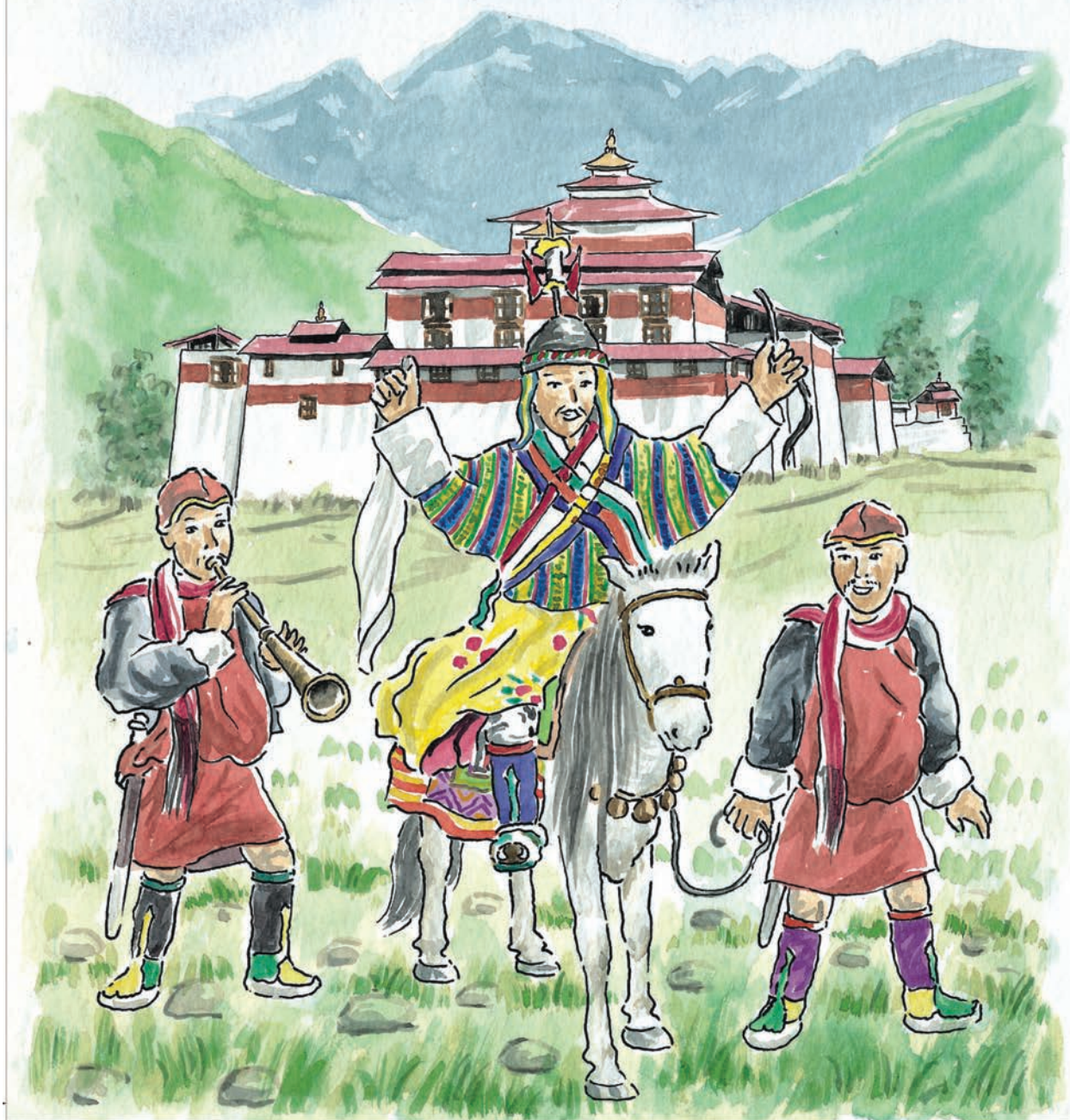


The Punakha Domchoe

Class III Book 2



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Department of School Education
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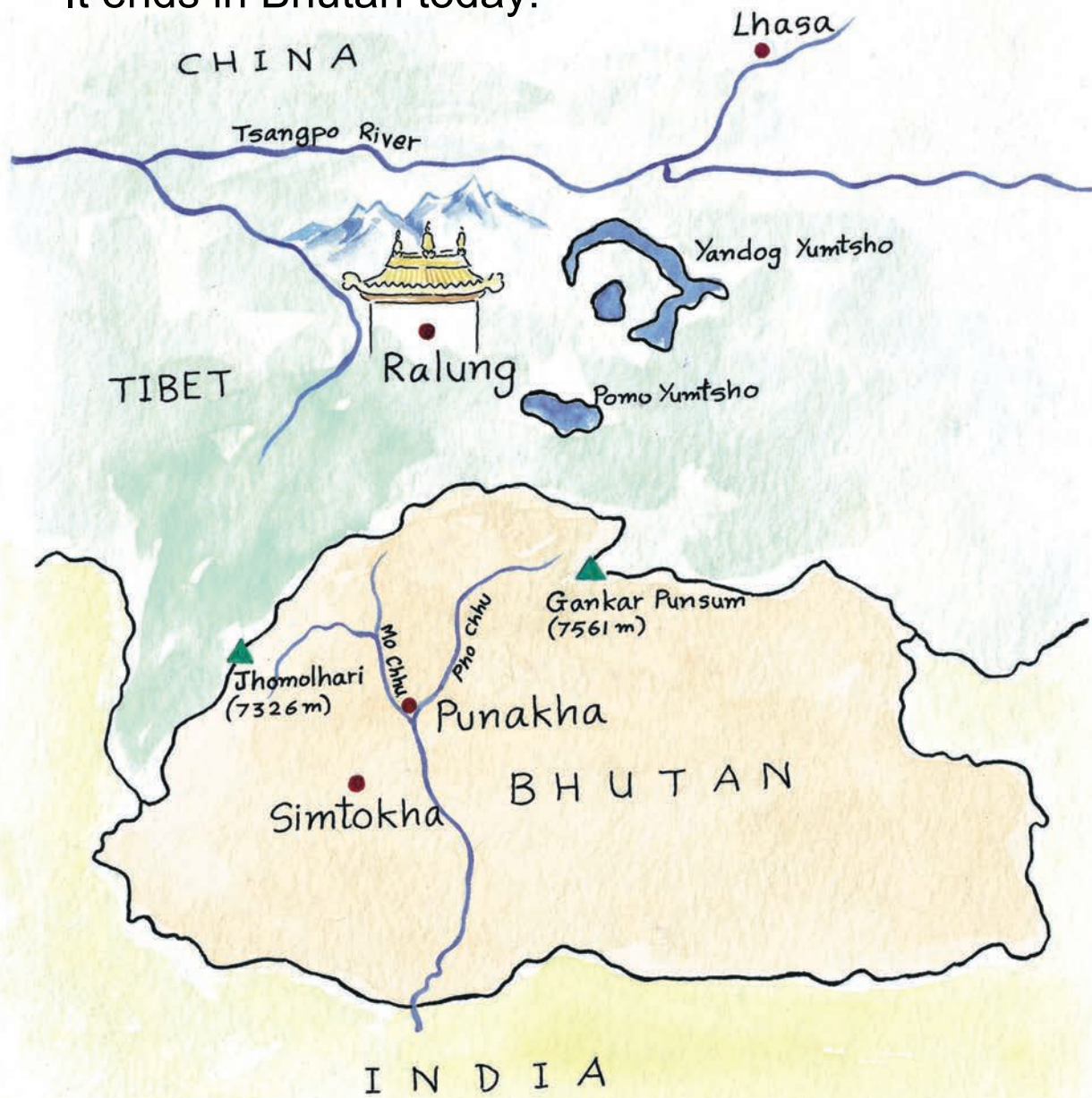
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Our story begins in Tibet four hundred years ago.
It ends in Bhutan today!





Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal was twelve when he became the head of Ralung Monastery in Tibet. This made him the leader of the Drukpas. He had to look after the monastery and the Rangjung Kharsapani which was a special relic of the first Drukpa leader. The man who had the relic was the leader of the Drukpas.

The ruler of that part of Tibet was called the Tsang Desi. He did not want Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to be the head lama at Ralung. There was a fight between the Tsang Desi's men and the Zhabdrung's men.



One night the Zhabdrung had a dream. He saw a black raven flying south. The raven was Pel Yeshey Gonpo (a deity) who protects Bhutan, and he told the Zhabdrung to go to Bhutan.



So in 1616 the Zhabdrung left Ralung and came to Bhutan. He brought the special relic with him.

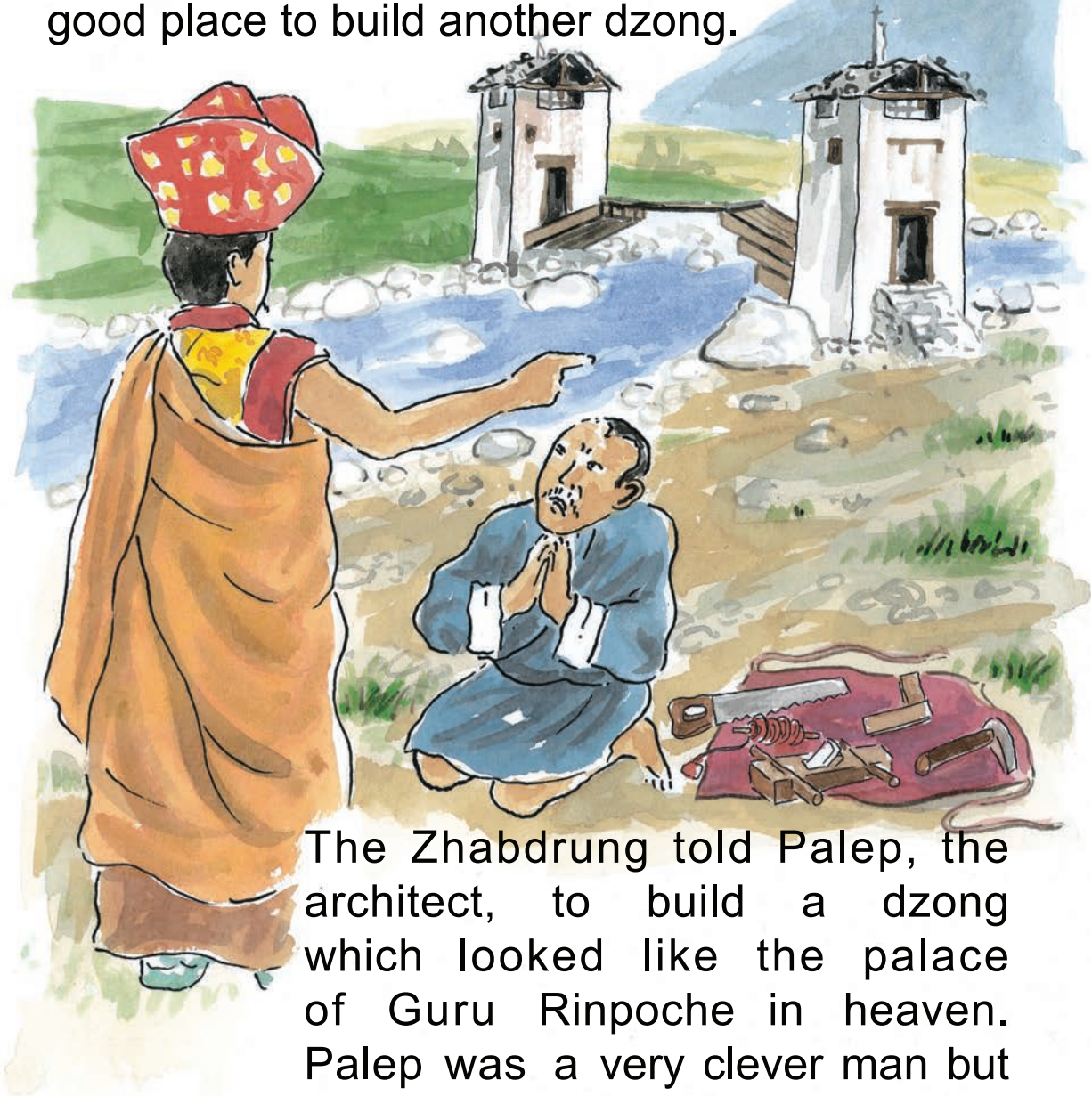


The people of Bhutan welcomed the Zhabdrung.

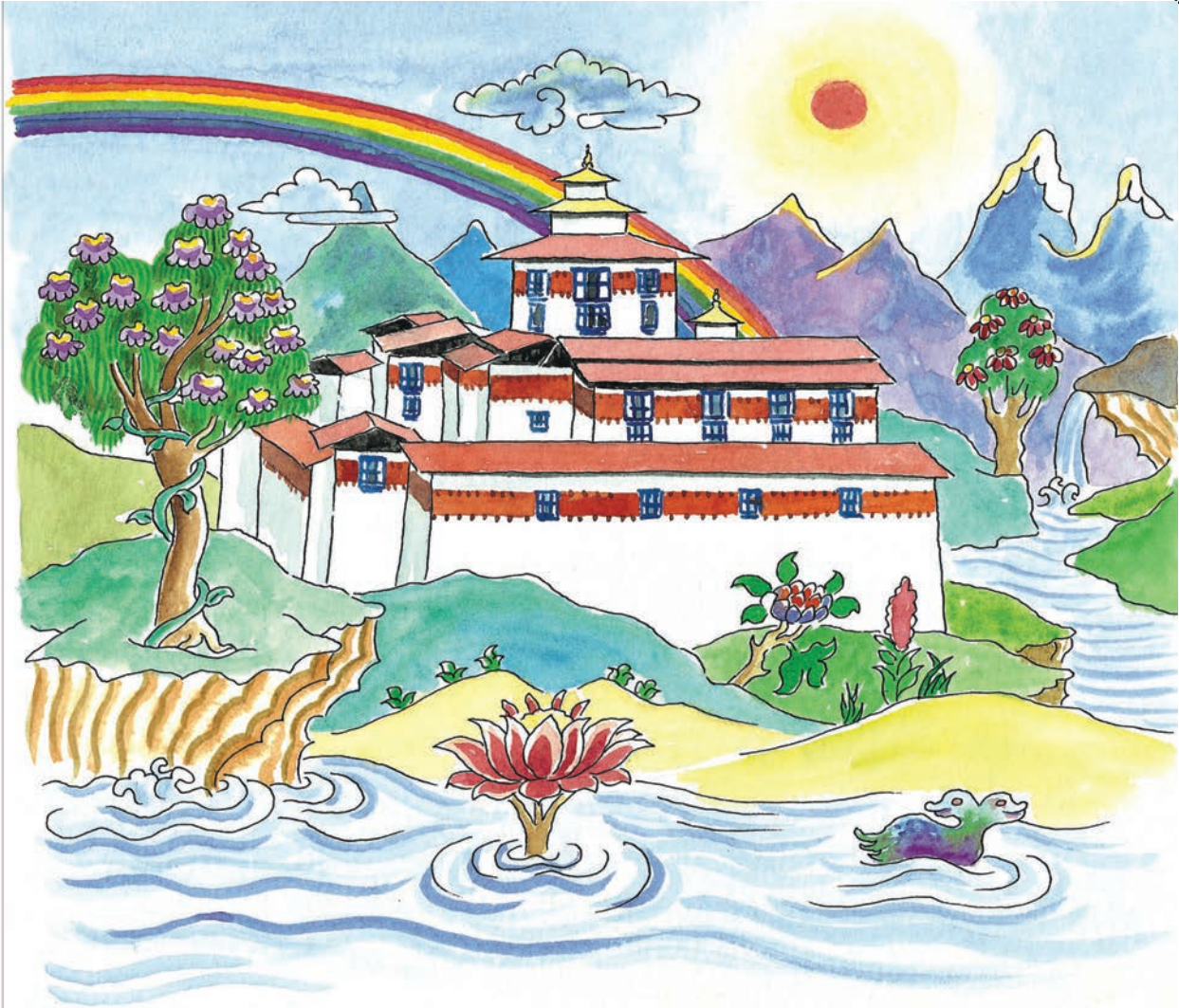


When Tsang Desi heard that the Zhabdrung was in Bhutan, he sent soldiers to kill him. The Zhabdrung began to build large Dzongs to protect Bhutan. The first of these was at Simtokha.

Then one day the Zhabdrung went to Punakha. He had a dream which told him that this was a good place to build another dzong.



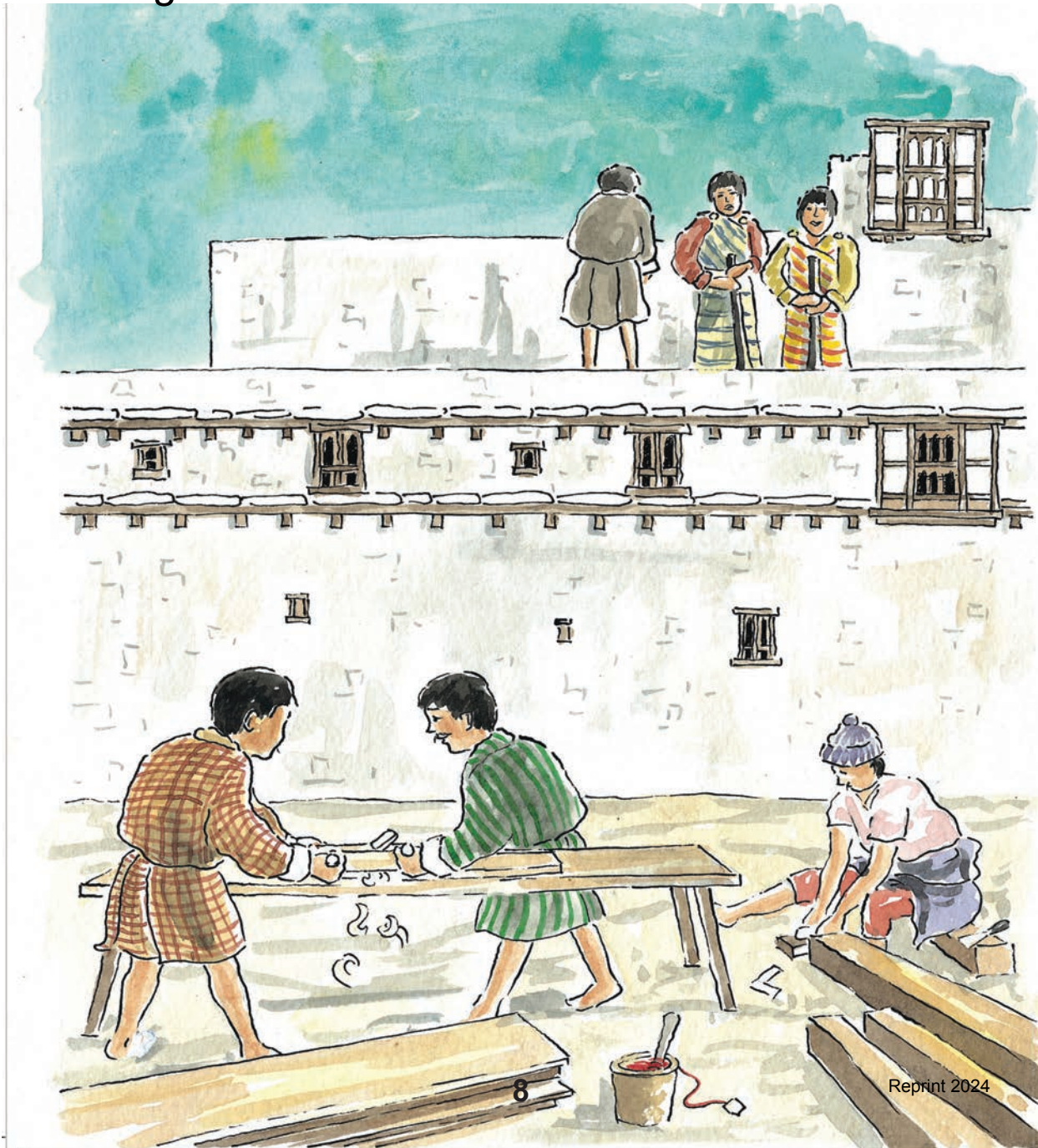
The Zhabdrung told Palep, the architect, to build a dzong which looked like the palace of Guru Rinpoche in heaven. Palep was a very clever man but he could not do this.



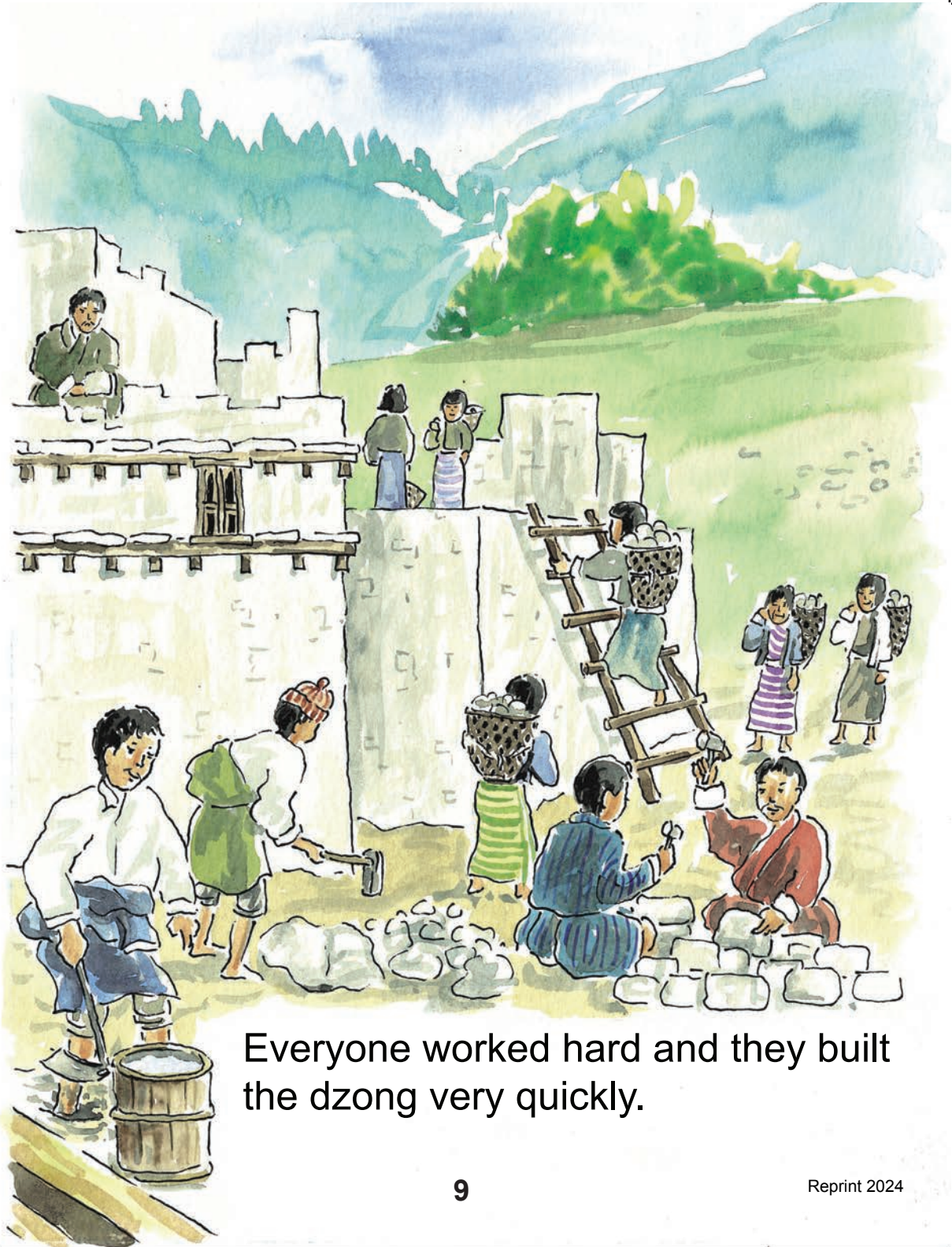
So the Zhabdrung took Palep to heaven in his dream and showed him the palace. "I want the dzong to look like this," he said. "Make a plan of it."

Then Palep made a plan which we can see inside Punakha dzong today.

People from all over Bhutan came to build the dzong.



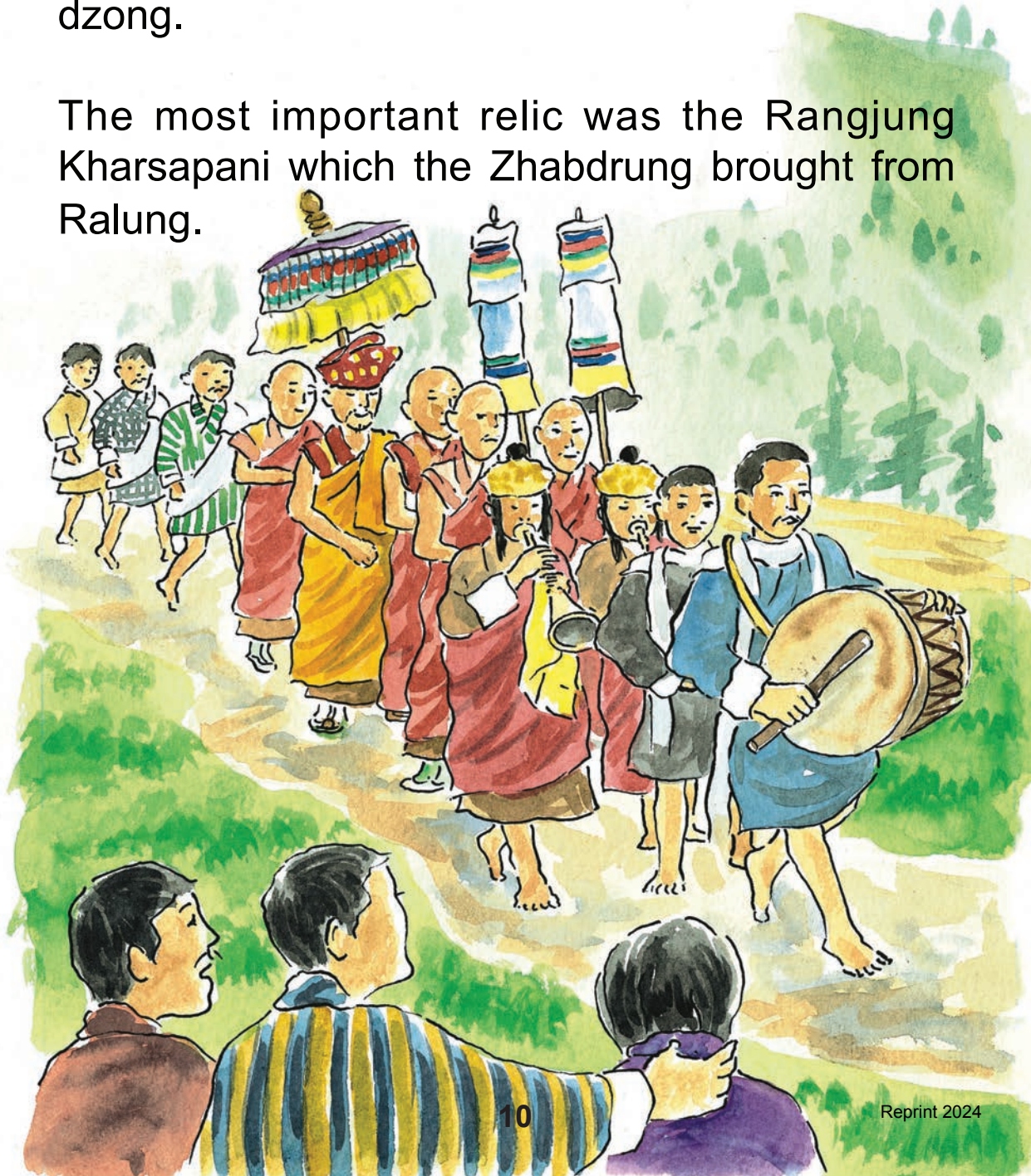
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Everyone worked hard and they built the dzong very quickly.

Finally they put relics, books and chortens in the dzong.

The most important relic was the Rangjung Kharsapani which the Zhabdrung brought from Ralung.

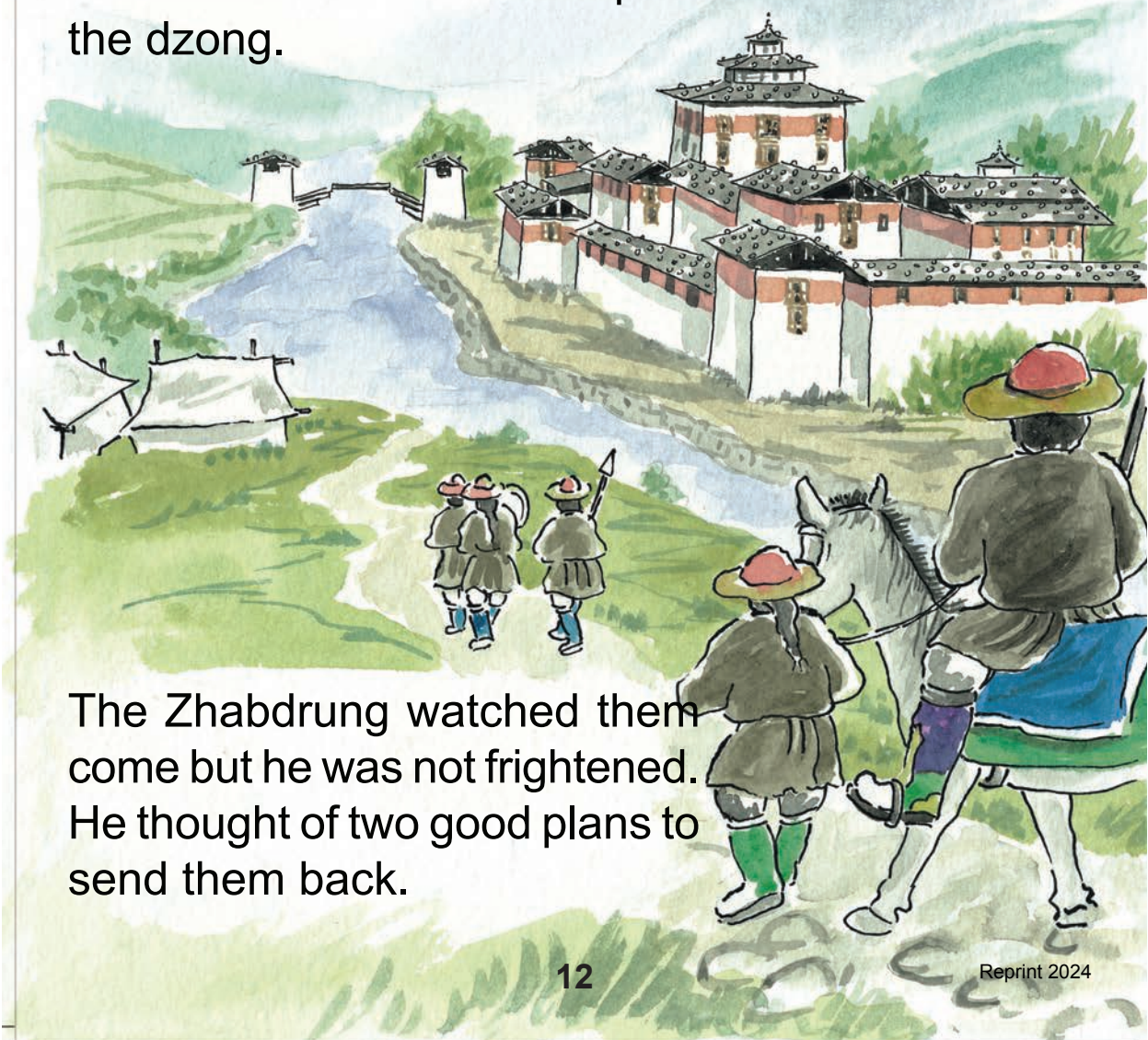




It was only the size of a rice seed but the man who had this relic was the leader of the Drukpas and so the ruler of the Tibetans wanted it.

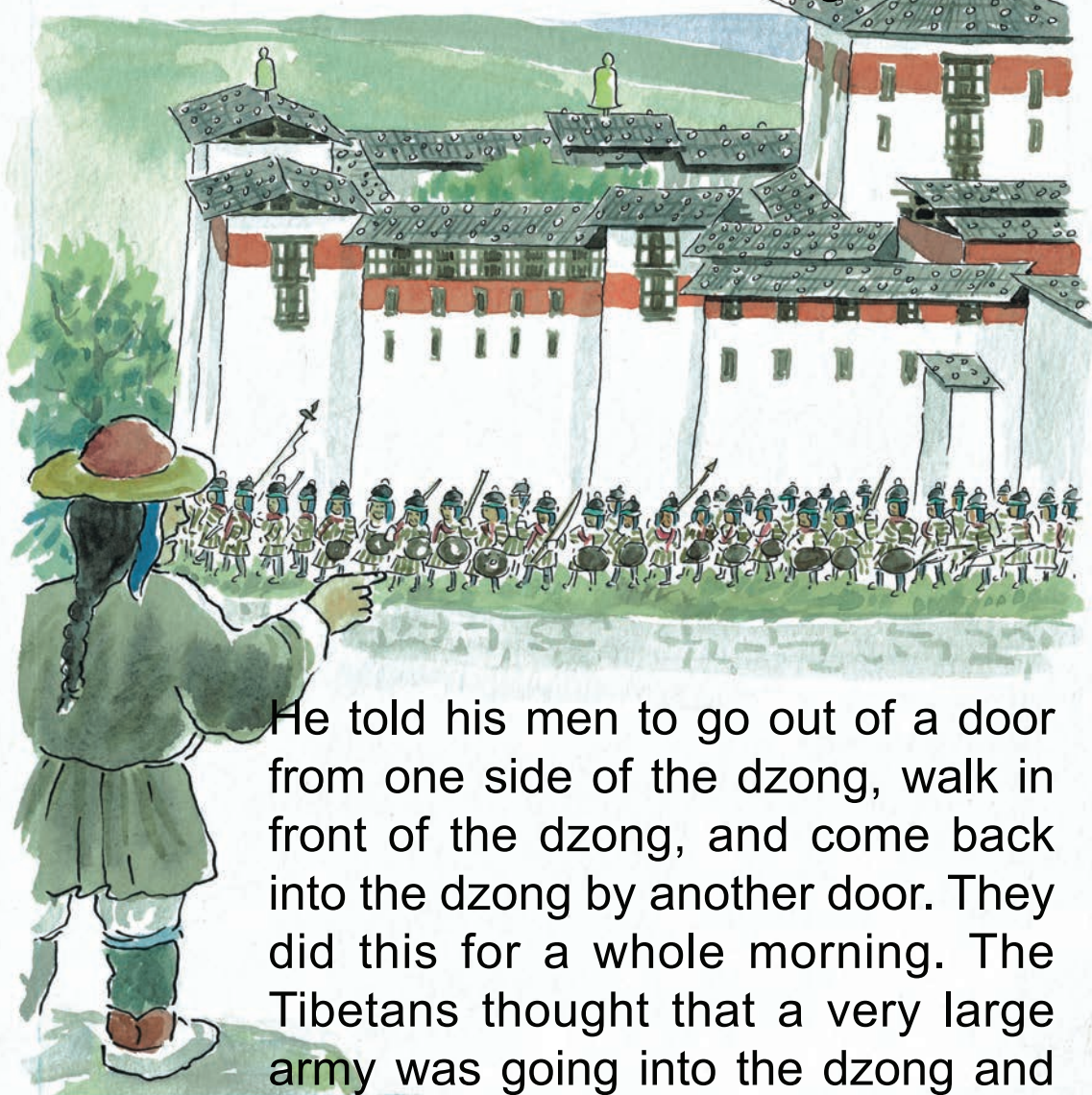
When the ruler of Tibet heard that the Rangjung Kharsapani was in Punakha dzong, he decided to send his soldiers to get it.

The Tibetan soldiers came over the mountains to Punakha and made a camp on the hill in front of the dzong.



The Zhabdrung watched them come but he was not frightened. He thought of two good plans to send them back.

The first plan was to make the Tibetans think that there were hundreds and hundreds of Bhutanese soldiers inside the dzong.

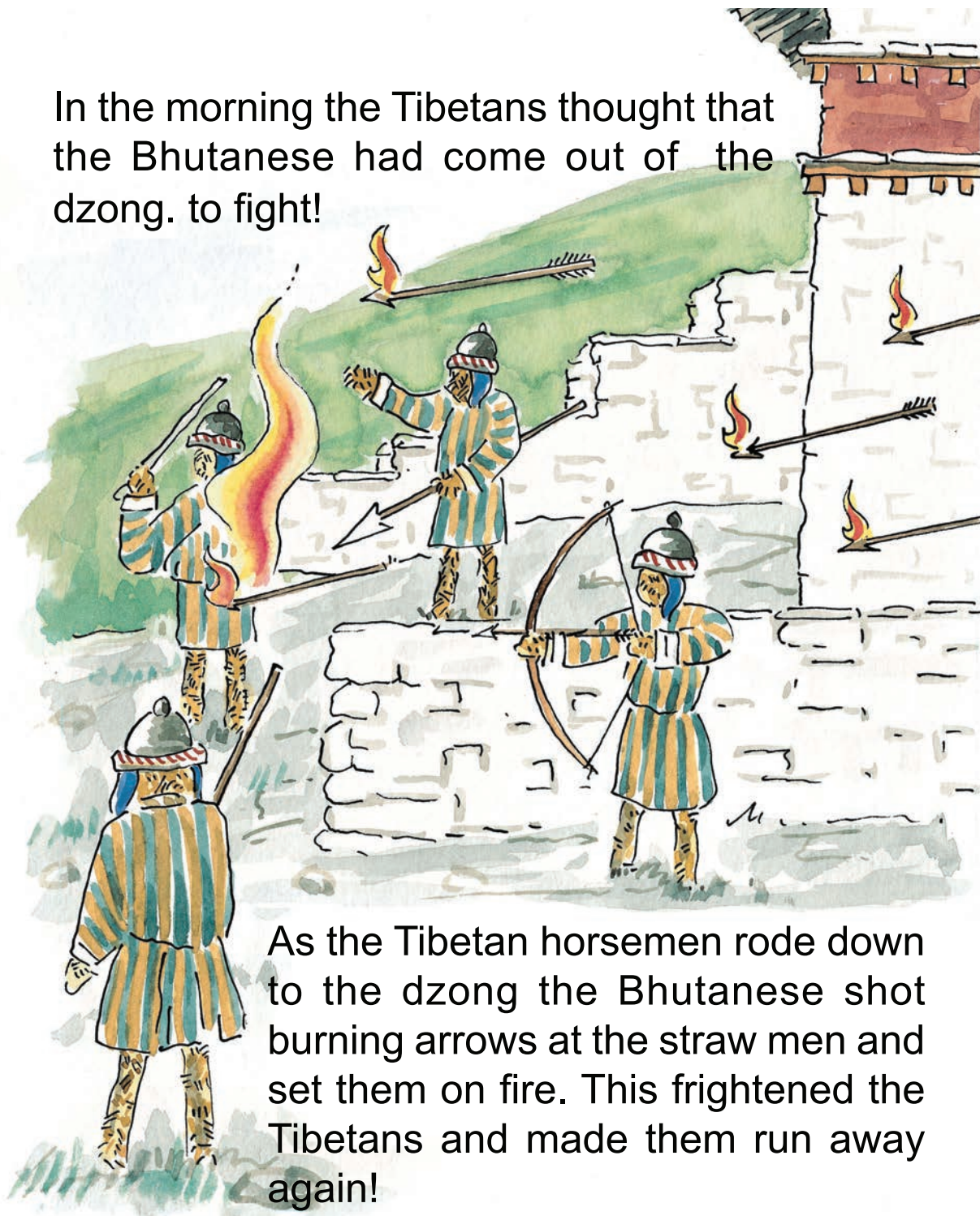


He told his men to go out of a door from one side of the dzong, walk in front of the dzong, and come back into the dzong by another door. They did this for a whole morning. The Tibetans thought that a very large army was going into the dzong and were frightened!

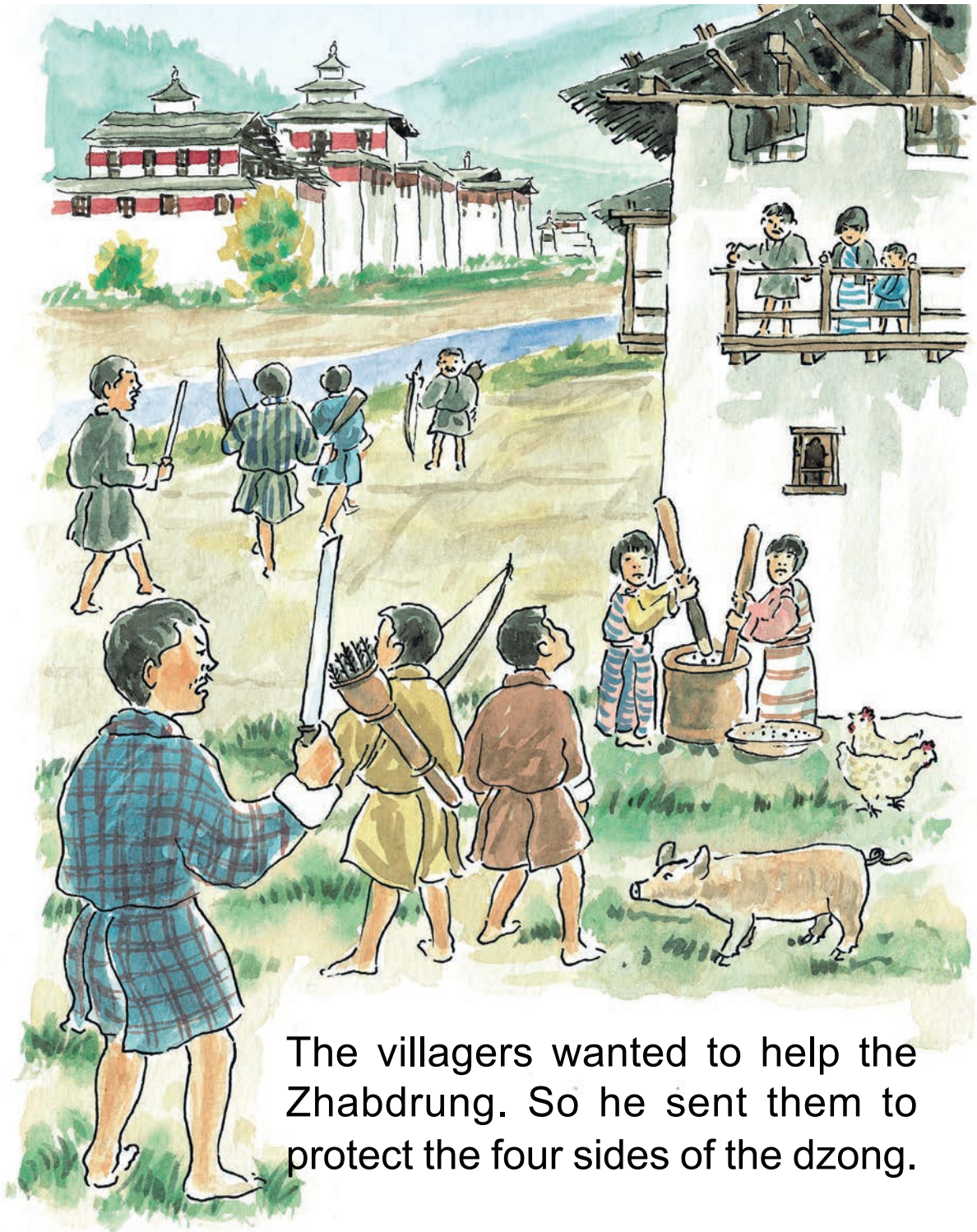
Another day the Zhabdrung told his soldiers to make men out of straw and put old clothes on them. Then, at night, the Bhutanese soldiers put the straw men in front of the dzong.



In the morning the Tibetans thought that the Bhutanese had come out of the dzong. to fight!

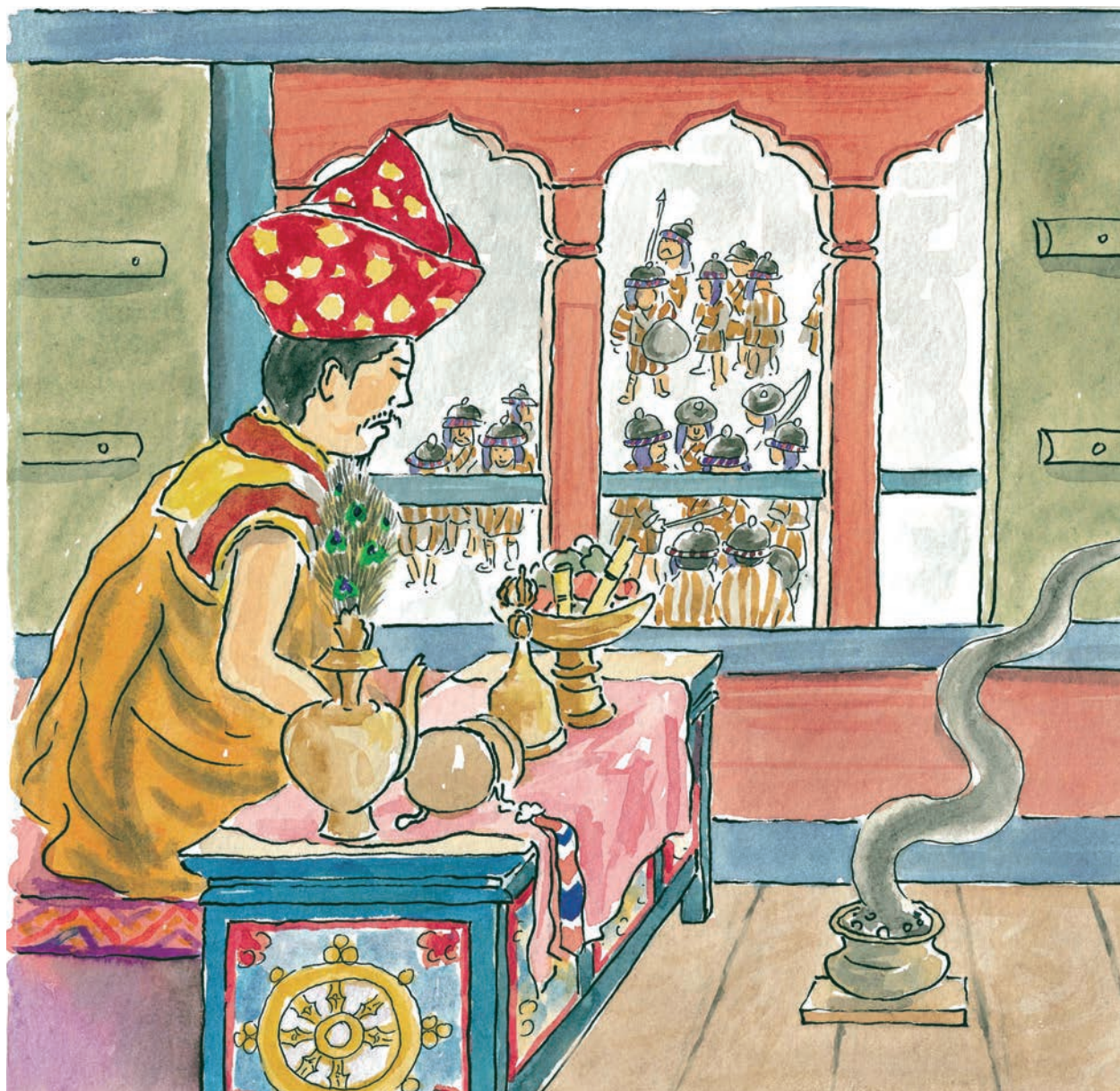


As the Tibetan horsemen rode down to the dzong the Bhutanese shot burning arrows at the straw men and set them on fire. This frightened the Tibetans and made them run away again!



The villagers wanted to help the Zhabdrung. So he sent them to protect the four sides of the dzong.

At last the Zhabdrung decided to stop the fighting.
He knew that the Tibetans only wanted one thing-
the Rangjung Kharsapani.



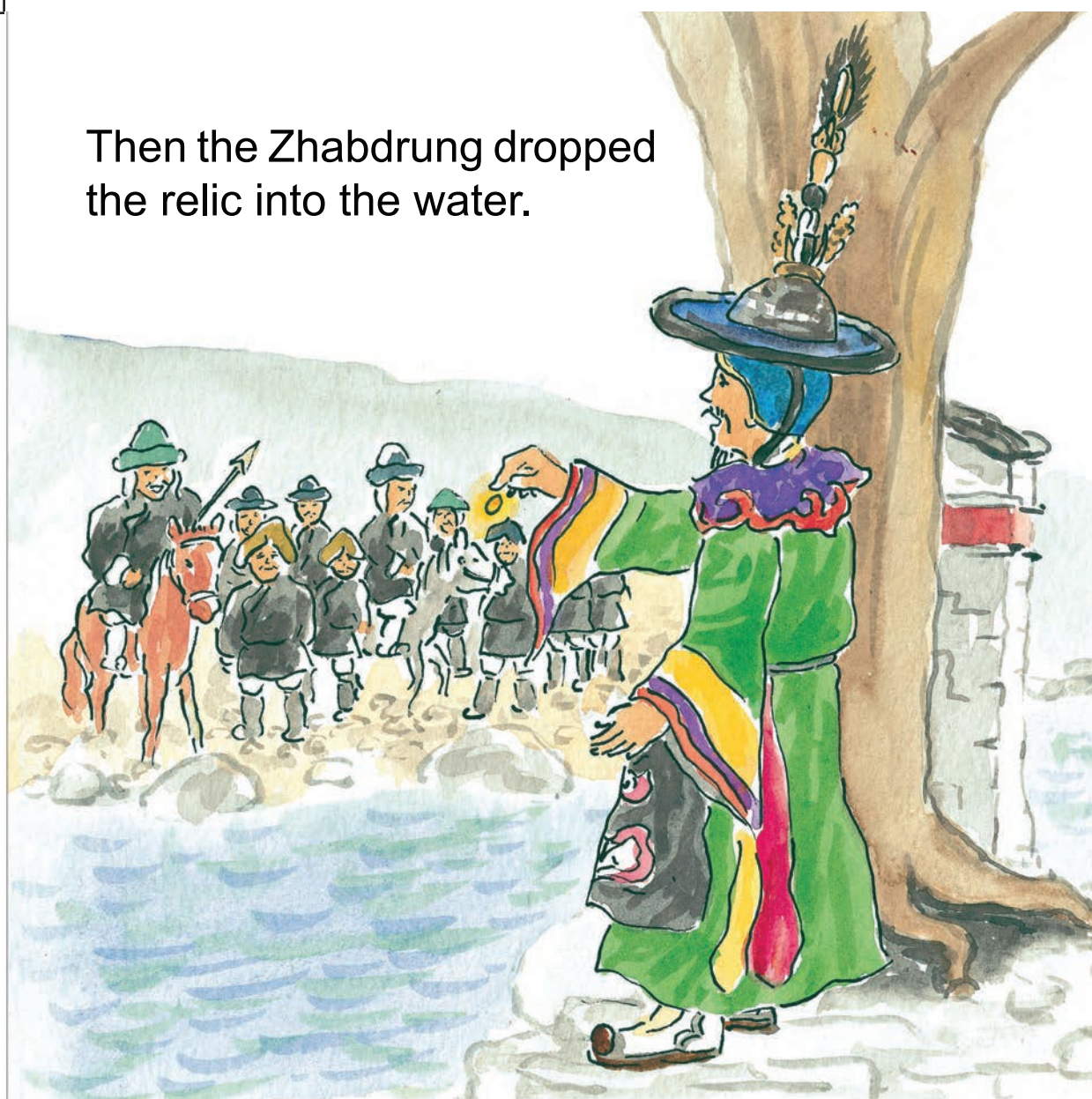
The next day the Zhabdrung walked to a big tree beside the river. Both the Tibetan and Bhutanese soldiers could see him and hear him.

“It is not good that our two peoples are fighting for this special relic,” he said.

“I will throw it into the river so neither of us will have it and we will not fight again.”

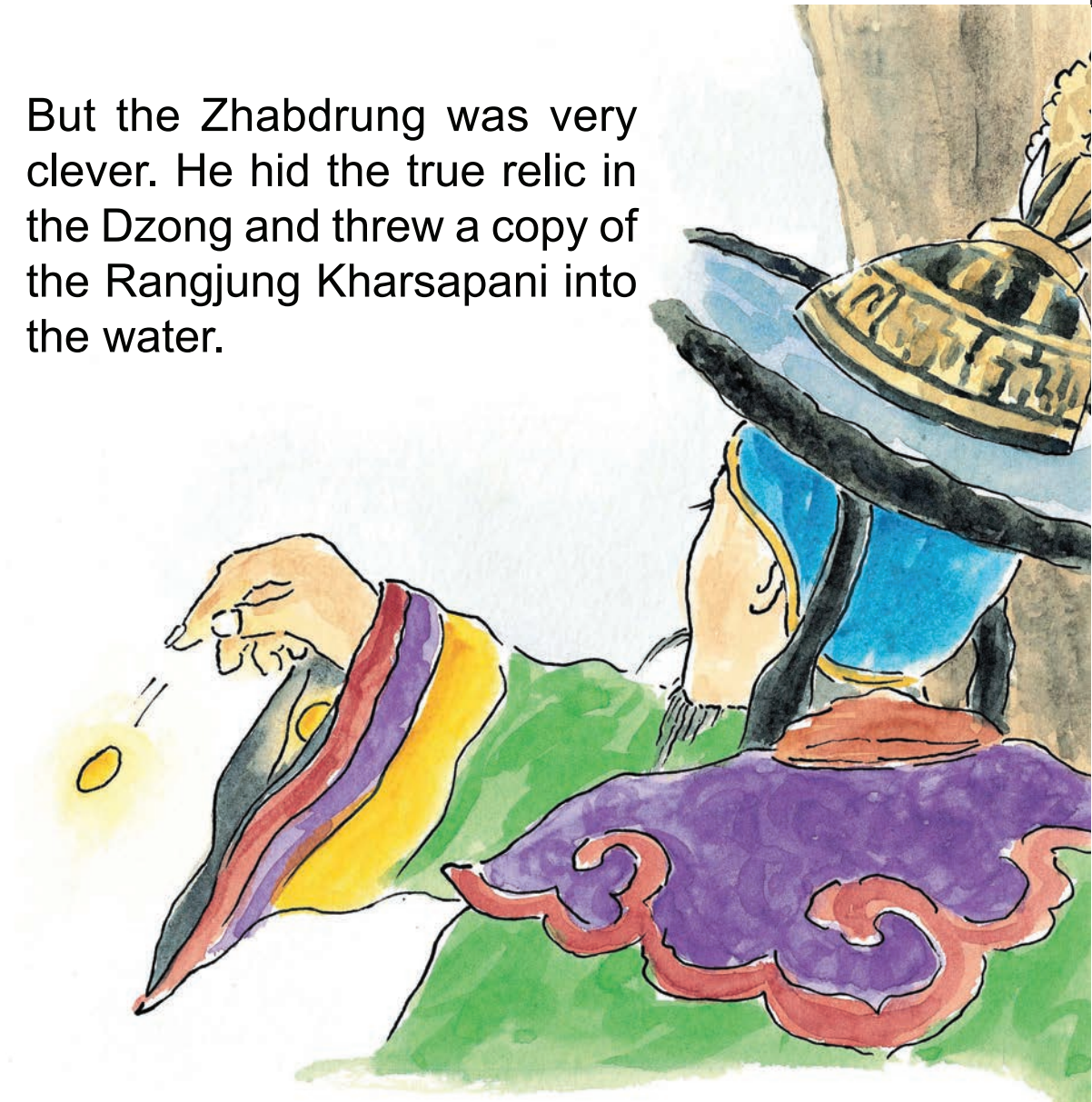


Then the Zhabdrung dropped
the relic into the water.



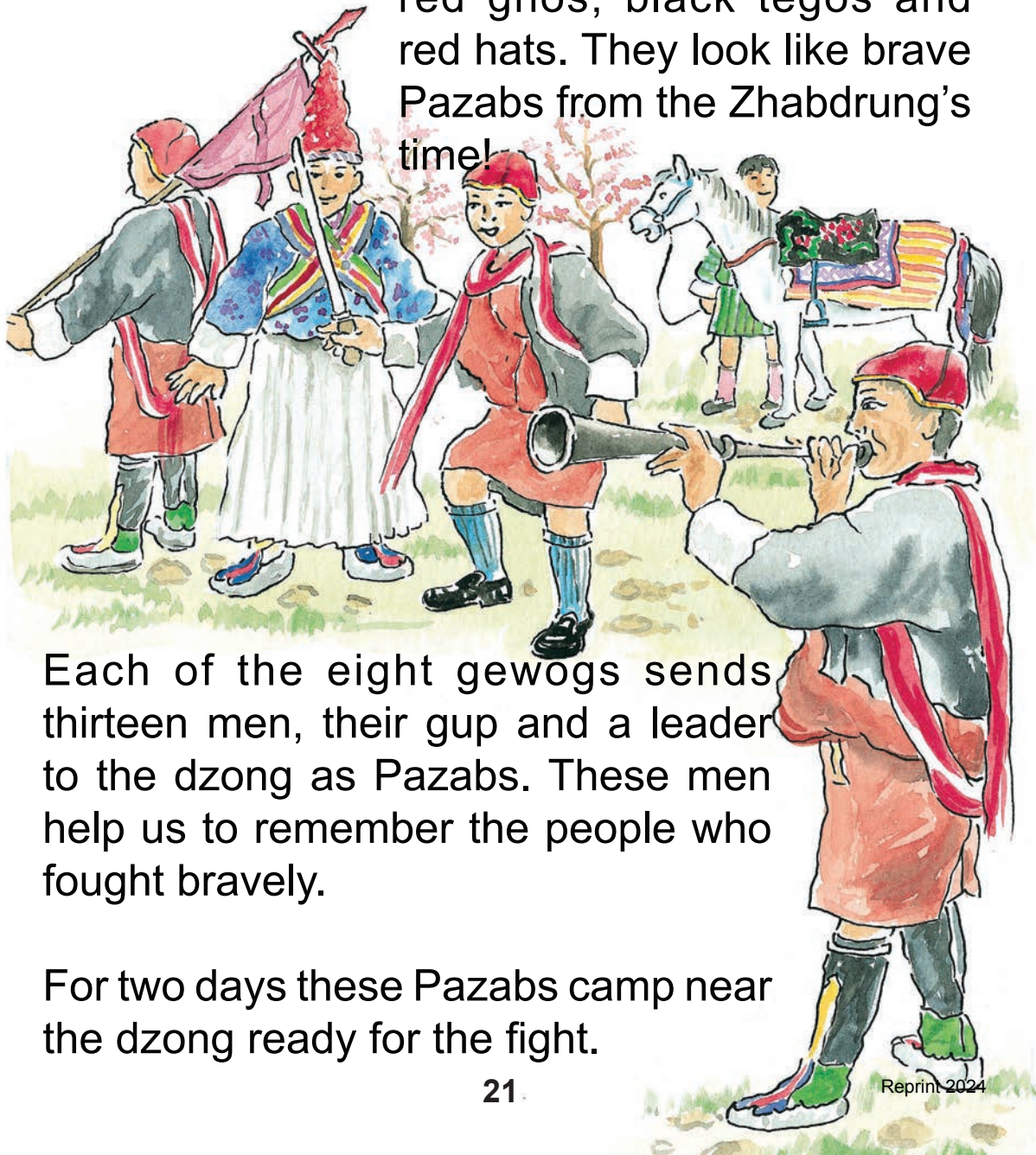
“Oh,” cried the Tibetans. They had come to get
the relic. Now, without it, there was no need
to fight. They went back to Tibet thinking that
the Bhutanese were very stupid.

But the Zhabdrung was very clever. He hid the true relic in the Dzong and threw a copy of the Rangjung Kharsapani into the water.



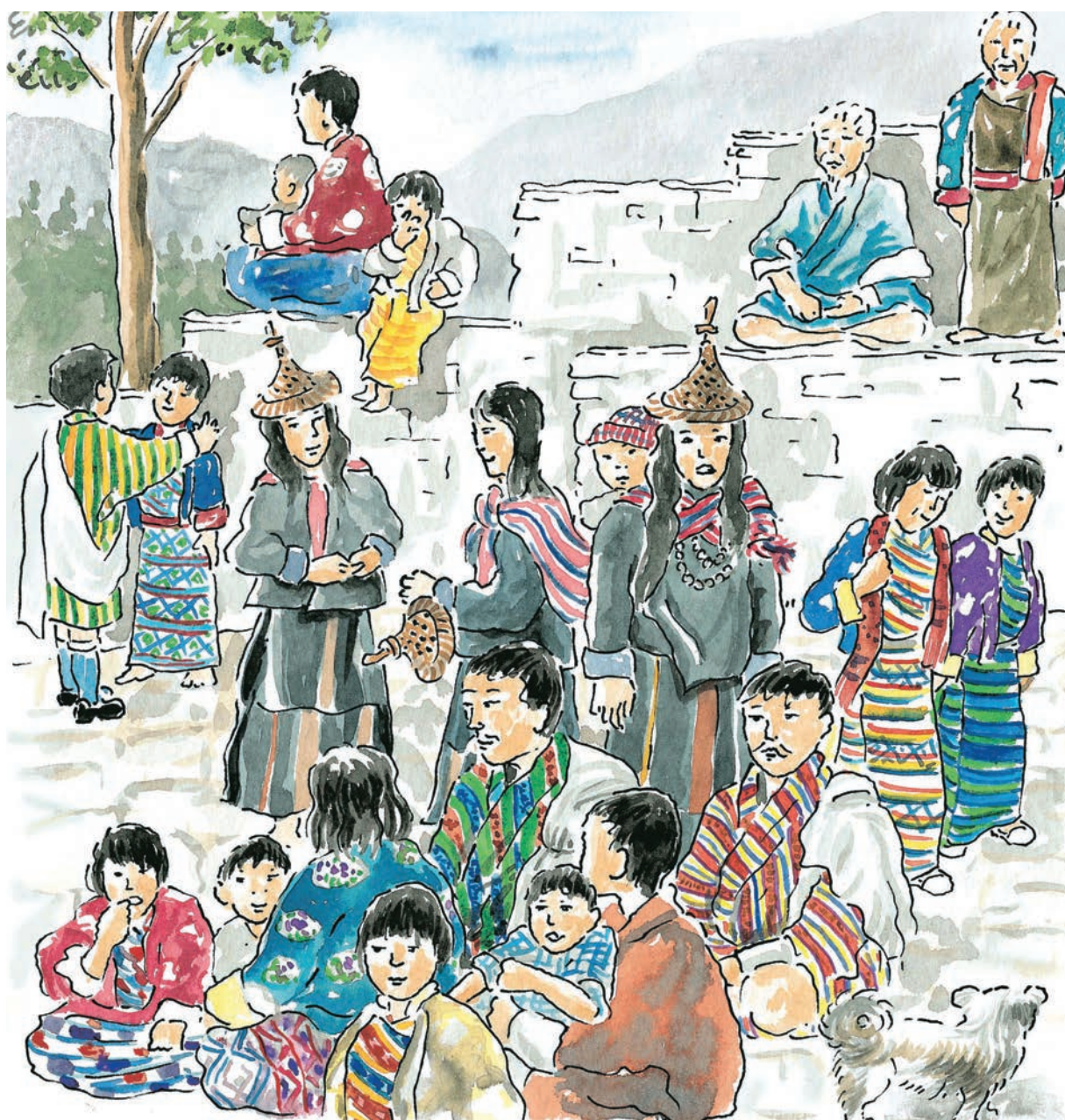
The true Rangjung Kharsapani is in Punakha dzong today, and once a year the people of Punakha remember how the Zhabdrung saved the relic and their dzong.

So every spring Punakha town is full of Pazabs wearing red ghos, black tegos and red hats. They look like brave Pazabs from the Zhabdrung's time!



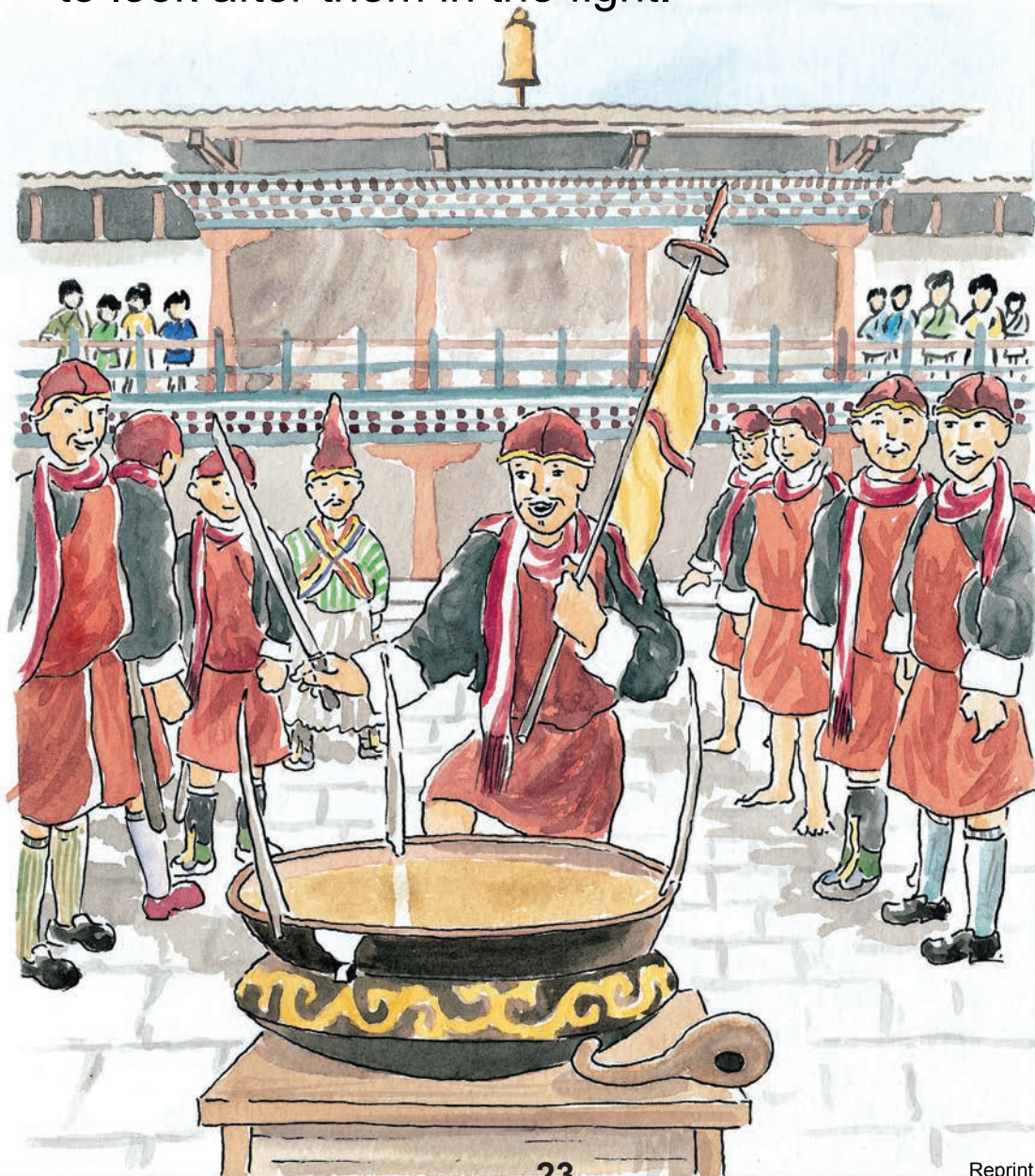
Each of the eight gewogs sends thirteen men, their gup and a leader to the dzong as Pazabs. These men help us to remember the people who fought bravely.

For two days these Pazabs camp near the dzong ready for the fight.

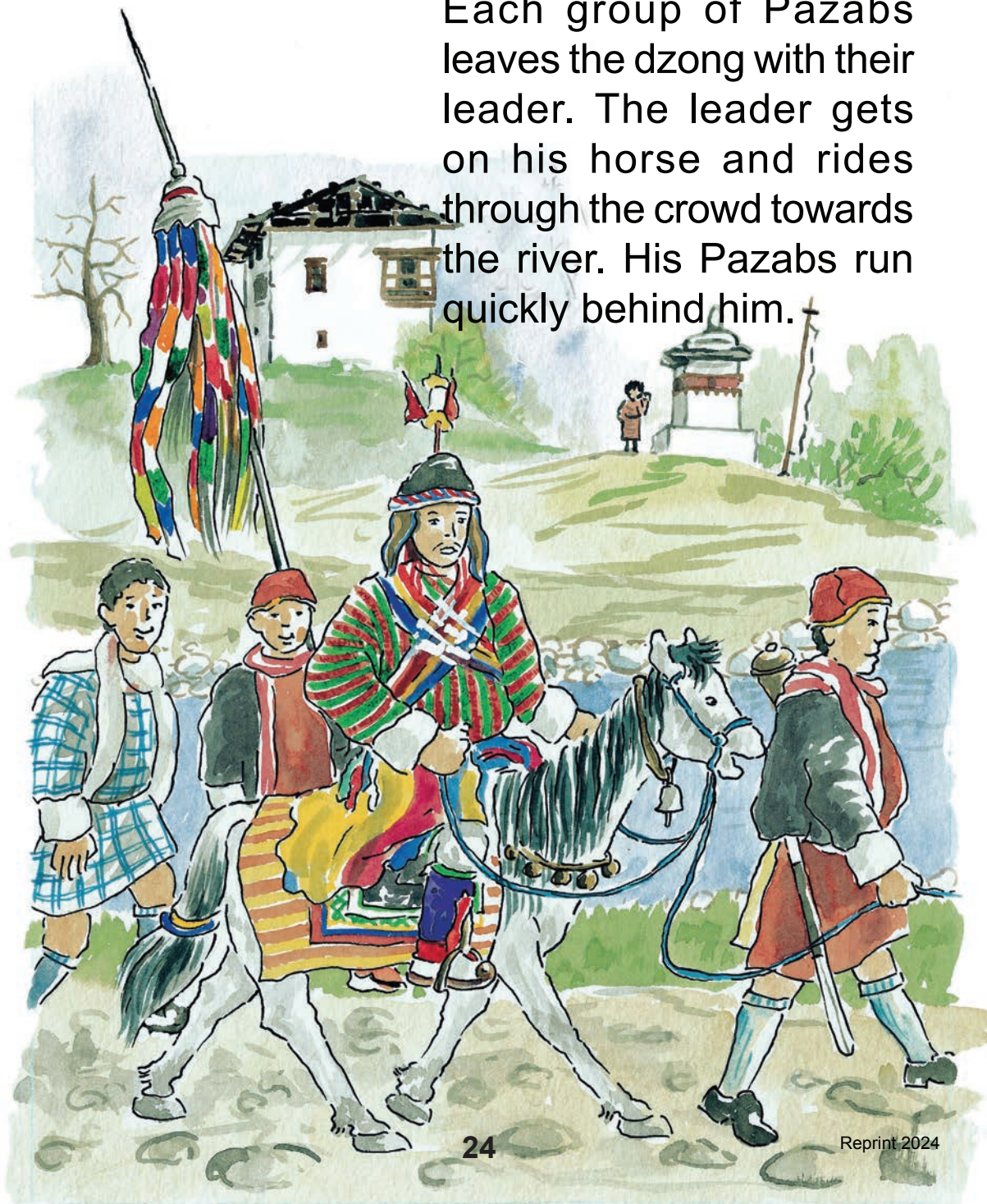


Lots of people come from Punakha valley to see the Domchoe. Some walk all the way from Laya. Can you see them in the crowd?

On day three of the Domchoe the Pazabs go to the dzong and get a blessing. They ask their gods to look after them in the fight.



Each group of Pazabs leaves the dzong with their leader. The leader gets on his horse and rides through the crowd towards the river. His Pazabs run quickly behind him.

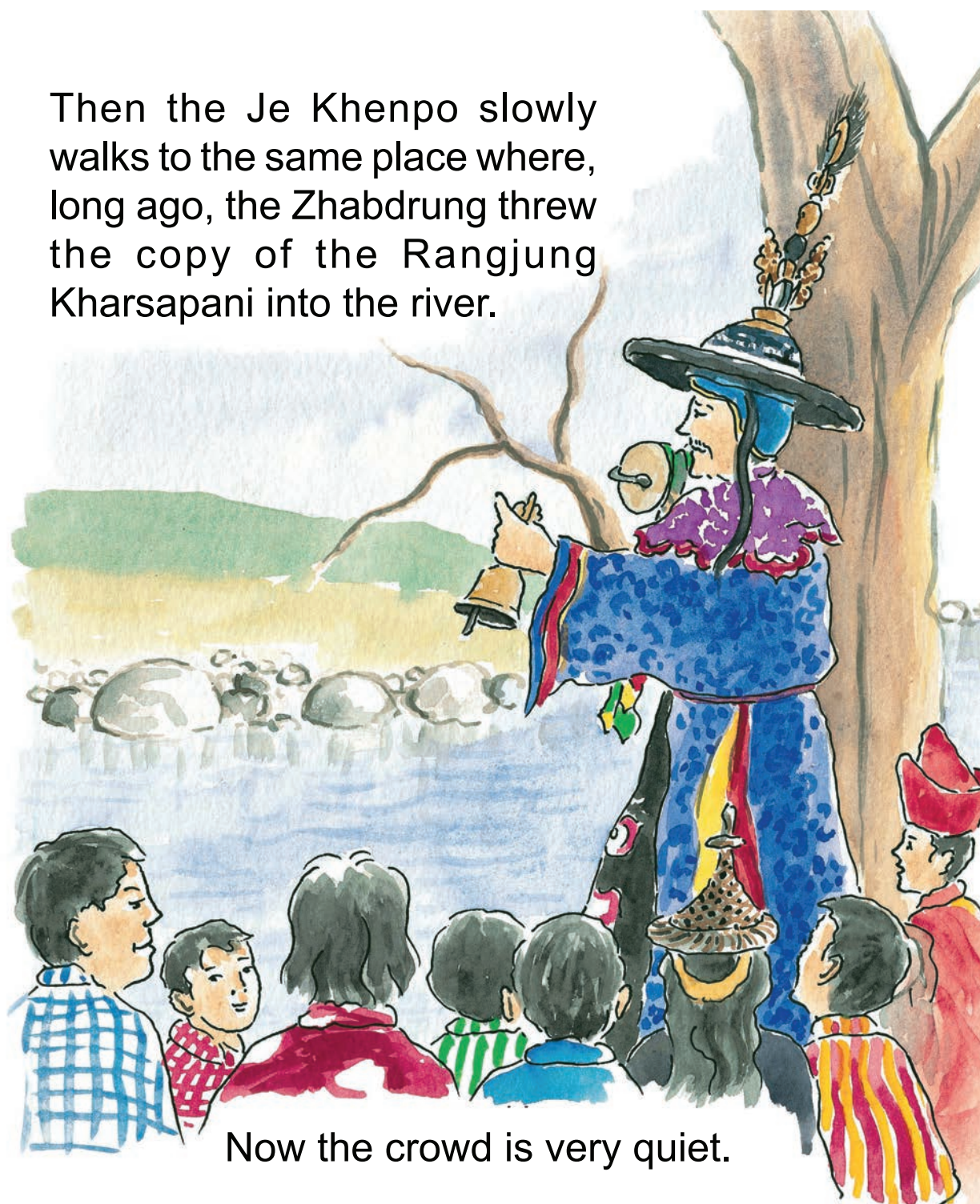


After the horsemen and their Pazabs leave the dzong, the Je Khenpo and the monks come out.



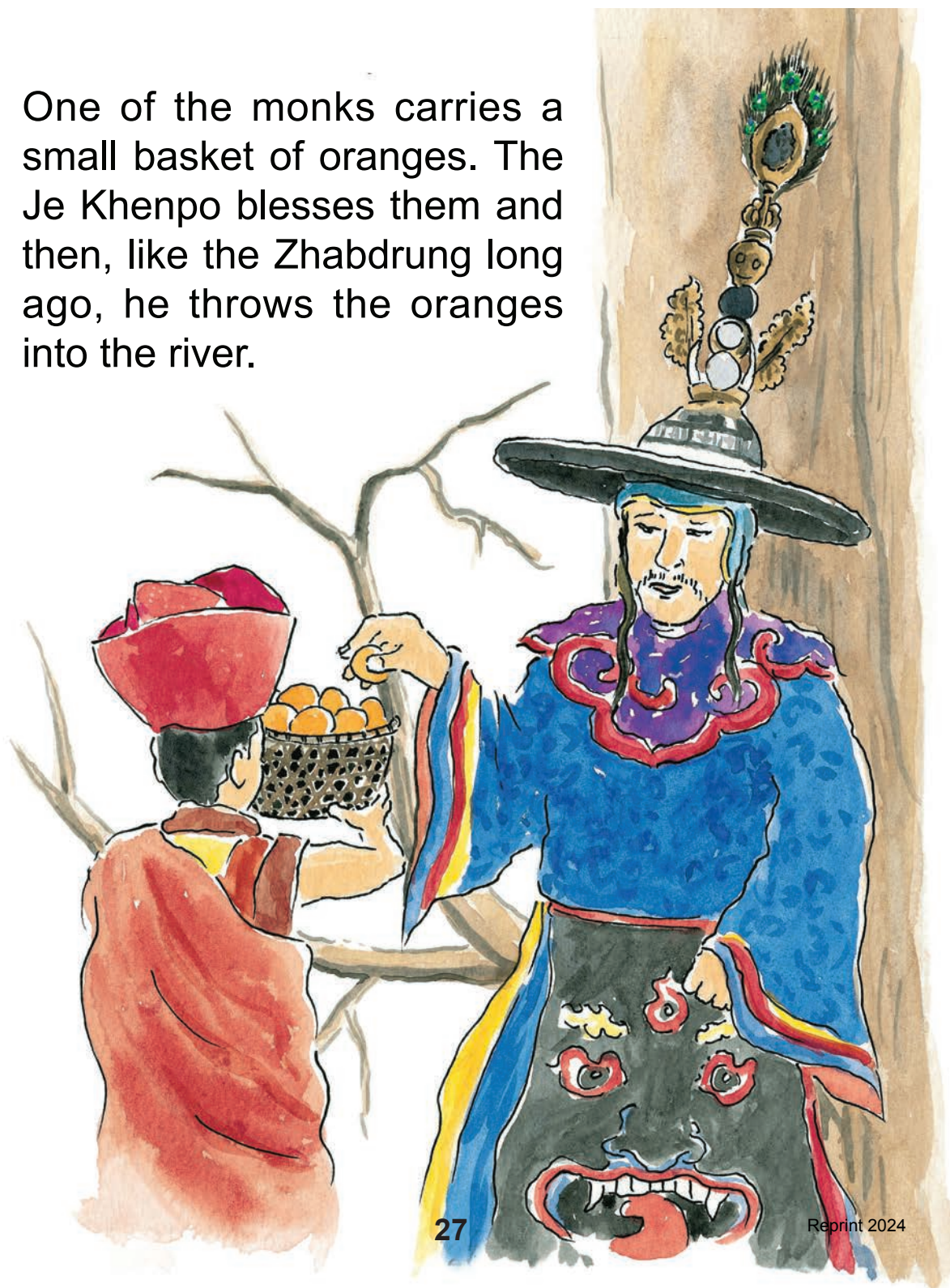
Everyone is very happy because he is going to give a blessing. It is very important for our people to get a blessing from the Je Khenpo once in their life in Punakha.

Then the Je Khenpo slowly walks to the same place where, long ago, the Zhabdrung threw the copy of the Rangjung Kharsapani into the river.

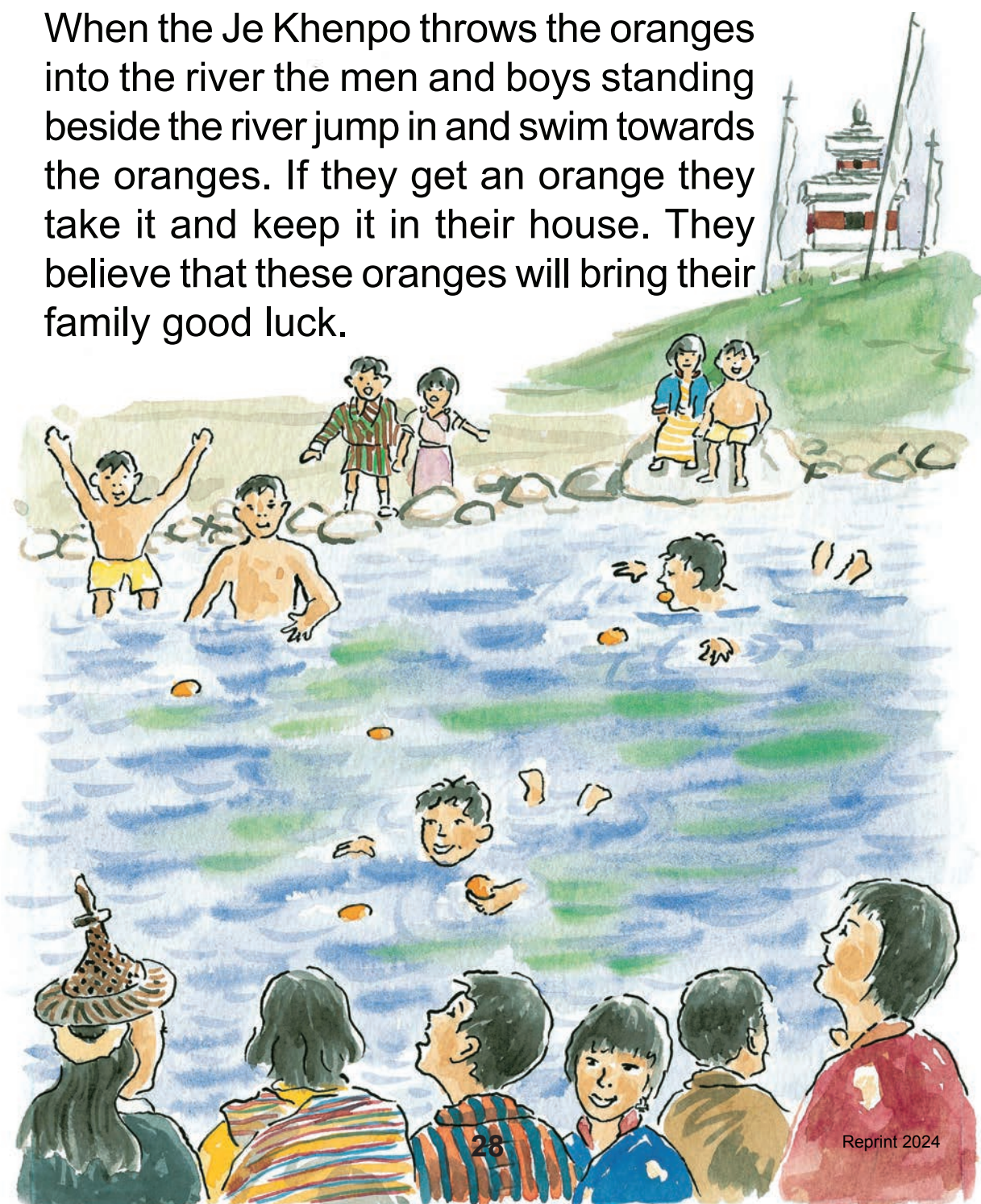


Now the crowd is very quiet.

One of the monks carries a small basket of oranges. The Je Khenpo blesses them and then, like the Zhabdrung long ago, he throws the oranges into the river.



When the Je Khenpo throws the oranges into the river the men and boys standing beside the river jump in and swim towards the oranges. If they get an orange they take it and keep it in their house. They believe that these oranges will bring their family good luck.



Now the horsemen and the Pazabs return to the dzong. They are very happy because the fight is over and they dance and sing.



The Domchoe is over this year.
Everyone goes home tired but happy.

VISION

“An educated and enlightened society of GNH,
built and sustained on the unique Bhutanese
values of Tha Dam-Tsig Ley Gju-Drey.”