

Chapter 4: First Light

One week passed. Then two. The infant still hadn't opened her eyes. The lids were still sealed tightly. Sonic was starting to get a little worried. *Quack said they'd open in a week. They're not.*

"Relax, honey. You can't rush nature, you know." Sally said as her mate peered anxiously at the child for the fifth time in ten minutes. "Have some patience."

"But...what if they never open? Is my daughter gonna be blind her whole life?!"

"You're cute when you're worried."

"I'm not worried."

"Yes you are."

"Well...I wanna see my daughter's eyes!"

"Patience, Sonic."

"Patience ain't my thing."

"Well then, you'll just have to learn it, won't you? Now calm down; you'll agitate her."

"Da."

"Huh?!" The azure 'hog's eyes opened wide. "Did she just-"

"Da!"

"Heh...She called me Da...Sal, she called me Da!"

"Yes, I heard. See, she's okay. She knows you already, even without her eyes."

Sonic picked up Serenity, grinning bemusedly as he rocked her. "Yes...that's right...who's your Da, huh?" he cooed.

"DA!" A small purple hand shot out and grabbed the blue hedgehog's nose. "Da!"

"Yebs, I'b ybor Dba. Serebity, pleabs let go ob Dbabdy's bose..."

Sally giggled, "She seems to have a bit of your attitude, honey." The ground squirrel reached out and gently uncurled her infant daughter's fingers.

Sonic returned the child to her mother, rubbing at his snout. "Oww..."

"Daaaa...Dadadadada..."

Several days later, Prophecy appeared suddenly beside the new parents, holding a fussing Serenity. The serval had volunteered to act as a nanny to the young princess when her parents were busy with affairs of state. Sally looked up from examining a holographic image presented by her hand-held computer, Nicole. Though the war was over, every now and then a problem related to it would crop back up. The ground squirrel had been discussing with her semi-sentient computer what to do about a lake that was known to have recently had radioactive sediments disturbed from its bottom.

Sonic was instantly beside Prophecy. He retrieved his daughter and tried to calm her. Serenity wouldn't be calmed. The hero-turned-king sent a helpless glance first to his mate – who was approaching, a concerned look on her face – then to the Mystic Serval beside him.

“Prophecy, what’s wrong?” Sally asked, trying to keep the worry out of her voice.

The wildcat gave the worried couple a knowing smile. “Why, don’t you know? There’s generally some pain involved when an infant’s eyes first open. It’s a very natural thing, you know.”

“Her eyes are openin’?! That’s great! ... Well, what d’we do? I can’t stand seein her like this!” the worried father exclaimed, still trying to soothe the child.

“Not much you can do, aside from putting a cold compress on her eyes and keeping her as comfortable as possible. Her lids will probably separate fully within the next couple hours, but you should still keep the compress on for two to three hours after that, to minimize the swelling. I suggest you keep her fairly close by throughout the day.”

“Of coarse we will. Thank you, Prophecy.” Sally took over holding the baby for a while as Prophecy placed a wet cloth across the purple hedgehog’s eyes.

Two hours passed. The infant Serenity woke loudly from a nap. “Waaaahhh...!”

Sally gently removed the compress, re-moistening it. One of the child’s eyes was open. The other one, distressingly, was still sealed as tightly as it had been when Prophecy brought the infant to her parents. *It’ll open. In time, it’ll open.* Sally tried to reassure herself as she replaced the cloth.

Another hour later, the other eye opened. Sort of. The lid seemed to be stuck halfway down the infant princess’s right eye. When either parent inquired of Prophecy, the serval simply shrugged and said, “Have faith, Your Highness. It will open.”

The next day, when Sally removed the cloth, gazing lovingly at her child, Serenity gazed right back, both of her large sapphire eyes open and brightly shining. The baby ‘hog was once again happy and free of pain.

“How is she?”

“See for yourself, Sonic.” The ground squirrel said softly, depositing their daughter in her

father's arms.

“Da!” the baby said, happily gurgling as she gazed for the first time at her proud father.

“Yes...Da's here.” he said, grinning. “Sal, she's got your eyes.” he said softly.

“Maybe. Y'know, her eye color could change. It often does during a child's first couple of months. Not that that would matter anyway. She's beautiful just the way she is.”

“Of course she is. I just...I mean...Aw, forget it.”