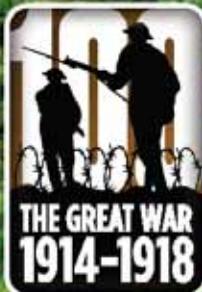


No.4757  
£2

COMPLETE 63-PAGE ACTION STORY

# Commando

FOR ACTION AND ADVENTURE



# HAND OF WAR

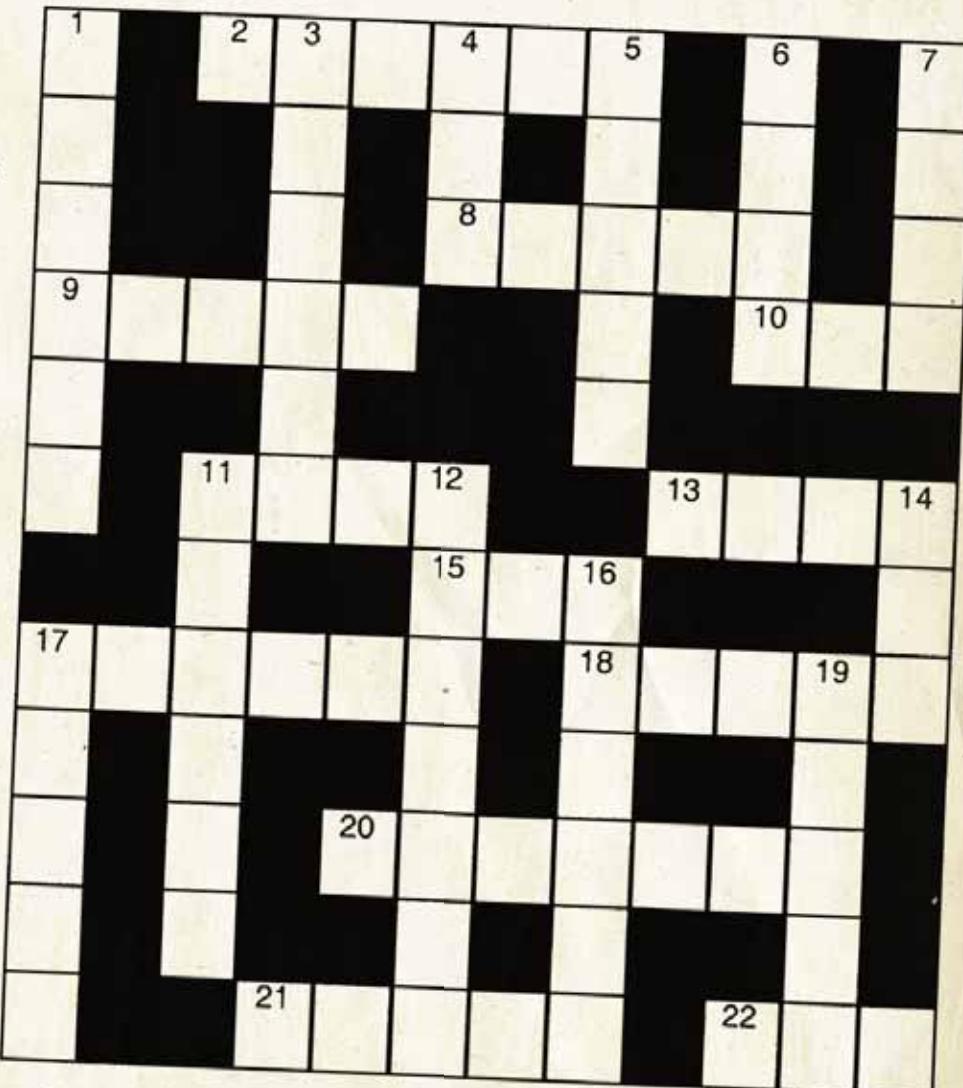
# COMBAT CROSSWORD

## ACROSS

2. Major WW2 battle in the Indian state of Manipur (6)
8. & 10 across: Landing area in Turkey, used in the Great and Crimean Wars (5,3)
9. American army sitcom character played by Phil Silvers (5)
10. See 8 across
11. See 11 down.
13. Worn by Scottish troops (4)
15. To direct a weapon (3)
17. Sign up for the armed forces (6)
18. European country, invaded by the Allies in 1943 (5)
20. & 16 down: Nickname for the German Nebelwerfer mortar (7,6)
21. To give out weapons etc. (5)
22. Best to keep your powder ... (3)

## DOWN

1. To fight against (6)
3. Antique firearm (6)
4. Prefix for British warships — abbreviation (1.1.1.)
5. To flatten enemy positions (5)
6. Sherman tank fitted with



- flails to set off mines (4)
7. Colour of Confederate uniforms in the American Civil War (4)
  11. & 11 across: American medal (6,4)
  12. Soldiers' grub (7)
  14. Youngsters might want this type of soldier in their Christmas stocking (3)
  16. See 20 across
  17. Operation to seize Caen, Normandy in 1944 (5)
  19. German pistol (5)

## ANSWERS

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| ACROSS | 1. COMBAT 3. MUSKET 4. H.M.S. (Her Majesty's Ship) 5. LEVEL 6. CRAB 7. GREY 11. SILVER (star) 12. RATIONS 14. TOY 16. (Mooring) MINNIE 17. EPSOM 19. LUGER |
| DOWN   | 2. IMPHAL 8. SUVLA (Bay) 9. BILKO 10. (Suvla) BAY 11. (Silver) STAR 13. KILT 15. AIM 17. ENLIST 18. ITALY 20. MOANING (Mine) 21. ISSUE 22. DRY             |

# HAND OF WAR

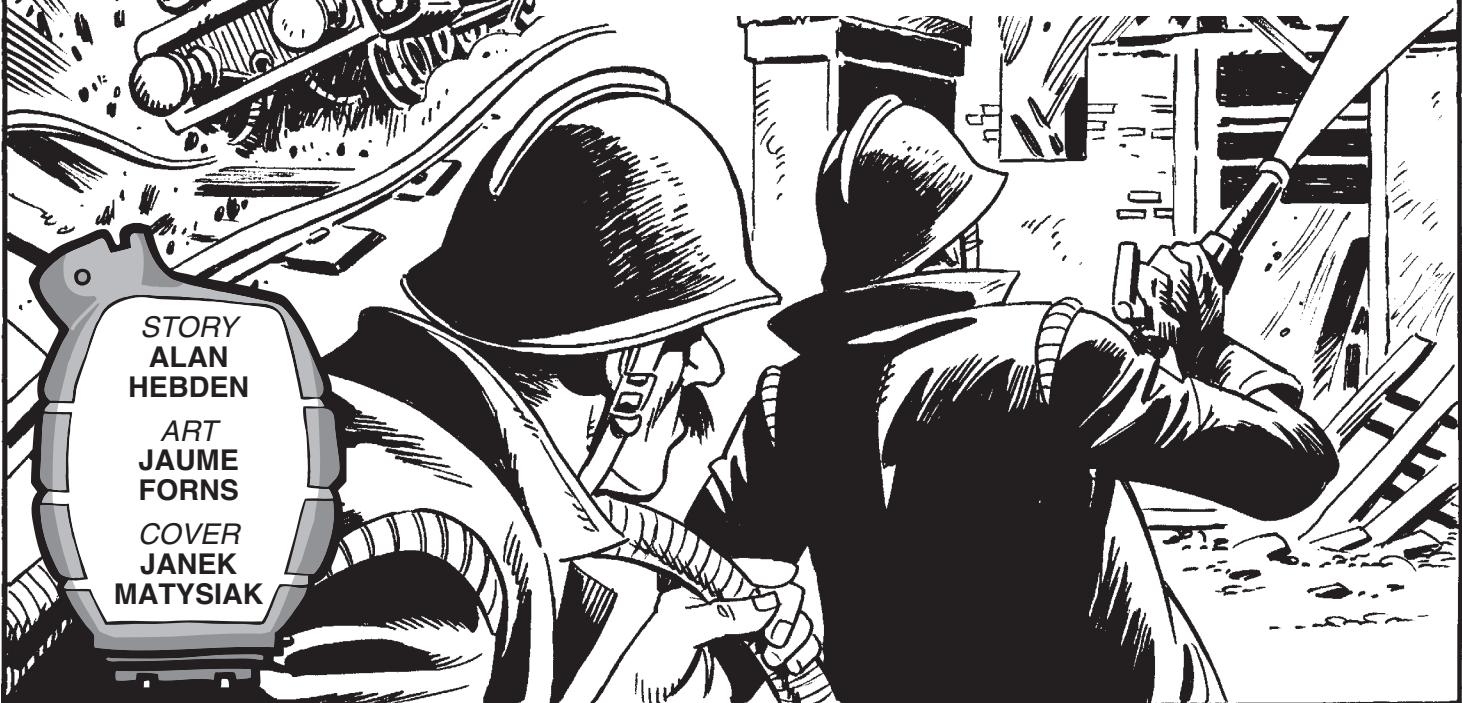


IN 1911 A NEW AND SINISTER ORGANISATION AROSE IN THE BALKANS, A GROUP SEEKING A NEW, INDEPENDENT COUNTRY FOR THE SLAVIC PEOPLES OF THE REGION BY ANY MEANS. IN THE FOLLOWING THREE YEARS IT CAST ITS DARK SHADOW OVER TERRITORIES RULED BY THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE. ASSASSINATION, SABOTAGE AND BOMB ATTACKS WERE ITS STOCK-IN-TRADE. ITS ORIGINAL NAME WAS "UNIFICATION OR DEATH", BUT THE WORLD WOULD COME TO KNOW IT BETTER AS "THE BLACK HAND."

STORY  
ALAN  
HEBDEN

ART  
JAUME  
FORNS

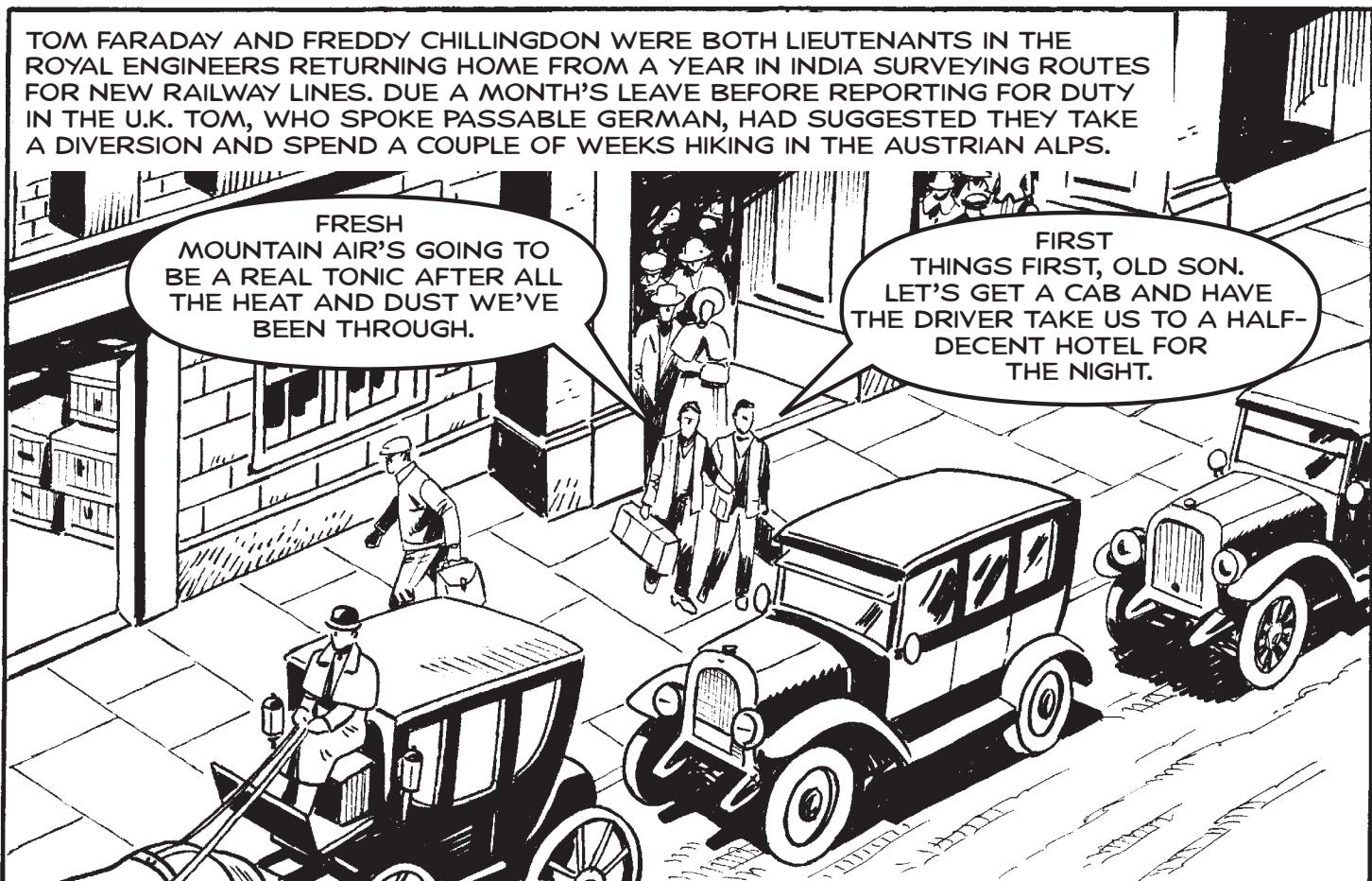
COVER  
JANEK  
MATYSIAK



IN JUNE 1914 A PASSENGER STEAMER FROM ALEXANDRIA ARRIVED AT TRIESTE, THE BUSTLING ADRIATIC CITY THAT WAS THE ALMOST LAND-LOCKED AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE'S ONLY MAJOR SEAPORT.

JUST ANOTHER DAY BY TRAIN AND WE'LL BE IN THE AUSTRIAN ALPS.

AFTER A WEEK'S JOURNEY FROM INDIA COOPED UP ON BOARD ONE SHIP OR ANOTHER I'LL BE MORE THAN READY TO HIKE UP ANY ALP I COME ACROSS.



A LITTLE LATER A TAXI DROPPED THEM OFF OUTSIDE A HOTEL THAT LOOKED A GREAT DEAL BETTER THAN SIMPLY HALF-DECENT. TOM LOOKED DOUBTFUL, BUT FREDDY JUST GRINNED.



AFTER CHECKING IN, COURTESY OF FREDDY'S TRUST FUND, THEY TOOK A TURN AROUND THE TOWN TO STRETCH THEIR LEGS AND WORK UP AN APPETITE FOR DINNER. BY THE TIME THEY HEADED BACK TO THE HOTEL IT WAS GETTING DARK.



CLIMBING THE STEEP, DARK ALLEY THEY TURNED A CORNER AND STUMBLLED ON AN APPARENT ROBBERY IN PROGRESS.

THREE  
AGAINST ONE DOESN'T  
SEEM QUITE FAIR.

LET'S  
EVEN UP THE  
ODDS THEN!



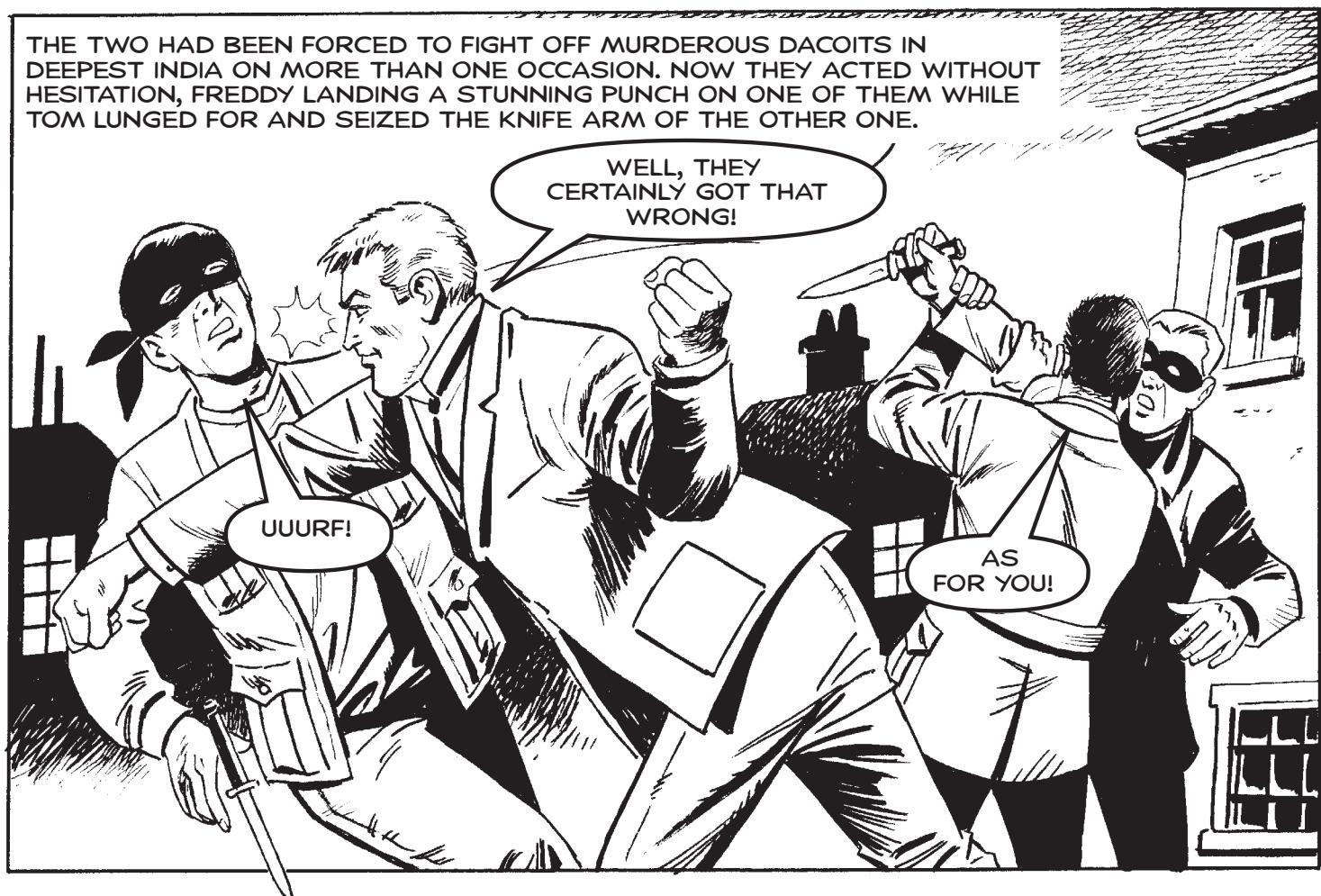
THEY QUICKLY DISCOVERED THAT THE ATTACKERS MEANT BUSINESS, TWO OF THEM TURNING TO FACE THEM WITH KNIVES IN THEIR HANDS.

I THINK  
THEY EXPECT US TO  
RUN AWAY.

DO  
THEY NOW...



THE TWO HAD BEEN FORCED TO FIGHT OFF MURDEROUS DACOITS IN DEEPEST INDIA ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION. NOW THEY ACTED WITHOUT HESITATION, FREDDY LANDING A STUNNING PUNCH ON ONE OF THEM WHILE TOM LUNGED FOR AND SEIZED THE KNIFE ARM OF THE OTHER ONE.



THE MAN TOM HAD GONE FOR TURNED OUT TO BE STRONG, BUT THE ROYAL ENGINEER WAS EVEN STRONGER. AS THEY GRAPPLED, HE ALSO SPOTTED SOMETHING DISTINCTIVE ABOUT THE KNIFE MAN.



THE TRIO'S ORIGINAL VICTIM, ALTHOUGH ON THE GROUND, WAS NOT IN ANY WAY HELPLESS. ABRUPTLY HE LASHED OUT WITH HIS LEGS CAUSING THE THIRD ATTACKER TO FALL IN A TANGLE.



THEN, AS IF BY SOME UNSPOKEN AGREEMENT, THE THREE ATTACKERS SUDDENLY BROKE OFF AND RACED AWAY.



THE MAN DECLINED THEIR OFFER TO CALL THE POLICE OR BE TAKEN TO A DOCTOR, ASKING ONLY THAT HE RETURN TO HIS HOTEL.



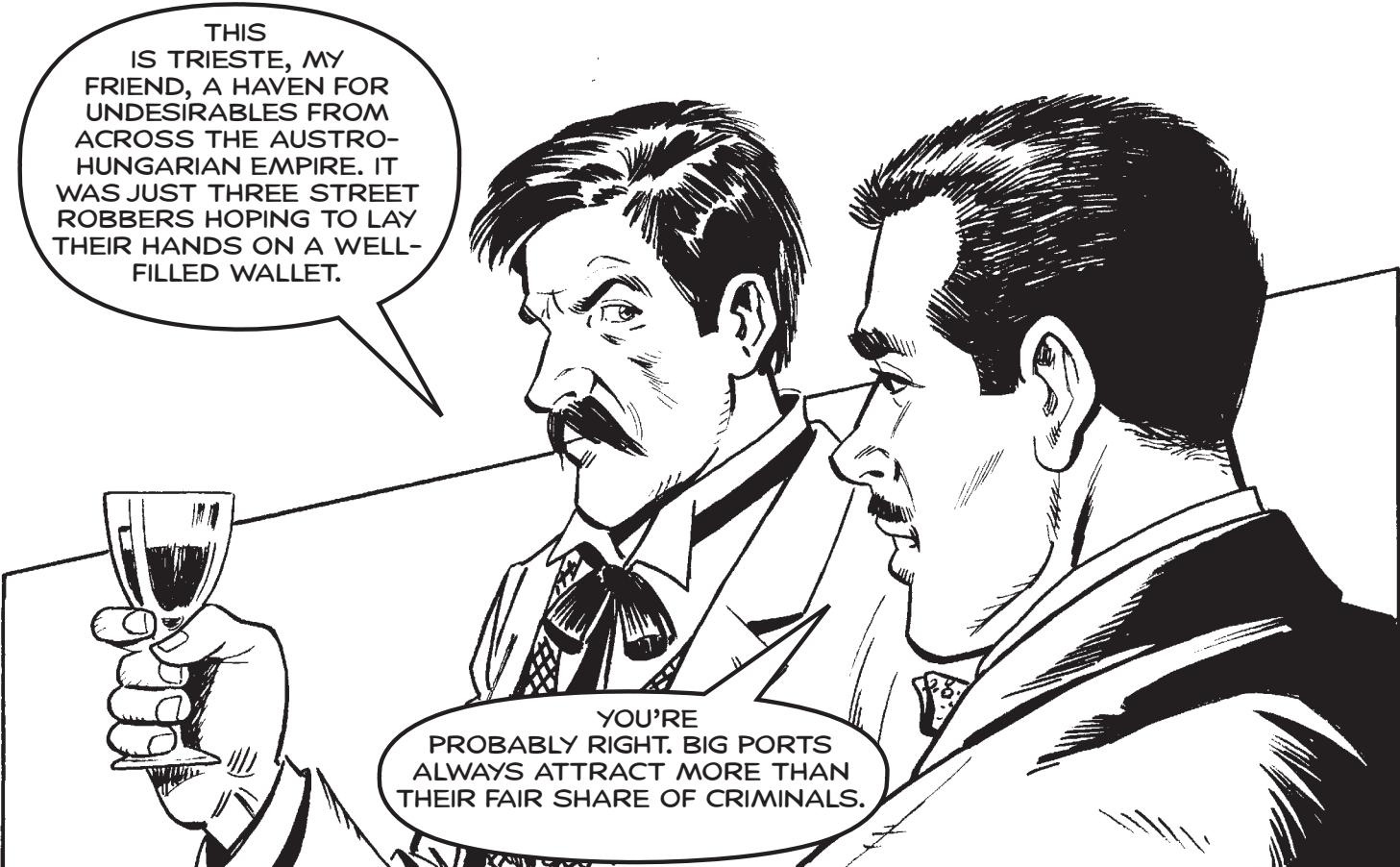
AS THEY ENTERED THE HOTEL THEY WERE UNAWARE OF A SINISTER WATCHER TRACKING THEIR PROGRESS — A MAN MISSING A FINGER.



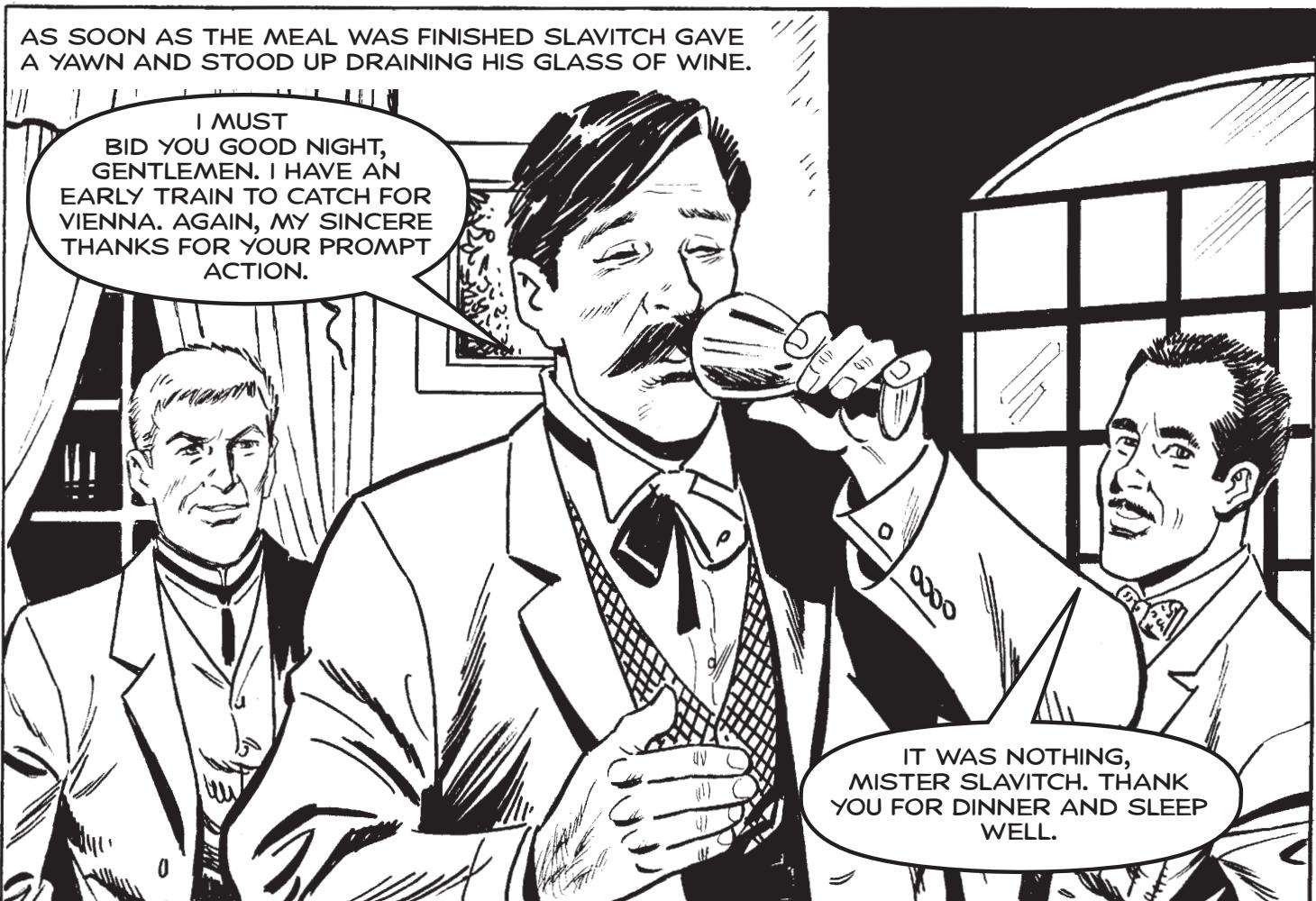
THE MAN THEY HAD RESCUED INTRODUCED HIMSELF AS DRAGO SLAVITCH, A BOSNIAN BUSINESSMAN EN ROUTE TO VIENNA. BY WAY OF THANKS HE INSISTED ON BUYING THEM DINNER IN THE HOTEL RESTAURANT, RECOMMENDING THE CHEF'S SPECIALITY.



SLAVITCH GAVE AN EXPANSIVE SHRUG.



BY THE TIME DESSERT WAS SERVED, SLAVITCH HAD LEARNT THEY WERE ON THEIR WAY TO SALZBURG FOR A HIKING HOLIDAY. HE HAD A RECOMMENDATION OF HIS OWN.



AS HE TOOK A STEP, SLAVITCH STUMBLED. FREDDY GRABBED HIM TO PREVENT HIM FROM FALLING BUT FAILED TO NOTICE THE OTHER MAN'S SLEIGHT OF HAND AS HE SLIPPED A THIN NOTEBOOK INTO THE ENGLISHMAN'S POCKET.



ASSURING THEM THAT ALL HE NEEDED WAS A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP THE BOSNIAN TOOK HIS LEAVE. BUT FAR FROM SLEEPING, HE BEGAN PACKING URGENTLY.



MOMENTS LATER HE FLUNG OPEN HIS DOOR, EAGER TO BE GONE. INSTEAD HE FOUND HIMSELF STARING DOWN THE BARREL OF A LUGER HELD BY A FOUR-FINGERED HAND.



UNAWARE OF ANY OF THIS, NEXT MORNING THE BRITISH PAIR WERE PREPARING TO LEAVE FOR THE STATION WHEN FREDDY DISCOVERED SOMETHING UNEXPECTED IN HIS POCKET.



OPENING THE LITTLE NOTEBOOK FREDDY HAD FOUND, HE AND TOM DISCOVERED THAT ALL IT CONTAINED WERE THREE NEATLY-PRINTED LINES OF LETTERS AND NUMBERS ON ONE PAGE.



ON THEIR WAY OUT THEY TRIED TO LEAVE THE NOTEBOOK AT THE RECEPTION DESK FOR SLAVITCH TO COLLECT ONLY TO FIND THAT THEY WERE TOO LATE.



THEY DECIDED TO TAKE THE NOTEBOOK WITH THEM, BUT WHEN THEY STOPPED OUTSIDE THE STATION TO CONSULT THEIR BRADSHAW'S TIMETABLE TOM FROWNED.



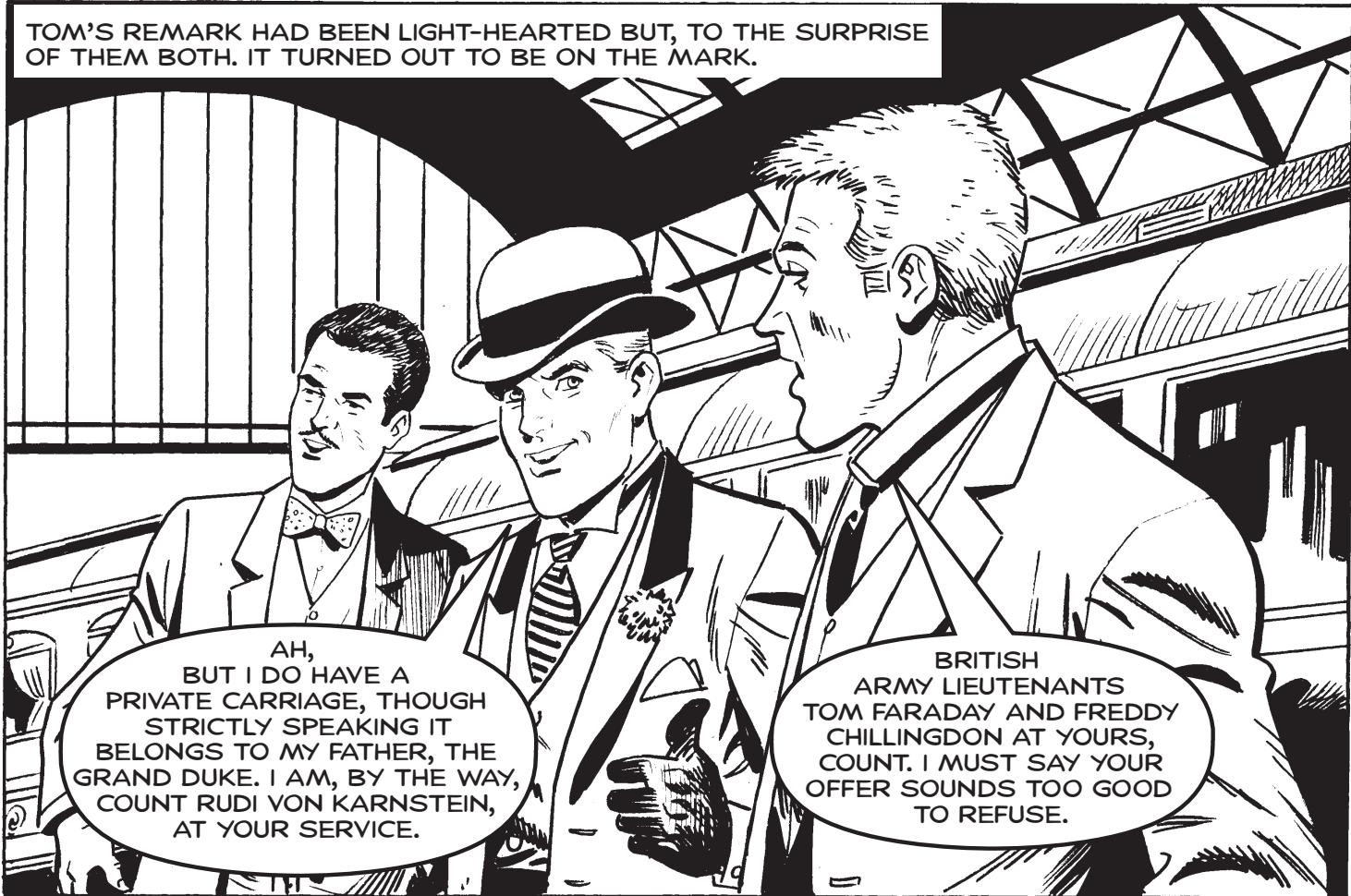
FREDDY WAS RIGHT. SINCE THE TRAIN TO SALZBURG CONTINUED TO MUNICH, THE FIRST CLASS CARRIAGE WAS ALREADY PACKED WITH THE GERMAN TOURISTS FREDDY HAD SEEN EARLIER.



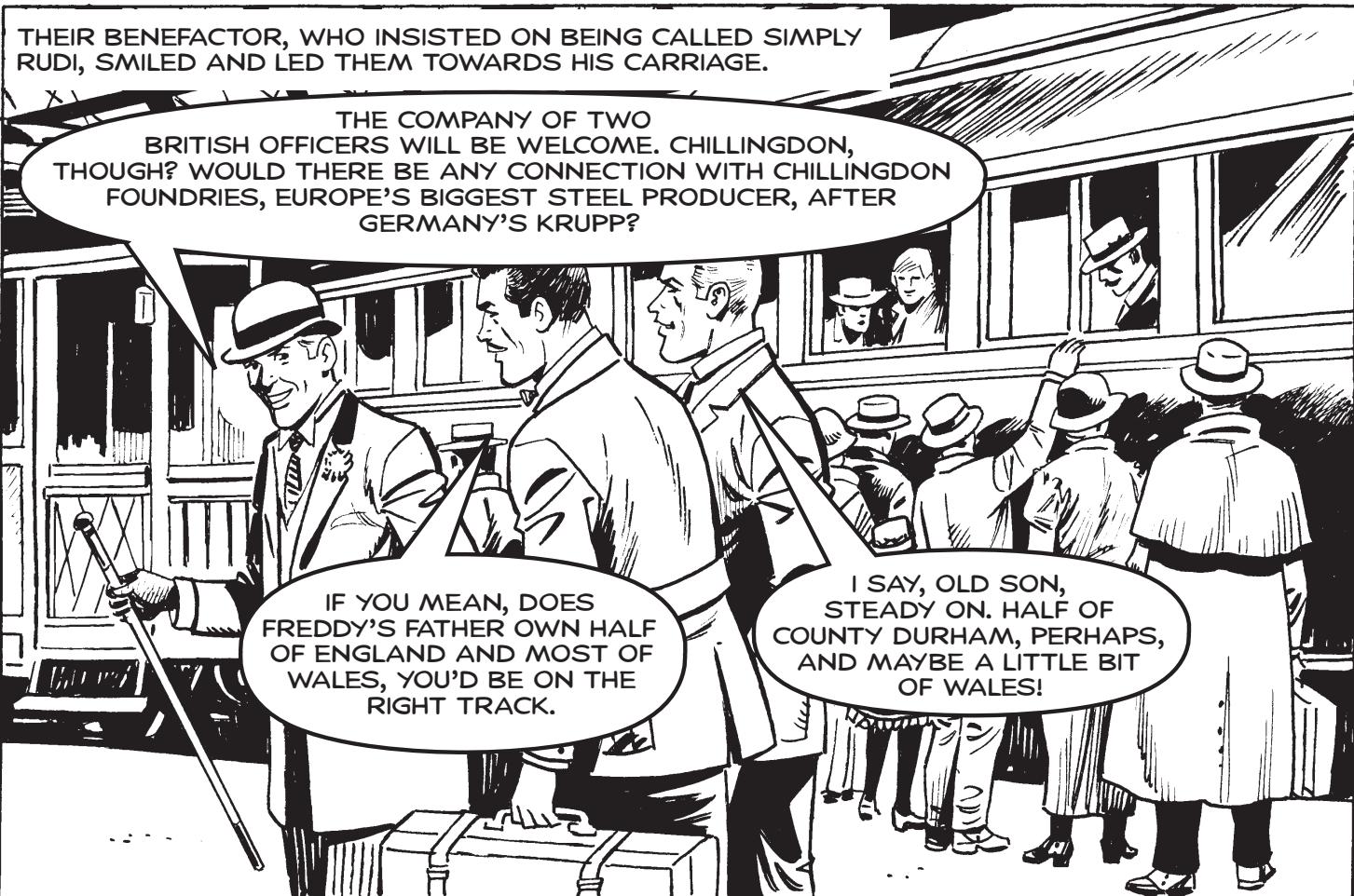
AS THEY TURNED AWAY THEY FOUND AN ARISTOCRATIC YOUNG MAN OBSERVING THEM WITH INTEREST.



TOM'S REMARK HAD BEEN LIGHT-HEARTED BUT, TO THE SURPRISE OF THEM BOTH, IT TURNED OUT TO BE ON THE MARK.



THEIR BENEFATOR, WHO INSISTED ON BEING CALLED SIMPLY RUDI, SMILED AND LED THEM TOWARDS HIS CARRIAGE.



AS THEY ENTERED THE PLUSH INTERIOR OF THE CARRIAGE A VALET STEPPED FORWARD AND TOOK THEIR CASES.

THESE  
BRITISH GUESTS WILL BE  
ACCOMPANYING US AS FAR AS  
SALZBURG, MAX. TAKE THEIR  
LUGGAGE AND TELL WOLF TO  
BRING COFFEE.

MAX LOOKS MORE  
LIKE A MILITARY BATMAN  
THAN A REGULAR VALET.

THE CARRIAGE WAS EQUIPPED WITH A SMALL GALLEY FROM WHERE ANOTHER TOUGH-LOOKING YOUNG MAN EMERGED WITH A SILVER COFFEE SERVICE.

COFFEE,  
GENTLEMEN. DO YOU HAVE  
ANY PREFERENCES CONCERNING  
LUNCHEON?

LET'S  
HAVE YOUR WIENER  
SCHNITZELS, WOLF.

WOLF SEEMS TO  
HAVE COME FROM THE  
SAME MOULD AS MAX.

AS THEY ENJOYED THE EXCELLENT COFFEE THEIR HOST HELD UP HIS GLOVED HANDS APOLOGETICALLY.

SOME WEEKS AGO I BURNED MY HANDS PULLING A HORSE FROM A STABLE FIRE. THEY ARE HEALING, BUT MY DOCTOR INSISTS I WEAR THESE TO PROTECT THE NEW SKIN.

AS THE TRAIN BEGAN ITS LONG CLIMB INTO THE AUSTRIAN ALPS RUDI TOLD THEM A LITTLE ABOUT HIMSELF.

MY FATHER, THE GRAND DUKE, IS AUSTRIAN BUT MY MOTHER IS GERMAN. HAVING SPENT MOST OF MY CHILDHOOD THERE I FEEL MORE GERMAN. UNLIKE AUSTRIA-HUNGARY, GERMANY IS A RISING POWER AND I PREFER TO SIDE WITH THE FUTURE. BUT WHAT BRINGS YOU TO AUSTRIA?

AS WOLF SERVED LUNCH THEY TALKED OF INDIA AND THEIR PLAN TO GO HIKING IN THE MOUNTAINS. LIKE SLAVITCH THE PREVIOUS EVENING, RUDI SUGGESTED THEY VISIT BAD ISCHEL.

YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST PERSON TO TELL US THAT. IT IS REALLY AS GOOD AS THEY SAY?

A YEARNING FOR A FEW WEEKS OF COOL ALPINE SCENERY AFTER A HOT AND DUSTY YEAR IN INDIA.

YOU WON'T FIND BETTER HIKING COUNTRY ANYWHERE ELSE IN EUROPE. WHY, YOU MIGHT EVEN RUN INTO THE EMPEROR.

I DOUBT IF WE'LL BE MOVING IN SUCH EXALTED CIRCLES.

IN DUE COURSE THE TRAIN REACHED THE SOUTHERN END OF THE MIGHTY TAUERN TUNNEL UNDER THE SPINE OF THE ALPS.

IT'S NEARLY SIX MILES LONG, OPENED BY THE EMPEROR JUST FIVE YEARS AGO. BEFORE THEN IT TOOK A DAY AND A NIGHT TO REACH MUNICH FROM TRIESTE. NOW IT CAN BE DONE IN A SINGLE DAY.



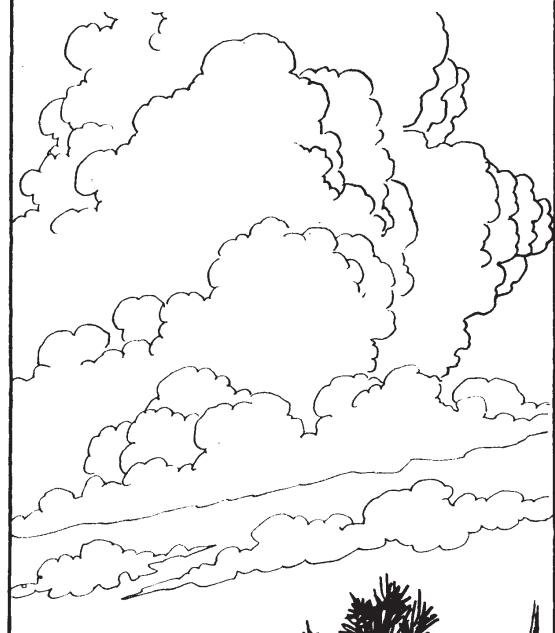
WHEN THE TRAIN REACHED SALZBURG THEY TOOK THEIR LEAVE OF RUDI.



THE PAIR DECIDED TO PRESS ON TO BAD ISCHEL IMMEDIATELY.



ON THE WAY TO THEIR HOTEL IN BAD ISCHEL THEIR HORSE-DRAWN CAB TOOK THEM PAST A SPLENDID BUILDING.



AFTER THE HARDSHIPS AND DISCOMFORTS OF INDIA THEY AGREED TO LET FREDDY'S TRUST FUND STUMP UP FOR THE BEST ACCOMMODATION IN TOWN AFTER THE KAISERVILLA, RETURNING THERE THAT EVENING AFTER ANOTHER HEARTY DINNER.



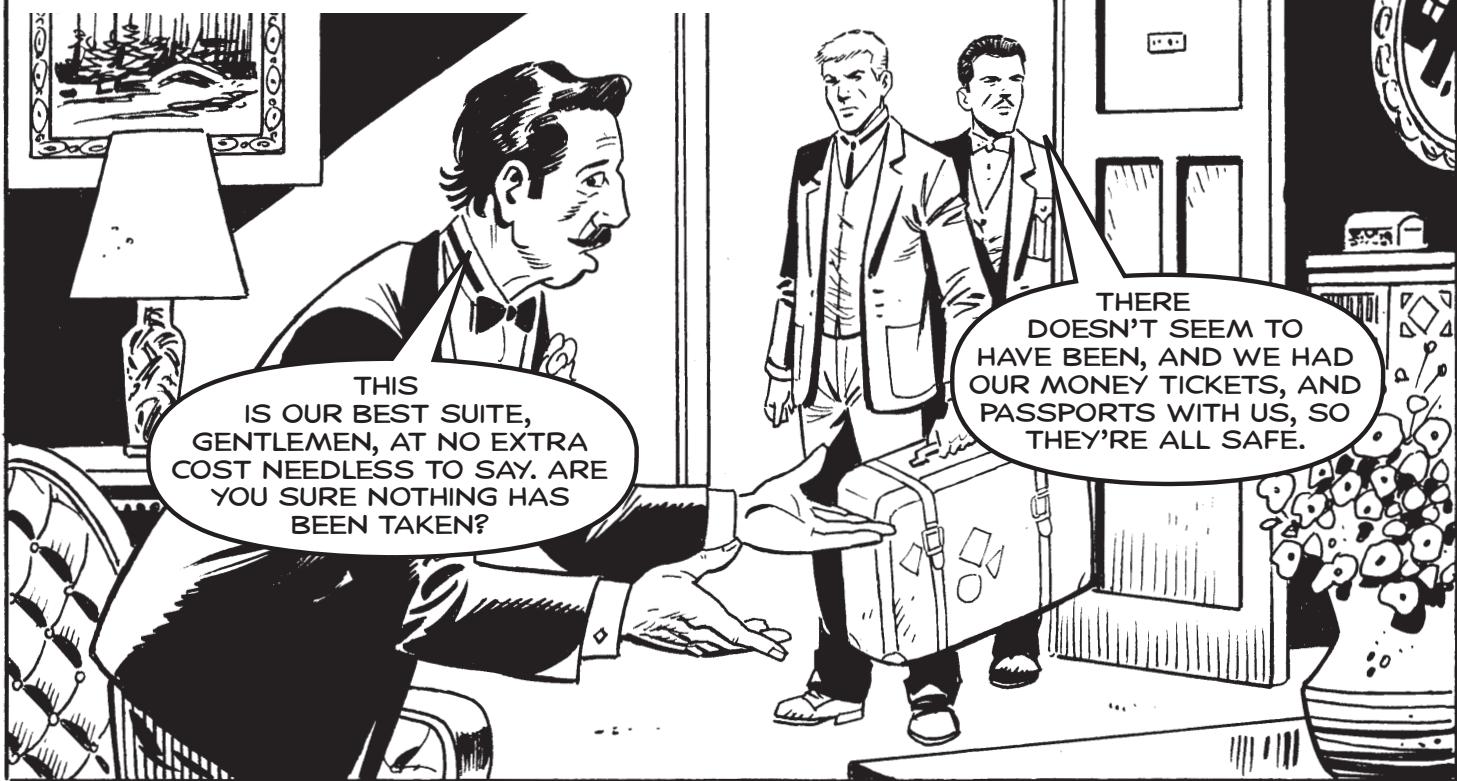
WHEN THEY GOT TO THE DOOR OF THEIR ROOM THEY MADE A DISTURBING DISCOVERY.



THOSE RESPONSIBLE HAD LONG SINCE DEPARTED,  
THOUGH, LEAVING A SHAMBLES IN THEIR WAKE.



THE SHOCKED MANAGER IMMEDIATELY HAD THEM MOVED TO MUCH GRANDER ROOMS AS HE FELL OVER HIMSELF TO MAKE AMENDS.



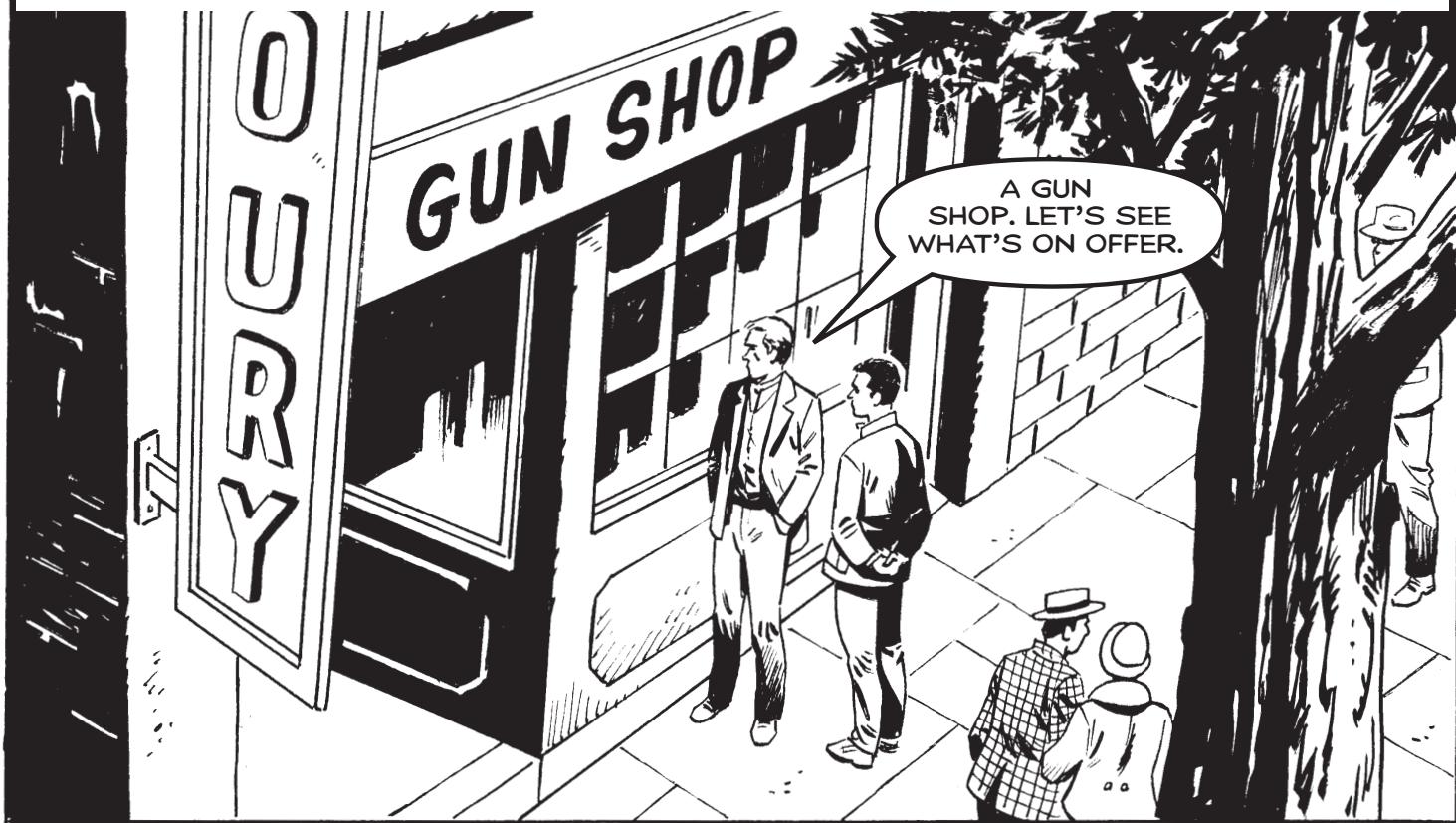
AS SOON AS THEY WERE ON THEIR OWN FREDDY REMINDED TOM OF SOMETHING ELSE HE'D KEPT ABOUT HIS PERSON.



IT THAT WAS TRUE, IT COULD  
MEAN ONLY ONE THING.



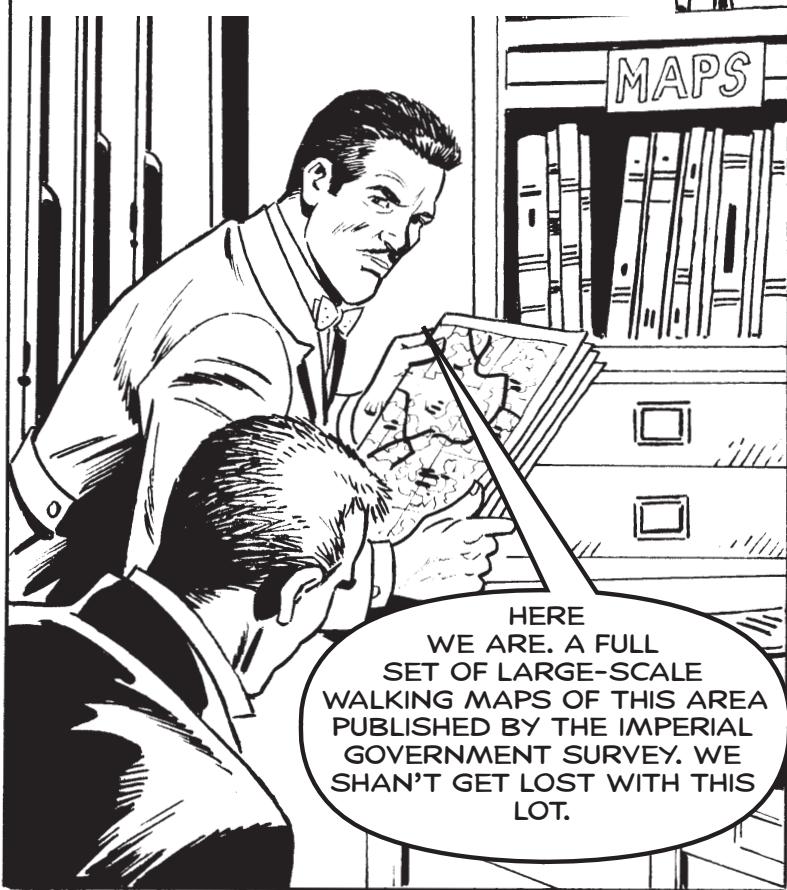
THE EMPEROR WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO SPENT HIS SUMMERS IN BAD ISCHEL. HIS PRESENCE ATTRACTED NOBILITY AND ARISTOCRACY FROM ACROSS THE EMPIRE, WHICH IN TURN SPAWNED THE SORT OF SHOPS WHERE THEY LIKED TO SPEND THEIR MONEY. IT DIDN'T TAKE TOM AND FREDDY LONG NEXT MORNING TO FIND WHAT THEY WERE LOOKING FOR.



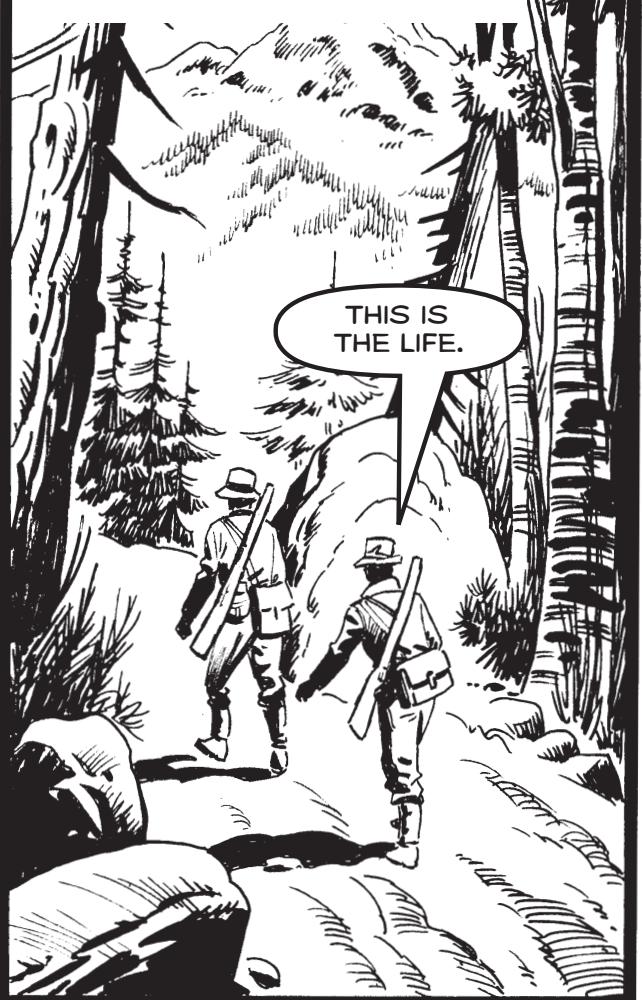
IN NO TIME AT ALL THEY ACQUIRED A PAIR OF POWERFUL HUNTING RIFLES BUT FREDDY STILL WASN'T SATISFIED. LOOKING AROUND HE SPOTTED SOME DERRINGER PISTOLS.



THEY ARRANGED FOR THE GUNS TO BE DELIVERED TO THEIR HOTEL AND WENT IN SEARCH OF ONE MORE SPECIALIST SHOP.

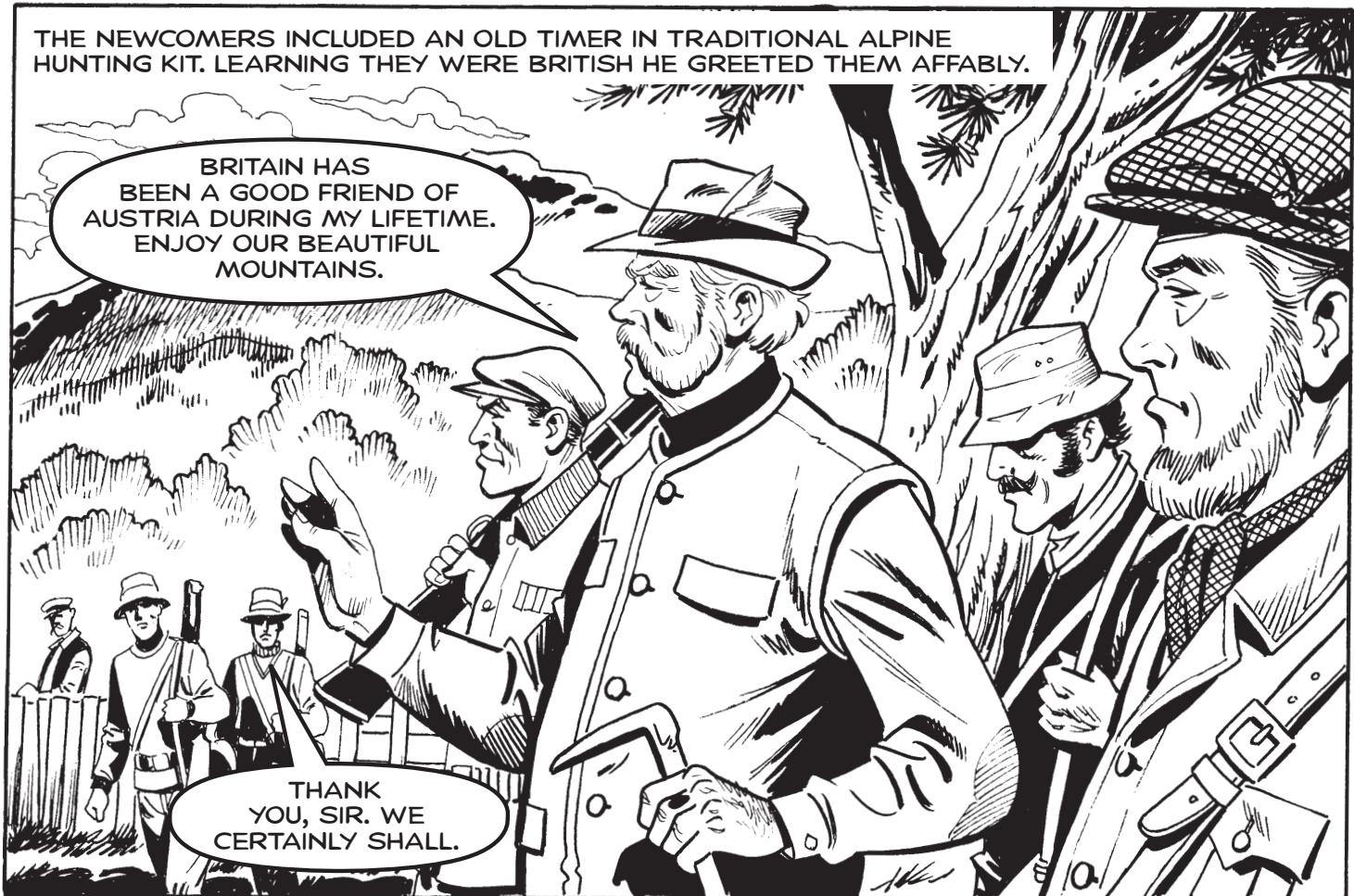


A FEW HOURS LATER THEY WERE CLIMBING OUT OF BAD ISCHEL INTO THE VERDANT HILLY TERRAIN THAT SURROUNDED IT.



THE COUNTRY WASN'T COMPLETELY DESERTED. THERE WAS A FARMER REPAIRING A FENCE AND ANOTHER PARTY COMING TOWARDS THEM.





THE FARMER LAUGHED AT THEIR ASTONISHED EXPRESSIONS AND EXPLAINED.



THAT EVENING AFTER A WELL-EARNED DINNER THEY RELAXED IN THEIR SUITE. TOM WAS STUDYING ONE OF THE MAPS TO PLAN THE NEXT DAY'S HIKING WHEN HE SUDDENLY STIFFENED.



TOM SPREAD THE MAP OUT AND POINTED TO IT.

WHAT IF  
THE LAST SIX FIGURES  
IN EACH LINE ARE MAP  
GRID REFERENCES?

COULD  
BE, BUT WHAT  
AREA ARE THEY  
REFERRING TO?

TOM HAD ALREADY WORKED THAT OUT.

BAD ISCHEL IS IN THE PROVINCE OF OBERÖSTERREICH, OR UPPER AUSTRIA, CLOSE TO THE BORDERS OF THE STYRIA AND SALZBURG PROVINCES. WE HAVE MAPS OBERÖSTERREICH-THIRTEEN, SALZBURG-SEVEN AND STYRIA-ELEVEN. RING ANY BELLS?

THEY'RE THE LETTERS AND NUMBERS BEFORE EACH GRID REFERENCE, OF COURSE! THE FIRST TWO LETTERS OF EACH MAP WOULD GIVE O.B.-ONE-THREE, S.A.-SEVEN AND S.T.-ONE-ONE FOLLOWED BY THE REFERENCE ON THAT PARTICULAR MAP. GOOD WORK, OLD SON.

WITH THE CHARTS SPREAD OUT, IT TOOK THEM JUST A FEW MINUTES TO PINPOINT EACH LOCATION.

THE OBERÖSTERREICH MAP REFERENCE IS AN ISOLATED GROUP OF BUILDINGS IN THE MOUNTAINS RIGHT NEXT TO THE FRONTIERS OF SALZBURG AND STYRIA. THE SALZBURG REFERENCE IS ANOTHER ISOLATED BUILDING.

THE STYRIA MAP REFERENCE IS SOMEWHERE IN THE WILDS. NO BUILDINGS ANYWHERE CLOSE BY. WE NEED TO ASK SOMEBODY WITH LOCAL KNOWLEDGE.

NEXT MORNING THEY BUTTON-HOLED THE MANAGER. ON THE MAPS HE IDENTIFIED THE PLACE IN OBEROSTERREICH AS THE EMPEROR'S HUNTING LODGE — WHERE HE STAYED OVERNIGHT WHEN HE WANTED TO GET AN EARLY START.



WITH THEIR RIFLES AND KIT, THEY SET OFF AND A COUPLE OF HOURS LATER WERE ABLE TO LOOK DOWN ON THE IMPERIAL HUNTING LODGE PINPOINTED BY THE FIRST GRID REFERENCE.

POSITIVELY BUSTLING WITH ACTIVITY. I WONDER IF THE EMPEROR'S IN RESIDENCE.

I'LL SEE IF I CAN ASK ONE OF THE WORKERS.

IT DIDN'T TAKE TOM LONG TO FIND ONE OF THE GROUND STAFF WILLING TO TELL HIM.

THE EMPEROR'S DUE TONIGHT. THERE'S A BIG HUNT PLANNED FOR TOMORROW IN THE REICHERWALD.



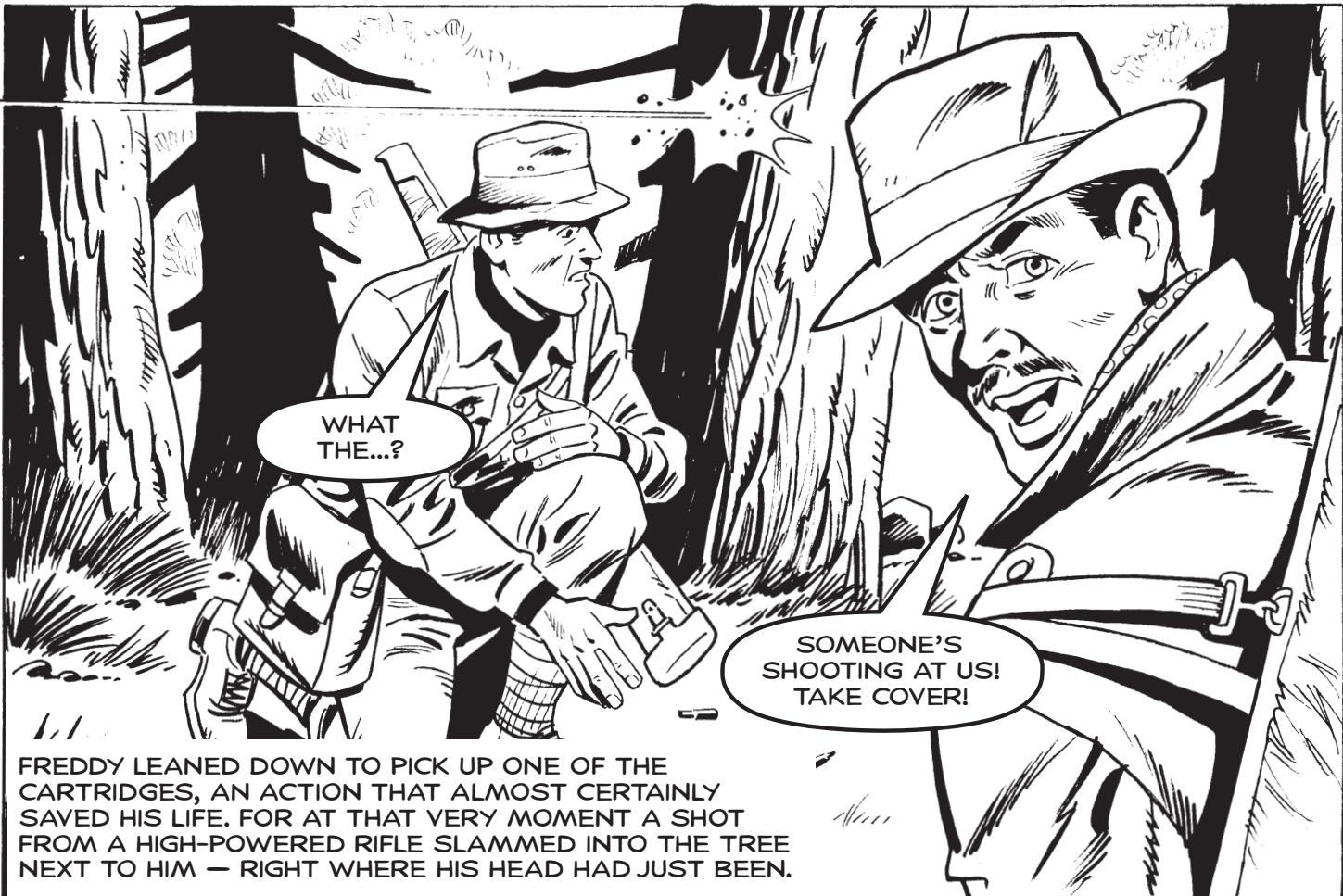
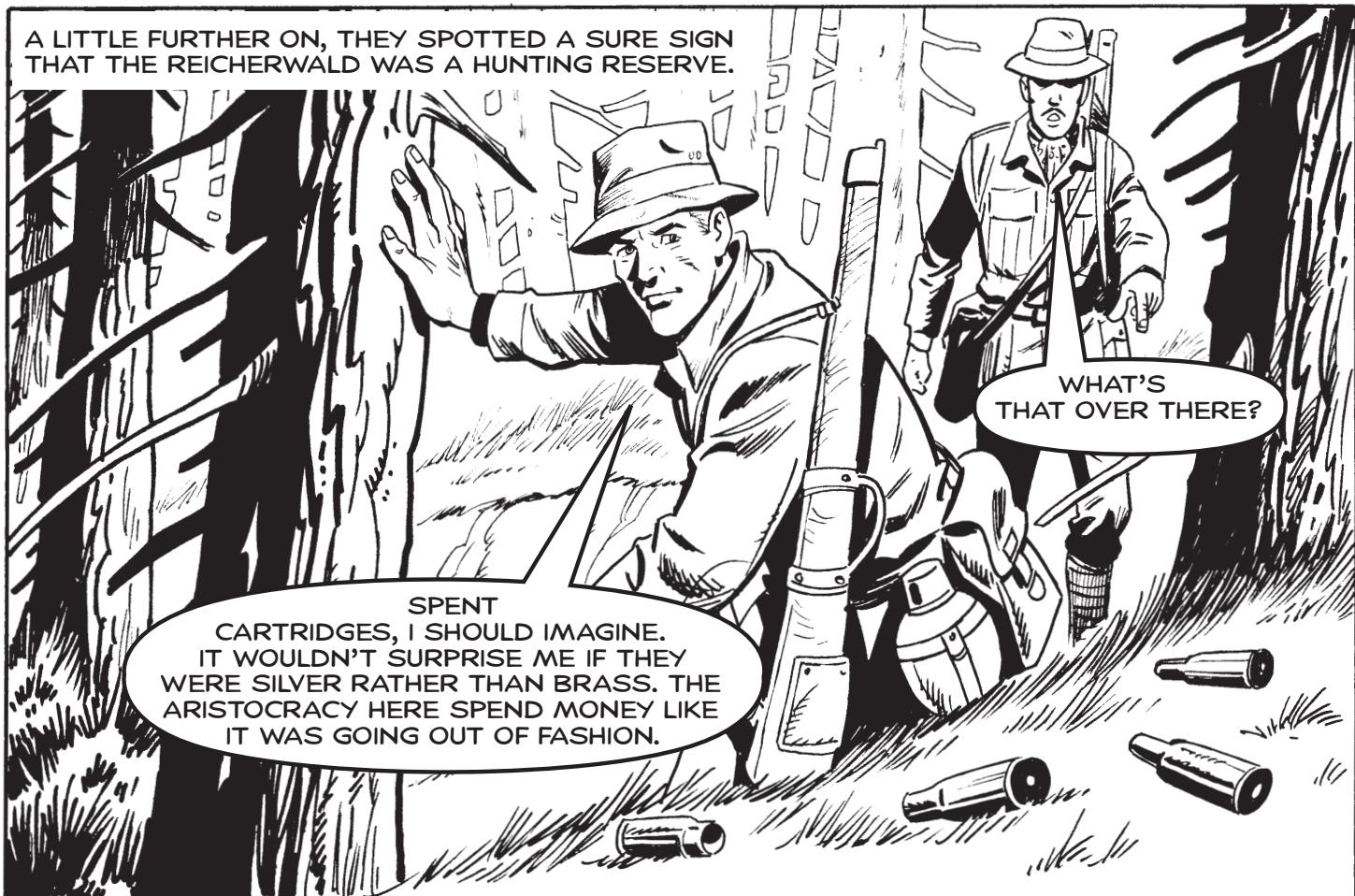
WE CAN EITHER CARRY ON THERE OR LOOK FOR THE BUILDING SHOWN BY THE OTHER GRID REFERENCE. TROUBLE IS THEY'RE IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS.

THEY DECIDED TO VISIT THE REICHERWALD FIRST AND BY EARLY AFTERNOON WERE CROSSING MUCH WILDER, UNTAMED COUNTRY.

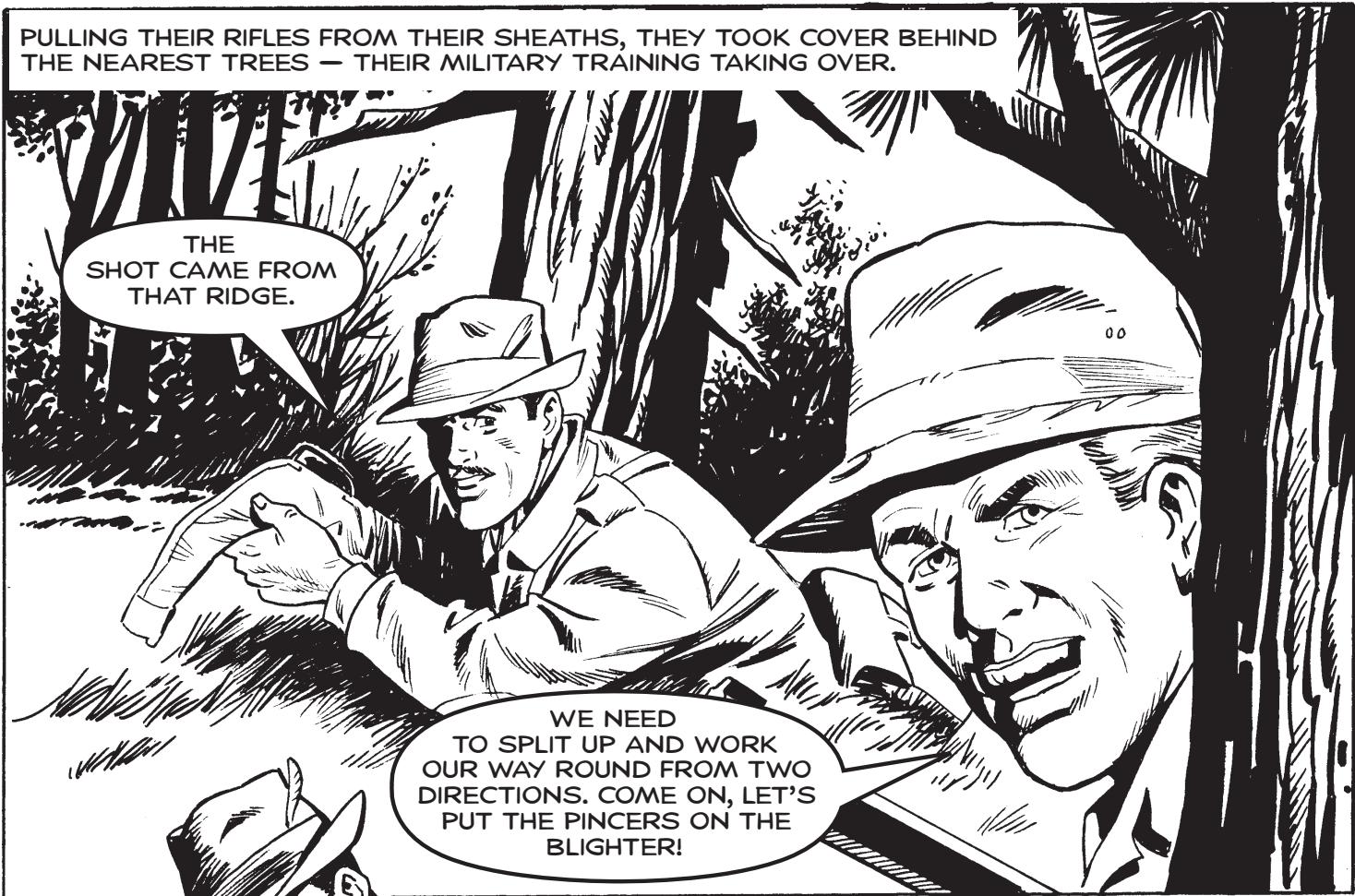
I SUPPOSE IT'S LEFT IN A MORE NATURAL STATE, LIKE THE ANCIENT ROYAL FORESTS OF ENGLAND RESERVED FOR THE KING'S HUNT ONLY.



IT CERTAINLY SEEMS TO BE TEEMING WITH GAME. LOOK, A WILD BOAR. YOU WON'T SEE ANY OF THOSE BACK HOME.



PULLING THEIR RIFLES FROM THEIR SHEATHS, THEY TOOK COVER BEHIND THE NEAREST TREES — THEIR MILITARY TRAINING TAKING OVER.



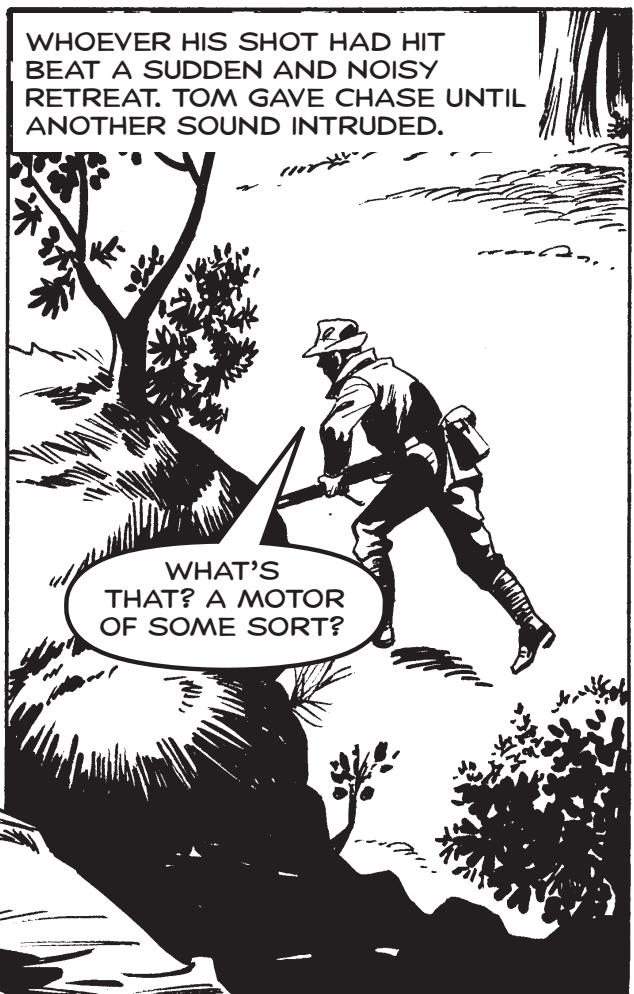
REACTING TO AN OVERRIDING SENSE OF DANGER TOM THREW HIMSELF DOWN AN INSTANT BEFORE WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A KILLING SHOT WHISTLED CLOSE BY.



CONSUMED BY FURY, TOM BLAZED AWAY AND WAS REWARDED BY A CRY OF PAIN FROM THE THICKET AHEAD.



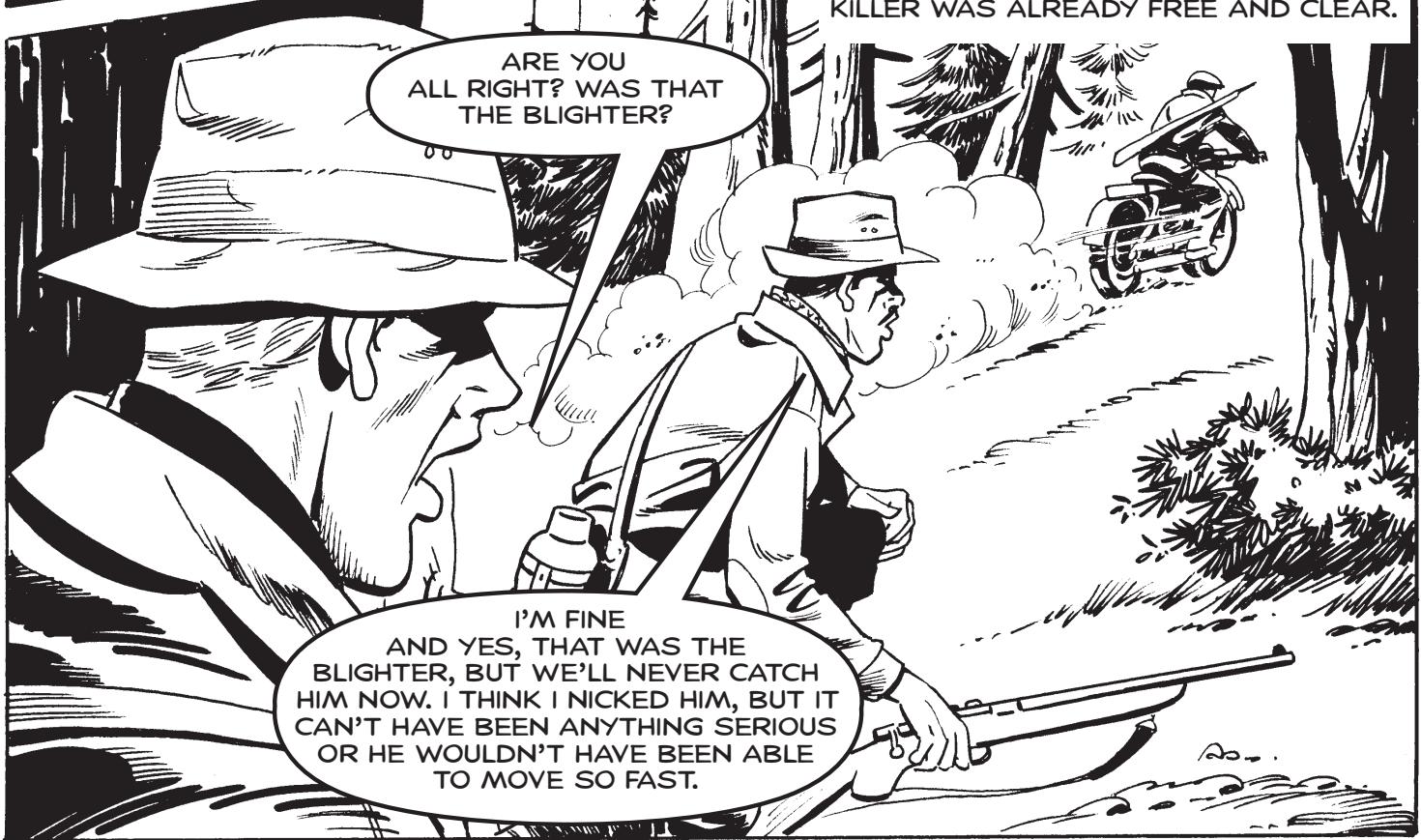
WHOEVER HIS SHOT HAD HIT BEAT A SUDDEN AND NOISY RETREAT. TOM GAVE CHASE UNTIL ANOTHER SOUND INTRUDED.



TOO LATE HE REALISED IT WAS A MOTORCYCLE ENGINE AND ONLY NARROWLY AVOIDED BEING RUN DOWN BY THE MASKED MAN ASTRIDE IT.

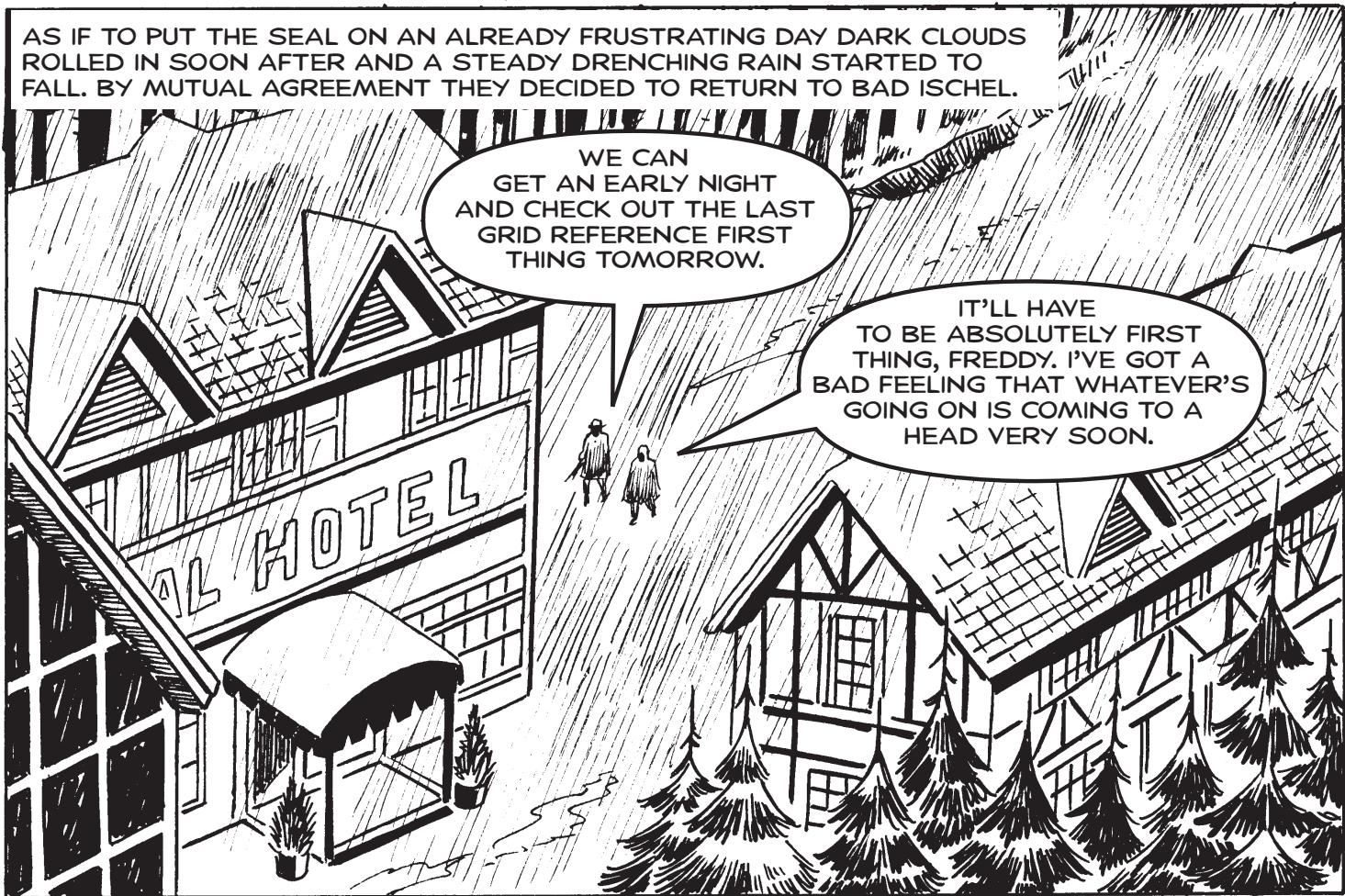


MOMENTS LATER FREDDY BURST ON TO THE SCENE, BUT THEIR WOULD-BE KILLER WAS ALREADY FREE AND CLEAR.



I'M FINE  
AND YES, THAT WAS THE  
BLIGHTER, BUT WE'LL NEVER CATCH  
HIM NOW. I THINK I NICKED HIM, BUT IT  
CAN'T HAVE BEEN ANYTHING SERIOUS  
OR HE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE  
TO MOVE SO FAST.

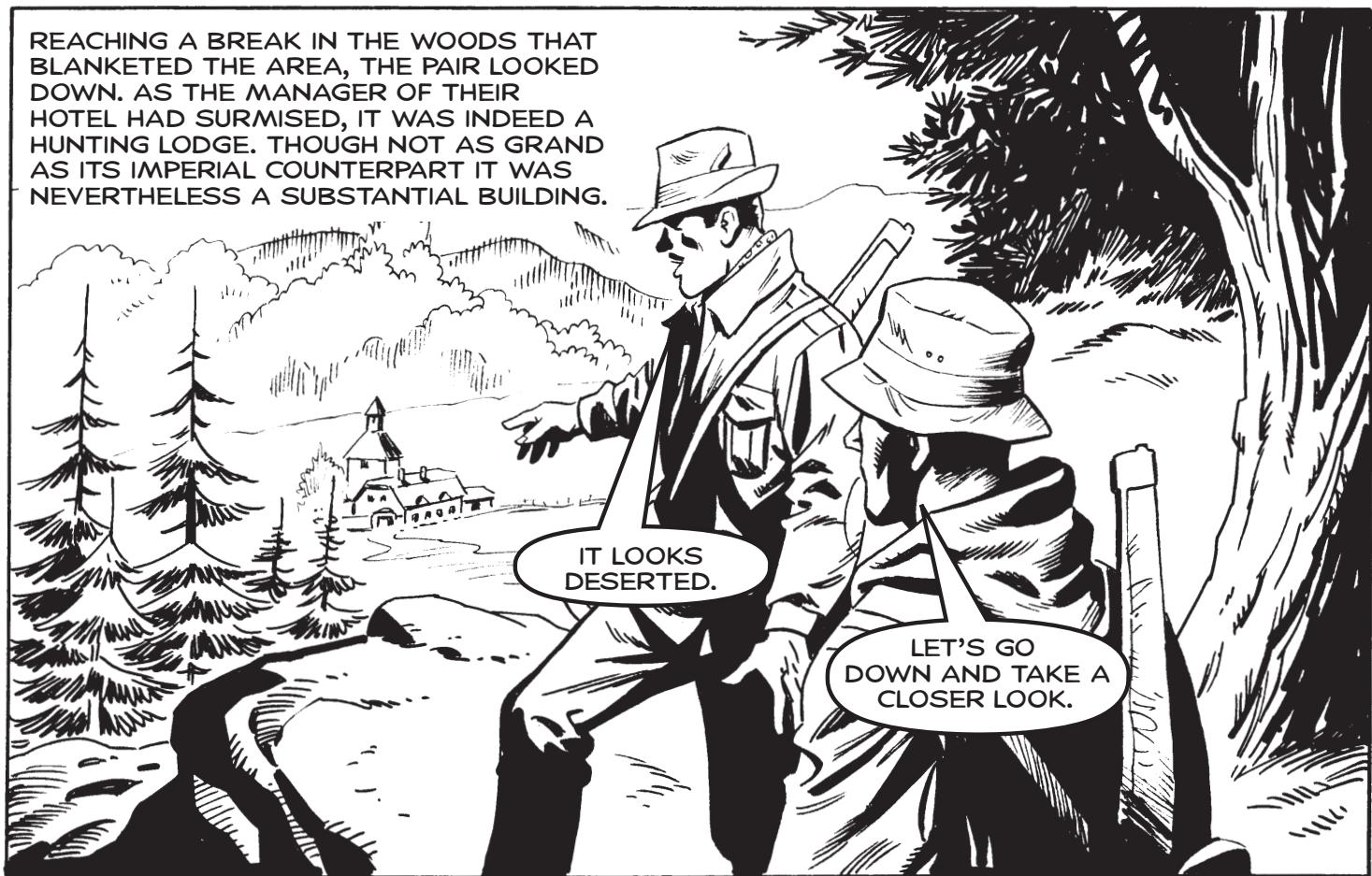
AS IF TO PUT THE SEAL ON AN ALREADY FRUSTRATING DAY DARK CLOUDS ROLLED IN SOON AFTER AND A STEADY DRENCHING RAIN STARTED TO FALL. BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT THEY DECIDED TO RETURN TO BAD ISCHEL.



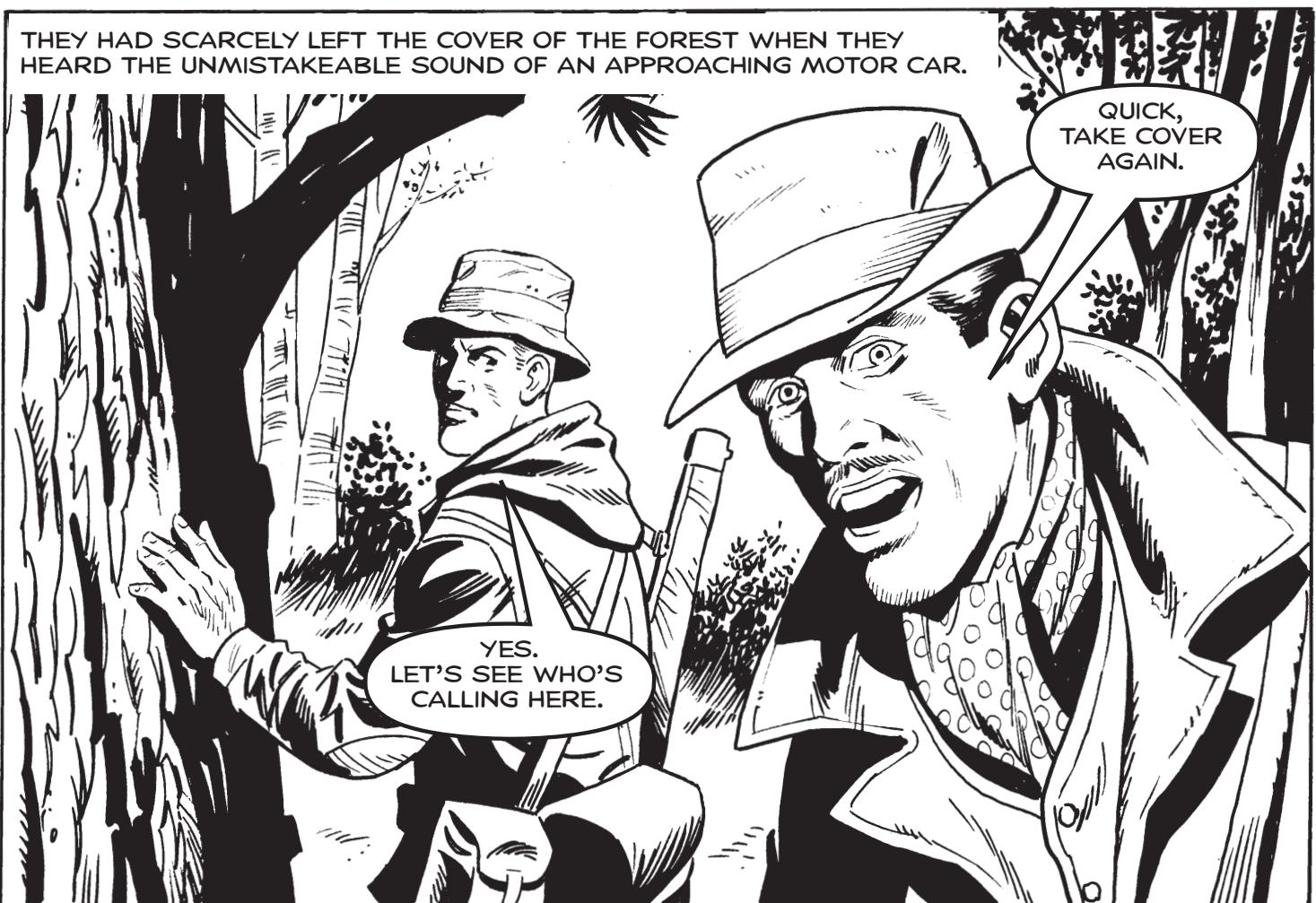
THE RAIN HAD STOPPED WHEN THEY SET OFF AT THE CRACK OF DAWN THE NEXT MORNING. AFTER A COUPLE OF HOURS OF FAST HIKING, THE PAIR WERE NEARING THEIR DESTINATION.



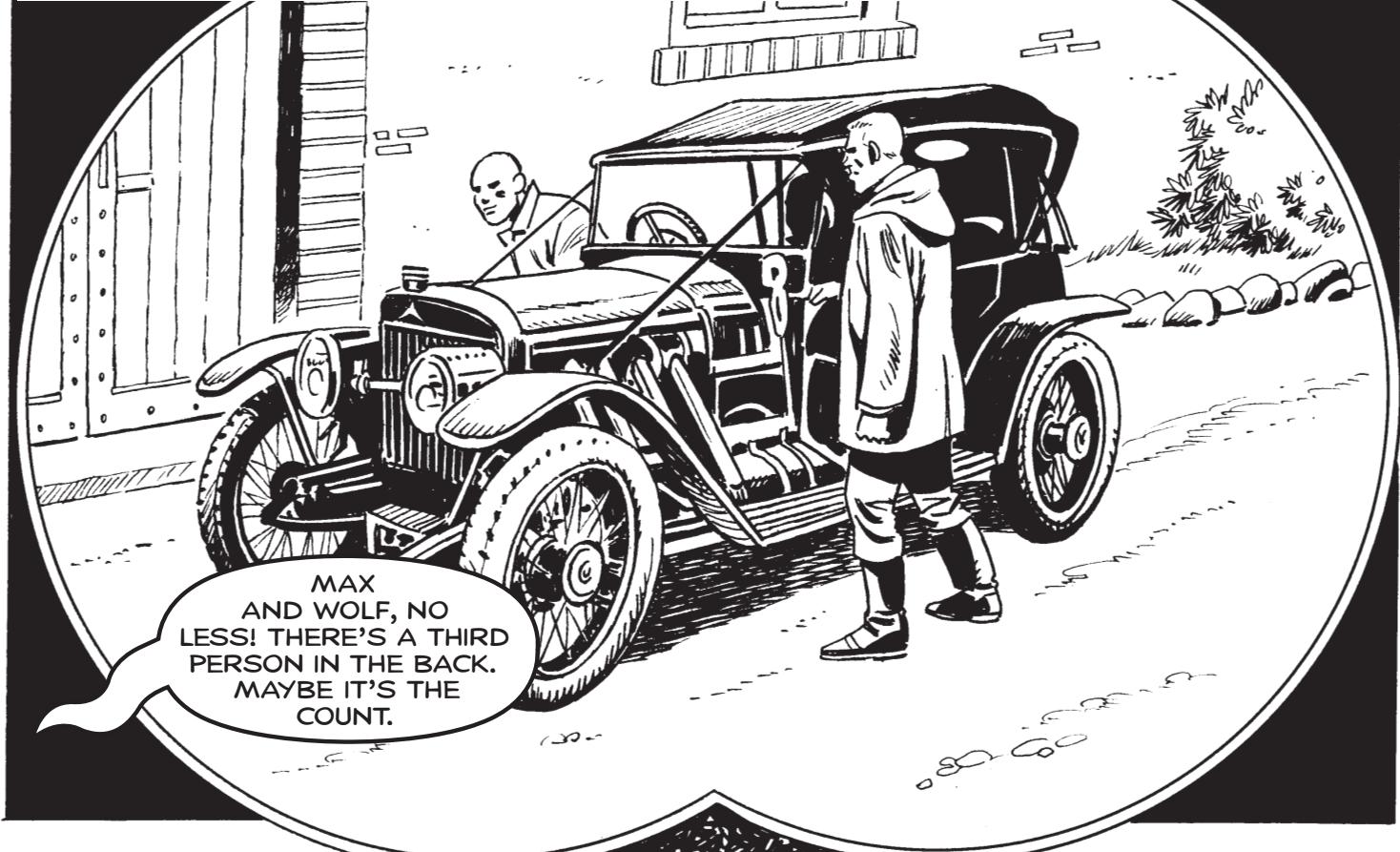
REACHING A BREAK IN THE WOODS THAT BLANKETED THE AREA, THE PAIR LOOKED DOWN. AS THE MANAGER OF THEIR HOTEL HAD SURMISED, IT WAS INDEED A HUNTING LODGE. THOUGH NOT AS GRAND AS ITS IMPERIAL COUNTERPART IT WAS NEVERTHELESS A SUBSTANTIAL BUILDING.



THEY HAD SCARCELY LEFT THE COVER OF THE FOREST WHEN THEY HEARD THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF AN APPROACHING MOTOR CAR.



A MERCEDES KNIGHT CAR PULLED UP OUTSIDE THE FRONT OF THE LODGE. TRAINING THE BINOCULARS HE HAD BROUGHT ALONG ON THE TWO MEN GETTING OUT OF THE CAR FREDDY GAVE A GASP.



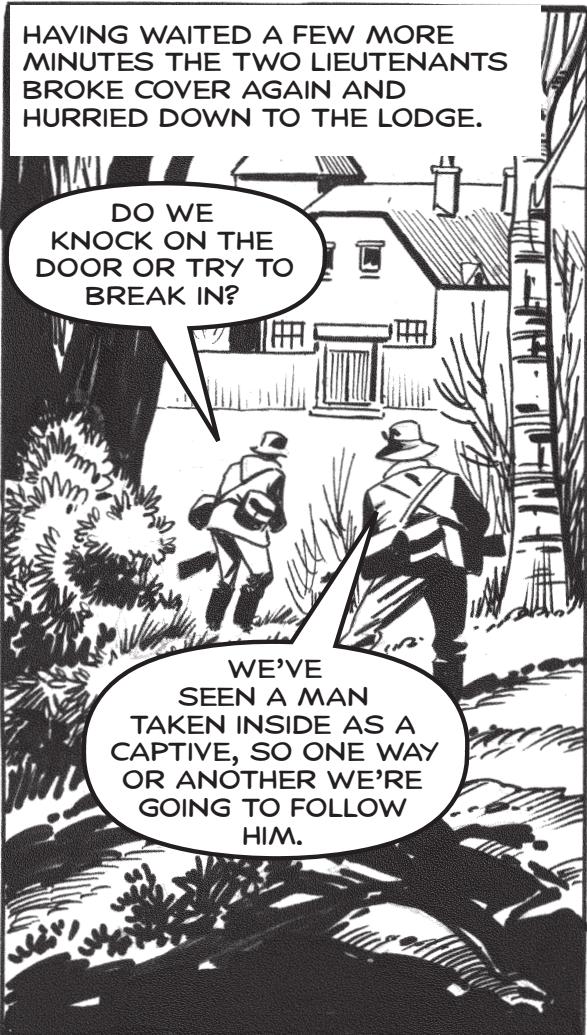
BUT INSTEAD OF THE COUNT IT WAS THE LAST PERSON THEY EXPECTED TO SEE WHO WAS DRAGGED FROM THE CAR.



TEN MINUTES LATER MAX AND WOLF REAPPEARED FROM INSIDE THE LODGE, GOT INTO THE CAR AND DROVE OFF.



HAVING WAITED A FEW MORE MINUTES THE TWO LIEUTENANTS BROKE COVER AGAIN AND HURRIED DOWN TO THE LODGE.



IT TURNED OUT THAT THERE WAS NO NEED TO BREAK IN AS THE FRONT DOOR WAS SLIGHTLY AJAR. TOM PUSHED ON IT GENTLY.



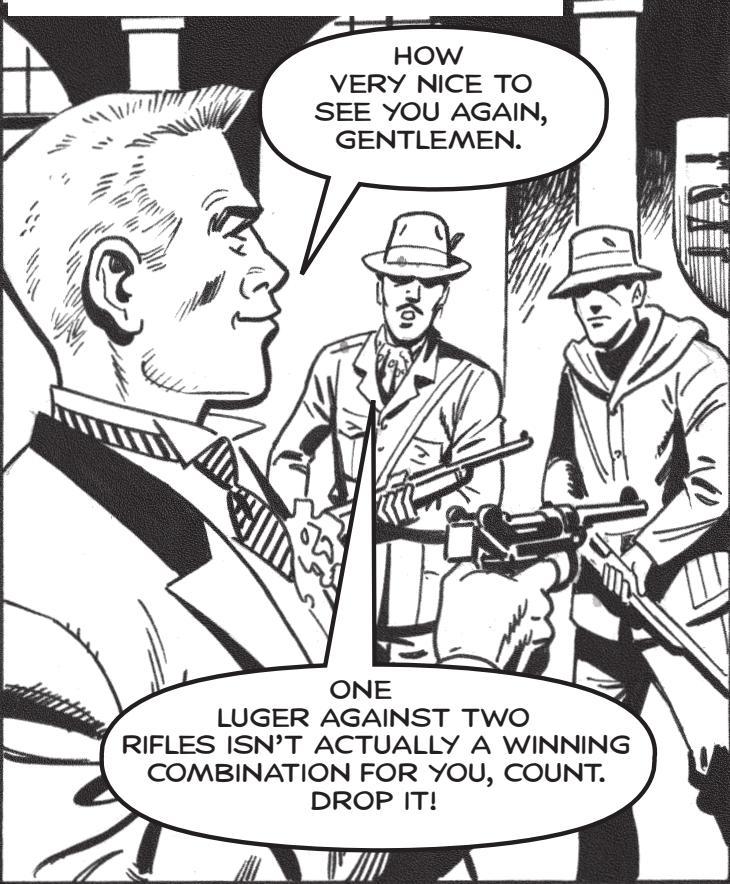
THEY CAUTIOUSLY SLIPPED INSIDE TO FIND A HALLWAY LEADING TO A LARGE WELL-APPOINTED WOOD-PANELLED ROOM.



TOM PICKED UP A PAIR OF BLACK GLOVES FROM A HALL TABLE. THE RIGHT HAND ONE WAS RATHER UNUSUAL.



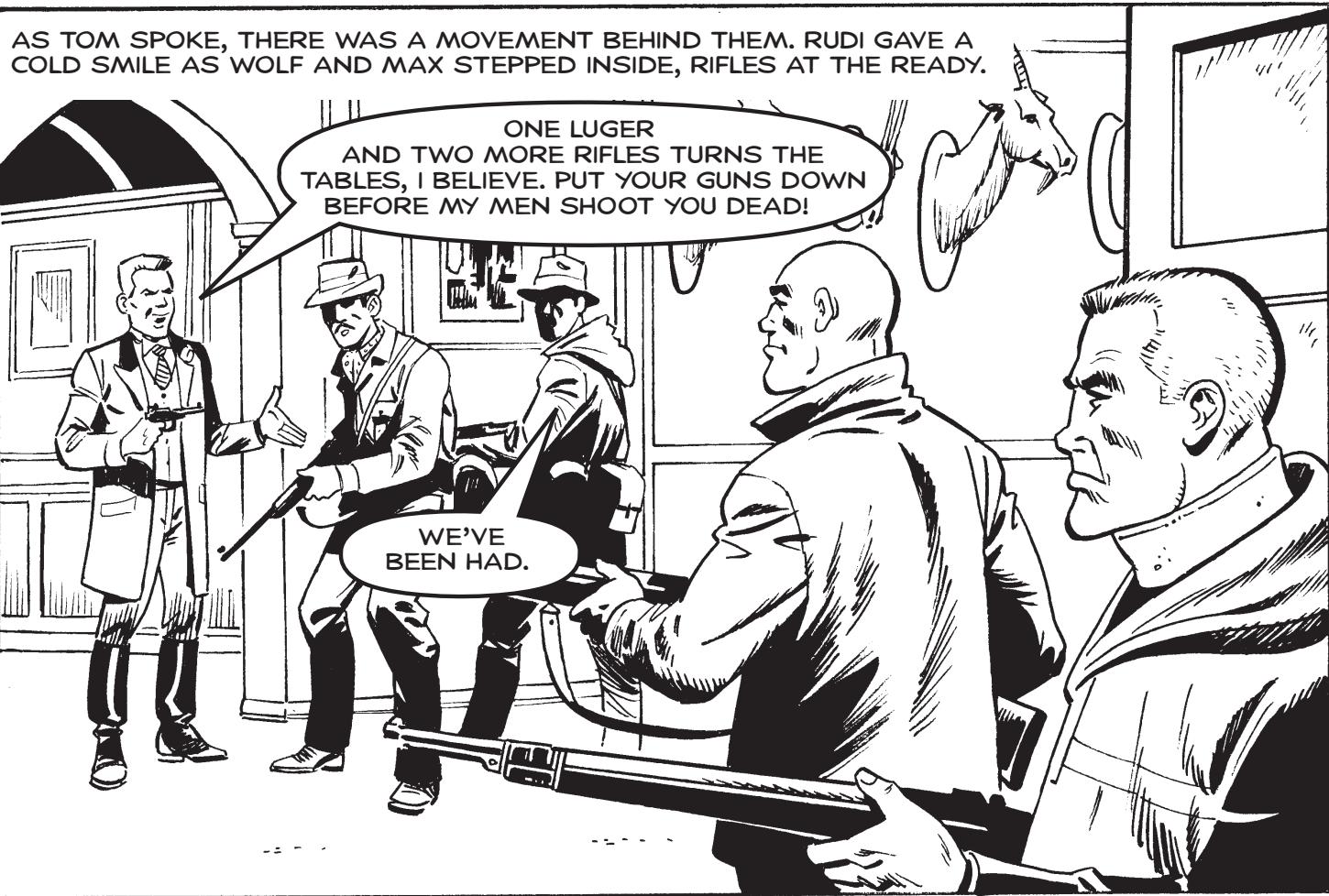
WITHOUT WARNING, THE GLOVE-WEARER HIMSELF STEPPED INTO SIGHT POINTING A LUGER AT THEM.



AS TOM SPOKE, THERE WAS A MOVEMENT BEHIND THEM. RUDI GAVE A COLD SMILE AS WOLF AND MAX STEPPED INSIDE, RIFLES AT THE READY.

ONE LUGER  
AND TWO MORE RIFLES TURNS THE TABLES, I BELIEVE. PUT YOUR GUNS DOWN BEFORE MY MEN SHOOT YOU DEAD!

WE'VE  
BEEN HAD.

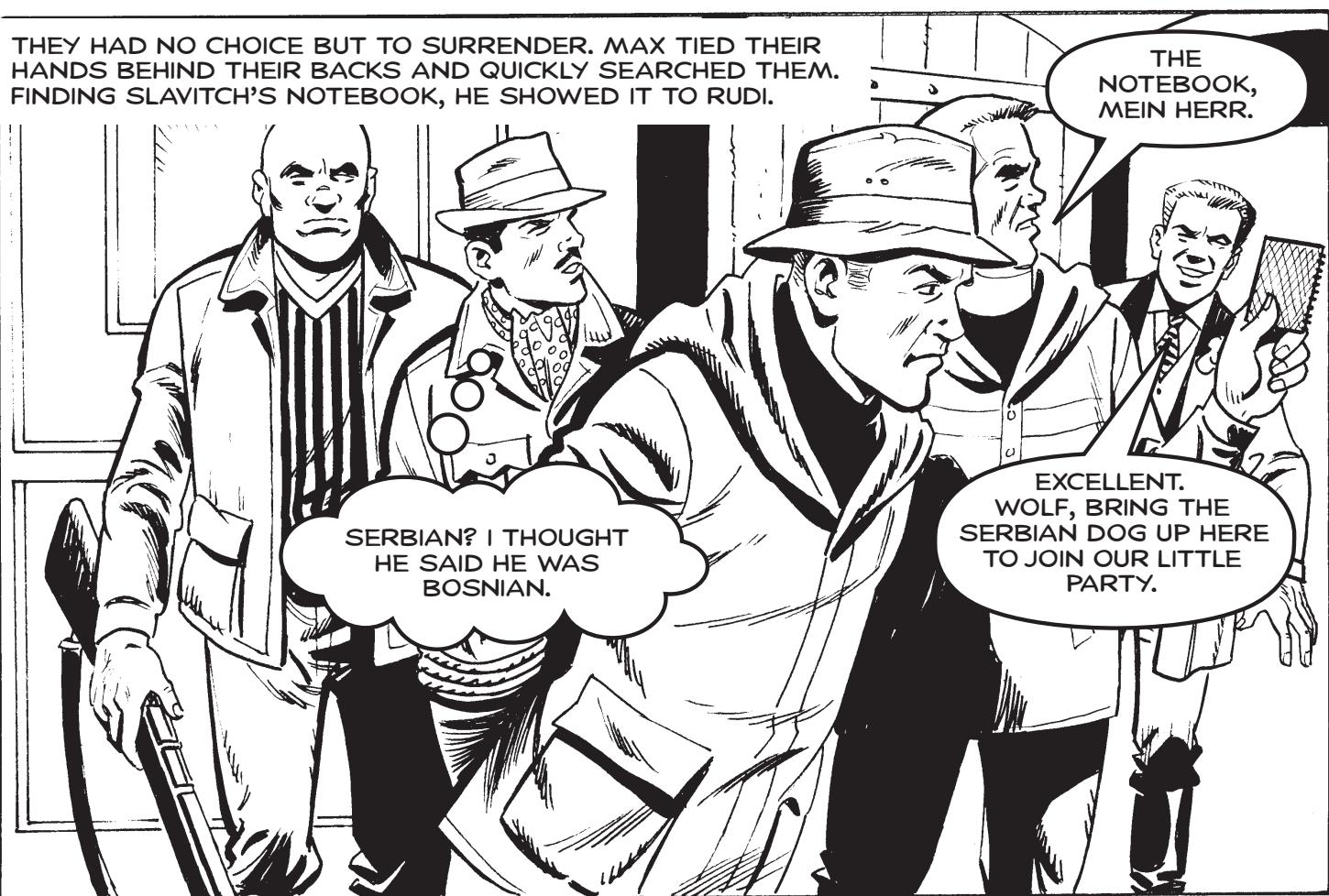


THEY HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO SURRENDER. MAX TIED THEIR HANDS BEHIND THEIR BACKS AND QUICKLY SEARCHED THEM. FINDING SLAVITCH'S NOTEBOOK, HE SHOWED IT TO RUDI.

THE  
NOTEBOOK,  
MEIN HERR.

SERBIAN? I THOUGHT  
HE SAID HE WAS  
BOSNIAN.

EXCELLENT.  
WOLF, BRING THE  
SERBIAN DOG UP HERE  
TO JOIN OUR LITTLE  
PARTY.



AS THEY WAITED RUDI POINTED OUT OF A WINDOW. HE HAD SEEN THE TWO BRITISH LIEUTENANTS EMERGE BRIEFLY FROM THE WOODS JUST BEFORE HIS MEN ARRIVED WITH SLAVITCH.



RUDI SMUGLY EXPLAINED HOW SLAVITCH HAD ENDED UP AT THE LODGE.



LED IN BY WOLF, SLAVITCH'S EYES WIDENED AS HE SAW TOM AND FREDDY.

AS USUAL  
HERR SLAVITCH USED  
THE COVER OF A BOSNIAN  
BUSINESSMAN WHEN FIRST YOU  
MET, BUT PERHAPS HE WILL TELL  
YOU WHO HE REALLY IS.

I'M A  
SERBIAN AGENT INVESTIGATING THE  
BLACK HAND, AN ORGANISATION PREPARED TO  
GO TO ANY LENGTHS TO CREATE AN INDEPENDENT  
SOUTH SLAV STATE. I WORK SECRETLY FOR MY  
PRIME MINISTER BECAUSE THEY HAVE MEMBERS IN  
HIGH PLACES. HE FEARS THEY ARE PLANNING AN  
ATROCITY THAT WILL BRING THE MIGHT OF THE  
EMPIRE DOWN ON MY COUNTRY.

HE'S ACTUALLY A  
FINE INVESTIGATOR. HE UNCOVERED THE  
MAP REFERENCES AND DEDUCED THAT THE BLACK  
HAND WAS PLANNING TO ASSASSINATE FRANZ-JOSEF  
DURING HIS SUMMER RETREAT TO BAD ISCHEL,  
WHERE SECURITY IS MORE RELAXED.

METHINKS  
YOU SPEAK OF  
YOURSELF, COUNT.

HE DIDN'T  
REALISE THAT EVEN THE BLACK HAND  
ISN'T CRAZY ENOUGH TO RISK THE RETALIATION  
SUCH A CRIME WOULD BRING. OTHERS, HOWEVER, ARE  
LESS INTERESTED IN THE CONSEQUENCES FOR SERBIA  
AND MORE CONCERNED WITH THE WIDER EUROPEAN  
RAMIFICATIONS.

REALISATION NOW DAWNED ON SLAVITCH.

GERMAN  
INTELLIGENCE BELIEVES  
THE BLACK HAND WILL ATTEMPT  
TO ASSASSINATE THE EMPEROR'S  
NEPHEW AND HEIR, ARCHDUKE  
FRANZ FERDINAND. THAT PROBABLY  
WOULD'NT START A WAR — KILLING  
THE EMPEROR CERTAINLY  
WILL.

RUSSIA  
WILL SUPPORT SERBIA  
AGAINST AUSTRIA. GERMANY  
WILL SUPPORT AUSTRIA, OBLIGING  
FRANCE TO ALIY ITSELF WITH RUSSIA.  
BRITAIN WILL WISELY STAY NEUTRAL  
WHILE GERMAN MILITARY MIGHT  
DEFEATS FRANCE AND THEN  
RUSSIA!

YOU  
SOUND AS IF THAT'S  
WHAT YOU REALLY WANT, AN  
ALL-OUT EUROPEAN WAR.

RUDI SPELLED OUT HIS REASONING  
WITH THE CERTAINTY OF A TRUE  
FANATIC. FOR HIM AND HIS LIKE-  
MINDED ASSOCIATES, THE ISSUES  
WERE CLEAR CUT.

THE  
AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE IS  
DISINTEGRATING. WAR WILL HASTEN ITS  
COLLAPSE AND ALLOW A VICTORIOUS GERMANY  
TO ABSORB ALL THE GERMAN-SPEAKING LANDS  
INTO A VIGOROUS REICH. A NEW GREAT  
POWER WILL BE BORN!

PERHAPS  
NOT!

SOUNDS LIKE AN  
AWFUL LOT OF  
IFS, BUTS AND  
MAYBES.

THE SERBIAN AGENT HAD WORKED OUT EXACTLY WHAT RUDI AND HIS PALS WERE PLANNING.

THEY ARE GOING TO ASSASSINATE THE EMPEROR AND BLAME THE BLACK HAND. I HAVE NO DOUBT I WILL BE THE SERBIAN ASSASSIN CAUGHT WITH THE SMOKING GUN, SO TO SPEAK, AND THEN CONVENIENTLY SHOT DEAD TRYING TO GET AWAY.

EXCELLENT, SLAVITCH. THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN. AS FOR THESE ENGLISH MEDDLERS, THEY WILL BE FOUND ROPE TOGETHER AT THE BOTTOM OF A CLIFF. TRAGIC HIKING ACCIDENTS AREN'T UNCOMMON IN THESE MOUNTAINS.

ON RUDI'S ORDERS THE BRITISH PAIR WERE TAKEN DOWN TO A CELLAR BY MAX.

YOU'LL NEVER GET AWAY WITH IT!

THE EMPEROR WILL BE HUNTING IN THE REICHERWALD TODAY. ONCE THE MISSION IS COMPLETED THE COUNT HAS TOLD ME TO RETURN TO DEAL WITH YOU TWO.

THE DOOR SLAMMED AND A MINUTE OR TWO LATER THE COUNT'S CAR DROVE OFF.



BEFORE THEY COULD DO ANYTHING, THOUGH, THERE WAS THE LITTLE MATTER OF FREEING THEIR BOUND HANDS. SITTING BACK TO BACK THEY WERE FORCED TO WORK BLIND.

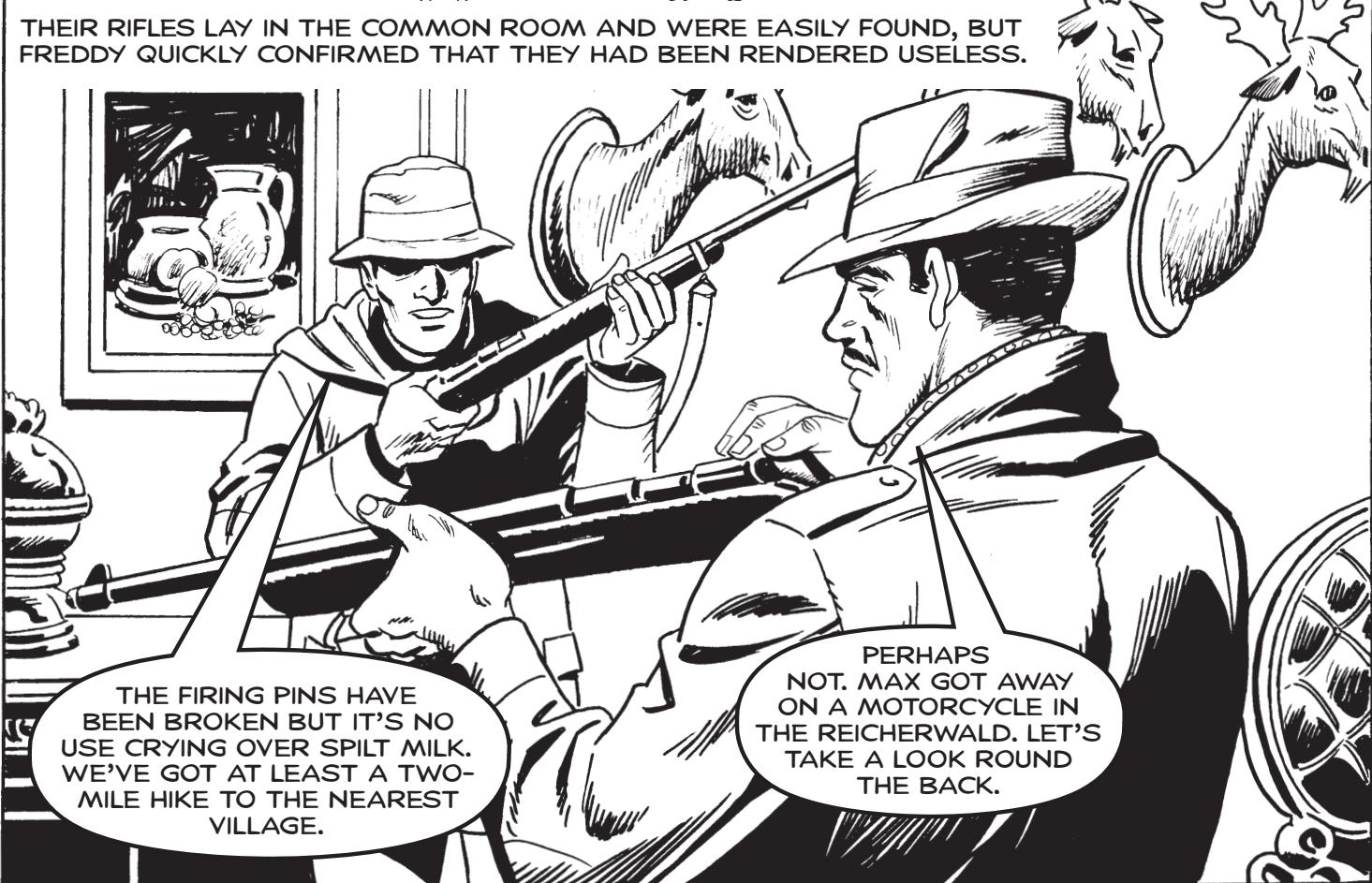


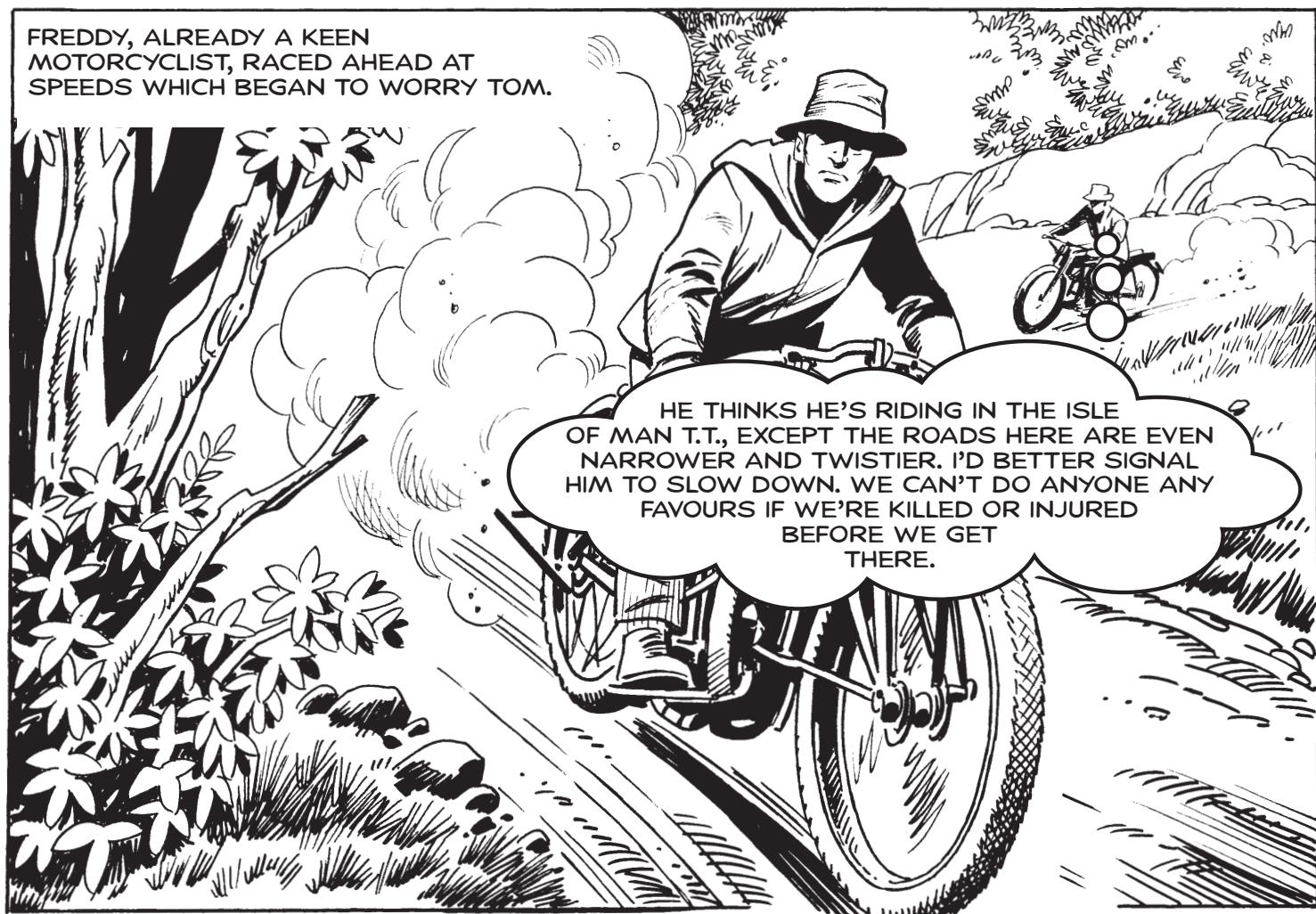
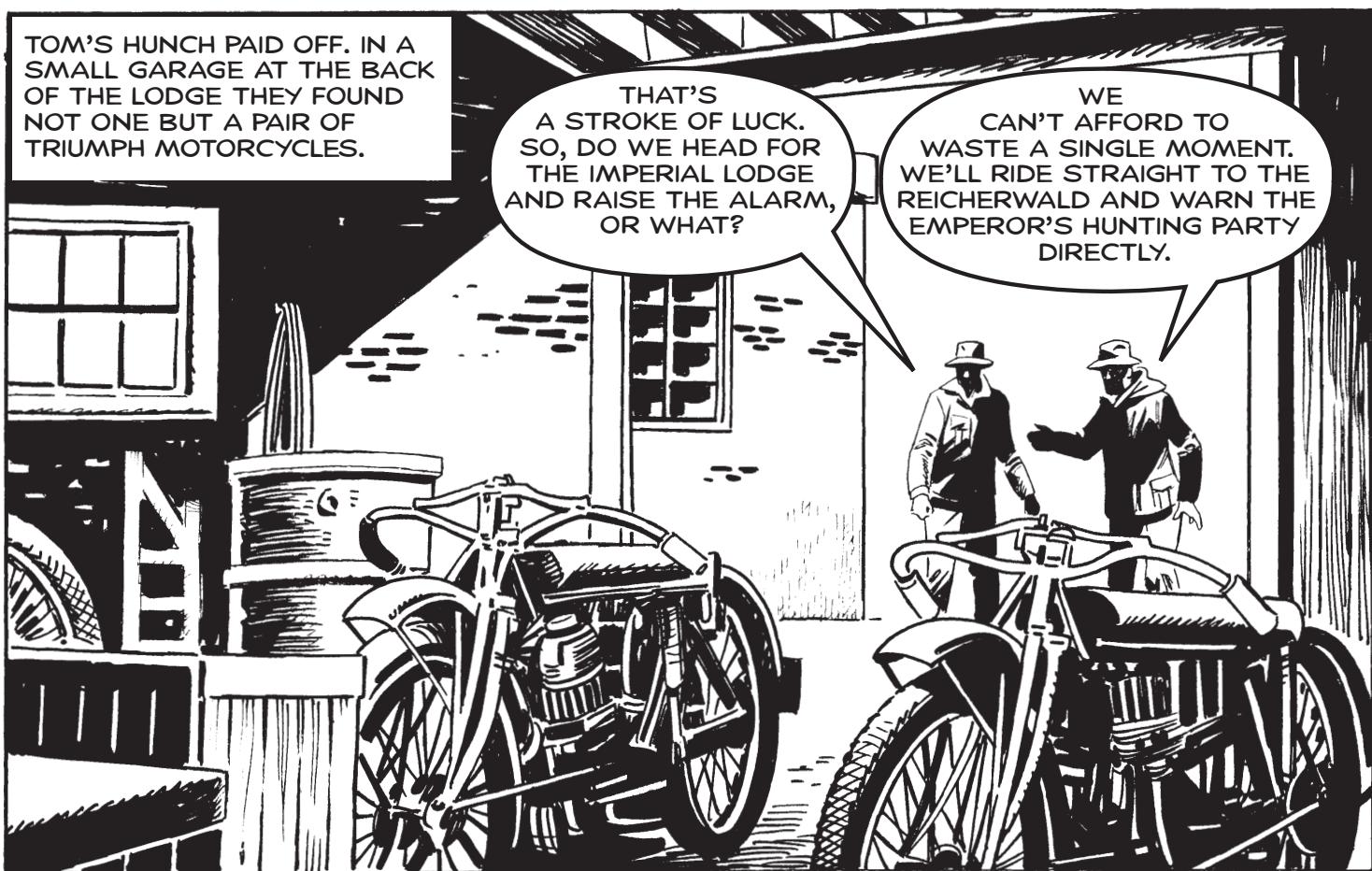


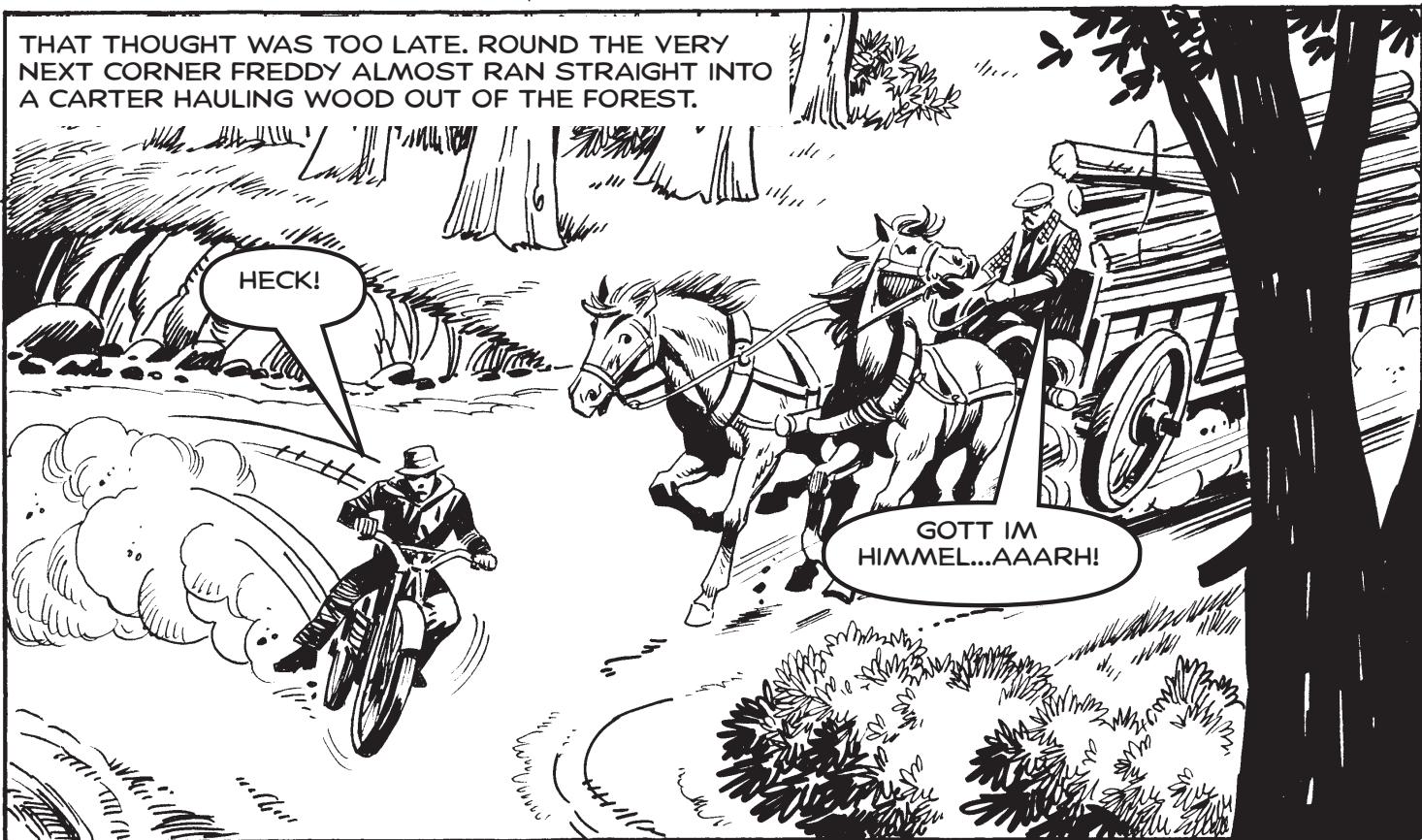
EACH DERRINGER HELD THREE SMALL CALIBRE ROUNDS. RECKONING THAT ONE SHOT MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH TO BREAK THE HEAVY LOCK THEY TOOK COVER IN CASE OF RICOCHETS AND TOM FIRED TWICE IN QUICK SUCCESSION.



THEIR RIFLES LAY IN THE COMMON ROOM AND WERE EASILY FOUND, BUT FREDDY QUICKLY CONFIRMED THAT THEY HAD BEEN RENDERED USELESS.







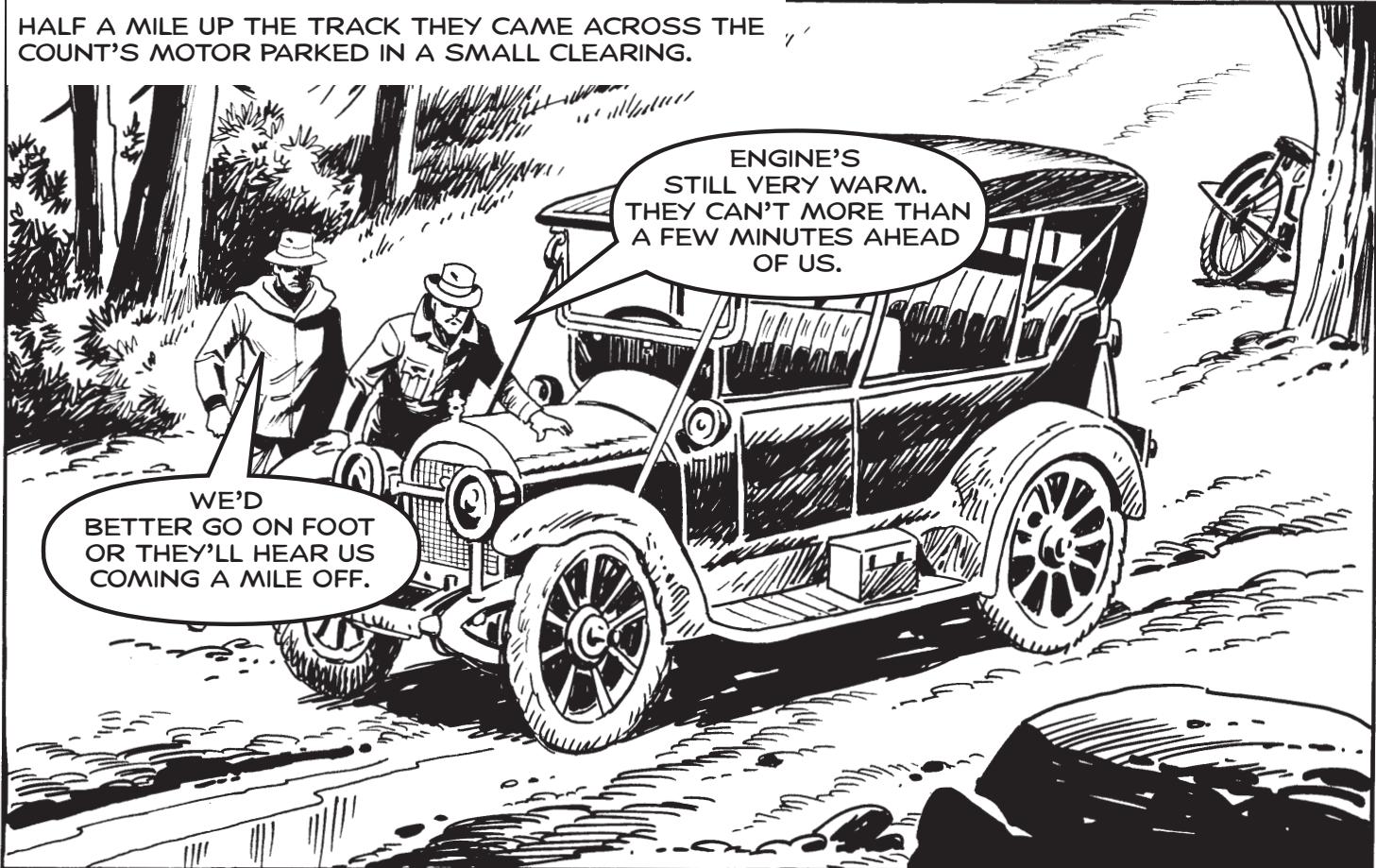
FORTUNATELY NO-ONE WAS HURT, BUT THE REARING HORSES MEANT THE CARTER'S LOAD ENDED UP ALL OVER THE PLACE, TO HIS EVIDENT ANGER. THE TWO RIDERS DECIDED TO PRESS ON.



AS THEY STOPPED ON THE FRINGES OF THE REICHERWALD IT DAWNED ON THEM THAT IT STRETCHED FOR MILES AND THAT THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO START LOOKING FOR THE EMPEROR'S HUNTING PARTY. THEN TOM SPOTTED SOMETHING.



HALF A MILE UP THE TRACK THEY CAME ACROSS THE  
COUNT'S MOTOR PARKED IN A SMALL CLEARING.



**FIND  
MORE  
FREE  
MAGAZINES**

**FREEMAGS.CC**

THE MUDDY CONDITIONS MADE FOLLOWING THE COUNT AND HIS MEN RELATIVELY SIMPLE.

THEY  
MUST KNOW WHERE  
THE EMPEROR'S GOING  
TO BE.

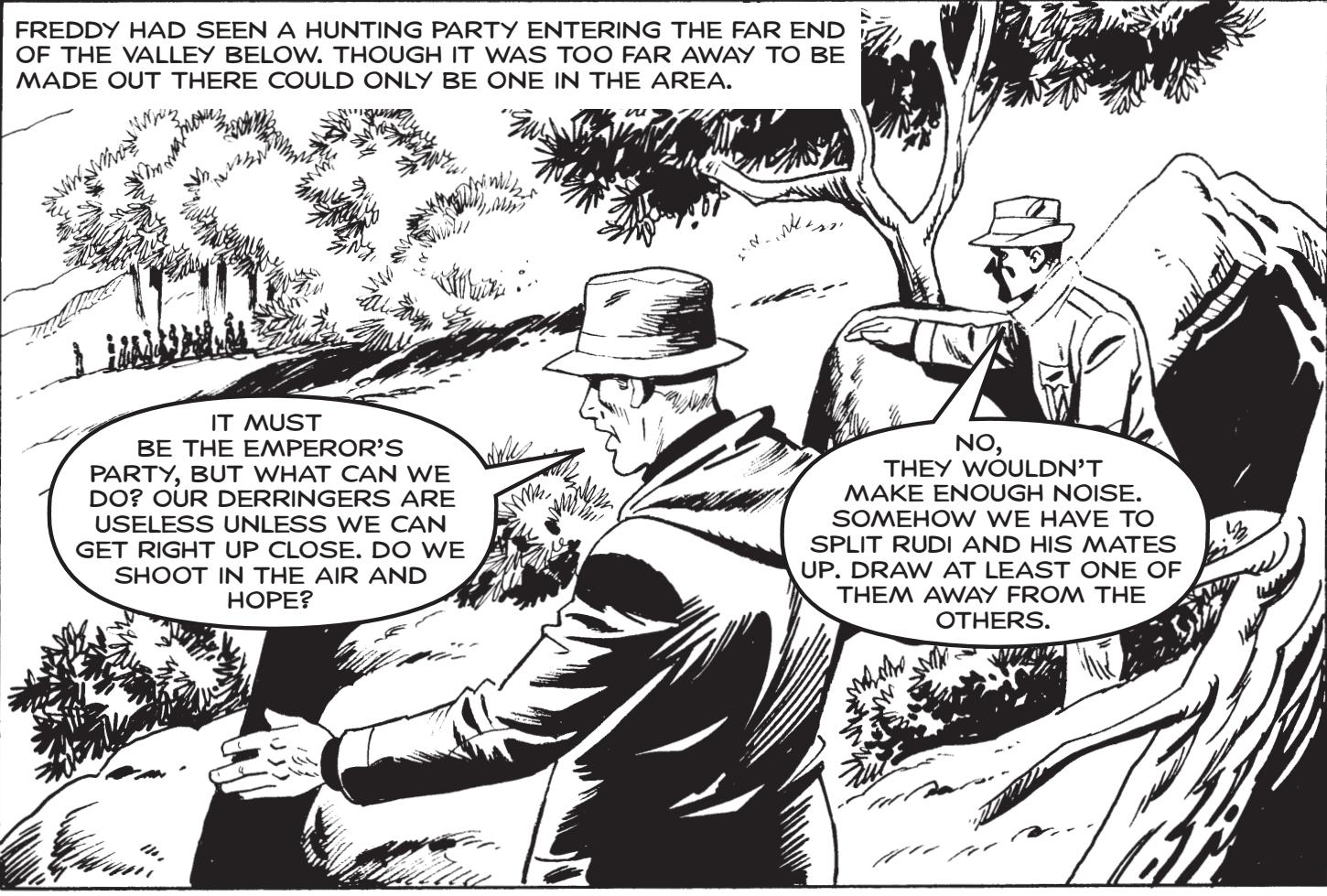
HE'S  
PROBABLY GOT A  
FAVOURITE SPOT, BUT  
WE DON'T KNOW WHERE  
IT IS. GO EASY, FREDDY.  
THE TREES THIN OUT  
AHEAD.

REACHING THE EDGE OF  
THE FOREST THEY SAW  
THE THREE MEN AND THEIR  
PRISONER A FEW HUNDRED  
YARDS AHEAD OF THEM.

THERE  
THEY ARE!

LOOK!

FREDDY HAD SEEN A HUNTING PARTY ENTERING THE FAR END OF THE VALLEY BELOW. THOUGH IT WAS TOO FAR AWAY TO BE MADE OUT THERE COULD ONLY BE ONE IN THE AREA.



IT MUST  
BE THE EMPEROR'S  
PARTY, BUT WHAT CAN WE  
DO? OUR DERRINGERS ARE  
USELESS UNLESS WE CAN  
GET RIGHT UP CLOSE. DO WE  
SHOOT IN THE AIR AND  
HOPE?

NO,  
THEY WOULDN'T  
MAKE ENOUGH NOISE.  
SOMEHOW WE HAVE TO  
SPLIT RUDI AND HIS MATES  
UP. DRAW AT LEAST ONE OF  
THEM AWAY FROM THE  
OTHERS.

PLANS DIDN'T COME ANY MORE  
MAKESHIFT THAN THIS ONE, BUT  
WITH THE AUSTRIAN EMPEROR'S  
LIFE AT STAKE THEY HAD TO TRY  
SOMETHING, HOWEVER DESPERATE.



I'LL CLIMB  
HIGHER AND LET THEM  
SEE ME. IF THEY OPEN  
FIRE IT MIGHT WARN THE  
EMPEROR'S PARTY.

THEY'LL  
PROBABLY THINK IT'S  
JUST SOME OTHER HUNTERS,  
BUT SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO. I'M  
GOING TO TRY AND GET AS CLOSE  
TO THE COUNT AND SLAVITCH AS I  
CAN WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED.

FREDDY TACKLED THE STEEP CLIMB WITH HIS USUAL DETERMINATION, TRYING TO KEEP HIS BEARINGS AS BEST HE COULD.

IN FACT IT WASN'T FAR ENOUGH. TO FREDDY'S HORROR HE EMERGED LESS THAN FIFTY YARDS FROM RUDI'S PARTY.



HARD TO TELL EXACTLY WHERE I'LL END UP, BUT IT SHOULDN'T BE TOO FAR FROM THOSE MURDERING SWINE.



OOPS,  
NOT QUITE  
ACCORDING  
TO PLAN.

TEUFEL,  
ONE OF THE  
ENGLANDERS!

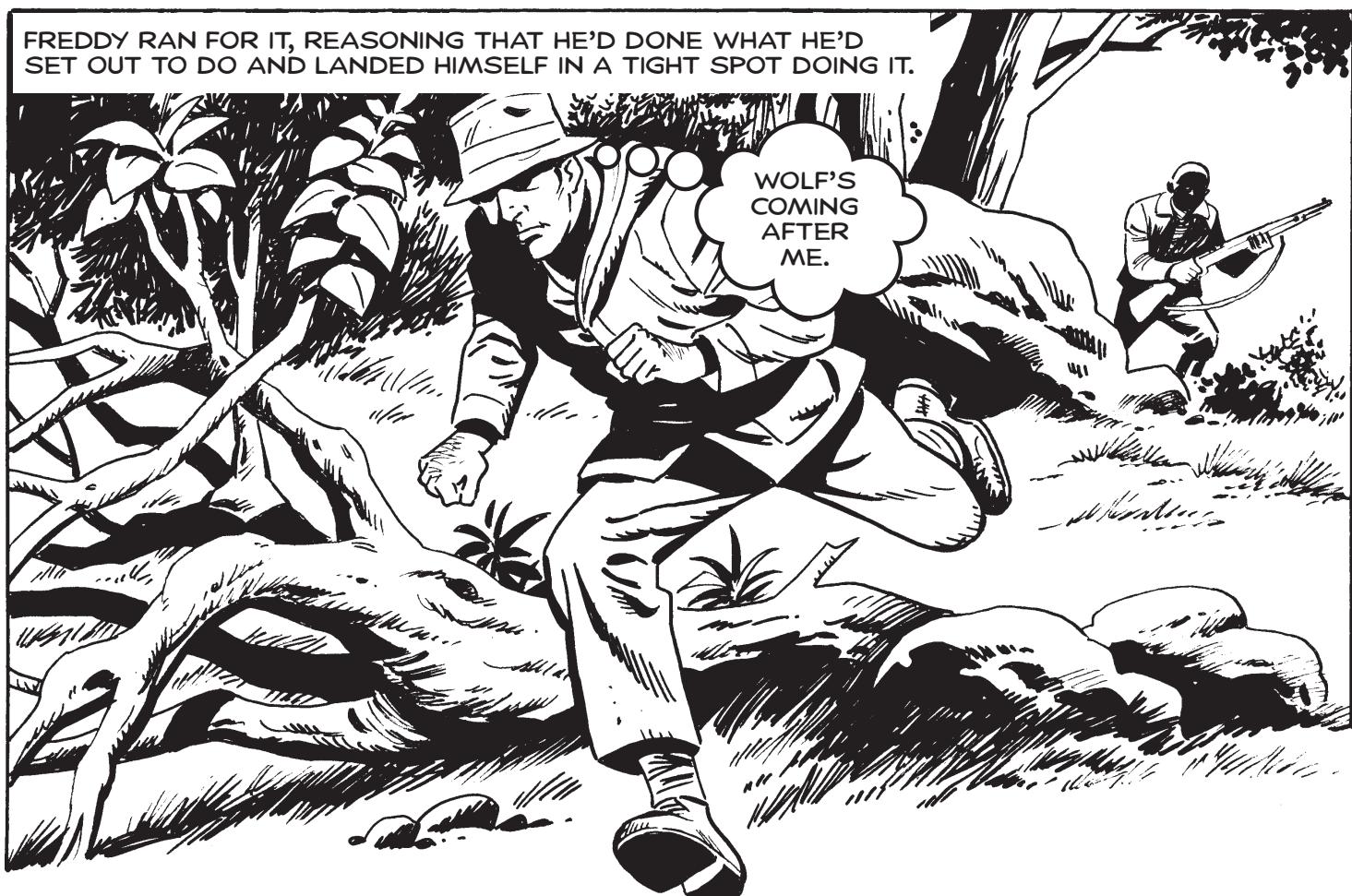


WOLF WHIPPED UP HIS RIFLE AND FIRED JUST AS FREDDY DIVED OUT OF THE WAY. RUDI SNARLED ANGRILY.

IDIOT,  
YOU'LL ATTRACT THE  
ATTENTION OF THE HUNTING  
PARTY. HE'S NOT ARMED, SO  
HUNT HIM DOWN AND FINISH HIM  
OFF. AND BE ON THE LOOK-OUT  
FOR THE OTHER ONE AS  
WELL.



FREDDY RAN FOR IT, REASONING THAT HE'D DONE WHAT HE'D SET OUT TO DO AND LANDED HIMSELF IN A TIGHT SPOT DOING IT.





THE NOISE ALERTED WOLF WHO CAME STRAIGHT TOWARDS HIM. INFURIATINGLY, THE GUN LAY JUST OUT OF HIS REACH.

I CAN'T LUNGE FOR THE BLASTED THING. HE'LL GET A SHOT OFF BEFORE I'M EVEN HALFWAY.



WOLF WAS ALMOST ON FREDDY'S HIDING PLACE WHEN HE SPOTTED THE DERRINGER AND FOR A PRECIOUS MOMENT TOOK HIS EYES OFF THE HUNT.

WAS IS DAS?

THIS IS MY CHANCE.



FREDDY EXPLODED INTO ACTION, CHARGING INTO WOLF LIKE A STAMPEDING ELEPHANT AND SENDING THEM BOTH CRASHING DOWN THE SLOPE.



STILL GRAPPLING WITH EACH OTHER THEY ROLLED INTO THE FAST-FLOWING STREAM AT THE BOTTOM OF THE INCLINE.



A RAPIDLY INCREASING ROARING SOUND WARNED FREDDY OF APPROACHING DANGER AND HE KICKED FREE OF WOLF.



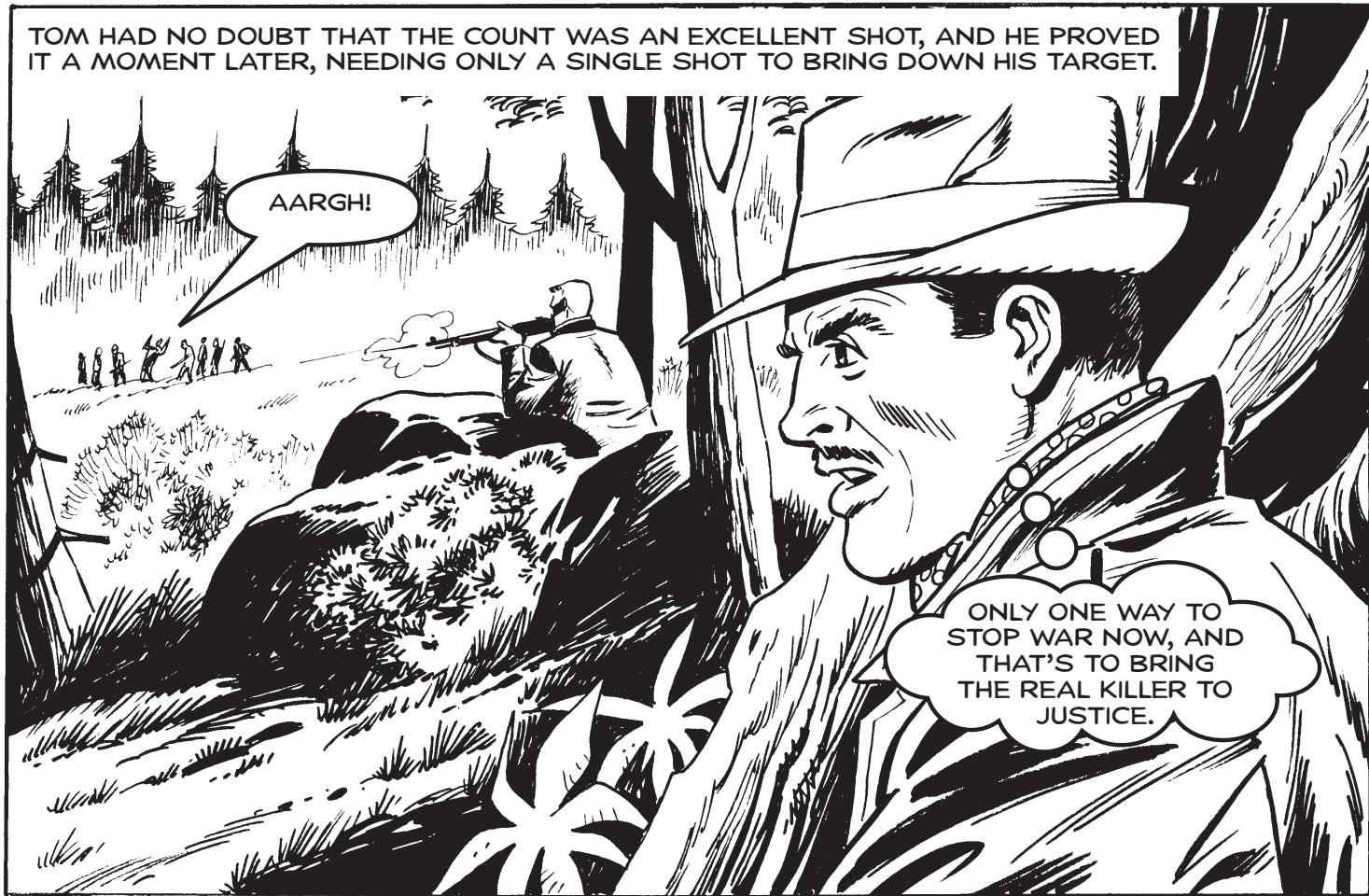
HE GRABBED AN OVERHANGING BRANCH AND HELD ON FOR DEAR LIFE. WOLF, HOWEVER, WASN'T SO LUCKY.



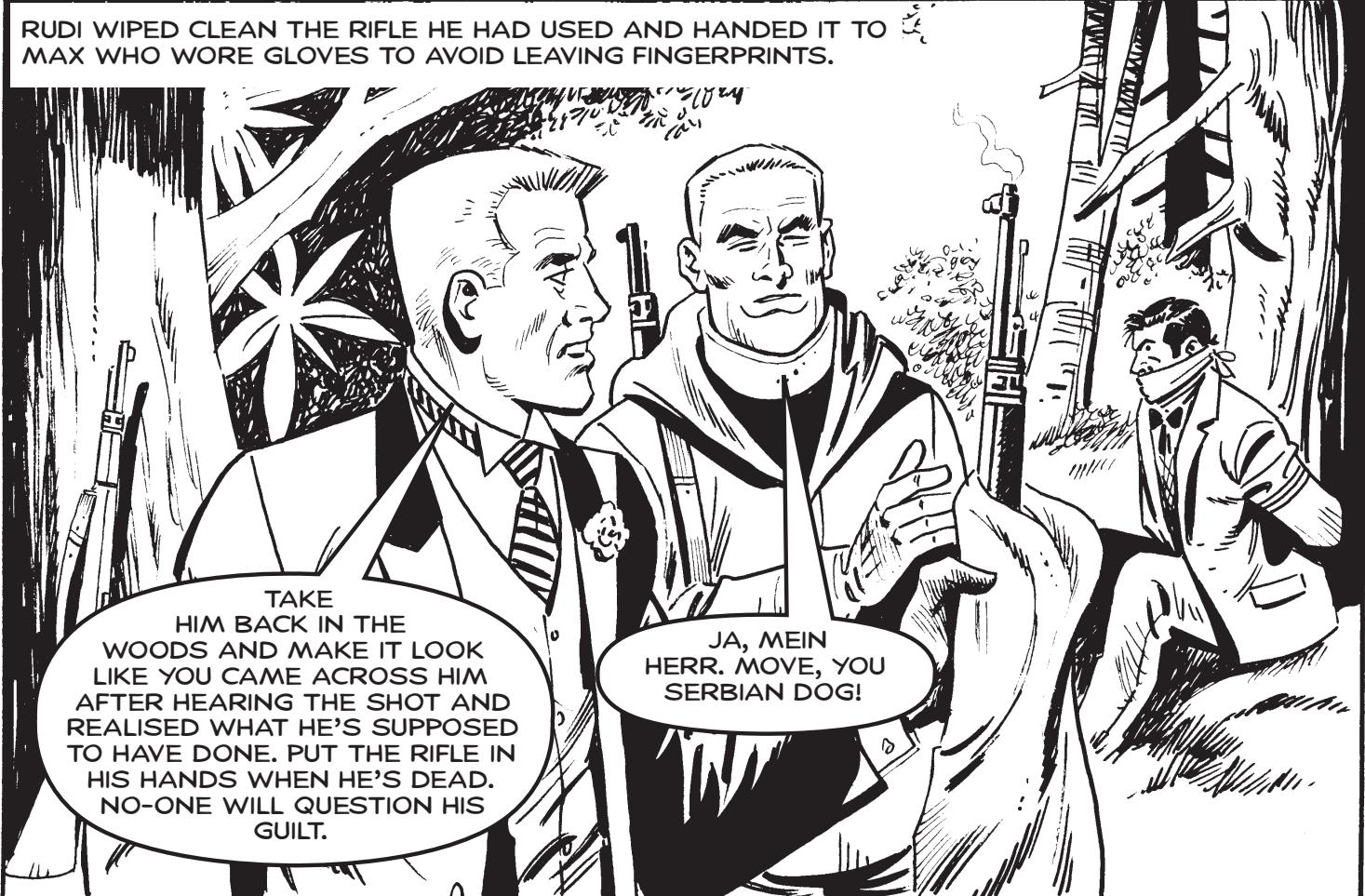
IN MANY WAYS TOM'S JOB WAS HARDER AS IT WAS TWO AGAINST ONE AND IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO GET CLOSE WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED. SEEING RUDI TAKE CAREFUL AIM, HE KNEW HE WAS TOO LATE.



TOM HAD NO DOUBT THAT THE COUNT WAS AN EXCELLENT SHOT, AND HE PROVED IT A MOMENT LATER, NEEDING ONLY A SINGLE SHOT TO BRING DOWN HIS TARGET.



RUDI WIPE CLEAN THE RIFLE HE HAD USED AND HANDED IT TO MAX WHO WORE GLOVES TO AVOID LEAVING FINGERPRINTS.



MAX SET ABOUT HIS WORK WITH BRUTAL EFFICIENCY. BUT SLAVITCH THOUGHT HE SAW SOMETHING AFTER THEY WERE OUT OF RUDI'S SIGHT.



MOMENTS LATER TOM STEPPED SILENTLY OUT OF COVER IMMEDIATELY BEHIND THE GERMAN AND SWUNG A HEAVY BRANCH INTO THE BACK OF HIS HEAD WITH TREMENDOUS FORCE.



TOM KNEW HE HADN'T A SECOND TO WASTE. SNATCHING UP MAX'S FALLEN RIFLE HE SET OFF WITH A FEW TERSE WORDS TO SLAVITCH, WHO UNDERSTOOD COMPLETELY.



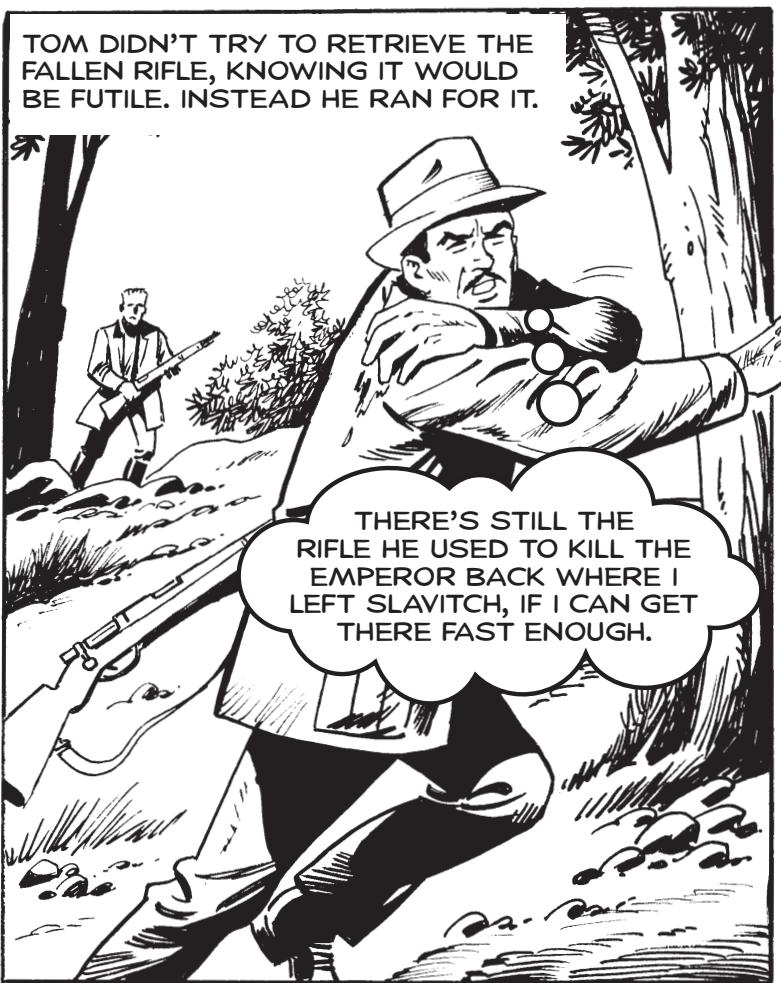
LESS THAN A MINUTE HAD PASSED SINCE MAX HAD SET OFF WITH SLAVITCH, BUT RUDI HAD ALREADY DISAPPEARED.



THE ANSWER CAME WITH SHOCKING SUDDENNESS AS, FROM COVER HIGHER UP, RUDI FIRED, HITTING TOM'S SHOULDER AND CAUSING HIM TO DROP MAX'S RIFLE.



TOM DIDN'T TRY TO RETRIEVE THE FALLEN RIFLE, KNOWING IT WOULD BE FUTILE. INSTEAD HE RAN FOR IT.



BUT THERE WAS TO BE NO SECOND CHANCE. RUDI FIRED AGAIN AND TOM WENT DOWN.



THIS TIME THE SHOT HAD GRAZED HIS SKULL, AND THIS TIME ALSO THERE WOULD BE NO ESCAPE FROM THE MAN WHO CLOSED IN, DETERMINED TO KILL HIM.

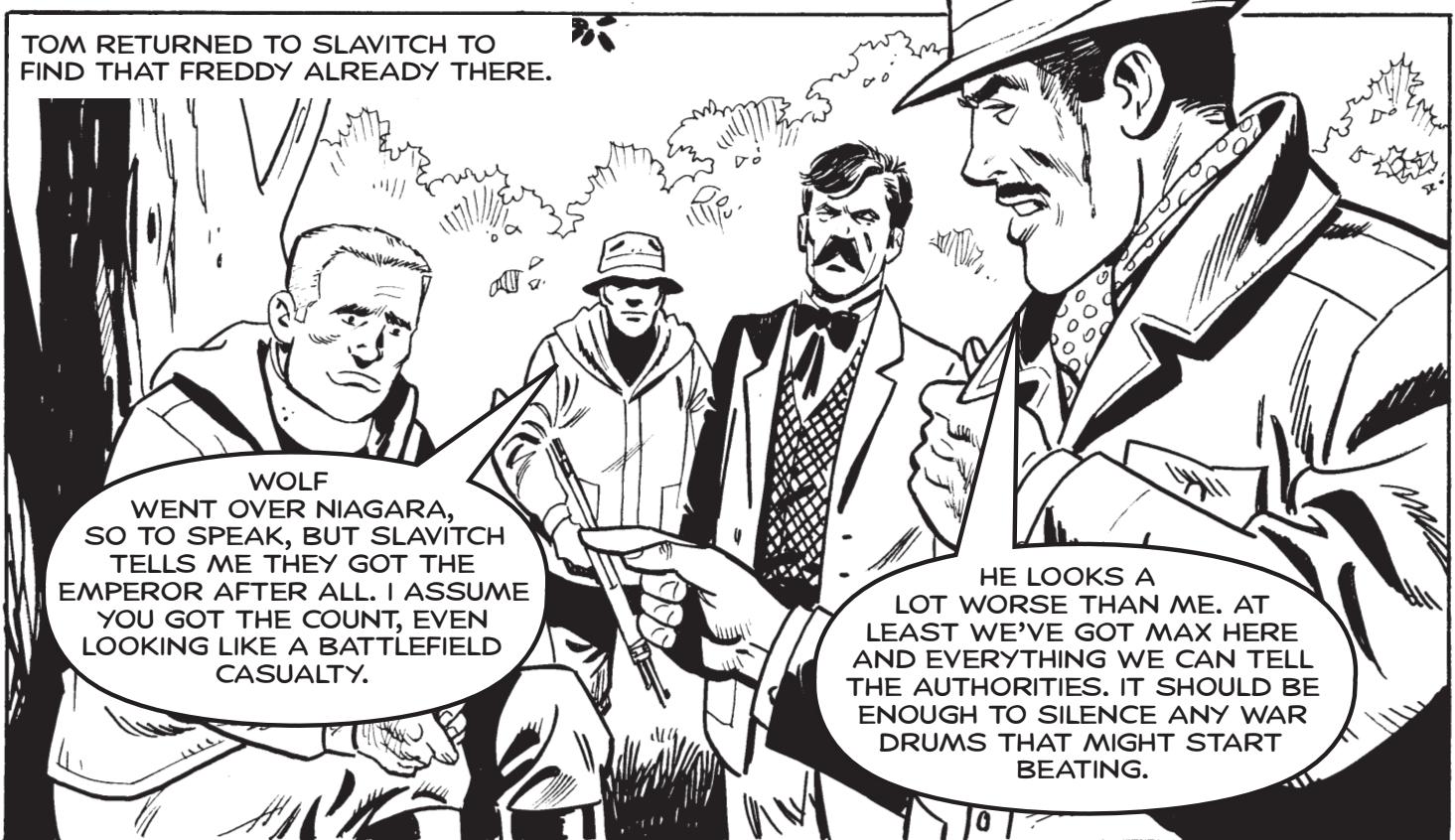


WAR IS COMING, ENGLANDER. CONSIDER YOURSELF ONE OF ITS FIRST FATALITIES.

TOM WAITED IN SILENCE UNTIL RUDI WAS JUST A COUPLE OF FEET AWAY THEN WHIPPED UP THE DERRINGER HE HAD MANAGED TO PULL FREE AND FIRED AT POINT-BLANK RANGE.

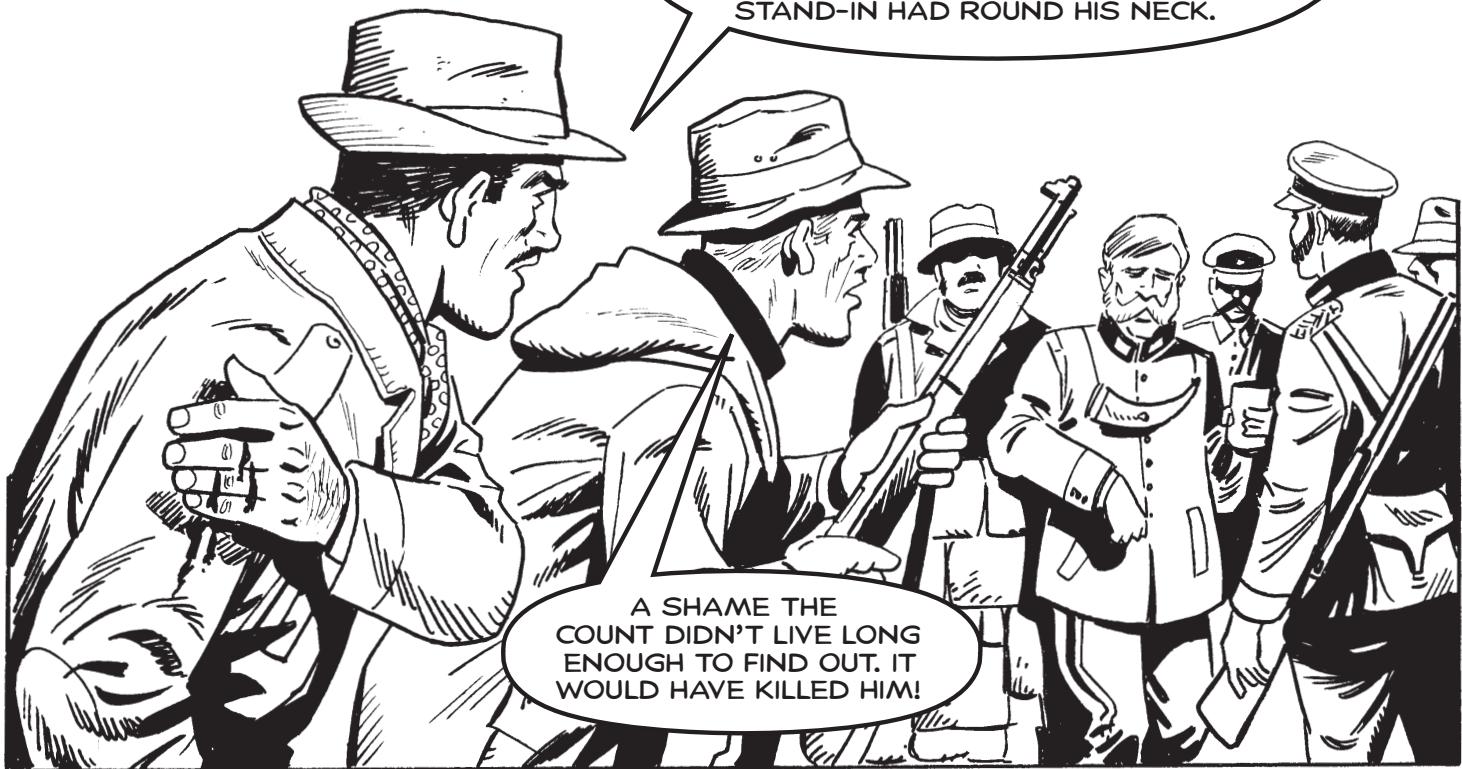


TOM RETURNED TO SLAVITCH TO FIND THAT FREDDY ALREADY THERE.



THEIR MOOD LIGHTENED  
CONSIDERABLY WHEN THEY REACHED  
THE EMPEROR'S PARTY TO DISCOVER  
HE HADN'T EVEN BEEN WITH THEM.  
TOM QUICKLY LEARNT THE STORY.

SEEMS HE  
WAS A BIT OFF-COLOUR TODAY  
AND STAYED AT HIS LODGE. AS HE DIDN'T  
WANT PEOPLE WORRYING THAT HE WASN'T  
OUT HUNTING, ONE OF HIS EQUERRIES DRESSED  
UP AS HIM. RUDI'S SHOT WAS DEFLECTED BY  
THE TRADITIONAL HUNTING HORN THE  
STAND-IN HAD ROUND HIS NECK.



FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS THE TWO BRITISH OFFICERS WERE CAUGHT UP IN A HIGHLY-CHARGED BUT VERY DISCREET INVESTIGATION. AT THE END OF IT THEY WERE MET IN THE GARDEN OF THEIR HOTEL BY A SENIOR OFFICIAL FROM THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN VIENNA.



LATER THAT DAY THEY WENT TO THE STATION TO SEE SLAVITCH OFF ON HIS WAY BACK TO BELGRADE.

WE PASSED ON  
WHAT WAS SAID ABOUT GERMAN  
INTELLIGENCE BELIEVING THAT ARCHDUKE  
FRANZ FERDINAND IS THE BLACK HAND'S  
MOST LIKELY ASSASSINATION TARGET.

FROM  
WHAT I'VE HEARD HE'S  
TOO STUBBORN AND PROUD TO  
ACCEPT EXTRA SECURITY, BUT AT  
LEAST FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED.  
GOODBYE, MY FRIENDS, AND LET US  
HOPE ALL THIS TALK OF WAR IS  
JUST SO MUCH HOT AIR.

A WEEK LATER, AT THE END OF JUNE 1914, THEY ARRIVED AT LONDON'S CHARING CROSS STATION, HAPPY TO BE BACK HOME UNTIL THE SHOUTS OF A NEWSPAPER VENDOR INTRUDED.

ORSTRIAN  
HAIR GUNNED DAHN!  
READ ORL ABAHT IT!

WHAT...  
WHAT WAS  
THAT?

QUICK,  
GET A PAPER!

THEY STARED AT THE HEADLINE, ALMOST UNABLE TO COMPREHEND THE WORDS.



Commando  
**THE END**

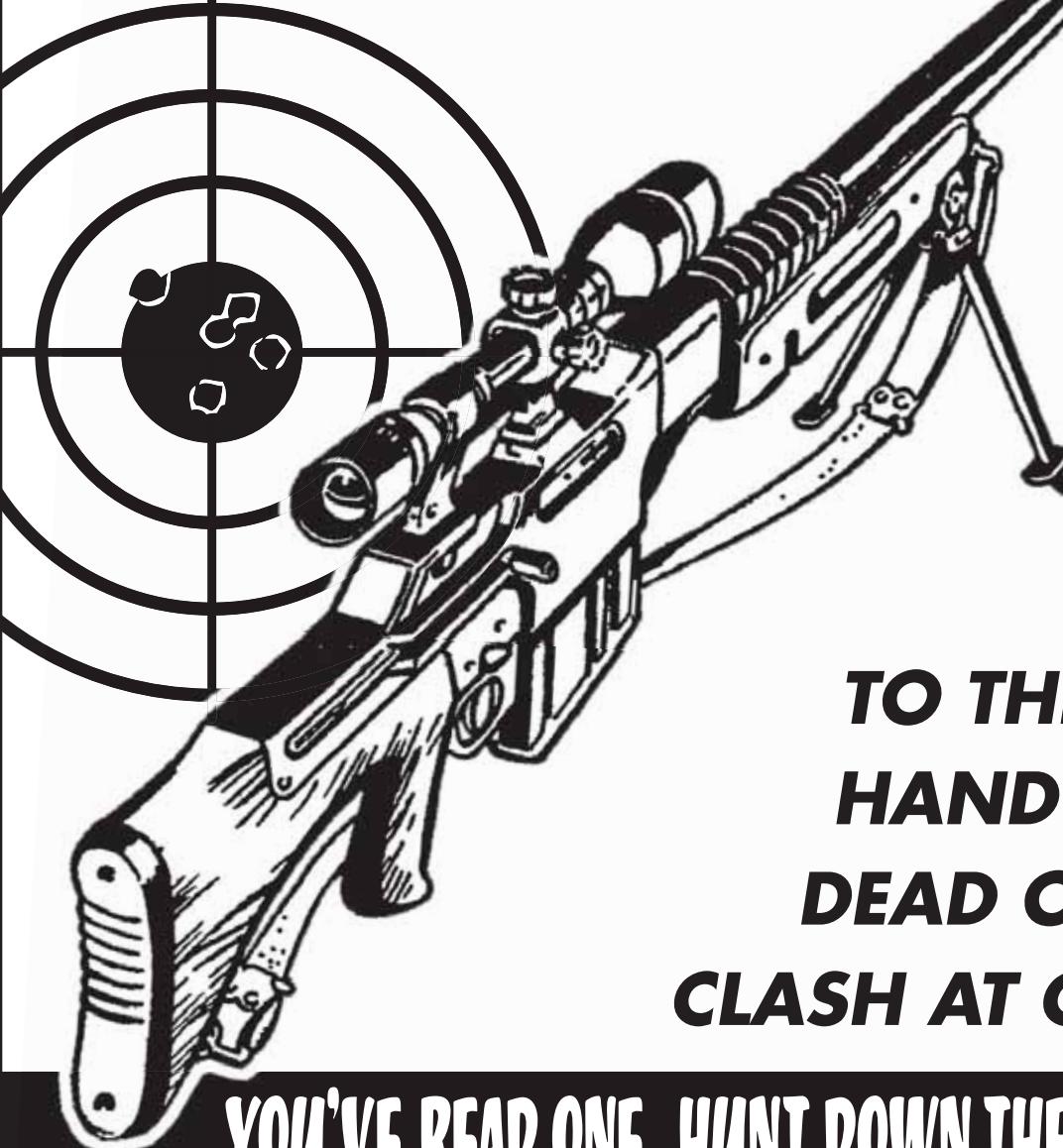
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