



ON THE CHASSELAS TRAIL

Script

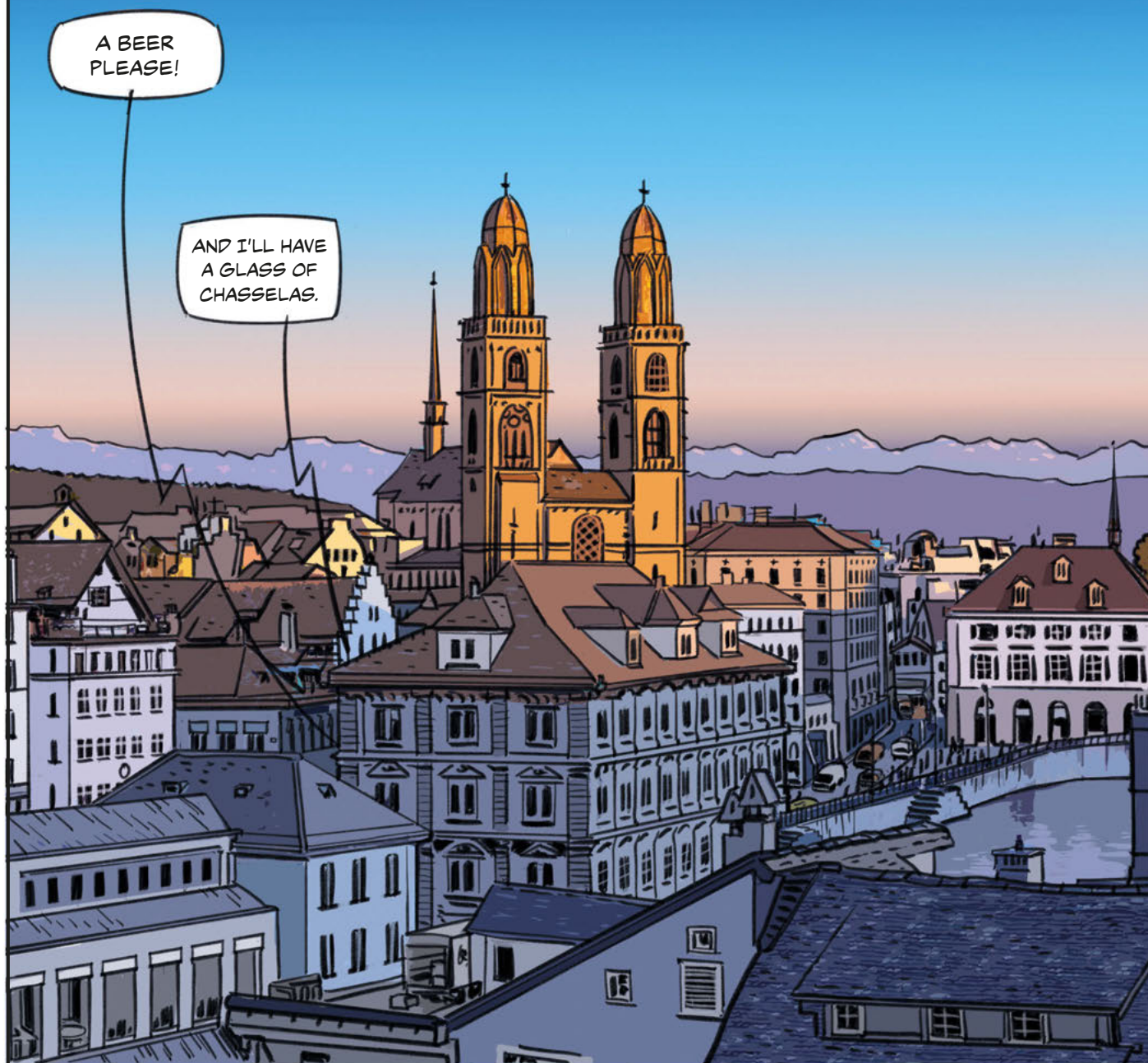
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ALEXANDRE TRUFFER**

Design and colour

CHRISTIAN MOREILLON

PROLOGUE

ZURICH, THE OLD TOWN



A BEER
PLEASE!

AND I'LL HAVE
A GLASS OF
CHASSELAS.



WE DON'T HAVE CHASSELAS.
HOW ABOUT A PROSECCO OR A
CHARDONNAY FROM CHILE?



NO THANKS,
I'LL ALSO HAVE A
BEER THEN.

SO, YOU'RE INTERESTED IN
CHASSELAS NOW?



THE THREE LAKES

THE GENTLY SLOPING VINEYARDS THAT ARE REFLECTED IN LAKES NEUCHÂTEL, MORAT, AND BIENNE, PRODUCE MAINLY PINOT NOIR AND CHASSELAS. THEY ARE DIVIDED INTO THREE SEPARATE REGIONS.

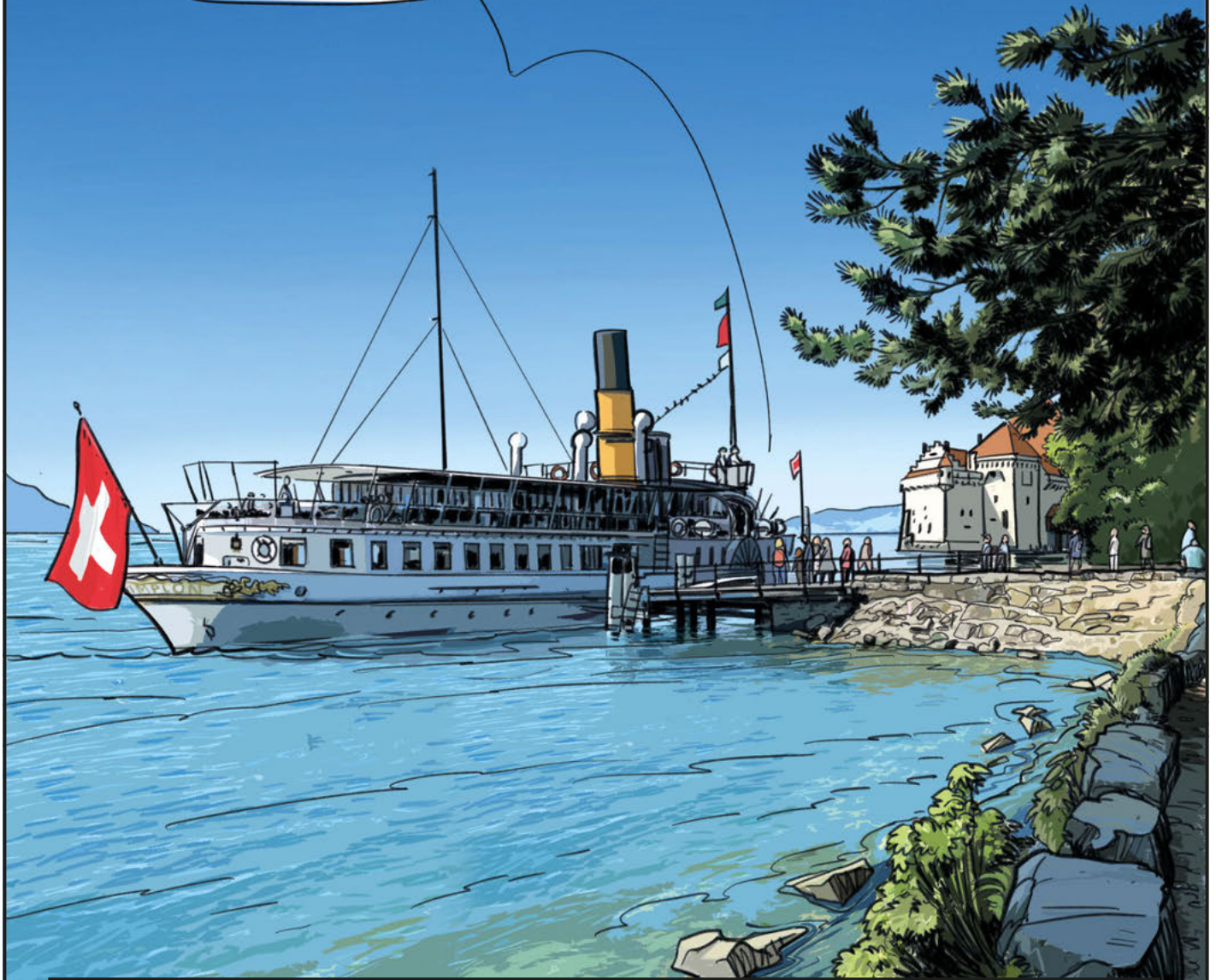
THE LARGEST AREA (600 HECTARES) STRETCHES ALONG THE WESTERN SHORE OF LAKE NEUCHÂTEL. THE SECOND (220 HECTARES), SITUATED IN THE BERN CANTON, IS ADJACENT TO LAKE BIENNE. THE THIRD (150 HECTARES) LIES ALONGSIDE LAKE MORAT AND INCLUDES VULLY, ONE OF TWO SWISS AOC APPELLATIONS (APPELLATION D'ORIGINE CONTRÔLÉE) THAT STRETCH ACROSS TWO CANTONS, HERE VAUD AND FRIBOURG

IN RECENT YEARS, A CLOUDY, UNFILTERED CHASSELAS WINE, PRODUCED IN NEUCHÂTEL AND RELEASED FOR SALE ON THE THIRD WEDNESDAY OF JANUARY, HAS BECOME VERY POPULAR.

ORIGINALLY, IT WAS CONSIDERED A SPECIALITY THAT WAS ONLY DRUNK IN THE SPRING BUT HAS SINCE WON SUCH ACCLAIM THAT IT IS NOW FOUND ON THE WINE LISTS OF LEADING ESTABLISHMENTS ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

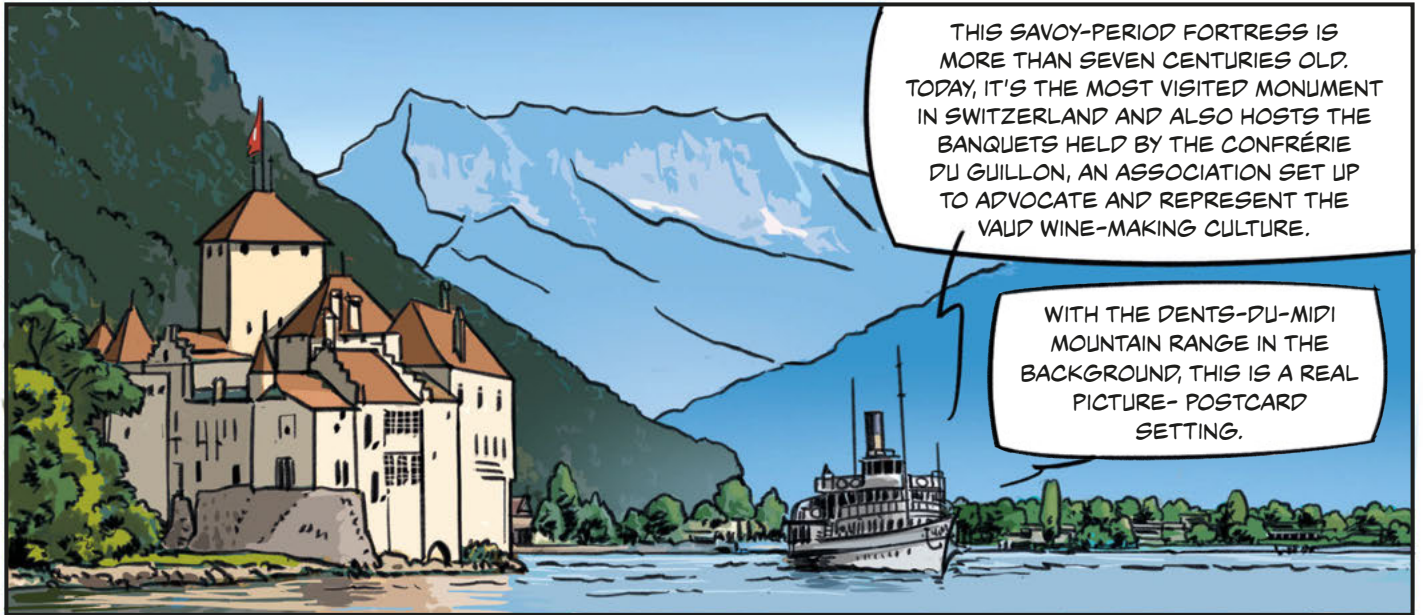
THE CHÂTEAU DE CHILLON PIER

GOSH, THIS BELLE-ÉPOQUE BOAT TAKES US BACK IN TIME, DOESN'T IT?



WHAT'S MORE, YOU'RE GOING TO SEE THE VINEYARDS FROM THE LAKE - AND THAT'S REALLY MIND-BLOWING.





THIS SAVOY-PERIOD FORTRESS IS MORE THAN SEVEN CENTURIES OLD. TODAY, IT'S THE MOST VISITED MONUMENT IN SWITZERLAND AND ALSO HOSTS THE BANQUETS HELD BY THE CONFRÉRIE DU GUILLON, AN ASSOCIATION SET UP TO ADVOCATE AND REPRESENT THE VAUD WINE-MAKING CULTURE.

WITH THE DENTS-DU-MIDI MOUNTAIN RANGE IN THE BACKGROUND, THIS IS A REAL PICTURE-POSTCARD SETTING.



COME NOW, THE CAPTAIN, AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE, HAS INVITED US TO JOIN HIM ON THE BRIDGE.



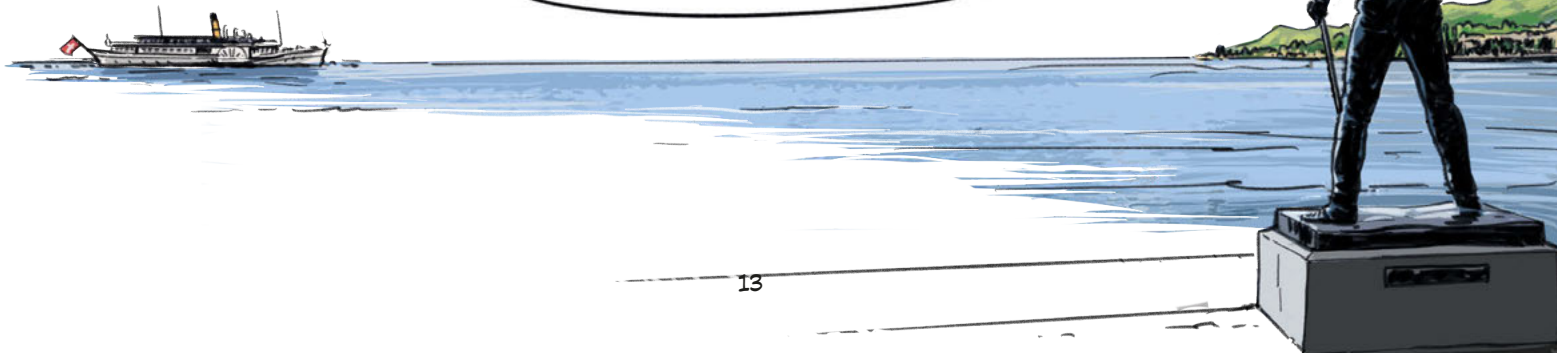
WELCOME!

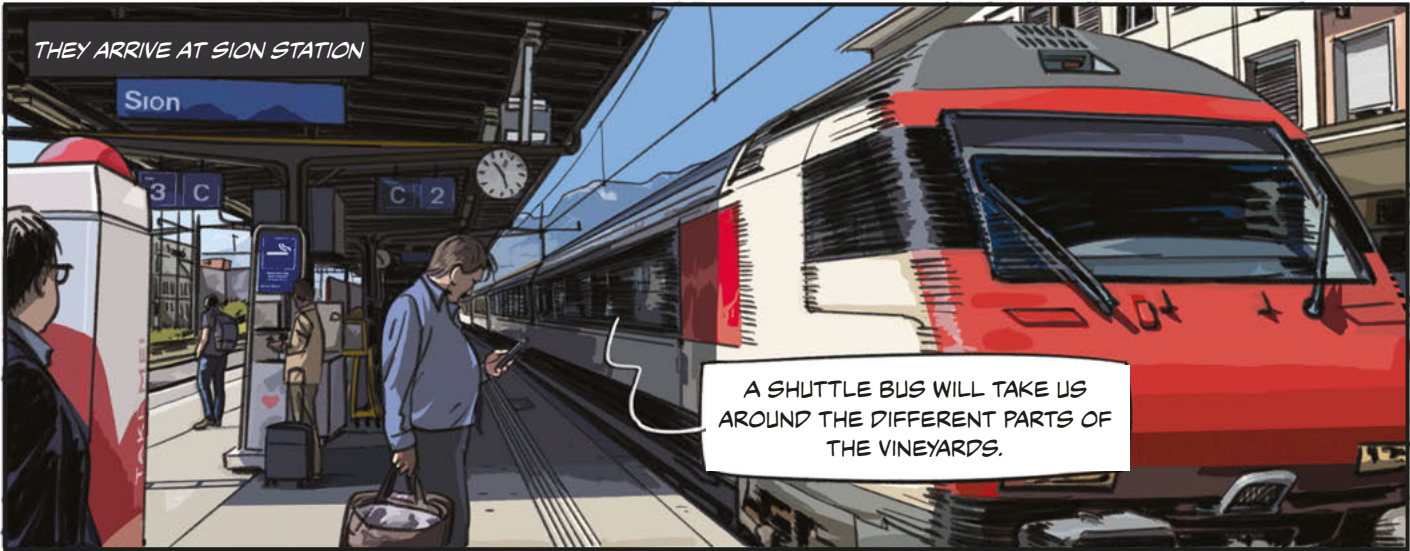


THE LAVALX VINEYARDS START HERE, BUT THE MOST SPECTACULAR VIEWS ARE FURTHER ON.

THIS IS THE KINGDOM OF CHASSELAS.

OVER THERE IS MONTREUX, FAMOUS FOR ITS JAZZ FESTIVAL. AND WE'LL BE SAILING PAST THE FREDDIE MERCURY STATUE.





THEY ARRIVE AT SION STATION

A SHUTTLE BUS WILL TAKE US AROUND THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE VINEYARDS.



AT THE FOOT OF THE MOLIGNON TERRACES

THESE TERRACES ARE BREATHTAKING, JUST LIKE THE ONES IN LAVALUX.

PUT TOGETHER, THEY'RE ABOUT 2,000 KM LONG!



WHY DID THE WINEMAKERS GO TO ALL THAT TROUBLE?

THEY MITIGATE THE STEEPNESS OF THE PLOTS AND PROTECT AGAINST SOIL EROSION. WHAT'S MORE, THEY'RE OFTEN MADE WITH STONES DUG UP IN THE VINEYARDS.

THAT'S CLEVER. COMING BACK TO CHASSELAS... OOPS, TO FENDANT, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT MOST LABELS SHOW THE NAMES OF OTHER GRAPE VARIETIES.



WELL, IN THE 1980S, FOR WHITE VARIETIES, THE VALAIS BEGAN TO FOCUS ON NATIVE GRAPE VARIETIES LIKE ARVINE, AMIGNE, AND HUMAGNE.

SO THEY UPROOTED PLOTS PLANTED WITH FENDANT?

SADLY, THEY DID. BUT THE DECLINE WAS HALTED AND THERE ARE STILL 800 HECTARES LEFT. KEEP IN MIND THAT IT'S A VERY DIFFICULT WINE TO VINIFY, PRECISION IS PARAMOUNT AND THERE'S NO ROOM FOR ERROR.

SO THE WINEMAKER'S REALLY PROUD WHEN IT WORKS OUT WELL.



ABSOLUTELY! WHAT'S MORE, A CHASSELAS WINE'S DISCREET AROMAS REVEAL THE TYPE OF SOIL ON WHICH IT HAS GROWN. IN FACT, THEY CALL IT A 'TERROIR-ABSORBING SPONGE'.

I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND.

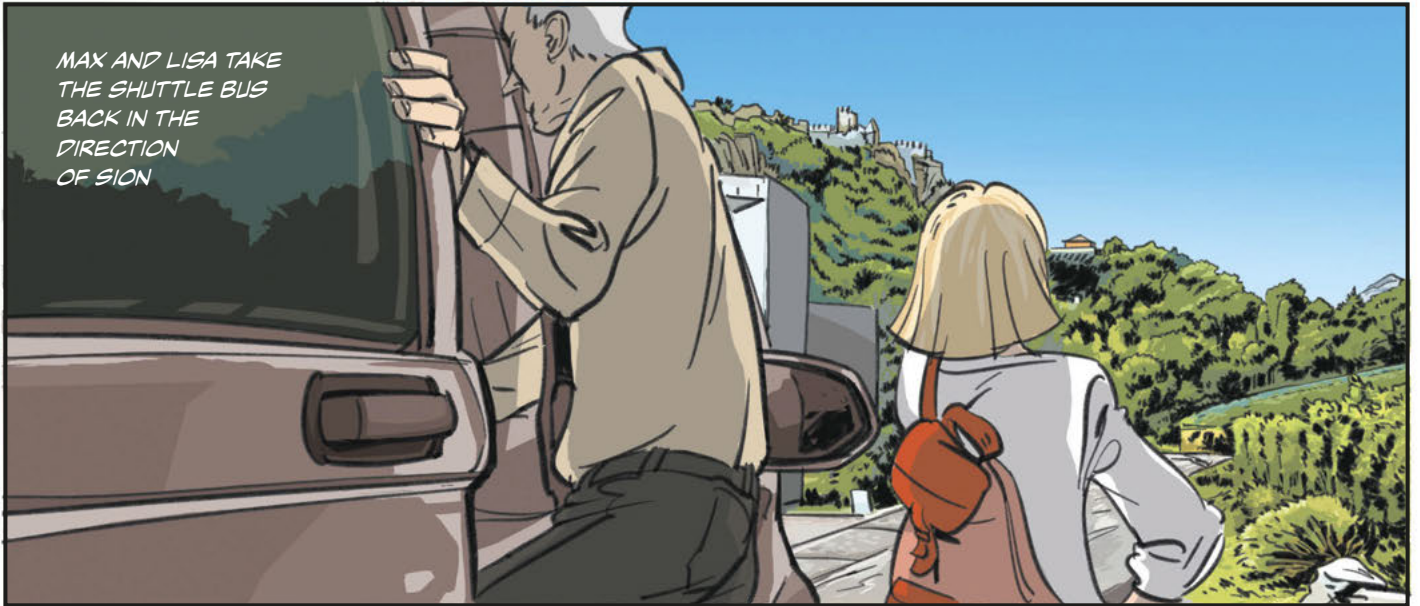
IT'S A BIT COMPLICATED, BUT I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A CONCRETE EXAMPLE RIGHT NOW: WE'RE GOING TO TASTE A FENDANT WINE THAT COMES FROM A GYPSIFEROUS SOIL.



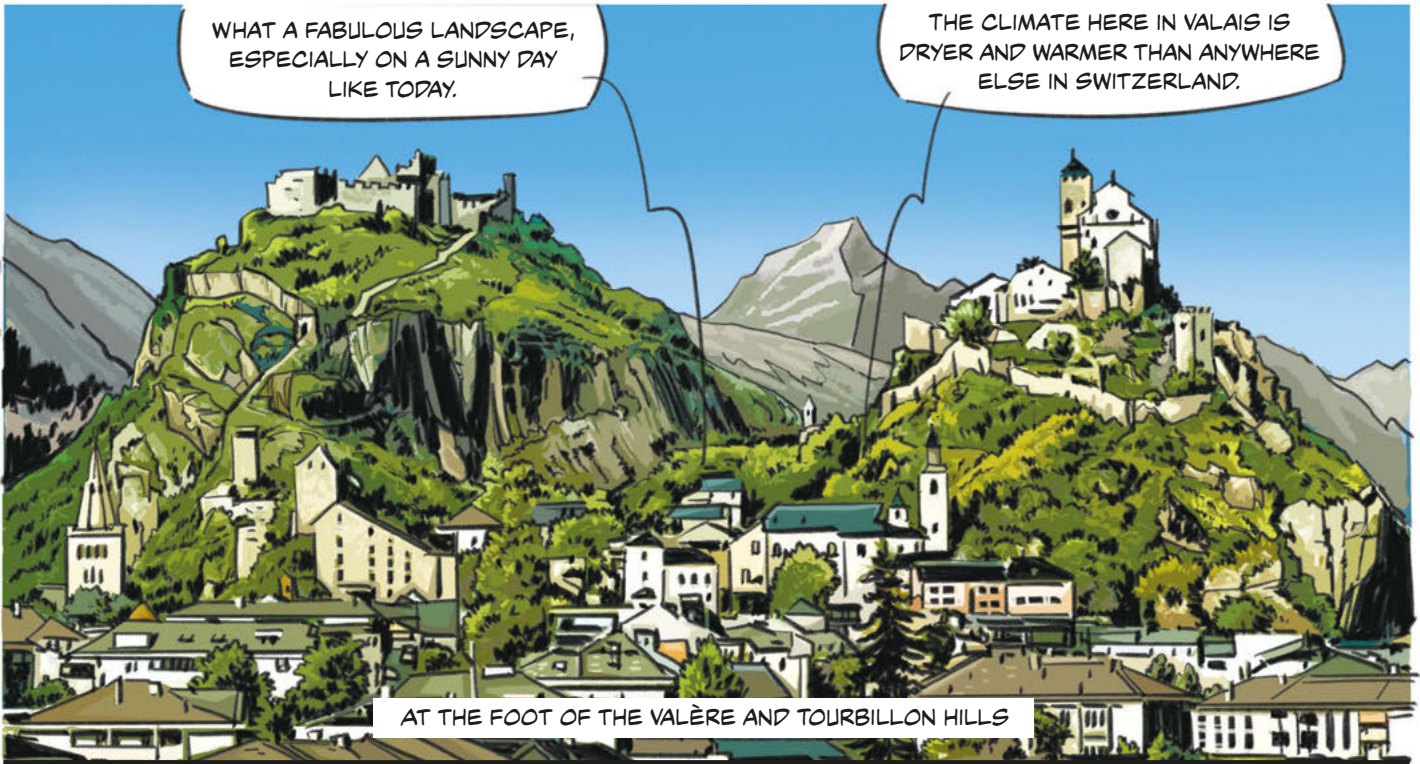
IS IT THE GYPSUM THAT GIVES IT A CHALKY MINERAL MOUTHFEEL?

SPOT ON!





MAX AND LISA TAKE THE SHUTTLE BUS BACK IN THE DIRECTION OF SION



WHAT A FABULOUS LANDSCAPE, ESPECIALLY ON A SUNNY DAY LIKE TODAY.

THE CLIMATE HERE IN VALAIS IS DRYER AND WARMER THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN SWITZERLAND.

AT THE FOOT OF THE VALÈRE AND TOURBILLON HILLS



I GUESS THAT'S FAVOURABLE FOR GRAPE-GROWING.



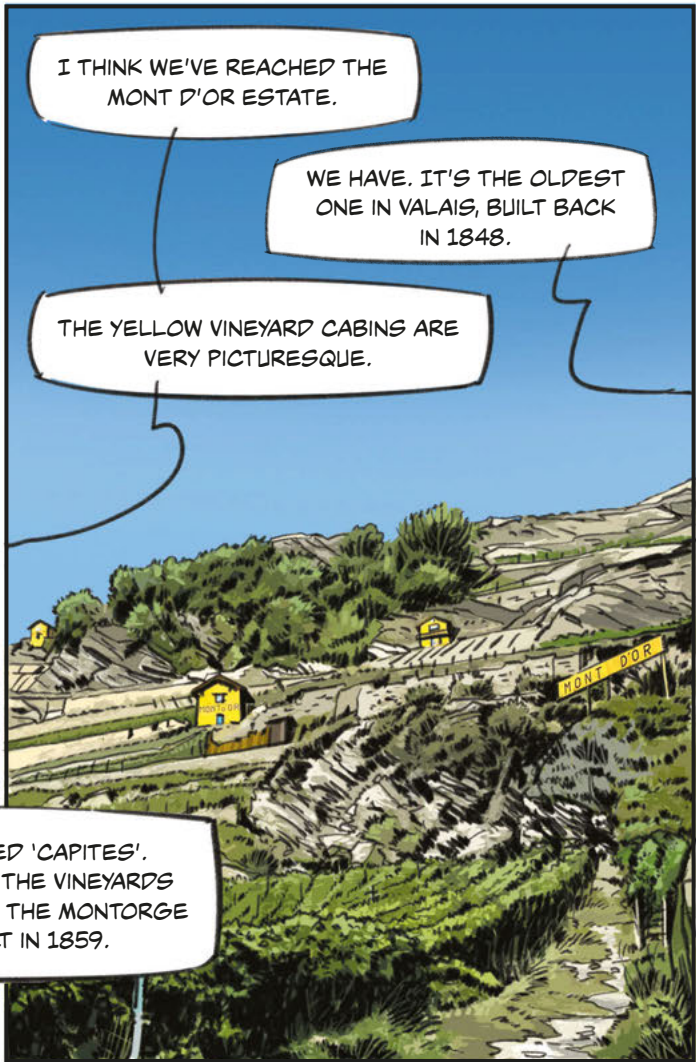
YES. YOU CAN EVEN FIND CACTUSES GROWING HERE! BUT THAT ALSO MEANS THAT THEY OFTEN HAVE WATER SHORTAGES.



CENTURIES AGO, THEY BUILT IRRIGATION CANALS CALLED 'BISSES', OFTEN AT DIZZYING HEIGHTS, TO BRING WATER FROM VALLEYS HIGHER UP.

THEY'RE CALLED 'CAPITES'. AND BY THE WAY, THE VINEYARDS ARE IRRIGATED BY THE MONTORGE BISSE, BUILT IN 1859.

THE MONTORGE BISSE



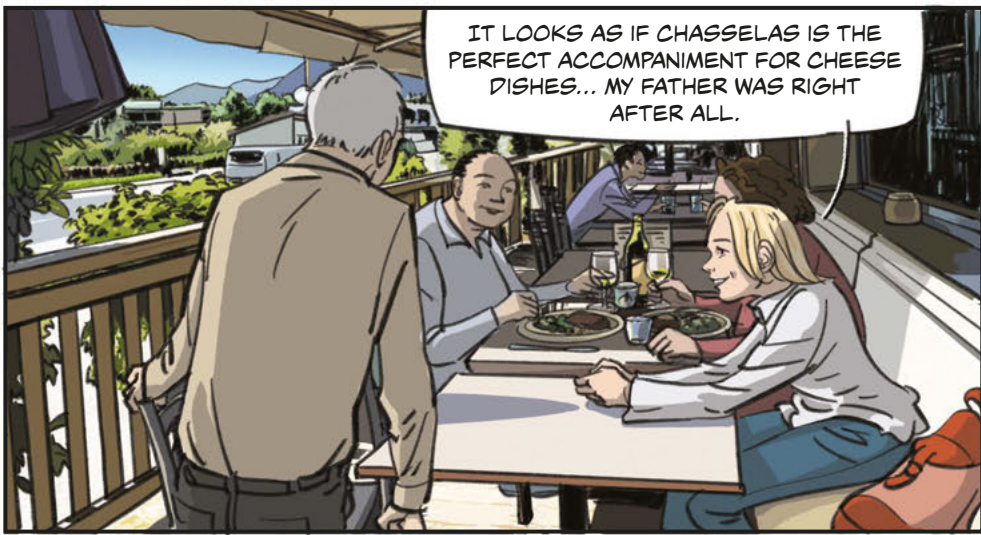
I THINK WE'VE REACHED THE MONT D'OR ESTATE.

WE HAVE. IT'S THE OLDEST ONE IN VALAIS, BUILT BACK IN 1848.

THE YELLOW VINEYARD CABINS ARE VERY PICTURESQUE.



I SEE THEY OFFER RACLETTE. SHALL WE GET A TABLE?



IT LOOKS AS IF CHASSELAS IS THE PERFECT ACCOMPANIMENT FOR CHEESE DISHES... MY FATHER WAS RIGHT AFTER ALL.

OKAY, WITH FONDUE OR RACLETTE IT'S NOT BAD. BUT WITH MORE ELABORATE DISHES...



SORRY TO BUTT IN, BUT DID YOU KNOW THAT CHASSELAS WINE ACTUALLY COMES IN MANY DIFFERENT STYLES, SO IN ADDITION TO CHEESE SPECIALITIES IT PAIRS VERY WELL WITH A LARGE RANGE OF OTHER DISHES.

IF IT'S CRISP AND DRY, IT'S IDEAL WITH FRESHWATER FISH, FOR EXAMPLE FILETS OF PERCH. IF IT HAS MORE RICHNESS, YOU CAN SERVE IT WITH POULTRY OR WHITE MEAT. IF IT'S A VIGOROUS WINE, WITH A HINT OF SALINITY, YOU SHOULD TRY IT WITH SUSHIS!



I KNOW ONE SOMMELIER WHO EVEN RECOMMENDS PAIRING A MORE MATURE VINTAGE WITH STEAK TARTARE.



SO, IN FACT, IT'S A REAL GASTRONOMIC WINE.

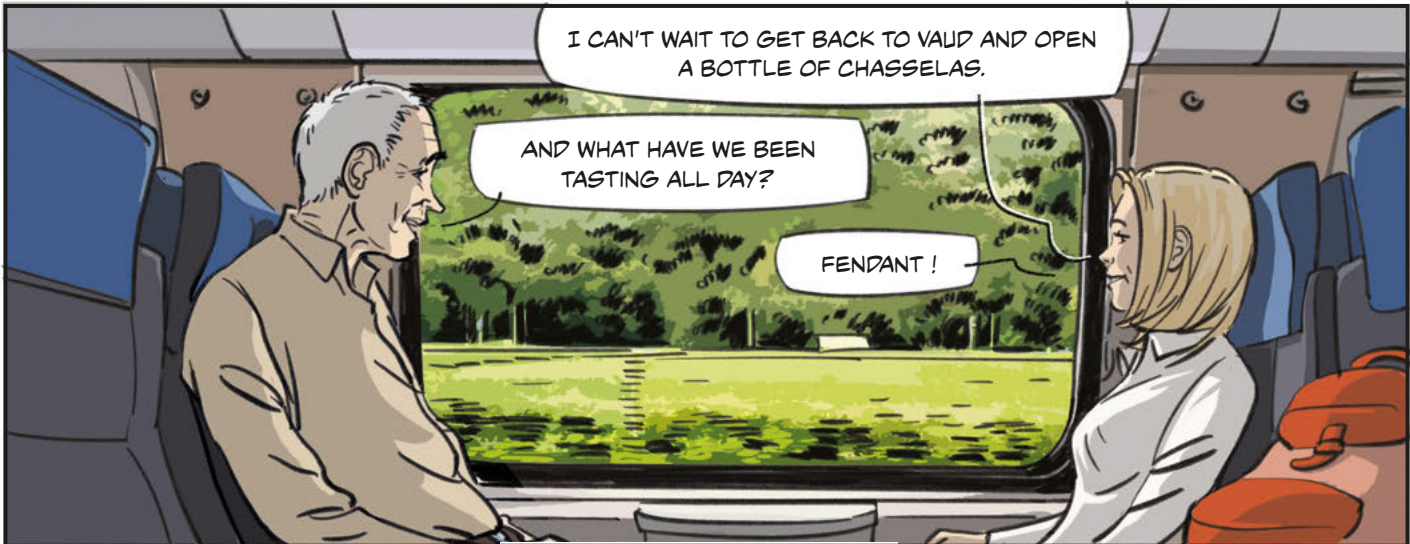
THAT'S FOR SURE, AND IT'S ALSO IDEAL AS AN APERITIF WINE.



I CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK TO VALD AND OPEN A BOTTLE OF CHASSELAS.

AND WHAT HAVE WE BEEN TASTING ALL DAY?

FENDANT !



SURROUNDED BY THE ALPS, VALAIS HAS A SEMI-ARID CLIMATE (600 MILLIMETRES OF RAIN PER YEAR). A LARGE PART OF THE WATER REQUIRED FOR THE CROPS COMES FROM MELTED SNOW AND GLACIERS. OVER A THOUSAND YEARS AGO, TO HARVEST THIS BLUE GOLD THE VALAIS FARMERS SET UP AN IRRIGATION SYSTEM THAT IS UNIQUE IN ITS KIND. CANALS, CALLED 'BISSES', CARVED OUT OF THE MOUNTAINSIDE, BRING THE MELTED SNOW AND ICE TO THE PASTURES AND TERRACED VINEYARDS BELOW. ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE BEEN REPLACED IN PART BY MODERN WATERING SYSTEMS, THANKS TO WINE TOURISM THEY HAVE FOUND A SECOND LIFE AS POPULAR SCENIC HIKING ROUTES.

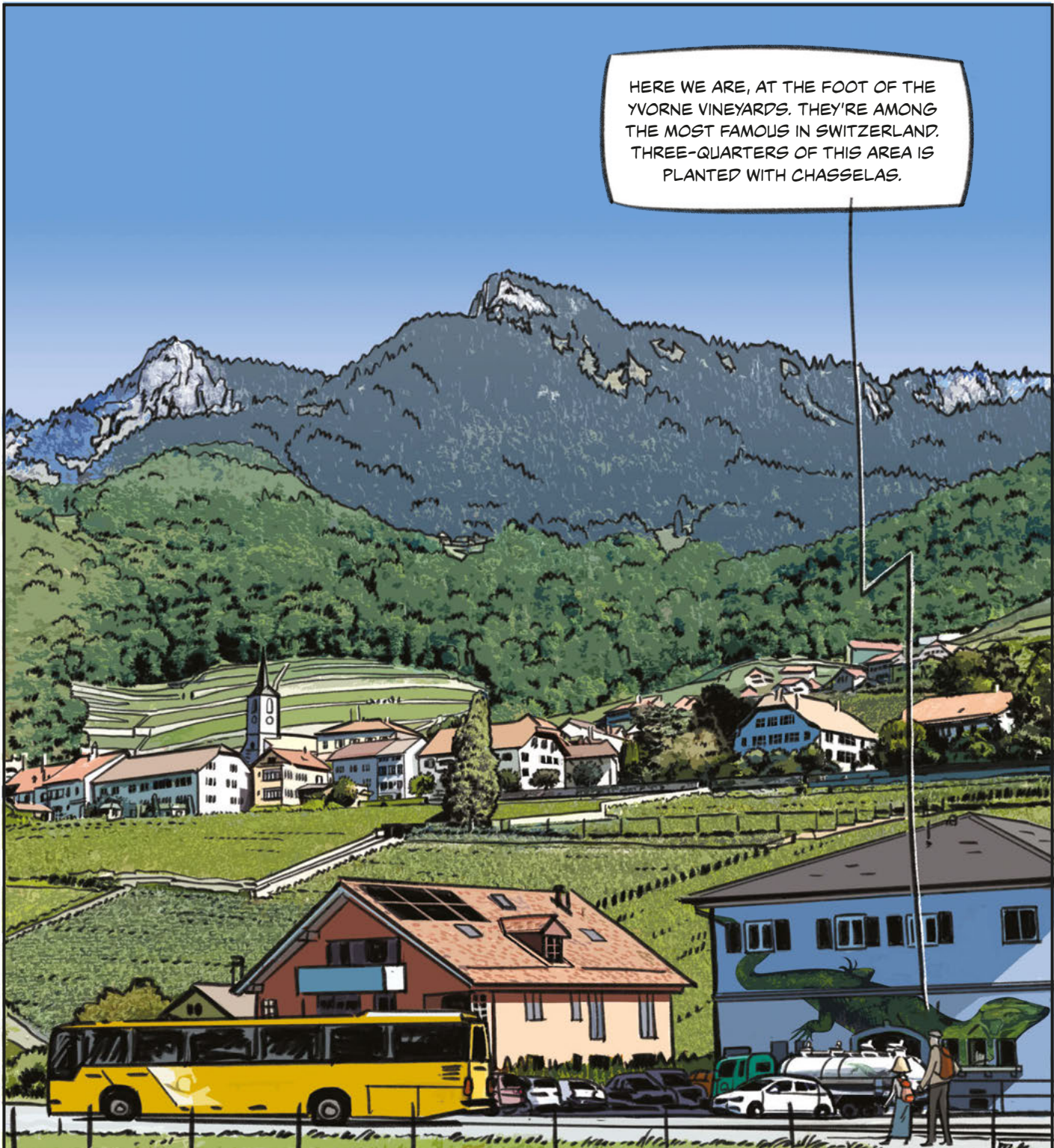


CHABLAIS

THE CHABLAIS REGION COMBINES LAKE GENEVA VINEYARD AREAS AND ALPINE FOOTHILLS. IT EMBRACES THE WINE-PRODUCING SITES OF AIGLE, YVORNE, OLLON, BEX AND VILLENELVE. CHASSELAS FLOURISHES IN THE REGION'S SUN-BLESSED, MAINLY TERRACED VINEYARDS, ACCOUNTING FOR TWO-THIRDS OF THE VINE POPULATION.

THE CLOSE PROXIMITY OF THE LAKE CONTRIBUTES TO MAINTAINING A TEMPERATE CLIMATE. THE CHÂTEAU D'AIGLE, SITUATED IN THE HEART OF THE CHABLAIS REGION, OFFERS A UNIQUE PANORAMA OF THE VINEYARDS THAT SIT AT THE JUNCTION OF THE CANTONS OF VAUD AND VALAIS. THIS MEDIEVAL FORTRESS, SURROUNDED BY AN OCEAN OF VINES, HOSTS THE ANNUAL MONDIAL DU CHASSELAS EVENT AND ALSO HOUSES THE VINE, WINE AND LABEL MUSEUM.

A FEW KILOMETRES AWAY LIES YVORNE, RENOWNED FOR ITS SOIL OF ROCK DEBRIS RESULTING FROM A SUDDEN LANDSLIDE THAT DEVASTATED THE VILLAGE IN 1584. SOME 500 YEARS AFTER THE CATASTROPHE, THIS ROCKY TERROIR IS PRODUCING SOME OF THE CANTON'S FINEST WHITES.



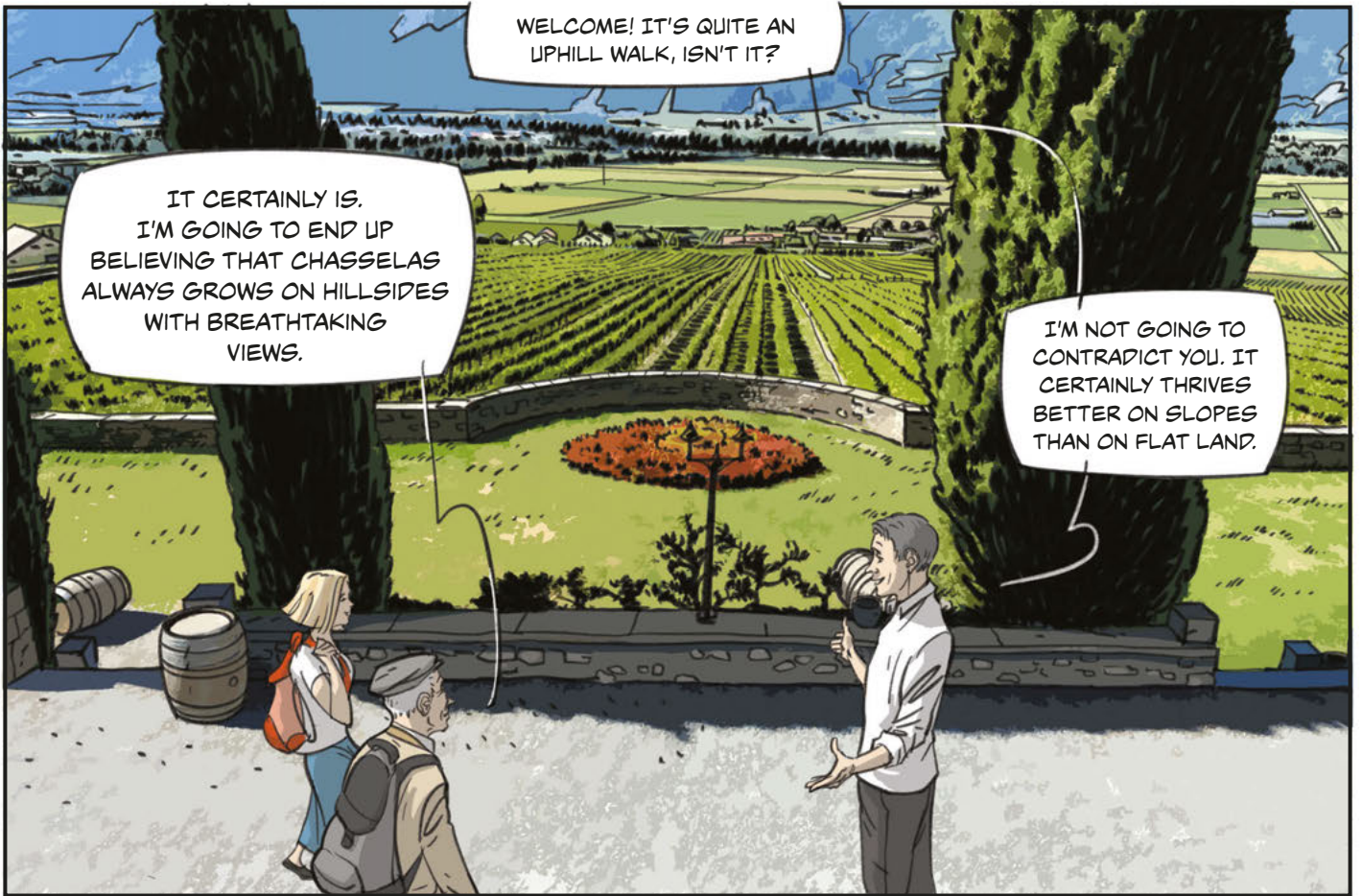
HERE WE ARE, AT THE FOOT OF THE YVORNE VINEYARDS. THEY'RE AMONG THE MOST FAMOUS IN SWITZERLAND. THREE-QUARTERS OF THIS AREA IS PLANTED WITH CHASSELAS.



ARE WE GOING TO CLIMB TO THE TOP?

NOT NOW, WE'RE EXPECTED AT THE CHÂTEAU MAISON BLANCHE.

IT'S STILL QUITE A WAY OFF. WE SHOULD GET GOING.



WELCOME! IT'S QUITE AN UPHILL WALK, ISN'T IT?

IT CERTAINLY IS. I'M GOING TO END UP BELIEVING THAT CHASSELAS ALWAYS GROWS ON HILLSIDES WITH BREATHTAKING VIEWS.

I'M NOT GOING TO CONTRADICT YOU. IT CERTAINLY THRIVES BETTER ON SLOPES THAN ON FLAT LAND.

AND IT SEEMS YOU HAVE GREEN LIZARDS HERE. I SAW ONE ON THE BUILDING AS WE ARRIVED.

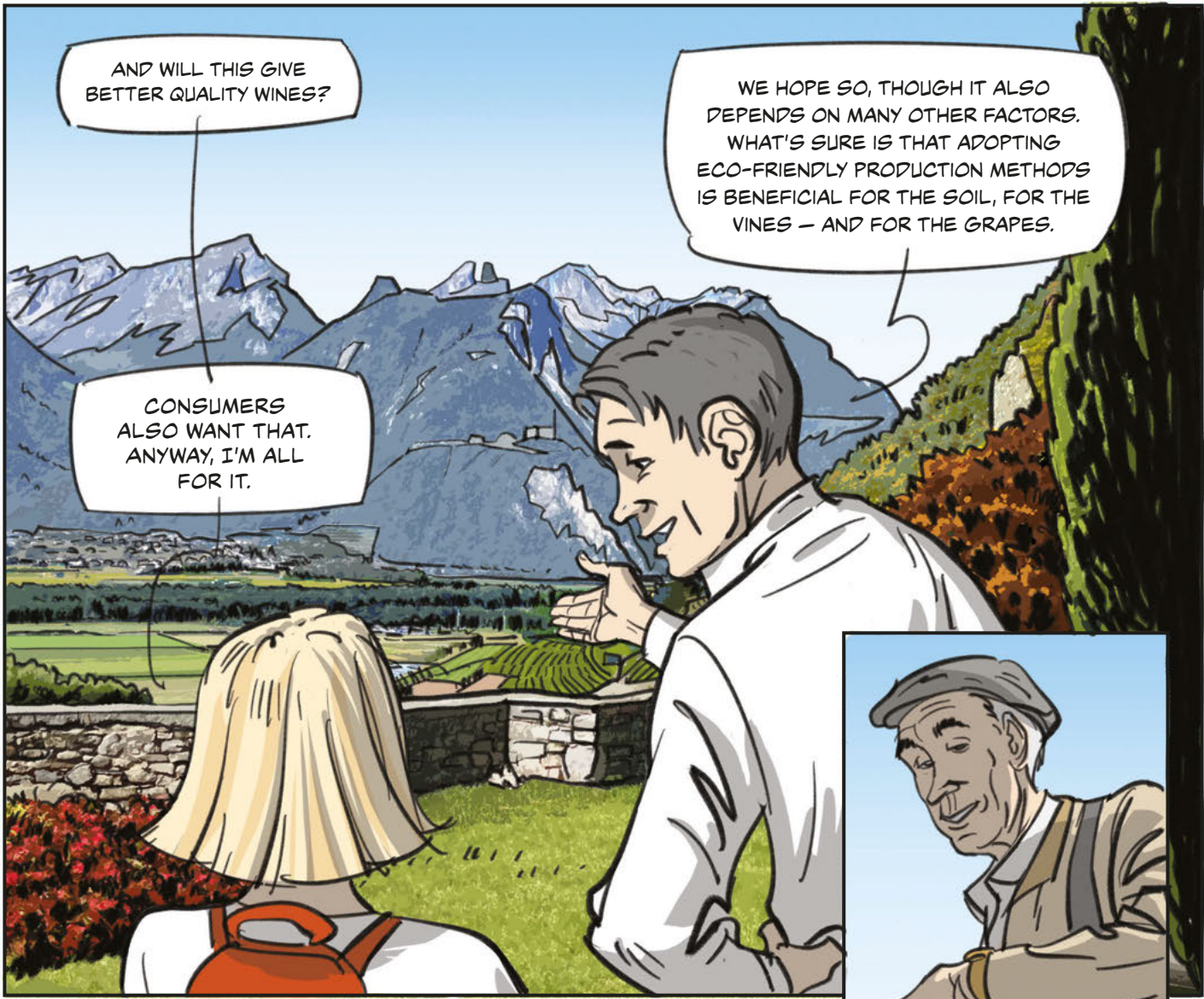


THE ONE ON THE BUILDING IS THE LOGO OF THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS AND MOST POPULAR CHASSELAS WINE, AIGLE LES MURAILLES. AND IN THE VINEYARDS, THE LIZARD IS A SYMBOL OF BIODIVERSITY.



I RECENTLY READ THAT YVORNE WANTED TO BE THE FIRST WINE-PRODUCING COMMUNE THAT'S ENTIRELY ORGANIC.

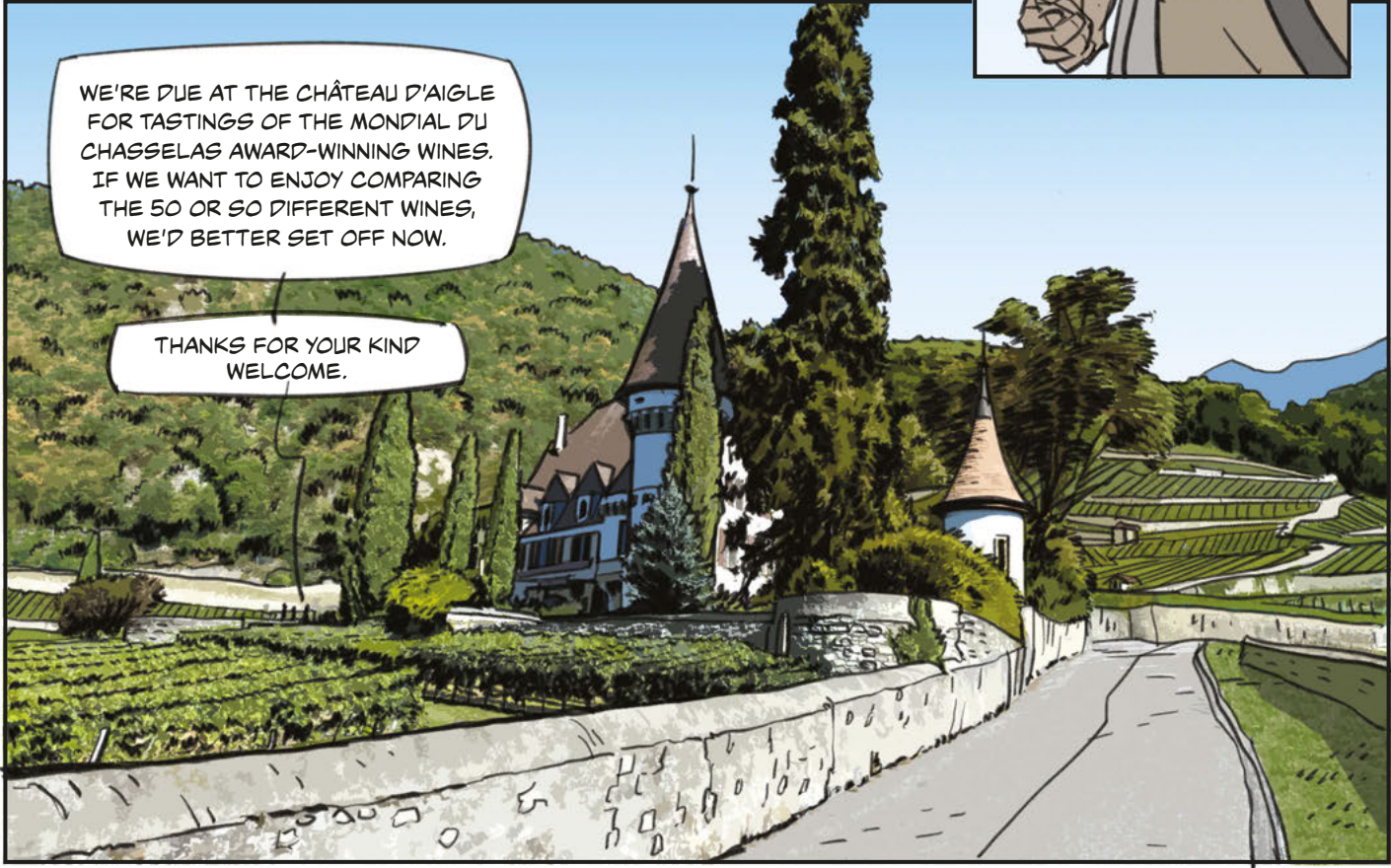
TO BE MORE EXACT, THE OBJECTIVE OF OUR YVORNE GRANDEUR NATURE PROJECT IS TO BRING TOGETHER ALL THE LOCAL PRODUCERS IN A SCIENCE-BASED SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME. THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN SWITZERLAND.



AND WILL THIS GIVE BETTER QUALITY WINES?

WE HOPE SO, THOUGH IT ALSO DEPENDS ON MANY OTHER FACTORS. WHAT'S SURE IS THAT ADOPTING ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTION METHODS IS BENEFICIAL FOR THE SOIL, FOR THE VINES – AND FOR THE GRAPES.

CONSUMERS ALSO WANT THAT. ANYWAY, I'M ALL FOR IT.



WE'RE DUE AT THE CHÂTEAU D'AIGLE FOR TASTINGS OF THE MONDIAL DU CHASSELAS AWARD-WINNING WINES. IF WE WANT TO ENJOY COMPARING THE 50 OR SO DIFFERENT WINES, WE'D BETTER SET OFF NOW.

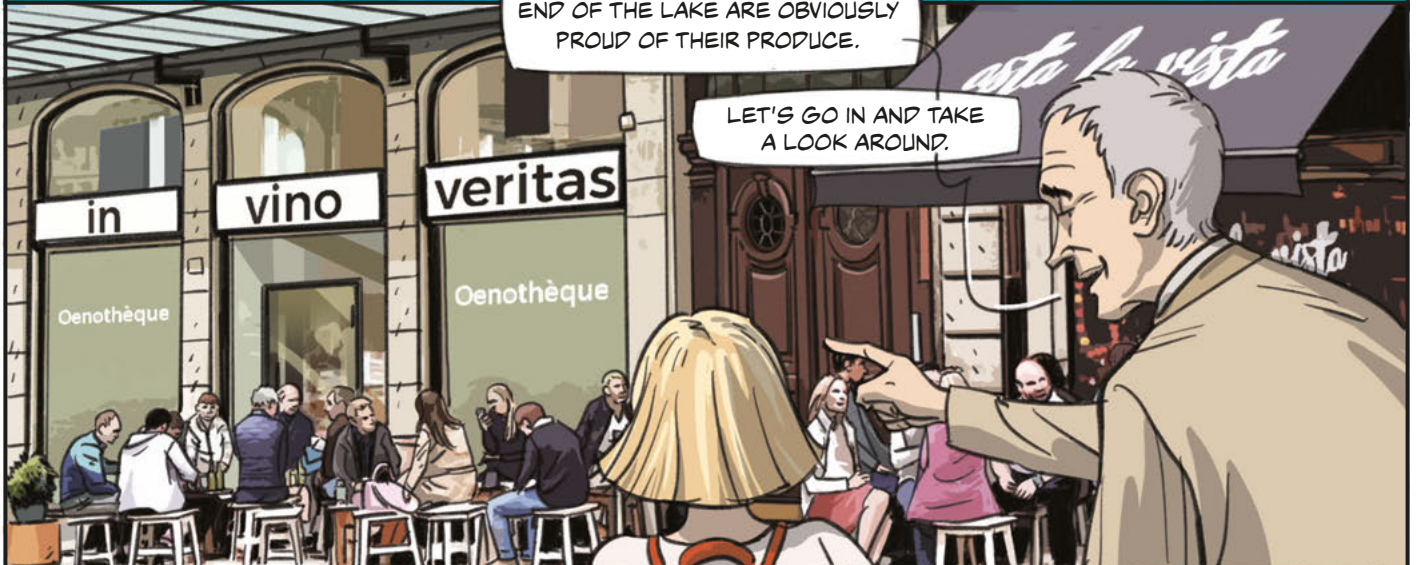
THANKS FOR YOUR KIND WELCOME.

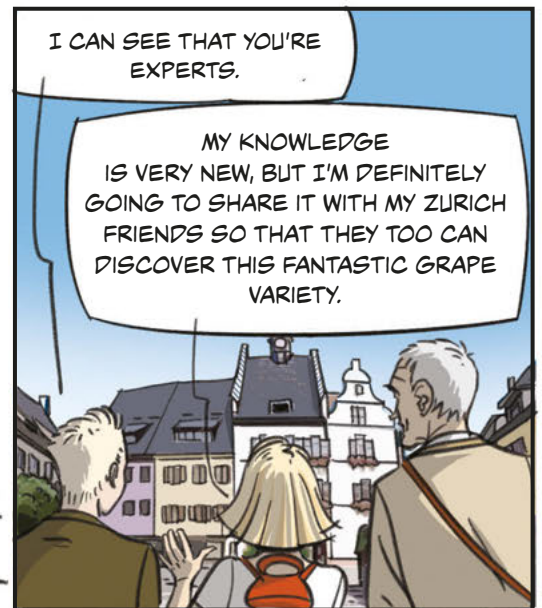
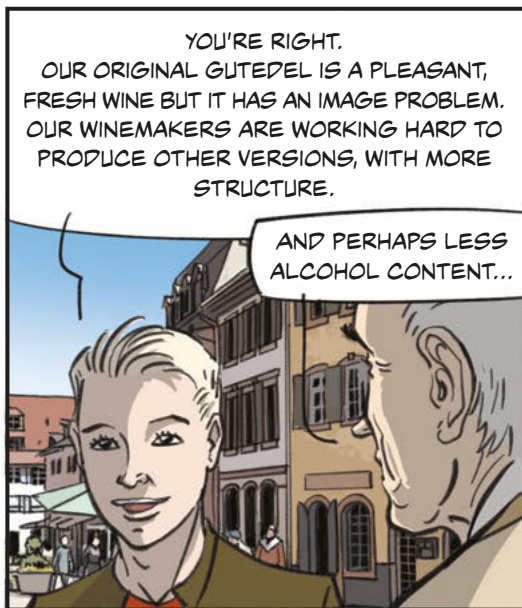
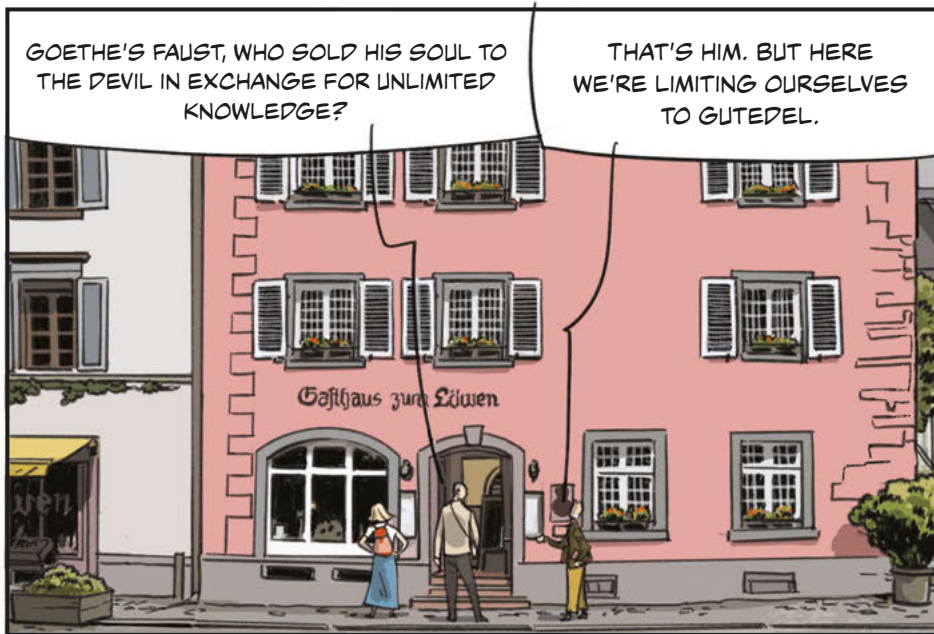
HOW UNLIKE ZÜRICH!
ALL THE BISTROS HERE SERVE
CHASSELAS AND GENEVA
WINES.



OUR COMPATRIOTS HERE AT THE
END OF THE LAKE ARE OBVIOUSLY
PROUD OF THEIR PRODUCE.

LET'S GO IN AND TAKE
A LOOK AROUND.





OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

OTHER THAN ROMANDY AND GERMANY, FRANCE IS THE ONLY COUNTRY TO VINIFY SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF CHASSELAS. OUR VARIETY IS GROWN IN ALSACE (LESS THAN 100 HECTARES), IN HAUTE-SAVOIE (APPROXIMATELY 100 HECTARES), AND IN THE LOIRE VALLEY (40 HECTARES IN POUILLY-SUR-LOIRE).

LANGUAGE AND STATISTICAL DIFFERENCES PREVENT US FROM ACQUIRING AN ACCURATE VIEW OF CHASSELAS-MAKING IN THE REST OF THE WORLD. HOWEVER, HUNGARIAN, MEXICAN, CANADIAN, AMERICAN, AND CHILEAN WINES HAVE BEEN PRESENTED AT THE MONDIAL DU CHASSELAS. MOST OF THOSE WINES WERE PRODUCED BY FAMILIES OF SWISS ORIGIN WHO TOOK THEIR FAVOURITE GRAPE VARIETY WITH THEM WHEN THEY EMIGRATED TO THE AMERICAS AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH.

EPILOGUE

ZURICH, THE OLD TOWN

THIS DINNER PARTY'S GOING TO BE AN IDEAL OPPORTUNITY...

I WONDER WHO THE OTHER GUESTS ARE.

ADRIAN
DRITIN

WELCOME!

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE...

HELLO SON.

GOOD EVENING DAD.

A CHILLED BOTTLE OF CHASSELAS, READY TO DRINK. YOU CAN SERVE IT THIS EVENING.

BUT... I'D PLANNED A CHABLIS PREMIER CRU.

WELL, IF YOU INSIST, WE CAN HAVE IT AS AN APERITIF.

ADRIAN, PLEASE.

NO PROBLEM.