

GREG RUCKA

STEVE LIEBER

WHITEOUT™



COMPENDIUM

THE COMPLETE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED THRILLER,
COLLECTED FOR THE FIRST TIME



WHITFOOT

COMPENDIUM



WHITEOUT

COMPENDIUM

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AN ONI PRESS PUBLICATION

PUBLISHED BY ONI PRESS, INC.

JOE NOZEMACK, PUBLISHER

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ONIPRESS.COM

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INSTAGRAM.COM/ONIPRESS

FIRST EDITION: DECEMBER 2017

ISBN 978-1-62010-448-4

EISBN 978-1-62010-449-1

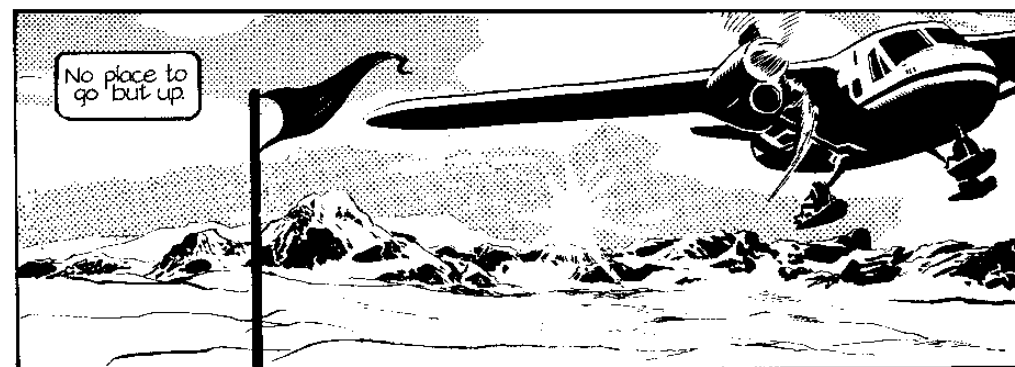
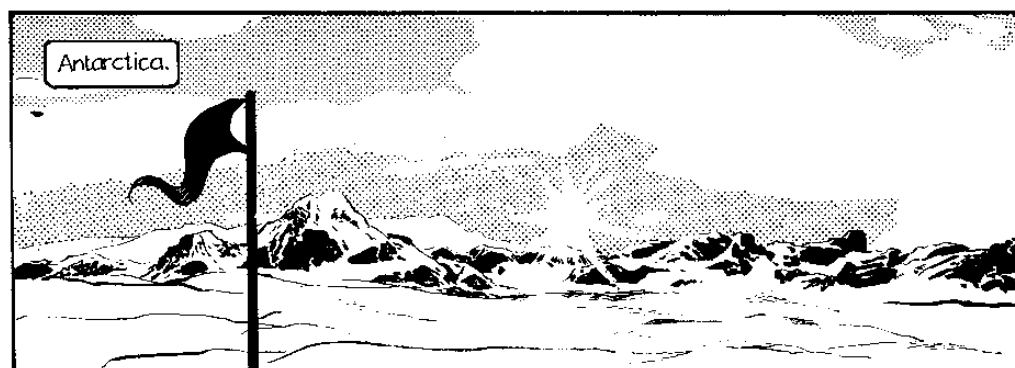
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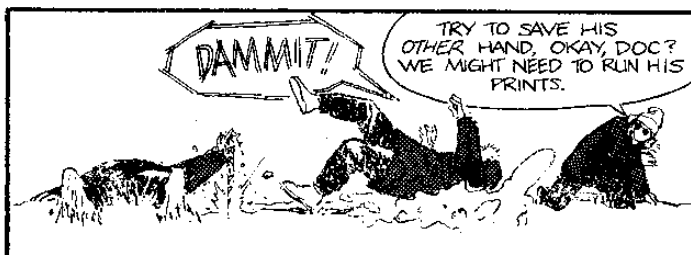
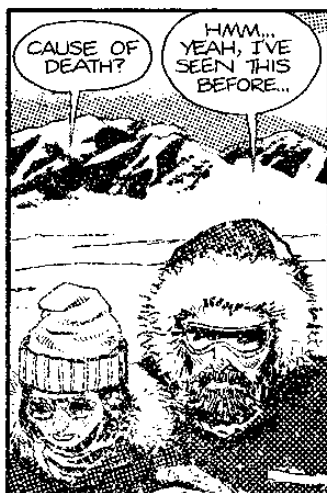
CHAPTER ONE



But when you hit
the bottom, you can
always start digging.









DEFINITELY MURDERED?

FURRY CAN'T DO AN AUTOPSY YET, BUT THAT'S HOW IT LOOKS

ONE OF OURS?

WE DON'T KNOW.

U.S. Marshal Brett McEwan—safe and warm in Hawaii—knows dick about The Ice.

But The Ice and I, we're kindred spirits, now.

We don't care.



DID YOU CHECK HIS TAGS, DEPUTY STETKO?

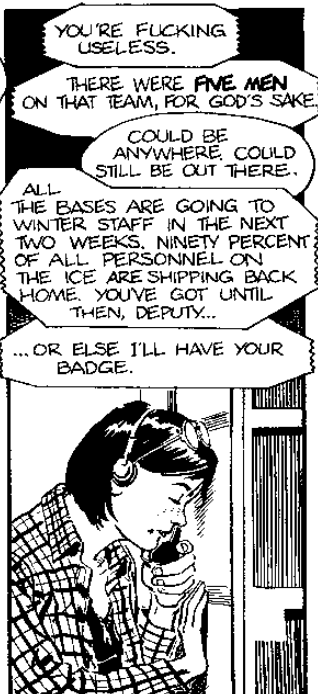
HE WASN'T WEARING TAGS, MARSHAL MCEWAN. BUT HE HAD THE FLAG ON HIS PARKA.

SOMEONE TOOK HIS TAGS?

I DON'T KNOW.

RESEARCH CAMPS JUST DON'T UP AND DISAPPEAR. WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

I DON'T KNOW.



YOU'RE FUCKING USELESS.

THERE WERE FIVE MEN ON THAT TEAM, FOR GOD'S SAKE.

COULD BE ANYWHERE. COULD STILL BE OUT THERE.

ALL THE BASES ARE GOING TO WINTER STAFF IN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. NINETY PERCENT OF ALL PERSONNEL ON THE ICE ARE SHIPPING BACK HOME. YOU'VE GOT UNTIL THEN, DEPUTY...

...OR ELSE I'LL HAVE YOUR BADGE.



I WANT YOUR JOHN DOE IDENTIFIED. I WANT THIS DAMN THING SOLVED. FIND THE MEN. FIND THE CAMP. MAKE AN ARREST.

UNDERSTOOD?

YES.



...KICKING THE ICE QUEEN'S ASS! THESE GUYS JUST DISAPPEARED OUT THERE, AND IF SHE DOESN'T PUT OUT, HE'S PULLING HER PLUG! AND THE MARSHAL JUST TOOK IT, DIDN'T KICK BACK OR ANYTHING.

SHE'S BEEN DOWN HERE TOO LONG, SHE'S GONE COLD.

FRIGID.

FROZEN



YOU KNOW IT! TALK ABOUT NSFA--

NO SEX FOR AWHILE.

NO SEX FOR AWHILE.

NO SEX FOR AWHILE.

DOESN'T KNOW WHAT SHE'S MISSING.



WHOOOPS.

Which of you is missing his face?

Rubin and Weiss, the Americans. Siple and Mooney, from the UK and Austria, respectively. Wesselhoeft, from Argentina.

People get claimed by The Ice all the time.



They just don't always know it.

It's not like death is original down here. Scott and his crew after losing the race to the pole...

...countless others, frozen, fallen, all dead.

But murder, that's new.

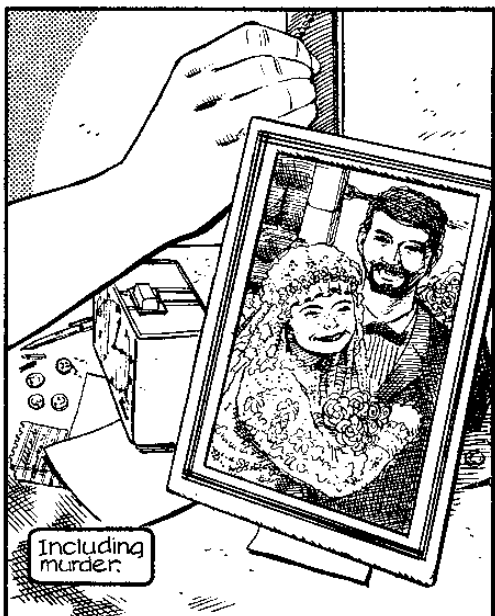


Doesn't matter where we go, we've got to make it seem like home. And McMurdo has it all...



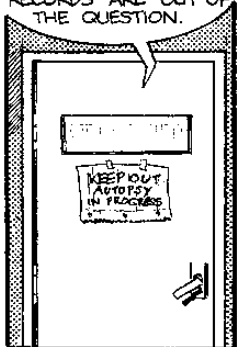
From Aerobics in the gym to "AA" meetings in the church basement, at the end of the world we can give you all the amenities of home.

Including homicide.



Including murder.

...STILL CAN'T GET THE SUMNABITCH OPEN, BUT RIGHT NOW IT'S LOOKING LIKE HE GOT BEATEN AND STABBED TO DEATH. DESTROYED THE TEETH. SO DENTAL RECORDS ARE OUT OF THE QUESTION.



THE WOUNDS ARE CONSISTENT THROUGHOUT. 'COURSE, I WON'T BE SURE 'TIL I OPEN HIM, LIKE I SAID, MAYBE A HAMMER?

ICE HAMMER?

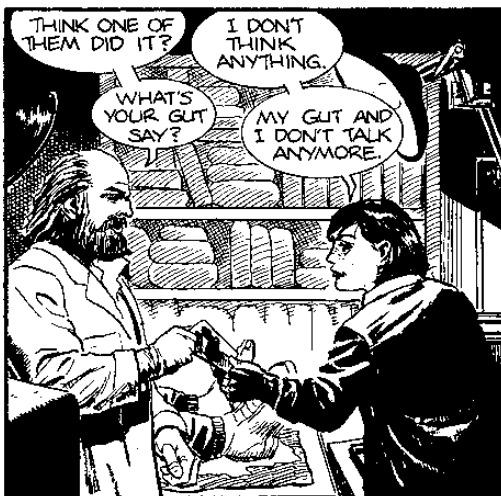
YEAH. THAT WOULD DO IT.



I'M TWELVE DAYS FROM HEADING HOME. I GET TO PLAY CORNER. WHY DOES THIS SHIT HAPPEN TO ME?

ADMIT IT, FURRY. YOU'RE GOING TO MISS US WHEN YOU'RE GONE.

NOT THIS I WON'T. HOW YOU PROCEEDING?

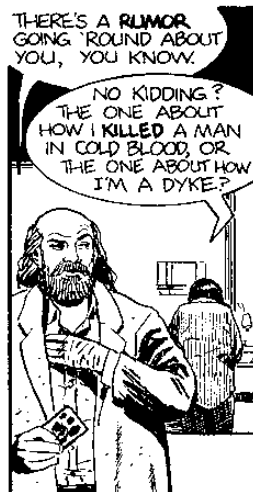


THINK ONE OF THEM DID IT?

I DON'T THINK ANYTHING.

WHAT'S YOUR GUT SAY?

MY GUT AND I DON'T TALK ANYMORE.



THERE'S A RUMOR GOING 'ROUND ABOUT YOU, YOU KNOW.

NO KIDDING? THE ONE ABOUT HOW I KILLED A MAN IN COLD BLOOD, OR THE ONE ABOUT HOW I'M A DYKE?

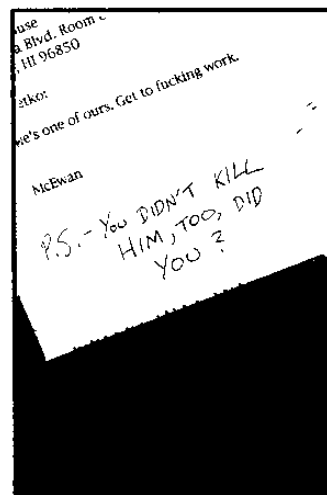
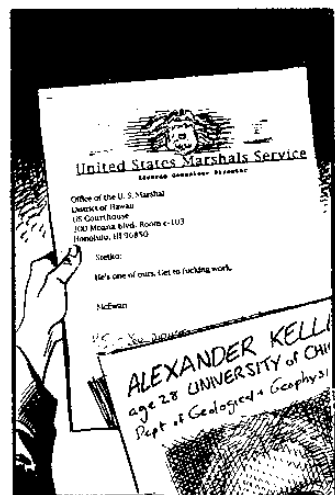
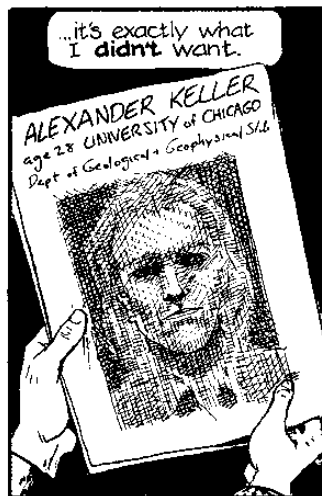
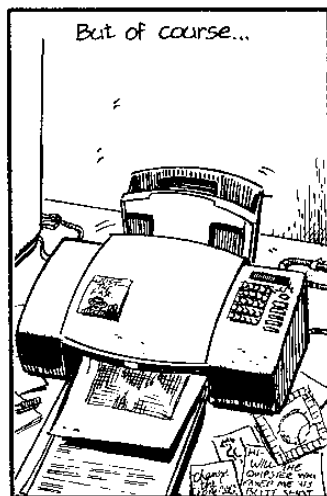
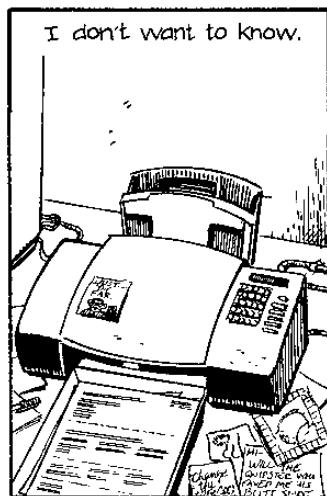
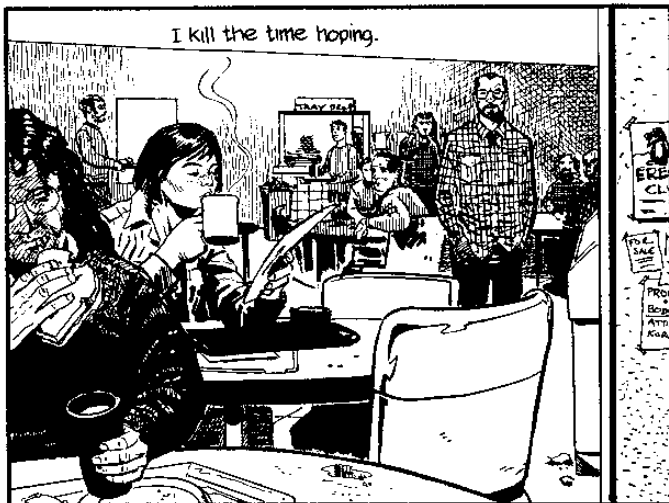
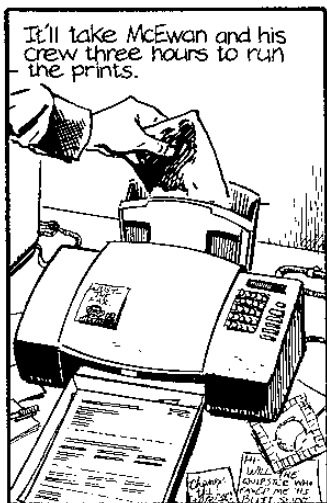


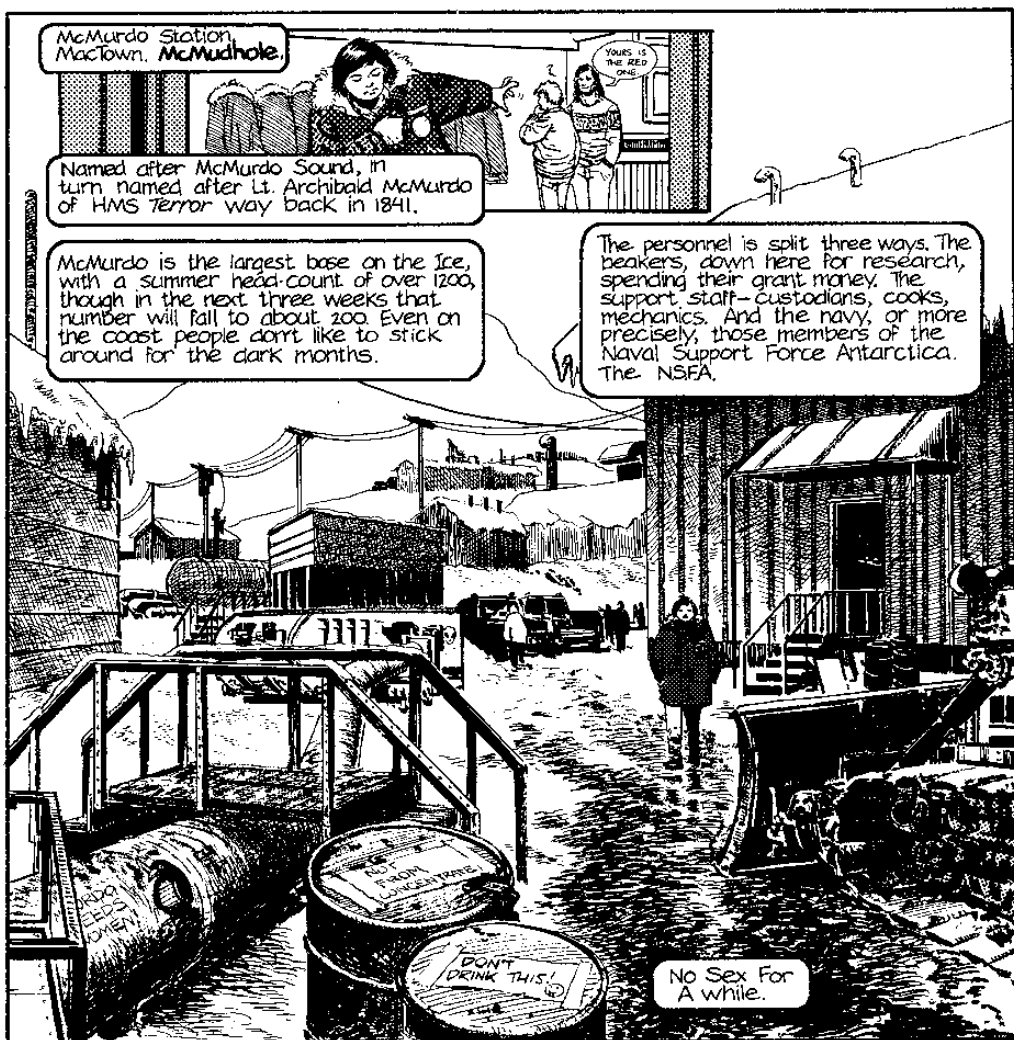
THIS ONE'S NEW. THIS ONE SAYS YOUR ASS IS ON THE LINE.

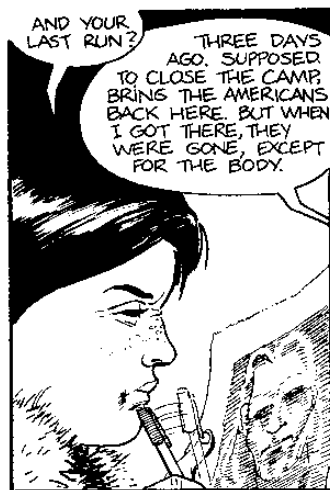
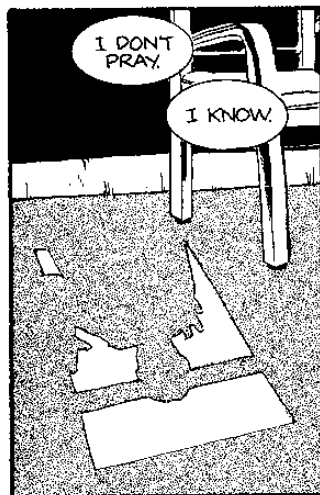
IT'S JUST TALK MAYBE.

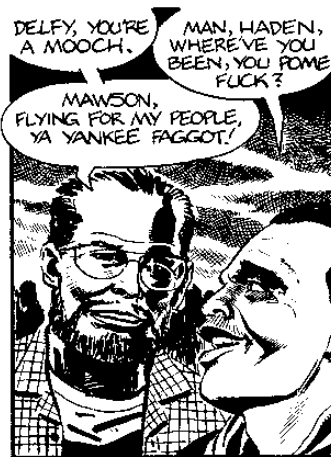


YOU GO CAREFUL, CARRIE. THIS COULD GET MESSY.

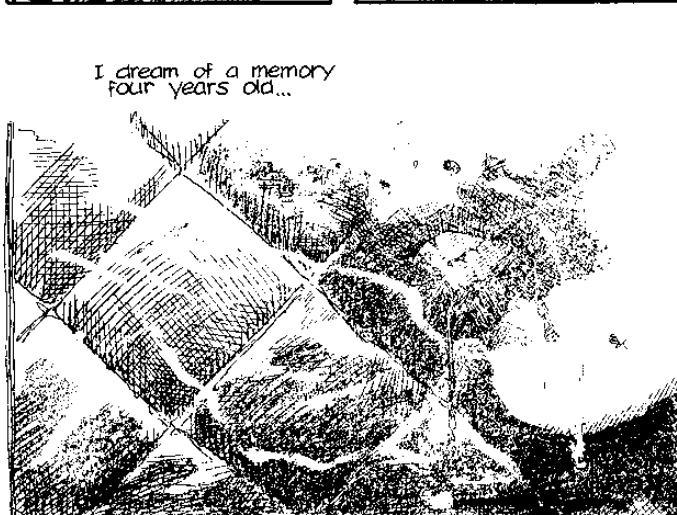
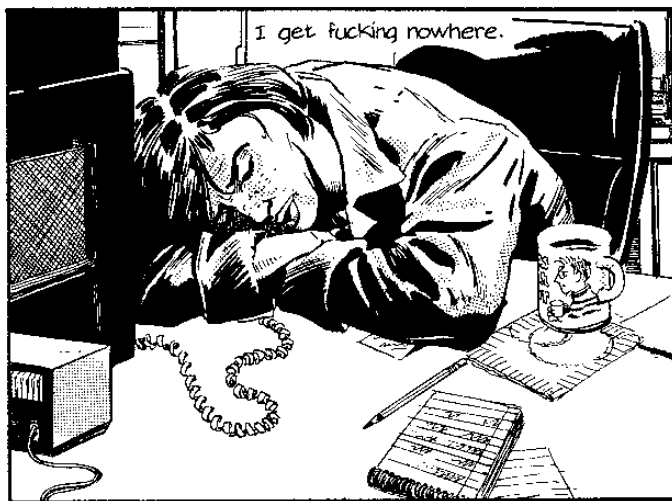
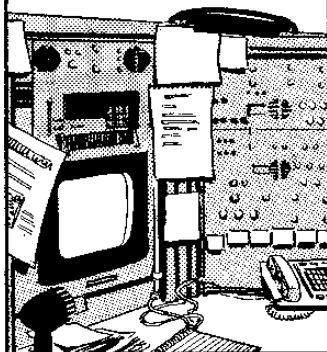




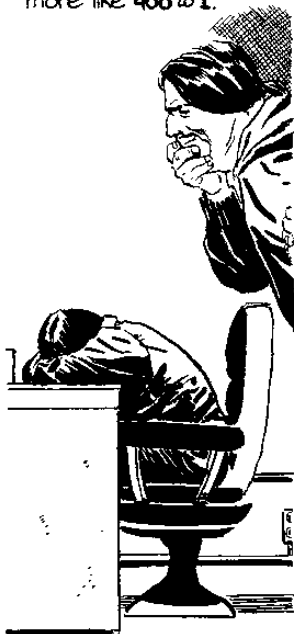




I spend the next **two days**
on the radio trying to find
my missing men.
Waiting for a call back from
someone, **anyone**, who knows
what I'm talking about.



The ratio of men to women on the Ice is something like 200 to 1. That's during the summer. During winter it's more like 400 to 1.



This causes many of the men to forget their manners.



DON'T DO THAT.

...YOU'VE GOT A CALL.



If they had any manners to forget.

IT'S NOT MCEWAN, IS IT?

IT'S VICTORIA.



STETKO. GO AHEAD.

AH, MARSHAL, HALLO, HOW'S YOUR WEATHER?

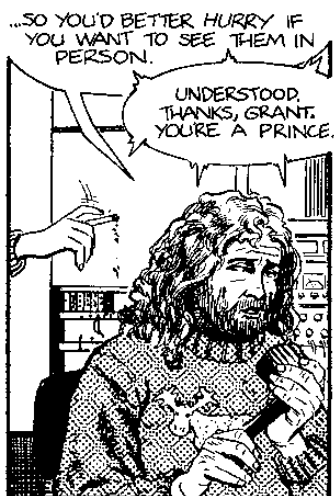
HAVEN'T BEEN OUTSIDE. IS THIS GRANT?

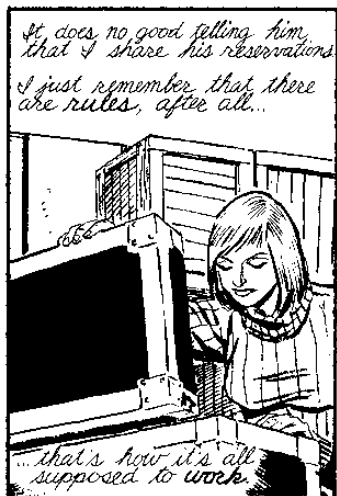
INDEED. YOU CALLED ABOUT TWO OF OUR PEOPLE, CORRECT? SIPLE AND MOONEY?



THEY'RE HERE, BUT NOT FOR LONG. TAKING TOMORROW'S FLIGHT BACK TO THE WORLD.

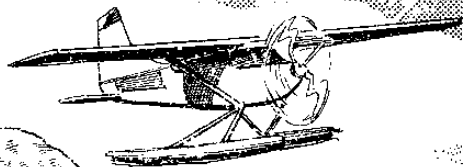






Normally, travelling The Ice is a bitch, but I catch some luck.

The Loo was back from the Pole and set to make resupply runs along the coast. He was willing to add Victoria Station to his list.



I convinced him we needed to go to Victoria first...

...and because the Loo likes me, I get to sit up front...



...while our other passenger flies with the baggage.

HE STILL ASLEEP BACK THERE?



YEAH, WHO THE HELL IS HE?

PILOT I KNOW. NAMES HADEN. FLIES FOR THE AUSTRALIANS OUT OF MAWSON.

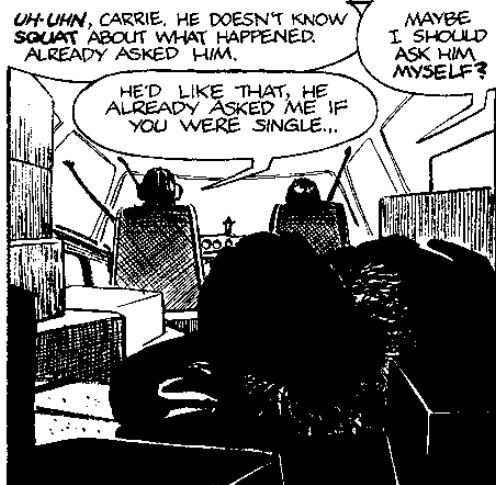
ANOTHER PILOT, HUH?



UH-UHN, CARRIE. HE DOESN'T KNOW SHIT ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED. ALREADY ASKED HIM.

MAYBE I SHOULD ASK HIM MYSELF?

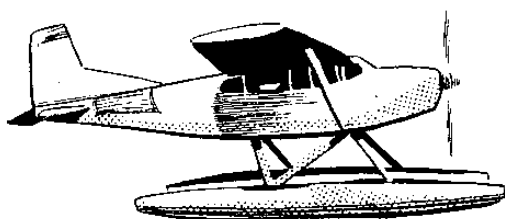
HE'D LIKE THAT, HE ALREADY ASKED ME IF YOU WERE SINGLE...



...I TOLD HIM HE'D HAVE BETTER LUCK WITH THE PENGUINS

FUCK YOU, TOO, LOO.





VICTORIA UK, THIS IS CHARLIE HOTEL EIGHT-NINER OUT OF ALMURDO. HOW'S YOUR WEATHER? OVER..

...WIND AT SEVEN KNOTS FROM SSE... GOOD LANDING CONDITIONS BUT BE ADVISED...



...SITUATION UNSTABLE... WINDS FORECAST TO REACH 60 PLUS KNOTS IN NEXT FOUR HOURS. OVER.

ROGER THAT, VICTORIA...



...WE'RE ON FINAL APPROACH NOW.

BE ADVISED THAT HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT CANNOT GRANT PERMISSION FOR LANDING OR ASSISTANCE DURING YOUR STAY, AND THAT YOU VISIT VICTORIA STATION AT YOUR OWN RISK. OVER.

CONFIRMED OVER AND OUT.

DON'T YOU LOVE IT WHEN THEY COVER THEIR ASSES LIKE THAT? WHAT THEY'RE REALLY SAYING IS, "IF YOU GET YOUR TITS IN THE WRINGER, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN."



YOU HAVE SUCH A WAY WITH WORDS, HADEN.

WE COULD HAVE A PROBLEM, THOUGH...



...THE WINDS KICK UP, WE'LL BE GROUNDED, GOD KNOWS FOR HOW LONG.

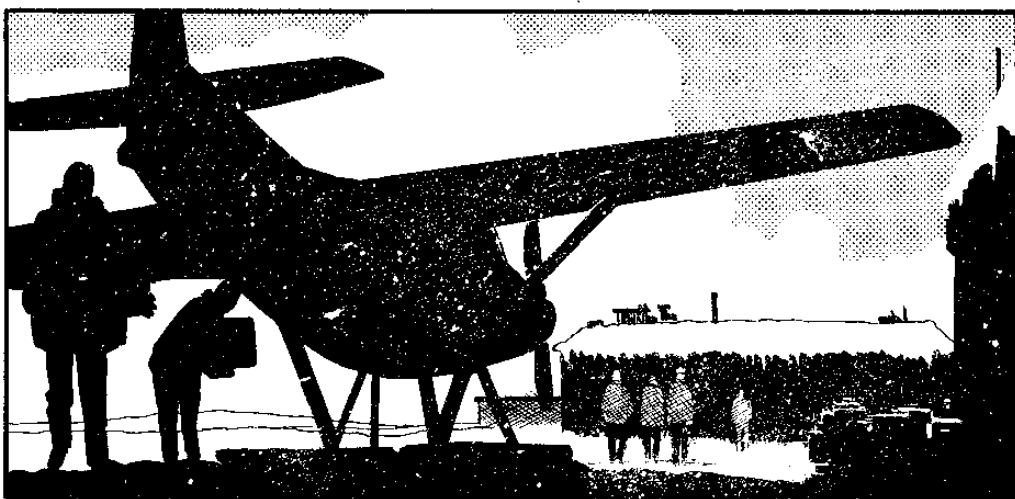
...NOT THAT YOU'D MIND.

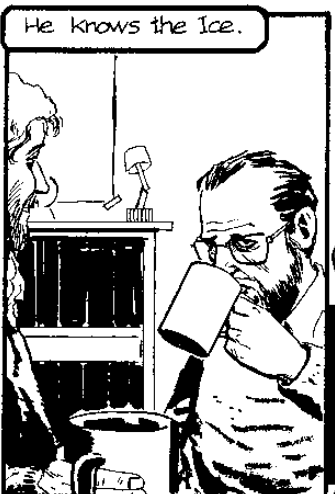
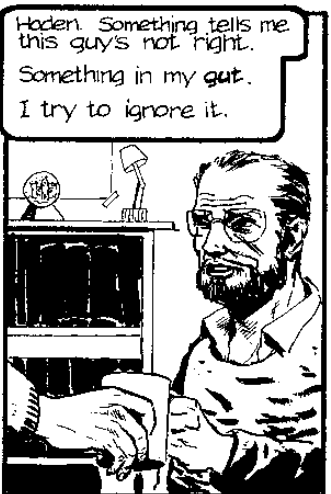


SORRY, WHAT?

NOTHING.



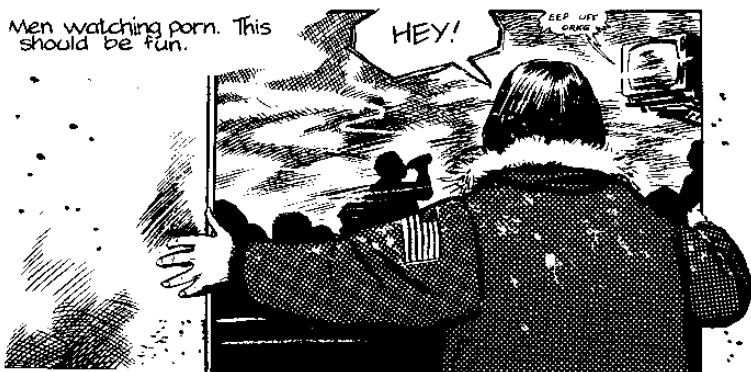


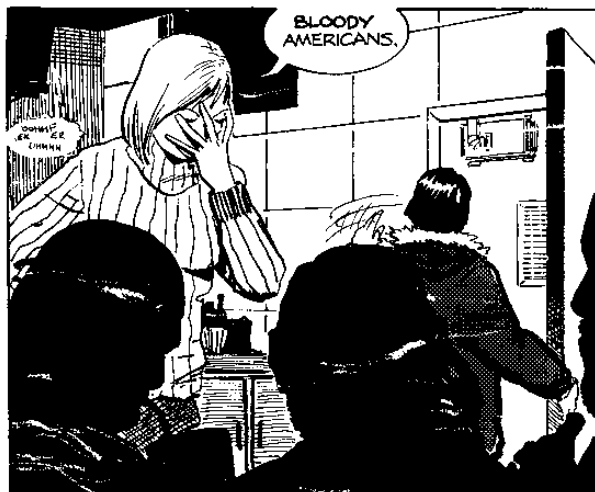


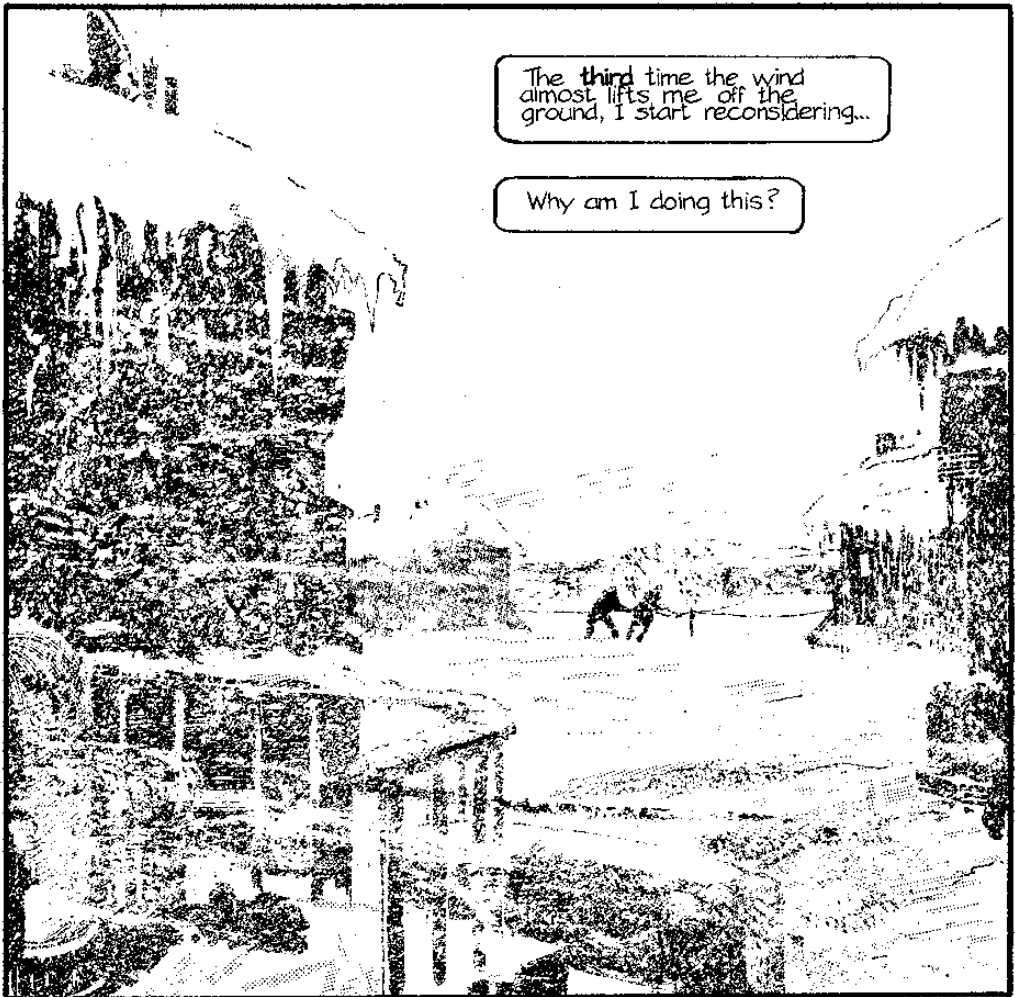
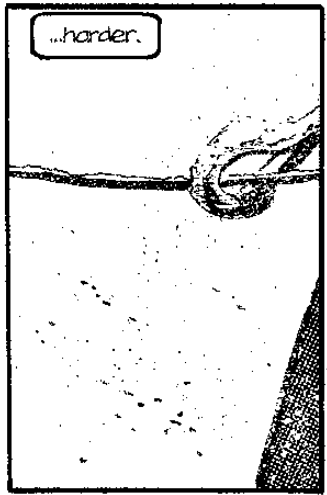
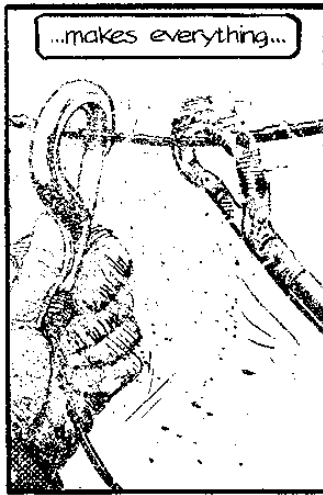
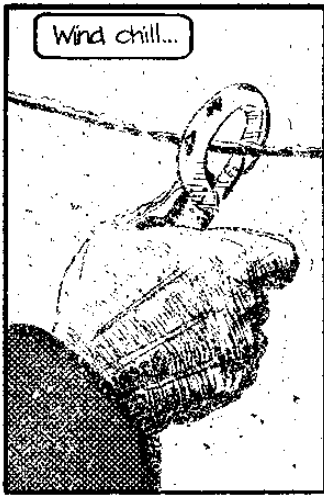




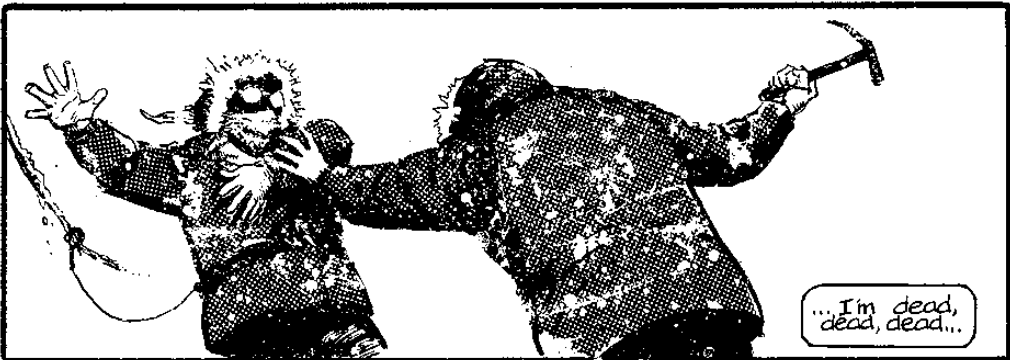
Men watching porn. This should be fun.

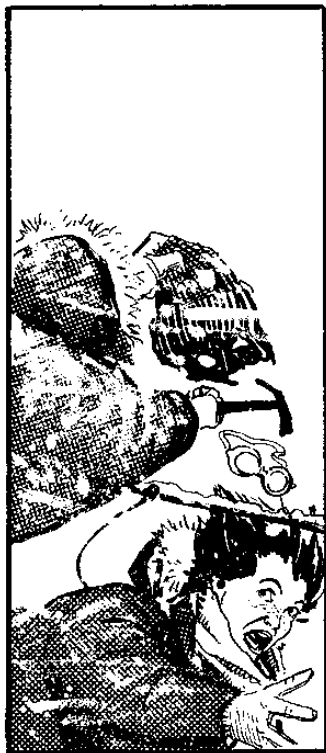




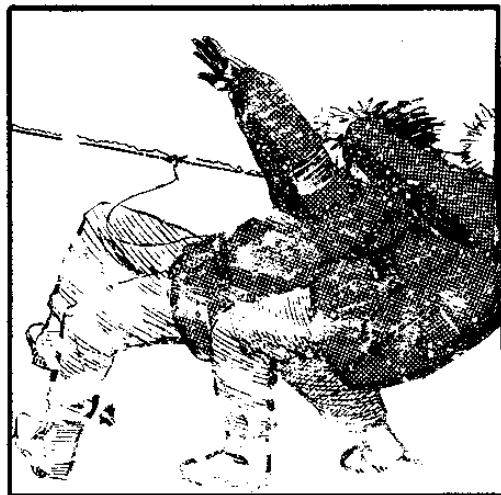






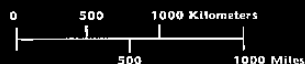


Dead.





CHAPTER TWO



An Ice story for ya.

Guy from Base A calls guy at Base B, five hundred miles away. Hours on the radio, trying to raise him- "Come in Base. Blah-Blah-Blah, can you read me?" **Over and Over** again.

Finally, there's this little voice crackling through the speaker and the eternal night. Tiny, exhausted, broken little voice. "This is Blah-Blah-Blah, go ahead."

And the first guy, he asks, "How's your weather?"

And the other guy, he says, "Cold. Yours?"

First guy says, "Same. Over and out."

In a place where a good day is when the mercury reaches minus 30°C without windchill...

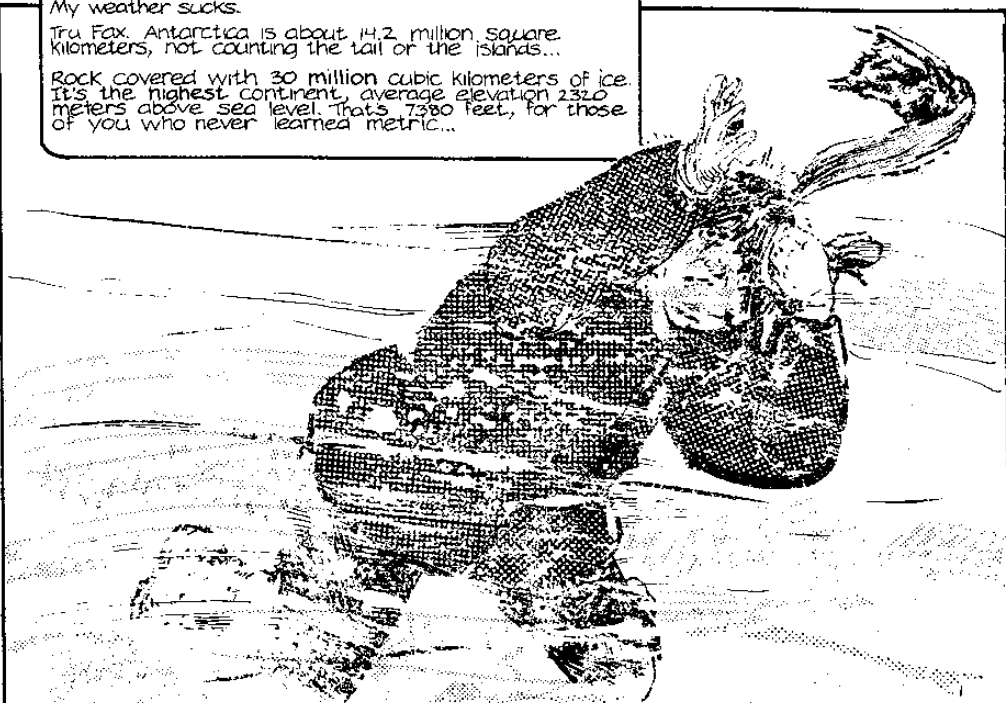
...the most important question in the world is...

How's your weather?

My weather sucks.

Tru Fax. Antarctica is about 14.2 million square kilometers, not counting the tail or the islands...

Rock covered with 30 million cubic kilometers of ice. It's the highest continent, average elevation 2320 meters above sea level. That's 7380 feet, for those of you who never learned metric...



Think about how cold it has to be to keep 30 million cubic kilometers frozen.

Pretty fucking cold.

On the coast, at McMurdo, it's a balmy minus 5°C...

Survivable. Life exists to prove the point. Penguins, seals, insects, other birds, some particularly masochistic fish...



In the interior though, temperatures are much lower. Minus 70°C during the winter. Not counting windchill...



It's so fucking cold that nothing survives on its own. No seals. No birds. No bugs. Not even bacteria...



Piece of trivia - coldest temperature ever recorded on Earth was by the Russians at Vostok Station. Got this - minus 89.6°C, recorded July 21, 1983.

Cold like that kills. Water vapor in your lungs freezes instantly, bursts cells...



Kind of like exploding from within...

Vostok's in the interior, in case you couldn't guess.

And that record, that's not counting windchill. And it gets windy...



Sorry, did I say windy?

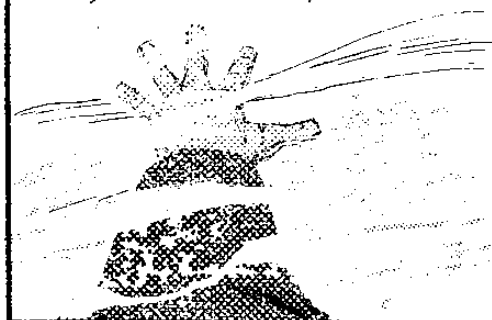
The Ice is the windiest place on earth. Katabatic winds, blowing from the Polar plateau down to the ocean. Fast.

320 kilometers an hour fast, sometimes.



With that sort of windchill, the temp plummets into the triple-digits.

Wind kicks up snow that's lain on the Ice for thousands of years, tosses it through the air. Destroys visibility, you can't see six inches in front of you, can't tell the ground from the sky.



That's called a whiteout.



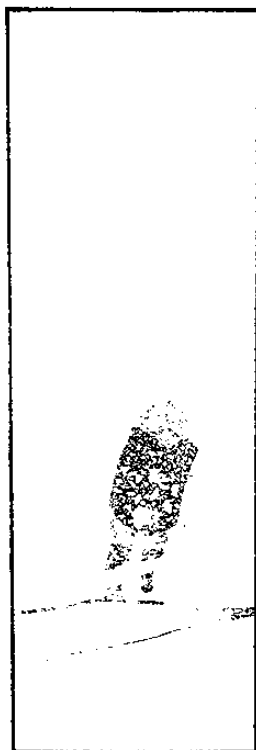
People freeze to death in whiteouts...

...bodies found a foot from safety and warmth...



...died because they couldn't see the damn front door...

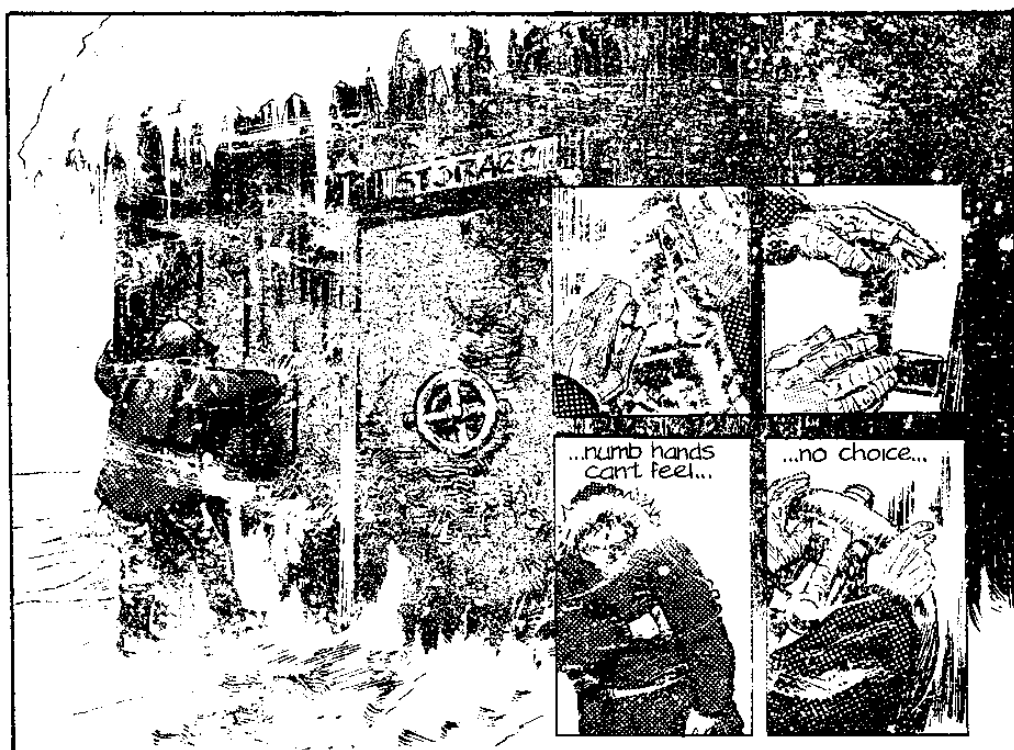




Can't feel my hands
or my face or my
feet...



...know I'm
hypothermic...





*I've been knocked out three times
before. Twice in training...
...and then once again last
year in Macao.*



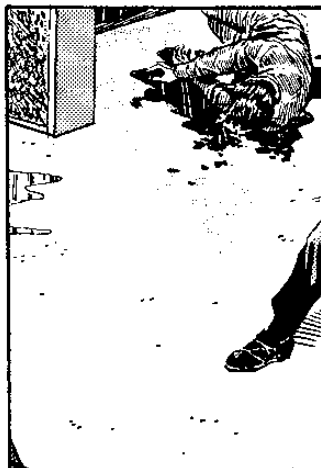
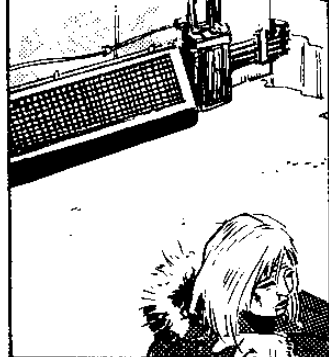
*Every time I come to, I do
the same bloody thing...*

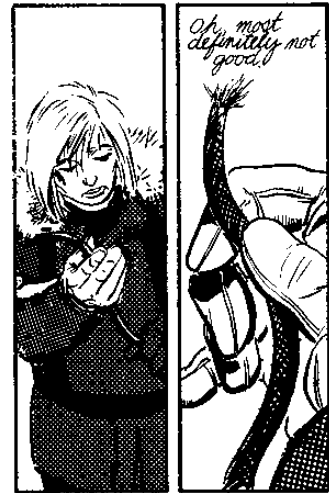
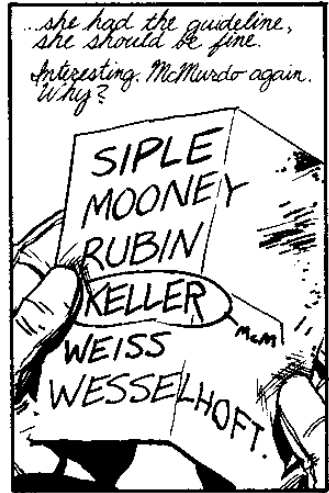
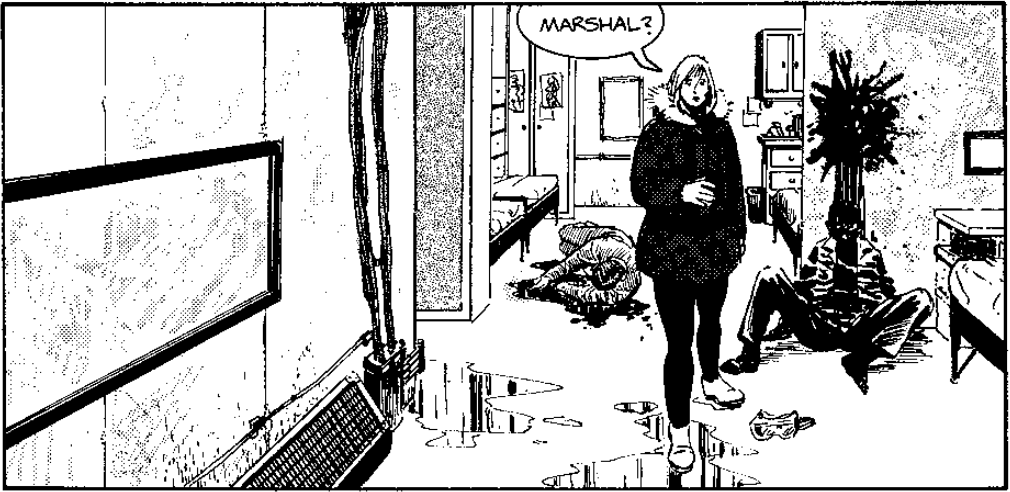


I puke.



*It also takes a minute
for the synapses to come
back on line, for the
short term memory to
return.*







Wind's dying. Or maybe I'm going deaf.

It could be hours, maybe days, before anyone can make it outside to look for me.



Hypothermia is insidious.

It makes you see things.

It makes you not care.



I stopped shivering an hour ago.

I'm not cold anymore.



HOT LITTLE
NUMBER, AREN'T
YOU?





...UNTIL TOMORROW AFTERNOON. WERE
GOING TO HAVE TO KEEP PRICE
HERE UNTIL THEY'RE READY. I'LL
TAKE THE FIRST WATCH.

CAN'T WE PUT
HIM IN THE LOCAL
LOCK-UP?

DON'T HAVE
THE ROOM. NO.
THIS IS BEST.



I DON'T LIKE IT. I
DON'T LIKE HIM.

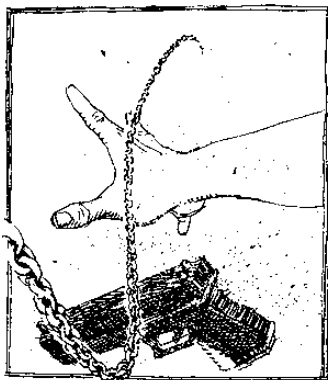
LET
IT SLIDE,
CARRIE.

YOU'RE NOT HIS
TARGET AUDIENCE,
BRETT.



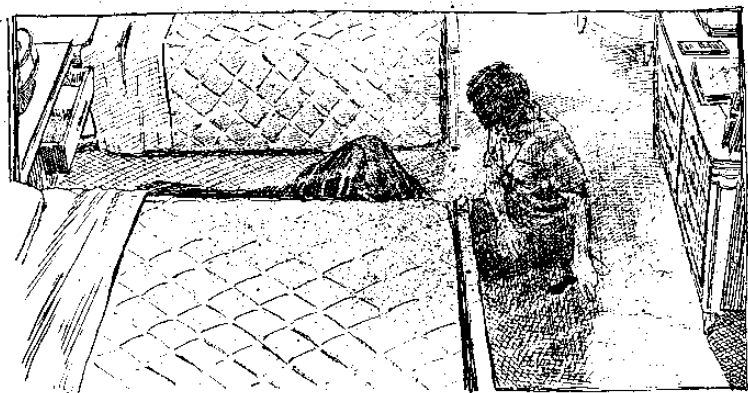
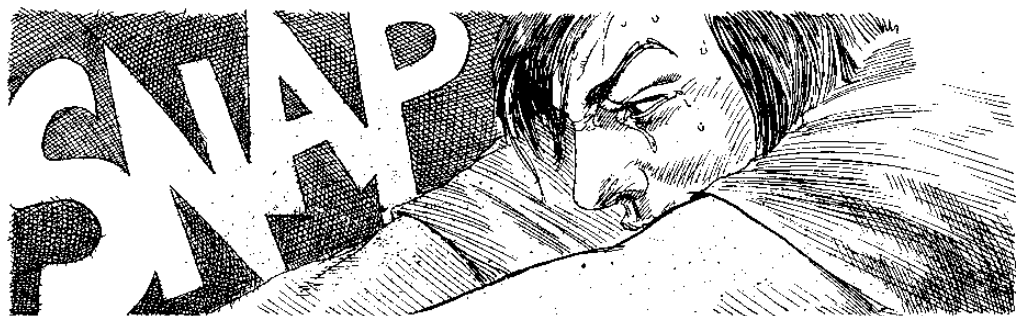
...ASKING FOR
TROUBLE...











...WIND STARTED DYING. THEN I CHECKED THE SURROUNDING SHEDS. SHE LEFT A PORTION OF HER HAND ON ONE OF THE DOORS.

DAMN LUCKY. ANY LONGER AND HER CORE TEMPERATURE WOULD HAVE HIT THE POINT OF NO RETURN.

BUT SHE'LL MAKE IT?

SHE WILL. I CAN'T SPEAK FOR THE FINGERS ON HER HAND THOUGH.

I'LL LET HER PEOPLE KNOW.

YOU'VE GOT TWO BODIES IN YOUR ACCOMMODATION BARRACKS.

GIFT FROM YOU?

ALAS, NO...

...THEY WERE THAT WAY WHEN WE ARRIVED. THE BASTARD WHO DID THEM IS ALSO THE MAN WHO CUT HER LINE.

SOMEBODY HERE, YOU THINK?

OR SOMEBODY SHE BROUGHT WITH HER.

YOU'RE SENDING STETKO BACK TO McMURDO?

ALL OF THEM. HRH'S GOVERNMENT DOESN'T HAVE THE RESOURCES TO OFFER COMFORT TO A FOREIGNER. WE CAN'T GIVE HER ANY MORE TREATMENT. THE AMERICANS CAN WATCH OUT FOR THEIR OWN.

I'M GOING WITH THEM.

TRY NOT TO LOOK TOO DELIGHTED, MARK.

Said I was fit to travel.
I'm practically warm again.

But I still can't
feel my hand.

...DOWN IN TWENTY
MINUTES. HOW YOU
DOING BACK
THERE?

WE'RE
FINE.

No we're
not.

We can't be.

HOW YOU
FEELING
SLUGGER?

THAWING.

Somebody tried
to kill me.

FROSTBITE, BUT WE'LL SEE.
SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN OFF
YOUR GLOVE.

SHE HAD TO
OPEN A DOOR, DOCTOR.
SHE DIDN'T HAVE A
CHOICE.

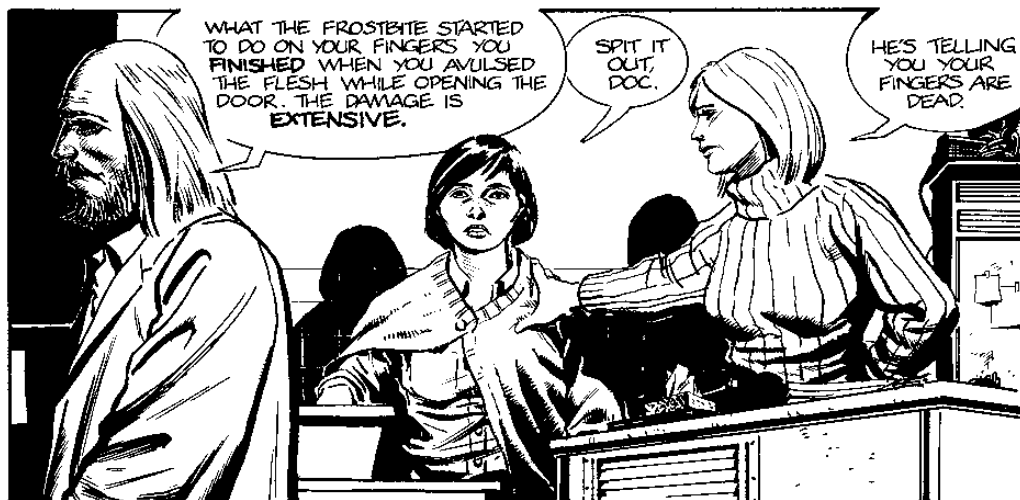
Wanted me to freeze to
death... My body might
never have been found.

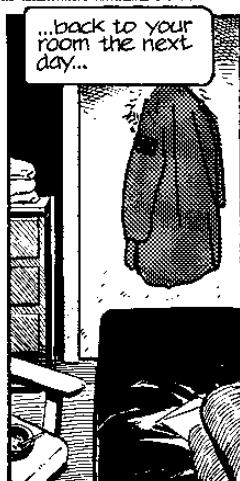
FUCK.

LOOKS LIKE IT THAWED
AND THEN REFROZE,
KIDDO.

CARRIE?

Whoever killed Siple
and Mooney probably
killed Keller, too. Why?









MARSHAL, IT'S SHARPE. MAY I COME IN?



THINK IT'S ONE OF THIS LOT THAT TRIED TO DO US THEN?



WHY ARE YOU HERE?



I'D THINK YOU'D BE A LITTLE MORE PLEASANT, WHAT WITH MY SAVING YOUR LIFE AND ALL.

HOW'S YOUR HAND?



DIMINISHED.

COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE.

I KNOW. ANSWER MY QUESTION.

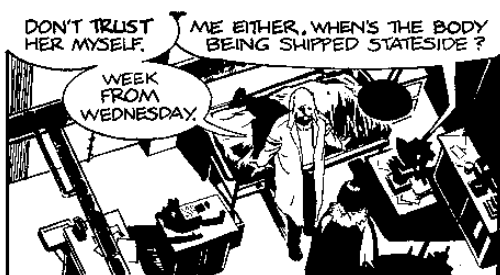


I'M HERE TO HELP.

THAT'S SO SWEET.

THIS IS NOT JUST AN AMERICAN PROBLEM. NOW, MARSHAL, SIPLE AND MOONEY WERE ENGLISH. FALLS UNDER MY PURVIEW.







YOU ALSO MENTIONED
A MAN NAMED PRICE.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE
HALLUCINATING.



DIDN'T THINK ANYTHING
OF IT AT THE TIME.

AND
NOW?

WELL, THERE ARE
RUMORS. I'M SURE YOU'VE
HEARD THEM. THAT YOU'RE IN
EXILE, DOWN HERE BECAUSE
THE U.S. MARSHAL'S SERVICE
DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO
DO WITH YOU.



I DON'T CARE WHETHER
OR NOT YOU'RE QUEER.
DOESN'T MATTER TO ME IN THE
LEAST, FOR EXAMPLE.

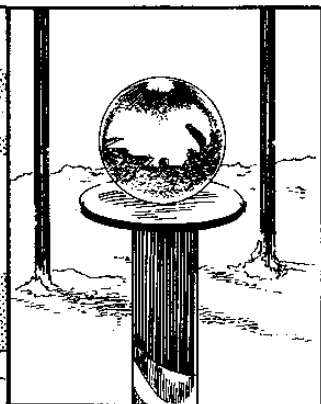
BUT IF THERE'S A
CHANCE YOU'LL KILL THE
SUSPECTS RATHER THAN
ARREST THEM... THAT
CONCERNS ME.





Welcome to 90° South. From here you can walk around the world in under a minute.

That's not the real Pole, of course. That's the 'Ceremonial Pole' used for publicity shots to be shown to taxpayers back in the world.



The 'real' pole is simply a stick.

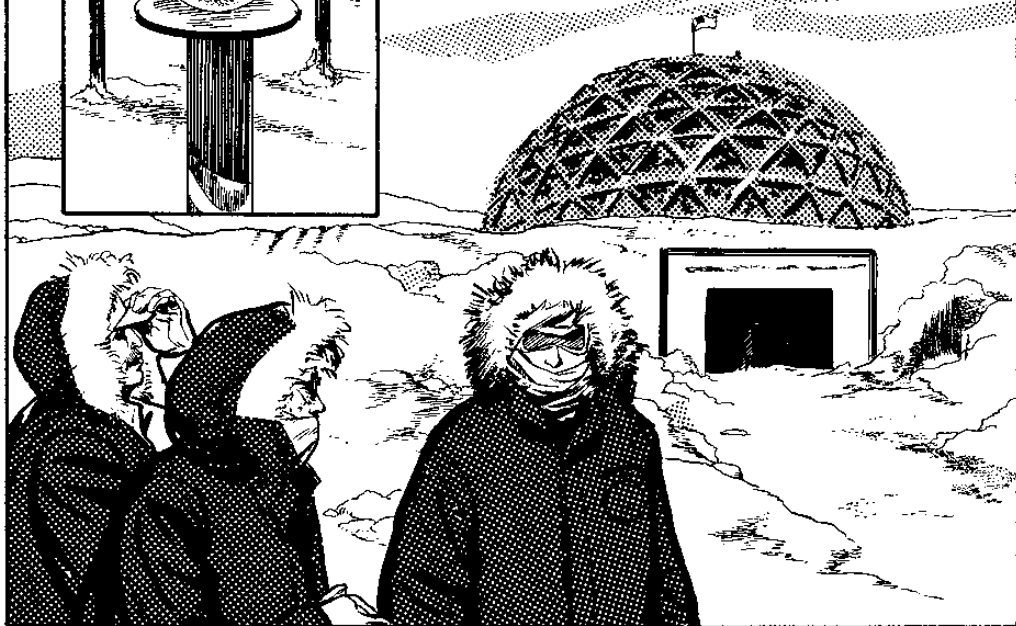
I prefer the stick.

Twilight here, at least for another couple weeks. Then it goes dark, and the sun won't shine for another three months.

Temperature's about minus 40° F, and that's only one of the polar worries.

See, at the Pole, you're at 9,300 feet above sea level. But because of the atmosphere's thinness and the cold, it feels like 10,500 feet.

So, you have the added bonus of altitude sickness.



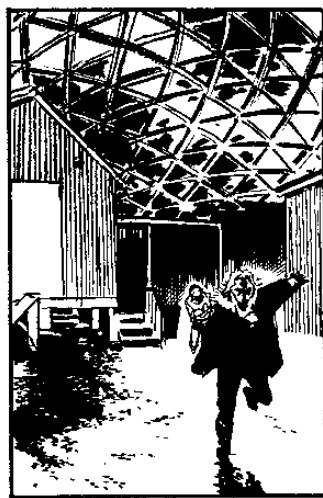
I'LL MEET YOU IN THE MESS HALL. I WANT TO TALK TO MY CONTACT FIRST.

I'LL COME WITH YOU.



NO.



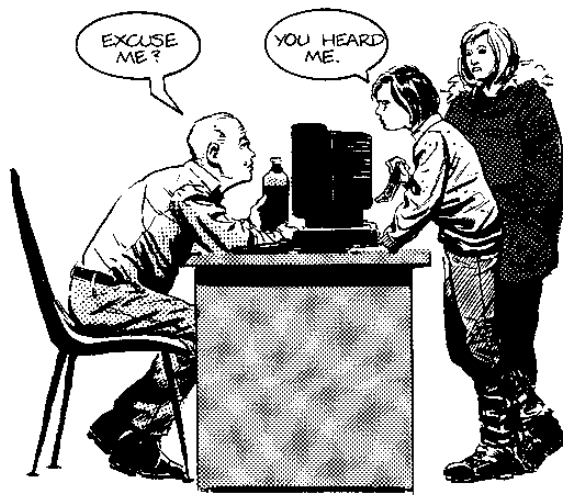
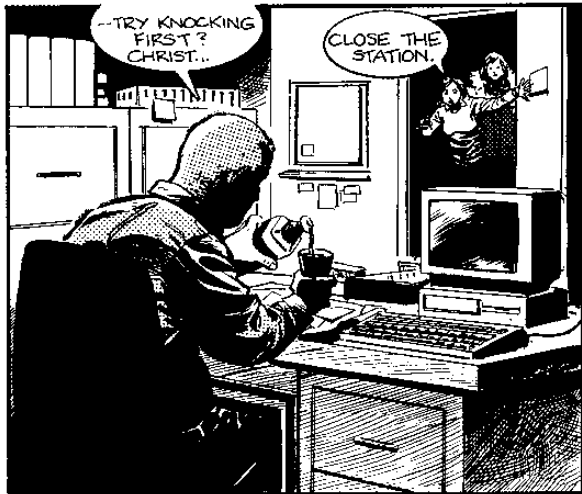
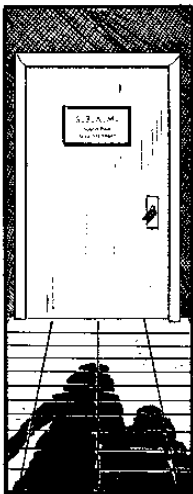


CHAPTER THREE



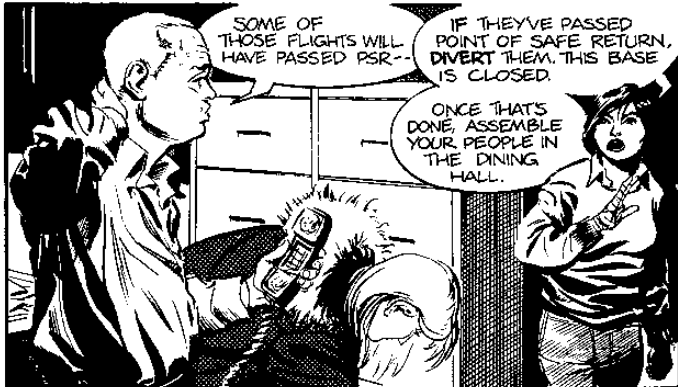
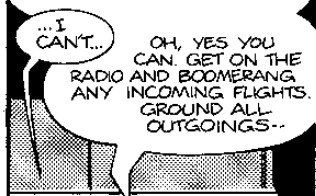








NOW, CLOSE THIS STATION AND CLOSE IT FUCKING NOW OR ELSE I'LL INCARCERATE YOUR ASS FOR OBSTRUCTION.



...PREPARING FOR WINTEROVER,
SO I'LL TRY TO KEEP THIS BRIEF.

ISAAC WESSELHOEFT AND BATES RUBIN
WERE FOUND DEAD IN THEIR QUARTERS
ROUGHLY AN HOUR AGO. WE BELIEVE
THEY WERE KILLED BY ALEX KELLER,
WHO IS STILL AT LARGE SOMEWHERE
ON STATION.

I AM HEREBY DEPUTIZING
ALL PRESENT AS AGENTS OF
THE UNITED STATES MARSHALS
SERVICE. YOU WILL BE BROKEN
INTO TEAMS AND ASSIGNED
SECTORS OF THE BASE
TO SEARCH.

KELLER
IS EXTREMELY
DANGEROUS. IF
YOU LOCATE HIM,
NOTIFY YOUR STATION
MANAGER, MYSELF,
OR MS SHARPE
IMMEDIATELY.

THAT'S IT.
GO TO IT.



This couldn't have come
at a **worse** time for them.

The pole is **inaccessible**
from mid-February to mid-
October. No flights in or out.

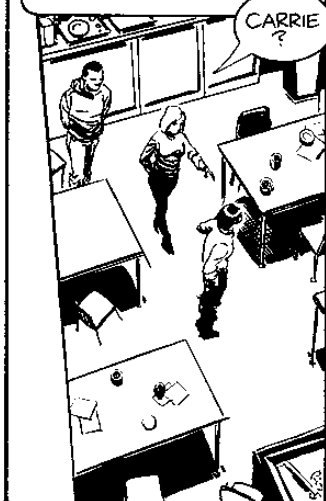
The sky goes dark and the
temperature matches that
of equatorial **Mars**..



Finding a fugitive is **low** on
their list of priorities.

Especially one presumed
dead...

...how'd we miss that huh?
His prints came back-



DELFY AND I ARE
GOING TO CHECK
OUTSIDE.

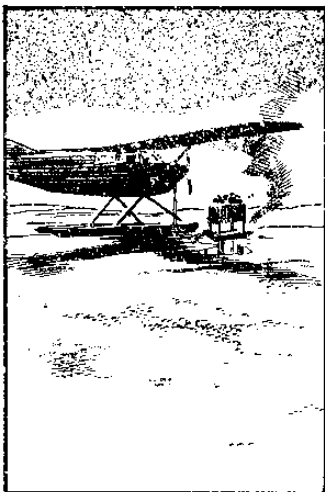
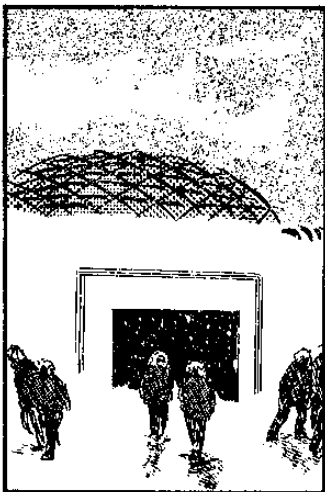
I'LL
JOIN
YOU.

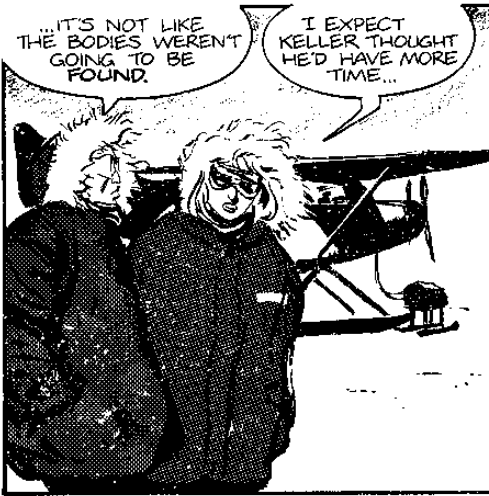


BEST IF YOU DON'T
BAD FOR YOUR
HAND, I'D THINK.





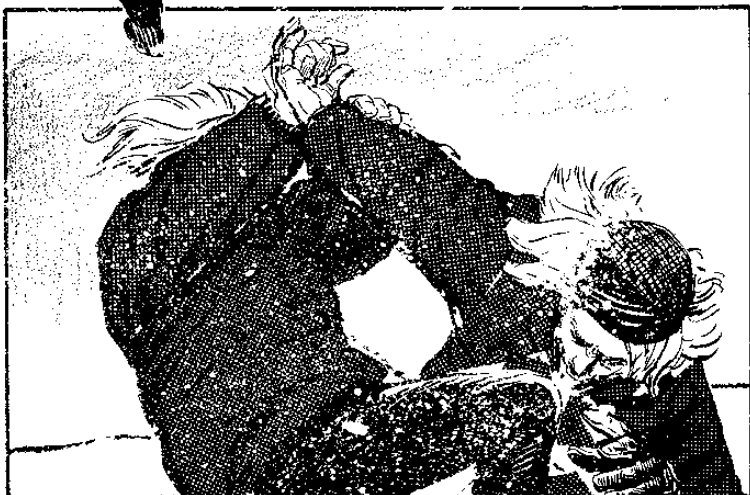


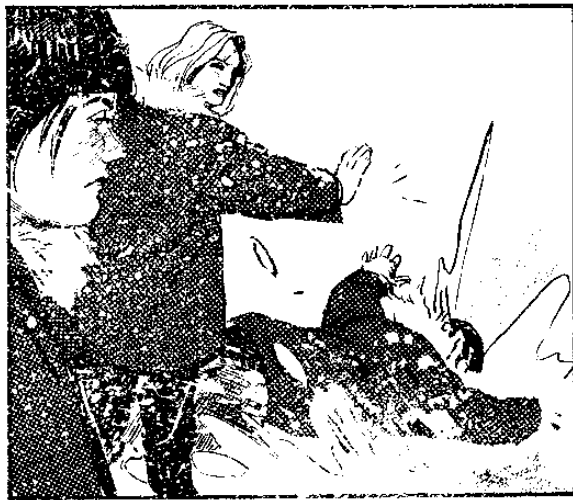


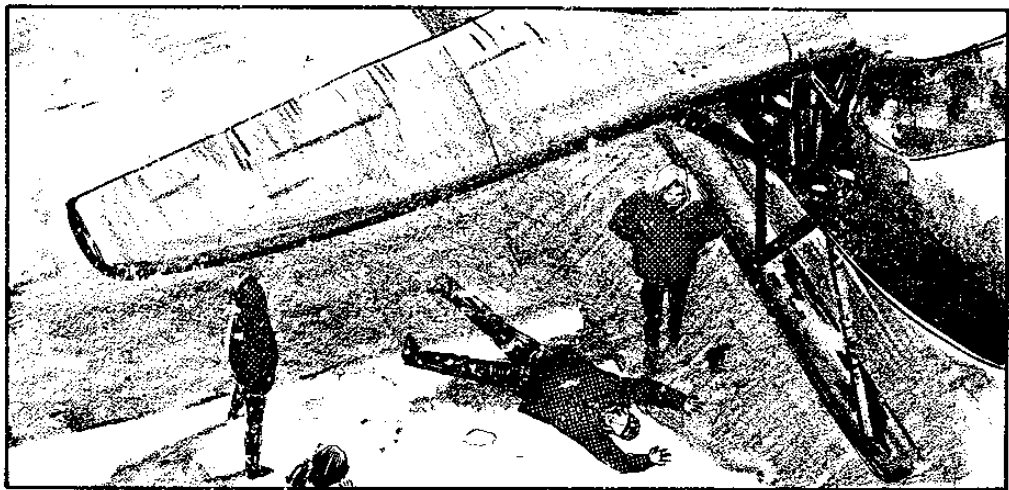












I'M... UH...
WHAT JUST
HAPPENED?



THE WEATHER, LIEUTENANT.
FROZE THE COMPONENTS
OF THE GUN. THE TRIGGERS
SHATTERED.



YOU KNEW
THE TRIGGER
WOULD BREAK?

OR THE
FIRING PIN ONE
OR THE OTHER
WAS CERTAIN TO
SHATTER FROM
THE COLD.



BUT YOU
COULDN'T BE
SURE.

NO, I
COULDN'T BE
SURE,
LIEUTENANT.

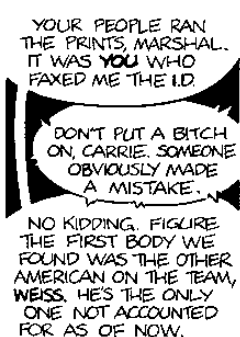


YOU'VE GOT
BRASS OVARIES
LILY.

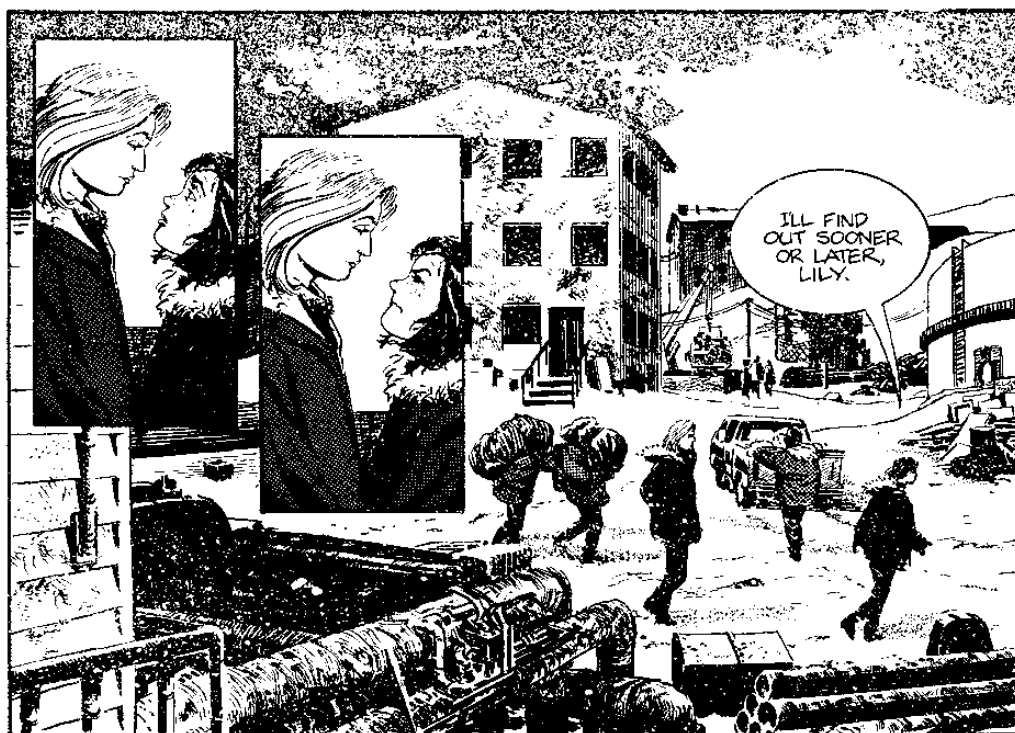
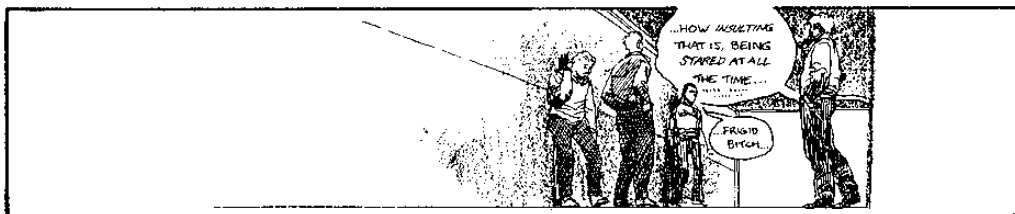


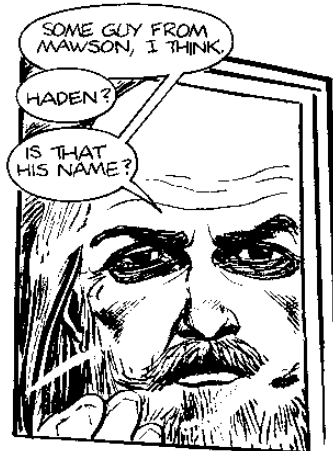
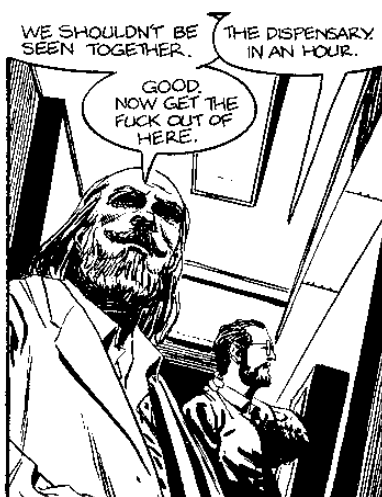


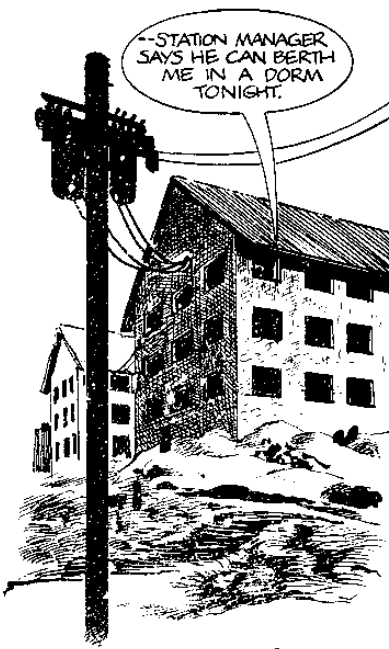














MUST BE ANOTHER PILOT, THEN...

...ONE KELLER RECRUITED. ANY IDEA HOW LONG IT TAKES TO DRILL THAT MANY HOLES?



QUITE A WHILE, I'D IMAGINE-- ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING HOW FAR ONE MUST GO TO ACTUALLY HIT EARTH.

IF EVEN HALF OF THOSE YIELDED GOLD...



...IT'D BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO BUY ANY HELP KELLER REQUIRED.

BUY HIMSELF SOMEONE HERE, AT MCMURDO.



THIS WAS ALL PLANNED.

NOT WELL, IT WOULD SEEM.



IT WAS PROBABLY A GOOD PLAN AT THE START. BUT IT WENT WRONG ABOUT THE TIME I WENT TO VICTORIA AND RAN INTO YOU...



WE CHECK THE LOGS, FIND WHO WAS HERE WHEN DELFY BROUGHT THEM IN, CHECK THOSE NAMES AGAINST CURRENT POPULATION.

YOU THINK THEIR ACCOMPLICE LOGGED HIS ARRIVAL?



THAT'S MY HOPE

THAT'S GOING TO BE A LOT OF NAMES.

TRUE, BUT HOW MANY OF THOSE NAMES...



"...YOU FIND OUT, I'LL DO THE REST."



FURY!
SOCIAL OR
BUSINESS?

BIT OF
BOTH.



...DIDN'T MEAN TO
INTERRUPT.

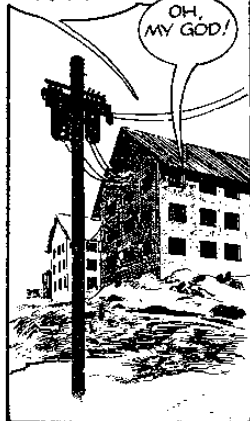
NAH, WE'RE JUST TRYING
TO FILL IN SOME BLANKS.

DOCTOR.

IS THAT BOTTLE FOR
SHOW OR ARE YOU
GOING TO POUR?

...REMEMBER THE GUY
WITH THE CLAW
HAMMER?

OH,
MY GOD!



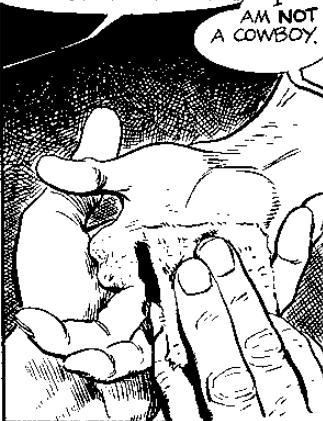
THIS WOULD'VE BEEN THREE, FOUR
YEARS AGO- HOLD STILL- SOME MECO
IN THE MOTOR POOL STARTED CHASING
EVERYONE IN THE GARAGE WITH A
CLAW HAMMER.

PUT TWO PEOPLE
IN THE DISPENSARY.



THE MARSHAL HERE, SHE WALTZES
INTO THE V.M.F. LIKE SHE'S SOME
COWBOY OR SOMETHING.

I
AM NOT
A COWBOY.



AND SHE ORDERS THIS GUY
TO DROP THE HAMMER.

AND?

AND OF COURSE HE
SAYS "NO."



ACTUALLY, HE SAID
"EAT ME, BITCH."

-STOMACH, I WAS
AIMING FOR HIS STOMACH-

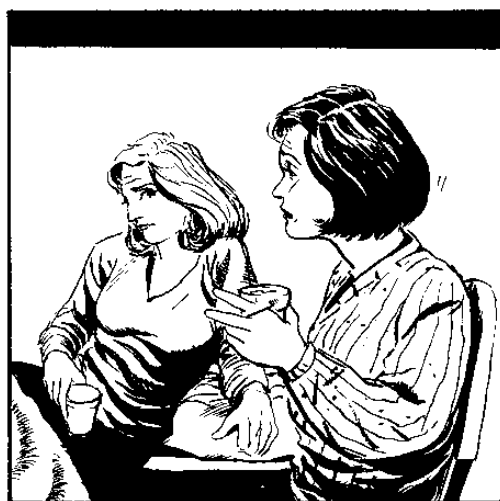
SO CARRIE
SHRUGS, STEPS
FORWARD, AND
KICKS HIM IN
THE GNADS.

GUY DOUBLES
OVER, LOSES THE
HAMMER...



...AND THAT'S HOW CARRIE
INTRODUCED HERSELF TO
MCMURDO STATION.





ENOUGH OF THAT, HUH? PASS ME THE BOTTLE.

YOU SHOULD HAVE GIVEN US MORE WARNING. I'D HAVE PLANNED A BIG BLOW OUT FOR YOU...

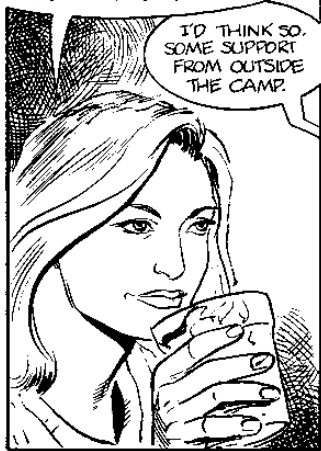


...AS IT IS, YOU CAUGHT US TRYING TO DO SOME WORK.

SO YOU SAID WHEN I ENTERED WHAT SORT OF MUCK ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?



KELLER'S ACCOMPLICE HE HAD TO HAVE HELP.



I'D THINK SO. SOME SUPPORT FROM OUTSIDE THE CAMP.

WE'RE THINKING IT'S A PILOT. THAT CAMP SURE AS HELL DIDN'T WALK OFF THE PATEAU.



ANY SUSPECTS?

POTENTIALLY.

IF YOU SEE HADEN, TELL HIM THAT I'D LIKE TO TALK TO HIM.



HADEN? OH... IF I SEE HIM, I'LL LET HIM KNOW.

WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT. JUST TAKES TIME.



HAVE YOU CHECKED THE INDEPENDENTS? ONE OF THE FIRMS OUT OF CEECH OR CHILE?

I'LL CALL NZ TOMORROW...

<YAWN> AFTER I GET SOME SLEEP. WHAT TIME IS IT?



PAST THREE.

I'LL COME BY YOUR OFFICE IN THE MORNING, ALL RIGHT, CARRIE?

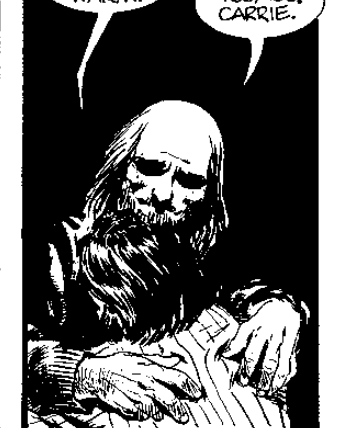
HAVE A GOOD REST.



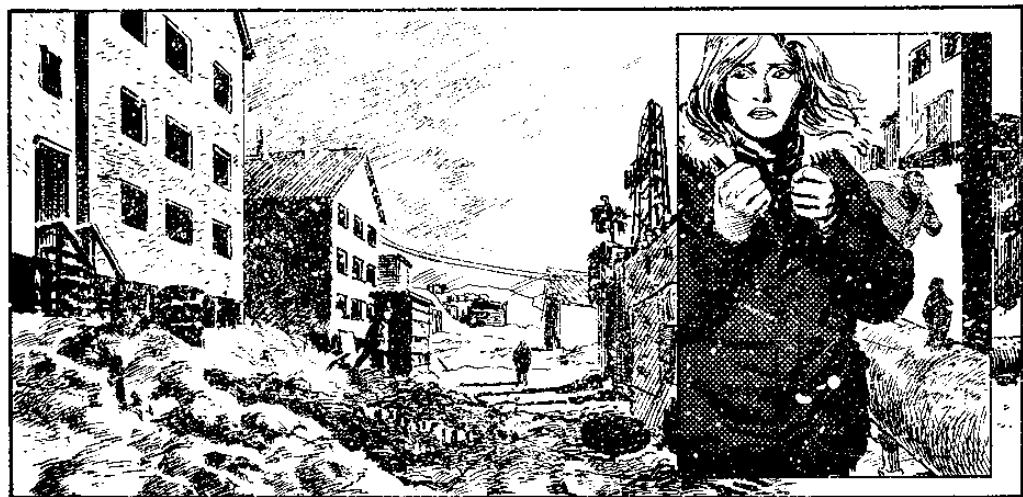
YOU AS WELL. GOODNIGHT, DOCTOR.

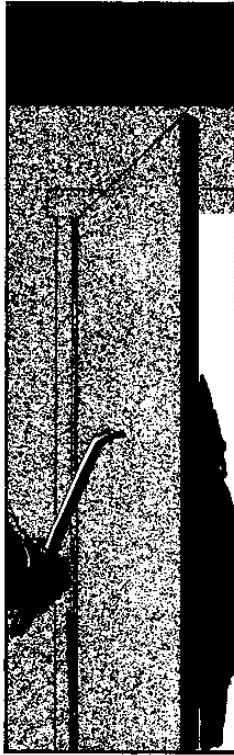
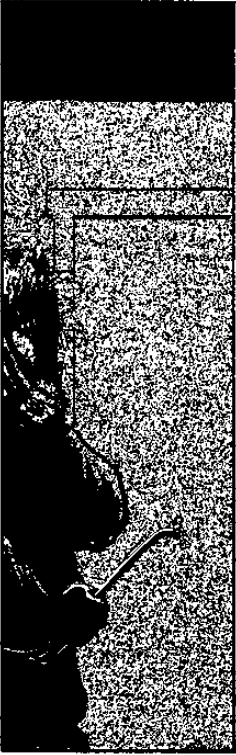
GOOD NIGHT.

SLEEP WELL, FURRY. STAY WARM.



YOU, TOO, CARRIE.

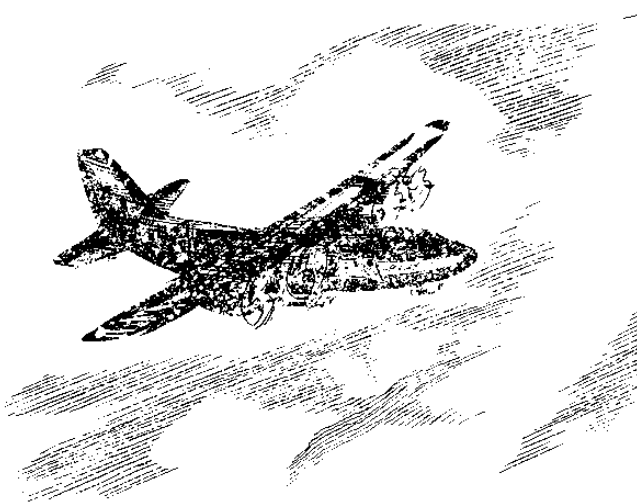


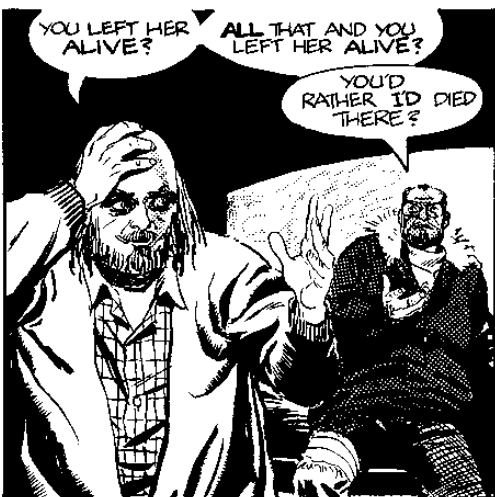
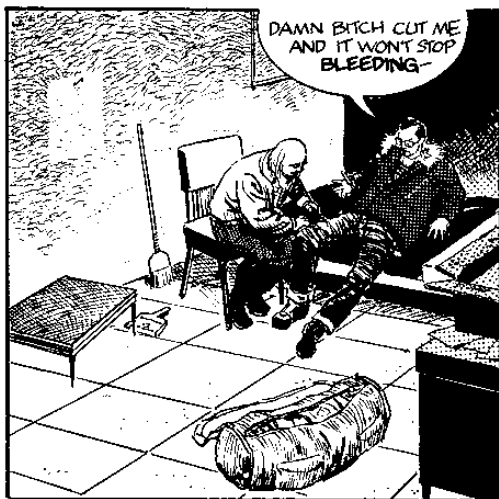


CHAPTER FOUR

















OH GOD
OH GOD NO
NO NO...







WHY? IN CASE SOMEONE FINDS A VEIN OF COPPER AND THREATENS BRITAIN'S PLACE IN THE BRONZE INDUSTRY?

URANIUM-OOF-IN CASE SOMEONE FINDS URANIUM...



...THEN MAKES A FISSION DEVICE WITH IT. DO YOU HAVE A SHIRT? THIS ONE'S COVERED IN BLOOD...



ALL THE NATIONS HERE CAN GET FISSIONABLE MATERIAL FROM...

NOT ALL AND NOT IN SECRET. ARGENTINA AND CHILE CANNOT TO NAME TWO.



Cue the Hallelujah Chorus...
...as the Marshal finally gets a clue



...WESSELHOEFT WAS ARGENTINE.

NOTHING?

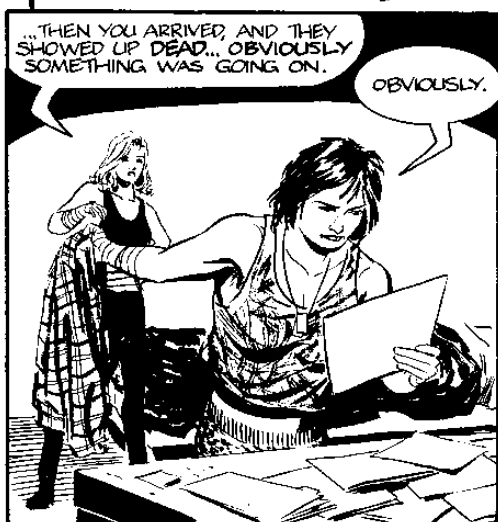
EXACTLY. WHEN SIPLE AND MOONEY RETURNED TO VICTORIA, THEY DIDN'T DECLARE SAMPLES.

NOT A PEBBLE. I ASSUMED THEY WERE HIDING SOMETHING...



...THEN YOU ARRIVED, AND THEY SHOWED UP DEAD... OBVIOUSLY SOMETHING WAS GOING ON.

OBVIOUSLY.



But they didn't find uranium.
They found gold.

A lot of gold.



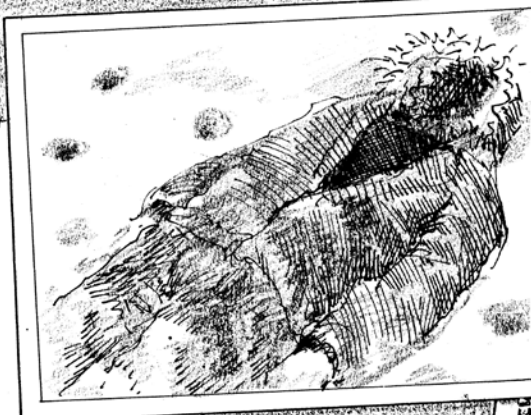
Six men in the middle of nowhere,
and they found a fortune.
But they're a **science** expedition.
They have to report their findings.
They decide to **sneak** the gold out.



...and Weiss was the first body...
...maybe he wouldn't play along...



So, they killed him, Keller
and the rest.



How?

Gold is heavy. How could they smuggle it back?

Keller... he's still alive. And he came here, to McMurdo. It was his plan...



And then Keller got greedy. Keller and the pilot he'd recruited, Haden.

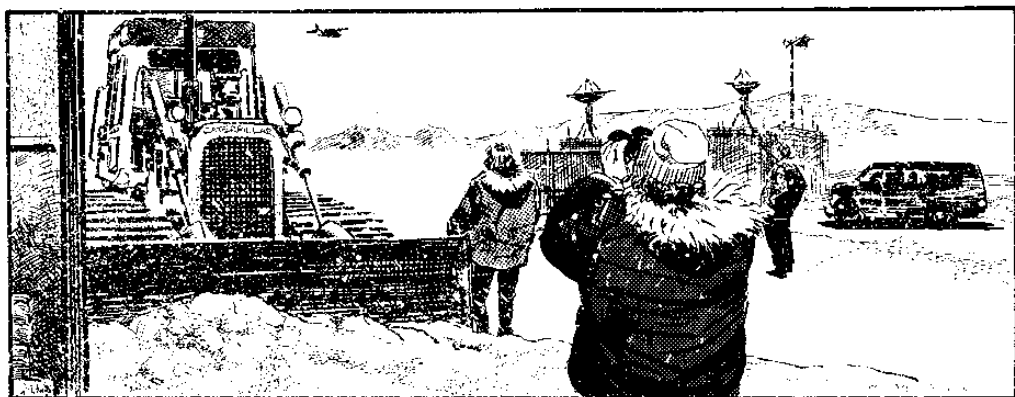
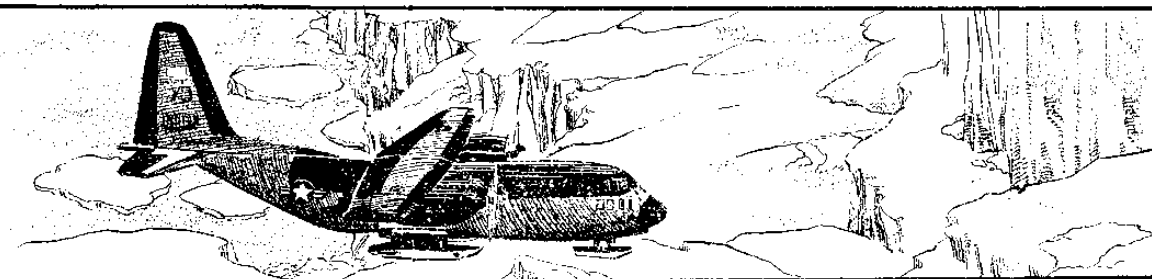
Killed the others, took their share of the gold...

But where's the rest of it?

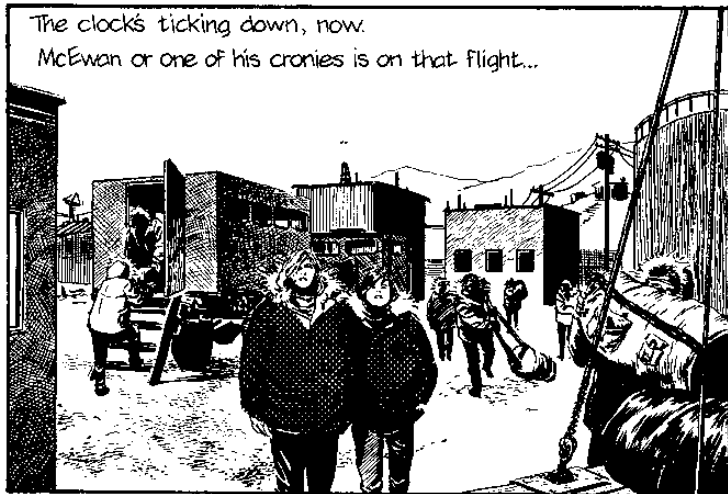


And how the hell were they going to get the gold off the Ice?





The clock's ticking down, now.
McEwan or one of his cronies is on that flight...



...here to transport the
prisoner back to the
world.



The last flight out of town.



HOWDY,
MARSHAL. HERE
TO SAY GOODBYE?



YOU'RE
ON THAT
FLIGHT?

BET YOUR
CUTE ASS.
WHAT HAP-

DON'T
ASK, SEEN
HADEN?

DURING BAG-DRAW THIS MORNING
GOING SOMEWHERE WITH DOC.

FURRY? YEAH, LOOKED LIKE
THEY WERE HURRYING.
COURSE THAT MIGHTVE
BEEN THE COLD.



WHICH
WAY?

TOWARDS
VME, I THINK.
WHY?



IF HADEN GRABBED
A VEHICLE, HE'S
HEADED FOR SCOTT-

YOU
GO.



TAKE THE
LOO.

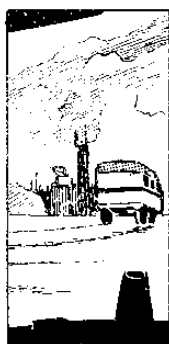
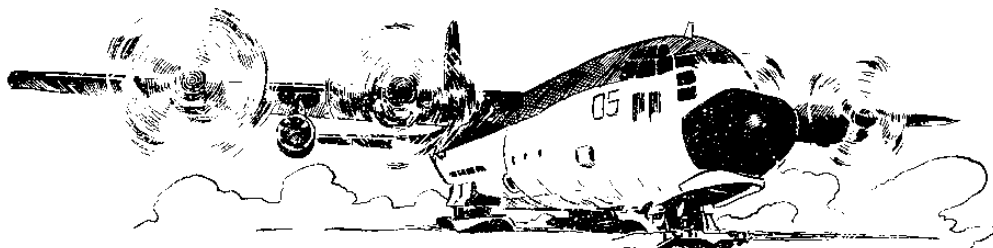
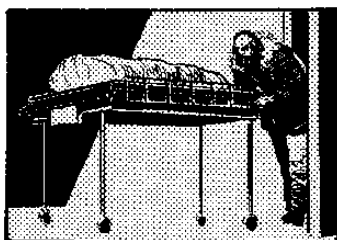
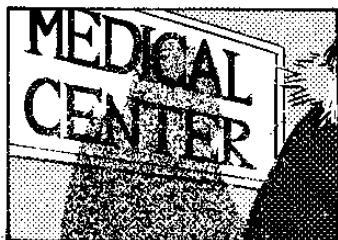
WHERE
ARE YOU
HEADED?

Let me be wrong.



Please let me
be wrong.

That's it



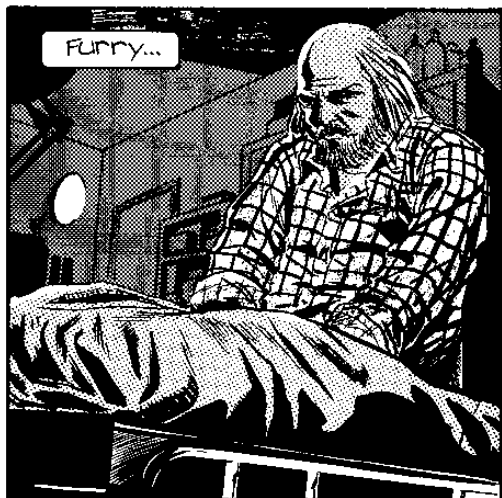
Moving the gold around the Ice,
that's Haden's job...

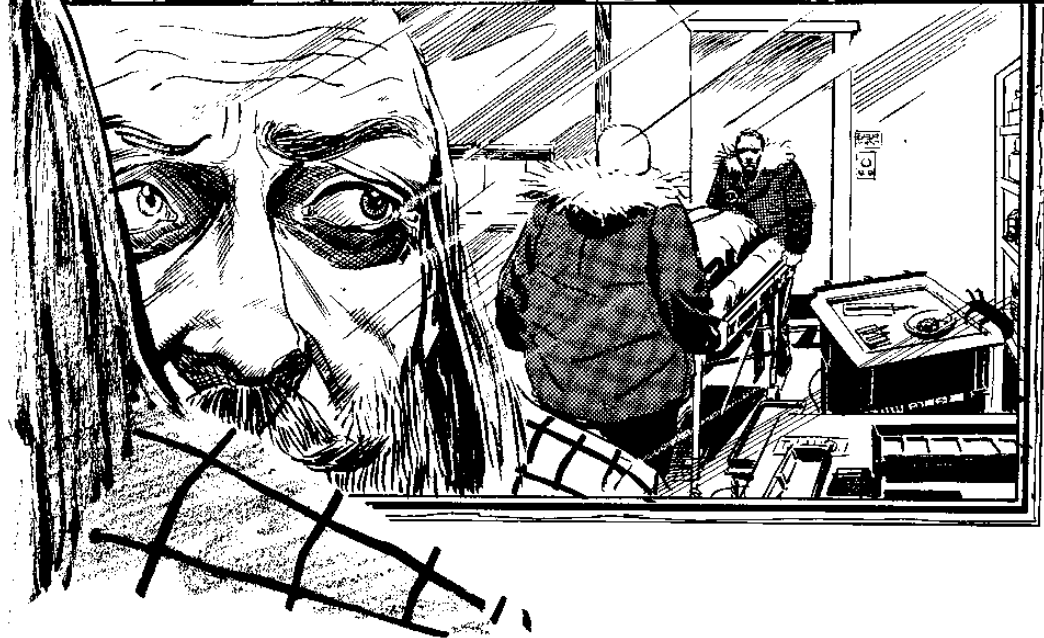


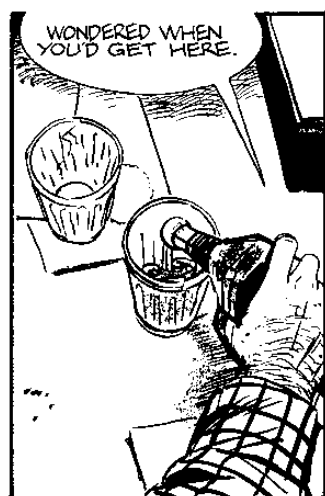
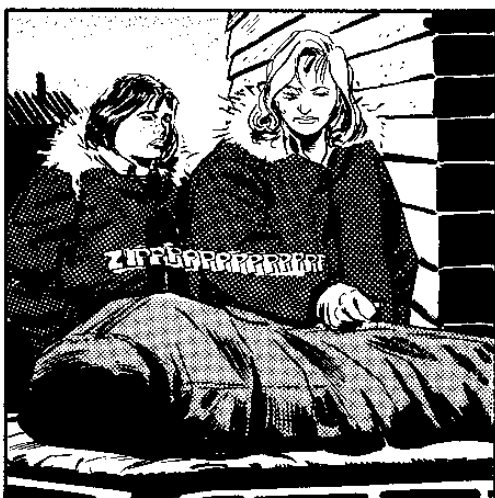
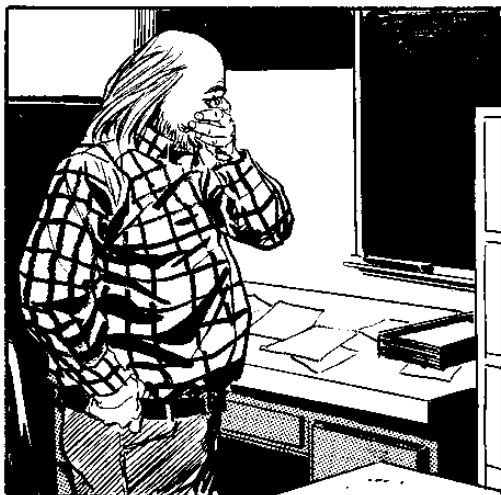
...but getting it back to the
World...that's different.



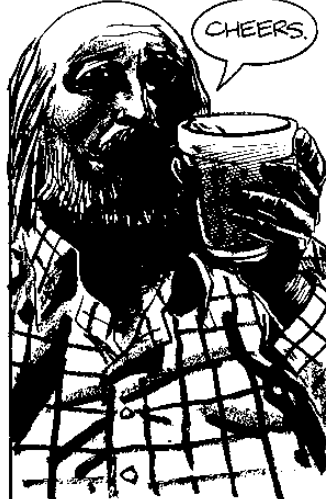




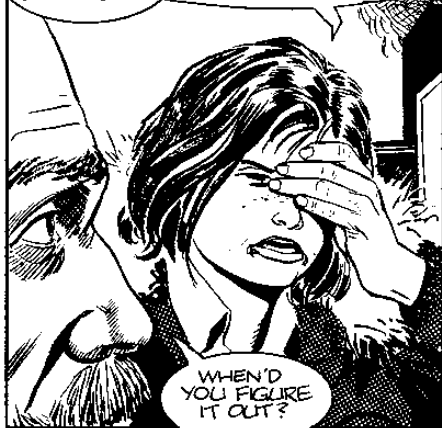








KELLER TALKED, BUT I KNEW BEFORE THEN, I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT.

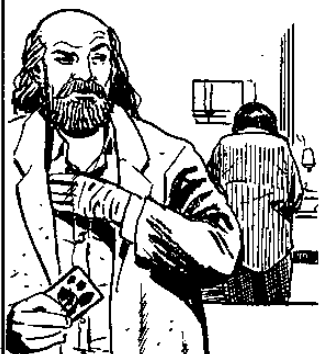


WHEN'D YOU FIGURE IT OUT?

AT THE POLE. IT BUGGED ME, HOW WE HAD IR'D WEISS AS KELLER... IT WASN'T A MISTAKE M-EWANS OFFICE WAS LIKELY TO MAKE.



...WHICH MEANT I'D SENT THEM KELLER'S PRINTS TO BEGIN WITH.



THERE HAD TO HAVE BEEN A SWITCH...

...AND YOU HAD TO HAVE DONE IT. YOU SWITCHED THE CARDS...



...WHICH MEANS YOU HAD KELLER'S PRINTS PREPPED.



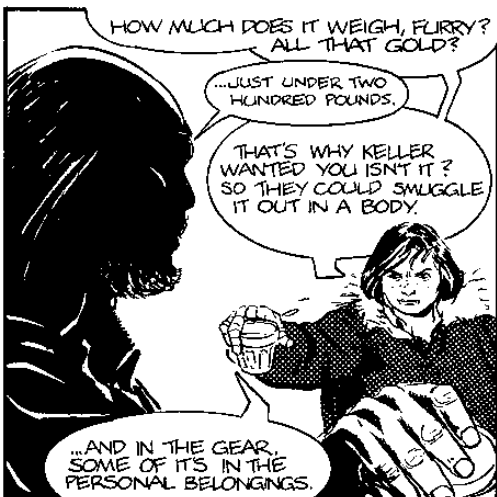
AND THAT MEANS YOU WERE IN ON IT FROM THE START.

HOW MUCH DOES IT WEIGH, FURRY? ALL THAT GOLD?

...JUST UNDER TWO HUNDRED POUNDS.

THAT'S WHY KELLER WANTED YOU ISN'T IT? SO THEY COULD SWIGGLE IT OUT IN A BODY.

...AND IN THE GEAR, SOME OF IT'S IN THE PERSONAL BELONGINGS.



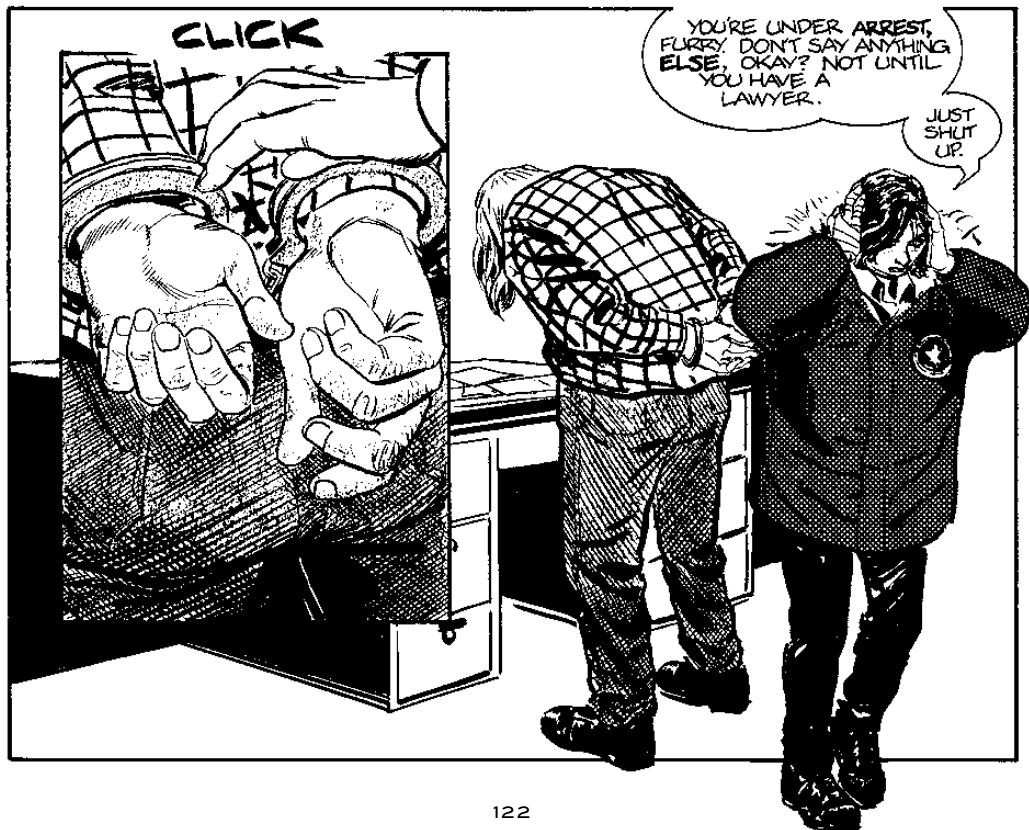
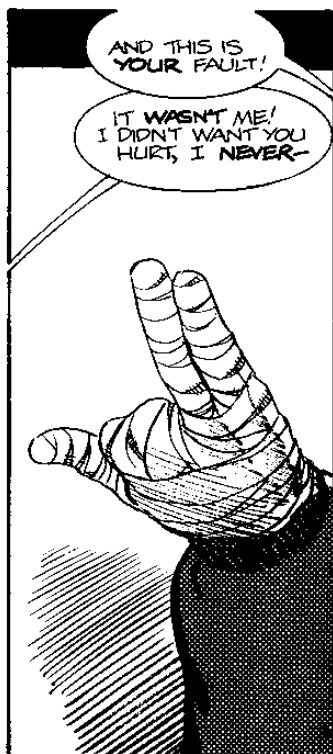
THEY HAD THE PLAN, KELLER AND HADEN, I MEAN... I WAS JUST SUPPOSED TO GO ALONG WITH IT, TAKE A SHARE...

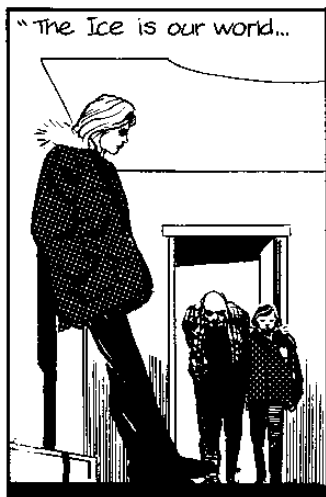
NO!

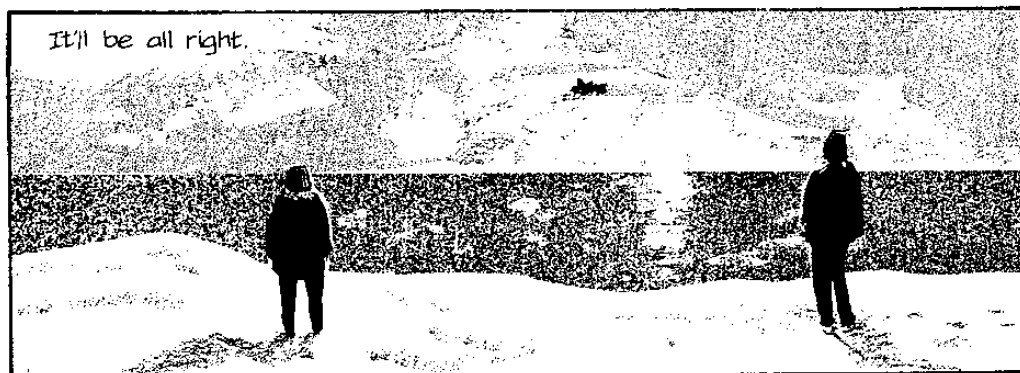
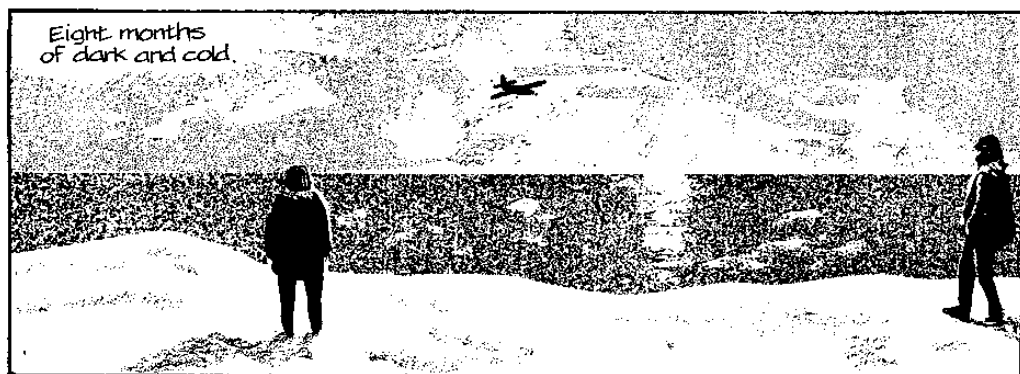
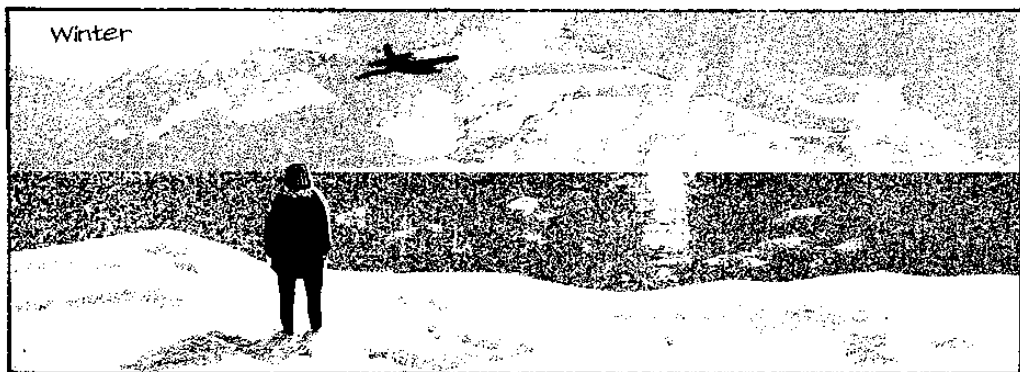
IS THAT WHY YOU KILLED HADEN, FURRY? GREED?



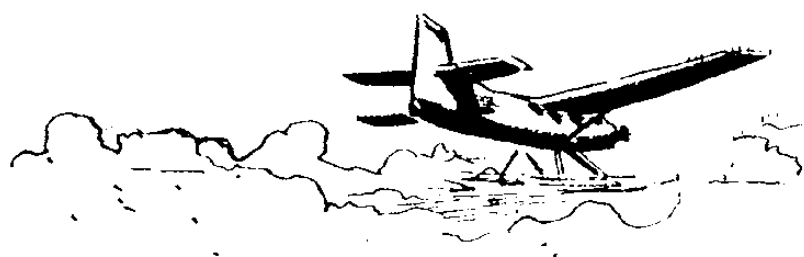








GREG ROCKY +
STEVE LIEBER



AFTERWORD

Ten years ago, when Bob Schreck first handed me a copy of Greg Rucka's first novel, *Keeper*, I was convinced I'd never make anything of myself in comics. I'd been working steadily for six years, but I couldn't look at anything I'd illustrated without vague feelings of regret. I knew I was capable of solid work, and I had a big pile of sketchbooks that supported that notion, but when I looked over my hundreds of pages of published stories, there just wasn't much to shout about. I hadn't figured out how to do good work on the industry's four color assembly lines, and that was the only place anyone could make a splash, right?

That's where Schreck comes in. Bob had given me my break at Dark Horse years ago, making him the first editor at a legitimate publisher to see any potential in my stuff. He'd just started a new company called Oni Press right here in Portland, where my wife and I had just moved. Bob said that he had a script that might be right for me, written by the same guy who wrote this novel.

I took the book home and devoured it in one sitting, and I felt like someone had built a writer just for me. Greg's novel was compelling, and compulsively readable, but more importantly, he worked the rhythms of storytelling the way I was desperate to do in comics¹. I saw that we agreed on the ways the energy and emotional pitch of a scene should rise and fall. Our attitudes about violence and heroism were in sync, as was our sense of the rules that make for believable characters and action in fiction.

Long story short, Bob sent me the script for the first issue. I said yes, and oh boy was I eager to get started. If Greg had set out to write a script just for me, he couldn't have come up with something this perfect. Carrie and Antarctica were absolutely alive in my mind. I understood her frustration and her wonder at the place she'd wound up and her determination to find out what happened. All I had to do was tell the reader the story Greg told me and we'd have a great comic. Greg's story was about a woman so frozen by anger and regret she'd found herself at home in the middle of millions of square kilometers of ice. How could I make

¹ It's best not to get me started on comics as a rhythmic—as opposed to a literary—medium. I tend to judge a page of comics by how the pictures sound, and I'm very aware of what a weird sentence that is. This isn't synesthesia. I just sort of hear panels and pages in my head as if I were reading a musical score. When the rhythm is off, the page doesn't work. When it's particularly good, the work comes to life in a way that's hard to communicate. Conversations with a number of other cartoonists lead me to believe this is a fairly common experience.

that world as believable and compelling in pictures as it was in the script? Monochromatic could easily lead to monotony. Black and white comics, particularly crime stories, usually get their impact from the use of heavy areas of solid black. For obvious reasons, that wasn't going to work in this one. But those sketchbooks I mentioned earlier were full of black and white drawings where I'd played with all sorts of media and had been able to fully indulge my interest in using texture as both a color and a rhythmic element. I never worried about restricting myself to a slick comic book brushline in my sketches; I just worked to please myself. I suppose I treated the comic like it was my sketchbook, and just let myself whale away at every panel until it felt as cold, as dry, as windy, and as desolate as it needed to be. Sure, there was a danger that some panels might get overrendered, but certainly on this title I could feel okay about dealing with a bad drawing by just whiting it out.

That did it. I was free. For the first time in my career, I felt like I was producing drawings that looked like I'd drawn them. I used a dozen different brushes, any pen nib I could find, grease crayons, markers, ball points, white paint, toothbrushes, homemade zip-a-tones, xeroxes, charcoal, unerased pencil lines, sandpaper, razor blades, an electric eraser, even my own fingerprints—anything that could make or remove a mark on paper—I'd give it a try. I inhabited those panels and I think the struggle gave the pictures a lot of energy. Along the way, I tried to do what Greg had done when he wrote it—I buried myself in research, spending hours online or in the library researching Antarctica. And I'd call and fax him at all hours to discuss possible approaches to panel sequences. A twelve hour day at the board was slacking off. I drove my wife and friends insane. Greg, too, come to think of it.

Looking back, I'm grateful to everyone who was involved with this project: Greg, of course, his wife Jen Van Meter, for clarifying their concept of "hooskie" (which you, dear reader, can ask one of them about sometime); Bob Schreck, Joe Nozemack, Jamie Rich, and James Lucas Jones; graphic designers Sean Tejaratchi and Steven Birch; original cover artists Matt Wagner, Mike Mignola, Dave Gibbons, and Frank Miller; the guys at the now defunct website nextplanetover.com who gave away a metric ton of copies at the San Diego Comic-Con; the readers of rec.arts.comics.misc, who were among the first to notice that something special was going on; Jeff Parker, who told me to quit being a puss when I was over-thinking; and most of all, my wife Sara Ryan, who supported me in my obsessiveness, inspired many of Stetko's expressions and gestures, and woke up with little bits of zip-a-tone in the blankets every morning for two years. From this day forward, it's all digital, hon, I swear.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Lieber". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Steve" and "Lieber" being capitalized and prominent.

STEVE LIEBER / MAY 2007

AFTERWORD

Whiteout was catching lightning in a bottle.

Whiteout: Melt was trying to catch lightning in a bottle, twice.

Steve Lieber and I had talked about the other stories we could tell about Carrie and Antarctica while we were working on the first one, and we had realized very quickly that there was a lot more that could be shown, a lot more we had to say. But when the opportunity came to do *Melt*, I was hesitant; I didn't want to tell the same story twice. I didn't want another murder mystery. And I knew that sequels, at least to the people who buy them, are often an attempt to capture "more of the same," and that was something I wasn't sure I could do, or even wanted to do. One murder mystery in Antarctica was enough, I told myself.

I came around, obviously, and the way I came around was primarily via Steve. For all of his varied and tremendous skill as an artist, Steve is also 1) very, very smart, and 2) a tremendous collaborator. Simply talking with him about story is often all it takes to get my engine revved and to send me racing for the keyboard to start pounding away. That was how it started here. Well, that, and the fact that I love spy stories, and wanted to do something about the espionage-related history of Antarctica.

But in talking to Steve, something crystallized for me that I hadn't realized while writing the original. I found that I liked Antarctica as a character as much as—and sometimes, perhaps, more than—I liked Carrie. And I adored Carrie, and still do to this day, frankly. But, like the Marshal herself, I had fallen in love with The Ice.

Realizing that opened the floodgates, and the ideas came pouring out.

More than the original, *Melt* is a morality tale. Bad men murder fourteen people and then try to make their escape. Why they do it is, frankly, immaterial—the nukes are a very traditional MacGuffin (though, like all things in the *Whiteout* series, the theory as to how and why there would be nukes on The Ice was based firmly in fact). Fourteen men were murdered, and that is a crime against God and Man, and it must be answered.

This is why it takes four issues for Carrie and Aleks to catch the Bad Russians, and why, when they do, they practically needn't have bothered. The Ice has done their job for them. The Ice has exacted its revenge. The Ice has answered.

But (if one is willing to continue with this personalization of a continent) unlike a traditional morality tale, The Ice hasn't done this out of any sense of moral judgment or desire for justice. The Ice has done this because this is what The Ice does. It kills you; slow, fast, easy, hard, now, later, doesn't matter—The Ice kills you, because it doesn't want you there. You shouldn't be there. You weren't made to be there. And it wants you to go home. It wants you to go home, now.

In a world where the Chinese are paving the road that leads to Everest, and where space tourism is rapidly becoming a reality, and the Ross Ice Shelf is coming apart in pieces as large as the state of Rhode Island, it's sometimes good to remember our place in nature. It's sometimes right to remind ourselves of how very small we are on a very large planet.

It's sometimes right to remember to pay respect.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'GR' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

GREG RUCKA / JULY 19, 2007
PORTLAND, OR



MELT

CHAPTER ONE

It was war.

Calling it anything else is
bullshit, pure and simple.

It wasn't until Amundsen
reached Madeira that he
told the stunned crew of the
Fram where they were headed.

"Beg leave to inform you Fram
proceeding to Antarctic. Amundsen."
Talk about passive-aggressive.

Then he sent a telegram to
Scott, who was wintering
in Melbourne.

Scott reached the Pole on
January 17th, 1912...
...33 days after Amundsen.

Amundsen had another
message for Scott
waiting there...

Scott-
I WIN.
-Amundsen

Didn't really
say that.

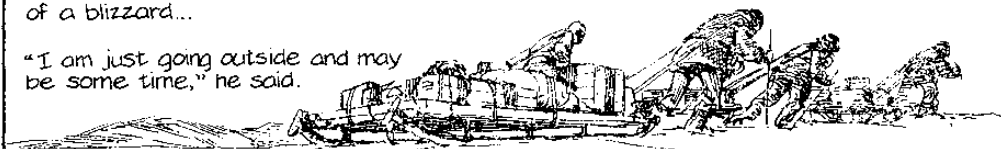
It didn't need to.

Evans, Scott's second-in-command,
died one month later.



Oates killed himself a month after that,
walked out of the tent in the middle
of a blizzard...

"I am just going outside and may
be some time," he said.



Very British of Oates. Very proper.
They never found his body.



The blizzard started on March 21, 1912.
Scott's last entry was dated March 29.



Their bodies were found
eight months later.



Casualties of war.

The race to the pole now over,
the new war was waged for
the continent itself.

No tanks, no bombers, no offensives.

Rather a bloodless land-grab, and
when the snow dust settled--

Argentina, Australia, Chile, France,
New Zealand, Norway, and the
UK all made claims to Antarctica.

The US and the Russians
didn't, but both have
reserved the right to do
so if the mood should
strike them.

During WW2, the Nazis made
their play for the Ice...

...scattering thousands of metal
swastikas all over the polar plateau,
sort of the way a dog pisses on
its territory.

It didn't work. Nobody cared.

Operation Highjump was a different story.

Officially a training mission,
Highjump brought 4700 men
to the Ice building bases
and airfields...

...and the Soviets responded in kind.
The Cold war and the Ice, a match
made in heaven.

Overt acts of war, though, those have been rare.
Argentina opened fire
on the UK in 1952...



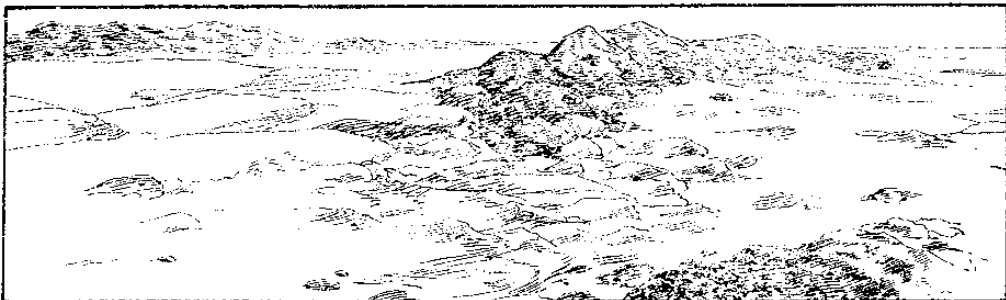
...warning shots as the Argentines
and the Chileans tried to flex
some territorial muscle.



Britain responded with a
couple boatloads of
Royal Marines.



One of the many factors,
incidentally, that lead to the
war in the Falklands.



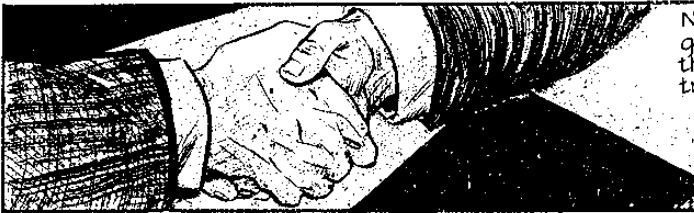
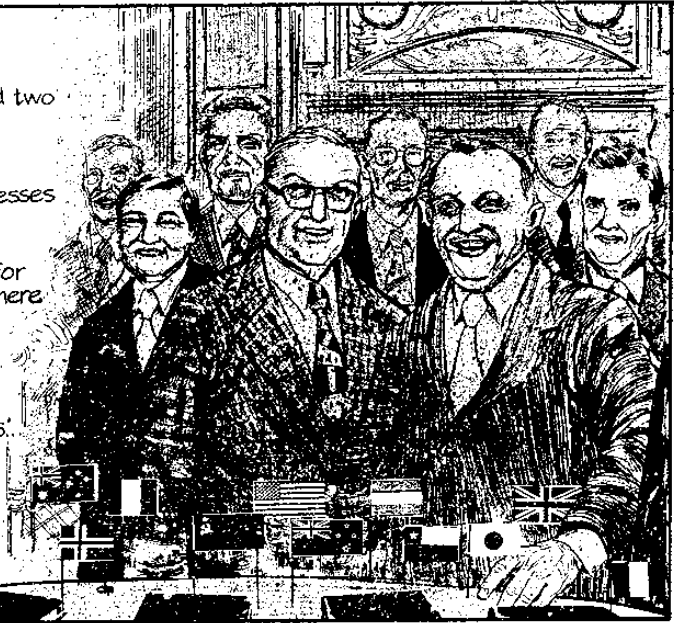
June 23, 1961.

The Antarctic Treaty-drafted two years earlier-comes into effect.

Article I, Subsection 1, addresses the military issue.

"Antarctica shall be used for peaceful purposes only. There shall be prohibited..."

"...any measure of a military nature, such as...military bases...military maneuvers...testing of any type of weapon."



Nearly 80% of the world's governments have added their signatures to the treaty since its ratification.

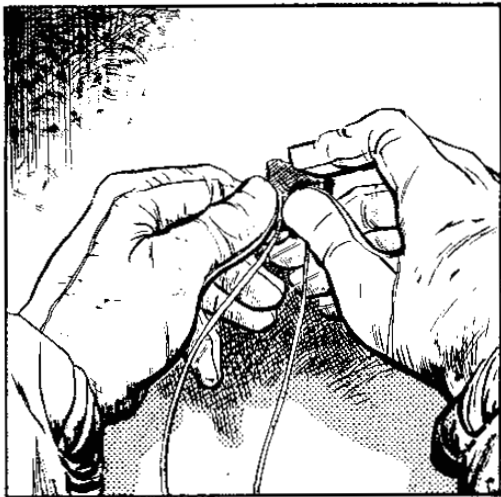


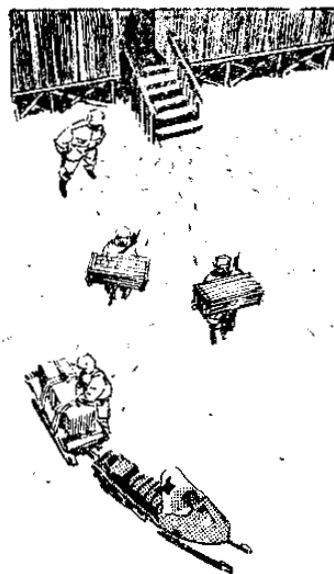
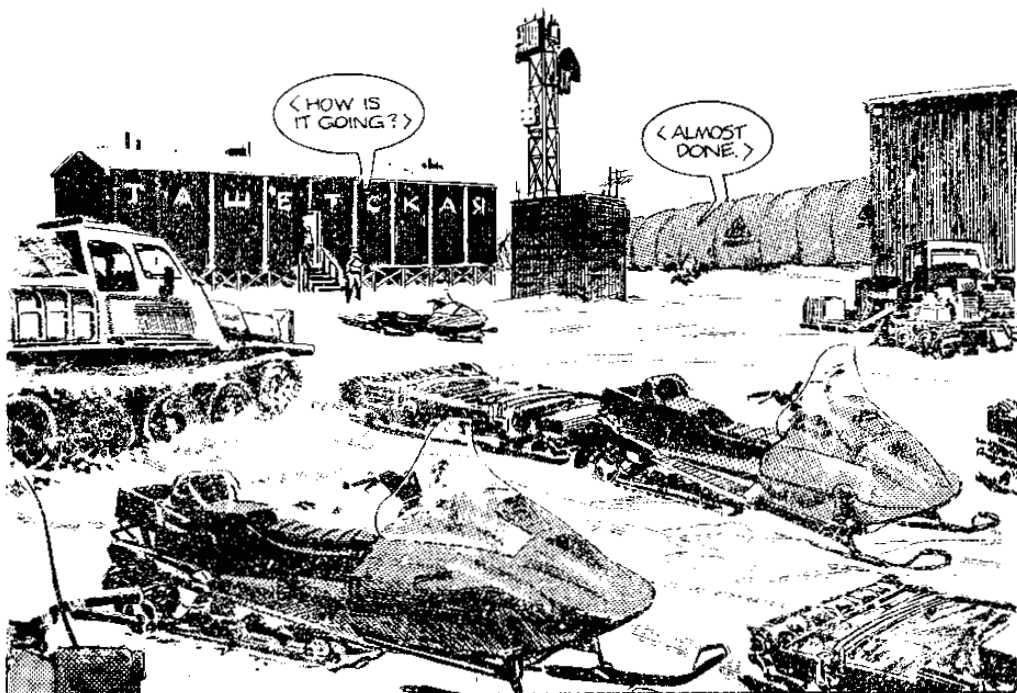
There has been no known breach of the treaty...



...no military action or violation...
...to this very day.



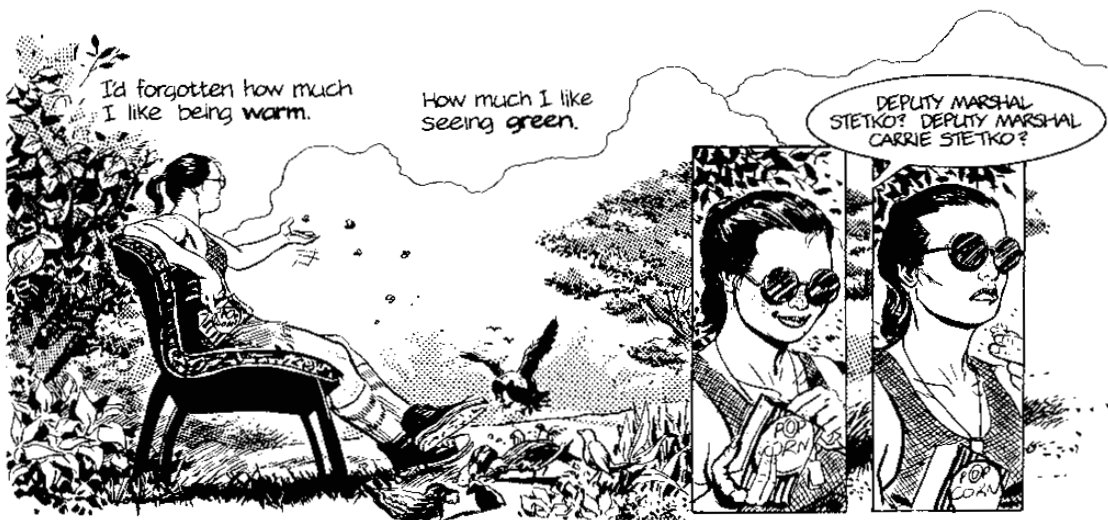


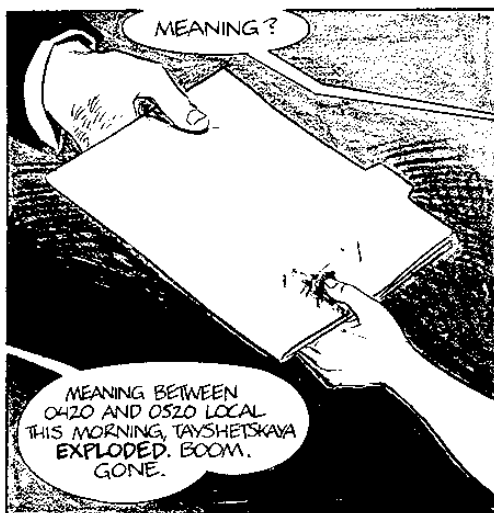










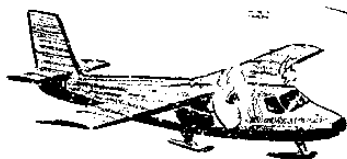












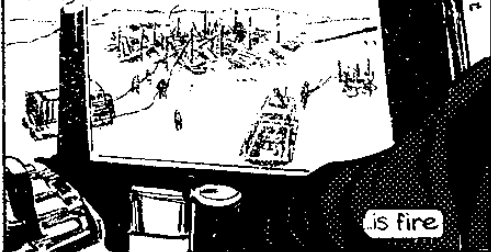
Miller has the LC-130 ready, and the weather-for once-is on my side...

...even so it's still 30 hours since leaving Christchurch that Delfy flies us in.



I'm not surprised to see the fires still burning.

The only thing on the Ice more dangerous than the weather...



is fire



Must have been a hell of a blast.

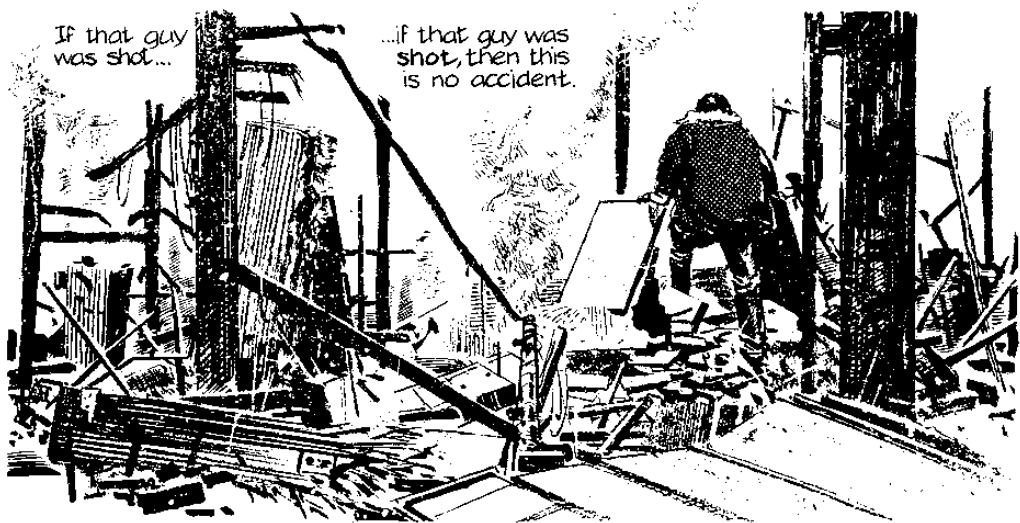
<JESUS CHRIST, THIS MESS I DON'T NEED.>



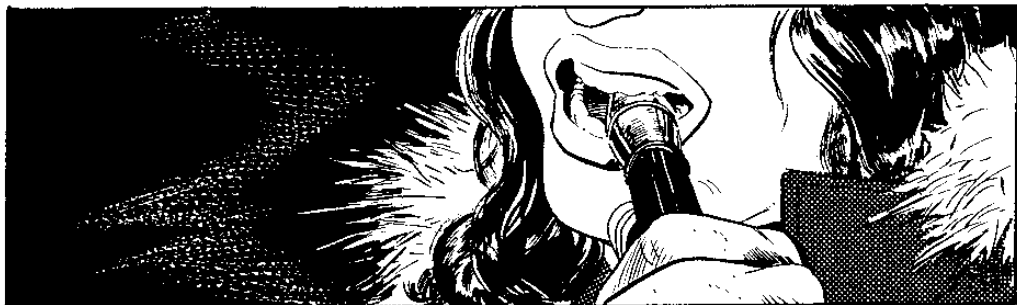
MARSHAL CARRIE!

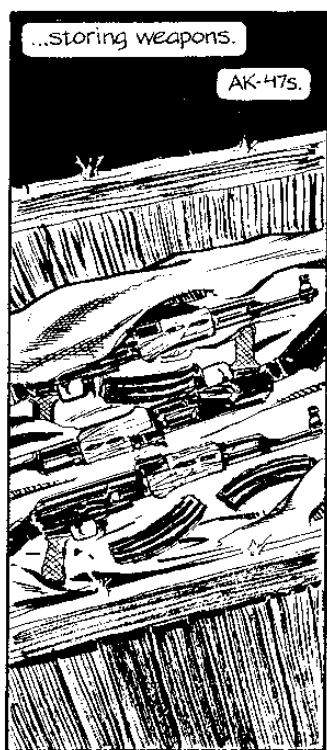


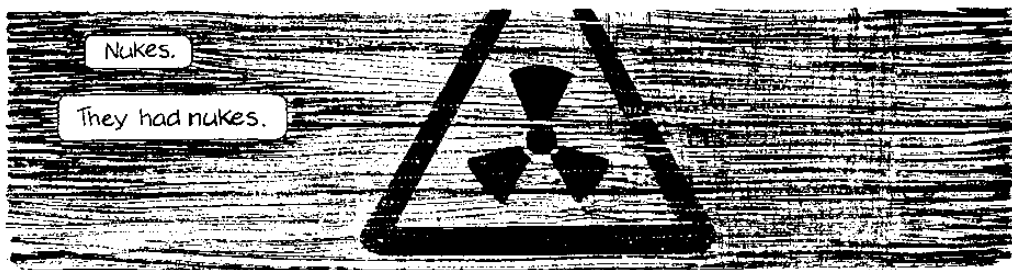












CHAPTER TWO

Antarctica is a murderous bitch.
Not to over-state it or anything.



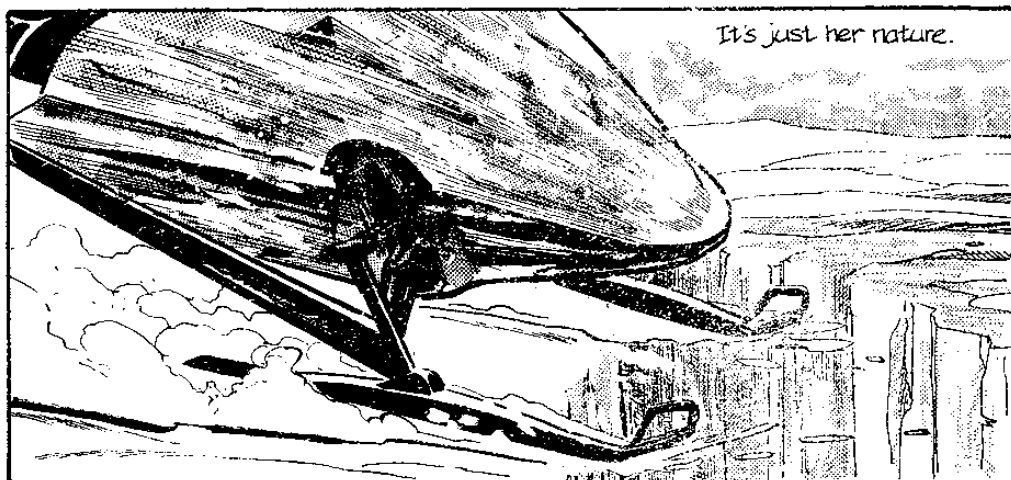
Just waiting for a chance to kill you.
It's not personal.



The Ice doesn't care.



It's just her nature.

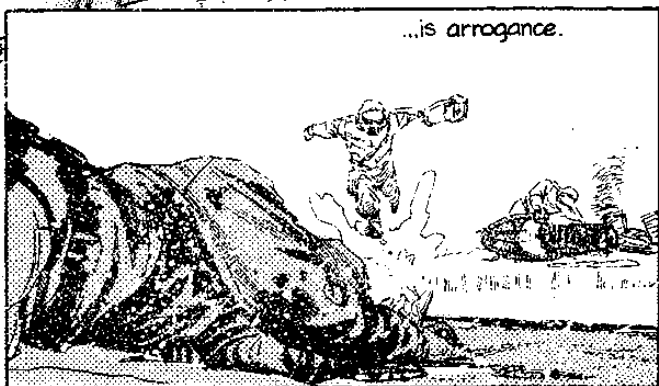


The Ice doesn't forgive mistakes.



And the only thing she
hates more than stupidity...

...is arrogance.



History quiz time, so sit up straight.
Know why McMurdo's oldest
airfield is named Willy Field?



Time's up.

Answer: The airfield is named in memory of Richard I Williams, one of the naval crew on Deep Freeze I.



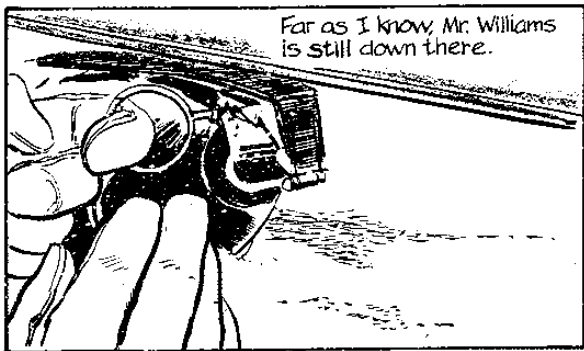
Next question:
How'd he die?



Answer: His 30-ton tractor
fell through the sea ice
off Cape Royds.



Far as I know, Mr. Williams
is still down there.



I'm not naïve.

I'm a cop for heaven's sake,
and I've seen enough, been
through enough, to know
better.

People kill each other.
People lie. People steal.

And what people are capable
of, certainly their governments
can do a thousand times over.

Like I said...
I'm not naïve.



But I sure as hell
wasn't expecting
to find this.



And I sure as hell
thought I was alone
down here.















What I should say is get stuffed. That's what I should say.

But Gerety's in NZ, yanking my chain, promising me a Back-to-the-World ticket if I do this right...



...and Goddammit but I **can't** just walk from this even if I wanted to.

Nukes. Speznaz. Fourteen murdered men on the Ice right above me...



FUCK IT.





THEY'VE GOT A TWO-DAY HEAD START ON US, YOU REALIZE THAT?

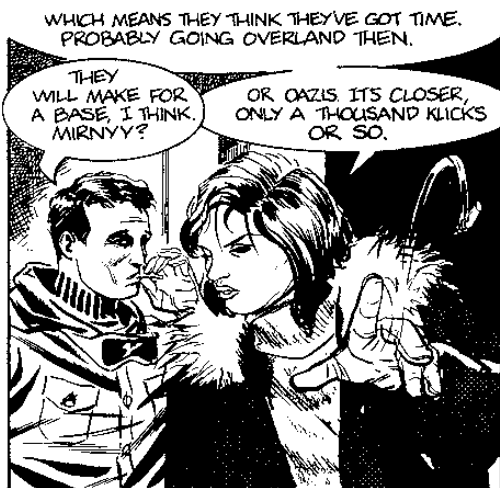
YES.



BUT THEY ARE STILL ON THE ICE, I THINK.

I AGREE. THEY WERE CAREFUL WITH THE BODIES—ONLY ONE WAS SHOT.

THEY DIDN'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.



WHICH MEANS THEY THINK THEY'VE GOT TIME. PROBABLY GOING OVERLAND THEN.

THEY WILL MAKE FOR A BASE, I THINK. MIRNY?

OR OAZIS IT'S CLOSER, ONLY A THOUSAND KILKS OR SO.



THEN WE WILL START THERE.

NO WE'LL START BY TRACING THEM FROM HERE.

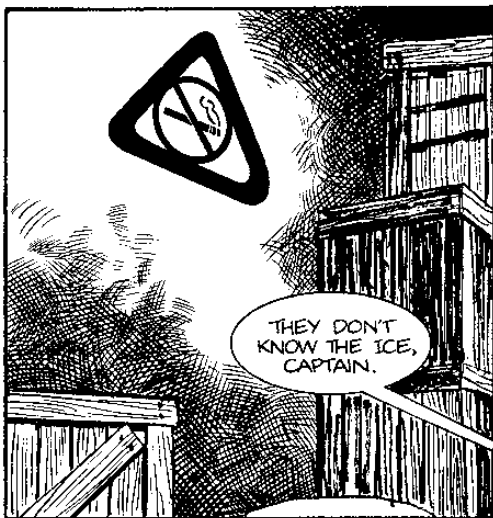
IF THEY WENT OVERLAND, THEY'RE ALREADY IN TROUBLE.



STETKO, UNDERSTAND PLEASE. A SPEZNAZ IS THE BEST SOLDIER IN RUSSIA.

THEY ARE LIKE YOUR GREEN BERETS, YOUR NAVY SEALS.

THERE IS NO TROUBLE SO GREAT TO THEM.

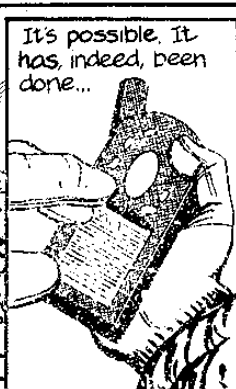


THEY DON'T KNOW THE ICE, CAPTAIN.

Overland traverses of the Ice
have had mixed results.



It's possible. It
has, indeed, been
done...



...but it requires planning and preparation
and more than a little luck.



Good luck, I mean.



Ranulph Fiennes, Ollie Shephard, and
Charlie Burton crossed on Skidoos
in 67 days back in 1981.

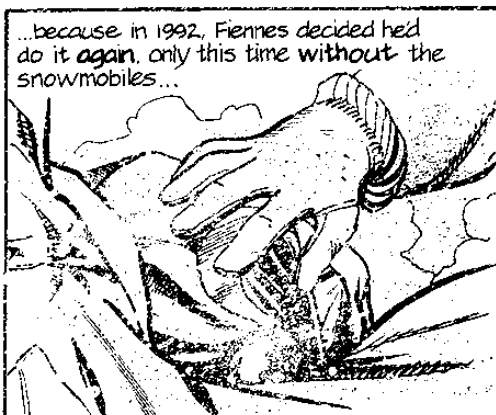




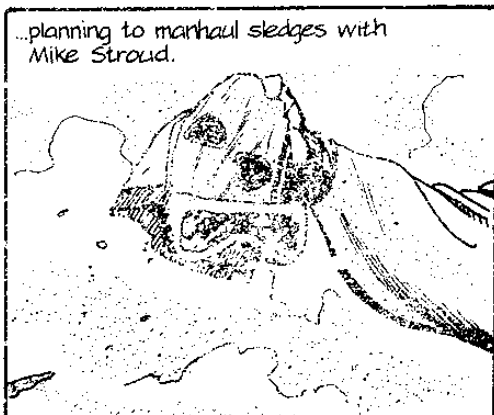
That's an example of good luck.



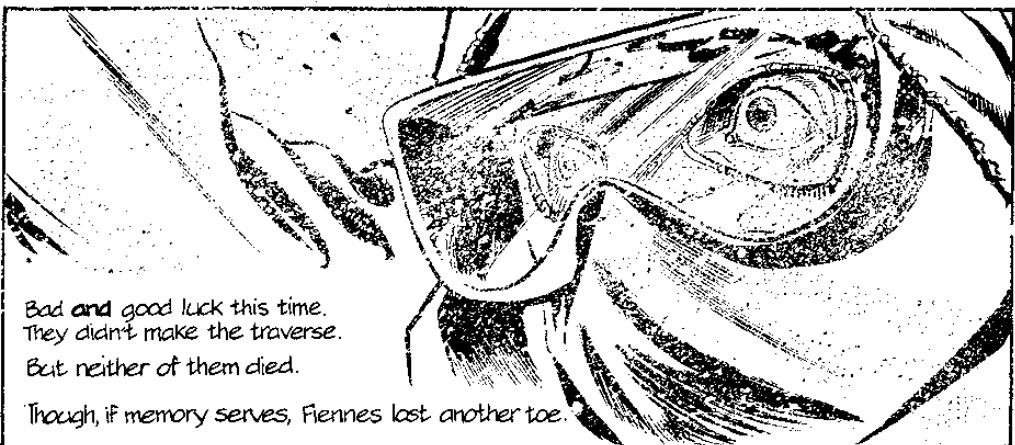
Maybe it went to his head...



...because in 1992, Fiennes decided he'd do it again, only this time without the snowmobiles...



...planning to manhaul sledges with Mike Stroud.



Bad and good luck this time.
They didn't make the traverse.
But neither of them died.

Though, if memory serves, Fiennes lost another toe.







IF YOU CAN RECOVER THE WEAPONS, I WANT THEM BROUGHT TO McMURDO.

DON'T WE HAVE BOMBS OF OUR OWN?

THAT'S HARDLY THE POINT. THE SITUATION IS EMBARRASSING TO THE RUSSIANS. I INTEND TO CAPITALIZE ON THAT...



...TO THAT END, I NEED EVIDENCE...

YOU WANT ME TO BURN KUCHIN?

I WANT YOU TO REMEMBER THAT YOU'VE GOT A CHANCE TO BE WARM AGAIN...



"...AND THAT'S WHAT YOU
WANT NOW, ISN'T IT
CARRIE?"



Takes us six hours to get all
the gear we're going to need
packed and then I spend
another three arguing with
Delfy.

The Ice, Delfy reminds me,
is a murderous bitch.

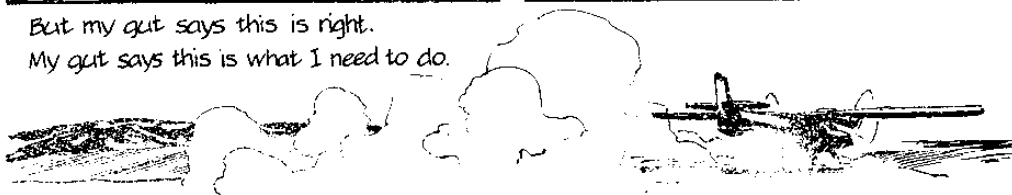
He thinks I'm taunting her.



Maybe he's right
Maybe I am.



But my gut says this is right.
My gut says this is what I need to do.

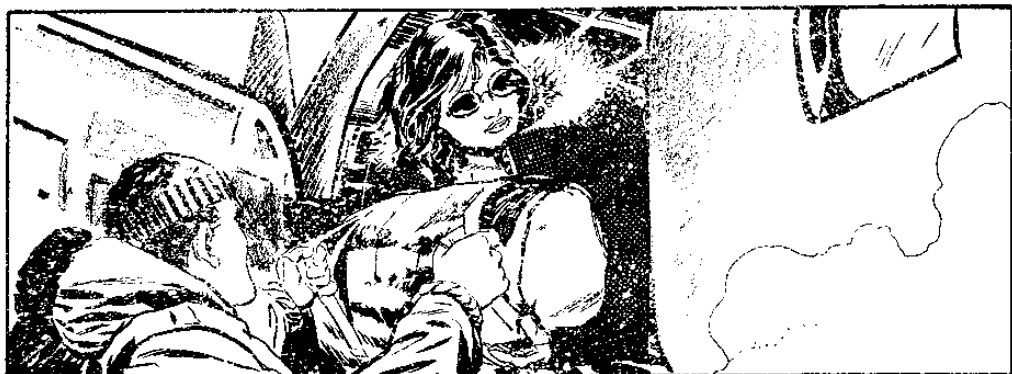


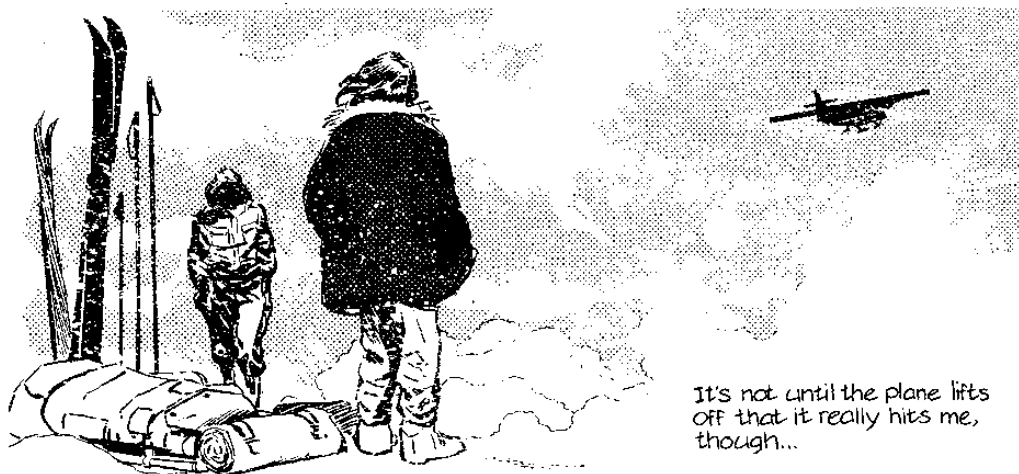
All my time here, I've
never tested the Ice.

Never tested myself
against it, on it.

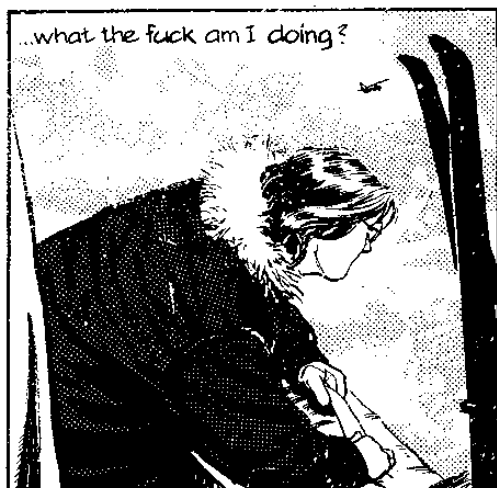


I have to
do this.





It's not until the plane lifts off that it really hits me, though...



...what the fuck am I doing?



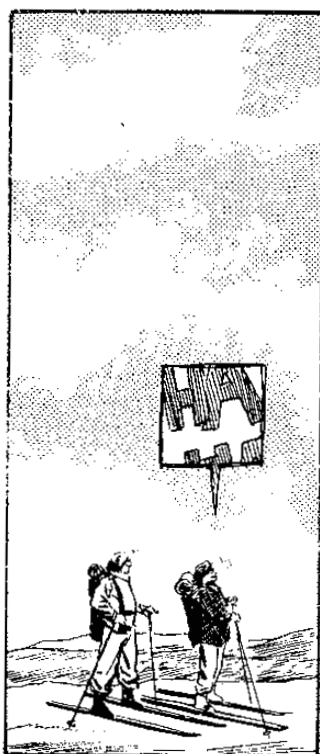
I'm in the literal middle of nowhere...

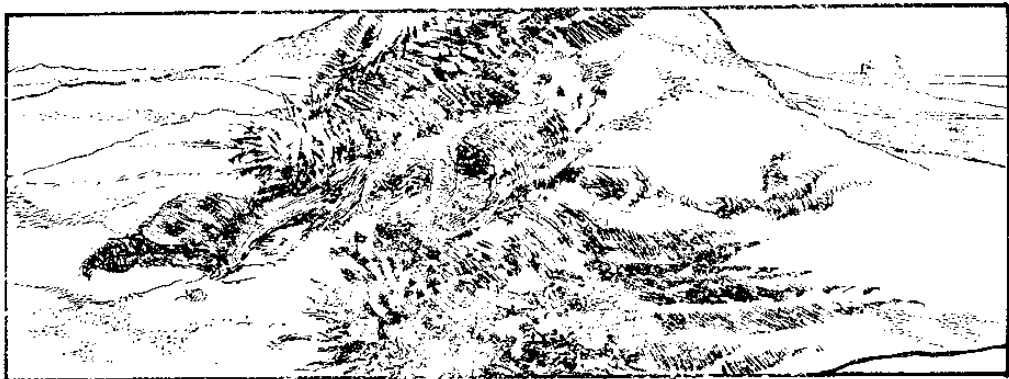
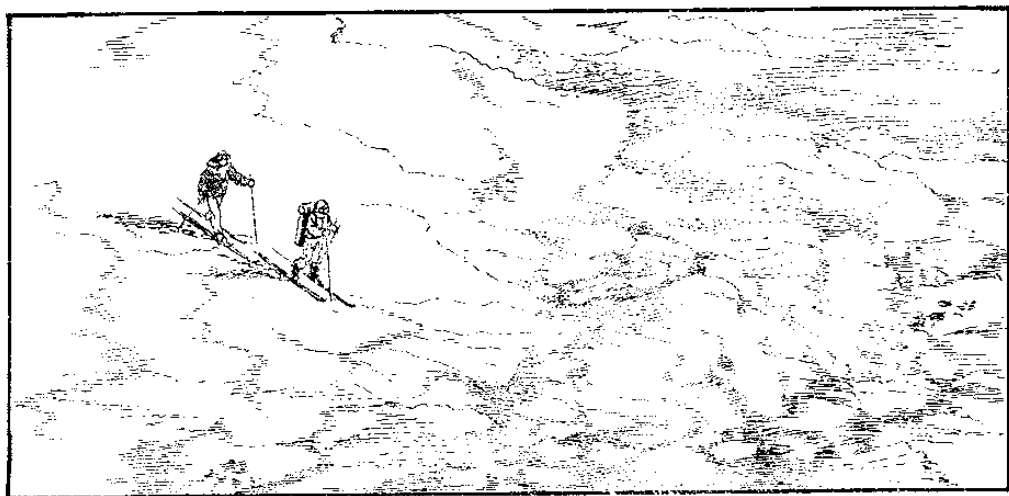


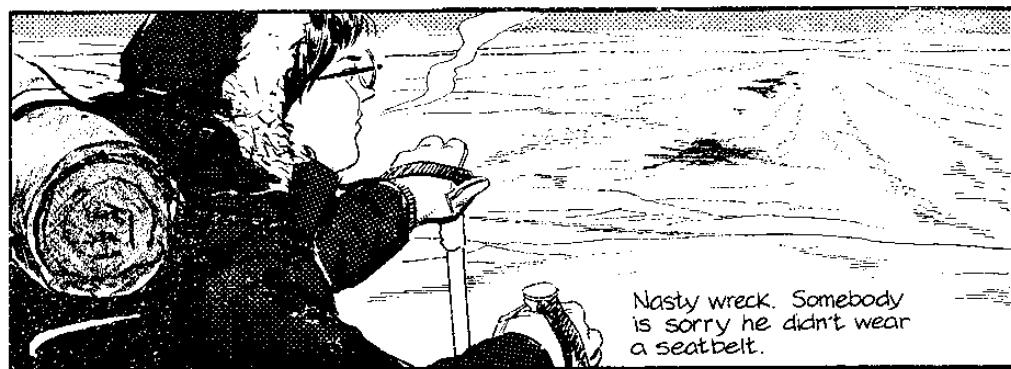
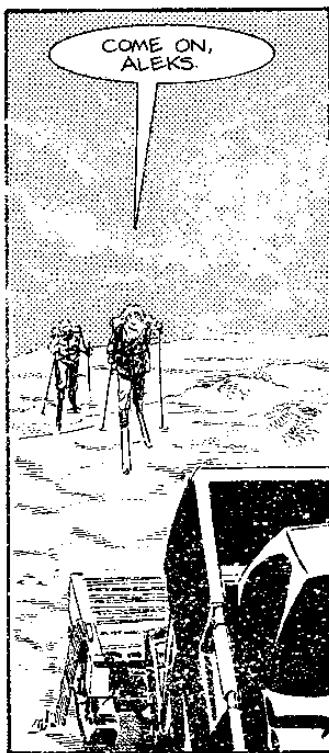
...traveling with a man I don't know and certainly shouldn't trust...

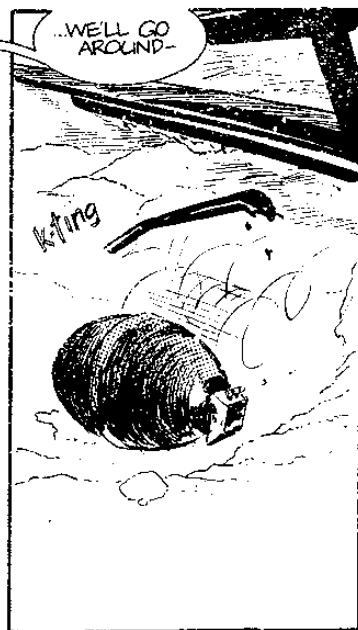


...chasing commandos with stolen nukes.





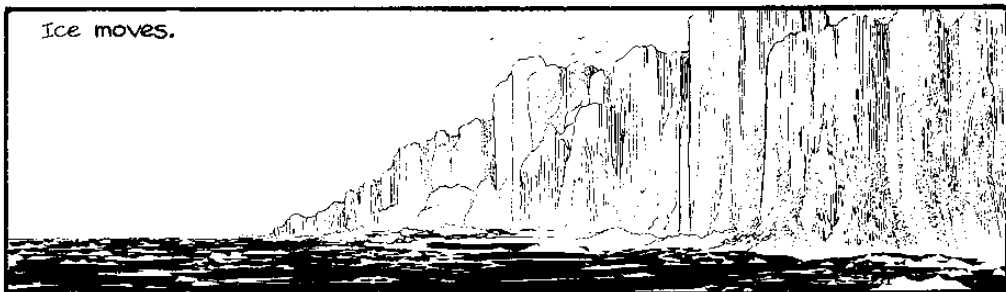




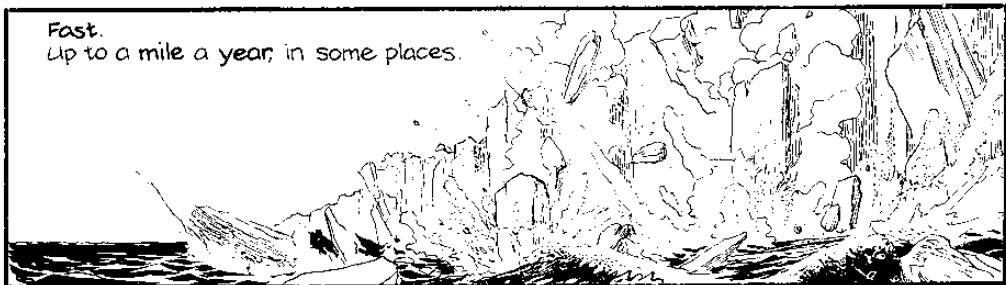


CHAPTER THREE

Ice moves.

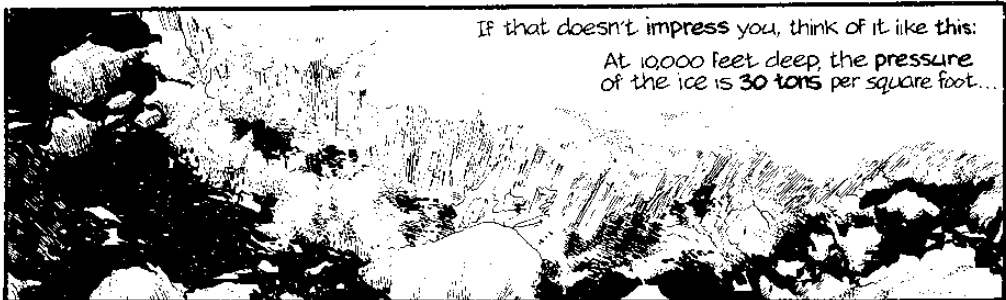


Fast.
Up to a mile a year, in some places.



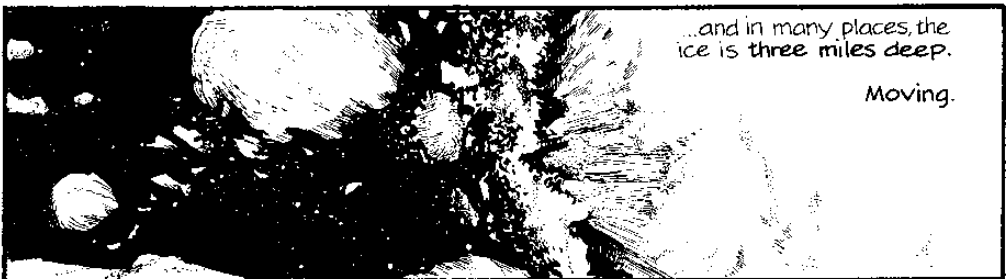
If that doesn't impress you, think of it like this:

At 10,000 feet deep, the pressure
of the ice is 30 tons per square foot.

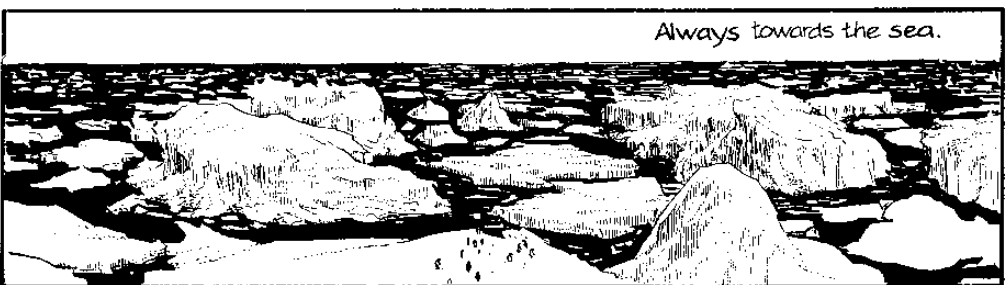


...and in many places, the
ice is three miles deep.

Moving.



Always towards the sea.



But, Carrie, I hear you ask, where
does all this ice come from?

After all, Antarctica is the
driest place on Earth.

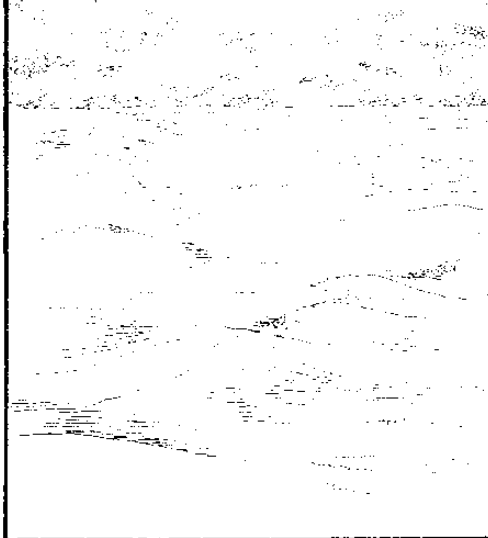
Annual snowfall is equivalent to
two inches of rain, at the most.

Answer: time and gravity
The wind blows the snow.
The snow accumulates and spreads.

New layers compress.
The layers freeze.
This happens over and over again...

...for tens of thousands of years.

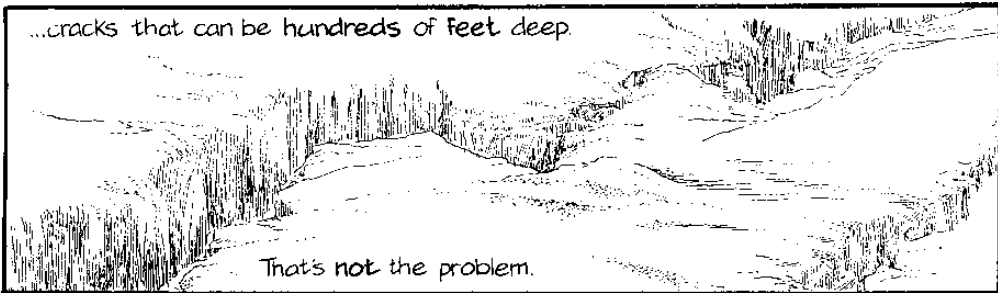
There is a point to this, bear with me.
That point is called a crevasse.



One of the Ice's nastier surprises.
Friction from moving ice opens
cracks on the surface.

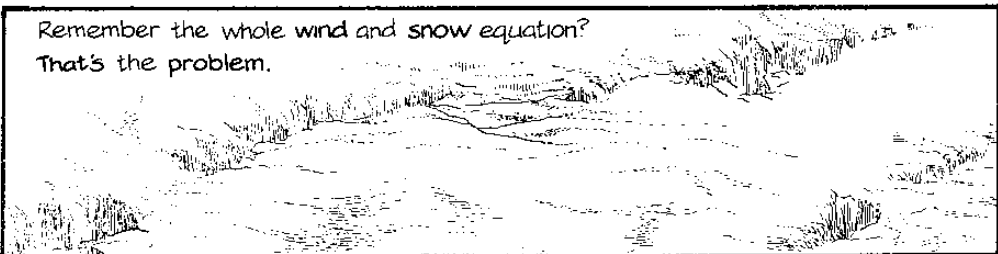


...cracks that can be hundreds of feet deep.

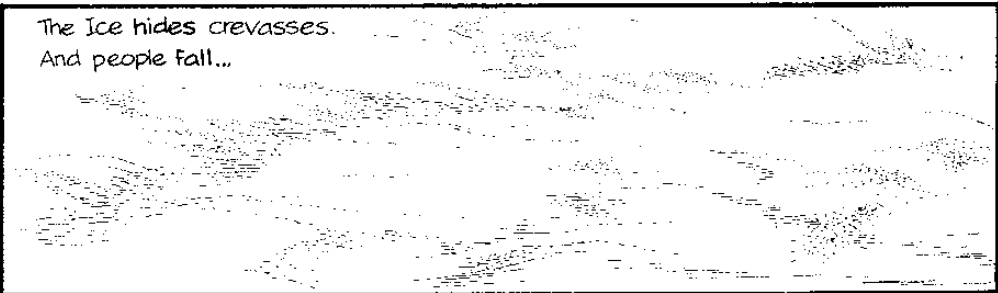


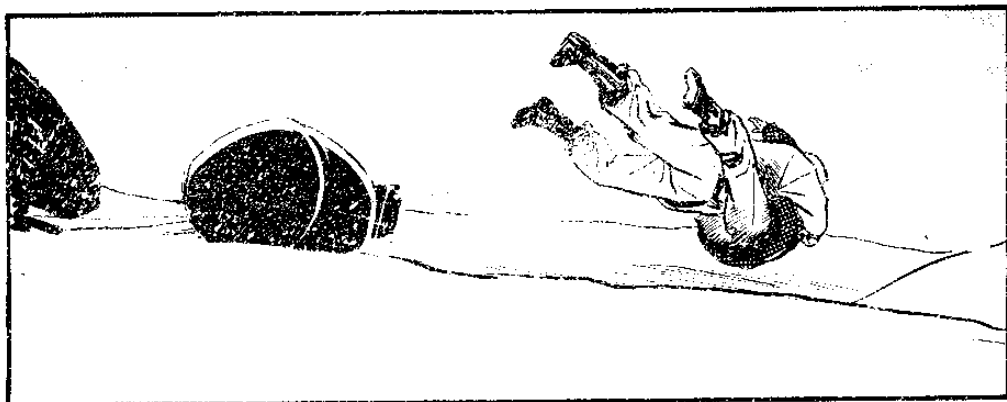
That's not the problem.

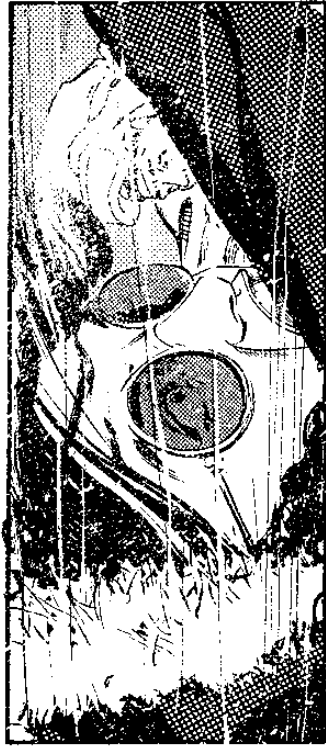
Remember the whole wind and snow equation?
That's the problem.



The Ice hides crevasses.
And people fall...











While the Ice is capricious, she
is not always malicious.



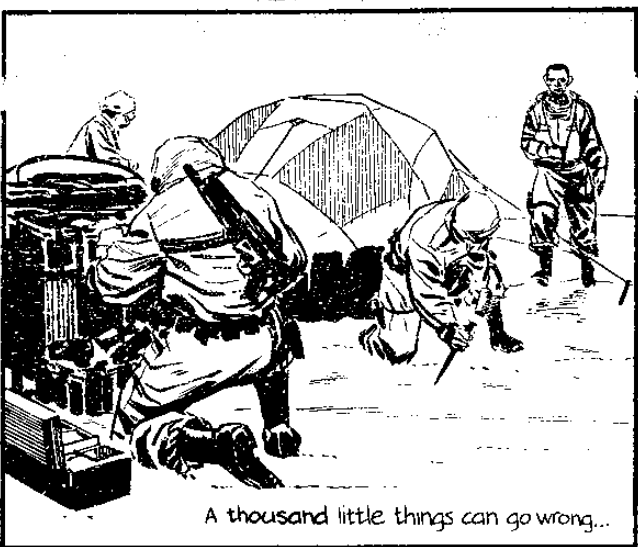
All the same, we got lucky.



I'm not complaining.



On the Ice, you
make your own luck.



A thousand little things can go wrong...

...things that, back in the world, mean nothing...



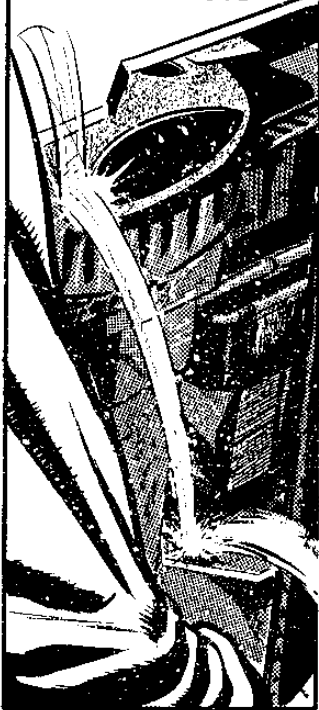
...things that, back in the world, are a minor inconvenience...



...and nothing more.



Not so on the Ice.



All those things you take for granted...



...they'll come back and bite you in the ass.

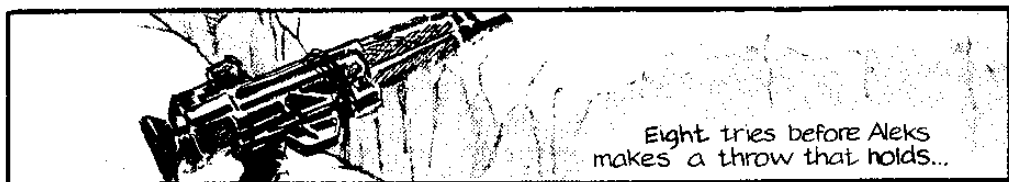


The ECW we're wearing spared
us the worst of the fall.

All our extra layers kept
us to bruises and contusions,
nothing more.







Eight tries before Aleks makes a throw that holds...

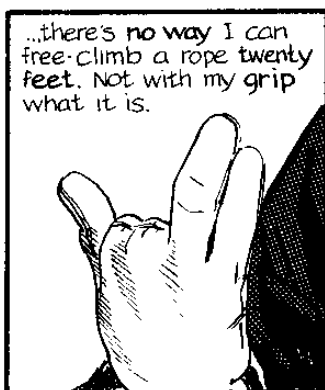


...all the while I'm reminding myself that we're freezing.

We need shelter.
We need heat.



He offers to let me go first, and I show him my hand...



...there's no way I can free-climb a rope twenty feet. Not with my grip what it is.



So Aleks goes, planning to hoist me after him.



Then he's gone

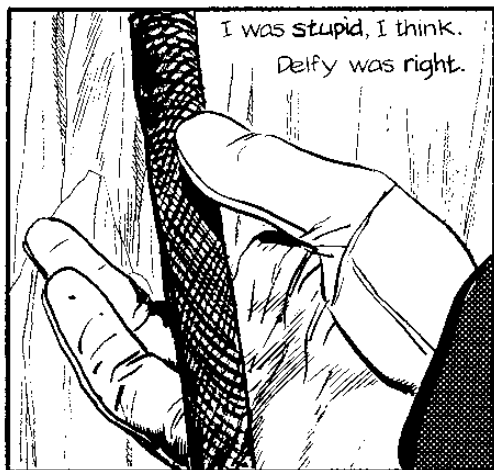
And I've never felt more alone in my life.



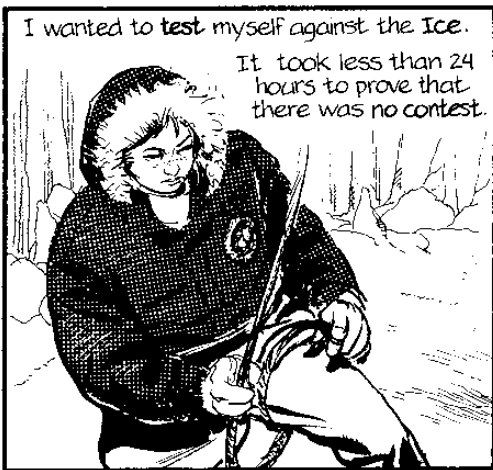
I'm scared.



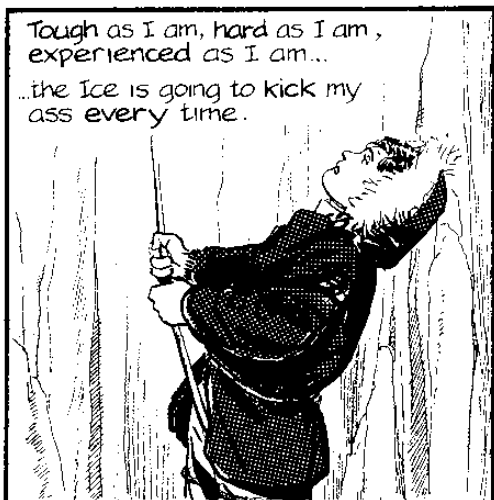
I'm really scared.



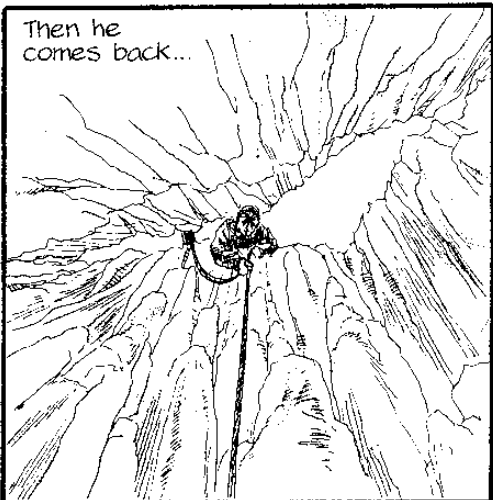
I was stupid, I think.
Delfy was right.



I wanted to test myself against the Ice.
It took less than 24
hours to prove that
there was no contest.



Tough as I am, hard as I am,
experienced as I am...
...the Ice is going to kick my
ass every time.



Then he
comes back...

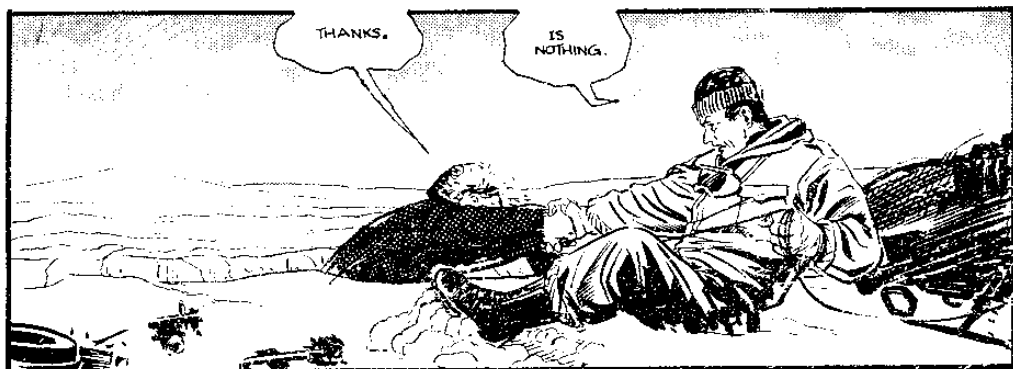


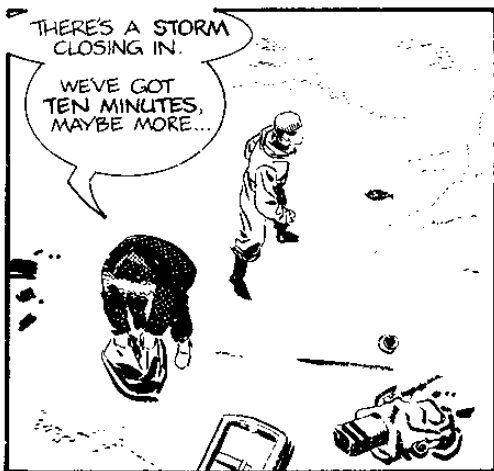
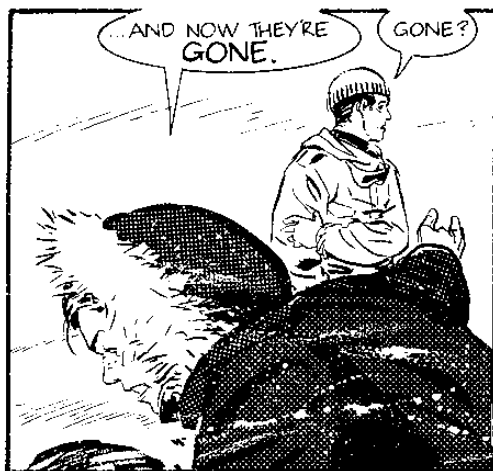
...and I'm thinking
all the way up...



...Aleks drops me,
I'm dead.
And no one would
know it was murder.



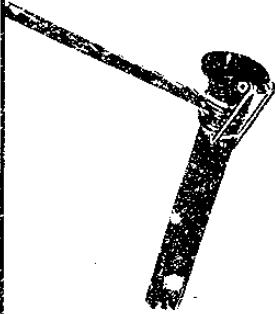




When you reach the Ice, you
take the Survival Course.
Those are the rules.

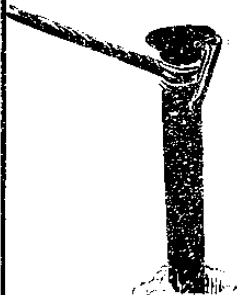


You learn that weather
can close in from three
miles in under two
minutes.



You learn how to build
your shelter.

You learn how to build
quick and strong.

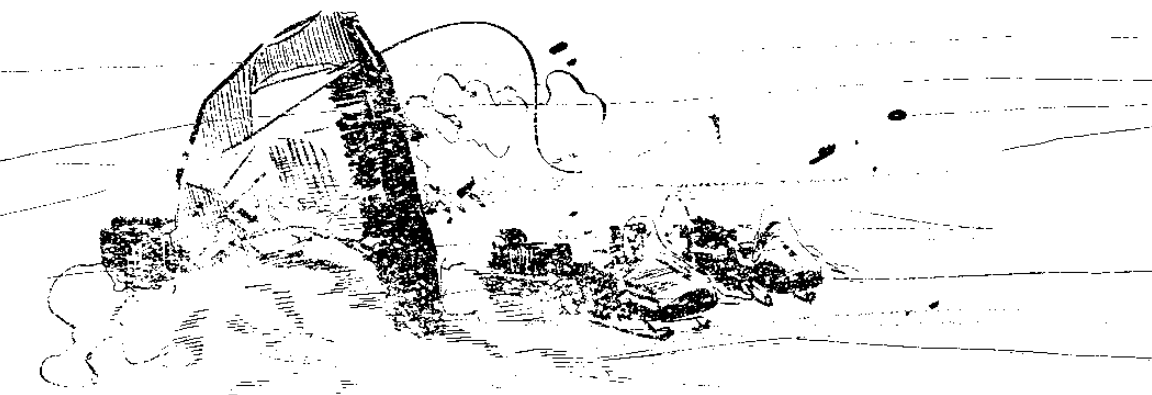


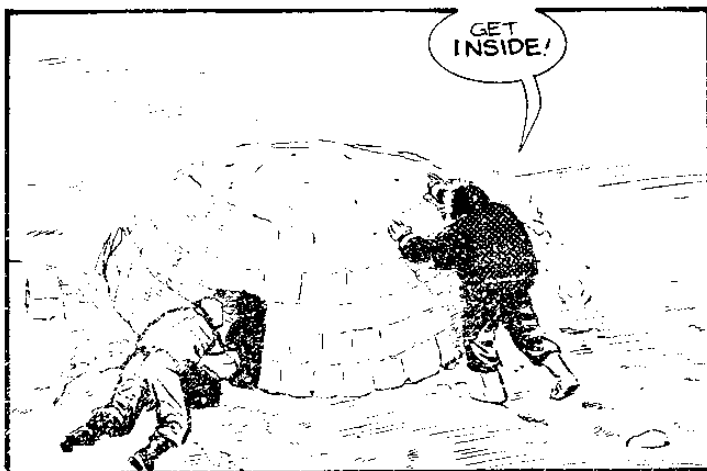
"Calories are gold,"
the instructors say
over and over.



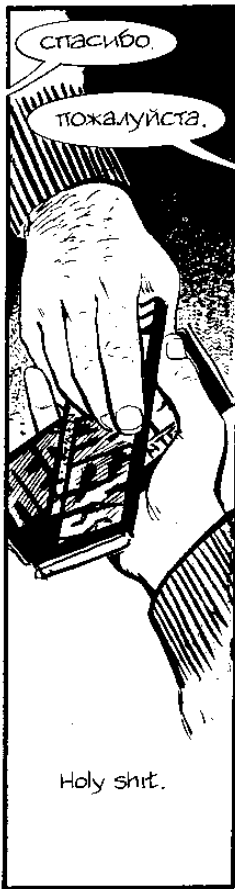
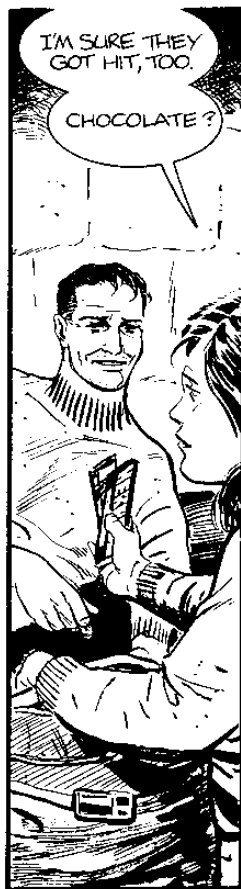
"Stay warm and live,"
they say.









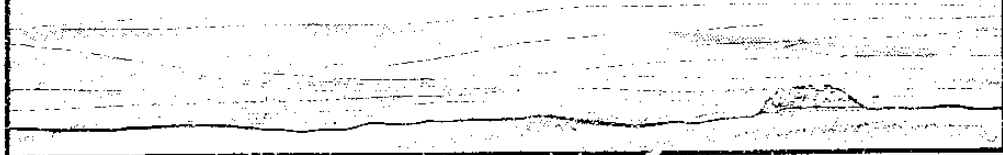


Holy shit holy
shit holy shit...

Carrie Stetko,
what are you
thinking?



You're in an Emergency Shelter, in a storm,
in the middle of Wilkes Land in East Antarctica...



...blackmailed by your Government into
finding three pocket nukes stolen from
Russians by Russians...



...working with a Russian
Agent who you've been
ordered to betray if you
get the opportunity...



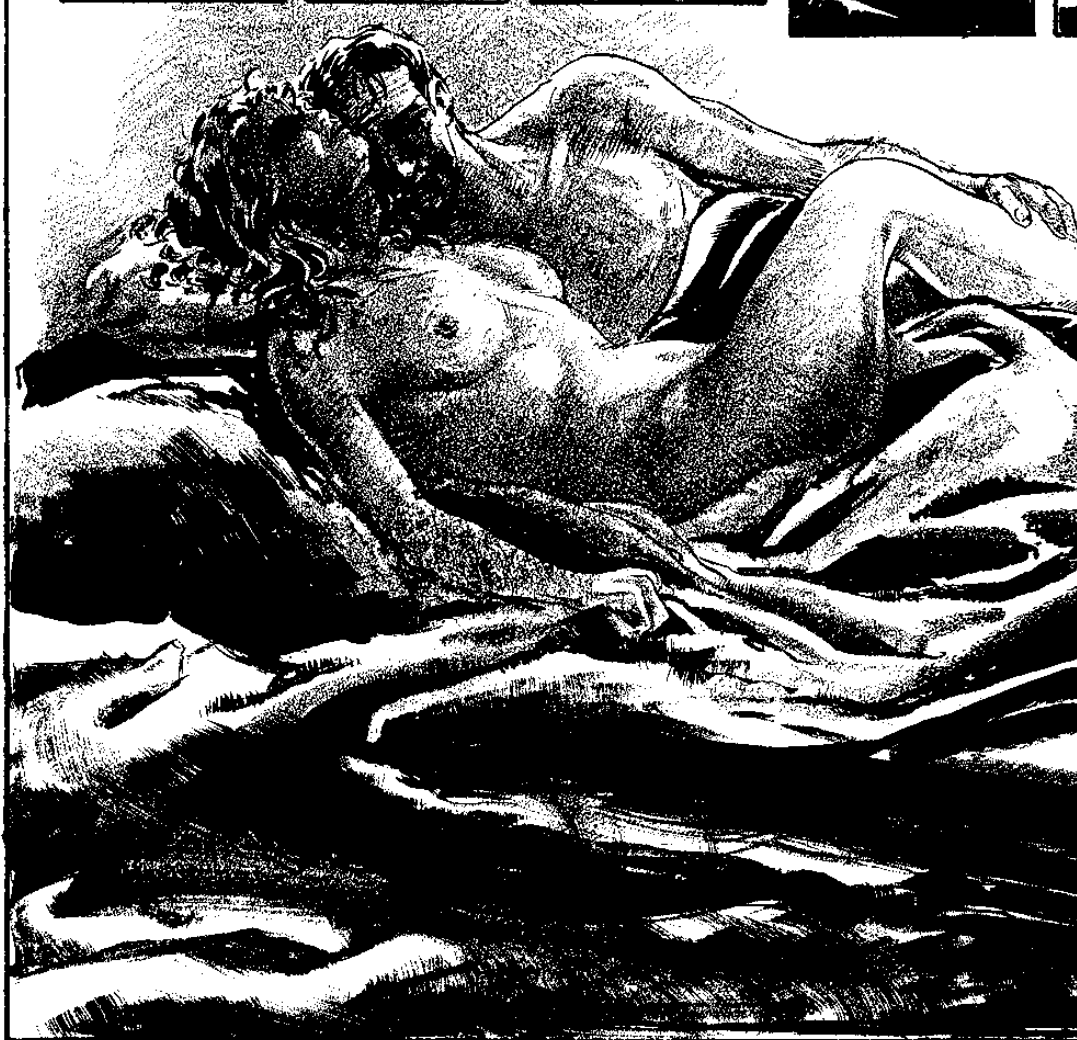
...and who will probably
do the same to you...

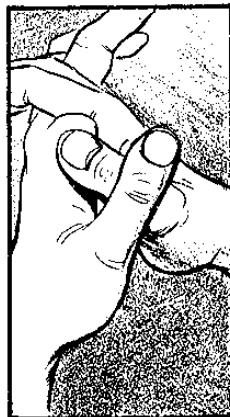


...you've nearly died
twice today...
... and you're thinking
about that ?



Well... why the hell not ?







CHAPTER FOUR

I suppose now would be a good time to say something disparaging about men in general...



...and Aleks Kuchin in particular.



Fuck, I'm cold.



There's an irony here, I'm sure of it.

First time I've had sex in over a year...



...and he leaves without so much as a good-bye.

It's the sort of thing one might take personally.



God knows I do.



Not my Finest hour

Fucking a Russian Agent in the middle of Antarctica.



No, I'd have to say that was not one of my better decisions.

He didn't take the beacon or the radio... Interesting.



He left me my gear. He didn't kill me.

So, either he's sentimental or he doesn't think I'm a threat.



I think I'm insulted.



His orders have to be similar to mine, with one difference.



He wants to keep Mother Russia from any embarrassment.

Whereas I've got two spooks
back in Christchurch hoping
that I'll give them the key
to their next promotions.



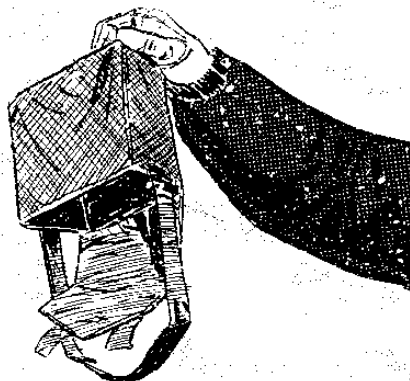
I do what they want, I
can go home.



I let Kuchin walk...



...I'm here forever.



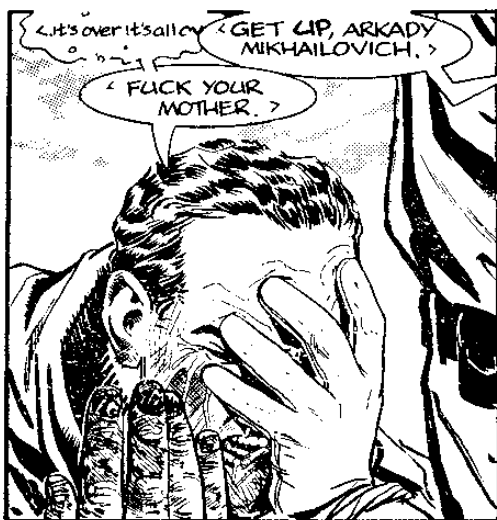
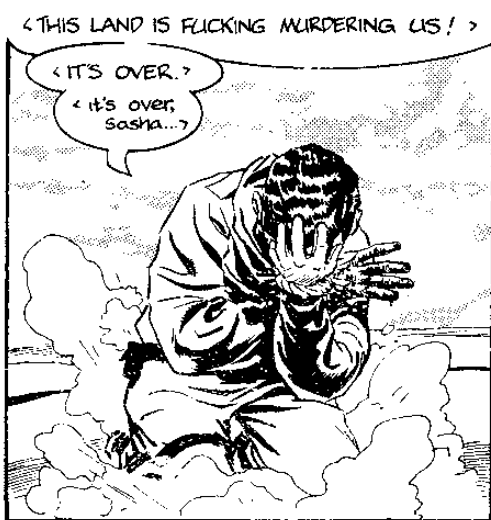
Son of a bitch...

I don't like being used.

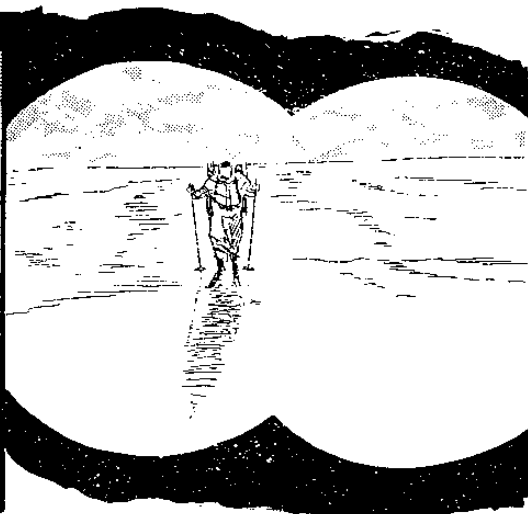


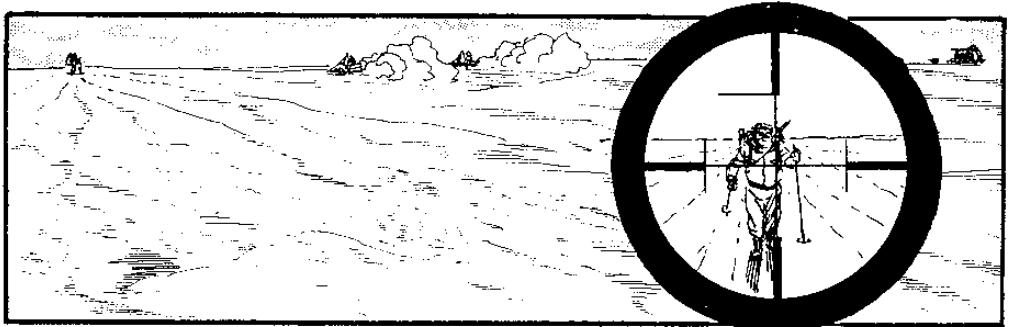
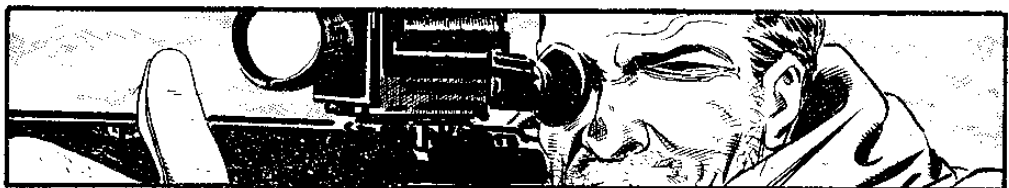
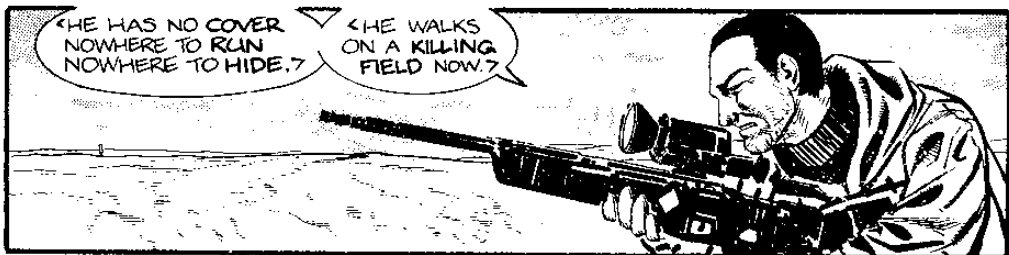
Not by anyone.

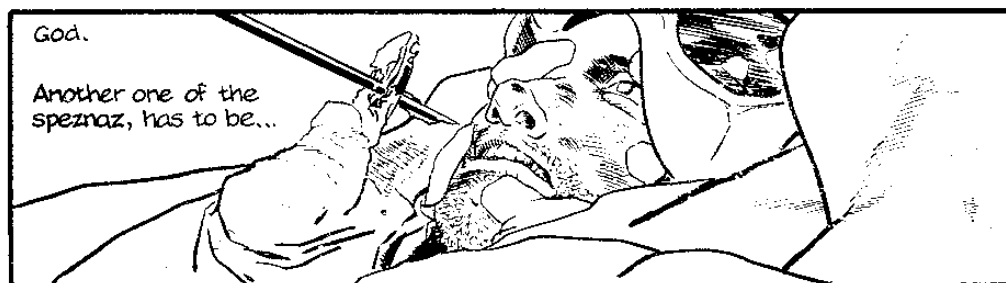
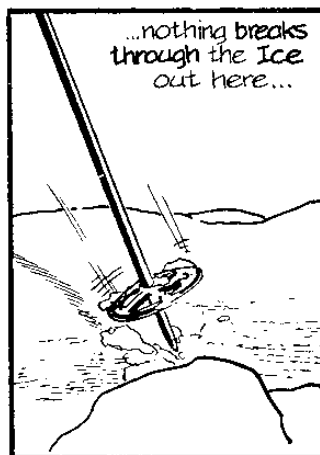
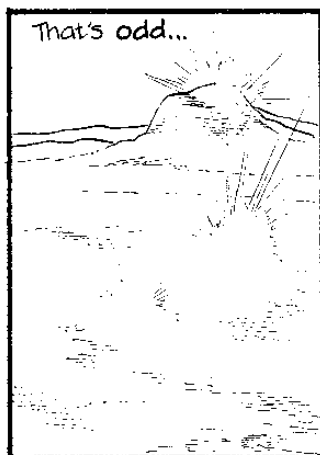
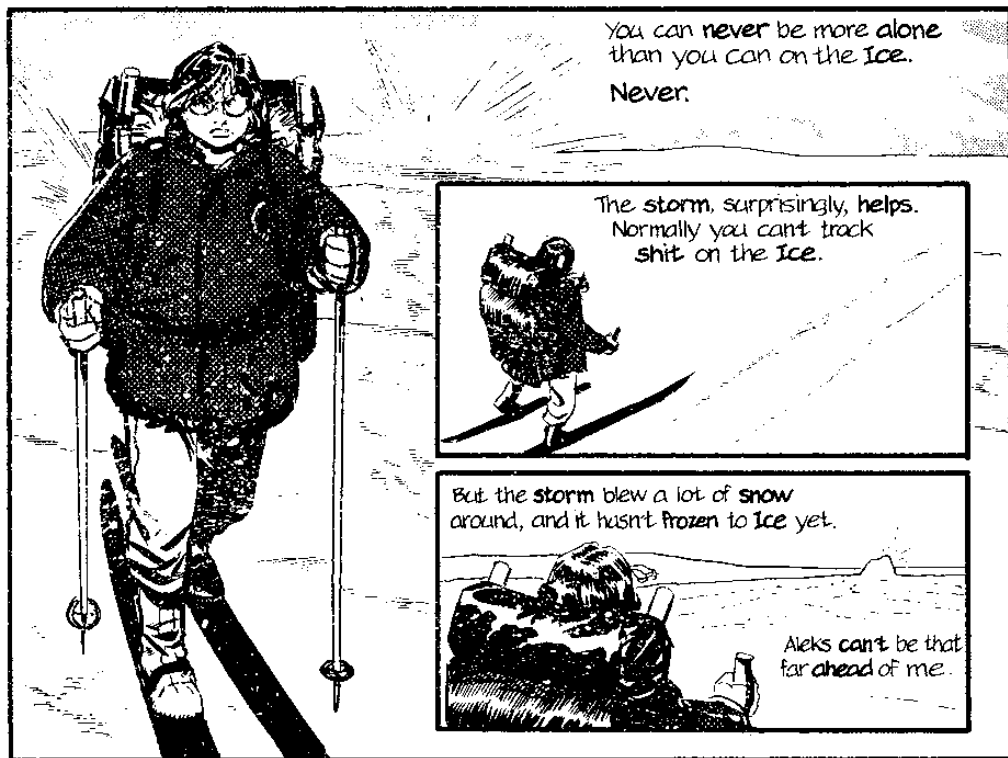














Well, it's not like he needs them any longer.

And at least this way I don't stick out like a nun in a whorehouse.



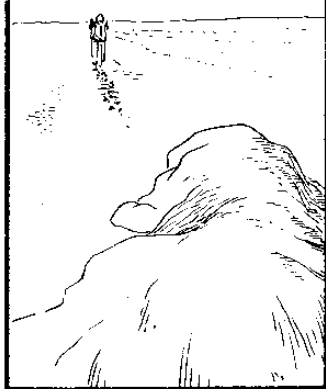
Separated from the rest.
Froze to death.

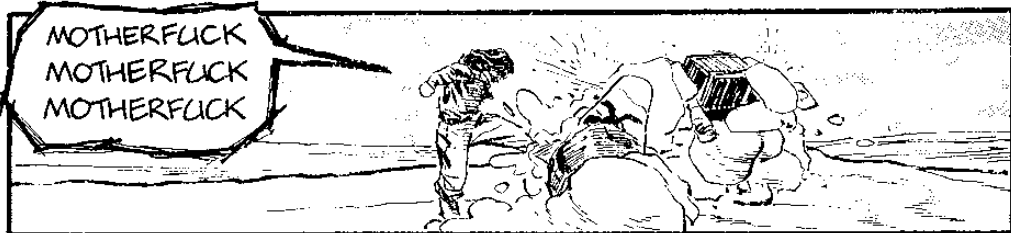
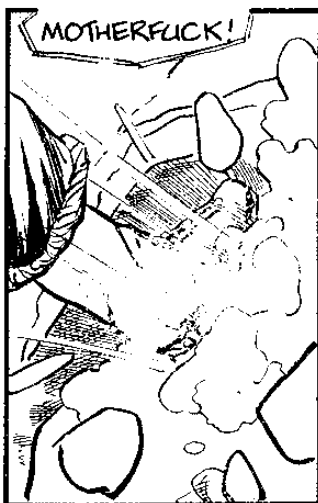
So, where's your transport,
hmm?

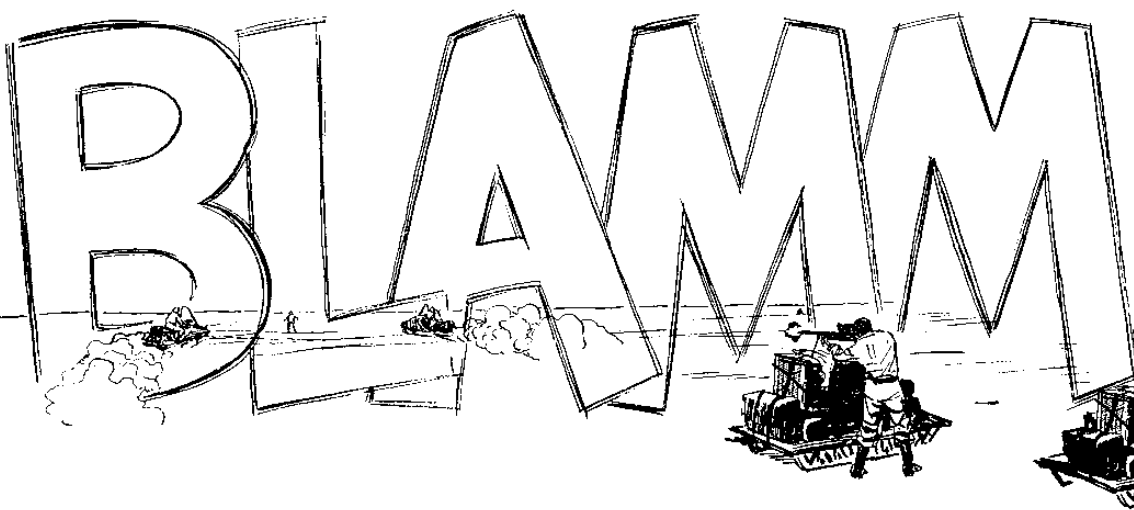
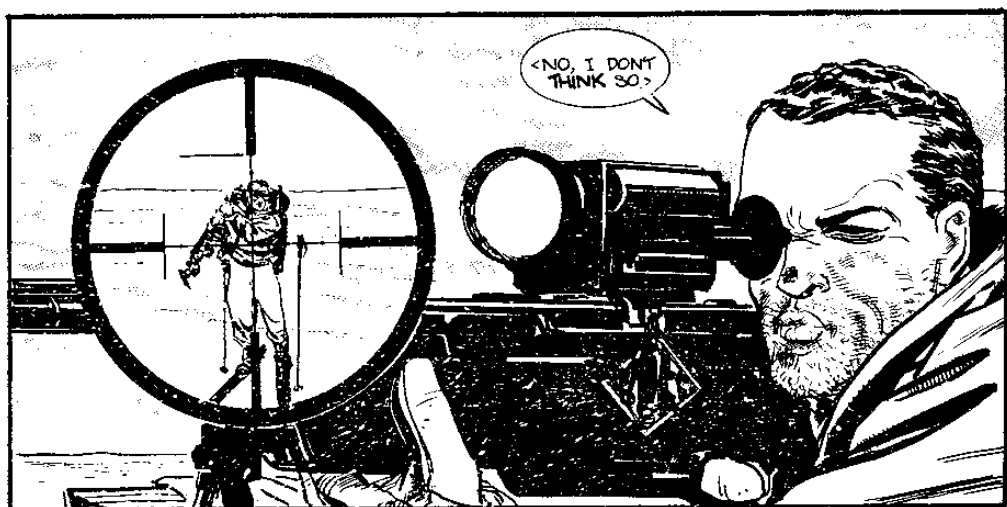
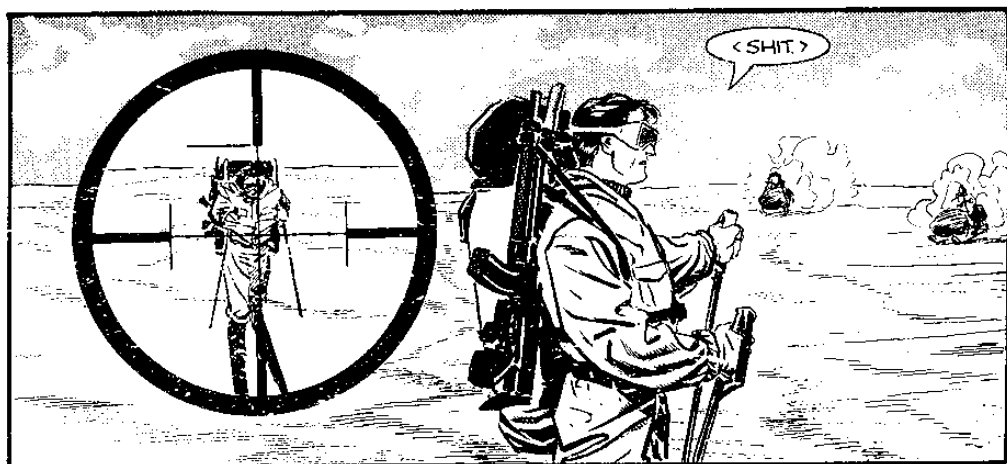


Figure one snowmobile
for each of you...

...just like at the
crevasse...







That was a shot.



Aleks... you fucking fool.



...there's no place to hide on the plateau.
And there's no place to run.



I hope for your sake...



...that that was a warning shot.



<YOU'RE A DAMN FOOL,
COMING OUT HERE,
COMING ALONE.>

<YOU'RE NOT
LOOKING TOO
SMART YOURSELF.>

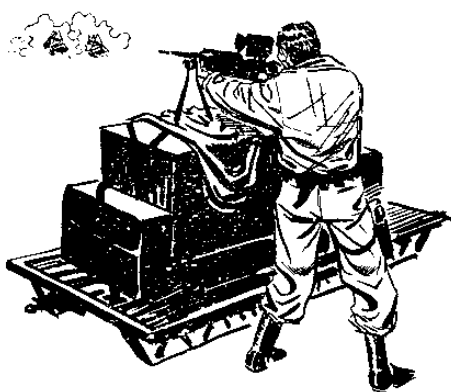


<PERHAPS, BUT THEN
AGAIN, I HAVE THE
GUNS.>

<AND
YOUR GLOVES.>

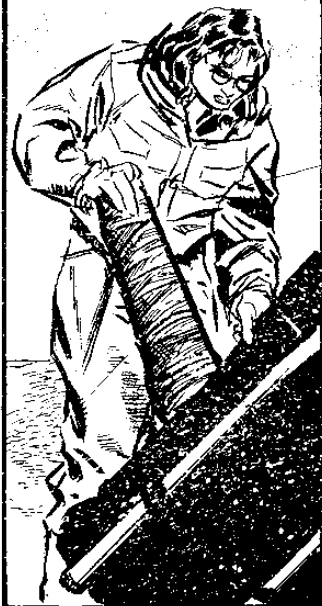


GET ON THE SNOWMOBILE. TRY
ANYTHING AND MY SNIPER
WILL SHOOT YOU.





Way I figure, I've got
a couple options.



I can radio for backup.



If the weather holds,
Delfy could be here in,
oh, say...

...Eight hours or so.



I could leave.
No, I couldn't.



Or I can fight.



I've got two advantages.



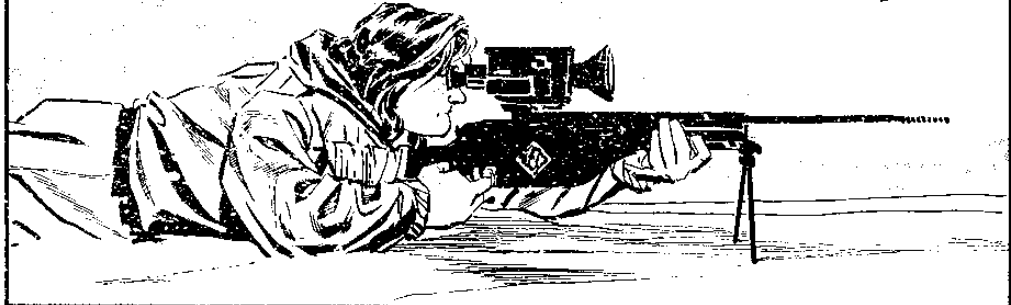
The sun and surprise.
They can't see me with
the glare.



I've got several more
disadvantages.
Not the least of them
being I'm not a sniper...

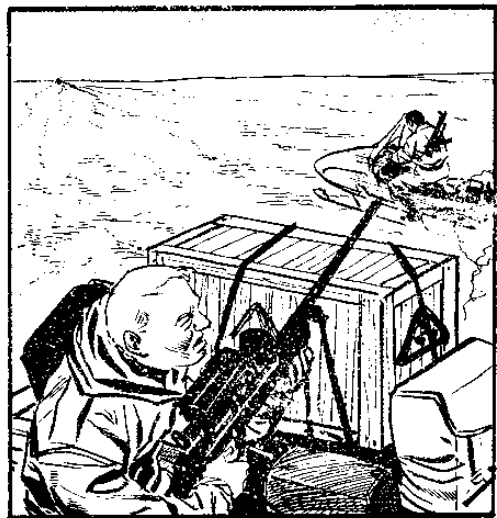
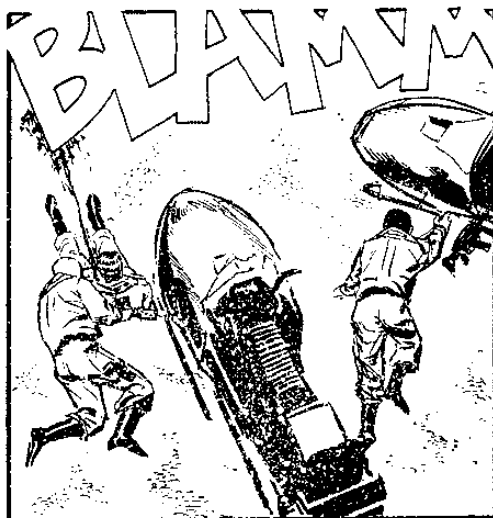
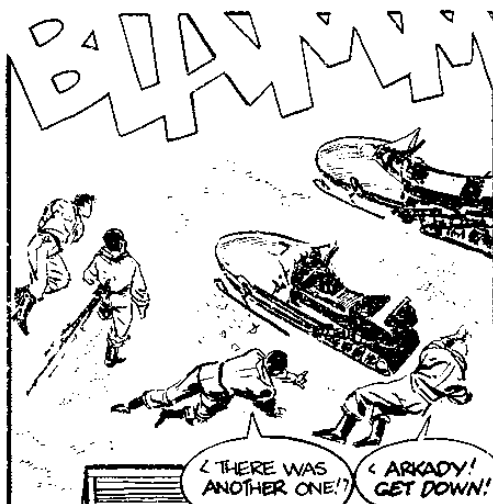


...and I'm lying on ice.



Here goes nothing.

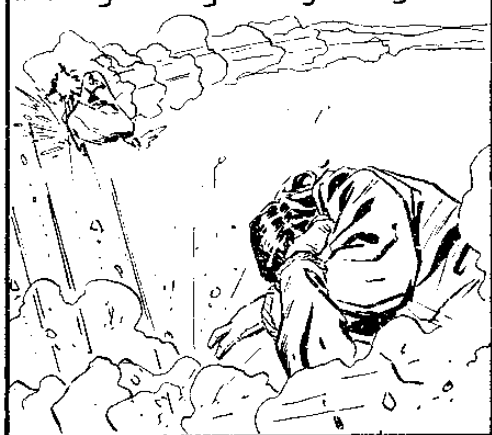




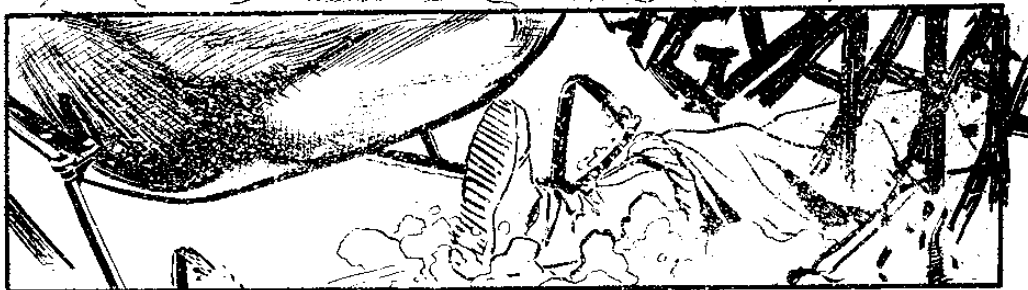
Oh, shit...



ABRATTABRATTABRATTABRA
Oh shit oh shit not good not good not good missing missing missing missing missing



...dumb stupid dead dumb d-

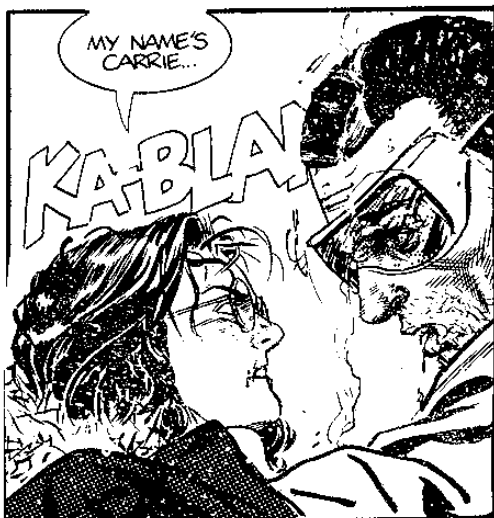


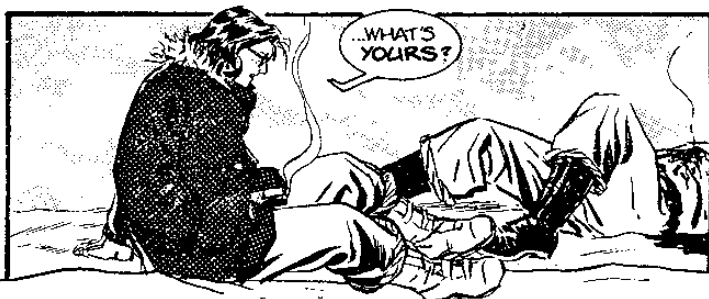
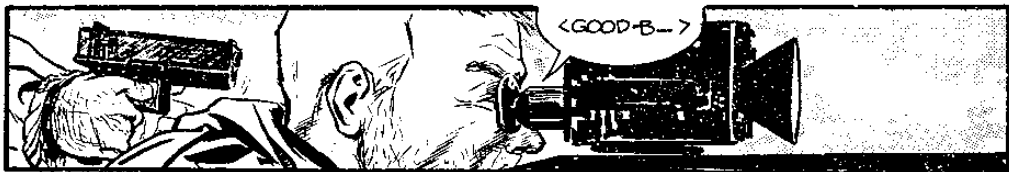
My foot God dammit my foot...

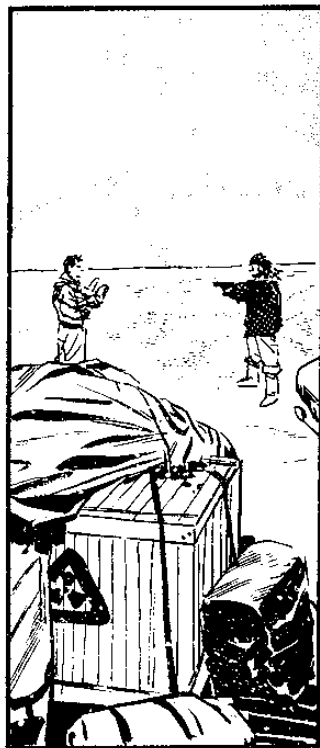
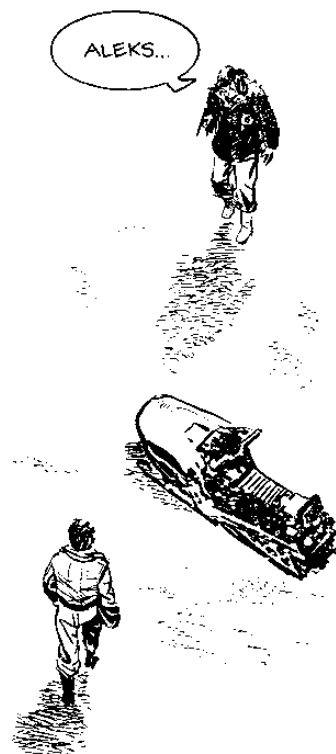
< DON'T
MOVE! >

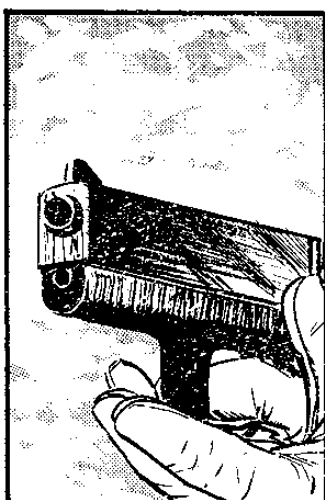








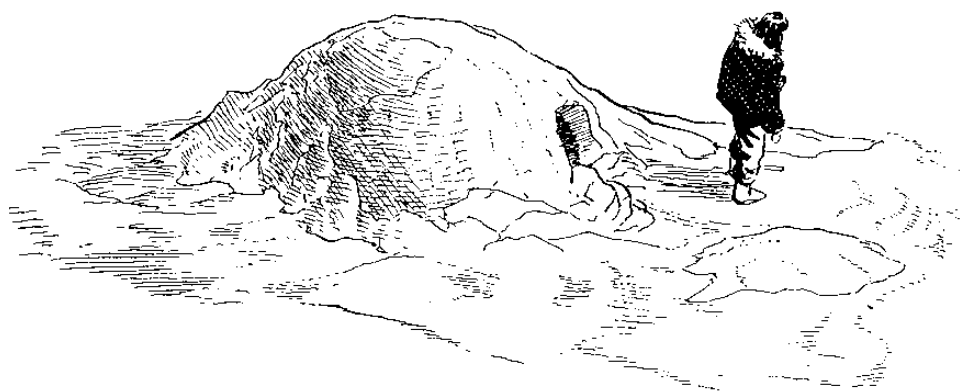








RUCKA - WEBER 1999-2010



AFTERWORD

It's the sign that does it.

It's an emergency evacuation sign, an "in case of fire" sign, with a map of escape routes and with all the nearest exits clearly marked, neatly lettered, crisp, clean. It is exactly what you would expect it to be.

Except it's on the wall of Amundsen-Scott base at the South Pole.

Except it's not, because it's on the wall of the set of Amundsen-Scott on a sound stage in Montreal.

I arrived on set a couple days before Steve, if memory serves. Memory doesn't serve me well here, frankly. This was a lifetime ago, it seems, a decade at least. But I remember that I'd arrived ahead of Steve, and that when Steve came to the set I just had to show him this detail, this piece of set dressing on the wall in this sound stage where they—"they" being the people who were making this movie—were trying to take the comic we'd created a decade prior and turn it into a feature film. This detail, this thing on the wall, so small, something that nobody would see in the movie, that they'd likely never notice, but I had to show it to Steve.

We wandered the sets for a while that day. Visited the fake Vostok and the storeroom where Carrie would seek shelter after her line had been cut. Admired the icicles that looked like icicles and were, instead, some manner of rubber or plastic or gelatin or I don't-even-know-what. We talked to the actors and the crew, and we took photographs, and I'm pretty certain each of us had these stupid, dopey grins on our faces, as much amused and bemused by what was going on around us as anything else.

The fact that—and we can be honest here, we're amongst friends—the movie wasn't very good doesn't diminish the memories for me. The movie is what it is, and what you've just finished reading (or rereading, perhaps) is the comic, and they exist as separate things, and that's as it should be. Twenty years later, this comic is still a living, thriving work, one that Steve and I both cherish, one that we both remain very proud of, and—speaking for myself

alone, now—a little baffled by, to be honest.

Twenty years is a long time. Twenty years is a *remarkably* long time, to tell the truth. Twenty years is long enough for the world to fundamentally change, for us to go from desktops to laptops to computers in our pockets that we call “phones.” It’s long enough to go from having no children to having two of them, and to see one of them entering his last year of high school as the other one is set to begin it. It’s long enough to have a career. It’s long enough to have several.

Whiteout began with me marveling at two facts. The first was, simply, that there was no actual law enforcement in Antarctica—the continent didn’t have a cop; but what they did have was—at least at that time—the station manager at McMurdo deputized as a US Marshal. The second was that, again back in 1998, the ratio of men to women on The Ice was 200:1, and during winterover it became 400:1.

And being a writer, I looked at those two facts and decided that with a little nudging of the truth, there was a hell of a story one could tell.

I look back over these pages and I suffer the Writer’s Curse of *seeing every single thing I did wrong*. Every mistake. I see the clumsiness of a writer trying to transition from novels to comics, I see how young I was, I see the overwriting and the telegraphing and the ham-fistedness and all the things I know now but didn’t know then. I see how I’ve grown in my craft, with experience, with my art. I would be wildly surprised if Steve didn’t say the same. All the things we did wrong, all the things we just *didn’t know*, and still, people return to these stories, people ask for sketches of Carrie and ask if I’ll write another one, people still read *Whiteout*.

This is the work that launched my career in comics. Without this there is no *Queen & Country* or *Stumptown*. There is no *Gotham Central* or *Wonder Woman* or *Batwoman*. There is no *Lazarus* or *The Old Guard* or *Black Magick*. Without this work, and the fearless collaboration of Steve Lieber, I am not here writing this, now.

All of that is obvious enough, I suppose. But how many of us can say, with certainty, that they can pinpoint the moment, the decision, the single meeting, that dictated so much of their life? Certainly I’d have continued writing if *Whiteout* hadn’t happened. I was three novels in and setting up for the fourth when I started writing *Whiteout*. The odds are good that my career, in that respect at least, would’ve continued on its established trajectory.

But I most certainly wouldn’t have the life I have now. And I am very, very lucky in that it is, all things being equal, a pretty damn good life.

So, the moment. *That* moment. As with all things, it’s never just *one* instance. I could pick Patty Jeres introducing me to Bob Schreck at San Diego Comic Con back in 1997. I could pick the meeting with Bob that followed, where I showed him my novels and he looked at me with near-panic in his eyes, praying that I wasn’t about to ask to adapt them. I could pick the party I was invited to that night, where I got to meet Joe Nozemack.

But if I'm honest, it was the moment I met Steve.

The story of how Steve and I first met, and how he came aboard *Whiteout*, has been told many times in many places, and I won't tell it again here. What I *will* share is that he and I have been through a lot in these past two decades, and not all of it was pleasant. There was a time when we were actively avoiding one another. There was a time when the thought of speaking together, let alone working together, was—if not difficult—shall we say, unlikely. I am grateful, and I am happy, to say that such a time has since passed. Twenty years is a long time. It's time enough to reveal things which, in their moment seemed so big, and that with perspective and age are uncovered to be small to the point of inconsequential, that were never worth the blood and sweat they exacted.

In twenty years, Steve and I have suffered losses and seen triumphs. We have grown, professionally and personally. We have striven, each of us and each in our own ways, to grow better at what we do, to learn and continue to hone ourselves as artists. We have pushed ourselves, professionally and personally. We have changed.

Through all of that, we have orbited *Whiteout*, not so much bound by its gravity as impelled by it. It's been our Jovian accelerator, and we have sling-shotted from its mass at incredible speed and reached undiscovered, even uncharted, territories—we have reaped successes, both together and apart, that we never dared imagine.

No matter where we've gone—and forgive me, because this is beating the analogy bloody at this point—we've been able to look back and see *Whiteout*, this fixed point, the place where we each, in our own way, began.

That is a hell of a thing. That is a remarkable and precious thing.

To everyone who joined us in this journey, who helped us get here, thank you. To everyone at Oni Press—and in particular to James Lucas Jones especially—unending and everlasting gratitude.

And to everyone who has shivered alongside Carrie, my sincerest wishes that you always find a place warm and dry, safe and sound.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GR' with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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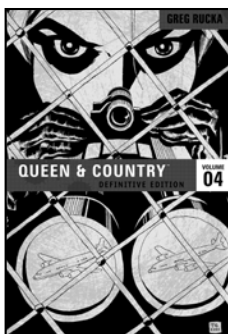
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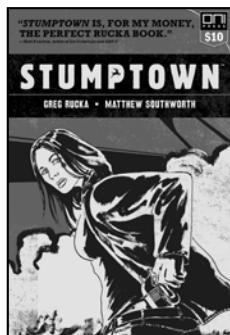
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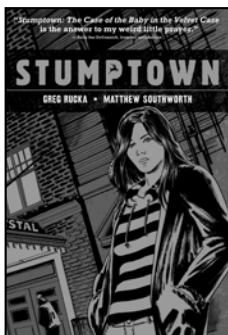
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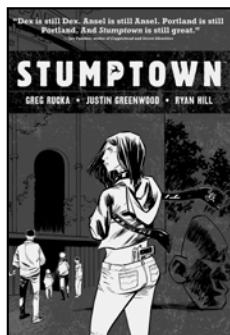
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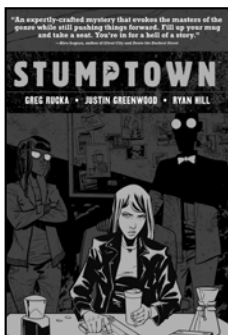
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