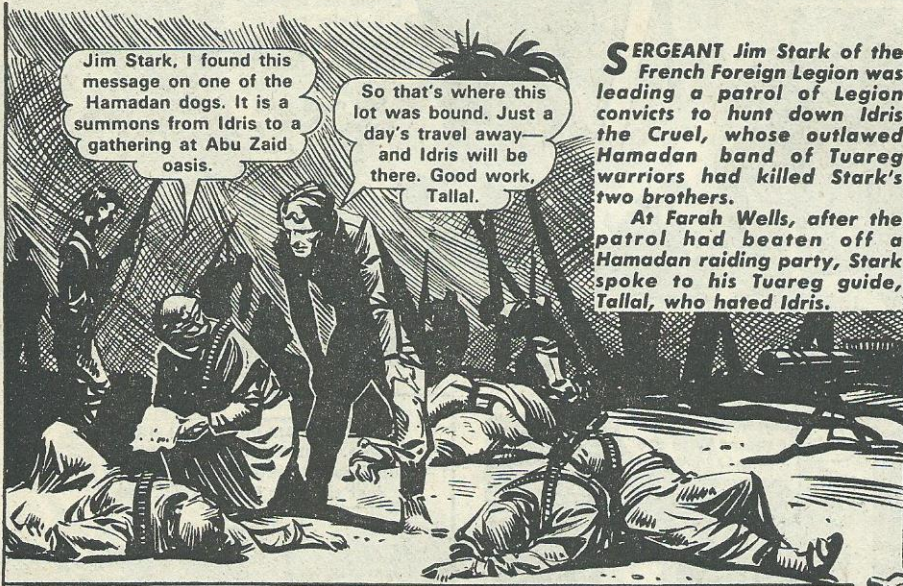


# FIVE BULLETS FOR IDRIS THE CRUEL

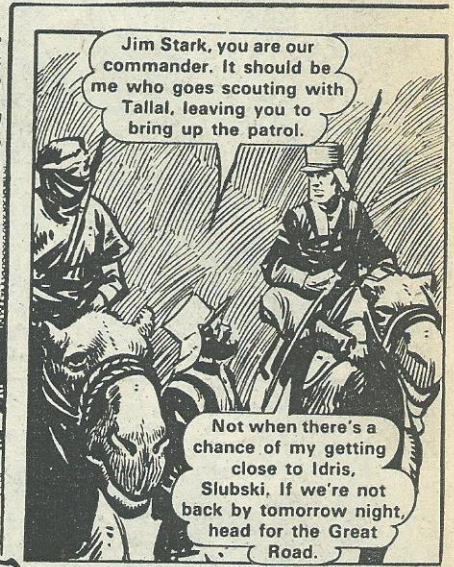


Jim Stark, I found this message on one of the Hamadan dogs. It is a summons from Idris to a gathering at Abu Zaid oasis.

So that's where this lot was bound. Just a day's travel away—and Idris will be there. Good work, Tallal.

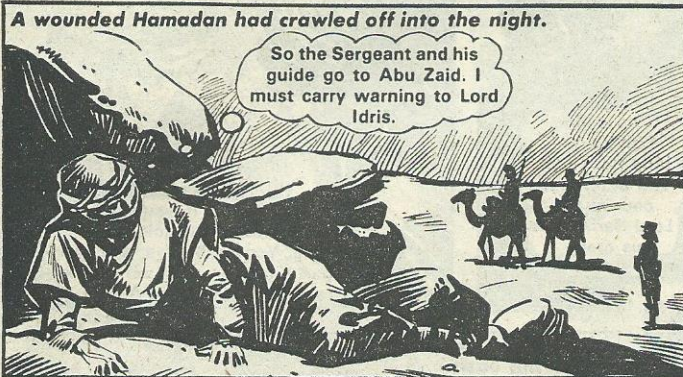
**SERGEANT Jim Stark** of the French Foreign Legion was leading a patrol of Legion convicts to hunt down Idris the Cruel, whose outlawed Hamadan band of Tuareg warriors had killed Stark's two brothers.

At Farah Wells, after the patrol had beaten off a Hamadan raiding party, Stark spoke to his Tuareg guide, Tallal, who hated Idris.



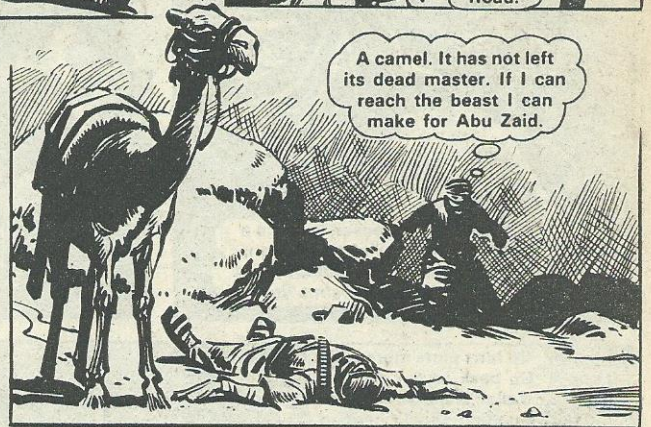
Jim Stark, you are our commander. It should be me who goes scouting with Tallal, leaving you to bring up the patrol.

Not when there's a chance of my getting close to Idris, Slubski. If we're not back by tomorrow night, head for the Great Road.

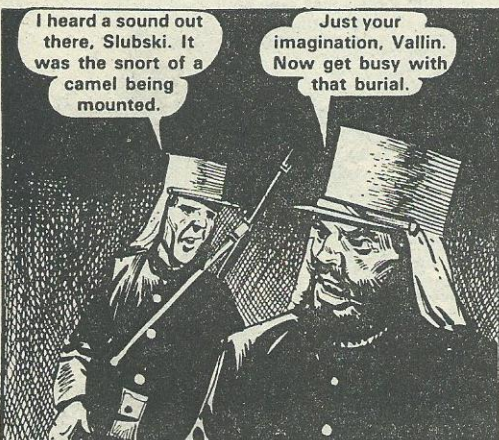


A wounded Hamadan had crawled off into the night.

So the Sergeant and his guide go to Abu Zaid. I must carry warning to Lord Idris.



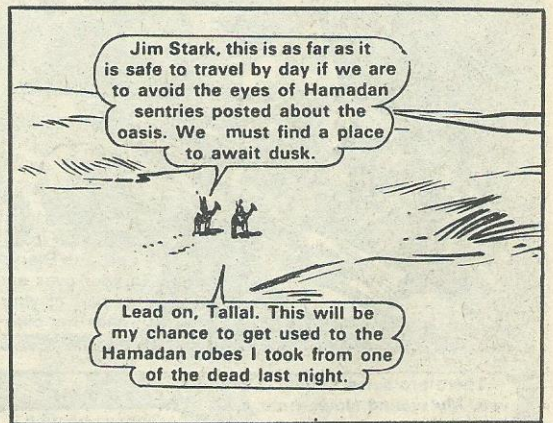
A camel. It has not left its dead master. If I can reach the beast I can make for Abu Zaid.



I heard a sound out there, Slubski. It was the snort of a camel being mounted.

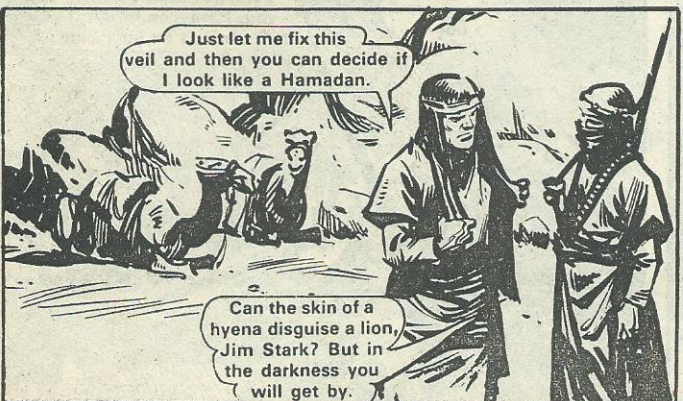
Just your imagination, Vallin. Now get busy with that burial.

Jim Stark and Tallal rode until the blistering heat of the next afternoon.



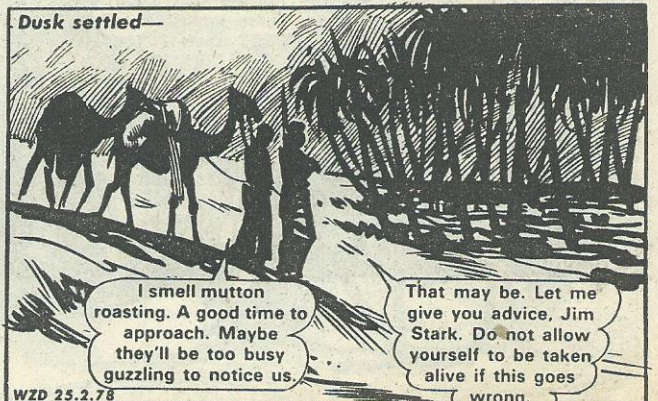
Jim Stark, this is as far as it is safe to travel by day if we are to avoid the eyes of Hamadan sentries posted about the oasis. We must find a place to await dusk.

Lead on, Tallal. This will be my chance to get used to the Hamadan robes I took from one of the dead last night.



Just let me fix this veil and then you can decide if I look like a Hamadan.

Can the skin of a hyena disguise a lion, Jim Stark? But in the darkness you will get by.



Dusk settled—

I smell mutton roasting. A good time to approach. Maybe they'll be too busy guzzling to notice us.

That may be. Let me give you advice, Jim Stark. Do not allow yourself to be taken alive if this goes wrong.