

COMPLETE 63-PAGE ACTION STORY

No.4706
£2

Commando

THE SILVER COLLECTION

WAR
AT SEA
1939-45



SEEK AND SINK

COMMANDO - THE SILVER COLLECTION

Title

SEEK AND SINK

Subject

In Commando we always have fictional characters but, for authenticity, they can be placed in real-life military organisations. The Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm gives us double the usual amount of scope — for a yarn that can encompass both a sea tale **AND** an aircraft story, in this case the Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber.

Author Ian Clark does this skilfully and delivers a script that manages to be thoughtful and thrilling. It's dynamically illustrated by Ibanez, whose rain-drenched, stormy scenes on pages 9, 10 and 11 are not for the faint-hearted!

Scott Montgomery, Deputy Editor

Issue Number

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STORY
IAN CLARK

ART
IBANEZ

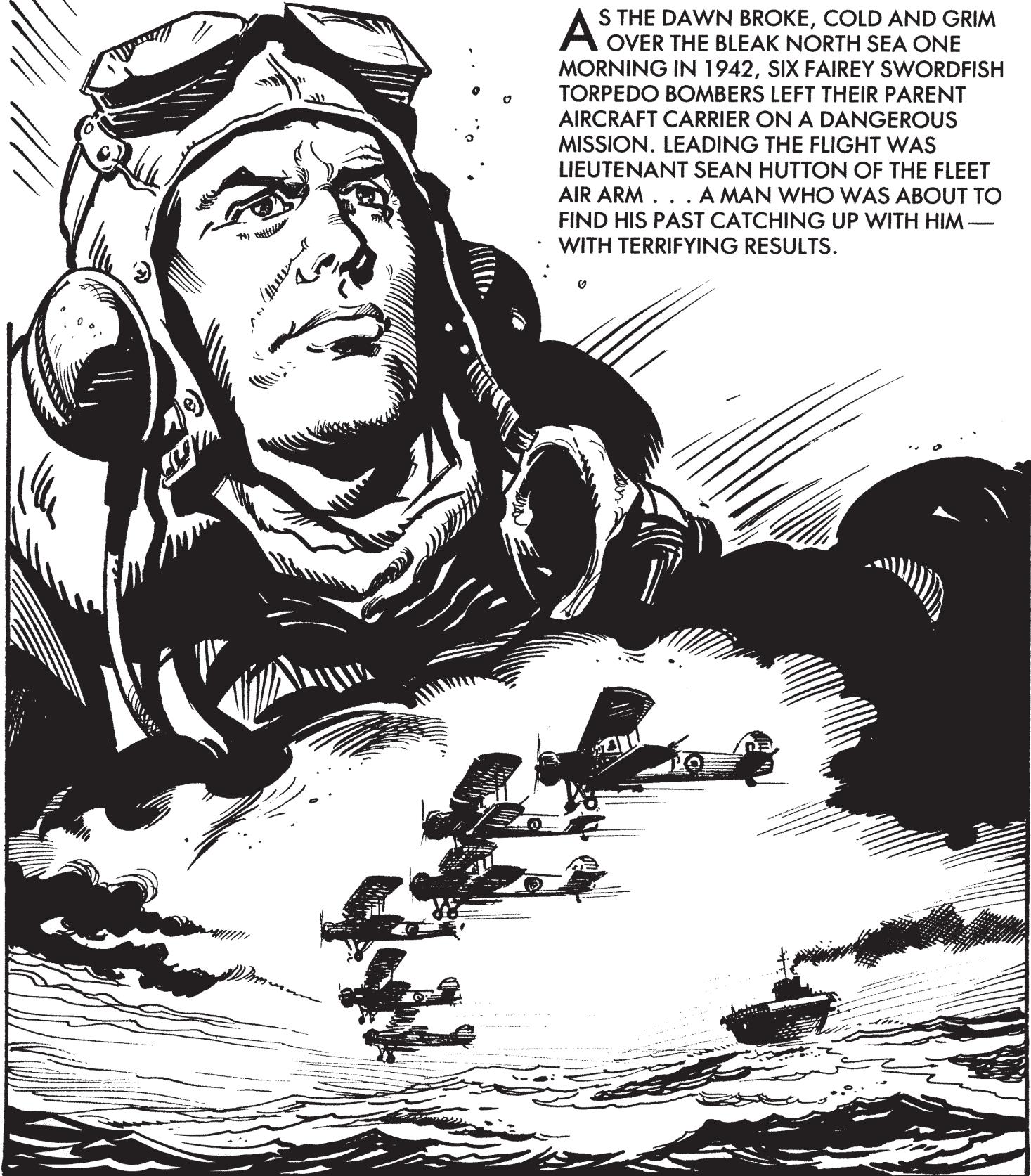
COVER
JEFF BEVAN

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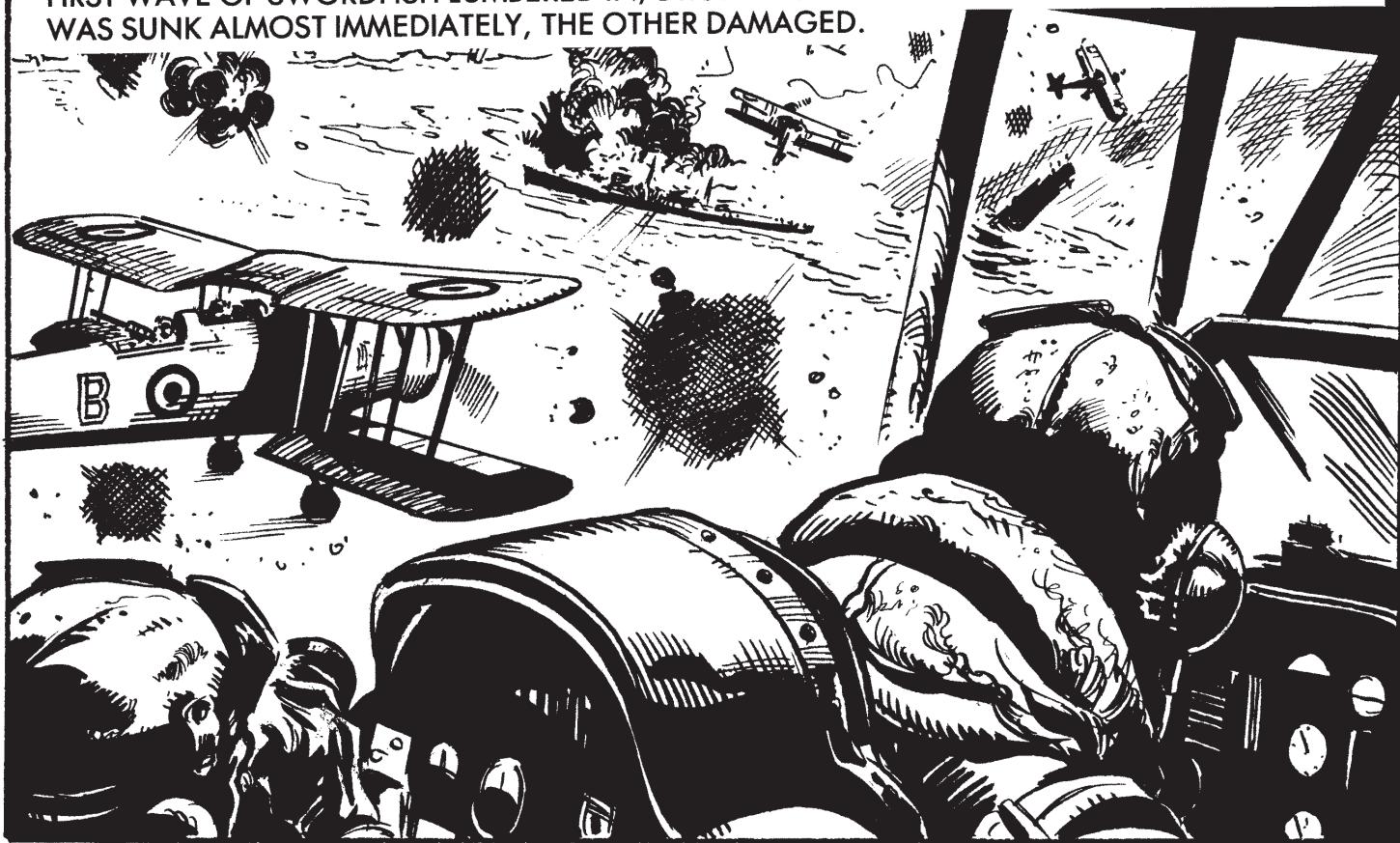


SEEK AND SINK

AS THE DAWN BROKE, COLD AND GRIM OVER THE BLEAK NORTH SEA ONE MORNING IN 1942, SIX FAIREY SWORDFISH TORPEDO BOMBERS LEFT THEIR PARENT AIRCRAFT CARRIER ON A DANGEROUS MISSION. LEADING THE FLIGHT WAS LIEUTENANT SEAN HUTTON OF THE FLEET AIR ARM . . . A MAN WHO WAS ABOUT TO FIND HIS PAST CATCHING UP WITH HIM — WITH TERRIFYING RESULTS.



THEIR TARGETS WERE TWO GERMAN DESTROYERS AT ANCHOR IN A NORWEGIAN FIORD. THE FIRST WAVE OF SWORDFISH LUMBERED IN, DROPPING THEIR DEADLY CARGOES. ONE SHIP WAS SUNK ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, THE OTHER DAMAGED.

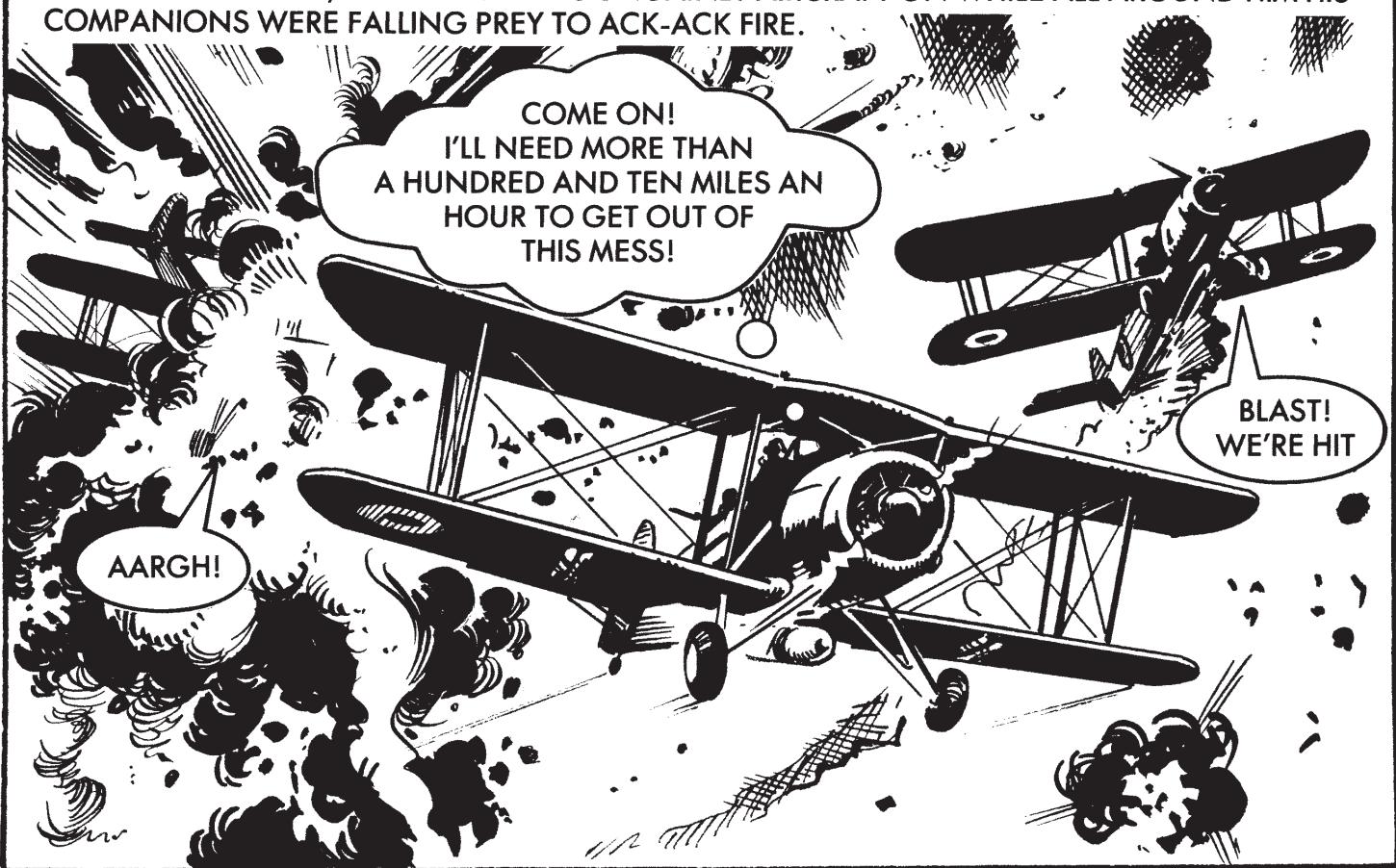


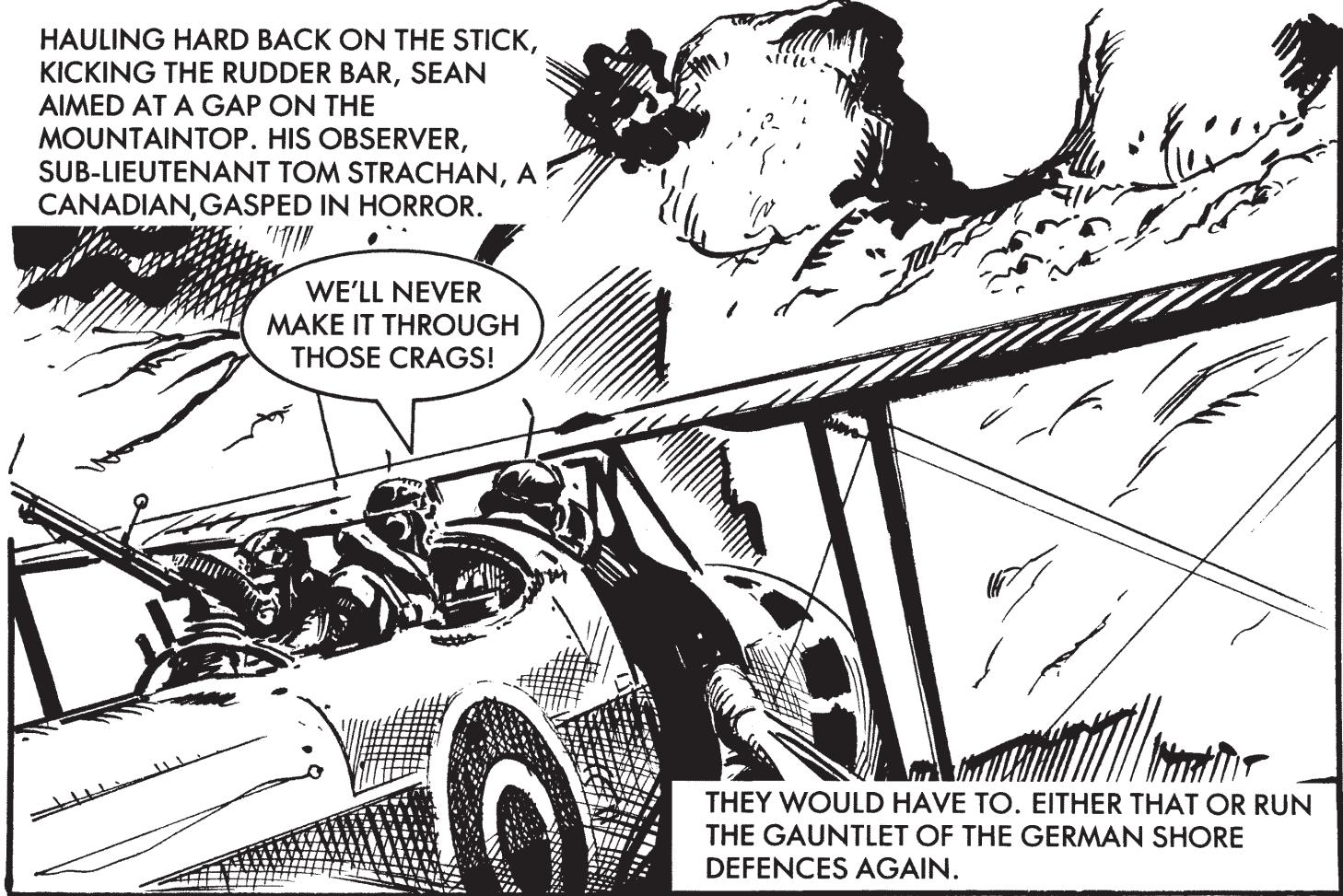
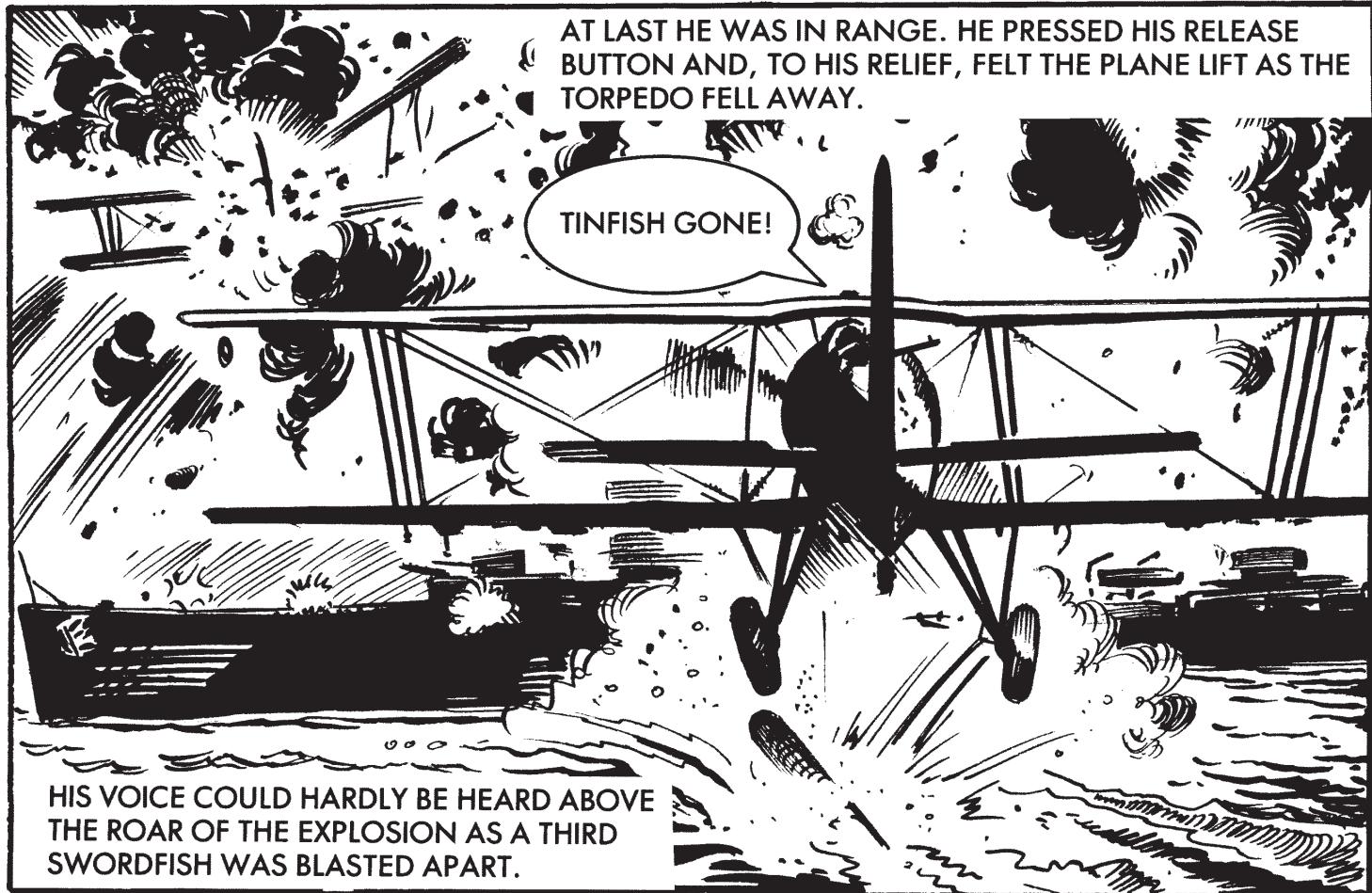
GRITTING HIS TEETH, SEAN URGED HIS UNGAINLY AIRCRAFT ON WHILE ALL AROUND HIM HIS COMPANIONS WERE FALLING PREY TO ACK-ACK FIRE.

AARGH!

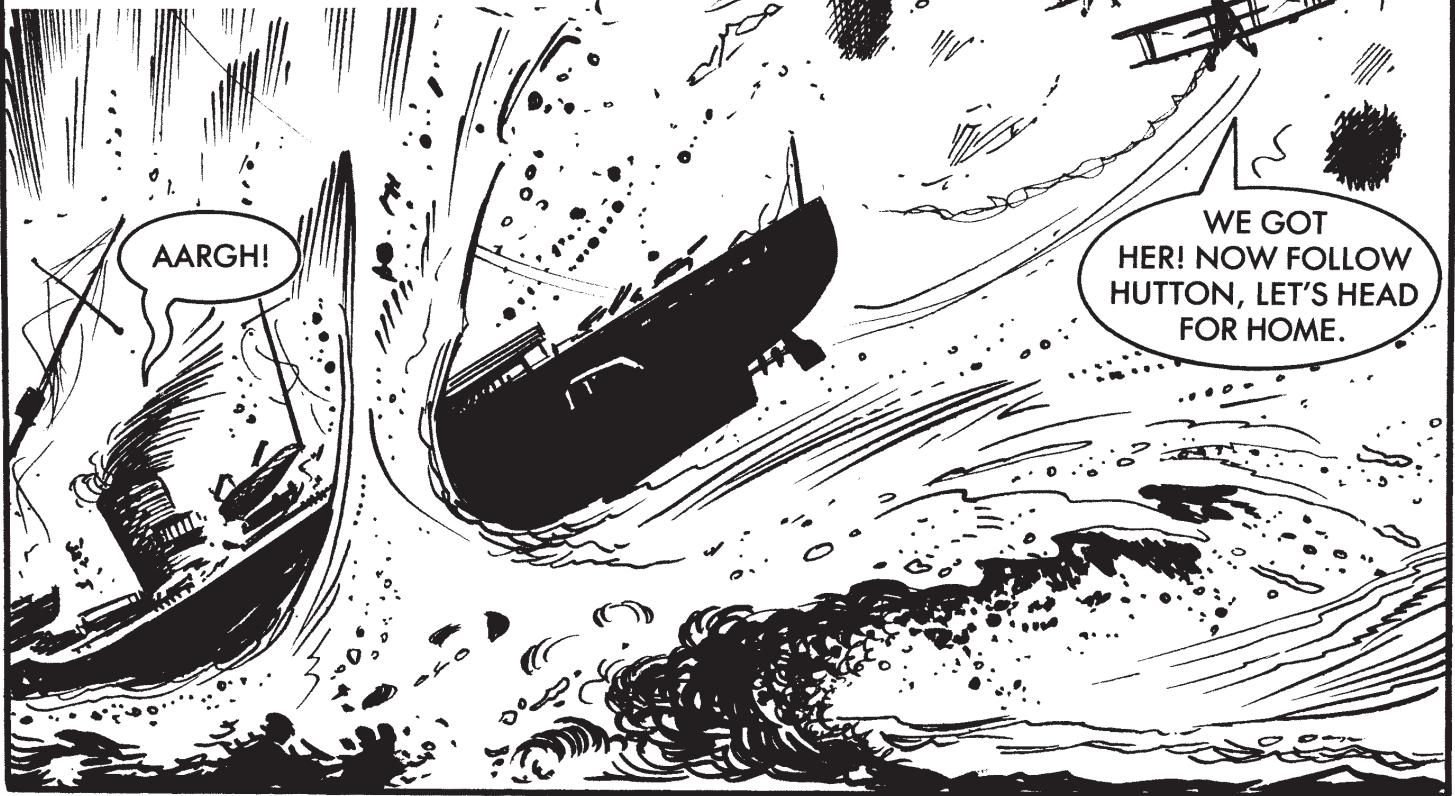
COME ON!
I'LL NEED MORE THAN
A HUNDRED AND TEN MILES AN
HOUR TO GET OUT OF
THIS MESS!

BLAST!
WE'RE HIT

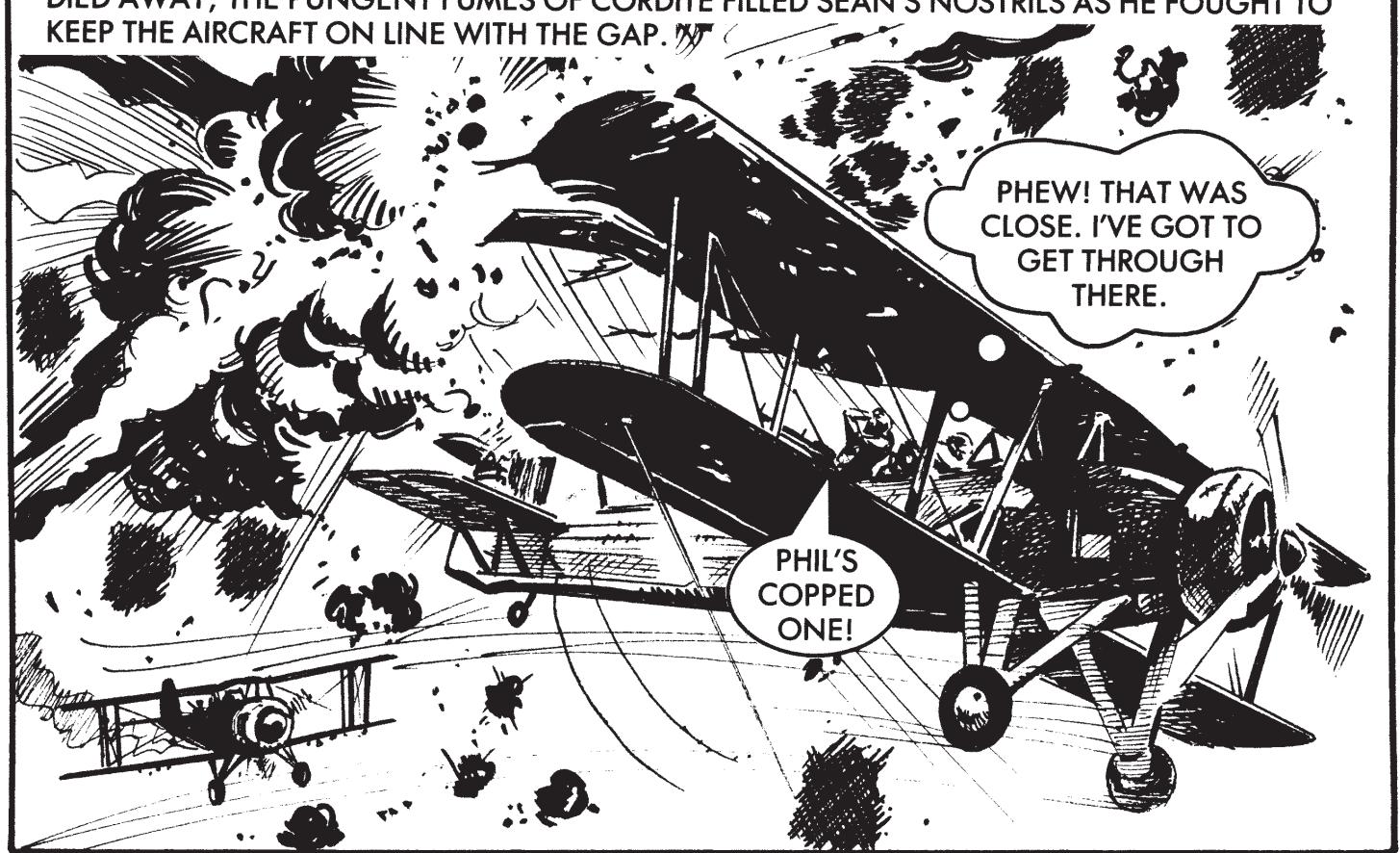


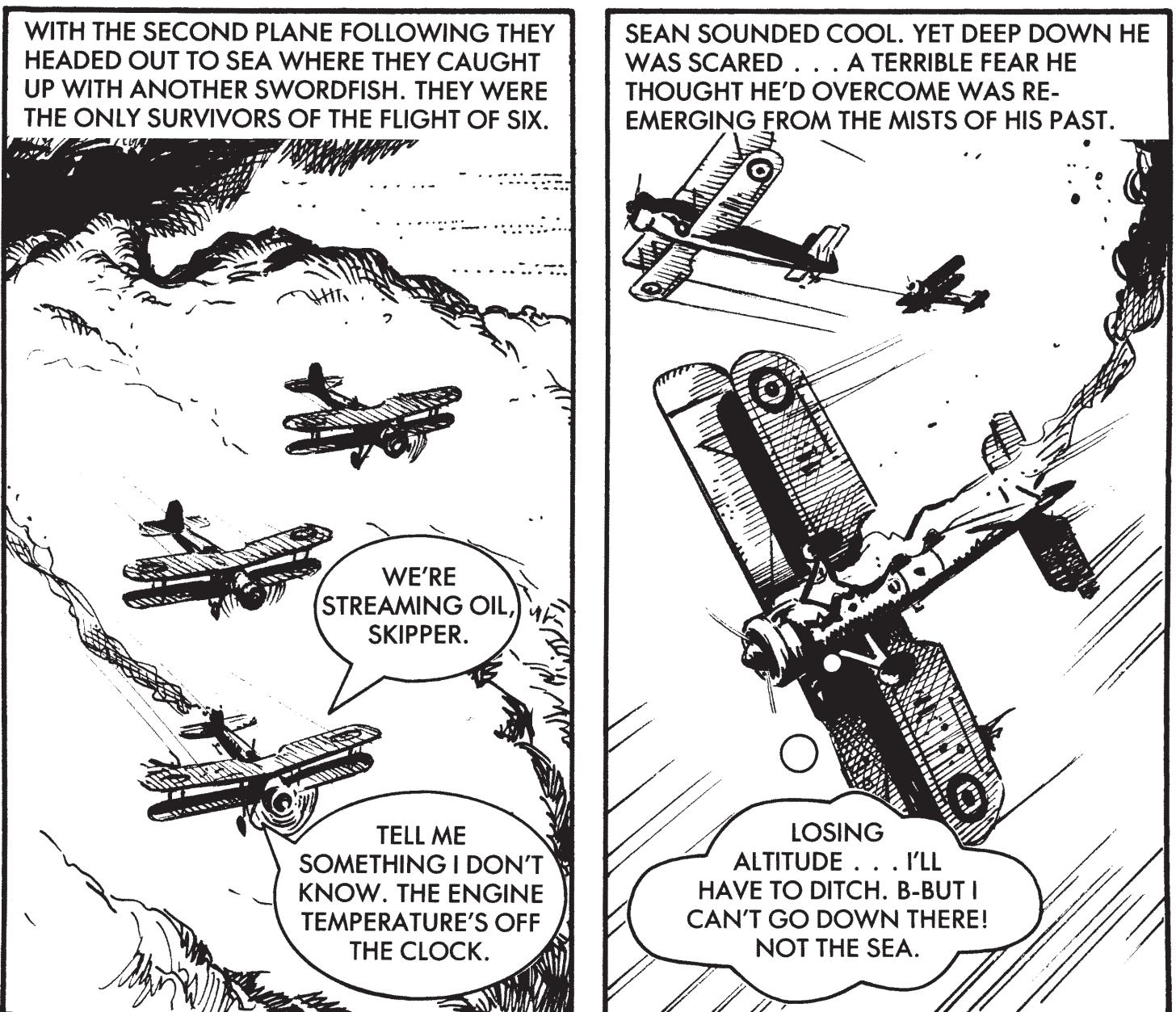
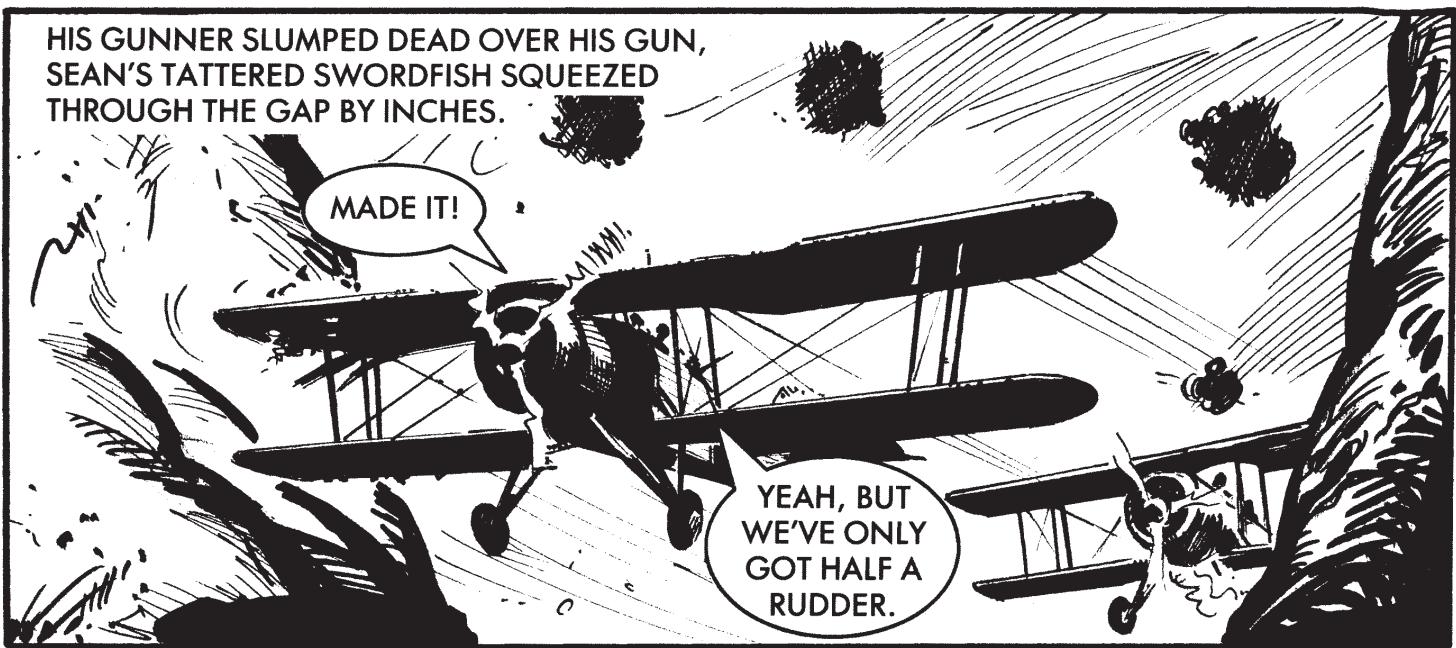


SECONDS LATER THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION AS NOT ONE BUT TWO TORPEDOES STRUCK THE CRIPPLED DESTROYER. ANOTHER OF THE SWORDFISH HAD SUCCEEDED.



THERE WAS ANOTHER TERRIFIC BANG CLOSE BY. AS THE ECHOES OF THOSE DETONATIONS DIED AWAY, THE PUNGENT FUMES OF CORDITE FILLED SEAN'S NOSTRILS AS HE FOUGHT TO KEEP THE AIRCRAFT ON LINE WITH THE GAP.

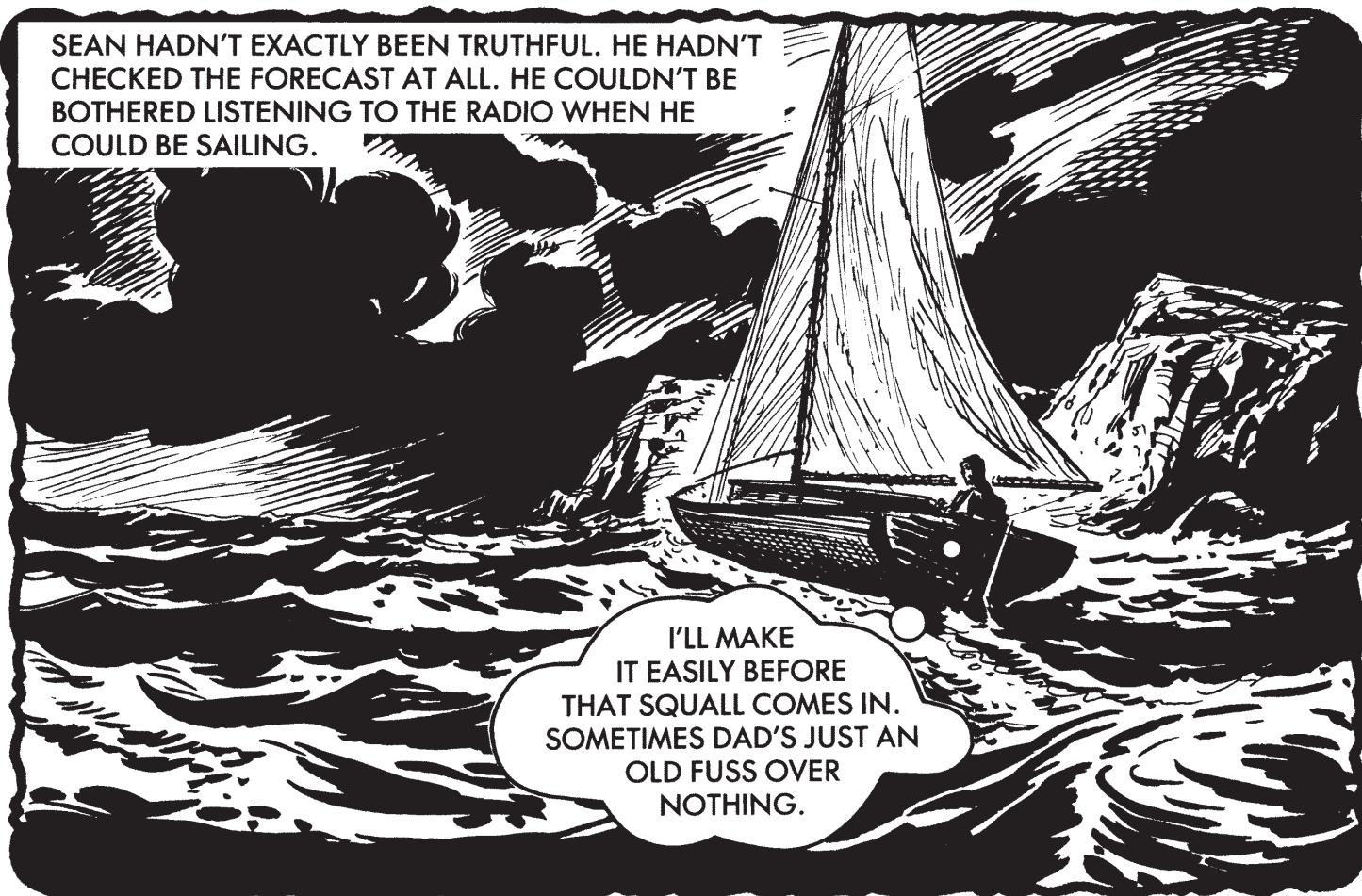




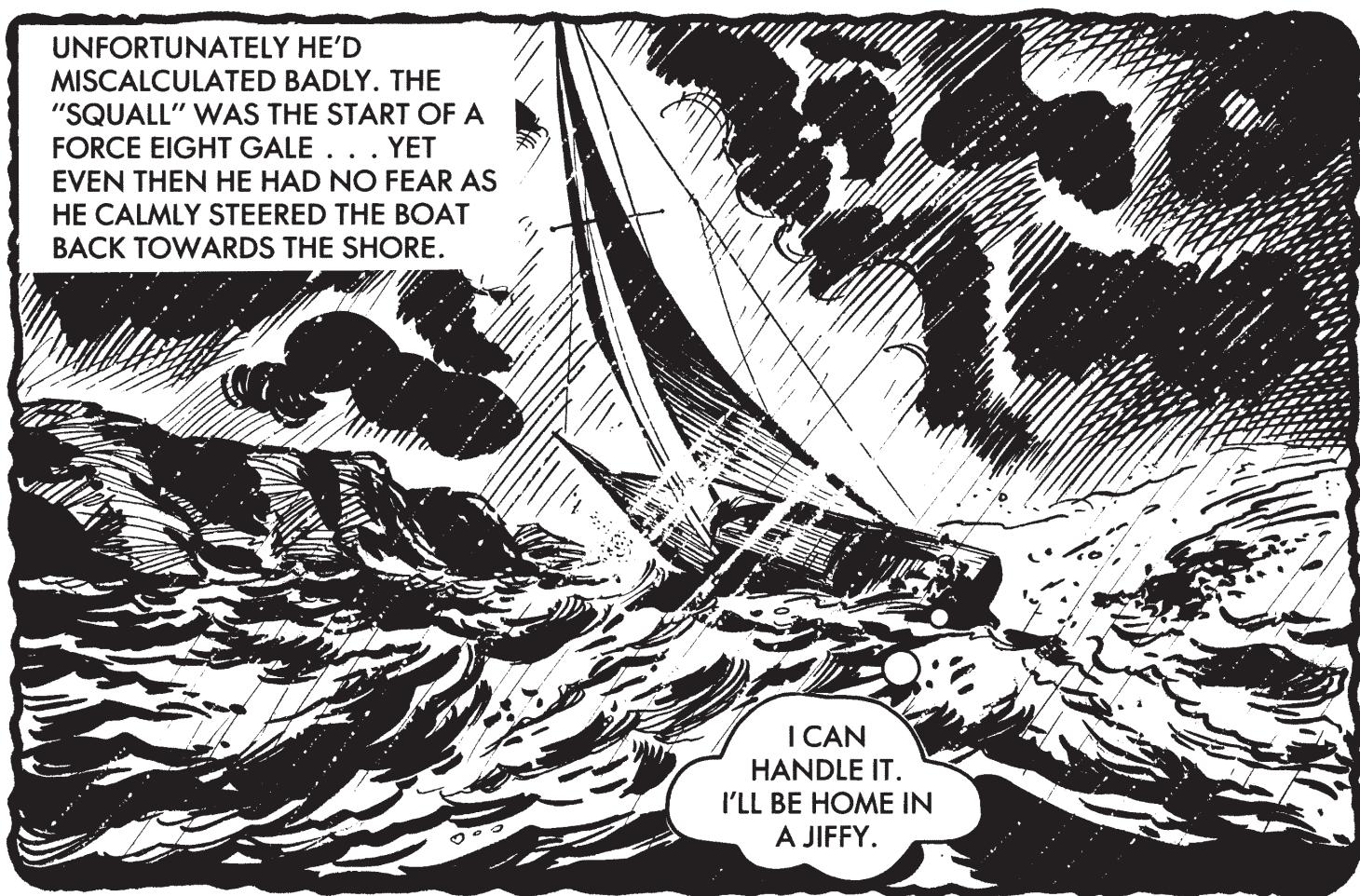
HE THOUGHT BACK TO WHEN IT HAD ALL BEGUN, AT HIS PARENTS' HOUSE WHEN HE WAS A TEENAGER. THEN HE COULDN'T GET ENOUGH OF THE SEA. HIS FATHER, AN EX-NAVAL OFFICER, ALWAYS ENCOURAGED HIM.



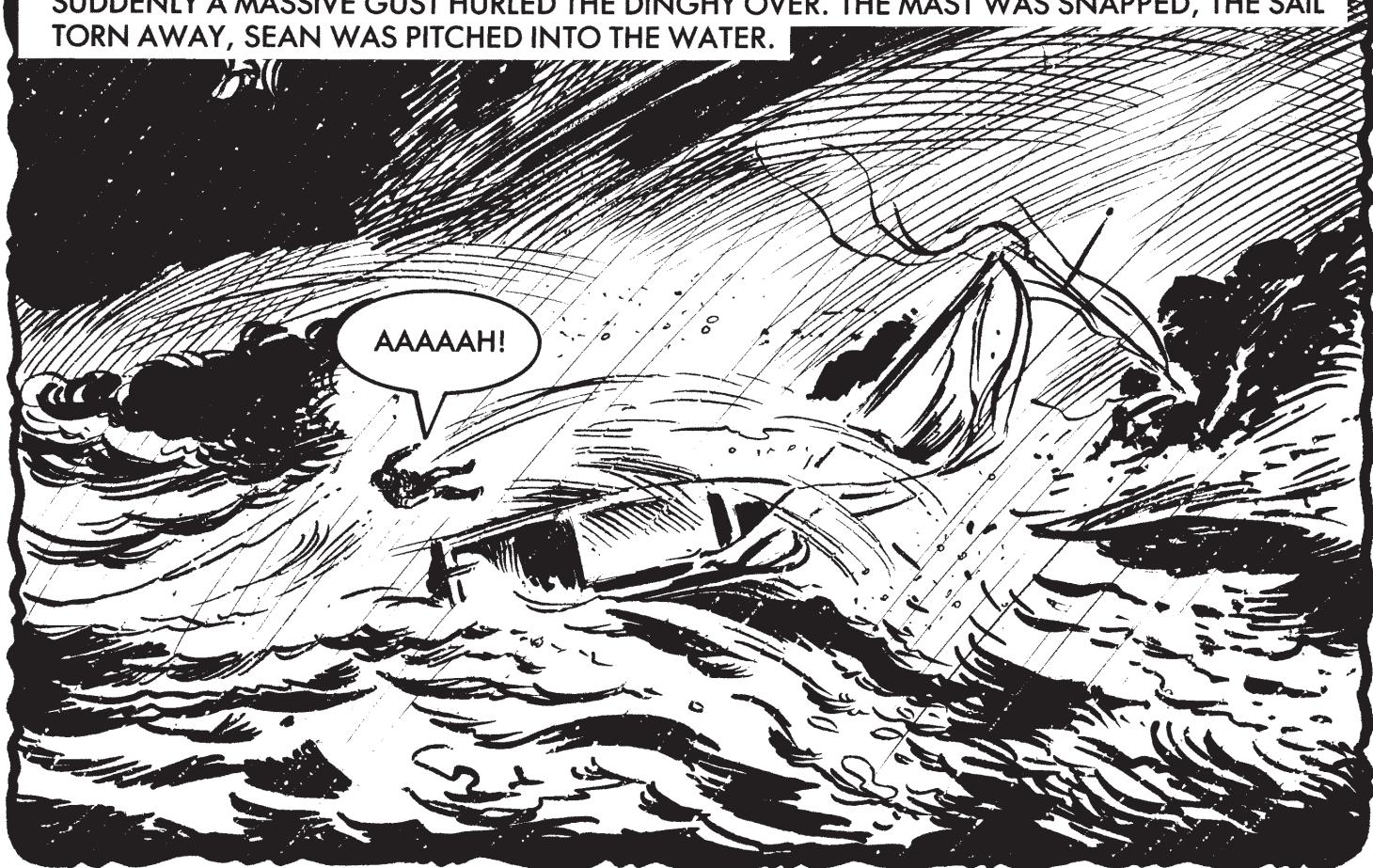
SEAN HADN'T EXACTLY BEEN TRUTHFUL. HE HADN'T CHECKED THE FORECAST AT ALL. HE COULDN'T BE BOthered LISTENING TO THE RADIO WHEN HE COULD BE SAILING.



UNFORTUNATELY HE'D MISCALCULATED BADLY. THE "SQUALL" WAS THE START OF A FORCE EIGHT GALE . . . YET EVEN THEN HE HAD NO FEAR AS HE CALMLY STEERED THE BOAT BACK TOWARDS THE SHORE.



SUDDENLY A MASSIVE GUST HURLED THE DINGHY OVER. THE MAST WAS SNAPPED, THE SAIL TORN AWAY, SEAN WAS PITCHED INTO THE WATER.



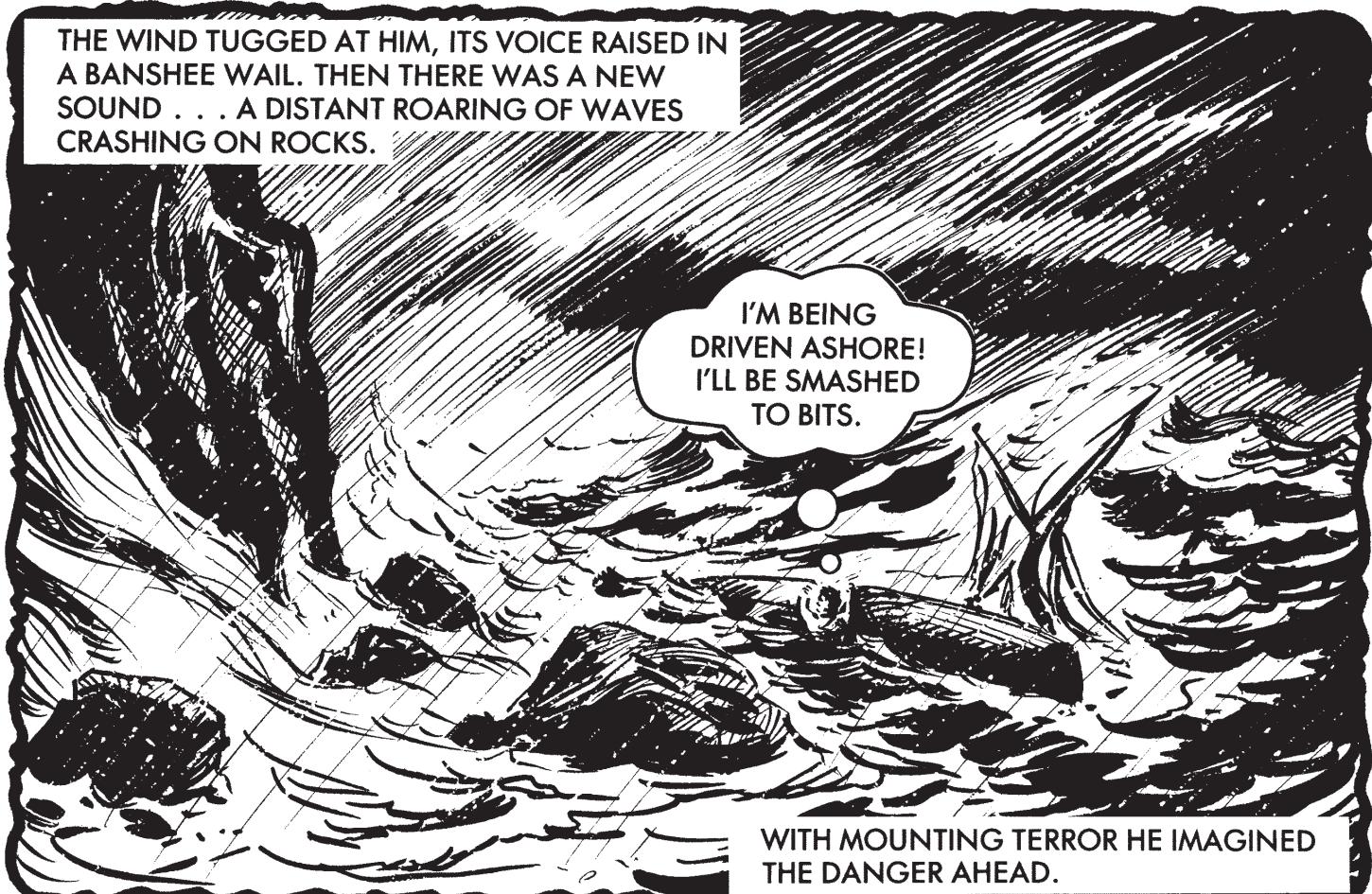
HE FOUND HIMSELF IN A CAULDRON OF TOWERING, HISSING WAVES. HE CLUNG DESPERATELY TO THE DINGHY, FEELING THE COLD SEEPING INTO HIM, DRAINING HIS STRENGTH. NOW THE SHORE FELT A MILLION MILES AWAY.



EVEN WITH
MY LIFE-JACKET
I WON'T LAST LONG
IN THIS WEATHER!
I'M GOING
TO DIE.

IN THAT MOMENT HIS MIND-NUMBING
FEAR OF THE SEA WAS BORN.

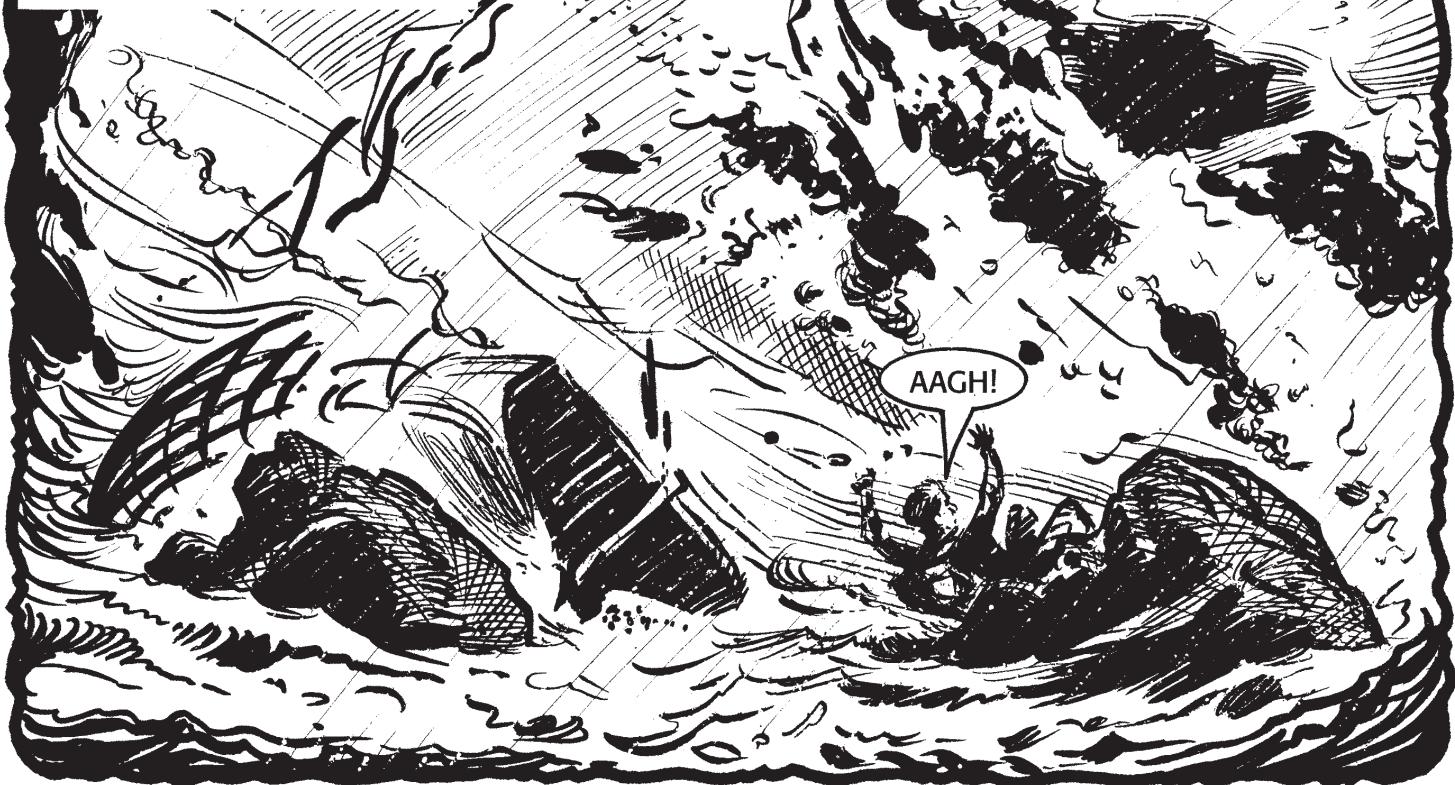
THE WIND TUGGED AT HIM, ITS VOICE RAISED IN
A BANSHEE WAIL. THEN THERE WAS A NEW
SOUND . . . A DISTANT ROARING OF WAVES
CRASHING ON ROCKS.



I'M BEING
DRIVEN ASHORE!
I'LL BE SMASHED
TO BITS.

WITH MOUNTING TERROR HE IMAGINED
THE DANGER AHEAD.

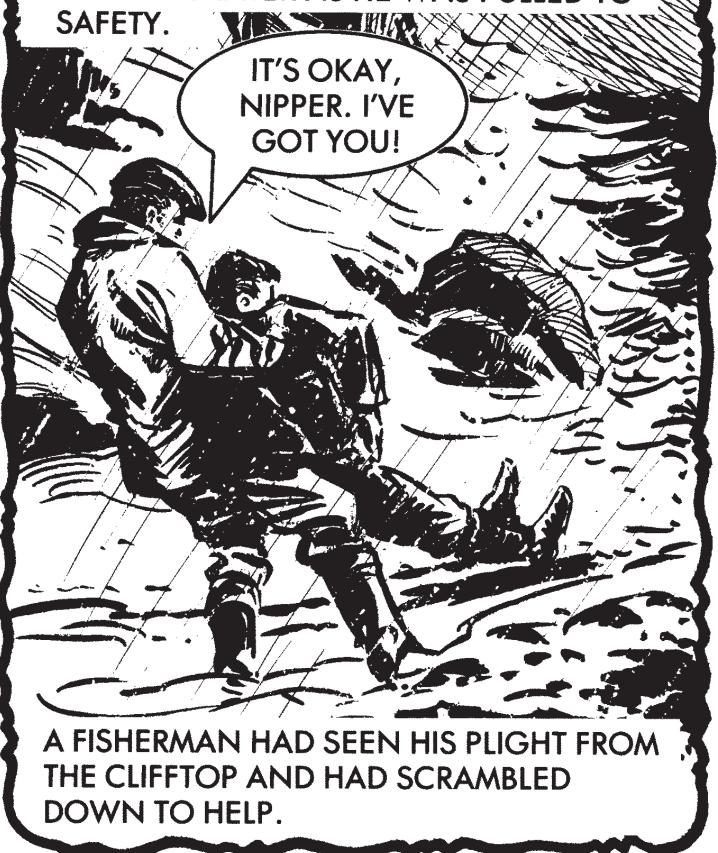
WHEN THE BOAT STRUCK THE ROCKS HE WAS THROWN AWAY FROM IT. ONE JAGGED BOULDER SLICED OPEN HIS LIFE-JACKET AS HE WAS TOSSSED ABOUT HELPLESSLY.



HIS HANDS FOUND THE EDGE OF A ROCK, GRIPPED IT DESPERATELY WITH THE LAST OF HIS ENERGY.

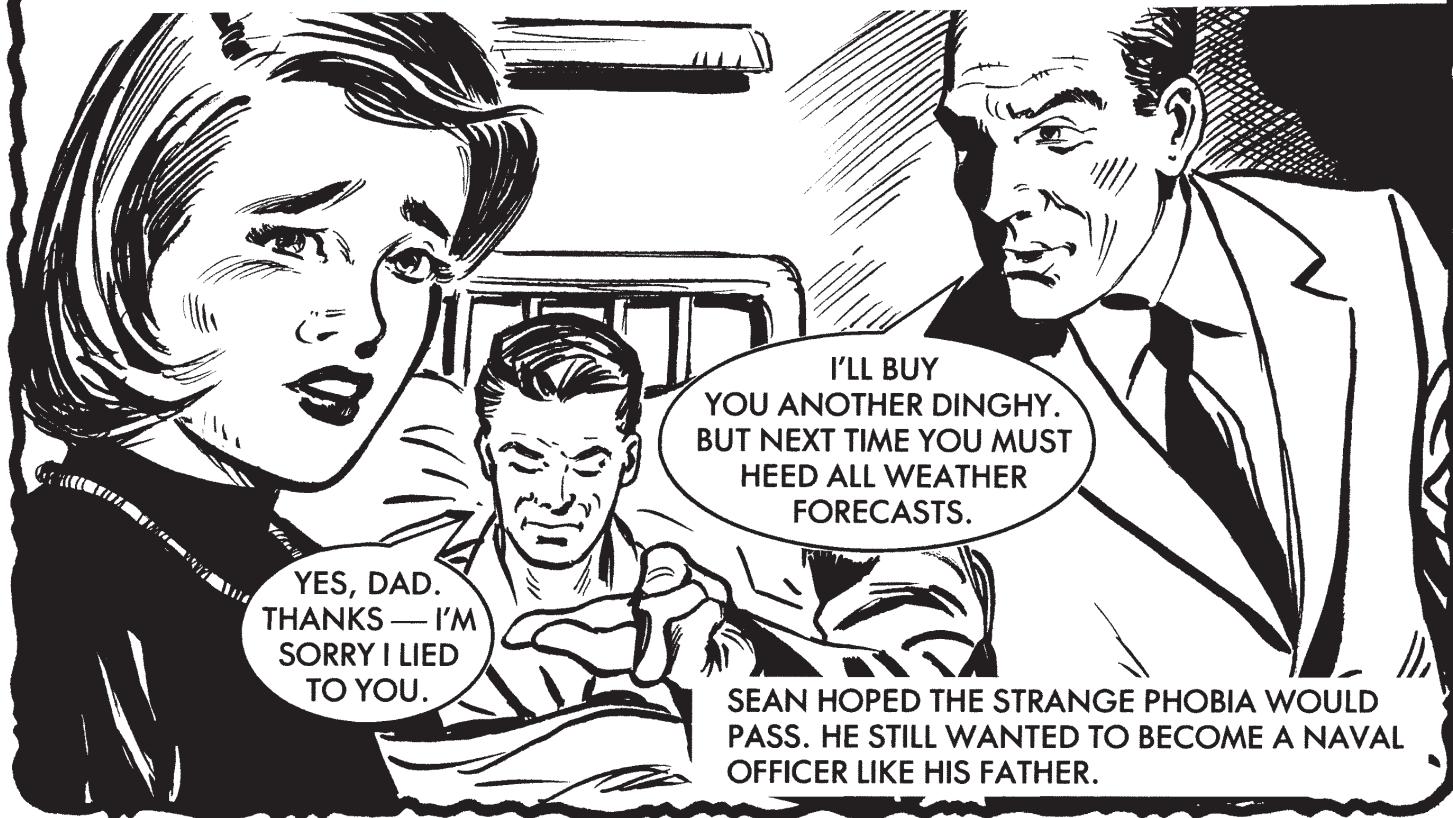


HIS LAST GASP PLEA WAS ANSWERED SECONDS LATER AS HE WAS PULLED TO SAFETY.

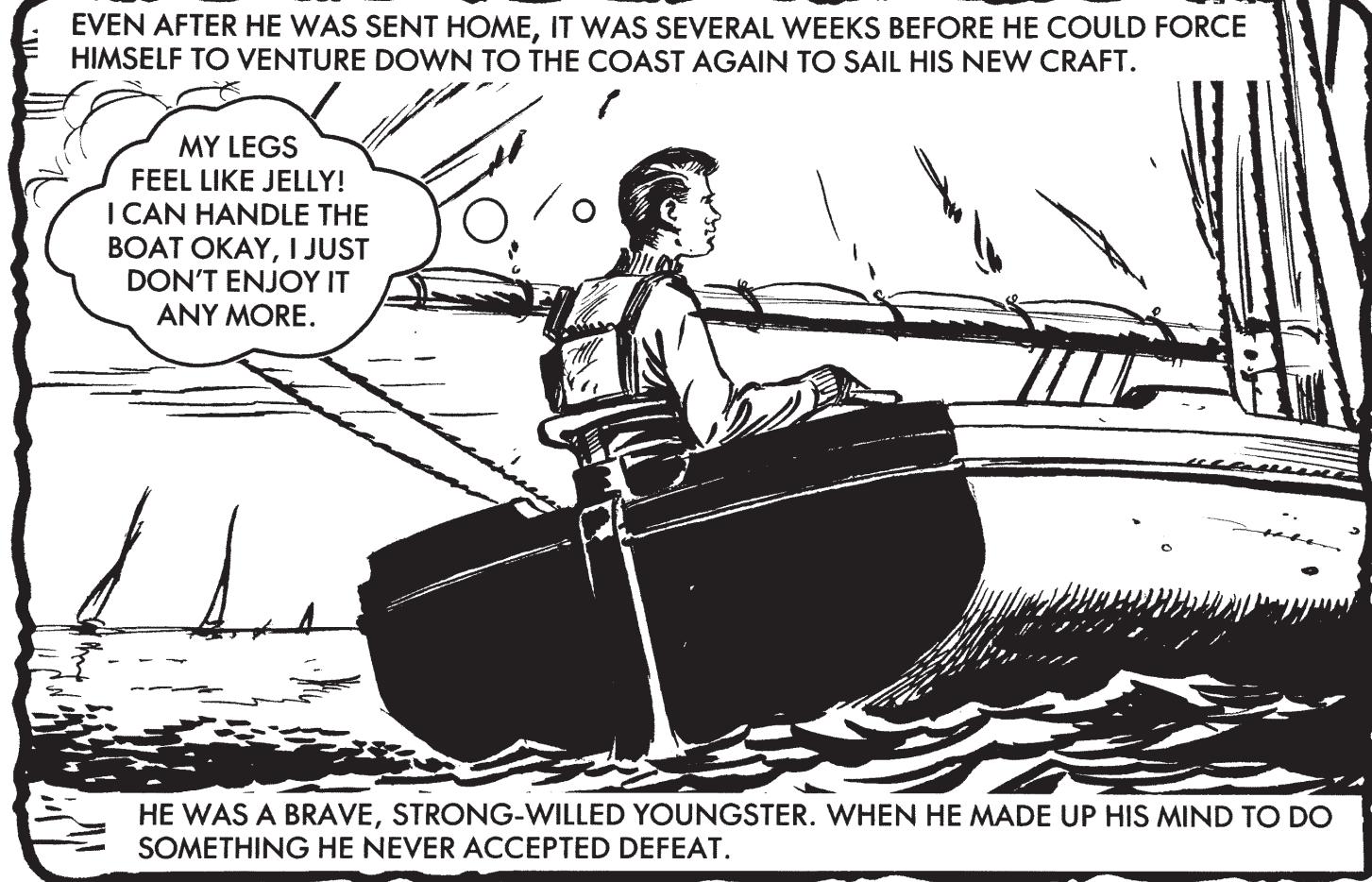


A FISHERMAN HAD SEEN HIS PLIGHT FROM THE CLIFFTOP AND HAD SCRAMBLED DOWN TO HELP.

SOON AFTERWARDS, HE WAS TUCKED UP SAFELY IN A HOSPITAL BED. WHILE HE RECOVERED WELL, HIS TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE HAD LEFT HIM WITH A DEEP-ROOTED FEAR OF THE SEA, SOMETHING HE FELT HE COULD NOT TELL HIS PARENTS WHEN THEY VISITED HIM.



EVEN AFTER HE WAS SENT HOME, IT WAS SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE HE COULD FORCE HIMSELF TO VENTURE DOWN TO THE COAST AGAIN TO SAIL HIS NEW CRAFT.



AS THE YEARS PASSED HE SAW HIS FEAR REcede AND DISAPPEAR. WHEN HE JOINED THE ROYAL NAVY HE WAS PROUD TO BE CHOSEN FOR HIS TRAINING COLLEGE'S YACHT RACE CREW.

THIS IS
THE LIFE! HOW
COULD I EVER HAVE
BEEN SCARED OF
THE SEA?

GOT HIM!
THAT'S TWO WE'VE
PASSED IN FIVE
MINUTES.

AFTER COMPLETING HIS NAVY TRAINING, HE DEVELOPED AN INTEREST IN FLYING AND QUALIFIED TO BE A PILOT IN THE FLEET AIR ARM. WHEN HE JOINED HIS FIRST SQUADRON AS A SUB-LIEUTENANT, HE MET TOM STRACHAN.

SEAN HUTTON?
PLEASED TO MEET YOU.
I'M YOUR OBSERVER. LIKE
SOME GUM?

I DON'T
KNOW. IS THAT,
ER, PROPER FOR AN
OFFICER?

THE CHEERFUL CANADIAN LAUGHED, POINTING TO THE SWORDFISH THEY HAD BEEN ASSIGNED.

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT, BUT IT'D SURE BE DANDY FOR KEEPING THAT OLD STRINGBAG TOGETHER.

BRILLIANT! I'LL KEEP SOME IN RESERVE IN CASE WE LOSE AN AILERON ONE DAY.

"STRINGBAG" WAS THE PLANE'S AFFECTIONATE NICKNAME.

THEY QUICKLY BECAME GREAT PALS, THEIR HIGH SPIRITS ALWAYS LEADING THEM INTO HARE-BRAINED ESCAPADES — LIKE THE TIME THEY AND THEIR FRIENDS CHANGED CAR DRIVERS AND PASSENGERS ON A COUNTRY ROAD AT FIFTY MILES AN HOUR.

OKAY. COMMENCE CHANGING OPERATION. INTO MY SEAT, TOM.

I FORGOT TO TELL YOU I CAN'T DRIVE. NO, ONLY KIDDING!

AFTER THE START OF HOSTILITIES THE SWORDFISH SQUADRON WAS SENT TO MALTA WHERE THEIR ADVENTURES TOOK A DEADLY TURN.

OKAY,
GUNNER. I SEE
HIM!

ONE-OH-NINE!
TEN-O-CLOCK
HIGH!

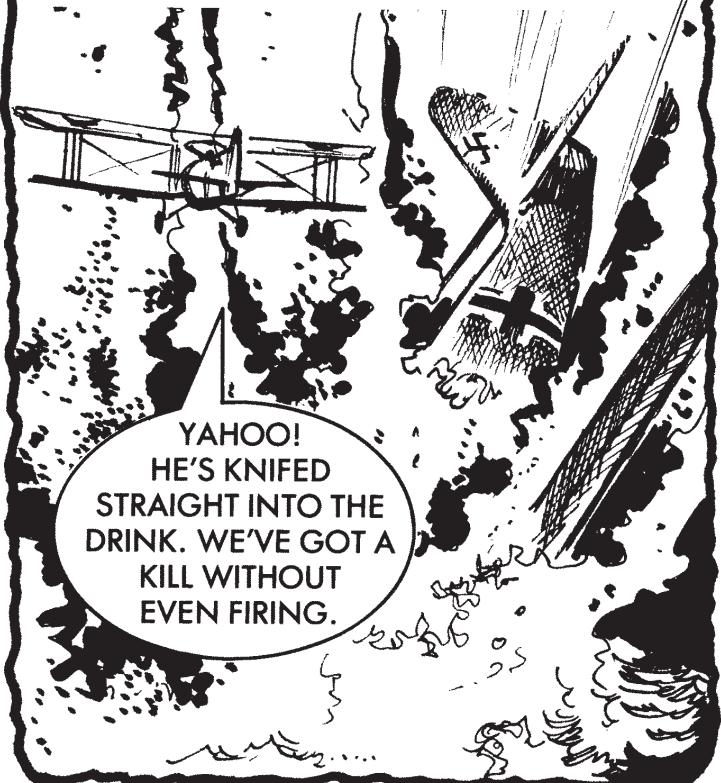
NOT LONG AFTER ARRIVING IN THE AREA THE CREWS HAD BEEN UPPED TO THREE WITH THE ADDITION OF A TELEGRAPHIST/AIR GUNNER. LEADING SEAMAN PHIL RUDGE WAS SEAN'S.

DOGFIGHTS WITH MESSERSCHMITT 109s HAPPENED ALMOST DAILY. GRADUALLY THOSE BRITISH PILOTS WHO SURVIVED BECAME WILY AT THE GAME.

HE'S
STEEPENING
HIS DIVE.

I THOUGHT
HE MIGHT. I'LL
KEEP THROTTLING BACK,
ALMOST UNTIL I'M
ON STALLING
POINT.

AT LOW ALTITUDES THE SWORDFISH WAS SUPREMELY MANOEUVRABLE. THE MESSERSCHMITT WAS NOT, AS THE GERMAN SUDDENLY FOUND OUT TO HIS COST.



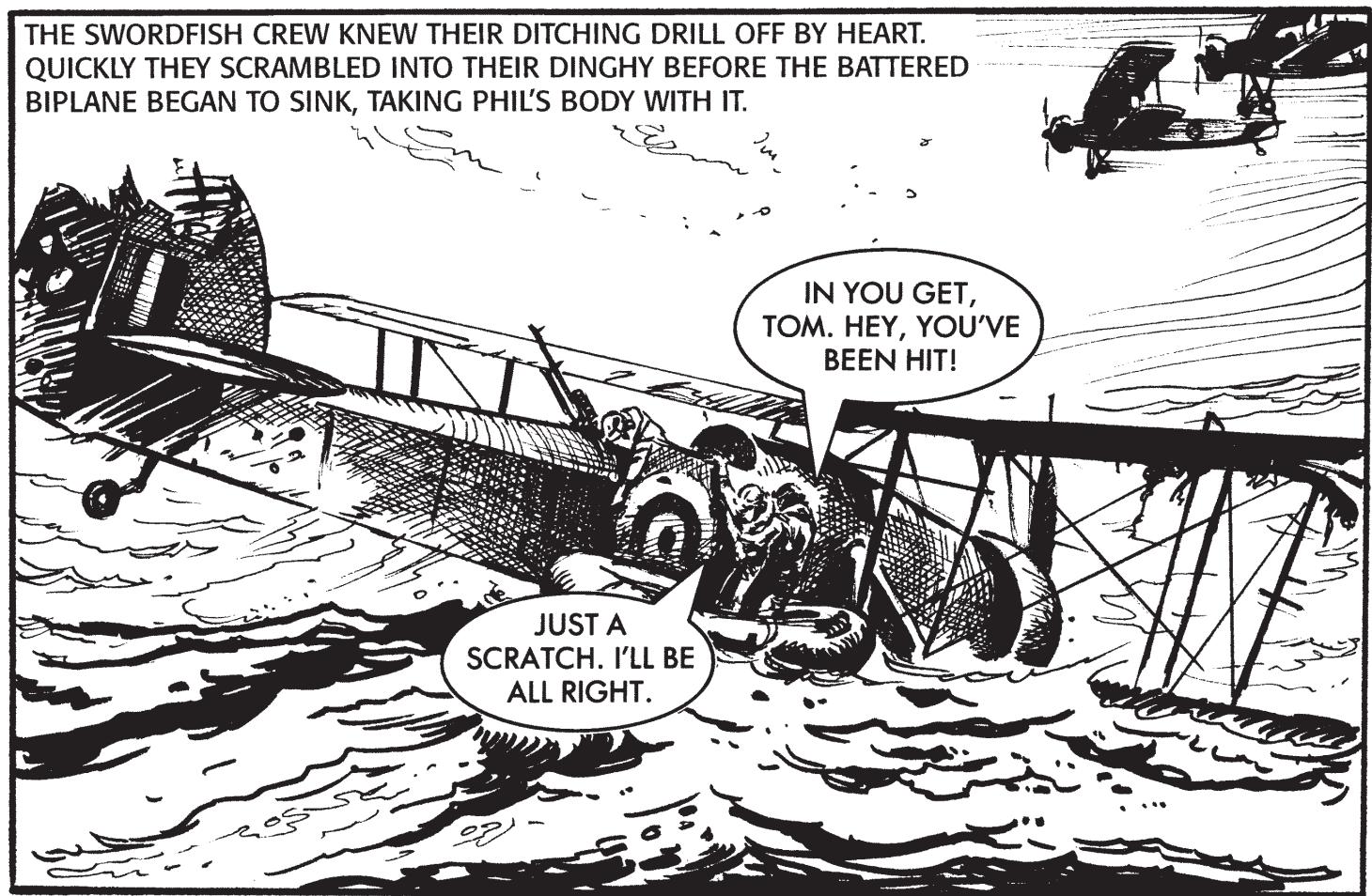
AFTER A FEW MONTHS THEY WERE POSTED TO AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER BASED IN SCOTLAND. PATROLLING THE NORTH SEA, SEAN FELT A STRANGE SENSATION —



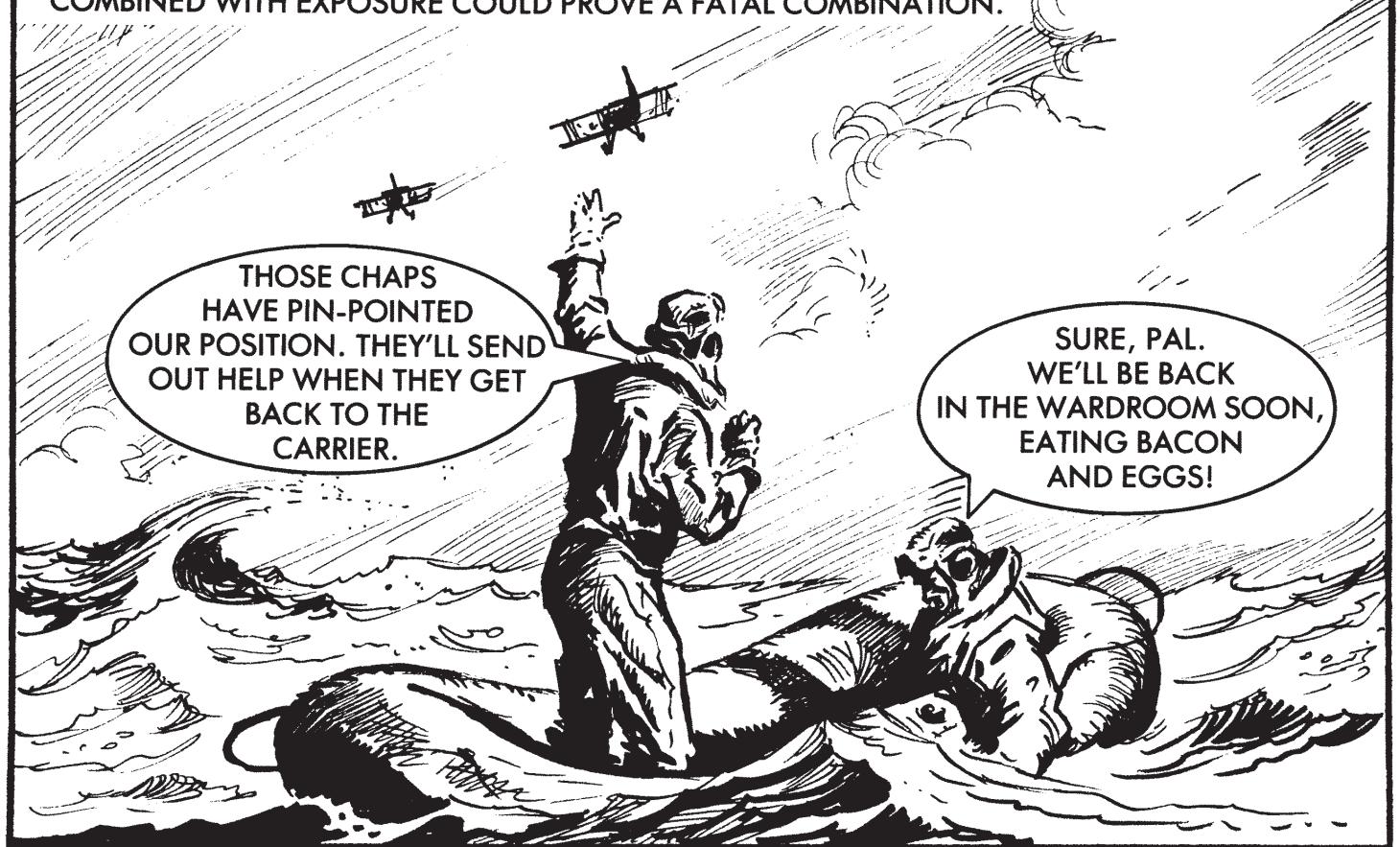
THAT, HOWEVER, WAS YEARS AGO. THE REALITY WAS THAT SEAN HAD HAD TO COME DOWN. HIS OLD DREAD WAS RE-ASSERTING ITSELF. NEVERTHELESS, HE KEPT HIS VOICE STEADY.



THE SWORDFISH CREW KNEW THEIR DITCHING DRILL OFF BY HEART. QUICKLY THEY SCRAMBLED INTO THEIR DINGHY BEFORE THE BATTERED BIPLANE BEGAN TO SINK, TAKING PHIL'S BODY WITH IT.



SEAN WAS WORRIED. WHILE TOM'S WOUND DIDN'T LOOK TOO BAD, HE KNEW THAT SHOCK COMBINED WITH EXPOSURE COULD PROVE A FATAL COMBINATION.



FATEFULLY, HOWEVER, THE CRASH HAD BEEN WITNESSED BY SOMEONE ELSE. A GERMAN U-BOAT COMMANDED BY OBERLEUTNANT KLAUS GRONNER HAD BEEN ABOUT TO SURFACE WHEN THE SWORDFISH HIT THE WATER.



LEUTNANT GILBERT JENSEN WINCED AT THIS PLAN. IT WENT AGAINST THE GRAIN TO USE SURVIVORS AS BAIT.

DO WE RESCUE THEM, KAPITAN?

NO, WE WAIT, JENSEN. THOSE AIRCRAFT MUST HAVE NOTED THEIR POSITION. WITH LUCK WE COULD HAVE A PROPER TARGET BEFORE LONG.

TIME ROLLED SLOWLY BY. TOM'S TEETH BEGAN TO CHATTER. SEAN WAS TOO CONCERNED FOR HIM TO BE AWARE OF HIS FEAR.

I'M FREEZING.
WHY DIDN'T THEY BUILD
A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED
LOG FIRE INTO THESE
THINGS?

WE'LL ASK THE BOFFINS WHEN WE GET BACK. DON'T WORRY, RESCUE SHOULDN'T BE TOO LONG NOW.

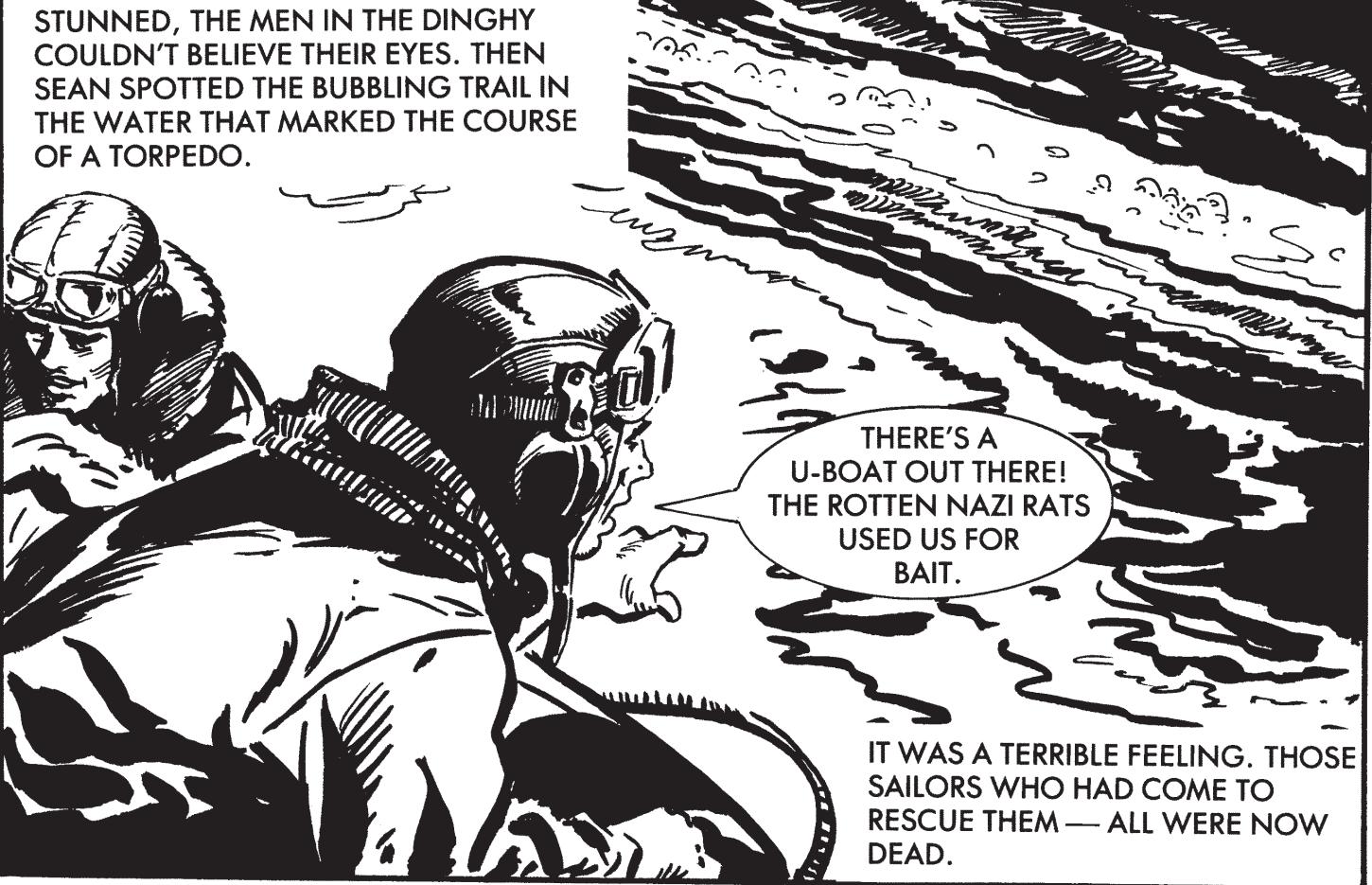
ANOTHER HOUR PASSED. THEN TO SEAN'S RELIEF HE SAW A SHAPE PLOUGHING TOWARDS THEM.



SUDDENLY THE SEA AROUND THE CORVETTE GAVE A TREMENDOUS HEAVE. THERE WAS AN EAR-SPLITTING ROAR AND THE SHIP WAS RIPPED APART.



STUNNED, THE MEN IN THE DINGHY COULDN'T BELIEVE THEIR EYES. THEN SEAN SPOTTED THE BUBBLING TRAIL IN THE WATER THAT MARKED THE COURSE OF A TORPEDO.



THERE'S A U-BOAT OUT THERE! THE ROTTEN NAZI RATS USED US FOR BAIT.

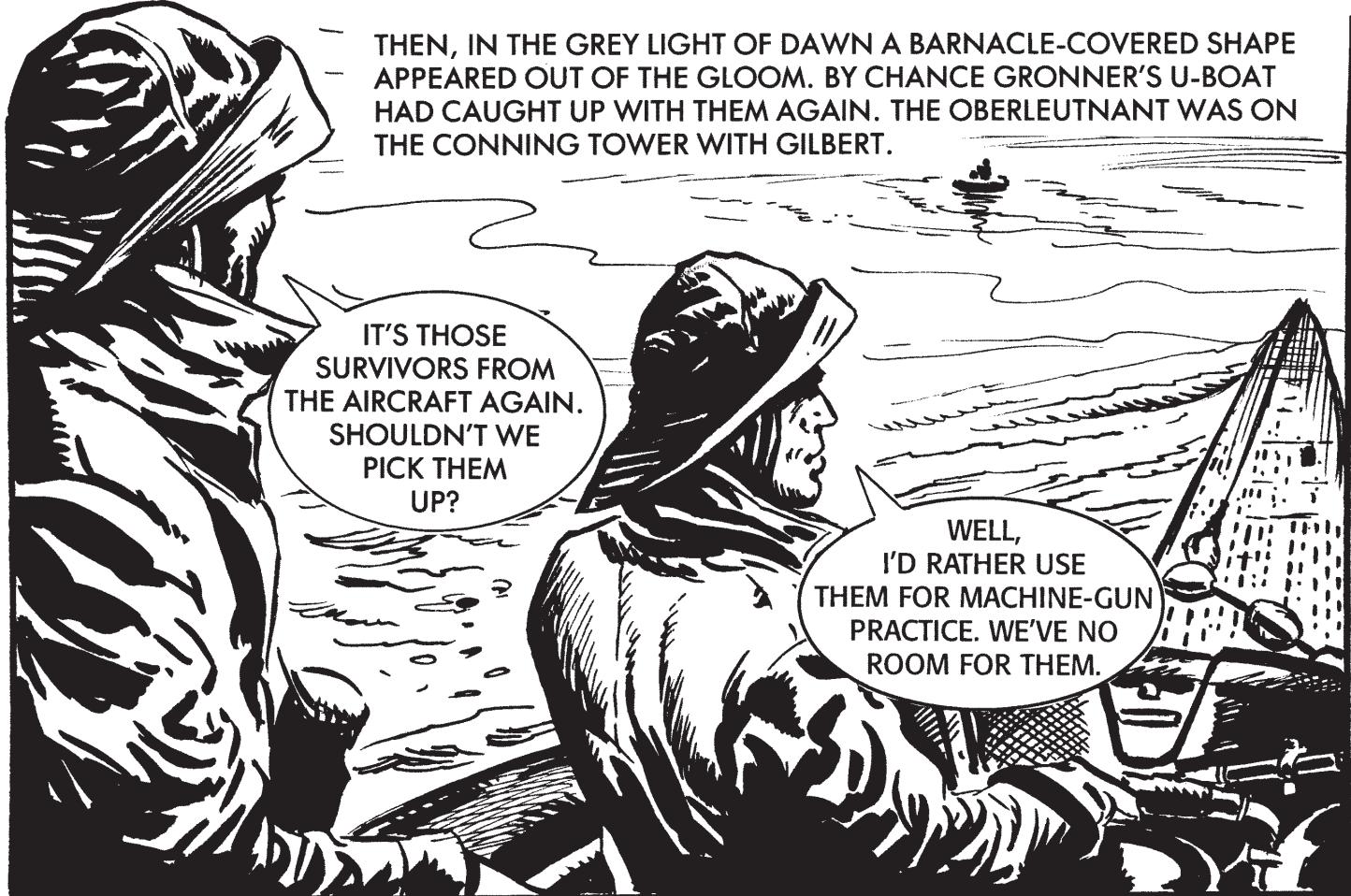
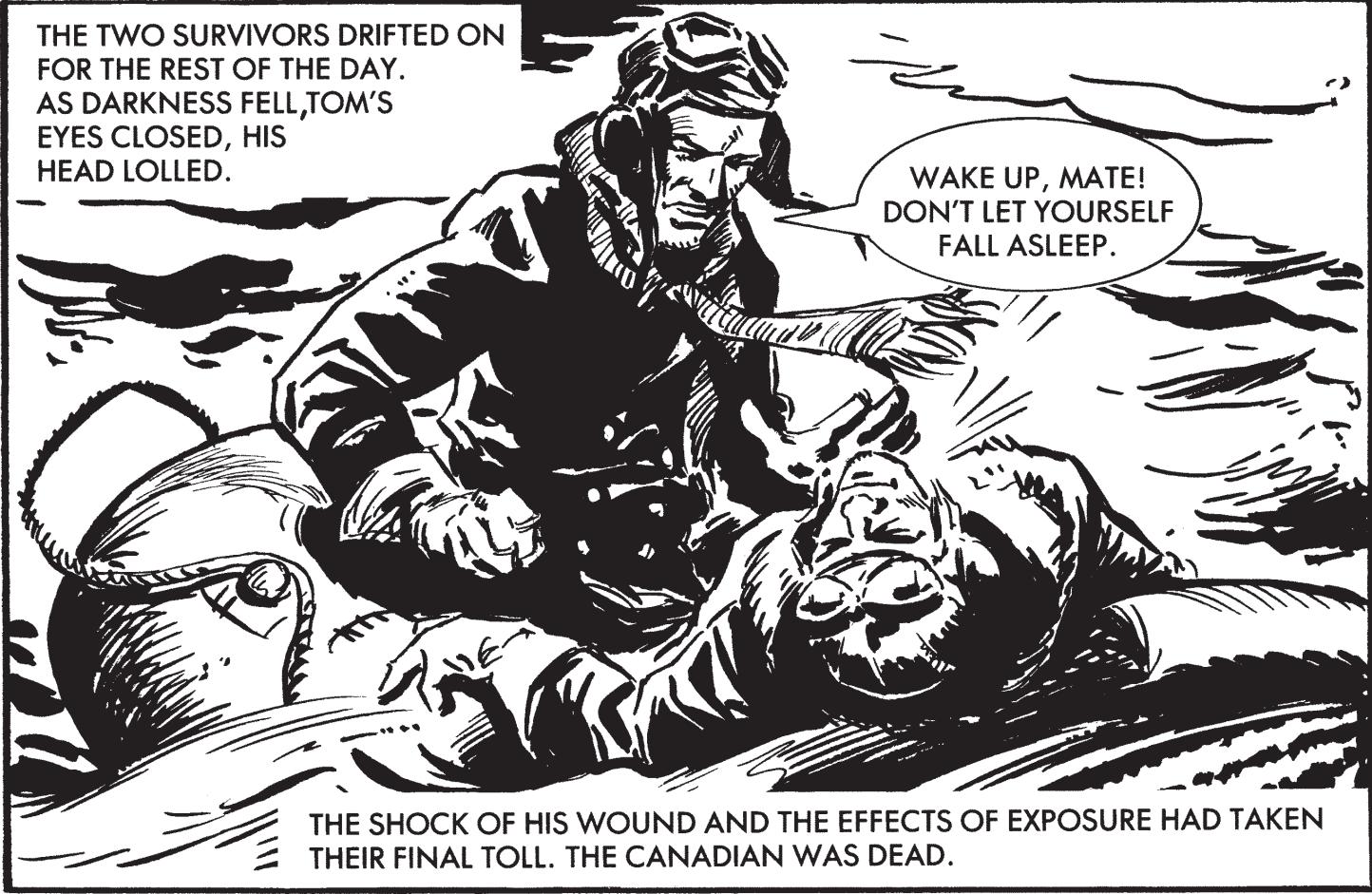
IT WAS A TERRIBLE FEELING. THOSE SAILORS WHO HAD COME TO RESCUE THEM — ALL WERE NOW DEAD.

BEAMING WITH HIS SUCCESS, MEANWHILE, GRONNER MOVED HIS SUBMARINE AWAY.

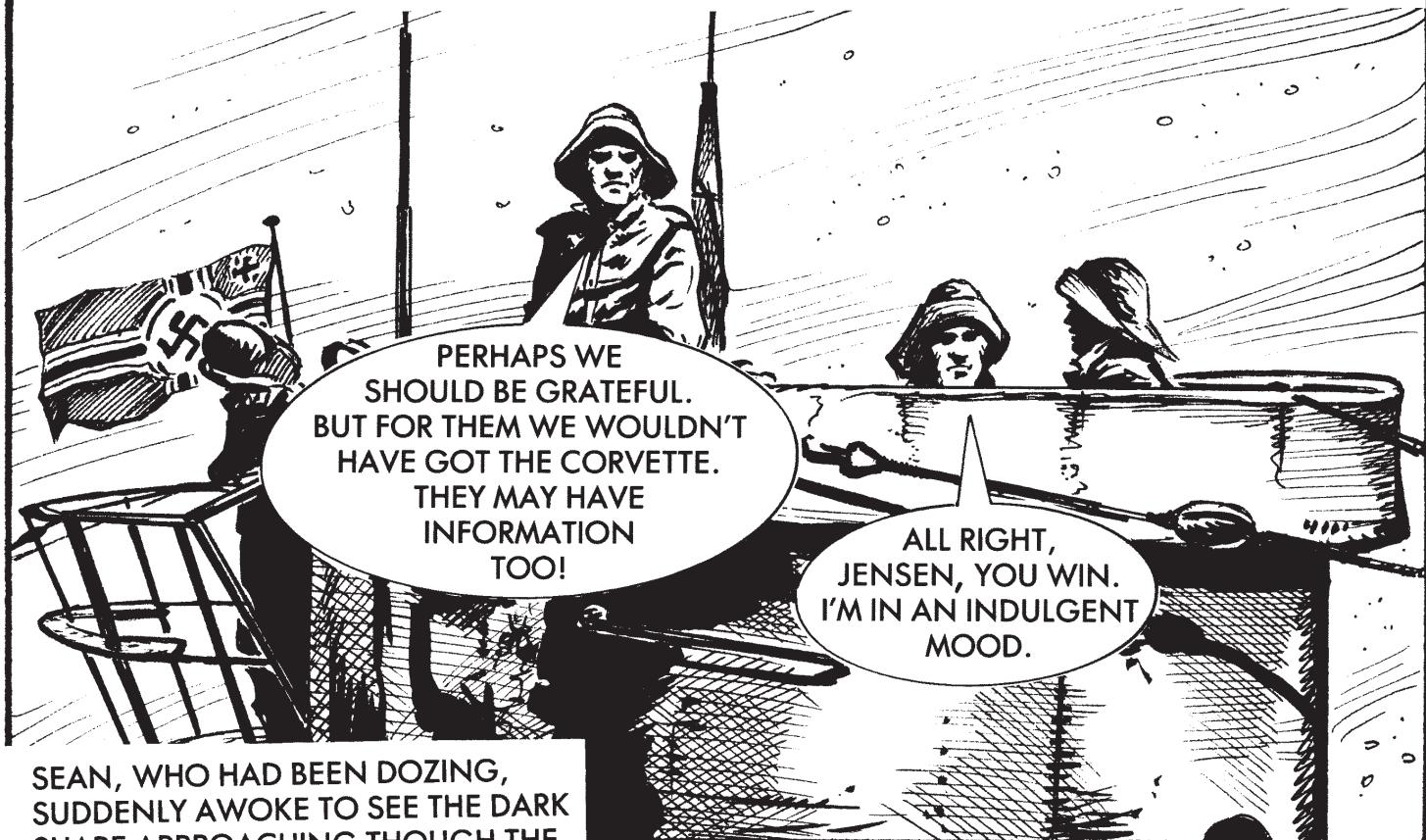


THAT GIVES ME THE HIGHEST TONNAGE SUNK IN THE FLOTILLA. WE'LL STAY IN THE AREA. PERHAPS WE'LL FIND A USE FOR OUR LAST TORPEDO!

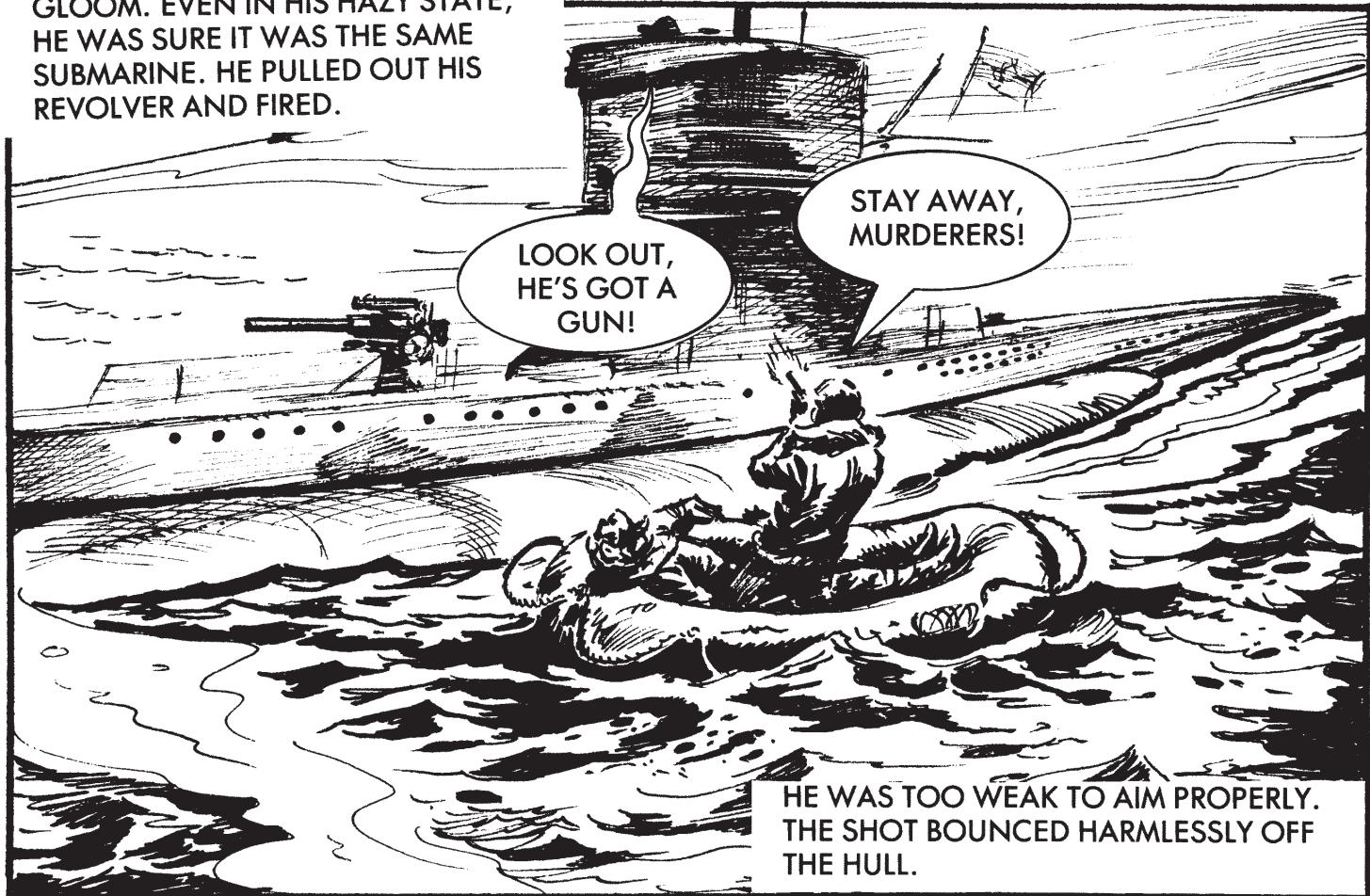
GILBERT WAS NOT SO PLEASED BUT HID HIS FEELINGS. HE STILL RESENTED USING THE MEN IN THE DINGHY.



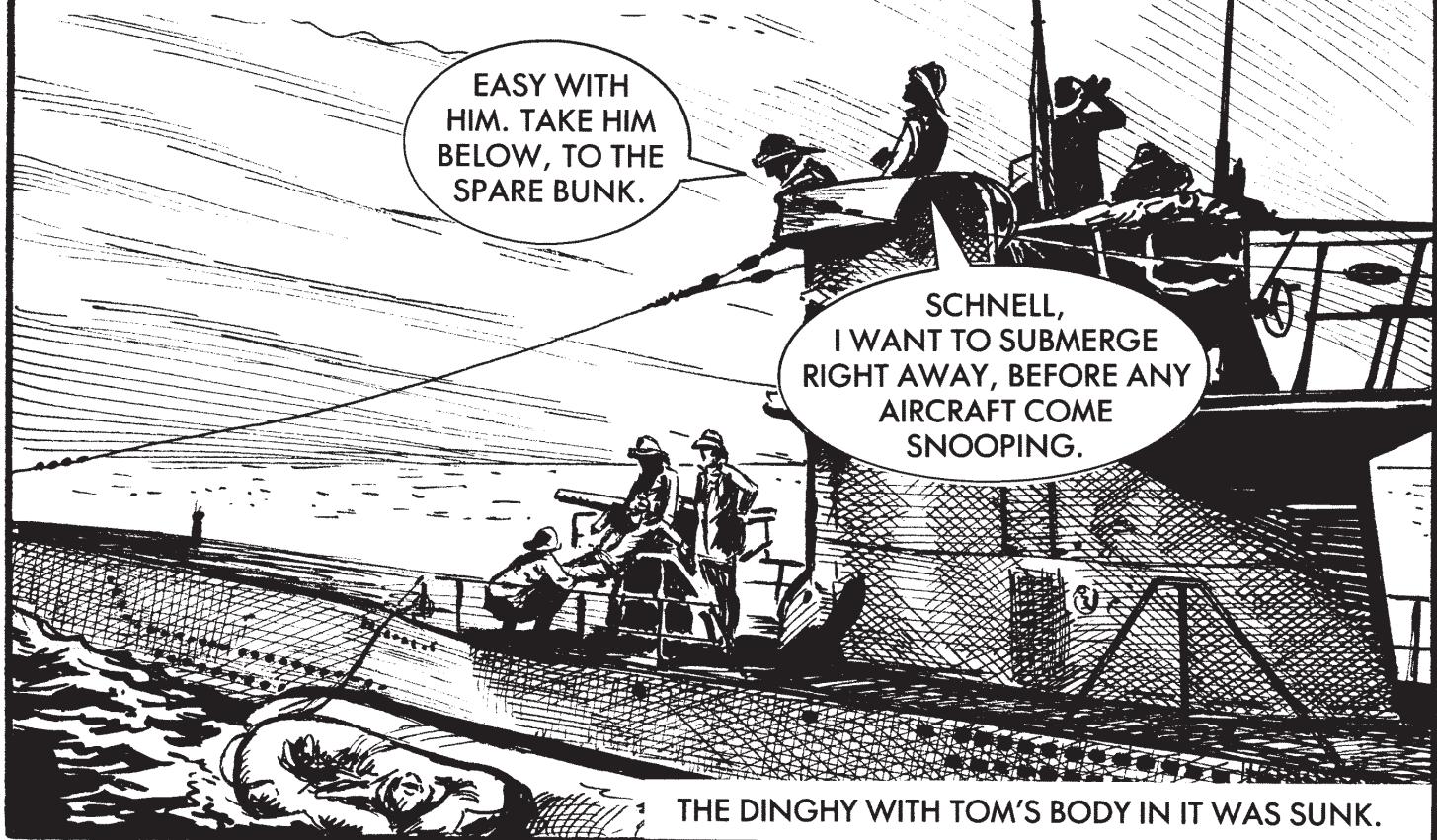
THE LEUTNANT KNEW THAT HIS SKIPPER, A FERVENT NAZI, WAS MAKING NO IDLE THREAT. CAUTIOUSLY HE SOUGHT TO SAVE WHAT HE THOUGHT WERE TWO MEN'S LIVES.



SEAN, WHO HAD BEEN DOZING, SUDDENLY AWOKE TO SEE THE DARK SHAPE APPROACHING THOUGH THE GLOOM. EVEN IN HIS HAZY STATE, HE WAS SURE IT WAS THE SAME SUBMARINE. HE PULLED OUT HIS REVOLVER AND FIRED.



THE EFFORT WAS TOO MUCH. HE COLLAPSED IN A DEAD FAINT. AS THE U-BOAT CAME ALONGSIDE TWO CREWMEN PULLED HIM ABOARD.



SEAN RECOVERED SHORTLY AFTERWARDS TO THE HUM OF DIESEL ENGINES, THE CREAKING OF THE SUBMARINE'S HULL. HE'D JUST FATHOMED OUT WHAT HAD HAPPENED WHEN GILBERT AND A PETTY OFFICER APPEARED.



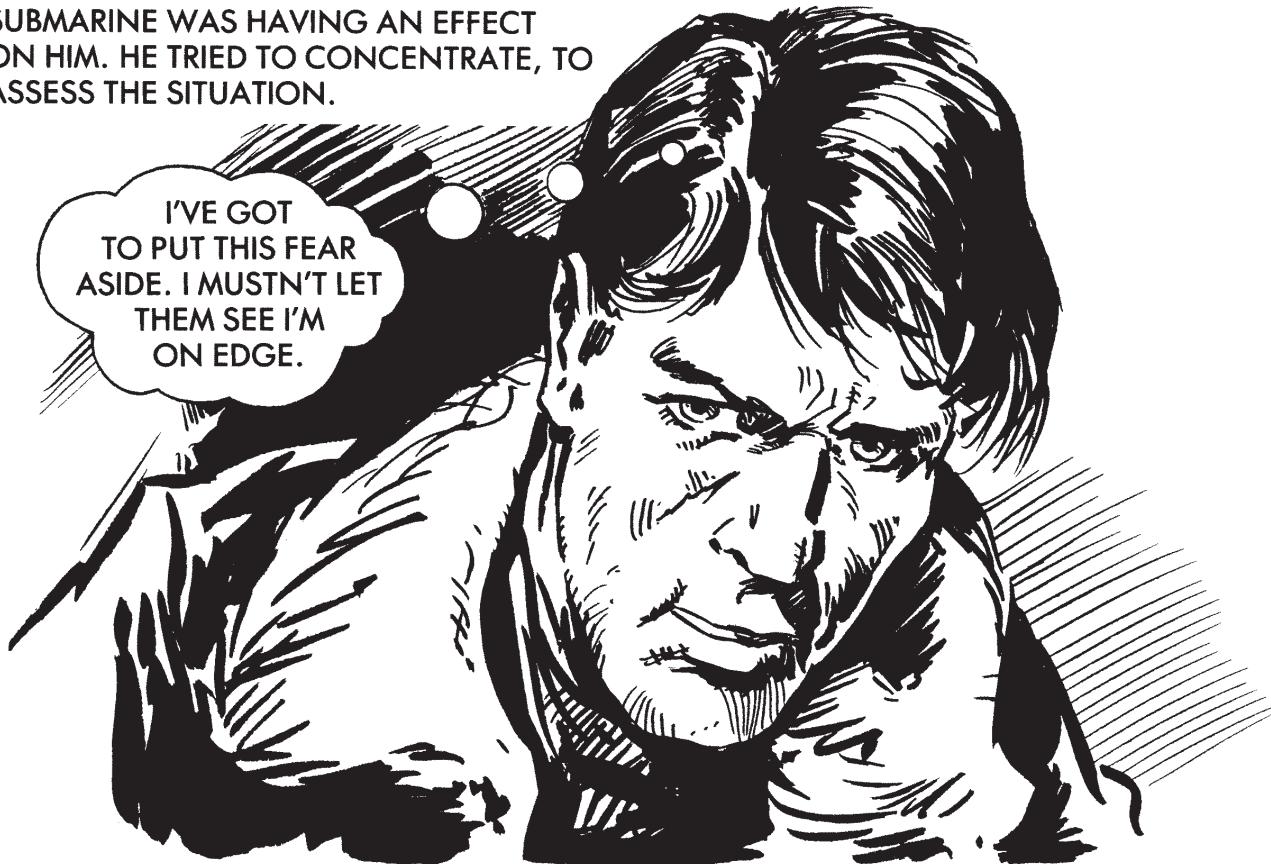
P.O. BERNHARD HINDE SPOKE GOOD ENGLISH. HE LAID THE PLATE DOWN BESIDE THE PILOT.



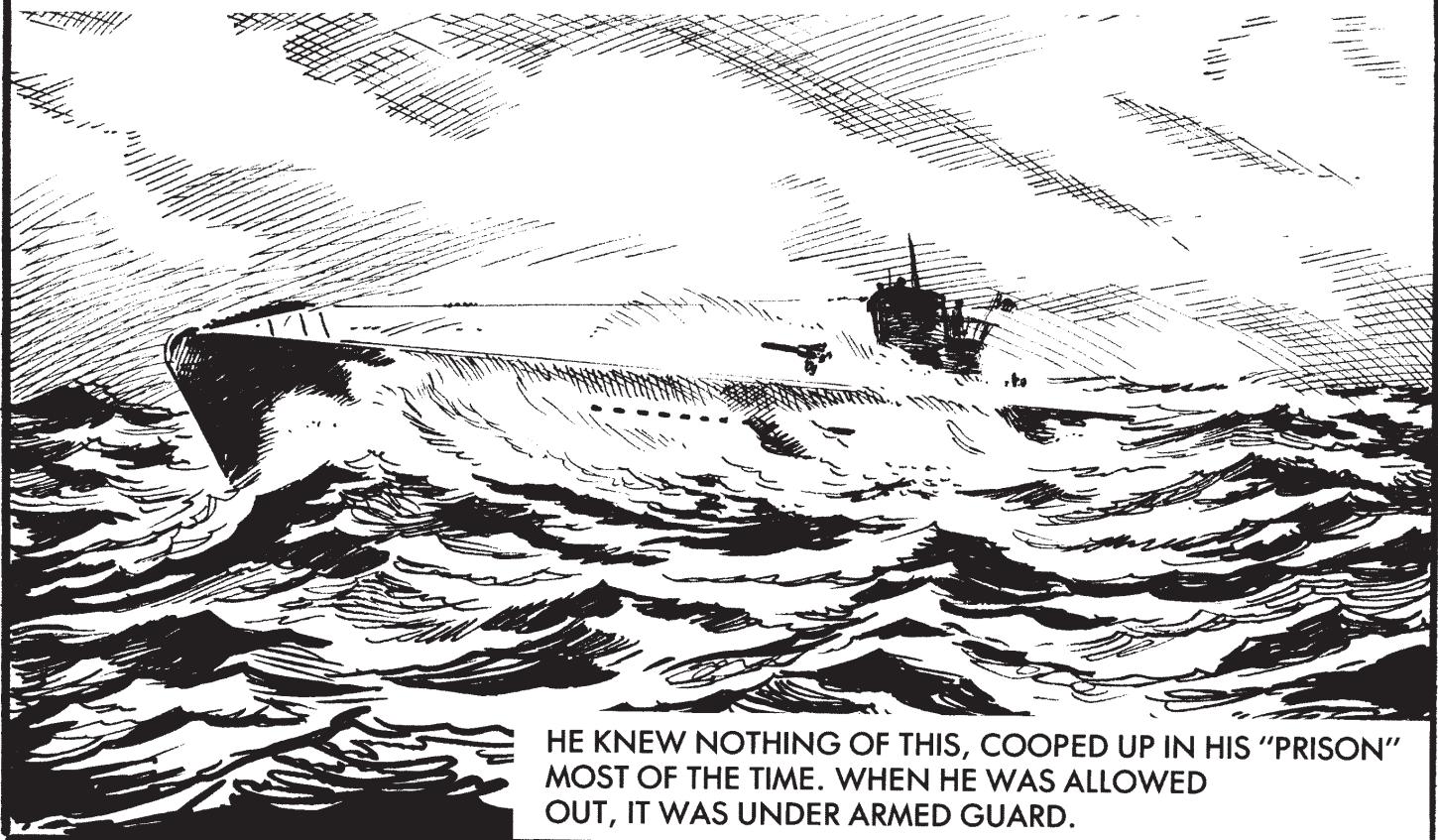
HINDE CONTINUED ANGRILY, STUNG BY
SEAN'S INGRATITUDE. GILBERT STEPPED
FORWARD TO CHECK HIM.



SEAN FOUND THAT THE
CLAUSTROPHOBIC ATMOSPHERE OF THE
SUBMARINE WAS HAVING AN EFFECT
ON HIM. HE TRIED TO CONCENTRATE, TO
ASSESS THE SITUATION.



THE NEXT DAY PASSED SLOWLY FOR HIM. ROUND DUSK THE U-BOAT SURFACED, ALLOWING IT TO MAKE GREATER SPEED WITHOUT FEAR OF ATTACK.



HE KNEW NOTHING OF THIS, COOPED UP IN HIS "PRISON" MOST OF THE TIME. WHEN HE WAS ALLOWED OUT, IT WAS UNDER ARMED GUARD.

GRONNER WAS NOT HAPPY. HE HAD BEEN ORDERED TO CHANGE COURSE, AWAY FROM THEIR HOME PORT TO FRANCE INSTEAD.



THE NEARER THE U-BOAT GOT TO SAFE WATERS THE MORE THE GERMANS RELAXED. ASSIGNED TO GUARD SEAN, PETTY OFFICER HINDE TRIED TO STRIKE UP A FRIENDSHIP, PLAYING CHESS WITH HIM. DESPITE HIMSELF SEAN WARMED TO HIM.



WHEN THE SUBMARINE BERTHED IN A FRENCH PORT, SEAN WAS TO BE TAKEN AWAY BY THE NAVAL GARRISON FOR INTERROGATION. BEFORE HE CLIMBED INTO A WAITING TRUCK HE SAID FAREWELL TO GILBERT WHOM HE NOW ALSO HAD A GRUDGING RESPECT FOR.



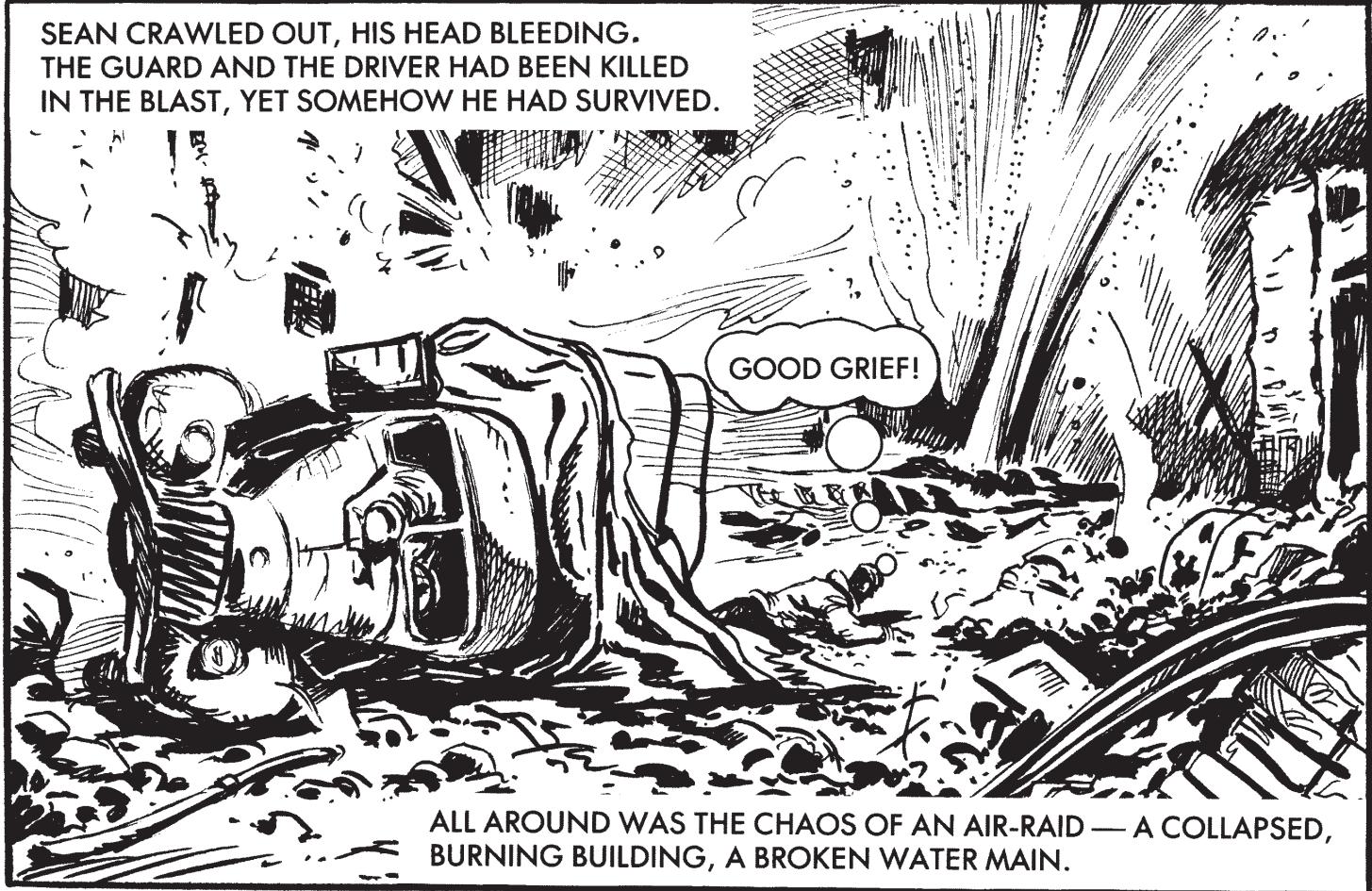
SEAN AND HIS ESCORT HAD AN UNCOMFORTABLE RIDE AS THE TRUCK BUMPED ALONG A NARROW STREET, THEN THE MOURNFUL WAIL OF SIRENS FILLED THE AIR.



THE WARNING WAS TOO LATE, HOWEVER, FOR ALREADY AIRCRAFT ENGINES DRONED OVERHEAD. SUDDENLY A BOMB WHISTLED DOWN — WHEN IT EXPLODED, THE TRUCK WAS THROWN SIDEWAYS.



SEAN CRAWLED OUT, HIS HEAD BLEEDING.
THE GUARD AND THE DRIVER HAD BEEN KILLED
IN THE BLAST, YET SOMEHOW HE HAD SURVIVED.



GOOD GRIEF!

ALL AROUND WAS THE CHAOS OF AN AIR-RAID — A COLLAPSED,
BURNING BUILDING, A BROKEN WATER MAIN.

SEIZING HIS CHANCE, HE MADE OFF ALONG
THE STREET. THEN A LITTLE FRENCHMAN
BECKONED TO HIM FROM AN ALLEYWAY.



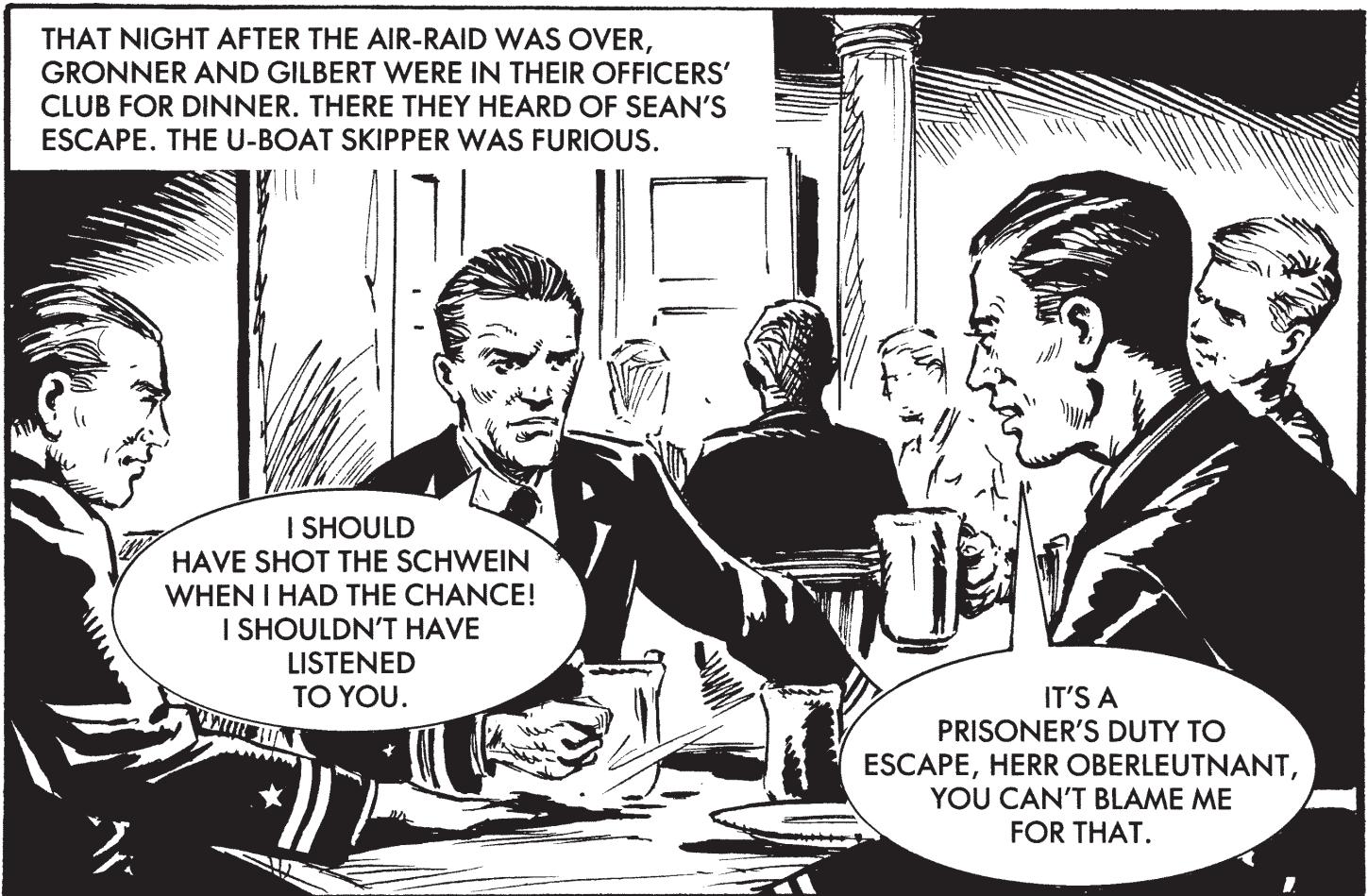
VENEZ,
MONSIEUR. VITE!
VITE!

WHAT? OH,
I SEE. "COME HERE".
RIGHT!

SEAN WAS TAKEN THROUGH A MAZE OF SMALL STREETS TO A WINE CELLAR WHERE HE WAS INTRODUCED TO A GROUP OF GRIM-FACED LOCALS WHO GAVE HIM A MEAL. ONE OF THEM SPOKE ENGLISH.



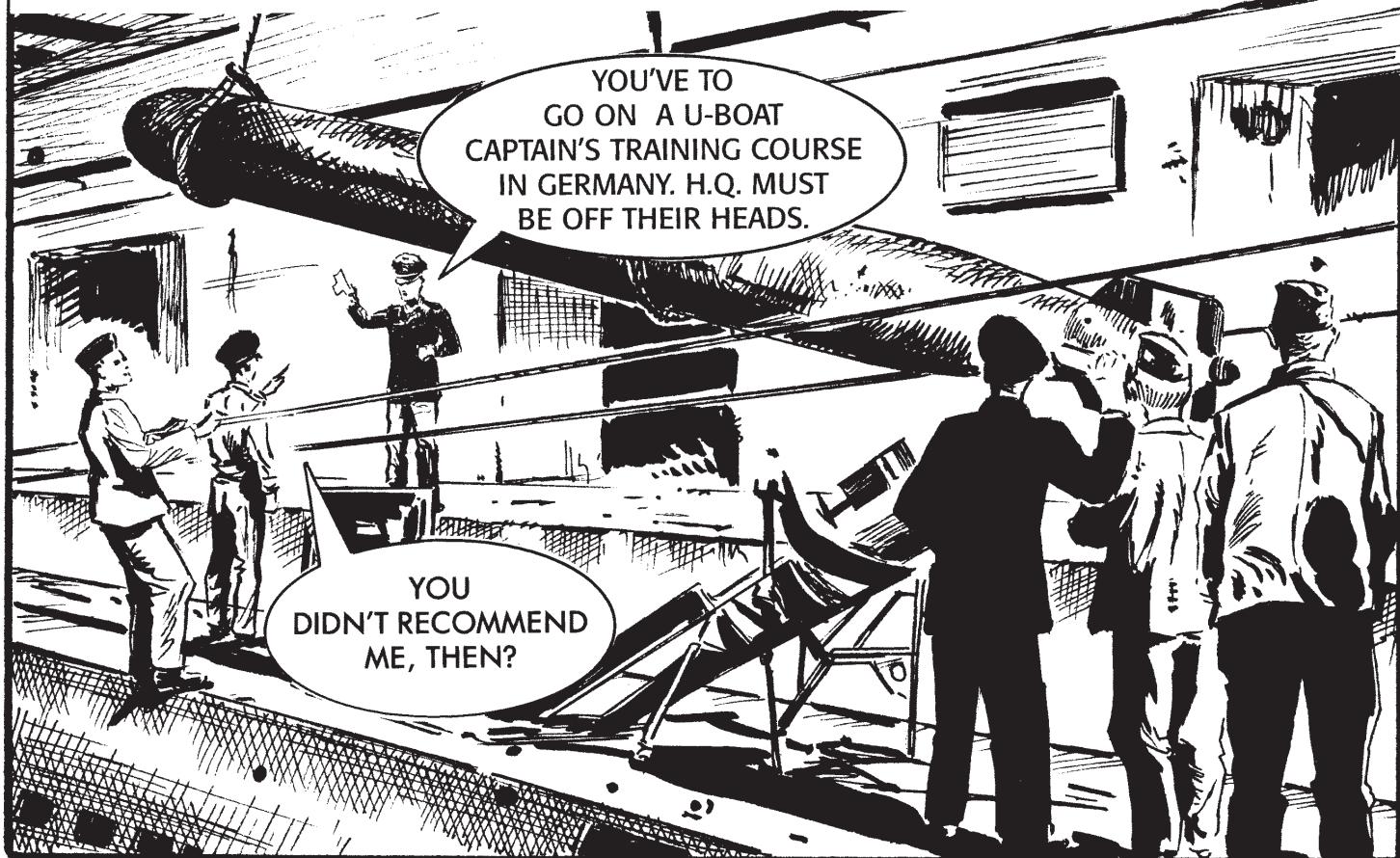
THAT NIGHT AFTER THE AIR-RAID WAS OVER, GRONNER AND GILBERT WERE IN THEIR OFFICERS' CLUB FOR DINNER. THERE THEY HEARD OF SEAN'S ESCAPE. THE U-BOAT SKIPPER WAS FURIOUS.



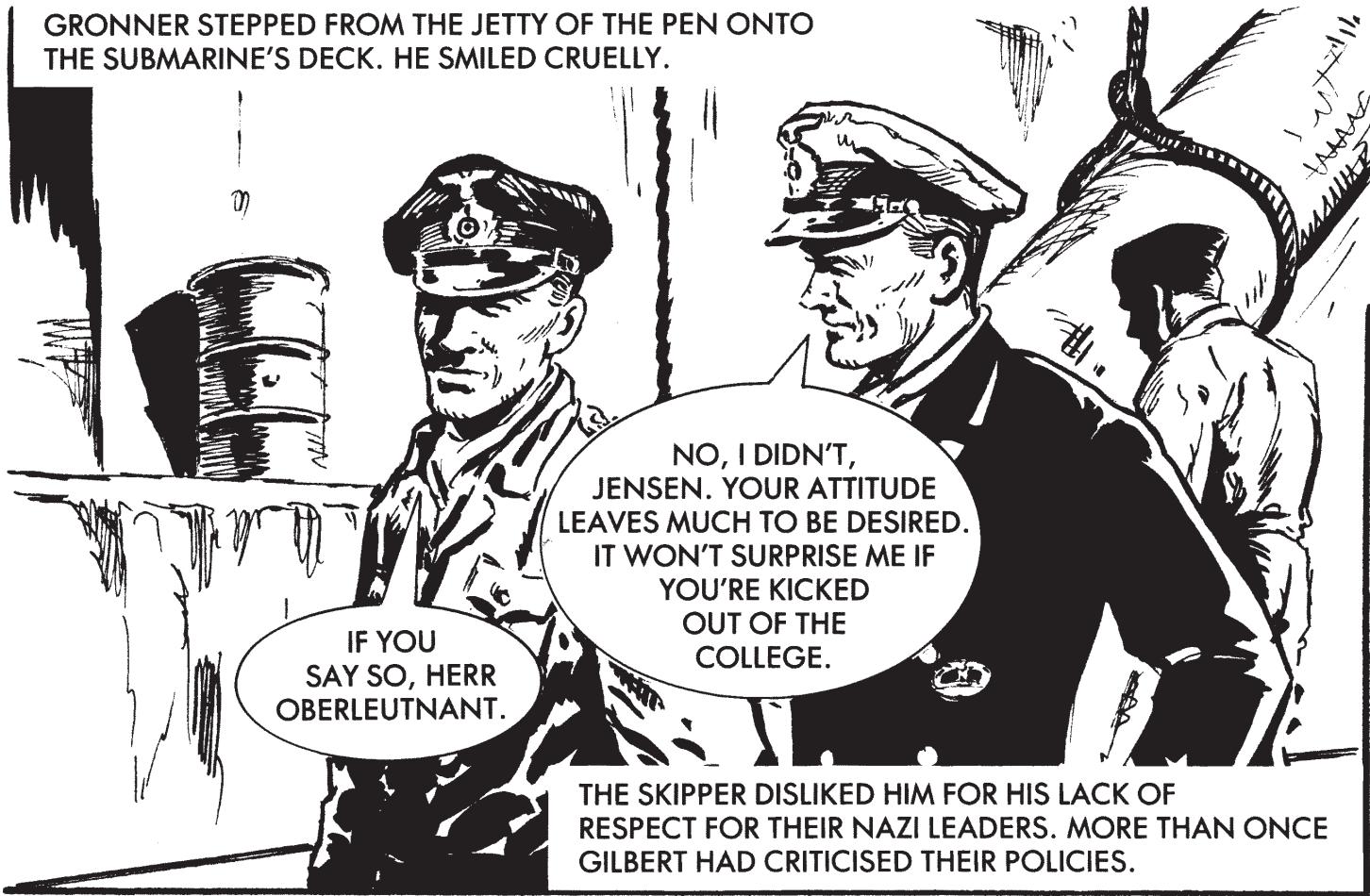
**FIND
MORE
FREE
MAGAZINES**

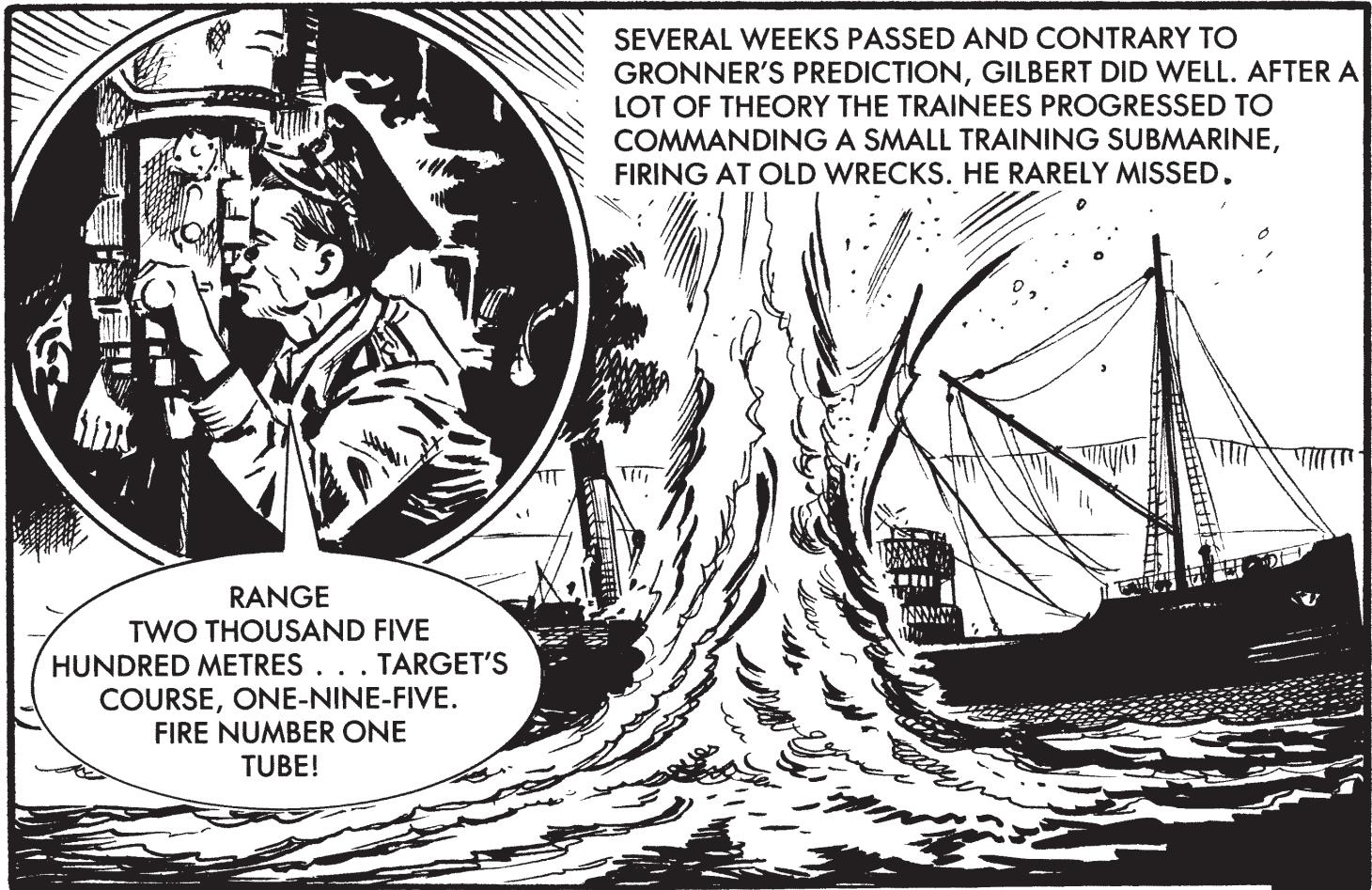
FREEMAGS.CC

BEFORE HE WAS DUE TO PUT TO SEA AGAIN, A SIGNAL ARRIVED WITH ORDERS FOR GILBERT.



GRONNER STEPPED FROM THE JETTY OF THE PEN ONTO THE SUBMARINE'S DECK. HE SMILED CRUELLY.





SEVERAL WEEKS PASSED AND CONTRARY TO GRONNER'S PREDICTION, GILBERT DID WELL. AFTER A LOT OF THEORY THE TRAINEES PROGRESSED TO COMMANDING A SMALL TRAINING SUBMARINE, FIRING AT OLD WRECKS. HE RARELY MISSED.

RANGE
TWO THOUSAND FIVE
HUNDRED METRES . . . TARGET'S
COURSE, ONE-NINE-FIVE.
FIRE NUMBER ONE
TUBE!

MEANWHILE, DURING THIS TIME, SEAN WAS PASSED ALONG THE ESCAPE LINE TO SPAIN. EVENTUALLY HE ARRIVED BACK IN BRITAIN WHERE HE WAS PROMOTED TO LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER. WHEN HE RETURNED HOME ON LEAVE, HIS FATHER WAS DELIGHTED.

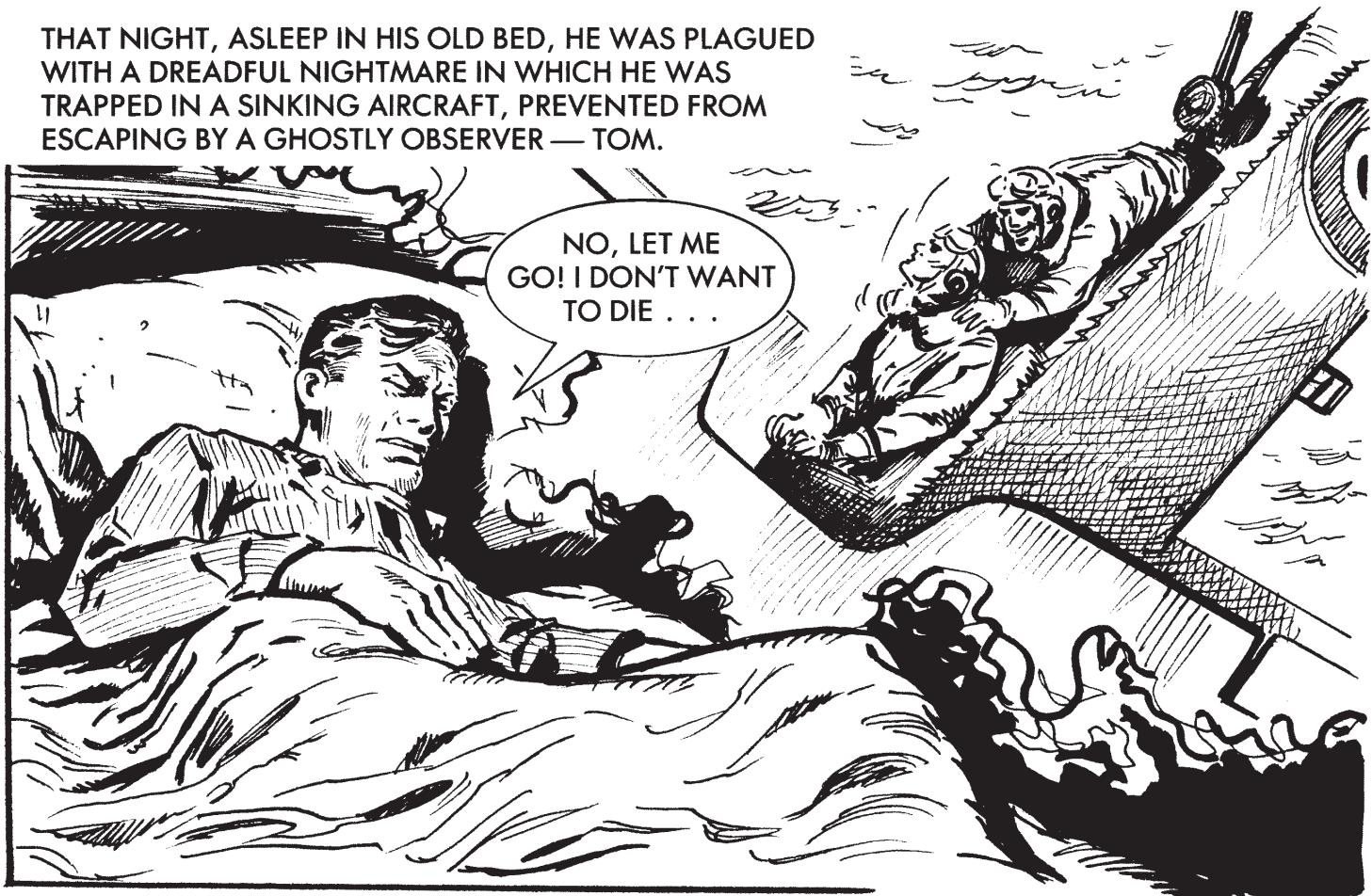


IT'S GREAT
NEWS! SO YOU'LL BE
COMMANDING YOUR
OWN SQUADRON.

YES, THANKS,
DAD.

AT THE BACK OF HIS MIND, THOUGH, SEAN WAS WORRIED. RETURNING TO OPS MEANT FACING UP TO THAT FEAR OF THE SEA AGAIN — WHICH HE WASN'T SURE HE COULD HANDLE.

THAT NIGHT, ASLEEP IN HIS OLD BED, HE WAS PLAGUED WITH A DREADFUL NIGHTMARE IN WHICH HE WAS TRAPPED IN A SINKING AIRCRAFT, PREVENTED FROM ESCAPING BY A GHOSTLY OBSERVER — TOM.



THE NEXT MORNING HIS FATHER SENSED A STRANGE ATTITUDE IN HIS SON.



THERE WAS MORE TRUTH IN THAT REPLY THAN HE DARED ADMIT.

ONCE HIS LEAVE WAS FINISHED HE TOOK COMMAND OF A SWORDFISH SQUADRON. ACTION WAS NOT LONG IN COMING.

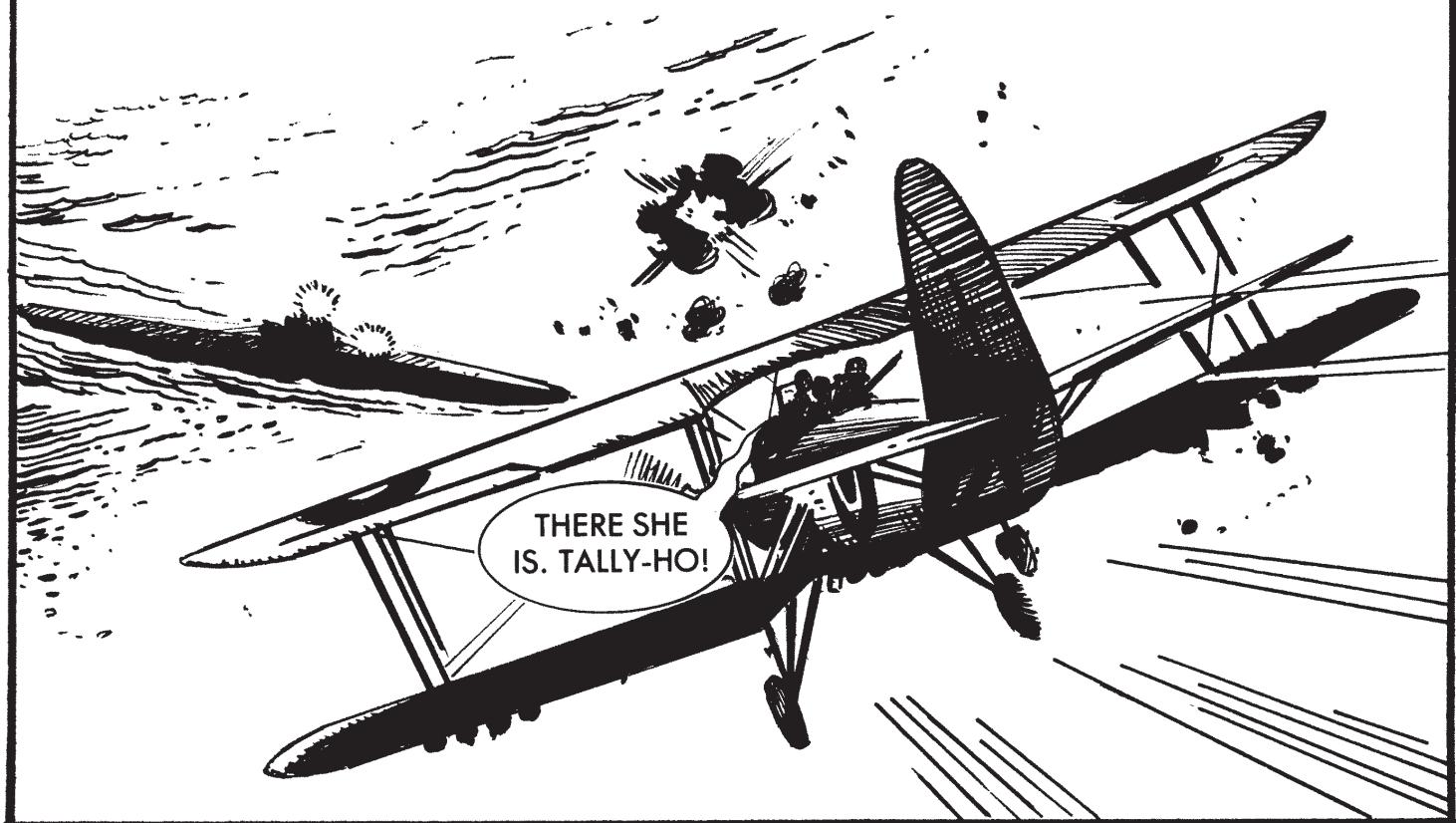


AS SEAN LED THE BIPLANES OUT TO SEA, HIS STOMACH WAS CHURNING WITH FEAR.

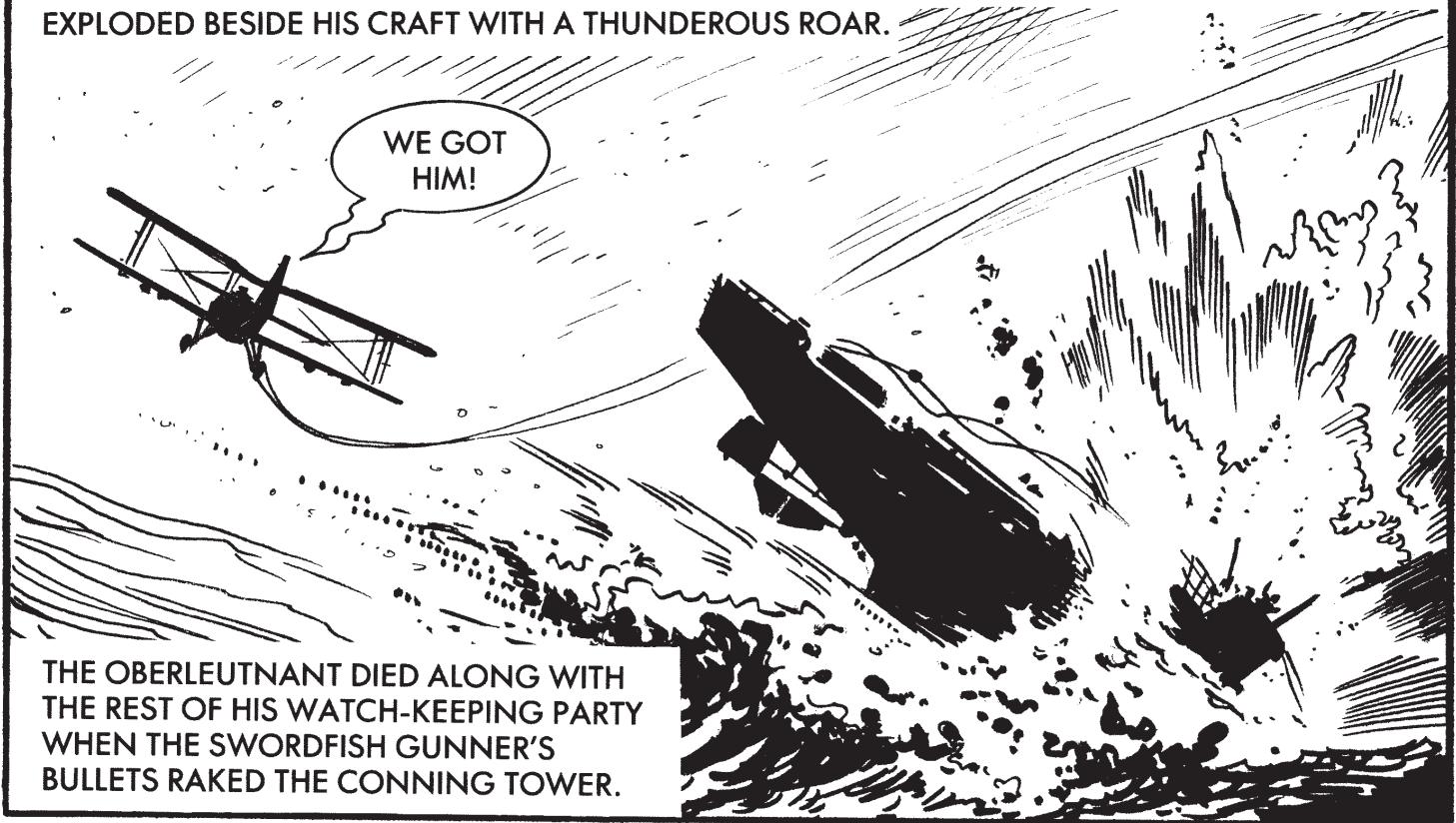


HE FELT A TERRIBLE FRAUD TURNING BACK.
HE SUSPECTED HIS TROUBLE WAS NO
MORE THAN A FAULTY GAUGE.

LIEUTENANT TONY GARRET TOOK COMMAND OF THE FLIGHT. HIS HEART LEAPED WITH EXCITEMENT AS THEY SPOTTED A U-BOAT ON THE SURFACE, MAKING TOP SPEED FOR THE MOUTH OF THE ESTUARY.

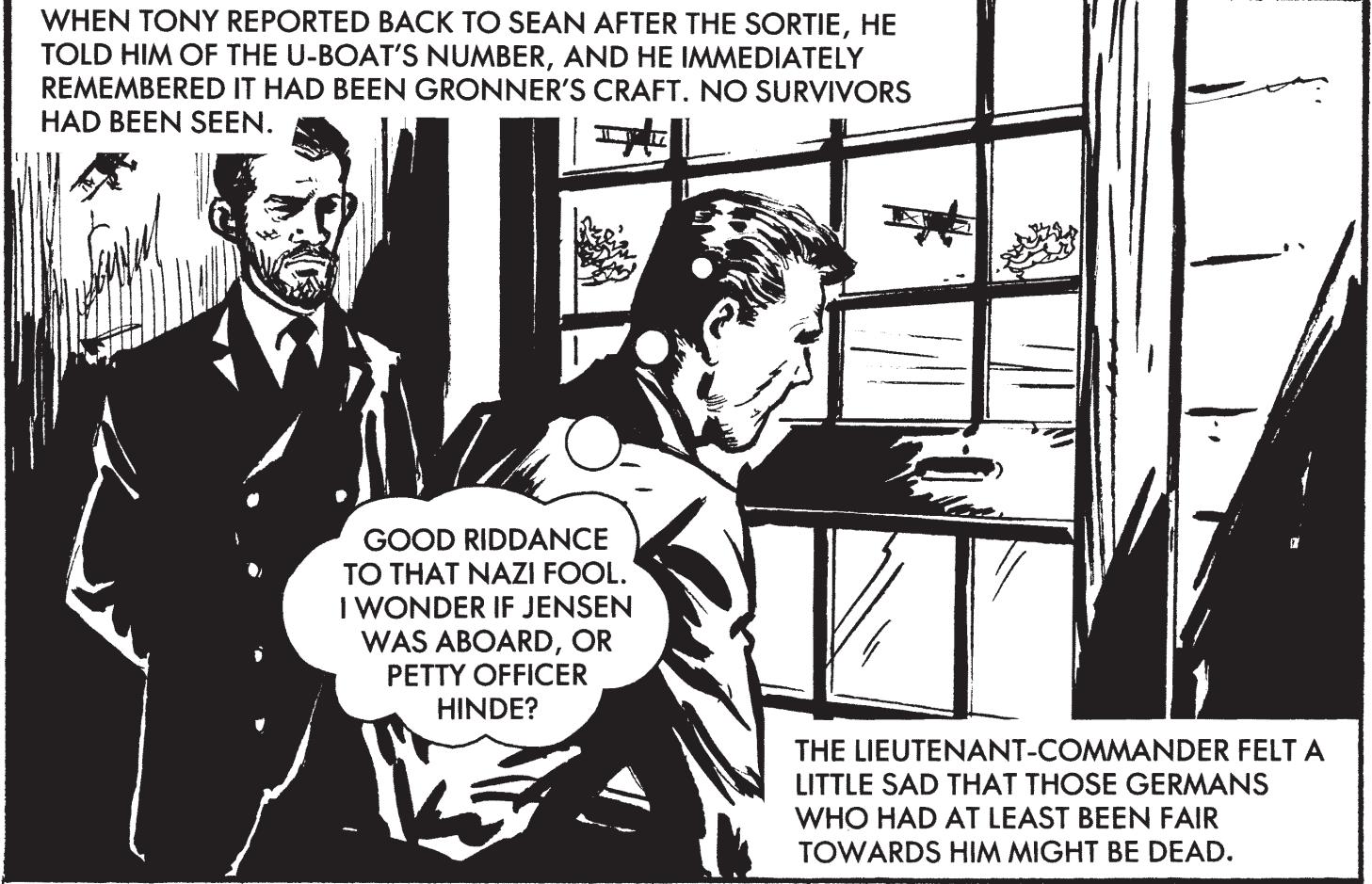


FATE PLAYS A STRANGE ROLE IN THE GAME OF LIFE, AND TONIGHT IT MEANT THAT IT WAS GRONNER'S SUBMARINE UNDER ATTACK. NOW HE WAS PAYING THE PRICE FOR HIS OVER-CONFIDENCE IN NOT SUBMERGING AFTER SINKING HIS TARGET. A DEPTH-CHARGE EXPLODED BESIDE HIS CRAFT WITH A THUNDEROUS ROAR.

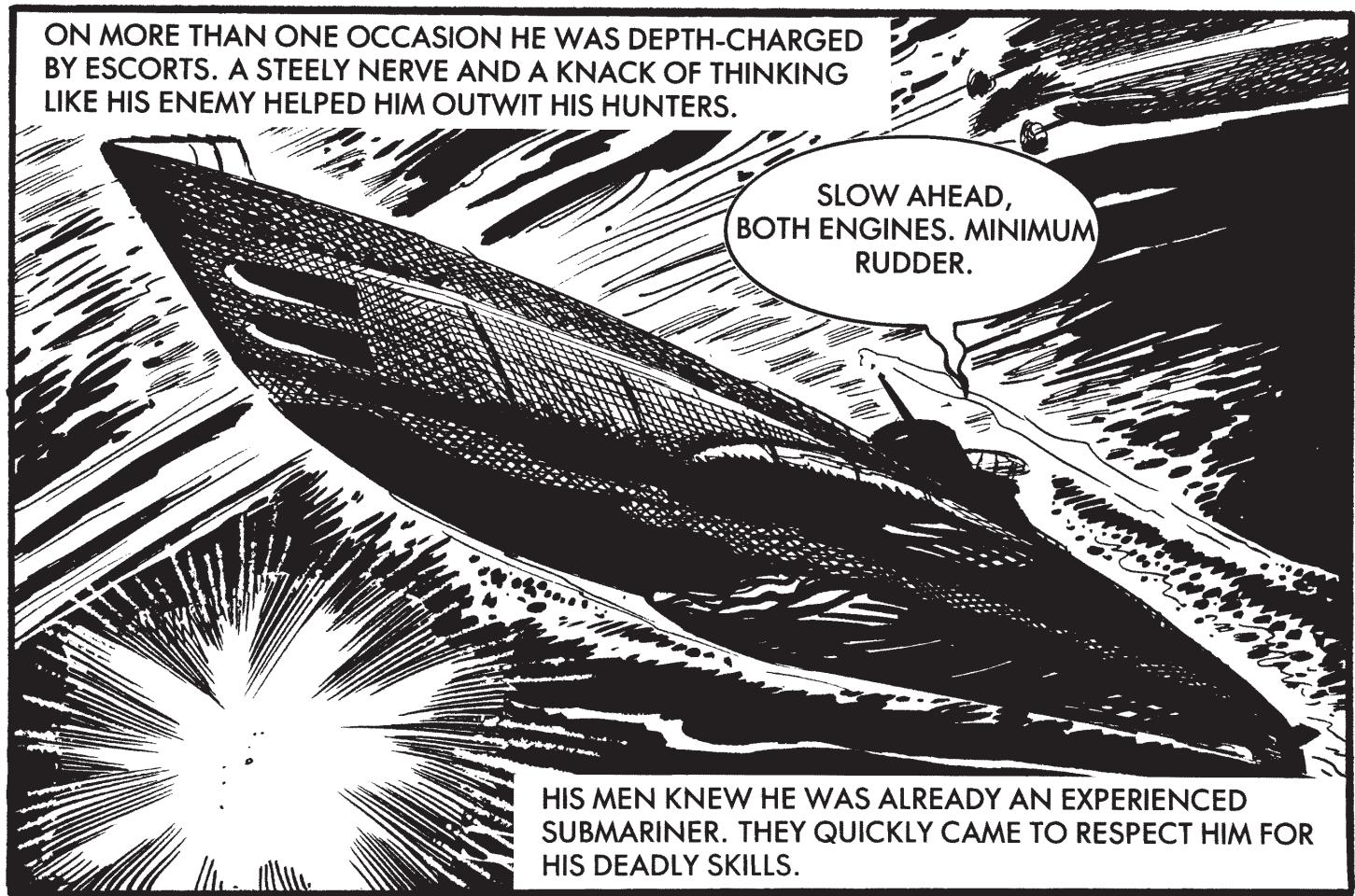
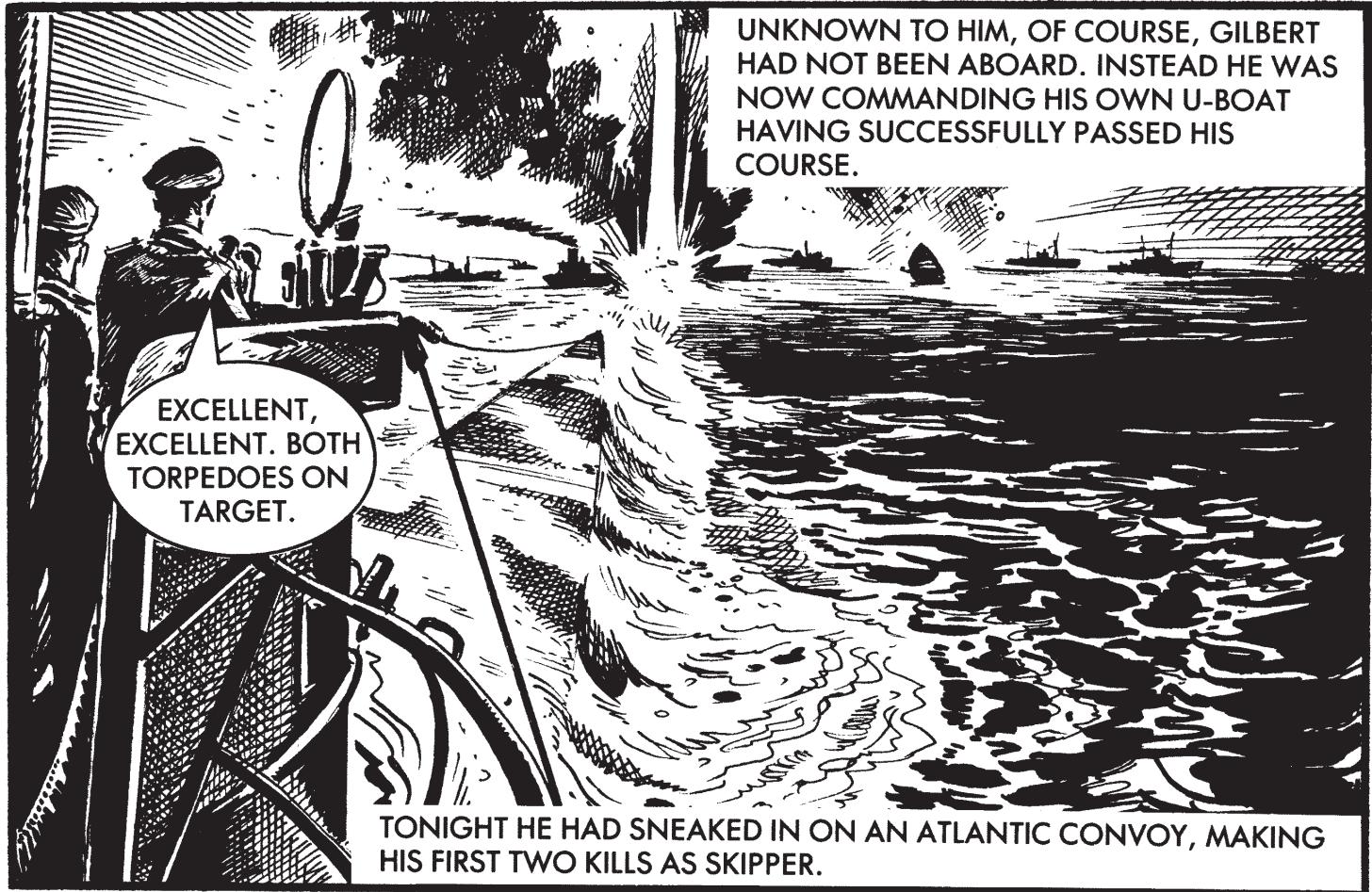


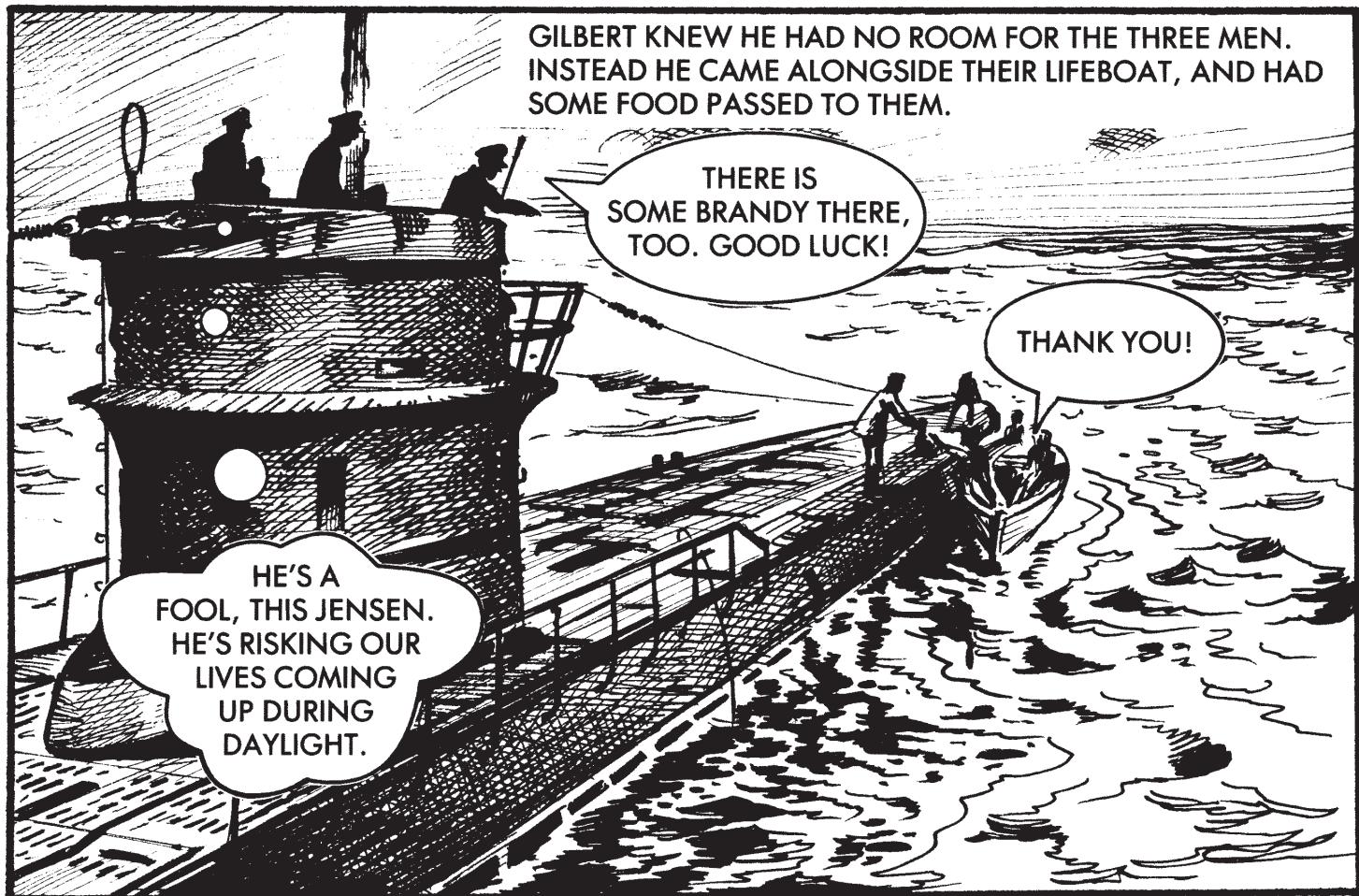
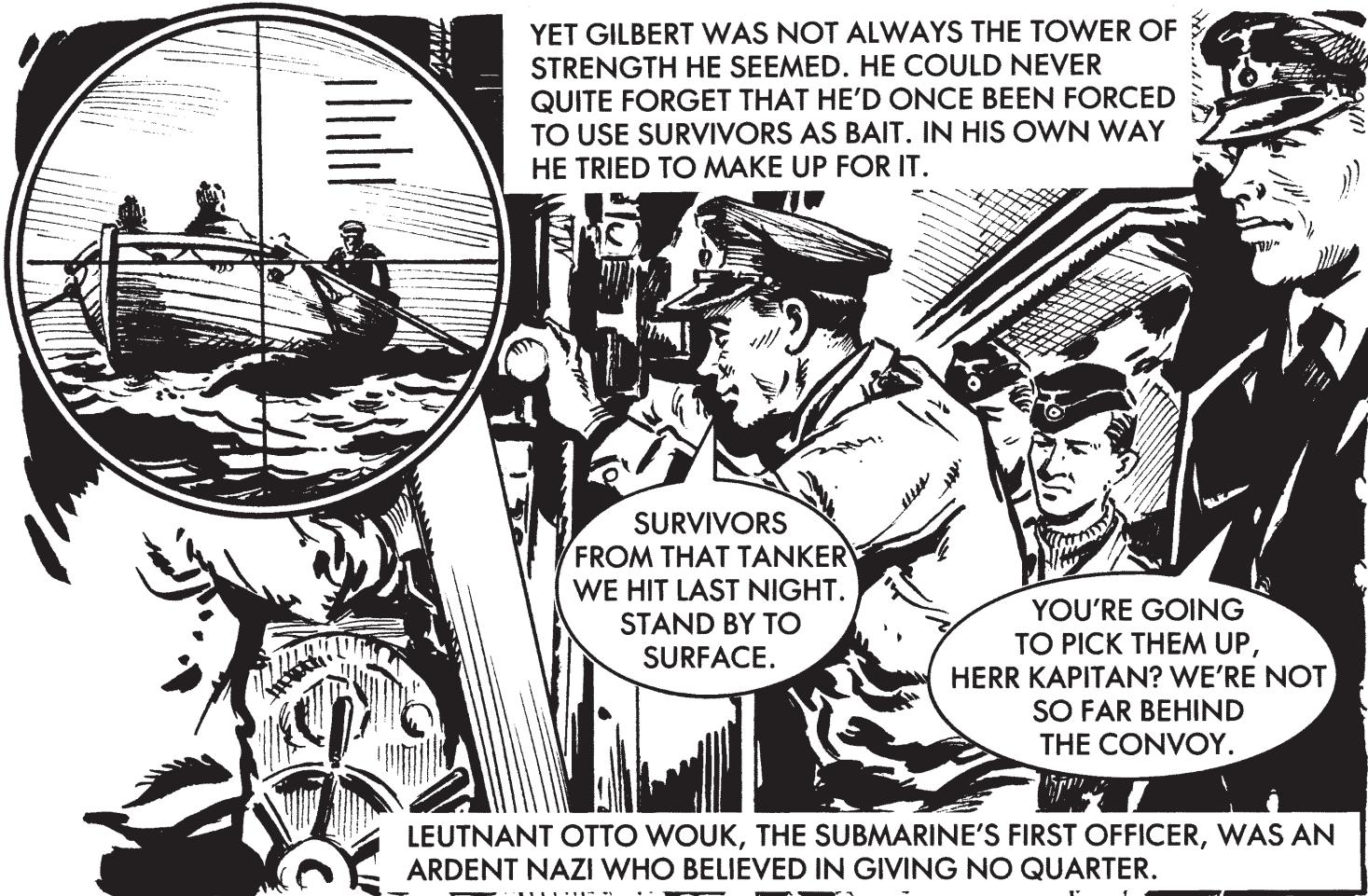
THE OBERLEUTNANT DIED ALONG WITH THE REST OF HIS WATCH-KEEPING PARTY WHEN THE SWORDFISH GUNNER'S BULLETS RAKED THE CONNING TOWER.

WHEN TONY REPORTED BACK TO SEAN AFTER THE SORTIE, HE TOLD HIM OF THE U-BOAT'S NUMBER, AND HE IMMEDIATELY REMEMBERED IT HAD BEEN GRONNER'S CRAFT. NO SURVIVORS HAD BEEN SEEN.

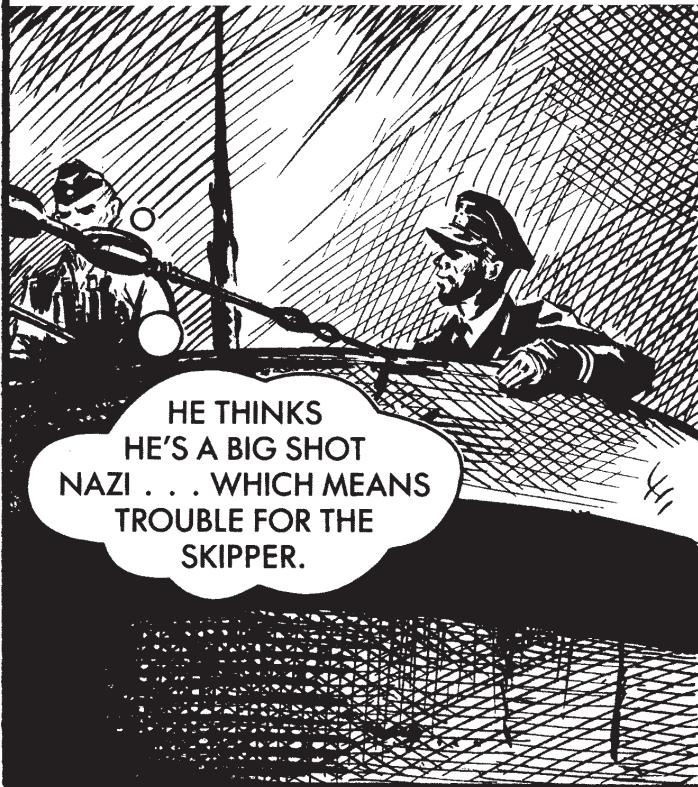


THE LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER FELT A LITTLE SAD THAT THOSE GERMANS WHO HAD AT LEAST BEEN FAIR TOWARDS HIM MIGHT BE DEAD.

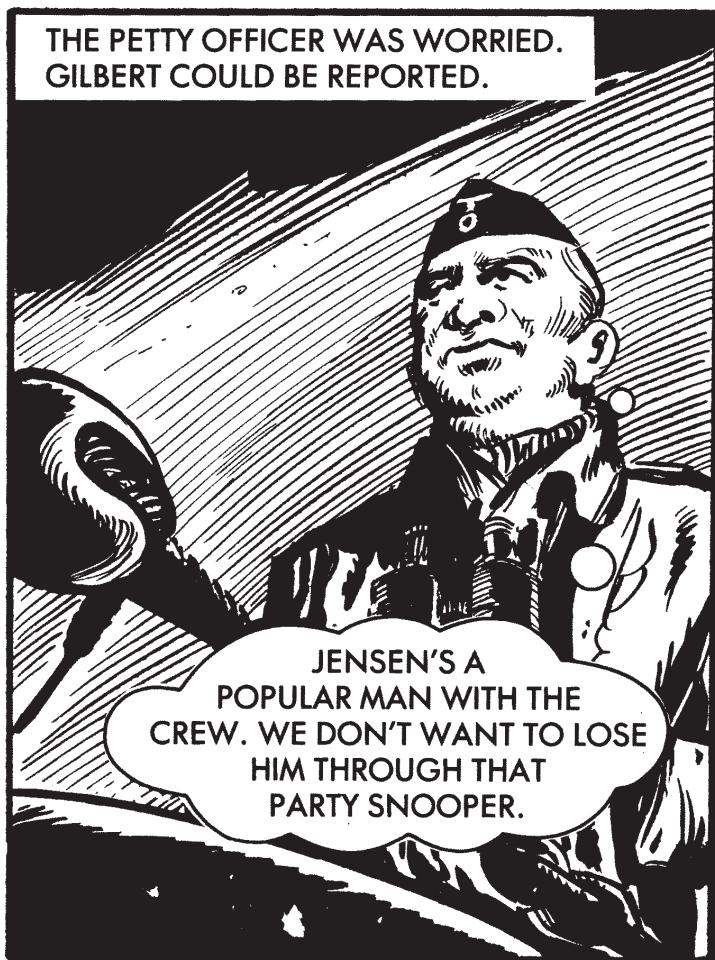




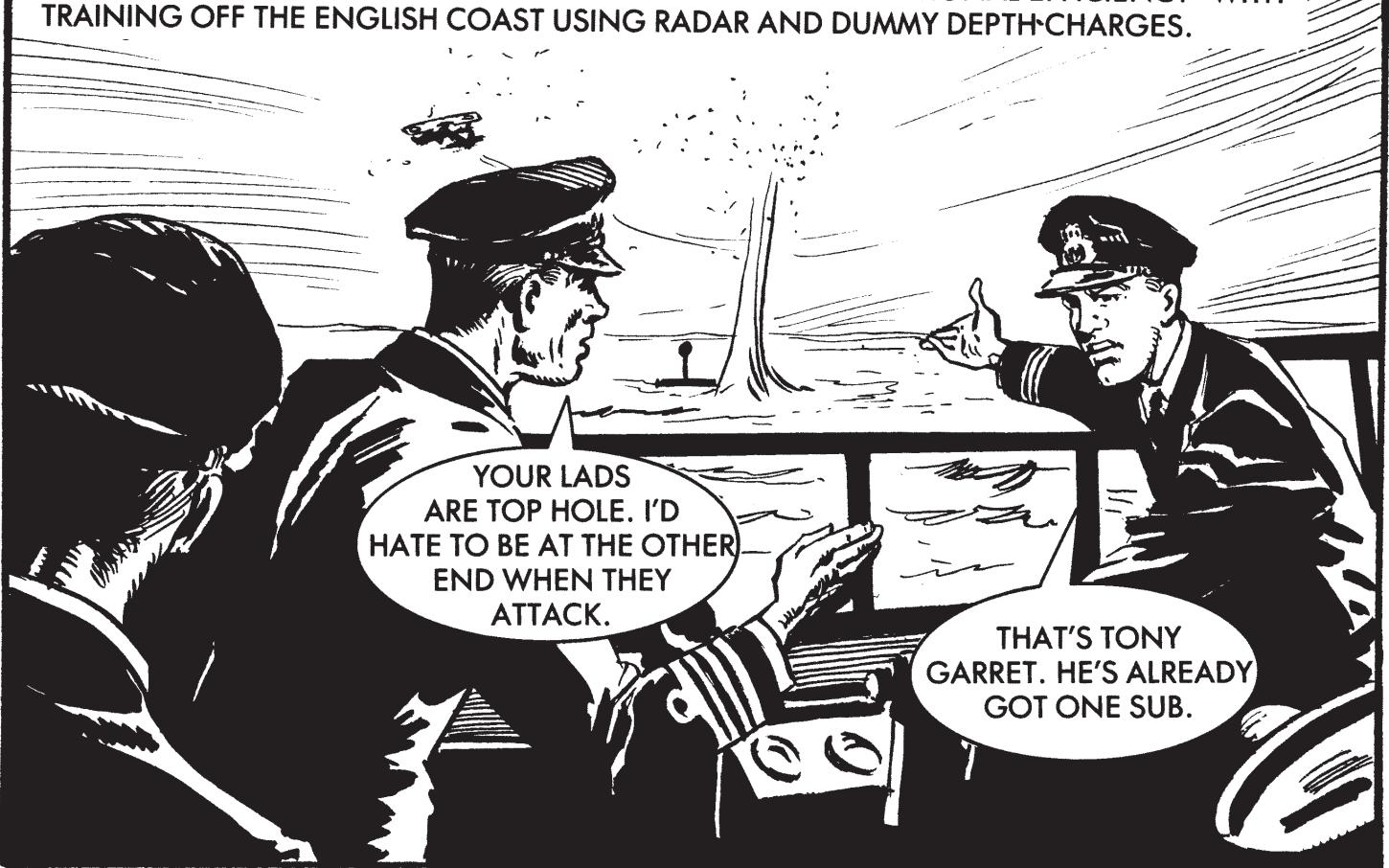
BY A STROKE OF LUCK, BERNHARD HINDE HAD ALSO CHEATED DEATH WHEN HE WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE NEW U-BOAT. HE WAS WELL AWARE OF WOUK'S ATTITUDE.



THE PETTY OFFICER WAS WORRIED. GILBERT COULD BE REPORTED.



MEANTIME, SEAN WAS INCREASING HIS SQUADRON'S OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY WITH TRAINING OFF THE ENGLISH COAST USING RADAR AND DUMMY DEPTH-CHARGES.



THE SQUADRON WAS TO FACE THE ENEMY FOR REAL JUST A FEW DAYS LATER, A DAMAGED ENEMY SURFACE RAIDER HEADING FOR THE FRENCH COAST. IT WOULD BE SEAN'S FIRST REAL TEST AS A COMMANDER.

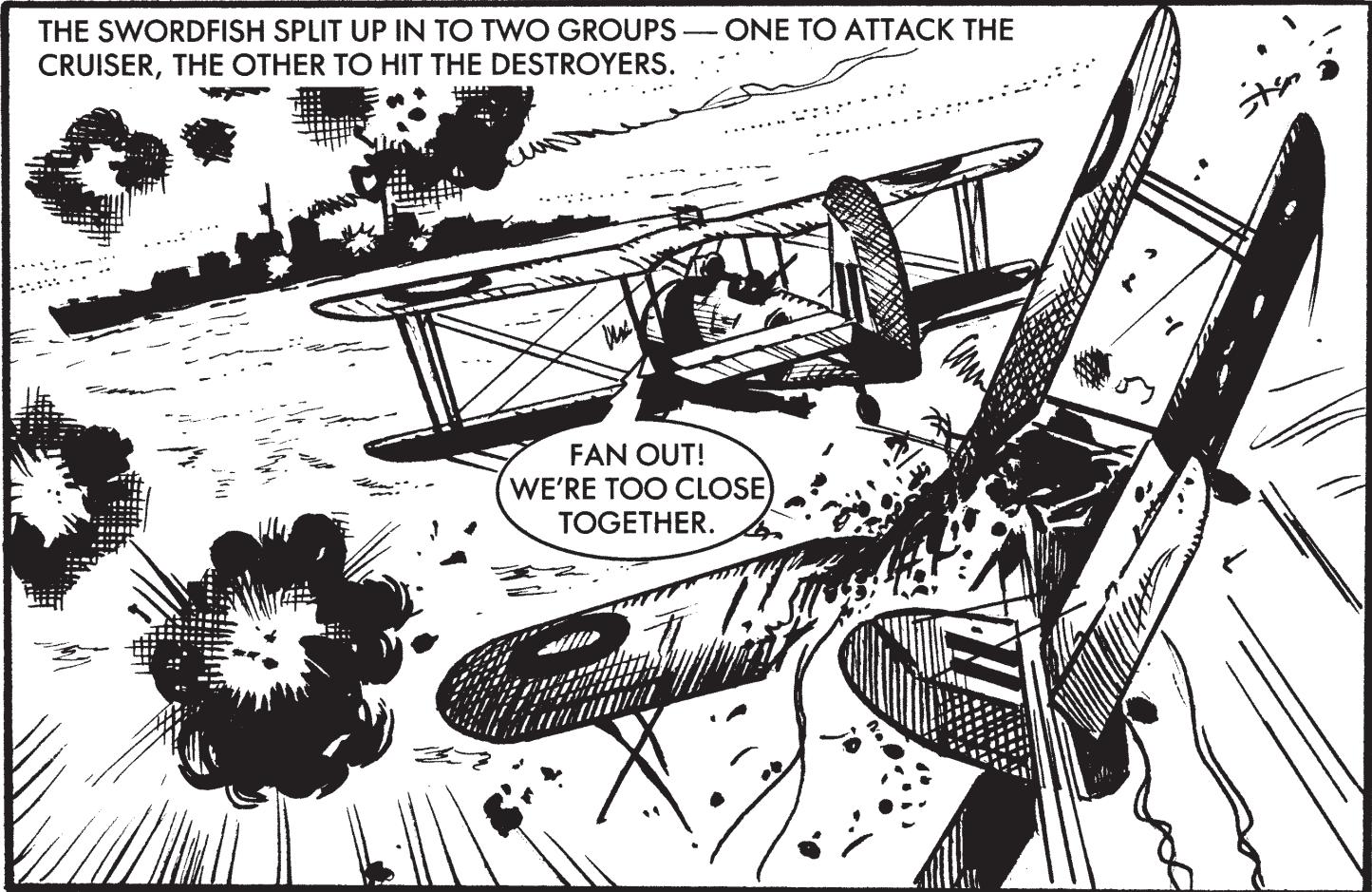
THERE SHE IS, CHAPS. A LIGHT CRUISER WITH TWO ESCORT DESTROYERS. LET'S GET HER.

WITH THE SWORDFISH OBSERVERS SCANNING THE SKY FOR ANY ENEMY AIRCRAFT, THE FLIGHT WENT IN.

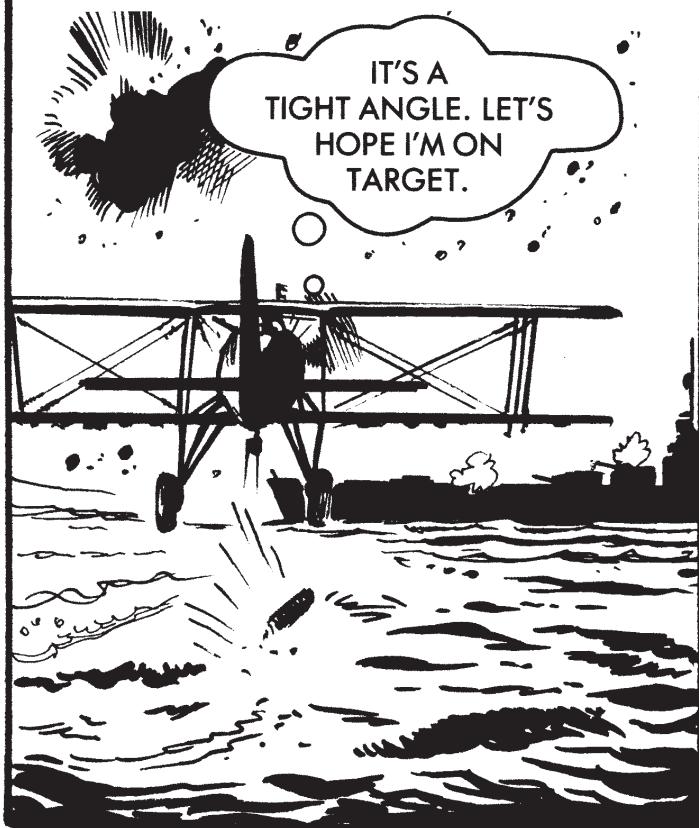
SOON THEY WERE IN RANGE OF THE SHIPS' DEFENCES. HEAVY FLAK SLUNG RED HOT SHRAPNEL THROUGH THE SKY. TRACERS LIKE COLOURED NEEDLES ASCENDED SLOWLY THEN SPED PAST LIKE AN EXPRESS TRAIN.

LOWER, CHAPS.
GET BELOW THE
ACK-ACK.

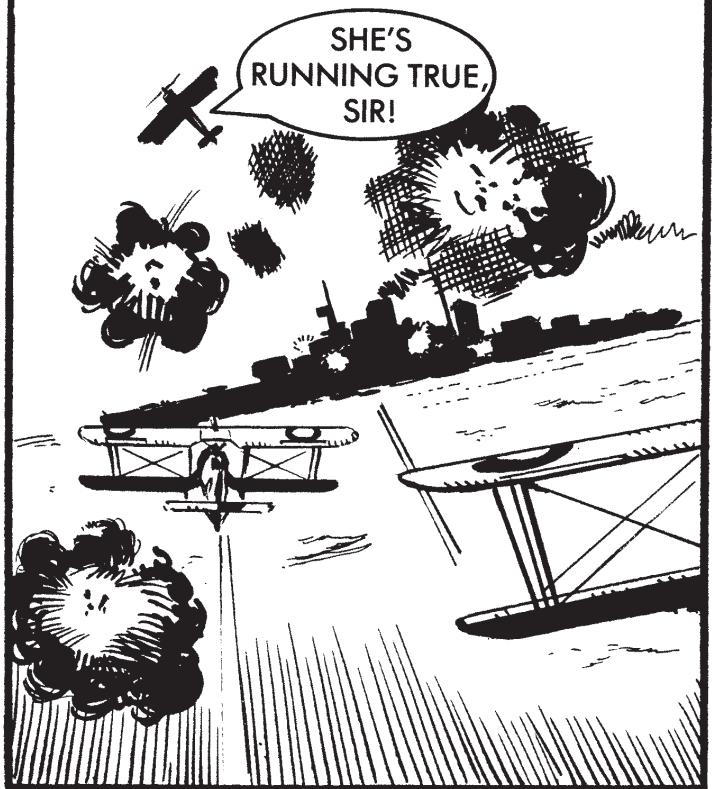
THE SWORDFISH SPLIT UP IN TO TWO GROUPS — ONE TO ATTACK THE CRUISER, THE OTHER TO HIT THE DESTROYERS.

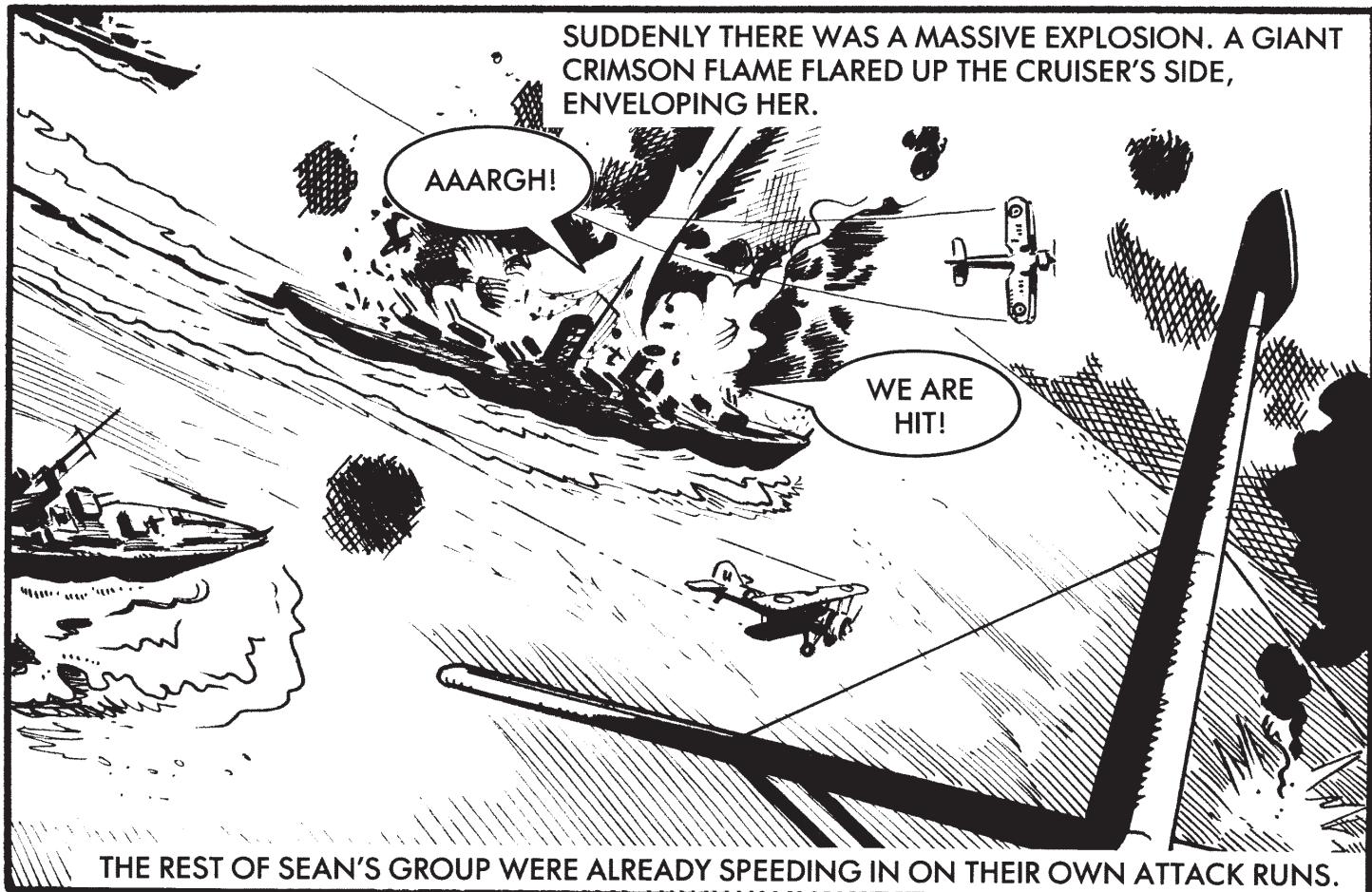


SEAN LED HIS GROUP AGAINST THE CRUISER. BRAVING CONSTANT FIRE, HE WENT IN ON HIS TORPEDO RUN.



THE TINFISH DROPPED NEATLY INTO THE WATER AND STREAKED TOWARDS THE TARGET, WHICH HIS OBSERVER DULY NOTED AS THE PLANE PULLED AWAY.



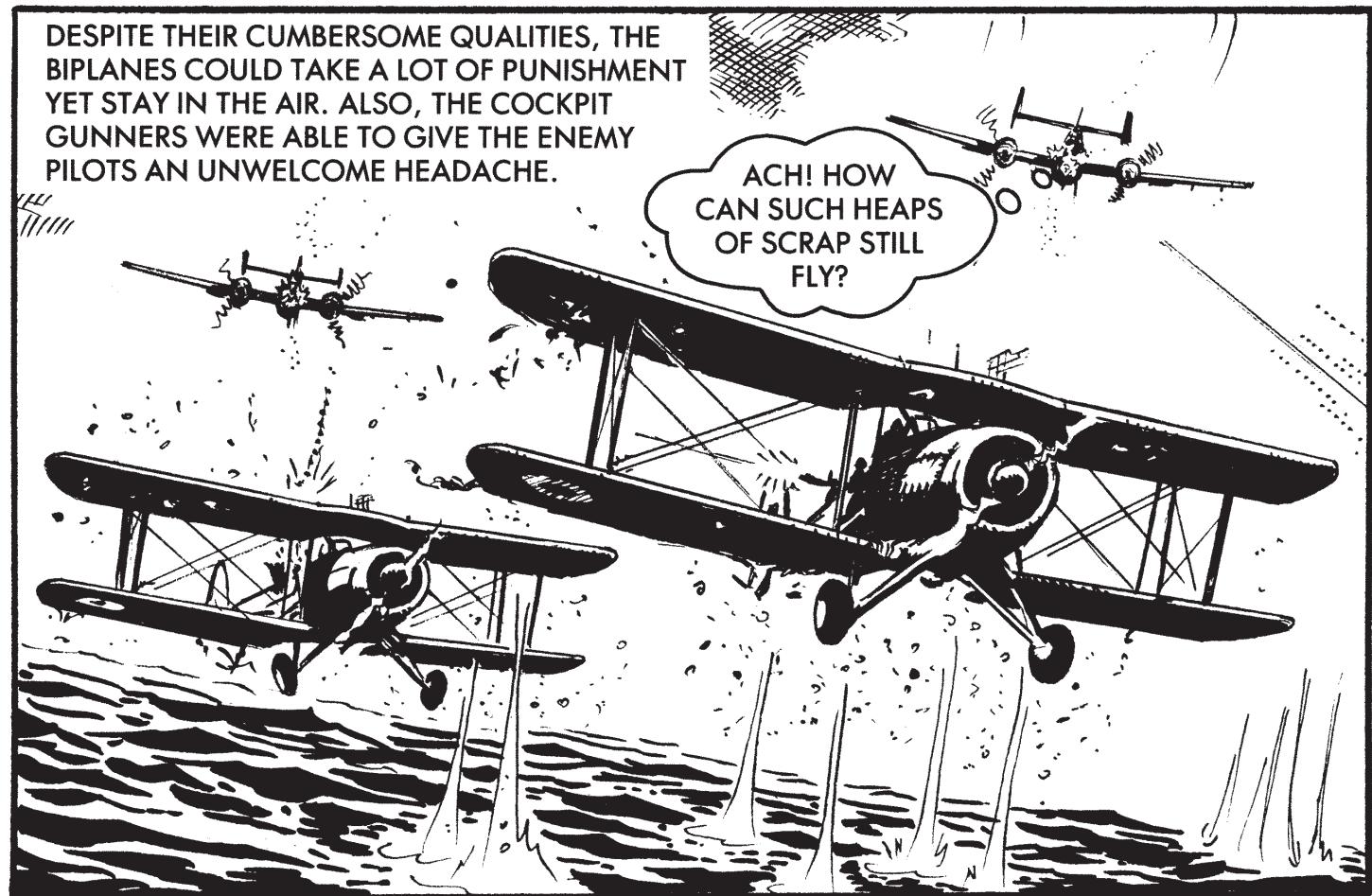
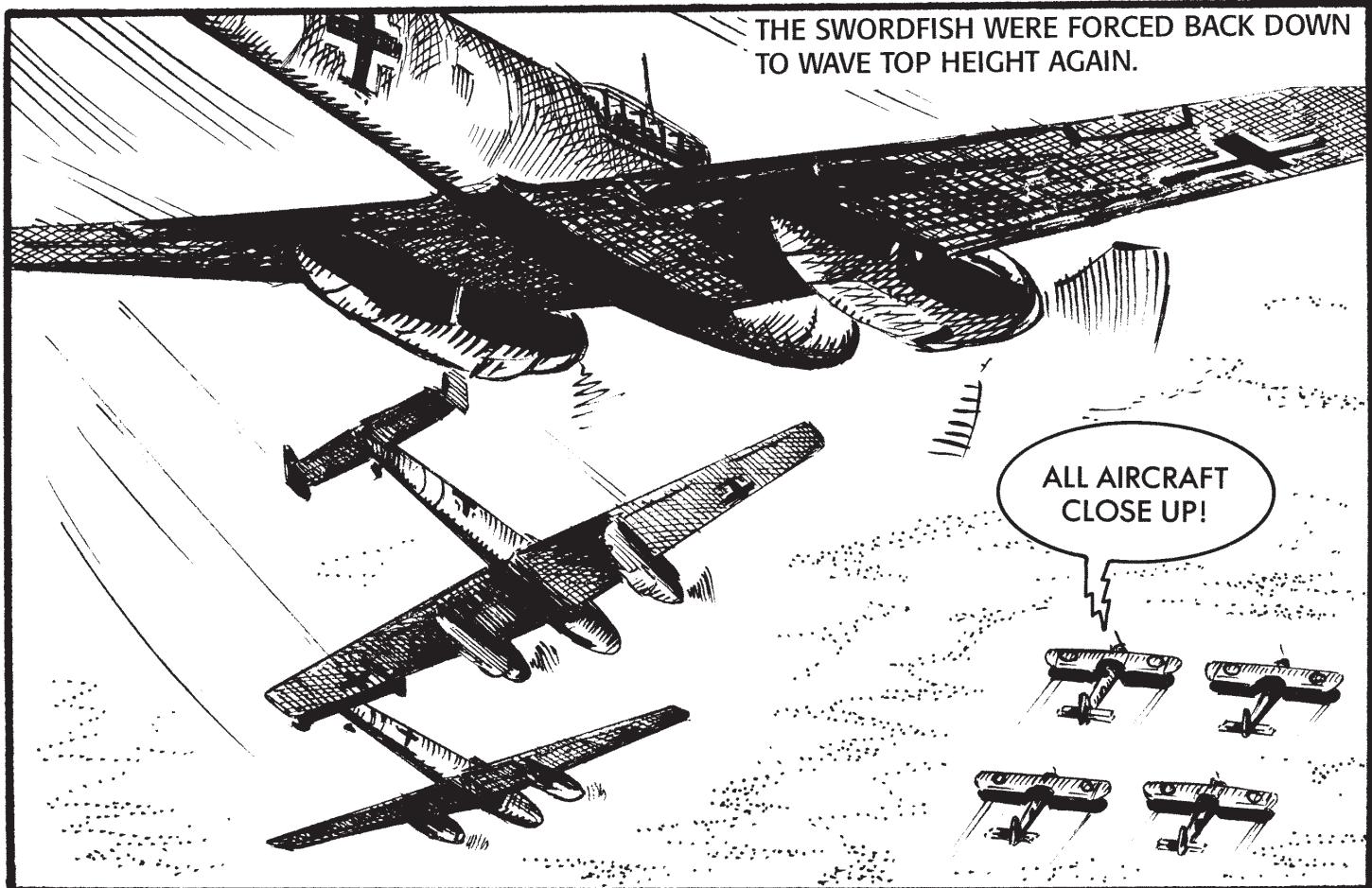


THE REST OF SEAN'S GROUP WERE ALREADY SPEEDING IN ON THEIR OWN ATTACK RUNS.

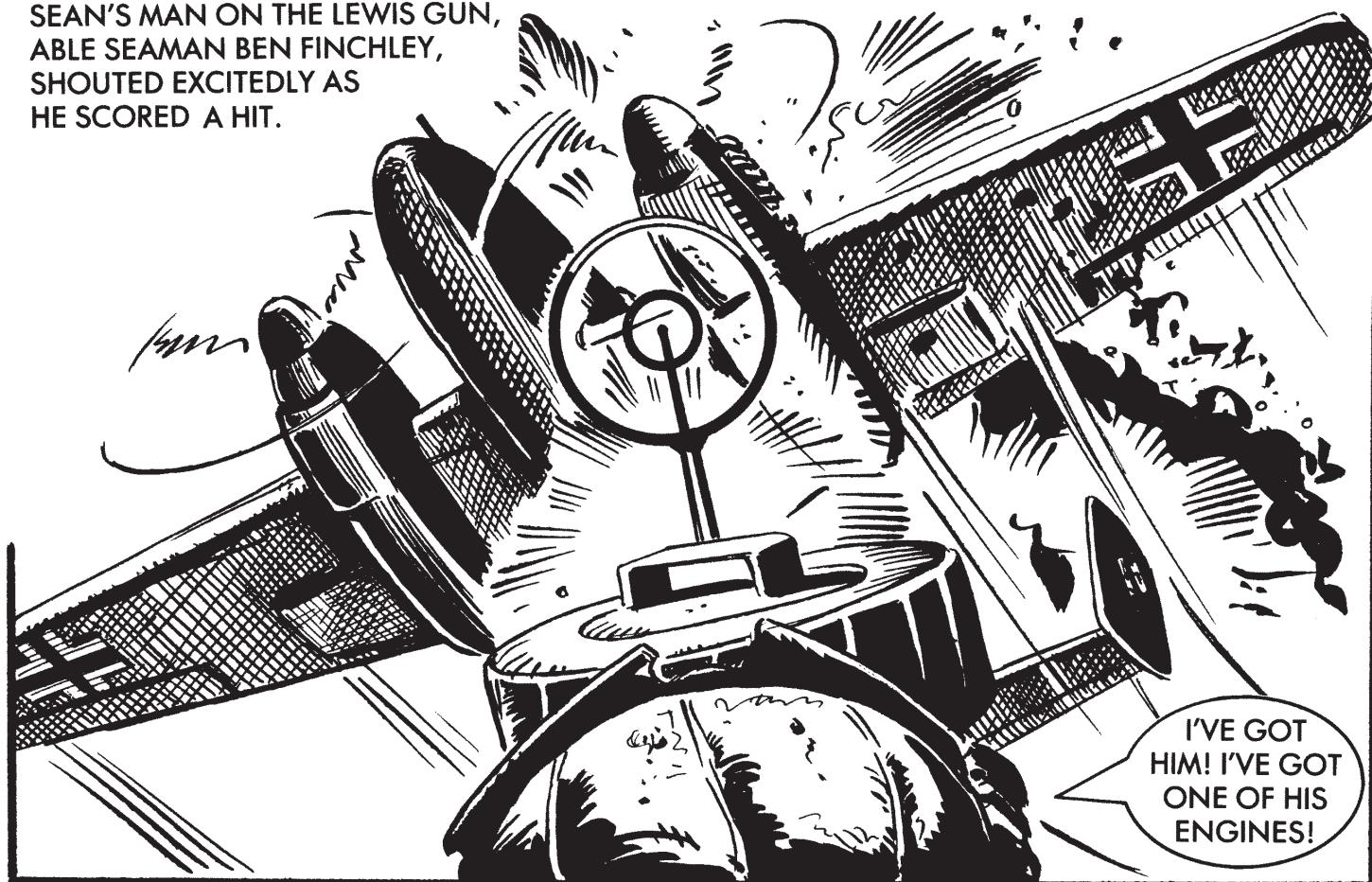
SECONDS LATER ANOTHER TORPEDO SMASHED INTO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SHIP — BUT JUST AS THE SQUADRON'S PILOTS WERE TURNING AWAY, WITH CONGRATULATIONS CLOGGING THE R/T, THERE WAS AN OMINOUS DEVELOPMENT.



THE AIRCRAFT WERE MESSERSCHMITT 110s.
WITH THEIR POWERFUL DAIMLER-BENZ
ENGINES AT FULL BOOST, THEY COVERED
THE INTERVENING DISTANCE QUICKLY.



SEAN'S MAN ON THE LEWIS GUN,
ABLE SEAMAN BEN FINCHLEY,
SHOUTED EXCITEDLY AS
HE SCORED A HIT.



IT WAS AN UNEVEN FIGHT, YET THE GERMANS MANAGED TO MAKE A MESS OF IT. THE CRIPPLED FIGHTER BANKED OUT OF CONTROL — STRAIGHT INTO ONE OF HIS COMRADES, WHO HAD BEEN TOO INTENT ON HIS OWN ATTACK.

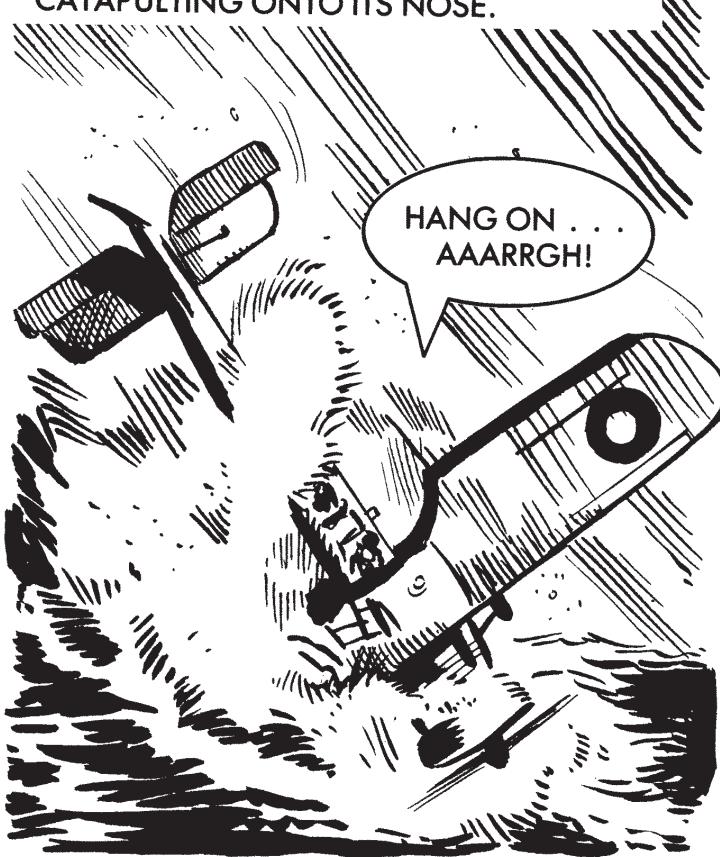
AAAIEE!



THIS WAS THE LAST STRAW FOR THE REMAINING GERMANS — THEY TURNED FOR HOME. EVEN AS THE PLANE DISAPPEARED INTO THE DISTANCE, THOUGH, TONY RADIOED SEAN THAT HE WAS IN TROUBLE.



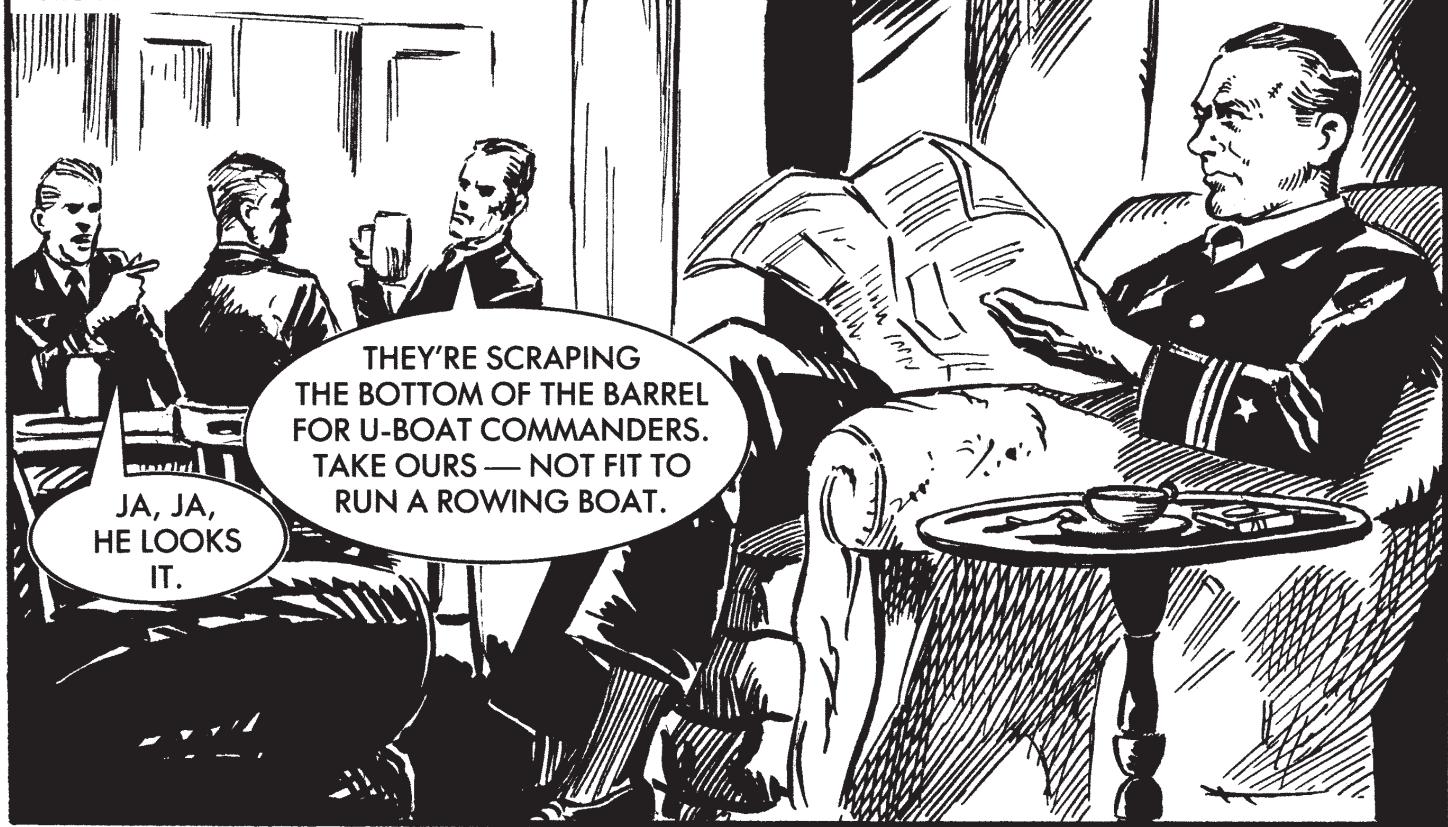
THE OTHERS COULD DO NOTHING AS HIS SWORDFISH HIT THE CREST OF A WAVE, CATAPULTING ONTO ITS NOSE.



CIRCLING ABOVE, SEAN PRAYED FOR THE CREW TO APPEAR IN THE WATER AS THE STRINGBAG SANK. BUT THERE WERE NONE . . . THE SEA HAD CLAIMED THEM.



FAR AWAY IN FRANCE, GILBERT WAS RESTING UP IN THE OFFICERS' CLUB BETWEEN VOYAGES. HIS READING WAS INTERRUPTED BY WOUK MAKING SOME TACTLESS REMARKS TO HIS NAZI FRIENDS.



GILBERT FUMED AT THE MAN'S CHEEK, OPENLY INSULTING A SUPERIOR OFFICER. HE STOMPED OVER TO WOUK AND HIS CRONIES.

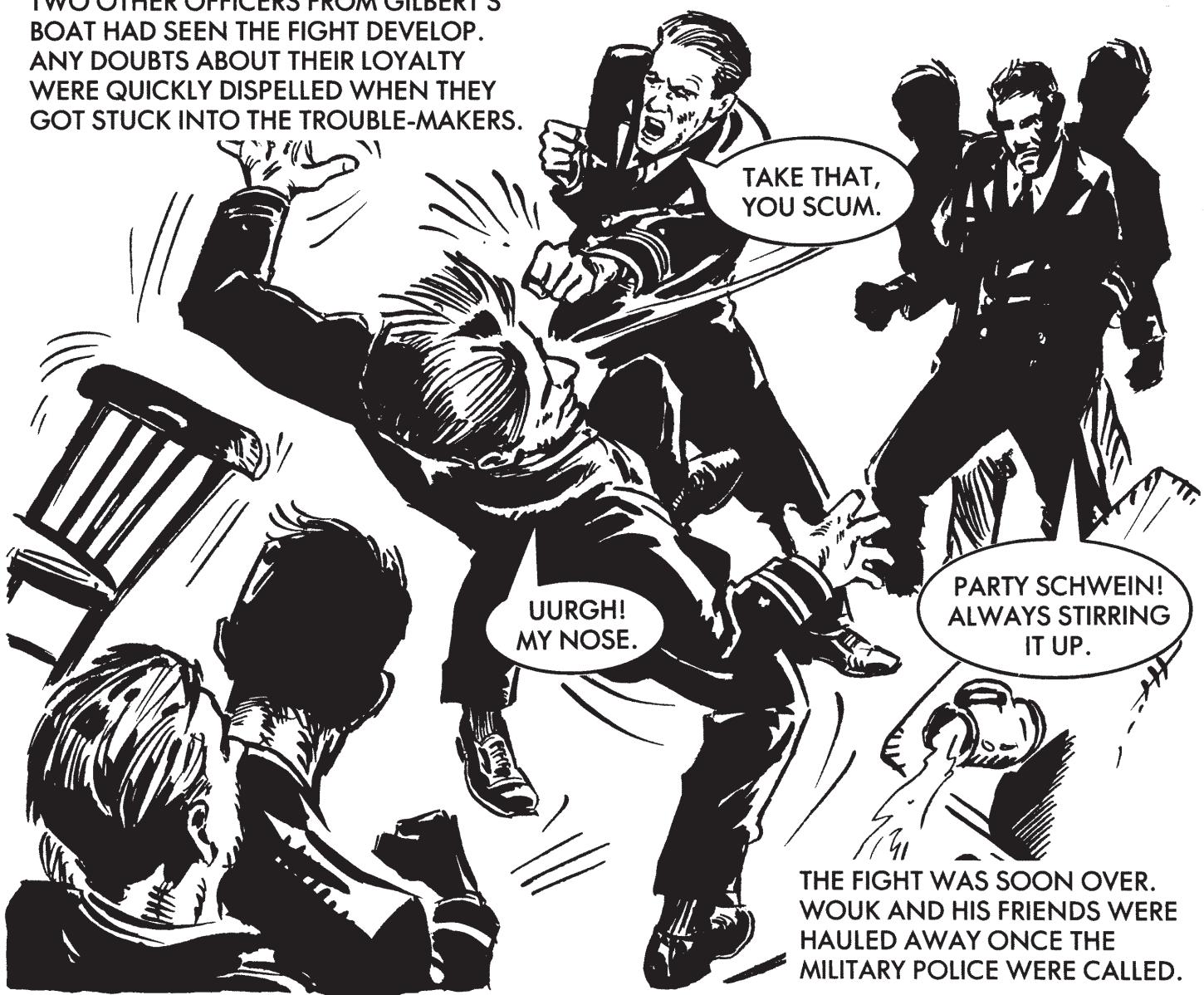
YOU'LL APOLOGISE,
OR I'LL HAVE YOU
ON A CHARGE. YOU PARTY
HEROES ARE THE REAL
DREGS, ANYWAY.



ALREADY TIPSY, WOUK HURLED HIS MUG AT HIS SKIPPER, WHILE THE OTHER NAZIS STARTED A SCUFFLE.

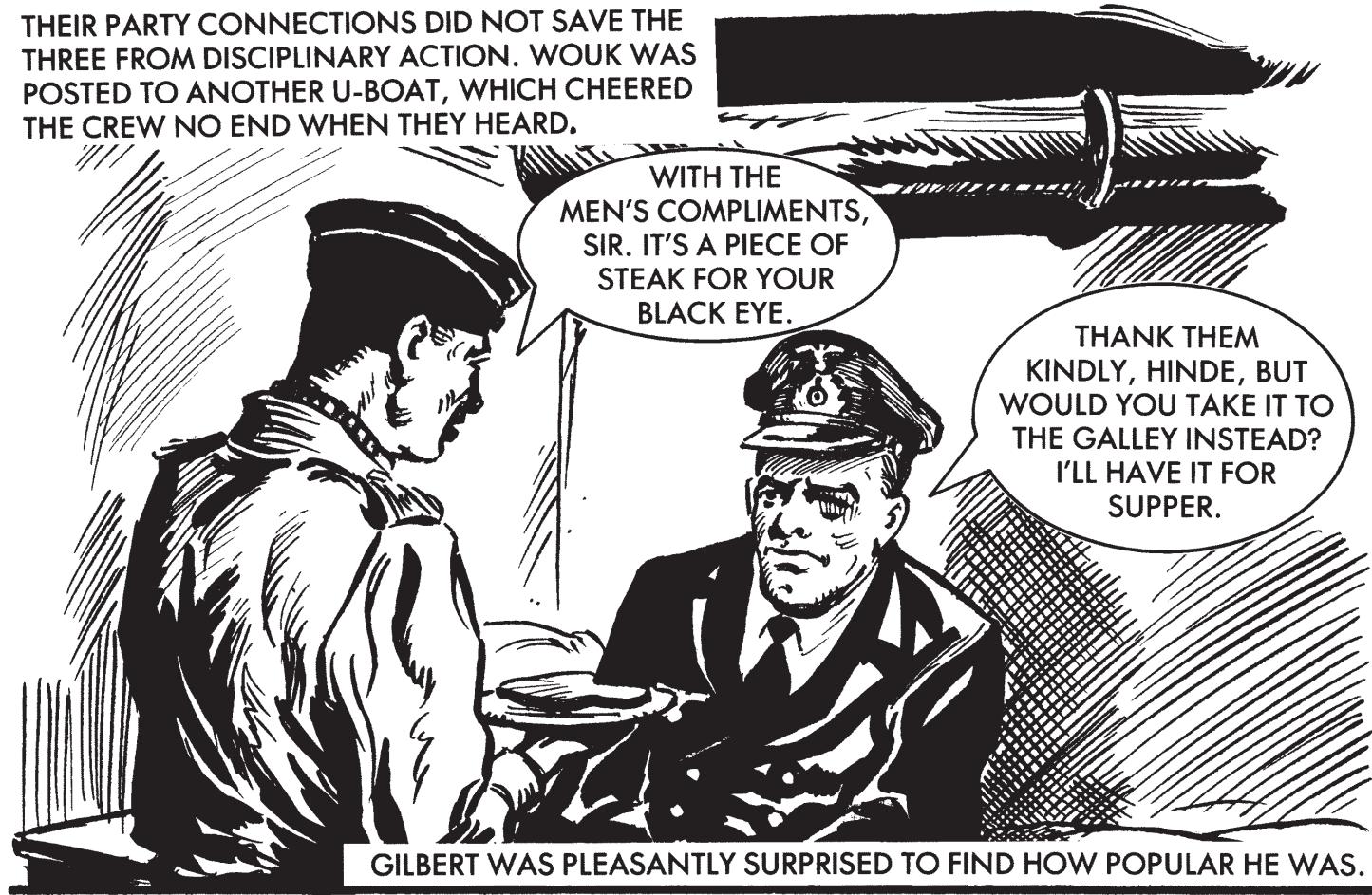


TWO OTHER OFFICERS FROM GILBERT'S BOAT HAD SEEN THE FIGHT DEVELOP. ANY DOUBTS ABOUT THEIR LOYALTY WERE QUICKLY DISPELLED WHEN THEY GOT STUCK INTO THE TROUBLE-MAKERS.

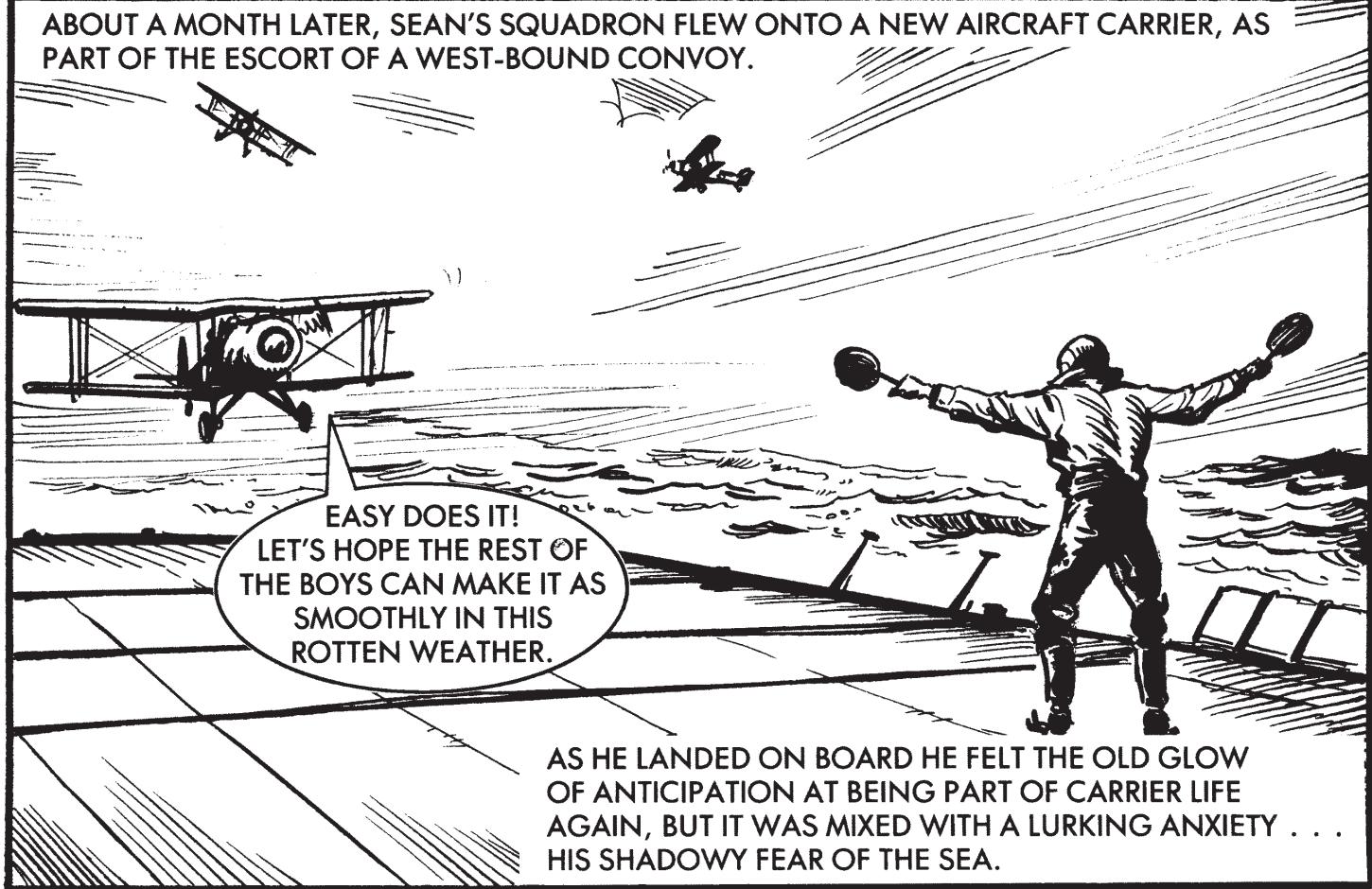


THE FIGHT WAS SOON OVER. WOUK AND HIS FRIENDS WERE HAULED AWAY ONCE THE MILITARY POLICE WERE CALLED.

THEIR PARTY CONNECTIONS DID NOT SAVE THE THREE FROM DISCIPLINARY ACTION. WOUK WAS POSTED TO ANOTHER U-BOAT, WHICH CHEERED THE CREW NO END WHEN THEY HEARD.



ABOUT A MONTH LATER, SEAN'S SQUADRON FLEW ONTO A NEW AIRCRAFT CARRIER, AS PART OF THE ESCORT OF A WEST-BOUND CONVOY.



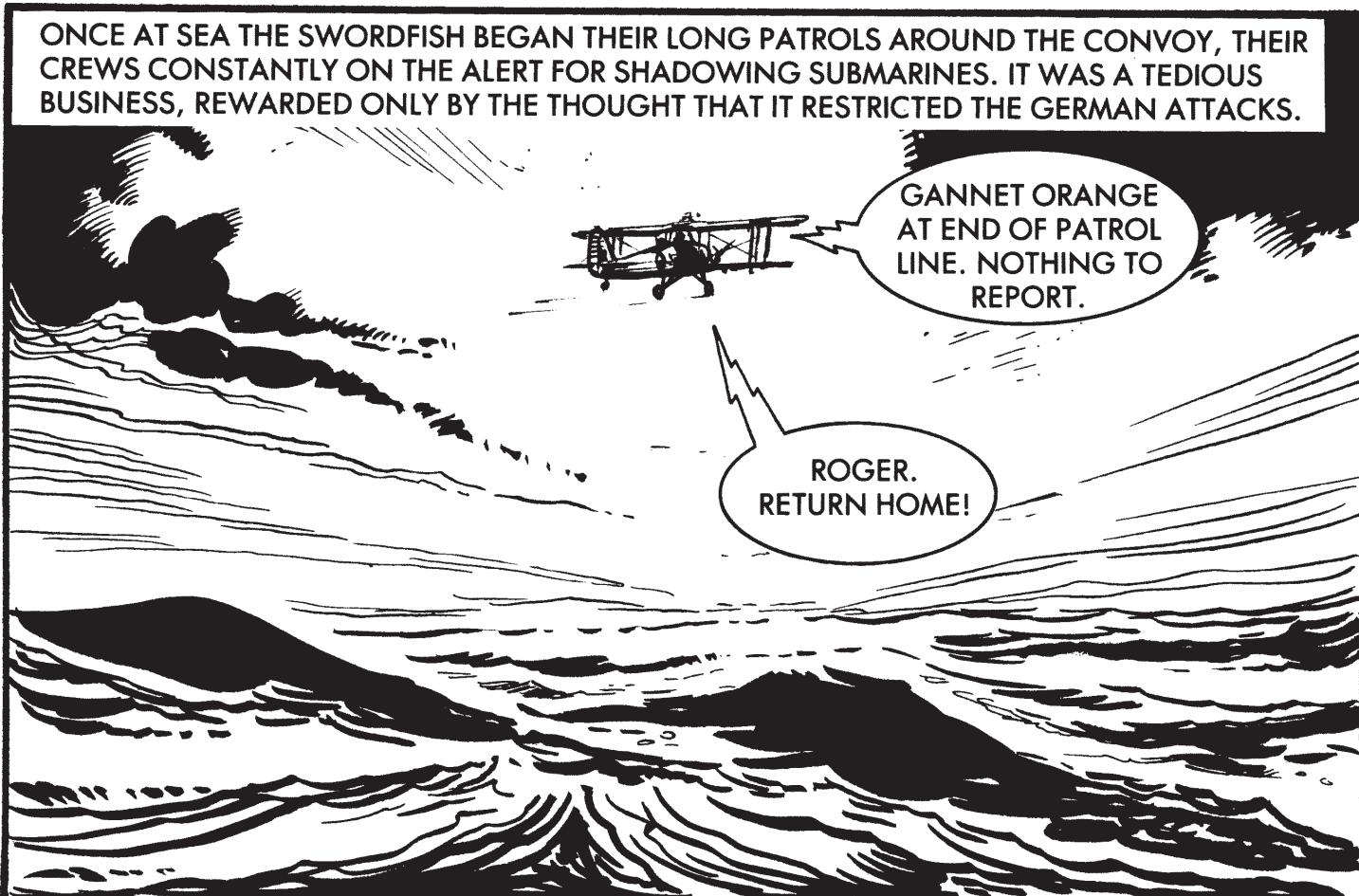
WAITING TO WELCOME HIM WAS COMMANDER BERTIE PADSTOKE, THE CARRIER'S COMMANDER OF FLYING. BERTIE HAD BEEN SEAN'S C.O. FOR A SHORT TIME IN HIS EARLY FLYING DAYS.



GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN. I HOPE YOU AND YOUR BOYS WILL MAKE YOURSELVES AT HOME.

NOT TOO MUCH, I HOPE, SIR. I DON'T WANT THEM TO UPSET YOUR OLD SEA-DOGS.

ONCE AT SEA THE SWORDFISH BEGAN THEIR LONG PATROLS AROUND THE CONVOY, THEIR CREWS CONSTANTLY ON THE ALERT FOR SHADOWING SUBMARINES. IT WAS A TEDIOUS BUSINESS, REWARDED ONLY BY THE THOUGHT THAT IT RESTRICTED THE GERMAN ATTACKS.



GANNET ORANGE AT END OF PATROL LINE. NOTHING TO REPORT.

ROGER. RETURN HOME!

FOR THE TWO MAN CREW OF GANNET ORANGE, THOUGH, THERE WAS TO BE A LITTLE EXCITEMENT ON THE WAY BACK TO THE CARRIER.

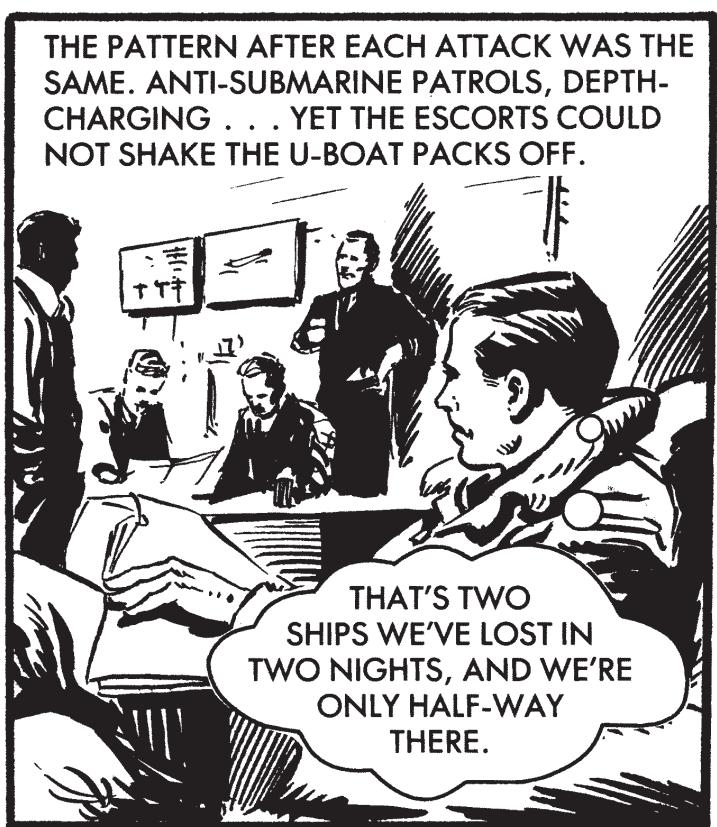
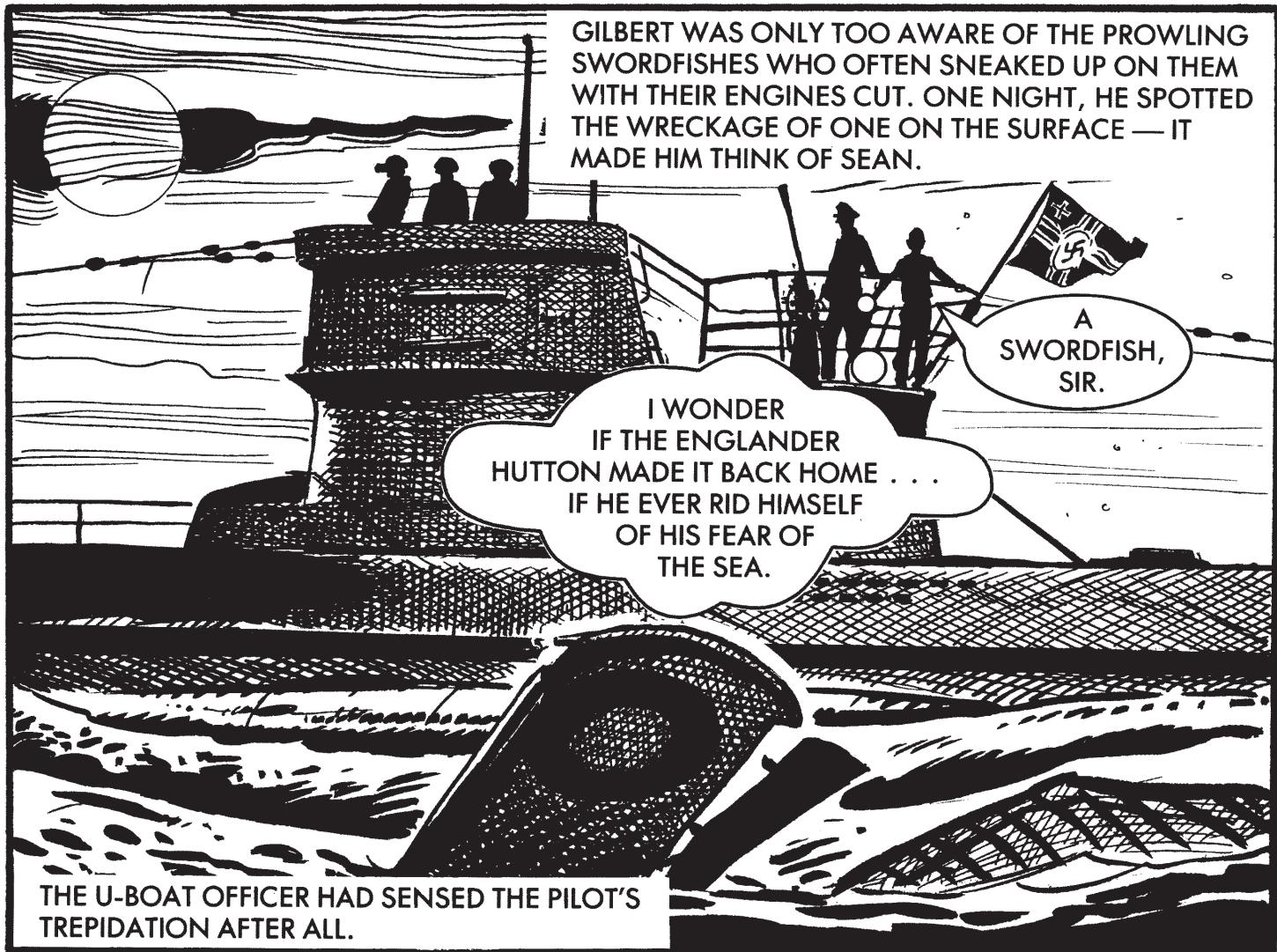
TO STARBOARD,
SPUD! PILE ON THE
COALS — THERE'S A U-BOAT
DOWN THERE.

RIGHT-OH,
MIKE. HERE
WE GO.

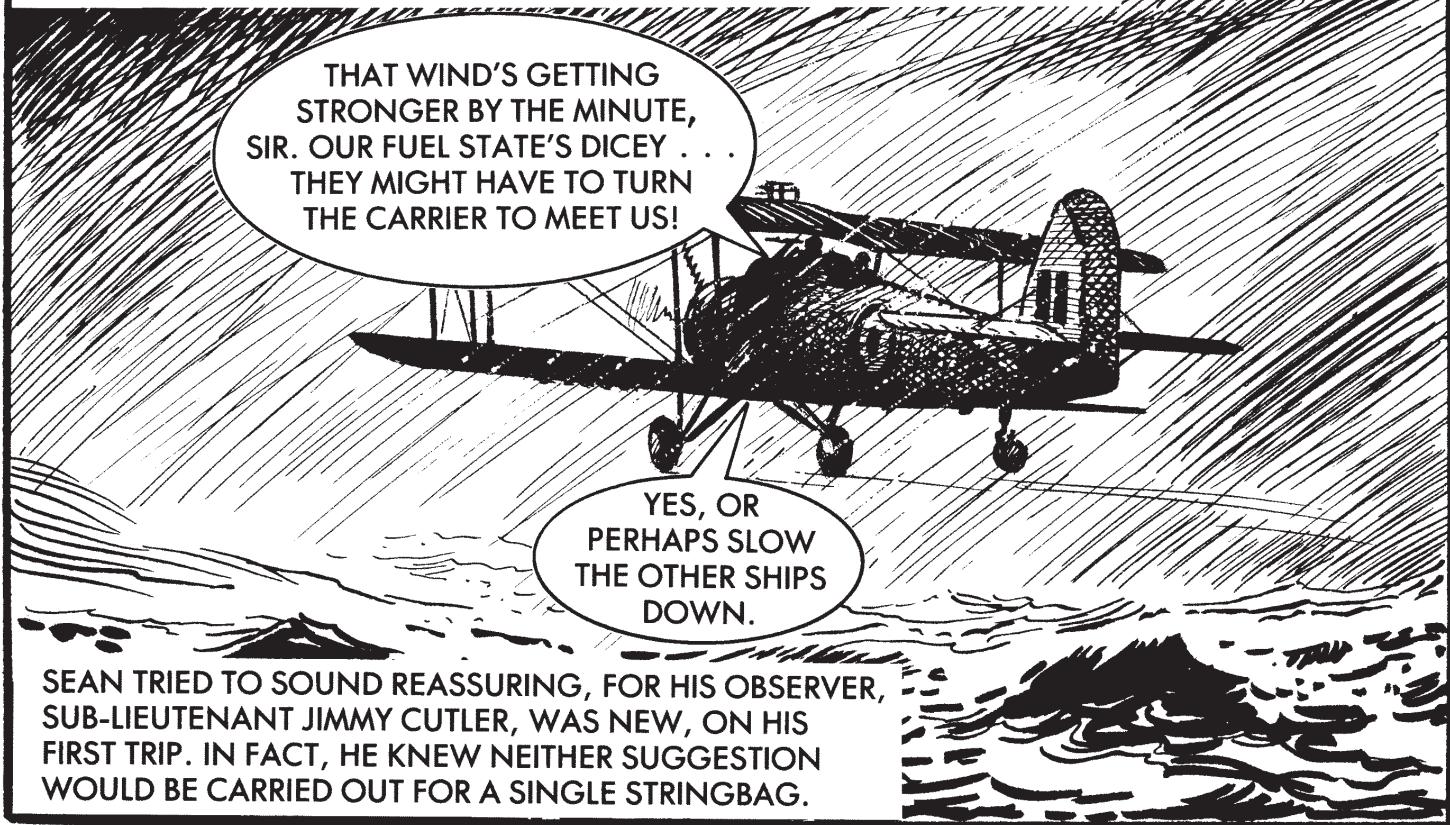
UNFORTUNATELY THE OBJECT ON THE SEA BELOW WAS NO MORE THAN A PIECE OF OLD WRECKAGE. SUCH INSTANCES OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY WERE COMMON.

YOU WANT
YOUR EYES TESTED,
MATE!

SORRY. IT
DOES LOOK A BIT
LIKE A CONNING
TOWER.



SOON AFTERWARDS, THE CONVOY WAS HANDED OVER TO THE AMERICAN NAVY. THEN THE CARRIER TURNED FOR HOME WITH ANOTHER, EASTBOUND, CONVOY. ONE DAY, SEAN FOUND HIMSELF IN TROUBLE AS HE TRIED TO GET BACK AFTER A PATROL.



THAT WIND'S GETTING STRONGER BY THE MINUTE, SIR. OUR FUEL STATE'S DICEY . . . THEY MIGHT HAVE TO TURN THE CARRIER TO MEET US!

YES, OR PERHAPS SLOW THE OTHER SHIPS DOWN.

SEAN TRIED TO SOUND REASSURING, FOR HIS OBSERVER, SUB-LIEUTENANT JIMMY CUTLER, WAS NEW, ON HIS FIRST TRIP. IN FACT, HE KNEW NEITHER SUGGESTION WOULD BE CARRIED OUT FOR A SINGLE STRINGBAG.

HEARTS THUDDING, STOMACHS CHURNING, THEY PRESSED ON, HOPING TO CATCH UP.



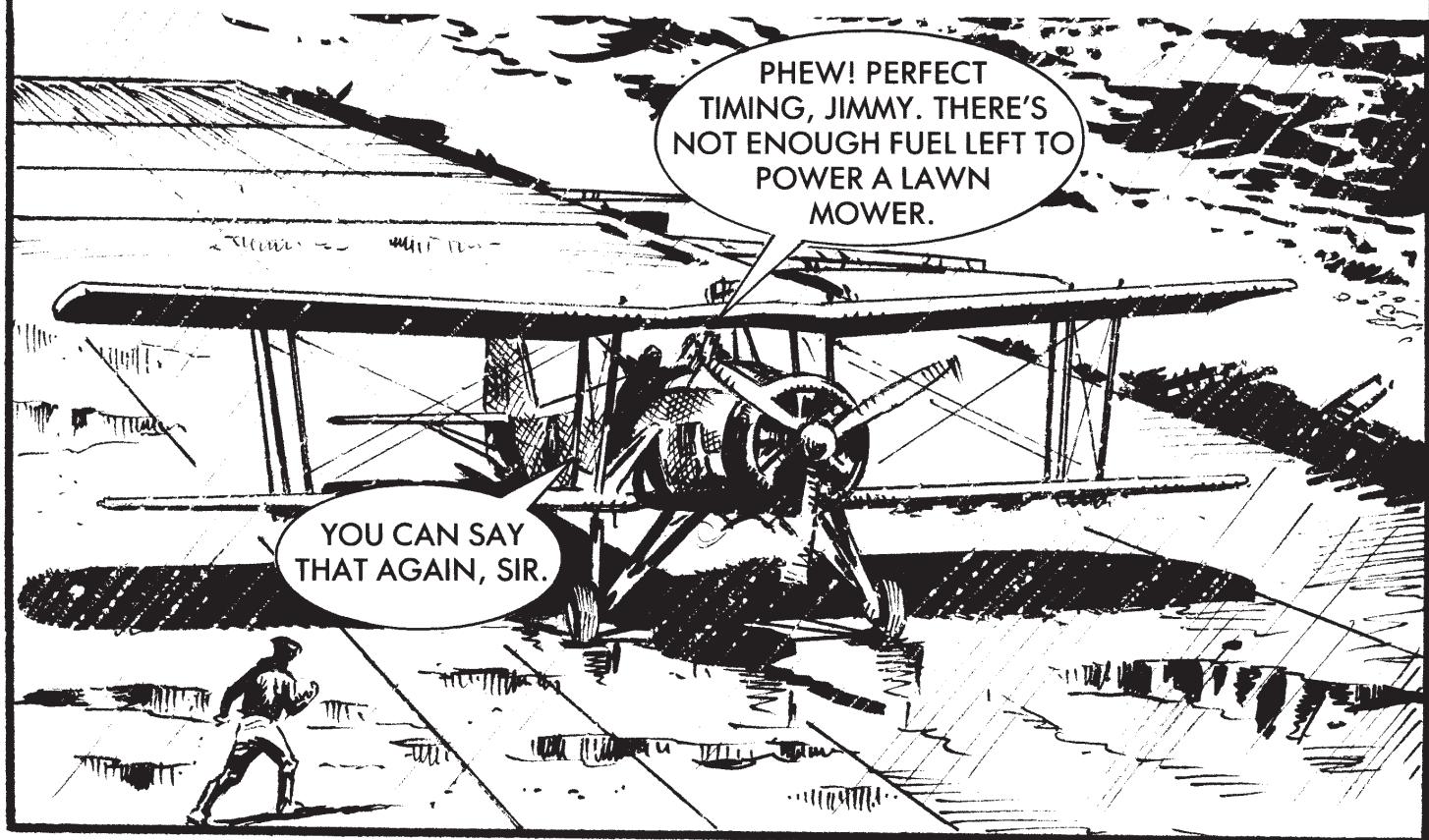
ONLY TEN MINUTES FLYING TIME LEFT.

SEAN'S LUCK WAS IN. JUST AS HIS PEGASUS ENGINE GAVE SEVERAL COUGHS AND BEGAN TO FALTER, THE CARRIER APPEARED OUT OF THE GLOOM AHEAD.

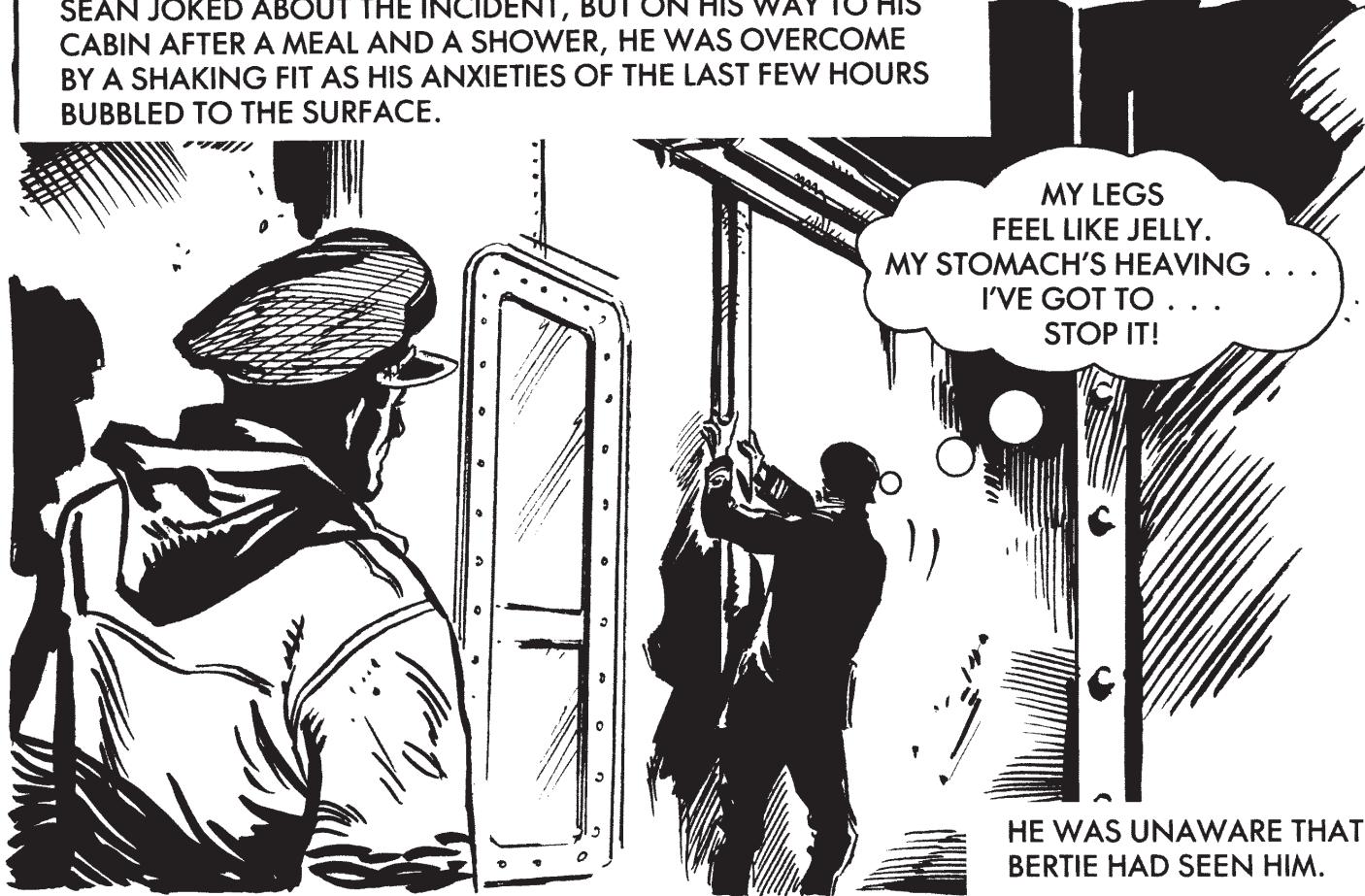


I'VE GOT TO LAND FIRST TIME. THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH JUICE TO GO ROUND AGAIN.

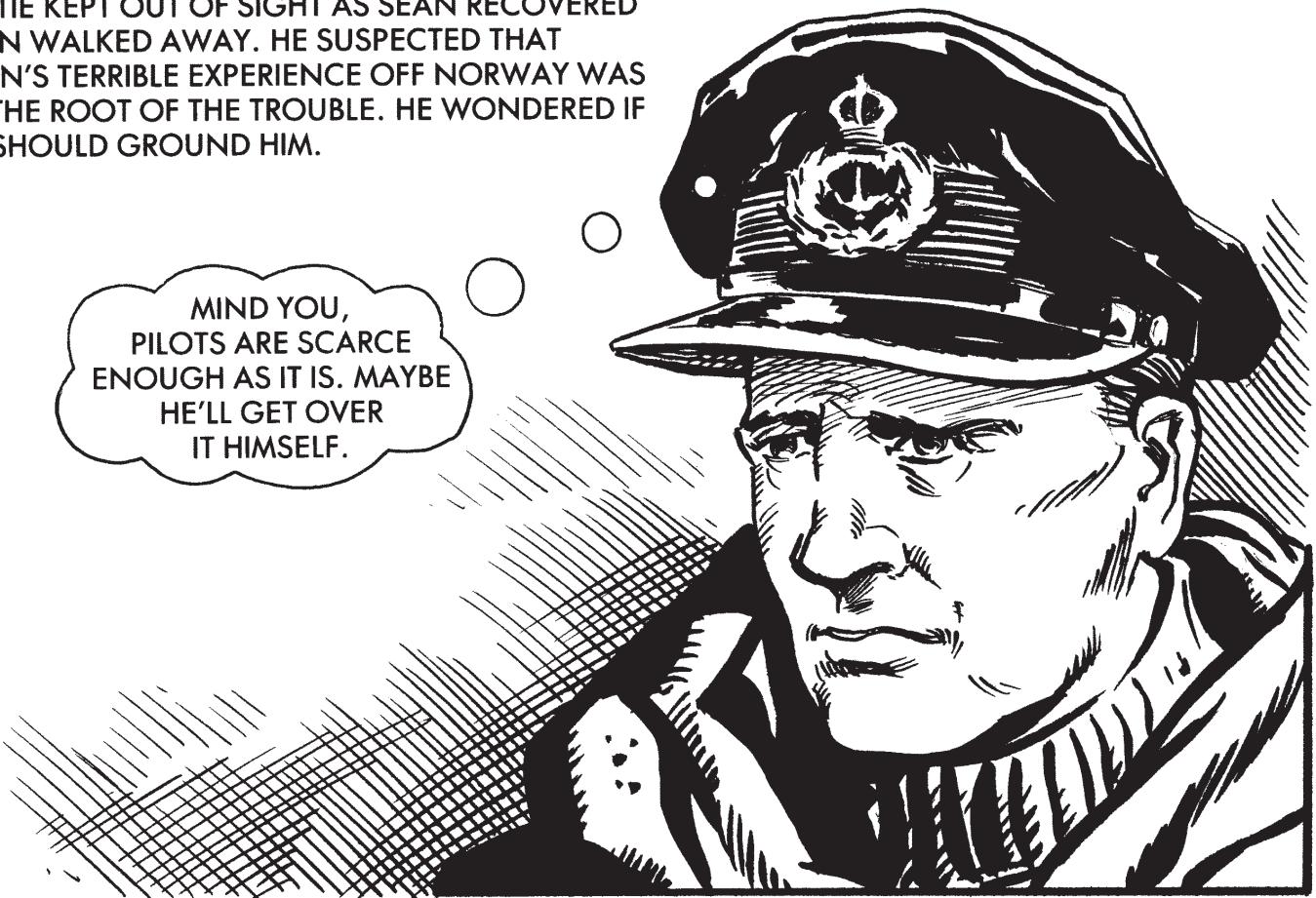
SWEAT BEADED SEAN'S BROW AS HE LINED UP CAREFULLY FOR HIS APPROACH. JUST AS THE ENGINE SPUTTERED TO A STOP HE LANDED SAFELY ON THE DECK.



SEAN JOKED ABOUT THE INCIDENT, BUT ON HIS WAY TO HIS CABIN AFTER A MEAL AND A SHOWER, HE WAS OVERCOME BY A SHAKING FIT AS HIS ANXIETIES OF THE LAST FEW HOURS BUBBLED TO THE SURFACE.



BERTIE KEPT OUT OF SIGHT AS SEAN RECOVERED THEN WALKED AWAY. HE SUSPECTED THAT SEAN'S TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE OFF NORWAY WAS AT THE ROOT OF THE TROUBLE. HE WONDERED IF HE SHOULD GROUND HIM.



MEANWHILE, GILBERT WAS STALKING THE CONVOY. HE COULDN'T SUPPRESS HIS EXCITEMENT AS HE CLOSED IN ON HIS QUARRY.

THAT CARRIER AGAIN.
I'M NOT SURPRISED. THAT
CONVOY IS WELL WORTH PROTECTING.
WE'LL SLIP IN TONIGHT AND
TRY OUR LUCK!

AS HE SWUNG THE PERISCOPE ROUND, HOWEVER, HIS EXPRESSION CHANGED TO ONE OF ALARM.



AS THE U-BOAT BEGAN A CRASH-DIVE TO THE DEPTHS THE BRITISH VESSEL RACED ACROSS THE AREA FRANTICALLY SIGNALLING FOR MORE WARSHIPS TO JOIN THE HUNT.

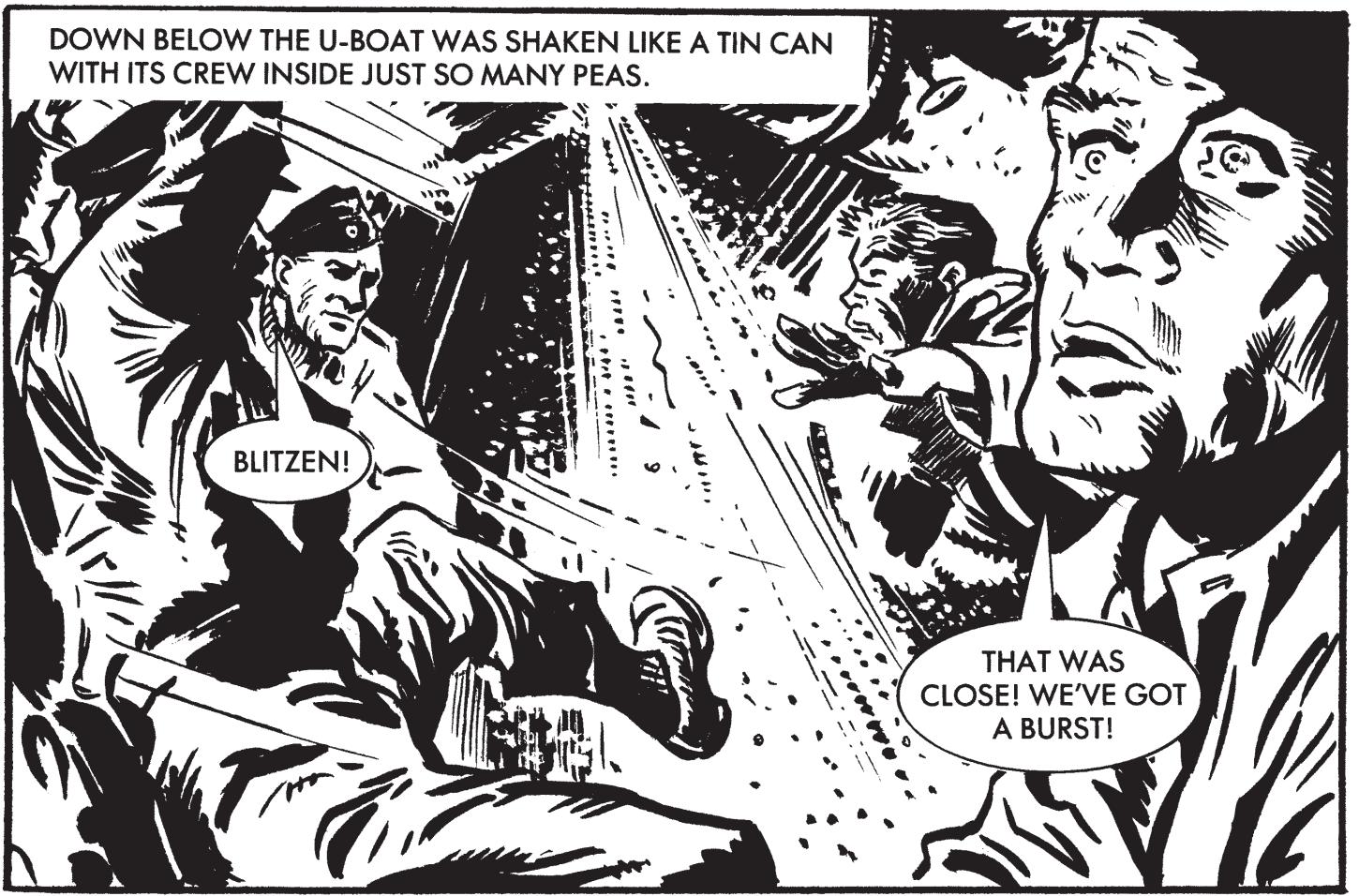
WE'VE
GOT A CONTACT,
BEARING ONE-SEVEN-ZERO,
MOVING TO
STARBOARD.

WHEN TWO MORE DESTROYERS ARRIVED ON THE SCENE,
THEY BEGAN DROPPING DEPTH-CHARGES.



TARGET'S BEARING
STEADY. SHE'LL NEVER SURVIVE
THAT POUNDING.

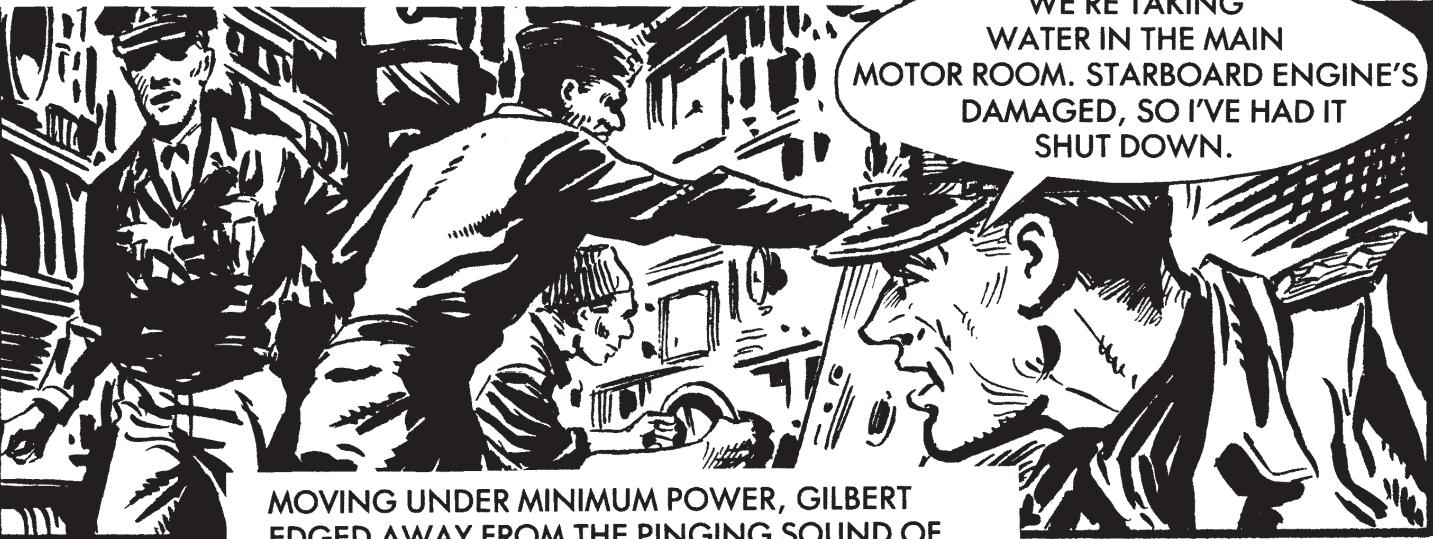
DOWN BELOW THE U-BOAT WAS SHAKEN LIKE A TIN CAN
WITH ITS CREW INSIDE JUST SO MANY PEAS.



BLITZEN!

THAT WAS
CLOSE! WE'VE GOT
A BURST!

THE NEXT PATTERN OF DEPTH-CHARGES WERE FURTHER AWAY. THE GERMANS HAD ESCAPED — THOUGH NOT WITHOUT EXTENSIVE DAMAGE.



WE'RE TAKING WATER IN THE MAIN MOTOR ROOM. STARBOARD ENGINE'S DAMAGED, SO I'VE HAD IT SHUT DOWN.

MOVING UNDER MINIMUM POWER, GILBERT EDGED AWAY FROM THE PINGING SOUND OF THE DESTROYERS' ASDICS UNTIL IT DISAPPEARED.



YOU'VE DONE IT, SIR. WE'VE GIVEN THEM THE SLIP.

YES, EXCEPT OUR TROUBLES MAY JUST BE STARTING.

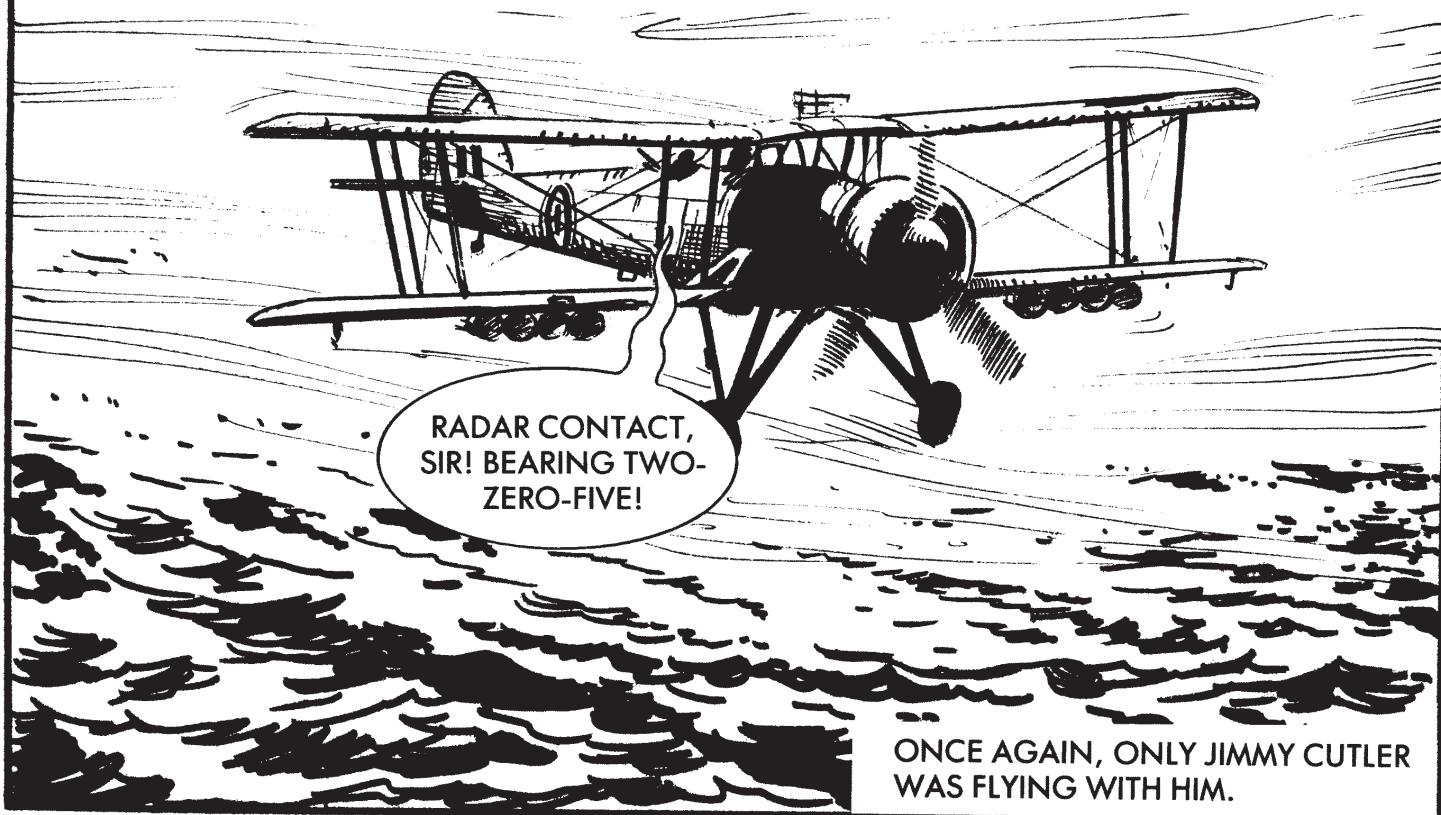
AT DUSK, HE WAS FORCED TO SURFACE, AWARE THAT THE SUBMARINE WAS TOO BADLY DAMAGED TO SUBMERGE AGAIN. NONETHELESS, HIS MEN WERE IN BUOYANT MOODS, CONFIDENT HE WOULD GET THEM HOME SAFELY.



AT LEAST WE'LL HAVE SOME FRESH AIR. I'M FED UP SMELLING WILLI'S FEET!

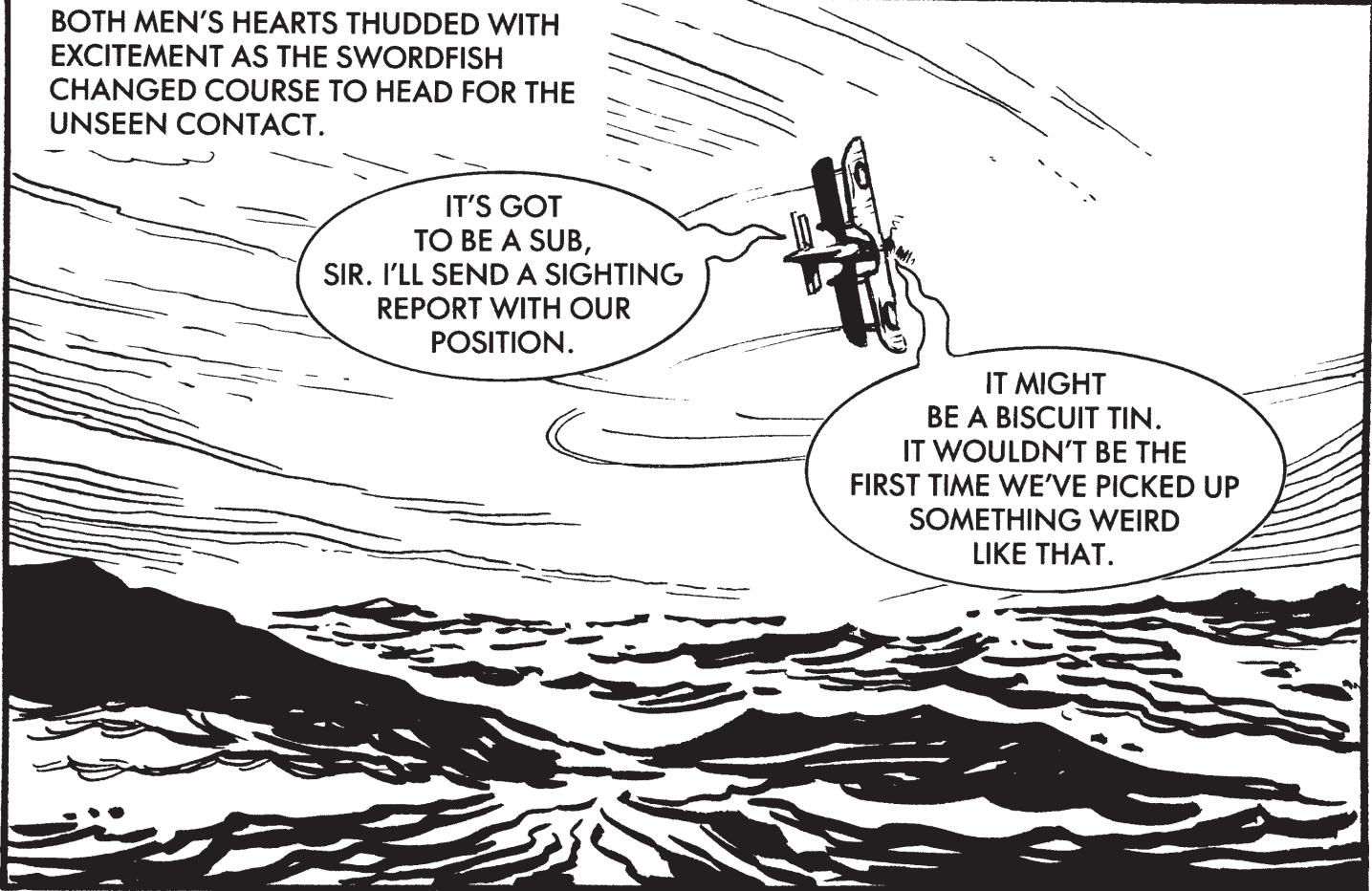
YOU'RE ONE TO TALK, HINDE, YOU WALKING PIG-STY!

AS DAWN BROKE, SEAN FLEW ON THE FIRST ANTI-SUBMARINE PATROL OF THE DAY, HIS COURSE TAKING HIM SOUTH OF THE CONVOY. HIS FEAR MEANT HE HAD HAD TO FORCE HIMSELF INTO THE AIRCRAFT.

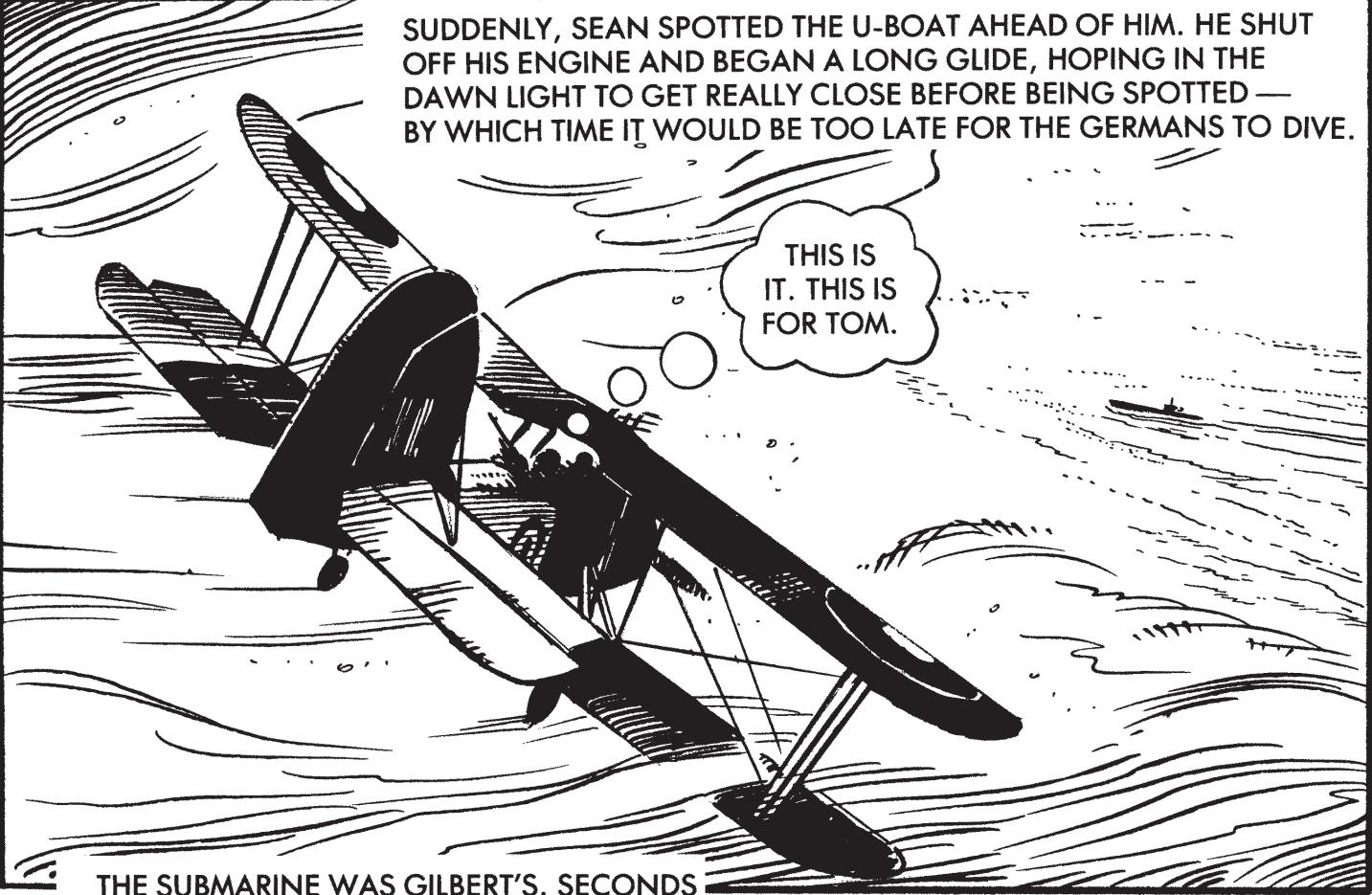


ONCE AGAIN, ONLY JIMMY CUTLER WAS FLYING WITH HIM.

BOTH MEN'S HEARTS THUDDED WITH EXCITEMENT AS THE SWORDFISH CHANGED COURSE TO HEAD FOR THE UNSEEN CONTACT.

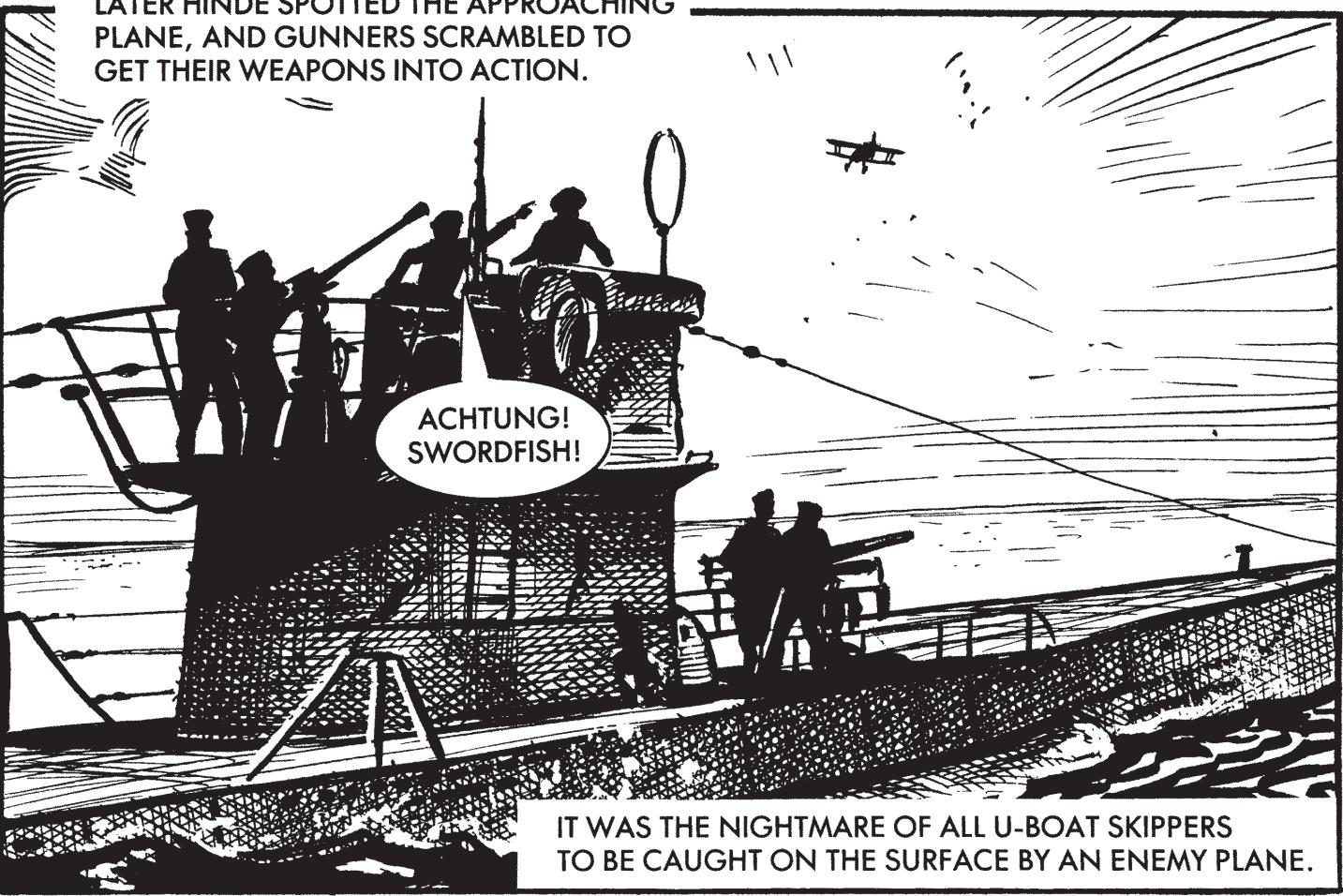


SUDDENLY, SEAN SPOTTED THE U-BOAT AHEAD OF HIM. HE SHUT OFF HIS ENGINE AND BEGAN A LONG GLIDE, HOPING IN THE DAWN LIGHT TO GET REALLY CLOSE BEFORE BEING SPOTTED — BY WHICH TIME IT WOULD BE TOO LATE FOR THE GERMANS TO DIVE.



THIS IS
IT. THIS IS
FOR TOM.

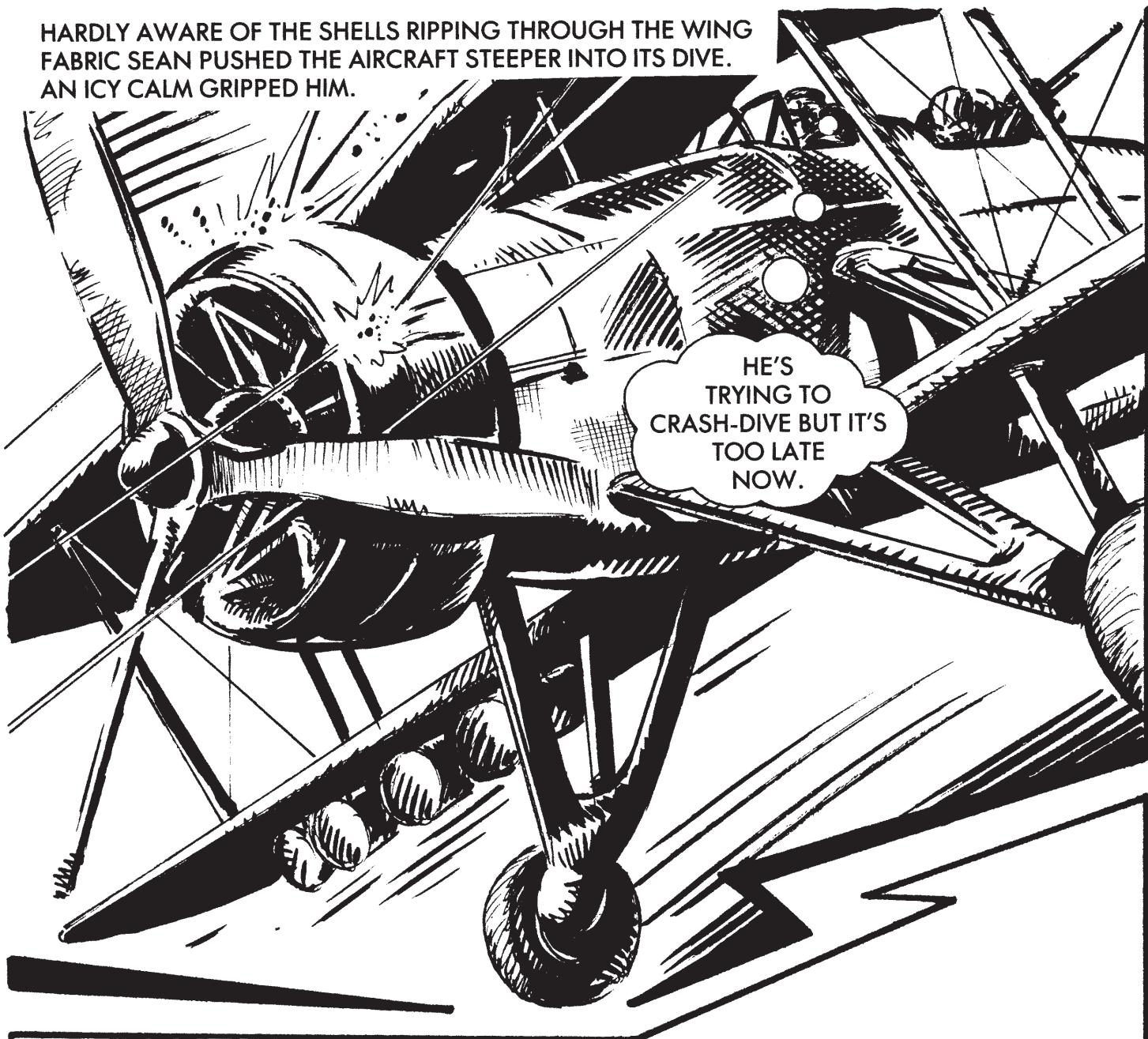
THE SUBMARINE WAS GILBERT'S. SECONDS LATER HINDE SPOTTED THE APPROACHING PLANE, AND GUNNERS SCRAMBLED TO GET THEIR WEAPONS INTO ACTION.



ACHTUNG!
SWORDFISH!

IT WAS THE NIGHTMARE OF ALL U-BOAT SKIPPERS TO BE CAUGHT ON THE SURFACE BY AN ENEMY PLANE.

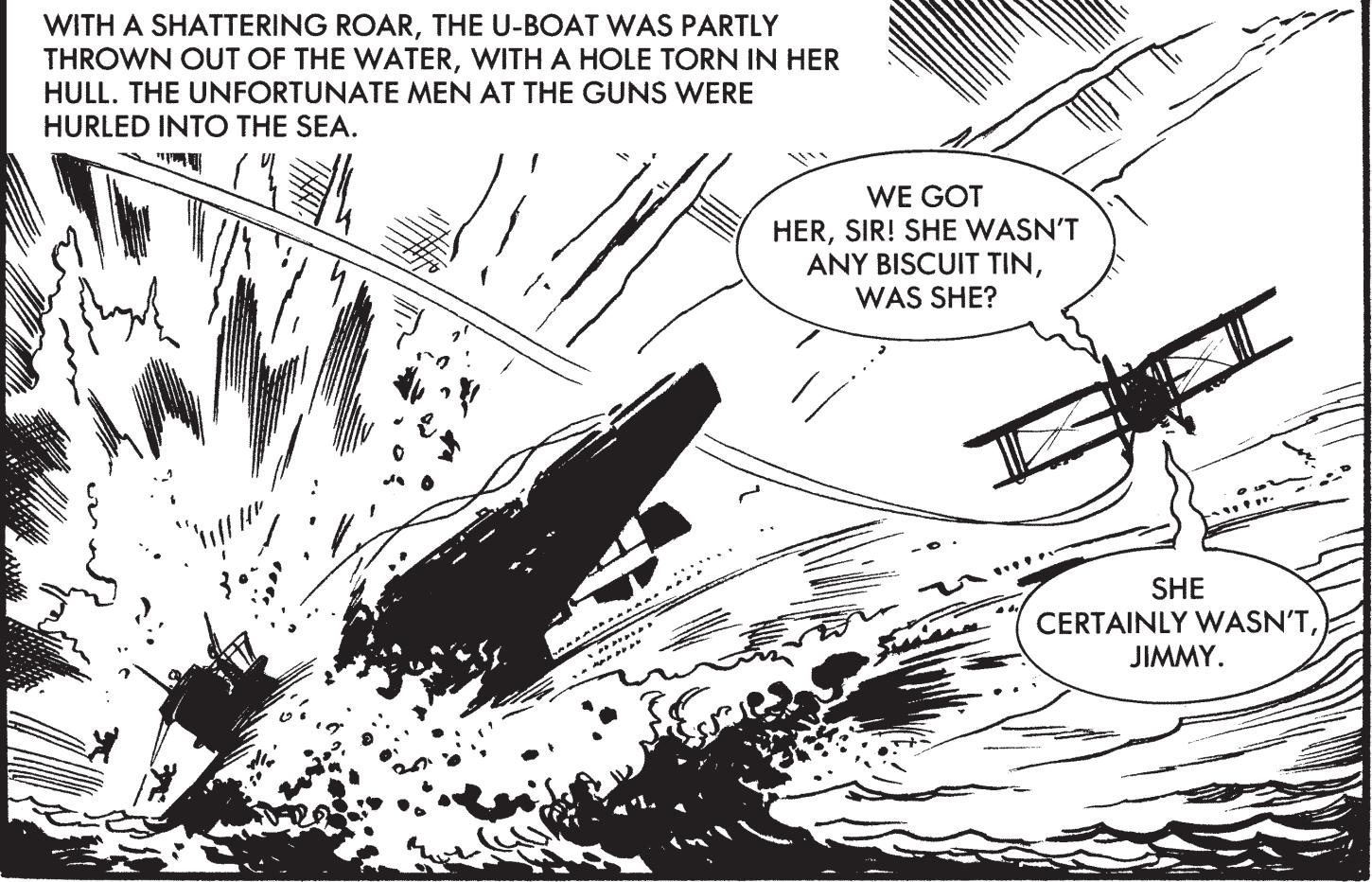
HARDLY AWARE OF THE SHELLS RIPPING THROUGH THE WING FABRIC SEAN PUSHED THE AIRCRAFT STEEPER INTO ITS DIVE. AN ICY CALM GRIPPED HIM.



SWOOPING LOW OVER THE U-BOAT, SEAN RELEASED HIS DEPTH-CHARGES, AT THE SAME TIME RE-STARTING HIS ENGINE TO POWER HIS AIRCRAFT AWAY FROM THE DOOMED VESSEL.

DEPTH-CHARGES GONE. NOW LET'S GO BEFORE THE WINGS FALL OFF!

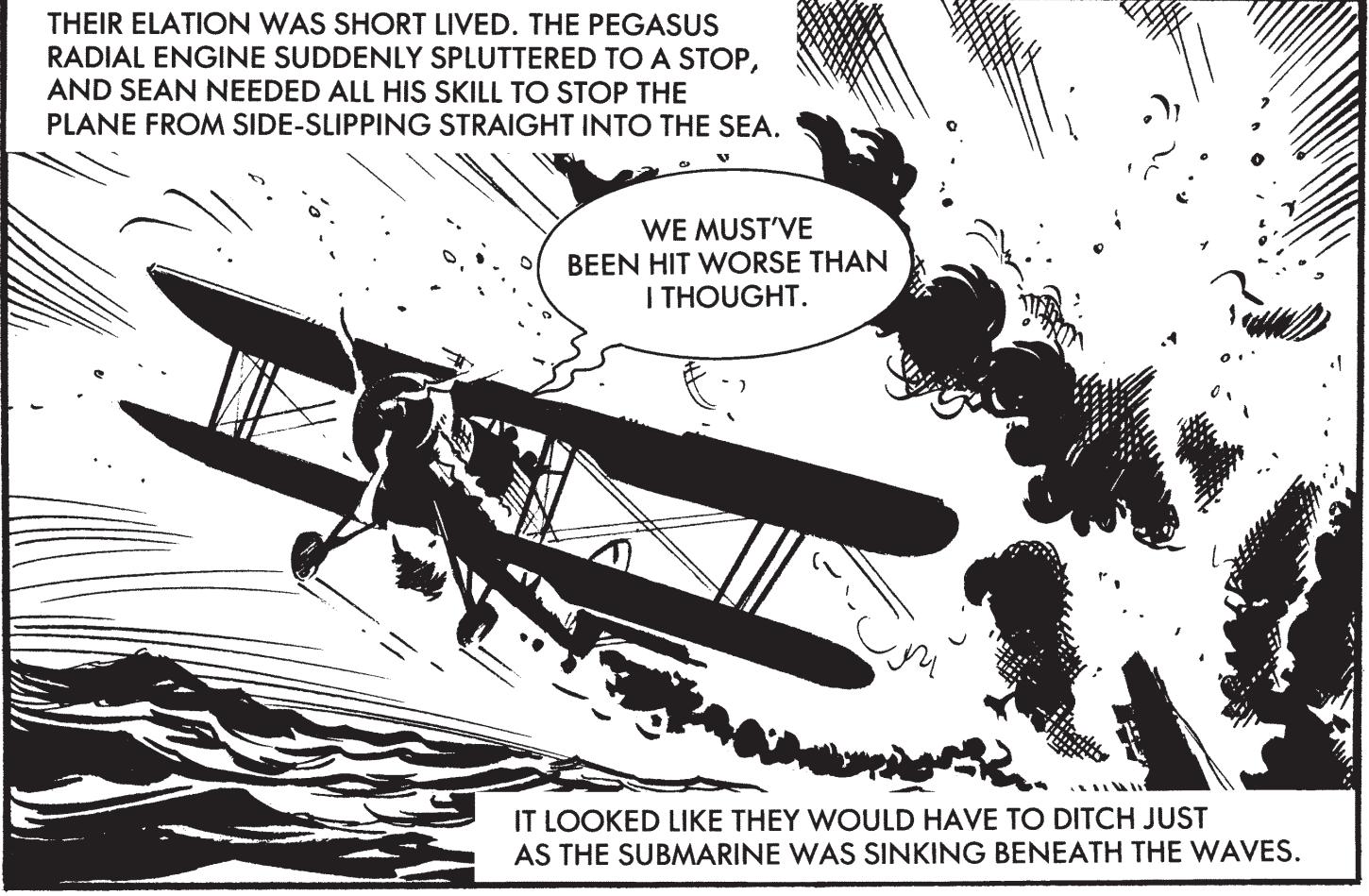
WITH A SHATTERING ROAR, THE U-BOAT WAS PARTLY THROWN OUT OF THE WATER, WITH A HOLE TORN IN HER HULL. THE UNFORTUNATE MEN AT THE GUNS WERE HURLED INTO THE SEA.



WE GOT HER, SIR! SHE WASN'T ANY BISCUIT TIN, WAS SHE?

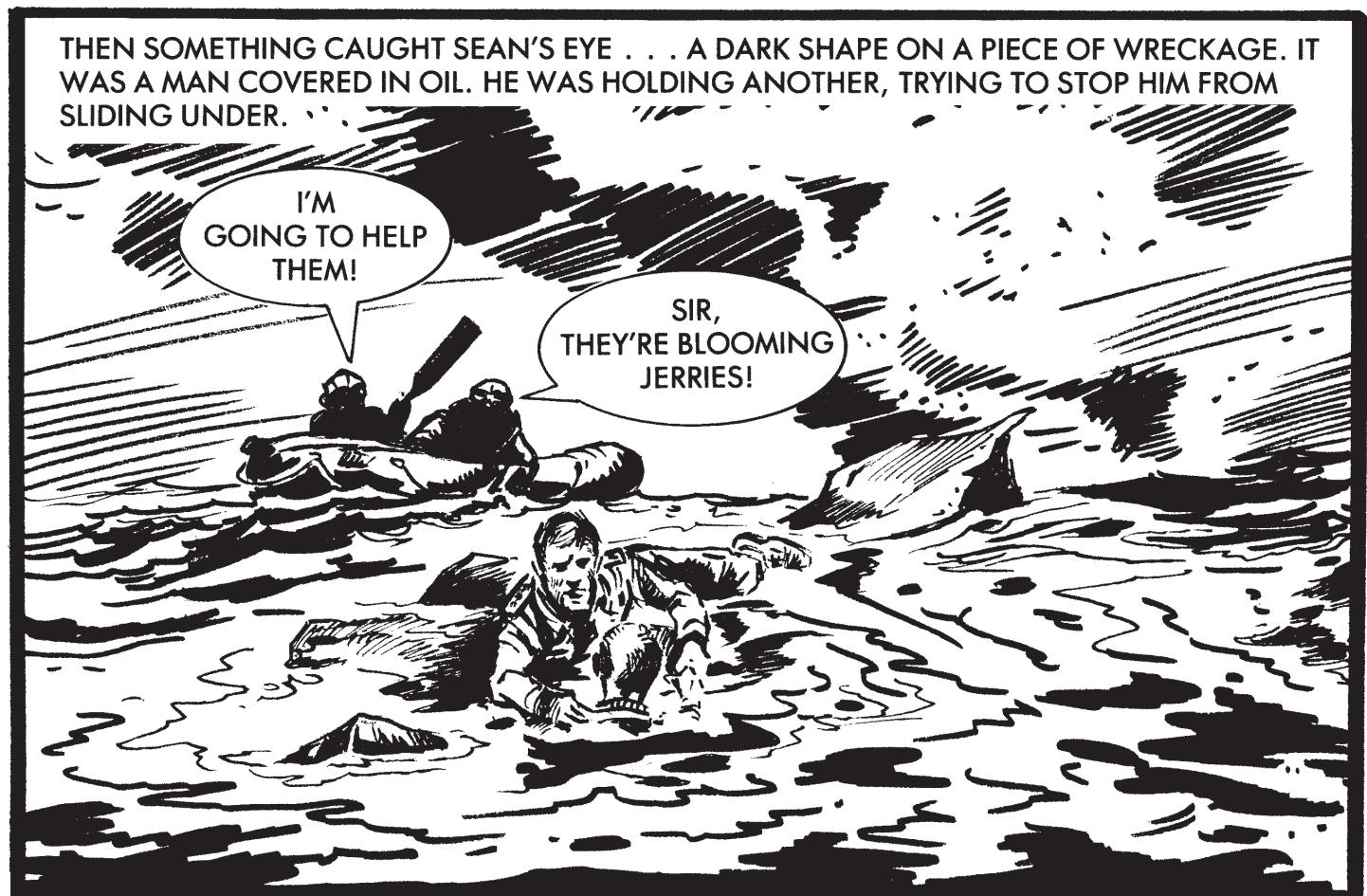
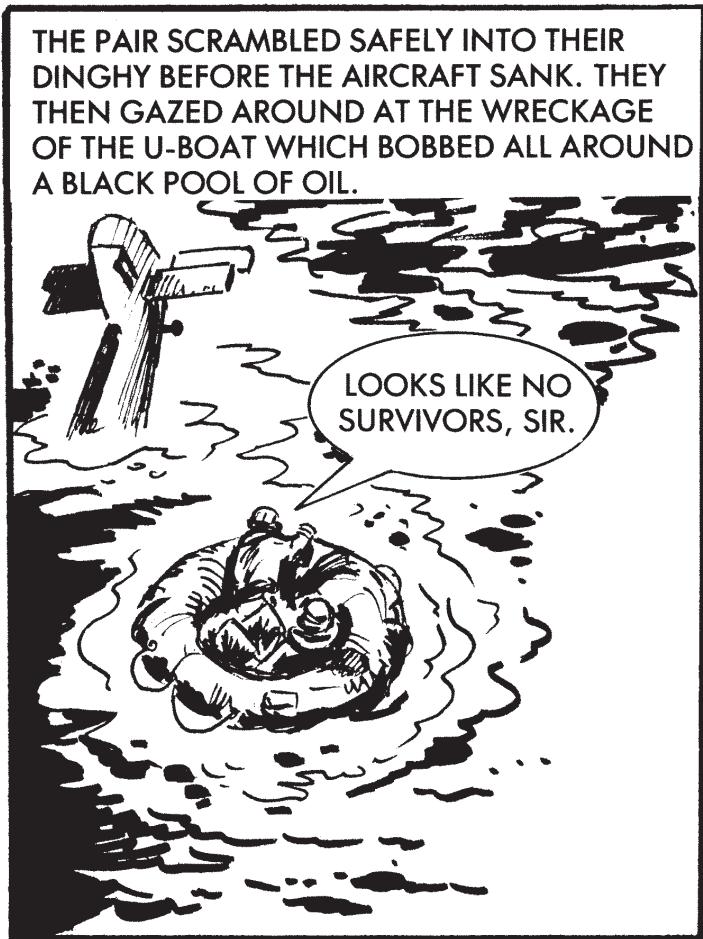
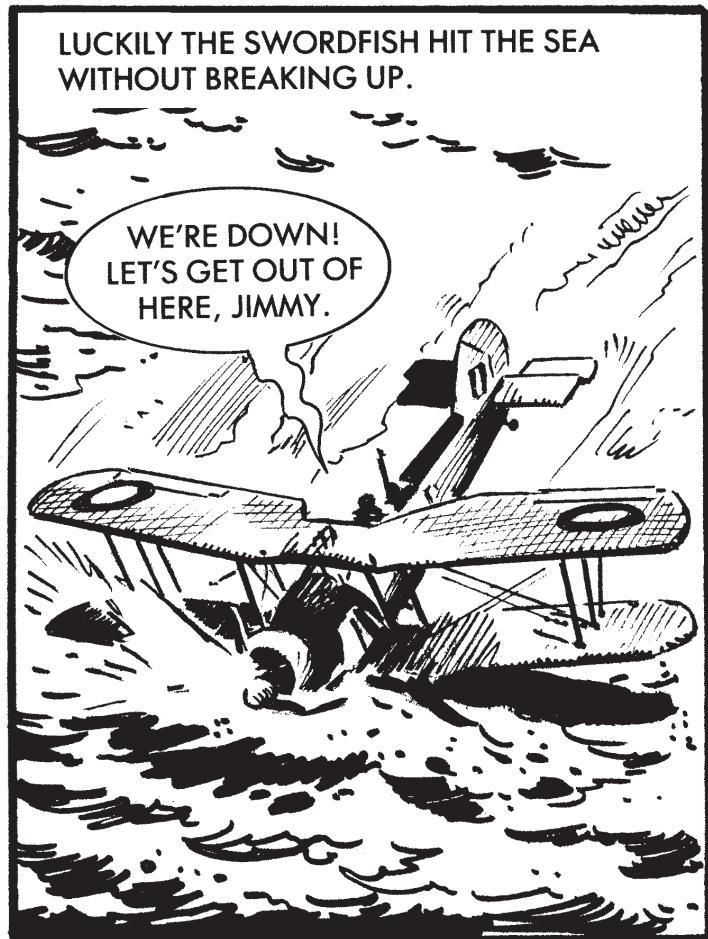
SHE CERTAINLY WASN'T, JIMMY.

THEIR ELATION WAS SHORT LIVED. THE PEGASUS RADIAL ENGINE SUDDENLY SPLUTTERED TO A STOP, AND SEAN NEEDED ALL HIS SKILL TO STOP THE PLANE FROM SIDE-SLIPPING STRAIGHT INTO THE SEA.



WE MUST'VE BEEN HIT WORSE THAN I THOUGHT.

IT LOOKED LIKE THEY WOULD HAVE TO DITCH JUST AS THE SUBMARINE WAS SINKING BENEATH THE WAVES.



SLIPPING INTO THE WATER, THE LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SWAM TOWARDS THEM POWERFULLY, ALL FEAR OF THE SEA SUBMERGED IN HIS ANXIETY TO SAVE THE POOR WRETCHES — ENEMY OR NOT.

THEY'RE ALSO HUMAN BEINGS! COME ON.

I CAN'T HOLD YOU. I'M TOO WEAK.

IT'S OKAY. I UNDERSTAND.

HE COULD NOT YET RECOGNISE THE OIL-BLACKENED FIGURES AS GILBERT AND HINDE.

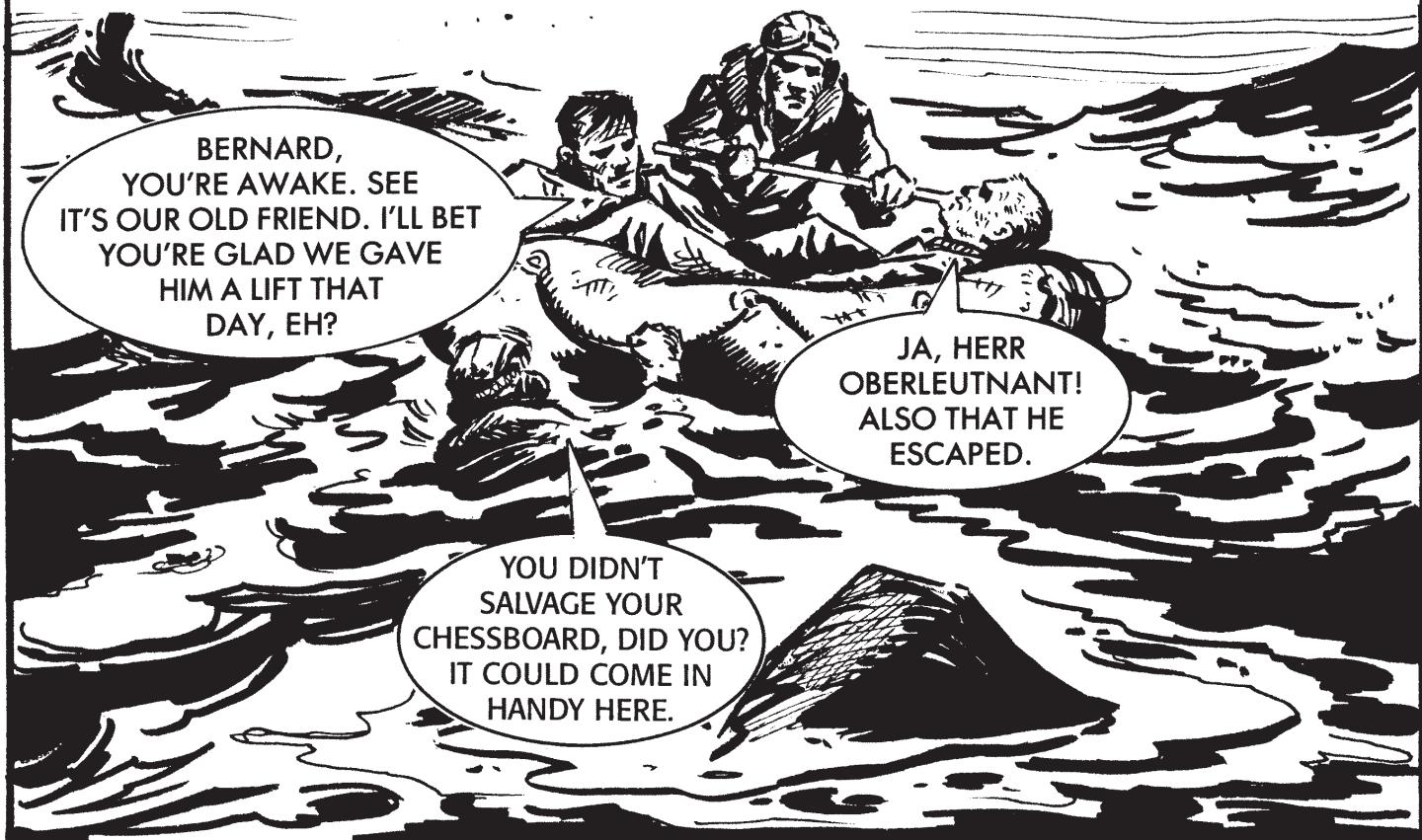
THE U-BOAT SKIPPER'S STRENGTH GAVE OUT AND THE PETTY OFFICER SLIPPED, UNCONSCIOUS, FROM HIS NUMBED FINGERS . . . JUST AS SEAN REACHED THEM.

IT'S OKAY, I'VE GOT YOU. HURRY UP, JIMMY.

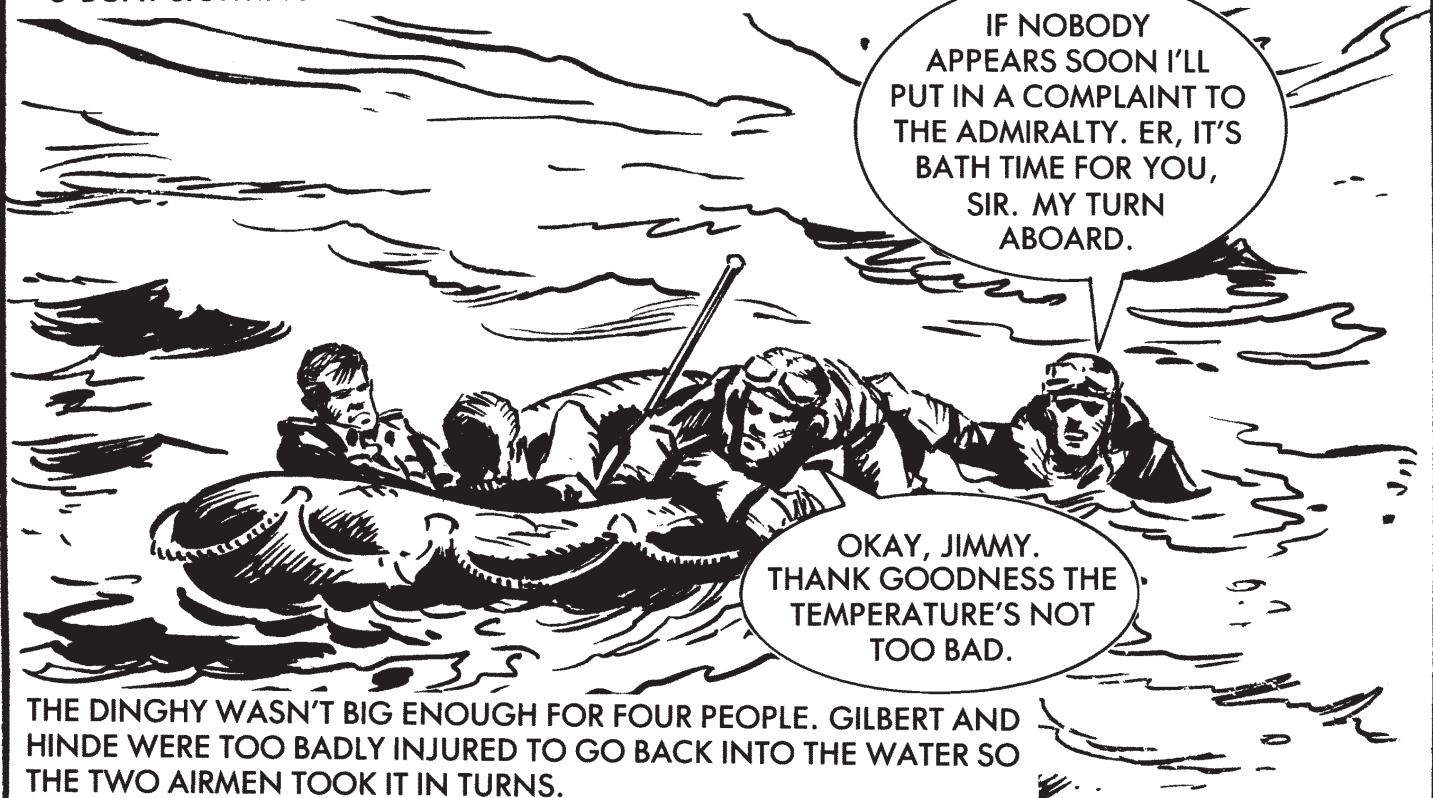
THEN GILBERT RECOGNISED THE PILOT. NOW HE REALISED THE SWORDFISH MUST HAVE BEEN HIT AFTER ALL.



THE TWO GERMANS WERE HAULED INTO THE TINY DINGHY. DESPITE THE DESPERATION OF THE SITUATION, ALL FOUR MEN WERE IN JOVIAL MOOD.



NOW IT WAS A MATTER OF WAITING TO BE PICKED UP. WHEN THE SWORDFISH FAILED TO RETURN ON TIME, A SEARCH WOULD BE MOUNTED FROM THE AREA JIMMY HAD RADIOED HIS U-BOAT SIGHTING.

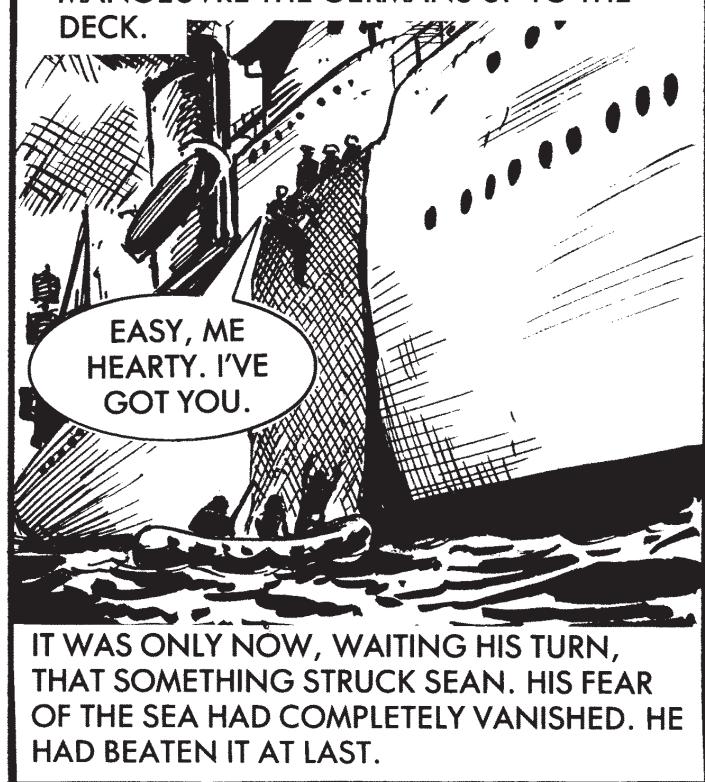


THE DINGHY WASN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR FOUR PEOPLE. GILBERT AND HINDE WERE TOO BADLY INJURED TO GO BACK INTO THE WATER SO THE TWO AIRMEN TOOK IT IN TURNS.

NOT LONG AFTER, A DESTROYER FROM THE CONVOY FOUND THEM. THEY CHEERED HOARSLY, KNOWING THEIR ORDEAL WAS ALMOST OVER.



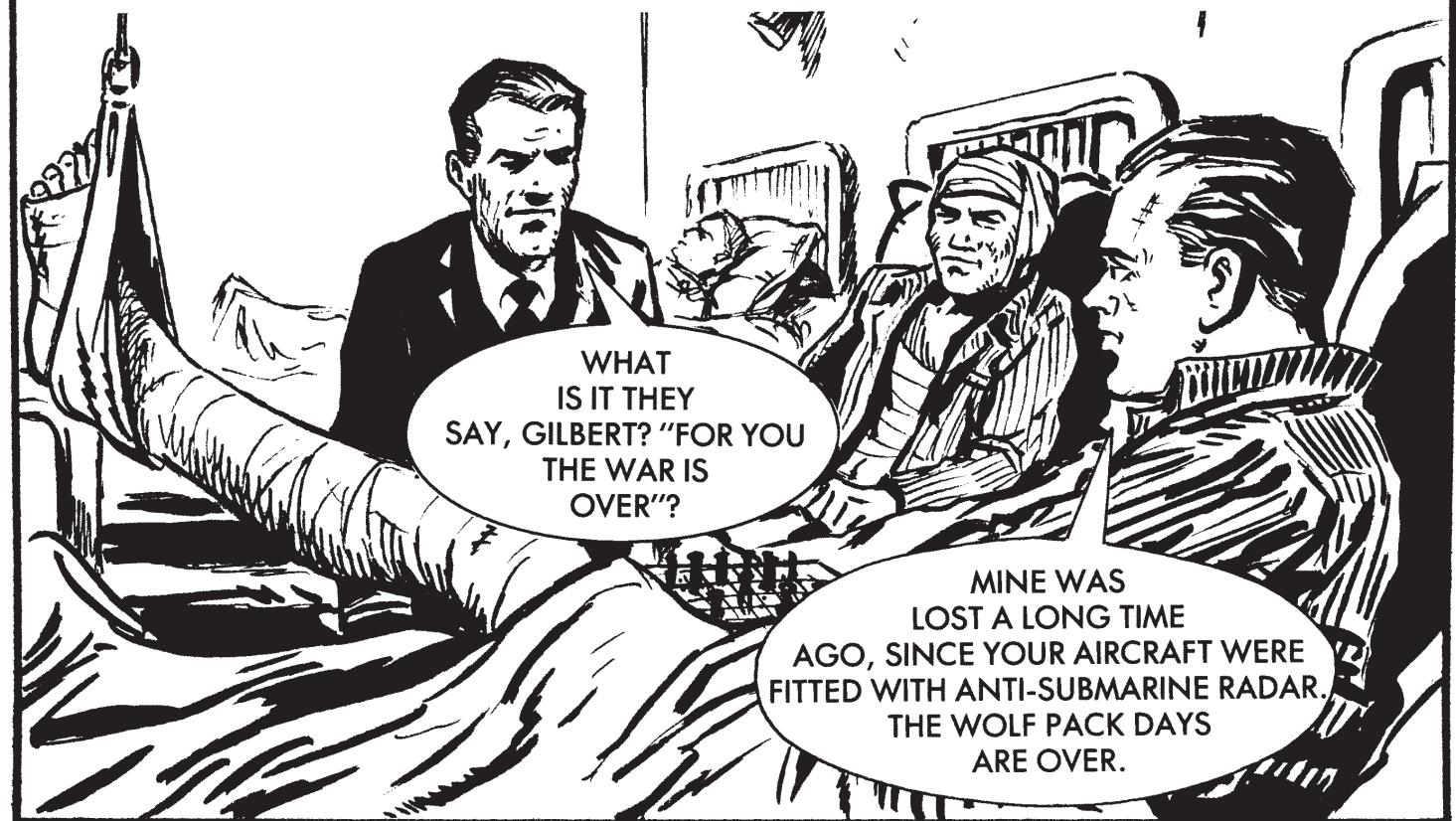
WHEN THE SHIP CAME ALONGSIDE, SCRAMBLE NETS WERE LOWERED. BURLY SAILORS CLAMBERED DOWN TO GENTLY MANOEUVRE THE GERMANS UP TO THE DECK.



BACK ABOARD THE CARRIER, HE SOUGHT OUT BERTIE. HE DECIDED TO EXPLAIN THE WHOLE CATALOGUE OF EVENTS ABOUT HIS TERROR TO HIM.



LATER THAT DAY GILBERT AND HINDE WERE TRANSFERRED FROM THE DESTROYER TO THE CARRIER'S SICK BAY, WHERE THEIR INJURIES COULD BE BETTER TREATED. SEAN VISITED THE U-BOAT SKIPPER, CHALLENGING HIM TO A GAME OF CHESS.



WHILE THE TWO GERMANS WOULD SPEND THE REST OF THE WAR IN A P.O.W. CAMP, THERE WAS NO RESPITE FOR SEAN AND JIMMY. THEY WERE SOON BACK ON OPERATIONS IN A GOOD OLD STRINGBAG, THEIR MISSION ONCE AGAIN, TO SEEK OUT AND DESTROY THE ENEMY.



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