

GeneX - A New Beginning

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A five chapter intro to the next story. Begins right where Tails the Fox left off, with Copter searching for his own place in the world...

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1 - Canine Companions

GeneX - A New Beginning
Chapter 1 - Canine Companions
Stage - Speed Highway
Battle - Copter Vs. Conan

Note: Sonic the Hedgehog and related characters are (c) SEGA and Sonic Team. You knew that, right?
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"One ticket to Station Square, please!" Copter was going to take a trip to the city where he and Tails first met. He wanted to really be there this time, unlike last time, when it was just business. His travels by train had taken him to many different places, but he hadn't gone there yet. So, he boarded the train and took a seat. He looked out the window at the people, with all their comings and goings. He still felt like he was on the outside looking in, like he really didn't belong in the world. As the train filled up, Copter began to fall asleep. He was awoken before the train took off. A black coyote girl wearing a small, sleeveless purple shirt and short jeans had woken him. "Hey, can I sit next to you?" she asked. Copter looked around. It seemed there were no other seats. "Sure." he said sleepily. The coyote sat down beside him and shook his hand. "I'm Katie the Coyote. What's your name?" she asked. "I'm Copter." he replied, still sleepy. The movement of the train as it left the station woke him up, and he looked over at the canine beside him. He was instantly struck by her beauty. He did not speak, as he couldn't think of what to say. After a while, though, she noticed him staring at her. "You recognize me, don't you?" she said, "Yeah, I'm the reporter for channel 2. I guess you want an autograph or something?" Copter shook his head. "No, I don't watch the news..." He looked away and tried to change the subject. "I... errr... I bet you covered the Kosmogon incident at Station Square? I was around when it happened..." he said. Katie smiled. "That was an exciting story. You know, you look a bit like the guy that fought alongside Tails." she said, "You know, the media still doesn't have much info on that. Sargent Gunner keeps declining interviews. If you were there, perhaps I could interview you?" Copter quickly snapped up the invitation. "Sure! Anytime!" he said. "Great. How about when we get off? Where are you getting off, anyway?" Katie asked. "Station Square." he replied. Katie gasped in surprise. "Me, too! I got a camera at my house, we can start as soon as we get there!" Copter blushed a little. "Uh... At your house?" he said nervously. Katie shook her head. "No, silly! I'll get my camera and meet you somewhere. How about Emerald Coast?" Copter looked out the window to hide his look of embarrassment. "Sure. I'll meet you there..."

The train soon reached Station Square, and the two of them got off together. Leaving the station, Katie called a cab to take her home. It seemed that Katie knew the cab driver. "Heya, Mia!" she said to the driver. Mia was a blue cat with violet eyes, and was wearing her "cabbie uniform," as she calls it. "Yo, Kat, who's the skunk?" Mia said. Katie looked over her shoulder at Copter. "You're still here? What, don't you know where Emerald Coast is?" she asked him. Copter scratched his head and looked around. "Ummm.... No." he finally said. Mia pointed to the nearby hotel. "There's an entrance through there, skunk boy." she said. "Call me skunk boy again and I'll take your muffler with me!" Copter growled. Katie

climbed into the cab as Mia laughed at Copter. "Chill out, buddy! I'm just messin' with ya. What's your name, then?" Katie shut the car door. "He's Copter. Stop eyeballin' him, Mia." she said quietly, so Copter couldn't hear. Mia waved at Copter and drove the cab away, leaving the fairly annoyed fox to himself. "Idiot. Skunks have stripes down their backs." he muttered, heading for the hotel.

After a while, Katie showed up and set up her camera on a stand so she could begin the interview. Holding a microphone, she made her introduction. "Hi, I'm here at Station Square for an interview with a fox who was present at the Kosmogon incident. Hello, Copter!" She held her mic to Copter, who didn't know how to react. "Oh, umm... hi?" Katie began the interview right away. "So, Copter, where were you when that big ship passed over Station Square?" Copter realized that he shouldn't tell the truth, as it might get him in trouble. "Umm... I was... uh... just... wandering the streets..." he said, a very bad liar. Katie pretended to ignore this and went on to the next question. "So, describe to us what you saw when the ship arrived." Copter struggled to think of a good lie. "Ummm, well, you see... I umm.... It was..." Katie interrupted him before he could finish. "You weren't in the streets, were you, Copter?" she asked knowingly. "Wh-what? Yes, I said I was in the streets!" he protested, but it was no use. "C'mon. I'm not an idiot, Copter. You were the second fox up there, weren't you?" she said, turning off the camera. Copter's jaw dropped. "You KNEW!?" he grumbled. Katie smiled. "I was in the streets myself. I saw you. What I'm very curious to know is why a hero like you lies." Copter looked like a little kid who was caught causing trouble, and Katie found this adorable. "Hey, listen, it's OK. If it makes you feel better, that camera wasn't really recording." she said, patting him on the back. "It's GUN, mostly." Copter said, "They've always been out to get me." Katie started packing up her camera. "You don't have to worry about me. I may be a news hound, but I can keep a secret!"

As Katie and Copter left the beach, Copter couldn't shake the feeling someone was watching him. Up in a high floor of the hotel nearby, a brown raccoon watched him with binoculars. "At last, I've found you!" he muttered to himself, "And what's more, I've found a nice bargaining chip." He put away his binoculars and picked a sheathed sword up from beside the window. "Of course, if all else fails, this won't." He started laughing as he thought of his plan. "Another day, another hunt! It won't be too long before I have everything I need!" He gazed over at a picture he'd placed on the table. It was a picture of a dark blue squirrel girl. "Nothing will stand in my way, ever again."

Copter and Katie went their separate ways. It was getting late, and Katie needed to go home. Copter, on the other hand, had nothing but time. As he wandered the streets, exploring the city, he was eventually spotted by a familiar face. "Tails! Good to see you!" Amy's voice came from behind him. He turned around and she realized her error. "Ooops, it's just you, Copter. I gotta get my eyes checked..." she said. "I suppose you were hoping that I was Tails because that might mean Sonic was in town?" Copter asked. Amy noticed something odd about him, something only she could notice. "Say, Copter... You seem... different..." she said. Copter placed his hands on his hips and shut his eyes, sighing an irritated sigh. "How so?" he asked, humoring her. Amy took him by the hand and led him in a circle. "Joyous day for Copter! He's in love!" she cheered. Copter pulled his hand free and backed away from her. "Are you always this nuts? What makes you say I'm..." he began to say, and Amy answered quickly. "In love? I can tell! So, who is it? Anyone I know? Have you told her how you feel yet?" All these questions took Copter a bit off guard. "I-I don't know what... No, I haven't told her..." he said hurriedly. Amy frowned at him. "Oh, that won't do! You gotta tell her! You can't keep such a feeling all bottled up inside, you'll explode!" she said scoldingly. "H-hold on! I only just met her!" Copter protested. This only got Amy's romantic thoughts going more. "Love at first sight! How cute! Just like me, when I met Sonic..." She sighed longingly, reminiscing about when she first met Sonic. Copter turned and ran toward the hotel

while she was distracted. "Uh, nice talking to ya, but I gotta get a hotel room for the night! See ya!" he shouted. Amy waved as he left. "Good luck with your romance, Copter! I hope you can be as happy as me someday!"

Copter couldn't sleep that night. There was far too much on his mind. Amy was right, the fact he'd said nothing ate away at him viciously. However, that wasn't all he was worried about. Earlier that day, he'd revisited the Mystic Ruins. It turned out, Shadow Arcangel had taken off again! While Copter was certain Bucky would not do anything drastic for a while, he was still concerned. Bucky's misdeeds had gotten Copter imprisoned once, and he feared it may happen again. "Since I may not have much time... I have to tell her how I feel..." he thought. Still, it wasn't the first time he'd felt he loved someone. During the day of the Kosmogon, Copter had felt something for Rainbow and Cream at certain times. Perhaps this wasn't love exactly, but it had to be something...

The next evening, Copter stumbled sleepily out of the hotel. He'd spent the whole day trying to sleep, but didn't get much. Now, it was rather late the next day. "Should've listened to Amy..." he thought. As he was about to cross the street, Mia's taxi cab pulled up to him. "Get in, now!" Mia ordered. Copter hesitated, so she opened the door and pulled him in really quickly, and sped away toward the busy streets of Station Square. "Hey, what's going on!? You do know kidnapping is illegal here, don't you?" Copter shouted angrily. Mia let out a sort of angry laugh. "Now that's irony! Here, read this!" she said, handing Copter a scrap of paper. Copter read what was written on the paper aloud. "Dear Skunk-Looking Fox, I highly suggest you bring your tailband to Speed Highway by 10:00. Otherwise, I'll just have to test the sharpness of my blade on your little girlfriend. Warmest regards, Conan the 'Coon." Mia nodded as she drove. "Yeah, do you have that tailband thing the note's talking about?" she said gruffly. Copter re-read the note and scratched his head. "I don't have a girlfriend...yet..." he said, mystified. Mia took the note back with one hand and continued steering with the other. "He thinks Katie's your girlfriend. Now do you have the trinket or what?!" she shouted. Copter fully realized what was going on and grabbed the band from his tail. "Shoot, he's after the Tailbands of Chaos!? How'd he learn about them? And... He's got Katie!?" Mia let out an irritated groan. "Not very fast in the head, are ya? That raccoon's insane! He's got this sword and... You're gonna help Katie or I'll personally kill you!" she shouted. Copter nodded in agreement. "I can't believe I got her in such trouble so quickly..." he thought, horrified at the situation he'd caused.

Mia's cab soon reached the meeting place at Speed Highway. It was on a blocked off bridge, so Mia stopped next to the cones blocking the bridge. She rushed Copter out of the cab. "Go, go, go! I'll be right back with the cops, okay?" she said. Copter shook his head. "No police. This is my mess, and I'll fix it." he told her. Mia gave him another angry laugh. "No thanks, pal. If you don't want police involvement, you better wrap it up quick, before I get back!" As Copter walked past the cones and onto the bridge, Mia's cab drove away quickly and recklessly. "She cares, I'll give her that..." Copter thought, running to reach the meeting place. He only had a few minutes left before 10:00, so he had to hurry!

Copter soon learned why the bridge was blocked off. It led to a dead end, high above the ground. Conan was waiting there with Katie, who had been tied up. Conan wore a grey hat and a black cape. A belt around his waist held the sheath to his sword. As Copter approached, he drew the sword, a silver blade with a golden hilt. "It took you long enough, didn't it, vermin?" Conan said deviously, "Have you brought the item?" Copter held it in his hand and showed it to him. Conan had a wicked smile on his face. "That's nice. Would you happen to have the other one?" he asked. Copter closed his fist over the tailband. "You never said anything about both of them! And you're not getting this one until you let Katie go!" he

growled. "How bold. But I know the tailbands were hidden together. Where is the second one?" Conan demanded. "Let Katie go, then we'll talk!" Copter shouted. Conan looked over at his captive. "This is getting us nowhere, isn't it? G'bye, love!" he said, pushing Katie over the ledge! Copter leapt over the edge after her, slipping the tailband on his tail along the way and catching Katie before she could fall far! Copter flew back to the bridge and landed a safe distance away from Conan. He quickly untied Katie so she could move. "Hide. This won't be pretty." Copter instructed her. Katie gave him a quick kiss on the cheek before running off. "Good luck, Copter!" she said.

Copter turned to Conan, who had pointed his sword toward Copter. "Very impressive. Just the sort of defiance I expect from GeneX Experiment 2!" he growled, swinging the sword to his side. Copter clenched his fists and bared his teeth, ready for a fight. "Just who are you, Conan? What do you want with the tailbands!?" he shouted. "My dear boy, it's power I want! As for me, I am the ultimate treasure hunter! And this... This blade is one of the many treasures I've unearthed! The Chaos Sword! Let me show you what it can do.... Blade, grant me power! Chaos Spear!" Conan pointed the blade at Copter again, and a Chaos Spear blasted forth from it! Copter was taken off guard and it knocked him on his back. Conan laughed as he approached the wounded fox. "The old world was truly amazing, wasn't it? Now, die!" Copter quickly rolled out of the way as Conan thrust his sword at him. As he stood up he was struck by another Chaos Spear, and in order to get away from the attacks he had to fly behind Conan. "Nice try!" Conan shouted as he pointed his sword behind him and sent more spears after Copter with surprising accuracy. Copter swiftly avoided the attacks as Conan turned toward him, which allowed him more accuracy. In moments, Copter found a barrage of spears coming straight at him, and all he could do was try to block with his tails. As he did this, the tailband glowed and emitted a blast of energy that negated the spears. Copter slowly lowered his guard when he realized he wasn't being hit. "What was that...?" he muttered. "Tapping into its power eh? Ha! I'll find you!" Conan shouted, looking around. Copter was puzzled. "What's he looking for?" he thought. Suddenly, Conan spun in a circle with his blade pointing forward, firing spears all around him. A spear struck Copter and knocked him over. "Ah, I see. You didn't move. I do wonder if you even know you're invisible!" Conan laughed as he approached Copter. "I'm invisible?! What are you talking about!?" Copter grunted, standing up. "It's a shame you're so stupid. I almost hoped you might keep me amused!" Conan said, swinging his sword at Copter, who quickly jumped out of the way. As Copter landed behind Conan, the raccoon simply spun around and smacked him with a Chaos Spear. As Copter tumbled forward from the attack, he suddenly noticed that his tailband had stopped glowing. "Can't control the tailband, eh?" Conan observed, chuckling softly at Copter's confusion. Copter turned to face Conan. "My tailband can make me invisible? But I guess since it stopped glowing, I'm visible again, aren't I?" he asked. "Oh, you DO catch on!" Conan said in mock surprise. "Now, once again, die!" The raccoon lunged after Copter with his blade, but Copter quickly jumped into the air and hit Conan in the head with his tails, knocking the raccoon backward hard. Conan had been taken by surprise, and the hit was sending him over the edge of the bridge. "Not totally clueless, eh? We'll meet again, Experiment 2!!!!" he yelled, seemingly falling to his doom. Copter, however, knew better. "Someone like that always has a contingency plan. He WILL be back... And next time he'll know that I know BOTH powers of the tailband..."

Copter found Katie back where Mia had dropped him off earlier. "I don't think we'll see him for a while." he said. Katie ran up to Copter and hugged him tightly. "Thank goodness, you're all right! What are ya, crazy? You should've waited for the police!" she said, holding back tears. "What is it with everyone and cops today? Doesn't anyone trust me even a little? I DID help beat the Kosmogon!" Copter grumbled. Katie released him from her embrace and looked away. "I'm sorry, I know. You don't need help." They could hear a siren heading their way after a moment. "I think I'd better go." Copter said, walking away.

Katie ran to his side. "Shouldn't you stay and talk to the police?" he asked. "Mia will explain everything well. She's good at that sort of thing. And I'd rather walk home with you." she said, taking his arm. "Well, um... O...K..." Copter muttered nervously. Copter can sure be shy when the mood takes him.

They walked slowly on their way to Katie's house. Copter kept his head down most of the way, afraid to look at her. It was apparently up to Katie to make conversation. "I see you on the train a lot." Katie said, "What brings you there so often?" Copter shrugged. "I'm on a journey. Sort of...searching for something." he replied. "Really? What are you searching for?" Katie wondered. Copter thought for a moment. "I'm not really sure. I'll know it once I've found it." Katie laughed a bit. "Are you sure? Hard to know you've found something if you don't know what you're looking for! Still, I do have faith in you. You'll find it." It was a bit cold out, and Copter thought she might be cold, so he put his arm around her, huddling close for warmth. "Who knows? Maybe I already have..." he said quietly. A few moments later, Copter managed to muster his courage to say what was on his mind, "Katie... I think I love you..." Katie smiled at him. "I think I love you, too." she said.

The next day, Conan searched the city for Copter, but did not find him. He had survived his fall through his own special methods, and now wanted revenge. "No one defeats me! No one! I may have been caught off guard last time, but next time, he WILL die!" he thought, holding the picture of the squirrel girl. "I will find all of the Chaos treasures, just you wait and see!"

To be continued...

2 - The Jackal

GeneX - A New Beginning
Chapter 2 - The Jackel
Stage - Red Mountain
Battle - Punchy Vs. Anubis

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"I've had ENOUGH!" Knuckles had caught Punchy attempting to steal the Master Emerald for the umpteenth time. Punchy leaned against the emerald while Knuckles shouted at him. "What is this to you, a game!? It's bad enough I have to live here at this lonely shrine, but I have to have you giving me grief constantly, too?!" he shouted. Punchy snickered at him. "Gee, Red, wouldn't you be bored without me?" he chuckled. Knuckles pushed him away from the Master Emerald. "It was peaceful before you were created! Now, I can never rest! Well, that's it! I'm taking a vacation!" he declared. Punchy looked at him quizzically. "Vacation? You're going to leave the Master Emerald here?" he asked. Knuckles replied by lifting the Master Emerald and stomping off. Punchy followed slowly behind. "Now, hold on! You can't just take off like that! What about Angel Island? What about..." Punchy found himself at a loss for words as Knuckles crossed the bridge toward the Red Mountain area. "The island will be fine. I'm outta here!" Knuckles muttered. "You know I'm just gonna follow you, Red!" Punchy shouted, still following Knuckles. "Right, sure, you're gonna chase me through Red Mountain without gliding? Good luck, Green!" Knuckles chuckled. He had a point, too...

Punchy found himself lost with Knuckles out of sight in no time. In the attempt to keep up, he'd gotten himself lost in the mountain caves. Now, he'd be content just to find an exit. "Who made these caves so big... and full of lava? Stupid Knuckles..." he mumbled, frustrated. He wasn't used to the heat, and didn't take to it very well. So, he hurriedly searched for a way out, heading on an upward path to distance himself from the lava.

"That's him!" A black and brown jackel was comparing Punchy to a sketch of Knuckles, which was in black and white. "The guardian of the Master Emerald. My mission begins now. Prepare yourself, echidna, to face the fiery wrath that is me! Anubis the Jackal!" Anubis waved his hands over the ground before him. "Arise, my servants! The time has come to bring despair to the denizens of the light once again!" Responding to the jackal's call, several arms burst out from beneath the ground, clawing their way to the surface. "I just wish there was a way to hurry this up. I grow weary waiting for the carnage to commence." Anubis complained as his minions dug themselves out of their resting places.

Punchy reached a dead end, a cliff at the peak of the path he was traveling on. The cliff overlooked a sea of lava, seemingly endless. "I guess I better turn back." he sighed, really wishing he hadn't followed Knuckles this far. As he turned to leave the area, he discovered that a group of black mummies had followed him! "What's with the black toilet paper? Who are you guys?" he growled, clenching his fists. Anubis stepped past them and stood in front of Punchy. "We are the agents of despair! I, Anubis, shall

be taking the Master Emerald to its new home, guardian!" Punchy looked at the group he was faced with, and gave Anubis a confused look. "Guardian? No, I'm the guy trying to steal it. And I seem to have lost track of it myself..." he explained. Anubis stared blankly at Punchy. "Your lies are amusing, but far more amusing will be your cries of agony! Break him, my servants!"

Knuckles was pretty pleased with himself as he made his way to the Mystic Ruins train station. He needed this vacation, and he was glad Punchy wouldn't be following him. As he reached the station, a train from Station Square arrived. "I wonder if there's a train to Soleanna from here..." Knuckles thought. He hoped to make it in time for the Sun Festival. As the passengers cleared off the train, Knuckles spotted a familiar face, Rainbow's. She spotted him quickly. "Hey, there, Knucklehead! What's up? Where's One?" she said cheerfully, looking around for her friend. She looked behind Knuckles, over the nearby railing, and then lifted up Knuckles' foot. Knuckles jumped away from her. "I'm not STANDING on him, crazy! He's not here!" he said, flustered. Rainbow scratched her head in confusion. "Then where is he?" she asked. Knuckles pointed to Angel Island. "I lost him in the mountains on my island. He can't glide, so it was pretty easy. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to catch a train!" Rainbow shook Knuckles' hand before taking off. "Thanks, Knucklehead!" she shouted back as she left. Knuckles shook his head. "I can't help feeling a bit sorry for Punchy... Having to put up with HER..."

"Hi-ya!" Punchy smashed the last of the mummies to dust after a bit of a fight. "If they already died once, what makes anyone think I couldn't kill them again?" he muttered, looking around and seeing no one in sight. "Looks like that weirdo got scared and ran! Ha ha!" As Punchy started to head back the way he came, a wall of fire blocked erupted in front of him, blocking his exit. "How in the..." he started to say, when Anubis dropped from the sky behind him, cackling loudly to get his attention. "That was merely a test to gauge your power. An infant could have defeated those mummies. Now, you face my fury! Burn in my Hellfire!!!" Anubis held out his hand and produced a flame from his palm. "Despair, for your miserable existence is about to end!" The flame burst into a large fireball, which Anubis hurled at Punchy. Punchy scrambled to get out of the way, but Anubis merely shot a jet of flames in front of him, cutting off his escape! "It's no use. You would be wise not to resist. The pain shall end faster." he insisted. Of course, that was out of the question. "You think you're so tough? I'll show you!" Punchy shouted, jumping high into the air. "I hope this works..." He lunged forward in the air, attempting to glide, but he couldn't. He tumbled to the floor and rolled over the ledge, barely grabbing the wall before falling. Anubis slowly turned around and watched him pull himself up. "Or perhaps you'd prefer to destroy yourself, oaf." he said. Punchy climbed to his feet and smirked at Anubis. "No thanks. I think I'll show you my true power! Chaos Avelanche!" Punchy lifted up chunks of the ground using his Chaos powers and threw them at Anubis. The jackal did not panic. He slowly and skillfully stepped left and right, dodging the rocks effortlessly. "Mere trifles. You cannot hope to harm me. Still, you're welcome to try. Approach me, imbecile!" Anubis growled. Punchy ran at him and attempted to punch him, but Anubis simply caught his fist in his hand, retaliating with a swift, flaming kick to Punchy's chest! Punchy was knocked away, but not shaken much. Anubis didn't waste a moment, and quickly shot two fiery pillars from his hands toward Punchy. Seeing no easy way to dodge the attack, Punchy flung himself over the ledge and grabbed the wall as the flames passed by him. "It is futile to hide!" Anubis slowly walked toward where Punchy was clinging to the wall. "I am not exiting this abyss without the great controller! As for you, you will never leave this place!" Punchy was climbing along the side of the wall, desperately trying to come up with a strategy. Soon, Anubis had reached the ledge, and spotted Punchy trying to escape. "Burn to ashes!" Anubis shouted, spouting flames at Punchy from his mouth! Punchy quickly

pushed himself back to the top of the ledge and climbed to his feet while Anubis was busy. "You sure like to talk!" Punchy grunted, running after Anubis once again. Anubis was too slow turning around, and Punchy managed to push him over the ledge! However, Anubis wasn't caught off guard, and managed to grab Punchy's hand as he fell! Punchy grabbed the ledge with his other hand, and tried to drop the jackal into the lava. Anubis climbed up Punchy's body to reach the ledge and within moments stood over the echidna, ready to deliver the final blow. "Any final words, guardian?" he asked as he created another fireball in his palm.

"You leave One alone!" Rainbow's voice shouted from behind Anubis. The jackal quickly turned around to see Rainbow gliding toward him at high speed, fists forward. She flew right into Anubis and knocked him over the ledge! As he fell, he attempted to drag Punchy down with him, but Rainbow managed to grab Punchy's arm just as Anubis pulled him off the wall! Punchy kicked Anubis away from him, and the fiery jackal plunged into the lava as Rainbow pulled Punchy up. They looked down to catch a final glimpse of a flaming Anubis as he sunk beneath the sea of lava. Anubis let out a terrible shriek and left them with some final words. "My death is nothing! Soon, you and all the world will succumb to the ultimate despair!!" With that, Anubis was gone.

Rainbow waved farewell to Anubis. "Um... Sorry... I didn't mean to..." she started to say before beginning to cry, "Oh, my gosh... I just killed that guy..." Punchy looked out over the sea of lava. "Yup, looks like it. You'd think a pyrokinetic would be able to survive in lava..." he said, They were silent a moment, when Punchy suddenly realized something. "You just saved my life..." he said, stunned. Rainbow's crying subsided somewhat at his words. "He was about to kill you...? Then it serves him right!" she said, her cheery demeanor returning. "How'd you know I was here, anyway?" Punchy asked as they started to leave, since Anubis' flames were no longer blocking the path. "I saw Knucklehead on my way off the train! He said you were here!" she explained. "He must be long gone by now..." Punchy realized, "Well, maybe he went to Station Square! At least if I'm wrong, I can spend the night at your place...um...maybe?" Rainbow smiled and nodded. "Sure! Follow me, One!" she said excitedly, running ahead to lead the way out.

Of course, Knuckles wasn't in Station Square. However, Punchy did run into Copter during his search. They both shared the stories of their recent adventures while chatting in front of the train station. "Sounds like you really like this Katie gal, eh, Copter?" Punchy chuckled. "Well, I only just met her... But, yeah. I think so." Copter said, "Hey, I bet Rainbow likes you, Punch! She saved your life, what, twenty times already?" Punchy shook his head. "You've got it all wrong. I'm the one who normally saves her!" he insisted. Copter laughed. "Ah, so you're the one who likes her?" Punchy smacked Copter in the back of the head. "Shut up! I barely even like her as a friend!" Copter continued chuckling. "Really? Could've fooled me." he said. "Whatever. I gotta go." Punchy muttered, walking away. Copter waved as he left. "Nice talking to ya, One!" Punchy hurled a rock at Copter. "Fine, fine. Mr. One!"

After a while, Punchy gave up the search and found his way to Rainbow's underground home. As he walked down the roads of the hidden city, he noticed that little had changed. Remnants of the robots he had fought on his first visit were still scattered about. The hole in the library where Terra had crashed through it was still there, as well as the hole where Rainbow's doorway used to be. "I guess she can't fix this stuff by herself." he thought, feeling some remorse for the damage that he'd caused by leading Terra to her home. Rainbow ran out to greet him as he approached her home. "Hey, One! How'd the search go?" she asked cheerfully. Punchy ignored her question and pointed to the damage he'd observed. "Still in ruins, eh?" he said. Rainbow looked surprised, as though she'd only just noticed it. "Wow, that robot

jerk sure made a mess. I never had time to see the damage, what with how crazy the last few days have been!" she said. "I could fix it for you... maybe..." Punchy offered. Rainbow shook her head. "No, you don't have to do that. I don't even notice it!" she said. Before Punchy could reply, she ran inside saying, "Follow me!" He hesitated a moment, taking another look at the damage. "I probably can't fix it anyway..." he realized. "Oh, well. Maybe I'll try anyway..."

To be continued...

3 - Android Assignment

GeneX - A New Beginning
Chapter 3 - Android Assignment

Note: Sonic the Hedgehog and related characters are (c) SEGA and Sonic Team. You knew that, right?
GeneX and related fanchars are (c) 2BIT, the author. (also known as TheGreatGator)

Experiment 6, Guard the Gargoyle, looked over the city of Station Square from his vantage point atop the tallest building in the city. It was a clear night, one of those rare sorts where every star in the sky was visible. The beauty of it went unnoticed, however, as the sound of every police car siren in the city kept most indoors, unable to stand the noise. Guard, however, had too much to do to go indoors. "They're here... I can sense them..." he thought as his internal scanners searched the city. It wasn't the scanners that informed him of this, though. It was something more. Something he himself didn't understand. "I have a feeling about this..." he muttered to himself as he leapt from his high perch, stretching out his wings so that he could glide down to his destination. "What's bugging me is... How can an android, an artificial being... have feelings at all?"

Guard landed in near the Station Square police station. A police car was waiting for him just outside. As the android approached, a green porcupine in a police uniform stepped out of the car to greet him. "You must be the guy from GUN." he said, extending his hand in greeting. Guard ignored the gesture and headed inside the station. "Oh, I can see it'll be a blast working with you!" the porcupine said sarcastically, following Guard. It was rather busy in the station, with people rushing to and fro all over the place, with the exception of a young yellow porcupine sitting behind the front desk. "Grrrr... You can't be authorized to be there." Guard growled. The green porcupine stepped between them, sitting on the counter. "Leave him alone, it's just my little brother, Tommy." he explained. Guard glared at the youngster, who looked a bit frightened, then turned away and looked around the area. "Who's in charge here?" he asked. The green porcupine stepped in front of Guard again. "I'm the highest ranked officer here, sir! The chief and the other head blowhards are busy and I've been instructed to bring you up to speed. I am officer Razor the Porcupine, and if I'm not mistaken, you're here for the GeneX case, right?" Guard nodded. "I have been instructed to bring fugitives such as Kosmo the Morph and the other four experiments to justice. Grrrr... If you have any information I don't already know, please share it!" Razor gave him a sly smile. "All business, aren't you? Follow me then, I have some informants waiting." he said, leading Guard away. Tommy stood up from behind the counter and watched them leave. "Now I get what Razor's always talking about. There's some scary dudes out there..."

Razor led Guard to an interrogation room where two brown hedgehogs were seated, one with darker fur than the other. The light furred one stood up. "Hey, Raze, what's with the accommodations? We're not under arrest, are we?" he said in a gruff tone. Razor shrugged. "Standing room only around here tonight, Bill. The head honchos have every cop in the city hunting experiments. Experiments that you two claim to have spotted, am I right?" Bill looked over to the other hedgehog. "You tell 'em what you told me, Bob." he instructed. "I done spotted that there black chameleon in the poster." Bob said, holding up the poster with Vortex on it. Guard stepped past Razor and glared at Bob. "Where! Grrrr... Where was he?"

he growled. Bill held up his hand between them. "Easy, fella! We're here voluntarily, an' if you threaten us, we'll take our info elsewhere!" he warned. Guard backed off slightly, growling softly. "Go ahead, Bob." Bill said. Bob cleared his throat and continued. "I followed 'em. Very careful-like. But I had to stop, 'cuz I didn't have no cash to get in. See, he went into Twinkle Park." Guard immediately began to exit the room. "Hey, hold up!" Razor said. Guard stopped and looked back. "Anything else to report?" he growled. Bob shook his head. "Don't think so, sir." Guard let out an irritated growl. "Then don't detain me any longer!" Razor hurriedly followed Guard out, with Bill and Bob following. "There a reward?" Bill shouted as Razor and Guard left the station. "Put it on my tab!" Razor shouted back. Bill scoffed at him. "Fine thing. You'd think we was runnin' a charity, eh, Bob?" Bob looked at his watch. "I think it's 'bout time we got back to the bar, dontcha think, Bill?" Bill nodded. "Gotta call in some tabs if we wanna pay the rent! Let's go!"

"Wait a second, Agent Guard! I'm to accompany you on the mission!" Razor shouted as he followed Guard to his squad car. Guard jumped over the car and took to the air, flying in the direction of Twinkle Park. "Dang GUN! No respect for police authority!" Razor groaned, hopping into the driver's seat of his car. "I had a feeling this'd be a bad day. Better break out the siren..." In a few moments, he was off, following Guard as best he could. He also had to get the other officers off the wild goose chase they were on. "Attention all units! Suspects have been spotted in Twinkle Park! Repeat, suspects spotted at Twinkle Park!"

Vortex the Chameleon had indeed gone to Twinkle Park, and he wasn't alone. "Find any ringssss yet, Zipp?" he asked his companion once he caught up to him. "A few, but my luck isn't all that great. Guess I better not go to Vegas." the hornet said. "What's the grand total?" came a nearby voice, which belonged to none other than Bucky the Rat. Zipp held up one of his shimmering prizes proudly. "Fifty so far! How many are we shooting for?" Vortex looked around the park. "A lot more. Sssshadow Arcangel won't fly much longer on the power we've been ussing. I only hope that thesssse ringssss will do the job." he said. "I don't know, but we'd better hurry up and finish gathering as many as we can! Four, Five, move out!" Bucky instructed. Zipp hesitated. "Say, master, why did we come here looking for rings, instead of at the casino?" Vortex looked back as he was leaving, curious to know as well. "An enclosed area like the casino could make for dicey situations if the military came looking for us." Bucky explained. "So? They're no match for us! We could crush the fools easily!" Zipp said. Bucky let a few warning sparks fly from his fingers. "Innocents could be hurt if we were to battle inside such a place! There's more room out here! I did not create life with the intent of taking lives, though I did plot revenge when I realized GUN was after me..." he fell silent, lost in memories. "I lost sight of my true purpose when I planned vengeance against GUN. I won't let it happen again." Vortex and Zipp left after a moment, unquestioningly carrying out their orders. Still, Zipp wasn't quite satisfied with Bucky's attitude. "Why do we have all this destructive power if we are not to use it? I say he's going soft! Well, maybe it's just something to do with how Kosmo almost killed us all, but I still want my revenge on GUN!"

It wasn't long before Guard reached Twinkle Park. His android components sent a signal that enabled him to activate the entrance elevator without a pass. "Grrr... Now, finally commencing the mission." he said, feeling that he'd been slowed down by visiting the police station. As he entered the park, his sensors began to detect the presence of the experiments. Their unique genetic signature was unmistakable, and it would not take too long for Guard to find them. Before his exploration of the park could really begin, though, Razor caught up to him. "Yo, sunshine! While you're in this city, I'm your

partner! You don't leave without me!" he shouted as he ran toward Guard. "Grrrr.... Tell your superiors.... I work alone!" he grumbled, flying away. Razor slowly began to follow him, loading his gun with some odd looking darts as he did. "Maybe he don't need me, who knows? But what kind of cop would I be if I didn't follow him anyway?"

"Cursed vermin! I'd almost swear he was hiding from me!" Conan the Raccoon was still attempting a vain attempt at searching for Copter in the city. Little did he realize that Copter had already moved on, continuing his journey from town to town. At any rate, he'd grown tired of searching for the black fox, so he'd decided to try his original plan again. "If I can't find him, I'll make him find me! After all, if he came for that girl once, he'd surely do so again!" To that end, Conan searched a while for his old hostage, Katie, and found her at Twinkle Park, along with her friend, Mia. However, Conan did not make his move right away. The park was crowded that night, as they were once again having their popular "cute couple special." Conan wasn't interested in creating a big ruckus, and instead chose to bide his time for a while, hoping the crowds would dissipate at some point.

At the same time, Zipp had found the perfect way to win rings for himself: a shooting gallery! In no time at all, he'd won hundreds of rings with his incredible shooting skill. Still, the game was a bit too simple for him, and he grew bored quickly. "C'mon! Where's the challenge! I could make these shots from the other side of the park!" he bragged as he packed his winnings into a bag. At that moment, Vortex and Bucky arrived. "Hey, Zipp! Massster sssaysss that Guardssss around!" Vortex said. He was carrying four ring bags that seemed to be filled as much as Zipp's single bag. "Impossible! How'd you win all that!?" Zipp said with surprise. "Enough! I'm thinking it's time for us to leave!" Bucky said. He couldn't be more right, too.

Just then, an announcement was heard throughout the park. "Attention, patrons! We ask that everyone calmly vacate the park in an orderly fashion, through the main exit. The Station Square police force is on its way, as some terrorists have been sighted in the area!" The rest of the announcement could not be heard, for at the very mention of the word "terrorist," everyone in the park was sent into a panicked frenzy! Chaos and confusion broke out through the entire park as the patrons rushed to reach the exit. Zipp began to follow them when Vortex grabbed him by the wings. "Hey, lemme go! I hate when you do that!" he shouted in a panic. "Zipp, what are you sssso worked up about?" he asked him. "Didn't you hear?! Terrorists!" Zipp shouted. Bucky shook his head in annoyance. "Idiot! We ARE the terrorists! Apparently, my fears have already been realized. Sargent Gunner has Guard and the police force on our trail! These rings will have to do. Let's get out of here!"

Katie and Mia were among those that were alarmed by the thought of terrorists in the area, but it was a story that Katie just couldn't pass up. "It's too dangerous, Kate! Let's just get out of here!" Mia insisted. "No way! Not this news hound! You can go, Mia, but I've gotta get as much info as I can!" Katie said, pulling out the digital camera she had started carrying around for just such an occasion. Mia thought for a moment, then followed Katie as she ran against the crowd. "Least I can do is keep you from facing all this danger by yourself! Gimme that camera!"

All the excitement soon came together in the large pool area near the entrance to the park. As Bucky, Vortex, and Zipp ran to find an exit, Guard arrived and stood in their way. Seeing this event unfolding, Katie and Mia ran to get a closer look. However, Mia insisted they keep their distance, so as not to get

dragged into the possible fight that may have been coming. Unaware of the audience, Guard pointed his scythe at Vortex. "I've been searching for you. Grrrr... The boss wants you and Zipp in custody." he growled. Zipp aimed a pistol at Guard. "Yeah, well I'm thinking he'll be disappointed, as always!" he said. Vortex held out his arm in front of Zipp, as a sign for him to stand down. "What about the massster? Would you sssstand againssst him, too?" he hissed. Guard remained unfazed. "Boss said to arrest the experiments. Grrrr... He said nothing about master! Besides, I would never harm my master! Grrrr... But you aren't him!" Bucky pushed past his two experiments. "Experiment 6, I order you to stand down!"

"Are you getting all this, Mia?" Katie asked her reluctant camera-girl from their vantage point atop the steps near the pool. "Yes, but I don't think we're getting any hearable dialog..." Mia replied. Suddenly, a Chaos Spear struck the camera from her hand! "Sorry, love, your show's cancelled!" Conan declared, jumping down from the roof of the hall of mirrors building. Katie and Mia watched in horror as the villain they now believed was the terrorist approached. "I'd considered using you to lure Experiment 2 back to me, but I just remembered that I tried to kill you before, and I really think I should finish the job. You'll be my hostage this time, feline. Now, as for you, canine, die!" Conan aimed his Chaos Sword at Katie, firing a spear straight towards her! However, at the last moment, someone rushed up the steps with incredible speed and intercepted the attack before it could hit Katie! It was certainly a fast customer, but it wasn't Sonic! It was a light orange cheetah wearing a red jacket and red pants, someone Katie apparently knew quite well. "Chet! Oh, my god, are you okay!?" she gasped, helping him to his feet. "I'm a bit banged up, but I'll live, Kate..." he said with difficulty. Conan laughed at this event. "Oh, this is too amusing! How many boyfriends have you got, you dog! One less once I'm through with you!"

Guard heard the noise nearby, and found himself struggling to decide what to do next. "There are innocents in danger. An immediate threat, that for some reason I feel I should put a stop to. Then there's my mission, everything in my android programming says to carry out the mission... Yet..." his thoughts distracted him, and Bucky sensed the internal struggle. "So, what's it gonna be, six? You can try to capture us, and please your unpleasant commander, or you could rescue the innocents and be a hero. Clock's ticking, better choose!" Bucky declared, pointing to the hall of mirrors to inform Vortex and Zipp of where to go. Guard looked from Bucky to Conan, back to Bucky, then to the helpless citizens Conan was threatening. Suddenly, as a higher intelligence than his programming took over, Guard flew off toward the objective he chose...

Conan approached his victims. He grabbed Mia by the arm and restrained her with some ropes he'd brought with him. "Not enough to tie you all up, so I have no further use for you lovebirds! Now, die!" He began to swing his sword at them, but before it could hit its mark, the blade of Guard's scythe blocked it! "What's this!? Who dares stand in my way!" Conan growled as he pulled back his sword and looked around, seeing no one other than his hostages. Suddenly, Guard dropped down from the sky between Conan and Katie. "Get out of here! Grrrr... Get that cheetah medical attention!" he instructed. Katie began to lead Chet away, but Chet hesitated. "What about Mia?" he asked. Guard turned around and pointed away past the two of them. "Go! I'll take care of this!" Katie helped Chet limp away from the dangerous area, while Guard turned to face Conan. "Who do you think you are? Sonic the Hedgehog? Not that that bonehead could hope to challenge me, either! I am Conan, master of chaos!" He held his sword above his head before pointing it at Guard. "Blade, grant me power! Chaos Spear!" As Conan sent his attack at Guard, the gargoyle retaliated by firing an energy blast from his scythe! The energy blast flew straight into the spear, causing an explosion at the point where the attacks made contact! Conan stood still a moment in disbelief. "Another weapon like my own!? Impossible! There is no Chaos Scythe! Where did you get that!?" he demanded to know. Guard flew a distance away in order to draw

the battle away from Mia. "The good scientists at GUN upgraded the scythe that my master gave to me upon my birth! Grrrr! And in the name of GUN, I place you under arrest, raccoon!" As Guard said this, Conan made his way down the steps toward him, sword in hand. "Ah, I get it! You must be GeneX Experiment 6! The so-called only gargoyle in existence! What would you say if I told you there were more gargoyles out there?" he said. "I would not care, for I am merely an android! Grrr... They are not my kin!" Guard replied. Conan chuckled softly and somewhat angrily. He was a bit annoyed at this turn of events. "What, may I ask, could possibly be your motive for challenging me?" he asked, just out of curiosity. "Grrr... When I fully understand myself, I'll let you know!" he said. "Oh, you won't get the chance! Those who stand in my way all share the same fate! En garde!"

Thus, Conan and Guard became locked in combat. Each were highly skilled with their respective weapons, but Conan lost interest in the fair fight quickly. He backed up and fired a Chaos Spear at Guard, which he flew out of the way to dodge and fired an energy blast from his scythe in response. Though the attack hit, it did little to slow Conan down. "Indeed, that is simply a machine! Your scythe's blasts are nowhere near as powerful as Chaos Spear!" With those words, Conan began firing shot after shot at Guard, who was being kept too busy dodging to fire his own energy blasts in retaliation. Since he couldn't shoot back, Guard chose to fly around behind Conan and try to get close enough to attack. However, Conan was too fast with his sword, and Guard couldn't get behind him. That was okay, though. Guard had a new trick to try. He flew straight toward Conan, which left him wide open for attack, but before a spear could hit him, he activated a new function that had been built into him. The spear bounced off of the new force field that he had just activated! Using the surprise caused by this, Guard managed to hit Conan, though only the side of the scythe hit him. While the raccoon was stunned, Guard spun in the air and kicked him aside! Following that hit, though, Conan was back to his senses. He realized that since Guard was able to hit him through the force field, the shield probably only blocked energy attacks, such as Chaos Spear. However, it had no such effect when Conan fought back with his fist! He gave Guard a nasty uppercut, then kicked him with all his might! Guard was knocked high into the air, then crashed into the nearby pool!

Conan walked toward the pool, laughing in triumph. "You fool! I'll grant that you're an expert scythe wielder, but you're a poor fighter all 'round!" Guard burst out of the water, gasping for breath. Though he was an android, it seemed he required oxygen to survive as well. "Grrrr... You haven't won... yet..." he said between gasps. Conan pointed his sword at Guard's head. "Perhaps not, but in a moment it will all be over! You saved two lives, but sacrificed your own! How sickeningly noble! Now..." Before Conan could finish his gloating, he was struck from behind by a small dart. "Ow... What in the..." In a moment, the dart shot bolts of electricity through Conan's body, rendering him helpless. As quickly as the shock started, it soon ceased. "Impossible!!!" Conan shouted as he fell to the floor, making it possible for Guard to see officer Razor standing a few meters behind the villainous raccoon. "Nighty night, sucker! THAT is what I call good backup!" he said, blowing smoke away from the barrel of his gun. Mia, whom Razor had untied, ran to the edge of the pool to offer Guard a hand. "Are you all right, sir? Thank you so much for saving me, by the way!" she said as she pulled him out of the pool. Guard climbed to his feet and saluted Razor. "Grrr... I had it under control... But thanks just the same." he said. Razor smiled and nodded, then saw to it that Conan was handcuffed. "All in a day's work, Agent Guard. By the way, any sign of the experiments?" he asked. Guard hung his head in shame. "I am sorry. Grrrr.... I let them escape in order to rescue these civilians. I will accept the responsibility for my failure..." he said in the saddest tone he seemed capable of. (which was still pretty gruff) Razor laughed at his seriousness. "What do you mean? I think you did the right thing. Protecting the innocent should always come first, for an agent as well as an officer!" he said. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to get a stretcher for this one.

He shouldn't have suffered any permanent damage, but we better have him examined just in case. Think they'll mind if I skip reading him his rights while he's out? Heheheh..."

While Razor was busy, Mia took the opportunity to speak to Guard. "So... You're an agent? Like a secret agent?" she asked. "I don't know if I'd say 'secret'..." Guard replied. Mia saluted him in a playful manner. "Don't worry, your secret's safe with me, sir! And if you ever need a ride anywhere, call me! It'll be the least I can do!" she said. "Grrrr... Thank you. I think you can leave now, we have this under control." Guard said. Razor interrupted them, "No, I think she'd better stick around. The officers may have a few questions for her." with that, he resumed his work, as some other officers arrived with a stretcher. Mia gave Guard a quick kiss on the cheek before heading off to see if there were any questions for her. "Thanks again, agent..." As she hesitated to finish her sentence, Guard realized he hadn't introduced himself. "Guard. I'm Guard the Gargoyle." Mia winked playfully at him as she walked away. "Don't be a stranger!" she said. Once she was busy talking to the officers, Guard gazed up at the stars once more, his mind racing as he tried to make sense of the past night. "It would seem that I am more than just a mere android... The master gave me something other androids are without... And as a result..." His thoughts fell silent for a moment as he watched a shooting star fly across the sky. Afterward, he continued uninterrupted. "I can be more than just a program... I can be.....alive..."

To be continued...

4 - The Report Heard Round The World

GeneX - A New Beginning

Chapter 4 - The Report Heard Round The World

Note: Sonic the Hedgehog and related characters are (c) SEGA and Sonic Team. You knew that, right?

GeneX and related fanchars are (c) 2BIT, the author. (also known as TheGreatGator)

"And now, it's time for an important SSTV News Bulletin!" are the first words PUNCHY hears upon turning on Rainbow's television set (a rather old model, by the way). The two sit down to hear what the big message is. At the same time, Copter is catching the report on a large screen that was recently installed in Station Square's train station. It is a few days after Bucky was in the city, and now Copter had at last returned. Elsewhere, in front of an electronics store, a purple creature wearing a brown trench coat was watching the report on the TVs in the store window. His glowing yellow eyes were fixed on the screen...

Katie the Coyote appeared on screen to break the story. "Today, the military has released a list of dangerous fugitives that are loose here in the Untited Federation. The list was compiled by GUN's very own Sergeant Richard Jackson Gunner, who is here with us to provide further details." After that introduction, the camera turned toward Gunner, who was standing nearby. Spy was standing behind him, holding up a sign that read "Hi Mom!" Gunner cleared his throat and began his sinister speech. "Citizens of the United Federation. I come today with a dire warning. In the past few weeks, a terrible threat has been unleashed on our great nation. The most sinister manifestation of which was the giant dragon that nearly destroyed Station Square recently." The purple creature in front of the electronics store growled angrily at that statement. "That is taken completely out of context! He forgot to mention how he was the one who drove me so mad!" His complaints go unheard, and Gunner's speech continues. "Shortly prior to that, similar forces, led by one who escaped military custody, stole the Chaos Emeralds, which were used to release that abomination!" PUNCHY spit out the soda he was drinking when he heard this. "That underhanded jackanape! He's gonna pin this on me when he was the one that released Experiment 3 in the end!?" he shouted. "Calm down, One. Mind your inner darkness!" Rainbow warned. Sergeant Gunner's slander continued. "These six menaces have been known to work with the notorious Dr. Eggman, and are to be considered a great threat. Therefore, I beseech each and every one of you out there watching; If you happen to see any of the five GeneX Experiments or their sinister creator, call the police immediately. I fear to think what would happen if they were left to accomplish their dark, malicious goals..." As Gunner's speech came to a close, the camera returned to Katie. "Wanted posters are being sent throughout the nation so that everyone can be aware of what the fugitives look like. After the commercial, we'll be showing all you viewers the wanted posters as well, don't go away!"

Copter froze during the commercial break. He couldn't believe it. Katie, the same girl who had told him she loved him only a few days ago, was now betraying him to all of Station Square! "This can't be happening... I trusted her..." he thought. Suddenly, he noticed that everyone in the station was staring at him. Copter looked up at the screen, and saw the six wanted posters displayed. There was PUNCHY, Vortex, Kosmo, Bucky, Zipp... and of course, Copter himself. He looked around the station as the fearful eyes of the citizens looked from him to the screen and back to him. Their fear turned to anger, then to

hatred. Copter realized that it was no longer safe where he was. He addressed the gathering crowd in order to stall for time. "Umm... Gee, you sure can hear crazy things on TV... I once saw this show where this guy was claiming to have been to Saturn..." The crowd grew restless fast, and started shouting hateful things to Copter, who stepped backward toward the door slowly. "OK, wanna see some magic? Nothing up my gloves..." He turned and ran out the door. "Ta-da! I made myself disappear!" he shouted, running off through the streets to escape the furious mob.

Bucky, Vortex, and Zipp sat in front of a TV screen in Shadow Arcangel's control room. "We hooked up the TV for thissss?" Vortex hissed, glaring at the wanted posters. "I don't look like that!" Zipp growled, tossing a knife at the screen, which missed and landed on the floor. Bucky stood up and walked to the controls of the ship, gazing out the still broken window. "I knew this was coming. That's why I'm glad we collected so many rings. I just hope the other experiments don't do anything foolish." he said. Zipp hopped into the air and hovered beside Vortex, who had turned to look out the window as well. "I'm beginning to think Kosmo had the right idea! Kill them all and they'll leave us alone!" Zipp snorted. Bucky shook his head. "That's not the way. We must find a way to coexist with everyone else. This witch hunt, however, is a very nasty obstacle. Yet if we fight back, we just make them right!" Bucky slammed his fist against the control panel, furious with the recent turn of events. Vortex looked at the emerald terminal nearby, which held a fake Chaos Emerald inside it. "The fake emeraldsss are almosst out of power. Are you ssssure the ringsss can power thissss sssship?" he asked. Bucky turned to him. "They already are. I installed a few before we took off. That's why the fake emeralds aren't losing power. Because we're not using them. If we were, they'd be useless already." he explained. Zipp flew to another terminal, which held a fake red emerald. "How can rings power this ship, anyway?" he said. "The ship was designed to run on rings by the ancient people who first built it. The emerald terminals there were added by another people that took over the ship when its creators disappeared. A single ring can power this ship for a few hours, but the rings have grown weaker over the centuries. There was a time when one ring would power the ship for months! Though a lot of this ship and its history is still unknown to me, I have been able to determine that the ancients who built this ship relied heavily on ring power. Perhaps they were even the creators of the rings!" Bucky explained. Zipp dropped from his hovering place and landed on his head. "Ooof! You nearly put me to sleep! I didn't ask for a history lesson!" Bucky chuckled heartily at Zipp's remarks. "Sorry. Vortex, man the controls. I must resume work on the next generation of GeneX!" he said, heading for the exit to the control room. "Come, Zipp! Your banter will keep me focused!" Zipp flew over and picked up his knife before following Bucky. "I'll show you my new juggling act! Just let me find another knife!" he said excitedly as he left. Vortex manned the controls and sighed heavily. "I sssure hope experiment sssseven isss ssssmarter than Zipp..."

As another news day came to a close, Katie made her way out of the news studio, met by Chet on the way. "I can't believe they wouldn't let me see the wanted posters during the broadcast. Well, I'm checking them out on the way out the door! Are they posted there, Chet?" she asked him. Chet nodded. "I think I saw some of those guys at Twinkle Park the other day. Scary thought." he said. As they neared the main entrance, Katie rushed to the bulletin board and gasped as she looked at the posters for the first time. "Oh, my gosh! This can't be!" she shrieked, causing Chet to rush to her side. "What's up? Are you OK? You look like you've seen a ghost!" he said. Katie began sobbing uncontrollably. "Wh-what have I done? That's Copter up there!" Chet placed his arm around her and dried her tears with a hankie. "One of them a friend of yours?" he asked. Katie was too distraught to respond. She knew Copter was present during the fight against the Kosmogon, but she had no idea that he was related to it in any way!

Chet did not quite understand why she was so upset, but tried his best to comfort her as he led her out of the building. "It'll be okay... We'll do whatever we can to fix this..." he said, hoping they could. However, it was far too late to take it back now. The damage had been done.

Razor was off duty for the moment, so he took a break at his favorite watering hole, the Neon Tavern, known by those who frequently visit as "Bill's Bar." Having recently turned 21, Razor could order whatever he wanted, but always settled for soda. Today was no exception. Bill and Bob were both moving to and fro behind the counter, serving customers. That didn't stop Bill from chatting with his favorite customer, Razor. "What's up today, Raze? You on the hunt for them terrorists still?" he asked. Razor took a sip from his drink before replying. "It's a madhouse at the station. Since all of the fugitives have been spotted around sometime or other during the week, Station Square's bein' called a hot zone. By the way..." Razor reached into his pocket and handed Bill a wad of cash. "For your trouble. That GUN agent's a real nasty customer. Still, he means well. He rescued Mia from some maniac that night." he said. Bill chuckled. "Hoo boy... She got herself in trouble again? Was the whole gang there?" he asked. Razor nodded. "They left before I got there. Lucky thing Chet came back to town when he did. Katie nearly bought the farm, but he saved her again." he explained. Suddenly, a ringing was heard in the bar. After a moment, Razor checked his cell phone. "It's mine..." he muttered as he answered it. "Yo, big bro! It's me!" It was Tommy. "Hey there, little guy, what's the good word?" Razor said. "I'm soooo bored... Thought I'd see if you were doin' anything exciting..." Tommy replied in a drowsy voice. "My work's dangerous, Tom, you know that. Why don't you go help out at the station again. They need all they can get." Razor suggested. "All I get to do there is sort papers. I'm tryin' to reduce my boredom, not make it worse!" Tommy protested. "Well, it's better than wasting time! It's about time for me to get back to work, so I'll talk to you later, bro. G'bye!" Razor hung up his phone and started on his way out the door. Bill stopped him. "You gonna pay fer that soda!?" he shouted. "Tab!" Razor shouted back, rushing through the door. Bill glared at the doorway. "He's lucky he's my friend. And a cop. Or I'd..." he trailed off. Bob tapped Bill's shoulder. "We need cash to make the rent, Bill!" he said. Bill nodded, then stood up on his stool. "Right, I'm callin' in all yer tabs!" Before he even finished his sentence, the bar emptied as everyone fled paying their immense bills. "Thanks for nothing, bums!" Bill shouted, climbing down from the stool. Rather than complain to Bob, Bill simply began cleaning glasses.

Copter was furious. After getting by the initial shock of what had happened, he decided that Katie must have known exactly what she was doing, and now Copter was searching for her to confirm his suspicions. "She must've known I was one of the experiments. How long has she known? Does she really think me some criminal? After I saved her life!?" His thoughts ran uncontrollably, filling him with a terrible fear and intense paranoia. He was walking along a busy street when he spotted her on the other side. She and Chet were walking hand in hand, talking and laughing. Copter's eyes went wide and his jaw dropped. "She's got a boyfriend...? But I thought..." before Copter could complete his thought, he heard a siren nearby. Razor was on a police motorcycle, and he stopped a few meters from Copter. "Hey, you! Experiment! Freeze! You are under arrest!" he shouted. Copter glared defiantly at Razor. "The Hell I am! On what charge? Existing? Fine, try and catch me if you dare!" With those fiery words, Copter ran into the street and blocked another motorcyclist, who skidded to a stop quickly. Copter jumped at the motorcycle, and the rider hopped off and ran away in terror, possibly because he knew who Copter was. "Thanks for the bike!" Copter shouted, taking off as fast as the motorcycle would go! Razor sighed in annoyance. "Resisting arrest of course. You'll be sorry." He took off after Copter as fast as he could, though with a little more regard for the safety of those on the road.

Copter had never driven a motorcycle before, and it was extremely difficult to keep himself from hitting anything. Luckily for him, his unpredictability did make it difficult for Razor to keep up with him, much less shoot out his tires, which is what he was attempting. "This guy's gonna kill himself and anyone in his way! I have to stop him!" Razor thought, doing his best to aim his gun and steer the motorcycle at the same time. Copter, in the meantime, was having trouble focusing on the situation at hand. The events of the day had really gotten to him. When he woke up in the morning, everything seemed much simpler than it did now. He'd been looking forward to seeing Katie again, but now he felt betrayed. His mind racing, he struggled to keep focused enough to steer the motorcycle. Since it was dangerous on the crowded streets, so he turned at the first opportunity. Razor followed behind very stubbornly. "You obviously can't drive that thing! Pull over before you hurt someone!" Razor shouted, to no avail. Copter was too busy thinking to listen anyway. He simply sped up in hopes of losing Razor. Copter turned whenever he could, hoping to find a road he recognized, and Razor struggled to maintain pursuit. "I gotta make him stop, but I can't risk shooting at him. Odds are, I'd hit a civilian!" Razor thought, weighing his options. Soon, however, Copter found a street he recognized. It was a road rarely visited, and Copter could use the space in order to figure out how to better control his vehicle. Followed by Razor, he tore down the street, passing a dark alley with a secret...

The noise got the attention of the only nearby resident in this forgotten part of the city. Namely, Rainbow and her guest, Punchy! The two of them climbed out of the sewer to see what the commotion was. "We never get traffic 'round here, One! I wonder who it could be..." Rainbow said, gazing down the street in the direction the noise came from. In a moment, though, Copter and Razor passed by them again, coming from the opposite direction, as Copter had turned at the end of the street. Copter passed by his old "friends" too quickly to acknowledge that he saw them, not that he would have had he been going any slower. Punchy watched as Copter was chased to the end of the street and then turned out of sight. "Looks like the police aren't wasting any time rounding us up..." Punchy noted, a bit worried. "You think they saw us?" he asked Rainbow, who was waving in the direction Copter had gone. "Bye, Two! Stay longer next time!" she said, then turned to Punchy. "I don't think it's safe for you out here, One! Better get back underground!" she suggested. Punchy shook his head. "Can't. I know Copter. He don't belong locked up. Heck, I'd say he's more innocent in all this than I am! I have to bring him back here, so he'll be safe!" As he started to head off after Copter, Rainbow grabbed him by the arm and looked at him worriedly. Punchy didn't give her the chance to speak, "Stay out of sight. If they find you helping us, you'll be under arrest, too." Rainbow let go of his arm and watched him run after Copter. "Good luck, One..." she whispered.

The Station Square police station also housed the only prison facility in the city, which was more a temporary holding area for the more dangerous criminals detained there. It had taken longer than anyone would have liked, but the transport to the higher security prisons would arrive that night. Since there was delay, Conan was still being held in his temporary cell in Station Square, awaiting the transport. He had no plans to get on the transport, though. Yes, he would be leaving that night, but not with the other murderers and cutthroats. "Yes, Paulsy, my man, I'll be free once again when that transport arrives!" Conan sighed, lying against the wall of his cell. His cell mate, however, was skeptical. "Sure, you're gonna escape. And I'm gonna become queen of Soleanna. You're nothin' but talk." he grumbled, gazing down at the raccoon with hatred only learned through terrible deeds. Conan looked up at him sleepily. "You know, Paulsy, you have been disturbing my sleep all week. Maybe you need to lie down..." Before "Paulsy" knew what was happening, Conan jumped to his feet and pushed the man

against the wall, holding one hand over his mouth while the other choked the life out of him! It took only a moment, and the few guards around were in the middle of changing shifts. Conan had killed the killer so quickly and efficiently, it was easy to pass him off as sleeping. "Ah, well, Paulsy. You did say you were on death row, anyway. You've just been spared the crummy last meal they would've given you. Pleasant dreams, pal..."

Copter's cycle driving improved quickly. He was able to move faster as a result, but as Copter's driving became less unpredictable, Razor found it easier to pursue him. Copter was now speeding through the bridge at Radical Highway, when Razor gave him one final warning. "Pull over, experiment, or I'll be forced to shoot out your tires!" Copter responded by looking back and sticking his tongue out at Razor. He only looked back for a second, but it was long enough to cause him to crash his motorcycle into the side of the bridge! The impact sent him flying over the side of the bridge! Razor pulled over near the wreckage of Copter's motorcycle and glanced down the side of the bridge. "Stupid idiot!" he groaned, seeing no sign of Copter, "Why don't anyone ever listen to me?" As Razor turned to leave, Copter flew back up from under the bridge, apparently unharmed. "OK... I pulled over..." he said, panting with exhaustion. Razor spun around and aimed his gun at Copter. "Hands on your head!" he ordered. Normally, Copter would've just flown away, but he just didn't have the energy for it now, so he did as he was told. As Razor approached Copter with a pair of handcuffs, a jet of flame flew past both of them from behind Razor! The two of them looked in the direction the blast came from to see the Kosmogon flying towards them! At least, it looked like the Kosmogon, but much smaller than the version Copter had faced before. Kosmo flew under the bridge, and Razor ran over to the side to look for him. While Razor searched for a dragon at one side of the bridge, Kosmo flew back up through the other side in his gargoyle form. Upon landing on the bridge, he reverted to his normal form. "Run for it, Copter. I'll distract him!" he whispered. Copter nodded, "Just don't hurt anyone. You don't want me to have to kick your rear again!" Kosmo pointed away from the area. "Just get going! Don't make me reconsider this!" As Copter began to run away, Razor spun around and aimed his gun at him, then at Kosmo once he noticed him. "Freeze, monster!" he growled, having decided Kosmo was the greater threat. Kosmo held out his arms. "All right. Cuff me, officer, I've been baaaaad..." he said. Razor slowly stepped over to Kosmo and cuffed him, when Kosmo suddenly transformed into a bee! "Whoops, they don't fit me!" Kosmo chuckled, tossing the cuffs aside. "Aw well, better luck next time, constable!" Before Razor could fire a shot, Kosmo flew off over the bridge! Razor tried, but couldn't manage to hit the morph. He was further frustrated by the realization that Copter was long gone now. He tossed his now empty gun to the ground in frustration. "They're gonna love this back at the station..."

Copter really didn't have any idea as to where he should go. It seemed to him that once again, he was all alone without any friends. In the end, he decided that there was one person he had to see. He had to confront Katie, and find out for himself if she really did betray him. Therefore, his next stop became Katie's house. He wasted no time getting there, and as he went to ring the doorbell, he heard voices coming from inside. "Perhaps I shouldn't let them know I'm here yet..." he thought, "I might get more honest answers if I eavesdrop..."

Katie and Chet were just beyond her front door, in her living room. Their conversation had apparently been going on for some time. "It's all right, Katie, don't cry." Chet said, drying tears from Katie's eyes, "I'm sure he'll be all right. We'll talk to the police in the morning and see if we can't get this all straightened out." Katie shook her head slightly. "No, it's not that. It's the deception. Copter never told

me he was... one of them... I thought we trusted each other, but he didn't tell me the whole truth..." Chet put his arms around her, holding her tightly. "I'm sure he had his reasons. Even so, it doesn't really mean anything. Maybe he didn't think it was all that important for you to know." Katie returned his embrace and smiled. "At least I know I can trust you, Chet." They eased out of their embrace, gazed briefly into each other's eyes, then kissed each other.

Copter had looked in through the window at that point, and right then and there had all he could take. He rang the doorbell, but found he couldn't even wait for them to open the door, so instead he bashed it in with a powerful blow from his tails! "Foul, trecherous, two-timing dog!" he yelled, bursting into the room just as they ended their kiss. Chet and Katie quickly jumped out of each others' arms as Copter pointed an accusing finger at Katie. "I saved your life, then you condemned mine! You told me you loved me, but here I find you kissing this guy! What else do you plan to do to me, you hag!" he roared. Just then, Chet stood up between Copter and Katie. The cheetah was a bit taller than Copter, and might've seemed intimidating to him if he wasn't so angry. "Now wait just a minute, you dirty skunk! Don't you DARE speak to her like that again!" Chet warned. Copter opened his mouth to speak but didn't get the chance. "Shut your trap, and listen up! She had no interest in betraying you. That newscast was aired BEFORE she got to see just who these experiments were. She had no idea who you were. Maybe you should've told her something before, then maybe she'd have done something differently! And as for your romance..." he turned to Katie as his voice trailed off. "Was there a romance?" Katie sat there with her arms crossed, looking at the ground. "I told him I loved him. You know I say that to all my friends... He just took it the wrong way..." Chet turned back to Copter. "It's apparent that you haven't known her long. She loves all her friends. Doesn't mean she's IN love with them!" Copter turned away from them for a moment, lost in thought. "Th-that... She... you... How could I have known that? The truth is, you let me believe it anyway..." he muttered. Katie rose to her feet, looking apologetically at Copter. "I'm sorry if I hurt you... I didn't mean it. Could we be friends anyway?" Chet put his hand on Copter's shoulder. "How about it. Truce?" Copter went rigid when Chet touched him. He stayed perfectly still for a moment, then spun around and punched Chet in the jaw! Chet fell backward onto the couch, and Katie rushed to see if he was all right. "I don't need any friends." Copter growled, walking out the doorway. "Farewell."

Back at Shadow Arc, Experiment 7 had been completed. A masterpiece, the fruit of all Bucky's research. Zipp was waiting outside the lab when the door slid open, and Bucky scurried out to announce his newest creation. "Experiment 4, you are fortunate to be here! May I now present the newest addition to our ranks! The first of its kind, and the seventh of your kind, say hello to the phoenix!" Through the doorway stepped a fire red bird, wearing one of Bucky's old lab coats. It was beautiful. It was legendary. It was...

"A girl!?" Zipp gasped. It was, after all, the first female experiment created. Bucky smiled like a proud parent. "That she is. Why don't you introduce yourself, Experiment 7! What name would you like to be called?" he asked. Experiment 7 looked around the area. She was a bit dazed, having not been alive long. "I... I don't... Understand..." she finally said. Bucky chuckled. "No rush. Look around our home, but stay with Zipp. That's him, there. I'm feeling inspired, so I'm going to start my next experiment immediately." Without delay, Bucky walked past Experiment 7 and re-entered his lab, shutting the door behind him. Zipp flew over to the newbie to get a better look at her. "Ah, lovely. Always wanted a sister. Allow me to explain us... Team GeneX." he said, flying a distance in front of her. "Follow me, ma'am. I'll show you around while we talk." The phoenix, still new to the world, followed Zipp slowly and tried to comprehend everything that was happening. Zipp spoke while they walked. "Here's how I see us. We

are the few, the proud, the fake. Face it, we came off an assembly line. Old man Bucky wants to call you the first phoenix in existence, but you're just a science fair project, like the rest of us. We don't count. At least, not in the eyes of all those so called 'real' creatures. They don't accept us, because we don't have a mother. No, we just have a doctor. Crazy rat don't give his own behind about us anyhow, I reckon. He just wants to use us for his own ends. But, he's my pappy, so I grin and bear it. So, anyway, I forgot to introduce myself! I'm Experiment 4, Zipp the hornet!" Heather said his name, just to see if she could, while Zipp continued. But she was no longer paying much attention to him. "I'm not real? I was created by that rat? I won't be accepted? But why? I don't understand... Does everyone hate me? That's not fair! I won't stand for this!" she thought. Anger began to fill her heart. And with anger, can darkness not be far behind?

To be continued...

5 - A New Threat

GeneX - A New Beginning

Chapter 5 - A New Threat, A New Beginning

Note: Sonic the Hedgehog and related characters are (c) SEGA and Sonic Team. You knew that, right?

GeneX and related fanchars are (c) 2BIT (TheGreatGator), the author.

The Cosmic Interstate is (c) Archie comics.

The night grew later. Storm clouds were gathering over Station Square. In the light of the full moon, the prison transport at last arrived at the Station Square police station. The guards went through their routine, as always, until they reached Conan's cell. A few cells away, a prisoner was shouting and complaining. That prisoner was an odd man in an alligator costume, known as Gator the pirate. "Let me out! I don't wanna be in here anymooooore!!" he whined. One of the three guards looked at his prisoner list, then walked over to Gator's cell. "It says here this cell should be empty. Who are you and how'd you get in there?" the guard asked. "I am the great Gator! As for how I got here, your guess is as good as pie... er, MINE!" Gator said in a panicky tone. The guard walked back toward Conan's cell. "We'll deal with you later." he told Gator. The other two guards had already opened Conan's cell. "What, is he sleeping?" one of the guards said, pointing at Conan's cell mate. All three of the guards surrounded the man and tried to wake him up. Conan took advantage of the opportunity to take out the guards by smacking their heads together! All three of the guards fell to the ground, unconscious. "Good evening, officers! Lovely day for an escape, isn't it?" As Conan began to head out of the prison area, Gator appeared in a puff of purple smoke in front of him! "I forgot I could do that!" Gator said, realizing that he probably accidentally teleported into his cell in the first place, too. "Get out of my way, you oaf!" Conan growled, pushing Gator aside. "Oh, how rude of me. Sorry!" Gator said as Conan passed by. "Say... That guy had a nasty look about him.... Meh, it's late. Maybe he's just tired..." Gator then teleported away.

Outside, it had begun to rain. In this weather, most would go inside. Copter, however, had nowhere to go. So, he wandered the streets, hoping not to draw too much attention to himself. He soon found himself in front of city hall, at the place where Sonic and Chaos had faced off for the first time, before Copter was even born. "So, here I am. Back to where I started. Alone. Hated and hunted. Betrayed. The only thing left is for them to send me back to Death Row. Maybe I should let them..." he thought, then he took off and looked at the tailband. Tails had allowed him to leave with this one, and might've let him leave with both, too, had Copter seen fit to take it. "What kinda crazy talk am I thinking? I'm not as pathetic as I was before. I'll get outta Gunner's latest trap! I always do!" Copter felt a bit better. He may have been cold and alone in the rain, but he was still free. Just knowing that felt good enough for the moment.

Then, all at once, the moment turned sour. Copter suddenly spotted a familiar silhouette on the roof of city hall. Thunder crashed behind the figure, illuminating the area and revealing the snarling form of Guard the Gargoyle! Guard swooped down to the ground in front of city hall, pointing his scythe at

Copter. "Grrrrrr!! There you are! I've a score to settle with you, copter-boy!" Guard growled, "Give yourself up, experiment! Grrrr... In the name of GUN, I arrest you!" Copter hopped smugly through the gate, ever defiant. His freedom was the only thing that kept his spirits up, and now, he found he'd have to fight for it. "Maybe I'd give up if I thought there was any chance of you beating me, but there's not. The score stands at two-zip! Care to give me another point, dog breath?" Copter said boldly. Guard snarled like a crazed wolf, raising his scythe in preparation for a beam attack. "Your luck's run out, Copter! Tonight, I shall defeat you once and for all!" He swung his scythe, releasing an energy beam toward Copter! The black fox quickly slipped his tailband back onto his tail and then deflected the beam by hitting it with the banded tail! The beam simply crashed to the floor, wrecking the drain that Chaos had once used to escape from Sonic!

Conan had retrieved his sword from the evidence room, which was conveniently very close to the prison area. Now, he was making his way toward the exit to the station. Anyone who stood in his way would up hurt, or worse! As chaos and confusion spread through the station, Tommy soon caught wind of the escape attempt at his "post" at the front desk of the station. "That crazy guy's gonna come through here... Shoot, I gotta call Razor!" Tommy said excitedly, fumbling through his backpack in an attempt to find his cell phone. The receptionist chuckled and tried to reassure Tommy. "We're in a police station, Tom. You don't really think any crook's gonna get too far, much less to here, do ya?" Tommy wasn't so sure. "How'd he get loose in the first place, Ms. Dedam? I think that's scary enough to think about! I wish I could find my cell phone..." The old receptionist just sighed in an irritated manner. "That's just a goof on the part of the guards. You think a group of trained professionals is going to make two goofs in one night? Gimme a break, Thomas." Tommy pulled out his phone at last. "I thought I looked in there first..." he muttered, dialing Razor's number. Suddenly, screams and shouts were heard nearby, as well as the growls and grunts of a furious Conan! "Out of my way, pitiful scum! You can't stop me!" the crazed raccoon shouted as a blast from his sword sent several police flying through the door to the front office. Tommy panicked, and tried to dial faster, but his haste caused him to make mistakes, forcing him to start over repeatedly. Ms. Dedam ran around the desk and grabbed Tommy by the arm. "Come on, kid! We have to get you out of here!" she said hurriedly. Tommy, however, had frozen in place, terrified by what was happening. Suddenly, Conan burst into the room, and noticed Tommy holding his phone. "Trying to blow the whistle on me, eh, kid?" Conan growled. Ms. Dedam stood between Conan and Tommy, attempting to protect the young porcupine. "Leave the young one alone!" she shouted. Conan stared hatefully at her. "I'll have no one chasing me once I get outside! Now, die!" Conan fired a Chaos Spear from his sword, which passed clean through the old woman's body and passed over Tommy's head before hitting the wall! Ms. Dedam fell to the floor, and now Conan pointed his sword at Tommy!

As the thunderstorm worsened outside, Punchy found himself caught in the middle of it. The winds had picked up speed, and the rain was really doing a number on his eyes. Punchy had lost track of Copter while he was still being chased by Razor, and now he'd settle for just finding his way back to the Hidden Ruins. "Last time I try to help that lunatic Copter out!" he muttered just before bumping into someone in front of him. "Ooof! Sorry, mister! I didn't see you!" Punchy said, attempting to dry his eyes with his arm. "Quite all right, Dark One." the person responded. Right away, Punchy recognized the voice. "Illusi?!" Indeed, it was. The shrew was wearing a red hood along with his blue cape, so he remained relatively dry. "Yes, Dark One, I'm here. Back from my vacation in the Cosmic Interstate." he said, though Punchy couldn't have had any idea what that meant. Illusi handed him a long black coat with a hood, which he quickly put on to keep the rain out of his eyes. "So, what do you want now, Illusi?" Punchy asked. Illusi

gazed up at the sky, which was illuminated by lightning. "As storm clouds gather, so, too, does the darkness. Something terrible is drawing near." he said. Punchy looked out where Illusi was looking, and spotted Kosmo flying by. As quickly as the morph was there, he was gone. "Was that who I think it was?" Punchy said in disbelief. Illusi nodded. "He is just as outraged over the arrest order as the rest of you are." he said. Punchy let out a disbelieving, angry "HA!" before saying, "He's the reason we're all in this mess to begin with!" Illusi turned to Punchy. "No, Dark One. This has been a long time coming. Sargent Gunner has been planning this from the beginning. Anyway, I happened to see Copter on my way here. I presume you are out in this weather looking for him? That way." Illusi pointed in the general direction where he spotted Copter, then disappeared. "Well... Thanks, I guess." Punchy groaned, annoyed that Illusi left without warning. At least now he had clothes, and could continue his search with greater ease.

"Did you call anyone on that phone?" Conan demanded, slowly stepping toward Tommy. The young porcupine was too terrified to speak, and instead just backed away, shivering and stuttering. "I-I-I..." Conan grew impatient quickly. "Stop stalling! Who did you call!? Speak!!" At that moment, Razor burst into the station and pointed his gun at Conan. "Drop the sword, coonsky! One of the guards you knocked out woke up and called for backup. Very sloppy escape, pal!" Conan was furious. "I am no 'pal' to you! Now, die!" He jumped out of the way of Razor's gun and fired a Chaos Spear at him, knocking him over! Sirens were heard approaching outside, so Conan took his last chance to escape, and fled through the door without delay. Tommy rushed over to his wounded brother, who sat up slowly. "I'm okay. I only hurt my pride." he said. Tommy hugged him tightly, sobbing. "Ms. Dedam... he killed the old lady..." Tommy managed to say. Razor hugged Tommy back. "Next time you call me and say your bored, I promise I'll have a better answer! Now, help me up, bro. Don't worry, everything'll be all right..." While all present would like to believe that, in the next moment it was proven quite uncertain. The backup police that had just arrived came in and informed all present that Conan had given them the slip. It seemed that the sinister raccoon's escape scheme had worked.

Copter and Guard's battle raged on, each refusing to back down. Ever since his fight with Conan, Guard had been training himself to become a better fighter, and it showed. Still, Guard remained a bit clumsy. Copter had managed to knock the scythe out of his hands. So, for the first time, Guard found himself fighting unarmed, and in this more close ranged combat, the two of them appeared more evenly matched. "So, I see you're serious for a change." Copter said after a while. "Grrrrrr, I'm not losing to you again!" Guard growled, attempting to kick Copter from the air. Copter was knocked backward a bit, but quickly responded by punching Guard in the chest. The two backed away a moment. "Yeah, you've improved. I almost feel the need to tap into the tailband's power!" Copter chuckled. He was wearing the tailband, but not using it. After all, it was just Guard. "Grrrrr.... You arrogant skunk! You think you've already won! Grrrr... But this is far from over!" Guard jumped into Copter, sending them both tumbling across the ground and into the gate, where Copter kicked Guard away from him! Guard jumped away and took the opportunity to reclaim his scythe, which he immediately used to send a torrent of energy blasts hurtling toward Copter! The blasts crashed around the gate, obscuring it in a cloud of dust and smoke. Guard squinted to see through the smoke, when suddenly, Copter jumped out of it! He'd recieved a few bruises and burns, but nothing he couldn't bear. Now, however, he was incredibly frustrated. He tore after Guard in a fury, hoping to put an end to the battle right away. Guard, seeing the rage in Copter's eyes, took advantage of his blind anger and flew straight upwards, allowing Copter to pass under him before landing on top of him with a crash! Guard jumped away from Copter and pointed

his scythe at the fox, who was on the ground and struggling to stand. "It's over, Copter! Grrrrr, give yourself up, now!" Copter glared up at Guard, defiant as ever, refusing without speaking. Guard sighed heavily. "Grrrr.... You have the right to remain silent..."

Suddenly, a figure soared over the gate, coming straight for Guard! "Back.... off!!!" Guard heard this warning and flew straight up to avoid the oncoming attack. Guard landed behind the attacker, who turned around toward him. It was a green echidna in a long, black, hooded coat. "I've seen you before... Shadow Arc, right? But we haven't been properly introduced. I'm Punchy the Echidna!" he said, glancing back at Copter a moment to see that he was okay, then looking back to Guard, "And this idiot you're attacking happens to be a friend of mine. Errr... Maybe more an acquaintance..." Copter climbed to his feet. "Bah, he's lying, Guard! I don't know this bozo!" he snickered, joking. Guard tightened his grip on his scythe. "Grrrrr! You fool! I have orders to arrest you, too, 'Punchy!' Both of you will be coming with me now! Unconscious, if necessary!" Before any of them could make a move, however, they were interrupted by the sound of screeching brakes nearby! A taxi cab had pulled up to the gate, and Mia the cat ran out, trying to shield herself from the rain with her arms. "Guard! There's an emergency!" she shouted. Copter stepped past Punchy and looked through the storm to see Mia. "So, you're with Guard, eh? Why am I not surprised? Is everyone in this town so treacherous!?" he shouted. "I'm just as surprised about Katie's report as you are! But that doesn't mean I can't be friends with GUN agents!" Mia replied. Guard let out an impatient growl, which Mia quickly replied to. "Right, the problem. Conan's escaped from prison! He's caused utter chaos at the station! Razor and the others need you there!" She dashed to her cab upon finishing her explanation. "Hop in! I'll give you a ride!" she offered, but before she could open the cab door, Guard was flying off toward the station. "Fine! Catch a cold in the rain for all I care!"

As Mia's cab took off, Copter and Punchy watched. "Seems like you're having a bad day, Copt." Punchy observed. "What was your first clue?" Copter groaned. "You're welcome." Punchy said sarcastically. "I didn't need your help, greenie." Copter retorted. Punchy started to leave, without a word. "Thanks, though," Copter said, "'acquaintance!'" Punchy turned around, giving Copter an odd look, which he couldn't help but laugh at. "You look utterly ridiculous, Punch! Where's you get that oversized robe?" Punchy chuckled as well. "Wish I knew. So, it seems everyone's after us. Need a place to stay, 'bro?'" Copter walked over to Punchy and shook his hand. "Sure. I guess this makes us partners in crime, eh, 'bro?'" Punchy placed a hand on Copter's shoulder and looked at him with a grave expression. "There's one small catch. How do you feel about our host calling you 'Two' all the time?" Copter gave Punchy a similar, comically serious look. "Well, 'One', we're fugitives. We could always tie her up and gag her." They both chuckled a bit and then started walking side by side. "Beats prison, buddy." Punchy said.

It had been a busy night at Shadow Arcangel. Bucky's spree of inspiration had spawned four new experiments, each currently adjusting to their newfound lives. Experiments 9 and 10 were busy exploring the ship on their own, while Zipp was off conversing with Experiment 8 elsewhere on the ship. Vortex, in the meantime, had put the ship on auto pilot, and was waiting outside Bucky's lab, hoping to greet Experiment 11, who Bucky was now in the final stages of creating. "The massster hasss grown quite sssskilled at creating life. He'sss made almosssst ass much in a ssssingle night ass he did in the weeksss it took to create usss originalssss." Vortex said to himself. "Well, he did have help thiss time, though." He was referring to the little break he took from pilotong the ship after Zipp was finished talking to Experiment 7. Bucky had requested that Vortex and Zipp aid him in the creation of Experiment 8. They did well, and when Zipp left to begin talking to Experiment 8, Bucky took Vortex aside and had a chat with him. "I'm quite impressed by your work, five." Bucky had told him, "You'll make a fine assistant

in the years to come, and I couldn't be prouder of you. Four was all right, but he plays around too much. He lacks focus. You, on the other hand, may surpass even me some day!" He'd then asked Vortex what sort of creature he'd like to see. When Vortex answered, Bucky told him to expect a surprise once Experiment 11 was finished. So, here he was.

Experiment 7 was also in the hallway leading to Bucky's lab, lost in thought. "I'm just here to serve the whims of that crazed rat. To be 'Experiment 7.' To never be me." she thought, her anger building. She found herself speaking to herself, arguing even. "He did create me. I should respect him. He is my father." Then, her voice grew angrier, her attitude with it. "But he created me just as a specimen! Just as a project! He'll probably trash me once he's done with me!" Her voice then softened again. "No. Perhaps not. He'll treat me like a bird. Nurture me, care for me. Sure, he'll also be studying me, but he'll let me fly away when I'm ready!" Then, anger took her again. "I'm ready now! He won't release me! I'm a prisoner! He's betrayed me, brought me into the world only to cast me to darkness!" Vortex noticed that something was odd about her, but couldn't hear exactly what she was saying, and frankly, he didn't care. He was too excited to meet the newest addition to what he and Zipp referred to as "Team GeneX." After a few moments, Experiment 7 fell silent. She walked down the hall, to the door of the lab. "Massster cannot be dissturbed." Vortex hissed quietly. He'd become a bit drowsy waiting, though, and dropped off to sleep as Experiment 7 entered the lab. It was silent for a few moments in that hallway, until Vortex was woken by the sounds of explosions! Experiment 7's voice echoed into the hallway, "...And I shall henceforth be known as Heather the Phoenix!!!!" Vortex ran for the door to the lab, halted as he felt an incredible surge of heat coming from inside the lab. Another loud explosion, a violent crash, and the heat subsided, allowing Vortex to enter. He looked around the room with terror, and Zipp followed him inside moments later. The lab lay in ruins, all the equipment had been knocked around and burned. Bucky stood over a charred table, gazing through a gaping hole in the roof. "Where'd we get the new skylight?" Zipp joked. Bucky crashed his fist onto the table, causing it to crumble to pieces, before turning to Vortex and Zipp. His lab coat was burned in places, but he was mostly unharmed. He spoke in a shaky voice, disbelieving what had just occurred. "Experiment 11... had only just begun to live... and now she's dead. Experiment 7 saw to that on her way out. She's escaped...." Tears were rolling down his face, but a look of outrage burned through. "I will not lose this one. I will not be betrayed again!! I shall not allow another monster to be unleashed! Vortex! Zipp! Gather the rest of Team GeneX and bring Experiment 7 back! Chase her to the ends of the earth if need be! Move out!!!" With his fiery commands, Zipp headed out immediately. Vortex left a bit slowly, looking around the room for any trace of Experiment 11. "By heaven or hell... She shall be avenged!" he thought, heading out for his next mission.

Copter and Punchy soon found themselves at Rainbow's house, and the three of them were seated at her "kitchen" table, discussing the events of the day. "I thought I had friends in this town, but today, every last one of them betrayed me." Copter said after explaining his situation. "Not me, Two!" Rainbow pointed out. Punchy had related the story of his battle with Anubis as well. "At least you didn't have to endure that insane heat I dealt with." he said. Copter stood up from his seat, leaning against the table. He appeared exhausted. "I'd prefer fighting a real enemy, like you did. Someone clearly in the wrong. But the police... They've just been taken in by Gunner's biased reports." He began to walk away, then stopped, looking out a nearby window. "This underground city's incredible. I've never seen anything like it..." Punchy and Rainbow had stood up as well. "Yeah, this place is neat. We could stay here for years and they'd never find us. Maybe we ought to." Punchy said. "That'd be neat! You could each take one of the old houses in the city! We could have a lot of fun here, guys!" Rainbow said excitedly. Copter looked blankly at her. "No, I can't stay here. It'd be just like prison, only the food would be better. I for one don't

want to give Gunner the satisfaction! I can't live in hiding!" he insisted. Rainbow looked a bit disappointed, but cheered up quickly. "It's okay. You're still welcome here anytime, Two!" Copter walked toward the exit. "Thanks." he said without stopping. "Coming back, Copt?" Punchy asked. "Probably." he replied, leaving their sight. "He's a fox of few words, ain't he, One?" Rainbow said a bit too cheerfully. "He's troubled, Rainbow. Are you so dense you can't see that?" Punchy muttered, too quiet for her to hear.

As the night grew later, the rain slowed down and eventually ceased. By this time, Guard had accomplished the task Razor set before him: to find and gather the citizens of Station Square who'd been involved in the recent events with the experiments and Conan. Back in the same interrogation room, all of them were assembled. Razor addressed the small crowd, which consisted of Tommy, Katie, Mia, Chet, Bill, and Bob, "I've called you all here because each of you have been involved with the recent experiment business, not to mention the capture of Conan the Raccoon. First off, let me inform you all that Conan has escaped!" A couple gasps and words of surprise followed before Razor continued, "Yes, yes, I know. I also know that he's bound to have thoughts of revenge for each of us. Not to mention the fact that the experiments might, as well. In fact, Chet here tells me Experiment 2 was at Katie's house tonight." Katie shot Chet a dirty look. "I was worried about you!" Chet explained. "He seemed violence prone!" Razor hushed the group and continued, "Therefore, you all are being placed under the witness protection program, and moved to a safe place. They tell me we'll be shipped to Soleanna." Everyone was upset by this news. "But... My bar! I poured my life into that bar!" Bill protested. "I just got back to Station Square!" Chet groaned. "Are we gonna have to change our names?" Mia asked. Razor hushed the crowd again. "One question at a time! No, our names will not be changed. With us furies, we can be found simply by our species, there's so few of us. Now I'm very sorry about all this, but it's the safest way to go." he insisted. Bill raised his hand. "Why, pray tell, would anyone come after me and Bob?" he asked. "You led us to where we confronted some experiments and arrested Conan! All of them may come after you!" Razor explained. "What about our jobs? Our friends? Our LIVES?!" Katie nearly shouted. "I'm sorry. No one can know where we're going. Don't worry, though. I'll take care of all of you. I'm being transferred to Soleanna as part of your protection." Razor said. "Fine thing!" Mia shouted. "See if I'll be helpin' youse guys again!" Bob muttered. "HEY!" Tommy shouted, silencing everyone. "You think my big brother likes this? He's a target, too! We all have to leave everything behind, because those scary people hate us! It's not fair, but we don't want to die, do we?" Everyone silently agreed, and they were dismissed to begin getting their affairs in order.

Guard, meanwhile, was talking to Gunner on a video display elsewhere in the police station. "Guard, I have a new mission for you." he began. "A few hours ago, the president contacted Shadow the Hedgehog in regards to the recent disappearance of Rouge the bat in Soleanna. Her mission was to retrieve a stolen artifact from Dr. Eggman. Guard, I suspect foul play, and I don't trust Shadow. You are to go to Soleanna, find Shadow, and observe his activities. If you see him doing anything out of line, kill him immediately!" Guard was a bit suspicious himself. "Grrr? How'd you get this information?" he said. Spy's voice was heard somewhere behind Gunner. "I AM a spy, after all!" Gunner groaned at Spy's stupidity. "Never mind my methods. Drastic measures must be taken to ensure the nation's security. You are to set out immediately! Gunner, out!"

Copter had wandered back to the surface just outside the Hidden Ruins. The storm had ended. Copter was wondering what would come next for him. As storm clouds gathered once more, he soon got his

answer. "Storms don't come up again this fast..." Copter said as a thunderstorm started raging again in the area. Lightning crashed nearby, and almost as though appearing from it, the Doomsayer approached Copter. "You again! I was beginning to wonder what happened to you!" Copter said. The Doomsayer's chilly demeanor remained unchanged. "Copter... There is darkness in the air tonight. It is a terrible omen. The Dark is coming." he said. Copter chuckled. "You're afraid of the dark?" Thunder crashed near Copter, causing him to jump. "OK, I get it! Don't mock the Doomsayer!" he said, gasping to recover from his near heart attack. "Evil stirs once again. A great flame is being unleashed, in more ways than one." the cloaked enigma warned. "Can you try being specific for a change?" Copter asked. The Doomsayer let out a low growl. "An experiment has escaped. A new creation, of immense power. It is full of confusion. Confusion that the darkness could use to its advantage. Worse, it is being pursued, by more foes than one, and for more reasons than one. These events will lead to the ending of the very fabric of the universe. You changed the future, but for the worse! Now, more than just this world is threatened. I warned you repeatedly, and you defied me to the end! Now, it's over. There's no hope for you now. Or anyone, for that matter. Doom has come!!!" As the storm grew more violent, the Doomsayer vanished into a cyclone of sleet and hail, and the storm subsided. The Doomsayer's voice echoed on the wind, "It shall begin at Soleanna..."

Copter looked up at the sky, now clearer than before. "Should I really care? Tails fought Kosmo, too! And Sonic, and Shadow! Let them deal with this! I'VE FOUGHT MY BATTLE!!!" His scream was heard below ground, and Punchy and Rainbow soon climbed up from the Hidden Ruins. "What is the MATTER with you!?" Punchy shouted, "Every cop in the city's looking for us, and you're just calling them over!" Rainbow tapped Punchy on the shoulder. "So are you, One!" Copter didn't avert his gaze at the sky. "One of the experiments has escaped from Bucky. A new one. And it's being chased." Copter said solemnly. Punchy looked up where Copter was looking. "You're kidding? Bucky's chasing it? He didn't chase me, and I was glad of it. This isn't fair! If that experiment wants to be free, it should be... But, what are you gonna do? Not our problem." he said. Copter's eyes went wide, and he looked at Punchy with disbelief. "You're right... You son of a gun, you're right!" he said. "Yeah!" Rainbow added, "What are we gonna do?" Copter shook his head. "No, I mean, she should be free. Don't you see? This experiment's in the same situation we're in! Wouldn't we like someone to help us?" Rainbow scratched her head. "Well, gee, what about me? I'll help you!" she said. Punchy looked confused as well. "Yeah, I don't see where you're going with this." Copter chuckled. "You two have been hanging around each other too long. One of you is making the other equally dense." Rainbow smacked Punchy in the arm. "What're you doin' to me, One?" Punchy rubbed his arm where she hit him. "Me?! He meant you!" Copter chuckled again. "Don't you see? We have to find that experiment and help it. We gotta get to Soleanna!" he declared. "Anna? Who's she?" Rainbow asked. Punchy rolled his eyes. "It's a PLACE Rainbow! But how do we get there? I mean, we can't exactly waltz into an airport, we'll be arrested in two seconds flat!" Suddenly, Gator appeared in a puff of purple smoke! "Hi! Gator was nearby and couldn't help overhearing! You need to get to Soleanna? Well, Gator needs a crew to get to treasure! And I bet Soleanna's bursting with treasure! And pie! So, set sail with me! I am Captain Giseppi Gator! Pirate extraordinaire!" Copter and Punchy exchanged strange glances. Rainbow, however, was smiling. "I like him!" she said, "I'm in, Bluehair!" Copter and Punchy excused themselves and discussed it privately. "What do you think, Punchy?" Copter asked. "I think I'm drunk." Punchy replied, "This is too weird to actually be happening." Copter nodded in agreement. "Yeah, but let's say you're not drunk, since you don't drink. Should we go?" They both pondered this a moment. "Soleanna's got nothing against us..." Punchy realized. "And this guy seems... friendly..." Copter noted. "We're gonna regret this, but..." they both said at once, "We're in!"

"Dr. Eggman!" Char flew through the passageways of Eggman's new Egg Carrier in a huge rush. Soon, he reached Eggman's control room. "Yo, doc! Your spy satellites just sent us these pictures!" Dr. Eggman turned in his seat to take the pictures. They showed what appeared to be a figure, blasting through the roof of Shadow Arcangel, covered in flames. "Ah, old Dr. Stein has created another monster beyond his control. A powerful critter, too. Perhaps I can harness this power for the Eggman Empire! Alpha!" The blue robot quickly reported to the control room. "Yes, sir, big red, sir!" he said, saluting. "Stop calling me that! I want you to find the creature in these photos and bring it to me. Alive, please. Char, you're in charge of this mission. Take a squad of robots with you." Eggman ordered. "Aye, aye, Eggman!" Char said enthusiastically. "Yes, Santa!" Alpha added. As the two of them left the control room, Char turned around. "Good luck with the Solaris thing!" he said. Eggman chuckled. "Who needs luck when you're this big a genius?" As Char flew off on his way, Eggman let loose a symphony of his insane laughter!

The next morning, Copter, Punchy, and Rainbow gazed out at the sea as Gator's ship set sail. They had no idea what time had in store for them, but they would face this next adventure together. It was time for a new quest. They had started a new beginning...

To be continued in Chapter 1 of GeneX - Soleanna Struggle! But for now...

The End