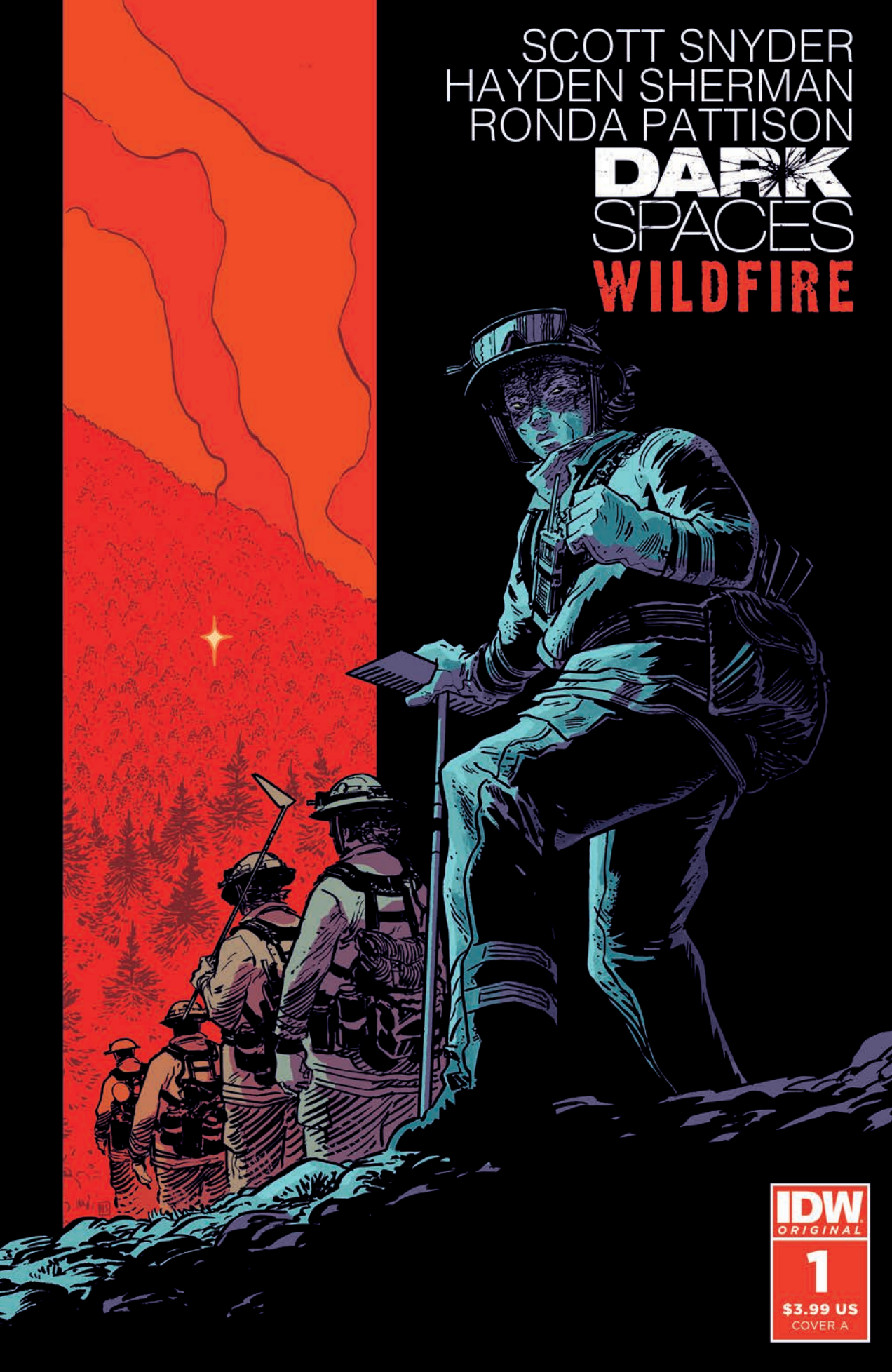


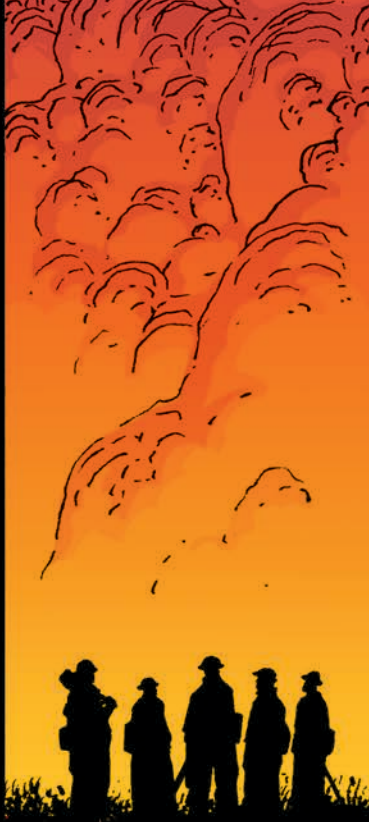
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HAYDEN SHERMAN
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DARK
SPACES
WILDFIRE



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COVER A

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DARK SPACES WILDFIRE



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Cover E
 Blank Sketch Variant



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CALIFORNIA FORESTRY SAYS THERE ARE *FOUR* STAGES TO A WILDFIRE.



IGNITION.




FLASHOVER.




MAX HEAT.



DECAY.



BUT I'VE BEEN WORKING FIRES THIRTY YEARS--LONG ENOUGH TO KNOW THERE'S A *FIFTH* STAGE NO ONE TALKS ABOUT. THE MOST *IMPORTANT* ONE. THE ONE BEFORE IT ALL, BEFORE THE SPARK. I CALL IT *THE TRAP*.



IT'S THE PERIOD WHEN EVERYTHING CREEPS INTO PLACE FOR A *DISASTER*. THE QUICK RAIN DURING A DROUGHT THAT BRINGS UP GRASS DRY AS TINDER. THE BEETLE INFESTATION THAT HOLLOWES THE TREES INTO KINDLING. THE SANTA ANAS KICKING UP...



THE *DANGER*, THE *WARNING* SIGNS--THEY'RE ALL THERE, IF YOU KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR.



THE TRAP IS WHEN YOU CAN STOP THE FIRE BEFORE IT STARTS. DISMANTLE EVERYTHING.



I ALWAYS THOUGHT I WAS GOOD AT SPOTTING A TRAP.

BUT FROM THIS BURNING HOUSE, 900 MILLION DOLLARS HAS JUST BEEN STOLEN.



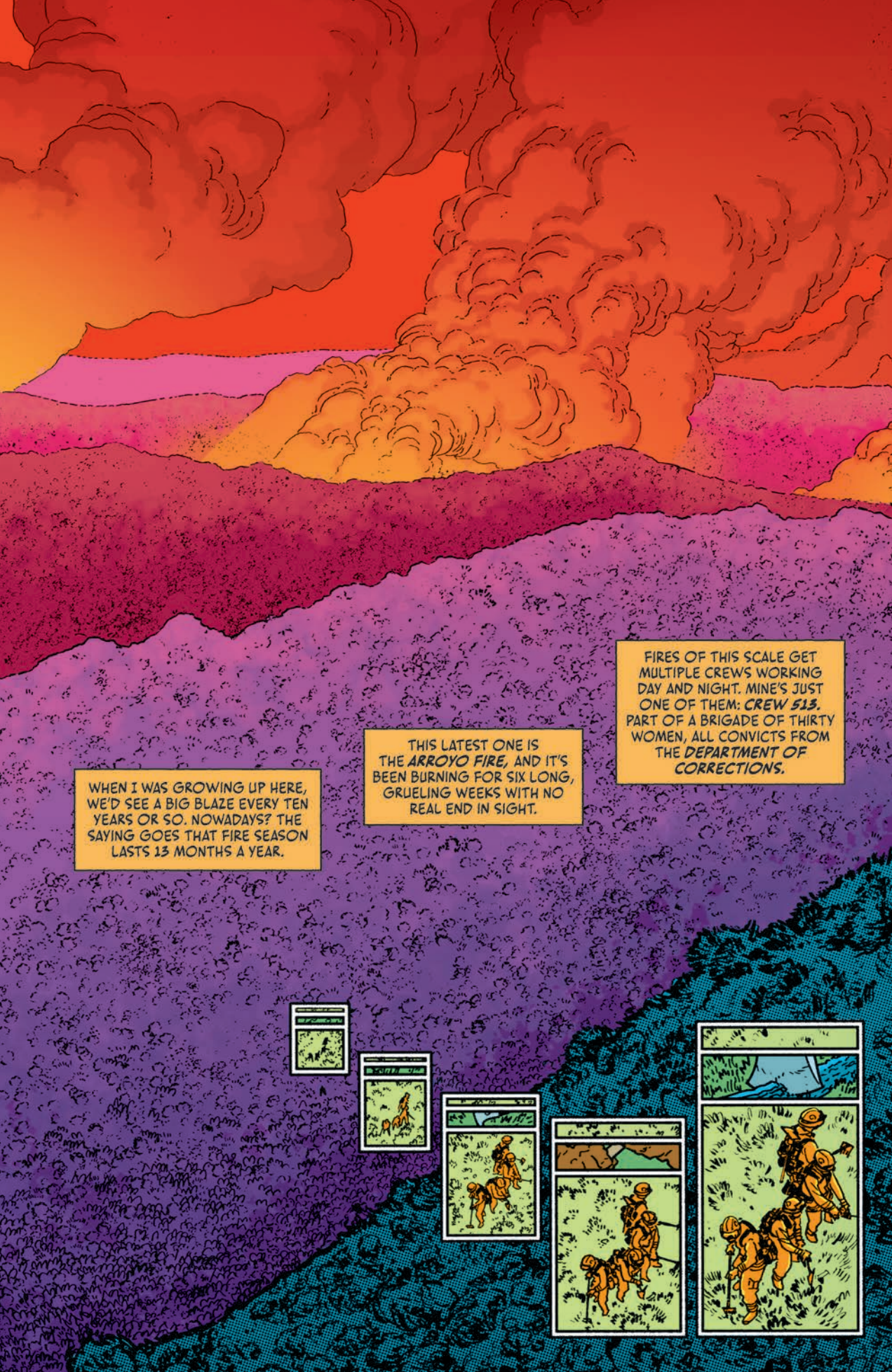
IN THE LIVING ROOM, FIVE PEOPLE LIE DEAD. ALL MURDERED.

AND I SAW NONE OF IT COMING.





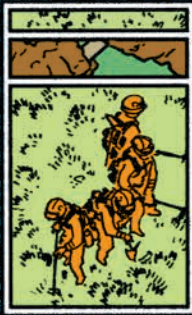
WILDFIRE
Part One: THE TRAP

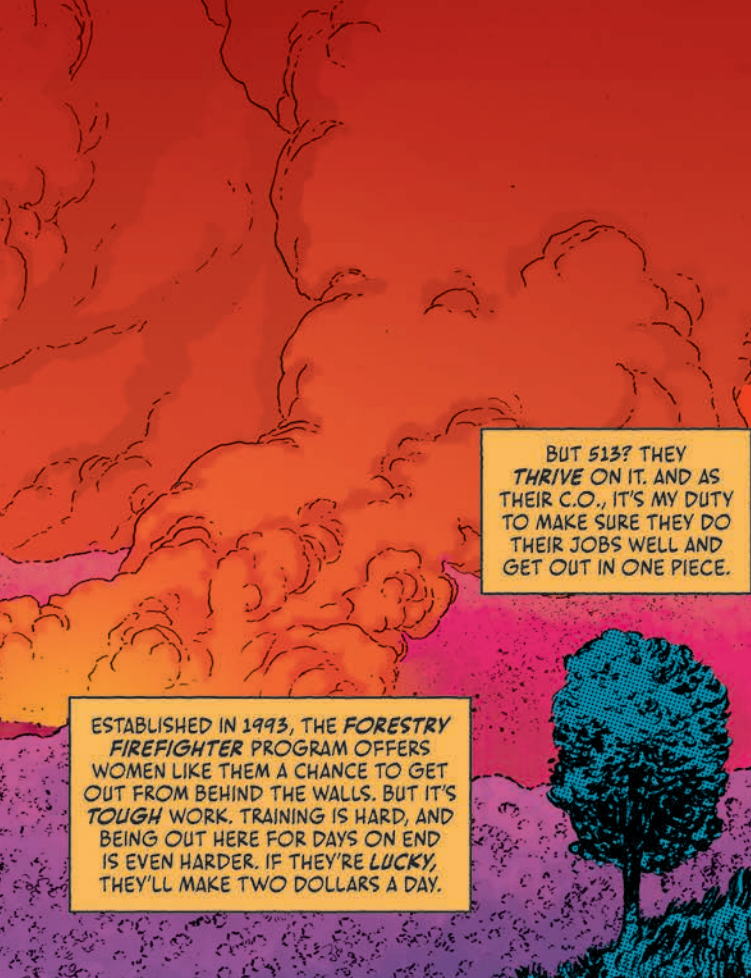


WHEN I WAS GROWING UP HERE, WE'D SEE A BIG BLAZE EVERY TEN YEARS OR SO. NOWADAYS? THE SAYING GOES THAT FIRE SEASON LASTS 13 MONTHS A YEAR.

THIS LATEST ONE IS THE ARROYO FIRE, AND IT'S BEEN BURNING FOR SIX LONG, GRUELING WEEKS WITH NO REAL END IN SIGHT.

FIRES OF THIS SCALE GET MULTIPLE CREWS WORKING DAY AND NIGHT. MINE'S JUST ONE OF THEM: CREW 513, PART OF A BRIGADE OF THIRTY WOMEN, ALL CONVICTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS.





BUT 513? THEY THRIVE ON IT. AND AS THEIR C.O., IT'S MY DUTY TO MAKE SURE THEY DO THEIR JOBS WELL AND GET OUT IN ONE PIECE.

ESTABLISHED IN 1993, THE FORESTRY FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM OFFERS WOMEN LIKE THEM A CHANCE TO GET OUT FROM BEHIND THE WALLS. BUT IT'S TOUGH WORK. TRAINING IS HARD, AND BEING OUT HERE FOR DAYS ON END IS EVEN HARDER. IF THEY'RE LUCKY, THEY'LL MAKE TWO DOLLARS A DAY.



MY NAME IS RUBY MA NING.



BUT EVERYONE ON THE LINE CALLS ME MA.



SMOKE BREAK, MA?



SMOKE IT UP, LADIES!

