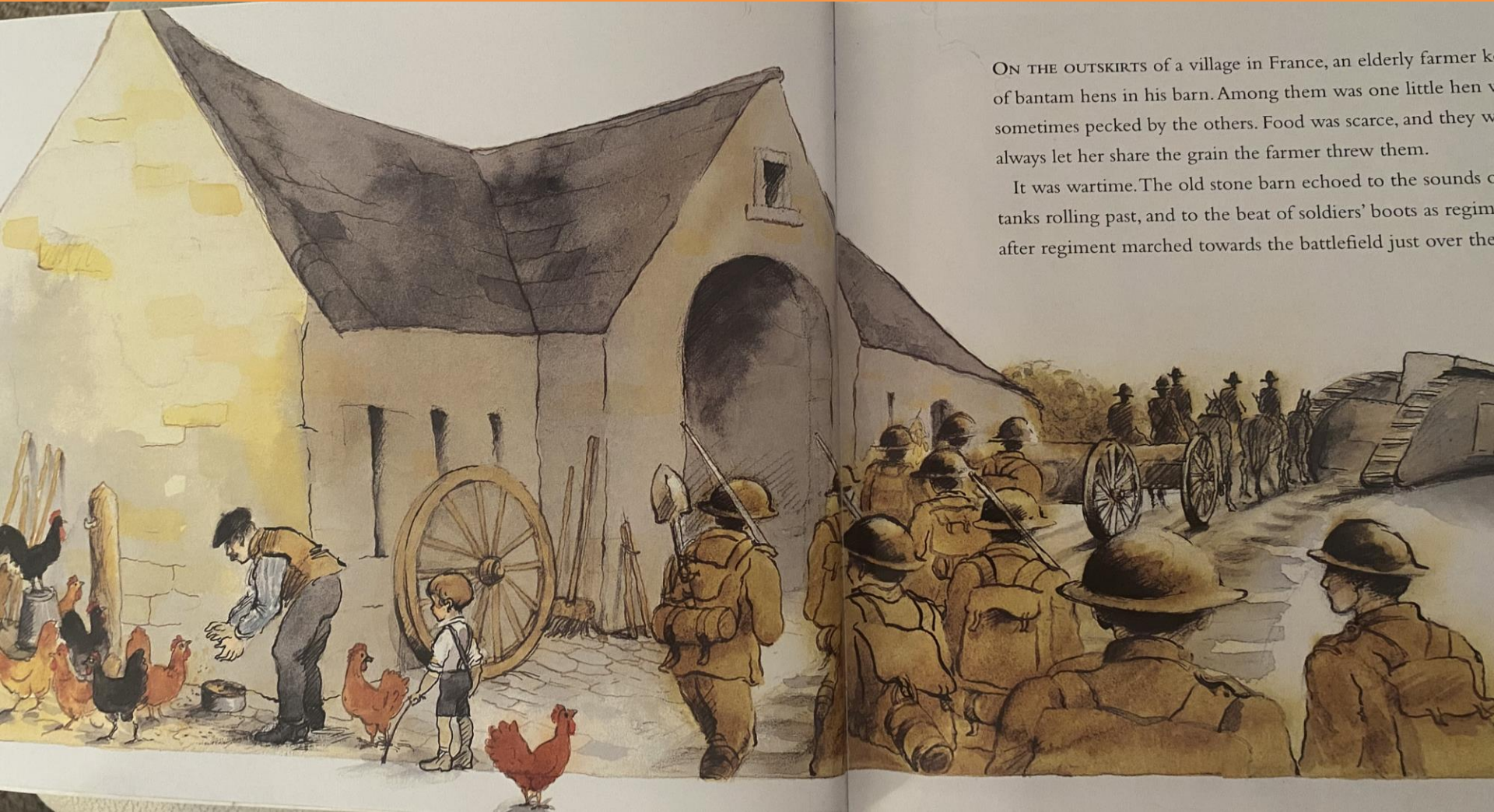


The **LITTLE HEN** and
the **GREAT WAR**



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ON THE OUTSKIRTS of a village in France, an elderly farmer kept a flock of bantam hens in his barn. Among them was one little hen who was sometimes pecked by the others. Food was scarce, and they would always let her share the grain the farmer threw them.

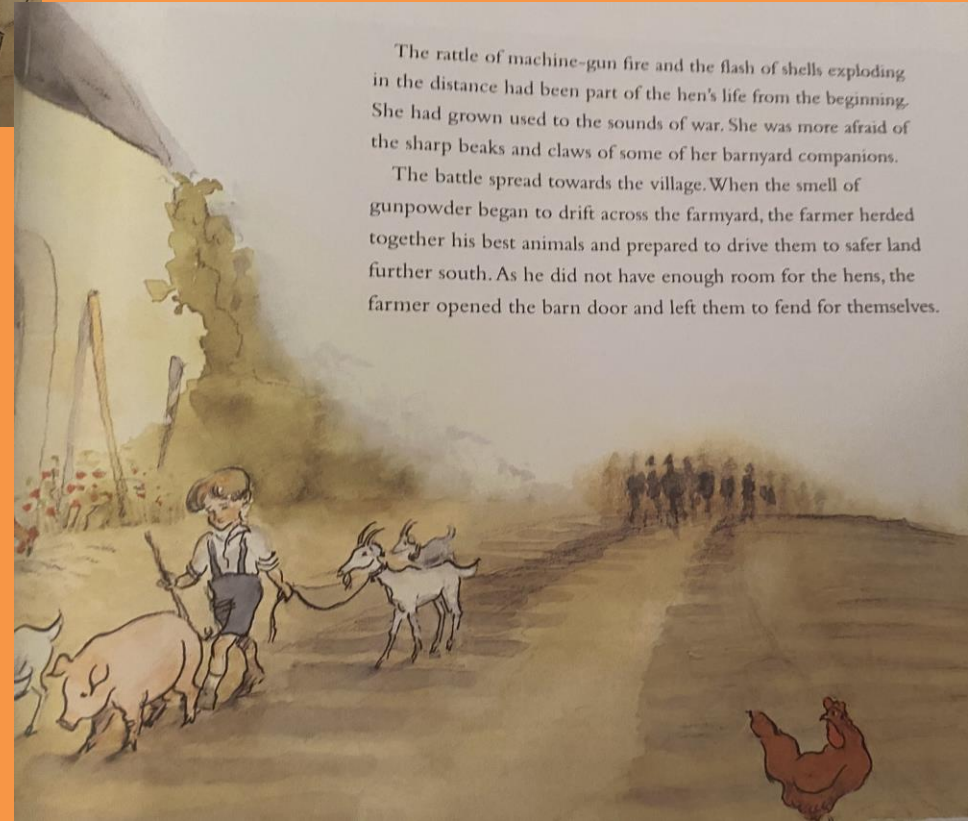
It was wartime. The old stone barn echoed to the sounds of tanks rolling past, and to the beat of soldiers' boots as regiments after regiments marched towards the battlefield just over the





The rattle of machine-gun fire and the flash of shells exploding in the distance had been part of the hen's life from the beginning. She had grown used to the sounds of war. She was more afraid of the sharp beaks and claws of some of her barnyard companions.

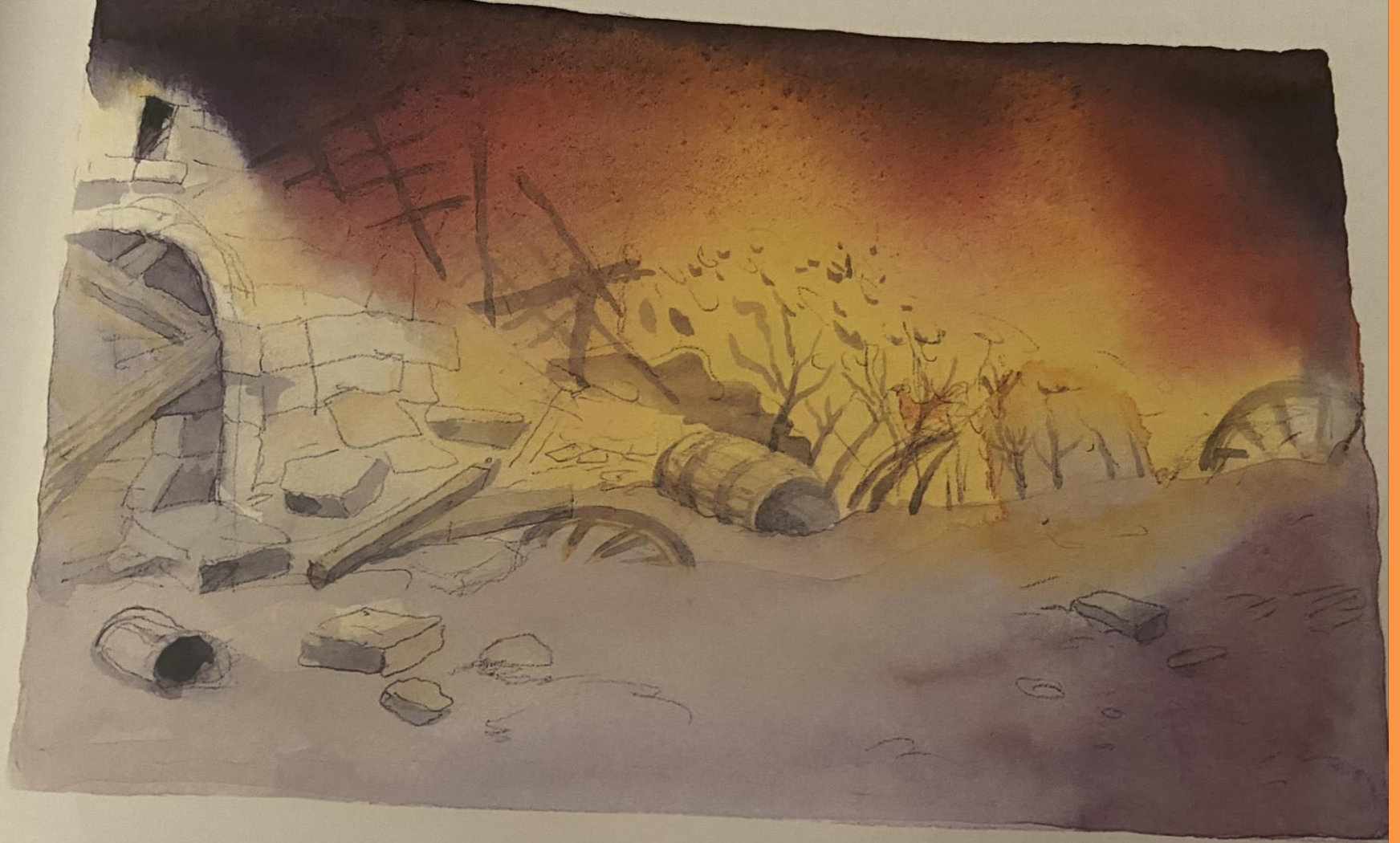
The battle spread towards the village. When the smell of gunpowder began to drift across the farmyard, the farmer herded together his best animals and prepared to drive them to safer land further south. As he did not have enough room for the hens, the farmer opened the barn door and left them to fend for themselves.





The hens scratched about in the farmyard during the day, and returned to the barn to roost in the evening. That is, all except the smallest hen. She kept apart from the others, foraging in nearby fields and sleeping at night under an overgrown hedge by the roadside.





One night there was a deafening explosion. A stray shell had landed near the farmyard. The barn collapsed into a heap of broken beams and jumbled stones. Then there was silence. Only the hen under the hedge survived, but in the blast she was thrown among the branches and could not struggle free.



It so happened that the very next morning a company of soldiers marched through the village towards the battlefield. They had come from a country on the other side of the world to join their allies. In those days they called it the Great War, and believed it was the war that would end all wars.

