

I hope you enjoy my book – Ervin Wayne Reed



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ARE YOU A TURTLE?



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A true American story of courage, humor, and brotherhood in
the skies over World War II Europe.

Based on the life of Ervin William Reed — pilot, veteran, and
founder of the WWII Turtle Club.

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Chapter 1 — A Child Unlike Any Other

Baby Ervin — Born March 25, 1917

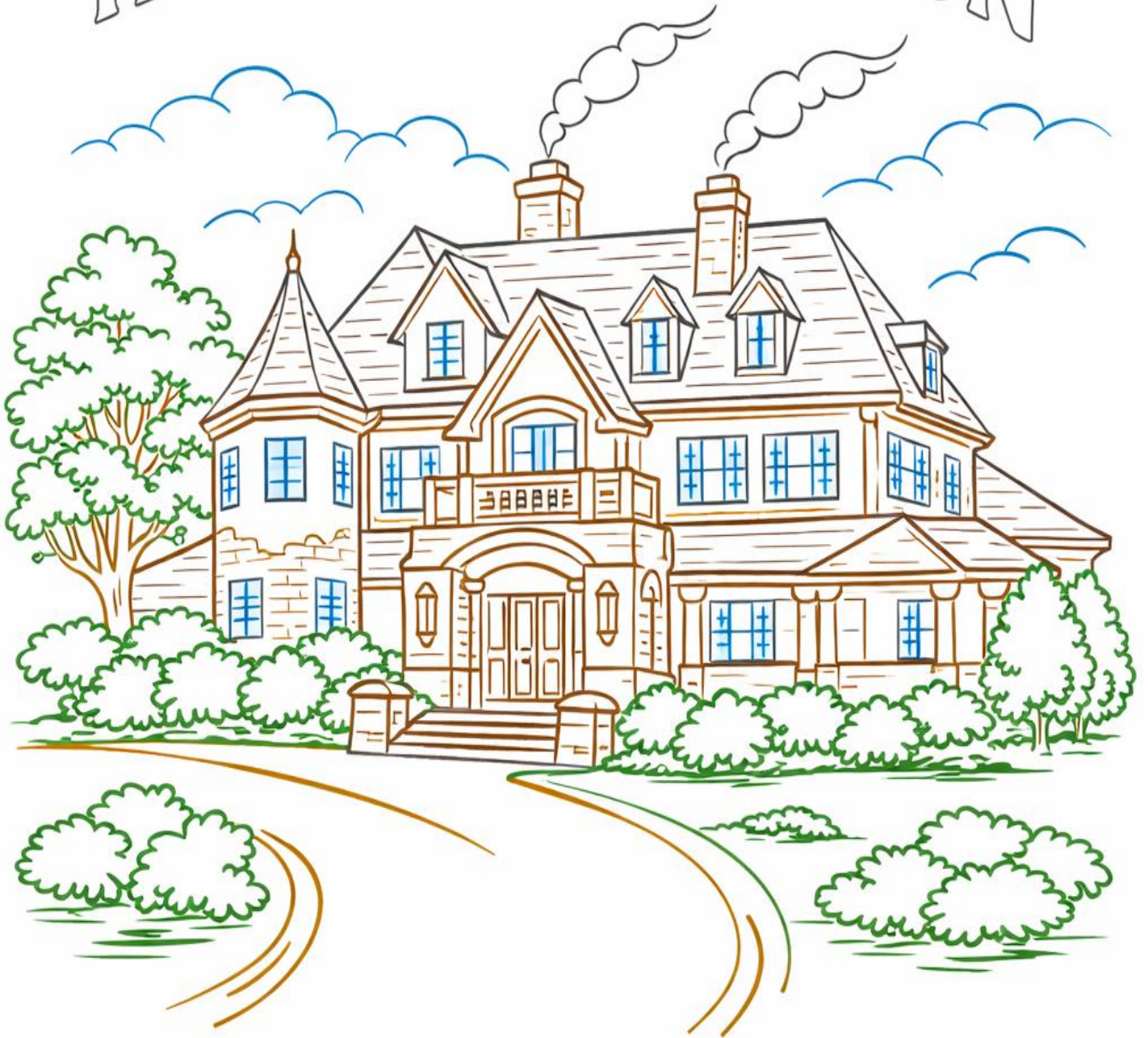


Born on March 25, 1917, Ervin William Reed arrived in the world quietly — but those present said there was something different about him from the very first moment.

His eyes, wide and steady, seemed to take in everything at once. As he grew, while other children played with noise and motion, Ervin watched. He listened. He absorbed. His family quietly called it his "gift" an extraordinary photographic memory that recorded the world like a living photograph, missing nothing.

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THE REED MANSION



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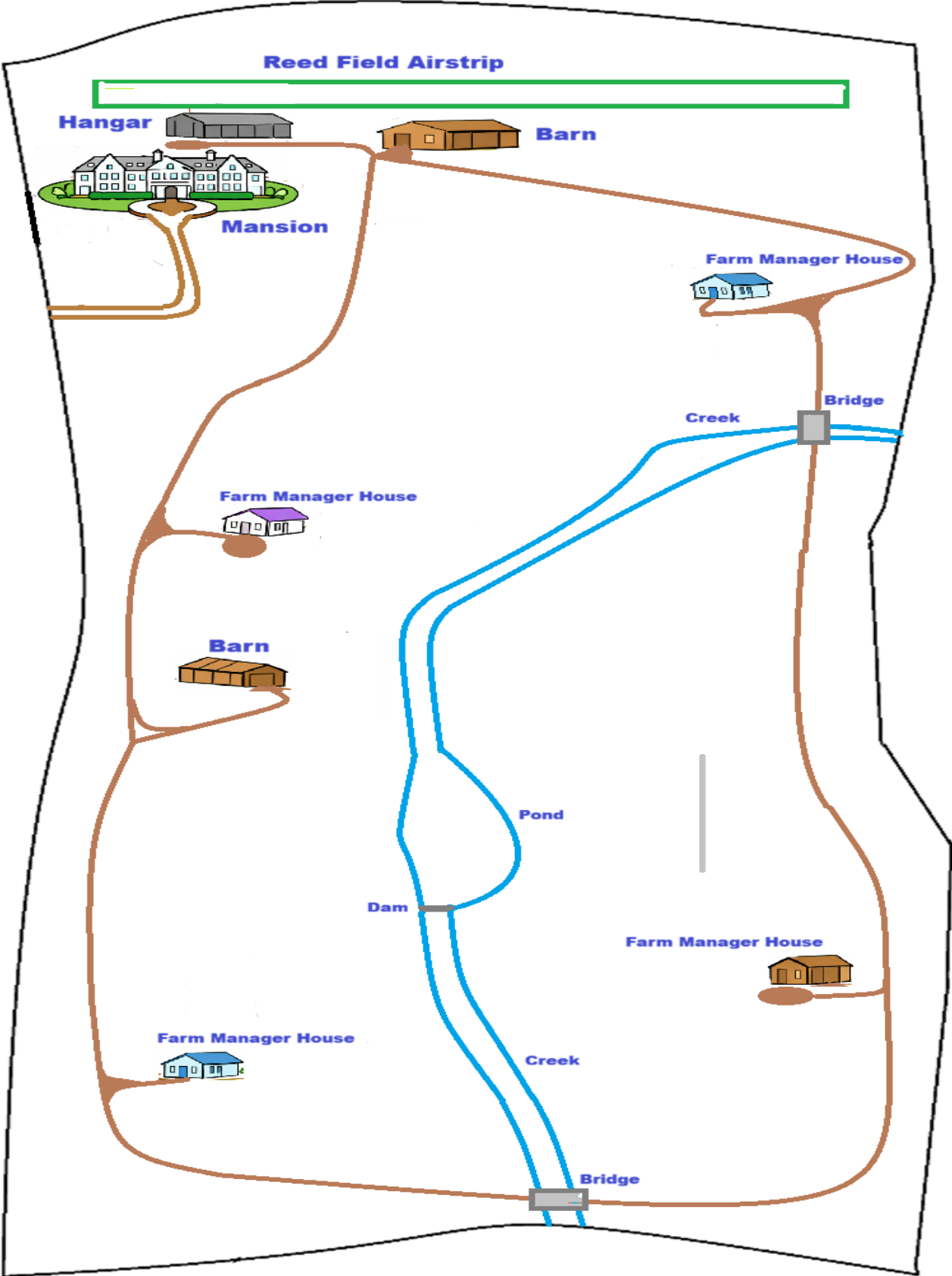
The Reed Mansion — Home on the Estate



The Reed Mansion stood at the heart of the family's vast Kentucky estate — six bedrooms, a massive library filled with maps and aviation books, a formal dining room that hosted guests from across the country, and a kitchen pantry that could feed a small army. Ervin grew up at its very center, watching, listening, and recording every detail of the life being built around him.

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The Reed Estate



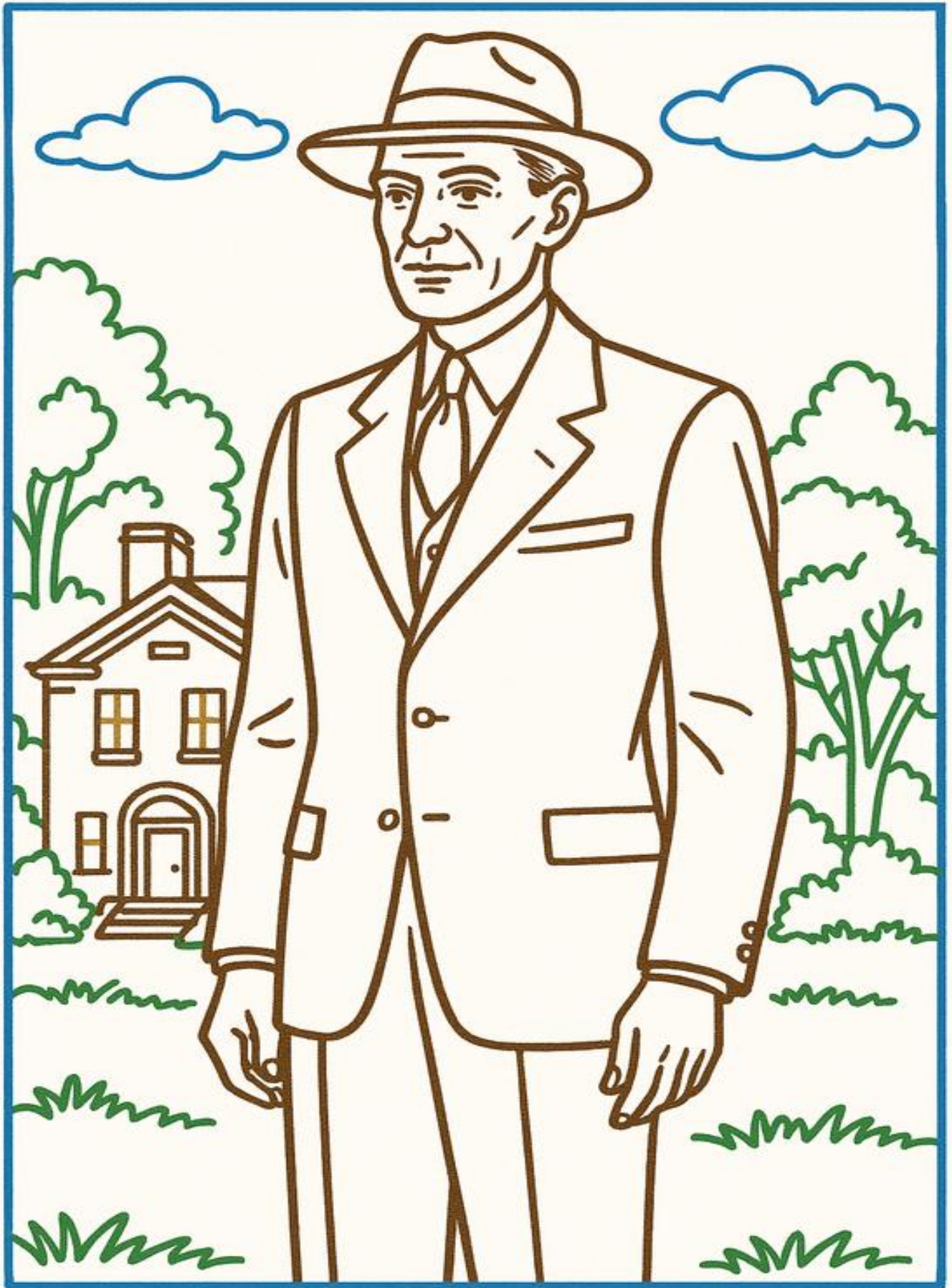
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The Reed Estate — 3,000 Acres of Kentucky Countryside



The Reed Estate spanned nearly 3,000 acres of Kentucky countryside, divided into six 500-acre sections — tobacco, hemp, corn, wheat, oats, and more. A large stream cut through the middle with a sawmill beside it. At one edge of the property sat Reed Field — a private airstrip that would shape young Ervin's destiny. He remembered every inch of it.

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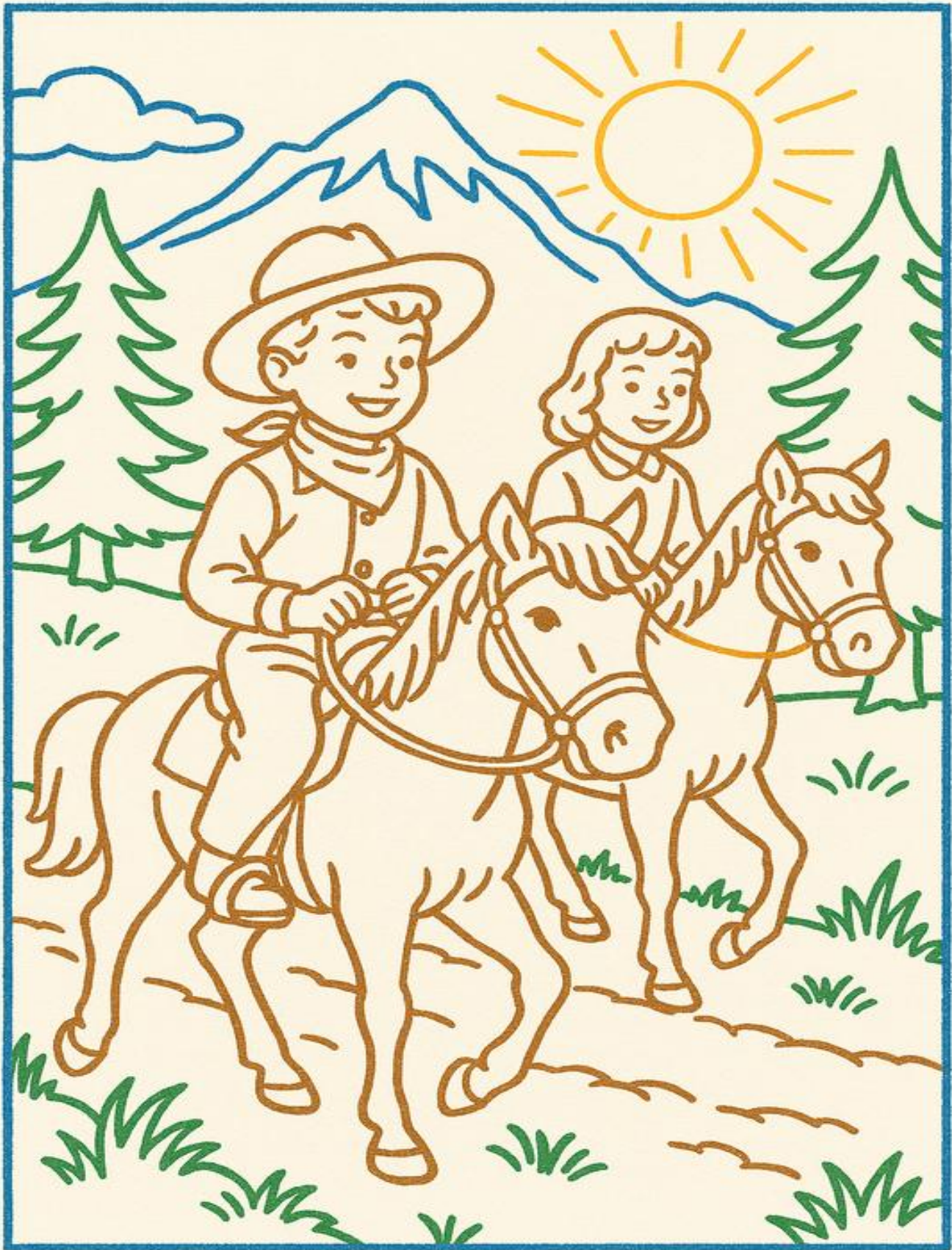


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Cecil Reed — Businessman & Father

Ervin's father, Cecil Reed, was a man of striking presence — tall, dark-haired, slender, with the quiet confidence of someone who had built something real. He grew the family's wealth through investments in Boeing, Chrysler, and European markets. What made Cecil exceptional was not just his business mind — it was how he treated people. Farm managers, field workers, household staff — all were treated with dignity and fairness. Young Ervin watched his father closely, and what he saw shaped him as deeply as any formal education.

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Juanita Reed — Angels on Horseback



Ervin's mother, Juanita Reed, came from a prominent Brazilian family with fierce intelligence and quiet moral authority. During the Great Depression, she joined the "Angels on Horseback" initiative — training nurses to ride into remote Appalachian mountains to bring medical care to families who had no other way to get help. She received national recognition for her efforts, though she was never one to seek the spotlight.

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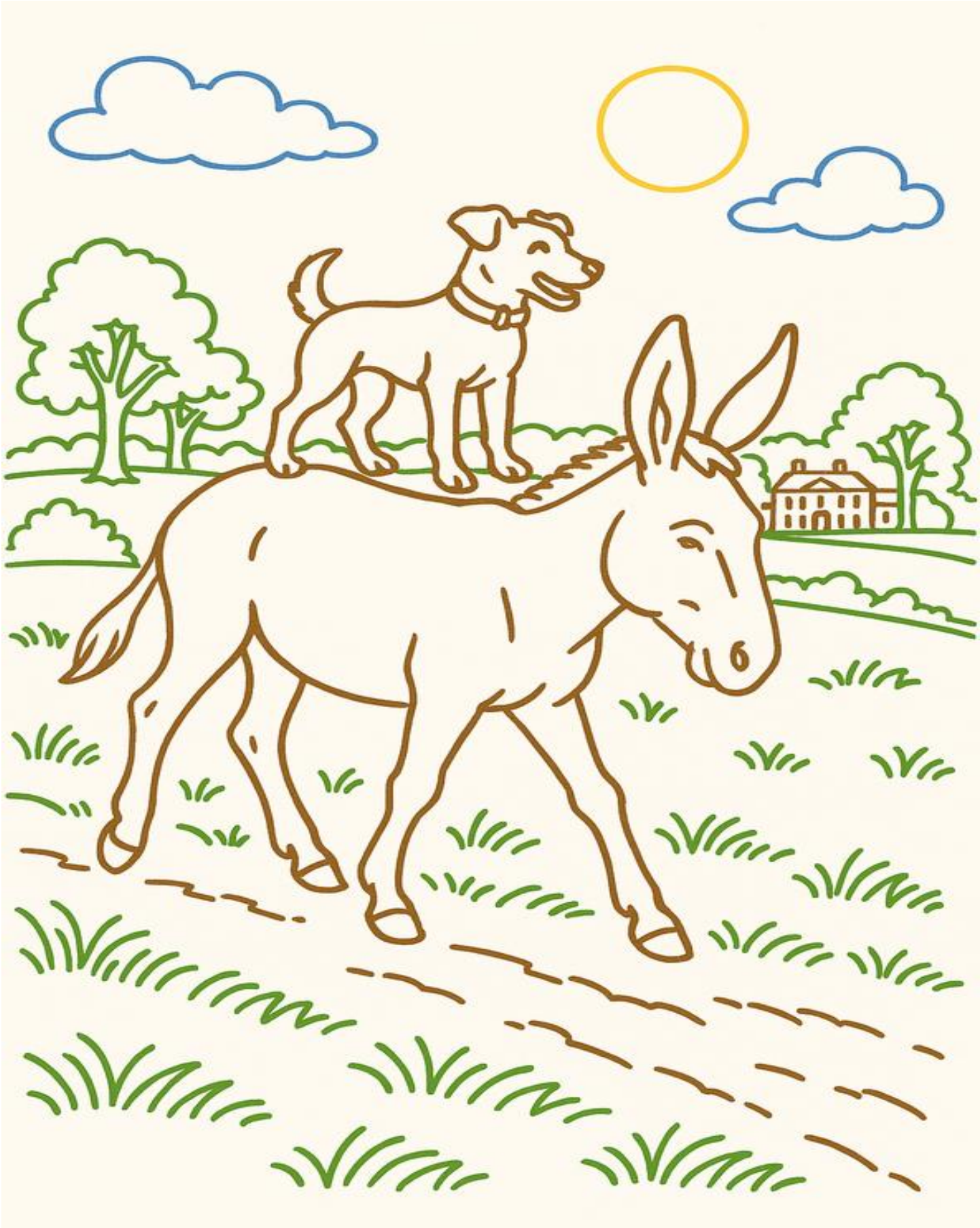
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Nurse Kaylee — Guardian of the Estate



While Cecil and Juanita traveled, the Reed Estate was in the capable hands of Nurse Kaylee — a warm and devoted caregiver who had served the family for years. She read to young Ervin every afternoon, taught him his letters and numbers before school, and made sure the estate ran smoothly in the family's absence. Ervin remembered her with deep fondness for the rest of his life.

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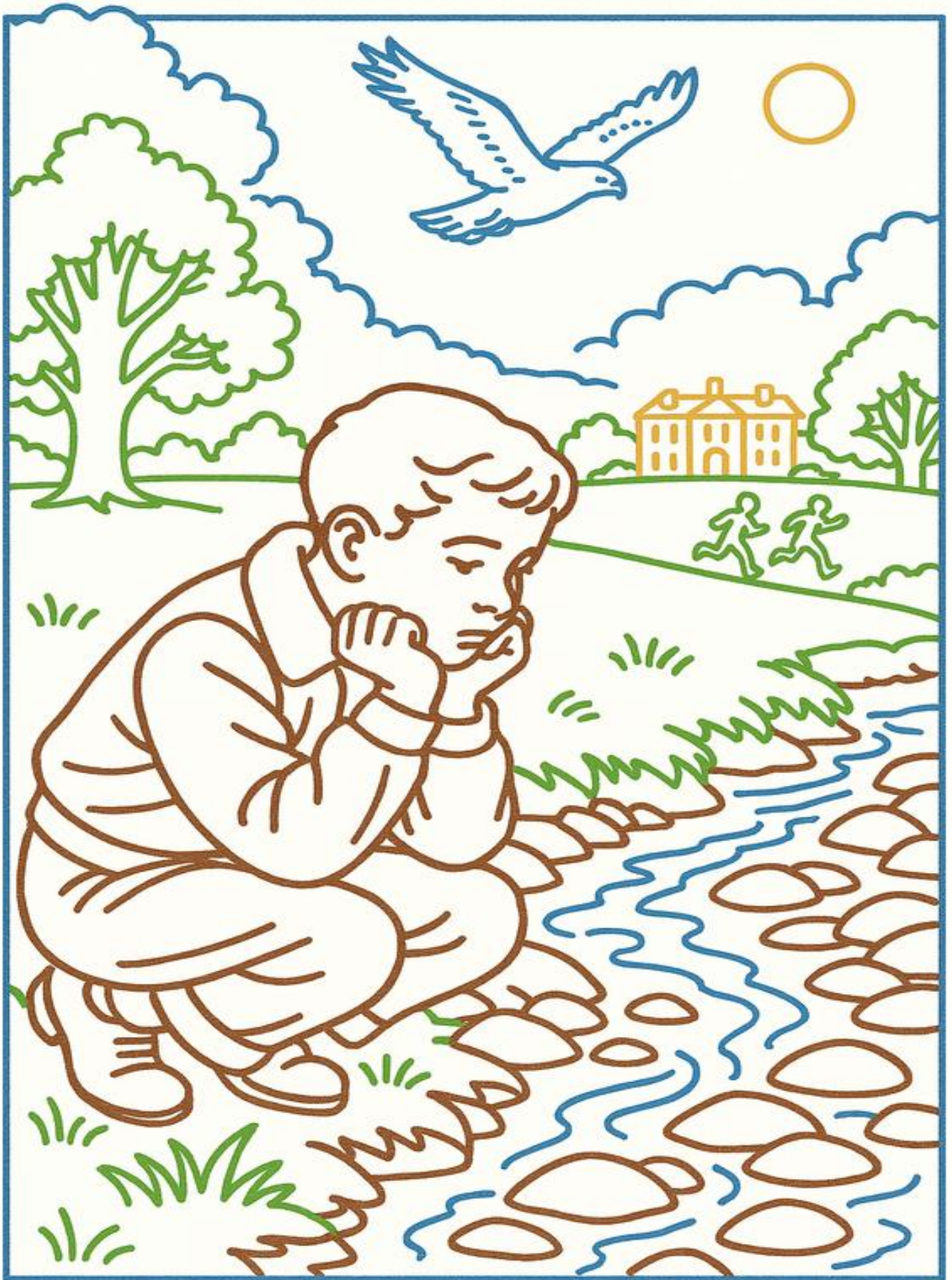
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Sweet & Jackie — Faithful Companions



Ervin's two constant companions were Sweet — a gentle, well-mannered donkey with long ears and a soulful bray that could be heard across three fields — and Jackie, a quick-witted Jack Russell Terrier who had decided early in life that the best place to travel was on Sweet's back. The three of them — Ervin, Sweet, and Jackie — became a familiar sight on the Reed Estate, roaming every inch of the property together every single day.

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The Boy Who Remembered Everything



While other children ran ahead, Ervin stopped. He watched the water move over the stones. He studied the hawk circling overhead. His classmates called him slow — but Ervin was not slow. His mind was recording every detail of everything he saw. He would never forget a single thing. It was this quality — deliberate, patient, and precise — that would one day make him one of the finest fighter pilots in the 8th Air Force.

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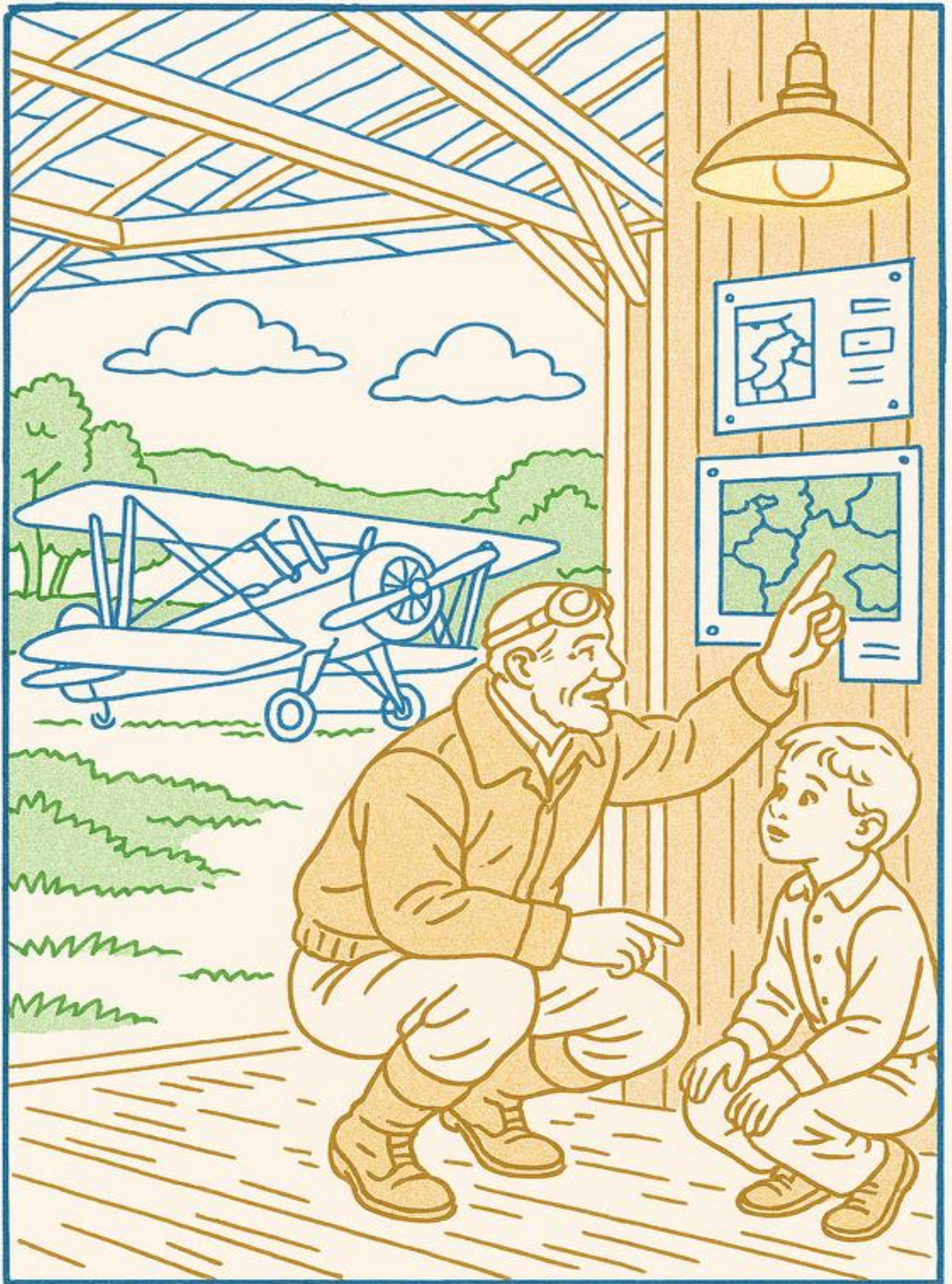
Chapter 2 — Captain Jamie Mathewson

Captain Jamie Arrives — 1919



In 1919, Cecil Reed was traveling in South Africa when he met Captain Jamie Mathewson — a WWI flying ace who had trained with Britain's Royal Flying Corps at Upavon on Salisbury Plain. One of only five from his group of ten trainees to earn his flying certificate, Jamie had flown reconnaissance and bombing missions throughout the war. Cecil offered him the position of personal pilot for the Reed family. Jamie accepted and sailed to America at age 26. He would become a second father to Ervin.

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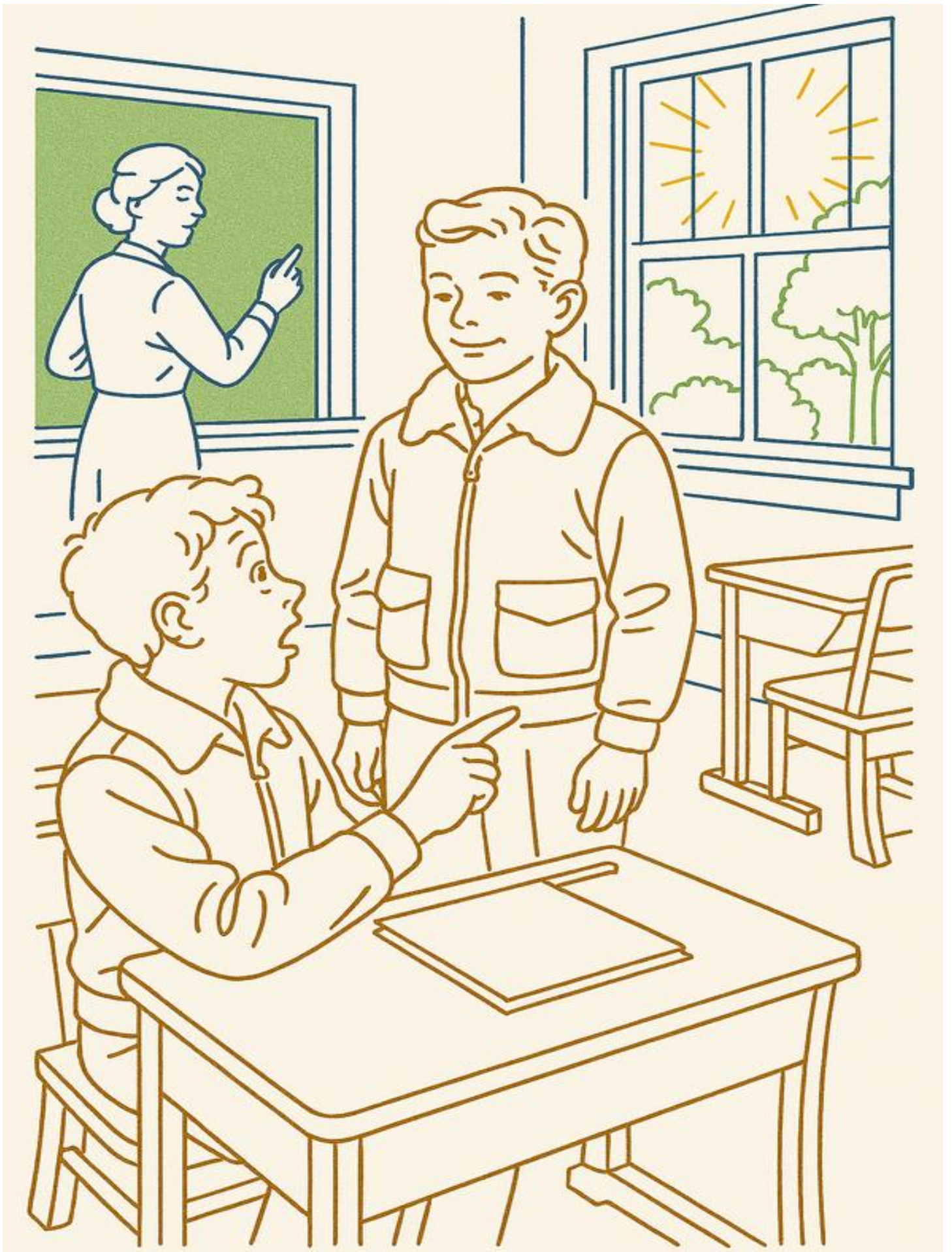
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Reed Field Hangar — Where the Real Education Began



Captain Jamie's hangar at Reed Field became Ervin's most important classroom. Jamie taught him how weather moves, how terrain shapes air currents, how a pilot reads the sky by watching the trees. He shared long stories of South Africa, of dogfights over the English Channel, of the craft of flying. Ervin stored every word in his photographic memory — vivid and retrievable for the rest of his life.

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Chapter 3 — School Years

Are You a Turtle? — The Classroom, 1923



Ervin began school in 1923, at age six. While other children answered questions quickly — often incorrectly — Ervin paused, considered, and then answered precisely. "Why do you move so slow?" they asked. "Are you a turtle?" At first Ervin pushed back. But over time his quick wit and genuine warmth won over his classmates one by one. He found a better response: a smile, a shrug, and an embrace of the name. He had already figured out that the turtle always gets exactly where it is going.

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*Friends on the Reed Estate — Sam, Stella, Lucia, Blakelyn,
Colby & Caden*



Ervin's close friends — Sam, Stella, Lucia, Blakelyn, Colby, and Caden — spent summers at the Reed Estate climbing apple trees, fishing in the creek, riding Sweet around the grounds with Jackie running alongside, and sitting for hours in Jamie's hangar listening to stories of WWI dogfights over the English Channel. These were the friendships of a lifetime — forged in laughter, rooted in loyalty, and remembered perfectly by a boy who forgot nothing.

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First Solo Flight — Reed Field, 1935



By 1935, at eighteen years old, Ervin was ready for his first solo flight. His plane was a 1930 Taylor Craft Piper. His runway was Reed Field. His destination was Westford Airfield, approximately 100 miles away. Captain Jamie stood beside the plane. "Keep your wits about you," he said. "Remember — the sky is your friend. It'll tell you everything if you know how to listen." The takeoff from Reed Field was smooth. Ervin was a pilot.

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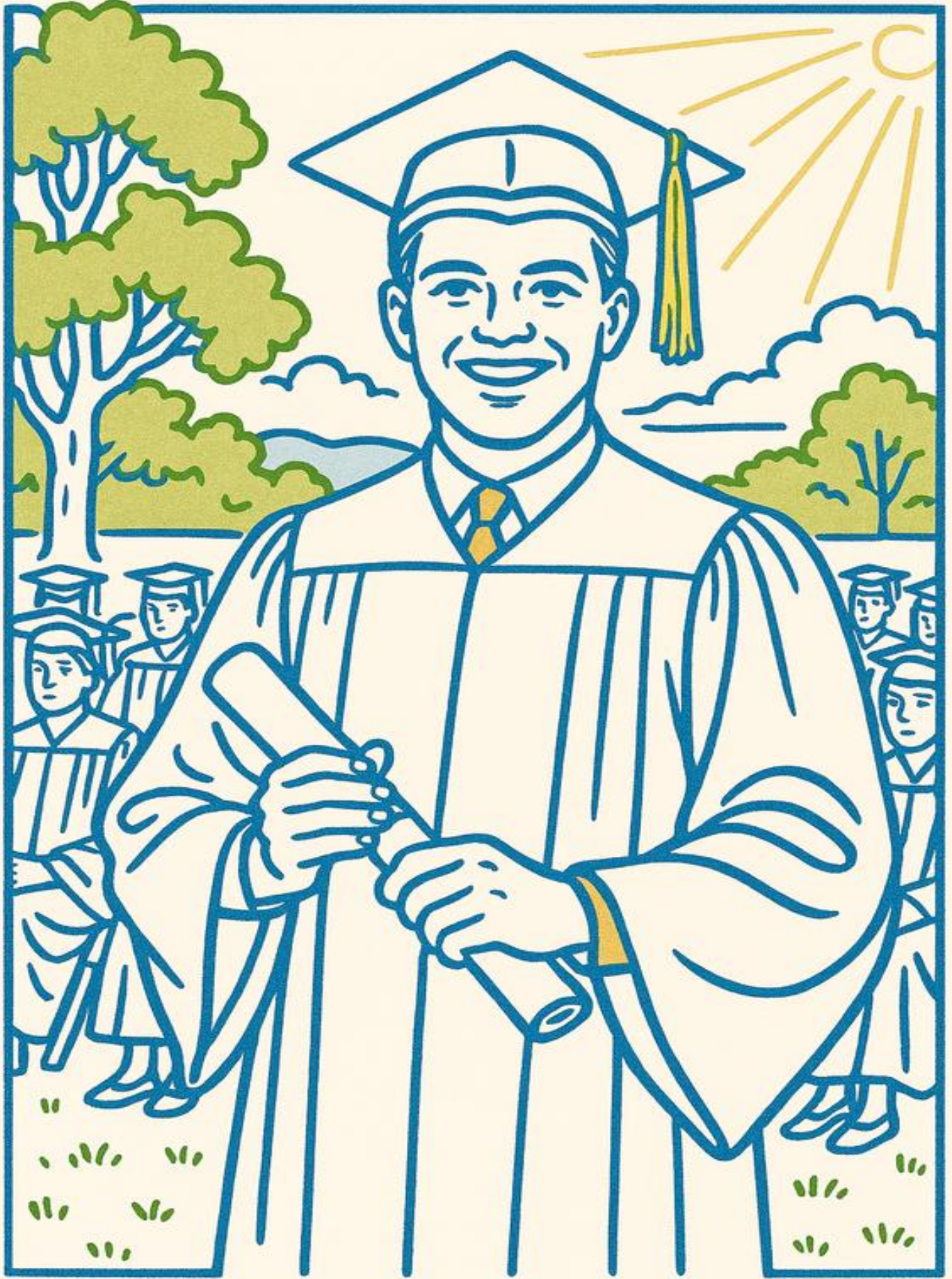
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The Storm and the Hawk — A Lesson from Nature



Halfway to Westford, dark clouds gathered over the mountains. The plane bucked and jolted in the turbulence. Rain spattered the windshield. Then Ervin spotted a hawk — gliding through the very same turbulent air, adjusting effortlessly to every gust. He smiled, took a lesson from the bird, and flew on. He landed smoothly at Westford and flew home under clear skies. Jamie was waiting at Reed Field. He said nothing. He simply nodded.

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High School Graduation — 1935



In 1935, Ervin William Reed graduated at the top of his high school class. He had earned every grade the same way he did everything else — slowly, deliberately, and without missing a single detail. His photographic memory gave him an edge that no amount of last-minute studying could ever match. The turtle, patient and deliberate, had arrived exactly where he was going — and the journey had only just begun.

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Chapter 4 — College & The World Beyond

College Years — 1935 to 1939



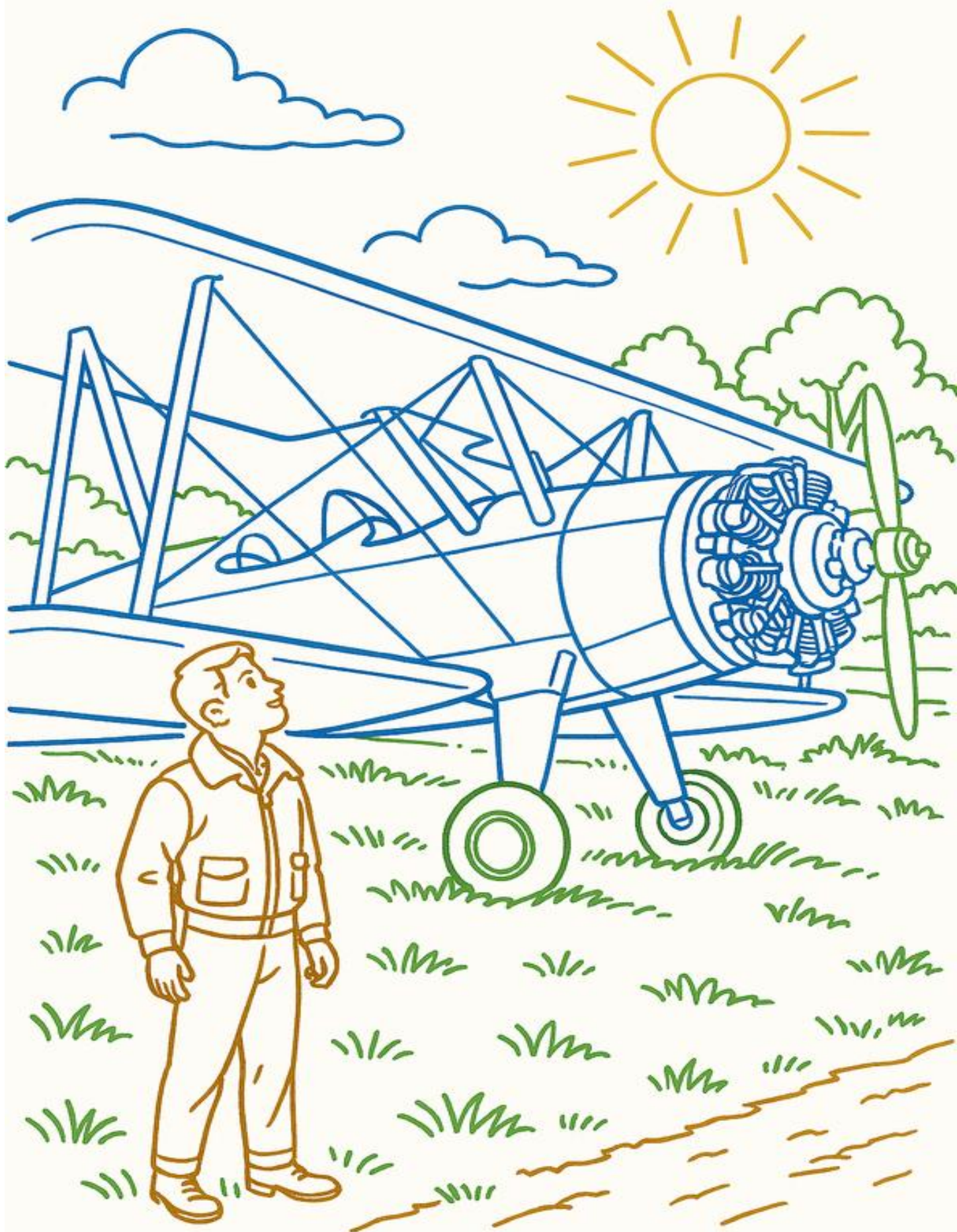
College brought new horizons.

Ervin studied Business and foreign languages and made two friends who would remain close for life.

He brought them home to meet his family and took them flying over the Reed Estate. Meanwhile, in Europe, Adolf Hitler was on the march.

Ervin read everything he could about the growing war. The aviation magazines and maps of Europe on his library table pointed toward what was coming.

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The Stearman Bi-Wing — His Ticket to the Sky



In June 1939, Ervin graduated from college at age 22. His parents gifted him a 1939 Stearman Bi-Wing biplane as a graduation gift.

"This is your ticket to the sky," his father said.

Ervin flew it across America and then traveled abroad — witnessing firsthand the Nazi war machine grinding across the continent.

He came home knowing exactly what was coming and knowing exactly what he intended to do about it.

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Europe Under Attack — The London Blitz, 1940



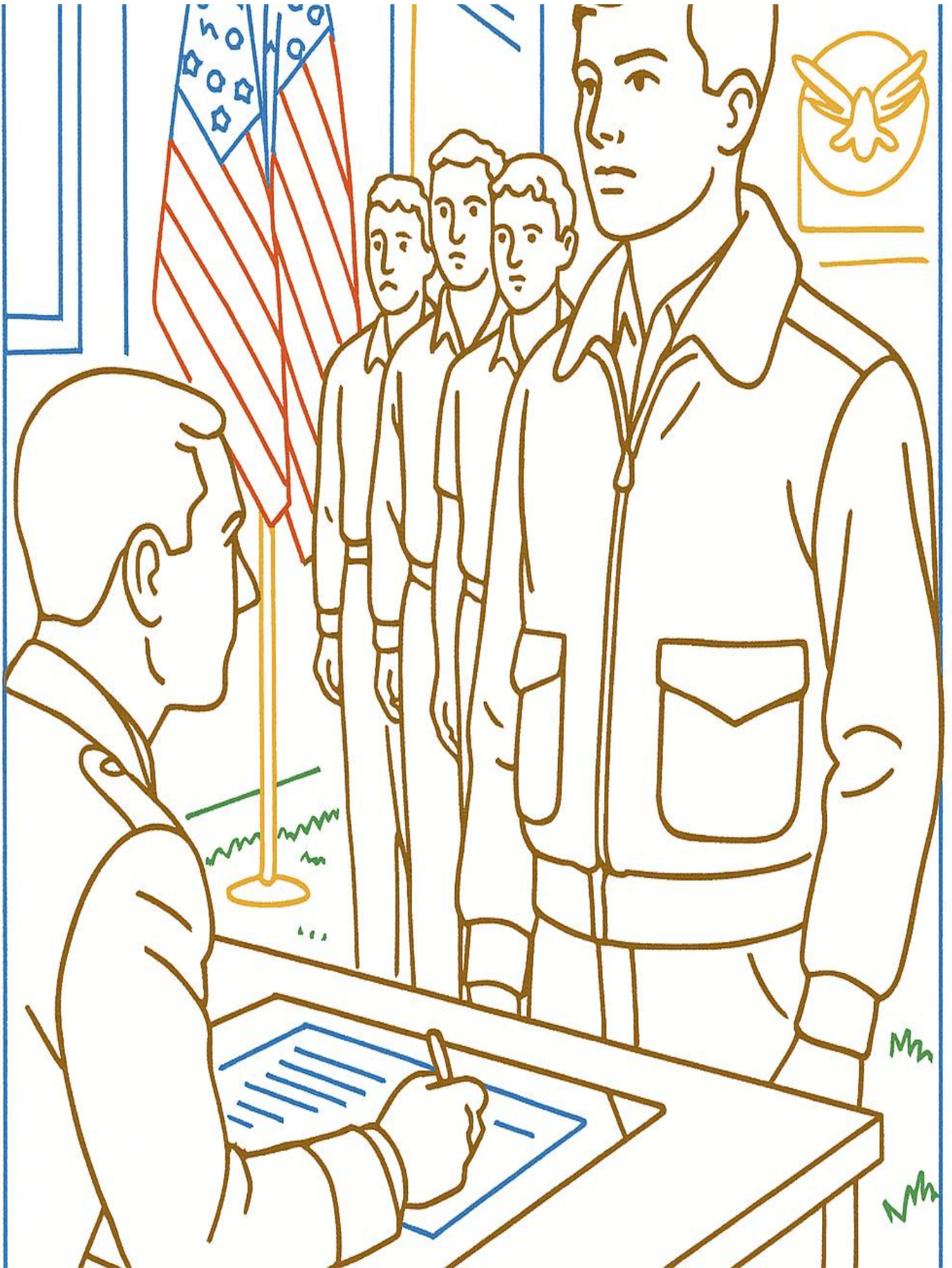
From September 1940,
Nazi Germany bombed London nearly every night in what
became known as the Blitz.

The Royal Air Force fought back with everything they had.
St. Paul's Cathedral stood through the smoke and fire — a
symbol of defiance.

America watched. Ervin watched. And in Washington,
military planners began building what would become the
greatest air armada the world had ever seen.

The 8th Army Air Force was taking shape.

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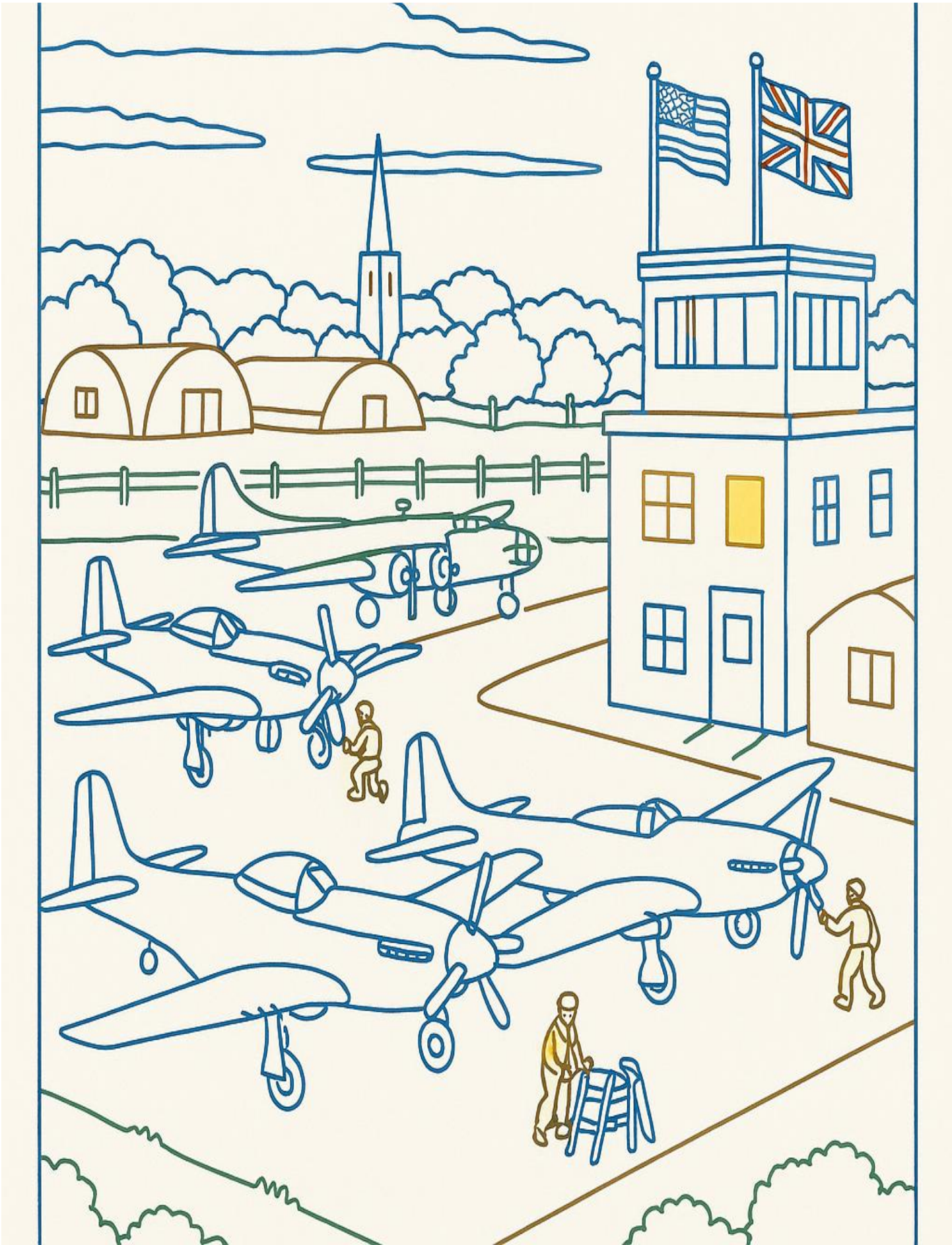


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Chapter 5 — America Goes to War
Answering the Call — 1942



Ervin William Reed walked into the U.S. Army Air Corps recruiting office and signed his name. He already knew how to fly — he had been flying since age fifteen. His photographic memory had been storing maps, weather patterns, and terrain his entire life. He was exactly what the 8th Air Force needed. He did not hesitate. He had been preparing for this moment his whole life without knowing it.

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East Anglia, England — Home of the 8th Army Air Force



The 8th Air Force built its bases across East Anglia in eastern
England

The closest Allied territory to Nazi Germany.

From these airfields, American pilots like Ervin flew east
every day into some of the most dangerous skies in the
history of warfare.

The Mighty Eighth grew from seven men and no aircraft into
the largest air armada the world had ever seen.

Just beyond the airfield fence, English villages and church
spires seemed a world away from the combat that waited
over the horizon.

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Chapter 6 — The Aircraft of World War II

The P-51 Mustang — America's Greatest Fighter Plane



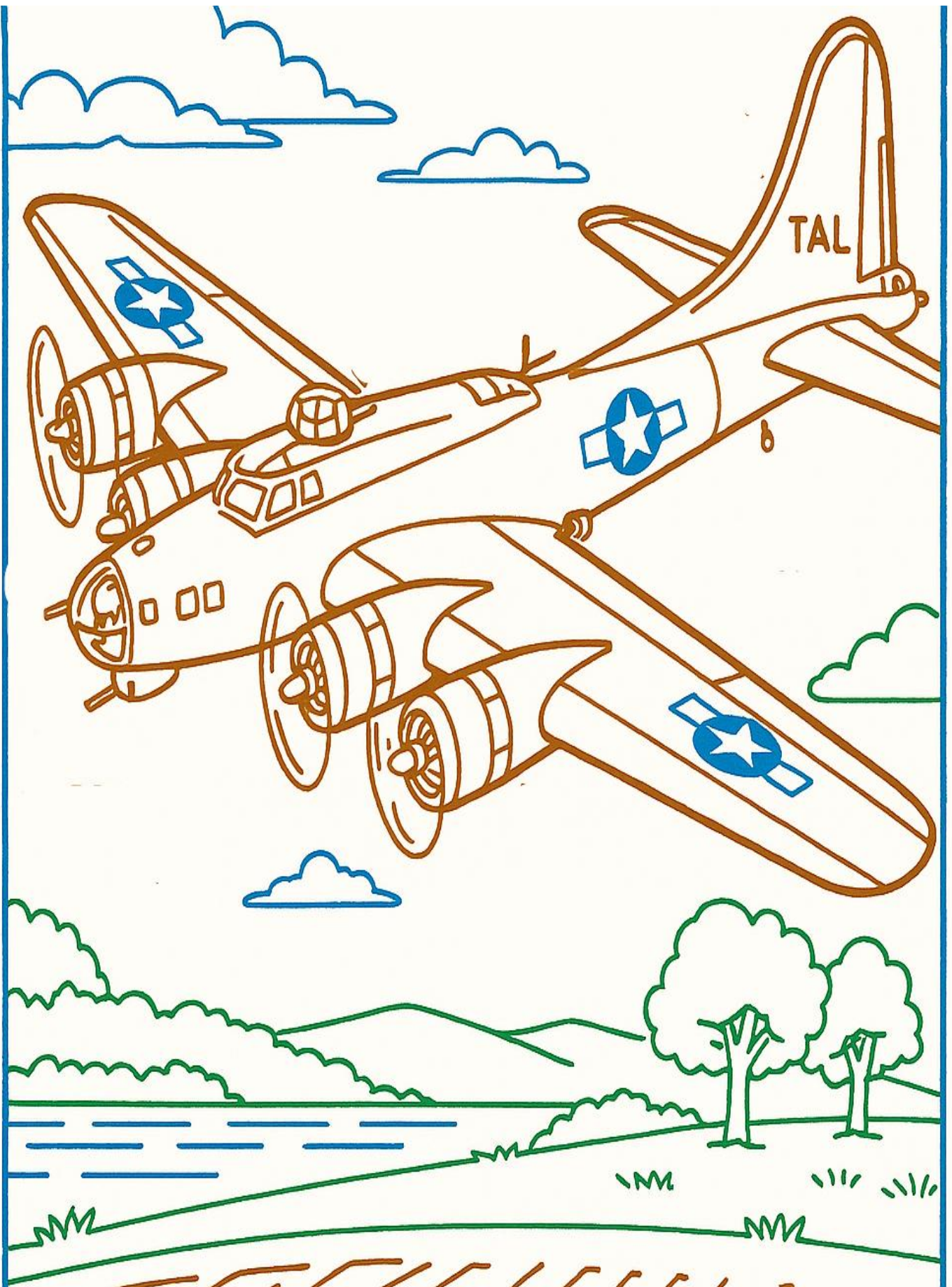
The P-51 Mustang was America's greatest fighter plane of World War II.

Top speed: over 400 miles per hour. Ceiling: 41,900 feet.
Range: enough to escort bombers from England all the way to Berlin and back.

Armed with six .50-caliber machine guns.

For a boy who had memorized every detail of every plane in Jamie's hangar, the P-51 felt like coming home. Ervin flew one into combat over Europe.

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The Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress



The Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress was the backbone of the 8th Air Force.

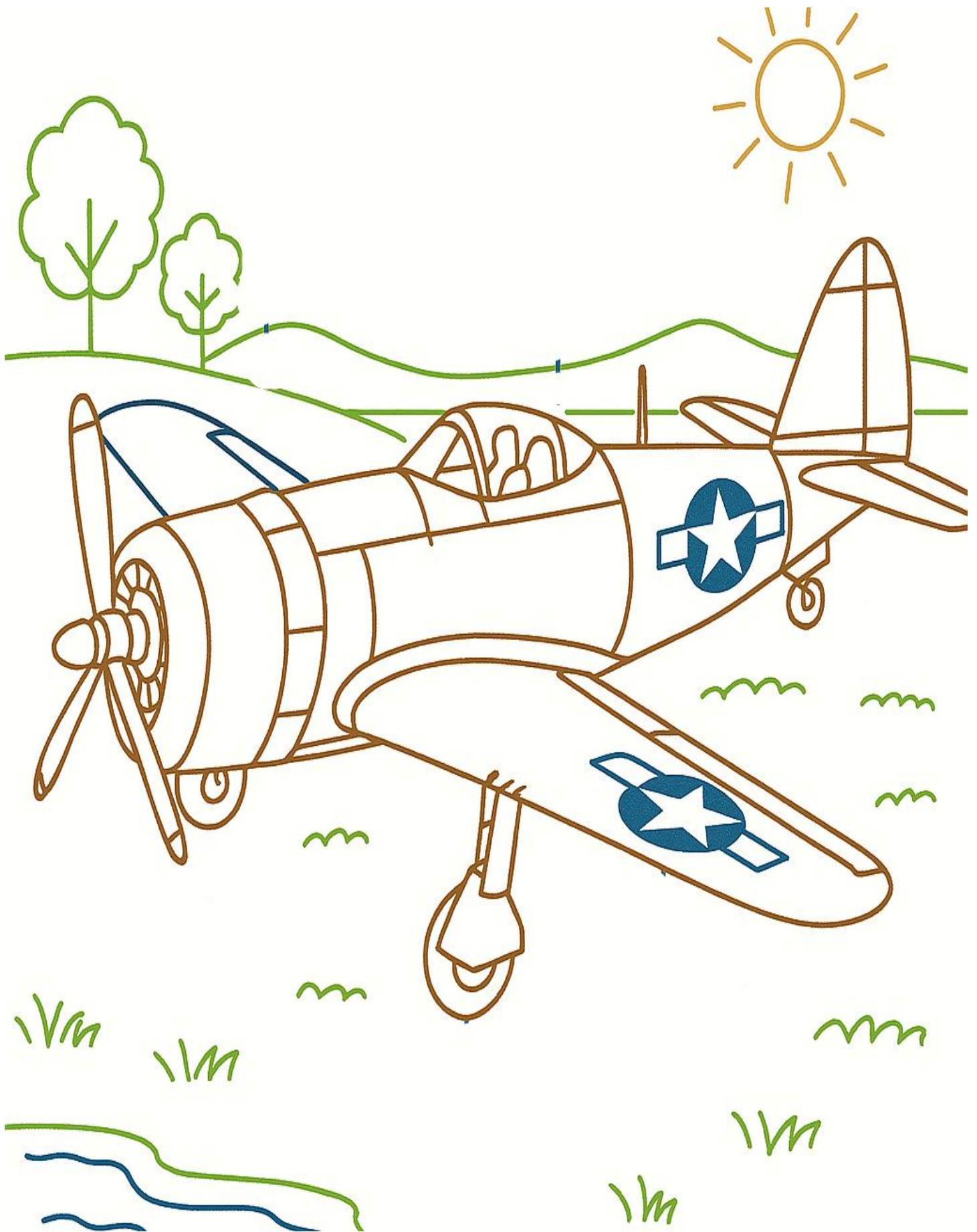
Four engines. Up to thirteen machine guns.
It could carry 8,000 pounds of bombs deep into Nazi Germany.

Without fighter escort, the bombers were terribly vulnerable to enemy attack.

With pilots like Ervin flying P-51 Mustangs at their side, they had a fighting chance.

Mission after mission — from England east over occupied Europe into the heart of Germany.

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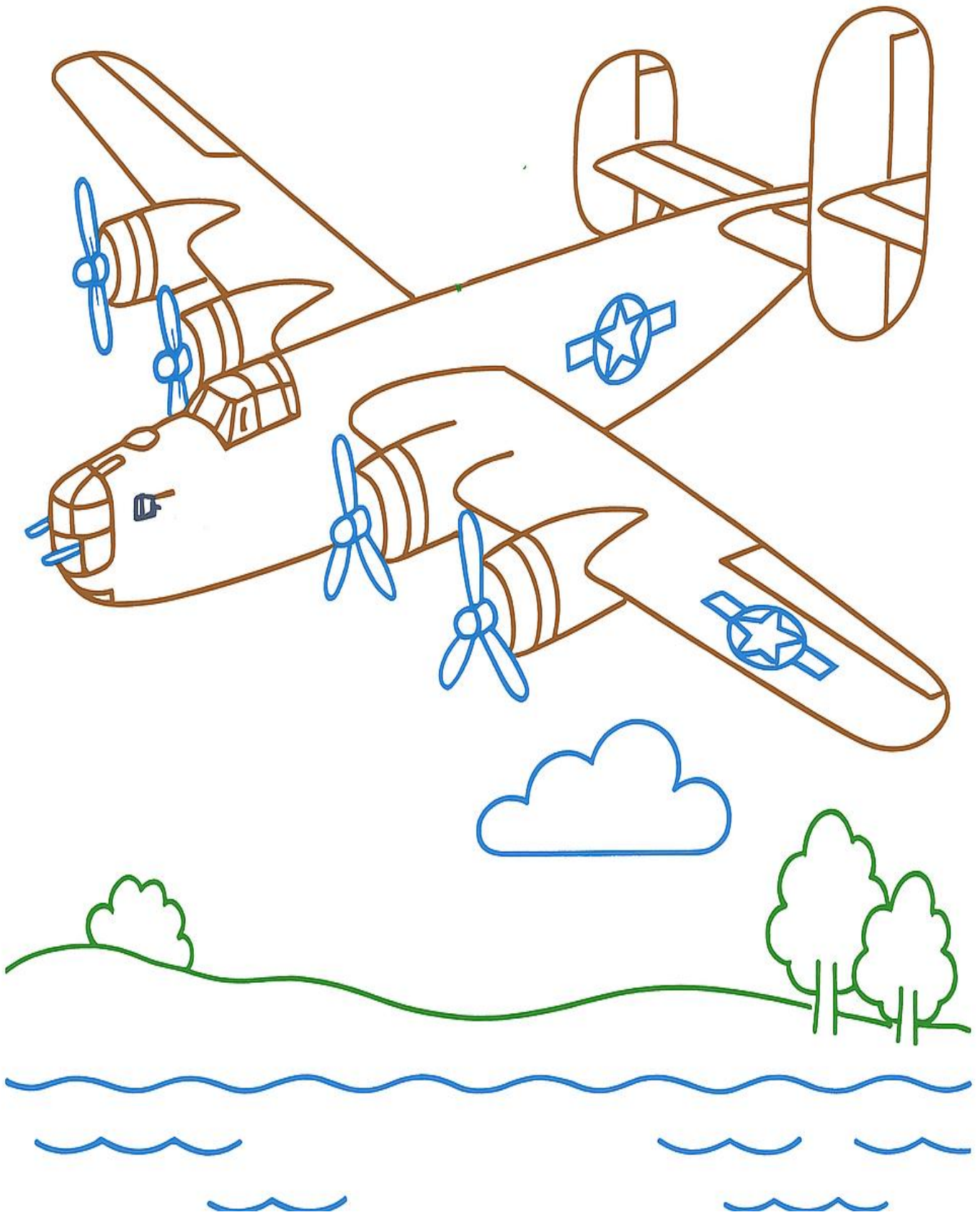
The Republic P-47 Thunderbolt — The Jug



The Republic P-47 Thunderbolt nicknamed "the Jug" for its round shape — was one of the toughest fighter planes of the entire war. Eight .50-caliber machine guns. A massive radial engine up front.

It could absorb incredible punishment and keep flying. Early in the war, before the P-51 had the range to reach Berlin, the P-47 flew escort missions as far as it could — then turned back and left the bombers to fight alone.

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The Consolidated B-24 Liberator



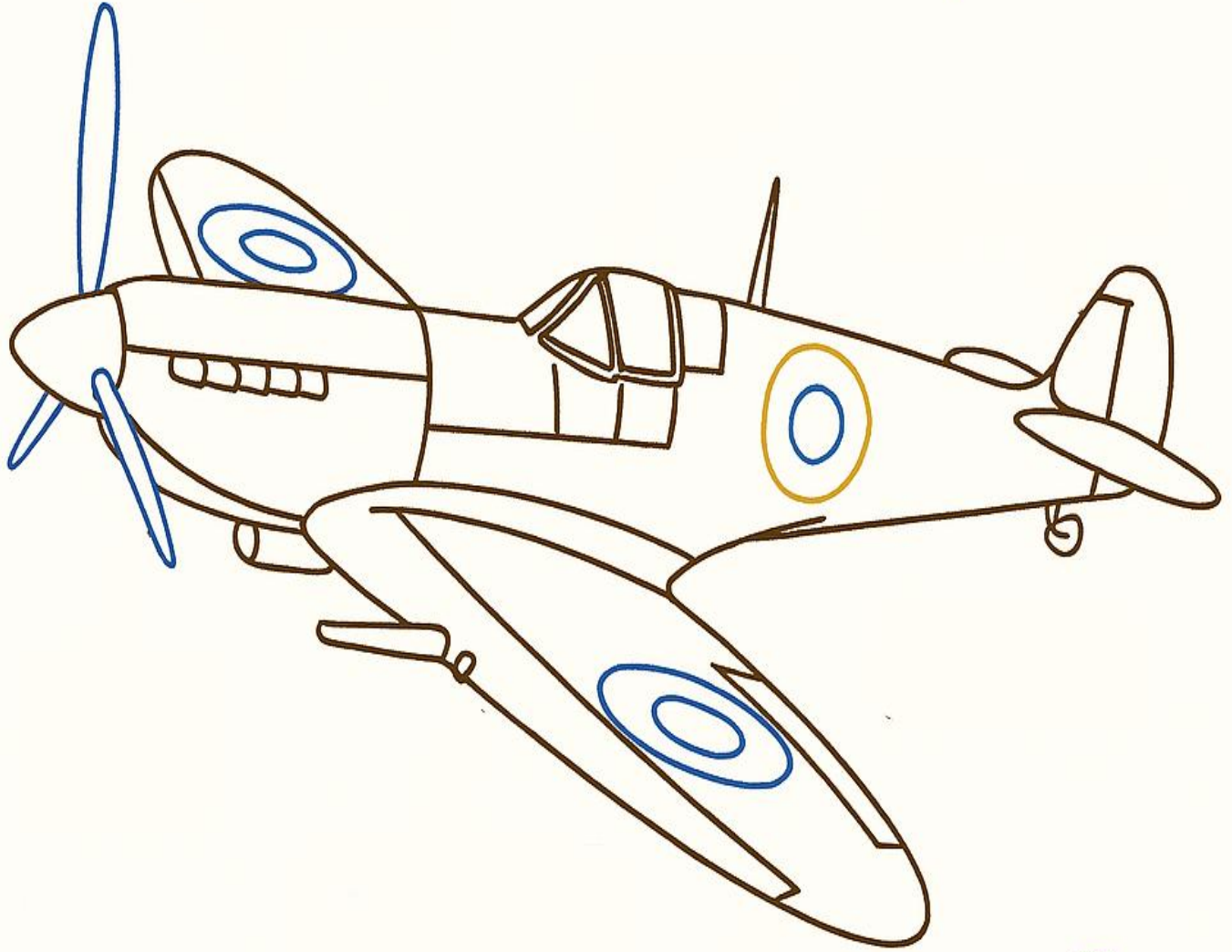
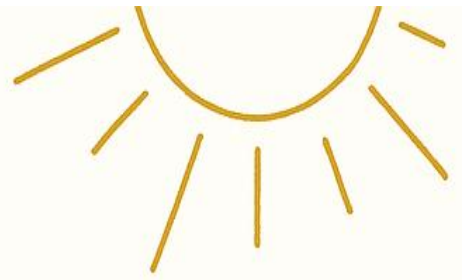
The Consolidated B-24 Liberator

flew alongside the B-17 on bombing missions across Europe and beyond.

Four engines. Its distinctive twin tail and high shoulder-mounted wings gave it a unique profile in the sky. It could fly farther than the B-17, making it invaluable for long-range missions.

More B-24s were built than any other American aircraft in World War II — over 18,000 total.

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The Supermarine Spitfire — Britain's Finest



The Supermarine Spitfire was Britain's most legendary fighter plane.

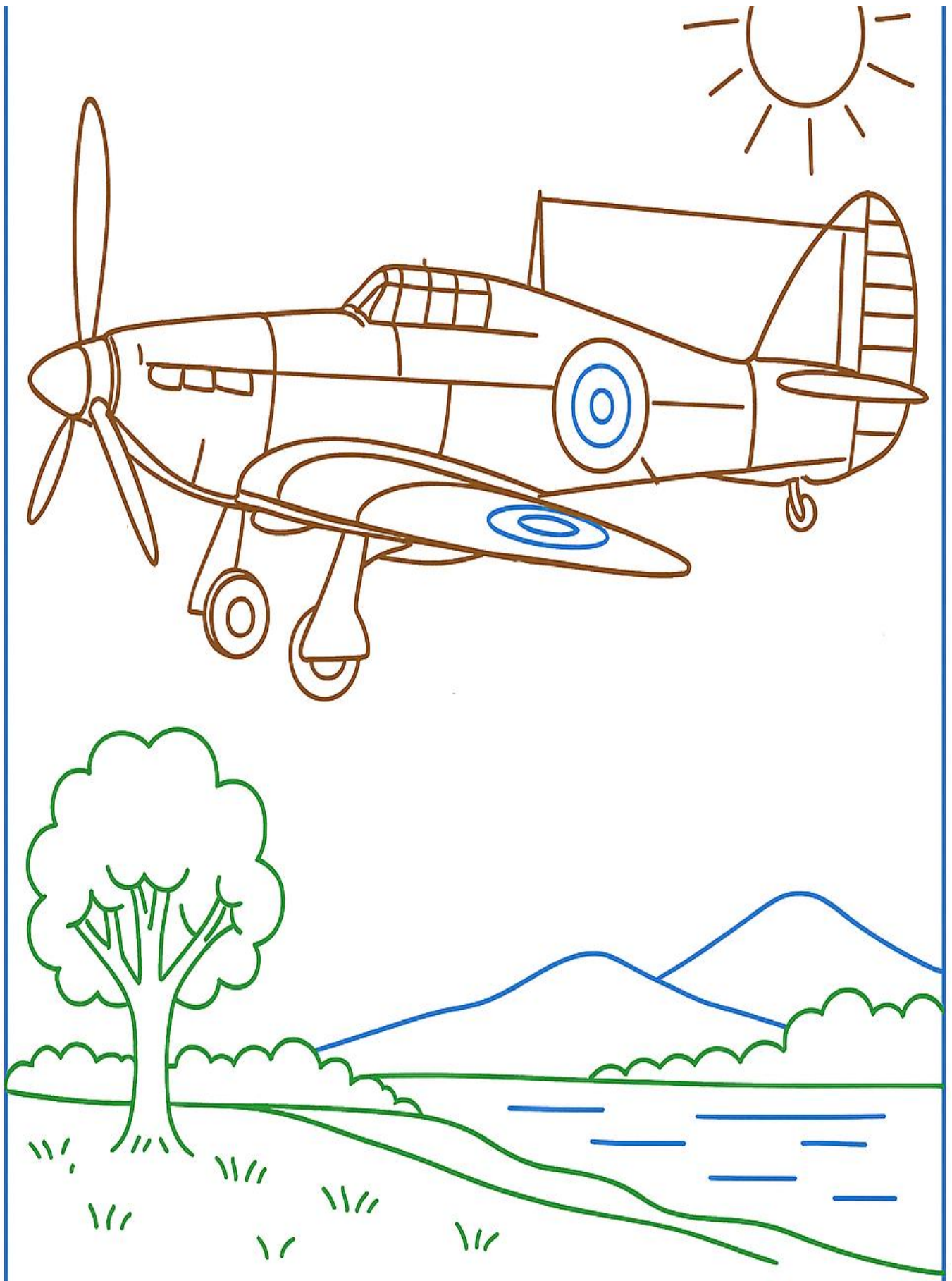
Its distinctive elliptical wings and sleek profile made it one of the most beautiful aircraft ever built — and one of the deadliest.

It defended Britain during the Battle of Britain in 1940, flying against overwhelming odds.

Throughout the war, Spitfires flew alongside American pilots like Ervin

A partnership forged in shared purpose and mutual respect.

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The Hawker Hurricane — The Workhorse

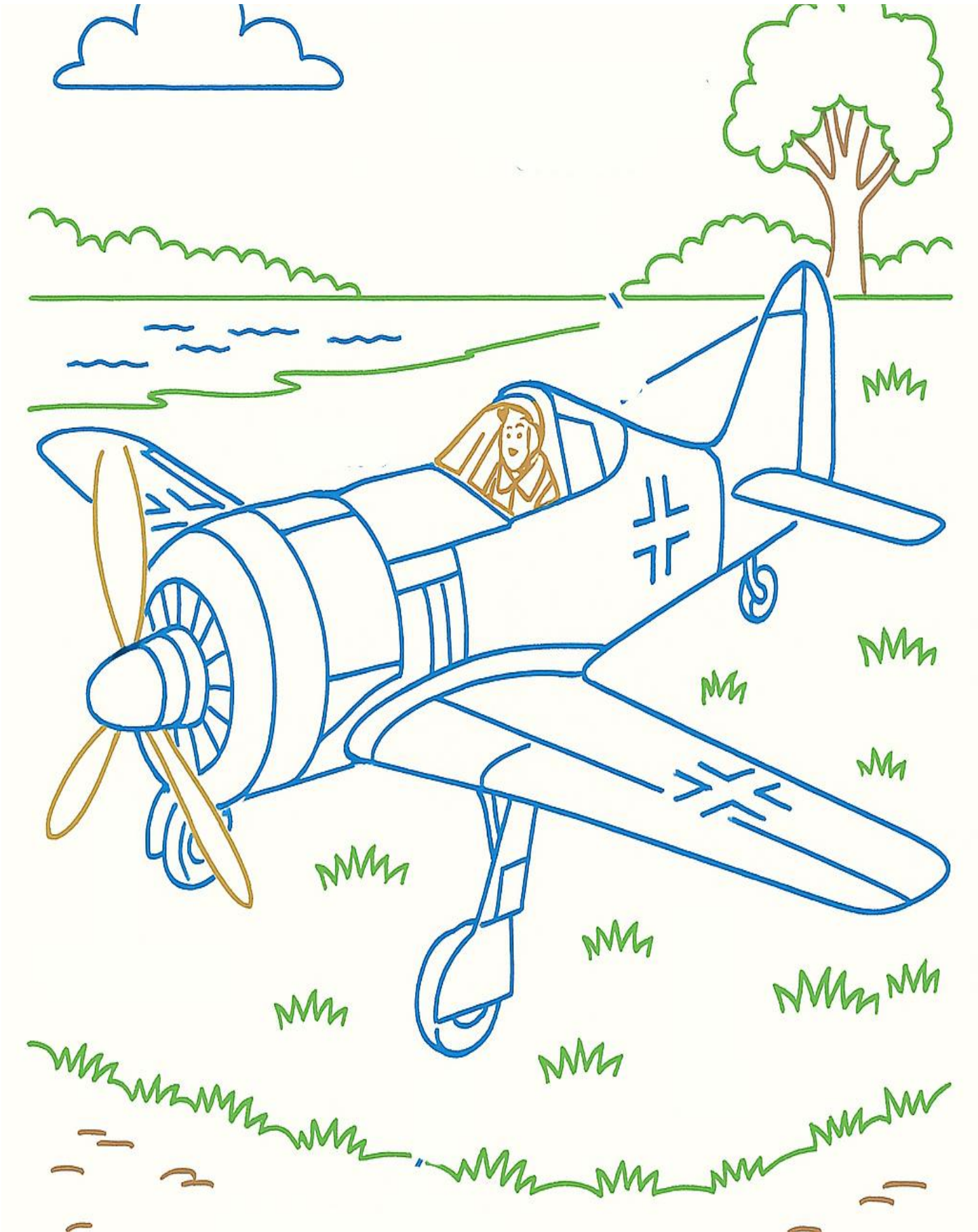


The Hawker Hurricane was the sturdy, reliable workhorse of the Royal Air Force.

It flew alongside the Spitfire during the Battle of Britain — and despite receiving less fame, it actually shot down more enemy aircraft than any other Allied plane during that critical battle.

Tough, dependable, and formidable, the Hurricane proved that quiet reliability can win wars just as surely as glamour and speed.

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The Focke-Wulf Fw 190 — Germany's Best



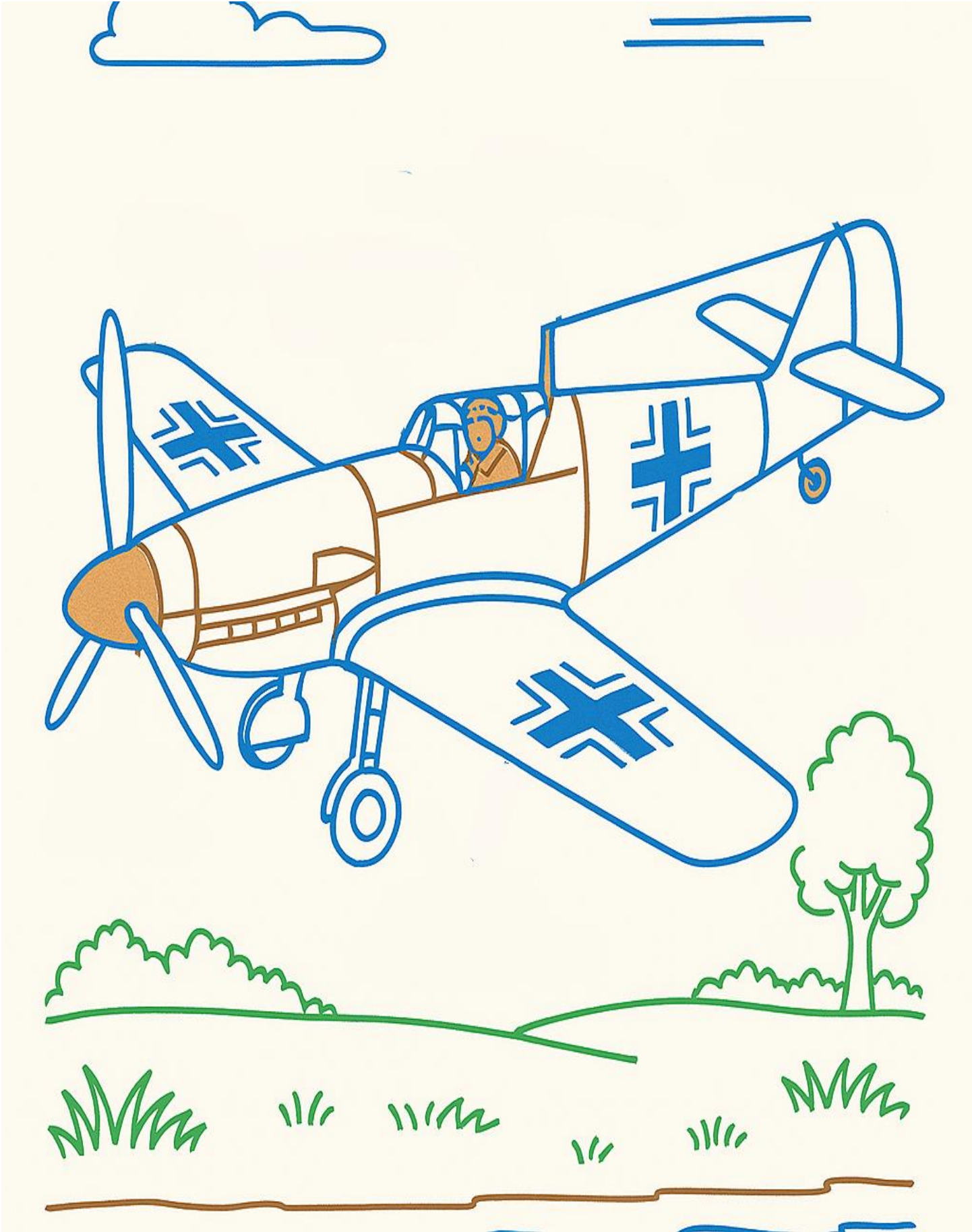
When the Focke-Wulf Fw 190 appeared over Europe in 1941,
it shocked Allied pilots.

Faster and more maneuverable than anything the Allies had
at the time, it quickly became Germany's most formidable
fighter.

It took the arrival of the P-51 Mustang to restore the balance
in the skies.

Ervin knew the Fw 190 by reputation and by encounter — and
he treated it with the respect every dangerous opponent
deserves.

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The Messerschmitt Bf 109 — Germany's Workhorse



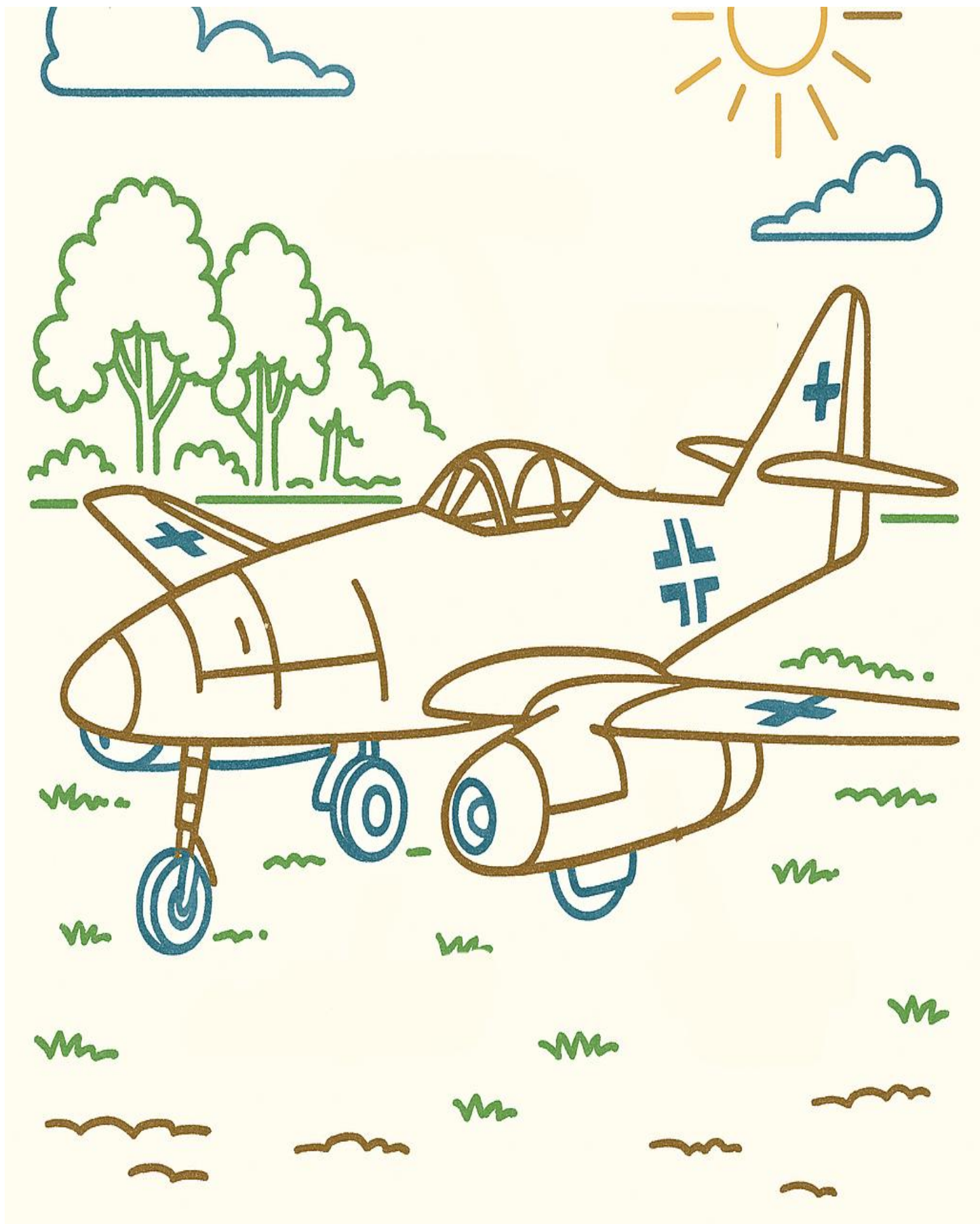
The Messerschmitt Bf 109 was Germany's most produced fighter

Over 33,000 were built during the war. Fast, agile, and armed with cannon and machine guns, it was a dangerous opponent in any dogfight.

Ervin met one early in his combat career.

He took a shot almost blind — and immediately saw coolant streaming from the German plane's engine. "Hot dog, I got him!" It was the first of twenty-eight.

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The Messerschmitt Me 262 — The World's First Jet Fighter



The Messerschmitt Me 262 was the world's first operational jet fighter

Faster than anything the Allies had in the sky.

When it appeared late in the war, it alarmed Allied commanders.

But Germany could not produce enough of them to change the outcome.

Allied pilots learned to target them during takeoff and landing, when the jets were most vulnerable.

The Me 262 was a glimpse of the future — but the future came too late for Nazi Germany.

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Chapter 7 — Combat Over Europe

Fighter Pilot — Ervin in the Cockpit



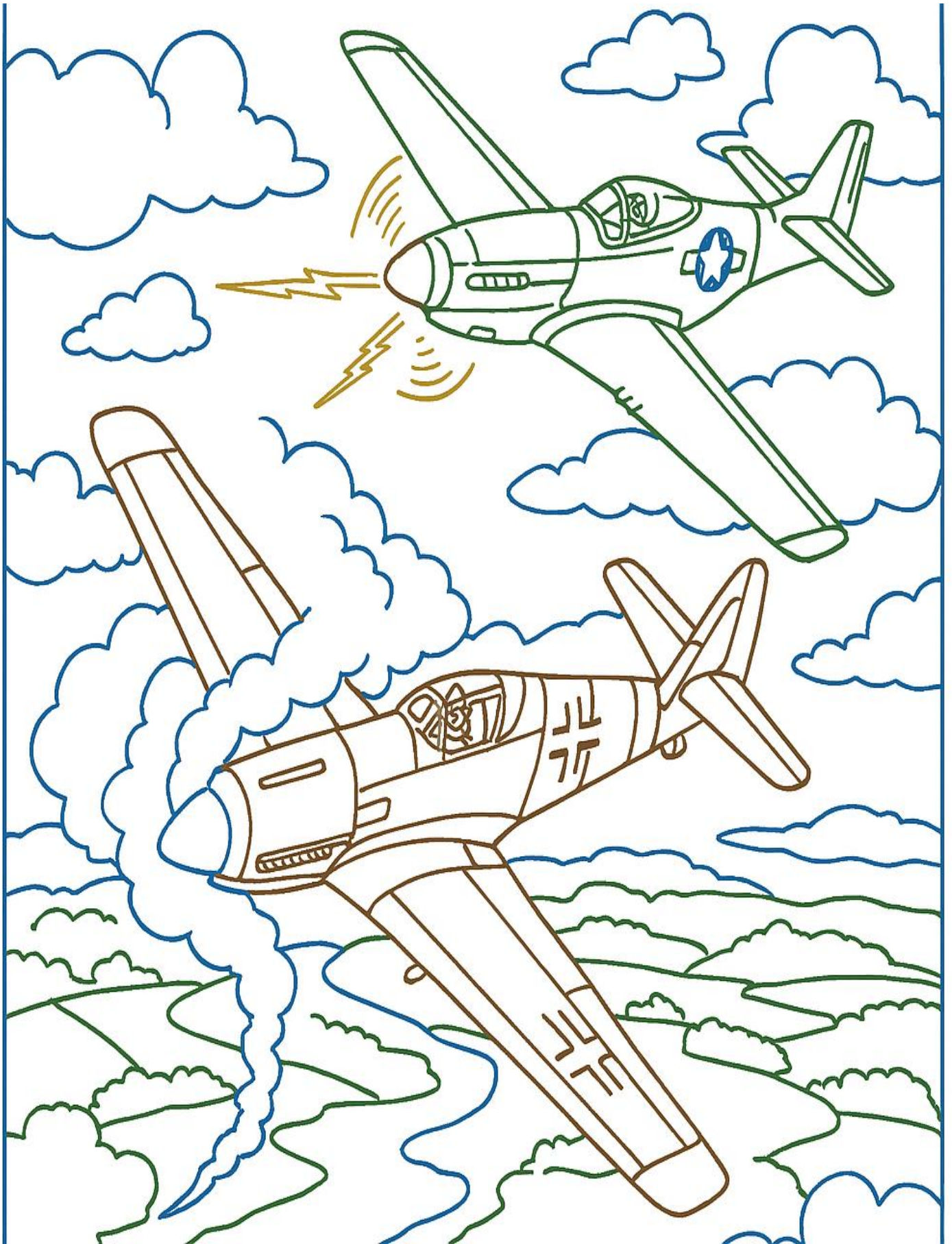
Inside the cockpit of his P-51 Mustang,
Ervin was completely in his element.

His photographic memory meant he knew every gauge, every dial, every warning sign without looking twice.

"I was scared going into combat for the first time," he said later.

"But after a couple of missions, you get used to it. And if you're successful, that gives you confidence." He became one of the most skilled and respected pilots in his squadron.

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The Dogfight — First Kill Over Europe



The dogfight was fast and disorienting — the kind that could end in seconds.

Ervin maneuvered his P-51 behind the Messerschmitt, took a shot almost blind through the banking turn — and immediately saw coolant streaming from the German plane's engine.

The Bf 109 rolled away trailing smoke. "Hot dog, I got him!" he said into the radio.

Back at base, his squadron mates were waiting. It was the first of twenty-eight confirmed kills.

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Flying Ace — 28 Confirmed Kills



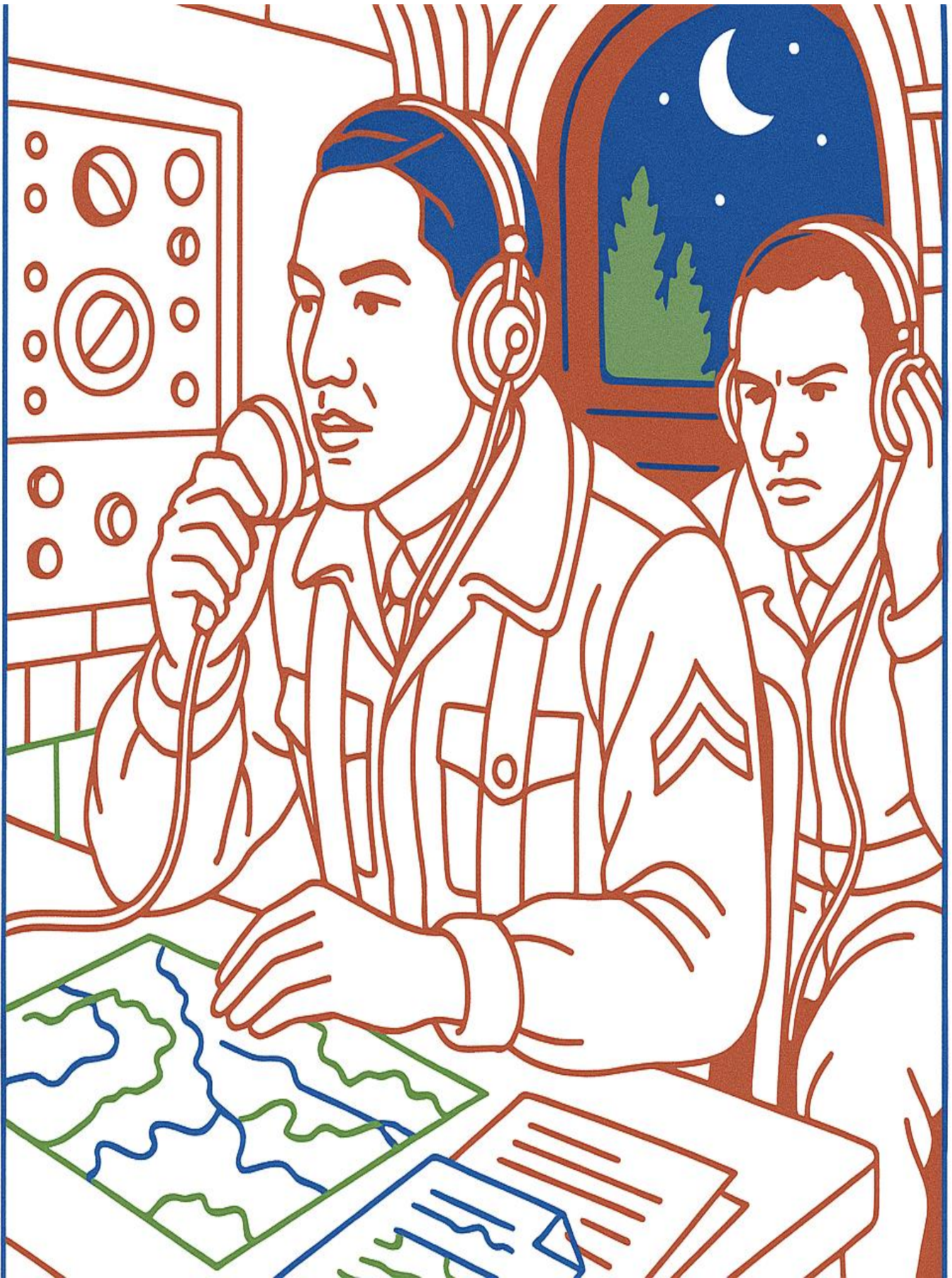
A Flying Ace is a pilot who shoots down five or more enemy aircraft in aerial combat.

Of the tens of thousands of pilots who flew for the 8th Air Force during World War II, only 260 achieved that status.

Ervin William Reed shot down twenty-eight confirmed enemy aircraft — making him one of the most accomplished fighter pilots of the entire war.

Count the victory markings on the nose of his P-51.

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Chapter 8 — A Mission Unlike Any Other

The Choctaw Code Talkers



Among all of Ervin's wartime experiences, one stood apart
Not for its danger, but for what it taught him.

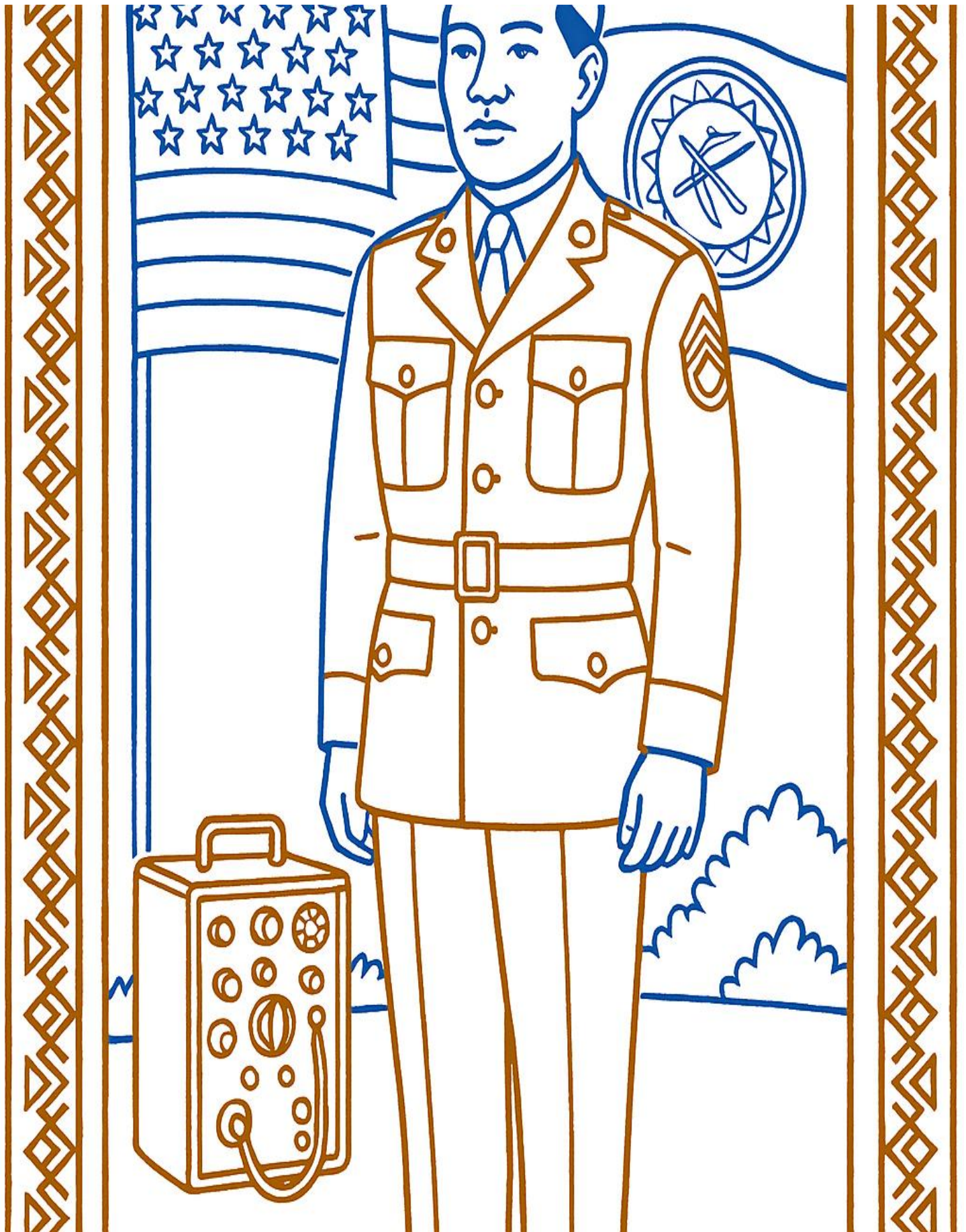
Intelligence had identified key enemy positions, but the
enemy had been intercepting Allied communications.

That night, a Choctaw Code Talker joined the mission
A Native American soldier trained to transmit battlefield
communications in his ancestral Choctaw language, creating
a code no enemy could break.

The mission was a complete success.

Ervin flew escort. He would never forget what he witnessed.

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Warriors of Two Worlds



After the mission, Ervin sat with the Choctaw Code Talker and listened.

"We're fighting for this country," the man said.

"But we're also fighting for our people, our history, and our future."

Ervin heard those words and felt them land somewhere permanent in his photographic memory — alongside the maps, the weather patterns, the dogfights, and the names of every man he flew with.

He carried those words for the rest of his life.

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Chapter 9 — The Turtle Club Is Born

A Rainy Night at the British Officers' Club



After one of the war's most grueling stretches of missions,
Ervin and his fellow pilots found themselves in a British
officers' club on a rainy night

Rain hammering the windows, ale on the table, the relief of
being alive mingling with the weight of what they had seen.

Someone proposed a fraternity.

For Ervin, the name was obvious.

The question that had followed him since childhood was
about to follow him into history.

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Are You a Turtle? — The Password



Ervin settled on the password with a grin:

"Well, lads, I do have a pet donkey back home — a sweet little thing I call my ass.

How about: 'You bet your sweet ass I am'?"

The room erupted. The Turtle Club was born.

When the war ended, Ervin raised his glass:

"These brave men weren't just heroes of WWII. They represent the veterans of all wars.

Through their courage, humor, and unwavering bond, they've shown us what it truly means to be a Turtle."

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RULES



1, _____

2, _____

3, _____

4, _____

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6, _____

7, _____

8, _____

COMMANDING OFFICER

WWII TURTLE CLUB

The Rules of the Turtle Club — Ancient and Honorable



Rule I: If a fellow Turtle ever asks
"Are You A Turtle?" the full response must be given
immediately:

"You bet your sweet ass I am."

Failure results in forfeiting a beverage of the asking Turtle's
choice.

Rule II: To gain admission, a prospective Turtle one must
correctly answer the four initiation riddles
each appears to suggest a vulgar answer, but the correct
answer is always perfectly innocent.

Rule III: You are now a member of the Turtle Club.
Govern yourself accordingly — and go find new members.

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Victory in Europe — May 8, 1945



On May 8, 1945 — Victory in Europe Day —
Nazi Germany surrendered unconditionally. The war in
Europe was over.

In London and across the Allied world, people poured into
the streets to celebrate.

American GIs and British civilians cheered together.

Ervin raised his glass with his squadron mates.

"These brave men weren't just heroes of WWII," he said.

"They represent the veterans of all wars."

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Chapter 10 — Coming Home

Coming Home — A Hero's Welcome



Ervin returned home as a hero, proudly wearing his Turtle Club pin.

He reconnected with his family, walked the familiar acres of the Reed Estate, and flew his Stearman over the countryside he had dreamed of during the long months overseas.

The fields looked the same. The creek still moved over the stones.

Sweet was still at the estate. Jackie too. But Ervin had seen the world — and the world had seen him.

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Judy — The Love of His Life



During his travels after the war, Ervin met Judy
A warm, graceful woman who captured his heart without
effort.

He brought her home to meet Cecil and Juanita, who
approved immediately and warmly.

Ervin and Judy married and settled into a life of family,
community, and purpose.

The man who had memorized the flight paths of a hundred
missions found that the most important journey of his life had
just begun.

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Chapter 11 — The Vocational School

The Old Warehouse — A New Vision



Despite the Reed family's considerable wealth, Ervin felt a persistent pull toward doing more for the community that had shaped him.

He found an old warehouse. He bought it.

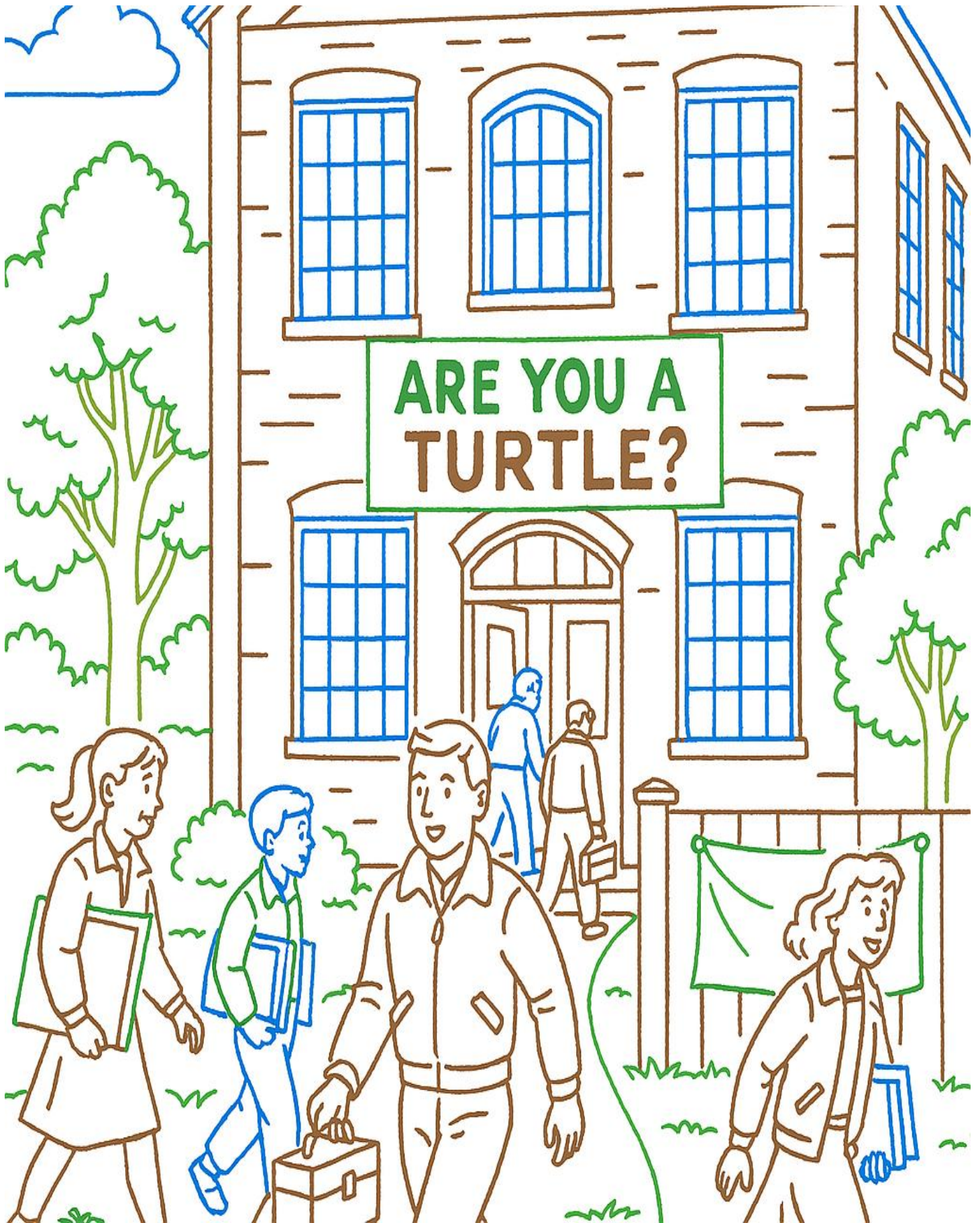
Together with Judy, he began to transform it into something the area had never seen

A vocational school that would give young people the tools to own their futures.

He knew exactly what he wanted to build.

He had been planning it since before the war.

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**ARE YOU A
TURTLE?**

WWII TURTLE CLUB

Are You A Turtle? — The Motto Above the Entrance



Above the entrance to the school, Ervin mounted the motto:

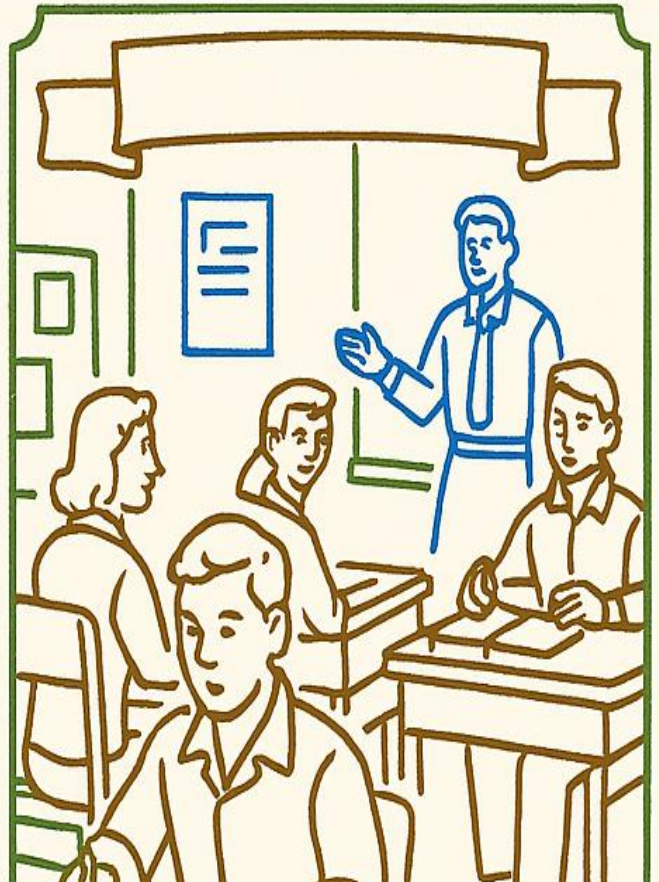
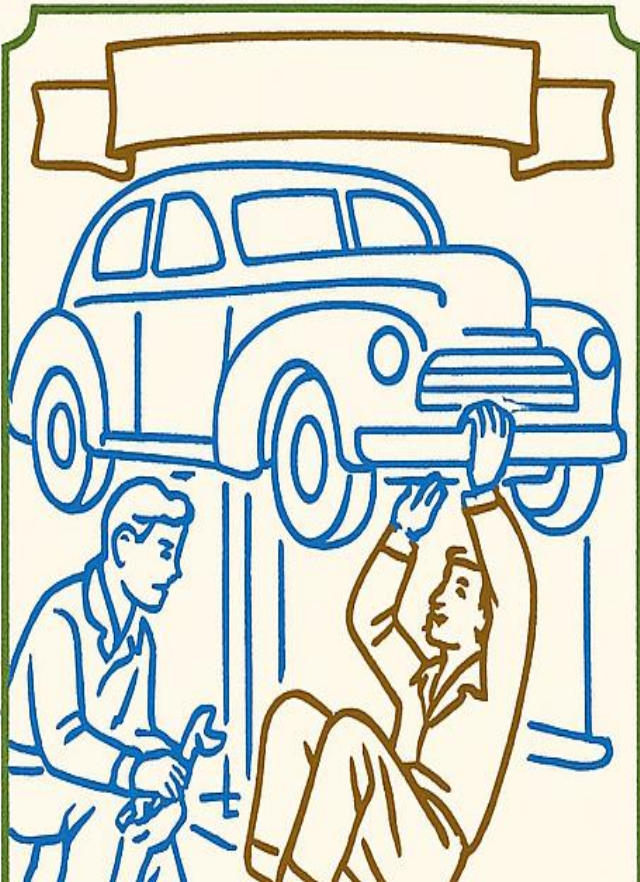
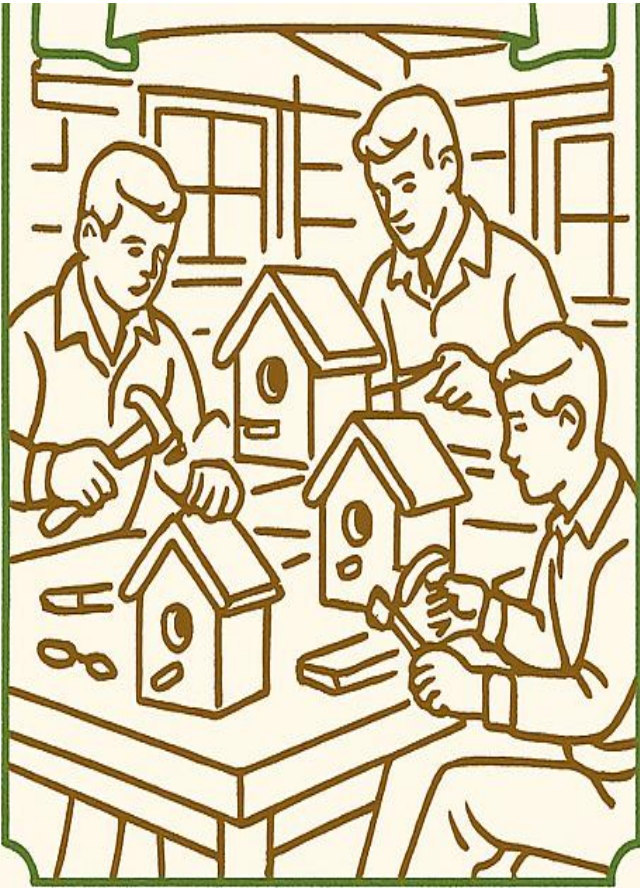
"Are You A Turtle?"

an invitation to step out of your shell, try something hard, and move slowly and deliberately toward something worth doing. Those who didn't know him assumed it was eccentric charm.

Those who did understood it perfectly.

The same question his classmates had used to tease him had become the motto of an institution that changed lives.

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What the School Offered — Tools for Life



The school offered four programs:

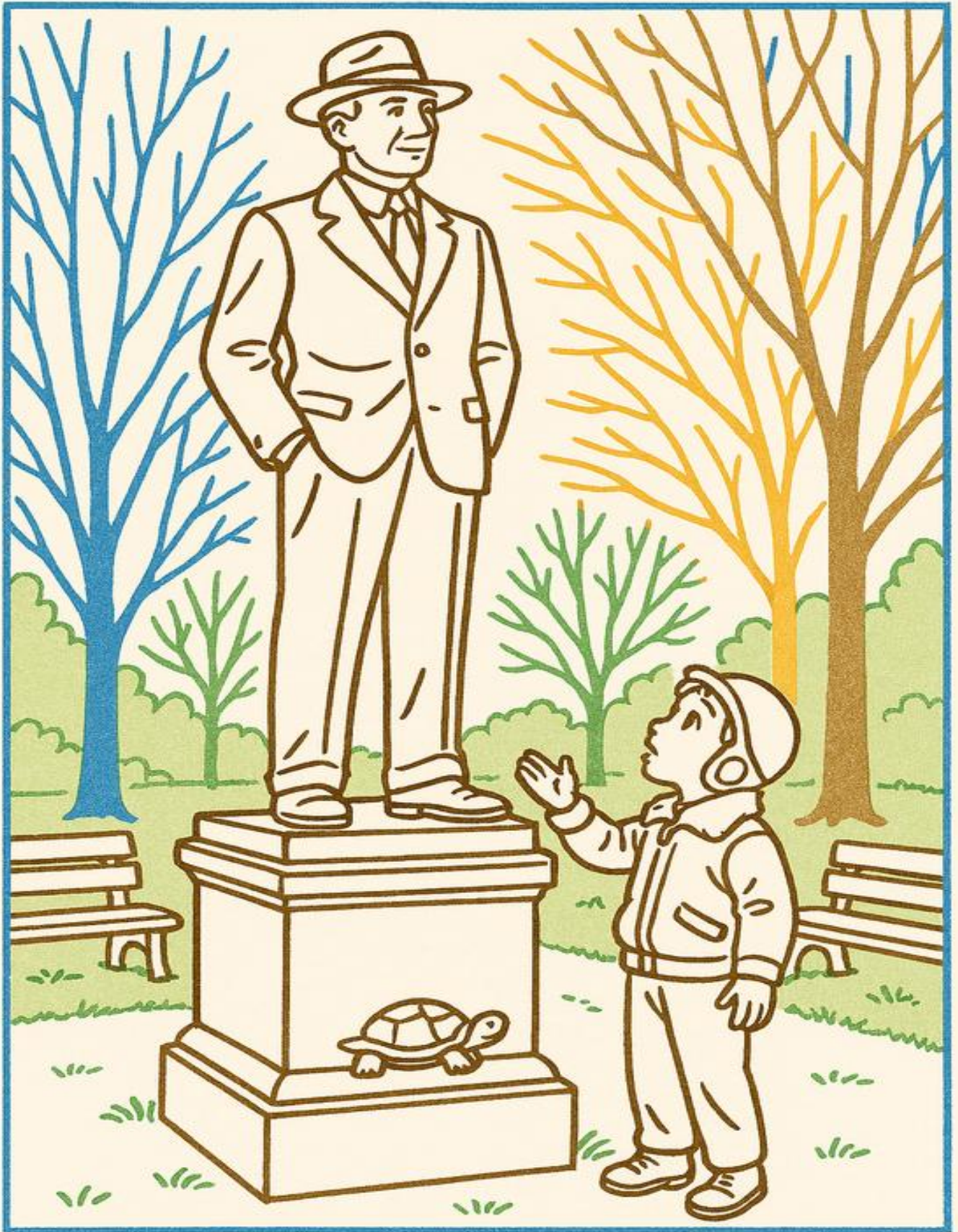
The Woodshop, where students crafted birdhouses, bat houses, wooden toys, and hand-carved turtles from reclaimed materials.

The Art Studio, where creativity was treated as a skill.
Trades Programs in mechanics, electrical work, carpentry, and plumbing.

And Business Classes covering bookkeeping, taxes, licensing, financing, and marketing.

The school's influence spread, and local school systems adopted Ervin's model as their own.

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Chapter 12 — Legacy

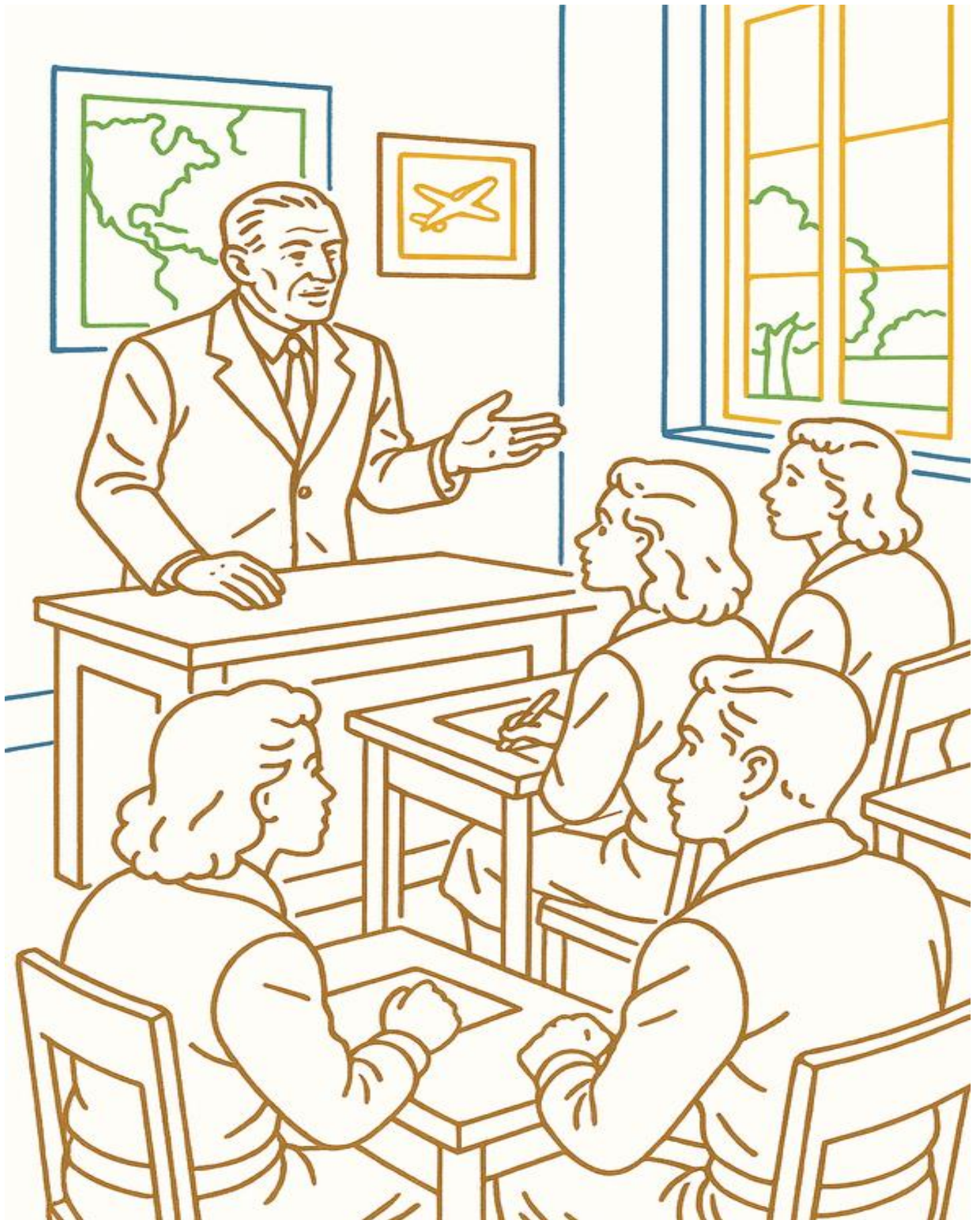
The Statue of the Imperial Turtle



In time, the community honored Ervin's legacy with a statue depicting him as the Imperial Turtle, patient and wise, a symbol of everything his life had embodied: deliberate thought, fierce loyalty, irrepressible humor, and a generosity of spirit that outlasted the man himself.

The children who had once called him "Turtle" with teasing voices had grown old alongside him and they understood now what Captain Jamie had always known.

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WWII TURTLE CLUB

The Eternal Turtle — A Legacy That Lives On



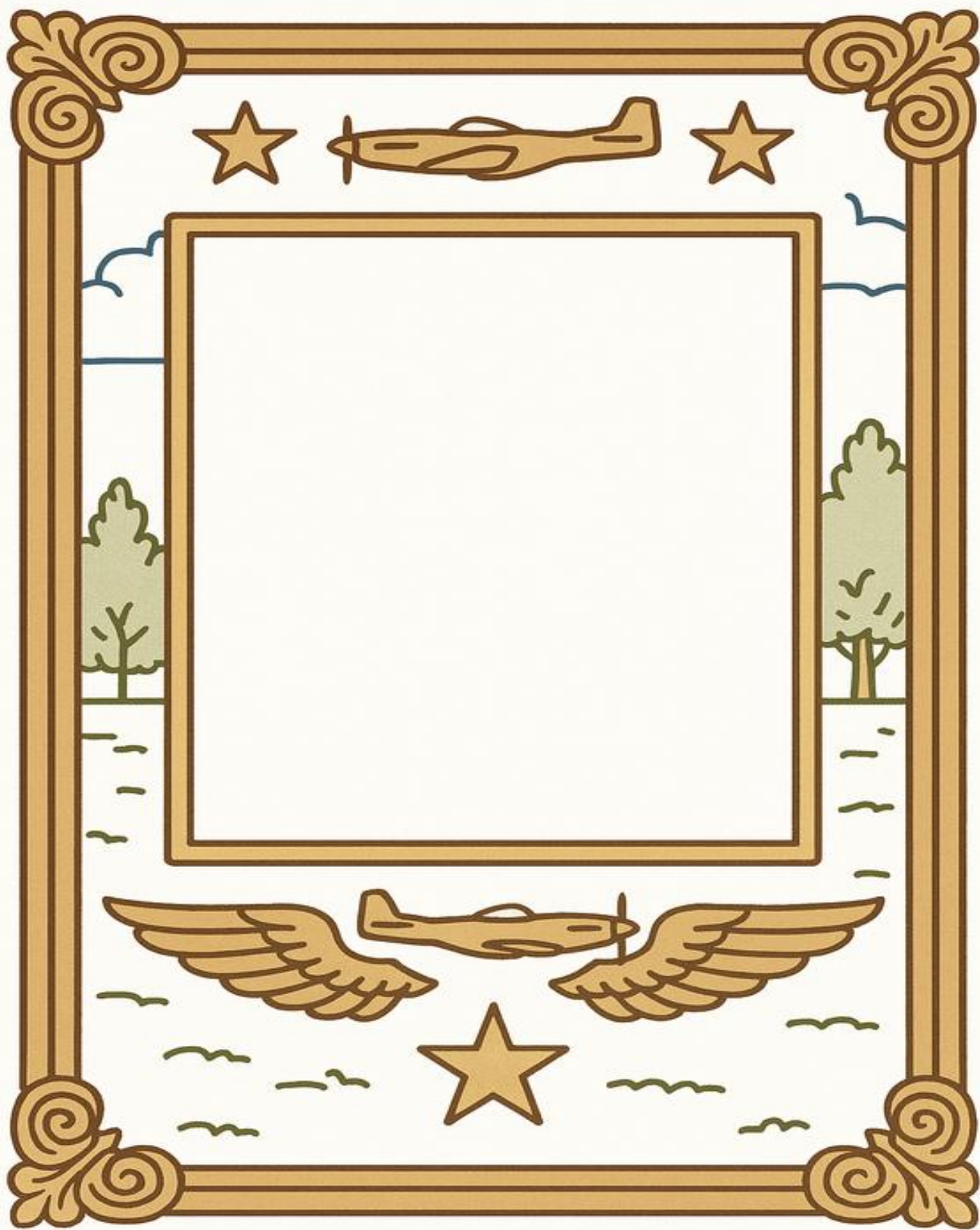
Ervin's legacy extended far beyond the vocational school shaping a new era of community, courage, and purpose. A generation of young people who might otherwise have had no path found one.

A Turtle Club that began on a rainy night in a British officers' club spread across the country.

A question asked by a teasing child became a password, a motto, a movement, and a membership that anyone can join.

The turtle always gets where it's going.

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WWII TURTLE CLUB

The Legacy Continues — worldwarii.us



The World War II Turtle Club
inspired by the life of Ervin William Reed
is a living tribute to the veterans of all wars.

Visit worldwarii.us to read the full story, download free
coloring pages, and join the club.

Free Turtle Club Membership Cards are available at
worldwarii.us

print at home, carry with pride.

Membership Kits with laminated cards are also available in
our shop.

Join the club. Answer the question. You bet your sweet ass.

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★ ARE YOU A ★
✈️ TURTLE? ✈️



**OFFICIAL
WORLD WAR II
TURTLE CLUB
MEMBERSHIP CARD**



Name _____
Date _____



worldwarrii.us

WWII TURTLE CLUB

Are You a Turtle?

You Bet Your Sweet Ass I Am.



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Download your free printable

Turtle Club Membership Card.

Shop for WWII Heritage apparel.

Share this coloring book with a child

and tell them the story of the boy who never forgot anything,

who flew the greatest fighter planes in history,

and who turned a childhood nickname into a brotherhood

that has never stopped growing.

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