

A GIANT MAXTON BOOK

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# THE LITTLE TIN SOLDIER





Anderson, Hans Christian, 1805-1875

*MY BOOK OF*

# THE LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

*The little tin soldier had only one leg, but he was a true soldier at heart. He had so many adventures that they fill all this book, and he was just as brave as could be in every one of them.*

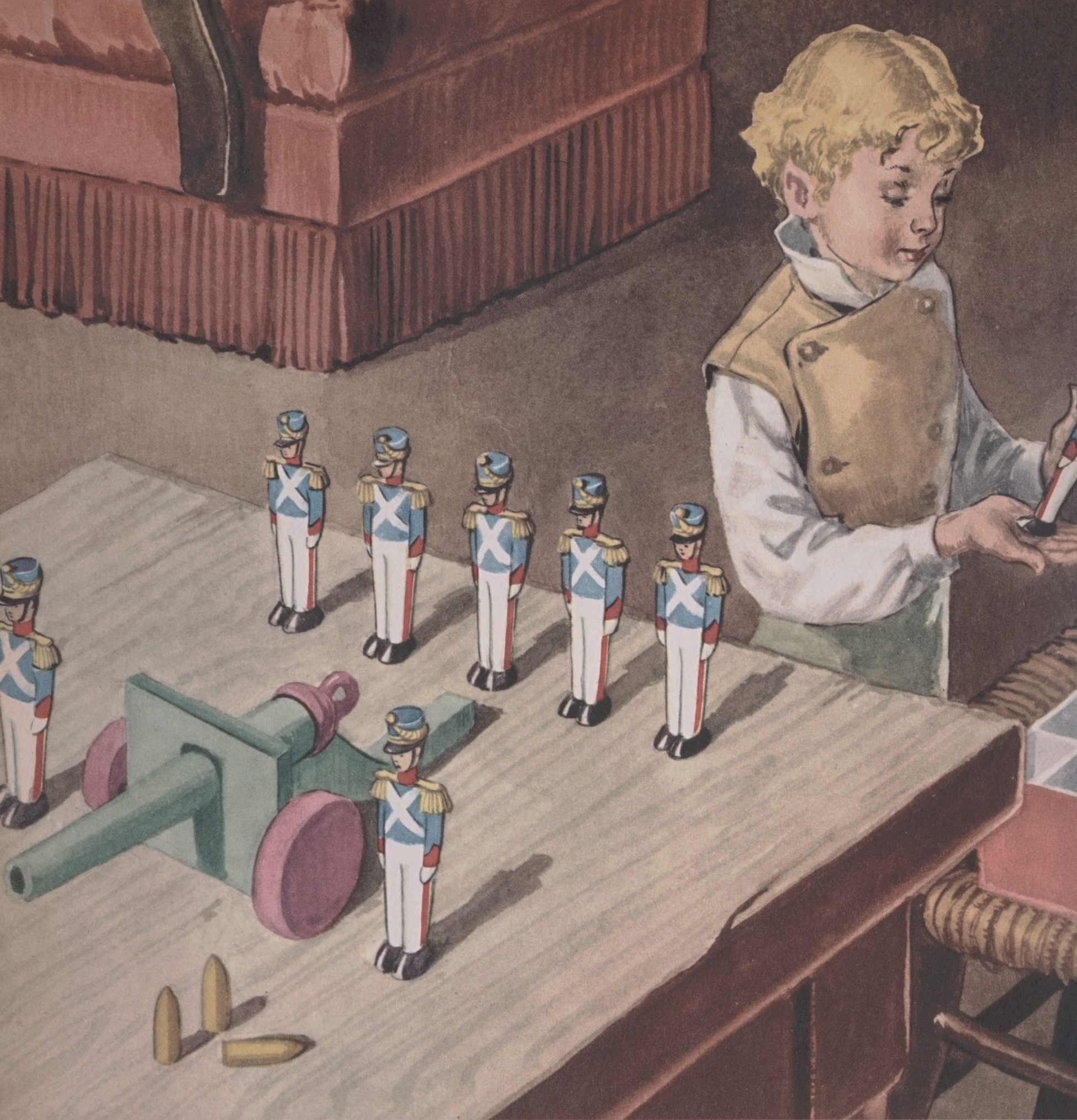
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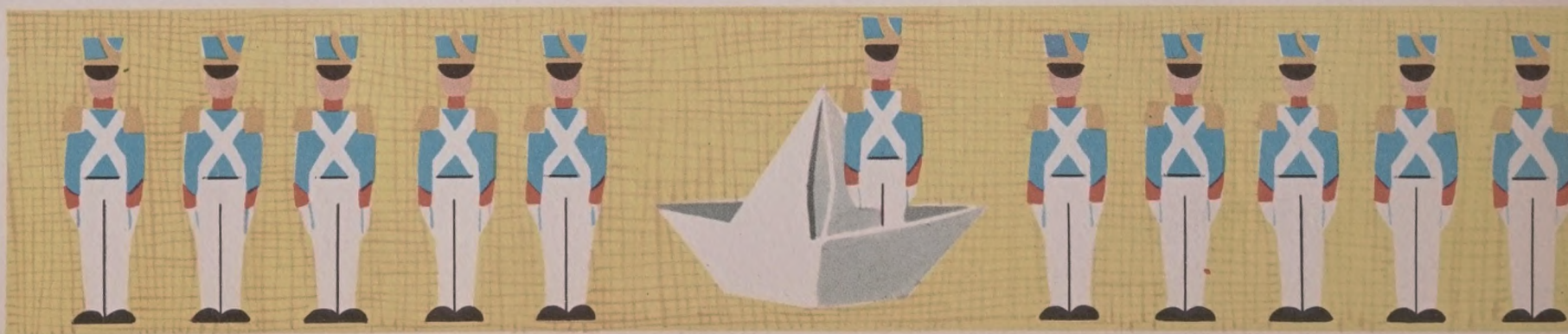
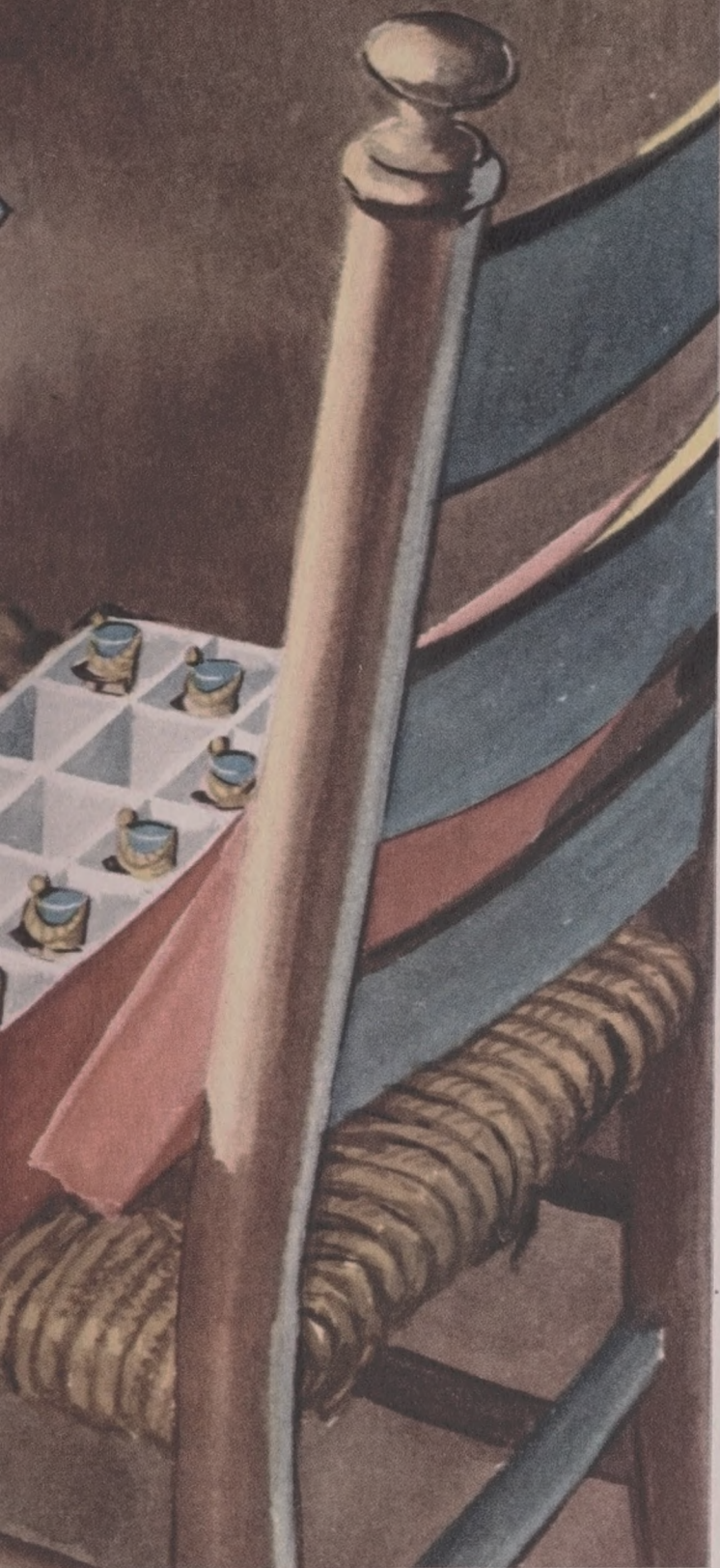


Once upon a time, there was a little boy who was given the most wonderful present for his birthday. This was a box of tin soldiers. There were no less than twenty-five soldiers in the box, and they were all brothers. They had been made, you see, from the same old tin spoon.

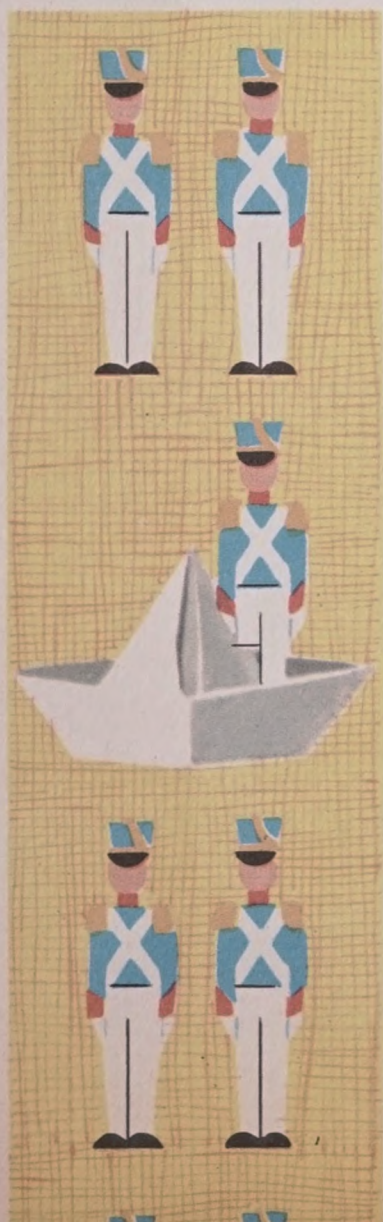
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“What a grand birthday present!” cried the boy, as he took the soldiers out of their box. “Why, they are all exactly the same—all except this one.” And he stared at the soldier who was not like any of his brothers—for he had only one leg. “But he really stands as firmly as the others,” thought the little boy, as he set them all out on the table.

Now, as well as all the tin soldiers, there was a pretty cardboard castle which had a lovely blue lake. Round this lake, which was really only a mirror, stood some tiny, very pretty trees.



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But in the eyes of the one-legged tin soldier, the prettiest thing of all was the little dancing girl. She was also cut out of cardboard, but her dress was of a most wonderful softness, and there was a golden star at her waist.

“How beautiful she is,” sighed the tin soldier. “She is just the wife for me.” Then he thought that perhaps she, too, had but one leg for he did not know that being a dancer she could balance on one toe for just as long as she wanted to. And he grew more fond of her than ever.





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In fact, the only two who did not move from their position were the dancing lady and the little tin soldier.

“Tin soldier! Tin soldier,” the saucy Jack-in-the-box said, “Why don’t you keep your eyes to yourself?”





In the morning, the boy found the tin soldier still standing stiff and straight, and he stood him up on the window ledge.

But suddenly, and all at once, the window flew open, and down fell the tin soldier, head first.

Down and down and down he dropped, and he was spinning round and round as he fell.

The boy rushed down to search for him, but the tin soldier with one leg did not cry out for help because he was in uniform.

“I must be very brave,” he told himself.

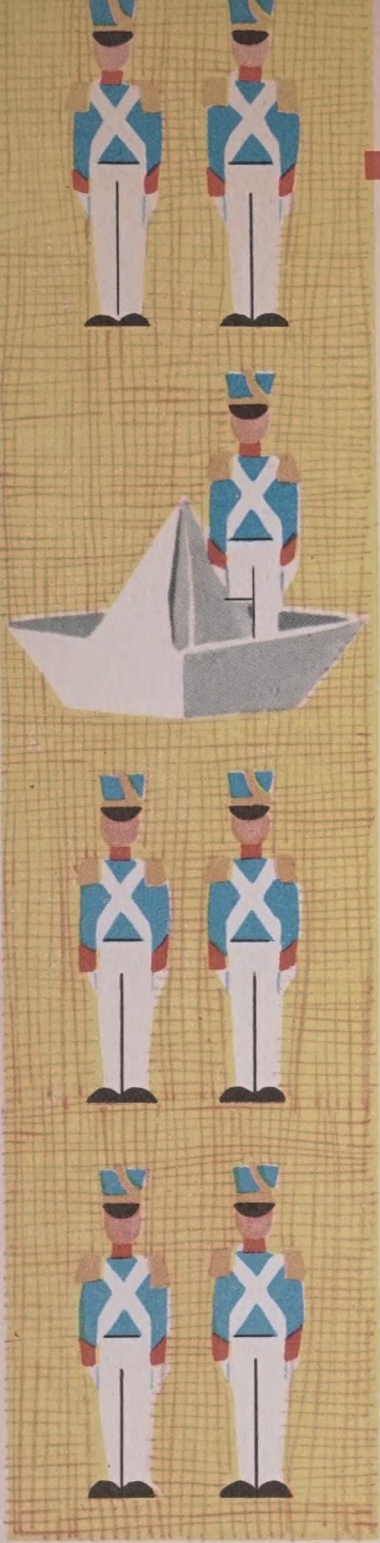



The boy searched for a long time because he did not want to lose one of his twenty-five tin soldiers. And when he found a long stick, he began to prod the grass with it.

The little tin soldier could have called out, "Here I am," but he did not. "Soldiers in uniform never cry out," he thought, and he stayed very still and quiet.

Then, at last, the boy went away. The soldier was all alone and still standing upright in the earth.





A watercolor illustration of a tiny soldier in a blue uniform with a red collar and cuffs, and a blue hat with a yellow band and a gold ball. He stands on a small patch of ground, looking up at a giant white daisy flower on the left and a large green leaf on the right. A single large raindrop is falling from the leaf towards him. The background is a plain, light color.

“How huge everything is!”  
he said, as soon as the boy  
left. “How tiny I must be.  
And here I am all by myself  
in this big world.”

But though he was afraid,  
he did not show it. Nor did  
he move. Then it began to  
rain and a big raindrop just  
like a big teardrop fell on his  
bright blue uniform.



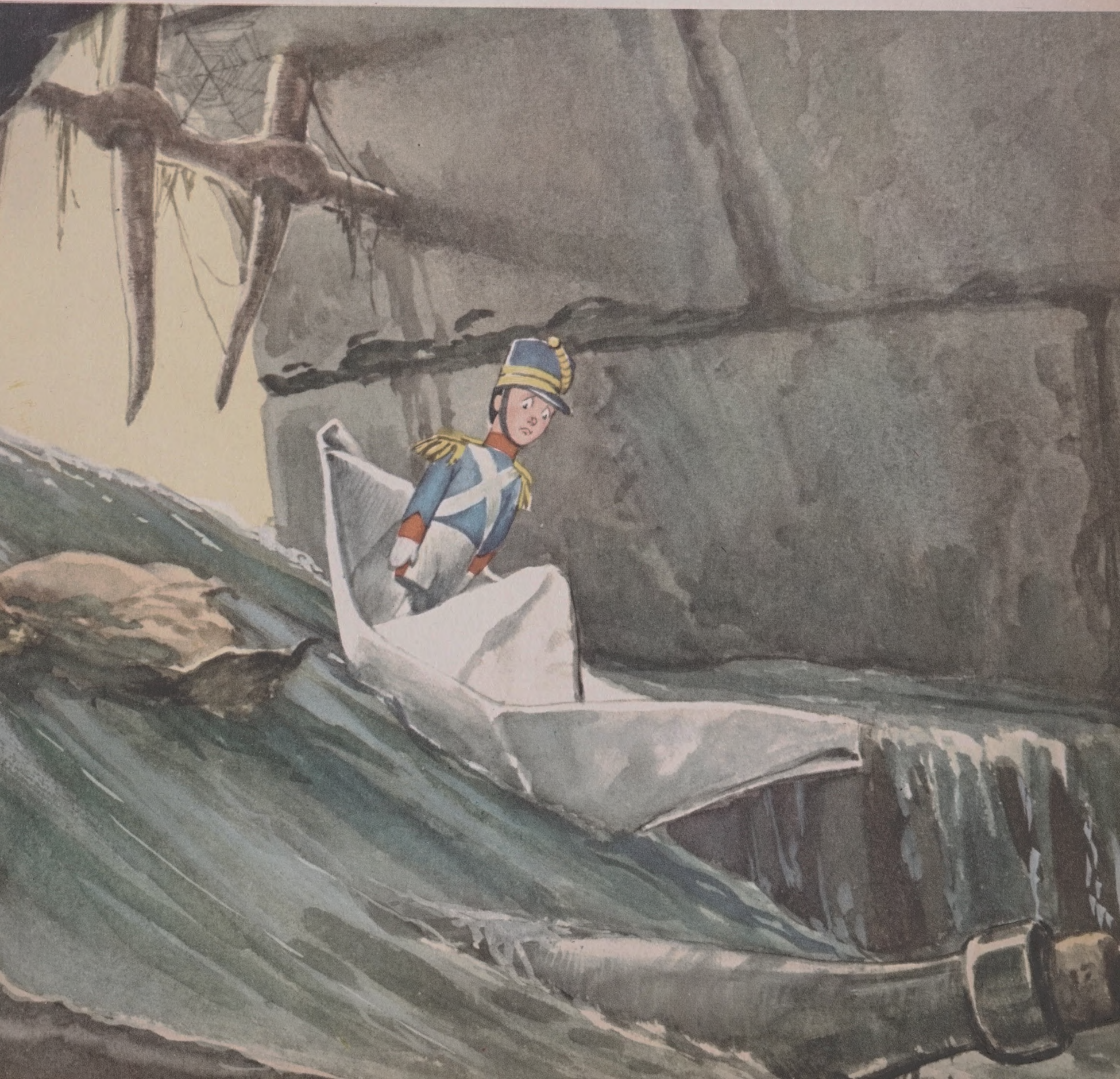
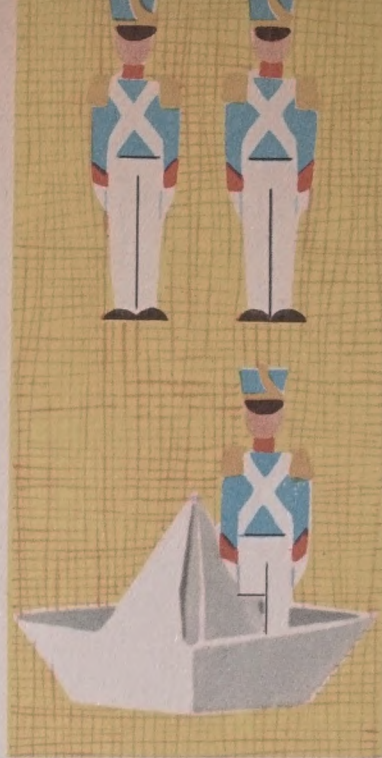
As soon as the rain was nearly over along came two ragged little boys. And they spotted the tin soldier at once.

“Look!” cried one. “There’s a tin soldier. Let’s give him a sail.”

And they made a paper boat and put the soldier in it.



The brave tin soldier did not blink an eye, but he wondered to himself just where he would get to as the boat sped along, and he wished, yes, he wished that the lovely dancing girl might be beside him. For then he felt he would mind nothing at all.





The boat tossed from side to side as it went hurrying along. It even started to go round and round in circles, until it shot into a long, dark tunnel of water.

This made the soldier feel quite seasick, but he still stood stiff and straight just the same. And he kept both eyes to the front like all good soldiers do.

Now this water tunnel ran the whole way under the road and it happened to be the home of two or three fierce water-rats.

As soon as they spied the little soldier in his paper boat they wanted to know about him.

“Stop there! Stop!” they ordered harshly.

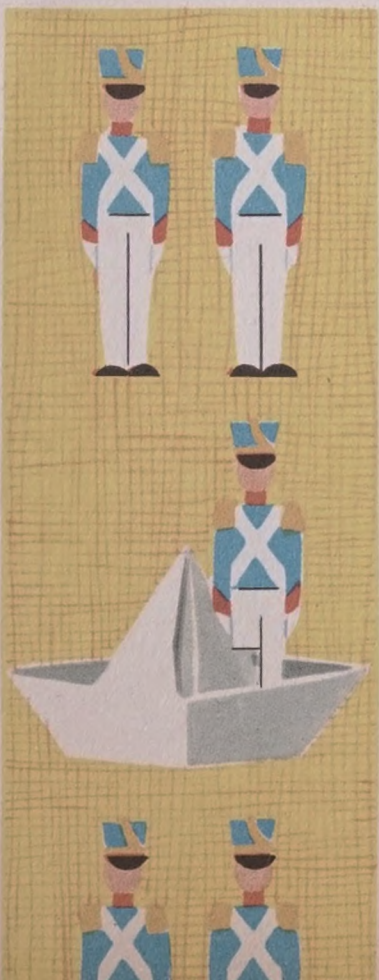




“We want to see your passport! Show us your passport!”  
the biggest of the water-rats demanded.

“But I have no passport,” said the tin soldier, and how glad  
he was when the current carried him away out of reach.





The dark water swept him along, faster and faster.

“My goodness me...!” the little tin soldier thought to himself.

“Whatever is going to happen to me next?” For now he saw ahead of him a patch of light, but the boat was rocking so much that he almost fell overboard.

There was a loud, rushing noise as the boat was whirled into the deep waters of the canal.

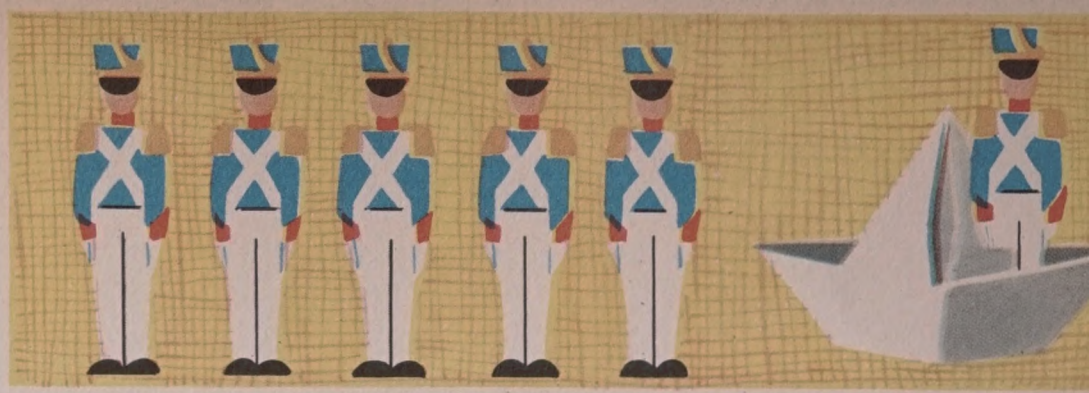
The brave soldier held himself as stiff and straight as he could, but the little paper boat was sinking down and down.

“Never again shall I see my lady of the castle,” he told himself, as all at once the boat fell apart, and he found himself face to face with an enormous fish.

“Nothing can save me now!” he cried, as he saw its great big eyes and its open mouth waiting to receive him.







Oh, but how black it was inside that fish. And how narrow it was! But never for a moment did the brave soldier try to make life more comfortable. He kept himself just as stiff as though he had been on guard duty.

The fish sprang this way and that. Then all of a sudden it did not jump any more.

“Aha,” cried the old fisherman, as he began to pull strongly on his line. “I’ve caught a fish of some size here. This is going to please the wife.”

So he quickly put an end to the fish, then put it in his basket, and carried it home.



“I’ll take it to the market right away,” said his wife as soon as she saw the fish.

But soon after she had sold it, along came a servant from one of the big houses.

“Here you are, ma’am,” said the fishmonger. “Here’s the very fish for you.”

“Yes, it looks fresh enough,” said the servant.

And, not bargaining at all, she put the fish in her basket, and went back home.

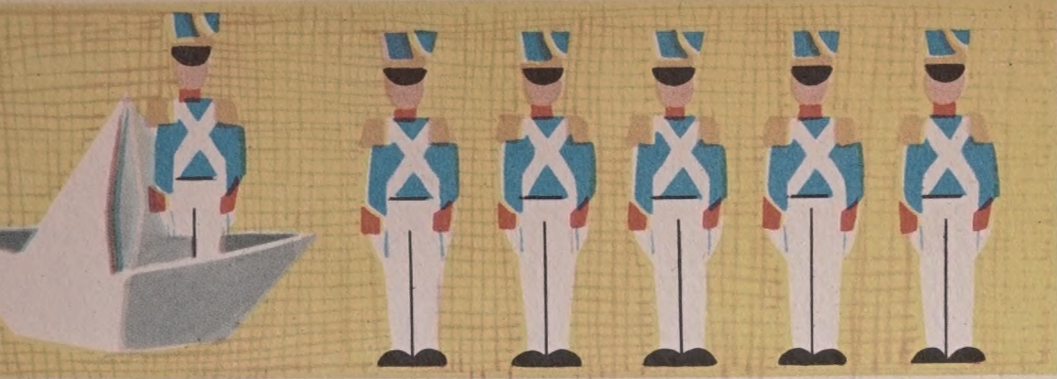


As soon as the servant began cutting up the fish she felt something hard inside.

“Come quickly,” she called to the little boy of the house. “Here is a very strange thing.” And she pulled out the one-legged tin soldier.

“It’s mine! It’s mine!” cried the little boy.





Then he began to call out with delight at his luck in finding his old tin soldier again.

And the little soldier could hardly believe in his good fortune. There he was back in the very same room he had left.

The boy put him on the shelf above the fire so as to dry quickly. From there, the soldier saw all his own friends and the castle. How his heart beat quickly when he saw the pretty dancing girl!

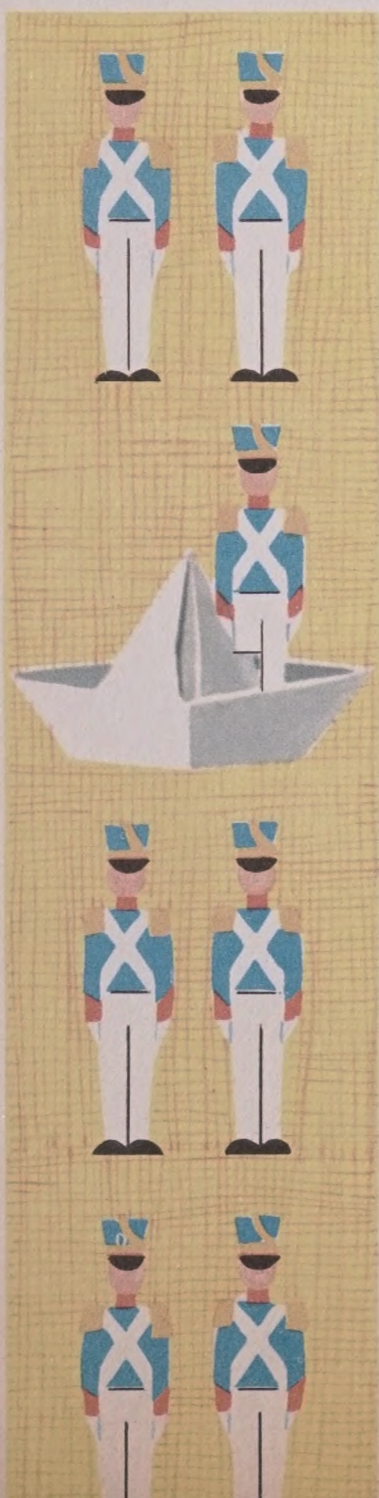
“She is just as lovely as I thought she was,” he told himself, as he gazed down at her. “Why, it is just as though I had not been away.”

And he fixed his eyes upon her.









Stiff and straight stood the soldier, and his heart beat all the faster when he saw that the dancing lady was looking at him.

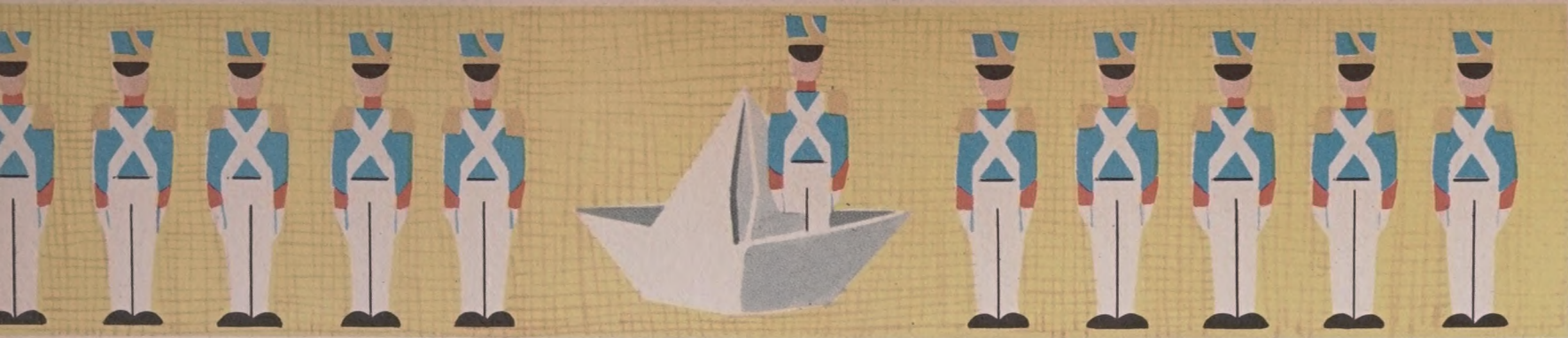
“She remembers. She remembers,” he told himself. How very proud he felt, in a humble kind of way, that he had been through so many adventures.

He thought of his twenty-four brothers in their box and he was glad he was not in the box with them.

He did not look at the other toys on the table, but he knew they were there and he wondered what they were thinking.

Surely it must have been one of the most horrid boys in the whole world who got the idea of throwing the tiny tin soldier into the fire. But that is exactly what happened. And at that very same moment, the wind puffed and puffed round the pretty dancing lady. It lifted her right off her feet. It tossed her straight into the golden flames, straight into the arms of the little tin soldier. And slowly, slowly, they began to melt together.





The little boy of the house wept bitterly the next morning.

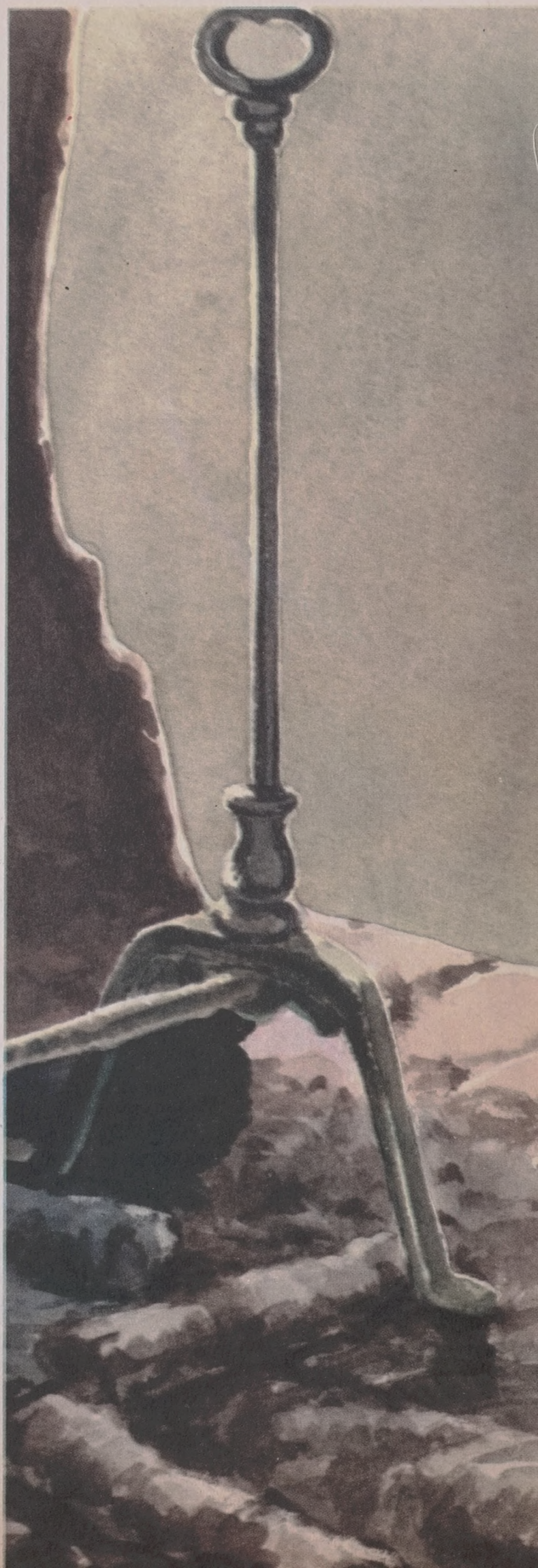
Where was his twenty-fifth tin soldier?

Where was his pretty dancing lady?

Then he looked at the empty grate, where last night the big fire had been.

Sadly, he picked up a round, hard lump of tin. It was all that was left of his tin soldier. And then he saw beside it, a golden star, and that was all that was left of his pretty dancing lady.

But now as he held them carefully in his hand, he saw that the lump of tin was shaped like a heart . . . a small, tin heart, a very brave heart, and true.







*When Hans Christian Andersen first wrote this story of the tin soldier, he called it "The Constant Tin Soldier." For "constant" is a word which means "staying the same." The tin soldier really did stay the same. No matter what happened to him, he was always brave and true and loving.*

*Perhaps Hans Andersen was thinking of all the real soldiers who came back from the wars and who, in spite of their wounds, remained cheerful and brave and true to themselves and their families.*

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