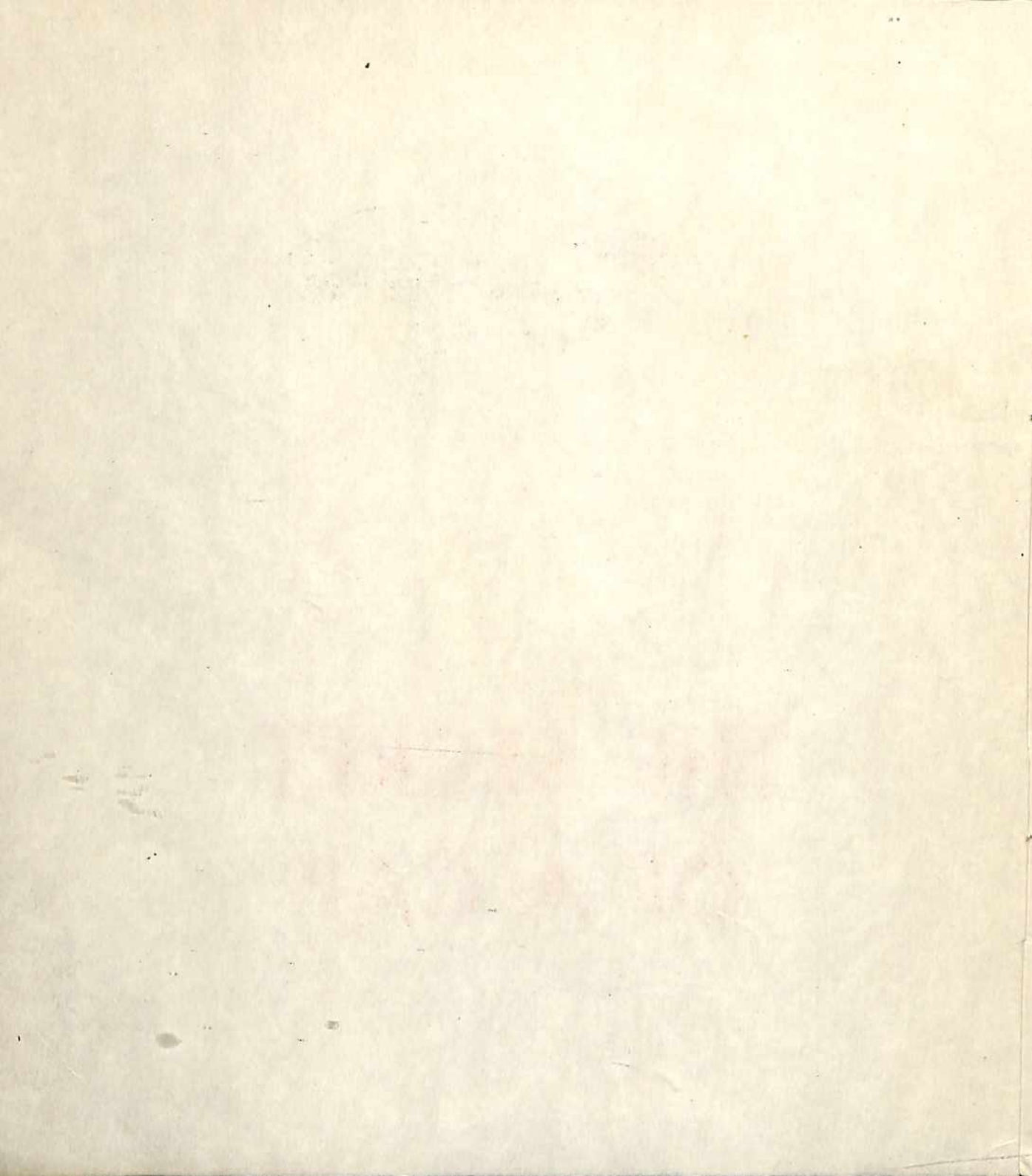




THE SECRET OF A CAP



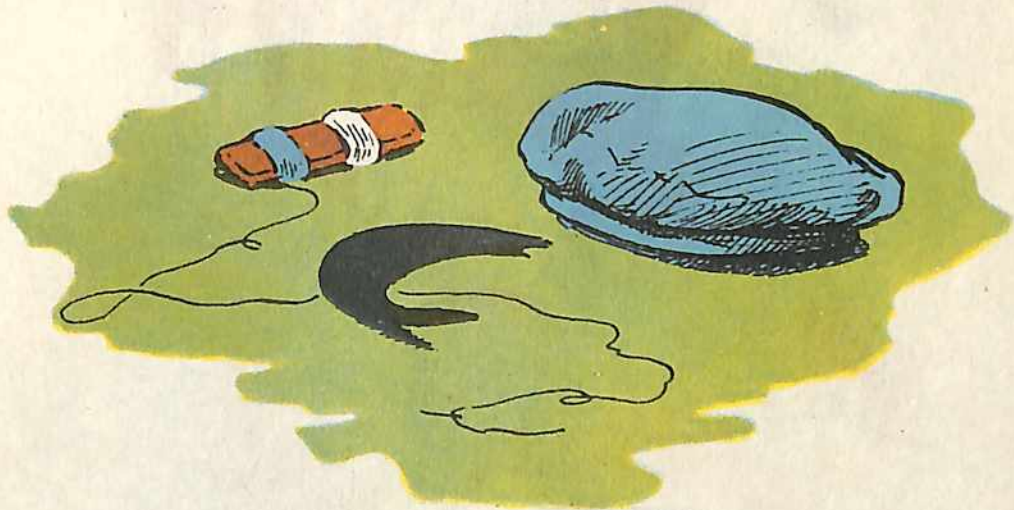




My brother was not an ordinary boy. He was already in the third grade at school and very clever. My mother gave him a new cap for a prize because he had so many good marks for his work.



The cap was a bright blue one with a black, shiny peak in front to shade the eyes. It made me happy just to look at it, even though I would never be lucky enough to wear it.



A very strange thing happened. Everyday, the shiny peak in front was torn and never in its right place. My mother sewed it on over and over again. She simply could not understand why it was always torn.



One day she asked me to go with my brother to see if I could find out what happened to his cap. I watched, but as soon as I went near my brother, he chased me away.



At last I managed to follow him. Together with seven or eight of his friends in the third grade, my brother went outside the school yard and then all the boys tore the peaks off their caps.

They began to play a game. With their caps on without the peaks, they ran about yelling out to each other "Come alongside!" or "Let go the anchor!" My brother had a pair of spy glasses in his hand, just made from two pieces of wood. He pretended to look through them and searched everywhere.





Before I had time to hide myself, my brother caught sight of me. Suddenly someone shouted close behind me and, although I put up a good fight, I was caught and held tightly by some of the boys.



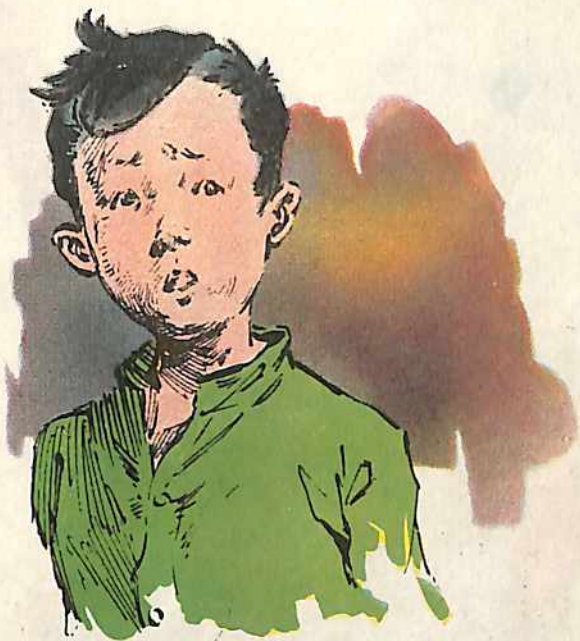
The two boys who caught me called themselves sailors. They saluted my brother and reported to him. They said they had caught an enemy spy. Worse than that, without even looking at me, my brother ordered that I ought to be shot right away!



Angrily I shouted to him, "I'm not a spy, I'm your brother!" Instead of listening to me he just shouted back, "You're not my brother. You're a spy!"

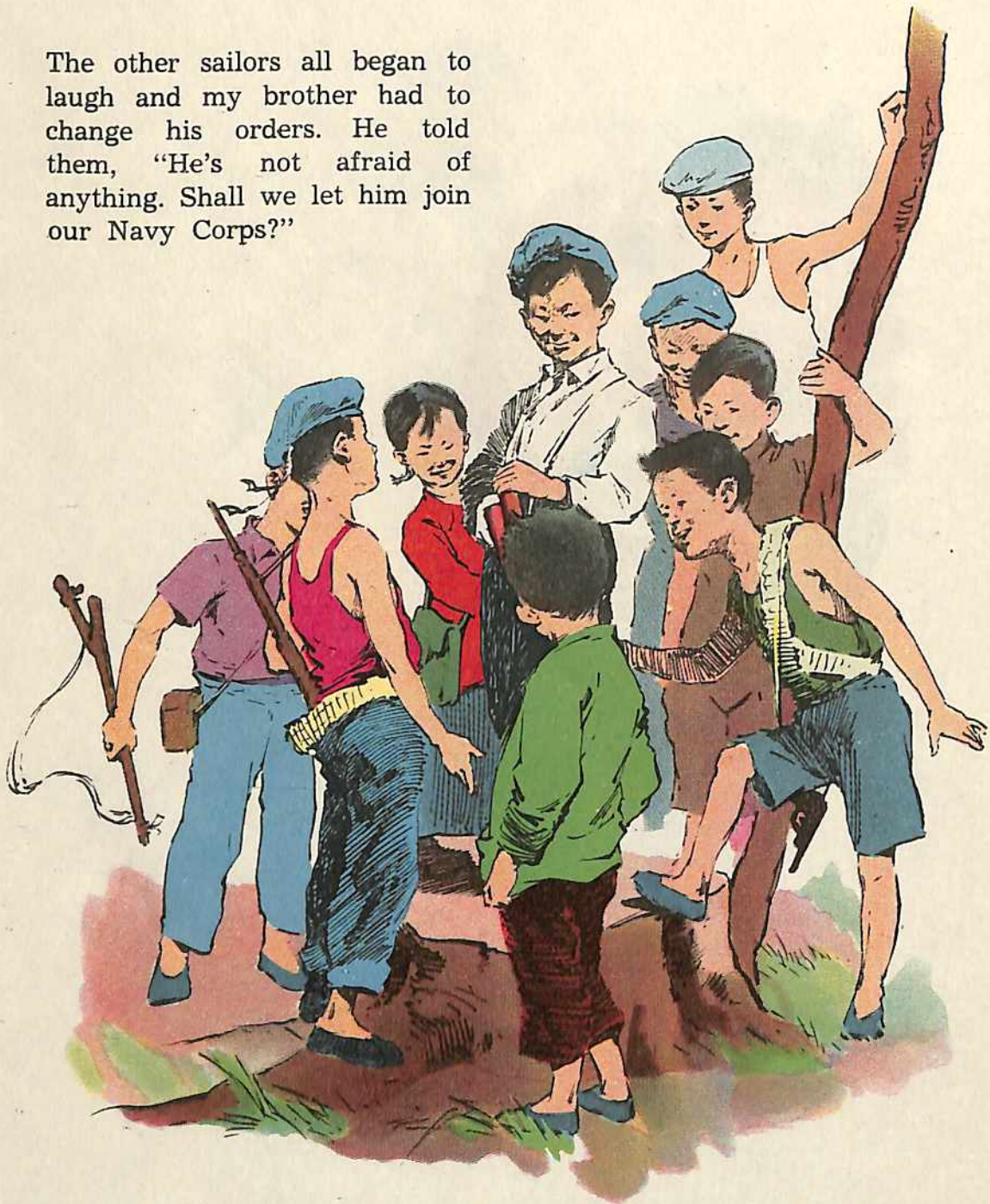


I simply couldn't bear such a disgrace. I began to kick and yell and call out at the top of my voice. The two sailors found me very difficult to hold, so to comfort me they whispered, "We won't hurt you. It's only a game we're playing."



I said to them, "Hurt or not hurt, I'm not going to let you kill me. When I grow up I'm going to enlist in the Liberation Army, so it's not right for you to call me a spy!"

The other sailors all began to laugh and my brother had to change his orders. He told them, "He's not afraid of anything. Shall we let him join our Navy Corps?"

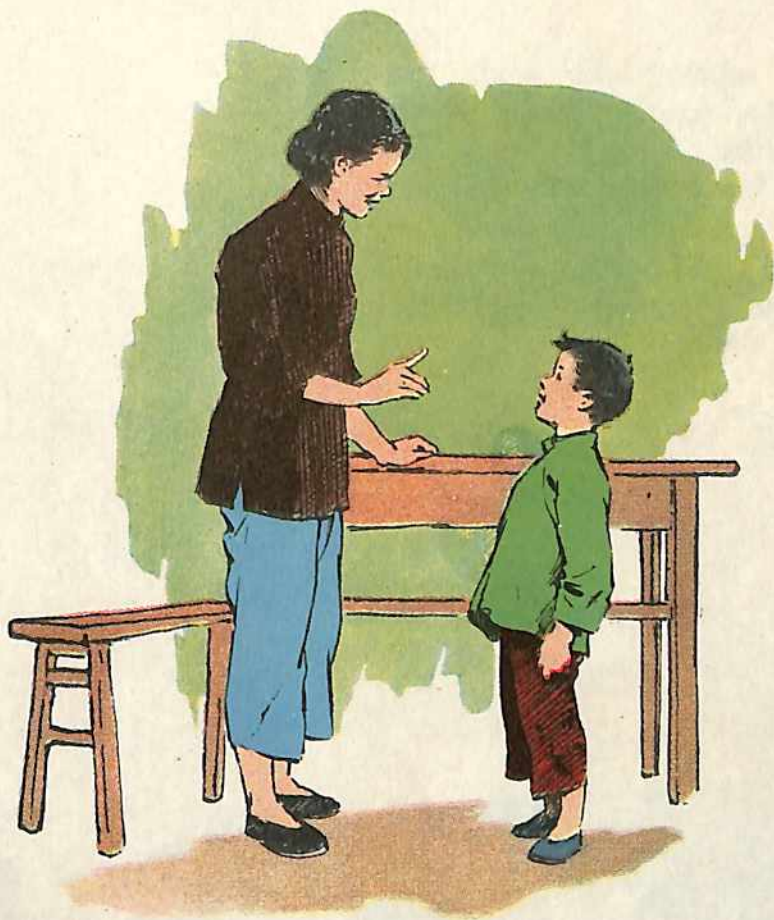




That evening when I went home and saw my mother, I told her among other things a great deal about the cabin and deck. I told her what a fleet was too. Sailors, I let her know, are the most courageous men in the world.

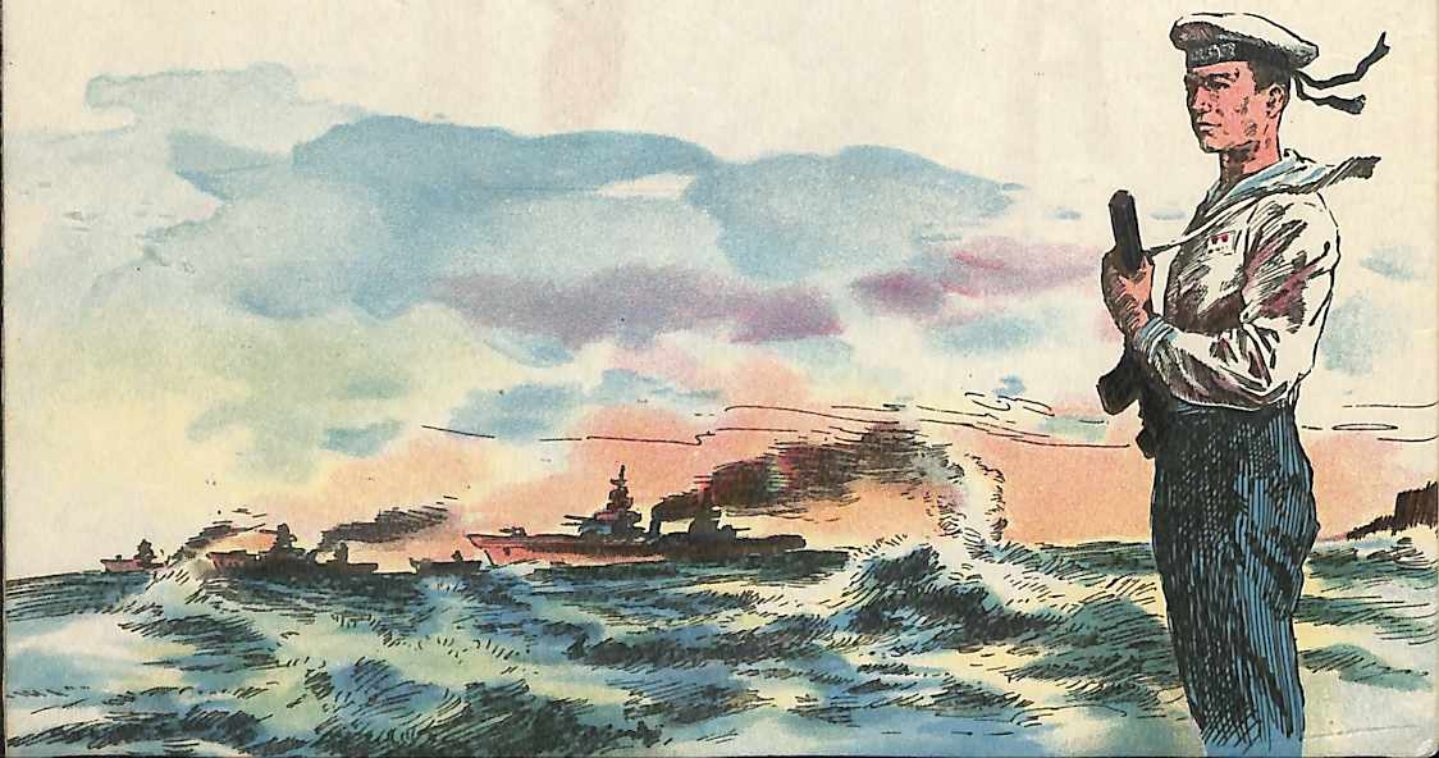


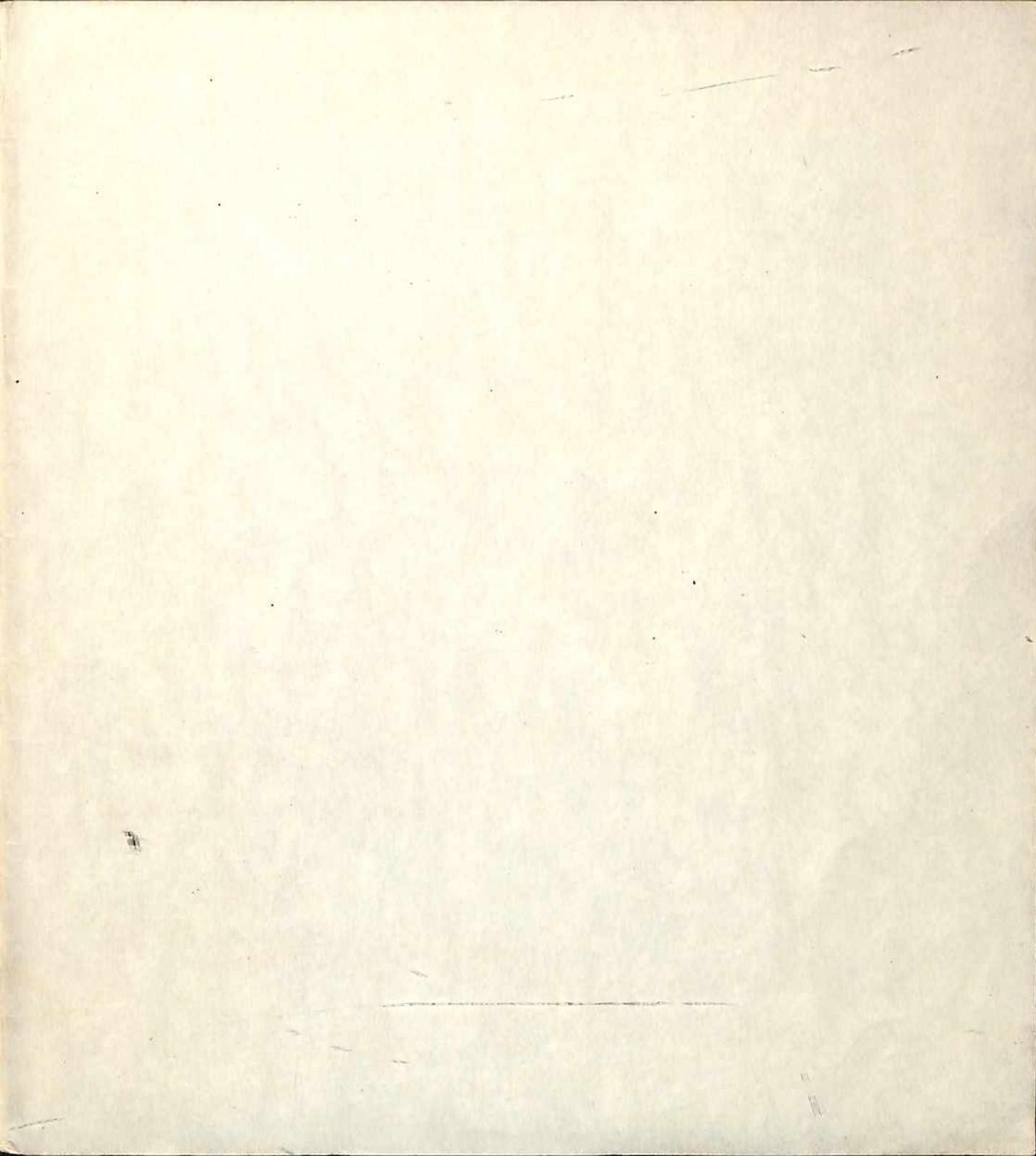
After a while my mother asked me what happened to the cap. I had to tell her it was a secret that she shouldn't really ask about. Mother stroked my hair and smiled, saying, "All right then my little sailor!"



I was surprised that my mother knew everything. "Well, that's a secret too," she told me. Then she asked if I would give a little message to the sailors from her.

“Real sailors,” she said, “are brave and strong-willed men who love their country dearly and love to work too. What happens to the cap doesn’t really matter. The important thing is to learn to be like sailors, brave and true!”





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