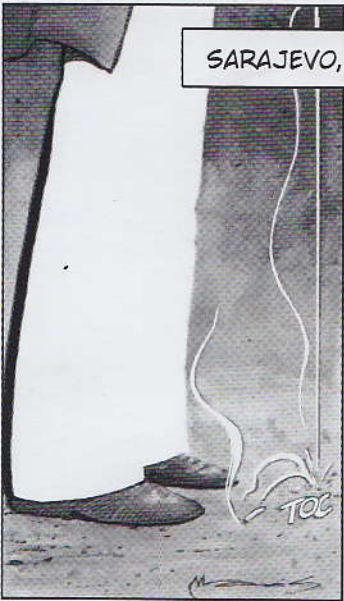


SARAJEVO, AUGUST, 1995.



In memory of my dear friend and colleague
Karim Zaimović (1971-1995.)

This book carries a message for all those who still have doubts but yet, deep in their hearts, they know.

To be continued... Until the end of the world!

For my loved ones: Ajla, Afan and Ema.

Author

Biblioteka Bosančica

Book 5

Mom, what is war?

Art by: Senad Mavrić

(Original title: *Mama, šta je to rat?*)

For Publisher:

Almir Šehalić

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Senad Mavrić

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MAVRIĆ, Senad

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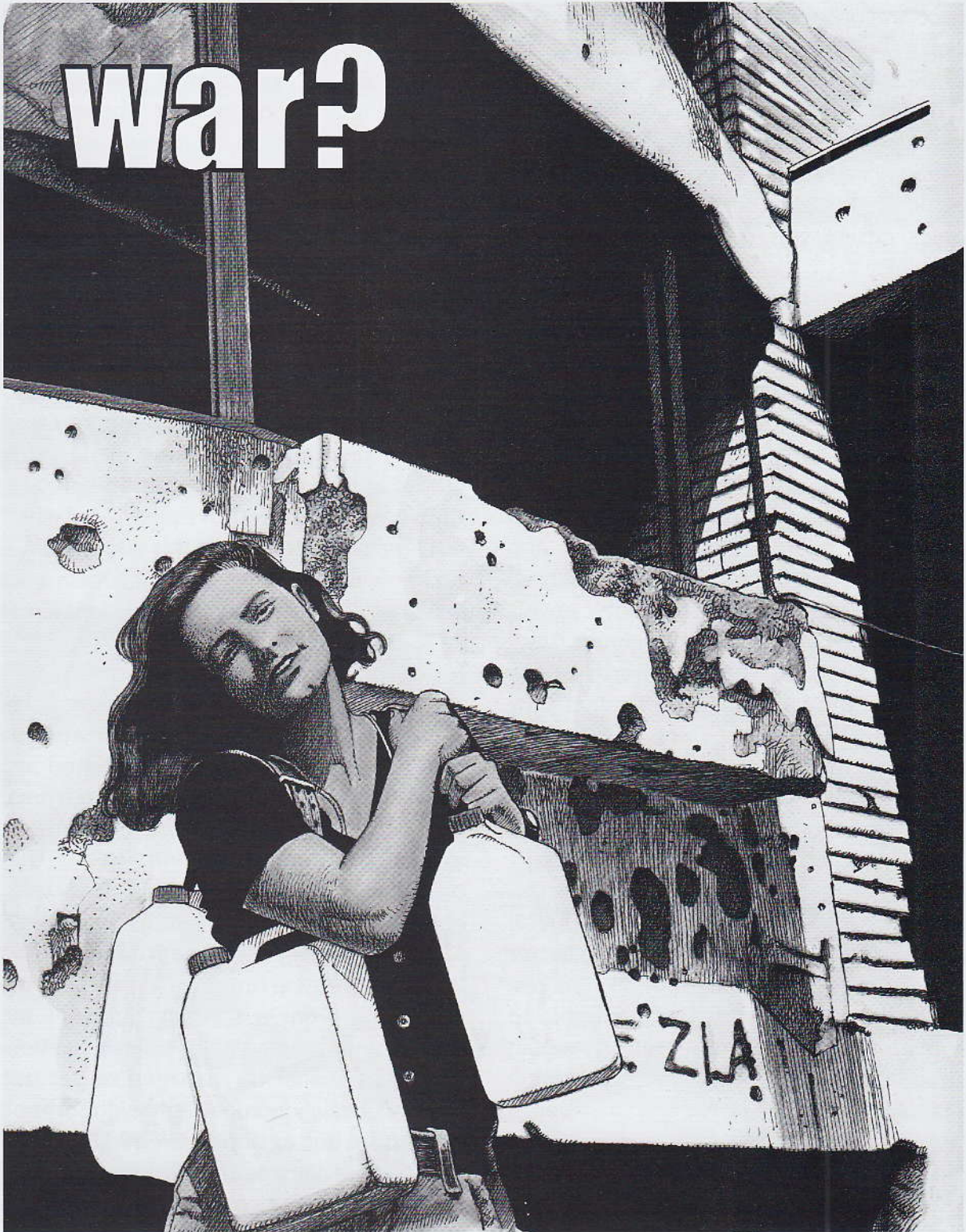
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Senad Mavrić

Mom, what is war?



Sarajevo, 2017.

To my avid comic book enthusiasts,

In your hands you are holding the second and expanded edition of the graphic novel book **"Mom, What Is War?"** originally published over 16 years ago, in German, English and Bosnian language. This original edition, published by Buybook, was a much more modest one (but exactly so conceptualized in the first place) while the choice and order of language in which it was published depended solely on the publishing and sponsoring prospects. I must mention that the Bosnian version was co-financed by, at the time, Minister of Culture of The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina herself, a gesture that today may be regarded as a sort of a precedent, and that the book's design was done by my longtime friend Samir Plasto.

After all these years and for numerous reasons (mainly those of moral nature and stemming from desire to spite everyone who thought that graphic novel art is dead and buried in this country) I decided to take on this project and breathe new life into the graphic novel put together during the war. **"Mom, What Is War?"** (yes, just like a child asks his mother questions about what he doesn't understand and the notion of war, indeed, is difficult to comprehend) is actually a collection of my short graphic novels **"Sniper Story," "A Walk," "One Ordinary Day," "Black Water Limba,"** based on a short story by **Antonio Zalica** from his book **"A Dragon Paw Imprint,"** and **"The Smiling Cookie."** It goes without saying that even after all these short novels were published I still felt that much was left untold. Thus, I compiled them in this book.

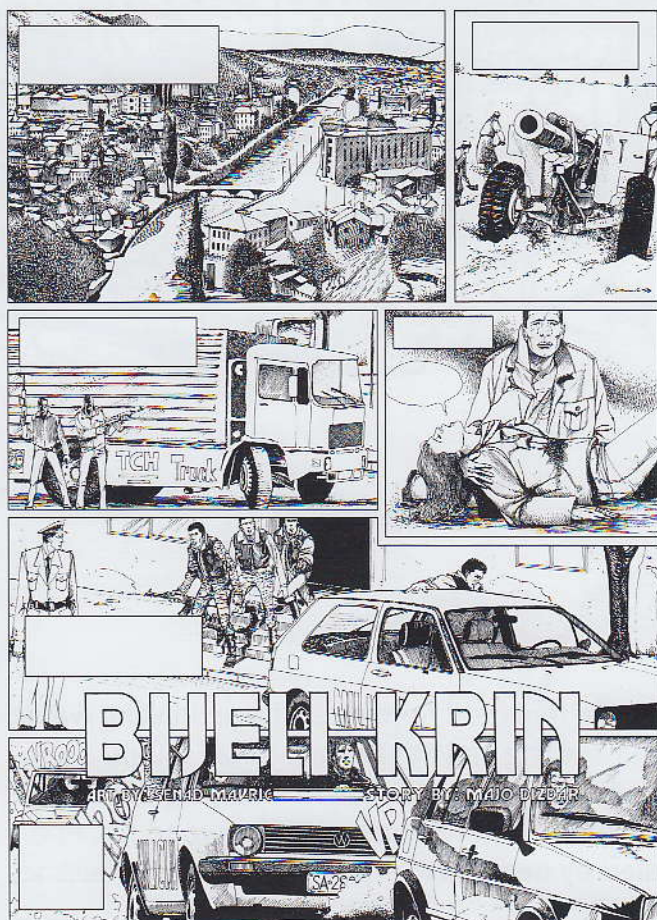
Compared to the original edition and apart from a couple of sketches and text balloons, this new edition is also improved from a technical standpoint as the readers can now enjoy a better quality print and higher resolution images, something the original version was not able to offer at the time. Perhaps the key difference can be noticed in the revised cover page, bearing a more personal sentiment rather than a universal one.

Please also allow me to take this opportunity to share with you some of my mindset as I sketched, as well as lived, these short novels irrespective of press coverage and critiques of the original

edition. Naturally, the initial idea was to illustrate and recount the war in Sarajevo, not dwelling on weapons, soldiers, and trenches. The focus was on the immense suffering in living each day anew under the constant shadow of death articulated by a variety of whistle sounds of incoming mortar fire; each day tougher than the previous. I regarded all this in some sort of phases carefully ranked in my mind. Phase one: a period of complete confusion during which you try to reason with yourself and assume this must be some sort of exaggerated reaction and that everything will soon be over. The second phase involved an infinite fear for your own life and life of your loved ones, followed by physical suffering due lack of nutrition (including water) that went on and on, and, finally, the third and last phase, which, to me, was the most astounding and chilling one. This phase was like entering a different dimension of existence in which horrific war images were a regular daily occurrence to which one didn't even react any more due to empty emotions, and one no longer cared if he lived or died anymore. Some managed to find humor in it all and daringly and fearlessly faced the siege of the city. Only time will tell whether or not I managed to cope in this way myself. What I do know is that in 1993, albeit subconsciously, I got dressed and nonchalantly walked over to the PTT Building (SFOR peacekeeping force headquarters at the time), sat in one of the SFOR armored vehicles and in a very casual and normal way (note that "normal" at the time equaled well-being and good-fortune), I abandoned Sarajevo, having set no goal or direction, apart from that of trying to eliminate the possibility of my remains one day being splattered onto walls of the many barricades erected across Dobrinja, the barricades I personally walked through every day.

Indeed, it all started when, during the war, as I laid in the wartime hospital in Dobrinja, recovering from a shrapnel injury, I met my mentor and former employer **Ervin Rustemagić**. I was pleased that he managed to get out alive from his heavily bombarded neighborhood near the airport, but, again, I was reminded of the crisis and massive damage and losses he suffered as his **Strip Art Features** company was leveled to the ground and with it the thousands of original story boards and comic books by some of the best and

most respected artists in the world of comic book art. There was an impulse to start drawing again, and Ervin, even though this was the most difficult time of his life, counseled and supported me by telling me what was important to be documented. Despite this momentum, it was still hard not to take notice of the horrors around me during the hospitalization and having to listen various testimonies of the many wounded treated in the hospital. I ended up drawing over 150 portraits of the wounded, both civilian and military. Many of those portraits owe their keep to the dedicated administrator who ran this improvised hospital at the time. I then continued drawing this and that and upon my joining the HQ, the editorial team of the magazine "Front Line," the idea of creating an actual comic book was born. It was **Majo Dizdar** who came up with the idea of us making a comic book that would illustrate the war aggression, be printed with the *Front Line* and distributed with it. He even wrote the script for the first few pages of it and named the comic "**Bijeli Krin.**" Unfortunately, all that was left of it was its first page (see image) and a remarkable story as to how this one page came back to my possession.



France-Soir

TOUTE DERNIÈRE • TRIOS

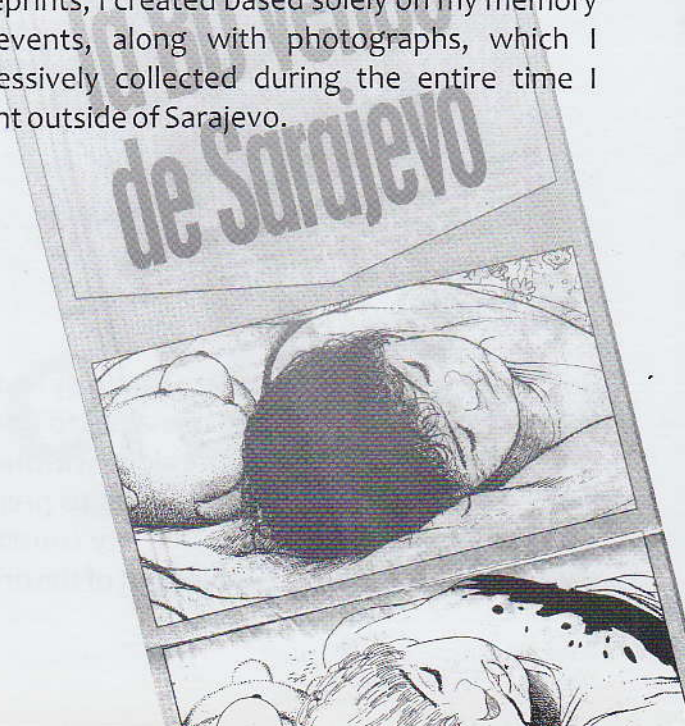
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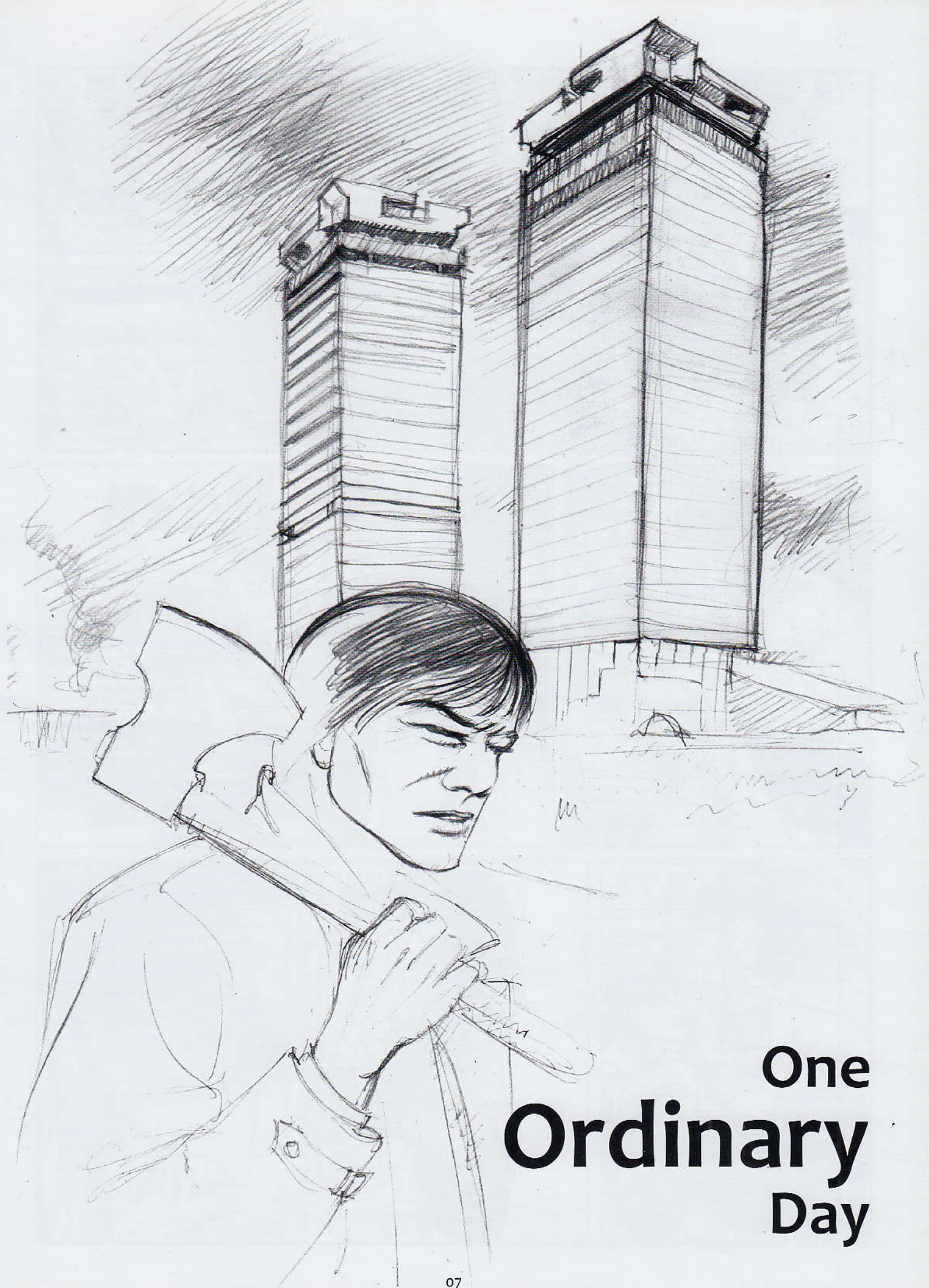
During this time I began working on comics that later became part of the final collection this foreword is about. The "Sniper Story," a brief, 2-page comic, was created first. There were a few versions of it. The first version was published in the French daily "France Soir," 04/01/1994., (see image) while the latest version is being offered in this very collection.

The version I mentioned printed in "France Soir," is in the possession of a French journalist who I met in Sarajevo. He also requested copies of some of my drawings as a keepsake. By the way, it turned out he found more use for them than just as a keepsake but that is a different story. Other short comic book stories followed and, for this edition, each comes with a brief introduction relating to the idea behind each story. Each introduction comes with snapshots of drawings, blueprints, I created based solely on my memory of events, along with photographs, which I obsessively collected during the entire time I spent outside of Sarajevo.





During the war, every Sarajevan routinely had to manage to find food for the day, have drinking water, and a way to stay warm. We managed to find water but coming up with firewood was tough. So, we ended up chopping up furniture along with nearby trees. In winter days cooking and staying warm came hand in hand as we burned firewood to prepare food. The search for water and firewood became a common, routine, daily ritual in a city constantly shelled by heavy artillery; a search that sometimes ended up fatal for some. Nothing out of the ordinary, right?



One
Ordinary
Day

