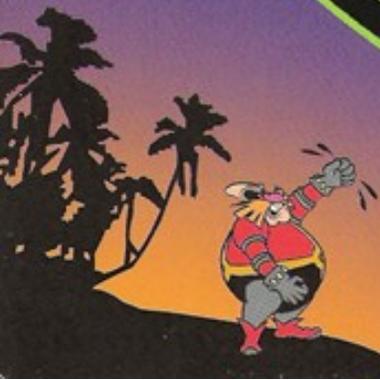


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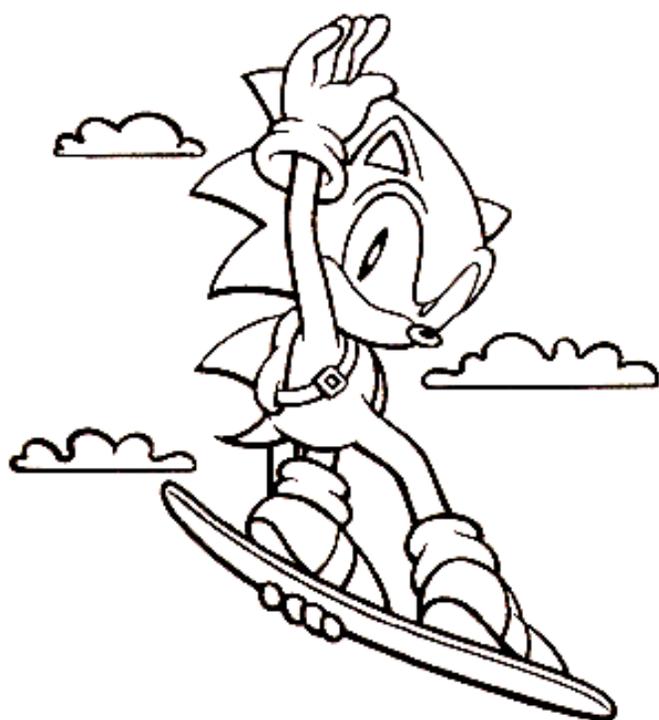
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SONIC XTREME



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Sonic The Hedgehog

sat on his mountain bike, atop the tallest mountain on the planet Mobius. His good friend Rotor stood far below at the base of the mountain. Rotor held a stopwatch in one hand and a checkered flag in the other.



Lately Sonic had become hooked on X-treme sports. He had ridden down this twisting, bumpy mountain trail many times. One each ride, Sonic picked up a little more speed. He now thought of just one thing --- riding down the slalom course before him and breaking his own personal speed record at slalom mountain biking. *I'm ready to push this bike to the max!* he thought. *Edge City, here I come!* He focused his full attention on the flag in Rotor's hand.

With a snap of his wrist, Rotor brought down the checkered flag. At the same instant, he hit the start button on his stopwatch.

Sonic saw the flag drop. He gave a hard push with his left foot. Then he leaned all his weight onto his right foot, shoving down the pedal. The mountain bike shot off the starting mark. Sonic was on his way, barreling down the mighty mountain.

The narrow slalom course wound to the left, then back to the right, snaking its way down. A tall column of rock rose from the ground at each curve. Sonic had to

swing around each column as he rode the course. First he leaned left. His left shoulder was only inches from the ground as he swung past the column. Next he leaned right. His right knee scraped the craggy ground. Sonic kept his balance and continued his breakneck pace.

Rotor looked up and spotted Sonic make his way down the mountain. He glanced at the stopwatch. *Five seconds ahead of his best pace*, thought Rotor, *But he's almost at Dead Man's Curve!*

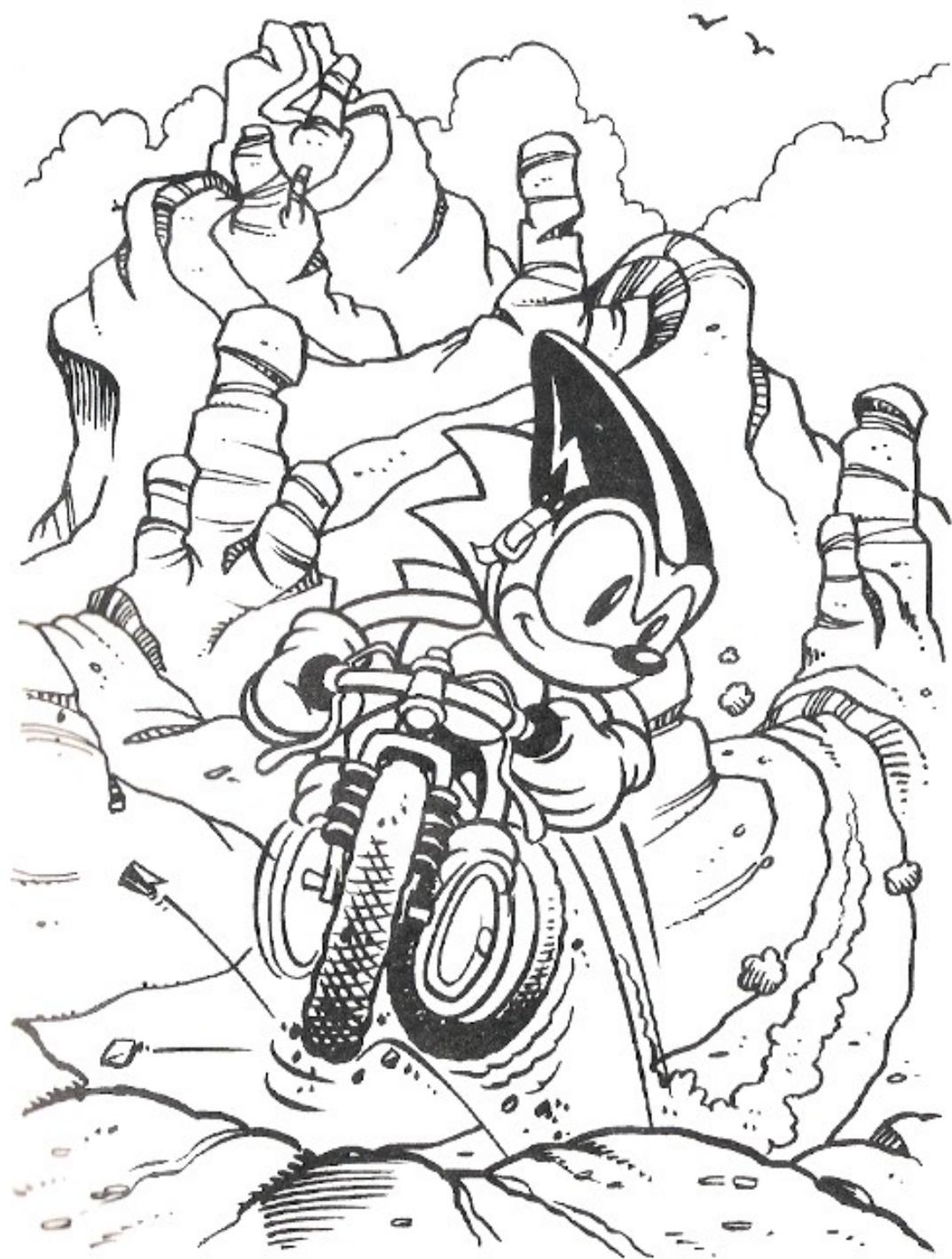
Dead Man's Curve was the sharpest, most dangerous section of the whole slalom course. Sonic remained relaxed but kept a tight grip on the handlebars. "Stay with it now," he said to himself. "Lean into it. Remain calm and juice right through it."

Sonic hit Dead Man's Curve. He leaned to his left and swung through the curve with his left elbow only inches from the ground. When he came around the far side of the curve, the course straightened out.

"In your face!" shouted Sonic. He raised both fists into the air triumphantly as he sped down the straightaway and neared the bottom of the course. Rotor let out a sigh of relief. "Don't get cocky!" he shouted up to Sonic. "Keep your hands on the handlebars!"

The worst was over. Sonic pedalled hard down the final stretch. He crossed the finish line, and Rotor clicked off his stopwatch. "Way past cool!" Sonic shouted. He turned his bike around and coasted over to Rotor. "Well," began Sonic, "how did I do?"

Rotor looked at his stopwatch and smiled,



“Congratulations, pal” he said. “You broke your old record by four seconds!”

“Juicin’!” exclaimed Sonic. “I am the Master Blaster of X-Treme sports. Just call me Sonic X-Treme!”

Sonic’s celebration was suddenly cut short, Princess Sally, leader of the Mobius Freedom Fighters, came into view. She was a short distance away, running toward Sonic and Rotor.

“Sonic!” she called weakly.

“That’s ‘Sonic X-Treme’ from now on, Sal!” the hedgehog yelled back. Sonic was so caught up in his record-breaking triumph, he didn’t notice that something was wrong with Sally.

“Sonic,” began Rotor.

“Sonic X-Treme,” corrected Sonic.

“No, Sonic, I’m serious,” said Rotor. “Sally’s in trouble.”

Sonic focused on the figure now stumbling toward him. He could see that something was very wrong. “Sal!” he shouted. Sonic leaped off his bike and dashed over to Sally in a blazing blue blur. When he reached Sally, he saw that she looked exhausted. Her clothes were torn, she was covered in dirt, and she could barely stand up. Sally had obviously been in a battle.

Sonic and Sally, along with Rotor, lived in an underground hideout called Knothole Village, located deep in the Great Forest of Mobius. They were all part of a brave band of Freedom Fighters, led by Princess Sally. Sally’s father, the Good King of Mobius, had once ruled

the planet. But then Mobius fell into the evil clutches of Dr. Robotnik. Robotnik kidnapped the Good King and took control of the planet.

Mobius had once been a happy, clean place to live. But under Robotnik's rule, the planet became a dark, polluted wasteland. Robotnik's Mechanical soldiers, called SWATbots, patrolled the planet. Their mission was to stop Sonic, Sally, and the Freedom Fighters in their quest to rid Mobius of Robotnik and place the rightful king back on his throne.

Sonic now picked up Sally and carried her to the base of the mountain. Rotor was waiting, very concerned. "What happened, Sally?" he asked.

Sally caught her breath, then began. "Bunnie and I were out on patrol," she began. Bunnie Rabbit was a Freedom Fighter too. She was half-rabbit, half-robot. Her body, legs and left arm were mechanical and extremely strong. Her head and right arm were those of a living rabbit. Bunnie had once been a normal rabbit. But Robotnik had tried to turn her into a mindless robotic slave. Sonic saved her, but not before most of her body had been mechanized.

"We were carrying your new robot-paralyzing weapon, Rotor" Sally continued. Rotor was a great inventor. He was always building devices to help the Freedom Fighters in their battle against Robotnik. Rotor had invented this weapon to stop Robotnik's SWATbots. "A team of SWATbots ambushed us. Before we could use the weapon, one of them grabbed it and fired it at Bunnie.

She instantly lost her robotic strength. Without it, she could barely move her heavy mechanical legs and arm. I just managed to escape myself.”

“But where’s Bunnie?” asked Sonic.

“The Swatbots captured her,” replied Sally, “We’ve got to rescue her, Sonic. We’ve got to.” Then Princess Sally collapsed in Sonic’s arms.

Sally awoke in the

in the Freedom Fighters' hideout in Knothole Village, deep in the Great Forest of Mobius. Sonic had used his Super Sonic-Speed to rush her back home. Rotor followed, riding Sonic's bike.



After arriving safely at Knothole, Sally was immediately attended to by Antoine. Antoine had been Sally's Personal guard back in the days when the princess lived in the palace. That was during the years that her father, the Good King, had ruled Mobius. Antoine was now a Freedom Fighter, but remained Sally's loyal servant and protector. He had cleaned her up and was pressing a cool cloth to her forehead when she opened her eyes.

"So good of you to join us, your Highness," said Antoine smiling.

"Oh, I'm home," said Sally weakly. She raised herself up onto her elbows. "Bunnie!" she exclaimed. "We've got to go get Bunnie."

"And we will," said Antoine, easing her back down into a more restful position, "after you regain your strength." Antoine was extremely protective of the princess.

"But how did I get back here?" Sally asked.

"Courtesy of Sonic X-Treme Transportation System," replied Sonic, bowing slightly.

"Thanks, Sonic," said Sally, giving him a warm

smile. She knew that Sonic was impulsive. He didn't always think through every decision before rushing into danger. His love of speed and action sometimes frustrated Sally. She liked planning each mission down to the last detail. But she also knew that Sonic's talent and energy had given a huge boost to the cause of her Freedom Fighters. Sonic's being on their team greatly improved their chances of retaking Mobius and rescuing her father.

"Yes, thank you," added Antoine. Antoine didn't care much for Sonic's style, but he did appreciate the hedgehog's loyalty to Sally.

"No prob, Antoine, old buddy," replied Sonic. "You know I'd do anything for our fearless leader."

Again Sally tried to rise from her bed, and again Antoine eased her back down. "We've got to start planning a mission to rescue Bunnie!" exclaimed Sally. "I don't think we can wait any---"

Sally was interrupted by Rotor. He burst into the room, very upset.

"I think you should all see this," said Rotor, "I picked up this broadcast in the outer chamber. I'll switch it on to here," Rotor turned on a large monitor in Sally's room. The image of Dr. Robotnik filled the screen.

Everyone in the room gasped. Robotnik's evil grin beamed from his face.

"I analysed the broadcast signal," explained Rotor. "This message is being transmitted on all frequencies throughout Mobius."



“Butt-nik!” snarled Sonic. “What does he want?”

“I think, Sonic,” replied Rotor, “that he wants you!”

“Quiet, everyone,” Sally. She lifted herself up onto her elbows again. “Let’s listen.”

The group of Freedom Fighters listened intently as Robotnik spoke. His deep voice filled the room. “This is a personal message for my old and dear friend, Sonic The Hedgehog,” Robotnik began.

Sonic’s eye’s narrowed as he stared at Robotnik’s image. “You’re no friend of mine, creep!” Sonic shouted at the screen.

“I understand that Sonic has become quite good at X-Treme sports,” Robotnik continued. “I’ve heard that he’s broken all the existing records on Mobius. Very impressive --- for a hedgehog. Well, Sonic, old pal, I am here to issue you a challenge. I challenge you to a one-on-one competition of X-Treme games. You see, you may be good, hedgehog, but I am better. If it happens on Mobius, then I am the best at it--- whatever it may be. I’ll prove that to you if you are brave enough to accept my challenge.”

“I’d kick his Ro-Butt-nik all over the place,” snapped Sonic. “But why should I even bother breaking a sweat against the likes of him? It would be no contest! There’s no way I’d agree to play against him.”

“I’m sure, Sonic, that you will agree to this contest,” said Robotnik, “But if for some reason you don’t, I’ve got something special to pique your interest. You’re friend and fellow traitor Bunnie Rabbot is now my prisoner. If

you do not agree to this competition, you will never see her again. I am, however, a fair fellow. If you beat me in this contest, Sonic, I will release Bunnie Rabbot. I'm sure you'll consider my terms fair.

“Oh, by the way,” Robotnik went on, “I'm not holding your friend at my fortress, as you might expect. She is safely tucked away in a secret location. Don't think you can avoid this contest by attempting one of your feeble rescues. You cannot free her, because you don't know where she is!”

A sneer crossed Robotnik's face. “I give you 24 hours to decide. I will be waiting for you at the Northern Cliffs, the site of our first little contest. My trusted assistant Snively will accompany me. He will act as referee and scorekeeper. To prove that I have only the highest sportsmanship ideals in mind, I will allow you to bring a scorekeeper of your own. However, know this: If you are not at the Northern Cliffs by 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, you will never see Bunnie Rabbot again! Have a nice day.”

The screen went blank. The Freedom Fighters looked at each other in stunned silence.

“I don't trust him, Sonic,” said Sally finally.

“And with good reason, Your highness,” added Antoine. “He's an evil liar.”

“And those are his good points,” said Sonic. “Still, what choice do we have? If I don't show up tomorrow morning, Bunnie's history!”

“But you have no way of knowing whether he'll

keep his word,” Rotor pointed out. “Even if Sonic winds, Robotnik still might not release Bunnie.”

“I know,” said Sally, sighing. “But, as Sonic said, what choice do we have? Right, Sonic? Sonic?”

Sally looked around in time to see a blue blur streaking away from her room.

“I’m going to get in a little practice before I beat Ro-BUTT-nik and get Bunnie back tomorrow morning,” shouted Sonic as he sped from Sally’s side.

“I guess that means ‘yes,’” said Sally. Then she leaned back and thought about the contest to come.