# Tails of Brave Adventure (Old)

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**Summary:** Tails, believing Sonic is dead, travels to a mysterious island to find his father. Part 1 is told in reverse chronology - it's an experiment, and I'm sorry if it's confusing :) Part 2 coming soon

## \*Chapter 1\*: Looking Back

TAILS OF BRAVE ADVENTURE

Series 3 - The Runes of Awakening   
Episode 8

[E-mail the author](mailto:Shaxr@angelfire.com)

**Part one - Looking Back**

**\*\*\***

**5:00 pm   
June 6, 2000**

**"Time for your medicine, number four oh five seven slash nine k." the bird growled. He had teeth in his beak, sharp, menacing teeth. They all did. What kinds of birds were they? Ravens, or crows, probably. But even that was a long shot, because they hid themselves very well beneath their military-style black uniform helmets and army-like uniforms. Their feathers were black, which was the only indicator of their species.   
The bird revealed a hyperdermic needle. It was long. Sharp. His prisoner wiggled out of its way, but he was trussed up like a Christmas turkey. The needle went in, and the prisoner felt nothing but bliss afterwards. He was being sedated. It was working. He struggled to stay awake, but the medicine was strong, and his body stood no chance against it. His eyelids closed. He fell limp.   
The bird put down the needle, a grin plastered across his beak, and picked up something else. A scalpel. It glinted in the dim light.   
"Time to see what's in your genes." he growled. He ripped away the apron that covered his prisoner patient's back, and lowered the scalpel towards one of the two appendages that was revealed.   
He lowered the scalpel to one of Tails' tails.**

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**What do you do when something eats away at your very soul? When your mind is focused on one thing, is focused on one thing only, for weeks, for months. Probably for a year, if you do nothing about it. Do you let it sit dormant, let it invade your every thought, your every dream... or do you do something about it?   
CAN you do something about it?   
Tails thought he could. That was why he left on the greatest adventure of his few years of life, and why he brought nobody with him.   
It actually started when he had recieved a message from Tyler, the fox who had once pretended to be his father. Tid informed him that he had finally arrived in Catilina, a positively enormous city to the north of New Knothole, and that a renowned scientist was looking into his werefox problem. He thought about Tails often, and apologised once more for pretending to be his father.   
Oh, and one other thing. He had heard news about Tails' father - his REAL father. Apparently, Robert Prower had returned to Kitsune Atole, where he had grown up. He had gone over the dark sea to try and bring order to the lives of the miserable people who still lived there. And he had never returned....**

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**1:00 pm - FOUR HOURS EARLIER   
June 6, 2000**

**"What was that?" Tails whispered harshly.   
He had heard a sound. He wasn't entirely sure where it had come from, or even what it was, for that matter. It was a decidedly metallic sound, like a brief clanking, but then it had stopped, having gone on long enough for Tails' ear to prick up just a little. The silence was immediate, foreboding. It was like whoever had made the sound had had an accident and tried to recover it, staying even quieter than they had before. Not even the birds chirped anymore. Neither the ones in the trees, nor the ones that swarmed over the island and spread their horror.   
"Tock." he whispered. Silence. "Tock?"   
The small robot lay beside him, motionless. The little clockwork bot had run out of juice again. Tails picked him up and began to crank the key in his back.   
His eyes lit up green. "Maa-aan, I HATE it when that happens. Zoink!"   
"Shhhhhh! Shhhoosh!" Tails rasped, a finger over his mouth.   
"Shoosh?" the robot asked, "Well how RUDE! Noig! What's going on?"   
Tails was hiding himself in the bushes, now. "I heard a noise."   
"A noise? Zoink! Hope those birds haven't caught us. The birds! The 'orrible birds! Zap! Noig! Stay low, we'd better. They prolly know we're 'ere by now. Creepin' around. Zip."   
"We have to try and make it to Q Beta." Tails said, "I don't intend on getting stuck here like my father did."   
"Q Beta, just up the road!" Tock said, and then added "Zap!"   
"I hope so."   
"I KNOW so. Crank me up a little more, would you?"   
Tails held Tock in one hand and cranked the key with the other for a good few minutes. The little pig-shaped robot's eyes lit up slightly brighter with every turn. "Thanks... TAK! I needed that."   
"Do you think we could make a run for it?" Tails asked, "I mean, I'd carry you. How far would we have to go before we're safe?"   
"Oh, under a mile, now! Zip, I can tell, Q Beta is close, DANG close! Zzzzoey! Nobody can stop us then! Hang on, I'll go check."   
A little propellor forced its way out of Tock's back, and began to spin rapidly. The little bot lifted off the ground, and began to zip through the air until he disappeared into the foliage ahead.   
Now Tails was alone, and he began to get afraid, truly afraid. For the first time in his journey, he began to question why, exactly, he had come.   
"Who do you think you ARE?" his mind screamed at him, "Sonic?"   
That hit a weak spot, and he began to sob. With Sonic gone, he supposed he WAS intending on filling the hedgehog's shoes and being a defender of the innocent. And the foxes of Kitsune Atole were most definately innocent. A hand grabbed Tails' arm. He squealed in horror, for the birds had caught him, and he hadn't even noticed their approach while he was sobbing.   
The one who had him in an iron grip was one he recognised. It was the bird who appeared whenever something bad happened to him.   
It was the bird known as Overdraw. The only one with a name that Tails knew.   
"Let go of me!" the fox growled, "You have no right!"   
"I have a right." Overdraw replied, the teeth in his beak glinting in the sunlight and his dangerous, wild eyes staring at him from beneath the crash-helmet-like headgear. "I have a right indeed. The only RIGHT that's lacking here is YOUR right to be here in the first place, yes?"   
"I'M SAVING MY FAMILY!" Tails screamed in a sudden outburst of rage, "YOU DOMINATED THIS ISLAND! YOU'RE THE ONES WHO SHOULDN'T BE HERE, DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING!!"   
"Get to your feet." Overdraw commanded, yanking Tails hard enough that the fox would have had to stand even if he didn't comply. His fur was dripping wet, matted to his body.   
"You'll never get away with this." Tails said.   
"Who do you think you are?" his mind screamed at him.   
"What would Sonic do?"**

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**If Sonic wasn't dead, would Tails have even considered going on his little mission? Wasn't at least some of the urge to go on his own adventure due to Sonic's untimely, sudden and quiet demise? Most, even?   
For Sonic was indeed dead - he had to be, didn't he? He had been missing for at least four months, now, probably more, but Tails wasn't really counting. He hadn't believed Sonic was dead, nobody did. Nobody wanted to believe that. But eventually, Sally conceded. And when Sally conceded, it kind of took away the hope from everybody else. They had a funeral. Sally had poured her heart out about the hedgehog on the day, and everybody else had lined up to do the same. Tails, however, said nothing. He wanted to, but he could do nothing but cry. It was the saddest day in his life. His best friend in the world was dead.   
But was 'dead' really an accurate synonym for 'disappeared off the face of the planet'?   
The day of the letter from Tyler came right after the day of the funeral, and in a way it seemed like fate. Here was Tails, desperate to fill a sudden void in his life with an adventure like those of the old days, and an excuse to do so fell into his lap. It was on that day that he decided he was going to hitch up the Tornado 2...**

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**12:00 pm - AN HOUR EARLIER   
June 6, 2000**

**"What are we going to do NOW?" Tails asked.   
The river roared. The rapids splashed against rocks with a deafening sound.   
"Have to go that way." Tock said, "Have to fly! Zip! Spin your tails and zoom! Zip! Zoohey! Z-"   
"I can't!" Tails complained, "I hurt it too badly! I think I may have broken it..." He held up his left tail, wincing from the pain. It was bent at a funny angle, starting to show dark bruises.   
"Oh... right... that.... zoink. Well, we're screwed. Stuffed. Mission: Impossible. Dang it! Zzzzop!"   
"We'll have to create a raft." Tails suggested.   
"A RAFT?" Tock asked, taken aback, "Have you EXPERIENCE in such matters? Mister Barefoot Bushman? Zip?"   
"Experience nothing. I didn't let that mountain range get in my way, did I? I'm not going to stop at no river, either."   
So Tails found as much debris as he could from the forest floor. Anything he thought would float - wood, mostly, but he found a lot of bark and such, and tied it together with long grass. It took him the best part of an hour.   
"There!" he exclaimed, "What do you think?"   
Tock eyed it for a long time before speaking. "You want the truth?" he asked, "Unfathomably dodgy."   
The raft sagged under its own weight.   
"Well, it's going to have to make do." Tails replied, "Hop on."   
"ZOOP!" Tock screamed, "No! I want to live! Zoik! I have many great years ahead of me!"   
Tails frowned and grabbed the little robot, who tried as best he could to resist. Then, holding Tock firmly, he shoved the raft into the rapid river.   
"She canna' hold together cap'n, she's breakin' up!" Tock exclaimed. Tails, remote robot under one arm, jumped atop the raft and pushed off. "How do you steer this thing?" he asked, as it began to move.   
"Steer?" Tock asked, "STEER? ZIP! If you can manage to keep all your LIMBS after this, that's a dang good achievement! FORGET about STEERING! ZzzzzzzZZZZZOOOOOOOOPAAAAAAAHHH!!!"   
The raft burst through the water, the rapids ripping it to tatters. Tails was almost thrown off several times, but he kept to his station, and he didn't lose Tock.   
"If your Dad knew how much you were going through for him-" Tock began, and was cut off by the bursting of a wave that ripped the raft apart. Tails was hurled into the water, and he lost his grip on Tock, who flew into the bushes on the other bank somewhere. Tails screamed, his mouth filling with water and almost choking him. The rapids were so strong he couldn't get a handle on direction. He threw his arms up and groped blindly for something, anything, that might save him... and he grabbed something solid. It was a tree branch. With an effort, he gripped it with his other hand, and managed to heave himself out of the river.   
Panting, he crawled across the branch to dry land, and dropped down. "What a rush!" he exclaimed, and began to giggle crazily. Where was Tock? He looked around, and finally his eyes fell on the little robot in the bushes. He crawled amongst the foliage beside Tock, and it was then that he heard the sound. A decidedly metal sound, like a brief clanking.....**

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**Sally, of course, had tried to stop him from leaving. Tails was nowhere near old enough to be the next Sonic Hedgehog - he was barely in double digits. She had, in fact, been quite infuriated by the mere suggestion. "What are you trying to do to me?" she had demanded, "So soon after Sonic's death, you want to run off on your own adventures? See how much worry I can put up with before I lose my mind? I won't have it!"   
"You don't know Sonic's dead!" Tails had disputed, and now he had been furious as well. It was a hard time on everybody, and everybody had a three-millimetre fuse, it seemed.   
"He's been missing since January, and that was half a year ago." Sally had said, "He's gone, Tails. I don't need this right now, we've been through it already."   
So Tails said some things that he couldn't remember, and would probably regret them if he could, and they had both been crying by the time Tails stormed out of the hut and slammed the door behind him. Almost unconcious of his actions, he had then gone to get his atlas to find the location of Kitsune Atole...**

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**6:00 pm - EIGHTEEN HOURS EARLIER   
June 5, 2000**

**It was almost nightfall when Tails and Tock, weary, run-down but determined, finally reached Quarantine Alpha. It was like a village, like Knothole or New Knothole or any number of Freedom Fighter villages back on the mainland. The only difference here was that the villagers were foxes. Every last one of them.   
Hideously, most of them were mutants.   
Tails was spellbound, so much so that he completely forgot about his pain-ridden tail, and he bolted into the village with no regard whatsoever for caution. It was pure luck that Q Alpha apparently wasn't patrolled by birds, or at least, not in any visible way. Orange foxes, some with two tails, some with three or more or none, some with more or less than the natural number of fingers or toes, walked back and forth, conducting their business, and took no notice of him. For the first time in his entire life, he walked into a public place and not one person looked twice at him. Not one single villager thought "hang on, something's not right with that kid". In fact, compared with most of the people here, Tails had it extremely lucky. He was overwhelmed with a sudden sense of belonging, like he had finally found his TRUE species. They were the residents of the Kitsune Atole. Though he remembered nothing more than being a fox with an abnormality on the mainland, he was hit with the sudden certainty that he, in fact, was a Kitsune, and he had no business as anything other than a Kitsune.   
"DAD!" he screamed into the crowd, and he did this without planning or thinking about it, it just happened, like a spasm.   
Now people looked at him, but still it was different than usual. It wasn't "Holy crap it's a mutated little freak boy", it was "Oh dear, that handsome young man appears to be lost". It made Tails feel so warm, but he was still overtaken with the need to find his father. He was so close, now. "DAD! DAD! IT'S ME! MILES! IT'S MILES, DAD!"   
Nobody responded to his wails. After a while, Tock flew up to him and landed at his feet. "You're here now, yep. Took you here. Zap! I guess I'll be going now, but I need a crank...zz."   
"What?" Tails asked in surprise.   
"Need a crank! A wind-up! A twist! Turn my key, kid!"   
"Yeah..." Tails replied, and picked the clockwork robot up to wind his spring, "But what did you say? You're going?"   
"Said I'd only take you this far kiddo, zoik. Any further and we risk death! We're fugitives, so I gotta get back to work!"   
"But what if I don't find my father, Tock? How will I find my way?" "That's your problem, tike. Hurry up and wind me, I'm running down." Tails took his hand off the robot's key and just stared at him. "Sorry pal, but I need you."   
"Hey! What are you doing? I'm... running... down!"   
"You're going back to sleep until I'm sure I don't need you anymore." Tails said, and he was suddenly a little ashamed - he sounded like one of the Armada birds he was going up against.   
"I can't... let you... do that... Miles... Zzip..." Tock said, his voice winding down with the rest of him like a poorly maintained pocket-watch, "My mind is going! I can... feel it... I can... feel it... my mind is... going... I am... unit... six-sixty-C... first brought online... about three days ago..... Daaaaisy... Daaaaaisy... I'm half... crazy... all for the love of... bicycle... built for......"   
And then the life left him, and he was just the hunk of metal he was when Tails had first located him in the mountain. He put Tock under his arm and went on his way.   
Where could he possibly even begin to look for his father? The situation had never really occured to him until now, but now it was here, he realised that he didn't have the vaguest idea what his father looked like. He remembered his father, yes, but in his mind, the memories were composed of random quotes and blurry shapes. His father looked like a silhouette of a person in his mind, he couldn't seem to remember any significant features. His father was Robert Miles Prower, that was a solid fact, but anybody could have claimed to be him. But why would anybody want to lie about something like that?   
(Tyler did...)   
Yes, but Tyler was a special case... he had motives. Regardless, Tails was confused and clueless as to how he would proceed...   
"I haven't seen you before." somebody said, and Tails was startled into spinning around. There was an old, greying fox staring at him, working him over with his eyes and a suspicious gaze. "Are you from Quarantine Beta? Are you lost, son?"   
"Quarantine Beta?" Tails asked, "Uhh, no. I'm not from around here, I'm looking for someone. Robert Prower... Robert Miles Prower, do you know him?"   
"Know him like I know the back of me own hand, I do." the old fox replied, and Tails' heart caught in his throat.   
"Where can I find him?" he almost demanded.   
"I'm afraid he's gone, son." the old fox said, "Gone from here. He brought hope to us, that young man, hope that we might one day gain rights like normal people. Like the Armada. He said one day there would be a revolution, and that we must all be ready for it. Ask anybody here about Robert Prower and they'll tell you you're not the only one looking for him..."   
Tails' stomach and face knotted up tightly, as it came to mind that he might not have come to Kitsune Atole quickly enough...   
(your aircraft will be impounded. Do not resist.)   
...and he might not be able to get off.   
"How long has he been gone?" he managed to ask.   
"Not too much longer than a week," the old fox replied, and Tails calmed a bit, "He is probably at Quarantine Beta, spreading the same message as he spread to us. Why do you ask? Where are you from?"   
"A long way away." Tails replied, and he looked up at the sky, which was quickly darkening to black. "Can I stay here for the night?"   
"Yes, we have a place for you. You are welcome here."   
Later that night, Tails wound Tock back up. He was excited all over again at the possibility that his father was as close as the next quarantine station.   
"ZAP!" the clockwork robot exclaimed, annoyed, "Some pal you are! I only ask to be wound up every so often!"   
"I did, didn't I?" Tails asked, and then sighed. "I need you to lead me to Quarantine Beta in the morning, they say my father is there."   
"I thought as much." Tock said, "Zip, I'll take you, but if you get caught, it's your own wretched fault. Zooey! I really should be working, you know."   
Tails put his hand on the robot's head, a single tear running down his cheek, and mouthed the words "thank you".   
The next morning, before most of the other foxes had woken up, Tails and Tock left the quarantine station. They hadn't intended on facing the roaring river, nor the bird who had been spying on him for all this time, just waiting for him to get out in the open... the one named Overdraw.   
"Subject is on the move again, yes? I will persue once again. I will close in to capture."**

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**Kitsune Atole was over the Dark Sea, which was an unfortunate thing, because planes had a habit of disappearing over there. It was like the Mobian version of the Bermuda Triangle. A small patch of ocean to the east of the mainland, which probably claimed its victims due to the horrible weather that seemed to always occur around there, hurricanes and tornados and the like. Tails was lucky when he navigated this area, because it was an unusually calm day. He thought that maybe it meant that the whole affair was going to be easier than he first thought. As it turned out, it would be much harder. He didn't take the Armada into account... he didn't know about Overdraw...**

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**1:00 pm - FIVE HOURS EARLIER   
June 5, 2000**

**Tails, panting furiously, pulled himself up to a ledge, and there he stayed for as long as fifteen minutes, catching his breath and letting his heart calm down. He could still hear the roaring of the flames beneath him.   
"I'll have to be more careful." he commented, realising it was an understatement. He didn't want to be deep fried before he got a chance to meet his father.   
Now he looked around the place, seeing where he was. What he expected was a cave, nothing more. After all, it was a perfectly ordinary mountain. But somehow he had managed to find himself in some kind of facility. The room was plated with steel walls, probably to keep the possibility of a cave-in down to a minimum. There were computer terminals everywhere and big rusty metal wheels all over the place that looked too big for Tails to handle, and they were probably stuck, too. The place looked like it hadn't been used in quite a while.   
Tails picked himself up and took a look around. He had time, now, to contemplate the strange presence that called itself Armada.   
(Do not resist. You are in Armada airspace. Turn around or your aircraft will be impounded.)   
Though he had almost been killed, he supposed he shouldn't blame them for protecting their airspace. It was a political thing. But did they have to go to such extreme measures for an unarmed biplane? And was that fire really necessary? He decided he was really going to have to watch out for Armada in the future...   
He came across something on the ground. Looking at it, he saw that it appeared to be a child's toy. It was caked with dust, and there was even a spiderweb running from the top of it to the ground. It was the likeness of some kind of little animal, the closest thing Tails could think of was a piglet, made of metal. There was a key sticking out of its back.   
Tails kneeled next to it and looked at it closer. What the heck was it doing in a place like this? He started turning the key in curiosity, vaguely wondering if the toy was going to attack him. Robotnik had made badniks that were as small as this thing was in the past, after all. He turned the key as far as it would turn, and then let go. Nothing appeared to happen. Perhaps it was broken.   
Tails began to stand up again when the key started to turn back the other way, ever so slowly, by itself. As it did, the toy's eyes lit up, and it made a whirring noise, which began to get louder and turn into a different kind of sound..   
"--zzzzzzzzzZZZZZZZZZZZZZIP!!" it screamed, and it picked itself up on its two stumpy metal legs and spun around to face Tails, who was shocked.   
"What date is it? Quickly! ZAP!" the toy demanded, and Tails was too surprised to do anything but give the answer.   
"Uhh... June fifth, I think..."   
"JUNE FIFTH! ZZZZOINK!" the toy exclaimed, and began running around in circles. "I'M BEHIND SCHEDULE! I'M BEHIND SCHEDULE! ZOINK! ZOINK! ZZZOOOOOOOOOINK!!"   
"Zoink?" Tails wondered. Aloud, he asked "What are you?"   
"What am I?" the toy replied, a question for a question, "What am I? Zap! What am I? Remote Robot Unit Six-Sixty-C! Zap! Zingo! What are YOU? Escape from quarantine, did you?"   
"No!" Tails said, "I mean, I flew here from the mainland, but the Armada..."   
"THE ARMADA!" the Remote Robot exclaimed, "ZOOPEDY-DOODAH! THE ARMADA! THEY'LL MELT ME DOWN FOR SCRAP METAL! I am so behind schedule! If I don't get back to work... did you say you flew here? You flew? Here? Zap! Why would you want to come HERE?"   
"I'm looking for my father." Tails said, "Maybe you know him? He's a fox. Like me."   
"Oh, that narrows it down!" the robot said, and chuckled in a flurry of beeping laughter, "There are hundreds of foxes here! They're all in quarantine. That's probably where you need to go, kiddo. Zoit."   
"Quarantine? Like, they have a disease or something?" Tails asked.   
"Zap! No, just valuable genes. They cut 'em up to see what makes 'em tick. Tick!"   
"That's awful!" Tails said, shocked and disgusted, "These Armada people just chop up my relatives for their genes?"   
"That's about the size of it." the robot replied, "There are two quarantine stations, and Alpha is nearest. You ought to get going before somebody finds you! Zap!"   
"Can you show me the way?" Tails asked.   
The robot stared with its blank lightbulb eyes into Tails' moist, pleading ones, and said "I suppose so.. zoink, since you started me up and all, I owe it to you, but just make sure you keep my engine going! Zip! You have to wind me every so often."   
"Thank you so much!" Tails said, and paused, "Uh, what did you say your name was?"   
"Unit Six-Sixty-C! Zap! Tock!"   
Tails giggled. "Maybe I'll just call you Zap-Tock. Or Tock... do you like Tock?"   
"I like Unit Six-Sixty-C, kiddo, but that's fine, I guess. Zap."   
Tails walked over to the ledge he had walked in from, and looked down. The fire had extinguished itself. Tock hovered beside his head with a propeller blade sticking out of his back beside the key.   
"You can fly!" Tails announced, "Neat! So can I!" He spun his own tails around in circles and took off, hovering just above the ground.   
"That is an incredible trick, yes?" came a voice, and Tails instantly realised that it wasn't Tock's. He landed and turned around.   
There was an army of birds standing in the room, now. Birds with military uniforms, or what looked like them, and very military styled guns, all pointed towards him. They must have gotten in through some back entrance. Tails froze solid.   
"Incredible!" the bird in the lead announced, and it was grinning. Its eyes were darkened by some kind of helmet, and his beak had teeth in it that were sharp like fangs. Needless to say, he was scary.   
"That is an effect we have not seen before, yes? The ability to FLY! Finally, your kind is beginning to evolve! To adapt to be like your masters! This is an exceptional occasion! One question remains, though..." He stepped closer, his grin fading. "Who... ARE you?"   
"Who are YOU?" Tails snapped back, gaining courage. "THAT is the question!"   
"We are the Armada." the bird announced at once, "The Armada we are. And I am Overdraw. You will come with us, yes?"   
"Not on your life." Tails replied, and took a step backward.   
The Armada aimed their guns at him. "Yes, we must have you! You must be studied!" Overdraw said with some kind of insane excitement. Tails tried to take another step back, but there were no more steps to take. He slipped off the ledge.   
By the time he knew he was falling, it was too late to completely save himself, but he spun his tails anyway, hoping to cushion the blow. Instead, he went into a spin, went through a tree and landed on the ground hard. He landed on his backside, crushing one of his tails underneath him.   
"AAAARGH!" he screamed, and rolled over. His injured tail felt cramped and very hot. After a while, Tock came down next to him.   
"They're after you!" he announced, "Zoink! Better get going! Come on!"   
"My tail!" Tails moaned, but he picked himself up anyway and wandered away with the small robot.   
It was slow going, but they weren't persued... at least, they didn't think so. And the sun began to disappear towards the horizon by the time they approached their destination...**

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**Transmission sent out by the Armada, a month and a half earlier - 20th April 2000:**

**Begin transmission   
WE ARE THE ARMADA.   
THE ARMADA WE ARE.   
We are close to our goals.   
Our research is paying off.   
But there are complications.   
There is a troublemaker in our midst,   
Making trouble,   
He is of THEIR kind, of the foxes,   
He has come across the land,   
And he has brought talk of revolution with him.   
He speaks of politics.   
Of rights.   
He must be eliminated.   
Therefore, he must be seperated from his people.   
He must be taken.   
He must be eliminated.   
For the sake of the project.   
Nobody defies us.   
Nobody escapes us.   
Ever.   
End transmission.**

**\*\*\***

**11:00 am - TWO HOURS EARLIER   
June 5, 2000**

**He lay on the beach for a long time.   
Sopping wet, cold and sandy, Tails picked himself up and looked about himself. Had he really almost drowned? What happened?   
(do not resist)   
That's right.. The Armada happened. They had taken his plane and he'd done an overboard dive. Now he was here, on the shore of Kitsune Atole. It dawned on him that he didn't know why they called it an atole, because it was definately an island - small, but only vaguely banana-shaped, and an atole was usually close enough to a full ring surrounding a lagoon. But such thoughts were meaningless, because he realised why he had come, and that was to find his father. And now he was here.   
Knowing not what he was doing, Tails ran into the forest that ran against the beach. He didn't know what he was looking for or where he might find it, and he ended up running in circles.   
"Okay, focus." he said to himself, and stood still, "Where am I going? I probably need to find a village, or something."   
He looked through the trees, and could see the mountains he had seen when he flew over. Maybe, he thought, if he could get on top of one of those, he could get a panoramic view of the whole island. So, he set off into the forest again, always keeping one eye on the mountain peaks he could see through the canopy. He was walking for over an hour before he decided to rest.**

**12:23 pm**

**Sitting himself underneath a tree, he looked at the lushness around him. Strangely enough, there weren't any birds singing, because that would make it a perfect scene.   
In fact, Tails noted, there didn't seem to be any animals at all. Something flew overhead, but it wasn't a bird. It was like a jetplane, or something. It was followed by three more, moving at something that must have been close to the speed of sound. They zipped past overhead, and before he could get a close look, they were already well and gone.   
"Are they looking for me?" Tails asked, and then answered himself,   
"Probably."   
The jets flew over again, slower this time, having done a full circle, and Tails thought he saw one of them drop something into the trees. Or was it his imagination?   
In any case, he decided it was time to pick himself up and get moving. If he stayed where he was, it might be easier to find him, and he didn't want to be captured by any tropical island government before he got to find his father.   
"What if they got him, too?" he wondered, and dismissed the thought. His father would be smarter than that, wouldn't he?   
Then he heard the sound and smelled the stench. The former was some kind of crackling noise, and the latter was like petrol and smoke. It confused him for a while, until it got considerably hotter, and he heard a tree crash to the ground behind him.**

**12:45 pm**

**"!!FIRE!!" his mind screamed at him, "But where'd it come from?"   
Another of the jets flew over, and dropped something into the trees very nearby. They exploded into flames at once, and Tails realised what they were doing - they were napalming the entire forest to flush him out! Or to kill him, he supposed, whichever came first. Knowing this, he bolted as fast as he could, his tails spinning like a propellor behind him. The heat was getting unbearable...**

**10:45 am**

**...he opened his eyes and realised that he couldn't see, the water stung them so badly. Which way was up? Which way was down? It was so cold...**

**12:46 pm**

**...he tripped over a stick and went head-over-heels into the dirt. The flames were all around him, now. They spread so fast! And the heat... the heat...**

**10:46 am**

**...if he could just see the sun then it would be alright, the sun would show him which way was up, which way to go, but he was panicking...**

**12:47 pm**

**...staring up at the sun, so bright it hurt his head, the flames all around him, he ripped himself to his feet, but there was nowhere to go, blocked off completely, and he didn't know what direction...**

**10:47 am**

**...running out of air now, thrashing his limbs around, but something brushed past them, something under his arm now and he hung on, hung on for dear life...**

**12:48 pm**

**...bolting into the flames now, bolting into the intense heat, bolting so fast that he almost ran into the mountain when he got to it...**

**10:48 am**

**...something under the other arm as well now, something like a fish, it was a dolphin! a dolphin! the dolphins were under his arms and he could see the sun now and they were going towards it...**

**12:49 pm**

**...climbing now, climbing so fast that his arms and legs hurt, but he was getting away from the flames, he could see the sun above him now and he was climbing towards it...**

**10:00 am - TWO HOURS, FORTY-NINE MINUTES EARLIER   
June 5, 2000**

**The Tornado 2 finally left the Dark Sea behind, and Tails, from the cockpit, could see his destination. It rose out of the endless ocean like a huge green whale - Kitsune Atole.   
"That's not an atole." he said to himself, and suddenly the thought occured to him that it might not be his destination at all. But no, it had to be. As far as his atlas knew, anyway, this was the only piece of land between the coast of the mainland and the coast of the next continent.   
It took him quite a while to bring the little biplane close enough to make out any features on the island. It appeared to have a cluster of tall mountains surrounded by dense forest. It wasn't very big at all - if his father was there, it shouldn't be extraordinarily difficult to find him. There was a crackling sound on his radio, and then there was a loud booming voice that startled him.   
"WE ARE THE ARMADA. THE ARMADA WE ARE."   
After a little while contemplating this, Tails reached to his radio and replied, "Uh, I copy, Armada. This is Tornado Two, a private small plane, requesting permission to land..."   
"Do not resist." Armada replied immediately, "You are in Armada airspace. Turn around or your aircraft will be impounded. Do not resist."   
"Armada, this is an emergency," Tails bluffed, thinking quickly, "I am requesting permission to land and refuel."   
"Do not resist." Armada replied, and there was no further transmission. "Armada? Do you copy? Do you copy, Armada? Oh great." Tails took hold of his control stick and tried to turn the plane, but it wouldn't budge. Instead, he realised that he was losing velocity, and he heard the clanking sound of the landing gear going down.   
He wasn't in control of his plane, anymore.   
Suddenly, he felt the overriding certainty that he didn't want to go where this mysterious Armada was taking him. He bailed out of the Tornado 2, and he was already in the open air before he realised that the wind was blowing too strong for him to fly, and so he fell instead. He fell like a rock, towards the ocean. As he fell, he wondered what was going to become of him, what his adventure had in store for him...**

**By five o'clock the next day, he would have his answer...**

**TO BE CONTINUED**

## \*Chapter 2\*: Looking Forward

**TAILS OF BRAVE ADVENTURE**

**Series 3 - The Runes of Awakening   
Episode 8**

[**E-mail the author**](mailto:Shaxr@angelfire.com)

**Part two - Looking Forward**

**"If you treat me like a dog, And keep me locked in a cage, I'm not relaxed or comfortable, I'm aggrivation and rage." --Powderfinger**

**\*\*\***

**Begin transmission.   
WE ARE THE ARMADA.   
THE ARMADA WE ARE.   
Our motives are simple.   
Our methods, complex.   
Our control, ultimate.   
Upon Mobius are many species,   
Some of them animals,   
Many of them people,   
All of them can teach us something,   
If we are willing to listen.   
To learn.   
Years ago, we recognised that red foxes have unique bilogical properties.   
Their blood, their grey cells, their deoxyribonucleic acids,   
They are special, and they can teach us.   
We can learn from them.   
They are native to the island of Kitsune Atole, east of the Dark Sea.   
We are scientists of the highest order.   
We have studied them for many years.   
Our experiments often have side effects, some of them desirable.   
Some are not.   
But the price of science is a great one.   
The price of becoming a better society, the price of growing.   
The price, of EVOLVING.   
Though our nature is inquisitive,   
Our grasp is not weak.   
We are the barrier.   
We are the higher evolution.   
Nothing escapes us.   
Nothing, nobody.   
Ever.   
End transmission.**

**\*\*\***

**5:00 pm   
June 6, 2000**

**"Time for your medicine, number four oh five seven slash nine k." the bird growled. He had teeth in his beak, sharp, menacing teeth. They all did. What kinds of birds were they? Ravens, or crows, probably. But even that was a long shot, because they hid themselves very well beneath their military-style black uniform helmets and army-like uniforms. Their feathers were black, which was the only indicator of their species.   
The bird revealed a hyperdermic needle. It was long. Sharp. His prisoner wiggled out of its way, but he was trussed up like a Christmas turkey. The needle went in, and the prisoner felt nothing but bliss afterwards. He was being sedated. It was working. He struggled to stay awake, but the medicine was strong, and his body stood no chance against it. His eyelids closed. He fell limp.   
The bird put down the needle, a grin plastered across his beak, and picked up something else. A scalpel. It glinted in the dim light.   
"Time to see what's in your genes." he growled. He ripped away the apron that covered his prisoner patient's back, and lowered the scalpel towards one of the two appendages that was revealed.   
He lowered the scalpel to one of Tails' tails.   
"Cease this operation." another bird commanded, and the scalpal stopped in its path.   
"Why?"   
"The board wishes for your presence to discuss matters involving the research."   
"Can this meeting wait for twenty minutes? This fox, right here, IS the research."   
"The board is impatient. They will not wait."   
"Very well, then. Lock this subject away until I can return to my work. Put him next to the other one. He has been sedated. He will not fight you."   
"Understood."**

**\*\*\***

**5:15 pm - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER   
June 6, 2000**

**"Aaand THERE we go!" the red fox with glass-bottle spectacles exclaimed when the little robot's eyes flashed on and it shook its head in confusion.   
"Uuh..." the other fox, the chubby one, said, "What is it, Dave?"   
"It's an Armada worker droid. They zip around the labs doing odd jobs and repair work. This one seems to be winding down too quickly, though, they're supposed to have enough juice to run all day."   
"What's it doing all the way out here?"   
"Beats the bejeebers outta me."   
The robot suddenly screamed "ZZZAP!" and looked around frantically. "How long was I out? Where'd he go? Where am I?"   
The two foxes looked at each other, and then down at the pig-shaped robot, its key turning in its back at alternating speeds. When it moved quicker, the robots eyes lit up brighter. "Ahh curses! Zip! Darn this dang-blasted-zoink-darned key! I must have fallen out of the flipping sky! Where's the kid?"   
"Dalziel, I think what we have here is a loopy robot, but one who might just be our key to doing some major damage in yonder laboritory, if you catch my drift." the thin fox said, and he adjusted his spectacles on his nose.   
Dalziel looked down at the robot. "Nah, 'fraid I don't, mate."   
"Well, it's painfully obvious if you know that these little things have full access to everything the Armada have. This isn't just an entertaining toy, but a skeleton key!"   
"Zip! Where's the kid? Where's the kid?" the robot demanded.   
"Aah quiet, you! Get him, buddy."   
Before the little robot knew what was happening, Dalziel's hands closed over it.**

**\*\*\***

**5:35 pm - TWENTY MINUTES LATER   
June 6, 2000**

**From where Tails lay, the world was dark. And yet, there were so many colours.. but he put that down to being the work of the drugs they put into his system to render him inept.   
The room he was in was changing shape before his eyes, but he thought he could work out what it was - a dull gray cell, cubic in diameter, with no openings except a grill in the locked metal door and a few vents around the place. From the light streaming in from the vent, he could see some kind of mural on the wall opposite to him. It was a full-wall representation of a DNA strand.   
"The Armada..." he whispered to himself, and rested his face in his hands. He was never going to get anywhere if he was locked up in a prison, and he certainly wasn't going to find his father.   
There were shuffling noises coming from behind him, through the wall. Tails wasn't concerned with them at first, as he druggedly pulled himself up to the vent with the light pouring through. He clung to the perhaps futile hope that the light was sunlight, and that there might be some means of escape. He didn't have to pull himself all the way up to know, even in his present less than coherent state, that the light wasn't strong enough, or yellow enough, to come from the sun. It was more blue than anything, and probably streaming from a fluorescent bulb in some other room infested with the creepy and dangerous birds. The fact that they were using fluorescents instead of chewing up the island's energy violently with regular lighting felt somehow ironic to Tails.   
The shuffling noises stopped (Tails hadn't really noticed them until they stopped - the way you don't really know crickets are chirping until they fall silent) and there was a single cough - short but distinct - and Tails knew he wasn't alone in his prison. The sound had a vague metallic echo to it, and that was most likely because the cell of his mysterious companion was joined to his own by one of the vents. The only question was, was it a friend or a foe?   
"Hello?" Tails croaked, unaware of how difficult it was to speak until he opened his mouth. The word barely came out, and he decided he'd have to repeat it: "Hello?"   
"Who's that?" came the slow, depressed voice from the other side of the wall.   
"My name's Sonic, who are you?" Tails replied, and his mind clearly and politely asked him why he said it. He had no idea - it just kind of came out.   
The other prisoner paused for a long time, as if thinking out his reply, and at last he mumbled something, a single word. It wasn't clear, but it sounded to Tails like "Trevor". Now they were on a first name basis, Sonic and Trevor, but it was clear by Tails' outright lie and Trevor's uncomfortable pause that neither really trusted the other, if at all, as of yet.   
"What are you here for?" Tails (Sonic) asked.   
Another long pause, then: "I was an inconvenience to the Armada, why else?" That ended the conversation for a little while, the stranger apparently not interested in asking the same question in return, and Tails' attention shifted once again to how he was going to escape. The idea that escape might not actually be possible was never on the cards, it was too depressing.   
Five or maybe ten minutes later, Tails said "What are they? The Armada."   
The customary long pause, enough of one for Tails to think that Trevor wasn't going to reply, and then: "Monsters. That's all there is to it. They think they're the highest forms of life because they have traits over those of other Mobians. They can fly, for one. They don't do it often, but they can. And they can fight. They don't really need weapons at all, even though they pack guns up the wazoo. You'd know that if you've ever seen one of them under pressure. They think they're smarter than everyone else, too, and their mission is to evolve every species to their level. They think it's their holy crusade, for the benefit of every Mobian. They speak of benefits even through their cruelty. It's their 'you have to be cruel to be kind' policy. They have distorted eyes, every one of them. They came here and the first thing they did to keep us under control was to drown over three quarters of us. We outnumbered them at first, but they got the drop on us when they sank us. You sound like a child, so I'm assuming you don't remember this."   
"They 'sank' you?" Tails asked, unsure whether he heard correctly.   
"That's right. This island used to be part of an atole, you know. That's where it got its name. This is just the tallest of a ring of islands which now lay under the Dark Sea. Some say that the waters are so turbulent there because they're haunted by the spirits of a thousand red foxes - Kitsunes - warning travellers to stay clear of the former Kitsune Atole. It's a poison place, this is."   
That explained to Tails the mystery of the island's name. But how did the Armada sink a series of islands? Their technology was evidently even more advanced than he suspected, and that made them all the more dangerous.   
"I have to get out of here!" he exclaimed suddenly, "I'm on... I'm on a mission. How do I get out?"   
"If I knew that," Trevor replied, "I wouldn't still be in here, would I?", and then, "Though they never come in here anymore. They never open the door - they're waiting for me to die. The only way out is through that door, and they open it from a computer terminal on the outside. If they're coming back for you, then I can try to help you. I know how you are feeling - I, too, was on a mission before they threw me in here."   
"Thank you...." Tails replied, and suddenly he felt tears welling up behind his eyes. "I'll find you, Dad."**

**\*\*\***

**6:05 pm - THIRTY MINUTES LATER   
June 6, 2000**

**"THE BOARD WILL SEE YOU NOW, OVERDRAW." the voice boomed over the loudspeakers, and then the doors, which made such a loud noise that its rusty screeching echo disabled the production of any other sound, opened to a dark corridor. Fearlessly, Overdraw stepped through, and proceeded to walk down the hall. Once at the end, another door opened to an enormous room. The lighting was terrible, but five figures could be seen looming over the far wall, seated on balconies too high to reach. Overdraw had to stand well back from them to communicate at a relatively eye-to-eye level.   
"WE ARE THE ARMADA." the same voice boomed, this time straight from the speaker's mouth, though it was impossible to tell which one of them had spoken.   
"The Armada we are." Overdraw agreed, and bowed deeply.   
"WE HAVE HEARD, OVERDRAW, THAT YOU HAVE MADE A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE RESEARCH." It was not a question.   
"Yes, your honors. From my personal observations, it appears that the first signs of desirable evolution have begun to show. A fox has been bred that possesses the ability to fly by its own power."   
"FLIGHT! THE FIRST OF THE THREE PARAMOUNT GOALS! EXCELLENT! IN ALL OUR YEARS, NEVER HAS SUCH AN EVENT TAKEN PLACE!"   
The birds who made up the panel of managers known only as 'The Board' began to chatter amongst themselves.   
"And currently I am examining the specimin in the lab, yes! We can clone him, erase the need for the other subjects... they are rebuilding their society, you know. Evolution has a way of forming societies even through the barriers set up by...."   
"WE KNOW ALL!! WE ARE AWARE OF HOW EVOLUTION WORKS!! MUCH MORE AWARE THAN YOU YOURSELF, OVERDRAW! WE ARE THE ARMADA! THE FORMATION OF ALL THAT YOU STAND FOR IS GOVERNED BY US! THE ARMADA WE ARE! WE DO NOT APPRECIATE TUITIONS! WE HEAR OF FACTS! WE HEAR OF PROGRESS!"   
"Many, many apologies, your honors, yes. I get carried away with my research, the excitement, you see."   
"WE WOULD LIKE TO OBSERVE THE SUBJECT. THE EVOLVED ONE." For the first time, a different Board member spoke.   
Overdraw was silently startled for a moment, but then, hesitantly, "You want to meet him? The flying fox? I was about to perform exploritory surgery..."   
"YOU SHALL NOT OPERATE UNTIL WE HAVE SEEN THE PHENOMENON. BRING HIM TO US."   
"Yes your honors, it shall be done. Am I dismissed?"   
"YOU ARE DISMISSED."   
Overdraw bowed again, turned and walked back through the opening from whence he came. Once the doors had closed behind him, he scowled and turned his head back to them. "Yes you high and mighty idiots. Whatever you say."   
He turned back into the prison block, rows of cells down the sides of both walls, and stopped at the main door. Reaching into a pocket, he pulled out an object - a key of some kind, slightly bent, without a handle with which to twist it. It looked like it had been part of something larger, and had been ripped off. Overdraw jammed it into a console and, with an effort involving mainly the misshapeness of the shaft of it, twisted it sharply to the right. The barrier between him and the cell block removed itself. He removed the key, but did not put it away. He walked up to one of the jail cells and turned to a computer terminal built into the wall. There was another keyhole beside the monitor. Once again, he inserted the key and twisted it, and then typed a code into the computer. There was a satisfied beep, and the door opened. Overdraw turned to the open cell, and that was when something like a chunk of brick hit him squarely in the forehead. He squauked loudly, but it was all for naught as he fell...**

**\*\*\***

**6:05 pm - SIMULTANIOUSLY   
June 6, 2000**

**Tails painstakingly removed the last of the six screws with his makeshift screwdriver. It was just a chip of concrete he'd found in the corner and rubbed on the ground until it had a flat edge. Then he twisted the screws of the vent with it, and found that each one was several inches long. It took him what he thought must have been at least twenty minutes to complete the job. When he removed the vent, he found that Trevor had already taken the grate off on his side, and was already pushing his package through the shaft. It was a decent sized chunk of concrete, the same kind as the little piece Tails had found. The Armada's prisons were falling apart, it seemed.   
"I was going to use it myself." Trevor said, "But that was before I realised that they were never going to open my door again. It's useless to me, but I have a feeling they'll be coming back soon. Just make sure you lob it good, kid, 'cause otherwise you'll never see the light of day again. They don't take kindly to being attacked, I have the scars to prove it." Tails took the brick and looked at it. It was large and jagged. He didn't know how long he was staring at the object before he heard noises outside the cell. His fingers closed even harder over the brick, and his heart began beating in his chest like a kettle drum.   
"Lob it good, kid." Trevor's voice repeated in his mind, and the door of his cell slid open with hardly a sound.   
Overdraw stood outside, and when Tails saw him, he almost dropped the brick he was holding so tightly. It might have been just his mind playing tricks on him in a time of stress, or it could have been an optical illusion caused by the lighting in the prison, but for a moment, just one moment, Tails was absolutely certain he was staring at Dr Ivo Robotnik.   
"!!HE'S BACK!!" - the thought hit him with such violent force that it almost gave him a headache. His heart skipped a beat. He wanted to cry out, but it caught in his throat.   
Then Overdraw turned around, and Tails saw him for what he really was - not a mechanical genius with a mostache that could sweep a floor, but a twisted feathered fiend with pointy teeth and an accent that he couldn't say he'd ever heard before. Without a second thought, he found the chunk of concrete flying from his hand across the room. Trevor had told him to lob it good, and he lobbed it very good indeed. Overdraw let out a squauk of pain as it hit him directly between the eyes. A little blood dribbled down the bird's beak as he collapsed.   
"RUN!" Trevor's voice screamed through the open vent. He had evidently heard Overdraw's cry of pain. "GET OUT OF HERE!"   
And Tails did. As he ran through the halls, fleeing his prison, he suddenly felt like somebody else. He felt like his old friend Sonic (and hadn't he given his name as Sonic when his invisible assistant Trevor had asked?) and he felt like he was running through the halls of the long obliterated city of Robotropolis (and hadn't Overdraw looked like Robotnik, just for a moment?). He realised, in his fleeting mind, that the Armada might as well have BEEN Robotnik... a thousand Robotniks, in fact. They were crafting robots from things made of flesh, and intended to do the same to everybody around the world.   
When Tails realised this, it could well have been the moment his mission statement began to change from finding his father to rescuing the foxes of Kitsune Atole.**

**\*\*\***

**6:15 pm - TEN MINUTES LATER   
June 6, 2000**

**"Don't go any further!" David rasped, and yanked back on Dalziel's arm. The chubbier fox, who held the little clockwork robot in one arm, sat down hard in the bushes. "What is it?"   
"Checkpoint." the bespectacled fox said, and he pointed to a strange looking thing sticking out of the ground that looked like a telephone booth. "You go past that and it sees you, there'll be a hundred Armada guards with gun barrels up your toosh before you know it."   
"So what's the plan?"   
"That little critter you've been carrying all this way, my good friend! This is what they do, you know. We have one of these, we can get anywhere, you see what I'm saying?" "ZAP!" the little robot exclaimed, "I am NOT a little critter, bozo! Zippo! If you expect me to help you..."   
"Now now, this is how it's going to be." David said, "You're going to stick out that little key of yours and do whatever it is that you have to do, or we're going to wait until you've wound down and then rip it right outta you and do it ourselves, you understand?"   
"Zzzz..." the robot began, and then paused.   
"You understand?" David repeated.   
"Well shucks, you are pretty persuasive, aren't you. Zoop. Alright, alright."   
Dalziel let go of the robot, and a rotor blade slipped out of its back and allowed it to fly upwards. Something came out of its side - the business end of a key, exactly the same as the key that Overdraw had used. The robot flew towards the checkpoint that looked like a phone booth, and slipped inside it. Moments later, the dim fluorescent lights around the edges of the thing switched off, and the robot returned to them.   
"There." it said, "Zap! Are you happy?"   
David grinned. "Very. Let's go, Dalziel. Time to kick some Armada cans!" "I'm not sure this is suck a good idea." Dalziel said, and he held onto the little robot as they got up and moved past the disabled checkpoint.   
"Of course it's a good idea! We're upholding the cause of the great Robert Prower! After they erased him, it's up to the rest of us to keep going with this! Standing up to our opressors!"   
"Yeah, but do you really think this is the best way to..." Something burst out of the bushes ahead of them, almost colliding with them. David shrieked and jumped aside, hiding behind his companion.   
"THE ARMADA'S HERE! THE ARMADA'S HERE! THE..."   
The thing that burst out at them, not a bird at all, screeched to a halt and fell over backwards. It was another fox. Dalziel, with David close behind, approached and bent over the strange victim of what was obviously considerable fear.   
"TAILS!" the robot suddenly exclaimed, and tore itself out of Dalziel's grip to land on Tails' chest.   
Tails lifted his head, and then sat up. "...Tock?"   
"Zap! Zippo! ZzzzzOOM! You're back!"   
Tails burst out into hysterical laughter, hugging the robot close to him. Opening his eyes, he noticed the two other foxes standing above him. "Who are you guys?"   
David looked at his companion, pushed his glasses up on his nose, then looked back. "We're David and Dalziel." he said, for lack of any more informative response.   
"They're terrorists." Tock said, "Zip."   
"HA! Terrorists? Hardly." David corrected, "We'd prefer the term 'demonstrators' or 'protestors'. Supporters of Prowerism... fighting for Kitsunes everywhere... defenders of foxkind, you know what I'm saying?"   
"Where have you been?" Tock asked, "Zap, I've been all over the hill and dale with these weirdos all day."   
"All day? We found you an hour ago!" David protested.   
"Inside some kind of Armada prison." Tails said, "I just escaped... man, what a rush! I got this big brick, and I threw it at one of the... Trevor!"   
"One of the Trevor?" Dalziel asked.   
"Wait a second," David interrupted, "You were actually INSIDE the labori..."   
"TREVOR! He's still in there! He saved my life, I have to get him out!" Tails began shouting.   
"Okay... zippo... everybody stop talking at once, okay?" Tock said, "There was somebody else in there with you?"   
"Yeah! In the next cell... Trevor... I have to go back inside and let him out, or else they'll kill him!"   
"Okay, okay," David said, "You're all going to listen to ME now, okay? Yeah, listen. Going back inside there? NOT a good idea, okay? The key to raiding an Armada facility is discretion, and hocking a brick at one of them before you escape from their laboritory is NOT discrete. It's a good idea now for us to all just go home and wait six to eight weeks for everything to simmer down, and then..."   
"I'll do it!" Tock announced.   
"...WHAT??"   
Tails perked his ears up. "Tock, it's too dangerous, if they catch you..."   
"I can do it. ZAP!" Tock insisted, and his rotor blade carried him into the air, "Besides, I'm the only one with a key! You finish going to Quarantine Beta, I'll make sure your friend gets outta there... zip... go!"   
Tock whizzed off in the direction of the lab, and Tails looked back to Dalziel and David.   
"Can either of you give me directions to Quarantine Beta?"   
"Yeah." David sighed, "We live there. Come on."**

**\*\*\***

**6:45 pm - THIRTY MINUTES LATER   
June 6, 2000**

**The sun disappeared behind the horizon. But it didn't matter inside the Armada complex, because you couldn't see the sun, anyway.   
Overdraw's eyes snapped open. Blood was drying on his eyelids, having run down from his forehead and settled there, and flaked away when the lids moved. Slowly, he felt around his face. His hand came away red. He scowled and spat.**

**\*\*\***

**7:35 pm - FORTY MINUTES LATER   
June 6, 2000**

**The people of Quarantine Beta were even more accepting for Tails than the people of the first quarantine station he had visited. Not only was he given a place to sleep and fed a hearty meal, but everybody was anxious for him to speak to them about where he came from and what he was doing on the former Kitsune Atole when he could be virtually anywhere else and be better off. Once again, for reasons he couldn't even himself explain, he gave his name as "Sonic", and he came looking for somebody named Robert Prower.   
There was an uneasy silence among the people when he mentioned that name, and he didn't take it as a good sign.   
The meal was good. The vegetables were fresh, and the meat was well done. Even though they were trapped like rats in a cage and studied, the Kitsunes had grown to be quite prosperous. If something could be done about the Armada, it wouldn't be long before the foxes could build up their society again.   
There was an old fox in Q Beta who was unofficially the mayor of the quarantine station. He reminded Tails of the old fox he had met at Q Alpha, except this one, whose name was Paul, was taller and greyer. Paul made Tails feel exceptionally welcome, but he frowned upon the antics of the two young foxes who had led him there - David and Dalziel.   
"No, we weren't trying to get us all into any trouble at all! We were trying to spread the message that we won't be EXPERIMENTED on anymore! I was trying to spread the message of Prowerism!" David protested.   
"And what would vandalisation do to help things?" Paul asked, "You would get caught, and then how would even Prowerism help you?"   
"It was oppertunity, man! Full-on! I found an Armada worker droid! An AWD, Paul! A keybot! How often does that happen?"   
"Excuse me..." Tails said, "But.. did you say 'Prowerism'?"   
Paul looked at him, his scowl changing into a kinder expression. "Yes... Robert Prower made a great impression on us, as you can see. Prowerism is standing up for ourselves and for our freedom, making a stand against the Armada... not with petty vandalism, I might add."   
Tails gasped. His father was an even greater man than he'd known, then, for it seemed that the Kitsunes had formed some kind of socialogical system and named it after him. Tails thought it was time to ask the big question, the one he had been dreading, because he had a strong feeling that the answer wasn't good.   
"Where is Robert Prower today?"   
Another long uncomfortable pause, and then the answer that he had dreaded and somehow known about at the same time came from Paul's mouth:   
"Robert Prower... left our village some time ago to try and speak to the Board of the Armada. He was attacked... I'm afraid he didn't survive. More evidence that the Armada are a plague upon us."   
Tails sighed. He'd gone on an adventure hoping to find his father, and now he had confirmation that he never would. Suddenly, he was filled with dozens of conflicting emotions, and had an overriding need to be alone.   
"Excuse me... I'm very tired. Do you mind if I crash for the night?" he asked lamely.   
Paul nodded. "I wish you good night... and I'll see you in the morning."**

**\*\*\***

**8:35 pm - ONE HOUR LATER   
June 6, 2000**

**A brush of fur...   
A tuft of hair...   
The caress of a hand...   
A sigh...   
A smell of breath...   
The sound of breathing...   
This was all Tails had in the way of memories about Robert Prower, his father. And now, with no chance to renew those memories, to make more and better ones, he could only cry. He had already been crying when he walked into the small empty hut, and he had cried unhaltingly ever since. The quest for his father was over... over... over... and now a new problem arose in his mind, one that he hadn't even thought about before, but now that his reasons for being there were much less, it surfaced in his mind like a submarine coming in to dock:   
How the heck was he going to get home again?   
If his plane even still existed, it was under the ownership of the Armada, now. He was trapped on an island in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by twisted birds who wanted him dead or hurt or something. Unless he could get a hold of something he could fly or float, he was stuck there.   
There was a knock on his door. At first, he didn't hear it, but it persisted... it got louder when he ignored it.   
"Come in!" he shouted, wiping the tears from his eyes, which were immediately replaced with new ones.   
The door burst open, and David stumbled in, carrying arms full of rolled-up papers. He slammed the door behind him with the heel of his foot, dropped half of his scrolls in the process, and then dropped onto his knees in front of Tails. He pushed his glasses back up his nose with his elbow.   
"Hey there Sonic..." he said, "I didn't wake you, did I?"   
"No..." Tails replied.   
"Your name isn't really Sonic, is it."   
Tails sniffed, wiped his nose, "No."   
"I knew it! I knew it! But you don't have to worry about me, see? I was devestated when I heard Robert Prower had been whacked, and I think you feel the same way, am I right? By the look of your eyes I can answer that question myself. Because you were close to him, weren't you."   
Tails sniffed again, "I guess you could say that."   
"So was I. So was I, really close. REALLY close. And I think he should be avenged, am I right? Look, I've been thinking about this for weeks. Me and Dalziel, actually. We've been thinking, and we've come up with something we can do to really make an impact on the Armada... I'm talking about an IMPACT, you know what I'm saying? I mean, not piddly vandalism or protesting, but I'm talking about downing the entire Armada computer network... that's security systems, that's cameras, that's alarms, that's any kind of assault system hooked up to their mainframe. I have all the plans here, how we're going to do this, but we need three people, you see? Three... That's me and Dalziel, and I want you to be the third. Will you do it?"   
Tails took a while to get this through his head. "You want me to help you launch some kind of assault on the Armada?"   
"Yeah. Well... yeah, I guess, that's exactly what I want you to do. Like I said, all the plans are here, we've thought it all out and everything. Look here..." He picked up one of the rolls of paper and unravelled it, showing a large map. "This is the mainframe facility for the entire island, it isn't very far from here. We come in from here, and we have to watch out because there are checkpoints here, here, here, here, here and here. We have to come around here and...."   
"Do they have planes?" Tails asked.   
"....this is the tricky part, because they have a... sorry, what?"   
"Planes." Tails repeated, "Or anything that flies. I want to get off this island."   
There was a long silence from David, who just sat there and stared for a very long time. Then, when Tails was thinking of repeating the question, the bespectacled fox looked down at his plans again and twitched his tails (Tails saw that David had two tails as well, though one was longer than the other, which was a skinny little stump of a thing that could only twitch once in a while).   
"Yeah. Yeah, I hear you, brother. I hear you, brother. I'll show you where the planes are, they've got heaps of them sitting in a hangar. I'll show you where they are."   
"Thank you." Tails replied.   
"But.." David added, "But you have to help me first, okay? You have to help me and Dalziel with this, you're the only one who can. You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours, am I right?"   
Once again, he stared at Tails for a very long time, this time himself the one who was waiting for a response.   
"Okay." Tails said at last, "I'll help you."   
"Good boy... good boy. Now, look here, this is what we're going to do, and we'll do it in the morning... early, to catch them all off-guard, you see? Okay, listen up. There are checkpoints here, here, here, here, here and here, so we have to come around here, beside the big warehouses, and...."**

**\*\*\***

**5:50 am - NINE HOURS, FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER   
June 7, 2000**

**Three days, now, and Tails opened his eyes.   
Well, almost three days. It would be just over four hours before this exact period of time was reached, but all the same, Tails' body had crashed in the waters outside the Kitsune Atole (not an Atole anymore, he reminded himself, but a lone island, the rest having been sunk beneath the waves by the Armada long ago) on June fifth, and now he'd woken up on the morning of June seventh, getting ready to take out a surprise attack on the Armada computer facility, of all things.   
He didn't know much about David and Dalziel, the two renegade terrorists who insisted they weren't terrorists, but even still, had recruited Tails to help them set a bomb. Dalziel, whom Tails had met very few times, kept to himself a lot and said as little as possible. David himself was an extremely fidgety character who seemed to have been seriously damaged upstairs by the news of Robert Prower's death. Driven by revenge, he was excited to have finally met somebody who could fill the troublesome gap in his three-person plan.   
But what relationship had he had with Tails' father? He looked strangely familiar, to Tails, but he was too young to perhaps be an uncle. He looked about twenty, or slightly younger, even. At the current moment in Tails' damaged psyche, even an uncle would be a wonderful person to meet, so he could consider his mission at least partially completed, even though he would never meet his father.   
Ten minutes later, at the stroke of six, Tails, Dalziel and David met each other at a given point, and then David led the other two out of Quarantine Beta and into the forest. He was wearing a large trenchcoat. Tails would be glad to have this over and done with, so that David would tell him where the planes were, and he could get off the wretched remains of the island. But, as time wore on, Tails reached deep inside himself and realised that the idea of helping wage the war against the Armada excited him. Though his logic told him it was impossible, he couldn't help think that he would love to free his relatives, the Kitsunes, from the stranglehold of the Armada. After all, was it not his father's life-long quest? And shouldn't he be continuing his father's work, being his only descendant?   
They reached the first of six phone booth 'checkpoints' that protected the facility they were trying to gain access to. It hummed gently, dim lights glowing all over its frame.   
"Come within cooey of that thing if you're not a keybot, and it's all over, you hear?" David instructed, "This is the hardest thing we're going to have to get past. From here on, it's a fairly free run, okay? Okay, let's run over what we're doing here... and keep voices down, alright?"   
They went over their course of action, and then they went through with it. Keeping as low as they possibly could, they crept along the ground behind the safety of the bushes, and managed to get past the checkpoint without setting it off. David informed them that this was the only one of the checkpoints around the perimeter that could have been bypassed with any safety at all, and that he had been especially rigorous in his research of this. Dalziel replied that he knew, that David had told him a hundred thousand times.   
At last, they reached the building that they had come for. It was at the centre of a large complex, with smaller buildings dotted around. To Tails' surprise, it wasn't guarded. There wasn't a soul anywhere around.   
"They're not lulling us, are they?" Tails asked, "Planning to put the drop on us?"   
"Nah," David replied, "The Armada are the most naive race in existance, it's almost as if they think we LIKE being experimented on, that we wouldn't even dream of doing anything like this. The thing about them is that they retaliate harshly to any rebellion, see, but our purpose here is to show them that we CAN make a difference, no matter how lowly they think we are. Now, Sonic... or Tails, or whatever you want to call yourself... Look yonder, can you see that big thing that looks like a... a giant SHED, or something?"   
Tails nodded.   
"Well," David continued, "That's where you're going as soon as we've done what we came here to do. That's the hangar, they have planes and stuff in there. I wouldn't condemn you to stay on this cesspit of an island anyway, if you can get off it again that's one less Kitsune we have to free in the end, but the rest of us are staying here to finish the job we're starting today, okay?"   
Tails nodded again, "Let's do it."   
They opened a small side-door that led into the largest building. Once inside, the air was dense with the cacophony of a thousand or more Armada worker droids. A thousand or more Tocks, abuzz with activity, turning keys and swapping wires around. Tails and Dalziel were startled, but David remained composed.   
"They won't bother us unless we bother them, see? And that's not what we're gonna do, either, we're just gonna walk right past them. Now, look, I'm going to find the primary security control console, I know where it is, see, and then what you two are going to do for me is to walk along the west wing and find for me the manual shutdown for the electric shield in the... uhm... the main power central core, okay? Now watch out, because you might not see any birds wandering around, but they're here, alright, overseeing everything, and they're observant buggers, they are. You're looking for a huge wheel, and it's going to take at least two of you to even budge it, okay? That's why I needed three people for this. Now go on, and if you find the wheel before I find the primary console, you'll know, because a little light will show you. ONLY turn the wheel after the light is OUT, okay? Or else it's all over. Do you both understand?"   
Tails and Dalziel both nodded.   
"Good. After you've turned the wheel, I'll be given access to the central core, where I can plant this..." David opened his trenchcoat, and revealed a bomb strapped to his body. There were seven sticks of dynamite, with wires streaming out of each one and into a large panel with a digital clock showing the display "00:10". He closed the coat again, nodded at his companions, and wandered off, through the mass of AWDs. Dalziel grabbed Tails' arm and led him in the right direction.**

**\*\*\***

**00:10**

**"Why does he know so much about this?" Tails asked.   
He and Dalziel were standing in front of an enormous wheel, after ten minutes of weaving through the Armada complex. The light was still on. David hadn't fulfilled his part of the plan yet. So they waited.   
"Who, Dave?" Dalziel asked. He was taller than Tails, but larger as well - like an orange-furred Big the Cat. He didn't have two tails, only one, but he had six fingers on each hand, which was something Tails hadn't noticed until he had reached his own arms out to the wheel, and Dalziel had stopped him by putting one hand on his shoulder where he could see it, and pointed the other one towards the lit light, where he could see that, too.   
"Yeah." Tails replied, "How does he know about how to do this? About the wheel and the console and the light... and how did he build a bomb?"   
"His father taught him, I guess." Dalziel said, "It runs in his blood, or somthing. His whole family are excellent mechanics. Or what's left of it. Come to think of it, he's probably the only one left, now. Such a pity... the poor guy."   
Tails nodded, and glanced back at the light. As he did, it clicked off in front of his eyes.   
"He did it," he announced, "The light's off. Let's go."   
The two foxes gripped the wheel on both sides, and yanked at it. It was easy to see that just one of them alone couldn't do the job. Eventually, with an effort, the wheel began to turn. Slowly, at first, like it needed oiling seriously, which it probably did, but then it became easier to turn and started moving faster. Not knowing how much turning was required, Tails decided that he should keep it up until he was shown some evidence that he should stop.   
"How will we know when we've done this enough?" he asked Dalziel.   
The other fox shook his head, "I don't know. Something on the console beside you might tell you."   
Tails looked at the console. There was a power indicator on it for the security system to the central power core, and the marker was dropping. While Tails was watching it, he wasn't watching the light.   
It clicked back on. Neither of them noticed. They continued to turn.   
Suddenly, the fluorescent lighting along the ceiling above them changed in colour from white to red. A wailing sound, an alarm, thundered throughout the complex.   
"What happened?" Tails asked, in panic.   
"Look!" Dalziel said, and pointed to the light that was glowing away on the wall beside the wheel, "We turned the wheel when the light was on! David said that would mean it's all over! We screwed up!"   
"But why did it come back on again?"   
"No time! We have to get out of here!"   
Dalziel grabbed Tails with one six-fingered hand and yanked him back the way they had come in. The alarm buzzed all around them. They finally reached the main hallway, where they had parted company with David, and screeched to a halt.   
Overdraw stood before them. In one hand, he held David by the scruff of his neck. When the other two arrived, he threw the bespectacled fox onto the ground, hard. There was a cracking sound as his glasses smashed.   
"You're in trouble now... yes?"   
"YOU!" Tails exclaimed.   
Overdraw had some kind of medicated bandage between his eyes, where he had been slogged with a brick during Tails' escape. David tried to struggle to his feet, his trenchcoat gone and the bomb gleaming in the red light, but Overdraw kicked him down again. "You can't pull one over on me... no way, not this bird. Oh... and listen! It seems you've tripped the alarm! Lucky I was around to turn that backup safety switch back on, after this friend of yours turned it off... who knows what kind of trouble you might have caused? My compodres are going to be here any moment to take care of you... a whole army of them, what do you have to say to that?" Tails clenched his teeth, but said nothing in reply. Neither did Dalziel. Instead, Tails looked around above him. Where were all the little robots that were buzzing around when they got there?   
As if his suspicions had summoned them, a massive army of AWDs burst into the room. Overdraw let out a surprised choke. The little robots buzzed around the bird's head, their rotor blades spinning, their keys turning harmoniously. One of them detached from the group and hovered in front of Tails' face. Though it looked exactly the same as the others, Tails knew in his heart who it really was.   
"TOCK! You got them all on our side!" he shouted.   
"Nah... I just confused them! ZIP!" Tock announced proudly, "But you've all gotta get outta here! Right now! Right this... ZOOP... minute! Run!"   
"RUN!" Tails echoed, but David let out a pained wail, "I... I can't run! Not fast enough! I'm... I'm winded! My... stomach... hurts so bad!"   
Tails looked at Dalziel, but the large fox shook his head, "I can't run with him, it'll slow us all down, we'll all get caught!"   
"HURRY! ZAP!"   
"Okay," Tails said, "Listen... you get out of here, Dalziel, I'll take care of David. GO!" Dalziel looked at him with skepticism, but turned and bolted as fast as he could from the complex. Tails reached for David's hand and held on. "We're going for a ride."   
David closed his eyes to block out the image of the masses of little robots flying circles around the shrieking Overdraw in the red light, and when he opened them again, he was airborne. Tails was spinning his tails in circles like a rotor blade, and they were flying away together... right out the door! Everything was blurry to David without his glasses, but this was particularly unmistakable.   
When they were out of the building, away from the noise, Tails looked down at his wounded companion, their arms clasped together tightly. "Are you okay?"   
David nodded, and looked down at what was below him. Various buildings and constructions gleamed in the sunlight. He couldn't see any of them in detail, but he saw enough. His face twisted into a scowl, and he yanked one of his arms out of Tails' grip.   
"What are you doing?" Tails demanded.   
"You think I'm leaving here without doing any damage at all?" David asked, and he ripped the bomb off his chest, bringing tufts of foxhair with it. Pressing a number of buttons, he started the timer going, and then dropped the explosive device randomly into the wasteland of buildings.   
"TAKE THAT, YA' FEATHERED SCOUNDRELS! TAKE THAT, WHY DON'T YOU? YOU KILLED MY FATHER! IT'S GOING TO BE A COLD DAY IN HELL WHEN DAVID PROWER STOPS FIGHTING!!"**

**\*\*\***

**00:09**

**The timer on the bomb clicked down one number as it landed in a junk pile and bounced off. If the touchdown had been any harder, it might have been enough alone to set it off, but the junk had been soft and the bomb was still ticking away. It fell down a slope and rolled into a gap between two buildings, some of the dynamite sticks having come dislodged. There it lay.**

**\*\*\***

**00:06**

**He'd dropped David off with a heartfelt goodbye, but it could have been a lot more heartfelt than it had. For some reason, perhaps it would be easier to leave this way, he had opted not to tell David that they were brothers. HE knew, however, and it gave him a warm feeling inside to know that his trip had not been a complete failure - he had not met his father, but he had met a brother, which was at least something. He wasn't alone in the world. Now, he was travelling back to the hangar, where he was going to perform one final trick on the former Kitsune Atole - he would hijack an Armada plane, and fly it home.   
He saw Tock on the way, and flagged him down.   
"Where to now? Zip!"   
"The hangar," Tails replied, "Can you help me take one of their planes?"   
"Zappo! I'll certainly try!"   
They landed, and then walked into the building that David had pointed out to be the Armada hangar. Their planes were huge and black, ugly things that looked like warplanes. They were armoured... fierce-looking. While looking around, Tails spotted something that made his heart leap.   
"The Tornado!" he shouted.   
There it was - the Tornado 2, just sitting amongst the ugly warplanes, dwarved among them.   
"All-RIGHT! Hey Tock, can you open the hangar doors?"   
"ZAP!" Tock shouted in alarm, "TAILS! WATCH OUT!"   
The door they had entered through slammed shut, taking away most of the light except for what came through the skylight. That was just enough light to see that Overdraw was in there with them.   
"Guess... who..." the bird rasped.**

**\*\*\***

**00:05**

**When Tails hit the wall, thrown around while fighting Overdraw (the bird had immediately attacked when he spotted Tails), a section of sheet metal in the wall gave way, and what should tumble through but David's bomb, still ticking away...**

**\*\*\***

**00:04**

**Tails managed to escape the snarling, thrashing bird, and he crawled to safety. There was a gash on his left shoulder. Overdraw was unarmed, but it hadn't disadvantaged him any.   
"Tails..." the bird called, having lost sight of him. His eyes darted back and forth. "Tails, that's your name, isn't it? But I can call you number four oh five seven slash nine k, can't I? I can see all your plans, you know. I can see everything, all of you. All your little coups and your strategies to bring us down. It's never going to work, you know! We are the Armada, you little rat! The Armada we are!"   
He caught movement out of the corner of his eye, and darted around. "Actually... you want me to be precise, number four oh five seven slash nine k? \_I\_ am the Armada! How's THAT for you, yes? The Armada I AM! And I am more evolved than ANY of you scheming little buggers! Why don't you come out of hiding, now? We don't need you alive, you know. All we need is your DNA, and that'll still keep for quite some time if we hurry up and shove your carcass into a freezer. It'll still work out for us quite nicely, yes? It always does! Everything works out for Overdraw, because THE ARMADA I AM!"**

**\*\*\***

**00:03**

**"You killed my father!" Tails yelled down.   
Overdraw followed the sound of the voice and spun around. "Excuse me, number four oh five seven slash nine k?"   
It amazed Tails that he had memorised that number all this time. "The Armada killed my father!" he repeated.   
Overdraw chuckled. "No, that's not what you said... you said \_I\_ killed your father, yes? And that's quite a coincidence that you should say that, yes? Do you know what my job is? It's probably too complicated to explain to a devolved little imbecile such as yourself, but basically, none of the subjects die except through me. If your father was killed by the Armada, there's a good chance that I DID kill him myself, yes? How does that strike you? Quite interesting, yes? AND I'LL KILL YOU, TOO!"   
Overdraw ripped aside a piece of sheet metal, and revealed Tails, his shoulder bleeding down his arm.**

**\*\*\***

**00:02**

**"TAILS!" Tock shouted when Overdraw ripped the fox out of his hiding place and threw him again. Tails slid along the ground, and Overdraw approached him again.   
"TAILS! ZAP! TRY TO GET INTO YOUR PLANE! ZIP! I'LL OPEN THE DOORS! ZZZZZZZOOOOOOOEEEEEEHHHAAAAAAAA!"   
Tock's rotor blade popped out and spun as fast as it could. He flew up to a control panel high on a balcony, and poked his key out.**

**\*\*\***

**00:01**

**There was a crash as Tails hit the wall again and rolled. He could hear Overdraw approaching yet again, probably with his claws ready to rip him to shreds. Tails was in too much pain to make too much of an effort to save himself. How was he going to survive this one? He had just barely heard Tock's cry for him to get into his plane... if only he could make it that far. He grunted and tried to pull himself to his feet. He opened his eyes...   
"00:01"   
The numbers were displayed in red LED light, just inches from his face. It was all he saw, and then the rest of it came into sight as his vision returned. David's bomb.   
"00:01"   
He read it again. Less than a minute before detonation. Less than a minute. It could go any moment. Overdraw was above him, now, staring down at him. Laughing.   
The numbers continued to glare.   
"00:01"   
Tails, given strength from hope, pulled himself to his feet and, in an explosion of pain, turned his tails as fast as he could. As he lifted off, he grabbed the bomb off teh ground and shoved it into the startled Overdraw's arms. The bird yelled in surprise and dropped it on his feet, scrambling away from it to the best of his ability. Tails lifted towards the roof and in the direction of his plane.**

**\*\*\***

**00:00**

**The bomb beeped before it exploded. It was a simple, unassuming little sound that echoed throughout the hangar, all else falling silent.   
Then, the explosion.   
Luckily for Tails, his plane was on the other side of the building. Half of the hangar was ripped away by the flames. It was a rather impressive bomb for the resources David must have had to make it.   
Tock jammed his key in the appropriate hole and twisted it. There was a loud noise, an anticlimax to the explosion that ripped the building apart moments before, as the hangar doors slowly began to open.   
Tails dropped to his feet beside his plane, and scrambled towards it... but a whoosh of air made him look backwards.   
Like a phoenix, Overdraw rose from the flames.   
Tails hadn't yet seen any of the Armada birds actually use their wings for the purpose nature intended them to be used... but here one was, flying... engulfed in flames, no less. His pain must have been intense, but maybe he was so infuriated that he didn't notice. He screamed, a noise which climaxed as a high-pitched wail, and swooped.   
Tails tried to back away, but Overdraw cut him off and slashed him across the chest. The wound wasn't deep, but it bled. The white fur on his chest was matted down a deep red. Overdraw turned in mid-air, the flames around him crackling, his wings making a deep WHOOSH...WHOOSH...WHOOSH...   
The hangar doors continued to open. Tails lifted into the air again, his tails spinning above him, and it became an aerial battle. Overdraw swooped, and Tails ducked out of the way. Overdraw turned and swooped again. This time, Tails lifted above him and grasped a handful of whatever feathers weren't burned away on Overdraw's back. The bird snarled and lost his balance mid-air. Tails hovered above his plane and dropped in, fumbling for the ignition.   
Overdraw regained his midair balance and turned. He looked ready to swoop again, but then he screamed in pain as the flames around his body finally made their mark. Underneath, he looked like a plucked turkey, but his form could hardly be seen, now. He thrashed around, screaming and cursing, and then dropped to the ground and stopped moving.   
Tails was already up and away. His plane lifted off the ground and out the open mouth of the hangar. Tock buzzed after him, landing beside him on the cockpit.**

**\*\*\***

**"You coming home with me, little buddy?" Tails asked, pressing buttons on the console to bring up the landing gear.   
"I don't see what choice I have.... ZIP! I can't exactly stay HERE, can I?"   
"I wouldn't worry about that..." Tails replied, and he looked down at the island which was quickly vanishing underneath him. "I have a feeling tables are going to turn on the Kitsune Atole, very shortly."   
Tock let out a satisfied beep, and hopped into Tails' lap. His key stopped turning, and his eyes went dead. Tails took his hand off the controls for a moment to wind the robot back up. "Zap.... hey! I just remembered!" Tock said, once he was running again, "You never asked about your friend in the prison that I risked my neck to rescue!"   
"Hey! Yeah!" Tails said, "Trevor! What hapened?"   
"He was very... zap... grateful. He says that the island is going to be a better place because of you. But hey... ZIP! I got to wondering if you're absolutely sure his name was 'Trevor'?"   
"Well... no, I guess I'm not, but why do you ask?"   
"Could it be... Zippo... possible at all that it was actually 'Trebor'?"   
"Sure, it's possible. Why?"   
"Oh, nothing. Only that 'Trebor' is an anogram of 'Robert'."   
Tails fell silent. He stared directly ahead, even his hands stopped moving on the controls.   
"Tails? Tails? Hey! Zip! Zoop! Tails? Hello?"   
The fox shook his head, and then looked back at the island. They were over the water, now.   
"Are you okay?" Tock asked.   
When Tails turned back, he was wearing a smile wider than any Tock had ever seen.   
"Yeah. I'm fine. Better than ever. C'mon... we're going home."**

**\*\*\***

**10:00 am - ONE ADVENTURE LATER   
June 7, 2000   
The end**

**End transmission.**