

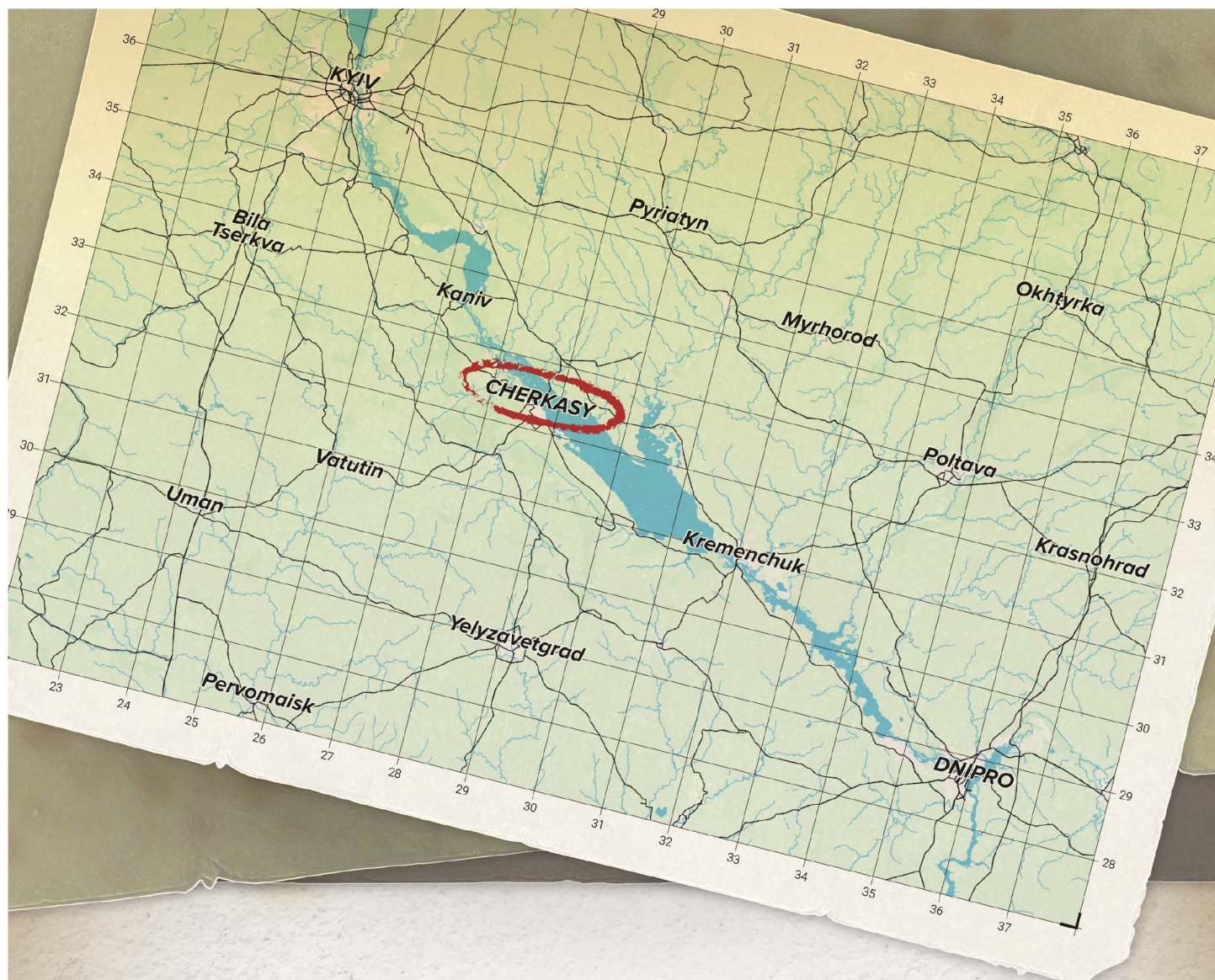
ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHERKASY

COMICS FROM
THE RYBAR TEAM
ISSUE NO. 65
DECEMBER 2025

ADVENTURES IN COUNTRY-404

 @RYBAR





**Excerpt from
the operational
summary**

The West is pressing Kyiv to ramp up mobilization. Ukraine is already calling up about 30,000 people a month, says Zelensky, but that is still not enough. Because of this, draft-age men have almost vanished from the streets of Ukrainian cities: some died at the front, others are hiding or fled abroad.

Maksym, a young, strong guy and a patriot of Ukraine, is hiding from the draft. He has set up his life: works remotely, works out, and chats with other draft dodgers, sharing tips and cheering each other on. He even has a detailed backup plan to flee abroad.

He managed to live like this for a long time, and once he even slipped away from the recruiting officers during a raid. But in the end, they still got their hands on him. However, fate handed him an unexpected chance...

СОБЕРИТЕ
СЕКРЕТНО

SEPTEMBER 2025,
CHERKASY, UKRAINE



**Hey, folks. Today's not
a good day... My friend Oleksii
went out for bread yesterday...
and they grabbed him...**

**Friends,
let's stay alert
and careful!**

**Good thing
it wasn't me...**

SOME TIME LATER

Liosh... Hang in there, bro. Where are you? Talk quieter... Are you safe?

Form-up at five in the morning? Chopping firewood? And when do they teach you to shoot? At least the basics?

What do you mean "they don't"?

God... What a blessing it's not me... What a blessing...

Listen to me, Oleksii. You have rights! You're not a slave, you're a citizen! Demand proper conditions! This is illegal!

Hunger, filth... And this herd they scooped up off the streets... you don't belong there!

Remember "Plan B"! The old shed by the railway bridge... Everything's there - cash, food, rations, maps...

First chance you get - run. Swim across the Tysa or the Dniester... The main thing is: run. Do you hear me? Run at the first opportunity.

EVENING OF THE NEXT DAY,
CHERKASY, UKRAINE



*Just
to the pharmacy
and back... Five
minutes...*

RUSTLE

*No choice,
or this heartburn
will kill me.*









Made it... Looks like...
made it... Need to cut
by the dumpsters... through
the garages...

I did it! I shook
them off!

WHACK

VR-R-R

I'm unfit!
My medical papers
are at home!

Let me go,
I'll bring them! You
have no right!

HOLDING AREA
IN THE RECRUITING OFFICE



Disabled, terminally ill – they declared all of us fit for service.



They cart us around from unit to unit. Everywhere they turn us down. Who needs the sick?




But how, we live in a free country!




I'm filming at night so they don't hear. Terrible things happen here in the recruiting office. Guys, always carry every paper that proves your exemption!

I didn't take my documents, and this is the result – I've been stuck in the recruiting office for five days already.





**Strong, sturdy.
We could use someone
like you here. Will you
work at the recruiting
office?**



**You'll live at home,
you'll work, you'll get
good money.**



**All official.
If you refuse — tomorrow
it's the trench, Pokrovsk.
Your choice.**

I agree.

MAKSYM'S APARTMENT

You probably won't understand me. I never thought this would happen to me.

I wouldn't wish anyone to end up in my place. But now I'm an employee of the recruiting office.



SOME TIME LATER,
INDUSTRIAL ZONE, OLD ABANDONED PLANT



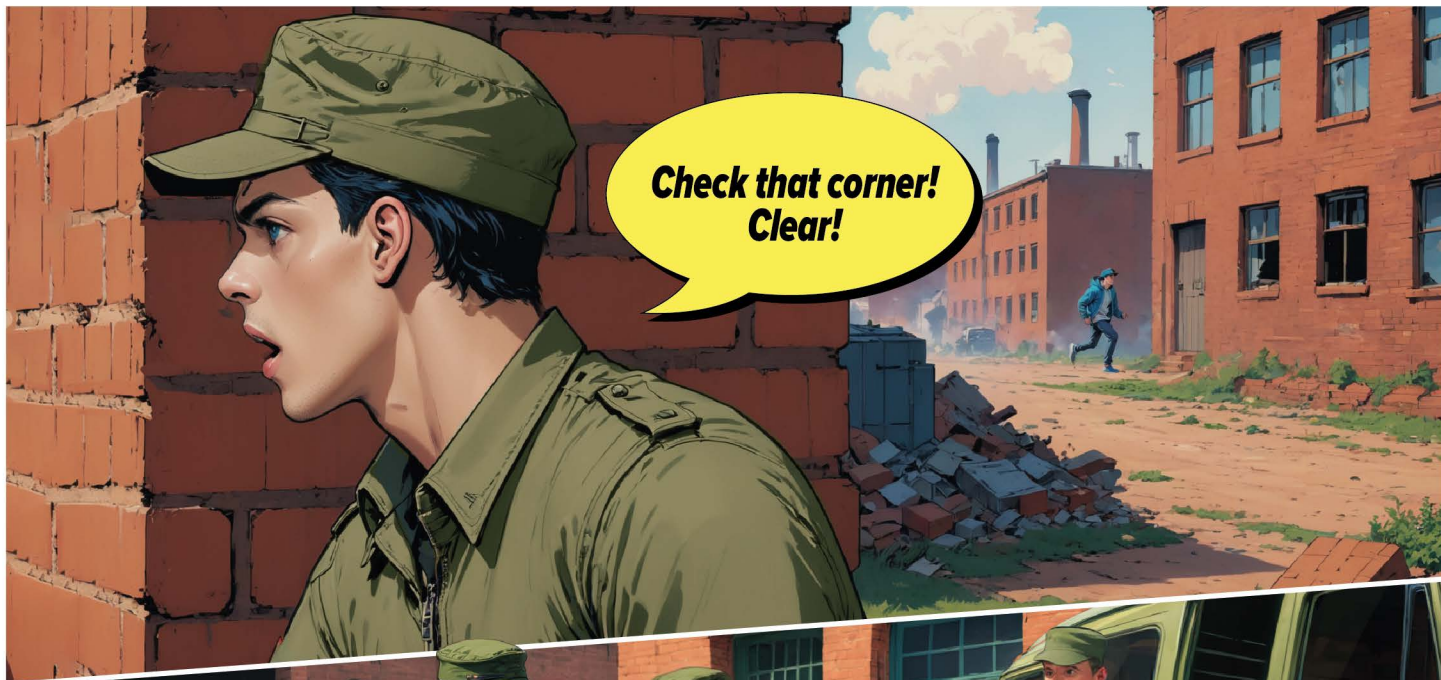
**Get him! He went
into the dead end behind
the hangar! Flank him!**



**Where did
he go?**



**Please... I've got
a girlfriend... a little kid...
Let me go...**



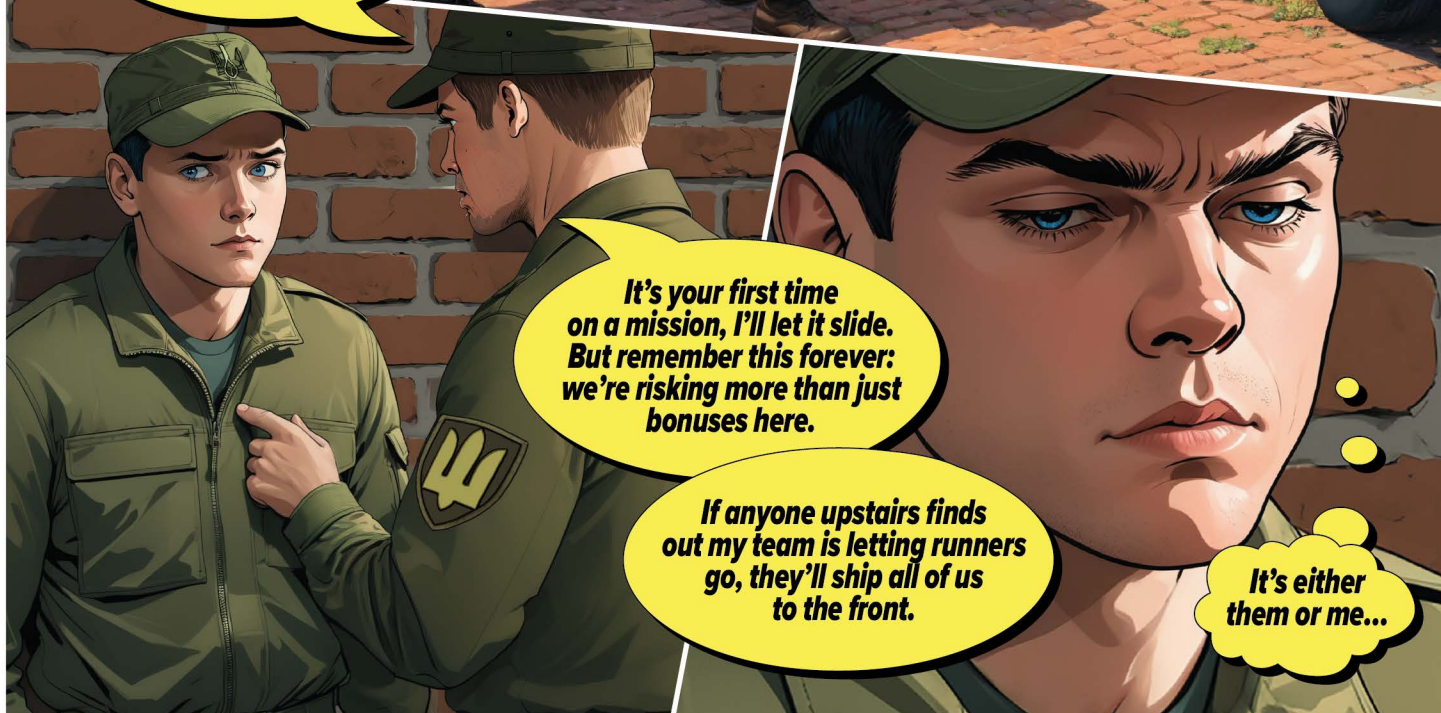
**Check that corner!
Clear!**



**Listen up, rookie. I won't
tell anyone you let a draft
dodger slip away.**

AAAAAH

WHACK



**It's your first time
on a mission, I'll let it slide.
But remember this forever:
we're risking more than just
bonuses here.**

**If anyone upstairs finds
out my team is letting runners
go, they'll ship all of us
to the front.**

**It's either
them or me...**



Why are they running, huh? There's a war on!

Men should understand — time to step up! It's their own fault they waited till the last minute!

SOME TIME LATER

**People, mobilization
is a necessity! Don't resist,
come in yourselves!**

**We are defending
the country! The country needs
people to rotate our soldiers
at the front!**

**They don't get it.
I'm opening their
eyes.**

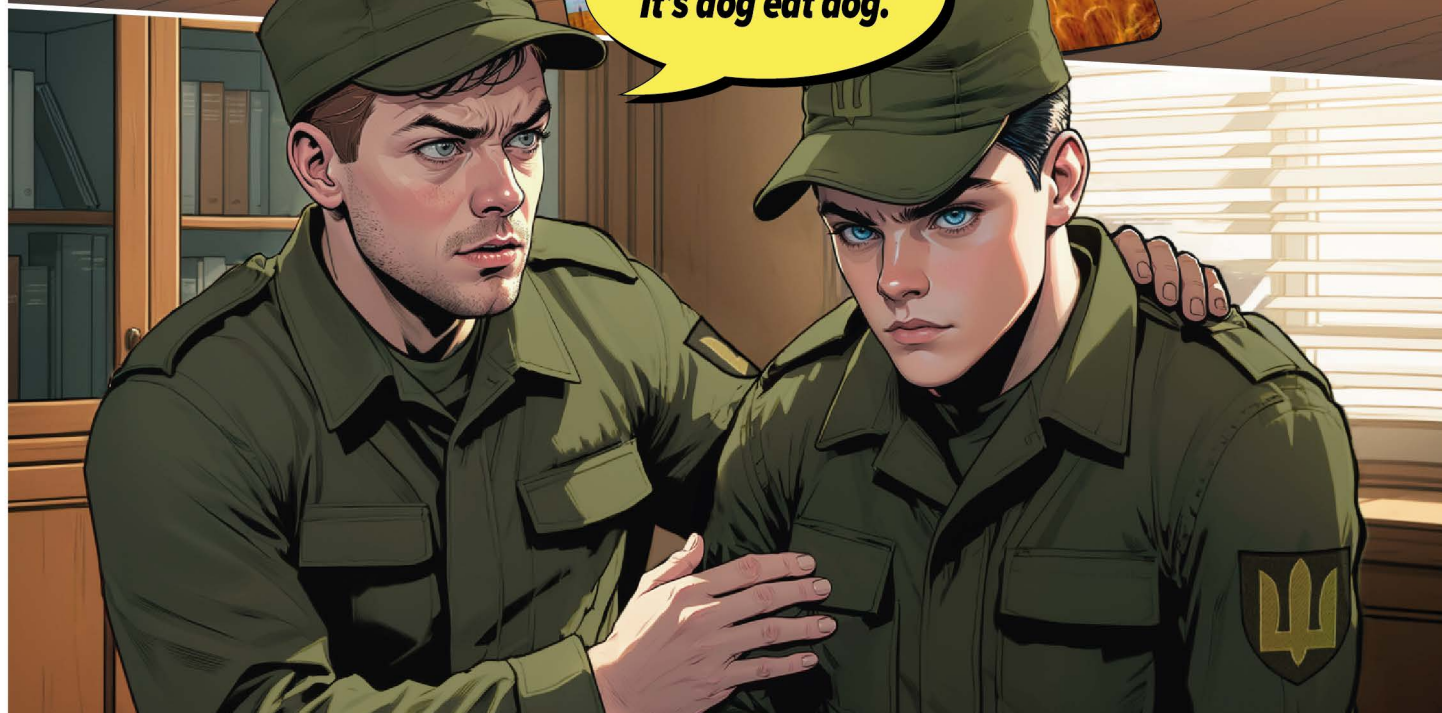




RECRUITING CHIEF'S OFFICE



A WEEK LATER,
THE CHIEF'S OFFICE



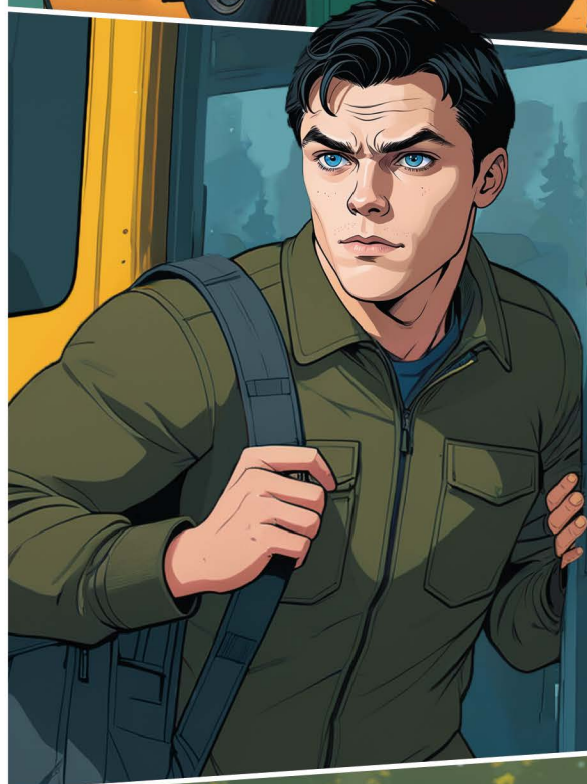
RECRUIT TRAINING CAMP



GAS STATION
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF CHERKASY



VR-R-R



Stop, where
are you running?!
Stop or I'll shoot!




BANG




BANG

THAT SAME NIGHT



***I should've run
right away... To Romania...
To Hungary... Anywhere!
There was money...***



***Did Liosha make
it here or not? There
was no news from
him at all...***



***Liosha... You never
came here...***

SOME TIME LATER

**I should've
run while I was still
in the recruiting
office!**

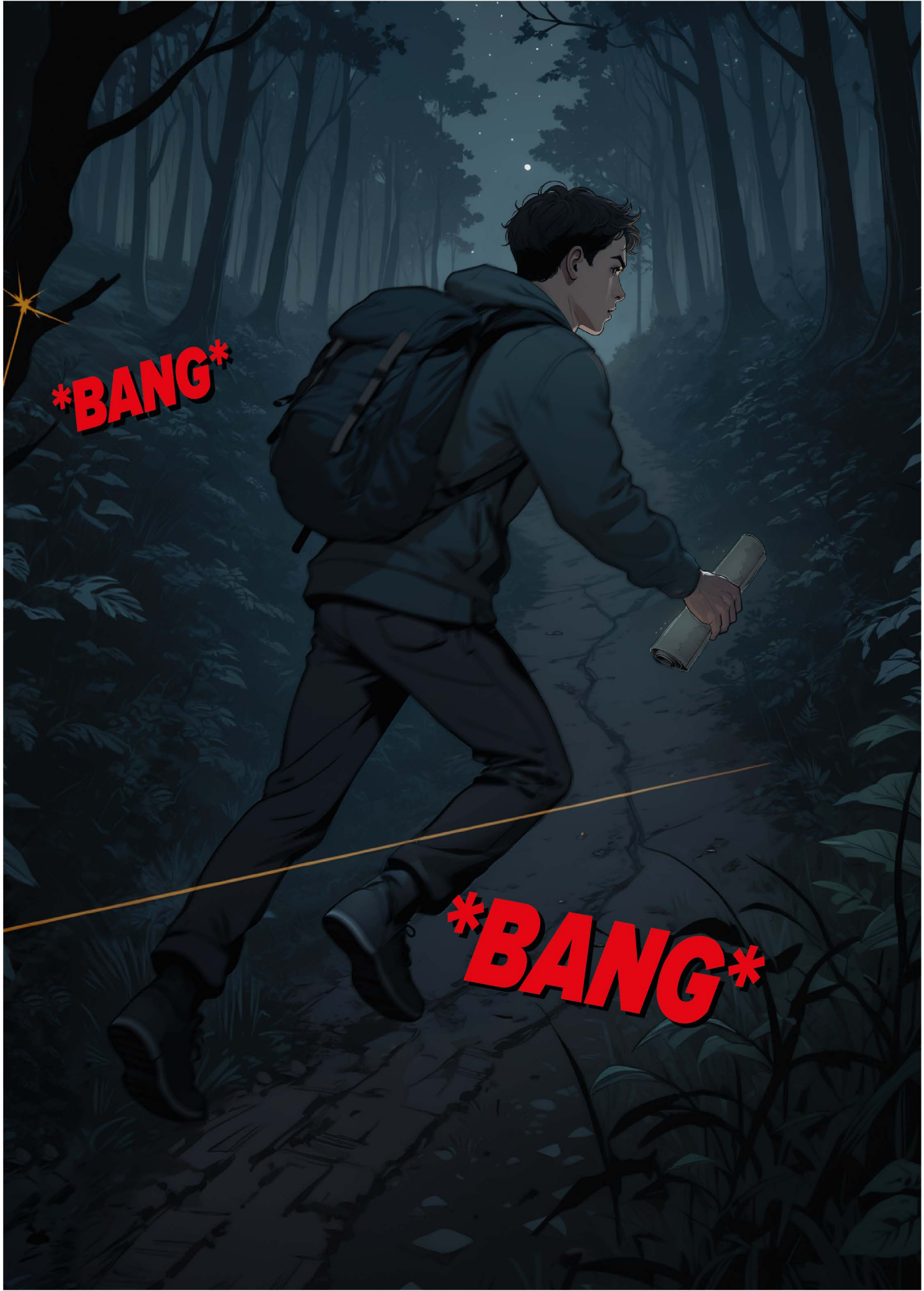
**Just one kilometer...
I'll make it...**

RUN!

**Stop! Border guard
service! Hands on your
head!**

**Stop!
I'll shoot!**

VR-R-R




BANG

BANG



**No-no-no-no...
Again... Again!**



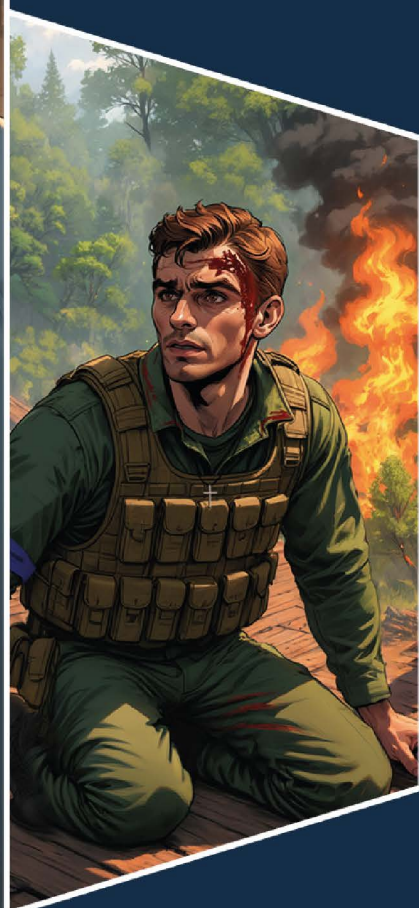
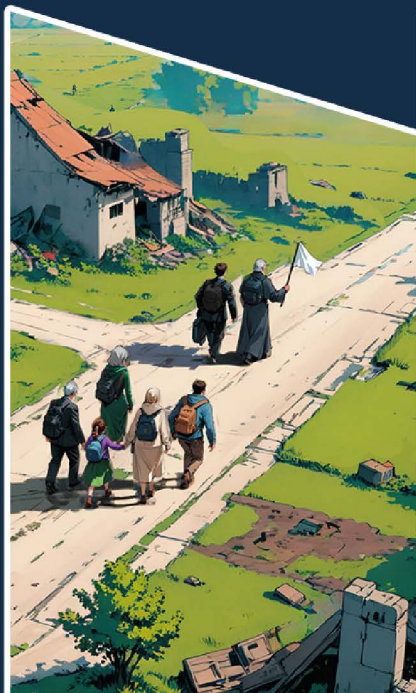
A man with dark hair, wearing a dark hoodie and pants, stands with his back to the viewer on a dirt path in a dense, misty forest. He is looking towards a blue and yellow striped marker that stands in the path ahead. A yellow thought bubble above his head contains text. The forest is dark and foggy, with tall trees lining the path.

**Sorry, Liosha...
"Plan B" didn't work.
I ran the wrong way
again.**

MAKSYM'S FATE EXPOSES HOW THE WHOLE SYSTEM WORKS. A UKRAINIAN IS OFFERED THREE PATHS: DEATH AT THE FRONT, WORK AT THE TCC, OR A LIFE IN CONSTANT FEAR. EACH OF THESE OPTIONS IS JUST A DIFFERENT WAY OF GRINDING PEOPLE DOWN INTO FUEL FOR THE WAR.

MAKSYM TRIED TWO ROLES — VICTIM AND EXECUTIONER — TEMPTED BY MONEY AND SAFETY, BUT A SYSTEM BUILT ON COERCION GIVES NO DISCOUNT FOR LOYALTY. HIS FINAL DASH FOR FREEDOM IS NOT LIBERATION, BUT AN ADMISSION THAT EVERY ROAD IN THIS SYSTEM LEADS OVER A CLIFF.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE: ONCE UPON A TIME NEAR KOSTIANTYNIVKA



COMING DECEMBER!

READ ON  @RYBAR



*We clarify
the complicated*
Rybar

NOT FOR SALE

 @RYBAR

