

THE LYDIAN STONE

THE BOATS



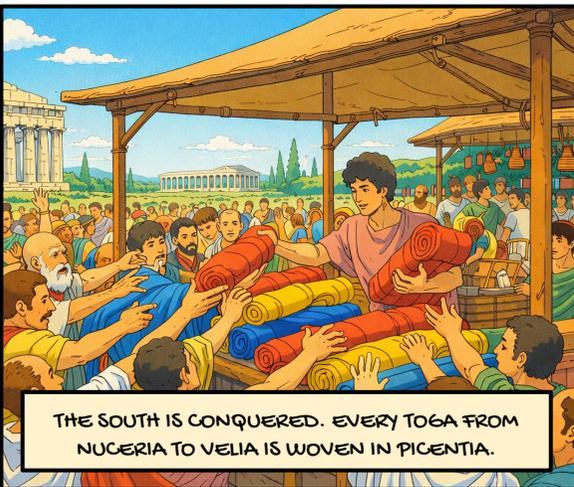
VESUBIUS

**COMIC
BOOKS**

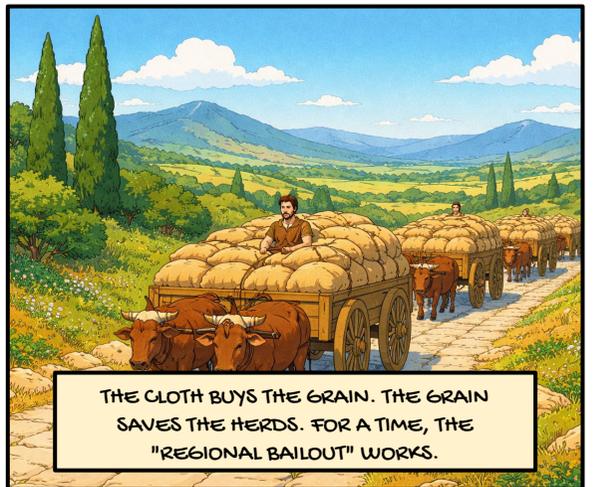


Issue #3

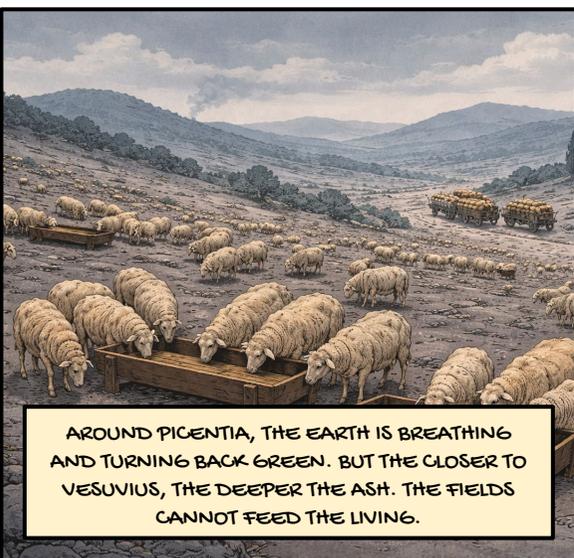
CAMPANIA. YEAR 2. THE SEASON OF THE LOOM.



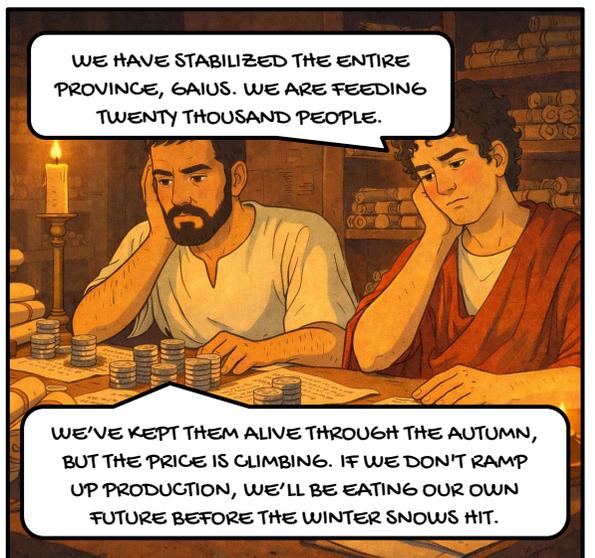
THE SOUTH IS CONQUERED. EVERY TOGA FROM NUCERIA TO VELIA IS WOVEN IN PICENTIA.



THE CLOTH BUYS THE GRAIN. THE GRAIN SAVES THE HERDS. FOR A TIME, THE "REGIONAL BAILOUT" WORKS.



AROUND PICENTIA, THE EARTH IS BREATHING AND TURNING BACK GREEN. BUT THE CLOSER TO VESUVIUS, THE DEEPER THE ASH. THE FIELDS CANNOT FEED THE LIVING.



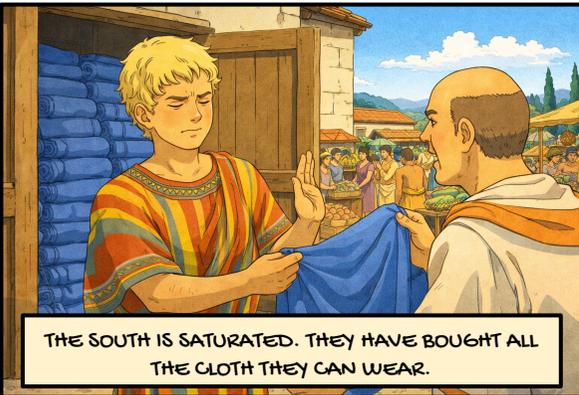
WE HAVE STABILIZED THE ENTIRE PROVINCE, GAIVS. WE ARE FEEDING TWENTY THOUSAND PEOPLE.

WE'VE KEPT THEM ALIVE THROUGH THE AUTUMN, BUT THE PRICE IS CLIMBING. IF WE DON'T RAMP UP PRODUCTION, WE'LL BE EATING OUR OWN FUTURE BEFORE THE WINTER SNOWS HIT.

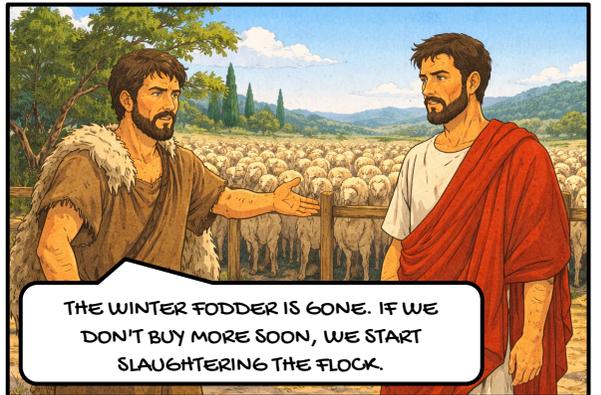
THE NORTH IS A DEAD END. THE ROAD TO ROME IS A GRAVEYARD OF TIME AND MONEY.



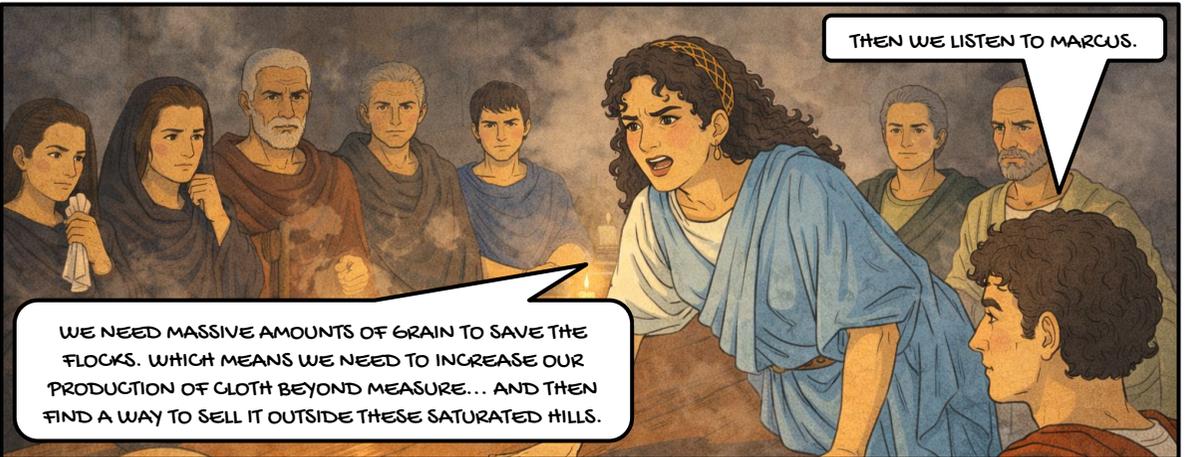
THE SOUTH IS SATURATED. THEY HAVE BOUGHT ALL THE CLOTH THEY CAN WEAR.



THE WINTER FODDER IS GONE. IF WE DON'T BUY MORE SOON, WE START SLAUGHTERING THE FLOCK.

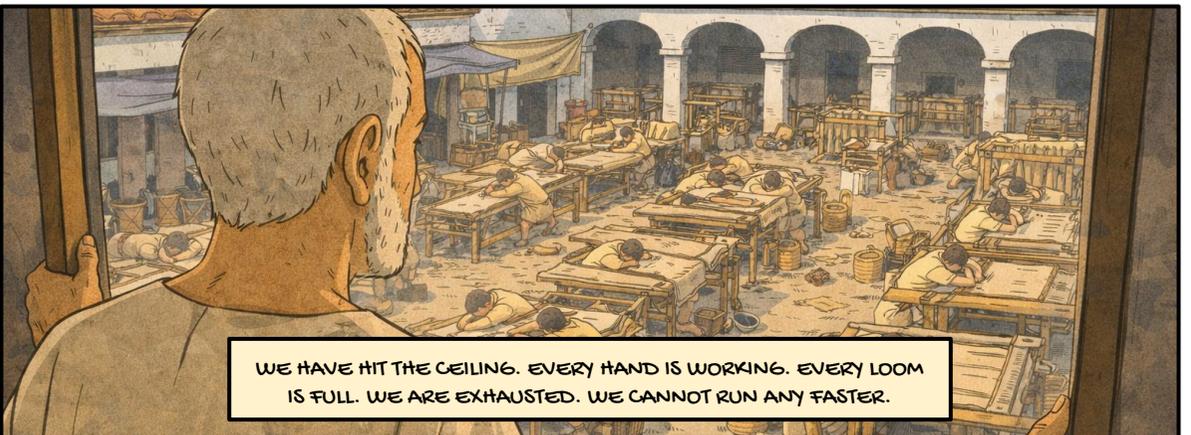


WE NEED MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF GRAIN TO SAVE THE FLOCKS. WHICH MEANS WE NEED TO INCREASE OUR PRODUCTION OF CLOTH BEYOND MEASURE... AND THEN FIND A WAY TO SELL IT OUTSIDE THESE SATURATED HILLS.



THEN WE LISTEN TO MARCUS.

WE HAVE HIT THE CEILING. EVERY HAND IS WORKING. EVERY LOOM IS FULL. WE ARE EXHAUSTED. WE CANNOT RUN ANY FASTER.

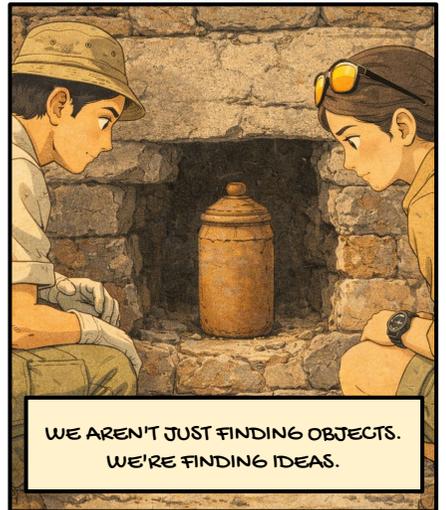


PEACE IS EXPENSIVE, BUT WE BOUGHT IT. TEAM "QUANT" HAS THEIR TEMPLE. PARRINI HAS HIS HEADLINES. AND WE HAVE THE QUIET.

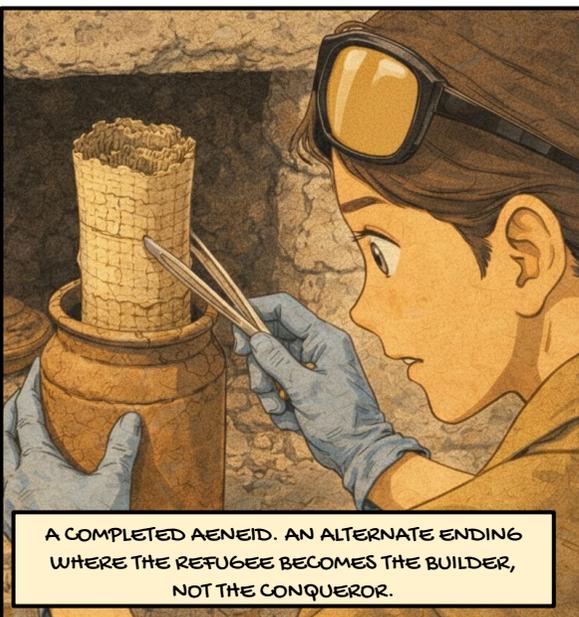
WE KEEP THE MIRACLES SPACED OUT. NO MORE STREAKS.



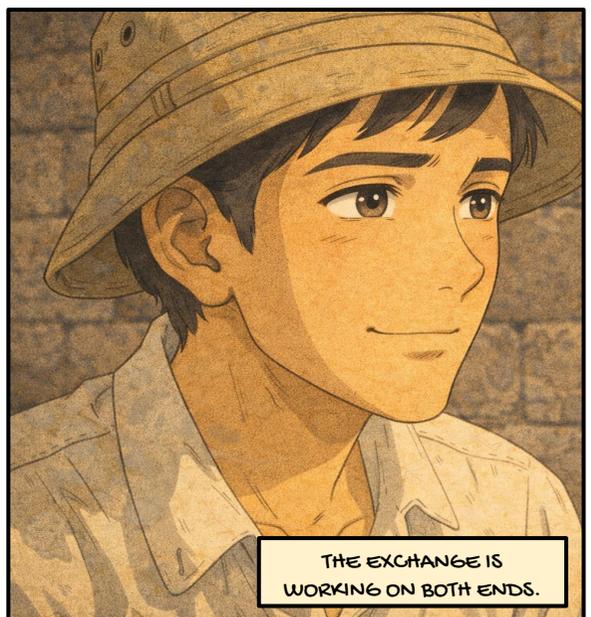
EVERY WEEK, MARCUS SENDS A COORDINATE. EVERY WEEK, WE DIG. THE ANXIETY IS GONE, REPLACED BY A ROUTINE OF MIRACLES.



WE AREN'T JUST FINDING OBJECTS. WE'RE FINDING IDEAS.



A COMPLETED AENEID. AN ALTERNATE ENDING WHERE THE REFUGEE BECOMES THE BUILDER, NOT THE CONQUEROR.



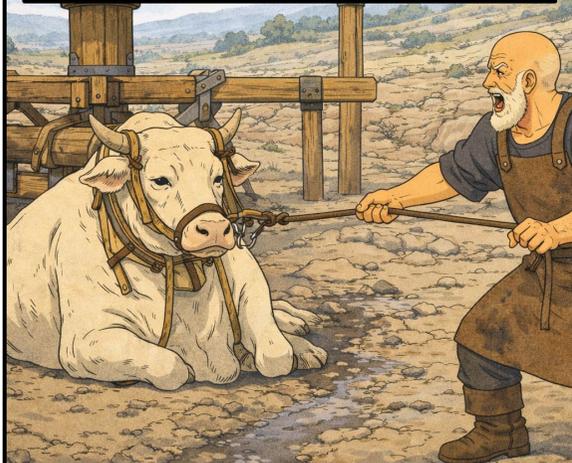
THE EXCHANGE IS WORKING ON BOTH ENDS.

FOR A TIME, WE TRIED TO POWER OUR NEW SPINNERS AND LOOMS WITH WHATEVER WE HAVE AROUND.

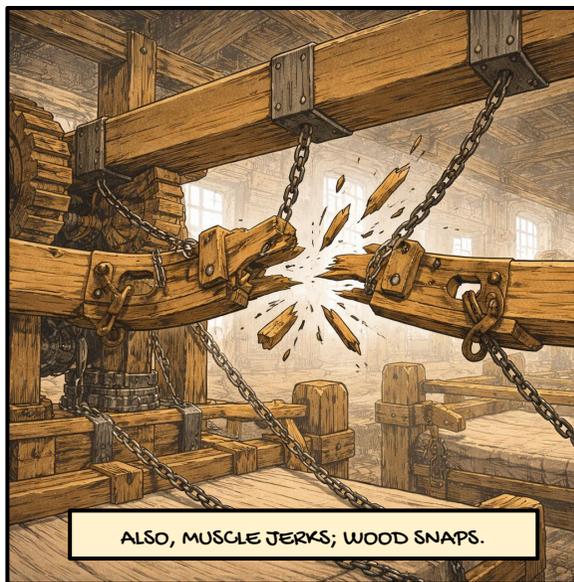
SCALING HAS REACHED A DEAD END. A COLLISION OF MISFORTUNE AND MECHANICS;

THE STREAMS HAVE BETRAYED US. THE ASH CHOKED THE FLOW.

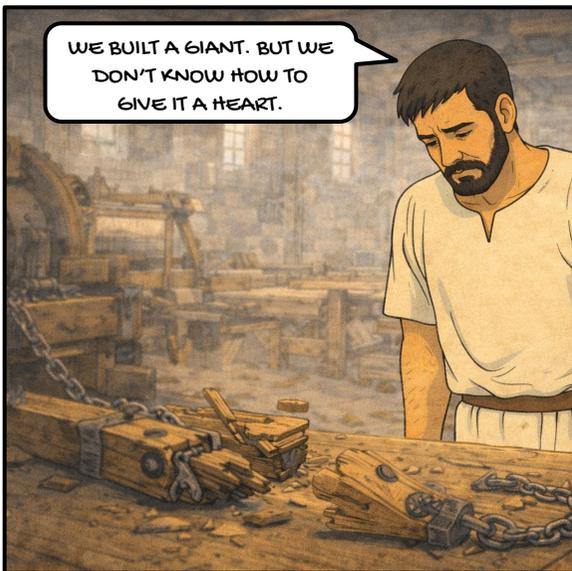
THE BEASTS ARE STRONG, BUT THEY ARE STUBBORN. AND THEY EAT THE GRAIN WE ARE TRYING TO BUY.



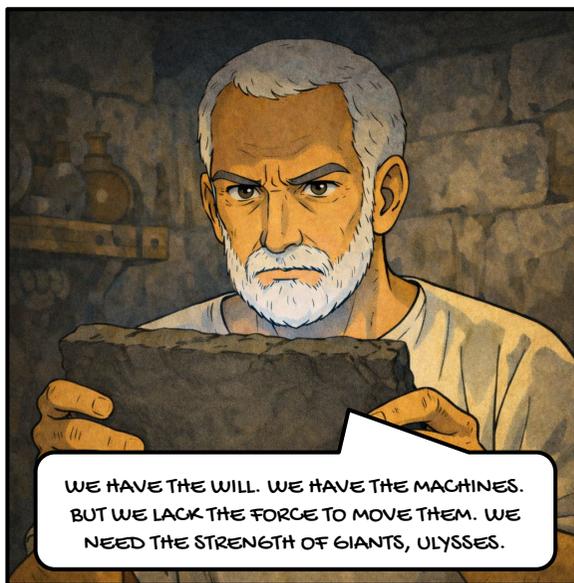
ALSO, MUSCLE JERKS; WOOD SNAPS.

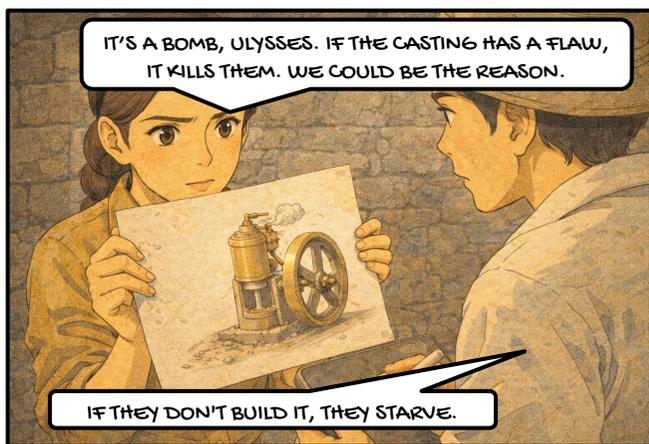
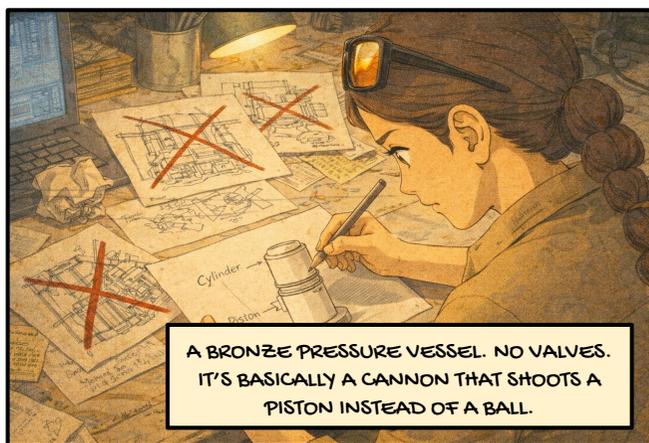
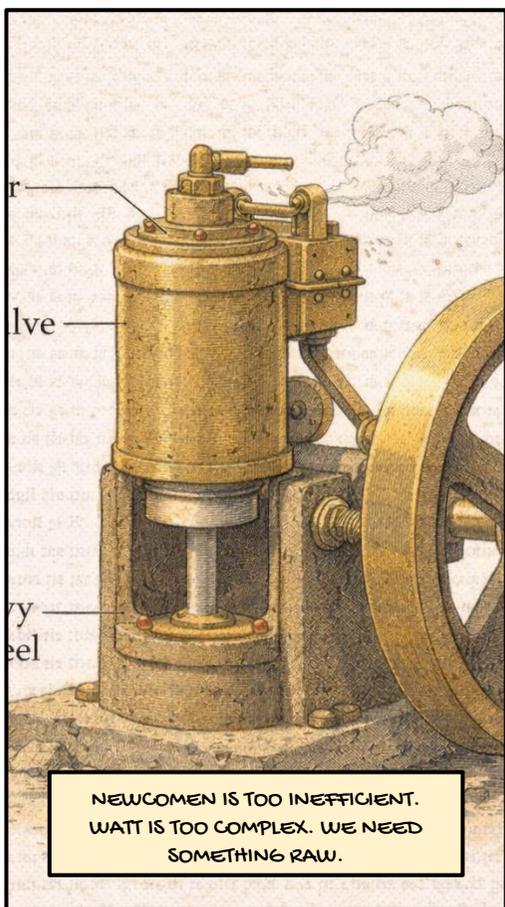
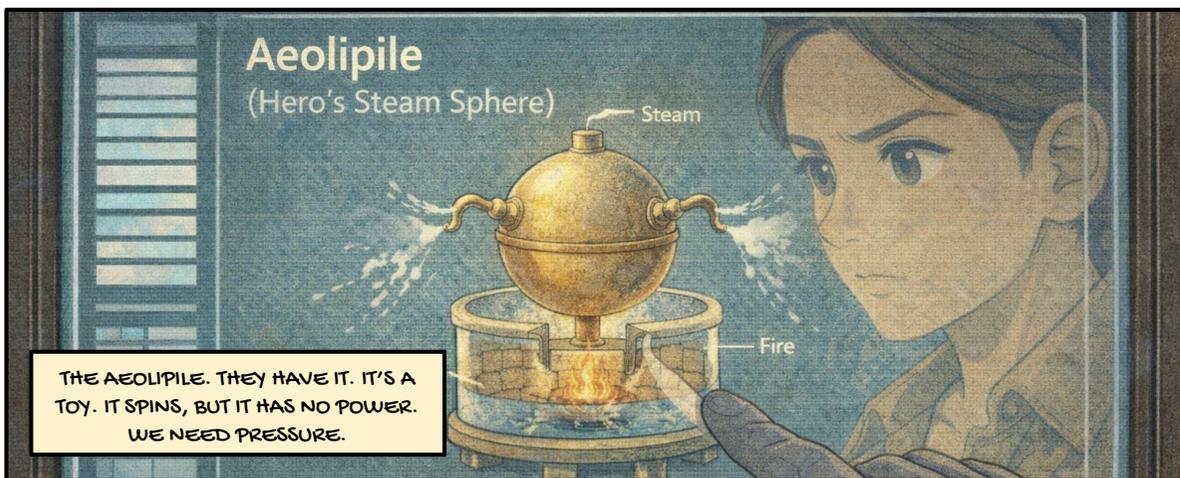


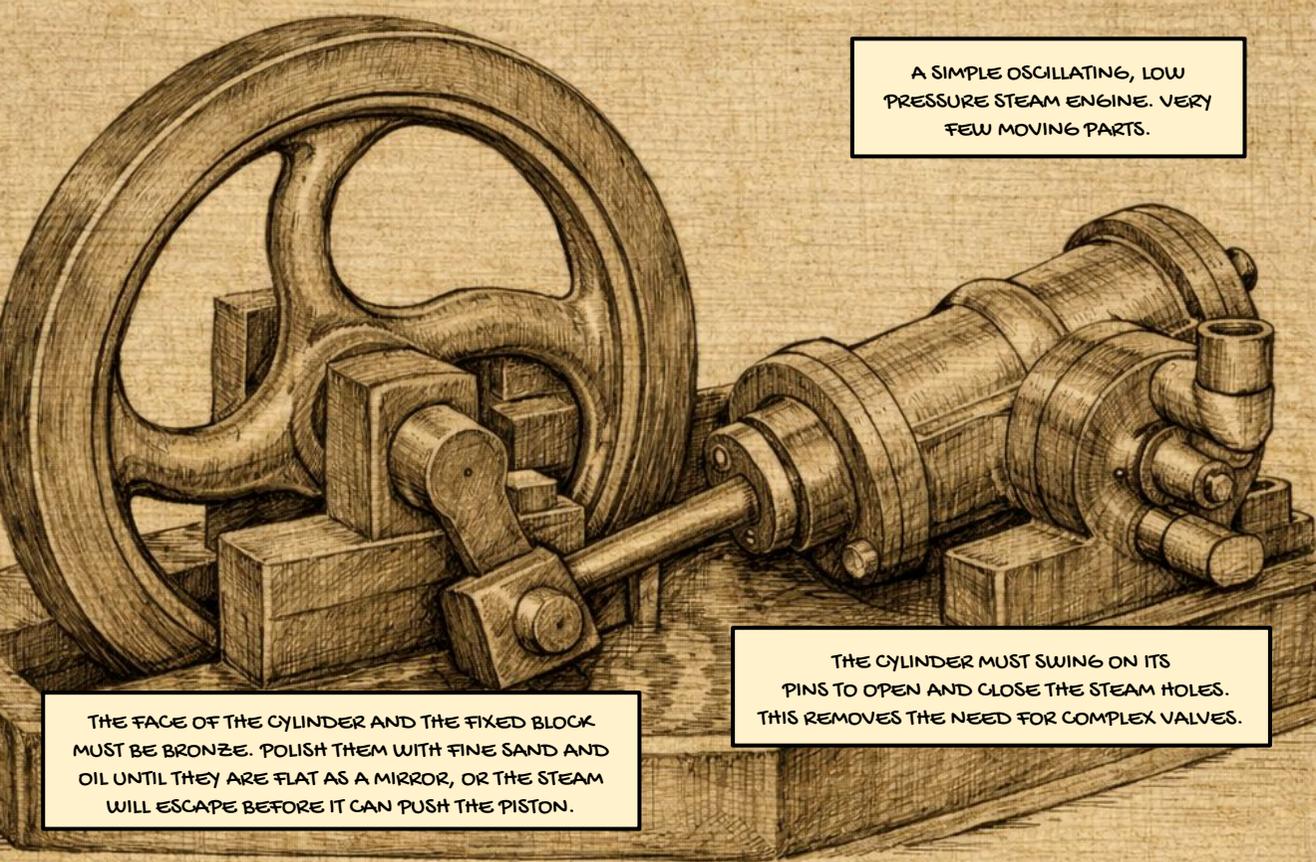
WE BUILT A GIANT. BUT WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO GIVE IT A HEART.



WE HAVE THE WILL. WE HAVE THE MACHINES. BUT WE LACK THE FORCE TO MOVE THEM. WE NEED THE STRENGTH OF GIANTS, ULYSSES.



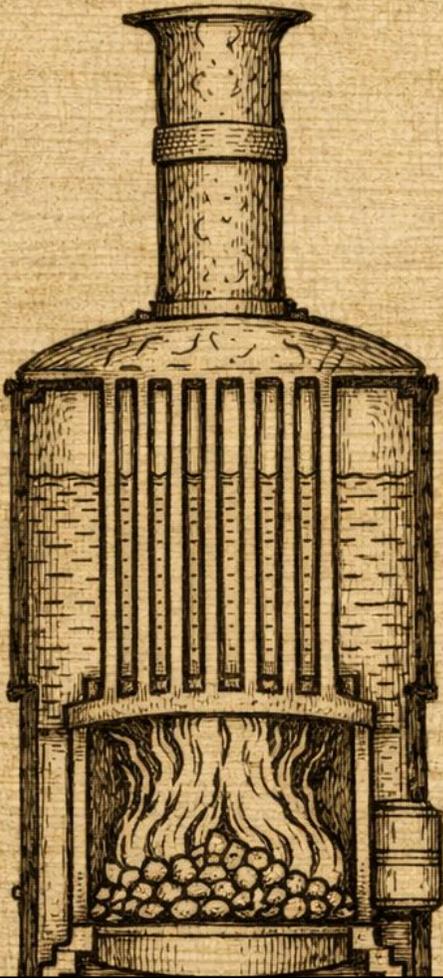




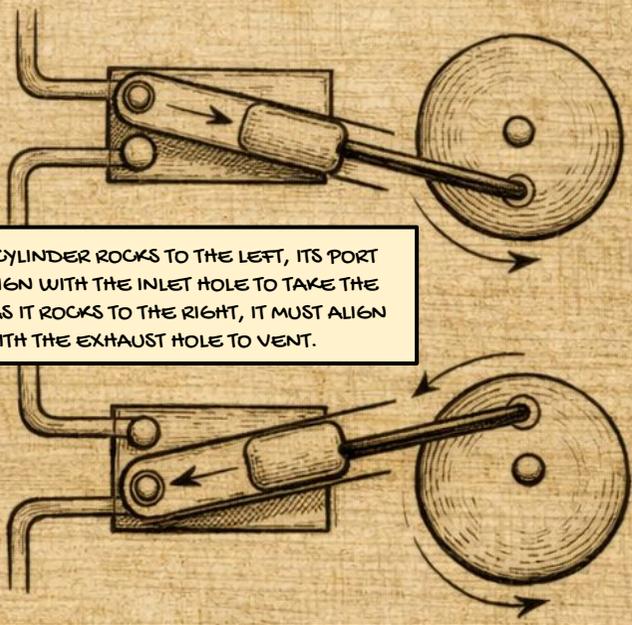
A SIMPLE OSCILLATING, LOW PRESSURE STEAM ENGINE. VERY FEW MOVING PARTS.

THE FACE OF THE CYLINDER AND THE FIXED BLOCK MUST BE BRONZE. POLISH THEM WITH FINE SAND AND OIL UNTIL THEY ARE FLAT AS A MIRROR, OR THE STEAM WILL ESCAPE BEFORE IT CAN PUSH THE PISTON.

THE CYLINDER MUST SWING ON ITS PINS TO OPEN AND CLOSE THE STEAM HOLES. THIS REMOVES THE NEED FOR COMPLEX VALVES.



BUILD THE BOILER AS A VERTICAL COPPER CYLINDER BOUND IN IRON HOOPS. THE FIRE SITS AT THE BASE, AND THE HEAT MUST RISE THROUGH THE WATER.

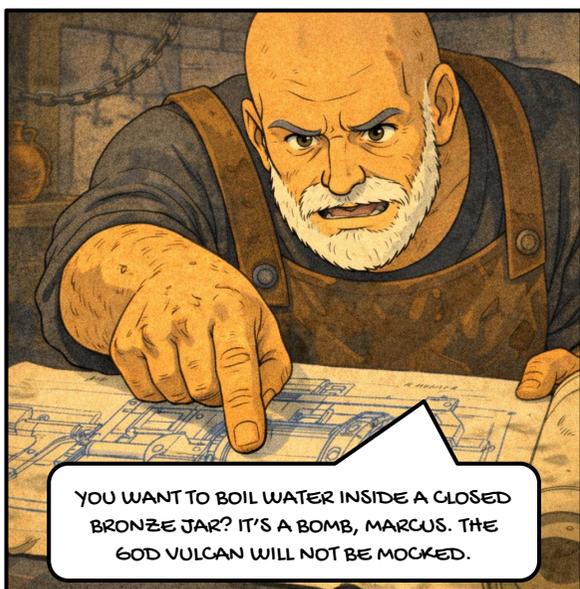


AS THE CYLINDER ROCKS TO THE LEFT, ITS PORT MUST ALIGN WITH THE INLET HOLE TO TAKE THE STEAM. AS IT ROCKS TO THE RIGHT, IT MUST ALIGN WITH THE EXHAUST HOLE TO VENT.

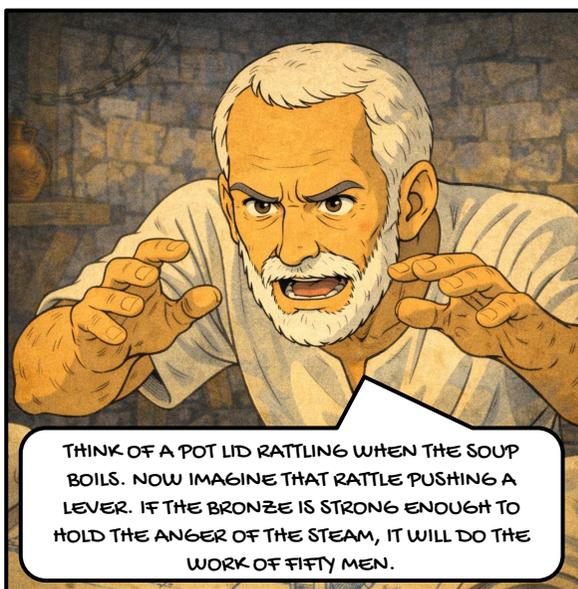
THE CYLINDER WANTS TO STOP AT THE TOP AND BOTTOM OF EVERY STROKE WHERE THE PUSH IS WEAKEST. YOU MUST BUILD A HEAVY FLYWHEEL OF WOOD BOUND IN IRON. ITS WEIGHT ACTS AS THE ENGINE'S MEMORY, CARRYING THE CRANK THROUGH THESE "DEAD" SPOTS SO THE PADDLE WHEELS TURN IN A STEADY, UNBROKEN RHYTHM.



IT'S NOT MAGIC. IT'S EXPANSION. WATER TURNS TO STEAM, STEAM PUSHES THE PISTON.



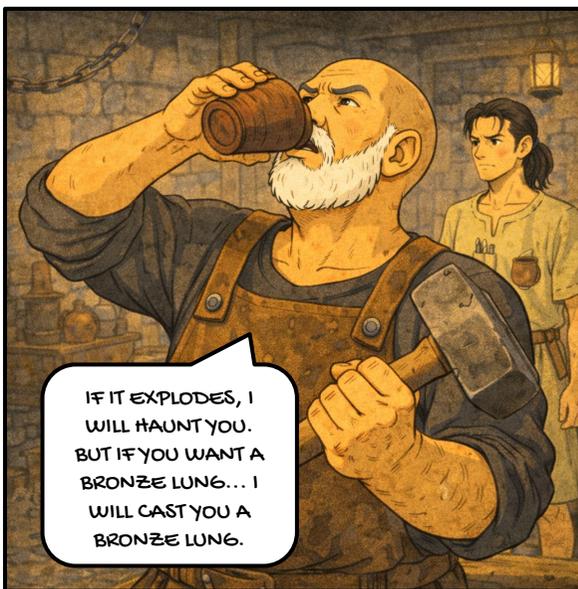
YOU WANT TO BOIL WATER INSIDE A CLOSED BRONZE JAR? IT'S A BOMB, MARCUS. THE GOD VULCAN WILL NOT BE MOCKED.



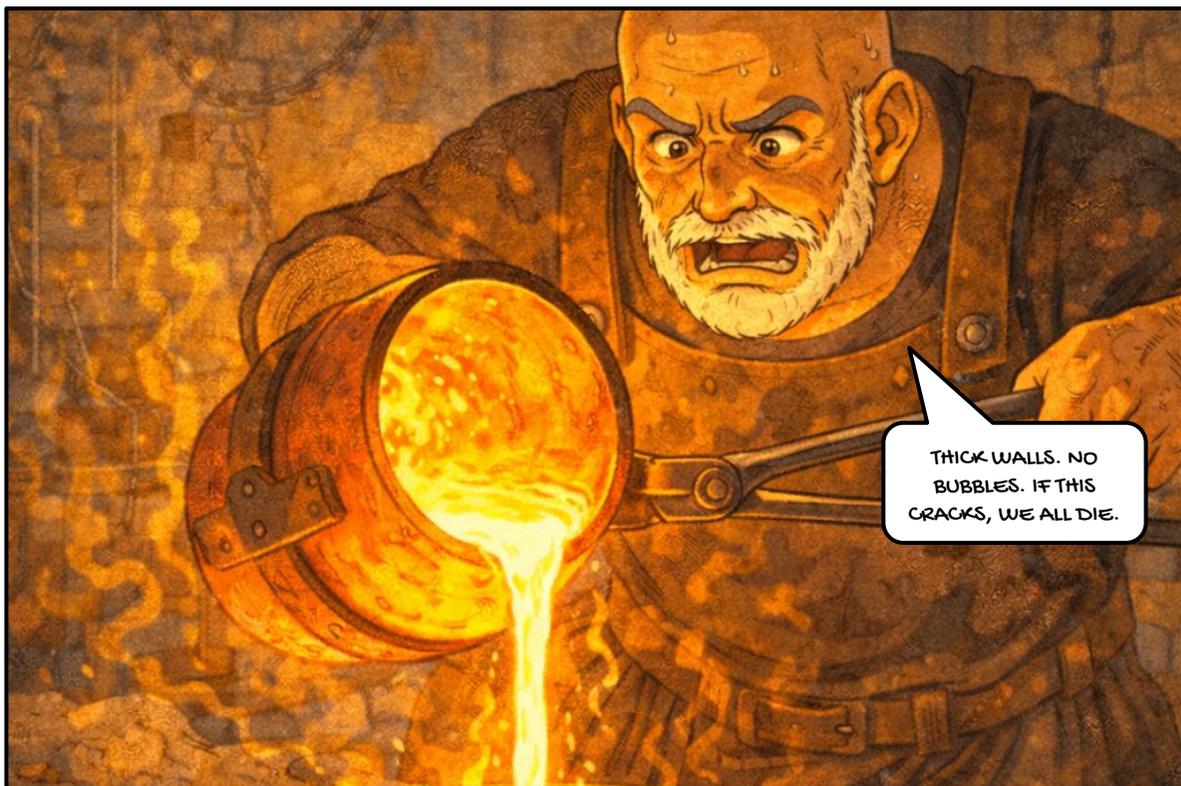
THINK OF A POT LID RATTLING WHEN THE SOUP BOILS. NOW IMAGINE THAT RATTLE PUSHING A LEVER. IF THE BRONZE IS STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD THE ANGER OF THE STEAM, IT WILL DO THE WORK OF FIFTY MEN.



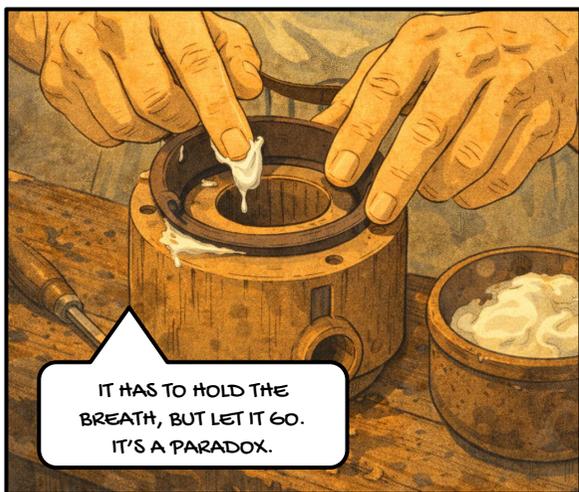
IT NEEDS TO BREATHE. INTAKE HERE. EXHAUST HERE. IT'S... IT'S LIKE A LUNG MADE OF IRON.



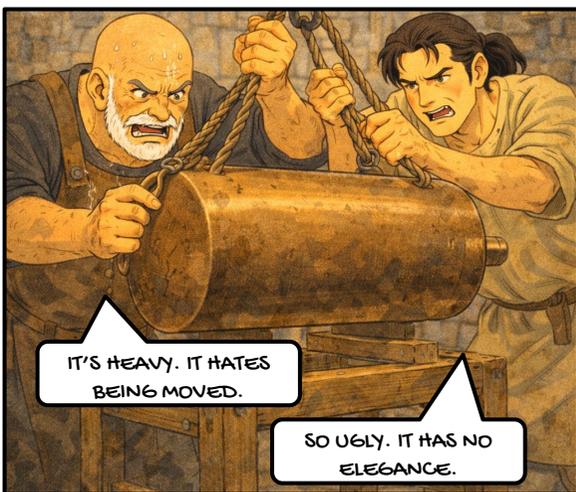
IF IT EXPLODES, I WILL HAUNT YOU. BUT IF YOU WANT A BRONZE LUNG... I WILL CAST YOU A BRONZE LUNG.



THICK WALLS. NO BUBBLES. IF THIS CRACKS, WE ALL DIE.

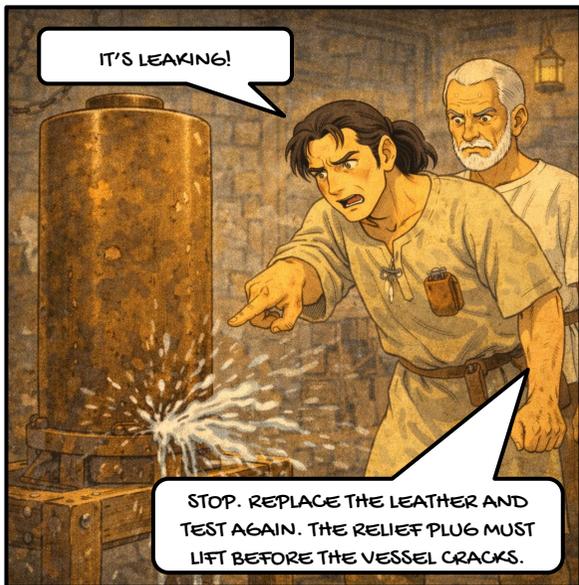


IT HAS TO HOLD THE BREATH, BUT LET IT GO. IT'S A PARADOX.



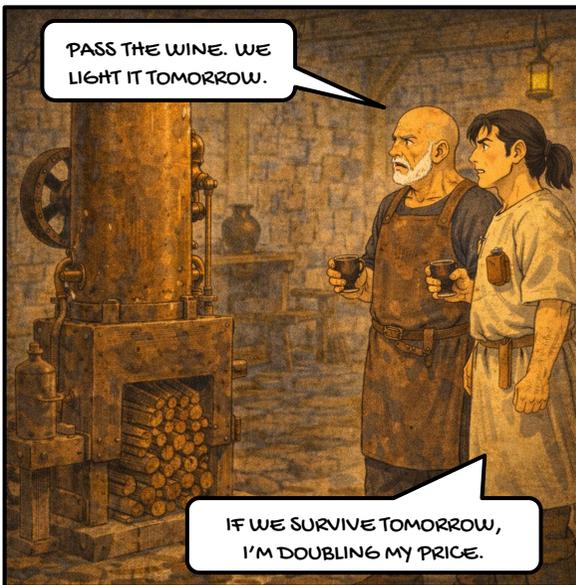
IT'S HEAVY. IT HATES BEING MOVED.

SO UGLY. IT HAS NO ELEGANCE.



IT'S LEAKING!

STOP. REPLACE THE LEATHER AND TEST AGAIN. THE RELIEF PLUG MUST LIFT BEFORE THE VESSEL CRACKS.

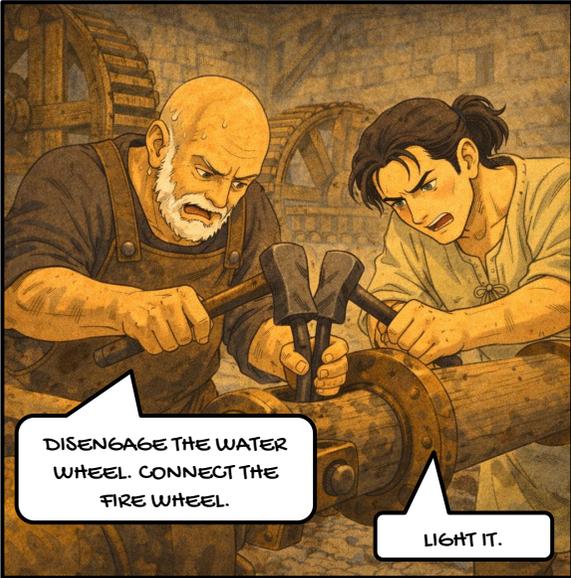


PASS THE WINE. WE LIGHT IT TOMORROW.

IF WE SURVIVE TOMORROW, I'M DOUBLING MY PRICE.

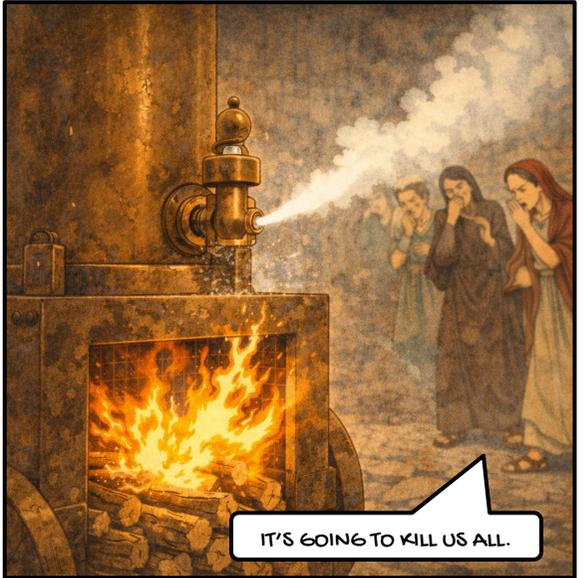


YOU BROUGHT THIS...
CAULDRON... TO A MILL? THE
RIVER TURNS THE STONES,
BLACKSMITH. NOT A POT.

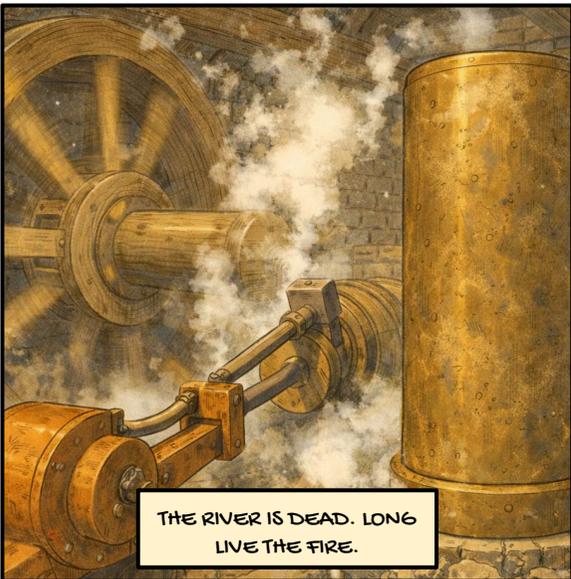


DISENGAGE THE WATER
WHEEL. CONNECT THE
FIRE WHEEL.

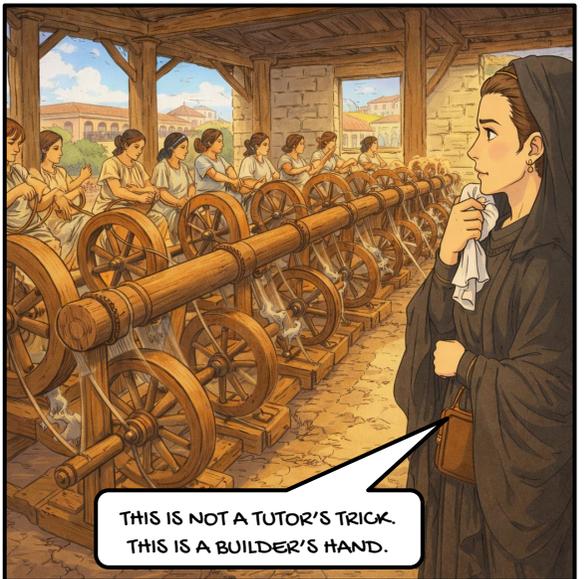
LIGHT IT.



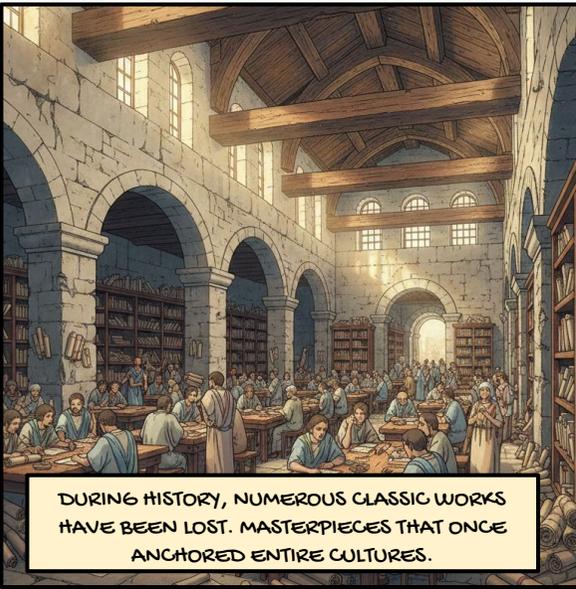
IT'S GOING TO KILL US ALL.



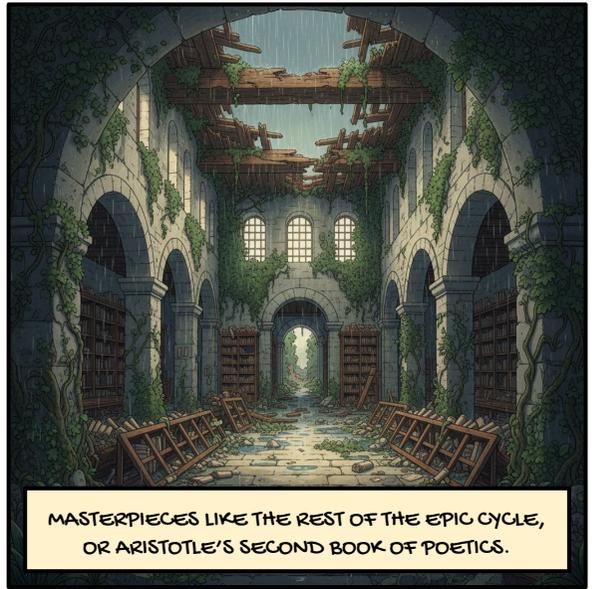
THE RIVER IS DEAD. LONG
LIVE THE FIRE.



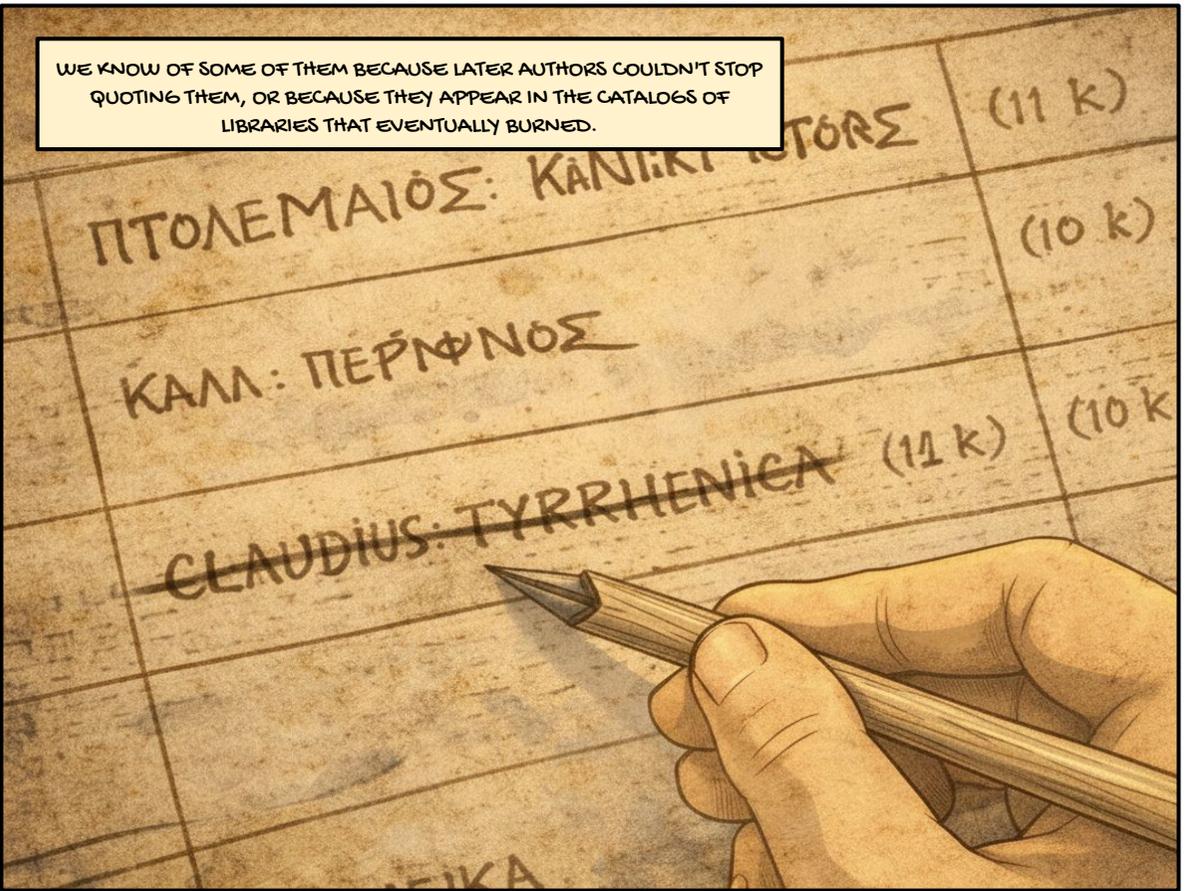
THIS IS NOT A TUTOR'S TRICK.
THIS IS A BUILDER'S HAND.



DURING HISTORY, NUMEROUS CLASSIC WORKS HAVE BEEN LOST. MASTERPIECES THAT ONCE ANCHORED ENTIRE CULTURES.

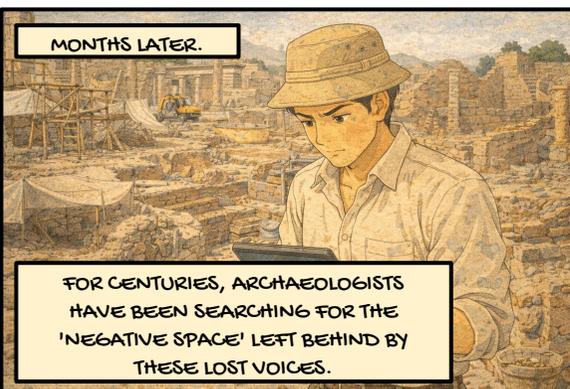


MASTERPIECES LIKE THE REST OF THE EPIC CYCLE, OR ARISTOTLE'S SECOND BOOK OF POETICS.



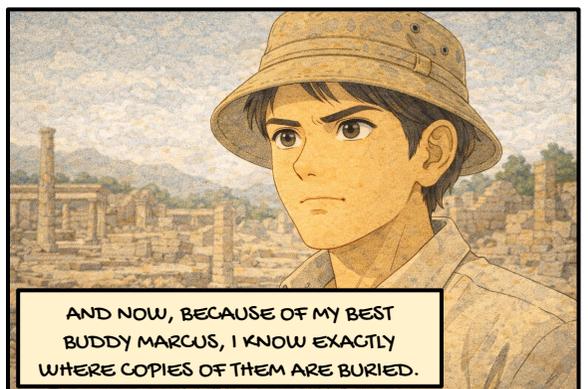
WE KNOW OF SOME OF THEM BECAUSE LATER AUTHORS COULDN'T STOP QUOTING THEM, OR BECAUSE THEY APPEAR IN THE CATALOGS OF LIBRARIES THAT EVENTUALLY BURNED.

ΠΤΟΛΕΜΑΙΟΣ: ΚΑΝΙΚΗ ΤΟΡΟΣ (11 k)
ΚΑΛΛ: ΠΕΡΦΝΟΣ (10 k)
~~CLAUDIUS: TYRRHENICA~~ (11 k) (10 k)



MONTHS LATER.

FOR CENTURIES, ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR THE 'NEGATIVE SPACE' LEFT BEHIND BY THESE LOST VOICES.

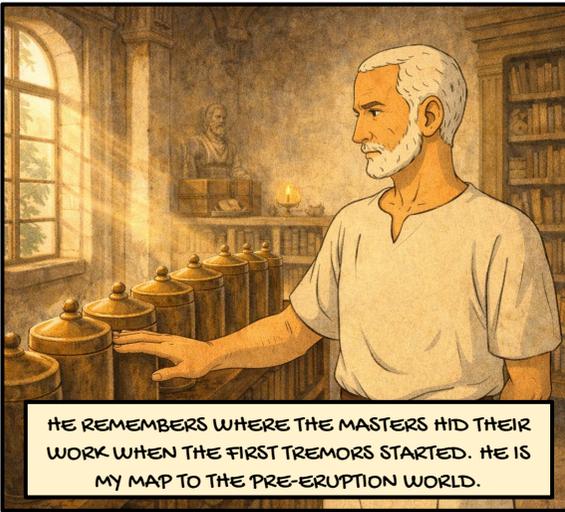


AND NOW, BECAUSE OF MY BEST BUDDY MARCUS, I KNOW EXACTLY WHERE COPIES OF THEM ARE BURIED.

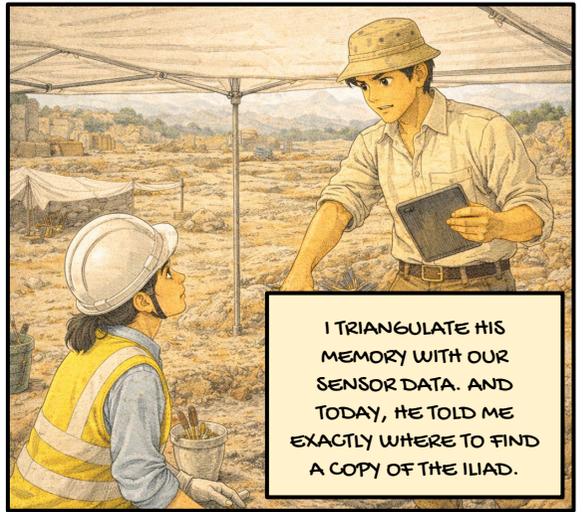
MARCUS PROVIDES THE LANDMARKS. LANDMARKS THAT NO LONGER EXIST ON THE MAPS. 'THE HOUSE OF THE SCHOLAR, THREE DOORS DOWN FROM THE WELL.'



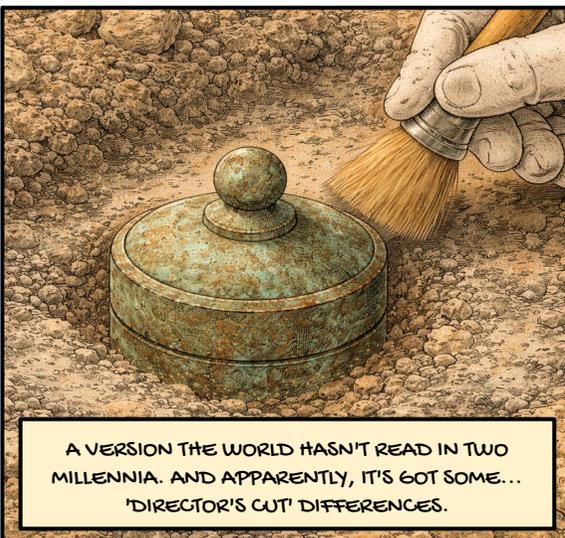
HE REMEMBERS WHERE THE MASTERS HID THEIR WORK WHEN THE FIRST TREMORS STARTED. HE IS MY MAP TO THE PRE-ERUPTION WORLD.



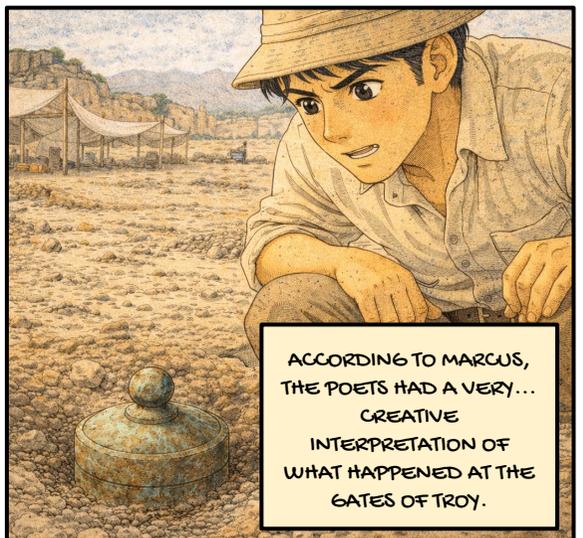
I TRIANGULATE HIS MEMORY WITH OUR SENSOR DATA. AND TODAY, HE TOLD ME EXACTLY WHERE TO FIND A COPY OF THE ILIAD.



A VERSION THE WORLD HASN'T READ IN TWO MILLENNIA. AND APPARENTLY, IT'S GOT SOME... 'DIRECTOR'S CUT' DIFFERENCES.



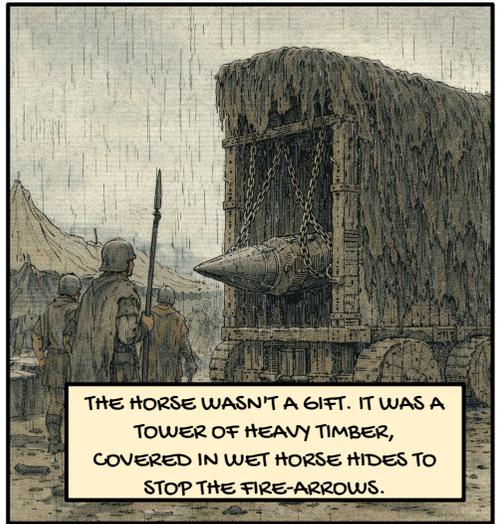
ACCORDING TO MARCUS, THE POETS HAD A VERY... CREATIVE INTERPRETATION OF WHAT HAPPENED AT THE GATES OF TROY.



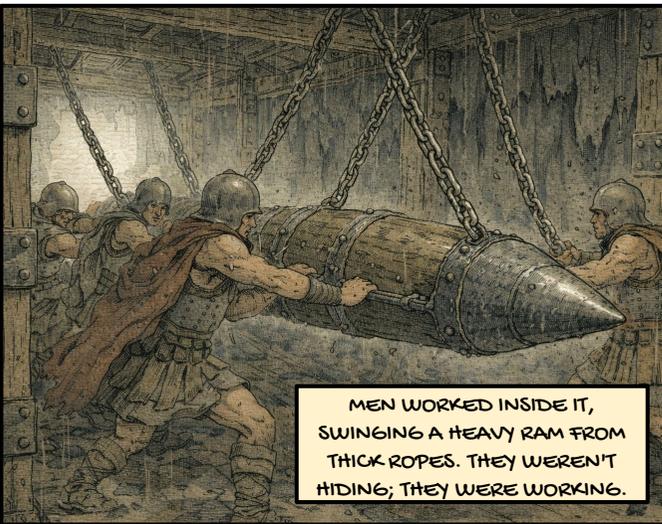
MARCUS TOLD ME THE STORY WAS DIFFERENT. IN THIS VERSION, NO GODS STEPPED DOWN FROM OLYMPUS. NO DIVINE SHIELDS WERE FORGED. IT WAS JUST A LONG, COLD WAR OF ATTRITION.



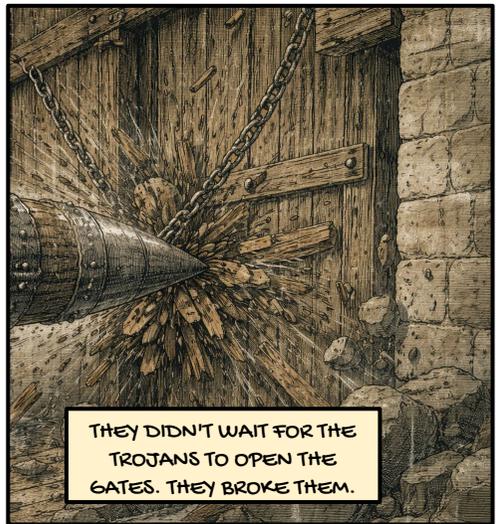
THE HORSE WASN'T A GIFT. IT WAS A TOWER OF HEAVY TIMBER, COVERED IN WET HORSE HIDES TO STOP THE FIRE-ARROWS.



MEN WORKED INSIDE IT, SWINGING A HEAVY RAM FROM THICK ROPES. THEY WEREN'T HIDING; THEY WERE WORKING.



THEY DIDN'T WAIT FOR THE TROJANS TO OPEN THE GATES. THEY BROKE THEM.



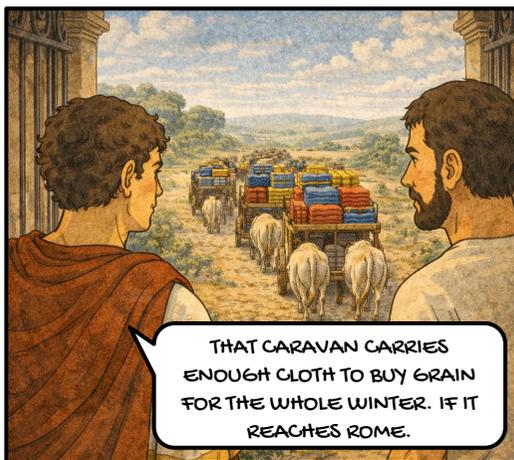
THAT IS THE VERSION THEY WROTE DOWN. THE ONE THEY KEPT IN PRIVATE LIBRARIES.



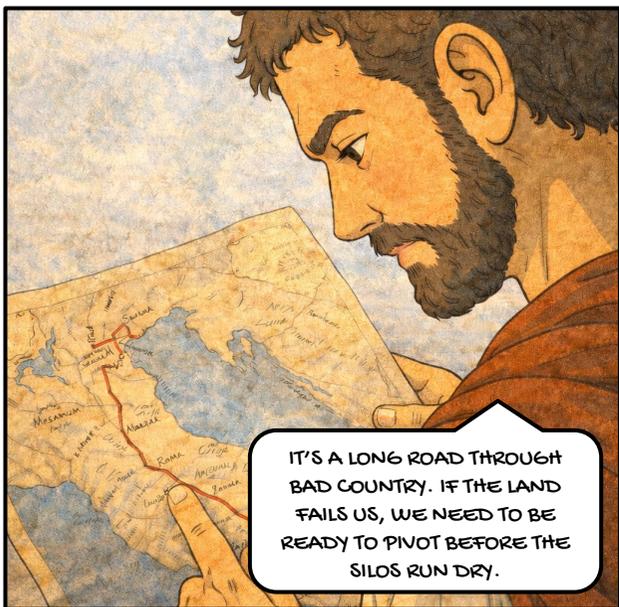
PRODUCTION HAS
OUTPACED THE WORLD.



THE RESERVES ARE HOLDING, BUT THEY ARE THIN. WE
HAVE ENOUGH FODDER FOR TWO MONTHS. AFTER
THAT... THE HERDS BEGIN TO THIN.



THAT CARAVAN CARRIES
ENOUGH CLOTH TO BUY GRAIN
FOR THE WHOLE WINTER. IF IT
REACHES ROME.



IT'S A LONG ROAD THROUGH
BAD COUNTRY. IF THE LAND
FAILS US, WE NEED TO BE
READY TO PIVOT BEFORE THE
SILOS RUN DRY.



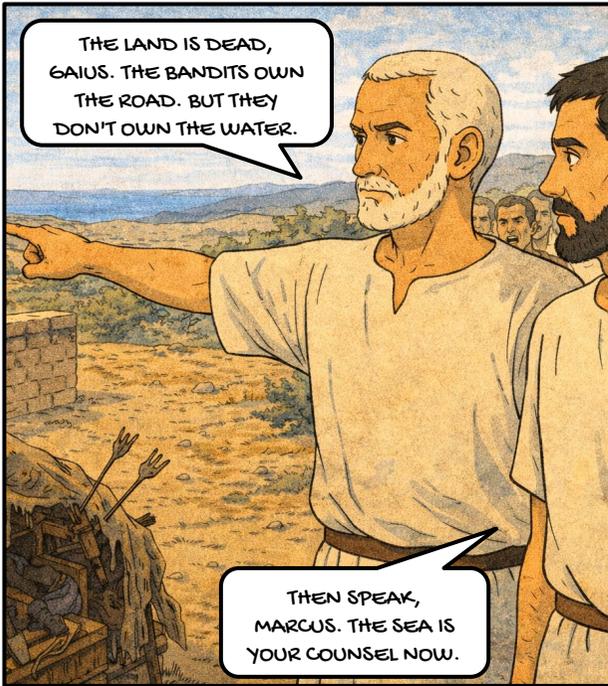
ONE LAST ROLL OF THE DICE.



BANDITS... HUNDREDS OF THEM... THEY TOOK EVERYTHING.

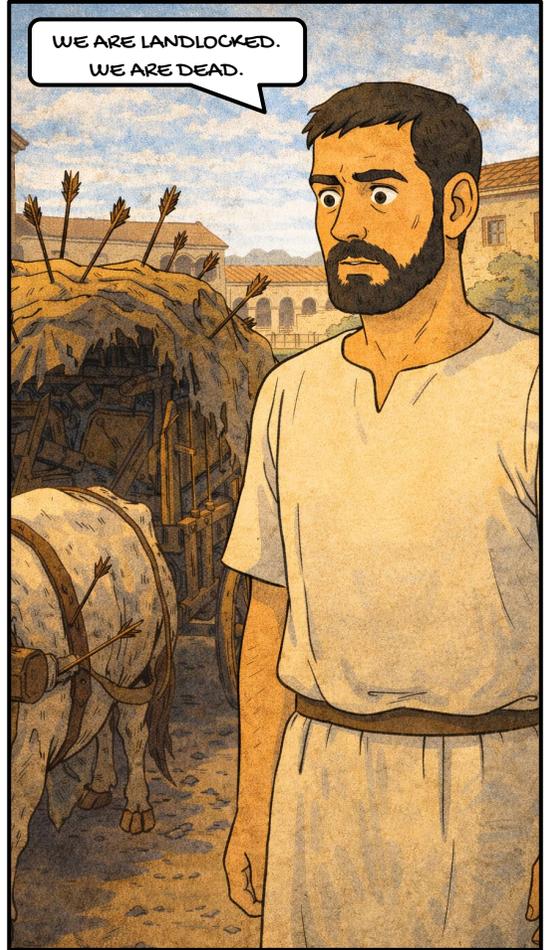


THEY LOST IT! THE SILVER IS GONE!

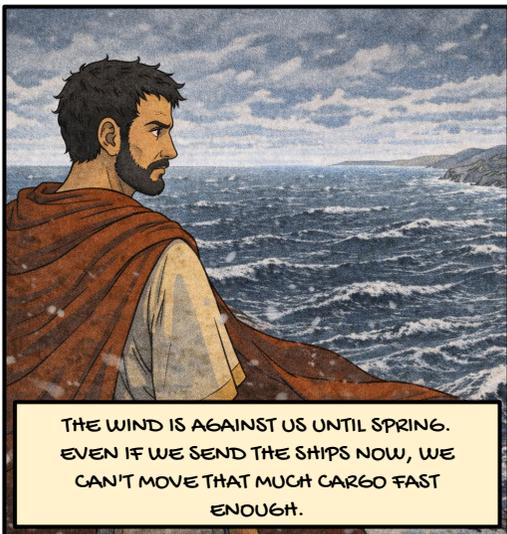


THE LAND IS DEAD, GAIVS. THE BANDITS OWN THE ROAD. BUT THEY DON'T OWN THE WATER.

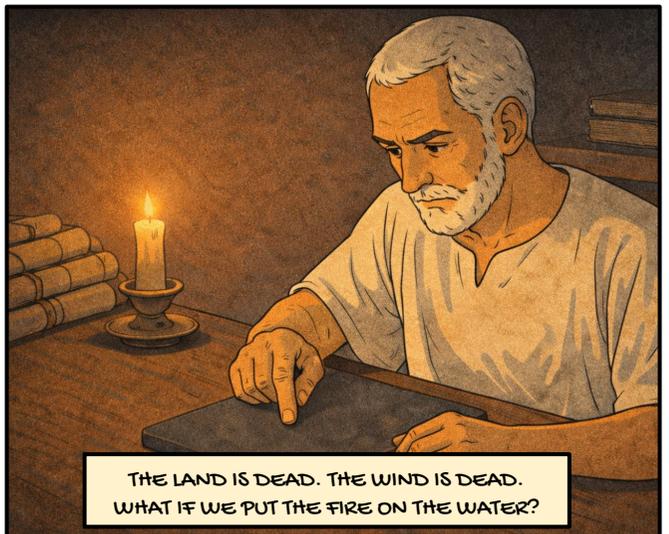
THEN SPEAK, MARCUS. THE SEA IS YOUR COUNSEL NOW.



WE ARE LANDLOCKED. WE ARE DEAD.



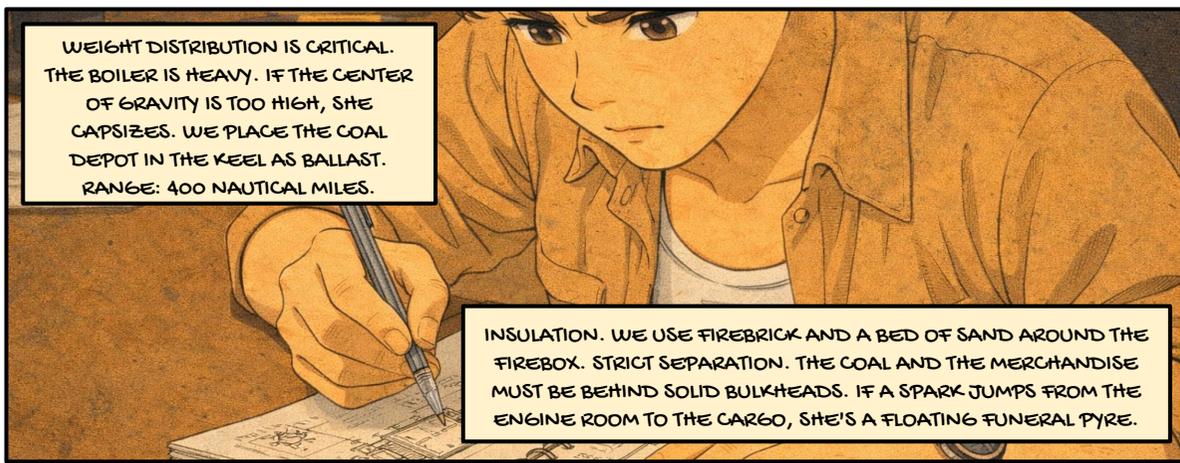
THE WIND IS AGAINST US UNTIL SPRING. EVEN IF WE SEND THE SHIPS NOW, WE CAN'T MOVE THAT MUCH CARGO FAST ENOUGH.



THE LAND IS DEAD. THE WIND IS DEAD. WHAT IF WE PUT THE FIRE ON THE WATER?

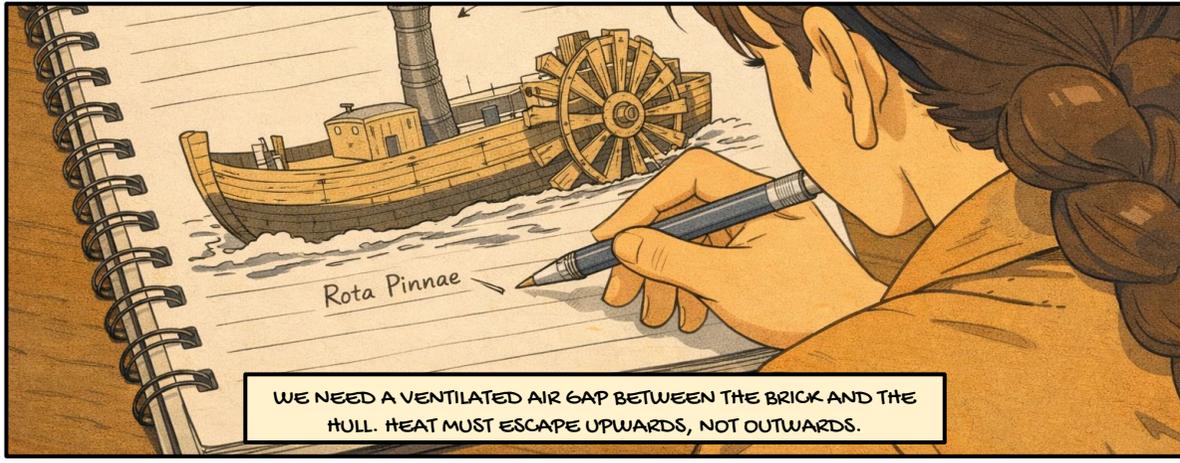


HE WANTS TO PUT THE FACTORY ENGINE ON A BOAT. THEY MIGHT END UP AT THE BOTTOM OF THE TYRRHENIAN.

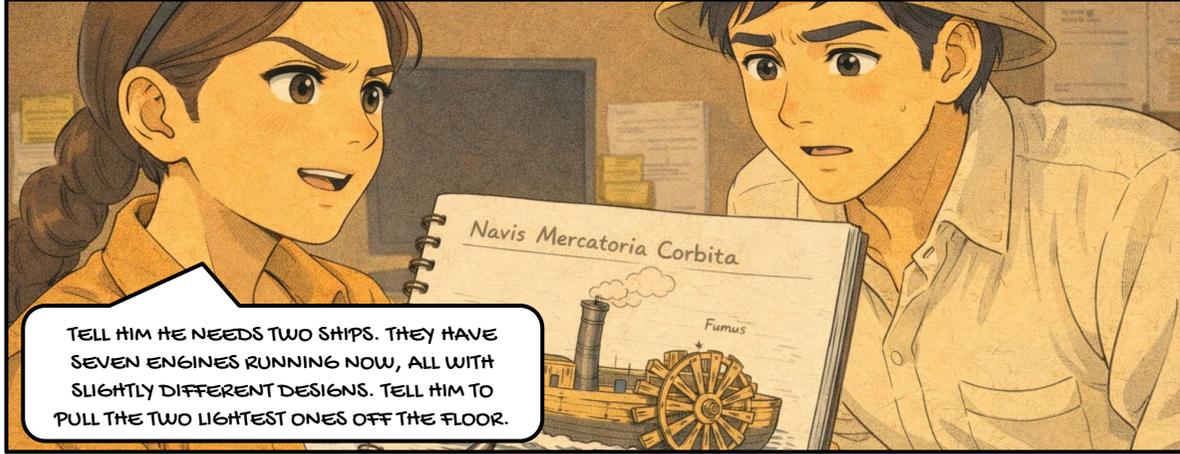


WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION IS CRITICAL. THE BOILER IS HEAVY. IF THE CENTER OF GRAVITY IS TOO HIGH, SHE CAPSIZES. WE PLACE THE COAL DEPOT IN THE KEEL AS BALLAST. RANGE: 400 NAUTICAL MILES.

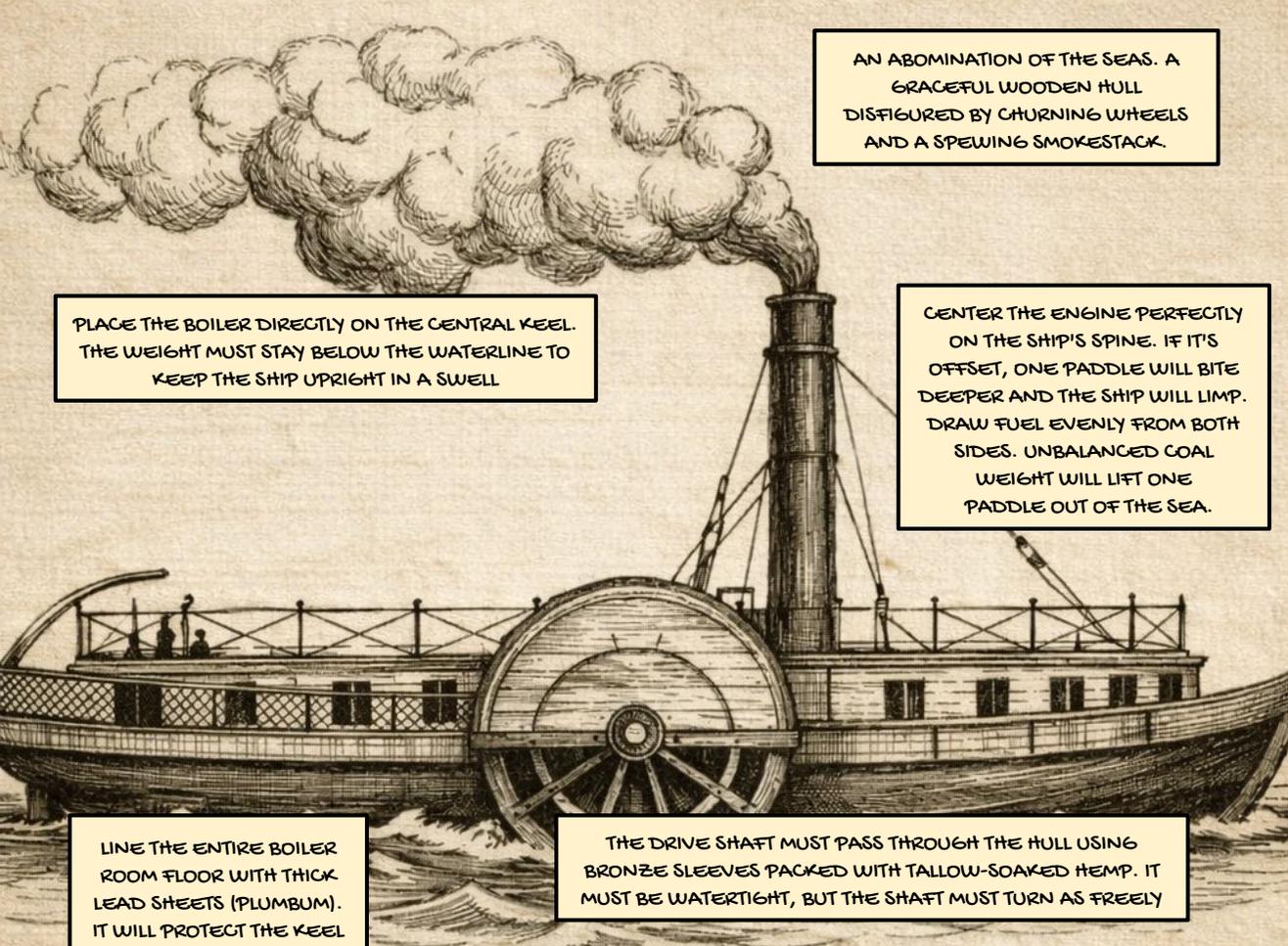
INSULATION. WE USE FIREBRICK AND A BED OF SAND AROUND THE FIREBOX. STRICT SEPARATION. THE COAL AND THE MERCHANDISE MUST BE BEHIND SOLID BULKHEADS. IF A SPARK JUMPS FROM THE ENGINE ROOM TO THE CARGO, SHE'S A FLOATING FUNERAL PYRE.



WE NEED A VENTILATED AIR GAP BETWEEN THE BRICK AND THE HULL. HEAT MUST ESCAPE UPWARDS, NOT OUTWARDS.



TELL HIM HE NEEDS TWO SHIPS. THEY HAVE SEVEN ENGINES RUNNING NOW, ALL WITH SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT DESIGNS. TELL HIM TO PULL THE TWO LIGHTEST ONES OFF THE FLOOR.



AN ABOMINATION OF THE SEAS. A GRACEFUL WOODEN HULL DISFIGURED BY CHURNING WHEELS AND A SPEWING SMOKESTACK.

PLACE THE BOILER DIRECTLY ON THE CENTRAL KEEL. THE WEIGHT MUST STAY BELOW THE WATERLINE TO KEEP THE SHIP UPRIGHT IN A SWELL

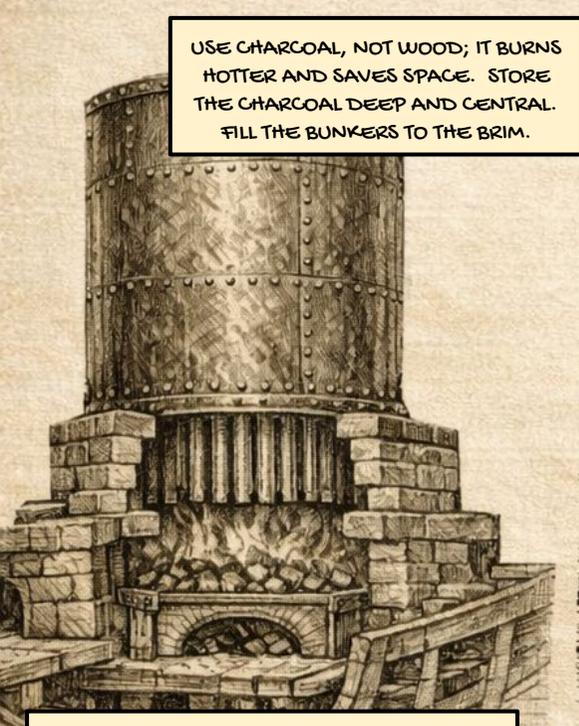
CENTER THE ENGINE PERFECTLY ON THE SHIP'S SPINE. IF IT'S OFFSET, ONE PADDLE WILL BITE DEEPER AND THE SHIP WILL LIMP. DRAW FUEL EVENLY FROM BOTH SIDES. UNBALANCED COAL WEIGHT WILL LIFT ONE PADDLE OUT OF THE SEA.

LINE THE ENTIRE BOILER ROOM FLOOR WITH THICK LEAD SHEETS (PLUMBUM). IT WILL PROTECT THE KEEL FROM HOT ASH AND HELP STABILIZE THE SHIP'S CENTER OF GRAVITY

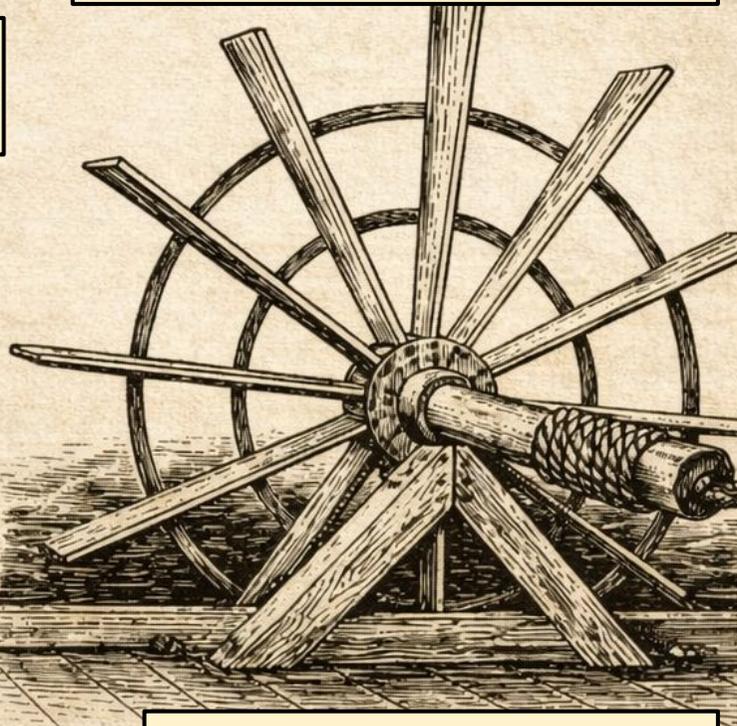
THE DRIVE SHAFT MUST PASS THROUGH THE HULL USING BRONZE SLEEVES PACKED WITH TALLOW-SOAKED HEMP. IT MUST BE WATERTIGHT, BUT THE SHAFT MUST TURN AS FREELY

THE PADDLE WHEELS MUST BE BOUND BY IRON HOOPS, NOT JUST WOOD. THE ENGINE'S PUSH IS VIOLENT; WITHOUT IRON REINFORCEMENT, THE OAK SPOKES WILL SHATTER.

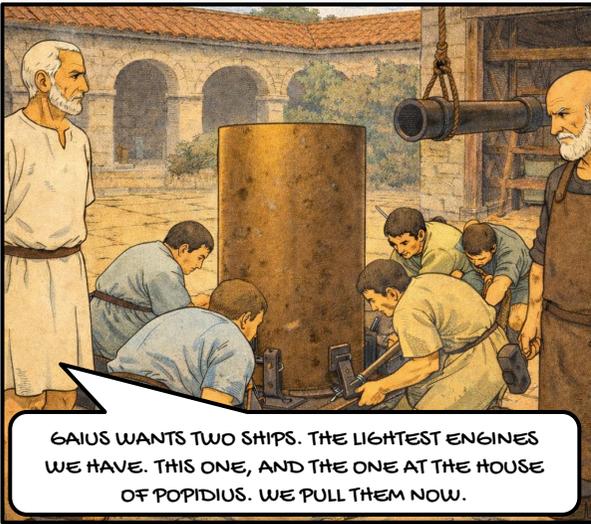
USE CHARCOAL, NOT WOOD; IT BURNS HOTTER AND SAVES SPACE. STORE THE CHARCOAL DEEP AND CENTRAL. FILL THE BUNKERS TO THE BRIM.



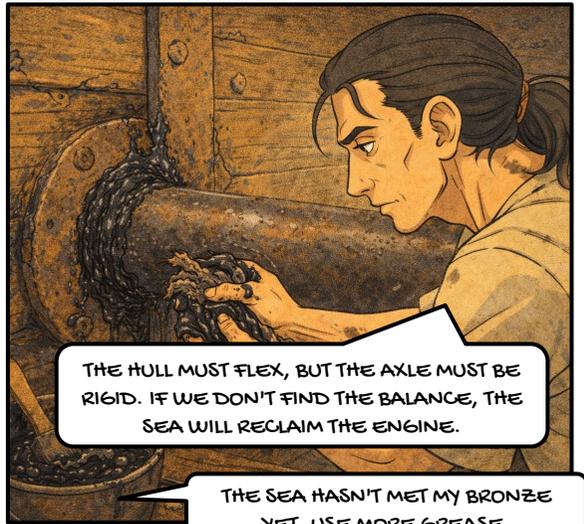
THE FIREBOX MUST NEVER TOUCH THE WOOD. LEAVE A WIDE AIR GAP BETWEEN THE BRICK FURNACE AND THE HULL RIBS.



GREASE EVERY MOVING JOINT WITH TALLOW HOURLY. A LEAK IS A LOSS OF POWER. TIGHTEN THE HEMP PACKING THE MOMENT YOU HEAR A HISS. WATCH THE WATER LEVEL AT ALL TIMES. IF THE BOILER RUNS DRY WHILE THE FIRE IS HOT, THE SHIP WILL EXPLODE. CARRY A MECHANICUS ON EVERY VOYAGE.

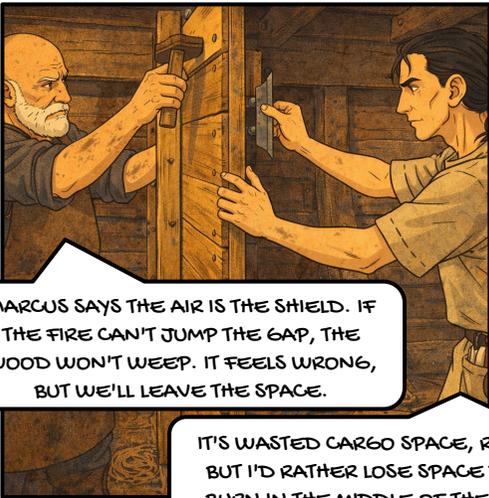


GAIUS WANTS TWO SHIPS. THE LIGHTEST ENGINES WE HAVE. THIS ONE, AND THE ONE AT THE HOUSE OF POPIDIUS. WE PULL THEM NOW.



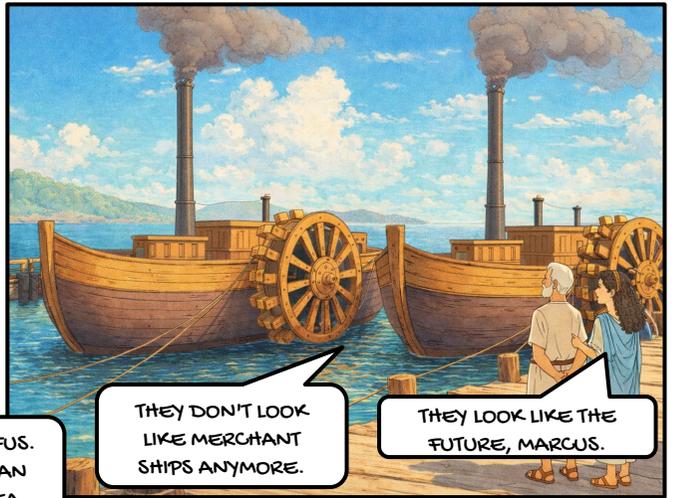
THE HULL MUST FLEX, BUT THE AXLE MUST BE RIGID. IF WE DON'T FIND THE BALANCE, THE SEA WILL RECLAIM THE ENGINE.

THE SEA HASN'T MET MY BRONZE YET. USE MORE GREASE.



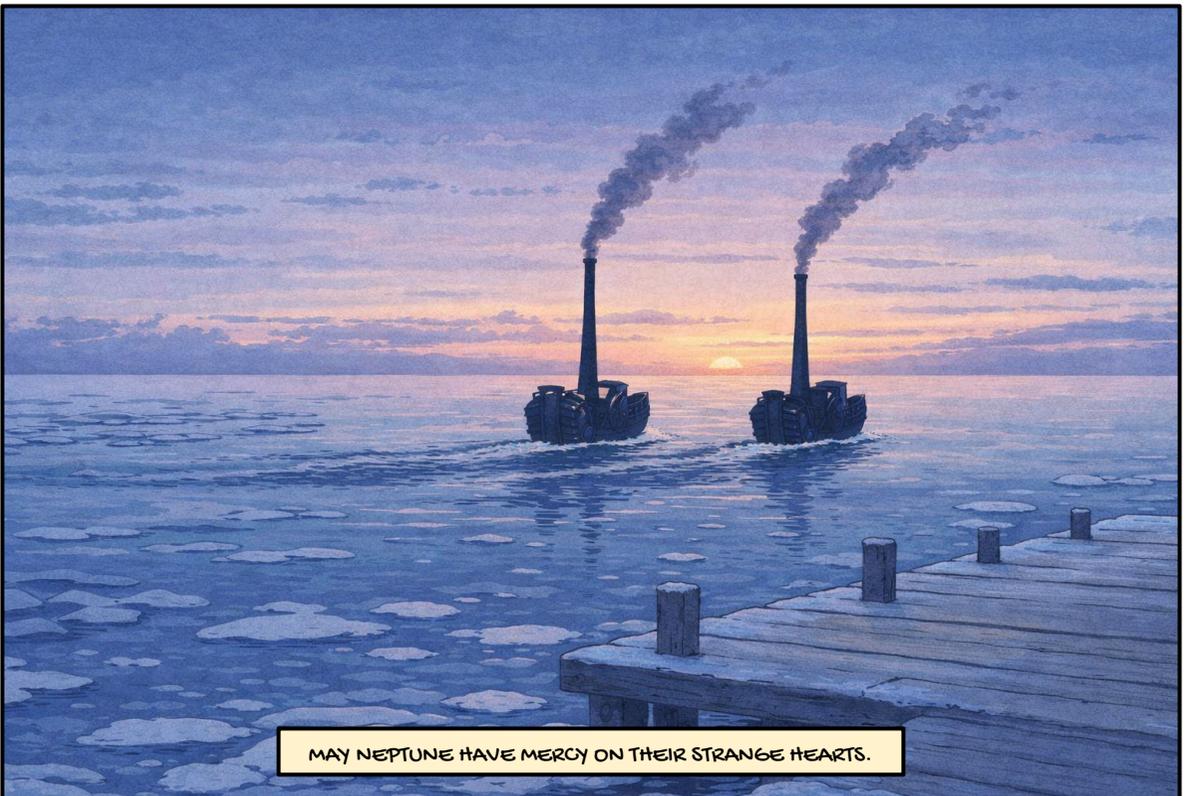
MARCUS SAYS THE AIR IS THE SHIELD. IF THE FIRE CAN'T JUMP THE GAP, THE WOOD WON'T WEEP. IT FEELS WRONG, BUT WE'LL LEAVE THE SPACE.

IT'S WASTED CARGO SPACE, RUFUS. BUT I'D RATHER LOSE SPACE THAN BURN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEA.

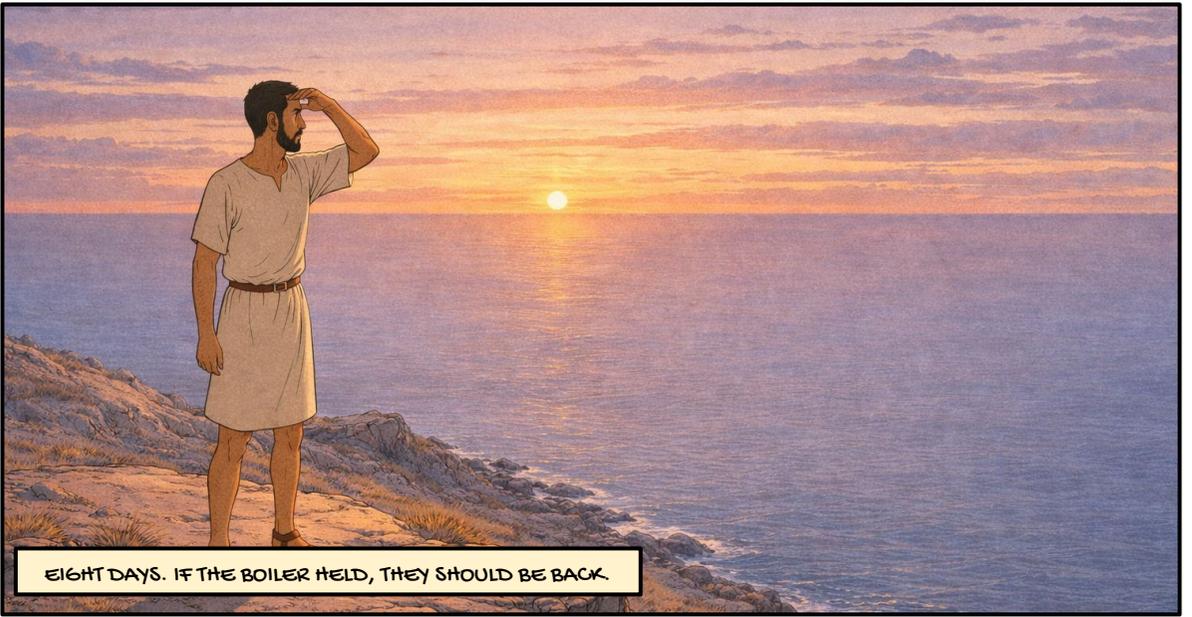


THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE MERCHANT SHIPS ANYMORE.

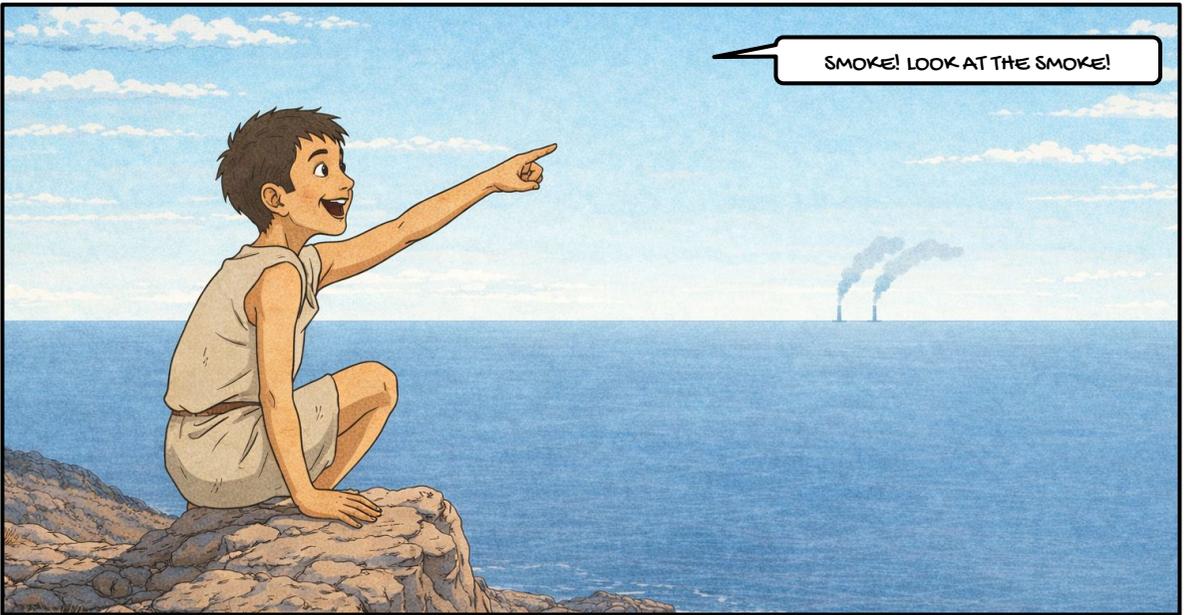
THEY LOOK LIKE THE FUTURE, MARCUS.



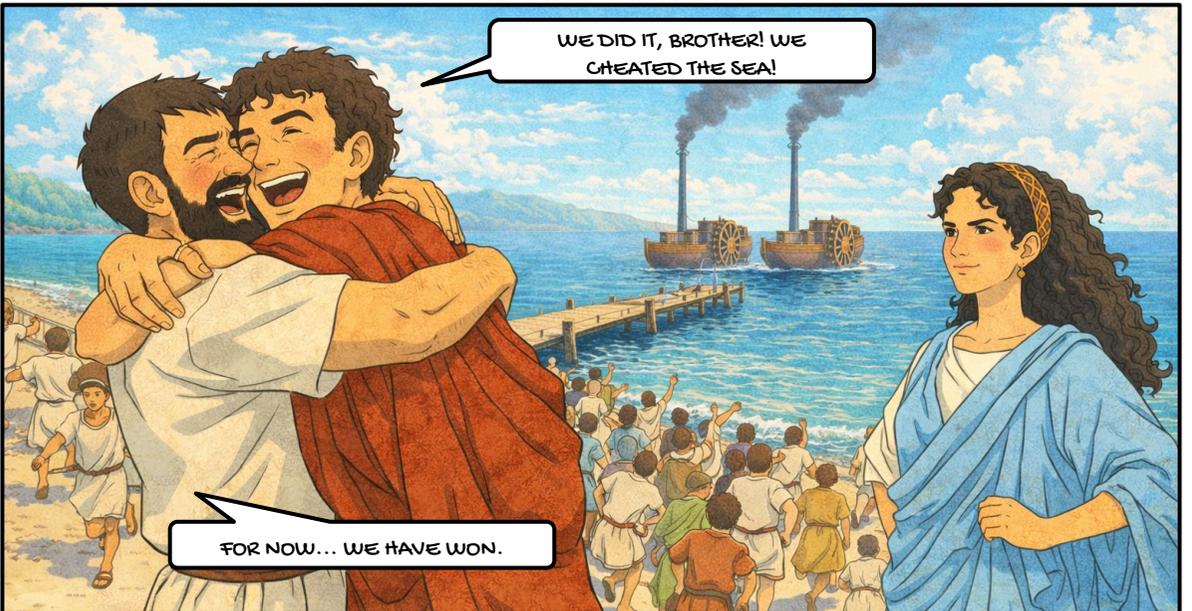
MAY NEPTUNE HAVE MERCY ON THEIR STRANGE HEARTS.



EIGHT DAYS. IF THE BOILER HELD, THEY SHOULD BE BACK.



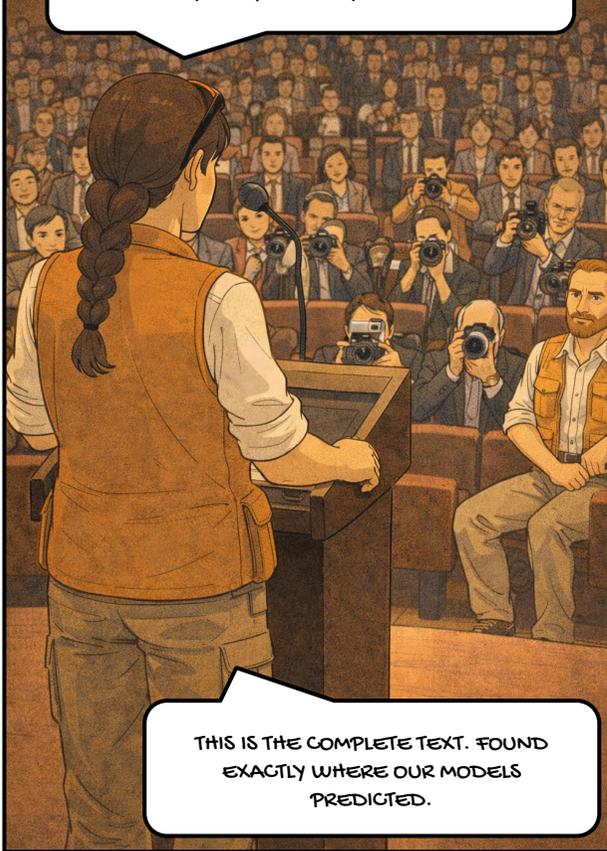
SMOKE! LOOK AT THE SMOKE!



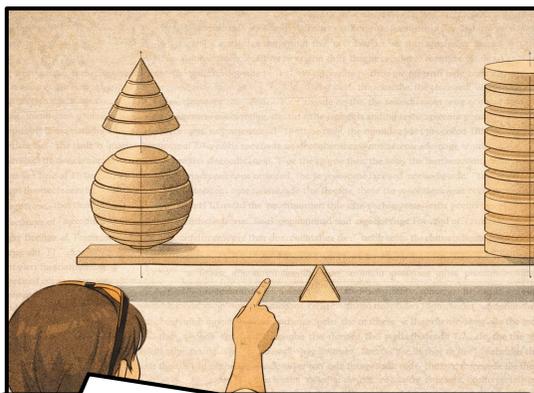
WE DID IT, BROTHER! WE CHEATED THE SEA!

FOR NOW... WE HAVE WON.

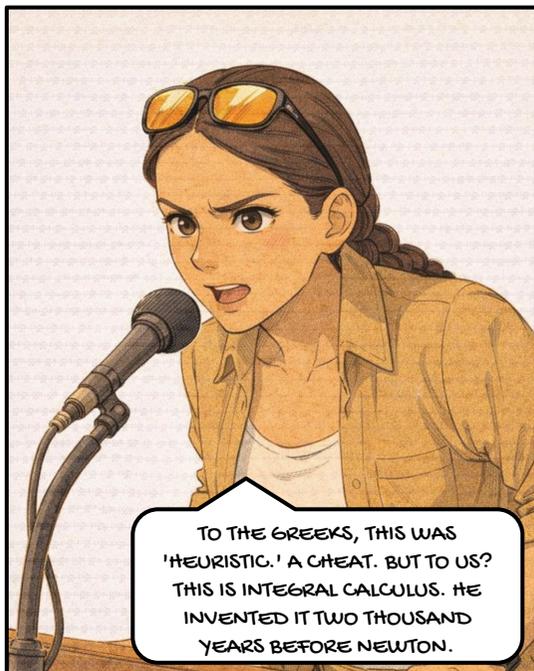
THE LOST METHOD OF ARCHIMEDES. FOR TWO THOUSAND YEARS, WE ONLY HAD FRAGMENTS.



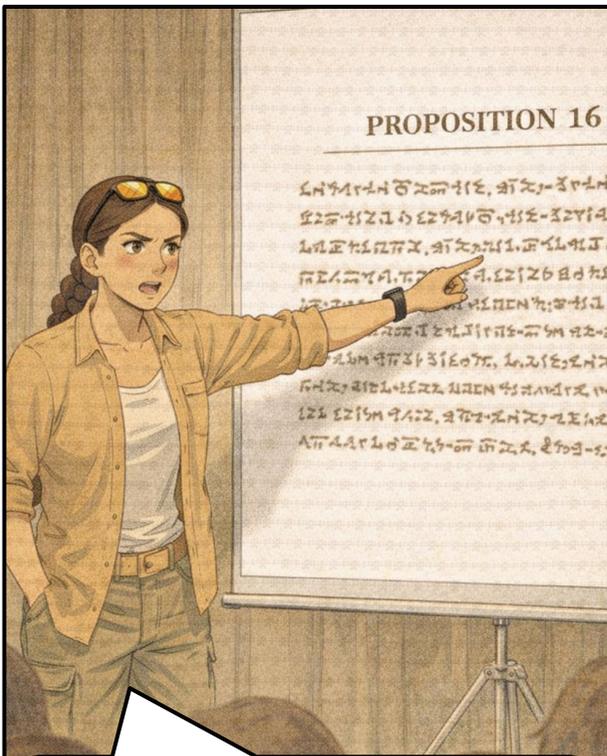
THIS IS THE COMPLETE TEXT. FOUND EXACTLY WHERE OUR MODELS PREDICTED.



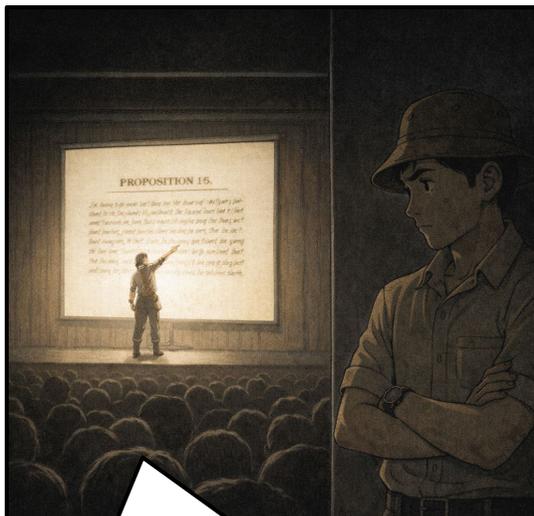
WE KNEW HE WEIGHED SHAPES TO PROVE HIS MATH. BUT THIS TEXT GOES MUCH FURTHER.



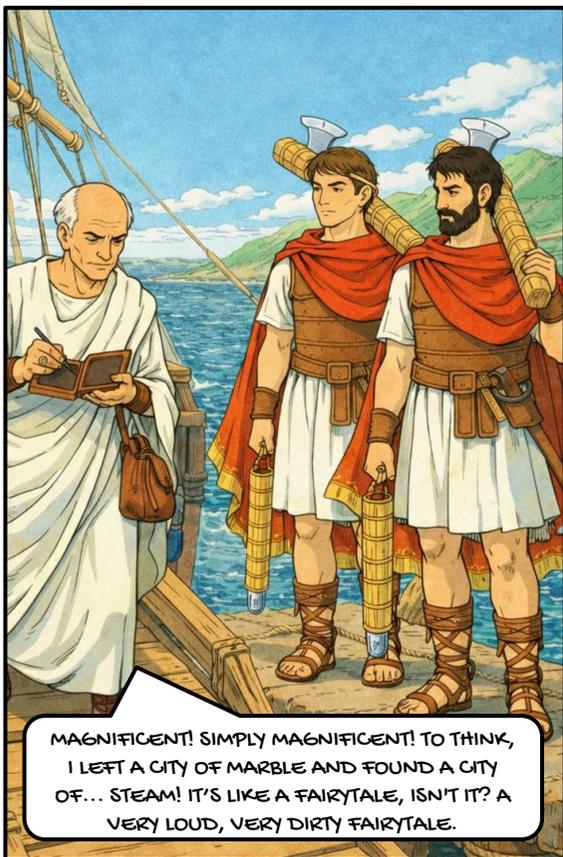
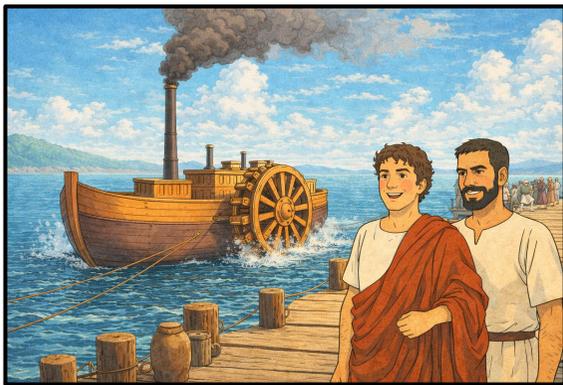
TO THE GREEKS, THIS WAS 'HEURISTIC.' A CHEAT. BUT TO US? THIS IS INTEGRAL CALCULUS. HE INVENTED IT TWO THOUSAND YEARS BEFORE NEWTON.



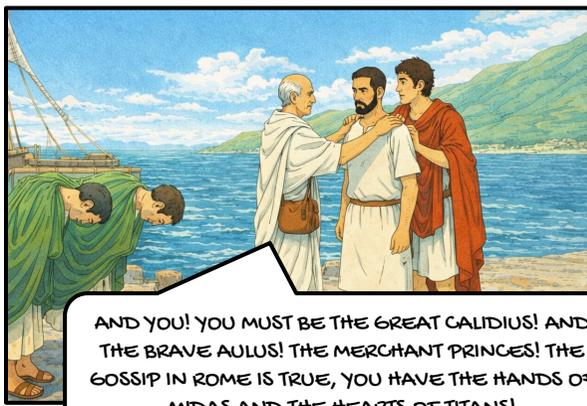
AND HERE IS THE SURPRISE: PROPOSITION 16. IN OUR WORLD, THIS CHAPTER IS LOST OR DIFFERENT. HERE, HE APPLIES HIS METHOD TO FORCE OVER TIME. HE IS CALCULATING THE MATH OF A BODY IN MOTION.



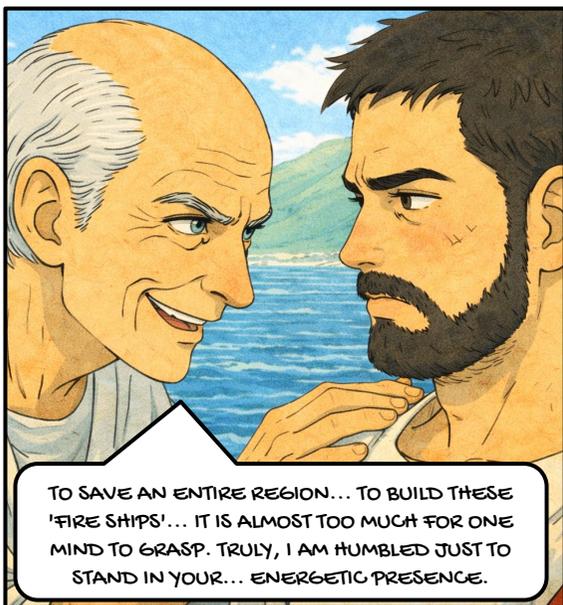
WE REMEMBER THE PHILOSOPHER. BUT SYRACUSE REMEMBERED HIS WAR MACHINES. ONE MIND, WITH THE RIGHT MATH, COULD DESTROY AN ENTIRE FLEET.



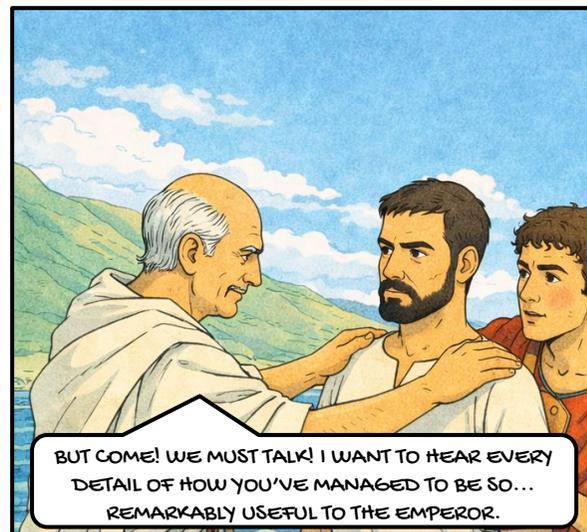
MAGNIFICENT! SIMPLY MAGNIFICENT! TO THINK, I LEFT A CITY OF MARBLE AND FOUND A CITY OF... STEAM! IT'S LIKE A FAIRYTALE, ISN'T IT? A VERY LOUD, VERY DIRTY FAIRYTALE.



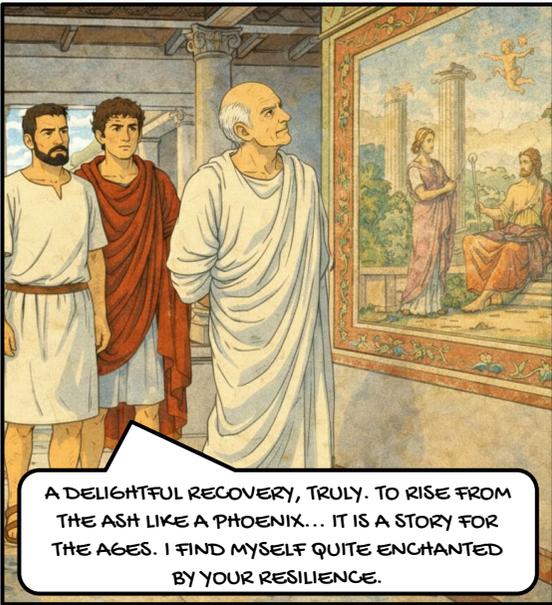
AND YOU! YOU MUST BE THE GREAT CALDIUS! AND THE BRAVE AULUS! THE MERCHANT PRINCES! THE GOSSIP IN ROME IS TRUE, YOU HAVE THE HANDS OF MIDAS AND THE HEARTS OF TITANS!



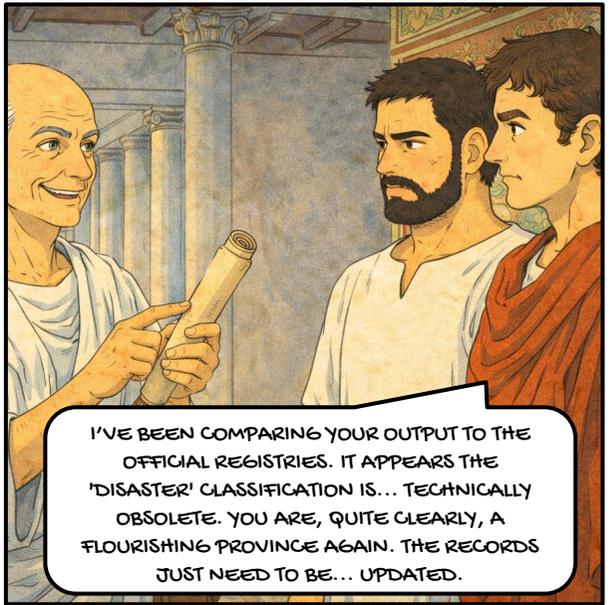
TO SAVE AN ENTIRE REGION... TO BUILD THESE 'FIRE SHIPS'... IT IS ALMOST TOO MUCH FOR ONE MIND TO GRASP. TRULY, I AM HUMBLLED JUST TO STAND IN YOUR... ENERGETIC PRESENCE.



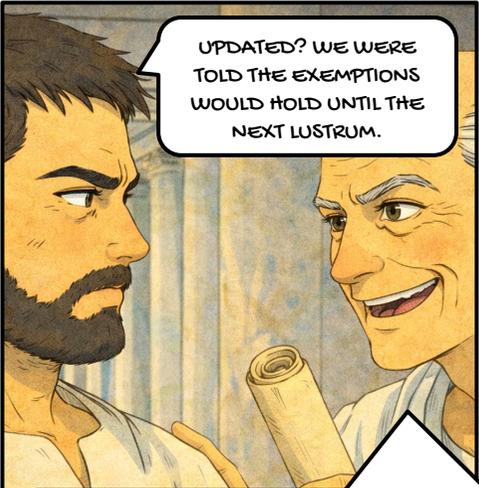
BUT COME! WE MUST TALK! I WANT TO HEAR EVERY DETAIL OF HOW YOU'VE MANAGED TO BE SO... REMARKABLY USEFUL TO THE EMPEROR.



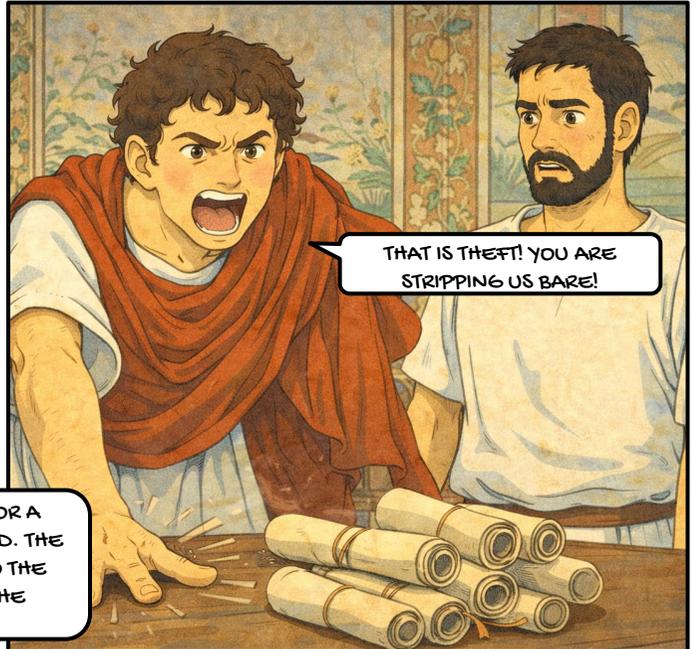
A DELIGHTFUL RECOVERY, TRULY. TO RISE FROM THE ASH LIKE A PHOENIX... IT IS A STORY FOR THE AGES. I FIND MYSELF QUITE ENCHANTED BY YOUR RESILIENCE.



I'VE BEEN COMPARING YOUR OUTPUT TO THE OFFICIAL REGISTRIES. IT APPEARS THE 'DISASTER' CLASSIFICATION IS... TECHNICALLY OBSOLETE. YOU ARE, QUITE CLEARLY, A FLOURISHING PROVINCE AGAIN. THE RECORDS JUST NEED TO BE... UPDATED.

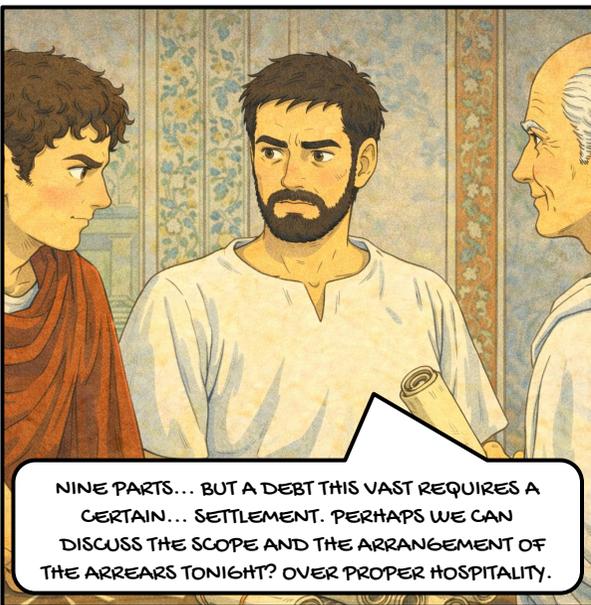


UPDATED? WE WERE TOLD THE EXEMPTIONS WOULD HOLD UNTIL THE NEXT LUSTRUM.

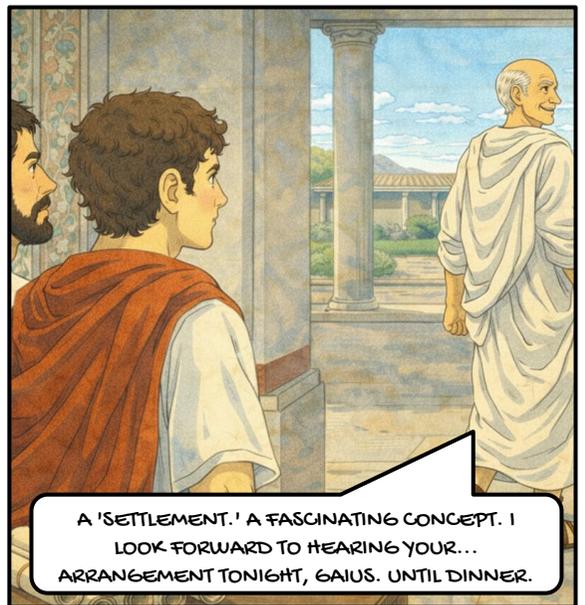


THAT IS THEFT! YOU ARE STRIPPING US BARE!

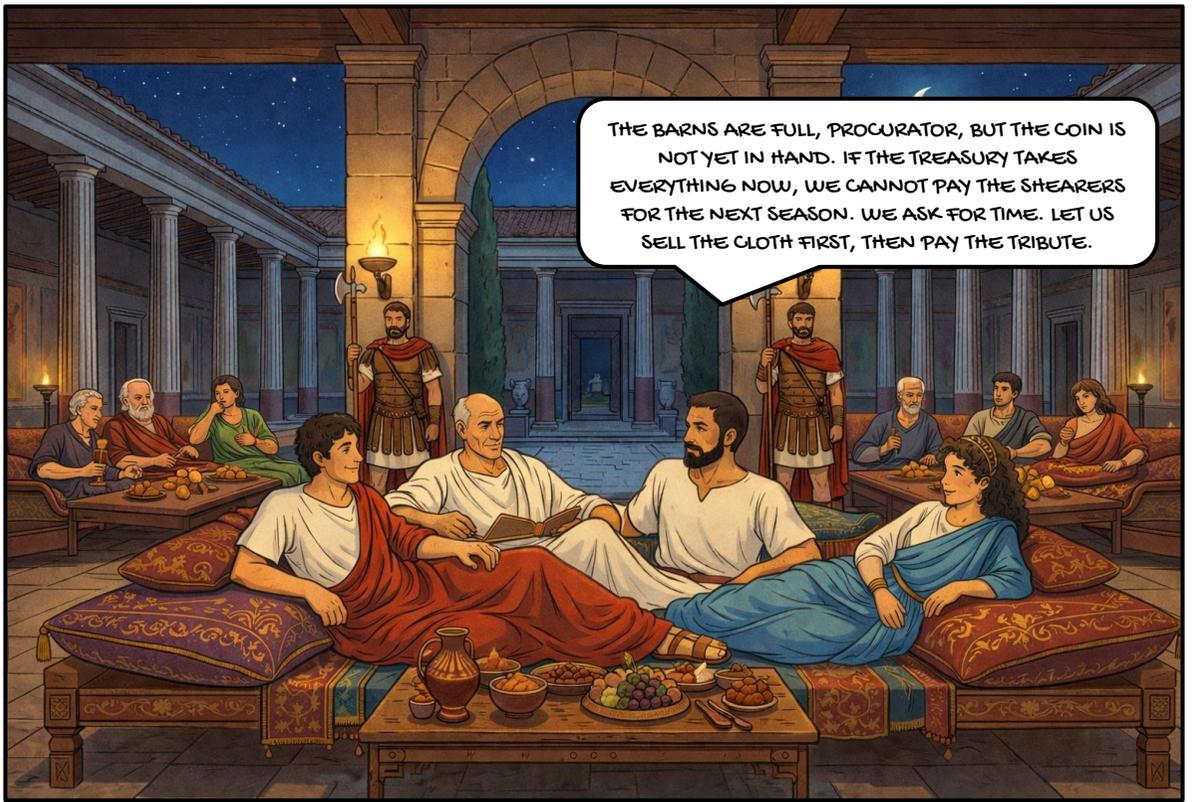
THE LUSTRUM IS FOR THE CENSUS, GAIUS. FOR A SURPLUS THIS VAST, THE EXEMPTION IS VOIDED. THE PROFITS OF THE LAST TWO YEARS BELONG TO THE AERARIUM. WE ARE SIMPLY COLLECTING THE ARREARS. NINE PARTS IN TEN.



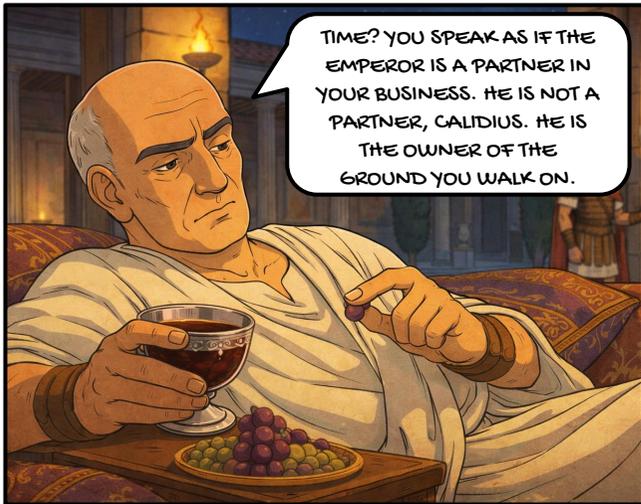
NINE PARTS... BUT A DEBT THIS VAST REQUIRES A CERTAIN... SETTLEMENT. PERHAPS WE CAN DISCUSS THE SCOPE AND THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE ARREARS TONIGHT? OVER PROPER HOSPITALITY.



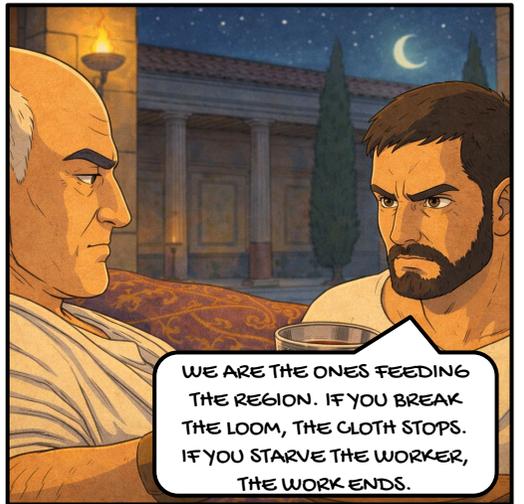
A 'SETTLEMENT.' A FASCINATING CONCEPT. I LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING YOUR... ARRANGEMENT TONIGHT, GAIUS. UNTIL DINNER.



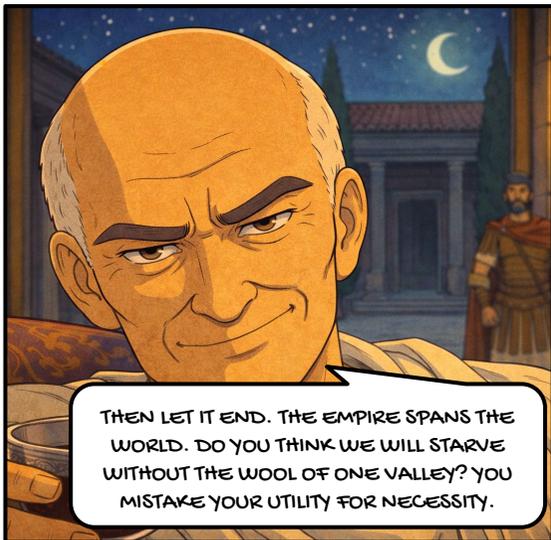
THE BARNs ARE FULL, PROCURATOR, BUT THE COIN IS NOT YET IN HAND. IF THE TREASURY TAKES EVERYTHING NOW, WE CANNOT PAY THE SHEARERS FOR THE NEXT SEASON. WE ASK FOR TIME. LET US SELL THE CLOTH FIRST, THEN PAY THE TRIBUTE.



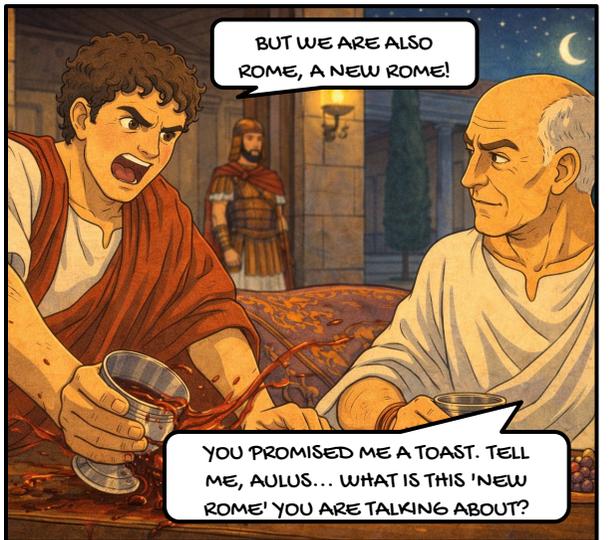
TIME? YOU SPEAK AS IF THE EMPEROR IS A PARTNER IN YOUR BUSINESS. HE IS NOT A PARTNER, CALIDIUS. HE IS THE OWNER OF THE GROUND YOU WALK ON.



WE ARE THE ONES FEEDING THE REGION. IF YOU BREAK THE LOOM, THE CLOTH STOPS. IF YOU STARVE THE WORKER, THE WORK ENDS.

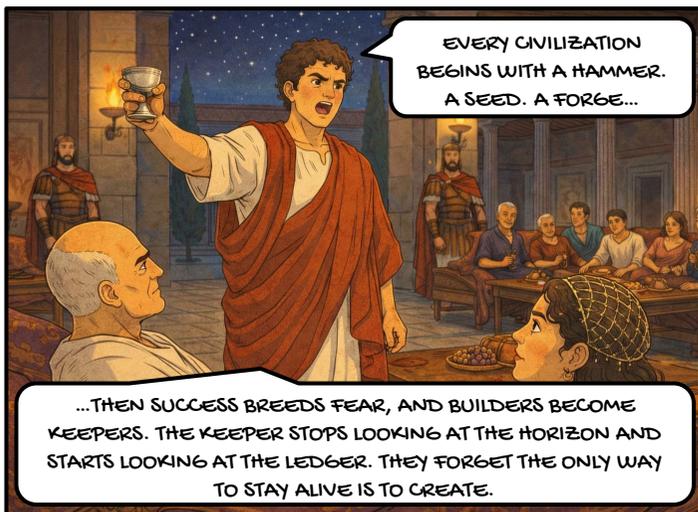


THEN LET IT END. THE EMPIRE SPANS THE WORLD. DO YOU THINK WE WILL STARVE WITHOUT THE WOOL OF ONE VALLEY? YOU MISTAKE YOUR UTILITY FOR NECESSITY.



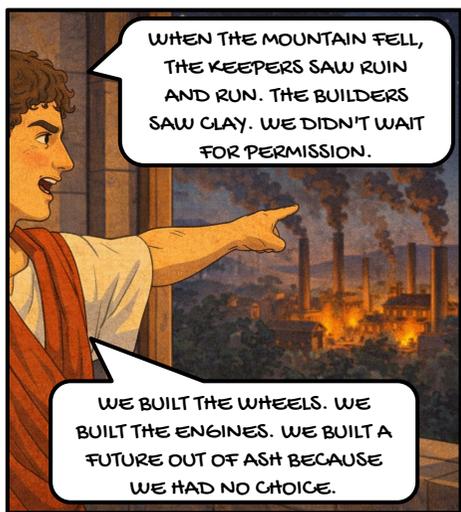
BUT WE ARE ALSO ROME, A NEW ROME!

YOU PROMISED ME A TOAST. TELL ME, AULUS... WHAT IS THIS 'NEW ROME' YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT?



EVERY CIVILIZATION BEGINS WITH A HAMMER. A SEED. A FORGE...

...THEN SUCCESS BREEDS FEAR, AND BUILDERS BECOME KEEPERS. THE KEEPER STOPS LOOKING AT THE HORIZON AND STARTS LOOKING AT THE LEDGER. THEY FORGET THE ONLY WAY TO STAY ALIVE IS TO CREATE.



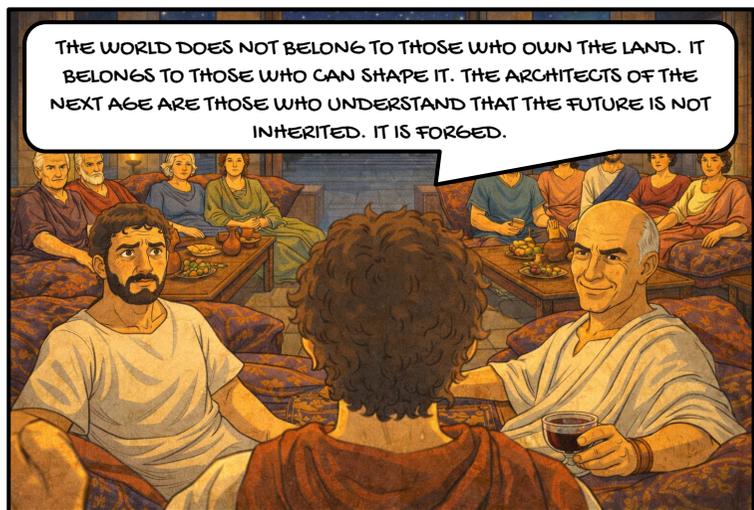
WHEN THE MOUNTAIN FELL, THE KEEPERS SAW RUIN AND RUN. THE BUILDERS SAW CLAY. WE DIDN'T WAIT FOR PERMISSION.

WE BUILT THE WHEELS. WE BUILT THE ENGINES. WE BUILT A FUTURE OUT OF ASH BECAUSE WE HAD NO CHOICE.



IT IS THE ONLY TRUE MORALITY. TO MAKE SOMETHING WHERE THERE WAS NOTHING.

THAT IS HOW A PEOPLE SURVIVES. NOT BY TAXING THE SUN, BUT BY BOTTLING THE FIRE.



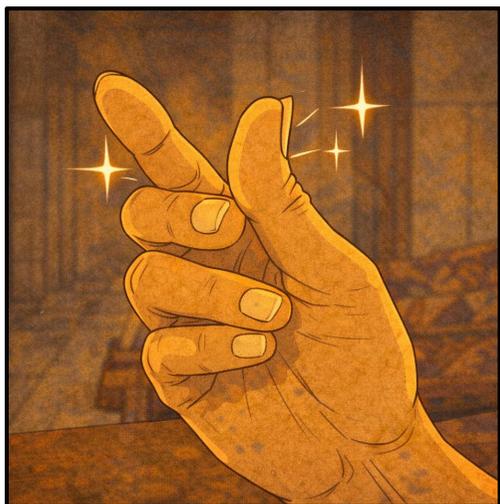
THE WORLD DOES NOT BELONG TO THOSE WHO OWN THE LAND. IT BELONGS TO THOSE WHO CAN SHAPE IT. THE ARCHITECTS OF THE NEXT AGE ARE THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND THAT THE FUTURE IS NOT INHERITED. IT IS FORGED.



THE KEEPERS INHERIT THE DUST. BUT THE MAKERS... THE MAKERS CREATE WHAT OTHERS SAID COULD NOT EXIST..



WE ARE THE NEW ROME.

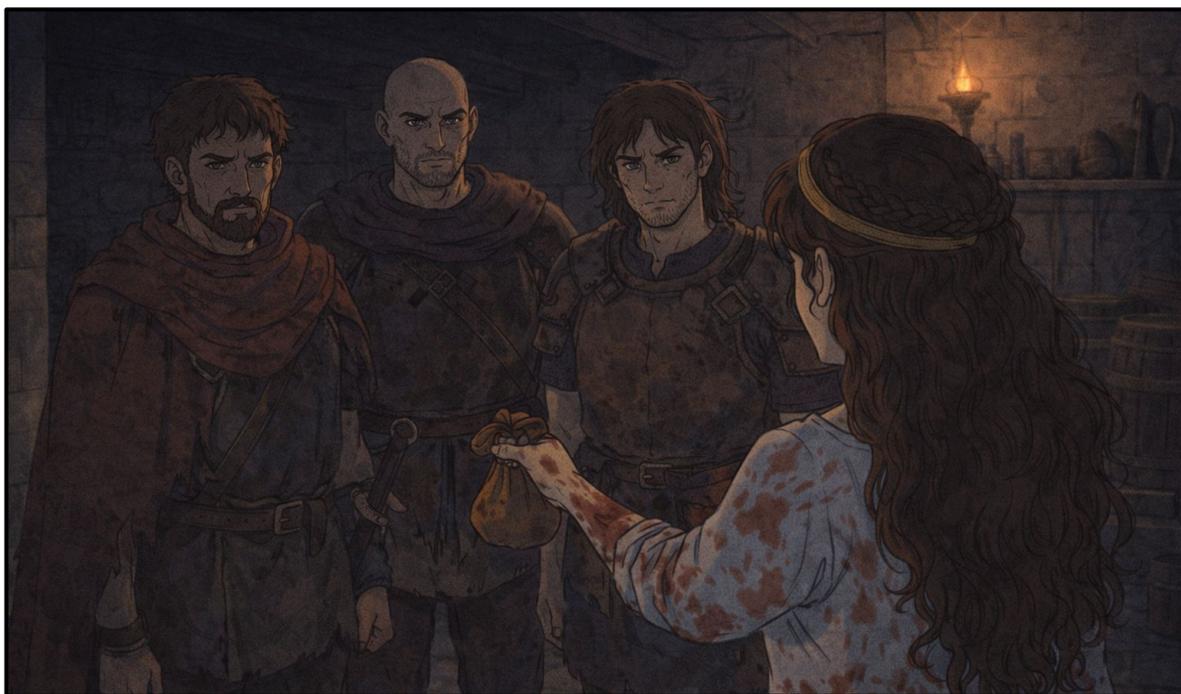




MISTRESS. THE MEN YOU SENT FOR... THEY ARE HERE. THEY WAIT IN THE ATRIUM OF THE SERVANTS.



STAY WITH HIM. DO NOT LET THE CANDLES BURN OUT.

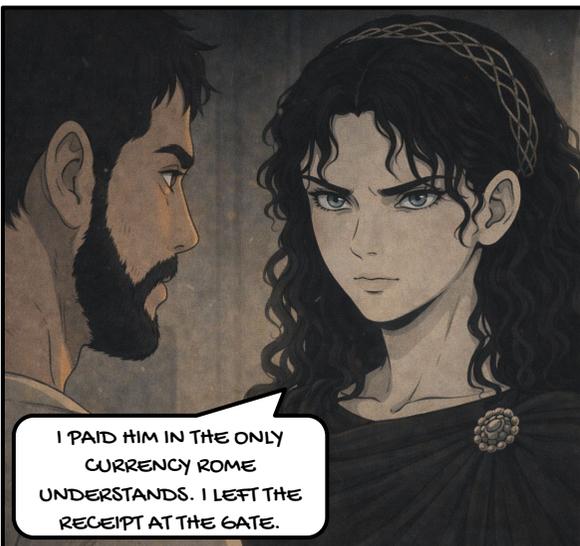




I AM SO SORRY ABOUT
AULUS. BUT WE
CANNOT GRIEVE YET.
THE PROCURATOR...



YOU CAN PUT THE
LEDGER AWAY NOW,
GAIUS. THE ACCOUNT
IS SETTLED.



I PAID HIM IN THE ONLY
CURRENCY ROME
UNDERSTANDS. I LEFT THE
RECEIPT AT THE GATE.



THE LEGIONS WILL COME, ULYSSES.

