



ANCIENT BETRAYALS

6 Episodes x 60 minutes

BIG
M E D I A

“Uncover the clandestine world of **conspiracies, murder, and acts of treason** that shaped the **pivotal betrayals** in ancient history.”



Betrayal is one of our biggest fears, when someone we trusted turns against us and our common cause we feel that the natural order has been shaken, that people can turn against each other and change the world. It's a universal theme in contemporary society and goes back through the ages from **Judas Escariot** to **Yevgeny Prigozhin**, where we have power, we have power clashes, where we have people we have Betrayal.

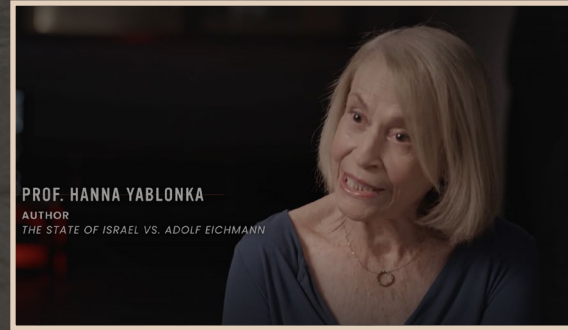
VISUAL STYLE

The series will be built on a **compelling and deeply researched archive sourced from the best libraries available**. In order to bring the archive to life we will employ graphic treatments that composite **stills with timelines** and other **GFX** to elevate the archive and create a series look and feel.

Archival footage will be complemented with **expert interviews** shot in classic and relevant locations. Interview shoots will be on 2 cameras. The master interview will be a wide room view to capture the locations and the second camera will be a long-sided shot to capture the more dramatic and pivotal moments of each betrayal.

In order to bring these individuals and relationships to life we will employ actors to play the central characters in each episode. They will be shot in the style of a **true crime documentary** in **stylised recreations** that set the scene of each betrayal, the actions and interactions that led to the event and the moment of realisation. The combination of these elements will provide the viewer with the **motive, meaning, modus operandi** and **proof of each betrayal** so the audience can understand the event through terms and tropes a modern audience can relate to.

SAMPLE STILLS





SEASON BREAKDOWN

This series will take viewers on a riveting journey through the untold tales of treachery, murder, and political intrigue that underlie some of the most significant betrayals in ancient history. From Ancient Greece to the homes of Hannibal in Carthage and Julius Caesar in Rome to Macedonia's Alexander the Great and the mighty Mongol Empire's Genghis Khan, all the way to the mysterious Mesoamerican Aztecs - this series spans the globe to delve into the critical moments that defined history's greatest figures.

Along the way we will explore the darker aspects of ancient civilizations, unveiling the clandestine realm of politics, intrigue and revenge; a cutthroat and treacherous landscape where betrayal adopted many faces. It was not always a knife in the back or rope around the throat, but political and personal backstabbing that often proved to be fates worse than death.

With the guidance of Ancient History experts and Psychologists we will delve into the background, unravel the sequence of events, and examine the impacts - the sliding doors of history. With a compelling mix of reenactments, CGI reconstructions, and expert interviews, each episode will shed light on the historical, political, and social context surrounding these damning acts of betrayal.



EPISODE STRUCTURE

ACT I:


Each episode will start by **setting the historical context** and **tease the betrayal** which immediately **establishes the dangerous environment** and **fraught relationships** at play at the time. What made our key characters tick? How did they see themselves and each other?

ACT II:

We will then look at the **setting for the betrayal, the motives, the events and the eventual breaking point** as a part two cliff hanger, the moment the course of events were irretrievably launched.

ACT III:

We begin our third act with the act, setting it up with the **tropes of a modern true crime thriller; how was it planned and executed, and what was the cover story or alibi etc.** . .and finally closing with the impact, aftermath and repercussions be they historical, political or militarily.



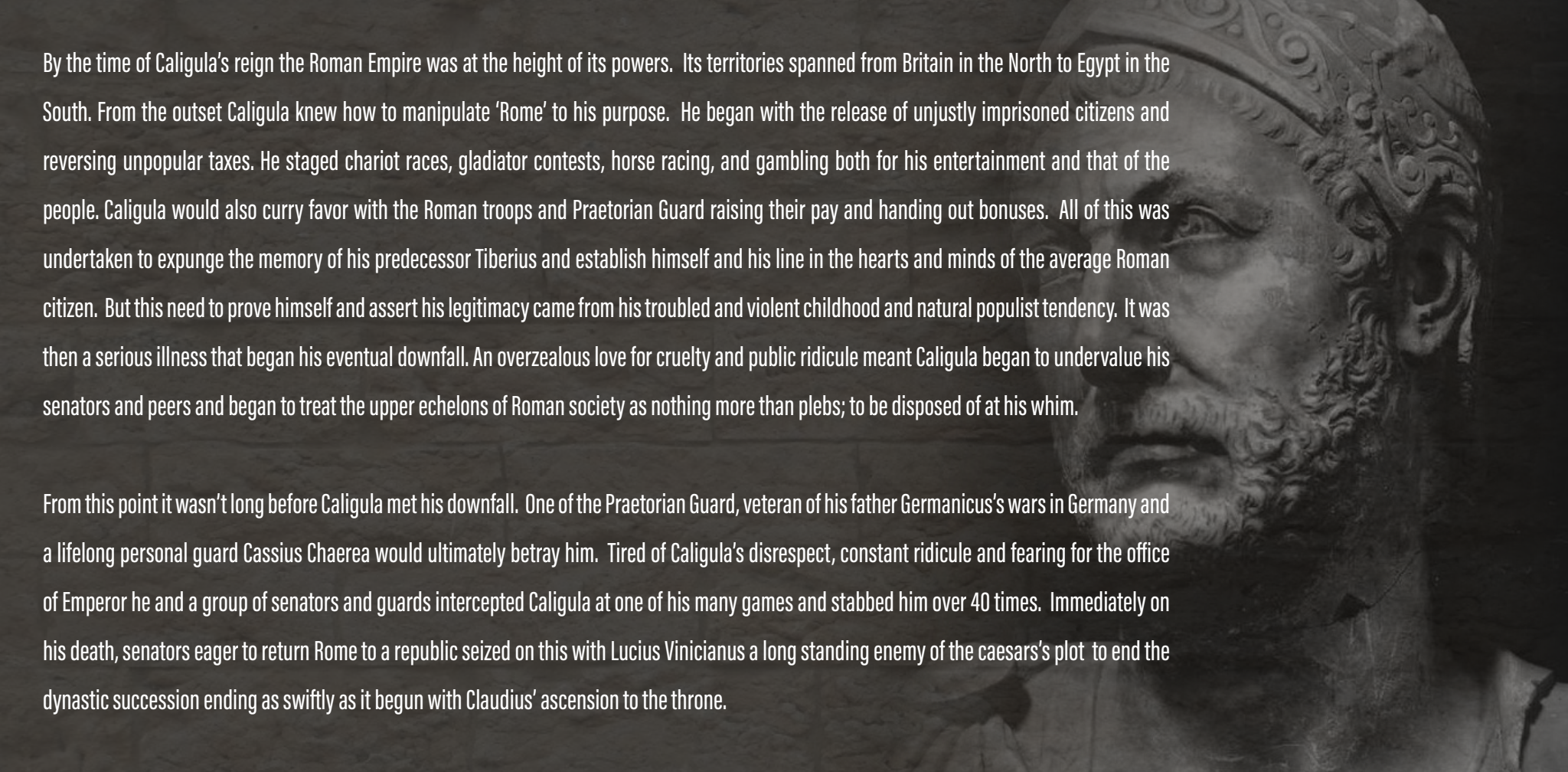
EPISODE LIST



I: THE ASSASSINATION OF EMPEROR CALIGULA

ROMAN EMPIRE, 24TH JANUARY 41 A.D.

CASSIUS CHAEREA, A PRAETORIAN GUARD MEMBER, DRIVEN BY DAILY RIDICULE, STABS EMPEROR CALIGULA TO DEATH. CALIGULA'S WIFE AND DAUGHTER ALSO MEET THEIR TRAGIC END.



By the time of Caligula's reign the Roman Empire was at the height of its powers. Its territories spanned from Britain in the North to Egypt in the South. From the outset Caligula knew how to manipulate 'Rome' to his purpose. He began with the release of unjustly imprisoned citizens and reversing unpopular taxes. He staged chariot races, gladiator contests, horse racing, and gambling both for his entertainment and that of the people. Caligula would also curry favor with the Roman troops and Praetorian Guard raising their pay and handing out bonuses. All of this was undertaken to expunge the memory of his predecessor Tiberius and establish himself and his line in the hearts and minds of the average Roman citizen. But this need to prove himself and assert his legitimacy came from his troubled and violent childhood and natural populist tendency. It was then a serious illness that began his eventual downfall. An overzealous love for cruelty and public ridicule meant Caligula began to undervalue his senators and peers and began to treat the upper echelons of Roman society as nothing more than plebs; to be disposed of at his whim.

From this point it wasn't long before Caligula met his downfall. One of the Praetorian Guard, veteran of his father Germanicus's wars in Germany and a lifelong personal guard Cassius Chaerea would ultimately betray him. Tired of Caligula's disrespect, constant ridicule and fearing for the office of Emperor he and a group of senators and guards intercepted Caligula at one of his many games and stabbed him over 40 times. Immediately on his death, senators eager to return Rome to a republic seized on this with Lucius Vinicianus a long standing enemy of the caesars's plot to end the dynastic succession ending as swiftly as it begun with Claudius' ascension to the throne.



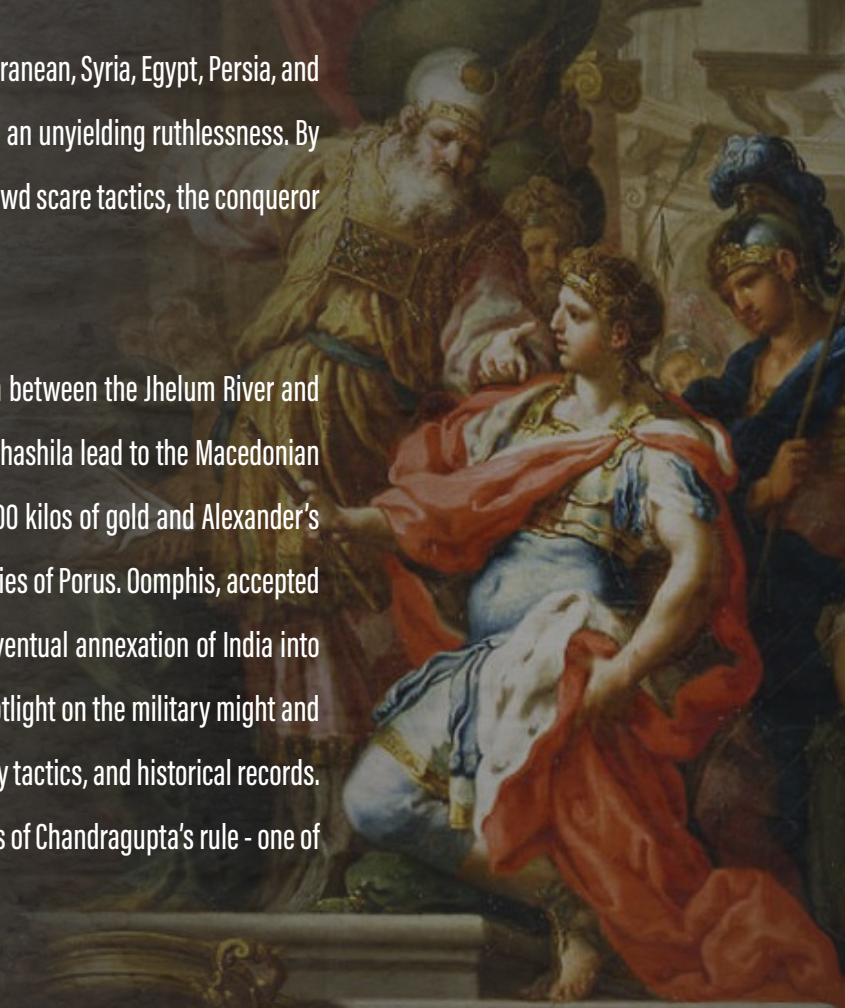
II: A COUNTRY BETRAYED TO DEFEAT A RIVAL

MACEDONIAN EMPIRE, 326 B.C.E.

KING OMPHIS PLOTS TO BETRAY HIS COUNTRY TO ALEXANDER THE GREAT TO SECURE VICTORY OVER HIS RIVAL,
KING PORUS.

Alexander the Great ruled over the known world. His bloody military campaigns led to the annexation of the Mediterranean, Syria, Egypt, Persia, and Central Asia. All of these territories were placed under Alexander's rule and his armies plundered their lands with an unyielding ruthlessness. By 326 B.C.E., all that remained for Alexander and his armies was India, which, through cunning negotiations and shrewd scare tactics, the conqueror was able to successfully annex into his global empire.

At the time, Porus stood as the master of the gateway to the Indian subcontinent; Punjab. Porus ruled the region between the Jhelum River and Chenab River. He was seen as a strong leader; but a betrayal by Oomphis, ruler of the bordering kingdom of Takshashila led to the Macedonian advance into India. Oomphis betrayed his ally Porus when confronted by Alexander's might. He was offered 25,000 kilos of gold and Alexander's word that he would not ravage the king's lands in exchange for safe passage and military support against the armies of Porus. Oomphis, accepted Alexander's offer, which significantly aided the conqueror's victory in the Battle of Hydaspes (326 BC) and the eventual annexation of India into the Macedonian Empire. Despite the obvious effects of Oomphis' betrayal, Alexander's conquest of India put a spotlight on the military might and intellectual ferocity of Eastern culture. This encounter of East and West led to the sharing of cultural norms, military tactics, and historical records. Art and military tactics would evolve and advance and the memory of this defeat was said to have inspired aspects of Chandragupta's rule - one of the first rulers of all of India.





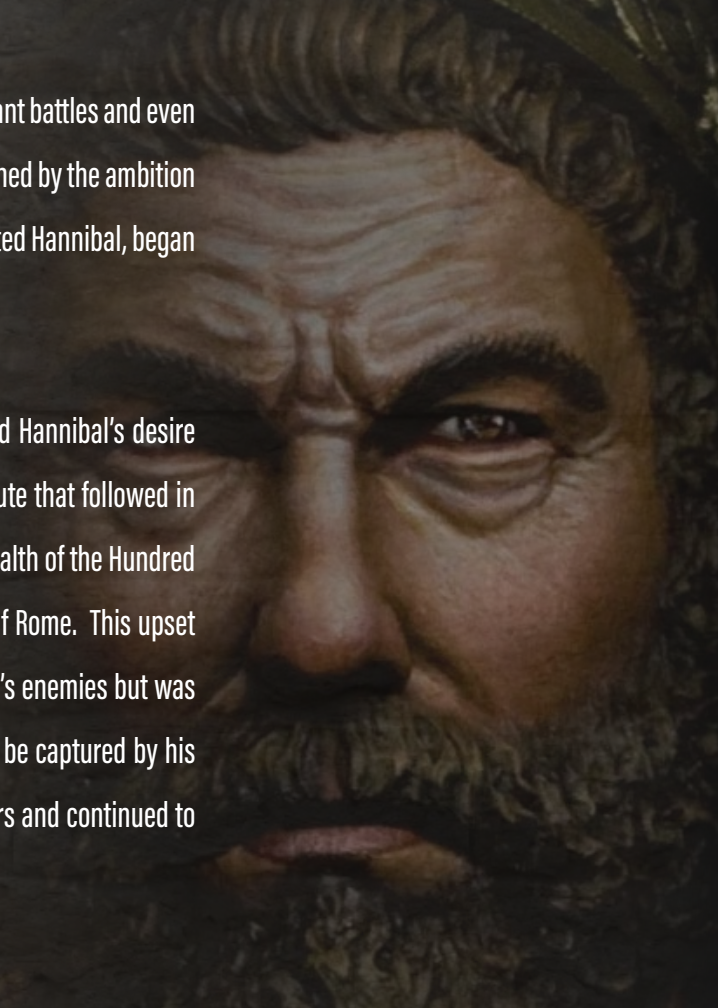
III: HANNIBAL BETRAYED BY HIS OWN, CARTHAGE'S RULING ELITE

CARTHAGE, 202 B.C.E.

THE CARTHAGINIAN SENATE, PRIORITISING ITS COMFORT OVER THE WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE, SLOWLY TURNS
AGAINST HANNIBAL.

Hannibal Barca, the brilliant Carthaginian general, who led a series of daring campaigns against Rome, winning several significant battles and even crossing the Alps to invade Italy was a legendary figure of the ancient world. But his prowess on the battlefield was never matched by the ambition of the the Carthaginian ruling elites and as Rome continued to press for more territory the Barcid ruling class which had supported Hannibal, began to lose influence some elites believing that negotiating peace with Rome would secure their personal interests and wealth.

The breaking point of the initial betrayal can be pinpointed to the Battle of Zama in 202 BC. The Carthaginian elites opposed Hannibal's desire to continue the war and left him undersupplied, under-resourced and open to defeat. Hannibal took this defeat and the tribute that followed in good grace and began to reorganise the carthaginian state to pay the indemnity. This re-organisation directly affected the wealth of the Hundred and Four, the leading elite of the time who resented Hannibal, but Carthage was again thriving and attracting the attention of Rome. This upset the Carthaginian elites who soon sent Hannibal into exile. He travelled asia minor as a military tactician and advisor to Rome's enemies but was eventually betrayed again in modern day Turkey when King Prusias gave Hannibal up to a Roman Army and before he could be captured by his eternal enemy he took poison and died. Rome would never see another opponent as worthy as Hannibal for hundreds of years and continued to expand and dominate the mediterranean for hundreds of years.

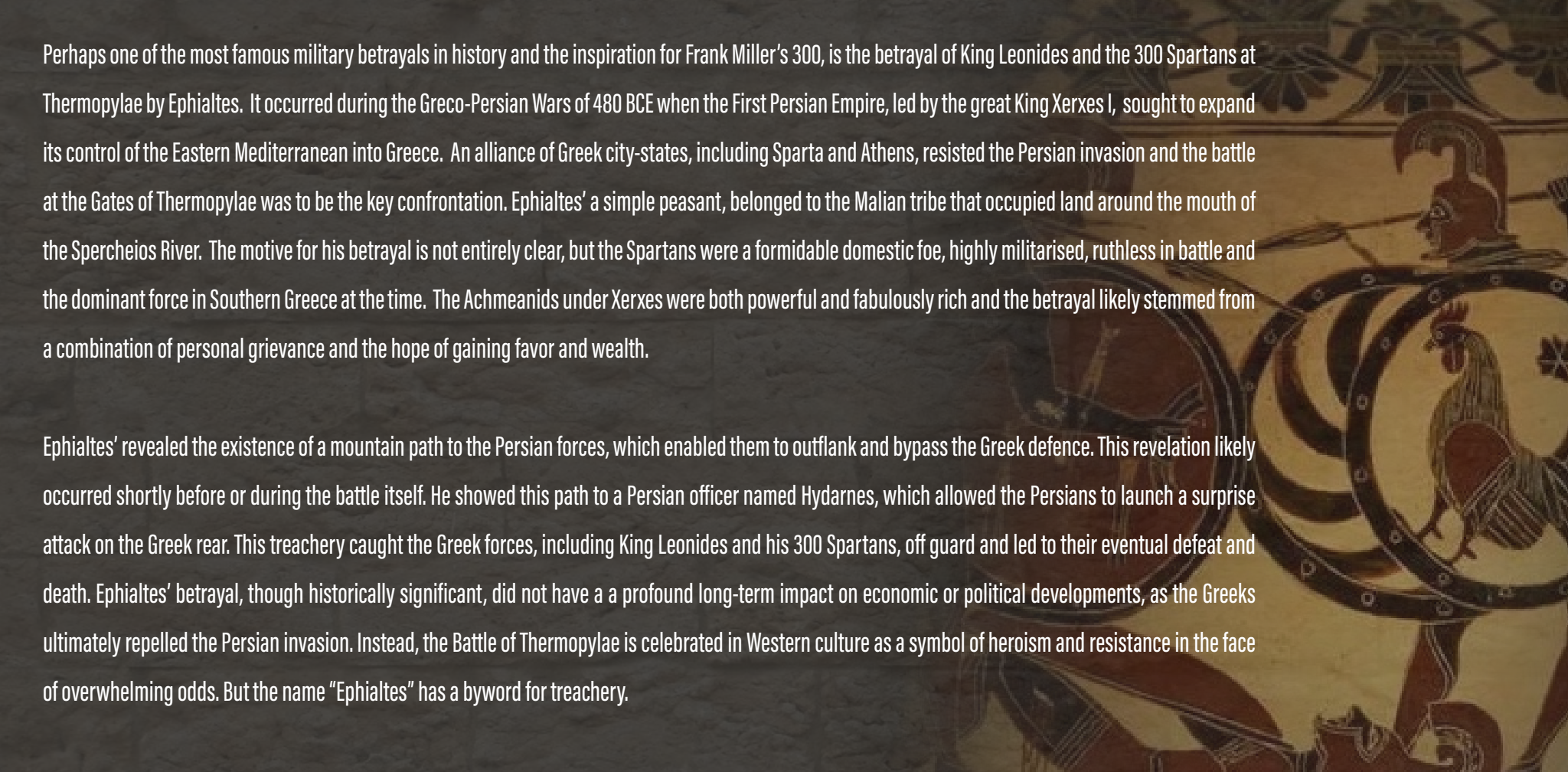




IV: THE SLAUGHTER OF THE SPARTANS AT THERMOPYLAE

ANCIENT GREECE, 480 B.C.E.

EPHALTES, THE TRAITOR, LEADS THE PERSIAN ARMY BEHIND GREEK LINES, SURROUNDING AND SLAUGHTERING HIS COUNTRYMEN.



Perhaps one of the most famous military betrayals in history and the inspiration for Frank Miller's 300, is the betrayal of King Leonides and the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae by Ephialtes. It occurred during the Greco-Persian Wars of 480 BCE when the First Persian Empire, led by the great King Xerxes I, sought to expand its control of the Eastern Mediterranean into Greece. An alliance of Greek city-states, including Sparta and Athens, resisted the Persian invasion and the battle at the Gates of Thermopylae was to be the key confrontation. Ephialtes' a simple peasant, belonged to the Malian tribe that occupied land around the mouth of the Spercheios River. The motive for his betrayal is not entirely clear, but the Spartans were a formidable domestic foe, highly militarised, ruthless in battle and the dominant force in Southern Greece at the time. The Achmeanids under Xerxes were both powerful and fabulously rich and the betrayal likely stemmed from a combination of personal grievance and the hope of gaining favor and wealth.

Ephialtes' revealed the existence of a mountain path to the Persian forces, which enabled them to outflank and bypass the Greek defence. This revelation likely occurred shortly before or during the battle itself. He showed this path to a Persian officer named Hydarnes, which allowed the Persians to launch a surprise attack on the Greek rear. This treachery caught the Greek forces, including King Leonides and his 300 Spartans, off guard and led to their eventual defeat and death. Ephialtes' betrayal, though historically significant, did not have a a profound long-term impact on economic or political developments, as the Greeks ultimately repelled the Persian invasion. Instead, the Battle of Thermopylae is celebrated in Western culture as a symbol of heroism and resistance in the face of overwhelming odds. But the name "Ephialtes" has a byword for treachery.



V: THE BETRAYAL OF THE FUTURE GENGHIS KHAN

MONGOL EMPIRE, 1201

THE SON OF WANG KHAN IS INCITED BY JEMULKA TO WAGE WAR AGAINST HIS BLOOD BROTHER GENGHIS KHAN, A DECISION HE WOULD LIVE TO REGRET.

The early life of Ghenghis Khan was defined by his deep friendship turned into a fierce rivalry with his “blood brother” Jamukha. They first met when their respective clans visited one another; the two formed an unbreakable bond that transcended their wildly different realities; Temujin was born to a poverty-stricken family and Jamukha was of noble blood. Their relationship would be further solidified when Borte, Temujin’s young wife, was kidnapped. Jamukha used his army to retrieve her, commanding the future Khan’s loyalty in his army.

However, Temujin, now a steppe warrior, became contemptuous of his brother Jamukha who, concerned with Temujin’s natural charisma, treated Temujin with increasing belittlement. Temujin reached his breaking point when Jamukha forced him to camp with herd animals; which was of utmost disrespect in Mongol culture. Furious, Temujin fled with his men and from this point the two warlords would be forever foes until they met each other on the battlefield in 1190. Ending in a defeat for Temujin. When they met again in battle in 1205, Temujin was prepared, he was now a seasoned warrior and emerged victorious as Jamukha’s men betrayed him—handing him to their former leader Temujin. Nonetheless, Temujin, mindful of their blood bond, offered his rival the opportunity to serve under him. Jamukha did not accept and instead requested a “bloodless death” which Temujin granted him by breaking his back. |From this point on Temujin would rise to Genghis Khan, he was a bold, ruthless and brilliant general and military strategist, forever forged by his early life on the plains and his battles with Jamukha. One of Genghis’s central Mongol laws was ‘Never Betray Your Khan.’





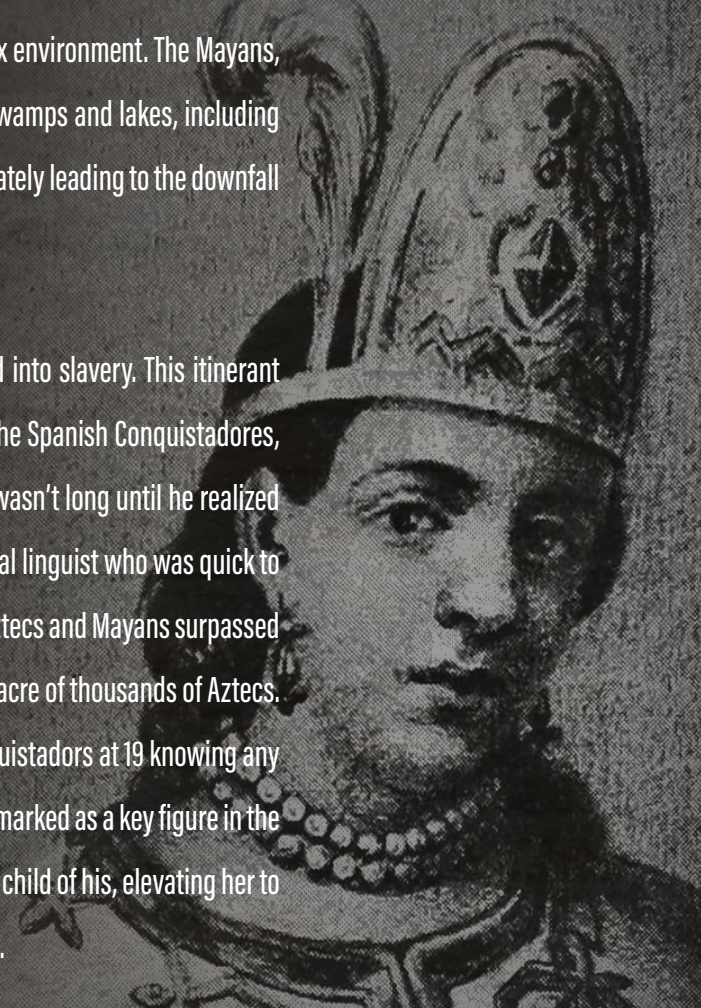
**VI: LA MALINCHE:
THE TRAITOR, THE TRANSLATOR, THE LOVER**

AZTEC EMPIRE, 1592

EXPLORE THE STORY OF THE BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS LA MALINCHE, WHO BETRAYED HER PEOPLE AND PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN THEIR DESTRUCTION.

Before the arrival of the conquistadores in the Yucatan Peninsula, the Mayan and Aztec empires thrived in a diverse and complex environment. The Mayans, primarily concentrated in the southern part of the peninsula and in the northern regions, the Aztecs held sway over a land of swamps and lakes, including their grand capital, Tenochtitlán. The arrival of the conquistadores in the 16th century would drastically alter this landscape, ultimately leading to the downfall of these indigenous civilizations.

Born around the year 1500, Malitzen was the eldest child of nobility; however, when she was eight or nine, Malitzen was sold into slavery. This itinerant lifestyle taught her languages spoken by both the Aztec and Mayan populations respectively. In 1519, Hernan Cortés, leader of the Spanish Conquistadores, arrived at the city of Pontonchan and received twenty enslaved women as a peace offering; one of those being Malitzen and it wasn't long until he realized her proficiency with the Nahuatl and Yucatec languages—taking her back as his own slave and interpreter. Malitzen was a natural linguist who was quick to learn Spanish and became indispensable to Cortés and his efforts to conquer the Yucatan Peninsula. But her true betrayal to the Aztecs and Mayans surpassed interpretation. She would often warn Cortés of incoming attacks and plots, saving the lives of Spaniards and leading to the massacre of thousands of Aztecs. Malitzen's life before Cortés' arrival contributed to her betrayal; sold into slavery before she turned ten and then sold to the Conquistadors at 19 knowing any transgression would lead to certain death. The Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire lasted from 1519 to 1521 and Malitzen is often marked as a key figure in the ruthless slaughtering of the Aztec people. She went on to bear Cortés' child before marrying Captain Juan Jaramillo and bearing a child of his, elevating her to the status of Spanish noblewoman. Malitzen died a free Spanish woman in 1529 and her name is a byword for treachery even now.





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BIG
MEDIA