

SCARE SHEET: RUSTBELT

[SCARE sheet] Wally Gunderson

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To:

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Date:

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Sir,

I respect Wally Gunderson for the kind, good-hearted person he is. He may be uneducated and perhaps not sharp-minded, but his heart is in the right place and his tenacity is almost off the scale. He would be an excellent operative to recruit into the organization.

Sincerely,

Jamal Norwood

SCARE operative

HISTORY

Originally from Minnesota's Iron Range, Wally worked in the open-pit iron mines with his brothers and father. When his card turned he became Rustbelt: a 350-pound joker-ace, wrapped in inch-thick iron armor, with a jaw like a steam shovel with massive hinge joints.

Rustbelt competes in the first season of *American Hero*, where Stuntman falsely accuses him of using a racial epithet. This causes Rusty to be discarded by the other contestants and he absorbs a lot of abuse until the truth finally surfaces and Stuntman's accusation is revealed to be a lie.

But by that time Rusty is pretty much fed up with the show anyway and, determined to do something useful with his powers, resolves to go to Egypt to help John Fortune, Bugsy, and Lohengrin in their quixotic attempt to save that country's joker population from genocide. This ignites a passion among like-minded contestants, and a number of them join him.

He distinguishes himself numerous times during the Egyptian campaign and in the second Battle of Aswan is proven not to be invulnerable, when a grenade or artillery shell manages to penetrate his armor, wounding him in the arm.

After Egypt, he's a founding member of the Committee, loyally following the orders of Fortune and then Lohengrin, but his sense of confusion and alienation increases as his missions, and the reasons behind them, become more complex.

His sense of loneliness increases when Drummer Boy, his best friend on the Committee, leaves.

Partly to combat these feelings, but also partly from his simple need to do good, Rusty "adopts" seven needy children around the world through various charities. He sends them money every month and faithfully answers their letters when they write. He gets worried when one of them, a boy named Lucien who lives in Africa, writes to tell him that he's being taken to a new school and can't write any more.

He takes his concerns to Lohengrin, but the Committee can't get officially involved for political reasons: The boy lives in the People's Paradise of Africa. In casting about for any source of information, since he's operating completely out of his depth, he talks with Jerusha Carter (Gardener). There's an awkward moment when she asks Wally why he approached her about this and he says it's because Lucien is in Africa and Jerusha is black, but his obvious sincerity—plus Gardener's realization that he wouldn't survive five minutes if he went to Africa on his own—eventually convinces her to join him in his quest.

The first stage of their trek is long and arduous as they travel to Tanzania, then by small plane and boat around Lake Tanganyika, and on foot through the jungle. Rusty finds the local weather conditions taxing. The rust problem gets increasingly dangerous, especially when he runs out of S.O.S. pads to polish his iron skin, making him more vulnerable by the day. This doesn't deter him from his quest, however.

They finally reach Lucien's former home village to discover it's been destroyed by PPA soldiers. A survivor tells them that Lucien and the rest of the children had been taken to a bad place where they'd be *changed*. In a small boat given to them by the surviving villagers, Gardener and Rusty follow the trail to Nyunzu, where they find a laboratory staffed by doctors who inject children with the wild card virus as part of the Nshombos's insane plan to create a cadre of children aces to fight in the PPA's wars. It's guarded by a contingent of Leopard Men and child soldiers, who the American aces quickly subdue. Wally keeps calling for Lucien, and a joker child points the way to the edge of the compound's clearing where there's a large mound of fresh dirt, a backhoe, and the stench of death. Wally opens the mass grave and finds his little friend dead among scores of other children. He personally digs separate graves for all, burying them with quiet dignity.

Jerusha, who has been looking through some official papers they found in the lab, discovers that this isn't the Nshombos's only installation. She also discovers that all the experimental facilities receive wild card virus from a bio-manufacturing lab near the village of Bunia. Wally realizes they have to split up: Jerusha to take the children they'd just rescued to safety, him to go to Bunia and destroy the lab creating the wild card virus.

At first Jerusha resists his suggestion. They both realize they're starting to have unexpressed feelings for each other, but they also know the children's safety has to come first. Jerusha and Wally say heartfelt goodbyes and she leads the kids into the jungle while Rustbelt heads further west, upriver, leaving an obvious trail in hopes of drawing off any attackers, while Gardener disguises her own trail with new-grown plants.

Investigating the Nyunzu site a short time later, Tom Weathers sees through their ruse and sends a child-ace after Rustbelt

NAME: WALLY GUNDERSON
("RUSTY" TO HIS FRIENDS)

WC NAME: RUSTBELT

OCCUPATION: MINE WORKER, AMERICAN *HERO* CONTESTANT, GLOBE-TROTTING ACE FOR THE COMMITTEE

BASE: FROM NORTHEASTERN MINNESOTA, BUT BASED IN NEW YORK CITY WHILE WORKING FOR THE COMMITTEE

WC STATUS: ACE

ETHNICITY: CAUCASIAN

and a larger group after Gardener and the children. The tiny, wraith-like ace following Rustbelt is armed only with a wicked-looking kitchen knife. She tries to kill Rusty in his sleep a couple of times, but his armor prevents any serious harm. She follows him relentlessly for days while Wally talks to her gently, trying to draw her out, trying to feed her. One night, she attacks as he sleeps, and her knife hits a weak spot in his now rust-pitted armor, drawing blood. He realizes he can no longer sleep in her presence, and his trek to Bunia becomes a grim endurance race between him and the silent little girl. Wally becomes utterly exhausted, but finally manages to grab her knife and rust it. She can no longer harm him, so he's able to fall into sweet slumber.

But even disarmed she keeps following him, trailing at a discreet distance. Wally keeps talking to her, nicknaming her Ghost, treating her as if she were just a normal little girl. He talks about Jerusha, his home in Minnesota, his family, Jerusha again.

Finally he stumbles into a contingent of Leopard Men. He deals with them summarily, but he hears weeping after all his foes are finished. It's Ghost. He tells her that she's safe, that they can't hurt her now, and she drops the wooden knife handle she'd been carrying and grabs a fallen branch from the ground and beats a dead Leopard Man with it, crying



RUSTBELT

POWER LEVEL 8

STRENGTH	STAMINA	AGILITY	DEXTERITY	FIGHTING	INTELLECT	AWARENESS	PRESENCE
8	4	-1	-1	2	-1	0	0
POWERS							
Iron Armor: Protection 8 (Impervious 6) • 14 points							
Rusting Touch: Transform 7 (iron and steel to rust), Continuous • 21 points							
SKILLS							
Close Combat: Unarmed 4 (+6), Expertise: Mining 6 (+5)							
ADVANTAGES							
Great Endurance							
OFFENSE							
INITIATIVE -1							
Unarmed +6	Close, Damage 8						
DEFENSE							
DODGE	4	FORTITUDE	10				
PARRY	4	TOUGHNESS	12				
WILL	6						

more loudly than ever. Wally takes the stick from her and wraps her in his arms until, after a long time, she cries herself to sleep.

A few days later, after Rusty destroys a train full of PPA soldiers by rusting the track right out from under them, Ghost begins to talk. He can't understand her language any more than she can his, but she sounds like a normal little girl now, which makes Rusty happy. As they continue toward Bunia, Ghost talks to people they meet, telling them what Rusty has done to the Leopard Men, and within days Rusty finds himself being followed by scores of angry people as the leader of a popular uprising.

When they arrive at Bunia, Rusty makes the mob wait far enough away from the perimeter of the lab to be safe. He's contemplating charging the encampment alone when Lilith arrives with Gardener. He barely recognizes what's left of Jerusha. His heart is in his throat, but they have time for only a brief reunion before Rusty has to turn his anger against the lab.

He enters through rents torn in the barbed wire fence by Jerusha's vines. Gunfire hammers at him from a dozen directions and he can feel some of the bullets hitting their mark. He sees Tom Weathers, and he and the Radical go at it, but even Rusty's strength is no match for the power of the mad ace.

COMPLICATIONS

Motivation—Doing Good: Wally's moral core is as solid as his iron skin, and nothing can prevent him from doing the right thing if he can figure out what the right thing is.

Disability: Rustbelt's massive hands are clumsy and he can break semi-delicate instruments (like cell phones) if he doesn't handle them carefully. Wally's large, heavy, and angular, making him a danger to furniture and awkward in tight spaces. He also clanks loudly when he walks, making it hard for him to sneak up on anyone.

Weakness: Rustbelt is extremely vulnerable to water, even ordinary atmospheric humidity. He has to scrub himself every morning with steel wool to make sure rust doesn't develop on his body's metal casing. If it does, it can weaken his armor so he becomes vulnerable to attacks he would ordinarily shrug off.

Weakness: Wally has below-average intelligence and is a slow thinker. Given time, he can usually puzzle things out, but he can be helpless if he finds himself in a strange situation. He doesn't have an extensive education and is at a disadvantage in complicated social situations and foreign (non-Minnesotan) settings.

Abilities 22 + Powers 35 + Advantages 1 + Skills 5 + Defenses 18 = 81

Weathers hurts him bad, breaking Rustbelt's ribs through his armor. He can feel bone scraping against iron with every movement, but as he turns to Jerusha, he sees Wrecker explode the brick that kills her. Somehow, in his great pain and anguish, Rusty runs Wrecker down. For a moment he contemplates the unthinkable, but even in his anger he can't find it in himself to kill the boy who killed Jerusha. He hogties the child-ace with a piece of twisted steel rebar and leaves him.

Later, with the PPA affair cleaned up, he returns to New York City with Ghost.

PERSONALITY

His below-average intelligence is balanced by his kindness and good nature. He is also more than a little naïve and can be too trusting, assuming his own generous, honest, and trusting nature is shared by everyone he meets, even if sometimes the goodness is initially hidden from view. But if his temper is ever aroused it burns steady and hot like an unquenchable iron smelter. He can focus with a laser-like intensity on a task he deems important and will undergo any trial or privation to see it through.

POWERS & ABILITIES

Rustbelt is oversized, iron-skinned, and mightily muscled. He can also cause iron or steel to rust with the touch of his hand.

ALLIES

Wally makes friends easily and is perhaps too trusting at times, but often his honesty and goodness brings people to his side,

as it did Drummer Boy. Even those Committee members who consider him a dim bulb are loyal to him. He had an unexpressed love for Jerusha Carter.

ENEMIES

Wally doesn't consider even the people he fights to be enemies, unless they get his ire up by harming the weak and innocent.

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