



# The Last King of Lydia

*Tim Leach*

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## **The Last King of Lydia** Tim Leach

A defeated king stands on top of a pyre. His conqueror, the Persian ruler Cyrus, signals to his guards; they step forward and touch flaming torches to the dry wood. Croesus, once the wealthiest man of the ancient world, is to be burned alive. As he watches the flames catch, Croesus thinks back over his life. He remembers the time he asked the old Athenian philosopher, Solon, who was the happiest man in the world. Croesus used to think it was him. But then all his riches could not remove the spear from his dying elder son's chest, could not bring his mute younger son to speak, could not make him as wise as his own chief slave, could not bring his wife's love back, could not prevent his army from being torn apart and his kingdom lost. As the old philosopher had replied, a man's happiness can only be measured when he is dead. The first coils of smoke wrap around Croesus' neck like a noose. This deeply wise novel of what it means to be human is perfect for readers of Mary Renault and David Malouf.

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