

“The Wheel Comes ‘Round: chapter 1”

Page 1

6 panels, each the full width of the page.

Panel 1 - View from the pitcher's mound of Angel Stadium of the third baseline, with the batter's box on the left and the dugout on the right, with the lower deck stands behind. It's nighttime, and the field is bathed in bright light from the floods. A batter, features not clear but wearing an Angels uniform, is walking to the batter's box. The lower stands are pretty full.

CAPTION: Anaheim, California

LOUDSPEAKER (radio balloon): Now batting for the Angels, Left Fielder number 7, Jackson Behr!

Panel 2 - We're now looking at the upper deck. There's a handful of fans. The light isn't as bright up here. Most people are leaned forward, watching the game, talking to each other or cheering. Towards the top, towards one side of the panel, isolated from the rest, sit two men, Kaliq and Samir. Both are of Middle Eastern descent. Both are dressed in American clothes... Samir is perhaps 50, is dressed in jeans and an Angels t-shirt, with ball cap. He sits up straight, as if he's not very comfortable. Kaliq, by contrast, looks like he's a typical twenty-something urban American, with trendy facial hair and haircut, in basketball shorts, Angels tank top, backwards ball cap, jewelry and expensive sunglasses. He's lounging on the seat, foot propped on the seat in front of him. If it weren't for the word balloons, the readers wouldn't even notice them.

UMPIRE (off panel): Strike one!

KALIQ: I had a vision last night, Samir. I know you guys are big on those. And this one was so trippy.

KALIQ: I have that poster in my room of the kitten, dangling from the clothesline. So cute, right? Well, last night it spoke to me. “No more hangin', baby! Make this thing gooooo!”

Panel 3 - Closer up on Kaliq and Samir. Samir is staring straight ahead. Neither of them are smiling. Kaliq's lackadaisical posture belies his words.

UMPIRE (off panel): Steerike two!

SAMIR: Patience, my son. Remember, it's about the lesson. We strike too soon, and the lesson will be lost. Can we trust that you'll be patient until the right moment?

KALIQ: You saying you can't trust me now? What do I have to do to prove myself? I'm ready. I've been ready for... how long now? I'm not the one stopping us.

Panel 4 - Now, from their POV looking down. In the foreground, Samir is holding up a large cell phone with one hand and is pointing at it with the other. The image on the phone is an aerial shot of Angel Stadium (like this but without the words). This image will be used again on the last page. In the background we see the brightly lit infield. The jumbotron shows the Angels are playing the Padres. Along with the innings info it says the time is 7:02 pm and 69 degrees.

SAMIR (OFF PANEL): Ah, so you question our resolve, Kaliq? I'll say it again - we'll only have one chance to succeed.

KALIQ (OFF PANEL): Not this again...

SAMIR (OFF PANEL): The bombs will already be in place in the stadium when you begin, but you must know exactly where they are...

SFX (small): CRACK

Panel 5 - The two of them are now staring into the night sky, following the baseball that's just been crushed out of the park. The glow of the stadium is below, but fainter.

CROWD SFX (big): Aaaaaaah!

KALIQ: I know all the wheres, all the hows. I don't know the when. Dude, the playoffs start in a week! Please tell me it'll happen during the playoffs.

SAMIR: With soldiers like you in our cause, we cannot fail. You know we mean that, don't you? But Kalik, hold onto your faith. Especially now, at the end.

Panel 6 - We now see the baseball, extremely up close, still climbing. But we see something else against the night sky above it... a small, bright flash of fire.

CAPTION: "I'll tell you again, Samir. It's not about faith for me. It's about the view."

CAPTION: "I just want the best seat in the house..."

CAPTION: "... when we burn it to the ground."

Page 2

Splash page. 1 panel.

We see what the flash of light was from the last panel... We're now in orbit above the earth. What's dominating the page, though, is a ship, one side of which has a devastating hole that is erupting with flames. She's starting to disintegrate... pieces of her are already starting to burn in the upper atmosphere.

What we should see when we look at the ship is... we've seen this ship before. And that's because it's basically a larger version of the lunar lander that first took astronauts to the moon. (<http://talesofcuriosity.com/v/Apollo/i/lander.jpg>). It's bigger than the original... maybe by three times as much. But nothing like the sleeker space shuttles that came later... in fact, this steel bug is the opposite of "sleek." Its skewed decent indicates it's not in a controlled fall.

The main goal here is, we're wanting to look at this ship, as it disintegrates in the upper atmosphere, and think, "What is *that* doing there?!" We'll be returning to this scene a few times throughout our story.

North America and Central America lie below. We're too high up to see where it'll land yet. We don't get the sense that it's going somewhere as much as it is *arriving*.

TITLE: The Wheel Comes 'Round: Chapter 1

Credits:

Writer - Tom Larson

Penciler/inker - Luis Czerniawski

Colorist - Leandro Huergo

Letterer - Wes Locher

Page 3

Five panels

Panel 1 - We're now taking the POV from just below the explosion, looking up - it fills the starry sky. The Achilles' disintegration continues. Burning pieces are flying away from it. One of the pieces, on fire, shows the painted remains of the hull - an American flag and a partial of the word "Achilles."

CAPTION: "You didn't forget, did you?"

Panel 2 - We close in on one of the burning pieces, falling towards Earth. The atmosphere behind it is red, also seeming to burn.

CAPTION: "It didn't just slip your mind?"

Panel 3 - We close further on the burning piece, and see... it's a man - Scott Anders. On fire. His hair flying behind him, but not burning off. He is wearing a 1960's-era space suit, but it's barely recognizable... it's burning off him. He's falling like an arrow, pointed straight down. His head is angled down and his hands are thrown out in front of him as if he's trying, badly, to control his fall. The atmosphere behind him is less fiery red, more pink.

CAPTION: "The Sequoia Patio Furniture annual blowout. With three southern Arizona locations to serve you."

Panel 4 - We push on Scott's upper torso and face. Still on fire, but not blazing. Smoking tendrils are coming off him - his suit in the final stages of burning off him. His face should convey pain and anger as he stares down to where he's going to land any minute... We can now see red sky behind him.

CAPTION: "You don't know... how low we'll go!"

Panel 5 - From ground level we're looking at a desert road. No traffic. A sun-bleached, dirty billboard-sized sign says, "Real Estate awaits in Sierra Agua! Home lots from the \$60,000s! Moving fast! Call Johnson Realty 520-555-5077 today! www.johnsonrealty.tv johnsonrealty@juno.com" Action lines from the clear blue sky and a big puff of dirt indicates Scott has made impact with the ground behind the billboard. The sky is pink as the sun is almost gone.

CAPTION: "Hello, and welcome back."

Page 4

6 panels

Panel 1 - wide panel. The front of a gas station and fully modern convenience store. There's a digital readout saying "8:06 76 degrees." Two cars are parked outside, one a large new pickup truck that screams "redneck," the other a beat up junker. The sky is now dark with lots of stars.

CAPTION: "And! Finally, we've got some good news! Charlie?"

CAPTION: "That's right, Jess, a northerly wind up from Mexico is going to break the heat for at least a few days..."

Panel 2 - The view is from inside the gas station. Scott is pushing his way through the front door. We don't see his face or feet yet. He's wearing clothes that are clearly not his because they're so so small - jeans that come up to his calves, and a long sleeved button down shirt that has only the bottom three buttons fastened... his chest is too wide to button the rest. The shirt has a patch on the breast pocket that says "Auto Max" on it (this doesn't need to be legible... we'll get a close up on it later). The sleeves come down to just above the exposed forearms, which are blackened with soot and dirt. He is not, however, injured. In the outside background we see a couple rows of gas pumps and a couple cacti.

SFX: BING

TELEVISION (radio bubble): ... and we'll get some fall weather for a bit. As you can see, high temperatures in the high-nineties...

Panel 3 -- The view is from the floor, and Scott's dirty bare feet walking into frame. We see a rack with candy bars behind him.

TELEVISION (RADIO BUBBLE): ... lows in mid-seventies. So maybe you can give those swamp coolers a rest. Still unseasonably warm for September, but nowhere near as bad as Tucson's record breaking season...

Panel 4 - The POV is behind Scott as he stares at a television hanging over a magazine and newspaper rack, silhouetted by the huge wide-screen TV. Onscreen is a grinning news guy standing in front of a map of southern Arizona with weather infographics on it (basically a composite of [this image](#) and tighter on [this image](#), although it doesn't have to be super detailed). Below it are various magazines and newspapers. And (this is important), there's a spinning rack of flip flops, with helpful sign on top: "Flip flops!"

TELEVISION (radio bubble): ... back in 2017. Remember those days? But we stuck it out, like we always do. Why do we do it, Jess?

Panel 5 - A close up of Scott's face. Completely shocked. The light from the screen gives his face a ghostly tinge. This is the first time we're really going to see his face in detail, so we need to make sure we get the scars on his forehead. His hair is a little wild, his beard looks scraggly.

TELEVISION (radio bubble): Just another of Arizona's little mysteries. And of course, don't forget, local firewatches are still in effect...

Panel 6 - The POV is over Scott's shoulder, the TV blaring overhead, as he's leaning in to look at a magazine that looks, with a title that's partially obscured but hints that it's Time magazine, says 9/11/01: A Retrospective," with a picture of the burning Twin Towers.

SCOTT (small letters): Oh wow.

COUNTER GUY (OFF PANEL): Sir?

COUNTER GUY (OFF PANEL): You need help with something?

COUNTER GUY (OFF PANEL): Sir.

Page 5

Four panels

Panel 1 - The POV is behind Scott as he turns his head from the newsrack. He sees, further down the store, the checkout counter. Behind the counter there's Counter Guy - a skinny teenager, short, looking kind of nervous. Standing in front of the counter to one side is a guy with a cowboy hat. He's reading a hairstyle magazine, and looks very engrossed in it. The other guy is Rodney. He's a big guy, wearing a football jersey. He looks to be around 20, and weighing a couple hundred pounds, and well over six feet tall. His back is to them, as he looks very intently at a glass display case with cigars in them. One hand touches the case, the other isn't visible. Also of note, although not prominent yet, are a couple shirts hanging behind counter guy with designs that say "Arizona, the Grand Canyon State" and "AZ." One is a t-shirt, the other a long sleeved t-shirt. Scott will wear one of these later.

SCOTT: Sorry about that.

COUNTER GUY: And you're, uh, not really supposed to come in here without shoes.

Panel 2 - POV is from behind the counter guy. Scott is walking towards them. The cowboy hat guy hasn't budged. We see that Rodney hasn't turned, but his eyes are darted in Scott's direction. His face is unpleasant.

SCOTT: Right. I won't stay long.

COUNTER GUY: Can I... help you find anything?

SCOTT: Yeah, actually. I need a ride.

SCOTT: As far as I can get out west. I can hitch the rest of the way. Do people still do that here?

Panel 3 - The view is from over Scott's shoulder. We see the three guys... cowboy hat is looking at Scott from over the top of the magazine. Counter Guy is still looking nervous. And Rodney has turned his head, but not his whole body.

SCOTT: I assume that's your truck outside, sir. Would you mind? It's urgent.

SCOTT: I'm asking you, with the hat. Not you with the gun.

Panel 4 -- Same as panel 3. The guy with the cowboy hat and counter guy are both staring at Rodney. Cowboy hat is in the act of dropping his magazine. He's spooked. Counter Guy is actually cringing a little. Rodney has turned his whole body around, and we now see he's got a .357 pistol in his hand, now pointed at Scott.

RODNEY: Well, crap.

COUNTER GUY: Hey, hey, let's all be cool!!

Page 6

5 panels

Panel 1 -- Rodney faces the camera as his arm is fully extended, the gun shaking in his right hand. He looks very nervous. The counter guy has his hands up in a "let's be cool" gesture, as his eyes dart towards Rodney. Cowboy hat guy is standing straight now, his eyes glued to Rodney.

RODNEY: Okay, hero, get over here! What are you, a cop? Some kinda... undercover homeless guy or something? You packing?

SCOTT: Uh, no... I didn't pack. I got these off a clothesline, to be -

RODNEY: A gun, you dumb hobo cop! You got a gun?

Panel 2 -- Scott's back is to the camera. He's facing Rodney, but his head is turned to address Cowboy hat guy, who's looking back at Scott, very nervous. Rodney continues to point the gun, yelling.

SCOTT: Kid... do you think I could fit a gun in these pants?

SCOTT: Now, sir, is that your truck? I can't overstate how important -

RODNEY: You listening to me?! You're not going anywhere!

Panel 3 - a close-up of Scott's face. It's kind of like this - not scared but kind of appraising.

RODNEY (off panel): So shut up and get over here, I said! Or you... or suffer the consequences!

Panel 4 - a sepia-tinged flashback to the early '40s - so this panel needs to look different than the others - darker, with a sense of another time and place (this is the only page where we'll do this with one panel - in later pages in this issue we'll do whole pages like this). The POV is from the passenger seat of a 1940s sedan, facing the driver's seat. The car's interior is immaculate. The driver's seat is currently occupied by Scott's dad... dressed spiffily in 1940's-era casual clothes. Scott's dad is staring at the camera with an expression of controlled anger.

DAD: Don't be stupid, Scotty. That's your mom's problem. That thick kraut skull of hers makes it hard to get through sometimes.

DAD: I know you feel the need to get in between her and me sometimes. But I'm your dad. So you keep your mouth shut and be smart. Or suffer the consequences.

Panel 5 - close up of Scott's face. Same as panel 3, but this time he looks angry. Not enraged, but more cold.

SCOTT: Kid.

SCOTT: I don't have time for your problems.

Page 7

5 panels

Panels 1-4 are going to be a continuous shot. Same POV, angle, etc.

Panel 1 - We see Scott and Rodney in profile, from the waist up. Scott is walking to a couple paces of Rodney, who's now pointing the gun, still in his right hand, at Scott's midsection, arm locked. Scott is staring at Rodney with intensity. Rodney is a full head taller than Scott - Scott is looking up at him. Rodney is yelling at Scott in near-panic.

COUNTER GUY (OFF PANEL): C'mon, man, just take the damn money and get out of here...

RODNEY: Get your hands up! I mean it! This is a real gun! Can't you see that?!

SCOTT: Since I got here...

Panel 2 - Same POV as Panel 1 as a muzzle flash goes off. Rodney's eyes are wild. Scott's face is unchanged. But the panel is lit up by the flash, which makes it hard to see if the gun's bullets connected. We need there to be a little ambiguity as to what's actually happening here.

SCOTT: ... that's the only thing I recogni--

SFX: BLAM BLAM

Panel 3 - Same POV as panel 1. Scott's face is more mad now, but he hasn't lost his cool. Scott is starting to reach out his right hand. The gun is smoking a little. And Rodney is holding it up and staring at it, shocked.

RODNEY: Uh...

COUNTER GUY (OFF PANEL): Oh my god! You...

Panel 4 - Same POV as panel 1. Rodney's eyes squeeze shut and his teeth show in a grimace, as Scott has grabbed his right wrist (gun hand) with his right hand and is twisting and pulling it forward in a karate move. Rodney's legs are in mid-buckle and he is pitching forward. Scott's expression is still mad, still cool. He's making this look easy.

SFX: CRACK

RODNEY: EEEEEEEE!!

COUNTER GUY (OFF PANEL): Oh my god!

Panel 5 -- Now the POV is ground level. Rodney is lying face down on the floor. His eyes are watery. Scott is crouched over Rodney, holding Rodney's gun in his hand, looking at it skeptically. He's leaning on Rodney's shoulder with his knee. Cowboy hat guy is still standing, his eyes bulging, his mouth agape. Counter guy is comically enraged.

RODNEY: Ah, it hurts!

COUNTER GUY: You loaded your gun with blanks? You were holding us up with blanks, you prick!

SCOTT: Just a gun. Not sure what I was expecting.

SCOTT: Sir, I don't wish to beat a dead horse.

Page 8

5 panels

Panel 1 - The POV is above Scott, still on the ground, as he is looking down at Rodney. His hand is reaching into Rodney's back pocket. Cowboy Hat stands next to them (we only see his jeans and boots).

COWBOY HAT: Uh, sorry. That's my beater out there. I don't think it'd make the trip.

SCOTT: Hey, Butch Cassidy, is that your truck out there?

RODNEY: Go to Hah! Yeah, yeah, it's my truck! Hey, what're you doing, you perv...

Panel 2 - Action lines indicate Scott has pulled Rodney to a standing position and is pushing him against the counter. Scott seems to do this effortlessly. Scott also does this with one hand, and with the other is holding up Rodney's wallet, looking at his driver's license through the clear plastic window of the wallet. Counter guy is glaring at Rodney.

SCOTT: Okay. Rodney. I'm taking your truck. Consider it my fee for putting up with your nonsense. I'll leave it somewhere for the cops to find.

RODNEY: My daddy...

SCOTT: Hmm?

Panel 3 - Single shot of Rodney, cradling his broken arm, trying to look menacing...

RODNEY: My dad's an important man.

RODNEY: He's going to get you for this. Nobody messes with our family. You think you're going somewhere, you're not going to make it out of town, you little...

Panel 4 - Action lines indicate Scott has gripped Rodney by the throat with both hands and is holding him off the ground. Rodney is in mid-scream, hands around his own throat, eyes bulging. We see their whole bodies, so we see Rodney's feet aren't touching the ground, and Scott isn't making much effort.

RODNEY: Hurg!

SCOTT: I believe you. So I need you to tell this to Daddy. Verbatim. That means, word for word.

SCOTT: I've got somewhere to be. It's bigger than your little pea brain can comprehend. Your corner of the world here is nothing to me.

SCOTT: But if you do anything to get in my way...

Panel 5 - Rodney's POV, looking down at Scott's face. Scott looks intense. The light on his face actually makes him look a little sinister. I like this look..., like his face is angled down but his eyes are looking up.

SCOTT: I'll come back and make you disappear.

SCOTT: You'll be one of Arizona's little mysteries. Do you understand?

RODNEY (OFF PANEL): ... glg.

SCOTT: Thanks for being reasonable. Now just one more question.

Page 9

Three panels

Panel 1 - small panel. Close up on Scott's face. Now relaxed.

SCOTT: Which way is California?

Panel 2 - Scott walks out of the convenience store. He's carrying a bag. Poking out of the top of the bag is a sleeve dangling - one of the long-sleeved t-shirts from the store. It's still dark outside.

NO COPY

Panel 3 - large panel - if not the entire page, then close. In the foreground is the cab of the pick up truck that was in the parking lot. Scott is in the driver's seat - it's driving past the convenience store, which is in the background. Rodney, hands massaging his throat, counter guy and Cowboy Hat are still at the counter, staring at him as he drives past. What's most important about the panel, though, is this - Scott, is looking at the button-down shirt he's still wearing, and is sticking his fingers through the two bullet holes in it. His face is bemused.

SCOTT: Hmph.

SCOTT: I wasn't sure that would work.

Page 10

5 Panels

Panel 1 - A wide shot of the truck driving down the desert highway of Interstate 8 - two lanes going in the same direction. It's still dark outside. Most of what we see comes from headlights. A couple other cars are on the road as well. Some cacti and desert plants sit further back from the freeway.

NO COPY

Panel 2 - The view is from inside the cab of the truck, from Scott's POV in the driver's seat facing forward. The cab is a mess... wrappers everywhere, a full ashtray. Scott drives, right hand on the wheel, left elbow and hand set on the open window, like [this](#). The headlights point forward. There's a highway sign on the right side that identifies [Highway 8](#). The dash indicates it's 2:56 am. The radio is on. Further down the road on the right is another sign (see next panel).

RADIO (RADIO BALLOON): ... As critics continue to weigh in on their desire for answers on possible Russian tampering in the last American election cycle.

Panel 3 - Now we push in to the windshield, and see outside the sign, something like [this](#). It says "Yuma 13, El Centro 73, San Diego 184." Our attention is drawn specifically to the San Diego mileage.

RADIO (RADIO BALLOON): The White House press secretary reiterated the president's promise that "All concerns will be investigated thoroughly."

RADIO (RADIO BALLOON): Japan's legislature today presented a bill to lower the legal age of adulthood from 20 to 18.

Panel 4 - From the POV of the windshield, looking in: Scott, behind the wheel, glances down at the radio.

RADIO (RADIO BALLOON): Their aim is to help spur more youth participation in helping to support Japan's elderly population.

Panel 5 - Push in on Scott's face, as it continues to look down at the radio. The faint light from the dashboard gives him a slightly green cast. His expression is one of thought. He's rubbing one eyebrow with the middle finger of his left hand . This gesture, which means he's deep in thought, is one I'd like to return to a few times throughout this series.

CAPTION: "I hear they eat their enemies."

Page 11 -

the next two pages are going to be flashbacks. So do them in the style of the panel with Scott's dad back on panel four of page 6. This is 1941, so everyone needs to be dressed in the clothing of period. My plan is to have the colorist do these with a sepia tone to further indicate it's from back in time.

5 panels - sepia for flashbacks

Panel 1 -- A POV similar to last panel. We see young Scott (use the concept sketch you came up with, JL) standing, from the chest up, looking downward, with a similar expression of thought, touching his eyebrow with his finger. He's standing next to a blank brick wall, hand in his pocket. He looks young. There's a huge bruise on one cheek, kind of the color of the green cast on Scott's face from the last panel. The dialogue balloons come from further down the line in front of him, panel left.

OFF PANEL: That's crazy.

OFF PANEL: No, it's not! My old man told me.

Panel 2 -- We pull back a bit and now see Scott, in profile, from the knees up, no longer rubbing his eyebrow but still looking down, kind of sad. In front of him is a guy, slightly taller than him, leaning against the brick wall. His face is obscured by the newspaper he's reading - [this one](#) (I know the print might be tricky, but what's needed especially is "Miami," "Jap Subs" and "Hawaii" are legible). Cigarette smoke rises from behind the newspaper. The dialogue balloons come from the guys in front of newspaper guy.

OFF PANEL: He says, in battle, after they, you know, shoot you, they cut your heart out and throw it in a stir fry. With rice.

Panel 3 -- We pull back further to a wider shot. Same image of Scott as the last panel, but we now see that he's in a line of guys, with perhaps six in front of him, all slightly taller than he is, and a few behind him as well. Newspaper guy, in front of him, still reads. The two guys in front of newspaper guy are the ones in conversation. The speaker is laughing. On the brick wall above their heads is a big sign, half cut off, which says, "ine Corps. Recruiting Station" (like in the background of [this photo](#)).

KID: Your old man's all wet. He's just trying to scare you so you wouldn't come out here, dummy!

Panel 4 -- Now the POV is from where newspaper guy is standing, looking back at Scott. Behind Scott, the line of men stretches back quite a ways - we don't need a lot of detail. But Scott is now looking at the street, with a look of dismay.

OFF PANEL: So he can keep you home with the rest of the kiddies!

SCOTT (small words): Oh no.

Panel 5 -- Same POV as last panel. He's now facing forward, staring at the ground. He's stuffed his hands in his pockets. He's got a [determined](#) expression - but not angry. His mother is now

standing next to him in line, perhaps a head shorter than Scott. She's also staring forward, not at him, but she looks very sad. She's dressed in long sleeves with a long skirt. She also wears a headscarf... which doesn't hide the healing bruises on her face. These guys have been through the ringer.

MOM (small words): Scotty.

MOM (small words): Du bist zu jung.

Page 12

6 panels - sepia for flashbacks

Panel 1 -- Scott and Mom in profile. Scott looks over at her, a little sternly. Mom continues to look straight ahead.

SCOTT: Not here, mom. Are you crazy? We're at war with Germany too, now. You have to learn to...

SCOTT: And... I don't care. I'm sixteen. If they tell me no, I'll just try again somewhere else.

Panel 2 -- We pull way back to an extreme wide shot, so now we see the whole side of the brick building, which has several storefronts - a hair salon, a drug store (stores indicative of the era)... the one at the far left is the recruitment center. We also see the sign from panel 3 of the last page in its entirety. The line of men goes the length of the whole building. We see what might otherwise be a festive atmosphere--lots of guys signing up for what they think is going to be a grand adventure. Scott and Mom, tiny figures now, stand there, perhaps halfway in the line. We see a couple palm trees on the street.

SCOTT: I'm not going to hide anymore. I have to do what I think is right. And this is right.

MOM: Du... you do not understand me, Scotty.

MOM: You are too young. They will not let you join the army...

Page 3 - Close up on both of them, in profile, standing side by side, facing forward. Scott touches his eyebrow again with his left hand, eyes closed in frustration. Mom looks sad, her head bowed.

MOM: ... unless a parent tells them you are old enough.

SCOTT: I... you can't. Who am I kidding, I can't...

SCOTT: Mom... he'll know.

Panel 4 -- The POV is over their shoulders. Further down the street, walking towards them is a woman walking her dog, and behind her, a mom and two kids. A sedan drives by on the street. Life goes on while these men are getting ready to sign their lives away. The street has a couple palm trees or something else that indicates Miami.

MOM: It is no longer your job to protect me. It never was. It was my job to protect you from that hurensohn.

MOM: And now he sees you are older and he is afraid. So he will push harder. It will be better when you are gone. Maybe better for us both.

SCOTT: Mom...

Panel 5 -- Close up on Mom's face as she stares up at Scott... an expression betraying fatigue, love and sadness. She is quite beautiful in spite of the bruises. We'll revisit this panel again in a future issue.

MOM: Scotty, listen to me. The men who lead this country. They want to put you in danger.

MOM: Just... be careful. They mean to do the right thing. But they will not care for you. You have to do that for yourself.

Panel 6 -- The POV is behind them in line, so we clearly see Scott's face as he embraces his mom. His eyes are closed and a tear is rolling down his cheek. Behind Scott's back we see the roughhousing guys, staring back at them, smirking. Newspaper guy has put down his newspaper and is looking at the roughhousers, with one thumb cocked back at Scott.

SCOTT: I know. I will. I wish...

SCOTT: I'm sorry, mom.

Page 13

5 panels -- present day

Panel 1 - A small panel. Tight close up on Scott's bearded face, specifically his mouth, back in the present. He's no longer in the truck, but is indoors.

SCOTT (small words): I'm so sorry.

Panel 2 -- Large panel. The POV is behind Scott as he stands, leaning against a large conference table, staring out a large picture window... the California coast at sunrise. He's still wearing the same pants, but is wearing the long sleeved "Arizona" t-shirt and flip flops (which we'll see in a bit). His arms rest at his sides. Next to the window is an American flag on a stand, and next to it, a Marine Corps flag.

CAPTION: Marine Corps Air Station Camp Pendleton, southern California

DAWKINS OFF PANEL: Not bad, huh? Something our boots say is, the view of the coast improves..."

Panel 3 - In the foreground, Scott is looking sideways at the new arrivals. MAJOR DAWKINS, 35, frames the doorway in the background. He's in [uniform](#), sleeves rolled up, but doesn't have a hat on. He's got a crew cut. He's a little taller than Scott and looks slightly annoyed. Behind Major Dawkins, and not yet clearly visible, is Major CAMILLA CASTILLO, a latina Marine, also mid-thirties (like your concept art, JL, with those notes my Marine friend sent me), also without a hat. By the way, JL, I found these three photos to be really useful in terms of proper Marine utility uniform etiquette. Note the Major insignia [here](#), where it goes on the collar [here](#), and the collar [placement](#) and also the name over the right breast and the "U.S. Marines" tape over the left.

SCOTT: "... the further away you get." I remember.

DAWKINS: Okaayy...

DAWKINS: I'm Major Dawkins, this is Major Castillo. We're in charge of security for this installation. We've only got a few minutes, so... what can we do for you?

Panel 4 -- POVs is over the Major's shoulders, as Scott walks around the table. The Major is still in the doorway.

SCOTT: Okay. I have no intention of taking up more of your time than is necessary. I can't go into a lot of detail, other than to say... I'm here on a matter of tremendous urgency and importance.

SCOTT: Is the guard outside the door necessary, by the way? I don't care much for guns.

Panel 5 -- Dawkins has stepped into the room, looking very reserved. Castillo is stepping into the room behind him, and looks frustrated.

DAWKINS: Yeah, he's necessary. You don't have any valid ID, you've got nothing on you that says who you are. In fact, Major Castillo here's been supervising a search on you since you arrived. What'd you find, Major?

CASTILLO: Every military, law enforcement, government database, facial recognition, all of it. A half hour later and we have absolutely nothing on you, Mr...?

DAWKINS: Yeah. Right. You said your name is... Anders?

Page 14

6 Panels

Panel 1 -- third of a page. The sun is still rising behind Scott. The effect seems to darken his outline a bit, so he seems shadowed. He's about to introduce himself for the first time. And his long hair, scruffy face, and the fact that his long-sleeved t-shirt now clearly reads "Arizona. It's a dry heat," seem to contrast with the gravity of his words...

SCOTT: It's Colonel, actually. Colonel Scott Anders. United States Marine Corps.

SCOTT: I've been driving all night. The last 72 hours in particular have been... difficult. So here's what you need to know about me.

SCOTT: My birthday is May 1. I emigrated with my mother from Heidelberg, Germany, grew up in Miami, and I had an English bulldog named Bayliss. That should get you started.

SCOTT: And then, Majors, I need to use the red phone.

Panel 2 -- Dawkins looks like someone who's time is being wasted. He's looking down slightly.

DAWKINS: Let me start over.

DAWKINS: We ran a search. You are not in our system. You're not in any system.

Panel 3 - Small panel. We see what he's looking at... Scott's exposed ankles, and flip flops he grabbed from the gas station.

DAWKINS (OFF PANEL): Therefore... you aren't a colonel, you're not a Marine. Hell, you're not pet friendly until we say so...

CASTILLO: (OFF PANEL): Batman.

Panel 4 - POV behind the Majors, in the foreground. Dawkins is staring at her, surprised. Scott, in the background, is looking at her, with a serious expression.

CASTILLO: The red phone. From the old Batman TV show, right?

SCOTT: That's right, yeah.

SCOTT: You... don't know what I'm talking about beyond that, do you?

Panel 5 - Scott's face. Eyes closed, touching his eyebrow. He looks troubled.

SCOTT: No red phone. That's a problem.

DAWKINS OFF PANEL: And not your only one. I'd be okay with kicking you loose to the civilian authorities. You can call your lawyer from the red phone.

Panel 6 -- Dawkins continues talking, close up, deadly serious.

DAWKINS: Except for what you said to the guard back at the gate. It was flagged on our network.

DAWKINS: Kayless. What does it mean?

Page 15

Five panels

Panel 1 -- bigger panel. Castillo and Dawkins are driving down a street, in a jeep, Dawkins behind the wheel. Both of them are now wearing hats. A Marine guard, Corporal Exley, with a belt and holstered pistol, sits in the rear seat, keeping his eyes on Scott. At left, further up the street, a squad in formation (like [this](#)), led by a platoon sergeant. Scott looks at them with a wistful smile.

SCOTT (small): I'm riding in a moon buggy.

DAWKINS: So is this some kind of exercise to test our operational readiness?

CASTILLO: Or a training exercise? Whoever flagged that codeword seemed to believe their instructions wouldn't be questioned.

SCOTT: What instructions assigned to that codeword did you find in your computer's memory banks?

Panel 2 -- Dawkins and Castillo glance at each other, mystified.

DAWKINS: Our database says, give the sayer of the word "Kayless" what he wants, within reason, and alert some office at DoD. And attached to the file is a security clearance identifier we've never heard of.

SCOTT: And what did DoD say?

Panel 3 -- They drive away, as, in the foreground, another platoon sergeant yells at a line of recruits, kind of like [this](#).

DAWKINS: How about we ask the questions...

CASTILLO: It took them twenty minutes to get me to the right office. The call lasted another two.

CASTILLO: They seemed... confused. They said they'd look into it, took my info and hung up. Someone needs to tell DoD their customer service sucks.

Panel 4 -- The view is over Scott's shoulder in the front seat. Dawkins is looking back at him as he's jerking his thumb at a nondescript building that's separated from the others. Castillo is already starting to get out of the jeep.

SCOTT: What are we doing here?

DAWKINS: The flag in our system cross-referenced this place. We call it the Museum.

DAWKINS: Pendleton's been around since the early '40s. Some of that history got collected. Seems like a strange place to end a scavenger hunt, though.

Panel 5 -- Dawkins, Castillo, Scott and Exley walk through the front door into a small but clean foyer. We see them from the POV of the man behind the only piece of furniture in the room... a big desk that goes the width of the room. There's a small television on. The image on the TV is of Daenerys, riding a dragon. We also see a pair of Marine issue boots, propped up on the desk.

DAWKINS: What're we going to find here, Mr. Anders? A note saying, "Congratulations. Your security protocols are secure. Enjoy a free soda at the MCX?"

SCOTT: No, Major. That's not what it's going to say.

HERRON: Ah, there you are.

Page 16

Five panels

Panel 1 -- Maybe do this panel in profile? All three of the uniformed Marines are now standing a couple paces back from Herron's desk. They are holding their hats, and saluting Colonel Herron as he stands. A man in his late sixties, his Marine uniform seems too big on him. Herron is returning the salute. Scott stands at attention, although he doesn't salute. This whole time, Herron stays behind his desk.

DAWKINS: Colonel Herron.

HERRON: Majors. Corporal. And... other.

SCOTT: Apologies, Colonel. I'm out of uniform today.

SCOTT: Colonel Scott Anders. Formerly stationed here at Pendleton.

Panel 2 -- Close up on Herron's face. It looks like he's seen a ghost.

CASTILLO (OFF PANEL): Sir? Does that mean anything to you?

Panel 3 -- Major Dawkins looks questioningly at Colonel Herron. Scott, standing next to Dawkins, smiles a little.

SCOTT: Ah. Herron. Now I remember.

HERRON: Colonel... you're Colonel Anders. But... how can...?

Panel 4 -- In profile, Colonel Herron stares in wonder at Scott, who looks back calmly. Castillo stands in between them, looking questingly at Herron.

HERRON: Wow. I should have known something like this would happen. Eventually.

CASTILLO: Sir, when this man showed up at the Onofre gate an hour ago, he said a word. Kayless. Is there anything here that sheds light on it?

CASTILLO: General Thompson asked us to look into it. We realize it's won't be as easy as producing a folder with a stamp on it but we were hoping you could at least ...

Panel 5 - Herron, with a sad smile, holds up a brown folder. It's clearly labeled "Kayless: Eyes Only. Top Secret/SCI." The folder seems a little thin. In the corner is a simple list that says "Sign out," with some indecipherable writing.

HERRON: Our Camp Commander wants answers.

HERRON: Well, for once, I may be the only one who's got 'em.

HERRON: Here you go, boys and girls. The reason for my continued existence on this base.

Page 17

5 panels

Panel 1 -- Castillo is reaching out for the folder from Herron when Dawkins grabs it first. Motion lines indicate he's moving fast.

DAWKINS: "Eyes only." This is dated 1967. What is this, Cold War crap?

HERRON: Something like that, Major.

CASTILLO: You read it? Do you have that kind of clearance, sir?

HERRON: Clearance? Pah!

Panel 2 -- Herron is smiling, cocking a thumb behind him to a solitary, unimpressive door.

HERRON: I was there, Major. Or, more specifically, I was here.

HERRON: That whole back room is full of plain ol' stuff. Some of it mildly interesting. Most of it dusty, forgotten junk.

HERRON: I don't know if anyone outside this room cares about the contents of that folder anymore. But someone once thought it was important enough to keep my slowly-pruning ass around this long just to babysit it.

Panel 3 -- On Castillo and Herron. He's now a little sad. Castillo looks at him questioningly.

HERRON: They refused to digitize it. They needed someone who remembers.

HERRON: Or they did. But you're back, Colonel Anders. So I guess the jack's sprung from that box, hasn't it?

DAWKINS OFF PANEL: Corporal Exley.

Panel 4 -- Dawkins is still holding the open file folder. He's looking up with an intense look on his face.

DAWKINS: Place this man under arrest.

Panel 5 -- Exley has his pistol pointed at Scott, who looks back at him with a stern look. Exley is yelling, looking nervous.

EXLEY: Put your hands up!

CASTILLO (OFF PANEL) Major! What is it? He's not doing anything!

EXLEY: Sir! I said put your hands up! Ma'am, please step away!

CASTILLO (OFF PANEL): Brad!

Page 18

Five panels

Panel 1 - Dawkins, looking very intense, yells. Holding the folder open. There's only one page showing, and it's a bit yellowed. There's also a photo of Scott's face - upside down from the camera's point of view - paperclipped to the folder. It shows Scott, about seven or eight years younger than he is now.

DAWKINS: Heidelberg, Miami. Bayliss the damn bulldog. It's all right here. Just like you knew it would be. This isn't a training exercise, it's a passcode. And your birthday is May 1. 1925.

DAWKINS: Your memory's pretty good, Colonel Scott Anders. For a man over 90.

DAWKINS: And now you've conned your way aboard a Marine installation for reasons unknown. So you don't go anywhere until I get answers from someone who does know.

Panel 2 -- In profile. Scott takes a step towards Exley, who looks almost panicked at this point. The pistol is aimed at Scott's midsection.

SCOTT: I'm afraid that's not going to work.

SCOTT: You don't know where the red phone is? Find it. I'll wait. I won't explain, but...

SCOTT: It's owed me.

EXLEY: Sir, I won't tell you again! Put...

Panel 3 -- Exley's face lights up as the pistol flashes.

SFX: BLAM

Panel 4 - Same POV as panel 2. Exley is staring at Scott, unbelievably, his gun smoking. Scott looks angry. His t-shirt has a hole in it.

SCOTT: Feel better now? Because...

Panel 5 - Same as panel 4, except the muzzle flashes make both characters appear as lit shadows.

SFX: BLAM BLAM BLAM

Page 19

Four panels

Panel 1 -- third of a page wide panel, from left to right: Exley stares at Scott, uncomprehendingly. Scott glares at Exley. His t-shirt has several holes in it. Castillo, Dawkins and Herron stare at Scott. I want this to be different from the Rodney exchange from page 7 - this time everyone in the room is actually aware of what's just happened.

SCOTT: Qw.

Panel 2 --Even as the gun discharges, Scott is knocking the pistol out Exley's hand to one side and up with his left hand--all with action lines. With his right arm he's throwing an elbow at Exley's jaw... Exley is rolling with the impact.

SFX: BLAM

SCOTT: Give me that!

SCOTT: You'll hurt somebody.

EXLEY: Whu-uh!

Panel 3 -- A wide shot... Scott staring down at the downed guard. Castillo is staring intensely at Scott, and Dawkins is yelling, as he squats down to pick up the pistol Exley just dropped.

DAWKINS: Get on the ground! Get on the ground right now or I swear...

CASTILLO: Brad. Shut up. We don't know what that'll do. The ricochet might...

SCOTT: I don't ricochet. I'm not Robby the Robot.

SFX: Briiiing

Panel 4 -- Colonel Herron, still standing behind his desk. And in one hand he's holding a very red, 1960's-era telephone base, with the cord trailing down to some point behind the desk. With the other hand he's holding up the phone's receiver. He's smirking.

HERRON: Colonel Anders?

HERRON: It's for you.

Page 20

Five panels

Panel 1 - Dawkins holds the phone to his face, his gun pointed at Scott, off panel. Action lines indicate he's grabbed the receiver from Herron, whose eyebrows are raised in an expression that says "you sure you want to do that?"

DAWKINS: Who is this? Identify yourself.

DAWKINS: No, this is Major Dawkins. Colonel... Anders is in my custody. I...

Panel 2 - Dawkins is hearing something on the other line that's making him surprised and a little shocked. His pistol is lowered. Scott is walking into the panel, hand raised to take the receiver.

DAWKINS: But, sir. He... some homeless guy wanders in and I'm supposed to... yes. From the looks of it.

DAWKINS: Yes, of course, sir. I apologize.

DAWKINS: Yes, certainly. Here he is, right here.

Panel 3 - A wide panel. Scott is talking into the receiver. Herron is placing the phone base on his desk. Castillo stands, staring at Scott. Next to her, Dawkins' face betrays a man who can't believe what he's experiencing. Behind them, action lines indicate a couple Marines are bursting into the room, pistols drawn. Castillo doesn't take her eyes off Scott.

MARINE: Sirs... ma'am, we heard gunfire... what's...

CASTILLO: We're fine, Corporal. Take Private Exley out of here, please. Maybe get him some ice.

SCOTT: Hello.

Panel 4 -- Scott continues talking as the Marines carry Exley out the door.

SCOTT: Yes. "Floating Oak."

SCOTT: Now, can we get down to it? Who is this I'm speaking with?

SCOTT: Very well, sir. I'm ready to debrief you immediately...

Panel 5 - The POV is a high angle, further back at the other end of the room. Scott stands at Herron's desk, holding the phone, his back to us. Herron is behind the desk, now sitting and looking up at him. Dawkins and Castillo are standing and staring at Scott's back. Dawkins is holstering his sidearm, keeping his eyes on Scott. The POV is further back... we get the feeling Scott is isolated as he talks to the mystery caller.

SCOTT: Sir, I need to impress on you...

SCOTT: No, Kayless is still viable. It's more critical than ever. I can't... I cannot overstate its importance.

SCOTT: No, sir, I do not understand...

Page 21

Six panels

Panel 1 - The POV is from behind Herron - Scott is facing the camera. Scott's face shows agitation-- he's looking down and leaning on the desk with his free hand. Herron is glancing at Castillo, facing the camera, who looks back at him, concerned.

SCOTT: Please, sir, I'm... I apologize, I'm not being clear, this is very hard to do over the phone.

SCOTT: Please listen to me... there are countless lives at stake.

SCOTT: Bring me in, I'll tell you everything, there's... a wealth, incredible wealth of intelligence I have to share, but we can't waste another minute... we have to move on this immediately...

Panel 2 - Same as last panel, but this time Scott is standing straight and he stares straight ahead.

SCOTT: Yes sir.

SCOTT: What... what do I do in the meantime?

Panel 3 - Same as last panel. Scott hangs his head. He has placed the receiver back on the cradle. Shoulders slumped. Herron looking at him with concern.

SCOTT: I'm done here.

Panel 4 - Scott has a stoic look on his face. Castillo stares at Scott with a questioning look.

SCOTT: Colonel. There's a small box back there, labeled "Jack Flash." Some of my personal effects.

CASTILLO: Wait a minute.

SCOTT: No.

CASTILLO: You were just shot point blank.

SCOTT: No. If you don't like it, Major, feel free to take another.

Panel 5 - Close up on Castillo. She looks angry.

CASTILLO: You can go to hell, Anders.

CASTILLO: We've got orders from our chain of command, and unless that was God on the phone, we need an explanation for what's happening. Now.

Panel 6 - Scott's face looks weary for the first time as he looks down.

SCOTT: I'm sorry. I just ... I was hoping it'd be simple, but that's crazy. I see that now.

SCOTT: That... was the Department of Defense. After I leave, you're going to call them, in spite of yourself. And here's what they'll say - forget everything that happened here today. They already have.

SCOTT: I should have known. In the end...

Page 22

Five panels - all stretching the width of the page, like page 1.

Panel 1 - An exterior shot of a largish Wal-Mart-type store. The parking lot is only a quarter full. It's about 10 am. The sign for the store identifies it as a "Swift-Mart."

CAPTION: "... nothing's changed at all."

CAPTION: Somewhere in middle America...

EMPLOYEE (from inside the store): Bill says he needs a special part.

Panel 2 - A small back office in the store. In the background is an employee with a green vest, with name tag identifying himself as Kevin, and collared shirt and tie. He is leaning in the open doorway, smiling. In the foreground is a desk that's facing the doorway. The POV is from behind the desk. The office looks comfy and inviting, with some feminine touches - a calendar with horses is on the wall, etc.. There's a modern desk phone on the desk, along with a computer monitor. Right now the screen shows a spreadsheet. There's also a closed folder on the desk. We don't ever see the face of the person behind the desk - who goes by Melissa - or anything other than her nail-polished fingers.

MELISSA (OFF PANEL): Oh come on. We have a hardware department. How long does he need?

EMPLOYEE: Maybe 45 minutes to the plumbing store and back. Then another hour to fix.

Panel 3 - Same view. Except the employee is leaving, pulling the door closed. And the image on the screen has changed to a photo of the aerial view of Angel stadium - the same image as was on Samir's phone on page 1. Melissa's nail-polished- hand is holding up a cell phone.

MELISSA (OFF PANEL): Great. Tell Janey to make the ladies room in the back sparkle. And tell everyone on the floor to be extra nice. It's a Sunday.

EMPLOYEE: Sparkly and nice. You got it, boss.

MELISSA (OFF PANEL): Thanks, sweetie. Pull the door closed, would you?

SFX: CLICK

Panel 4 - same view. Except the cell is off panel now... she's holding it to her ear. Her other hand is opening the folder. A large photo is inside, showing an obscured image of (see next panel).

CELL PHONE (OFF PANEL RADIO BALLOON): Murphy's Auto Repair.

MELISSA (OFF PANEL): G7 Azor.

MELISSA (OFF PANEL): It's time to activate the Kaliq asset.

Panel 5 - Push in on her hand, now holding up the photo - a satellite photo of the Achilles explosion. The way she holds it, we clearly see the computer monitor, with the image of Angel Stadium, in the background.

CELL PHONE (OFF PANEL RADIO BALLOON): You're kidding.

CELL PHONE (OFF PANEL RADIO BALLOON): Are we finally going to do it this time?
MELISSA (OFF PANEL): No more waiting. Our countdown clock just started.