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QUEEN & COUNTRY™

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VOLUME 1: PAUL CROCKER

WRITTEN BY
GREG RUCKA

ILLUSTRATED BY
BRIAN HURTT

LETTERED BY
JOHN DRANSKI

CHAPTER BREAKS BY
SCOTT MORSE

ORIGINALLY EDITED BY
JAMES LUCAS JONES

SIS



JAMES WATSON—Director of Operations for SIS, responsible for all day-to-day operations and intelligence gathering performed by SIS, as well as all “special” operations performed by the Minders.

LINDSAY MILLS—Minder One, eleven year veteran of SIS, head of the Special Operations Division (also known as the Special Section). Considered by many to be one of the best special operations officers working in the world.

WESLEY HARGREAVES—Minder Two, with five years of SIS duty under his belt.

DONALD WELDON—Prague Station Number Two. Acts as gopher and resident legman for the Prague Number One.

PAUL CROCKER—In his mid-twenties, newly married, considered by many at SIS to be a prodigy in the field. The latest addition to the Special Section, with the designation of Minder Three.

JOHN GILCHRIST—Mission Control Officer (also called Main Communications Officer), responsible for maintaining communications between the Operations Room (Ops Room) in London and agents running in the field.

SIS

KGB

OTHERS



GARY MACHON—Duty Operations Officer, acts as the conduit for all incoming and outgoing information with operational impact. Monitors and evaluates information, as well as implementing the Director of Operations’ mission orders.

FRANCES BARCLAY—Frances Barclay, the Prague Station Chief (or Prague Number One). Heads the resident SIS mission in Czechoslovakia.

VALERY KARPIN—KGB Resident Officer in Prague, twenty-seven year veteran of the Cold War.

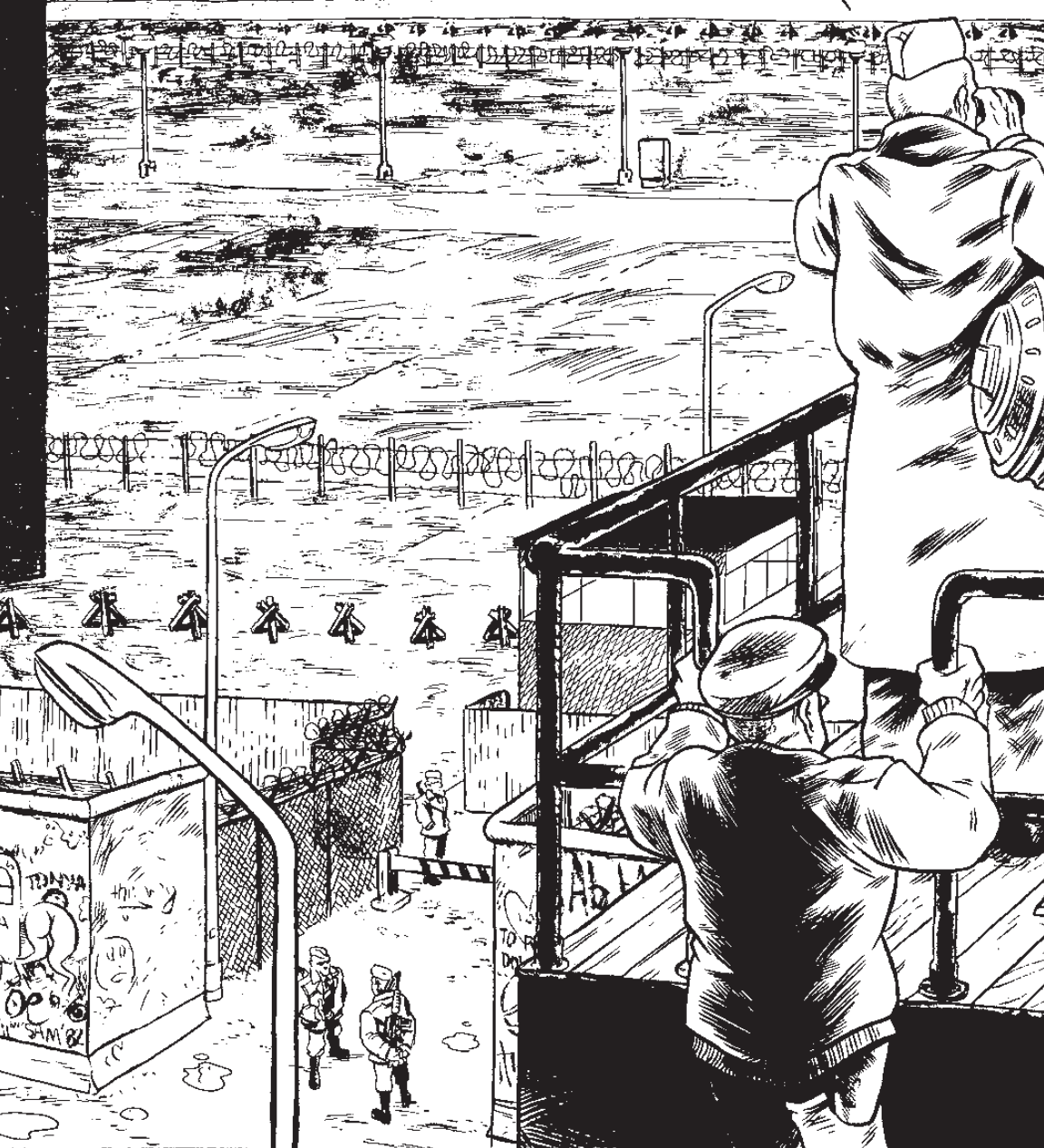
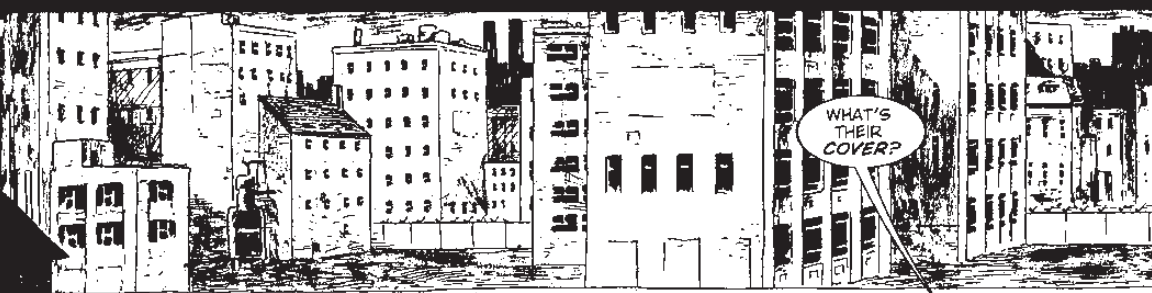
RUSLAN IZMAILOV—KGB Officer, recent addition to the Executive Action division.

JENNY CROCKER—In her early twenties, wife of Paul. Aware that he works for SIS, but not certain in what capacity. Teaches pre-school.

CHAPTER 1







WORKING
AS DAY LABORERS
IN THE WEST. SHOULD
BE CROSSING WITH THE
MORNING SHIFT.

SO IF
THEY DON'T CROSS
IN THE NEXT HOUR,
YOU DO THIS AGAIN
TOMORROW?

THEY DON'T
CROSS IN THE NEXT
HOUR. THEY'RE NOT
COMING AT ALL,
CAPTAIN...

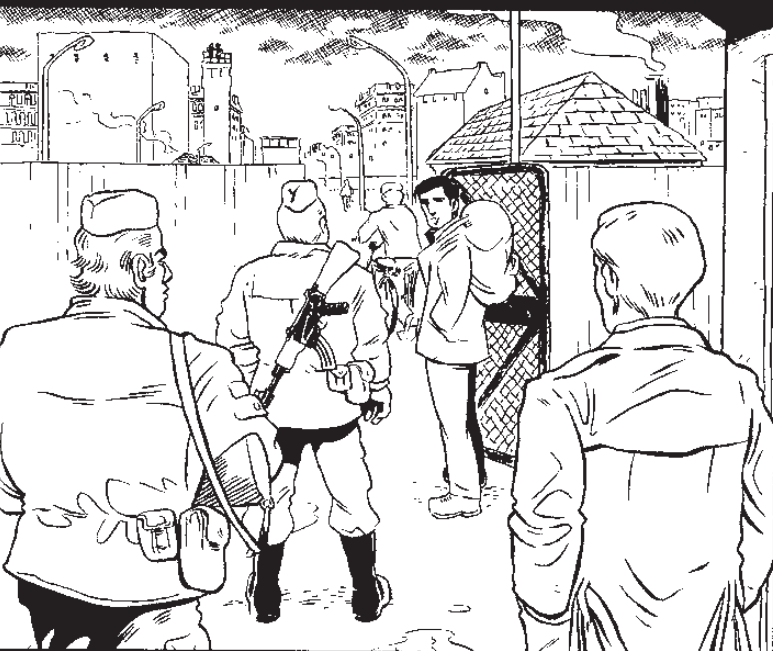
...
SEE HIM...
DAMMIT...

...DAMMIT
TO HELL.

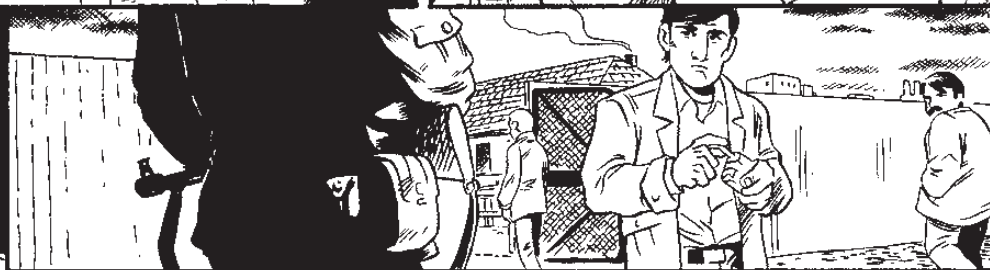
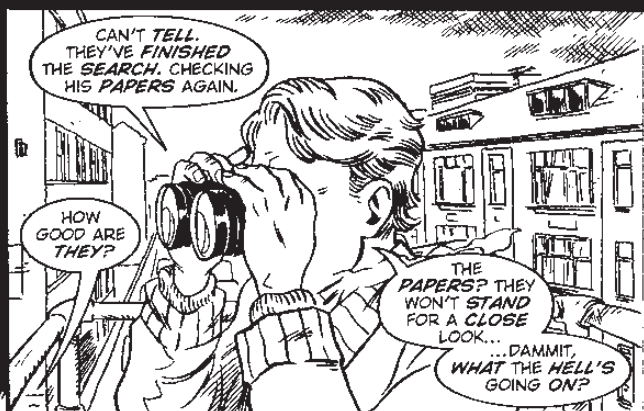
HE'S
ALONE.















HE'S GONE.



GONE?

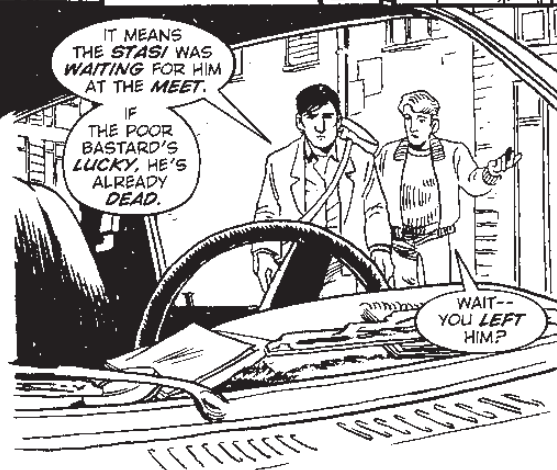
WHERE'S THE CAR?

DOWN THE STREET.

KEYS.



WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? GONE?



IT MEANS THE STASI WAS WAITING FOR HIM AT THE MEET.

IF THE POOR BASTARD'S LUCKY, HE'S ALREADY DEAD.

WAIT-- YOU LEFT HIM?



I'M NOT GOING TO RUN A BUST-OUT IN EAST BERLIN, OWEN!

AS IT WAS, I BARELY GOT CLEAR. THE HEAVY CHECKING MY PAPERS WAS FRESH FROM MOSCOW.



I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN--

SHUT UP.

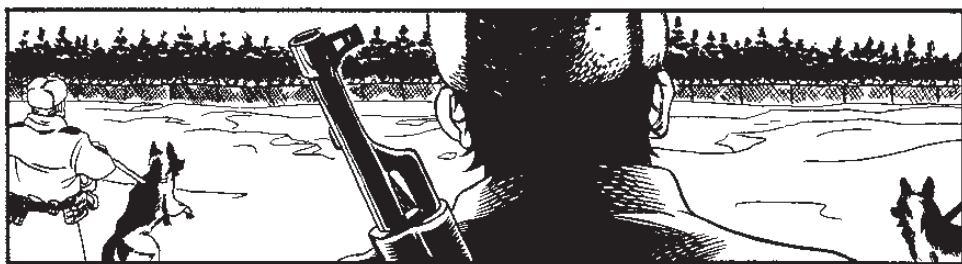


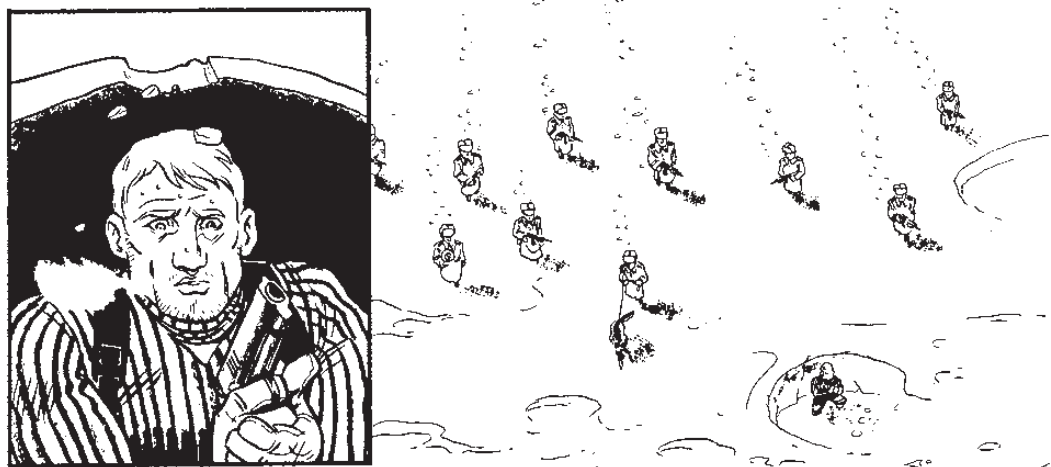
I WANT TO GO HOME.

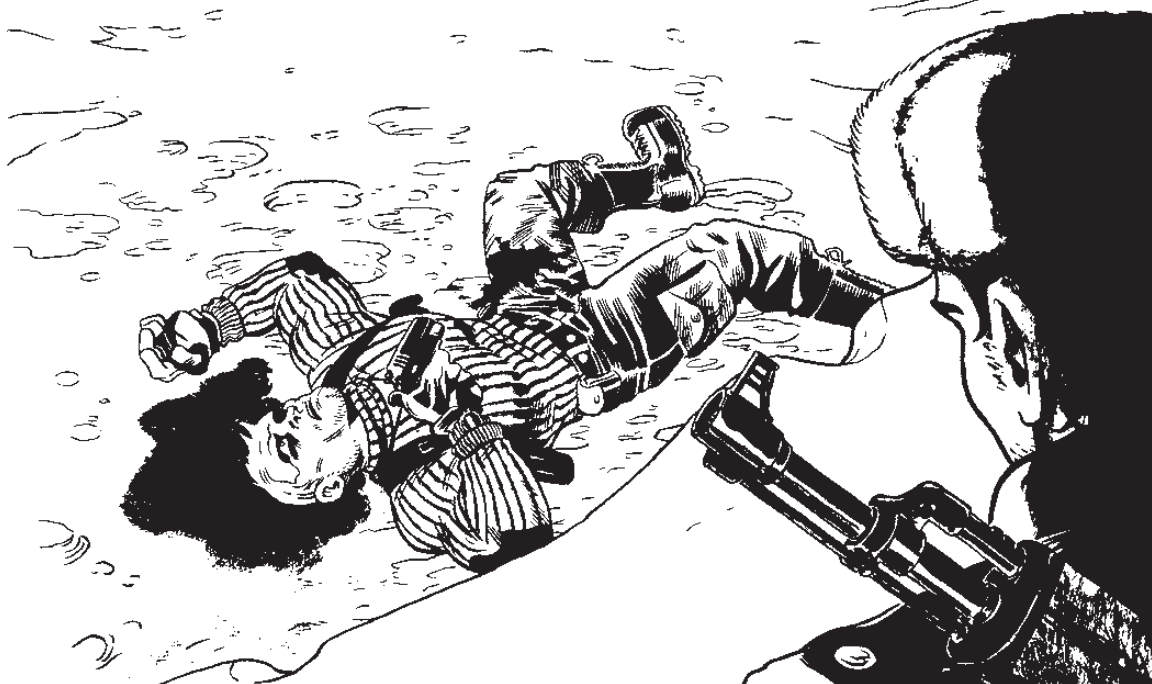
U.S.S.R.

THE UKRAINE.

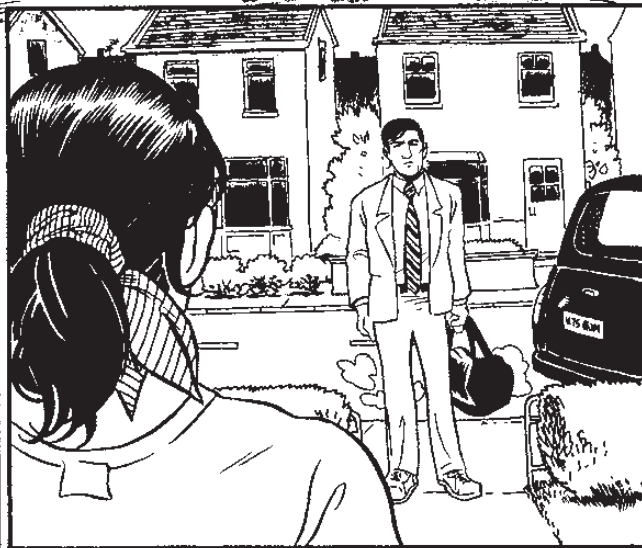
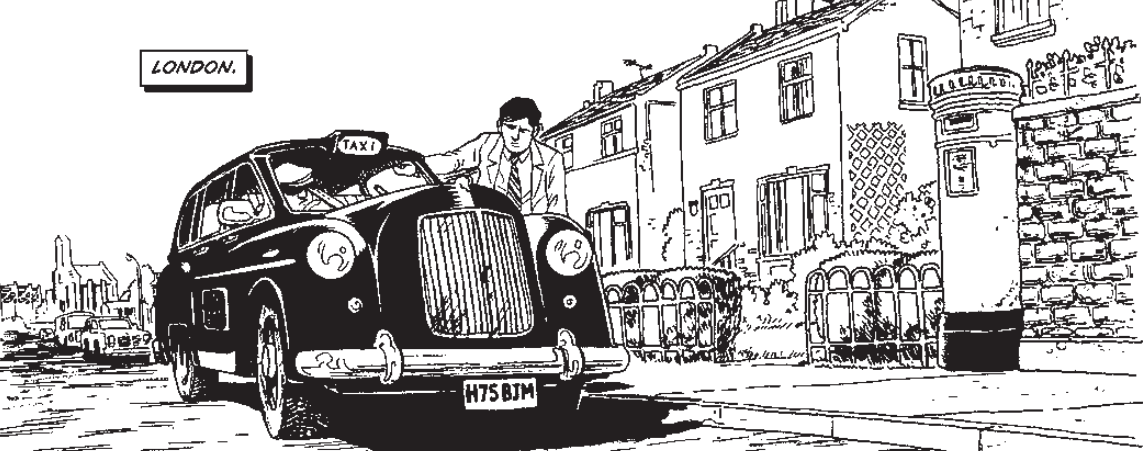
46 KM WNW KIEV.

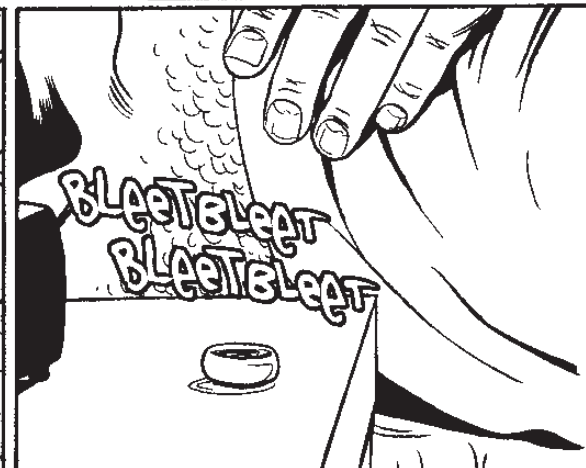
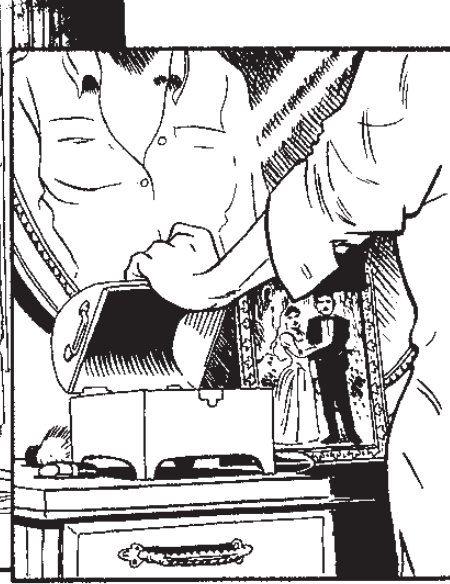






LONDON.





Special Operations

Mills, L.
— Head of Section

Hargreaves, W.

Crocker, P.

YES.

PAUL.

I'VE ALREADY
CLEARED MY *DESK* IF
YOU...IF YOU WANT TO
SHIFT.

RIGHT.
THANKS.

MAKE
ROOM FOR THE
NEW GUY, YOU
KNOW.

YES.

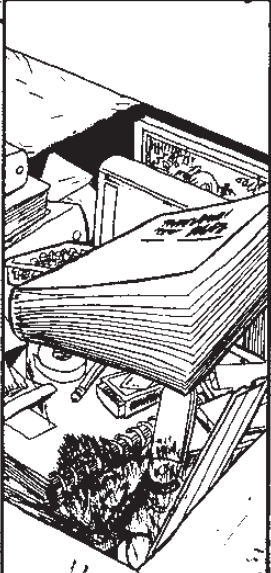
LOOK
AT THIS. YOU
REMEMBER GIVING
LINDSAY THIS?

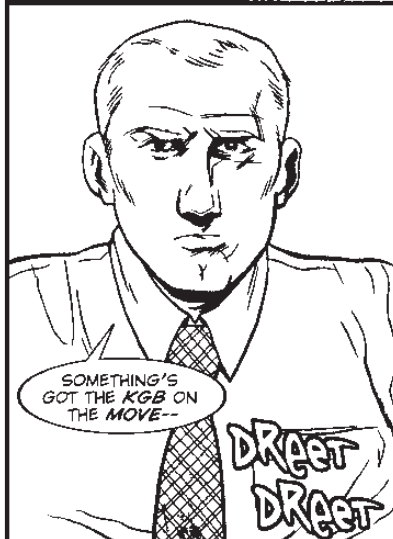
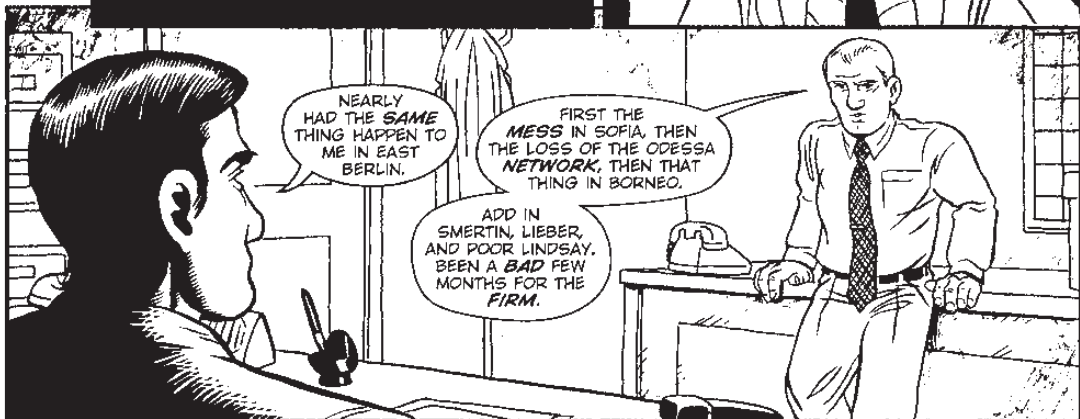
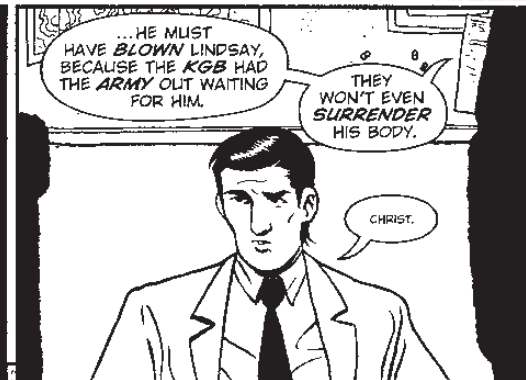
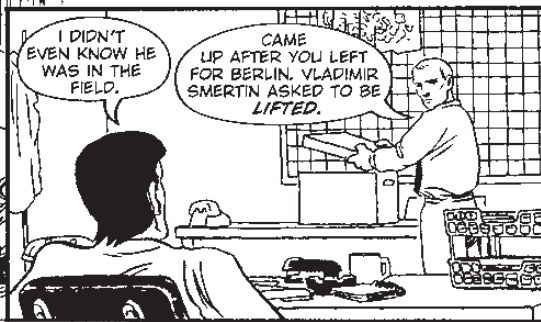
WHAT IS
THAT?

THAT *GUIDE*
YOU PICKED UP IN
THAILAND, THE ONE
TO ALL THE *SEX*
SHOPS. YOU
REMEMBER?

YES.

LINDSAY
DIDN'T THINK
IT WAS THAT
FUNNY.







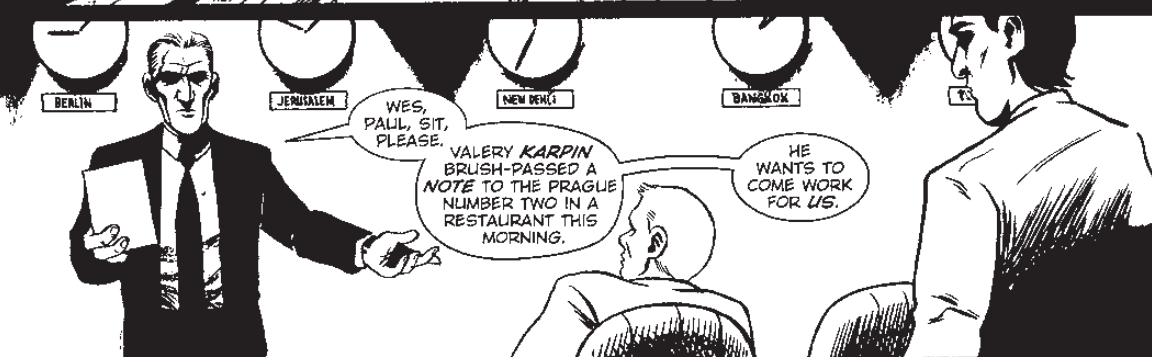
DESIGNATING
OPERATION:
LANDSLIDE.

JOHN?
YOU'VE GOT
FLIGHTS?

CHECKING
NOW, SIR.

SOONEST
FLIGHT, IF YOU
PLEASE.

YES,
SIR.



BERLIN

JERUSALEM

NEW DELHI

BANGKOK

TS

WES,
PAUL, SIT,
PLEASE.

VALERY KARPIN
BRUSH-PASSED A
NOTE TO THE PRAGUE
NUMBER TWO IN A
RESTAURANT THIS
MORNING.

HE
WANTS TO
COME WORK
FOR US.



AND WHO'S
HE WHEN HE'S
AT HOME?

THE K.G.B.
RESIDENT IN
PRAGUE, ISN'T
HE?

LAST REPORT
SAID HE WAS FIGHTING
WITH CHERNENKO'S
PEOPLE.

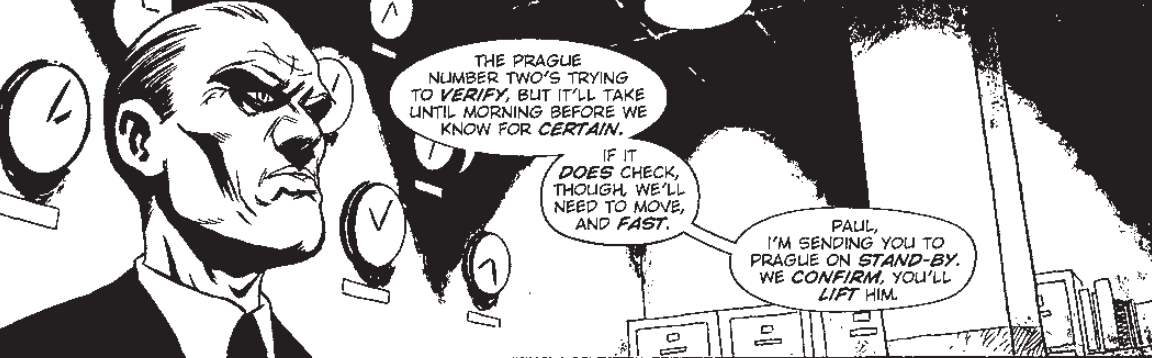
CHERNENKO'S
DEAD.

I HAD
HEARD. IS IT
LIKELY HE'D
DEFECT,
SIR?

GOD ONLY
KNOWS. GORBACHEV
CAN'T CONTROL THE
KGB, AND THE OLD GUARD
DON'T MUCH CARE FOR
REFORMERS.

MIGHT BE
AN INTERNAL PURGE
ON, TRYING TO GET THE
MODERATES OUT OF
POWER.

IS
IT ON THE
LEVEL?



THE PRAGUE
NUMBER TWO'S TRYING
TO *VERIFY*, BUT IT'LL TAKE
UNTIL MORNING BEFORE WE
KNOW FOR CERTAIN.

IF IT
DOES CHECK,
THOUGH, WE'LL
NEED TO MOVE,
AND FAST.

PAUL,
I'M SENDING YOU TO
PRAGUE ON *STAND-BY*.
WE *CONFIRM*, YOU'LL
LIFT HIM.



ME,
SIR?



I CAN'T SEND
WES UNTIL I KNOW ABOUT
LINDSAY'S *REPLACEMENT*,
AND YOU'VE PLAYED IN
CZECHO BEFORE.

GARY WILL
BRIEF YOU. YOU SHOULD
HAVE *ENOUGH* TIME TO
NIP HOME AND GIVE YOUR
NEW BRIDE A KISS BEFORE
YOU'RE ON YOUR
BIKE.



YES,
SIR.



WES,
IF YOU'LL
COME WITH
ME.

OH, AND
PAUL?

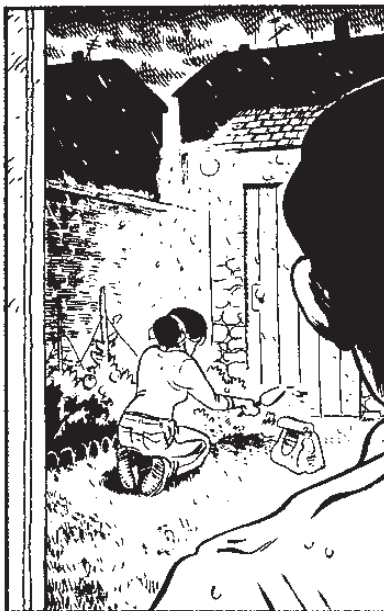
SIR?



ROTTEN
RUN OF *LUCK*
LATELY. HATE TO
SEE US SET UP
AGAIN.

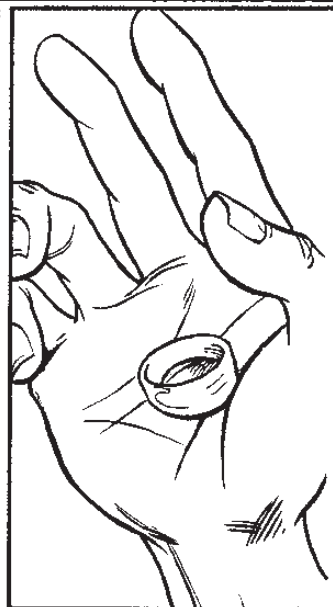
YOU'LL
DRAW *ARMS* ON
STATION.

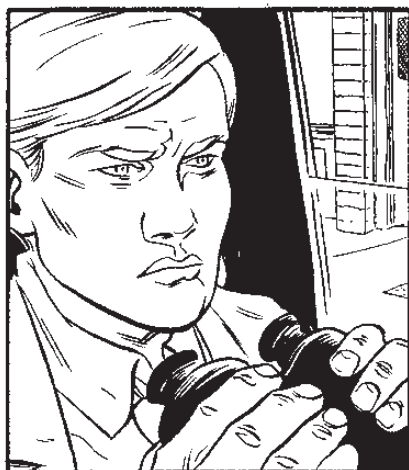
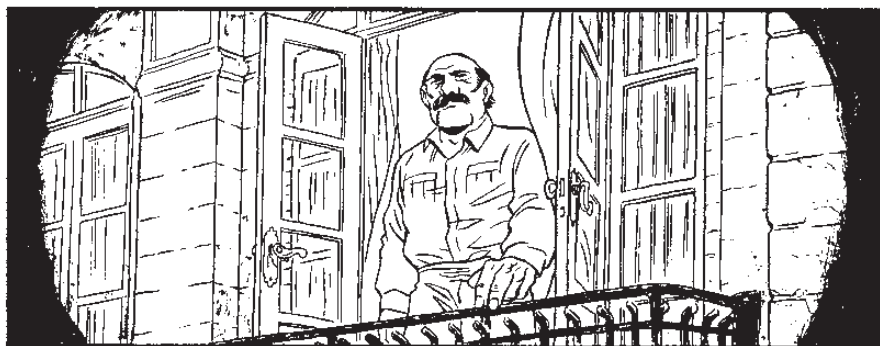
THAT'S AN
ORDER.







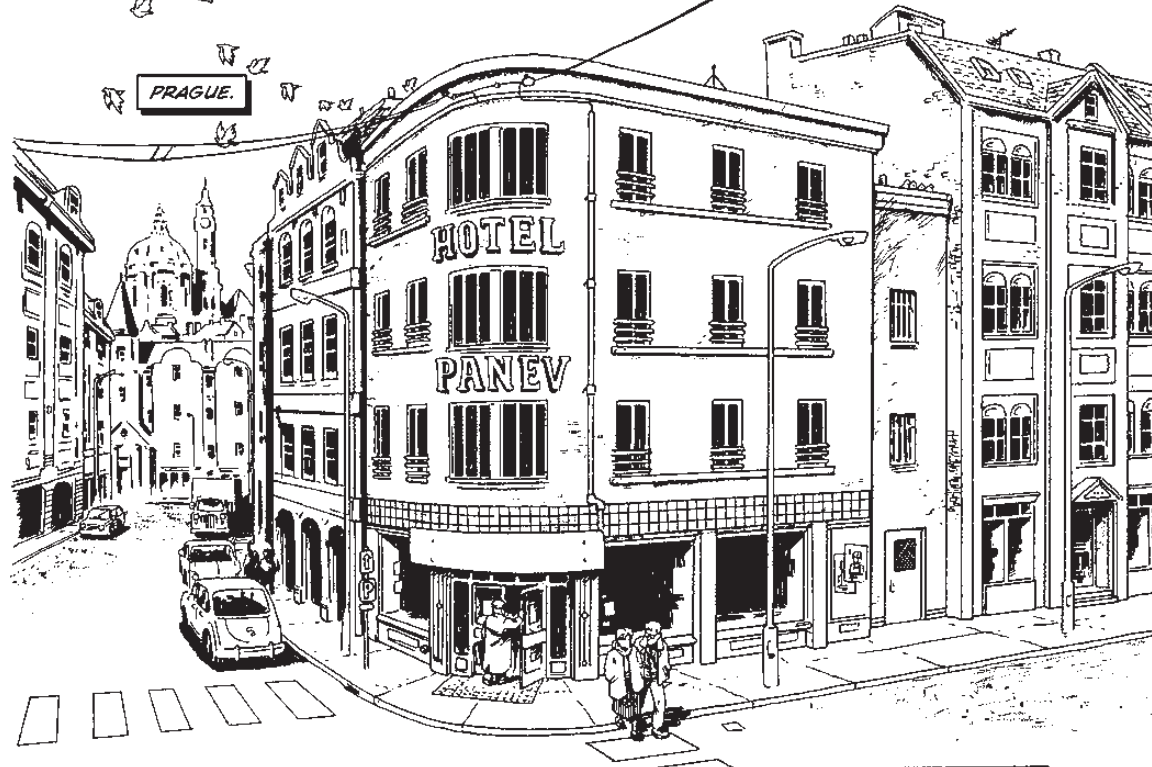


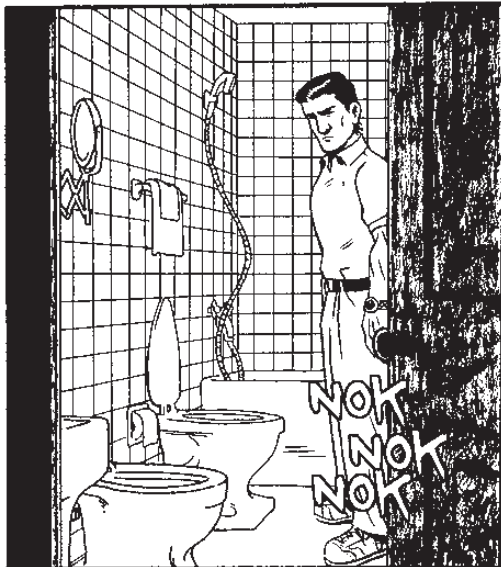
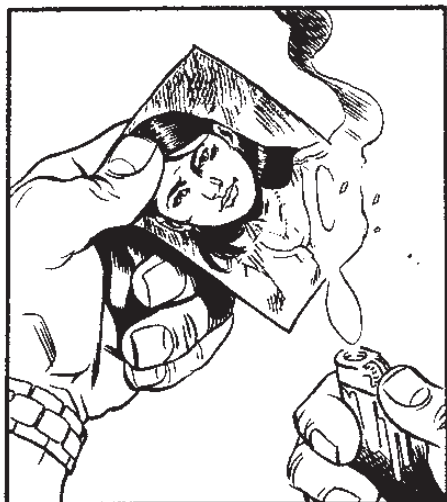


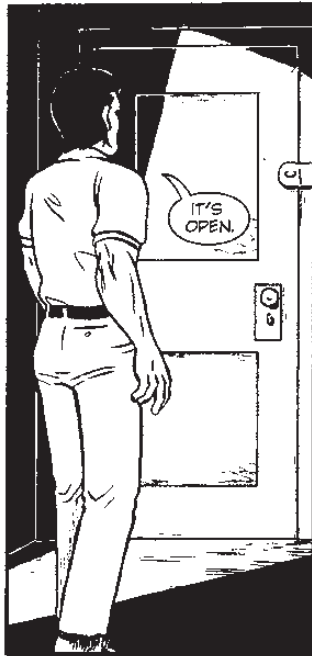
CHAPTER 2

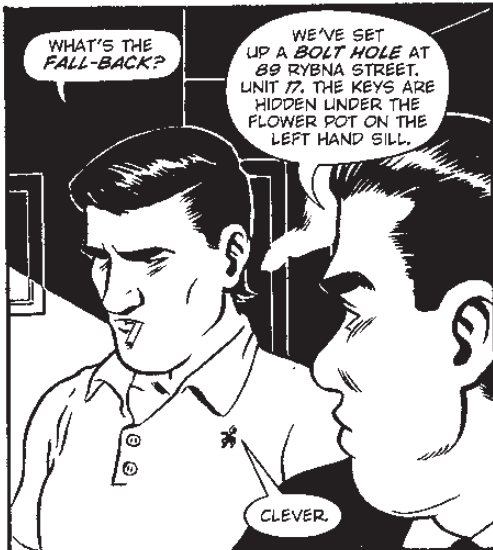
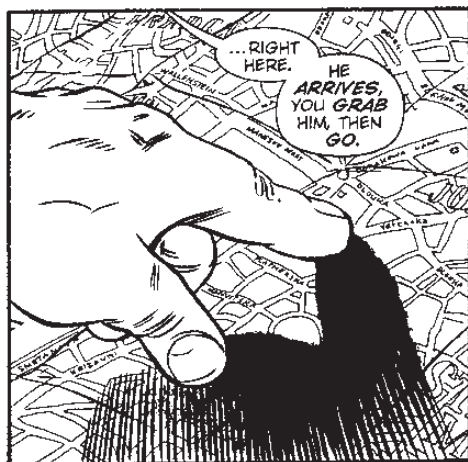


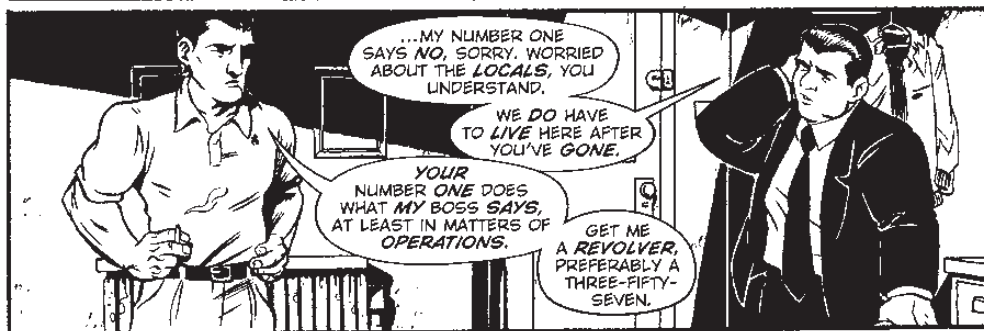
PRAGUE.

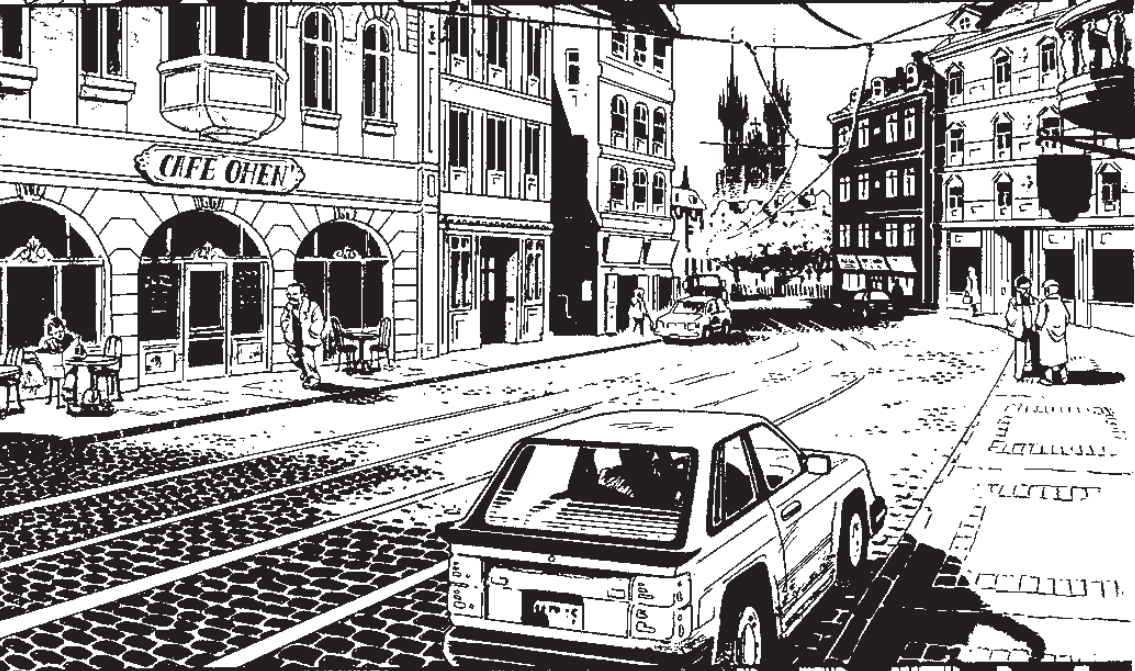
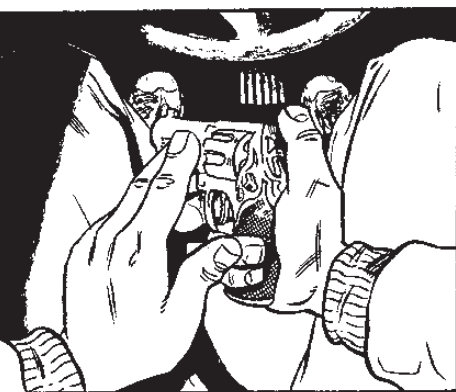
















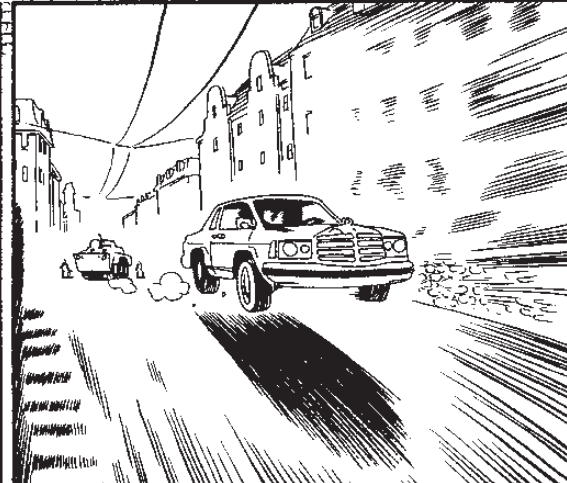
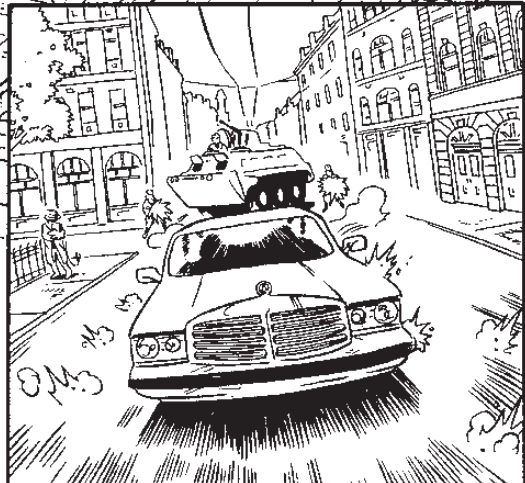
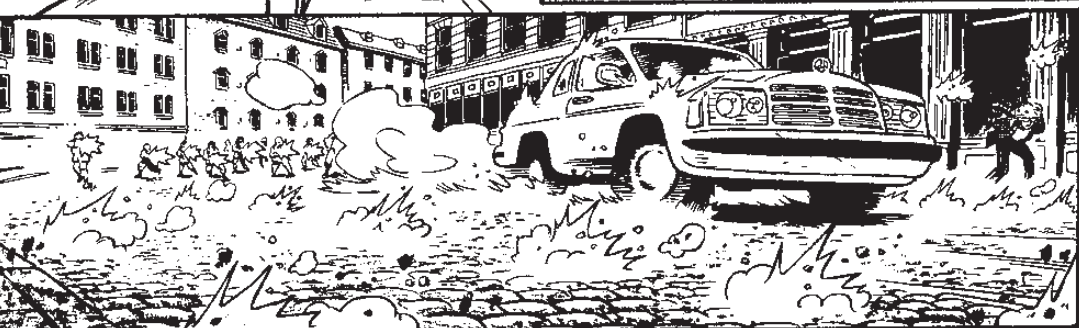
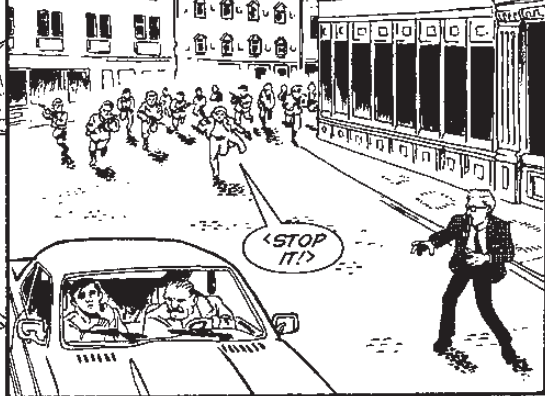
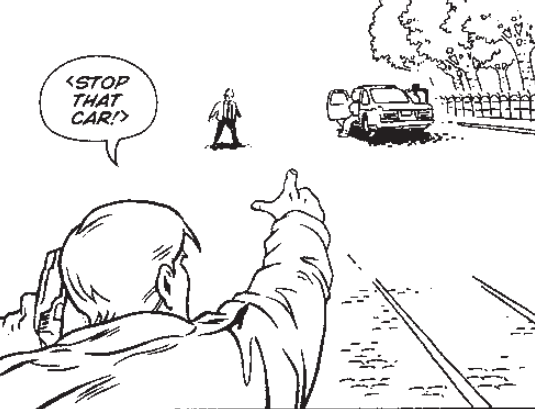


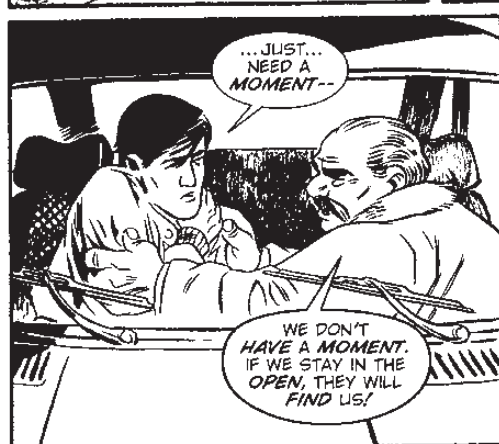




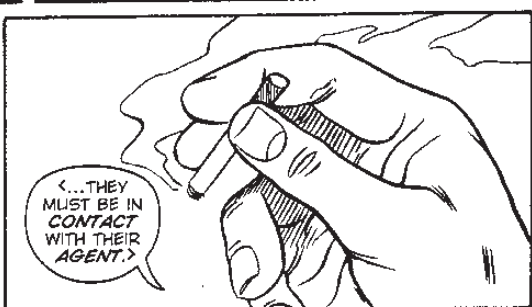
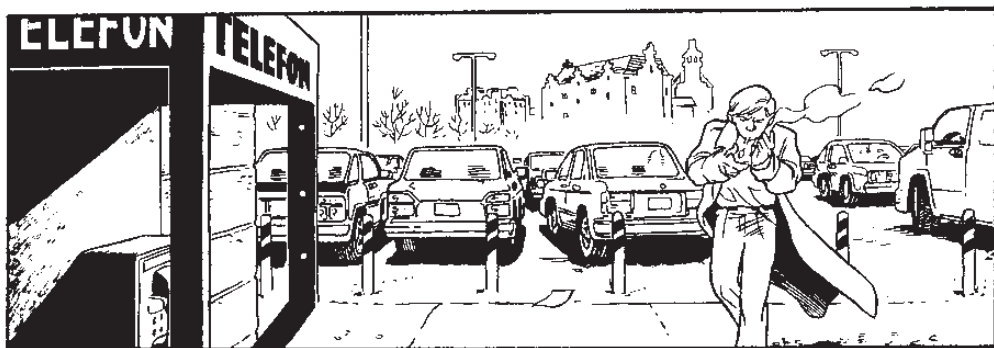


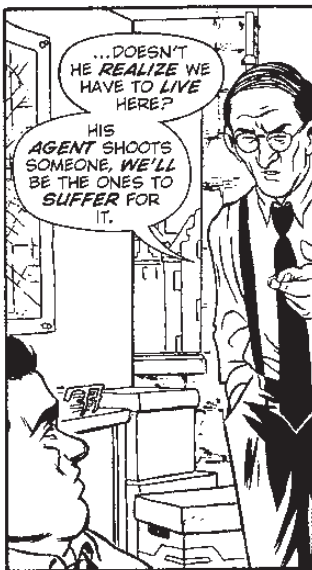
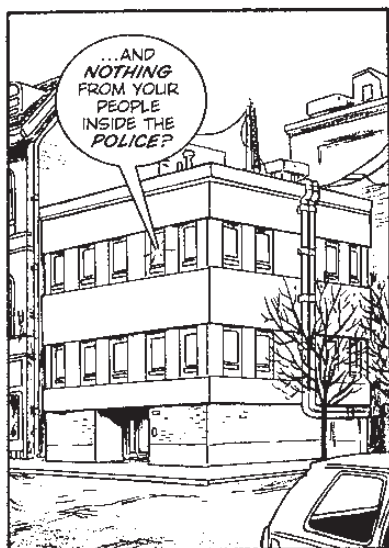


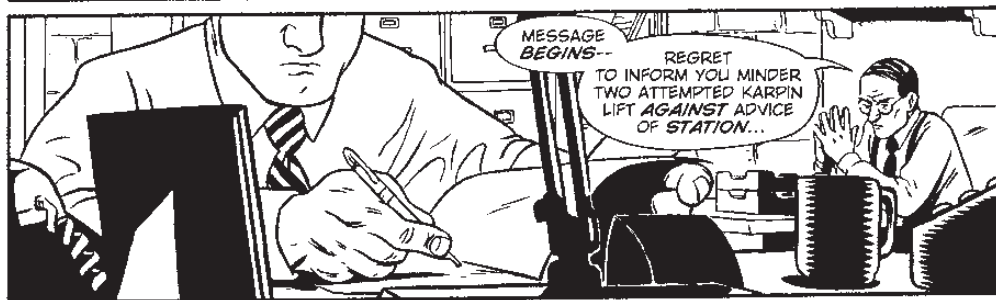
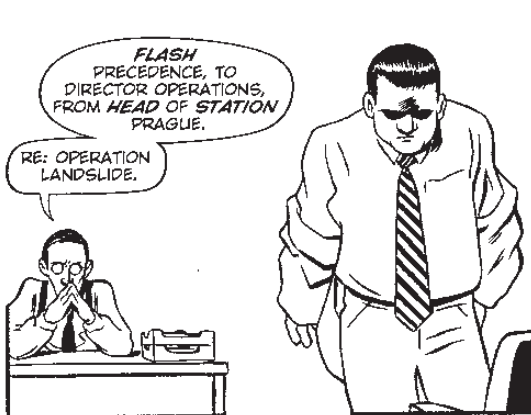


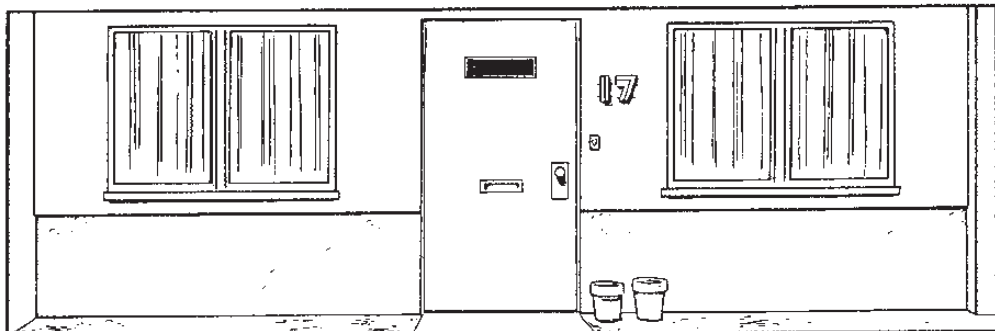
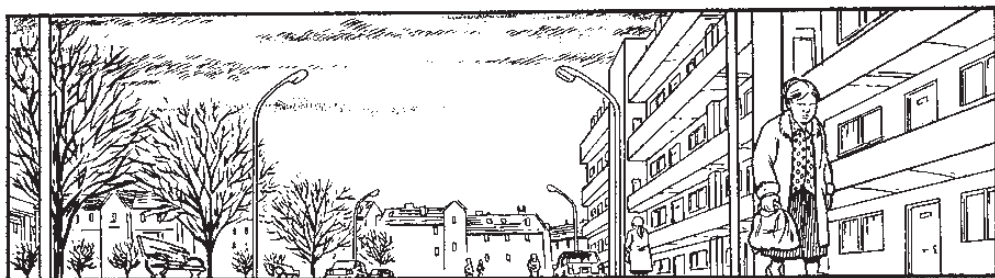


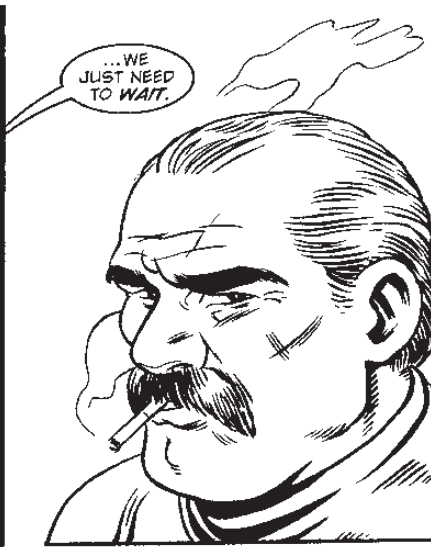
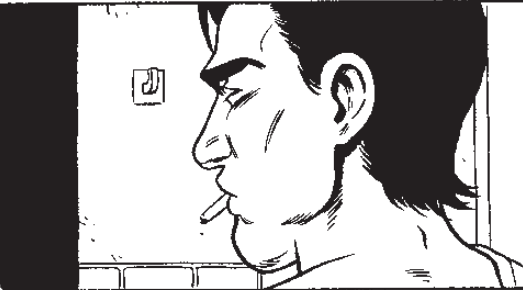
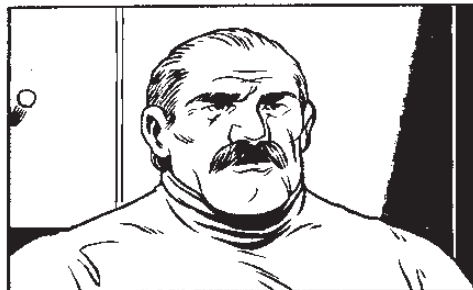
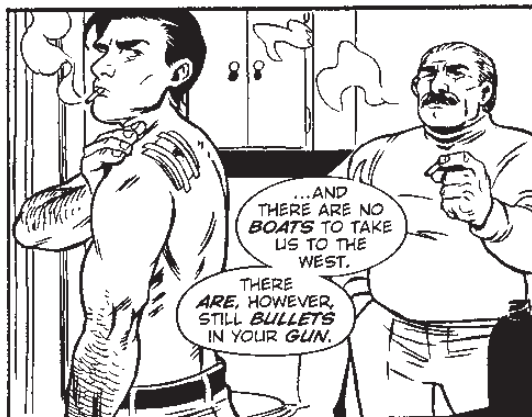
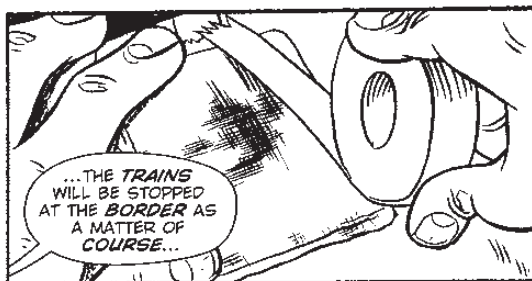
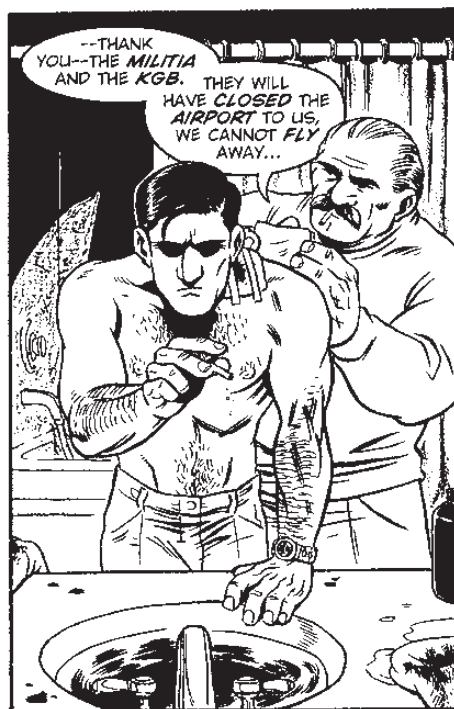


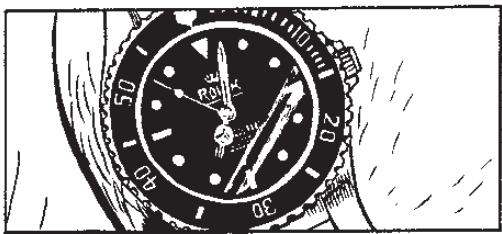
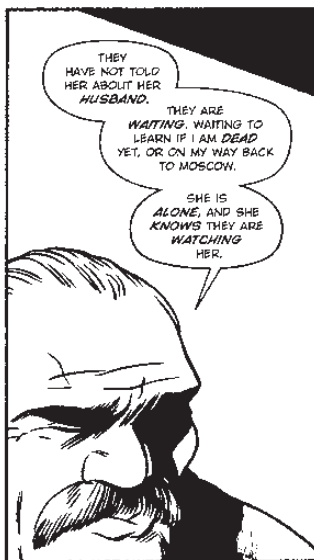
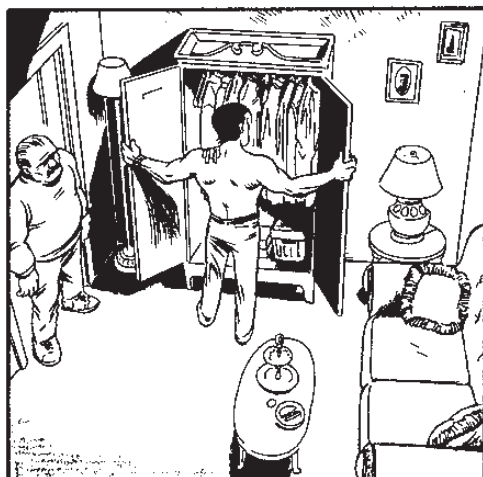


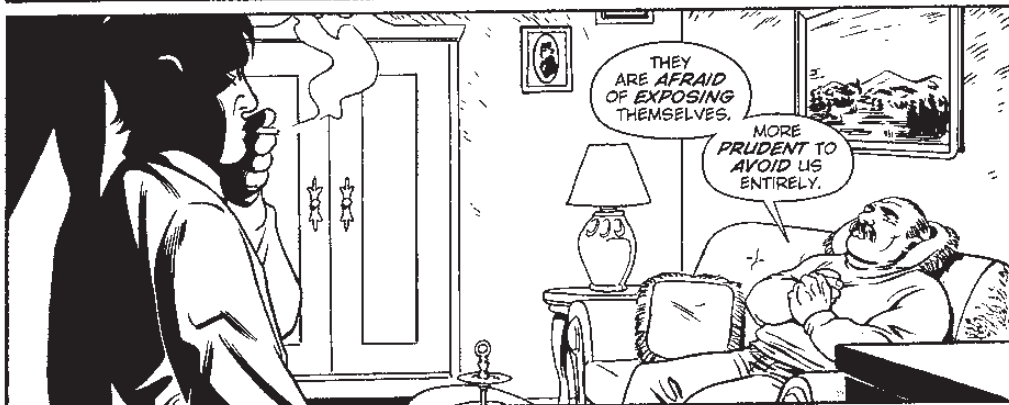


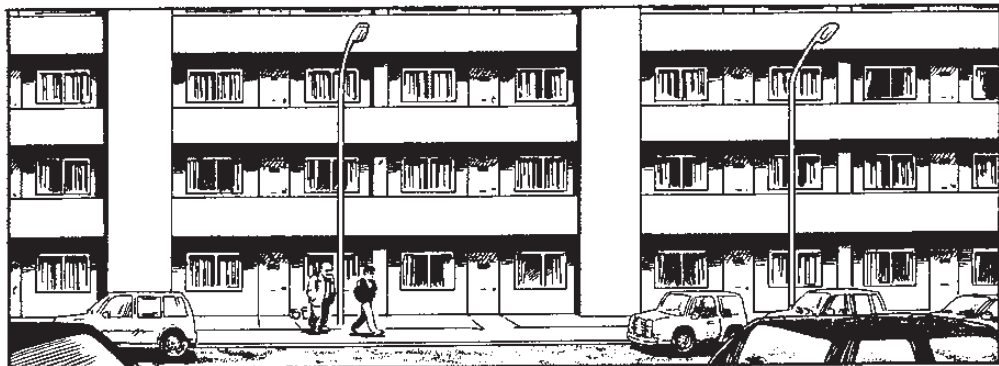
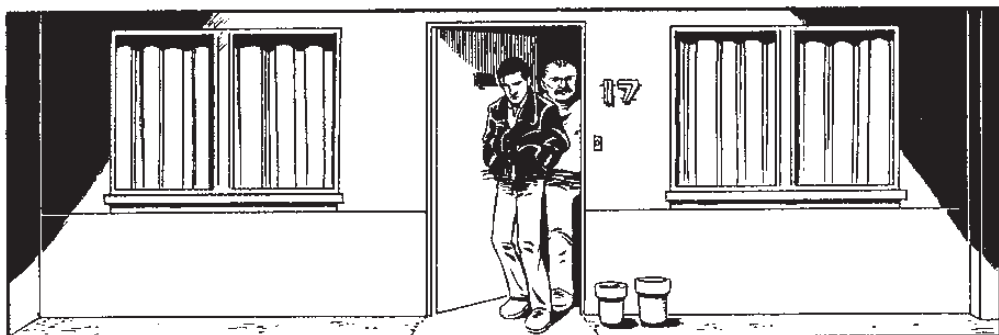












CHAPTER 3



LONDON.

FLASH
SIGNAL COMING
THROUGH,
SIR...

17086-EWP-PS-HRA11
- FLASH - FLASH - FLASH -
TOP SECRET - Immediate Precedence
From: Head of Station (Prague), Barclay, P.
To: Director Operations, Watson, J.

...FROM
PRAGUE,
OPERATION:
LANDSLIDE.

FROM
HEAD OF STATION
PRAGUE, SIR.

LET'S
HAVE IT.

Post Director Operations, Watson, J.
Re: Landslide
Request to inform Landslide base. Assume
subject of station, HINDEN TWO attempting
break-out. Contact with station severed. Karpin
SFA. Citizens killed, POW captured. Karpin
whereabouts unknown. Unconfirmed report
Hinder Two shot. Information unknown.
Action: NO FURTHER ACTION at this time.

SIR?

LANDSLIDE'S
GONE BUST. KARPIN'S
MISSING, AND HINDER
TWO'S BEEN SHOT.

GET ON
TO THE FCO, NOTIFY
THEM OF THE SITUATION,
BUT IMPRESS UPON THEM
THAT IT'S TOO EARLY TO
COMMENT.

SEE IF
THE CIA CAN
VERIFY WHAT
PRAGUE'S
SAYING.

I'M
GOING LIP
TO C.

FRAGILE.



DO NOT
MOVE, MISTER
CROCKER...



...AND DO
NOT MAKE ANY
FURTHER ATTEMPTS
TO ESCAPE...



...FOR THEY
WILL ONLY
RESULT IN
YOUR DEATH.

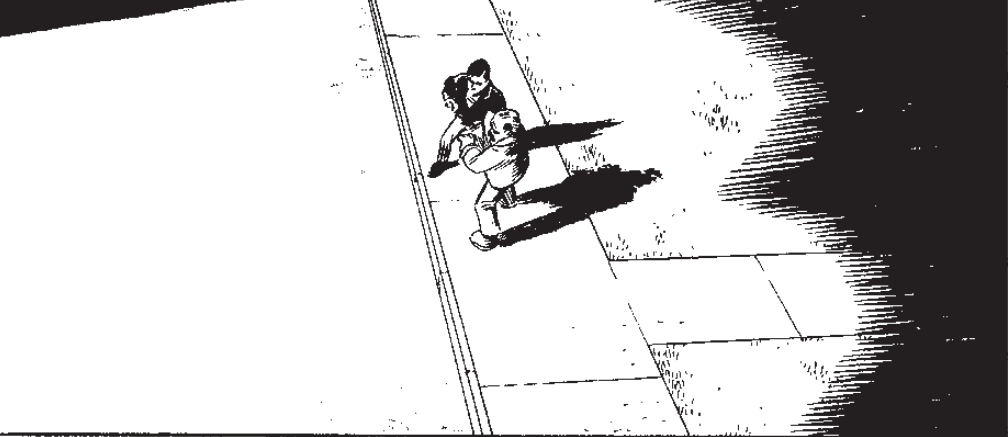


...PLACE
YOUR HANDS
OVER YOUR--

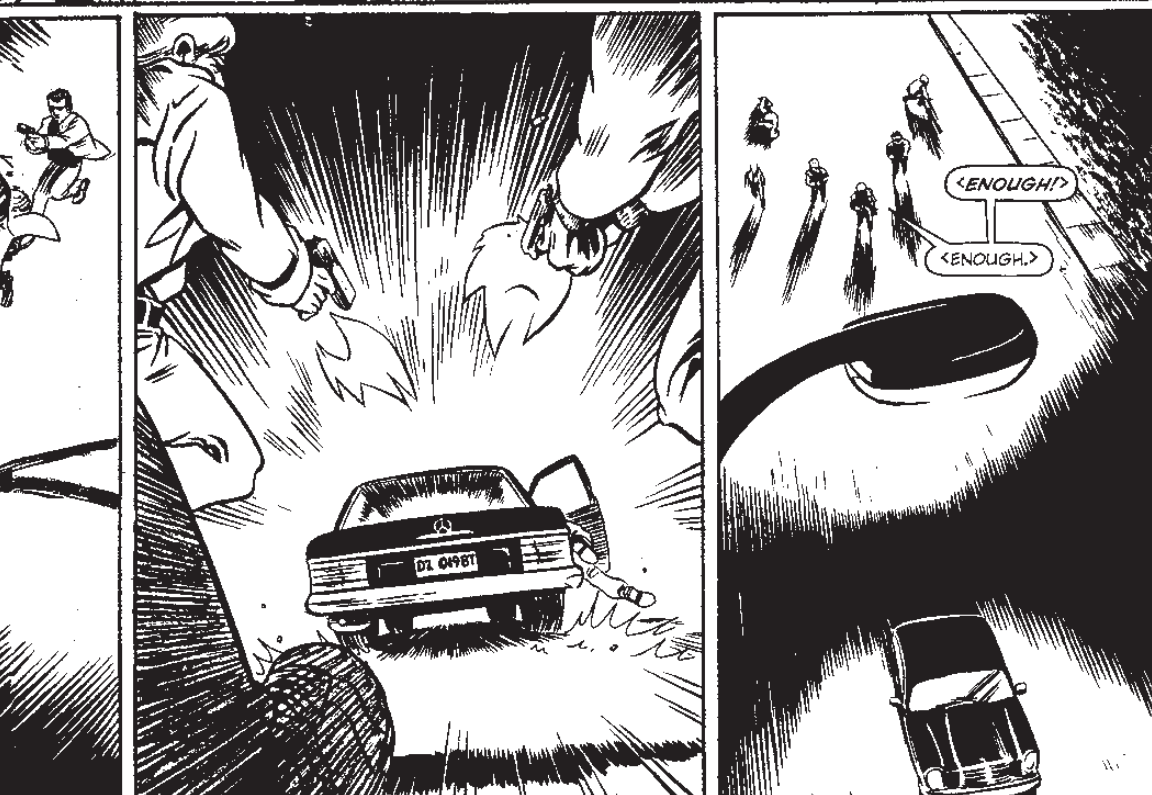


--HEADS--







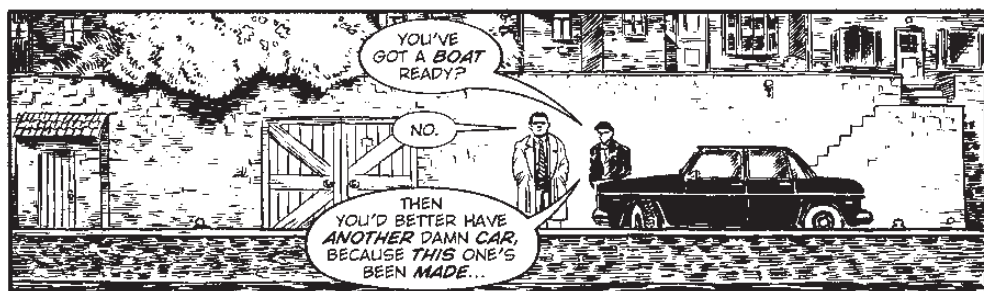




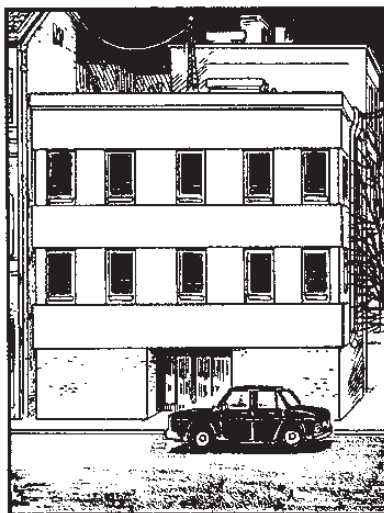




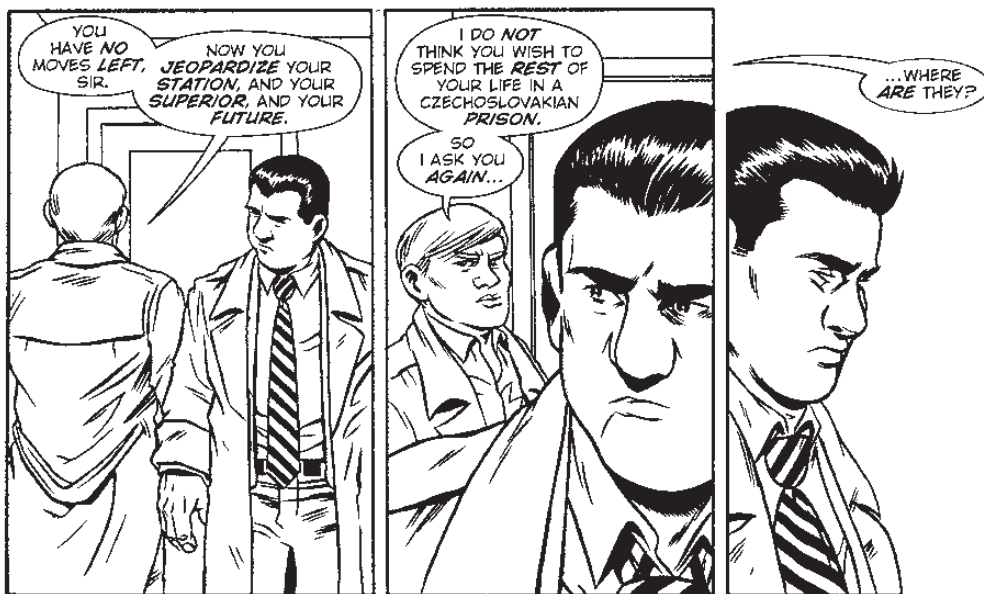




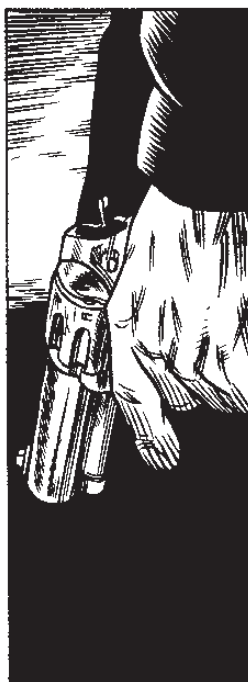
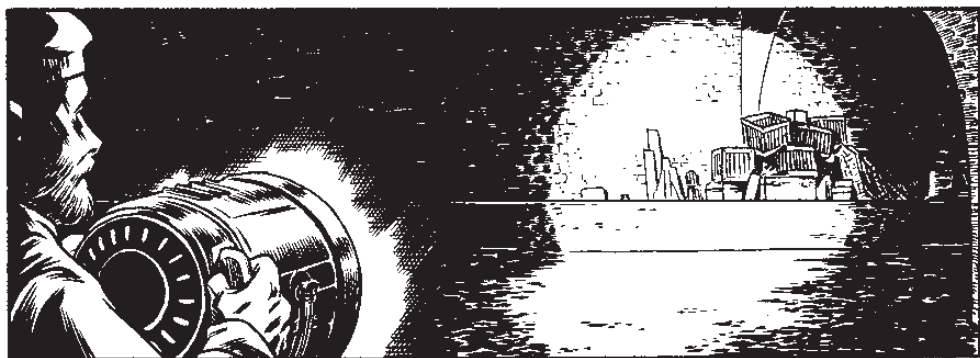




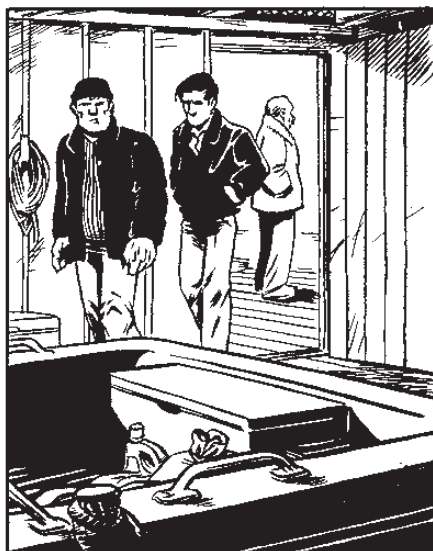
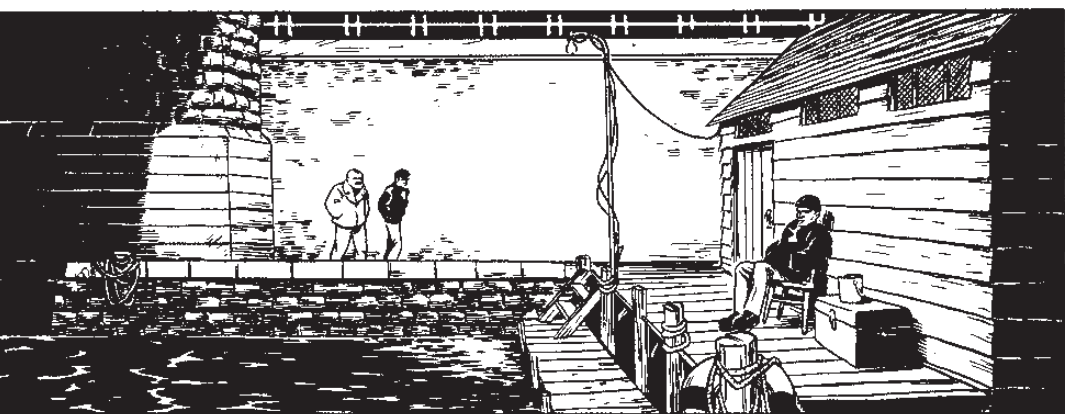


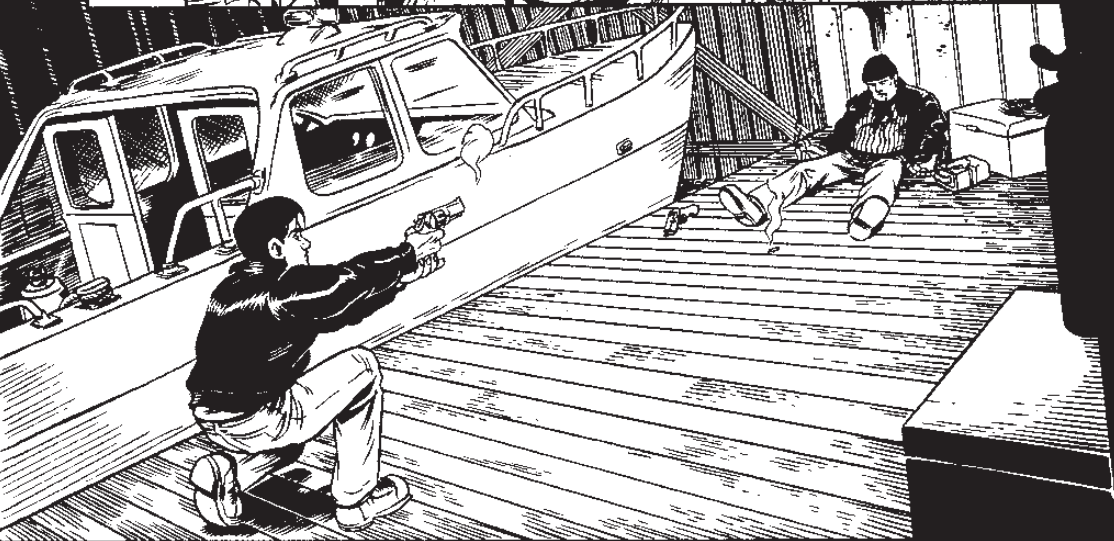


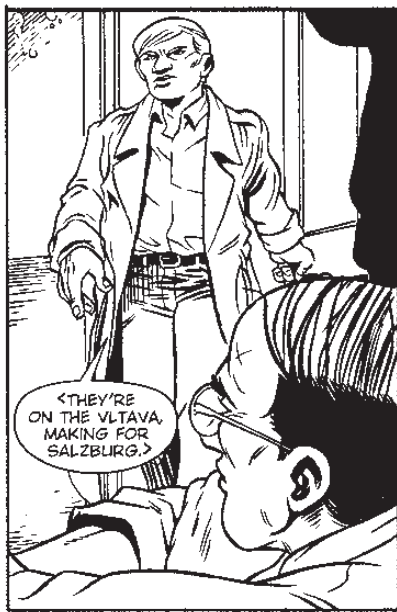


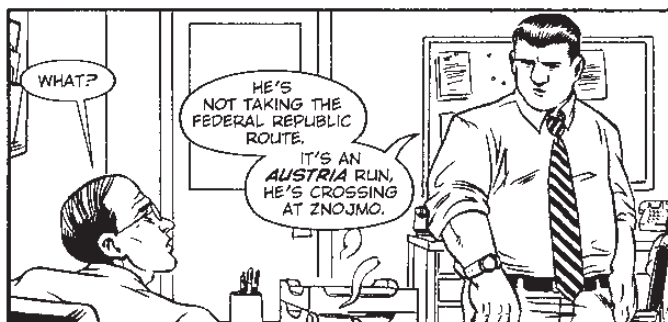
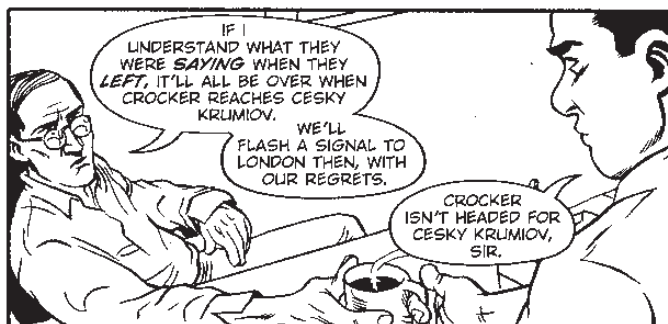
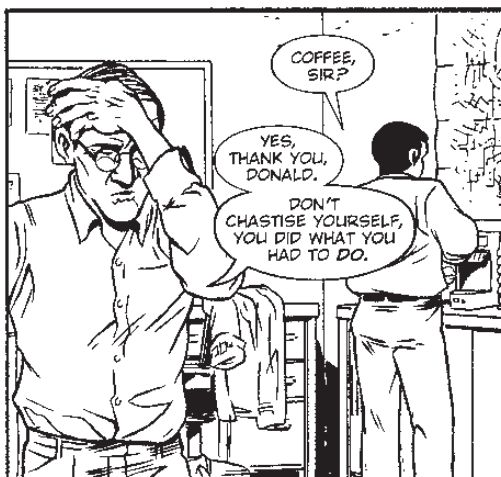


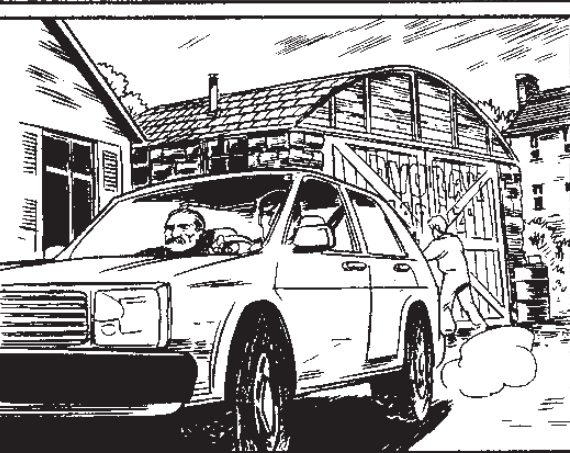
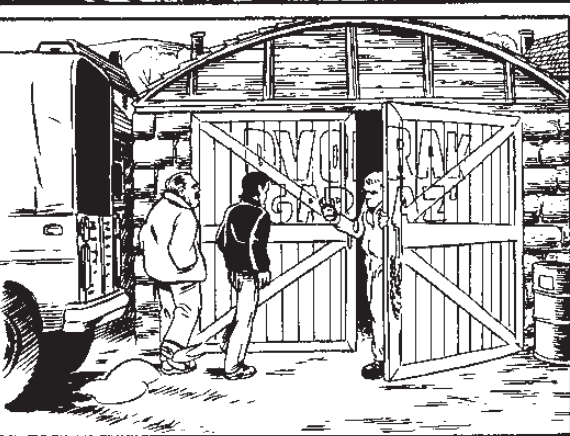
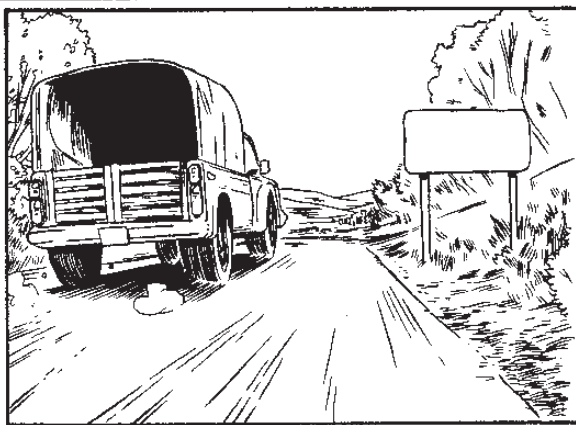












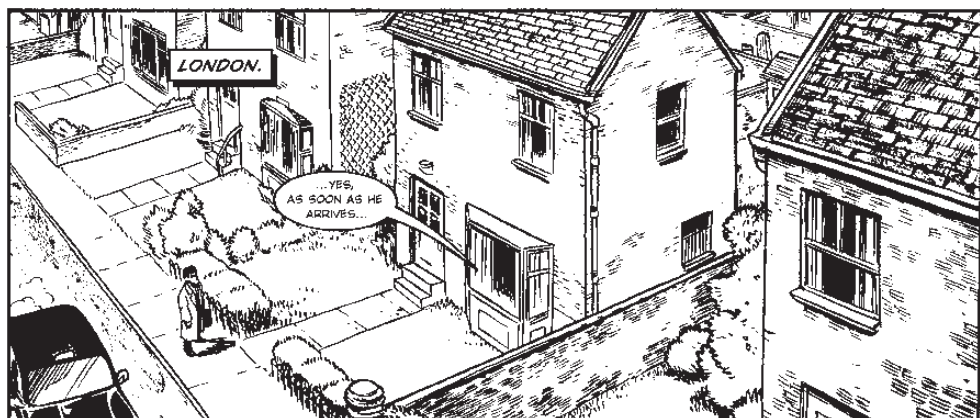












VOLUME 2: TOM WALLACE

WRITTEN BY
GREG RUCKA

ILLUSTRATED BY
RICK BURCHETT

LETTERED BY
JOHN DRANSKI

ORIGINALLY EDITED BY
JAMES LUCAS JONES

SIS



TOM WALLACE—Ex-Sergeant of the Royal Marines Commandos. Recruited to the SIS as Minder Three, eventually promoted to Minder Two when Shepherd retires. Sent to Hong Kong to investigate the death of Bill Lambert.

PAUL CROCKER—Head of the Special Section, designated Minder One. A man with a family. Had risen through the ranks to Minder One through his service during the Cold War.

TERRENCE SHEPHERD—Minder Two of the Special Section. Retired from the Special Section when he was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.

CARTER—Director of Operations, or D.Ops. Became D.Ops through bureaucratic means rather than through skill or experience. Has direct command of the Special Section, despite the fact that his men don't respect his decisions.

BILL LAMBERT—The Number Two in Hong Kong. Involved in some off-the-record business dealings before his body turned up in the Hong Kong Harbor.

SIS

OTHERS



FIONA—Deputy Chief of the Special Section. .

LOUISE—Secretary to C. The gatekeeper to C's office.

ROY HALLECK—The Number One in Hong Kong. Insists that there was nothing untoward in Lambert's business arrangements.

DETECTIVE MEI XIAO FENG—Hong Kong Metropolitan Police. Investigating the murder of Bill Lambert.



BOSNIA, 73 KM NNW KONJIC.

SEPTEMBER 23, 1995.

SON
OF A
BITCH

MARINE
ANDROS

--WHERE
THE HELL'S
BRAVO?

SECOND FIRE
TEAM'S PINNED
DOWN ON THE
NORTH SIDE!

SERGEANT!
COMING UP ON
THE LEFT! THE
LEFT!

FUCK!

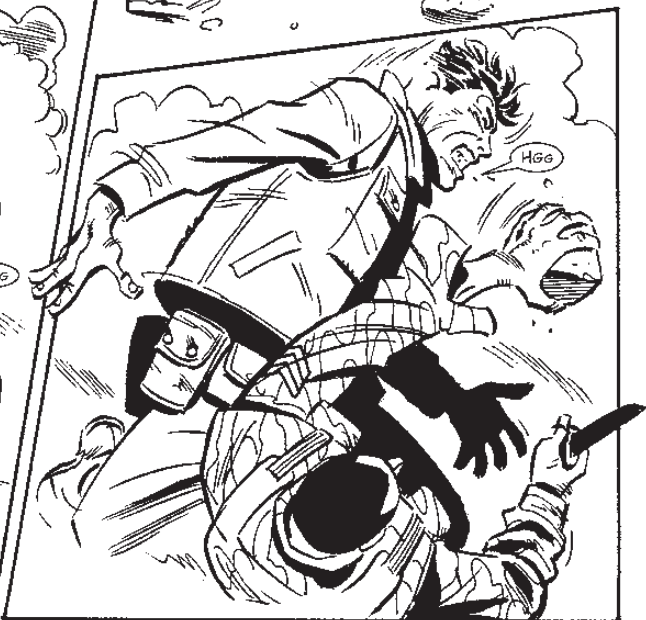
BIGGS!

YES, SIR!

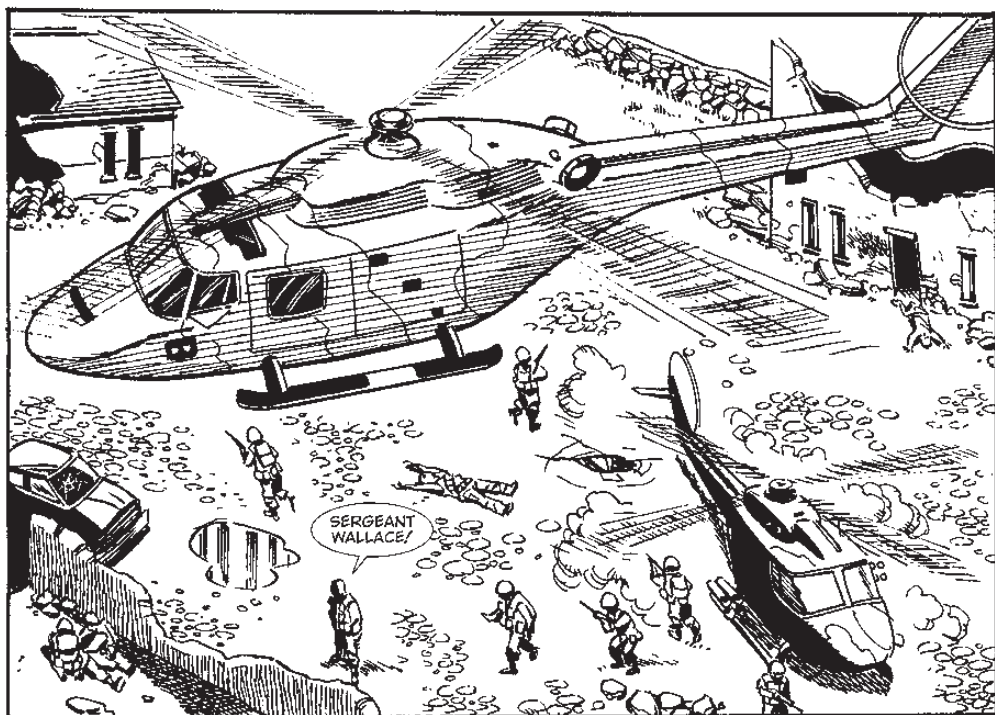
POP
SMOKE,
LAD!

YES,
SIR!











MOSTLY
MEN AND BOYS,
SIR.

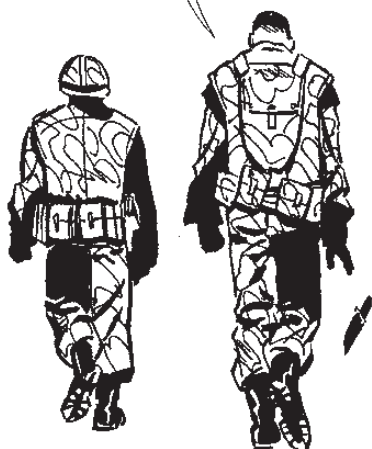
WE THINK
THEY *RELOCATED* THE
WOMEN TO THE RAPE
CAMPS.



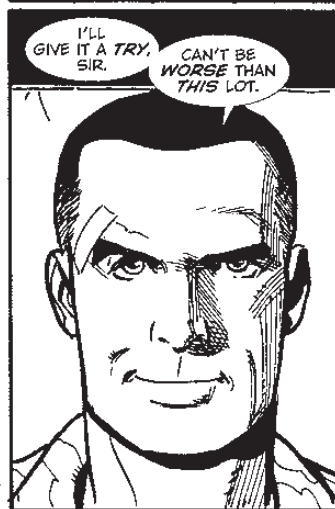
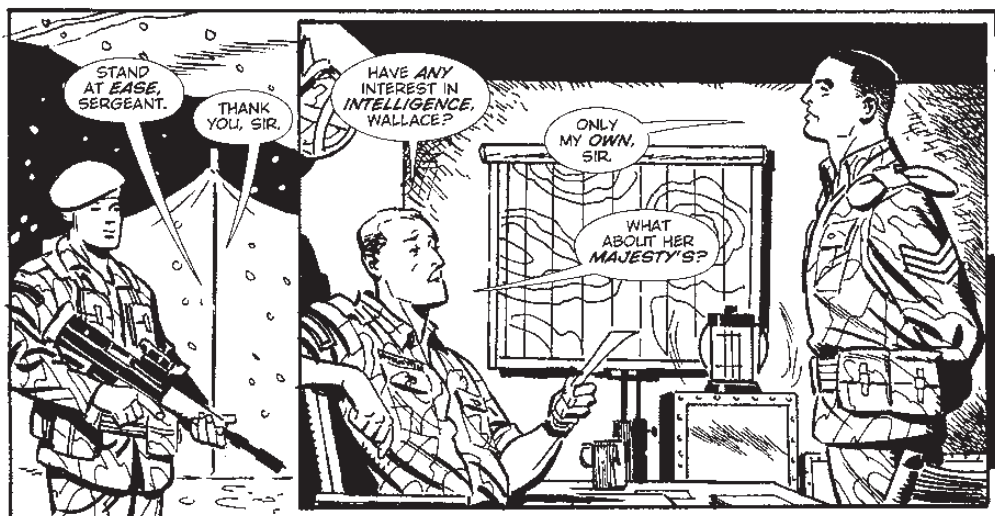
WE'LL
REPORT IT AS
SOON AS WE'RE BACK
AT CAMP.

SEND THE
INVESTIGATORS
OUT TO *COUNT* THE
BODIES.

YES, SIR.



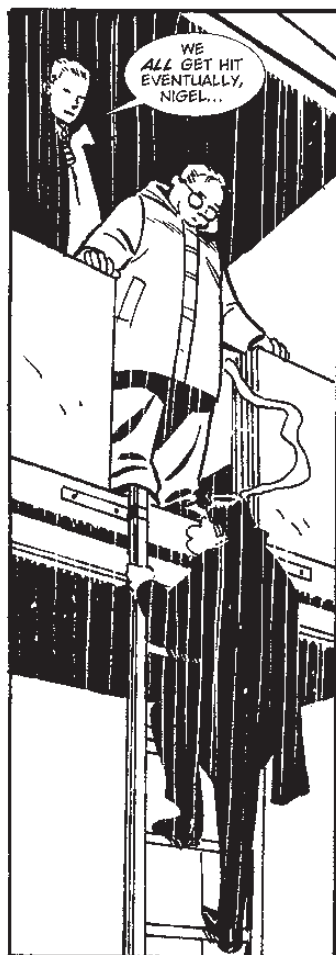




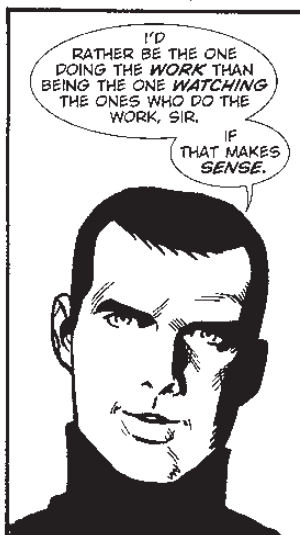




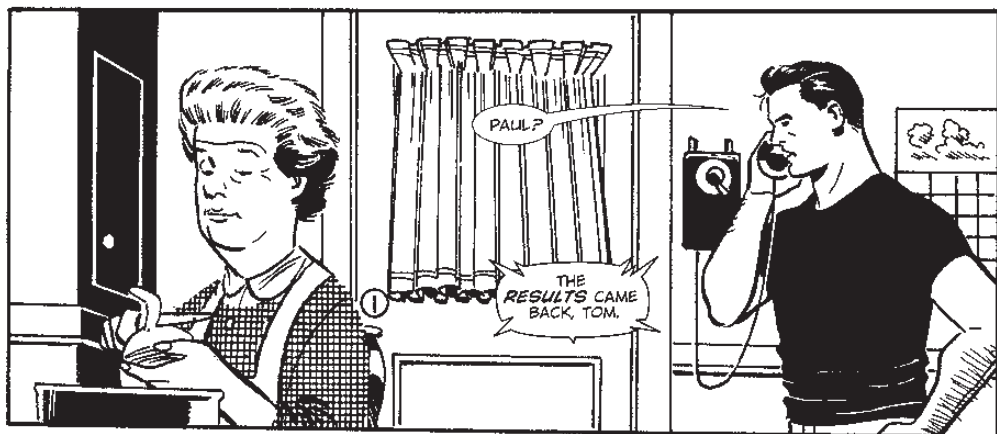


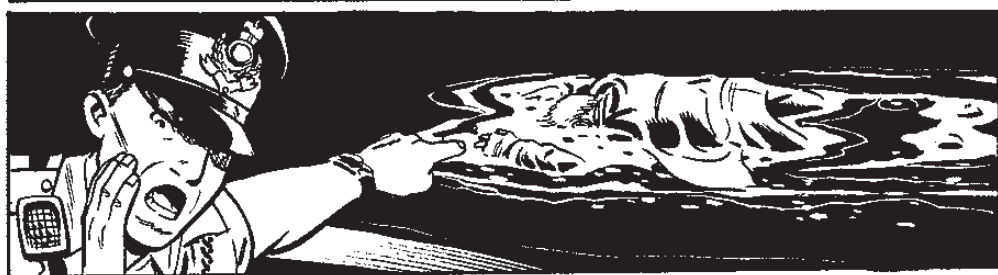
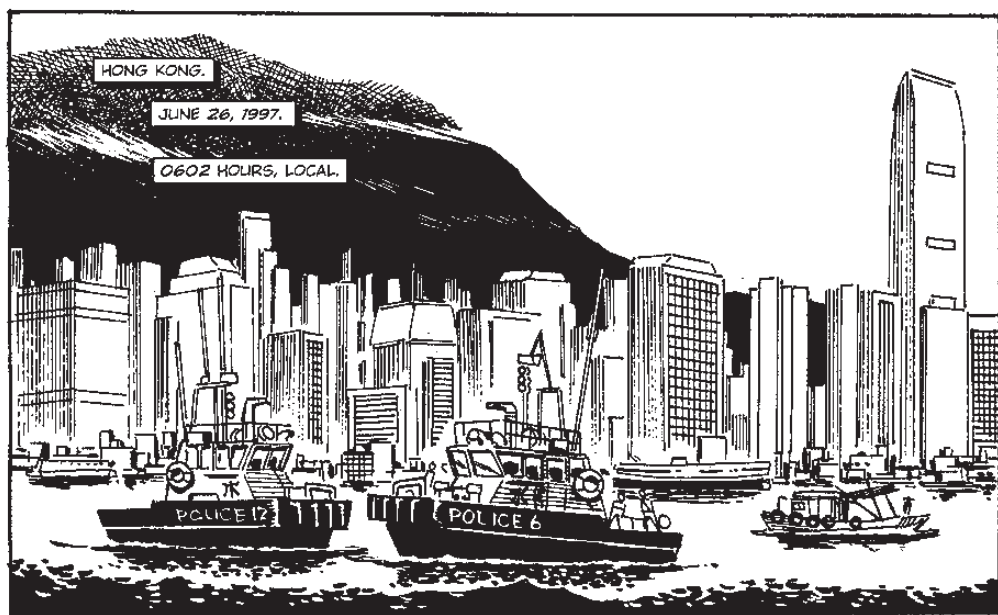
















Crocker, P.
Head of Section

Wallace, T.



IT'S A
BUST.

NO
ONE IN THE
PIPE?



WOULDN'T
MATTER IF
THERE WAS.

D-OPS
JUST INFORMED
ME THAT THE FCO'S
IMPLEMENTED A
HIRING
FREEZE...

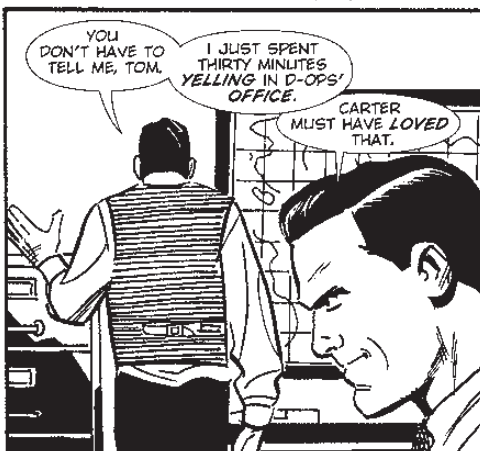


...IT'S GOING
TO BE JUST YOU
AND ME FOR THE
FORESEEABLE
FUTURE.



ARE THEY
DAFT? WHAT HAPPENS
IF A JOB COMES UP AND
ONE OF US NEEDS
BACKUP?

WE'RE
TO GET IT ON
STATION.

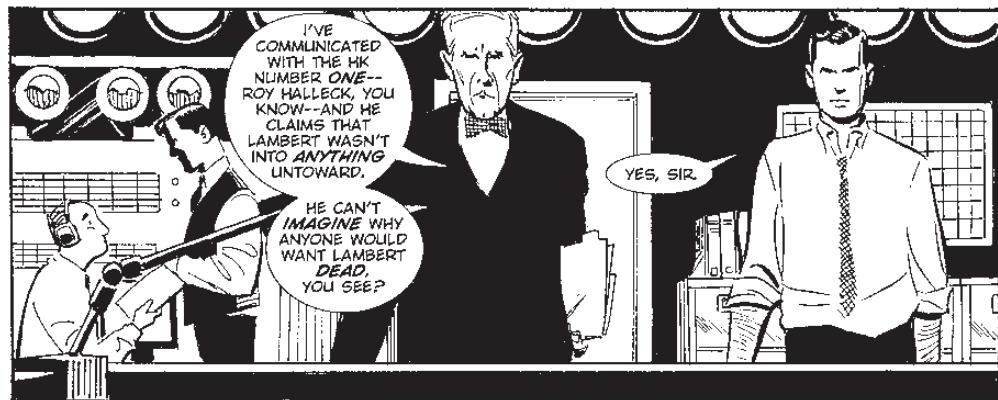
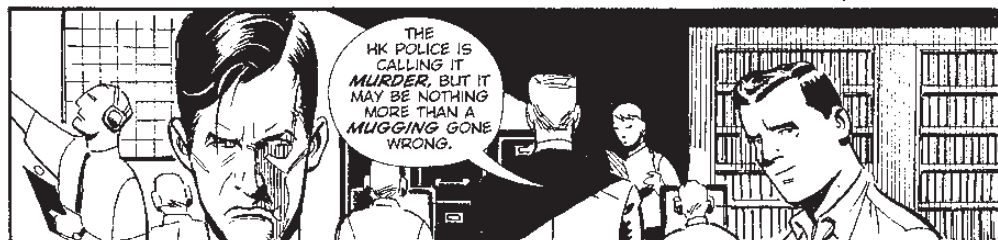
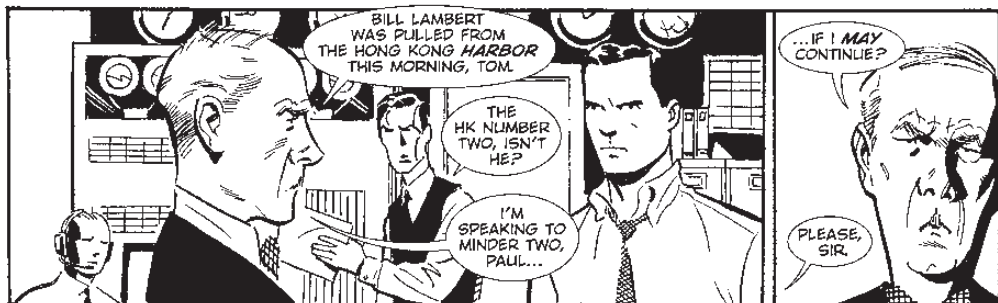


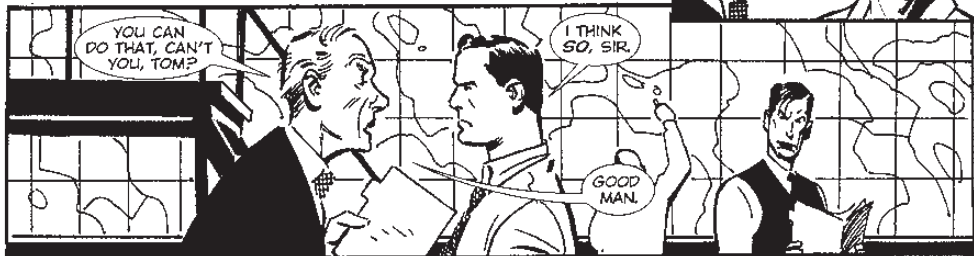
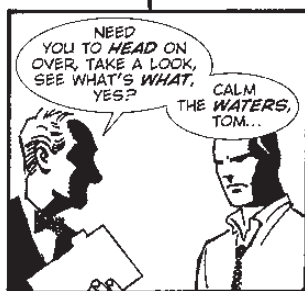
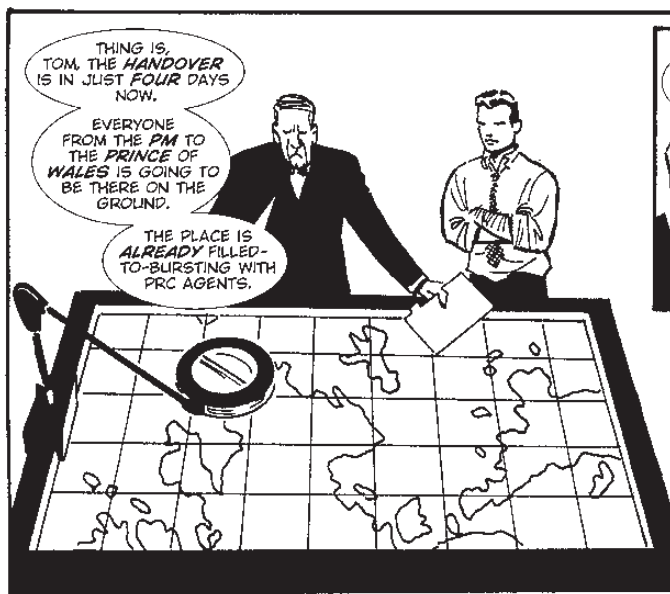
YOU
DON'T HAVE TO
TELL ME, TOM.

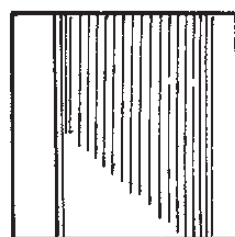
I JUST SPENT
THIRTY MINUTES
YELLING IN D-OPS'
OFFICE.

CARTER
MUST HAVE LOVED
THAT.









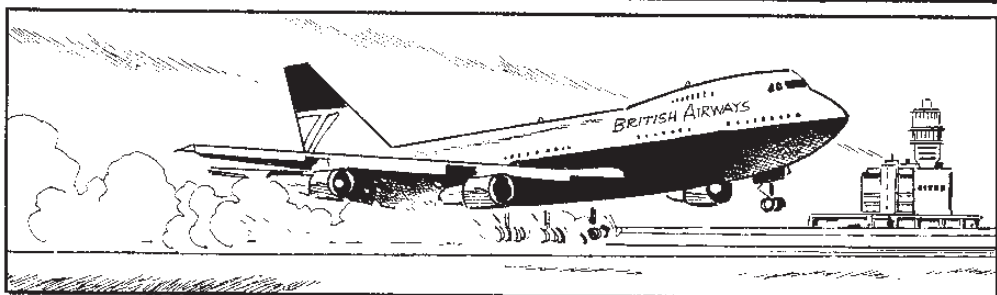
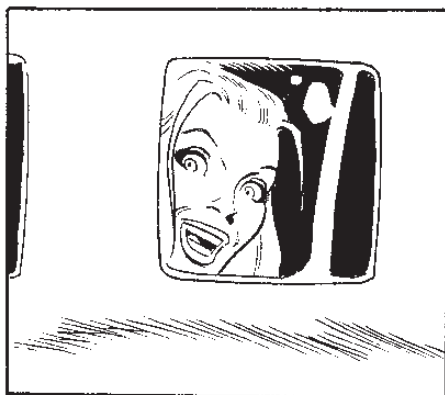
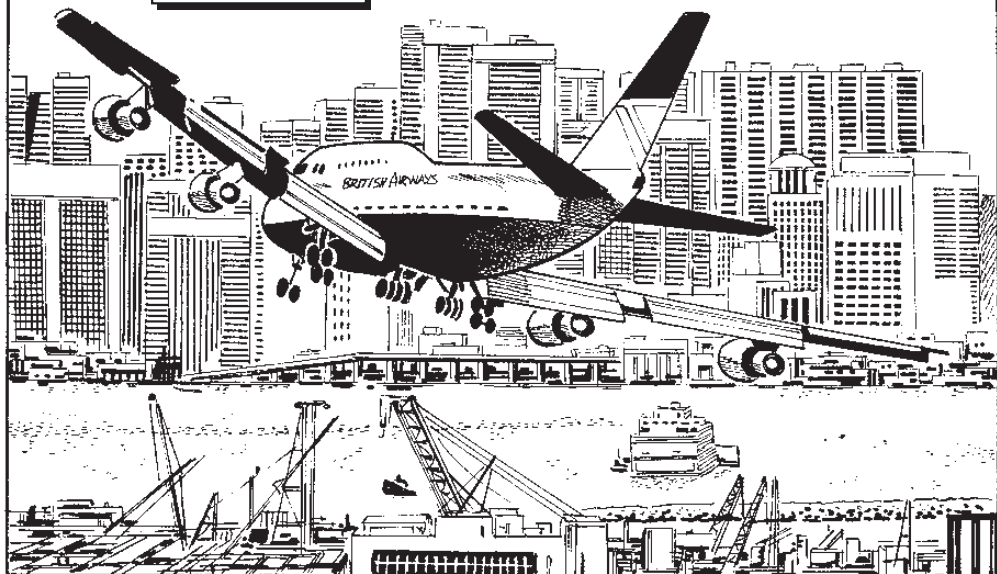


HONG KONG.

JUNE 27TH, 1997--3 DAYS
UNTIL HANDOVER.



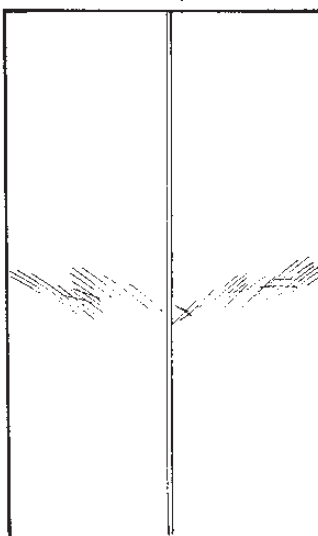
1643 HOURS (GMT+8.00)

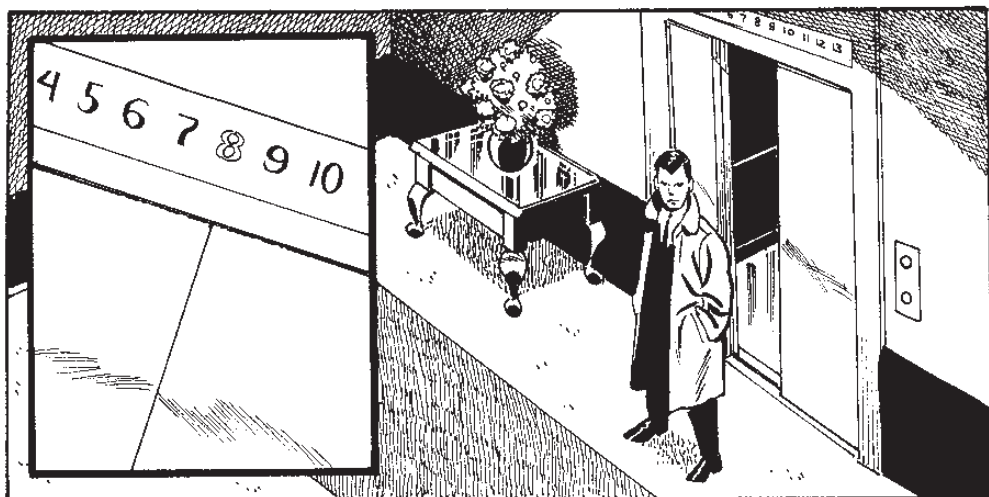


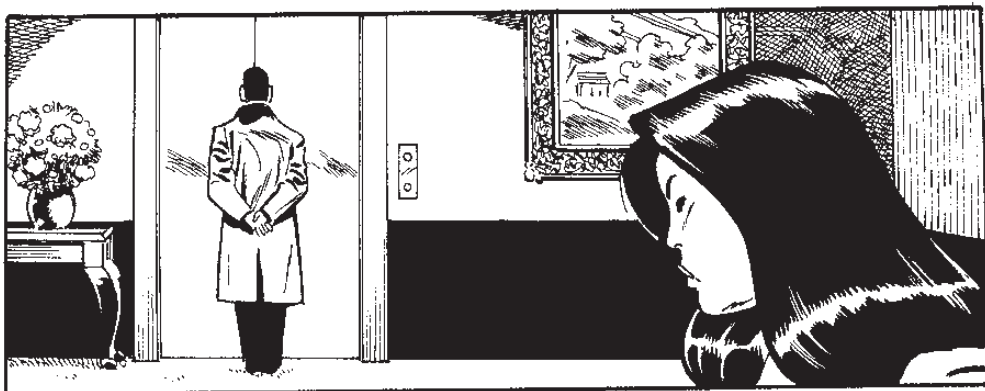




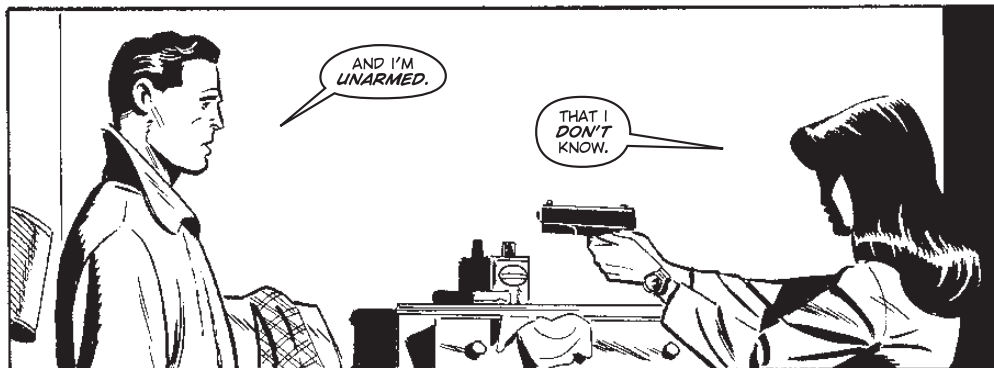
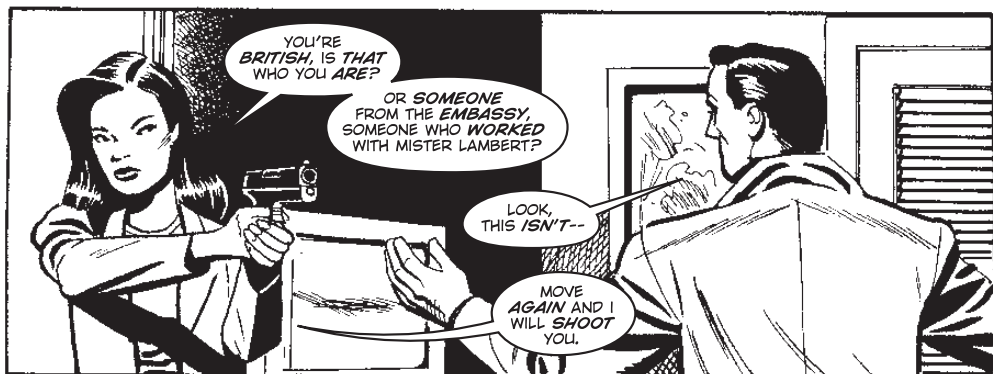


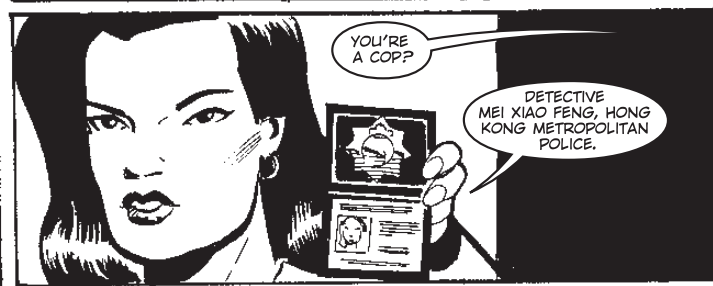




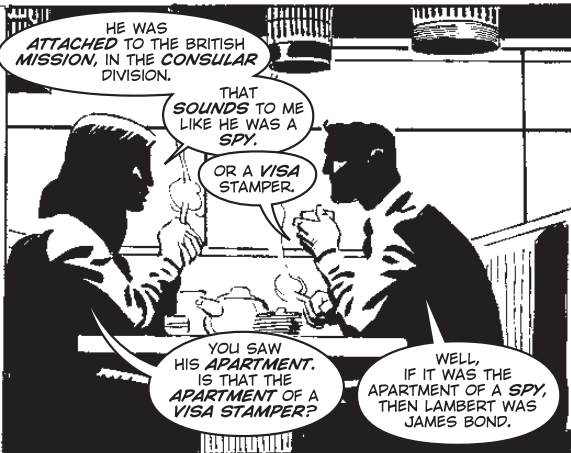








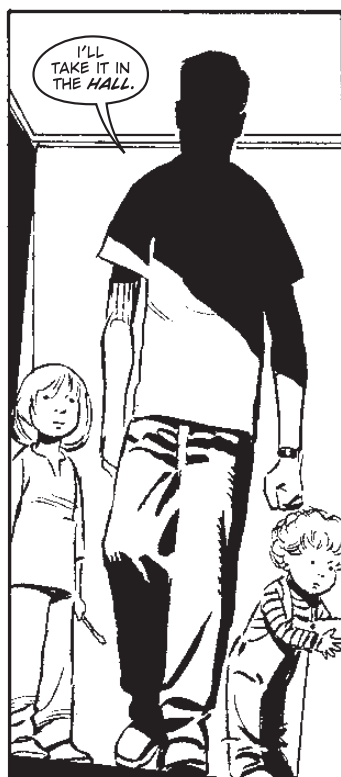
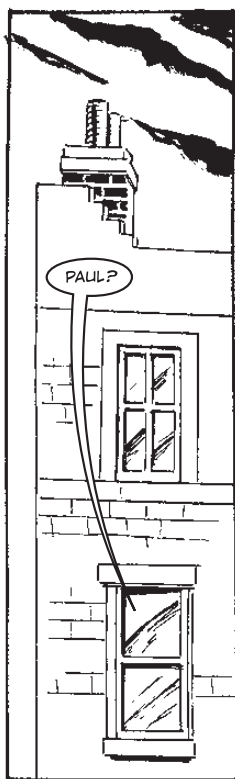




... JAMES BOND DOESN'T EXIST.

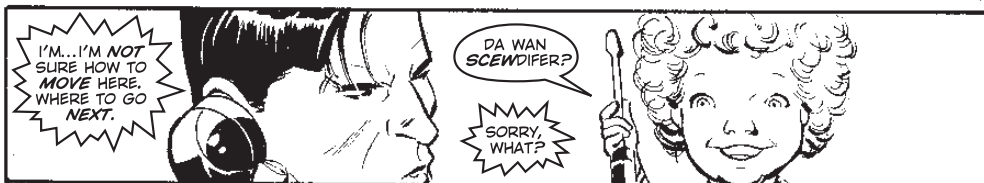
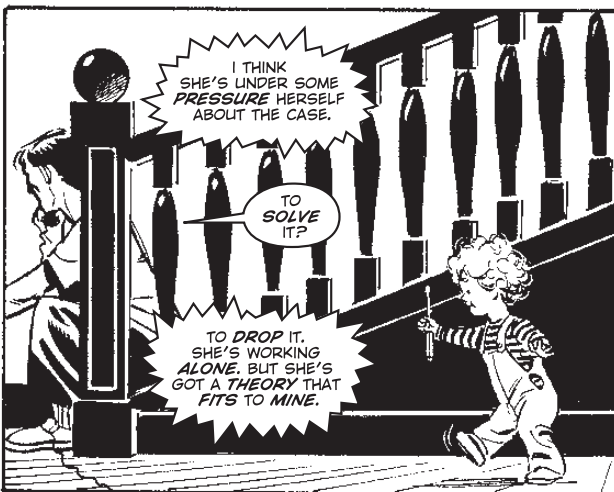


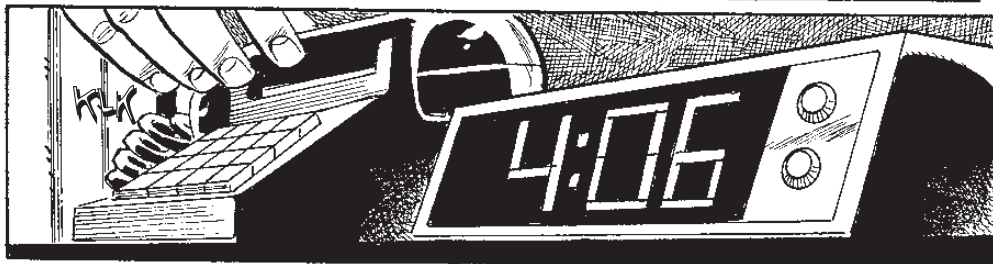




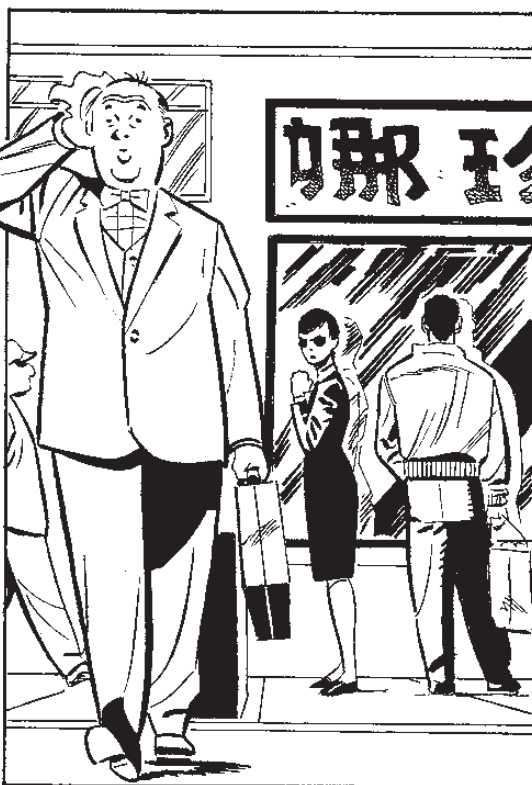








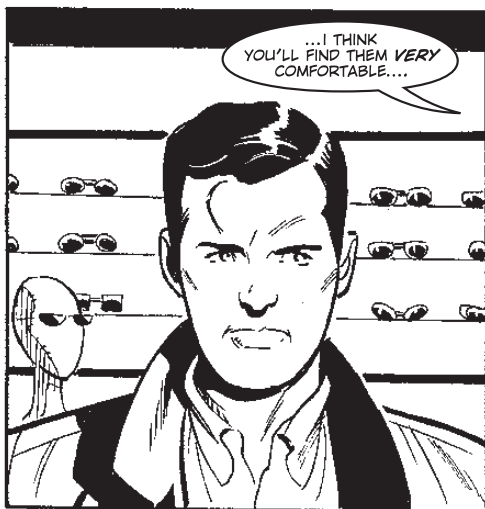
JUNE 28TH, 1997 --
38 HOURS UNTIL
HANDOVER.

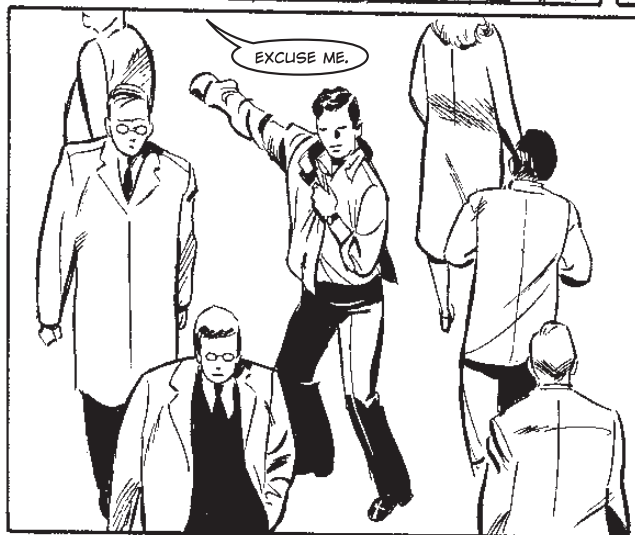






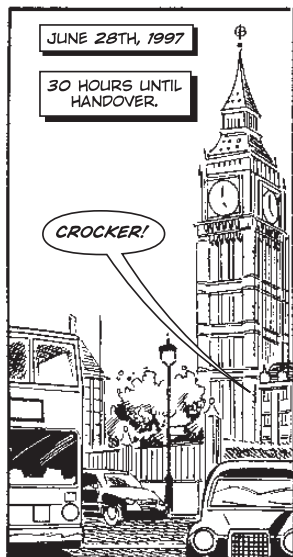


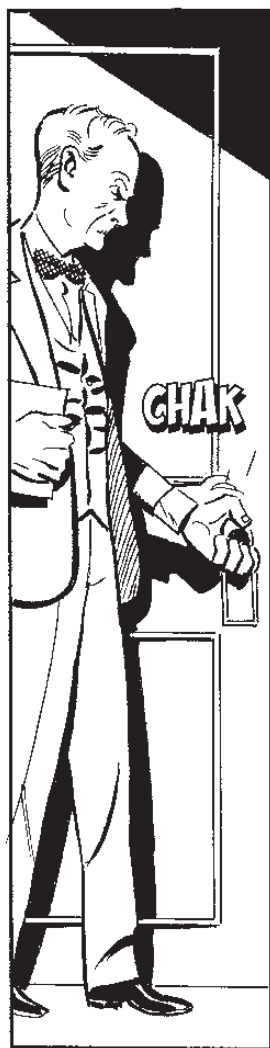
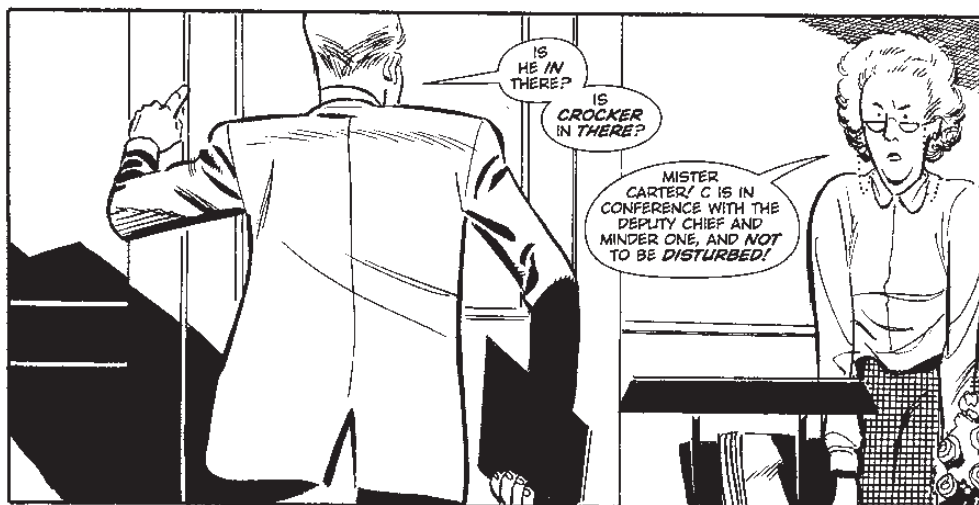












LINLOCK THE *DAMN* DOOR, LOUISE, AND LET ME *IN* THERE.

THEY'RE *NOT* TO BE *DISTURBED*.

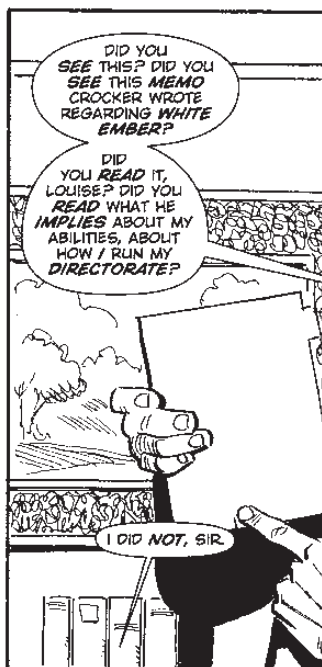
SIR.

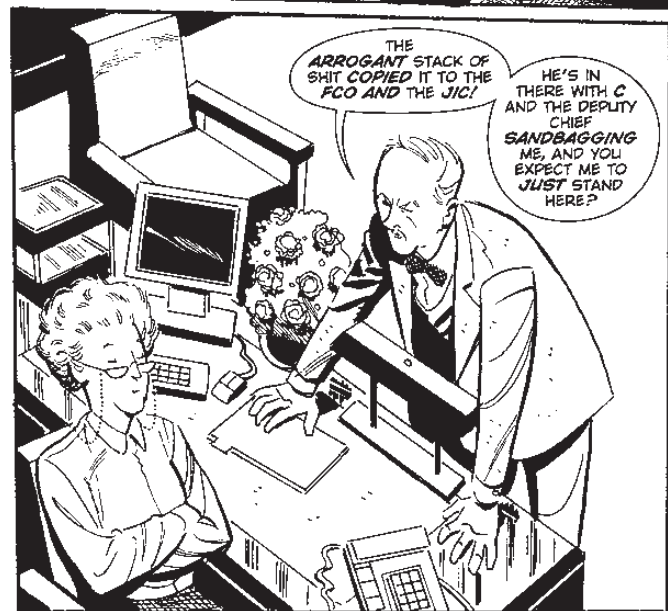


DID YOU *SEE* THIS? DID YOU *SEE* THIS MEMO *CROCKER* WROTE REGARDING *WHITE EMBER*?

DID YOU *READ* IT, LOUISE? DID YOU *READ* WHAT HE *IMPLIES* ABOUT MY ABILITIES ABOUT HOW I RUN MY *DIRECTORATE*?

I DID *NOT*, SIR.

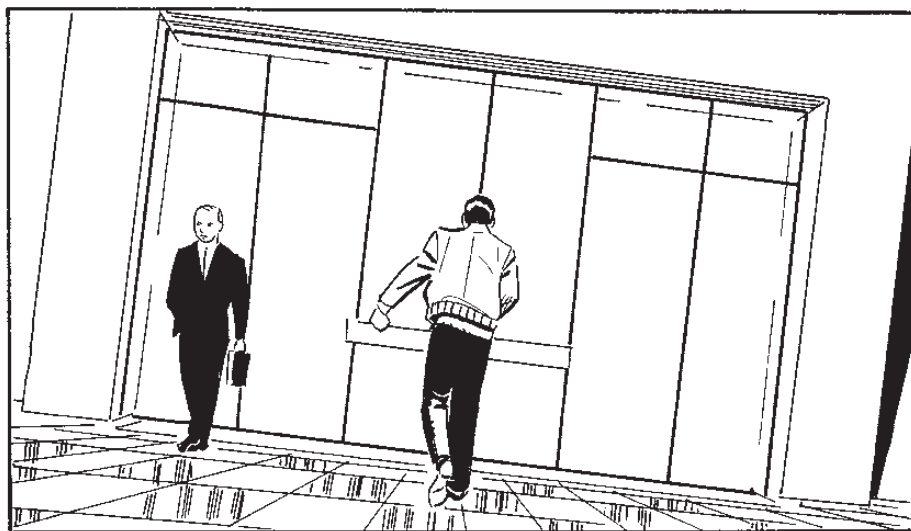
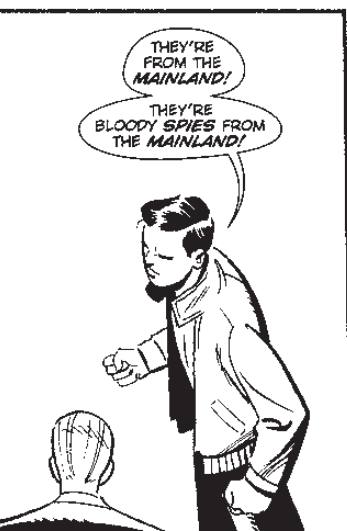


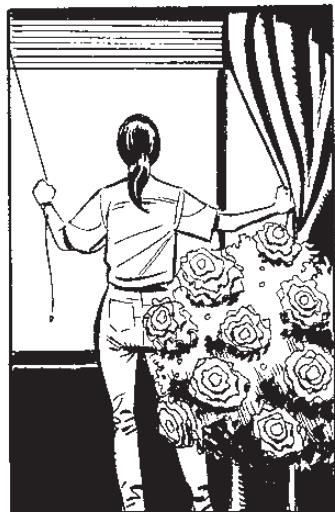
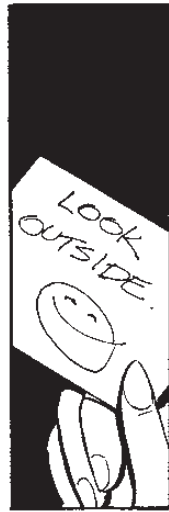








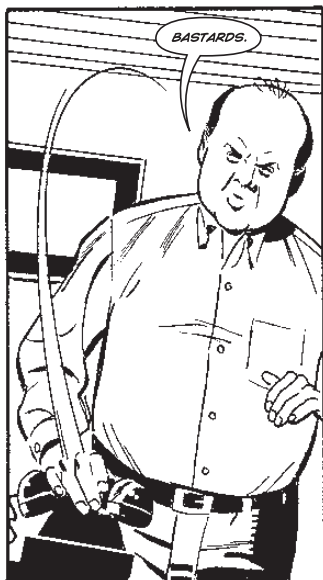


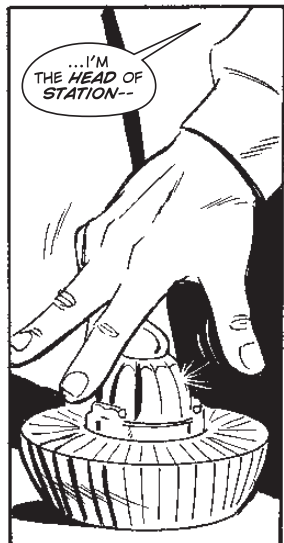




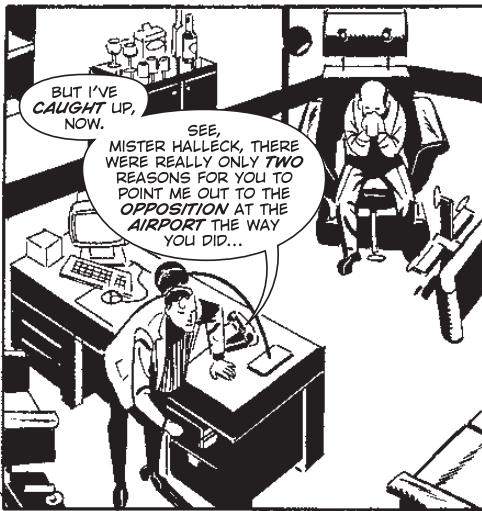
25 HOURS UNTIL HANDOVER.







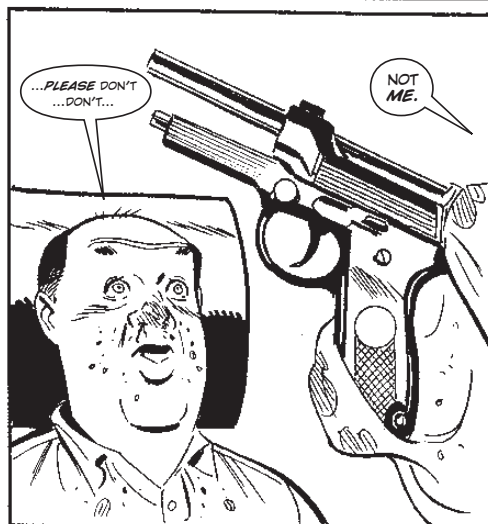
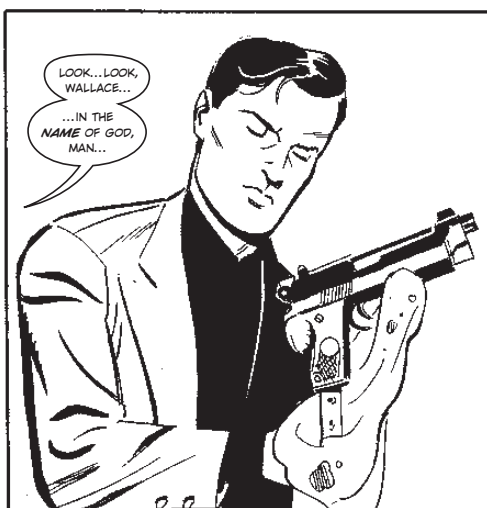


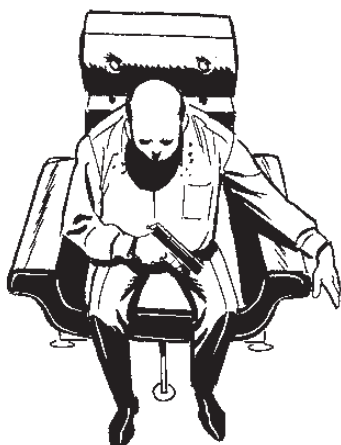


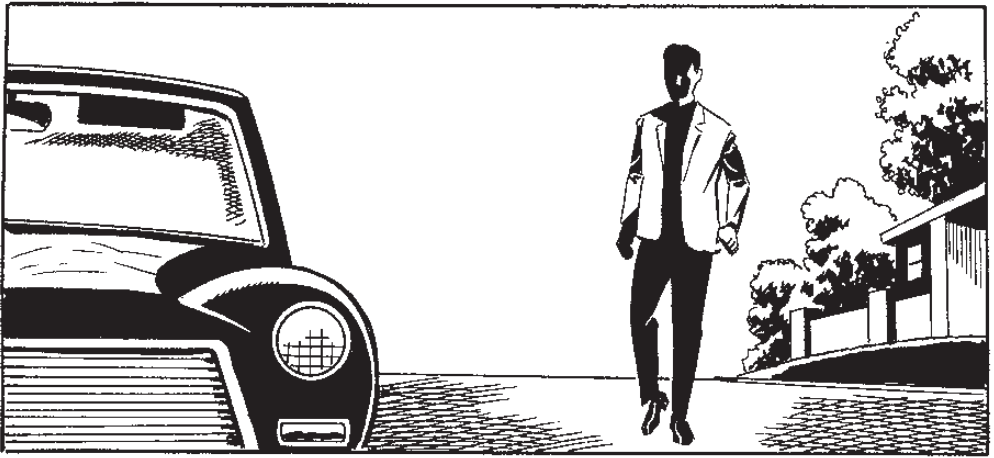


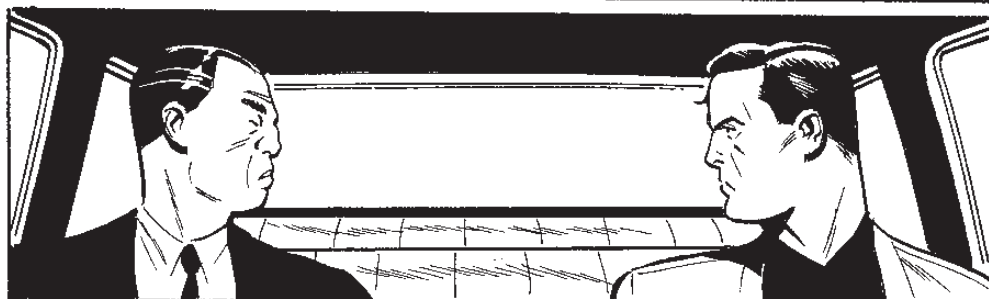


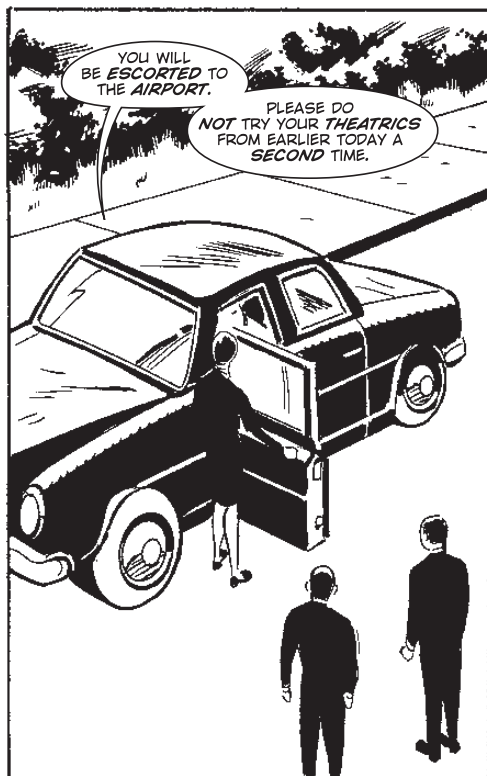


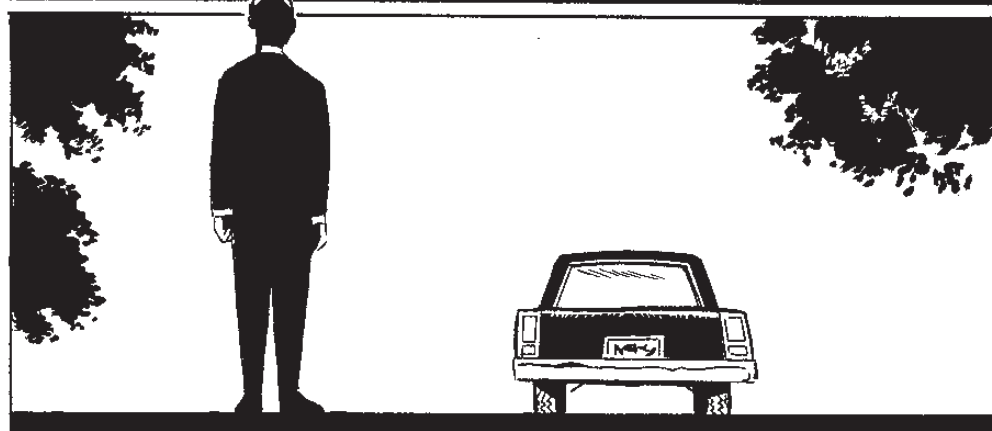












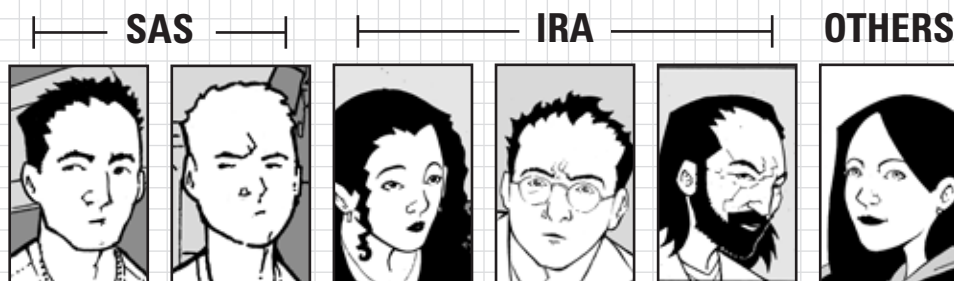
DECLASSIFIED VOLUME 3: NICHOLAS POOLE

WRITTEN BY
ANTONY JOHNSTON

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHRISTOPHER MITTEN

LETTERED BY
JOHN DRANSKI

ORIGINALLY EDITED BY
RANDAL C. JARRELL



NICHOLAS POOLE—Corporal, 22 SAS. Follows in the footsteps of his father, an SAS Captain who also served in Northern Ireland. Young, capable and a good all-rounder, Poole is tipped for a good career. Closet homosexual.

ADAM HART—Corporal, 22 SAS. A crack shot who served with Poole in the regulars before SAS. Homophobic, misogynistic and arrogant, but possesses remarkable discipline and stamina.

NIAMH DOHERTY—Sergeant, 14 Intelligence. Placed deep undercover, infiltrated the Real IRA's Newry Brigade and began successful relationship with Ciaran Ryan. Valuable source of intelligence.

CIARAN RYAN—Leader of the Real IRA's Newry Brigade. South Armagh falls under his purview. His skill lies in strategic planning, not ground action.

LIAM FINNEGAN—Soldier, Real IRA. Sole IRA survivor of the 1981 "Armagh Massacre," subsequently imprisoned at Long Kesh "Maze" until prison closure. Newry native, from a family of IRA supporters and activists.

LAUREN MULLEN—Moved to England after her father was killed during the "Armagh Massacre." Remained there through University. Newly returned to Armagh after the Good Friday Agreement. Now in politics, supports peace.



SOUTH ARMAGH, NORTHERN
IRELAND. MARCH 1987.

THEY'RE *NOT*
GONNA FUCKIN' RELEASE 'EM.
I FEEL IT IN ME FUCKIN' *BONES*.
LET'S JUST *KILL* THE BASTARD
AND BE AWAY.

"SHUT YOUR FUCKIN' GOB, AND
CALM *DOWN*. IT'S NOT YOUR
FUCKIN' *SERGEANT* HERE THEY'LL
BE WANTIN' TO SAVE, IS IT?"

"SHE'S A LITTLE FUCKIN' *GIRL*--"

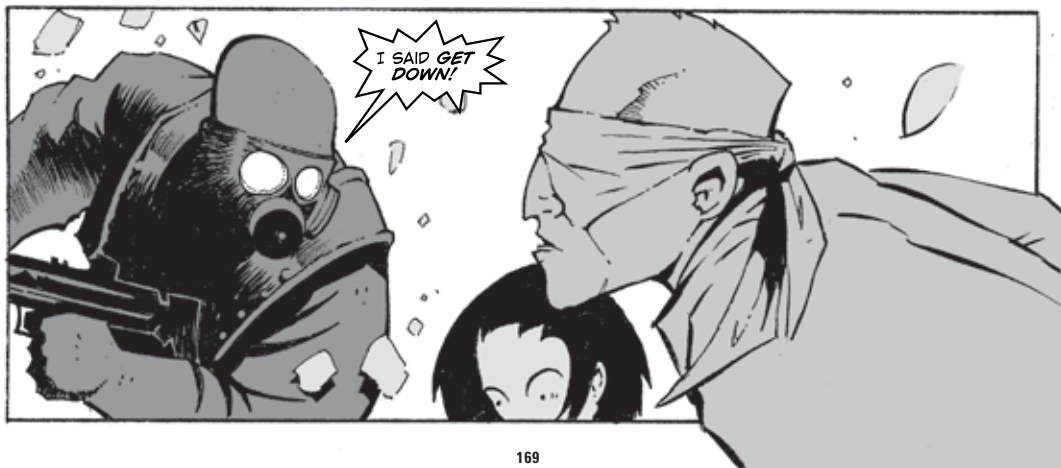
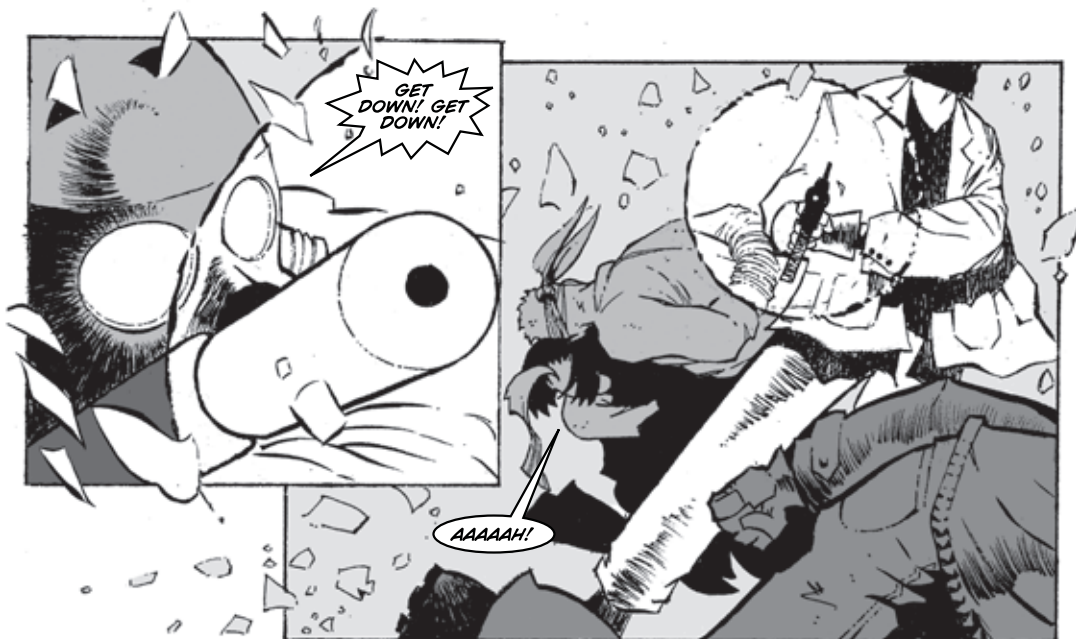
"SHE'S A FUCKIN' *PAISLEY*
BAIRN, IS WHAT SHE IS. *AREN'T*
YOU, EH? YOUR DA SINGS YOU TO
SLEEP WITH *GOD SAVE THE*
FUCKIN' QUEEN, IS THAT IT?"

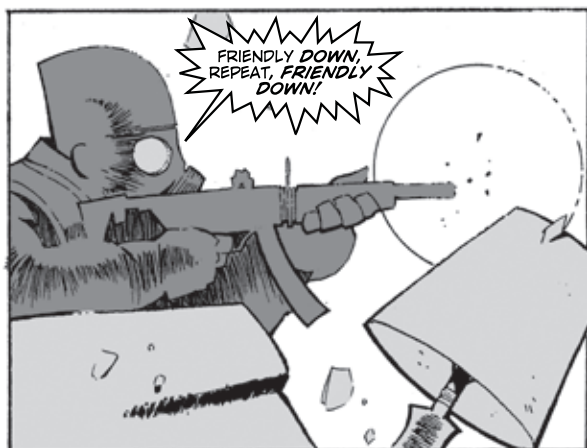
"SHUT YOUR FILTHY
MOUTHS IN FRONT OF
MY DAUGHTER, YOU TAIG
BASTARDS!"

"AH, RELAX YOURSELF,
SERGEANT FUCKIN' MULLEN--
AND WHERE THE FUCK D'YOU
THINK *YOU'RE* GOIN'?"

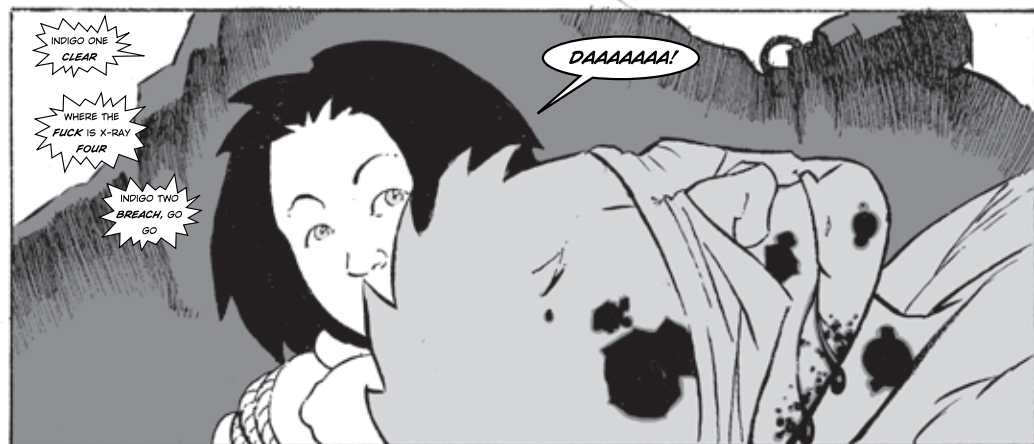
"I NEED A FUCKIN' *PISS*. BE
SURE AND LET ME KNOW IF I
MISS ANYTHING *INTERESTIN'*,
WOIN'T YOU?"





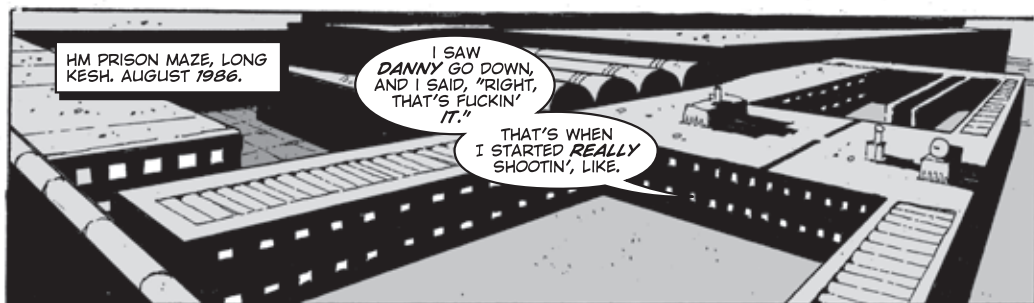


X-RAY
TWO DOWN!



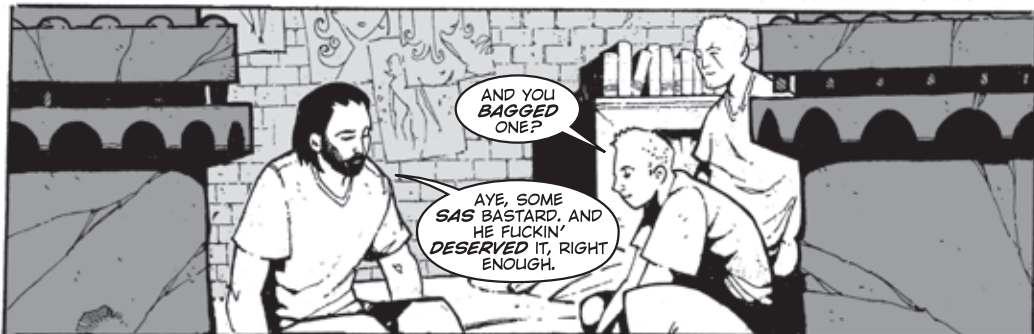
NEWRY, NORTHERN
IRELAND, OCTOBER 2003.





I SAW
DANNY GO DOWN,
AND I SAID, "RIGHT,
THAT'S FUCKIN'
IT."

THAT'S WHEN
I STARTED **REALLY**
SHOOTIN', LIKE.



AND YOU
BAGGED
ONE?

AYE, SOME
SAS BASTARD. AND
HE FUCKIN'
DESERVED IT, RIGHT
ENOUGH.



FUCK**SAKE**,
LIAM, HASN'T EVERY MAN
JACK HEARD YOUR HEROIC
TALE A **HUNDRED** FUCKIN'
TIMES?

FUCK OFF,
TOM, YOUR LADS HERE
ONLY CAME IN LAST
WEEK. YOU MIGHT HAVE
NOTICED IF YOU EVER
POKED YOUR FUCKIN'
HEAD OUT FROM UNDER
THEM **BOOKS**.



IT WAS
THE **ARMAGH**
MASSACRE MADE
ME AND BILLY HERE
ENLIST.

IS THAT
RIGHT?



AYE, WE
BEEN FIGHTIN' EVER
SINCE. NOT THAT WE
EVER **BAGGED** US AN
SAS BASTARD,
MIND.



NO, LAD.
THERE'S NOT
MANY OF US
HAVE.

NEWRY. OCTOBER 2003.

FUCK ME, YOU'VE
HARDLY CHANGED
AT ALL.

AND HOW
THE FUCK WOULD *YOU*
KNOW? DON'T RECALL EVER
SEEN' *YOUR* FUCKIN' MUG
INSIDE.

AYE,
WELL, SOME OF
US WORKED HARD
AT NOT GETTING
CAUGHT.

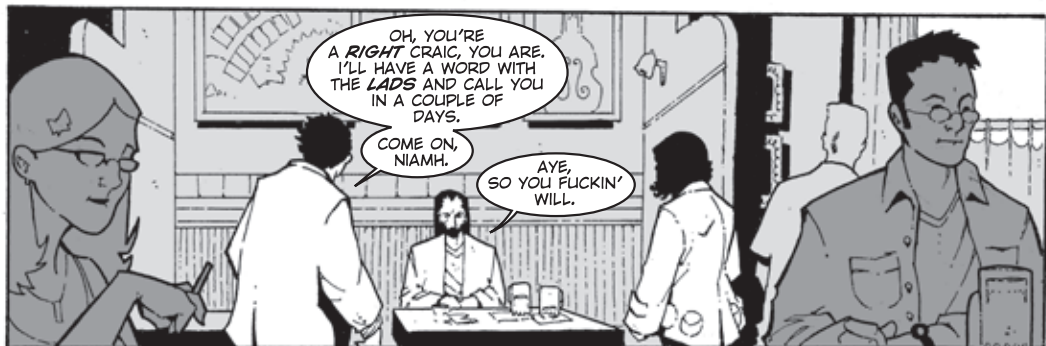
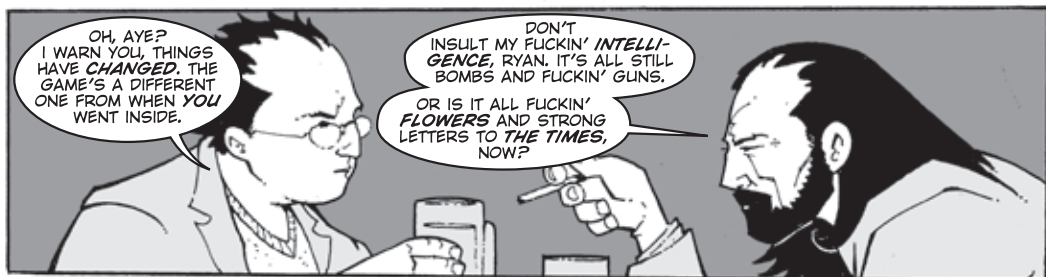
I'M
CIARAN RYAN. IT
WAS ME SPOKE TO
YOU ON THE
PHONE.

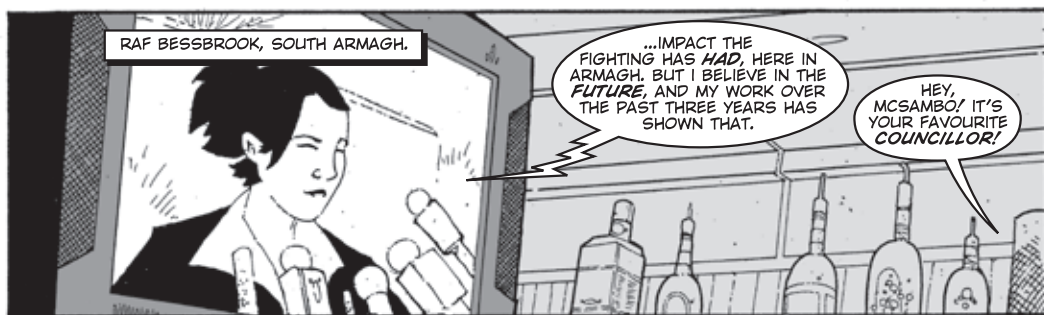
I KNOW
WHO YOU
FUCKIN' *ARE*.
WHO'S YOUR
TART?

NIAMH
DOHERTY. AND
YOU WATCH YOUR
FUCKING MOUTH.

LAST
MAN WHO SAID THAT TO
ME GOT A *BULLET* FOR
HIS TROUBLES, WEE
GIRL.

JESUS,
KEEP YOUR
BLOODY VOICE
DOWN.





RAF BESSBROOK, SOUTH ARMAGH.

...IMPACT THE FIGHTING HAS **HAD**, HERE IN ARMAGH. BUT I BELIEVE IN THE **FUTURE**, AND MY WORK OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS HAS SHOWN THAT.

HEY, MCSAMBO! IT'S YOUR FAVOURITE COUNCILLOR!



WE MUST NEVER **FORGET...** BUT WE MUST **FORGIVE**. IF NOT, WE CONDEMN OUR CHILDREN TO A LIFE NO LESS FILLED WITH VIOLENCE, HATRED AND SUFFERING THAN OUR **OWN**.

I'D SLING ONE UP HER, WHO THE FLICK **IS** SHE?



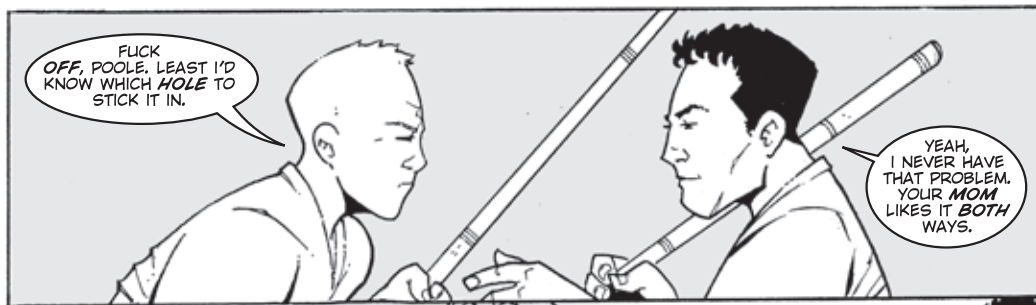
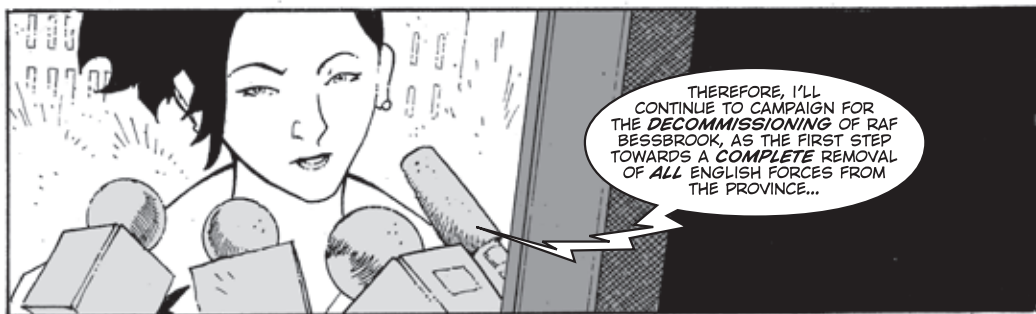
SHUT YER FUCKIN' **TRAP** AND YE MIGHT FIND **OUT**!

OOH, GET **SAMBO**.



JUST SHUT UP A SECOND, **HART**.

I BELIEVE IRELAND IS STRONG ENOUGH TO **FACE** THESE CHALLENGES... AND STRONG ENOUGH TO FACE THEM **ALONE**.





CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY,
ENGLAND. FEBRUARY 1995.

YOU'VE
ALWAYS TOLD US THAT
PASSION IN POLITICAL
ANALYSIS IS A **GOOD**
THING, SIR.

ALL I'VE
DONE IS TAKEN THE
STANDARD ANALYSES
AND LOOKED AT THEM
WITH A MODERN
EYE.

AN EYE,
I MIGHT ADD, THAT
HAS ALSO SEEN LIFE
IN ULSTER **FIRST-
HAND**.

BUT
YOU'VE ALLOWED THAT
PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT
TO COLOUR YOUR LOGIC
TO THE POINT OF
DETREMENT.

**GIBBON &
CARTWRIGHT**, FOR
EXAMPLE, SHOW THAT IN THE
ABSENCE OF **ARMISTICE**,
ANY REMOVAL OF BRITISH
FORCES FROM A TROUBLED
AREA QUICKLY RESULTS IN A
RESURGENCE OF VIOLENCE.
YET YOU'VE USED THEM TO
CONCLUDE AN ENTIRELY
OPPOSITE VIEW.

I THOUGHT
THAT WAS QUITE
CLEVER.

LAUREN...
I **ALMOST** ADMIRE
YOUR ABILITY TO
MANIPULATE SOURCES
IN SUCH A FASHION,
BUT THIS PAPER SIMPLY
WON'T STAND UP TO
SCRUTINY.

WE CALL IT
POLITICAL **SCIENCE** FOR
A REASON, AND THAT IS THE
PROCESS WHEREBY WE
MOULD **CONCLUSIONS**
FROM **FACTS**.

IF YOU
WISH TO PURSUE A
REVERSE METHOD, THEN
ONE MIGHT SUGGEST YOU
ARE BETTER SUITED TO
BEING **IN** POLITICS THAN
STUDYING IT.

NEWRY, OCTOBER 2003.

ALL
RIGHT, ALL
RIGHT, KEEP
YOUR BLOODY
HAIR ON...

RING
RING

HELLO?

IT'S ME,
WHERE'S YOUR
TART?

AND
WHY THE FUCK
D'YOU WANT TO
KNOW?

I'M BEING
FUCKIN' **FOLLOWED**,
THAT'S FUCKIN' WHY.
AND YOU AND THE **TART**
ARE THE ONLY FUCKIN'
PEOPLE SUPPOSED TO
KNOW WHERE I
AM.

OF
COURSE
YOU'RE BEING
FUCKING FOLLOWED,
YOU GOBSHITE,
YOU'RE FRESH OUT
OF **CLINK**!

YOU
THINK THEY'RE JUST
GOING TO LET YOU GO
ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS
AND PAY NO FUCKING
MIND?

I'M
TELLIN' YOU, RYAN,
IT'S YOUR **TART**. SHE'S
NO GOOD.

NIAMH'S
FUCKING
PROVED
HERSELF, AND
THAT'S MORE
THAN I CAN SAY
FOR YOU.

OH, IT'S
PROOF YOU'RE
WANTIN', IS
IT?

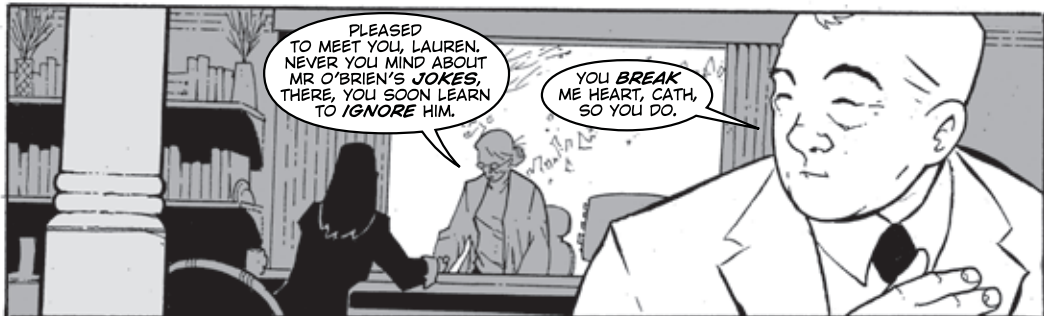
WELL,
I'LL GIVE YOU FUCKIN'
PROOF, ALL RIGHT, JUST
YOU WAIT AND SEE.



BAILEY, HOGAN & O'BRIEN
SOLICITORS, ARMAGH.
SEPTEMBER 1998.

MORNING TO
YOU, CATHERINE. MEET
LAUREN MULLEN, YOUR
NEW SLAVE--OH, I'M SORRY,
I MEANT **ASSISTANT!**

HAHA!



PLEASSED
TO MEET YOU, LAUREN.
NEVER YOU MIND ABOUT
MR O'BRIEN'S **JOKES**,
THERE, YOU SOON LEARN
TO **IGNORE** HIM.

YOU **BREAK**
ME HEART, CATH.
SO YOU DO.



I MUST **DASH**,
YOUNG LAUREN, SO
I'LL LEAVE YOU IN
CATH'S CAPABLE
HANDS. **WELCOME**
ABOARD.

THANKS, MR
O'BRIEN.



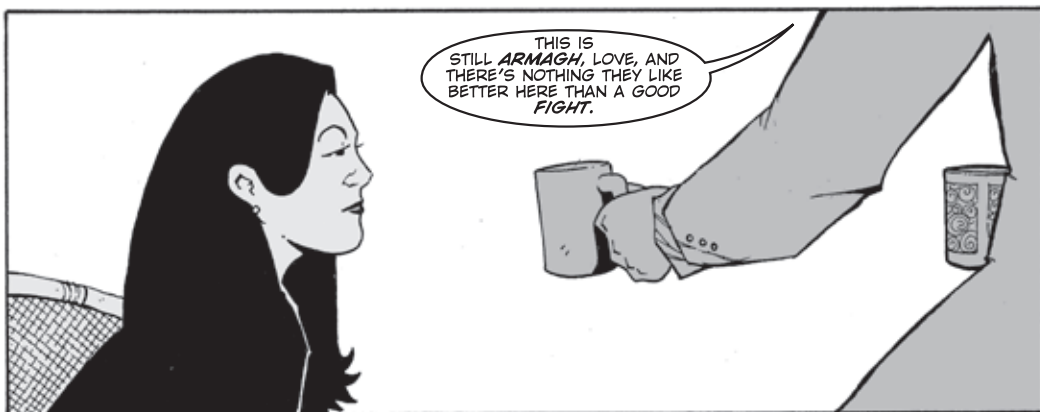
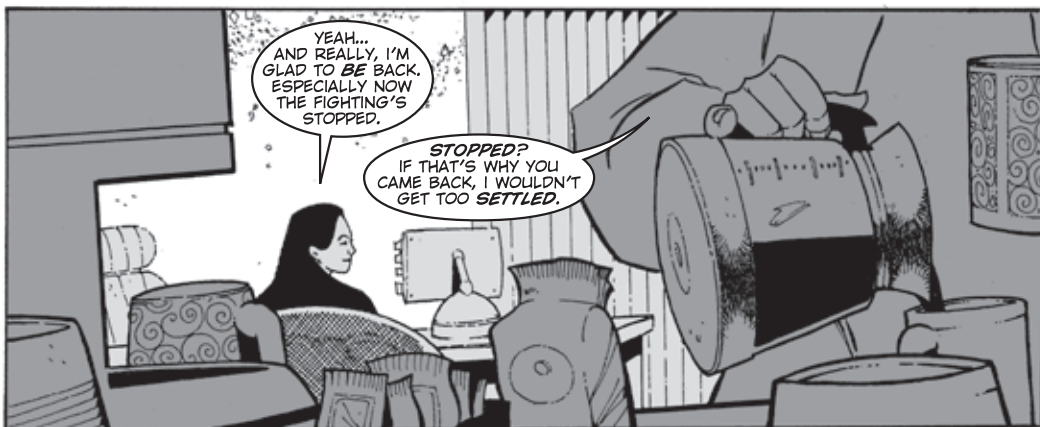
MIND YOUR
HAND IS **ALL** HE SHAKES, THERE.
AND DON'T BE AFRAID TO SHOW
HIM THE BACK OF YOUR HAND IF
HE GETS **FRISKY**.

ANYWAY,
LOVE, SIT YOURSELF DOWN AND
TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF. YOU'RE
FROM ARMAGH, AM I RIGHT?
BECAUSE YOUR ACCENT DOESN'T
SOUND IT.



NO, I KNOW.
I **WAS** BORN HERE, BUT I
HAD TO GO TO THE MAINLAND
WHEN I WAS A GIRL, AND I
HAVEN'T BEEN BACK
SINCE.

IT'S
SORT OF NICE TO
SEE SO MUCH HAS
CHANGED.





NEWRY, OCTOBER 2003.

WHO IS IT?



IT'S FINNEGAN. LISTEN, THERE'S SOMETHIN' I NEED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT. CAN I COME IN?

AYE, SURE. HOLD ON, I'LL BUZZ YOU IN.



WHERE'S CIARAN? IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?

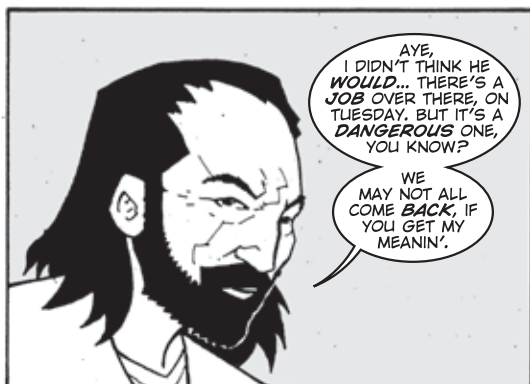
HOLD ON, AND CLOSE THE DOOR.

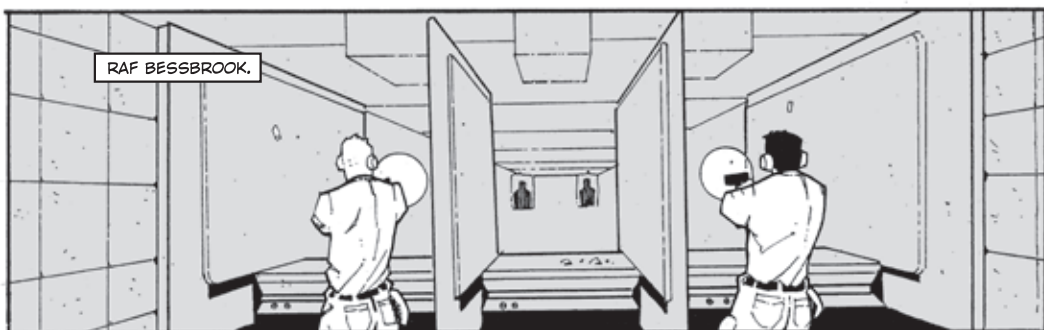


CAN I GET YOU A DRINK? CUP OF TEA?

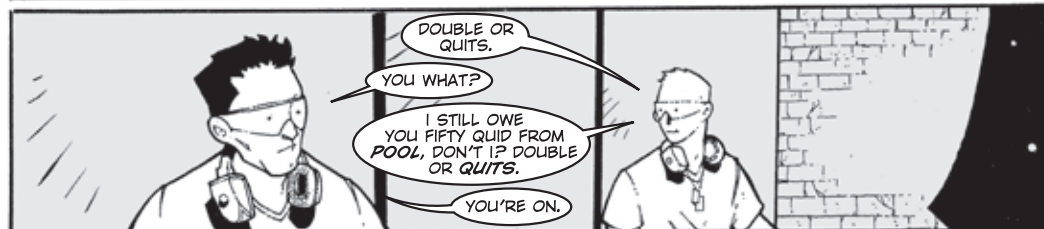
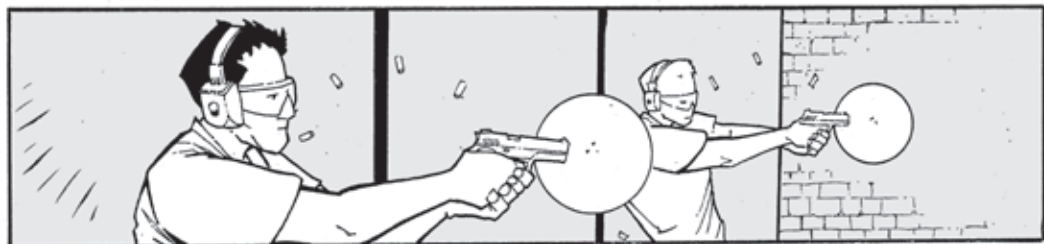
NO, THANKS, I'M ALL RIGHT.

LOOK... HAS YOUR MAN THERE SAID ANYTHING ABOUT BANBRIDGE TO YOU?





RAF BESSBROOK.



DOUBLE OR
QUITS.

YOU WHAT?

I STILL OWE
YOU FIFTY QUID FROM
POOL, DON'T I? DOUBLE
OR QUITS.

YOU'RE ON.



QUITS
IT IS,
THEN.



BASTARD.
JUST YOU--

POOLE!
HART!

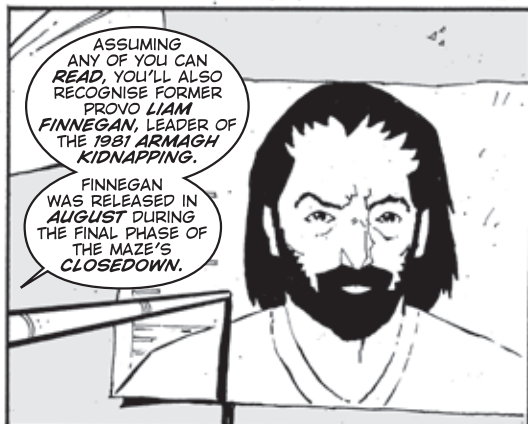


BRIEFING
ROOM, TWO
MINUTES.



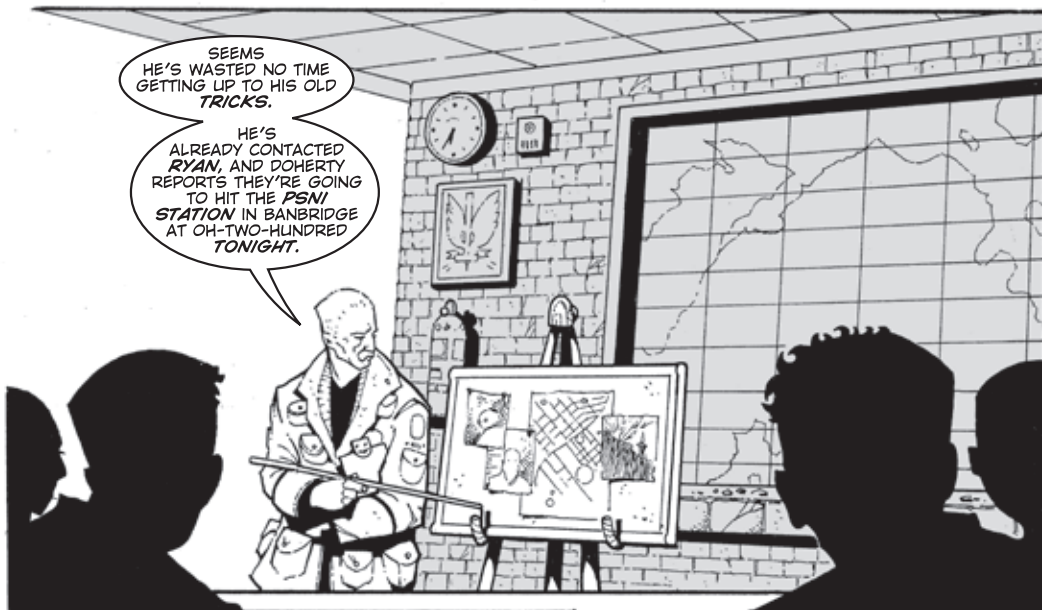
ANOTHER GOOD ONE FROM EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE 14TH INTELLIGENCE AGENT, LADS, AND IT LOOKS PRETTY CONCRETE.

YOU ALL KNOW CIARAN RYAN, LEADER OF THE REAL IRA'S NEWRY BRIGADE.



ASSUMING ANY OF YOU CAN READ, YOU'LL ALSO RECOGNISE FORMER PROVO LIAM FINNEGAN, LEADER OF THE 1981 ARMAGH KIDNAPPING.

FINNEGAN WAS RELEASED IN AUGUST DURING THE FINAL PHASE OF THE MAZE'S CLOSEDOWN.

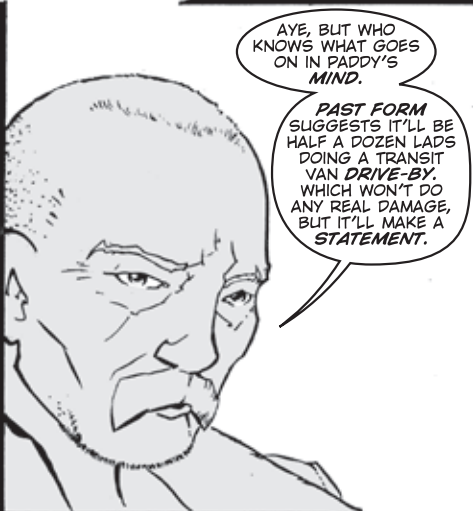


SEEMS HE'S WASTED NO TIME GETTING UP TO HIS OLD TRICKS.

HE'S ALREADY CONTACTED RYAN, AND DOHERTY REPORTS THEY'RE GOING TO HIT THE PSNI STATION IN BANBRIDGE AT OH-TWO-HUNDRED TONIGHT.

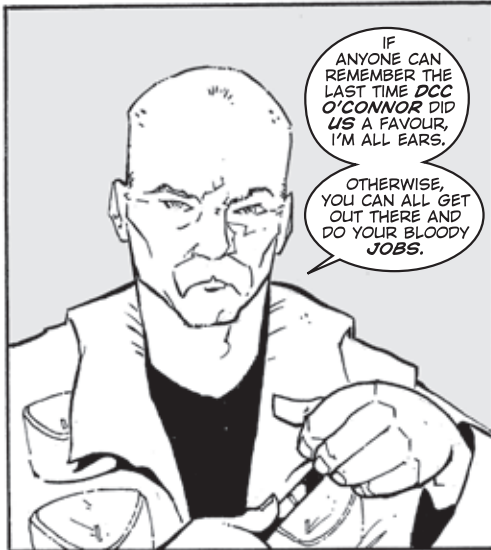
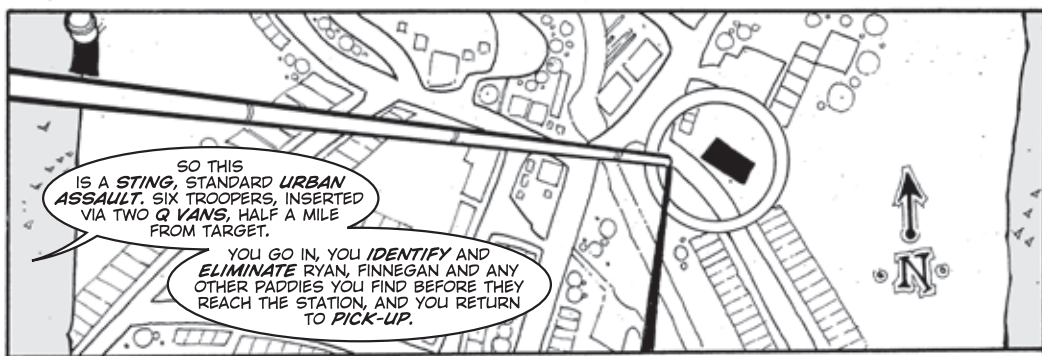


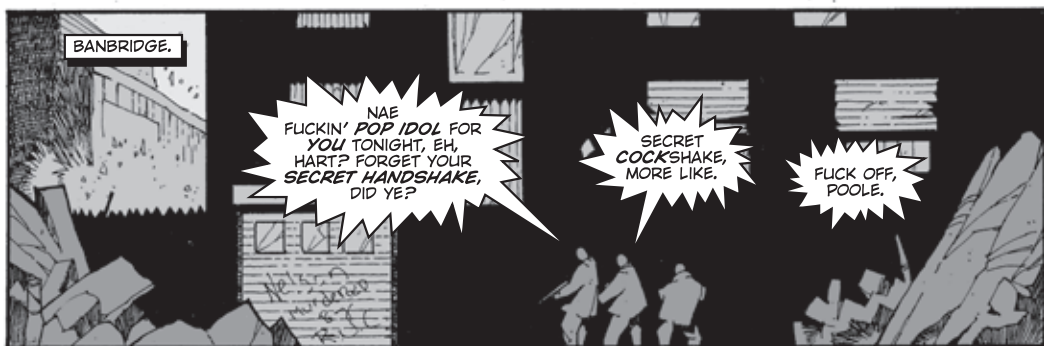
BANBRIDGE? BIT OF AN ODD TARGET, ISN'T IT?



AYE, BUT WHO KNOWS WHAT GOES ON IN PADDY'S MIND.

PAST FORM SUGGESTS IT'LL BE HALF A DOZEN LADS DOING A TRANSIT VAN DRIVE-BY, WHICH WON'T DO ANY REAL DAMAGE, BUT IT'LL MAKE A STATEMENT.





BANBRIDGE.

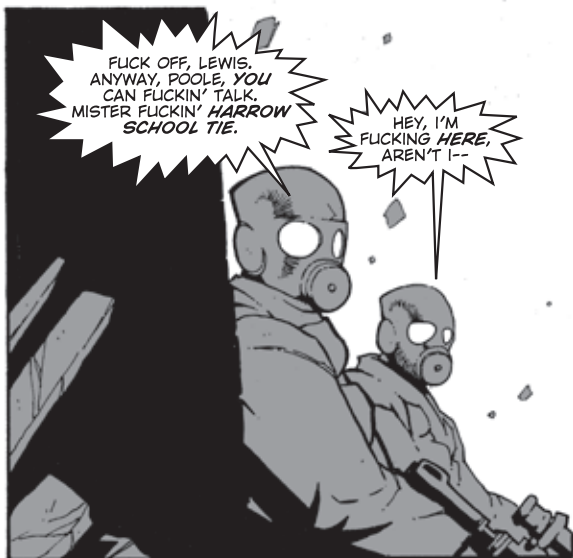
NAE
FUCKIN' *POP IDOL* FOR
YOU TONIGHT, EH,
HART? FORGET YOUR
SECRET HANDSHAKE,
DID YE?

SECRET
COCKSHAKE,
MORE LIKE.

FUCK OFF,
POOLE.

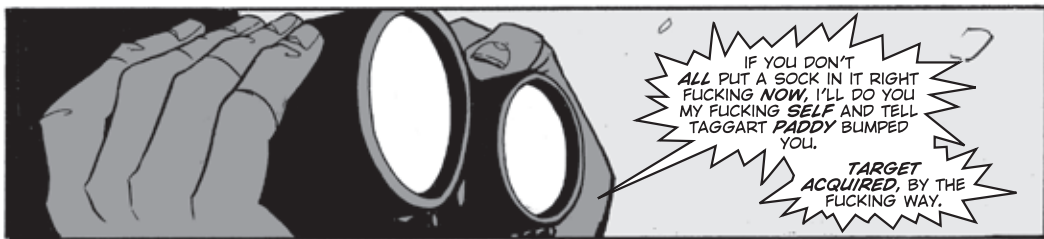


SHUT THE
FUCK UP, THE
LOT OF YOU.



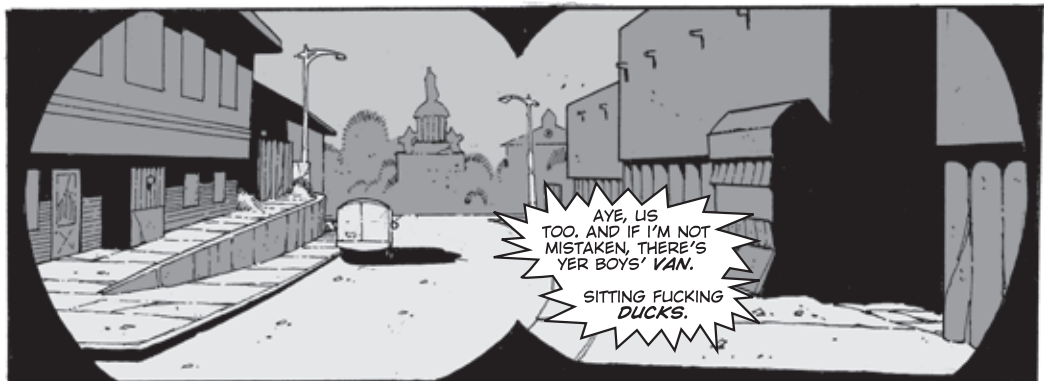
FUCK OFF, LEWIS.
ANYWAY, POOLE, *YOU*
CAN FUCKIN' TALK.
MISTER FUCKIN' *HARROW*
SCHOOL TIE.

HEY, I'M
FUCKING *HERE*,
AREN'T I--



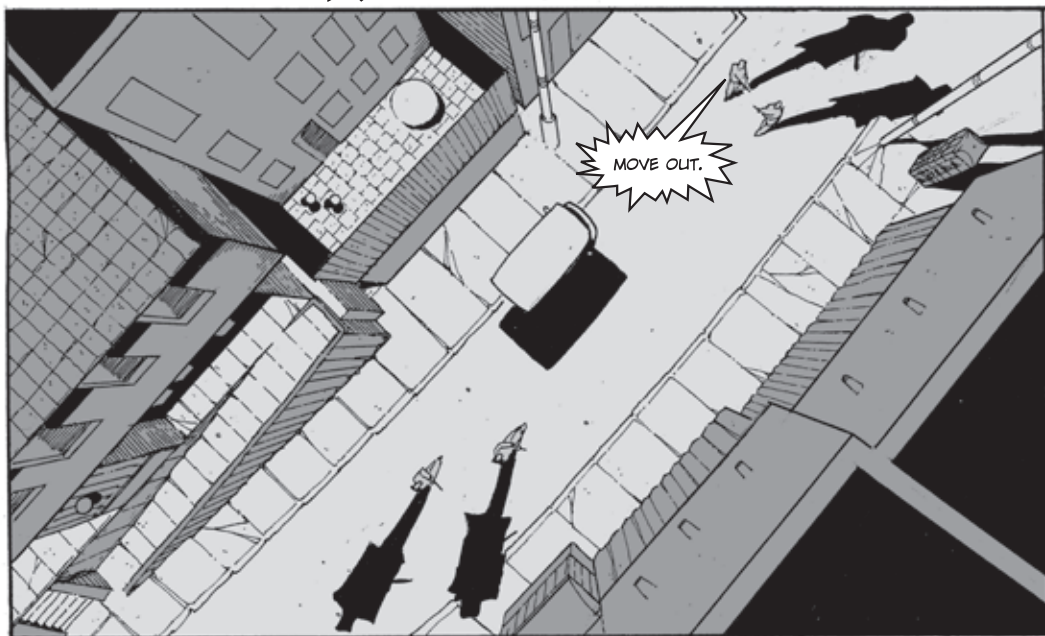
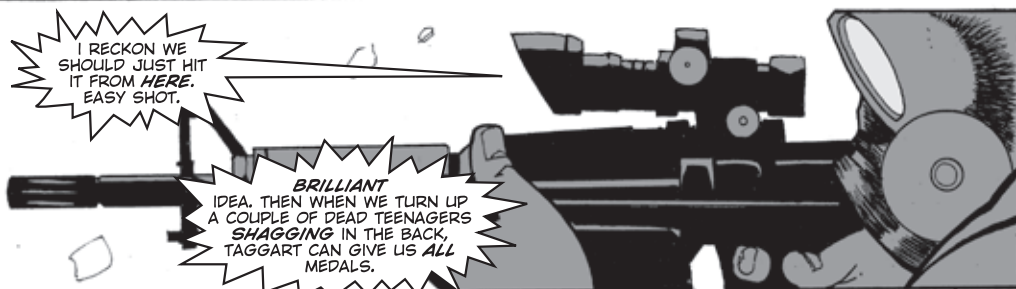
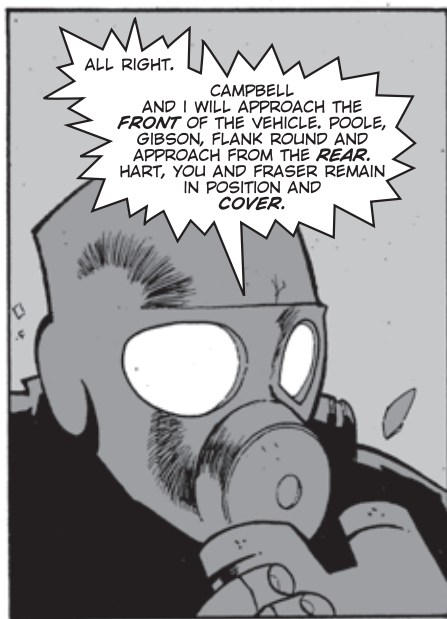
IF YOU DON'T
ALL PUT A SOCK IN IT RIGHT
FUCKING *NOW*, I'LL DO YOU
MY FUCKING *SELF* AND TELL
TAGGART *PADDY* BUMPED
YOU.

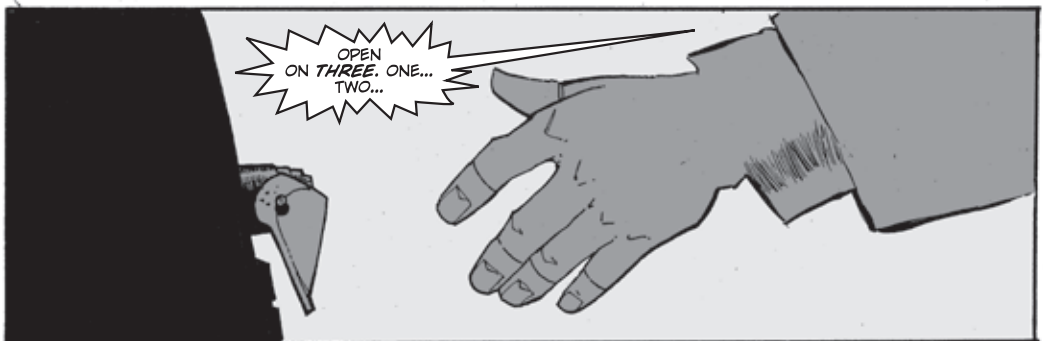
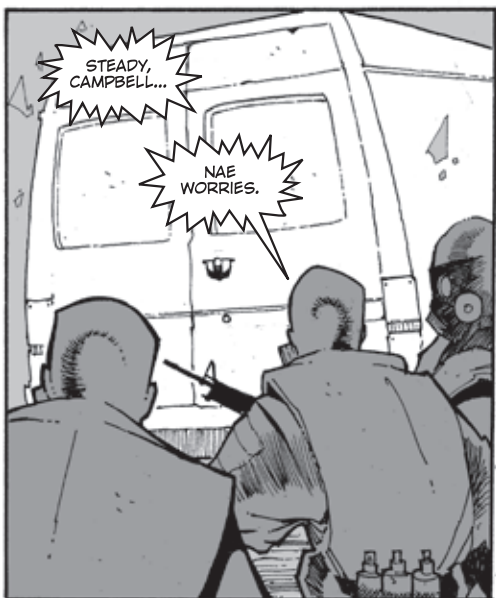
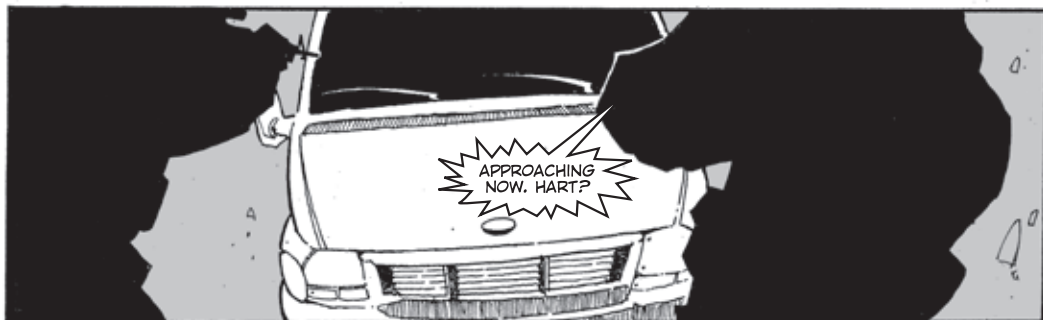
TARGET
ACQUIRED, BY THE
FUCKING WAY.



AYE, US
TOO. AND IF I'M NOT
MISTAKEN, THERE'S
YER BOYS' *VAN*.

SITTING FUCKING
DUCKS.







TO BE CONTINUED

Chapman



CAN
YOU HEAR
ME?

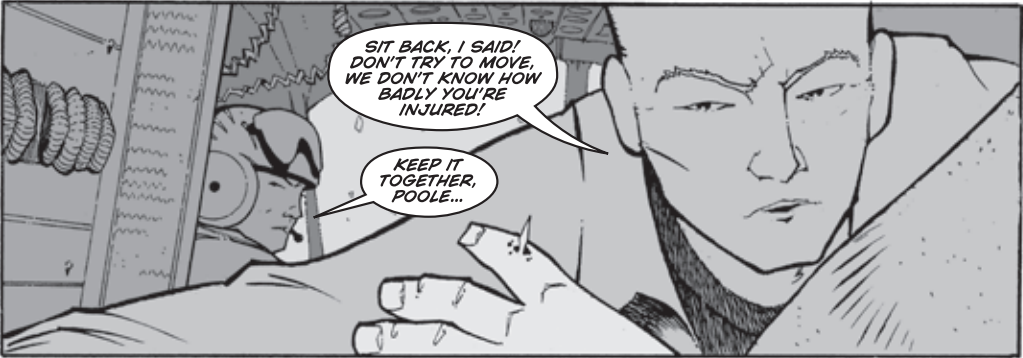
WE'RE
TAKING YOU
BACK

I DON'T
THINK HE
CAN

PULSE IS
IRREGULAR

CONCUSSION

FINGER
TWITCHED!

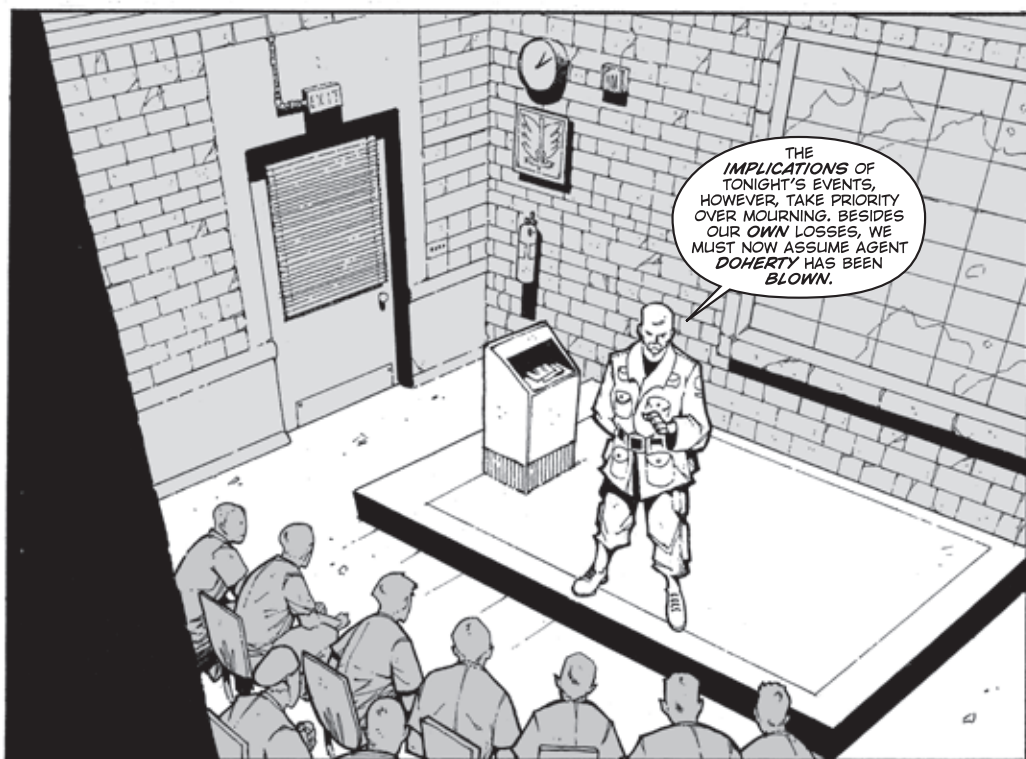


RAF BESSBROOK, OCTOBER 2003.

...WE'RE HOME.

"THIS IS
YOUR CAPTAIN SPEAKING, WE
ARE NOW APPROACHING **BESS-
BROOK INTERNATIONAL**. WE
HOPE YOU ENJOYED YOUR FLIGHT
WITH US TODAY..."

KNOCK IT OFF,
MACKENZIE. YOU'RE
CLEAR TO LAND.





DENIED. YOU AND FRASER WILL BOTH BE SEEING THE LOVELY DR ATKINS TOMORROW AT OH-NINE-HUNDRED.

SIR, I DON'T NEED A FUCKING PSYCH EVALUATION.



AND I DON'T NEED A TROOPER WITH A VENDETTA IN MIND. GO GET SOME BLOODY KIP, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

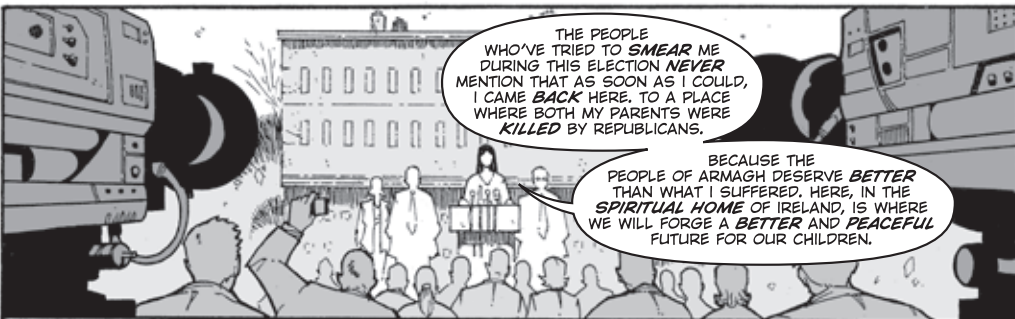
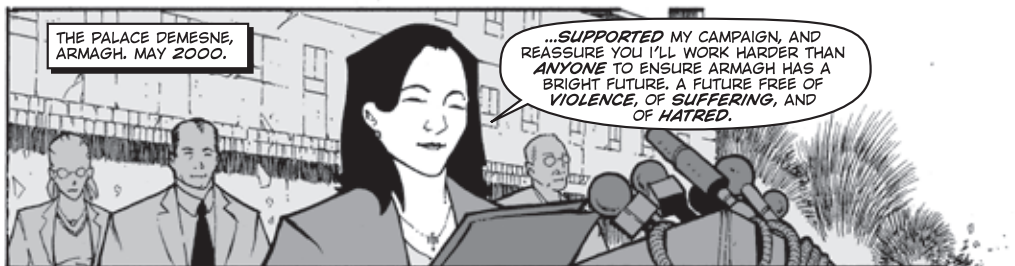
WHY NOT JUST PULL HER NOW, SIR? WE KNOW WHERE SHE LIVES.



AYE, AND SO DOES FINNEGAN.

I DON'T WANT THIS TURNING INTO A BLOODY WAR, FLETCHER. YOU WAIT FOR HER TO HIT THE STREET. STUFF HER IN THE BACK OF THE VAN, AND GET THE HELL OUT OF THERE. AM I CLEAR?





RAF BESSBROOK, OCTOBER 2003.

MORNING,
NICK. HOW ARE YOU
FEELING?

NOT TOO
BAD, SIR. RAMPING
HEADACHE AND A FEW
CUTS AND BRUISES,
BUT *CAPTAIN HARRIS*
SAYS I'LL BE FIT FOR
DUTY AGAIN IN A COUPLE
OF *WEEKS*.

AYE,
AND THAT'S WHAT I
WANTED TO *TALK* TO YOU
ABOUT.

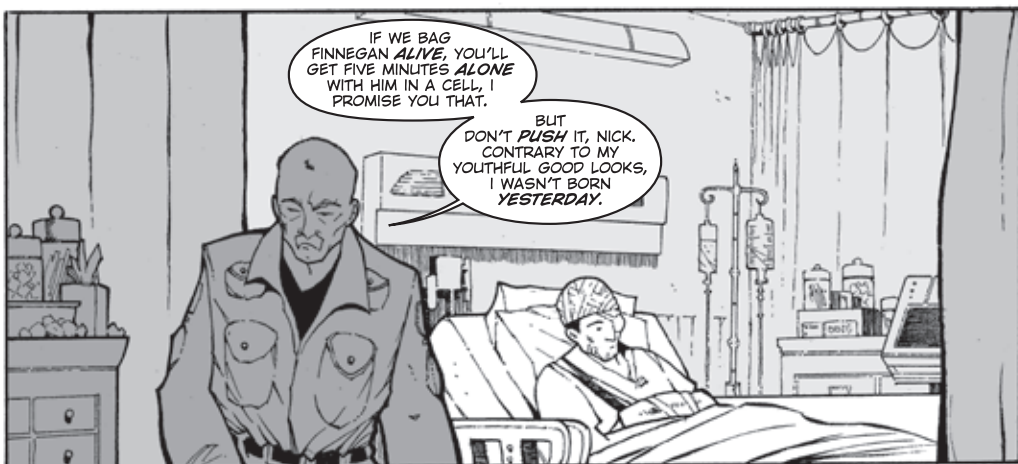
CORPORAL,
YOU ARE HEREBY
REMOVED FROM ACTIVE
DUTY IN ULSTER TROOP.
EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY,
YOU'RE ON UNOFFICIAL
RESERVE STATUS.

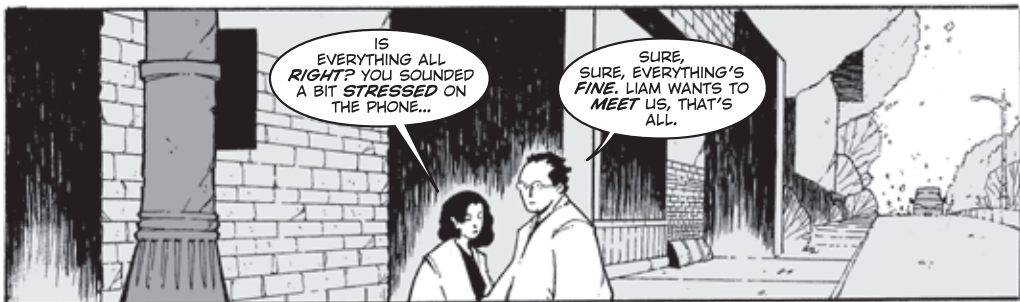
SIR,
I *OBJECT!* I'M
SURE DOC ATKINS
WILL GIVE ME A
CLEAN *PSYCH BILL*,
AND PHYSICALLY I'LL
BE *FINE* IN--

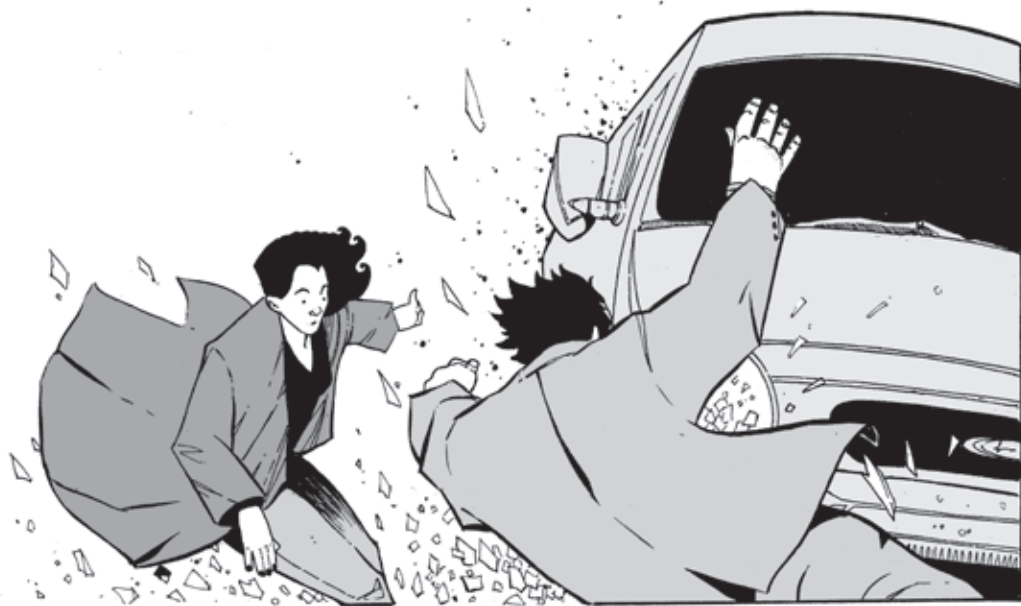
CONSIDER YOURSELF
LUCKY I'M NOT PUTTING
YOU ON THE FIRST PLANE
BACK TO *HEREFORD*,
LADDIE.

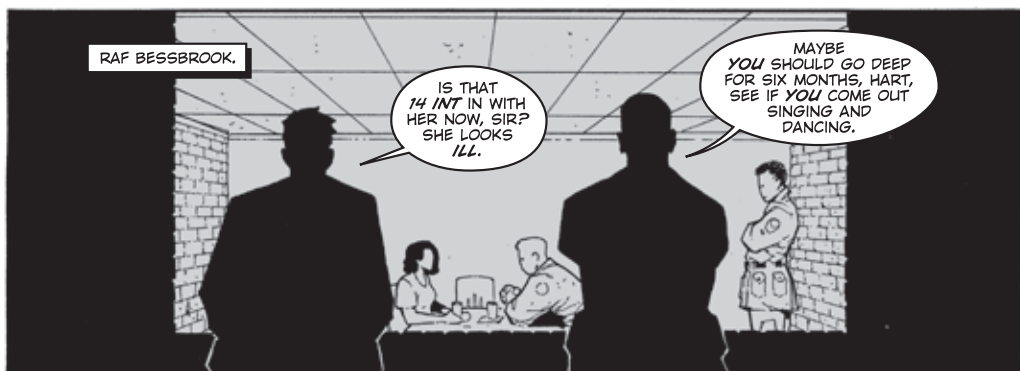
ANYWAY,
YOUR TOUR'S *UP* IN
DECEMBER. BY THE TIME
YOU'RE *FIT*, YOU'LL BE ON
YOUR WAY *HOME*.











RAF BESSBROOK.

IS THAT
14 INT IN WITH
HER NOW, SIR?
SHE LOOKS
ILL.

MAYBE
YOU SHOULD GO DEEP
FOR SIX MONTHS, HART,
SEE IF *YOU* COME OUT
SINGING AND
DANCING.



WHAT'LL
HAPPEN TO
HER?

RTU'D.
WITH THREE MONTHS
LEAVE AND A *PSYCH*
EVALUATION. STANDARD
PROCEDURE.



IN THE
MEANTIME, *WE* HAVE TO
BAG *FINNEGAN*. FLETCHER
RECKONS HE BROKE
RYAN'S *LEGS* WITH THE
VAN. FIND OUT WHICH
HOSPITAL HE ENDS UP IN.
WE'LL GET THE *PSNI* TO
KEEP AN EYE ON
HIM.



YOU THINK
FINNEGAN'S *LIKELY*
TO VISIT, SIR?
SURELY HE MUST
KNOW WE'D BE
WATCHING.

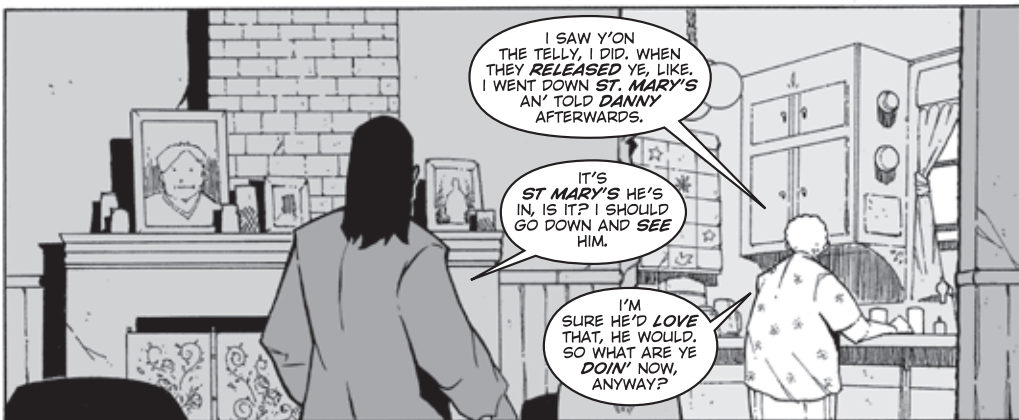
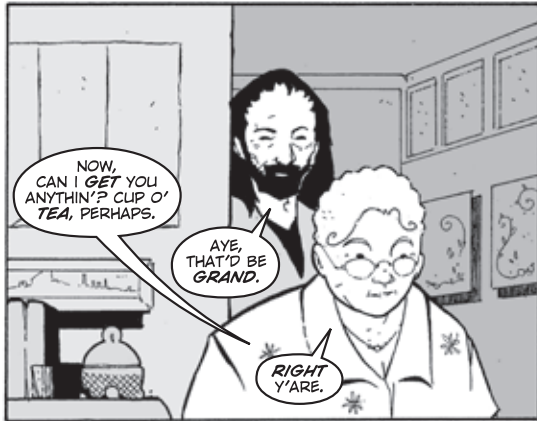
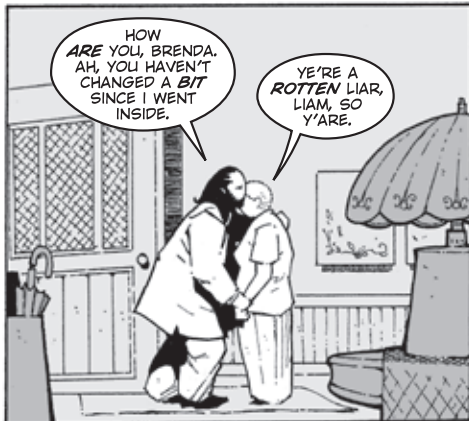
AYE, AND
HE'S A BIG ENOUGH *CHANCER*
THAT HE'D PROBABLY RELISH THE
CHALLENGE.



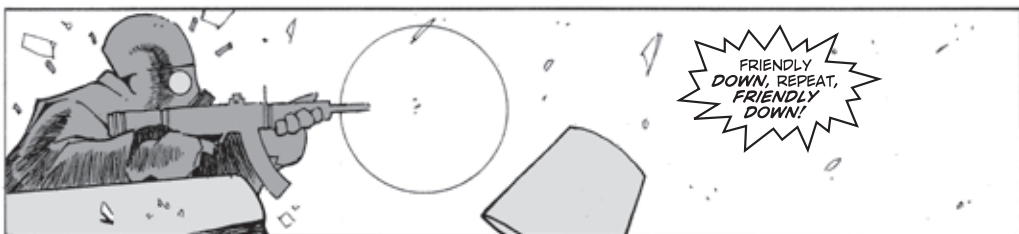
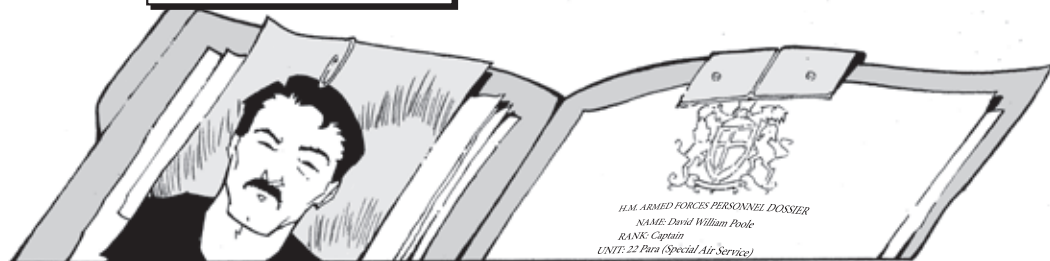
JUST *DO* IT,
CORPORAL, BEFORE
I STICK YOU ON
RESERVE WITH
POOLE.

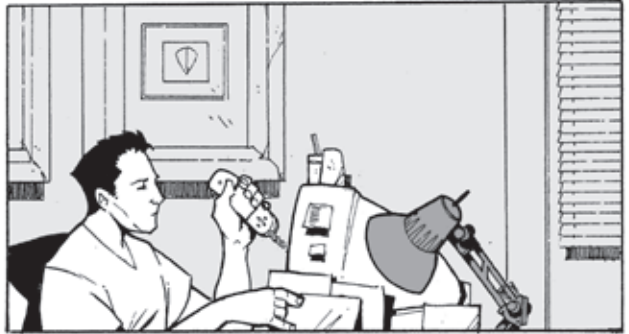
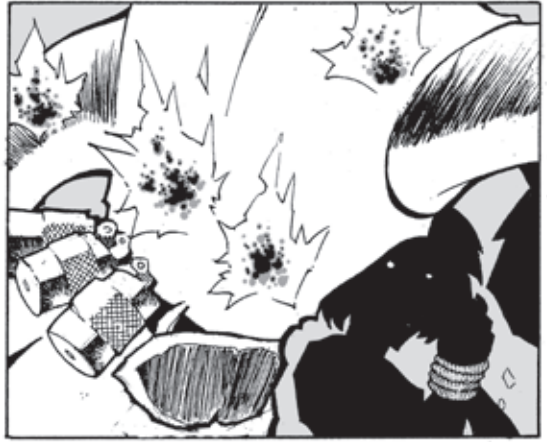
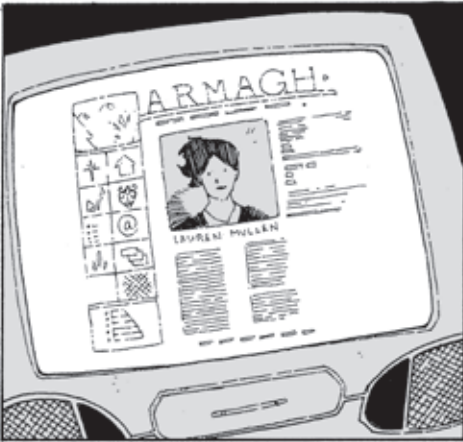
YES, SIR.

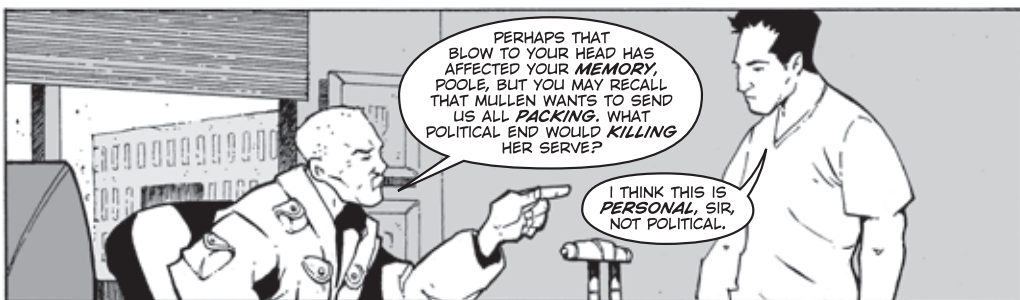
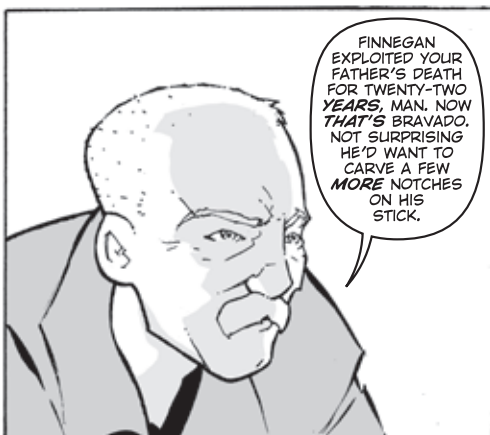
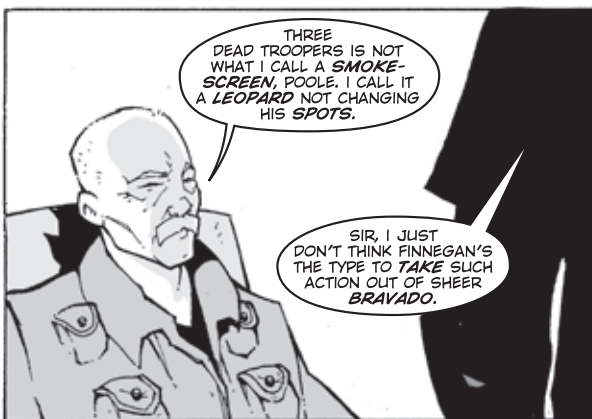
SWEET
MARY AND JOSEPH/
LIAM FINNEGAN!

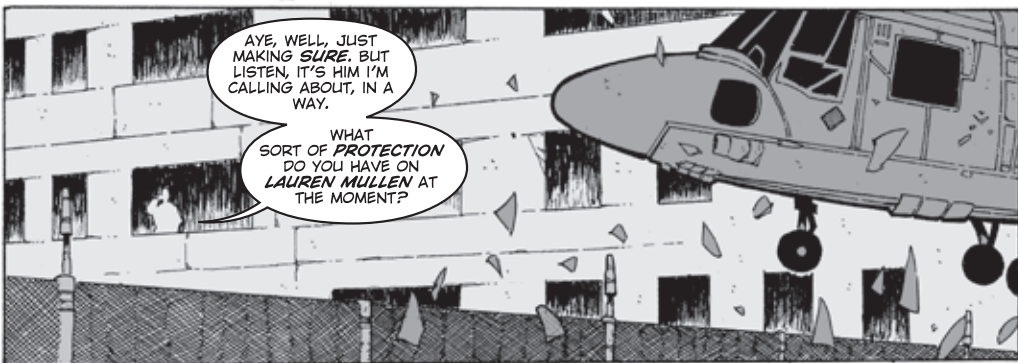


RAF BESSBROOK, NOVEMBER 2003.









TWO
PLAINCLOTHES, SAME
AS ALL THE *OTHER*
CANDIDATES. WHY
D'YOU ASK?

WE'RE
THINKING SHE MIGHT
BE *FINNEGAN'S*
NEXT TARGET.

AFTER ALL THIS
TIME? I CAN'T SEE
IT, MESELF.

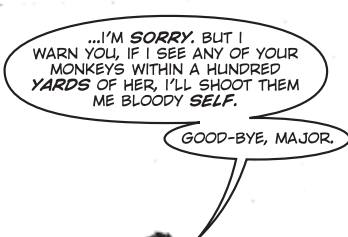
WHAT
WOULD YOU SAY TO
PUTTING A *TROOPER*
IN THERE WITH HER, AS
WELL?

SORRY,
BARRY, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO
REPEAT THAT. FOR A MINUTE
THERE, I *THOUGHT* YOU WERE
SUGGESTING MY LADS DON'T
KNOW HOW TO DO THEIR
BLOODY *JOBS*.

MIKE,
THE ELECTION'S IN *TWO*
WEEKS. DURING THAT
TIME, MULLEN'S GOING TO
BE MAKING *PUBLIC*
APPEARANCES--

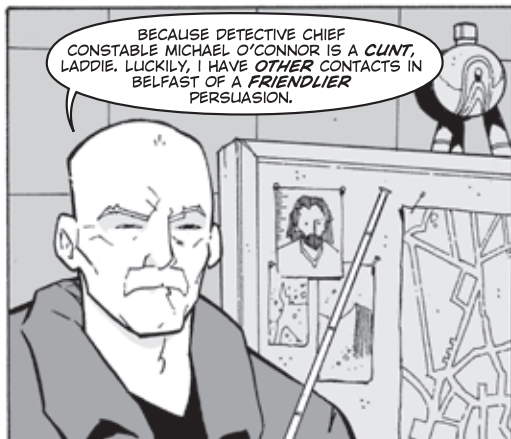
ALONG
WITH EVERY *OTHER*
CANDIDATE IN
ULSTER.

--AND WE CAN'T
IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY THAT
FINNEGAN IS LOOKING TO FINISH
THE JOB HE *STARTED*.











GET OUT,
CORPORAL.



SIR, LAUREN MULLEN IS
MAKING A **RALLY APPEARANCE**
TONIGHT, AT THE MARKETPLACE
THEATRE, AT **TWENTY-HUNDRED**
HOURS.

I THINK THIS IS
ANOTHER DECOY.
POSSIBLY EVEN A
HOAX.



BOLLOCKS.
HE'D JUST BLOW UP
THE **FUCKING THEATRE,**
WHY BOTHER WITH THE
UNI?



HART'S RIGHT.
ANYWAY, IF THIS WERE A
DISTRACTION IT'D BE IN
BELFAST, NOT HALF A MILE
FROM THE **BLOODY**
TARGET.



GO ON,
POOLE, GET BACK TO
YOUR **QUARTERS.**

BUT, SIR--



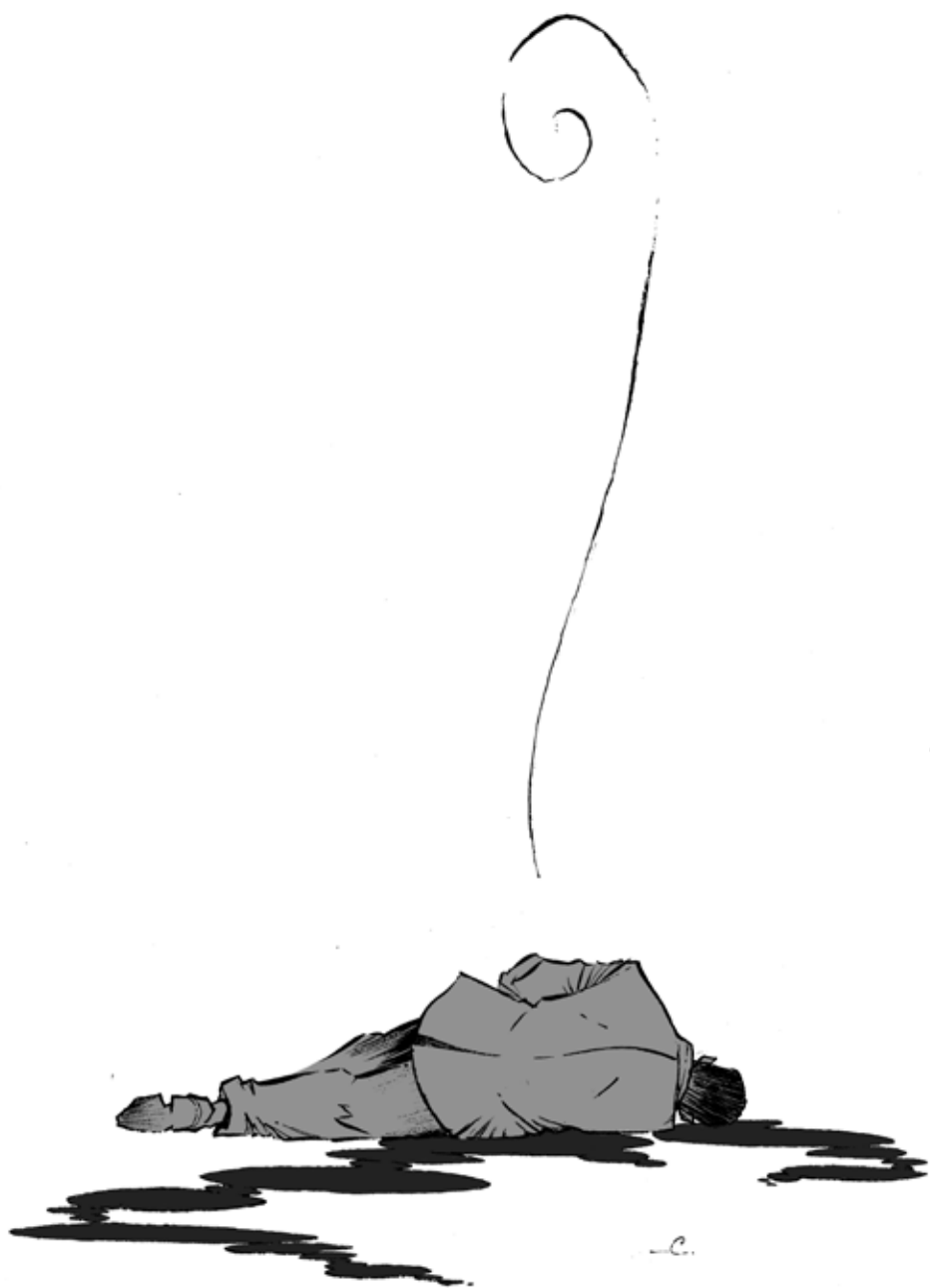
I SAID
DISMISSED,
CORPORAL.





POOLE APPEARS
TO HAVE GONE
AWOL.

TO BE CONTINUED





"I NEED A FUCKIN' PISS. BE SURE
AND LET ME KNOW IF I MISS
ANYTHING *INTERESTIN'*, WON'T
YOU?"



JESUS FUCKIN'
CHRIST

GO GO
GO



DANNY

FUCK
FUCK



THREE X-RAY
DOWN, TWO YANKEE
SECURE

WHERE THE
FUCK IS X-RAY
FOUR

COUNTY ARMAGH, NOVEMBER 2003.

FALCON
IS IN THE AIR, ETA
NINETEEN-TWENTY-FIVE,
REPEAT ONE-NINE-TWO-
FIVE, OVER!

UNDERSTOOD,
FALCON. SITUATION
CONSTANT, MAINTAIN
TARGET, OVER AND
OUT.



THE MARKETPLACE THEATRE, ARMAGH.

...YEARS OF
VIOLENCE AND HATRED BEHIND
US, AND LOOK TO THE FUTURE. I
BELIEVE ARMAGH IS UNIQUELY
SUITED TO MOVE FORWARD INTO
AN AGE OF--

HMMM.

CAN YOU THINK
OF ANYTHING *BETTER* THAN
"UNIQUELY SUITED"? IT'S A
BIT *VAGUE*, BUT I DON'T
WANT TO GET CAUGHT UP
IN *DETAILS*...

IT'S, UH, NOT
REALLY OUR *FIELD*,
MISS.

NO,
BUT AS A MAN IN
THE *STREET*--

beep
beep

'SCUSE ME, MISS.

HELLO?

YES, SIR.
IS THERE,
NOW?

I SEE.
ALL RIGHT,
SIR.

WHAT'S THE
MATTER?

SORRY,
MISS, BUT THERE'S A
BOMB THREAT JUST
DOWN THE ROAD.

WE'VE
BEEN ASKED TO *ESCORT*
YOU TO A *SAFE HOUSE*.
YOU'LL HAVE TO CALL OFF
THE RALLY.



WHO IS IT,
O'CONNOR?
GIVE IT HERE.

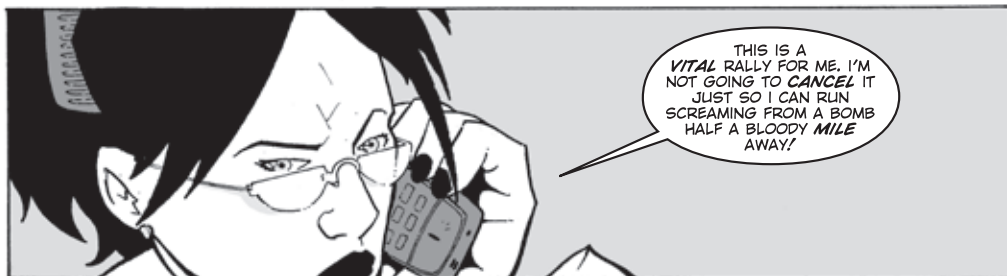


MICHAEL,
WHAT THE HELL'S
GOING ON?

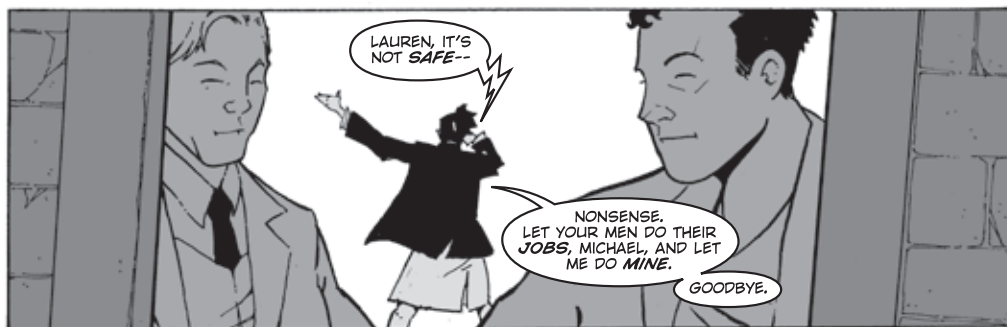


LAUREN?
THERE'S A BOMB INSIDE
THE UNIVERSITY, LOVE. IT'S
BLOODY MADNESS AND
ALL OUT HERE NOW.

MY MEN'LL
TAKE YOU TO A SAFE
PLACE UNTIL WE CAN
SECURE EVERYTHING,
LIKE,



THIS IS A
VITAL RALLY FOR ME. I'M
NOT GOING TO CANCEL IT
JUST SO I CAN RUN
SCREAMING FROM A BOMB
HALF A BLOODY MILE
AWAY!



LAUREN, IT'S
NOT SAFE--

NONSENSE.
LET YOUR MEN DO THEIR
JOBS, MICHAEL, AND LET
ME DO MINE.

GOODBYE.



FALCON
HAS LANDED,
REPEAT, FALCON HAS
LANDED, OVER!

SIR,
O'CONNOR'S AT
THE SCENE--

NEVER YOU *MIND* THAT,
LADDIE, I'LL DEAL WITH HIM.
YOU JUST GET TO *WORK*.
OVER AND OUT.



WHAT
THE *FUCK* ARE YOU
DOING HERE? THIS IS
A *POLICE* MATTER!



SORRY, DEPUTY CHIEF
CONSTABLE, BUT WE HAVE
OUR *ORDERS*. IS *E.O.D.* IN
THERE, YET?

YES,
THEY *FUCKING ARE*,
AND THEY DON'T NEED
GORILLAS LIKE *YOU*
BOLLOCKING THE
WHOLE THING
UP!



ALL RIGHT, LADS,
BOMB SQUAD'S AT
HOME, SO TREAD
CAREFULLY!

LET'S GO!

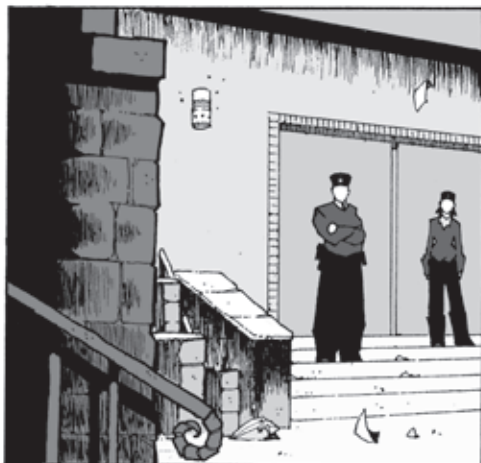
DON'T
YOU FUCKING
DARE! THERE ARE
RULES, HERE!

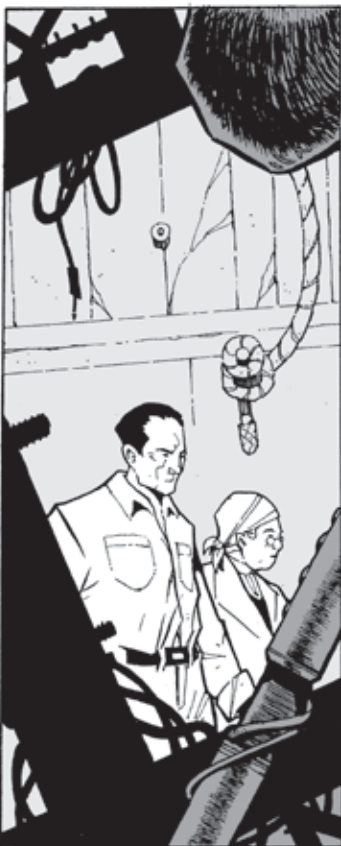


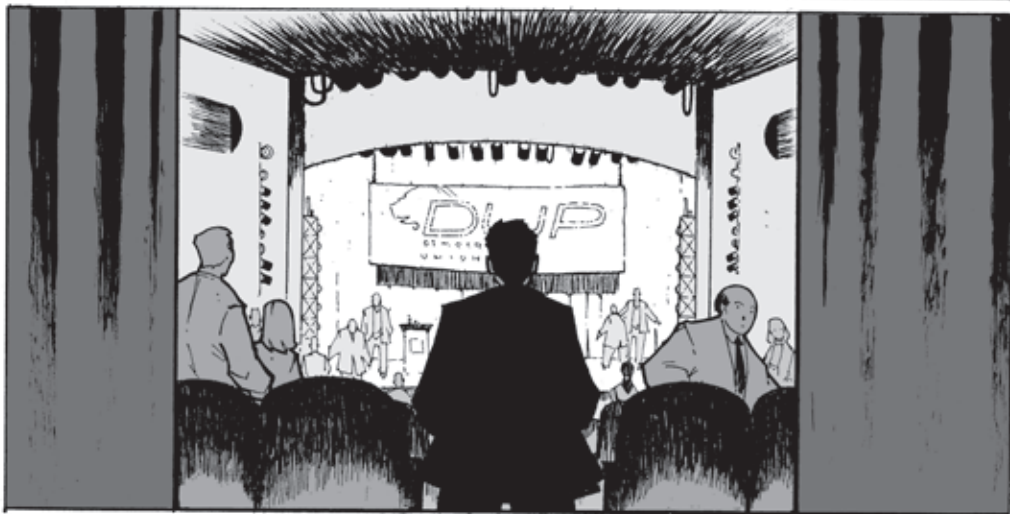
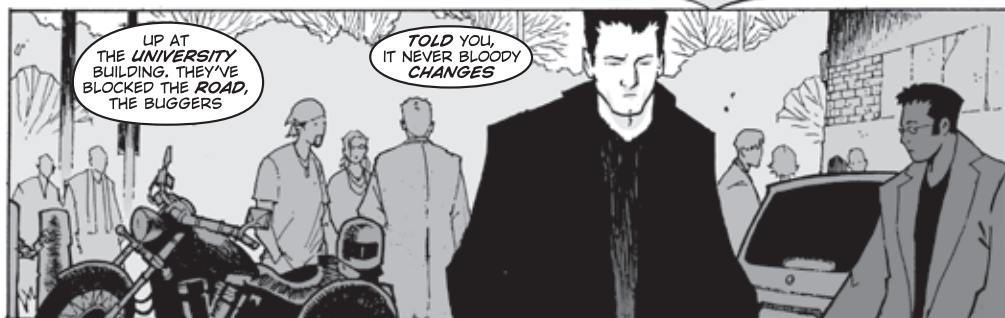
DON'T TALK
TO ME ABOUT *RULES*,
PADDY, WE'RE THE
FUCKING SAS.

TAKE
IT UP WITH
TAGGART.













HEY!
HEY, YOU
THERE!



THIS
AREA'S **STAFF ONLY**,
Y'KNOW. YOU CAN'T
JUST COME BARGIN'
IN HERE.



I'M WITH
THE **ARMY**. JUST DOING
A FINAL CHECK, HELP OUT
THE COPPERS.

HA! AYE,
AND DON'T THEY
NEED IT? COULDN'T
FIND THEIR **ARSES**
WITH BOTH BLOODY
HANDS, THEM
LOT.



I'LL BE
SURE AND LET
YOU KNOW IF I
SEE ANYTHING
INTERESTIN',
THEN.

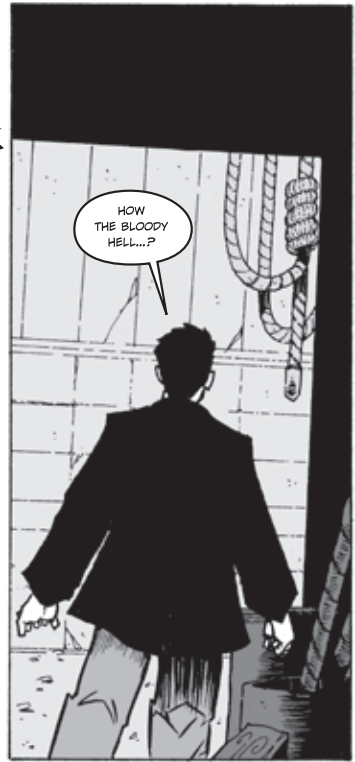
YEAH,
CHEERS.



...AGE OF **PEACE** AND **UNDER-
STANDING**. WE ARE THE SPIRITUAL
HOME OF ALL IRELAND, AND AS SUCH
WE HAVE A **RESPONSIBILITY**...



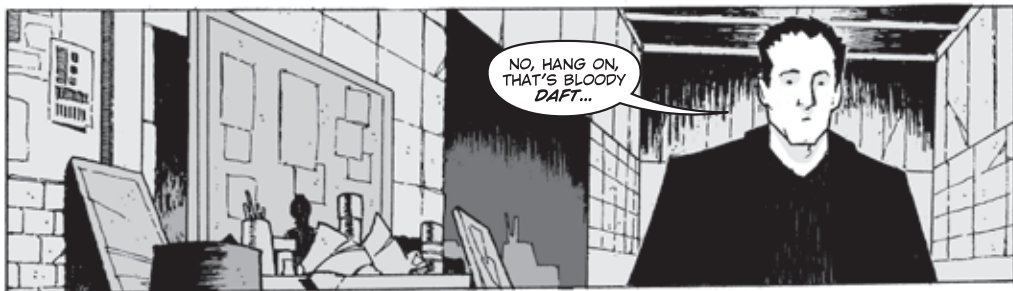
...WOULD
MR NICK POOLE REPORT
TO **RECEPTION**, PLEASE, AS
THERE'S A **CALL** WAITING
FOR HIM. **MR POOLE** TO
RECEPTION, PLEASE. THANK
YOU.



SEE
YOUR **BOSS MAN**
MUST BE CHECKIN' UP
ON YOU, EHP? NO REST
FOR THE **WICKED**, AND
ALL.

YEAH,
TELL
ME ABOUT
IT.











"ISN'T THAT *RIGHT*?"



NOW WHY
WOULD YOU WANT TO DO
THAT, LIAM? AFTER ALL, **SHE**
WANTS GUYS LIKE ME TO GO
BACK HOME.





"WOUNDS CONSISTENT WITH ROUNDS FIRED FROM
A BELGIAN VIGNERON NINE-MILLIMETRE SMG."

BUT THEY
FOUND YOU COVERING IN
THE BATHROOM WITH A
FORTY-FIVE CALIBRE
PISTOL.

"DIDN'T THEY?"

YES, OF
COURSE. I THOUGHT
I REMEMBERED SEEING
THAT MAN GET
SHOT...

SHUT UP!

"DANNY, THAT WAS IT."

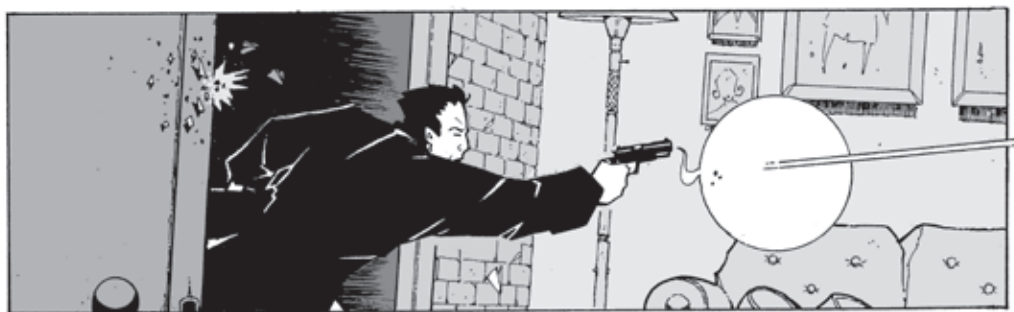
HIS
NAME WAS
DANNY.

YOU WERE
SIX FUCKIN' YEARS OLD!
HOW THE **FUCK** WOULD YOU
REMEMBER?

AND HOW
THE **FUCK** WOULD YOU
KNOW **ANYWAY**, EH? LIKE
THEY'RE GOIN' TO LET SOME
FUCKIN' **SQUADDIE** READ
FUCKIN' **SAS** FILES?

I FUCKIN'
KILLED THAT
BASTARD **POOLE**,
AND **THAT'S**
THE--

POOLE.



THAT'S
RIGHT, YOU
BASTARD.

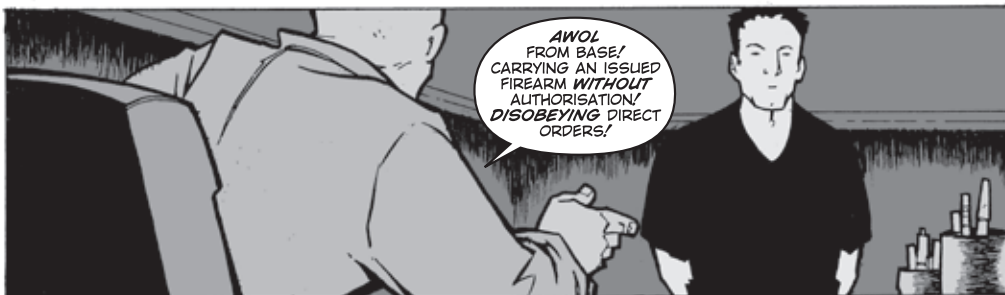
MY FATHER.



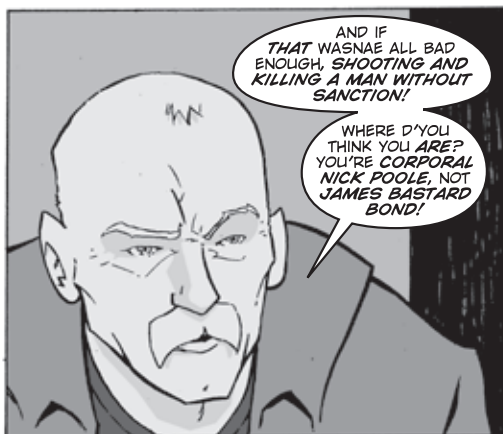


RAF BESSBROOK.

BY
CHRIST, LADDIE, I
OUGHT TO SKIN YOU
ALIVE.



AWOL
FROM BASE!
CARRYING AN ISSUED
FIREARM *WITHOUT*
AUTHORISATION!
DISOBEYING DIRECT
ORDERS!



AND IF
THAT WASNÆ ALL BAD
ENOUGH, *SHOOTING AND*
KILLING A MAN WITHOUT
SANCTION!

WHERE D'YOU
THINK YOU *ARE?*
YOU'RE *CORPORAL*
NICK POOLE, NOT
JAMES BASTARD
BOND!



I'M
SORRY, SIR. I ONLY
ACTED IN WHAT I
CONSIDERED TO BE
THE CROWN'S
BEST INTERESTS.

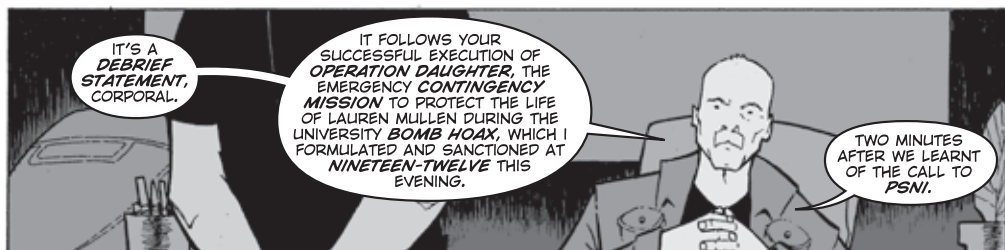


OH, DON'T
GIVE ME THAT "*WHO*
DARES WINS"
BOLLOCKS!

I SOMEHOW
DOUBT *ASSASSINATING*
MIDDLE-AGED PROVOS IS
AT THE *FOREFRONT* OF HER
MAJESTY'S *MIND*, DON'T
YOU?



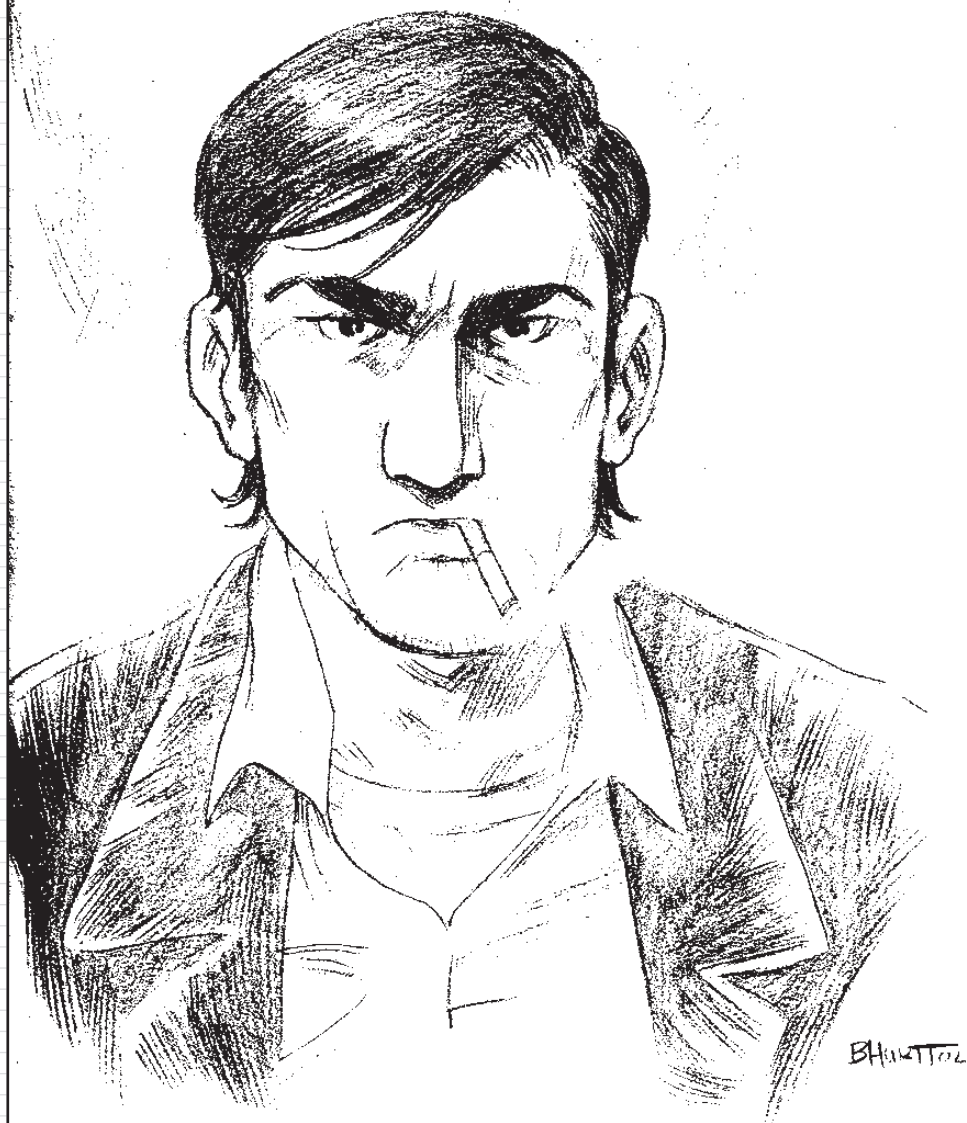
I'M AWARE
OF THE *CONSEQUENCES*,
SIR. I'LL FACE WHATEVER
PUNISHMENT YOU DEEM
SUITABLE.



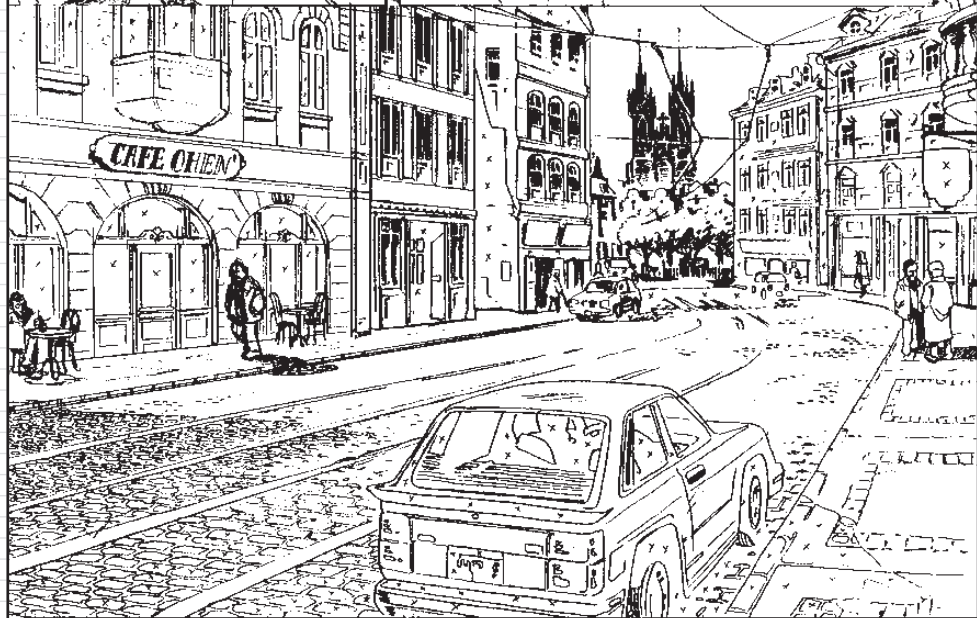
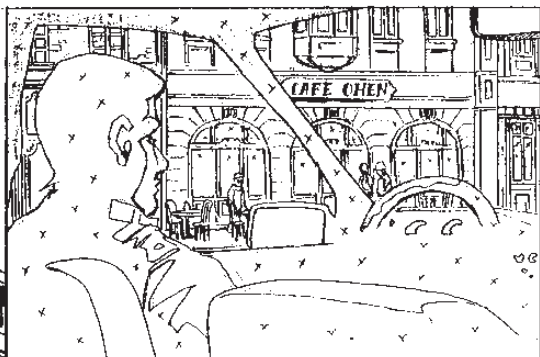
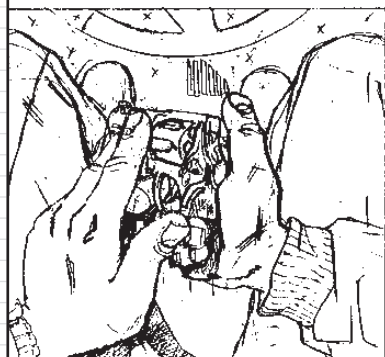
QUEEN & COUNTRY™

BEHIND THE SCENES





The following pages contain an intimate look at Brian Hurtt's sketches and development process for *Queen & Country Declassified* Volume 1.

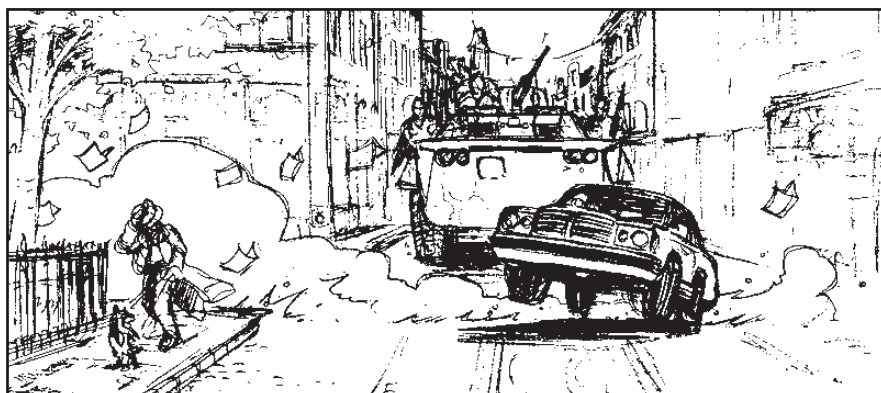
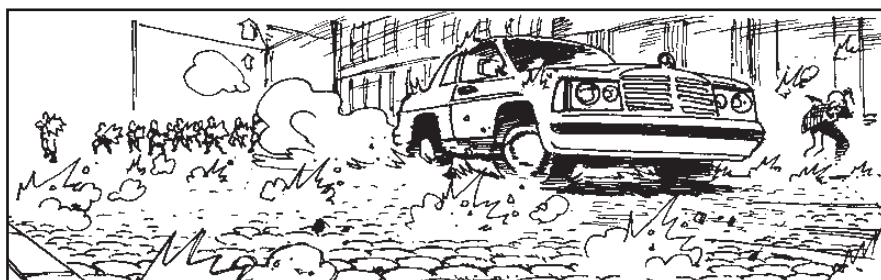
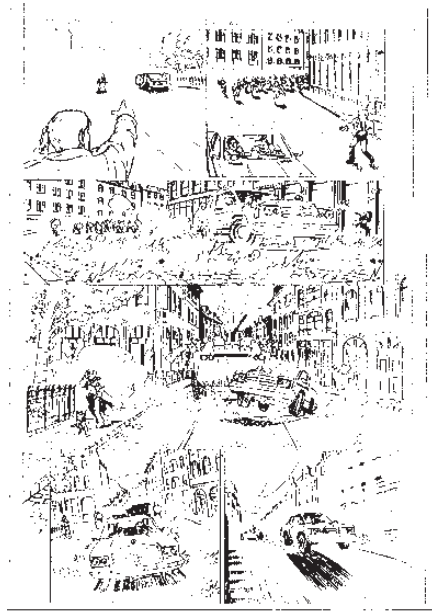














Declassified Volume 1 was originally intended as a 56-page stand-alone. Once Greg started writing, though, the script took on a life of its own and became this weightier volume. Above is cover artist Scott Morse's original cover for issue 1, which was discarded when Scott decided to use specific design elements on all three covers (shown as the chapter break pages for Volume 1.)



Scott Morse's painted cover for the original *Declassified* collection.



GREG RUCKA

QUEEN & COUNTRY: THE INTERVIEWS

In this series of interviews, *Queen & Country* creator Greg Rucka chats with three of his collaborators on the series. First up, we have inaugural artist Steve Rolston, whose deft line and attention to detail helped establish so many of the set pieces the series would rely on. Rolston returned to the book for the double-sized 25th issue and has also collaborated with such critically acclaimed authors as Brian Wood, Brian K. Vaughan, and Warren Ellis.

STEVE ROLSTON

Greg Rucka: First, I just want to say, I really appreciate you doing this. It's really short notice and out of the blue.

Steve Rolston: It's cool.

GR: James and I had been talking about what we could do to make the definitive editions more definitive, and I had mentioned to him that I liked the idea of talking to the artists, and obviously, you were first on the list, for a number of reasons, not the least of which is you being "the first." Honestly, I was thinking about it, and I was thinking that as much as I suppose I had an iron hand in a lot of this stuff, everything visually that was established for *Q&C*, you are responsible for.

SR: Well... that can't be all true.

GR: I was looking through *Broken Ground* again, and I was looking through the third *Definitive* collection, and you can clearly see it. You set the visual tone, even if different artists came in with

different interpretations. How did you approach that? How did you approach that design?

SR: I'm not sure if I had much of a plan. I was still new to it all at that point. I'd been trying to draw my own comics for a few years, but it was all cartoony stuff. I'd never drawn more than eight pages or so, I guess. And then being thrown onto this spy book, well, that was interesting, cause as you probably remember, when I first did some sketches, I did a cartoony version and I did a realistic version. And we wound up going with the realistic version, which people still think was cartoony. But that was me stretching to be as realistic as I could. I had never really approached drawing any drama. And there was a lot of drama in *Queen & Country*. That's what all of those office scenes are. Basically, I was just doing what I thought worked.

GR: Well, it clearly did! Actually, you just jumped ahead of me a bit, but now that you've brought it up, I remember all of us being really steamed that the initial response to the art was that "too cartoony" comment. It's a personal question, but how did it feel? When you were seeing that and hearing that?

SR: I think I was more amused than anything. Most of the criticism I get on my comics, I never take any of it too personally or too seriously, because everyone's got their own interpretation. And I do know that my stuff is cartoonier than others, I just disagreed with them when they thought that it didn't fit the book. It worked out fine, though, because it was a bit of a vindication when three issue later, online reviewers actually said "I was wrong when I said it was too cartoony." So when they actually go back and eat their words, you know, that's pretty good. [laughs]

GR: [laughs] Well, and it did seem to be the curse of the *Q&C* artist, and it started with you: Whoever got the gig was always being compared to the last guy. And you were the first guy, so I suppose a lot of people were comparing you to Steve Lieber [artist on *Whiteout*].

SR: Yeah, I think a lot of people were comparing me to him. Which is a tough comparison, because Steve's pretty damn good.

GR: Oh, yeah, Steve's amazing.

SR: But we have completely different styles.

GR: Yes, exactly.

GR: So I remember the first time we met, at San Diego. I can't even remember the year. I can't remember who even made the introduction, and we sat down in that hallway, before it was impossible to sit down in the outer hall. I recall you having this glazed expression as I bombarded you with this idea for the book. What did you think when we first said "Here, take this thing on?"

SR: Well, it felt pretty cool, because I loved *Whiteout*, so I knew I was going to be working on a great project. I think my eyes were glazed throughout the entire convention. It was a little intimidating, but somehow I had faith that I could pull it off.

GR: Well, there was never any doubt from any of us that that was true. What did you think when you got that first script, when you first read it?

SR: Well, I'm gonna assume that I was blown away. My memory sucks, so.... One thing, whenever I read one of your scripts, I can always see it in my head perfectly. Some kind of weird movie/comic hybrid that's going on in the back of my head. First I have to read it through, you know, as a fan. And enjoy it. And then I have to go back and actually think about if it's going to work on the page the way I'd envisioned it. So basically, I always have fun reading your scripts. I'm sure the first one was the same. And then I say "Wow, it's a brain getting shot. It's gonna look cool! I don't know how I'm gonna do that, but I'm sure it's going to look cool!"



GR: [laughs]

SR: I was so impressed with that first script specifically. The way your script tied all the political stuff together with the great action stuff. It was nice.

GR: But it really came down to execution. I appreciate it, but you know, going back through the scriptbook and seeing all your designs... that level of detail that you put into not only the character designs but you really seem to get into the architecture as well. Which is something that is not only present in *Broken Ground*, but is also evident when you came back and you did issue 25.

SR: Environments are so key to a lot of stories, and especially this one. I also have this weird thing where I can't *not* put that much attention into these things. Character's faces, you know, one line and that's enough! Anything else, I have to overthink way too much.

GR: It's funny you say that about character faces, and when I was looking back through what we did. It's such a subtle little line that you did, but in one panel, Tara's biting her lower lip.



SR: Okay...

GR: You're gonna have to trust me on that one, if you don't remember putting it in there.

SR: I'm sure I did draw it, but yeah, I don't remember right now.

GR: I'm pretty sure I didn't put that in the script, but it was perfect emotional communication. The style is "cartoony" but do you find yourself using models? Where do you get your acting from?

SR: I have a mirror. [laughs] That's one thing. A lot of it is just me acting it out in my head or in the mirror. Trying to figure out how they'd feel and infuse that into each character. I've been trying to focus on that more since *Queen & Country*. I've been trying

to push that kind of subtle acting. That's the stuff I love. The biting the lip thing, the subtle bits like that. It's easy to draw someone jumping up and down and waving their arms, but the subtle acting is what I've got an appreciation for.

GR: It's weird, because *Q&C* had a balance between the two. You know, they're alternately shooting people, and brains are hitting windshields, and then are these quiet moments.

SR: Those little scowls from Crocker.



GR: Speaking of Crocker, I don't think I ever asked you this, but I've always wondered because I know I didn't put it in the script: Where did you get the idea for that dragon painting in his office?



SR: I'm trying to remember if I stole that from something or not... I don't think I did. I assumed he'd done a lot of traveling. And so I figured that he'd have collected a lot of relics from his travels whether he was traveling for business or pleasure. I'm not sure exactly why I chose to go with Asian themes for that particular picture but it seemed right. It also seemed like the sort of thing I could reproduce time and time again. [laughs] it was slightly stylized so I could hack it out if I needed to.

GR: [laughs] Well, it does become the single most identifying locator feature in the book from then on. And every artist after that uses it.

SR: Yeah, that was always fun to see.

GR: And It was interesting to me because it was a great choice for him, that whole idea of the dragon, the ferocious beast, and yet the asian dragon style is not this fire-breathing dragon but is a much more subtle and sneaky creature. It was a great metaphor for him as a spy, I thought.

SR: I won't take any credit for the cleverness of the metaphor.

GR: [laughs] But you should!

SR: I should, but I won't. I'm much too honest.

GR: Well, like I said, you started it off, and then everyone came after you. And then you came back for issue 25. Which I think is a personal favorite for me. I really love that issue and I love the execution of it. It was wonderfully nostalgic to work with you again, and I loved seeing how your style had evolved. What do you think the biggest difference was between the *Broken Ground* arc and what you'd done in 25?

SR: Well, I think the biggest difference was that I was a few years better an artist. That was one of the reasons I was so glad to go back and do that was so that I could show people that I had improved. Sometimes it's hard to look at the first four issues, because my art was so raw back then. The faces are a little wonky, the anatomy was never what I wished it were. So to go back on 25 and be able to do it better. I think the storytelling was on par... It's such an artist thing, hating my old work.

GR: Yeah, writers do it too. Trust me.

SR: It was really nice to show that more personal side of Tara. That was pretty cool to be a part of.

GR: Was there a favorite moment in there?

SR: Well, I probably should have read it before you called. It's probably been a year or so since I've read it, so I can't really say which it was.

GR: Well, let me ask you another one the, and you may say "Hey, stop putting me on the spot" but of all the people that came after you, was there a particular artist that you really liked what they took from you had designed, and in the way they ran with it?

SR: I loved a lot of the artists, and when I really think about it, I think Chris Samnee's probably my favorite *Q&C* artist. I think he captures the mood the best. It's weird, because each of them capture certain aspects of it better than others. Brian Hurtt, maybe... Hmm. I think he's a close second after Samnee. He does such a great job with it. And when I went back for 25, I especially looked at the guys up to then, and took bits and pieces of everything they had done. Mike Hawthorne's Crocker, you know, I infused a bit of his style into my Crocker. Who was your favorite?



GR: It's weird because it so comes down to moments in story. I think the quintessential Tara moment was a Jason Alexander moment in the *Blackwall* arc when she's looking at what's his name and he says "what should I do now?" and she says "shoot yourself" and walks out because she's just so angry. But the flip side is, looking at 25 again in

particular, I just love the difference that you drew in her between her in the office and outside of the office. I don't know if that was conscious on your part, but she seemed to carry herself differently once she was out of Crocker's sight, for lack of a better phrase.

SR: Yes, well, there's also a big difference between when she's with her mother versus being with her old friend. And I think she's always got that different air about her depending on her situation.

GR: Is there a favorite emotional state to draw Tara in for you?

SR: Exhausted, beat down. At the bottom of a bottle. I think those are the ones that are my favorite Tara moments. I'm not sure what it is, there's something about characters where you respect them more the more you beat them down. She keeps on kicking once she gets down to the bottom. Those are my favorite to draw. Those are also tricky to draw without it looking too silly.

GR: I can imagine it's a fine line to draw it realistically without it looking melodramatic. You mentioned the realism that's in the series. Was that particularly difficult compared to other comics work? Having to draw "a real world?"

SR: It's a different type of challenge. I'm not sure I can say it's any harder or easier, it's just definitely different.

GR: Well, you said earlier that you didn't like looking at the first four, so I suppose asking the question if





there was anything you'd do differently has already been asked and answered.

SR: [laughs] Well, it's easy to say "well, I'd just draw it better." There probably were some moments where I wish I'd hit the acting a little bit better. But I guess it was pretty good for being my first "real" comic. I'm not sure what else I would have done differently.

GR: Is there anything I asked for that made you really want to wring my neck?

SR: There was that one time that I thought there were nine panels on a page but it was really two pages worth, but then I forgave you once I realized I was the idiot. Luckily I'd thumbnailed and hadn't gotten any further in when I'd finally clued in. I think I got a little sick of drawing the MI-5 building. I'm really precise when it comes to buildings...



GR: Well, you are really precise with your architecture.

SR: There's only so much cheating that I can allow myself to do with that building. I can't allow myself to cheat too much with real buildings. If it was some fake town in some fake country, that's a lot less of a problem.

GR: Did you wind up using a lot of reference? I mean, obviously the MI-6 building would be referenced.

SR: I usually reference pretty heavily whenever it's a real place. I remember you gave me a lot of reference for things like sniper rifles and that was really awesome. I was still doing a fair amount of googling back then. I've since gotten even better at searching online for reference. Nowadays for projects, I have folders of hundreds of reference photos pulled off the web, you know, for cars, buildings, architecture, fashion for the appropriate seasons, in the appropriate part of the world. I can get a little anal-retentive sometimes.

GR: I think that stuff serves it really well. That's where it lives and breathes, in being able to convince people you know what you're talking about.

SR: Those details are important. I mean, so often you can tell if someone just pulled it out of their ass and they don't really know what these things should look like.

GR: It's funny, I've worked with some artists that you



can send all the reference material in the world, and they still won't use it. They'll draw whatever the hell they want. [laughs] And all my friends who actually use guns, you know, professionally, were grateful for the technical details.

SR: Ooh, I just thought of one of those things that made me want to wring your neck!

GR: [laughs] Oh yeah?

SR: All the talking. Especially when you'd have four characters all talking in one panel, or at least, you know, maybe five characters in a panel and three of them are talking? It would happen a lot in the ops room a lot. There'd be four or five characters all talking. I remember I'd spend a lot of time doing these little tiny thumbnails just to figure out which balloon would come first, and how I would have to move the camera around. A lot of people have said that it was a really good thing, the way I moved the camera around--I had no choice! I had to keep moving it around to find a composition that worked with the sequence of their dialogue and where the characters were positioned. Yeah, if I was going to change anything, I wouldn't have characters sitting in the same place all the time. I'd have them walking around so that I could cheat it a little more.

GR: I would write these scenes and I would know that there would be buckets of dialogue in there, and I'd be like "Eh... but that's what it is! These people talking quickly at each other!" It makes me wonder, though, aside from getting people out of their chairs and moving around, what's the solution to that problem? How do I change something I've written that so that the next time you're drawing something where have four people in a room and they're all talking at once?

SR: I'm not sure what a better way would be without losing all that great dialogue. I mean, you could chop it down, but that's not a great solution. But I wouldn't have asked you to change the script in any way.

GR: I don't know... I seem to remember us going back and forth, and back and forth, in particular about the bit when Tara's got the photos of herself at the checkpoint? And me feeling like a dirty old man saying "more of this and less of that" and making you draw her naked over and over again.

SR: Oh yes, that was so tough for me.

GR: [laughs]

SR: One of the things that I can tell people is that Greg Rucka sent me naked pictures of ladies.

GR: Did I? I can't remember!

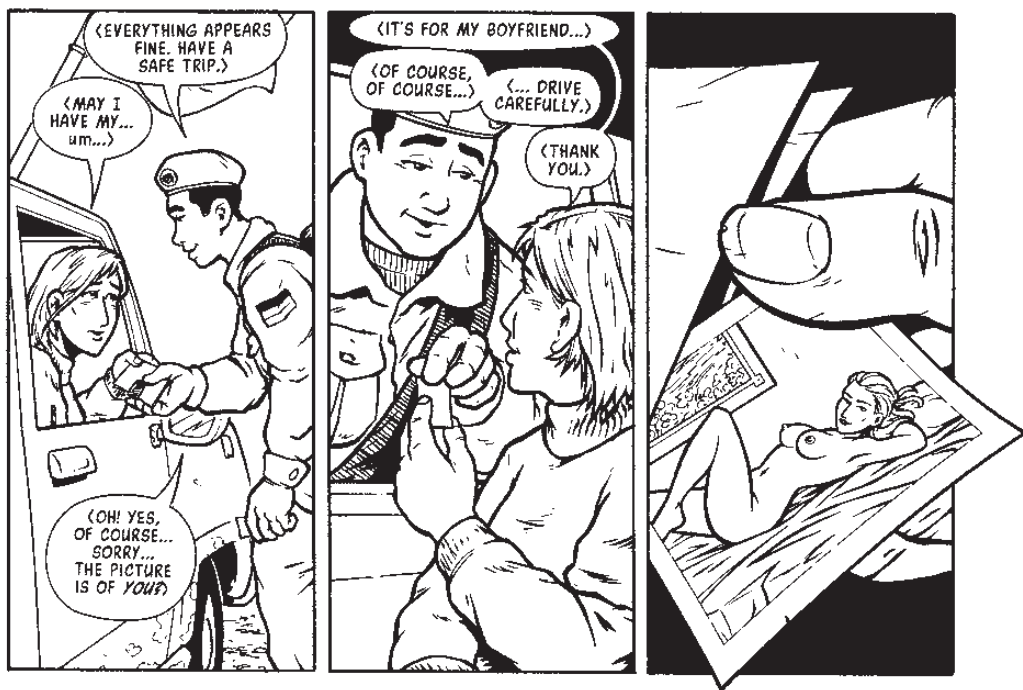
SR: Maybe they weren't completely nude, but they were like "maybe more like this pose, rather than this."

GR: [laughs] All my secrets come out! That's all just reference for me, you know. All reference.

SR: Of course. [laughs] I agree. That scene worked out nicely too.

GR: Oh yes, it's a great character bit. And I do remember us going back and forth on that a few times and me starting to feel really... dirty. "No, no, Steve. Draw it again!"

SR: It was a tricky thing to draw, though. We wanted just that right level, not too naughty, not too innocent.



Sometimes it's hard to hit that exactly right.

When are we going to get more *Queen & Country*?

GR: Well, there's a plan to do a second volume, and the new novel I'm going to write is a *Q&C* novel that will bridge the two series, so if all goes well, I hope to start a new series in 2010. You on board for the second volume?

SR: Well, I'm not going to commit on air or anything, but people ask me all the time "Are you ever going to do more *Queen & Country* with Greg?" and I say "Well, maybe. When the time is right."

GR: Excellent. Well, I'm hoping that time is soon. At the end of the day, so much of the series owes so much to you. Visually, the style, the locations, the option of layouts, the character design, all of that comes from you. So, I owe you for that.

SR: Well, so much of my career stems from *Queen & Country*, so I thank you for that!

GR: On that note, we can close this meeting of the mutual admiration society! Thanks for taking the time to chat with me today.

SR: Thank you!

BRIAN HURTT

Brian Hurtt is the co-creator of *The Damned* and the illustrator of both *Operation: Morningstar* (collected in *Definitive Edition, Volume 1*) and the first *Declassified* spin-off collected in this very volume. He spoke with Greg about their work from his home in St. Louis, MO.

Greg Rucka: This is the interview with Brian Hurtt. So yeah, you know, I actually finished re-reading both *Morningstar* and the first *Declassified* this morning.

Brian Hurtt: Oh yeah? How they holding up?

GR: I think *Declassified* holds up exceptionally well. I'm really pleased with that volume in total. I look at it and I think we did a great job on it. *Morningstar*, less so, but I think that's because of the shift in the politics.

BH: That was very awkward... I mean, I remember you wrote the script before 9-11, and I got the script just after 9-11. And the whole world had obviously flipped at that point. At that point nobody was talking about Afghanistan, or talking about the Taliban. I remember that very clearly.

GR: So you actually hadn't started drawing it until after 9-11?

BH: Right, right. I think I actually came on, I think there was another artist on the book and things had fallen through, so it was probably October when I actually started drawing it.

GR: That was Christine, right? Christine Norrie?

BH: No, Christine actually helped with issues 2 and 3. Yeah, she inked issues 2 and 3.

GR: Right. I was trying to figure out where Bryan was, where you were, and where Christine was in the process.

BH: Bryan O'Malley inked the first issue. It might have even been his first published work. Oni had just discovered him online through his strips and they threw some work his way because we were kinda time-crunched to get the book done. And that was his first published work, and he'll tell you it wasn't his best work. And I'll tell you the same thing about mine. It was trial by fire. I wasn't sure I was ready for the big leagues yet, but I started learning pretty fast after that.

GR: Do you think there was a marked difference just in the learning curve between *Morningstar* and that first *Declassified*?

BH: Yeah, there was two different learning curves because with *Morningstar* I was just penciling, and seeing the difference, with having two different inkers. I had Bryan Lee O'Malley on the first issue and Christine Norrie on issues 2 and 3. And neither of them--both of them had completely different approaches, and both were good--but neither of them were what I had envisioned, so I thought "I want to just ink it on my own." So when we started *Declassified*, that was the first time I had ever inked anything.

GR: That was your first time inking your own work for publication?

BH: Yeah. Not just for publication. Pretty much ever!

GR: Really?

BH: Yeah, I never really was an inker. I'd done maybe two or three drawings in my life where I'd inked them, but that was the first time I'd done it for a comic. So that was a whole other learning curve. Between the first and third issues of *Declassified*, I learned a lot. I definitely grew a lot. I'm still working on it, but yeah. I still tell people, when I have a table set up at conventions, with all the books out on the

table, that I love everything I've ever done. I'm proud of every book I've ever worked on. But outside of *The Damned*, the book I co-created with Cullen, *Declassified's* the most fun I ever had doing a book. It was right up my alley, I love the European setting, the cold war. It was just a blast. It was great.

GR: You know, it was your idea to do that, wasn't it?

BH: [laughs] The only part that was my idea was me saying "Hey Greg, have you ever thought about doing a spinoff with one of these characters?" and that was about the extent of my input.

GR: You're being unduly modest there, because I think you specifically said to me, or was it Jamie, at that point?... you specifically said that you wanted to see Crocker when he was in the field.

BH: Yeah, I did the like idea of a young Crocker. And I still like the idea.

GR: It's funny because Randy Jarrell [at Oni] has said more than once that he wants to do ones where the original C was in the field, and call it *King & Country*. [laughs]

BH: [laughs] Yeah, that's pretty clever.

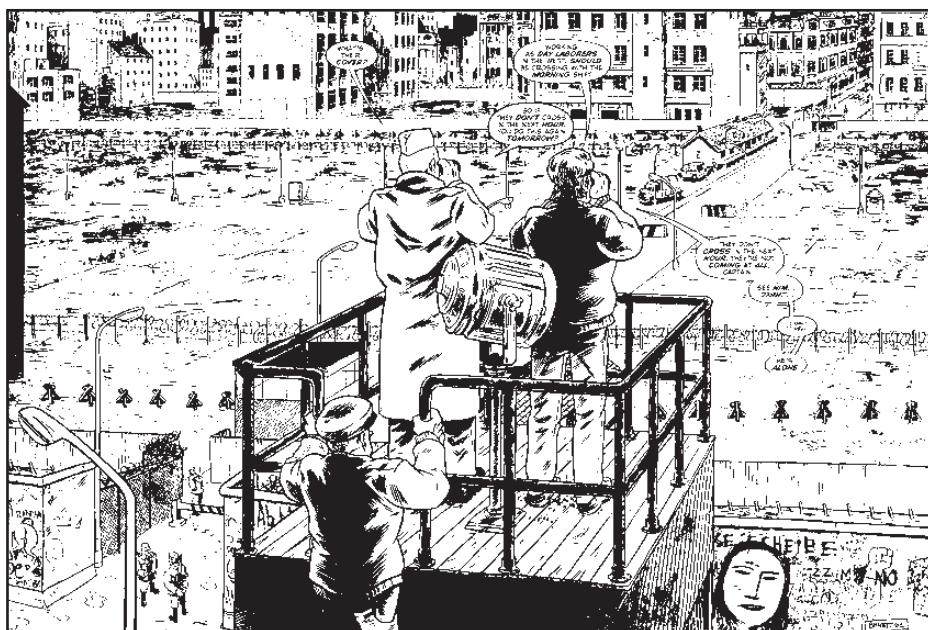
GR: Yeah, You know, I only have so many hours to write, and the question is whether to go back or to go forward. Until you had proposed it, I hadn't thought of a way to do the story with all those cold war tropes, and that, I think, was the biggest appeal for both of us at the beginning. That Checkpoint Charlie scene at the start, for instance.

BH: Yeah, that was a blast. I will tell you though, I had a hard time researching that.

GR: Really?

BH: I could find plenty of shots of the gate on the American side, and don't think I ever found one from the other side. I'm not even sure if I finally did, or if I just cobbled together a lot of information from the other sites. But I never found any information about the no-man's land. And you know, that first shot we have is from the guard tower, looking out over the no-man's land.

GR: If you didn't have hard research, you faked it beautifully. Because in particular, the wall on the West Berlin side really matches all the descriptions that I've read and seen. And I was thinking, it always seems that all those representations of the wall, there aren't a lot of actual, factual pictures. But there's a lot of cinema stuff, you know. There's a lot of spy movie stuff.



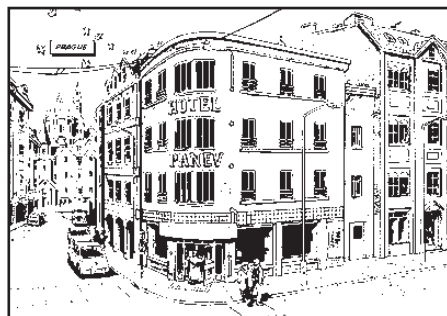
BH: Right, exactly. I think I found maybe one very grainy photo that I was able to get some info off of, but yeah, you're right, all the rest were whatever the [various film's] art department came up with to represent that area.

GR: Did you have the same problem for Prague?

BH: No, no, I had plenty of reference for Prague. I actually wish I could have drawn more Prague. It's a beautiful city, and I wish I could have drawn more of the buildings. To me, the European locale is just as much a character in the book as anything else.

GR: Very much so.

BH: It's always that way for me. I think the environments are very important, and I love drawing that stuff. I have a blast doing backgrounds.



GR: When you're doing environments, is there a specific thing you're looking at, to sort of, find the entry into it?

BH: Boy, I don't know. I don't know that that's the case. I tend to look at the composition first, and then I start gathering reference. I never use straight reference, I usually kinda pick bits and pieces, and fake parts of it to make it fit the composition. It's hard to describe how I go about trying to set a mood. Yeah, I don't know.

GR: Well, in particular in the *Declassified* one, I think because we've all been educated by pop culture, and we know what that mood is. That sort of grey, dreary, eastern block feel. And you absolutely captured it. There are a lot of moments in *Declassified* that I really love. I love that first escape.

BH: In the restaurant?

GR: Yeah, the restaurant sequence.

BH: That's probably my favorite sequence in the whole book. The scene when they get out the back door into the alley, and they have the shootout there. Yeah, that was great.

GR: Yeah, the Crocker moment, when he's slamming the guy's face into the table. [laughs] You've got that wonderful visceral sense of that violence, and it's not the something that a lot of artists capture. They tend to go real big, but not so tactile, and there are a

lot of moments that you really feel, I think, and that you created beautifully. That was one, and Crocker's fall, later in that same sequence.



BH: Yeah, yeah. Where he's on the wall?

GR: Yeah, and he gets shot. We can say all this because the *Declassified* will be in this volume, and so ideally people will have read it, and then they'll know what we're talking about.

BH: [laughs] Exactly. No Spoilers here. Stop. If you haven't read the book, go back.

GR: Yes. Proceed no further. You are now leaving the spoiler-free zone.

BH: Right, because I'm sure we'll probably cover a very big spoiler coming up.

GR: Well, I was about to say. I think that penultimate page is incredibly evocative.

BH: Still, I think if I could go back, I feel like I could draw it better. I mean technically, I could draw it better, but it's still one of my favorite pages I've ever done. I love that page.

GR: You captured it so.... That look on Crocker's face. And I didn't really realize, this'll give you an idea the sort of reader I am, it wasn't really until I was looking at it today that I really realized that you were using the flashlight the guard was holding as a spot. And I don't know if it was conscious on your part, but there are all these key moments in all three of those issues, where people are looking through binoculars, or being hit with a spotlight, or there's the danger of a spotlight...

BH: right.





GR: Even with the beginning when we see the previous *Minder* one, and that sense of discovery...

BH: Yeah, yeah, that was another favorite scene of mine as well. That scene out in the snow, right?

GR: Yeah.

BH: Well, you know what? It's so hard to explain sometimes, but when you're drawing a book, and when you're working with a script, you're living

with the script. I mean, I probably spend at least as much time, if not more time with the script than you do, even.

GR: Yeah.

BH: I study every panel, and it's totally like Let's Pretend. You enter into that world yourself, so sometimes you don't have to overthink something. You kinda feel it as you're drawing, and with that page, the penultimate page, that's very much what was going on there. I totally saw it in my head. I was kind of living it. And you're kind of like an actor with those characters too, you're feeling what they're feeling, no matter who the character is.

GR: You know, it's funny, I talked to Steve Rolston last week, and I bring this up only because I asked him about acting. Both you and he, and frankly every *Q&C* artist has had the same challenge, which is that the history of espionage and of this type of comic are much more pulled back. It's "more realistic" and consequently seems to require, I think, a greater subtlety. That both you and he really excel at, in particular when talking about mood. And now I'm thinking about *Morningstar*, and when Tara goes into Charlotte's apartment, she breaks in, the sense of sadness in that apartment is palpable.



BH: Well, I'll tell you, before I drew comics. Like any comic artist, you tend to draw a lot of what you want to draw. You know, if you like action, you draw action. You draw dragons, or whatever it is. You just draw whatever it is that makes you happy. So when we were going into *Morningstar*, it was absolutely not the sort of book I ever thought I'd be drawing. And so much of the focus is between Tara in the office-and what's the doctor's name...?

GR: Yeah...

BH: There's so much interplay going on between the two of them, just these little moments, and so I definitely learned a lot. Like I said earlier, it's trial by fire. And I learned to love that stuff. And I remember when Christ Samnee first started drawing *Q&C*, it was one of his very first gigs. And I told him "it's going to be hard, but it's going to make you such a better artist by the time you come out the back end of it, because you'll draw things you never thought you'd draw, and it's all about the small moments. You know, your least favorite panel might be drawing a guy opening a door, but you'll get good at it!"

GR: [laughs] You'll know that door!

BH: It's the little things that makes the book more complete. The big stuff speaks for itself. It's those little moments that make something work, to help create the mood and the atmosphere.

GR: What do you do to capture the acting in those moments? I'm thinking in particular of *Morningstar*, I'm thinking of several moments in *Morningstar* that are relatively small character reactions to big things. Like at the end of that first issue, Tara trying, passed out almost on the couch, and the dead eyes. But in particular I'm thinking about that moment in the football stadium, with Tom. And Tom's reaction. What did you do to get a handle on that acting? Do you use reference?



BH: Well, actually, it's pretty easy. I mean, its there in the script. You reading the script, and this is especially true for that scene in particular, as it's based on real events, and you're just as horrified as he is. It's not hard to draw horrified when you're horrified. When you get sad, you can draw sad. I know so many comic book artists do this, and we don't realize we're doing this until someone points it out, but we make faces while we're drawing. We're drawing a sad character and we're making a sad face while we're drawing them.

GR: Writers do it too.

BH: [laughs] Oh yeah?

GR: I'll be writing this scene where someone is angry, and Jen will walk by and say "What? What happened?!" and I'll say "Nothing, I'm working!" [laughs]

BH: Yeah, it's all Let's Pretend, you know? It goes back to being a kid, when it's easy to get lost in it. And when you get lost in it, it's easier to do the work.

GR: Do you think—and again, I'm thinking about that football stadium scene, it is, it's not BASED on a real event—it actually happened. I don't remember if I gave you a link to the footage.

BH: I've seen enough of it. I have seen some of the video, because it's very grainy. At the time I saw it, this would have been seven years ago, I watched a very pixilated version on the internet.

GR: Yeah, that was before it became commonplace to film people being executed and release it on youtube, but I know for me, especially because I know I'd written the first issue before 9-11. And I know that I hadn't finished writing the arc until after it. And you had started drawing it right after the country's trying to figure out what happened, and this was before we'd even gone into Afghanistan, you hit a moment like that, it was such a typical moment exemplifying the evil of the Taliban. I mean, did you care? You talk about living in make believe, but then that's a very realistic moment, that's a real world. And you're dealing with a real moment there. How do you negotiate that?

BH: I think, talking about it in terms of acting, it's also empathizing. I don't know, it's rough. When you feel pretty strongly about something, it makes the art better. The more you feel it, the better you're going to be at depicting it. How do I negotiate it? I don't know. I read the paper everyday too, and there's some harsh stuff in there too. I have to do it the way everyone else does.



GR: Did you think there was any sort of obligation in needing to depict it the way you did?

BH: Yes. Something like that, you definitely don't want to sensationalize it. It's tough, because you don't want to make it entertaining. And that shot, I don't usually do this, but that drawing I did was fairly close to the actual image. I did that consciously. It wasn't a matter of laziness. I really wanted to echo what really happened. I wanted to depict it as closely as I could. I had to cheat some things to get everything in the picture, but more or less it's very close to the image that I was using for reference. It is a comic book, but it is also memorializing someone who was murdered in front of thousands of people.

GR: Thousands of people who came to watch.

BH: Who came to watch. Yeah.

GR: Shudder. On that nice note.... [laughs]

BH: [laughs]

GR: Ironically, it just occurred to me, that there is a follow up. I mean, you have that sequence in *Morningstar*, the execution at the stadium, but that's juxtaposed with the action back in London on Tara. Tara has picked up some no-name guy in the pub, so you did a double page where we're cross cutting there, so it's a delicate...

BH: There's a lot going on there. [laughs] As a writer,

you understand why you're juxtaposing those two scenes, there's a lot going on with Tara there.

GR: And I also realize as I look at it, Tara's naked an awful lot in those first two arcs. You get the nudie picture bit in *Broken Ground*...

BH: Well, and that's why I'm assuming it's no mistake that you have a woman being executed in Afghanistan, while Tara is doing what she is doing to herself. And I say to herself, because she really is doing it to herself.

GR: Absolutely, and it was really conscious on my part that she's in her own private hell, but she's also doing something that would get her shot.

BH: Right, she has the freedom to screw up her life.

GR: I guess we could take it further and say that now you and I are culpable because we created this piece of art depicting a woman's sexual life, and everyone who bought it and looked at it are culpable as well. But I'm not sure anybody chased that down as far as I just did. [laughs]

GR: So, *Morningstar* was your first paying gig?

BH: Yeah, it's the one I always reference. I actually did a six-page... oh, for Jen! I did a six-page *Captain America* piece.

GR: I remember that *Captain America* piece. So that was the first one?

BH: That was the first thing I ever did. I just did the pencils on it. And Jim Mahfood inked that.

GR: That was when they had killed him the time before this last time.

BH: [laughs] Right, exactly.

GR: What were you doing before you were drawing?

BH: Those two jobs I got back to back. Probably within a week or two of each other. It was just bizarre that it happened to be your wife. It was just coincidence, really.

GR: It was fated.

BH: For the six months leading up to that I was actually living on Staten Island with Christine Norrie and her husband Andrew. I had saved up a bunch of money and my intention to finally get down to it and try to break into comics, work on my portfolio. So for the six months leading up to these two gigs, and especially *Operation Morningstar*, I was drawing all the time. Before that, I worked retail for many many years. I worked at a comic book store for three or four years, and at Pier 1, and I was a production assistant on commercials for about a year and a half. And that's how I was able to save up the money to take the time off to finally focus on what I always wanted to do, which was draw comics.

GR: We've never discussed it, but now I'm curious. Have you had any formal training? Did you do the Kubert stuff, or anything like that?

BH: No, I never had any sort of comic book formal training. We had a local community college with a pretty good fine arts program. So I went to the local community college for about two years, and only showed up for the art classes, which really ruined my GPA.

GR: [laughs] That'll do it.

BH: So yeah, I did that for about two years, and it definitely helped a lot, but that training and on the job training is what it came down to. Not that I'm saying I couldn't have used it...

GR: No, no, that's not what I'm fishing for. I'm just curious.

BH: For other people out there who are considering taking classes and courses, I do recommend it. There is definitely a lot that can be taught and can be learned if you're open to it. But I never had the opportunity; I never pursued that.

GR: Stylistically, you're the second guy to suffer the *Q&C* curse. You can in after Rolston, who initially had been pilloried for being too cartoony, and then you came in...

BH: It's always too something, isn't it?

GR: It is! It always is. What was yours, do you remember? You were too....

BH: I can't remember. I didn't look enough like Rolston, I think. That was probably what the complaint was.

GR: Yeah, you were the second artist to discover that nobody drawing *Queen & Country* was going to be loved until they were done.

BH: [laughs] Yeah, right. Leandro probably had it the worst, which I thought was unwarranted. I loved his take on it.

GR: One of the things that I've loved about *Queen & Country*, to this day when I look back on all the work that all of us did, was that everybody got to work from the people around them, the people that preceded them, yet they all brought their own stamp.

BH: That's what's fun about it. I probably had more fun than Steve, because I got to follow Steve. I got to look and say "well, that's his take, now here's my take on it." I still had to follow his lead, but it's easier when someone else establishes it for you. [laughs] So you can have more fun, you know where the wiggle room is. Most of the heavy lifting's already been done. The OPS room had been designed, the characters had been designed. It's just up to me to do my take on the characters.

GR: And then we did the curveball in the *Declassified* where you had to take all those designs and redesign them yet again.

BH: That was a lot of fun. Like any job I've ever done I want to go back and do it over again, but I remember that being a lot of fun. I loved doing the old headquarters.

GR: I loved your young Weldon. It may be Weldon's best moment in the entire series, in that *Declassified*, when he stands up to Barclay. And I love your young Crocker, because you can see so much the man he's going to grow into.

BH: As an artist, I love doing that, I love taking characters and making them older, making them younger, and trying to find that part of them that's consistent with them. What hasn't happened to them yet. Crocker's a different guy from issue 1 to issue 3, obviously. He's a little more weary.



GR: I don't suppose you'd be interested in doing the Chief's *Declassified*.

BH: I always thought it'd be great, as a fan, to see Crocker's last operation in the field. And it'd be fun to come back and say that this is his trial by fire, to overuse a phrase, this first one was, and this last one was whatever it was that got him out of the field. I mean, was it just politics, or was it more than that?

GR: Hmm. I've been thinking more and more about what volume 2 is going to be, and I'm still about twelve months out from writing that first script, but the next novel is going to be sort of a bridging novel.

BH: Well as a fan, that's my question. Where are you at with the novels?

GR: The one that's gonna come out in 2010, that's a *Q&C* novel, and that's going to be the one that bridges the two series. The reason I bring it up is because it's going to be Tara's last mission. And I've been wracking my brain saying "what is that last mission?" Because so much of what moves these people out of their positions is politics as much as it is operational. But it'll be interesting to sort of bracket it; to say this is where she started, and this is where she ended this phase, because it's certainly not the end of that character.

BH: I love the comic and I love the novels. I've got my brother and my father hooked on the novels, too. My dad's read the whole series.

GR: Cool! What did your dad think of your work?

BH: Well, he's my biggest fan! [laughs]

GR: [laughs] That's good!

BH: But he's not shy about pointing out things here or there, you know. Like if he thinks perspective



might be a little off, or if somebody's head's too big, he'll definitely tell me. But you know, he's my dad. He's always going to be my biggest fan.

GR: I'm coming down the home stretch here, so let me ask you some of my written questions now.

BH: Okay.

GR: If you had to pick the favorite moment you had to draw, of the two arcs, which would it be?

BH: One from each arc, or the two arcs combined?

GR: However you want to answer!

BH: I think we touched on a couple of them already. In the *Declassified*, the penultimate page is one of my favorites. I love the page, when they're escaping the café, and he comes busting out the door. That skewed perspective, like a fish eye lens, I really like that page a lot. But I love the whole series. Hmm, I like the first shot of the café, when he's sitting in the car on the street. Man, the first series, that's a tough one, especially since I didn't ink it. But I remember researching and drawing the Cairo pass, and really enjoyed drawing that part. Probably one of my favorite pages from *Morningstar* is towards the end of the third issue, when they're leaving Afghanistan. When he goes to the dead drop, that sequence there is probably my favorite of that series.

GR: That's funny, because I think that may be the coiest the series ever gets, the interplay between Ed and Tom. "Oh, you're holding the map upside down!" "Oh, am I?" And I think the reason it works is that we don't actually see them doing their Mutt & Jeff, we're watching Dennis as he's trying to get to the dead drop. Actually, that reminds me of something else that struck me. I think you drew the most handsome Wallace.



BH: [laughs] I appreciate that, I thought of him as being a handsome guy!

GR: It's funny, because I was looking, and I really thought that he was like Super Wallace. This is the best he looks, ever, in the whole series. It's really when you're drawing him in Afghanistan. Not that Steve before you hadn't. Were you thinking of anybody when you were drawing him?

BH: No, I really wasn't. It was more a character type. He's like a strapping man's-man.

GR: Well, that comes across!

BH: Kind of a James Garner type, you know?

GR: I can see that. Very cool.

BH: I haven't ever really based any character on anybody, because that limits me. I feel more limited, and it might sound artsy, but if I'm basing a character on somebody I feel limited in acting through them. I like getting notes from authors because I like reading what they have in mind, but then I usually take those notes and go in my own direction.

GR: Do you have a moment, either when you were reading the script, or when you're looking at it now that you think "You know, I really want to kill Greg for this."

BH: [laughs] Yes, I do!

GR: [laughs] I would think so!

BH: It was a small panel, in *Morningstar*. You had Tara storming out of the room and slamming the

door behind her in the same panel. You can't draw that!

GR: [laughs]

BH: For the most part I get excited when I read a script. I don't think I've ever read a script where I've thought "Aww, that's gonna be no fun to draw." I get excited about drawing, about interpreting it. And I've been very fortunate that I've always worked with good writers. It's always been a blessing. Because I have read other scripts that I have not drawn, and I've been thankful that I have not drawn them. [laughs]

GR: Really? I'm not going ask you to name names.

BH: No, no, I wouldn't. But I have no problem saying that every writer I've worked with has been a great writer. I've been blessed in that way.

GR: Well, I was really lucky on *Q&C*, because there wasn't one artist who fell down on that job, everyone went all the way through. I mean, there was the person you replaced for *Morningstar*, but that was as much my fault as anybody else's.

And my last question. I don't know if you remember this, but I was looking at it and I thought I would have to bring this up.

In *Declassified*, Jenny and the kettle. You remember the kettle?

BH: No, I don't remember the kettle. Is this in the first issue?

GR: Yeah, it's when Paul comes back and says he's

going out again, and she's making the tea. This was the flak you got over the plug on the kettle.

BH: Oh! I see it now. I should know better.

GR: Do you remember anybody bringing that up to you at the time?

BH: Nobody's ever brought that up. [laughs]

GR: Really? [laughs] So I'm the schmuck!

BH: Here's what's horrible about this. That kettle is based on a kettle that my mother had in the 80s when I was a kid. In the 80s, I lived in England. There was no excuse for that. I should have known better.

GR: I guess we should clarify, that the plug on the end of that kettle is a standard two prong American plug, and you're not going to find that anywhere in England.

BH: Yeah, that's how you fry things in England. [laughs]



GR: I'm not sure you even can. Can you even plug those in?

BH: Well, I do remember we fried an Atari that way.

GR: Oh, back when they were cheap, too! [laughs]

BH: [laughs] Yeah, I have no excuse for that.

GR: Well, we'll do a patch in the next issue.

BH: Or offer a no-prize. You know, explain why that would be.

GR: Yeah, you get a Crocker no-prize. One week in Siberia.

ANTONY JOHNSTON

Antony Johnston, writer of the hit ongoing series *Wasteland*, among many others, is the only scribe other than Greg Rucka to ever pen a *Queen & Country* story. His *Declassified* arc, the third in the series, introduced readers to Nicholas Poole, a major player in Tara Chace's Special Section.

Greg Rucka: So, I've been talking to folks about the series, people who contributed, but mostly I've been talking to artists, because you're really the only other guy who wrote on it. So that puts you in a unique position and I suppose gives you a unique perspective.

Antony Johnston: Probably, yeah.

GR: What was the experience like, coming to this thing? By the time you wrote the *Sons and Daughters Declassified*, the material had been very well established, I think.

AJ: Yeah, it had, and frankly, it terrified me. [laughs] There's really no other way of putting it. I was really scared to do it, to take it on. I wanted to take it on, obviously. But I was really quite worried about how it would turn out. There was a lot of self doubt there, because I loved the series so much. I've been a big fan of yours for years. And I was such a huge fan of *Queen & Country* and its versimilitude, and the characters, and everything about it, that I was really quite intimidated when the offer came through, when it landed in my inbox. But it's one of those things where you have to sit down and think "Okay, they've asked me to do this, so they must have asked me for a reason." So I just had to trust in you, and in James, that you were making the right decision.

GR: Yeah. It's funny, because from where I was sitting, there was never any question from me about your ability to do it.

AJ: Right, but you know how writers are, self doubt and all of that.

GR: Definitely. And the problem is, we're doing interviews four or five years after the fact now.

AJ: Yeah, I just read the graphic novel a couple of days ago to refresh my memory.

GR: And what did you think of it?

AJ: It was actually better than I remembered. Looking at it from such a distance, like four years since I wrote

it, well, actually slightly more than four years since I actually wrote it, but certainly four years since it's been published. And I quite enjoyed it, actually.

GR: I re-read it as well. I've been re-reading everything in preparation for the interviews, and it really holds up for me. I think it's exceptionally well done and exceptionally well told, and I think one of the things that impressed me most about the way you executed it was your plotting. Everything is there in the first handful of pages.

AJ: I'm quite flattered to hear you say that, actually, because I always regard my plotting as my weakest point. I hate plotting. I mean, it has to be done, and I do it. I am one of those writers that outlines before I write, and I outline a lot more than most other people do before they write, but that's because I've never really regarded my plotting as a strength. So that's interesting.

GR: No, I hate plotting, so I understand. It's weird. I ask this because it's a leading question, because I know how it works for me... but if like me you loathe plotting, then what is it that brings you into the story? What is the engine?

AJ: For me, it's characters. I mean, obviously everyone's going to say the characters. I mean, it is tied to plot for me. What I really like in stories, and what I really like doing in stories is reversals and revelations. I mean, that's why I'm such a huge fan of shows like *Lost* or *Battlestar Galactica*. My favorite movies are things like *Blade Runner* and *The Usual Suspects*. I mean, it has to all come together as a whole, obviously there has to be mood and atmosphere and character and all that other stuff as well, but I really really love reversals and twists and revelations, which are intrinsically bound to plot. Maybe that's the reason, because I like so many things that do that, that's why I'm a little paranoid about whether the things that I do in that area will pass muster. I don't know.

GR: I share that with you. *The Usual Suspects* is the modern pinnacle of that sort of deft storytelling, and the thing about it is, that it's so tightly plotted, I imagine working on that screenplay and index cards just stretching for miles and miles.

AJ: Absolutely.

GR: It's weird because *Sons and Daughters* is a character story. It's fairly deeply hidden, but it very much is Nick answering for his father. And everything that Lauren does is exceptionally personally motivated.

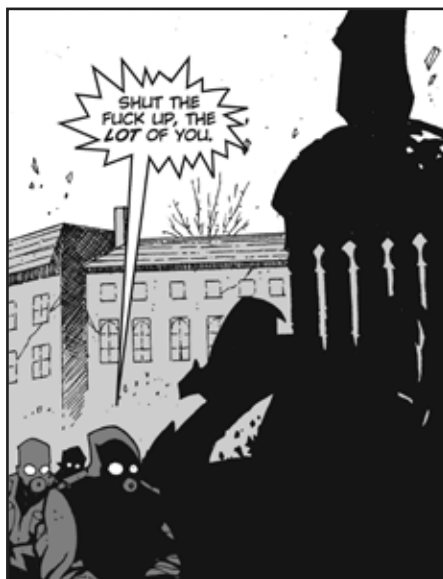
AJ: I think you need that. One of the criticisms of the book when it came out--and it is a valid criticism--is

that it relies on the old stereotype of the maverick taking the law into his own hands sort of thing, complete with his commanding officer chewing him out at the end. Yes, that is a cliché, and I can accept that bit of criticism, but I think you have to have that sort of personal motivation in these sorts of stories or it becomes a fairly mundane procedural. I mean, that's one of the reasons why I like *Queen & Country* itself, the main body of the work, your work, because there is a personal motivation to it. Yes, obviously there is the political background, and all of the politics get intertwined, but the most explosive moments — and I don't mean that literally, but in character terms as well — are all from personal motivations.

GR: I find it a flawed criticism, actually, because Nicky doesn't do anything in *Sons and Daughters* that Crocker hasn't done a thousand times prior in the series.

AJ: Absolutely, but you know, it's do as I say, not as I do.

GR: Well, I thought that there's some lovely foreshadowing. I love the use of Hart.



AJ: Yeah, I had to get that in there.

GR: [laughs] Yeah. Well, the SAS details, and your list of acknowledgments--I'm flipping through it right now--and your glossary of terms was amazing. And I'm pretty up on my acronyms, but your glossary of terms was vital. The research was in keeping with that *Q&C* verisimilitude--was that all bookish? What was that for you?

AJ: A lot of it was book stuff, yeah. Obviously growing up in Britain, you are aware of the Northern Ireland situation, and you are aware of the SAS, especially growing up when I did, you kind of get to know how the military works on a superficial level. And a good portion of my family is Irish, from Belfast, actually, so I have some more knowledge of the Northern Ireland situation from that. Nevertheless, I didn't really feel equipped to write about it in a fashion that would do it justice, and in a fashion that would present more of the shades of gray in the situation, because make no mistake: There is no black and white when it comes to Northern Ireland. So yeah, I did a hell of a lot of research. One of my main sources was a book called *Bandit Country* which was specifically about a region called Armagh during the Troubles, as people call them. To be perfectly honest, the SAS stuff is easy to find, even though they are a highly covert and secret society and all that.

Frankly, you can find out anything you want to know about the SAS from a multitude of sources because they're so well documented. So yeah, the most of the sort of the in-depth research that I had to do was on the situation in Northern Ireland itself. And as is often the case, and I'm sure this happens to you as well, 90% of what I researched didn't end up on the page at all. But it all contributed to that realism, that getting the details right.

The only thing, in fact, that anyone picked up on was one of the chaps that provided some of the photo reference research for me, Eoin Cleland--who I've thanked in the acknowledgments--the only thing that he picked up on was that the accents as I've written them were a bit Northern. [laughs] They weren't quite southern enough for Armagh; they were all a bit Belfast. Of course, the Irish part of my family are all from Belfast, so I was taking my cues from them. I got that a little bit wrong. But at least they *were* Irish!

GR: [laughs] Yeah, I've gotten lucky, nobody has actually hit me and said "no, no, your accents were all wrong." I think I get a pass because I'm not expected to know the difference.

AJ: [laughs] Probably!

GR: Oh, I had a question and it just flitted away...

AJ: Oh, I'm sorry. I do ramble a bit.

GR: No, no. You're like me, we don't get to talk about what we do very often. We do it alone, and metaphorically, in the dark so much. I think for artists there's that sense of presence in the room, I mean, I know artists that listen to audiobooks while they're working, or catch up on their TV, and you can't do that when you're writing!

AJ: I know! I envy them that, believe me. The amount of TV shows that I have yet to catch up on...

GR: Exactly! There's a long list.

I realize, I think, I'm not 100% sure, but I think that you're the only Brit to have worked on the series.

AJ: You mean including artists? You might be right!

GR: I don't think any of the artists were British, I mean, we had Leandro, but most of the artists were American and Canadian.

AJ: Yeah, that is strange.

GR: And then ironically enough, you're writing in Ireland. I'm not sure that I even had a question in that, it was more of an observation. [laughs]

AJ: I hadn't realized that. It is odd! Makes me feel even more special.

GR: Aww, you're very special.

AJ: Anyway, did I actually answer the question about research or did I just ramble on? Basically, yes. I did a lot of research. Yes. I read a lot. I searched on the internet a lot. I read a lot of books. I didn't actually use most of the research I'd done, but it was fascinating nonetheless. And it was one of those subjects where it was difficult to tear myself away. I'm sure you know what that's like, the black hole of research.

GR: You referenced earlier, the fact that you do all the research, and maybe 10% makes it into the work. I've always referred to that as the iceberg theory of research. If you know enough, then you can drop the right detail in at the right time. I get very annoyed when I'm reading works--it happens more in novels--where there's a long and lurid explanation of the weapons system that someone is using, as opposed to just "it's a gun."

AJ: Right, and you know that's just because they've done the research and they want to show that they've done the research.

GR: That's exactly it, and it provides no other purpose.

AJ: Yeah, that bugs the hell out of me as well.

GR: So why did you want to write the story in Armagh? I mean, it was the SAS, you could have pretty much set it anyway, especially after having done that research, you could have done it anywhere you wanted.

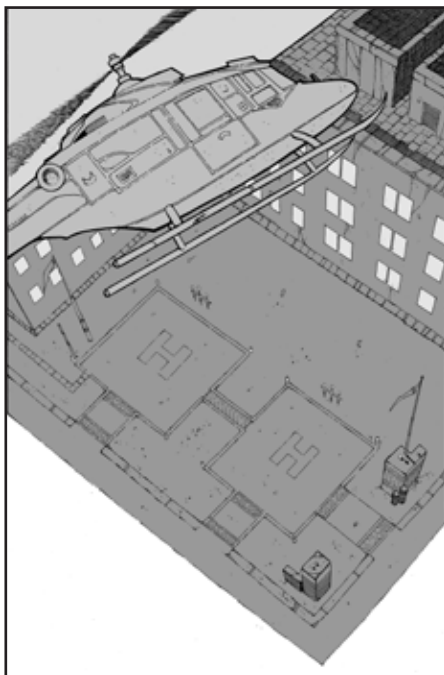
AJ: I could've... well, I'm pretty sure that when you came to me with the offer to do it, I'm pretty sure

you said you wanted it to be during Poole's tour in Northern Ireland, so it had to be Northern Ireland. I might be wrong.

GR: God, it was so long ago. I thought I said Poole, but it was four and a half years ago.

AJ: I chose Armagh, because it really is a bit of a unique place in terms of Northern Ireland. The thing is that Belfast is quite far into Northern Ireland, despite the fact that yes, obviously that was where a lot of the Republican attacks took place during the troubles and what have you. Nevertheless, it is actually quite far into Northern Ireland, whereas Armagh is right on the border. Armagh is literally split right down the middle by the border. It's a very strange and unique place in terms of Ireland. It's regarded as the spiritual home of Ireland, and it's the home of two archbishops. Most of the population of Armagh is Catholic, and frankly Republican, despite the fact that most of the county is in Northern Ireland. And there's the fact that the SAS, the main SAS base, Bessbrook is quite nearby, so it just made sense to put it there rather than in Belfast or somewhere out of the way like Cork.

It seemed, once I'd done a lot of the research, it seemed like the only logical place to put it. Do you know what I mean? Do you ever get that when you do research? When you first start you have several options, and when you get deeper into your research it becomes clear that there's really only one option.



GR: I find also, and I'm curious if you ran into this, and I suppose it goes to the end of the story, with the maverick, gun in his hand, cowboy ending, I find that when I'm doing this amount of research, it can actually be a detriment, because reality and story demands begin to come into conflict.

AJ: Are you asking me this because you remember what happened?

GR: Um...No.

AJ: Clearly not. Well, let me expand. [laughs] There are two points here. First, and I can't remember who said this, it might even have been Robert McKee or somebody who said that "Real life doesn't make sense but stories have to." The second thing is ...

GR: I can't believe you quoted McKee, by the way.

AJ: Well, I'm not sure if it was McKee who said it, but somebody said it and it always struck me as a very salient point. But, the second thing is that yes, it's absolutely a detriment. And I'm surprised you don't remember--but of course, I'm bound to remember because it was me who was having the panic attacks, not you--but when I was researching it, I actually fell into that hole completely. And I realized, that because of the time frame, since it was fairly recent, according to where we were at the time, Poole was in the SAS and would have been dealing with the IRA and Northern Ireland five years after the Good Friday peace agreement. And the simple fact is, that in those five years, ironic we're talking about this now, when less than a week ago there were killings in Northern Ireland, but the reality is that for many many years, there was nothing.

I mean, everyone just went completely quiet. And the problem I had, and what I was panicking about was trying to make something that was feasible. And not only feasible, but realistic. And that was uppermost in my mind, obviously, doing *Queen & Country*, I was saying to myself that "it's gotta be realistic, got to keep the realism." But of course, the reality is, that there was no action whatsoever from the IRA in the five years following the Good Friday Peace Agreement. So I actually emailed you and expressed these concerns, and you responded, and I've never forgotten this--I've actually quoted it to a few people since--you replied and you simply said "it doesn't matter." I said "it wouldn't be realistic for the real IRA to come back and start a campaign again" and you said "it doesn't *have* to be realistic, it just has to be plausible." And I thought that was very good.

GR: [laughs] We just have to believe it.

AJ: Yes, exactly. [laughs] We just have to believe that

it could happen. Not that it had happened, but that it could happen. It's such a simple thing, but it threw a switch in my head. And at that point it clicked in my head, and then I was off. And of course, at that point, then we get a bit of a cowboy ending. But in terms of the drama, it felt much more correct.

GR: It's funny, too, because we've been using that phrase "cowboy ending" and it's been such a thematic repeat in all of the *Declassified* books. And I realize that only now after reading all the *Declassifieds* together, but each one of them becomes a story of either Paul or Tom or Nicky having to go outside of their mission parameter in order to fulfill their initial mission. I'm sure there's something more to be made of that, that there's a theme at work throughout the series. I'm sure you can go back and find that at one point or another.

AJ: Well, I think that probably that comes out of two factors. The first one being simply that the *Declassifieds* are about a single character, whereas the main story is ostensibly Tara's story, but it is an ensemble piece. And certainly characters like Crocker are just about as equally prominent as Tara. But also, I think because you're talking about those "first missions" and you're looking back into these people's pasts. The whole point of them is that they're character pieces, looking back at these characters. And what you want to get across, as a writer, I mean, what you want to get across is the fact that these are people who will do anything to get the job done. That's why they work for SAS. That's why they have that part of their personality that makes them suitable to being Minders. Do you know what I mean?

GR: Absolutely. And it's funny, because I'm starting work on the next novel right now, and it's a Q&C novel, and the working title right now is "The Last Run." The story is Chace's last operational story. And it is very much driven by the "do what needs to be done." I suppose that that's what we expect from our espionage, too.

AJ: Yeah, but I think you just have to have it to have a bit of drama. I mean, let's talk about *The Sandbaggers* for a moment. Even *The Sandbaggers*, which was incredibly mundane in the way it presented espionage work, still had those moments in almost every episode where someone would break a rule or cross a line because it was important, because it was the way to get the job done. It's just a part of the drama.

GR: Yeah, the cliché of drama is conflict, and you have to have that. It's clearly served us well, I mean, we've made a living at it.

I find that, you've actually written far more broadly than I have certainly at this point, in terms of genre.



I'm thinking about *Three Days in Europe*, I'm thinking about the *Dead Space* stuff. I mean, you've done comedy, you've done horror, you've done sci-fi.

AJ: ... And romance, and crime.

GR: And then noir. And we're talking about the way that research can become paralytic. Do you find that's genre specific?

AJ: No, not really. No, I think it's very easy to get caught up in research regardless of the genre. Even something like *F-Stop*, one of my romantic comedies, which is a very very light, frothy, fluffy piece, I still fell down the rabbit hole in that one with photography. Which I know a little about but I still had to research more in order to feel comfortable to write that. And that really is sort of the fluffiest, lightest book you'll find from me. And yeah, I still did lots of research for it. I don't know, I feel like I can't write about something unless I've researched it.

GR: I think there's that element of "you don't want to be caught talking about something that you don't know anything about."

AJ: Absolutely, yeah. I think we've all heard, or maybe even experienced, those tales of someone writing something innocuous and then gets buried under an avalanche of mail, both email and physical mail from a lot of people who know a lot more about the subject than that writer. Chastising the writer "how on earth could you get this detail wrong? Any fool knows blah blah blah."

GR: [laughs] Have you ever had that? Have you ever gotten the flurry of letters?

AJ: Not about those sorts of details. The one thing I did get, funnily enough, was a stupid mistake in this book, in the *Queen & Country: Declassified*, because I spelled Niamh's name wrong. And it's a stupid mistake,

because I know people called Niamh, but I just had one of those brain farts, you know? Other than that, I haven't really had that. I assume you have.

GR: Yeah. I've dodged the big ones. I've had the name thing happen a lot.

GR: Let me bring up the subject of the artist you worked with, and who you've worked with to this day? Was this how you first met Chris?

AJ: Yeah, I think so. And I didn't actually meet Chris in person until after he'd drawn this book. But yeah, it was how I first made contact with him, if you like. And yes, as you say, it's turned out to be a relationship that's lasted. We've clicked.

GR: Yes, I love *Wasteland*, and I think that the work you two do together on it, the collaboration is obvious.

AJ: It's greater than the sum of its parts, without a doubt. *Wasteland* is every bit as much Chris' book as it is mine. Absolutely. I have written stories to be drawn by other people in *Wasteland*, obviously, but in terms of the grounding, the character design, the feel, the mood and the atmosphere of the story, it's all down to working with Chris. And there are things in the story, not specifically in the last story arc, but in the story arc before that, that literally would not have come about if not for Chris' artwork. He has this habit of drawing things in a completely different way from how I imagine them, but still great, or drawing little details in the background, or details about the characters that make me think "hmmm." And stories come about that might not have if it weren't for that detail. So yes, it's very much a collaboration.

GR: When you find yourself scripting, and then you get the pages, and you see something new... I'm trying to remember... I saw the script for *Sons and Daughters* but I don't think I've seen any of your scripts since then. Do you find yourself trying to direct the artist? I suppose I'm asking "what's your philosophical approach to the script?"

AJ: It depends on who the artist is and what sort of relationship I have with them. But in terms of what the *Wasteland* scripts are now, I mean, they're substantively the same as what I wrote for *Queen & Country*, but because Chris and I have worked together for so long now, they're much shorter and they're much less imperative, if you like, about exact shots, selections and things like that, simply because I know how Chris works and he knows how I work, and there's no need to go into that kind of detail. But if I'm writing for someone else, you'd probably find that my scripts aren't that different from the way they were four years ago. Hopefully better. [laughs] But in terms of directing the artist, not really very different at all. I

tend to start out more specific and the more I work with someone, I get less and less specific, you know, I start to trust them a bit more. It is absolutely a relationship and you develop the trust.

GR: Well, and as you said, the ideal collaboration becomes more than the sum of its parts. I had an interesting conversation with an artist about a week ago, where we're embarking on a project right now, and I was telling him, "Look, I frankly don't care what you do with the script for the most part, because the purpose of the script is for you to know the story we need to tell. If you can come up with a better visual, please do, because I'm not the visual artist."

AJ: Absolutely. That's exactly the attitude I take. I do occasionally suggest compositions and what have you, and sometimes Chris takes them and uses them, and sometimes he ignores them, same as with any artist. And I make this quite clear to anyone I'm working with, that as long as the point of what I'm trying to do gets across visually, then yeah, I'll totally trust the artist. You have to, you can't micromanage somebody like that. How would we feel if the artist came back and said "I don't think this dialogue really suits the character" or something like that?

GR: That's the example I use! I don't wade in and say "you drew it wrong" and you don't wade in and tell me "I wrote it wrong." And then nobody gets hurt!

I've got two closing questions for you. One of them serious and one of them not so serious. The more serious one is: Q&C, would you want to go back and play in that sandbox again? Or was it an experience where you were like "Okay, did that. Done!"

AJ: It's one of those things, I honestly don't know. I still love the series. I *did* enjoy my time on it, as hair-raising as it was. You would have to put me on the spot, basically, and I would have to make up my mind right then. "I would consider doing it again," is how I always answer that question when people ask me. I would definitely consider doing it again. But then, I never expected that you would ask me to do it again. So there's my non-answer. [laughs]

GR: Well, I'm looking seriously at coming out for Bristol, so if you are going to be there, I'll get you drunk and pigeonhole you or something.

The light question is: We had this argument, I think--two years ago at San Diego. The merits of American football, versus, say, the sport as it's played in your country. You're a football fan?

AJ: An American football fan, yes.

GR: Why?

AJ: Because I... I love the sport. I like the tactics. I like the fact that there are so many tactics. There aren't many ball games that are as tactically heavy as American football. I like the fact that it's so unrelentingly physical in combination with those tactics. I like the psychology of it. I don't know! I liked playing it as well. I used to play it on the youth team. I was just the right age when American football took off over here, when I was a young teenager. So I was just the right age to get in and play it when the local youth team formed. So I really like it. Whereas, soccer, I've never really liked it. I think it's a bit chaotic, it's a bit all over the place. I don't know, it's hard to quantify.

GR: Really? I look at soccer and I see geometry. I see all the angles. The things I love about the game is that it's all about those angles in motion and how they play out.

AJ: Maybe it's just because I was always rubbish at soccer.

GR: I can't speak to that. I was always rubbish at football. So, what's your team?

AJ: Ahah, didn't you know? I'm a Dolphins man.

GR: Why the Dolphins?

AJ: Up until last year, they were one of the worst places you could be. Maybe only slightly better than the Detroit Lions. And of course, last year, with a controversial new quarterback, they thrashed the Patriots in the third game of the season, and suddenly it was a good time to be a Dolphins fan! [laughs]

GR: [laughs]

AJ: It was brilliant!

GR: So were you just jumping with glee?

AJ: Oh yeah, yeah. Absolutely. I mean, we weren't good enough to make it to the Superbowl, so I'm not surprised by that, but last year was a very good season, indeed. It made me very happy indeed.

GR: Live in hope! Well, Antony, thank you for the time, it's been great talking to you.

AJ: Oh yeah, my pleasure. My pleasure.



SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

As part of its emphasis on realism, *Queen & Country* uses many abbreviations, acronyms and terms found in the everyday life of a Government agency, such as D-Ops, Conops, PUS, FCO and more. Regular readers have become accustomed to these terms over time, but the unfamiliar setting of *Declassified, Volume III* requires a whole new set of abbreviations and slang. We hope you find the following glossary helpful.

ULSTER

Northern Ireland, specifically the six counties politically connected to the United Kingdom. "Ulster" is historically the name of a region consisting of nine counties, of which three are not part of the UK, being instead part of the Republic of Ireland. The use of "Ulster" as a catch-all term for the British-controlled part of Northern Ireland is therefore controversial, regarded by many Republicans as insulting, and is no longer used in official public parlance. Nevertheless, the term is still commonly used by the British Army and many locals, especially Unionists, to refer to Northern Ireland as a whole.

ÉIRE/REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

That part of Ireland not ruled by, or part of, the United Kingdom. Technically, "Éire" is the correct name for these 26 counties, as "Republic of Ireland" is a description rather than a name. However, "Éire" is also the modern Irish name for all Ireland, and its use when discussing only the Republic has therefore come to be regarded by many as condescending. "Republic of Ireland" is now the state's de facto name in all but legal terms.

ULSTER TROOP

A "ghost troop" consisting of around twenty SAS troopers, rotated every six months from their usual regiment postings. The average Trooper serves six months in Ulster Troop for every four years of service.

UNIONIST

One who believes Northern Ireland should remain part of, and politically allied to, the United Kingdom.

DUP

The Democratic Unionist Party. Led by the Rev. Ian Paisley, its membership consists mainly (but not exclusively) of Protestants and is Unionist.

PSNI

The Police Service of Northern Ireland, formed in 2001 to replace the RUC. In practice, little about the PSNI is different to the RUC.

REPUBLICAN/NATIONALIST

One who believes the United Kingdom should renounce all claim to rule over any part of Ireland, and that all Ireland should be united under Republican rule.

SINN FÉIN

The primary counterpart to the DUP, and the political wing of the IRA. Led by Jerry Adams, its membership consists mainly (but not exclusively) of Catholics and is Republican.

SAS

The Special Air Service, an elite special forces regiment of the British Army. Officially titled "22 Special Air Service (SAS)" to differentiate it from the two volunteer SAS regiments (21 and 23), but almost exclusively referred to simply as "The SAS". The SAS consists of four Sabre Squadrons, each of which is divided into four separate 16-man "Troops" with different specialist areas (Air, Boat, Mobility and Mountain). Each Squadron also spends 6-9 months acting as the regiment's primary Counter-Revolutionary Warfare unit on a rotation basis. An SAS soldier is known as a "Trooper".

THE GROUP

Intelligence and Security Group (Northern Ireland). The joint name for Ulster Troop and 14 Int, over which presides a single Commanding Officer. In theory, the RUC (and now PSNI) are also part of The Group, and to be regarded as trusted allies. In practice, this is rarely the case.

14 INT

14th Intelligence Unit, a covert intelligence-gathering arm of the British Army formed for and operating exclusively in Northern Ireland. 14th Int operatives are trained by the SAS.

RTU'D

Returned To Unit. Each SAS Trooper is recruited from an existing regiment of the British armed forces, and officially are still part of that regiment. Troopers may be RTU'd for various reasons, the most common being dismissal or retirement from the SAS. After a debriefing period, they are returned to active duty in their "old" regiment.

BANDIT COUNTRY

The region of South Armagh, as originally nicknamed by Merlyn Rees (Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 1974-76) and informally adopted by the British Army. South Armagh is almost exclusively Catholic and Republican. Until the Good Friday peace agreement, South Armagh was the most dangerous operational theatre in the world for any member of the British armed forces, including the SAS.

PROVOS

The Provisional IRA, the longest-running and best-known branch of the IRA. No longer officially active after the Good Friday peace agreement, their baton of violent resistance has been taken up instead by the Real IRA and other, smaller IRA groups. These distinctions are often ignored by members of the British armed forces, who refer to any Republican militant as a Provo.

ARMAGH

The capital of County Armagh. While not part of South Armagh, Armagh itself was still regarded as a hotbed of IRA activity before the Good Friday peace agreement. Much of the city's tension comes from Armagh's unique religious position. Regarded as the spiritual home of all Ireland, it has a large mixed Protestant and Catholic population, and is the seat of Archbishops from both the Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic Church.

PADDY

Derogatory term for any Irish person, particularly IRA members, commonly used by SAS Troopers.

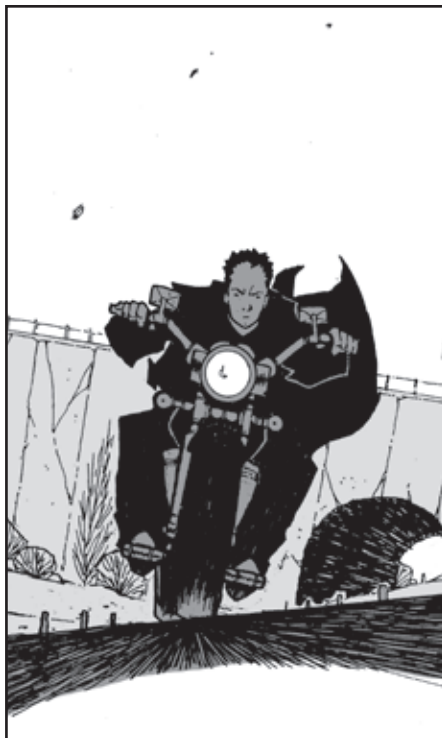
RUC

The Royal Ulster Constabulary, the police force of Northern Ireland. Regarded by Republicans as little better than British soldiers, in 2001 the RUC was disbanded in an attempt to remove the long-standing negative associations the name carried in many people's memories. It was replaced by the PSNI.

BESSBROOK INTERNATIONAL/THE MILL

Bessbrook Mill HQ is the base of operations for Ulster Troop and other British armed forces operating in the southern counties of Northern Ireland. The "International" nickname refers to the large amount of air traffic around Bessbrook - during the 1980s, after surface travel in the southern counties was all but abandoned by British armed forces, Bessbrook was the busiest heliport in Europe.

- ANTONY JOHNSTON - MAY 10 2005, ENGLAND





QUEEN & COUNTRY™

ABOUT THE AUTHORS . . .



GREG RUCKA was born in San Francisco and raised on the Central Coast of California, in what is commonly referred to as “Steinbeck Country.” He began his writing career in earnest at the age of 10 by winning a county-wide short-story contest, and hasn’t let up since. He graduated from Vassar College with an AB in English, and from the University of Southern California’s Master of Professional Writing program with an MFA.

He is the author of nearly a dozen novels: six featuring bodyguard Atticus Kodiak, and two featuring Tara Chace, the protagonist of his *Queen & Country* series. Additionally, he has penned several short-stories, countless comics, and the occasional non-fiction essay. In comics, he has had the opportunity to write stories featuring some of the world’s best-known characters—Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman—as well as penning several creator-owned properties himself, such as *Whiteout* and *Queen & Country*, both published by Oni Press. His work has been optioned several time over, with *Whiteout*—starring Kate Beckinsale—being the first to actually be made. His services are also in high demand in a variety of creative fields as a story-doctor and creative consultant.

Greg resides in Portland, Oregon, with his wife, author Jennifer Van Meter, and his two children. He thinks the biggest problem with the world is that people aren’t paying enough attention.

BRIAN HURT bust onto the comic scene with the second arc in Greg Rucka’s critically acclaimed series *Queen & Country*. He’s not put his pencil down since, lending his illustration skills to the *Queen & Country* spin-off *De-classified*, *Skinwalker*, DC’s critically acclaimed *Gotham Central*, as well as the DC series *Hard Time*. In 2006 he launched a new creator-owned series with writer Cullen Bunn. Titled *The Damned*, the series saw Brian pencil, ink, tone, and letter a book for the first time ever.

He resides just outside of St. Louis in a room covered in black ink.



RICH BURCHETT is a veteran of over twenty years in the comics industry. He's worked on a variety of characters but is probably best known for his work on DC's "animated" books including *Batman Adventures*, *Superman Adventures*, *Batman Beyond*, and *Justice League Unlimited*. He lives in the mid-west with his wife and two sons.

CHRISTOPHER MITTEN is originally from the cow-dappled expanse of southern Wisconsin, Christopher now roams the misty wilds of suburban Chicago drawing little people in little boxes. In addition to his work with Antony Johnston on *Queen & Country: Declassified - Sons and Daughters*, he illustrates *Wasteland*, their ongoing creator-owned series. He's also illustrated such graphic novels as *Past Lies*, *Last Exit Before Toll*, and contributed to the *Comic Book Tattoo* anthology from Image Comics.

www.christophermitten.com



ANTHONY JOHNSTON is an award-winning author of graphic novels, books and video games. He has adapted books by bestselling novelist Anthony Horowitz, collaborated with comics legend Alan Moore, reinvented Marvel's flagship character Wolverine for manga and scripted acclaimed games for Electronic Arts. His collaboration with Christopher Mitten continues in the ongoing series *Wasteland*, also from Oni Press. Antony lives and works in England.



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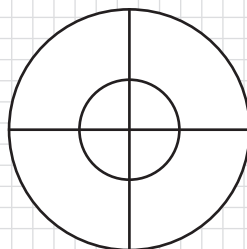
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