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Author and poet Christina Rossetti once asked, "Can anything be sadder than work left unfinished?" (Rossetti). This question invites reflection on the countless incomplete stories cast into the world, destined never to reach their full potential. If a narrative falls short of realizing its complete potential, readers may find it challenging to establish a meaningful connection with the story. William Cole's "Waiting for Rusty" is a prime example of one such narrative. "Waiting for Rusty" weaves the tale of Dotty, an outlaw fleeing the authorities following a bank heist alongside her gang. Seeking refuge in a roadside bar to evade the police, she awaits the arrival of Rusty, her lover and the gang's leader. During this wait, Dotty shares tales of her and Rusty's youth with the captive bartender, reminiscing about times before their involvement in a life of crime. The narrative takes a dark turn when news over the radio reveals Rusty's arrest and his association with a mysterious dark-haired woman. Struggling to accept her partner's betrayal, Dotty confronts the town's sheriff outside the bar, resulting in a confrontation that effectively becomes Dotty's tragic end. The tale leaves many unanswered questions about the origins of Rusty and Dotty's relationship, the decision to form a gang, the motivations behind the fateful robbery, and any potential signs of Rusty's betrayal, creating a narrative rich in untold details that would deepen the reader's connection to Dotty's struggles. In order for the reader to better connect to the story, "Waiting For Rusty" could be adapted into a video game with a three chapter interactive narrative that tells the story of the beginning of Dotty and Rusty's

relationship, the glory days of their gang, and their eventual downfall as shown in the narrative itself.

By transforming "Waiting For Rusty" into an interactive video game, readers can engage in a narrative that explores the start of Dotty and Rusty's relationship, providing a dynamic and immersive experience that fosters a stronger emotional connection with the characters' romantic journey. As players navigate through the virtual world, they become active participants in the unfolding narrative, gaining insights into the characters' emotions and motivations (Caroux et al. 367). The interactive format not only allows for a more profound exploration of the story, but also enables players to make choices that influence the direction of the plot, creating a personalized and dynamic experience (Caroux et al. 367). By immersing themselves in the gaming environment, readers are enabled to forge a stronger emotional connection with Dotty and Rusty, making their romantic journey more touching and memorable. The initiation of their romantic journey unfolds within the first chapter of the video game adaptation, commencing with Dotty reminiscing about the occasion when Rusty escorted her to a dance at a nearby music venue:

> "I was [at the Pavilion] once," she says. "I went there with Rusty. They were havin' a dance and he took me…I had to wear an old dress because that's all I had, but Rusty, he sees me and says, 'Gee, kid, where'd you get the new dress?' and we hop in his boiler and roll down there…They have the whole place fixed up...those colored lights on a string and the tables under the trees and two bands on the platform…The girls all wear flowers," Dotty says. "And I don't have none. But Rusty says, 'You just wait here,' and soon he's back with a big bunch of flowers, all colors and kinds. Only I can't wear half of them, there's too many.

And then we dance and drink punch until the cops come. And then we have to lam out of there; they say Rusty bust the glass in the town florist shop." (Cole 165-166)

To achieve a successful adaptation, the story should start by incorporating as much of the source material as possible. Emily Wallace says it best, "One of the most important things to consider when creating a good [story] adaptation for many people is accuracy to the [story] itself" (Wallace 1). Though there is a beginning, the rest of the chapter remains to be written. It is imperative to note that "[f]undamentally, video game adaptations need to have something new to add to the media…movie and series directors will undoubtedly deviate from the source material. This is true in video game adaptations as well as book adaptations" (Coghlan 2). I plan to continue the chapter by depicting the immediate aftermath of Rusty and Dotty's escape from the police after the dance. While I envision Dotty's account of the dance as a cutscene, the player's initial true engagement with the game would commence by assuming control of Dotty as she and Rusty evade the police in his boiler. Once the player successfully evades police attention, the chapter would unfold further. Rusty would persist in executing further thefts for Dotty, just as he did to obtain her flowers. Over time, Rusty's criminal activities would escalate in complexity and value. These crimes would also begin to involve Dotty herself, drawing the player deeper into their unconventional romance. Eventually, Rusty devises a plan to rob a small bank, aiming to acquire the funds for a special outing with Dotty. However, he realizes that the undertaking is too ambitious for him and Dotty alone. Rusty proposes that she assists him in forming a gang to accomplish his goals, positioning her as his "girl and Gun Moll, No. 1" (Cole 165). Dotty enthusiastically accepts the role and Rusty's offer to be his girl. At this juncture, the chapter concludes, setting the stage for the gang's rise to glory in the second chapter.

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Through the medium of a video game, players can vividly experience the thrilling highs of Dotty and Rusty's gang's glory days, providing an engaging platform for readers to connect emotionally with the characters and the sense of camaraderie that defined their peak. The second chapter enables the player to immerse themselves further in the narrative, given its foundation on creative freedom. It is crucial to acknowledge that "[t]he decision to faithfully adapt a book or take creative liberties rests on the [creator's] discretion, and the success of an adaptation depends on their ability to capture the essence of the story in the new medium" (Balescu and Pophristic 5). Keeping this in mind, the story unfolds with Rusty and Dotty recruiting for their gang, granting the player complete control. A selection of ten characters, each with distinct skills, is presented for recruitment. The player is allowed to choose five, thereby dictating the composition of the gang in terms of individuals and abilities. Through the player's choices, a sense of camaraderie develops–a pivotal element from the gang's glory days, not merely depicted but tangibly felt and experienced in the gameplay. The narrative progresses with the planning and execution of the heist introduced in the first chapter, undertaken as a mission by the player with full control over directing gang members and participating alongside Rusty. Successful completion of the heist initiates a series of playable robbery and heist missions for the player. As the story unfolds and each theft proves successful, Dotty and Rusty's bond deepens–both as a couple and partners in crime. The gang expands as the player selects additional characters with skills beneficial to the gang. Through strategic missions, shared triumphs, and facing adversity as a united front, the gang grows closer. The player gradually becomes intimately connected to the bonds among the gang members. The chapter concludes with the planning of the heist embedded within the actual "Waiting for Rusty" story. As Dotty prepares for the heist, she observes Rusty's increasing distance from her and the gang.

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While she only vaguely notes his separation as the second chapter concludes, this sets the stage for the third and final chapter.

The adaptation of "Waiting For Rusty" into a video game offers a unique opportunity for readers to actively participate in and witness the downfall of Dotty and Rusty, heightening the emotional impact of the narrative as players watch the original story unfold. The third chapter commences with an engaging bank heist mission that players can actively participate in, followed by a thrilling escape sequence. Nevertheless, as Dotty skillfully eludes law enforcement and finds refuge in a local bar, the narrative takes a decisive turn. The game seamlessly transitions from player control to a captivating final cutscene. Subsequently, the concluding chapter unfolds, narrating the original story of "Waiting For Rusty." As the story concludes with Dotty's confrontation with the sheriff, the player regains limited control, allowing them to unleash Dotty's final shots into the ceiling. This marks the culmination not only of the game's storyline, but also of Dotty's life within the story. Though creative liberty is imperative to the creation of the game, it is fitting that it goes back to the source material for the finale. While the conclusion of Dotty's life may be disheartening for some, its significance plays a crucial role in shaping the ultimate emotional resonance of the narrative. According to writer Angela Ackerman,

"Sometimes, there is a cost to holding to a belief or following a certain path, and death may be necessary to fully underscore the weight of the story's theme. Sometimes, there is no justice. Evil triumphs instead of good. Safety is an illusion" (Ackerman 3). This holds true not only for Dotty but also for numerous other video game protagonists featured in immensely successful franchises, such as *Red Dead Redemption*. In both games of the *Red Dead Redemption* franchise, the narrative decision to kill off both protagonists contributes significantly to the story's impact, earning the games numerous awards for their compelling narratives (Wong 3-6).

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In the intricate balance between player agency, the scripted finale, and the inevitable ending, the third chapter ultimately delivers a compelling and emotionally resonant conclusion that stays true to the essence of the original story.

In conclusion, the transformation of William Cole's "Waiting For Rusty" into an interactive video game presents a compelling opportunity to delve deeper into the narrative, allowing the audience to actively engage in the emotional journey of Dotty and Rusty. By expanding on the untold details of their relationship, the game offers a more immersive experience, fostering a stronger connection between players and the characters. The adaptation unfolds in three chapters, each providing a unique perspective on Dotty and Rusty's story. The first chapter explores the beginnings of their romance, the second delves into the thrilling highs of their gang's glory days, and the third brings players face-to-face with the inevitable downfall, mirroring the original narrative's tragic conclusion. The incorporation of player choices and control not only enriches the storytelling experience, but also deepens the emotional investment in the characters' fates. While the conclusion may be disheartening, it resonates with the theme of the story and mirrors the impactful endings of successful video game franchises. In this interactive adaptation, the unfinished work finds its completion, and players are invited to reflect on the heavy cost of holding onto beliefs, the complex nature of justice, and the illusory nature of safety in a world shaped by choices and consequences.

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