

SONIC

THE HEDGEHOG

In Castle Robotnik



MARTIN ADAMS

SONIC
THE
HEDGEHOG

IN CASTLE ROBOTNIK

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SONIC
THE
HEDGEHOG

IN CASTLE ROBOTNIK

Martin Adams

Virgin

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This one's for Jack Johnson.
Knock 'em dead, kid.

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THE SONIC STORY SO FAR

There was a time when Mobius was a peaceful world. And the Green Hill Zone was the most peaceful and pleasant and generally all-round cool place to hang out on the entire planet.

Mobius's inhabitants were, and are, talking animals of all types. The hippest, streetwisest dude of all was, and is, a hedgehog named Sonic.

And of course it just had to be Sonic who stumbled into the laboratory of Mobius's only human, the kindly but absent-minded Doctor Kintobor.

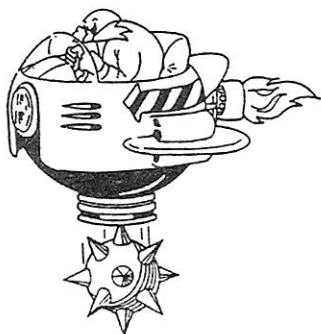
Dr K was perfecting a device – the Retro-Orbital Chaos Compressor – to attract all the evil on Mobius and contain it within six emeralds he called the Chaos Emeralds (neat name, Doc). He found the time to help boost Sonic's already radically fast footwork, too, and with the help of a special pair of drop-dead cool red trainers, Sonic exceeded the speed of sound. And he turned blue, of course.

Sonic superspeeded all over Mobius, searching for the Grey Emerald that would neutralise the evil contained

in the Chaos Emeralds. But before he found it, Doctor Kintobor's absent-mindedness brought disaster to the whole planet as he entered faulty data into the ROCC. The device exploded, releasing the Emeralds, scattering protective golden rings across the length and breadth of Mobius, and transmogrifying Kintobor into his exact opposite: the evil, power-crazed, obese and egg-loving Doctor Robotnik.

Robotnik's influence reached across the entire planet. Once-verdant landscapes were transformed into polluted wastelands. The evil Doctor's robots scoured the land for animals to imprison, and in particular for the one super-fast hedgehog who has the power to foil his plans – Sonic.

And Sonic has foiled Robotnik's plans – at least twice, by the time you read this book. But Robotnik is ineggshaus-tibly, eggsasperatingly resilient. Once again, he's back. And that means trouble for Mobius in general, and for hedgehogs with red trainers in particular.



1

TERROR IN THE DARK

It was a dark and stormy night.

Thunder crashed from the broiling black clouds that blotted out the moon. Jagged forks of lightning lit up the night sky in garish electric blue. Raindrops the size of lightbulbs splattered into the soggy ground. Forlorn trees swayed in the howling winds, and unfortunate owls, desperately clinging on to them with cramped feet, went 'Wooooo, wooooo, wooooo!' rather pathetically. Let's face it, only a complete maniac would be outdoors on a night like this.

Sonic the world-famous hedgehog and his chums cowered in the darkness, their eyes as wide as dinner plates. Their bodies were lit only by the sinister blue flicker from the screen they were watching. Just in time, Sonic stopped Sally Acorn from squealing by stuffing a pawful of tortilla chips into her mouth.

'Begone, hideous nightmare-type being from our over-paid and totally useless special-effects department, untroubled by intelligence or creativity!' snarled the actor

on the screen. Well, no all right, that's what he wanted to say, but what he actually said was, 'Begone, foul fiend of the night! Drink the blood of the living no more!'

'Oh, gross,' Sally whimpered, gulping down the last of her unexpected snack. 'This is really scary.' Her bushy squirrel's tail stood bolt upright, as if some practical joker had just zapped forty thousand volts through it.

'Yikes!' squeaked the fox next to her. This was Miles Prower, also known as Tails, also known as Sonic's twin-tailed foxy best friend, fellow adventurer and all-round cute little dude. 'Look at that! He's got fangs bigger than Joe's!'

'We walruses do not have fangs,' Joe Sushi sniffed in mock grumpiness. 'We just have very, very large, long, sharp, pointy tusks. All the better to – eat you all up!' With that he lunged at Tails, who took super-fast evasive action sideways. Joe carried right on by him and flipped a slice of tuna and anchovy pizza into his mouth, which was what he'd really been after all the time.

'Now look, you guys! Can we all chill out and have some quiet here?' Sonic complained, tapping a red-sneakered foot irritably on the floor. 'I mean, I'm enjoying this.'

'Uurggh! Look at all that blood!' groaned Johnny Light-foot, shielding his eyes from the video. Sonic looked over at him, a despairing look on his handsome hedgehoggy face. For a rabbit who thought he was really cool, Johnny's rating on the wimpometer was bouncing suspiciously in the red.

'He's a vampire,' Sonic pointed out. 'What do you expect him to do? Go to the mall and get a sandwich from the deli? He's just eating on the hoof, that's all. Rolling buffet, you know.'

The screen went black for a few moments, then a hideous wailing scream filled the room. All the animals – yes, even Sonic! – almost jumped right out of their skins.

'I don't want to watch this any more. This is too scary,'



Sally complained. 'I'm going to have bad dreams after watching this! It's even more scary than the one we saw last week. What was it called? *The Scrunchback of Dotty Name?*'

'Oh yeah, that was righteously cool! I loved the bit where the girl Desmerelda is ironing Quasirobo's shirt with a wok,' Sonic grinned.

Tails's eyes were glued to the screen. He wagged his twin tails ever so slightly, fascinated and scared at the same time. The video was very dark and it wasn't clear what was happening. He had to get up really close to take a good look. The cloaked vampire suddenly burst into focus on the film as lightning flared out behind him and Tails leapt two metres backward, landing flat on his back. He had his paws firmly clasped over his eyes.

Sonic stood over him, shaking his head. 'Garlic pizza?' he suggested.

'Well, I think I'm off home to bed,' Porker Lewis said with an exaggerated yawn, rubbing his eyes with his trotters. 'Although I'll probably get soaked in the rain. Gosh, it's raining cats and dogs out there.'

'Why do people say that?' Sonic wondered aloud.

'I haven't got a clue. They could have said it's raining hedgehogs and foxes, I suppose. Don't ask me.'

'Be sure the vampires don't get you,' piped up Chirps Chicken.

'Huh! There aren't any real vampires,' the pig sniffed derisively. 'Everyone knows that. I read a book about it once.'

The friends all turned to Porker, curiosity lighting up their eyes. Porker read a lot of books and he was smart, so he Knew About Stuff.

'One reason why people used to believe in them was because once, a long, long time ago, people used to be buried before they were really dead. By mistake. 'Cause

they got some sort of nasty lurgy that made them all look dead. Then they used to try to claw their way out of their coffins,' the pig said with relish. The others were getting more scared by Porker than they were by the film.

'So they had blood all over their hands and faces, and when they were . . . dug up,' Porker said, pronouncing those last two words v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y to gross them out, 'people thought they were vampires.'

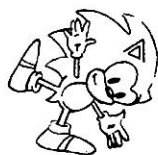
'Oh yuck! Horrible! I don't think we wanted to know that, Porker!' Sally complained.

'It's all right, I'm just going,' gloated the pig. 'Tomorrow I'll tell you what was in the second chapter of the book. Heh, heh, heh.' He flung open the door of Sally Acorn's cottage just as another flash of lightning crackled overhead. Unfurling his umbrella, he vanished into the darkness of the Green Hill Zone, closing the door behind him.

The video ended soon afterwards. They were all a little twitchy and scared, after what Porker had told them, and the storm was still raging outside. Sally asked them if they'd like to stay for the night since the weather was so bad, and everyone thought that was a good idea. Sonic thought it was an especially good idea because he'd seen Sally bringing home a twelve-pack of potato chips and a huge pack of marshmallows that afternoon and he knew where she always hid them. Sonic and slumber parties seemed to go hand in hand.

Joe, though, decided to go home. 'I don't mind wet weather,' he pointed out. 'I am a walrus, after all. I love it!' He lumbered out into the night, ducking his whiskered head through the doorway, splashing happily along through the huge pools of rainwater.

The animals settled down to sleep, dozing in Sally's comfortable armchairs. It wasn't easy to drop off, because the storm was noisier than a grunge band practising next



door and they were all still a bit queasy about vampires.

Then there came a rap at the door. Bang. Bang! Bang!
BANG!

Instantly Sonic jerked into wakefulness and looked at Tails. The fox put his paws over his eyes and sat hoping that whatever was at the door would go away. Sonic wasn't afraid, though, and he walked right up and flung open the door.

Wind and rain howled into his face in a sudden storm squall. He could barely see the huge, sinister form filling the doorway, its terrible twin fangs gleaming in the light of the full moon suddenly revealed by a parting in the clouds. The lumbering thing towered over him and reached down as if to grab him in its amorphous limbs.

'Better come quick, Sonic. It's Porker,' Joe Sushi said grimly. 'He's been bitten by a vampire.'

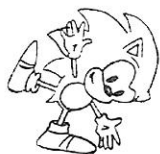
2

A VISITOR IN THE NIGHT

It was another dark and stormy night.

In fact, it was even darker and stormier than the first dark and stormy night. The thunder was so loud that a small group of field mice caught out in it had to get hearing aids to go with their white sticks after being right underneath one massive thunderclap. The sky was electric blue pretty much all the time, the lightning was so bad. Raindrops the size of watermelons splattered into the ground. Those owls were getting cramp in their legs from clinging on to the trees for dear life, and the trees dug in with their roots and hoped like crazy that the storm would soon be over. Let's face it, only a complete and utter barmpot of a maniac would be outdoors on a night like this. Oh look: here he comes now!

The cloaked figure prowled the margin of the Green Hill Zone, sticking to the undergrowth to hide his bulk. He had stalked his target carefully. He knew when to strike. The evil face cracked into a smile of evil pleasure as he contemplated his raid. It would all be over so soon, so very soon.



The dark cloak of the horror flapped about him in the howling gale. Great scurries of leaves whipped up around him as the night stalker crunched through the undergrowth on his heinous mission. At last he reached his destination. In his dark-gloved hands, he gripped the door handle, and threw open the door behind which his unsuspecting victim lay.

The squirrels inside screamed and cowered back on their settee. The remote control for the video fell from one set of paws and a bucket of popcorn fell from the other. The female squirrel screamed again, and then fainted. The other squirrel shrank back even further, trying to disguise himself as part of the pattern on the settee cover. It was a pretty good plan in the circumstances, but it didn't work.

The gloating horror advanced into the room. It was dark, sinister, utterly evil. It was also wet, with a really gross drop hanging on the end of its nose, and there were little dribbles of egg white on its waistcoat. The horror wasn't just fat. It was spherical.

'Kevin, you're coming with me. Ha ha ha!' it said.

Sonic and Joe carried the prostrate pig back to Sally Acorn's house. They laid him out on the floor, with a fluffy cushion under his head, trying their best to make him comfortable.

'Look, Sonic,' Joe growled. 'Look at the side of his neck!'

Sonic whistled through his teeth. 'I can't believe this, it's just too heinous,' he snapped. 'Vampires? In Green Hill Zone?' He bent down to take a closer look. The twin puncture marks on the side of the pig's neck were very clear.

Tails rushed in from Sally's kitchen with a hammer and a long, thick length of wood which had been hastily whittled to a sharp point at one end.

'It's terrible, Sonic, but we might have to do it!' he bab-

bled. 'It's the only way to kill vampires, you know. We saw it on the film.'

'Whoa! Chill out, little buddy,' warned the hedgehog. 'He's breathing. Just go and get me a bucket of ice.' Tails reluctantly put his weapons down and sped off.

When he returned with the few ice cubes Sally had left in her fridge, he gave them to Sonic, and stood back with a slice of garlic pizza defiantly held out in his paws. Sally thought she heard a foxy whisper of 'Begone, foul fiend!' but she wasn't certain.

Sonic stuck the ice cubes down Porker's shirt. The pig twitched and groaned.

'Oh no! He's undead! The horror! The horror!' shrieked Tails.

'Cool it!' Sonic yelled. 'Look!' Porker's eyes opened and then he scrabbled to his feet, arms flailing as he tried to get the ice cubes out of his clothes.

'What kind of practical joke is this?' yelled a furious pig.

'Keep back,' Tails warned, waving his garlic pizza. 'We have a stake and mallet and we aren't afraid to use them!'

'Has he gone mad?' Porker wondered, trying to make sense of the mayhem around him. 'I wake up here and find myself being threatened by an insane fox armed with a pizza. What kind of a welcome is that?'

Sonic looked closely at the disorientated pig. 'What do you remember, Porker?'

'Like, when?'

'Like, just this evening,' the hedgehog replied, tapping his foot irritably.

'Well, we were just watching the video, and we fell asleep, and I suppose Foxface over there must have had a bad dream and it's turned his head,' Porker replied. 'Mind you, some of us have always thought he was a bit, well, unstable,' he added darkly.



Tails bristled, but Sonic wasn't taking any notice. 'You don't remember walking home, do you?'

'I told you, I fell asleep. If I'd gone home, I'd have got very wet.' The pig looked down at the puddle of water he was lying in. 'Ugh, I do appear to be very wet. You dastardly hedgehog! How much ice did you use?'

Sonic helped the complaining pig up on to his trotters and manoeuvred him gently to the bathroom. He picked up Sally's vanity mirror and showed Porker the marks on his neck. The pig's terrified eyes met his own.

'I hate to say this, Porker, my old chum and all that, but would you mind trying a piece of that garlic pizza Tails has over there?'

'Well, that's a relief,' Sally Acorn sighed when they'd put Porker into the bed in her spare room. 'He can eat garlic, anyway. So he can't be a vampire.'

'Don't you believe it,' Tails whined. 'It doesn't happen instantly, you know. First he'll get all pale and weedy, and then -'

'He's fairly pale and weedy anyway,' Johnny Lightfoot pointed out.

'Well, he'll get more pale and weedy. And thin,' Tails said triumphantly, since no one could possibly fail to notice if Porker got thin. 'Then he'll get allergic to garlic, and we won't see any reflection of him in the mirror, he'll start prrrrrowling at night, and then - oh crikey! What are we going to do?'

They all looked at Sonic. At times like this, he had to take the lead.

'We'll have to find out what happened to him,' Sonic said seriously. 'Find out what kind of heinous dweeb bit him. Maybe it was one of the monkeys sneaking up from the Emerald Hill Zone playing a practical joke. Yeah, that's the likeliest thing, dudes.'

It was almost dawn outside. The storm had played itself out, and it was clear and fresh all over the Green Hill Zone.

'Hey! It's a lovely morning,' Tails said. 'Why don't we go and find those monkeys now?'

'Because I'll get my sneakers wet and muddy and that's too heinous a possibility to consider,' Sonic sniffed.

'You must go!' Sally cried. 'If something awful really has happened to Porker, it's up to you to act now and save his bacon!'

Sonic raised an eyebrow.

'Well, okay, perhaps that wasn't the most tactful way to put it,' Sally said hastily. 'But if Tails is right, we have to know now. We can't wait!'

'She's right, my most triffic hero buddy,' Tails insisted, putting on his most pleadingest face.

Sonic took the hint. Taking in a deep breath and really puffing out his chest, he took a sneak peek in the mirror to make sure his spines were really neat, and dashed out the door. Tails was right behind him.

They were halfway to the Emerald Hill Zone when they saw the last of the vampire bats fleeing to its dank and dismal home before the sun rose. Obviously, they didn't actually know it was a vampire bat from such a distance, but by now they regarded bats of any kind as seriously suspicious, given what had happened to Porker.

'Never seen any of them around here,' Tails said anxiously.

'Too right. I don't think it's, like, one of those fruit bats that eat the bananas in the Emerald Hill Zone. It's not flying that way either. Let's take a closer look,' Sonic replied. As the fox's twin tails began spinning, raising him into the air, Sonic took a run up and hit SuperSpin.

They got close enough to see that what they'd thought was a bat didn't really look right. It moved rather stiffly and its joints didn't seem natural. The main giveaway, though,



was that there was a small jet engine mounted underneath its wings. When it saw them, the Batbot spun round and opened its jaws. Two long fangs presented themselves to the advancing dudes.

'Yikes!' Tails cried out, taking evasive action. Halfway through his spin, Sonic decided just to tackle the problem head-on. Gritting his teeth to get above the Batbot as it turned and swooped, he stomped it hard on the back. It fell apart into several chunks of metal which disappeared into the trees below.

'Crikey! What was that?' Tails wondered when they'd returned to the safety of the ground.

'It's got to be something Robotnik's dreamed up,' Sonic grimaced. 'I mean, who else builds heinously fiendish robots to give us a bogus time?'

'But why this? What's fatty doing now?' Tails puzzled.

'Well, my furry foxy buddy, who's going to find out? Let's get searching for those robot parts,' Sonic said, looking at the forest around them.

'Oh, Sonic, that's not going to be much fun. They could be anywhere in there. It'll take ages. And it's nearly breakfast time,' Tails pointed out.

'Hmmm,' Sonic mused. 'You're right. We'd have to spend an awful lot of time, and we'd get hungry, wet, and miserable. So here's what we'll do instead: I'll go and talk to Mickey the Monkey and find out if he knows anything about this, and you go and search for those robot parts. That way, we don't both get to be hungry and wet and miserable.'

'But why do I have to do it?' Tails whimpered.

'Because my sneakers are already getting a little damp around the edges, dude, and that is totally uncool. See you back at Sally's. Cowabunga!'

A racing hedgehog vanished in the direction of Emerald Hill Zone. Tails sniffled a bit and then slunk off into the woods. Then he had a Clever Idea.