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# ACROPOLIS ADVENTURE



Written by Troy Wolff  
Illustrated by Marcy Ramsey

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## DIMITRI THE GREEK

“You must be Brady.”

Surprised, Brady stopped and looked around; he felt jostled by large crowds of tourists streaming down narrow stone-paved streets like rivers of people.

“Over here, young man,” the voice continued.

Brady squinted in the bright morning sunshine, struggling to find the voice’s origin. He glanced toward a shady sidewalk cafe on the busy street, but the glaring sunlight kept Brady’s eyes from penetrating deep into shadows created by umbrellas.

“Yes,” Brady answered timidly.

“You’re Brady, son of my American friend, John Phillips?” the voice questioned.

“Yeah,” Brady answered more surely.

“Please, my young friend, come and sit with me.”

As Brady slowly moved into the shade, his eyes adjusted. He noticed this tall figure sitting alone at a table in the corner. The man’s head looked completely bald and tanned by years



in the sun, yet his eyes beamed bright and welcoming. Even though the man was sitting down, Brady could tell he was tall and slender because his clothes hung loosely.

“Are you Dimitri?” Brady inquired, rather cautiously.

Brady was on vacation with his parents in Greece, and they’d arranged for him to connect with Dimitri, an old family friend, while they spent precious time visiting the **Athens** National Museum. Brady wasn’t thrilled to hang out with Dimitri, but his father assured him that it’d be a day he’d never forget, so Brady begrudgingly obliged.

“Yes, I am,” the man answered. “Actually, it’s Dimitrious Thanapopoulous, at your service,” he continued with a slight bow of his head, “but please call me Dimitri.”

“So, you know my dad?” Brady wondered.

“Yes, Brady. I met your father when he graduated college and felt eager to experience life outside the United States. We explored the **European** countries of Greece, Italy, France, and Spain together, and I owe your father a debt for saving my life.”

Dimitri stopped speaking and closed his eyes. A tiny smile crossed his face, and the wrinkles around his eyes deepened. “What a glorious time; remember, all of us older folks were once young and full of questions and energy like you,” Dimitri observed.

“Well, I don’t have many questions,” Brady answered with a shrug of his shoulders. “All this **ancient** history and learning about other countries seems boring.”

“Boring?” Dimitri boomed. “My friend, you’re in one of the most exciting cities; Athens is the birthplace of many ideas that are the foundation of our modern world.”

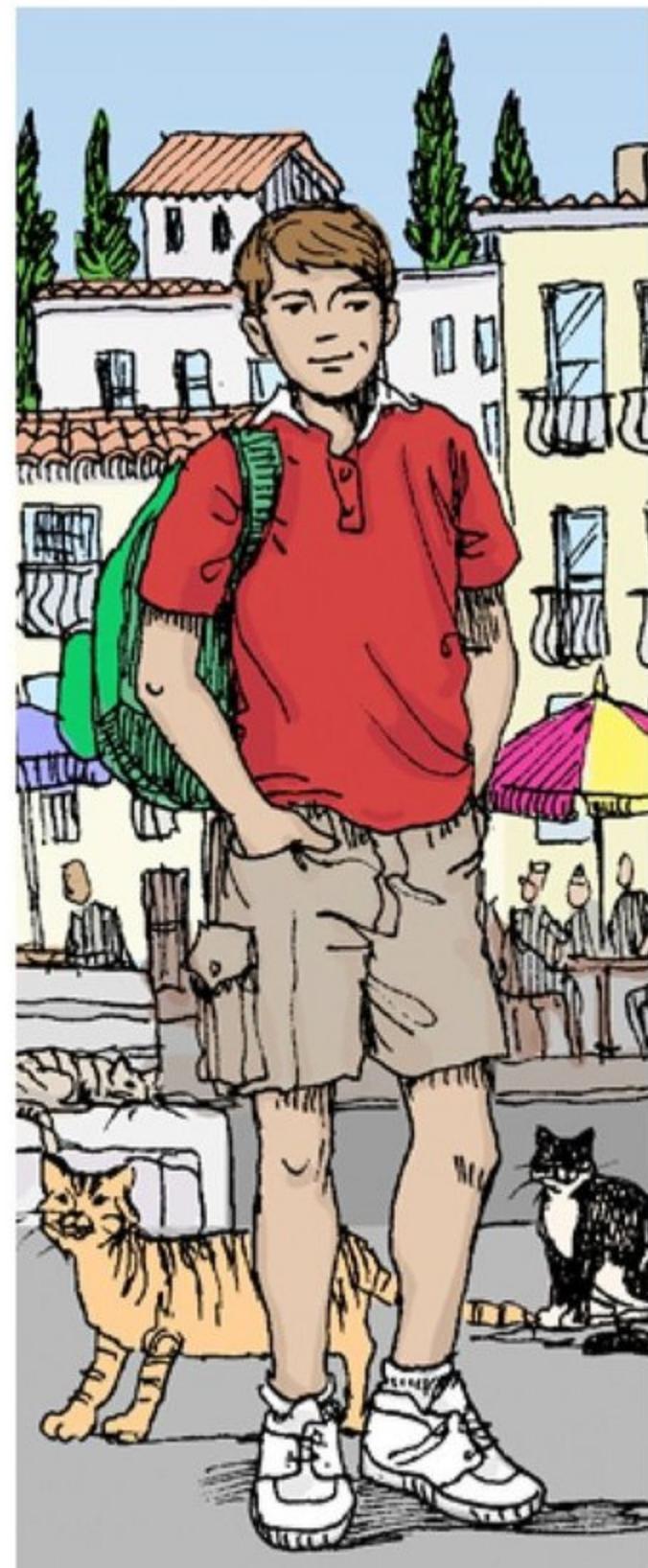
"Yeah, yeah, I've heard," Brady said, "but in my world, in my little sixth-grade reality, a bunch of dates and names don't mean anything to me."

"Well, that's about to change," Dimitri exclaimed, patting Brady on the shoulder. "I'm going to bring the secrets of Athens to life before your very eyes."

"I'm more interested in how my father saved your life. He didn't mention anything about that. As far as visiting places in Greece, I don't have much money," Brady responded, hoping this would excuse him from a day of historical sightseeing.

"Money isn't needed," Dimitri answered. "Simply open your imagination and I'll do the rest. What do you say?" Dimitri asked, extending a suntanned arm toward Brady for a handshake. "And for a treat, at the end, I'll tell you a story about your dad."

"Well, okay, I guess," Brady replied.





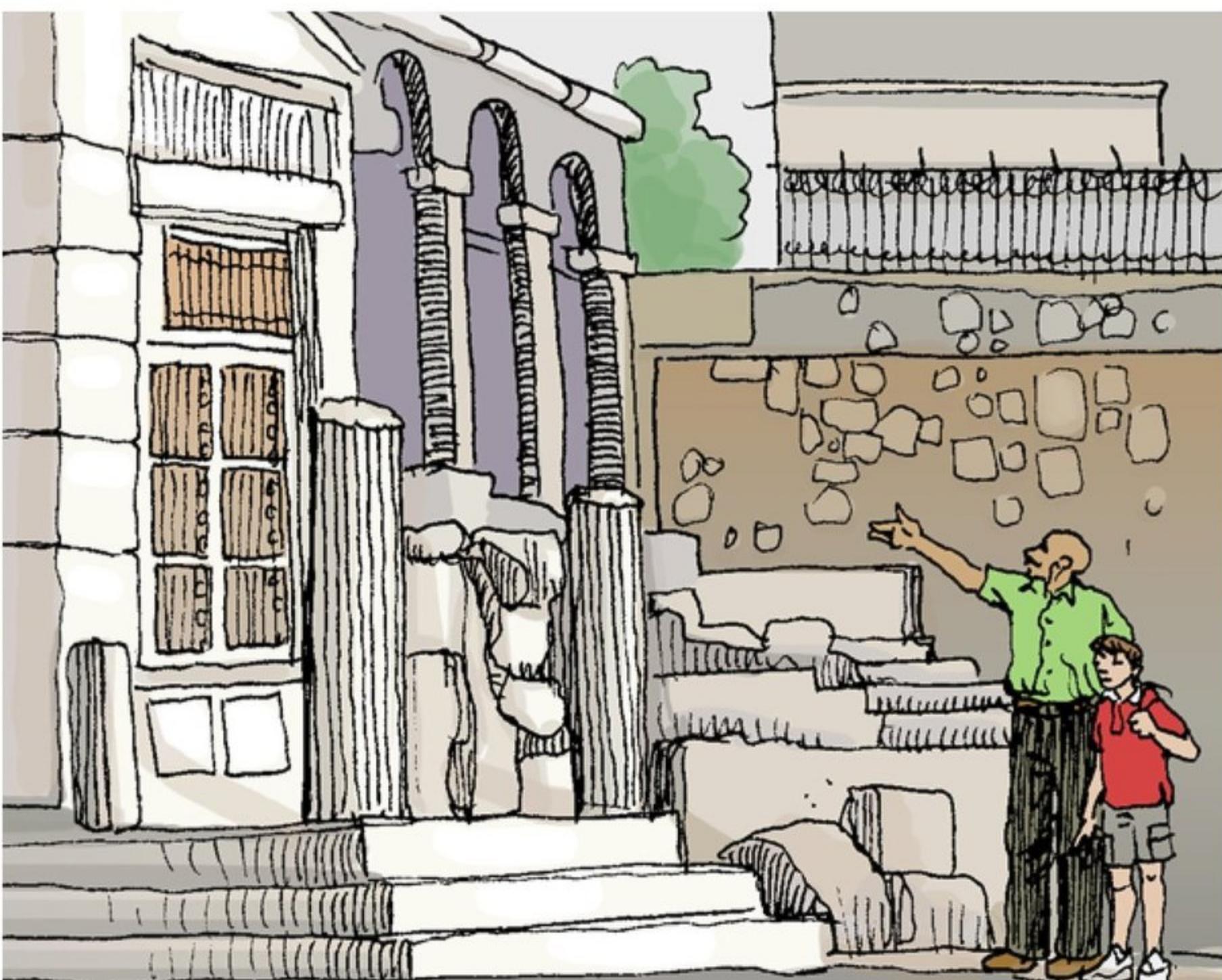
## WINDING AROUND THE ACROPOLIS

Dimitri and Brady left the cafe, working their way among groups of tourists sightseeing and shopping along the narrow streets of Old Athens that wound through the city like a snake. The pair walked toward the steep-sided hill called the Acropolis, which was Greece's most famous **landmark**. The Acropolis hill rose up and towered above the crowded streets of the city. Brady previously saw the buildings on the hilltop lit up at night, glowing high above the city as if anchored in the ground like a huge cruise ship.

Before Dimitri and Brady reached the foot of the steep slope leading up to the hilltop, Dimitri steered Brady away from the crowd.

Off the street, through a rusty, iron gate stretched a flat, dusty plot of land dotted with several marble columns and bits of old stone-paved roads. A modern iron fence separated this area from the rest of Athens like a private park or cemetery.

"What are we doing here?" Brady protested. Instead of answering, Dimitri led Brady toward a stone tower near a fenced area. The tower resembled a two-story-high marble **octagon** that had turned gray and rough with weather and age. Atop each of the eight flat sides, a carved figure appeared as if floating on the wind.



"Brady, tell me what you see," Dimitri demanded quietly.

"Um, a tower," Brady answered.

"That's obvious," Dimitri smiled, "look closer and tell me what you really see."

Brady shaded his eyes with his hand and focused. He noticed several small metal rods—rusted with age—poking out from flat sides of the tower at odd angles. Each rod rose out from one of the floating figures. “What are those rods for?” Brady asked.

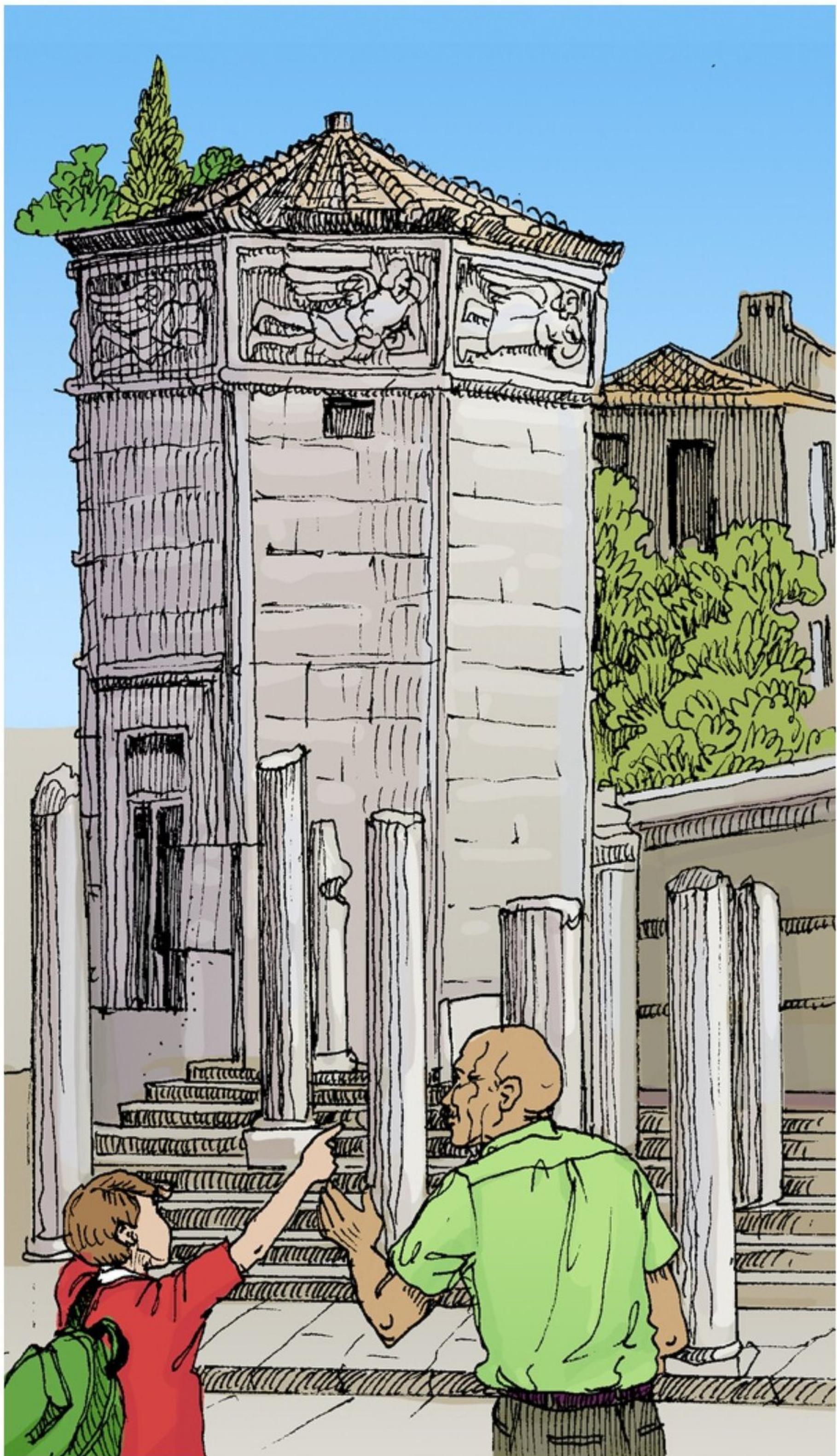
“Ah, so now you notice something unusual,” Dimitri answered. “We miss so much in life if we fail to notice the details—if we don’t *really* keep our eyes open.”

“My dad says that, too,” Brady answered, “but what are these metal things for?”

“Well, my suddenly inquisitive friend, this is the Tower of the Winds, built approximately 100 BC by an astronomer named **Andronicus** (an-draw-NY-kuhs).” As Dimitri spoke, he leaned back and focused his attention on the tower. “Brady, look more closely at the carvings and tell me if you see the straight lines cutting through the figures?”

“Yes,” Brady answered, noticing lines stretching out like spokes on a wheel.

“Do you know what a sundial is?” Dimitri asked, keeping his eyes on the tower.



"Yeah," Brady answered, "it tells time by the shadow created by the Sun, right?"

"Exactly," Dimitri responded. "Imagine this tower as one giant sundial, but a sundial also working all year long as a calendar."

"I don't understand," Brady said, looking more closely at the markings.

"It's quite brilliant, really," Dimitri continued. "The Sun changes position in the sky throughout the year. Each of the lines, when hit by the shadow cast by the rod, told the citizens of Athens the exact time of day, but also the exact time of year."

Dimitri stepped back and spread his arms wide in the direction of the tower: "A giant marble calendar!"

"Man, that's really cool," Brady answered enthusiastically.

"Cool?" Dimitri asked. "What exactly do you mean by 'cool'? Be more specific."



“Okay,” Brady replied, staring hard at the tower. “I mean . . . it’s surprising that this Andronicus guy who lived so long ago figured out exactly how to measure time.”

“Much better,” Dimitri smiled. “And speaking of time, we’d better quicken our pace if we’re going to meet your splendid parents for dinner tonight. We have much yet to see.”

“Dimitri, will you now tell me how my father saved your life?”

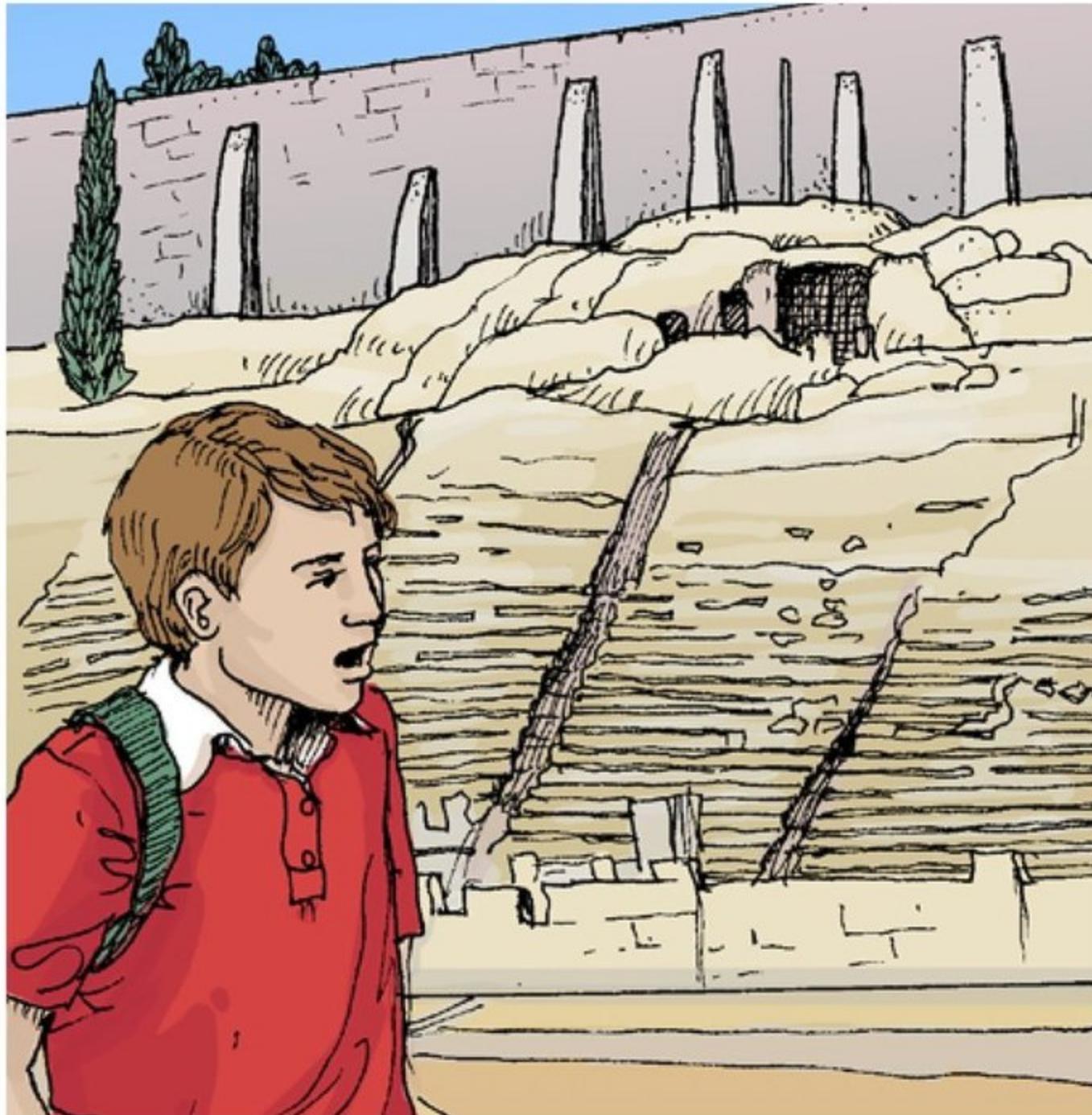
“Not yet, young man,” said Dimitri, “remember, patience is an important virtue.”

## **DISCOVERING THE THEATER**

Dimitri and Brady soon rejoined the walking crowds filling the narrow stone streets at the Acropolis’s base. Brady lagged behind, unable to keep up with Dimitri’s determined pace. Brady began to notice local people working in the restaurants surrounding the Acropolis, along with tourists from all over the world with cameras around their necks and maps in hand. Suddenly, Brady gasped, “Whoa! What’s that?”

“Brady, such emotion from you? I’m surprised,” Dimitri grinned.

"Oh, I just meant it took me by surprise, that's all—no big deal," Brady answered, slightly embarrassed. "But what is this place?" he continued.



Stretching up the slope toward the Acropolis, looming before Dimitri and Brady, stood row after row of stone benches in a gigantic semicircle. The benches brightly reflected the midday sun.

After giving Brady some time, Dimitri spoke: "So, Brady, do you like movies?"

"Of course," Brady said, puzzled, but not taking his eyes off the sight before him.

"Well, they started right here," Dimitri stated. "All our ideas of drama, **comedy**, and **tragedy** began with **Greek** theater. Twenty-four centuries ago, great plays were performed in this ancient arena, the Theater of Dionysus (dy-uh-NY-suhs)," Dimitri continued. "Once a year, 17,000 people watched play after play—tragedies and comedies—many we still perform and study. At the end of a three-day contest, citizens decided on the winning play."

Brady tried to picture the slightly overgrown stone theater filled with people. The actors must have struggled to have their lines heard by those seated in the very top rows.

"Dimitri," Brady asked, "did the Greeks have microphones?"

"Brady, it was 400 BC," Dimitri said, laughing. "There were no microphones."

"Then how could people watching from the top rows hear actors onstage?"

Instead of answering, Dimitri instructed Brady to climb to the last row of seats. As Brady scrambled up the steep marble steps worn smooth by centuries of footsteps, his leg muscles burned like wood over hot coals. He began sweating profusely.

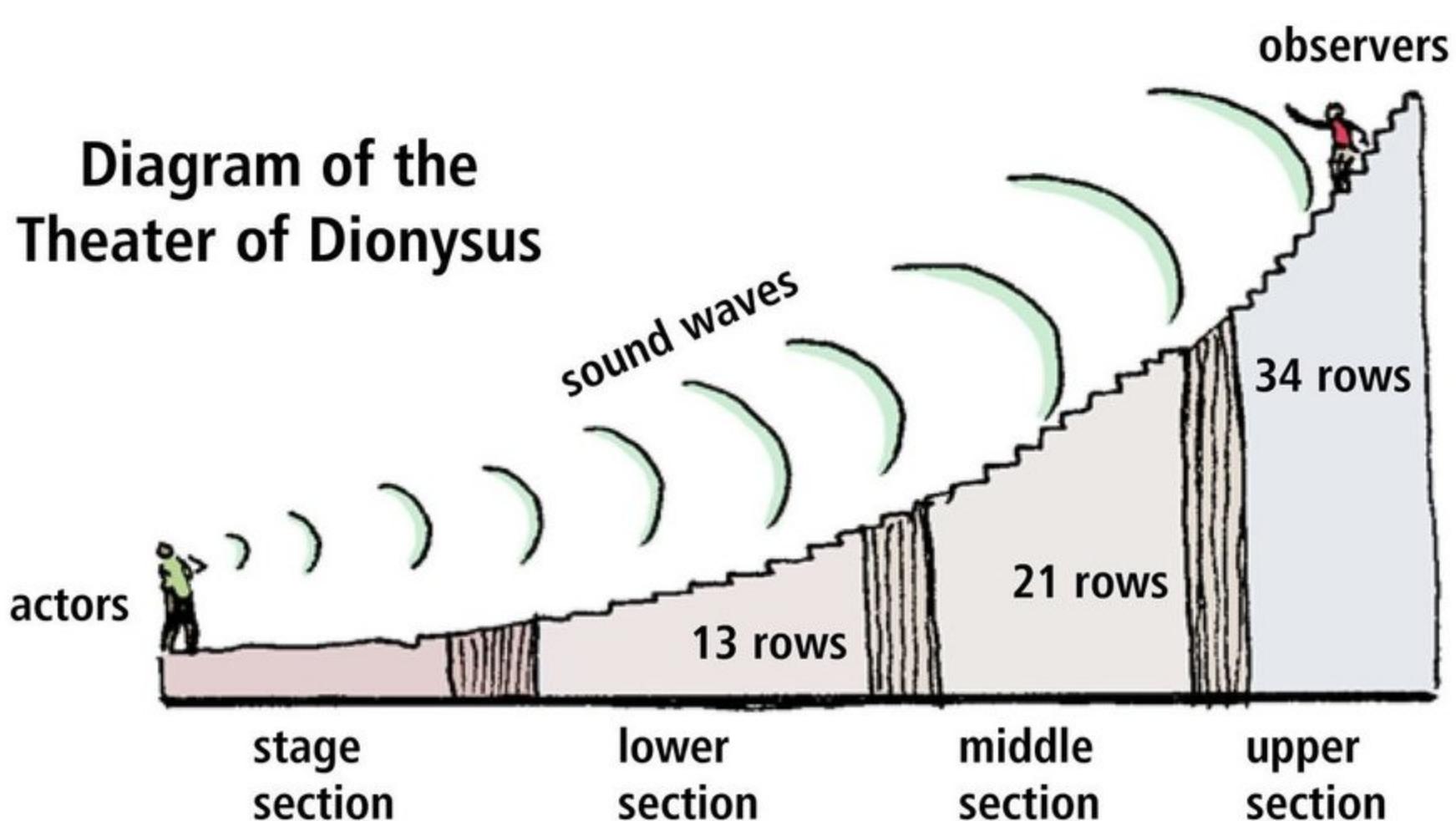
Brady finally reached the top row, winded from the climb. He turned toward the stage where Dimitri, tiny from this distance, stood in the middle, waving his lanky arms. Then the kind guide cupped his hand around his ear, giving Brady the silent signal to listen.

Brady felt completely shocked to hear Dimitri's voice come to him in a normal, everyday tone. It sounded as though Dimitri were standing right next to him, Brady thought.

"So, Brady," Dimitri said from below, "can you hear how they didn't need microphones back then?"

"Yes!" Brady yelled excitedly, his voice echoing off nearby cliffs and stone. "This is amazing!"

"Well, come down and I'll explain how," Dimitri added.



After climbing back down, Brady listened, amazed by the simplicity of the Greeks' plan for outdoor theaters. Based on mathematics, Dimitri explained, the theater was divided into three equal sections—lower, middle, and upper. Each section of the semicircle tilted at a slightly higher angle than the level below it. This created a bowl effect, trapping sounds from the stage. As long as each row of seats was placed in exact proportion to the stage, the audience members could hear the actors.

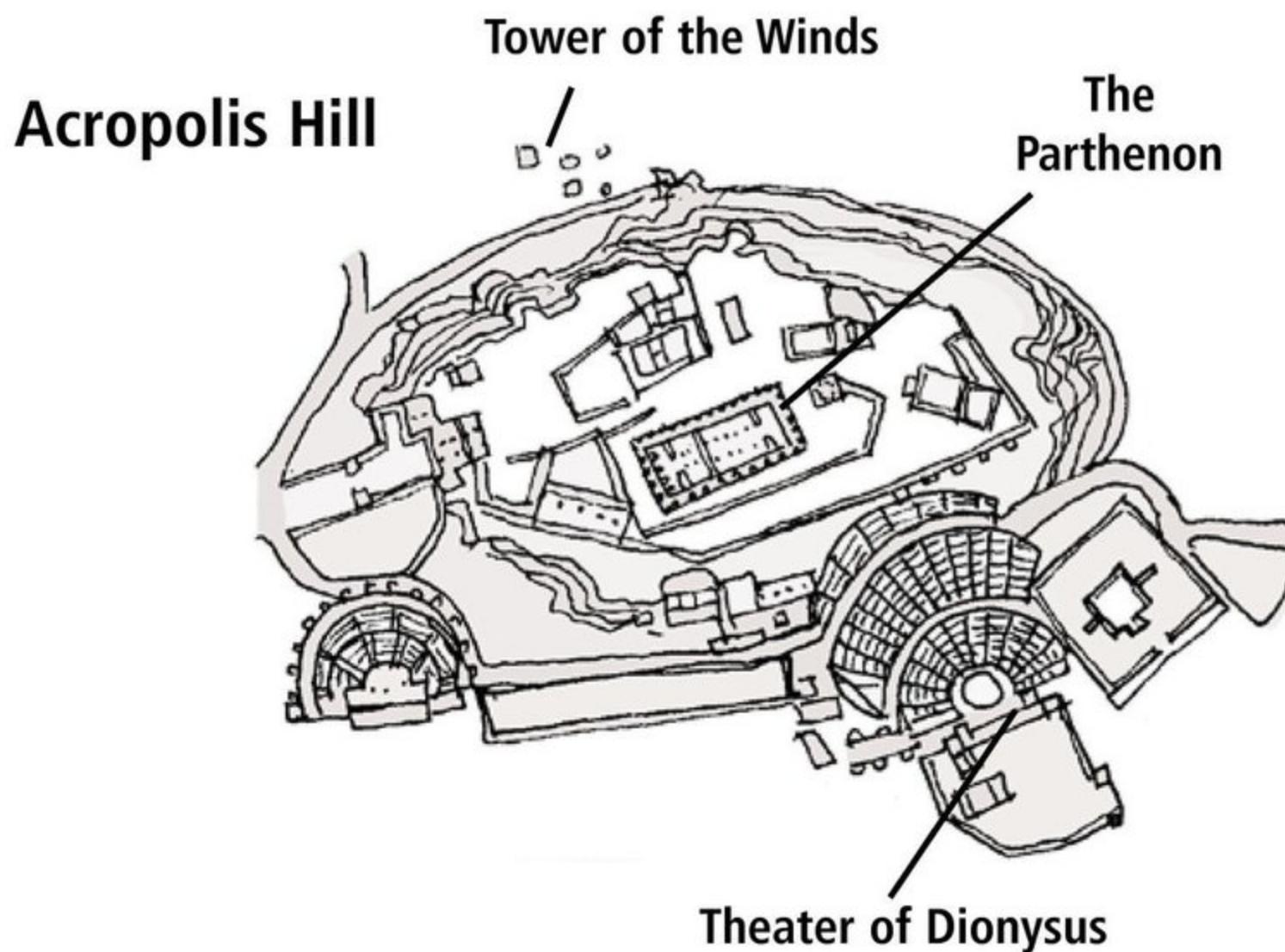
As Dimitri and Brady turned to leave the theater, Brady shook his head, "I can't believe things like this could've been built so long ago; perhaps, I've misjudged history." Brady now loved his adventure, and no longer regretted sightseeing with Dimitri.

"We still have the Acropolis to visit," Dimitri said excitedly as they left the theater.

## CLIMBING TO THE TOP

Continuing along the stone walkway following the curve of the hillside, they noticed people above them, gathered around the entrance gate to the Acropolis like a flock of pigeons eating breadcrumbs. From where Dimitri and Brady stood, all Brady could see were the modern

buildings and pathways of a city park surrounding the entrance and a series of broken-down marble buildings higher up on the hillside.



"Dimitri, I don't understand the big deal," Brady muttered, looking at the crowds of people swarming over steps leading up the hill. "We've walked so far to experience the Acropolis, yet all this place looks like is a bunch of broken, scattered rocks."

"Brady, my impatient friend, it's a matter of **perspective**," Dimitri maintained.

"Perspective?" Brady wondered.

"Yes," Dimitri responded, "what you see from where you're standing—this represents perspective. What's important to realize is that you often can't

see everything from your own viewpoint. It's an important lesson to learn." Dimitri paused for a moment, letting Brady think about what he'd said. Then he continued. "Don't you think there's a legitimate reason these people walked so far and climbed such a **multitude** of steps?"

"Yeah, I guess," Brady admitted.

"Then you need to look past what your eyes tell you; ask your father, he knows. As far as the Acropolis is concerned, trust me, beyond the top of those marble steps lies one of the wonders of the ancient world—the Parthenon and many buildings of the Acropolis."



Sure enough, after reaching the top, Brady's jaw dropped open at the sight before him. On the highest point of the Acropolis hill stood a stone temple with evenly spaced, massive columns of marble—the Parthenon. It looked as big as a modern football stadium but was decorated with carved figures and **geometric** patterns in stone. The entire building seemed to glow a honey-orange color in the late afternoon light. Shafts of sunlight shot down between the columns, reaching toward the earth from the sky.

Brady tried to think of something back home that would compare to this, but nothing came to mind. His thoughts spun as he tried to picture this magnificent temple being built by ancient Greeks centuries before people even knew the Earth was round.

"So, worth the climb?" Dimitri queried playfully.

"Yes, it's awesome," Brady answered.

Dimitri and Brady walked around the Parthenon, admiring the perfect lines in the building and its unbelievable height. At various places near the roof, Brady saw detailed scenes carved into the stone—perfect images of faces, clothing, animals, and ancient gods.

"Dimitri," he asked, after momentarily losing sight of his friend in the crowd around the temple, "this building's so different from other great buildings I've seen. We don't decorate our buildings, not like this. American buildings are all glass and steel."

"That's true," Dimitri agreed, "but you've got to remember, this wasn't an ordinary building. This was a magnificent temple to the goddess Athena, the protector of Athens. All buildings of the Acropolis celebrated the utter greatness of Athens."



"Things sure are different today," Brady answered, marveling at the monument before

him and comparing it in his mind's eye to the churches and office buildings back home.

After admiring the Parthenon and other buildings, Brady found himself against a wall on the extreme edge of the hilltop.

Below him in every direction stretched the crowded streets and rooftops of Athens. In the distance, he could see the large oval of the Olympic stadium, and even farther away, the glistening sea. As the Sun turned orange and began to drop below the horizon, Brady's thoughts wandered back over all he'd seen.

"You know, Dimitri," Brady said, while focusing on the brilliant sunset spilling out before him, "you're right, I need to pay more attention to the details of life. I would've missed so many of these amazing sights if I were here by myself. Thank you for opening my eyes about these places. Now will you please tell me how my father saved your life?"

"You don't need to thank me, my friend," Dimitri answered, putting a hand on Brady's shoulder and joining him in admiring the sunset. "Nothing in life pleases me more than seeing friends truly appreciate the wonders of life." Dimitri stood silently for an extended moment before continuing:

"Now I'll explain how your father's a hero."

"My father was a hero?" asked Brady, shocked.

"Your father and I were traveling in Spain when we decided to take part in the Running of the Bulls, a Spanish tradition in which regular people carouse with hundreds of wild bulls. What an exciting time! But while running, I took my eyes off the bulls and would have been stamped to death except that your father pushed me out of the way at the last instant. That's why I said it's important to see things from a certain viewpoint, and that's also why your father and I say it's important to keep your eyes open."

"Wow, I never knew my father had that in him," Brady replied. In the fading light, Brady thought about how he'd leave Greece a different person than when he arrived.



## **GLOSSARY**

- ancient** (*adj.*) from a very long time ago (p. 6)
- Andronicus** (*n.*) an astronomer, engineer, and architect from Syria who lived during the 1st century BC (p. 10)
- Athens** (*n.*) the capital of Greece (p. 5)
- comedy** (*n.*) a type of entertainment with funny characters and a happy ending (p. 15)
- European** (*adj.*) of or relating to the continent of Europe (p. 6)
- geometric** (*adj.*) relating to the field of math that deals with angles, points, lines, surfaces, and solids (p. 20)
- Greek** (*adj.*) of or relating to the country of Greece and its people (p. 15)
- landmark** (*n.*) an important historical building or site (p. 8)
- multitude** (*n.*) a large number (p. 19)
- octagon** (*n.*) a shape with eight angles and eight sides (p. 9)
- perspective** (*n.*) a person's mental outlook or point of view (p. 18)
- proportion** (*n.*) portions or parts in relation to the whole (p. 17)
- tragedy** (*n.*) a serious play, movie, or book with a sad ending (p. 15)

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