

COMPLETE 63-PAGE ACTION STORY

No.4754  
£2

# Commando

THE SILVER COLLECTION



# NIGHT OF FEAR

# COMMANDO - THE SILVER COLLECTION

Title

## NIGHT OF FEAR

Subject

Just imagine...

A spooky castle in darkest Transylvania —  
The sinister Count who dwells there —  
Waited on a by creepy assistant —

Swarms of large bats flying out of nowhere —  
Night of Fear may not be the most subtle Commando ever

published — but it is certainly a hugely entertaining one. The influences on the plot — Hollywood vampire movies and American horror comics — are actually acknowledged in the text, so, nearly 40 years on this remains a fiendishly fun read.

So, trick or treat?

In my humble opinion, this is definitely a treat. Happy Halloween!

Scott Montgomery, Deputy Editor

Issue Number

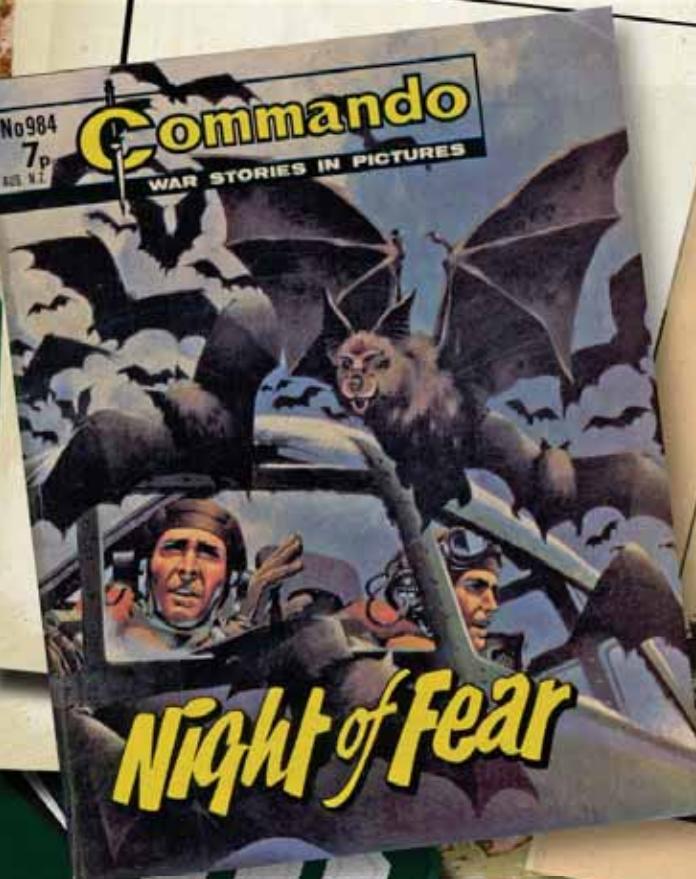
Night Of Fear, originally Commando No 984  
(November 1975), re-issued as No 2324 (November 1989)

STORY  
ALAN HEBDEN

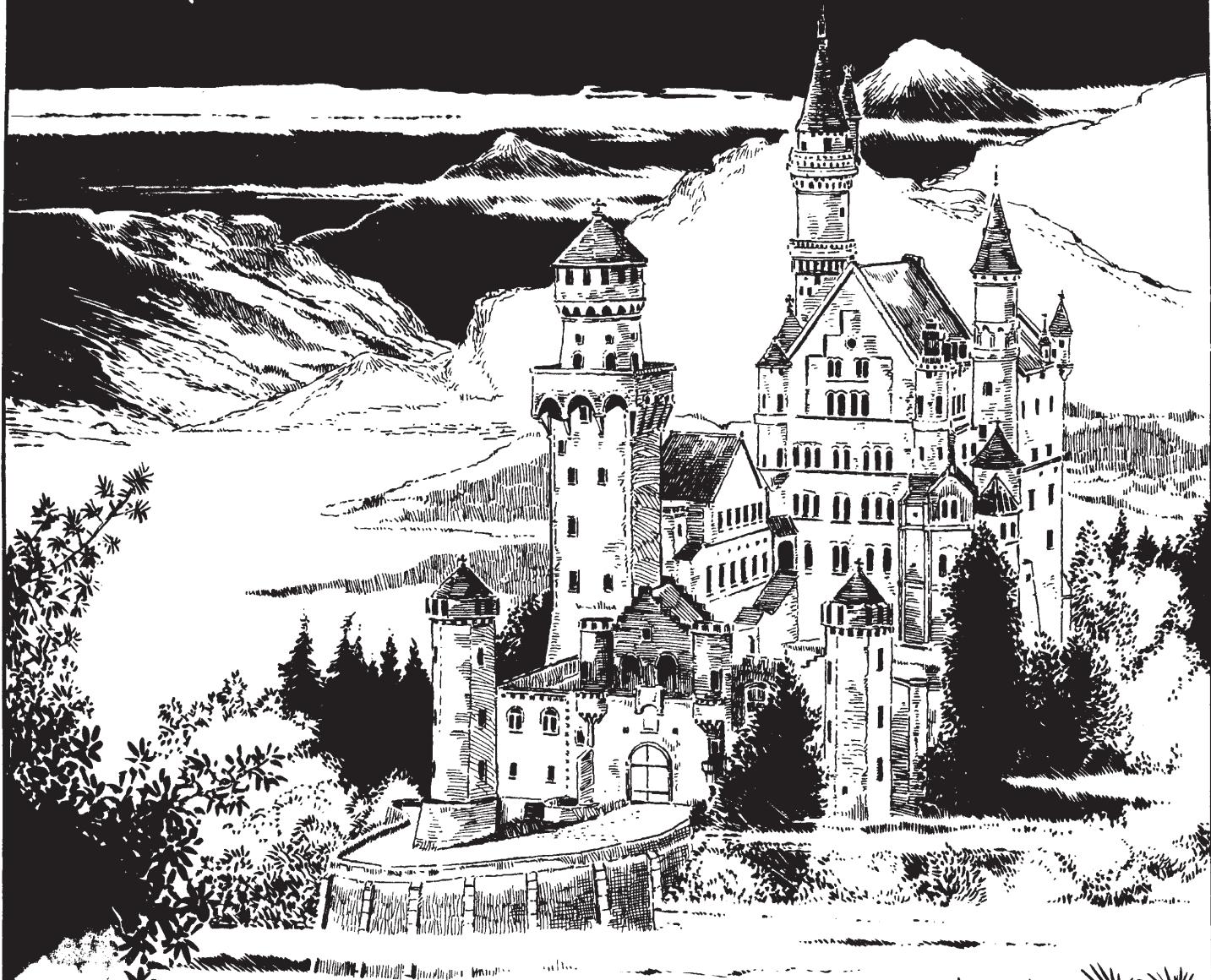
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First Published  
1975  
No 984



# NIGHT OF FEAR



**T**RANSYLVANIA...A NAME INTERWOVEN WITH LEGEND AND MYSTERY FOR SO LONG THAT TO MANY IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN A FANCIFUL SETTING FOR TALES OF VAMPIRES AND WEREWOLVES. YET TRANSYLVANIA IS REAL ENOUGH – A PROVINCE OF RUMANIA, REMOTE AND DISTANT PERHAPS, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO HAVE ESCAPED THE SAVAGE STRUGGLE OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1943 RUMANIA WAS STILL NOMINALLY AN ALLY OF NAZI GERMANY, BUT NOT ALL RUMANIANS WERE WILLING TO SIT BACK QUIETLY AND ACCEPT THE EVER-INCREASING BURDENS GERMANY WAS FORCING THEIR COUNTRY TO ACCEPT.



THE ANTI-NAZI PARTISANS HIT BACK HARD WHEN AND WHERE THEY COULD. EVEN THE LUFTWAFFE WERE NOT SAFE.



AS RESISTANCE BECAME MORE WIDESPREAD, THE GERMANS CALLED IN S.S. GENERAL LUDWIG VON STACH, AN ELEGANT BUT RUTHLESS MAN WHOSE NAME SPELLED TERROR THROUGHOUT THE OCCUPIED LANDS OF EASTERN EUROPE.

WHAT IS THIS PLACE, MAJOR POEST?

THE CASTLE  
REMPAVI, HERR GENERAL.  
IT BELONGS TO THE OLD COUNT  
REMPAVI. HE'S SOMETHING OF  
A HERMIT. BIT OF A NATUR-  
ALIST TOO - STUDIES  
BATS, I BELIEVE.

BATS? THE GENERAL SNORTED. SOME PEOPLE OBVIOUSLY DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS A WAR ON.

VON STACH'S ANTI-GUERILLA FORCE WAS OUT TO CRUSH THE PARTISANS, BUT THE LAST FEW DAYS HAD YIELDED NOTHING. THE CASTLE WOULD DO FOR A FEW HOURS' RELAXATION.

IS ANYBODY THERE? OPEN THESE GATES!

MY MASTER SEES NO ONE.  
WHO ARE YOU?

THAT BROUGHT A VERY ANGRY REPLY. VON STACH WAS NOT USED TO BEING TREATED THIS WAY.

GENERAL  
VON STACH OF THE  
S.S., AND I DEMAND  
ENTRY. IF THESE GATES  
ARE NOT OPEN IN TWO  
MINUTES I'LL HAVE  
THEM BLASTED TO  
PIECES!

NO, NO...  
WAIT! I MUST  
ASK MY  
MASTER!

VON STACH'S DEADLINE HAD JUST EXPIRED WHEN THE GATES CREAKED OPEN, PUSHED BY A POWERFUL HUNCHBACK.

MY  
MASTER BIDS  
YOU WELCOME.

NOT A MOMENT  
TOO SOON EITHER.  
ANOTHER FEW SECONDS  
AND HE WOULD HAVE BEEN  
BIDDING ME WELCOME  
WHETHER HE LIKED IT OR  
NOT. TAKE ME TO HIM  
IMMEDIATELY.

COUNT REMPAVI WAS WAITING IN THE COURTYARD.

HE SAYS  
HE IS GENERAL  
VON STACH OF THE  
S.S., MASTER.

ARE YOU  
SUGGESTING I AM  
AN IMPOSTER,  
OAF?

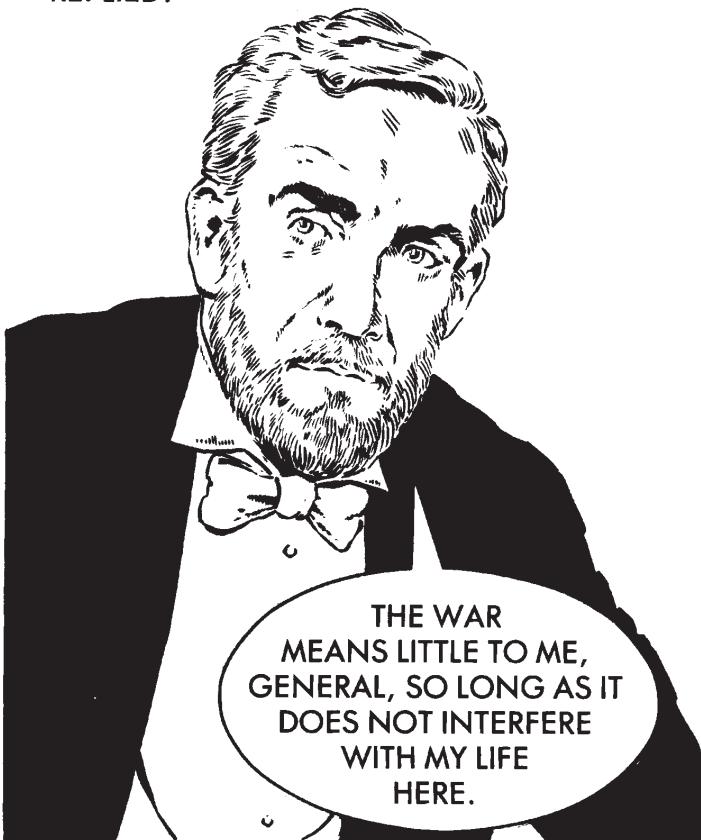
THE COUNT SMILED, SHOWING STARTLINGLY WHITE TEETH.

FORGIVE  
ZABA - HE DOES  
NOT CARE MUCH FOR  
STRANGERS. YOU ARE  
WELCOME HERE. PLEASE  
HAVE DINNER WITH  
ME.

THIS INVITATION PUT THE GENERAL IN A BETTER FRAME OF MIND, AS DID THE EXCELLENT MEAL SERVED BY ZABA.



THE COUNT SMILED SLIGHTLY AS HE REPLIED.



VON STACH DID NOT APPROVE OF THIS ATTITUDE.



THE GENERAL'S AIDE, MAJOR POEST, INTERVENED.



BUT IT WAS TIME FOR THE GERMANS TO RETURN TO THEIR BASE MUCH FURTHER DOWN THE VALLEY. VON STACH HAD A LAST WORD OF ADVICE FOR THE OLD COUNT—



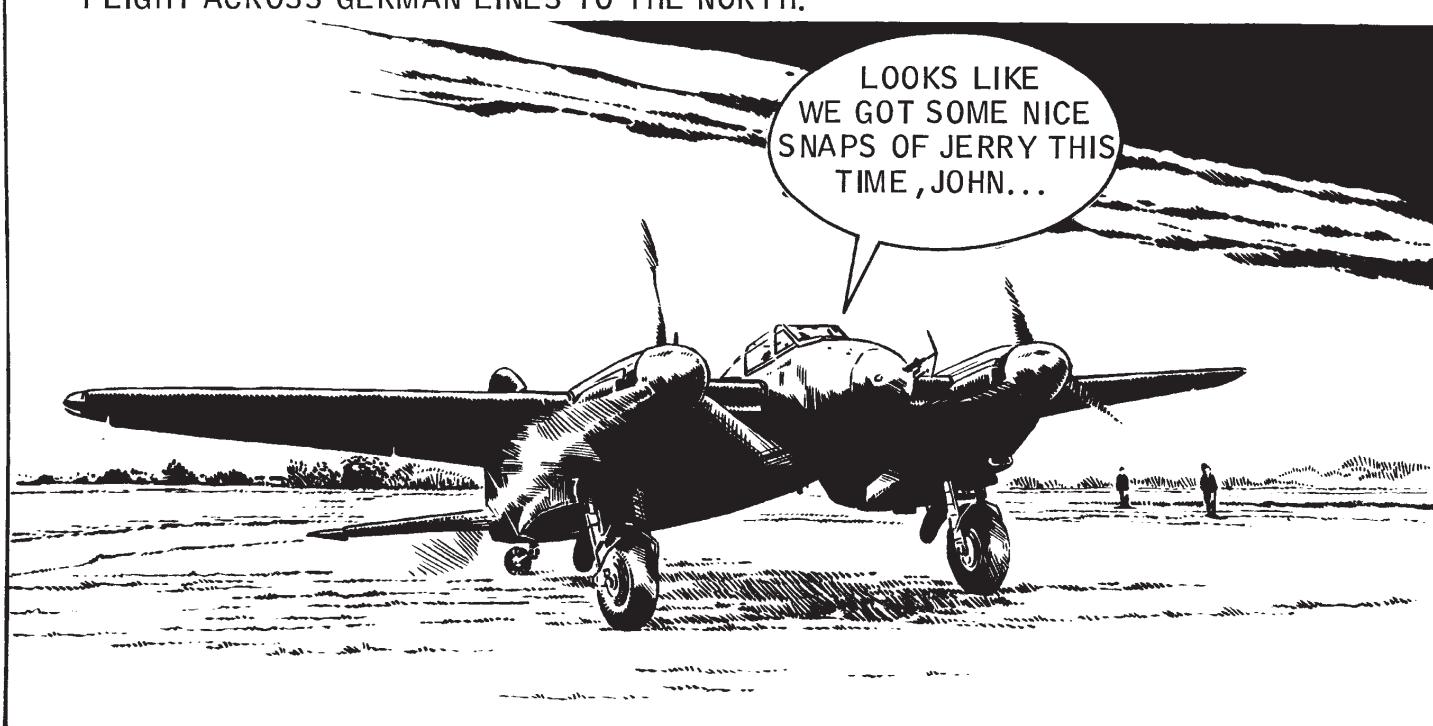
THE GERMANS DISAPPEARED DOWN THE VALLEY AND THE COUNT RETURNED TO THE MAIN HALL, WHERE BRADU, HIS SON, APPEARED FROM BEHIND A TAPESTRY.



BRADU KNEW THE ANSWER BEFORE HE ASKED. THE COUNT'S WORDS CAME AS NO SURPRISE.



EVEN AS COUNT REMPAVI WENT WEARILY TO HIS BED, AN R.A.F. MOSQUITO WAS COMING IN TO LAND AT A RECENTLY CAPTURED AIRFIELD IN ITALY AFTER A RECCE FLIGHT ACROSS GERMAN LINES TO THE NORTH.



LOOKS LIKE  
WE GOT SOME NICE  
SNAPS OF JERRY THIS  
TIME, JOHN...

FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT HOWARD GARFORTH AND FLYING-OFFICER JOHN KNOWLES WERE THE CREW. ON THIS PARTICULAR EVENING JOHN KNOWLES SEEMED UNUSUALLY EAGER TO GET BACK ON TIME. ALMOST BEFORE THEY'D STOPPED ROLLING, HE WAS OUT OF HIS STRAPS.



THERE'S A  
FILM SHOW TONIGHT,  
A VAMPIRE MOVIE. I'M NOT  
MISSING THAT. SEE  
YOU LATER.

HEY, WHAT'S  
THE RUSH, JOHN?  
YOU'VE BEEN COUNTING  
THE MINUTES FOR THE  
LAST HOUR.

HOWARD LAUGHED. THE WHOLE SQUADRON KNEW ABOUT JOHN'S OBSESSION WITH HORROR FILMS AND BOOKS.

HAVEN'T SEEN MISTER KNOWLES MOVE SO FAST FOR AGES, SIR. COULDN'T BE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THAT FILM THEY'RE SHOWING TONIGHT, COULD IT?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, SMITHY.

NOT EVERYONE WAS AMUSED BY JOHN'S ENTHUSIASM. IN THEIR SHARED TENT THEIR BATMAN HAD A PROBLEM.

NOT MORE VAMPIRE COMICS - I THREW OUT ABOUT A HUNDRED YESTERDAY!

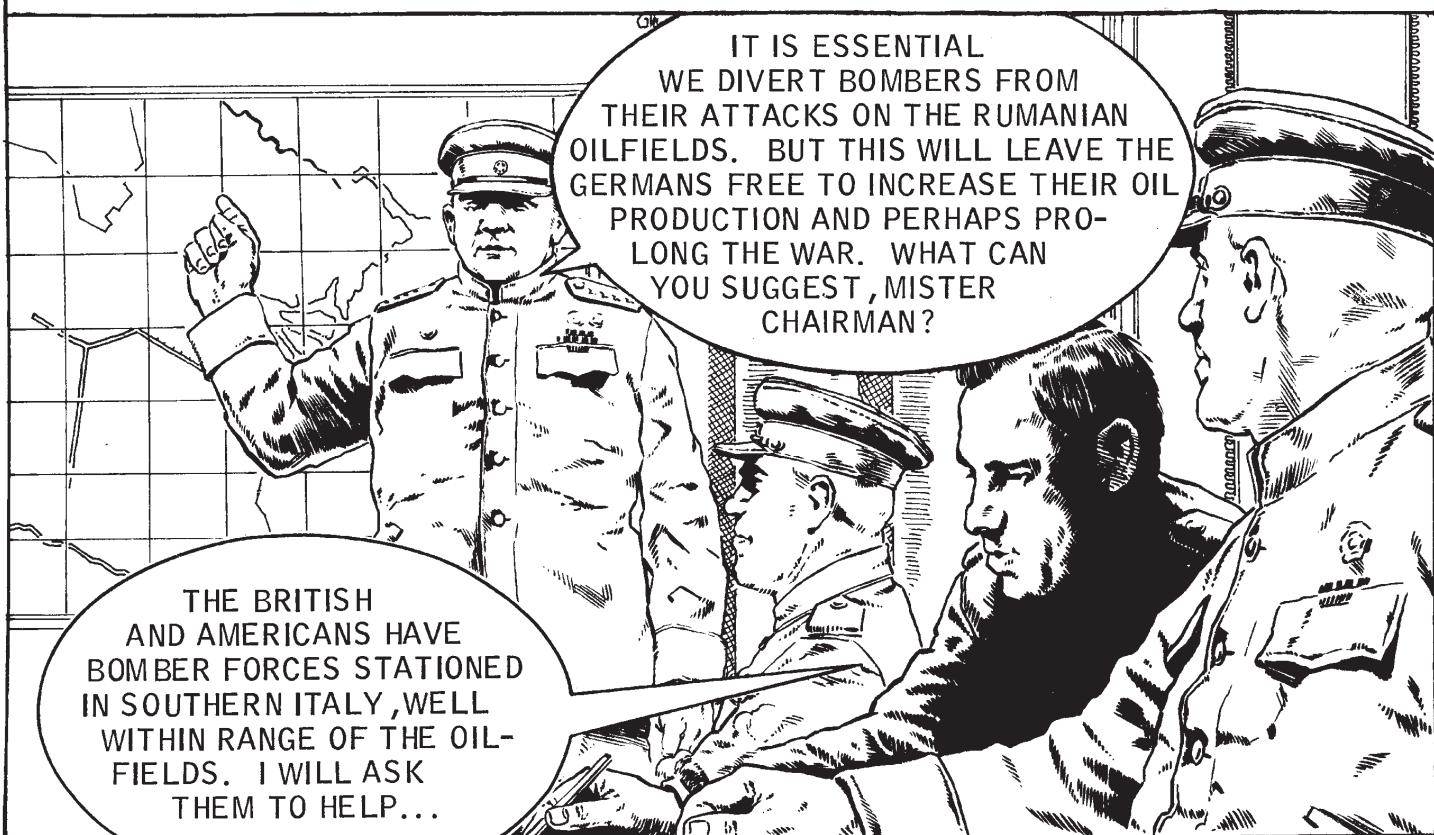
BLAME THE YANKS. THEY FLY A PLANE-LOAD IN EVERY WEEK.

LATER HOWARD MET JOHN COMING OUT OF THE FILM TENT.

YOU MISSED A GREAT FILM. I WONDER IF TRANSYLVANIA REALLY LOOKS LIKE THAT?

NOT IF IT WAS MADE IN HOLLYWOOD. NEVER MIND, MAYBE YOU CAN VISIT IT AFTER THE WAR. YOU WON'T GET THE CHANCE BEFORE THEN.

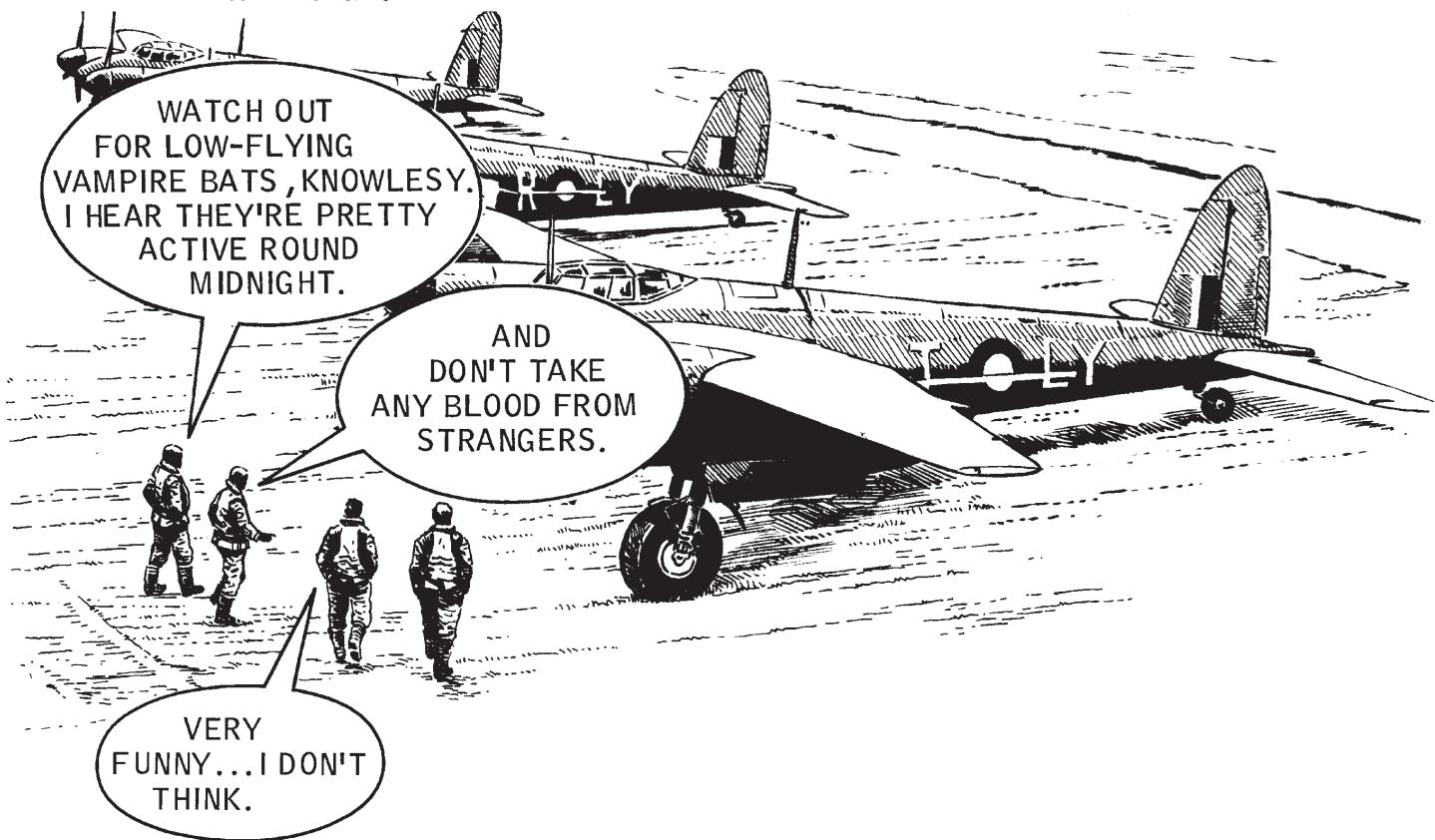
BUT HOWARD WAS WRONG. FAR AWAY IN MOSCOW A TOP-LEVEL COMMITTEE WAS MEETING BEHIND THE RAMPARTS OF THE KREMLIN.



A WEEK LATER THAT STRATEGIC DECISION HAD FILTERED THROUGH TO THE MEN WHO WOULD HAVE TO CARRY IT OUT. AT A BRIEFING THEIR NEW TARGET WAS EXPLAINED – A TARGET THAT DELIGHTED JOHN KNOWLES.



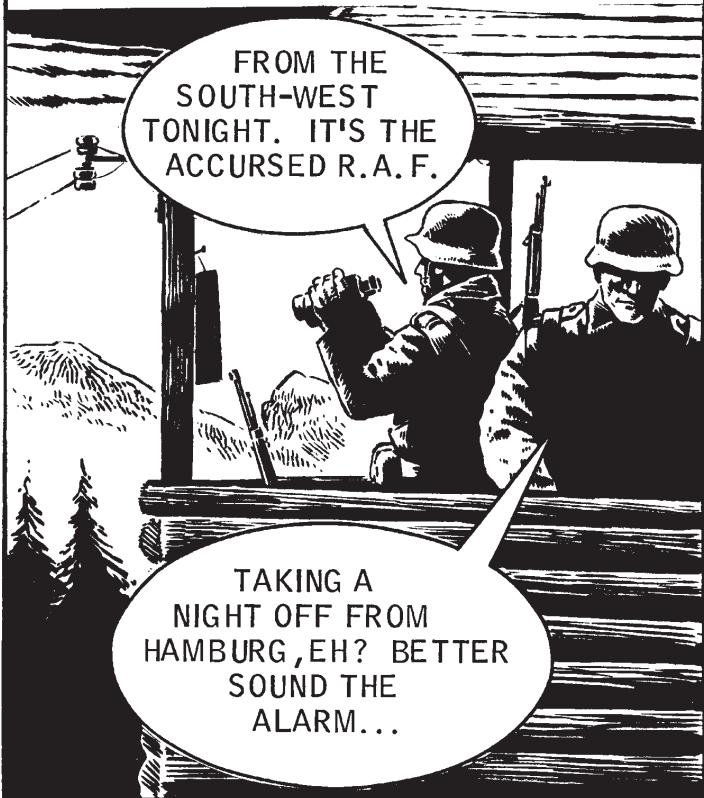
THEY WERE READY TO GO AT SUNSET, THOUGH JOHN RECEIVED A COUPLE OF LIGHT-HEARTED WARNINGS.



AS THEY PREPARED FOR TAKE-OFF, JOHN FUMBLED IN HIS JACKET.



A FEW HOURS LATER THE GERMANS AT THE PLOESTI OILFIELD BRACED THEMSELVES FOR ANOTHER RAID.



THE SIRENS HAD BARELY SOUNDED BEFORE THE PATHFINDING MOSQUITOES ARRIVED, LED BY HOWARD AND JOHN.



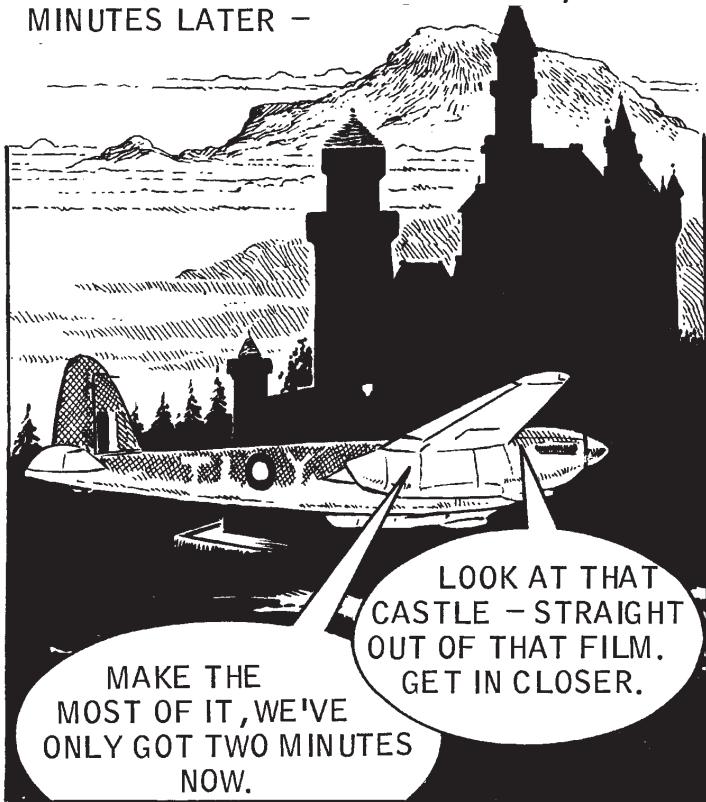
AS THE MOSQUITO UNLOADED ITS INCENDIARY BOMBS AND FLARES, THE TARGET WAS BATHED IN A LURID GLARE.



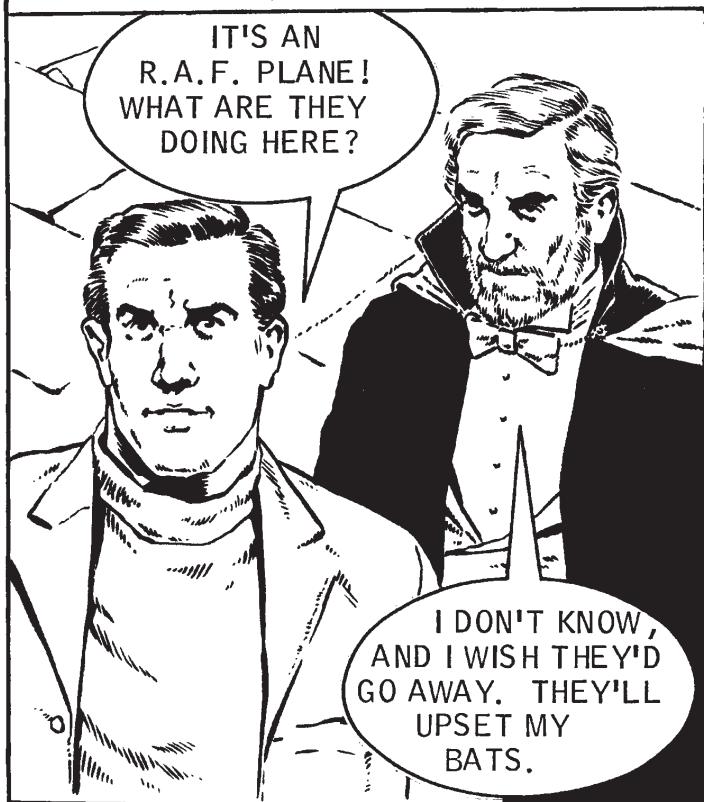
THE BOMBER CREWS WEREN'T BLIND, AND SOON THE OILFIELD WAS A MASSIVE INFERNO OF HUGE FIRES AND EXPLOSIONS... THOUGH JOHN SCARCELY NOTICED.



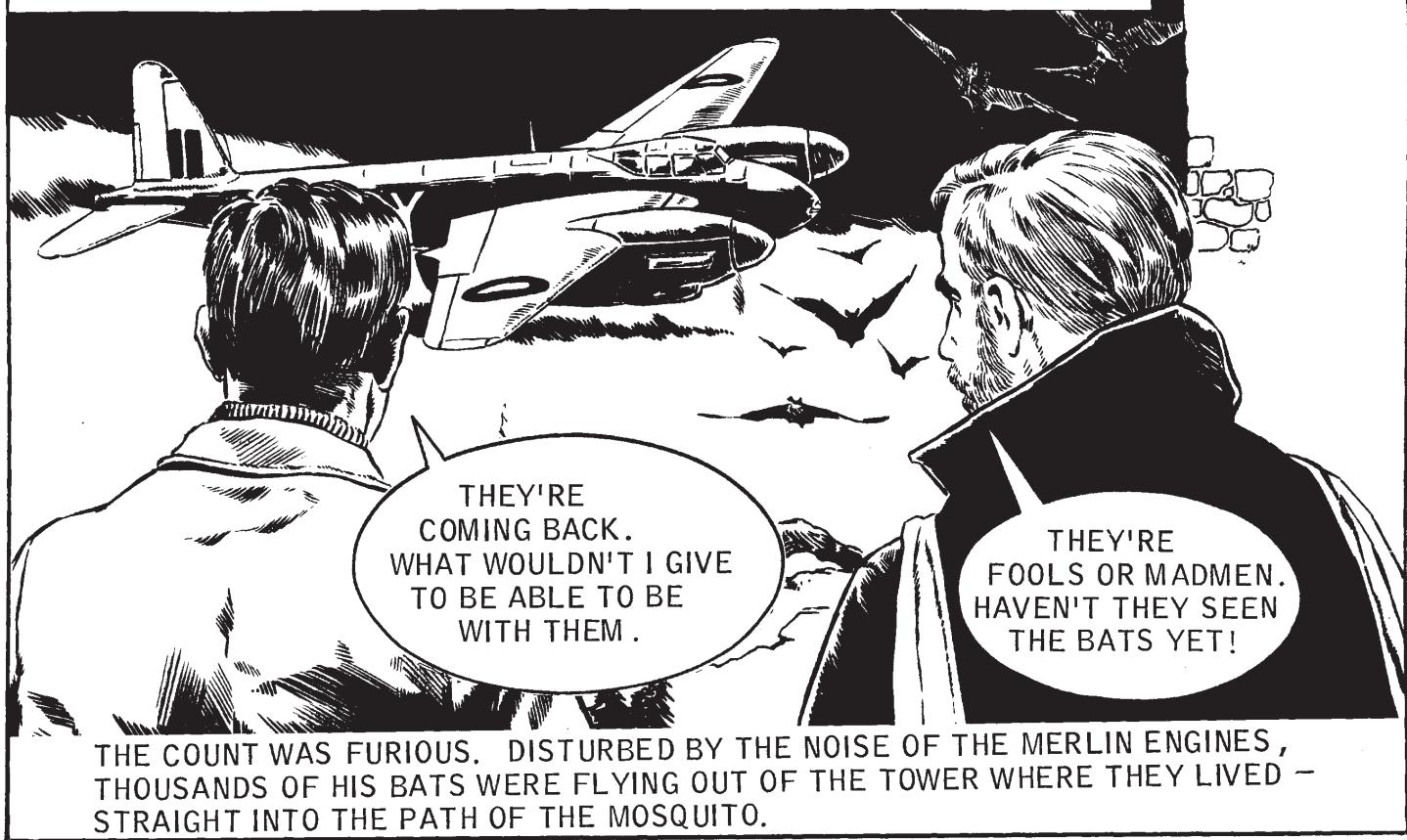
SUCH A DETOUR WAS STRICTLY AGAINST ORDERS, BUT SOME OF JOHN'S ENTHUSIASM HAD RUBBED OFF ON HOWARD. SO, A FEW MINUTES LATER -



THE SOUND OF THE AIRCRAFT BROUGHT THE COUNT AND HIS SON TO THE BATTLEMENTS.



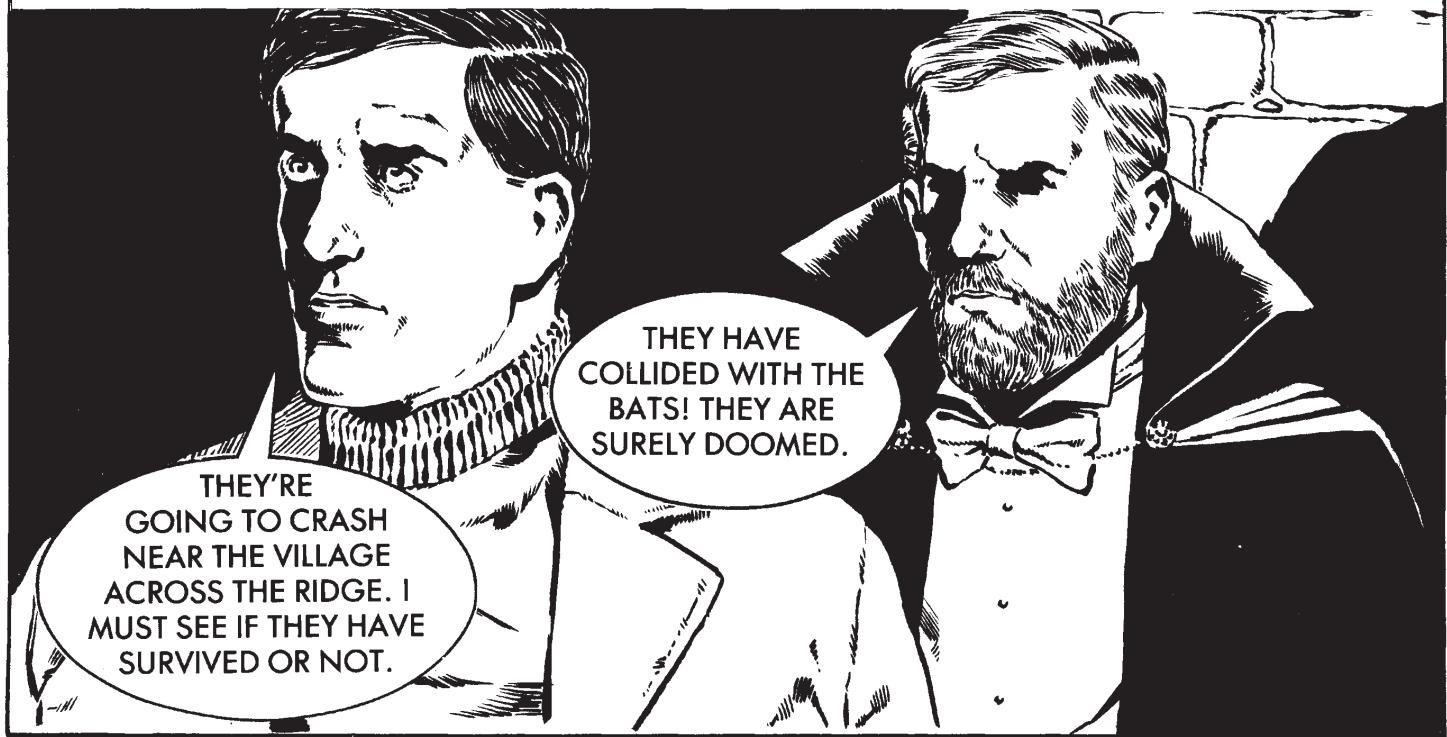
THE PLANE TURNED STEEPLY FOR ANOTHER RUN OVER THE CASTLE.



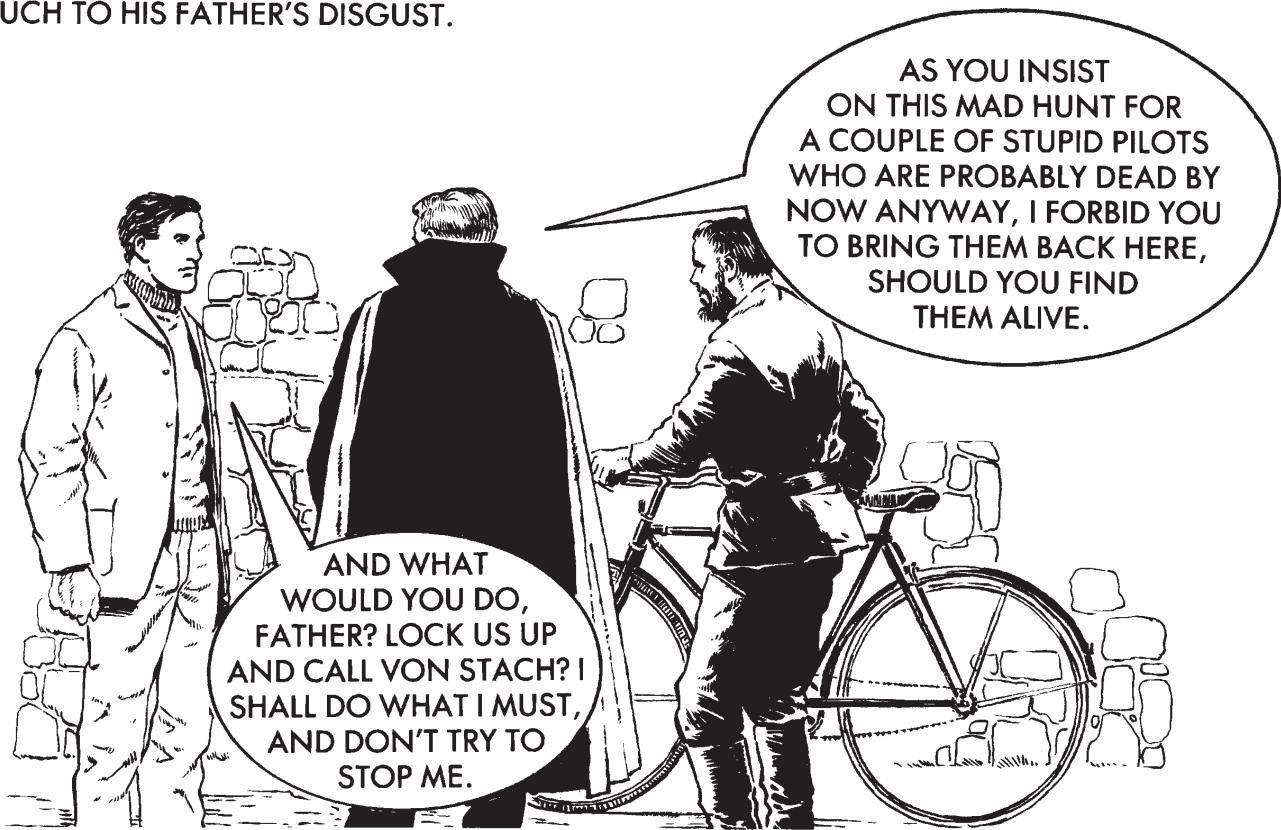
BLACK BATS AT NIGHT WEREN'T THE EASIEST THING TO SPOT, AND WHEN JOHN EVENTUALLY SAW THEM IT WAS TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING.



FOR THE AIRMEN THE JOY-RIDE TURNED SWIFTLY INTO A NIGHTMARE AS THEY HURTLED INTO THE SWARM. THE TWO WATCHED IN HORROR FROM THE CASTLE.



ONCE BRADU HAD MADE UP HIS MIND NOTHING COULD STOP HIM. SOON HE WAS SETTING OUT, MUCH TO HIS FATHER'S DISGUST.



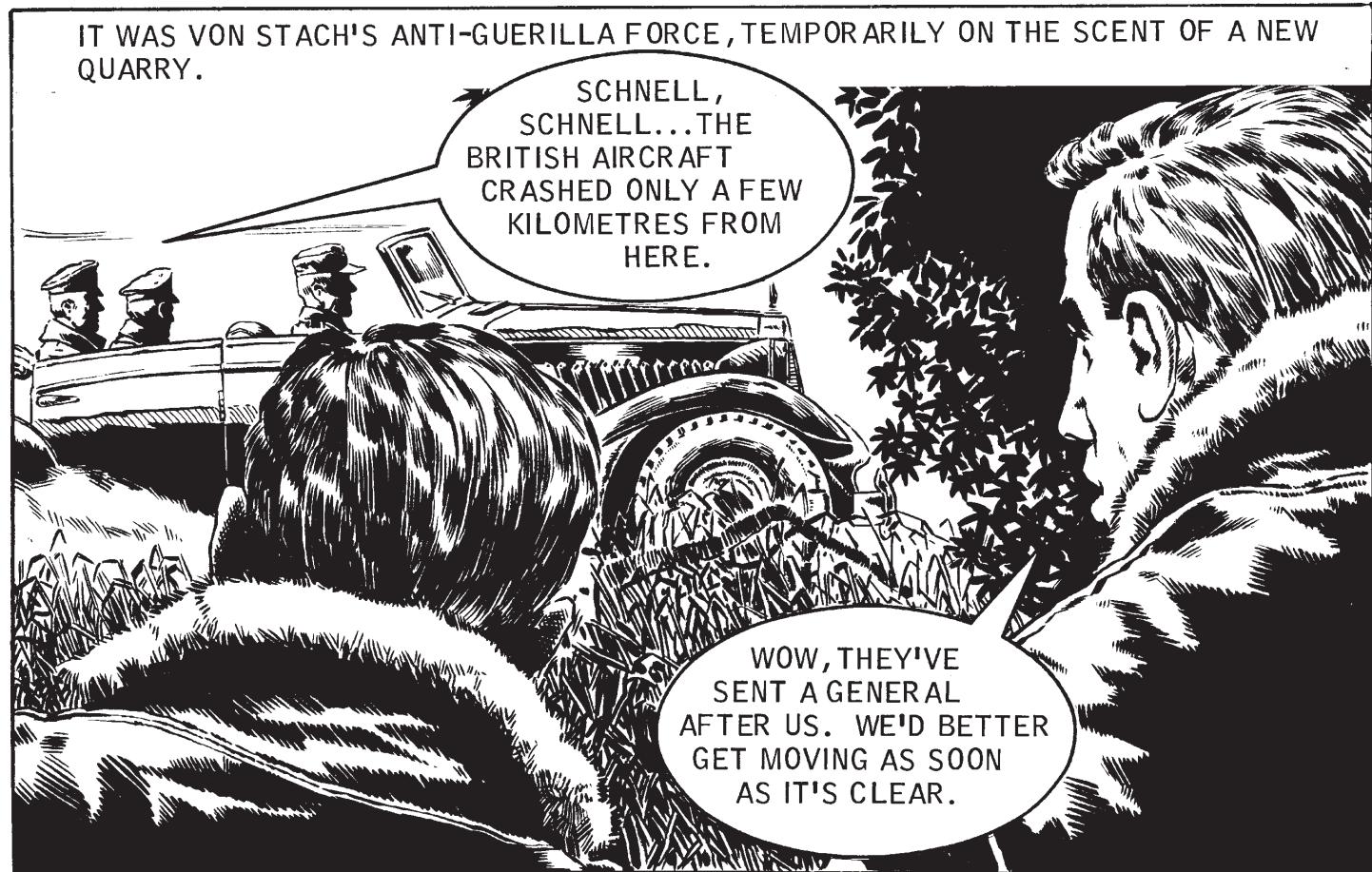
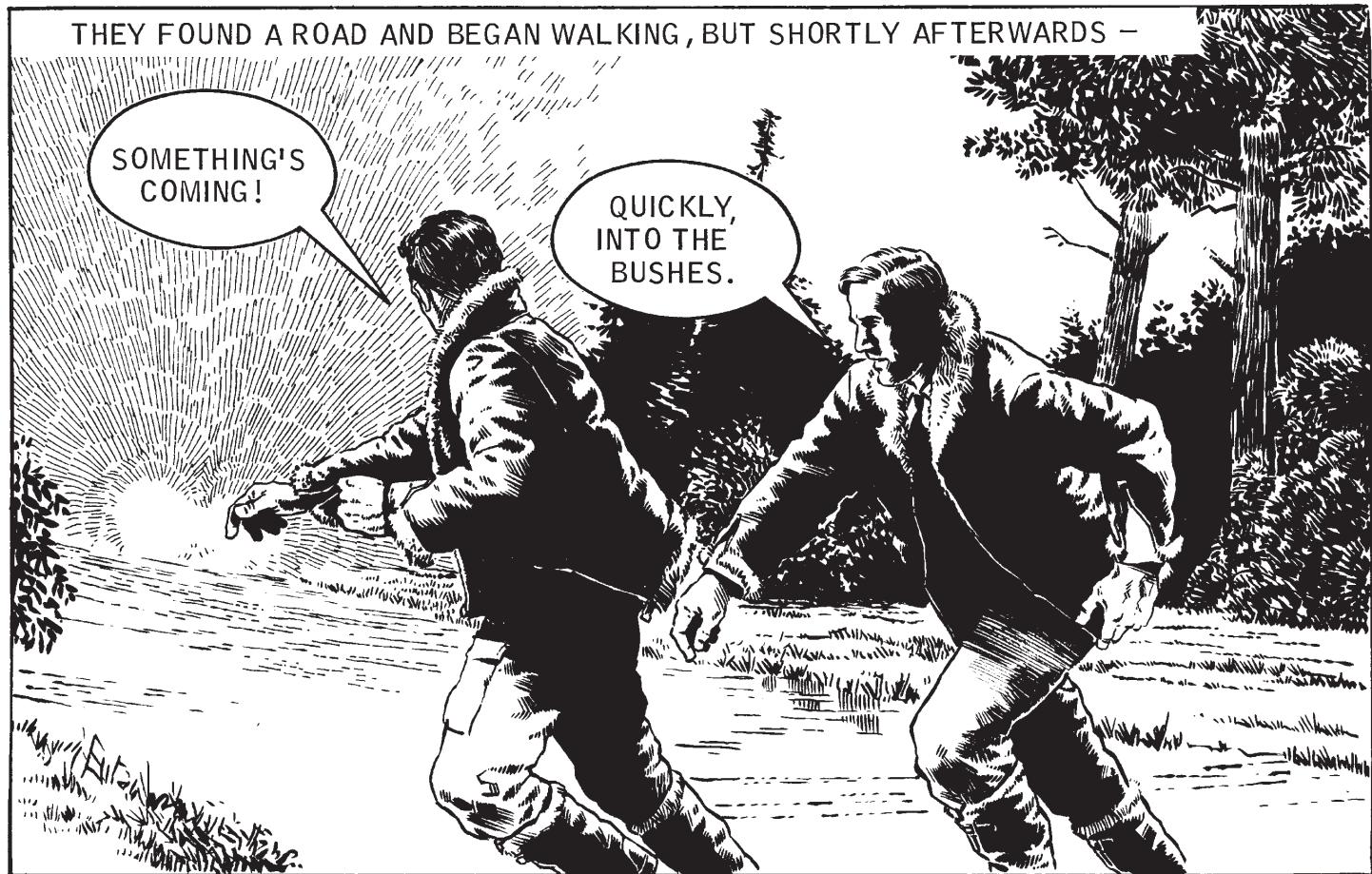
THE COUNT SHOOK HIS HEAD AS HE WATCHED HIS SON RIDE OFF INTO THE NIGHT. BESIDE HIM THE FAITHFUL ZABA SIGHED. IT WAS BAD ENOUGH THAT BRADU DISOBEDIED HIS FATHER, BUT WITH NAZIS AROUND IT WAS TEN TIMES WORSE.

MEANWHILE THE TWO AIRMEN HAD ABANDONED THEIR DOOMED PLANE.



THEY LANDED SAFELY AND HID THEIR PARACHUTES. JOHN WAS STILL CHUCKLING AS HE PULLED OUT A MAP.





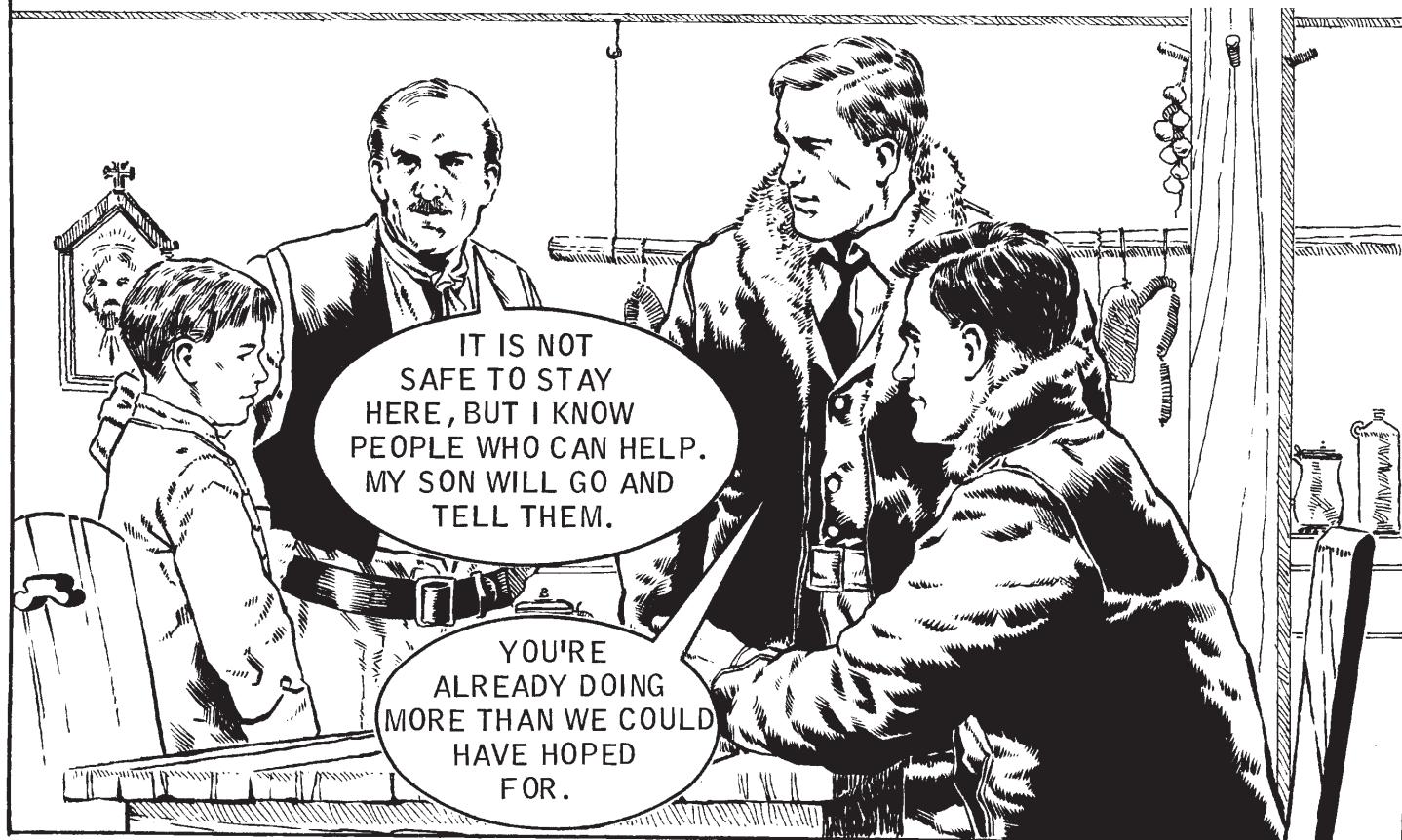
THEY SET OFF AGAIN AS SOON AS THE GERMANS HAD DISAPPEARED AND SOON CAME TO A SMALL VILLAGE.



THE SIGHT OF THE TWO R.A.F. AIRCREW NEARLY GAVE THE INNKEEPER A HEART ATTACK, BUT...

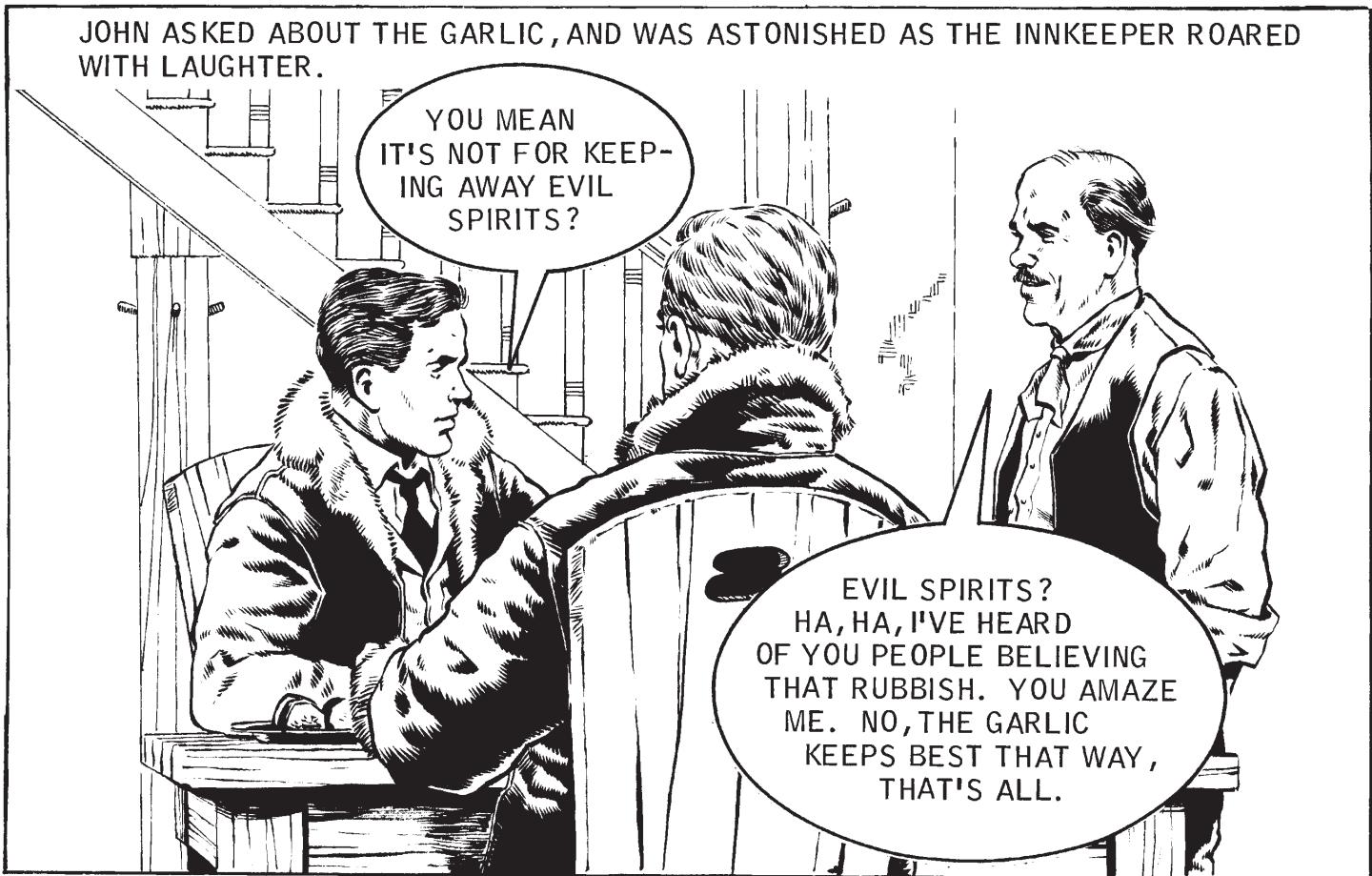


THE INNKEEPER WAS NO GUERRILLA, BUT HE HAD LITTLE LOVE FOR THE GERMANS.



AFTER THE BOY HAD GONE THE INNKEEPER GAVE THEM SOME FOOD. BUT IT WAS THE  
INN ITSELF THAT FASCINATED JOHN.





HOWARD COULD NOT RESIST A JIBE AS JOHN RETURNED MOROSELY TO HIS MEAL.



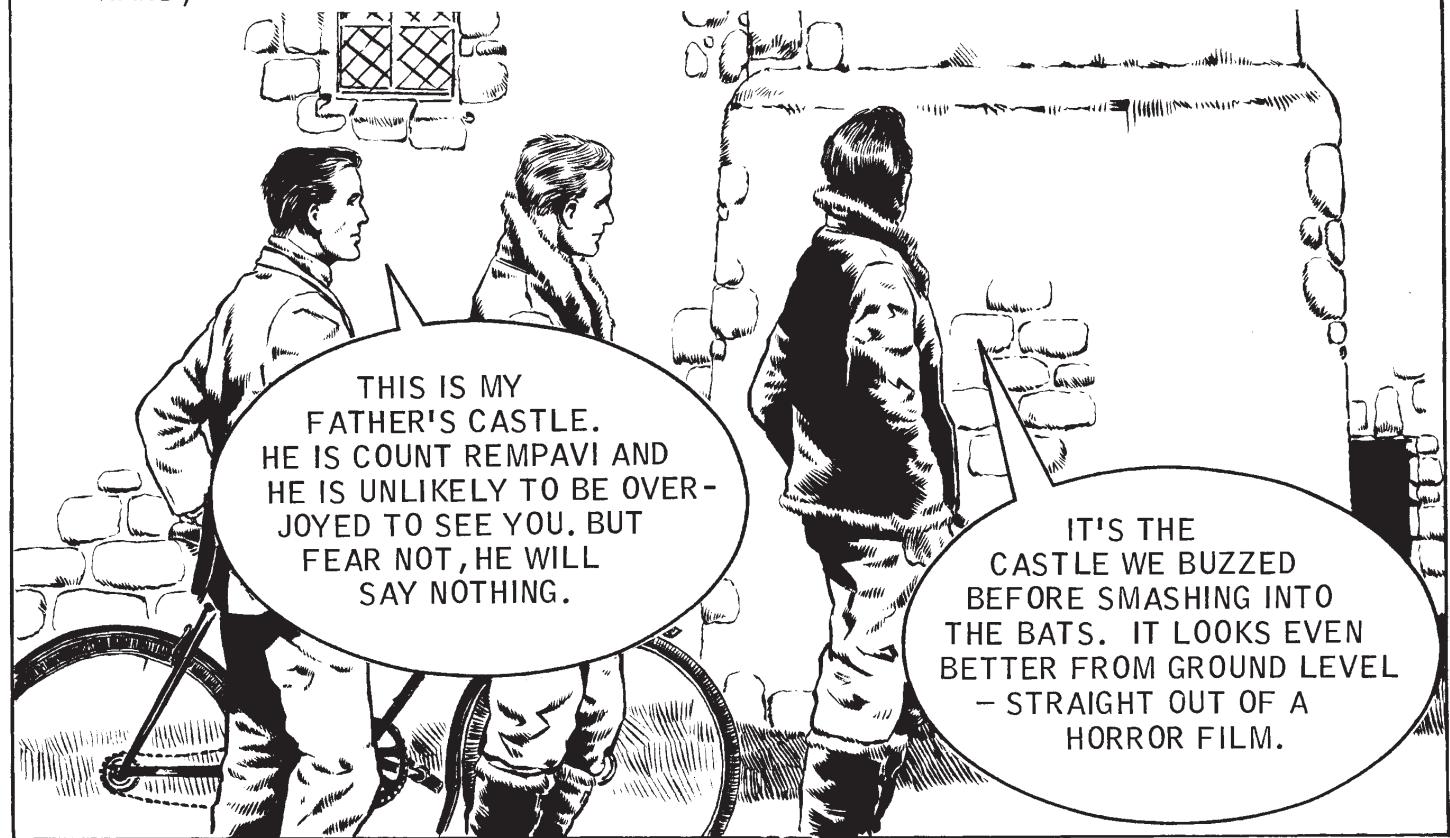
MEANWHILE THE INNKEEPER'S SON HAD RUN INTO BRADU.

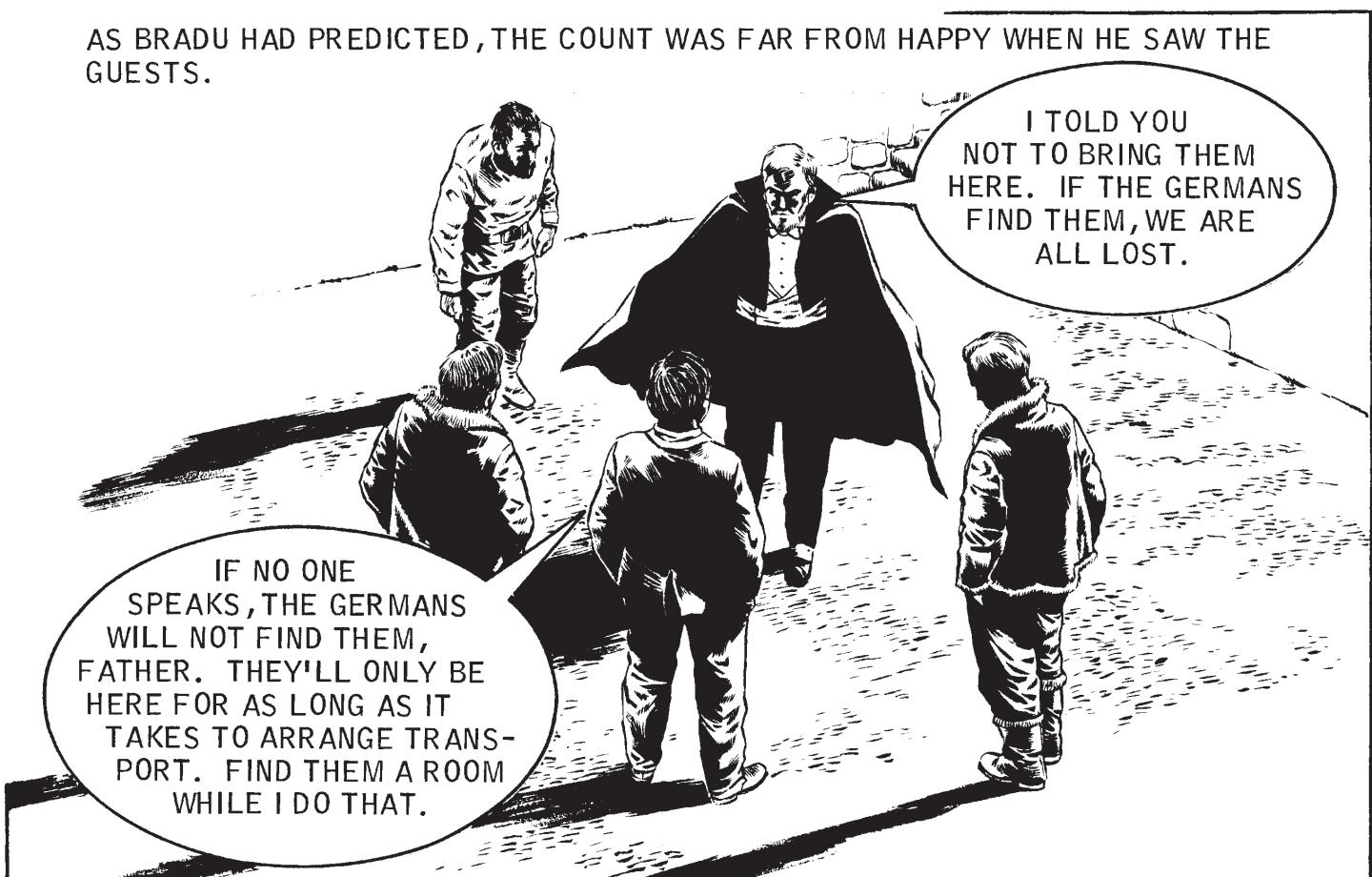
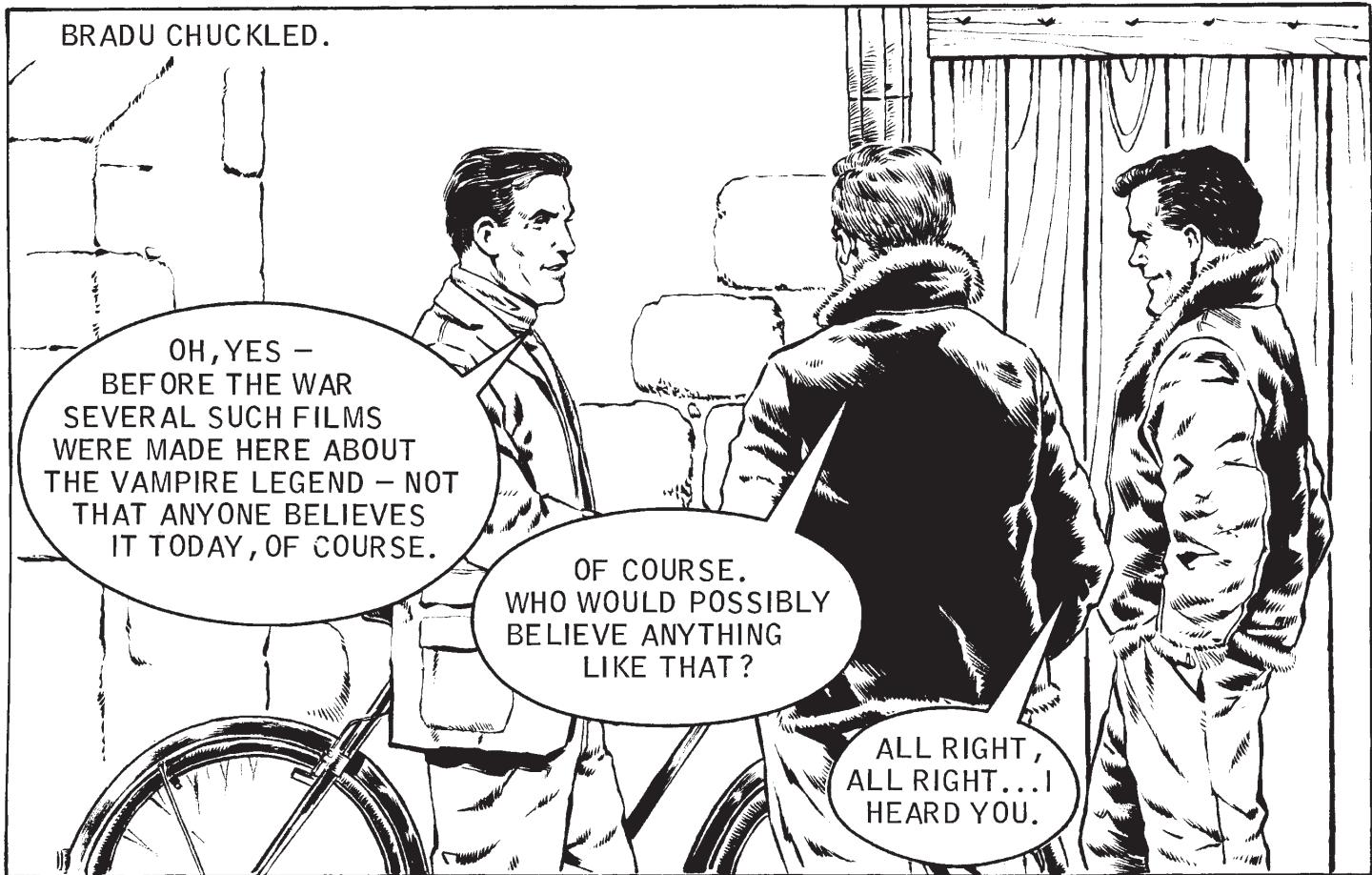


BRADU TOOK CHARGE AS SOON AS HE ARRIVED.



DODGING ALONG NARROW, HIDDEN TRAILS THAT HE KNEW LIKE THE BACK OF HIS HAND, BRADU LED THEM BACK TO THE GLOOMY CASTLE.





THEY FOLLOWED THE SURLY HUNCHBACK THROUGH THE CASTLE TO A LUXURIOUS BEDROOM.

YOU STAY  
HERE. NOT LEAVE.  
PULL BELL-ROPE IF  
YOU WANT ANY-  
THING.

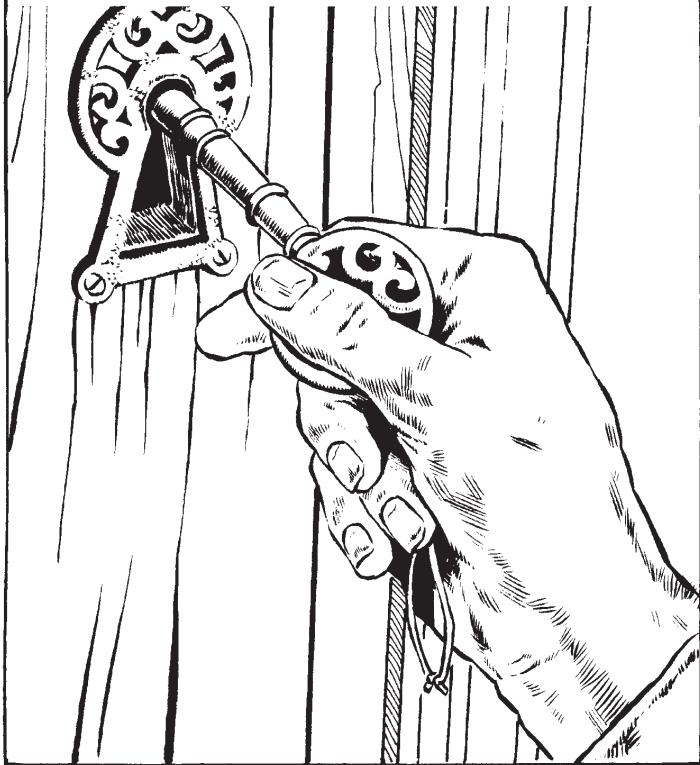
WE'D HAVE  
BEEN WORSE OFF  
AT THE RITZ.

AND THE SINISTER MANSERVANT LEFT THEM ALONE.

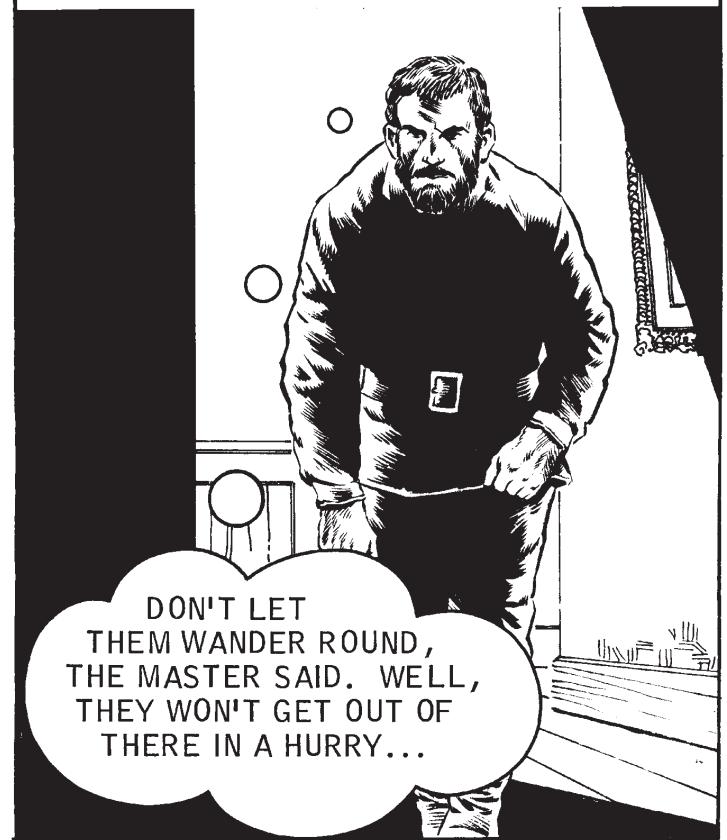
SPOOKY  
BLOKE, THAT COUNT.  
BRADU WAS RIGHT ABOUT HIM  
NOT WANTING US, NOT THAT I  
BLAME HIM. AT LEAST WE'RE  
SAFE AND COMFORTABLE  
FOR THE MOMENT.

ALL I CAN SAY IS  
THAT IF PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN  
THIS CASTLE DON'T BELIEVE IN  
VAMPIRES, THEN WHAT HOPE CAN THERE  
BE FOR THE WORLD? I'M GLAD I BROUGHT  
THESE COMICS ALONG NOW, EVEN IF THEY  
WON'T BE QUITE THE SAME AGAIN.

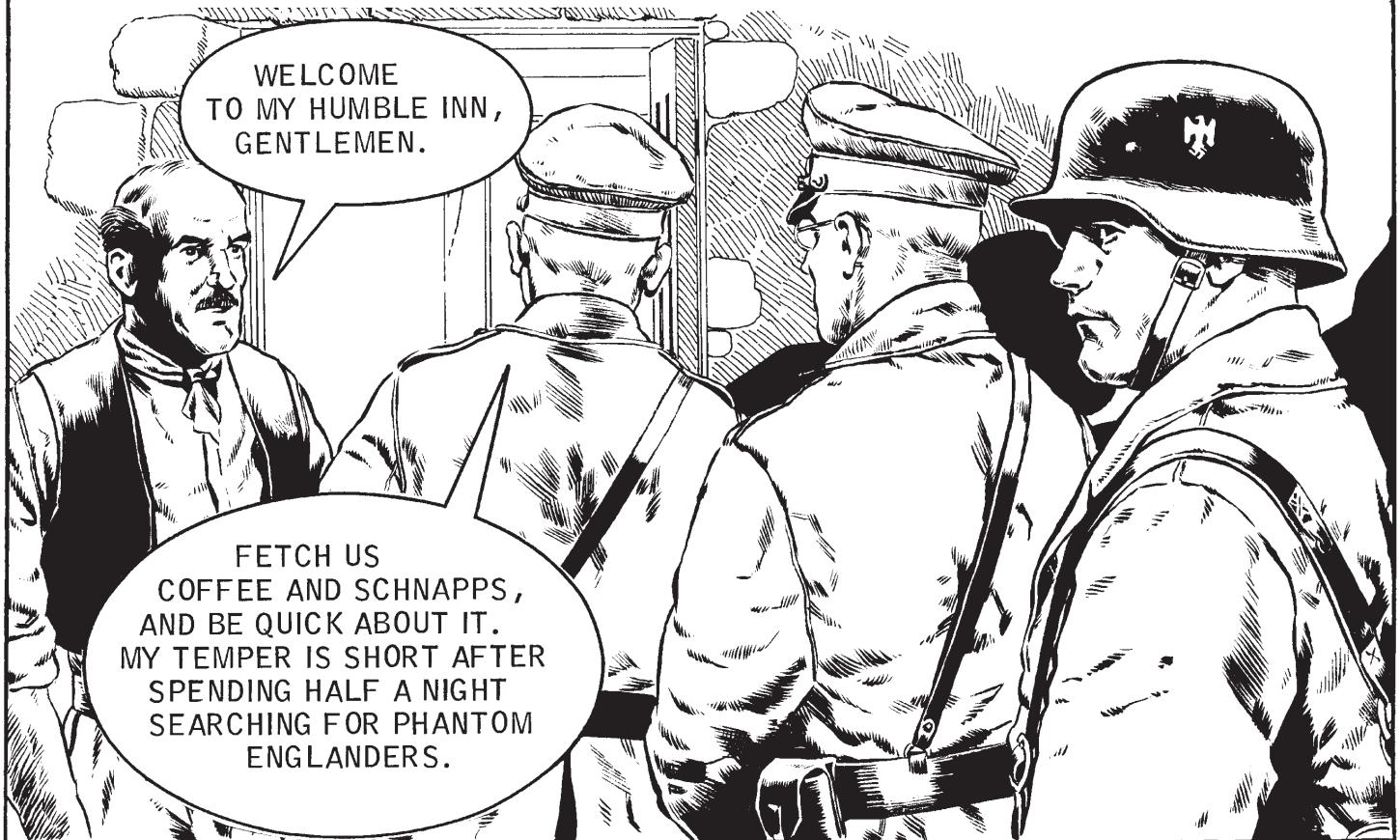
THEIR CONVERSATION MASKED THE SLIGHT SOUND OF A KEY TURNING IN THE WELL-OILED LOCK AS ZABA FOLLOWED HIS MASTER'S INSTRUCTIONS.



GRIMLY THE SINISTER HUNCHBACK LIMPED OFF DOWN THE CORRIDOR.



IN THE VILLAGE THE GERMANS HAD ARRIVED AT THE INN AFTER A FRUITLESS SEARCH.



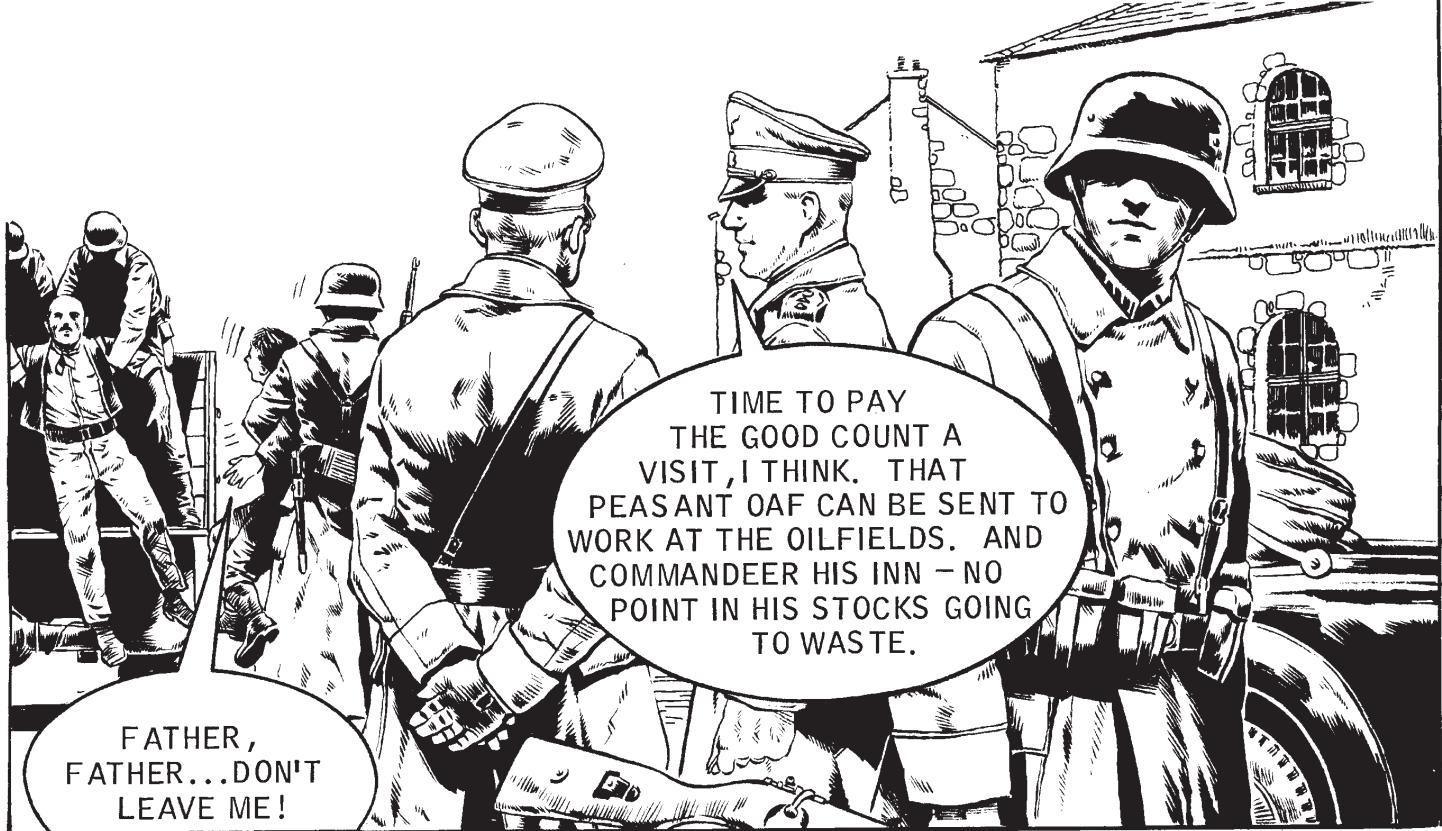
UNFORTUNATELY THE TWO AIRMEN HAD LEFT AN UNINTENTIONAL MEMENTO OF THEIR OWN SHORT VISIT TO THE INN.



THE GENERAL WAS IN NO MOOD TO ARGUE. HE GRABBED THE INNKEEPER'S SON.

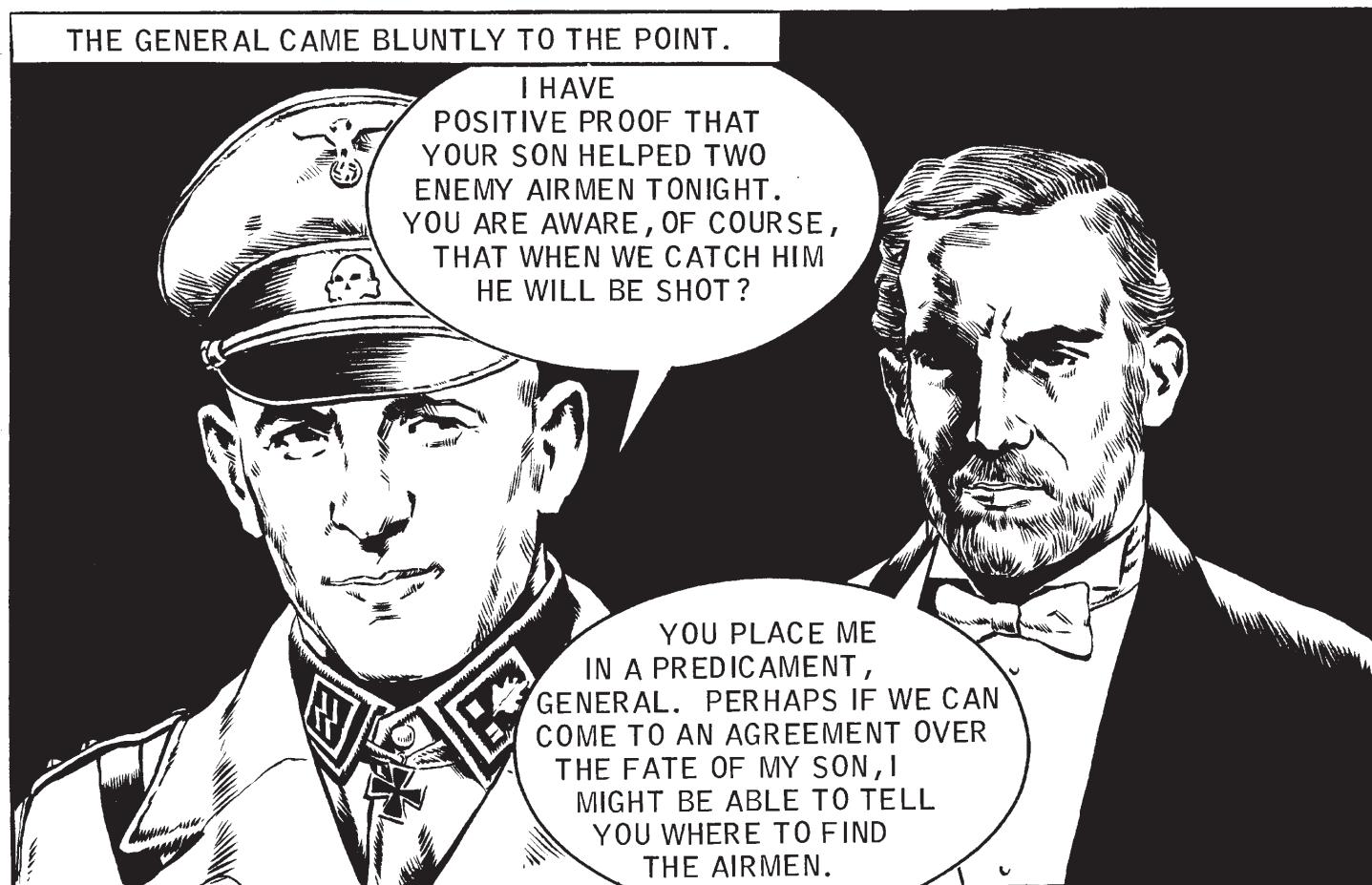


A FEW MINUTES LATER THE GERMANS WERE ON THE MOVE AGAIN...AND THE INN-KEEPER WAS UNDER ARREST.

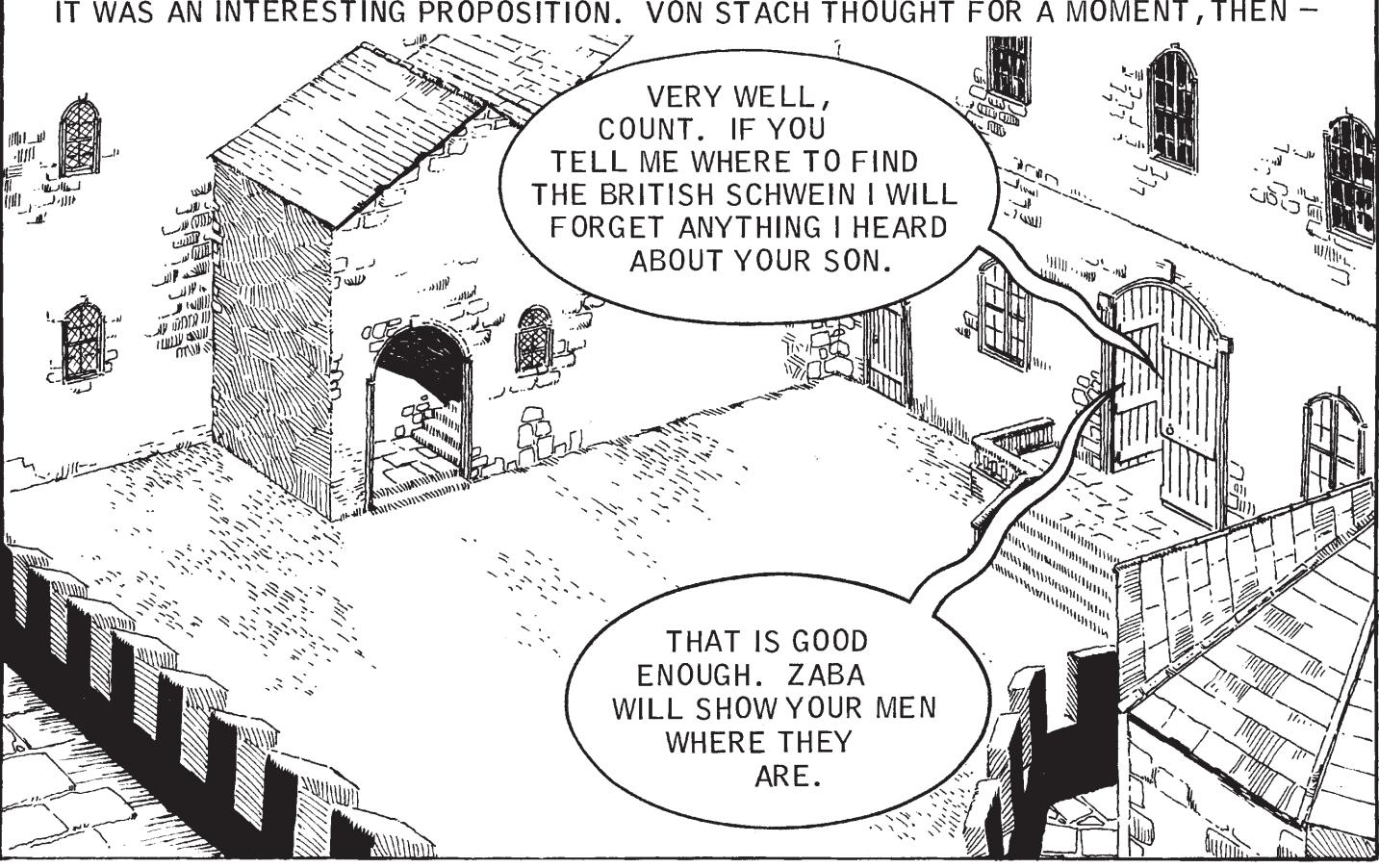


TWENTY MINUTES LATER THE OMINOUS RUMBLE OF ENGINES IN LOW GEAR ON THE ROAD TO THE CASTLE ALERTED HOWARD AND JOHN, BUT...





IT WAS AN INTERESTING PROPOSITION. VON STACH THOUGHT FOR A MOMENT, THEN -



VERY WELL,  
COUNT. IF YOU  
TELL ME WHERE TO FIND  
THE BRITISH SCHWEIN I WILL  
FORGET ANYTHING I HEARD  
ABOUT YOUR SON.

THAT IS GOOD  
ENOUGH. ZABA  
WILL SHOW YOUR MEN  
WHERE THEY  
ARE.

A COUPLE OF MINUTES LATER -



THERE  
THEY ARE - GRAB  
THEM!

GOOD GRIEF,  
THE COUNT MUST  
HAVE TOLD THEM  
WHERE WE WERE.

AND I  
THOUGHT WE  
WERE SAFE!

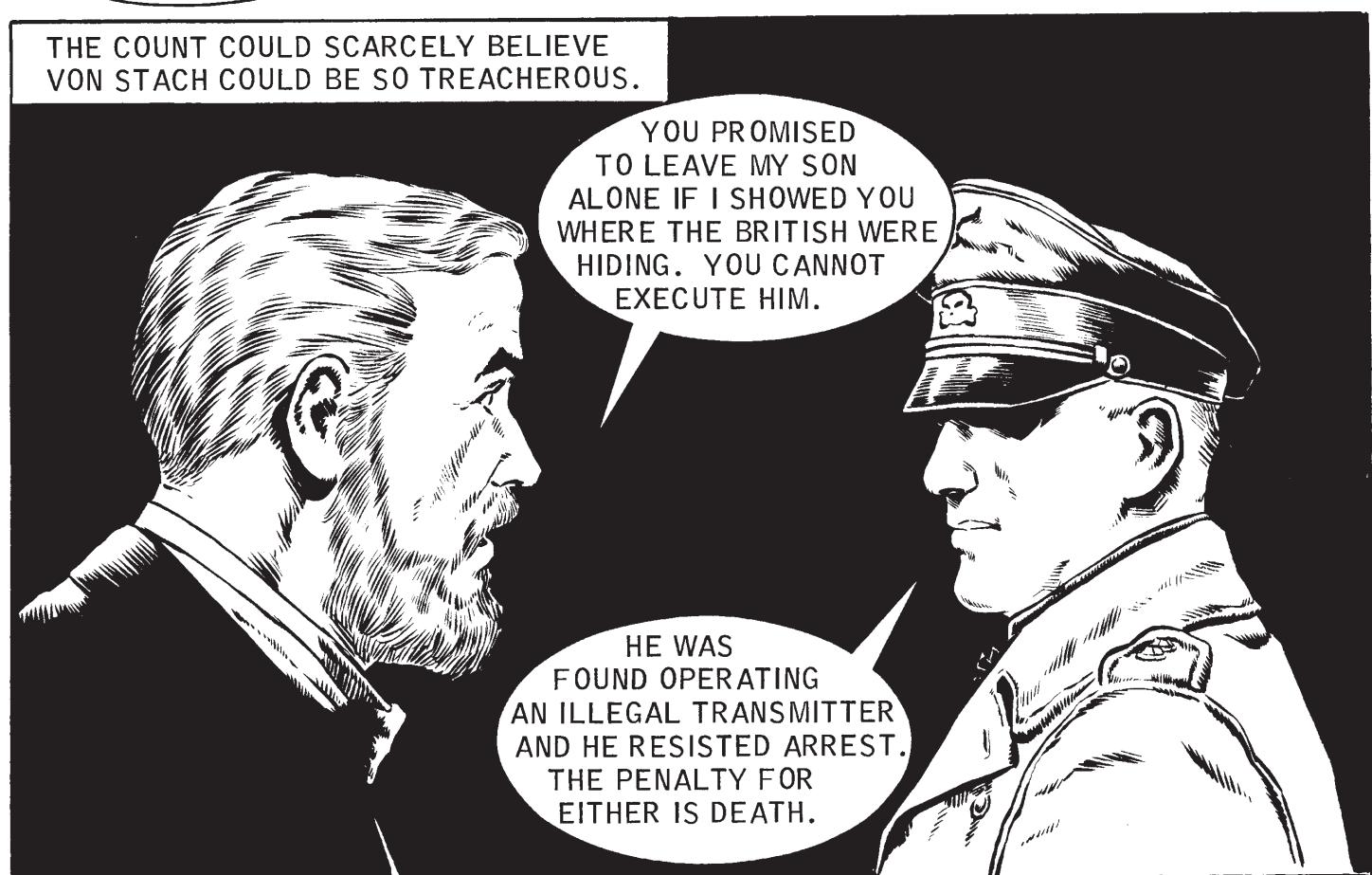
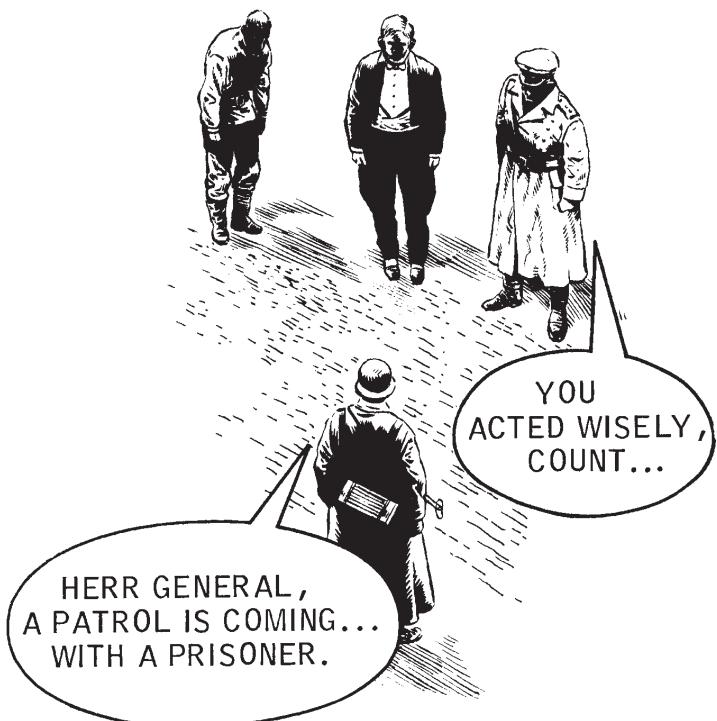
SEVERAL MILES AWAY A SIMILAR SCENE WAS BEING ENACTED AT A REMOTE FARM-HOUSE, AS SOME OF VON STACH'S MEN ON PATROL DISCOVERED BRADU AND HIS COMPANIONS.



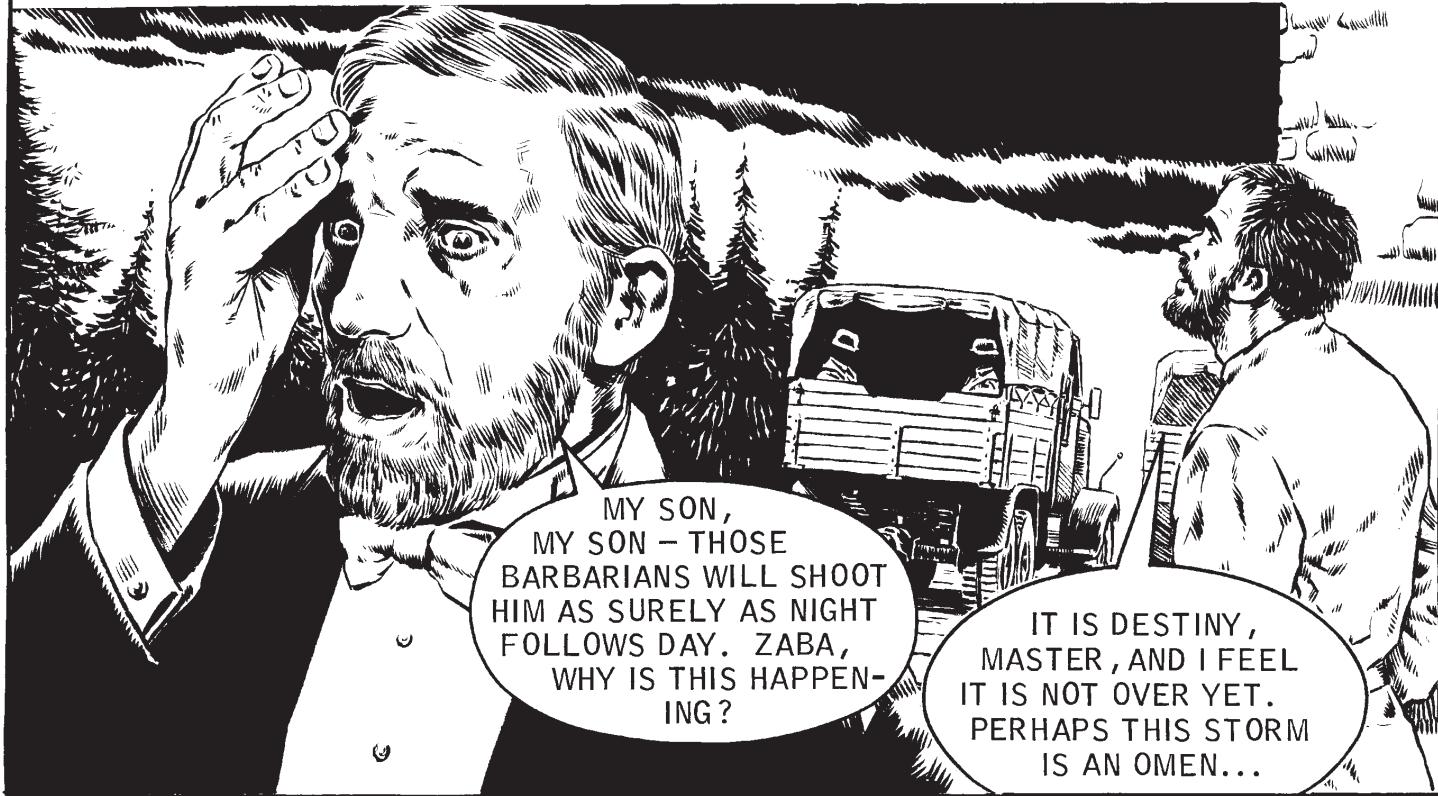
THERE WAS A BRIEF, BUT FIERCE BATTLE. BRADU'S TWO HELPERS FELL DEAD, AND HE HIMSELF WAS KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS.



BACK AT THE CASTLE VON STACH WAS READY TO LEAVE WITH THE TWO AIRMEN.



VON STACH IGNORED ALL FURTHER PLEAS AND THE GERMANS DROVE OFF WITH THEIR PRISONERS. THE COUNT STOOD IN ANGUISH AT THE GATE. AS IF TO UNDERLINE HIS FEELINGS THE MUTTER AND RUMBLE OF THUNDER SOUNDED FROM THE INKY SKY.



DOWN THE MOUNTAIN THE STORM WAS ALREADY BEGINNING. THE THREE CAPTIVES SAT GLUMLY IN THE BACK OF A TRUCK.



THE COLUMN REACHED THE BRIDGE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE ROAD AT THE SAME TIME AS THE STORM REACHED ITS HEIGHT, AND...

MEIN  
GOTT, THE  
BRIDGE HAS BEEN  
STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.  
STOP, DRIVER!

THE TRUCK DRIVER, BLINDED BY THE FLASH, STAMPED ON THE ACCELERATOR INSTEAD OF THE BRAKES IN HIS PANIC.

LOOK OUT!

NEIN...  
AAAGH!

THEY'RE  
GOING OVER...  
AND THEY'RE TAKING  
THE BRIDGE WITH  
THEM!

WE'RE CUT  
OFF. THAT BRIDGE  
IS THE ONLY ROAD  
TO TOWN.

THE GENERAL RADIOED FOR AN ENGINEER UNIT FROM BASE, AND AN HOUR LATER THEY GAVE THEIR VERDICT.

VERY WELL.  
WE WILL WAIT AT  
THE CASTLE. RADIO  
ME AS SOON AS IT  
IS CLEAR.

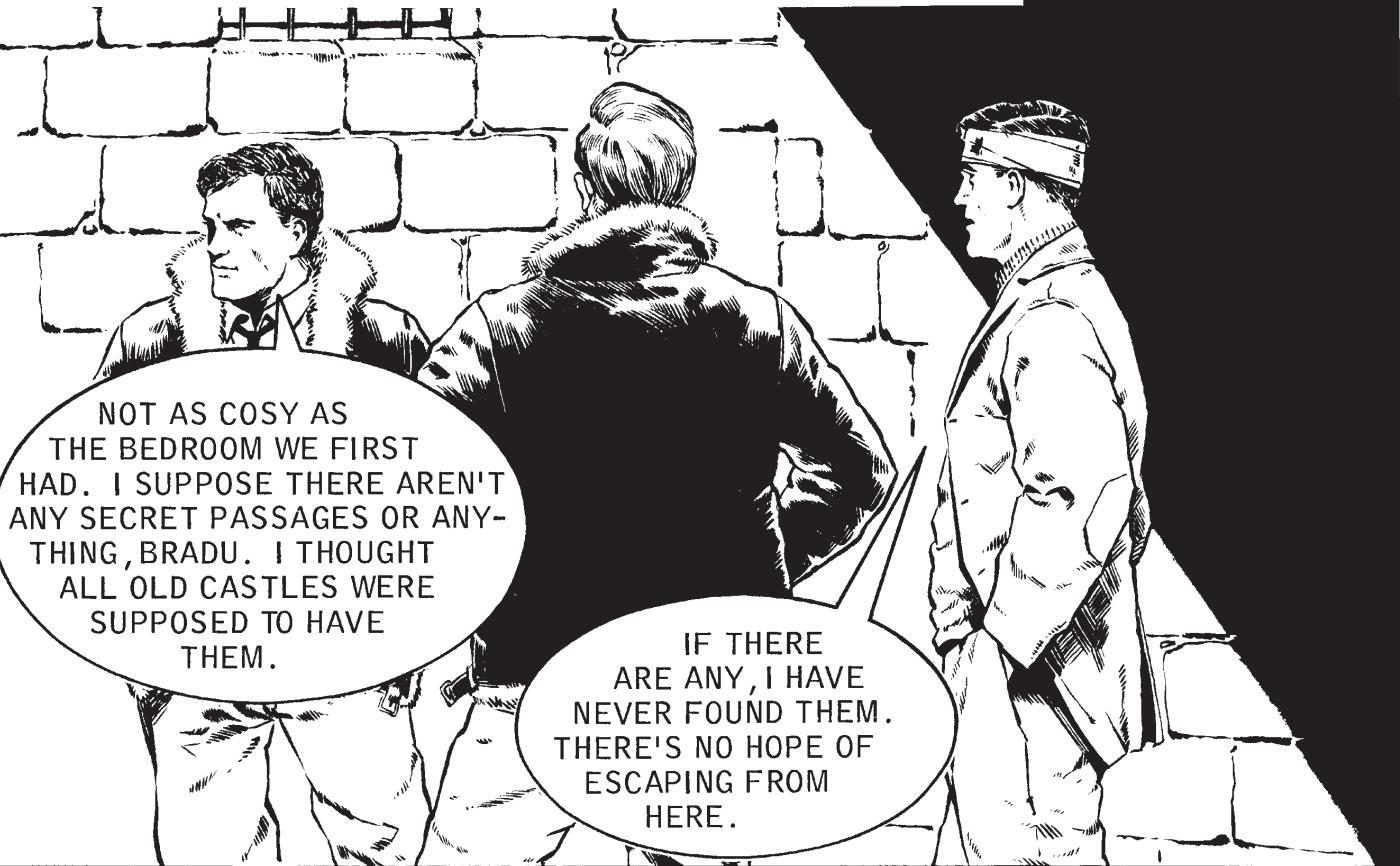
WE WILL  
HAVE TO BUILD A  
COMPLETELY NEW  
BRIDGE, HERR GENERAL.  
IT WILL TAKE AT LEAST  
A DAY.

THEY ARRIVED BACK AT THE CASTLE.

IT LOOKS  
AS IF WE SHALL  
BE YOUR GUESTS FOR  
LONGER THAN WE  
EXPECTED, COUNT.

THEN BE UNDER  
NO ILLUSION THAT YOU  
ARE WELCOME HERE. I WILL  
HAVE NOTHING MORE TO DO  
WITH YOU. ZABA WILL  
ATTEND TO YOUR  
NEEDS.

THE PRISONERS WERE THROWN INTO A FORBIDDING DUNGEON.



MEANWHILE ONE OF THE GERMANS HAD DISCOVERED JOHN'S ABANDONED HORROR COMICS AND WAS SHOWING THEM AROUND.



THE GERMANS THOUGHT THE COMICS HIGHLY AMUSING. ONE OF THEM EVEN OPENED THE PEEPHOLE AND BRANDISHED THEM. JOHN WAS FURIOUS.



MEANWHILE STRANGE THINGS WERE OCCURRING IN THE COUNT'S DRAWING ROOM. THE COUNT AND ZABA WERE ENGAGED IN SOMETHING FURTIVE...



**FIND  
MORE  
FREE  
MAGAZINES**

**FREEMAGS.CC**

THE SECRET PASSAGE LED TO A HIDDEN UNDERGROUND CRYPT.

IT IS THE FAMILY  
CUSTOM TO SHOW THE ELDEST  
SON THE SECRET WAYS ONLY AFTER  
HIS FATHER DIES, AS YOU SHOWED THEM  
TO ME, ZABA - BUT WE MUST BREAK THE  
TRADITION. THE BARBARIANS SHALL  
NOT SHOOT BRADU NOW THAT FATE  
HAS RETURNED HIM TO US. BRING  
HIM HERE, AND THE AIRMEN  
TOO.

AT ONCE,  
MASTER.

THE FIRST THE PRISONERS KNEW OF  
ZABA'S ARRIVAL WAS WHEN THE WALL  
BEHIND HOWARD SUDDENLY WASN'T  
THERE.

YAAH!

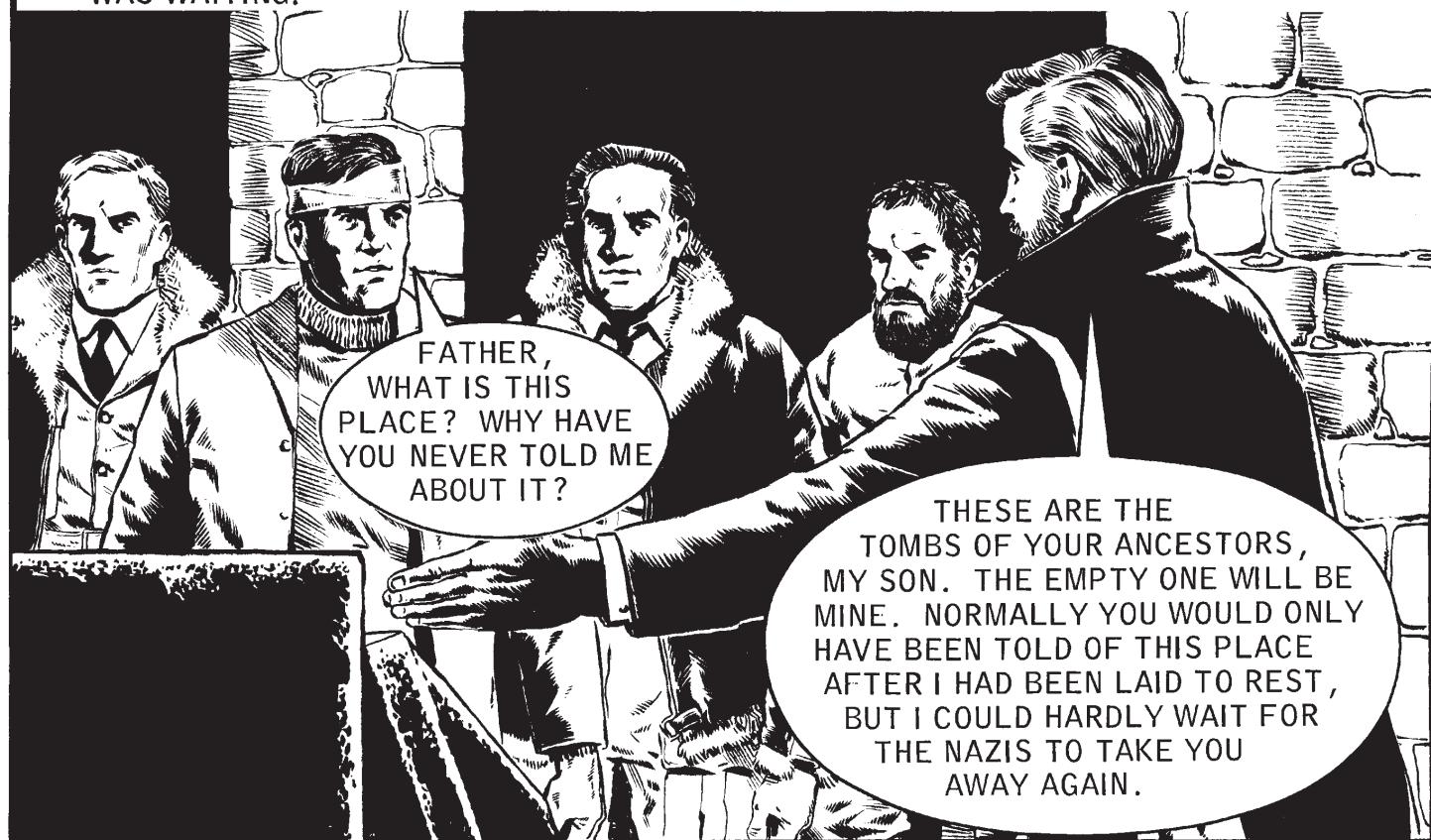
IT'S SLIDING  
BACK!

EQUALLY SUDDENLY THE HUNCHBACK  
APPEARED, TO EVERYONE'S AMAZE-  
MENT.

ZABA!

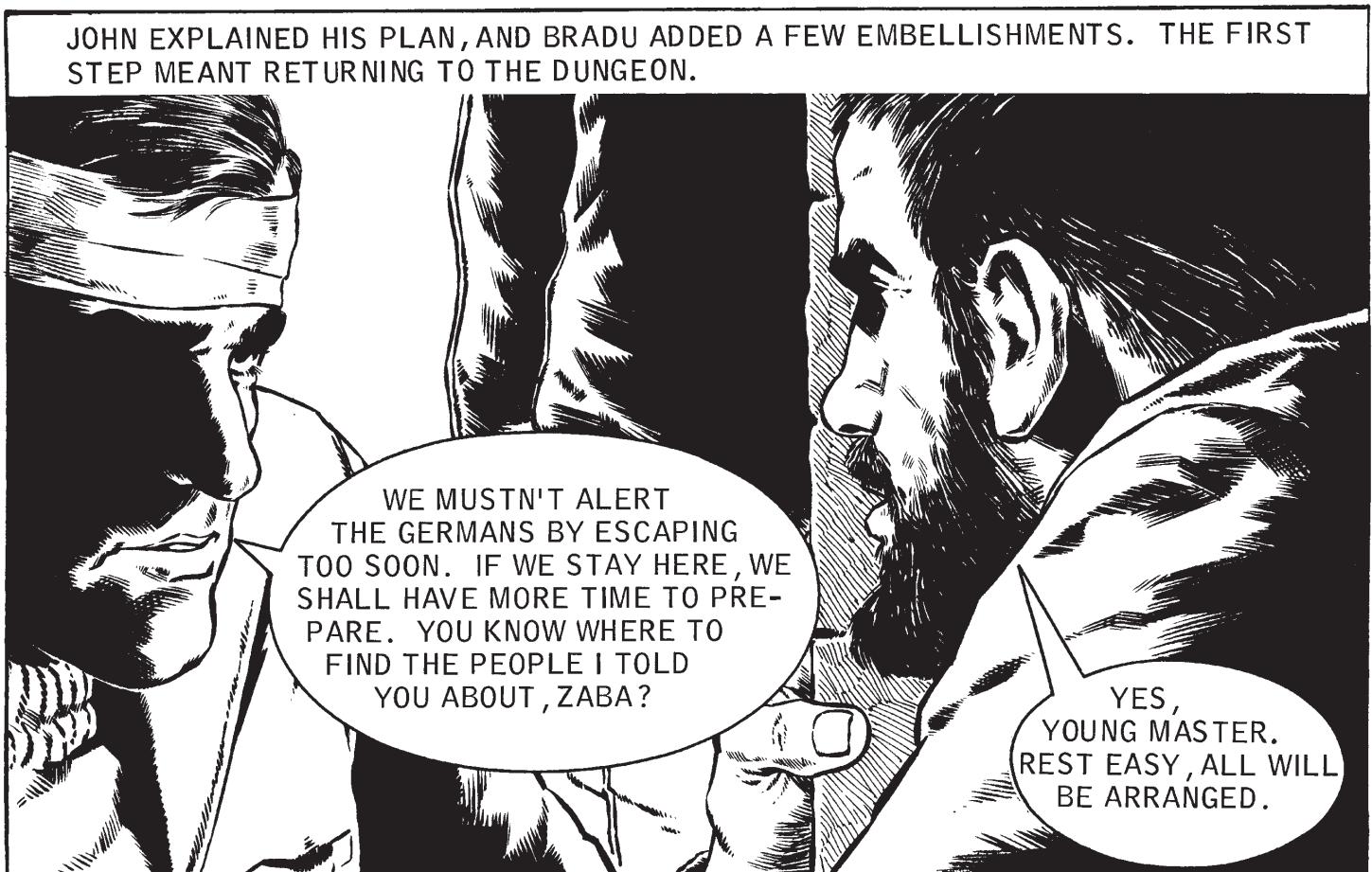
BE SILENT,  
YOUNG MASTER.  
FOLLOW ME, ALL  
OF YOU.

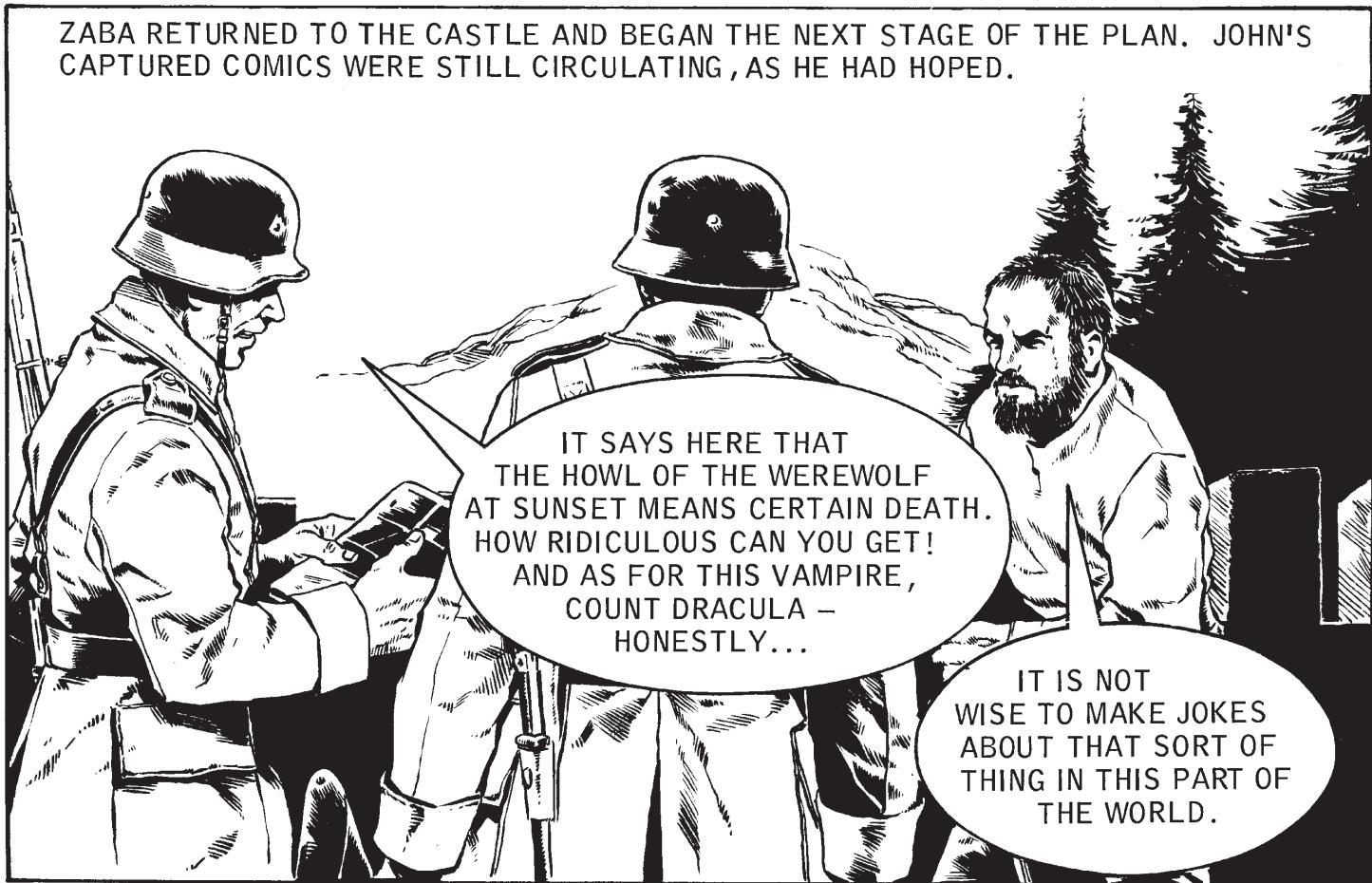
WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY THEY FOLLOWED HIM BACK TO THE CRYPT. THE COUNT WAS WAITING.



THE COUNT EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO A PUZZLED HOWARD AND A GOGGLING JOHN.







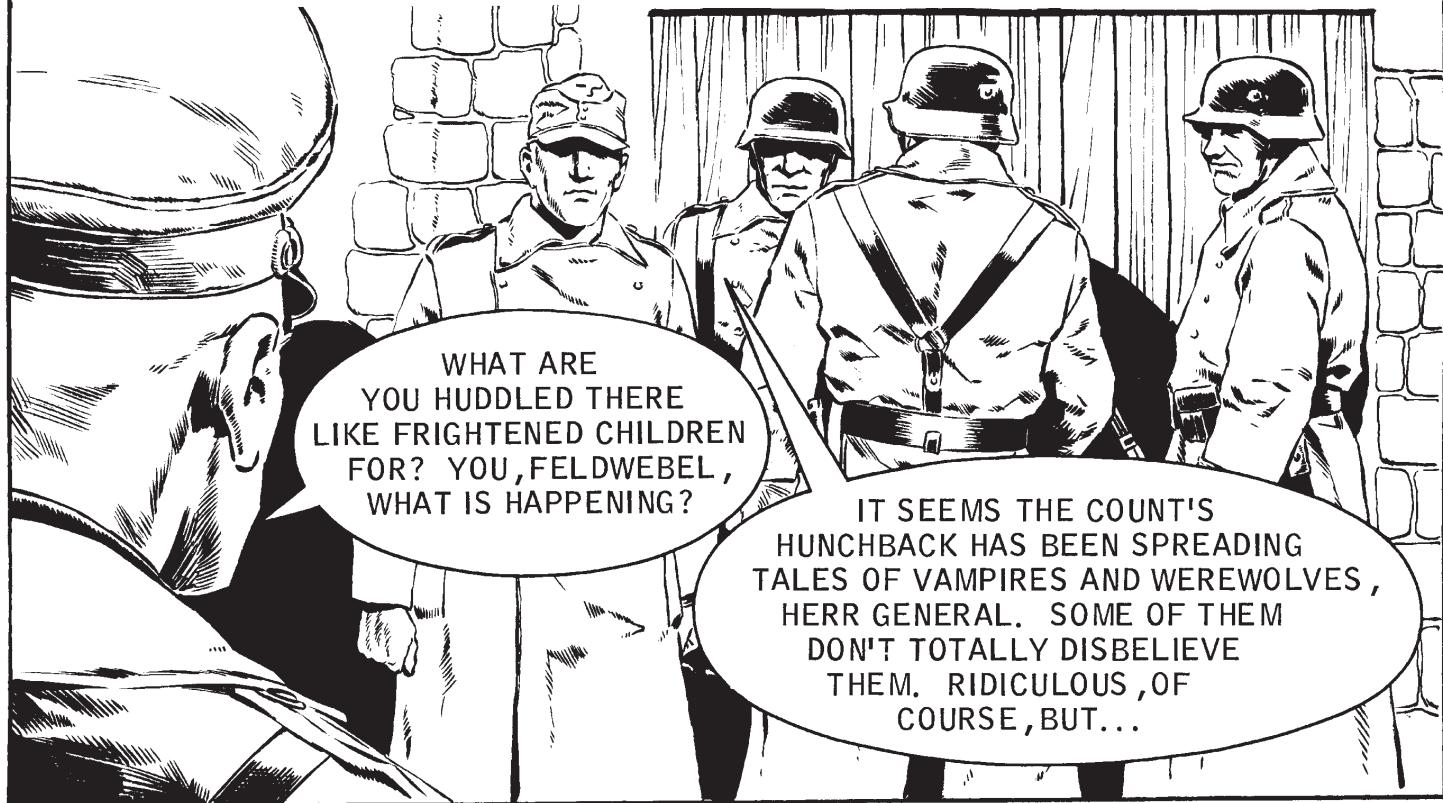
THE GERMANS STOPPED LAUGHING ABRUPTLY. THEY HAD NOT HEARD THE SINISTER HUNCHBACK'S SILENT FOOT-FALLS.



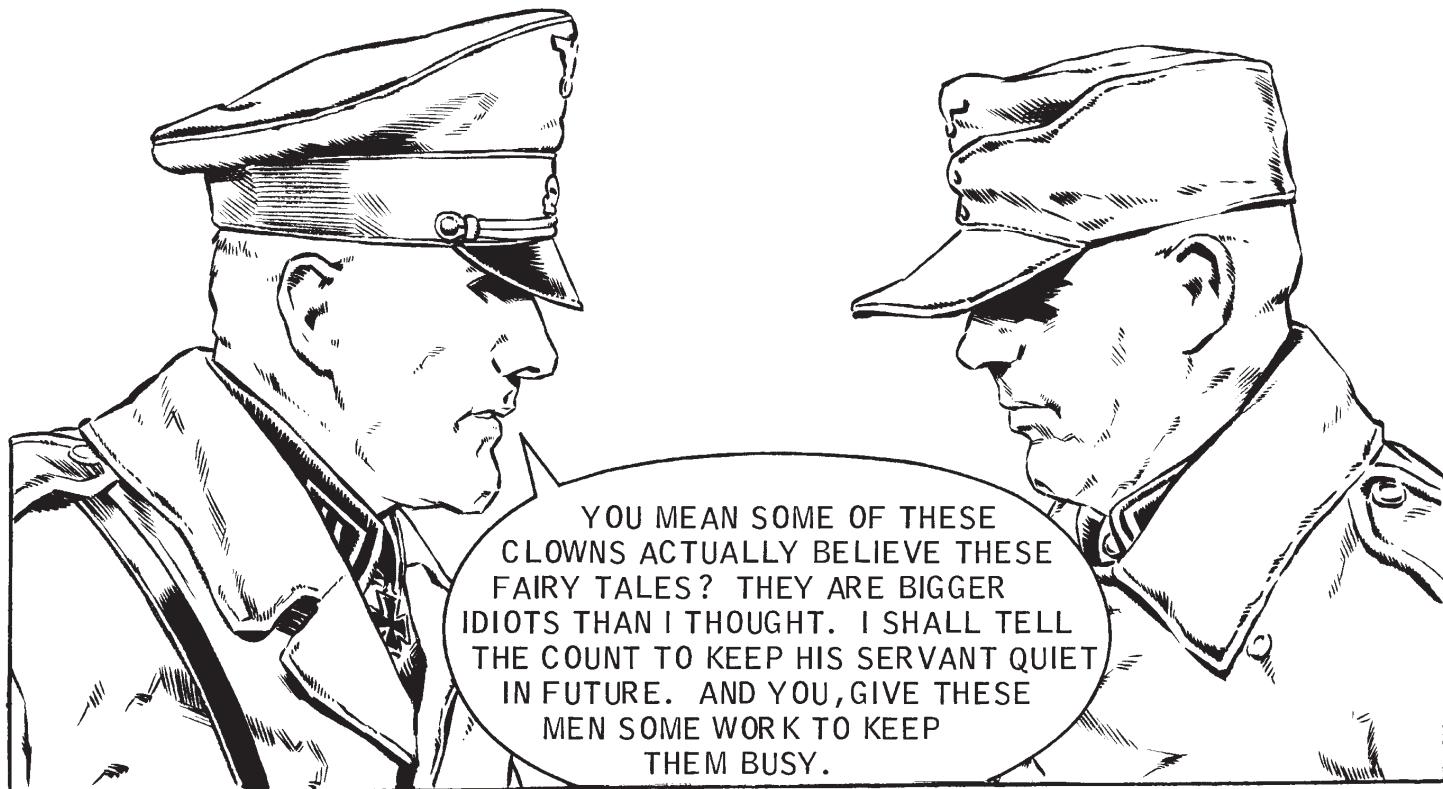
ZABA SHRUGGED AND SIGHED EXPRESSIVELY, THEN LIMPED OFF, WHISTLING TO HIMSELF. THE TWO GERMANS DIDN'T SEEM QUITE AS CHEERFUL AS THEY HAD BEEN...



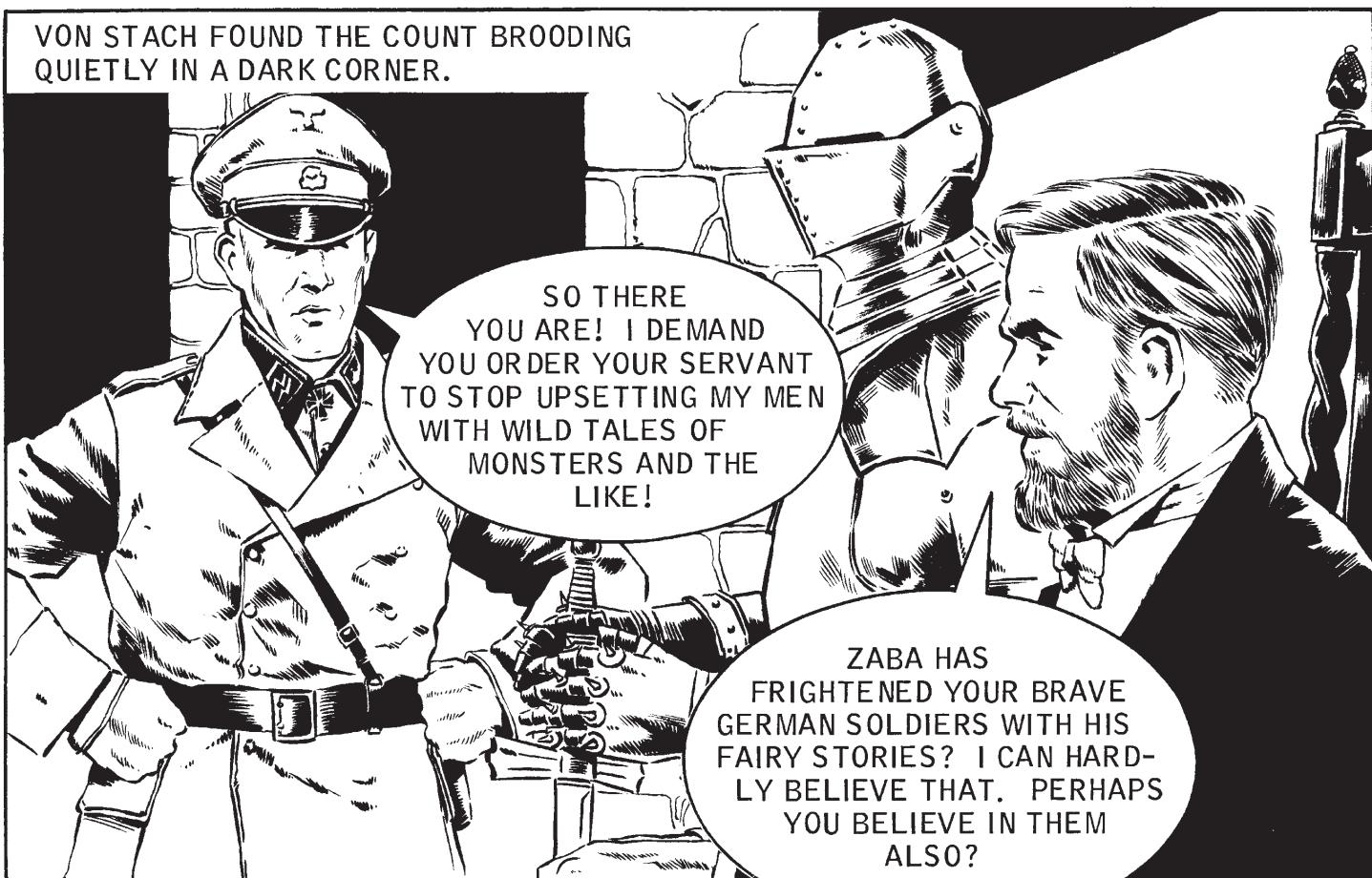
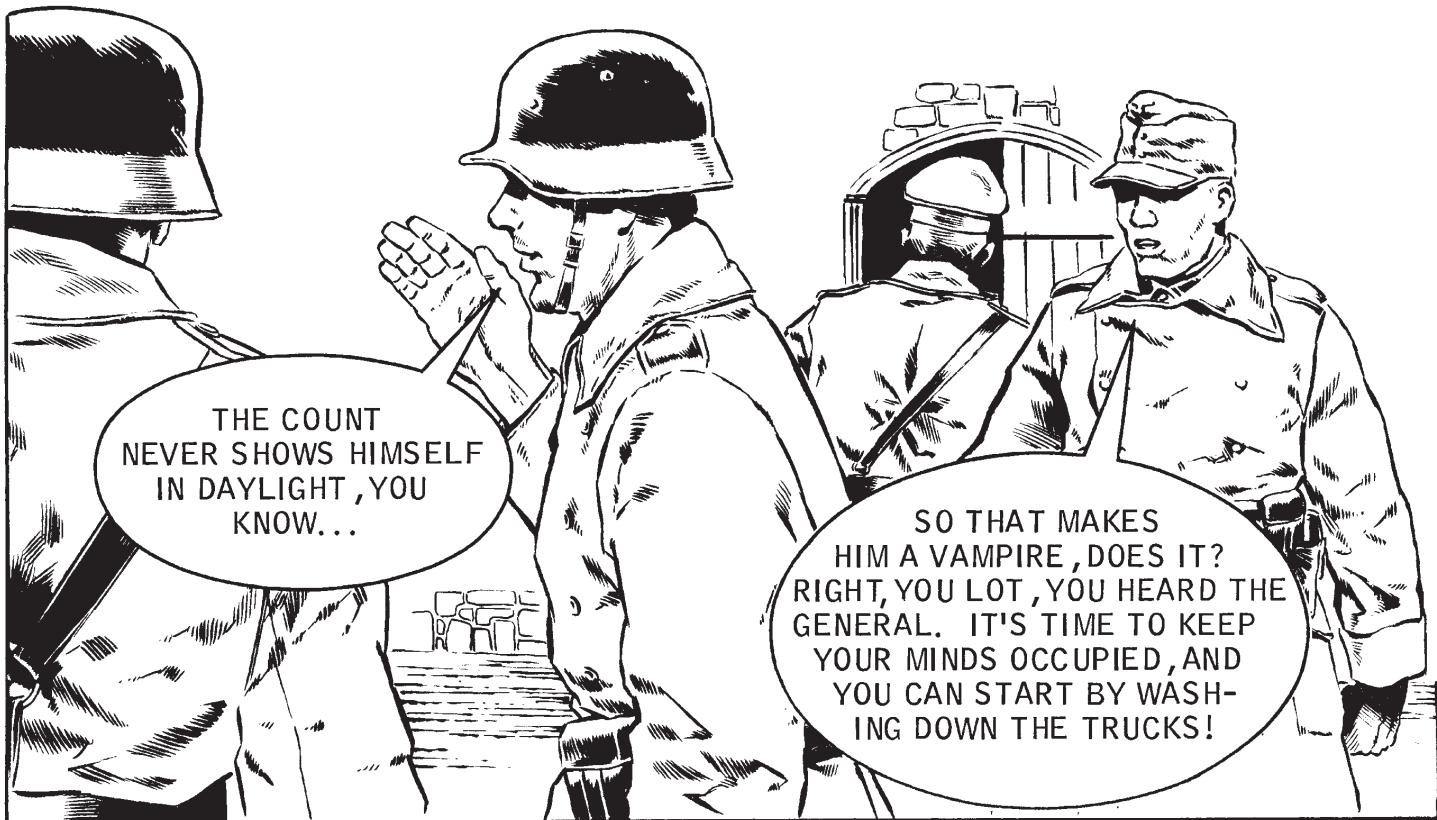
AS ZABA WORKED HIS WAY ROUND THE CASTLE HE MET MANY MORE GERMANS, AND GRADUALLY THE WORD SPREAD. IT DID NOT TAKE LONG FOR VON STACH TO NOTICE SOMETHING WRONG.

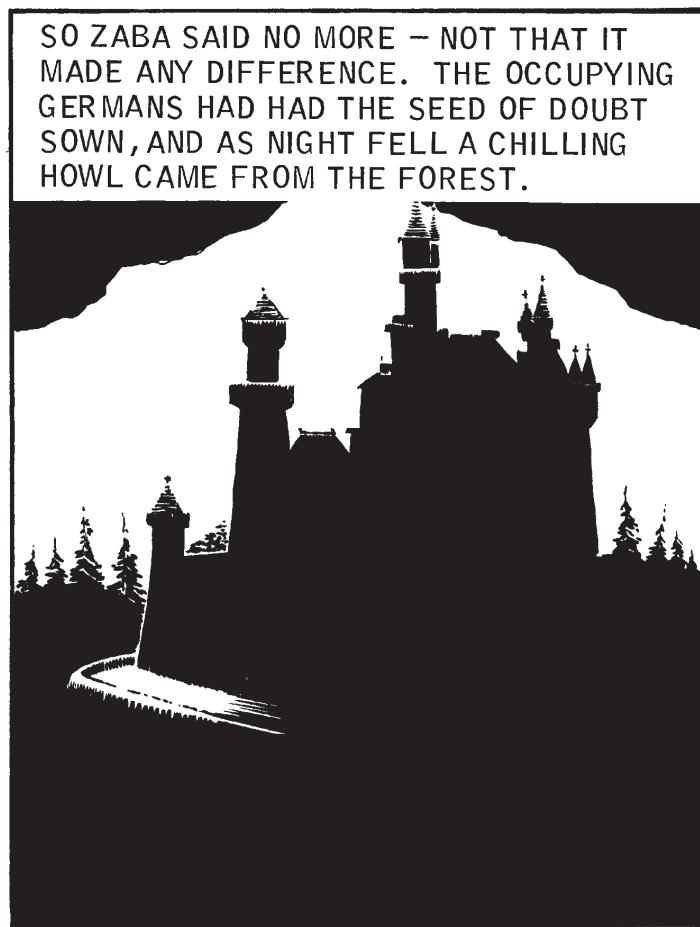
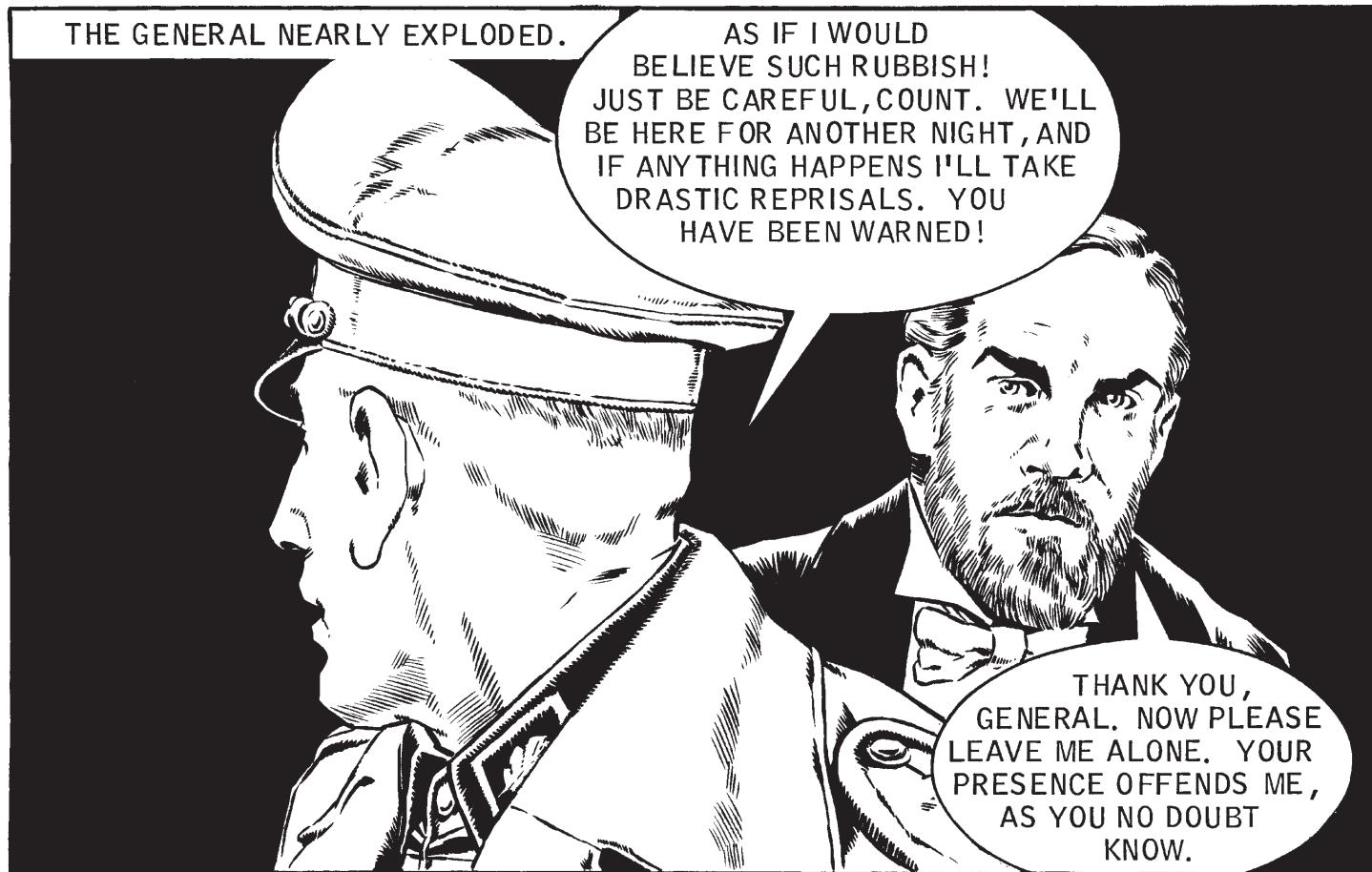


VON STACH COULD HARDLY BELIEVE IT.

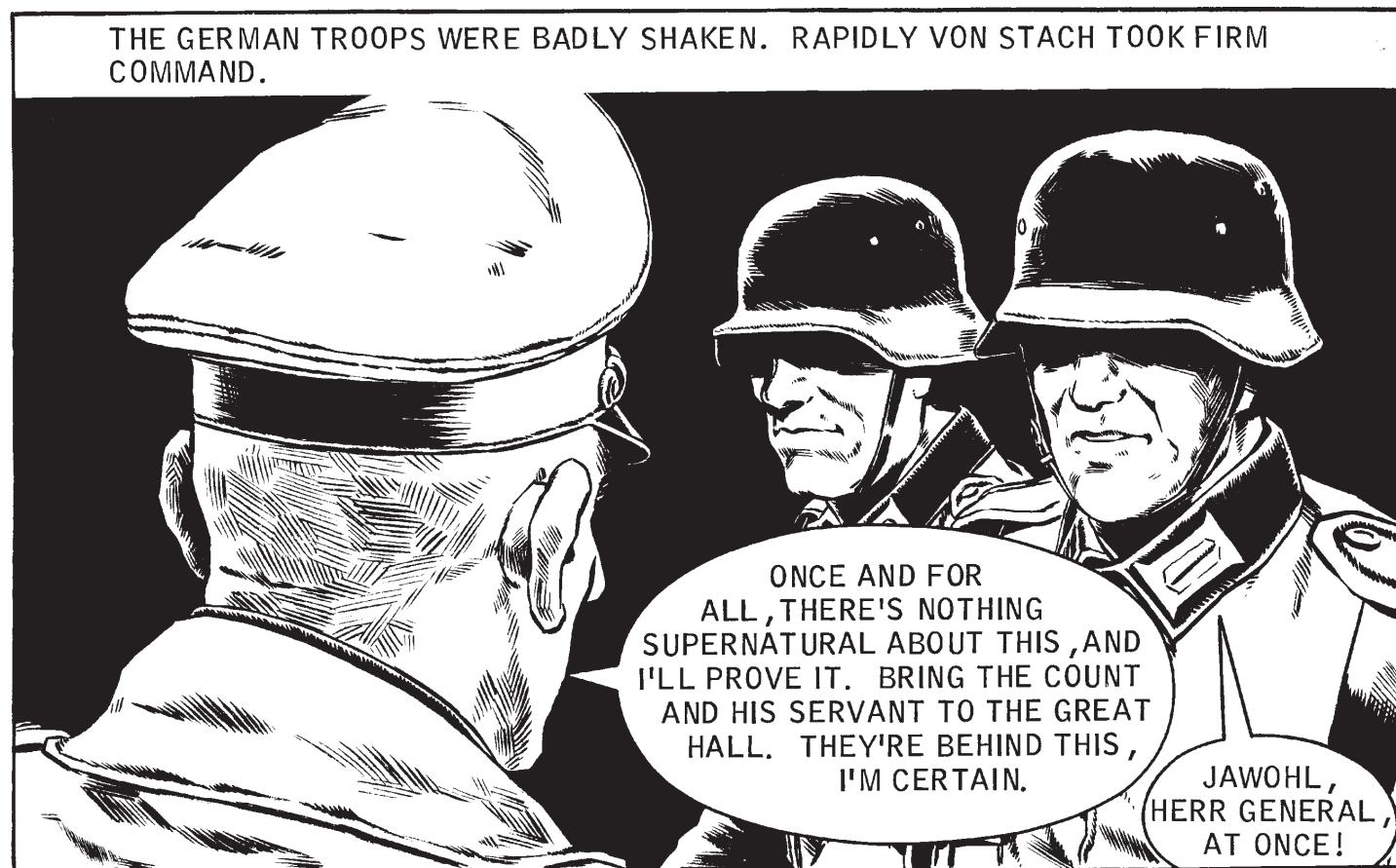
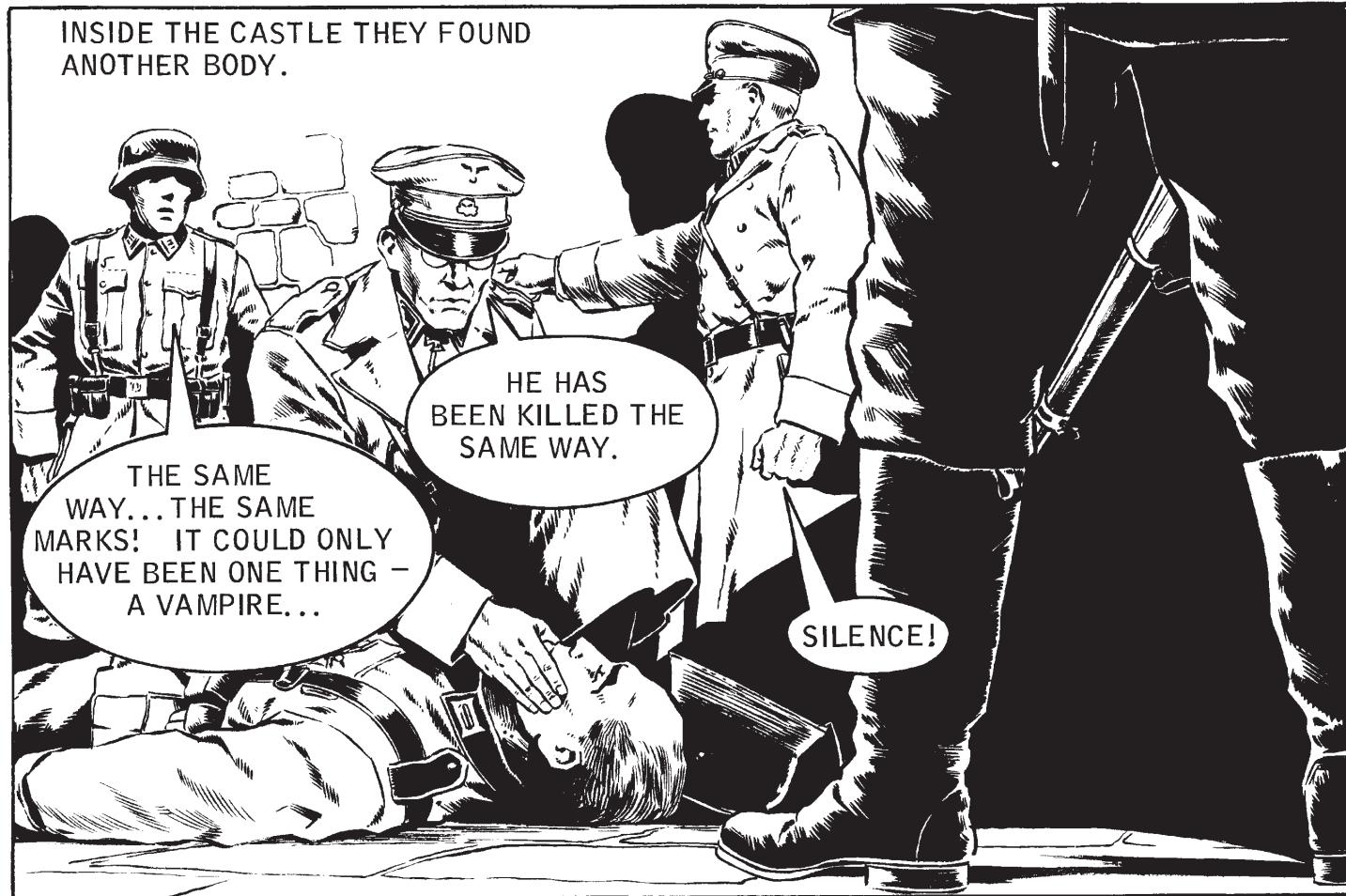


THE GENERAL STRODE INTO THE GREAT HALL ANGRILY. BUT STILL THE SOLDIERS WONDERED -

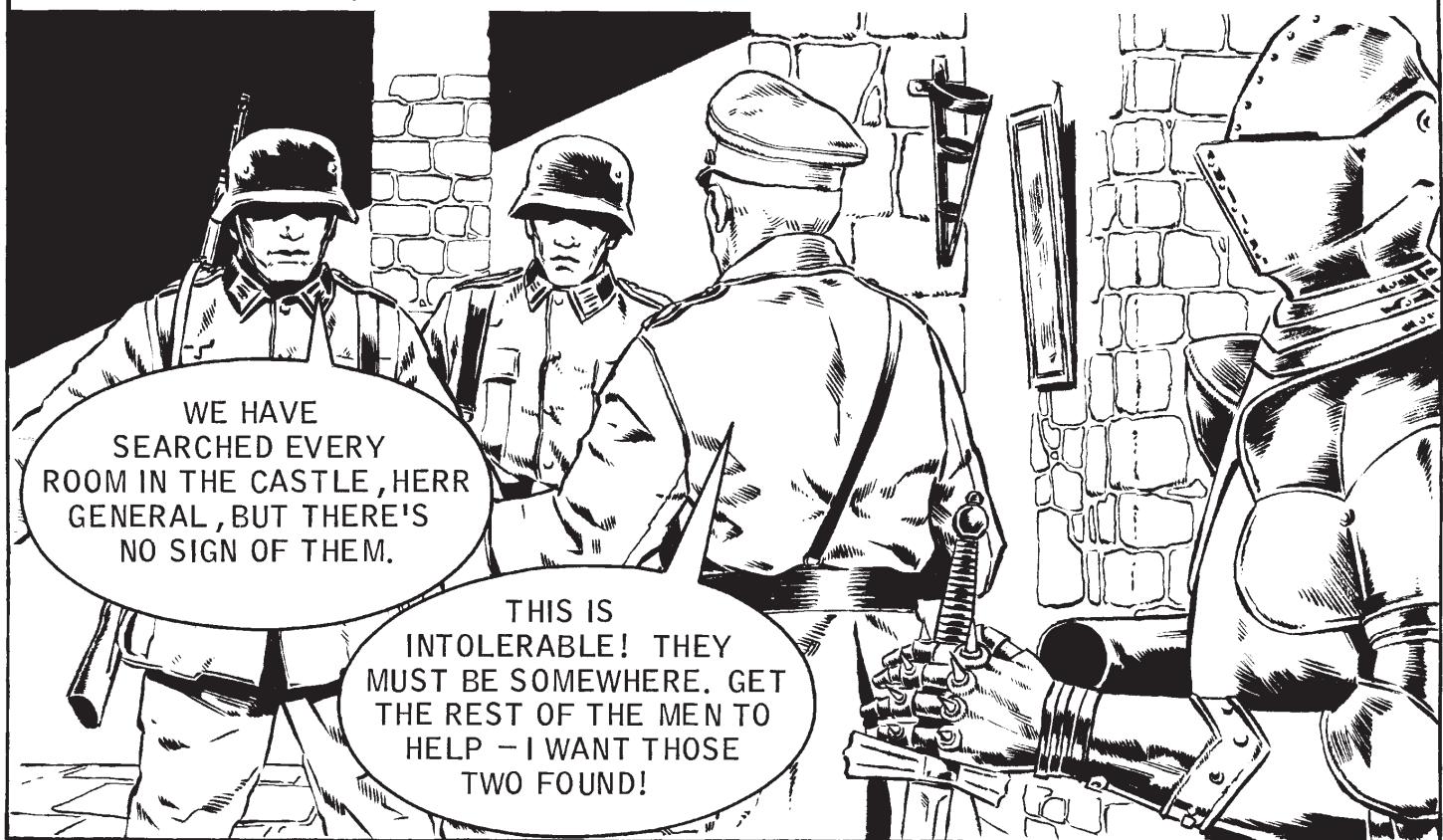








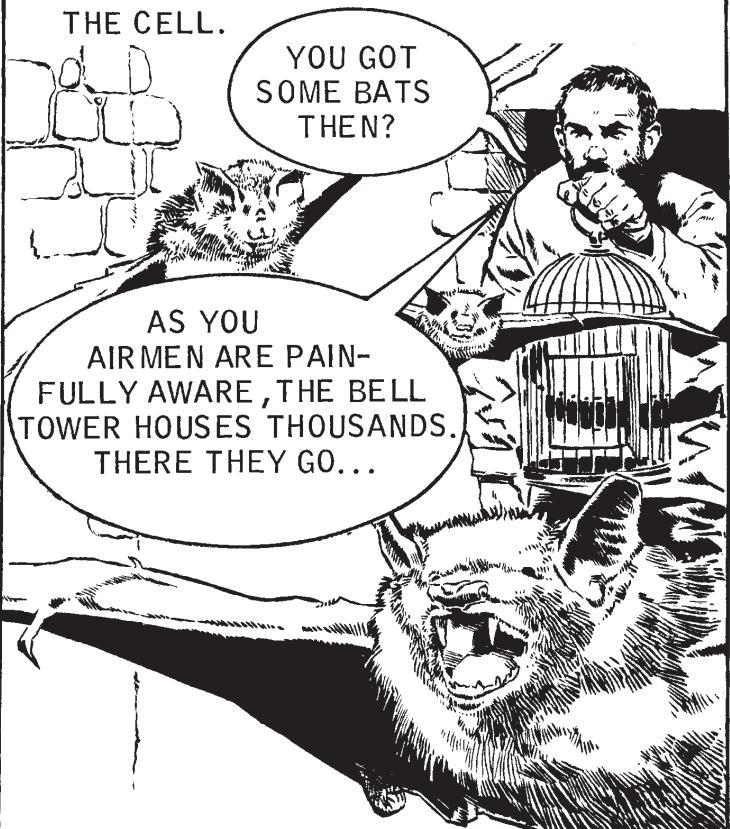
BUT AFTER TWENTY MINUTES OF SEARCHING NOTHING COULD BE FOUND OF THE COUNT AND ZABA.



DOWN IN THE DUNGEON THE TIME HAD COME FOR THE PRISONERS TO DISAPPEAR.



BEFORE SLIDING BACK THE STONE ZABA RELEASED THREE CAGED BATS INTO THE CELL.



THEY SLID THE STONE BACK AND MADE THEIR WAY TO THE CRYPT WHERE THE COUNT WAS WAITING.



MEANWHILE THE ESCAPE HAD BEEN DISCOVERED.



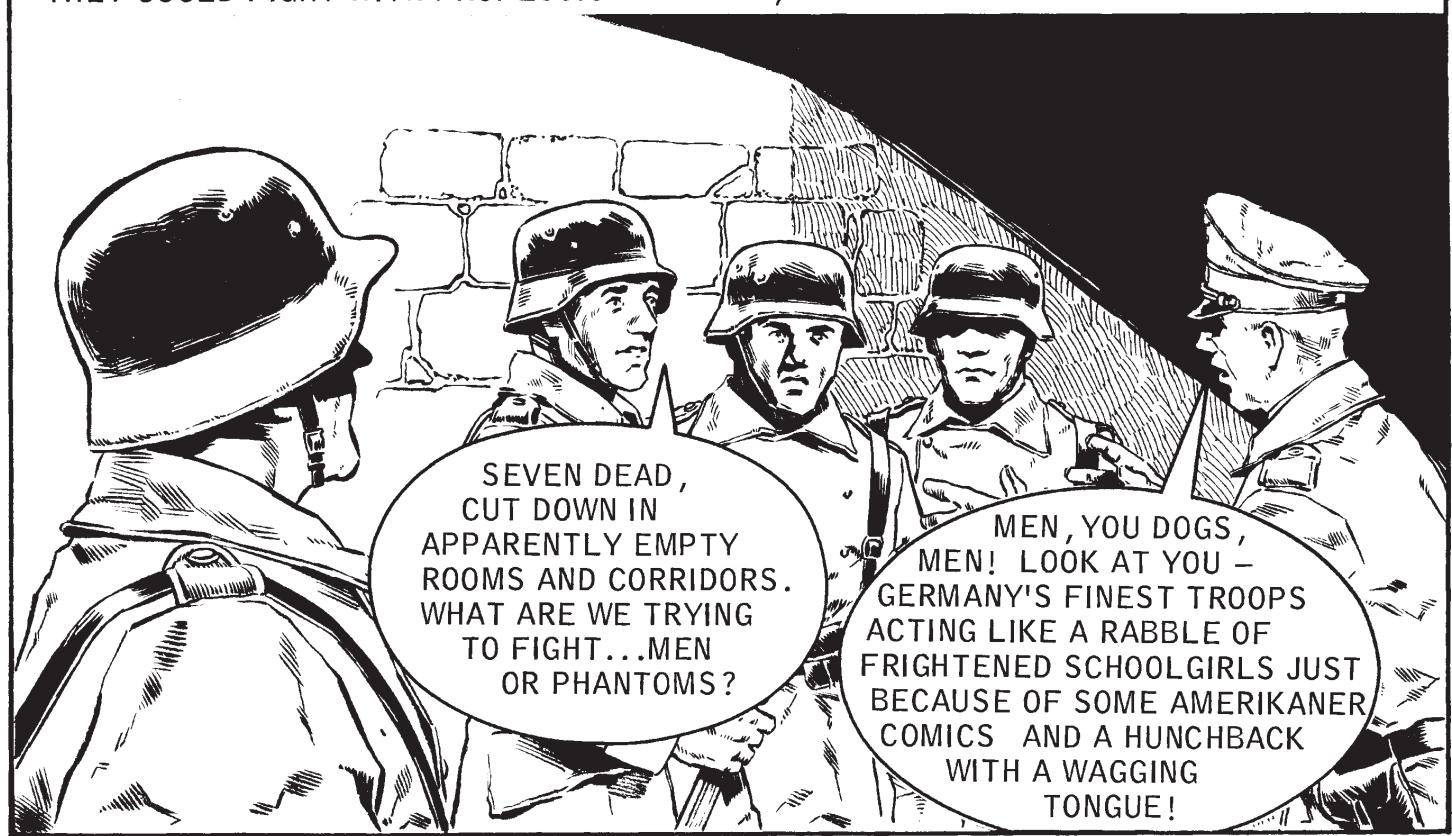
THE FRANTIC SEARCH BEGAN, BUT THE CASTLE'S HIDDEN WAYS GAVE THE FUGITIVES ALL THE ADVANTAGES.



FOR ZABA, WEAPONS WERE UNNECESSARY. HIS IMMENSELY POWERFUL ARMS WERE LIKE A VICE.



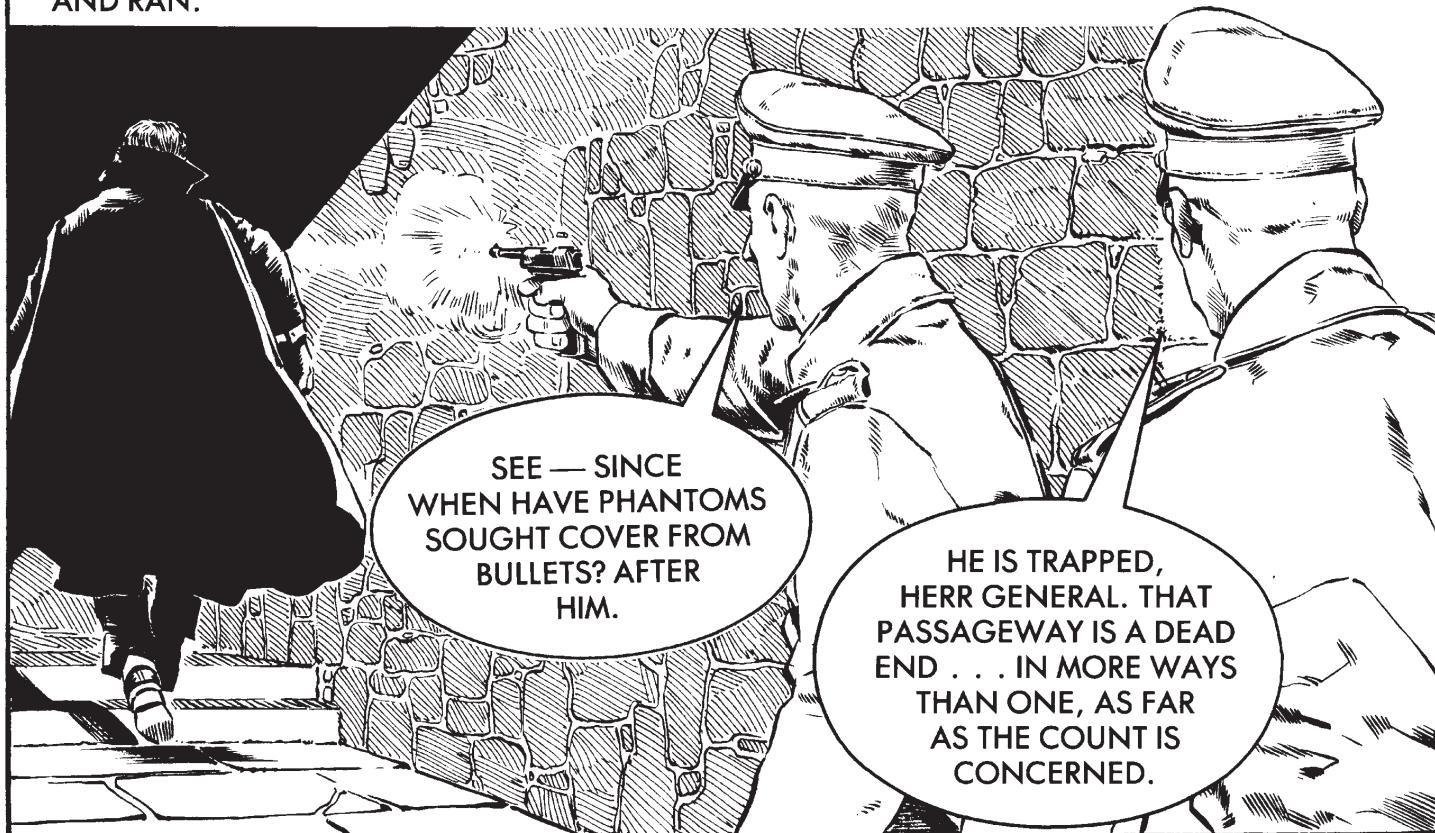
THE UNEASINESS OF THE TROOPS SOON TURNED INTO NEAR-PANIC. ARMED GUERILLAS THEY COULD FIGHT WITH PROFESSIONAL SKILL, BUT THIS WAS DIFFERENT.



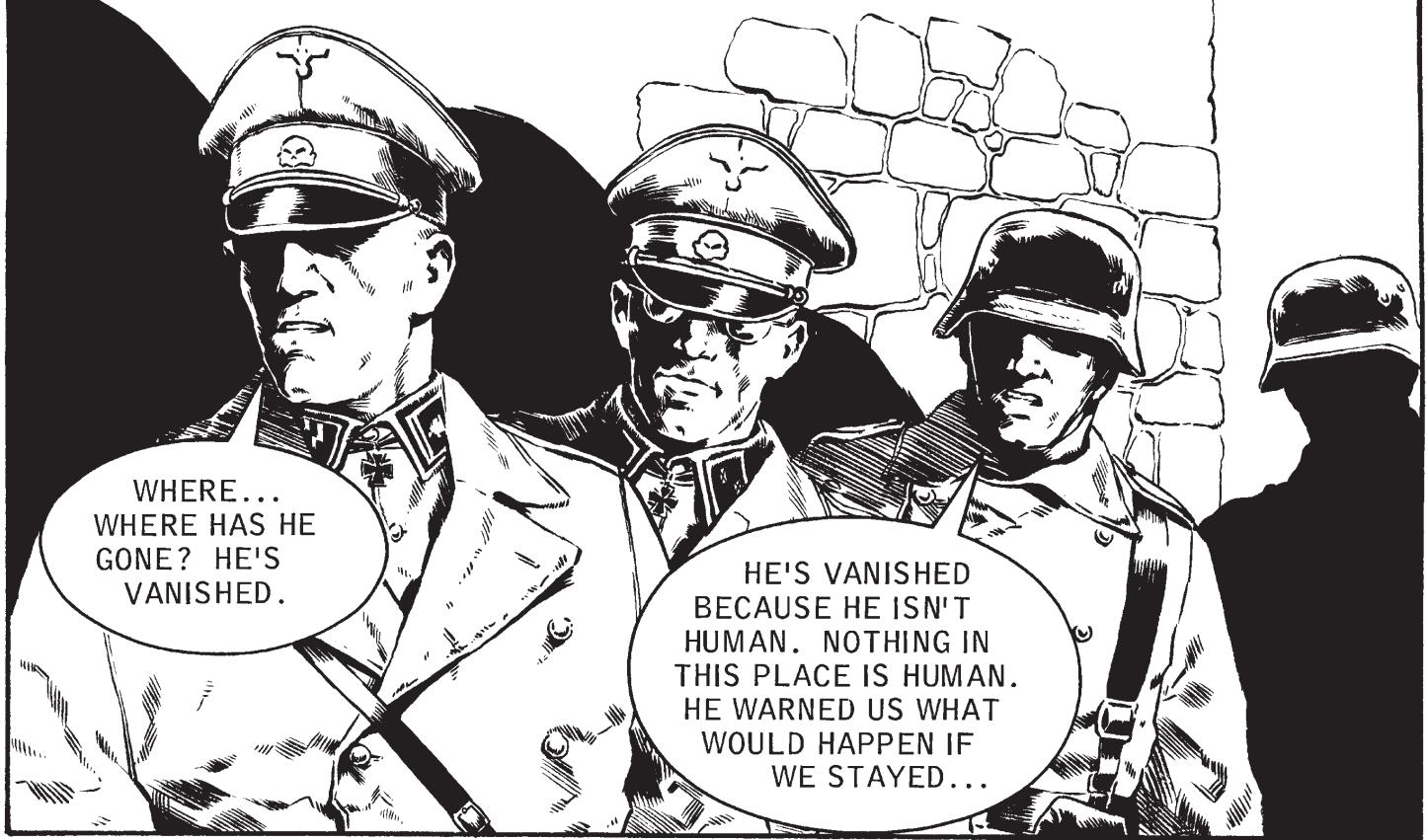
SUDDENLY A STIFLED CRY MADE THE GERMANS TURN, JUST IN TIME TO SEE THE COUNT CLAIM ANOTHER VICTIM.



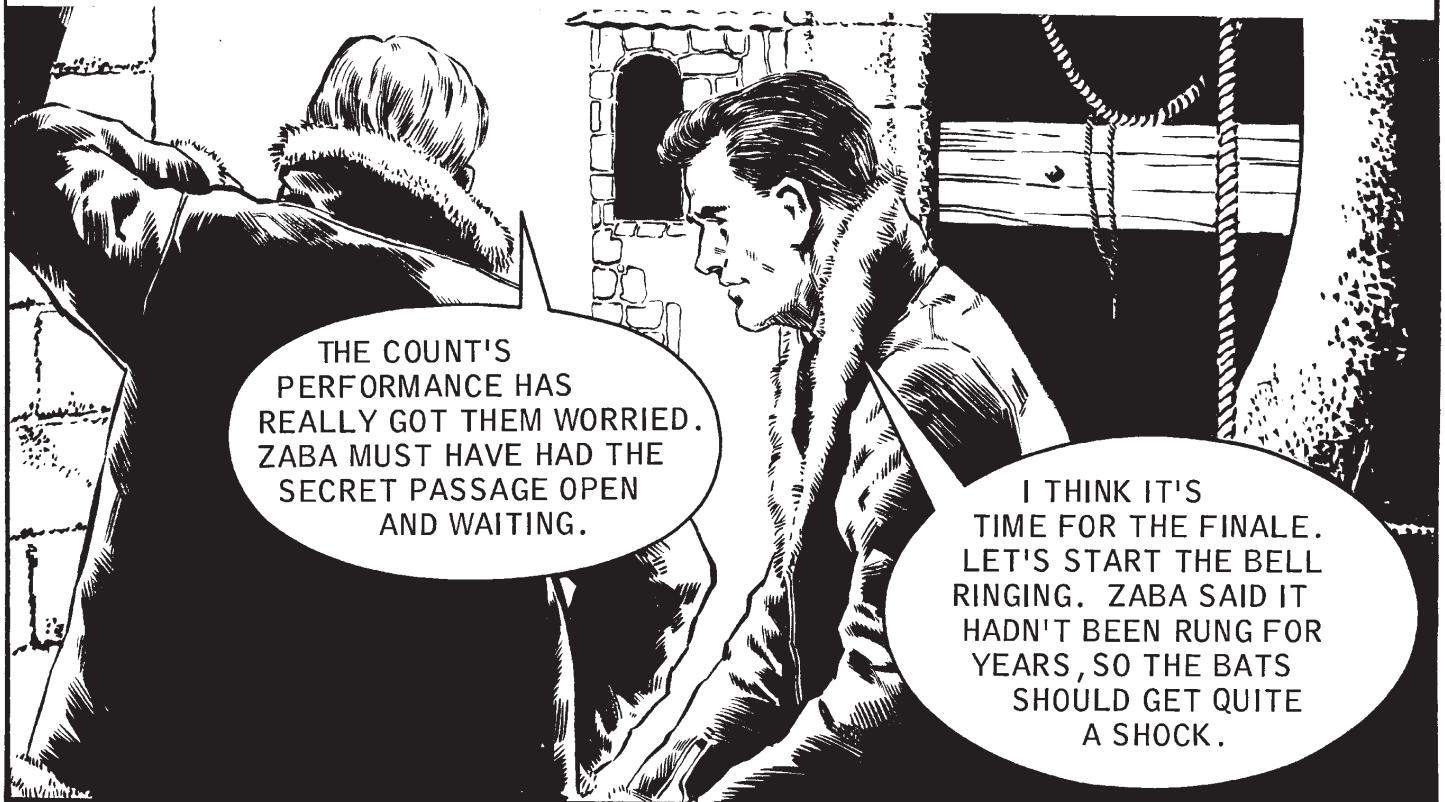
LIVID, THE GENERAL PULLED OUT HIS PISTOL AND OPENED FIRE. THE COUNT TURNED AND RAN.

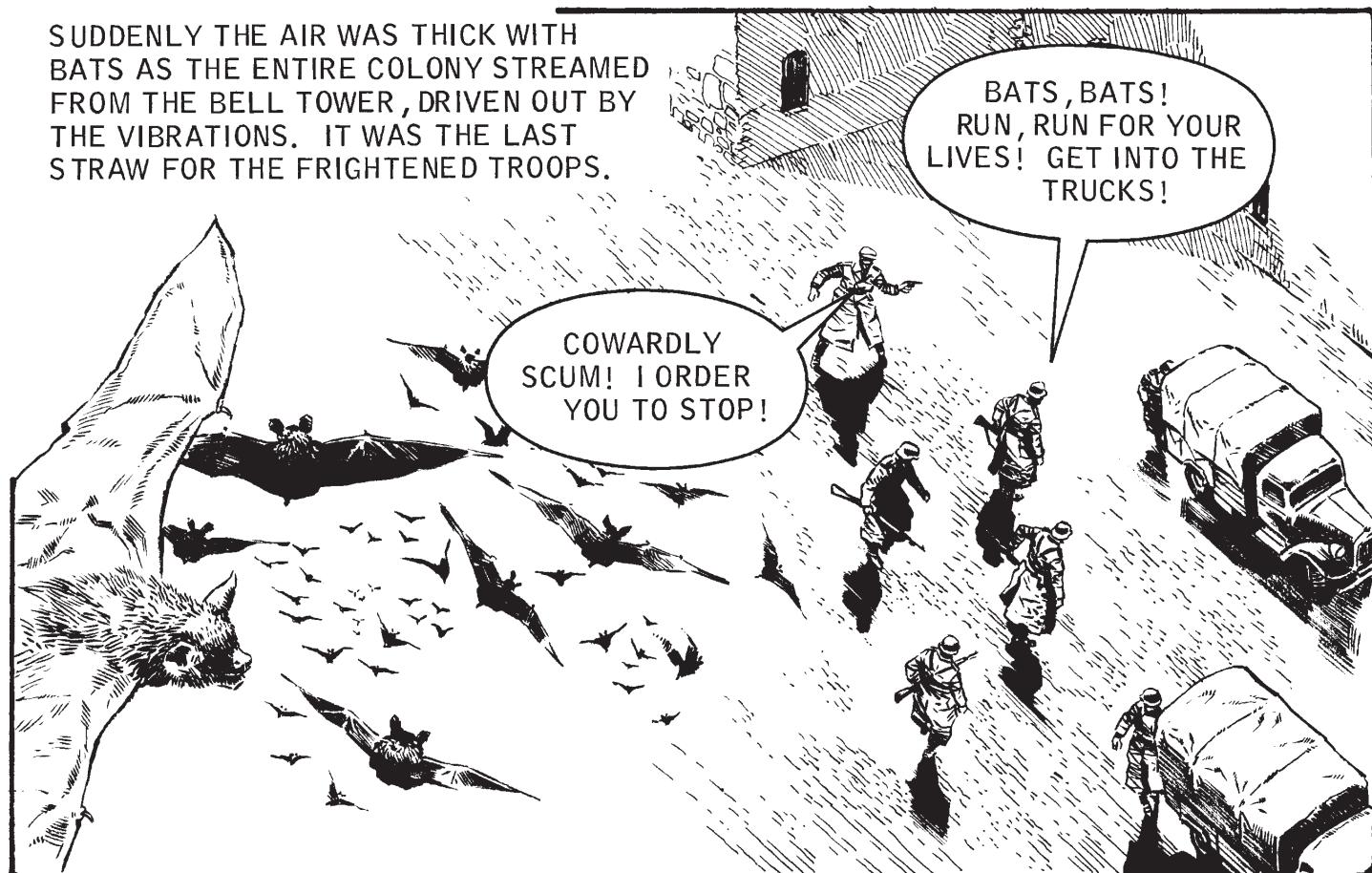


SCENTING VICTORY, VON STACH LED HIS MEN TO THE PASSAGE, BUT...



AS THE GERMANS MILLED AROUND IN PANIC, OTHER EYES WATCHED THEM FROM THE HIGH BELL TOWER. HOWARD AND JOHN HAD TAKEN THEIR POSITION FOR THE FINAL PHASE OF THE OPERATION.





NOTHING ON EARTH COULD HAVE HALTED THE PANIC NOW, LEAST OF ALL MAJOR POEST, WHO DIED IN A VALIANT BUT FUTILE ATTEMPT.



ON THE EDGE OF THE FOREST THE GUERILLAS WHO HAD SUPPLIED THE HOWLS WATCHED THE PANIC-STRICKEN ROUT.

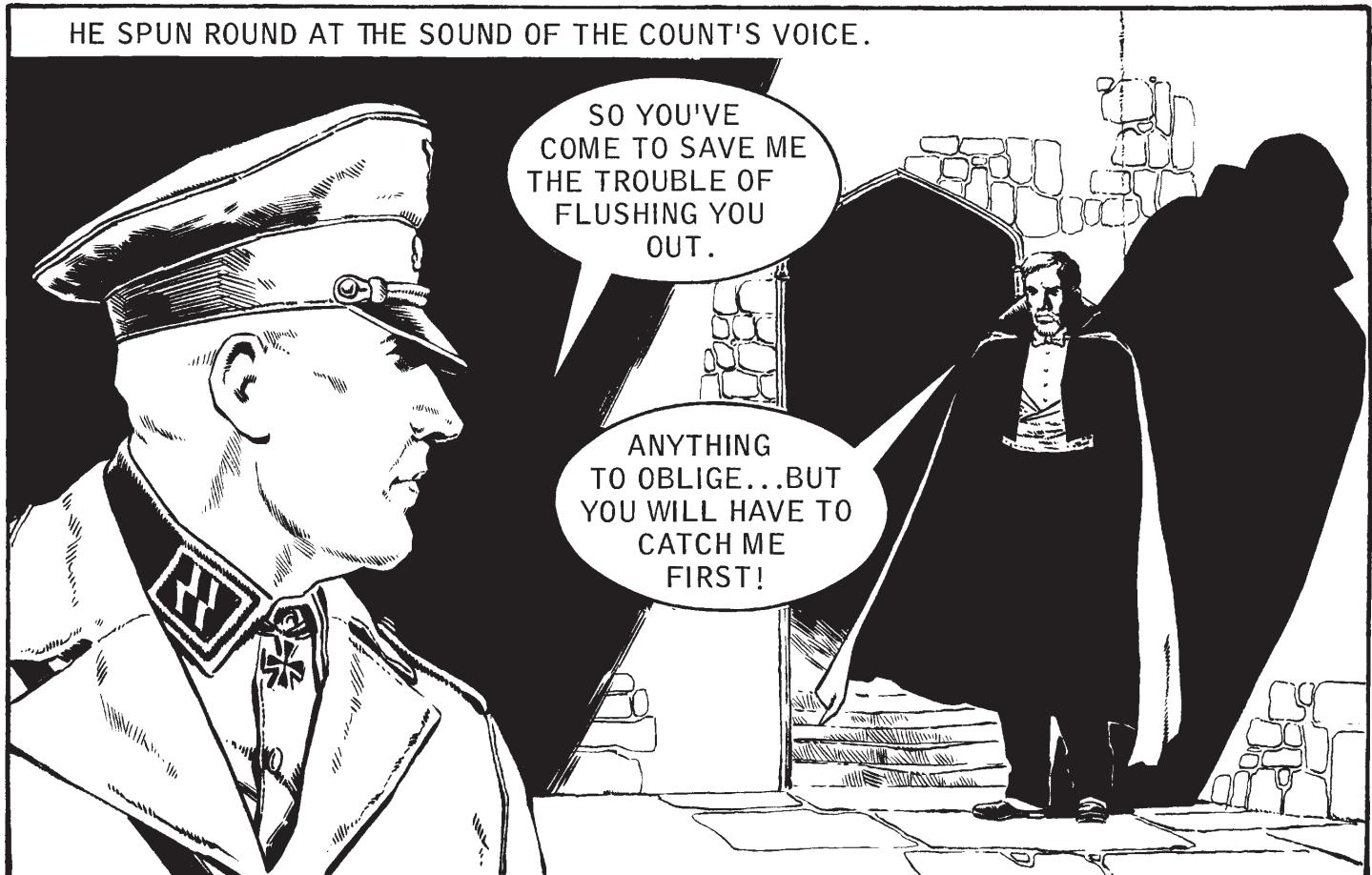
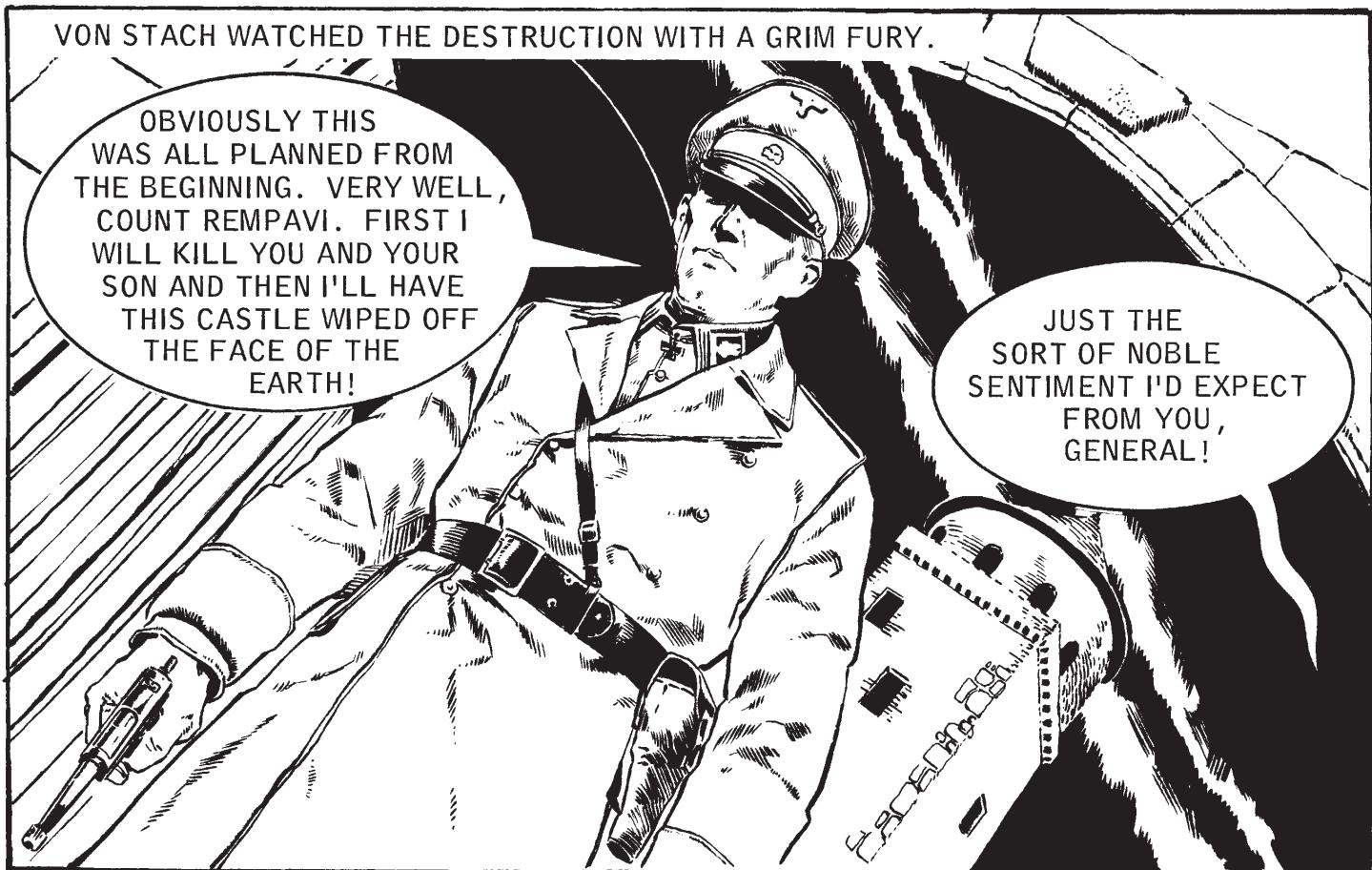


THE WELCOMING MAT CONSISTED OF SEVERAL BARRELS OF OIL SPREAD ONTO THE ROAD SURFACE.



NONE OF THE TRUCKS COULD AVOID THE DEADLY SURFACE. ONE AFTER ANOTHER THEY SLITHERED OFF THE MOUNTAIN ROAD – INTO OBLIVION.





VON STACH OPENED FIRE AS THE COUNT DODGED INTO A DOORWAY. EVEN AS THE GENERAL GAVE CHASE, THE OTHERS APPEARED.



AS THEY GAVE CHASE VON STACH WAS ALREADY CATCHING UP WITH HIS QUARRY.



THE CHASE ENDED IN THE CRYPT.



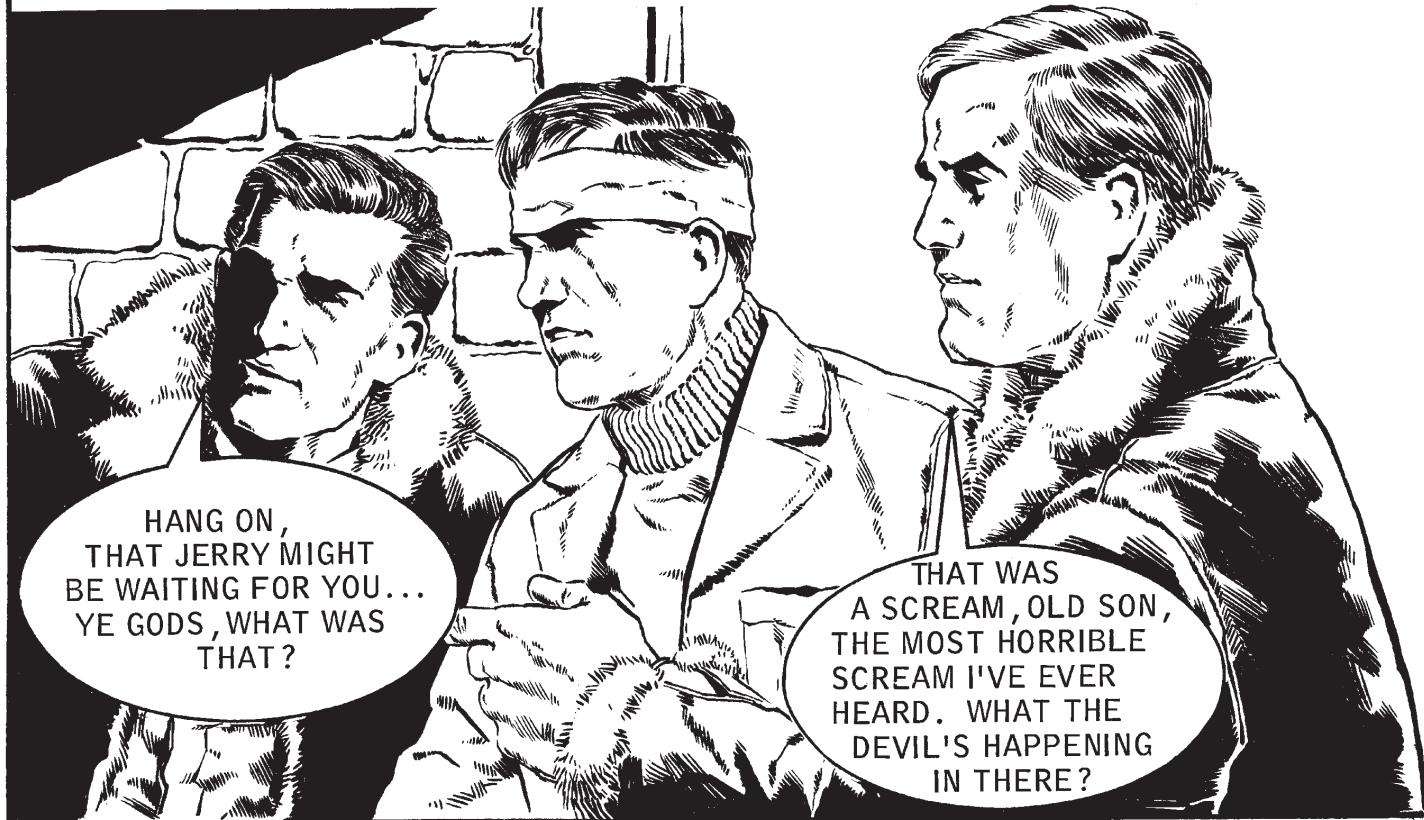
THE S.S. GENERAL SQUEEZED THE TRIGGER SEVERAL TIMES.



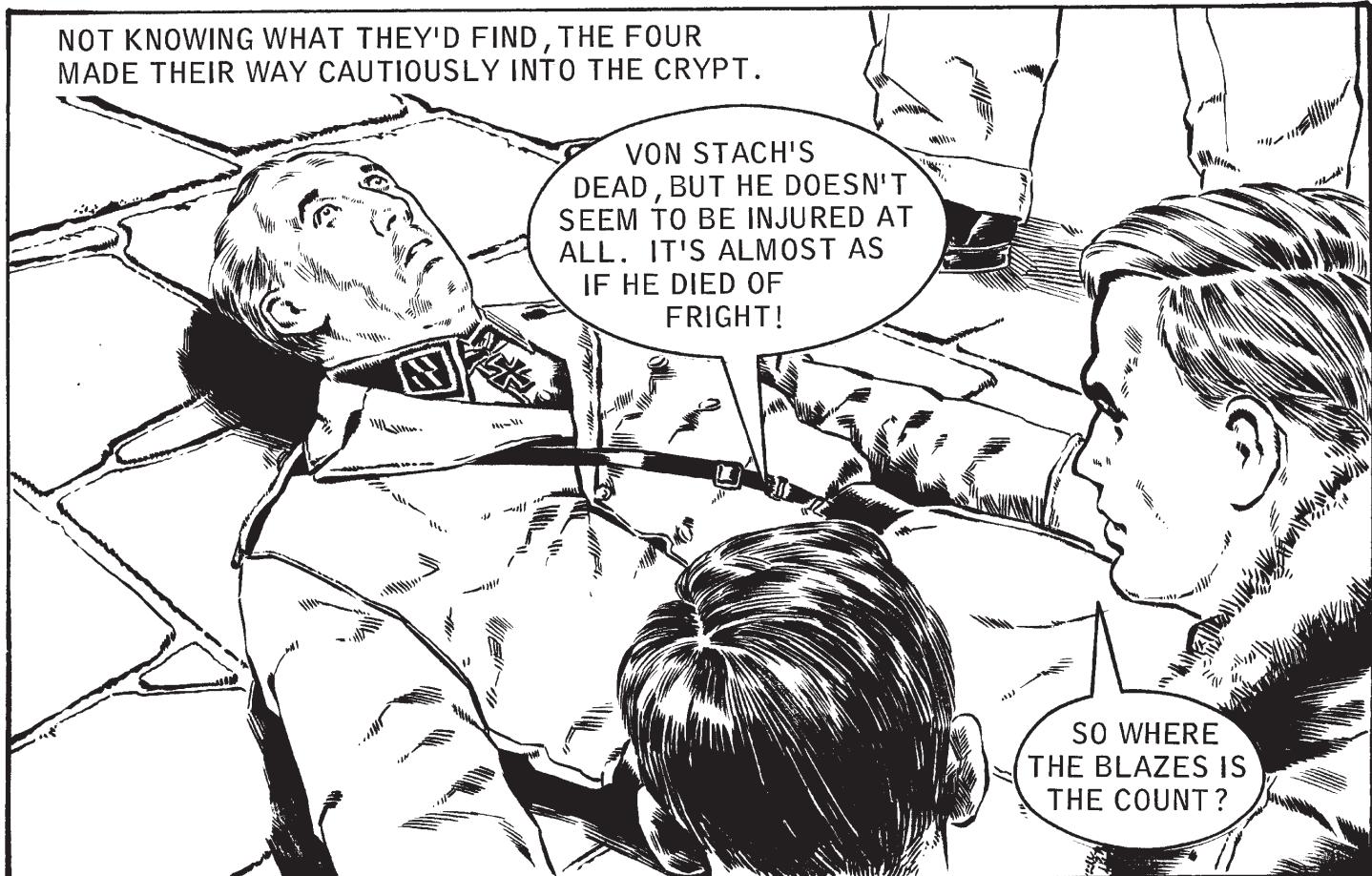
THE OTHERS HAD JUST REACHED THE ENTRANCE TO THE PASSAGE WHEN THE SHOTS RANG OUT.



AS THE TWO AIRMEN TRIED TO STOP BRADU BLUNDERING INTO A POSSIBLE AMBUSH, A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM SOUNDED FROM DEEP IN THE PASSAGE.



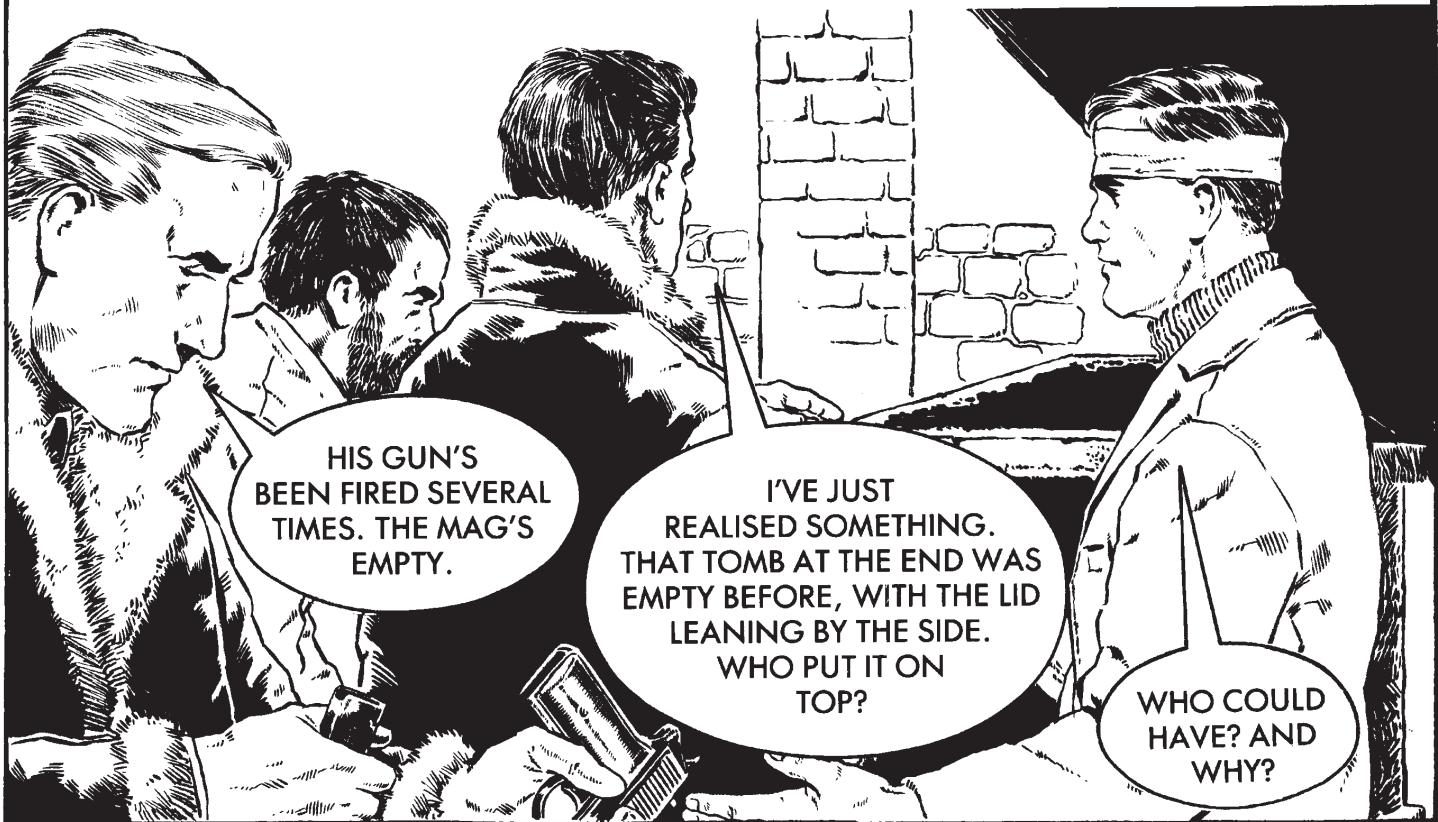
NOT KNOWING WHAT THEY'D FIND, THE FOUR MADE THEIR WAY CAUTIOUSLY INTO THE CRYPT.



VON STACH'S DEAD, BUT HE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE INJURED AT ALL. IT'S ALMOST AS IF HE DIED OF FRIGHT!

SO WHERE THE BLAZES IS THE COUNT?

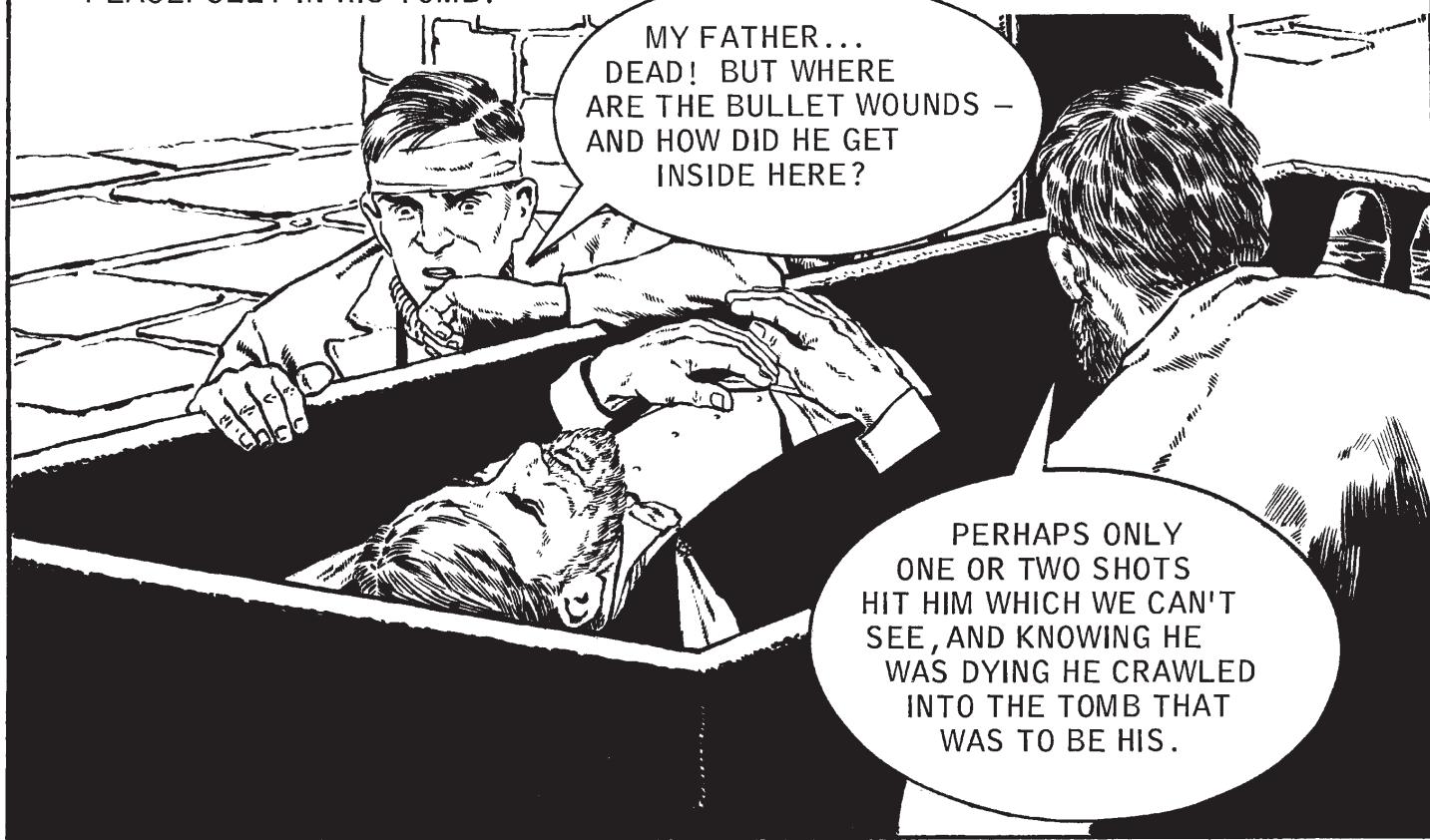
AS HOWARD CHECKED VON STACH'S GUN, JOHN SUDDENLY NOTICED SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT THE CRYPT.



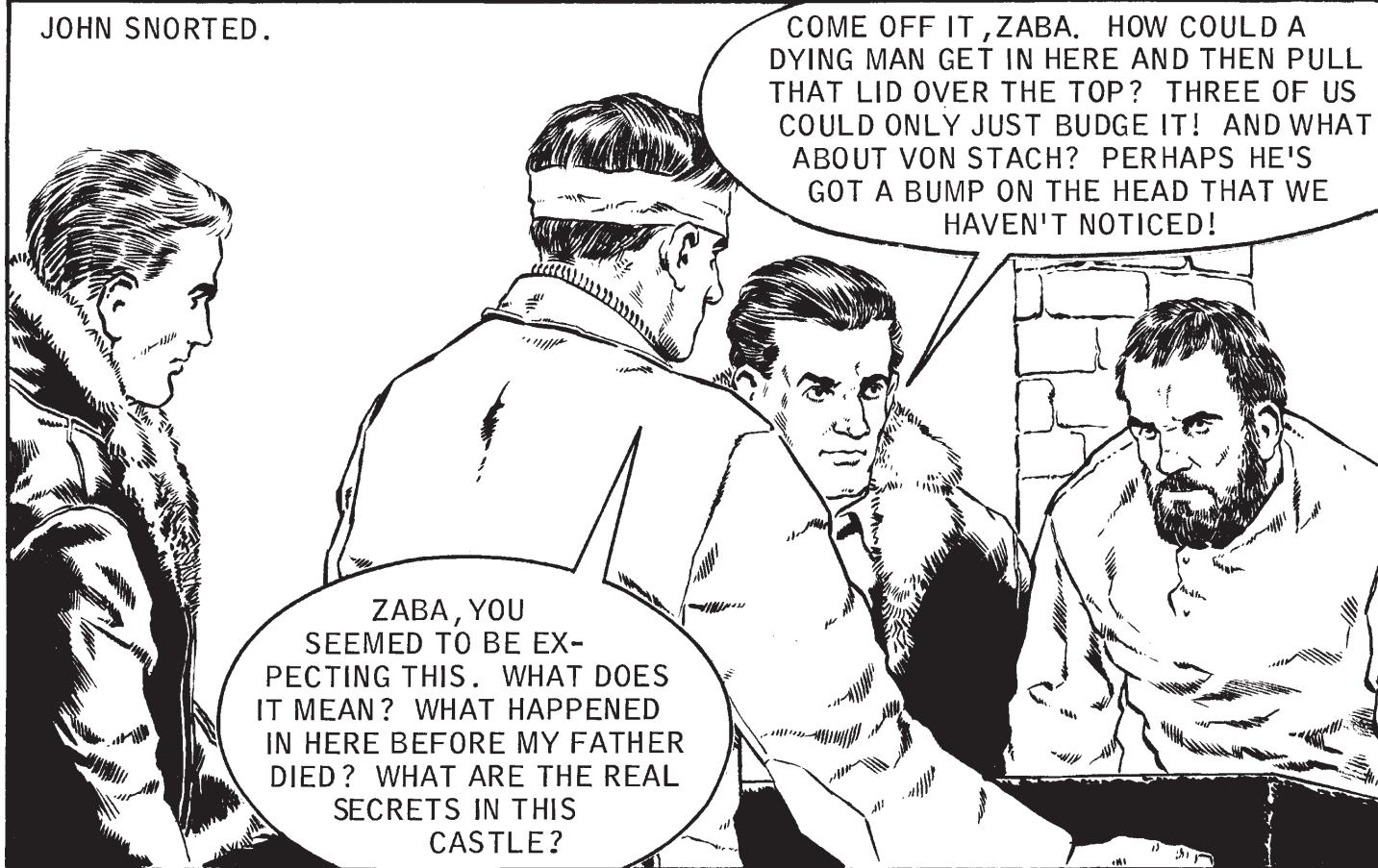
AS ONE MAN, HOWARD, JOHN AND BRADU, STEPPED FORWARD AND HEAVED OFF THE HEAVY STONE LID. ZABA WATCHED CLOSELY, A SLIGHT SMILE ON HIS UGLY FEATURES.



EVERYONE EXCEPT ZABA GASPED WHEN THEY SAW THE BODY OF THE COUNT LYING PEACEFULLY IN HIS TOMB.



JOHN SNORTED.



THE FAITHFUL OLD SERVANT SIGHED, AND THEN SMILED A LITTLE.

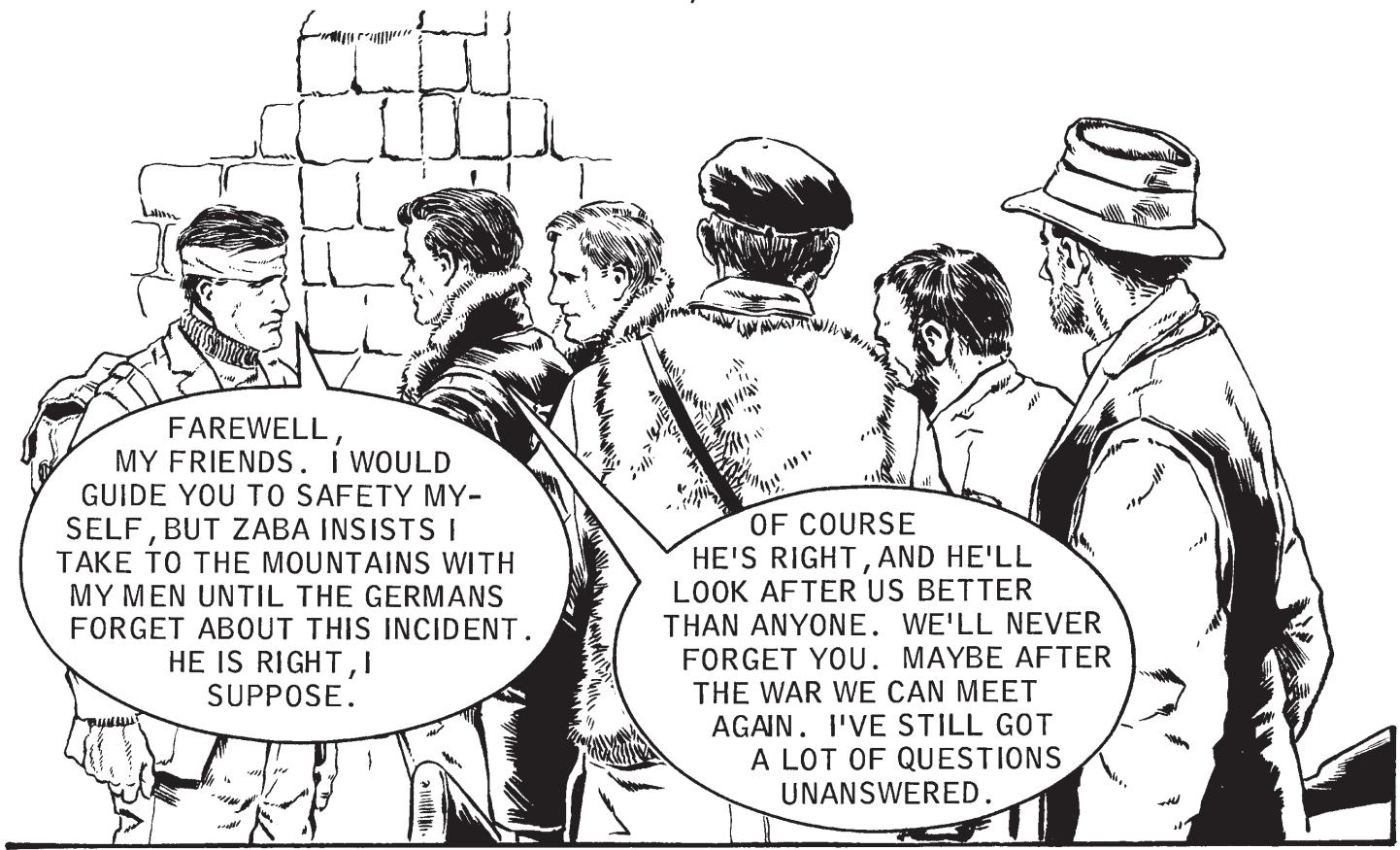
THERE ARE  
MANY SECRETS  
IN CASTLE REMPAVI,  
YOUNG MASTER. MOST  
OF THEM HAVE DIED WITH  
YOUR FATHER. HE WAS  
THE LAST OF THE TRAD-  
ITIONAL LINE – YOU ARE  
DIFFERENT. PERHAPS  
MY EXPLANATION IS  
INSUFFICIENT, BUT  
IT WILL DO. NOW  
LET US THINK  
ABOUT THE  
FUTURE.

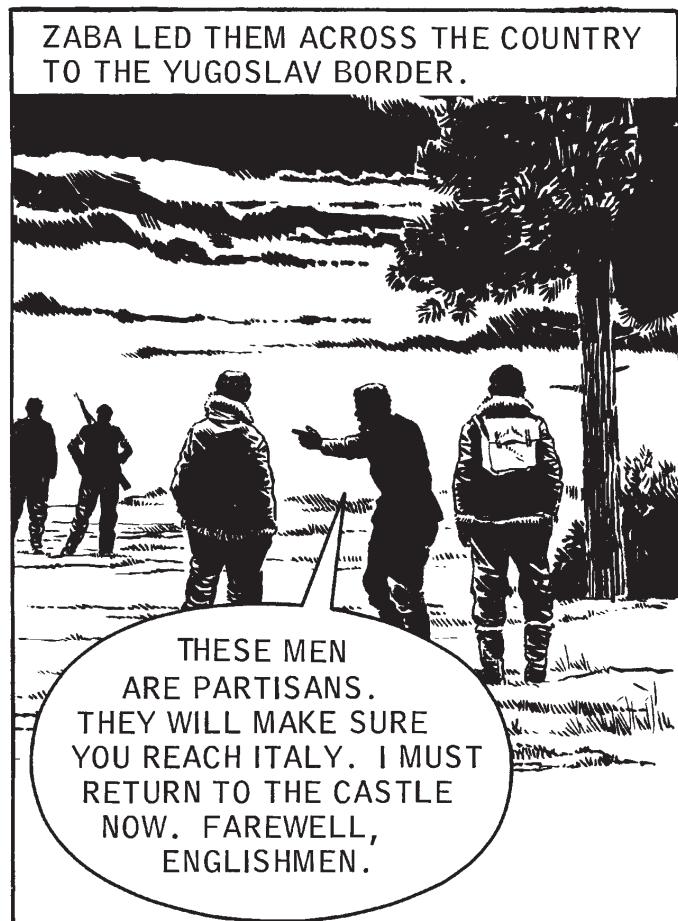


THEY DID AS THE OLD HUNCHBACK ASKED, AND LATER CAME THE PARTING OF WAYS.

FAREWELL,  
MY FRIENDS. I WOULD  
GUIDE YOU TO SAFETY MY-  
SELF, BUT ZABA INSISTS I  
TAKE TO THE MOUNTAINS WITH  
MY MEN UNTIL THE GERMANS  
FORGET ABOUT THIS INCIDENT.  
HE IS RIGHT, I  
SUPPOSE.

OF COURSE  
HE'S RIGHT, AND HE'LL  
LOOK AFTER US BETTER  
THAN ANYONE. WE'LL NEVER  
FORGET YOU. MAYBE AFTER  
THE WAR WE CAN MEET  
AGAIN. I'VE STILL GOT  
A LOT OF QUESTIONS  
UNANSWERED.





A FEW WEEKS LATER THEY WERE BACK IN ITALY AND BACK ON OPS. ONE EVENING IN THE MESS –



JOHN HELD UP THE PIECE OF PAPER HE HAD BEEN SCRIBBLING ON.



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