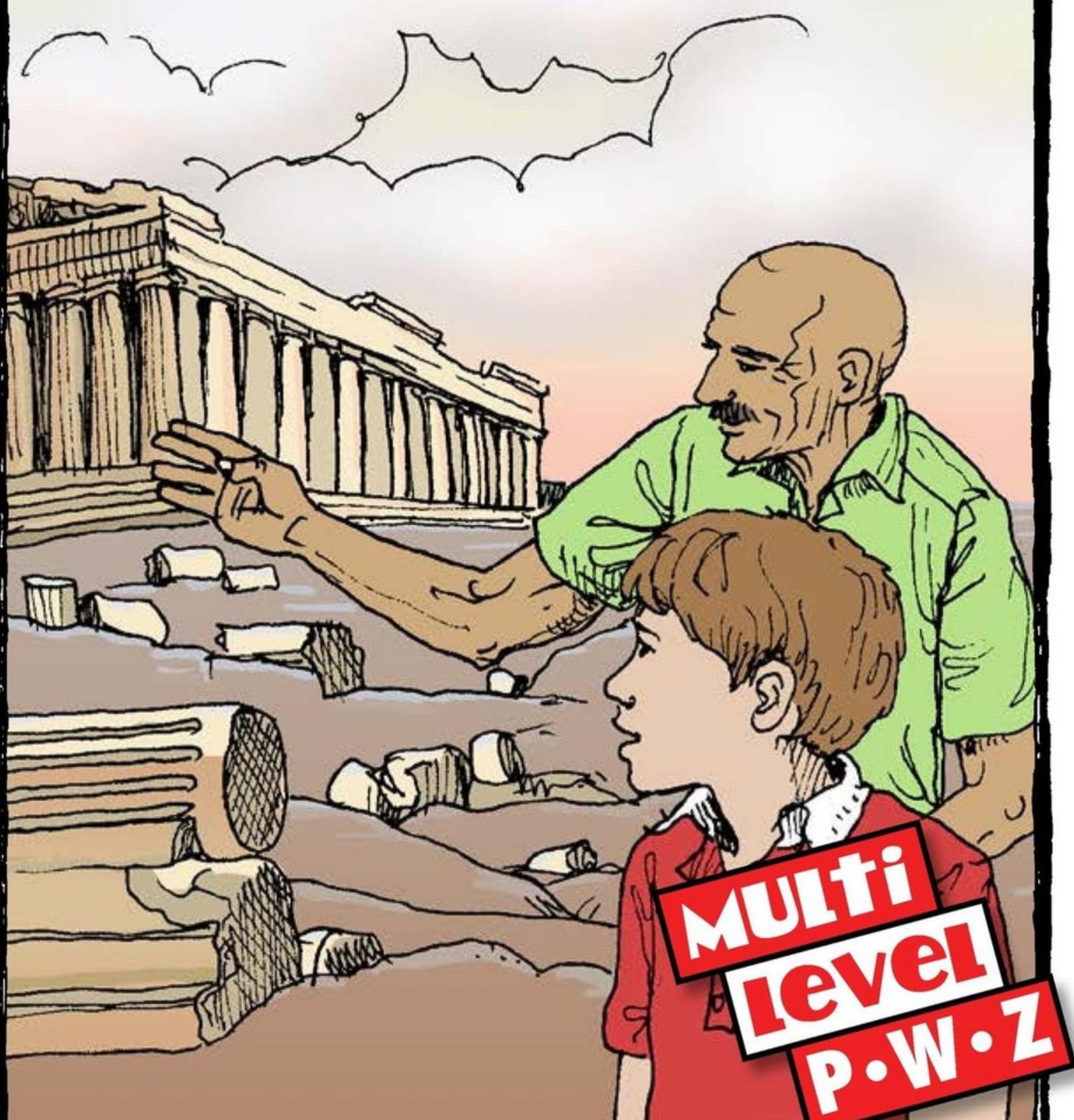


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# ACROPOLIS ADVENTURE



Written by Troy Wolff  
Illustrated by Marcy Ramsey

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dimitri the Greek .....	4
Winding Around the Acropolis.....	8
Discovering the Theater .....	13
Climbing to the Top .....	18
Glossary .....	24

## DIMITRI THE GREEK

“You must be Brady.”

Surprised, Brady stopped and looked around; he was getting jostled by the crowds of tourists streaming down the narrow stone-paved street.

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

Brady squinted in the bright morning sunshine, struggling to find where the voice came from. He looked toward a shady sidewalk cafe on the busy street. The glaring sunlight kept him from seeing into the deep shadows created by the umbrellas.

“Yes,” Brady answered timidly.

“You are Brady Phillips, son of my American friend Jonathan Phillips?” the voice questioned.

“Yeah,” Brady answered a bit more surely.

“Then come and sit with me.”

As Brady slowly moved into the shade, his eyes adjusted. He could make out a tall figure sitting alone at a table in the corner. The man’s head was completely bald and tanned by years in the sun, but his eyes were bright and welcoming.

Even though the man was seated, Brady could tell he was tall and slender, and his clothes hung loosely on him.

"Are you Dimitri?" Brady asked.

Brady was on vacation with his parents in Greece, and they had arranged for him to meet Dimitri, an old family friend, while they spent the day visiting the **Athens** National Museum.



"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 asked.

"Yes, Brady. I met your father when he was just out of college and eager to experience life outside of the United States. We explored the **European** countries of Greece, Italy, France, and Spain together."

Dimitri stopped speaking and closed his eyes. A tiny smile crossed his face, and the wrinkles around his eyes deepened. "It was a glorious time. Remember, all of us older folks were once young and full of questions and energy like you," Dimitri said.

"Well, I don't have many questions," Brady answered with a shrug of his shoulders. "All this **ancient** history and learning about other countries is kind of boring."

"Boring?" Dimitri boomed, raising his eyebrows in surprise. "My friend, you are in one of the most exciting cities in the world, the birthplace of many of the ideas that make up our modern world."

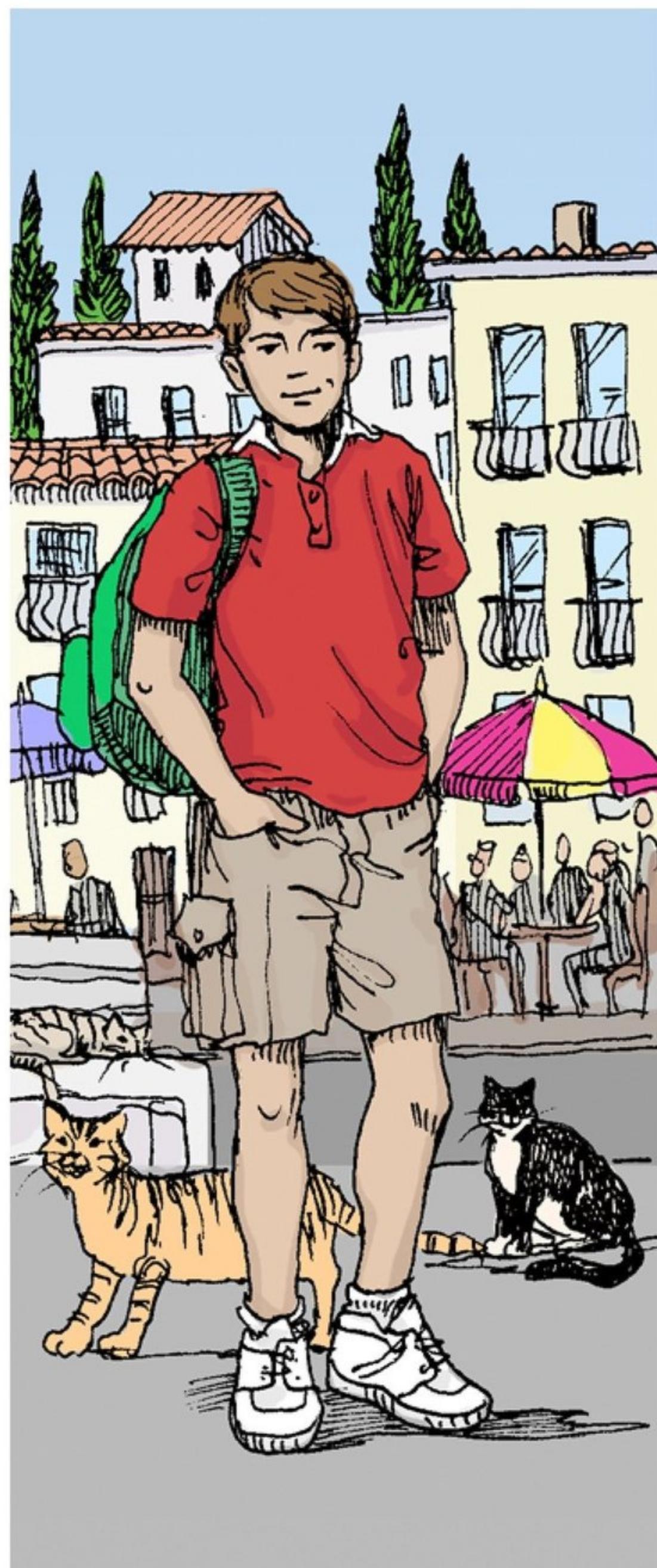
"Yeah, yeah, I've heard all that," Brady said. "But it's just a bunch of dates and names that don't mean anything to me."

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

"I don't have much money," Brady responded, hoping maybe this would excuse him from a day of historical sightseeing.

"It's not 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.

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





## WINDING AROUND THE ACROPOLIS

Dimitri and Brady left the cafe, working their way among groups of tourists sightseeing and shopping along the winding, narrow streets of Old Athens. 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 had seen 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.

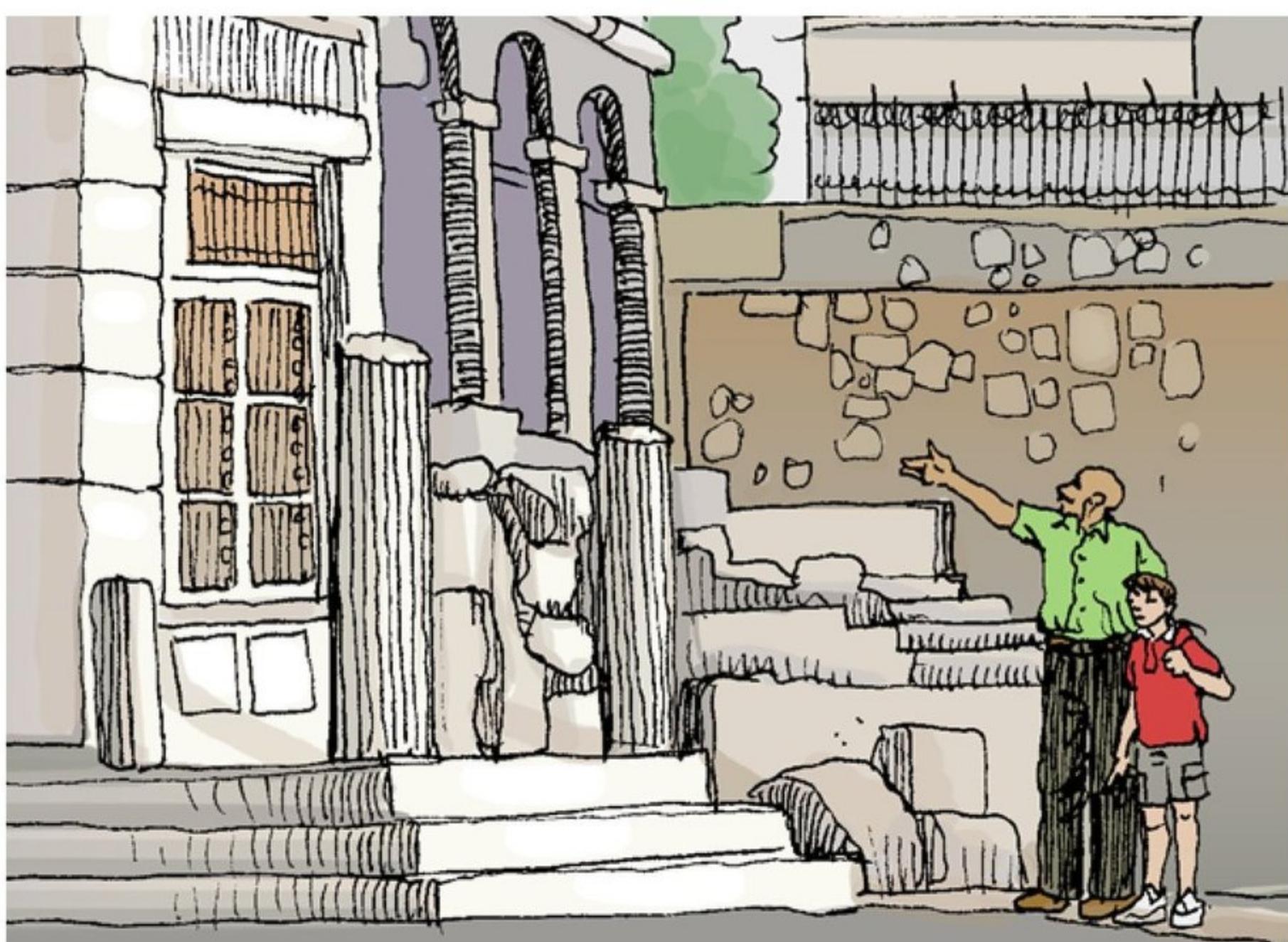
Before Dimitri and Brady reached the foot of the steep slope leading up to the hilltop, Dimitri steered Brady away from the crowd.

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

"What are we doing here?" Brady protested. Instead of answering, Dimitri led Brady toward a stone tower off to their left in a corner of the fenced area. It was a two-story-high marble **octagon** that had turned gray and rough with weather and age. At the top of 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, pointing to the tower.

"Um, I guess I see a tower," Brady answered.  
"Of course, that's obvious," Dimitri smiled.  
"Now 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 the flat sides of the tower at odd angles. Each rod rose out from one of the floating figures.

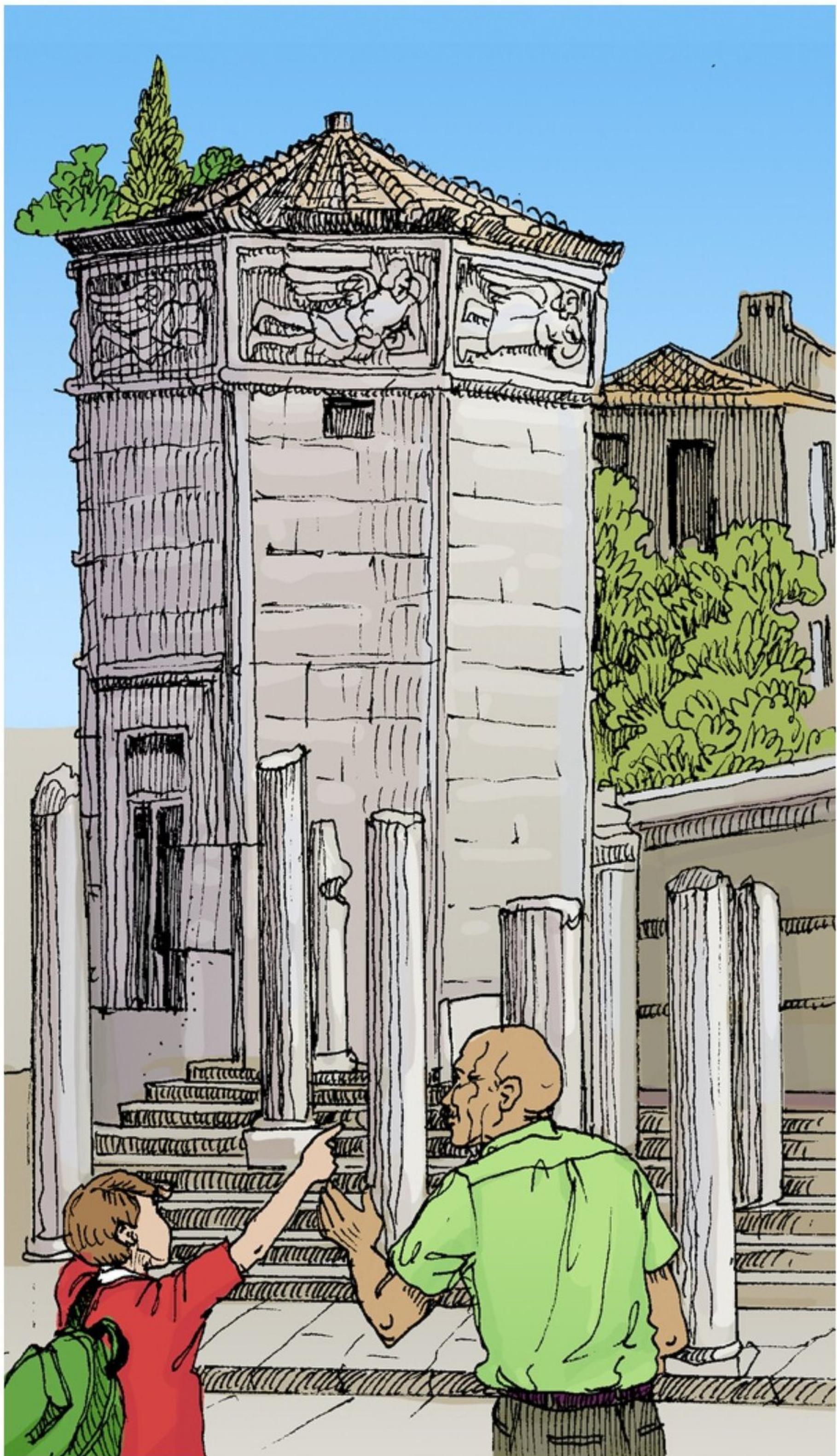
“Dimitri, what are those rods for?”  
Brady asked.

“Ah, so now you notice something unusual,” Dimitri answered. “We miss so much in life if we fail to notice the details.”

“My dad says that, too,” Brady answered with a shrug. “But what are these metal things for?”

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

“Yes,” Brady answered, now noticing lines stretching out from the metal rods like spokes on a wheel.



"Do you know what a sundial is?" Dimitri asked, still keeping his eyes focused on the tower.

"Yeah," Brady answered. "It sort of tells time by the shadow created by the Sun, right?"

"Exactly," Dimitri responded. "So, imagine this tower as one giant sundial, but a sundial that also works all year long as a calendar."

"I don't understand," Brady said, scratching his head and 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, informed the citizens of Athens not only as to the exact time of day, but also the exact time of year."

Dimitri took a step 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 with a frown. “What exactly do you mean by ‘cool’? Be more specific.”

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

“Much better,” Dimitri smiled. “And speaking of time, we had better get moving if we are going to meet your parents for dinner tonight. We have much yet to see.”

## DISCOVERING THE THEATER

Dimitri and Brady soon rejoined the walking crowds filling the narrow stone streets at the base of the Acropolis. 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 said, with a slight grin.

"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 a moment to take in the sight, Dimitri spoke: “So, Brady, do you like movies? How about television?”

“Yeah, of course,” Brady answered, a bit puzzled, but not taking his eyes off the sight before him.

“Well, they started right here,” Dimitri said. “All our ideas of drama, **comedy**, and **tragedy** began here with **Greek** theater. Twenty-four centuries ago, the greatest of plays were performed in this very theater, the Theater of Dionysus (dy-uh-NY-suhs),” Dimitri continued. “Once a year, 17,000 Greek citizens would watch play after play—tragedies and comedies—many of which we still perform and study. At the end of a three-day contest, the citizens would decide the winning play.”

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

“Dimitri,” Brady asked, “they didn’t have microphones back then, did they?”

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

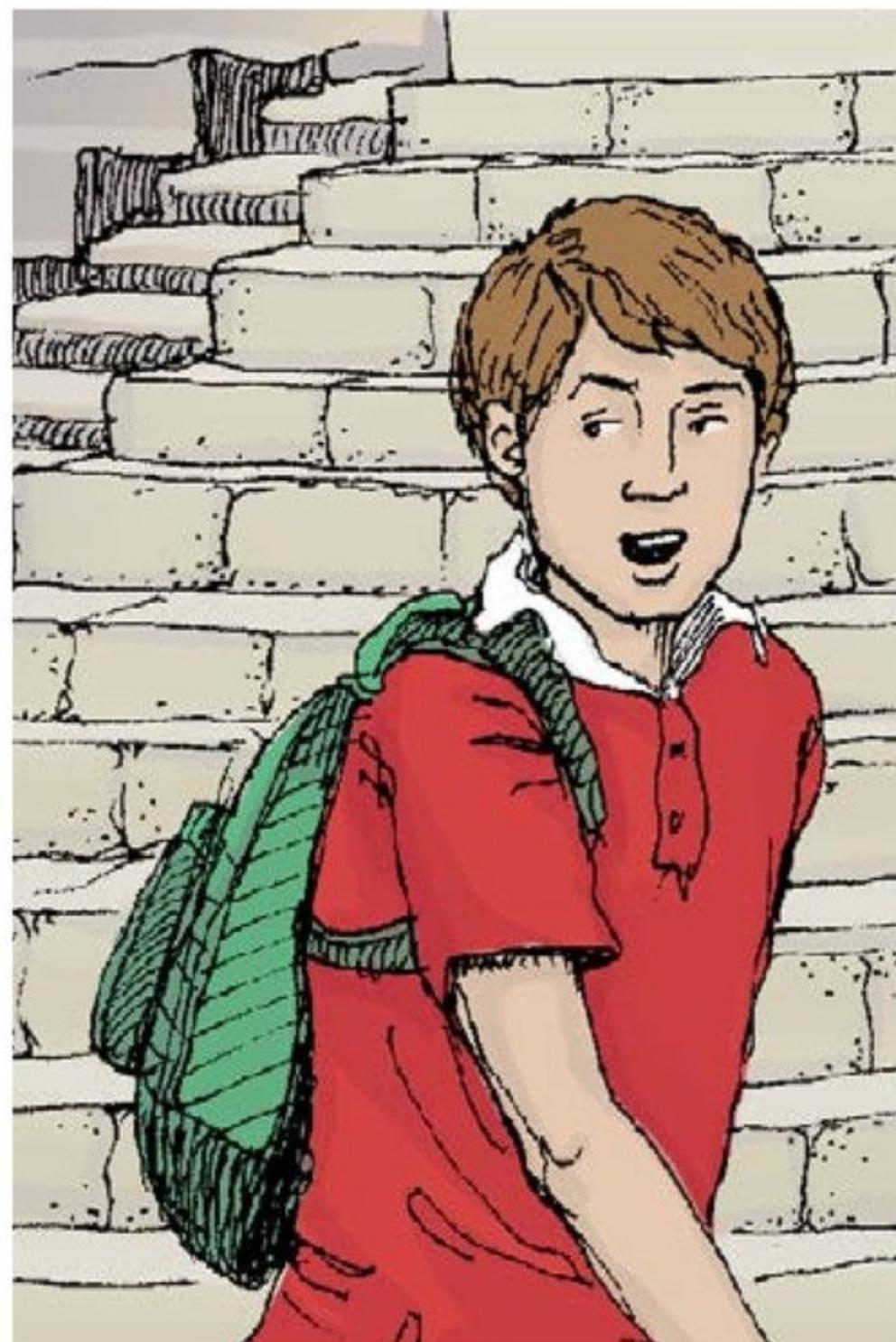
"Then how could people watching from the top rows hear the actors onstage?"

In place of an answer, Dimitri told 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. He began sweating in the afternoon sun.

Brady finally reached the top row a bit out of breath.

He turned to look back toward the stage and could see Dimitri, tiny from this distance, as he stood in the middle of the stage. Dimitri waved his arm above his head to make sure he had Brady's attention. Then he cupped his hand around his ear, giving Brady the signal to listen.

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

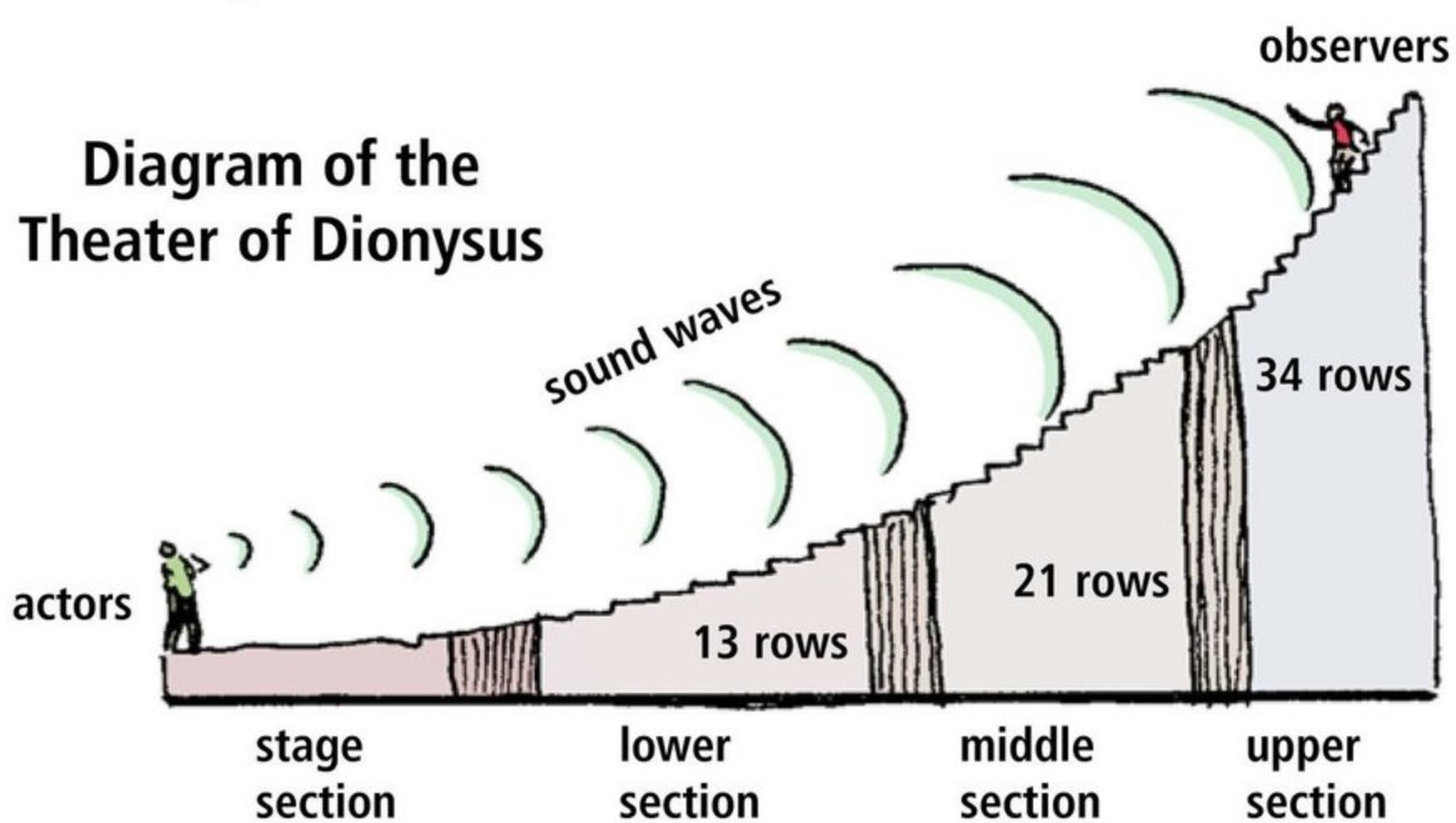


"So, Brady," Dimitri said from below. "Can you hear how they didn't need microphones back then?"

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

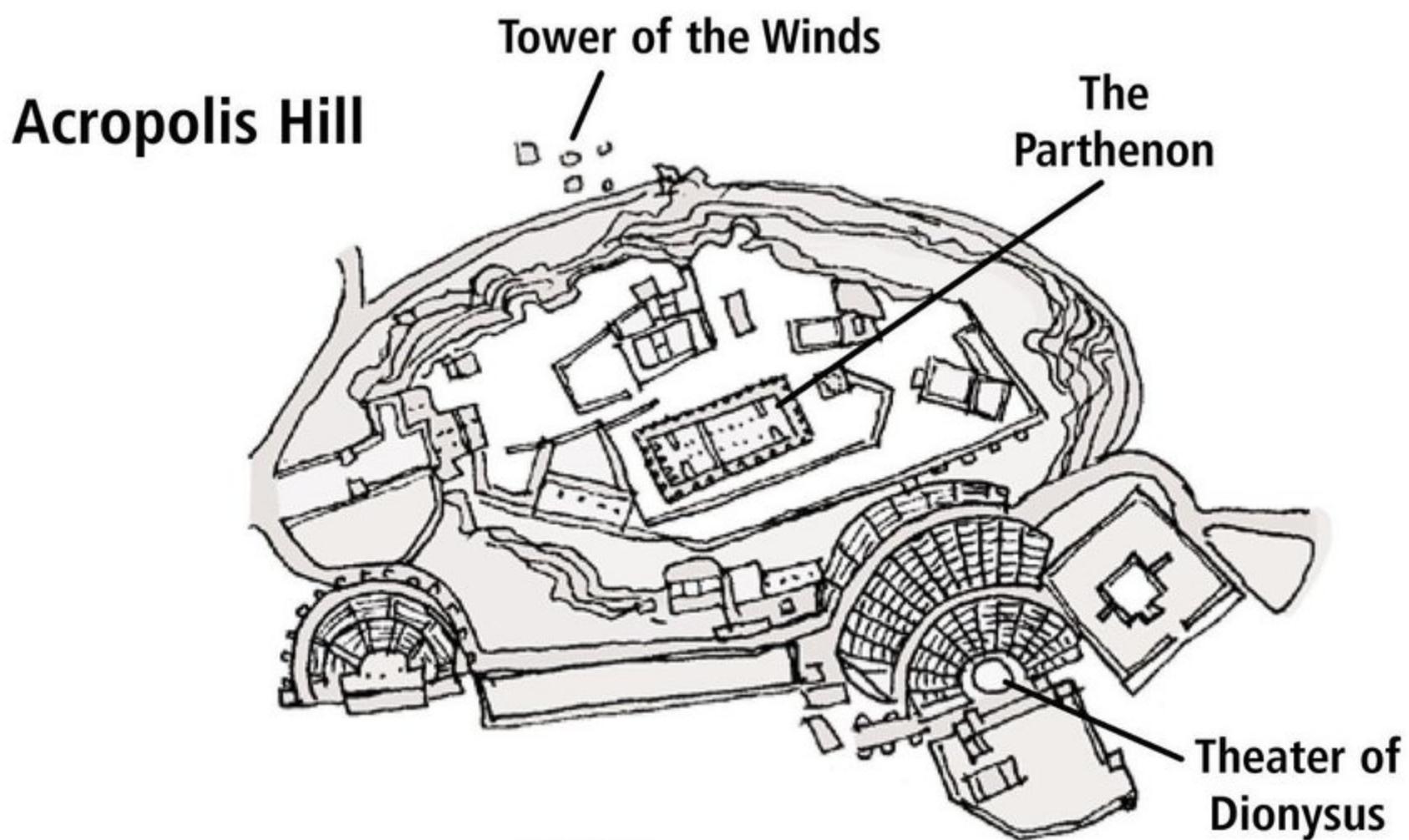
"Well, come down here, and I'll explain how they did this," Dimitri said.

After climbing back down, Brady listened, amazed by the simplicity of the Greeks' plan for outdoor theaters. It was all based on mathematics, Dimitri explained. The theater was divided into three equal sections—lower, middle, and upper. Each section of the semicircle was tilted at a slightly higher angle than the level below it. This created a bowl that trapped the sound from the stage. As long as each row of seats followed the exact **proportions** to the stage, the people watching could hear the actors.



As Dimitri and Brady turned to leave the theater, Brady shook his head. "I just can't believe that things like this could have been built so long ago. I think I've misjudged history."

"Well, my friend, just wait. We still have the Acropolis to visit," Dimitri said as they left the theater.



## CLIMBING TO THE TOP

Continuing along the stone walkway that followed the curve of the hillside, they saw a crowd of people above them, gathered around the entrance gate to the Acropolis. 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 know what the big deal is,” Brady asked, looking at the crowds of people swarming over steps leading up the hill. “We’ve walked all this way to see the Acropolis, but all it looks like is a bunch of broken rocks.”

“Brady, my impatient, young friend, it’s a matter of **perspective**,” Dimitri said.

“Perspective?” Brady asked.

“Yes,” Dimitri responded. “What you can see from where you are standing—this is perspective. What is important to realize is that you often can’t see everything from your own viewpoint. This is 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 must be a very good reason all of these people are willing to walk all this way and climb all of these steps?”

“Yeah, I guess,” Brady admitted.

“Then you need to look past only what your eyes are telling you. 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 the 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 was 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 to compare this to, but nothing came to mind. His thoughts spun as he tried to picture this magnificent temple being built by ancient Greeks centuries before people knew the Earth was round.

"So, was it worth the climb?" Dimitri asked playfully.

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



Dimitri and Brady walked around the Parthenon admiring the perfect lines of the building and its unbelievable height. At various places near the roof, Brady saw detailed scenes carved into the stone. Even from where he stood, he could see the perfect lines of faces, clothing, animals, and gods.

"Dimitri," he asked, after momentarily losing sight of his older friend in the crowd around the temple, "this building is so different from the great buildings I've seen. We don't really decorate our buildings, never like this. The buildings I've seen are all just glass and steel."

"That's true," Dimitri agreed. "But you have to remember, this was not just an ordinary building. This was a temple to the goddess Athena, who protected Athens. All of these buildings of the Acropolis were meant to celebrate the greatness of Athens."

"It sure is different today," Brady answered, marveling at the monument before him and comparing it to the churches and office buildings back home.

After admiring the Parthenon and the other buildings, Brady found himself at a wall on the very 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 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 orange-and-purple sunset spilling out before him, "You are right. I need to pay more attention to the details of life around me. I would have missed so many of these amazing sights if I had been by myself. Thank you for opening my eyes."

"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 around them. You have made me very happy today." He stood silently for a moment, then continued: "And I think your father will be very proud of how you've learned to love Athens, just as he did many years ago."

In the fading light, Brady thought to himself that he would leave Greece a different person than he had been when he arrived.

## GLOSSARY

<b>ancient</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	from a very long time ago (p. 6)
<b>Andronicus</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an astronomer, engineer, and architect from Syria who lived during the first century BC (p. 10)
<b>Athens</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the capital of Greece (p. 5)
<b>columns</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	tall cylindrical posts used as supports and decoration for buildings (p. 8)
<b>comedy</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a type of entertainment with funny characters and a happy ending (p. 15)
<b>European</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to the continent of Europe (p. 6)
<b>geometric</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	relating to the field of math that deals with angles, points, lines, surfaces, and solids (p. 20)
<b>Greek</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	of or relating to the country of Greece and its people (p. 15)
<b>landmark</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an important historical building or site (p. 8)
<b>octagon</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a shape with eight sides (p. 9)
<b>perspective</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	one's own viewpoint; also, an understanding of the true relationship of things (p. 19)
<b>proportions</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a portion or part in relation to the whole; a pleasing arrangement of parts (p. 17)
<b>tragedy</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a serious play, movie, or book with a sad ending (p. 15)

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