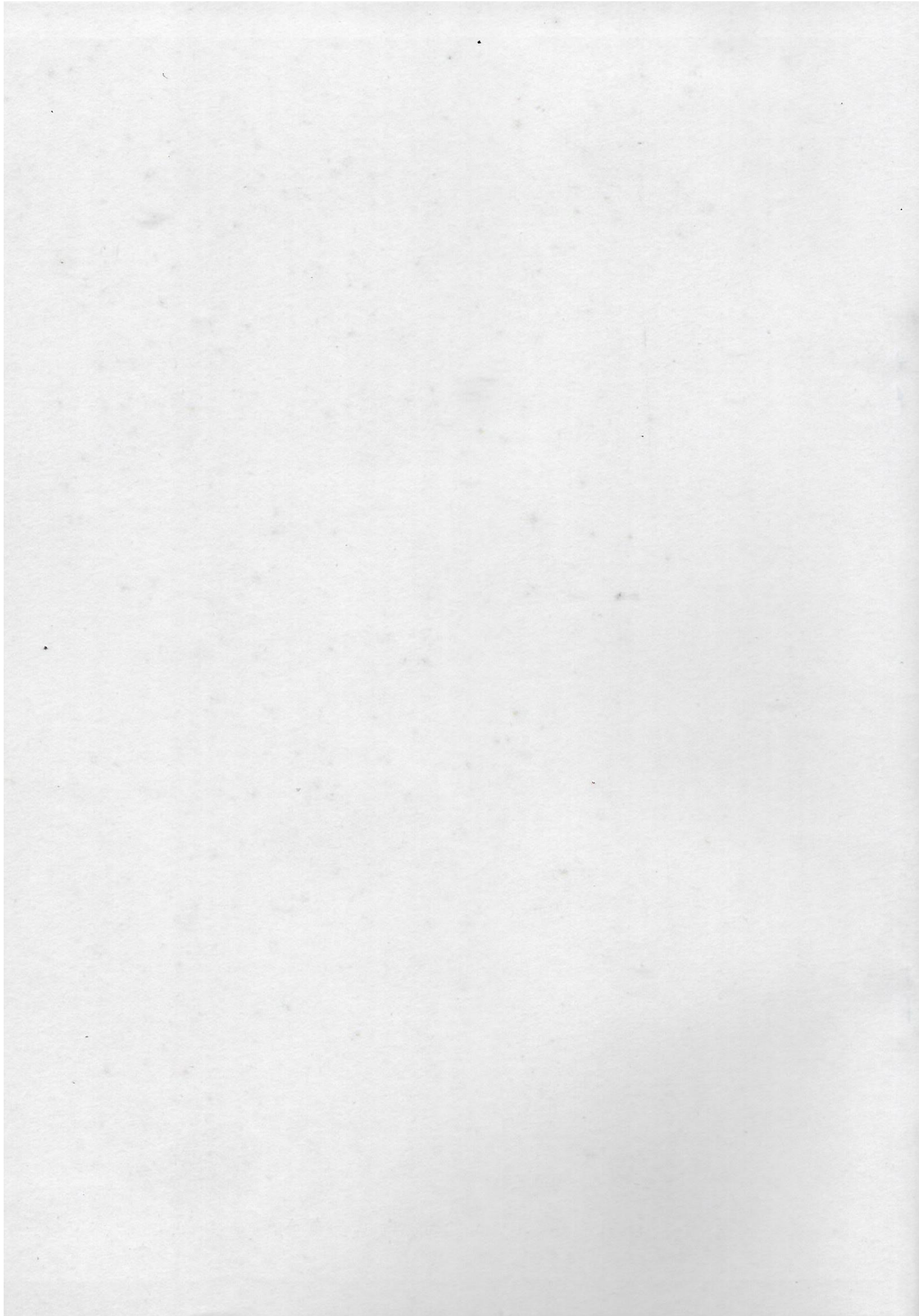


VALENTIN KATAYEV

RAINBOW-FLOWER





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Kanol Publishing House

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THERE WAS ONCE A GIRL NAMED ZHENYA. ONE DAY HER MOTHER SENT HER TO THE BAKERY FOR SOME BREAD-RINGS. ZHENYA BOUGHT SEVEN BREAD-RINGS: TWO with caraway- seeds for her father, two with poppy-seeds for her mother, two with sugar coating for herself, and a little pink one for her brother Pavlik. The bread-rings were on a string, just like beads. Zhenya started back for home with the string of bread-rings. She walked along, looking up and down, reading the signs on the way, just passing the time of day. Meanwhile, a strange dog came up to her from behind and began eating the bread-rings. First it ate the ones for her father with caraway-seeds, then the ones for her mother with poppy-seeds, then her own two that had sugar coating on them.

Zhenya suddenly felt that the string of bread-rings was very light. She turned around, but it was too late. There was nothing but the string left in her hand, and the dog was just swallowing the last piece of Pavlik's little pink bread-ring and licking its chops.

"Oh, you horrid dog!" Zhenya cried and ran after it. She ran and ran, but couldn't catch it.

Finally, she got lost. When she stopped, she saw that she was in a strange place. There were no big houses there, just very little ones. Zhenya began to cry.

Suddenly, an old woman appeared.

"Why are you crying, little girl?" she asked. And so Zhenya told the old woman what had happened.

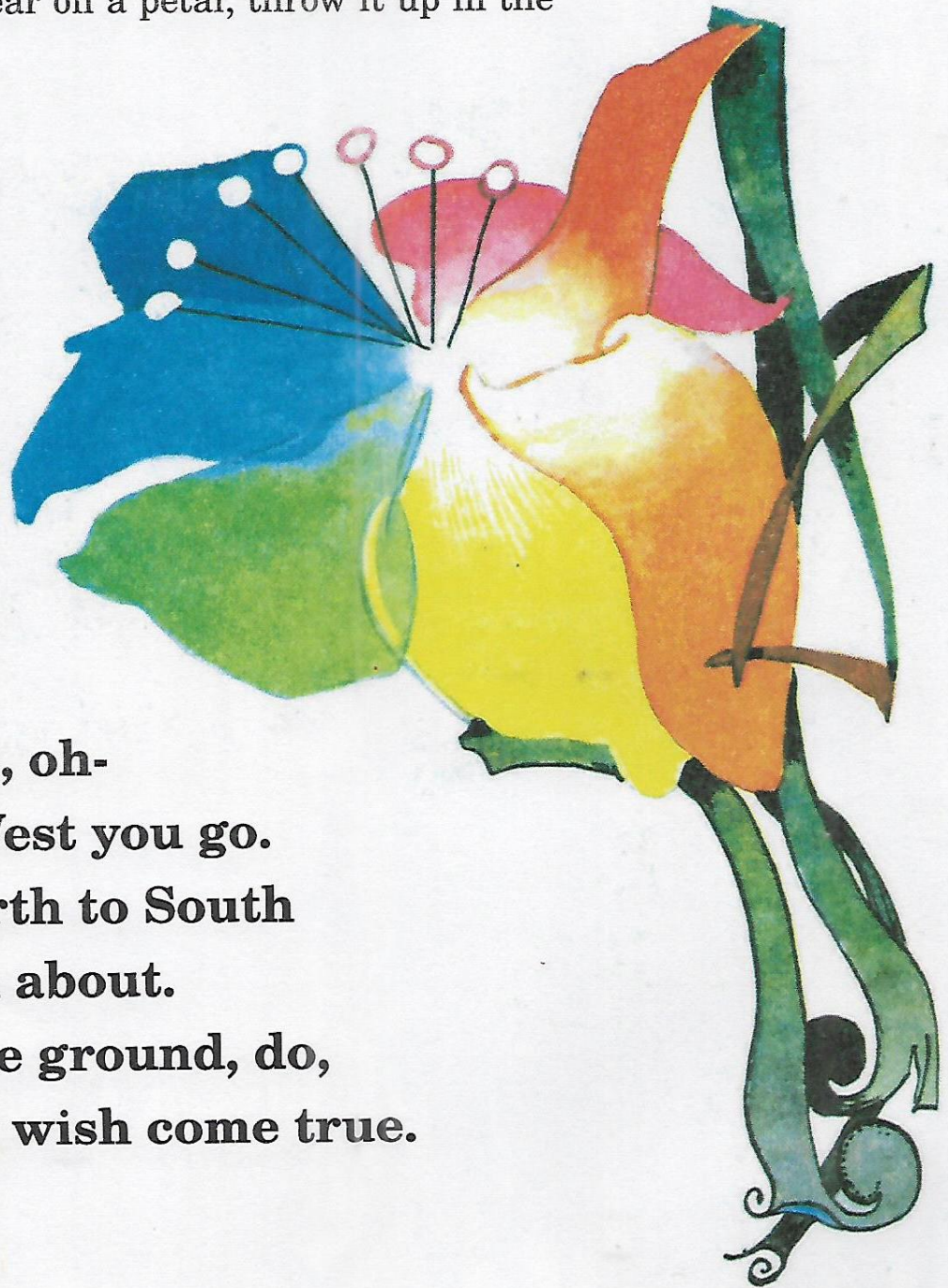
The old woman was sorry for Zhenya. She led her to her little garden and said: "Don't cry. I will help you. I don't have any bread-rings, and I don't have any money either, but there is a very special flower growing in my garden. It is a rainbow-flower and it can do anything you ask it to. I can see that you are a good girl, even though you are absent-minded. I will give you the rainbow-flower and it will help you."

With these words the old woman picked a very pretty flower from one of the flower-beds. It looked like a daisy. It had seven thin petals and each one was of a different colour. One was yellow, one red, one blue, one green, one orange, one violet, and one light-blue.





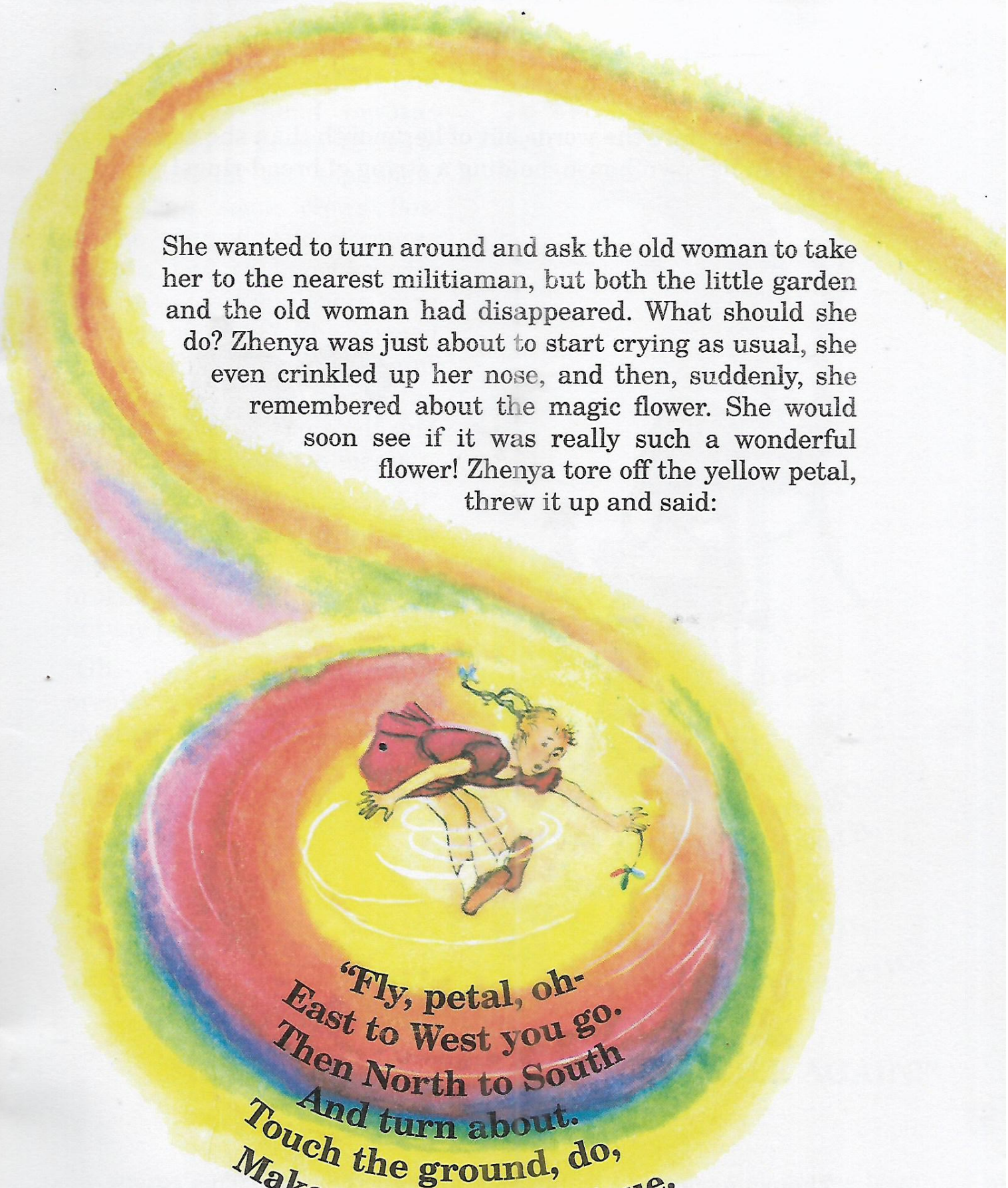
"This is not an ordinary flower," the old woman said. "It can make any wish come true. All you have to do is tear off a petal, throw it up in the air and say:




**Fly, petal, oh-
East to West you go.
Then North to South
And turn about.
Touch the ground, do,
Make my wish come true.**

Then you say what your wish is. And it will come true."

Zhenya thanked the old woman. She went out of the garden gate and suddenly remembered that she was lost and didn't know how to get home.



She wanted to turn around and ask the old woman to take her to the nearest militiaman, but both the little garden and the old woman had disappeared. What should she do? Zhenya was just about to start crying as usual, she even crinkled up her nose, and then, suddenly, she remembered about the magic flower. She would soon see if it was really such a wonderful flower! Zhenya tore off the yellow petal, threw it up and said:



**“Fly, petal, oh-
East to West you go.
Then North to South
And turn about.
Touch the ground, do,
Make my wish come true.**

**MAKE ME BACK HOME AGAIN
WITH THE BREAD-RINGS!”**

No sooner were the words out of her mouth than she was back in her own house, holding a string of bread-rings!



Zhenya gave them to her mother and thought: "This is really a wonderful flower. I'll put it in the prettiest vase we have!"

Zhenya was only a little girl, so she climbed up on a chair and stretched her hand towards her mother's favourite vase that stood on the top shelf. Just then some crows flew by the window. And of course Zhenya had to know exactly how many of them there were - seven or eight? She opened her mouth and began to count on her fingers when 'bang!' the vase toppled off the shelf and crashed into a million pieces.

"My goodness, what a child!" her mother called angrily from the kitchen. "What have you broken this time? I hope it's not my favourite vase!"

"Oh, no, Mommy! I didn't break anything!" Zhenya shouted. She quickly tore off the red petal, threw it up and whispered:



*"Fly, petal, oh-
East to West you go.
Then North to South
And turn about.
Touch the ground, do,
Make my wish come true."*

MAKE MOMMY'S BEST VASE WHOLE AGAIN!"

No sooner were the words out of her mouth than the tiny pieces began moving towards each other and fitting themselves together.

Her mother came in from the kitchen - and vase sitting prettily on the top shelf as always! her finger at her, just in case, you know, and the yard.



there was her favourite Zhenya's mother shook sent her out to play in

When Zhenya went outside she saw the boys in the yard were playing - they were Arctic explorers. They were sitting on a pile of old boards and had a stick stuck into the sand nearby.



"Can I play, too?" She asked.

"Ha! Of course not. Can't you see, this is the North Pole! We don't take girls along to the North Pole."

"That's not the North Pole, it's only a pile of boards."

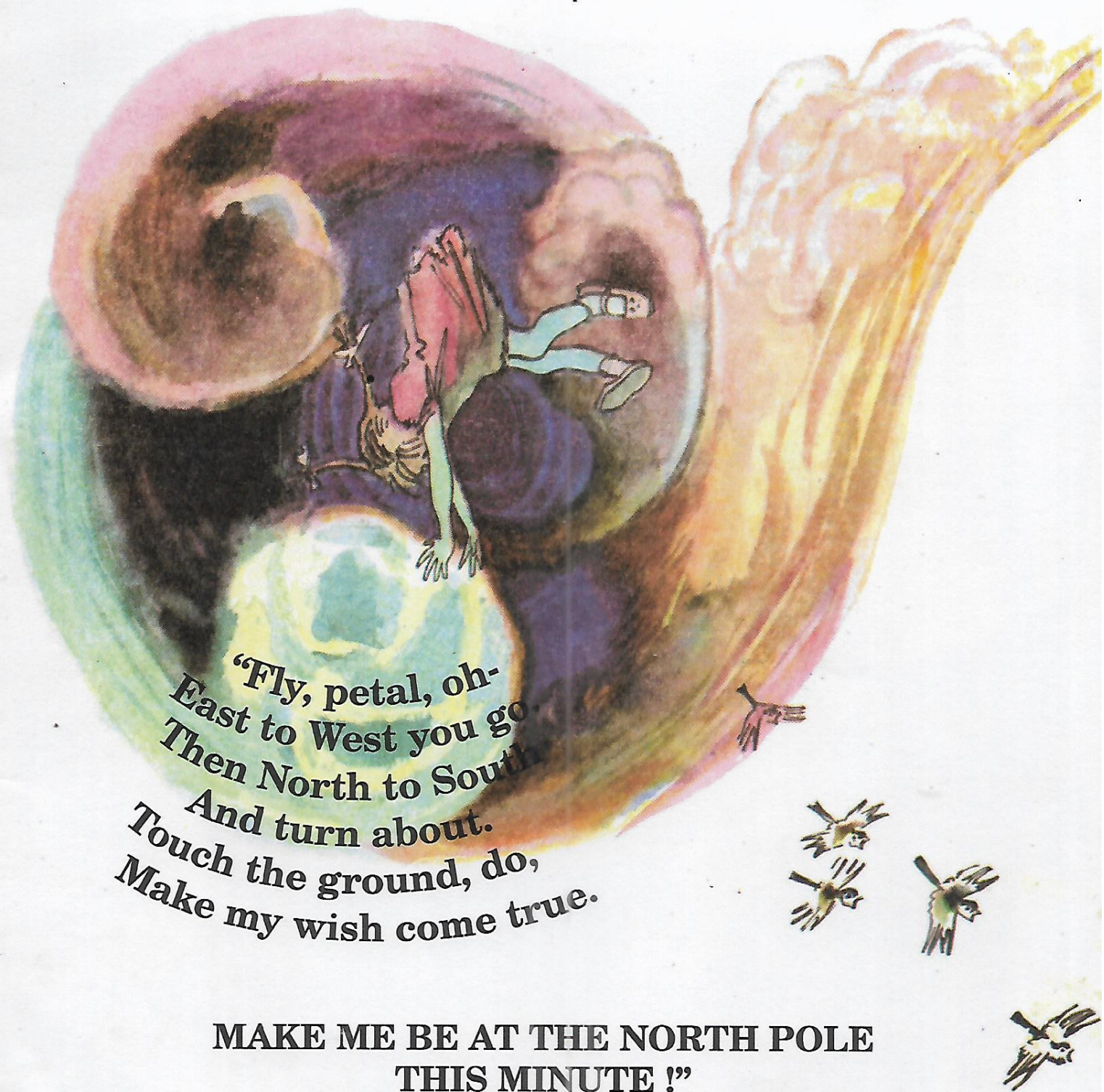
"It's not boards, it's ice floes. Go away and don't bother us! Can't you see the ice is beginning to crack?"

"Then you won't let me play?"

"No. Go away!"

"Think I care? I can get to the North Pole without any of you. Only it won't be this awful pile of boards, it'll be the real North Pole. So there!" Zhenya went off into a corner of the yard, took the rainbow-flower from her pocket, tore off the blue petal, threw it up and said:





“Fly, petal, oh-
East to West you go,
Then North to South
And turn about.
Touch the ground, do,
Make my wish come true.

MAKE ME BE AT THE NORTH POLE THIS MINUTE !”

No sooner were the words out of her mouth than suddenly a terrible blizzard was howling all around, the sun disappeared, everything became black, and the earth spun around under her feet like a top.

Zhenya found herself all alone at the North Pole, in her little summer dress and nothing on her bare feet but sandals: And the frost was just terrible!



"Oh, I
freezing
but her tears
and hung from
Meanwhile, seven
appeared from behind
her. One was more horr
jumpy, the second was mea
was lean, the fifth had a cap, t
was th



ommy, I'm
She wailed,
arned into icicles
he tip of her nose.
lar bears had suddenly
ice hill and started towards
le than the next: the first was
the third was grumpy, the fourth
sixth liked to scrap, and the seventh
biggest of all.

Zhenya was scared to death. With frozen fingers she tore off the green petal, threw it up and shouted at the top of her voice:

**“Fly, petal, oh-
East to West you go.
Then North to South
And turn about.
Touch the ground, do,
Make my wish come true.**



MAKE ME BE BACK IN OUR YARD RIGHT NOW !



No sooner were the words out of her mouth than she was back in the yard. And the boys were making fun of her.

"Where's your North Pole, smarty?"

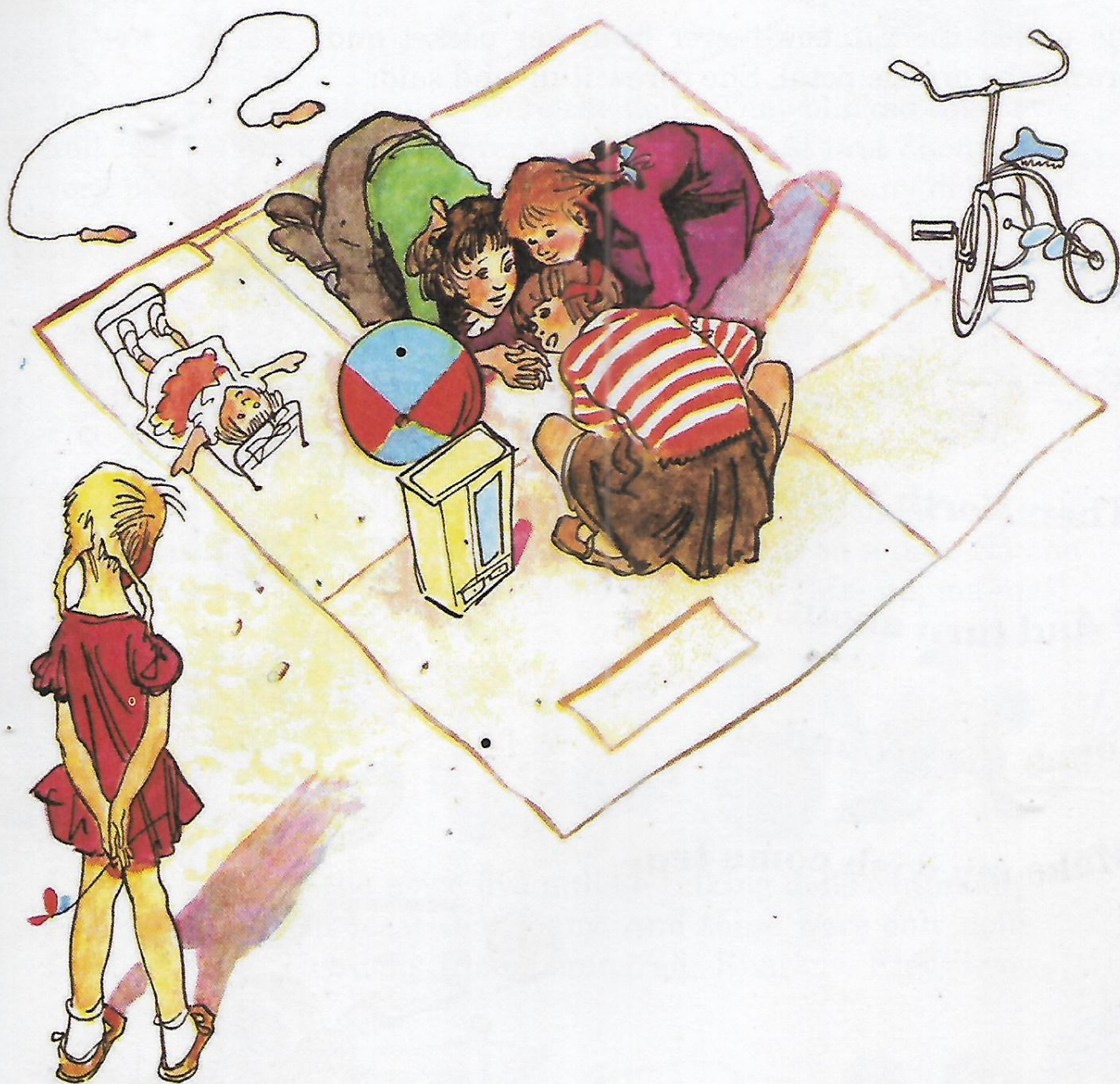
"I was just there."

"Well, we didn't see you there. Prove it!"

"See, I still have an icicle here."

"That's no icicle, it's a piece of fuzz, silly!"

Zhenya decided that the boys were horrid and she'd never play with them again. So she went into the next yard to play with the girls.



There she saw that the girls had a lot of toys. One had a doll carriage, one had a ball, one had a skipping-rope, one had a tricycle, and one had a big talking doll with a doll's hat on and a pair of doll's galoshes. Zhenya was terribly unhappy. Her eyes even turned as green as a cat's from envy.

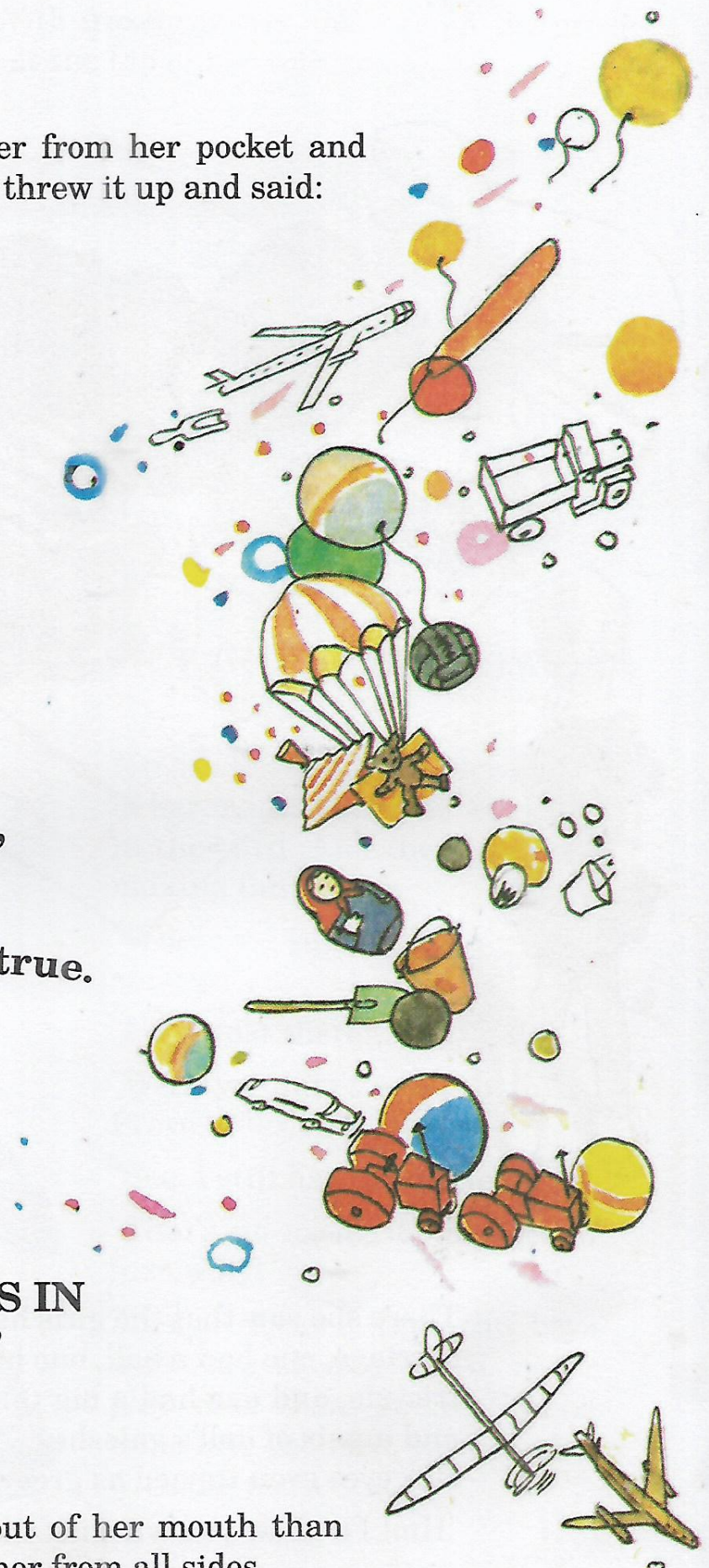
"Hm! I'll show you who has the best toys!" She thought.

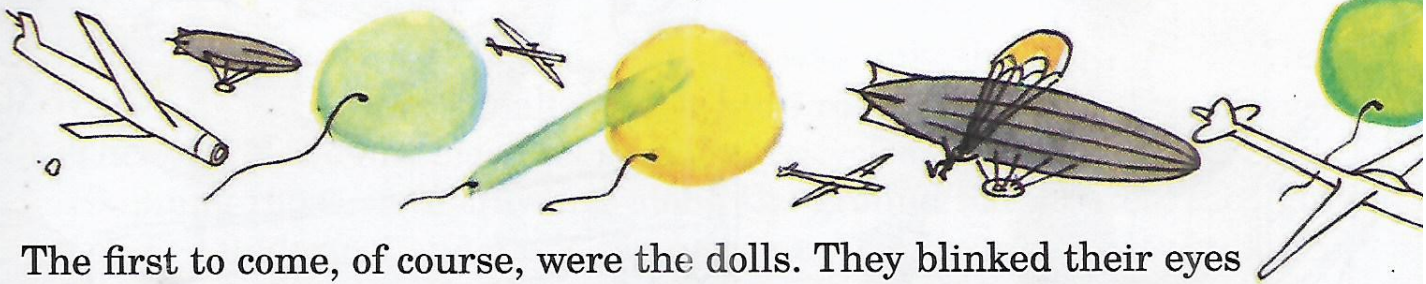
She pulled the rainbow-flower from her pocket and tore off the orange petal. She threw it up and said:

*“Fly, petal, oh-
East to West you go.
Then North to South
And turn about.
Touch the ground, do,
Make my wish come true.*

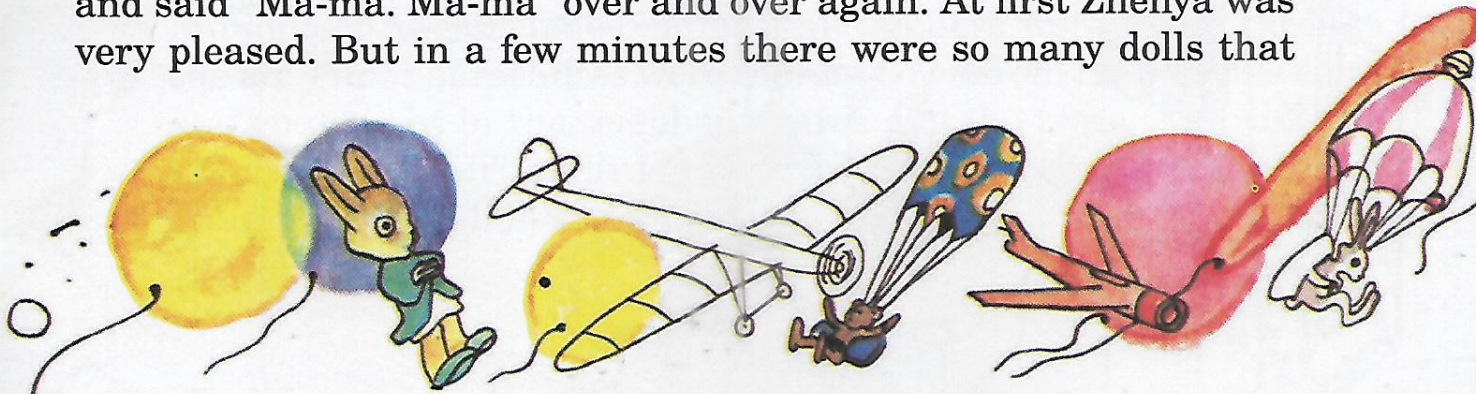
**MAKE ALL THE TOYS IN
THE WORLD MINE !”**

No sooner were the words out of her mouth than toys began rushing towards her from all sides.

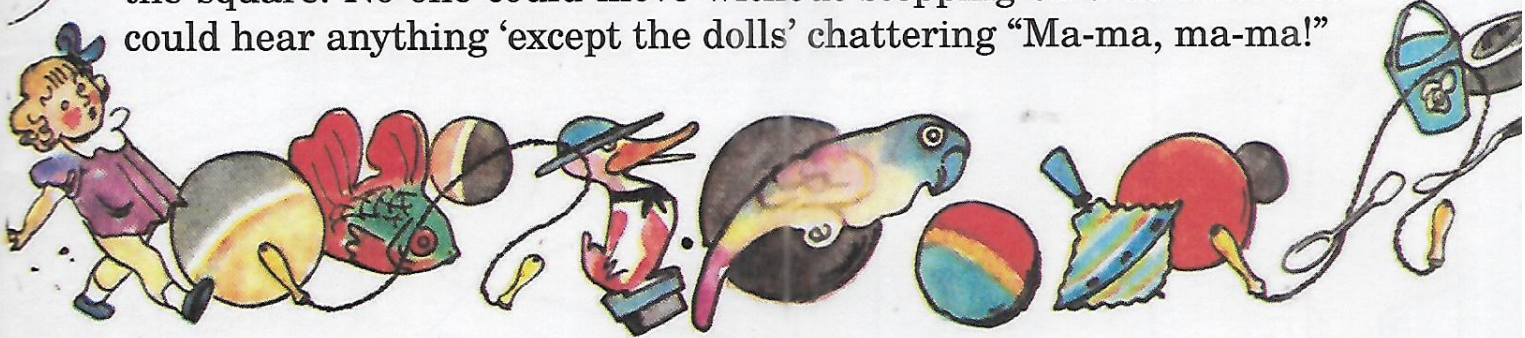




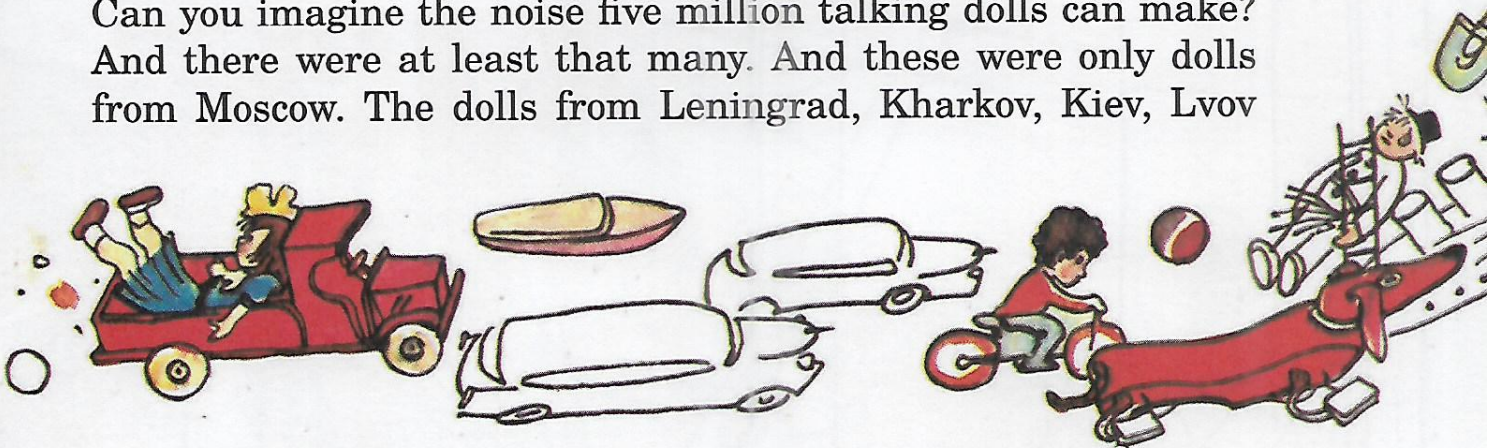
The first to come, of course, were the dolls. They blinked their eyes and said "Ma-ma. Ma-ma" over and over again. At first Zhenya was very pleased. But in a few minutes there were so many dolls that



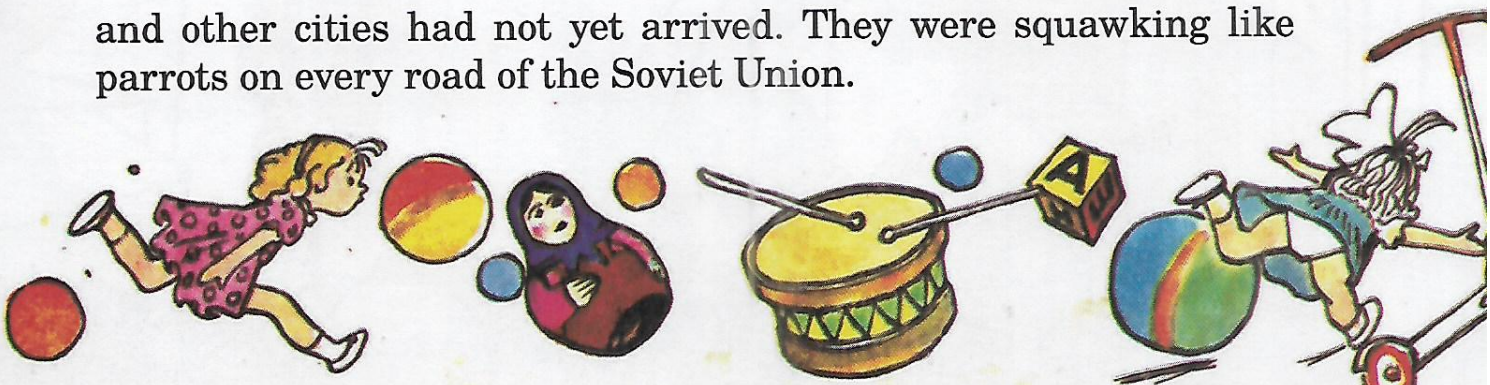
they filled up the yard, their little street, two big avenues and half the square. No one could move without stepping on a doll. No one could hear anything 'except the dolls' chattering "Ma-ma, ma-ma!"



Can you imagine the noise five million talking dolls can make? And there were at least that many. And these were only dolls from Moscow. The dolls from Leningrad, Kharkov, Kiev, Lvov



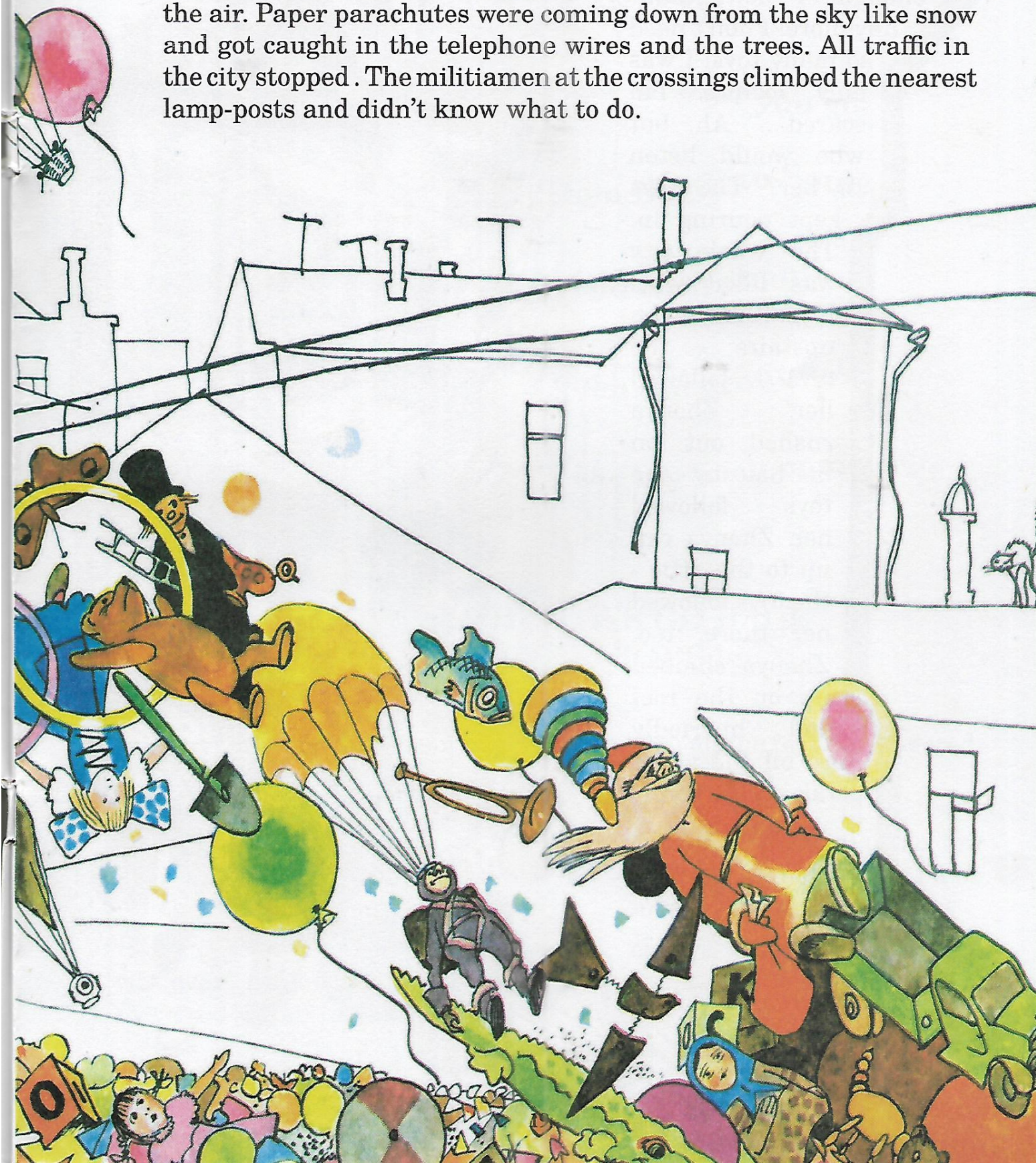
and other cities had not yet arrived. They were squawking like parrots on every road of the Soviet Union.





Zhenya was getting worried. But this was only the beginning. After the dolls came rubber balls which were rolling along by themselves. Then came the marbles and scooters, tricycles, toy tractors and cars. Skipping-ropes were crawling along the ground like snakes, they got tangled underfoot and made the nervous dolls squeak louder still.

Millions of toy airplanes, blimps, and gliders were flying through the air. Paper parachutes were coming down from the sky like snow and got caught in the telephone wires and the trees. All traffic in the city stopped. The militiamen at the crossings climbed the nearest lamp-posts and didn't know what to do.



"Stop, stop!" Zhenya screamed. "That's enough! I don't want any more! I don't need so many toys! I was only fooling. I'm scared...." Ah, but who would listen to her? The toys kept pouring in. The whole city was filled with toys. Zhenya ran upstairs - the toys followed her. Zhenya rushed out on her balcony - the toys followed her. Zhenya ran up to the attic - the toys followed her there, too. Zhenya climbed up on the roof and hurriedly tore off the violet petal. She threw it up and quickly said:





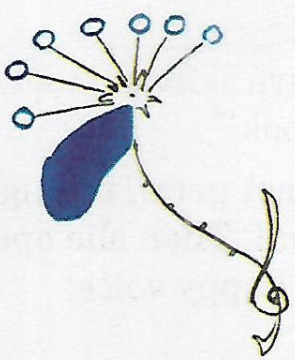
*"Fly, petal, oh-
East to West you go.
Then North to South
And turn about.
Touch the ground, do,
Make my wish come true.*

**MAKE ALL THE TOYS GO BACK
TO THE TOY SHOPS !**

No sooner were the words out of her mouth than all the toys disappeared.

Then Zhenya looked at the rainbow-flower and saw that there was only one petal left.

"Oh dear! " She said.
"I've used up six petals



already and I've had no fun from any of them. Well, I'll be smarter next time."

Zhenya walked along the street, thinking.

“What else should I wish for? I know, I’ll wish for a pound of chocolate candy. No, I think I’d rather have a pound of peppermints. No, I’ll have half a pound of chocolates, half a pound of peppermints, a package of halvah, a bag of nuts, and I might as well get a pink bread-ring for Pavlik. But what’s the use? What if I get all that candy? I’ll eat it up and have nothing left. No, I better wish for a tricycle. No, that’s no good. I’ll have a couple of rides on it and then the boys will probably take it away. And they’ll hit me if I don’t give them rides! I think I’ll buy myself a ticket to the movies or to the circus. That’s a lot of fun. But maybe I’d better ask for a new pair of sandals? That’s also nice. But then, what’s the use of a new pair of sandals? I can ask for something much better than that. The main thing is not to be in a hurry.”

This was what Zhenya was thinking about as she walked along. Suddenly she saw a very nice boy sitting quietly on a bench. He had big blue eyes that looked merry. The boy was really nice, you could see he wasn’t a bully. Zhenya decided to make friends with him. She came up close, so close that she could see her own face mirrored in his eyes: there were her braids touching her shoulders.

“Hello. What’s your name?” she asked.

“Vitya. What’s your name?”

“Zhenya. Let’s play tag.”

“I can’t. I’m lame.”

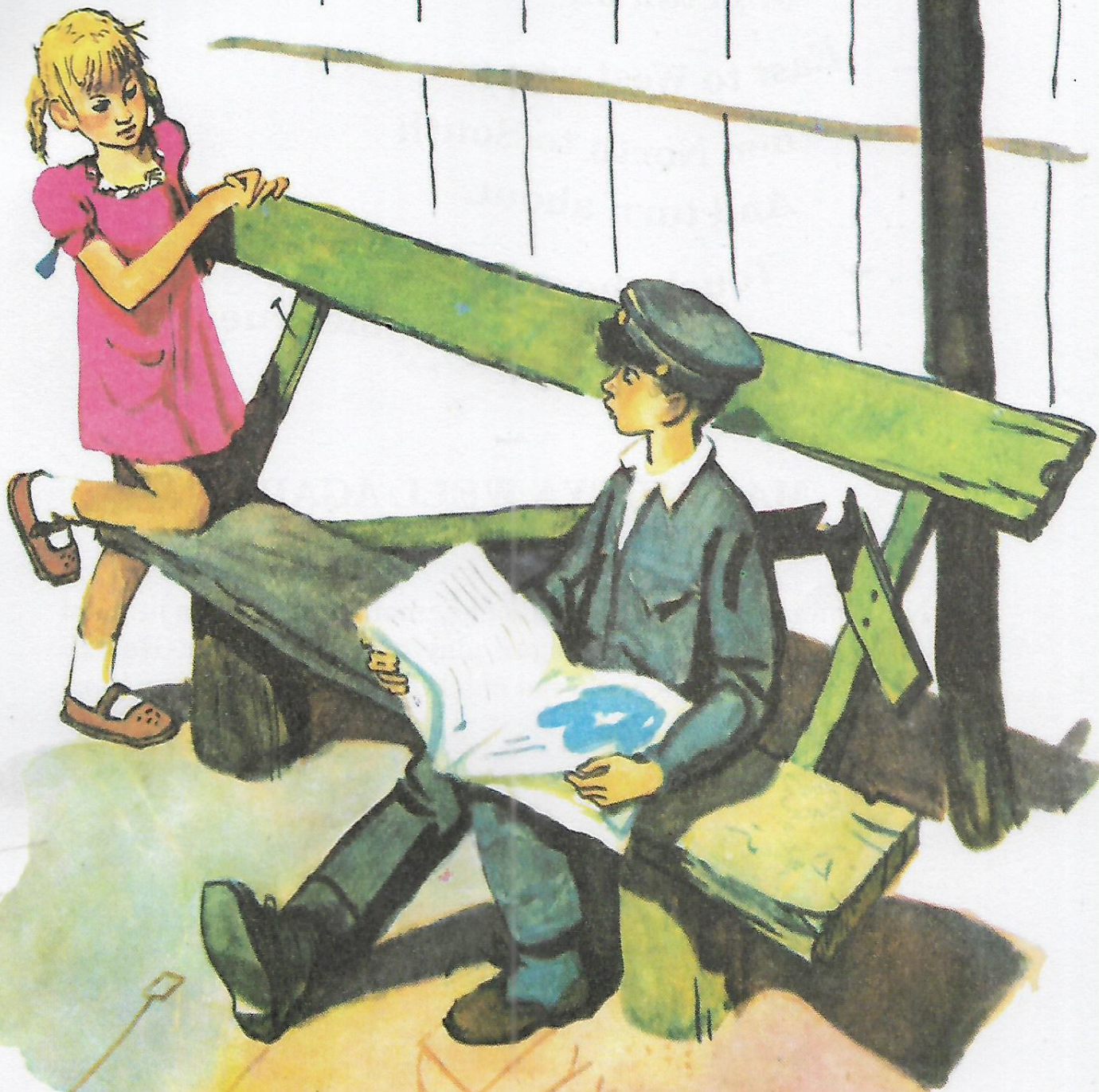
And then Zhenya saw that he had on a big ugly shoe with a very thick sole.

“Oh, that’s too bad!” she said. “I like you and it would have been a lot of fun to play tag.”

“I like you too, and I know it would have been a lot of fun to play tag with you. But I can’t. I’ll never be able to. I’m crippled for life.”

“Don’t be silly, Vitya!” Zhenya said and took the precious rainbow-flower from her pocket. “Look!”

She carefully tore off the last petal, the light-blue one, and held it up to her eyes for a second. Then she opened her fingers, let it fly off, and sang in a high, happy voice:

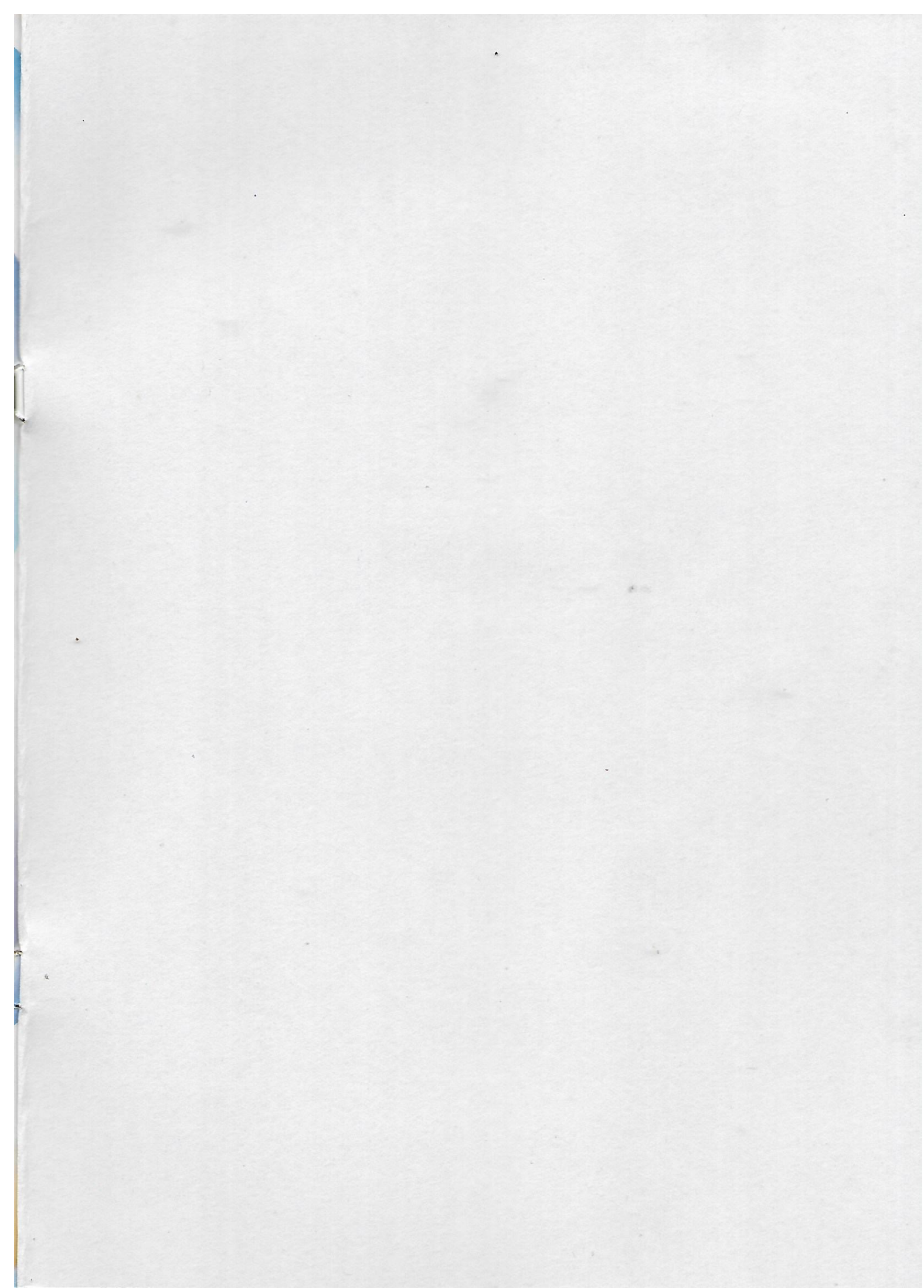


**“Fly, petal, oh-
East to West you go.
Then North to South
And turn about.
Touch the ground, do,
Make my wish come true.**

MAKE VITYA WELL AGAIN !”

No sooner were the words out of her mouth than Vitya jumped up from the bench and began playing tag with her. He ran so fast that Zhenya could not catch him, no matter how hard she tried.







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