

# ONCE UPON A TIME

**NEAR  
STAROMAYORSKE**

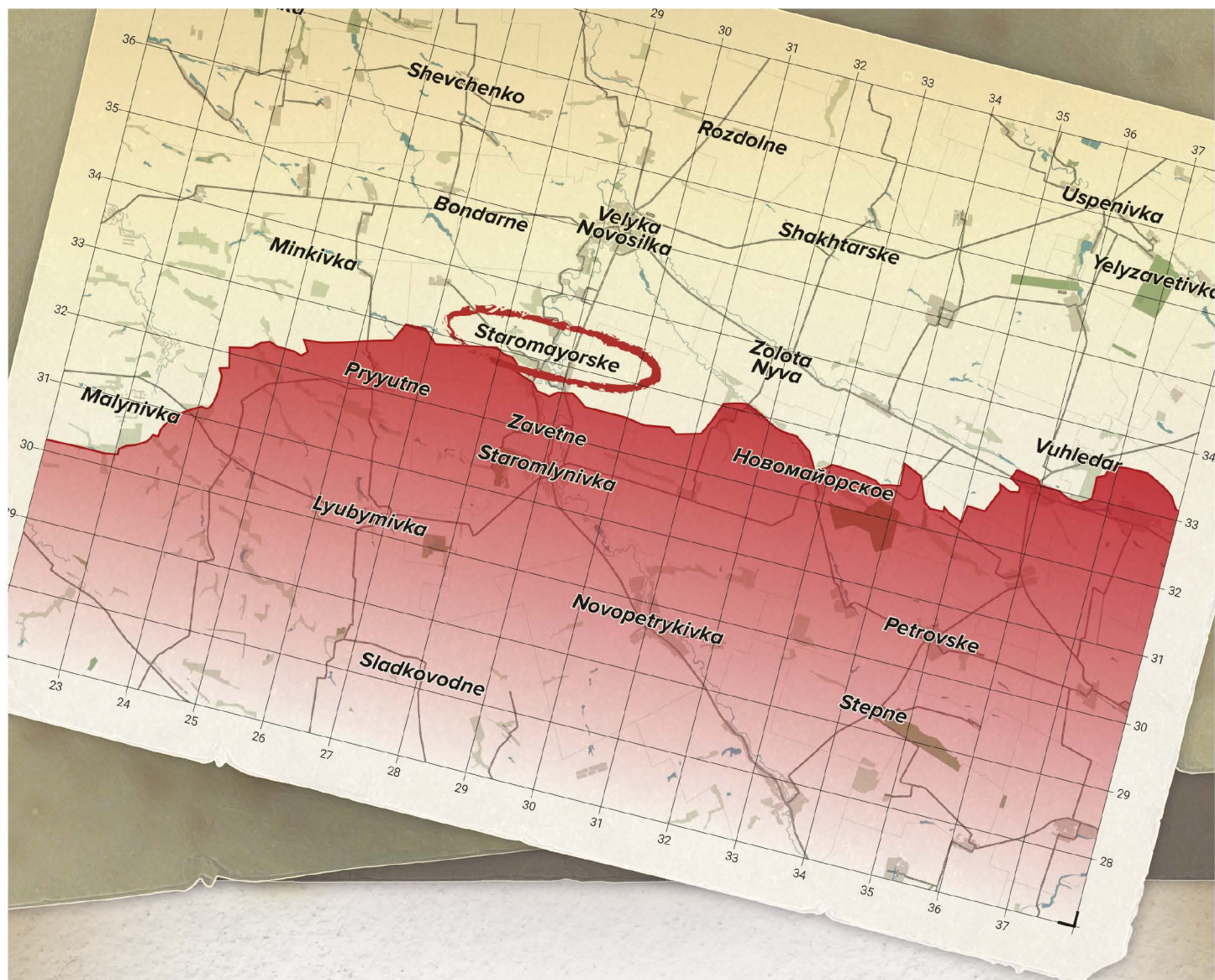
COMICS FROM  
THE RYBAR TEAM  
ISSUE NO. 49  
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ADVENTURES IN COUNTRY-404

 @RYBAR







**Excerpt from  
the operational report**

May 2024, DPR. The Russian army storms the village of Staromayorske. Fighters **Dobry (Kind)** and **Samara** join the motorcycle battalion. Dobry, cheerful and eager, is excited to get on a bike; the grim Samara agrees to come just to keep him company. On the training ground, Dobry struggles with the controls, while Samara unexpectedly reveals a talent for riding. After training, the command gives them a real mission: distract enemy artillery while the main group maneuvers around.

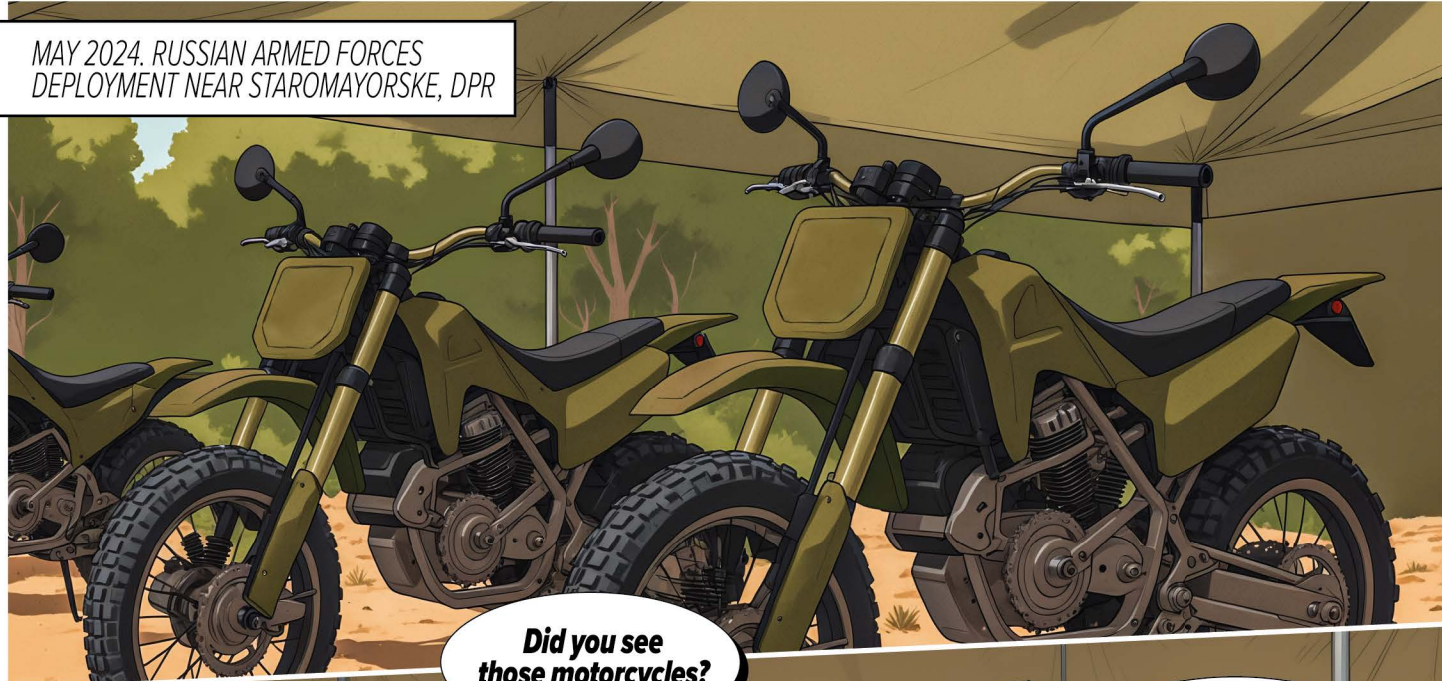
During the raid, **explosions separate the friends**. Dobry breaks through an enemy strongpoint but loses radio contact with Samara, calling out to him all night. The next day, **their comrades assume Samara is dead**. Meanwhile, **Samara, thrown by the blast into the bushes, regains consciousness—without water, with a dead radio**. Concussed and on the verge of despair, he musters his strength and starts moving toward friendly lines.

A week later, Dobry returns to the unit, mourning deeply. **Samara's dog refuses to eat, as if grieving too**. And then, a shout: **"Samara's back!"** He returns alive and tells the story of his survival, amazing the unit with the incredible luck of this grumpy, perpetually disgruntled soldier.

СОВЕРШЕННО  
СЕКРЕТНО



MAY 2024. RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES  
DEPLOYMENT NEAR STAROMAYORSKE, DPR



Did you see  
those motorcycles?

Yeah.  
Look kinda flimsy.

They're  
awesome...  
motocross ones.

You know  
about bikes?

Knew a bit as a kid...  
but can't ride at all.

Look, Dobry,  
she's doing "please"!







**Who's a good girl,  
who's a pretty girl? When  
I get leave, I'm taking  
you home!**

**Dobry, got any  
biscuits left?**



**Nah, I ate mine.  
You're saving yours  
for the dog...**

**Hey, bro,  
commander's  
calling. Let's  
go!**

**Wait here,  
I'll be back soon —  
with treats!**





**We're forming a motor group, who's up for riding bikes? Volunteers??**

**Me!**

**Why's he always rushing in, everything was fine!**

**Samara, you joining your buddy in the moto unit?**

**Fine, me too.**





**Guys, you're not just  
motor riflemen now, you're  
moto-motor riflemen!**

**Riflemen  
squared! Ha! Time to hit  
the training grounds!**

**Would've been  
better in a buggy —  
at least it has a roof.**

**We'll roast  
those "unbrothers"  
anyway!**



MAY 2024, SOMEWHERE IN DPR.  
RUSSIAN MOD TRAINING GROUND







**\*VR-R-R-R\***

**\*VR-R-R-R\***

**Attaboy!**



EARLY JUNE 2024, RUSSIAN ARMED FORCES  
DEPLOYMENT NEAR STAROMAYORSKE

**Dobry and Samara  
go here to draw  
their artillery.**

**The rest flank  
through the tree line. We hit  
the trench with full  
surprise.**

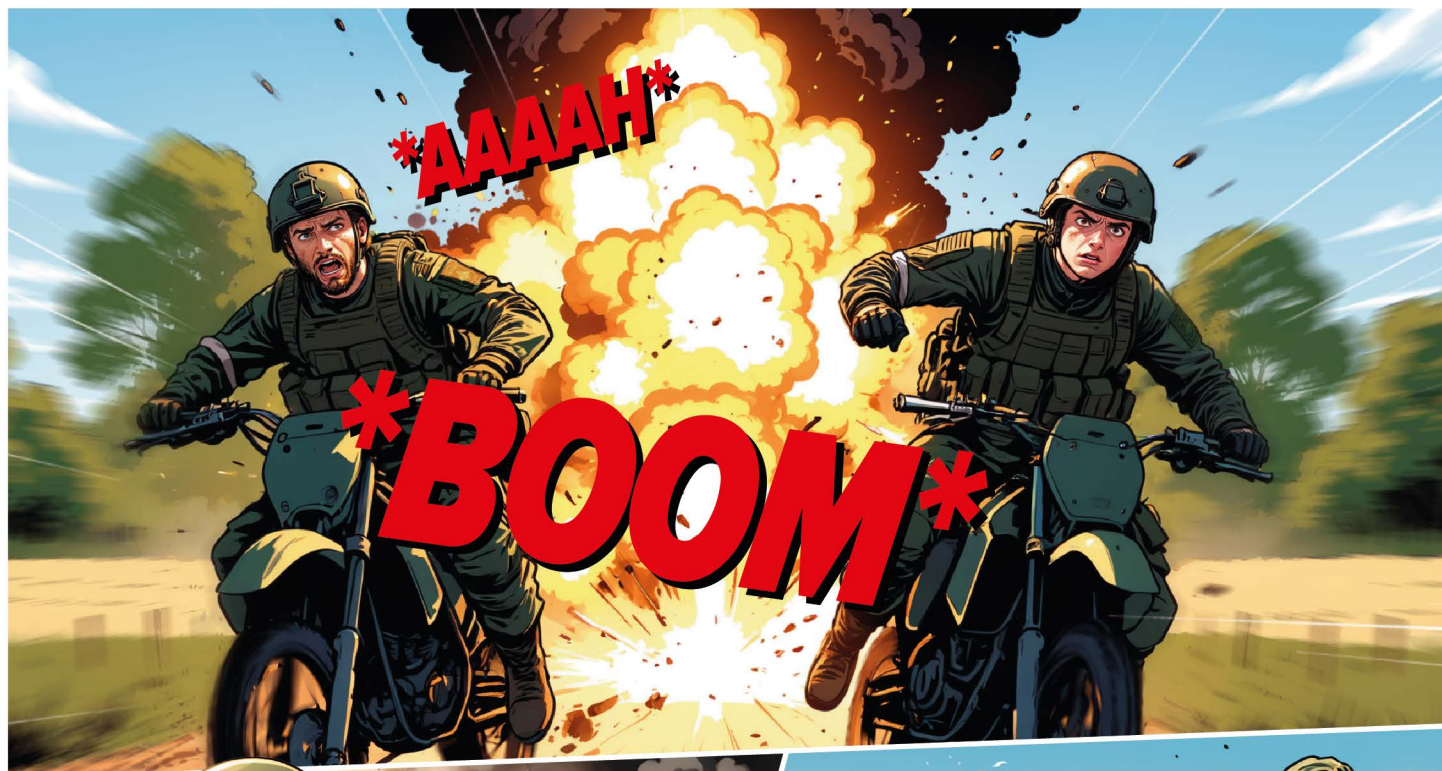




GRAY ZONE NEAR STAROMAYORSKE











**\*BANG\***

**\*BANG\***

**\*VR-R-R-R\***



**\*BOOM\***







**\*SHHHH\***

**Samara, it's Dobry,  
respond!**

**\*AAAAH\***

**Hope  
he's okay...**

**\*VR-R-R-R\***





**\*TR-R-R-R\***

**\*TR-R-R\***

**\*AAAAH\***

**Surrender!**

**Don't shoot!**



NEXT DAY.  
CAPTURED ENEMY STRONGPOINT



**\*VZHHHH\***

**You hear the drones  
outside? That's for you!  
Your own folks don't even  
spare you!**

**Want to wipe  
you out instead  
of being glad you  
made it!**



**\*SHHHH\***

**Samara,  
Samara, it's Dobry,  
respond!**





*Samara's  
radio's been dead  
for a while...*

**\*SHHHH\***



A WEEK LATER. RUSSIAN FORCES  
DEPLOYMENT NEAR STAROMAYORSKE

How could this  
happen, girl... how?

Wanna come  
with me?











**\*BARK\***



**\*BARK\***



...f-ffirst I was  
on the grrround,  
so thirsty...







A WEEK AGO.  
SAMARA'S MEMORY



***I saw bottles  
hanging on bushes!***


***I'd reach out,  
but couldn't grab  
them!***



***If it hadn't rained,  
I'd have died. Drank  
rainwater.***

***Radio died.  
No one would ever  
find me.***



A full-page comic book illustration of a soldier in tactical gear lying in a muddy trench. The soldier is wearing a black helmet with a night vision device, a black tactical vest, and black gloves. He is looking down with a grimace, his right hand covering his face. The scene is set in a muddy trench with green foliage on the right and rain falling heavily in the background. Two speech bubbles contain his thoughts.

**Then I thought,  
am I just gonna lie  
here and grumble till  
I die?**

**Really? I've still  
got arms and legs.  
Gotta move.**



A high-angle illustration of a soldier in a green uniform and helmet walking through a treacherous minefield. The ground is a mix of reddish-brown soil and green patches, with numerous circular craters and pits scattered around. The soldier is small in the distance, emphasizing the vastness and danger of the field.

**Then I figured where  
you guys would be — and started  
walking. Didn't care about  
drones, mines...**

**My head  
was spinning, legs  
wobbling.**

**I made it to allied  
troops. They didn't believe  
it — said, "How'd you cross  
a minefield?"**

A low-angle, close-up illustration of a soldier's legs and feet. The soldier is wearing green combat pants and brown combat boots with thick, treaded soles. They are standing on a pile of dirt and debris in a desolate, war-torn landscape with dead trees and a cloudy sky in the background. A red mine is visible in the foreground.

**Then they  
brought me here.**



NOW



**Bro, do you realize how lucky you are? You're one lucky bastard!**

**Eh, I'm a rifleman, but always took the No. 11 bus.**

**What's the 11 bus?**

**This!**





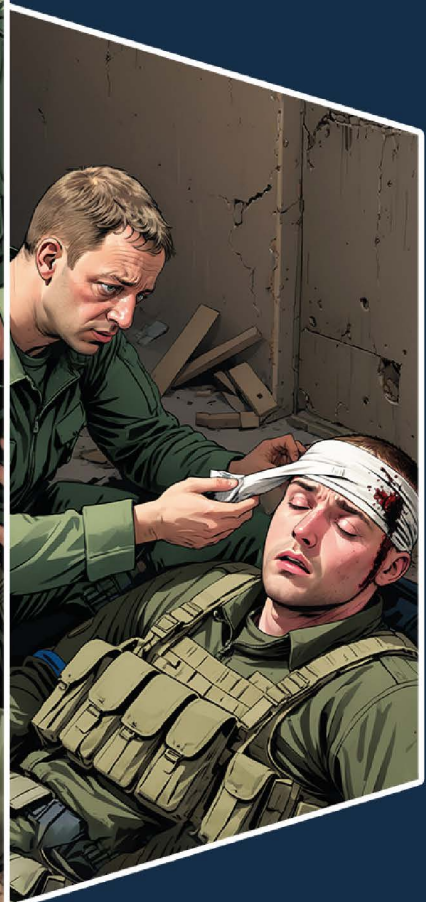
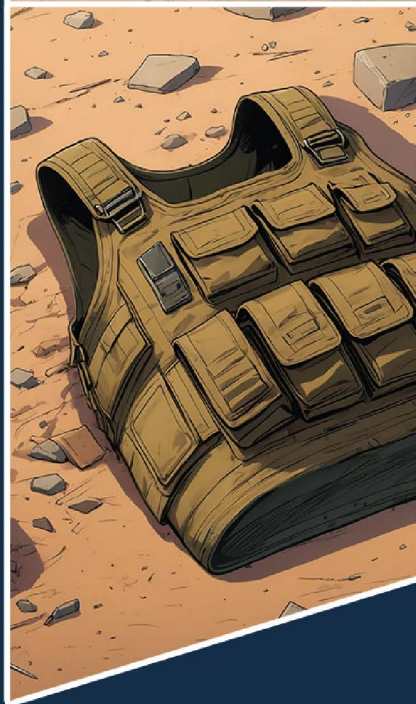
**A true rifleman:  
tech breaks, but you  
keep going!**

**Damn right!**

IN THIS STORY, A MIRACLE HAPPENED: A SOLDIER SURVIVED A DIRECT HIT, MADE IT THROUGH A MINEFIELD. SUCH MIRACLES ARE BEYOND HUMAN WILL. BUT WHAT IS UP TO A PERSON IS WHERE TO DIRECT THEIR WILL. IT'S UP TO THEM WHETHER THEY CAN STEEL THEIR RESOLVE AND DO SOMETHING HARD — RETURN FROM THE EDGE OF DEATH. OR, IN MEMORY OF A FRIEND, ADOPT HIS DOG.



# IN THE NEXT ISSUE: ONCE UPON A TIME NEAR SKUDNE



COMING IN JUNE!

READ ON  @RYBAR





We clarify the complicated Rybar

 @RYBAR

NOT FOR SALE

