

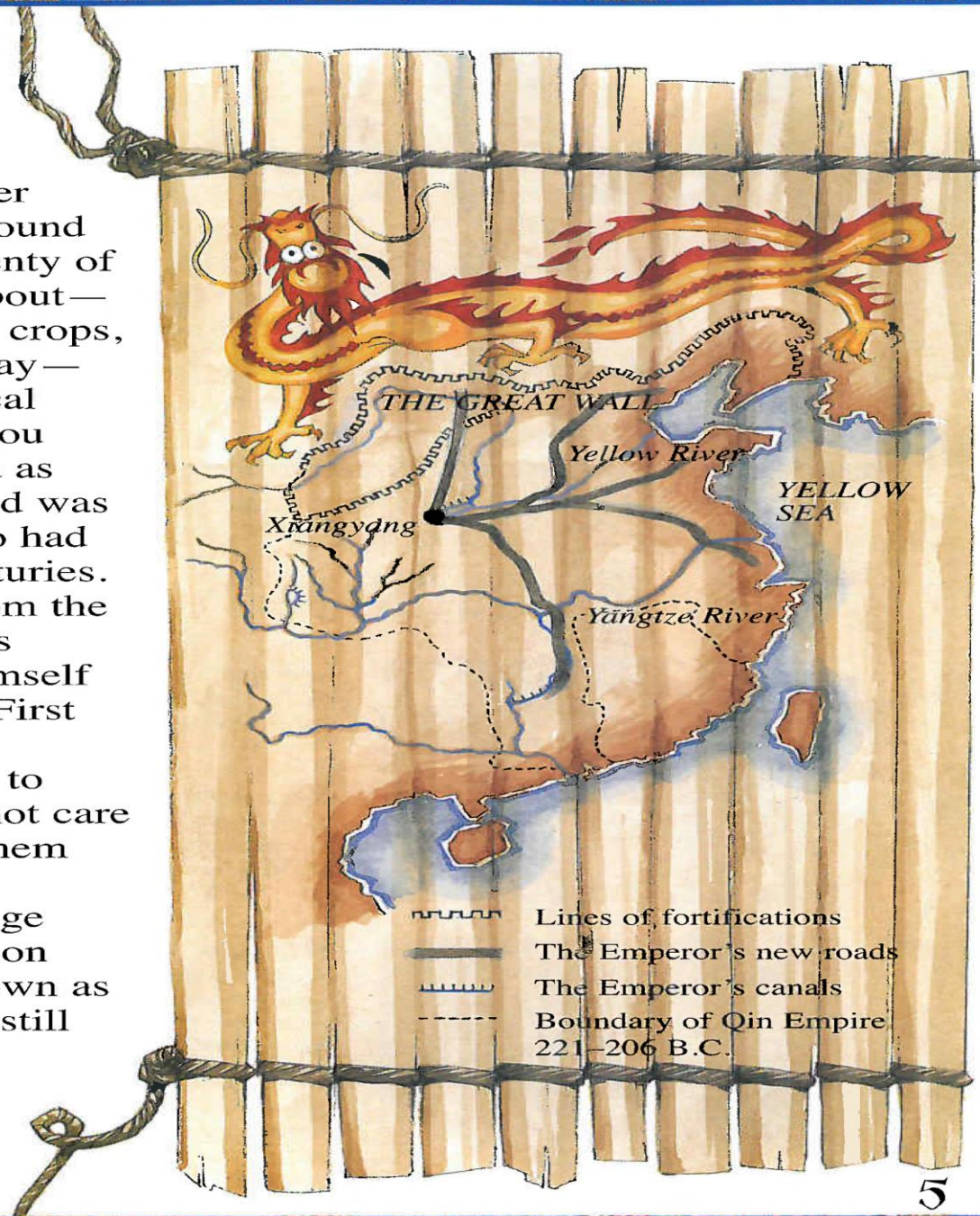
You Wouldn't Want to Work on the Great Wall of China!



Defenses You'd Rather Not Build

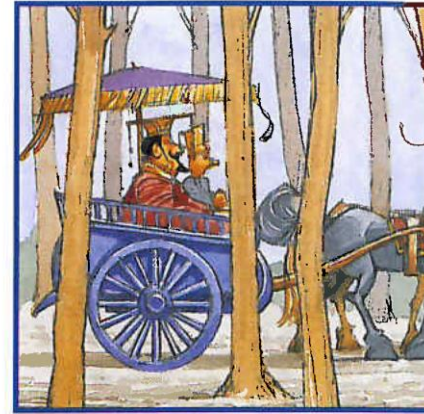
Introduction

Xou're a poor farmer living in China around 215 B.C. With plenty of things to worry about—bad weather, poor crops, and big taxes to pay—you've barely noticed the political upheavals taking place around you recently. A few years ago, China as one nation did not exist. The land was divided between rival states who had been fighting each other for centuries. But now a really strong ruler from the state of Qin has emerged. He has united the country and called himself Qin Shihuangdi, which means "First Great Emperor of China." He is ruthless and cruel. No one dares to disobey his orders and he does not care how many people die carrying them out. You are one of the unlucky thousands he sends to build a huge defensive wall 1,800 miles long on China's northern border. It's known as the Great Wall of China and it's still there today.

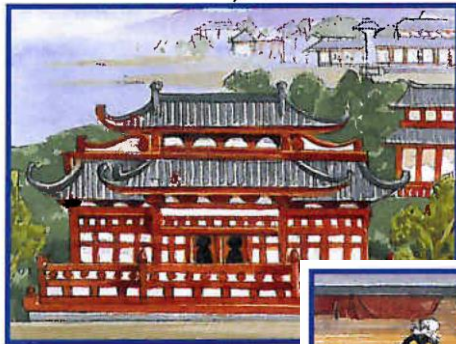


The First Great Emperor

The Emperor has “all-seeing eyes, the nose of a hornet, the voice of a jackal, and the heart of a wolf.” That’s how one of his advisors described him (before fleeing for his life). You saw the Emperor once, and it’s a fair description. He was driving along one of the many new highways he ordered built to speed communications and tighten his control. He has made everyone use the same currency, writing style, weights and measures, and distance between their cart wheels (so they can run in the same ruts). There are rules for everything.



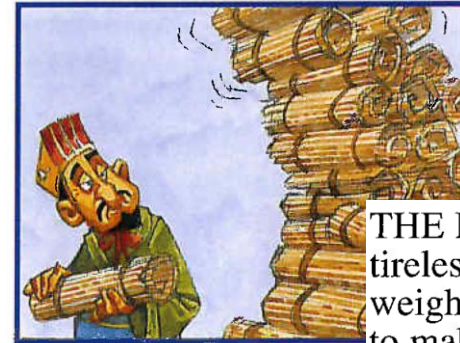
How He Rules:



HE'S BUILT a magnificent new capital, Xiangyang, and made the headstrong nobles hand in their swords, leave their lands, and live there under his watchful eye.



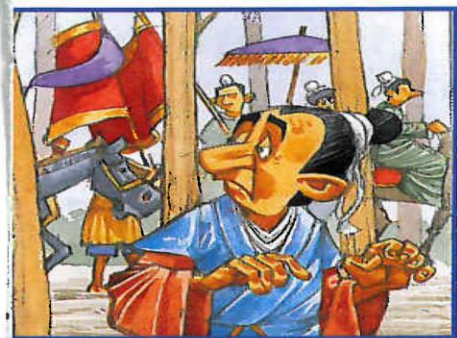
THROUGHOUT the land, government officials write him reports on strips of bamboo laced together and rolled up—there is no paper.



THE EMPEROR is a tireless worker. He weighs his pile of reports to make sure he's done his daily quota.

DISOBEYING him is most unwise. Punishments include beheading, being buried alive, and being cut in half at the waist.





Handy Hint
Don't criticize the Emperor or you will never be promoted — if you survive at all!



Everlasting Rule



Build, build, build!

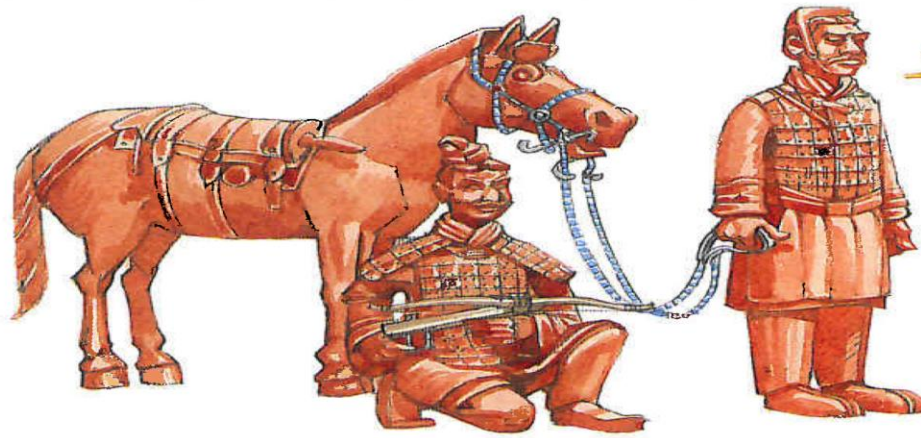
POOR PEOPLE everywhere are forced to work on the Emperor's projects—soldiers, convicts, slaves, and ordinary people just like you. You see large numbers of them being marched off to dig canals or to build new roads and fortifications. Your time will come.



UNDERGROUND TOMB: In the inner chamber of the Emperor's tomb, a dragon ferries his copper coffin across a model of his kingdom complete with gem-studded palaces and towers. The ceiling represents the star-filled sky, while below, the rivers of China, made in quicksilver, flow into a quicksilver ocean. (As described by a Chinese historian of c.100 B.C. It has not been excavated.)

The Emperor is very superstitious and terrified of dying. He hopes to cheat death by finding the “elixir of life,” a magic substance that will make him immortal. He has sent expeditions far and wide to seek it, so far with no success. If this plan fails, he has another one. He has 700,000 workers building a tomb containing a model of his kingdom, so that he will continue ruling in the next world. They are also making an army to guard it—over 8,000 life-sized figures of men, horses, and chariots made from terra-cotta and buried underground.



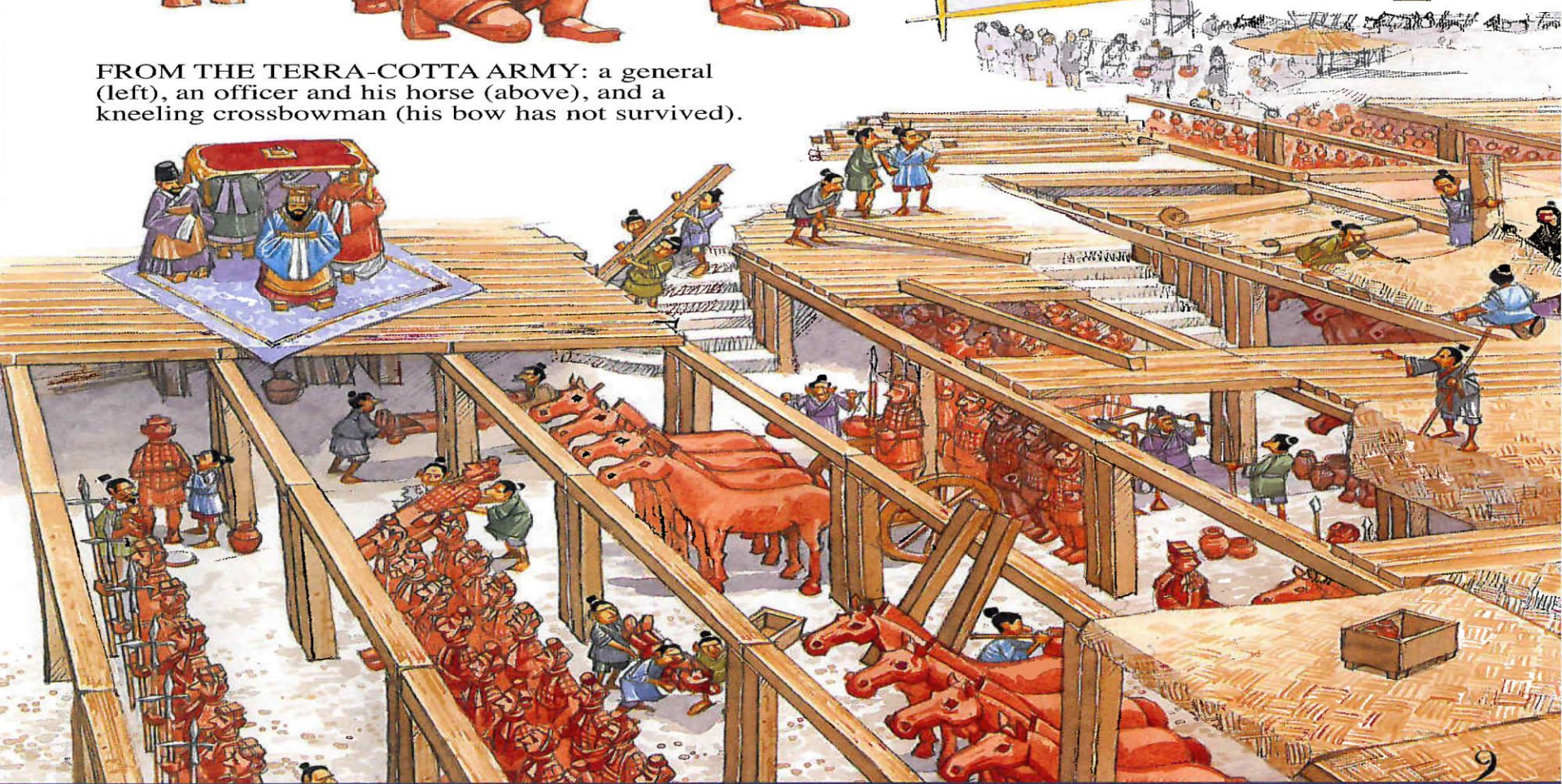


Handy Hint

Tomb robbers beware! Traps in the Emperor's tomb will shoot at you.



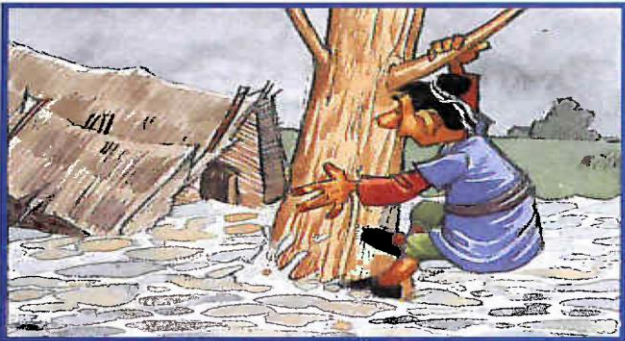
FROM THE TERRA-COTTA ARMY: a general (left), an officer and his horse (above), and a kneeling crossbowman (his bow has not survived).



A Hard Life



DROUGHT AND FLOOD:
Bad weather can ruin all your hopes. If no rain falls, your crops will shrivel. If it does fall, the Yellow River may flood and drown them.

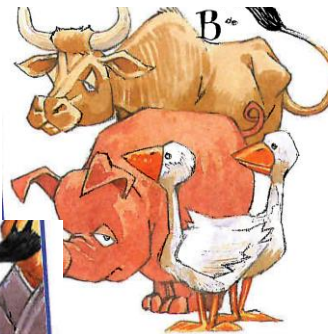


From Bad to Worse:

A You borrow money from a rich landowner to pay your debts.



Like most of the Emperor's subjects, you live in the country and scrape a living from a small piece of land. It belongs to your father, who's getting old now but still makes all the decisions, and you must obey him. That is the duty of Chinese sons and daughters, no matter how old they are. You work every day of the year, but still it's hard to grow enough to feed the family—you, your parents, and your sister—and to have anything left over to sell. Every year you pay tax to the Emperor, and this is calculated according to the size of your land, not the size of your crop. When the harvest is poor, there's nothing left once the tax has been paid. In order to eat and to buy seed for next year's crop you have to borrow money, and once you get into debt it is very hard to get out. Many poor farmers are ruined this way.



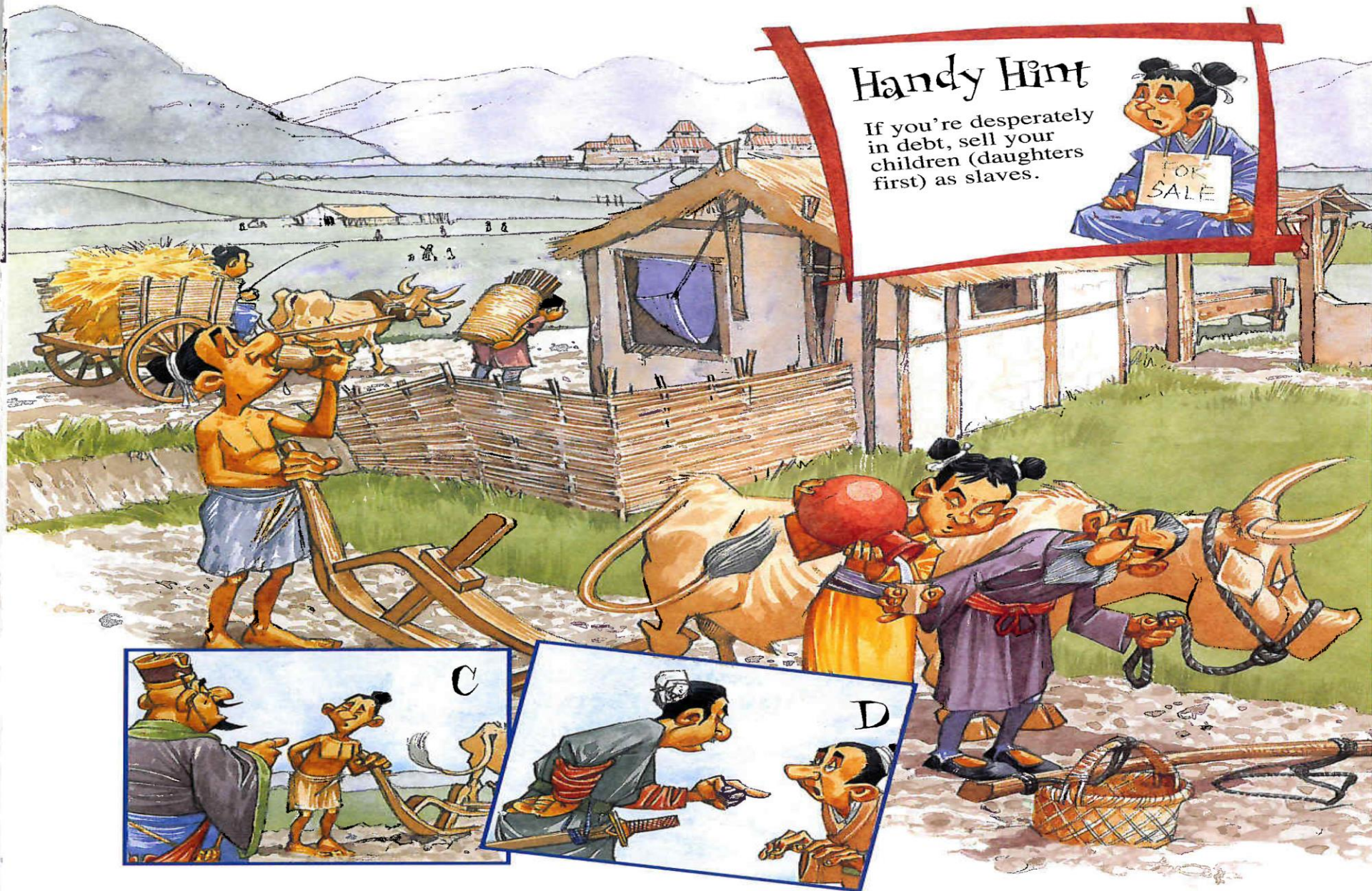
B You have to sell animals and tools to pay him back.

C You can't work the farm without your tools so you are forced to sell it to the landowner. You become his tenant and do all the work, and he keeps all the profit.

D The last straw: a conscription officer selects you to do forced labor.

Handy Hint

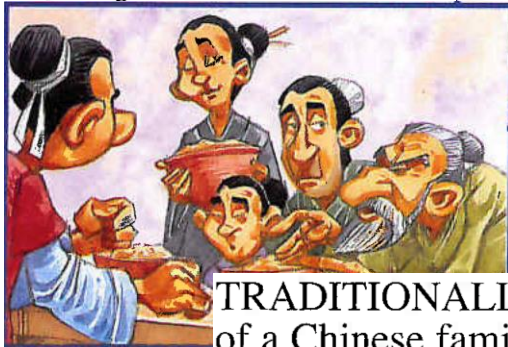
If you're desperately in debt, sell your children (daughters first) as slaves.



Old Duties and New Laws

Xou have been brought up to believe that family loyalty is the most important thing in life. Two and a half centuries before your time, the great Chinese thinker and teacher, Confucius, emphasized this. You must offer food to the spirits of your ancestors so they will protect your family, because if they feel neglected they may harm them. Every home has a shrine to its family ancestors, and the honor of worshipping them is handed on from father to son. But your new Emperor has introduced a very different duty—loyalty and total obedience to him. By law you must report all breaking of his rules, even if this means informing on members of your family. If you do not, you will be judged to be as guilty as they are. Most people feel very unhappy about these changes, but few dare to say so openly.

Old-Style Duties:



TRADITIONALLY all generations of a Chinese family live and eat together, and all belongings are shared among them.



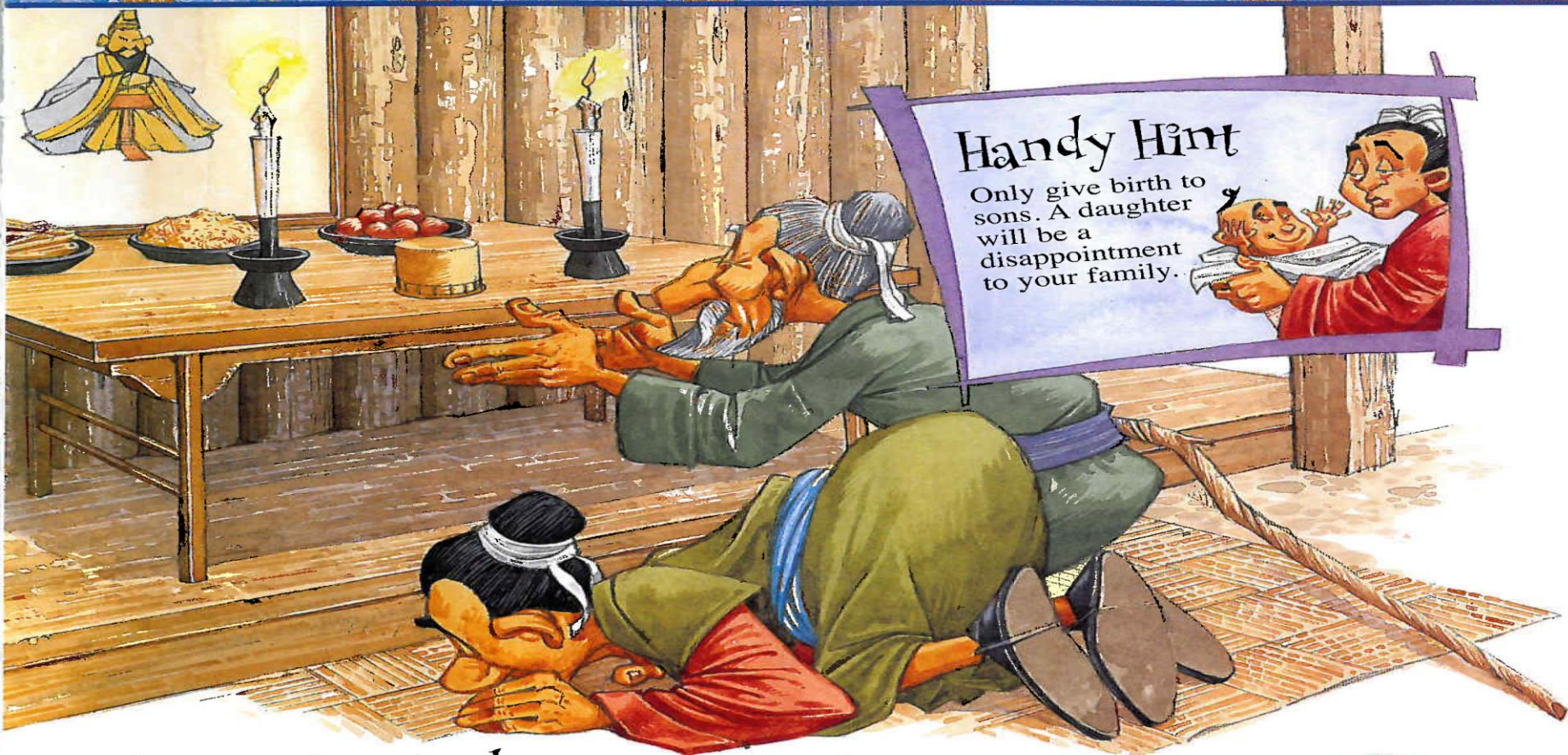
OBEY YOUR ELDERS:
A wife always obeys her husband, but she shows her parents-in-law even more respect, since they are older.



A FATHER can beat his grown-up son, and even get him banished, with no appeal.

WIVES WITHOUT sons can adopt one (who must be a blood relation) because females cannot continue the tradition of ancestor worship.





New-Style Obedience to the Law:



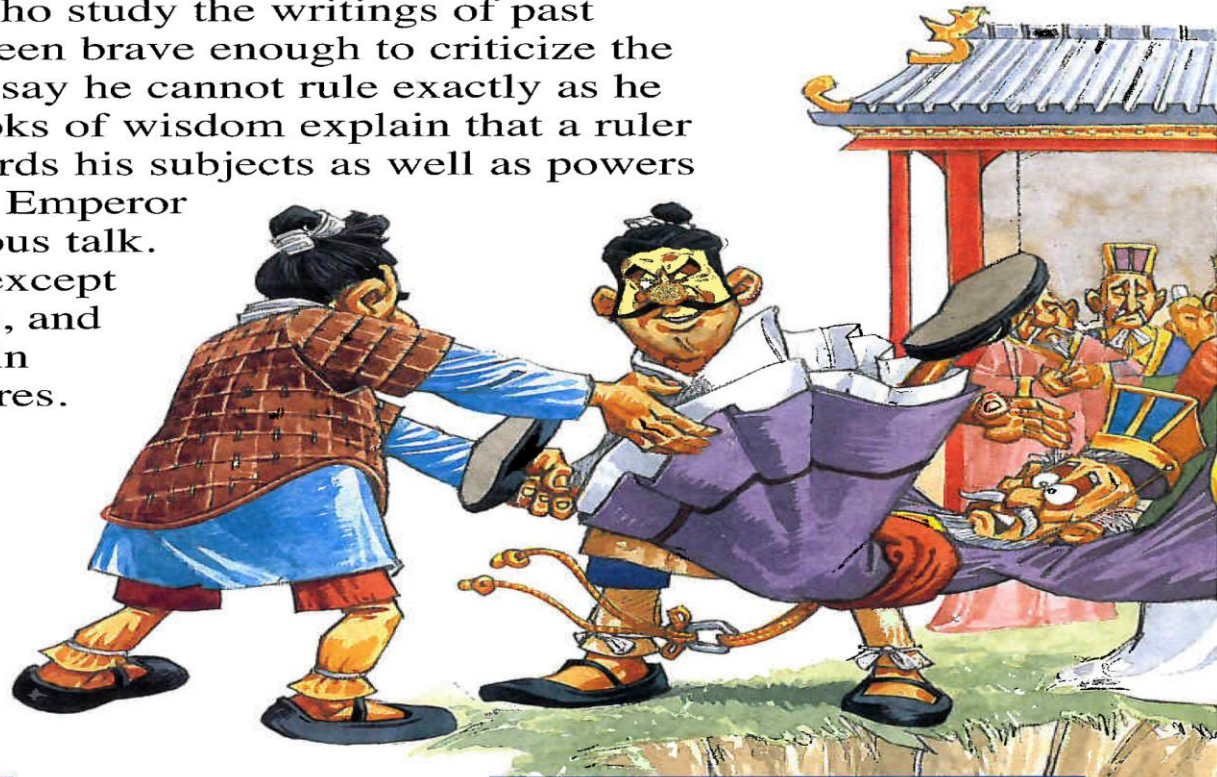
DENOUNCE YOUR NEIGHBORS: If you hear something the Emperor wouldn't like, it is your duty to report it or you will be blamed.



PERMITS AND PASSES: To make a journey you need a permit from an official, so that he can report what you're up to.

The Burning of the Books

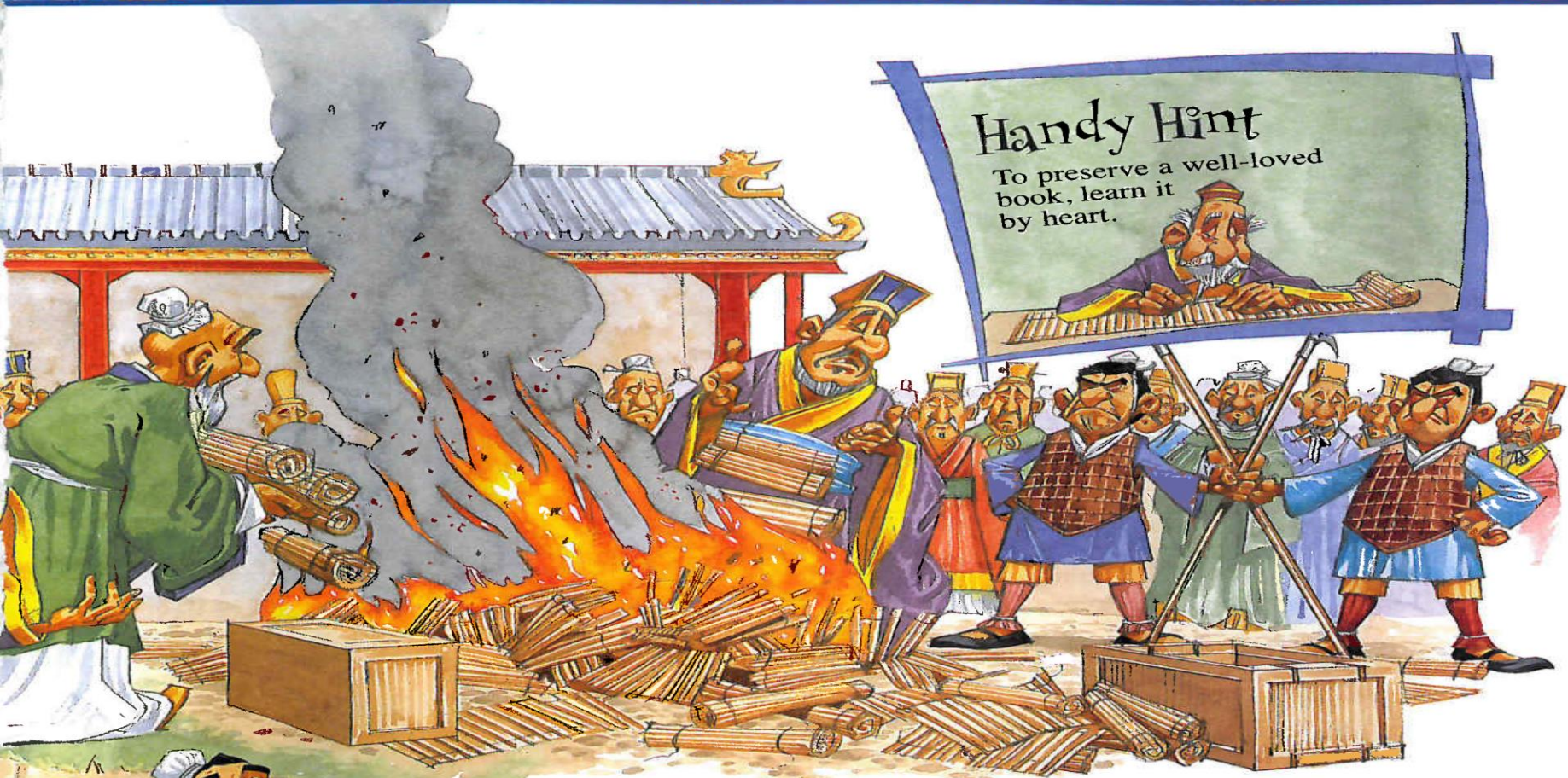
Some scholars who study the writings of past thinkers have been brave enough to criticize the Emperor. They say he cannot rule exactly as he pleases, for books of wisdom explain that a ruler has duties towards his subjects as well as powers over them. The Emperor intends to stop this dangerous talk. He has ordered all books (except those on farming, medicine, and soothsaying) to be handed in and burned on public bonfires. Anyone quoting books to criticize the Emperor will be put to death. Already over 460 leading scholars have been buried alive.



SEARCHING: Soldiers are searching houses and gardens for hidden books. If they find any, the owner is executed on the spot.

BURYING BOOKS: A terrified old scholar begs you to hide a box of his precious books by burying them in your field. He pays you well.





Handy Hint

To preserve a well-loved book, learn it by heart.



CAUGHT! "I only did it for the money!" you plead when you are caught. You're sentenced to five years on the Great Wall.

BACK IN THE CELLS, you ask what the Great Wall is. "They call it the longest graveyard in the world," a fellow prisoner tells you.

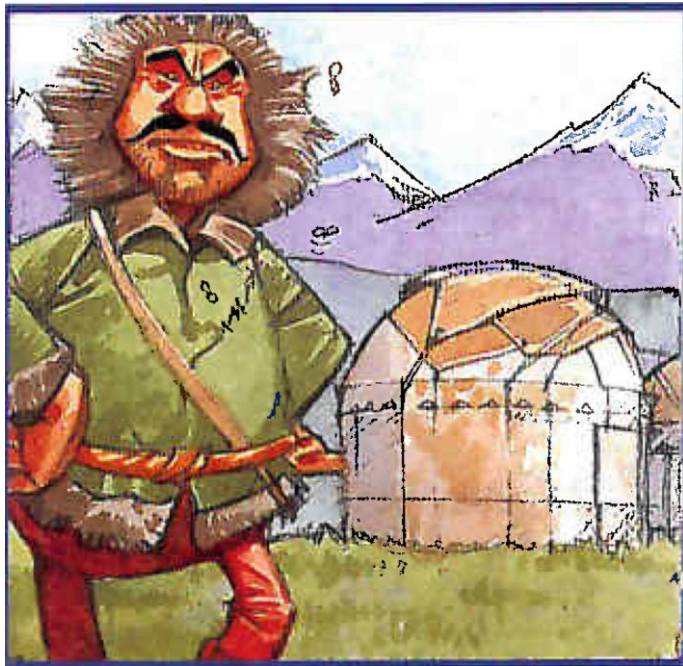


Raiders from the North

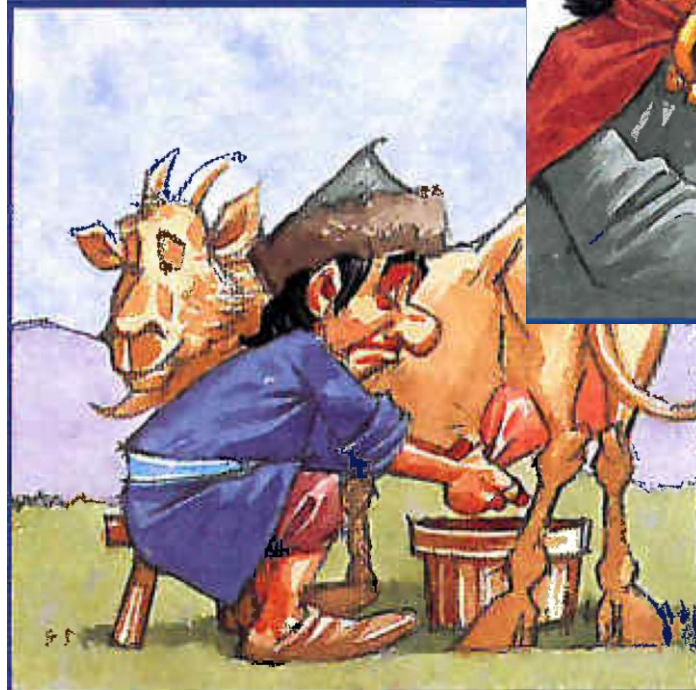
Xou're going to China's northern border, where people live in terror of the Xiongnu, the wandering herdsmen from the plains. Their animals provide their food, clothes, and shelter, but for other needs they go trading—or raiding! They are incredibly skilled horsemen, swooping out of nowhere, killing villagers and taking whatever they want. The Emperor has decided to build a huge wall to keep them out. It will run the length of his kingdom from east to west, linking some existing walls and going far beyond them. He wants it built fast, and he doesn't care how many people die building it.



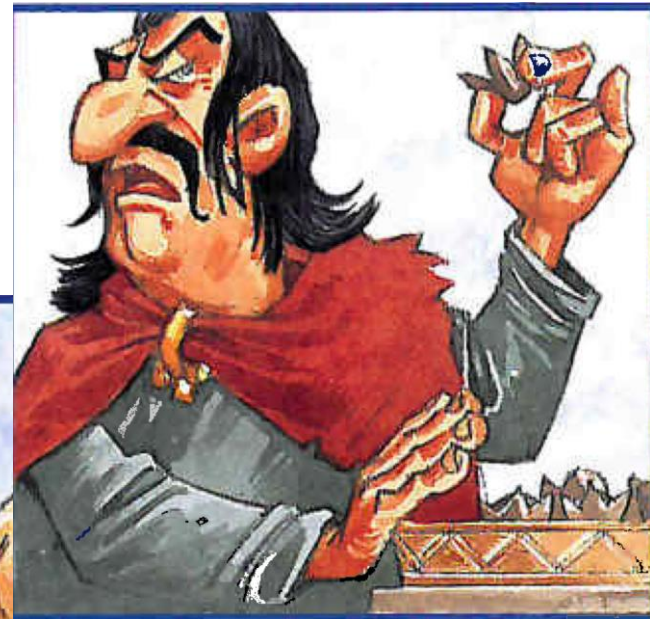
What You've Heard About the Xiongnu:



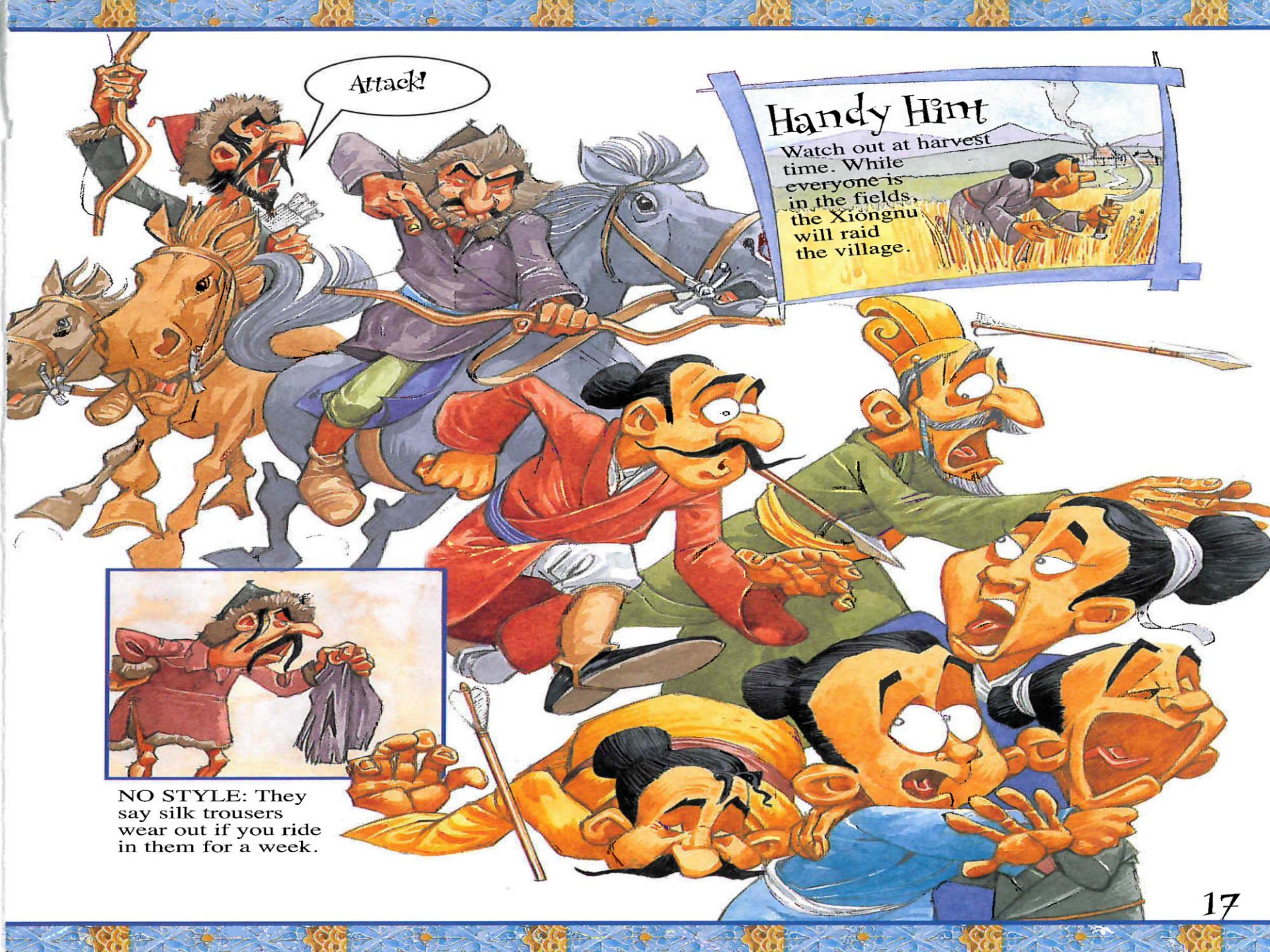
HOUSING: They don't live in houses like normal people but in round tents made of animal skins. Even their clothes are made from skin instead of cloth.



FOOD AND DRINK: They eat and drink the most disgusting things. For instance, they drink milk and make cheese, which no Chinese person would dream of doing.



NO TASTE: When Chinese diplomats brought them expensive gifts, they turned their noses up at the most delicious delicacies.



Attack!

Handy Hint
Watch out at harvest time. While everyone is in the fields, the Xiongnu will raid the village.



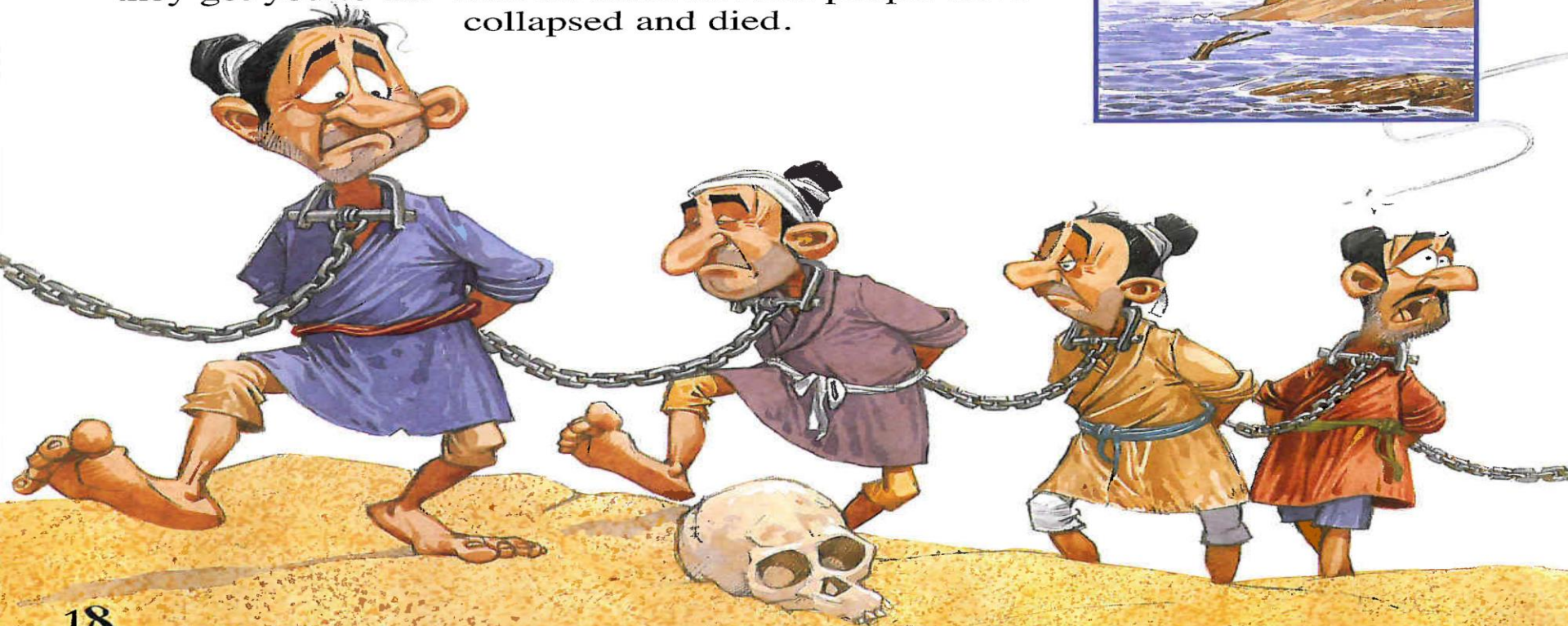
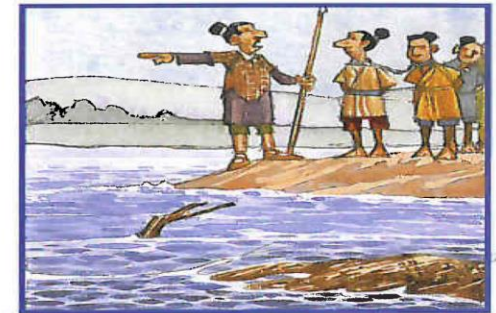
NO STYLE: They say silk trousers wear out if you ride in them for a week.

The Journey North

Branded, put in a convict's rough hemp robe, and chained to the next man, you're being marched to the Wall. From your home village in central China, this means a six-to-eight-week journey on foot. As you go further north, more and more lines of convicts pour in from side roads, until the route is almost blocked with them. You have no idea where you are, you just stumble on exhausted. The guards don't care what state you're in as long as they get you to the Wall on time. Several people have collapsed and died.

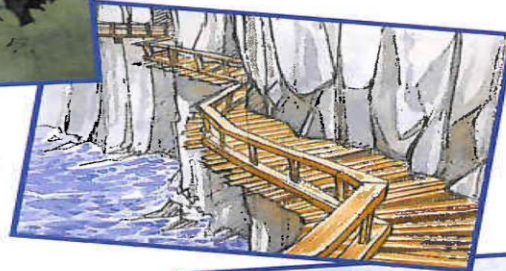
The 6-8 Week Journey:

IN MANY PARTS the roads are terrible. You must clamber up slopes and wade through rivers with no bridges.





CROSSING
DENSE forest is
the worst, for it's
well-known that
demons live there.
You are terrified.



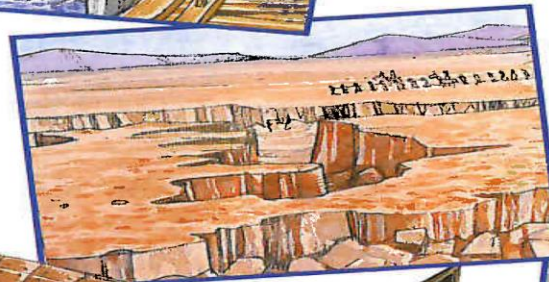
SOMETIMES the
road is just a wooden
walkway, clinging to
the side of a gorge.

Handy Hint

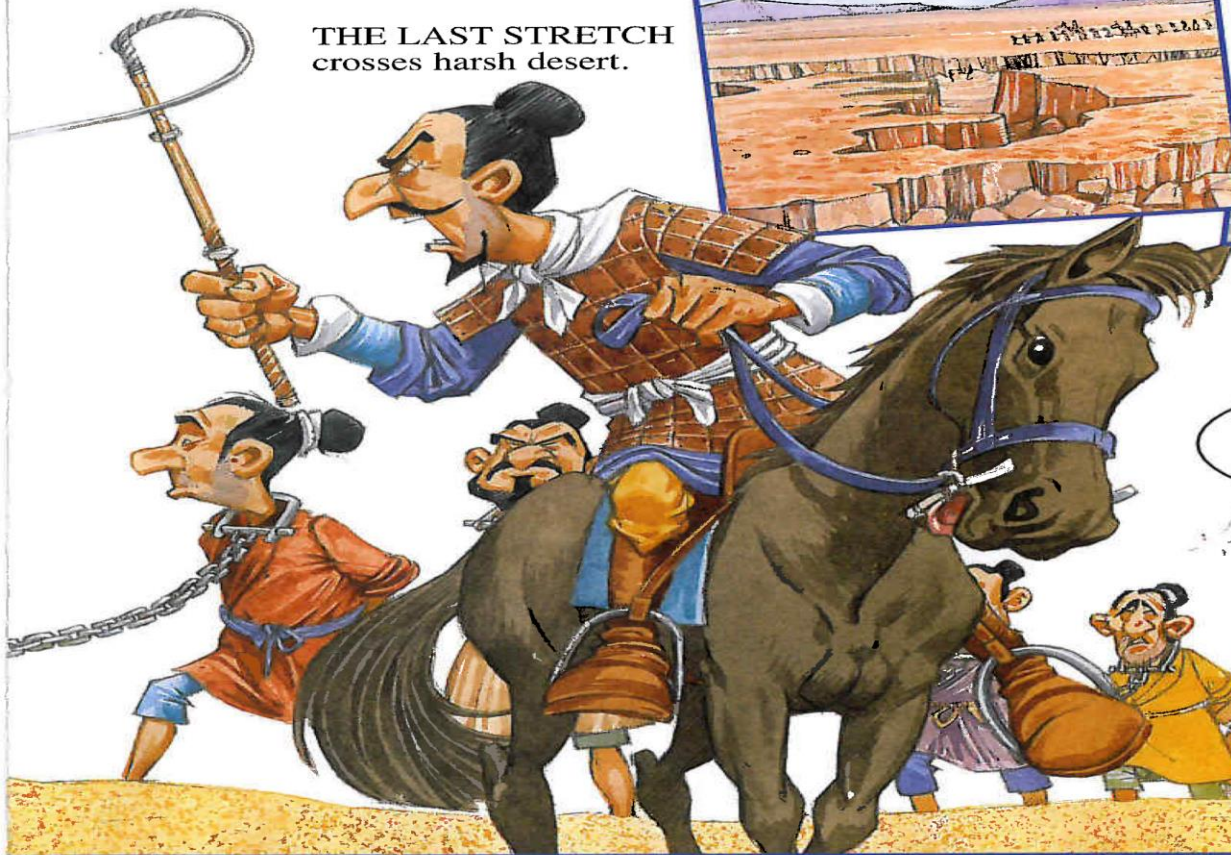
Cheer up. At
least you're
not being
executed like
an official
you pass on
the road.



THE LAST STRETCH
crosses harsh desert.



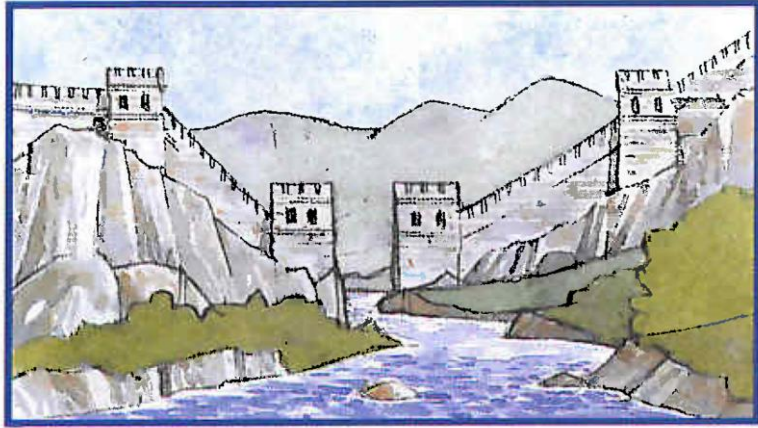
FINALLY you arrive at a
military encampment by
the Wall.



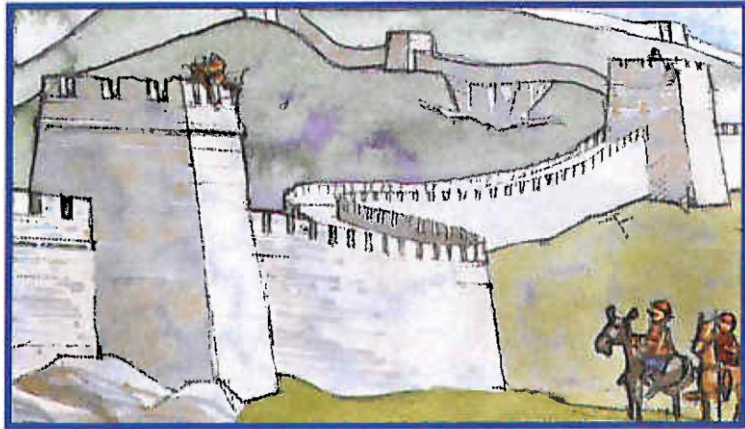
Walk faster!



The Emperor's Great Wall



WEAK POINTS in the wall, where rivers cross it, are guarded by especially large towers full of soldiers.

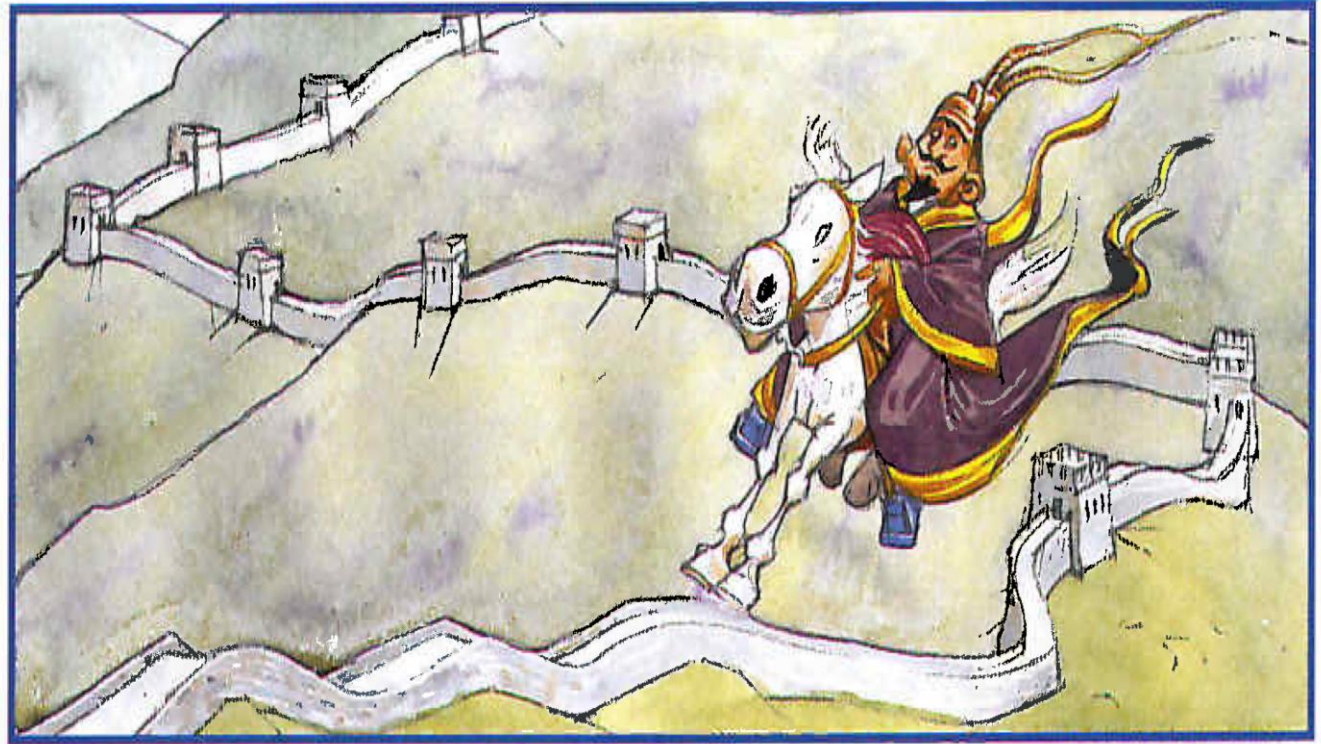


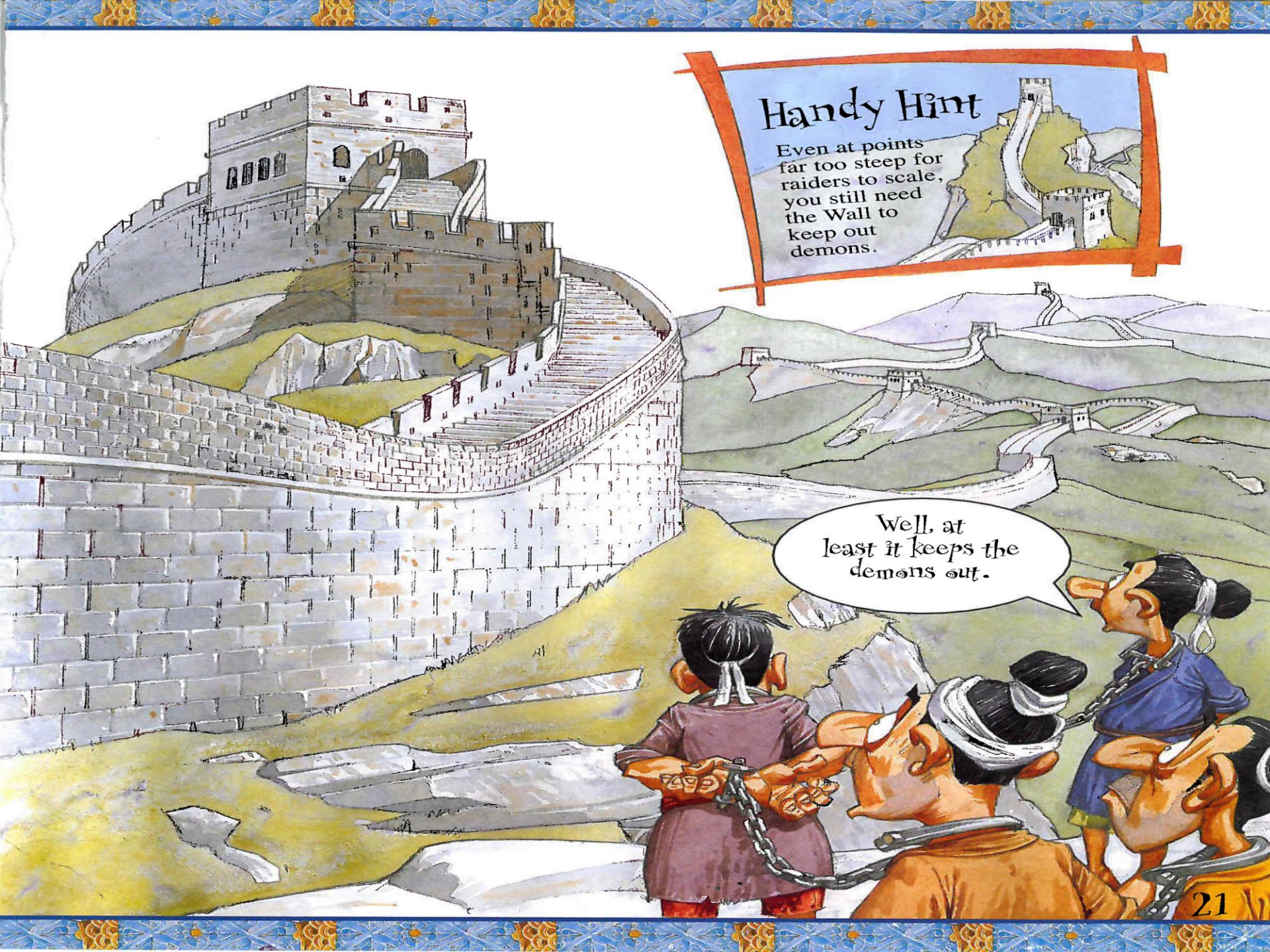
SMALLER TOWERS are put close together so that raiders storming the Wall are never out of arrow range.



our first thought on seeing the Wall is, “A wall can’t be that long!” And this is just the part they’ve built so far—miles of it, twisting and turning like a wriggling dragon along the highest ridges of ground. It’s guarding China from the wilderness beyond, where lawless people and cruel demons live. The towers are set at regular intervals along the Wall and manned by soldiers constantly on guard. General Meng T’ien, who is in charge of this great project, has put 300,000 troops to work on the Wall and, just as importantly, on the roads to protect the supplies. You soon learn to watch for the arrival of the grain wagons. If they’ve had an accident or if their contents get stolen on the way here, you’ll soon be starving.

THE WALL'S AMAZING number of towers is explained very differently by ordinary people. They say that the First Great Emperor galloped the whole length of the Wall on his magic flying horse, and wherever its hooves touched the Wall a tower sprang up.





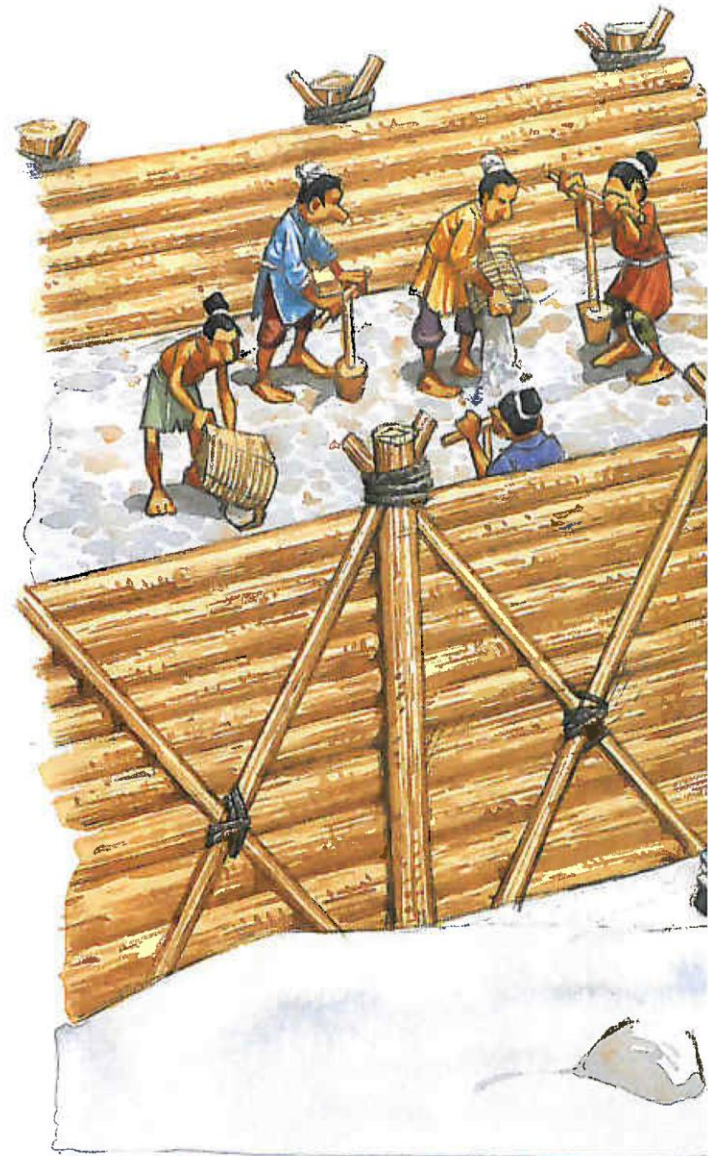
Handy Hint

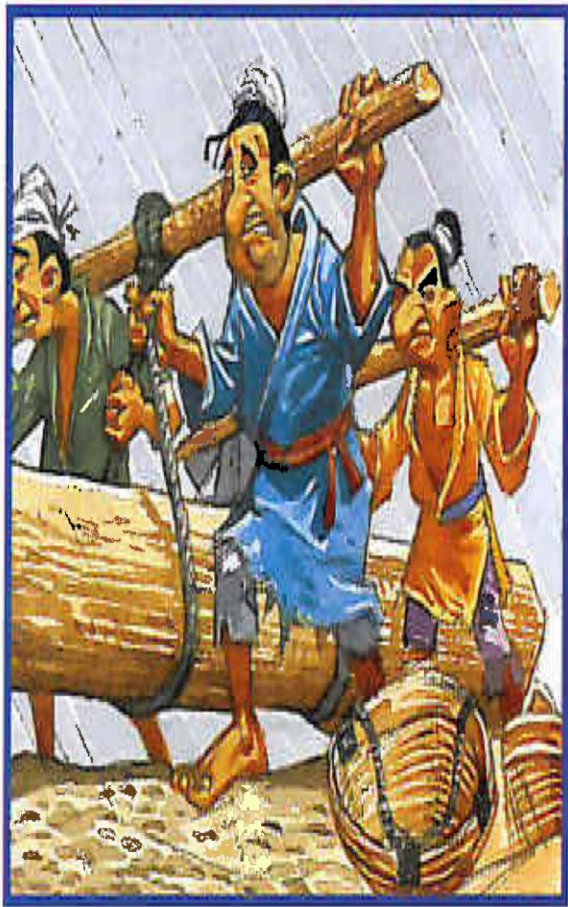
Even at points far too steep for raiders to scale, you still need the Wall to keep out demons.

Well, at least it keeps the demons out.

Building the Wall

Under the whip, day in, day out, your work is endless, and no one cares if you are sick or dead. You build the Wall over mountains and across desert. In rocky areas you use stone, but in most places there isn't any suitable stone and the whole wall has to be made of pounded dirt. When you're in one of the supply gangs, you dig dirt or carry it to the site and tip it into a wooden frame. If you're in a frame gang you spread the dirt out thinly, no more than 5 inches deep, and ram it down with pounders. When that layer is hard and dry, a new one goes on top. When the stack is high enough, the frame is taken down and set up in the next spot. It takes much sweat and many days to build a section 33 feet tall and wide enough for five horsemen to ride side-by-side along its top.

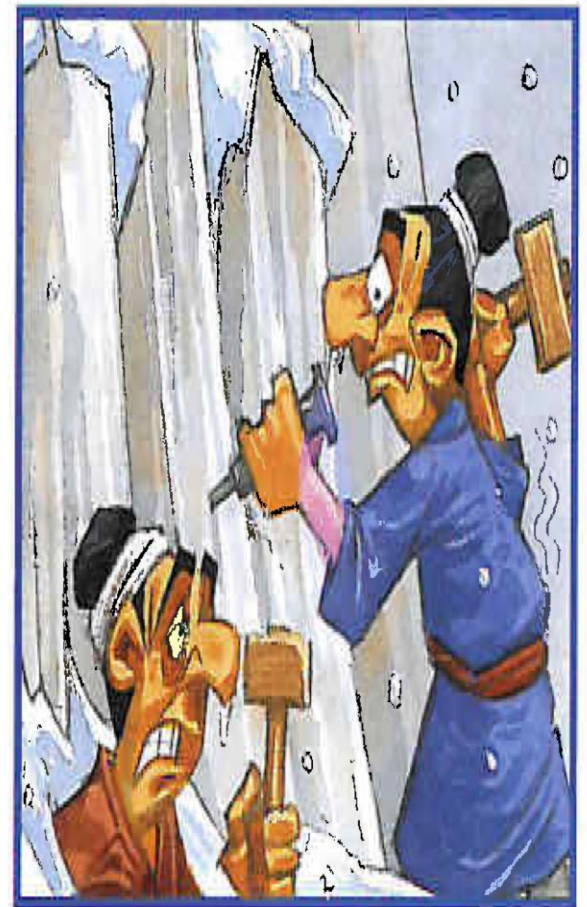




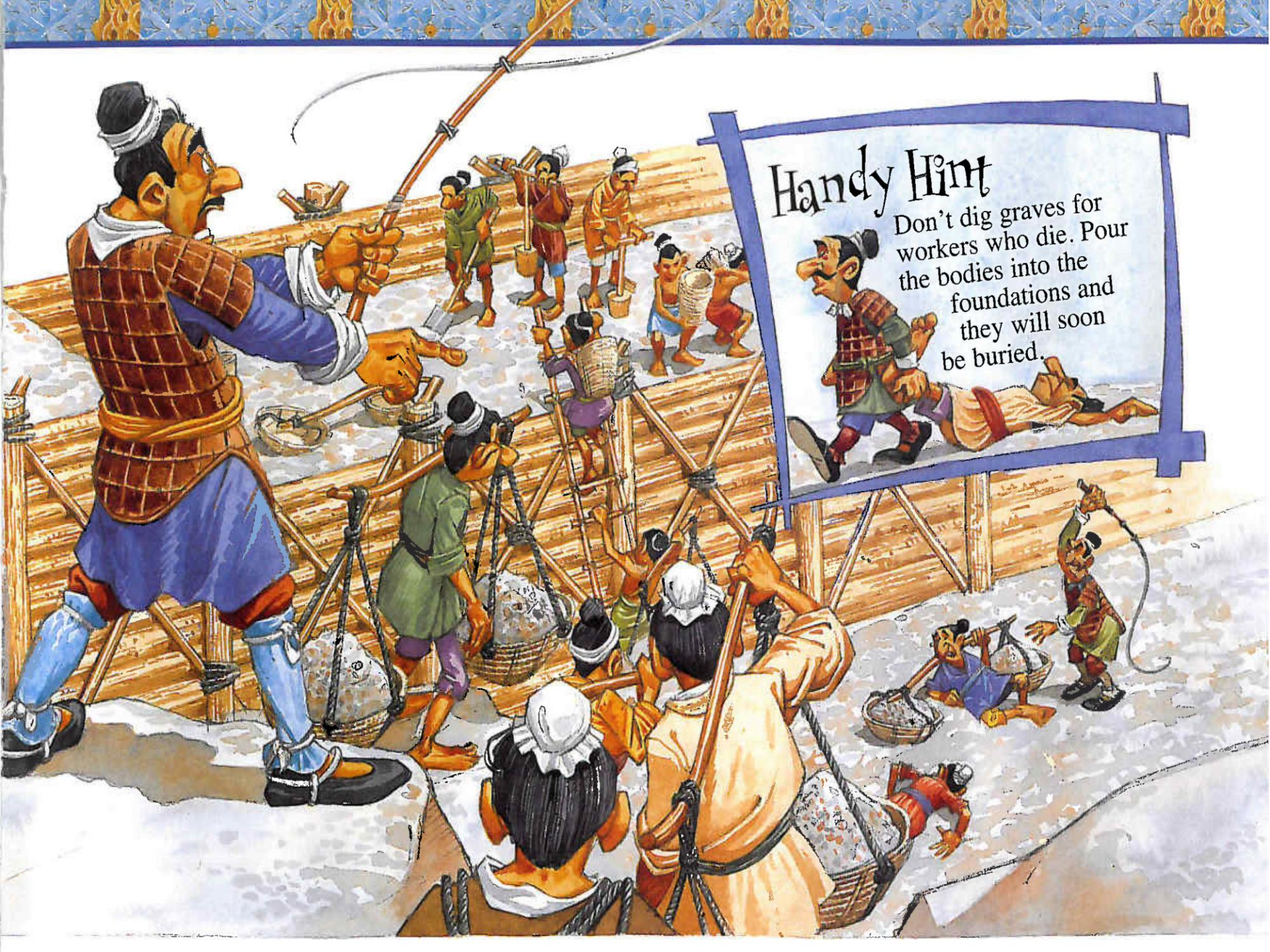
SOAKED TO THE SKIN:
Weather never makes the work stop. You carry loads, haul logs, and pound dirt in pouring rain.



SWELTERING HEAT: In blazing summer heat you hack through undergrowth to make a clearing for a new stretch of the Wall.

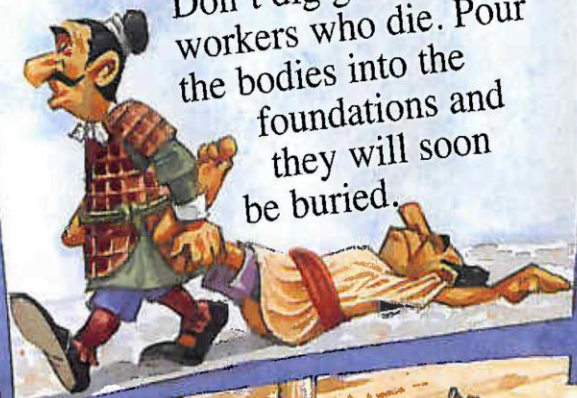


FREEZING COLD: Chilled to the bone in icy mountains, you cut through solid rock to make a level foundation for the Wall.



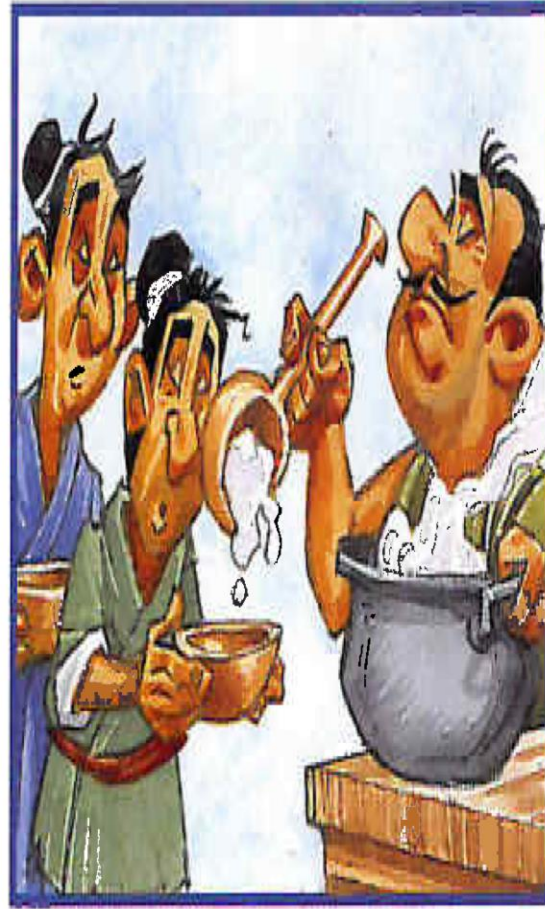
Handy Hint

Don't dig graves for workers who die. Pour the bodies into the foundations and they will soon be buried.





WATCH YOUR STEP: No one cares about your safety. You stagger under heavy loads all day, often up dangerous slopes...



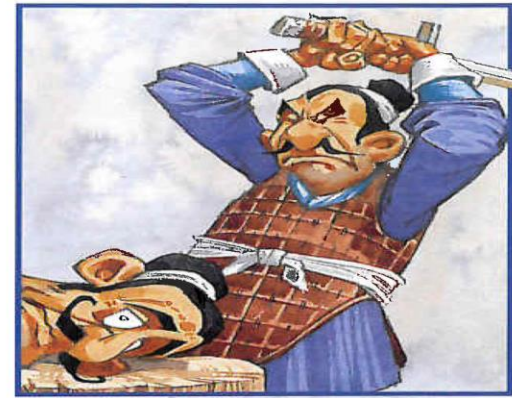
AN EMPTY STOMACH: Only boiled mush again for supper! The army is growing food locally now, but there is not always enough.



ALL IN A DAY'S WORK: After working every hour of daylight, you fall asleep exhausted on your patch of straw, inside a crowded tent.

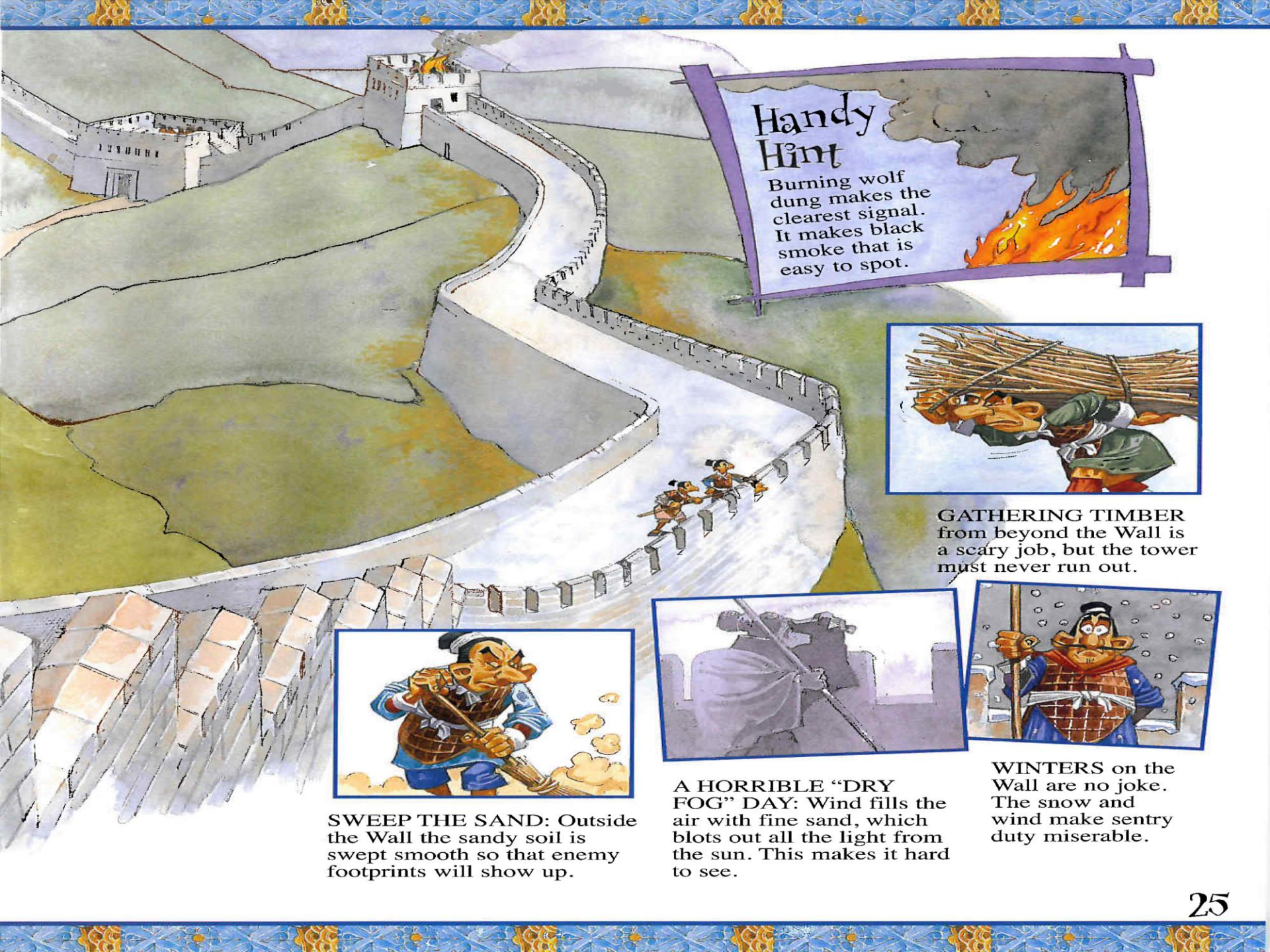
Along the Watch Tower

After three years of hard labor, your sentence has been lightened to military service and you're stationed on a watch tower along the Wall you helped build! Army life is tough with cramped quarters, iron discipline, and constant inspections by the company commander. If anything moves out on the dusty plain, it means danger. Immediately you light a beacon fire—one column of smoke (or flame by night) for up to 500 raiders sighted, two for up to 3,000 and three for more than that. From beacon to beacon, the signal passes swiftly to the next garrison to summon help.



ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE:
An officer who killed two of the enemy without waiting for orders was executed for disobedience.





Handy Hint

Burning wolf dung makes the clearest signal. It makes black smoke that is easy to spot.



GATHERING TIMBER from beyond the Wall is a scary job, but the tower must never run out.



SWEEP THE SAND: Outside the Wall the sandy soil is swept smooth so that enemy footprints will show up.



A HORRIBLE "DRY FOG" DAY: Wind fills the air with fine sand, which blots out all the light from the sun. This makes it hard to see.



WINTERS on the Wall are no joke. The snow and wind make sentry duty miserable.

Guarding a Gate

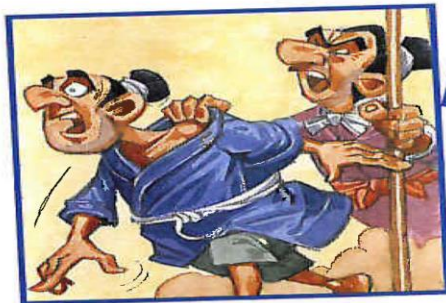
Day to Day:



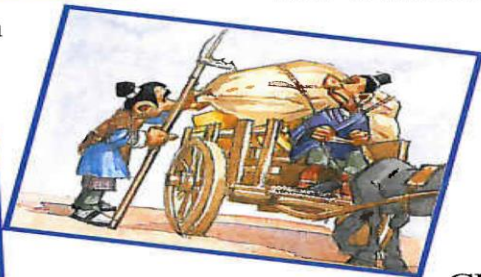
POSTAL SERVICE: You take letters to the next postal station along the Wall.



You've been transferred to a large garrison that guards a gate. It's the military headquarters for this stretch of the Wall, and its general has 100,000 men under his command. There has to be a gate in the Wall wherever it crosses a route used by traveling merchants from either side of the border. This means that when you're on gate duty it's your job to police it. You check passports, search wagons for goods being smuggled in, and watch out for illegal immigrants and criminals on the run.



GOTCHA! You've caught an army deserter (left) who was trying to slip through the gate.



CHECKING WAGONS (above left): He says it's only firewood underneath that cover, but is it?



MENDING THE WALL: Your section includes some older wall that's starting to crumble.



ALARM! Raiders have been sighted! You all grab weapons and rush into line.



INSPECTION: You dread the general spotting something about you that's not perfect.



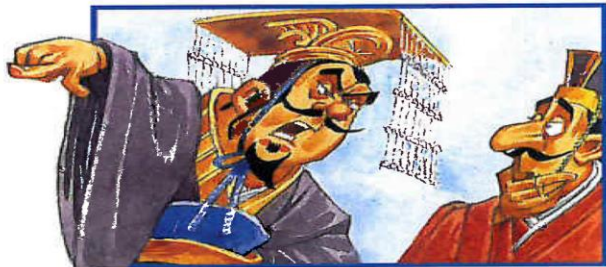
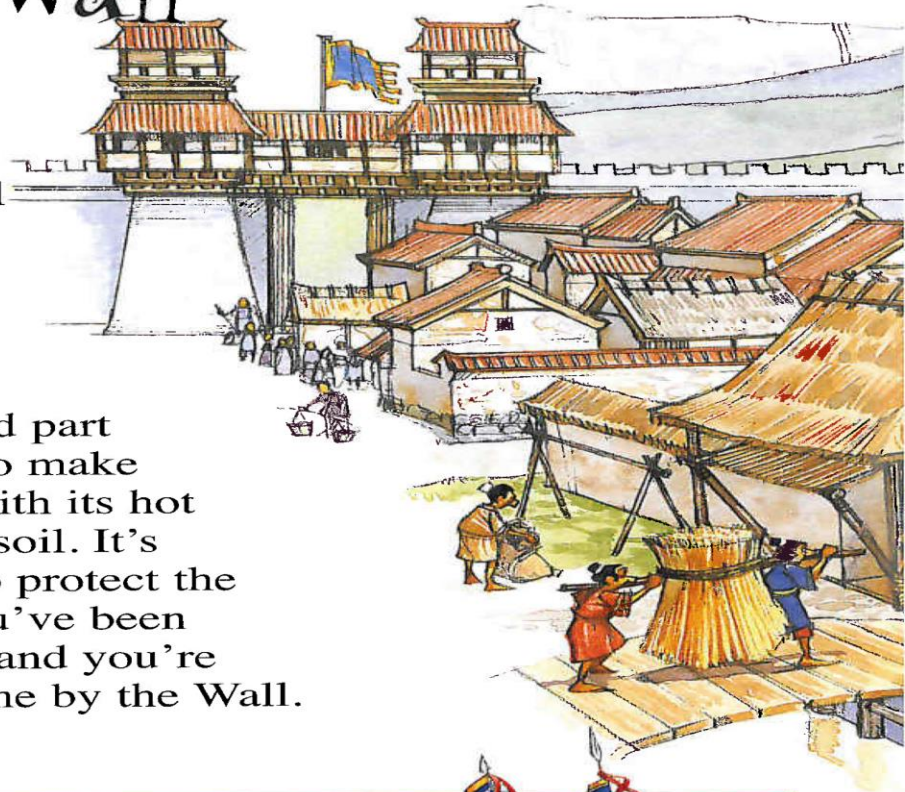
Handy Hint

A good poke at a bundle will soon tell you if someone's hiding inside.

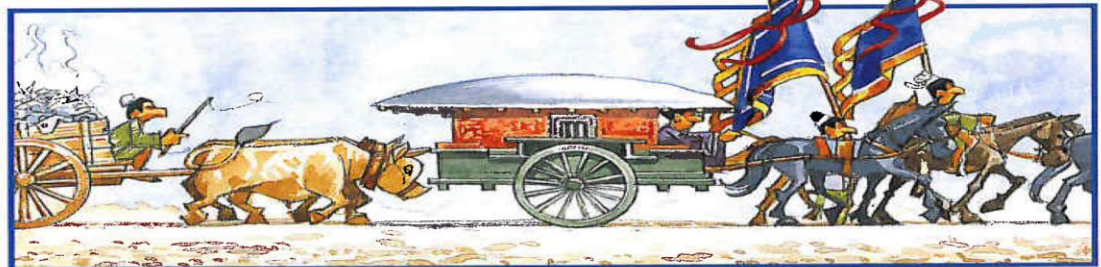
I hope he doesn't look too closely...

A Lifetime by the Wall

Time passes. You hear that the Emperor has died. After a violent revolution, a former rebel is now Emperor. But all this matters little to you. You've finished your army service but you're stranded here, without the money or the permit to make the long journey home. Your father is dead, your farm is sold, and your sister is married and part of another family. There's no choice but to make your home here in northernmost China, with its hot summers, freezing winters, and hard, dry soil. It's government policy to settle people here to protect the border and to grow food for the army. You've been granted land, you've married a local girl, and you're farming again—but you're facing a lifetime by the Wall.



“FIND ME THE ISLAND of the Immortals,” the Emperor ordered, desperate to escape death. But his efforts are in vain.

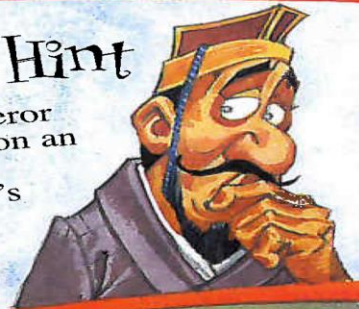


HE DIED unexpectedly on a tour of eastern China. Plotting to seize power, the ministers with him tried to conceal his death. The Emperor traveled in a covered chariot, but his body started to smell. To hide this, they put a cart of rotting fish behind the chariot.



Handy Hint

If the Emperor sends you on an impossible mission, it's best not to return.



HEARING THE Emperor was dead, his long-oppressed people started a revolt, led by a laborer facing execution.



THE REBELS TAKE OVER: The capital burned for three months, and soon after the entire Qin family were dead.