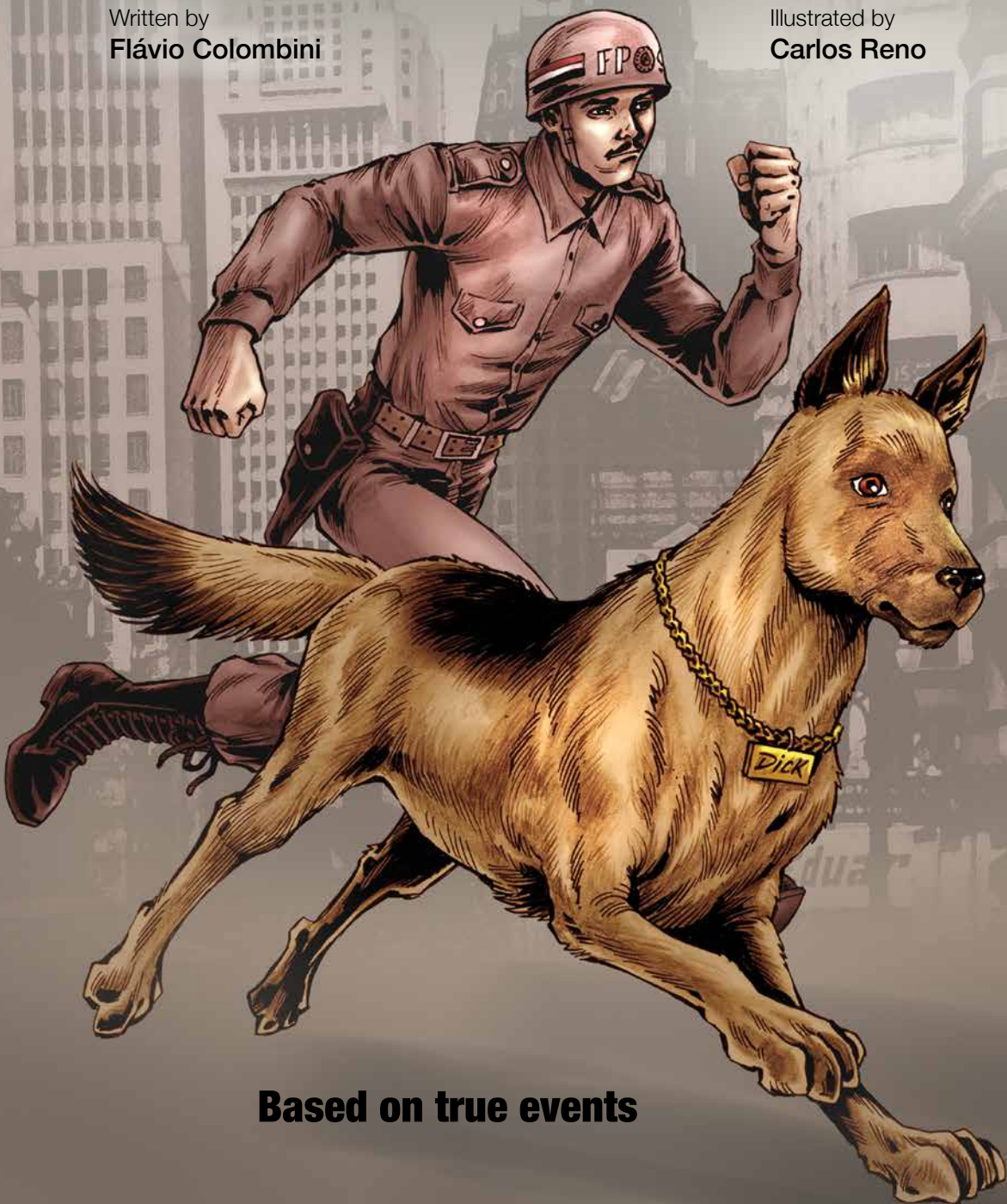


POLICE DOG

Written by
Flávio Colombini

Illustrated by
Carlos Reno



Based on true events

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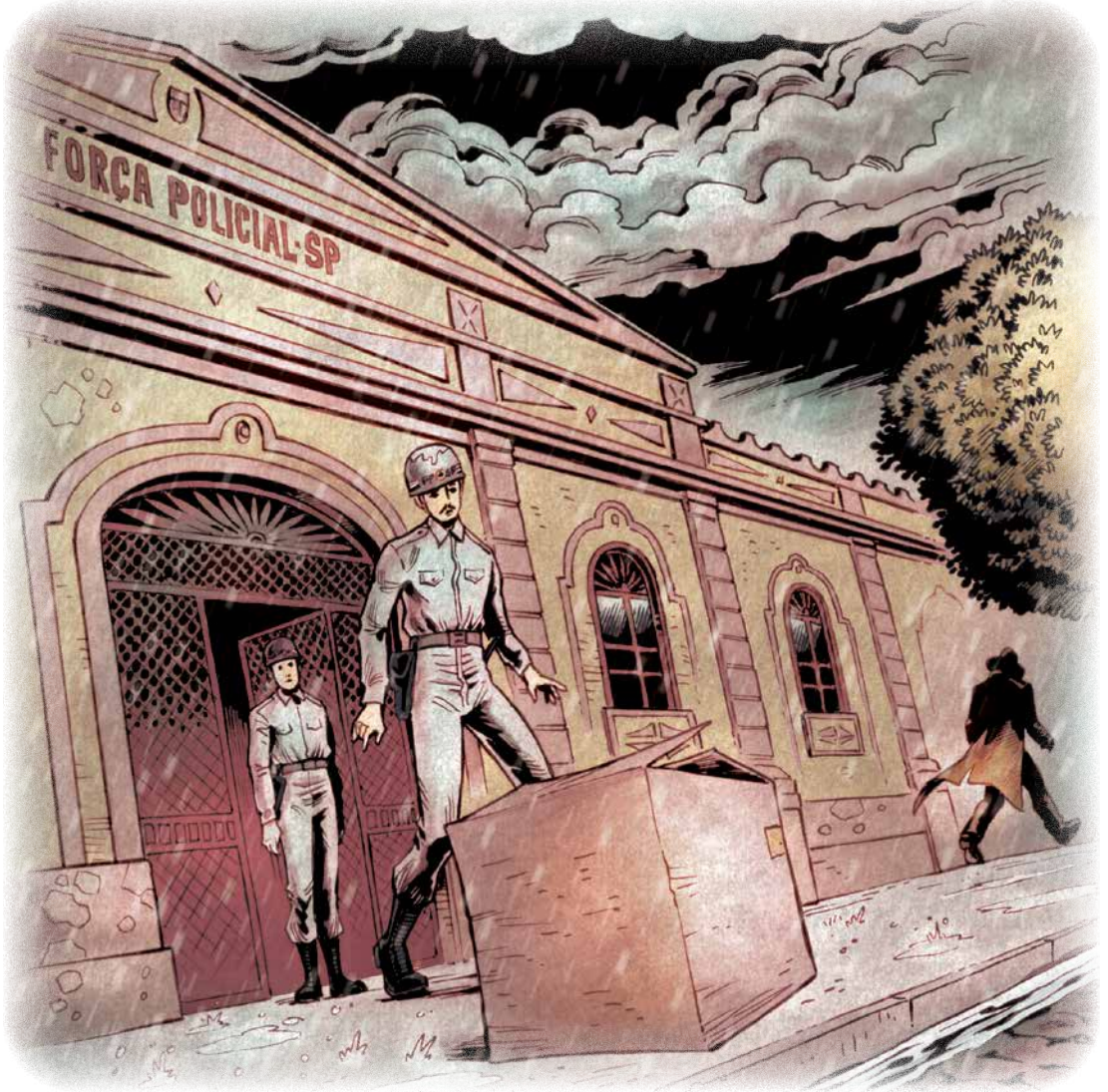
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One cold, rainy night, Private Muniz was standing guard at the entrance to the São Paulo Public Force barracks. A mysterious man, wearing a hat and overcoat, left a box in front of the barracks and ran out.



“How strange! I’m going to see what’s in the box” said the private. His partner was worried: “Don’t go, it could be a bomb!” The policeman hesitated and kept an eye on the box. Suddenly, it began to move. Muniz was so curious he couldn’t help himself and went to see what was inside.

To his surprise, he came across a puppy. It was shivering with cold. The soldier picked it up and stroked it. The puppy wagged its tail in delight and licked the policeman, who said: “Your owner was very cruel to abandon you.”

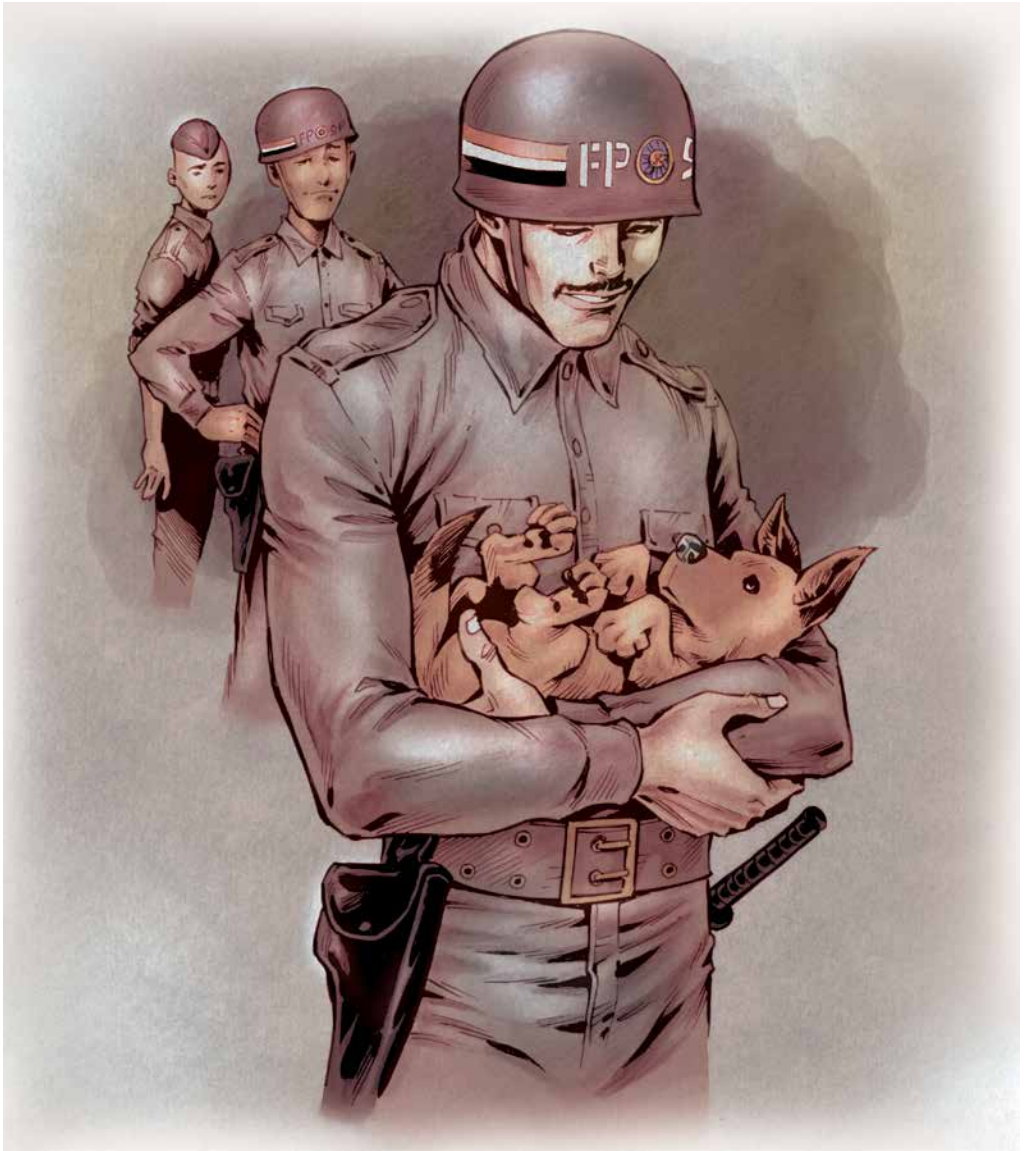


Muniz took the puppy to the barracks. The other soldiers were curious. “Is it a breed?” “What luck to find a dog like that on the street!” “Are you going to keep it?”

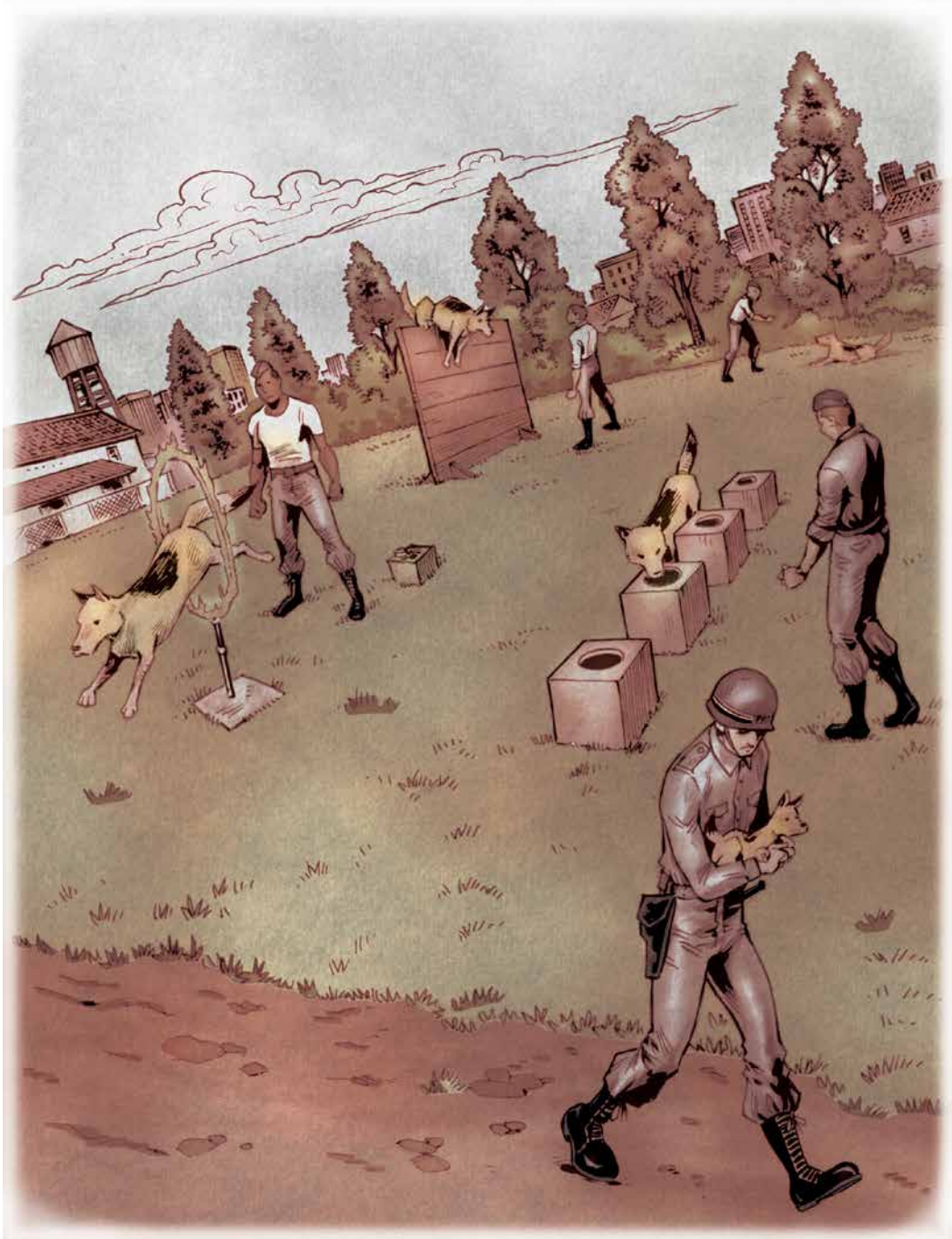


Muniz felt very much like adopting the puppy, but was unsure. He had never had a pet before. His father didn't like them. But now he no longer lived with his parents, he was married and had his own house. But it was small. Would it have room for a big dog? After all, the puppy would grow up.

In the midst of the whirlwind of doubts, the soldier looked at the puppy and felt so much affection for it that he made a decision. He said to the dog: “You were despised once, but don’t worry, I’ll take care of you and I’ll never abandon you!”

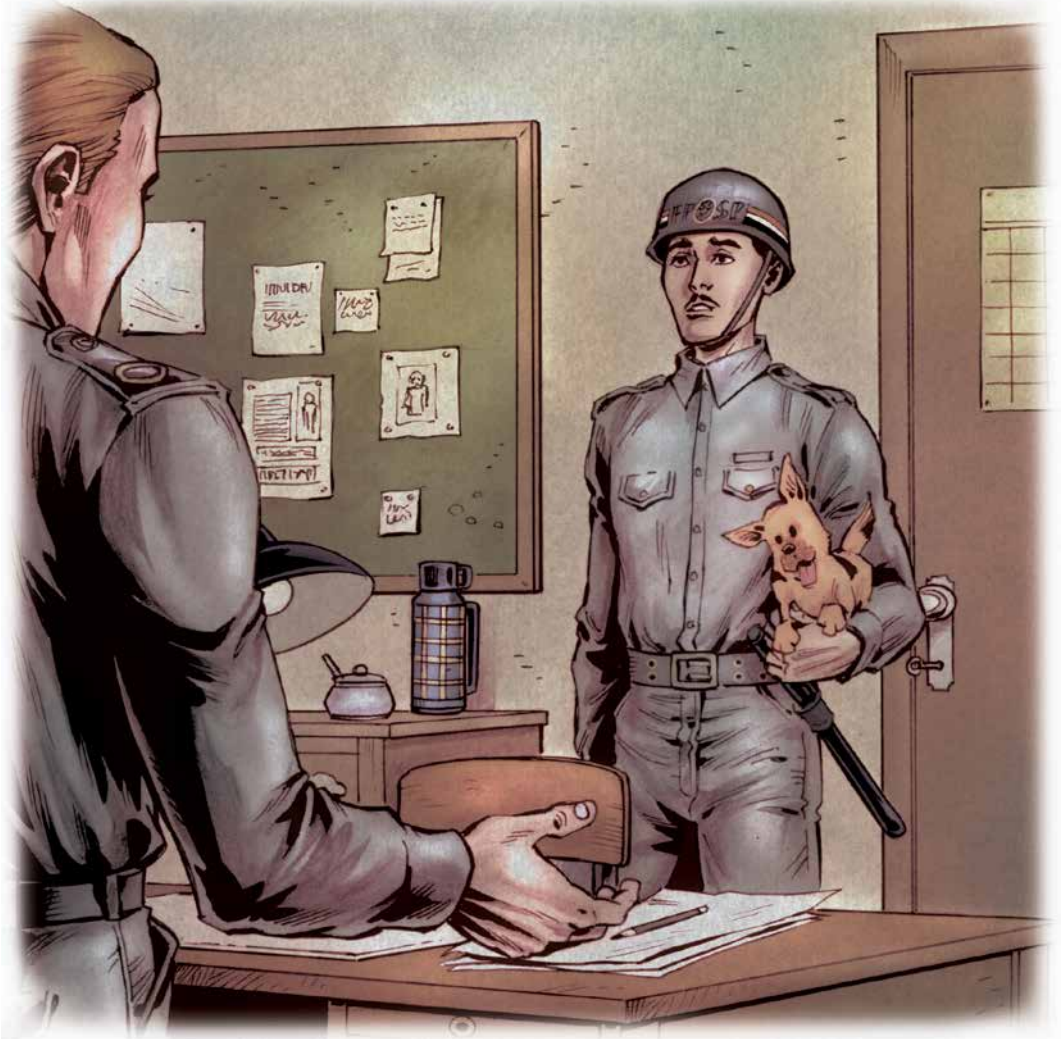


“What name are you going to give him?” asked the soldiers. Muniz thought and thought until he decided: “His name will be... Dick.” Everyone liked it. One of them commented: “Great! An American name for a German shepherd.”



By coincidence, that barracks was precisely where the São Paulo Public Force's dog corps was based. There were many dogs there who were trained to chase thieves, sniff out weapons, bombs, drugs and search for lost or buried people. They were very special dogs!

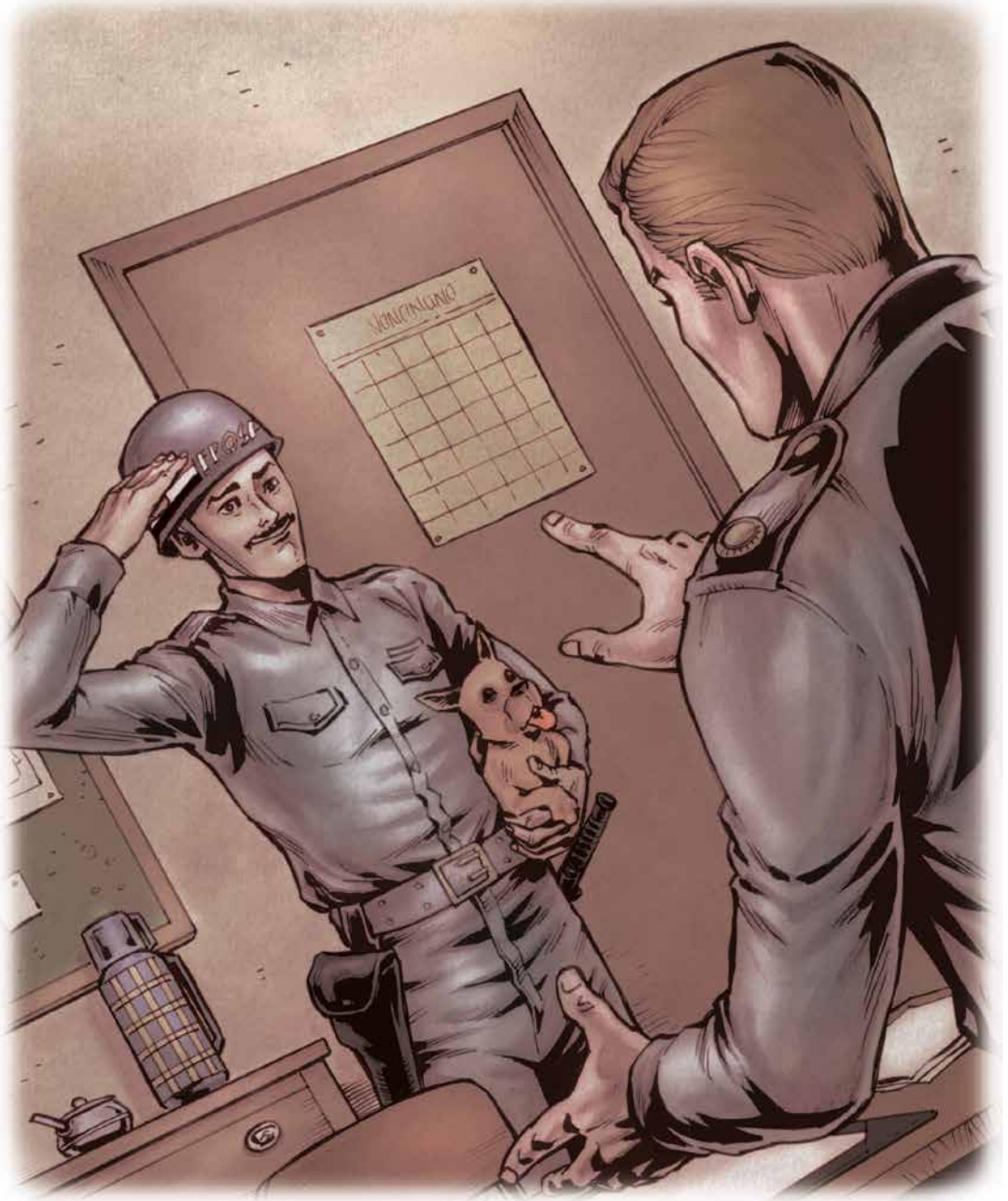
Muniz presented the puppy to Captain Edson Falco, who was in charge of the kennel. He examined the puppy and concluded: "It's too weak. He's not fit to be one of our dogs. Besides, all the handler soldiers already have their own dog. We don't need another one."

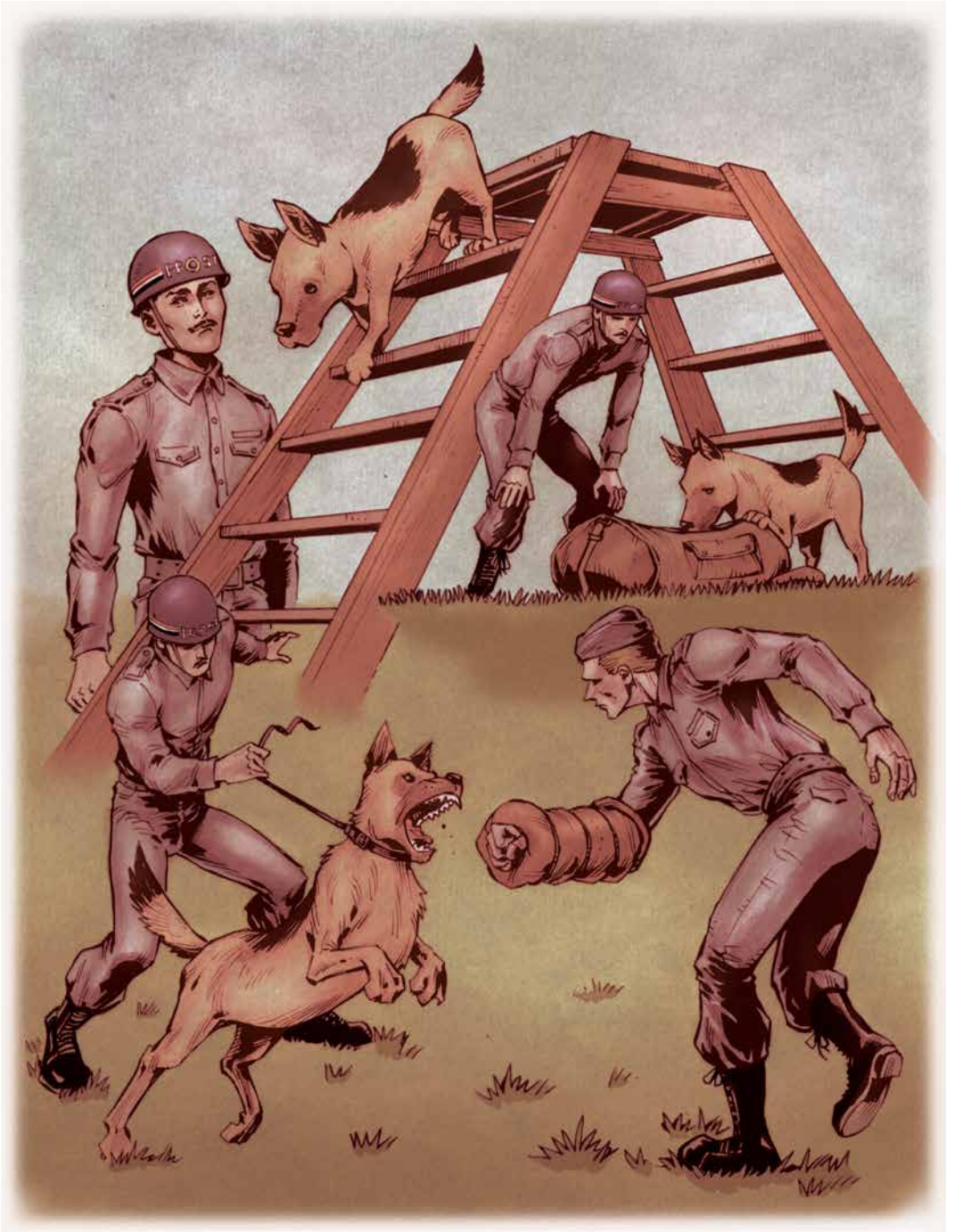


Private Muniz's dream was to be responsible for one of the dogs and lead it on missions. He took courage and said: "Captain, I'm asking you to give this dog a chance. Allow him to be trained here in our unit. If he shows talent, we'll keep him in the police. If not, I'll take him home".

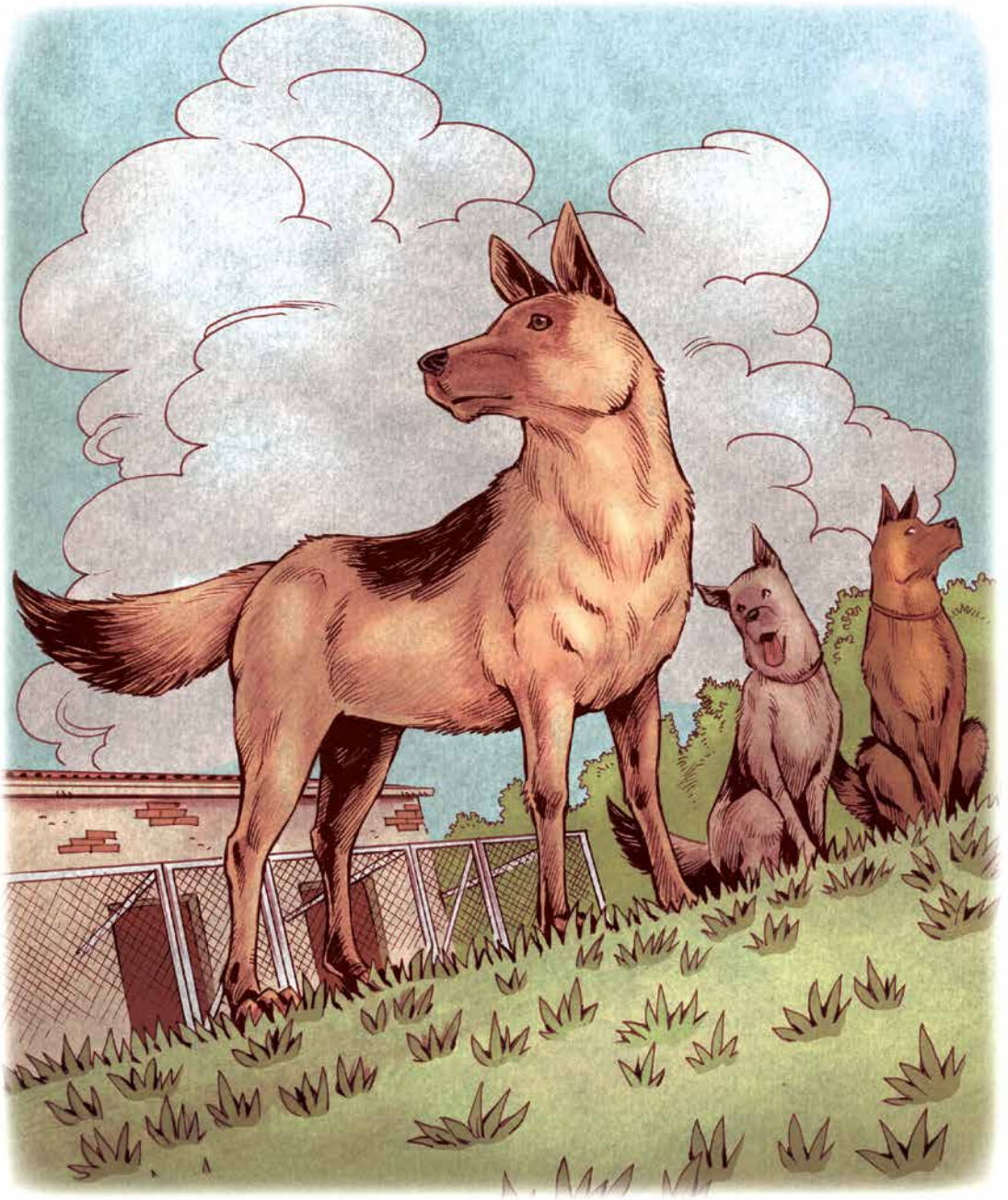
The captain remained silent.

The soldier insisted: "What do you think of my proposal, Captain?"
The officer replied: "All right. But he'll be your responsibility, Private Muniz. If he's hungry, you feed him. If he poops, you clean it up. If he bites anyone here, you'll be punished. And if, in a year, he doesn't show some talent, he goes! Bye, bye, Dick! In our corporation, we have no place for sloppy dogs."





A trainer began to teach little Dick. Muniz accompanied him and learned to be a handler. At first, everyone doubted that the dog had the talent for police work. But little by little, Dick showed characteristics such as: a keen sense of smell, strength, endurance, obedience, intelligence, courage and determination. Finally, he grew up to be a great sniffer dog.



After a year of dedication, Dick was finally accepted as a police dog. Until then he had lived in the nursery, as the novice dogs' wing was called, where they all slept together. With his promotion, Dick was given an individual box in the wing of the trained dogs, who were involved in police operations on a daily basis. There he made friends with two other dogs, Typhoon and Fury.

Soon he was assigned to his first mission. The police raided the house of a suspected bank robber. But they needed to find the gun used by the criminal, otherwise they would have no evidence to incriminate him. The police searched the house, but didn't find the gun.



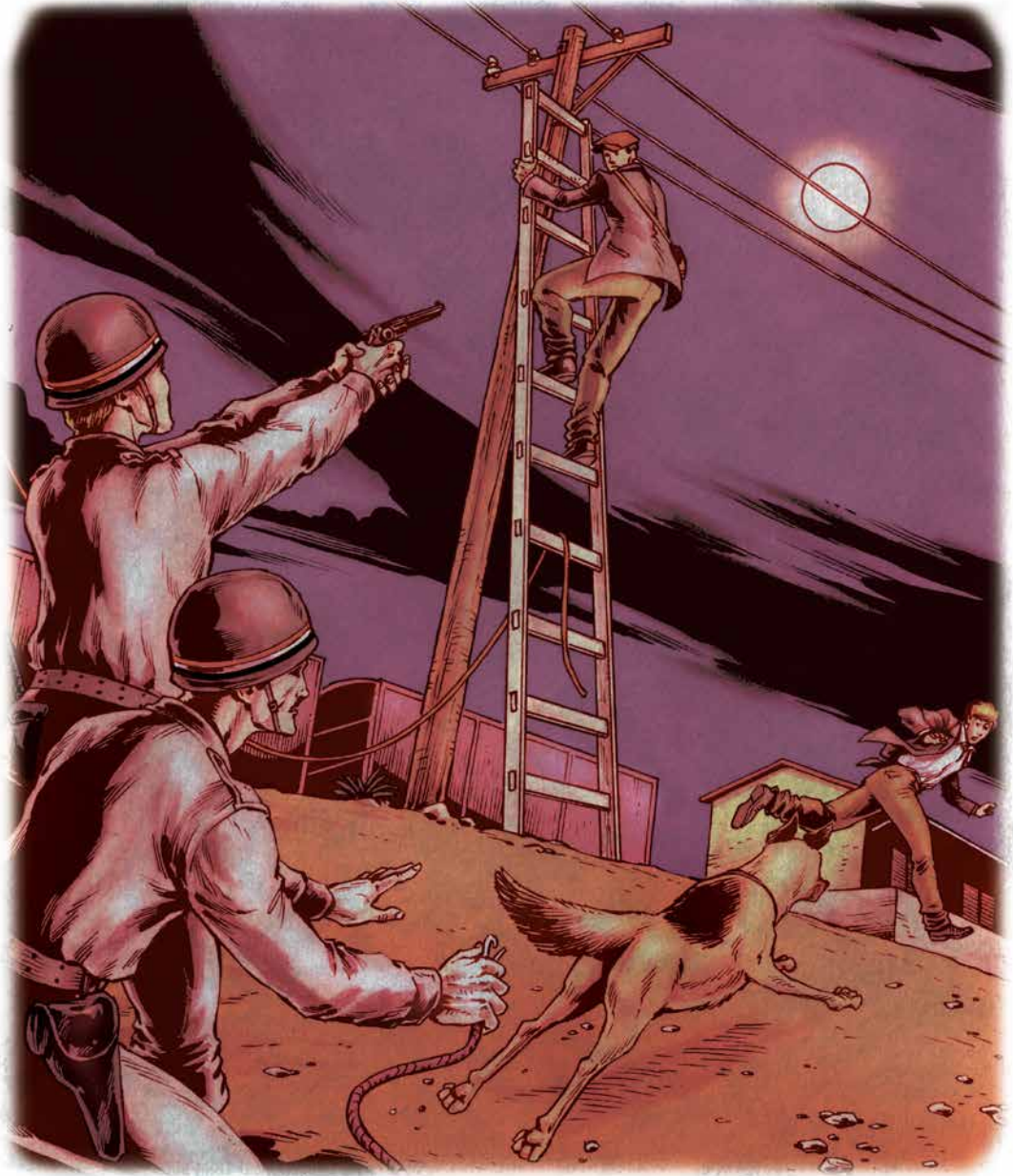
So they called Dick to help with the search. Private Muniz made the dog sniff out a revolver similar to the one used in the crime, and they both entered the house. The dog sniffed a few rooms and found nothing.

They went into the bedroom. Dick searched the room until he smelled the mattress and became agitated, wagging his tail. Muniz removed the sheet and found a tear in the side of the mattress. He stuck his hand in there and pulled out a 32-caliber revolver, identical to the one used in the robbery, as described by witnesses.



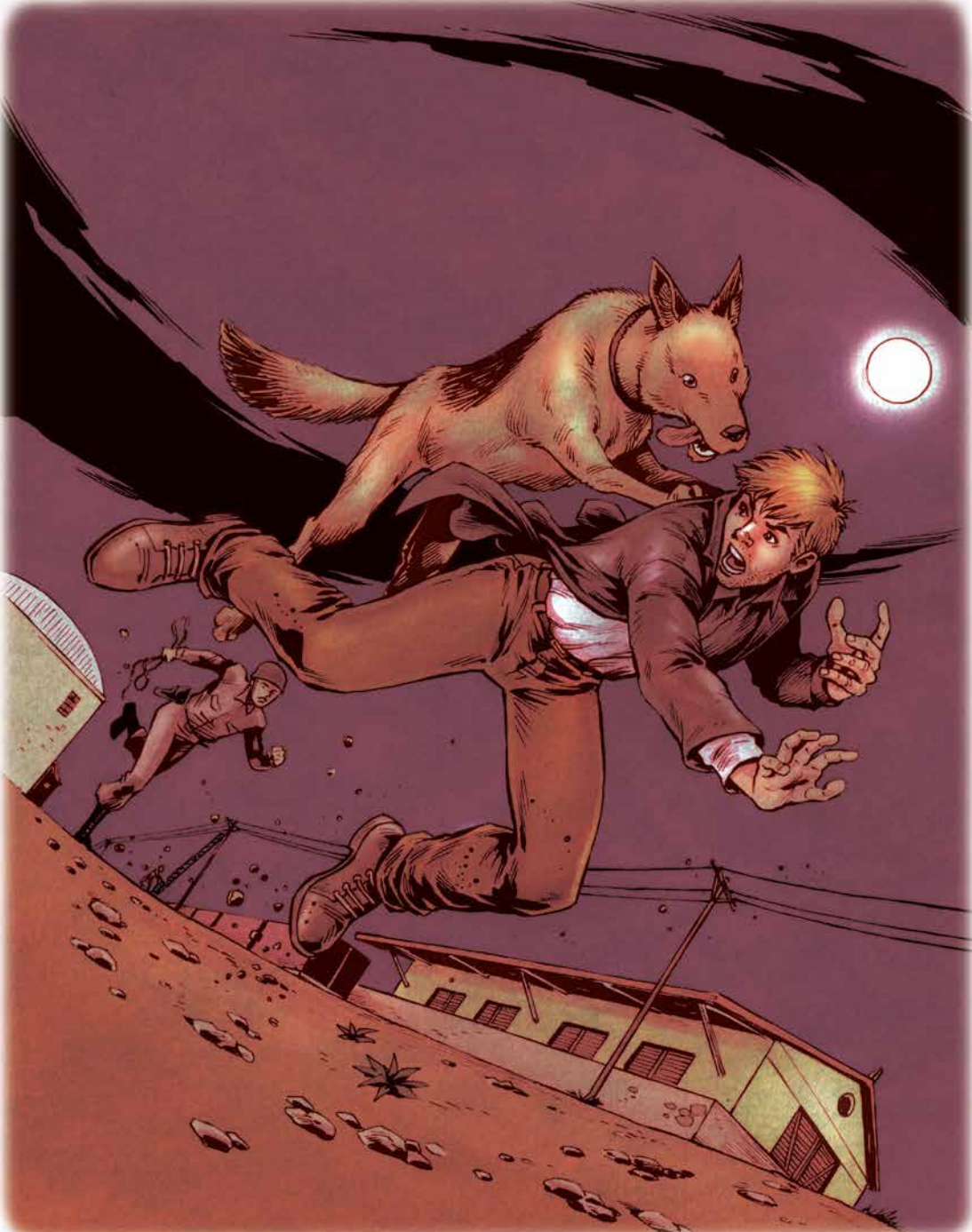
The dog was able to find the evidence of the crime. All the policemen hugged and petted him. His first mission had been a success.

Dick began to be included more and more in the squads that took part in police operations. But he didn't think he was working. He saw it all as a game he was playing.

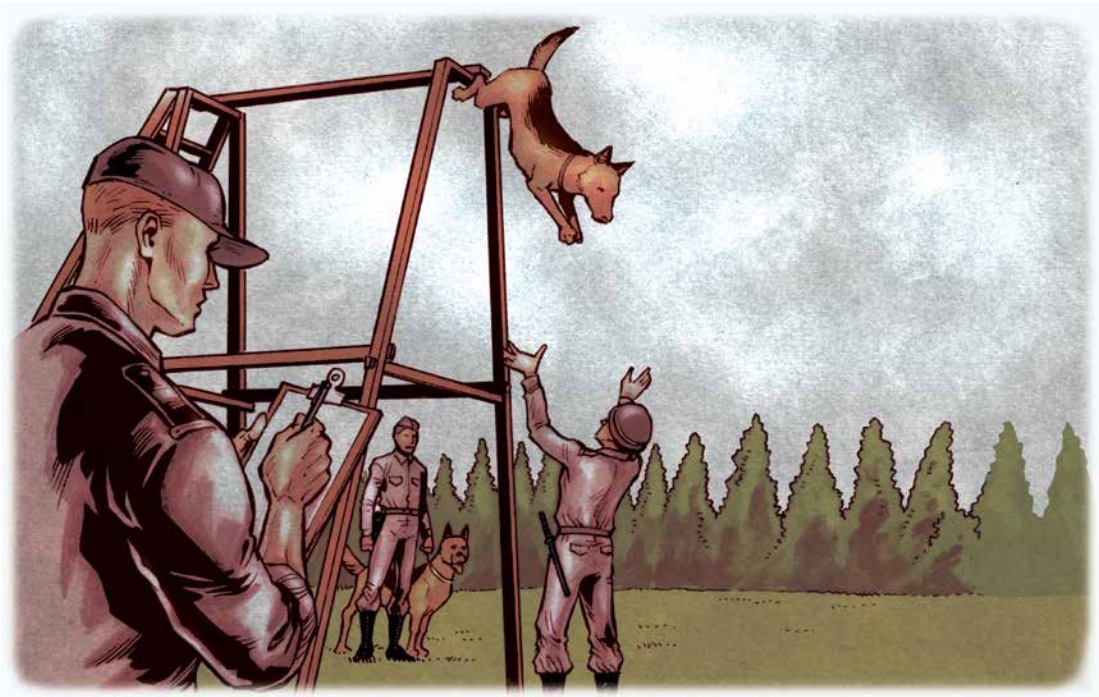


On one occasion, he was called out on patrol in search of an electrical wire thief on the local railroad. The officers spotted two suspects. One of them ran away from the scene. Private Muniz released Dick's collar and pointed at the man.

The dog ran after the bandit, jumped on him and knocked him to the ground. Dick was overjoyed, as he thought he was playing catch. The crook was scared to death and was soon arrested.



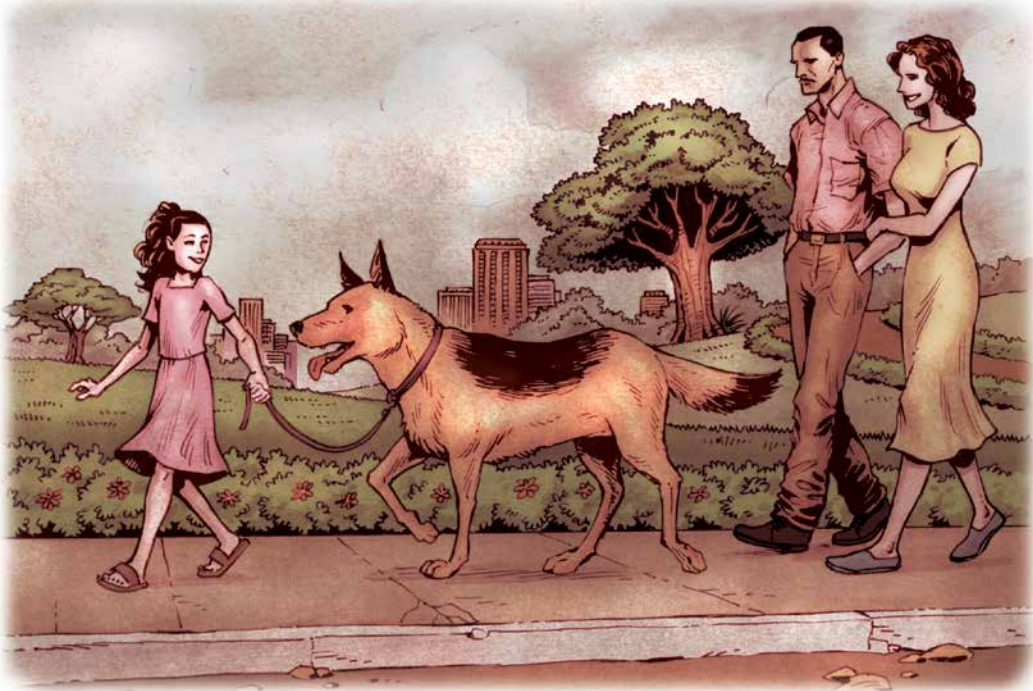
Dick also started taking part in competitions held between dogs from all over the country.



He took 2nd place in the high jump competition.



Private Muniz and his dog Dick became inseparable companions. Even on his days off, the dog would go to the soldier's house, where his daughter walked and played with him.



However, in 1956, a warning from the then Governor of the State, Jânio Quadros, caused fear among the police officers who worked in the Public Force dog squad. The politician threatened to close it down, claiming that it was too costly and brought little benefit to society. In a note, he threatened: “Make the dogs work or disband the pack”.





Not long afterwards, a sad event made headlines across the country. Little Eduardo Jaime Benevides, nicknamed Eduardinho, who was three and a half years old, was kidnapped while he was playing outside his home in a quiet neighborhood.



All the police in the city of São Paulo mobilized to find the boy. No effort was spared in the search for the missing kid. Hundreds of police officers and investigators scoured the city looking for the boy.



On the second day, dogs from the Public Force were assigned to the case. They sniffed some of the boy's clothes and went out looking for the same scent. However, they were unable to find the child.



It was concluded that the clothes had been handled by many people before being shown to the dogs, which made it difficult to identify the boy's specific smell.

Radio stations and newspapers were reporting the progress of the searches. There was general apprehension. The talk in town was of nothing else. Questions hung in the air: Who kidnaped the boy? Why did they kidnap him, if he doesn't even come from a wealthy family? Where is the kid now? Will the police be able to find him?



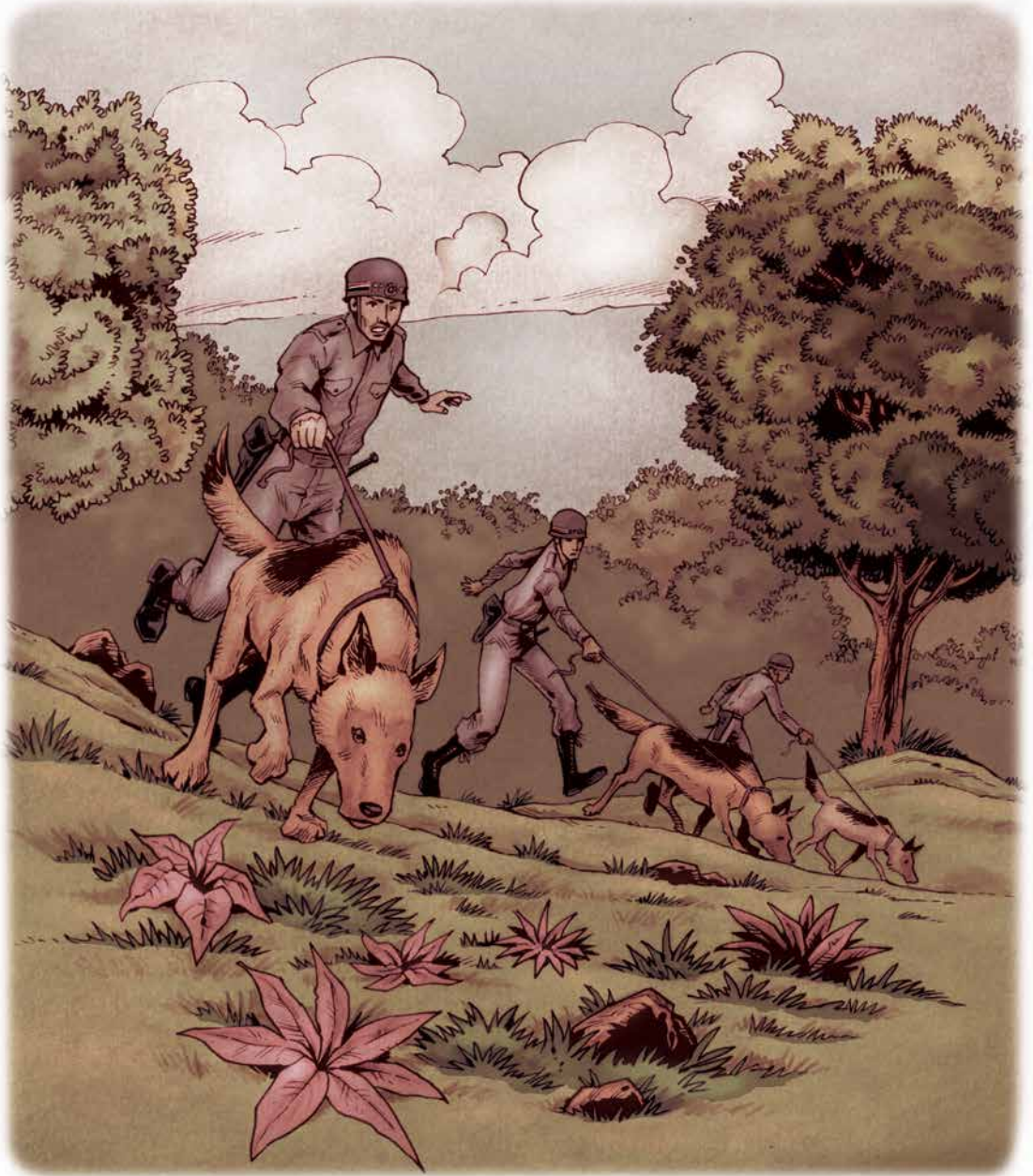
With each passing hour, hopes of finding the child alive diminished. To stimulate the search, the Governor promised that the policeman who found the boy would receive a promotion.

Friday, April 20th, 1956.



On the third day, Sub-Lieutenant Aadoramo Antunes led a new search party, summoning the dogs Typhoon, Fury and Dick to help with the search. They brought Eduardinho's pillow, which had remained untouched until then, and gave it to the dogs to sniff. This way, they could clearly identify the boy's scent for tracking.

The dogs were mobilized to search for the boy in the woods of Água Funda (where the São Paulo Zoo is located today).



The policemen and their dogs split up to search the huge area. Dick and Private Muniz walked a long way trying to find clues about the boy. Suddenly, Dick became agitated and barked intensely.

Private Muniz kept a watchful eye and let the dog lead him through the woods. They walked and ran through the thick vegetation.



Until the dog pointed to a spot on the ground covered in branches, leaves and a zinc plate. The soldier lifted the plate and discovered a dry well, one and a half meters deep.

Inside the well was none other than Eduardinho, the missing boy. Fortunately, he was alive! The soldier immediately rescued him.



The boy was in tattered clothes, dirty and hungry. He said he asked God to send an angel to save him.

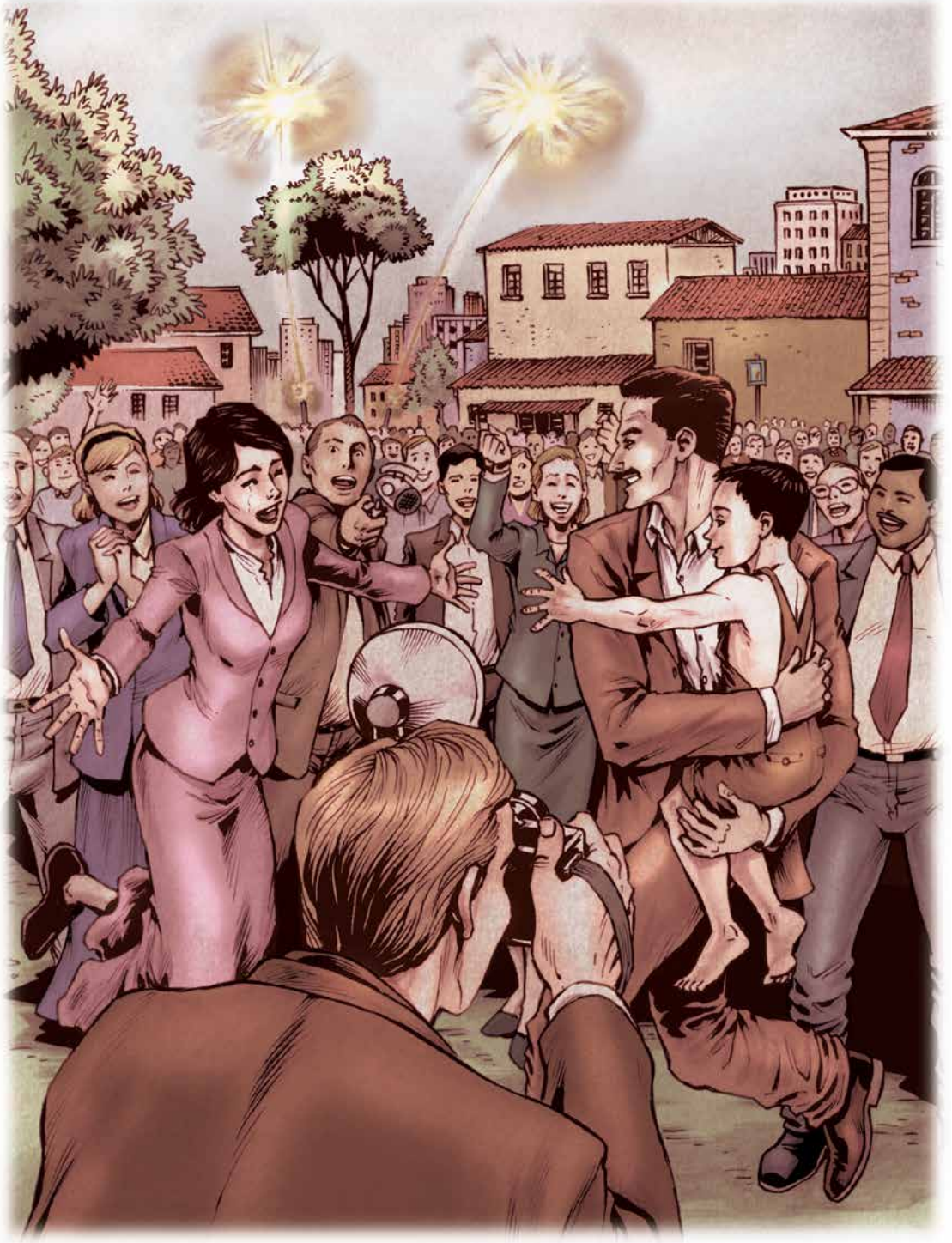
The child was taken to the police station, where he met his father, who was thrilled.



They went to the Campos Elyseos palace to meet the Governor.



Afterwards, the child was taken to hospital to be examined. Despite slight bruising, Eduardinho was perfectly healthy.

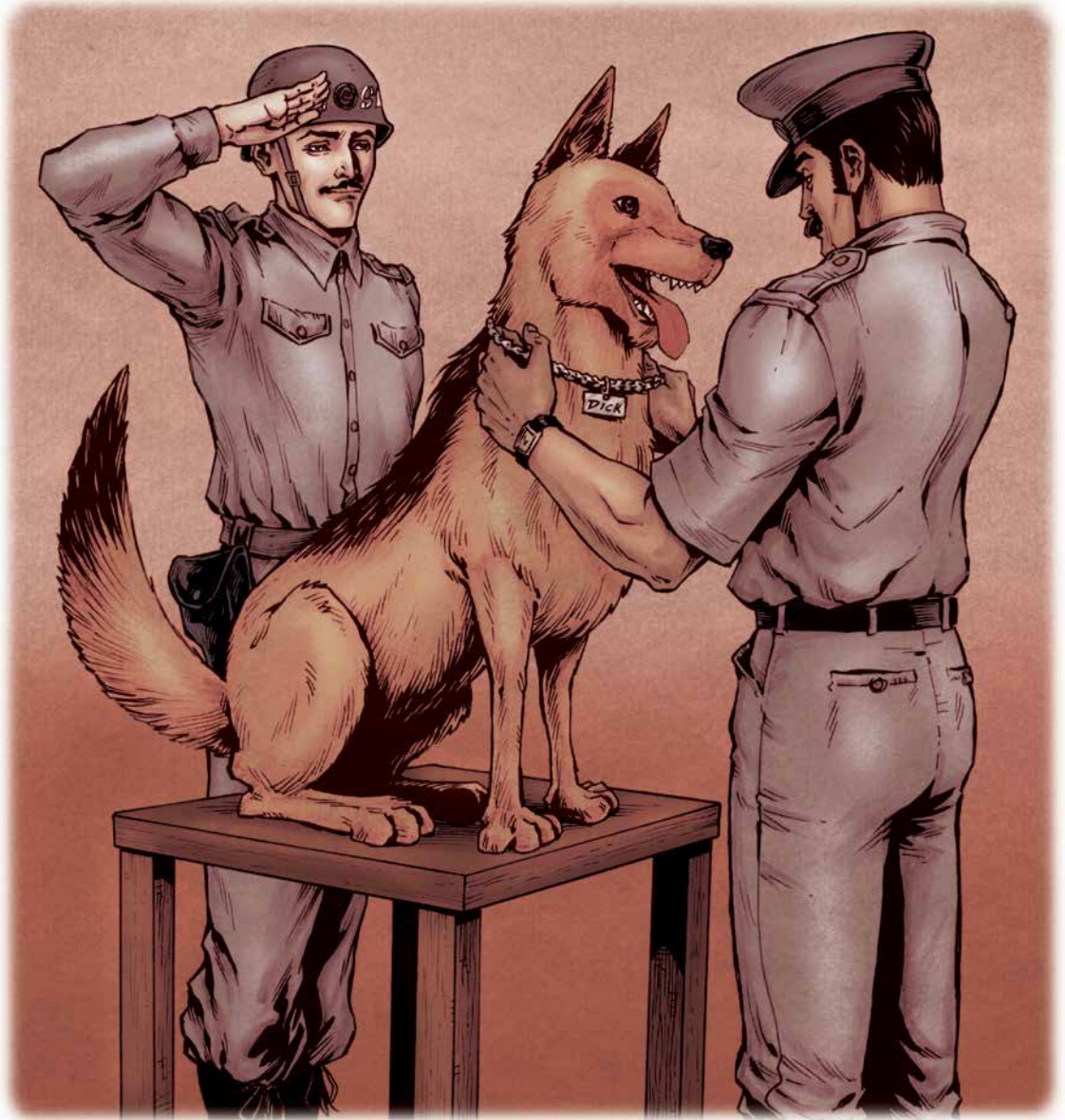


Only then was the boy able to return home. The street where he lived was packed with people, who welcomed him with a huge party.

The headlines of all the newspapers in Brazil reported that the kidnapped boy had been found by the policeman and his faithful sniffer dog.



The Governor kept his promise. Private José Muniz de Souza was promoted to Corporal Muniz. The dog was also promoted and renamed Corporal Dick. He was the first dog to get such a promotion and received a beautiful collar with his name on it.

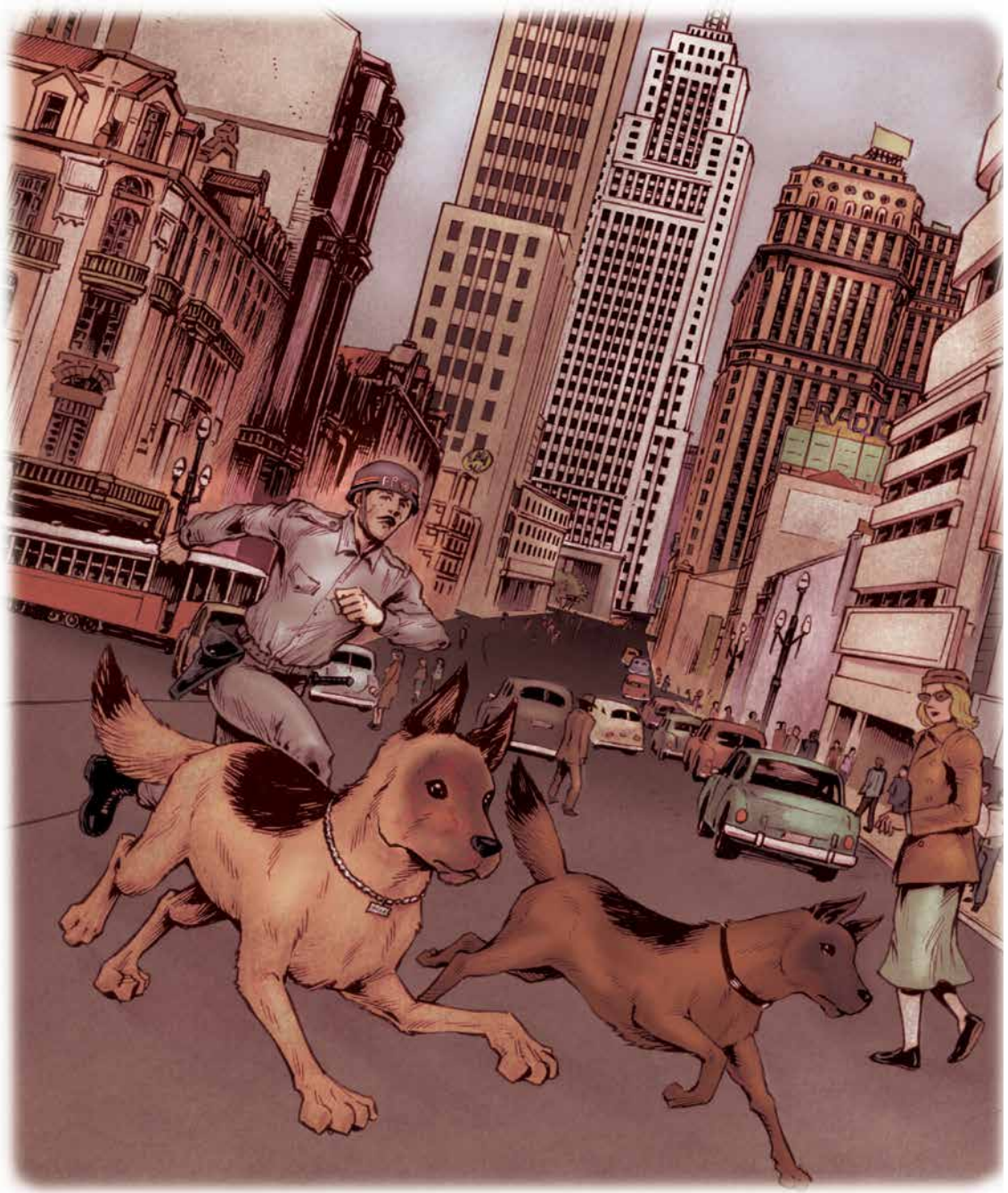


At the awards ceremony, Corporal Muniz declared that all the credit for the rescue went to his skillful dog. They were considered heroes and became famous.



The Governor gave up on closing the dog corps. In this way, Dick not only saved the boy Eduardinho, he guaranteed the continuity of all the valuable work of the dogs and soldiers of the São Paulo Public Force kennel.

After that, Dick was sent on several other missions. He used to go with the female dog Fury. They made a perfect pair. When one wasn't able to sniff something out, the other would. Together, they helped the police solve other crimes and save more people.

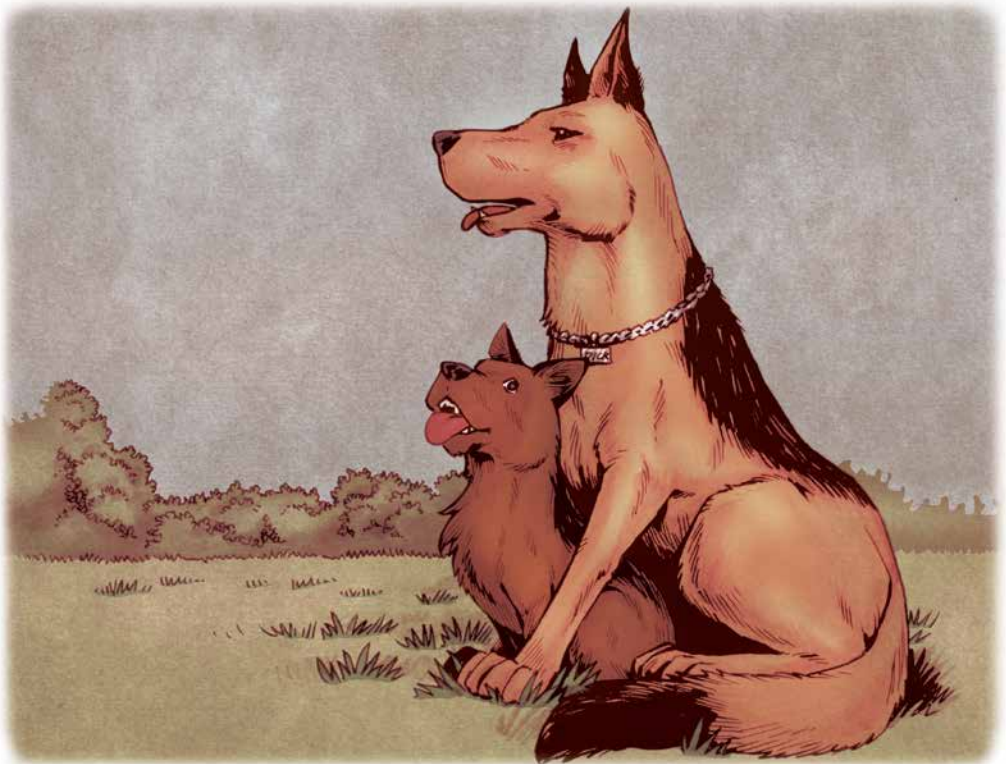


In between missions, the male and female mated.

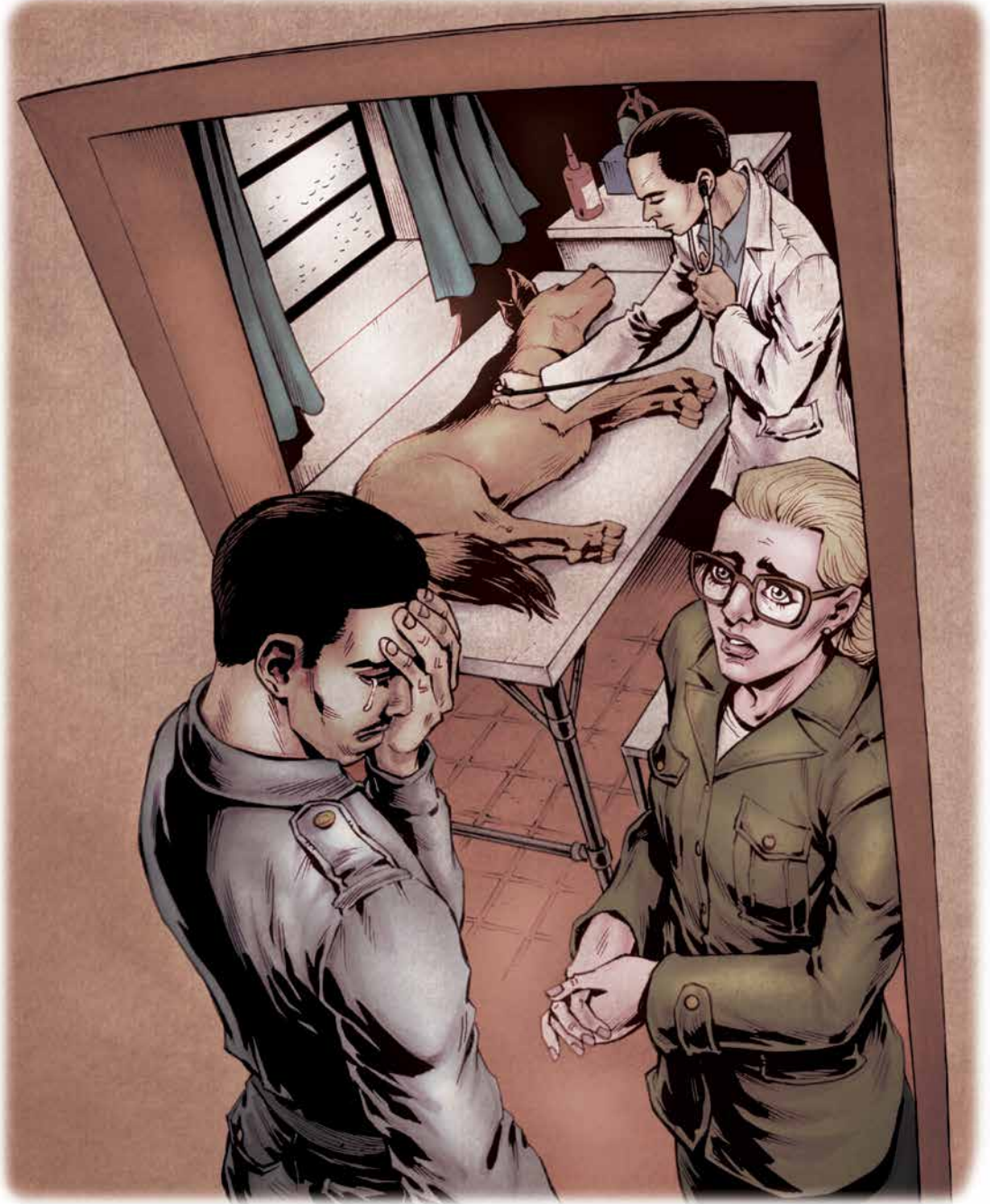
Months later, Fury had four beautiful puppies.



Dick proved to be a loving father and enjoyed looking after his cubs.

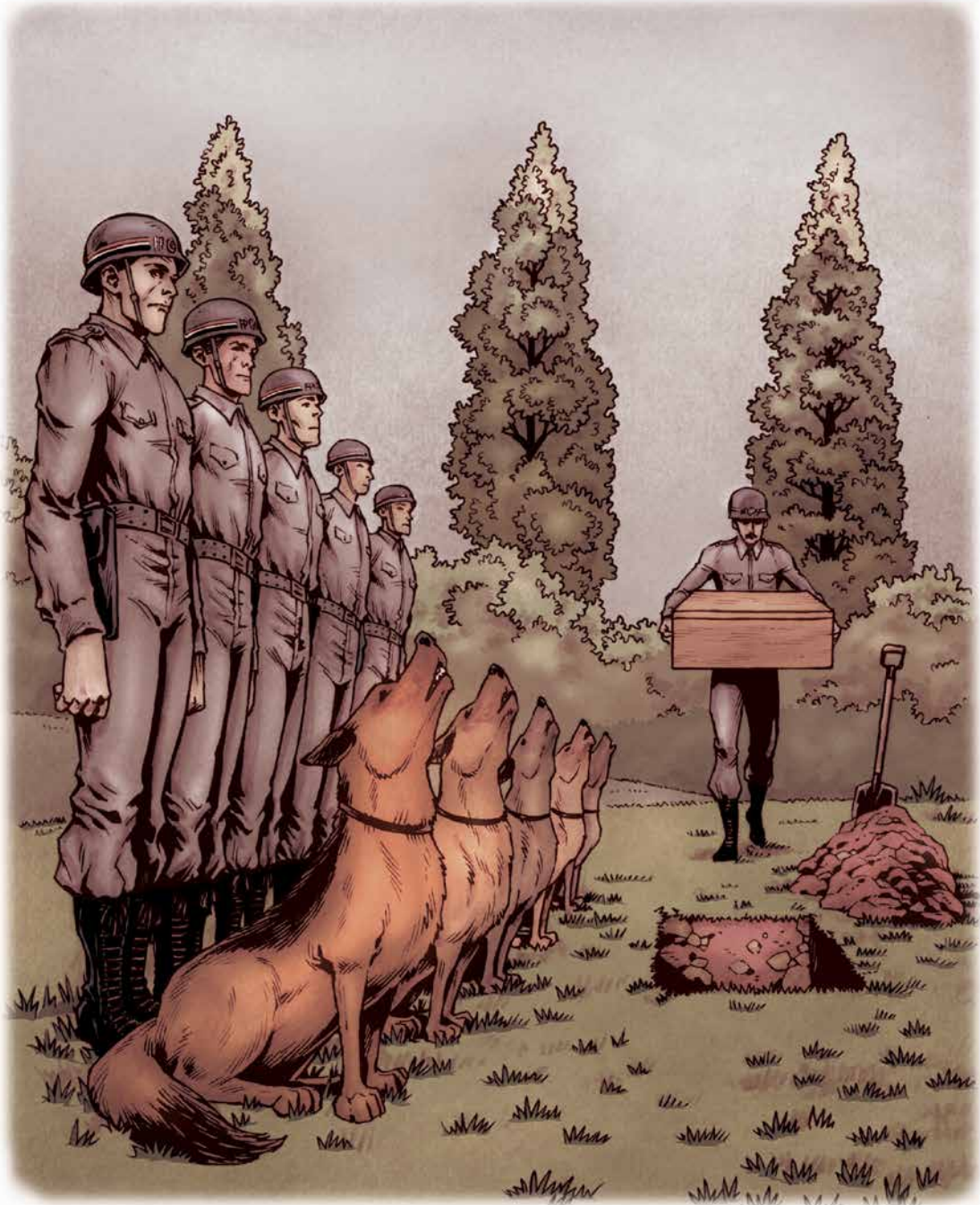


But it wasn't all roses in the German shepherd's life.
In May 1959, Dick fell ill.



He received proper care and treatment, but unfortunately the illness worsened so much that the dog couldn't resist and died.

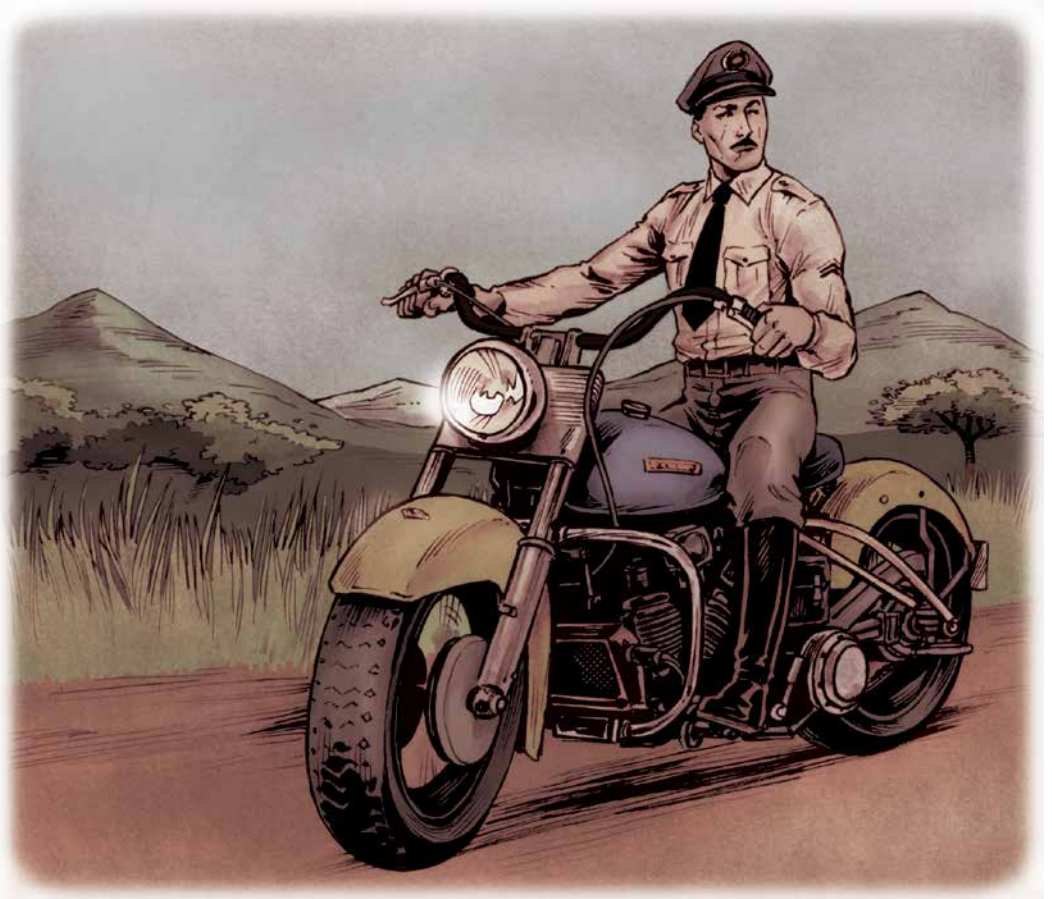
The news made the headlines and caused a commotion. The funeral of Brazil's most famous dog was a huge event. Many police dogs accompanied the ceremony. When the small coffin was buried, all the dogs present howled in homage to their companion.



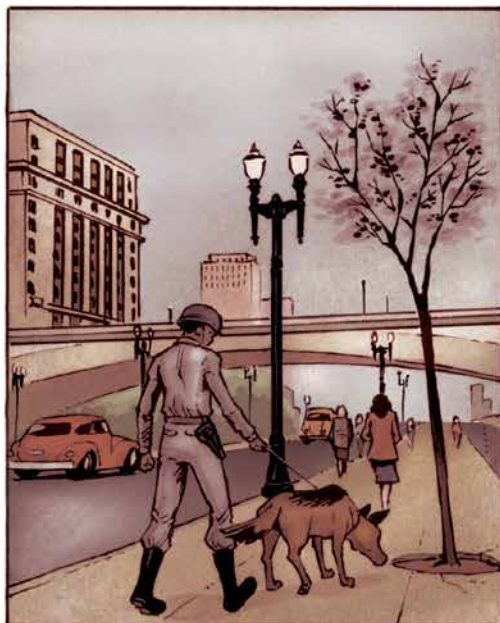
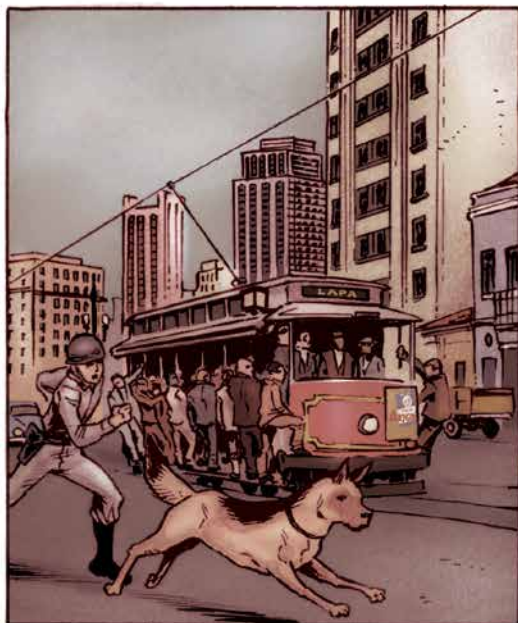


Corporal Muniz was devastated by the departure of his best friend and asked to change post.

He was transferred to the Highway Police.



Dick only lived for six years, but his life was fascinating and touched the hearts of countless people. His four sons followed his example and also became excellent police dogs.



The German shepherd left a beautiful legacy, showing the city and the country the importance of dogs in police work.

Dick was so important that they built a bust in his honor, which still stands today at the entrance to the São Paulo Military Police kennel. Below the sculpture of the German shepherd is a plaque with the words: “To Corporal Dick, champion of police searches”. The tribute extends to all the dogs, who are an “example of fidelity, courage and affection.”



PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PERIOD



Corporal Muniz and Corporal Dick



Eduardinho met the policeman and the German shepherd on two different occasions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

One of the proofs of Dick's legacy is that the São Paulo Military Police currently has around 320 dogs, of various breeds: Belgian Malinois, German Shepherd, Dutch Shepherd, Labrador, Rottweiler, Bloodhound, among others. They are used for ostentatious patrols, crowd control, incidents inside prisons, sniffing out drugs and explosives, searching for lost people, rescuing people from collapsed structures, among other activities. Dogs save many lives and bring great results to public safety.



Photos: Comunicação Social - Canil PMESP

WRITER



Flávio Colombini

One day, I was doing some research on the internet and came across an article about Dick, issued by the press office of the São Paulo Military Police. I was fascinated and immediately thought the story would make a good children's book. So I spent months researching in old newspapers everything I could find about this very special dog. Almost all the facts reported in the book actually happened, with the exception of a few fictional scenes, added to fill in gaps that the newspapers didn't tell. All the names used in the story are also real. If you'd like to see the other books I've written, visit my website: www.flaviocolombini.com/english

ILLUSTRATOR



Carlos Reno

After years of working as a comic book illustrator, I was waiting for a job that would take me out of the ordinary. Then, one day, Flávio came along and invited me to add images to his excellent text about a brave police dog and his surprising true story, which has all the makings of a hero's journey: learning, overcoming, conquering and a compelling emotional charge. For me, as a father, and at a time when we were going through the pandemic, it was a breath of fresh air and an honor to put my traits at the disposal of this project. For more samples of my work, follow me on Instagram: [carlosreno_studio](https://www.instagram.com/carlosreno_studio)