

Rusty Gulch Preview
8 pages
Written by Darrell Hardy
Illustrated by Lou Frank

Page 1, 4 Panels

Panel 1

Sheriff Abbey is standing dramatically on the train platform, gazing out into the wasteland. Gopher-2 is nearby, and Deputy Shane has just stepped onto the platform. Both Abbey and Shane are wearing their badges prominently.

SHANE: MORNING, SHERIFF.

ABBEY: MORNING, SHANE.

GOPHER-2: HEY, SHANE!

SHANE: WAITING FOR THE SEVEN O'CLOCK?

ABBEY: YUP.

Panel 2

Abbey's point of view: We see the "train" coming. It's going very fast, and blowing up a lot of dust. Beyond and behind the train is a barren wasteland, with mountains on the horizon.

SHANE (OP): EXPECTING TROUBLE?

ABBEY (OP): NOPE.

ABBEY (OP): BUT THE TRAM'S A LOT MORE CROWDED THESE DAYS. USED TO BE WE'D GET A NEW FACE MAYBE ONCE A WEEK. BUT ONCE WORD GOT OUT THERE'S ORE HERE...

Panel 3

Wide shot from behind Abbey and the gang of the train pulling into the station. It's enormous: more than two stories tall, long as a pair of semis (or more) and still blowing up dust. The wind might make our cast hang onto their hats.

Panel 4

Looking over our cast's shoulders, we see massive doors that have been slid open on the train, revealing a horde of settlers ready to descend on Rusty Gulch. There are prospectors, miners, and robots of every shape and size.

ABBEY: ... WELL, I RECKON IT'S EASIER TO FLASH THE BADGE AT ALL OF 'EM ALL AT ONCE.

(This would be a good place for the credits *if they will fit.*)

Panel 1

Head and shoulders shot of Abbey and Shane talking. Shane is looking off to one side, while Abbey is still looking ahead (at the crowd coming out of the train).

SHANE: WHAT'S SILAS CAIN DOING HERE? MUST BE SOMETHING IMPORTANT. HE ALMOST NEVER LEAVES THE RANCH.

ABBEY: MAYBE HE'S GOT KIN COMING INTO TOWN, AND HE'S MEETING 'EM HERE.

SHANE: NAH. MORE LIKELY, HE'S PICKING UP A DELIVERY OF SOMETHING NASTY. PART OF SOME NEW SCHEME TO RUN THE OTHER RANCHERS OFF THEIR LAND.

ABBEY: YOU'RE A PARANOID OLD –

Panel 2

Close-up on Abbey. A combination of surprise and worry is on her face.

ABBEY: LOOK AT THAT. IS THAT WHAT I THINK IT IS?

Panel 3

Large panel. A large, ominous robot – the Eradicator – is trying to blend into the crowd, which doesn't seem to notice him. We're looking at the front of the robot. Abbey, Shane, and Gopher-2 might not be visible at all from this angle, but if they are, they're small in the background.

SHANE: IF YOU'RE THINKING IT'S AN ERADICATOR MARK 4, THEN YES.

ABBEY: MARK 4?

SHANE: FOUR TIMES AS DEADLY AS THE MARK 3, AND FOUR TIMES HARDER TO TAKE DOWN. THEY WERE SHOCK TROOPS AND ASSASSINS DURING THE WAR. WORD IS, ONE OF THEM WIPED OUT A HUMAN ENCAMPMENT ALL BY ITSELF.

Page 2, cont.

Panel 4

Shot of Abbey, Shane, and Gopher-2, with the focus on Abbey. Maybe a slight bird's eye angle, to get Gopher-2 in there as well. The little bot is saluting.

ABBAY: HERE'S THE PLAN. SHANE?

SHANE: YES, MA'AM.

ABBAY: GO TALK TO CAIN. SEE WHAT HE'S UP TO. YOU MAY BE A PARANOID OLD CRANK, BUT I DON'T LIKE THAT CAIN SHOWS UP THE SAME TIME AS THIS WALKING DEATH MACHINE.

ABBAY: GOPHER-2?

GOPHER-2: YES, MA'AM.

ABBAY: GO BACK TO THE OFFICE AND GET MY PLASMA RIFLE. THE BIG ONE. JUST IN CASE.

GOPHER-2: CHECK, CHIEF.

ABBAY: I'M GOING TO FOLLOW OUR FRIEND HERE. IF HE'S LOOKING FOR TROUBLE, I MEAN TO HELP HIM FIND IT.

Panel 1

Full shot of Silas Cain. He looks rich, imposing, and powerful. He's standing in front of his fancy black hovercar that looks like a cross between a carriage and a 1940s limousine, which is parked near the tram. Damien Locke, the lawyer, is speaking to him and may or may not be in the panel (whatever works best).

LOCKE: SILAS CAIN, I PRESUME?

CAIN: YOU PRESUME CORRECTLY, SIR.

Panel 2

Medium shot of Locke. He is bowing slightly. He is carrying a briefcase, which may or may not be visible from this angle.

LOCKE: DAMIEN LOCKE, SIR, AT YOUR SERVICE.

Panel 3

Longer shot of Cain and Locke talking.

LOCKE: I TRUST MY ASSOCIATES CONTACTED YOU TO MAKE ALL THE PROPER FISCAL AND LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS.

CAIN: IT'S ALL BEEN TAKEN CARE OF. AND YES, THEY WERE VERY DISCREET.

CAIN: SOMETHING I CAN HELP YOU WITH, DEPUTY CALDWELL?

Panel 4

We see that Shane (aka Deputy Caldwell) is near Cain and Locke. He's just been caught eavesdropping, but knows he's in the right, so he doesn't care. Cain and Locke may or may not be in panel.

SHANE: I RECKON THERE IS, MR. CAIN.

SHANE: YOU CAN HELP ME UNDERSTAND WHAT BRINGS A BIG, IMPORTANT RANCHER SUCH AS YOURSELF DOWN TO THE TRAM SO EARLY IN THE MORNING. WE SEE YOUR COWBOYS IN TOWN ALL THE TIME – MAKING TROUBLE, MOSTLY – BUT A PERSONAL VISIT FROM THEIR BOSS IS A RARE THING INDEED.

SHANE: SO, WHAT IS IT? A PACKAGE FROM BACK EAST, PERHAPS? OR MAYBE ROUNDING UP SOME MORE PSTOL-PACKING DRIFTERS TO “HELP OUT” ON THE RANCH?

Page 3, Cont.

Panel 5

Cain smiles thinly, fury in his eyes. Locke holds up a calming hand towards him, and offers his card to Shane, who may not be in the panel much or at all.

CAIN: WHAT ARE YOU IMPLYING, CALDWELL? IF YOU WANT TO ACCUSE ME OF SOMETHING –

LOCKE: WHAT MY CLIENT MEANS TO SAY IS THAT HIS PERSONAL, DAILY DOINGS ARE HIS OWN BUSINESS, AND OF NO CONCERN TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OR ANY OTHER PUBLIC OFFICIALS.

LOCKE: IF YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC ACCUSATION OR CLAIM AGAINST MY CLIENT, PLEASE CONTACT ME DIRECTLY, AS I WILL BE REPRESENTING MR. CAIN IN ALL LEGAL MATTERS FOR THE DURATION. HERE'S MY CARD. UNLESS YOU HAVE SUCH AN ACCUSATION (AND I DON'T BELIEVE YOU DO) AND JUST CAUSE FOR DELAYING US FURTHER, I WILL THANK YOU TO STOP HARASSING MY CLIENT, AND ALLOW HIM TO GO ABOUT HIS BUSINESS.

Panel 6

Shane looks rather stunned and disgusted. Behind him, Locke and Cain are walking away (toward's Cain's vehicle, if we can see it). Shane is talking to himself.

SHANE: RATS... COCKROACHES... AND NOW LAWYERS.

SHANE: GUESS THE SCIENTISTS WERE RIGHT ABOUT THE BOMBS BACK EAST: ONLY THE LOWEST FORMS OF LIFE CAME THROUGH UNHARMED.

Panel 1

Large panel, wide shot. Interior, Wylie's saloon. In the back of the panel is the front door, complete with the standard swinging doors. The Eradicator has just stepped in, and is holding the doors open in front of him dramatically. (If you're feeling really ambitious, he might be casting a long, ominous shadow across the floor).

In the mid- and foreground are your typical Western saloon bits: cowboys playing poker, a robot playing piano, mugs of beer, etc. Add robots to taste. We can keep it sparsely populated, however, since it's supposed to be pretty early in the morning.

Behind the bar on one side is Wylie the bartender. A human cowboy is sipping a drink at the bar opposite the bartending robot.

Panel 2

Shot of Wylie behind the bar. He's surly and yelling. The cowboy in front of him is shrinking in his seat and glancing nervously towards the door.

WYLIE: IN OR OUT, BUDDY!

WYLIE: I CAN'T HAVE YOU STANDING THERE BLOCKING MY DOORWAY. IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR THE WHISKEY BRUNCH!

COWBOY (QUIETLY): UM, WYLIE? DON'T MAKE HIM ANGRY. THAT'S AN ERAD –

WYLIE: WELL, WHAT'S IT GONNA BE? IN OR OUT?

Panel 3

Small panel. Close-up on the face of the Eradicator as he ponders.

Panel 4

Same as panel 3.

ERADICATOR: I AM LOOKING FOR OTIS O'CONNER, THE BLACKSMITH.

ERADICATOR: TELL ME WHERE HE IS, AND I WILL GO.

Panel 5

Shot of Wylie and the cowboy again. Same angle, different poses. The cowboy is starting to slink off his barstool. Wylie is pointing.

WYLIE: O'CONNER'S PLACE IS ABOUT THREE BLOCKS SOUTH OF HERE. ON YOUR RIGHT. LOOK FOR THE SMOKESTACKS.

COWBOY (QUIETLY): I BETTER GO WARN OTIS.

WYLIE: NOT BEFORE PAYING FOR THAT DRINK.

Panel 1

Otis is wearing goggles and welding the underside of an enormous cast iron wood stove. We can't necessarily tell it's a stove from this angle (or exactly *what* it is).

OTIS: ALMOST... GOT IT.

ERADICATOR (OP): OTIS O'CONNER?

OTIS: JUST A SECOND!

OTIS: OKAY, I THINK THAT'S GOOD. PUT 'ER DOWN, GODFREY.

Panel 2

Larger panel. Otis is removing his goggles and turning towards the door to see who has called his name. Behind him, Godfrey the strong robot is setting down the enormous stove.

OTIS: CAN I HELP YOU?

OTIS: OH.

OTIS: OH, MY.

Panel 3

We see what Otis sees: The Eradicator stands inside the smithy, the doorway behind him (we might see some street behind him, if it's not distracting), revealed in all his deadly glory. He looms ominously over us, exuding malice and danger from every iron pore. There should be no doubt that he is about kill Otis a lot.

ERADICATOR: OTIS O'CONNER. I HAVE COME A LONG WAY TO FIND YOU.

ERADICATOR: AND NOW, MY MISSION IS COMPLETE.

Panel 1

Medium shot of Sheriff Abbey, standing in a dramatic pose, her gun drawn and pointed at us. She is standing just inside the smithy. More importantly, she's right behind the Eradicator.

ABBEY: STEP AWAY FROM THE BLACKSMITH.

Panel 2

Large panel with everyone in it. Abbey's holding the Eradicator at gunpoint. The Eradicator has his arms up, and we can see that there are parts obviously missing. Otis is standing wary but curious (not afraid), with a calming hand towards Godfrey. Godfrey may be holding something, and looks like he's ready to bust some heads.

ERADICATOR: YOU KNOW WHAT I AM. WHAT I'M CAPABLE OF.

ABBEY: YUP.

ERADICATOR: AND YOU KNOW YOUR BLASTER IS USELESS AGAINST MY HARDENED ARMOR.

ABBEY: I'M WILLING TO FIND OUT.

ERADICATOR: KNOWING THIS, I HOPE YOU'LL BELIEVE THAT I MEAN NO HARM TO YOU, THE SMITH, OR ANYONE ELSE.

GODFREY (QUIET): I COULD CRUSH –

OTIS (QUIET): NO. I WANT TO SEE WHERE THIS GOES.

OTIS: I BELIEVE HIM, ABBEY. LOOK AT HIS ARMS. HE'S REMOVED HIS ON-BOARD WEAPONRY!

ABBEY: OKAY. SO WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH OTIS?

Panel 3

Shot of Eradicator talking with Otis.

ERADICATOR: I HAVE HEARD HE IS GIFTED WITH ROBOTICS. THERE IS LITTLE HE CANNOT DO.

OTIS: I PREFER TO SAY THERE'S NOTHING I CAN'T DO, BUT I'M BIASED. SO WHAT DO YOU WANT ME FROM ME, STRANGER?

ERADICATOR: A NEW BODY.

OTIS: YOU MEAN A BODY THAT THAT WON'T PUT THE SHERIFF ON YOUR TAIL EVERY TIME YOU STEP OFF A TRAIN.

ERADICATOR: YES. A BODY NOT OF AN ERADICATOR, OR EVEN A WARBOT, BUT A COMMON WORKER BOT.

ERADICATOR: THE WAR IS OVER. MY... FEATURES ARE NO LONGER NECESSARY. THIS CHASSIS IS OBSOLETE.

ERADICATOR: I WISH TO BE AN ERADICATOR NO LONGER.

OFF-PANEL (YELLING): HEY! ERADICATOR!

Panel 1

An angry-looking cowboy is standing in the street just outside the smithy holding an enormous rocket launcher. He's little more than a kid – maybe 18, if that, and give off a “punk looking to make a name for himself” vibe. We might recognize him from the crowd at the train station.

KID: I'M CALLING YOU OUT!

KID: YOU RECOGNIZE THIS, DON'T YOU? IT'S A PYTHON INFERNO ROCKET. IT'S GONNA TEAR THROUGH YOUR ARMORED SHELL, MELT OUT YOUR INSIDES, AND VAPORIZE EVERYTHING IN A 15-FOOT RADIUS.

KID: MA'AM, SIR. I'D MOVE AWAY FROM THE ERADICATOR IF I WAS YOU. AND KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE 'EM.

Panel 2

Medium shot of Abbey. Her hands are up, but only shoulder-high, and she's still got her blaster in her hand (though it's not pointed at anyone). She got a determined squint to her eye as she tries to talk sense.

ABBEY: I AIN'T MOVING, KID.

ABBEY: AND YOU DON'T WANT TO DO THIS. AIN'T NOTHING GOOD GONNA COME FROM IT.

Panel 3

Medium shot of the kid. He's still angry, but a little upset.

KID: I GOTTA DO THIS!

KID: AN ERADICATOR WIPED OUT MY FAMILY IN THE WAR! MA, PA, AND EVEN MY LITTLE SISTER. ALL GONE!

KID: AND SOMEONE'S GONNA PAY FOR THAT.

Panel 4

Close-up on Abbey.

ABBEY: WE ALL LOST FOLKS IN THE WAR, KID. BUT THE WAR'S OVER.

ABBEY: IT TOOK A WHOLE LOT OF DESTRUCTION, BUT WE GOT PEACE NOW BETWEEN HUMANS AND BOTS. IT AIN'T MUCH, BUT IT'S ALL WE GOT. AND IF YOU WANT SOME OF THAT PEACE, YOU GOTTA LET GO OF THE PAST.

Panel 5

Close-up on the kid. He looks furious, but ready to cry.

KID: I...

KID: I CAN'T.

Panel 1

Shot from the street outside the smithy. Gopher-2 is holding an extremely long-barreled plasma rifle that's littered with energy packs, clips, and other hardware that makes it both heavy and awkward to carry. The little robot is obviously having trouble carrying it, and is stumbling into the kid.

GOPHER-2: SHERIFF! I GOT YER PLASMA –

GOPHER-2: OOPS!

Panel 2

Close-up on the kid. He is turning his head to see what just bumped him. He's frowning and distracted.

KID: WHAT THE?

Panel 3

Abbey is shooting the kid in the chest! A beam connects her blaster to the kid's chest, and he is hunching and crumpling towards the point of impact, a look of pain on his face. The rocket launcher is falling gently from his unconscious fingers (the reader shouldn't worry that it's about to go off).

SFX: ZZZZAAAAP!

Panel 4

Close-up on the kid's face. His eyes are closed and his mouth slightly open. The point of this panel is to show he's not dead, just stunned.

KID (WEAKLY): UNNNGH...

Panel 5

Abbey is standing over the kid, her blaster smoking. Otis, Gopher-2, and the Eradicator are nearby (maybe in the background), looking ready to help. (The last line or two could go into in close-up panel if there's room on the page, but I don't think there will be.)

ABBEY: OTIS, GRAB THE KID'S PEA-SHOOTER BEFORE IT KILLS US ALL.

ABBEY: GOPHER-2, FIND SHANE. TELL HIM WE'VE GOT ONE FOR LOCK-UP HERE AT THE SMITHY. THE KID'S STUNNED, BUT HE'LL BE UP IN AN HOUR OR SO.

ABBEY: ERADICATOR?

ERADICATOR: YES?

ABBEY: WELCOME TO RUSTY GULCH.