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Idiom Stories

# BORROWING ARROWS WITH THATCHED BOATS

· 草 船 借 箭 ·



中华传统经典故事绘本  
附中文拼音



CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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Retold by Song Huaizhi  
Translated by Liu Jun & Bruce Humes



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编 写: 宋怀芝

翻 译: 刘 浚

特约译审: Bruce Humes (美国)

绘 画: 一片黄叶工作室

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## 草船借箭

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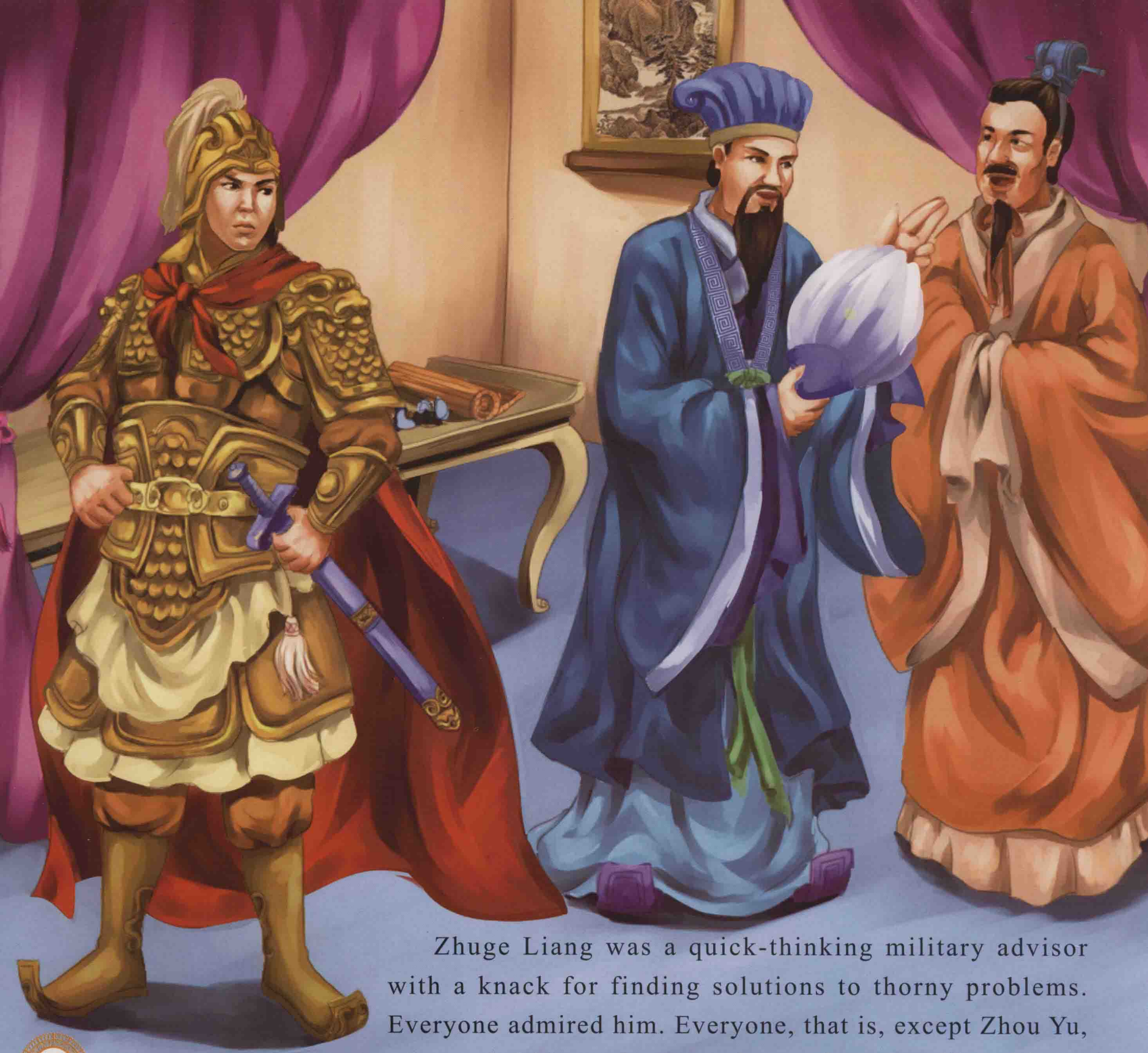
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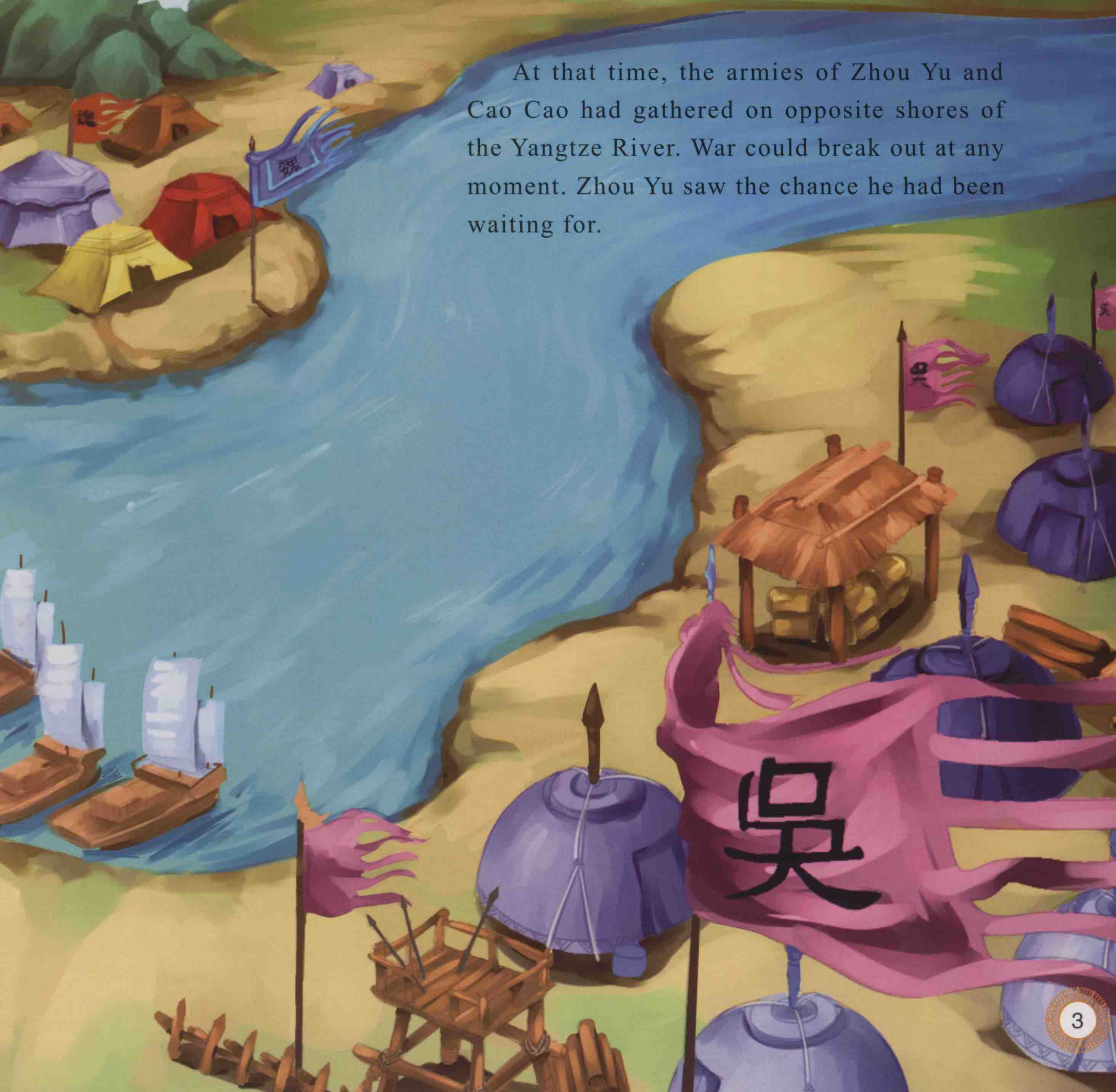


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Zhuge Liang was a quick-thinking military advisor with a knack for finding solutions to thorny problems. Everyone admired him. Everyone, that is, except Zhou Yu, who envied him and constantly sought to humiliate him.





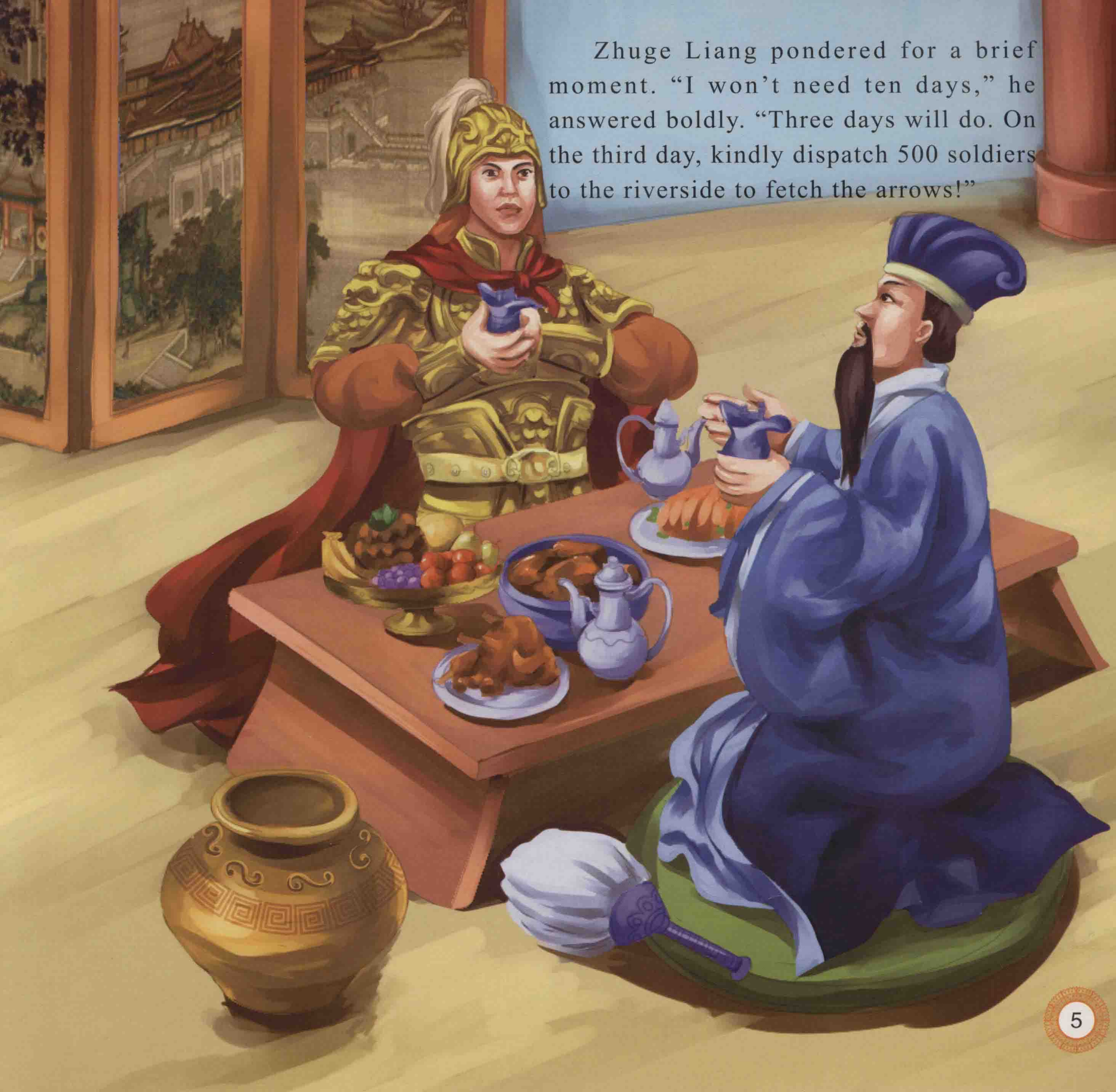
At that time, the armies of Zhou Yu and Cao Cao had gathered on opposite shores of the Yangtze River. War could break out at any moment. Zhou Yu saw the chance he had been waiting for.



One day he summoned Zhuge Liang. “We are soon to do battle with Cao Cao’s army,” began Zhou Yu. “I bid you to craft 100,000 arrows over the next ten days. Should you fail in this task upon which our victory depends, however, you can expect no leniency.”



Zhuge Liang pondered for a brief moment. "I won't need ten days," he answered boldly. "Three days will do. On the third day, kindly dispatch 500 soldiers to the riverside to fetch the arrows!"





After Zhuge Liang withdrew, Lu Su, an official under Zhou Yu, expressed his disbelief. “How can anyone possibly craft 100,000 arrows in three days? Was he boasting?” “Let’s wait and see if his actions match his words,” replied Zhou Yu with a smirk.

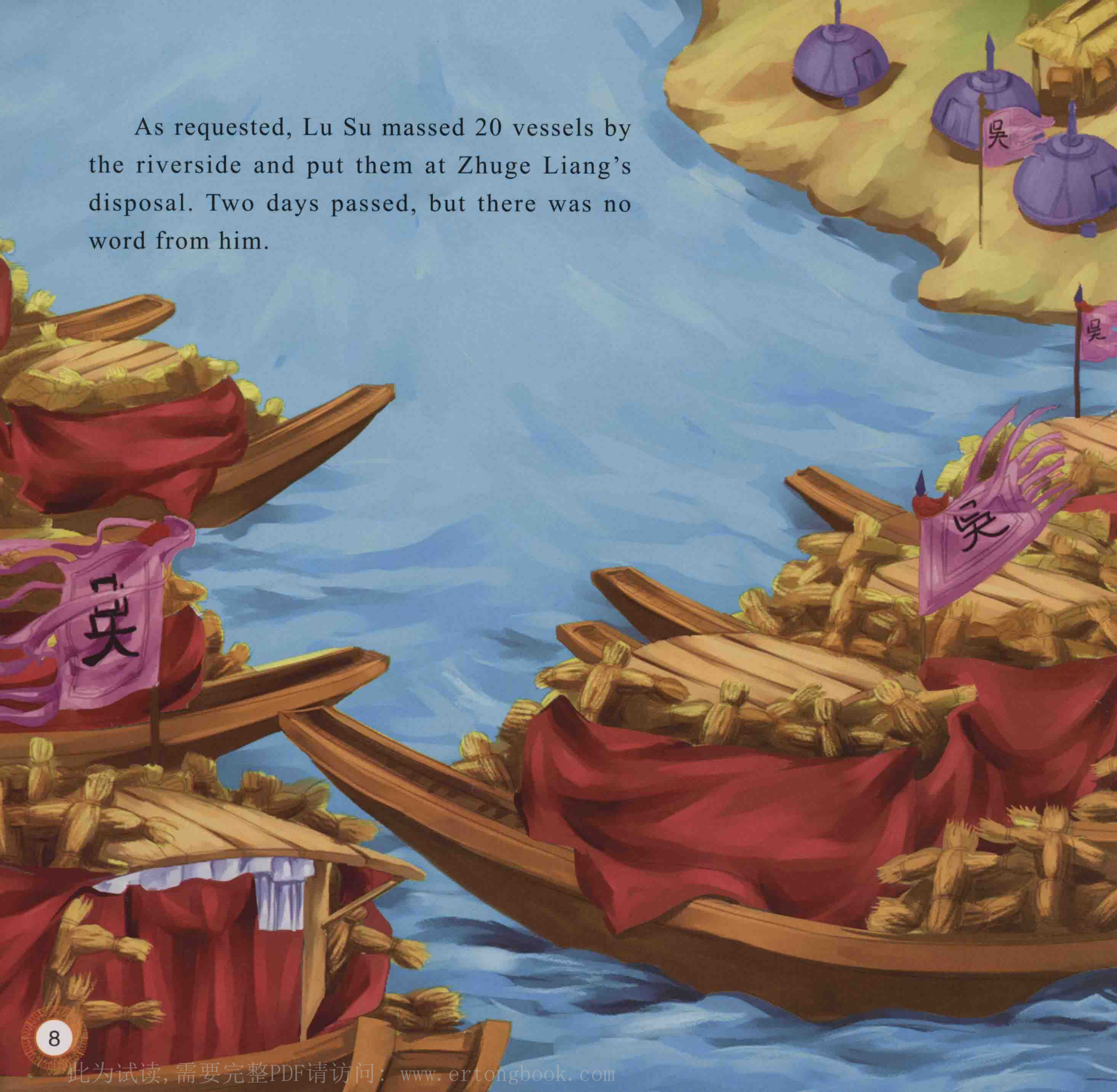




Full of doubt, Lu Su paid Zhuge Liang a visit. “Please help me prepare 20 boats, each manned by 30 soldiers,” said Zhuge Liang. “Line the deck on both sides of each boat with scarecrows made of straw. I guarantee by the third day Zhou Yu shall have his arrows.”




As requested, Lu Su massed 20 vessels by the riverside and put them at Zhuge Liang's disposal. Two days passed, but there was no word from him.





On the third night, a heavy mist rose over the Yangtze. Zhuge Liang secretly sent for Lu Su to join him aboard one of the boats. "Come, let's fetch the arrows," said Zhuge Liang with an air of great mystery. "Wherefrom?" asked Lu Su, puzzled.





Zhuge Liang commanded the soldiers to link the 20 boats together with rope, and set off toward the northern bank. Before dawn, they were already approaching Cao Cao's riverside encampment. Thanks to the heavy fog, their approach remained unnoticed by the enemy.



Down from Zhuge Liang came the order to form the boats into a single queue, the bows facing west and the sterns facing east, parallel to the bank. Then he commanded the soldiers onboard to sound the drum and shout at the top of their lungs.





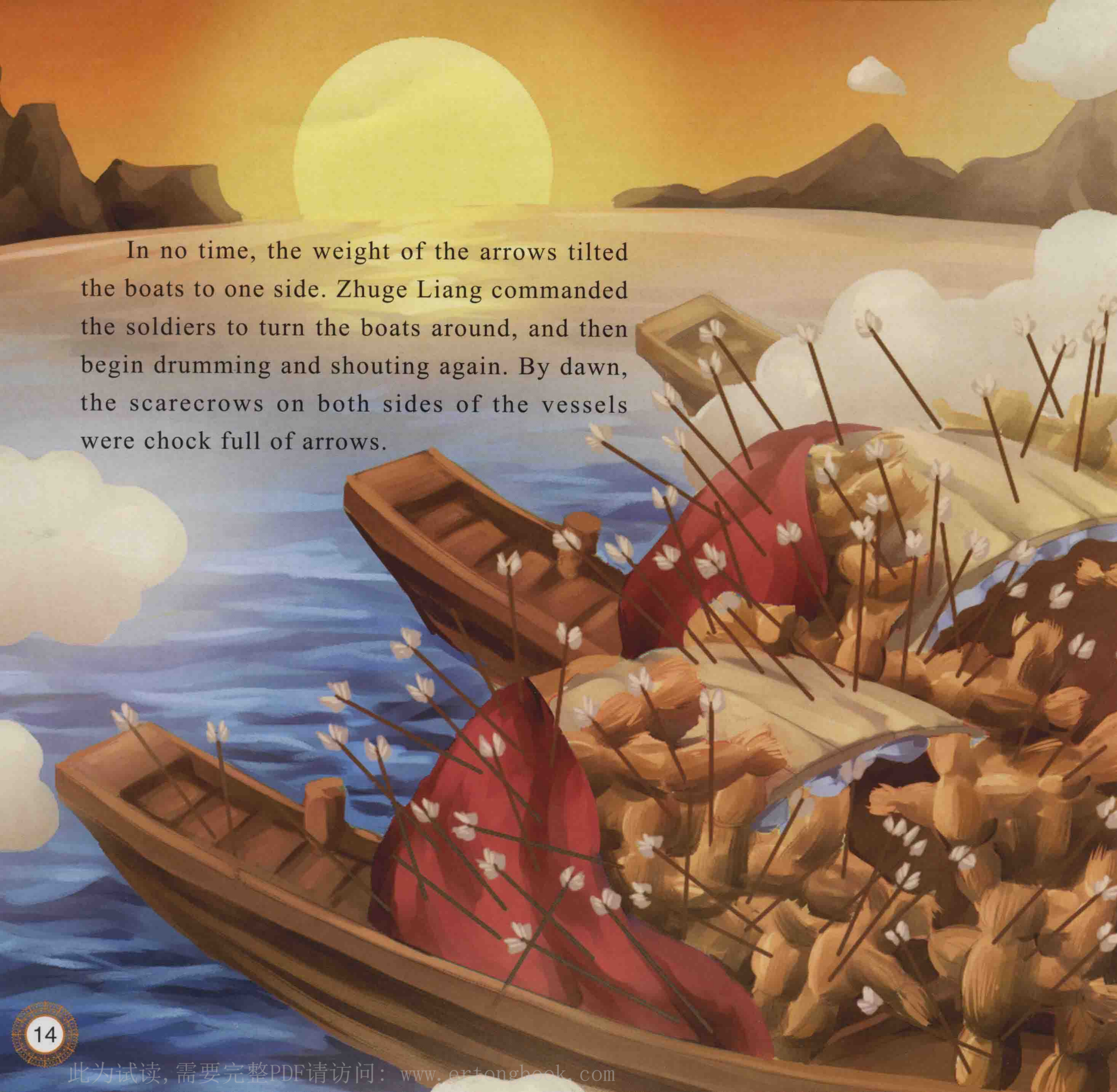
“What if Cao Cao’s army advances on us?” asked Lu Su, alarmed.

“In such heavy fog, Cao Cao won’t dare engage us,” said Zhuge Liang with a reassuring smile. “Let’s drink to our hearts’ content. By daybreak, we’ll be on our way home.”



When he heard the clamor, Cao Cao hastened to call for 10,000 archers. He ordered them to shoot their arrows at the hazy enemy in the river. The arrows rained down and planted themselves in the straw figures erected on Zhuge Liang's vessels.





In no time, the weight of the arrows tilted the boats to one side. Zhuge Liang commanded the soldiers to turn the boats around, and then begin drumming and shouting again. By dawn, the scarecrows on both sides of the vessels were chock full of arrows.