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End of Summer FURSCA Report

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For my FURSCA project this summer I worked towards researching, planning, and scripting a historical fiction graphic novel showcasing the Viking Age in Norway. The Viking Age is often shown inaccurately in media like movies, TV shows, and video games—these pieces of media often present a mystical, exaggerated, and often hypermasculinized representation of this period of medieval history. For this project, I wanted to create a piece of Viking-related media that was not only more historically accurate than other Viking stories in popular culture, but also more grounded in showing aspects of Viking age life apart from fighting, and importantly, centering much more around the lives of women in the Viking Age. I also wanted to challenge myself by writing a piece of historical fiction that was not only extremely historically accurate, but also narratively compelling at the same time.

I would say that I have succeeded with the goals that I have laid out for myself. I was able to do enough research to fully flesh out the medieval setting of my narrative in a historically accurate way, and I am certain that the end result of my narrative is quite different from any Viking-centered stories that I have seen. I spent the summer doing large amounts of research on the Viking Age, writing a compelling script, and drawing concept art for what a finished graphic novel would look like. For research, I read dozens of peer-reviewed articles on this time period, as well as several books written by historians. I also read through some primary sources, specifically *Njal's Saga*, a medieval Icelandic narrative. I also did some experiential learning—with the help of my advisor and with funding from FURSCA, I was able to attend a medievalist conference, try my hand at archery, and, most impressively, take a week-long trip to Norway.

This trip was funded in part by FURSCA, but also by a grant from Albion's Experiential Learning fund. While in Norway I visited Viking museums, visited the actual locations where my narrative takes place, and talked to experts on the Viking Age in Norway. Below are some photos from my trip.

The most involved process in this project was my actual writing of the script for this graphic novel. Graphic novels are like movies in that they require an involved script with dialogue, plot descriptions, and descriptions of the scenes (or in this case, the drawings). The majority of my time during this summer was spent on writing and editing the script, under the guidance of my advisor. The script I have created is 104 pages of writing, and while it is still a draft that needs to be edited, I believe I have succeeded in creating a story that is both narratively compelling and historically accurate. Below I have included a sample from the beginning of my



script.

Page 5:

Text: *7 years later*

- Panel 1: Long horizontal panel. We are underwater. There is nothing here except for a couple of small FISH. Then...
- Panel 2: SPLASH! OARS descend into the water, sending bubbles everywhere. The fish scatter!
- Panel 3: Short panel. Above water now. Close up on a pair of ARMS straining to pull the oar.
- Panel 4: Short panel. A magnificent SAIL. It's hanging loose with the lack of wind, which explains why the rowers are working so hard.
- Panel 5: Short panel. Looking up at the STERNPOST. It's curled in a spiral, similar to one on the famous Oseberg ship.
- Panel 6: Wide panel. Seeing it in its entirety, we know that this is a VIKING LONGSHIP.

Page 6:

- Panel 1: Wide panel, takes up about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the page. A woman standing at the bow of the ship. It's INGA! She's 19 years old and she's changed a lot. Her hair is shorter, cut jaggedly by her own hand a number of years ago. Inga's dress is neither torn nor dirty. She stands in a straight-backed pose of confidence, and her eyes are sharp and alert. Her jaw is clenched just slightly. We can see a MAN not too far behind Inga, leaning against the side of the ship.

INGA (narration): *I am called Inga Ulfsdóttir. I have seen 19 winters as a maiden, and if the gods favor me I will soon be married.*

INGA (narration): *I have waited for this. I am ready.*

- Inga exudes confidence, but that clenched jaw makes us pause. Is she truly as assured as she seems?

Finally, my project for this summer has involved drawing. Although I set out only to write my graphic novel script, not to actually illustrate it, I did create some concept art that could serve to inform future art, if this graphic novel is ever actually fully illustrated.



This project has been extremely important to me, as it has allowed me to combine my passion for art, history, and storytelling all into one project. This has allowed me to stretch my muscles as a storyteller, which will serve me throughout my career at Albion and beyond. I plan on continuing this narrative as the basis for my thesis— although I have written a 100-page script, this script actually only consists of one chapter of the overall story I’d like to tell. Before the end of my senior year, I’d actually like to write three more chapters to this story (although I am planning for each of these chapters to be much shorter than the first!). The final, fully edited 4-chapter script will serve as my Honors thesis, and this is the project that I hope to present at Elkin Isaac in Spring of 2026. Although it would not be realistic for me to attempt to illustrate

hundreds of pages of writing, I do also hope to someday publish this story as a fully-finished graphic novel, perhaps once I have the time or the funding to hire artists after I graduate.

For everything I have accomplished so far, I need to thank my advisor Ian MacInness, the entire FURSCA team, Cristen Casey and the Experiential Learning Fund, and of course to the Charles J. Strosacker Foundation donors that have made this project possible. I am excited to continue working on this project in the future.

