

THE LYDIAN STONE

CONTACT



**PREMIERE
ISSUE**



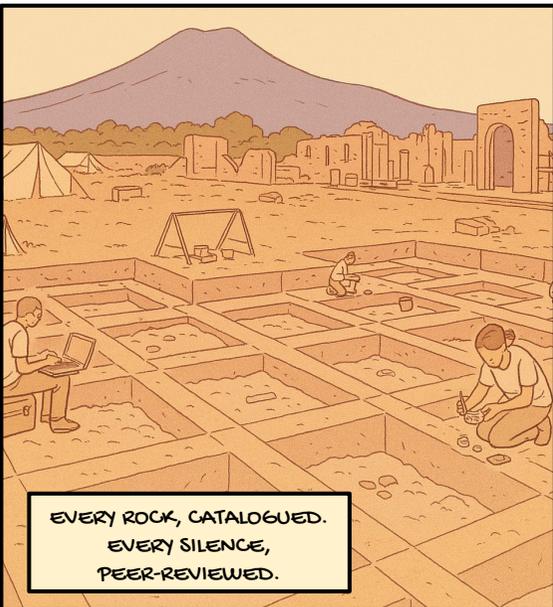
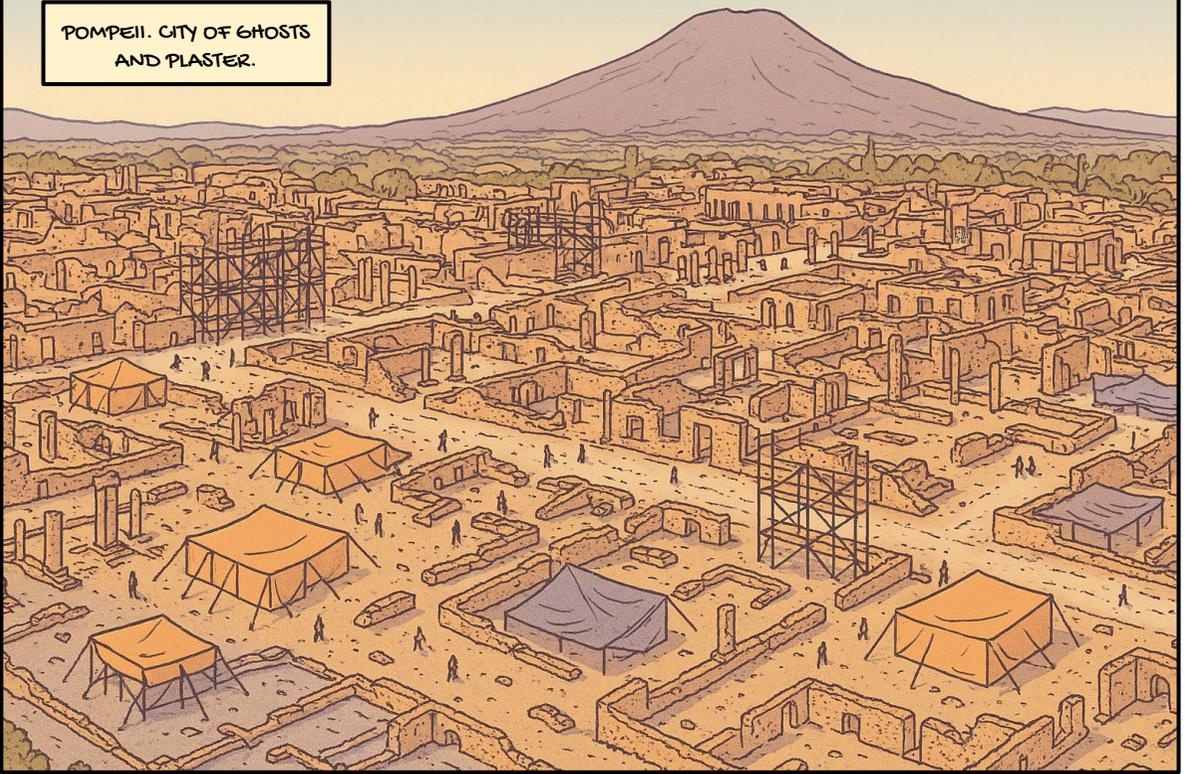
VESUBIUS

**COMIC
BOOKS**



Issue #1

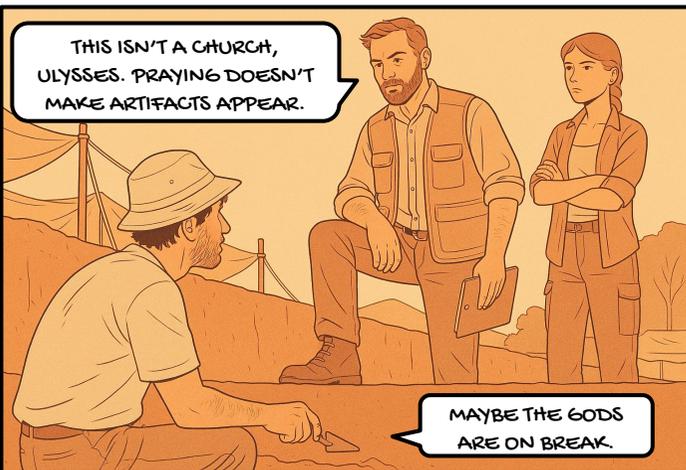
POMPEII. CITY OF GHOSTS
AND PLASTER.



EVERY ROCK, CATALOGUED.
EVERY SILENCE,
PEER-REVIEWED.

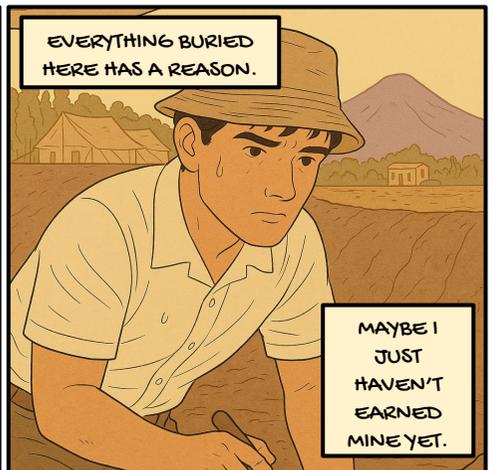


SEVEN WEEKS. NOT A
SINGLE GODDAMN
AMPHORA.



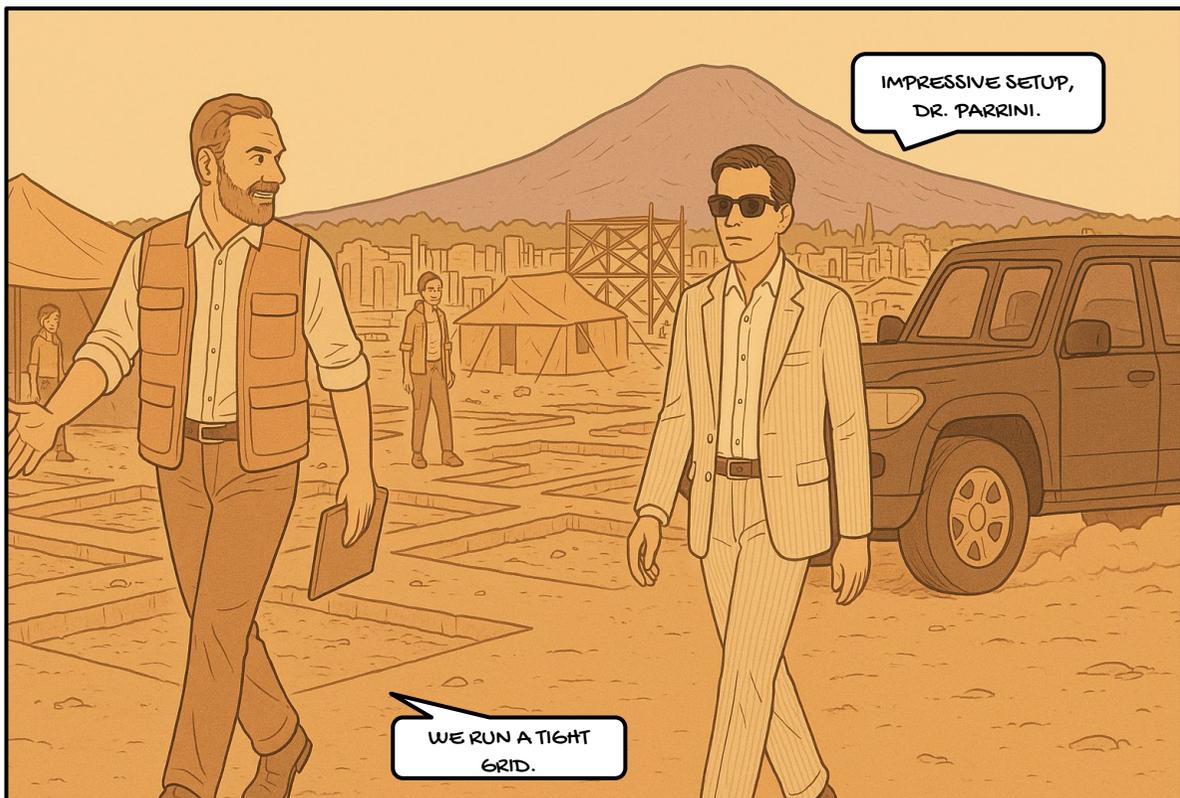
THIS ISN'T A CHURCH,
ULYSSES. PRAYING DOESN'T
MAKE ARTIFACTS APPEAR.

MAYBE THE GODS
ARE ON BREAK.



EVERYTHING BURIED
HERE HAS A REASON.

MAYBE I
JUST
HAVEN'T
EARNED
MINE YET.



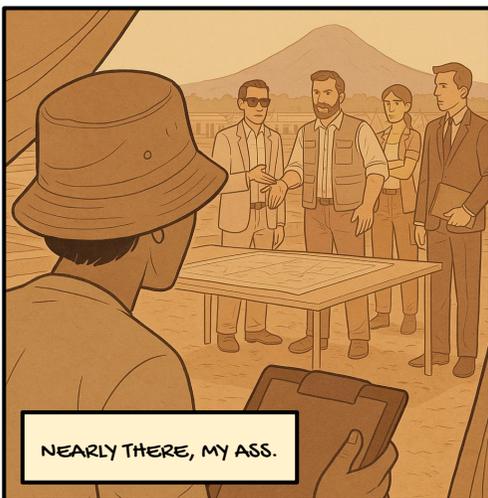
IMPRESSIVE SETUP,
DR. PARRINI.

WE RUN A TIGHT
GRID.

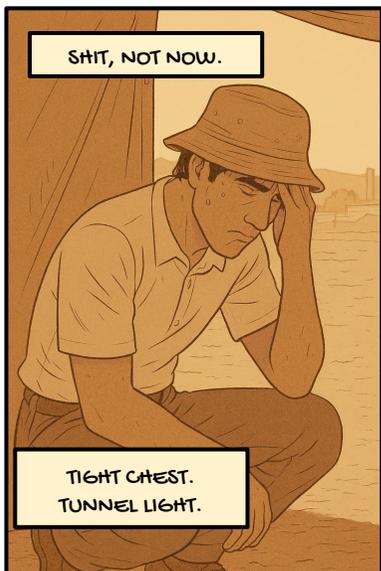


WE'LL NEED
FINAL FINDINGS
BY NEXT FRIDAY.

OF COURSE. WE'RE
NEARLY THERE.



NEARLY THERE, MY ASS.



SHIT, NOT NOW.

TIGHT CHEST.
TUNNEL LIGHT.

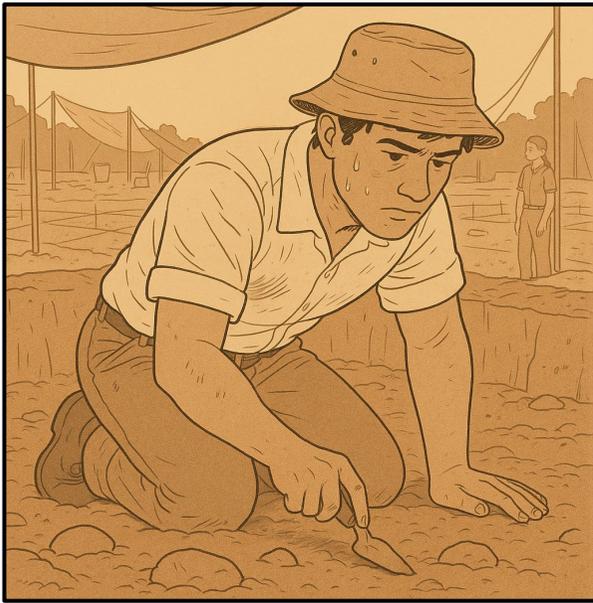


JUST KEEP IT
TOGETHER.

LIKE ALWAYS.



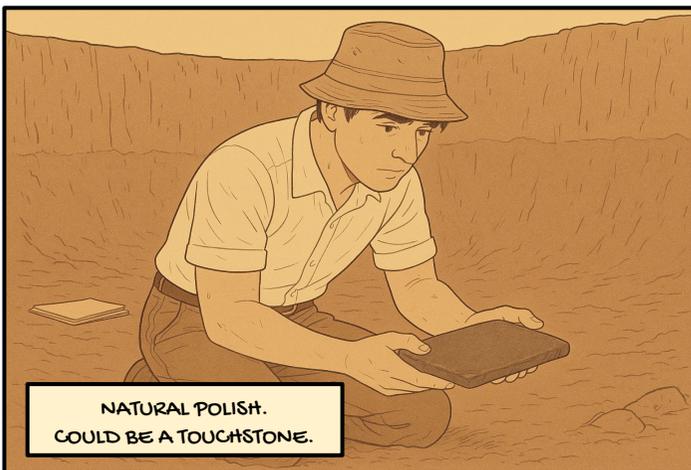
CAN'T LEAVE
EMPTY-HANDED.
NOT AGAIN.



NOT A ROOT. DOESN'T
GIVE... CLEAN EDGE.



FLAT. FAMILIAR TEXTURE.



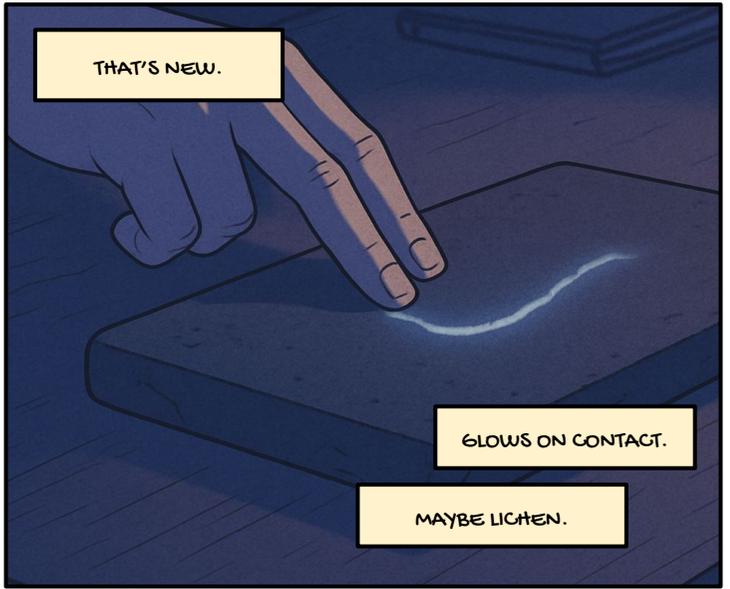
NATURAL POLISH.
COULD BE A TOUCHSTONE.



BETTER THAN
POTTERY SHARDS
I GUESS...



THAT'S NEW.



GLOWS ON CONTACT.

MAYBE LICHEN.



FADES AFTER FIVE SECONDS. NO HEAT.



I'M NOT TOUCHING IT!



OKAY.
LET'S PLAY ALONG.



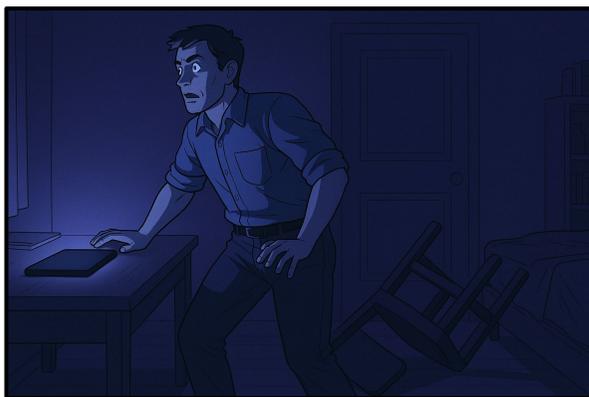
HELLO FRIEND



I WAS WAITING FOR YOU



I'M AWAKE



IT DIDN'T HAPPEN



GODDAMN
HALLUCINATIONS.



CUT THE DOSAGE.
SLEEP IT OFF.

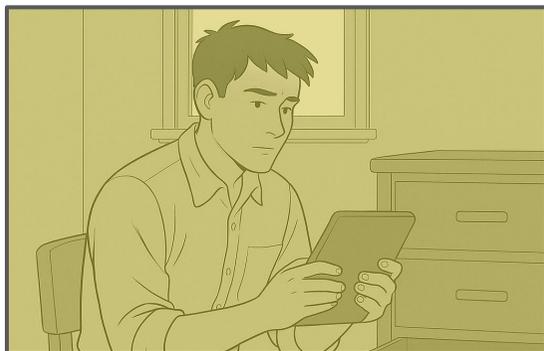


JESUS, I NEED
HELP



OR MAYBE I JUST
NEED SLEEP.





IF THIS IS A JOKE—YOU WIN.
HIDDEN CAMERAS?
STREAMING PRANK SHOW?
WELL F**ING DONE.

GOD, I HOPE IT'S A JOKE.



VERBUM·UNUM·NON·
INTELLEGO·SED·
SENTIO·FUROREM·IN·
SCRIPTURA·TUA·
CLAMAS·VELUT·
ANCILLA·SPUMOSA(*)

WAIT—DID I JUST GET ROASTED... IN LATIN?
AND IT WAS... KIND OF GOOD.

WHO ARE YOU(**)

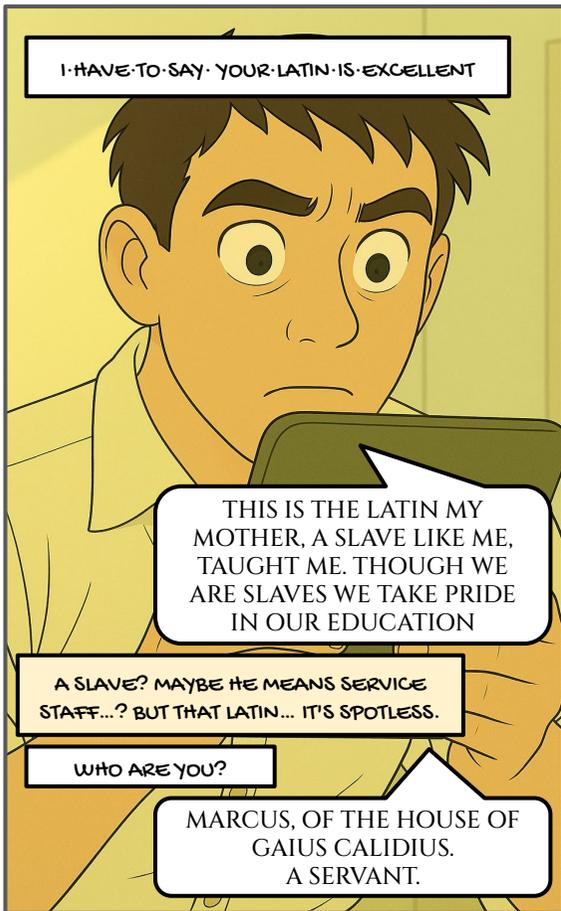
OKAY, OKAY... MY NAME. ULYSSES. EASY.
WHAT THE HELL IS "ARCHEOLOGY STUDENT" IN
LATIN? DID THEY EVEN HAVE THAT?

WAIT, "STUDENS HISTORIAE"—NO,
MAYBE "STUDIUM HISTORIA"...?

FORGET IT. LET'S KEEP IT SIMPLE...
I'M ULYSES. HISTORY STUDENT. SOMETHING
ABOUT POMPEII... OH, GOD, THIS IS AWFUL.

MEA·NOMEN·EST·ULYSSES·STUDENS·
HISTORIAE·IN·POMPEII

(*) I DON'T UNDERSTAND A SINGLE WORD. BUT I FEEL YOUR FURY
IN YOUR WRITING. YOU SCREAM LIKE A FOAMING SERVANT GIRL.
(**) YES, YES, I'M TRANSLATING FOR YOU. YOU'RE WELCOME.



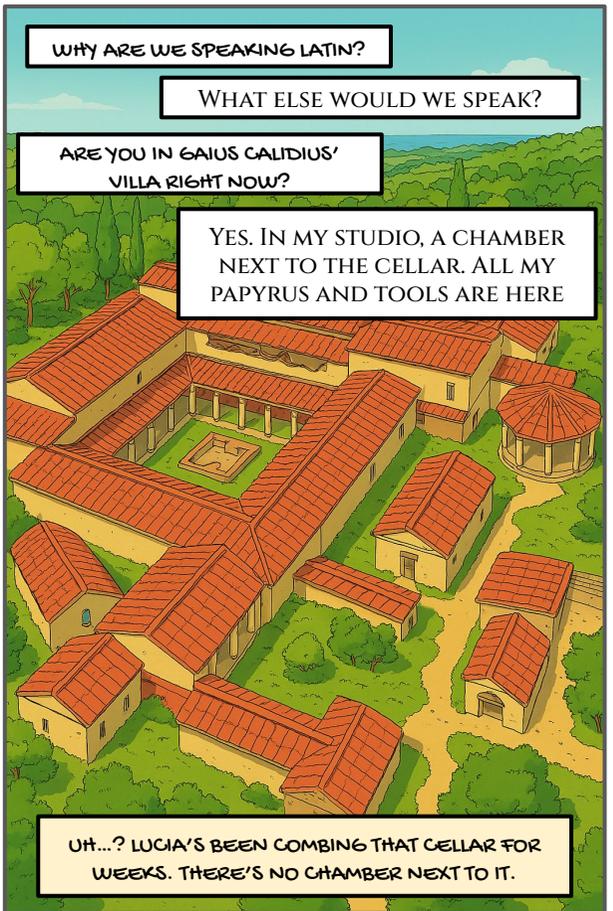
I HAVE TO SAY YOUR LATIN IS EXCELLENT

THIS IS THE LATIN MY MOTHER, A SLAVE LIKE ME, TAUGHT ME. THOUGH WE ARE SLAVES WE TAKE PRIDE IN OUR EDUCATION

A SLAVE? MAYBE HE MEANS SERVICE STAFF...? BUT THAT LATIN... IT'S SPOTLESS.

WHO ARE YOU?

MARCUS, OF THE HOUSE OF GAIVS CALIDIUS. A SERVANT.



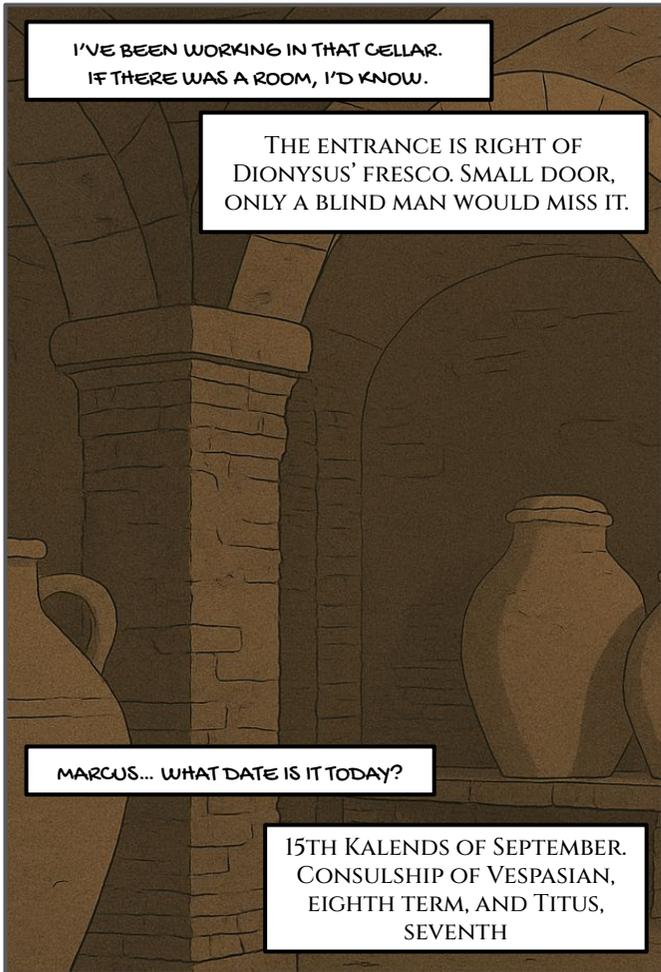
WHY ARE WE SPEAKING LATIN?

WHAT ELSE WOULD WE SPEAK?

ARE YOU IN GAIVS CALIDIUS' VILLA RIGHT NOW?

YES. IN MY STUDIO, A CHAMBER NEXT TO THE CELLAR. ALL MY PAPYRUS AND TOOLS ARE HERE

UH...? LUCIA'S BEEN COMBING THAT CELLAR FOR WEEKS. THERE'S NO CHAMBER NEXT TO IT.



I'VE BEEN WORKING IN THAT CELLAR. IF THERE WAS A ROOM, I'D KNOW.

THE ENTRANCE IS RIGHT OF DIONYSUS' FRESCO. SMALL DOOR, ONLY A BLIND MAN WOULD MISS IT.

MARCUS... WHAT DATE IS IT TODAY?

15TH KALENDS OF SEPTEMBER. CONSULSHIP OF VESPASIAN, EIGHTH TERM, AND TITUS, SEVENTH



I HAVE TO GO. WE'LL SPEAK AGAIN AT DAWN.

I HAVE QUESTIONS

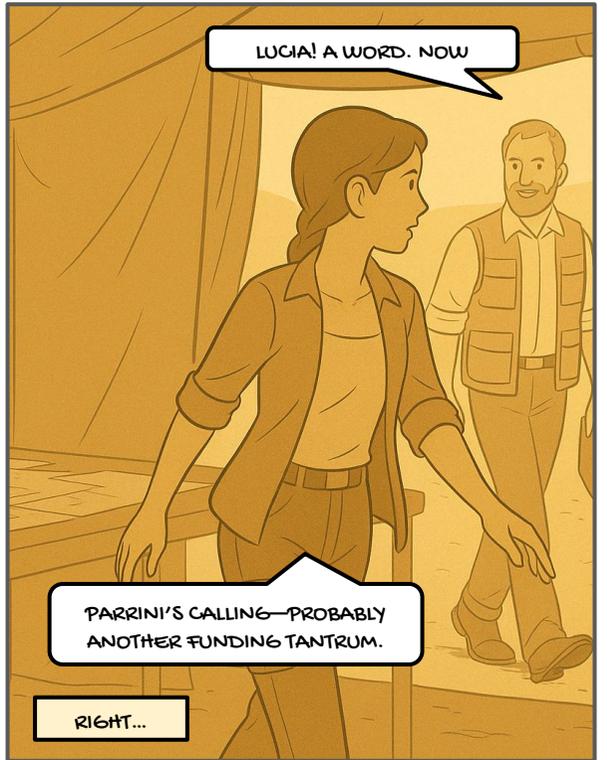
TOMORROW



THIS SIDE OF THE CELLAR'S BEEN A DEAD END. NO VOIDS, NO GAPS. JUST SOLID BACKFILL.

YOU RAN RADAR ON IT?

TWICE. NOTHING BUT DIRT.



LUCIA! A WORD. NOW

PARRINI'S CALLING—PROBABLY ANOTHER FUNDING TANTRUM.

RIGHT...

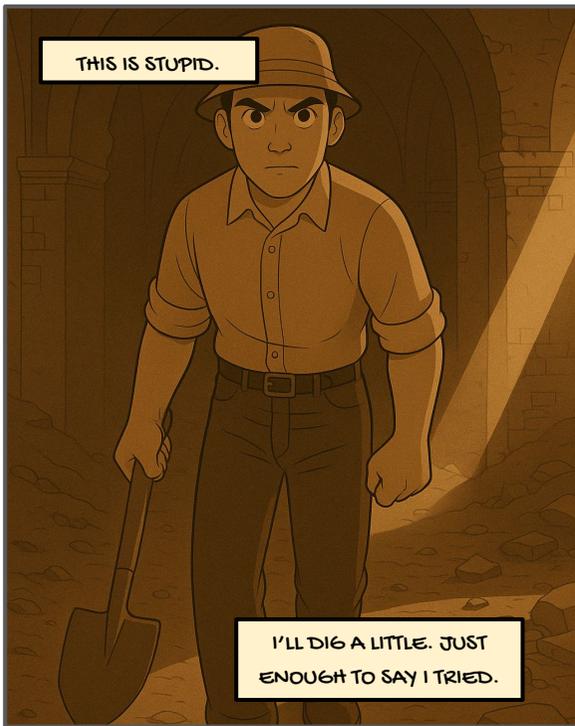


HM.

THIS WHOLE ZONE WAS FLAGGED AS STERILE.

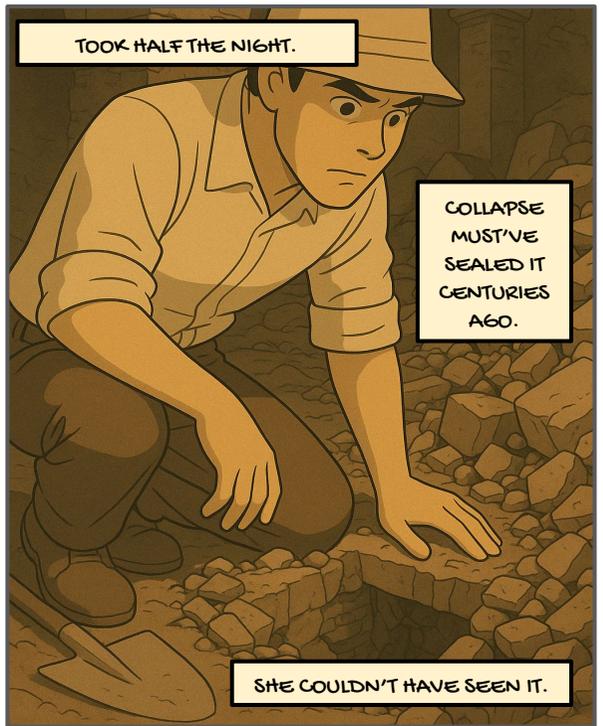
BUT THIS RIDGELINE... IT DOESN'T MATCH THE RADAR PROFILE.

NOTHING'S SUPPOSED TO BE THERE.



THIS IS STUPID.

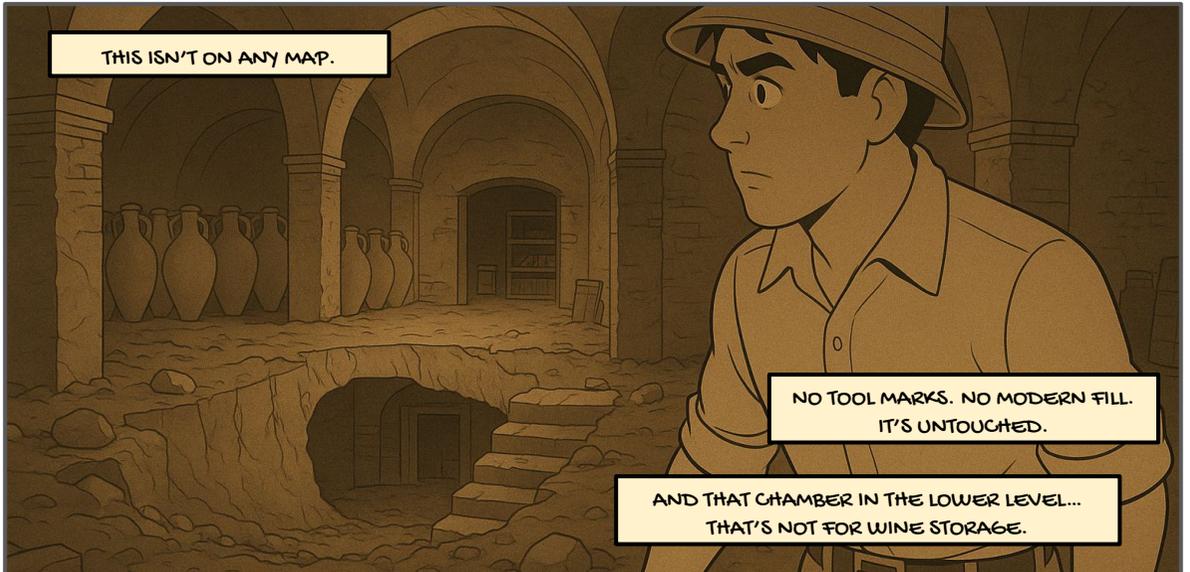
I'LL DIG A LITTLE. JUST ENOUGH TO SAY I TRIED.



TOOK HALF THE NIGHT.

COLLAPSE MUST'VE SEALED IT CENTURIES AGO.

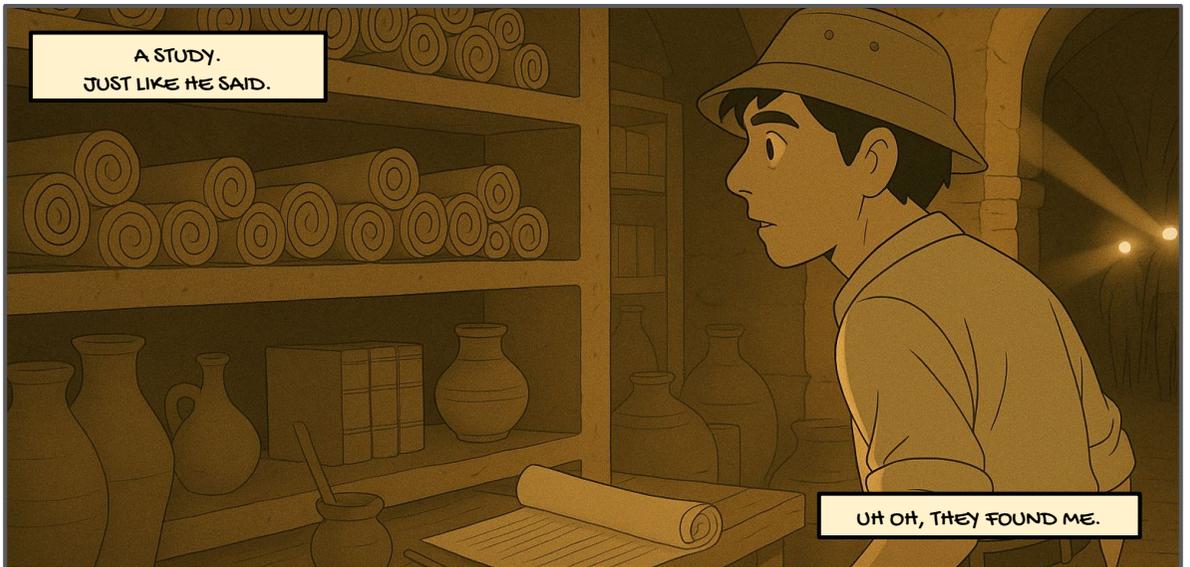
SHE COULDN'T HAVE SEEN IT.



THIS ISN'T ON ANY MAP.

NO TOOL MARKS. NO MODERN FILL. IT'S UNTOUCHED.

AND THAT CHAMBER IN THE LOWER LEVEL... THAT'S NOT FOR WINE STORAGE.



A STUDY. JUST LIKE HE SAID.

UH OH, THEY FOUND ME.



WHAT IN HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING? YOU WEREN'T AUTHORIZED TO ENTER THIS AREA — LET ALONE START DIGGING THROUGH SEALED RUBBLE. WHAT IF YOU'D COLLAPSED THE SITE?



...IS THAT—?



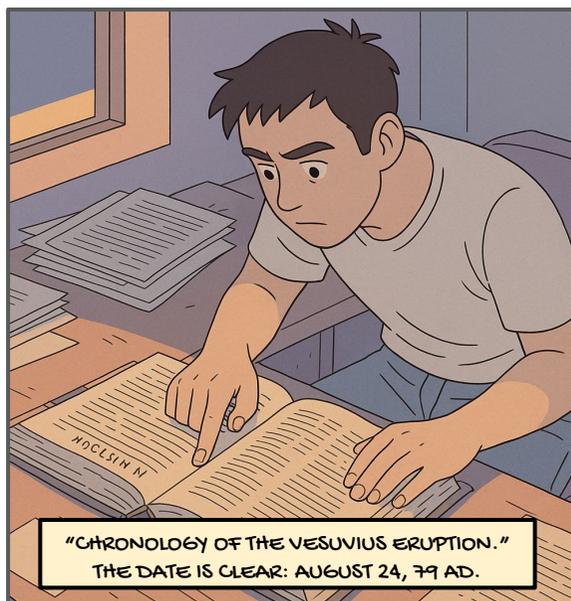
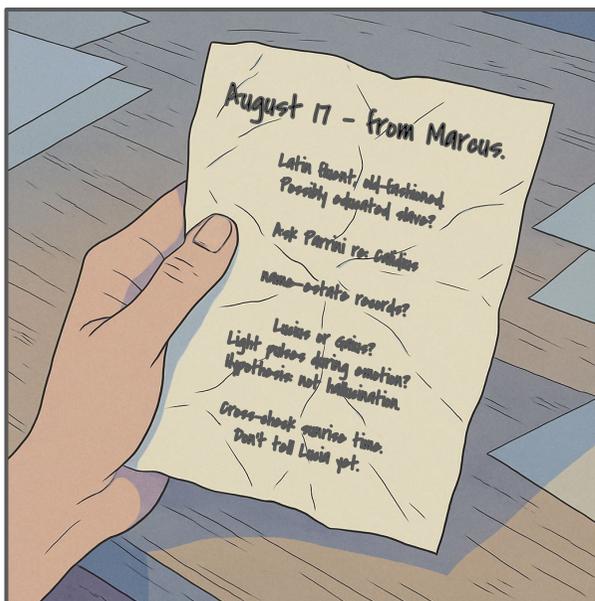
I MEAN—YES. I TOLD YOU THIS AREA HAD POTENTIAL. DIDN'T I SAY?

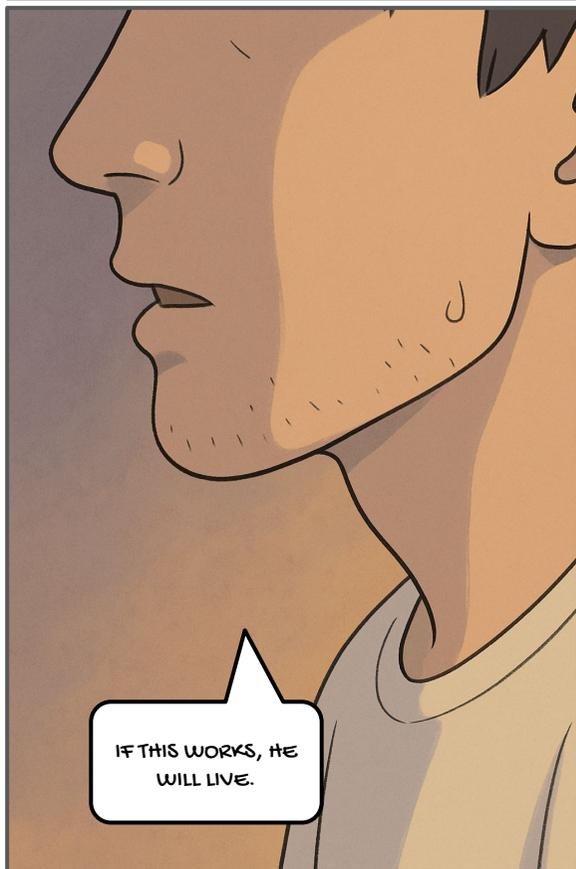
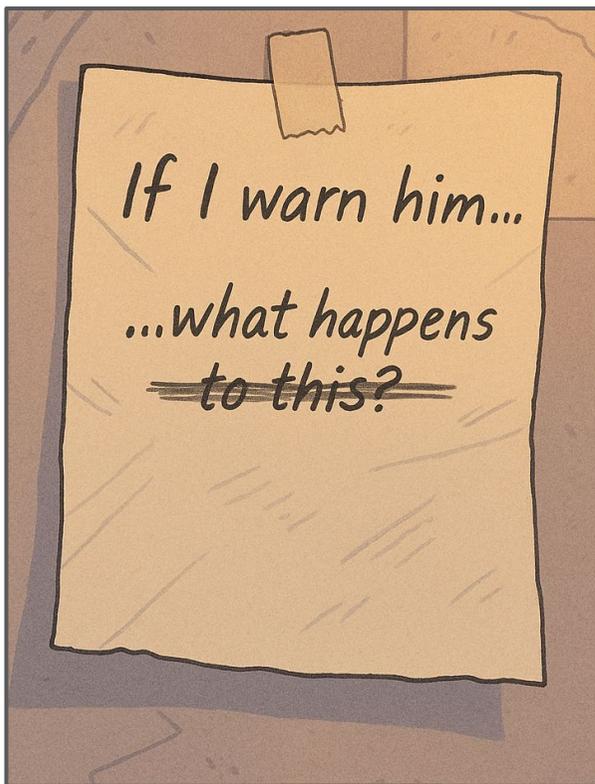
SURE, PARRINI.

LET HIM HAVE IT. THE ROOM DIDN'T CARE WHO FOUND IT.



THEY FOUND TREASURE. I'M STARING AT A CRACK IN TIME.









WHAT KIND?

SURE DEATH. YOU AND YOUR ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD.

WRITING IN A.U.C. 2778, TWENTY CENTURIES BEYOND YOU.

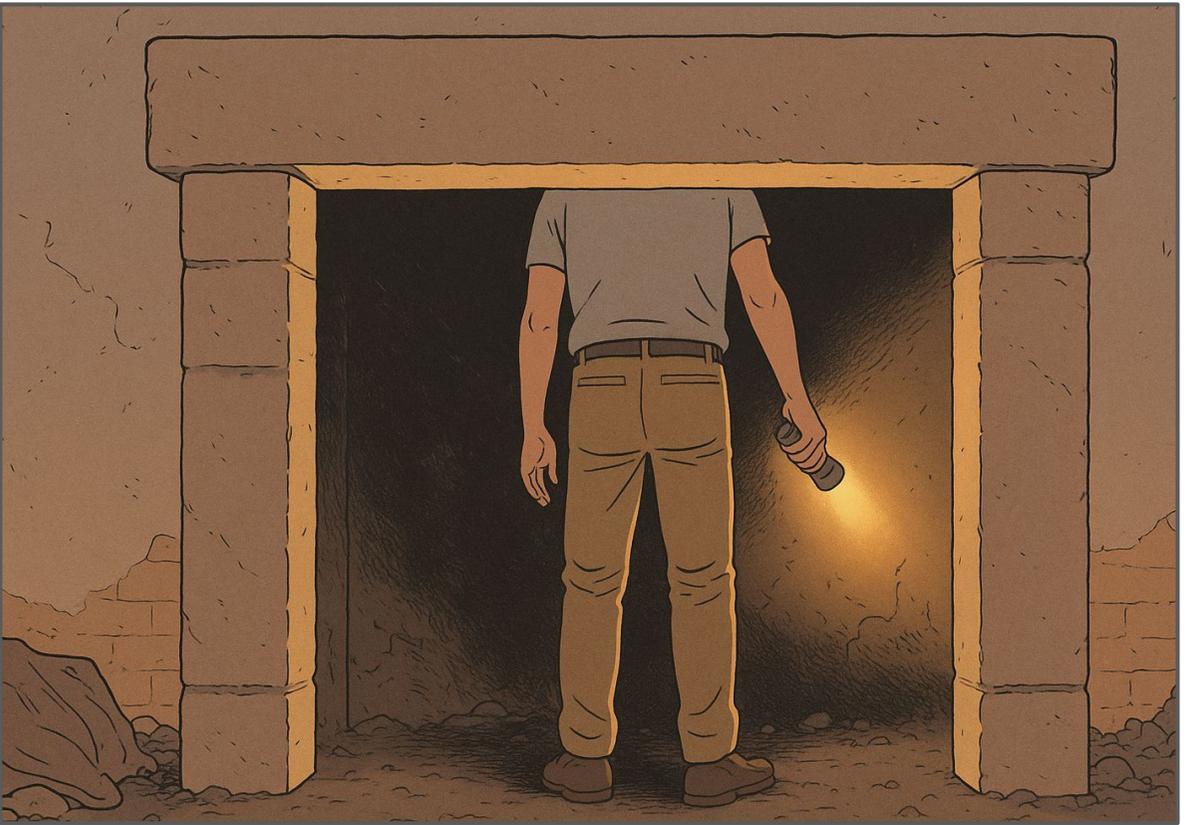
I MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP. BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME FIRST.

ARE YOU A MAN FROM THE FUTURE?

I AM. IN YOUR CHAMBER, I SAW A FIREPLACE. CARVE YOUR NAME INTO THE INSIDE OF THE LINTEL, WHERE NO ONE CAN SEE IT.

WHY?

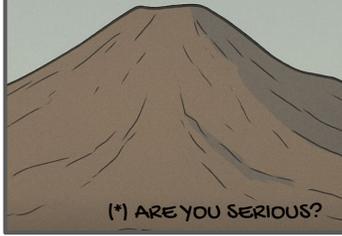
I CAN'T TELL YOU YET. DO IT, AND I MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP YOU. TRUST ME.



THEN YOU MUST LEAVE.
THE MOUNTAIN IS... SICK.
IT'S GOING TO GO...
KA-BOOM.



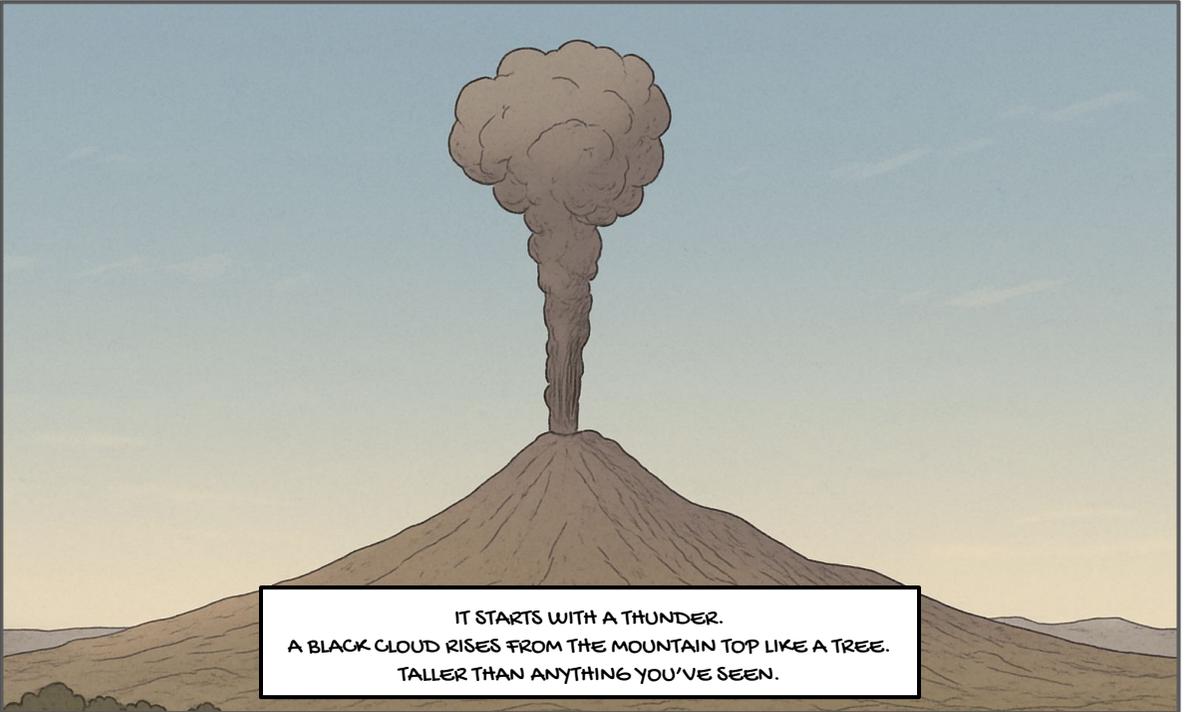
SERIO DICIS?*



(*) ARE YOU SERIOUS?



RIGHT, WORDS
MATTER



IT STARTS WITH A THUNDER.
A BLACK CLOUD RISES FROM THE MOUNTAIN TOP LIKE A TREE.
TALLER THAN ANYTHING YOU'VE SEEN.



ASH WILL FALL UNTIL THERE IS NO SUN.
YOUR BREATH WILL TURN TO DUST.



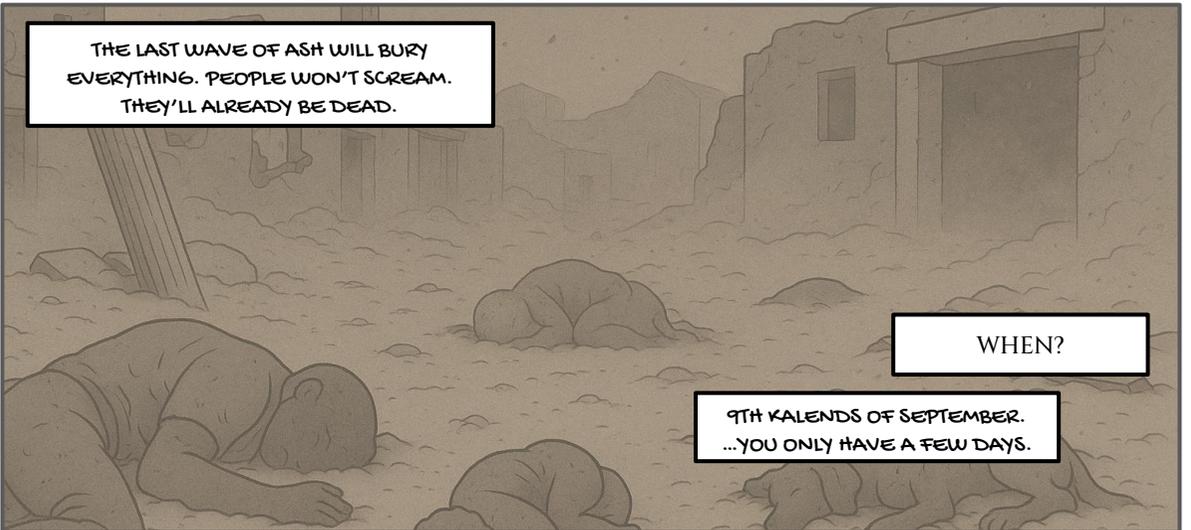
THEN STONE WILL FALL FROM THE SKY.



ROOFS WILL BREAK.
PEOPLE WILL DIE IN THEIR HOMES.



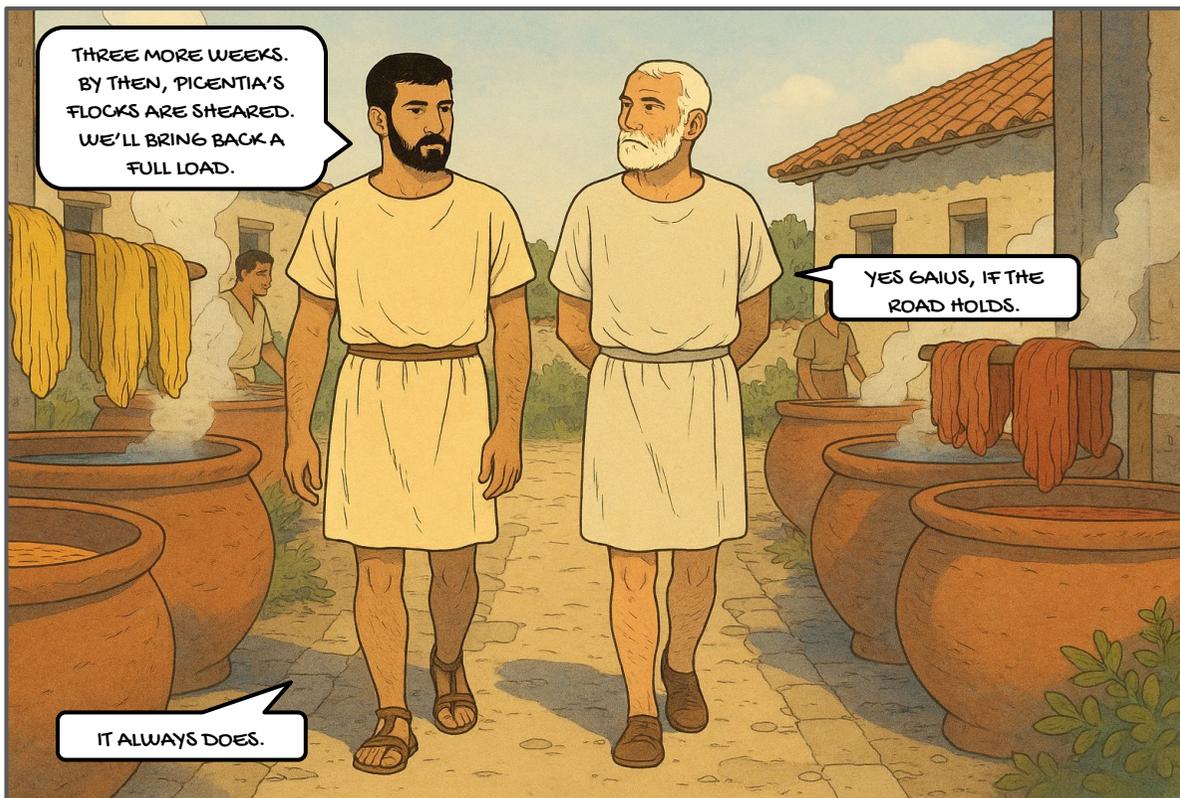
THEN COMES THE BURNING WIND.
NO FIRE, JUST HEAT.
SO HOT IT COOKS THE AIR IN YOUR LUNGS.



THE LAST WAVE OF ASH WILL BURY EVERYTHING. PEOPLE WON'T SCREAM. THEY'LL ALREADY BE DEAD.

WHEN?

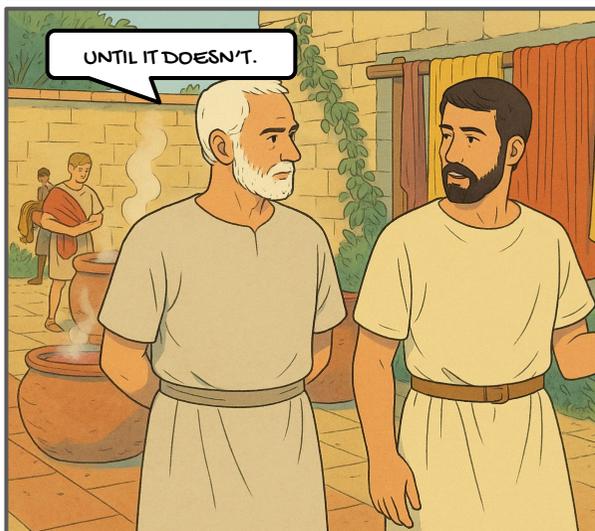
9TH KALENDS OF SEPTEMBER.
...YOU ONLY HAVE A FEW DAYS.



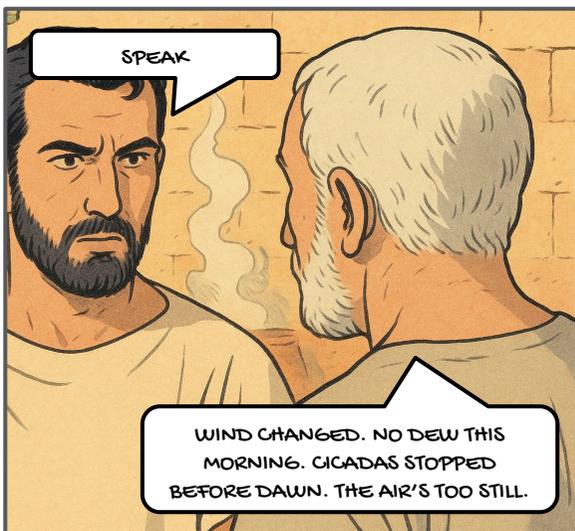
THREE MORE WEEKS. BY THEN, PICENTIA'S FLOCKS ARE SHEARED. WE'LL BRING BACK A FULL LOAD.

YES GAIUS, IF THE ROAD HOLDS.

IT ALWAYS DOES.

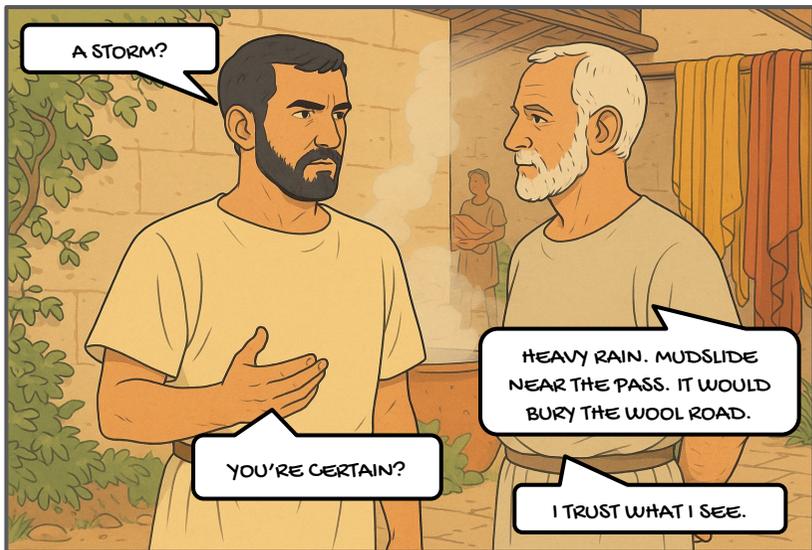


UNTIL IT DOESN'T.



SPEAK

WIND CHANGED. NO DEW THIS MORNING. CICADAS STOPPED BEFORE DAWN. THE AIR'S TOO STILL.



A STORM?

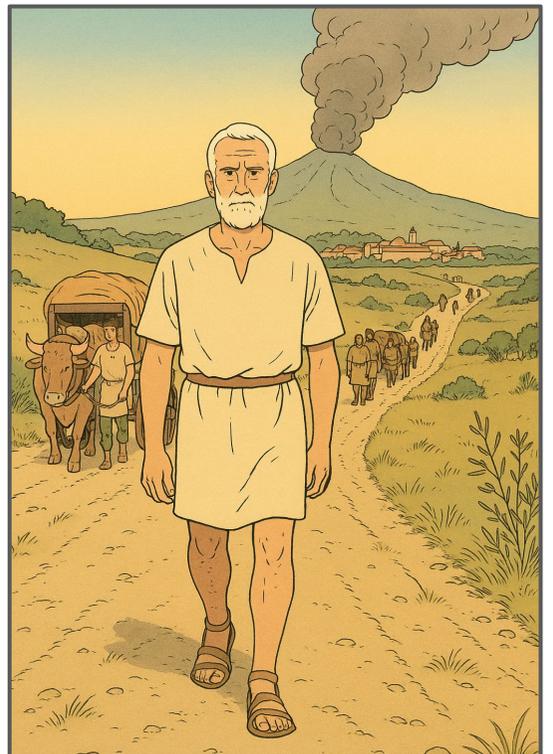
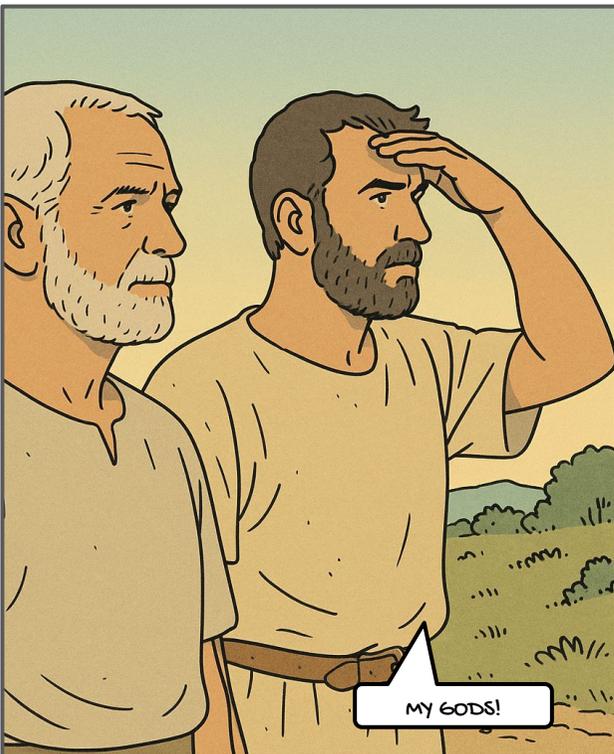
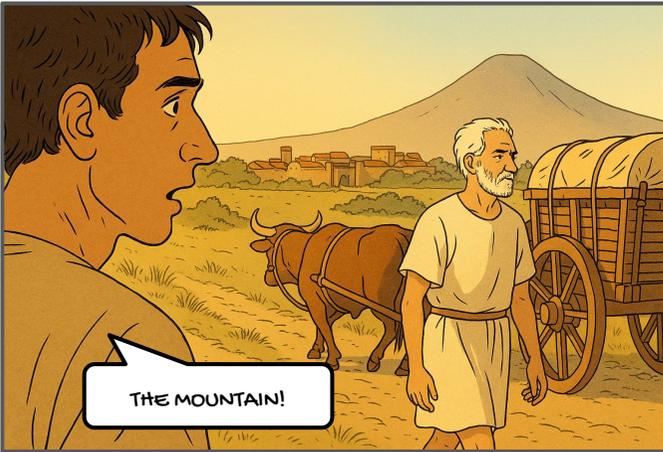
YOU'RE CERTAIN?

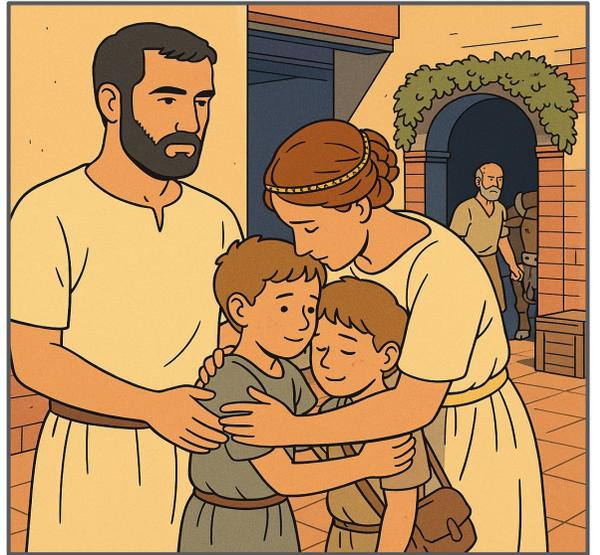
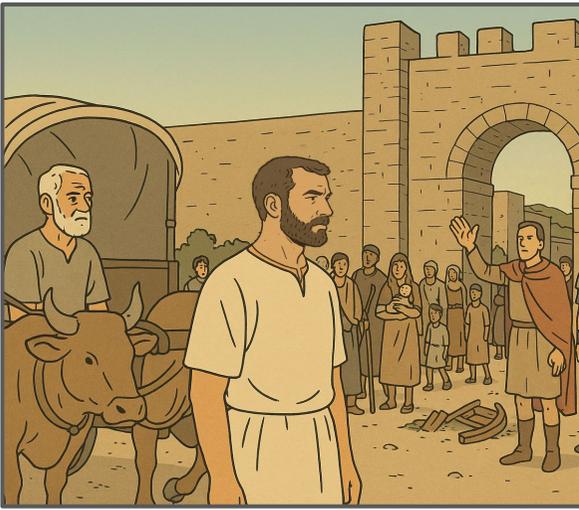
HEAVY RAIN. MUDSLIDE NEAR THE PASS. IT WOULD BURY THE WOOL ROAD.

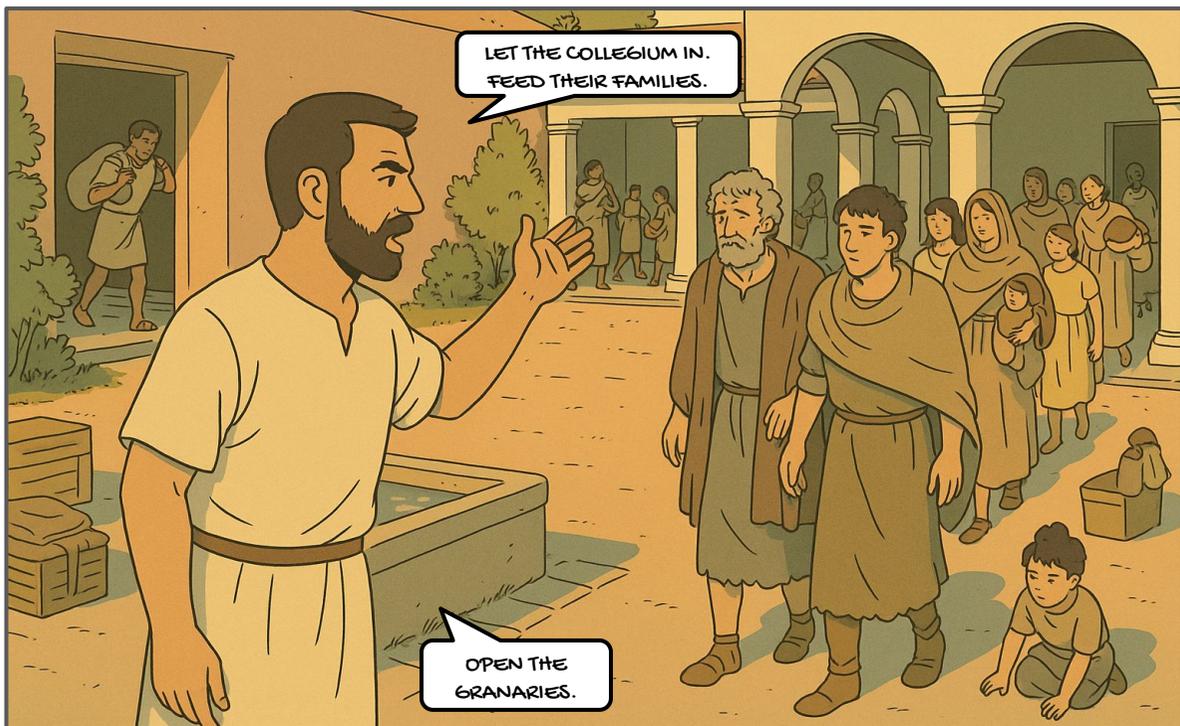
I TRUST WHAT I SEE.



GET THE CARTS READY.

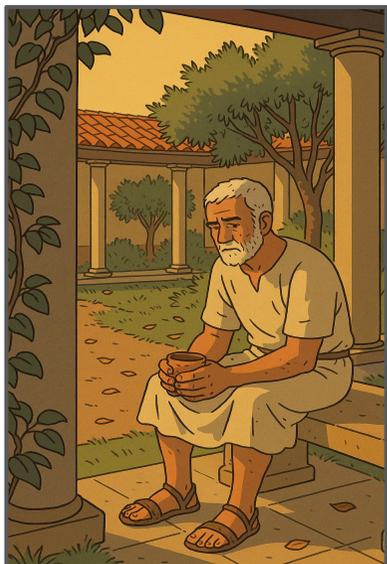






LET THE COLLEGIUM IN.
FEED THEIR FAMILIES.

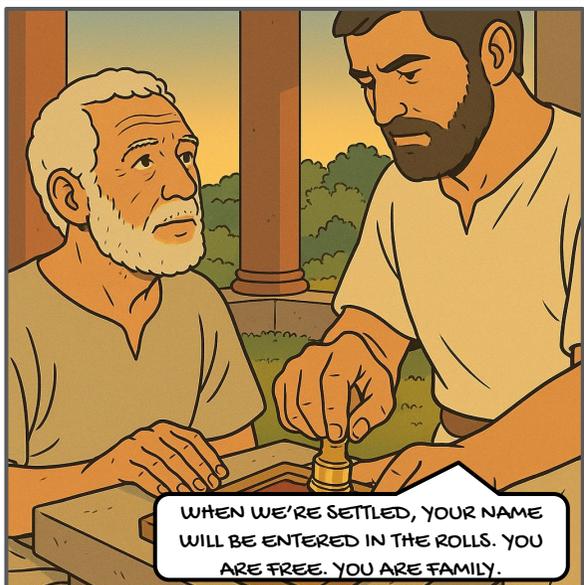
OPEN THE
GRANARIES.



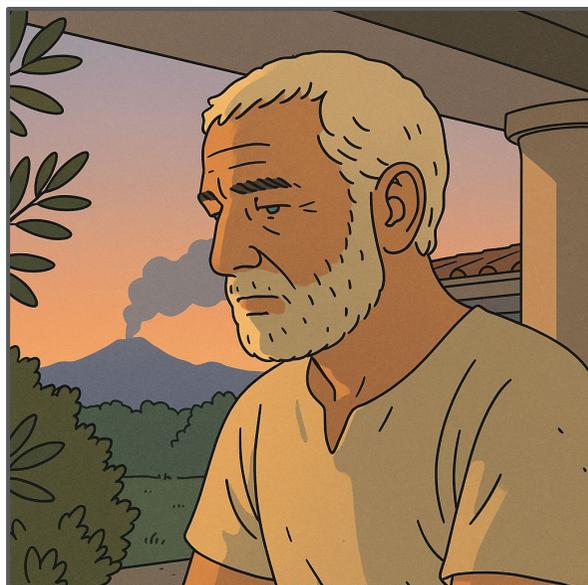
POMPEII IS GONE.
THE VILLA, THE
FULLONICA, ASH.

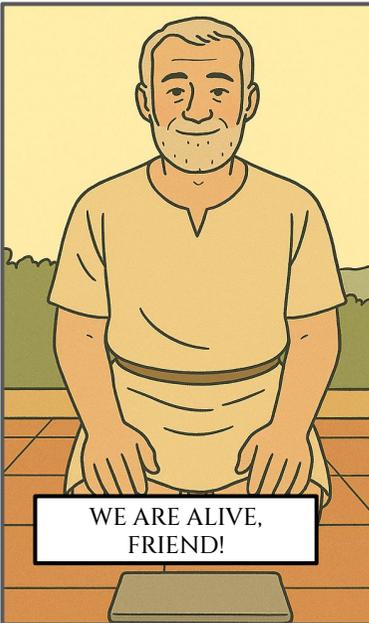
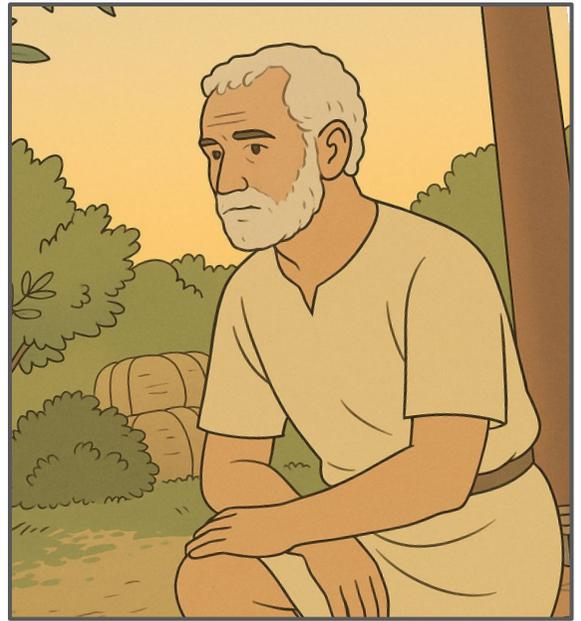


ONLY THIS HOUSE
STANDS. I MAY BE
POORER, YET MY
FAMILY LIVES.
BECAUSE OF YOU.

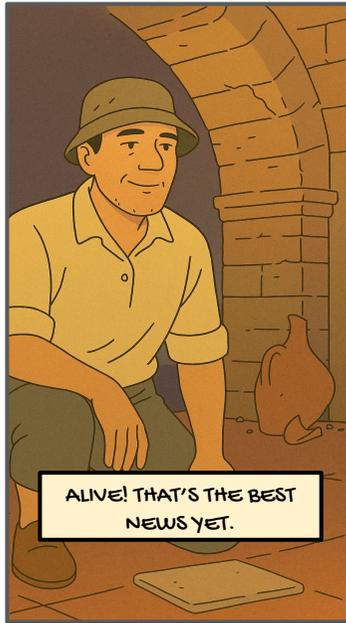


WHEN WE'RE SETTLED, YOUR NAME
WILL BE ENTERED IN THE ROLLS. YOU
ARE FREE. YOU ARE FAMILY.

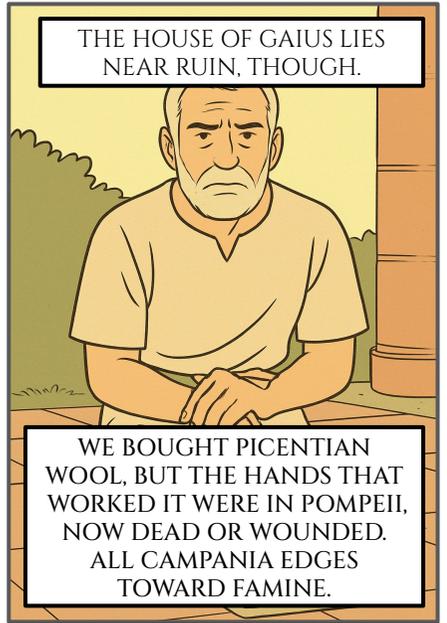




WE ARE ALIVE,
FRIEND!

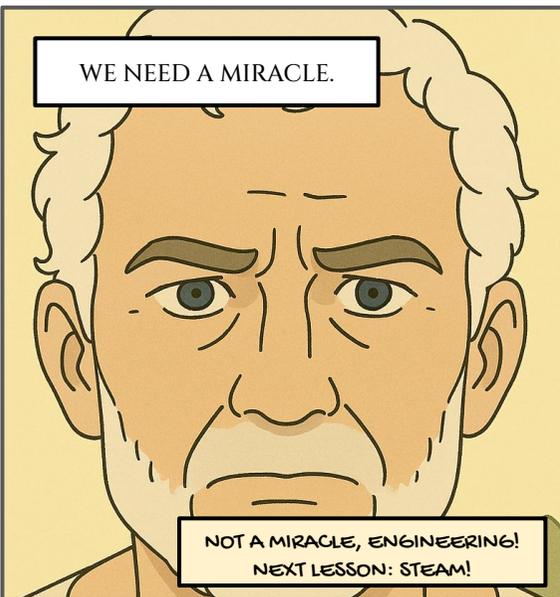


ALIVE! THAT'S THE BEST
NEWS YET.



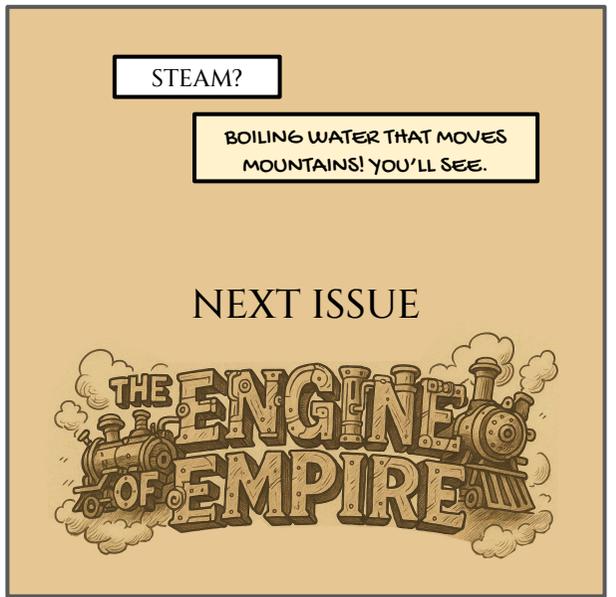
THE HOUSE OF GAIVS LIES
NEAR RUIN, THOUGH.

WE BOUGHT PICENTIAN
WOOL, BUT THE HANDS THAT
WORKED IT WERE IN POMPEII,
NOW DEAD OR WOUNDED.
ALL CAMPANIA EDGES
TOWARD FAMINE.



WE NEED A MIRACLE.

NOT A MIRACLE, ENGINEERING!
NEXT LESSON: STEAM!



STEAM?

BOILING WATER THAT MOVES
MOUNTAINS! YOU'LL SEE.

NEXT ISSUE

