

BY fire

THE
JAKOB
HUTTER
STORY

SANKHA
BANERJEE
RICHARD
MOMMSEN

JASON
LANDSEL



BY FIRE



"IF I SAY, 'I WILL NOT MENTION HIM, OR SPEAK ANY MORE IN HIS NAME,' THERE IS IN MY HEART AS IT WERE A BURNING FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES, AND I AM WEARY WITH HOLDING IT IN, AND I CANNOT." JEREMIAH 20:9



HEROES OF THE RADICAL REFORMATION

BOOK TWO

By Fire

THE JAKOB HUTTER STORY

JASON LANDSEL

SANKHA BANERJEE, ART

RICHARD MOMMSEN, SCRIPT



Plough

This is a preview. Get the entire book here.

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TO THE READER

INNSBRUCK, AUSTRIA, IS A CHARMING CITY. My wife and I walk down Herzog-Friedrich-Straße on a beautiful summer day, sunlight illuminating the surrounding mountains. We make our way past cafés, boutiques, souvenir shops, delivery trucks, and groups of tourists flooding the historical district.

Our destination is an unobtrusive plaque on a wall beneath the Goldenes Dachl, a landmark gold-roofed balcony completed in 1500 for Emperor Maximilian I to celebrate his wedding to Bianca Maria Sforza. From this balcony emperors and their entourage could fashionably view tournaments – and the burning of heretics – in the square below.

The plaque commemorates Jakob Hutter, a hatmaker from South Tyrol who encountered the teachings of a branch of the Reformation known as the Anabaptists. (Their enemies called them Anabaptists, or “rebaptizers,” because they didn’t recognize infant baptism – one had to choose to become a Christian.) Adherents were intensely persecuted: anyone who was rebaptized faced the prospect of execution “by water, by fire, or by sword.”

Hutter was a zealous convert and soon became a leader. King Ferdinand I, who would later become Holy Roman Emperor, felt threatened by this subversive teaching spreading throughout his realm, with its radical model of economic sharing and nonparticipation in war, and wanted it stamped out. On February 25, 1536, he ordered that Hutter be burned to powder. As Hutter was being tied to the stake, he shouted defiantly up to Ferdinand’s emissaries on the balcony.

Over 480 years later, I stand in the spot where Hutter died, leaving behind his wife, Katherina, their infant child, and an irrepressible movement that would carry on his flame. I am here to pay my respects and to collect material for the graphic novel you hold in your hands.

For years before I started writing and drawing, I gathered artwork, maps, letters, photos, and other documents. I had to recreate dialog and added supporting characters, which makes this a work of historical fiction, but I believe the result offers a faithful examination of Hutter’s world and experience.

I want to thank my coauthor Sankha Banerjee for the creative collaboration as we drafted each page of this story, Richard Mommsen and Casey Kurtti for their work on the script, and my wife and children for their steadfast support.

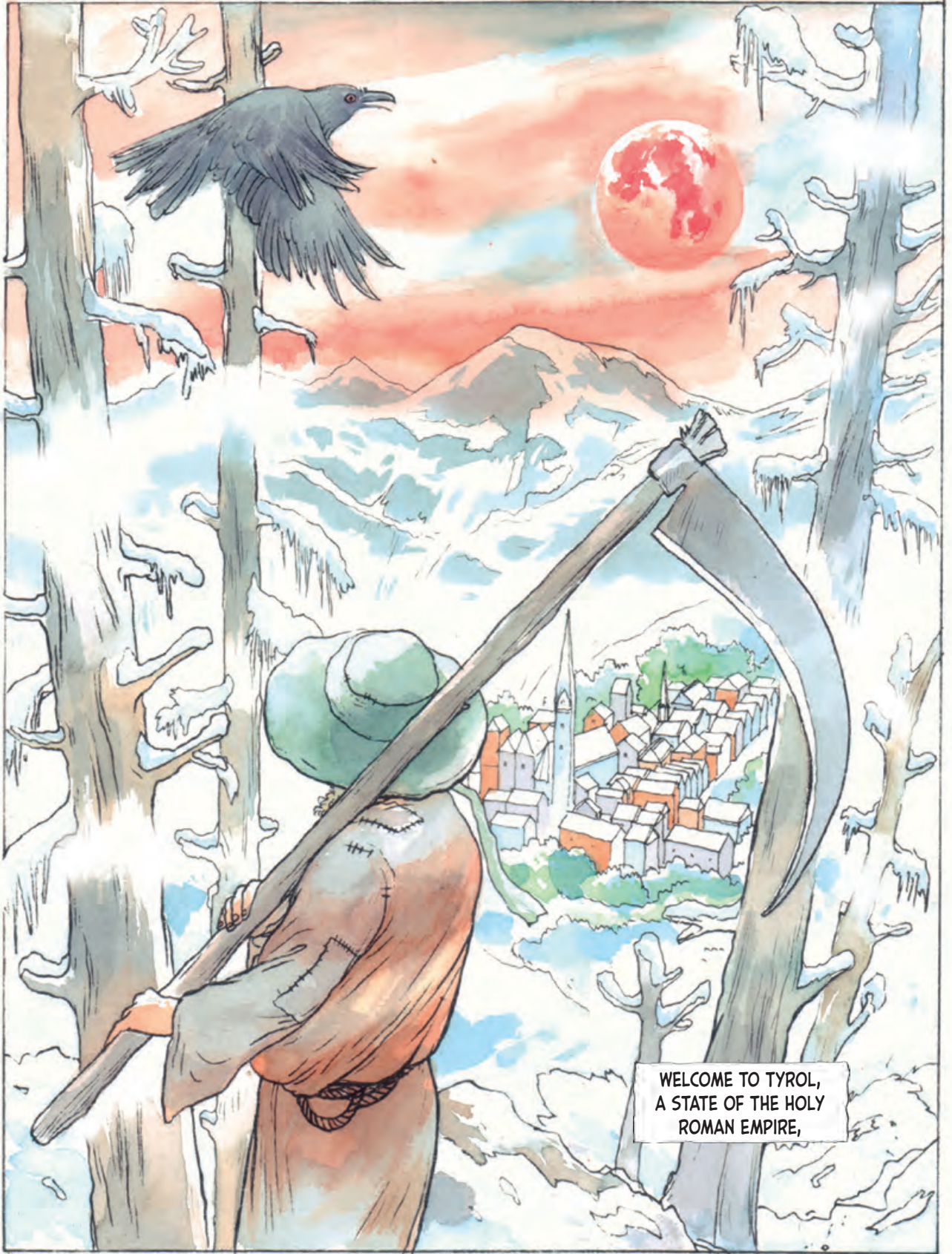
Though Jakob Hutter led the group that would later be called Hutterites for just three short years, he was an example of a true leader, someone who cared deeply for the well-being of his people and was willing to make any sacrifice. I hope his courage and determination are an inspiration to you.

Jason Landsel
April 2024

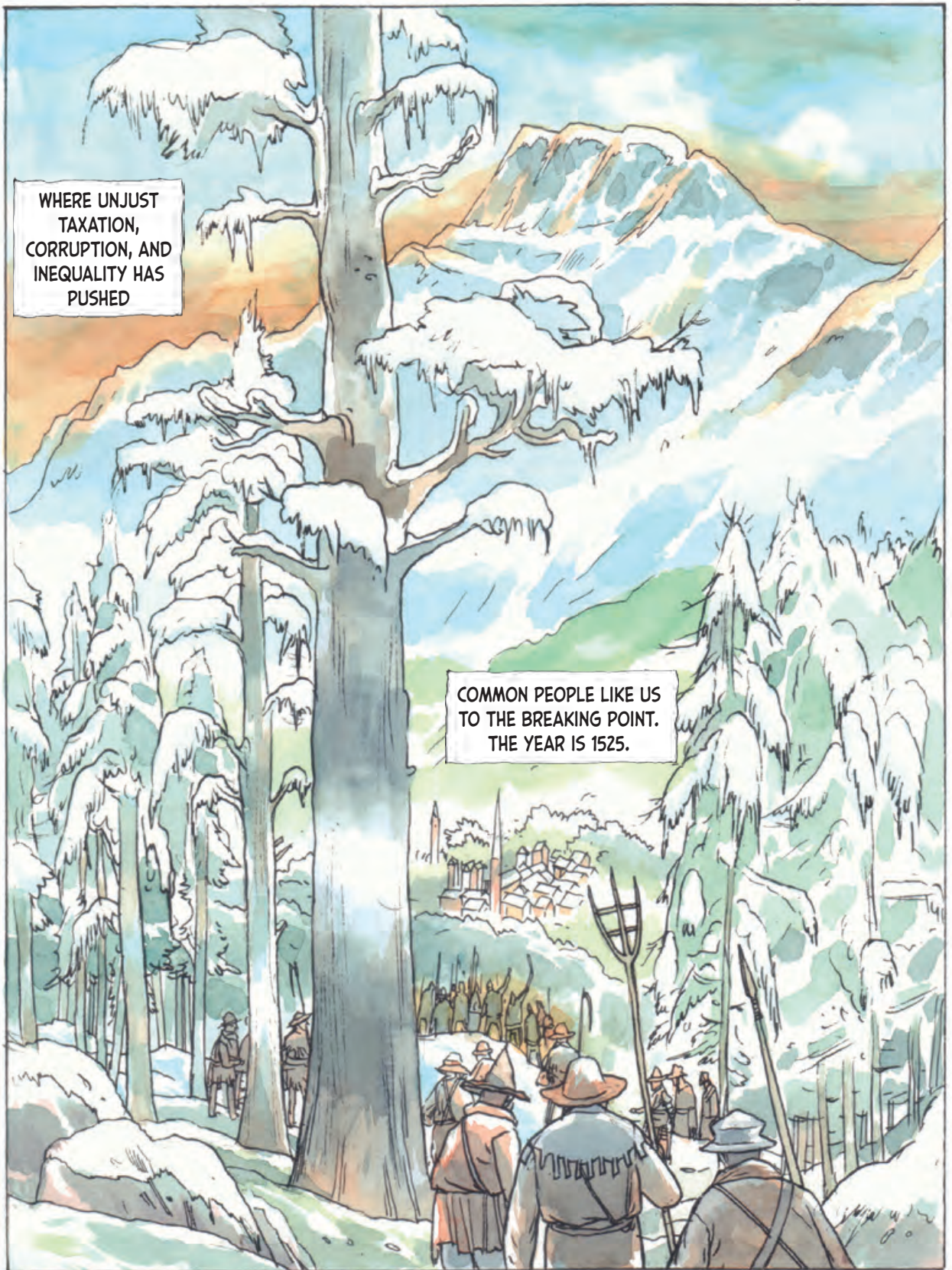


THE SPARK





WELCOME TO TYROL,
A STATE OF THE HOLY
ROMAN EMPIRE,



WHERE UNJUST
TAXATION,
CORRUPTION, AND
INEQUALITY HAS
PUSHED

COMMON PEOPLE LIKE US
TO THE BREAKING POINT.
THE YEAR IS 1525.

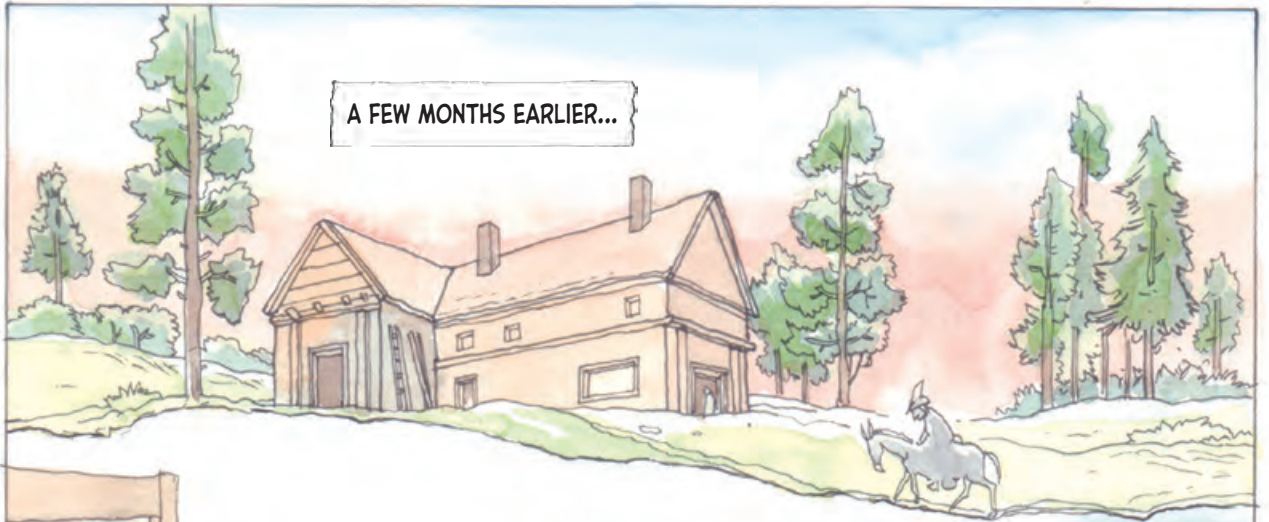




MY NAME'S PETER. AFTER MY FATHER LOST HIS FARM, IT WAS HARD TO MAKE ENDS MEET. WHEN MY FRIEND JAKOB TOLD ME ABOUT PLANS FOR REVOLUTION IN TYROL, I WANTED TO BE PART OF IT. AT LEAST I THOUGHT I DID.



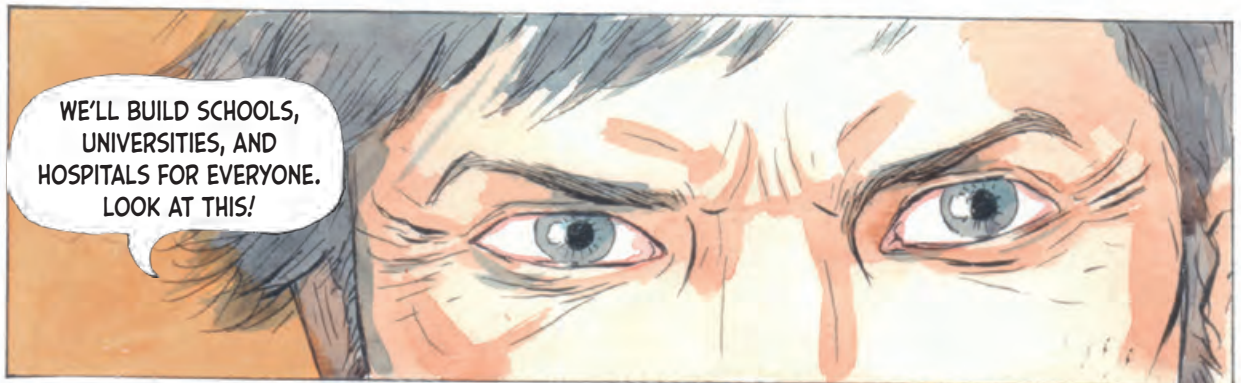
A FEW MONTHS EARLIER...

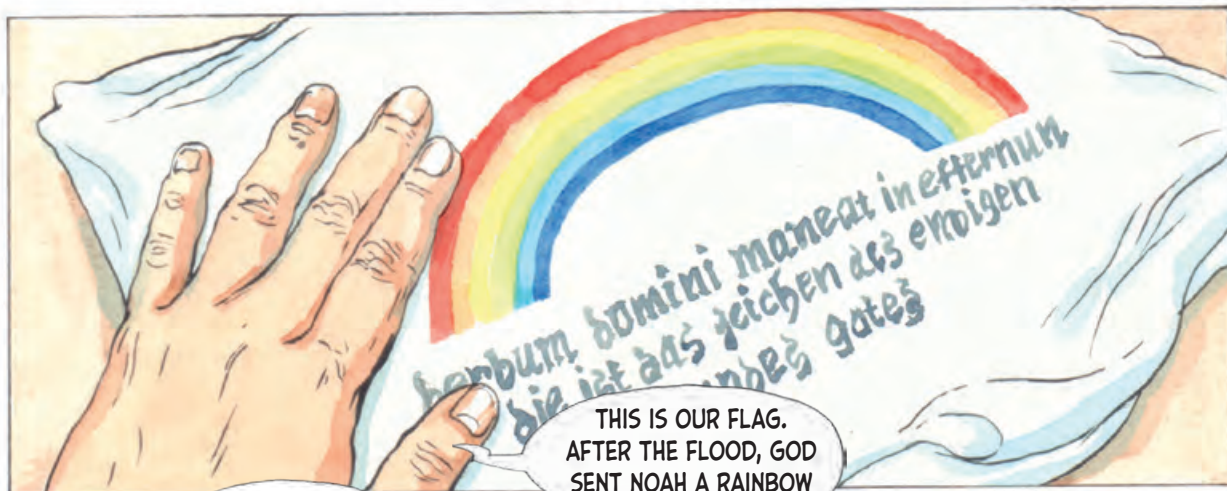


WE DON'T HAVE TO LIVE LIKE SLAVES FOREVER. WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.

I'M WITH YOU. I'M TIRED OF BEING BROKE.







AS A SIGN OF AN EVERLASTING COVENANT. GOD IS ON OUR SIDE.





ATTACK ON THE BISHOP'S PALACE IN BRIXEN



READY, PETER? GIVE ME THE FLAG.

berbunt bünini manna in offerrun
die ist das zeichen des ereignen
Bundes gates



TIME TO BURN IT ALL DOWN



LET'S GO!
CHARGE!

KILL THE FORNICATING PRIESTS!

DEATH TO THE BISHOP!





WE ESCAPED WITH OUR LIVES BUT THERE WAS FIERCE RETRIBUTION. FARMS WERE BURNED AND PILLAGED. HUNDREDS OF PEASANTS WERE ARRESTED AND TORTURED.

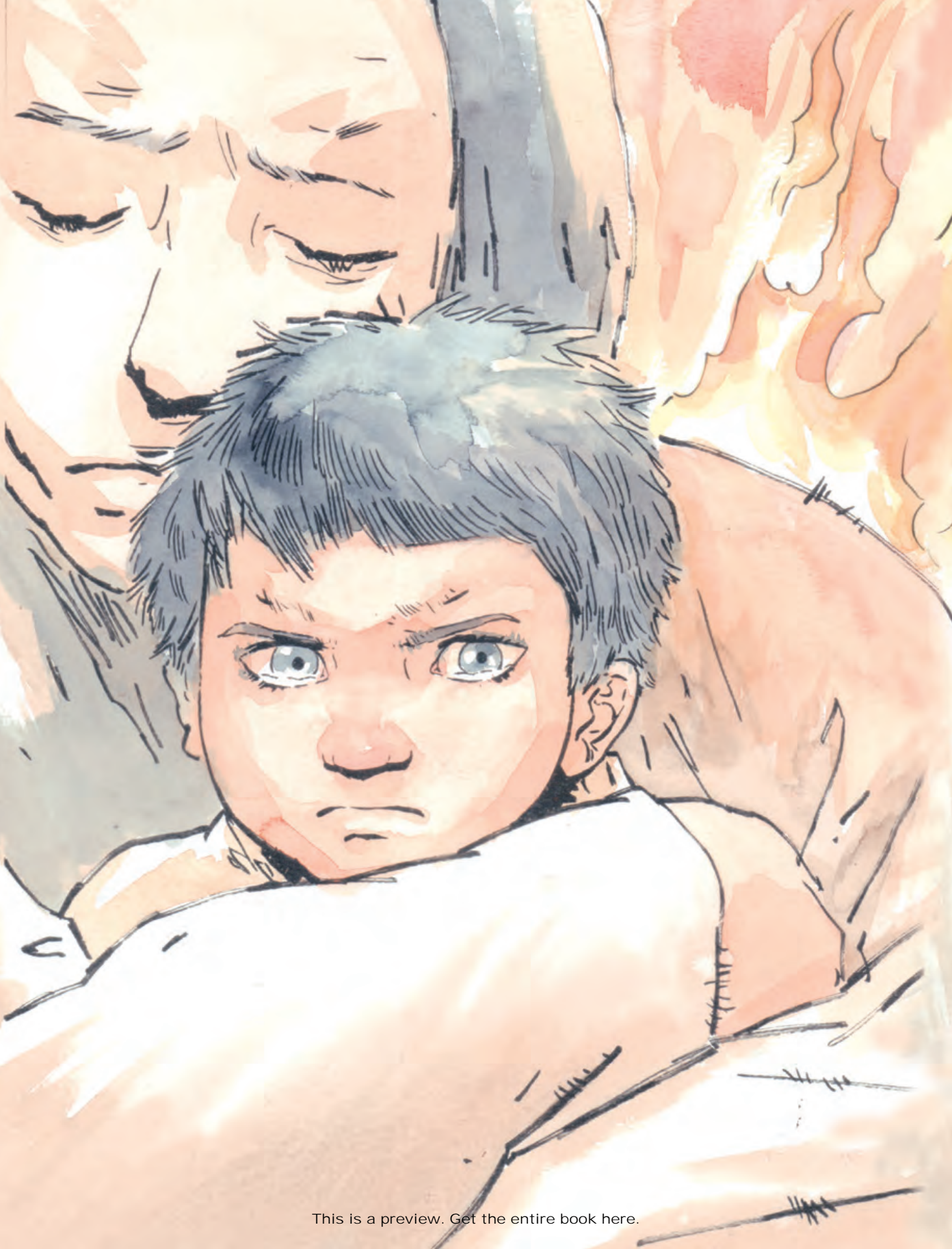


HE HARBORED REBELS. CUT HIS THROAT.

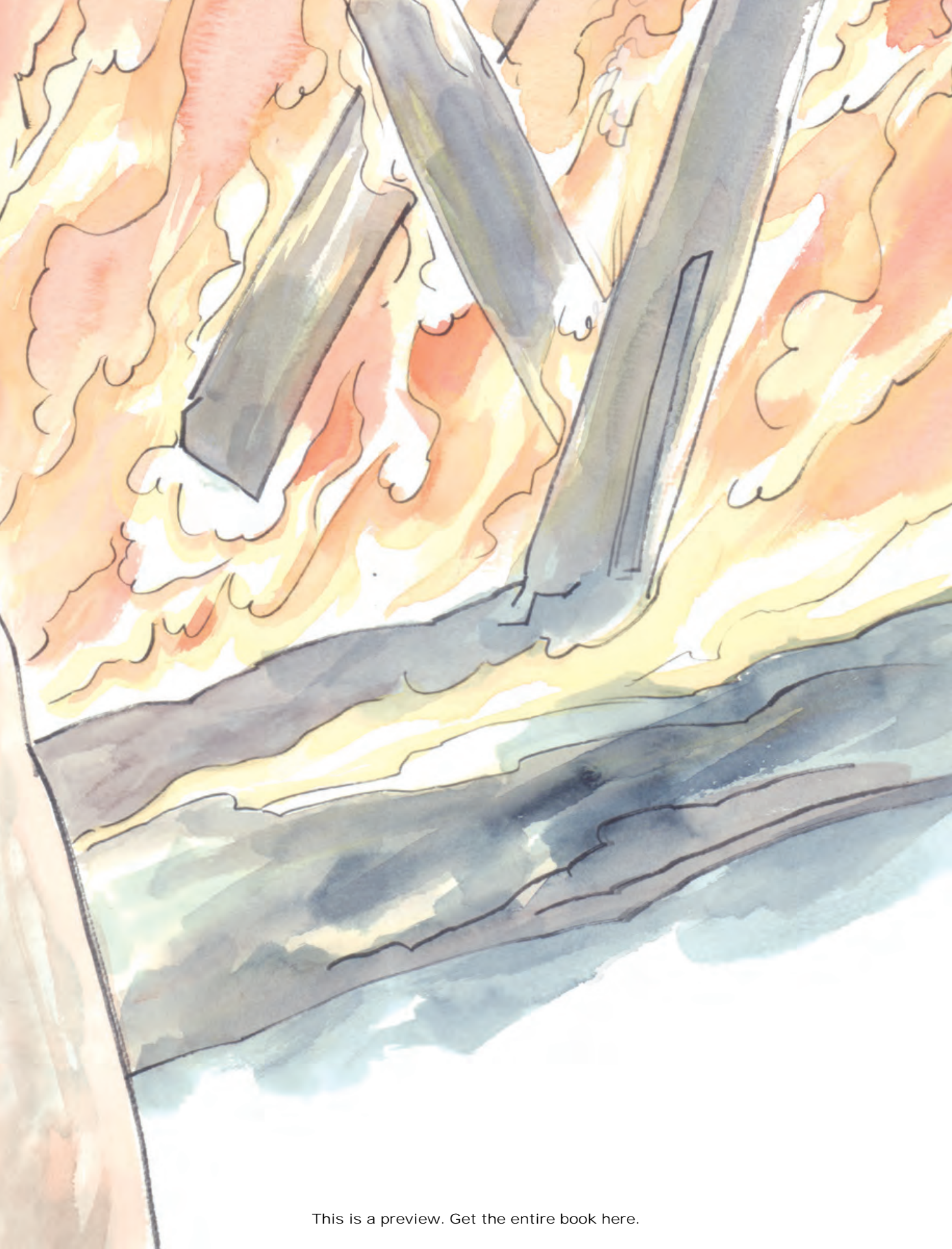


I'LL TEAR THEM TO PIECES.



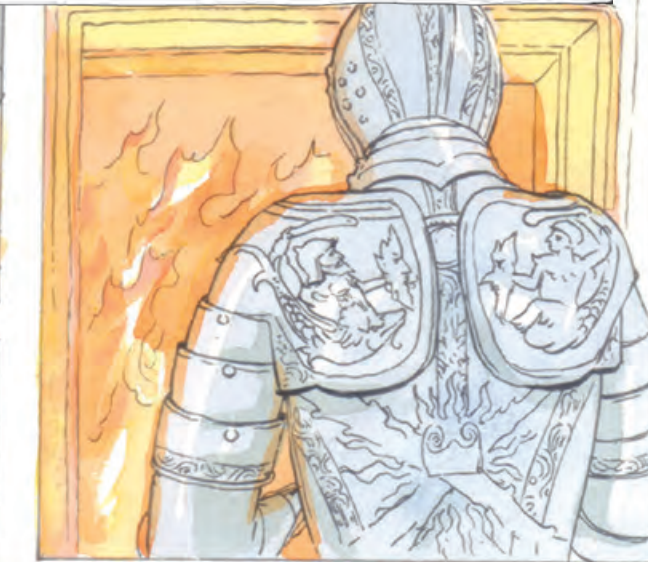
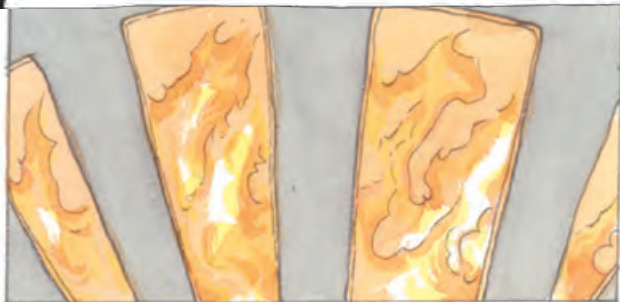


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FERDINAND, A SPANIARD BY BIRTH, RULED AUSTRIA AND TYROL FROM HIS PALACE IN VIENNA. IN 1527 HIS ARMY DEFEATED THE KING OF HUNGARY, BUT IN THE EAST A GREATER THREAT LOOMED - THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE.



ALL OF HUNGARY IS UNDER YOUR DOMINION NOW.



WHAT ABOUT THE TURKS? THEY KNOW THIS WAR COST US HEAVILY. THE SULTAN WILL NOT BE SLOW TO TAKE ADVANTAGE.

