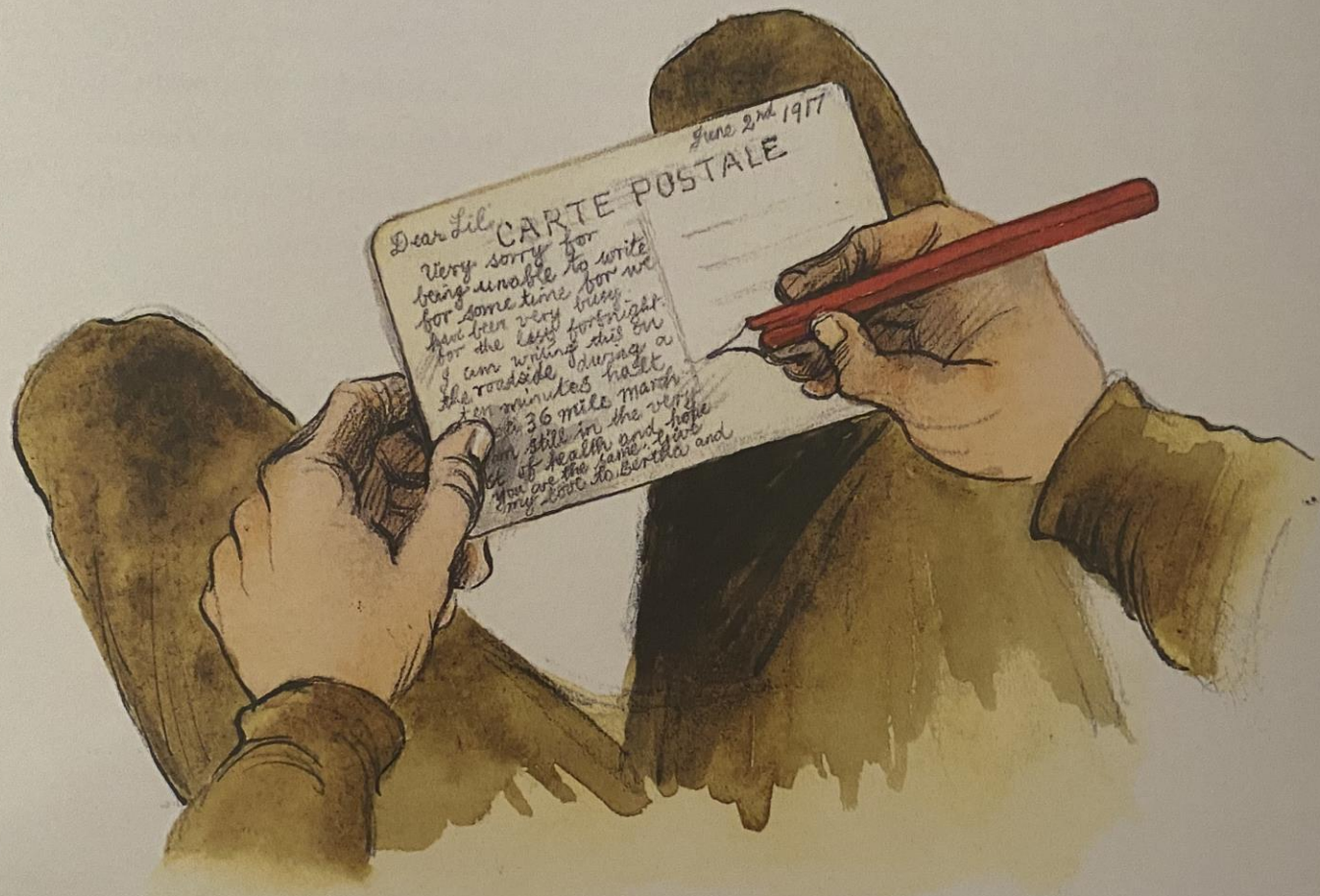


The soldiers had been marching for many hours. There were sighs of relief when they were allowed to rest for a while by the roadside.

One of the youngest among them was a farmer's son called Arthur. He loved farm life, and until a year before had travelled no further than a hundred miles from home. In war-torn Europe he often felt homesick and afraid, but tried not to show it. The older soldiers teased him enough as it was for his shyness and quiet country ways.





Sitting slightly apart from the others, Arthur took out a postcard to send to his family back home. He was thinking about his young niece, who liked to visit the farm during the school holidays. Arthur had just written 'Give my love to Bertha,' when he saw a movement in the hedge. It was the hen, trapped between branches and by then too weak to make a sound.

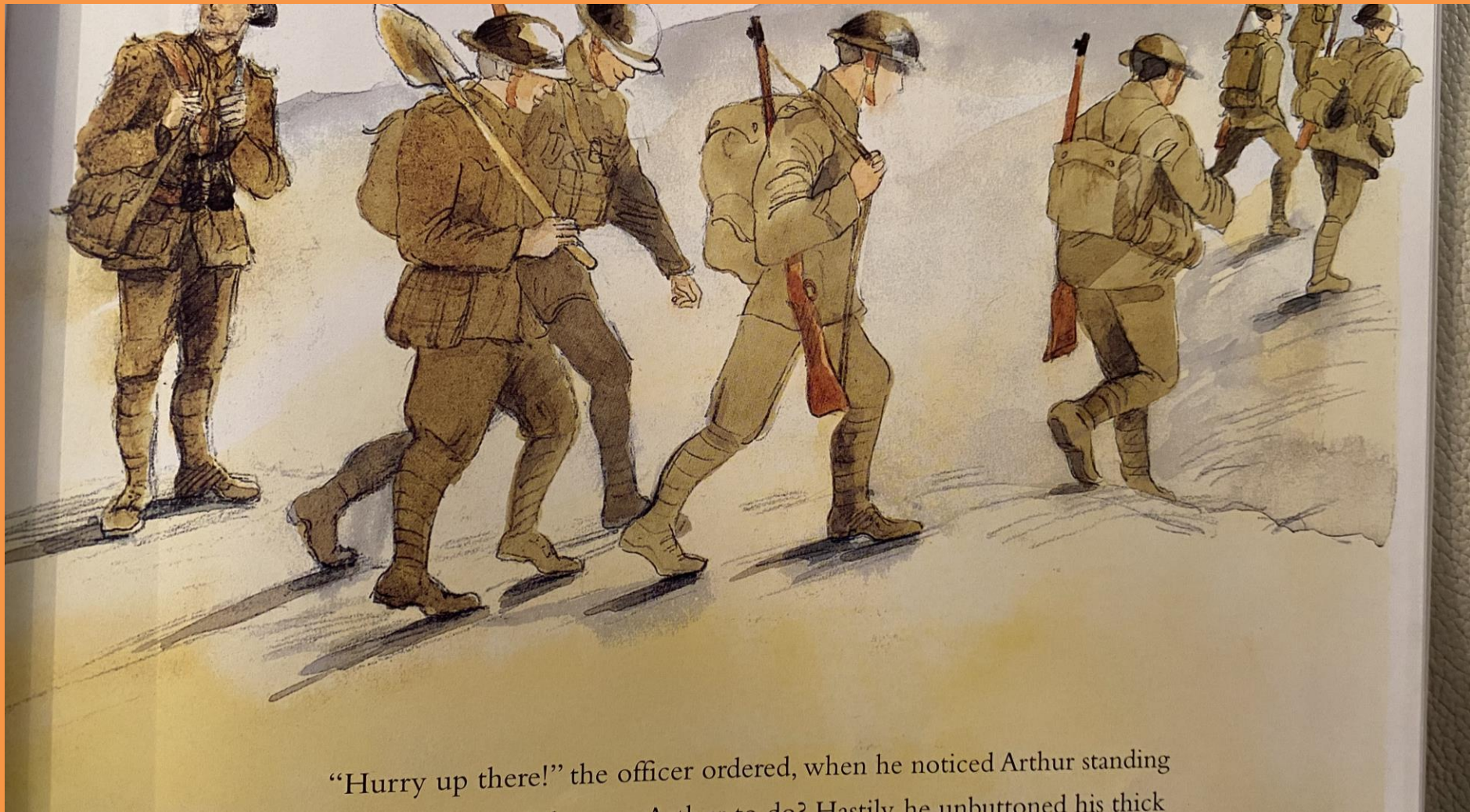




“Take it easy, little one,” Arthur whispered as he cradled the quivering bird in his hands and eased her gently through the tangle of thorns.

Just then the officer in charge shouted, “Time’s up, men!” and the soldiers struggled reluctantly to their feet and began to line up on the road.

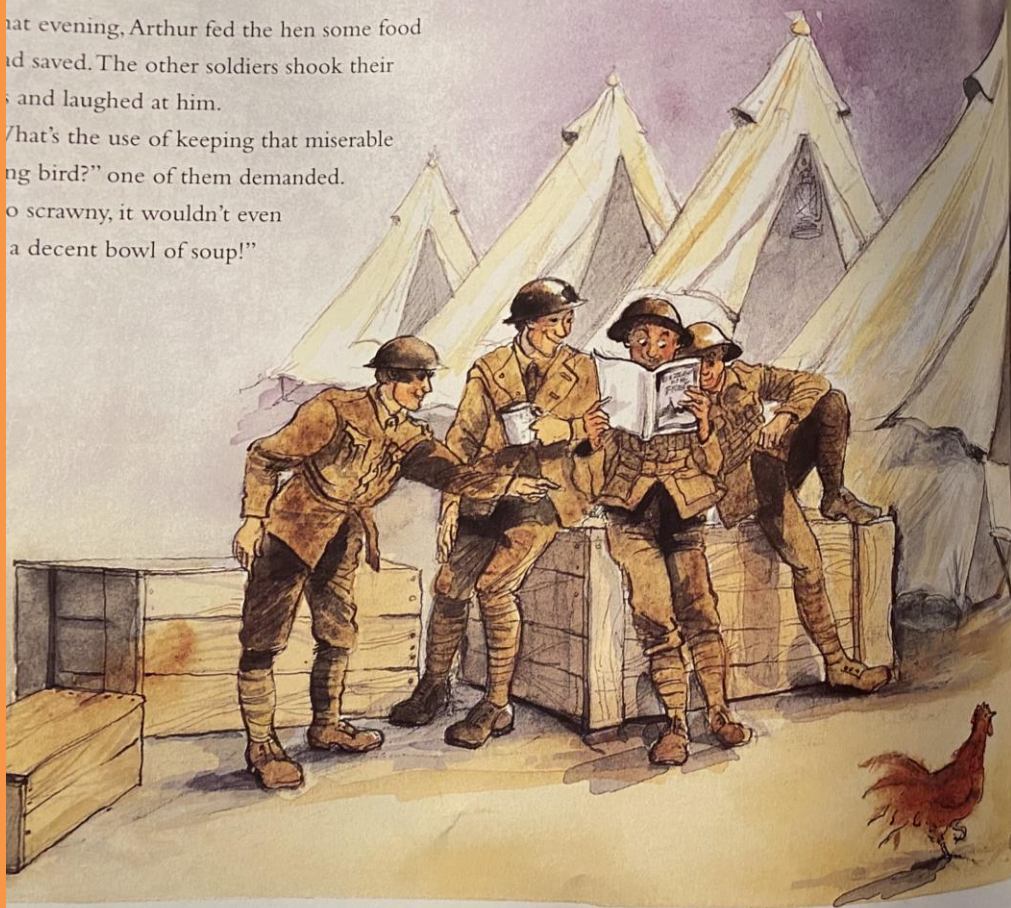




“Hurry up there!” the officer ordered, when he noticed Arthur standing
And what to do? Hastily he unbuttoned his thick



at evening, Arthur fed the hen some food
and saved. The other soldiers shook their
heads and laughed at him.
"What's the use of keeping that miserable
scrawny bird?" one of them demanded.
"So scrawny, it wouldn't even
eat a decent bowl of soup!"



"If it starts crowing,
I'll wring its skinny
neck and warn another."
"Her name is Bessie,
Arthur," and she must
be looked after her."

