



The Prologue of Grievances: A Chain of Abductions

Herodotus opens with the mythical 'tit-for-tat' kidnappings that the Persians cite as the root of the East-West conflict.



The Persian Worldview

“To carry off women is the deed of a rogue; but to make a stir about it is the deed of a fool... The Asiatics never troubled themselves about the matter; but the Greeks, for the sake of a single Lacedaemonian girl, collected a vast armament and destroyed the kingdom of Priam.”

The Curse of the Lydian Kings



King Candaules, obsessed with his wife's beauty, forced his bodyguard **Gyges** to **view** her naked. The Queen, discovering the betrayal, gave Gyges an ultimatum: "Slay Candaules and become my lord, or die this moment."

Gyges (The Usurper)

Ardys

Sadyattes

Alyattes

CROESUS



**The Oracle's
Prophecy:** Vengeance
shall come for the
Heraclides in the
fifth generation.

Croesus the Magnificent & The Question of Happiness



Croesus displays his treasury to Solon, asking: *"Whom, of all men, deemest thou the most happy?"* Expecting to be named, he is shocked when Solon names dead men who lived honorably.



Solon refuses to call the living Croesus happy. He argues that wealth does not equal fortune.

"Man is wholly accident... Call him, however, until he die, not happy but fortunate. Mark the end of every matter."

The Tragedy of Atys: Fate Cannot Be Cheated



The Dream: Croesus dreams his son Atys will die by an iron weapon.



The Evasion: Croesus removes all weapons from the palace walls. He forbids Atys from going to war.



The very precautions taken to avoid the prophecy led directly to its fulfillment.



The Irony: A boar hunt is organized. Croesus believes a boar has “no iron weapon,” so he allows Atys to go.



The Climax: Adrastus, a man purified by Croesus for accidental murder, throws a spear at the boar. He misses the beast and kills Atys.



The Test of the Oracles & The Fatal Ambiguity

Croesus tests the world's oracles by doing an unthinkable act: boiling a tortoise and lamb together.

Delphi Montserrat correctly senses the smell.

ΣΑΥ&ΡΕΜ ΣΥΑΛΛΙ:
'Lo! on my sense there
striketh the smell of a
shell-covered tortoise,
Boiling now on a fire,
with the flesh of a lamb,
in a cauldron.'



*'Lo! on my sense there
striketh the smell of a
shell-covered tortoise,
Boiling now on a fire,
with the flesh of a lamb,
in a cauldron.'*

Empowered, Croesus asks
if he should **attack Persia**.

The Oracle replies:
"If you attack, you will
destroy a mighty empire."

Croesus destroys his own empire.

The Origin of Cyrus: The Destined Winner



The Mule of Media

The Dream: King Astyages of Media dreams his daughter Mandane's offspring will overshadow all of Asia (The Vine).

The Order: Astyages orders Harpagus to kill the baby Cyrus to prevent the usurpation.

The Switch: Harpagus passes the task to a cowherd. The cowherd raises Cyrus as his own.

The Myth: Cyrus's foster mother was named Spaco ('Bitch' in Median), creating the legend that the Great King was suckled by a wild dog.

The 'Mule': Cyrus is of mixed heritage: A noble Median mother and a Persian subject father.

The Revenge of Harpagus

The Crime

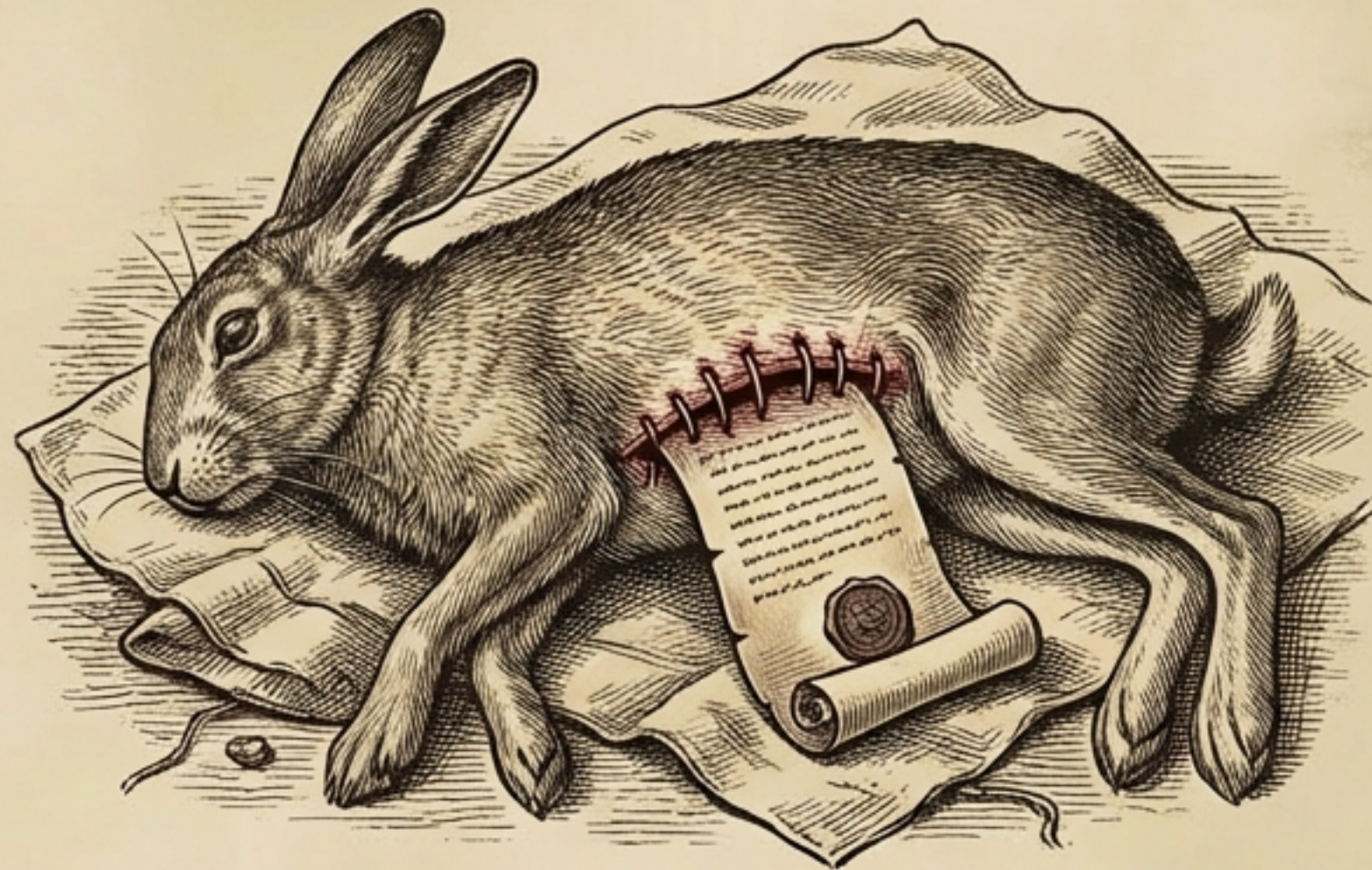
When Astyages discovers Harpagus failed to kill Cyrus, he punishes him by feeding him his own son at a banquet.

The Reaction

Harpagus collects the remains in silence: “**Whatever the King does is agreeable.**”

The Plot

Years later, Harpagus orchestrates the Persian revolt. To bypass guards, he sends his plan to Cyrus hidden inside the belly of a hare.



Result

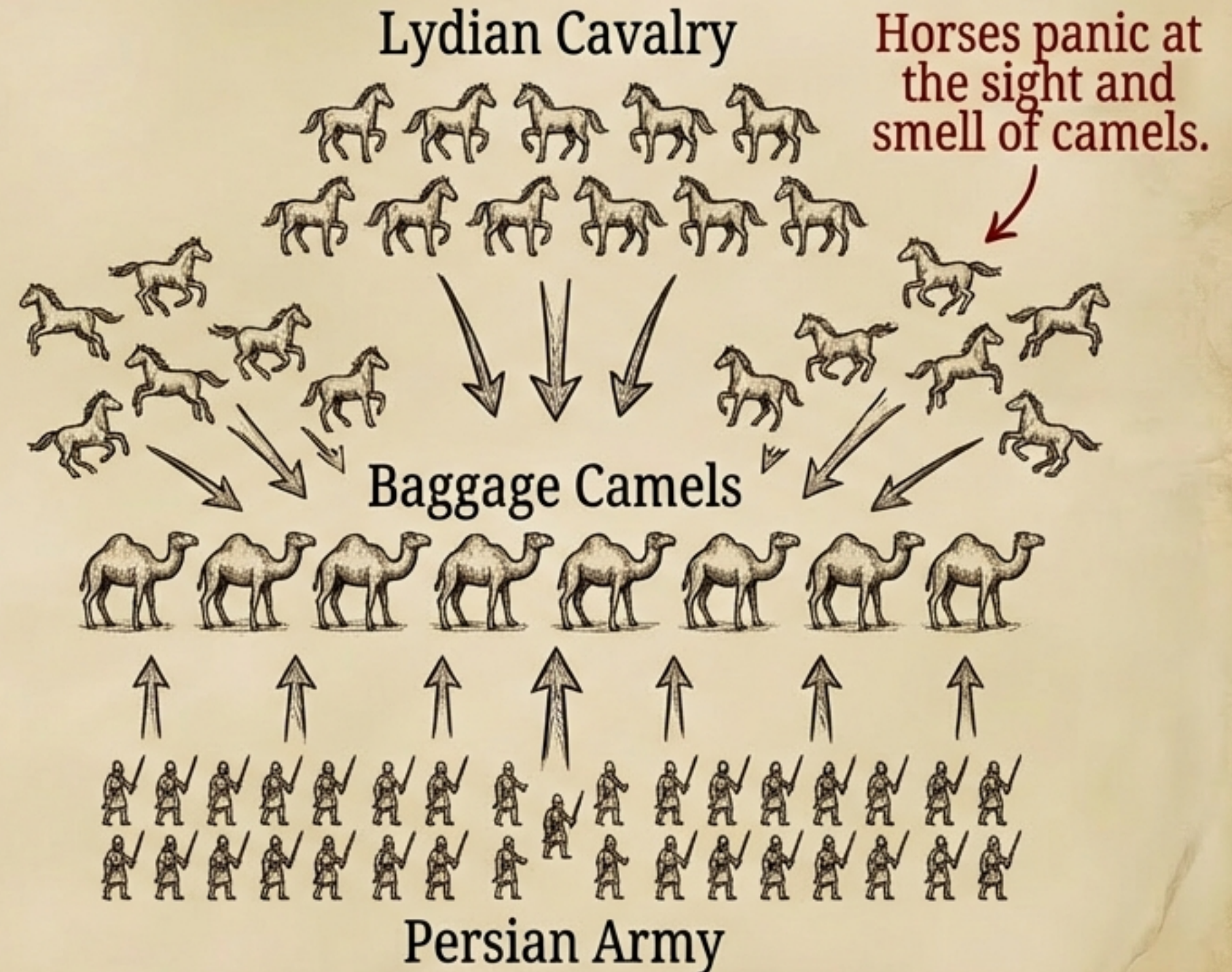
The Medes betray Astyages on the battlefield. Power shifts from Media to Persia.

The Battle of Sardis: The Stratagem

Context: Croesus retreats to Sardis, expecting a winter truce. Cyrus marches instantly, catching him unprepared.

The Tactic: Advised by Harpagus, Cyrus places baggage camels on the front line to neutralize the superior Lydian cavalry.

Outcome: Sardis is besieged and captured. The 'Mighty Empire' promised by the Oracle is destroyed.



The Pyre & The Wisdom of Solon

The Cry

As the flames rise, Croesus groans:
"Solon! Solon! Solon!"

The Realization

Cyrus demands an explanation.
Hearing Solon's philosophy, Cyrus
realizes his own fortune is fragile and
tries to stop the execution.

The Plot

Apollo sends a sudden storm
to quench the fire.

The Resolution

Quench the fire. Cyrus
spares Croesus, making him
a trusted advisor.



"Peace is better than war, for in peace sons bury fathers, but in war fathers bury sons."

The Subjugation of Ionia

With Lydia fallen, the Persian generals Mazares and Harpagus systematically conquer the Greek coastal cities.

The Phocaean Exodus

Rather than submit to slavery, the Phocaeans abandon their city. They sink a mass of iron in the harbor, swearing not to return until the iron floats.



Most Ionians are enslaved. The Persian Juggernaut expands westward.

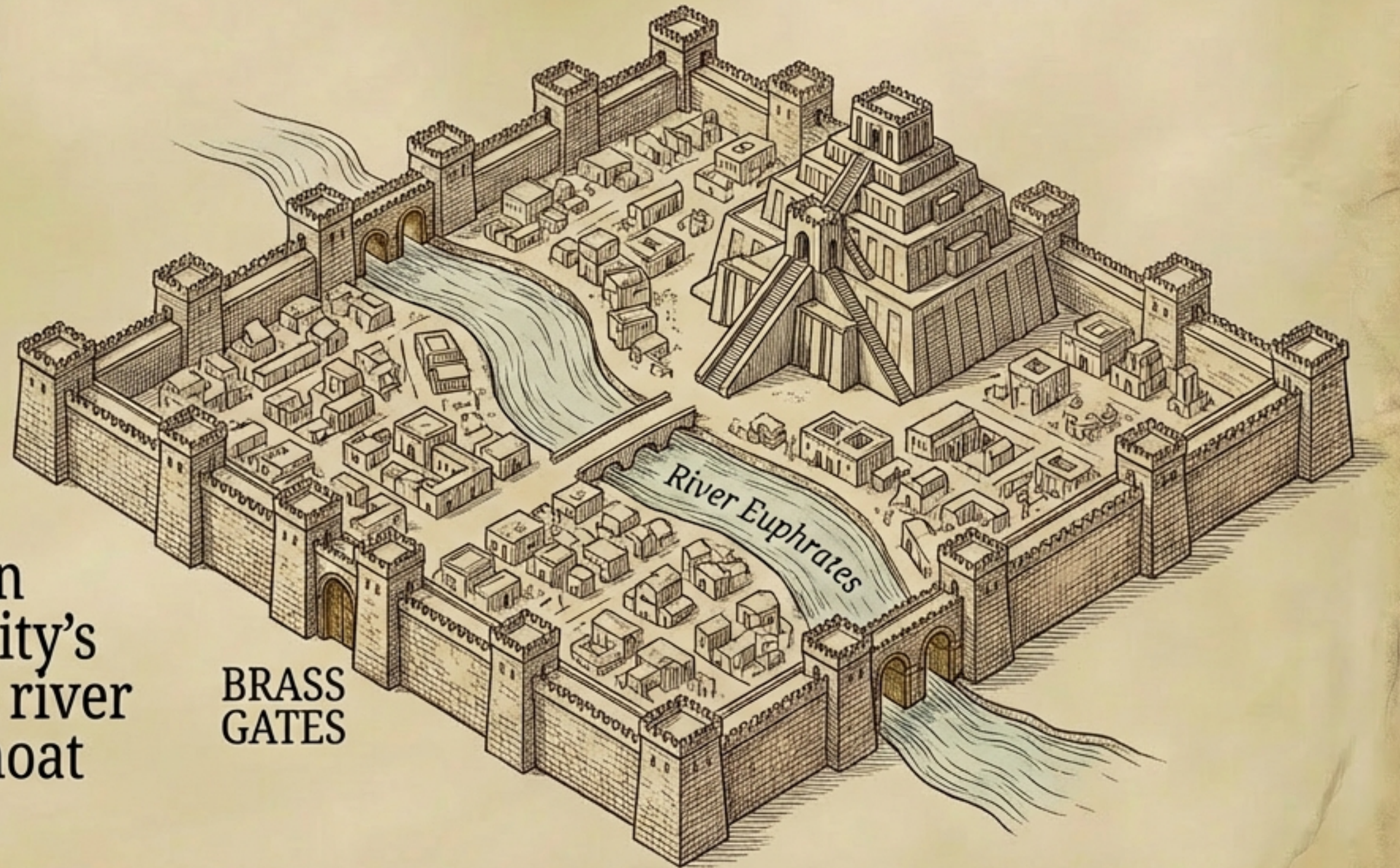
Wonder of the World: Babylon

Walls: 200 cubits high,
50 cubits wide.

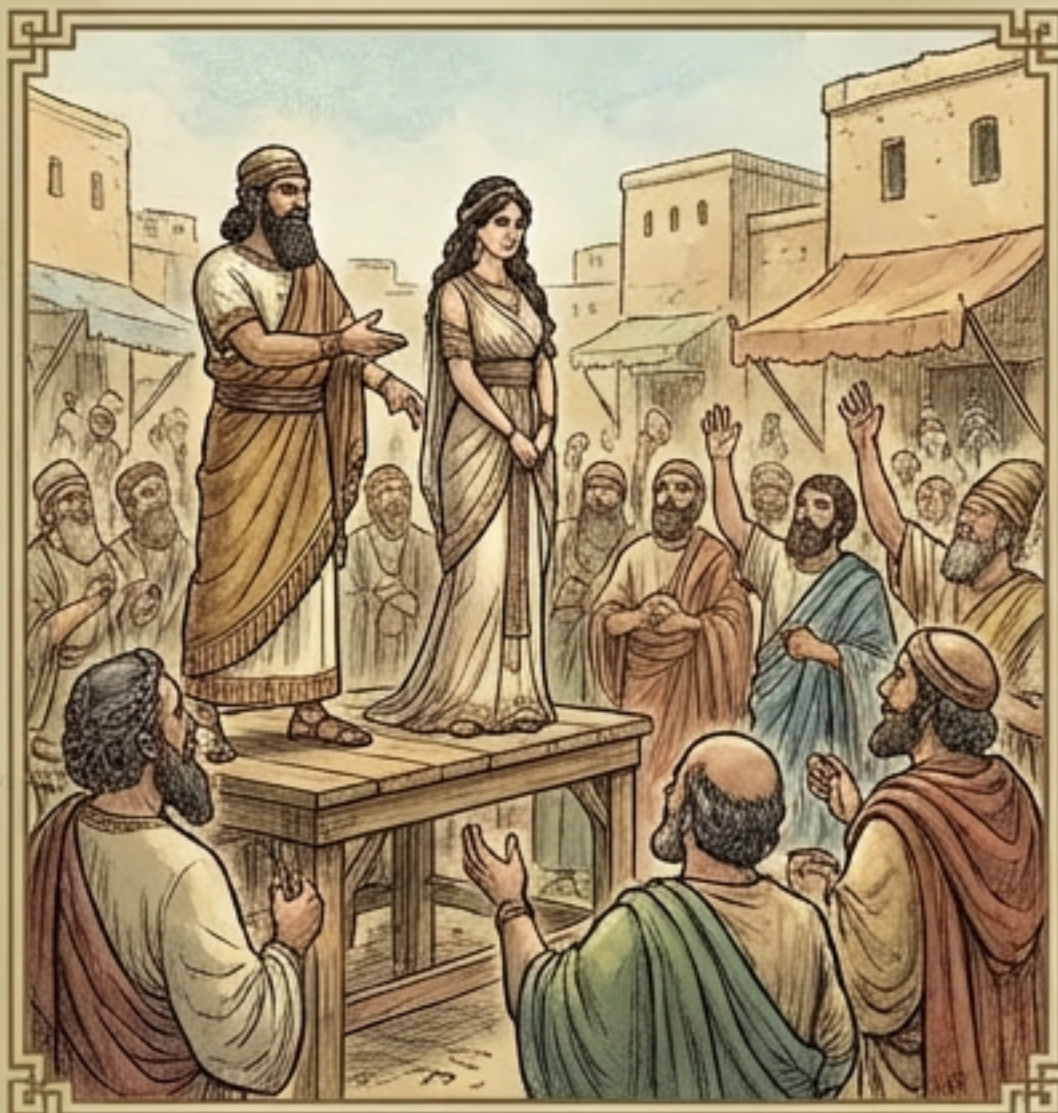
Layout: Square, 120
furlongs each side.

Defenses: 100 Gates
of Solid Brass.

Engineer Queen: Queen
Nitocris designed the city's
defenses, diverting the river
to create a defensive moat
and bridge system.



Customs of the Babylonians



The Marriage Auction.

Beauty buys a husband. The rich bid on fair maidens; the proceeds pay dowries for the others.



Public Medicine.

No physicians. The sick are laid in the street; passers-by must offer advice based on experience.



Temple of Mylitta.

Every woman must once sit in the temple of Venus and consort with a stranger for a silver coin.

The Fall of Babylon: Ingenuity Overcomes Strength

The Problem

The walls were impenetrable, and the city had provisions for years.

The Attack

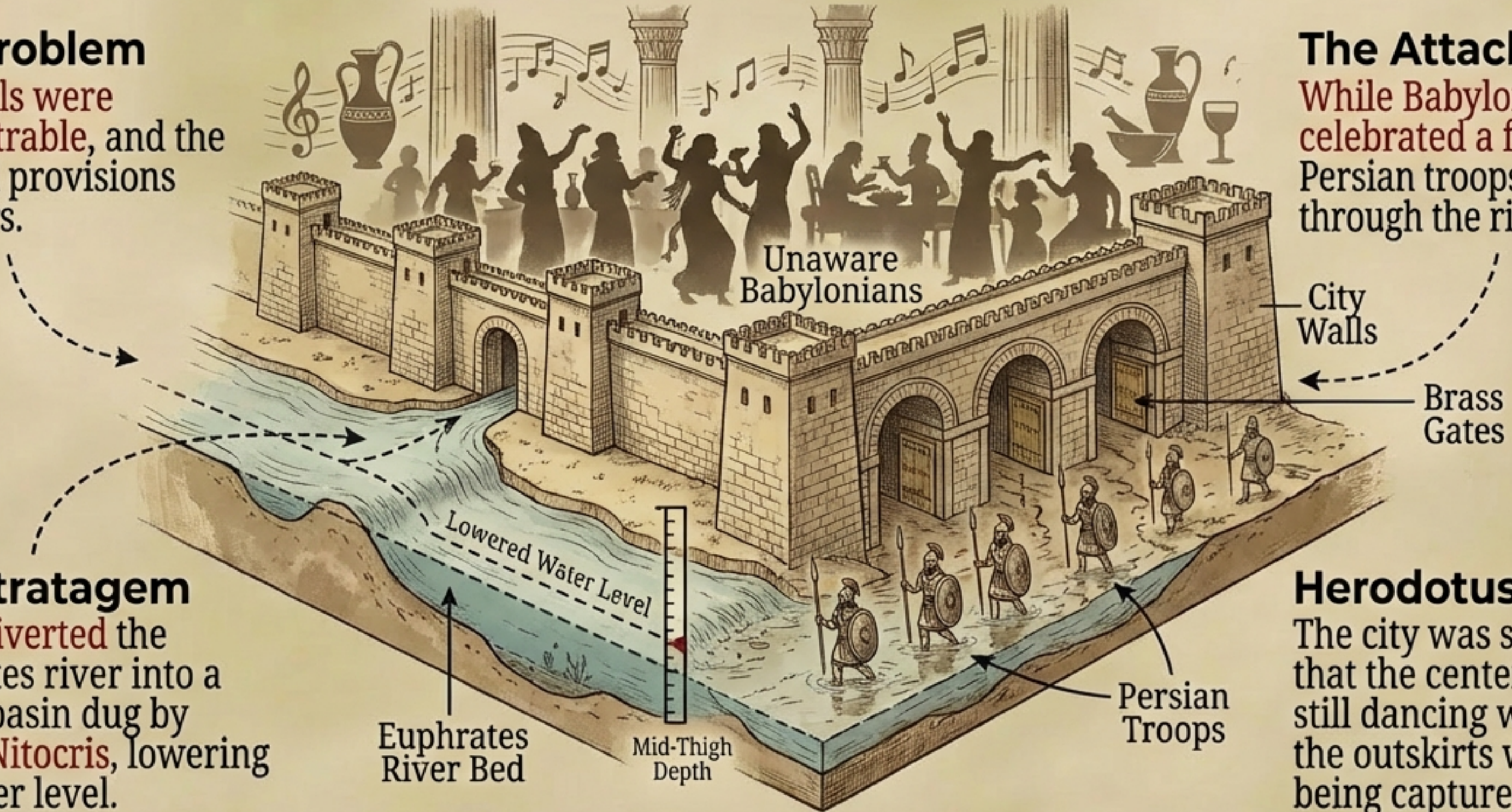
While Babylon celebrated a festival, Persian troops waded in through the riverbed.

The Stratagem

Cyrus diverted the Euphrates river into a marsh-basin dug by Queen Nitocris, lowering the water level.

Herodotus Note

The city was so vast that the center was still dancing while the outskirts were being captured.



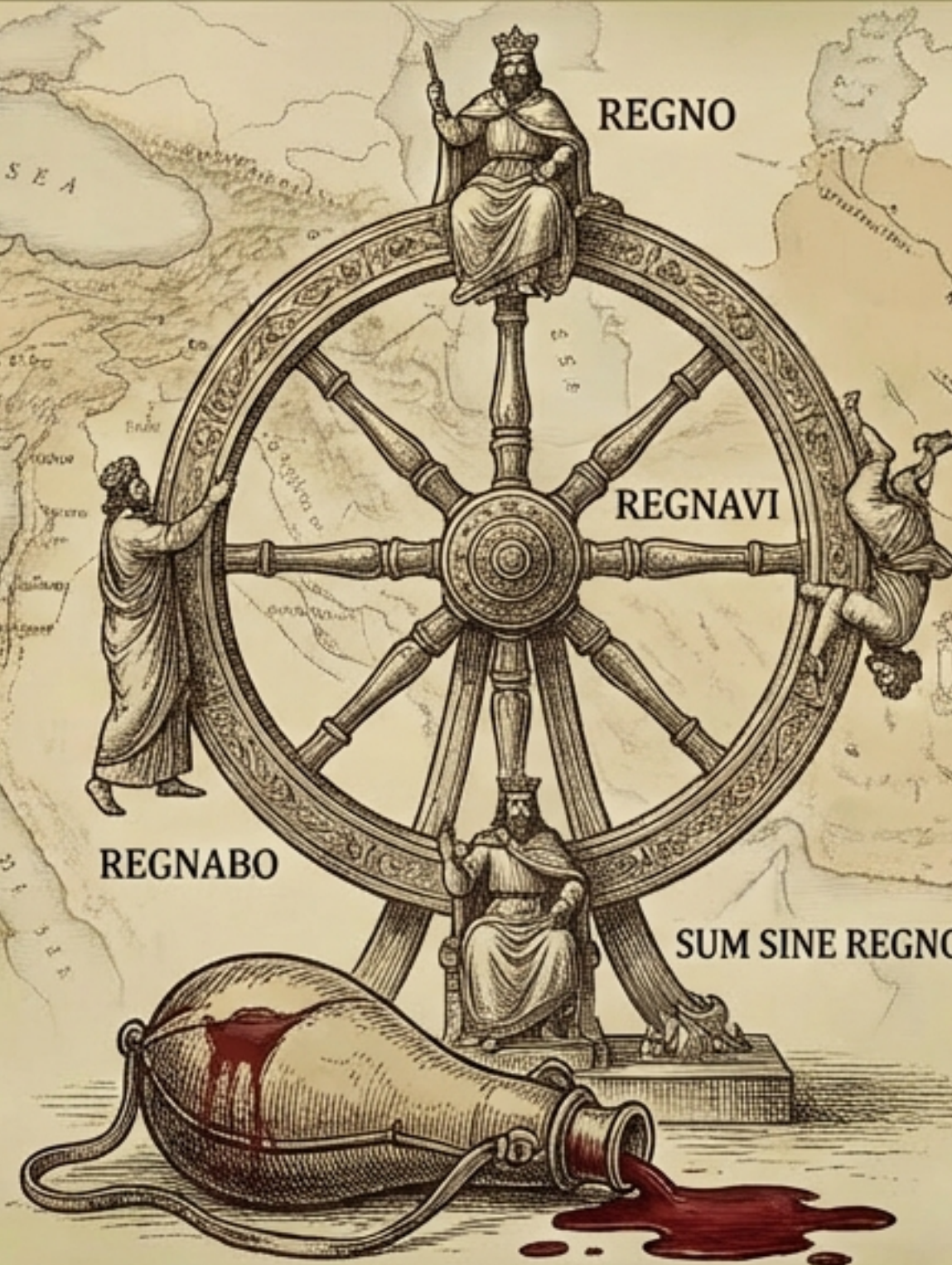
Epilogue: The Wheel of Human Affairs

The End of Cyrus

Insatiable for more conquest, Cyrus attacks the Massagetae.

The End of Cyrus

Queen Tomyris:
Insatiable for more conquest, Cyrus attacks the Massagetae. He is killed by Queen Tomyris, who dips his head in blood: "I give thee thy fill of blood."



Final Thesis:

"There is a wheel on which the affairs of men revolve, and its mechanism forbids the same men always to be fortunate."

The cycle of Rise and Fall is complete.