

Shadow and the Huntress of G.U.N.

Chapter One

In Station Square, there is a cute little building painted blue and orange, with little bushes and small garden area. This is Chao Kindergarten, and a very special event was about to happen today, when one ultimate life form meets another.....

"Everybody ready?" Professor Chao called out to the class. The little assortment of Chao looked up at him, blinking. Nurse Chao looked around and scratched his head.

"Uh, Principal Chao, I think we're forgetting someone." he told the bearded little professor. Prof. Chao looked around again. The class had twelve little Chao in it. There were four neutral Chao, four Hero Chao, and four Dark Chao, also know as Angel Chao and Demon Chao. Ms. Chao, the teacher, stood in the back of the kindergarten building, watching them.

"Let's see. You're here. I'm here. Ms. Chao is here. All the Chao children are here. Nope, we're ready to go to the zoo!" Prof. Chao declared. Nurse Chao sighed and pointed up at the attic door. Prof. Chao looked up and thought hard, then brightened. "Oh, yes! I almost forgot about the teacher's aide!"

"Yes, the teacher's aide. The one who's taking the kids to the zoo for their field trip. Remember?" Nurse Chao remarked. The principal looked blank. "Never mind."

"Ms. Chao! Wake up the teacher's aide!" Professor Chao declared, pointing one little finger up into the air. Ms. Chao rolled her eyes and pumped her wings, flying up to the attic door. She grabbed the string and pulled down. The door pulled down into a staircase and she climbed up the steps.

"Wake up the teacher's aide. Wake up the teacher's aide." Ms. Chao grumbled as she made it into the attic and walked over to a bed in one corner of the attic, which was decorated to resemble a bedroom. There was a small television, small refrigerator, cupboard, dresser, table and chairs, a mirror, and a small linen closet.

"I always have to wake up the teacher's aide. How can he be a teacher's aide? He doesn't have the qualifications!" Ms. Chao grumbled as she pulled on the sky blue blanket to climb up onto the bed. "But he's good with kids and he can chase them down, so I guess that amounts to something." she amended and began to poke at the large mound under the blanket. "Wake up! We have the field trip to go to! You have to take the Chao children to the zoo." Ms. Chao called out and poked harder. The mound shifted and groaned.

"Mmmurkle murtle grrr." the mound replied sleepily. Ms. Chao poked harder, then stepped carefully to the bedside table. The clock was jammed again, no wonder he didn't wake up.

"Wake up, Shadow!" Ms. Chao yelled and slammed her fists onto the clock. The numbers flipped over to the correct time and the alarm blared. Shadow the Hedgehog bolted up and shrieked.

"I'm up! I'm up! What's going on?! Are we under attack?!" he cried and blinked drowsily. "Stupid clock." he grumbled and turned to bang the snooze button. "I'll get it fixed. Promise." he added and pulled the covers back over his head.

"Shadow! The field trip? It's today! No, wrong. It's right now!" Ms. Chao scolded loudly. The covers shifted around and the black hedgehog sat up again.

"Today?!" he asked and jumped out of bed, "Why didn't you say so earlier?! Late, late, late!" He grabbed his sneakers, pulled them on, ran to the closet, threw a pale blue shoulder bag out, then ran to the mirror and cleaned himself up a bit.

"Don't forget to pack the supplies!" the teacher exclaimed. Shadow grabbed the Flame Ring and put it on before running back to the closet.

"Okay! Checklist!" he called back.

"Chao seeds!" Ms. Chao shouted. Shadow threw out a bag of seeds. They landed in the shoulder bag on the floor behind him.

"Check!" he confirmed.

"Water can!" A pink watering can with a white daisy on it flew out and landed in the bag.

"Check!"

"Snack mix!" A box of crackers and pretzels flew out into the bag.

"Check!"

"Blanket!" A bundle of yellow was thrown into the bag.

"Check!"

"Chew toys!" A package of rubber bones and a squeeze toy newspaper were next.

"Check!"

"First aid kit!" A white box sailed out into the bag.

"Ow! Threw it with my bad arm! I'm okay! Check!" Shadow called back after crying sharply in pain.

"Be careful! Okay! Chaos Emerald!" Ms Chao called out the last item. Shadow ran out of the closet and dove under his bed.

"It's in here! Hold on! Almost got it! Found it!" Shadow replied and scooted out backwards, dragging a yellow gem along with him. He shoved it into the pack and zipped it closed. "Chaos Emerald, check! Ready to go!" Shadow declared and hoisted the bag's strap onto his shoulder. The Chao teacher nodded and flew up to hover next to him.

"Now, remember to have Nurse Chao check your left arm before you go out." she reminded him, "How does it feel?" Shadow moved the arm a little and studied the bandages wrapping it.

"It doesn't hurt as much. And my leg is almost back at full strength." he replied, "I told you I would be fine."

"You were **not** fine when we found you on the Emerald Coast, bruised and battered and with a broken leg and mangled arm." Ms. Chao

scolded, "You were delirious with fever, babbling some girl's name over and over again. Thank goodness we got you to the hospital quick."

"Yeah, and after I got my sanity back I joined the kindergarten to repay your kindness and find a way to get some kind of life going." Shadow finished, "I know, I know. But I'm immortal. So let's get this field trip over with. Where's Omochao?"

"Where else? Under all this stuff in your closet! You almost stepped on my tail!" Omochao, the mechanical Chao, lectured as he flew out and hovered next to the black hedgehog.

"Sorry. Okay, let's go!" Shadow declared and headed downstairs to meet with the group of Chao kids and get the trip to the zoo underway.

The Chao cheered joyfully as Shadow appeared and stood among the group. Professor Chao dug around in the piggy bank and brought out a wad of money. He counted it out, then handed it to Shadow.

"This is the field trip budget, enough for lunch for the Chao children and yourself. Here are the tickets to get into the zoo, and the paper and crayons, and the sticker sheets and the grade-book." he told Shadow, loading his arms with papers and stuffing the money and tickets into his only free hand. Shadow wobbled out the door.

"Thanks a lot, Professor Chao. See...you...later!" he gasped out, walking around to keep the stack of papers from falling over. "Come on, kids! Follow your buddy! Follow me!" The Chao grouped behind him and followed him down the path of the schoolhouse to the zoo in Station Square. Omochao gave him directions as he walked.

The zoo was on one of its busy days as Shadow passed out sheets of paper and boxes of crayons to the children. He hesitated with the Demon Chao, then gave them the crayons.

"Okay. Your assignment for this field trip is to draw three different animals. You will be in four groups of three Chao, one neutral, one Hero and one Dark. Stay in this area and when you've drawn an animal, come back to me." the black hedgehog told them, "Okay?"

"*Chao!*" the kids laughed and scampered away to draw. Shadow sat on a bench and watched the kids, packing the extra boxes and paper into the bag.

"Are you sure that was a good idea, Shadow? Letting them run loose like that?" Omochao asked worriedly. Shadow leaned back and relaxed.

"It'll be fine. They all have a Hero Chao to deal with the Demons." he replied and studied the glove with the torn off cuff, "You know, I really have to go buy another pair of gloves." he added.

"That's what you said last month! And the same with your clock! You don't have the money for it, Shadow! You're flat broke!" Omochao wailed, "All the stuff in your room is either what the school gave you or what you found in dumpsters!"

"You're that worried about the Chao, you keep an eye on them. I am **starving**." Shadow sighed and listened to his stomach growl in annoyance.

"That's because you also haven't eaten in three days! That box of snack mix is all you have left and you're giving it to the Chao!" the mechanical creature yelled then sighed. "Prof. Chao gave you some money for lunch. Buy some food and I'll keep an eye on the kids until you get back." Omochao added in a gentler tone.

"Whatever." Shadow grumbled irritably, having heard the lecture on his money troubles before. He got up, hefting the bag onto his shoulder again. Taking one more look around at the kids, Shadow nodded and walked off in the direction of the food court. Omochao flew up and coasted around overhead in his new guard duty as the Chao went on scribbling down pictures of zebras and giraffes. The Demon Chao started out following rules, then they all grinned at each other and turned prankish, bolting from their groups and scurrying away,

laughing. Omochao yelped and chased after one, saw another zip in a different direction, followed that, saw another race off, and spun in the air, dizzy. The Hero Chao looked around in surprise and began wailing for someone to stop the Dark Chao.

"I knew it! I knew this would happen! Shadow! Shadow! Help! The Dark Chao are on the rampage! Shadow!" Omochao shouted and raced off to find him.

"Okay, that's one order of chili dogs and one small soda. Here you go, sir." the food attendant checked off and handed the tray of food to Shadow, who paid and took the tray.

"It was either this, or the nachos and I'm not in the mood for cheese dripping onto my shoes." he muttered as he sat down and started eating ravenously. Food! Food! Blessed food! It felt like ages since he'd had a decent meal. Demon Chao didn't leave much in the way of leftovers, what with their constant food fights, but whatever was left behind in their wake usually wound up on Shadow's dinner plate. In a few seconds the two chili dogs were gone and Shadow contentedly slurped on the soda straw, feeling full and sleepy. *Ultimate life form my foot, if I didn't get a second job quick, I'm gonna starve to death in the attic of a schoolhouse*, he thought to himself with a wry smile.

"My, weren't we hungry today?" a voice startled him back to alertness. Shadow looked over his shoulder at a light green hedgehog girl who watched him with a grin. She wore a safari outfit of dark green colors and a hunter green headband, quills down in the fashionable hairdo that seemed to be all the rage. Shadow remembered Amy Rose wearing the same style. The stranger smiled wider at him. "Hi! My name's Cammy, what's yours?"

"Um.... Shadow." the black hedgehog replied warily, suddenly feeling a bit warm. Cammy looked at the shoulder bag.

"Are you here with somebody?" she asked.

"Um.... My class. Well, not really my class, they're the Chao kids and I'm their chaperon for the field trip." he stammered and turned back to his drink to avoid looking at her.

"Uh huh. So where are the little tykes?" Cammy asked sweetly, walking around the table to face him. She sat in the chair opposite him, never moving her sea-green eyes away from him. Shadow played with the straw.

"Drawing the zebras." he replied softly. Cammy giggled and he glanced up at her. "What?"

"You're blushing. Shy? Are you scared of a girl like me?" she teased. She winked at him. "Bet you don't have a girlfriend, huh? That's all right. I don't have a boyfriend." Cammy smiled wider, "But I think I might have found one." Shadow swallowed another gulp of soda and winced as the bubbles made his ears burn. He bit down on the straw and tried to think of a way to escape Cammy when Omochao blazed in and landed on the table.

"Shadow! The Dark Chao are on the loose! They're racing around like maniacs!" he wailed. Shadow grabbed his bag, gave a little sigh of relief and raced away from Cammy.

"Gotta go! Nice talking with ya! Bye!" he called back and then looked up at Omochao, "Omochao, you are a *lifesaver*."

"Don't flatter me! Catch those little demons!!" the robot snapped, "I told you this was a bad idea!" Cammy watched them run off and grinned, pulling out a green and yellow hammer from behind her back. She gave it a twirl and laughed lightly.

"You're not getting away that easy! I've got my Tiki Tiki Hammer to help me!" she declared and ran off after him.

Sonic and his friends were at the same zoo, mostly to try to cheer Sonic up. He was in one of those depressed moods again. They would strike every now and then, often to the point where the blue

hedgehog would just stop what he was doing and look glum for days. He sat at a table, a plate of chili dogs sitting, untouched, before him. Amy Rose, Tails, and Knuckles all looked worried.

"Come on, Sonic! Just a bite!" Amy pleaded. Sonic rested his chin on his arms on the table, looked at the plate and sighed, gazing sadly at the red and black band around the cuff of his glove. "This isn't good. He won't eat."

"Sonic, you love chili dogs! Come on, eat something!" Tails urged him, "You can't be sad forever about Shadow! We all miss him, but we have to move on!" Sonic glanced at him, then looked away, silent.

"It's no use. The two of them go into super forms together just once, and Sonic starts thinking Shadow could have been his long lost older brother or something." Knuckles grumbled, "Accept it, Sonic. He's not coming back."

"But he was supposed to be immortal." Sonic mumbled, sitting up and toying with the torn off cuff. He tried to save Shadow, grabbed onto his hand before he fell into the earth's atmosphere, but the cuff had torn away and a bright flash of light erupted where Shadow had been, a ball of flames in space. "We were both in super forms, why did he get weaker? Why did he lose that form in space?"

"I don't know about you guys, but I'm getting thirsty. Who's gonna buy me a soda?" Amy declared, looking at each of the three boys for an answer. They all gave her a blank stare, then looked startled when a small black Chao jumped onto the table and gobbled up the chili dogs.

"Whoa! A Dark Chao! Cool!" Tails exclaimed as the Chao stomped around on the messy plate and laughed at them. "Sonic! Grab it so I can study it up close!" Sonic reached out and grabbed it by the tail. It jumped around angrily and tried to bite his hand as a mechanical Chao flew up to them.

"We seem to be attracting a lot of strange Chao." Knuckle remarked, peering suspiciously at the robot. Tails looked excited and pulled out a pair of tools.

"Neat! Somebody made a mechanical Chao! I'm gonna study that one, too! Grab it, Knuckles, and I'll open it up to see what it's made of!" he cried happily. The robot flew out of reach.

"Oh, no, you won't!" the robot Chao snapped, "I'm Omochao, the teacher's aide's assistant! And that's one of our Chao students! Keep him still while I go get the chaperone!"

"This mechanical Chao sure is loud." Amy remarked as the robot turned to yell out loud. Sonic held the Demon Chao away from him and hoped it didn't decide to chew on his fingers.

"Shadow! I found one! It's over here! Hurry up and get it before it runs away again!" Omochao yelled. The friends looked at each other in shock and disbelief.

"**Shadow?! Here?! Alive?!**" they all cried and turned to see if it was true. Soon enough, a black hedgehog came running up, stopped before the group, then bent over, gasping. "It *is* Shadow!"

"It's about time, Shadow! You take forever to go anywhere! Why didn't you use Chaos Control?! Never mind! Look! This guy caught the first Demon Chao!" Omochao scolded him. Shadow fell back and sat down, trying to catch his breath.

"Give me some time to rest a bit, Omochao! My leg still isn't at full strength! And as for Chaos Control, I don't want to pull the Chaos Emerald out yet!" he yelled back and looked up at the group of people who peered over the table at him. He came face to face with Sonic. "Sonic? Here? Uh oh."

"Shadow! You really are alive!" Sonic exclaimed joyfully. Shadow grabbed the Chao from his hands and gave it a chew toy before shoving it into his bag.

"No, I'm not! I'm dead! You're hallucinating!" Shadow snapped at him and scrambled to get away, "Come on, Omochao!" The two of them fled from the scene. Sonic looked confused.

"What? But, Shadow...." he called and stopped when a second hedgehog came up to them, green and sporting matching clothes and hammer.

"Did you guys see a tall, dark, handsome, black hedgehog run by here? Goes by the name of Shadow? Is available for little ole me?" she asked them quickly. They stared at her.

"You're chasing after Shadow?" Sonic asked her, "Who're you?"

"My name's Cammy Hedgehog and yes, I'm chasing him down. So, did you see him?" the green hedgehog replied and blinked at Amy, "Hey, you have a hammer like me. You're not chasing Shadow, too, are ya? 'Cause I saw him first! I got dibs on him!"

"No way!" Amy replied and pointed at another direction, "Shadow ran that way, but watch out for his Chaos Control. He can warp out of sight if you don't be careful." she warned. Cammy nodded and ran off, hammer tucked away as she darted among the people in the crowds.

"Why'd you do that for?" Sonic demanded to know from Amy. She smiled and didn't answer. "Oh, forget it. Girls.... Come on, Tails! Let's go and find Shadow ourselves! I have to ask him why he never talked to us all this time! If he made it through okay, why didn't he try to contact me?" he asked as he raced away.

A bush shook, lifted up on two long black legs, and tiptoed quickly down the pebble path. Omochao floated behind, looking annoyed. The bush dropped down suddenly when a pair of kids ran by, then lifted up again and went tiptoeing away.

"Shadow, is that really necessary? You look dumb." Omochao remarked. The bush dropped down and Shadow reached up to grab him. "Ow! Hey! Stop it! That hurt!" Omochao wailed.

"Quiet! You'll give me away! If Sonic finds me, he's not gonna leave me alone! He'll chain himself to my leg and I'll never be free, the way Maria wanted me to be." Shadow griped and sighed, "And where am I gonna find another Chao?" A warden ran by with a net.

"That creepy little thing's kissing the lions! Get it out of there before it causes anymore havoc!" the speakers blared out. Shadow poked his head out of the bush and smiled.

"Well, that answers my question!" he said cheerfully.

"There you are!" Cammy's voice called out. Shadow winced and looked over his shoulder. The green hedgehog stood against the wall, giving him a sly, sneaky look. "Thought you could get away that easily, huh? I don't give up the chase so quickly, Shadow."

"Not you again! Outta here!" Shadow yelled and dug out the yellow Chaos Emerald, "Chaos Control!" He and Omochao vanished into the air in a bright flash of light. Cammy watched it and smiled again.

"So, *you're* the ultimate life form that got away from the military. Now I definitely have to get with you." she murmured and picked up her purse. Skipping away to the lion cages, Cammy whistled cheerfully, twirling her hammer at her side.

Shadow reappeared in front of the lion cages. There was that Dark Chao, kissing the lions and doodling all over the walls. The wardens were chasing it around, swinging their nets to try to catch it. Omochao zipped ahead with a chew toy. The Dark Chao spotted it and began to run after him, biting the air and jumping to grab it.

"Great! Lead him over here, Omochao!" Shadow called out. Omochao flew his way and the Demon Chao gave a flying leap up to grab the chew toy. At that moment a warden swiped at the air and caught both the Demon Chao and Omochao in the net.

"Ha! Gotcha, ya little runts!" the man said with a laugh and rushed off with them.

'Help, Shadow! Help!' Omochao wailed as the Demon Chao sat in the net, startled. Shadow yelled and chased after the warden.

"Hey! Wait! Stop! Give those Chao back to me!" he cried but the warden had vanished into the crowd of people. Shadow stood in the

crowd, looking around frantically for the man. "Oh, no. Oh, no! What am I gonna do? How am I gonna explain this to Professor Chao and Ms. Chao?!" he exclaimed, "I can't believe I lost the Dark Chao! And now Omochoa is lost, too!"

Chapter Two

Sonic and his friends searched the zoo, still searching for Shadow. They found Cammy taking it easy by the lion cages, sipping a soda and now wearing a pretty green dress with a white flower tied to one shoulder and sandals instead of hiking boots and the safari suit. She winked at Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, and Amy and nibbled on a cracker.

"Hi. Nice to see you all again. Having fun at the zoo?" she asked sweetly.

"Did you lose Shadow already?" Amy asked her, "I thought I told you to watch out for the Chaos Control." Cammy smiled and shook her head.

"I can handle Chaos Control capable hedgehogs. I'm just giving Shadow a break before I catch him." she replied and raised her eyebrow a few times to give them a hint, "I don't want him to run out of energy so early, if you catch my drift."

"Eew." Sonic muttered and looked around, "Hey, speaking of Shadow, where is he?" Cammy slurped at her soda and dropped the empty cup into the trash can, standing up and hefting her hammer onto her shoulder. She gave him a sneaky grin.

"I know exactly where he is. I've been tracking him ever since he used that Chaos Control for the first time." she said and walked away, dress flowing about her gracefully as she did so. Sonic, Knuckles, and Tails stared after her, mesmerized. Amy frowned at them and tapped her foot impatiently. Cammy looked back over her shoulder at them, still giving them that sly grin. "Coming?" she asked.

"Uh...oh yeah." Sonic muttered and shook his head quickly to clear his mind, "Lead the way, Cammy." He stepped behind to follow her and the other boys fell into line. Amy followed behind, steaming.

"That's disgusting, talking about things like that in public. And about poor Shadow too!" she grumbled.

Shadow peeked into the window of the warden's office and spotted the Demon Chao and Omochao sitting on a bench inside. The Demon Chao was chewing happily on the rubber bone, well-behaved so far. Omochao looked lonely.

"How do I get in there without the warden freaking out?" he muttered and looked around. Nearby was a clothesline on which hung several uniforms. Shadow blinked at them and smiled. "Problem solved!" he declared and ran over to grab some clothes. He dressed quickly in the disguise and headed back to the office, knocking on the door. It opened and Shadow walked in, trying to look as if he belonged. The wardens were either watching television or playing card games. Shadow headed to the bench and opened his shoulder bag.

"Okay, you two. In the bag." he whispered to them. Omochao gasped, then shoved the Dark Chao inside before hopping in. Shadow zipped it up and turned to leave. One warden looked up and saw the Chao were gone.

"Hey! What do you think you're doing?!" he shouted and ran after Shadow.

"Make a break for it, Shadow! They're onto ya!" Omochao shrieked as Shadow bolted for the door and burst through. He raced down the trail as the wardens gave chase. "Where did you get those clothes?! Get rid of them, they're slowing you down!" Omochao added. Shadow struggled out of the uniform as he ran, got his legs tangled in the pants and fell onto the path. The wardens caught up and grabbed him by the arms, dragging him back to the office.

'You are in big trouble, buddy! We're gonna call your parents and let them know you're causing trouble at the zoo!' they scolded. Shadow blinked as he was taken away.

"My *parents*? I don't **have** parents." he muttered and looked worried, "What's gonna happen when they find out I don't have parents? Maria, why did you have to die on me?"

Cammy looked up at the sign on the warden's station and smiled, leaning on the handle of the Tiki Tiki Hammer. Sonic looked around, then up at the sign. He scratched his head and shrugged.

"I don't see Shadow. Are you sure he's here?" he asked Cammy.

"Positive." Cammy replied and headed up to the office. The group followed and they peeked into the window. Shadow sat on the bench, staring at his shoes and still wearing the jacket and necktie he took from the clothesline. The warden was asking him questions about his parents, but Shadow didn't answer.

"If that guy calls policemen to come here and deal with Shadow, they'll hand him over to G.U.N.!" Knuckles exclaimed. Cammy thought about the situation as the Sonic and Tails peered in worriedly.

"Why are they asking Shadow about his parents? He was created in a laboratory, he had a creator, but no parents." Amy remarked. Cammy smiled and snapped her fingers.

"Amy, you just gave me a great idea!" she declared and pulled out a ribbon, sunglasses and scarf from her purse. She tied the ribbon around Sonic's neck to create a tie and the scarf onto Amy's head, tying it just under her chin. She gave her the sunglasses to wear. "You two can go in there and pretend to be Shadow's parents. That way he can come out and G.U.N. doesn't get him." she told them.

"Us? His *parents*?!" Amy and Sonic exclaimed together. Cammy nodded. Tails jumped up and down.

"Yeah! You can do it, Sonic! I know you can!" he declared. Knuckles snickered.

"Look! Sonic and Amy are a mommy and daddy." he teased and laughed. Sonic growled a little at him, then headed to the door with Amy.

"I feel so stupid." Sonic grumbled.

"How do you think I feel? This scarf clashes with my skirt." Amy muttered as he opened the door.

Shadow looked up as the door opened. The warden followed his gaze and frowned. Two hedgehogs, one blue, one pink, entered the office.

"Sonny boy! There you are!" Sonic declared in a fake cheerful voice. Amy hopped to Shadow, playing the role of airheaded mom.

"Oh, sweetie, we've been looking everywhere for you! You shouldn't run off and scare your poor Mommy like that, shnookums!" Amy cooed and gave Shadow a kiss on the cheek and hugged him tight. Shadow looked shocked.

"'Mommy'?" he echoed as Sonic explained to the warden that he was in the habit of running off and getting lost.

"It's his medication. Does that every time." Sonic whispered to the man and ran to open the door. Amy grabbed Shadow by the wrist and pulled him through the doorway.

"Now, come along, cutie-pie, and Mommy will buy you a nice ice cream cone! Wouldn't you like that, hmm? Yummy yum!" she cooed and the three of them rushed away. The warden scratched his head, confused, then shrugged and went back to work.

Shadow pushed them away once they were in the clear. He opened his bag and let Omochoa out. The robotic Chao floated over him as Cammy, Knuckles, and Tails joined the group.

"I said to get him out, not kiss him." Cammy growled at Amy.

"I had to make it look good." Amy growled back. Sonic rolled his eyes and pulled off the tie.

"Why did you do that?! I had everything under control!" Shadow snapped at him. Sonic glared at him.

"Yeah right! That guy was gonna call the cops! If they see you, they'll drag you back to the military's clutches! You'll be locked away for research forever!" he pointed out.

"I don't need your help! And I could have used Chaos Control! Just leave me alone!" Shadow shouted and stormed away, pulling off the tie and tossing it down. Cammy watched him and whistled loudly.

"Yeah, yeah! Take it all off, baby!" she called out as he got rid of the jacket.

"And you stop stalking me! When did you change clothes anyway?! You weren't wearing *that* the last time I saw you!" Shadow yelled at her. Cammy blew him a kiss.

"Glad you noticed. And I told you I don't give up the chase that fast. Chaos Control all you want, Shadow. I'm still gonna get you." she purred. Shadow stiffened, then raced away again.

"Aw, he's getting away! Come on! We can cut him off at the seal exhibit!" Sonic cried and ran in another direction, his friends following him. Cammy watched them all leave and smiled again.

"Created in a lab, huh? Shadow really is a full-blooded creation of the ultimate life form. And to think that the military thought he was dead, ha! Bunch of over-paid, government idiots." she remarked and skipped away again, "Come out, come out, my little boy toy! Can't hide forever from me!" she sang along as she skipped down the trail, hammer packed back into her purse.

"I don't think she's going to leave us alone for a whole day." Omochao remarked as Shadow collapsed onto a bench to catch his breath. He rubbed his left arm gently and winced. Since the warden grabbed him, the arm had been hurting a lot more. He was worried, what if the stitches in it tore?

"I should change bandages." Shadow muttered and opened his bag to get the first aid box. The two Demon Chao inside were asleep, still chewing on the toys in their sleep. He pulled out the white box and opened it, pulling out the bandages. Omochao grabbed it and proceeded to unwrap the first one on Shadow's arm. Shadow sprayed the stitched area with a disinfectant, then watched Omochao wrap it back up tight with a fresh bandage.

"That's better! You should have let Nurse Chao check it out before we left the school, like Ms. Chao told you." Omochao pointed out. "Hey, Cammy's pretty good at hunting you down. Maybe she can help us catch the last two Chao. How are the Hero and neutral Chao?" he asked.

"They're at the giraffe exhibit, like I told them to stay. And no, we're not letting that stalker lady follow us around." Shadow muttered and looked up at his friend, "You don't understand, Omochao! She creeps me out! There's something weird about her! She wasn't afraid of my Chaos Control and when I warped, she was still able to find me! How does she do it?!"

"Lucky guess?" Omochao suggested. Shadow sighed and grabbed the box of snacks, chewing on a pretzel.

"I don't think so. She's tracking me, but how? And with what?" he muttered, "And we don't have all day to get the Chao back to school. We only have until two thirty. What time is it now?" Omochao looked around for a clock and peered at it.

"It's ten in the morning. We left the school at seven. Three hours and we found only two Chao." Omochao reported. Shadow looked at the pretzel he was eating and frowned.

"Ten? It's snack-time for the Chao. I'd better get them this food and quick." He packed up the box and first aid kit and pulled out the Emerald again. Omochao grabbed onto him and held on. "Chaos Control!" Shadow warped back to the giraffe section and looked around. The little Chao were sitting around, crying. They were hungry and scared. Where did Shadow go for such a long time?

"It's okay! I'm here! Here you go. Snacktime!" Shadow told them and passed out crackers and pretzels. The Chao ate them quietly and the Demon Chao woke up, yelling to be fed as well. Shadow fed them and set them down with the other Chao, then pulled out the Chao seeds and watering can. He filled the can at a fountain and poked a hole in some dirt. He put a seed in the hole, covered and watered it and stood back as the Chao seed sprouted and speed grew into a tree full of fruit. The Chao cheered and gathered around hungrily. Shadow grabbed onto the tree trunk and gave it a good shake, knocking fruit down to the ground. The Chao ran to them and ate hungrily. Shadow watched to make sure all the Chao ate, then looked up at the tree to see if there was anything left for him. Not even a puny little fruit. He sighed and leaned against the tree, listening to his stomach growl. Two chili dogs and a soda was not going to make up for three days of no food.

"I'm gonna *staaarve!* Watch me, Omochoa. I'm gonna show you how an ultimate life form turns into skin and bones in less than a week." Shadow groaned. Omochoa shook his head and flew around to scope out the area. He came back a little later with Cammy following him. She had a tray of food with her, sandwiches, fruit, juice, carrot sticks and a chocolate bar. Shadow looked her way and sighed, too tired and hungry to gripe as he sat down and leaned back against the tree. Cammy knelt down next to him and set the tray down. "All right. I'll bite. How did you find me? Did you follow Omochoa?" Shadow asked her quietly.

"Nope. Your Chaos Emerald. Gives you away like a giant neon sign that screams 'Shadow is here now!'" Cammy replied and smiled at him gently, "Hey, you're tired out and looking kind of weak. No fun chasing someone who could drop dead. I'm here to help you out."

"Of course he's like that!" Omochoa yelled, "The dummy skipped three days' worth of meals!" Shadow hissed at him and the robot jumped back, startled. Cammy raised an eyebrow.

"Three days without eating? No wonder you ate those chili dogs so fast." she remarked and selected a sandwich, "Stop hissing at your

toy and eat. Here." She held the sandwich up to his mouth. He turned away. "That's not helping me any, Shadow. Open up and take a bite. It's not poisoned. I promise." Cammy took a small bite and chewed. She swallowed and held it out again. "See? I ate some of it and I'm fine." Shadow looked down at the triangle hovering in front of his mouth and chewed on his lip. Lettuce, tomato, thick slice of turkey, cheese. Food, food, wonderful food! Right there! Tempting, delicious. Cammy waved it back and forth slowly.

"Careful, Shadow. You're drooling." she pointed out and giggled, "Come on. Just one bite and you can have the whole thing. Doesn't it look yummy? You know you want it." Shadow wiped away the trail of saliva with a glove and continued staring at the sandwich. It felt like a trap, but with the bait that good, how could he resist?

"I can't take it!" Shadow cried and bit into the sandwich, ripping off a large chunk of it. Cammy held the sandwich as he ate, then gave him another, and another. She fed him every sandwich on the tray, then gave him the fruit and juice to finish it as she nibbled on a carrot stick. "Ish delicshous!" Shadow exclaimed through a mouth full of watermelon. Cammy giggled again and finished her carrot stick.

"See? I told you I was helping! Feel better?" she asked him. Shadow nodded and finished the rest of the carrot sticks. Cammy unwrapped the bar and broke off a piece of chocolate. "Open wide!" Shadow opened his mouth and she tossed the chocolate in, watching him chew and swallow happily. Omochao watched them, confused. First Shadow wanted her gone, now he was enjoying having her there?

"Hedgehogs. Weird." he muttered and looked at the Chao. "Hey, Shadow! They're up to something!" he cried. Shadow and Cammy turned to watch the little creatures swarm up to them. Some ran to Shadow and gave him hugs, chattering happily. Some went to Cammy and jumped up into her arms for hugs. Cammy laughed.

"Oh, they're so sweet!" she exclaimed and cuddled them, "How cute! Are these the Chao children you were looking after, Shadow?" Shadow wrestled a few of them and gathered them into his arms. So

little and innocent, like Maria had been. Maybe that's why he liked them so much.

"These are my little guys! Don't let the innocent looks fool you. They can be tricky and rowdy." he replied, not realizing he was smiling at her. Cammy smiled back.

"You've got a nice smile." she remarked. Shadow blinked and hid his face among the Chao kids. Cammy tickled an Angel Chao and winked at him. "You're a shy one, all right. Do you always hide when you smile at a pretty girl?" she asked.

"I don't usually hang around girls. Too much trouble." Shadow muttered behind the protection of the Chao children, "Rouge and the pink hedgehog...one headache after another. But at least the pink hedgehog helped me on the ARK." He looked up at Cammy, who was suddenly very still and was staring at him with barely closed eyes.

"The pink hedgehog...helped you." she whispered, "So...you like her best. She's your...girlfriend, huh?" The Chao kids went quiet and still, looking back and forth between the two hedgehogs. They just gave each other cold stares.

<This doesn't look good.> one Hero Chao remarked to his friend, "*Chao chao chao chao chao.*"

<I'll say. I thought we finally got Shadow happy.> the Chao replied, <Snacks made him happy for a while. Hugs made him happy for a while longer. What else could make Shadow happy?>

<Kissies!> one younger Angel Chao cheered as he jumped into the air. <Me give Shadow many kissies!>

<Kissies might work. Let's try it!> the others agreed and squirmed around in Shadow's arms to plant little kisses on his face. Shadow shook them away and set them down, still scowling at Cammy.

"She's **not** my girlfriend, just someone who helped me remember a little girl I cared for back home on the ARK." he growled at her, "Maria was like a sister to me, and I made a promise to her when she died. I almost forgot what it was but the pink hedgehog reminded me of it. Now go away and leave me alone. I've got two Chao to find."

"I thought you said girls were nothing but trouble. So what about Maria was so different?" Cammy asked, miffed.

"We grew up together. I was created to help her. That's all you need to know." Shadow growled, "She was sweet and kind and caring. You're no Maria, so just stay away from me." He got up and opened his bag for Omochao to get in so he could use the Emerald's power. "And stop following me! Chaos Control!" Shadow yelled out and vanished. Cammy sniffed as she stood up and brushed off her dress.

"You're welcome for the lunch." she muttered and set off to find him again, determined to learn more about the Chaos Control. The Chao looked at each other, confused.

<Maybe we gave him the wrong kind of kissies?> one Angel Chao wondered aloud.

A reporter was working on a story about new animals at the zoo when one of the lost Demon Chao jumped into the piranha pool and began to chase the fish, snapping at their tails.

"Miss Kim! Look behind you!" the cameraman shouted and the reporter turned to stare at the Chao.

"Wow! What a scoop! We have to get a close up of that creature! Get in the tank!" she shouted.

"Are you nuts?! Those are piranhas in that tank! I'll get eaten!" the man snapped at her, but she was already off, following the Chao. It jumped out of the tank and raced off to draw all over the walls of the fish exhibit.

Shadow arrived at the exhibit, following the cries of startled people and the vandalism. He looked around as he walked into the dark building that led to the fish tanks. Omochao flew ahead and looked at the piranha tank.

"The Dark Chao was here." he reported. Shadow ran up to him and looked at the tank.

"How can you tell?" Shadow asked as he put his face against the glass and squinted to look in.

"Those are piranhas, fish that can strip the flesh from your bones in seconds. They're all trying to hide in that hole in a log over there. This Chao must have been the swimmer." Omochao replied, "We have four Chao to deal with; a flyer, runner, swimmer and powerhouse. We got the runner and the flyer. Now we need the swimmer and the powerhouse."

"Leave it to a swimming Demon Chao to freak out a school of piranhas." Shadow sighed and looked at a nearby wall. "These drawings show he must be heading for the seal exhibit. I can make out a seal on the walls." Shadow added and sighed again, "I knew I shouldn't have given them those crayons." Omochao pulled out the zoo map and looked up the seal pool.

"Here it is, Shadow, and here's where we are." he pointed out. Shadow studied it and nodded.

"Okay, in the bag. I'll use Chaos Control to get there and maybe we'll lose Cammy too." he told Omochao and pulled out the Chaos Emerald again.

"Why not ask her, very nicely, to help us find the Chao? If she can track you, she could track the Chao." Omochao asked him.

"I told you already, Omochao! She gives me the creeps! Whenever Cammy shows up, I get this really weird feeling and I can't think straight and I don't like being creeped out or startled stupid." Shadow griped at him, "Now get back in the bag or I Chaos Control and make you lose your head!" Omochao yipped and ducked inside as he warped.

"Look, Sonic! What's that chasing the seals?" Amy asked, pointing at the swimmer Dark Chao. The group peered at the pool and watched the seals try to escape the Chao's teeth.

"Hey, cool! Another Dark Chao!" Tails exclaimed. Knuckles frowned and turned to Sonic with a thought.

"Hey, Sonic. When Shadow ran into us earlier, there was a Dark Chao at our table, right?" he asked. Sonic nodded. "And when you got him out of the warden's office, he had another Dark Chao with him, right?"

"Yeah. What's your point, Knuckles?" Sonic replied with a question of his own.

"Call me nuts, but wherever there's a Dark Chao, Shadow shows up to nab it. There must be a connection between him and these crazy Chao." the echidna pointed out. Sonic looked out at the Chao, who had all the seals trapped on top of one big rock in the middle of the pool. It was circling the rock, smiling up at them with all of its teeth showing.

"Ah, coincidence." he remarked with a shrug then yelped in shock when Shadow materialized in the air above the pool.

"Waaah! I got thrown off! Help! Help!" Shadow wailed and splashed down into the pool.

"It's Shadow!" the group exclaimed.

"See? I told you! Where there's a Dark Chao, Shadow can't be too far behind!" Knuckles declared as the black hedgehog surfaced and splashed about.

"Hey, Shadow looks like he's in trouble." Tails remarked, squinting at him.

"I can't swim! Help! Somebody!" Shadow cried before sinking under the water. Sonic jumped in after him.

"Sonic! Are you crazy?! You're not much better in water than he is! Get back out here!" Knuckles yelled at him. Amy ran off to find help while Tails flew overhead to try to grab Shadow from the air. Sonic paddled as best he could in Shadow's general direction.

"Hang on, Shadow! I'm comin' to get ya!" he called out and yelped suddenly. Sonic went under and Shadow resurfaced, still splashing, still screaming. Tails snatched at him.

"Grab onto my hand, Shadow! Sonic! Where are you?! Don't die on me!" he cried out. Shadow reached out to him, but sank again. Sonic came up, sputtering, and splashed towards Shadow's direction.

"Tails! Where is he?!" he cried and heard another splash behind him. Knuckles dove in to help. The people watching the events pointed and yelled for help.

"He's over here, Sonic! The water's kind of murky! I can't see him too well!" Tails called back. Sonic went back under the water, about to speak when he did. "Sonic!" The fox flew to his area and searched the water frantically. "Sonic! Shadow! Knuckles, can you see them?!" he cried. Knuckles scanned the water and shook his head before diving down to get a closer look.

"Heeyah!" Cammy's voice sounded. Tails whirled around to see where she was coming from. The light green hedgehog raced towards the pool, hammer out and at her side. "Hang on, Shadow! Let me see where you are!" she screamed. As if to answer, Shadow resurfaced, flailing and choking on the water. Sonic came up near him, also glugging. Knuckles surfaced nearby and tried to paddle towards them as fast as he could. "Stay right there!" Cammy yelled and slammed the ground with her hammer as she ran. It threw her high into the air as Amy arrived with some help and saw her flying.

"Hey! She moves just like me!" Amy declared as Shadow went under for the third time. Cammy sailed through the air, did a mid-air twist, and then a swan dive into the pool. Tails finally grabbed Sonic's hands and hefted him up into the air, Knuckles pushing him up so Tails could keep a hold on him. Sonic coughed and looked around frantically.

"Where's Shadow?! Didn't you save him, too?! Knuckles! You should have grabbed him, not me, ya knucklehead!" Sonic yelled at him and stared at the bubbles floating to the surface of the pool. The zoo was hushed as everyone stared at the water. After a few moments, the bubbles stopped coming. Sonic tried not to cry as he watched the last of the bubbles pop. "Shadow?" he whispered.

"They...they didn't make it." Tails whispered, "They both drowned." He shrieked in surprise when both Cammy and Shadow burst through the surface in an explosion of water. "Yaah! Mayday! Mayday! I'm goin' down!" Tails wailed and skimmed the water as he raced back to dry ground. He set Sonic down and landed to rest. Amy and a warden rushed to his side and wrapped him up in blankets.

"You know better than to jump into dirty water like that, Sonic! You almost drowned!" Amy scolded him. Sonic just gave her a glare and stood to watch the two other hedgehogs swim to shore. Cammy swam a sidestroke, carrying Shadow along by holding his head above water. She got him back to the edge of the pool and climbed out, then pulled Shadow up and over, laying him out on the ground. She sat down and coughed, then shook her head and began to shake Shadow by the shoulders.

"Come on, Shadow! Wake up! Wake up!" she called to him. When the black hedgehog didn't answer, the warden pushed Cammy away and tried to revive him by breathing air into his mouth. Cammy dug around in the blue bag and pulled out the yellow blanket. Omochao flew out and coughed, falling onto the pavement.

"Ow! What happened? I got soaking wet! Shadow, did you warp us all the way into the rainforest exhibit?!" he grumbled. He looked up, saw the warden trying to get Shadow breathing and yelped. "Yikes! Shadow! What happened?!" he cried. Cammy squeezed out the blanket and waited anxiously. Shadow suddenly arched and spat up the water, turning over and curling up, shivering. Cammy wrapped him up in the blanket and just held him in a hug. Omochao joined her, snuggling up to him.

"C-c-c-o-o-old." Shadow stammered, "I f-feel so c-c-c-o-o-o-old." The warden declared them both to be okay, warned them about jumping into the pools and left to clear the crowds.

"Shadow, are you okay? What happened?! Why did you warp right over the pool?!" Sonic exclaimed, sitting next to him. Shadow's teeth

chattered a bit and he retreated deeper into the warmth of the blanket and Cammy's hug.

"I got d-distracted using the C-Chaos C-Control. I d-didn't focus on wh-where I was g-going," he replied. Sonic took his own blanket and wrapped it around both Shadow and Cammy. "Th-thanks."

"You need it more than me." Sonic replied and tucked it around him. Shadow looked down at his hands and spotted the missing cuff.

"Hey! You've got the part of my glove that tore! How did you get it?" he asked Sonic, who blinked at him.

"Don't you remember? I t tore when I tried to save you." he replied. Shadow looked blank. "We destroyed Final Hazard, remember? And I told you that your power was getting weak and you said you couldn't hold it. When we used Chaos Control on the colony together, you used up the last of your super form's power and fell to earth. I tried to save you by grabbing your hand, but your cuff tore and you vanished." Sonic explained, "I thought you had died, so I kept this piece with me, as a memento." He frowned, "But you didn't die. How did you survive? And why didn't you ever say anything to me?!" he added angrily.

"I used Chaos Control at the last second when the Chaos Emeralds reappeared around the two of us. I grabbed one before they all scattered and used it to return to earth safely, but I was too weak to do a complete warp. I reappeared a few hundred feet above ground and...well, you get the idea." Shadow replied and huddled in his blankets. "When I hit the ground, it must have scrambled my memory. I t took me a while to remember how I saved myself, but I couldn't figure out why my glove was torn."

"That doesn't explain why you never contacted me." Sonic grumbled. Shadow frowned.

"I wanted a life of my own. And I had to repay the Chao that saved my life." he replied softly and stopped shaking, turning his head to one side and dozing off. "I feel...so...tired...." he murmured before falling asleep. Cammy held onto him and rested her cheek on his head.

"Sleep, my little Shadow. You need your rest." she whispered and looked up at the group. "I can't go back in the water now. Shadow needs me to help keep him warm. Could one of you go and get that little Chao he was trying to rescue?" she asked them.

"I'll go. I can swim." Knuckles volunteered and glided out to the Dark Chao still circling the rock. He dove down and grabbed the little Demon Chao, then swam back to the edge of the pool with it chewing on his arm. "Ow! Get it off of me! Get it off! It's eating me alive!" Knuckles cried, waving it around as soon as he set foot on dry land. Amy, Sonic, and Tails tried to grab for it, but Knuckles kept swinging his arm around. "Get it off! Get it off! It's devouring my flesh!" he wailed.

"Hold still!" Sonic yelled and grabbed the Chao. "Got it! Ah! Now it's trying to bite me!" Omochao dove into Shadow's bag and pulled out a chew toy. He threw it to Sonic, who offered it to the Dark Chao and sighed in relief when it clamped its jaws onto the rubber bone instead of his arm.

"That's three down and one to go." Omochao remarked as the reporter lady raced up and began firing questions at them.

"Hello! I'm Miss Kim! Do you own that remarkable creature?! What is it? Where did it come from? Did you know it terrorized a tank full of piranhas? Who found that creature?" she asked.

"It scared piranhas? Big deal. That thing could scare a dinosaur if one was around." Tails muttered and scowled when the cameraman showed up to film them. "I hate camera-people. They always screw things up."

"It's not our Chao. It belongs to Shadow." Sonic replied and gasped, covering his mouth. "Oops! I shouldn't have said that." The lady and cameraman turned to Shadow and Cammy, firing the questions at her and filming the two of them.

"Be quiet and go away!" Cammy snapped, "Sic her, little Demon Chao!" The Dark Chao looked up from his bone, spotted the lady and jumped towards her, teeth bared. He chased the reporter and her

assistant away, then returned to chew on his toy contentedly. "Stupid woman. Now I'll have to run away from G.U.N. Again." Cammy muttered under her breath as Shadow slowly came around. He flicked an ear and looked up at her in surprise.

"G.U.N.?" he echoed and looked around fearfully, "Where are they? And where's the Chao?" Omochao pointed at it.

"Right there. And G.U.N. isn't here." he replied. Shadow sighed in relief and glared up at Cammy.

"What do you think you're doing?" he growled at him. Cammy blinked at him and gave him one last squeeze before pulling away. "That was uncalled for."

"Just helping you out again. That's no way to treat the person who saved your life." she replied haughtily, "Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to change clothes again." She stood up and walked away, hammer over one shoulder. Shadow wriggled out of the blankets, packed the yellow one away and stuffed the Dark Chao into his bag, zipping it up after he pulled out the Chaos Emerald. He shouldered the bag and waited for Omochao to get in place.

"Thanks for the help, but like I said, I don't need it. I could have taken care of things myself." Shadow told the group.

"Yeah right." Sonic muttered under his breath. Omochao looked at a nearby clock and tightened his grip on Shadow's shoulder.

"Shadow, it's twelve noon! Only two and a half hours left!" he cried. Shadow looked at the clock, gasped and held out the Emerald.

"The last Chao is a powerhouse! We'll feed the others lunch and then keep searching!" he cried, "Chaos Control!" He vanished into the air.

"What was that all about? Shadow has a time limit on finding the Chao?" Knuckles wondered aloud. Tails yelped.

"Hey! He's got my Chaos Emerald! The one the mayor of Station Square gave me!" he exclaimed.

"I'm more worried about that camera. Was it live? If it was, and the military saw it, they'll know that Shadow is still alive and they could try to capture him again!" Amy declared, "And this time, they'll make

sure there would be no way of anyone getting in to save him or him finding a way out by himself!" Cammy rejoined the group, wearing a tube top and miniskirt with high top boots, all in a shade of hunter green.

"Let me guess. Shadow warped." she said as she came up to them. Sonic nodded.

"You lost him again." he said with a grin, "We warned you about his Chaos Control." Cammy smiled mysteriously.

"Oh, I wouldn't be so sure of that." she said and walked away, hunting him down again.

"What kind of hedgehog are you anyways?!" Amy yelled out.

"I'm a legend hunter! Tracking a hedgehog that can warp is nothing compared to tracing ancient legends and myths!" Cammy called back and gave them a salute before disappearing into the crowd.

"That explains her tracking skills." Knuckles remarked, slightly impressed, "Sort of like a treasure hunter, but she's not interested in jewels and money, just in stories and riddles. That's rare."

"Okay, that's eleven kids' meals, eleven small sodas, eleven side orders and eleven cookies." the cashier listed out and told Shadow the price. He paid with the school budget money and handed the meals to the Chao kids. They ate lunch in the shade of some large trees as Shadow and Omochao studied the map and tried to figure out where the last Chao could be.

"I told you this would be easier if we had Cammy helping us." Omochao grumbled, "But you're too stubborn to ask for help. What do you have against the lady anyways?" Shadow grumbled something under his breath. "What?"

"I said, there is something about her that feels familiar, but I can't quite figure it out. And she still creeps me out! The way she looks at me, it's scary. Like she wants something from me and won't leave me

alone until she gets it." Shadow clarified and looked around nervously, "And I thought I heard her say something about G.U.N."

"Yeah, she said something about having to escape them again." Omochao remarked and circled something on the map, "Here's the strong animals' section, gorillas and elephants. The last Chao could be there."

"Why would G.U.N. want Cammy?" Shadow asked Omochao. The robo-Chao shrugged. "Does she know something about Prof. Gerald Robotnik's research? Is that why she's after me? To find out the secrets to making the ultimate life form?" Shadow wondered to himself, suddenly feeling cold and scared, "I don't want another Biolizard trying to destroy the world. Would Cammy try to destroy the earth like the professor tried to do?"

"Do you really think Cammy would do something like that? What for? She's not crazy like that old professor!" Omochao told him. Shadow only shrugged helplessly and sighed. "Well, let's check out the elephant section first." Omochao said and crawled into the bag. Shadow pulled out the Emerald, told the Hero Chao to look after the Dark Chao and warped away.

G.U.N. had seen the newscast and mobilized to capture Shadow and Cammy, sending troops out to the zoo.

"Remember! We need those hedgehogs in perfect condition! Don't harm them any more than is absolutely necessary!" the general ordered, "Your primary target is Project Shadow, but if Project Hunter displays any powers, bring her in as well!" The soldiers nodded and moved out.

Chapter Three

Shadow watched the elephants and yawned. Nothing. He had checked the gorillas and the lions but the Chao wasn't there. No sign of the Chao anywhere. Shadow grew worried as he looked up at the clock. An hour and a half left. Could he make it? He wandered the area and came upon a broken crayon by the side of the path. He followed the trail and found another broken crayon. It led deeper into the bushes and trees outside of the fence surrounding the zoo. Omochao looked around as Shadow poked around for an opening in the fence.

"This looks bad." he muttered and found a large hole in the chain link fence, "Bingo! Come on, Omochao!" Shadow crept out of the zoo and followed a faint dirt trail to a building hidden in the woods. More broken crayons. "The last Dark Chao must be in there." Shadow muttered as he walked up to the door.

"What would a Demon Chao be doing all the way out here?" Omochao asked as they headed inside. The building was dark and quiet. Shadow tried to see in the darkness, but it was hard and he could only make out faint outlines of objects in the room.

"*Chao!*" Shadow called and listened. A sound answered him, faint. He stepped forward and looked around again as he explored the building. There were a lot of crates and cages in the room. Supplies for the zoo? "*Chao!*"

"I don't like this, Shadow. I feel something bad here." Omochao muttered. Shadow didn't answer, poking at something on the wall. "Shadow? Did you hear me?" Omochao called out.

"Hey, I think this might be a light switch or something.... Aaahhh!" Shadow wailed as he flicked the switch and found it made the floor beneath him drop open. Omochao jumped and flew to where his voice had been.

"Shadow! Shadow, are you okay?!" he cried. Sounds of something moving made him wary. "Shadow?"

"Yeah, I'm okay! I think. I landed on a pile of hay or something, but I think I twisted my bad arm. Ow! Yep, I twisted something, all right." Shadow replied and shook his head. The new room he fell into was just as dark as the first, but this time he could hear animal sounds. He felt the floor around him and picked up another broken crayon. "Omochoao! The Dark Chao's down here!" he called up.

"Great! Grab it and let's get out of here!" Omochoao yelled. Shadow stood up and cradled his arm as he stepped along carefully.

"Chao!" he called out and listened.

"Chaaaoooo!" a wailing voice answered him. Shadow followed it, calling out to the baby until he found himself standing in front of a cage. Inside was the Dark Chao! It looked up at him, sad. "Chao! Chao!" it cried and pointed at its stomach.

"Hungry, huh? Well, I'll get you lunch as soon as I figure out how to get you out of there." Shadow told him and frowned. "Hey, how did you get in there to begin with?!" he asked aloud.

"**We** put him in there, that's how!" a gruff voice yelled behind him. Shadow turned to see who it was, but cramped quarters were not to his advantage. The being who yelled at him hit him with something hard and Shadow slumped to the floor, dazed.

"Whaddya reckon that there critter is, Mack?" a second, nasal voice asked the first one. Shadow was grabbed by the injured arm and he cried in pain.

"I don't know, and I don't care. I'll fetch a good price on the black market, that's for sure! Some game hunter will pay big bucks for a trophy like this one!" Mack snapped.

"But ain't that Sonic the Hedgehog?" the second voice asked.

"Listen, Buster. If this were Sonic, would we have caught him this easy?"

"Uh...."

"Do me a favor, Buster, and close your mouth. Forget I asked. Put him in a cage."

"But we ain't got anymore cages, Mack." Buster pointed out, "Ya used the last one for that little critter there."

"Then put him in a box or crate or something! Use that thing that's s'posed to be in your head for something other than keeping your head from caving in!"

"Ya don't have to get nasty, Mack." Buster grumbled and took Shadow from him, pulling him towards one of the shipping crates, "And I still think it's that Sonic guy."

"Shadow! What's going on down there?! I heard you yell! What's up?" Omochoa called down and listened. No answer. "Man, I knew this place had bad vibes! Shadow, you're probably gonna be really mad at me, but I'm gonna find Cammy and have her help you out!" he declared and raced away.

"Look at all the Chao!" Amy exclaimed and ran over to pick up one of the Hero Chao, "Ooh! They're so cute! I want one!" Sonic studied the group of kids napping and scratched his head.

"Chao. Chao. Hey! There are three Dark Chao right over there! Those are the ones Shadow was chasing!" he exclaimed, "Shadow must be taking care of this big group of Chao kids! But, why?"

"Do you suppose these are the Chao that saved his life? He did say he was trying to repay them." Tails added, watching one Hero Chao color a picture. It showed the picture to him. "Oh, that's cool. Hey, Sonic! This little guy drew a picture of Shadow! Uh, sort of. One arm's longer than the other one. And I don't think he smiles that big." Sonic ran to him and looked at the drawing.

"Let me see. Huh? What's up with that? This guy drew Shadow with a sling and a cast on his leg. Wait a second. Shadow had a bandage on his left arm when he bumped into us. I saw it earlier. And he's got a

slight limp. He wasn't kidding. That drop from space must have done a number on him." he muttered.

"Who's the Chao with the pink bow on her head?" Knuckles asked. Tails shrugged.

"I don't know, but I do know that Shadow isn't here. Do we keep looking for him or stay here with the Chao and wait for him to come to us?" he wondered.

"Let's stay! I want to play with these cute little Chao!" Amy declared and tickled the Angel Chao.

"We might as well. Shadow comes back here to drop off a Dark Chao. Once he gets the last one, he'll warp back here to finish up the group." Sonic remarked, "Then we can ask him about what he meant by getting a life of his own."

Cammy looked through the fence at the woods, frowning. What would Shadow be doing out there? With a sigh, she walked back away from the fence to get a running start, then propelled herself over the fence using her hammer. She landed on the dirt trail and blinked at it.

"Shadow must have followed this trail. Well, let's see where it goes." she muttered and went on. Soon, she found the building Shadow had found. "There? What is that?" she wondered aloud and entered the building. Dark and musty, the building looked creepy and abandoned. Cammy dug around in her purse and pulled out a flashlight. She flicked it on and searched the room.

"Nothing. But he has to be here." she muttered and opened her purse again. A green Chaos Emerald shone brightly inside, pulsing with power. "My Emerald shows he's here. Or at least, that his Emerald is." Cammy sighed and shone the light around again, lighting up a switch on the wall. "Oh! A light! Great!" she hurried over and flicked it. The floor opened under her and she dropped down, landing on the hay and grass.

"Whoa. That was weird." Cammy remarked and frowned, "And very suspicious. A secret floor. This abandoned warehouse isn't so abandoned after all." She got up and walked along, calling Shadow's name softly.

"*Chao! Chao!*" the Dark Chao cried. Cammy followed the sound and found the little creature in its cage, crying.

"Oh, you poor thing!" Cammy whispered and searched the cage's sides, finding a spare key hanging on one side. "Whoever put you in here wasn't very smart." She unlocked the cage and lifted the Chao out, cuddling it. "There, there! You'll be okay now. Where's Shadow?" she asked it. The Chao pointed at a direction and Cammy walked on, shining her light at the cages to find him. When she couldn't find him in the cages, she turned to the Chaos Emerald for help. It flashed faster in the direction of the shipping crates. She followed the gem and came across one long crate that was nailed shut and poked with holes.

"This must be where Shadow, or his Emerald, is being kept." Cammy whispered and tried to open the crate. "Oof! Too hard. Hey, little Chao. Got any ideas?" she asked it. The Chao wriggled in her grip and jumped onto the crate, looking around. It pointed at something nearby and smiled. Cammy shone her light and found a hammer propped against the wall. "They used that to nail the box shut." she told the Chao and got the hammer. "What do I do now?" she wondered aloud, her mind suddenly blank. The Demon Chao grabbed it and stuck the flat end under the lid, then jumped on the handle. It held on with both hands and pulled down. The lid popped open.

"You're the powerhouse Chao, right?" Cammy asked it. The Chao grinned at her. The dust cleared away from the box and Cammy looked in.

"No! Stay away! Don't hurt me! Maria! Maria! Help!" Shadow cried, looking up at her with a glazed, terrified expression.

"Shadow? Are you okay? What's wrong with you?" Cammy asked him worriedly.

"No more tests! Please, no more tests!" Shadow whimpered, shaking and hugging the blue shoulder bag tightly. Cammy couldn't figure out what was wrong, then remembered what G.U.N. had said about Shadow.

When Gerald Robotnik and Shadow were both on Prison Island, the military kept Shadow in a capsule while the professor finished his research to perfect him. They kept him locked in the closed-in space for years after the project was done and the military feared that Shadow was remade as a living weapon to be used against them.

"You don't like small places. You're claustrophobic, aren't you?" Cammy whispered and reached down to pull him out. Shadow struggled, still crying Maria's name. "Wake up! You're having a flashback! G.U.N. isn't here!" Cammy shouted and gave him a shake. Shadow shook his head and blinked at her. For a moment, he was quiet, taking in his situation. Finally, he realized what was going on.

"You again?! Why won't you leave me alone?!" he yelled at her. He struggled to get up and climbed out of the crate, wincing in pain as his arm throbbed.

"How did you get in there to start with?" Cammy asked him. Shadow picked up the Chao and put him in his bag with a chew toy, then rubbed his head lightly.

"Someone hit me on the head. That's all I can remember." he replied, "Where's Omochao?"

"The little toy thing? I don't know. I thought he was with you. Anyway, let's get out of here and tell the zoo people there are caged animals down here." Cammy replied. The lights came on suddenly and two men with guns stood in front of them.

"You ain't going anywhere! You're gonna get in that there box like good little critters, or we can sell your hides for as good a price as the whole hedgehog!" the thinner, lankier man cackled.

"Buster, I thought I told you to do the smart thing and keep your mouth shut for the rest of the day." the fatter man growled.

"We are so out of here!" Shadow griped and dug out the Chaos Emerald.

"He's got a weapon! Fire!" Buster yelled and opened fire just as Shadow grabbed Cammy by the arm.

"Chaos Control!" The shotgun blasts hit the crate where they had been standing a split second before.

"Hey! What was that?" Buster yelled, "Ghosts! This place is haunted!" Mack hit him over the head and ordered him to carry the cages to the trucks outside.

"We gotta get while the getting's good!" he barked.

Shadow and Cammy reappeared in another section of the zoo. It wasn't where the other Chaos Emeralds were, they were at the birds section. The Chaos Emerald had been left at the zebra section.

"I knew I should have thought of a specific destination!" Shadow grumbled, letting Cammy go so he could pack away the Emerald. "Now I don't have Omochao, or a map, or any idea where I am. This day can't get any worse." Military helicopters flew overhead. He and Cammy looked up at them. "Correction. It just did." he grumbled. Shadow scrambled to get the Emerald back out. Cammy panicked.

"Run, Shadow!" she cried and grabbed his hand, "Come on! This way!" She led him deeper into the bird section of the zoo, hoping to lose the troops among the trees and vines. "I can't believe they finally caught up to me!"

"You?! They're after *me*!" Shadow protested, still trying to get the Emerald out.

"They'll get us both if they find out you're here!" Cammy cried and reached into her purse. She brought out a wristband device and snapped it around Shadow's wrist. "Here! This can help you out! This turns it on, this turns it off! If anything happens, turn it on!" she shouted, pointing at two buttons.

"What is it?!" Shadow exclaimed, scowling at the band. Cammy kept running and looked ahead. The troops were surrounding the area!

"Can you use Chaos Control to get us out of here?" Cammy asked him. Shadow nodded.

"Yeah. If you let me stand still long enough to get the Emerald out." She paused and waited anxiously for Shadow to get the gem. The helicopters flew overhead and ropes dropped down around them.

"Too late! Turn it on!" Cammy cried. Shadow hit the 'on' button on the band. Cammy shoved him into the bushes and ran. "Stay there! Don't move!" she called back and stopped when a few troops dropped down in front of her. She gasped and stepped backwards. Shadow crouched low to the ground and watched.

"Camilla, you are to come with us right now!" one man ordered. Cammy shook her head, waving her hammer threateningly.

"No way! I'm not your experiment anymore!" she snapped. Shadow blinked in surprise. G.U.N. experimented on Cammy? Why?

"You remembered?! How?!" the man yelled. Cammy held out the Chaos Emerald and Shadow stifled a gasp. That's how she tracked him! She had an Emerald to track his own! Did that mean she was also an ultimate life form like himself? No way! He shook his head furiously. G.U.N. didn't have the notes to duplicate Shadow and the Bio-lizard, Shadow had taken them himself! So, what was Cammy's connection?

"This Chaos Emerald brought my memory back! And I'm not letting you do anything more to my body!" she yelled and held it up over her head. "Chaos Cont-aah!" Cammy cried out in pain before she could finish. A dart was shot into her leg and she crumpled to the ground, the Emerald falling away from her. The troops grabbed her and she fought weakly. "No...! No more tests and experiments!" she cried faintly, "I wanted to be a normal hedgehog! You took that away from me! Noooo!" The soldiers pulled on the ropes and were brought up into the helicopters. One of the men had Cammy slung over one shoulder, another had her Tiki Tiki Hammer. In a few minutes, they were gone.

Shadow crawled out from the bushes and tried to sort out what he heard. G.U.N. wanted Cammy for experiments, and she tried to use Chaos Control. Did the military manage to create another ultimate life form without the notes? Was Cammy the new ultimate life form?! If so, then she could be in trouble! She would be used as a weapon, maybe even against him! Was that why she had been chasing him all day? Was she trying to find help, or destroy him?

"She wanted something, but it wasn't to kill me. The military thought I was already dead. Cammy must have been looking for help." he muttered, "And now she really needs it! But why didn't the troops see me?" he wondered as he ran back to the other Chao.

"Sonic?! What are *you* doing here?!" Shadow exclaimed when he found him and his friends with the Chao kids. Sonic stood up and looked around.

"Whoa! I heard Shadow's voice, but I don't see him." he exclaimed.

"Hey, I'm right here!" Shadow snapped and waved his hand in front of Sonic's face, "See? Hello! Anyone home?" Sonic looked around and frowned.

"I can hear him all right. Shadow! Quit fooling around and get out here!" he yelled.

"Did you find the other Chao?" Tails called out.

"Can't you see me?! I'm right in front of you!" Shadow snapped and gave Sonic a push. Sonic stepped back startled.

"Whoa! Freaky!" he exclaimed. Shadow looked worried. They couldn't see him? Why?

"Hold on. Let me take a look. I think I know what's up." Knuckles remarked and pulled his sunglasses down over his face. He stared right at Shadow and grinned. "Ha! Found you! You're invisible, Shadow!

That's new. Did you come up with that power, too?" he asked. Shadow shook his head.

"No, but now I know why G.U.N. missed me. Cammy gave me an invisibility shield of some kind." he replied and pushed the 'off' button. "There. That better?"

"Hey! Now I can see you! Great!" Sonic exclaimed, "G.U.N.? They came after you?" Shadow nodded grimly.

"Yeah, but they took Cammy instead of me." he answered, "I think they've been using the professor's research on her or something. She tried to use Chaos Control and she had a Chaos Emerald with her."

"No wonder she found you so easily. But how can she use Chaos Control? We're the only ones who can use it." Sonic asked, "Unless they managed to make another ultimate life form and she's it."

"I don't know. It's not possible. I stole the notes from them." Shadow replied and opened his bag to let the last Dark Chao out, "But I have to go and rescue her. If the military has made her and she's like me, then we could have a repeat of the professor's evil plan to destroy the world." He stood up and looked a little scared. "I don't think I could handle another experience like the one in space. Especially if we end up having to destroy Cammy."

"So you admit you like Cammy?!" Amy asked hopefully, hugging a Hero Chao.

"No!" Shadow snapped at her, "I just don't want her to lose her life for no good reason! Besides, she kind of saved me. I owe her one and that's it."

"You can't go to the military base! They'll catch you too!" Tails cried, "You're not in shape for a raid! Your arm is hurt and so is your leg!"

"My leg's just fine, Doctor Prower." Shadow hissed, "And my arm can manage. Ugh." He put a hand over the bandage and grimaced. It throbbed worse now. Those men should have gone a little easier on him. "I'll track her with the Emerald and Chaos Control out with her. I'll be a snap." he struggled to say.

"You mean **my** Chaos Emerald. That yellow one is the one I got for a reward." Tails pointed out, "I want it back." Shadow pulled the gem out and dropped the bag down.

"I need it, so find something else for a trophy. You guys stay here and watch the Chao for me. Toys in the bag, seeds for food. Plant them for fruit." he grumbled, "Okay, Chaos Emerald, find your other! Chaos Control!" Shadow warped away, letting the Emerald choose the destination.

"Oh no, you don't! We're coming whether you like it or not! Tails!" Sonic declared, "Where's that red Chaos Emerald you managed to track down?" Tails pulled it out of a box and held it up to him.

"Right here. Hey, maybe I can trade Shadow this one for my Yellow Emerald! I can say it matches the rest of him better than the yellow gem." he exclaimed.

"After we rescue Cammy and make sure Shadow doesn't get captured, too." Knuckles told him, "I'm coming with the both of you."

"Hey! What about me?! I wanna go too!" Amy cried, picking up her Long Hammer. "I wanna help Cammy!"

"Amy, it's too dangerous for you! Stay here and watch the Chao, like Shadow told you. We'll be back soon. Tails, Knuckles, hang on tight!" Sonic cried and held onto the Emerald as the two friends grabbed onto his shoulders. "Chaos Control!" The three boys vanished as Amy continued protesting.

"No fair! I wanted to go along! They always leave me behind and have all kinds of fun and adventure while I get stuck babysitting!" Amy wailed and the Hero Chao crawled to her to try to cheer her up.

<I wish Shadow stuck around. He's more fun than this crying girl.> one of the neutral Chao muttered.

<Yeah, at least he doesn't open his mouth like that. Shadow's quieter and only yells when the Demon Chao are doing something bad.> another added. The neutral Chao plugged their ears and sighed while the Angel Chao tried to cheer Amy up and the Demon Chao plotted to throw sand at her.

Chapter Four

Cammy stood between a pair of guards. Her Chaos Emerald sat on a cushion on the table in front of the general. Prison Island Site B was the new base after Shadow had blown the other one up and where Cammy had been taken a year before to be made over into a new living weapon. The general smiled at her.

"Greetings, Project Hunter. How has life treated you?" he asked her, making small talk. Cammy sniffed and turned her head up in disdain.

"Great, until I had to see your ugly mug again. Dummies, all of you! Why bring me here?! Your tests proved I didn't have special powers! Let me go home right now!" she snapped.

"But you had this Emerald and you tried to use Chaos Control, like Project Shadow and the Bio-lizard." the general pointed out. Cammy rolled her eyes.

"The Chaos Emerald crashed onto my front porch during a meteor shower. And the Chaos Control thing was me trying to call a bluff. Silly me, I forgot your stupid soldiers believe everything they hear." she griped.

"Well, you're here now and we're not letting you go this time." the general growled. "Where is Shadow?" Cammy looked innocent.

"Who?" she asked sweetly.

"You know who I mean! The black hedgehog! Where is he?!" the general barked at her.

"Don't boss me around. I'm not one of your overgrown boys. And I don't know what you're talking about. The only shadow I have are these boneheads stalking me. I'm gonna have to get a court order against you people." Cammy replied.

"It seems you still need that attitude adjustment." the general muttered, "Into the tank!" Cammy looked startled.

"The tank?! No way! Not that! Don't put me in there! No! No! No!" she screamed and tried to run. The guards grabbed her, lifted her off the floor and carried her to the core of the base. "Put me down! And gimme back my hammer!" she shrieked, "Put me down! Don't put me in the tank! Not the tank! Anything but the tank! Help! HELP!"

Shadow dropped into a room in the secret base and jumped in shock. A military base! He scrambled under the long table and looked around. The room was empty. He crawled out and looked at the table. There was the Emerald. He grabbed it and snuck out of the room.

"I kind of wish there was an easier way of moving around here without having to hide every time I hear something." he muttered and looked at the band. "Oh, yeah. The shield Cammy gave me. She said it could help me. I'll have to remember to thank her for this." Shadow hit the button and ran down the hall, both Emeralds tucked under one arm. He passed by one of the control rooms and ran back to it, looking in. He could make out someone on the screen of one monitor struggling. Shadow waited for one of the men to leave the room, then slid in past him to study the screens up close.

"Cammy!" he whispered, staring at the monitor in shock. The green hedgehog was in a capsule similar to the one he had been put in, but it was full of something liquid and glowing. She had stopped struggling and now was floating limply within the tube. The Tiki Tiki Hammer was floating next to the capsule, suspended by strange beams of energy. Without waiting for the man to return, Shadow raced out of the room. The other guard saw the door open on its own and hit alarms, shouting that an unknown intruder was in the base.

"Cammy! Stay alive! Don't give up!" Shadow yelled as he raced down the halls to the base's core. The security defense system

attacked and he just blazed by with the Fire Somersault. "Why is it that I can never get any peace from that girl?! She's driving me nuts!" he muttered as a stray beam of laser fire burned across one arm. Shadow hissed in pain as he made it to the core and ran up to the center of the room. A screen over head displayed Cammy's name and status. Shadow skimmed it, stopped, then reread it more slowly.

"'Camilla Maria Hedgehog. Codename: Project Hunter. Prototype of hybrid of the Ultimate Life Form. Designed for espionage and warfare, the first living weapon. Fifty-six percent saturation of E Life Serum.' Camilla Maria? Is that her real name? Maria! Just like Maria!" Shadow exclaimed, "The military destroyed my Maria! And now they're trying to do the same with this one! Hang on, Cammy! I'll get you out of there!" Looking around, he made sure the coast was clear before he turned off the shield. Now visible to the security cameras placed in the room, the general spotted him and smiled cruelly. His voice blared out over the speakers.

"So, you really are alive! I knew you would come for her. I saw that news report. You had to come and get her Emerald, didn't you, Project Shadow?" the general laughed. "Well, Miss Hedgehog has been in that tank for at least three hours. Plenty of time to give her another dosage of the E Life Serum! If you really want her, then try and take her!" The capsule drained out and Cammy dropped to the floor of it, huddled and shivering. "Hunter! There's your prey!" the general shouted, "Your first orders are to take down and capture Shadow! Don't fail me!" With that, the general ran from the control room to find a safe place to wait for the end of the fight.

"Cammy, are you okay in there? What did that screen mean about hybrid and the E Life Serum?" Shadow called out. Cammy stood up and shook herself off, then glared at him, eyes glowing bright white. She kicked the glass and it shattered, setting her free. She jumped forward and grabbed her hammer from where it floated. "Cammy?!"

"Tika Blade!" Cammy yelled and held the hammer out. It glowed and transformed into a long, dark green pole with a silvery blade at one

end. It was long and curved at the end. She twirled it and held it behind her, poised to attack. She didn't have the top, skirt, and boots from the zoo. G.U.N. had her dressed in a green, camouflaged armor chest-plate and waist-plating. She didn't have any shoes on and her gloves were gone as well. "Prepare to be beaten, Project Shadow! I am the Hunter, you are the prey! There's no escaping me!" Cammy shouted and shot forward, bringing the blade around to slash at him.

"No thanks!" Shadow cried and leaped over the attack, "I like freedom better than this place! Cammy! Snap out of it!" Cammy stopped sharply and leaped backwards, doing a back flip to strike out at him again. "Cammy! Knock it off! Are you nuts? I'm not the enemy!" Shadow yelled at her and dodged the blow. He jumped back step by step as Cammy continued to strike out at him with the blade. "Cammy!"

Sonic, Tails, and Knuckles warped into the base and looked around at the flashing lights, billowing smoke and blaring alarms. The halls were littered with wrecked robots and smoldering boxes and crates.

"Well, now I won't have to ask if Shadow's been here." Sonic muttered and sighed, "Okay, guys. Let's follow the trail of destruction and see where it takes us."

"I give you three guesses on who made this mess." Tails told Knuckles as they ran through the hallways and corridors. "And the first two don't count."

"Shadow. Wouldn't you think he would try sneaking in here first?" the echidna muttered. They raced on down the halls, following the wreckage to the base's core.

"I think he tried to do that, but got found out anyway. Hey! You hear that?" Sonic exclaimed as they made it to the center of the island's secret base. Tails pressed his ear to the door blocking their way and frowned.

"I can hear Shadow. And Cammy. They're fighting." he reported and looked surprised, "Each other! Sonic! Cammy's *attacking* Shadow!" Knuckles boxed the air.

"Out of the way! I'll break down the door!" he declared and began punching on the steel door. It crumpled in after several blows and fell away to reveal the center.

It was in havoc! Wires, beams, and computers all smashed, torn and scattered across the floor as if some emerald and ebony tornado had been unleashed inside. They spotted the black hedgehog on all fours on the floor amidst the mess, panting.

"Shadow! Where's Cam-?!" Sonic called out just as Cammy shot down from the ceiling and slammed the floor, throwing up a cloud of dust and debris, "Agh! There she is! Shadow!" Shadow was thrown from it and rolled along the floor, bruised and beaten, but unwilling to go down quietly. He scrambled to his feet and leaped aside from Cammy's next charge. Moving fast, he kicked her in the back, slamming her into the far wall and watching her land in a pile of wreckage. The pile moved and Cammy stood up, holding the spear and breathing hard. She was in just as bad a condition as Shadow, who held his arm and gasped in pain.

"Cammy! Listen to me! You're not like this!" he snapped at her, "The military has some kind of mind control over you! Break free!"

"Stop your babbling and surrender, pathetic hedgehog!" Cammy screamed back and leaped up into the air, bringing the spear over her head.

"This doesn't look like the rescue mission Shadow said it was gonna be." Sonic muttered and raced forward to help, "Hang on, Shadow! I'll get her!" Shadow turned to see him, startled. His focus on Cammy had been so intense, he hadn't heard him call the first time.

"No! Sonic, don't...!" he blurted out, but the blue hedgehog had already jumped and used a Homing Attack on Cammy. She flew across the hall and crashed into the circuit-breakers on the back wall. Electricity flowed through her as she was pinned to it, arms and legs

splayed apart. She screamed in pain and the power in the base's center began to flicker and fade.

"That should stop her cold!" Sonic declared, "This place looks like it could blow!" Shadow ran past him towards Cammy. "Shadow?! Get back here! She's trying to cut your head off!" Sonic yelled at him.

"You shouldn't have hit her! It's not her fault!" Shadow yelled back and jumped onto the circuit-breakers, gritting his teeth against the electricity attacking him. He grabbed onto Cammy's arms and pulled. She went on screaming and howling until he finally tore her away from the machines and they both fell back into the piles of wrecked equipment. Sonic, Tails, and Knuckles all ran up to check on them. Shadow sat up painfully and looked down at the green hedgehog in his arms. "Cammy?" he called her name. Cammy twitched and opened her eyes slowly, coming around.

"I feel like a Mac truck hit me. Shadow, did you get the number of that eighteen-wheeler?" she asked weakly. Shadow grinned and hugged her.

"Hey, you're back!" he exclaimed, "What happened to you? You were like some psycho with a spear!" Cammy pushed him away and rubbed at her head.

"Ow. Last I remember, those idiot guards had me dressed in this armor thing and shoved me into the tank. Then I wake up and you're hugging me and I feel like the building fell on me." she groaned and looked him over, gasping. "Shadow! Look at you! What happened?! You're all beat up!"

"Your doing. You pack quite a wallop with that hammer-turned-spear of yours." Shadow replied. Cammy blinked and held up the spear, finally registering it in her hand.

"My Tiki Tiki Hammer turned into **this**? I hurt you? Oh, I'm so sorry!" she cried. She struggled to her feet and looked around at the destruction, "Whoa. Somebody must have made me go postal big time!"

"It was that stupid general. He ordered you to attack and capture me. You called that the Tika Blade and came at me like a living

cannonball." Shadow told her and cringed. "Enngh! My arm.... I can barely move it." he added painfully, rubbing it gingerly with one hand.

"So what's the story? Why did the general want you?" Tails asked Cammy, who ground her teeth at the thought of the general ordering her to hurt her friend. Sonic began inspecting Shadow's arm as she began her story, only to get a venomous look from the black hedgehog.

"It started over a year ago. I was out in the field with my colleague, Ben. We were researching one of many legends about the Chaos Emeralds when we were captured and taken prisoner by G.U.N. They said they needed volunteers for an experiment, but didn't have enough." she began to say, "They took us into separate labs and began to inject something called E Life Serum into us. They wanted to make another ultimate life form, like Shadow, but didn't have the notes to make one from scratch. They managed to recreate the serum, but only for beings already fully grown. Prof. Gerald Robotnik's serum for the embryonic stage was gone, so they couldn't make it and use it at the start of a life."

"So that explains the mysterious disappearances of all those people the news talked about. Only adults were being taken for this experiment." Knuckles muttered. The group looked at him in confusion. The echidna turned slightly red. "The Master Emerald's been picking up cable signals recently. I don't want to talk about it, but it comes in handy sometimes." He coughed a bit. "Ah, never mind. Continue." Cammy shook her head with a smile, then went on.

"G.U.N. tested the serum on other 'volunteers' but they mutated horribly and had to be destroyed. I don't know what happened to Ben. Maybe he was one of them." she paused, looking downcast, and wiped away a few tears. "When I got the serum injections, nothing happened. Or so they thought. All their tests showed I didn't react to the serum, but I did. No one knew it, though. They thought it was safe for me to go back to my life, so they wiped out my memory, put me back where I had been and kept an eye on me ever since." Cammy stopped again and

brushed herself off, frowning at the bruises that were beginning to appear on her arms.

"Well, I went on like nothing happened, until this Chaos Emerald crashed into my house one day. I touched it and all my buried memories resurfaced. I guess hypnosis ain't all it's made out to be. Oh well. That's how I learned the serum made for Shadow really did change me. It made me sort of like the ultimate life form, but not quite. I know I have some powers, but I'm not sure what they are." Cammy twirled the pole and watched it shrink down to a portable state. She grinned slightly again. "I learned I could use Chaos Control, and when I woke up from my trance, I found the Tiki Tiki Hammer in my hand. I kept it all secret and went on with life, keeping the Emerald with me. I used Chaos Control only once, and found that it came with a nasty side effect that, apparently, the true ultimate life form doesn't suffer from. I didn't try it again after that."

"What is Project Hunter?" Shadow asked her, alternating between holding his arm and slapping Sonic's hands away. Cammy looked angry.

"G.U.N. wanted to create another version of you, one that would hunt you down and destroy you or bring you back to this base. It would be their way of keeping control over you. You would be their weapon, and if you escaped, Hunter would find you and bring you back. I guess they thought I would be the perfect hunter. I'm a legend hunter, so my tracking skills are great, plus I'm a pretty girl. They figured you'd fall for me and not resist capture." she hissed and unleashed the spear to transform it back into her Hammer, then recall it. "That's **not** why I chased you, Shadow. I wanted to ask you about your powers and if you could show me how to deal with mine." She blushed and smiled at him. "And also, to have a friend again. They took my life, played with my DNA and mind, and killed my friend. I wanted someone to help me come to terms with that and be there for me, too."

"Well, now we know what the story is, so let's get out of here!" Tails exclaimed. Sonic searched the wreckage and pulled out the two Chaos Emeralds Shadow had dropped to fight Cammy.

"My Emerald!" Shadow and Cammy exclaimed and grabbed their Chaos Emeralds.

"You mean **my** Emerald." Tails muttered, glaring up at Shadow with his arms folded over his chest. Sonic watched the red Chaos Emerald in his hand glow.

"Hey! It's pulsing!" he remarked in surprise and Cammy watched hers as well.

"Yeah, now I remember. G.U.N. recovered the other four Emeralds. They're in a vault down in the sub-basement. Let's go get them, too!" Cammy exclaimed and laughed, "That'll teach them to mess with me!"

"You two get out of here while you can. We'll grab the Emeralds and meet with you outside." Sonic told Knuckles and Tails, then held up his Chaos Emerald. Shadow did the same and Cammy held onto his shoulder, holding her green Emerald close to her. "Okay! Find the other Emeralds! Chaos Control!" Sonic cried and Shadow echoed his words. They both disappeared, warping to the sub-basement.

Cammy led the way to the vault, telling Sonic and Shadow more about her lost friend.

"Ben was a snake, literally. But he was really nice to me. He had this really nice shade of forest green and he was sweet, bringing me coffee when I worked late in the lab." she told them as she stopped at one door and began to open the console, "When he was lost to the military, I thought I'd go nuts. I refused to work with them, disobeyed every command they gave me, and just sabotaged anything I could get

my hands on. They put me in the tank for punishment. While I was in there, they'd give me more life serum, trying to make me at least something like Shadow, but more compliant. Didn't work, until today." She began working with the wires after opening the casing.

"You seem to really like green. Your clothes are green, your friend was green, your armor and hammer are green, even your Chaos Emerald is green!" Sonic remarked with a laugh. Cammy blushed and laughed along as she crossed the wiring and unlocked the door.

"Yeah, green's my favorite color." she replied and pushed open the door. "The vault's on the other side of the room. I can crack the codes and we can get out of here with the Emeralds before the base explodes. The circuit-breakers I crashed into controlled the power output for this whole place. With them out of commission, the power generator overloads. I'd give this island another half hour before it goes up in smoke."

"Then we'd better move quickly." Shadow murmured and rushed into the room. The three hedgehogs raced to the vault as the speakers came to life again.

"Hunter! I thought I gave you a direct order to capture Shadow, not steal the Chaos Emeralds!" the general barked at her from some hidden room. Cammy stopped and stuck her tongue out at the ceiling, knowing a secret camera would pick up her image. "You were always a wild card, Camilla. Now I'm glad I held onto Project Predator. He'll take care of you *and* get Shadow back for us. You should have played it smart and obeyed us!" the general snapped, "Predator! Seek out your prey! Destroy Hunter and retrieve Shadow!"

The room began to shake violently as Cammy rejoined Sonic and Shadow. The floor opened just as she reached them on the steps of the vault. Something huge was rising up from the depths of the island...

"This doesn't look good." Sonic muttered as Cammy jabbed at the console computer. The vault opened, revealing the four missing Emeralds. Sonic grabbed them and turned to see what else was happening. "What *is* that?! What's Predator?!" he yelled at Cammy.

"I don't know! I never heard of it until now!" she yelled back and gasped when the creature the general spoke of finally appeared. The floor was replaced by the platform Predator lay on. The creature was enormous, a long, thick, coiled up serpent with a mouth that took up half of its body length, edged with jagged fangs. Its skin was covered by razor edges glinting silver in the flickering lights. Extending from its body like several platinum spikes were power poles, supplying energy to the beast so it could move and attack.

"It looks a little like Perfect Chaos." Sonic muttered, "Man! I did **not** need to see that! He was tough to beat, but was nothing compared to Final Hazard!"

"The Bio-lizard had a life support system. Those power poles must act the same way. They're all attached to Predator at strategic points." Shadow thought aloud. "Hey, Sonic! Let's try hitting the power poles! That could take it out in no time!" he called out to him. Sonic set the Emeralds down and nodded.

"Let's give it a shot! Cammy, you stand back and watch the Chaos Emeralds! We'll handle Predator ourselves!" he called out to her and raced down at the giant serpent with Shadow. Cammy frowned, but stood back, holding her Emerald in her arms.

"I don't like this. Not one little bit. Something's not right about that reptile." she muttered, watching it intensely.

The Predator flicked its tongue and hissed at a painful frequency as Sonic and Shadow prepared to use Homing Attacks on it. The sound filled the air and the three hedgehogs in the room froze and covered their ears, screaming. Predator continued hissing and uncoiled part of its body, swinging its tail to knock Sonic and Shadow aside. They tumbled across the floor, still covering their ears.

"It's tearing my brain apart!" Shadow shrieked, "What **is** that?!" Sonic got to his feet and glared up at a power pole.

"I don't know, but we've got to make it stop! Hit the poles! Quick!" he shouted and jumped to ram it. Cammy forced herself to stop howling in pain and watched him use a Homing Attack.

"Wait! Stop!" she cried out as he hit. The pole flashed brightly, sending out a surge of energy that threw Sonic back against the wall. "Those poles are protected! You can't break them that way!" Cammy cried to them over the noise.

"You could have told us sooner!" Sonic snapped angrily as he got up, huffing and puffing from the blow, "How do you know they're protected?!"

"Predator is big and slow to move, right? Well, if those poles are his weak points, don't you think they would have a self-defense mechanism to stay safe?" she pointed out.

"She's got you there, Sonic." Shadow added with a grin. Sonic panted, giving him a glare.

"Whose side are you on? Mine or hers?" Sonic grumbled between puffs. Shadow shrugged off the comment and looked up at several gaps in the ceiling. Rings were falling through them and hovering in the air.

"Power rings? Here? What for?" he muttered and looked back at Cammy, who still held her green Chaos Emerald and stood over the other six Emeralds. "And the seven Chaos Emeralds.... Hey! That's it!" Shadow turned to Sonic with a smirk. "Yo, Sonic! Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" he asked as the blue hedgehog looked around at the rings in confusion. He turned to look at him, then followed his nodding head to the seven Chaos Emeralds. After a moment, he understood, realization lighting up in his eyes.

"Hey, that just might do it!" Sonic exclaimed, "But Shadow, don't you remember what happened last time?! Your power ran out at the end of the fight!"

"That was out in space! We're on Earth now! Nothing's gonna happen!" Shadow griped and ran to the Emeralds.

"But what if you run out of power in the middle of the fight?!" Sonic cried and chased after him, "Hey! Wait up!"

"What's going on? What are you doing?" Cammy asked as Shadow ran up to her and took her Emerald. "Hey!"

"I need to borrow this for a bit." he told her and set it with the other Emeralds. "Hurry up, Sonic! Let's transform into our super forms and get rid of that thing before this base blows up with us still on it!" Sonic jumped to his side and nodded, holding a hand out to the Emeralds. Shadow did the same.

"What are you doing?" Cammy asked them.

"We're going to use the power of the seven Chaos Emeralds and all those rings out there to turn into our super forms. Then we'll have the power to destroy the poles and escape this base!" Sonic told her. Cammy blinked in surprise.

"Super forms? Hey, count me in! Predator must be one of those mutant volunteers! That thing is trying to kill me, so I'm taking it out first!" she declared and held her hand out to the Chaos Emeralds as well.

"You can't transform! You're just a girl!" Sonic yelled, "Clear out of here while we distract the Predator!"

"I will, too, transform into a super version, you sexist pig! Now shut up and let me share some of that power!" Cammy snapped back at him.

"Let her have a shot, Sonic." Shadow muttered under his breath, "If we're lucky, nothing will happen and she won't be able to blame us that she can't change forms, too."

"She's your girlfriend. You deal with her." Sonic muttered back.

"She's **not** my girlfriend, you idiot!" Shadow raged back at him, "She's just some crazy woman who won't leave me alone!"

"Watch who you're calling 'crazy', Shadow! I'll give you another whacking and I won't go easy on you either!" Cammy snapped. The three of them decided to drop the subject and try the transformation.

The seven Chaos Emeralds glowed brightly, filling the room with their light and channeling their energy to the ones who asked for their power. Enriched by the hearts of those who wanted to be free, the energy magnified, filling the three hedgehogs who called for it and heightening their power limits. The light flashed again and the Chaos

Emeralds vanished, distributed among the three of them and linking their power together.

"Whoa. Power rush." Sonic muttered, looking himself over. Gold replaced the blue of his body. "All right! I'm Super Sonic again!" He looked over at Shadow, who blinked at the silver that replaced the black. "Nice look, Shadow! Or should that be Super Shadow?"

"Just Shadow will do fine, thanks." he replied wryly, "Come on, Sonic. Let's grab some rings to sustain these forms and get that Predator!"

"Hey! Did you forget about me already?!" Cammy snapped. Sonic and Shadow looked back at her in shock. Cammy stood behind them, also in a new super form. The light green was replaced by a deep, shimmering emerald green and the armor had changed to solid black. Chest plate, shoulder-plates, waist and leg plates, knee high boots and shoulder-length gloves completed her outfit, matched with a black headband and visor to protect her eyes. The Tiki Tiki Hammer changed again, this time to a long black pole with a curved blade at each end. She had it shouldered as if it wasn't that dangerous.

"No way! She actually did it?!" Sonic shrieked, "She's turned into a...Super Cammy?!"

"Just plain Cammy, okay?" Cammy replied and looked herself over. "Whoa! Stylin'! I like this look. Hey, Shadow! What do you think?" she asked, posing a little. Sonic looked in his direction. Shadow just stood there, mouth open. "Hey, you're drooling again." Cammy pointed out and winked. "I guess that means you like it. Well, time to save the day!"

"Somebody joined the super form club." Sonic muttered and shook Shadow out of his trance, "Let's go! We don't have much time left! We have to grab rings and destroy the power poles!"

"Sorry. Let's do this like last time! You start the attack and Cammy and I will collect the rings!" Shadow replied and they raced down to battle.

Predator hissed and flicked its forked tongue at the three hedgehogs that circled and took up positions around the snake. On Sonic's side were four power poles, on Shadow's side were three, and Cammy had four poles on her side. Rings continued to drop and Shadow and Cammy flew around to scoop them up. Every ring they collected vanished into them, adding to their energy supply. Sonic watched Shadow warily.

<Shadow, don't you dare disappear on me again.> he growled. Shadow glanced his way briefly, ignored him, and grabbed two rings in his hands. <I know you heard me. When will you stop being so cold to people? I know what happened to Maria really hit you hard, but you can't act like a walking ice cube forever!> Sonic hissed mentally.

<Shut up and get to attacking. Predator looks like it could try to swallow you any minute. Just...do what you always do. I'll survive.> Shadow growled back, <Cammy, stay away from that thing's skin! I t could rip your arm off!>

<I've never talked with my mind before. Has Sonic started attacking yet?> Cammy replied with a question.

"Here I come!" Sonic suddenly yelled and charged the snake, a flash of lightning that slammed one power pole. It snapped off and the snake shrieked, throwing its head aside and knocking Sonic aside. He tumbled through the air and hit a wall, dazed.

<Shadow! It's up to you! I can't see straight to hit him again! Cammy and I will keep up the ring collecting!> he called out, shaking his head to clear it. Shadow dodged another sweep of the Predator's head.

<I'll do what I can, Sonic! Cammy! How are things on your end?> Shadow called out. A flash of light and a sharp cry cut the air.

<Got one! My Chaos Blade will cut these things off like mowing the lawn!> Cammy laughed as the Predator swung its head again. Shadow barely avoided it.

<Cammy, you're supposed to be collecting rings!> Shadow yelled as he aimed for another power pole.

<Don't you shout at me, Shadow the Hedgehog!!> Cammy snapped back, <I'm not your wife! You're taking too long to attack, so I'm taking over!> Shadow frowned at the remark as he hit the pole with a sweeping kick, snapping it off, then shot back to avoid the serpent's head.

<Sonic! Are you up to keep attacking?> he called out.

<I need another minute, Shadow! Buy me some time, you two! He's...aaahhh! What's that?!?!> Sonic shrieked as Predator unfurled and opened its mouth to reveal a dozen forked tongues that lashed out at the air, protecting a few of the power poles. Shadow scanned the area in horror, watching Sonic dive and spin to avoid the appendages.

<Sonic! Get out of there!> he called out to him. A few more close calls and Sonic managed to weave his way to freedom. He flew back, panting.

<Sorry, guys! Couldn't get close to those poles on my side! Cammy! Can you cut those things?!> Sonic asked. Another flash of light and Cammy was zipping to the mouth, a streak of emerald light.

<Yeah! Just let me get in range for the Chaos Blade to work at its best!> she replied, holding her spear firmly.

<Sonic, are you crazy?! Why did you send her in there?!> Shadow snapped at him, <Cammy! Fall back! Don't go there!>

<Stay out of it, Shadow! This thing's trying to eat us, and I'm not gonna wind up as some stinkin' reptile's chewing gum!> the girl snapped back at Shadow.

<I don't have any better options, Shadow! She can distract Predator while the two of us take out the power poles!> Sonic called back, already diving in to snap off another pole. Shadow scowled, tensed slightly when he saw the green hedgehog among the flailing tongues, slashing and flitting among them, then raced to another pole when he saw an opening.

<Got one!> he cried, snapping it off and flipping back to recover. He looked down at his leg and stifled a cry. A small patch of black

peeked through the silver. <No, no! Not now! Sonic! I'm losing energy!> Shadow called out in a panic.

<I'll get the rings for you! Take some of my energy to help! Cammy! Watch your back!> the golden hedgehog barked orders, <Shadow! Keep attacking! Don't give up!>

<How much longer before the base explodes?!> Shadow called back, seeing the black turn silver again and then rushing down to snap off another pole.

<Another twenty minutes! The generator is a stubborn thing!> Cammy called back, <Aaahh! Something's happening!!>

<Cammy, get out of there!> both Sonic and Shadow yelled at the same time. The green blur sped away and returned to her position beside the snake, searching for another glowing purple pole. Shadow searched his side, found he had no poles left and called to the others.

<I've got two power poles on this side! I can take them!> Sonic called back.

<There's three on my side! Predator is doing something!> Cammy replied. The snake rose up and hissed. On its skin, the razor edged plates began to shift, then rise and fall, providing a deadly barrier around the last of the power poles. Shadow skimmed over the snake and joined Cammy. She gave him a startled look, then went back to glaring at the beast. <That means we have five poles left. Shadow, what are you doing here?> she finally said.

<Helping you with these. Do I have to ask permission to help?> Shadow retorted with a grin. Cammy returned it and shook her head before crying out and bending over. <Cammy?! What's wro-aah!> Shadow exclaimed and cried out himself. The silver was fading again, and on Cammy the emerald color was growing light. <Sonic! We're....>

<Don't! He'll make us stop fighting! I'll collect the rings! You attack!> Cammy called to him before Shadow could talk with Sonic, <You have the better chance, anyway, of getting the poles.> Shadow tightened his mouth, then agreed and dove in to attack. Cammy twisted

through the air, scooping up rings and adding them to her and Shadow's diminishing energy supply.

<Hey! Guys! Shadow! Cammy! I felt a sudden drop in your power over there! Are you two okay?!> Sonic called out, darting in to snap a pole. A razor edge jumped up and sliced into his arm. <Aahh! I'm hit! Shadow! Take over!> Sonic cried and fell back to stop the bleeding. Red splattered onto the floor as he folded his arm and held it close to his body.

<Four poles left! I'm having a little trouble of my own, Sonic! I can't get in!> Shadow called back, darting away and among the stabbing razor scales that continued to shoot up around the power poles. His arm was hurting worse and he had checked the bandage, finding it stained red. The stitches had broken and the bandage wouldn't hold it together for much longer. He bit his lip, then returned to seeking out another easy target.

An opening! Shadow darted in and slammed his feet against the pole, snapping it off. Predator screamed and rustled its body a little, trying to get him away. It turned to swallow him, opening its mouth and lashing out at him with a dozen more tongues.

<Shadow! Look out!> Cammy cried as she grabbed a few more rings. One tongue wrapped around Shadow's ankle and started pulling him into the mouth. Clawing at the air and using up ring energy in short bursts of speed, Shadow struggled to get away.

<It's got me! It's got me! Hurry up and finish it!> he cried as the silver began to change back again.

<Shadow! Your power's getting weak again! You told me that wouldn't happen! Liar! Where are you?!> Sonic yelled, ignoring the cut on his arm and scanning the giant serpent frantically.

<The mouth! Predator caught Shadow! Rescue him! I'll take care of the last few poles!> Cammy shrieked, charging up her spear again. She swung it at the snake's side, <Chaos Blade!> A wide yellow band of energy sliced across it, tearing down another power pole. The monster

shrieked again and changed fighting tactics. Scales lifted up from its skin again, but this time began to glow.

Sonic grabbed onto Shadow's hands and pulled, flying backwards to get him free. Shadow shrieked and Sonic let go, startled. The silver hedgehog held his injured arm, cringing in pain. Sonic understood and grabbed onto his good arm, pulling again.

<Sonic! Shadow! Can you hear me?! Predator is changing tactics! What's the hold up?!> Cammy called out.

<I can't get him free! Our energy is running low! Grab some rings, then come take over! I'll deal with my side! I've got one pole left!> Sonic yelled back. The green blur zipped around, scooping up more rings. <Okay! You hit fifty! That's good! Come here and take over!> Sonic flew away when Cammy came to his side.

<We've got less than fifteen minutes to get out of here!> Cammy told Shadow as she pulled. The two of them were being drawn further into the serpent's mouth. Shadow was kicking at the tongue that held him prisoner.

<We also have only thirty rings for energy! Forget trying to get me loose! Get those power poles!> he yelled as a shriek pierced the air. <Sonic!>

<I t's firing the scales at us! I almost got my leg cut off!> the golden hedgehog shouted, <What kind of creature is this?! I t's worse than Final Hazard!>

<Why only thirty?! I got fifty!> Cammy demanded as she began to slash at the tongues with her spear, cutting Shadow free.

<I can't hold the super form for a long time! And you're weaker than me, so you can't hold it long either! The longer we use this power, the faster we lose our super forms! That's why we're losing energy!> he told her and raced out of the mouth with her in tow. Once outside, he turned sharply and swung her up to the ceiling. <Avoid the scales! Grab a few more rings and then attack!> he ordered and flipped over to race after the poles. A flash of light on one side.

<I got the last one on my side! Shadow! How are you?!> Sonic cried.

<I 'm almost done! We have two poles left!> Shadow called out, dodging flying scales to snap off another pole. <Make it one! I just got another one! Sonic! Are you okay?> he added.

<I 'm fine, but your energy is growing weak again! What's happening to you, Shadow?!> Sonic replied, sounding worried and slightly panicked. Shadow scowled at the black patches appearing in the silver.

<Nothing! I 'm okay! Cammy! How's the supply?!> he called out to the green hedgehog.

<Not good! The power leaks out as fast as I can collect the stupid things!> Cammy reported as she flipped through the air, snagging rings with her arms, legs, and pole, <We're losing our energy! We can't hold these forms for very much longer!>

<We have enough for two minutes! I 'm closest to the last pole! Here I come, you creep!> Shadow shrieked and flew straight for the last pole. Predator turned to lunge for him as he reached it.

<Shadow! Look out!> Cammy screamed as Shadow slammed headfirst into the pole, snapped it and went tumbling through the air, a mere few inches from the edges of the deadly scales. Predator screamed in pain, writhing and lashing out with its tail. It made contact with Sonic, who had paused in shock over Shadow's reckless attack, and slammed him into another wall, stunning the golden hedgehog. Shadow hit the floor, just as dazed and struggling to retain the silver super form. Cammy flew right up to the face of the giant serpent.

<How dare you hurt my friends, you monster! I 'm the one you want! Come and get me!> she screamed. The monster writhed and then faced her, coiling up in pain and agony.

<Camilla....> the Predator spoke to her. The three hedgehogs looked shocked and startled.

<Cammy, get away from that thing!> Shadow yelled at her, struggling to get up. His arm buckled under and he collapsed again. Sonic recovered quickly, then flew down to help him up into the air.

"Your energy is fading. Fall back to the vault and rest. You've done all you can, Shadow." Sonic told him softly, reverting to normal speech over the telepathy they had used in the battle. Shadow shook his head, glaring at him.

"No! Cammy is still in danger and I'm not losing her like I lost Maria! Her death was my fault! G.U.N. wanted me, and killed Maria when they couldn't catch me in time!" he hissed and jerked away from him, "If Cammy dies now, it'll be the same all over again! My fault for her death...I'll lose my mind again!" Sonic looked down at the hedgehog and the snake and froze, grabbing Shadow's arm before he could go down and swoop her away.

"Wait. Something's up. I want to see what happens first." he whispered and watched. Shadow struggled, then looked down, growling angrily as Cammy floated down to stand in front of the Predator. He had to save her, he just had to!

<What are you? How do you know me?> Cammy hissed, holding her spear tight.

<Camilla...you've grown more beautiful since last I saw you...> Predator rumbled, a hoarse sounding voice that seemed to crack with disuse. Cammy gasped and looked at the monstrous snake with wide eyes.

<Ben?! Is that you?! Oh my.... What have they *done* to you?!> she choked out. Predator breathed hard, exhausted from the battle. All around, the building was smoking and burning.

<The E Life Serum did this to me. G.U.N. found a way to control me. They wanted you and me to be like Shadow and the Bio-lizard, like Project Shadow. So we would be made as Project Hunter. But you didn't show any powers, so they let you go and kept me for study.> the snake told her.

<The pigs. Don't worry, Ben. We'll...we'll find a way to change you back somehow. We'll go back to the way we were, my friend.> Cammy whispered.

<Always the kidder, Cammy. That's why I liked you. You made life fun. An adventure.> Predator murmured, <But I can't go back. Never. I'm too far gone in this hideous form. I can't stand living like this. Cammy, please. Will you do me a favor?> Cammy nodded tearfully.

<Anything, Ben. I'll help you. We can change you back. Shadow is here and he knows the professor's research. He can help us change you back.> she babbled. A forked tongue slid out of the Predator's mouth. Shadow almost dove down to snatch her away, but Sonic grabbed him and held him back, fighting to hold him.

"Don't do it, Shadow! That's Ben! Cammy's friend!" he yelled. They kept watching, unsure of what was going on.

<We can change you back. I know we can.> Cammy whispered tearfully. The tongue reached to her and gently lifted a tear away from her cheek, then pulled back.

<I t's impossible, Camilla. Cammy.> the snake replied softly, <You say you are my friend. Do me a favor. The last I'll ever ask. End my pain. End my nightmare. Forever.> Cammy shook her head, crying.

<I can't! I can't do it, Ben! You're my best friend! I f you go, I'll be all alone again!> she pleaded, <Ask anything but that!>

<Please, Cammy. As one friend to another, please do it. You have the power to do it. I can't live like this anymore. I t's only a matter of time before G.U.N. shows up to take me away. They'll perfect the mental control system and send me after you and Shadow. I don't want to be responsible for your death and Shadow's enslavement.> Predator murmured, <I t would kill my spirit, then I'll lose any hope of redemption. Please, Cammy. End my life so you and Shadow may live forever as free hedgehogs.>

<Why? Why did they do this to me?> Cammy cried, <When I find that general, I'll make him pay! I'll make him suffer for what he did to you and me and Shadow! He destroyed us, that evil man!> She tightened

her grip on the spear and brought it forward, shaking with tears. Sonic and Shadow stared at her in shock. Was she actually going through with it? Shadow started struggling again.

"Let me go! I've got to help her!" he yelled, straining to get loose. "You're worse than those stupid tongues that grabbed me!"

"You're crazy! You're losing power and you want to go down in there?! Forget it!" Sonic snapped.

<Ben.... Please, say there's another way.> Cammy whispered. Predator only looked at her with emotionless red eyes. She swallowed and charged the spear up with what was left of her power, still shaking. It glowed brightly, showing it was ready. <Ben, forgive me.> she said softly, <I'll see you on the other side.>

<No you won't, but thanks for the offer. Goodbye, Camilla. You'll always be in my heart.> the giant snake told her and opened its mouth wide. Shadow fought harder.

"It's going to eat her! Let me go, Sonic! I've got to help her!" he screamed again, suddenly crying as well. That snake's words, pleading with Cammy for help. It was just like Maria begging him to help the people on earth. It wasn't fair. They were losing people they cared for because of G.U.N.

<And you'll always be in mine, Ben.> Cammy whispered and took a deep breath, <Chaos Blade!> She slashed the spear and released the energy blade. It flew into Predator's mouth, traveling down into it and slicing the monstrous serpent in half. It spun through the coils, cutting and slicing all the way up to the tip of the Predator's tail. The huge snake toppled, one half falling to one side, the other half falling to the other. Cammy stood on the floor, paralyzed, shaking and staring blankly at the body of her former friend. Shadow broke away from Sonic and flew down to her.

<Ben....> Cammy whispered, then dropped the blade and burst in tears, sobbing as if her heart had been ripped out. She turned to run blindly out into the burning hall but Shadow managed to grab her and pull her back, hugging her tightly as she kept sobbing. <Ben!> The

emerald finally faded, leaving her as she was before the transformation, and a hammer on the floor where the Chaos Blade had been. Sonic landed nearby, silently watching Shadow lose his own super form and turn solid black and red again.

"Cammy, I know it hurts. Think of it this way. Now he's not suffering anymore. You ended his suffering." Shadow whispered to her. Cammy held him tighter.

"They made me do it. They made me destroy my only friend. They knew if they sent him after me and I knew who he was, I wouldn't fight him." Cammy sobbed, "Just like they knew that if they sent me after you and you fell for me, you wouldn't fight against me. They've been trying to use us against each other, to control us. Ben! Ben! I'm sorry! It should have been me!" Shadow gave her a little shake and held her tighter.

"Don't say that! He did it for you. So you could live in peace. Be happy for him. He's in peace and so are we." he told her and stepped back to wipe her tears away. "Now, how many minutes before the base explodes?"

"Um, I think about ten." she murmured and turned to pick up her hammer. Sonic ran up to them and shut down his Super Sonic form, grabbing three Emeralds as they began to scatter again.

"Ten minutes? Plenty of time for us to use Chaos Control and get out of here." he said, giving Shadow the red Emerald and Cammy the green one while he held onto the yellow Chaos Emerald.

"Hey! I had yellow!" Shadow complained. Sonic rolled his eyes.

"Yellow belongs to Tails. Red suits you better." he said and held the Emerald out, "We'll meet up outside with Tails and Knuckles. Then we're taking you to a doctor to tend to that arm of yours, Shadow. Chaos Control!" Sonic warped away as Shadow ran up to Cammy, who got her hammer and was walking to the vault.

"Come on! Let's go!" he exclaimed, grabbing her arm. Cammy jerked away.

"No, I'm not going. I want to stay here with Ben." she told him. Shadow looked startled, then shook it off.

"Are you insane?! This place is going to explode in ten minutes!" he snapped. Cammy shook her head.

"I lied. It's going to go off in three minutes. You get out. I'll stay here and wait for the end." she replied and stopped walking. "This looks like a good spot to die. I'll be there soon, Ben. Watch me." she whispered.

"Cammy, this isn't how it's supposed to be! If you give up and wait for the end here, then Ben would have died in vain!" Shadow snapped at her, "That's why he asked for you to end him. So *you* could live! Weren't you paying any attention to what he was saying?!" Cammy didn't answer, just hung her head down and let the hammer drop to her side.

"I killed my friend. Now I'm alone. It doesn't matter now. You go. Live and be happy. I won't be chasing you anymore." she muttered.

"You're **not** alone. You've got me, Cammy. And I won't be happy if you die here." Shadow replied in a dark voice, "Your death would haunt me because I'll feel that it's my fault. All it would do is cause more pain for me, then pain for everyone else because then I'll want revenge for you. I don't want to be a monster like Bio-lizard. I don't want to be the uncaring hedgehog I had been when Maria died."

"Just go away. Go back to your girlfriend, the pink hedgehog." Cammy muttered, "I'll go to Ben. My dear friend." Shadow growled in frustration and grabbed her arm, startling her. "Hey! What are you doing?!"

"Saving you from yourself!" Shadow snapped angrily, "And that pink hedgehog's **not** my girlfriend! She's with Sonic!" He held up the Emerald and focused on trying to find Sonic's Chaos Emerald. "Now quit fighting and let's go! Chaos Con-!"

The wall near them exploded suddenly, throwing both hedgehogs across the room and slamming them into the floor before Shadow could finish using the Chaos Control. The building was covered in flames

and burning debris fell from the ceiling, blocking off usual escape routes.

"One minute left to detonation!" Cammy exclaimed, "Shadow, get out of here now!" She turned to yell at him again, but found the black hedgehog lying on one side, the injured arm almost shredded and bloodied.

"Shadow?" Cammy called and crawled over to him, shaking him. "Oh, no. Not now!" she cried and scrambled around to get his Emerald and her own. She closed up her hammer and packed it away on her armor, then gathered the gems into one arm while she held Shadow up with the other. "Hang on! I'll get you out of here!" Taking one last look at the body of her dead friend, Cammy took a deep breath and decided to risk the Chaos Control. "Chaos Control!" she cried, focusing on the grassy park just outside of the zoo, the only thought in her mind. The two of them warped away, just as the ceiling caved in and the generator exploded.

Chapter Five

Sonic waited impatiently for Shadow and Cammy, then ducked when the base exploded, looking out at it in horror. What had happened? Why didn't they meet with him outside? Did they make it out before it exploded? It was too soon! Cammy said ten minutes, it had only been three!

"Tails! Can you pick up Shadow and Cammy's Emeralds?! Are they okay?" he called out. Tails studied his Emerald and the machines in the Cyclone.

"They weren't in the base when it went off, Sonic. It looks like the Emeralds are back in Station Square." he reported.

"Then let's go! We've got to see if they're okay!" Sonic exclaimed and watched the Cyclone transform into the Tornado II again. Knuckles jumped onto one wing as Sonic leaped on the other. "Let's go! I'm not using Chaos Control again this close to a military base! Besides, I'm a little tired out from the fight."

"What fight?" Tails asked, curious. Sonic shook his head and the fox took off for Station Square, still wondering about what had happened in the base.

Shadow woke when pain surged through his arm. He sat up and gasped at his ruined arm, then again when he saw Cammy lying beside him, unconscious and barely breathing. He shook her shoulder.

"Cammy? Cammy, wake up! What happened?!" he cried and looked at the Emeralds in her arms for a clue. "You used Chaos Control." he murmured in realization, "And this is what it did to you? Is that why you never used it after that one time?" He looked up at a clock on the

entrance of the zoo. Two twenty. Only ten minutes before the school expected the children to be back! He grabbed the Red Emerald. "Hang on, Cammy! I'll be back for you!" he exclaimed and held it up. "But first, those men that are stealing animals! Chaos Control!"

Shadow warped to the shack where the men were still loading cages onto a truck. Ignoring his hurt arm, he used a Fire Somersault to knock them over and then threw them into a cage of their own. He grabbed on, used Chaos Control again, and warped to the warden's office.

"Animals in the shack outside of zoo! These men did it!" he blurted out to the startled men, then cried in pain and warped again, this time to the Chao children.

Amy was all tied up to a tree with the Dark Chao dancing around her, laughing. Shadow appeared and grabbed his bag as Omochoao finally arrived, still looking for help.

"Shadow! You're free! You're hurt? What happened to you?!" Omochoao yelped.

"Time to go, kids! Grab on to me! Omochoao! In the bag! Now!" Shadow barked. The robot jumped and flew in as the Chao gathered around Shadow and held onto both him and each other. "Chaos Control!" They warped to the school, leaving Amy behind.

"Wait! What about me?! I don't want to be an Indian sacrifice anymore!" Amy wailed. "Ooh! Shadow, you're just like Sonic! A great big brat of a hedgehog! I don't care if you're the ultimate life form, you're a spoiled, rotten brat!"

Shadow appeared in the school and let all the Chao kids run to Ms. Chao. Prof. Chao looked surprised.

"Shadow? Why did you warp them back? We thought you'd bring them the normal way, on the bus!" he exclaimed. Shadow tossed down the bag and cried in pain again before warping away. "Shadow? Shadow! Get back here this instant and explain what's going on!" the

principal shouted angrily. Nurse Chao ran to where Shadow had been standing and peered down at the drops of blood.

"Professor Chao! Shadow's injured! I think the stitches on his arm broke! We've got to get him to a doctor!" he declared. The principal nodded.

"Ms. Chao! Call the teacher's aide so we can track down Shadow!" he declared. Ms. Chao scowled.

"Professor Chao! Shadow **is** the teacher's aide! Did you forget that already?!" she snapped.

"Oh yeah." Prof. Chao remarked bashfully. "Sorry."

The black hedgehog returned to the grass as the Tornado II flew overhead and Sonic and Knuckles jumped down from it to him. He ignored them and struggled to pick Cammy up. So much warping, and the fight in super form had weakened him, Shadow couldn't hold her and just knelt there, crying in pain and worry.

"Shadow! What happened?! Why didn't you meet me at the base? What's wrong?!" Sonic cried, running up to him. He cringed as he came to a stop, but quickly wiped the expression from his face. Tails landed the plane and changed it back into the Cyclone, watching them worriedly.

"I can't move! I don't have any strength left! I've used it all up and Cammy's dying and I can't do anything to help her!" Shadow cried, left arm hanging limply and shredded. Sonic pulled Cammy away and held her out to Knuckles. "Save her, Sonic. Do something!" Shadow pleaded, "First Maria, now her.... I won't be able to take it!"

"We'll get you both to a doctor." Sonic promised and turned to the echidna, "You take Cammy. I'll deal with Shadow." he told him. Knuckles gave her a look over and frowned.

"She's really weak, Sonic. I don't know if she could make it or not." he replied, taking her in his arms.

"She's got to, Knuckles. She's part ultimate life form, and they can't die." Sonic told him, wrapping Shadow's good arm over his

shoulders and hefting him to his feet. "Tails! Call ahead! Tell them we're on our way in with injured hedgehogs!" he called to his best friend. Then he winced and sighed. "Myself included." Sonic added in a low voice. He limped ahead quickly with Shadow running to keep up.

"What?! You're hurt too?!" Tails cried as he made the call. Knuckles ran after the hedgehogs, carrying Cammy in his arms.

"Of course he is! Didn't you see his arm and leg, Tails?! Sonic's been mangled as bad as Shadow's arm!" he called back. Tails gulped and began to follow the group deeper into the city.

"I wonder how Amy's doing." he muttered to himself.

Several hours and a pair of surgeries later, all three hedgehogs were asleep in hospital beds, bandaged, stitched and looked after by nurses and friends. Tails headed back to the zoo, untied Amy and brought her in to see Sonic, Shadow and Cammy. Cammy was extremely drained of energy, too weak to even breathe on her own. Shadow's arm was restitched and then put back into a cast while the rest of his injuries were bandaged. Sonic had similar treatment for his arm and leg. Just before going to sleep, he loudly complained how it would make him a slug, then kept an eye on Shadow for as long as he could. Shadow immediately konked out after a strong dose of sedatives was pumped into him to keep him from shrieking about his treatment and the addition of the cast. He still hated any medical facility that reminded him of G.U.N.'s bio-laboratories.

"So, what happened? How did my hero get all banged up like that?!" Amy demanded to know from Tails and Knuckles.

"I don't know! Sonic said they were in a fight in the base, but that was all he would say. I just want to know how he broke his leg. Sonic's never broken his leg before." Tails muttered, "And if you want to see

Cammy, she's in the room next door. She doesn't look good. She's pale and hasn't woken up."

"Hey, I think Sonic's coming around." Knuckles remarked as Sonic shifted and then opened his eyes to look up at them. "Hey, guy. Welcome back to the world of the living." the echidna joked.

"Ugh. How long was I asleep?" Sonic grumbled as he sat up carefully.

"About two and a half hours." Tails replied. "Shadow's really out of it. He hasn't moved at all since falling asleep and he keeps muttering 'Maria' and 'Camilla' over and over. He's driving me nuts."

"He's still blaming himself. How is Cammy?" Sonic answered, then asked. The group looked grim.

"Not too good. She looks more wiped out than you when you first used Chaos Control with that fake Chaos Emerald." Knuckles told him.

"The Emerald sapped out her energy and since she's a hybrid, it sapped even more than usual to get a full effect. That's why she's so weak." Sonic muttered, thinking aloud, "Like the fake did to me. I t sapped more to get the full effect of a warp."

"What happened in the base? Why were you cut up with a broken leg? How did Shadow and Cammy get messed up like that?" Tails asked him. A nurse came in and wrote something out on his chart, then gave him a tray with a bowl of soup on it, then went to check on Shadow. She felt his forehead, stuck a thermometer in his mouth and waited. She pulled it out, checked it, frowned, then left.

"I don't like the way she did that." Sonic muttered, "Anyways, we went down to get the other Emeralds but G.U.N.'s general had a surprise waiting for Cammy and Shadow. A giant snake monster called Predator. We destroyed its power supply and it turned out that Predator was Cammy's lost friend, Ben." Sonic frowned and shook his head. "I think I broke my leg snapping off one of the power poles. I kicked them all pretty hard. Anyway, Ben begged Cammy to kill him so he could stop living as a monster and Cammy did. She turned super, just like me and Shadow, but Shadow and Cammy were losing power

throughout the fight and it was a struggle to keep them in super form to do the job. She used Chaos Blade to finish him and we all went back to normal. I gave them a couple of Emeralds and told them to meet me outside the base before it exploded. I warped out first. Shadow didn't look like that when I left and the base exploded sooner than Cammy said it would."

The nurse returned to check on Shadow once again. Sonic merely scowled and glared at her until she finished her duties and left the room once more. Amy walked over to him and poked at Shadow a little.

"Shadow? Are you awake?" she asked softly. Shadow made a face and opened his eyes, scowling at her.

"I am now." he grumbled and sat up slowly, "My head is killing me and I hate this cast." He looked around, saw no one else in the room, and panicked. "Cammy? Where's Cammy?! Where is she?!" he cried in worry, then cried and winced in pain, falling back on the pillows.

"She's next door, sleeping. Take it easy." Amy told him and smiled. "I brought markers with me! I'll decorate your cast!" she exclaimed and brought out the box of markers.

"You will do no such thing." Shadow muttered, still a little groggy. Amy stuck her tongue out at him and set to work on coloring the cast on his arm. "I'm being punished, right?"

"Let's see, pink hearts here and red kisses here and some rainbows and flowers and my name here. Ooh, and a kitty over on this side!" Amy remarked as she happily colored the plaster, covering it in drawings. "Let me squeeze in one more puppy and...there! All done! Look at how sweet it is!" she exclaimed, stepping back so everyone could see it. Shadow grumbled and pouted as Tails and Knuckles examined the decorated cast and started laughing.

"I don't deserve this, you know." he muttered, "Great, I'm gonna be stuck with flowers, bunnies and rainbows for another three months." He would have gone on complaining if Ms. Chao, Prof. Chao, Nurse Chao, Omochoa and the doctor hadn't walked into the room. "Omochoa! Hello, everyone! How are you? I'm great! See? Nothing to worry about."

Shadow tried to lie his way out of pity, smiling and waving his bad arm at them, "Look, my arm's healed! It's a miracle!" A small shift and Shadow yelped in pain. "Ow! No, it's still sliced up. Never mind." he sighed.

"I told you to be careful in that shed! What did those men do to you?!" Omochao demanded.

"I wasn't at the shed. G.U.N. kidnapped Cammy so I went to save her. They had her attack me, then had a giant snake attack the both of us and then the base exploded while we were still in it. That's why I look like this." Shadow grumbled, "And don't ask to sign the cast. The pink hedgehog already worked her marker magic on it."

"So where's Cammy?" Omochao asked. Shadow looked down and sat back.

"She's next door and very weak. She needs to rest." Sonic told the robot.

"Are you happy now, Shadow? Now she won't chase you around anymore. Isn't that what you wanted, huh?" Omochao scolded the black hedgehog.

"I didn't want her like that. I tried to save her, but she didn't want to be saved. It's my fault she's like that in the room." he murmured. The doctor looked Sonic over, handed him a crutch and told him to take it easy for the next few weeks.

"Take it easy?! That's torture!!" Sonic wailed as he was helped out of bed by Tails. Shadow snickered a little and tried to look innocent when Sonic glared at him. "Shadow, you were making fun of me. I heard you snicker." he pointed out. Shadow shrugged and smiled at him. The doctor turned to him, stuck a thermometer in his mouth and wrapped his arm up in a sling. He waited, pulled the tube out and checked it.

"Fever's gone. You can go now as well. Go easy for a few days and try not to get into as much trouble as Sonic here. You kinda look alike. Are you his brother?" the doctor remarked curiously. Shadow swallowed and looked to him for help.

"Yeah, that's my brother, Shadow! He's been overseas a few years, checking out the sights. He came over here to tell me all about it and to visit for a few weeks. We kinda got in a wreck when he wouldn't let me use his car as a roadster." Sonic quickly butted in. "Shadow, you're absolutely right. I do much better on my feet than behind the wheel of your sports car. I'm real sorry I mangled the fender! I'll pay you back! Promise!" He laughed forcefully, hoping it sounded convincing.

"Next time, let your brother drive. He seems to have more sense than you do." the doctor muttered and frowned at his chart. "And the other hedgehog, Camilla Maria Hedgehog. How is she connected with you? This is the second time she's come in with severe exhaustion."

"She's Shadow's new girlfriend!" Amy volunteered before Sonic could shut her up. Shadow looked mad enough to jump out of bed and strangle her with one hand. "She got tired out again, but we're not sure why."

"Well, she should recover soon enough. I give her another two days before she's ready to go legend hunting again. She's really into her field work, Miss Hedgehog is. I'll call her sister and let her know she's in again." the doctor replied and left the room. Shadow climbed out of bed and stomped to Amy.

"Why did you tell him that?! She's not my girlfriend! I owed her for saving me and I paid her back! That's all!" he snapped at her. Amy stuck her tongue out at him.

"That's not what I heard. Tails said you were mumbling her name in your sleep." she pointed out. Shadow stepped back and snorted.

"That doesn't prove anything." he muttered and left the room with the Chao following behind. Sonic watched them go and sighed sadly.

"And there he goes again." he muttered and hobbled along, "Come on, guys. Maybe we can get some ice cream at the hotel and rest up some. We'll come back later and visit Cammy." The others looked at each other, shrugged and followed him out.

Shadow watched the clock on the table next to his bed. It read the same time for nearly an hour. Omochao sat next to him, also watching it. Sighing, Shadow picked up a screwdriver and began to open the clock, making yet another attempt to fix it on his own.

"Couldn't you just buy another clock? That one jams no matter what you do to it." Omochao asked, "You know, the person who trashed that clock did it for a reason."

"I can't afford a clock. I can't afford new gloves, or blankets, or food." Shadow muttered and sighed, setting the screwdriver down. "Now I only have one arm working. That makes it even harder for me. How can I take care of the Chao kids like this?" There was a knock at the door and Shadow walked over to it, pushing down on the staircase to open it. The Chao kids and Ms. Chao stood at the bottom.

"Hello, Shadow! The kids all made 'Get Well' cards for you! Come along, children!" Ms. Chao exclaimed happily and flew up the stairs as the Chao kids climbed up into the attic with their cards.

Inside, the kids presented Shadow with their handmade cards, laughing and hugging him. He laughed with them, patting them all on the heads as he looked at each card. Soon, they all put the cards in a little pile on the table and trooped off, waving goodbye to him. Ms. Chao flew up to Shadow and looked concerned.

"Shadow, take care. The kids love you very much. You're the best friend they always wanted. Be careful in the future." she told him, "We just wish you would take some kind of payment for the work you do here."

"I'm doing this for free to pay you back for your kindness. You helped me when I was in trouble, so now I'll help you. Besides, seeing the Chao kids so happy is payment enough." Shadow replied and looked out the window at the city. "I guess I should go visit Cammy. See if she's woken up at least." he murmured and glanced in the mirror to see

if he looked all right. With that, he headed downstairs and started walking to Station Square's hospital.

Shadow arrived at the hospital, asked where Cammy's room was to make sure he wouldn't get lost, then headed up to see her. As he stepped out of the elevator, Shadow saw Cammy step out of the hospital room, dressed in a conservative brown business outfit, high heels, and a pair of no-nonsense glasses. She walked down the hallway as Shadow ran up to her.

"Cammy! You're awake!" he exclaimed, "I'm glad you're okay!" The green hedgehog stared at him with wide, sea green eyes before turning and running down the hall in screams.

"Help! Help! Security! There's a killer here! Rapist! Murderer! Help!" she screamed as Shadow blinked and chased after her. He grabbed her arm and pulled her back to him.

"Cammy! What's the matter with you? Don't you recognize me? It's me! Shadow the Hedgehog, remember?" he asked her. Cammy shook and screamed again, pounding her fist on him.

"Let me go! Let me go! Help! Killer! He's trying to hurt Cammy!" the hedgehog screamed. Shadow jumped back, surprised.

"But, you're Cammy! Aren't you?" he asked the green hedgehog who stood paralyzed before him.

"No, I'm her twin sister, Vanilla Crema Hedgehog. Stay away, or I'll call security!" the green hedgehog threatened shakily. Shadow looked back at the room, then walked over, opening the door and walking in. "No! Leave my sister alone!" Vanilla yelled and chased after him. She found him standing next to Cammy, who still lay asleep. She had regained some strength and was now breathing on her own. "Go away!" Vanilla hissed.

"I'm not here to hurt anyone. Cammy is my friend. She saved my life and I just wanted to see if she was okay." Shadow replied softly and reached out to Cammy. He stroked her cheek a little, then pulled

away. "When will she wake up?" he asked the twin. Vanilla jumped slightly and looked a little scared.

"Uh, um. I...I don't know. Maybe in another couple of hours." she babbled, blinking a few times very quickly, then looked worried. "At least, that's how long it took last time. Why did she lose energy this time?"

"You don't know?" Shadow asked, surprised that Cammy's own sister was confused by her weakness. "Didn't she ever tell you about Chaos Control?" Vanilla shook her head. "She really did keep it a secret. Well, I think it'll be better if she told you." Shadow remarked and headed out of the room. "Um, you wouldn't happen to have a nickname or something?"

"Vanni. Cammy's twin. How did she save you, Mr...?" Vanni trailed.

"Shadow, just call me Shadow. And she saved me twice, I think. Once from smugglers, then again from a secret base. I'm not sure about the last one, I was sort of out of it." Shadow replied.

"Oh, wonderful. Smugglers, secret bases, ancient ruins, relics and artifacts, centuries old riddles and legends.... Why couldn't Camilla get a nice, quiet job and settle down?" Vanilla griped, "Look at me. I have a nice job, a loving husband and I don't have to go tramping around the world racking up a huge medical bill just to get my hands on some new story about those silly Chaos Emeralds she's been talking about." Shadow held up his Emerald.

"You mean this?" he asked, showing her the red Chaos Emerald. Vanilla looked at it and yelped.

"Eek! You've got one of them! Quick! Hide it before Cammy wakes up and decides to figure out where it came from and test her crazy theories on it!" she squealed and pointed at a trash can. "Throw that nasty jewel away! Eek! Get it away!"

"You're a lot different from Cammy." Shadow remarked softly and left the room. Vanilla watched him leave and breathed a sigh of relief. She turned back to her sister and sat down beside her.

"Cammy, how on earth did you get involved with that creepy hedgehog? And how did you end up like this again? I thought it was a one time thing. I told you your work was going to do you in, but do you listen to your sister? Nooo." Vanilla scolded, "You just go on, zipping around the world with that backpack full of parchments, scrolls, books, and artifacts. And where did you get that horrible armor outfit? It's so skimpy!" She sighed again and opened her brown purse, pulling out a phone. She dialed a number and waited for an answer.

"Hello, Mother? Mother, it's me, Vanilla. I just wanted to let you know that Cammy's done it again. She's gotten herself in trouble again and now she's in the hospital because of exhaustion and...no, she's fine. She's sleeping right now." the twin chatted, "Mother, she's really done it this time. She's gotten herself involved with this rascal that looks like serious trouble. Well, he seems polite enough, but I don't like the looks of him. Have you ever heard of a black and red hedgehog, Mother? It's positively chilling! He looks like a maniac killer! No, he didn't try to kill me, Mother. He's got a cast on one arm and it looks like some little girl's been scribbling all over it and... No, Mother, I don't know if Cammy's dating him. She hasn't said a word to me all day. Never mind. She's doing fine and I'll talk to you later, Mother. Kissies Muah, muah!" Vanilla smooched and then hung up.

"Errm." Cammy groaned softly and slowly opened her eyes. "Vanni? Is that you?" she asked softly. The twin nodded and leaned closer to her.

"Cammy! You're awake! How are you?!" she asked cheerfully.

"You called Mother again, didn't you?" Cammy grumbled, "You know she hates my work." She shifted and yawned. "I feel like somebody sucked my bones out of me." she muttered and eyed her sister. "Vanni. I thought I heard a guy's voice in here. Was it Shadow, a black and red hedgehog?"

"I knew it! You *are* involved with that crazy-looking young man! Where did you dig him up this time, huh?! Some wild jungle tribe in South America?!" Vanilla scolded, "And what's this about you messing

with smugglers and secret bases?! Why, oh why, can't you ever leave it to the police?! That's what they get paid to do!"

"Boring. And Shadow is a teacher's aide from a Chao kindergarten. He's a friend of mine." Cammy grumbled, "Now help me up." Vanilla helped her sister sit up and continued to lecture her about her work.

"And then there's that whole thing last year where your assistant, Ben Tucker, disappeared and you couldn't remember a single thing that happened. I told you it was dangerous work!" she added. Cammy winced and fought back tears. Vanilla noticed and stopped lecturing. "Oh, Cammy. I'm sorry for bringing him up. It's just that I get worried about you, twin." she whispered and hugged her. "I don't want to lose you to some 'mysterious force' before you get your feet back in reality." Vanni smiled gently, "So, what did you find on this outing of yours? Besides the danger and intrigue and the high risk of death?"

"I found someone I liked, I learned some new things about myself, and I learned that some people have to leave us." Cammy replied, "And that they never really leave as long as I hold them in my heart." Vanni watched her and smiled again, shaking her head.

"Astounding, Camilla. You've turned a day at the zoo into a race against death. And somehow you've actually managed to win. Again." she remarked and gave her a kiss on the forehead. "Rest up, twin. I'll come back soon. I left the trainee hanging at the office. A secretary's job is never done." she laughed and left the room. Cammy watched her go and sighed. Then she put a hand to her cheek and looked puzzled.

"Was I dreaming, or did Shadow actually touch my face? I guess I could ask him the next time I chase him down." she muttered and lay back down, pulling the sheets up as she drifted off to sleep again.

Chapter Six

Sonic lounged on the beach chair, looking up at the clouds floating by and the birds flying overhead. Tails watched him carefully, noticing how with each passing minute, Sonic grew more and more dark-faced.

"All right! I can't stand it anymore! I gotta have adventure! I gotta have excitement! I gotta run or I'll go bonkers!" he shrieked, punching his fists into the air. Knuckles sipped on a glass of lemonade as he kept one hand on the Master Emerald he carried with him.

"You've only been sitting there an hour. How can you get bored after only an hour?" he asked in exasperation. Tails giggled as he sat surfing the web on his notebook computer.

"That's the way he is, Knuckles. He's always on the go. Can't stay still for more than a minute." the fox replied as Sonic frowned and glared at his cast. "Sonic's never had a problem with anything keeping him from using his speed. Sorry, Sonic, but you won't be doing any running around the city for a long while."

"Man, this is boring! Tails, have you found that school yet?" Sonic grumbled. Amy walked out to the pool with an ice cream cone, followed by a waiter bringing several more cones.

"School? What school?" she asked, sitting next to Sonic and licking at her ice cream. Knuckles set the lemonade aside in favor of the cone the waiter handed him.

"Sonic's still trying to figure out where Shadow is, so he's got Tails looking for a list of Chao schools. He's planning on going to each one and asking if Shadow works there." he replied with a grin. "Do you know how long that will take with you wobbling around like one-legged kangaroo?" he asked the blue hedgehog.

"Ha, ha. Make fun of the cripple." Sonic griped and took his ice cream cone from the waiter with a nod of thanks. "I'm gonna find Shadow and figure out what he's been up to for so long."

"I got it, Sonic!" Tails exclaimed. "I found three schools in Station Square where Shadow could be working! Chao Trainers, Chao Elementary and Chao Kindergarten." He printed out the addresses and gave the paper to Sonic.

"Great! Let's go ask them right now!" he declared and wobbled off the chair to his crutch. Amy pouted and finished off her ice cream cone.

"Wait a second, Sonic! What about visiting Cammy? Are you just gonna leave her there?" she scolded.

"Aww! She's being taken care of. Didn't you hear the doc? He's calling her sister. Let's go find Shadow!" he protested and headed out with Tails and Knuckles in tow.

"Ooh! Sonic, you're a brat! You and Shadow, for leaving me tied up to a palm tree!" Amy yelled at them, but followed anyway.

Chao Trainers had never heard of Shadow, except for the news reports about a Sonic look-alike stealing the Chaos Emerald from Station Square's bank. Chao Elementary insisted that all of their aides were rabbits. The only school left on the list was Chao Kindergarten.

"Well, it makes sense. The Chao we found were drawing pictures for a school project. And none of the other schools had a Chao that looks like the one in the picture." Knuckles pointed out as Tails unrolled the childish drawing of Shadow, the Chao kids and a Chao with a pink bow.

"This drawing is of that Chao lady that visited Shadow in the hospital yesterday. We find her, we find Shadow." he said, "Isn't that right, Sonic?" The hedgehog nodded and knocked on the door of the school. The building was cute and friendly, all blue with green doors and windows and an orange colored roof. Leading up to the school was a yellow brick path and round shrubs lined up on either side of the path.

"Shadow works here? You'd think he'd pick something dark and spooky so he can hide in the shadows." Amy remarked, "But this place

looks kind of nice and sweet." The door opened and Professor Chao looked up at them.

"Oh, hello! Are you visitors? Welcome to Chao Kindergarten! Where baby Chao learn about life and fun in a loving, happy environment! Please, come in!" the Chao greeted and let the group inside. Sonic and his friends looked around in the school as Prof. Chao continued. "I am Prof. Chao, the principal of this school. To your left is Nurse Chao's office. Next door is Ms. Chao's kindergarten class. In front of you is our bulletin board, and next to that is our supply closet. On the right is my office. Please enjoy your visit."

"I'm looking for somebody." Sonic told the little professor, "I think you know him. His name is Shadow the Hedgehog and he looks kind of like me, only black and red." Prof. Chao thought hard.

"Shadow? Yes, he works here." he replied, "Hold on a moment. Let me call the teacher's aide so he can get Shadow." The Chao took a deep breath and shouted. "*Ms. Chao! Call the teacher's aide!*" he yelled. The whole school exploded into wails and shouts as the classroom door and the nurse's office door both flew open. Nurse Chao ran out of the room, followed by an angry Demon Chao with a headache that had worsened when Prof. Chao yelled. Ms. Chao stormed out of her class.

"Now look what you've done! You've woken up my entire class! Have you **any** idea how long it took me and Shadow to put them all to sleep?! And when they fell asleep, so did Shadow! You woke them all up!" she scolded, "And for the last time, Shadow **is** the teacher's aide!"

"Shadow's here?!" Sonic exclaimed. Ms. Chao looked up at him, frowning.

"Yes, he is. Who are you?" she replied. Sonic introduced himself and his friends. "Really? Well, he's in the classroom. Maybe you can help him put the Chao back to their naps since your little visit caused them all to wake up and cry!" she lectured, flying up and poking him in the nose. "Shame on you for waking up children and a hungry hedgehog!" The group ran to the classroom and went in, looking for Shadow.

"Rock a bye baby, already! Please, go back to sleep!" Shadow wailed, patting Chao kids on the head with one hand as he rocked a cradle with one foot stretched out at full length. "Come on! I'm wiped out from giving you all baths after your last food fight!"

"Shadow? This is what you do for a living?" Sonic exclaimed in disbelief as Amy squealed and ran up to hug a Chao and rock it back and forth. Shadow blinked up at them and wailed just as loudly as the other Chao.

"And you still won't leave me alone! I'm hungry and tired and my arm hurts and I just want to live a normal life!" he wailed in the center of a crowd of Chao children. Sonic, Tails and Knuckles stepped carefully and gathered up Chao, trying their best to soothe them all and rock them back to sleep. The crowd began to calm down and the crying eased away, Shadow included. He sat on the rug in a sort of daze, listening to his stomach growl. "Why me? I had them all asleep until Prof. Chao shrieked again." he sighed and looked up at Sonic, who cradled a sleepy Hero Chao. "And why won't you leave me alone?" he asked. Shadow stood up and ran past him, "Everybody just leave me alone!" Once in the main hall, he jumped up, grabbed the string that was tied to the attic door, and pulled. He ran up the attic steps, then shut himself up in his room.

Sonic followed and looked up at the attic door, cocking his head in confusion. What exactly was going on? Shadow didn't normally act like that.

"Tails, can you pull down that staircase? I want to talk to Shadow." he told the fox. Tails nodded and hovered up to the string, pulling down the attic stairs. The group quietly stepped up the staircase to the attic.

Shadow sat on his bed, staring down at the clock on his lap. Omochoa perched on the bedside table, watching him. The two of them were silent, just watching the still broken clock.

"Shadow?" Sonic called out softly. Shadow rubbed at an eye and focused on the clock.

"It's still jammed, Omochao. Is there something we're not doing right?" he asked, trying to keep his voice steady.

"It's broken, Shadow. It can't be fixed. You'll have to buy a new one." the robot replied.

"But I told you, Omochao. I don't have the money for it. I don't have anything. Nothing! All I have is a Chaos Emerald and that's not going to be of any help to me!" Shadow cried and threw the clock away, letting it crash to the floor as he curled up and trembled.

"This looks bad." Amy whispered to Sonic, "I can tell this isn't a good time to talk to Shadow." Sonic nodded and hustled everyone down the stairs again. "Hey, Sonic. I've got an idea. Let's go visit Cammy and see if she's well enough to join us. I bet we can cheer Shadow up!" Amy added.

"Are you sure?" Sonic asked dubiously. Amy nodded with a grin. "Well. Okay. Just so long as it doesn't involve setting Shadow up on a date with Cammy..." Sonic muttered. Amy made a face.

"Aw! Plan A shot down before it gets set up! No fair! Oh well. On to Plan B! Come on!" she declared and ran off. Sonic and his friends raced after her.

Cammy was sitting up and eating soup when Sonic and company arrived. They told her Amy's plan and she agreed to help. She stepped out of bed, dressed in some clothes Vanilla had brought for her and stuffed her Chaos Emerald into her purse. She wobbled for a moment, then regained her balance.

"All right. Do you guys have the money for it?" she asked as they walked out of the hospital. "It sounds like a great idea, but it won't be easy."

"We don't have a lot. Just enough for a few things." Tails replied, looking worried.

"That's all right! I've got plenty to spare! We'll pool the money and get started. I'll transfer funds to you guys. You can get everything set while I keep Shadow busy." Cammy said with a grin. She winked. "And I know just how to do it!"

Shadow dozed softly, resting up from chasing Chao everywhere. They had been exhausting and the Demon Chao scribbling on the walls gave Shadow more work to do. There was a knock on the door leading up to his room. He slowly woke up and looked around.

"Omochoa. Who is it?" he mumbled. Omochoa flew over and pressed the button to let the stairs down. He watched as a familiar green hedgehog bounced up the stairs with a smile on her face.

"It's Cammy!" Omochoa cheered and Shadow bolted up in shock. Cammy danced her way over to him and laughed.

"Hi, Shadow! Miss me? I'm all better now! Thanks for helping me out. I know! Let's go out for ice cream!" she said brightly, "Just you and me! It'll be my way of showing you how thankful I am for your friendship and help."

"Cammy?! You're okay! That's great!" Shadow exclaimed and laughed. "Us? Out there? Sounds too much like a date to me." he pointed out slyly.

"Call it what you want, let's just go out and have some fun!" Cammy declared and winked at him, "Don't you get tired of being so serious and gloomy all the time? G.U.N. thinks the both of us died in that base explosion, so let's make the most of our freedom by pigging out on burgers, fries and shakes! My treat!"

"Sounds great! Go on, Shadow! Go and get something to eat so you don't wind up a skinny little hedgehog!" Omochao urged, laughing along with her.

"Well, it's been a while since I last ate anything." Shadow muttered slowly.

"You haven't eaten since Cammy gave you all that food in the zoo yesterday!" Omochao scolded, "Go eat!"

"Well, all right! Don't yell at me!" Shadow gave in and followed Cammy out of the school. As they walked down the path, Cammy looked back at the bushes and winked. Sonic and his friends saw it and nodded. That was their signal. They gathered up their supplies and rushed into the building. Omochao waited for them at the bottom of the attic stairs.

"It's about time! Hurry up! Shadow won't stay away from here too long. As soon as he's done, he'll probably try to warp back here!" he shouted and flew back up into the attic.

"Okay! Let's do this fast!" Sonic cheered and they headed up the stairs to get to work.

"Shadow, I've been wondering. At the hospital yesterday, were you the one who touched my face?" Cammy asked over lunch at a restaurant, "I swear I heard your voice near me." Shadow focused on his plate, suddenly very interested in the fries covered with ketchup. Cammy grinned and leaned back in her chair. "I thought so. So, were you talking with my sister? Did she tell you how horrible I am and what a lousy job I have?" she asked with a smile, "Or that I should have done the proper thing and gotten a sensible job and a husband? How about the fact that nearly all the doctors around the world know me by name because I keep getting torn up?"

"She mentioned it." Shadow mumbled, "I didn't know you had a twin sister. I thought she was you. She started screaming that I was some kind of killer." Cammy blinked at him and laughed.

"It's probably your coloring. She's paranoid, my twin. Mother raised her to be neat and nice and proper. The good girl with a family and a woman's job, hah! Luckily, Dad got to me before Mother's teachings sank into my brain. I learned how to be rough and tough, down and dirty, sneaky and sly, and most of all, to have fun with life!" Cammy exclaimed and looked out the window at the city, "There's so much wonder and mystery in the world and I want to experience it all. I want to find out about them, and figure out the secrets of the past."

"What exactly is your job?" Shadow asked, curious. Cammy blinked and looked at him, then blushed.

"I'm a legend hunter. I'm also a part time tomb raider, but only to donate artifacts to museums. Most of the time, I'm chasing down ancient legends and stories about the Chaos Emeralds and other myths." she answered and looked at Shadow's plate, "Shadow! You didn't even eat your food! You're starving yourself!"

"What? Oops. Sorry." Shadow muttered and ate some of the food quickly. "There, happy now?" he asked, "And what do you mean by rough and tough, down and dirty? Girls aren't supposed to be like that. They should be delicate and whimsy."

"Don't forget sneaky and sly. And wouldn't you like to know?" Cammy purred, giving him a coy look, "Besides, delicate is for the nice girls. They let themselves get led along by other people. I like to take charge." She gave him another wink and went back to eating. The two of them finished lunch in silence.

"Sonic, you're not doing it right! Stop aggravating your leg and try calling for pizza. This is taking longer than we thought. While you're at it, call Cammy and tell her to stall Shadow a little longer. We need more time!" Tails shouted as he tightened the screws on the broken clock. Sonic made a face and grabbed a nearby phone.

"Man, I hate broken legs! What's Cammy's number again? Oh, yeah." he muttered and dialed the number. "It's not my fault the stupid table tipped over. Where did Shadow get such a cheap thing anyway?"

Cammy dug into her purse as Shadow sat back on a park bench, enjoying the warm sun. Whipping out her phone, she put it to her head and listened.

"Cammy here. Talk to me!" she greeted. She listened, frowned, smiled and nodded. "No problem. I t'll be a pleasure. Trust me. He's in good hands. My hands." she purred slyly. She hung up and put the small phone away.

"Who was that?" Shadow muttered, too lazy to open his eyes.

"A friend. Here's an idea. Let's go to a movie! They're showing *Chao in Space 2* at the Megaplex!" Cammy exclaimed and pulled Shadow up, "Come on! Let's go check it out!" They raced off to see the movie, buying Sonic and his friends another couple of hours.

Tails looked up from fixing the television as Sonic came wobbling into the attic again. He looked worried.

"Sonic? What's wrong? Is everything okay?" he called to his friend.

"I'm worried about Shadow. I don't like the way Cammy said she would deal with him. I think she's up to something." Sonic muttered.

"Worrywart! Cammy and Shadow will be fine. Now help me with these flowers. I want this room to look nice for when he comes back!" Amy declared and put a vase on the new table Knuckles brought in. He was sitting on Shadow's bed, drinking lemonade and resting for a bit. The plan was going well, all that was left to do was finish things up and wait for Shadow to return from the outing.

The movie ended and Shadow grew a little suspicious as Cammy suggested a visit to a mall.

"What's going on? Why are you dragging me around the city?" he asked, "Why didn't Omochao come along? What's up?" Cammy smiled at him innocently.

"Why, Shadow! What do you mean? I'm just trying to show you a good time, that's all!" she replied and laughed.

"You're up to something. You're keeping me away from the school." Shadow told her, suspicious, "You're keeping me from going home. What's going on? What are you doing?!" He stepped away from her and looked around. "I'm going home right now! I'm gonna get to the bottom of this!" With that, he raced off, running for the school. Cammy ground her teeth in frustration and pulled out her phone. After a few rings, it was answered.

"Sonic?" Cammy asked.

"Nope. The name's Knuckles. What can I do for you?" the voice on the other end replied.

"This is Cammy. Bad news! Finish up quick, 'cause Shadow is on his way in! That attic room is his home, and he's running there as fast as those air blade shoes can carry him!" the green hedgehog declared.

"What?! Why didn't he warp?" Knuckles exclaimed.

"He didn't bring his Chaos Emerald with him! And he probably forgot I had mine with me! You've got a few minutes, so wrap things up and get out!" Cammy barked and cut the line. She stuffed the phone in her purse and went chasing after Shadow.

"Shadow's on his way! Shake a leg, people!" Knuckles yelled out as he ran up the stairs. The group worked harder to finish their surprise. Unable to help much, Sonic was content to stand watch at the window. Omochao was outside, waiting for Shadow so he could buy more time. After another few minutes, Sonic could see a black blur zip up to the path. Omochao flew to meet it and the blur stopped. Shadow stood talking with Omochao on the path to the school.

"He's here! Hurry up!" Sonic yelled. Amy stuffed flowers into the vase and fluffed the pillows. Tails finished the television and turned it off. Knuckles crammed the last few packages of food into the refrigerator and closed it shut with some difficulty. "Are you done already? I think I'm growing a beard over here!" Sonic declared loudly.

"Okay! Done! Hide!" Amy shouted and they scattered to hide in corners of the room. Just in time, as the staircase was pulled down and Shadow came bouncing up the steps with Omochao right behind him.

"You and Cammy were in on this, Omochao! What were you planning?!" Shadow shouted and came to a dead halt, staring at his room.

Everything was either new or completely fixed! New blankets and dishes and tables and chairs. The clock and TV were fully repaired, a miracle in and of themselves. The refrigerator looked packed with food and the whole place looked nice and clean. A vase of flowers on the table made the room smell fresh and nice.

"Omochao! What did you do to my room?!" Shadow yelled and everyone popped in, laughing.

"Surprise!" they shouted and the black hedgehog looked around at them in shock.

"Sonic? And the others? You did this? Why?" he asked. Sonic limped up to him and rapped on his head.

"'Cause we wanted to, lamebrain! We wanted to cheer you up, so we fixed your place up. It's the least we could do for you." he replied.

"It was my idea!" Amy butted in and giggled. She winked slyly. "So, how was your date with Cammy?" Shadow blushed and shook his head.

"It went okay, and it *wasn't* a date. Just lunch and movie, until I figured she was up to something." he answered and blinked, "Wait a second. She was in on this, too?"

"Of course! Some of my money went into this project!" Cammy declared from the stairs. She finished climbing them and stepped up beside him. She winked at him. "Besides, getting you out of the way was fun. We should do it more often."

"Only if you catch me." Shadow told her flatly. Cammy shrugged.

"Sure, play hard to get. It's no problem for me. I caught up to you a bunch of times before. I can do it again!" she laughed, "Deal! Every time I catch you, we go on a date!"

"Why do I suddenly feel like I've been suckered?" Shadow mumbled. Sonic shook his head and motioned for him to lean to him.

"It's because you were, Shadow. Watch out. Women are tricky." he whispered to him.

"I heard that!" Amy scolded.

"So, how do you like our present to you?" Sonic exclaimed, changing the subject quickly. Shadow smiled and nodded.

"It's great. Thanks. I'll help me get better grips on my life." he replied.

"Well, while we're here...let's party!" Knuckles declared and the unanimous cries of 'Party!' decided it.

A few hours later, Sonic and his friends had to leave for the hotel where they stayed. Knuckles had to get back to Angel Island before Tails' new Floater device choked and dropped the island without the Master Emerald to keep it up. Tails had offered to give him a lift home. Shadow waved to the group as they headed down the street.

"It was great, what they did for me." Shadow murmured quietly with a small smile as Omochao floated near him and Cammy stood next to him. She nodded.

"Friends are wonderful, Shadow. Learn to make and keep them. Don't close your heart because of tragedy. Maria, whoever and wherever she is, would have wanted you to live on, for her and for you." she told him and looked up at the stars in the night sky. "Time for me to be getting along. My plane leaves in the morning." Shadow looked at her in surprise.

"You're leaving Station Square?" he asked with just a hint of sadness in his voice. Cammy grinned at him.

"Nice to hear you care. Yes, for a few weeks. I'm going to continue research overseas. I hear there are some temples there dedicated to the Chaos Emeralds. There may be some useful information there." she replied and stretched her arms over her head, yawning. "Well, I'm outta here!" she declared, then twirled and planted

a kiss on Shadow's cheek, catching him off guard. Cammy winked at him. "See you 'round...Shadow the Hedgehog." she whispered and took off down the street, laughing. Shadow shook his head and rubbed at his face.

"Crazy woman." he muttered and grinned, "But at least I can Chaos Control again if she gets too close."

"Not in that condition, you won't!" Omochao scolded, "Come on, Shadow! It's bedtime! You're not warping with that messed up arm and all that kissing is just making you look funny! Let's go!" Shadow saluted him and laughed.

"Whatever you say, Omochao!" he declared, "Tomorrow is another day for you, me, and the Chao of Chao Kindergarten!"

The End