

COMPLETE 63-PAGE ACTION STORY

No.4770  
£2

# Commando

THE SILVER COLLECTION

DESERT WAR  
1940-43



# TOO OLD TO FIGHT

# COMMANDO - THE SILVER COLLECTION

Title

## TOO OLD TO FIGHT

Subject

If "Too Old To Fight" were a movie, it could be described as a "Buddy Cop" action film — featuring two characters who initially dislike each other but who, when circumstances force them to work together, resolve some of their differences along the way.

This is a terrific Commando adventure — script, interior art and cover are all top-notch, thanks to a team of the comic's finest freelance creators. There are plenty of thrills and spills but at the heart of it is the most important thing of all — wonderful characters.

Scott Montgomery, Deputy Editor

Issue Number

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STORY  
ALAN HEBDEN  
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IAN KENNEDY

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No 2262



# TOO OLD TO FIGHT

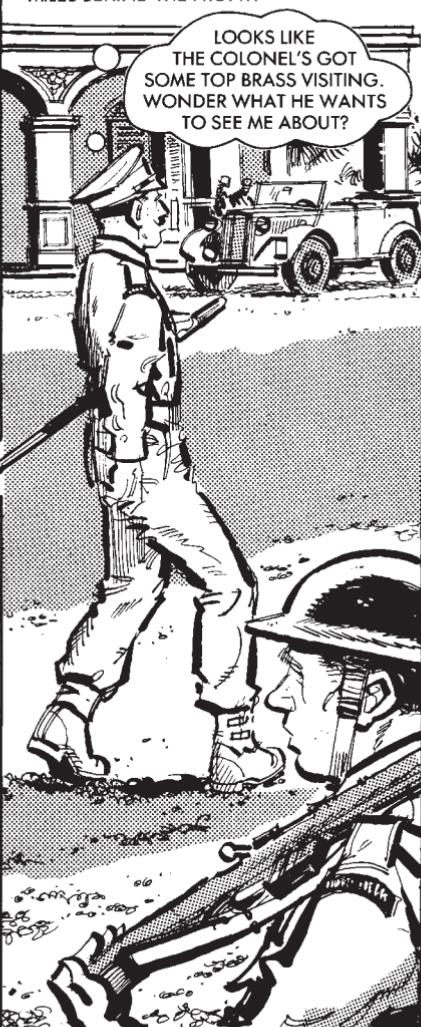


HERE WERE FEW FINER REGIMENTS IN THE BRITISH ARMY THAN THE GRANVILLE FUSILIERS, AND NONE THAT COULD BOAST AS FINE A REGIMENTAL-SERGEANT-MAJOR AS BURNHAM BULWORTH, VICTORIA CROSS. HIS WHOLE LIFE DEDICATED TO THE GRANVILLES, HE HAD FOUGHT ACROSS THE YEARS FROM THE FIELDS OF FLANDERS TO THE FARDEST EAST, HIS ROCKLIKE PRESENCE GIVING HEART TO EACH NEW GENERATION OF FUSILIERS.

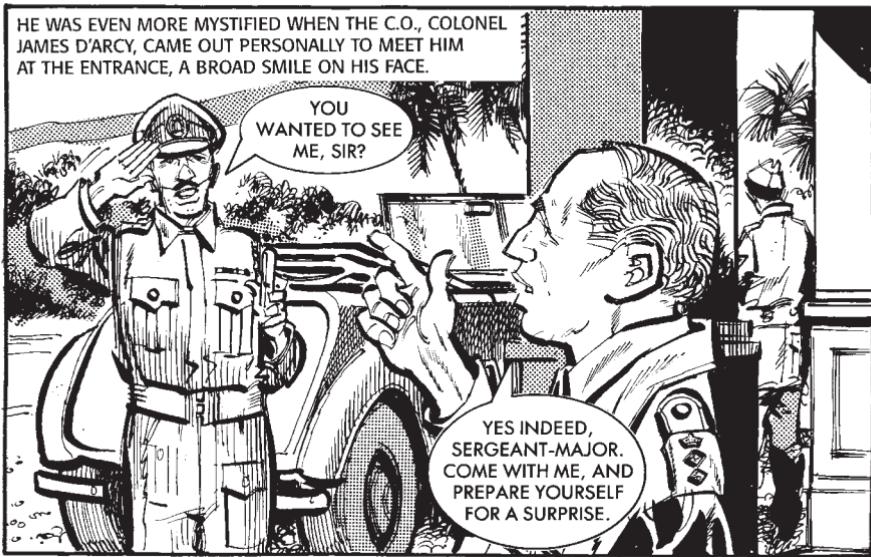
WHEN BURNHAM WENT INTO BATTLE HE WAS A LIVING LEGEND, HIS STURDY FIGURE AND BOOMING VOICE EFFORTLESSLY IMPOSING ORDER AND DISCIPLINE — EVEN IN THE DESERT INFERNO OF NORTH AFRICA IN NINETEEN-FORTY-ONE.



JUST AFTER BURNHAM HAD SEEN HIS MEN SETTLED INTO NEW DEFENSIVE POSITIONS, HE RECEIVED A MESSAGE TO REPORT TO THE REGIMENTAL H.Q. A FEW MILES BEHIND THE FRONT.



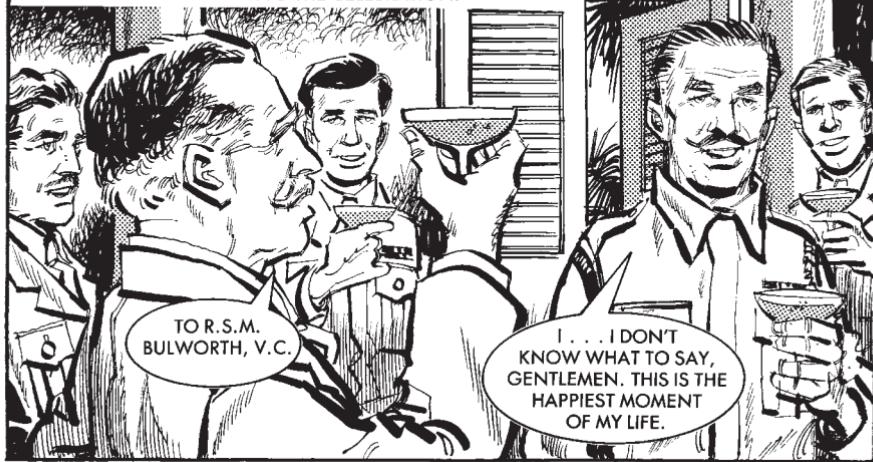
HE WAS EVEN MORE MYSTIFIED WHEN THE C.O., COLONEL JAMES D'ARCY, CAME OUT PERSONALLY TO MEET HIM AT THE ENTRANCE, A BROAD SMILE ON HIS FACE.



IT WAS MORE THAN A SURPRISE WHEN D'ARCY FLUNG OPEN THE DOORS OF A RECEPTION ROOM TO REVEAL MOST OF THE REGIMENT'S OFFICERS GATHERED AROUND A BIRTHDAY CAKE IN THE PRESENCE OF NO LESS A FIGURE THAN A BRITISH GENERAL.

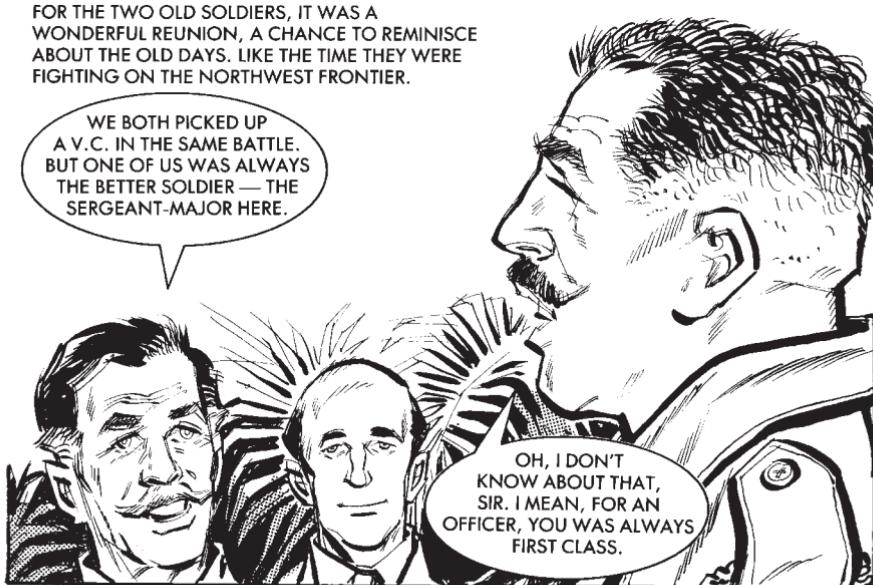


GENERAL SIR JOHN MADINALLY, V.C., HAD KNOWN BURNHAM SINCE HE'D JOINED THE GRANVILLES BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR. NOW A MILITARY ADVISER TO THE WAR CABINET, HE HAD BEEN ON AN OVERSEAS INSPECTION TOUR WHEN D'ARCY HAD INVITED HIM TO THE CELEBRATION.



FOR THE TWO OLD SOLDIERS, IT WAS A WONDERFUL REUNION, A CHANCE TO REMINISCE ABOUT THE OLD DAYS. LIKE THE TIME THEY WERE FIGHTING ON THE NORTHWEST FRONTIER.

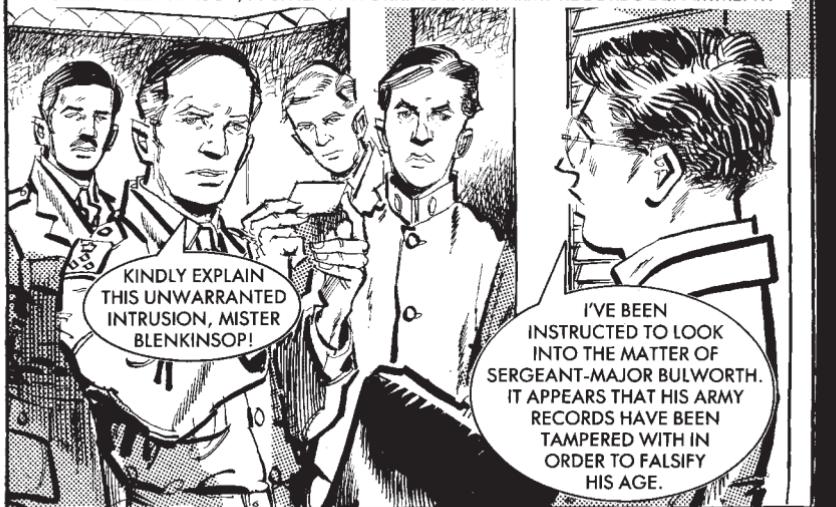
WE BOTH PICKED UP  
A V.C. IN THE SAME BATTLE.  
BUT ONE OF US WAS ALWAYS  
THE BETTER SOLDIER — THE  
SERGEANT-MAJOR HERE.

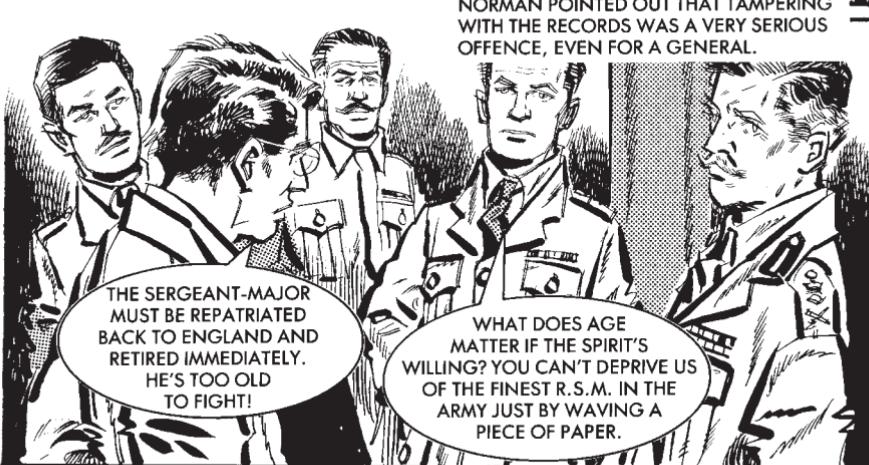
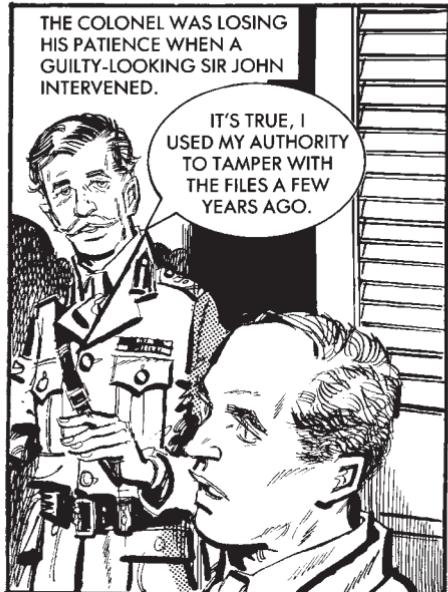


SUDDENLY THERE WAS AN UNEXPECTED INTERRUPTION AS AN ORDERLY TRIED TO PREVENT AN UNINVITED GUEST FROM GATE-CRASHING THE PROCEEDINGS.



WHEN THE COLONEL DEMANDED TO KNOW WHO THE INTRUDER WAS THE YOUNG MAN HANDED OVER AN OFFICIAL-LOOKING CARD WHICH IDENTIFIED HIM AS NORMAN BLENKINSOP, A CIVILIAN WORKING IN AN ARMY RECORDS DEPARTMENT.





HOWEVER, BURNHAM WASN'T GOING TO HAVE SIR JOHN'S REPUTATION SULLIED ON HIS BEHALF, EVEN IF THE COST OF SAVING IT MEANT THE END OF HIS OWN LONG MILITARY CAREER.

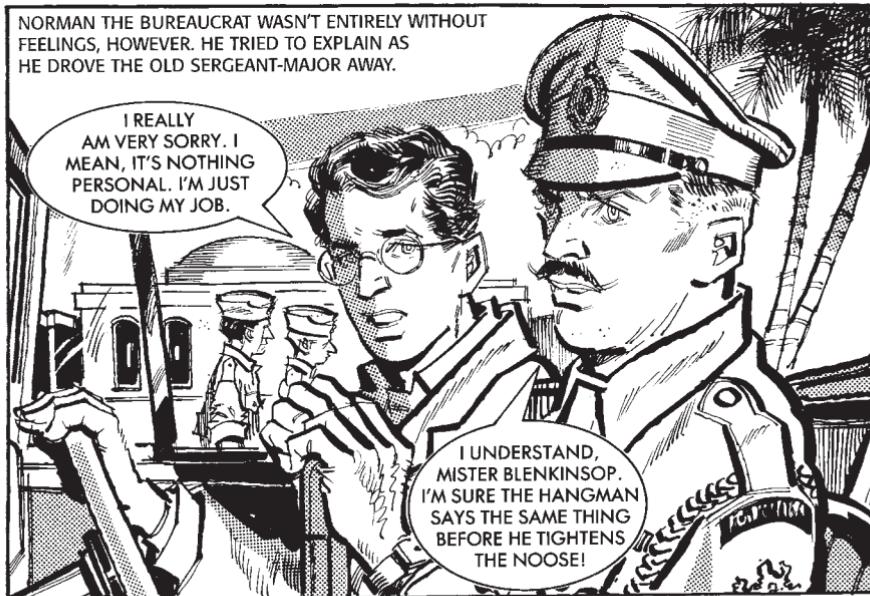
I'M AFRAID MISTER BLENKINSOP'S QUITE RIGHT, RULES IS RULES. JUST AS LONG AS SIR JOHN'S NAME IS KEPT OUT OF THIS, I'LL GO AT ONCE.

NO PROBLEM, SERGEANT-MAJOR. AFTER ALL, IF YOU'RE NO LONGER IN THE ARMY, THEN THAT PUTS THE RECORD STRAIGHT, DOESN'T IT?

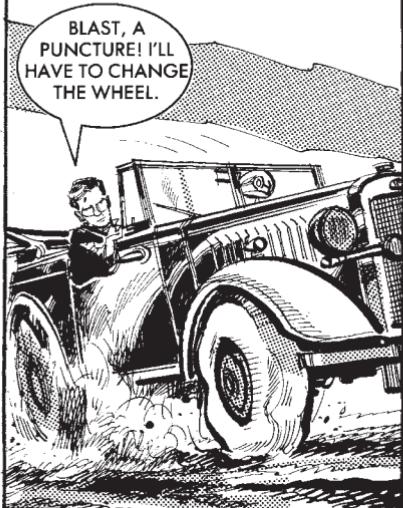
HIS MIND MADE UP, BURNHAM BID A HOARSE FAREWELL.

IT WAS AN HONOUR TO HAVE SERVED UNDER AN OFFICER SUCH AS YOURSELF, SIR JOHN.

NO, IT WAS I WHO WAS HONOURED TO HAVE COMMANDED YOU.



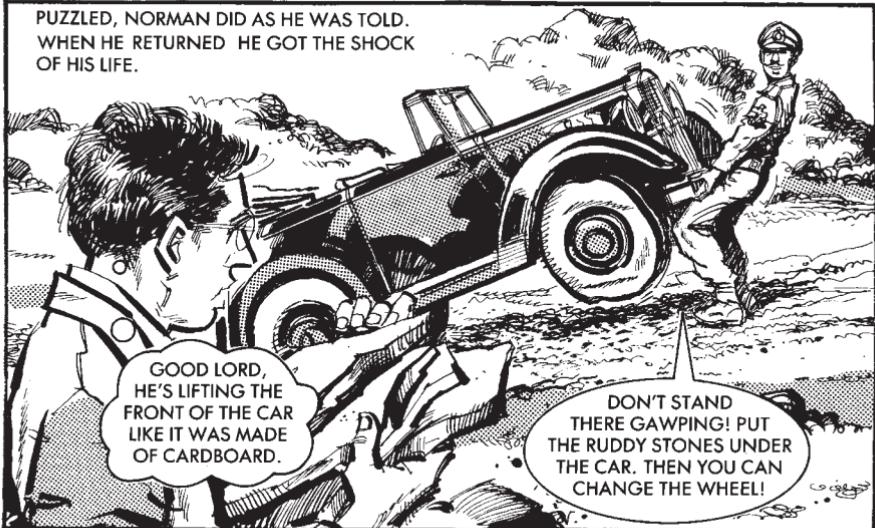
AFTER THAT CUTTING REMARK THE TWO DROVE ON IN UNEASY SILENCE FOR THE NEXT TWENTY MILES, UNTIL NORMAN FAILED TO SEE AN OBSTACLE AHEAD.

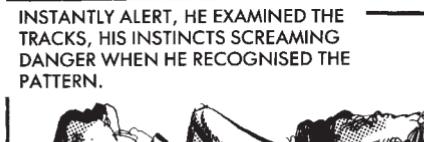


UNFORTUNATELY THE CAR, THOUGH POSSESSING A SPARE WHEEL, DID NOT HAVE A JACK.



PUZZLED, NORMAN DID AS HE WAS TOLD. WHEN HE RETURNED HE GOT THE SHOCK OF HIS LIFE.





SUDDENLY HE REALISED WHO WOULD BE THE NEXT PERSON TO TRAVEL THE ROAD.



HE SET OFF AT A CRACKING PACE UNDER THE BLAZING SUN, LEAVING THE RECORDS CLERK STARING AFTER HIM IN TOTAL BEWILDERMENT.

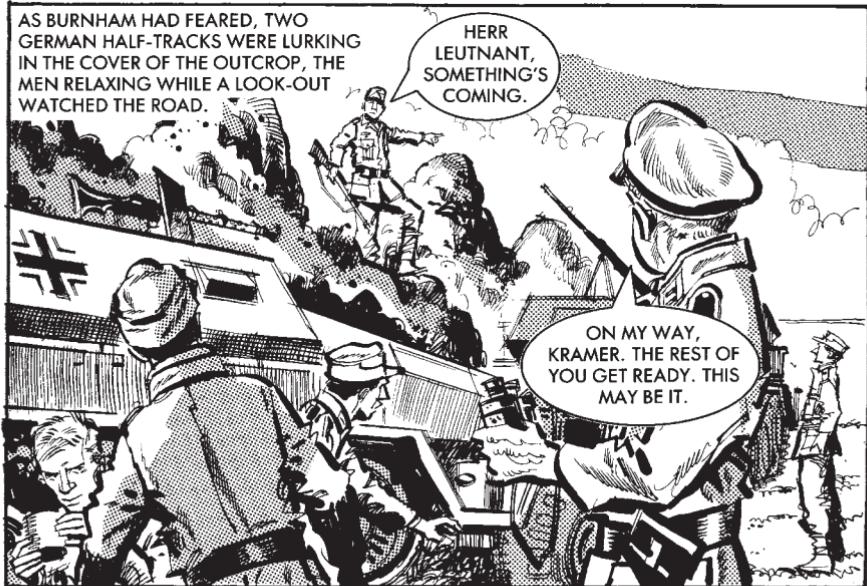
WHERE'S HE GOING? I HAVEN'T FINISHED CHANGING THE WHEEL YET!



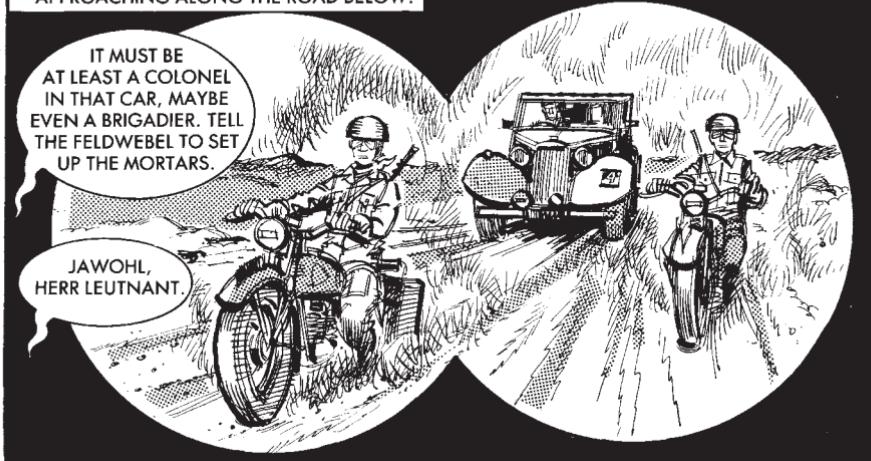
AS BURNHAM HAD FEARED, TWO GERMAN HALF-TRACKS WERE LURKING IN THE COVER OF THE OUTCROP, THE MEN RELAXING WHILE A LOOK-OUT WATCHED THE ROAD.

HERR LEUTNANT,  
SOMETHING'S COMING.

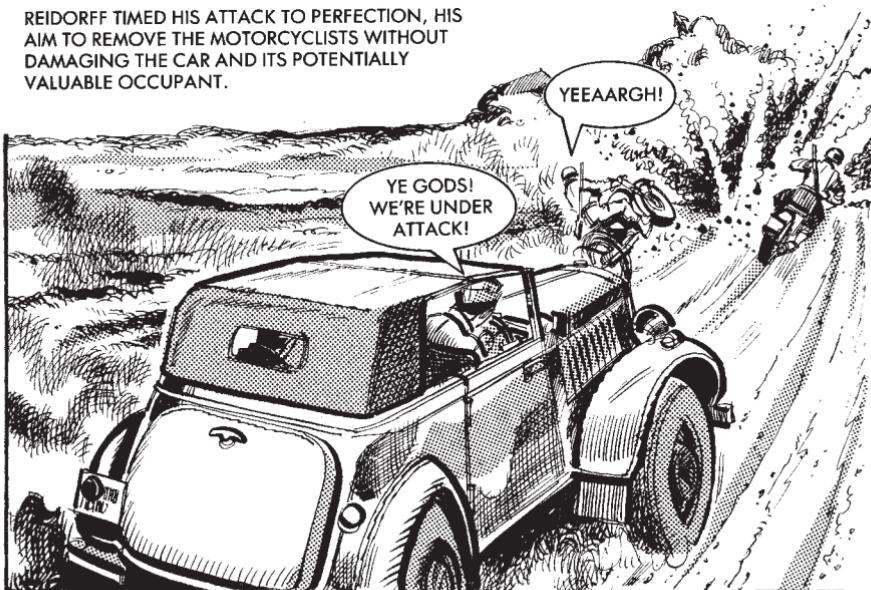
ON MY WAY,  
KRAMER. THE REST OF  
YOU GET READY. THIS  
MAY BE IT.



LEUTNANT MAX REIDORFF HAD BEEN DESPATCHED WITH ORDERS TO BRING BACK A PRISONER FOR INTERROGATION, PREFERABLY AN OFFICER. JOINING HIS LOOK-OUT, HE SMILED IN ANTICIPATION AS HE SAW A BRITISH STAFF CAR WITH TWO MOTORCYCLE ESCORTS APPROACHING ALONG THE ROAD BELOW.



REIDORFF TIMED HIS ATTACK TO PERFECTION, HIS AIM TO REMOVE THE MOTORCYCLISTS WITHOUT DAMAGING THE CAR AND ITS POTENTIALLY VALUABLE OCCUPANT.



THE DRIVER AND AN OFFICER TRAVELLING IN FRONT STAGGERED OUT TO DO BATTLE, TO BE CUT DOWN INSTANTLY BY THE AMBUSHERS.

JERRIES . . . UURGH!

CEASE FIRE!  
I WANT PRISONERS,  
NOT CORPSES!

EVEN AS REIDORFF REACHED THE CAR, A UNIFORMED ARM HOLDING A SERVICE REVOLVER POKE OUT OF THE REAR WINDOW, BUT ITS OWNER HAD NOT NOTICED THE GERMAN'S PRESENCE THROUGH THE SWIRLING SMOKE OF BATTLE.

OOOF!

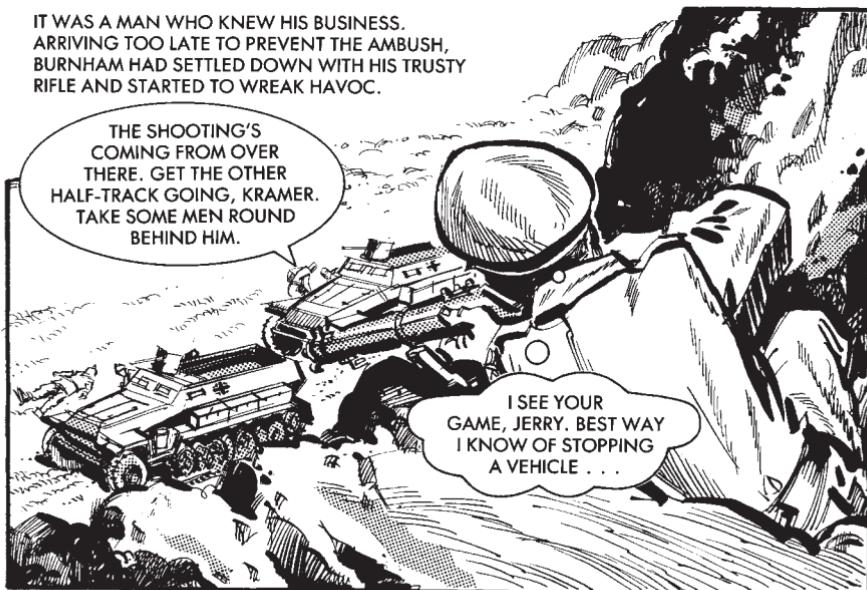
THAT'S QUITE  
ENOUGH, ENGLANDER!  
NOW STEP OUT SO I  
CAN SEE WHO  
YOU ARE.

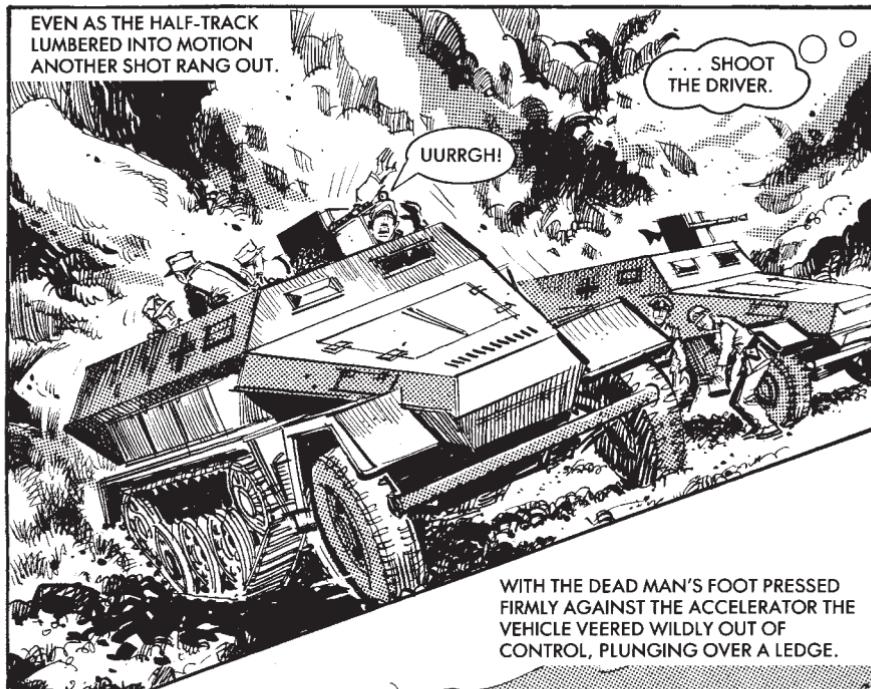


MAYBE NOT A MIRACLE, YET THE SUDDEN AND TOTALLY UNEXPECTED SOUND OF RIFLE SHOTS CUTTING DOWN REIDORFF'S MEN WITH DEADLY ACCURACY CERTAINLY OFFERED A HOPEFUL ALTERNATIVE.



IT WAS A MAN WHO KNEW HIS BUSINESS.  
ARRIVING TOO LATE TO PREVENT THE AMBUSH,  
BURNHAM HAD SETTLED DOWN WITH HIS TRUSTY  
RIFLE AND STARTED TO WREAK HAVOC.

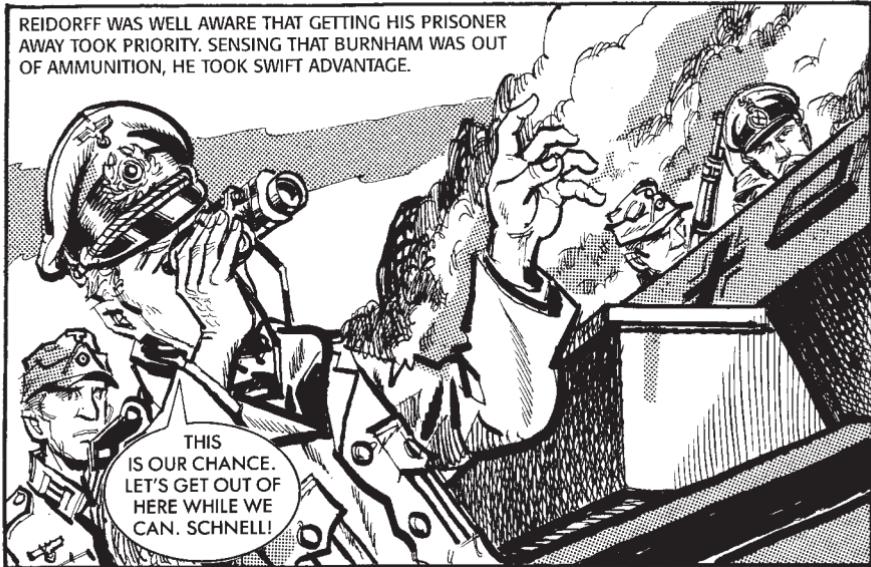




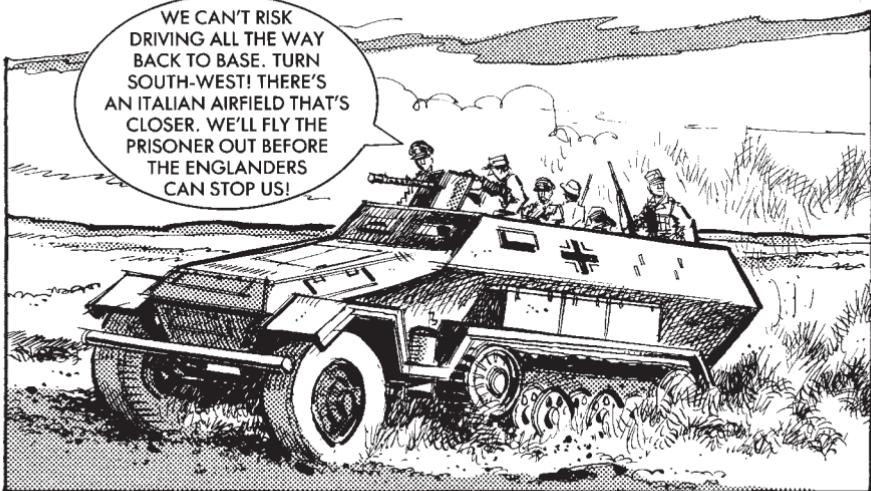
WITH THE DEAD MAN'S FOOT PRESSED FIRMLY AGAINST THE ACCELERATOR THE VEHICLE VEERED WILDLY OUT OF CONTROL, PLUNGING OVER A LEDGE.

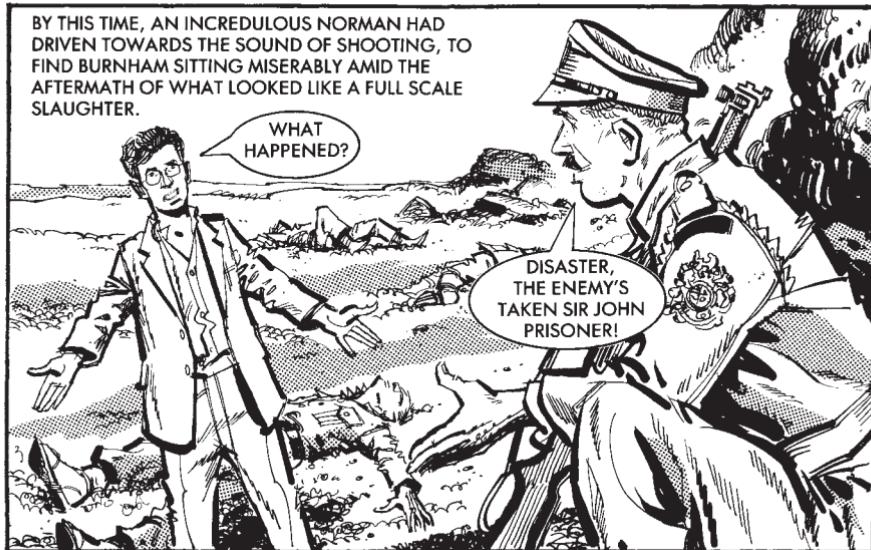


REIDORFF WAS WELL AWARE THAT GETTING HIS PRISONER AWAY TOOK PRIORITY. SENSING THAT BURNHAM WAS OUT OF AMMUNITION, HE TOOK SWIFT ADVANTAGE.

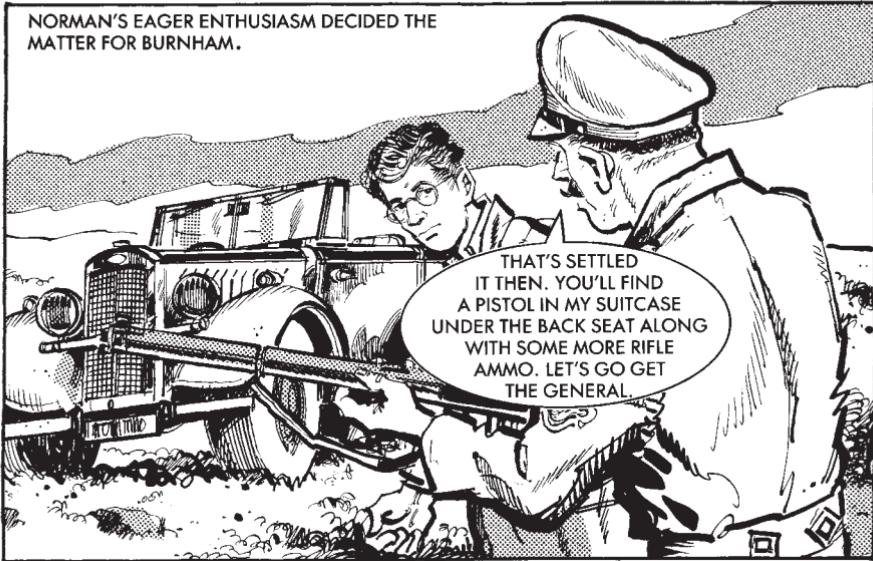


EVEN THOUGH HE WAS ON THE MOVE AGAIN, THE LEUTNANT WAS WORRIED. THE LONE RIFLEMAN WOULD RAISE THE ALARM AND THE BRITISH WOULD VERY SOON LAUNCH A MASSIVE PURSUIT.

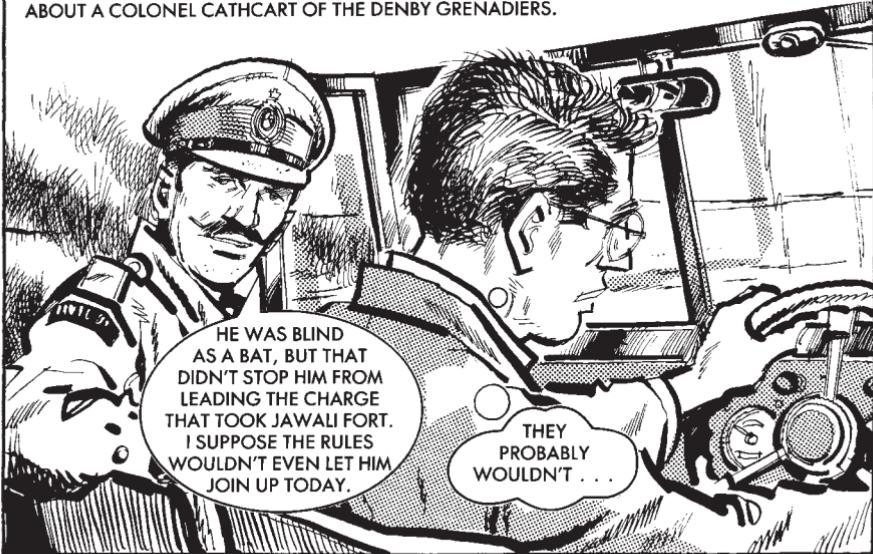




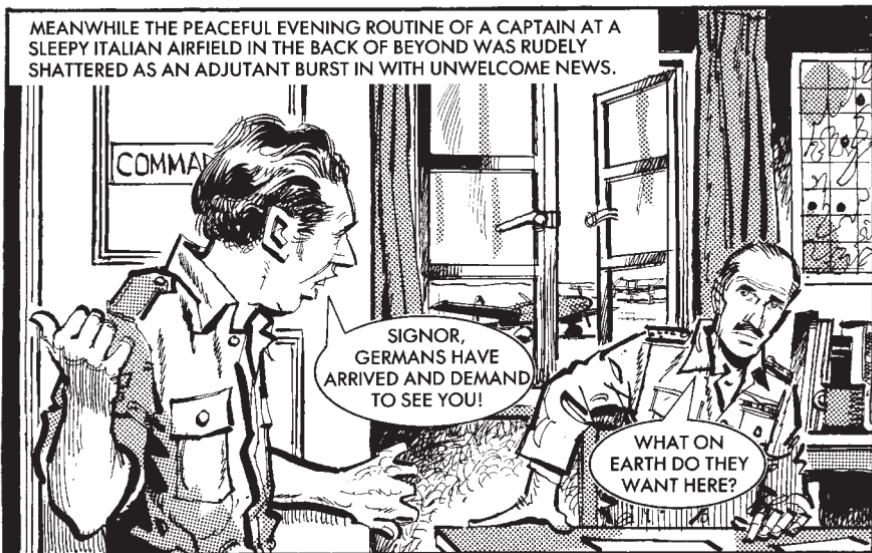
NORMAN'S EAGER ENTHUSIASM DECIDED THE MATTER FOR BURNHAM.



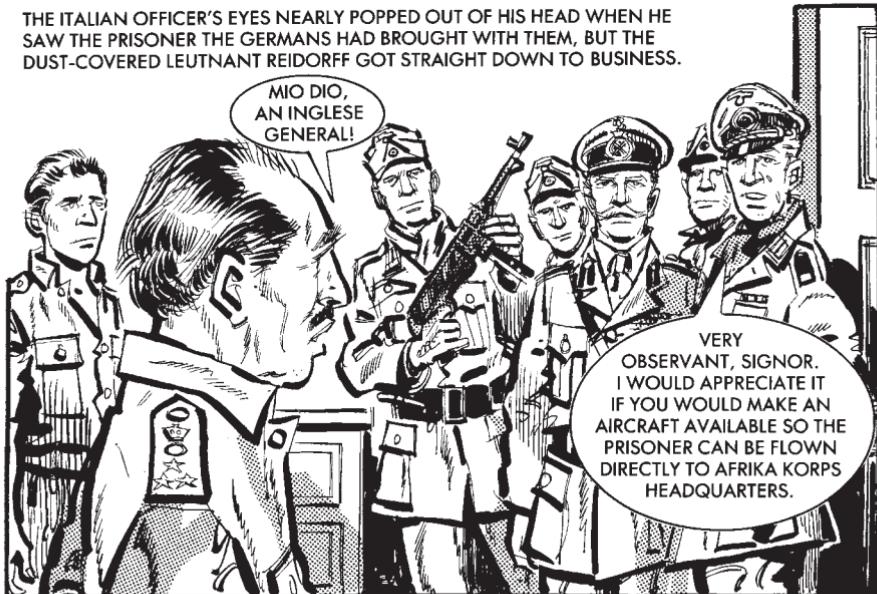
AS THEY SET OFF, BURNHAM TOLD THE BESPECTACLED CLERK ABOUT A COLONEL CATHCART OF THE DENBY GRENADIERS.



MEANWHILE THE PEACEFUL EVENING ROUTINE OF A CAPTAIN AT A SLEEPY ITALIAN AIRFIELD IN THE BACK OF BEYOND WAS RUDELY SHATTERED AS AN ADJUTANT BURST IN WITH UNWELCOME NEWS.



THE ITALIAN OFFICER'S EYES NEARLY POPPED OUT OF HIS HEAD WHEN HE SAW THE PRISONER THE GERMANS HAD BROUGHT WITH THEM, BUT THE DUST-COVERED LEUTNANT REIDORFF GOT STRAIGHT DOWN TO BUSINESS.



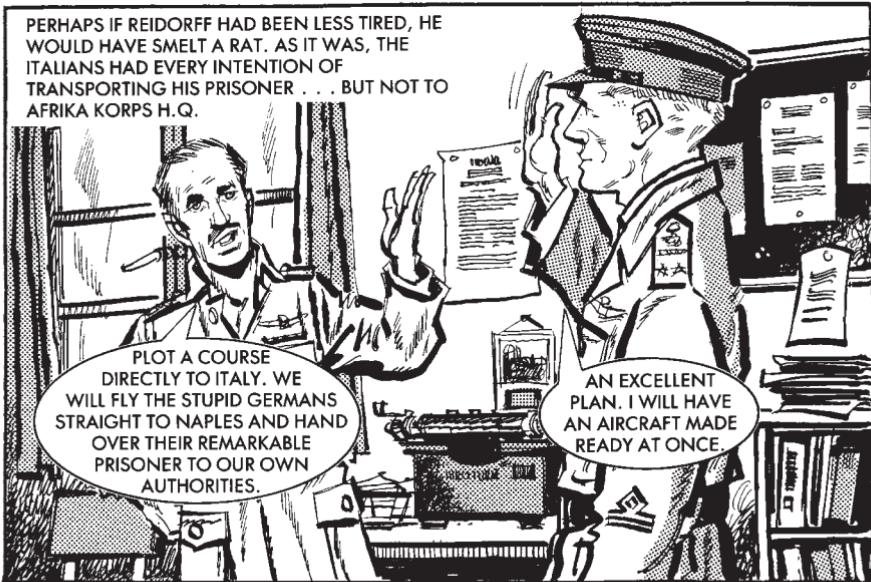
FIND  
MORE  
FREE  
MAGAZINES

**FREEMAGS.CC**

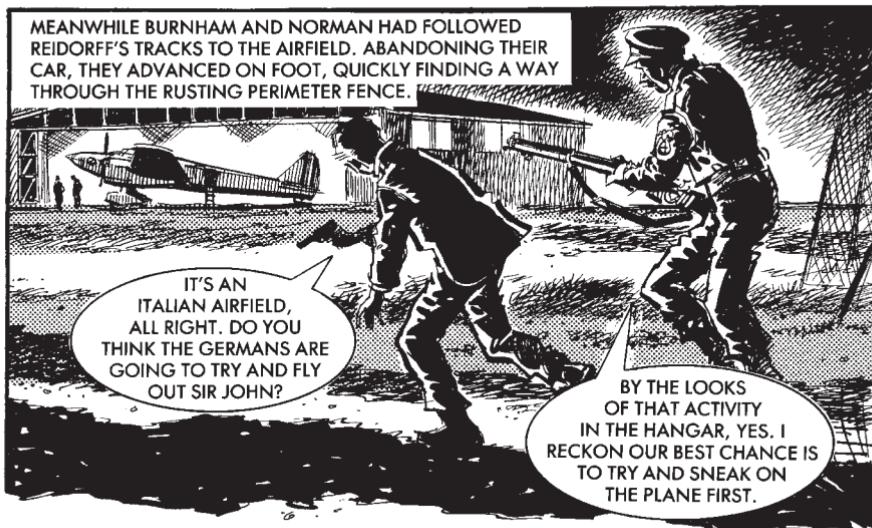
CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE GERMANS AND THE ITALIANS HAD NEVER BEEN A STRONG POINT, AND REIDORFF HAD BEEN EXPECTING AN ARGUMENT. INSTEAD, TO HIS GREAT SURPRISE, THE CAPTAIN AGREED READILY TO HIS REQUEST.



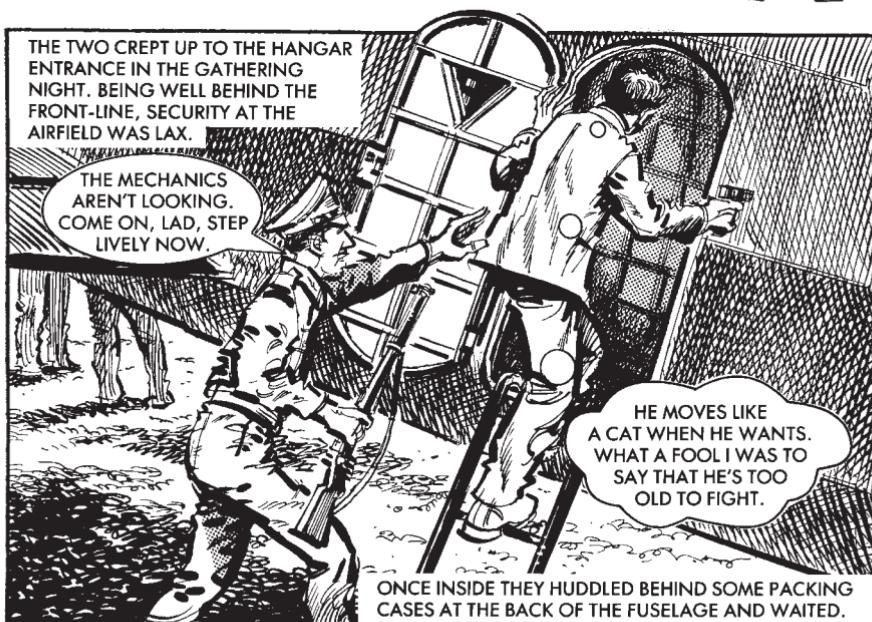
PERHAPS IF REIDORFF HAD BEEN LESS TIRED, HE WOULD HAVE SMELT A RAT. AS IT WAS, THE ITALIANS HAD EVERY INTENTION OF TRANSPORTING HIS PRISONER . . . BUT NOT TO AFRIKA KORPS H.Q.



MEANWHILE BURNHAM AND NORMAN HAD FOLLOWED REIDORFF'S TRACKS TO THE AIRFIELD. ABANDONING THEIR CAR, THEY ADVANCED ON FOOT, QUICKLY FINDING A WAY THROUGH THE RUSTING PERIMETER FENCE.



THE TWO CREPT UP TO THE HANGAR ENTRANCE IN THE GATHERING NIGHT. BEING WELL BEHIND THE FRONT-LINE, SECURITY AT THE AIRFIELD WAS LAX.



A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE ITALIAN CAPTAIN LED HIS PASSENGERS ON BOARD.



THE WEATHER REPORT PREDICTS STRONG HEADWINDS, SO THE FLIGHT MAY TAKE LONGER THAN EXPECTED.

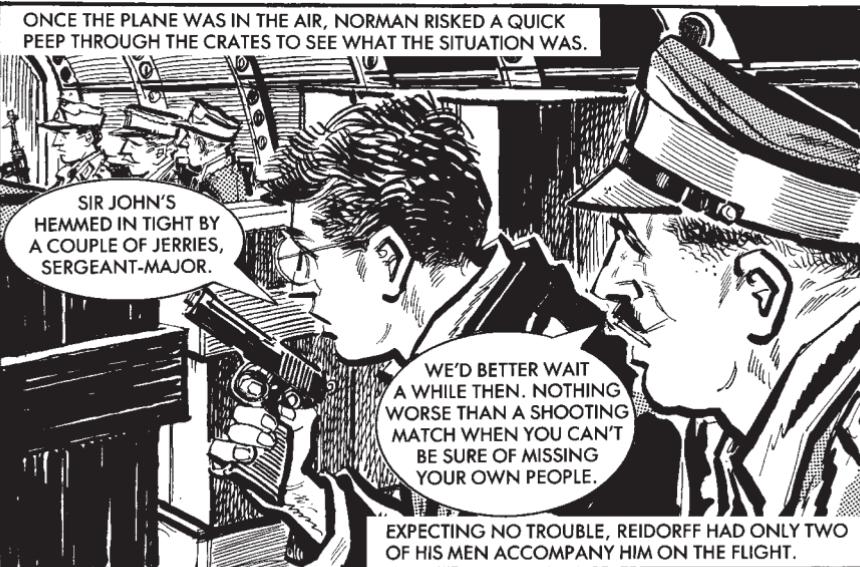
AS SOON AS HIS PASSENGERS WERE SEATED, THE OFFICER JOINED HIS NAVIGATOR IN THE COCKPIT.



THAT WAS VERY CLEVER. NOW THEY WON'T BECOME SUSPICIOUS ABOUT THE LENGTH OF THE FLIGHT.

EXACTLY, WE WILL BE IN OUR HOMELAND BEFORE THEY REALISE WHAT HAS HAPPENED.

ONCE THE PLANE WAS IN THE AIR, NORMAN RISKED A QUICK PEEP THROUGH THE CRATES TO SEE WHAT THE SITUATION WAS.



SIR JOHN'S HEMMED IN TIGHT BY A COUPLE OF JERRIES, SERGEANT-MAJOR.

WE'D BETTER WAIT A WHILE THEN. NOTHING WORSE THAN A SHOOTING MATCH WHEN YOU CAN'T BE SURE OF MISSING YOUR OWN PEOPLE.

EXPECTING NO TROUBLE, REIDORFF HAD ONLY TWO OF HIS MEN ACCOMPANY HIM ON THE FLIGHT.

THE PLANE DRONED ON THROUGH THE NIGHT, THE MONOTONY BROKEN ONLY BY FURTHER REFRESHMENTS SUPPLIED BY THE ITALIANS BEFORE TAKE OFF.



AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, REIDORFF APPEARED IN THE COCKPIT JUST MOMENTS AFTER THE PLANE CROSSED THE NORTH AFRICAN COAST. HE DIDN'T HAVE TO BE A NAVIGATIONAL GENIUS TO REALISE HE HAD BEEN DUPED.





THE SHOT BROUGHT THE OTHER TWO GERMANS TO THEIR FEET IN A MAD SCRAMBLE TO DISCOVER WHAT HAD HAPPENED. BURNHAM AND NORMAN TOOK IMMEDIATE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY.



THE TWO STOWAWAYS EMERGED FROM HIDING, TAKING THE GERMANS, AND SIR JOHN, COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE.





BY THE TIME THE TRIO WERE READY TO JUMP, THE PILOTLESS PLANE HAD MADE AN AIMLESS TURN AND WAS HEADING BACK OVER THE NORTH AFRICAN COAST. AT BURNHAM'S INSISTENCE, SIR JOHN WENT FIRST.



NORMAN ENDED UP IN A CONFUSED TANGLE FAR AWAY FROM THE DOOR, BURNHAM BATTING TO SAVE HIM.

NEVER MIND ABOUT ME, GO AFTER THE GENERAL.

HE'S AN OFFICER AND KNOWS HOW TO LOOK AFTER HIMSELF. I AIN'T LEAVING YOU BEHIND!

BY THE TIME THE TWO MANAGED TO BALE OUT THE PLANE HAD FLOWN SEVERAL MILES INLAND.

I HOPE TO BLAZES WE CAN FIND SIR JOHN AGAIN.

AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME A GROUP OF ITALIAN OFFICERS WERE ENJOYING DINNER ON THE VERANDA OF THEIR H.Q. OVERLOOKING THE SEA. SUDDENLY THEIR PEACEFUL EVENING MEAL WAS DISTURBED BY A HOARSE CRY FROM ABOVE.

MORE WINE, ENRICO . . . WHAT THE . . .

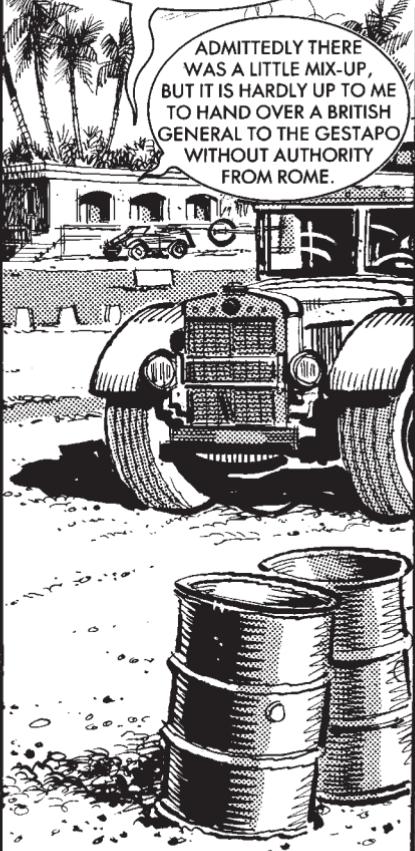
LOOK OUT BELOW!

AND SO IT WAS THAT A CERTAIN BRITISH GENERAL DROPPED IN FOR DINNER, FEET FIRST INTO A LARGE BOWL OF SPAGHETTI, WHICH AT LEAST HAD THE SAVING GRACE OF SLIGHTLY CUSHIONING HIS FALL.

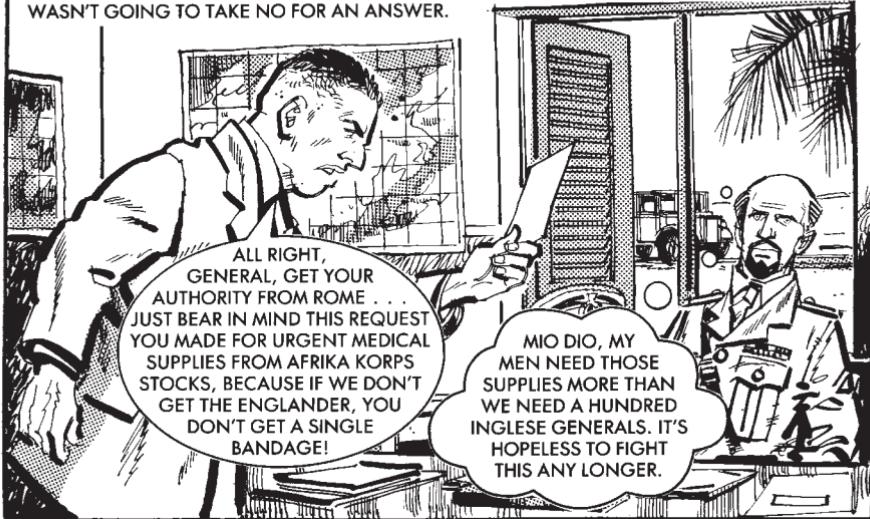


BY THE FOLLOWING MORNING, A MONUMENTAL ROW HAD Erupted BETWEEN THE TWO AXIS PARTNERS OVER THE CUSTODY OF THE PRISONER, THE REST OF REIDORFF'S MEN HAVING DRIVEN BACK TO BASE WITH THE NEWS.

I DON'T CARE IF HE PARACHUTED INTO YOUR MOTH-EATEN H.Q. GERMAN FORCES CAPTURED HIM IN THE FIRST PLACE, SO STOP STALLING AND HAND HIM OVER!



DISCOVERING THAT AN ADVISER TO THE BRITISH WAR CABINET HAD BEEN PURLOINED BY THE ITALIANS, THE GERMANS HAD FLOWN IN TOP GESTAPO AGENT HEINRICH GLAWITZ — HE WASN'T GOING TO TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER.



INEVITABLY THE ITALIANS WERE FORCED TO CAVE IN BENEATH RELENTLESS GERMAN PRESSURE, BUT ONLY AFTER A FACE-SAVING FORMULA HAD BEEN DEVISED — WHICH INFURIATED GLAWITZ EVEN MORE.



OTHER EYES WERE ALSO OBSERVING THE SCENE. BURNHAM AND NORMAN, HAVING TRAMPED ALL NIGHT TOWARDS THE COAST, HAD BEEN FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO ARRIVE IN SIGHT OF THE TRAIN JUST AS SIR JOHN WAS BEING TAKEN ON BOARD.



BURNHAM HAD NOTICED THAT THE LINE HAD TO FOLLOW A LONG CURVE THROUGH A CUTTING TO GAIN HEIGHT AS IT CLIMBED AWAY FROM THE STATION.



THEY MADE IT WITH A FEW COACHES TO SPARE, BRACING THEMSELVES FOR THE JUMP. IT WASN'T A LONG DROP, BUT IT HAD TO BE TIMED RIGHT.



THERE WAS ALWAYS THE DANGER THAT SOMEBODY UNDERNEATH WOULD HEAR THEM LAND, BUT THAT SOMEBODY HAPPENED TO BE GLAWITZ WHO WAS PREPARED TO BLAME EVERYTHING ON THE ITALIANS.





SUDDENLY REALISING THE DANGER, SIR JOHN LUNGED FORWARD TO SHAKE THE COLONEL BY THE HAND, ENSURING THAT HE DIDN'T TURN HIS HEAD TOWARDS THE WINDOW.

MY DEAR FELLOW,  
DO FORGIVE ME FOR  
BEING SO RUDE. OF COURSE  
I REALISE THIS IS NONE  
OF YOUR DOING.

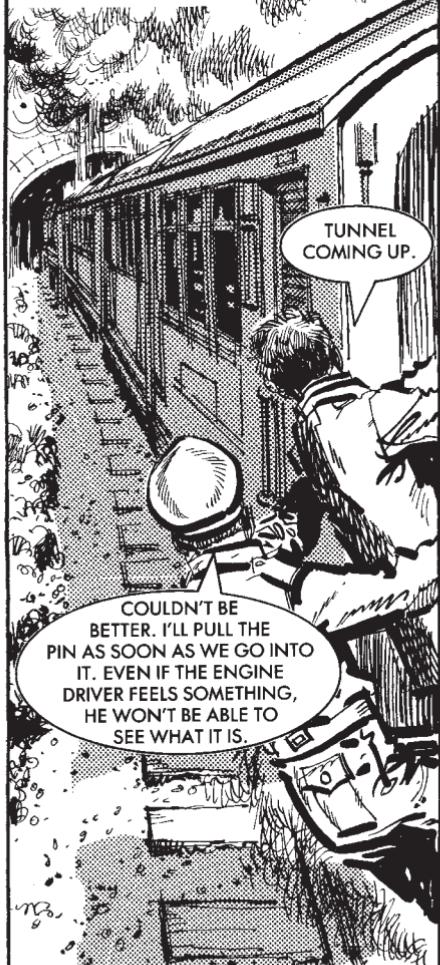
THAT IS WHAT  
I SO ADMIRE ABOUT  
YOU BRITISH. YOU ARE  
NOT SELFISH LIKE  
THE GERMANS.

NORMAN'S BIZARRE APPEARANCE HAD BEEN WITH BURNHAM'S HELP, FOR THE SERGEANT-MAJOR NEEDED TO MAKE SURE WHICH CARRIAGE SIR JOHN WAS ACTUALLY TRAVELLING IN.

HE'S IN  
THIS LAST ONE,  
SERGEANT-MAJOR.  
JUST ONE EYETIE  
WITH HIM.

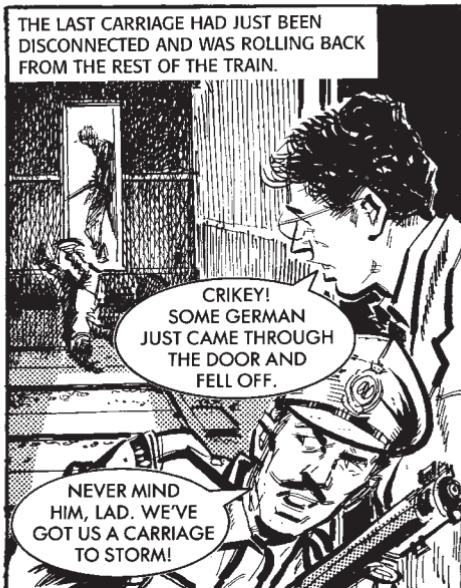
GOOD WORK, LAD.  
OUR NEXT JOB'S TO  
DISCONNECT THIS CARRIAGE  
FROM THE REST OF THE  
TRAIN. THEN WE CAN GO  
IN AND GET HIM.

THEY CLAMBERED DOWN TO THE COUPLINGS BETWEEN THE LAST CARRIAGE AND THE REST OF THE TRAIN. BEING OF ANCIENT VINTAGE, NO SPECIAL EQUIPMENT WAS NEEDED TO EXTRACT THE HOLDING PIN. IT WAS ALL A MATTER OF TIMING, AND AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY WAS APPROACHING.



GLAWITZ, MEANWHILE, HAD DECIDED TO CHECK ON THE PRISONER. ACCOMPANIED BY HIS S.S. GUARDS, HE WAS MAKING HIS WAY TOWARDS THE BACK OF THE TRAIN WHEN IT ENTERED THE TUNNEL, PLUNGING EVERYTHING INTO DARKNESS UNTIL ONE SOLDIER MANAGED TO FIND AND LIGHT A MATCH.







BY NOW THE DETACHED CARRIAGE HAD EMERGED FROM THE TUNNEL TO ROLL BACK DOWN THE INCLINE. THE THREE FUGITIVES JUMPED BEFORE IT GATHERED TOO MUCH SPEED.



AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO WALKING, NORMAN'S IDEA WAS TEMPTING. BURNHAM WASN'T SO SURE, THOUGH.





SUDDENLY IT DAWNED ON NORMAN WHAT WAS HAPPENING. SIR JOHN HAD A POWERFUL THROWING ARM, HIS STONES LANDING FAR ENOUGH OUT TO SEA FOR THE FISHERMEN TO BE UNABLE TO SEE WHAT WAS CAUSING THE SPLASHES IN THE FADING LIGHT.

IS IT  
SOME SORT OF  
FISH, AHMED?

JUST YOU  
TWO KEEP LOOKING  
THAT WAY A MOMENT  
LONGER.

BURNHAM MOVED WITH SUCH STEALTH THAT NEITHER FISHERMEN SENSED HIS PRESENCE UNTIL A PAIR OF POWERFUL ARMS CRACKED THEIR HEADS TOGETHER.

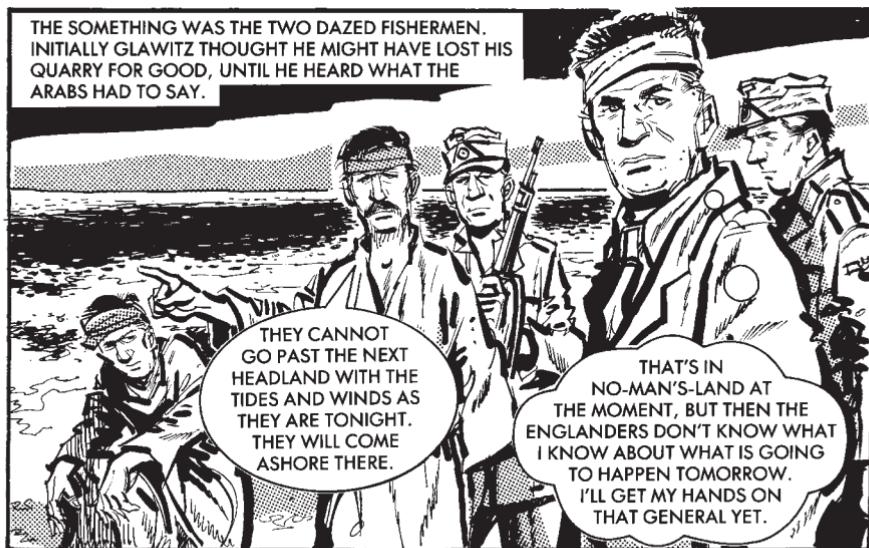
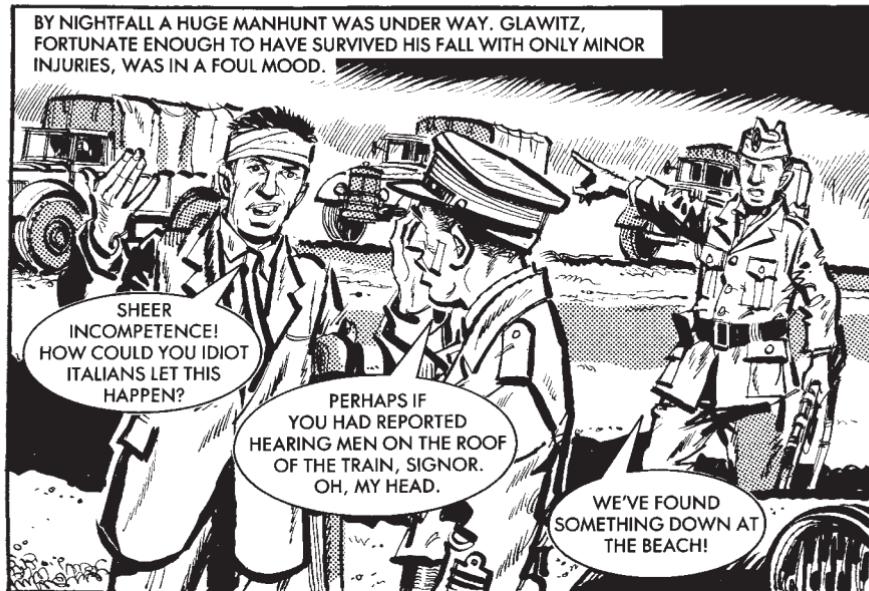
OOOF!

LIGHTS  
OUT, LADS!

SOON AFTER, THE THREE MEN SET OFF IN THE DHOW.

THAT  
REALLY WAS QUITE  
REMARKABLE.

NOTHING  
SPECIAL, LAD. IT  
COMES NATURALLY WHEN  
YOU'VE FOUGHT MEN LIKE  
THE PATHANS. IT'S UP  
TO YOU NOW.



AS THE ARAB FISHERMAN HAD PREDICTED, THE WINDS AND TIDES DROVE THE DHOW ASHORE JUST AFTER SUNRISE. A FRUSTRATED NORMAN FELT HE HAD SOMEHOW LET THE OTHER TWO DOWN, BUT BOTH REALISED WHAT A GOOD JOB HE'D DONE.

NOT YOUR FAULT, LAD. THEM TIDES AND WINDS WAS AGAINST US ALL NIGHT. IT'S A BLOOMING MIRACLE YOU GOT US THIS FAR, WHEREVER THIS IS.

I DO BELIEVE THIS HEADLAND HAPPENS TO BE NO-MAN'S-LAND. YOU'VE DONE SPLENDIDLY, YOUNG FELLOW. ONCE WE'RE THROUGH THE TOWN, WE'LL REACH OUR OWN LINES IN AN HOUR.

SUDDENLY THE MORNING CALM WAS SHATTERED BY THE THUNDER OF MASSED GERMAN AIRCRAFT.

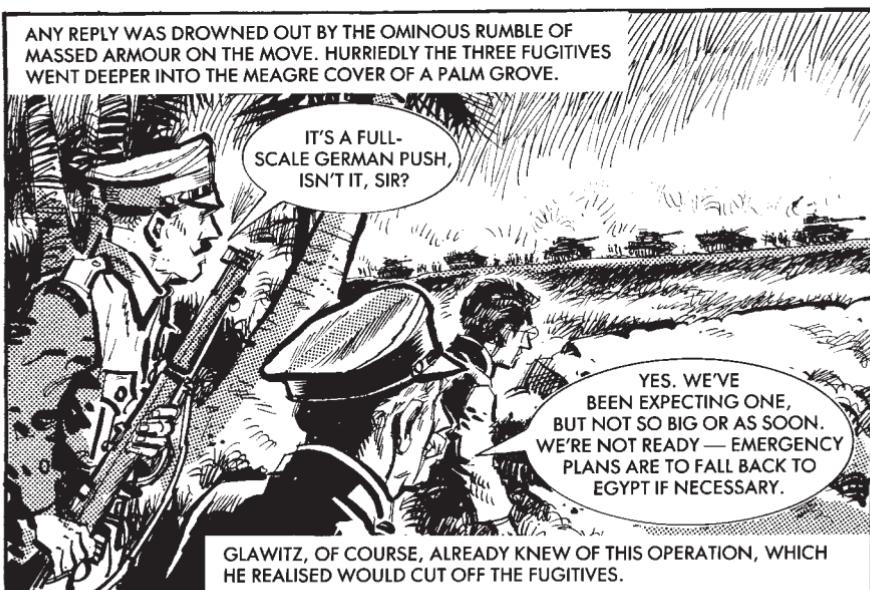
I WONDER WHERE THAT LOT'S GOING?

I THINK I ALREADY KNOW, SERGEANT-MAJOR.

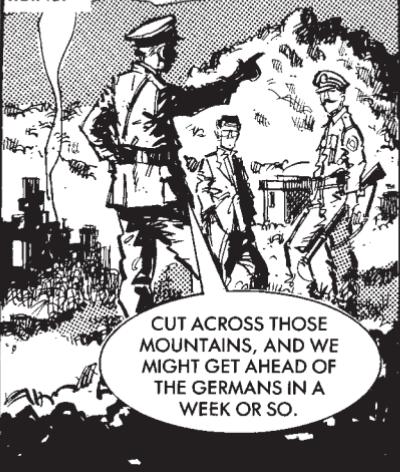
THE TARGET, A SMALL TOWN, WAS JUST AHEAD OF THEM. IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS IT HAD BEEN WIPE OFF THE MAP.



ANY REPLY WAS DROWNED OUT BY THE OMINOUS RUMBLE OF MASSED ARMOUR ON THE MOVE. HURRIEDLY THE THREE FUGITIVES WENT DEEPER INTO THE MEAGRE COVER OF A PALM GROVE.



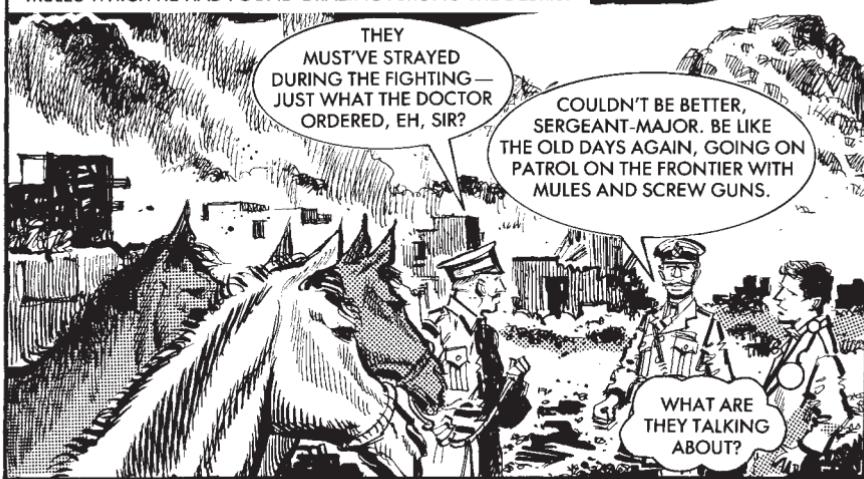
QUICKLY THE TRIO ESCAPED FROM THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF THE ASSAULT TO PONDER THEIR NEXT MOVE BY THE TOWN'S RUINS.



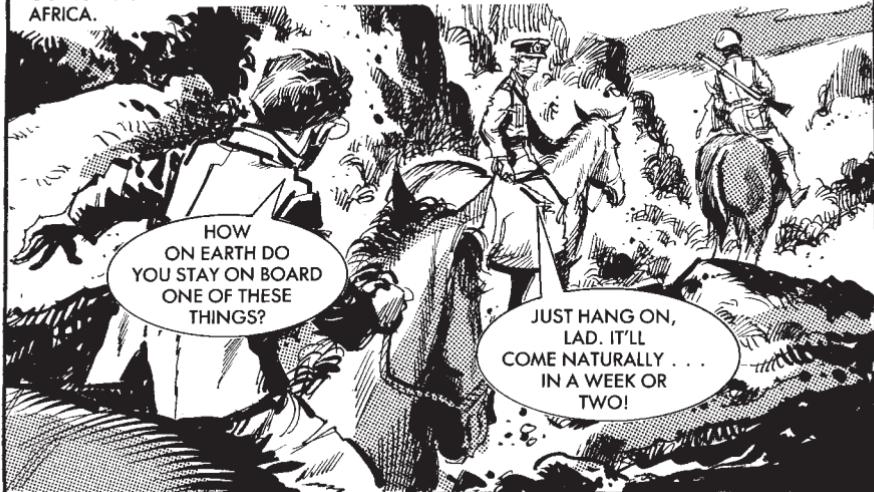
TO NORMAN THE IDEA OF CROSSING SUCH A WILD-LOOKING BARRIER SEEMED MAD.



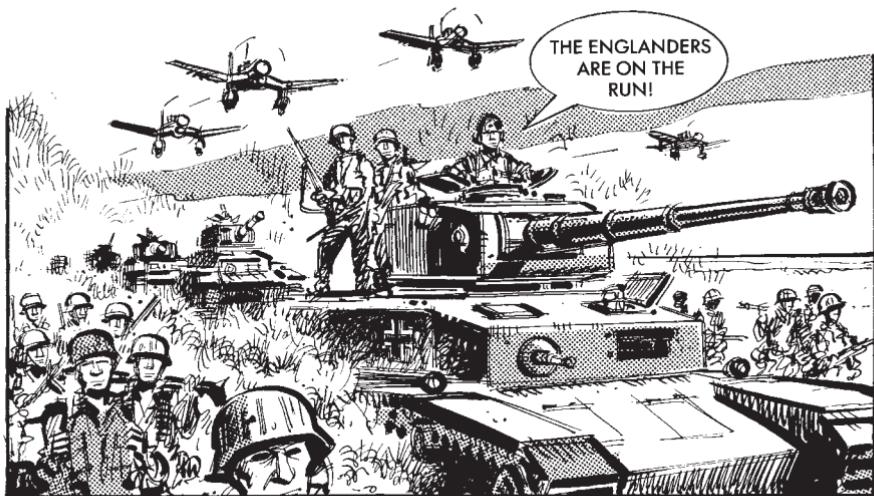
SIR JOHN WAS DELIGHTED WHEN BURNHAM, WHO HAD BEEN CHECKING THE AREA, LED OUT THREE MULES WHICH HE HAD FOUND GRAZING AMONG THE DEBRIS.



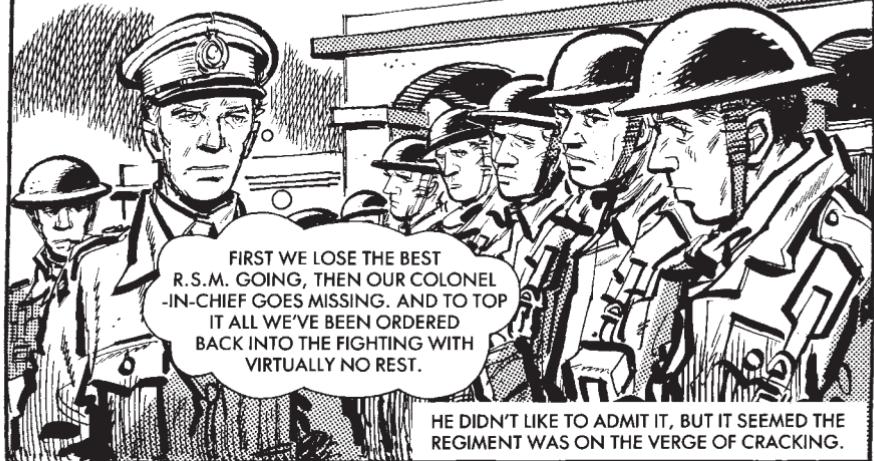
NORMAN SOON FOUND OUT. HE'D NEVER EVEN SEEN A MULE BEFORE, BUT NOW HE WAS GOING TO SPEND DAYS RIDING ONE THROUGH SOME OF THE WORST TERRAIN IN NORTH AFRICA.



AS THE FUGITIVES DISAPPEARED INTO THE MOUNTAINS, THE GREAT GERMAN PUSH STORMED ALONG THE COAST, DRIVING ALL BEFORE IT.

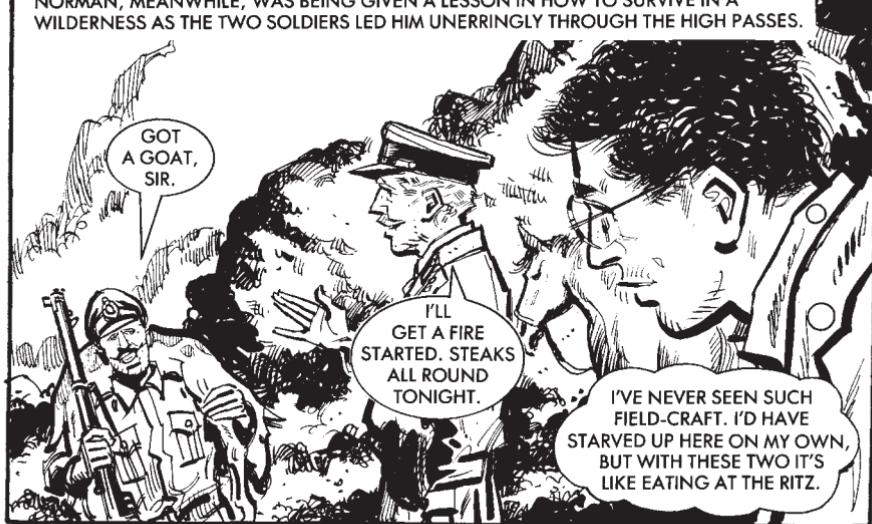


AMONG THEM WERE THE GRANVILLE FUSILIERS. EVEN COLONEL D'ARCY WOULD BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THAT THE OLD FIGHTING SPIRIT WAS SADLY MISSING.



HE DIDN'T LIKE TO ADMIT IT, BUT IT SEEMED THE REGIMENT WAS ON THE VERGE OF CRACKING.

NORMAN, MEANWHILE, WAS BEING GIVEN A LESSON IN HOW TO SURVIVE IN A WILDERNESS AS THE TWO SOLDIERS LED HIM UNERRINGLY THROUGH THE HIGH PASSES.



NOT THAT NORMAN'S OWN MILITARY EDUCATION WAS NEGLECTED BY THE TWO OLD TIMERS EITHER. AFTER INSTRUCTION FROM BURNHAM, HE WAS SOON HANDLING A RIFLE LIKE A VETERAN.



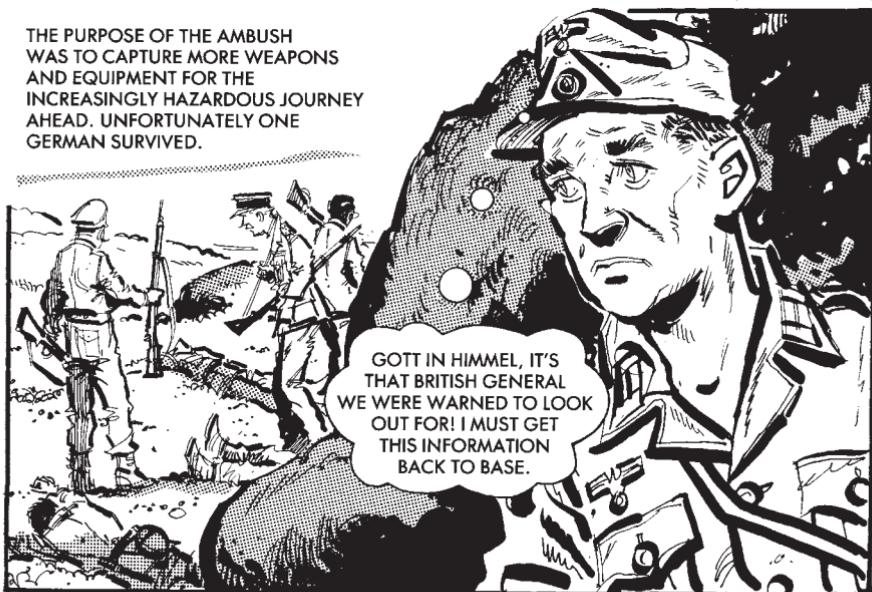
AFTER SEVERAL DAYS IN THE WILDS THEY BEGAN DESCENDING AGAIN TOWARDS THE COAST, SOON RUNNING INTO THE MORE OMINOUS SIGNS OF CIVILISATION.



DOWN IN THE FOOTHILLS THE THREE MEN SENSED THE PRESENCE OF A SMALL GERMAN PATROL IN GOOD TIME TO SPRING A TRAP.



THE PURPOSE OF THE AMBUSH  
WAS TO CAPTURE MORE WEAPONS  
AND EQUIPMENT FOR THE  
INCREASINGLY HAZARDOUS JOURNEY  
AHEAD. UNFORTUNATELY ONE  
GERMAN SURVIVED.



AFTER DAYS OF FRUITLESS SEARCHING, THE SURVIVOR'S NEWS WAS WELL RECEIVED BY GLAWITZ. WITH A HAND-PICKED SQUAD OF S.S. TROOPS, HE HEADED FOR THE PLACE THE FUGITIVES HAD BEEN SEEN.



MEANWHILE, DRAWN BY THE SOUND OF BATTLE, THE THREE AT LAST CAME IN SIGHT OF THE FRONT-LINE, DISMAYED TO SEE THEIR OWN SIDE APPARENTLY TAKING A PASTING.



FOCUSING HIS BINOCULARS, SIR JOHN WAS INITIALLY RELIEVED TO SEE THE FORCE ON THE HILL WAS NONE OTHER THAN THE GRANVILLES. HIS SATISFACTION SWIFTLY EVAPORATED AS HE SAW WHAT WAS HAPPENING, HOWEVER.



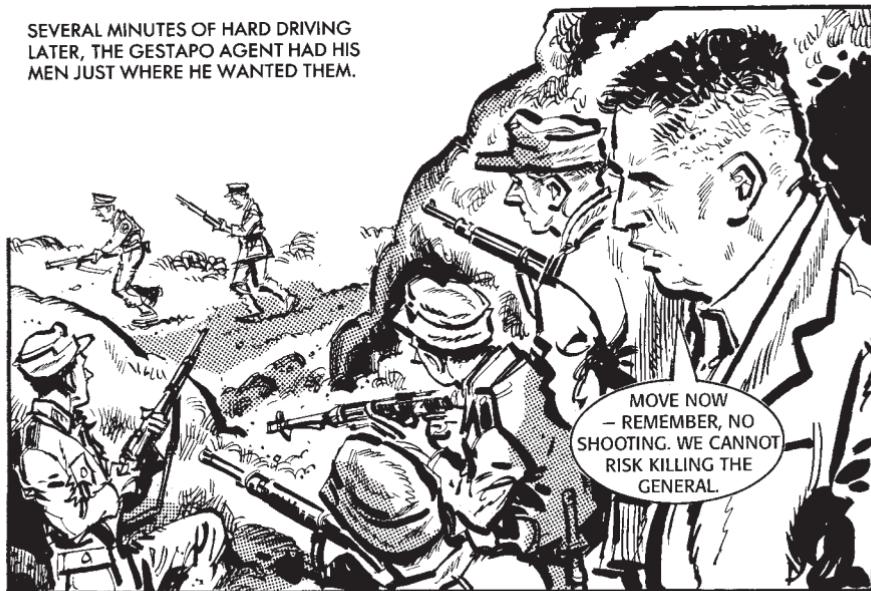
AS ONE, THE TWO OLD SOLDIERS ABANDONED THE MULES TO SET OFF AT A CRACKING PACE. NORMAN STAGGERED AFTER THEM.



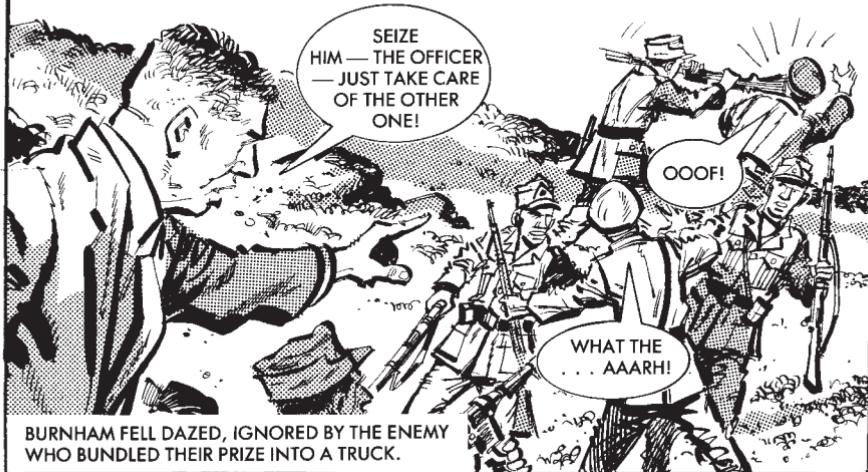
TEN MINUTES LATER, GLAWITZ DISCOVERED THE ABANDONED MULES. SCANNING THE COUNTRY AHEAD, HE SOON SPOTTED HIS PREY, UNAWARE THAT ONE WAS STRAGGLING BEHIND OUT OF SIGHT.



SEVERAL MINUTES OF HARD DRIVING LATER, THE GESTAPO AGENT HAD HIS MEN JUST WHERE HE WANTED THEM.

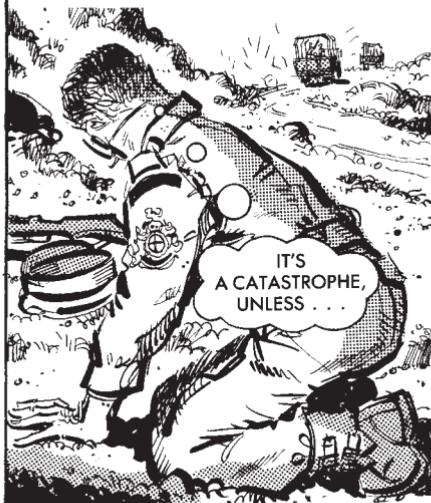


SLOGGING UP THE SLOPE, NEITHER BURNHAM NOR SIR JOHN WAS ALERT AS THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN. THEY WERE TAKEN COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE.



BURNHAM FELL DAZED, IGNORED BY THE ENEMY WHO BUNDLED THEIR PRIZE INTO A TRUCK.

THE R.S.M. WAS BACK ON HIS FEET IN MOMENTS, JUST IN TIME TO SEE SIR JOHN BEING TAKEN AWAY.



LIKE A HUMAN JUGGERNAUT, HE PLOUGHED RELENTLESSLY ON UP THE STEEP HILL.



MEANWHILE, ON THE HILL CLOSE BY, COLONEL D'ARCY COULD ONLY WATCH IN DESPAIR AS HIS MEN'S RAGGED RETREAT DEGENERATED INTO A COMPLETE ROUT.



D'ARCY WAS WRONG, THOUGH — ONE MAN COULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. JUST WHEN ALL SEEMED LOST HE APPEARED, HIS BOOMING VOICE UNIMPAIRED BY THE RECENT EXERTIONS.



THE EFFECT WAS ELECTRIFYING. AS ONE THE BATTERED UNIT TURNED TO CHARGE FEROCIOUSLY INTO THE ADVANCING GERMANS WHO WERE NOT REMOTELY PREPARED FOR SUCH AN UNEXPECTED REVERSAL.



IN LESS THAN A MINUTE, A NAZI TRIUMPH HAD BEEN TURNED INTO TOTAL DISASTER. THE DAZED SURVIVORS FLEEING BEFORE AN INFANTRY CHARGE THAT WOULD GO DOWN IN HISTORY.



IT WAS A GREAT VICTORY, YET WITHOUT THE REAL PRIZE. JUST AS BURNHAM AND THE FIRST FUSILIERS REACHED THE TRACK BEHIND THE GERMAN LINES, GLAWITZ'S TRUCKS SPED OFF, ESCAPING THE NET.



IN THE HEAT OF EVENTS, BURNHAM HAD FORGOTTEN COMPLETELY ABOUT NORMAN WHO HAD BEEN LEFT FLOUNDERING FAR BEHIND, FORCED TO REST BY THE TRACK LOWER DOWN THE HILL.



EXHAUSTED AND ANGRY, HE DIDN'T HEAR THE APPROACH OF TWO VEHICLES UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.



WHAT WOULD SERGEANT-MAJOR BULWORTH DO? HE WOULD SHOULDER HIS GUN AND FIGHT, WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT NORMAN DID.



THE FIRST TRUCK NEVER EVEN SLACKENED PACE AS IT THUNDERED OFF THE TRACK TO CRASH IN A BALL OF FLAME. THE SECOND SKIDDDED TO A HALT, BUT AS ITS MEN JUMPED OFF, NORMAN COOLLY KEPT ON FIRING.



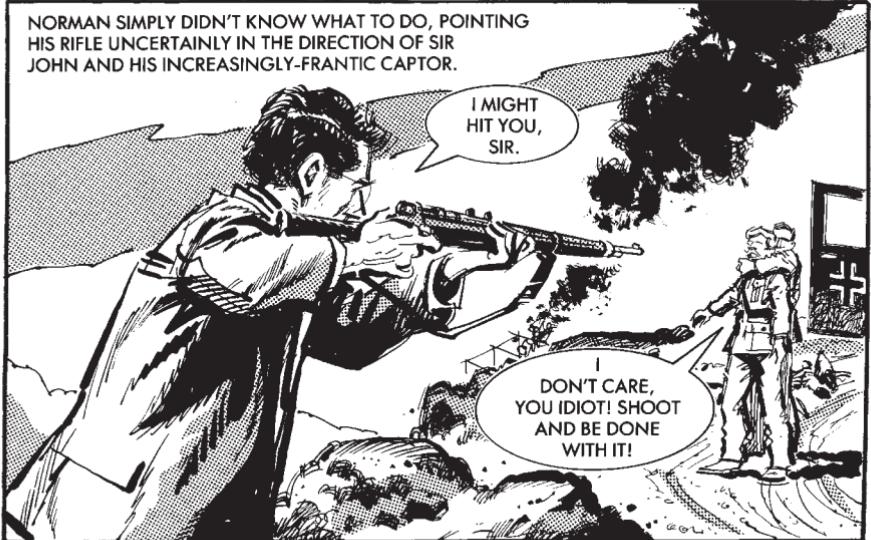
IN A DISPLAY OF MARKSMANSHIP THAT WOULD HAVE IMPRESSED EVEN BURNHAM, NORMAN PICKED OFF EVERY OPPONENT IN RAPID SUCCESSION. THEN TWO MORE FIGURES APPEARED FROM BEHIND THE TRUCK, AND HIS TRIGGER FINGER FROZE. IT WAS GLAWITZ — USING SIR JOHN AS A HUMAN SHIELD.



HAVING BEEN RESCUED FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THE GESTAPO ONCE, SIR JOHN HAD NO INTENTION OF BEING TAKEN ALIVE AGAIN.



NORMAN SIMPLY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, POINTING HIS RIFLE UNCERTAINLY IN THE DIRECTION OF SIR JOHN AND HIS INCREASINGLY-FRANTIC CAPTOR.



FOR A TIMELESS MOMENT NORMAN HESITATED. THEN, ALMOST WITHOUT REALISING IT, HIS FINGER PULLED BACK THE TRIGGER, A SINGLE SHOT RANG OUT.



FURTHER BACK, COLONEL D'ARCY WAS TRYING TO CONSOLE BURNHAM, WHO REFUSED TO ACCEPT THAT A GREAT VICTORY HAD BEEN WON.



THE TWO MEN WHIRLED ROUND TO GAPE IN ASTONISHMENT.  
CLUTCHING A BLEEDING SHOULDER AND SUPPORTED BY NORMAN,  
A FAR FROM DEAD OR CAPTURED GENERAL RE-APPEARED.



WHILE NORMAN WENT OFF FOR A WELCOME BREW, AND SIR JOHN'S WOUND WAS  
DRESSED, THE THREE SOLDIERS DISCUSSED THE FUTURE.

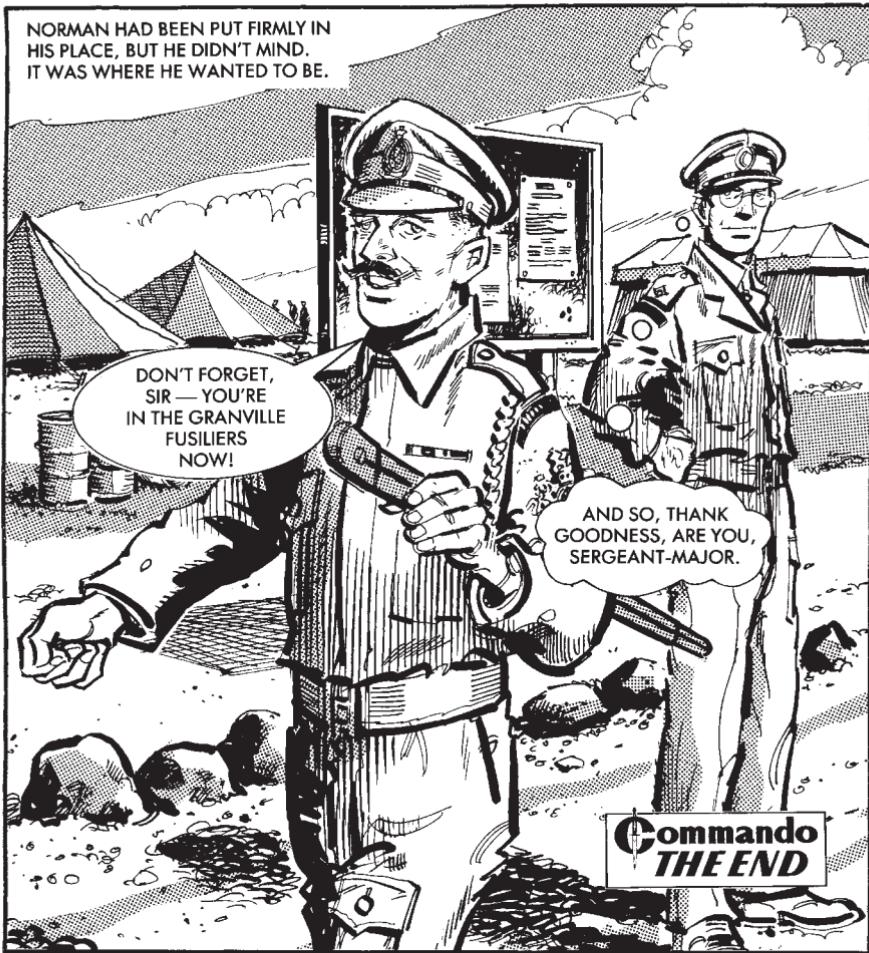


SIR JOHN TOOK NORMAN ASIDE FOR A QUIET CHAT, REMINDING HIM HOW A WORD IN THE RIGHT EAR COULD OFTEN WORK WONDERS.



SEVERAL MONTHS LATER, A NEW OFFICER JOINED THE GRANVILLES, HIS FIRST TASK TO LOCATE BURNHAM, NOW SECURE FOR THE DURATION.

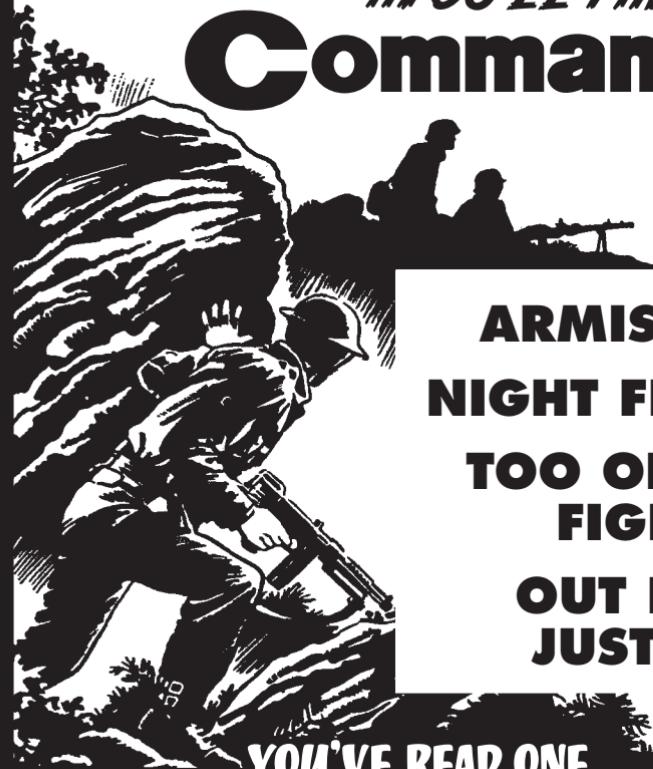




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