothole, which has already been evacuated. The mammoth wears fine clothes, a green aura of Chaos energy is surrounding him, and now also has a Super Emerald embedded in his chest. Tails is in front of him, looking patiently.

"We meet again, Mogul. Or will you call yourself 'Master Mogul'?"

Tails watches the Super Emerald.

"It seems that you've prepared well for this occasion. Have you been on vacation in Station Square and brought a Super Emerald as a souvenir?"

"Let's say you're not the only thinking being in this world, kid."

"That's right. However, you're trying to be a god, you want to have total dominance over a force of another universe. That's not a typical action of someone wise like you. It will have negative consequences for you at any time."

"I don't need a sermon, so shut up and let me conquer this world."

"You're asking me for a favor I can't do."
"This isn't optional, it's obligatory."

Mogul shoots a beam of Chaos energy at Tails, but he absorbs the energy and shoots it again at the mammoth, who creates a shield to protect himself. Tails then forms a kind of sword with his energy, flies to Mogul and plunges the sword into the shield, weakening it but not breaking it. Then the magician causes the shield to expand rapidly in all directions, throwing the little fox at a great distance. Before Mogul can create a new shield, Tails flies towards him and gives him a left hook that, thanks to the extra force provided by the Emeralds, almost knocks the mammoth to the ground. Taking advantage of the opportunity, the child prodigy throws several Chaos spears at the Super Emerald to try to separate it from the body, but fails and is forced to dodge the new attacks of Mogul.

Fiona enters Tails' workshop and checks between his things, until finding a small closed box, which she proceeds to open.

"Jackpot! This is exactly what I need."

Then she grabs Tails' high-tech armor and a pair of gloves with experimental electric weapons, and leaves.

"I know you're in love with that girl! I swear I'll make her perish, even if you can beat me!"

"No way! This will be resolved between you and me, and no one else!"

"Turbo Tails" and "Master Mogul" continue to attack each other, trying to get at least a small advantage and find some weakness in the other, but neither man can. In spite of the successful surprise attacks of the fox, the mammoth manages to continue in the fight thanks to his powers.

In a well-planned maneuver, Mogul manages a Chaos energy beam to strike an unprotected Tails, causing him to fall to the ground and become weak.

"It's over... Now, the world is mine-"

Suddenly, from one side, Mogul is struck by a very strong EM pulse, which makes his energy aura look dim for a few seconds. Mogul tries to prepare for a possible surprise attack, but Fiona appears behind him and, without wasting time, she stuck the needle of a syringe in his chest, injecting all its contents into his heart.

"You filthy scoundrel, are you stupid enough to try to kill me with science?"

Mogul grabs Fiona and throws her like a rag doll, although Fiona then activates her thrusters and stays steady in the air.

Meanwhile, Tails rises and flies again, but is still very weak.

The magician prepares to throw Chaos spears at the two foxes, but then his hands begin to lose their grasp, and their Chaos spears vanish. Then he looks, with horror, as his body becomes softer. He has no damage, but his Super Emerald starts to separate from his chest, and when it falls and Mogul tries to lift it off the ground, his hands can't catch it.

"What... what's happening to me?!"

Fiona lands, walks toward Mogul, grabs the Super Emerald and embeds it in the metal plate of her chest, previously extracting the quantum reactor. Then she rises and shoots, from the chest, a beam
with an immense amount of Chaos energy, which hits Mogul, throwing him to a few hundred meters away and leaving him unconscious.

While Tails, astonished, looks at the scene, Fiona isn't distracted and advances towards Mogul. When she arrives, she opens a box and takes out a Chaos Emerald, which is yellow and is a little less bright than it should be. She embeds that Emerald in Mogul's chest, replacing the Super Emerald, and flies back to Tails.

"What have you done, Fiona?"

"I injected something similar to the viruses for Gene Therapy. I've created them, they're not used for medical purposes."

"Fiona, he's a wizard. You can't defeat him with that."

"Actually, I just did it. Your uncle Merlin gave me a tip to beat him: don't damage him, but change him. Viruses change DNA, change a living being at its most basic level, and he still has DNA for being a mobian. In addition, these viruses act much more quickly than traditional Gene Therapy viruses. Mogul's Chaos powers serve to cure him of the illnesses, but I didn't cause him any illness. I only made his body softer, made his hands lose their claw function, and caused the Super Emerald to be unlocked from his chest."

"But he will recover at any moment. He only needs to wish his DNA to be the same as before, and thanks to his mastery of the mystical arts, his desire will come true."

"Don't worry, Miles. Mogul and you are not the only ones who know how to plan for the long term."

In the distance, Mogul rises again from the floor, with his body returned to its normal state again.

"You two won't be left unpunished for this, inferior beings! And I don't mind having only a common Chaos Emerald now! I, Master Mammoth Mogul, Elite Sorcerer of the Order of IXIS, will give you your fair punishment, for committing the daring and stupidity of defying me!"

Despite the threat, Fiona doesn't panic or turn to look at Mogul.

"If you think you can punish us, then do it."

When Mogul tries to throw Chaos spears at the two foxes again, he activates his Chaos Emerald, which begins to release sparks.

But that Emerald isn't what it seems.

**BOOM!**

The gem in Mogul's chest, a fake Chaos Emerald that Tails had invented, explodes when the magician tries to use his energy, causing him to explode his body, already without healing powers. The pieces of roast mammoth meat fall all over the territory on Knothole's outskirts.

"Fiona..."

"Don't thank me." Says the vixen, exaggerating his pride.

"You should have warned me."

"I'm sorry, Miles. But you must admit it: my idea has been great."
Tails looks at the landscape around him: under the stars, a fertile plain, covered with grass and also covered with pieces of Mogul's body.

"You're right. In truth, this deserves a celebration."

"By Royal Decree, His Majesty Maximillian Acorn has accepted Miles Prower's proposal, that Fiona Fox receive the Royal Pardon for her meritorious actions and for the demonstration of her exceptional change of attitude."

After finishing her speech in the throne room of the New Castle of Acorn, Lady Alicia heads toward Fiona Fox and shakes hands with her.

"I thank you very much, Your Highness."

"You're welcome, Miss Fox. I'm sorry my husband isn't present, he's very busy."

Several people are in the throne room, applauding Fiona. Among them are a Tails radiant of happiness, who applauds quickly and smiles widely, even emitting a whistle occasionally. There's also a seemingly uncomfortable and disgruntled Princess Sally, who applauds slowly and makes a forced smile, without showing her teeth.

Chapter Notes

The success and exemplary change of attitude achieved by Fiona are unquestionable. However, there are some people who will not like this at all.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Three weeks after Mammoth Mogul's Defeat...

It's 7:00 PM on Christmas Day. Tails is sitting in the waiting room of the hospital, which has a small Christmas tree in a corner. The fox has a lot of coat, because of the harsh winter weather in Knothole.

Fiona, dressed in a hospital gown and a pair of black shoes with stilettos, appears in the waiting room, emerging from one of the corridors, and walks toward Tails.

"Hi, Miles. Have you come to visit me?"

"Something like that." Tails replies, while Fiona smiles playfully.

"I have something for you."

Fiona puts a hand in her pocket and gives Tails something similar to a hospital bracelet, but covered with a thin layer of pure gold engraved with the phrase "Thank you for healing my soul".

"I know, it seems little. I tried to give you something of symbolic value."

Tails watches the bracelet for a long time, and then puts it on his right wrist.

"Fiona... I don't know what to say... I think it's a beautiful gift."

The two foxes leave the hospital, being at night at that time.

"Sometimes I think about how children like you live and relate to each other, Miles. I wish I could live in your world, there's no discrimination, the women ain't beaten."

"Yeah, being a child has good things."

Tails looks around, but then sets his sights on a particular spot.

"However, in children's world, there are no rules, and that brings problems in some cases." Tails starts to speak softly. "Since there are no rules and no control, there are times where wild and meaningless rules govern, rules as unfair as some adult rules. Did you see those gangsters over there?"

Tails pointed to where he was looking, showing Fiona a gang of five teenage mobian doberman dogs, dressed in leather suits and leather pants, smoking alongside five motorcycles that appeared to be theirs.
"Yes. What about them?"

"When I'm alone and go to school, they often harass me. I'm trying to fight them on my own, but I'm not very successful. I still haven't very refined my skills in hand-to-hand combat, and I can't do much if I fight against five."

"Why don't you transform into Turbo Tails and frighten them?"

"Fiona, I can't do that. I must have some discretion when I have super-powers, or I'll become someone just like Sonic. You know what he's like... Fiona, I think they've seen me."

At the end of speaking, Tails instinctively grasps Fiona's hand very strongly and approaches her. Fiona feels that.

"Don't worry, I'll resolve this."

The five gangsters, confidently, walk towards the two foxes.

"Wow... Look who's here: Miles 'Retarded Homosexual Mutant Nerd' Prower."

Fiona tries to contain her anger by the "nickname" that the gangsters gave to Tails. "And you are..."

"My name doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is that I'm the coolest of Knothole. I'm even cooler than your super-fast boyfriend, Tails."

"There are some who don't agree with you."

"Well, let me tell you that the boy next to you says that because he can't accept the truth: he's a mama's boy, and he can't survive in this world, unlike me. He fought with the weakest of my friends on one occasion, but in the end he ran away, crying and begging for his dear Auntie Sally."

The gangster makes a mocking laugh, replicated by his four friends, which causes Tails to lose his patience and advance towards him with clenched fists. "I'll make you swallow your words, miserable-"

Tails is stopped by Fiona, who puts her open hand in front of him.

"Come on, baby! Try to hit me. I don't know what the word 'miserable' means, but I don't care, because I'll make you apologize for calling me that." Then the doberman addresses Fiona. "Doll, could I know why you're with that mutant fagot? Surely he's annoying you, you don't need to be with him, holding him."

"So who should I be with? With you? Your brain has a single neuron, surely you'll not respect me, and you probably obey someone smarter than you, who will eventually betray you and discard you when you're no longer useful to him. I appreciate your offer, but I've been with guys like you before, and I ain't stupid enough to fall back into the same trap. I'd rather be a friend of 'that mutant fagot', as you call Miles."

When Fiona finishes her speech, she realizes that the five Dobermans have already surrounded her and look at her, burning with anger.

"You'll regret this, b****. No one insults me and goes unpunched."

Immediately, the other four grab Fiona's arms and legs, and they take her, running, to a nearby hiding place in the woods, followed by his boss.
"Let me go, shit! MILES!" Fiona screams, with a mixture of fury and despair.

"Do you think your little friend will help you? He's with his two tails between his paws."

The quintet ignores Tails, who's no longer in the place but is watching and following them without anyone seeing him.

When they reach the hideout, while their four subordinates hold Fiona firmly, the leader rips off her top in a single pull, then lowers her pants, and then begins unbuckling the belt of his own pants. The worst memories go back to the memory of the apparently unprotected red vixen, though she doesn't cry yet.

"I think we'll have to tame you, vix- AAAAARRRGGH!"

The leader screams and writhes in pain as a rusty metal bar sticks to one side, from behind him. He falls to the ground as Tails runs over him with a war cry that impresses both Fiona and the gangsters. Without giving break, he flies with his two tails, speeds forward towards one of the gangsters and hits him directly on the nose, causing him to fall. While the other three Dobermans try to help him, she frees herself from their control and, using the stilettos of her shoes, gives them a sure kick in the anus to each of them, traversing their pants and leaving them lying on the ground.

With the gang defeated, Fiona walks in the direction of his leader and approaches his ear.

"I want you to hear this: no one disciplines me except Miles Prower, and only if I let him." She whispers to the Doberman, without Tails hearing her.

Then the vixen violently pulls the metal bar from his body, making him suffer and bleed, and then removes his jacket and pants, revealing that the motorcyclist wears white boxer boxers with red hearts.

"Who's the fagot now?"

Fiona puts on his jacket and pants, then turns to Tails, who has his back to her.

"Miles, you can look at me now. I ain't naked."

Tails turns and looks at Fiona.

"Is there something wrong with you seeing my body, Miles?"

"Actually... Well... You're not ugly..." Tails begins to get nervous and blush, but immediately takes on a serious face, or tries to do so. "It's a matter of modesty. You don't deserve to be seen by someone you don't want while you're naked."

Fiona looks longingly at her friend, and then addresses the leader again.

"Now, if you'll excuse me..."

Fiona grabs Tails and charges him like a baby, making him blush even more.

"I must take care of this little hero. He's made a big effort today, right? And to finish: it ain't said 'unpunched', it's said 'unpunished', idiot."

It's 9:30 PM, and Tails and Fiona are in the workshop, watching "Four Fat Men Talking About Soccer", a television talk show about soccer and other sports. In that television show, videos of the
main events of the United Federation Great Cup matches are being played, including Station Square vs. Shamar; meanwhile, the four panelists, who are now out of shape but who claim to have been athletes in a very distant past, discuss heatedly about everything concerning those matches, even discussing for the most stupid and insignificant details.

Fiona is dressed in clothes that Tails bought for her on the way to the workshop: a red t-shirt, tied in such a way that her abdomen is exposed, and tube-type jeans, bagged at the bottom, following a "70s" style. Occasionally, Tails takes a look at her, watching the way she had changed: Fiona is already less skinny, her arms and legs are better formed, her fur looks silky, stronger and longer, and her face has regained her youthful beauty. Then the two-tailed fox realizes something else: she no longer purposely adopts a specific face, but shows a natural face, without any hidden intention, which is even more beautiful for the child prodigy's eyes.

"So, will you resume your story about the Chaos Emeralds? You promised me three weeks ago." Fiona asks.

"Yeah, thank you for reminding me of it." Tails replies, who realizes how distracted he had been a few seconds ago."About ten thousand years ago, the Chaos Emeralds arrived at different places of the universe, coming from outer space, presenting themselves with seven different colors: green, blue, red, yellow, light blue, purple and white. Probably the origin of them is some parallel universe, the same universe that surely is the origin of the god Chaos, the home of the divinity Aurora and also the home of the deceased Guardians. In Mobius, the Chaos Emeralds that appeared were the green ones, which made us call them 'emeralds', while the other variants appeared in other places of the universe. However, all have exactly the same properties, the only difference between them is the color. When Shadow and I sent all the Chaos Emeralds to the Zone of Silence, the seven Chaos Emeralds we kept for us were one of each color, and those are the Chaos Emeralds we all know. For some strange reason, after gathering and using them, as when I became Turbo Tails, Emeralds are dispersed all over the planet spontaneously."

"Interesting. You could make a novel with that."

Tails laughs at Fiona's comment. "I don't know if such a novel could become a bestseller. Anyway... How is your treatment?"

"Well... It's much better than taking cocktails of forty different pills to control the symptoms. I'll be totally cured in a short time."

"Good to know."

("You're so beautiful... My favorite femme fatale. I wish I could just touch you, pet you, hug you-What am I thinking?! I can not think of these stupidities anymore! I must concentrate, I must think rationally, or I'll be unhappy again.")

"Something wrong, Miles?"

"What? Oh... well..."

PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM

"Open the door, murderous worm!" From behind the door of the workshop, behind the sofa, the voice of an old woman, who seems to be very angry.

"Who's that old woman, Miles?"

"That old woman is the mother of the gang leader who's now in the hospital. To tell the truth, she's
"I'll denounce you, and not even that brat called Sonic can save you!"

Tails stands on the sofa and turns to the door. "Is your son called Sonic?! Really!"

"This isn't funny, mutant!"

"Of course it's funny!" Tails replies sarcastically. "And it has been flattering that you call me 'mutant', it's obvious that you're the mother of that gangster! What will you call me now?! Let me guess! Homosexual?! Retarded?! Mama's boy?!"

From that moment, nothing is heard from outside.

"She's gone. I can hear it." Tails returns to sit on the sofa and look at the TV screen, where one of the four panelists begins to argue with his three colleagues and insult them.

"The guys in this show are incredibly stupid. Since when is a scandal about a soccer team's water-bearer so important?"

"Miles, that water-bearer had sex with the wife of Station Square's goalkeeper."

"So what?"

"So what?! When sex is involved, there are always scandals. It's a universal rule of show business-"

"PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM-PUM"

Fiona is interrupted by someone knocking on the door again. Tails's reaction is quite obvious.

"You never get tired, huh?! Dammit!"

Tails stands up and walks toward the door, leaving Fiona speechless. When he's about to arrive, Tails grabs one of the pieces of his high-tech armor, puts it in his right hand and prepares him to shoot.

Upon reaching the door, he opens his right hand, pointing straight ahead, and opens the door with his left hand.

"I'll tell you one last time, you crazy motherf- SALLY!" Tails is startled, seeing the chipmunk at the door, while he quickly removes the metal glove and throws it to the side of the door.

"What brings you here, Auntie Sally?" Asks the fox, once reassured.

"Tails, stop acting like you've not done anything wrong. We need to talk."

"Sally, don't look at me in that accusatory way, and don't use that disastrous phrase about 'we need to talk'. What I did near the hospital, I did it in self-defense."

"There are those who say that it's not so."

"Who? That stupid psychopath who thinks he's a gangster? That crazy, overprotective old woman who's supposed to be his mother?"

"Tails, you can't go around denouncing and mistreating people."
"If, according to you, that's what it means to tell the truth, to defend oneself against a gang and to try to do justice when no one else does, then I think you're a hypocrite worse than that old woman. Now, if you'll excuse me, oh, magnanimous princess who lives in a fart cloud, I'm gonna torture myself, going back to seeing the poor game strategies of the Station Square's Soccer Team, while that asshole is still convalescing in the hospital."

Tails tries to close the door, but Sally puts a hand to prevent it from closing. "Wait: I heard you brought a friend here. Could I meet her and welcome her to Knothole Village?"

"Let her in, Miles. There's no problem."

"Is not that the voice of Fiona, Tails?"

"Well, yes. Do you have any problem with that?"

Sally forcibly enters the workshop and walks over to Fiona, who is seated on the sofa and watches television.

"You cheap prostitute, you deserve to be in prison! What the f*** are you doing here?!"

"The same as Miles does." Fiona answers, not looking at the princess. "Torture myself, seeing again the poor game strategies of Station Square's Soccer Team, while that doberman remains convalescent in the hospital, after the two of us have given their deserved and we've avenged the mistreatment he gave Miles."

"Okay, you've had enough talk for today." Tails says, taking Sally's hand and dragging her toward the door. "Sally, I know you're frustrated because Sonic is abroad and, most likely, he's also sleeping with some other woman, either the Princess Elise III of Soleanna or some allied woman of Freedom Fighters. So... What if you try to date someone else? Date Antoine, for example. Personally, I think he has great potential, both to be a good warrior of our cause and also to be a good boyfriend of yours, but first, you have to give him a chance."

Altered, Sally releases Tails's hand and addresses Fiona again. "What did you do with Tails?"

"What do you mean, Your Highness?"

"Tails is acting shamelessly, like... like... like Sonic, but with the difference that Tails isn't stupid."

"Hey, Sally! Fiona has also changed." Tails intervenes.

"Oh yeah? And how are you so sure she's not cheating on you?"

"It's a Matter of National Security. I can't reveal it to you so easily. But I can guarantee you that she has changed."

"You're so naive, Tails. You think you can achieve things such as creating a high-tech weapon that works efficiently with a more durable power source than the Power Rings and more accessible than the Chaos Emeralds, establish a democracy that works properly, attract Fiona to be on our side, release the supposed potential of Antoine as a warrior, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera."

While Sally speaks, Tails intentionally makes a yawn that turns out to be rude. But her surrogate mother continues to give her sermon.

"All these things are utopias, which are only possible in one place: your imagination."
With these last words of the chipmunk, Fiona loses the patience.

"Excuse me, Princess, but you're not doing a good job as a leader either." She tells Sally, who's shocked.

"How dare you say that?! You have no moral authority to speak of that subject!"

"Moral authority, my ass. You despise anyone who, according to your precepts, is useless or irrecoverable. Let me tell you something, Your Highness: Miles is giving me a chance to be someone better, and I won't waste it, so you'll have to endure me here, living with your beloved stepson."

"Tails isn't my stepson. And you're a w****, which is something that nothing and no one in the world can change."

"That's yet to be proven, Sally." Says Tails, visibly irritated. "However, I must remind you that you excluded Fiona when she hadn't yet betrayed us, nor was there evidence of her true personality at the time. You may have been right, but the fact that you've prejudiced her is still wrong. And Fiona is right: I'm the smartest on the team, and I can even outdo Rotor in some fields of science and, of course, also the ability to fight, so I deserve more respect from you."

Sally, defeated, remains silent, then walking towards the door of the workshop.

"Before you go, let me tell you one more thing, Auntie Sally."

Sally stops when she's about to leave, and looks at Tails. "Let's see... What's so important?"

"That doberman and his four friends have tried to 'feast on Fiona', if you know what I mean." Tails starts walking slowly towards Sally. "Do you think that a rational and sensitive being, like me, would stand idly by while a woman is deprived of her honor by a quintet of cowards who are only strong if they're in a group?"

Unperturbed, Sally turns around and leaves the workshop, closing the door behind her, ending the debate.

"Thank you, Miles." Fiona says earnestly. "For having pierced that son of a b**** with a metal bar, and for taking away that... princess."

"I understand you: she's really hateful at times. But she's the best leader we could have ever had. To fulfill that role, there was never anyone more suitable than she."

"Miles, what if we start training tomorrow? You told me you weren't very skilled at hand-to-hand combat yet."

"Will you teach me? I can't wait..."

Another two weeks later...

"The Mobius' fastest thing alive has come back!"

It's 10:00 AM. Sonic is in the central square of the village, surrounded by fans who acclaim him, after he returned from his mission abroad.

"I'm sorry I missed Christmas. If you want to find the culprit, he's called Shadow Hedgehog: he wanted us to have a duel, and that delayed me more than I had planned."
His communicator starts to vibrate, and he puts it in his ear, listening to Sally's voice.

"Sonic, could you leave your fans for a second and meet me?"

"SONIC! MY HERO!"

Amy Rose appears among the crowd, making her way among the other admirers, beating them with her huge Piko-Piko Hammer.

"Of course, Sally." Sonic answers, a little nervous, through the communicator. Then the blue hedgehog addresses the crowd.

"Sorry, Ladies and Gentlemen, but I must go. Duty calls me. I wish you all a very happy New Year of 3237!"

In a flash, Sonic disappears, leaving behind a ditch in the thick layer of snow, and covering with that snow everything that is nearby.

In Sally's hut...

"Alright, Sally, what's so worrying?"

"Do you remember Fiona Fox?"

Sonic sighs.

"Unfortunately, yes."

Sally turns her gaze to the window, and she casually sees, in the distance, Fiona and Tails walking together.

"She has returned."

Outside, Tails participates in a target shooting game, earning a giant teddy bear as a trophy. The princess looks distressed while the little fox, hypnotized according to her, gives the teddy bear to Fiona.

"And she has Tails under her control again."

"For me?" Outside, Fiona is surprised by Tails' gift. "Miles, it's cute, but I think I'm too old to have teddy bears."

"So what?" Tails replies.

"You want me to separate them, right?"

While listening to Sonic, Sally stares out the window, infuriated by something that is happening outside: Fiona, with the bear in her arms, is giving Tails the "funny kiss", the kiss Sally usually gave the child prodigy in his nose. Now it's a personal matter.

"By any means necessary."

"With 'any means necessary', do you mean any necessary means, Sally?"

Sally sighs and turns to Sonic.
"Sonic, you know there has been no relationship between us in a long time. Besides, I need you to do this for the sake of Tails."

Sonic thinks for a few seconds.

"Fine, if this doesn't bother you... But I must warn you: this will be very painful for Tails, and I can't guarantee that he won't attempt to do an act of madness later."

"I know, but we must get that femme fatale out of Knothole, and we must do it at any cost. Also, Tails needs to grow someday, and growth is always painful."

---

Tails and Fiona are in a spacious room with a padded floor and a high ceiling. Both wear mouth guards and head protection. In the case of Tails, he has his two tails tied, so as not to cheat.

Both are facing each other, walking slowly, circling around the center of the room.

"Tell me, Miles, how hard do you want me to hit you?"

Tails smiles confidently. "Hit me as hard as you can, I'll take it."

"Okay, If you want it..."

Fiona throws a blow with all her strength, but Tails dodges it, grabs Fiona's arm and gives a little boost so that, because of the force of her own stroke, she's thrown forward and falls face down. The maneuver works, but Fiona rolls on the ground as she falls, then stands up, turns around and drags her foot to sweep the legs of Tails, who jump and land on his opponent's leg. The vixen is trapped in a shameful position that, luckily, no one is watching: Tails is leaning on her leg, and his head is casually very close to her crotch.

"It looks like I won the First Round." Says Tails, smiling mischievously.

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Five minutes later...

Sonic is heading for the training room, and begins to listen to a woman laughing wildly. Intrigued, the hedgehog approaches the door slowly, avoiding being seen from inside the room.

When looking, the sprinter can’t believe what he sees: Tails is tickling Fiona, and he seems to be succeeding.

"JAJAJA! Tails, wait- AHAHAHA-! AAAAAHHH! WHAT THE F*** ARE YOU DOING HERE?!" Fiona stops laughing and screams furiously and horrified, staring at the door, and she regain her composure. Tails turns and looks where Fiona is looking: Sonic is standing there, staring open-mouthed.

"Sonic, you're back." Says Tails, while Sonic still looks at nothingness.

"What's she doing here?"

"Sonic, she's Fiona Fox."

"Yeah, I know who she is. Didn't you hear my question?"

"Yes, I heard, Sonic. Why do you think I have these big ears?"
While Sonic is looking at Fiona, she's also looking back at him, but her gaze isn't pleasant at all.

It's 1:30 PM. There's a large tent installed in the central square, and several villagers are seated around several tables, on the occasion of Sonic's return. Around a large rectangular table, the Freedom Fighters are sitting, along with the royal family of Acorn.

"C'est intolérable." Says Antoine to himself, disgusted by the situation. "How is it possible for people to allocate so many resources to receive a single person? If this was done in honor of the Princess or the King, I would accept it. But that's not the case."

Near Antoine, they're seated Rotor and Bunnie.

"You'd better hold me very tight, because I'll break the nose of that selfish frenchy." Says the walrus, annoyed by the coyote's sayings.

"Rotor, calm down. Think of the good side: his loyalty could serve as an example."

"Bunnie, I don't wanna offend you, but Antoine would only serve as an example of what should not be done."

"Antoine ain't the only one who boasts. Sonic does too."

"But he boasts with good reasons, while Antoine has absolutely no achievements to his credit."

Meanwhile, the cyborg girl watches Antoine, who also doesn't seem to be very happy about Rotor's sayings, although the walrus doesn't know that the coyote heard him.

"Will you excuse me, Rotor? I would like to be with others for a moment." By saying this, Bunnie gets up from the table.

Meanwhile, Fiona sits next to Bunnie, Rotor and Antoine, so she has been able to hear everything they said.

"I think there's something between Antoine and Bunnie, and it ain't exactly hatred."

"Are you sure, Fiona?"

Tails is on her left, dressed in an old Special Forces uniform: a black leather jacket, which covers the neck and has the insignia of the Special Forces - a blue shield, with a sword pointing down and surrounded by a pair of yellow laurel branches - in each sleeve; long, tight pants made of black artificial leather; matching gloves, and a pair of black military boots. In this outfit, the fox looks as if he's older than he really is. He also has the Medal of Resistance on the left side of his chest.

"Totally sure, Miles. I know how to recognize these things."

Bunnie walks past them and sits to the left of Sally. At the same time, Sonic is located to the right of the princess. He's talking about his duel with Shadow, and he's also quite uninhibited, because he had drunk a certain amount of champagne.

"And that's how I defeated him, confirming that the faker ain't me, but he."

"It's a great story, Sonic." Says King Max, sitting in front of him and to the left of Lady Alicia. "Truly exemplary."

"Anyway, strength, speed and agility are not the only important things." Says Bunnie. "Is not that
right, Sally?"

"Yeah, Bunnie, but Sonic forgets about that sometimes."

"I've heard a little about one of you: Miles Prower." Alicia tells her daughter.

"Tails? Yeah, he also makes many contributions."

"But he's still a child, and that creates problems." Adds Sonic, who's not aware that Tails is listening to him.

"Fiona, I have to go find something. Could you wait for me for a moment?"

The red vixen knows the reason for that request. "Of course, Miles."

Tails gets up from the chair and walks slowly and quietly towards another table. Once there, he serves squeezed orange juice in his glass goblet and then, while drinking it, listen and watch what Sonic is doing.

"What happens to Tails is that he's naive. He imagines things, and he forgets that such things can't be done in the real world." Says Sonic, using a slightly mocking tone as a result of his alcohol consumption, although its effects are still not very evident. Sally is silent.

"Sonic, don't you think he deserves to be treated a little better?" Fiona takes the floor. "After all, as I heard, he saved you from your own mistakes on several occasions."

"Yeah, right..." Without paying attention to what Fiona said, Sonic grabs a glass of champagne and, rudely, drinks all its contents in one go.

"I think he could perfectly well have a nice girlfriend. He deserves that his effort and attitude be recognized and rewarded."

"I think so too, Fiona. But the world ain't fair, you proved it yourself when you rejected Tails and favored a fool like Scourge."

These sayings cause a lot of emotional damage to Fiona, although she disguises it. Tails also listens to that, and prepares to intervene if necessary.

"That was a serious mistake, and I've learned not to commit it again."

"Actually, I mean something else." Sonic turns his back on Fiona and addresses the others. "I wish Tails could have a girlfriend."

("You're lying, hypocrite.") Tails thinks. ("If I could attract a girl, I would be already becoming a competitor of yours, which is the last thing you want.")

"However, the world is cruel. And I can say, from experience, that a high IQ serves to do many things but is absolutely harmful in terms of love."

("You didn't help me much either. Supposedly, you were my brother, but in practice, you're a treacherous.")

"Another thing that is detrimental when looking for a girlfriend is to show an excessive commitment in a relationship. If you don't believe me, look at Antoine. In addition to being clumsy as a Freedom Fighter and as a soldier of the Royal Army, all he has is his world-famous 'unconditional loyalty'. That's not only insufficient to be a good warrior, but also another detrimental aspect when trying to
establish a romantic relationship."

("Fortunately for you, Sonic, I'm also very clumsy to commit treason. If I had no loyalty to you and
our cause, you would all have died, and the village would have been destroyed.") thinks Antoine,
who then gets up from the chair and leaves without saying anything more.

"To quote my experience once again, I must mention that, when a woman initiates a relationship
with a man, she knows that the relationship won't be lasting, she knows that it will last very little. So,
if a man shows himself to be too committed, the woman realizes that she won't be able to cast him so
easily out of her life."

("You stupid sexist.") Tails' hand begins to squeeze his glass goblet tightly. ("You deserve that
someone shut you up.")

Meanwhile, Sally is silent, looking down. King Max nods to everything he says, Lady Alice does
something similar to what Sally does, and the others listen to him without even disapproving him
with a face of disgust.

"In basic terms, women are, in part, manipulative in nature. No matter what woman she is, they all
do the same-

*PAF!* *PAF!*

Tails is startled by the sound and, like the others, looks at Fiona and Bunnie: as they squeezed their
fragile glass goblets with their hands, they have made them explode; the most surprising thing was
that Bunnie had done it using her organic arm.

"Don't worry! I'll fix this accident!" Tails says, approaching the table and grabbing Fiona and Bunnie
to take them both away.

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:

To live in a fart cloud: not to be aware of what actually happens in society, or to be
misinformed about this same issue.

Chapter Notes

Convinced by Sally, Sonic will try to implement various plans for Fiona to separate from Tails. But Fiona will prove that it has indeed changed, and when all is revealed and the situation reaches a critical point, a terrible confrontation will erupt.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

[In the present...]

Tails, his mother and Fiona are in a coffee shop, occupying a table for four.

"Yeah, Mom: a lot of times, Sonic and Sally forget I ain't just a kid, and they're especially annoying." Says the fox, drinking a sip of his "submarine" chocolate milk.

"Considering what you told me..." answers Rosemary, who suddenly rises from the table. "Can you wait for me for a moment? I need to go to the toilet."

As Rosemary leaves, Fiona finishes eating a sweet croissant and starts to suck her fingers slowly while looking at Tails.

"You're bad, Fiona." He says, making a mischievous smile. "Is it really necessary for you to do that?"

"Do what?" She answers, as if she doesn't know what her boyfriend is talking about. "To suck my fingers? These croissants are delicious, and it ain't my fault that some remains remain in my fingers."

"I think what happens is something else: it reminds you of what we did at GUN HQ, in the guest rooms, before the mission in Mercia. Did you like it and want to remember the moment?"

"Miles, don't be rude. We're in a public place."

"But I didn't say anything explicit... Okay, I'll shut up."

The two young foxes are silent for a while.

"Returning to the subject of our memories: do you remember what happened in the days after that party, when Sonic returned from his mission abroad?"

"Yes, Fiona, I remember it well..."

[In the past...]

The next day...

It's 9:00 PM. Fiona is walking to Tails' workshop after working at the hospital. Along the way, she meets Sonic.

"Good night, Sonic." She answers bitterly.
"Wait, Fiona. I want to apologize for what I said yesterday."

Fiona, keeping her face expressionless, stares at the hedgehog.

"You're apologizing only because you're obliged to do so. At that moment, you revealed what you really thought. Besides, you're late, very late: you could have apologized last night, but you waited another twenty-four hours."

"How do you want me to prove that I'm telling the truth? Ask me whatever you want."

Fiona is silent, thinking.

"I'll keep it in mind." After saying this, she resumes her advance toward the workshop.

"Is that your answer?" Sonic asks, sounding like he's offended. "How do I know it ain't an excuse not to date with me?"

Incredulous and angry, the red vixen turns. "Am I obligated to date with you?"

"No, I ain't saying that, but-"

"No buts, Sonic. Maybe you don't believe me, but I've changed, and now I prefer honest people."

"I'm honest, Fiona. I... I like you... very much, and I have faith that you can change. Really, I'm sorry for what I said at that party."

Fiona stares at the hedgehog for a long time.

"Fine, I accept your apology. But I'll only do it this time. If you do something bad or suspicious again, any friendship that has been between us will definitely end." Sonic tries to answer, but Fiona continues speaking. "And if you give me again the treatment you gave me a few seconds ago, as if I were forced to accept one of your invitations for a date, I'll break your teeth and denounce you for sexual harassment, because that's exactly what you were doing."

Fiona resumes her advance toward Tails' workshop, leaving the blue hedgehog speechless.

A few minutes later, Fiona enters Tails' workshop, whose interior is almost completely dark, except for a small lamp on, next to the sofa where Tails is now sitting.

"Hi, Miles. You should turn on some lights."

As she approaches her friend, Fiona hears a slight sob.

"Miles?"

"Yes, that was about to do..." The fox answers, sitting with his back to her.

Tails goes to one of the walls and presses some buttons, turning on the workshop's lights. Then he returns to sit on the sofa.

"Something wrong?"

"No, there's nothing amiss. I was just thinking, remembering things..."

"It seems to be sad memories."
There's no response, which is interpreted by Fiona as a "yes".

"Do you wanna tell me?"

"No, I don't wanna involve you in this. These are personal matters."

"Okay, it's none of my business. I get it. I know I ain't the most reliable mobian-"

"No, Fiona, don't get me wrong. What happens is... How to say it? I should be the only one obliged to worry about these things, and if you started to worry about my problems, it would be unfair to you."

"Miles..." Fiona walks to the sofa and sits next to Tails, who has his face's pelage wet with tears, his head resting on his hands, and his elbows resting on his legs.

"Miles, we're friends. Any problem of yours is also a problem of mine, and vice versa."

"All right, I'll tell you... I've not been having a good time lately, although I've managed to hide it."

"Did something bad happen to someone close to you?"

"No. It's difficult to explain."

"Take your time."

Tails does what Fiona says, taking a deep breath.

"I've accomplished many things, things that no one else of my age would have ever dreamed of. I'm quite skilled. I have a great intelligence, even greater than some adults, and I use that attribute well. I treat people well, although I ain't necessarily innocent. I can fend for myself, be independent..."

"That's right, Miles. But what's wrong with all that?"

The child prodigy looks at his friend, while his eyes are filled with tears again.

"Is not it obvious? Someone with my qualities never succeeds in real life, is excluded by peers, and is rejected when trying to get someone's love."

"Is this about me, Miles?"

"NO!" Tails turns his back on her. "What happened between you and me is already in the past. It was a moment of weakness that I had."

The vixen lowers her head.

("Obviously this is my fault.")

"Actually..." The two-tailed fox resumes his story. "The problem is Sonic."

"He's your best friend."

Tails stands up and starts walking.

"Yes, but when I threaten his supremacy, when I try to be independent, he forgets our friendship. He knows that if I have the opportunity, I can become a very important person, and I can even eclipse him. That's why, when he's dating girls, he claims he's still the best and that I'm nothing but a child,
his second in command."

"Miles, you're worrying too much. You should enjoy life, enjoy your childhood."

"I can't, Fiona! I'm a nerd! I'll never be able to live in the same way that other children live, I can never be normal. If I tried to be normal, I would be fighting against my own personality, against my own way of being. I would be fighting myself, and if that happened, the only possible outcome would be my fall into madness and, finally, my suicide. When you're a nerd, or when you're different in some way, the only thing you can do is accept yourself and take advantage of the good things you have. In my case, I'm very aware of what's happening around me, to the point that my only option is to behave like an adult, to worry about those things that an adult would normally worry about."

While Tails talks, Fiona, distressed, looks at him.

"I know I shouldn't cry about this, but I can't help it. I ain't asking for much. I just want there to be some girl that I like and whom I also like, I want to be able to share everything with her, even the most intimate of both, I want to feel that she and I are one. I ain't asking for anything extraordinary, I just wanna enjoy love, just like everyone else. Having many loyal friends doesn't solve this problem, according to me, because friends come and go, and I need something more... more..."

Tails sighs when he can't find the right word.

"Even so, sadness isn't the only thing I feel. This morning, I saw Sonic coming out of the house of Mina, a girl who's having some success as a singer. It was obvious they had slept together. When I saw him, I remembered all the different girls with whom Sonic came out..." Tails' voice becomes more sinister. "... and then I felt an immense anger, something that I had felt on very few occasions."

The fury is increasingly evident in the voice of the little fox. "A blue idiot, whose only qualities are his speed and bravery, whose only merit is to have saved the world, who acts like a gentleman but still retains sexist ideas, manages to have a huge success with women. And I... I HAVE NOTHING! HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?! Fiona, tell me..."

Tails turns and faces the vixen, then screams with all his might.

"HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT A STUPID SON OF A B**** IS HAPPIER THAN I AM?!"

Yelling at her in her face, Tails makes Fiona be surprised and also freaks out a little. Realizing what he did, he falls to the ground, sitting on his knees and stooping, crying disconsolately.

("Confirmed: Miles is no longer the child I knew.")

After recovering from the fright, Fiona approaches the little fox, resting a hand on his shoulder.

"What have I done to you, Fiona?"

"You didn't do anything wrong."

"I screamed at your face. And I've also persecuted you in the past, just as you said when we met again."

"I know you didn't do any of this with bad intentions."

"I was forcing you to be my girlfriend. That counts as 'bad intention', don't you think?"

"Well, Sonic does the same, and he doesn't do it for a good purpose. In fact, he did it a moment ago, when I was coming here."
"And what did you do?"

"I rejected him, although I did it in a disguised way."

After being quiet for a few seconds, the two foxes start to laugh, and Fiona tightly embraces Tails.

"I know we've started badly, and I also know we've only been friends for a month, but... you're my best friend, Fiona. I love you so much, I love you more than Sonic, more than Sally, more than I could ever love all my other friends and comrades-in-arms together."

Upon hearing this, Fiona closes her eyes and drops a tear.

"I love you too. These sixteen years were horrendous, I lost a lot... You're all that I've left."

The next day...

It's 1:00 PM, and Fiona is leaving the hospital. At that moment, she sees Sonic, who's walking down the street and doesn't seem to have seen her.

"Sonic!"

The blue hedgehog turns to hear the vixen's voice. "Fiona! How are you?"

"I'm fine, I'm taking a break from work as a nurse. And you?"

"In fact, I'm bored."

"Well, that's not so surprising."

"Fiona, there are almost no more villains to defeat, and now I have nothing else to do. I don't have a common boredom, this is serious."

"Really? I don't believe you."

"Come on, I ain't lying to you, I would never."

Fiona is about to answer, but she remembers what Tails had told her about Sonic's habits as a womanizer.

"So you'd never lie to me, huh? So, what happened between Mina and you yesterday?"

"Did Tails tell you?"

"It doesn't matter. You're already well known for dating a different woman every day."

"I can explain it, Fiona: me and Mina slept together, yes, but then we ended our relationship."

"So fast?"

"There are many celebrities who divorce just a few days after they've married."

"Well... No wonder that happens to you, the fastest thing alive. Does that nickname apply to other areas besides when you're running?"

"Fiona, did you just make a malicious remark about my speed?"
"Am I not entitled to do so?"

Sonic, defeated, sighs. "Do you want us to go for a drink?"

[Soundtrack: Foolin' around (Remix of "The Freddie Mercury Album") – Freddie Mercury]

Upon arriving at Tails' workshop, at 4:00 PM, Fiona can hear a boy singing in a very talented way, with his voice superimposed on the sound of a music player.

"Obviously it's Miles' voice." She tells herself.

"Walking down the street, people watching closely.
Such a tease, you can turn on any man you want.
You masquerade.
You are the catch of the season every night and day.
You, you, you don't have any time for me.
You just keep fooling around with me."

"He's singing the lyrics in a very perfect way. Is he trying to give me a message?"

"Fooling around, everywhere I go you are the only, only, only sexy lady.
Fooling around, all you do is keep me hanging around.
You are really so hard to please.
You've gotta really watch that, baby!"

She then listens to an electric guitar solo, which doesn't seem to come from a music player, but from a guitar inside the workshop.

"He plays the guitar better than Sonic- Wait a second: What if he knows I've gone on a date with Sonic?"

A few seconds later, Fiona enters the Tails' workshop. As the door opens, Tails stops singing, nervous about Fiona's arrival.

"Fiona, you're back..."

"Yeah... Miles, I've met Sonic today."

"So what?"

"Well... he's a womanizer, but I've been talking a little with him, and... I think he can change, he can be a better person. He does everything with good intention, you know. He ain't like Scourge, who really did everything with bad intention."

"Yeah, I know..." Tails looks down.

"Miles, don't you think you exceeded a little yesterday? I know what's happening to you is very hard and unfair, but I think you should let Sonic know. I'm sure that if you tell him about this, he will help
you."

The two-tailed fox turns his back on Fiona and heads for the stairs to his room, while Fiona looks at him.

"Yeah... Maybe, you're right... Maybe, I just had cloudy judgment..." he answers, seemingly depressed.

Tails climbs the stairs and goes into his room. At that moment, she realizes that Tails left a few keys on the table, with a label that says "For my favorite femme fatale".

("He was gonna give me a gift... I've ruined everything.") Fiona thinks, as she leaves, taking the keys.

Walking outside, she finds a hut next to the workshop. It has a sign that reads "RESERVED"; there are solar panels installed in the ceiling; doors and windows have frames painted red, and window panes are double panels that prevent heat loss; there are also rose plants, with roses of different colors, planted on each side of the entrance.

After removing the poster, Fiona tries to open the door with her keys, following her intuition, and she succeeds. Upon entering, she finds that the hut is larger than it looks. The living room has: two armchairs and a sofa, covered in the best quality artificial leather, very comfortable and fluffy; a small table that has a music player along with heavy and metallic rock CDs, which casually is Fiona's favorite music style; a large LED TV; a desk with a computer and a chair; a bookcase still empty, and another small table with empty drawers and picture frames without photos. The kitchen has the floor, walls and ceiling made of concrete, with white tiles covering the floor and walls, as in the kitchen of Tails' workshop; there's also a common oven, a microwave oven, a dishwasher, a refrigerator, and a table with a chair. The bathroom is designed in the same way as the kitchen, with a shower that also allows to do dipping baths and that includes shampoo and conditioner containers.

Fiona, astonished by all this, walks slowly toward the sofa and sits down.

"It feels so comfortable... It's obvious that he has worked hard to do this..."

After a few seconds, Fiona starts to cry in silence.

"Miles... You don't know how much I want us to start something together... even if it ain't perfect..."

The next day, at 12:00 PM, Fiona leaves her hut and meets again with Sonic.

"Hello, Sonic. Are you looking for Miles?"

"Actually, I was looking for you... Is that your hut?"

"Well, yes. Why do you ask?"

"How did you get it?"

"Miles gave me the keys, that's all I know."

"That is to say that Tails gave it to you."

After hesitating for a moment, Fiona nods, and Sonic starts to approach her. Although she doesn't reveal it, she starts to worry.
"I have a bad feeling about this."

"Fiona, do you like Tails?"

"To tell you the truth..." Fiona hesitates about his response. "I think he's quite nice."

"I get it... And who would you prefer?"

"I wouldn't know what to tell you. Miles isn't really interested in me, we're just friends, but I'd like other men to be like him."

"But, don't you think that someone like Tails, when he becomes an adult, would be cold, boring, very focused on his job? Don't you think the best long-term option would be someone who doesn't have so much brain but does have feelings? Don't you think I would be a better choice than Tails?"

Upon hearing this, Fiona starts to laugh hysterically.

"Does this sound funny to you?" Sonic asks, suddenly enraged.

"Sorry, Sonic." Fiona replies as she regains her composure. "It ain't my fault you're so funny."

"Well, that wasn't my intention."

The vixen stares at Sonic.

"Do you know what I think? I think a mobian can have intelligence and feelings at the same time, like Miles. On the other hand, a mobian may miss both; that's what happens to you... and so is what happens with Scourge. Do you remember him? Well, you're just like him: you think that, because of being a woman, I must obey you and your stupid and unfair rules, which are surely an invention of yours; you think that you have the right to treat me like a child or an inferior being; you think that the fact that you're cool gives you authorization to have forty thousand different girlfriends and to discard them whenever you want, and you consider inferior and discredit all those who really think. Now, I want you to hear this: if I relate to a nerd, it ain't your business, you have no right to get involved or tell me what to do; I'll deal with the long-term consequences. And speaking of this topic, you also have no right to talk about 'long-term things', considering that you're always with a different girlfriend, womanizer son of a b****."

Fiona turns her back on Sonic, but he, furious, grips her arm tightly and pulls her to him, making her scream, scared. He then wraps an arm around her waist and puts his face very close to her face.

"Now I want you to listen to me, b****: Sally asked me to get you away from Tails, and that's what I'll do, by any means necessary."

"This only confirms what I just said, Sonic. Until a few seconds ago, there was a difference: Scourge accepted and openly acknowledged that he was despicable, while you hid it under that guise of hero and gallant. Now, the two are exactly alike."

Finally, a crazed Sonic prepares to slap Fiona, but a yellow, white and black thing hits him from his right side, leaving a trail of smoke. The tricolor thing pushes Sonic to the central square of Knothole, where it finally brakes and lets Sonic crash into a tree."

When Sonic recovers from the blow, he sees Tails in front of him, who's dressed in his father's uniform, but with some additions: his two tails are covered by the metallic mesh he created; he wears a belt where he carries two strange pistols, each with a miniature quantum reactor and a tube filled with water; he doesn't wear gloves of any kind, so he also has his fox claws exposed; on his head, he
wears a black military cap with silver details, folded in a "saddleback" shape and with the raised front, which has the insignia of the Special Forces; his eyes are covered by sunglasses, which don't have a modern design that matches the round shape of the head, but have an old design.

"What's up, Freddie Mercury? I think you still don't have the mustache, my friend."

"I ain't your friend, Sonic."

"Come on, lil bro-" Sonic is interrupted when Tails shoots the tree that Sonic collided with. The shot pierces and crosses the trunk completely, causing splinters to come off of it.

"These guns shoot water droplets, and shoot them at a speed of two thousand kilometers per hour." Says Tails, now aiming his two pistols at Sonic. "So, I recommend you be smart and do what I'm gonna say to you: leave Fiona alone, tell Sally to do the same, and stop calling me 'lil bro'. Have you understood? We've already fought this matter three months ago, and I wouldn't like to resume it now."

"Sorry, lil bro, but I have orders to fulfill."

After saying this, Sonic does a Spin-Dash, but Tails takes flight and dodges him, letting the hedgehog crash into another tree. Then Tails makes a Spin-Dash, tearing the ground with his tails, now sharp, and advances towards Sonic, but he uses his super-speed to dodge the fox. Tails hits the tree and cuts it, and then Sonic sees that tree falls to the ground. Taking advantage of the distraction, Tails stands up and, quickly and very close to the ground, flies towards the sprinter; when the fox changes direction and rises, he gives Sonic a blow from below, breaking some teeth.

As Tails lands on the ground, Sonic gets up, spits out a tooth and looks at his former friend with a fierce look. For some strange reason, the Tails' sunglasses didn't suffer any damage, and his military cap is still in his head.

"I think I've hurt someone's pride. Am I right?"

Sonic throws himself towards Tails and tries to hit him with all his might, throwing a war cry and forgetting to have pity, but the child prodigy manages to dodge the arm, grab it and give it a little boost, letting Sonic fall to the ground because of his own strength. The blue hedgehog rises and starts hitting him, but Tails, following the style of the boxers, protects himself with his arms, until he finds the perfect opportunity and hits Sonic directly on his nose, breaking it and causing it to bleed. Screaming again, the sprinter advances toward him, but the fox gives him another blow in the nose, making the hedgehog suffer even more.

Using his super-speed again, Sonic manages to grab a short metal bar that was nearby, but Tails pulls out a retractable baton. The hedgehog tries to hit him in the head, without thinking that it can cause an instant death, but the blow is stopped with great mastery and little effort by the fox. Sonic continues to try to hit him with his improvised metal truncheon, but Tails stops all the blows and takes advantage to hit his leg, causing the hedgehog to lose his balance and fall back to the ground.

Tails approaches Sonic, but the hedgehog suddenly rises from the ground and makes a rugby tackle to the fox, pushing him to the wall of a cabin. More furious than ever, Sonic begins to hit Tails to break his sunglasses and also make him bleed.

"This will teach you not to break the noses of people!"

Finally, Tails, a little disoriented, is dropped to the ground. However, Fiona throws herself on Sonic from behind, and tries to strangle him with a rope. Sonic manages to get rid of her and, without any
remorse, gives her a hard blow to the head, fainting her. Without him knowing, Tails recovers; seeing the way Sonic hit Fiona, he makes an animal growl, throws himself on Sonic and makes deep wounds with his claws, then try to slice him with his two tails. Sonic dodges the two huge blades into which Tails' tails were transformed, and then he runs off to the Great Forest, with the fox chasing after him.

Sonic runs between the trees, trying to get Tails to hit some, but the fox manages to continue his pursuit. When arriving at a zone especially full of trees, Sonic manages to pass between them, but Tails, in the absence of space, begins to fly by positioning his two tails in front of him, as if he were a wasp that's begin to sting, with the difference that he adopts that position to shred the wood of any tree that stands in his way. His maneuver succeeds, and the fox continues to chase the hedgehog, entering the meadow and leaving behind many fallen trees.

In the meadow, Sonic stops to rest, and also to wait for Tails and finish the fight definitely.

However, his waiting is interrupted by a strange flash of light.

Sonic hides behind a hill, and finds that they're two tanks and a missile launcher, all with a strange appearance, coming from an alternate universe through a portal. There are robots commanding these vehicles, although they're not robots of Doctor Robotnik, but they're very similar to Sonic and are painted green.

"Locate Sonic Hedgehog and Miles 'Tails' Prower, and destroy them." Says one of the robots, who's aboard the missile launcher. Then these vehicles and the two tanks are dispersed.

After hearing this, Sonic runs away from there, heading in the direction of Knothole.

Meanwhile, in Knothole...

Tails enters his workshop. He's tired, very beaten, dirty with mud and blood, and his patience is over. Fiona is also in the workshop, with an ice pack on her head.

"That idiot will pay me for hitting me that way in the head."

"Fiona, don't start complaining like you've been beaten by the Scotsman of '100% Lucha'. Look at me."

"I know, Miles. But it wasn't necessary for you to do this."

"What? Protect you?"

"I mean trying to kill him."

"Don't exaggerate..."

"Miles, this is serious." Fiona pauses. "I've decided to leave Knothole."

Fiona walks to the door, leaving an incredulous Tails.

"What?! But, Fiona... I built a hut for you-"

"Yes, I've seen it, Miles, and I appreciate everything you've done for me. But I must do what's best for everyone. You've seen how Sonic and Sally reacted, and I don't wanna make you fight with them just because you wanna defend me." Fiona starts walking toward the door again.
"Since when do you care about these things, Fiona? If Sonic and Sally disagree, ignore them. Besides, defending you isn't a nuisance to me, nor is it a nuisance to fight with them. On the other hand, where are you gonna go if you leave here? Probably Station Square already put a price on your head, while here you already received the Royal Pardon. Please, Fiona... Before you leave, think about what I'm telling you."

Standing in front of the door, Fiona sighs. "Okay, I'll do it. I'll stay in Knothole."

"Thanks, Fiona. You'll not regret it, I swear."

An hour later, Tails is walking through the central square of Knothole, still wearing his father's leather clothes. As he looks around, he realizes that everyone's looking at him, as if they're judging him.

"Surely Sally told them what happened." He tells himself.

Suddenly, a blue thing from the meadow hits Tails and drags him out of the square. At that moment, in the place where the fox was, a missile hits and generates a big explosion, and its blast breaks some windows of the houses nearby. Fortunately, no one is hurt.

"What the fuck was that?" Tails asks as he gets off the ground.

"Someone's trying to kill us." Responds Sonic, who's next to him now. "Whoever it is, they've brought two tanks and a missile launcher. We must destroy them quickly, I know where they are."

"Okay, but for the record, this doesn't make up for what you did to Fiona and me. And another thing: when we're done with this, I want you to be a man and try to resume your relationship with Sally, instead of being a womanizer."

"Okay, got it." Sonic answers with disdain. "But I'll do it only because you'll cut me in two if I don't."

[Back to the present...]

"Shall we tell her, Miles?"

The fox is eating a sweet croissant. His cup of chocolate milk is already empty.

"About what?"

"Our talk, your fight with Sonic..."

"I would rather not do it. She doesn't need to know."

Meanwhile, Rosemary returns to the table.

"Excuse me, son, where were we?"

At the question of Tails' mother, he and Fiona look at each other.

Chapter End Notes
Glossary:

Submarine: A way to make chocolate milk, very common in Argentinean coffee shops, consisting of introducing a chocolate bar in a cup full of hot milk. Because of the heat, together with the action of stirring the milk through the use of a spoon, the chocolate melts and is suspended in the milk. To accommodate the chocolate bar, a special cup is used, which is high and shaped more like a glass, and to stir its contents, a special spoon is used, long enough to enter the glass without completely sinking.

100% Lucha: An Argentine professional wrestling championship, broadcast on television. "The Scotsman" was Mc Floyd, one of the participants.
Chapter 7: The Golden Boy's Chronicles, Part 5.

Chapter Notes

Someone seeks to exterminate Sonic and Tails, so the two-tailed fox will launch a risky plan to overtake the conspirators and unmask them. However, almost nothing is known about them yet, and Tails' involvement in this dangerous game can have terrible and unexpected consequences for him and for his closest friends.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

[In the present...]

"Hi, Tails!" Sonic arrives at the coffee shop and approaches the table where the two-tailed fox is sitting. "What are you doing here?"

"Hello, Sonic." responds Rosemary. "Tails is telling me about some things that happened while me and Amadeus were in space."

"For example, the fight I had with him." The hedgehog mentions. "Yes, lady of the four decades: your son hits very hard."

At Sonic's sayings, Tails is deadly silent, and Fiona decides to do the same.

"What?"

"You just called me lady of the four decades." Says Rosemary, in a sinister voice.

"You have to accept it: you're almost forty years old-"

"You just quoted a song by Arjona."

"Uhh..."

"And I hate the songs of Arjona."

"Continuing the story..." says Tails, nervous and trying to calm the situation. "Sonic and I knew someone wanted to kill us, so we went to confront the robots that were looking for us."

"And you defeated them?" Rosemary asks, relaxing.

"Yes, but when I tried to get information from them, I wasn't very successful..."

[In the past...]

In the meadow near Knothole, there are the remains of two tanks and a missile launcher, wrapped in flames, along with some robots also destroyed. It's 1:00 PM, and a robot is still standing, but Tails falls on him, and then he keeps it stuck to the ground and grabbed the neck.

"I'm gonna be direct: Who do you work for?"
"Activating the security protocol..." says the robot's computerized voice. "Self-destruct in 3..."

"Shit."

Tails flies away from there, and a few seconds later, the robot is destroyed in a big explosion, leaving no trace. Then the fox lands about a hundred meters away, meeting Sonic.

"Have you managed to get some information?"

"No, the robot that was still in one piece self-destroyed. I'll have to grab the destroyed robots whose bodies are still there, and access their memory, but it won't be easy. Whoever wants to see us dead has taken steps to prevent us from knowing who is he or she."

"So... Do you have any plans?"

After thinking for a while, Tails suddenly flies away.

"It seems that he came up with some idea."

Two days later...

It's 8:00 PM, and Tails is in his room/attic, sitting in front of the table in the wall, dimly lit by a lamp on the table. He's drawing a very intricate graphic, using a notepad and a pencil.

At the very moment he finishes drawing, a doorbell rings. Tails picks up a phone that was attached to the wall.

"Who are you?"

"C'est moi, Antoine." Antoine's voice rings on the phone. "Did you call me to come to your workshop, Tails?"

"That's right, come in."

The fox hangs up the phone, and the sound of a door opening on the ground floor is heard. Then, he leaves his room and down the stairs, meeting the coyote.

"Do you remember what we've been talking about this afternoon?"

"Oui, Tails."

"Fine." Tails gives Antoine a small wooden paper envelope, about 5 cm by 5 cm in size. "You already know what to do."

The coyote keeps the envelope in a pocket. "What do you think of my excuse?"

"It will work, Antoine, it will be excellent. In fact, I think you should be a secret agent instead of a soldier."

"A spy? Moi?"

"Why not?"

Tails starts to walk into the kitchen. "Do you wanna dine here?"

"Oui, I'd like to see how good your culinary skills are." Says Antoine, accompanying the fox.
"I assure you I'm better than Sonic in the kitchen." Says Tails, crossing the kitchen door with the young soldier. "And I have better tastes."

"Soit dit en passant, are not you offended when I mention your best friend's negative aspects? For example, his lousy diet based on chili-dogs."

"Antoine, I'm Miles Prower, I'm not Amy Rose. She would crush you with her hammer, turning you into a sort of frisbee, if she heard you say those criticisms about Sonic." The child prodigy approaches one of the stoves, where a salad is being cooked in a wok. "On the other hand, I'm a great friend of him, but I ain't a fanatic of him."

"I think, lately, you've stopped being a great friend of that hedgehog." Says Antoine timidly.

"I guess Sally also told you about my... 'discussion' with him."

"Pour être honnête, I heard it from others. There's even a video on the Internet. But I know that the princesse spread this information in the first place."

A minute later, Tails removes the wok from the stove and takes it to the workshop, while Antoine accompanies him carrying plates and cutlery. When they arrive, both support the wok, the plates and the cutlery on the table, in a space surrounded by remains of machines that include the head of one of the robots destroyed at noon.

Meanwhile, Fiona enters the workshop, meeting with Tails and Antoine.

"Bienvenue, mademoiselle Fox!"

"Hello, Antoine. What are you doing here?"

"Uhh..." The coyote starts to get nervous, and addresses the two-tailed fox. "Tails, didn't you tell Fiona what I'm doing here?"

"Sorry, I forgot to tell her." Says Tails, turning to Fiona. "Antoine comes to help me in the workshop sometimes. He's a good helper, especially when I leave this place full of machinery remnants and he reminds me to make some order." The three of them start laughing.

"Do you wanna eat with us, Fiona?"

"Of course Miles."

An hour later...

Antoine is gone, Tails is trying to access the robot's information, and Fiona is bathing in her house, next to the workshop. The vixen is quiet, under the stream of water from the shower, thinking.

("I think I'm gonna test Miles.")

A minute later, Tails enters Fiona's house.

"Hi, Fiona. I hope I ain't bothering you."

Having heard the sound of the door opening, along with Tails' voice, Fiona comes out of the bathroom to receive him... but she's totally naked, with only a towel on her shoulders.

"WHAT THE F***?!" Tails immediately turns around, leaves the hut and closes the door.
"I'm sorry, Miles!"

"What were you thinking, Fiona ?!" Tails asks from the other side of the door.

"I just wanted to try something!"

"What did you wanna try?! Make me have a heart attack?!"

"It's impossible for you to have a heart attack at age ten, especially if you're in such good physical condition..." In saying the latter, Fiona adopts a... suspiciously seductive tone of voice.

"Fiona?! What's happening?!

"Nothing happens! By the way, I ain't naked anymore, in case you wanna know!"

Tails enters the hut. "I repeat: What's happening here? What's happening to you?"

The red vixen sighs, defeated. "I just wanted to see how you would react if I were naked."

Tails stares at Fiona in silence for a while.

"It's one of the stupidest things I've ever heard in my short life."

"Well... I wouldn't mind if you saw me naked." She says timidly. "Miles, you're smart, nice, and much more mature than I thought..."

Meanwhile, the child prodigy looks at her as if he were saying "I'm tired of you telling me that story".

"There are many things about you that I like..."

"But..." Tails is ahead of what she's going to say.

"But... What? Miles, I try to tell you that I like you, and I know you still like me-"

"NO!" He answers defensively. "I've already told you! There's nothing between us now! Whatever has ever existed between us, my love for you, has been in the past! We're just friends!"

"Tails... Why do you try to deny it? Do you not trust me yet?" She starts to get angry. "You criticized others for treating me badly, for not trusting me, for excluding me. But now you do exactly the same thing as them."

Tails stares at his "friend".

"Well, I'm sorry, dear Fiona, but there are things that are not forgotten as easily as you think."

"What?! Does that mean that all my effort and my change of attitude have been in vain?"

At Fiona's words, the fox simply leaves the house, walking towards his workshop.

"Are you gonna leave me like this, so easily?!" She shouts from the door.

"I have nothing to do with you, nor do I owe you anything!" He answers as he reaches the door of his workshop. "You know what?! If you wanna leave this village and become a criminal again, do it, because I don't care about you anymore!"

When he finishes, Tails opens the door, enters his "house", and closes the door with a strong and
violent blow. In response, Fiona, also angry, closes the door of her house violently.

The next day...

It's 11:00 AM in Knothole, and Sonic runs super-sonic speed from Uncle Chuck's restaurant to his house, leaving all the villagers stunned.

Among them is Bunnie, who meets Sally in the square.

"What happens to Sonic? Did he wake up late, and are he doing his daily exercises now?"

"No, Bunnie, he's just going to the bathroom."

"Well, it seemed very urgent."

"He went to the bathroom twice in a row, staying there for about thirty minutes each time, and he didn't feel well when he left. Now he's going again. Surely he has a serious problem in the intestines."

"Considering what he eats, this doesn't surprise me."

Half an hour later, in the central square, Antoine watches Sonic's house from a distance. The soldier carries a bag hanging from his left shoulder.

Then the blue hedgehog walks slowly, with one hand resting on the lower abdomen; a few seconds later, the hedgehog urgently returns to his house. Seeing the scene, Antoine smiles, holding back his laughter.

("It worked.")

Then the coyote sneaks out of the village.

RING! RING!

At 2:00 PM, in the Tails' workshop, a landline phone rings, with a ringtone similar to that of old phones. There's no one there, so the answering machine is activated.

"Hello, I'm Miles Prower, aka 'Tails'. If I don't answer, it's probably because I'm working on an invention, saving the world, or just sleeping. I'm someone who keeps its word, so leave your message, please; when I can, I'll call you so we can talk. Thank you very much for your patience."

PIIIIP!

Then there's a long silence.

"You have a new message."

PIIIIP!

"Hello, Miles. Yeah, it's me: Fiona. I was thinking about our... 'talk' last night. I admit it: I was wrong when I appeared naked without warning you. I didn't do it with bad intention. I wanted to tell you that-"
"Hi, Miles. It's me, again. I think you should use your expertise to make the answering machine allow me to record longer voice messages. Anyway... I know you didn't like me very much, and I know that you were very emotionally damaged because of what I did to you, but-

"Thank you, stupid phone. Now I have to start all over again. As I told you, Miles, I think you should leave behind what happened between us, you should overcome it. I know it's easier said than done, but I want you to at least think about it. I know you're-

"They should pay me for making these ridiculous calls over and over, because of an answering machine that doesn't give me enough time to talk." Fiona starts talking a little faster. "This is already resembling 'Moonlighting'... I continue: Miles, you saw goodness in me, and you got it right. I firmly believe that there's goodness in you too. Please give me a chance to-"

"You f****** answering machine!" Fiona starts talking much faster. "I'll get to the point, I'll tell you what I think, and it better be clear: I LOVE YOU, and I'll do everything I can to prove it to you. Do you know why I'll do this? The Freedom Fighters treated me badly, and then I gave up and I became an evil mobian. Maybe I'm looking like Amy Rose, but I won't give up or become evil again, even if you treat me badly too."

[Soundtrack: Exercises in free love - Freddie Mercury]

Meanwhile, a two-tailed fox walks among the airplanes, at an airfield near Knothole. He's dressed in a uniform, restored, of the Special Forces.

At a certain point, he stops and stands by a jet, and then puts on a pair of sunglasses, keeping his eyes on the horizon.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

BOOM!

The fuel of the plane next to him is set on fire, blowing up the plane and launching the fox at a great distance. He lies on the runway, moaning in pain; all his clothes and the right side of his body are burned, his face is disfigured, and his sunglasses are broken.

With much effort, the fox stands and looks at the terrace of a nearby building.

BANG! BANG!

Two bullets hit him and pierced his abdomen, causing him to fall to the ground. He starts to lose blood quickly and to writhe in pain.

BANG!

One last bullet enters through his left eye, shattering the lens of that eye, and it crosses his head,
leaving shattered his skull in its posterior part. The fox, downcast, stands motionless in a pool of blood.

"Sonic..."

Sally is in the hospital of Knothole, in the room where is Sonic, who's being attended by a diarrhea. She tries to hold back the tears, while Dr. Quack is at her side.

"What's up, Sally? You don't look well."

"Princess, I'll take care of it." Says the doctor, putting a hand on her shoulder and advancing towards Sonic. "There was an attack on the airfield."

"An attack? Whose?"

"Still not known. But there has been a victim, whose body has just reached the morgue."

Sonic begins to despair, imagining the worst.

"Who's that victim?"

The doctor looks at the floor and swallows.

"You'd better come with me."

Half an hour later, Sally, Bunnie, Rotor, Dr. Quack and Uncle Chuck are gathered around one of the tables of the morgue, watching the corpse of a yellow and white fox child with two tails. The deceased has a bullet hole in the left eye, a large hole behind the head, teeth exposed on his right side by the absence of the cheek on that side, the right eye exposed by the absence of his eyelids, and the right half of his body burned; he's dressed in the remains, also burned, of a Special Forces uniform.

Bunnie, crying disconsolately, retires from the morgue, walking quickly. Meanwhile, Sally stays there, crying but staying calm; Chuck and Rotor look distressed as they look at the fox, and the doctor, accustomed to these situations, remains unperturbed.

"Where's Sonic?" Asks the robian hedgehog.

"I advise you to leave your nephew alone, Sir Charles." Says the doctor duck. "For now, it's the best thing for him."

"No, doctor."

The three of them turn around, seeing Sonic, with a serious face, at the entrance door.

"We will seek the guilty of this."

At the same time, Fiona arrives at the site, standing next to the young hedgehog.

"Sonic, they told me you were here. I'm looking for Miles. Do you know where he might be?"

Sally steps aside, letting Fiona see the corpse. Fiona is speechless.

"Okay... Don't worry about me." The vixen, trying to stay calm, turns and walks down the hallways of the hospital in silence.
A few minutes later, she arrives at the training room. When she's alone and nobody sees her, she wipes the tears from her eyes. Then, Fiona walks towards a boxing bag hanging from the ceiling, and starts to train for relief.

After a minute, she starts to hit the boxing bag much harder, growling as she does, until a punch breaks the hook from which it hangs, causing it to go off and hit the wall, while Fiona really starts crying.

"Do you want me to give you a hug?" Says a voice, similar to Sonic's, but more sinister.

Fiona seems to recognize the voice and, furious, turns to fight, but all she sees is a fist about to hit her face, before losing consciousness.

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:

Ricardo Arjona: singer-songwriter and musician of Latin pop genre, of Guatemalan origin, known for his lyrical style, author of songs that usually address themes of love and various social issues; "Señora de las cuatro décadas" ["Lady of the four decades"] is one of his songs.


Chapter Notes

I know, Dear Reader: the suspense is killing you. Surely you wonder: Who provoked the murder of Tails, the kidnapping of Fiona and the diarrhea of Sonic? Wait a moment: There's a two-tailed fox called Tails telling this story to his mother.

Did he actually die as a victim of that attack, or is it all part of an intricate, complex, twisted plan to apprehend the enemy who might still be lurking?

Don't despair, Dear Reader, because everything will be revealed in due time.

[In the past...]

The next day...

"Fellows: yesterday, one of the most valued and beloved members of our team has been cruelly murdered; shortly after, a village girl formerly related to criminals has disappeared, possibly being kidnapped."

It's 10:30 AM, and Sally is giving a speech in front of a group of mobians in a large hut. Among them are the Freedom Fighters.

"From now on, we won't rest until we identify, locate, capture and prosecute the culprit. So get to work. But be discreet, as we'll reveal the death of our friend Tails when we've resolved this."

"Yes, ma'am!" They all say in unison, going to do their work: investigate and analyze all available information.

"Princess, I'm going to take one of yours to help me in the morgue." Says Dr Quack.

"I offer myself, Votre Altesse." Antoine intervenes.

Sally is beginning to suspect something. "Antoine..."

"It's all right, Princess." Says the duck. "If Antoine really feels ready for this, then let him come with me. What he must do doesn't require too much skill."

Half an hour later, Quack has finished his autopsy report, and is retiring from the morgue. The corpse is in a refrigerator compartment, with the head and chest still out. Antoine is standing in front of the refrigerator.

"You know what to do, Antoine." Says the doctor from the door.

"Oui, monsieur le docteur."

Before fully introducing the corpse into the refrigerator, the coyote, observed by the duck, pulls a small tube out of a pocket, pulls the lid off and rests it against the body. The tube has a strange and
tiny electronic device, which is activated at that time.

Immediately, the corpse begins to drop drops of a kind of liquid metal. The drops run through the surface of the body, fall on the metal surface of the tray where the remains are resting, move directly towards the opening of the tube and enter it. After half a minute, the whole body melts, forming a puddle of liquid metal that flows and enters the tube, where it even compresses itself to fit inside it.

Antoine watches everything that has happened, and when the process is over, he grabs the tube, closes it and stores it back into his pocket. Then he slides the empty tray into the refrigerator and closes the door, withdrawing from the morgue with Dr Quack.

At noon...

"Princess, we have information about Fiona Fox's kidnapping."

Geoffrey St. John heads for Sally, carrying some papers.

"Alright, just tell me the important thing, the details don't matter."

"As you order, Sally. Indeed, she has been kidnapped, and the culprit is Scourge Hedgehog, a rival already known."

"Considering what happened between her and that pig, I'm not surprised." Responds the squirrel.

While Geoffrey and Sally talk, Antoine listens intently. At that point, Sally receives a SMS that she proceeds to read. At the end, the princess returns to address her subordinates.

"I have news for all of you: the Tails' corpse has disappeared mysteriously from the morgue. I want someone to investigate."

At 4:00 PM, Geoffrey re-arranges a meeting with the princess, with the difference that Sonic is with her and the skunk is accompanied by his wife: a female cat named Hershey, with black fur on the body, white fur on the chest and abdomen, and black hair on the head.

"What's new?" The princess asks.

"Sally, Sonic, we'd better talk about this in private." Says Hershey.

Then the four of them leave and go to the Great Forest. Once there, the skunk starts talking.

"We made investigations on our own, about the weapons that killed Tails and about the diarrhea that affected Sonic yesterday."

"Don't remind me, Geoffrey." Says Sonic. "None of both."

"The important thing is that they all have someone in common, who's also the only suspect available." The cat continues.

"Scourge?" Says Sonic.

"This is someone from our team."

"Fiona?" Says Sally.
"No. The Royal Army cadet."

"FRENCHY MOTHERF*****! WHY THE F*** DID YOU DO THAT TO TAILS?!"

Sonic is in his house, where he is being held by Sally, while he tries to beat Antoine, who in turn is tied to a chair.

"Please, Sonic, calm down."

"I will when that guy is dead!"

Meanwhile, Antoine keeps staring at the ground.

"S'il vous plaît, let me explain."

"Explain what?" Asks the squirrel. "What do you have to explain? You betrayed us. It's assumed that as a soldier you should have been the most loyal of all, but all that was just a cover to accomplish your mission: kill Sonic and Tails. Tell me: Who do you work for?"

Antoine sighs.

"Before I tell you, promise me that no one will know who I work for."

"You're in no position to ask for anything."

"Do you really want me to give you information?"

"Okay, we won't tell anyone. Now, talk."

"D'accord. I work for Tails."

Sally and Sonic remain silent, and even Sonic stops moving.

"It's not true." Says Sonic. "Surely it was Moebius' Miles Prower, and you got confused, you useless clown. Besides, why would Tails want someone to kill him? Why would he want you to kill him?"

"Première, vous have more chances than je to confuse a mobian with his Moebian counterpart, stupid hedgehog. Deuxième..."

Antoine tries to scratch his left ear, tilting his head and rubbing his ear against his shoulder, intending to make Sonic nervous. When he finishes, he speaks again.

"Tails is still alive."

The whole place is in absolute silence.

"WHAT?!" Sonic and Saly scream in unison suddenly.

"What you heard: he's still alive."

"Prove it."

"It's hard to do, but I'll do my best to-"

Suddenly, the tube with liquid metal falls out of Antoine's pocket, even though it was placed in such a way that it could only fall off if the coyote was on his head. Then the lid of the tube opens on its
own, and the liquid metal starts to come out and scatter across the floor, while the squirrel and the hedgehog look confused.

"Were you looking for me?"

They both turn around, and find a replica of Tails made of that same strange liquid metal. As soon as he sees it, Sonic grabs a blaster pistol he had on a table and shoots the replica. Because of the shot, "Tails" falls to the ground, but soon rises, showing a huge hole that crosses his head where the right eye, and that hole even makes it possible to see the other side.

"It looks like someone is happy to see me." Says "Tails" sarcastically.

"TAILS!" Sally, excited, embraces him.

"Please, Auntie Sally, I have a lot of work to do, and I wanna clear all your doubts as soon as possible."

"Okay, what does Antoine have to do with all this?" Sonic asks.

"And why did you fake your death?" Adds Sally after disarming the embrace.

"If you are dead, you can not be killed. If I pretended my death, whoever tried to kill me would relax and reveal himself. Something similar applied to Sonic, whom I commanded to poison so that he was out of combat; actually, I didn't do that just to protect him and to catch the culprit, but also so that he didn't interfere with my plans. Regarding Antoine, I chose him to participate in all this: he has put a special poison on Sonic's chili-dogs yesterday morning, while, strategically, Uncle Chuck was 'unavailable' to take care of Sonic's order; in addition, he shot me, or rather, shot this body, which is made of a few nanites and is controlled by me in a remote way. Therefore, I'm responsible for the crimes committed by Antoine, and I ask you, please, don't be so hard on him."

"So..." Sonic starts. "We should tell this to the investigators."

"No, I want them to continue investigating as if I were still dead. Scourge, who's trying to kill me and Sonic, is surely watching us with more of those robots."

"Another question: Why did you involve Antoine?" Sally asks.

"Any of you, especially you and Sonic, would have been the obvious choice, both from Scourge's point of view and from anyone's point of view. I needed someone whom no one suspected, and that was Antoine. For the record, Dr Quack and Uncle Chuck are also involved in this."

"What?! Did you involve the most important doctor in the village, and also involved my uncle?"

"Alright, let's calm down." The squirrel tries to intervene. "Tails, could you tell us where you are?"

"I'll not say it, and those who know about my plan won't say it, no matter how much you try to get that information. Now, if you'll excuse me, this nanite replica will return to the morgue to play its role of 'poor dead child'. So you'll not be able to prove that I'm alive, and my secret will be kept safe, so I can give the mortal blow to Scourge. Au revoir, mes amis."

When "Tails" finishes speaking, its body melts, the liquid metal rises and remains suspended in the air as if it were the humidity, and then it comes out the window to fly to the hospital.

"Scourge will kill him." Says Sonic. "And if not, Fiona will betray him."
"It seems Tails also has a great ability to learn and speak foreign languages." Says Antoine, getting looks from Sonic and Sally.

"Sonic, Votre Altesse: Tails is intelligent, he knows what he does. It's always so."

Furville aerodrome, 5:00 PM.

Tails is in an empty control tower, sitting in a comfortable armchair, watching the way the sun is hiding on the horizon.

Chuck climbs up the elevator and walks toward the fox.

"Chuck, I have to warn you that Sonic and Sally have discovered us, but they don't know where we are and they won't bother us." Tails says, sitting on his back.

"I get it. I have the information collected so far."

"Tell me."

"Fiona has been kidnapped by Scourge shortly after you feigned your death."

The news makes the two-tailed fox clench his fists on the arms of the chair.

"I also have information on what happened. I hope it will help you find him."

Then Chuck leaves the room. When he's alone, Tails, choleric, rises from the chair suddenly, grabs a bottle and throws it against the wall, breaking the bottle into thousands of pieces; then he grabs a stack of papers left on the table by Chuck, and he starts to read them.

Somewhere in the Great Forest. 5:30 PM.

Fiona is lying on her back on a table in a cave in the Great Forest. Her clothes are broken and lying on the floor, and her naked body is badly beaten and mistreated.

"I hope you learned the lesson, doll."

Scourge approaches her, burying his snout between her breasts. Fiona seems unconscious, but drops a tear.

"No matter what you do to me..." she says faintly. "I'll never love you."

"Yeah, I know what you mean..." Scourge walks away from her. "Robotnik, who was once a regular customer of mine, told me a story... When you were ten, you were a prisoner of his, and he used you to make a robot, an Auto-Automaton with the same body and mental patterns as you. Five years later, the good doctor used it to seduce and kill that kid who calls himself Tails."

"Wow... At last you understand and use technical vocabulary." Says Fiona with feigned astonishment.

"According to what remained of the records of that robot, 'she' not only failed, but also showed some... repentance, because of what happened. In the end, by copying your mental patterns, 'she' also fell in love with Tails, and when the trap failed, 'she' let out something like a tear."

Scourge puts his hand in Fiona's crotch, caressing her, while Fiona tries to resist, although the effects
of certain drugs make her unable to resist too much.

"When we started our relationship, I thought that wouldn't give me problems. However, now you've met him again, and you really fell in love with him. So now you're forcing me to do you very bad things to make you decide to leave that little mutant a f***** time."

Scourge pulls off his leather jacket and squeezes his body close to Fiona's body.

"To be honest, you've always done bad things to me, Scourge. What difference is there now? On the other hand, as I told you before: no matter how much or how you rape me, I'll always love Miles Prower, the Miles Prower who calls himself 'Tails'... even though he's dead."

"In that case, I'll have to rape you now, and then I'll have to kill you. Don't worry, you'll die quickly, and you'll see your beloved nerd in the afterlife- AAAAAARRRGH!"

Suddenly, the green hedgehog feels something metallic leaning on his shoulder and grasping it tightly to cause pain. Then, that same thing throws him against a wall of the cave, causing his head to hit the stone surface directly.

Scourge, who's still alive and conscious but is aching, falls to the ground, and then rises. When he sees what happened, he encounters Tails, who's again dressed in his father's restored uniform, wears sunglasses, has his two tails covered by his metal mesh, and also wears the parts of his armor corresponding to the chest, the upper back, the hands and forearms, and the feet and lower legs.

Meanwhile, Fiona lifts her head a little and, upon seeing Tails, manages to make a small smile.

"I'm sorry to be interrupting you this way, Scourge, but I still have plans in this world. For example, to become your worst nightmare."

"Wow, how terrifying... Who do you think you are? A modern version of the Tin Man?"

"Well, my only difference with him would be that I have a built-in heart. Which makes me think of this: considering that you apparently have no heart, would not you be someone more similar to him?"

Scourge stands up and advances slowly towards Tails, but the fox doesn't react.

"I know that I'm soulless according to you, Super-Gay, but I've suffered a lot too, I suppose you already know that my father was lousy in the performance of his duties. I deserve the same consideration you're giving Fiona, don't you think?"

Scourge stops in front of the fox, crouching a little and looking at him with "puppy eyes", but Tails, suddenly and without relaxing his face, gives the hedgehog a head blow, causing his nose to bleed and throwing him to the ground.

"You killed for pleasure, you lied to your girlfriend, you raped women, you collaborated with Robotnik... Those are unforgivable crimes. No matter you had a tough childhood."

The hedgehog growls angrily as he gets up, then starts to back away.

"Are you done, kid?"

"Of course not! I just started. What if you give me a demonstration of your strength?"

The hedgehog continues to walk slowly backwards, until he stops at a particular place.
BOOM!

There's an explosion of energy that, although not lethal, pushes Tails back. When he looks at his rival again, he sees that he has become Super Scourge.

"Do you wanna fight?! Then you'll get it, fagot!"

Scourge, laughing hystically, flies toward Tails, but the fox also flies off and crashes directly into the hedgehog's chest, taking him by surprise and pushing him against the wall. Then, Scourge strikes with each fist, but Tails successfully stops both hits and he takes the opportunity to jump and hit his chin with his knee, breaking a tooth. After spitting the broken dental piece, the hedgehog creates and throws several Anarchy energy lances, but Tails stops them with a Chaos energy shield and remains unharmed, while Scourge looks amazed and increasingly enraged.

"Perhaps, you're the most powerful with the Anarchy energy in your world. But in my world, the most powerful with Chaos energy ain't your counterpart Sonic, but me."

Screaming madly, the green hedgehog generates a large ball of energy and spear it towards Tails; the shield manages to repel him, but then he loses this shield. In response, the child prodigy unfolds the repulsor cannon of his chest and fires a beam with great amount of Chaos energy; Scourge creates a shield with Anarchy energy, but this one is penetrated by the beam, that strikes the hedgehog and throws to him backwards and upwards, causing that he strikes the ceiling and soon lands.

Tails advances towards his rival, but Scourge makes a Spin-Dash and hits Tails, pressing him against the wall and starting to spin swiftly to cut his armor and kill him once and for all. Then the fox sarts to make his own Spin-Dash, and in doing so, his two tails, covered with their metallic mesh and powered by the Chaos energy, cut Scourge's thorns and begin to damage the skin on his back, although the hedgehog should theoretically be invulnerable in his Super form.

Scourge backs and stops spinning. His back is aching and bleeding, but he soon recovers.

"Okay, I admit it, you're a great fighter."

"I appreciate that comment on your part."

"Anyway, there's something I forgot to mention."

"Let me guess: Did you transform yourself with Anarchy Beryls of lesser quality, and still have Beryls of a better quality, which would give you enough strength to kill me with very little effort?"

"No, I must admit that your artificial Super transformation makes you very strong. I mean something else: when you arrived, I had done many things with Fiona... if you know what I mean."

Tails stares at Scourge while his fists begin to close and his body starts to shake with rage.

"In fact, I enjoyed it a lot. Fiona didn't feel very comfortable, but she will soon get used to it."

Then, Tails gets rid of almost all of his armor, except for the part corresponding to his right foot. He also removes the gloves he had in his hands, under his armor. Then he removes the sunglasses, the military cap (for some strange reason, neither of them has any damage) and the leather jacket, leaving only his pants. His bare eyes glance with measureless fury, and his exposed body shines because his potential Chaos energy has just been used.

"What are you gonna do now? Fighting without weapons to prove your strength? I'm Super Scourge, and you're nothing now."
Despite Scourge's words, Tails starts to walk at a steady pace toward him.

"Do you still wanna fight? Whatever..."

Scourge creates and throws an Anarchy spear. Then, Tails kicks with his right foot, and the piece of his armor on his foot creates a small shield that stops the spear. Then, without giving rest to Scourge, Tails throws himself towards his rival with a war cry and gives him another kick with his left foot, barefoot. The blow, which hits the pit of the stomach, turns out to be stronger than the super-powerful villain expected, which leaves him surprised and off guard; the fox, taking advantage of this, turns and uses his two tails to cut the chest of Scourge, and the wounds in his chest open again and start to bleed. Then, before the wounds heal thanks to the Anarchy energy, Tails begins to give several and very strong punches to the hedgehog: hooks, blows to the pit of the stomach and to the ribs, blows from below and towards the chin, direct blows to the nose. Thanks to the extra strength provided by the Chaos energy that still emanates from his body, the blows outweigh Scourge's invulnerability, so his mouth starts to bleed, and his nose also starts to do so again.

Choleric and in a frenzy, Tails begins to strike with all his force, while also shouts and growls. Finally, a blow to the chin not only breaks several teeth, but also causes the Anarchy Beryls to leave Scourge's body.

The hedgehog, heavily beaten, weakened and bleeding, falls to the ground and barely manages to keep his eyes open, while Tails stares at him.

"Go ahead, kill me." Scourge babbles.

Penitentiary for Interdimensional Criminals, under the control of the Zone Cops Corps. Parallel Universe of the "Prison Zone".

The guards are guarding the cells, while Officer Zonic appears there, checking that everything is in order.

Then, everyone is surprised when a portal opens into an empty cell. the body of a faint Scourge enters through this portal, and when the portal closes, the hedgehog remains locked up.

Chapter Notes

And finally we come to the end of these exciting chronicles, and we'll know how this perfect relationship of Tails and Fiona really began.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

[In the present...]

"That's how I defeated Scourge for the first time. Fin."

It's 11:30 AM, and Tails is sitting at the cafe bar, along with Rosemary and Fiona. But now there are several other mobians who had come up to hear about the two-tailed fox fight with Sonic's dangerous moebian counterpart. Fiona had gathered all these people together, and Tails began to tell them what he did: pretend his death, find Scourge and defeat him. However, he didn't tell the whole story: he had adapted the story, omitting the "sensitive" details, such as the description of the damage received by his "pseudo-corpse" made of nanites, and tried to minimize Fiona's intervention in the facts, so that no one suspected the bond between them. Now, they're applauding and cheering on Tails, while Sonic looks at them from afar, pretending to be jealous.

Among them is Amadeus, along with a male mobian raccoon with gray and black fur. He's the first lieutenant Leonidas Procion, member of the Royal Guard; he was a former student of Amadeus, and he's now one of his most loyal officers.

"Wow, it's incredible." Says Procion. "You and your wife had an amazing son, Colonel."

"You're absolutely right, old friend. We never thought this would happen." His leader answers.

There's also Cream, a mobian rabbit girl, with light-pink fur on a large part of her body, orange hair on her head and the tips of her ears, and a red dress with a light-blue ribbon tied around her neck. Being a friend of the KFFs, she's usually close to Sonic and also to Tails, whom she seems to be following for quite some time; now, she's staring at the fox, her head resting on one hand, amazed by his story. She's accompanied by her best friend, a Chao named Cheese.

Tails then steps out of the chair and walks away with Fiona. Rosemary also stands and walks toward them.

"Wait, are not you going to tell me... that?" She says quietly.

"What, Mom?"

"You know... How you two started to be together."

"Sorry, Mom, but I can't tell you. It's..."

"Okay, okay, I get it: a National Security Matter. I know what you mean."

With the conversation over, the young couple, holding hands, moves away from the coffe shop. When they're already far away, Fiona suddenly embraces her boyfriend and starts frantically kissing
"Wait, Fiona! What's up?!" He asks, causing Fiona to stop kissing him.

"After hearing your story about how you defeated that green idiot, I was so eager to kiss you..." Then she gives him a French kiss, while he keeps his eyes narrowed and his gaze skyward.

Finally, the vixen breaks the kiss.

"Anyway, Fiona, I was late that time."

"Miles, why do you keep torturing yourself with that?"

[Back to the past...]

After launching (literally) Scourge into the Prison Zone, Tails runs to Fiona to take care of her. Although to see her naked doesn't impress him, he proceeds with caution anyway. However, what impresses the little fox is how injured she is: not only is it full of bruises, but also has some cuts on the body and marks of strong bites on the neck and breasts, and even her intimate area drops a few drops of blood.

"What did that monster do to you?" Tails is said to himself, who then grabs his cell phone and sends an SMS to Dr Quack and Uncle Chuck.

I'm Tails. Urgent. I found Fiona. She was raped and now she's very, very hurt. Have someone trace signal of my cell phone, and come here to take her to hospital.

Scourge regains consciousness and looks around. Realizing his situation, he starts to despair and scream.

Meanwhile, outside the cell, a portal opens in front of Zonic; on the other side of the portal, is Tails.

"You did a great job." Says Sonic's counterpart in the Zone Cops Corps. "It would be great to have someone like you as a member of this team."

"Believe me, Zonic: you wouldn't want it. I'm good at what I do, but I ain't used to teamwork, although I ain't totally incapable of doing it; in addition, I can be excessively violent, which can be demonstrated by the same Scourge."

"Heeeeey! Get me out of here!" The new inmate screams, attracting the attention of Tails, who crosses the portal and walks towards the cell. Now, Tails and the defeated Scourge stand facing each other, having in the middle a force field that keeps the criminal effectively locked.

"You'd better get used to staying in this cell."

"What if I don't? And what if I escape, as I always do?"

"In that case, I'll deal with you again. And if that happens, rape in prison showers will be the least of your problems."

"Do you really think you're so threatening?"

"After the fight we had a moment ago, you should believe what I say."
"I know you're still a scared kid inside."

"I don't believe in those things about the 'inner child'. But if this is indeed as you say, that 'scared inner child' is surely already atrophied. During all this time, you believed that your rival par excellence, your primary objective, was Sonic, your benign counterpart. Now you must get used to this new reality: I'm better than Sonic and, by extension, I'm better than you too; I have intelligence and I have Chaos powers, and I also have the ability to bring to light the good side of people, so that I can convince them to support me; in practice, that combination makes me invincible and unstoppable. If you want, you can ignore me and underestimate me, but I know you'll soon have nightmares about me."

Tails returns to Mobius through the portal, generated by a Warp Ring, appearing in a service room of Knothole Hospital. When he finishes traversing it, the portal closes, and Tails grabs the ring again. He then leaves the service room and heads to one of the patient rooms. When he opens the door, he meets Fiona, who is resting in a hospital bed. The clock on the wall indicates that it is 10:30 AM.

"I was too late, Fiona." He says, although Fiona doesn't react. "I've not given you the treatment you deserve, nor have I been able to save you from Scourge. I'm no longer worthy of you."

He, crestfallen, withdraws from the room. Then, Fiona opens her eyes and looks at the window, following with her eyes the two-tailed fox, who's walking down the aisle.

Two weeks later...

It's 9:30 PM, and Tails is walking the streets of Knothole, dressed in a green jacket, with his hands in his pockets, and a schoolbag on his back. While walking, he's seen by Cream and Cheese, who were watching a group of fireflies.

"Hello, Tails." Says Cream, in a cheerful and polite way. "How are you today?"

Tails walks towards the little rabbit to hear it. "I'm fine, Cream, and you?"

"I'm fine too, thank you."

"Chao! Chao! Chao!" Cheese tells the girl, who seems to understand him perfectly.

"Good idea, Cheese. Do you want to come to my house, Tails? Mom made cookies, and there are still some of them left."

"Thank you for the invitation, Cream, but I was planning to go visit someone else. Maybe I could visit you and Vanilla some other time." The fox turns and walks away.

"Okay, Tails." She answers in a less cheerful tone. "See you."

"See you, Cream! Goodbye, Cheese!"

"Chao! Chao!"

The child prodigy resumes his advance, heading to Fiona's house, while remembering what happened during the last two weeks...

About two days after being rescued by Tails, Fiona had been discharged from the hospital, but was held at her home for a week, starting to sneak out of her home sporadically in the days that followed.
All this time, his friendship with Tails resumed, and he brought her several things; however, he continued to stay on the sidelines in some way, trying to make the relationship between her and him a friendship only. Meanwhile, she was left with her body totally clear of any infection.

Despite this, he's now facing a harsh reality: he still likes Fiona, albeit against his will; in fact, right now, in his schoolbag, he's carrying a box of chocolates bought in a store. On the other hand, there's something that prevents him from advancing in their relationship, but it's not lack of trust in Fiona, but a problem that, according to Tails, is present in himself.

Slowly but surely, his relationship with the other KFFs is improving. He apologized to Sonic for having feigned his death and for having forced him to live something so traumatic. The fox became responsible for the actions of Antoine, Dr Quack and Uncle Chuck, so there was no reprisal against them, and the relationship of the old robian hedgehog with his nephew wasn't harmed at all. He also apologized to Sally and made peace with her, but remarked that, from now on, she shouldn't exclude Fiona or anyone else in the way she did; anyway, it was soon apparent that the squirrel wasn't going to change: in a very nasty prank that Sonic played to Antoine, it was evident to the fox that the princess had been an accomplice, since she knew what was going to happen but didn't warn the coyote nor tried to stop Sonic.

Speaking of Sonic and Sally, they had finally resumed their relationship, although they tried to keep it secret so they could live peacefully (anyway, everyone knew about this soon enough, though they pretended not to know); Tails contributed to this, as he followed Fiona's advice and began telling his "big brother" about his problems, which led to Sonic vowing to treat his "younger brother" as an equal, to recognize his qualities when Sonic talks about him, not to get involved in Tails' romantic relationships (by mentioning this topic, Sonic began to speculate that Tails would start dating Fiona, but he categorically denied it) and to try to win Sally's love. In this way, the problem of "Sonic the Womanizer" was solved, and now Tails really expects this to continue, because if the hedgehog returned to his old ways, the fox would be forced to use his tails to behead him.

Regarding the robots that tried to kill them both, it was a group of "Metal Scourge" robots: robots that mimicked the appearance and skills of the infamous hedgehog. They had been created by Robotnik shortly before his regime fell, just as previously had been created the "Metal Sonic" robots to replicate the powers of his heroic archenemy; later, with Robotnik already defeated, they were appropriated by Scourge himself, and when he had his "makeover", they were re-designed to look similar to him.

Finally, Tails arrives at Fiona's hut, next to his workshop.

KNOCK KNOCK

"Who are you?!"

"It's me, Tails!"

For a few seconds, nothing is heard from inside the house.

"Come in!"

Obeying the call, Tails enters the house, meeting with Fiona, who is dressed in a bathrobe.

"Hope I didn't come at a bad time."

"Don't worry, Miles. What brings you here?"

"I just wanted to give you something." Tails then pulls the schoolbag from his back, opens it, pulls
out a box of chocolates and gives it to Fiona.

"For me?" Fiona starts to blush. "Uhm... Thank you, Miles. Anyway, I didn't need this..." She grabs the box and opens it. "Do you want one?"

"No thanks, I've already eaten."

Fiona lies down on the sofa and begins to eat the chocolates. "I saw Cream knocking at the door of your workshop."

"Yes, she's very aware of me lately. Apparently, she likes me, but I don't like her."

"Why?"

"She's too polite, too refined, and I would prefer a girl with whom I can establish a relationship that is more... How to say it?"

"Mature?"

"Yes, that word might serve."

Tails sits down on an armchair, next to the sofa where Fiona is lying down, and stares at her as she slowly eats the chocolates. She notices his gaze.

"Miles, I have a question: Why do you do this? I mean the chocolates, the things you bring to me every day."

"I just wanna give you things. Is there anything wrong with doing it?"

"Miles... Do you like me?"

"Fiona, I told you before: I love you very much, but only as a friend. I don't want-"

"You don't want me to repeat what happened between us before, I understand it. But it's very obvious now, Miles. Please tell me. Tell me what's the real reason you bring me these chocolates. Tell me why you don't date a girl like Cream, who's nice and better than me and who also likes you. Tell me why you defended me all this time, why you rescued me."

"I already told you, Fiona: I do my duty." As he answers, Tails remains unperturbed.

"Duty doesn't necessarily force you to look after a particular individual in such a way."

At Fiona's words, the two-tailed fox fails to respond.

"Do you like me, but you still don't trust me? If so, I understand. I know that I did many bad things that, perhaps, I can never compensate for..."

Fiona leaves the chocolates on a small table, near the sofa, and then keeps her gaze toward the floor next to her, avoiding looking at her friend.

"I'm... I'm sorry for what I did, really. I'm sorry... to have taken advantage of your feelings... to have become a criminal... to have ignored you and your abilities... to have treated you like a child... to have hit you..."

Fiona's lower lip begins to tremble involuntarily, which causes Tails to approach her and put a hand on her shoulder. Then, the vixen looks at Tails, showing her eyes full of tears but trying to contain
them at all costs.

"I love you, Miles, I have to admit. I love you, literally. I'm a shit, but I wanna correct that. I wish we could have a relationship, even if it's a disaster in the end. All I want is... is to be with you. I was wrong about you, now I see who you really are, and I like you, and... and..."

Before she can finish speaking, Fiona can't take it anymore and lets her head fall, while she lets a few tears fall from her eyes. Tails puts his hand on Fiona's chin and makes her look at her again.

[Soundtrack: *My way* – Claude François, Jacques Revaux & Paul Anka, version of Fausto Papetti]

What happens next leaves the vixen in shock. When she comes to herself, she realizes what has happened: Tails had kissed her directly on the lips. It was a small kiss, the prodigious child's lips were barely in contact with Fiona's, but it was a long-lasting kiss. Now Fiona has her eyes wide open and is blushing intensely; meanwhile, Tails looks at her, smiling, giving her confidence.

"I think I should apologize for what I did. I treated you very badly, in a way you didn't deserve, until Scourge kidnapped you and raped you. When that happened, I realized my mistake, and I also realized that I had been selfish in faking my death; however, I think I was a coward, because I could never tell you this in these two weeks. I thought that if I did, I would look like a hypocrite and you would hate me. Now I see that you also blamed yourself for certain things and you were in a situation similar to mine."

Now Fiona is even more incredulous.

"But... How do you know that I'm telling you the truth? How do you know I ain't manipulating you again?"

"If you had, you would have thrown yourself at my feet, begging for forgiveness, in a sudden and rather theatrical way. Instead, you tried to hold back the tears, unconsciously seeking to keep your image as a 'bad girl', and you weren't very sure of telling me what you really felt. Anyway... It's me who's actually to blame."

"Don't say that, Miles..." Fiona hugs him tightly, wrapping her arms around his neck, and Tails wraps his arms around her waist. "If I hadn't played with your feelings the way I did, this would never have happened..." She starts to cry again.

"Okay, cry all you need, there's nothing wrong with that. No one will know." Tails says, using a soft tone and speaking directly in her ear. "You're forgiven for whatever you've done."

"I love you, Miles." She babbles.

"I love you too, Fiona." Says Tails, while he also drops a tear.

Then Fiona separates from Tails, and then gives him a big, passionate kiss. Tails, who seems to be living the happiest moment of her life, kisses her with great passion as well, and both remain so for a long time.

It's 9:00 AM, the dawn light comes in through the window and illuminates everything. Both of them, just awake, are resting on the sofa, hugging each other. Tails has wrapped his two thick tails around Fiona, who rubs her face against them and uses them as a cushion, emitting something like a purr.

"You're so adorable when you do that..."
Then, the vixen breaks the silence.

"My friends told me about an occasion when Mogul captured you to use your body's Chaos energy, while you were transformed into Turbo Tails; so, to prevent that plan from being ruined, he used his magic to create a replica to replace you."

"Yes, it was true. I was thinking about a lot of things while I was a prisoner, even though I appeared to be unconscious. One of the things I thought of was you."

"Yeah, and I didn't go to see if you were okay when you got away from there."

"It wasn't your fault, Fiona. You weren't interested in me, and you weren't obliged to worry about my welfare. Actually, no one, at any time, is obliged to think of anyone determined; you're always free to worry about who you want."

"Anyway, I still feel guilty. You did so many things, you got so far, you're still capable of doing many things... Hell, you even help in workshops, making and baking mud bricks, working the molten glass to make windows, goblets and such things... And however, I favored Sonic, first, and that green monster, later."

"But now we're together, we've reconciled, you've changed, I've also changed... That's all that matters now. And speaking of what you had changed: I spoke with João Falcão, the President of Station Square, and I managed to move some threads so that they still don't put a price on your head. Surely, they won't wanna do it anymore if you help with Freedom Fighters missions or if you help GUN's division in Station Square."

"Thank you, Miles."

"You're welcome. Oh, and there's one more thing I wanna tell you: I plan to travel to Westopolis, in the United Federation. I was invited to collaborate in a joint investigation of GUN's Criminology Labs and the Spagonia University, about Moebius and the nature of its inhabitants; I'll bring a DNA sample that I took from Scourge, to assist in the investigation, and information provided by the Zone Cops, so that GUN can learn more about him."

"Well, hope you have a good trip."

"Actually, I was planning to invite you to travel with me."

Fiona, surprised and excited, stands up suddenly, sitting on the bed. "Are you talking seriously?"

"Of course, Fiona, do you wanna come with me?"

"Obviously, Miles!" She hugs him very hard.

"Okay, Fiona... I get it. I know you're very excited, but..."

"But what?" She asks, worried, undoing the hug.

"I'll meet with scientists, professors, people from the University... In short, people who know a lot. Will not you be bored?"

"Don't worry. For some reason I'm a doctor, and I also know about other sciences. I've needed to study to achieve this, so I'll surely understand them."

"Some ain't very sociable, nor are they extroverts, nor do they have a normal personality. There are
also people belonging to the Police, and maybe you don't feel comfortable."

"I'm already with a nerd, an especially strange nerd, so I'll probably relate very well to the scientists. Maybe we can also be an encouraging presence, being the living proof that a nerd can have a solid and serious romantic relationship with someone. Besides, I know you'll make me look good in front of the cops."

Tails, smiling, gets out of bed, picks up a CD she had given Fiona, and puts it on the music player, going back to bed with her girlfriend afterwards.

"Do you wanna listen to some music?"

[Soundtrack: The golden boy – Freddie Mercury & Montserrat Caballé]

[In the present...]

It's 3:00 PM in New Mobotropolis. Fiona is reminiscing the beginning of her relationship with Tails as they both walk into the two-tailed fox's workshop.

They go in there, and when they close the door, Tails watches that no one is listening or spying, and whispers to his girlfriend.

"Fiona, do you feel like... doing it?"

"Why not?"

Half an hour later ...

Cream walks toward Tails's workshop and starts to hear suspicious noises.

Slowly and silently, the little rabbit opens the door a little...

And she's shocked by what she see.

"TAILS!"

The two foxes, scared, look at the door and see Cream, who, shocked, frightened and angry at the same time, is looking at them.

"Cream!" They shout in unison.

"What are you doing here?" Tails asks.

"What are you two doing?! That's wrong!"

Fiona tries to intervene. "Cream, we can explain. This is the same thing Vanilla surely did to create you... unless she's the Virgin Mary."

"SHUT UP! And how dare you talk about my mom like that?! I'll tell her about all this, and she will take care of giving you your due!"

"Hey! The only mom who can tell me what to do is my mom!" Says Tails defiantly. "Vanilla has no right!"
"Then I'll tell Sonic and Sally and everyone else in this city." Having said that, Cream runs away.

"F***." Tails and Fiona say in unison.

Chapter End Notes

So... In this chapter, Fiona takes two weeks to fully recover from having been raped by Scourge. I hope I have portrayed Fiona well and have not offended anyone.

Although, on the other hand--

Random reader with totally justified wrath: "WHAT THE F*** IS WRONG WITH YOUR F***ING MIND, U F***ING PAEDOPHILE?! YOU HAVE NO F***ING SHAME, DO NOT YOU?!

Yes, I realize the implications of this. I'm against paedophilia, of course; but for me, paedophilia is someone eight years old with someone twenty-five years old, for example. And speaking of hypocrisy: TailsXRouge would be paedophilia, especially if we consider the videogames' universe, where Tails is eight years old (and don't deny Rouge is about twenty-five, it's painfully obvious), but that shipp is much more supported than TailsXFiona, and no one is scandalized by it.

By the way, surely y'all have already noticed the insinuations Rouge makes to Tails throughout this fanfic series. Don't worry, there's nothing between them, there never was and never will be. In my fanfics, Rouge likes to play pranks, even if they're really annoying; before, Tails felt embarrassed with the jokes (What kid would not?), but now they don't affect him in the least and he answers her in an equally joking tone or just ignores her.

By the way (again), in "Sonic X", Rouge defeated Tails in a wrestling tournament by using something that could easily be called "seduction", and yet that in the end meant nothing; of course, that didn't stop the most insane pervs (that is, a considerable majority of Sonic fans) from shipping them.

Anyway, someone 11 or 12 years old having sex with someone 16 or 17 years old would be very, very troubling, even if it weren't illegal. Later in this fanfic series, I'll address the consequences of this.
Chapter 8: The Forty Tridents' Revenge.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the AFFs will seek to defeat Eggman by... How to say it? "Questionable" methods. Surely the other members of the KFFs are going to put the cry in the sky because of this.

Three days later...

In Central City, from a television studio, Channel 12's noon newscast is being broadcast. At 1:30 pm, the TV presenter interrupts his monologue to hear something through his earphone, and then he talks back to the camera.

"We have breaking news: King Maximilian has abdicated the throne in the Kingdom of Acorn. Apparently, the Court in that country was already planning to force him to do so: the Royal Army's leader during the Great War, General Armand D'Coolette, had declared before the Federal Supreme Court of our country about crimes against humanity and violations of International Law committed during that conflict, and he accused King Max of being the mastermind of these crimes and inciting the soldiers to commit them; on the other hand, it was discovered that the leader of Acorn unofficially ordered the use of firearms in some anti-aerial defenses of the western border, violating the prohibition that he himself kept in force. Regarding the succession of the throne, Elias, the Crown Prince, returned from a journey through the territory of his Kingdom and decided to accept the title of King, so he will be crowned today at 1:00 pm, New Mobotropolis Hour, which would be equivalent to 6:00 pm in this city."

The TV presenter goes back to hearing something through his earphone, and then he resumes his story.

"They just notified us that there was an attack on Prison Island, where General D'Coolette had been locked up after being sentenced to life imprisonment. Apparently, there was a big explosion in the section where this prisoner's cell was, and he could have died by the explosion's force, even if he has been robotized. Work is underway to clear the rubble, to find and identify the deceased, and to rescue and care for the survivors, who will be transferred to another prison, possibly the Elba Island Prison, near Spagonia."

Another four days later...

It's 2:30 pm, and the Egg-Fleet is attempting to destroy New Mobotropolis, but the city remains intact, thanks to its protection by a dome-shaped shield. Meanwhile, a small but powerful fleet of GUN’s air destroyers are attacking the ships, increasingly weakening the Egg-Fleet.

However, their crew are not humans, but mobians: on the bridge of command of one of these ships are Colonel Prower, who leads the defense of the city, and Elias Acorn, who was recently crowned King and now watches the battle's progress.

"Colonel, you are doing an excellent job, as always. The Kingdom will forever be grateful to you."
"I think you and that super-advanced computer program deserve that thanks more than I deserve it, Your Majesty. Had it not been for his decision to lift the prohibition on the use of firearms, none of this would have been achieved, nor would we be alive if that machine had not come up with the idea of building this city."

"Excuse me, Colonel...." Procion, first officer of the Colonel in the ship, intervenes. "But the computer program you're referring to has a name: NICOLE. Maybe you have seen her."

"Was the lynx woman in violet dress a computer program? I thought she was real."

In the distance, as the Colonel, his first officer and the King converse, two GUN's fighters, purchased by the Kingdom of Acorn and now piloted by Fiona and Rosemary, attack an Egg-Cruiser and destroy it in a massive explosion.

"Anyway..." says Elias. "I couldn't have lifted the ban if you hadn't convinced the courtiers of the Kingdom. Changing topic: by chance, do you know where my sister and her team are?"

"They're on a mission. They told me that in order for them to succeed, they needed me only to defend the city and not get involved in that mission. That's all I know. I trust they're doing the right thing."

Meanwhile, at Robotropolis...

"Tails, are you really sure about this?"

"Trust me, Auntie Sally. We'll release all Robians from this city."

Sally, Antoine and Bunnie are advancing down an alley, each with their guns drawn. Bunnie has both her arm plasma cannon and her martial arts stick ready, Antoine carries his saber and bow and arrows, and the princess, who was communicating with Tails, is armed with Blade-Rings: special blue rings that she carries on her wrists as if they were bracelets and that deploy power blades when activated.

"I think you two have something to talk about." Bunnie says.

"What do you mean, Bunnie?" Sally asks.

"I think she refers to what the Source of All had predicted." Antoine replies.

"There's nothing to talk about, Antoine. I'll not obey that order, and I know you wouldn't wanna do it either."

"D'accord, if Votre Altesse says so..."

The trio continues to advance in an uncomfortable silence.

"I think I couldn't apologize to you the last time we met, when you left with Tails' team."

"No problem, Princesse. I acted wrong, I admit it."

"I also acted wrong, Antoine. In fact..." Sally says, timidly. "I have come to think that you... that you were homosexual, a repressed homosexual."

Again, the silence falls on the three mobians.
"Antoine..." Sally puts a hand on the swordsman's shoulder. "Something wrong? I hope I've not offended you."

"Ne t'inquiète pas, I'm not offended. In fact, although the fact that we're in the middle of a mission prevents me from expressing this freely, I assure you that I'm laughing out loud inside myself." He smirks, trying not to laugh to keep himself silent.

"Ant, I'm serious." Sally says, annoying. "I even came to believe that you would get Sonic and that he would become your boyfriend someday."

Then, Antoine stares at nothingness.

"You know what, Bunnie? I think I'm pissing now because of laughter." He says, still keeping his smile and trying not to make noise. Bunnie bites her lower lip and looks up at the sky, and Sally rolls her eyes.

"Sally..."

Antoine looks directly at the princess' eyes. This takes her by surprise: Antoine is no longer using protocol.

"Taking into account the current situation, I'm obliged to give you some advice: s'il vous plaît, go to a psychologist."

"Yeah, I know... I've already heard people give me that advice before. They told me a thousand times."

"It's been a week, and I still can't believe it: Did you really have sex with Fiona for almost a year, and you didn't let me know it?"

In another alley, Sonic and Tails are walking. The latter is wearing his ATA suit.

"Why should I tell you about my private life?"

"Did you really start having sex when you were ten?"

"Correction: It was only two months before I was eleven."

"And do you really have anal sex with her?"

"Hey! We both enjoy it, and we use everything we need so that neither of us is hurt or infected with anything."

"Well... Congrats, my friend."

"You were indignant a few seconds ago, and now you congratulate me. Can you decide at once which opinion you'll adopt, please?"

"Take it easy, Tails. No need to get angry."

"You say it as if I could avoid it."

"Returning to the topic: you should thank me and the team."

"Why?"
"Cream and Vanilla tried to marginalize you, because of to start having sex at such a low age and having anal sex; however, we've not marginalized you."

Tails remains silent, until...

"DOWN!"

The fox pushes Sonic to the ground, then he takes off just before a rain of laser shots passes by where they were standing. Tails ascends, sees from the sky a group of SWAT-bots that are advancing down the alley, and destroys them with their repulsor guns, coming down to earth later.

"We must move faster, Sonic." He says, while helping the hedgehog to rise from the ground.

"But what's the hurry?"

"Just do what I tell you. I have a plan, and that plan now requires us to hurry."

"You wanna go faster, huh? Well, I challenge you to a race: my super-speed versus your technology."

In response, Tails gets rid of the ATA suit, which takes flight and stays close to the two mobians, with weapons prepared to protect them, as if someone were inside the armor.

"I can beat you using only my tails, without resorting to technology. I think I've proven it more than once."

"Okay, if you say so..."

Sonic puts himself in position to start running. Tails takes off the ground and keeps flying a few centimeters high, ready to race.

"On the count of three..."

"There they are, Antoine." Bunnie says, pointing to a group of robians who are walking towards a labor camp. She, Antoine and Sally are hiding behind a small mountain of scrap metal.

Among them are two blue hedgehogs, one man and one woman. Both of them have strands of hair on their foreheads, plus their thorns. The male hedgehog seems to have great similarity with Sonic, a similarity even greater than that between Sonic and his uncle Chuck.

"They're Jules and Bernadette, Sonic's parents." Sally says when she sees the Robians.

"We must get them out of there immediately." Says Antoine. "NICOLE?"

From the miniature computer carried by Sally in her hand, a small hologram of the female mobian lynx is projected. Her brown pelage includes black parts, and she wears her typical violet dress.

"Yes, Antoine?"

"It's time to execute the plan." The coyote pulls out his bow and presses a button on it. "It's time to give those Robians a helping hand so they can free their mind."

Elsewhere in Robotropolis, there's an arrow stuck in a wall, and red lights at the tip of the arrow light up and start to blink.
On the other side of the wall, there's a warehouse full of barrels with nanites.

Sonic is running at super-sonic speed through Robotropolis' alleys, and Tails is flying at full speed to his side. Both are very even in the race. Finally, they both stop abruptly in front of a door of Eggman's fortress. In front of them, the monumental egg-shaped metal structure rises to the sky.

"Shall we knock on the door?" Sonic asks Tails, who seems to be distracted. "Tails?"

"Sonic, I think you should go help Sally, Antoine and Bunnie in the Robians' rescue. They'll need your speed."

"What?! No, Tails! You can't confront Eggman alone."

"Sonic, should I tell you that I ain't just any kid?"

"Of course you ain't just any kid! You're my lil bro, my duty is to protect you."

"Wow... Maurice Hedgehog, aka 'Sonic', the magnificent 'Hero of Mobius', the world's fastest thing alive, is starting to have the 'Empty Nest Syndrome'. Who would believe it?"

"Enough, I'm serious. And what the hell is the 'Empty Nest Syndrome'?"

*sigh* "Nevermind. What I'm trying to tell you is this: I have weapons, many weapons, and after everything I lived, I aint afraid of Eggman or afraid of my death, which will not happen this time."

Jules Hedgehog and Bernadette Hedgehog, both of them robotized, are walking along a path, along with other Robians. Meanwhile, rivers of nanites run down the ground towards them, ascend through their bodies and seep through the joints between the metal sheets.

Suddenly, in the robotic eyes of both of them, appears a text of white letters superimposed on the image of red tones.

I am NICOLE, a computer program at the service of Freedom Fighters. Through the use of nanites, I have defeated the programming implanted by Eggman in all of you, and he still does not know it. We are implementing a plan to release you all. To achieve this, I will take control of your bodies for a moment, if all of you allow me, and I will guide you all. The other robians, here and elsewhere in Robotropolis, are receiving this same message.

Sonic walks slowly and silently into the hiding place of Sally, Antoine and Bunnie, and meets with them.

Sonic: "What's up?"

Sally: "NICOLE is controlling the Robians to get them out of here. And Tails?"

Sonic: "He went to confront Eggman. I don't know what he's trying to do."

Sally: [worried and angry] "And why didn't you stay with him?"

Antoine: "Sonic... [catches the hedgehog's attention, also trying to prevent the discussion.] We found your parents. Look at them, they're there."

The coyote points to Jules and Bernadette. When Sonic sees them, he's in shock for a few seconds,
but then he recovers.

Antoine: "Sonic, tu te sens bien?"

Sonic: [disturbed] "Yeah... I'm fine... although I didn't understand you at all. Okay... [determined] Let's rescue them."

Antoine takes out an arrow and shoots it. The arrow sticks to a wall away from there and makes a small explosion that distracts the SWAT-bots.

Bunnie: "Sonic, Sally, I'll take Antoine to the roof so he can shoot from there. You two: guide the Robians, so that they escape."

Then, Bunnie firmly hugs her boyfriend as she activates the rockets on his legs, and takes flight smoothly and quietly, while Sonic and Sally meet with the Robians.

Sonic: "Dad? Mom?"

Jules: [surprised, but still softly] "Sonic ... Are you? Princess Sally?"

Sally: "Yes, it's us, sir. I guess you two know about NICOLE."

Bernadette: "Yes, we know. Thank you for doing this."

Sonic: [a little nervous, but trying to relax] "Don't mention it. Thank NICOLE."

Bernadette: "To NICOLE? I thought it was just a computer virus created by you."

"Just a computer virus?"

The voice of a slightly offended NICOLE sounds from the miniature computer the chipmunk holds in his hand.

Half an hour later...

Eggman is sitting on his throne, watching a screen showing a labor camp.

Then he looks at the time, and he realizes something that makes him suspicious: the Robians should have gotten there a while ago, but there's no one. He then makes the screen show a Robotropolis alley, and growls enraged when he sees the remnants of the SWAT-bots that should have guarded the Robians and were destroyed by the Freedom Fighters. Later, the dictator rewinds the camera-captured image in the same alley, and finds that the mobians had created a loop so that the camera showed a still image while they were destroying all SWAT-bots: Sonic "ran over" several with his super-speed; Sally, using the energy blades generated by her Blade-Rings, fought with them and protected herself from their laser rifles' shots; Bunnie attacked them with her great variety of weapons, including her plasma cannon, her martial arts stick and her own robotized limbs, and Antoine threw his arrows from a terrace while also watching the robots' movements to warn his teammates.

"Are you going through a bad time, doctor?"

The dictator turns around and, to his surprise, finds Tails leaning against a wall and chewing gum.

"I didn't expect you to come here, rodent." Says the self-styled "doctor", hiding his surprise in his voice. "Are not you afraid of being in front of me, Mobius' most terrifying being, the culprit of
"First: I'm a fox, and foxes ain't rodents but canines, which means that I can be much more ferocious and intelligent than you think... although my intelligence ain't something new. Second: I've seen people more terrifying than you. For example, Sonic's moebian counterpart: he worked for you, several times. Anyway, on one occasion, I wasn't afraid and I managed to defeat him."

"It seems that Scourge remained active in my absence."

"One could say, Yes. And he's still alive today, although he doesn't appear very often."

Eggman looks at the door, trying to hide the nervousness that begins to seize him.

"Waiting for the robots you called a few seconds ago? Sorry, but I destroyed them recently. Well, actually they were destroyed by my armor." Tails chews his gum a little more, and finally spits it out, causing it to fall right into a garbage can.

"No matter, kid. I can still beat you."

"Then I invite you to prove it."

Suddenly, Eggman's throne rises, and a series of missile launchers appear immediately below it, which immediately start firing at Tails; in response, the fox stands in the same spot as before, looking patiently. Then, the ATA suit crosses the wall, enters the fortress, envelopes the fox and deploys a shield that stops the missiles. Eggman, infuriated by failure, frantically oppresses the buttons of his control panel, deploying weapons of all kinds: common bullet machine guns, laser machine guns, grenade launchers, flamethrowers, EM pulse cannons that are still in experimental phase and that start to produce smoke in each shot because of their malfunction, etcetera, but Tails blocks all attacks with his shield while he flies and destroys all weapons with his repulsive guns, his miniature missiles and the weapons mounted on his shoulders.

When the battle is over, the two-tailed fox looks around: the structure has holes in the walls and places wrapped in flames, but it remains standing. Eggman is still alive, but a piece of the ceiling had fallen on him, leaving him trapped now.

"Is that all, inventor kid?" Eggman says faintly.

"Of course not. There are GUN’s nuclear submarines stationed near the East Coast of Northamer. They don't obey King Elias's orders, but they obey orders from me."

"Right now, they're gonna launch nuclear missiles into this same city. Your empire is about to come to an end."

The submarine "Ypovrýchio" of GUN is sailing submerged in the Central Sea's waters, in front of the East Coast of Northamer, accompanied by several submarines more. The submarine's captain activates the radio to communicate with the captains and crew of the entire fleet.

"Έχει έρθει η ώρα. Ξεκίνησε την έναρξη των πυρηνικών πυραύλων της κατηγορίας "Τρίαινα". Για να επισημάνετε το στόχο, αναζητήστε το σήμα από τη συσκευή παρακολούθησης που έχει εγκαταστήσει ο επίτροπος πράκτορας Προυερ."; "The time has come. Start the launch of Trident-class nuclear missiles. To mark the target, look for the signal from the tracking
device installed by Honorary Agent Prower.

In each of the submarines, a gate is opened, leaving from each ship a nuclear missile that ascends to the surface. As soon as they get out of the water, the missiles activate their propulsion system and fly off westward towards Robotropolis.

The forty nuclear missiles have written the phrase "Στο χωριό Κνοτολε" ["Sto chorió Knothole", "By Knothole Village"].

"What if you destroy everything with that nuclear attack? Will you accept to be known as the culprit of the destruction of this world?"

"Then so be it." Tails takes off with his ATA suit. "If free mobians, humans and overlanders can't have this world for us, then no one will have it."

Eggman expects Tails to try to save him from his situation, but the fox flies and punches the roof of the fortress, leaving without looking back, while the dictator stands silent, staring into nothingness.

Meanwhile, several transport ships land at "King Frederick Acorn" Airport near New Mobotropolis, while the Egg-Fleet is stopped by the Kingdom of Acorn's new Fleet. When the ships land, the Robians, already free, leave quickly there; among them are also Jules and Bernadette, unharmed and accompanied by her son and Sally.

Antoine: "Go to the city! There you'll be safe from Eggman's control! Vite! Vite!"

In that moment, Tails arrives at the place, scaring with his armor to the Robians, who think he's a robot.

Tails: "Hey, wait! [lands and then leaves his face exposed] It's me."

Bernadette: "It's Colonel Prower's son!"

Tails: "Miles Prower, at your service. You all can call me 'Tails'. You must be Sonic's parents: Jules and Bernadette."

Bernadette: "You can call me 'Bernie', if you want."

Once everything calmed down, they all resumed their advance toward the city, walking at a rapid pace.

Jules: "According to what Maurice told us, you're still his friend."

Sonic: [ashamed] "Dad, don't call me that. Everyone knows me as 'Sonic'. Also, I have a reputation to take care of."

Tails: "Well, you could say yes, we're friends." [has some doubt in his voice, which is noticed by the parents of the 'Hero of Mobius']

Bernie: "Something wrong?"

Tails: "Well... Once upon a time there was a hedgehog that had a tendency to be a womanizer..."

Sonic: "Please, Tails..."
Bernie: "Wait a minute: what Tails said reminds me of you, Jules."

Tails: "Is it hereditary, ma'am?"

Bernie: "Without a doubt."

Tails: "Yeah, something similar happens to me: I inherited my father's intelligence and my mother's strong character."

Jules: "Did you meet them? Does that mean they're back? I would like to meet with them."

Tails: "Now they're busy, repelling the Egg-Fleet attack."

In the Air Fleet of Acorn...

"So, has Your Majesty thought of the idea of making a Democratic Opening?" Amadeus asks.

"Well..."

While he's thinking of his answer, Elias sees his father Maximilian, who's standing at one of the entrance doors to the bridge of command. The emeritus king is giving him a stern look.

"I'm still thinking it over carefully, Amadeus."

Five minutes later, in New Mobotropolis...

Robians are already inside the city, and Sonic's parents are still talking to their son and his friends.

Tails: "As I told you, Mr. and Mrs. Hedgehog, Sonic is currently in a romantic relationship with Princess Sally."

Sonic: "Tails! That's supposed to be private!"

Tails: "What's the difference? Everyone already knows!"

Sonic: "You started with this when you mentioned what happened to Fiona."

Tails: "What do you mean?"

Sonic: "I mean when you said 'Once upon a time there was a hedgehog that had a tendency to be a womanizer'. Are you doing this as revenge for what happened? I thought we had sorted this out a year ago."

Bernie: "What are you talking about? How serious was the problem?"

Sonic: "Actually, it wasn't that bad, Mom. In fact, Fiona, that girl who appeared in our lives, is currently Tails' girlfriend. He won the prize, so he has nothing to complain about."

Tails: [starts to look altered] "Wait a minute: What did you call her? Did you just call Fiona a 'prize'?"

Sonic: "It's a way of saying, my friend."

Tails: [evidently upset] "Yes, of course, it's a way of saying that women are just objects."
Sonic: [mumbles] "Tails..." [looks at his fathers]

Tails: "That was the way of thinking he had and he still seems to have, Mr. and Mrs. Hedgehog. That caused a discussion between us, and I must admit that our friendship wasn't the same since."

Sonic: "Especially because, in that 'discussion', you broke my nose twice."

Tails: "And you pushed me against a wall and gave me more than twenty blows in a row."

Sonic: "And you tried to cut me in half."

Tails: "And you insulted Fiona, hit her and tried to hold her against her will, doing all that in front of me."

Jules: "Did they fight like that for a girl? This is definitely my son."

Bernie: [facepalms] "Teenagers..."

Sonic: "Actually, he was only ten years old at the time."

Tails: "Don't lie, it was only two months before I was eleven-"

Tails is interrupted by the noise of forty nuclear missiles that fly over the city from the east to Robotropolis.

Sally: "Oh, my God... What the hell...?"

Then the missiles fly over the ships of the Kingdom of Acorn and the Egg-Fleet, and after a half-minute journey...

**BOOM!**

The missiles, following the signal of a tracking device installed by Tails, impact exactly in Eggman's fortress. The combination of the explosions of forty nuclear warheads generates a huge mushroom cloud and also produces a shockwave, which atomizes Eggman's fortress and its surroundings, leaves the other buildings in the city very damaged and destroys all robots. The monstrous explosion threatens to continue advancing and destroying everything around it, including the meadow, the Great Forest and New Mobotropolis, but a dome-shaped deflector shield, similar to the shield that protects Acorn's new capital, stops the blast wave and contains the radioactive cloud, causing the damage to be limited to the Eggman Empire's capital.

All the inhabitants of New Mobotropolis, including the newly arrived robians, watch the explosion and run out of words, until...

"We won!" Shouts Procion, who has just returned to the city.

"Yeah! We won!" Another mobian shouts.

Several inhabitants start to shout, celebrating the destruction of Robotropolis.

"Yeah!"

"We did it!"

"Long live Freedom!"
"Victory!"

"Long live the Homeland!"

Meanwhile, Antoine presses a button on a remote control. Some cannons appear and shoot colored pieces of paper, and some previously installed speakers are activated.

[Sountrack: *La Marseillaise*]

Some mobians, like Sally, don't seem to be very happy.

"This is a disaster." She tells herself. Antoine gets to listen to her.

"Why do you say so, Votre Altesse? Robotropolis has been destroyed, we won."

"We won using weapons, nuclear weapons."

"Princesse, it isn't going to start a world war that destroys our entire planet, nor will it abuse these weapons. We're smart enough to avoid making those mistakes. De plus, we know what humans did before the Xorda attack; that stupidity, to make countries fight against each other until the world is brought to the brink of destruction, won't be committed again. D'autre part, to carry out a war without making any advance in armament was something unsustainable, et sooner or later it would have been necessary to do this."

"Anyway, Eggman has yet to be captured." Tails says, appearing next to them two. "Apparently, Scourge helped him and Snively to escape. That's why the Egg-Fleet is still active and attacking us." The fox points to where the Egg-Fleet is, whose attacks are still successfully repelled by Acorn's new Air Fleet.

At 6:30 pm, all the ships of the Empire are destroyed after a long battle, and the mobians' ships return to the city. Meanwhile, several inhabitants are gathered near a building, which looks a lot like a nuclear power plant and has a red ribbon in front of the entrance door.

"Good evening, People of Acorn." Elias starts his speech. "We're gathered here for an important announcement that I wish to make: As part of the plan that resulted in the destruction of Robotropolis, a radioactive cloud has been formed, and this cloud is now being held by a shield, as you all have surely seen. Miles Prower and others have invented a system to exploit the radiation and radioactive waste from Robotropolis' ruins, and this will not only allow this environmental hazard to be gradually eliminated: From now on, in this place, it will start operating a power plant where the produced by the nuclear bombardment will be converted into clean and safe energy."

The crowd starts applauding. It's then that the King starts to look to one side and the other, looking for someone. Later, he leaves the scenario and approaches Tails, who attended the power plant's inauguration.

"Something wrong, Your Majesty?" Tails whispers into the chipmunk's ear.

"I thought Sonic and Sally were going to be here." The King answers him, speaking the same way.

"They didn't quite agree with my plan to make a nuclear attack. I very much doubt that both of them wanna attend this event, considering the origin of the electric energy that we'll use from now on."

"Well, I guess you'll have to do the honors."
Elias climbs onto the scenario again, accompanied by Tails now, and gives the fox a golden scissors. The child prodigy, smiling, greets the cameras and then cuts the red ribbon, receiving many applause and inaugurating the power plant.

Meanwhile, Sonic and Sally are looking from the distance, hidden in the shade, not to be seen. Seeing Tails doing that symbolic act, they both deny with their heads and look at him disapprovingly, and then they leave.
Chapter 9: Scourge's return.

Chapter Summary

After a great performance in a recital, the AFFs will meet with Scourge and will be forced to fight with him personally and as a team for the first time.

The next day, at 7:00 pm, the band "Forget Me Knots" leaves the stage of an amphitheater on the city's outskirts. The lead singer is Mina Mongoose, a female mobian mongoose, with light yellow pelage, with long violet hair; She wears a top, gloves and boots, all these clothes being dark green; a skirt of violet and black stripes, and two earrings in each ear.

At that moment, while the rest of the band is resting, she's in her dressing room, having sung in front of the audience for a long time. Next to her is Ash, her boyfriend and manager, a male mobian mongoose with yellow pelage and black hair, wearing a black short-sleeved T-shirt with a yellow happy face, a dark red jacket, wide blue jeans, black shoes and small lenses with reddish glasses.

"So, Mina, doesn't it bother you that these friends of yours come to sing?"

"If they feel ready, why wouldn't we let them, Ash?"

"They're amateurs, they're not people dedicated to music like you. What if they ruin the show?"

"I and some members of the band witnessed a practice they were doing, last night. They really sing well, and they also know how to play instruments. Besides, with this victory over Eggman, they are now very motivated, and they already got someone to play the drums, so they already have the band complete. It's worth giving them a try."

"Okay, if you say so..."

It's night time, and people are crowded in front of the stage, waiting for the next musicians to perform.

"I wonder who they'll be." Says Sally, who's sitting on a box away from the stage. Next to her are Antoine, Bunnie, Tails, Fiona, Amadeus and Jules, each dressed in a brown overcoat, and there are also Sonic, Rosemary, Bernie and Uncle Chuck. The princess is seated next to the "Hero of Mobius", who in turn is together with his family; then there's Tails's parents, then Fiona, and finally, Tails himself, away from Sonic and Sally to avoid trouble. In turn, the princess is seated next to Bunnie, who at the same time has Antoine on the other side.

"Antoine, have you heard about what happened to your father?" Sonic asks the coyote.

"Oui, Sonic, I heard." He answers without looking sad.

"Didn't you plan to make a funeral or anything to your father?"

"I'll do it after Christmas."

"Okay... Ant, I don't wanna offend you, but you look pretty... positive."
Antoine pauses, not looking offended by the hedgehog's observation.

"Je was talking to il on the phone the day before the bombing. Il told moi to forget for a moment what il instilled in moi when je was a cadet, because il had been wrong. il also told moi to try to be happy, to enjoy life. Je think il deserves that je apply his advices, in memory of il. After all, il showed moi that il was worried about moi and that il regretted what il did, and il tried to solve it."

"I understand you, Ant."

"And now, on this party night, we introduce The Nameless Band!"

At that moment, the six who were dressed in brown coats get up from the seats, they take off their coats and then advance among the people to reach the stage, where everything is ready. As they wanted, the audience is surprised, especially Sonic, Sally, Rosemary and Bernie.

Fiona grabs an electric guitar, Jules sits in the drummer's position, Amadeus grabs a bass guitar, and Tails sits down in front of a keyboard, all of them dressed in leather clothing with metal parts; the lead singer turns out to be Antoine, who seems very confident and, unlike the others, is dressed in an extravagant outfit: open red-orange jacket, white t-shirt under the jacket, and tight pants with black and white squares like on a chessboard. Seeing the coyote in that situation, Sally and Sonic remain open-mouthed.

"You'll pay for thinking you're cooler than me, Ant." Sonic says to himself, jokingly.

("In an alternate universe, I would date him.") Sally thinks. ("Wait a second: What am I thinking at?")

"Oui, we know: we're the AFFs." Says Antoine, using a microphone. "It so happens that, after that strenuous battle, we decided to relax by making some music, and then mademoiselle Songoose decided to give us the great responsibility of singing here, so... We'll try to play songs for all tastes. Does anyone want us to start with something in particular?"

"Heavy rock!"

"Classic rock!"

Fiona approaches Antoine and says something in his ear, returning to her place later.

"I think I know where we're going to start!"

Fiona starts playing the guitar with a mastery that impresses Sonic as the audience shouts, cheers on The Nameless Band and claps the same rhythm with which Jules and Amadeus play drums and bass guitar respectively. Then, Antoine, smiling broadly, does some dance steps on stage, and then he starts to sing.

[Soundtrack: Hammer to fall – Queen]

Antoine: "Here we stand or here we fall. / History won't care at all. / Make the bed. Light the light. / Lady Mercy won't be home tonight."

All: "You don't waste no time at all."

Antoine: "Don't hear the bell but you answer the call."
All: "It comes to you as to us all."

Antoine: "We're just waiting for the hammer to fall."

Then the coyote spins swiftly and deftly on stage, and Tails comes out of his seat and stands next to him, singing without shame of any kind. Meanwhile, Bunnie replaces him on the keyboard.

Tails: "Oh, Every night... and every day, / a little piece of you is falling away / but lift your face, the western way / build your muscles as your body decays."

Tails and Antoine: "Tow the line and play their game."

Tails: "Let the anaesthetic cover it all."

Tails and Antoine: "Till one day they call your name."

Tails: "You know it's time for the hammer to fall."

While playing the guitar, Fiona also starts singing alone.

Fiona: "Rich or poor or famous..."

Tails: "For your truth is all the same."

Antoine: "Lock your door but rain is pouring / through your window pain. / Baby, now your struggle's... all vain."

While Fiona plays a guitar solo, Tails imitates the melody on a grand piano, while Jules makes his drums' sound feel strongly. After Antoine stood by Fiona's side and imitated her for a few seconds, using the microphone and its stand as if they were a guitar, he sings again.

Antoine: "For we who grew up tall and proud / in the shadow of the mushroom cloud, / convinced our voices can't be heard, / we just wanna scream it louder and louder..."

All: "What the hell are we fighting for?"

Antoine: "Just surrender and it won't hurt at all."

All: "You just got time to say your prayers..."

Antoine: "... while you're waiting for the hammer to- hammer to fall."

"This is how it's done, my love!" Bernie shouts at Jules when the song ends, while Rosemary applauds proudly and the audience continues to cheer the band.

Instead, Chuck sits down, one hand on his forehead.

"I imagined you were going to do something daring when you came back, brother."

Sonic and Sally are still sitting in their seats, totally still, not reacting even when the robian hedgehog waves his hand in front of their faces.

At 9:30 pm, the AFFs are gathered in a bar, after some of their members have acted as part of The Nameless Band. Now they're dressed in their special uniforms and weapons to show them to Jules and Bernie. Tails' armor is being repaired inside his workshop, so Tails is only wearing pants and a
T-shirt. Fiona is dressed in her black top and her leather pants; her cloak and her weapons are also in Tails' workshop, where improvements are being added to them.

In addition, The Nameless Band is showing the KFFs, Rosemary, Bernie and Chuck a CD recorded by them.

Sonic: "You do have good taste, Ant. Here are songs by Michael Jackson, The Beatles, Queen, heavy rock, jazz... Did you play all this?"

Antoine: [smiling and arching an eyebrow] "Did you think je had the musical preferences of an old man?"

Sonic: "Actually, yes, you have the musical tastes of an old man, but in a good way. Here are songs that never go out of style. It's a pity you don't play Elvis Presley's songs."

Sally: "Sonic, you're the only one in the whole city who likes Elvis Presley."

Jules: "You've forgotten me, Princess."

Chuck: "It seems that when I was forced to robotize you to save your life, I couldn't change your terrible musical tastes. [adopts a sad tone] Besides that I made you lose your free will."

Jules: "Stop blaming yourself for that, bro. [puts a hand on Charles' shoulder] We all know that it wasn't your fault, but Robotnik's fault: it was he who sabotaged your invention."

Rosemary: [to Amadeus] "So, did you talk to Elias yesterday about the Democratic Opening?"

Amadeus: "Yes, he's still thinking about it."

Sally: "It's evident that my brother wasn't yet ready for a job like this."

Fiona: "At least, he ain't like Max. That stingy man never wanted to give us the Cross of Merit, neither me nor Miles."

Chuck: "Fiona."

Fiona: "Yeah, I know I shouldn't worry so much about a simple medal. But both of us have managed to do a lot of important things, and there are others who made less effort and had less brains but gained the Cross of Merit anyway. I don't mean you, Colonel, you're an exception."

Amadeus: "Yeah, I got it." [drinks a sip of red wine]

Chuck: "Actually, I meant when you called the King 'stingy'... Oh, forget it."

Suddenly, in the middle of the rain outside, a portal, generated by a Warp Ring, opens into a square near there. When they see what happens, they find Scourge entering through that portal, carrying Moebius' Royal Crown on his head.

Fiona: "What the f*** is he supposed to do here?!

Antoine: "Je ne sais pas. Mais whatever il wants to do, we'll avoid it."

He then leaves the bar accompanied by his teammates.

"Alright, let's see how this place is. I could start by tasting some restaurant's food... and then spit it
out at the waiter in his face." Scourge starts to laugh out loud at the sentence's end, while the rain falls on him.

"Et how do you plan to eat, if you're going to have all your teeth broken?"

Scourge looks to one side and is surprised by a blow that Antoine gives directly into the mouth, breaking his teeth. When he recovers from the blow, he sees the AFFs standing in front of him. The city's inhabitants, some carrying umbrellas and others letting the rain wet them, start to gather around them to observe what happens.

Antoine: "Vous, animal méprisable, why did you come here? You already saved Eggman et Snively, you have nothing to do in this city or in this world."

Scourge: [babbles angrily] "I just came here to settle some outstanding business, frenchy. [looks at the red vixen] Fiona, doll, come with me. Please."

Fiona holds her arms crossed and her face serious, while Tails takes a step forward and stands in front of her.

Tails: "Even if you have good manners, none of us are stupid enough to be fooled by you. Now, you should remember what I told you a year ago, what would happen to you if you came back."

Scourge: "Yeah, I remember it well: you said you would be my worst nightmare, and I dunno what else. Something about that you were gonna rape me and that I was gonna suffer even more than when I was raped in prison."

Sally: [upset, her hands resting on her waist] "Were you really gonna do that, Tails?"

Tails: "No, but since he misrepresented what I said, I think I'll do it as additional punishment."

Scourge: "C'mon, let's make peace, Fiona. The problems we had are already in the past, we can start over. You don't need to stick to this effeminate kid."

Tails: "And what do you use as a basis for saying that I'm an effeminate?"

Scourge: "I'll not go into the details, they're boring. [his face looks more friendly and more sympathetic again when he looks at Fiona] Come with me, babe. Please, I beg you. I've learned from my mistakes, just as you did. Trust me, I'll not hurt you."

To the surprise of almost everyone present, Fiona walks slowly in the direction of Scourge, passing to the side of Tails, smiling with malice; Scourge recognizes that smile and returns it. Tails, incredulous, feels that he faints, although he manages to hide it, and then he extends his trembling arm towards his "ex-girlfriend".

Tails: "Ain't possible... Fiona... Are you betraying us again?"

At that very moment, she moves her tail and wraps it around Tails' arm; while she looks at Scourge and advances toward him, her tail slides slowly and gently through Tails' arm and then through his hand's palm, until finally they both separate. Tails' face relaxes, going from being about to cry to having poker face, but Scourge doesn't pay attention to that change: Fiona's clothes got wet in the rain and now it's tight against her skin, which makes the hedgehog instinctively concentrate much of her attention on looking at the vixen's curves and cleavage while she walks toward him.

Scourge: "What happens, Tails?"
Fiona stands next to Scourge, and he grabs her by the waist.

Scourge: [to Tails] "Trying to hold back the tears?"

Tails remains expressionless.

Fiona: [with false tenderness] "Sorry, Miles. I've already said before: you can't trust anyone. It seems that there's someone here who hasn't yet learned that lesson."

Meanwhile, Fiona's hands, which wear black fingerless gloves, are kept hidden behind her back. She presses a button on one of her gloves.

Scourge: "Okay, that's all for today, I'm already satisfied. Have fun!"

Fiona: "Wait, Scourgey. I still have to take clothes for the trip."

Fiona walks away a little. When Scourge is about to respond, he's wrapped in a black and dark red cloak that falls from the sky.

Scourge: "Fiona! What the f*** is this?!"

While the green hedgehog tries to get rid of the mantle, he's electrocuted.

TZZ!

Scourge: "AAAAAAAAAARRRRRGGH!"

Then he falls to the ground; despite the electrocution, is still alive, groaning in pain. The red vixen removes her cloak from him and then she puts on it without suffering damage, then she puts on her gloves with electro-weapons and prepares her whip, and she runs to Tails and embraces him without electrocuting him.

Fiona: "You should have paid more attention, Scourgey: I said that someone hadn't yet learned the lesson, but I never mentioned Miles. [to Tails] I guess you got my signal."

Scourge: "You'll pay for this, b****! [gets off the ground quickly] And what was that signal supposed to be?"

Fiona: "Only Miles has permission to grab my tail."

Tails: "Scourge, I warn you: get outta here, or we'll make you feel even more pain. I guess you already know what I mean now."

The green hedgehog looks around until he sees Tails' parents, seemingly vulnerable.

Scourge: "I think I'll make you feel a lot more pain, you'll see."

Immediately, Scourge runs to Amadeus, but he, knowing this, steps aside and puts his arm in front of Scourge's face, causing the hedgehog's head to collide and he to fall to the ground. He gets up, while Rosemary looks at him patiently and Amadeus draws his sword.

Amadeus: "You've already heard our son. I hope I have made you understand this time."

In response, Scourge growls and runs towards Rosemary, but she, with great timing, jumps, rests her foot on his head and propels herself, letting him crash into a lamppost. Despite the blow, Scourge rises again and recovers from the dizziness, much to everyone's surprise.
Rosemary: [prepares to fight] "Scourge doesn't want to understand us, Marshal. Not worth keeping trying."

Scourge: "Do you wanna fight, old men?!"

Scourge attacks Rosemary, but Tails flies at speed, gets to interpose between his mother and the hedgehog, and punishes him with a flying kick that hits the pit of his stomach. While Scourge is lying on the floor facing up, Tails puts one foot on his chest, starting to concentrate his weight on that foot, threatening to break his opponent's ribs.

Tails: "Unfortunately, I'll have to resort to a phrase from Eggman for this occasion: Have not you been taught to respect your elders?"

Scourge grabs the foot of Tails, who automatically crushes his ribs with all his strength, breaking two of them, but the hedgehog doesn't seem to suffer for this and suddenly twists the foot of the fox. This causes him to turn and fall to the floor face down, with a sprained ankle, being then grasped of the neck by his opponent's left arm. Tails nails his claws hard on his elbow's inner side, causing Scourge to bleed profusely in that place and to release him. He then gives the hedgehog a blow with the hand; that blow not only stuns him and makes him stagger, but also makes cuts on his face.

When the hedgehog prepares to continue fighting, Bunnie flies toward him and hits him with her robotic arm, throwing him into a tree. Despite the strength of the arm itself and the blow, he manages to recover and runs towards her; when he's near, the cyborg girl tries to kick him, but Scourge, foreseeing this, dodges it and grabs her from the waist tightly, and then he drags her to the door of a restaurant; once there, he grabs a knife from one of the sidewalk tables, preparing to kill her.

Scourge: [mockingly, holding the knife very close to Bunnie's jugular] "Tooooonyyyyy...! I have your girl! [to Bunnie, in a threatening tone of voice] You better not try anything with your robotic parts, babe, unless you want this thing to cut your throat by accident."

SRATCH!

Scourge feels a sharp pain in the wrist of his right hand, and at the same time loses the sensibility in that same hand. Very pained and even more terrified, he sees that that hand, the hand that held the knife, is no longer there. Bunnie has already escaped her control and runs towards Antoine, who prepares an arrow with a circular saw at the end, just like the arrow that had mutilated the hedgehog.

Antoine: "Certainement, those two cuts on your chest have been very painful for you. Do you want to have a third cut, a little higher than the other two? Don't you want that? Then surrender. It's our last warning."

Surprisingly, the area where the hand had been amputated is already healed, and Scourge, although that area of his body is still sore and with a strange feeling of "phantom limb", uses his super-speed and attacks the AFFs. Antoine shoots his arrow and its circular saw makes a deep cut on the hedgehog's shoulder, but he keeps moving, so Bunnie raises her boyfriend off the ground, Tails grabs Fiona and takes flight, and the Prowers push each other away and let him pass between them. Before hitting a wall, the hedgehog manages to stop.

Scourge: [thinking] ("Alright, I'll let all of you win this time. But all of you will fall soon, one way or another. You'll see.")

Scourge runs back to the portal to escape, although he can no longer run very fast, while Bunnie, Antoine, Tails and Fiona land. When they see Scourge escaping, the six are preparing to stop him, possibly in a cruel way: the coyote and the red vixen, both accompanied by Tails' parents, chase after
him, while the child prodigy and the cyborg rabbit take off again and try to close the way to him.

"Stop them!"

The AFFs stop and turn around, incredulous, to look at Princess Sally: she had ordered them to be stopped. Then Rotor uses her strength to retain Bunnie, Fiona is knocked out by a blow Amy gives her with her hammer (fortunately, for some strange reason, the blow does her no real harm), and Amadeus and Rosemary are retained by Sonic's parents. When Tails and Antoine realize what happened, they both direct their fury toward the chipmunk.

Meanwhile, the green hedgehog, with a big smile on his face, patiently crosses the portal.

Tails prepares his fists and flies straight at Sally, but Sonic jumps, hits him behind his head and makes him faint. Antoine, saber in hand, makes a war cry while he runs towards the princess, and she responds by drawing a gun with tranquilizing darts and firing him right, causing him to stop and fall to the ground immediately, with the drizzle falling on him.

THMP...

THMP...

THMP...

A few seconds before losing consciousness, the coyote manages to hear the seemingly distant voice of Sally, the princess to whom he had always been loyal and who has now betrayed him.

"I'm sorry, guys. It's for your own good."

There are a lot of people, who came to the square to watch the fight against Scourge, and then saw the way the KFFs and Sonic's parents neutralized the AFFs. Now, while half the audience is only surprised, the other half of the audience is visibly upset with the princess and the mobians loyal to her, especially after seeing that both Scourge and the Warp Ring have disappeared from the square.

"What are you all looking at?!!" The chipmunk shouts angrily at the audience. "If what you were all looking for was a Roman circus, that's over! Get back to your business!"

Meanwhile, her team takes the AFFs from there.
Chapter 10: A looming new conflict.

Chapter Summary

The AFFs' attempt to end Scourge's crimes has been thwarted by Sally herself and the KFFs, so Antoine and Bunnie are not likely to take it well after being loyal to her. At the same time, there will be people who will start to express their discomfort by the way of life carried out by Tails and Fiona.

"Antoine... Wake up, my love... It's me, don't you recognize me? ..."

"Come on, comrade... Listen to Bunnie... Wake up, you can do it... I'm sure, as sure as I have two tails..."

"Bunnie, Miles, that ain't how a patient is awakened... I'm a nurse, leave it to me... Hey, Tony! Are you there?!"

The young soldier opens his eyes a little.

"WAKE UP A F***ING TIME! OR I'LL STEAL YOUR SABER, AND I'LL USE IT TO CROSS YOU RIGHT HERE!"

He gets scared and opens his eyes wide when he sees Fiona opening her mouth wide and shouting at him a few centimeters from his face. Antoine immediately tries to get up from the hospital gurney where he was resting, but something prevents him from doing so: a pair of handcuffs, with which his right hand is attached to a metal railing of the gurney.

Then the coyote looks at Tails and Fiona, both standing to his left, and Bunnie, standing to his right. Sunlight enters through a window, and a clock on the wall indicates that it's 9:15 am. Tails wears only shorts, Bunnie wears her traditional pink leotard, an open brown jacket and tight brown shorts, and Fiona is dressed in her old set of black artificial leather clothes and has also a yellow ribbon tied in a topknot in her reddish brown hair.

Tails: "Fiona, we're supposed to keep quiet in the hospitals."

Fiona: "At least my technique worked."

Tails: "But how could those loud screams not work? Surely you woke the dead in the morgue."

Fiona: "Honey, the morgue is on the opposite side of this building, and it's underground."

Tails: "That's precisely what I mean."

Antoine: "What's this?" [points to his handcuffs]

Bunnie: "Sally."

The coyote, hearing Bunnie's voice, looks at her in silence.

Antoine: "It's a joke, non?"
Bunnie: "No, Antoine: last night, she ordered you to be kept 'in custody' in the hospital. We went to talk to Elias, and now he's trying to convince Sally to make you totally free again."

After hearing that, the soldier stares into nothingness, while his mouth starts to show his fangs and his right eye's lower eyelid starts to tremble.

"What was that supposed to be, sister?"

"Antoine tried to kill me, Elias. I had to do something about it."

Sally and Elias are in a hospital corridor, next to the entrance door to Antoine's room.

"Well, what you did was too much." Then the young King addresses the guard at the door, a male grizzly bear with a purple band, a purple belt, purple boots and gloves, and a green beret. "Your work here is over. Remove the handcuffs from Antoine, and then rest."

"Yes, Your Majesty." The guard enters the room, and Elias leaves there. Upon leaving the hospital, he meets with Max.

"Hello Dad."

"What happened, son?"

"Sally 'arrested' Antoine, but I freed him. She exaggerated a bit with what she did."

Max remains thoughtful.

"Dad?"

"You're getting soft, my son."

"By admitting that my sister has acted wrong and trying to make up what she did?"

"Antoine is a rebel and a traitor. I suppose you ever saw TV in your exile."

"No, but they told me what he said about the Democratic Opening. By the way, didn't you want to fulfill the prophecy made by the Source of All and to make my sister marry him?"

"Yes, but although Sonic is a little undisciplined, he is still obedient and a good warrior, in addition to being raised by his uncle, whom I myself knighted. Even that young hedgehog would be a better husband than Armand's offspring."

"Wait a second: Since when is it so important that your father-in-law be 'obedient' and belong to the Nobility? Is not Sally's welfare more important?"

The emeritus king sighs. "Let's change the subject: What will you do with the senior rebel?"

"Who?"

"Who?! Colonel Prower! Who else?"

Without either of them realizing, there's a group of mobians listening to the discussion: Amadeus, Rosemary and the first lieutenant Procion.

At the same time, a robust, elderly mobian, belonging to a race of canids, is hidden behind a thick
tree trunk, listening to what Elias and Max are saying.

"Why are you so permissive with him, my son? He's a traitor, and he even admits it by wearing the Overlanders' Field Marshal's epaulettes."

"GUN."

"What?"

"He's GUN's Field Marshal, not the Overlanders' Field Marshal. And he's only an honorary member of that organization, he's not a full member."

"GUN, Overlanders... It's all the same."

"No, it's not the same, Dad. Considering that you've been King, you should know about these issues of diplomacy. And Colonel Prower isn't a traitor either: he continues to fight against Eggman, and he still seeks our people's welfare; the same goes for Antoine and the other AFFs. By the way, I thought you had enabled the AFFs to form their own team."

"Well, now I'm starting to regret it. Surely they're forming a clandestine army to overthrow us and to impose chaos, under the excuse that this country would fight better against Eggman if it had a democratic government."

"They never said that. Antoine said that a Democratic Opening would make the people trust us more. In addition, a change in the form of government will have no effect on the war itself."

"Of course it will have effect! The people know nothing about how to wage war. How can you let them decide the course of this?"

"Those who lived in Knothole have lived most of their lives hiding, fighting against Robotnik and against Eggman in a guerrilla war, so they know a lot about the war. In addition, I've heard of Leon Kodos, that Warlord who was later replaced by Robotnik, and obviously he didn't get very good results." Elias approaches Max's ear to whisper to him. "And you still have to give explanations about the massacres ordered by you. And you also have to explain your relationship with the resistance group in Sandblast City. And you also have to explain why you allowed the use of firearms in the Western Border's military bases, while you were officially forbidding them."

"Elias, please... That's a thing of the past, we should concentrate on more current problems, don't you think? You should think for a moment: Is there not a chance that Colonel Prower will only want to dethrone you to start his own dictatorship?"

"Well..." The King bows his head.

"Have not you thought of it before? Don't worry, my son. I made similar mistakes when I was young. You're still in time to correct it."

Then, father and son walk away from the hospital, walking to the New Castle of Acorn.

"Clearly this situation isn't going to get better." Rosemary says, then entering the hospital along with her husband. Procion walks away, looking for a few seconds at the same tree behind which is hidden the other mobian who was spying on the King.

"Colonel, I have to take care of a personal matter."

"Okay, you don't have to ask me for permission if you have to go. We're not in service for now."
Sally is sitting in a seat in the waiting room, with earphones in her ears: she's listening to the songs of The Nameless Band's CD, more specifically, a well-known jazz song versioned by Antoine.

[Soundtrack: *Strangers in the night* – Bert Kaempfert, Charles Singleton & Eddie Snyder, versión de Frank Sinatra]

While listening to the music, she starts to imagine a strange scene...

The chipmunk is in a restaurant, sitting at a table in front of a stage. The place is almost dark, except for a few faint purple lights on the stage. Suddenly, there appears Antoine, dressed in the clothing and hat characteristic of Frank Sinatra era. After loud applause, he starts to sing using an old Shure 5S microphone.

Maybe it's his voice, maybe it's his look, maybe it's his smile... Something about him makes her keep staring at him and listening intently to him.

Sally shakes her head a little, blinking a couple of times, as if she's confused.

Sally: "What the f*** am I thinking?"

Meanwhile, Bunnie leaves the room, looking at the chipmunk with a serious look.

Bunnie: "Sally..."

She responds to the call and turns to the rabbit, removing the headphones from her ears.

Sally: "Bunnie, I'm sorry about Ant-"

Bunnie squeezes Sally's right wrist with her robotized left hand, causing the squirrel to start feeling great pain there, but the cyborg girl does it in a sneaky way without changing the expression on her face, avoiding attracting attention.

Bunnie: [sternly] "Enough of lies. We need to talk."

Sally: "For the record, your mentally unstable boyfriend was gonna kill me. Besides, I never tried to kill him, I already had my pistol with tranquilizing darts reserved-"

"How did you call me?"

Surprised, Sally looks over Bunnie's shoulder, who doesn't turn around, and she finds a very upset Antoine.

Sally: "Ant, I can explain it-"

Antoine: "Explain... Quoi? Vous think I'm crazy, non?"

Sally: "I didn't mean that, you're misunderstanding me- One moment..."

The princess reaches into her pocket and finds the keys to the coyote's handcuffs. She, incredulous, looks at them and then looks at him.

Sally: "How...?"
In response, the soldier raises his right arm: The handcuffs are still attached to his hand's wrist, and the metal railing of his gurney is hanging from those same handcuffs.

Antoine: [with a frown and a manic smile on his face] "I'm so angry that Je can become my Super form without using even a single Emerald Chaos."

Meanwhile, Tails and Fiona also appear, walking quietly toward the exit.

Fiona: "Bye-bye, fellas. We'll let you all discuss without any interference."

Tails: "You're so cynical... I love that."

Then the pair of foxes leave the hospital and meet with Tails' parents at the door.

Tails: "Hi, Mom! Hi, Dad!"

Amadeus: "It's good to know that you two are well. Something happened?"

Fiona: "Sally thinks Antoine is crazy, Marshal."

Rosemary: "It's not the only one: Max is just like Sally, and he's also influencing Elias a lot."

The two-tailed fox starts to look around, until his face freezes.

Tails: [looking at nothingness] "Oh, no."

Rosemary: "What's wrong, son?"

Tails: "Turn around and you'll see."

Rosemary turns around and sees Cream. Now she's accompanied by her pet Cheese and her mother Vanilla, who wears a set of traditional clothes: a light pink and purple long dress, with a white border and a tight burgundy waistcoat; an orange scarf tied around her neck; white gloves with gold cufflinks, and low-heeled shoes, the same color as the waistcoat.

Cream: [in her typical gentle voice] "Good morning, I assume you're Tails's parents. I'm Cream Rabbit. He's Cheese..."

Cheese: "Chao! Chao! Chao!"

Cream: "And she's my mother Vanilla."

Vanilla: [shakes hands with Rosemary] "It's nice to meet you."

Rosemary: "Same for you. I'm Rosemary Prower, and he's Amadeus Prower, my husband."

Amadeus: "Good morning, Mrs Rabbit."

Vanilla: "I heard a lot about you, Colonel."

While their respective parents talk, the rabbit girl looks, now with disgust, at the child prodigy. He looks at her in the same way.

Cream: "Hi, Tails. Hi, Fiona."

Tails: "Cream, If you're here to criticize me because of my relationship with Fiona, I suggest you fade away."
Cheese: "CHAO! CHAO!"

Cheese looks very offended, but Cream doesn't seem to react to Tails' sayings.

Tails: "Oh, come on, Cheese..."

Vanilla: [to Tails' parents] "Just a moment..." [trying to act as a referee] "Guys! Can you tell me what happens now?"

Cream: [with malice] "Tails is treating me badly."

Vanilla: [in a conciliatory way, in a calm voice] "Tails, could you please explain to me what my daughter did for you to treat her like this?"

Tails: "And what if you do some memory? Remember what happened a week ago."

Cream: "I'm waiting for your answer to my mom's question."

Tails: "The question about what have you done to me? [to Vanilla] Ma'am, save yourself the effort of trying to remember what happened, I'll tell you: His daughter revealed to the whole city the nature of my relationship with Fiona, and she talked about it as if it were a bad thing."

Cream: "Because what you do is a bad thing."

Tails: "First: there's no law that says that. Second: Why should people be judged by the type of relationships they establish?"

Vanilla: "Tails, that talks a lot about what people are like."

Tails: "Yeah, of course... And your daughter has very good manners, but evidently she's a spoiled brat."

Cream: "Shut up!"

Tails: "I told you so, Vanilla."

Vanilla: [indignant] "Mr and Mrs Prower, it would be better if both of you take responsibility for your son's actions, because he's using a very defiant and offensive tone of voice."

Rosemary: [patiently] "No."

Vanilla: [pauses, trying to process what she has just heard] "What?"

Tails: "Wait a moment: I ain't done yet. Since Vanilla has expressed her opinion about the tone of voice used by me, what if I make my contribution? For example: I dunno what you do, ma'am, but Cream always forces others to 'talk right', she always reminds us of it when we say a curse."

Vanilla: "I think you should be grateful for that. She's doing you a favor by correcting your language."

Tails: "She's asphyxiating me! She wanna be my girlfriend, but can you imagine having a girlfriend like that? She seems a more childish version of Amy Rose, but with the difference that she's a fan of me instead of a fan of Sonic. It only needs that she become a dominatrix."

Cream: "How dare you, Miles 'Insane' Prower?! Do you say that I'm worse than the b**** you have as a girlfriend?!"
Vanilla: "CREAM! TAILS!"

Cream: [to Vanilla] "I'm telling the truth! [to Tails] And how can you even be that girl's boyfriend? What does she have and I don't have?"

Tails: [pauses] "So Fiona is a b****, huh? Well, I have some news for you: [screaming with a mixture of fury, pride and happiness] I LIKE B*****!"

The tears start to form in Cream's eyes, while Cheese and Vanilla sigh in surprise.

Tails: "What? Am I being too cruel? Well, I'm sorry, but I already have a beautiful girlfriend who understands me, someone who participates in this war just like me, someone to whom I'm faithful and who's also faithful to me, a girl with whom I can even do intimate things that we both enjoy very much. Why would I want to give up my girlfriend to have... [gestures to Cream's body] this? Yeah, maybe Fiona is too much for a nerd who's barely turning twelve, but there are several compelling reasons why I deserve to be her boyfriend and I'll remain her boyfriend. And you'd better get over it, because I'll continue to go to bed with "that b****" and we both will continue having days of unbridled sex, even if everyone is against us."

On hearing the strong language adopted by the little fox, all the people on the hospital's outskirts stops walking and looks at him. An uncomfortable silence falls on everyone. Among those who observe, there's a certain blue hedgehog that was walking towards the hospital. He gets mad at the scene: the little rabbit girl, crying disconsolately, rests her face on her mother's skirt; meanwhile, Tails continues to show his fury, Fiona looks without showing emotion, and Tails' parents simply look surprised.

Vanilla: [angry, despite trying not to lose her temper] "Mr and Mrs Prower! Generally, I have a lot of patience and let others express themselves and live as they please, but this is too much. I demand that you both do something about that heartless monster that you two have begotten as a son."

Tails' parents think for a moment their answer and they look at each other, before turning to Vanilla.

Tails' parents: [in unison] "No."

Vanilla: "WHAT?!"

Fiona: "You heard my future in-laws, Lady Perfection. If you seek to force my boyfriend to be your daughter's boyfriend and to marry her in the future, as the oligarchs like you usually do, you can give up already. [squats, and hugs Tails] As Miles said, he likes to be with me." [gives him a kiss on the cheek]

Unable to answer this, Vanilla turns her back on the quartet of foxes and hurries, carrying in her arms her daughter, who continues crying but does it with less force because of fatigue. Cheese also goes with them, flying "in reverse" and sticking out his tongue to the quartet, to which Tails responds by making a "f*** you" gesture in a disguised way.

Fiona: "You know what, Miles? After all this discussion, I'm feeling like having sex. I think we would have good sex."

Tails: [smiling mischievously] "I can't wait. But before... [to his fathers] Thank you for defending me. I guess now you're gonna tell me not to talk like that again."

Amadeus: "Actually, I would only advise you to be more 'subtle' next time."

Tails: "Is that all?"
Rosemary: "Neither Cream nor Vanilla have the right to demand anything from you. You were right, despite the unpleasant language you used."

Fiona: "Still, why did you two refuse to act against Miles, when Vanilla demanded the two of you?"

Rosemary: "Because we would have hinted that we agreed with Vanilla, about the subject of Tails and his relationship with you. We weren't going to give her that pleasure."

Amadeus: "Considering what I heard from Fiona, I suppose you two deserve to be alone for a few minutes, son. Your mother and I will attend to some issues that we had pending."

Tails: "What kind of issues? If it's sexual matters, there's nothing to be ashamed of."

Tails's parents are starting to blush, but they manage to control themselves right away.

Rosemary: "Apart from that issue, we also plan to meet with a group of friends in the Royal Army. They're young officers who rose very fast in the ranks and who agree with us that a democratic government must be established."

Fiona: "Are you sure of what you do? That sounds like-"

Amadeus: "I know: it sounds like a coup d'état. But we're only planning to bring together followers, to then make a peaceful mobilization where there are a lot of people. In that way, we'll have King Elias listen to the people instead of listening to their father."

He and Rosemary start walking away from their son and his girlfriend.

Tails: "Good luck!"

Rosemary: [waving her hand] "Thank you, son!"

Amadeus: [waving his hand] "See you later!"

Tails: "Well, Cream's problem was solved, and Antoine is free. What do you think of this proposal, Fiona? Celebrate Christmas in Station Square, enjoying the summer weather and the beaches of Emerald Coast."

Fiona: "Yes, and you will enjoy seeing me dressed in a bikini, right?"

Tails: [tries to contain an erection, while Fiona giggles] "Why do you have to make those suggestions?"

Fiona: "It's fun to see you nervous."

Tails: "Well, I'll not deny that it's fun for me too-"

He's interrupted by someone touching his shoulder with a finger, but he doesn't turn around.

Tails: [calm, looking at nothingness] "What do you want, Sonic?"

Sonic: [in a threatening tone that sounds very real] "Go and apologize to her. Right now."

Tails: [smiling confidently] "Force me."

Meanwhile, in the waiting room...
Bunnie: "Why did you do that to us, Sally?"

Sally: "Do what?"

Bunnie: "Betraying us."

Sally: "Betraying us?"

Bunnie: "Yes! Betraying us! Are you deaf? You should use those earphones for less time."

Sally: "The only thing I did was to stop that 'policy of cruelty' that you were carrying out."

Antoine: "It seems that, according to Votre Altesse, any attempt to neutralize an enemy using all necessary means falls into the category of "cruelty". C'est certain?"

Sally: "You've cut a hand off him. Do you think that's okay? Obviously you did it intentionally, you were blinded by hatred and that made you act inappropriately-"

Bunnie: "Inappropriately?! He's Scourge Hedgehog! He committed the most terrible crimes. Any method, however bloody it may be, is appropriate if you really wanna stop it. In addition, Antoine ain't to blame that Scourge is such a difficult opponent."

Antoine: "De plus, Sally, GUN admits that we must resort to lethal force whenever we try to stop Scourge. I know I'm going to sound like someone bloodthirsty and cruel, but he's too dangerous to allow him to stay alive."

Sally: "But-"

Antoine: "Oui, oui, je sais: you're worried that we might lose our sanity by abandoning our 'no-kill policy'. But we must do it for two reasons: première, we're not so stupid as to continue killing innocents after killing our most dangerous enemies, and your measures are a disrespect to everyone's intelligence; deuxième, even if we lose our sanity by killing our enemies, we would also lose it if we continued to avoid assassination at all costs, because this war is unsustainable if we don't make use of all the resources necessary to obtain victory."

Sally: "Was nuclear bombardment a necessary resource?"

Antoine: "Oui. And it was also necessary to prevent you from knowing it. Because you, though you've not killed anyone or ordered anyone else to do it, you've already lost your sanity."

Sally: "Enough, Antoine! Enough, Bunnie! It's evident that we're discussing only because you two today woke up feeling like discussing."

Antoine: [energetically] "Bien sûr I feel like discussing, after waking up the way I woke up today: vous were the one who ordered me to be handcuffed to a hospital gurney, et auparavant, vous were the one who made me end up on a hospital gurney. It was also vous who ordered us to be arrested, instead of helping us in our attempt to stop Scourge."

Sally: "Ant, you're looking like-"

Antoine: "Quoi? What am je looking like? Am je looking like I'm crazy?"

Sally: "Actually, I was gonna say that you look like a woman who's menstruating, but what you said is good too. And speaking of that, I'm forced to fire you again."

Bunnie: "WHAT?! NO! You promised that what happened in the previous ten years with Antoine
wouldn't happen again. You promised you'd do things better."

Antoine: "Mon amour, I think she hasn't kept her promise for a long time."

Sally: "I don't have many options when a member of my team is mentally and emotionally unstable, like Antoine."

Antoine: [furious and defiant] "OUI! I'M CRAZY! Say: 'Antoine, you're crazy'! And once you've done it, stop psychoanalyzing me! You, most noble motherf-!"

The coyote is interrupted by Sonic, who flies to a hospital window, breaks it and enters the waiting room through it, falling to the ground after, just between the three mobians who were arguing and now are astonished.

Sonic: [trying to recover, gradually getting angry] "Ant, were you about to say "motherf*****" to Sally?"

The young soldier does not respond, as Tails also enters the same broken window, grabs Sonic's shoulders and, flying with his two tails, drags him and takes him out of the hospital. The fox is carrying many Rings of Power in his arms, as if they were bracelets, and he's radiating energy.

Tails: "I think we still have to settle outstanding accounts."

"Then you'll have to wait to be able to settle accounts with my Sonic."

Upon hearing a female voice speaking to him, the fox looks to his left, but he only gets to see Amy Rose's Piko-Piko hammer going swiftly toward him.

Fiona is peacefully seated at the foot of a walnut, near the New Lake of the Rings, eating some popcorn. She was watching Tails' fight against Sonic: Although the red vixen herself insisted on helping him, her boyfriend assured him that he could deal with his "ex-bro" on his own, so she decided to be a spectator of the fight. However, after the two contestants entered through a hospital window, she lost sight of them.

PIKO!

CRASH!

Tails crashes into the trunk of the same walnut, startling Fiona, who drops her popcorn on the grass. The two-tailed fox falls at the foot of the huge tree, dizzy and with some cuts that immediately start to heal thanks to his Chaos energy.

"Miles! Are you okay?"

"Urgh... My head..."

"Obviously you ain't well. What happened?"

"Amy... Hammer..."

"Miles, can you stop saying loose and meaningless words? You look like a... Bah, I can't think of anything anymore-"

PIKO!
Amy appears using her hammer to hit the ground in front of Fiona, causing the vixen to hurriedly lift Tails off the ground and drive him away from Sonic's Number One Fanatic.

"I dunno if you're aware, vixen, but your boyfriend hurt my Sonic and has become a psycho." An angry Amy says, hammer in hand.

"Really? Then I'll make sure Tails is still alive, because I want him to continue to hurt your Sonic, and also because that psycho loves me more than your Sonic or Scourge love me."

Amy tries again to crush Fiona, but she runs away, carrying Tails in her arms, until she stops in front of the hospital, where her boyfriend was fighting with Sonic. Then she leaves Tails on the floor to let him recover, while she presses a button on his glove. Amy suddenly jumps from the hospital terrace, making a war cry and raising her Piko-Piko to crush Fiona in a surprise attack, but Fiona's electro-cloak and electro-weapons arrive at the last moment, flying. Before being crushed by the hammer, the vixen is already covered by her cloak and has her weapons ready, and she uses her electro-whip to hook the hammer quickly and throw it to one side, also throwing Amy along with it.

Sally: "What the f*** is happening here?"

Fiona turns around and meets with Sally, Antoine and Bunnie, who leave the hospital to see what happened. There Sonic arrives too, who's very beaten and even more tired, but still approaches Tails to verify that he's well.

Sonic: [crouches next to Tails] "Tails, buddy, answer me..."

Tails opens his eyes a little. Seeing Sonic in front of him, he gives a surprise punch that breaks the hedgehog's nose.

Sonic: "OUCH! F***!"

Sally: "Sonic! Watch your language!"

Tails: [in a weak voice, rising slowly from the ground] "It's too late to keep me from learning to say curses, Auntie Sally."

Sally: "Silence, Tails."

Tails: [in a low, menacing voice] "Nobody makes me shut up, okay?"

Rotor: [approaching them after seeing the fights] "What happens here?"

Sonic: [with malice] "Ant said 'motherf*****' to Sally."

Rotor: He did WHAT?!

Antoine: [to Sonic] "P**ain! Va te faire foutre! Bon sang!"

Sonic: [pretending to be surprised] "Wow, what a great news... Ant is insulting me in French."

The coyote, infuriated almost to madness, with his fist in high, is about to throw himself on the hedgehog, but Sally stops him.

Sally: "Ant, you better decline your attitude, or else."

Antoine: [defiantly] Quoi? What will vous do if je don't 'decline my attitude'? [approaches Sally and tries to show how tall he is, to intimidate her] Are you going to arrest me? You would be
demonstrating, *encore une fois*, how you use excessively the power that you have as a princess. Are you going to kill me? I know you would be able to do something like that for Sonic, your beloved idiot."

Sally is silent for a moment, being apparently intimidated by the soldier, while Sonic prepares to intervene.

Sally: [looks straight into Antoine's eyes] "You're still in love with me."

Antoine: [upset and confused] "*Quoi*?"

Sonic: [thinking] ("What are you playing, Sally?")

Bunnie: [thinking] ("Damn b****, what's she trying to do to my boyfriend?")

Sally: "Although you're very happy with Bunnie, you're still envious of my relationship with Sonic."

Antoine: [indignant] "It's not true!" [thinking] ("You're confirming that you're crazy, Sally.")

Sally: [with seductive smile and look] "Are you sure? Because I think you ain't so sure. What would happen if...?"

To the surprise of the coyote himself and everyone else, Sally kisses him directly on his lips. In response, Sonic drops his lower jaw, Bunnie growls and prepares her robotic fist, and the others don't quite know how to react to this. However, during the several seconds when the chipmunk's lips are in contact with Antoine's lips, he's in shock, his eyes are wide and frowning, and his right eye's lower eyelid is shaking again.

Antoine grabs Sally by the shoulders and pushes her away from him, breaking the kiss; growling, he immediately uses all his strength to slap her with the back of his hand. Sally, shocked, screams and falls to the ground. In response to the soldier's actions, Sonic runs at supersonic speed and runs over him, Bunnie reacts by striking the blue hedgehog with her robotic fist, Rotor retains the cyborg rabbit by force, Fiona kicks the walrus behind his knee to make him lose his balance, Amy raises her Piko-Piko to try to crush the red vixen again, Tails stops the hammer with his own hands and then he gives a flying kick to the pink hedgehog, Sally recovers from the slap and then she drags Tails grabbing him by his two tails, Antoine unsheathes a combat knife and puts it near the chipmunk's neck to force her to free Tails, and Sonic again runs over him to prevent him from hurting his girlfriend.

Over time, the fight becomes a real street fight: Rotor measuring his forces with Bunnie; Sally trying unsuccessfully to catch Tails; Amy trying to crush Fiona, also unsuccessfully and receiving blows from the red vixen in addition, and Antoine and Sonic fighting wallowing in the mud. A few moments later, Sally and Fiona start to fight, testing their respective skills in close combat, and Tails and Sonic begin to fight to the death, taking to the limit their respective Chaos healing powers.

"*Miles Prower, Fiona Fox, Antoine D'Cooolite y Bunnie Rabbot: the bail bond has been paid, you can leave."

Responding to what NICOLE said through the loudspeaker, the four mobians leave the Penitentiary of New Mobotropolis: It's the new maximum security prison in the city, built in the shape of a tower, equipped with cells closed by force fields, which keep prisoners totally isolated from the world and other prisoners.

The Prowers and Procion are at the Penitentiary's door, standing next to a "minivan" type car. It's
6:00 PM, the sun is already hiding and the sky is reddish.

Antoine: "I suppose now we must thank you three for getting us out of prison."

Rosemary: "It's not necessary, Tony."

Procion: "Are you sure, ma'am? You and Marshal Prower have paid a quite large bail."

Tails: "Don't worry. Paying our bail bonds is fairer than what Max did."

Amadeus: "What has he done?"

Fiona: "He took advantage of Sally's condition as a member of the royal family, and he took her out of jail without paying her bail. Then Max and Sally, again taking advantage of their status as members of the royal family and her friendship with NICOLE, also freed Sonic, Amy and Rotor without paying bail."

Bunnie: "For some reason, King Elias didn't come personally to free them. I suppose he would prefer to pay bail with money out of his own pocket, or he would wanna free us four too, so the old man persuaded him to stay in the castle."

Rosemary: "Another proof of the influence exerted by our old friend Max on the King's decisions."

Amadeus: "For sure."

The group of seven mobians enters the car, and Procion, occupying the driver's seat, turns it on and starts the journey, in the direction of the Airport.

Fiona: "You know what? Something very curious happened today: when Max came to free Sally and the others, he came in a wheelchair."

Rosemary: "The beginning of the end?"

Fiona: "Probably."

Meanwhile, Procion doesn't seem very happy, although he disguises it and stays concentrated to control the car.

Amadeus: "Anyway... King Rob and Commander Tower invited us to a party at Station Square. It's a meeting of quite important people from different places of Mobius. Considering that the city is already safe, we could travel there for a few days, take a vacation, go to that party, and also think about what we're going to do next."

Tails: "Good idea, Dad. Considering what happened today, It won't do us any good if we continue to stay in this city."
Chapter 11: Upgrades and briefings.

Chapter Summary

Bunnie starts having problems with the robotized parts of her body. While Antoine faces the pain thinking about what could happen to the love of his life, Tails decides to resort to certain contacts that can help not only Bunnie, but also his own father Amadeus.

Central sea, 500 km north of Station Square, 10 km high.

5:00 am, New Mobotropolis Time, 7:00 am, Station Square Time.

"Attention, passengers: we will arrive at Station Square International Airport in half an hour."

The AFFs and Leonidas Procion are in a turbo-jet for passenger transportation, traveling in First Class. In this opportunity, both King Rob and Commander Tower have contributed money to pay all the expenses of the trip.

Amadeus, Rosemary and Tails are talking to several people on the phone.

Rosemary: "Good morning, I'd like to speak with Commander Tower, please... Thank you very much... Hello? Commander! How are you? Yeah, Amadeus and I are very well. Could we ask you a favor? We are going to carry out a mission, and we need you to... I'd better let you talk to my son, he will explain it to you better..." [hands the cell phone to Tails]

Tails: "Good morning, Mr Commander... Yeah, Fiona and I are having a great time... Oh, right, the favor we needed... First, we need access to the Elba Island Prison. More precisely, we need access to the corridor where the members of Destructix are locked up... Actually, we plan to make them an offer, so they give us a little help... Thank you, Commander. We also need Agent Shadow... Yes, it's for that same mission... Thank you very much, Commander... I'll let you talk to my dad. See you at Station Square." [hands the cell phone to Amadeus]

Amadeus: "Hi, Abraham. How's your job? Yeah, we decided to take a break..."

Fiona is enjoying the gourmet breakfast of the plane, sharing it also with the Colonel's son.

Procion is also on the phone with someone, but he's doing it separately from the Prower family.

And finally, Bunnie and Antoine are...

Well, they're inside the bathroom, attending a private, very private matter...

"Oh, Antoine... Do we need to do it in the bathroom?"

"Ne t'inquiète pas, ma chérie... I made sure it was a clean bathroom... De plus, I locked the door, et outside is the sign that says "occupied", donc no one will look here..."

"Antoine, sweetie... I don't feel well..."

A dull thud is heard from outside the bathroom, as if something had fallen to the floor; this noise is
heard by Fiona, who stops eating and looks behind her, at the bathroom. A few seconds later, a desperate Antoine leaves the bathroom, dragging a dizzy, barely conscious Bunnie.

"Hé! Bring a docteur! ¡Et somebody get this plane down, pour l'amour de Dieu!"

Interzonal Hospital for Acute Patients, Station Square. 9:00 am in the morning, Station Square Time.

Bunnic is sleeping on a hospital gurney, with a serum injected intravenously into her organic arm, while Antoine is seated at her side, his head buried in his hands.

"Mon Dieu, que dois-je faire?" ["My God, what do I do?"]

"Antoine..."

The coyote looks at his girlfriend, who just woke up.

"What happened, Antoine?" She says in a weak voice.

The young soldier is unable to respond, while nervousness starts to invade his mind again.

"I guess I'm in serious trouble."

"That would be a euphemism, ma chérie."

Meanwhile, Tails, her parents and Fiona are in the waiting room. The two-tailed fox was calling someone, but that person isn't answering the call, so he turns off his cell phone.

Fiona: "And well? Did Beauregard answer your phone calls?"

Tails: "No, he didn't answer any calls. I sent him an SMS explaining Bunnie's situation, but that guy doesn't wanna know anything about us."

Fiona: [indignant] "Ungrateful son of a b****. We restore him on his country's throne, and look how he rewards us and Bunnie: His niece, whom he raised as if she were his own daughter, is in trouble, and he, the 'Magnanimous Leader of the Southern Baronies', doesn't respond when we ask for help to make her well again. We ain't even asking for help as compensation for our work, we're asking him to help a member of his own family."

Tails: "When she finds out what's wrong with her... Antoine's reaction was already quite bad. Imagine how she will react."

"Quoi?"

"What you heard, Tony: I ain't surprised."

"Mais... did you know that this was going to happen one day?"

"Think for a moment: you get nanites inside your body, and those nanites make your bones, your muscles, your joints, your skin, your blood and lymph vessels, your nerves, all your tissues and your organs transform into cables, ducts, metal sheets, gears, microchips, and a bunch of other things like that. It's obvious: something like this ain't innocuous for your body, it will make you sick sooner or later."
"Et pourquoi didn't you tell us about this? Pourquoi didn't you tell le docteur Quack?"

"I didn't want y'all to worry. Regarding Dr. Quack, I did tell him, but we both decided that I was gonna wait for some de-robotization method to be developed." A slight smile forms on the lips of the rabbit girl. "I suppose it's time for me to be a normal girl again. Now I'm in Station Square, and here they may be able to de-robotize me, don't you think?"

Hearing this, a sad Antoine slowly bows his head, and the smile disappears from his girlfriend's face.

"I can't be de-robotized, right?"

The coyote tries to respond, stammering. "There are experimental methods, mais they're très, très risky. A fragment of metal may remain dangerously embedded after de-robotization, et... et you could... die."

A heavy silence falls on those present in the room.

"What other options are there?"

"You can stay connected to a machine that keeps you alive until you can be de-robotized... You can let your robotized limbs be amputated, which will make you disabled for the rest of your life... Ou you can have your robotized limbs replaced by robotic prostheses themselves. Les médecins advise you to use prostheses, which can be easily updated, mais aussi warn that if an effective et safe de-robotization method is developed one day, that method won't be applicable to vous, et part of your body will be robotic for the rest of your life."

"Well..." Tears start to form in Bunnie's eyes. "I must admit... that at least... *sob* I've already been warned..."

Antoine immediately hugs Bunnie as she starts to cry.

"Shh... Calme-toi... Je am here. Listen to moi: Whatever you do... I'll support you in your decision... always..."

"But... *snif* wouldn't you want me to stay alive? *snif* Wouldn't you want me to still have powers *snif* to fight in the war?"

"En vérité... Oui... Mais your wishes come first, mon amour... According to moi, at least... Please ignore what I just told you... Do what vous want: Using prosthetics, undergoing de-robotization... Je will support you."

A minute later...

Antoine leaves Bunnie's room and arrives in the waiting room, meeting her teammates.

Tails: "What happened?"

Antoine: "She will receive the prostheses, she was already taken to the operating room."

Tails: "Good to know... [suddenly runs out into the hall] Wait for me!"

The fox runs to the operating room, and Antoine, intrigued, accompanies him. When they arrive, they meet a group of doctors led by the surgeon responsible for Bunnie's operation.

Tails: "Wait a moment. We need to see how prostheses are for the patient Bunnie Rabbot."
Surgeon: "Who are you?"

Antoine: [arrives in the room] "A friend of mine."

Surgeon: "Are you the patient's boyfriend?"

Antoine: "C'est vrai, monsieur le docteur."

Surgeon: "Don't worry about prostheses, gentlemen. They are of the most advanced technology and the best quality."

Tails: "Show them to me, and maybe I'll believe you."

The doctor leaves, then brings several sheets with the prostheses' diagrams.

Surgeon: "At the same time, these prostheses are being assembled according to these specifications. They've been prepared by a team with our best experts in various disciplines."

Tails: [looks at the plans carefully] "I don't doubt that, sir. But what if I told you that there's a better technology and that I can bring it?"

The doctor picks up his cell phone and sends an SMS.

*Stop production of prostheses for cyborg rabbit girl. Maybe we should make changes.*

Surgeon: [to Tails and Antoine] "I hear you."

The next day...

It's 12:00 am, and Tails and Fiona are sunbathing on the beaches of Emerald Coast, taking advantage of the Southern Hemisphere summer. Tails has only a green beach mesh, Fiona wears a blue bikini, and both of them are wearing sunglasses. At the moment, the red vixen is lying face down on a towel, while the two-tailed fox is spreading sunscreen on the back of his girlfriend, who she also has unfastened her bikini's top so he doesn't have any impediments by putting the cream on her back.

Fiona: "I know you're enjoying this, Miles."

Tails: "You dunno how much..."

After spreading the sunscreen over Fiona's back, Tails fastens her bikini's top again. Coincidentally, Tails' parents, wet, approach them walking slowly.

Amadeus: "Hi, son. We just tested the sea water, and it's great. You should go."

Fiona: "We'll be going in a minute."

Tails: "And how are Bunnie and Antoine?"

Rosemary: "I think they're-"

"WAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!

Suddenly, Bunnie appears in the sky, flying with the rockets of her new robotic legs and holding Antoine with her new robotic arm, while the coyote screams terrified and excited at the same time.

Antoine: "S'il vous plaît, Bunnie! Stop! BUNNIE!"
Bunnie: "I'll not stop, Antoine! I'll take full advantage of these prostheses, and you'll enjoy it with me!"

Rosemary: "Does that answer your question, son?"

Tails: "It seems to have worked well... Dad, did you ever think about having a prosthetic for the eye that you lost in the Great War?"

Amadeus: "We didn't have much technology at the time, so I never thought of anything like that. We didn't even dream about it. Can you get a cybernetic eye?"

Tails: "I already got Bunnie's prostheses, and there's more where that came from."

The next day...

"Okay, Dad... Open your eyes."

It's 9:00 pm. Amadeus opens both eyes, and then he finds himself with a big surprise that makes him cry with joy: his left eye is functional again. The Colonel is lying on a hospital gurney, accompanied by his family, his teammates and one of the doctors.

Rosemary: "How's your new eye, my love?"

Amadeus: [crying but smiling, staring into nothingness] "It's... it's... the best day of my life... [looks at the doctor] How did you all get it?"

Tails sale silenciosamente de la habitación y, en el pasillo vacío, se encuentra con un mobiano misterioso.

"I think you deserve a thanks, Top Duck. Considering what you're enduring..."

The mysterious mobiano is a male platypus with a robust body, with little differentiation between his head and his torso, with blue-green pelage, with his "beak" and his tail of the same color but in a darker tone, and with his hair combed in the form of forward-bent, bluish-green tufts with orange tips. He's dressed in a uniform whose overall design is suspiciously similar to Eggman's uniforms design, with the difference that it's violet, not red.

"You don't have to thank me, Tails. And I don't need you to worry about my safety either, I can deal with this."

"Are you sure? If Eggman discovers your cover, he will make you explode, literally."

"I know. And if my cover is discovered and he doesn't make me explode, my own people will tear me apart. But I can do it, I'm sure. It's a very hard thing, but I'll do it."

"You don't have to do this, pal. I have a proposal for you: to fake your death. I'm an expert at doing that. If we make your 'Platypus Legion' believe that you sacrificed your life heroically in order to do them good, they'll not hate you."

"I'm sorry, Tails, but you'll not convince me to give up my duty. When I get the chance, I'll use my influence to convince my Legion that we'll be better at fighting Eggman."

"But first, you should solve the problem of the bombs installed in the implants of you and your soldiers."
"You're right..."

"I can help you with that: creating a computer virus that prevents the bombs from being detonated, or also making a speech to convince the platypuses to break their alliance with Eggman... After you've lent us the Legionization technology, this will serve as compensation."

"About that: officially, Chaotix and the Downunda Freedom Fighters infiltrated our facilities, taking me momentarily as a prisoner and stealing information about Legionization technology." In saying this, "Top Duck" winks at the fox, who responds with a smile without showing his teeth.

"I'm already imagining how furious you are about this setback... Speaking of the DFFs, could I know how they are?"

"Thrash left the team."

"Thrash is... Sorry, who's Thrash?"

"You never knew him, Tails. He had joined the DFFs shortly after I had 'betrayed' them. He's a Tasmanian Devil, one of the few remaining in Downunda and in the world. I have no idea why he left, although I made a guess: the last time I saw Thrash as a member of the DFFs, they were working together with Chaotix; within that other team, there was a pair of Echidnas, and Thrash didn't seem very happy with the idea of working with them two."

"He hates the Echidnas. Did he have any connection with the Dingoes?"

"No, I think his hatred is for another reason, a more 'personal' reason. I'll explain you... There were several groups of Mobian Equidnas who left Albion to try to establish colonies on our continent; in one of those incursions, some scientists experimented with Mobian Tasmanian Devils, possibly to use them as 'living weapons'. Since then, the Tasmanian people weren't the same: because of the experiments, many Tasmanian Devils lost the intelligence they once had, and the new resulting beings, the 'devil-dogs', were mere wild animals, similar to the mobini but with poorer behavior."

"Wait a second: the Tasmanian Devils we know... Are they really those 'devil-dogs' mentioned by you? I thought those were the original Tasmanian Devils."

"I don't blame you for thinking that. The experiments took place more than a millennium ago, and now people see a devil-dog and believe that this is a real Tasmanian Devil."

Tails is silent for a few seconds.

"I have a bad feeling about that 'Thrash'. I dunno if you already know, Top Duck, but there were other Echidna scientists, from more recent times, who had a questionable history, and I know about an Echidna scientist who can be included in that category and who's still active. Surely, Thrash already knows about the madness made by these guys, he believes that all Echidnas are the same and will never change... and he's preparing to take revenge on them. Anyway... What other news do you have about the DFFs?"

"Wombat Stu left your country's Royal Secret Service and returned to the team. I have seen him in action, on a mission of the DFFs against my Legion."

"I wish I could visit him one day, he was a great friend of mine... He also had great potential, I dunno why he went to the Royal Secret Service back then."

"At that time, Geoffrey's team was better. They were Geoffrey himself, his wife Hershey, Wombat, that chameleon that seemed to be of Hispanic origin..."
"Valdez."

"Yeah, His name was Valdez... The robots Heavy and Bomb were also there. That team was promising, but it was all over when Hershey died: Geoffrey apparently became an idiot again, and the team disbanded."

"It's a pity. And how's Barby?"

"She misses you, a lot. At first glance, she looks normal. But before I started working as a mole within the Dark Egg-Legion, I've come to know her well, and I can tell you that she has missed you since you left Downunda."

"If circumstances had been other, perhaps I would have been his girlfriend. But I've met Fiona, I really love her, and I'm a one-woman man, so... You have go-ahead." The fox winks at the platypus. "You mean..."

"Yes: I already discovered that you liked her. And I also know that you were upset when she kissed me."

"I ain't that spiteful, and you know it. When she kissed you, and after seeing how much she missed you, I simply resigned myself."

"Come on... You and Barby have grown up as if you were siblings, so it's perfectly possible that you like her. That's why I'm telling you that you should abandon this 'mole-leader' thing once and for all: You should enjoy your life, take advantage to try to win Barby's love... I could tell her about you and the immense sacrifice you're making."

"Are you a matchmaker now, Tails?"

"Something like that: I was one of the people responsible for getting Antoine to stop having that obsession with Sally; so, unintentionally I'm also one of the responsible for him to be Bunnie's boyfriend right now. Returning to the topic: Are you sure you don't wanna leave this job?"

"Why are you so insistent?"

"I suppose I'm so insistent because I'm worried about your safety, and also because I want Barby to stop thinking about me and find someone who really loves her and who stays by her side regardless of the circumstances." Tails puts a hand on the shoulder of his monotreme "friend". "I'll keep it in mind, Tails. I'll not abandon my mission, but I promise you that I'll take into account what you told me."

"Good to know. Changing the topic: Can you give me more details about the improvements incorporated in the prostheses?"

"Well... Let's start with Bunnie: the rockets on her feet will be more powerful; the plasma cannon in her left arm will have more varied functions, including laser machine gun, remote-controlled plasma bullets, a "plasma" version of flamethrower, etcetera; her three robotic limbs will have their "fuselage" more resistant and also lighter, and they'll also have incorporated generators that will allow to activate a deflector shield; in addition, we've changed the system to take advantage of the chemical energy produced by the body, and this new system will be more efficient and will extract more energy from the nutrient molecules, so the amount of consumed nutrients will be much lower than before. As for your father's new eye: it won't only allow him to capture visible light and to see images in depth, but also allow him to see other forms of electromagnetic radiation, forms invisible to
the human eye and even invisible to any mobian's eye."

"How broad will his 'visible portion of the spectrum' be now?"

"Of the wave frequencies beyond the color red, he will be able to see in infrared, and of the wave frequencies beyond the violet color, he will be able to see in ultraviolet and X-rays. He will also be able to see radiations of certain frequencies that he chooses, using voice control. It also includes a software for scanning machines and living things. In addition, his cybernetic eye is connected to the missing eye's optic nerve, and the captured image is sent to the brain and is combined with the image taken by the other eye; as a result, he can make his prosthetic eye see only in infrared, and his brain will create a total image that will include the infrared radiation captured by the left eye and the image of visible light captured by the right eye."

"And how was it done to put the eye in the corresponding hole? I think an entire eye couldn't fit by inserting it through the existing hole, especially if it's a hard sphere of pure metal."

"Nanites were used to arm the eye inside your father's skull."

"Witty... Top Duck, I have a question: do you know anything about the original Dark Legion?"

"The Echidnas led by Lien-Da?"

"I thought they were being led by Dimitri, her great-great-great-grandfather."

"Lien-Da betrayed him and took his place."

"She's ambitious, right?"

"More than you can imagine."

"Just as I was told. But... how are the people who are part of the Dark Legion?"

"They're like any other. That is, within what would be expected in a group of people who was rejected because they considered technology to be a good thing. To tell the truth, Lien-Da ain't at all representative of her people, and Dimitri and the other ancestors weren't much better than her. Within the Dark Legion, there are entire families of Echidnas, men, women, children, who are really convinced of technology's benefits and consider that the prohibition imposed by the High Council of Echidnaopolis was absurd."

"The problem is that they don't realize that Dimitri, with his actions, was to blame that the technology had so bad reputation. After all, it was he who wanted to play to be God. More precisely, he played to be Enerjak. Anyway, Echidnaopolis no longer exists..."

"Because of Eggman. It seems that both the original Dark Legionnaires are idiots just like Lien-Da herself. They're not realizing that they're working for the same guy who ordered the genocide of their people. When the Dingoes destroyed Echidnaopolis and killed 90% of that city's people, they were executing orders from Eggman. The Dingoes also didn't have a truly representative leader at the time: Helmut had been overthrown by his son Kage, a stupid big guy who was easy to make angry, and it was Kage who allied with Eggman and led the Dingo Regime during Echidna extermination; Later, Kage died, Helmut returned to take the control, and the Dingoes were independent of Eggman again."

"Yeah..."

"You six, the AFFs, should do something with them."
"With the Dark Legion?"

"With the Dark Legion and with the Dingo Regime too. Tails, you also recognize technology's benefits, you also disagree with the prohibitions, you hate that such absurd measures are taken on the basis of the individual actions of a few imbeciles with delusions of grandeur. Besides, you're not only intelligent, you're also clever with the words-"

"What? Me, someone clever with with words?"

"Of course, Tails. I know you can convince the Echidnas and the Dingoes to forget their differences."

The canine remains thoughtful.

"Perhaps so..."

"The only problem would be Lien-Da, but I know you're capable of beating her in a fight."

"Actually, I have other plans for her."

"Are you thinking of attracting her as an ally? Tails, she's manipulative, ruthless, and won't settle for any deal because she always wanna have it all-"

"Don't worry, I'll do the same thing I did with Fiona. Besides, you said it yourself: I'm clever with the words."

"Fiona is an exceptional case."

"I don't think so. All I needed to do with Fiona was inviting her to think and showing her the reality. And I plan to do the same with Lien-Da, when I get the chance."

"Show her the reality? She wants all the power for her people and especially for herself, she has that power thanks to her alliance with Eggman, and if you show her the reality, the only thing that you'll succeed in is to give her the reason."

"Top Duck, what I plan to do is to show her the other side of that reality. You'll see."
Chapter 12: Revealed secrets and new recruits, Part 1.

Chapter Summary

The day finally comes: the AFFs’ meeting with their allies around the world at Station Square. Surprises, interesting encounters, other encounters a little more problematic, revelations of state secrets, and the addition of more members to the Freedom Fighters.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The next day...

Elba Island Maximum Security Prison, near Spagonia coast. 11:00 pm, Spagonia Time.

Field Marshal Amadeus Prower walks through one of the prison corridors. He wears a gray uniform and a gray military cap, both with the attachments corresponding to his rank of GUN’s Field Marshal. In the right arm, he has two bands: one band is dark blue, with GUN’s symbol and the letters HM (“Honorary Member”) written in white; the other band is orange with a black star, and that star has the letters FF (“Freedom Fighter”) written in yellow. He also has several decorations: his Acorn’s Cross of Merit, with two repetition bars, hanging from its respective ribbon tied to the neck; his Knight Cross of the Steel Cross, also hanging from its own ribbon tied around his neck; his badge of Mercia’s New Legion of Honour on the abdomen’s left side, now with two red ribbons incorporated, and accompanied by a red band that now has a rosette in the middle; a Silver Medal for Bravery and a Bronze Medal for Bravery on the chest’s left side, just below the New Legion of Honour’s band. Finally, he wears a wedding ring on of his left hand’s ring finger, and he no longer has a patch on his left eye.

The adult fox with brown pelage stands in front of one of the cells.

"I am Amadeus Prower, GUN’s Honorary Member with the rank of Field Marshal. I request access to the cell of the prisoner Simon Simian."

"Access granted."

The sliding metal door opens, revealing the Sergeant who was once a member of Destructix, now in an orange one-piece uniform.

"If you come to punish me because I’ve attacked your son, I warn you that he was the one who actually hit me."

"I know what happened, don’t worry about it."

"Oh, I almost forgot: congratulations on having two eyes again, and congratulations on the medals."

Amadeus nods politely. "Thank you."

"According to what I heard, your son and his friends have made a scandal in their native country."

"News travel fast, does not it? Well, I have news for you: the public prosecutor is willing to make a
deal, but on one condition."

"I'll not betray my comrades in Destructix, Marshal."

"Actually, that's not exactly what the public prosecutor asks for. We want you to be a Freedom Fighter."

"Me, a Freedom Fighter? I ain't interested in offending you, but what did you smoke?"

"I read your file: When the rest of your village's people didn't want to fight Robotnik, you wanted to fight. That's admirable, do not you think?"

"That was in the past, my place is in Destructix now."

"Yeah, of course... Your place is in Destructix, with a mad murderer, a bloodthirsty mercenary and a ninja warrior fallen from grace-
"

"Shut up..." Simon says softly, his head down.

"Doing evil after you train to do good-
"

"Shut up." Simon says in a slightly louder and firmer tone, though he's ignored by Amadeus.

"Working for the same dictator whom you swore to overthrow-
"

"SHUT UP!" Simian tries to jump on Amadeus, but is stopped by chains attached to his wrists and ankles, and returns to sit. In all that time, the war veteran doesn't even flinch and still stares at the beast that almost attacks him.

"You don't want to accept the truth: you're working with murderers, and you've rendered your services to Robotnik, Eggman, and other criminals who are totally devoid of honor and who voluntarily chose to do evil: Scourge, Mammoth Mogul, that 'Finitevus'... Is that what you want to do with your life?"

The sergeant stares at the floor, understanding everything after his moment of fury. Amadeus is still talking.

"Or do you want to join the Alternative Freedom Fighters and to fulfill the oath that you made to yourself in your youth?"

Simon finally looks into Amadeus' eyes.

"You're foxy."

"I'm a fox."

A few minutes later...

"I am Amadeus Prower, GUN's Honorary Member with the rank of Field Marshal. I request access to the cell of the prisoner Lightning Lynx."

"Access granted."

The sliding metal door opens, revealing the ninja who was once the best one of the Raiju Clan, now in a situation similar to that of Sergeant Simian.
"Look who arrived: Super-Colonel Prower, one of the progenitors of the 'Chosen One'. What brings you here?"

"I'll be brief: we have an offer for you."

"Let me guess: Will I be freed if I betray Destructix? Forget it. I prefer Lethal Injection."

Amadeus is silent, staring into the lynx's eyes.

"To die rather than to be a traitor. In a way, it is a good role model: to give one's life for the group to which you belong... just to get that group to fire you when you make a small mistake."

"What do you mean?"

"I read your file: you were the best soldier of your clan, but you wanted to prove your worth to your leader, you failed, and you were fired. If I'm not mistaken, the Raiju Clan is led by the Bride of the Conquering Storm. Did you like her?"

"I don't have to answer your sayings, Marshal."

"However, she wanted her ninjas to be strong, both physically and mentally; besides, the rules forced her to be committed to her clan, to the point of being totally lacking in sentimental life. So when you fell in love with her, she didn't like it at all, and when you challenged her to a duel to show her that you were her best soldier, she thought you were doing that because your mind was weak and your judgment clouded. Or am I wrong?"

Lightning remains with his head down, looking sideways and frowning, and doesn't respond. The Marshal takes the opportunity to continue talking.

"I know, I'm not who to criticize the values of yours and your people. In fact, in my time as a Lieutenant of the Royal Army, I was in the Dragon Kingdom for a season, studying your people's fighting techniques and also their culture, and there are many things about your people that please me."

"I appreciate the compliment."

"But it must be admitted that suppressing feelings is excessive from any imaginable point of view, and in addition, having sentimental life doesn't necessarily weaken you or cause someone to fail in the role of leader."

"You say it from your own point of view, from a Westerner's point of view."

"There are things that are always the same, no matter the time or the place."

"Yes, of course..." The lynx responds with disdain.

"Does your 'code of honor' say it's okay to work at the service of a tyrant who turns people into robots to force them to obey him? Does your 'code of honor' say that being a mercenary is better than fighting for Mobius' freedom? Does your 'code of honor' say that it's okay to blindly obey a super-powerful prehistoric wizard who seeks to become a god and dominate the world, solely because that wizard improved your abilities and gave you a purpose to live? And besides, how can you govern yourself by a 'code of honor' and, at the same time, to work with people who have no honor?"

Lightning remains silent, unable to respond.
"I don't ask you to betray Destructix. What I ask of you is, at least, to think about the possibility of bringing your talents to the Resistance's cause. On the other hand, I understand that, being part of Destructix, you feel part of something and you feel loved. But I also know other people who have gone through situations similar to what you've been through, so you'll not feel alone if you join the Alternative Freedom Fighters. In this team, of which I'm a member, there are people like you, people who understand what Honor is, people who understand what it feels like to be rejected... Think about it."

A few minutes later...

After leaving the Elba Island Prison, Lightning Lynx and Sergeant Simian meet casually on the island's coast. Both are dressed only in white short-sleeved T-shirts and grayish-green long navy pants.

Lightning Lynx: "How did you get out?"

Sergeant Simon Simian: "The two-tailed fox's father visited me and offered me a deal."

Lightning: "Let me guess: you'll be a Freedom Fighter."

Simian: "How do you know?"

Lightning: "He visited me too, offering me the same deal."

Simian: "And did you accept?"

Lightning: "I can say that he's an honorable warrior in many ways. And he's also very clever with the words."

Simian: "I can already imagine how Predator and Flying will react when they know it: they'll wanna escape from prison and hunt us down."

"They'll never know, comrades."

Surprised, the lynx and the gorilla stop talking and look toward the dock: Colonel Prower, accompanied by Shadow, had appeared out of nowhere. Amadeus is carrying two bags with clothes, and Shadow is dressed in his usual outfit, but also has a dark red bow tied around his neck.

Amadeus: "And if the bird and the toad find out about this, we'll take care of them. Friends are for that, after all. [looks at Shadow] Right?"

Shadow: "..." [still looking into nothingness, with a serious look]

CRI-CRI-CRI-CRI-CRI-CRI-CRI-CRI-CRI...

Amadeus: "I'll take that as a yes. [gives a bag to Lightning and the other bag to Simian] Put on these clothes."

The lynx takes out of his bag a hanfu of simple design, of black color with red edges, and a set of gloves and boots of electric blue color with drawings of yellow rays, everything made according to his size. Simian takes out of his bag a military uniform of gala, of white color, also made to his measure.

Simian: "Are we going to a party in Spagonia?"
Lightning: "I don't see any ferries approaching here."

Amadeus: [to Simian] "Yes and no: we'll go to a party, and there you two will meet the other members of the AFFs and some of our allies, but the party won't be in Spagonia. [to Lightning] And don't worry about transportation, we have everything ready. [to both of them] Now come closer, please."

The two free prisoners walk down the dock and approach Marshal Prower and Shadow. Then the fox and the hedgehog hold each other by the hand and also take the other two by the hand.

Shadow: "Chaos Control."

The quartet becomes a silhouette of bright green light, and finally disappears.

New Sheraton Hotel, Casinopolis, Station Square. 8:15 pm, Station Square Time, 11:15 pm, Spagonia Time.

A silhouette of bright green light appears on the terrace of the new Sheraton Hotel, and after a few seconds, that silhouette is revealed as the same quartet that was on a dock on the Elba Island. At this hour, it's still evening in Station Square.

Simian: [slightly surprised] "Wow..."

Amadeus: "Now, I invite you two to accompany me."

Lightning: [to Shadow] "How did you do it? I thought a Chaos Emerald was necessary..."

The four of them go down through the elevator to a large, elegant, crowded hall. The hall has the best quality wooden floors, large windows, chandeliers hanging from the ceiling, a large empty space surrounded by chairs and tables, food and drinks in great quantity and variety, and so on. People are talking in a relaxed way, with the speakers emitting background music.

[Soundtrack: Concert of Brandenburg Number 3 in G major, 1st Movement: Allegro – Johann Sebastian Bach]

Among those present is João Falcão. The President of the United Federation has a red band and a badge of the New Legion of Honour, just like Amadeus, but his badge doesn't have the two red ribbons and his band doesn't have the rosette. When Amadeus sees him, he turns to him.

President: "Marshal Prower, you're back. And I can see that you managed to lure those two to the Resistance's cause."

Amadeus: "That's right, Mister President."

President: "And you also changed your Legion of Honour insignia. Were you promoted in rank?"

Amadeus: "Yes, this morning we received a package from King Rob and Queen Mari-An, with these new badges and bands for each of the members of the AFFs, and they also sent us the message about our promotion of rank: before, we were in the rank of Knights of the Legion, the lowest, and now we're in the rank of Officers of the Legion, the next."

President: "Why were you all promoted?"

Amadeus: "There's a sort of 'Evaluating Commission' within the Legion, and they determined that
we should have already been rewarded when we had destroyed Eggman's nuclear arsenal a few weeks ago. Since we had done two meritorious acts for which we deserved to be rewarded, they decided to promote us in rank."

Commander Tower, his daughter Amanda and Hope Kintobor are approaching them. Amanda and Hope have the insignia of the rank of Knight of the Legion of Honour, while Abraham has the insignia of the rank of Officer.

Amadeus: "Welcome, Abraham. I suppose you were also promoted in rank in the Legion of Honor. But... In the destruction of Eggman's nuclear arsenal, GUN didn't participate."

Commander: "What are you talking about? My promotion has nothing to do with it. I was promoted by the nuclear attack on Robotropolis."

Amadeus: "Did you plan it? I thought my son had been the plan's artificer."

Commander: "We both planned it together."

Amadeus: "Wait a second: Was Tails also promoted for the same reason?"

Commander: "According to what I had been notified, yes."

Amadeus: "But he had already been promoted to Officer by... Oh, no."

Hope: "Oh, no? It doesn't sound good, it never sounds good. What do you mean, Marshal?"

Amadeus: "My own son is-"

"Goodnight everyone! The brand new Commander of Mercia's New Legion of Honour has finally arrived!"

The group turns around and is surprised by what they see. In fact, Amadeus dropped a glass of champagne he had grabbed.

Through the elevator's door comes a mobian fox boy, with golden and white pelage, with blue eyes, with two tails, extravagantly dressed in a dress-coat, with the typical cut in the frock coat's tail, a galley, a white waistcoat under the frock coat, a white shirt under the waistcoat, a red bow tie tied around his neck, black pants, and white gloves; he has a proud smile that shows his fangs, and carries the insignia of his rank of Commander of the Legion: his badge has two ribbons that are silver instead of red, and his band, which he carries under the frock coat, has a thin silver strip that runs through it, the rosette superimposed over this silver strip. The young man also has other decorations: the Medal of Resistance, and three Bronze Medals for Bravery; in addition, he carries in his right arm the band of Freedom Fighter and the band of GUN's Honorary Member, and he also carries, uncovered, a ring on his left hand's middle finger, which isn't a wedding ring, of course. Everyone present stares at the child prodigy, being all surprised that someone like that is there with them, carrying military insignias of such importance.

Female guest: [murmuring] "Who is that kid?"

Female guest's husband: [murmuring] "I have no idea, but he seems to be someone important."

Female guest's husband's friend: [murmuring] "My wife works at Spagonia University, and she told me about him. That boy went to work with the University's staff and Westopolis' CSI cops, and was accompanied by a femme fatale who was very close to him. It was very strange."
Male guest: [murmuring] "How can that kid carry those medals?"

Male guest' wife: [murmuring] "He is Tails, that boy who accompanied Sonic. My nephew always tells me about them. Some say that fox is as smart as Eggman, and they also say that he participated in the war almost since he was able to stand on his two feet."

The two-tailed fox approaches his father and the group he was talking to.

Tails: [naturally] "Hi, Dad."

His father keeps his face frozen, while Hope tries to suppress a laugh.

Tails: [keeping his smile, glances sideways at Hope] "What's so funny?"

Hope: [nervous, taking a look at Amadeus] "Oh, huh..."

Tails: "I ain't asking you with bad intentions, I just wanna know so that I can laugh too."

Hope: "Oh, what's the difference? If everyone already knows! I was laughing because you're now of a rank greater than of your own father's rank."

Tails: "Oh... That's why, huh?" [smiling, takes a look at his father]

After looking at his son for a long time and with a stern expression, the Marshal finally lets out a laugh and gives him a hug.

Amadeus: "Who am I kidding? I'm proud of you, Tails."

Tails: "Thank you, Dad."

Meanwhile, Shadow approaches them, and he's not astonished to see him dressed in a dress-coat and a galley.

Shadow: "You look ridiculous, Tails."

Tails: [sarcastic] "Thank you, Shadow."

Shadow: "Actually, I was saying it as a good thing: I can't bear it when Sonic becomes obsessed with following the fashions."

Tails: "It seems that you and I have something else in common."

Shadow: "Even so, you still look old-fashioned."

"And what do you think of this?"

Everyone looks again towards the elevator's door, and they meet with Antoine, but all of them are perplexed by his... radical look.

[Soundtrack: Bad – Michael Jackson]

Black leather jacket, very tight, open, with buckles distributed in random places, and whose sleeves are retracted to cover the arm only up to the elbow. Improvised military epaulettes on the shoulders, consisting of silver plates, with small chains hanging in replacement of the usual thread laces. A tight black T-shirt, under the jacket. Black leather fingerless gloves, so long that they reach halfway up the forearm, and fitted with some buckles. Black leather trousers, also very tight, trimmed at the bottom
edges, with some groups of square-shaped pyramid-shaped tin-tacks, and a red stripe along the entire outer face of the left leg, from the waist to the shin. Two leather belts, full of tin-tacks with the same shape as the tin-tacks on the pants. Black tall military boots, each fitted by a long series of buckles. A ring on the left hand's middle finger.

That's Antoine D'Coolette's new outfit, who at that moment is present at the party, wearing a ferocious expression on his face and wearing disordered hair, noticeably longer and a little curly. Even Shadow opens his eyes wide and runs out of words, while Antoine walks steadily toward them, unintentionally sounding his clothes' buckles and chains.

Tails: "What's up, Michael Jackson? You look great with those clothes. More precisely, you look like someone-

Shadow: "Bad."

Tails: "Actually, I was gonna say that he looks like someone "free", but that also works."

President: "I think you should wear the Legion of Honour's insignia, Antoine. Rob and Mari-An, the Kings of Mercia, will arrive soon."

Antoine: "You're right, monsieur le Président."

The coyote proceeds to put his decorations on his clothes: the badge and the band of his newly obtained rank of Officer of the Legion of Honour, his two Silver Medals for Bravery and his unique Bronze Medal for Bravery. He also puts on his right arm his band of Freedom Fighter and his band of GUN's Honorary Member.

Antoine: "Maintenant, does anyone know where Bunnie is?"

Tails: "She hasn't arrived yet, neither did Fiona nor Mom nor Rouge. They were supposed to be preparing their dresses."

Antoine: "Dresses? What kind of dresses?"

[Soundtrack: Love potion number 9 – Jerry Leiber & Mike Stoller, version of Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass]

Four mobian women enter the hall through a large arch, and they then walk down a red carpet. Viewed from the front, from left to right, they're an adult vixen, a young vixen, a female rabbit as young as the second vixen, and a young-adult female bat. They wear long red dresses without sleeves, cut low in front and also in the back, very tight, and they also wear long white gloves, black shoes with high platforms and stilettos, pearl necklaces, small red handbags hanging from the right arm of each, and lips painted red, but they hardly wear makeup on other parts of their faces, except for some cases where the eyes are painted; almost all of them have their eyes half-closed; The four elegant ladies walk straight into the group of Amadeus, Tails, Antoine and Shadow, and seductively move their body as they walk.

The adult vixen has dark brown pelage with lighter parts, has a long mane of intense red on her head, has blue-gray eyes, her face seems to express disinterest, she looks to her right and up, smokes using cigarette-holder, and wears, uncovered, a wedding ring on her left hand's ring finger, similar to Amadeus' wedding ring.

The young vixen has red pelage with almond colored parts, her head has reddish brown hair with the addition of a yellow bow tie tied at the top of her head, she has eyes of a very intense blue color,
looks forward, makes a small smile as if she's inviting someone to approach her, and wears a ring on her left hand's middle finger; this isn't a wedding ring but is similar to Tails' ring.

The rabbit girl has yellow pelage with white parts, her legs and left arm are robotic but this doesn't detract from her beauty, her head has a very wavy blonde mane that is less long than the first vixen's mane, she has characteristic turquoise eyes, her eyelids and the entire area around her eyes are painted lilac, she has a ring on her left hand's middle finger, which is also not a wedding ring but is similar to Antoine's ring, and has a somewhat wild expression on her face, looking forward with her head a little low, having her eyes wide open, frowning, and making a wide smile without showing her teeth.

The bat woman has golden-orange pelage on the body, on the muzzle and around the mouth, has white fur on the rest of her face and head, has short white hair which shows some tufts protruding at the nape of her neck, has blue-gray eyes, her eyelids are painted with an intense sky-blue color, she looks to her left and has her face relaxed.

The two vixens and the cyborg rabbit girl are also showing various decorations and insignias: each of the three has the rank of Officer of the Legion of Honour, a Silver Medal for Bravery and a Bronze Medal for Bravery, besides carrying the band of Freedom Fighter and the band of GUN's Honorary Member in the right arm; the second vixen also carries Acorn's Royal Red Cross, while the rabbit girl carries, instead, the Medal of Resistance.

Amadeus: [in shock, stammering] "Rosemary... Are you?"

Tails: [looking closely] "Wow... That's what I call 'show yourself in all your splendor', Fiona..."

Antoine: "Mon Dieu... [makes a crooked smile] It seems that vous also want to test the limits, Bunnie..."

Shadow: [bored, holding his arms crossed] "Hello, Rouge."

Rouge: [disappointed] "Shadow, why do you say hello to me like that? Don't I look beautiful?"
[poses in front of Shadow]

Shadow: "Well... Yes, you're... beautiful. But you're not..."

Rouge: [a little upset] "What?"

Shadow: "Original."

Rouge: [more upset] "I ain't original? What do you mean I ain't-?"

The bat woman looks at the other three women, and her eyes open fully for the first time in a long time.

Rouge: *aint* "WHAT THE F***?!!"

The other three look at Rouge, then they look at each other, gradually becoming angry, and they finally start to struggle and shout at each other. Amadeus, Tails, Antoine and Shadow try to avoid the fight, retaining Rosemary, Fiona, Bunnie and Rouge respectively.

Rosemary: "What did you do?! I was supposed to wear that dress! You brat!"

Bunnie: "Who do you say 'brat'?! Menopausal mummy!"
Rosemary: "This is natural beauty! I don't need to paint my face like you! You look like that prostitute, Fiona!"

Fiona: "What?! I don't have my face painted! And I'm the opposite of a prostitute! If you're gonna call someone that way, call Rouge that way!"

Rouge: "This dress deserves to be worn by a refined woman, just like the jewels! You've stolen me the idea of wearing this dress!"

Fiona: "No honor among thieves! You should know it!"

Rouge: "Do you say it because I've been a thief?! But you were a thief too! A thief with less ethics than me, and more clumsy!"

Fiona: "Do you wanna see how clumsy I am?! What if you let me hit you and make you bruise in your eyes?! So you would have your eyelids painted in a 'natural' way, don't you think?!"

Tails: "Can you all stop fighting a f****** time, please?! [in a more powerful and serious voice, showing the fangs] ENOUGH! STOP FIGHTING! NOW!"

Everyone, including the others at the party, remain quiet and still, looking at Tails, who now has his breathing ragged, his hair disheveled, and his clothes and insignias unattended.

Tails: [reassured again] "Now, can we enjoy this party, beyond the fact that you four are dressed in exactly the same outfit? Please?"

The four mobian women look at each other, but in silence, without anger and with their faces relaxed.

Tails: "Thank you very much."

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A female mobian, hybrid of weasel and wolf, walks around the hall, making her way through the crowd. Her age is almost 30 years, she has lilac pelage with white parts, her eyes have an intense light blue color, her hair is tied in a ponytail by a series of metallic rings, and her facial features make her look suspiciously like Nack Weasel, standing out her upper jaw's fangs, which are disproportionately large and protrude, so they're visible even if her mouth is closed. She wears a brown hat just like Nack's hat, a sleeveless light blue top, a black leather belt with two revolvers at the sides, brown leather gloves with metal plaques on the knuckles, white and brown boots, and a hunting knife stored in her right boot.

The she-wolf-weasel stands at some distance from a large rectangular table. At that table there's plenty of food, and there's also a strange pair of young foxes: a male, with golden pelage, with two tails, dressed in a dress-coat and a galley, who apparently is about twelve years old, and a female, with red pelage, with a yellow bow tie tied on her head, with a provocative red dress, who seems to be about to start adulthood. The new arrival fixes her attention on the red vixen, whom she knows very well.

"I can't believe it... There are artisanal cold meats! Tandilia finely chopped salami! Tandilia thickly chopped salami! Longaniza! Sopressata! Raw ham of all varieties! Smoked bacon! And there are also super-hyper-mega-ultra-cured artisanal cheeses, seasoned with all sorts of spices! I can't waste this opportunity for anything in the world."

Fiona opens her handbag and starts to put in several portions of the artisanal cheeses and cold meats.
of the table, knowing that Tails is watching her.

Tails: "You must be kidding: you've put more than a kilogram of cold meats in your handbag... and it
didn't even increase in size! But what have you got in there? A Warp Ring?" Tails grabs Fiona's
handbag and looks inside. "Yes. There's a Warp Ring."

The child prodigy returns the handbag to Fiona, then goes to a large fountain filled with a *risotto*, and
takes a bite.

Tails: [relishing the *risotto*] "Excellent."

"*Miles Prower*?"

The fox turns around and meets with Sergeant Simian and Lightning Lynx.

Tails: "I suppose you two came here at my father's invitation."

Simian: "We just wanna apologize for what happened a few days ago at the Gran Hotel Soumerca."

Tails: "It's okay, I think I owe you an apology for using my repulsor cannon to launch you to the
other end of the square."

Simian: [lets out a laugh] "I must admit, you took me by surprise."

Tails: "I often make that impression on people."

Fiona: [approaches them] "Well, well... It's Lightning and Simon."

Lightning: "It's been a while since we've worked together, has not it, Fiona?"

Fiona: "A whole year."

Lightning: "And now we work together again, but for the good ones. I think you know how Scourge
is."

Fiona: "Yeah, I know very well how he is: obsessed with having me back and tearing Miles apart."

Simian: "In fact, when he hired us to go get you, he almost didn't mention Sonic, but he mentioned
more often... and I quote verbatim... 'an effeminate mutant fox who, for some strange reason,
managed to become your boyfriend and dared to question his power'. [to Tails] Does it look familiar
to you?"

Tails: "That has been a very crude and poor description of me, I'm much more than that."

Simian: "I totally agree."

Lightning: [holding back a laugh] "He also had an anxiety attack when we mentioned your name to
him."

Tails: "Really? It reminds me of the way Robotnik and Eggman had anxiety attacks when someone
mentioned them the name of Sonic."

Lightning: "Speaking of Scourge, there are contacts who told us that after our failure, he took
Moebius' throne by force and killed King Maxx."

Tails: "Oh... No wonder he had that strange crown on his head."
Fiona: "They call it 'the Iron Crown', according to what I remember."

Lightning: "They also say that the MSS tried to get him out of power, but it was a resounding failure and they had to exile."

Fiona: "The MSS? ¿The Moebotropolis Supression Squad?"

Simian: "Do you know them?"

Fiona: "Of course I know them! I joined them when I... Well, you know, Miles... When I left..."

Tails: "Yeah, I get it."

Simian: "There are also those who say that Scourge is preparing something very big."

Tails: "Something like what?"

Fiona: "Something like an invasion of Mobius. He always wanted to invade Mobius. Now that he has the entire planet Moebius in his hands, and with Eggman's help, he could create a very powerful military force. He could even take other interdimensional criminals out of prison and use them to form his own army of mercenaries."

Tails: "Anyway, we're not as weak as before, and we also have our own allies in other parallel universes. I dunno how Scourge intends to meet his goal... Fiona, what if you taste the risotto?"

Fiona: [tastes a bite of the risotto] "Mmm... Delicious."

Tails: "I myself gave the recipe of this meal to the cooks."

Fiona: "Well thought out, Miles."

Tails: "I added peas to the recipe. They're beneficial to the hair."

Fiona: "By the way, now I'm watching you better, and I realize you're letting your hair grow."

Indeed, Tails no longer has only his typical three tufts of hair on his forehead. The fringe, which is now thicker and made of longer hair, is clearly differentiated, and there are also tufts that protrude at the nape of the neck, not to mention that the pelage on the whole head is longer and forms a thicker layer. With this new look, the two-tailed fox is beginning to look like his father.

Fiona: "And besides, the golden color of all your pelage is a little more intense and orange than when we met."

Again, Fiona is right: the golden color of his pelage is getting darker.

It's evident that he's becoming more and more like his father.

Lightning: "Okay, see you later." [walks away with Sergeant Simian]

Tails: [to Lightning and Simian] "See you soon... comrades. [to Fiona] Returning to the question of food: I got Mom to give the cooks her recipe to make chocolate cake. It has a lot of chocolate, has a lot of dulce de leche, it also has fruits, and you can add a hot orange sauce if you want."

Fiona: "I would love to taste it."

"Bon Appetite."
The two foxes turn around, and they meet with the same she-wolf-weasel who was watching them from afar.

Elsewhere in the room, near the entrance to the bathroom, Rouge is flirting with Shadow, unsuccessfully. He's leaning against the wall, arms folded and with his usual serious look, and Rouge is standing in front of him.

"Come on, why are you still with that long face?"

"I told you: I'm not interested in having a 'good time' with you. Besides, to have what you call a 'good time', the bathroom isn't a good place."

Suddenly, Tails' parents leave the bathroom together, breathless, with their hair disheveled and their clothes unattended, looking in all directions to verify that no one has seen them.

"What were you saying?"

"No matter, Rouge. I'm just not interested for now."

**CRASH!**

Shadow and Rouge are surprised by two mobians crashing on the wall, next to them. One of them is the she-wolf-weasel with lilac and white pelage, whose back strikes directly against the wall. The other one is Tails himself, who pushed her to the wall and now has his left hand grabbing her top to keep her immobilized, while his right hand is covered by its corresponding piece of his ATA suit, pointing at her with his repulsor cannon.

"Now listen to me! Go away, and tell Scourge that Fiona and I will continue together! Have you got it?!"

"What are you talking about?! I have no idea who that 'Scourge' is! I don't even know who you are!"

"Don't lie to me! I know you're related to that inept bounty hunter: Nack Weasel, aka 'Fang the Sniper'! Admit it: Scourge failed to send his own team, and now he sends you to kidnap Fiona and to kill me and everyone else!"

"Why the f*** would I wanna kill you?!"

"Why?! For money! Why else?!"

"Miles! Stop!" Fiona appears behind Tails.

"No, Fiona! I swore to protect you, and that I'll do!"

"Nic ain't an enemy! Let her go!"

Tails turns around in disbelief.

"Do you know her?"

Fiona puffs, walks toward the she-wolf-weasel and hugs her, putting her boyfriend aside.

"Sorry for all this, Nic. We're going through hard days."

"It's okay, Fio. I think I should have warned you I was coming."
"You know what? Let's go to the terrace, it will be a better place to talk."

While Tails, Fiona and Nic enter the elevator to go to the terrace, King Rob and Queen Mari-An, Mercia's rulers, arrive at the party. Accompanied by Leonidas Procion, the hedgehog and the echidna go to the meeting with the Prowers.

The King wears a cloak of skin, dark green on the outside and white on the inside and at the edges; the Queen wears a similar cloak, but on the outside it's red with golden drawings that refer to her origin as a member of the Forgotten Tribe of Echidnas. The crowns of both are made of platinum, are decorated with precious stones at the base, are filled with pearls on the four diadems, and under the diadems there's a velvet cap whose edges are attached to the base's lower edge and are made of a layer of artificial ermine hair (white with small black spots). In the King, the precious stones at the crown's base are emeralds and the velvet cap is dark green, while the Queen's crown has instead a base decorated with rubies and a red velvet cap. The King has, in his left hand, a yellow gold scepter in whose tip has a fleur-de-lis made of green gold and decorated with small emeralds; the Queen wears a huge necklace, made of a red gold chain that is decorated with rubies, and which has, hanging on it, a badge of the New Legion of Honour made of pure gold.

Rob, Mari-An and Procion finally meet with the Prowers, who in turn are accompanied by Antoine and Bunnie.

Procion: "Colonel, Madame, Antoine, Bunnie ... With all of you, Their Majesties, the sovereigns of Mercia: King Robert of the House of O'Hedge, and Queen Mari-An of the Forgotten Tribe of Echidnas."

Antoine: [bows to Rob] "Votre Altesse... Ou should I call you 'Most Excellent Grand Master of the Legion'? Anyway, it's a great honor to have both of you here."

Rob: "Let me make a correction, Antoine: the Grand Master is her." [points to Mari-An]

Antoine: [to Mari-An] "Oh, well... I beg your pardon, Queen Mari-An. Ou should I call you 'Most Excellent Grand Master', I suppose."

Mari-An: "Don't worry about it, Tony. I got the title very recently, you didn't have to know."

Rob: "We both proposed to the people that the title of 'Grand Master of the New Legion of Honour' be granted to the reigning monarch's Consort. And the people accepted."

In the meantime, a new song begins to play.

[Soundtrack: Perfidia – Alberto Domínguez, version of Luis Miguel]

Bunnie: "Congratulations, both of you. Now, if you'll excuse me... [to Antoine] Shall we dance?"

Antoine: "Bien sûr, ma belle fleur." [he and Bunnie go to the dance floor]

Rosemary: "It's strange: this meeting is for people who drive Democracy's development, but you two are here. I think the most radical assistants would want to throw you out."

Rob: "The President invited us. He believes that with the Democratic Opening we're doing in Mercia, we're an example for all the mobian nations. There are many people, both human and overlanders as well as mobians, who think the same thing."

Mari-An: "As we were told, Lupe Wolf, Grand Chief of the Wolf Pack and, in a way, the leader of
all mobian wolves on the planet, will also be here."

Rosemary: "Why? I'm not saying she's not a good leader, we've met her and her pack. But a Tribal Monarchy, without an official representative of the people, sounds like something diametrically opposed to a Democracy."

Mari-An: "Actually, according to the information we've gathered, the tribes form assemblies, and each tribal assembly elects a wise and elderly member of their respective tribes, for that member to represent them within a council. That council chooses and supervises the Pack's Grand Chief, proposes ideas for the government and takes various measures in collaboration with the Grand Chief. In addition, the people can be called to plebiscite to decide if any particular measure should or shouldn't be carried out."

Rob: "The Wolf Pack's system of government could be included within the category of 'Popular Monarchy': the monarch's authority ain't based on stories of supernatural phenomena such as a God sending someone to Earth to rule mortals or a magical source who knows everything and predicts the future; instead, it's the people's strong support that keeps the monarch on her or his throne, and if the monarch commits a stupidity..."

Amadeus: "Interesting... Leonidas?"

Procion: "Yes, Colonel?"

Amadeus: "By chance, where do you know the King and the Queen?"

Procion: [slightly nervous] "What? Excuse me, but what are you talking about?"

Rob: [raises his right hand] "It's okay, Leonidas. What if you're gonna taste the food at the banquet, and then come and tell us how it is?"

Procion: [pauses] "Yes, Your Majesty."

The First Lieutenant bows and walks away from them, while the Prowers, especially the Colonel, give the King a stern look.

Amadeus: "What's this supposed to be, Rob?"

Rosemary: "Who's Leonidas Procion actually? Because he's not the Leonidas Procion we met."

Mari-An: "We'd better talk somewhere else, a place where there are fewer people."

A few seconds later, on one of the balconies...

Mari-An: "First of all: no, we've not replaced Leonidas Procion. The Leonidas Procion you're seeing is the real one."

Rosemary: "But..."

Rob: "Considering his rank within the Royal Guard and the fact that he agreed with your ideas, we made the decision to recruit him as a secret agent."

Amadeus: "Without my permission?"

Rob: "This was, and still is, a matter of national and international importance. We had suspicions about Maximillian Acorn, your country's emeritus king."
Amadeus: "And you hired Procion to spy and to gather evidence against Max."

Mari-An: [in a low voice] "Not only that. In the last week, we began to find evidence that Max controlled very dangerous forces, and we decided to send Proción to... to neutralize Max. Coincidentally, this was disguised by a street fight between members of the Freedom Fighters."

Rosemary: *ain't* [in a low voice, to Amadeus] "I remember: we both went to visit Antoine in the hospital, and Procion walked away from us, he went in the same direction as Elias and Max were going."

Rob: [in a low voice] "However, we had a setback: Procion had to poison Max in such a way that he was immediately obliged to maintain absolute repose, and we were even considering the possibility that Max's death was necessary; the mission was carried out and Procion wasn't discovered, but the poison didn't work, since Max remained alive and the poison's only effect was to make him stay in a wheelchair. Something abnormal allowed him to survive, something whose nature is probably similar to the nature of Chaos energy."

Rosemary: [in a low voice] "But what the hell are you doing? The MI6? Who else is involved in this ultra-secret thing? If any other mobian close to us is involved, we want to know it and we want to know it now."

Mari-An: *sigh* [in a low voice] "I guess we'll not be able to convince you otherwise."

Rob: [in a low voice] "Alright, we'll reveal this to you: we've got two other mobians involved..."

Going up by the elevator, Tails, Fiona and Nic arrive on the terrace.

Tails: "I don't wanna be brusque, but I have to ask you some questions, miss..."

Nic: "Nicolette. Nicolette Weasel. You can call me 'Nic'. And yes, I'm related to Nack Weasel: I'm his sister."

Tails: "Interesting... And how did Fiona and you have met?"

Fiona: [intervenes] "When we were working as bounty-hunters, we were associated. She taught me a lot of what I knew when I joined the Freedom Fighters."

Tails: [to Fiona] "You could have told me about her."

Fiona: "It was a different time, I was someone different. Why would I tell you about it, if it wasn't something that represented me as a mobian? If I had told you absolutely everything I did at that time, I would have caused even more problems than I had already caused. I mean... *sigh* I wanted to leave it all behind, Miles. I wanted to start over, and I would achieve it only if... How to say it? Let's see... I didn't wanna continue being, in my mind, the insensitive and cruel girl who gave you a slap. I tried to think of myself as someone different, to be a new Fiona... Reborn, in short. Do you think I would have done it if I told you about my past? [her eyes start to fill with tears] Do you think I would have done it by accepting the idea that I'm one of Mobius' biggest motherf***s?"

Tails: "Wait, Fiona... We'll talk about this later, okay? I swear on my parents that I will. But before... [to Nic] According to what I've heard so far, you didn't come here with the intention of capturing Fiona and taking her to Scourge. But if you're here to lure Fiona in to make her a criminal again, I swear that you'll regret daring to do such a thing."

Nic is silent, looking at Tails with a bored face and an eyebrow arched, and then looking at Fiona.
Nic: "He's one of those idealists, is not he, Fio?"

Fiona: "One could say, Yes. But I don't feel bad about it, so you'll have to get used to it."

Tails: "What's wrong with me being an idealist?"

Nic: "Nothing is black or white, my friend-"

Tails: "I ain't your friend."

Nic: *sigh* "What I mean is that I took care of Fio, even though I was a thief. Your rules apply only to that perfect little world that you have in your imagination, they have no validity in the real world."

Tails: "We're still in the same world, although each one lives in a different environment. There are no 'different truths for different people', that's something that some say to justify crimes or injustices."

Nic: [to Fiona] "How can you bear someone with such an-?"

Tails: "An immature mind?"

Nic: [to Tails] "A closed mind. I was gonna ask how she can bear someone like you, someone with such a closed mind."

Fiona: "Please, can you two stop discussing?"

Nic: "You're right, Fio. [looks at Tails] There's no point in discussing with a stone."

Tails: "How flattering... Although it would be even more flattering if you told me that I'm a stone in your shoe."

Fiona: "Miles, can we talk now?"

Tails: [to Fiona] "Alone?"

Fiona: "Yeah, come with me."

The foxes walk away from Nic and start talking in a low voice.

Tails: "You should have told me about this."

Fiona: "Why?"

Tails: "It was supposed to have confidence between us. If not, then something is going wrong in our relationship. Also, I wanna help you solve your problems, but if you don't tell me about your past and then problems arise related to it, then I can't help you."

Fiona: "These are personal matters, I'll solve them on my own."

Tails: [tries to answer] "But... does that mean... I'm useless?"

Fiona: [confused] "What?"

Tails: "That: I can't solve your problems, I'm making them worse." [lowers his head a little, and a tear begins to come out of his right eye]

Fiona: "No, please, don't cry... I didn't mean that-"
Tails: [in a cracked voice] "Fiona, if I'm really a nuisance to you, tell me. [looks into her eyes] Now."

Fiona: [remains silent, closes her eyes and takes a deep breath, then opens her eyes again and rests her hands on Tails' shoulders] "That doesn't matter, Miles. You have many good things, and to stop being with you wouldn't be worth it. But I really need to resolve this on my own, just as you might have issues that you need to solve on your own. That doesn't mean that our relationship, this wonderful relationship, is over. Come here..."

The red vixen gives a great kiss to her boyfriend, this kiss being very durable. When the kiss is broken, the two-tailed fox is relaxed again and has a slight smile.

Fiona: "I'll go talk to Nic, but I'll tell you what happened. Although I will solve my personal problems on my own, I think you deserve to know the truth and be informed."

Tails: "Yeah, that's the best, Fiona. It's better that you accept what you are and your past, but looking for change and not resigning yourself to be thus for the rest of your life."

Fiona: [pauses] "You're right."

Tails: "Now, tell me. I hear you."

Fiona: "Well... As you know, Robotnik took me prisoner when I was ten, and he made a robotic replica of me, the Auto-Automaton that you knew and that you had fallen in love with for the first time. More than a year later, and several months after the robot was created, I managed to escape."

Tails: "So you've needed to escape on your own."

Fiona: "That's when I met Nic. I was eleven, and she was at least twenty. I asked her for help, and we started working together as bounty-hunters. While Nic and I were associated at work... [blushes] we also gradually began to have a more... personal relationship."

Tails: "Nic became your girlfriend."

Fiona: "Not exactly. We just... had fun together. Did you hear about 'friends with benefits'? Well, one could say that we were in that category. There were also times when money was lacking, and there were no customers who paid us a reward big enough for us to live, so... Nic and I prostituted ourselves occasionally."

Tails: "I guess it was an equally horrible experience."

Fiona: "It continued to be horrible, but this time, Nic took care of me and prevented customers from committing excesses with us. She also gave me the larger food portions, and she even had more heart than I had when we were working: once, we were looking for a Power Gem, an ancient artifact that provided a lot of energy, something like a Chaos Emerald, and then we met casually with Mighty and Ray, that pair of adoptive brothers who are now members of Chaotix; I was more ambitious and wanted only the reward for getting that Power Gem, but Nic saved Ray from death, which also made us lose the opportunity to get the money. From then on, she and I went our separate ways, until I was taken prisoner again, shortly before Robotnik's Fall."

Tails: "And I guess that's all. Are you gonna fix things with Nic now?"

Fiona: "Yes, but don't worry about me. I'll come back with you, we'll eat that chocolate cake you told me about, and then we'll go somewhere private to find out how well chocolate works as an aphrodisiac. What do you think?"
"Did you tell him everything about us?"

"Yes, and I'm referring to everything."

"Including the 'fun' we had?"

"Yes, and also including the times when we had to work as prostitutes."

"But he's probably only twelve years old!"

"Eleven."

"Eleven?! But what kind of boyfriend is that?!"

"A super-boyfriend, literally."

"Fio, you know how men are: they cheat on you with another woman, they mistreat you, they only think about having sex, they're stupid... If you still don't believe me, remember what Nack was like."

"Miles is very different from your brother."

"Of course they're both very different: he was a stupid itself, and your boyfriend is a nerd who believes in ideas that are also stupid."

"Enough. I love that nerd, I love him more than anything in the world... I love him more than I ever loved you, Nicolette Weasel."

"That boy prevents you from seeing beyond, Fio. He makes you believe that he's charming, until you're completely under his control."

"Well, I was playing with Miles' feelings at first, and then I mistreated him and betrayed him. Besides, I've also met other guys who deceived me and then had me as a slave. The vixen's voice starts to crack. "Miles made me see further, he showed me that it wasn't necessary to have a cool boyfriend, he showed me that I had been the girlfriend of someone abusive, he accepted me when others did not, he showed me that living by following the rules and doing good could also be great."

She starts to cry. "And he was the only one who fought and put his life at risk for me, fighting even with claws and teeth! And he's still willing to do the same to anyone who dares to hurt me! Don't you realize?! After ten years of living without parents and in the midst of war, I finally feel cared for! I'M FINALLY HAPPY!" Fiona starts yelling at Nic. "And now what you come to do here?! You come to ruin this, with those excuses that people like you usually use to convince me that the world hates me! And don't start treating me as if I thought I'm perfect, because I don't care only for this! [points her medals] You made me think that doing good is useless! And because of you, I became the girlfriend of that pig Scourge, who almost let me die and then raped me! And who came to save me?! Who took care of me?! Was I taken care of by a thief who rules herself by a philosophy of shit but has a good heart?! NO! Miles took care of me, a real man took care of me! Because real men exist, contrary to what you think and you tried to make me believe! I HATE YOU, NIC!"

Nic is silent, unable to respond, while Fiona turns her back on her, steps away and tries to relax again.

Fiona stands with her back to the she-wolf-weasel. "I ain't willing to leave all this and throw away everything I got. I'll not be a miserable bounty hunter again, nor will I ever let anyone use me."

She
starts to wipe away her tears. "So, if you don't have any more objections..."

"I just wanted to take care of you, Fio. You were always the only thing that mattered to me more than the money. I was wrong, I was wrong about you and your new boyfriend." She lowers her head. "It's obvious that I'm no longer needed."

The she-wolf-weasel walks toward the elevator, while Fiona turns around and looks at her with pity. At that moment, a pair of small, gentle arms embrace her waist from behind, while Tails, flying, appears behind her and kisses her tenderly on her neck.

"Calm down, it's over..."

"Thank you, Miles. Thank you for always being there. Thank you for everything."

"I would do anything for you, and you know it."

"I know one way you could prove it..."

"Do you really wanna do it here?"

"The temperature is warm, and we're alone. What's better than that?"

"This will be a long night..." Tails says to himself.

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:

Hanfu: a garment of traditional clothing from the Far East, one of the most representative, made for both men and women, consisting basically of a tunic that reaches the knee and a narrow skirt that reaches the ankles.

Dulce de leche: a traditional Latin American and French dessert, made by caramelizing sugar in milk. It receives different names depending on the country ("manjar", "manjar blanco", "arequipe", "cajeta", "bollo de leche", "fanguito", "confiture de lait" in French, "doce de leite" in Portuguese, etcetera).
Chapter 12: Revealed secrets and new recruits, Part 2.

Chapter Summary

The party continues, and now, with the arrival of a new ally of the AFFs, everyone will hold a special meeting where they'll decide key points of their future plans. Besides, the usual fights will continue, and a new love will also arise with great force.

The party continues, and Lightning Lynx and Sergeant Simian are talking to Antoine and Bunnie.

Lightning: [amazed] "Did you try to be the boyfriend of the Princess of Acorn?"

Antoine: "Oui, mais je realized that je didn't really like her. Je got over that, et puis, je found l'amour de ma vie." [hugs Bunnie around the waist]

Bunnie: "In the end, it turned out that the Princess of Acorn wasn't as good a mobian as she looked."

Simian: [to Antoine] "And are you planning to remain in the Royal Army?"

Antoine: "Pour être honnête, I'm not as safe as I used to be."

Lightning: "Well, even if you've sworn to obey the Crown of Acorn, I think it would be well justified if you didn't do it any longer, and you wouldn't cease to be an honorable warrior. Now you have the AFFs, a group of friends who deserve more your loyalty."

Antoine: "Let's face it: until a few months ago, I wouldn't have deserved to be called an 'honorable warrior' from any reasonable point of view. I don't know why I was awarded the Medal of Resistance after Robotnik's Fall, considering that I was almost totally useless throughout the war."

Simian: "But now you're a warrior who deserves respect. Why don't you wear the Medal of Resistance?"

Antoine: "Because that medal rewards efforts during the war against the original Robotnik, efforts that I've not done. If I'm going to be awarded medals, I would rather be awarded those medals for my efforts in these last seven months, not for my laziness in the previous ten years."

Commander Tower and Tails' parents appear next to them.

Rosemary: "Hello everyone... [looks sternly at Bunnie] Hello, Bunnie."

Bunnie: [uncomfortable] "Hello, Mrs Prower."

They look at each other for a long time, while the others remain silent, in an atmosphere of pure tension.

Rosemary: [with a mischievous smile] "So... I'm a menopausal mummy, huh?"

Bunnie: [nervous] "Well, ma'am, that was just something I said in the heat of the moment-"

Rosemary: "You must to be very brave to tell me such a thing."
Bunnie: [confused] "Is that a compliment or what?"

Rosemary: [to Antoine and the Commander] "Speaking of medals, I think you, Commander Tower, should create a 'Gold Medal for Bravery' and award it to Bunnie. What do you think of the idea?"

Everyone starts laughing, including a relieved Bunnie and Commander Tower.

Commander: "It wouldn't be a bad idea, but I should still ask if it can be done."

Meanwhile, Lightning sees Nic, who stepped out of the elevator and is going to a balcony, preventing others from looking at her face.

Lightning: "Could you all wait for me for a moment, please?"

Antoine: "Bien sûr, mon ami."

Nic stands on the balcony, wiping some tears and looking at the few stars that shine in the big city's night sky.

"Are you well?"

*aint*

With a sigh, Nic turns around and meets with a male mobian lynx, with light brown and black pelage, dressed in a black hanfu with red edges, gloves and electric blue boots with yellow lightnings drawn on them.

"Who are you?"

"My name's Lightning Lynx."

"Lightning Lynx? I heard rumors you were working with Nack Weasel."

"That's right. My old team, Destructix, and Nack's team, the Hooligans, once teamed up to do a job in the service of Scourge Hedgehog."

"Scourge?"

"I guess you had the bad luck to meet him."

"No, but Fio mentioned him. He was her ex-boyfriend."

"That's right, I and the other members of Destructix witnessed the relationship between Scourge and Fiona. But then she broke away from him. Now Fiona is the girlfriend of Tails, that Freedom Fighter with two tails."

"Yes, I've just met with Tails and Fio, I found out what happened..." The tears begin to rise again in Nic's eyes, and Lightning realizes that.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes..."

"Do you have any relationship with them?"

"Well... I think I forgot to introduce myself: I'm Nicolette Weasel, Nack Weasel's sister. I took care
of Fio in her childhood. As you probably know, she had a very hard childhood.

"I'm aware of that. Did you ...?"

"What?"

"Nevermind."

"No! Please, I would like to hear you."

"Really? Well... I think you're jealous of Tails."

"Oh..."

"I thought this would be the moment when you say, 'What?! No! I ain't jealous! What nonsense!' People who feel jealous always try to deny it... as far as I know, at least."

"Actually... Yes, you're right... partly. Fio told me what happened after we stopped being associated. She became the girlfriend of that 'Scourge', who apparently lived outside the law, like the two of us. But he was a terrible boyfriend... and I was partly to blame for her being with him."

"What do you mean?"

"I made her think the world hated us. Thus, Fio thought life would be better if she lived doing evil. You were a mercenary too, so you know what I mean."

"Yeah, all of us have had very hard lives generally. We grew up with that idea."

"Later, she meets Tails, an idealist. And now, she's-"

"Oh! AH!" Fiona is heard screaming and moaning from the terrace. "MILES! GIVE ME ALL YOUR LOVE! DON'T STOP!"

"Please, Fiona... They'll find us..." Tails says.

"Ah! Then you'll have to gag me! I WANT EVERYONE TO KNOW THAT I LOVE YOU!"

"Do you want me to gag you?"

"Yeah!"

"Are you sure?"

"YEAH! DO ME WHAT YOU WANT! I WANNA BE YOUR GIRL! YOURS AND NOBODY ELSE'S!"

"No... I wanna be your man... I wanna be your property..."

"Maybe another day... Now, possess me... POSSESS ME, MILES PROWER!"

"As you order, milady."

"AH! OH! MIIIIILES! AAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!"

"When we were working for Scourge and Fiona was his girlfriend, we've never heard her say such things, Nic. In fact, the most frequent thing was to hear her speak in a weak voice, saying things like 'Stop' or 'You're hurting me'. Now, she's happy."
Nic turns her back on the lynx.

"Yes, she's happy, but no thanks to me. I even tried to stop her from starting a serious relationship with a boy, I tried to put into her head the idea that all men are bad. And now I see how wrong I was: now Tails is proving that my theory was wrong, and before that, I couldn't prevent Fio from falling into the clutches of a real monster like Scourge."

"Did she tell it to you?"

"Rather, she shouted it in my face, crying, saying that it was my fault and that I was seeking to ruin her life again. She was partly right: I wanted only the best for her, and I still want that; but if I remain by her side, I'll draw her into my world, into crime's world, and although I've become accustomed to living in that world and I couldn't survive outside it, I must admit that it's best to avoid it if possible."

Lightning looks at Nic with pity, until he comes up with an idea.

"What if you join the Alternative Freedom Fighters?"

Nic looks at him again.

"What? Are you crazy? ¿Me, a Freedom Fighter?"

"Why not? I know you're suitable for that job. In fact, you'd be more suitable than me."

"Why do you say that? You have your famous "code of honor", I have nothing like that."

"That code has failed me so many times that I've already lost count. Besides, it's the code of a raiju warrior: I have to be strong and relentless, and I can't let feelings dominate me, so I ain't too sure that being a Freedom Fighter is right for me. On the other hand, what kind of honor do I have, if I do evil to almost everyone I meet?"

The she-wolf-weasel keeps thinking about the ex-ninja's sayings, and then she walks back into the hall, drawing his attention.

"Wait. Where can I find you?"

"I dunno. I usually travel all over the world." Nic looks over her right shoulder, toward the lynx. "But, thanks to what you told me, I'll probably be where Fiona and Tails are gonna be."

"Good to know" Lightning responds with a slight smile.

"What is good for you? To know that I'll fight at the service of the good guys, or know where I'll be in particular?"

"What?"

"You obviously wanna date me."

"Huh..." Without realizing it, the lynx starts to blush. "My sincerest apologies, Miss, but I must leave. I have important matters to attend to, although I would have enjoyed continuing this conversation with you."

Immediately, Lightning leaves, almost running, while Nic starts to laugh.

"Yeah, I'm sure you would have enjoyed it..."
In the distance, not knowing that she's watching him, he quickly enters the bathroom. He doesn't realize that he just entered the women's bathroom.

"AAAAAH!"

"My sincerest apologies, ma'am-"

"GET OUT!"

The lynx leaves as quickly as he had entered, and then enters the men's bathroom, while Nic looks at him and is still laughing.

Lightning enters one of the cubicles, sits on the toilet lid, and grabs his head with his hands.

"Please, not again... First, my clan's leader, and now, her. Why?"

"For something that is called 'to like someone'. You know."

"Nic?! How did you get into the men's bathroom?!"

"The same way you got into the women's bathroom."

"I mean how you managed to get in here without any inconvenience- Wait a second: Were you spying on me?!"

"Sorry, it was fun. Did you really fall in love with your clan's leader? Did you fall in love with the Bride of the Conquering Storm, the Raiju Clan's leader? That's brave! You should be awarded a medal for that."

The lynx rolls his eyes. "Yeah, the same thing has been said to a rabbit girl who called 'menopausal mummy' a vixen in her forties."

"Lightning, you don't need to keep hiding it: you like me."

"That's impossible. To really like someone, it takes a lot of time. Besides, you hardly know me. How do you know I ain't someone like Scourge? Don't tell me that story about a 'female intuition' is true."

"Oh, come on, do you think you're so good at lying? You're like an open book!"

"We will work together at the service of the AFFs, so we're gonna get to know each other better."

"Okay, whatever... What if you get outta there at once? I know you ain't doing anything that requires privacy."

"Just a moment..."

"Have I told you before that you're like an open book? You're obviously nervous about seeing me. Admit it: you like me."

"But you probably don't like me."

"What? But what the hell are you talking about?"

The lynx leaves suddenly from the cubicle, taking by surprise to Nic, who was standing next to a lavatory.
"Do you think I wasn't paying attention to what you told me? You hate men."

"I don't hate them! I ain't like those radical feminists who think that men are evil by the mere fact of being men. I just... grew up with a wrong idea about them, and now I try to get used to reality."

"And when was the moment when, through a sort of "sudden revelation", you learned that not all men were monsters like Scourge?"

"When I heard about the relationship between Tails and Fio. And also when I met you: you obviously like me, but you've hardly ever looked at my body; for most of the time, you looked at my face, especially my eyes."

"I'm trying to verify the veracity of the phrase 'Eyes are soul's windows'. What's wrong with that?"

Nic starts to bring her face to the ex-ninja's face, without him resisting.

"I think that 'code of honor' of yours ain't so useless after all."

They both close their eyes a little.

"So you think, Nic?"

"Yes, and I think that you, like Tails, are a man worth giving a try... According to me, at least."

"Nic..."

"Shh..."

"Are you realizing what you're about to do?"

"Do you think I'm stupid?"

"No, but... We met less than five minutes ago..."

Nic wraps her arms around Lightning's neck, and he hugs her waist. Maybe they're doing it consciously, maybe they're doing it without realizing it.

"You're a ninja, I'm a thief. If you have the feeling that I'm gonna hurt you, you'll stop me. If I have the feeling that you're gonna hurt me, I'll stop you. Done deal?"

"Done deal..."

Their bodies approach, their faces too, and they completely close their eyes.

Tails and Fiona arrive in the hall by the elevator. As he walks through the door, he is talking on cell phone, and he doesn't seem very happy.

Tails: "No, I don't regret what I did, Sally... We're an independent team of Freedom Fighters. When was the moment when we began to have the obligation to render an account of what we do? If Lightning and Simian betray us, it's our problem, not yours... Why am I talking to you like this? Because you phoned me at a time when Fiona and I could have been having an intimate encounter. That's why I'm talking to you like that... Do you want me to admit it? Yes! Fiona and I had sex when you phoned me! We had sex on an outdoor terrace, because Station Square's weather is great twenty-four hours a day, three hundred sixty-five days and six hours a year! What? Did you forget the procedure by which, every four years, a "day 59 bis" is added? Ah... That's better. For a moment I
thought you forgot... Do you wanna talk to my parents? Why not? Did you think I wouldn't wanna? Well, I have news for you: I would love to let you talk to my parents. After all, I was getting tired of hearing you scream through the phone line. [walks toward his parents, extending his arm with the cell phone in his hand] Mom! Dad! The Most Prestigious Princess Sally of the Odious Dynasty wanna talk to you two. And if you wish to fight among yourselves on the subject of "who will have to listen to the protests of a hysterical noblewoman", it's no longer my problem and I'll not intervene, so don't even think about asking me to be a referee and to fix your problems."

Rosemary: [grabs the cell phone] "Don't worry, son. I'll handle her."

Then the child prodigy returns to where his girlfriend was, and leads her to walk through the hall.

Tails: "Fiona, I have a story to tell you. I've been researching about my family's origins, and I learned my mother's ancestors were leaders of Eurish's various peoples. Long ago, there were tribes who settled in the North-Northeast of Mercia, creating the Duchy of Frysklân; these tribes were wisely led by a lineage of warriors who were astute, rational, abnormally humble and concerned about their subjects, and when the Duchy was created, the people invested them with the title of 'Duke of Frysklân' the members of this lineage of warriors. Thus arose the House of Frysk, from which descends Rosemary Frysk, now known as Rosemary Prower, my mother."

Fiona: "Wow! That's great: inheriting the legacy of a whole family of leaders who, unlike other leaders of their time, did know what they were doing."

Tails: "Anyway... The Frysks had certain 'keys' to make food by taking advantage of resources efficiently and at their maximum potential, so that all the people had the energy necessary to withstand the harsh winters and also had opportunities to enjoy the good food. And these keys were transmitted from generation to generation, until today. This is one of the many and wonderful final results of this legacy..."

The two-tailed fox shows Fiona a large cake, made of three floors of chocolate sponge cake, with a thick filling of dulce de leche between each floor of sponge cake, covered with chocolate, and decorated with all kinds of fruit on top. Next to the cake, there's a large pitcher filled with a steaming sauce made from natural orange juice and impalpable sugar, to add to a serving of cake if the diner wishes.

Fiona: "So this is your mother's famous cake, huh?"

Tails: "The Great Tribal Dessert of the Frysks."

The gigantic cake is already cut into 32 exactly equal pieces, and there are also four other identical cakes. Each of the two foxes grabs a piece, bathes it in hot orange sauce, and tastes a bite.

Fiona: "I could survive for four winters in a row, having only eaten this cake before."

Meanwhile, a group of mobian wolves, dressed in tribal clothing, arrive there and eat from the same cake. They're led by a she-wolf who's giving pieces of cake to two other smaller wolves and two overlander little girls, who are evidently their family. She has gray pelage with lighter parts, under her eyes there are marks of a shade of an even lighter gray color, her eyes are blue-green, her long hair is very dark gray with a white stripe, Mohawk hairstyle and tied in a braid of such length that it reaches her hip; she wears garments that appear to be royal robes, such as a large headdress of white and red feathers, a skirt made of white feathers, and a long red cloak with golden edges, all with elaborate designs and red, blue and gold jewelery; beneath the royal robes, she wears a sky-blue leotard that is attached to the neck with a gold ring, she wears a wide gold bracelet on each wrist and arm, and is wearing brown sandals. She looks like someone nice and at the same time with all the
bearing of a great leader.

Tails: [to the she-wolf] "Excuse me... Lupe?"

Lupe: "Tails? Fiona? What a nice surprise! How did you two get here?"

Fiona: [in a low voice, approaching Lupe] "We entered through an air duct. Don't tell anyone, we ain't supposed to be here."

Lupe arches an eyebrow.

Fiona: [laughs] "Just kidding!"

Lupe: [lets out a laugh] "Yeah, I was already suspecting it."

Fiona: "We were invited by GUN's Boss and by the King of Mercia."

Lupe: "The King of Mercia? Where is he?"

Fiona: "I dunno, but Tails' parents do know."

Lupe: "Okay, I'll talk to them later. Now, I wanna introduce you to my family. He's Lobo, my husband."

The Grand Chief of the Wolf Pack points to her husband: a burly male wolf, whose pelage is brown with very light gray parts; he's dressed in a blue and yellow tight shirt that exposes his abdomen, matching tight pants, and gold bracelets on his wrists.

Lobo: "Hi, Tails. Lupe told me that you were a prodigy, but I never expected that I would meet a fox-boy full of medals."

Tails: "I'm flattered... Huh... Do you have any kind of honorary degree? 'Chief Consort' or something?"

Lobo: [laughs] "No, we have no such thing. In the Wolf Pack, there are no such privileges that exist in other mobian kingdoms. Yeah, our children receive a lot of care from the Pack's members, but all children are also very well cared for. And speaking of them..."

Lobo addresses his four children, the same children to whom Lupe had given them pieces of cake.

Lobo: "Children, meet Tails and Fiona. They're Freedom Fighters. Tails, Fiona, they're our children: Marcos, Maria, Aerial and Athena."

Marcos and Maria, the two little wolves, are not only biological children of Lupe and Lobo, they're practically clones of their parents: Marcos has the same pelage and almost the same clothes that Lobo, except for the fact that he wears boots instead of sandals; the same thing happens between Maria and Lupe, except for the fact that the Grand Chief's daughter has neither the royal clothes nor the Mohawk hairstyle, even if they share the long braid. As for Aerial and Athena, the two overlanders are twin sisters and the adopted daughters of Lupe and Lobo, which surprises many people inside the party, both humans and overlanders as well as mobians; both have very long hair with a few braids, a freckled white complexion, identical facial features, deep blue eyes, a garment consisting of a bodysuit and a t-shirt beneath it, and blue and gold bracelets at the wrists; Aerial has blond hair and is dressed in a green bodysuit and a white shirt, while Athena is redhead and has a purple bodysuit and a blue shirt.
Fiona: "Hi! I'm Fiona Fox, and he... [points to Tails] is Miles Prower, my boyfriend."

Tails: "But everyone calls me 'Tails', for obvious reasons." [takes flight with his two tails, rising half a meter above the ground]

Marcos, Maria and Aerial: [amazed] "Oooooh..."

Athena: *aint* [makes a notorious face of astonishment]

Fiona: "Antoine has told us a lot about all of you. Is it true that you all usually give problems to your mother?"

As if by instinct, the three girls point to Marcos.

Marcos: "Hey! That's not true!"

Maria: [is crossed arms] "As if you were an angel..."

Athena: [sticks her tongue out at Marcos]

Aerial: "He always takes advantage of Athena, Miss Fox."

Fiona: "What do you mean? Oh, now I remember: Antoine told us that she's mute. Does he take advantage of that?"

Athena: [nods, making an angry face]

Fiona: "In what ways does he do it?"

Maria: "Robbing us the ball and saying that Athena gave him permission."

Fiona: [looks at the sky] *sigh* "Boys."

Tails: [to Fiona] "Not all of us are like that, and you know it. [to Lupe's daughters] And I've seen people who do worse things to those who are supposed to be their brothers and friends... [his face starts to turn serious, but then he smiles again] You three are lucky that Marcos only makes those kind of jokes and doesn't take advantage of you in a serious way."

Maria: "He doesn't listen to me either."

Tails: "Then yell at him, don't ask me..."

Marcos: "You are all conspiring against me."

Tails: "Easy, Marcos. She may have very good ideas, you just have to try to listen to her."

Marcos: "As if it were so easy to do..."

A group of people approaches them: Tails' parents; Antoine and Bunnie; Rob and Mari-An; Shadow, Rouge, Hope Kintobor and Commander Tower; Lightning Lynx and Nic Weasel, who seem to be quite agitated, and Sergeant Simian.

Rosemary: [talking on the phone] "No, Sally! I'm not going to "boycott" the relationship between Tails and Fiona! They both have given enough proof that they know what they're doing, and I fully trust them, so there's no reason to prevent them from being together. Besides, I've seen too much conservatism during Max's reign, and neither Amadeus nor I are going to be like those retrograde
nobles. See you never! [turns off her cell phone suddenly, and addresses Lupe] I'm sorry about all this, Grand Chief Lupe, but we're having some disagreements with our compatriots."

Lupe: "It's all right, Mrs Prower. It doesn't bother me."

Antoine: [bows to Lupe] "Grand Chief, it's an honor to have you present here."

Marcos, Maria and Aerial: "TONY!"

Antoine: [to Lupe's children] "Salut, les enfants! How are you? AAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!"

Lupe and Lobo's four children suddenly surged over the coyote, and the five fell to the ground, Antoine being below them.

Bunnie: "Looks like someone has a lot of affection for you. Did you meet them when you trained with the Wolf Pack?"

Antoine: [to Bunnie] "Oui, they're very nice, although sometimes they have little fights between them. [to Lupe's children] Et what was that? A new attack tactic? If so, it seems très effective. How could we call it?"

Maria: "The Super-Hug!"

Marcos: "That sounds ridiculous."

Maria: "Oh, yeah? And what name do you think would sound better?"

Antoine: "Les gars... Ne vous battez pas... Remember that you're siblings, remember that you take care of each other on the battlefield."

Aerial: "We'll not always be in a war, Tony. One day, Eggman will be defeated, and that day, Marcos will start to bring more problems than solutions."

The young soldier looks at the girls, and then looks at Marcos' face: although he tries to hide it, the little wolf really was hurt emotionally by Aerial's words. Seeing this, Antoine denies shaking his head.

Meanwhile, someone else appears: a female mobian hedgehog, with water-green fur, with the thorns' tips a clear blue-gray. She's dressed in a tight shirt, baggy pants and shoes, all red, and she also wears white gloves and two gold bracelets on each wrist. Tails addresses her furiously.

Tails: "Breezie Hedgehog?"

Breezie: [turns around and looks at Tails] "Oh, what a surprise... I didn't know you'd be here, Tails. How's Sonic?"

Tails: "I'll not answer you. Instead, you're gonna answer me: what the f*** are you doing here?"

Breezie: [pretends to be offended] *aint* "That's a very rude language on part of a kid like you."

Fiona: [intervenes] "He will talk as he pleases, b****. On the contrary, you have no right to talk to him like that."

Breezie: "Come on, Fiona... Why don't you defend me, like in the old days?"

Fiona: "In exchange for what? In exchange for prostituting myself for fat and rude clients who hurt
me when I 'render my services'? No, thanks. I prefer to 'render my services' to someone like Miles, and I even am able to do it free for him, but that doesn't apply to anyone else, much less to you. By the way... [to Tails] How do you two know each other?"

Tails: "She worked for Robotnik, and she tried to use her charms to lure Sonic into a deadly trap. That was the first in a series of events that taught me that Sonic is an idiot and that I could no longer be a fan of him."

Breezie: "Actually, the lesson I wanted to teach you was another: you can't trust the charm of a woman."

Tails: "I learned that lesson a long time ago. And yet, now I'm the boyfriend of Fiona, who, in fact, is much more decent, freer and sexier than you."

Breezie: "Please, don't say stupid things-"

Tails: [covers his ears, closes his eyes and starts to move his head from side to side] "Lalalalala! I can't hear! I can't hear! I can't hear! I can't hear!"

Fiona: "Miles, I just came up with an idea: having sex on the beach."

Breezie: [with her eyes wide open] "WHAT?!"

Tails: [follows the flow] "I think we did it yesterday, Fiona. But it was great, so we can repeat it."

Breezie: [tries to respond and starts to lose her temper, in the style of "Dolores Umbridge"] "You know what? You know what?! Keep mocking... You'll see... I have very powerful contacts, including President Falcão himself-"

President: [stands behind Breezie] "Miss Hedgehog, do you have any problems with Commander Prower?"

Tails: [to the President] "Don't worry, Mr President. She was about to leave. [to Breezie] Is not that true?"

Indignant, Breezie walks away from them and heads toward the hall's exit.

Breezie: [mumbling] "Enjoy your party, Commander- [shocked and terrified] AAAAAHHH!"

As she was walking toward the exit, the she-hedgehog's shoes' stilettos had been hooked into the fabric of the red carpet, causing her to stumble. The people who are close to her are not sure whether to go help her or not.

Breezie: [gets off the ground with difficulty] "I'm fine, don't worry about me..." [leaves the room, walking in a bad way]

Shortly after, Fiona and Nic meet, and the vixen gives a stern look to her former associate, who seems to be uneasy. Lightning and Tails intervene.

Tails: "Fiona, Nic, don't fight, please."

Lightning: "Nic wanna tell you something, Fiona."

Nic: [takes a deep breath] "Fio... I come to ask you to forgive me. I've hurt you, and I wanna fix it."

Fiona: [still gives her a stern look] "Too late."
Lightning: "Are you sure? Give her an opportunity. She will be a Freedom Fighter."

Tails: "Fiona, don't do what Sally and the others did to you."

Fiona: [drops her head] "Okay, you're forgiven. [looks at Nic again] But from now on, be careful what you do."

Nic: "I will, I swear."

As for Lupe, she meets with the Kings of Mercia and Commander Tower, and the four greet each other and shake hands respectfully.

Lupe: "I think you wanted to have a meeting with me. Or am I wrong?"

Comandante: "Not at all. But we should go somewhere else."

Tails: "What if we go to the terrace? The weather is good there, Fiona can attest to it." [winks at Fiona]

All are already on the terrace, seated around a large circular table, with food and drinks available. They are: the AFFs, Commander Tower, Shadow, Rouge, Hope Kintobor, the Kings of Mercia, Lupe and her family, Sgt. Simian, Lightning Lynx, and Nic Weasel.

Along with the individuals already mentioned, there are also two other members of the Wolf Pack, who closely accompany Lupe: two twin teenage mobian she-wolves, whose pelages are pink with some lighter parts, with a brown hair that is of a tone close to purple, combed in the form of long, thick dreadlocks that reach the waist, with blue eyes, and dressed in a leotard, bracelets and other gold ornaments, sandals, and a hair band. The leotard and the hair band are blue in one of the wolves, and green in the other. The wolf dressed in green doesn't seem very sure of staying on the terrace, while the wolf dressed in blue seems to be a little more serious.

Lupe: "Okay... Rob, Mari-An, tell us what you had to say."

Mari-An: "Do you remember the Order of IXIS?"

Lupe: "I know what it was."

Rob: "We believe that there are people who are trying to get the Order back."

Antoine: "The Grand Chief and I already had those suspicions. We've fought with followers of the Order. [to Lupe] Do you remember it?"

Lupe: [to Antoine] "It would be impossible to forget, my friend. [to the others] It's surely Naugus who's behind this."

Bunnie: "According to something Sally once told me, Naugus was a sorcerer of King Max, and Robotnik banished them both to the Void. It's likely that something happened there, which resulted in Max being a follower of IXIS upon his return to Mobius."

Mari-An: "Precisely, we also have evidence that Maximillian Acorn is plotting a plan to use IXIS' power to his own advantage."

Amadeus: "That could give him the means to take power in the Kingdom of Acorn."

Lupe: "How? Max is old and has abdicated, not to mention that Acorn's Justice is still investigating."
Rosemary: "We assume he already has access to Ixian magic."

Mari-An: "We sent an agent to neutralize him, but that hardly affected him. It's obvious that he was saved by something supernatural."

Lupe: "Wait: have you ordered to kill him? That would have been a magnicide if it had succeeded!"

Rob: "Technically, we didn't seek to kill him. And yes, we were aware of the gravity of the fact. But we couldn't do anything else."

Marcos: "I'm booooooored...!"

Maria hits him on the back of his head.

Maria: [in a low voice] "Stop complaining, this is important."

Marcos: "Important?! All I care about is destroying robots and freeing people from the Eggman Empire's control! This doesn't interest me!"

Lupe: [to herself] "Children are harder to govern than my pack."

Simian: [to Marcos] "Are you not interested in a tremendously powerful and evil wizard coming close to our universe?"

Marcos: "I never said that. I meant that I ain't interested in these talks, I'm only interested in fighting for the Resistance's cause."

Simian: "Yeah, of course... I've seen what happens between your sisters and you: you all hate each other, you feel that they treat you badly..."

Marcos: "What are you insinuating?"

Simian: "Your hatred for your sisters, the apparent injustice in your life, weaken your loyalty to the cause."

Marcos: [furious] "You have no right to talk about loyalty, mercenary."

Simian: "You're wrong: maybe I was a mercenary, but I was a member of a team and I was loyal to them. [to Lightning] You can attest to it. [to Marcos] Instead, you're easy to alter, you're able to betray your teammates at any time."

Marcos: [in a low, sinister voice, showing his teeth] "You're wrong..."

Simian: "To tell the truth, you have a lot in common with someone I know: Drago Wolf."

Marcos: "DON'T EVER NAME THAT TRAITOR AGAIN!"

Simian: "He didn't feel part of the Pack. And neither do you feel part of your family."

Marcos: "SHUT UP!"

To everyone's surprise, Lupe's only male son rushes over Simian and, with all the force of his jaws, bites his right shoulder, tearing a small piece of flesh and making marks on the bones.

Simian: "YYYYYEEEEEEEEEEOOOOOOOOOOOOWWWWW!
The sergeant punches Marcos to get rid of him, throwing him to the ground, but the wolf stands up quickly.

Marcos: [vociferating and crying] "I AIN'T A TRAITOR! I would never betray my pack, much less betray my sisters! They're the best thing that has happened to me in my whole life! I love them, even if it doesn't seem so! And if you ever question my loyalty and my love for them, I swear I'll bite you in the neck, so that you'll still be alive but you'll be paralyzed! Let's see if you're so brave!"

Lobo: [stands between Marcos and Simian] "Okay, that's enough. Lupe, I'll take the kids from here, if you don't mind."

Lupe: "Do it, please."

Lobo immediately grabs Marcos and takes him to the elevator, accompanied by Maria, Aerial and Athena. Meanwhile, Lightning and Nic take away the gorilla from the others.

Lightning: [angrily, in a low voice] "You're a reckless idiot, Simon. What the f*** were you thinking?"

Nic: [in a low voice] "You'd better go and apologize to the boy, Sergeant."

Lobo and his four children are in hall. There's a rarefied air, and Marcos, crossed arms, is some distance away from his sisters, preventing them from looking into his eyes. Maria puts a hand on his shoulder.

Maria: "Brother..."

Marcos: "Sorry, Maria. Sorry for my outburst on the terrace... [in a cracked voice] Please, leave me alone..."

Marcos turns and walks away a little, but Athena approaches him and stands in front of him. Judging by the expression on her face, she's obviously worried. Aerial also approaches him.

Marcos: [his eyes are full of tears] "Did you hear what that gorilla said? He compared me to Drago."

Aerial: "He's wrong, we all know it."

Marcos: "Are you three sure? You said it yourself today: I give problems more than anything else..." *snif*

Aerial: "Marcos, don't take everything I say so seriously. Sometimes... *sigh* I'm sorry I said that about you a little while ago. I was out of line."

Marcos: But-"

Maria: [stands in front of him] "No need to justify it. What we just heard... That was enough for us to realize everything."

Finally, the wolf takes his sisters by surprise by hugging them three at the same time.

Marcos: *sob* "Forgive me, for all the heavy jokes I've played to you three, for all the times I've treated you badly or taken advantage of you. And this goes especially for you, Athena. From now on, I'll try to be a better brother, I swear by our mother."

Meanwhile, Lobo, who was about to intervene, stares at his four children, smiling after seeing how
everything was resolved between them. At the same time, four other mobians arrive: Antoine, Simian, Lightning and Nic.

Lightning: "Marcos Wolf, I need you to listen: here, Simian has something to tell you."

Simian: "Well..."

Nic gives a poke to Simian.

Simian: *sigh* "I wanna apologize for having questioned your loyalty to the Resistance's cause. It's clear that I ain't in a position to speak on this subject."

The little wolf looks long at the ape.

Marcos: *sigh* "What the heck? I suppose I should apologize too. We're supposed to fight side by side for a common cause, not to fight between us. I also have some of the blame for this fight, and you also deserve an apology from me, Sergeant."

Simian: [extends his hand] "Are we in peace? If you feel that I'm hurting you by grabbing your hand, you're authorized to bite me."

Marcos: "Alright, come here..."

The gorilla and the wolf are shaking hands, both making a smile, while the coyote approaches Marcos.

Antoine: "I recommend that you don't worry too much about your fits of rage. I often had such things, even when I began to change and to train. Do you remember when je was practicing fencing with Colonel Prower, je lost and il tried to figure out why je was performing less than usual?"

Marcos: "Yes, I remember it very well... At least, I remember the part that I witnessed."

[In the past...]

Wolf Pack's Camp, somewhere in the Great Forest of Northamer. Four months after the Prowers' return to Mobius...

It's 3:00 pm, and an exhausted Antoine is walking in the camp's vicinity, getting into the trees, treading the fallen leaves of the trees that Autumn, with his saber hanging from his hand.

"Tony! Come back, please!"

That's the voice of Colonel Prower. After an uninterrupted streak of victories, the coyote had been defeated by Colonel Prower in fencing training.

After a few minutes, he returns to the camp, where Tails' parents were waiting for him, along with Lupe and Lobo's children, who were there as spectators.

"Hey, Tony!" Amadeus, still with his patch on his left eye, puts a hand on Antoine's shoulder and tries to look into his eyes, since the cadet has his head down.

"Cheer up, Tony! I know you can't stand a defeat, but you mustn't forget that every technique can be improved, even mine. Now, we must review what went wrong, and correct it."

They both sit on a fallen log.
"Nothing has gone wrong, monsieur Prower. I just had a little distraction."

"Then we'll have to train your concentration-"

"No! I meant... Don't misunderstand me: I wasn't distracted by anything concrete or anything of my surroundings, I was distracted by something of my mind."

"In other words, you were thinking of something else."

Antoine nods.

"And could I know what you were thinking? Actually, I don't intend to invade your personal space, but I have to know if you have any problems that prevent you from concentrating."

"Well... I was thinking of... of a woman." The coyote says shyly and blushing.

"Oh... So Antoine D'Coolette is in love, huh?"

For some reason, the tone of voice used by the Colonel is being annoying to Antoine.

"There's nothing wrong with falling in love. It's totally normal, and I don't recommend repressing such feelings. Now, could I know who this woman is?"

"I don't have to tell you, monsieur le Colonel. She's just a girl I usually think of."

"Come on, Tony... You're among friends, among real friends. You can tell us everything you want-"

Antoine suddenly stands up, grabs his sword and points it to his mentor's throat.

"I've already told you." Ahora, el cadete está sinceramente enfadado. "She's just a girl I usually think of. It's none of your business, monsieur."

Rosemary draws her electro-bullet gun and addresses the children. "Tell the Grand Chief Lupe that we need her help."

Immediately, Marcos, Maria, Aerial and Athena leave, but Lupe's help is no longer necessary: Antoine had lowered his sword and had saved it again, and now he runs off through the Great Forest, far from the camp. Amadeus follows him.

"Tony! Wait! Don't leave, please!"

Finally, the Colonel reaches his apprentice, who stands with his back to him.

"I was wrong. I understand that this matter is very sensitive for you and that you prefer to be reserved about it. I promise you that I'll never-"

"I almost killed you, monsieur. I almost killed you for a simple sentimental matter."

"It's not so serious, Tony-"

"Oui, it's very serious!" Antoine turns and faces Amadeus. "I can't concentrate as much as I should in battle! I'm easy to anger! How can I be useful in the fight, having such an unstable mind?!"

"Tony, don't try to be the perfect soldier-"

"A soldier who manages to end his internal conflicts, a soldier who really ignores his feelings on the
battlefield... Would such a soldier be a perfect soldier?"

"Yes." Amadeus pauses. "I told you four months ago, when I told you about fear, and I'll tell you
now: those feelings, those conflicts, make you a living being instead of a robot."

"But what should I do with my emotions?"

"Control them, contain them, redirect them... I've been traveling in the Dragon Kingdom, and I know
some tricks. Come with me. We'll solve this."

Soon after, Antoine and Amadeus return to the camp, where Rosemary and Lupe were waiting for
them.

"So what was the problem?" Lupe asked.

"It's settled, Grand Chief." Antoine replies. "Merci beaucoup, anyway."

At that precise moment, Fiona and Tails appear from behind a bush. Both look quite relaxed and...
satisfied.

"Excuse me, but..." Fiona says. "What did we miss?"

[In the present...]

Lupe: "YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT?!"

Tails: "Come on, Lupe. What other option is there?"

Lupe: "There must be some other option. I'll not support a coup d'etat."

Bunnie: "If we don't do this, we'll not be able to stop Max. Besides, Sally is a lousy leader for the
KFFs: she won't be able to deal adequately with Max's problem, and there are also other reasons to
dismiss her."

Lupe: "Oh, yeah? What reasons?"

Rosemary: "She doesn't abide by her promise to be a better leader. She repeats the mistakes she
made before."

Lupe: "That's not enough reason to dismiss her."

Fiona: "She opposes the use of firearms."

Lupe: "I would do the same in her place. By the way, the nuclear bombardment done by you all a
few days ago has been a bestiality. [to Tails] Now you're exhibiting your rank of Commander of the
Legion of Honour, but you obtained that rank after make the Resistance to degrade itself and to be
the same as Eggman."

Tails: "And what else did you want me to do? If we hadn't attacked the Eggman Empire's heart with
a nuclear bombardment, he would have done the same to us. There's no place for this things such as
'avoiding to degrade ourselves' or 'not to be like our enemies', because we have very little room to
choose and there are more important things, such as the security of the people themselves and the
progress of the Resistance in this War versus Eggman."

Bunnie: "Going back to the topic of Sally-"
Lupe: "Yeah, yeah, you've already said it: she promised to improve as a leader, and she did not. At her age, I was the same. And by something she has been chosen as leader."

Tails: "But within your Pack, there are options available, there's more than one person suitable to play the role of leader, for example, your husband Lobo; besides, you assumed your position to a greater age than Sally's current age. Instead, in the KFFs, Sally was the only option available, and now she's a very stubborn and hysterical leader. Do you want someone like her to continue leading one of the main groups of the Resistance?"

Commander Tower: "The Team Dark expressed their willingness to collaborate, and so did I. But I've decided that the Team Dark will act on their own, without GUN being held responsible for what they do."

Hope: "What? No! I'm sorry, but I ain't gonna help."

Shadow: [slightly surprised] "Why not? We're talking about the Order of IXIS, we're talking about Naugus."

Hope: "I ain't gonna collaborate with a coup d'etat. If the Team Dark wants a genius, they'll have to find someone else."

Shadow: [begging] "But... Hope..."

Rouge: [puts a hand on Shadow's shoulder] "It's her decision, Shadow. Besides, we don't need her, we have Tails."

Shadow: "Okay..." [regains his serious expression on his face]

Lupe: "Do you want me to send a member of the Pack, without my being responsible for what that member is gonna do, only to let that member die in vain?"

Rouge: "You could ask if someone wanna volunteer."

She-wolves with pink pelage: [in unison] "I wanna volunteer, Grand Chief Lupe." [look at each other]

Tails: "Wow! The twins Leeta and Lyco! How are you?"

Lyco (dressed in blue): "Bored."

Tails: "Well, now you two have a chance to fight for freedom."

Leeta (dressed in green): "As long as it doesn't mean getting too far off the ground, it's all right."

Tails: "Don't worry. Bunnie, Rouge, Omega and I will handle the part corresponding to the flight."

Lupe: "Let's recap: your parents are gonna carry out a peaceful mobilization to ask for a Democratic Opening in the Kingdom of Acorn."

Rosemary: "That's right. We've already gathered many followers there, and we've contacted them to mobilize soon."

Amadeus: "However, knowing the way Max and his son have acted lately, surely the father will influence his son so that he represses the demonstrations."

Lupe: "Then, if that happens, you all will do the coup d'etat: you will force Elias' abdication, will put
Max at the disposal of the Justice, and will dismiss Sally."

Fiona: "That's right. We've already planned what we'll do with NICOLE: Miles has created a system to disable her for as long as we need."

Lupe: "I still think this is a bad idea: Eggman could seize the opportunity to attack. And if that happens, who will defend New Mobotropolis and the whole Kingdom of Acorn?"

Commander Tower: "Faced with the fact that neither the AFFs nor the KFFs will be available, a large contingent of land, sea and air forces from GUN will be prepared to keep the country and its capital safe."

Lupe remains thoughtful.

Leeta: "Grand Chief, let us go. This is for a good cause."

Lyco: "We're willing to take the risk and admit our responsibility."

Lupe: "*sigh* Okay, you two can participate in that mission if you really wanna."

The next day...

It's midnight at Station Square Airport, and a group of mobians are walking along one of the airstrips, ready to take a flight to New Mobotropolis. From the front, counting from left to right, they are: Nic, Lightning, Simian, Lyco, Leeta, Procion, Bunnie, Antoine, Amadeus, Rosemary, Fiona, Tails, Shadow, Rouge and Omega.

[Soundtrack: Midnight wandering – Metal Slug 3 OST]

Chapter Summary

After a peaceful mobilization led by Colonel Prower and a severe repression, a crisis is beginning to develop within the Kingdom of Acorn, and the differences between AFFs and KFFs reach a climax, which could even involve many more people from other groups and from other countries. The Civil War is about to begin.

Three days later...

Surroundings of the New Castle of Acorn, New Mobotropolis. 11:00 am.

Some groups of people begin to gather in the square around the castle. A few minutes later, from different parts of the city and even from other parts of the Kingdom, several columns of people begin to arrive slowly and in silence.

Half an hour later, the castle is already surrounded by almost a hundred thousand demonstrators concentrated in the square and in the streets leading to it. They carry banners and flags with different slogans:

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE.

DOWN WITH TYRANNY.

HOUSE OF ACORN = EGGMAN

DEMOCRACY ≠ UTOPIA

There are also banners with phrases in French, a sort of "recycling" of the slogans created in the famous mobilizations that certain groups of disadvantaged humans did half a century before the Xorda attack.

SOYONS RÉALISTES, DEMANDONS L'IMPOSSIBLE. [LET'S BE REALISTIC, LET'S DEMAND THE IMPOSSIBLE.]

ON NE PEUT PLUS DORMIR TRANQUILLE LORSQU'ON A UNE FOIS OUVERT LES YEUX. [WE CAN'T REST EASY ONCE WE OPEN OUR EYES.]

Colonel Prower, standing on an improvised stage, is giving a speech. This time, his patch hides his new cybernetic eye.

"People of Acorn! In recent times, we've hopefully waited for King Elias to change the system of government after the fiasco of his predecessors' reigns. But we've already waited too long, and several events have shown that Elias isn't ruling to fulfill the desires of the people but to fulfill the wishes of his father, the emeritus king..."

When Amadeus mentions the title of "emeritus king" in reference to Max, the crowd starts to whistle and to boo.
"... who intends to continue to rule de facto, having already abdicated and being investigated for very serious crimes currently. This impunity, all this nonsense, must be stopped, and all of you, the united and organized inhabitants of the Kingdom of Acorn, are the only ones with the strength to achieve it, and above all, you all are the only ones with the authority to do so. It's necessary to remember that we, or rather, our ancestors had decided to establish the Monarchy, and King Alexander and his successors swore to comply with the Social Pact that put them in power and to act as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Now the King must abdicate because he's betraying our trust, he's breaking that Social Pact... although we must admit that, in a way, they've done it before: the great majority of the Kings of the House of Acorn, when they considered all technology as 'bad' and forced the people to maintain a medieval way of life, were preventing the people from enjoying the many benefits of technology, benefits that far outweigh the damages; King Theodore, being carried away by his emotions after Prince Emerson's death and totally banning the use of firearms in our Armed Forces, left the Nation vulnerable to the attacks of other nations that did be using firearms; young Raphael knew that he wasn't qualified to govern but didn't allow his place to be occupied by someone more suitable than him, so he had to instruct Julius, his son and successor, for the day he would take over as King, letting God decide the people's fate; Julius himself, when he linked his lineage with the Source of All, made the destiny of the Nation and its people de facto governed by a magical being without credibility; Romulus created all those legends about the Source of All and its connection with the House of Acorn, proving that, indeed, religion is the opium of the people, and it also contributed later to that there was a King as stupid and crazy as George, who almost took to the Nation directly towards the precipice..."

At the mention of George's name and actions, there are again a series of boos and whistles.

"As for Silvanus, I consider it necessary to reflect more deeply on his measures of government and their consequences. Yes, his actions against the Southern Baronies were an idiocy of cosmic scale, because it generated a strong resentment of that people against the Crown and against the Nation in general; but the Southern Barons have also been partly to blame for this: both the King and the Barons carried out the war to protect their own interests, and neither of them was kind enough to address their respective peoples and ask them: "Do you all really want to go to war against your own brothers?". And later, Max wanted the Southern Baronies's people not to betray us during the wars against the Overland and against Robotnik. But how could they not betray us, if they had already been betrayed by the Kings themselves? There was no reason why it would be worth having loyalty to those Kings. So the Acorn have some of the blame for having caused the Baronies' people to betray the Nation, the Barons having the rest of the blame for this. If there had been Democracy, if there had been a government truly representative of all, here and in the Southern Barons, do you all think that this would have happened? Would there have been people betraying the Nation for being disillusioned with the Acorns? Would there had been such resentment between the two peoples, resentment that lasted almost to the present day? Or would we have waged all our wars as one people, united under one national identity, all convinced of our loyalty to the Nation, without little quarrels between us?"

Demonstrators start to shout different answers.

"Yeah!"

"We must be united!"

"Get out, Kings! Get out, Barons!"

Then, Amadeus resumes his speech.

"This series of inept, irresponsible and selfish leaders must end. That's why we're here: We came to
ask... No! We come to exhort, to order King Elias to stop listening to that retrograde Max and start listening to the people...

Meanwhile, several soldiers of the Royal Guard are installed around the castle, between this and the demonstrators, protected behind anti-riot fences. They're equipped with armors, shields and helmets with glasses protecting their faces, and several of them are armed with truncheons and even rifles ready to fire rubber bullets. There are also hydrant trucks parked nearby.

"Look at those who have been sent by His Majesty! It seems that old Max has already given him the idea of creating an anti-riot police corps. It's obvious that he has sent them to repress us." Amadeus says with regret, then he pulls out a sheet of paper to read.

"Once upon a time there was a human statesman who fought to make his country cease to be a colony of an empire. That statesman wrote this paragraph in one of his works, referring to Popular Education."

Amadeus starts to read his sheet of paper verbatim.

If people are not illustrated, if their rights are not vulgarized, if each man doesn't know what he's worth, what he can do and what's owed to him, new illusions will replace old ones, and after hesitating some time between a thousand uncertainties, it may be our fate to change tyrants, without destroying tyranny.

The people around the castle applaud for a long period of time, and when they finish doing so, the Colonel leaves the sheet of paper and speaks again.

"Now, with this mobilization, we'll make both the Acorns and Eggman know this: this Nation's people are enlightened, know their rights, know how valuable it is, know what they can do, know what they deserve, won't be fooled by the illusion of 'living in peace under a monarchical government in order to avoid the tyranny of Eggman', won't hesitate, and will destroy Autocracy forever, will destroy Autocracy in all its forms, in one way or another. And now you..." Amadeus speaks to the castle behind him. "... you've already been warned, Max. Even if you repress us, we'll not give up, and besides, if you finally order repression to take place, you'll be demonstrating our point, you'll be demonstrating that you are a tyrant just like Eggman. We're mobilizing in a totally peaceful way, and we want that to continue, but if you repress... we don't know what could happen."

The crowd starts to scream with all their might and fury, making their screams louder by putting them together.

"DE-MO-CRACY! DE-MO-CRACY! DE-MO-CRACY!"

In another place near the castle, someone infiltrates among the demonstrators and, by surprise, throws a Molotov bomb at the cops.

BOOM!

The others see what happened and become desperate, starting to shout at the aggressor.

"What did you do, you moron?! You just gave them the reason! We're gonna be repressed!"

However, the infiltrator has already gone very far.

BANG!
Suddenly, a shot resounds away from where Amadeus is: somehow, the repression had begun. The Royal Guard advances against the civilians who were attending the march, capturing and dragging the civilians who try to resist, hitting with their truncheons and, in some cases, firing rubber bullets, while the hydrant trucks start to shoot jets of water under pressure to disperse people. Several groups of people flee with dread, but most of them, including Colonel Prower, try to resist, at the same time that small groups of soldiers of the Royal Guard insubordinate and don't participate of the repression.

After about fifteen minutes of constant fighting between demonstrators and soldiers, most of the first have already been dispersed, but the Colonel and others continue to resist the soldiers, who try to take the march's leader as a prisoner.

The Colonel manages to resist, but the nanites on the city's floor start to wrap him in a sphere.

"Run! Run, comrades! Don't let yourself be captured!" Amadeus shouts from inside the sphere of nanites that already surrounds him almost totally. His followers obey his leader and run away reluctantly.

When the nanites manage to isolate the Colonel, they start to emit lime-green light, until they become a sphere of light. After a few seconds, the sphere is undone, but Amadeus is no longer there.

Rosemary: "I can't believe it. I knew this would happen, but still, I can't believe it."

It's 12:00 am, and Rosemary, Tails, Sonic and a hologram of NICOLE are watching TV, where they were reporting on what happened in the "March for Democracy".

It had also been announced that Colonel Amadeus Prower was locked up in New Mobotropolis Penitentiary for leading a "mutiny", according to what Max had told the press.

Tails: [disturbed] "It was a trap, I'm sure."

NICOLE: "No, it wasn't a trap, Tails. The Royal Guard repressed the march in response to a demonstrator who had thrown a Molotov bomb, and then the fighting continued for a quarter of an hour."

Tails: "So what?! That doesn't mean that all the demonstrators have wanted to attack the Royal Guard. And there were fights because Dad and his followers were defending themselves. No one was gonna carry weapons or plan to go there to fight. I'm sure it was a trap."

Sonic: [with disinterest] "Anyway... Amadeus is supposed to be a strategist. He should have realized that this would happen if he did such madness."

The two-tailed fox tries not to utter a shout of insult, and finally leaves. Rosemary accompanies him, not before addressing the blue hedgehog.

Rosemary: "You're an idiot, Sonic."

When Sonic and NICOLE are left alone, he looks surprised.

Sonic: "Did I say something wrong?"

In response, the holographic lynx girl looks up at the sky and bites her lower lip.

Sonic: "Bah... What does it matter? Now that everything has calmed down, I'll go out for a run. Bye-bye, NICOLE!"
The sprinter starts to run with his super-speed, leaves the hut and inadvertently passes right in between Tails and his mother, who stare in the same direction in which he left.

Rosemary: "Don't worry about him, Tails. You don't need him."

Tails: "I heard what you said to him. You're right: he's an idiot. I don't know why I admired him so much in all this time."

Rosemary: "At least you have something better than him: you have your girlfriend, you have Antoine and Bunnie, you have me and your father, you have a whole team of Freedom Fighters willing to follow you..."

Tails: "Talking about that... It's time to start Phase Two."

Rosemary: "I think it would be better to wait for people's reaction. Surely there will be more marches against the Monarchy, and Max and Elias will be forced to respond to the demands."

Tails: "Yeah, they'll give an answer to the demands... through anti-riot police. Max is almost unstoppable, he won't hesitate to repress the entire population of the Kingdom if he deems it necessary. We must resort to heavy artillery this very night."

The next day, at 4:00 am, NICOLE unexpectedly appears inside the bedroom of Sonic, who's sleeping in a single-bed, built in the shape of a red Ferrari.

NICOLE: "Sonic, wake up."

Sonic: [is startled] "What-?! NICOLE! Do not you know how to knock on the door?"

NICOLE: "Sorry, Sonic, but it's urgent: Amadeus is going to be freed from prison-"

Sonic: "Thanks for letting me know, NICOLE." [runs off with his super-speed]

NICOLE: "Wait! You don't know who's doing it! [her hologram starts to fade] Just a moment- Oh, no! Security breach! What's happening?!" [her hologram fades away definitely]

At New Mobotropolis Penitentiary, Rosemary has already met with her husband and has taken him out of his cell, and now they're embracing each other.

Amadeus: "It's so good to see you again, my rose..."

Rosemary: "Alright, save your compliments for another time. We still have work to do."

"What a cute couple..."

The Prowers stare at the door and, to their surprise and anger, find Sonic.

Sonic: "Too bad I have to kick the two of you in the ass."

Rosemary: [furious, stands between her husband and Sonic] "Enough, Sonic. He didn't do anything wrong, the march was peaceful."

Sonic: "Molotov bombs were thrown. Is that what you call a 'peaceful march'? Besides, I took the trouble to listen to a recording of the speech, and I know that he was inciting people to overthrow the King. You can't make people do that, it's wrong."
Amadeus: "That's relative."

Sonic: "Ha! All you have to do is say the same thing about the actions of Robotnik and Eggman."

Rosemary: [gets angrier] "DON'T SAY THAT AGAIN ABOUT MY HUSBAND! Acorns are more comparable to Robotnik than we are! [relaxes] Our son agrees with us, and he agrees because he's intelligent and realizes things."

Sonic: "Yes, but he's a good person. And since he's also intelligent, he will soon realize that what you two are doing is wrong. Besides, I know that he, in his heart, loves me more than you both."

"Really? Then you can count me as one more villain!"

The blue hedgehog recognizes the voice and turns around, but receives a punch that throws him towards the other end of the hall. The Prowers now see Tails standing at the door, opening the way to his parents. He's dressed in the uniform and cap worn by his father as a member of the Special Forces, but he doesn't wear gloves or any type of footwear and his claws are exposed, his jacket is open and his pelage is exposed, and he wears his typical pilot glasses instead of sunglasses. He carries his two "super-water guns" and two retractable batons on his belt. He also has his two tails covered with its metallic mesh.

Tails: "Quick! Get out! I'll distract him!"

Rosemary: [worried] "But, Tails..."

Amadeus: "Don't worry about him, he knows how to defend himself."

Rosemary: [rebuking her husband] "Amadeus Prower, how can you abandon our son like this?"

Tails: "Come on, Mom... This is how Sally acts when she puts herself in 'Auntie Sally' mode, so don't be like her and trust me."

Rosemary: "Okay... But I still think it's a bad idea."

Tails: "First of all... [to his father] How I look?"

Amadeus: "Scruffy, but still great."

Tails: "Thank you. Now, go away."

Tails' parents leave and sneak through the trees and the shrubs, heading for the New Castle of Acorn. Meanwhile, several air destroyers of GUN start to appear in the sky.

Amadeus: "At least, the city will be well defended in the meantime. Where are our reinforcements?"

Rosemary: "They're supposed to be coming by now."

"Maurice Hedgehog..."

"Miles Prower..."

Tails and Sonic are in a corridor of the city prison, standing very far from one another.

"And well? Will you continue with this 'revolution' thing, Miles?"
"Are you on the tyrant's side now?"

"Tyrant? How are you so sure your parents won't do the same? It's always the same when it comes to Politics."

"I repeat what Mom said about you this noon: you're an idiot. You still believe in those stereotypes about politicians, power, the state, and so on. Political power ain't a poison, it ain't something that corrupts you, as long as the people watch over the one who has that power, something that wasn't happening with the Monarchy. Also, if you really are so convinced that all politicians are bad, why don't you use your popularity to change that situation or to overthrow them directly?"

"Because it's wrong to do that. And that's something that, apparently, you still have to learn."

"I've already learned, Maurice. I've already learned..." The fox draws one of his pistols. "And now I have good reasons to shoot you without hesitation." He then points to Sonic.

"Then do it if you really think you're so rude- AAAAAAAAAARRRGHH!"

The blue hedgehog screams, moans and twists in pain: he had been shot that practically made his left ear explode.

"I told you."

The child prodigy puts his pistol back on, while the sprinter again turns his attention to his "ex-brother" and looks at him furiously.

"You like to play rough, huh?"

Immediately, Sonic does a spin-dash and tries to run over the fox, who takes flight and lands behind him. The sprinter manages to stop before crashing into the wall, but Tails, within a second, pulls out his retractable batons, extends them and uses them to hit his opponent behind his knees, causing him to lose his footing and fall to the ground.

Tails grabs Sonic by his thorns. The hedgehog, thinking that his opponent thinks he's exhausted, seizes the opportunity and tries to punch him directly on the nose, but the fox surprises him by holding his fist with his hand. After making a wide smile that reveals his fangs, he quickly releases the sprinter's thorns and, in a 360-degree turn on himself, uses his tails to make two long, wide, hideous scars on Sonic's chest, to then drop him to the ground.

"Great! I'm getting closer to achieving my goal."

"I guess your goal ain't to kill me, either slowly or quickly. If so, you would have made deeper cuts in me. Is your goal to make me commit suicide after seeing how my own lil bro tortures me without compassion?"

"No, it's making you look like Scourge. Now I only need one thing: to paint you green."

"Haha, very funny."

Surprisingly, Sonic runs with his super-speed and gives Tails a right hook, causing his military cap to fall and his pilot glasses to generate bruises around his eyes. Tails manages to get up quickly and stand up after being thrown to the ground by the effect of that blow with added super-speed. But he realizes that Sonic is no longer there, so the fox growls and screams with rage, and then leaves there flying to hunt him.
In the forest of the city, Tails manages to reach the sprinter, but this one notices his presence.

"No matter what you try to do, Tails! Your parents are about to do something stupid, and I'm gonna stop it!"

"You are the one who's about to do something stupid, and I am gonna stop you!"

Tails takes a shortcut, manages to reach Sonic and uses his left hand's claws to tear his right side. The blue hedgehog slows down by the pain that this generates to him, and decides to keep still, in the expectation of any new attack.

Indeed, the fox turns around and advances at full speed towards him, preparing his claws to make a new and more harmful attack. When Tails is close enough, Sonic does a spin-dash flying towards him, and although Tails tries to use his reflexes to dodge him, it's late and the hedgehog manages to hit him with that spin-dash, throwing the fox into a treetop. He finally gets out of there, spinning his tails to cushion his descent, and soon recovers from the dizziness generated by the impact.

"Come on, Tails... Let's end this fight, it doesn't make sense anymore."

"You're wrong, Sonic. It makes a lot of sense, and I can give you reasons: you're an imbecile, a selfish and a cocky."

"Thanks for the compliment. And you're crazy."

"When someone sane criticizes you rightly, you use your popularity to make him look bad in front of others. You call him 'idiot', 'clown', 'pessimistic', 'pretentious', or 'crazy', which is what you say I am."

"So does your father, making the Acorns look like 'the bad guys in the movie'. And you're supporting him."

"I support him because I read, I study, I investigate, I analyze the information... Things you would never do, not even if someone threatened to kill Sally. And talking about that: if there were no more chili-dogs available and Eggman was the only one to make them, you're capable of betraying us in order to eat chili-dogs again."

Sonic is very offended by this.

"I AIN'T SO! And you know it! I just wanna defeat Eggman! That's all I've ever wanted!"

"Bullshit! If Eggman ceased to exist, if all the great villains of this world ceased to exist, your life would no longer have sense, you would be bored. And I know very well that this is the last thing you would want."

"Is there a problem with my taste for fun? Is there anything wrong with me not being like you, a nerd who works in his lab all day without talking to anyone and not even seeing the sunlight?"

"Maybe I am an antisocial nerd, but at least I am a Freedom Fighter with all the letters, ready to give everything for the people I want. Instead, you are a clown, a normal ordinary teenager who had the blessing of super-speed and now doesn't show even the slightest sign of humility, even though you think you're a hero."

"You ain't a hero either: you take refuge in all that technology and your intelligence, but, unless you're an Adept to Chaos just like me and you have two tails, you would be lost, you couldn't fight anyone, you wouldn't be strong or resistant nor fast nor agile at all. I still don't understand how it's
possible that Fiona loves you."

"The reason Fiona loves me, the reason I deserve to enter the category of 'hero', is because I use my capacities for the common good, and if necessary, I do it at the cost of my own life, instead of using those capacities for my own benefit or to do evil. And within those 'heroic capacities' is also the intelligence, which you don't have... Or maybe, yes, you have intelligence, but you don't wanna use it. Besides, I'm a hero in Fiona's eyes because I overcame a painful childhood that had everything except happiness, satisfaction, respect from others, compensation for my contributions... love..."

"Love?! When did you lack love?! You're ungrateful, Tails! I, Sally and everyone else have given you all our love almost since you were born. We loved you, and even today we would like to continue to love you. You have more love from us than from your parents, who are using you as a toy to realize their own ambition."

"I support my parents because I think rationally, and I realize they're right; and to think what you think, that everything done by others is always by ambition and everything done by you always has pure intentions, it's an act of absolute hypocrisy. Regarding my parents' love for me: they now have difficulties, but they were forcibly exiled throughout the first decade of my life, so they deserve tolerance, it ain't fair that you compare them to yourself or to Sally or any of you, who did have opportunities. And by the term 'love' I was referring to romantic love, to sexual love, which you and everyone else tried to deprive me of, treating me as someone of little importance, describing me as 'the typical misfit nerd who lives working hidden in his workshop', seeking that I would never be even close to showing myself as someone better than you, trying to keep me voluntarily under your control and trying to make me feel satisfied with the crumbs of your own success. Because that has been your primary goal from the very moment you started to become aware of yourself: to affirm yourself in front of others as the best one, and through mockery and your popularity's use, to discredit those who question your superiority, as you did all this time with Antoine."

"Oh, come on... And now you bring up the subject of my relationship with that frenchy who now thinks he's Van Damme."

"Sonic, you ain't a true Freedom Fighter, you've never been. Antoine was always at least a little closer to being a real warrior in comparison to you, because he always thought, deep down in his being, that the War against Robotnik and against Eggman was a serious matter. On the contrary, you never saw this war as a serious matter, you only saw this war as a game and nothing else."

"That's my personality, Tails, and people realize that. That's why I'm still so popular: because everyone realizes I'm good at heart... Well, not everyone. The exception would obviously be social misfits like you and Ant. But you're the only one who reacts like this, after all, because Ant doesn't even come here to shoot me with his toy arrows."

In response, Tails makes a smile without showing his teeth.

"Waht? Did what I told you was funny? Are not you gonna get angry now?"

Bip

Bip

Bip-Bip

Bip-Bip

Sonic turns around...
Bip-Bip

Bip-Bip

Bip-Bip-Bip-Bip

And he finds a high-tech arrow stuck in the trunk of a tree just behind him.

Bip-Bip-Bip-Bip

Bip-Bip-Bip-Bip

Bip-Bip-Bip-Bip-Bip-Bip-Bip-Bip-Bip

The arrow has bits of shrapnel on the tip.


"Me and my big mouth."


Sonic prepares to run...

BOOM!

But the arrow explodes just a fraction of nanosecond after Sonic ran out. Sonic is lying on the ground, with the shrapnel embedded in his body, but slowly gets up while all his wounds begin to heal because he's, like Tails, an Adept to Chaos.

Meanwhile, Antoine, dressed in his AFF uniform, comes down from a tree and stands next to Tails.

"Sonic, Sonic, Sonic... Talking too much, comme d'habitude."

Antoine quickly fires another shrapnel arrow, and Sonic dodges it but then discovers that the arrow is following him: Now the arrow's tip also has built-in small rockets and fins that are leading it towards him. Fleeing from the remote control arrow, the hedgehog moves away from Antoine and Tails until they lose sight of him.

In full fleeing, Sonic goes through an abandoned arsenal and grabs an old shield to protect himself. The shield has a circular shape, and its design includes an acorn drawn inside a blue circle surrounded in turn by a red circle. Finally, the hedgehog stops, protects himself with the shield and lets the shrapnel arrow hit him.

BOOM!

A few minutes later, the Prowers are approaching the huge gates of the New Castle of Acorn. Amadeus already has his modified saber in his hand, and Rosemary prepares her invisibility suit and her electro-bullet guns. The snow is falling on the city now, and the floor already has a thin layer of snow.

However, they encounter an unexpected obstacle: Sonic, totally unharmed and now wearing that old shield, and Sally, armed with her Blade-Rings and also equipped with a jet-pack on her back.

Sally: [smiles confidently] "Good night, Mr and Mrs Prower. Trying to make a coup d'etat again?"
Rosemary: "Princess Sally Alicia Acorn... I knew that you were going to defend your tyrant father and your inept brother." [hides her hands behind her back, and presses a button hidden in her right glove]

Sally: "What can I say? I'm a warrior princess." [activates her Blade-Rings]

Then, all the summoned by the AFFs appear one by one in the place, coming from different places of the city, coming to Rosemary's call: Tails, flying, dressed in his ATA suit, now made of an alloy of gold and titanium, and with his metal mesh, also made of the same alloy; Fiona, with her electro-weapons; Antoine, with his bow and trick arrows, his saber modified ready and a combat knife saved; Bunnie is flying, with her arm's weapons ready and his martial arts stick ready; Shadow, preparing to remove the inhibitor rings from his wrists and release all of his body's Chaos energy; Rouge, flying and carrying in her hands two pistols of common bullets; Omega, flying and with all its arsenal ready; Leeta and Lyco, ready for hand-to-hand combat; Simian, showing his great size and strength and holding a grenade in his hand; Lightning, dressed in his hanfu and armed with a katana and several ninja weapons; Nic, carrying one of her revolvers and her hunting knife ready, and finally, Procion, leading a popular militia of 50,000 volunteers who now have surrounded the castle. The volunteers come from different parts of the Kingdom and from different social sectors; they include among them ten thousand Royal Guard soldiers rebelled against the King; they carry improvised weapons but designed in very ingenious ways with what little they managed to gather, and they're dressed in improvised red and black uniforms.

Fiona: [to Sonic] "Hahaha! Who are you?! All you need to do is paint a white letter A on your forehead and a pair of little wings in your ears, and you'll have already become Captain America!"

Everyone starts to laugh. The loud laughter of 50,000 militiamen resounds around the castle in an intimidating way, but neither Sonic nor Sally let themselves be frightened.

Meanwhile, Angel Island appears casually in New Mobotropolis' sky.

Amadeus: [in a roguish tone of voice] "In fact, he would be Captain Acorn, loyal defender of the tyrants who govern our country."

Sonic starts laughing at Amadeus's joke, making Sally nervous.

Sally: [in a low voice, barely moving her mouth] "Sonic, focus..."

Sonic: "Don't worry, Sally... Anyway, we're ready. Is not that right, friends?!"

Suddenly, several mobians appear alongside Sonic and Sally, others land from Angel Island, and others, coming from inside the castle and also from helicopters with two rotors descending next to it, stands around this great construction to protect it. Next to Sonic and Sally appear Amy, with her Piko-Piko Hammer, and Rotor, with ultrasonic cannons. From Angel Island comes the Team Chaotix: Mighty, a male armadillo with a red armor, endowed with super-strength; Ray, Mighty's foster brother, a male flying squirrel, with a yellow pelage and a light blue jacket; the strong Vector Crocodile; the chameleon Espio, trained as a ninja of the Shinobi Clan, armed with weapons similar to those of Lightning, and usually dark violet; the male bee Charmy, dressed as a pilot and flying with his membranous wings; Knuckles, ready to use his powers of super-force and flight and also carrying the Chaos Emeralds for Sonic to use when necessary, and Julie-Su, armed with two of her classic proton pistols. From the castle comes King Elias himself, carrying in each hand double daggers that he learned to use in his exile, and accompanied by 10,000 Royal Guard soldiers who are still loyal to him. At the same time, the helicopters let down 15,000 Robian soldiers of Beauregard's Legion, including the Baron himself and Matilde, a female armadillo with a green armor, Mighty's sister, with her arms legionized and turned into a sort of cranes. But the most surprising is the
presence of Vanilla Rabbit, now dressed in a Royal Guard uniform.

Rosemary: "Look who came... I thought you'd stay in your house, taking care of Cream. Considering how old-fashioned you are..."

Vanilla: "I've also had training. I couldn't have taken good care of my daughter if I hadn't learned to defend myself."

Bunnie: "Hi, Uncle."

Beauregard: "It's good to see you're okay, Buns."

Bunnie: "Really? Well, now I'll give you the thanks you deserve... for having left me in a hospital without even answering when we asked for help."

Procion: "Don't worry about him, Miss Rabbot. Let me punish the Baron. By the way, how much did Max pay him to make this alliance with the Acorns against our 'People's Republican Militia'?"

Beauregard: "I have to take care of my throne. What else can I do?"

Procion: "Same as always: fight against the Acorns."

Beauregard: "Max has made me a very tempting peace offer. For my country, allying with him and fighting against you is better than continuing to fight against him."

Procion: "You mean it's better for you, right?"

Sally: "In these last weeks, I knew that you really wouldn't be a submissive soldier of the Royal Guard. But I didn't expect this from you, Ant."

Antoine: "Technically, I'm loyal to the Nation and its people, represented in turn by the King. When the King doesn't fulfill his duties properly, the people have again the power, and I obey again those people. Something similar applies to our relationship with you, princesse: you're a lousy leader, so we separate and go our own way."

Sonic: "Does that 'own way' include making an alliance with members of Destructix and bounty-hunters?"

Antoine: "They're honorable warriors who have had difficulties and now deserve a new opportunity."

Sally: *sigh* "Amadeus Prower, are you sure you really wanna do this?"

Amadeus: "Totally sure."

Sally: "And are you also sure that this is the desire of the people, of which you're supposedly their voice?"

Amadeus: [grieved] "No people in the world would want such a thing, but we're forced to do so after the repression carried out by Elias, or rather, by his father."

Sally: "I read your speech: you said something about the wars that my family and the Southern Barons carried out without listening to their respective peoples. You're doing the same thing as them, Amadeus."

Amadeus: "No, because now they really want to fight, in order to defend their Nation and to avoid
being deprived of their rights."

Sally: [determined] "Then, so be it."
Chapter 13: The Civil War, Part 2.

Chapter Summary

The unstable equilibrium has already broken. The Civil War has already begun. Now, AFFs and KFFs, along with their respective allies, will decide the fates of the Kingdom of Acorn and themselves, in a battle of enormous magnitudes that will make some of the most important heroes of Mobius fight each other.

Whether or not the revolution is successful, whether or not there are dead, something is assured: after this, nothing will ever be the same.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"CHARGE, MY BRAVES!"

[Soundtrack: Unknown world – Metal Slug 3 OST]

With Colonel Prower's war cry, his followers quickly close the space of ten meters between them and the troops loyal to the King. As the 50,000 volunteers of the People's Republican Militia attack the New Castle of Acorn from all sides, the 10,000 Royal Guard soldiers try to resist the attack, though it's the 15,000 Robians brought by Baron Beauregard who really resist.

"Volunteers: neutralize the enemy, try not to kill them." Procion orders. "Remember that the Royal Guard and the Robians fight on orders."

PUM! PUM!

BANG! BANG! BANG!

BOOM!

CLANK! CLANK! CLANK!


Swords resonate as they collide, and the gunshots of pistols, rifles and machine guns and the explosions of the bombs also ring.

Beauregard's Robians and the Royal Guard's soldiers shoot Taser pistols, and the latter also bring their sabers. Beauregard's Legion's Robians have also brought in a lot of fragmentation grenades, rumble bombs and some incendiary grenades, all of which are now being launched by soldiers from the terraces, balconies and windows of the castle towers.

The Royal Guard's former soldiers turned militiamen bring catapults to launch rocks, grenade launchers made in an improvised way and loaded with homemade tear gas grenades, Micro Uzi submachine guns with rakes attached to the tip as if they were bayonets, and Glock 18 machine pistols stored in their uniforms. The other militiamen are armed with very modest homemade submachine guns Sten Mk 2 and Błyskawica, simple to manufacture and made of stamped sheet. As
for the bombs, each militiaman has only a few Model 24 stick grenades

In front of the castle's gates, the AFFs fight against the KFFs, along with all the allies that both teams gathered ad hoc for this battle.

Sonic rushes to Antoine, but the swordsman steps aside and, seizing his saber with his right hand, uses the sword's back to strike the sprinter's legs, causing him to stumble. As soon as the hedgehog rises from the ground, Antoine tries to cross him, so he makes a somersault in the air and stands behind the coyote; but the latter had foreseen such an act, and with his left hand, takes out his combat knife and makes a cut on Sonic's right wrist. Now the hand's tendons don't work and the blood comes out with a lot of pressure, although the Chaos energy starts to slowly heal the wound. Sonic is surprised by the new weapon that Antoine is carrying in his hand: the combat knife is made of pure diamond, completely transparent, perfectly crystallized, very well cut, very sharp and polished with the proper shape.

"An idea of Tails, votre vieil ami. You should see how much can be done with Chaos energy."

The young soldier attacks the sprinter unexpectedly, trying to cut him with his diamond combat knife or with his saber. Sonic dodges the coyote's maneuvers or protects himself them with his shield, then he runs away. Then, Antoine prepares his bow and shoots three remote-controlled arrows simultaneously. Sonic gets the arrows don't hit him, but he's forced to keep running.

Tails shoots Sally with his repulsor cannons, but the chipmunk is protected by the power blades generated by her Blade-Rings, and then she uses these blades to counterattack. The fox dodges the slashings and tries to hit Sally with his metal fists, but the princess also dodges the blows and manages to cut the union between the ATA suit and the railgun, then using this cannon to shoot Tails, who escapes flying. Sally activates her jet-pack and takes off to pursue the child prodigy of whom she was a surrogate mother sometime.

As they both fly at only four meters in height, Tails fires dozens of mini-missiles, which in this case are not nuclear, but the chipmunk dodges them all. Then the fox and the chipmunk start to chase after each other: he tries to shoot with his multiple-barreled laser machine gun or cut her with his tails, and she tries to do the same with her stolen railgun or with her Blade-Rings. Finally, the fox manages to shoot at Sally's jet-pack, forcing her to deactivate her Blade-Rings and attempt a forced landing. When the princess reaches the ground and gets to her feet, Tails lands next to her, hits her stomach with his metallic fist, then snatches the stolen railgun from her and mounts it over his right shoulder again, and finally, he points at her with his hand's palm's repulsor cannon, ready to make a shot with Chaos spear included.

However, the child prodigy doesn't get to shoot, because a blue blur from his left swiftly passes in front of him, picking up Sally on the way. When he looks to his left, he realizes that he's now in the path of Antoine's three remote-controlled arrows, so he tries to activate his Chaos energy shield, but the shield fails to form completely.

"Not again-"

**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**

Fiona is dodging Amy's hammer blows. Seeing how Tails, near where she is, is struck by the explosive arrows, she despairs.
"MILES!"

PIKO!

Amy takes the opportunity to give her a hammer from the side, throwing the vixen a few meters away. Shadow sees what happened and goes to confront the hedgehog girl.

"Come on, try to stop my hammer! Sonic's sloppy imitator!"

Amy tries to give him a hammer blow from above, but the black hedgehog jumps in the air and kicks the Piko-Piko sideways, taking it out of her hands. Then the "Ultimate Lifeform", as he often calls himself, grabs the hammer, holding it with one hand and manipulating it deftly, better than its former owner.

"Do you think I'm gonna give up?! I can keep fighting without my ha-!"

PIKO!

Sonic's Number One Fanatic is hit by her own hammer, being stunned and thrown about ten feet away. Then, Fiona rises from the ground, and Shadow goes quickly to attend her.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah, Shadow, I'm fine... Go and check on Miles, right now."

"Of course." Shadow runs to Tails and tries to help him get up. He fortunately seems to be fine, but Fiona, who looks from afar, is still angry.

"You'll pay for this, Sonic."

Sonic is taking care of Sally and fighting against militiamen at the same time. After almost a minute, Sally stands up and activates her Blade-Rings again.

"I'm fine, Sonic. I can defend myself."

BOOM!

Suddenly, a smoke bomb explodes where Sonic and Sally are. Taking advantage that they can't see, Fiona and Antoine jump on Sonic with a war cry.

Fiona uses her whip, which is disabled, to grab Sonic. Then she pulls the whip to lure Sonic towards him, and she hits him in the face, throwing the hedgehog to the ground.

"That's because you did that trick and you've hurt Miles."

When Sonic gets up, Antoine makes a quick move with his diamond knife to cut his knees' tendons. The blue hedgehog falls to the ground face down, unable to move or stand up.

"Et this is for making mon own weapons hurt mon meilleur ami."

Sonic Sonic isn't good at learning languages, but seems to know the meaning of what the coyote said; that paralyzes him, making him stay on the ground, vulnerable. Antoine tries to take advantage to attack the hedgehog using his modified saber, hot to white red, but Sally interposes, stops the saber with her Blade-Rings, and kicks to the coyote in the stomach.
"Attacking someone in that situation? You surprise me, Ant."

Sally leaves immediately after. Fiona doesn't pursue her, she's busy fighting the blue hedgehog.

"Are not you gonna chase Sally?"

"Soon there'll be someone to take care of her, Sonic. In this battle, I would rather have your head, or better yet, your balls."

The vixen throws a punch, but Sonic swiftly grabs her arm and grabs Fiona from behind.

"Are you mad at me?"

TZZ!

"AAAAAAAAARRRGHH!"

Sonic, electrocuted by Fiona's cloak, falls to the ground with his body smoking.

"You fooled me, and you tried to stop me from connecting with Miles. And yet it remains to be mentioned all that you did to the others: Miles himself, Antoine, and me."

The red vixen rests her foot on the sprinter's crotch.

"I'll make you feel pain for each of those things. We have a long fight ahead..."

Lightning and Espio are locked in a duel, testing all their abilities as ninjas. The lynx is a raiju warrior, is strong and fast, is aggressive, implacable and dangerously impulsive; the chameleon is a shinobi warrior, is agile, is calculating and meditates his actions. At the beginning of the duel, Espio had become invisible, but Lightning had attacked him by detecting him with his refined sense of hearing, causing them both to start a fight that still continues, using mainly their katanas.

Rouge, Bunnie and Nic are dealing with Ray, Charmy and Julie-Su, in a fight that is both terrestrial and aerial. GUN's agent chases the bee to grab him with her own hands, but after continually failing, she prepares her guns and starts to try to shoot him. To save the life of her teammate in Chaotix, the former dark legionary prepares her proton guns and starts to shoot furiously at the bat woman.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

"You'll pay me for flirting with my boyfriend, witch! You'll see!"

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

To prevent the echidna from knocking out the ex-jewel thief bat, the cyborg rabbit girl flies near the ground to hit her in the stomach with her robotic fist. The echidna stops firing and jumps in the air; Bunnie manages to stop and turns around to try again to hit Julie-Su, but the pink echidna, who's also a cyborg, quickly dodges her, turns around, stands to the right of Bunnie, and uses her cybernetic left arm's elbow to hit her in the face. In turn, the she-wolf-weasel tries to shoot the cyborg echidna with her revolver, but Ray throws himself on her, causing her to shoot in the air.

"I don't care if you're just a kid or I've ever saved your life." Fiona's former tutor and girlfriend pulls her hunting knife out of her boot. "You'll pay for doing such a thing."

Nic is about to attack Ray with her knife, but Vanilla, whose face is bruised, rushes over her to avoid
it, and then starts to beat her furiously while Ray escapes.

"We're not done yet, Lady Perfection."

Rosemary appears out of nowhere, behind Vanilla, and then grabs her shoulders and throws her far away. Vanilla tries to counterattack, but no longer finds Tails' mother.

"Were you looking for me?"

Vanilla turns around, but only sees the adult vixen's fist crashing into her face.

---

**CLANK! CLANK!**

Amadeus and Elias continue to fight: the fox, with his saber but without its modification activated, and the chipmunk, with the double daggers that he learned to use during his exile.

While the Colonel is fighting, a Robian suricate of Beauregard's Legion approaches him from behind and from the left, diagonally, after seeing the patch in his left eye and thinking that the enemy's leader couldn't see his attack coming. But Amadeus uses his hidden cybernetic eye to detect his new opponent, and apparently without even looking at him, activates his saber and makes a surprise attack before the robot can respond, using the saber to damage the laser weapon built into the Robian's arm, and then giving a blow that abolishes his metal head and leaves him knocked out. At that precise moment, Elias seizes the opportunity to attack with his daggers, but the war veteran, returning his saber in its normal way, stops the young King's attack.

**CLANK!**

"I've heard your speech, Colonel. It has been very offensive."

"I'm sorry, Your Majesty, but I was obliged to tell the truth."

**CLANK!**

"Then I'll not tolerate you insulting my family's memory!"

**CLANK!**

"And I'll not tolerate you or your father insulting and despising the people's intelligence!"

"ENOUGH!"

Amadeus and Elias hear Sally shout, and at the same moment, they're surrounded by two different force fields, both made of Chaos energy and created by a special device used by Sally. The princess enters the castle quickly, taking with her the device in question and also the two bubbles where her brother and the revolutionary leader are locked up.

Once they're in the throne room, Sally addresses them both.

"Can we please end this nonsense fight? It ain't necessary for you two to destroy each other to achieve peace. I trust we can find a solution to this. Now, if I free you two, do you commit to suspending this duel of swords, at least for a while?"

Meanwhile, Antoine, who had sneaked inside the castle, is watching them from the top of a scaffold.
Simian throws a grenade to where Vector is.

**BOOM!**

The grenade turns out to be a smoke grenade, which makes the crocodile unable to see for a few seconds, enough for the gorilla to strike him with all his might and to throw him several meters. Vector recovers and advances to the Sergeant, and when the latter throws more blows, the crocodile holds both fists with both hands and then gives him a headbutt that even makes a crack in the helmet.

Rotor intervenes and shoots Simian with his ultrasonic cannon, pushing him to several meters, but Omega appears flying and shoots Rotor, leaving him on the ground and also destroying his ultrasonic cannon. Suddenly, Knuckles also appears there flying and hits the walking arsenal. The blow not only abolishes and stuns it, but also his knuckles' spikes break one of Omega's eyes. Shadow runs to the place where the Guardian and the robot are flying.

"If you're planning to attack me, Shadow, that will be very unwise of you."

"Do you want to see how I do something unwise, Guardian?"

The "Ultimate Lifeform" removes his wrists' inhibitor rings, and then his whole body begins to glow and rises a meter above the ground. Knowing what's to come, Omega escapes.

"Oh, no... By Aurora, it ain't possible... NO!"

"**CHAOS BLAST!**"

**BOOM!**

Shadow's own body releases a devastating wave of Chaos energy, razing everything within a ten-meter radius. Before being struck by the energy wave, Knuckles throws to Sonic a bag with the seven Chaos Emeralds.

"Sonic! There they go! OOF!"

Sonic catches the bag. "Thanks, Knux!"

"Not so fast, Sonic."

**FLAZ! PLAZ! TZZ!**

Fiona starts attacking Sonic with her electric whip.

**FLAZ! FLAZ! ¡PLAZ! TZZ!**

Sonic tries to dodge the lashes and to take care of the Emeralds at the same time, but Fiona finally shoots him with her "taser fist".

**TZZ!**

"AAAAAAAAAARRRGH! NOT AGAIN!"

Once the electrocution is over, Sonic uses his last forces to grab the Chaos Emeralds. Fiona runs and tries to take them from him, but Sonic finally transforms into Super Sonic, with his pelage glowing in golden color, his thorns slightly bent upwards and his body floating a few centimeters off the ground; when he's transformed, Super Sonic releases an explosion of Chaos energy, throwing everything
around him about three meters away. Fiona is about to be hit by the energy wave, but Tails appears just in time, grabs her and flies away from there.

"Miles..."

"Fiona! Are you okay?"

"Miles, why do I always have to be the damsel in distress?"

"Because the Super transformation is dangerous for Non-Adepts to Chaos, like you."

"And why are Adepts to Chaos always men?"

"Because Chaos is sexist, I guess."

Finally, Tails lands and leaves Fiona on the ground, next to Nic.

"Nic, take good care of her, please."

"Okay, but, where are you going?"

"To pay off a debt." Tails addresses a group of militiamen. "Take care of Fiona and the she-gunslinger, at all costs!"

"Yes, sir!" replies a female mobian maned wolf, who leads her own division of militiamen. Then the fox flies away.

"Nic?"

"Yes, Fio?"

"Are you still as skilled as before when using whips?"

"I've not used a whip in a long time, but I think I could do it. Why you ask?"

Fiona gives her electro-whip to her former associate, who grabs and activates it.

"I'll not fail you, Fio. I swear." Then Nic flips the whip and makes a whiplash, ready to fight against a group of Robians approaching them.

The Royal Guard and Beauregard's Legion continue to fight against the People's Republican Militia. The militiamen manage to deal the Royal Guard's soldiers, but each Robian soldier is able to deal and beat two militiamen at a time.

Procion, designated by Colonel Prower as leader of the militiamen, is personally fighting against Baron Beauregard, who leads the Robians who now fight for the King. The raccoon attacks with his sword, but Beauregard pulls a facon stored inside his walking stick and stops the attack with it; then, he spins the facon and makes a cut in Procion's right hand, forcing him to use his sword with his left hand. Taking advantage of the fact that the raccoon is right-handed and can no longer handle his weapon as well as he did before, the rabbit throws a blow with his legionized right arm, but Procion manages to dodge him and, applying a martial arts technique, hits him in the shoulder joint and gets his opponent no longer able to use his cybernetic arm.

Procion prepares to take the Baron from the battlefield, and so show him as a prisoner of war and, perhaps, to get the battle to end; but the cyborg, without needing to raise his cybernetic arm, uses the
his hand's palm's cannon to shoot Procion at close range.

**BOOM!**

The shot shatters the raccoon's left arm without mutilating him, as well as leaving him lying on the ground and shocked.

However, the Baron doesn't have time to do anything, because Bunnie plummets over him, using her robotic fist to crush her uncle's right shoulder and thus rip off his robotic arm. Then she begins to punish him by kicking him with her robotic legs, and then, using her organic arm, she grabs him by the neck and lifts him a few centimeters above the ground.

"Go ahead, Buns, kill your uncle. Kill the same one who raised you as if you were his own daughter, while her parents betrayed their own kind and were going to fight on overlanders' side."

Bunnie releases Beauregard, but when he turns around to escape, she activates her arm's cannon in the "Plasma-Thrower" mode and shoots him in the back. The tremendously hot blue-violet stream of fire starts to engulf the adult rabbit, starting with his feet and legs, continuing with the rest of his body and moving toward his head, while he screams in pain and fear.

"You also committed treason, Uncle Beau: you betrayed me, leaving me in a hospital knowing that I was dying. Compared to you, even Antoine's father would have been better than you."

Meanwhile, Matilde, from Beauregard's Legion, and her brother Mighty, from Chaotix, are confronting the twins Leeta and Lyco, from the Wolf Pack. The armadillos have a great force, although he has that force in his proper body and she obtained that force by the legionization of her arms; but the she-wolves are very agile and manage not only to avoid strong blows but also to make accurate attacks on sensitive areas of their opponents.

Elsewhere, Knuckles and Shadow are fighting, testing their Chaos powers. The Guardian takes flight, then plummets quickly over the black hedgehog, seeking to crush him with his fists with spikes; the "Ultimate Lifeform" activates his shoes with rockets to dodge the blow, to run, to turn and to hit the echidna, but this one opposes a lot of resistance with his body and doesn't fall or is moved from his place; then, Knuckles starts to punish Shadow with several blows, but Shadow responds releasing another devastating Chaos blast that throws several tens of meters backwards at the echidna, and then the "Ultimate Lifeform" fires a barrage of Chaos spears at him, so the Guardian is forced to cover himself as he tries to rise from the ground and to move toward his opponent; when he manages to reach him, Knuckles threatens to punch, so Shadow does Chaos Control and teleports, but the echidna, foreseeing that Shadow would appear behind him again, strikes his elbow backward, and this blow directly impacts the hedgehog's teeth; however, it seems that he doesn't even feel the blow; Shadow teleports again and Knuckles turns around, but the hedgehog reappears in the same place from where he had teleported, and then shoots a Chaos spear at the echidna from behind.

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After being Super Sonic for a moment, Sonic had returned to his normal state, and is now repelling militiamen with his super-speed and his new shield, which turns out to be very useful: he not only uses it to protect himself, but also uses it as a frisbee.

Tails suddenly appears flying and shoots Sonic with his laser machine gun, but the hedgehog manages to react in time and protects himself with his shield. Tired of being shooting in vain, the fox flies quickly and lands in front of him, preparing the repulsor cannons from his hands' palms to make shots with Chaos spears included; as soon as he lands, Tails shoots Sonic at close range, but Sonic protects himself again with the shield, and both remain in their positions for several seconds: Sonic,
using his shield as sole protection, and Tails, firing a continuous beam of Chaos energy to try to overcome the amazing resistance that shield opposes. Finally, both move away from each other, and Sonic leaves the shield and becomes Super Sonic again, avoiding to cause an explosion in this occasion.

"Do you dare to fight with someone like that, Tails?"

"Do you want a real fight?" Having said that, Tails immediately flies up, towards Angel Island, with Super Sonic chasing him.

As he's about to reach Angel Island, the fox fires continuous beams of Chaos energy with his repulsor cannons, making a hole beneath the floating island. He enters there, and after crossing the rock, comes directly to the altar where's the very Master Emerald.

Sally is walking along the scaffolding on the roofs of the New Castle of Acorn, watching silently: Amadeus and Elias had vowed not to kill each other while she was away, and judging by what Sally is seeing from there, both are keeping their word and are even moving forward with the negotiations.

"I guess it's time to stop the battle." Amadeus grabs his communicator. "I'll tell my soldiers that we'll make a cease-fire."

"I'll do the same." Elias grabs his own communicator.

Seeing how both leaders order their respective troops to cease the battle, the princess smiles, but this smile fades when she hears a barely perceptible noise. At that moment, Sally starts to run on the scaffolding.

Antoine is walking along the scaffolding, preparing an arrow whose tip has an Anarchy Beryl. When Scourge was captured, the Zone Cops took over Anarchy Beryls, and Tails had got them to give one. As far as is known, the Anarchy Beryls' energy can be harmful in certain forms and quantities, depending on the circumstances and the being to which it affects, and an Anarchy Beryl is the only one with certain chances of achieving the death of the current target of the coyote.

"If you wanna kill my father, you'll have to get over me, Ant."

Without looking surprised, Antoine meets with Sally, who's standing right in front of him, blocking the way.

"I guess you heard me coming, Sally."

"Foxes like Tails and coyotes like you are not the only ones with a acute hearing."

"Well, I'm sorry, but your father is a threat to the Nation et to the entire planet. Killing him is the only alternative available." The coyote keeps his bow and his arrow with the Anarchy Beryl, and takes out his modified sword and his diamond knife. "Et if vous get in my way, I'll not hesitate to kill you too. After all, you're terrible as a leader and as a mobian, you no longer deserve my respect at all."

In response, Sally unfolds the power blades of her Blade-Rings.

"Do you want a duel? Then you'll have it. And I'll not hesitate to kill you either, because you are and you've always been an absolutely unpleasant frenchy, so you're likely to find some surprises when you see me fight."
Super Sonic crosses Angel Island from below, reaching the Master Emerald's altar. Once there, he walks around the great gem, until he finds Tails' armor lying on the ground.

"What are you planning to do, Tails?" He says to himself.

**BOOM!**

An explosion of Chaos energy, originated above the Master Emerald, launches Super Sonic into the temple walls. When the hedgehog looks at the explosion's point of origin, he meets with Tails, now transformed into his "Hyper Tails" form: in addition to his red cloak, which now seems to be very broken worn, and his red gloves, which are pierced by his claws, he also has three flickies of pure Chaos energy fluttering around him, his body and his facial features look more developed, there's a faint white-yellowish glow that is being emitted from his pupils, and his upper fangs protrude a little from the other teeth in his upper jaw.

"**NOW I'LL MAKE YOU LEARN YOUR LESSON, SONIC! I'LL MAKE YOU LEARN THAT YOUR ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES!**"

[Soundtrack: *Battle of the heroes* – John Williams]

Hyper Tails fires a powerful beam of Chaos energy in the direction of Super Sonic; he creates a shield, but the beam hits him anyway, causing the hedgehog to cross the wall where he was standing. However, when Super Sonic rises from the ground, he immediately flies in the direction of Hyper Tails, screaming furiously, and gives a blow to the fox's face; the child prodigy is also thrown towards the opposing wall in such a way that he crosses it, but then he rises from the ground and, flying without needing to use his tails, attacks with his fists to Super Sonic. The hedgehog holds both fists and, taking advantage of the few hundredths of a second in which his former friend is immobilized, gives him a headbutt; but the blow hardly stuns the super-powerful fox, who then gives a much stronger blow to Super Sonic, who then falls to the ground.

When he recovers, Super Sonic decides to use his super-speed improved by his new Chaos powers, and then runs at almost the speed of light to, at that speed, to give a blow that really leaves the fox at a disadvantage. However, when his fist is a very short distance from Hyper Tails' face, he apparently anticipates Sonic's movement, striking him in the stomach and throwing him afterwards; the super-powerful sprinter crashes into several dozens of large rocks, breaking them as well, until finally braking.

"How... is it... possible?"

"Physics, Sonic: when running at almost the speed of light, you traveled to the future, so your blow came late." Hyper Tails starts to laugh in a sincere way. "You know what? When you were running towards me, raising your hand to hit me, you looked like robots from the movies of 'Robocop': you were moving sequence by sequence, like a video made by stop-motion, ha, ha!"

Hyper Tails approaches Sonic, who's still lying on the ground.

"Come on, Sonic... You're supposed to be in a Super form, you should have gotten off the floor already."

"You're in a Hyper form... and you're also intelligent." Sonic says, seemingly giving up. "I can't beat you..."

"Throwing the towel so easy? That ain't the Sonic I know. If you really are so convinced that you're the 'Hero of Mobius', try to beat me."
On a snow-covered terrace, in a wide, high tower in the center of the castle, Antoine and Sally are having something vaguely resembling a fencing duel: she's using her Blade-Rings, and he's using his red-hot saber and his new combat knife. To the surprise of the coyote, the princess seems to be gaining an advantage; finally, she removes the saber from his hands to the soldier, leaving the gun nailed to the ground, but he is still fighting only with his combat knife, inflicting cuts to the chipmunk throughout her body and even breaking a Blade-Ring. Finally, she makes a martial arts shot and grabs him from behind, then removes the combat knife from his hand.

"Have not you been taught that technology ain't all that matters?"

"Et are vous embracing me as part of the fight ou as part of a wooing?"

Antoine hits Sally's solar plexus with his elbow, then gives her a headbuttle with the back of his head, steps on her foot, lifts his leg at a 180-degree angle and keeps it extended to kick the princess's face, and finally, when she can barely stand up because of the blows she received, he bites the Blade-Ring that was still functional, deactivating it and breaking it. Now they would have to fight hand to hand.

Sally, now with a lot of punches and cuts, backs but manages to stand, and then she attacks Antoine again with several kicks, some of them flying and all of them failed, since he dodges them all; in one of the princess's kicks, the coyote catches one of her feet with his own hands, then seizes the opportunity and uses his elbow to hit and break the chipmunk's knee quickly. Despite this, she stands on one foot, and takes up a combat position again.

Maximillian Acorn calmly rises from his bed and walks down the castle's hallways. Through the windows, he can see the corpses on the battlefield where there's already a cease-fire, the Sonic-Tails fight on Angel Island, and also the fight between his own daughter Sally and the swordsman Antoine. Watching all this, he smiles a little, while his eyes' iris emits a faint violet glow.

Meanwhile, on Angel Island, Hyper Tails is fighting Super Sonic and is outdoing him by far: the fox is giving several blows to the hedgehog, which doesn't even make an attempt to defend himself.

"Come on, Sonic... Do something, I'm bored."

Super Sonic, lying on the ground, gets up and stands on all fours, and then gives a threatening look to his former best friend.

"You know what? I'll let you continue to get bored."

"Then, I guess I'll have to end up with you once and for all."

Hyper Tails starts to charge energy for a Chaos Blast...

**BOOM!**

But the sprinter releases a Chaos Blast before him, taking the child prodigy by surprise and pushing him a meter back.

"Wow... It looks like I just made you motivated-

**BOOM!**
Another Chaos Blast is generated by Super Sonic, being Hyper Tails thrown about five meters backwards.

"Do you think I never learn from my mistakes, Miles?"

Another Chaos Blast generated by the hedgehog, and the fox is thrown twenty meters back.

"I've been keeping this for a long time, literally."

Finally, Super Sonic starts to generate a huge sphere of pure Chaos energy, while Hyper Tails looks stunned. The "Hero of Mobius" had been letting Tails beat him, while also storing Chaos energy to make an attack so strong that Hyper Tails would be unable to stop it. Finally, the sphere reaches an unusual diameter, equivalent to half the diameter of the surface of Angel Island, and Super Sonic, turning the sphere into a beam, pours all that energy directly on Hyper Tails.

"I'm sorry, my friend. Really, I'm so sorry."

The fox tries to use all his Chaos energy to repel that tremendously powerful beam, but he fails; when the beam strikes against him, he's thrown a hundred meters back while still being struck by the continuous flow of energy; then, Hyper Tails stands still and tried to absorb Chaos energy, but the torrent of energy is too much for him.

While Sally is fighting Antoine, something starts to affect her inside her mind. Suddenly, her hatred for the coyote is magnified until her judgment is clouded, causing her to start to attack him more fiercely. Antoine tries to defend himself, but soon realizes that she's a more dangerous rival when she's angry.

The young rebel soldier shoots a common arrow to the chipmunk, and the arrow crosses her side without mortally hurting her, but she throws herself on him and pushes him, causing them both to fall. The princess quickly rises and then pulls the arrow from her body, and when Antoine gets up, she starts beating him without giving him rest, while grunting and screaming. Finally, Sally, in the midst of her fury, finds Antoine's saber nailed to the ground, grabs it and attacks the coyote with it, piercing through his body.

Antoine, unable to move, looks helplessly at Sally, and falls to the ground covered with snow, still with his body pierced by the saber. The princess, coming to reason again, sees the coyote lying on the floor and, feeling guilty, kneels next to him and tries to attend him.

"Leave me ..." Antoine tells her in a weak voice.

"No, I will not, not this time." The chipmunk is about to cry.

"Kill Max... He..."

"What about my father? Why did you do this?"

"IXIS... He... is... IXIS..."

"What? Does Naugus have anything to do with all this?"

"I saw a violet glow in your eyes... I saw Max watching us fight... He's behind all this..."

"No, it ain't possible, he... He was in the Void, something happened there. Then he came back, and..."
"Do something... Vite... Ne t'inquiète pas pour moi... I'll be fine..."

"No, you're not fine-

"The modified saber... The wound is burned, cauterized... I'll survive..."

"Ant... I'm sorry... about everything... I would like to repair this-

"Then go and stop Max... That's enough..."

Sally obeys and runs off, down stairs. Meanwhile, Bunnie arrives there flying.

"ANTOINE!!"

When seeing her boyfriend's body, Bunnie throws herself on him to see how he is. Crying and desperate, the cyborg leaves there flying, carrying Antoine in her arms.

When Super Sonic's attack ends, Tails is still there, again in his normal form, lying on the floor, barely able to move, his eyes narrowed, and his body smoking. Sonic also returns to his normal form, and walks up to him.

"Did you learn the lesson?"

"F*** you... This doesn't change anything between us... You're still the same as always..."

Looking pitifully at his former best friend, and also feeling guilty for the fact that his way of acting caused this fight, Sonic walks away, becomes Super Sonic again and leaves Angel Island flying.

Meanwhile, in the castle's throne room, Amadeus and Elias continue to argue about what changes to make in government and how to make those changes. While they make the debate (which is already quite pleasant at this point), Max arrives at the place.

Max: [pretending surprise] "What's happening here?! What's that traitor doing here?!

Elias: "We're making peace, father. And we're also evaluating how to perform a Democracy. Something wrong?"

Max: "You embarrass me, my son. You're the King, you should act as such."

Meanwhile, Sally also appears there and moves directly towards her brother. When she arrives, she whispers something in his ear. Whatever the King is hearing from his sister's mouth, it's obvious that it's surprising him and also making him angry.

Elias: [suddenly gets up from the table] "You're right, father. It's time for me to do my duty. I should have done this a long time ago."

In saying this, the King looks menacingly at Amadeus, who prepares to unsheathe his sword and to fight. Max smiles slyly, and Sally remains poker-faced.

Elias: [while still looking at Amadeus] "Guards!"

Two robust mobian bulldog dogs, each wearing a green set of beret, band, belt, gloves and boots, armed each with a laser version of an AK-47 assault rifle, are made present inside the throne room.
Elias: [smiling, looks at Max suddenly] "Escort Lord Maximillian Acorn to the borders of the Kingdom. From now on, he is banned from entering this country, and the breach of this rule will be severely punished."

Max: [desperately and furiously] "WHAT?! Don't listen to him! He's not thinking clearly!"

Elias: "I, King Elias Acorn, have just given a direct order to you two. [shows his double daggers] And if you've not understood it well, believe me when I tell you that I'll take the trouble to explain to you what that means."

Guard 1: [involuntarily making a slight smile] "Don't worry about it, Your Majesty."

Guard 2: [smiling the same way] "It will be a pleasure to carry out your order."

The two guards stand on either side of the emeritus king, who finally decides to accompany them reluctantly. While walking escorted, Max addresses his son.

Max: "You'll pay for having betrayed me, son."

Elias: "No, you'll pay for having betrayed us all, IXIS Maximilian."

Max: "You don't know who you're messing with-"

The guard 2 gives Max a blow to the nape of his neck using the rifle butt, causing Max to faint.

Guard 2: [shyly] "Sorry, Your Majesty."

Guard 1: [whispering to the guard 2] "Shut up, you idiot. You'll make everything worse."

Elias: "Actually, it was a very good idea. He's a sorcerer, he could influence people's minds, so... Prevention is better than cure, is not it?"

While the guards drag an unconscious Max out of the castle, a relieved Amadeus exhales air.

Amadeus: "For a moment I thought..."

Elias: "Yes, that was my goal."

Amadeus: "That's what I call 'a sense of humor', Your Majesty."

Elias: "Please, just call me by my name, will you?"

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:

Maned wolf: a large, long-legged, endangered wild dog that has a reddish coat with black hair across the shoulders and large erect ears, native to the grasslands of South America. It receives different names depending on the country, being in Argentina called "aguará-guazú" (in Guaraní, "large fox").

Stop-motion: a cinematographic technique whereby the camera is repeatedly stopped and started, for example to give animated figures the impression of movement.
Chapter 14: 2.5.

Chapter Summary

After much pain (in addition to many deceased), the Civil War is over. In this chapter, it's time to rebuild.

However, a new enemy will arise, endangering the lives of Tails and Sally. AFFs and KFFs will need to leave their differences behind once and for all, or they'll not be able to deal with this.

At 3:00 PM on the same day, people are gathering in the square around the New Castle of Acorn. The corpses of the thousand killed during the battle had already been removed from the same square that had been a battlefield before dawn.

Elias Acorn goes out to the balcony to speak to the people, his speech being broadcast on national television. In the Southern Baronies, Sandblast City, Furville and the other cities and regions of the kingdom, there are also people gathered to watch the speech on a big screen.

On the castle's balcony, Elias is accompanied by: his mother, Lady Alicia; his wife, Megan, who carries his step-daughter Alexis in her arms, and Amadeus and Rosemary Prower.

"People of Acorn! We have finalized the negotiations with the leaders of the People's Republican Militia, and we have already reached an agreement to carry out the Democratic Opening. But in addition, I would like to take this opportunity to, on behalf of the State, ask for forgiveness for the actions of my predecessor, Maximillian Acorn, who has already been sentenced to exile."

The crowd applauds, and then Elias resumes his speech.

"I will create the National Council of Acorn, made up of a total of seven members: six members elected by the people, and the Head of State as the seventh member. To take government measures, the six members elected by the people will debate and vote; I, as Head of State, will provide my opinion only if the National Councilors authorize me, and I will participate in the voting only in the event of a tie. Within a few months, elections will be held to elect these Councilors. As for the structure of the Nation: the "Kingdom of Acorn" will be reorganized as the "Sovereign Nation of the People of Acorn"; I, as Head of State, will no longer have the title of "King of Acorn" and I will become "Prince of the National Council of Acorn"; apart from the titles corresponding to members of the family of the Prince of the Council, the only existing titles of nobility will be the titles of Sir and Baron, and the latter will cease to be hereditary, being granted only as a reward for meritorious acts and only if the National Council authorizes it; the national territory will be subdivided into Provinces whose governments will imitate the structure of the National Government, with a Provincial Council that will be made up of six representatives of the people and one representative appointed by the National Council."

After another series of applauses, Elias speaks again.

"Anyway, I will take measures regarding the People's Republican Militia. Their leaders will be punished as dictated by current military regulations: Colonel Amadeus Prower will be demoted to the rank of Major, and First Lieutenant Leonidas Procion will be demoted to the rank of Lieutenant;
therefore, Colonel George Sommersby will take the place of Amadeus Prower as Chief of Staff. The subordinates, on the other hand, will be reintegrated into the Royal Armed Forces of Acorn, which will be reorganized as the "Armed Forces of the People of Acorn". And continuing with the theme of the country's defense, will also be formed Popular Militias, made up of volunteers."

After finishing this part of the speech, Elias remains silent for a few seconds, and then he speaks again.

"However, we must not forget the thousand soldiers who died defending the ideas of both sides. Both I and Amadeus Prower, as leaders of the sides that were in conflict, admit our responsibility for all the unfortunate casualties produced during this morning's battle. We will remember, during each day of our lives, those thousand noble warriors, so that we will never again incur that same fatal error that we have committed."

When Elias finishes speaking, everyone makes a minute of silence almost instinctively.

The next day, most of the members of both sides are gathered in different places of New Mobotropolis. As if they were soldiers who have fought on opposing sides during an unnecessary and absurd war, the relationship between them is now quite pleasant: Lightning and Espio training together, Rouge and Julie-Su resolving their differences under Knuckles' auspices, etcetera.

As for the wounded, Antoine and Proción are in the hospital, recovering quickly thanks to Shadow's Chaos powers, who was successful in his first attempts to make the Chaos healing). On the contrary, Baron Beauregard, despite having survived, wasn't so lucky... or perhaps yes, depending on the point of view from which one looks at it: after his fight with Bunnie, the Southern Baronies' leader miraculously survived, but his body ended up full of third degree burns, so he had to be taken on a long trip to a high complexity hospital in Sandblast City.

Compared with the Freedom Fighters, the situation of the soldiers and their families is very different: the thousand killed in the battle were part of them, and that's something that can't be let go so easily. Except for a few soldiers who reconciled with each other, most still hold a grudge, not only for the opposing side, but also for the Freedom Fighters: they had carried out the Civil War, and yet they didn't have a single dead person in their ranks. This feeling was transmitted to various sectors of the population, especially those who wanted the Absolute Monarchy's continuity, but also some groups that were in favor of carrying out a Democratic Opening and are now disappointed with the Prowers, leaders of that movement; these groups are rather small, but they don't hesitate to get them to be heard occasionally.

Even within the Freedom Fighters, there are those who have not yet attempted reconciliation. These are, mainly, the KFFs' full members (Sonic, Sally, Amy, Rotor), on the one hand, and the AFFs' original members, on the other hand. Tails' parents were the only ones who carried out an approach, but they did it only with Elias, Megan and Lady Alicia, avoiding approaching any of the KFFs, especially Sonic and Sally.

Regarding the "queen mother", she was emotionally marked by the news that her husband had become a follower of IXIS during his forced exile. Alicia didn't talk to anyone and stayed away from everyone, including her family; this worried the "Prince of the Council" very much, who went to speak with his mother before going out to speak to the castle's balcony.

Meanwhile, Sally and Tails have not reappeared or contacted anyone. Sonic and the others believed that both the princess and the child prodigy would need to be alone for a certain amount of time after the Civil War, to think quietly and then return being fit for service again; however, after a whole day without any news about them, the members of both groups of Freedom Fighters are already really
worried.

It's noon, and Sonic and Fiona are looking for Tails traces on Angel Island. At this moment, the blue hedgehog is standing looking at a crater, the last place where he saw his old friend.

"Fiona..." Sonic calls the vixen without looking at her. "Search the rest of the island, starting with the temple. Surely he left a message for you somewhere."

"You should do that too, Sonic. You're the one who can travel all corners of this island in a matter of minutes." Fiona, who's behind Sonic, looks annoyed.

"No, I'll stay looking here." The sprinter responds, staying still and with his gaze fixed on the crater.

"You mean you'll stay meditating here, don't you?"

Sonic sighs and answers to Fiona without looking at her. "This has been my fault. Tails was right: I'm an idiot, I've not been a true friend to him."

"And do you realize just now? Was it necessary to go to this extreme so that you get it? He already made it clear to you what you had to stop doing, and he made it clear to you several times using his fists, but you didn't listen. If I were Miles, I wouldn't forgive you even if a million years passed."

"Enough, Fiona!" Sonic turns around suddenly, his eyes full of tears. "Do you think I don't try to change? I am like that, I can't change, no matter how hard I try. All this is already a habit for me."

"Well, you'll have to change a f***ing time. And if you can not change, you can blow your brains out. The Resistance will still have the same chances of winning, even if you ain't available. The vixen points her finger at the hedgehog. "You ain't indispensable. Get used to the idea."

"FIONA!"

"Sonic! Did you hear that?"

"It's Tails!"

In the distance, a two-tailed fox can be seen approaching Fiona. The red vixen runs immediately towards him and hugs him.

"Thank God you're okay, Miles- Oh... Miles..."

While they're embracing, the fox begins to frantically fondle her intimate area.

"Miles, I think it ain't a good time to- Oh..."

"What's up, Fiona?" He undoes the hug. "I thought you liked it."

"You took me by surprise, and that's weird. I think I should ask you what happens. Or rather, what happened in all this time that you were absent?"

"Nothing happened, I just wanted to spend some time alone to think about our relationship."

Apparently, Tails' way of speaking has some similarity to Sonic's way of speaking, which makes the hedgehog feel sympathy for him now. On the other hand, Fiona is confused.

"What? To think about our relationship? I thought there was no problem. What does this have to do with the Civil War?"
"¿The Civil War?"

Fiona, incredulous, stares at him.

("Something's wrong...")

"Miles, you should get checked by a doctor."

"What? To get checked by a doctor? What nonsense! I assure you I'm perfectly fine, *babe.*"

"So I'm your *babe,* huh?"

*TZZ!*

Suddenly, Fiona shoots him at close range with her EM-pulse cannons. As an unexpected effect, some parts of the two-tailed fox's body turn metallic gray and emit lights, and the whole body adopts rare forms and even starts to disintegrate. Sonic is horrified by the scene.

"Fiona, what did you do to Tails?"

The vixen turns to the hedgehog. "Don't you realize?! He ain't Miles! It's a robot, programmed with Scourge's personality surely."

"You offend me by assuming that."

Sonic and Fiona look again at the robot, who has returned to normal but with another appearance: now it looks like a "Metal Sonic" robot, with "thorns" that are long and straight instead of curved, with a seemingly less aerodynamic shape, and with a mouth built into its face. The robot has some kind of gem embedded in its chest, and its left arm had been replaced by a plasma cannon.

"I'm the opposite of Scourge. I was created to be that way and, if possible, to be even better."

Sonic, furious, throws himself on the Metal Sonic at super-sonic speed; but the robot's body is made of nanites, and these move away from each other to form a large hole in the robot's trunk. Sonic goes directly through that hole and falls to the ground, and then the robot returns to its normal form.

"Ouch... Hey, *Metal...*" Sonic slowly gets up from the ground, and he looks at the robot. "If you've done damage to Tails and / or Sally, I swear I'm gonna tear you and Eggman apart. I'll do it even if you're made of nanites."

"Even if you're able to tear apart a thing made of nanites, you'll not end up with the problem. These are your friend's nanites, this is just a puppet that I control remotely-"

*TZZ!*

Fiona returns to shoot an EM-pulse at the Metal Sonic, and it falls and kneels on the ground when it feels the EM-pulse's effects.

"Urgh..."

"It seems that these EM-pulses affect you in spite of everything." Fiona says. "I can destroy you without having to meet with you personally."

Metal Sonic rises again from the ground. "I know Tails is your boyfriend and all that. But my goal ain't Tails or Sally or you." It turns to the sprinter. "Mount Mobius, tomorrow at noon. You'll meet with me there. Otherwise, your 'lil bro' won't live long enough to make peace with you, and you'll
also be a widower even before you can marry your princess."

"I'll be there." Sonic answers with determination, causing the vixen to look at him as if she were saying "Are you crazy?".

Before either of the two mobians can do anything, the robot disintegrates in the air, and the nanites fly away in the form of a cloud.

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Northamer and Soumerca, the two continents of the planet's Western Hemisphere, had been united by a solid land-bridge that had a length of about 2500 km and an average width of about 500 km. But with the Xordas' devastating attack, even the great landmasses suffered sudden and catastrophic changes, and that great isthmus was replaced by a chain of islands. In the largest of these islands, with an extension similar to that of a small country, there's a volcano that will erupt at any time: Mount Mobius.

It's 10:00 AM, about two hours earlier than in New Mobotropolis. A "Metal Sonic" robot, similar to the one that met Sonic and Fiona, is walking calmly from one side to another, on a path that crosses a not very thick forest, halfway between the volcano's base and the island's coast. Near him are Tails and Sally, both very tired and beaten: Sally, who's also tied, is in that state because of having resisted Metal Sonic; instead, Tails is like this because of the battle with Sonic, a battle in which he almost died spending all his energy Chaos.

"Eggman's robots are more and more idiots." Tails says in a weak voice. "Don't you think, Sally?"

"Keep quiet, Tails." The fear is evident in the voice of the princess, who also speaks in a low voice.

"Well, well..." Metal Sonic interrupts them. "It seems that someone doubts my abilities."

"I have my reasons, Metal."

"Then tell me, Miles Prower, aka 'Tails'. I have plenty of time, and also plenty of power."

"First of all, you were built by Eggman, so your reputation as a vulgar badnik precedes you."

"Do you remember the Metal Sonic before me?"

"The version 2.0? He grabbed a Power Gem, one equal to the one that is embedded in your chest right now: he went mad, and was destroyed by Sonic and Knuckles."

"Interesting story, huh?" Metal Sonic pauses, looking to one side. "Considering your intellect, surely you already know what are the qualities of a Power Gem."

"Robotnik created them to use them as a replacement for the Chaos Emeralds. That was one of the few things in which the good doctor succeeded: Power Gems can grant physical strength, speed, agility, endurance, and various powers similar to those granted by a Chaos Emerald, such as flight capabilities, projection and absorption of energy and radiation, teleportation and... No way..."

"That's right, Tails: I've regenerated my body, and I've even forged a personality of my own. Now I have everything I need to take revenge on Sonic and the Guardian, starting with your best friend precisely."

"Your database is outdated, scrap. None of the guys mentioned are my friends. And that's the second reason why I doubt your abilities: you couldn't lure Sonic into this trap."
"You're forgetting something, Tails." The robot thirsty for revenge brings his face close to the fox's face. "I know my rival very well, I know him more than he knows himself. He won't only come to rescue Sally, he will come especially to rescue you."

Tails keeps looking at the Metal Sonic, making a poker face, but the robot notices something.

"I know what you're thinking now: you're realizing that, indeed, I can defeat your friend; and that idea also worries you, because you still care about him, in the same way that he cares about you."

They both look at each other for a long time, until the ground beneath them suddenly starts to tremble. The three of them look at Mount Mobius: the volcanic eruption is imminent. Sally starts to get scared, Tails still shows no emotions, and Metal Sonic smiles broadly and then he walks away relaxed, whistling.

"Tails..." Sally tries to talk to him. "I'm sorry-"

"Shut up, Sally." Tails says with disdain.

"Tails, I know you're angry because, according to you, we've all treated you like a child. But we did it because you were really a child and we didn't wanna lose you. *snif* We love you, Tails. The last thing we wanna do is hurt you or prevent you from being happy. We never intended to make your life look like "The Truman Show"... Did you see the film-?"

"Yeah, I saw it, Sally. I get it." Tails still doesn't look at the squirrel. "But you must admit that you did things wrong-"

"That's what I'm trying to tell you! *sob* Your problem is that you don't let people talk.-"

"Don't fuck with me, Sally. If I were as you say, Fiona wouldn't be my girlfriend and Antoine wouldn't be one of my best friends. And that's another proof that you're doing things wrong: you say that you take care of me and that you want me to be happy, but when you treat me like a misfit nerd, you have a totally wrong idea about me; and besides, you, believing that I'll not notice and that I'm gonna believe everything said by you and Sonic, you continue mistreating Antoine and Fiona-"

"Enough!" Now Sally is really crying. "Do you want me to admit it ?! Yes, I admit it! I admit that I was wrong with you! I admit that I was wrong with Antoine and with Fiona! I admit that I listened too much to Sonic! But we did everything for you, we did it to give you a happy childhood that very few could have because of the war. And now I wanna correct my mistakes, and I'm sure Sonic also wanna correct it-"

Tails turns to Sally. "And was this war necessary for you two to realize?!" He yells furiously at the princess, causing her to remain silent while the two remain in their respective places.

Then, he comes to himself and tries to say something to his surrogate mother, but it's more difficult than he thought.

"Sorry, Sally." He finally says, without looking her in the eyes. "I've gone too far."

"You're forgiven."

On the outskirts of New Mobotropolis, there is a hill that hides the KFFs' new base: the Freedom Headquarters, equipped with the latest technology and several comfortable rooms for the team's members.
Upon returning from Angel Island, Sonic and Fiona gathered the KFFs, the AFFs and Elias. With the news about a new Metal Sonic that kidnapped Sally and Tails, heated discussions between them began, discussions that are already reaching a half-hour duration.

Sonic: "I'll rescue him!"

Antoine: "Sûrement pas! Je will rescue mon mellieur ami!"

Amy: "I know about fights between wooers to be a woman's husband, but never in my life have I seen fights between wooers to be someone's best friend."

Fiona: "Shut up, Amy. You ain't doing anything to help."

Amy: "And what are you doing to help, vixen?"

Elias: "Does anyone in this place still remember Sally?"

Rosemary: "SILENCE!"

Everyone is finally silent, and Amadeus takes the opportunity to take the floor.

Amadeus: "The Prince's sister and our son are in danger, so we could also claim to let us go and rescue them; however, we don't do it and we don't participate in this discussion, which doesn't take us anywhere. Regarding the conflict between Sonic and Antoine, this is very easy to solve: both will go to rescue Tails and Sally."

Sonic: "Ok, but we must plan the rescue."

Fiona: "True. Antoine will rescue my boyfriend, and Sonic will rescue Sally."

Sonic: "What?! Nix!"

Antoine: "I'll not fail you, Fiona, nor will I fail you two, Mr and Mrs Prower-"

Sonic: "Wait a minute. I'll rescue Tails, you can rescue Sally."

Antoine: "Quoi? Mais je must rescue Tails!"

Sonic: "On Angel Island, Metal pretended to be Tails when he could have pretended to be Sally. To attract me, he plans to use Tails, not Sally, as bait. So, whoever is gonna rescue Tails will have to deal with Metal, and since he imitates my powers, the only one capable of fighting properly against Metal is me. Conclusion: I must go to rescue Tails."

While Sonic speaks, Fiona remains thoughtful.

Antoine: "Mais-

Fiona: "Tony, can we talk for a minute?"

Antoine: [pauses] "Bien sûr, Fiona."

The coyote follows Fiona down a corridor of the Headquarters, until they reach one of the rooms.

Fiona: [in a low voice] "Tony... Let Sonic go to rescue Miles."

Antoine: [in a low voice] "Quoi-?"
Fiona: [in a low voice] "I know, I know: I changed my mind very quickly. But Sonic said he really wanted to settle things with Miles, and I think he was serious. It's worth giving him a chance, at least for this time. Besides, he's right: Metal has his same abilities; so, Sonic is the only one capable of fighting him."

Antoine: *sigh* [in a low voice] "D'accord."

Monte Mobius. 2:00 PM, Local Time, 4:00 PM, New Mobotropolis Time.

"I feel Sonic's presence..."

"C'mon, Metal, don't start with the references to 'Star Wars' and the Force and all that. I know you're detecting him with your sensors, there's nothing unusual in that."

Metal Sonic has his back to Tails, observing the volcano. "It's true. But you also know that there's a 'Chaos Force' that permeates everything and everyone in our universe; this Chaos Force is more concentrated in certain objects, such as the Chaos Emeralds, and also in certain beings, such as the Adepts to Chaos; there are also Enerjak and other beings whose own bodies, due to exceptional circumstances, concentrated Chaos energy in such quantity that they're now made of pure Chaos energy."

Yeah, I know about those things. Not for nothing am I called 'nerd'. Now, it would be great if you end the mystery and reveal everything. Anyway, if you really are as powerful as you say and if you're gonna beat Sonic, revealing your plans wouldn't make any difference."

"You're right..." Metal turns to Tails. "But I like the mystery. It's something that I have as part of my new form: a personality of my own, which includes particular tastes and other things. I also have a purpose for my life: to have more power."

"Are you sure that this 'personality of your own', with all the things it includes, is as infallible as you say?"

"C'mon, Tails... Do you believe in those things that people say about us? You already know what I mean: they say that machines always have some inevitable error, even though everything works like a clock in them; errors that paradoxically can be solved by beings like mobians and humans, whose reasoning is strongly and constantly influenced by emotions."

"Metal, no system is infallible, no thought process is infallible. That's something I've learned after a lot of experience, not only experience with machines but also with the people around me; I've even learned it the hard way. That's one of the purposes for which we live: we live to learn from our mistakes, to incorporate information with which we can avoid tripping over the same stone a second time. Someone influenced by emotions may think less clearly, but it has a more flexible mind, it can adapt to solve problems; a mind that works like a clock is rigid, it can't adapt to a new situation... and that will happen to you sooner or later."

"We'll see. Sonic is about to arrive at the meeting point; so, it's time to start up my plan."

By surprise, Metal Sonic grabs Tails and, using his super-speed "copied" to Sonic, he runs towards the volcano's crater. Sally is left alone, tied up, where she was.

"Well... To be a replica of Sonic, he looks pretty disinterested in women."

Barely a minute later, Tails is already chained to a rock on the volcano's crater's shore. Metal Sonic
watches him for a few seconds, laughing softly.

"As much as you're an Adept of Chaos, I know you'll not survive in this situation. First of all, your body has little Chaos energy left, only the energy needed to stay alive and healthy and to resist the heat in a place like this. On the other hand, it seems that now what you said was gonna happen to me is happening to you: you never thought that my Power Gem could allow me to "be reborn from the ashes", and now you can't elaborate any plan that allows you to stay alive after this. And you ain't yet a demigod made of concentrated pure Chaos energy, like Enerjak, so you can be dead when the lava starts to rise."

"But I already have a plan to get outta here alive, Metal: wait for Sonic to come and free me. When that happens, you'll have to fight against us two together, and then you'll be lost."

"And why do you have so much faith in that idiot?"

"Because he's one of those idiots who never die even because of his own stupidity. Like the weed, it always comes back. And this time, that will be what allows me to get outta here alive." When finished speaking, Tails makes a maniacal smile.

Sonic is running at super-sonic speed through the jungle of Mount Mobius, towards the volcano. He's thinking of all the moments he lived with Tails, both the good ones and the bad ones.

Suddenly, the sprinter hits a netting that suddenly appears between the trunks of two trees, a trap set by his robotic double. Coincidentally, Metal arrives at the scene, while Sonic is on the ground, trying to break free from the netting.

"Hahaha! The Hero of Mobius, stopped by a simple netting! Who'd say? We all know that Tails hates you to death for a long time, but now, he would be totally disillusioned with you if he saw you."

"Enough, Metal! It's obvious that you have problems only with me! Let him go, don't involve him in this!"

"But Tails is indispensable for my plan. You'll see: if I make him suffer, I'm making you suffer; If you suffer, I'm happy. It can't be easier to understand."

Suddenly, Sonic does a spin-dash, cuts the netting and escapes, and then he hits Metal hard in the face, throwing him a few meters back.

"You already know that the only thing you achieve with that is to make me angry." The organic hedgehog shows a piece of the netting to his robotic counterpart. "And you know I can beat you at your own game."

"Sonic, I'm giving you the opportunity to win this and to save your friend... And yes, I know you still see Tails as a friend... But you must play by following my rules, which I can change whenever I want-"

"Gloat on your own time, I'm outta here." At that same moment, Sonic runs towards the crater, but Metal follows him and manages to reach it.

"Hey, don't leave me talking alone!"

In response, Sonic takes speed and moves away from Metal, but he also accelerates and reaches him easily, then maintaining a constant speed and positioning himself to the left of the Mobian hedgehog.
"Maybe you're a fast hedgehog, but I'm your robotic doppelgänger, so, I'm faster than you, not to mention that I'm stronger..."

Suddenly, Metal accelerates even more and leaves behind an overwhelmed Sonic.

"And I make better chili-dogs!"

Sonic accelerates more to reach his enemy. Suddenly, he sees a robotic foot poking out from behind a tree trunk. He tries to brake, but he reacts too late and stumbles.

"Have a good trip!" Metal yells at Sonic as he flies forward and crashes into another tree trunk.

*CRASH!*

"Woah... Who started the forest spinning?" Sonic asks himself when he gets up from the ground, after the crash.

"HAHAHA! This is getting more fun!" Metal shouts between his own laughs. "What if I give you a real challenge? For example... My cybernetic shredder blades!"

With the cannon of his left arm, Metal fires three circular saws, one after the other. Sonic is forced to make jumps, somersaults and other types of acrobatics, but he manages to dodge the saws every time one of them approaches him.

"This is your idea of letting me rescue Tails?"

"As I said: I make the rules... and change the rules!"

Finally, Sonic gets rid of the circular saws.

"That was just to remind you that no flesh-and-blood creature can stop a robot as advanced as I."

Suddenly, Sonic throws himself on Metal, pushes him against another tree trunk, takes the piece of the netting from the trap set by the robot and, running around the tree with his super-speed, he uses the netting to wrap the trunk together with Metal.

"There! A little leftover netting from one of the traps you sprung on me, and you're all tied up like a christmas package." The flesh-and-blood hedgehog says, admiring his work. "Quite opportune, considering that I'm gonna rescue Tails and that, the day after tomorrow, we're gonna celebrate Christmas together."

Metal, tied to a tree by his own net, bends his head in defeat.

"I didn't think you were this clever, Sonic. You may have actually won..."

Sally is moving slowly down the road in the middle of the jungle, heading towards the coast. To be precise, she's jumping, given the fact that she's tied by her feet and hands.

Suddenly, Bunnie lands in front of her, carrying in her arms Antoine, who's still a little nervous after flying with her.

Antoine: "Bunnie, was it necessary for moi to be on mon head and for vous to take moi by one of mon feet?"

Bunnie: "C'mon, Tony... I would never let you fall, I had everything planned. Also, you have to
admit that it was exciting."

Sally: [amazed] "Antoine? Bunnie? What are you doing here?"

Antoine: "Sonic et nous deux have shared the tasks: il deals with Metal Sonic and rescues Tails, pendant que nous come for vous."

Sally: "Okay... [embarrassed] Bunnie, sorry for... for having skewered your boyfriend." [smiles nervously]

Bunnie: "It's all right, Sally. Antoine told me: you were being bewitched by your father."

Sally: "Okay... although I think you also deserve an apology for other things-"

Bunnie: "You know what? We will talk about it during the flight, what do you think?"

The cyborg girl looks at Antoine, but he's totally still, paying attention to something else.

Antoine: [in a low voice] "Do you hear that?"

Sally and Bunnie try to catch whatever the coyote is listening to, and they seem to have realized what it is.

Bunnie: [in a low voice, fast] "Let's get outta here, before-"

When the three realize, they're already surrounded by hundreds of robots, which were hidden in the jungle: they're Com-bots built by the original Robotnik, somewhat deteriorated but still very powerful and with a camouflage that proves to be very effective yet. Several of them use their jet-packs to stay in the air, preventing mobians from escaping the island by air.

Bunnie: [incredulous] "Don't fuck with me..."

Immediately, all the Com-bots use their arms' laser rifles to shoot the mobians, but Bunnie generates a deflector shield that protects them while Antoine fires some arrows with smoke bombs. Before the Com-bots activate their infrared sensors, the cyborg goes flying horizontally, carrying the soldier and Sally close to her, keeping the shield activated so that the three are protected while escaping from the robots that were besieging them.

"That was too easy... I've got to be more alert than ever."

Sonic is ascending Mount Mobius' slopes, running at full speed through the spiral narrow paths. Meanwhile, there are certain parts of the crater where the lava is already overflowing, causing some lava flows to slowly run down the slopes.

"If anything's happened to Tails, I'll never forgive myself..."

The hedgehog jumps over a lava river and keeps running.

"... or Metal Sonic. I'll make him pay."

Finally, the sprinter reaches the crater's edge and finds Tails. The weakened Adept of Chaos, chained to the rock, is still alive and well, but the immense heat is tiring him.

"Tails! I'm here, buddy!"
"Sonic... Damn you unhappy, I knew you'd get here."

Then the hedgehog releases the fox from his chains, but the latter is reluctant to speak to him or approach him.

"Finally... These chains on my wrists were killing me."

"Well, now we have to prevent that lava from killing us. We better move fast or-"

"Or Metal Sonic will get free and catch up?"

The two mobians, surprised, look up and find Metal Sonic, who uses their feet's rockets to keep floating above them.

"Did you really think you'd stopped me, Sonic?"

"I'm fed up. Let's finish with him, Tails!"

"It'll be a pleasure to turn him into scrap-"

Sonic throws himself towards Metal, and Tails takes flight and accompanies him despite his own state. But the robot projects energy from his Power Gem to the two, throwing them backwards.

"Grow up, Tails. It's a cruel world."

"Urgh..." Sonic tries to talk to the robot. "Metal, listen-"

"Of course, I'm listening to your moans of pain... and thoroughly enjoying them."

"Please, fight your programming..."

Sonic rises slowly from the ground.

"I admit it: you're faster and stronger than me-"

"Finally, you realize... I've been proving it all day."

"But what good does it do you? There's more to life than that. There's friends and feelings and just the joy of being alive."

"I already have strength and power. Why would I embrace weakness, as you do?"

Tails starts to rise from the ground. "If someone saw me, it would think I should be dead right now. However, despite the cruelty of this world, I'm still alive. Why do you think that happens? I had friends who took care of me all my life, despite the war and everything else. I have a girlfriend who appreciates me." Tails' voice starts to stutter, which gets Sonic's attention. "I owe my life to each and every one of them."

"C'mon, Metal..." Sonic takes the floor again. "A being's feelings, its spirit, is the greatest thing there is."

"The prattling of a doomed hedgehog and fox."

*sigh* "It's no use. You'll never understand... but you won't win, either." Next, he addresses Tails. "I'm gonna keep Metal here busy. Fly away, Tails. Now!"
"No." The fox walks towards the hedgehog and stands beside him. "I'll not leave you." Then, he addresses Metal. "You'll have to stop us two together."

Faced with this, the robot remains silent... until the earth begins to shake, starting to fall some rocks from the walls as a result. Sonic and Tails cover their heads.

"Tails, fly away before-!

Despite the warning, each of them ends up with a foot trapped by the rocks that fall on them. Meanwhile, the volcano's eruption is really starting.

"Dammit, you leave me no choice."

An energy beam destroys the rocks that kept Tails' foot trapped, freeing him, and the same happens with Sonic at the same time. Both surprised, they look towards the author of the shots that have just saved them.

"Metal?!" They say in unison.

A stream of lava rises and throws towards them two. Metal doesn't waste time: he interposes between the lava and the mobians, and then he kicks the ground; a thick piece of rock separates from it and rises a little.

"Go! I'll hold the lava back for you!"

"How?!" Sonic asks.

"Like this!"

Metal's left arm changes shape, becoming a huge shovel. Using it together with his right arm, the robot picks up the rock piece and puts it upright quickly and with little effort. The huge lava wave is stopped and veers to the sides.

"Get outta here for a f***ing time, both of you! Even I can't keep this up all day!"

"This ain't a trick, is it?"

Metal strives more and more to keep the lava held.

"You... you were right, Sonic... I never realized... until now... that I could be more than my programming... more than a robot... because I felt... compassion... NOW GET OUTTA HERE!"

"Sonic, I don't know if I can fly now." Tails says.

"I got you, buddy."

"Save Metal, please."

"NO! That would doom us all! Don't worry about me! Remember: I'm a robot! A powerful... unfeeling... robot-!"

Sonic runs at full speed to the highest place he finds, carrying Tails sitting on his shoulders, while Metal is covered by the lava, which goes down at full speed down the slopes.

Meanwhile, some distance from the coast, the Com-bots are attacking Bunnie, Antoine and Sally,
causing the three to recoil gradually as they unsuccessfully try to reach the coast.

The rabbit is the first line of defense, since she deploys the deflector shield and repels the Com-bots by firing them with her robotic arm in different modes: common plasma bullets, guided plasma bullets, "plasma-thrower", laser machine gun, and a kind of shotgun that shoots high-energy subatomic particles. The coyote shoots his trick arrows, especially to protect the rear, and the chipmunk is in the middle of the two, unable to participate in the fight.

Finally, the three sighted the coast, where they're expected by the *Tornado*, Tails' plane: Sonic had used it to get to Mount Mobius in the first place, after Fiona "tried" to give him a quick course to handle it (anyway, the plane was on autopilot for most of Sonic's journey). However, several Com-bots cross their path. To make matters worse, Bunnie hadn't yet eaten at the beginning of this hasty mission, and the unexpected battle causes her to demand of herself much more than she anticipated; so, her weapons and her deflector shield generators spend more energy than the amount produced by her body, and the cyborg girl is starting to tire.

Antoine: *Mon amour, let moi continue with this.*

Bunnie: "No need... A few more robots, and we will be able to escape..."

Despite Bunnie's optimism, they soon start to be surrounded again, so the three hide in a cave. The Com-bots pile up at the entrance, and Bunnie and Antoine use their weapons to eliminate many more of them with each shot. Finally, the Com-bots move away.

Sally: "It seems we can get out now."

The three start to move slowly and silently towards the cave's entrance, but it's shaken by an explosion produced on the outside: the Com-bots had gathered above the cave's entrance and self-destructed, generating a rock slide. Before the cave's entrance is blocked by rocks, Bunnie uses all her forces to push Sally out, while she and Antoine stay locked.

The princess observes this, remaining shocked, and then she runs to the cave, now blocked. She tries desperately to take out the rocks, but she soon realizes that it's a useless effort; she kneels on the floor and bends her head, about to cry.

Sally: *snif* "I'm sorry... My God, I'm sorry for everything..."

Finally, she goes to the coast. While walking, she receives an SMS from Sonic:

*Tails rescued. I'll stay with him for a while, I'll try to make peace with him. You can go without us, we'll manage.*

She arrives at the coast and is about to get on the *Tornado*, when a Com-bot hidden in the water surprises her and throws itself at her, activating its self-destruct mechanism at the same time. However, a kick, coming from someone behind Sally, hits the Com-bot's chest and throws it tens of meters back and up, and the robot ends up exploding in the air. The chipmunk turns around, looks up, and is even more shocked to recognize her savior.

"You... you are... are-"

"That's right, princess. And don't worry about your two friends trapped in the cave, I'll take care of them."

Sally nods nervously, runs to the *Tornado* and gets on it.
"Oh, and another thing: I admit that we're on the same side, but if you tell someone about me without me or one of my chiefs authorizing it, I'll be forced to kill you. It's nothing personal, they're just occupational hazards."

After this strange encounter, Sally turns the plane on and she desperately leaves the island, while her savior turns towards the cave where Bunnie and Antoine are trapped.

On a hill some distance from the volcano, Tails and Sonic are contemplating the eruption.

"Weird, huh?"

"You said it, Tails." Sonic pauses and turns to the fox. "You did it: you turned the tide."

Tails also turns to the hedgehog. "Who? Me?"

"Yep."

"How?"

"Well... Everything we said to Metal meant nothing to him, he thought they were just words. But when you refused to leave without me and you stood by me to fight together against him... That's when what we said became real to him: he saw a concrete proof of what we were saying to him, and he gained some kind of 'robotic soul'."

"Yeah... We got outta this alive..."

"Thank you, Tails. I owe you my life... Actually, I owe you about forty lives: one for each time you saved me from my own stupidity."

"Yeah, sure... You're welcome..." Now, Tails avoids looking at his "brother".

"Tails? Are you okay?"

"Why would not I be?"

"Because of the loss of Metal."

"Well... He would have been a good asset to the team... Imagine: with Bunnie, we would have had two Freedom Fighters with plasma cannons instead of arms..."

The child prodigy tries to wipe away a tear, but Sonic realizes it and immediately hugs him; the fox starts to really cry, with his head resting on the sprinter's shoulder.

"I failed, Sonic... *sob* I also tried to convince Metal... *sob* and I failed... and now he's dead..."

"No... You did the best you could... Also, you saved me-"

Sonic is interrupted when a disgusted Tails undoes the hug, moves away and stands with his back to him.

"Sorry, Tails... Sorry to say... well, whatever it's that I have said and that has displeased you."

Tails doesn't answer.

"Would you like to tell me what happens?"
After a few seconds, the fox finally breaks the silence.

"When I saw Metal, and especially when he sacrificed for us, he reminded me of you, Sonic. Rather, he reminded me of the false image I had of you: someone good, brave, funny, reliable, who understands the problems of others, who knows how to contain others, who doesn't hesitate to sacrifice his own life for others or to reach the ultimate consequences to save his loved ones, who can live happily and without stress but combining that with an unwavering commitment to his duty..." Anger starts to resurface in the child prodigy's voice. "Of course, the real Sonic ain't like that at all..."

"I know I'm becoming repetitive... but I think I owe you another apology, for having disappointed you. Believe me, I wanna be as you thought I was, but... I dunno why, but I find it hard to notice the things I'm doing wrong, I couldn't realize that I was hurting Antoine, I couldn't realize that you were practically an adult in many ways... *snif* I couldn't realize how unhappy you were..."

"And the way you treat women?"

"It was a habit, Tails."

"Yeah, of course... And it was also a habit to see nerds as inferior people who don't deserve to have a romantic relationship."

"Please, Tails... *sob* Give me just one more chance... I beg you... I know you can't tolerate your own failures, and now I understand that you're like that; I'll support you whenever you need it. Also, there are people who are angry with your parents, with the Freedom Fighters, and even with you and with Fiona; I'll protect you-all whenever I can, I'll protect you, your parents and Fiona. And I swear, by my own parents and by Uncle Chuck, that I'll destroy the whole Eggman Empire without hesitation."

Tails looks at him again, but looks at him out of the corner of his eye.

"And if you don't keep your word, what?"

"You can do whatever you want with me. I'll even give up my place in the team if you order me."

After several seconds, Tails speaks again.

"Okay, I'll give you the benefit of the doubt. Now, let's go back home." Tails starts to walk towards the coast, being followed by Sonic, who soon reaches him and continues walking by his side.

Both continue walking in silence, until...

"Sonic?"

"Yes, Tails?"

"How do you do to be so relaxed, despite fighting this war?"

"I wouldn't know how to explain it to you... I guess I'm just like that. Anyway, anyone who sees me would think that I'm thinking of this war as if it were a game."

Tails gets the reference instantaneously. "It happens that... I'm also carrying the world on my shoulders, just like you, but I can't relax so easily being aware of that. The very idea of treating the issue of war as if it were a game... It almost makes me nauseous."

"I get it... Tails." Sonic puts a hand on his friend's shoulder. "Whatever happens, if you can't count
on Fiona or your parents for any reason, don't hesitate to call me, okay? You ain't alone in this war, you ain't the only one who carries the world on your shoulders, and friends are precisely to support each other. I'm still very aware of what this war means; I remember it every time I see my parents and Uncle Chuck, who are robotized, and I also remember it every time I look around me."

"Thank you, Sonic..."

"You should have taken advantage and left the cave too, Tony."

"It wouldn't have been fair for *vous, ma belle fleur. Vous* worked much harder than *moi, vous* deserved to leave."

"Oh, Tony..."

"*De plus, if you're gonna be stuck here, vous* deserve some company."

"Thanks... I love you."

Amid the darkness of the cave, the coyote hugs his girlfriend tightly.

"*Moi aussi, Bunnie.*"

Both see their "romantic moment" interrupted by new tremors, coming from the rocks that cover the cave's entrance. Suddenly, all the rocks start to fall, and a hole is formed by two drills. The cave starts to receive more and more light, until the hole is large enough for someone to enter.

It's a very robust robian male coyote of advanced age; surprisingly, he's covered by living tissue, which gave him the appearance of an organic mobian, but those tissues are already very deteriorated: part of his hair is gone; the skin has many cuts that expose his robotic nature, especially on the entire left side of his body, and the organic left eyeball has also been lost, revealing his robotic eye.

"*Papa?!*"

"*General?!*"

Armand D'Coolette makes a strange pose in front of the two younger mobians, and he speaks in a thick voice without Mercia accent.

*I'm back.*

[Soundtrack: Percussion blows from *Main Title ("Terminator 2" theme) – Brad Fiedel*]

"Oh, no..." Antoine facepalms. "Don't start with references to Schwarzenegger, *s'il vous plaît*..."
Chapter 15: Epilogue.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter: the epilogue of this fascinating story.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The day after the rescue, at 10:00 AM, Sonic and Tails finally arrive in New Mobotropolis. Upon entering the city, they're surprised by the few people in the streets.

Tails: "What happened while I wasn't here?"

Sonic: "It's as if the Martians had abducted half the people."

As they walk the streets, they watch people better: they're all young people and children who had previously been residents of Knothole; the adults and the elderly were very, very few.

Sonic: "I'll go to my house to check if my parents are still here."

Tails: "Okay, I'll do the same."

They both go in separate directions, and they meet again in the same place, half an hour later.

Sonic: [very worried] "My parents ain't there, and neither is Uncle Chuck. There ain't even Muttski."

Tails: [relieved, but still confused] "This is weird: I went to the castle and I met Lady Alicia, and she gave me some information: my parents are still here, Rosie also, and the same thing happens with the new Chief of Staff... Sonic, don't you have the feeling that these disappearances weren't random and that the disappeared belong to a group with specific characteristics?"

"Miles! Sonic!"

They both look in the direction of the source of that voice, and they meet Fiona, who runs towards them accompanied by Sally. When arriving, the red vixen gives a big hug to her boyfriend.

Fiona: "Thank God you're fine, Miles ... Did something happen to you?"

Tails: [returns the hug] "I'm fine, Fiona... [kisses her on the lips] Now, could you tell me everything that happened, please?"

Sally: "I'll tell you: sometime between midnight and dawn, all the Robians have disappeared, both in this city and around the world. It's even rumored that Eggman also disappeared from New Megaopolis, the new capital of his empire."

Sonic: "New capital?"

Fiona: "He had occupied the Old Megapolis, changed his name and started building new buildings on top of the old buildings' ruins."
Sally: "Returning to the subject of the Robians: Antoine and Bunnie arrived early today, saying that we shouldn't worry and that all the Robians will return tonight. They say that the Bems have abducted them to de-robotize them, but they also say that they can't reveal their sources."

Then, Fiona's cell phone starts to vibrate: an SMS had arrived, and she proceeds to read it immediately.

Fiona: [after reading the SMS] "It's Bunnie: she wanna hold a meeting in the Freedom HQ."

Tails: "Alright, let's go there."

A few minutes later, at the Freedom HQ...

The AFFs' six original members, the KFFs, Lieutenant Procion, Elias Acorn and his family are in a meeting room, seated in swivel chairs located around a large circular table. At that time, they receive a visit from a male mobian bulldog with a military haircut, dressed in a Royal Army uniform, carrying a walking stick in his left hand: Colonel George Sommersby, the new Chief of Staff.

Colonel Sommersby: [bows to Elias.] "Your excellency..." [to Amadeus] What a great surprise, rookie. Did you fight back at the front?"

Tails: "Rookie?! Hahaha! [his chair falls backwards, and he falls back along with the chair] WAH!"

Fiona: "Miles!" [lifts him off the ground]

Amadeus: [to Tails] "That happens to you because you laugh at me."

Tails: "Haha... I'm fine, I'm fine, Fiona... This is the funniest thing I've heard..."

Colonel Sommersby: "I guess that's your son, rookie. Is it true that he has a higher rank than yours?"

Amadeus: "Actually-"

Tails: [smiles widely] "That's right, Colonel: in the New Legion of Honour of Mercia, I've already surpassed my father's rank."

Amadeus: "Only in the Legion of Honour, young man."

While father and son discuss, Rosemary chuckles.

Colonel Sommersby: [to Tails] "Your father was the same, boy: I had instructed him in his youth, and a short time later, I was obeying orders from him. [to Antoine] And you're Amadeus' student, right? You've grown a lot, and I heard that you fight pretty well."

Antoine: "I had some ups and downs, mais here I am, fighting."

Sonic: "Ok, it's very nice that you two meet after so long, but can we start with this meeting?"

Antoine: "Eh bien, nobody is missing, alors we can start now."

Bunnie: "As we've said before, the Bems have abducted all the Robians of the planet to de-robotize them, and they did so between the 0:00 AM and 6:00 AM today; The Bems didn't make distinctions between the sides that are fighting in this war, so Eggman and Snively have also been abducted."

Sonic: "Snively? Why? He ain't robian."
Tails: "Actually, Eggman ain't a robotic overlander either. He has Robotnik's personality, but he's still an ordinary robot."

Procion: [answering Sonic] "When Eggman and Snively settled in what would now be New Megaopolis, the doctor robotized his nephew, probably for not having been able to prevent Robotropolis' destruction."

Fiona: "If Scourge replaced Snively and became Eggman's new lieutenant, I wouldn't be surprised. After all, it was he who rescued him, and it's also he who has control over the Armed Forces of a whole planet."

Procion: "If an Eggman-Scourge alliance is possible, it is still far from being realized: After the AFFs tried to capture Scourge more than a week ago, he didn't visit Mobius again, and neither Eggman nor any of his subordinates traveled to Moebius. Besides, we've already said that Snively was abducted along with Eggman, so he could also be de-robotized and he could continue in his position as his uncle's second-in-command."

When Procion mentions the battle between the AFFs and Scourge, Tails starts to look depressed. Sonic and Fiona notice this, and each of them puts a hand on one of his shoulders.

Procion: "As for how the Bems would be able to 'de-robotize' an ordinary robot, we have no idea. It's likely that their technology is more advanced than we thought, being able to do more things than robotize and de-robotize organic beings."

Sally: [to Procion, Antoine and Bunnie] "Wait a second: how do you know that the Bem were the ones who abducted all the Robians? How do they know everything they just told us?"

Procion: "Well... Antoine, Bunnie and I have to give them some confidential information. But first, we must give you-all a warning, which is quite obvious but deserves to be said: whatever we're gonna tell you-all, it shouldn't leave this room."

Everyone else except Antoine and Bunnie: "Got it."

Antoine: "General Armand D'Coolette, mon père, is still alive."

Everyone else except Bunnie, Procion and Sally: "WHAT?!"

Antoine: "He survived the attack on Prison Island, et he's maintenant an agent of His Majesty's Military Intelligence Secret Service for Foreign Security in Mercia."

Sonic: "A long name, huh?"

Sally: "It seemed to me that he was a spy or something like that: I met with Armand when I left the island, and he told me that I shouldn't tell anyone about him, or he would be forced to kill me."

Antoine: "Yesterday morning, the Bems abducted mon père to de-robotize him before the others, mais il refused to be organic again: His mind was already free, et il wanted to continue fighting by taking advantage of his new skills as a Robian. De plus, the Bems allowed him to return to Mobius for him to notify Rob O'Hedge about what the Bems was planning to do. A few hours later, Rob allowed him to go to Mount Mobius to help us rescue Sally; Bunnie et moi had been trapped inside a cave, il rescued us, et il told us everything."

Procion: "A few days ago, Rob O'Hedge hired me and I started working for that agency; half an hour ago, they called me to tell me all this, saying that both me and Bunnie and Antoine were authorized to reveal this, but they told me that we could only tell you-all about this. On the other
hand, in the United Federation, the only ones informed about this are: the President Joao Falcao, the Heads of State of each of the cities-State of the Federation, the Commander Tower, the Chiefs of Staff of the three branches of GUN, and the members of the Team Dark. Those who have been informed by Rob O'Hedge also include: the other Freedom Fighters teams, such as Team Chaotix, the team of Downunda and the team of Mercia itself; The totality of the members of the Brotherhood of Guardians, and the leaders of the other nations that support us, such as Lupe Wolf, Grand Chief of the recently founded Wolf Pack Nation."

Lady Alicia: "Alright, I understand that King Rob wants to reveal this to Elias, Colonel Sommersby and the Freedom Fighters, but I don't understand why you told me and Megan to come to this meeting with my son. We have nothing to do with this."

Bunnie: "There's also news about Maximillian Acorn: he has disappeared. Rob thought it would be wise to tell Elias' relatives about this, especially you, Lady Alicia."

Lady Alicia: "I get it..."

Antoine: "Mon père also discovered that Geoffrey St. John is a follower of IXIS; en fait, it was Geoffrey who carried out the attack on Prison Island. Mon père faked his death in that attack, il began working as an agent in the service of Rob O'Hedge, et in one of his first missions, il captured et interrogated Geoffrey: it seems that il doesn't serve Naugus in exchange for money, mais il does it to avenge the deaths of son père Ian et sa femme Hershey, et aussi because he's convinced that Naugus would be a better king than the House of Acorn's members."

Sonic: "In short: he's resentful because of the death of his loved ones. Maybe we should take that into account if we want him to return to our side."

Bunnie: "I don't think it will work. Armand told us that he seemed quite stubborn during the interrogation: he mentioned to Geoffrey that he met his father Ian, he told him that he heard about his wife Hershey, and then Armand asked him if they would want him to work in the service of someone like Naugus; Geoffrey replied that it didn't matter anymore because his wife and his father were already dead."

Rosemary: "What's Geoffrey's current situation?"

Antoine: "Malheureusement, he managed to escape from mon père. Sûrement he disappeared along with Max."

Megan: "Anyway... We can't do much from our place anymore. Now, shouldn't we start preparing for Christmas?"

Several hours later...

It's snowing again in New Mobotropolis. In the square that surrounds the New Castle of Acorn, Elias is making a Christmas massive dinner, with free admission for any citizen who wishes to attend it; the many mobians who attend the dinner (including the AFFs, the KFFs and their respective allies during the Civil War) are eating and chatting inside large, well-heated tents.

There are only a few minutes until midnight, and everyone anxiously awaits the countdown and fireworks, when Tails takes a covered stage and approaches a microphone to talk to all the guests, bringing a glass with squeezed orange juice. Each tent is in a specific position, so that the wide entrance door of each of them allows to observe what happens on the stage.

"Goodnight everyone..." Tails, somewhat embarrassed and sad, starts to speak while his voice is
He drinks a sip of orange juice, and after being silent for a few seconds, resumes the speech.

"I offer my apologies to all of you: to Sonic Hedgehog, Sally Acorn and the other KFFs, who had taken care of me in the first ten years of my life and then had to fight against me... to Elias Acorn, who evidently was a victim of his father and didn't deserve to go through this whole Civil War thing... to my friends in the AFFs... to all those who joined the war to fight on our side, including the entire Team Dark, the twin sisters Leeta and Lyco, Nic Weasel, Lightning Lynx and Sergeant Simian, who were also recruited by me..."

Amadeus Prower, sitting at one of the tables, is surprised by his son’s statements. "What's he doing?" He asks himself. "I had recruited them. I should apologize, not him."

Fiona gets to hear him. "Your son is like that, Marshal." She tells him, then looking at her boyfriend as she begins to look embarrassed. "He always demands a lot of himself and sacrifices himself, especially when he did something wrong..."

"... to all those who joined the war to fight for the Monarchy, like the Robians and cyborgs of Beauregard's Legion, the Guardian Knuckles, Julie-Su and all the Team Chaotix -including Matilde, Mighty Armadillo's sister-, who were forced by me to fight against those who were once their friends..."

Mighty, who's sitting with his sister and the Team Chaotix, listens to the latter and also feels very sorry for who's delivering that speech. "I think you deserve an apology too, friend." He says to himself.

"... to the totality of the soldiers of both sides and their respective families, especially the families of the deceased soldiers... and to all the citizens of this nation, especially a certain rabbit girl and her mother, who surely know that I'm referring to them and know why I apologize..."

Cream and Vanilla also react in the same way when listening to the child prodigy speak.

"The day before yesterday, I was kidnapped, Sonic immediately did everything he could do to save me, and he succeeded; now, I remember when I gave Fiona Fox a second chance, and I think it's also worth giving Sonic, Sally and the KFFs a second chance... Anyway, I've behaved like a real son of a b***. I know I've overstepped by saying this, but my vocabulary is no longer enough to describe how terrible I've been lately with all of you. It's even possible that my actions are already unforgivable at this point. That's all."

After his speech, everyone remains silent... until some mobians, like Vanilla, Cream, Mighty, Matilde, Sonic, Sally and Elias, start to applaud; very soon, everyone starts to solemnly applaud the repentant fox, making no sound other than the sound of their own applause. After wiping off a tear, Tails gets off the stage quickly, and Elias takes the stage.

"Citizens of Acorn... I think it would be a good idea to make this Christmas represent the final reconciliation between all of us. I invite everyone to take advantage of this meeting to apologize to each other for everything that happened. This would be an excellent Christmas gift for all of us."

People again applaud after Elias' sayings, and shortly after, everyone starts the countdown to Christmas' beginning.

" 10... 9... 8...!"
Tails is sitting at the same table as his parents and Fiona, hugging his girlfriend around the waist. But she doesn’t seem excited or very happy, although she doesn't reject her boyfriend's embrace either.

"7... 6... 5... 4...!"

Sonic, Sally, Amy, Rotor, Sonic's parents and Uncle Chuck approach them.

"3... 2... 1... Merry Christmas!"

A few hours later, when everyone begins to be overcome by sleep, Tails and Fiona return to his workshop and go to sleep together. However, once the two are in bed and the lights are off, they're still awake.

"Fiona, you were kind of weird lately. I don't wanna be a bother, but... Do you wanna tell me?"

"Don't worry, Miles. It's nothing."

"Are you sure?"

"Miles..."

"Okay, okay, I'm already being annoying... I'm sorry."

"It's all right, Miles... I think I'm just indisposed."

"I get it..."

Tails gets up from the bed, he goes around the bed, he gets into the bed from the other side and he gently embraces Fiona from behind, bringing his hands to the bottom of her abdomen and then kissing her on her cheek.

"Do you feel more comfortable now?"

"Thanks."

The child prodigy finally falls asleep, but the red vixen is still very awake: there's something that she can't get out of her head, something that's even making her cry in silence.

("Sorry, Miles... This is all my fault...")

Meanwhile, in some pocket universe...

Geoffrey St. John is walking on a winding road made of glass, so smooth that one have to walk with extreme care to avoid slipping. Around him, the space adopts rare forms, showing that it's a universe very different from that where the planet Mobius is located: the glass stalactites hang from a ceiling that, although it's also made of glass, seems to be at an infinite height from the ground and it even has points of light similar to stars, as if that were actually the sky; there are other roads similar to the one traveled by Geoffrey, but these go up or even are on their head, being traveled by all kinds of beings that seem to violate the Law of Gravity without any effort; the glass itself and even the empty space seem to be of several colors at the same time and they take strange and amazing shapes, as if they were psychedelic artworks or images generated by a kaleidoscope, which tend to cause optical illusions to any human, overlander or mobian who looks at them...

That "sky" has even two parts that, much to the consternation of the skunk, seem to imitate the faces
of Ian St. John and Hershey Cat; however, he looks away for a fraction of a second, and when he looks again at those same portions of the arch of heaven, those two faces are no longer there.

After walking a little more, Geoffrey arrives at a wide staircase that takes him to an altar: from there, Maximillian Acorn contemplates all that pocket universe, sitting on a throne made of the same crystal from which everything else is done in this place.

"I guess this place has caught your attention." Max tells the skunk, while the latter climbs slowly up the steps. "It's made in the image and likeness of the Zone of Silence, the universe that was our home for a whole decade."

The former agent of the Royal Secret Service had fled the Kingdom of Acorn shortly after Max's forced exile, after hearing that the king emeritus was also a follower of IXIS. Together, they entered this universe that, according to what Max said, was a refuge created by Naugus himself.

But now, Geoffrey notices something strange while going up the stairs: Max's voice is very similar to the voice he heard when talking to Naugus on a cell phone. When the youngest follower of IXIS has went up the stairs long enough to observe Max, he learns that he has changed a lot very suddenly: a small horn protrudes from between his eyebrows; his ears are slightly larger, losing their typical equilateral triangle shape and becoming longer; the wrinkles on his face are more noticeable; his mustache is absent, he's letting his white beard grow, and the hair on his head starts to get lost; his eyes have red irises; his left hand and forearm have been replaced by a claw similar to that of a lobster; to finish, all his clothing is different, now consisting of a violet one-piece suit, a metal belt, a black cloak that seems to imitate the shape of a pair of bat wings, gloves that cover his hand, his claw and both forearms, and heavy boots. Despite being old, the expression of his face in general, and his smile in particular, suggest that he still has a lot of energy.

In short, Max has just adopted the appearance and, probably, also the personality of the very leader of the Order of IXIS.

After arriving at the altar and meeting Max, Geoffrey remains incredulous.

"Is it... you... milord?"

"That's right, apprentice."

"Bu- but... How is it possible?"

"When Julian made his coup d'état and forced me and Max to exile us in the Zone of Silence, Max made a pact with me, and one of the terms of that pact included that his soul and my soul would coexist in his body. Of course, when we weren't alone and someone was watching us, I let him control his own body to keep up appearances, and Max even came to think that we were both equal under our agreement; however, after all, I was the puppeteer pulling the strings, and when Max was having control over his own body, he didn't realize that I was unconsciously influencing his decisions, so he was just a puppet of mine. Actually, even before Julian gave his coup, I was Max's advisor and was using my magic to manipulate his emotions; that's why he authorized the genocides as revenge against the overlanders, something he probably would have refused to do if I hadn't influenced him."

"Well... I suppose you already have full access to your powers, milord."

"No, not yet, but I will... and the looming conflicts in your home country will be of great help to achieve that goal."
A male mobian echidna is walking through the corridors of the Castle of Moebotropolis, on the planet Moebius. He's dressed in a long black cloak and gold medallions; as a result of a failed experiment with Chaos energy, he's albino and his eyes have black sclera, yellow irises and red eyelids.

Walking with his hands behind his back, the echidna appears in the throne room, where some moebians, following the orders of King Scourge, are doing all kinds of obscene graffiti on the walls. The usurper is sitting on his throne, watching the progress of the "artworks" he had ordered to do, until he sees the echidna entering the room.

"Good thing you came, Creepy von Evil! What do you think of the re-decoration I'm doing?"

"For this time, I'll ignore that nickname used by you, Your Cool Majesty."

"C'mon, Finitevus..." Scourge jumps and gets off the throne, walking towards the echidna and resting a hand on his shoulder. "Actually, I still respect you. I admit that you're very useful. If you were not-

"You would have executed me already."

"Actually, I wouldn't even have hired you." Both begin to walk together through the wide hallways of the castle. "Now, let's talk about the important thing: how many did you recruit?"

"Counting both the mercenaries hired and those freed from the Prison Zone, we already have ten million soldiers ready to follow your orders, Your Cool Majesty. All of them have quickly accepted the rewards offered."

"I told you, Doc: if you gather the mercenaries of all universes and if you offer them a reward they can't refuse, forming such a large army is a piece of cake. And offering them that reward is also a piece of cake when you're the King of a whole planet."

"I've also taken some liberties, if you don't mind..."

"Let's see what you did, and if what you did is good, I forgive you."

"Well... I've contacted a certain 'Eclipse'. He has shown me four specimens of some beings that he calls 'Dark Arms': initially, the purpose of the creation of these 'Dark Arms' was for a common soldier to merge with one of them and obtain new powers, making that soldier a sort of super-soldier; still, I've seen that the 'Dark Arms' had great potential as independent super-soldiers, so, I decided to collaborate in the research of that 'Eclipse' to get the 'Dark Arms' to become autonomous beings, with all the advantages that would imply for us if we recruited them."

"You know what? That has been a great idea. Do what you want with those 'Black Hands' or whatever they're called. I totally trust you."

"I thank you very much, and I assure you that the 'Dark Arms' will be following your orders and fighting Moebius' enemies in a very short time."

No one realizes that Dr. Finitevus, while talking to the King, is crossing his fingers behind his back.
To be continued...

Chapter End Notes

Glossary:

Kaleidoscope: Optical instrument consisting of a tube with two or three inclined mirrors and colored crystals inside, arranged in such a way that if one moves the tube and looks inside at one end, different symmetrical geometric figures can be seen.

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