

JASON  
LANDSEL

SANKHA  
BANERJEE  
RICHARD  
MOMMSEN

# By Water

THE FELIX MANZ STORY



# BY WATER

This is a preview. Get the entire book here.





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# HEROES OF THE RADICAL REFORMATION

BOOK ONE

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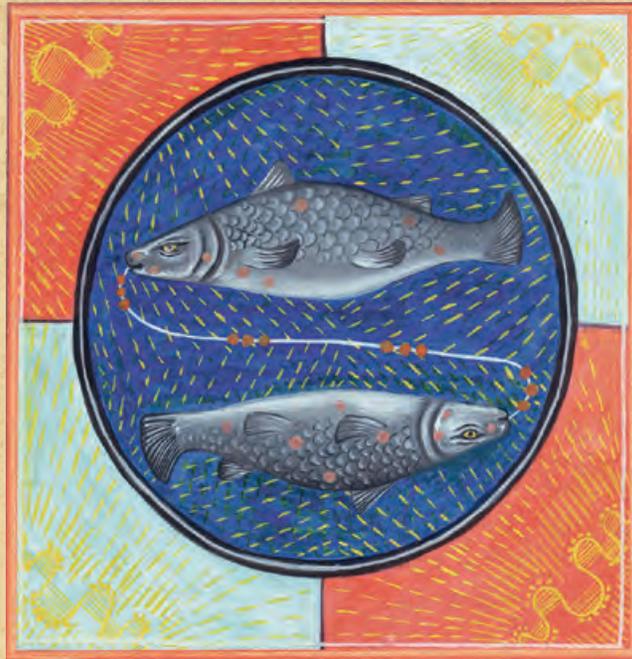
# By Water

## THE FELIX MANZ STORY

JASON LANDSEL

SANKHA BANERJEE, ART

RICHARD MOMMSEN, SCRIPT



Plough

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# Plough

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# TO THE READER

**S**TUDENTS WILL KNOW that the Reformation began when Martin Luther nailed his “Ninety-Five Theses” to a church door in 1517. While reading *Renegade*, a graphic novel about Luther, I realized that this format would be a great way to tell a lesser-known and far more dramatic part of Reformation history, the story of the Anabaptists of the Radical Reformation. These Reformers were more daring than Luther and faced intense persecution for their beliefs at the hands of both Catholic and Protestant authorities. Their courage and vision helped establish goals that we still aspire to today: economic justice, peaceful social reform, and freedom of conscience.

So I began seriously researching the Anabaptist movement, which started in the Swiss city of Zurich in 1525. (Their enemies called them Anabaptists, or “rebaptizers,” because they didn’t recognize infant baptism – one had to choose to become a Christian.) I read dozens of books and traveled to locations in Europe including the street where Felix Manz lived, a cave where he may have hidden, and the place where he was drowned.

The title comes from an early Anabaptist text describing the punishments threatening anyone who was rebaptized: along with torture and loss of property both men and women faced execution “by water, by fire, or by sword.” All named characters in this book are historical figures, and the plot follows documentary sources, though some scenes have been imaginatively recreated.

**THE ANABAPTIST STORY IS PERSONAL FOR ME.** I belong to the Bruderhof, a Christian community that practices the biblical tenets of early Anabaptism such as believers’ baptism, community of goods, and conscientious objection to military service. And I married Doris Waldner, who has Hutterite roots; her ancestors have been living a life of sharing and nonviolence in Christian community for centuries. They were driven from one land to another and eventually fled Russia during the 1870s when the tsar threatened to force them into the military. My wife’s family settled in what is now South Dakota, where Hutterites still live and work together today. Preserving her heritage and presenting it to our children has been an inspiration throughout this project.

I would like to thank my coauthors Sankha Banerjee and Richard Mommsen for their teamwork throughout the process, and Casey Kurtti and Oriol Malet for their editorial contributions.

Dauntless conviction was one of the marks of the first Anabaptists. I hope this book inspires you to stand up boldly and firmly for what you know is right and true.

Jason Landsel  
June 2022

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# Episode One

## THE DREAM





FELIX MANZ GREW UP  
IN ZURICH.

LIKE ERASMUS,  
HE WAS THE SON  
OF A PRIEST.

SOME CALLED HIS  
MOTHER A WHORE.

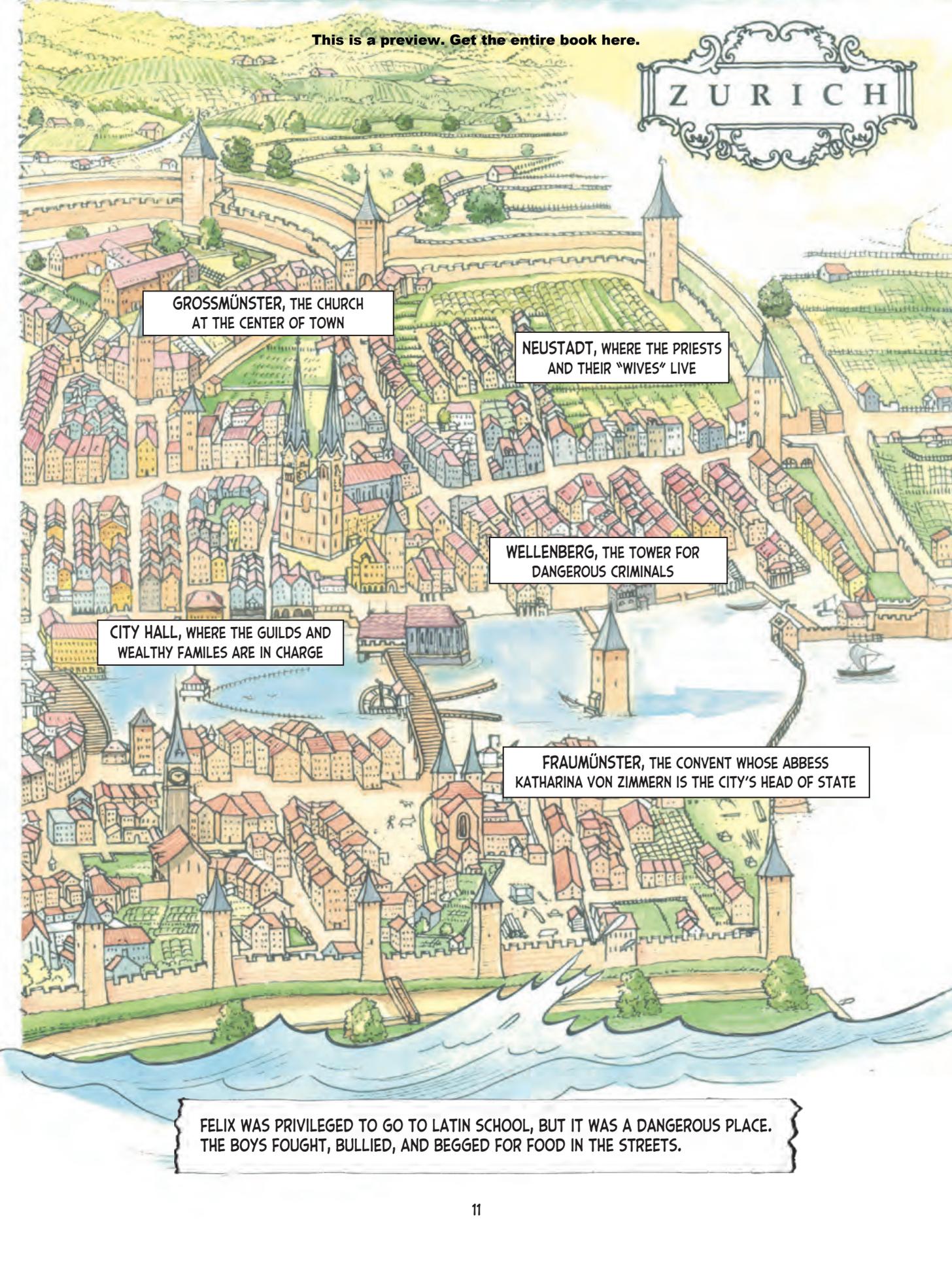
ZURICH WAS KNOWN MOSTLY FOR THE MERCENARY  
SOLDIERS IT RENTED TO WHICHEVER POWER-HUNGRY  
KING OR POPE WAS FIGHTING A WAR.

BATH HOUSE, WHERE THE SWEAT  
ROOM IS A POPULAR SOCIAL SPOT

TAVERN, WHERE HARD-BITTEN  
MERCENARIES GATHER



# ZURICH



GROSSMÜNSTER, THE CHURCH  
AT THE CENTER OF TOWN

NEUSTADT, WHERE THE PRIESTS  
AND THEIR "WIVES" LIVE

WELLENBERG, THE TOWER FOR  
DANGEROUS CRIMINALS

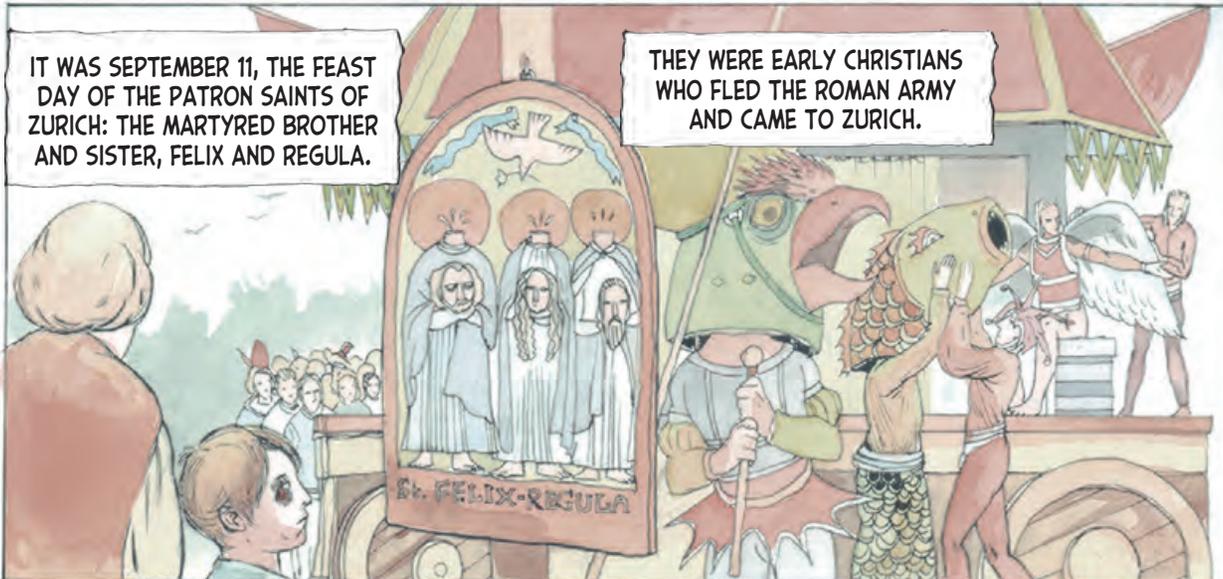
CITY HALL, WHERE THE GUILDS AND  
WEALTHY FAMILIES ARE IN CHARGE

FRAUMÜNSTER, THE CONVENT WHOSE ABBESS  
KATHARINA VON ZIMMERN IS THE CITY'S HEAD OF STATE

FELIX WAS PRIVILEGED TO GO TO LATIN SCHOOL, BUT IT WAS A DANGEROUS PLACE.  
THE BOYS FOUGHT, BULLIED, AND BEGGED FOR FOOD IN THE STREETS.

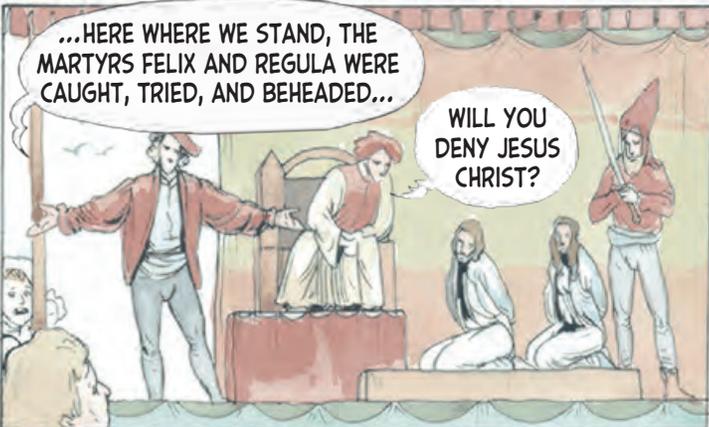


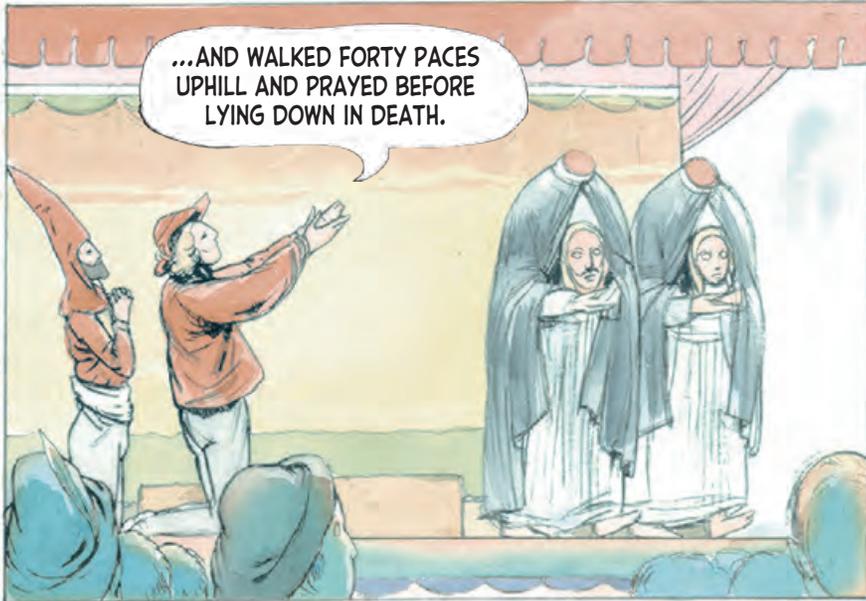




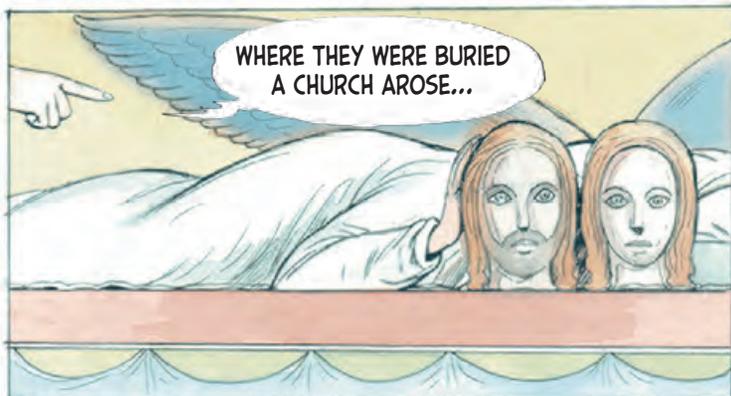
IT WAS SEPTEMBER 11, THE FEAST DAY OF THE PATRON SAINTS OF ZURICH: THE MARTYRED BROTHER AND SISTER, FELIX AND REGULA.

THEY WERE EARLY CHRISTIANS WHO FLED THE ROMAN ARMY AND CAME TO ZURICH.





...AND WALKED FORTY PACES UPHILL AND PRAYED BEFORE LYING DOWN IN DEATH.



WHERE THEY WERE BURIED A CHURCH AROSE...



IT'S A MIRACLE! SAINTS!

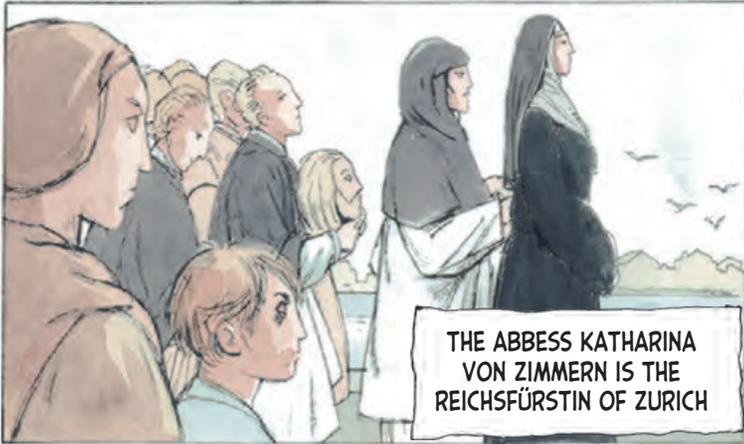


...OUR OWN CHURCH, THE GROSSMÜNSTER OF ZURICH!

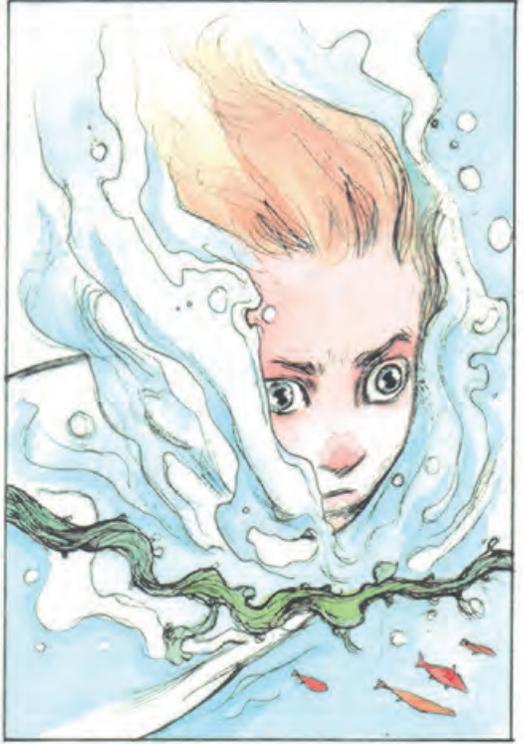


GROSSMÜNSTER!

A MIRACLE!









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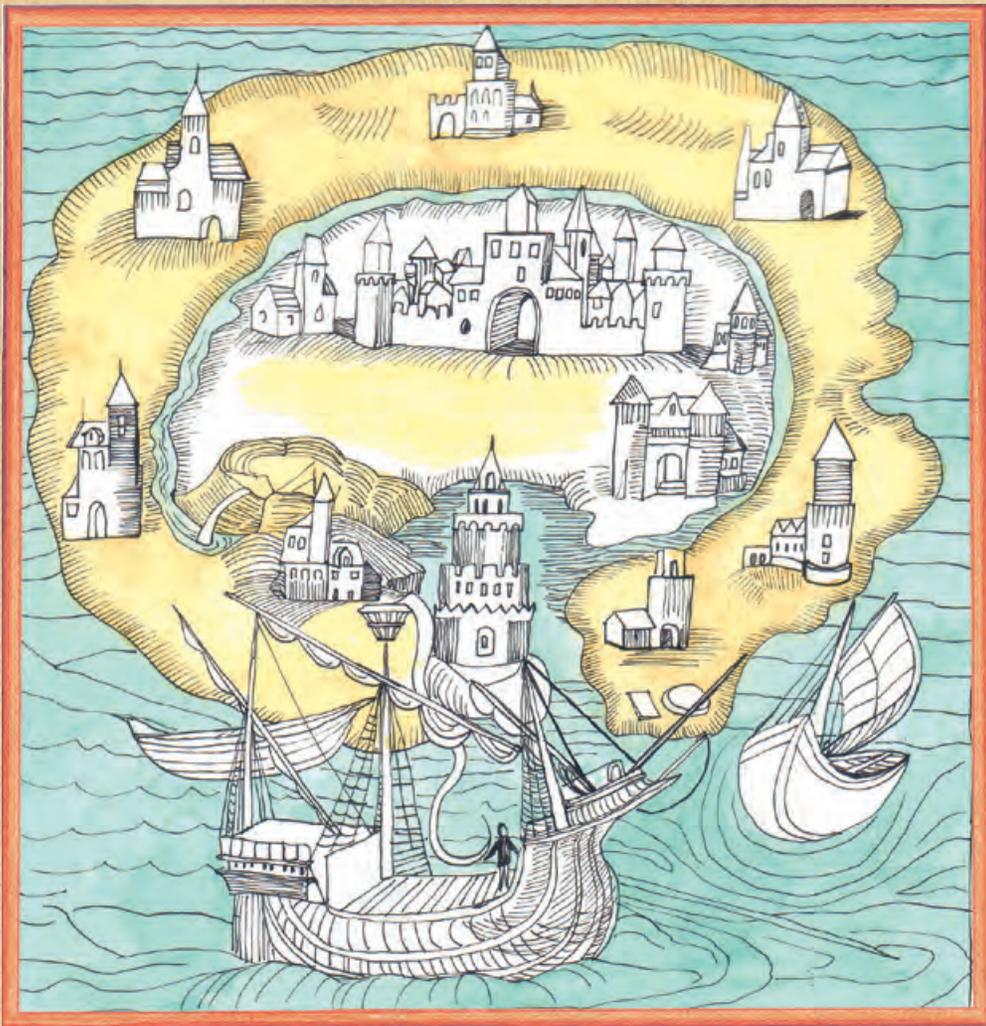
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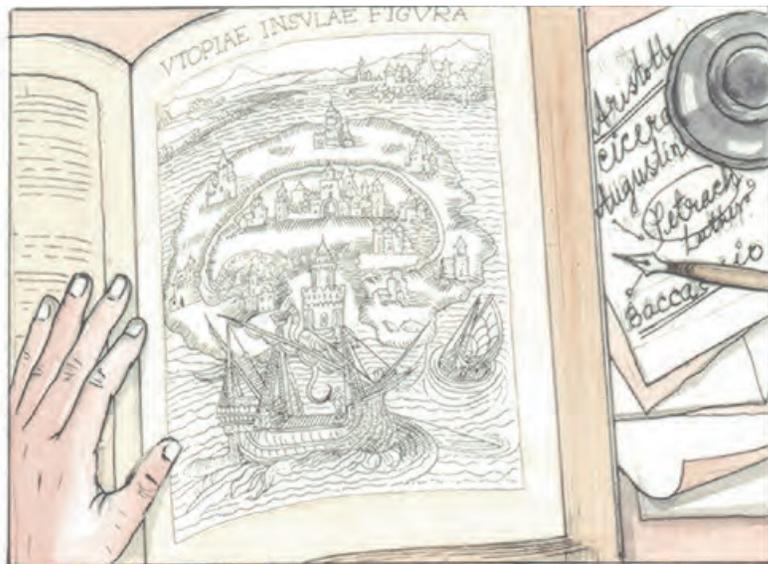
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# Episode Two

## UTOPIA









FELIX! LET US IN.



OR WE'LL BREAK DOWN THE DOOR.

WE'RE KIDNAPPING YOU -



YOU'VE BEEN HOLED UP IN THAT CAVE OF YOURS FOR DAYS. LET'S CELEBRATE.

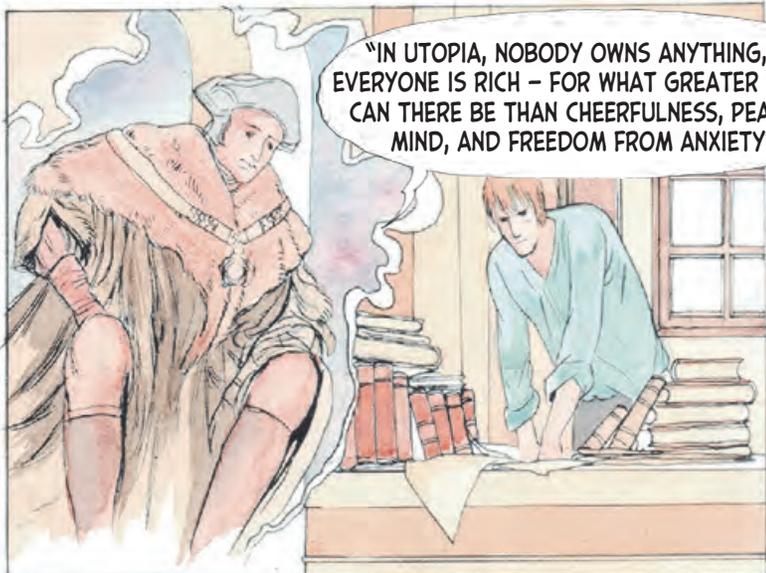


I CAN'T - I'M ONTO SOMETHING IMPORTANT...



THE WALLS TALKING TO YOU AGAIN?





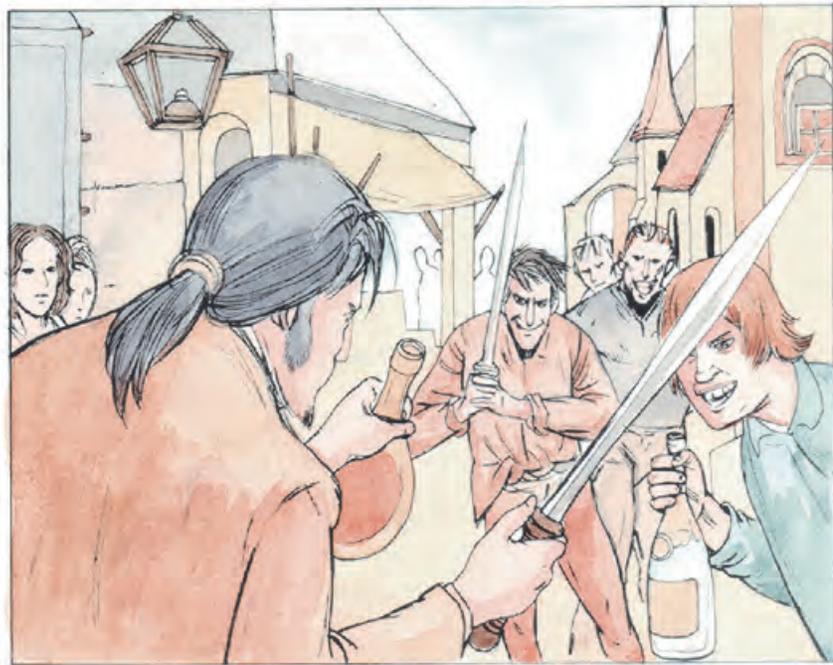
"IN UTOPIA, NOBODY OWNS ANYTHING, BUT EVERYONE IS RICH - FOR WHAT GREATER WEALTH CAN THERE BE THAN CHEERFULNESS, PEACE OF MIND, AND FREEDOM FROM ANXIETY?"



UUUUUTOOOPIA!!! IT MEANS NOWHERE.



"YOU WOULDN'T ABANDON SHIP IN A STORM JUST BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T CONTROL THE WINDS?"



YOU GONNA BUY ME A DRINK, SWEETIE?

JUST GIVE ME A MINUTE...



IS THAT  
CONRAD  
GREBEL?

AGAIN. NOT  
SURPRISED.



IDIOT. ONE DAY  
THIS IS GOING  
TO CATCH UP  
WITH YOU.



"DEAR GOD, MAKE  
ME CHASTE..."



"...JUST  
NOT YET."

