

RUSTED: FADED SIGNAL

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(SFX Note: Other than the scavengers, whose garish and violent sounds should interrupt and overrun everything else, all other SFX should be light and blend with the artwork – maybe a very thin font that looks penciled in and serves to really drive home the silence of our protagonist and her world.)

Page 1 (3 panels)

Our young lady, looking pensive, looks back over her shoulder at the darkened corner of the city which now lies miles behind her. The area around her is sparsely built upon, with only a few abandoned and wrecked buildings in view. We're on the outskirts of the city and headed towards nowhere. The ground is dirty with sand and the road, if at all visible, is cracked. An abandoned car, unusable and burnt, is ahead of her. She has a small rucksack thrown over one shoulder. She's average height and spry – looks to be between 17 – 20, short blonde hair and light eyes. Her clothes are torn in places, the top just a size too big for her small frame.

Panel 1: A wide panel of our girl in profile, walking across a desert area. The sun is post-noon.

SFX: Some light caws from the distant birds.

Panel 2: Larger panel, tight on her face as she looks back over her shoulder, troubled.

Panel 3: Now we see what's behind her and where she's coming from, what the troubling look was for: a derelict and dilapidated city is behind her. Its buildings are crumbling and falling apart, seeming to become part of the now-desert land, cars are abandoned, and the

shadows stretch long and dangerously. What's left of the road is cracked and damaged beyond repair.

Page 2 (4 panels)

Ahead of her is an old highway and, visible in the distance, a junkyard. She comes to a T in the road where her path meets the cracked pavement of the highway. Near to the junkyard is the visage of an oddly proportioned man.

Panel 1: Widescreen panel. Bird's eye shot from behind the girl as she nears the end of the road she's walking. Ahead of her and to the right is the old radio station. If we're at the correct angle for it and can see anything down the North end of the highway we'll see a junkyard teeming with scrap.

Panel 2: She's stopped at the T where her road meets the cracked highway. She has a hand raised to shield her eyes from the sun. There's one or two more abandoned cars here, but not too many. The biggest traffic jams were in the city. The abandoned cars are of a newer variety, one akin to a Toyota Prius and the other similar to a Scion xB. Both are rusted and stripped – only the bodies of the cars remain.

Panel 3: She looks surprised now, her hand still shielding her eyes.

Panel 4: Over her shoulder as we see what she sees in the distance: the shape of a man, although a bit out of proportion, near the junkyard.

Page 3 (3 panels)

She moves at a run, only to be stopped dead by the sounds of crude motors, rubber screeching, and the sounds of a charge.

Panel 1: A larger panel with her running onto the highway, stumbling a bit as she does. The highway, as we've seen, is rough and pockmarked.

SFX: The crinkle/crunch as her feet meet the dusty, broken concrete while she runs.

Panel 2: A closer shot on Roger, making him appear even more like a man... Still pulled back enough to keep his robotic body secret from the reader, possibly obscured in shadows. We're over her shoulder as she hurries towards him.

Panel 3: The sounds of crude motors rumbling from the other side of the junkyard halt her in her tracks. Her face is panicked and frenzied as she stands frozen in place.

(Thomas – if you've got something better in your arsenal for motorcycle and big, crude, engine noises, feel free to use it!)

SFX: Vvvvvvvv!

SFX: Rrrrrrrr!

Page 4 (4 panels)

Scavengers! They assault the man, revealing him to be at least seven-feet tall and not a man but a robot. The scavengers, armed with cutting tools and blunt instruments, attack viciously. We've just gone from silent to vicious in seconds – this page reflects wild violence in a world which has given up its humanity.

Panel 1: The re-constructed vehicles, a rusted '92 T-Bird frame without glass and a homemade chopper, round the corner and slam to a halt, dust flying up from their wheels. The hunched man stands to his full height – at least seven-feet. His robotic form revealed, his metal face emotes concern in the angle and light of his eyes.

Panel 2: The men have launched themselves from the car and the other has dropped his motorcycle, already on Roger with a blade. They all have saw some type of weapon or tool – wrench, saw blade, pipe, etc.

Panel 3: A close up on Roger's head, clearly in digital pain. A wrench is affixed to a joint on his shoulder.

1 SFX: CLANG

2 ROGER: Please, d0n't!1

Panel 4: Pulled back over our girls shoulder as the group separates his arm, still working on the rest of him as well.

1 ROGER: St0p!!11

Page 5 (6 panels)

Not staying to watch, and knowing what some of those men are capable of, the young girl seeks shelter in a darkened and rickety building – the old radio station she'd passed earlier.

Panel 1: Turning back, she runs towards the old building she passed earlier. Behind her the violence continues as the men hack at poor Roger. View is $\frac{3}{4}$ overhead, a shot of her turning back which also shows the men working over the 'bot.

Panel 2: A wide panel as she takes off across the sandy landscape, heading for the nearest shelter.

SFX: Again, her feet on the sand – a gentle 'paf' or something.

Panel 3: She's near a dilapidated wall and lunging for a first-floor window – the building is made of brick, many of its windows glassless, though the one she's nearing still has some shards hanging on. A slight lean to the structure indicates what might be a cracked foundation.

SFX: Same as above, feet on sand.

Panel 4: She lunges, diving for the window, running completely on survival mode now.

SFX: CRASH

Panel 5: Shot from inside the lobby as she bursts through the window, an arm covering her face and another reaching out to break her fall.

Panel 6: Tight shot on her. She's through now and on the ground, her head covered and her eyes shut. From outside comes the sound of Roger's escape and the Scavenger's pursuit. She's curled in something between duck and cover and the fetal position.

1 VOICE: Don't let 'im get away!

2 SFX: VvvvvVvvvvv--!

Page 6 (4 panels)

The setting sun filters through holes in the roof and floors of the upper levels. All around her are the remnants of a long-forgotten building, rundown even before everything changed. The first floor is a lobby – dead plants and mostly empty seats adorn the once bright space. It's now dark with soot and dust, the metals rusted. A rounded metal desk sits dusty and unused with a flat screen monitor on it. A body is slumped softly in the corner, mostly obscured by shadow.

Panel 1: A close shot on her face as she cautiously opens her eyes, her head still covered.

Panel 2: A similar shot as she uncovers her face and takes in the lobby.

Panel 3: Large panel, establishing shot of the lobby. She's gotten into a crouching position preparing to stand and is looking around as red-orange sunlight filters through cracks in the wall and the windows.

Panel 4: Wide panel - Looking towards the seating as she stands, she sees a slumped form obscured by shadow – a body.

Page 7 (3 panels)

Nonplussed by the body, having seen her share in the city, the young girl takes the stairs to the next floor.

Panel 1: She looks away from the body and towards the end of the room. There, past the dead plants and unmoving body she spies a stairwell.

Panel 2: As she passes by the abandoned desk, her finger traces a line in the dust across its broad surface.

Panel 3: Without looking back, she begins climbing the two short flights of stairs. Shot is from the top of the stairwell, looking down as she ascends.

SFX: The creak of the stairs – not a horror movie creak, just an aged one.

Page 8 (4 panels)

Here she finds herself at the entrance to a short corridor with rooms on either side and windows at either end. Two small speakers hang from the very end of each hall, one on each corner. She enters the room on the right. Page might work well with a lot of negative space to help add to the openness of the environment...

Panel 1: Wide panel – over-the-shoulder shot as we look down the short corridor, the stairwell to her right and a broken window behind her through which light filters. The window across the hall is tilted slightly, in line with the tilt we saw from the wall on that side when she entered on the first floor. There's a door almost immediately to her right, maybe 2'–3' away, and one about halfway down the corridor on the left. There's yet another door beyond the first on the right, across from the left-side door.

Panel 5: The console begins to light up with small lights.

SFX: An electronic hum that indicates an old console coming to life. Jjust a gentle ‘hmmm’ really.

Panel 6: She looks startled as she looks back out the door, voices emanating from the speakers out in the corridor.

(Thomas! Do you think it would be better for the radio shows to not be confined by word balloons of any kind? There are some pages coming up which get fairly dialogue heavy in which the dialogue may benefit from being free from confinement – likewise we would avoid a ton of bubbling covering up the details in the background. Also, it might be fun to go with different fonts for each broadcast to match the shifting tones... We’ve got a sit-com, a pulp noir, a stand-up comedy act, an emergency broadcast, and ultimately our girl’s broadcast.)

1 SPEAKERS (IN HALL): Ladies and gentlemen...

Page 10 (3 panels)

An old-time radio show begins to play, a light-hearted Amos and Andy sketch complete with laugh track. She’s surprised by the sound coming from the speakers in the hallway and goes out to listen.

Panel 1: She steps into the doorway, looking back towards where she came from and upwards at the speakers which hang there.

1 SPEAKERS: The Amos and Andy Show!

2 SPEAKERS: <clap><clap><clap><clap><clap><clap>

Panel 2: Pushing that door open, she sees a broadcast booth/room. The console has two sets of headphones, one on either side of the desk, and a microphone set on either side as well. In the top right corner is a small darkened sign which we can see reads “ON AIR”.

1 SPEAKERS (OFF PANEL): Right now the Kingfish is on the platform before the members, completing a speech of tribute.

2 SPEAKERS (OFF PANEL): Andy is sitting on the stage right in back of him.

Panel 3: She is in the room now and standing at the side of the desk closest to the door. She has a hand lightly lain on the headphones, another brushing the microphone wistfully.

1 SPEAKERS (OFF PANEL): “And so, for the members, I’m proud to pay tribute to our brother here on the platform, Mr. Andrew H. Brown, who has done been in our lodge for twenty years.”

Panel 4: Her hand leaves the microphone and brushes against a red button. Next to it is a piece of paper with two words written on it in bold red ink: “GO LIVE” – there is an arrow next to the words and pointing towards the button.

1 SPEAKERS (OFF PANEL): “Before Mr. Brown applied for membership with our lodge, the census of opinion was...”

Panel 5: She’s looking down now, smiling a good and honest smile. She’s near to outright laughter.

1 SPEAKERS (OFF PANEL): “...That Andy was a bum.”

2 SPEAKERS (OFF PANEL): Hahahahahahahahaha!

Page 12 (5 panels)

It's nightfall and she has her rucksack open on the floor of the hallway between the two rooms. All her worldly possessions, which are very few, are spread before her. In her hands is a can of Spaghetti-O's. She's sitting cross-legged on the floor as the moonlight shines through the window at the end of the hall. Outside are the sounds of scavengers passing by, but inside she's comforted by further radio shows.

Panel 1: Wide panel - She sits cross-legged on the floor, her rucksack opened before her. In her hand is a can of Spaghetti-O's which she eats with a piece of metal which looks as though it started life as a spoon. Moonlight shines through the window nearest here. She sits on the slanted side of the building, away from the stairwell but under the other set of speakers.

(The SFX should go over the radio show dialogue to really express the interjection, like the horrors of the outside world are bringing her back from her brief escape into the fictions she's found. If we can work around the window in Panel 1 rather than obscuring it that'd be best. I'm really attached to the pacing on this one as paired up with the panels, so if it's possible to maintain it that'd be great. As with the previous page, however, if it needs to be shunted around please just keep the final panel as-is.)

1 SPEAKERS: It was a dreary little procession that trudged back toward the lodge again from the shattered cabin.

2 SPEAKERS: I said nothing and pushed hard against the storm as far as the front door.

3 SPEAKERS: But when they were all inside I ducked back into the biting blizzard and back down to my car and the .38 I kept in the glove compartment there.

Panel 2: Sounds come from outside and she turns to take a glance out the window.

1 SFX: CRASH!

2 SFX: Vvvvvvvvv!

3 SPEAKERS: I figured it'd be a warming comfort through the long, cold night ahead...

Panel 3: She turns to look out the window at the noise, concerned and startled.

1 SFX: CRASH!

2 SPEAKERS: Until I saw that somebody else had figured the same way.

Panel 4: She spies a scavenger on his motorcycle with a pipe in hand, speeding around and slamming the pipe into objects. He's currently riding towards the driver's side of the first abandoned car we saw earlier, leaning so as to get a good shot at the side-view mirror and connecting with it. The passenger-side mirror is dangling limply on the other side.

1 SFX: VvvvVVVVVVV!

2 SPEAKERS: The lock on the glove compartment had been sprung and the gun was gone.

Panel 5: The scavenger is driving away now, as we can see through the window, while our young lady is sitting underneath the window, her eyes closed.

1 SPEAKERS: As I hurried back to the lodge I suddenly felt the kind of inside cold you can't ever blame on the weather around you.

Page 13 (3 panels)

She sleeps in the control room but leaves the equipment on, wanting the comfort of human voices to put her at ease. The door to the room is barricaded for safety. She's jarred awake by the sound of an old show being interrupted by a news broadcast.

Panel 1: Night time now out in the empty hallway. We can see the moon through the broken window, the jagged edges shining in its glow.

1 SPEAKERS: Well how you gonna bring the New Year in, Red?

Panel 2: She lies sleeping in the control room, the dim glow of the instrumentation casting soft light in the otherwise pitch-black room. She uses her rucksack as a pillow.

1 SPEAKERS(OFF PANEL): I got nothin' to do with it. I'll stand there and it'll come on its own.

2 SPEAKERS (OFF PANEL): Hahahahahahaha!

3 SPEAKERS (OFF PANEL): You know I got a hunch that '47 is my year to—

Panel 3: Tight shot on her face. Suddenly, the broadcast is interrupted by an emergency signal which must have recorded over the tape when it went live. Her eyes fly open.

1 SPEAKERS (OFF PANEL): kssssssK* We interrupt this broadcast for a special emergency announcement.

Page 14 (6 panels)

Page 15 (5 panels)

She's at a crossroad and doesn't know what to do. Remain hidden in the control room where she can be comforted by the walls and the voices, or expose herself to the world and try to reach out to others. Fight or flight...

Panel 1: She walks out into the hallway, the twilight going a lighter purple. She holds herself tightly, clearly shaken.

Panel 2: She runs a hand through her short hair, looking towards the dim light on the left side of the hall through the broken window where the moon is setting.

Panel 3: She looks across the hall at the door to the broadcast booth...

Panel 4: ...And back at her makeshift bed on the floor.

Panel 5: She looks out the right side through the still-whole window as the horizon begins to glow a bright orange, pushing upwards against the twilight.

Page 16 (5 panels)

Resolved, she returns to the broadcast booth and sits down in the DJ's chair, putting on the headphones.

Panel 1: A close shot of her hands on the headphones, pulling them apart.

Panel 2: Her hands on the base of the microphone, pulling it closer.

Panel 3: She looks upwards towards the "ON AIR" sign...

Panel 4: ...Her eyes set and determined.

daylight. The credits will be going here so leave an opening in the artwork somewhere, likely the bottom right.

1 GIRL (BROADCAST): You're not alone.

2 GIRL (BROADCAST): I've got some old friends to keep you company...

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