

A decorative border with colorful geometric patterns, including vertical stripes and wavy lines in shades of red, green, yellow, and blue, runs along the top and bottom edges of the image.

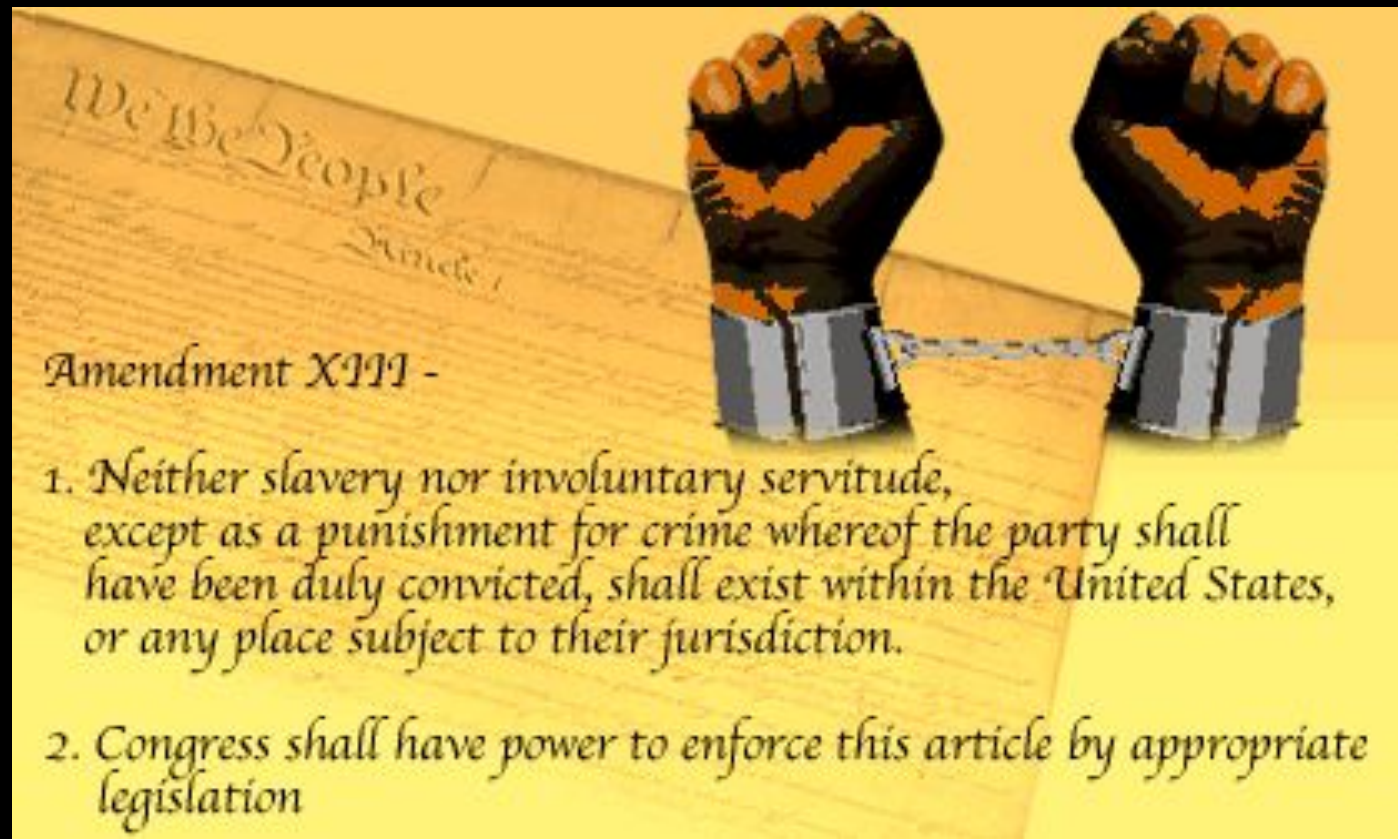
BLACK  
HISTORY  
MONTH

**Slavery in the United States began soon after the English colonists first settled in Virginia in 1619. A Dutch ship carrying African slaves docked at Point Comfort, which served as Jamestown's checkpoint for ships wanting to trade with the colonists.**



# Did you know that...

Slavery lasted until the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. December 6, 1865



# Do the math!

1619 to December 6, 1865

# That's 246 years of Slavery!

Now let's go back in time...  
to 1830....

**when there were  
slaves....**



**FREE STATES**

**SLAVE STATES**

By 1830 there were 14 slave states.

# Slavery

Slavery existed in many different forms. African Americans were enslaved on small farms, large plantations, in cities and towns, inside homes, out in the fields, and in factories.



**Slaves were considered personal property, and they were personal property simply because they were black.**

**Most slaves lived in a House near the master's house.**

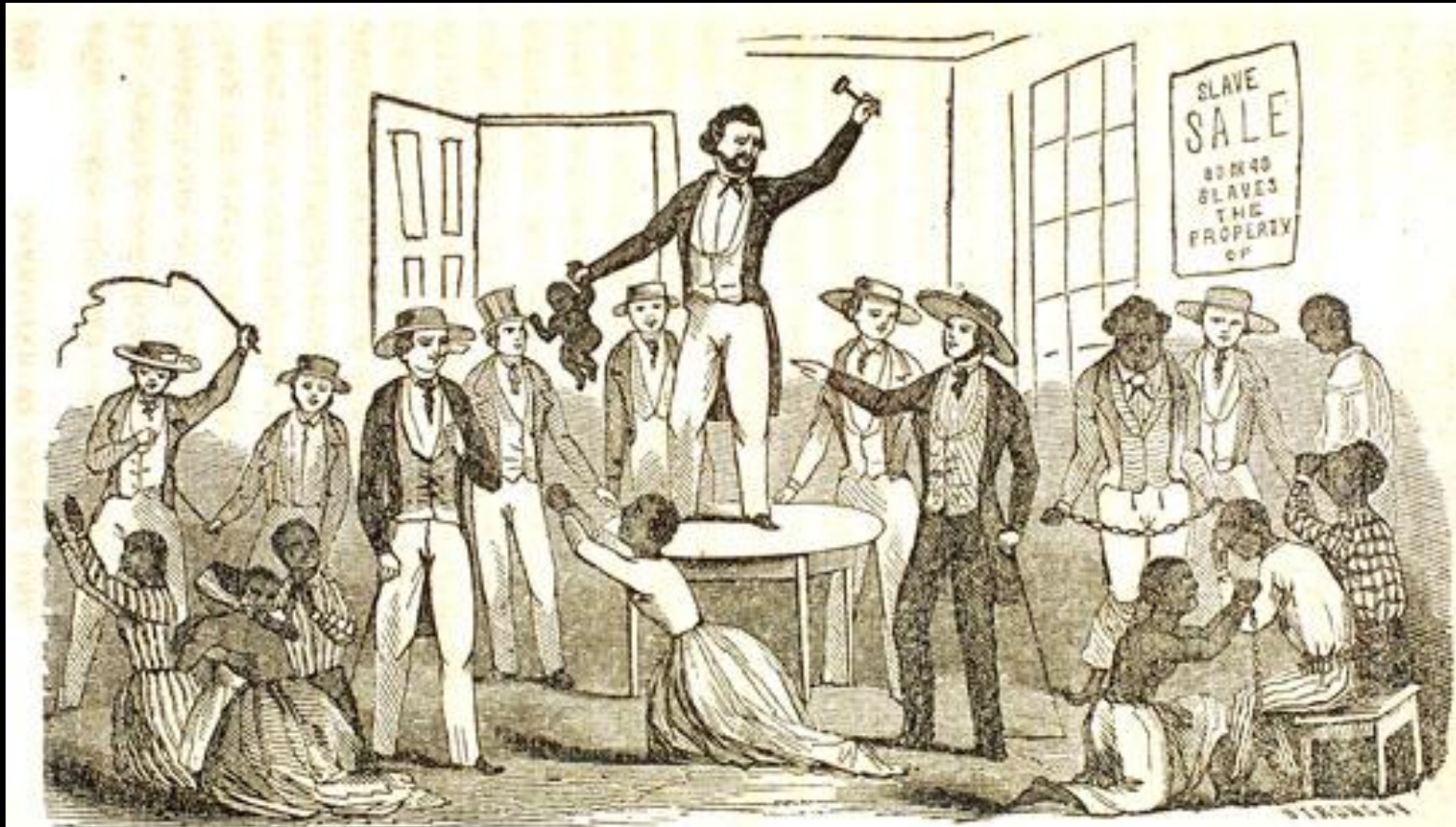






**The standard image of Southern slavery is that of a large plantation with hundreds of slaves. In fact, such situations were rare.**

One of the worst conditions that slaves had to live under was the constant threat of sale. Even if their master was a caring and kind master, slaves knew that a financial loss or another personal crisis could lead them to the auction block.



Slaves were sometimes sold as a form of punishment. And it was hard to keep mothers and children and fathers together. Immediate families were often separated.



If they were kept together, they were almost always sold away from their extended families. Grandparents, sisters, brothers, and cousins could all find themselves forcibly scattered, never to see each other again.

Even if they or their loved ones were never sold, slaves had to live with the constant threat that they could be.

# Slave Codes

**Slaves had to live under a set of laws called the Slave Codes. The codes varied slightly from state to state, but the basic idea was the same: the slaves were considered personal property, not people, and were treated as such.**

# Slave Codes

**Slaves could not testify in court against a white, make contracts, leave the plantation without permission, strike a white (even in self-defense), buy and sell goods, own firearms, gather without a white present, possess any anti-slavery literature, or visit the homes of whites or free blacks.**

# Slave Codes

**Slaves could not be found together in any road without a white person, or they would be liable to 20 lashes each.**

**If any slave visit a plantation, other than that of his master, without a written pass, he/she shall be liable to 10 lashes.**

Thousands of slaves ran away. Some left the plantation for days or weeks at a time and lived in hiding. They hid in carts, rode on horseback, walked hundreds of miles through forests and swamps, and crossed flowing rivers in summer and icebound rivers in winter. They traveled any way they could to reach freedom.





**Historians believe between  
60,000 and 100,000 slaves  
escaped to freedom.**

**They traveled on what became  
known as the**

**Underground Railroad.**



**The Underground Railroad, of course, was not a real railroad.**

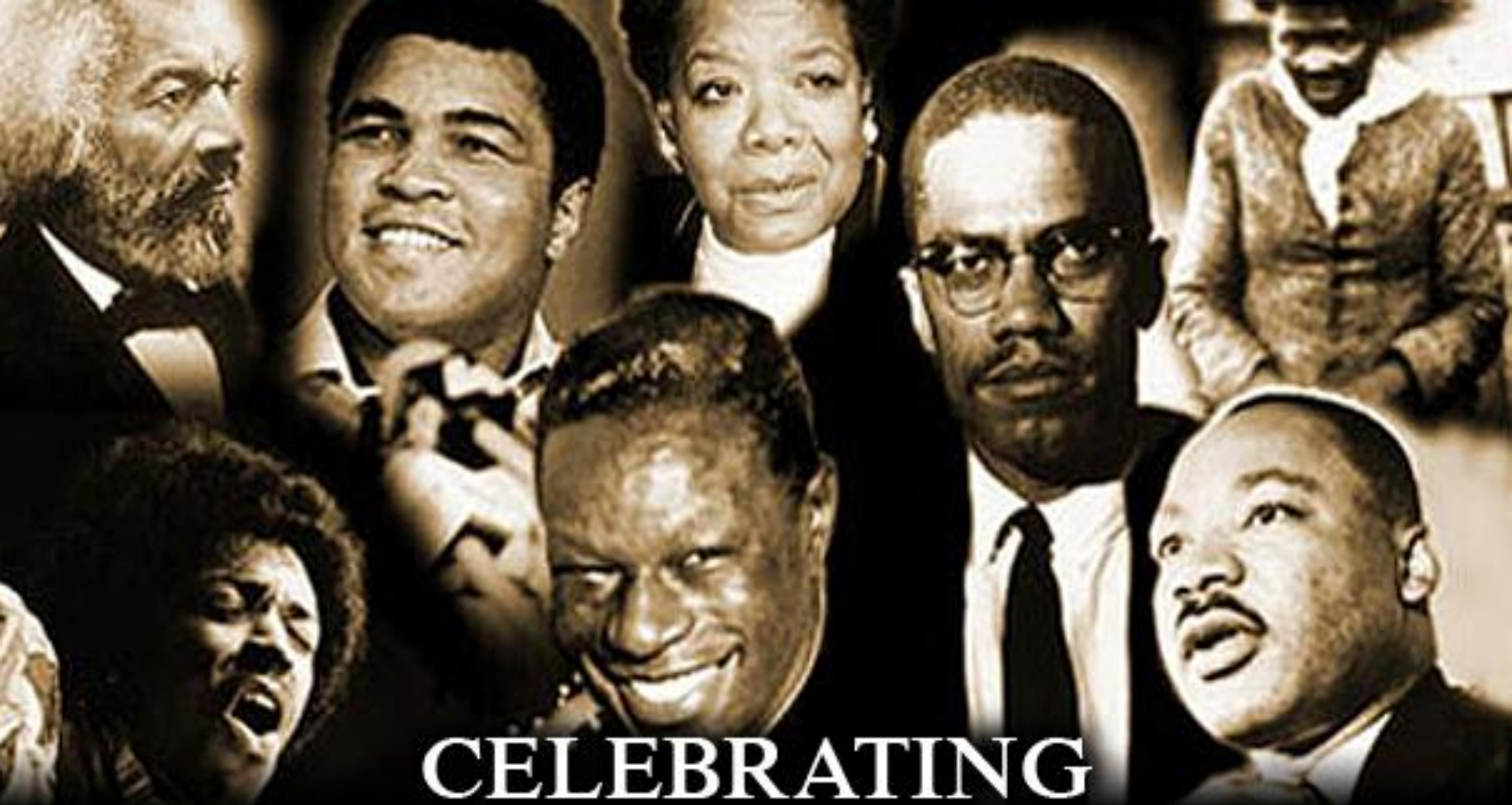
**It was all the secret ways slaves made their way from the South to the North.**

# UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

c. 1860

ORGANIZED & UNORGANIZED TERRITORIES





CELEBRATING  
**BLACK HISTORY**  
*Month*

# February



BLACK  
HISTORY  
MONTH

The image features the words "BLACK HISTORY MONTH" in large, 3D, gold-colored block letters. The letters are arranged in three rows: "BLACK" on top, "HISTORY" in the middle, and "MONTH" on the bottom. The letters have a metallic sheen and are set against a background of a stylized American flag with red and white stripes and a blue field with white stars. The background is slightly blurred and has a warm, golden glow. The text is reflected on a dark, glossy surface below it.

Since 1976, Black History Month has been celebrated in the United States during the month of February.

Today we will celebrate Black History Month by looking at one of the best nonfiction picture books of the decade.

This book is a true story. It will show you just how far a slave will go to seek freedom.

# Henry's Freedom Box

*A True Story from the Underground Railroad*



Written by Ellen Levine

Illustrated by Kadir  
Nelson



The book cover features a central illustration of a young Black girl with her hair in a bun, wearing a white collared shirt and a patterned skirt. She is sitting on a wooden crate, looking directly at the viewer with a serious expression. The background is a brick wall. The authors' names are written in a cursive font on either side of the girl. The title is written in large, gold, serif letters across the middle and bottom of the cover. A small subtitle is positioned above the title.

*Ellen  
Levine*

*Kadir  
Nelson*

*A True Story from the  
Underground Railroad*

HENRY'S  
FREEDOM  
BOX



2008  
Caldecott  
Honor  
Award  
Book



# HENRY'S FREEDOM BOX

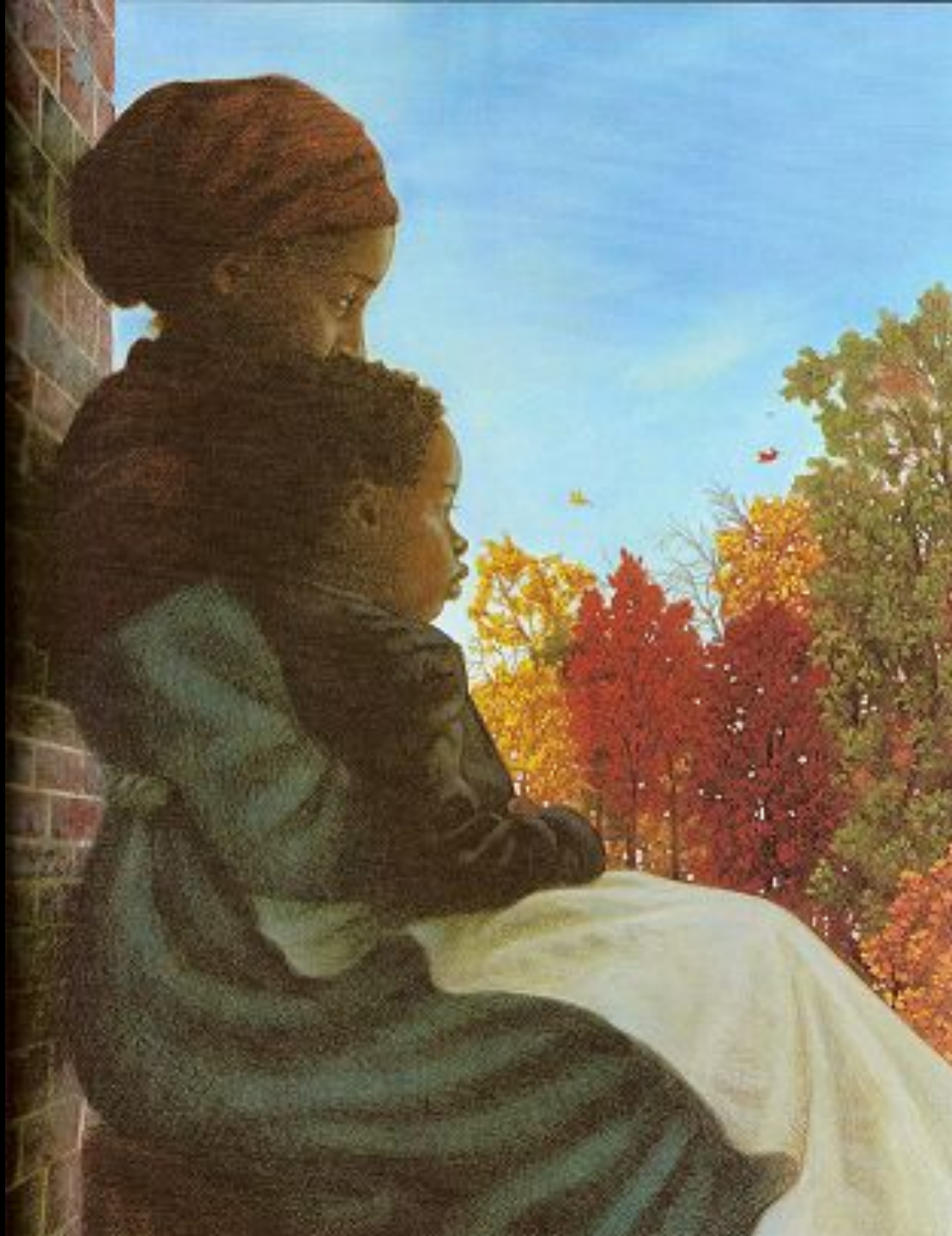
*A True Story from the Underground Railroad*

*Ellen  
Levine*

*Kadir  
Nelson*

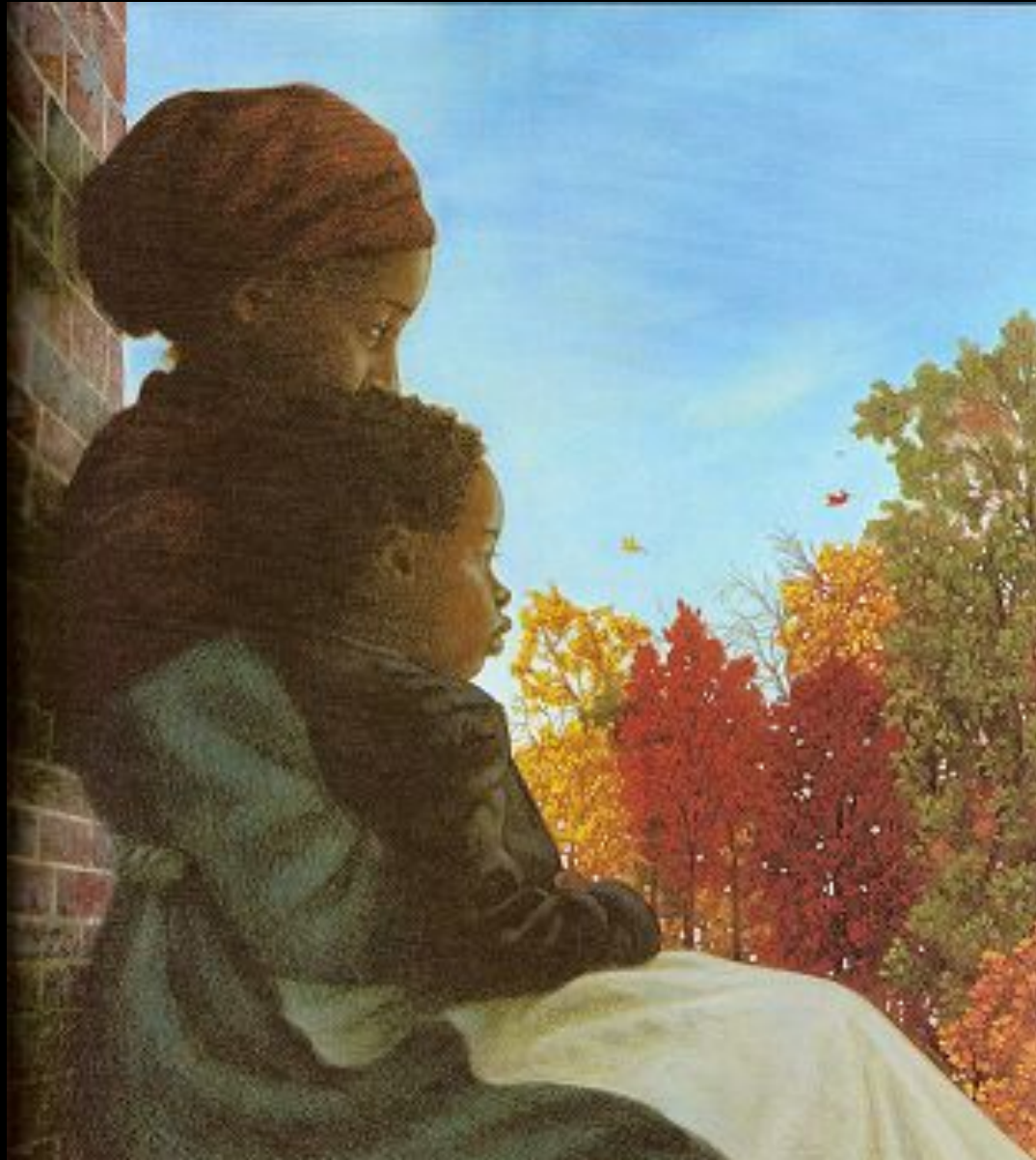
Henry Brown  
wasn't sure  
how old he  
was. Henry  
was a slave.  
And slaves  
weren't  
allowed to  
know their  
birthdays.





Henry and his  
brothers and  
sisters  
worked in  
the big  
house where  
the master  
lived.

Henry's master had been good to Henry and his family.  
But Henry's mother knew things could change. "Do you



see those  
leaves  
blowing  
in the  
wind?  
They are  
torn from  
the trees  
like slave  
children  
are torn  
from their  
families."

One morning the master called for Henry and his mother. They climbed the wide staircase. The master lay in bed with only his head above the quilt. He was very ill.



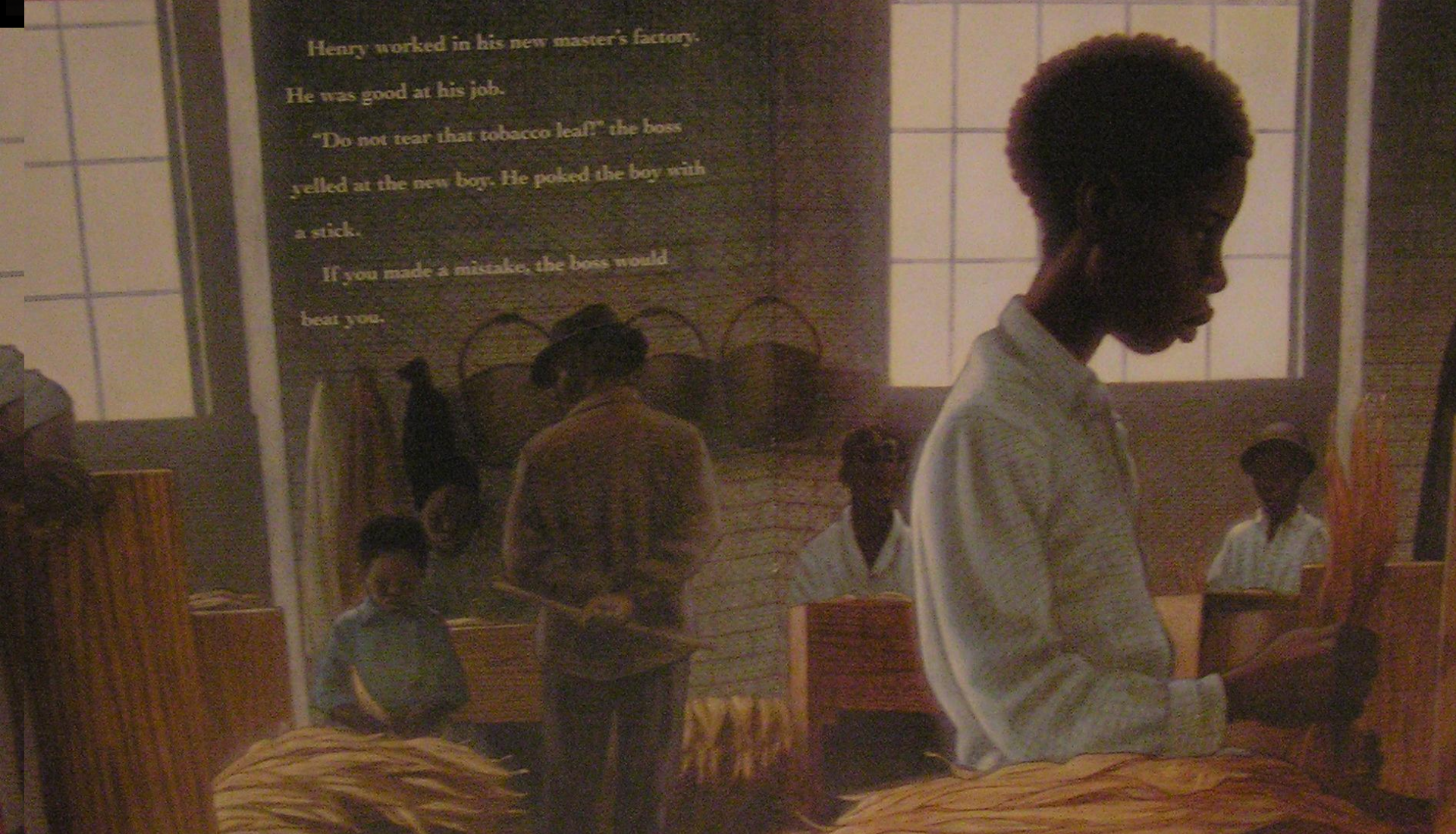
Some slaves were freed by their owners. Henry's heart beat fast. Maybe the master would set him free. But the master said, "You are a good worker, Henry. I am

giving you to my son. You must obey him and never tell a lie." Henry nodded, but he didn't say thank you. That would have been a lie.

Later that day Henry watched a bird soar high above the trees. Free bird! Happy bird! Henry thought. Henry said good-bye to his family. He looked across the field. The leaves swirled in the wind.

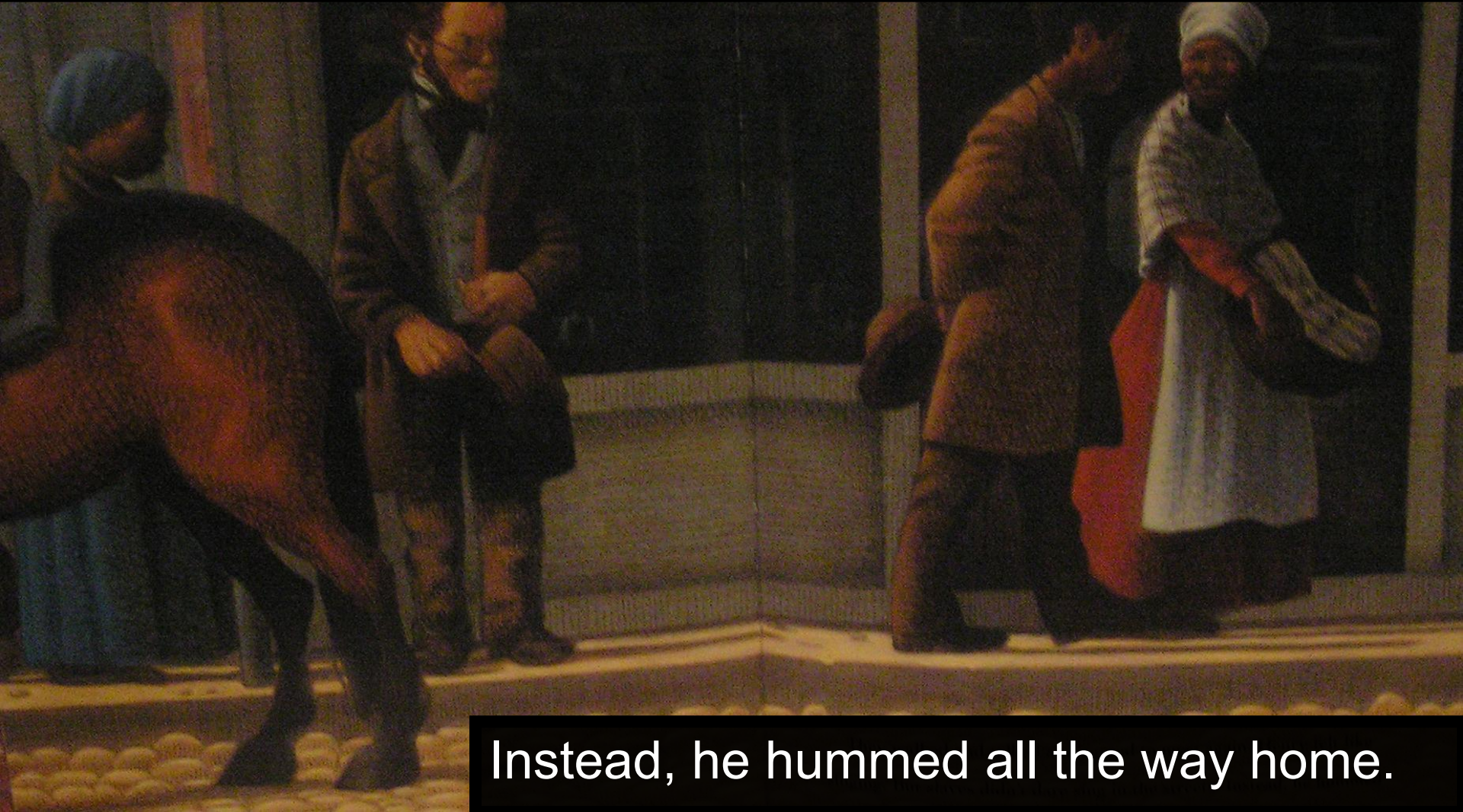


Henry worked in his new master's factory. He was good at his job. "Do not tear that tobacco leaf!" the boss yelled at the new boy. He poked the boy with a stick. If you made a mistake, the boss would beat you.



Henry worked in his new master's factory.  
He was good at his job.  
"Do not tear that tobacco leaf!" the boss  
yelled at the new boy. He poked the boy with  
a stick.  
If you made a mistake, the boss would  
beat you.


Henry was lonely. One day he met Nancy, who was shopping for her mistress. They walked and talked and agreed to meet again. Henry felt like singing. But slaves didn't dare sing in the streets.



Instead, he hummed all the way home.



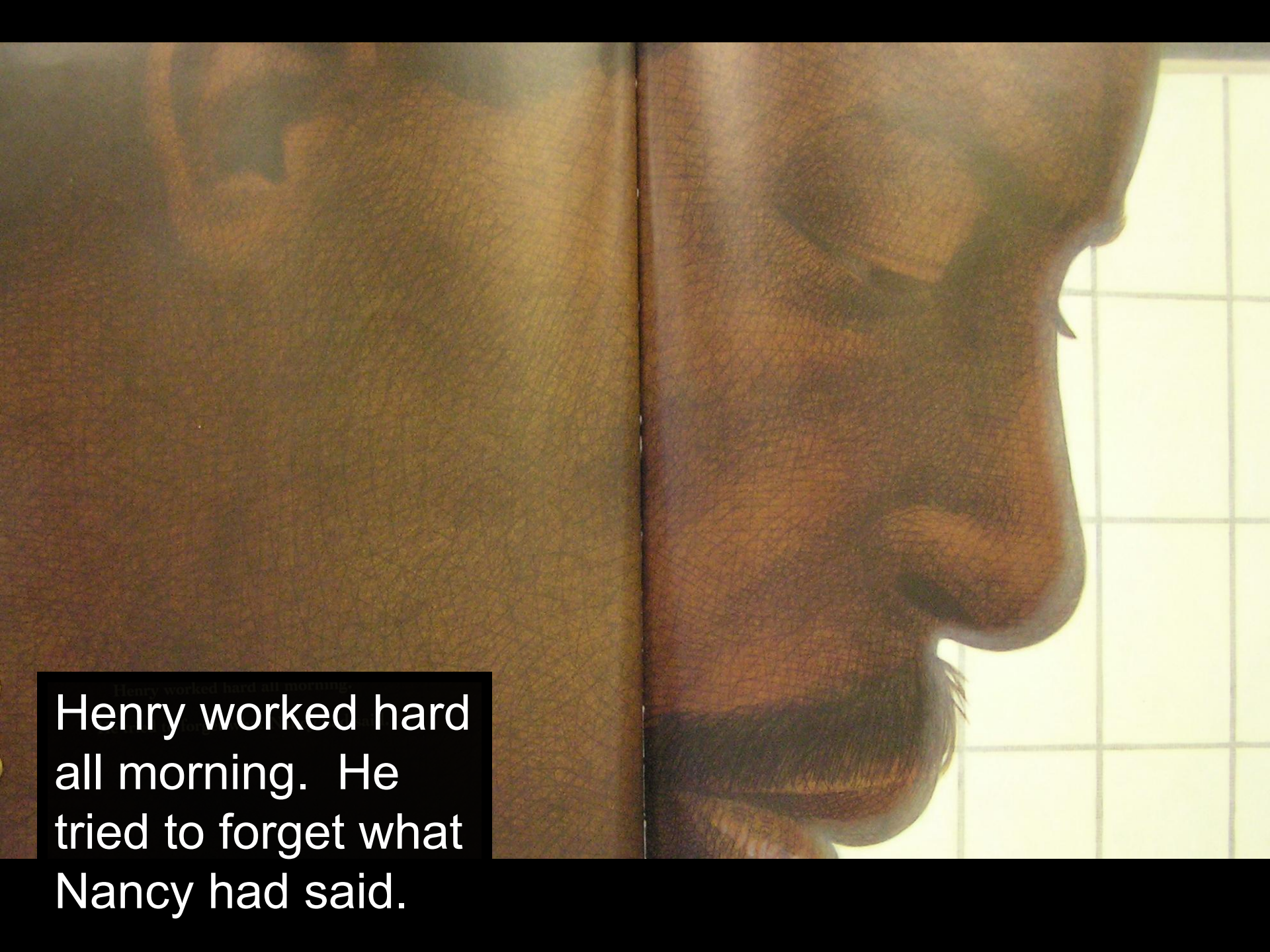
Months later, Henry asked Nancy to be his wife. When both their masters agreed, Henry and Nancy were married. Soon there was a little baby. Then another. And another.

A dimly lit scene showing a woman in a white dress holding a baby, with another person in a hat standing nearby.

Henry knew they were very lucky.

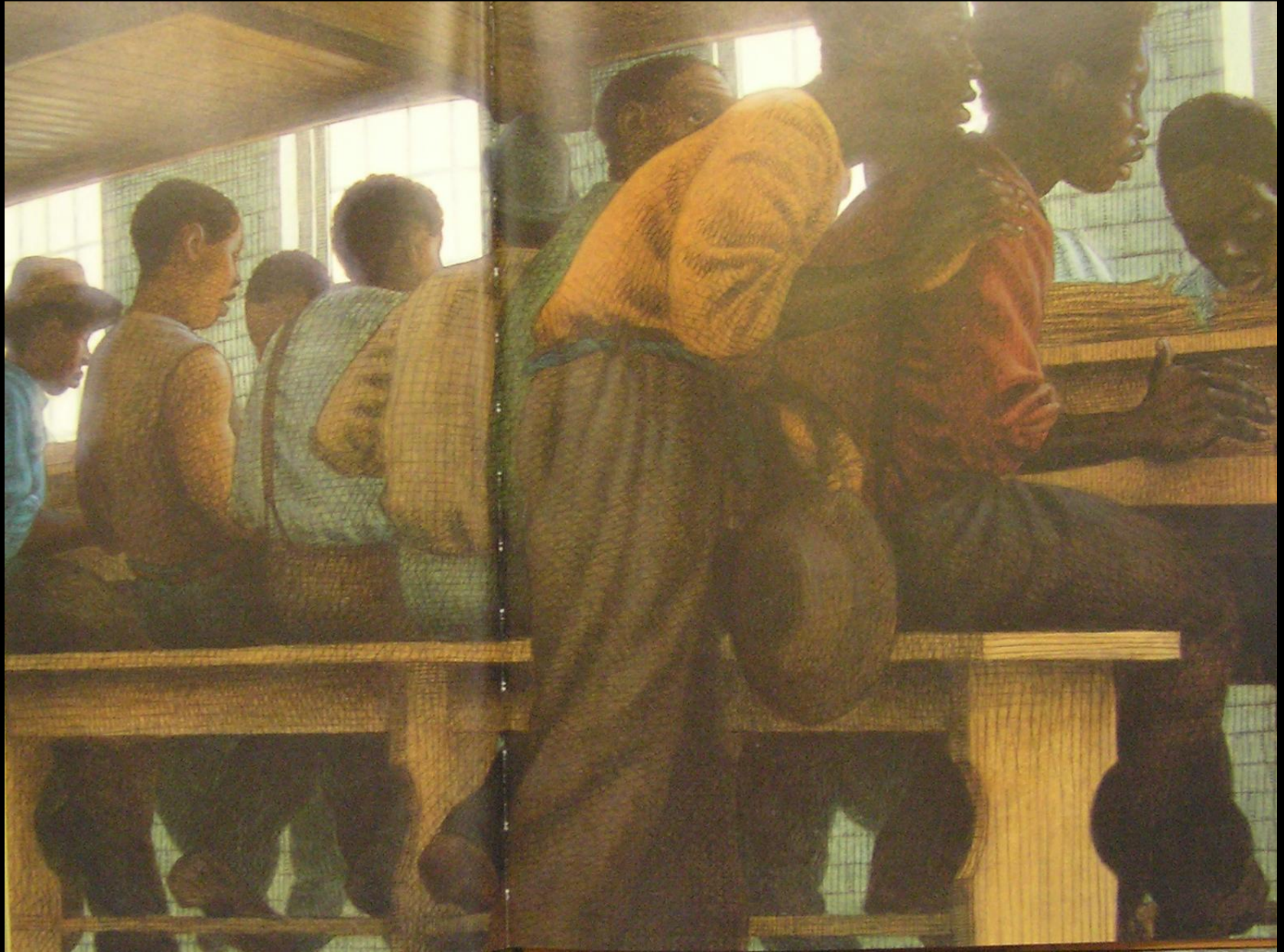
They lived together even though they had different masters. But Nancy worried. Her master had lost a great deal of money. "I'm afraid he will sell our children," she said. Henry sat very still.

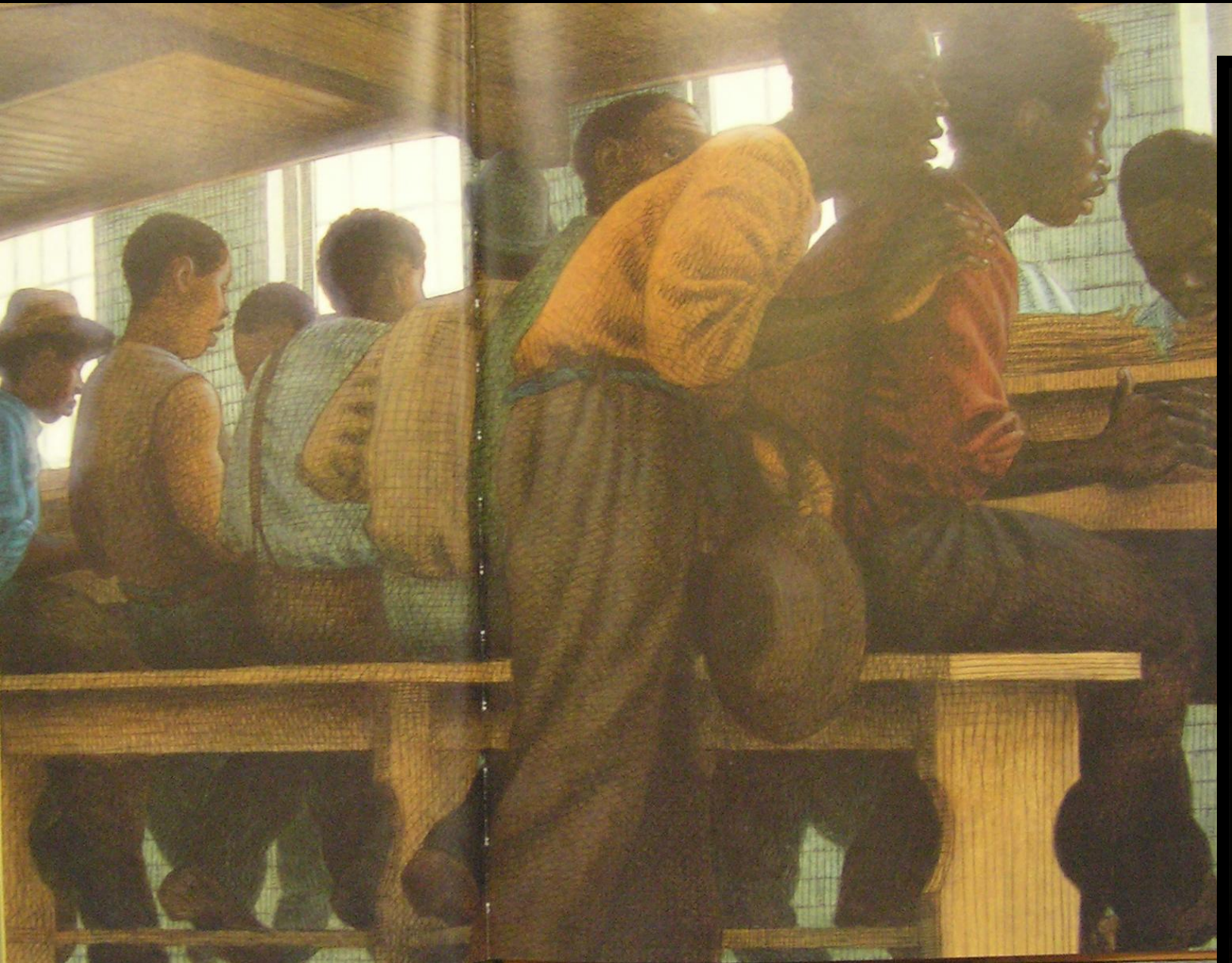




Henry worked hard all morning. He tried to forget what Nancy had said.

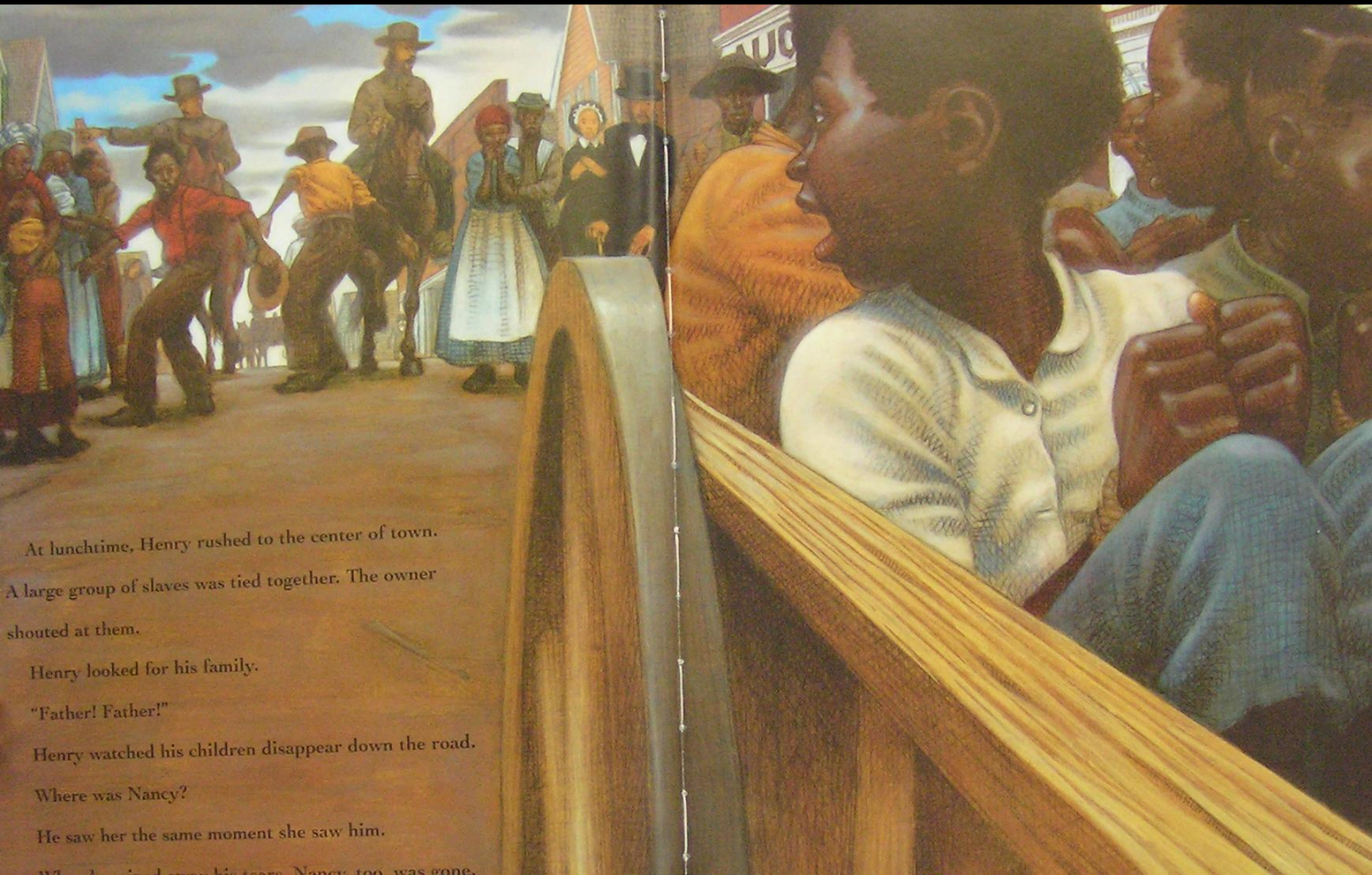
His friend James came into the factory. He whispered to Henry, “Your wife and children were just sold at the slave market.”





“No!” cried Henry. Henry couldn’t move. He couldn’t think. “Twist that tobacco!” The boss poked Henry. Henry twisted tobacco leaves. His heart twisted in his chest.

**At lunchtime, Henry rushed to the center of town. A large group of slaves were tied together. The owner shouted at them. Henry looked for his family.**



At lunchtime, Henry rushed to the center of town. A large group of slaves were tied together. The owner shouted at them.

Henry looked for his family.

"Father! Father!"

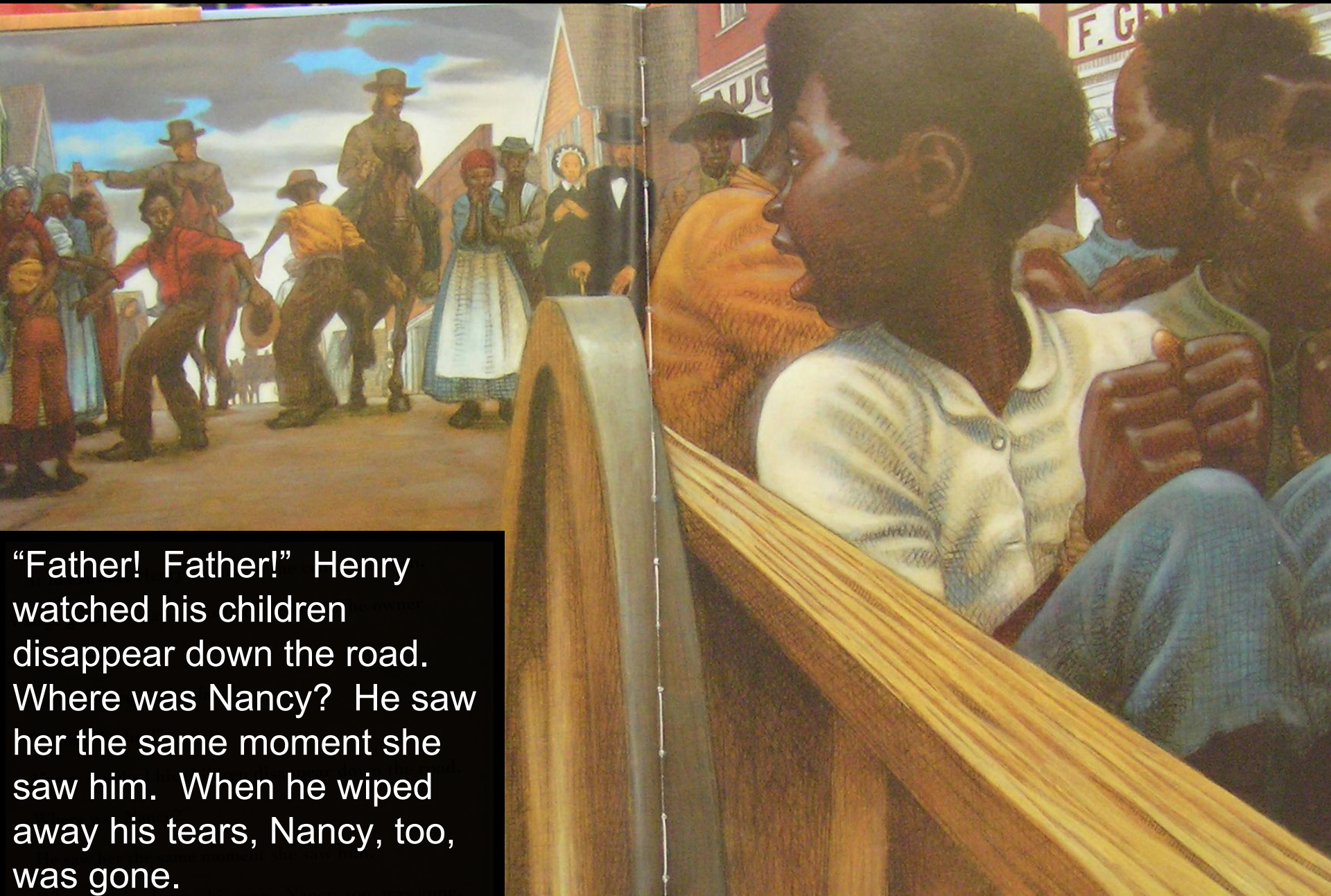
Henry watched his children disappear down the road.

Where was Nancy?

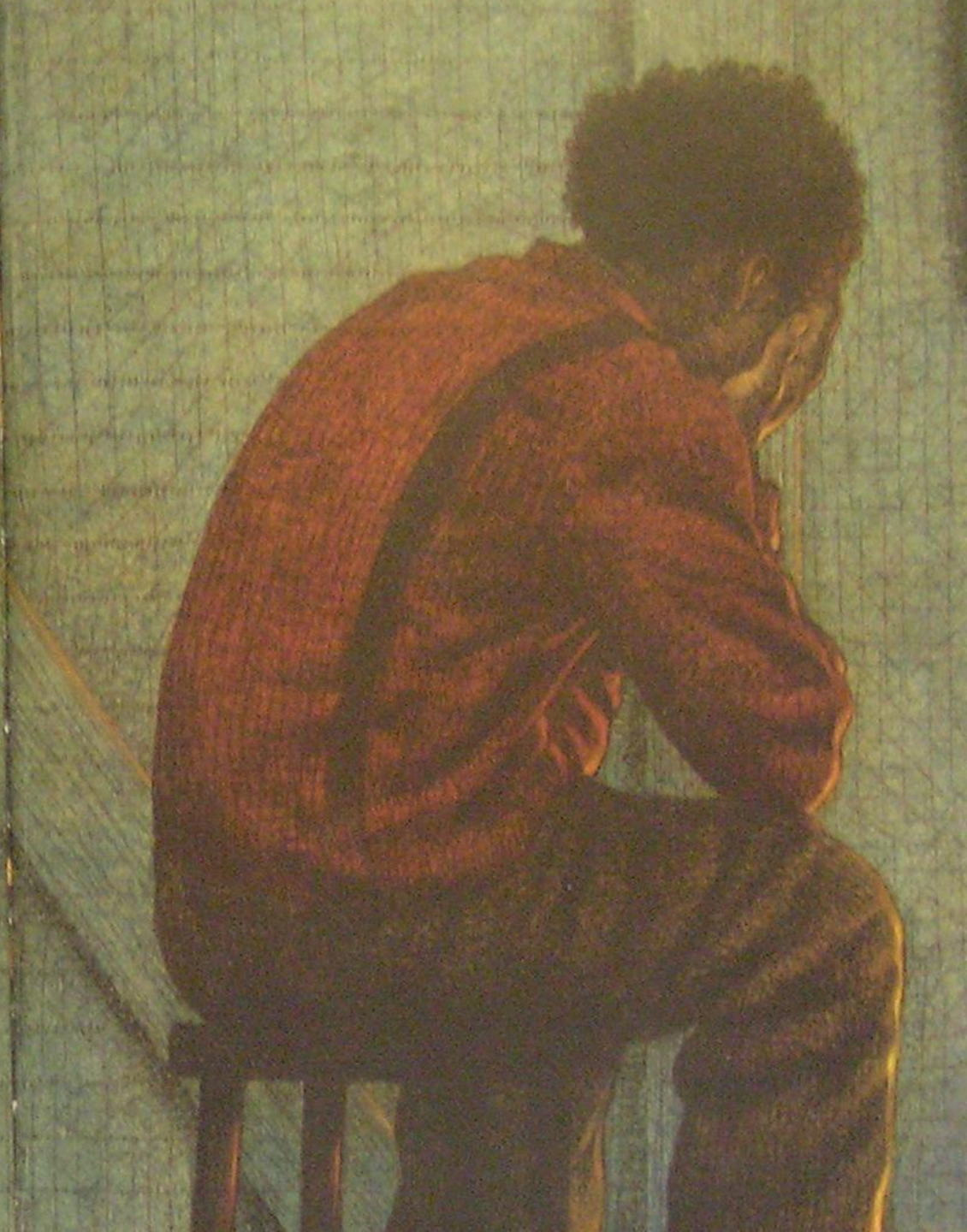
He saw her the same moment she saw him.

At that moment, Henry saw his tears. Nancy, too, was gone.

“Father! Father!” Henry watched his children disappear down the road. Where was Nancy? He saw her the same moment she saw him. When he wiped away his tears, Nancy, too, was gone.



Henry no longer sang. He couldn't hum. He went to work, and at night he ate supper and went to bed.

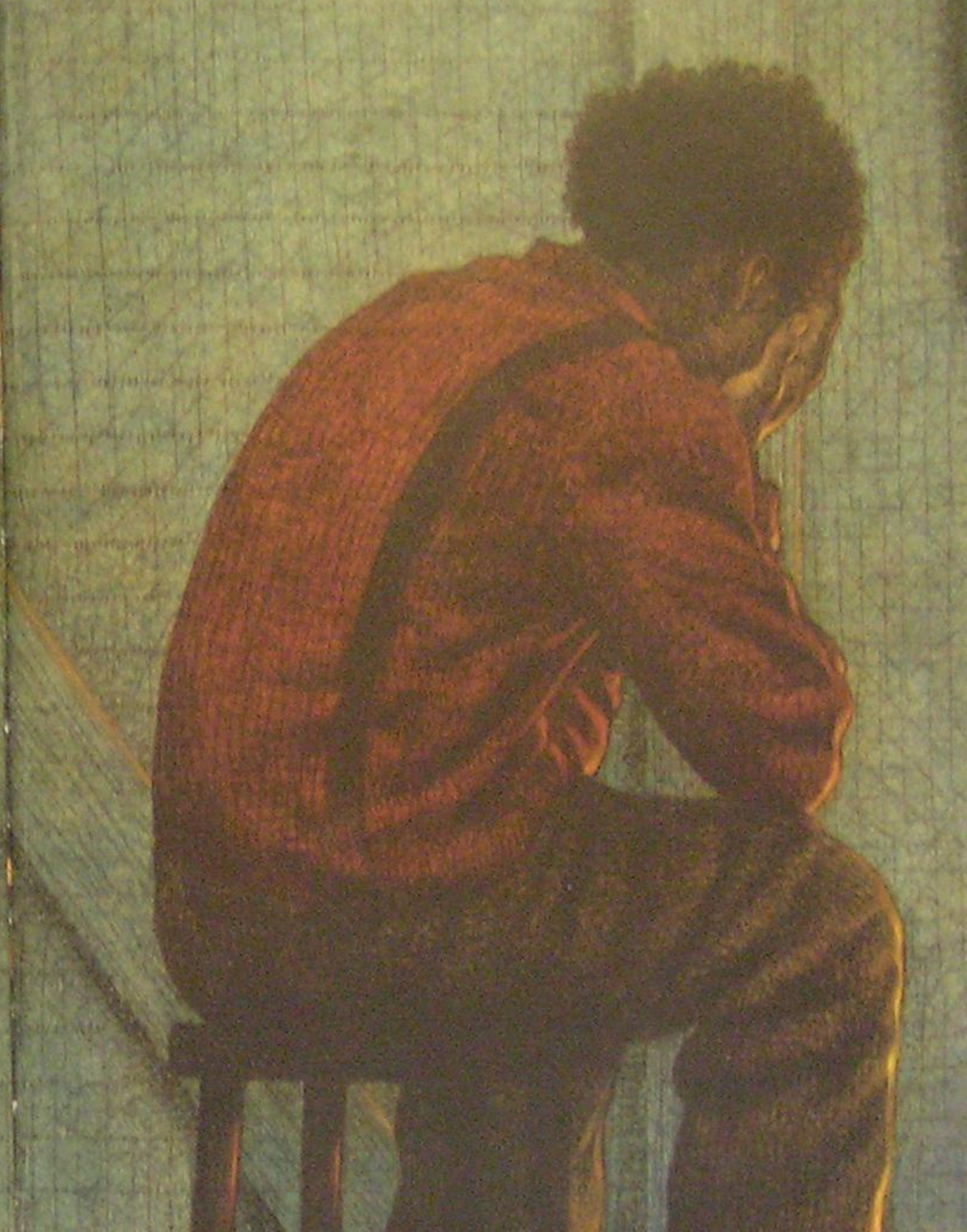




Henry tried to think  
of happy times.

But all he could see  
were the carts  
carrying away  
everyone he loved.

Henry knew he  
would never  
see his family  
again.



Many weeks passed.

Many months passed.

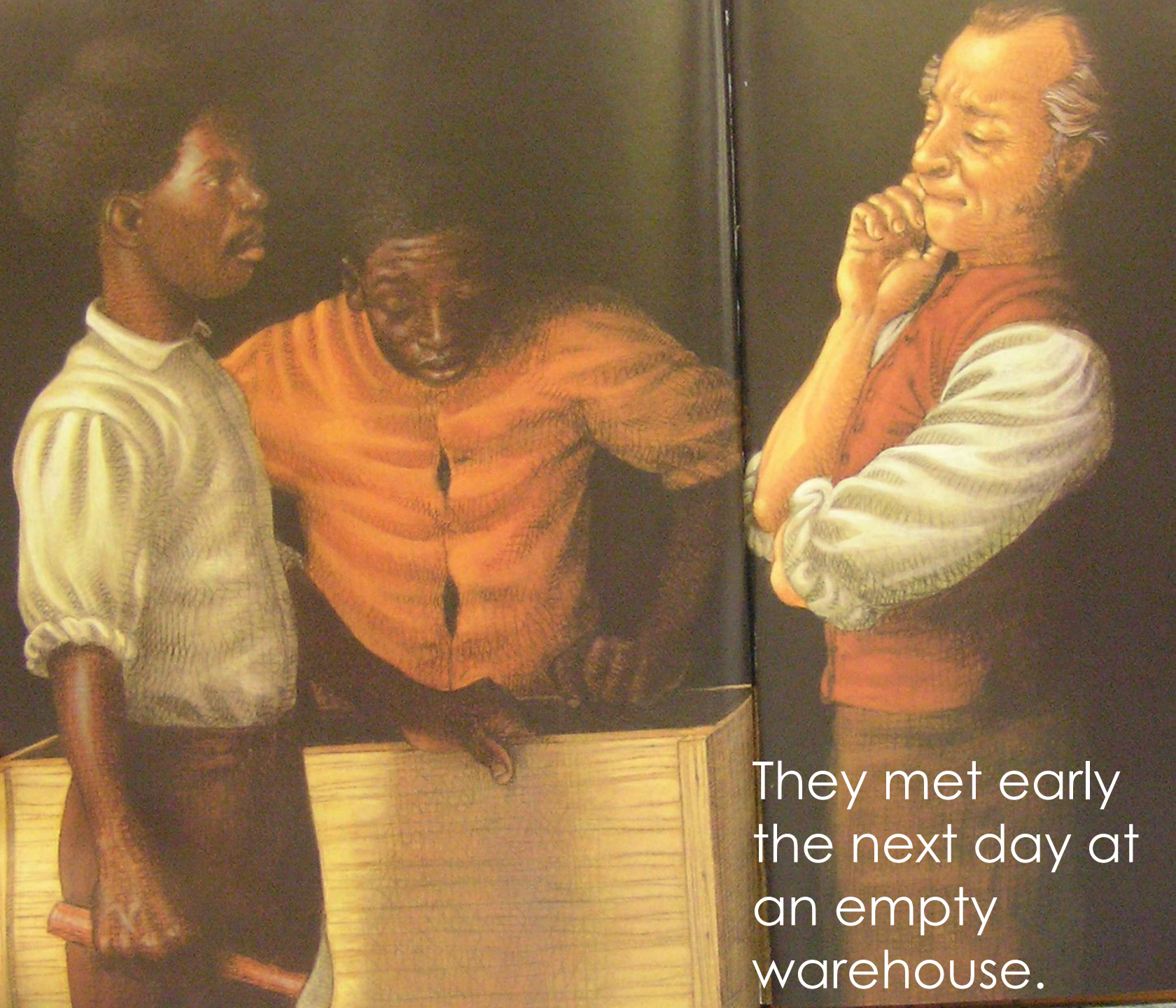
One morning, Henry heard singing. A little bird flew out of a tree into the open sky. And Henry thought about being free.

But how?

How could he be free?

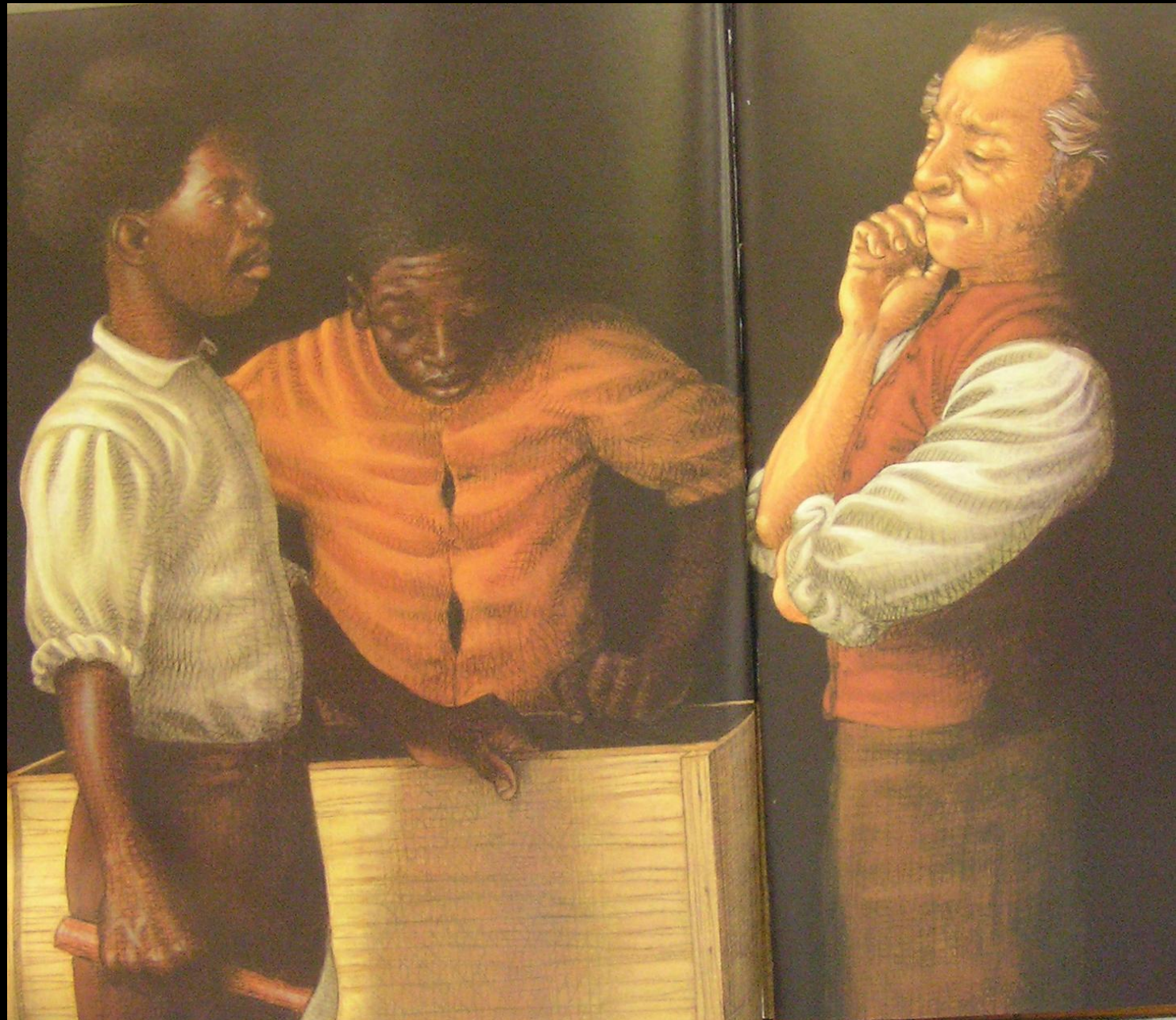
As he lifted a crate,  
he knew the answer.

Henry asked his friend James and Dr. Smith to help him. Dr. Smith was a white man who thought slavery was wrong.

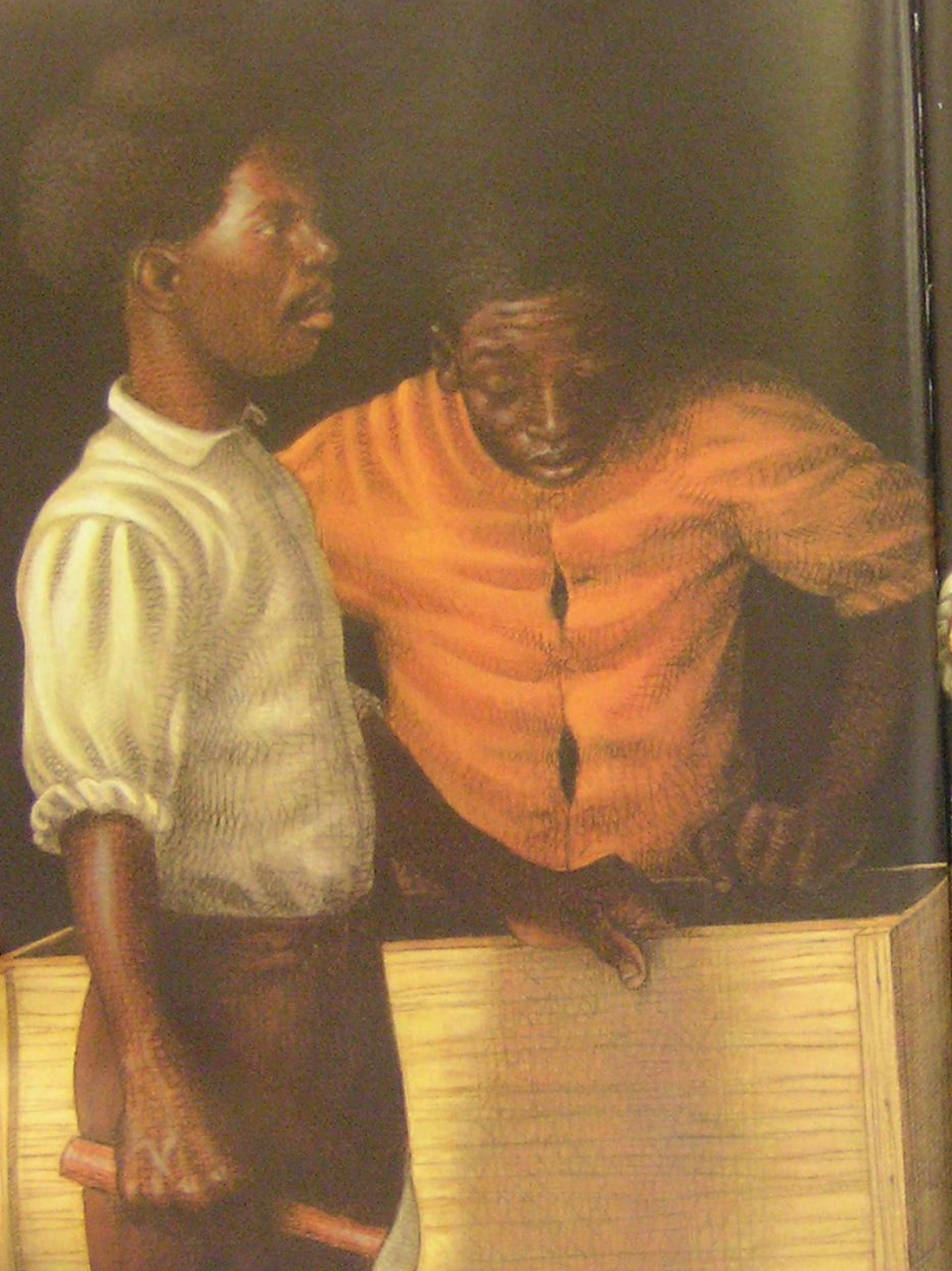


They met early  
the next day at  
an empty  
warehouse.

**“I will mail myself to a place where there are no slaves!” he said.**







James stared at the box, then at Henry. "What if you cough and someone hears you?"

"I will cover my mouth and hope," Henry said.



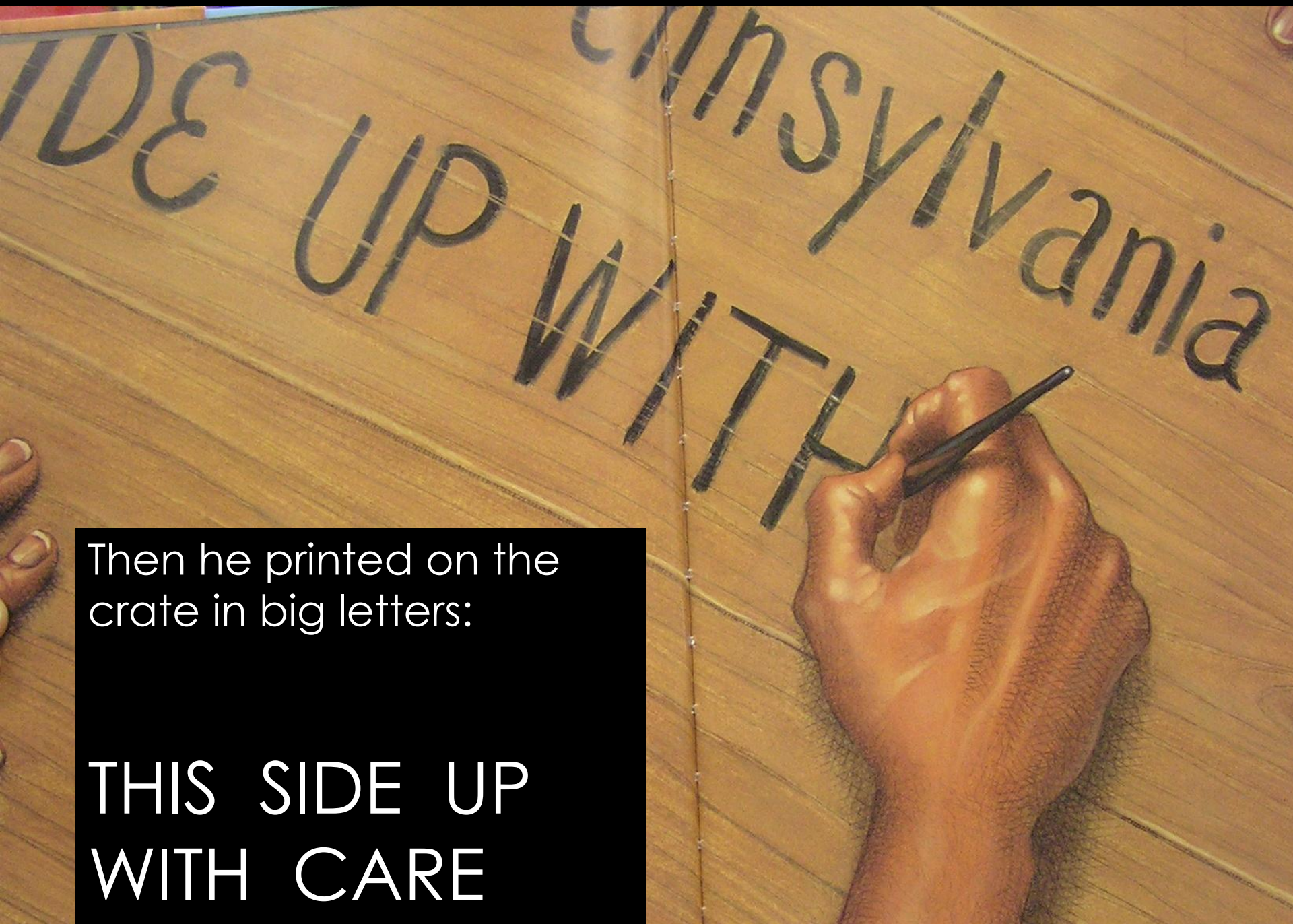
Dr. Smith wrote on the box:

To: William H. Johnson

Arch Street

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Henry would be delivered to friends in Philadelphia.



Then he printed on the  
crate in big letters:

**THIS SIDE UP  
WITH CARE**

Henry needed an excuse to stay home, or the work boss would think he had run off. James pointed to Henry's sore finger. But Henry knew it wasn't bad enough. He opened a bottle of oil of vitriol.

Henry needed an excuse to stay home, or the work boss would think he had run off.

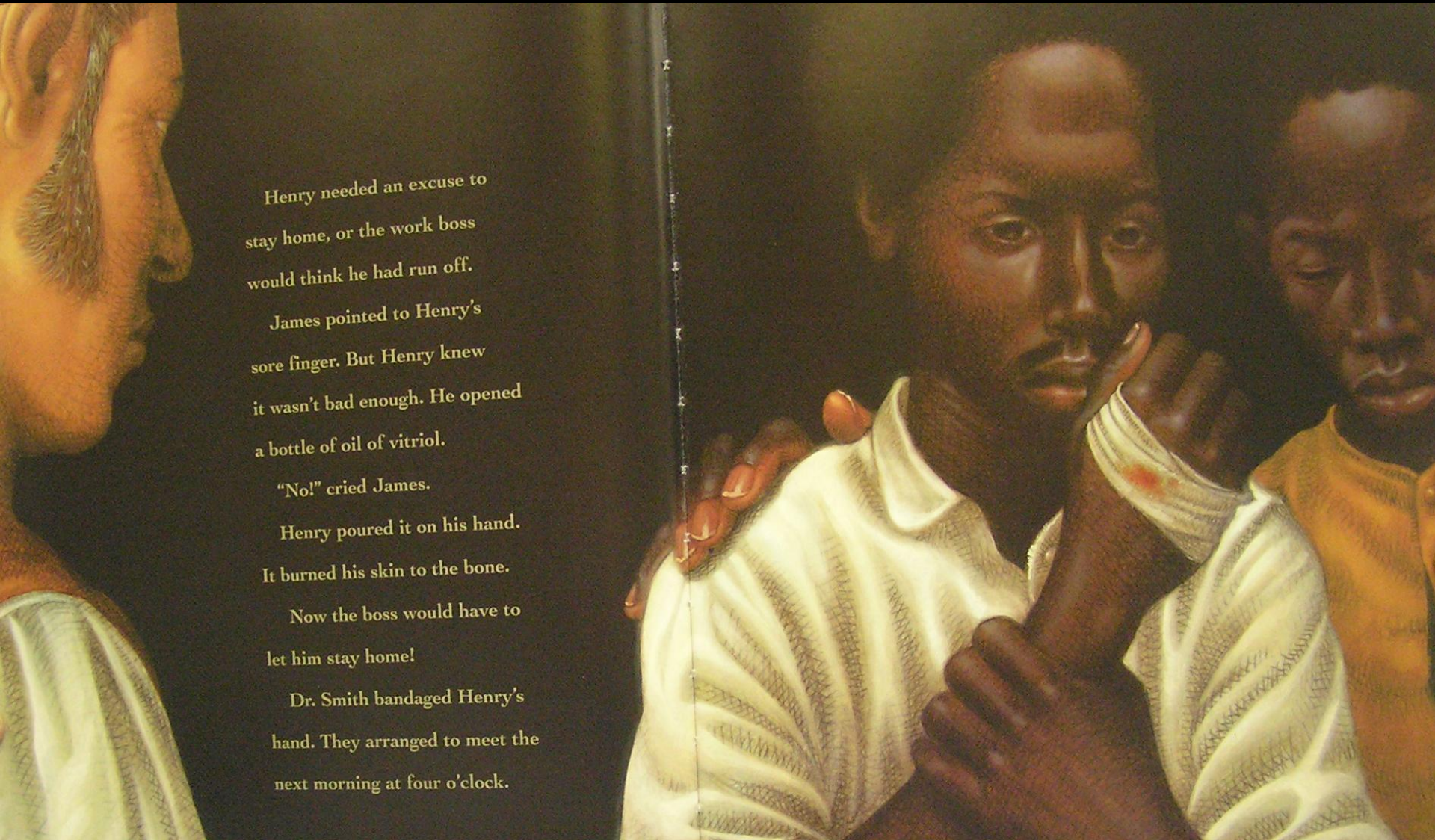
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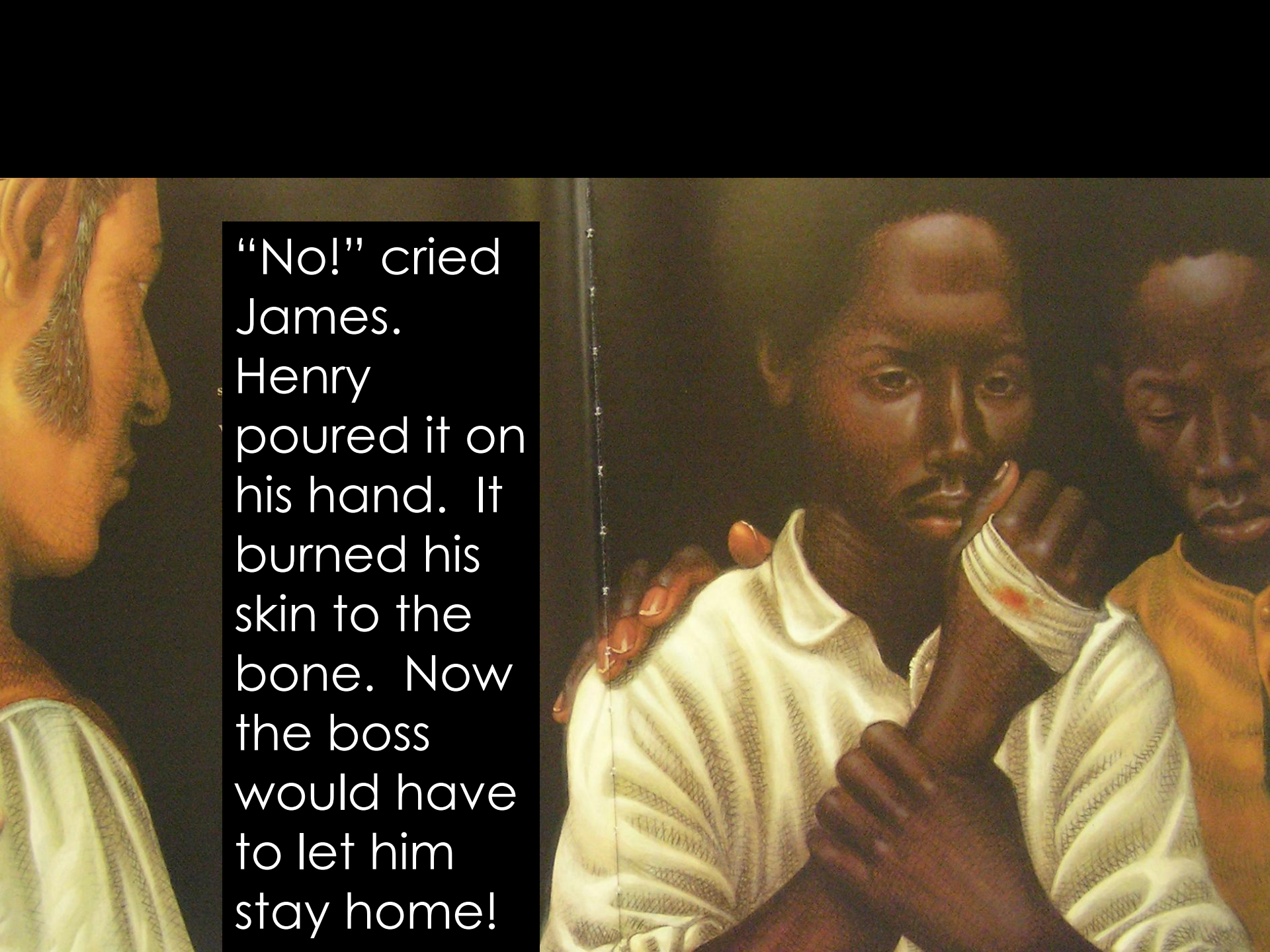
"No!" cried James.

Henry poured it on his hand. It burned his skin to the bone.

Now the boss would have to let him stay home!

Dr. Smith bandaged Henry's hand. They arranged to meet the next morning at four o'clock.





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They arranged to meet the next morning at four o'clock.

A detailed illustration of a man's profile, showing his ear, hair, and the side of his face. He is wearing a light-colored, textured shirt.

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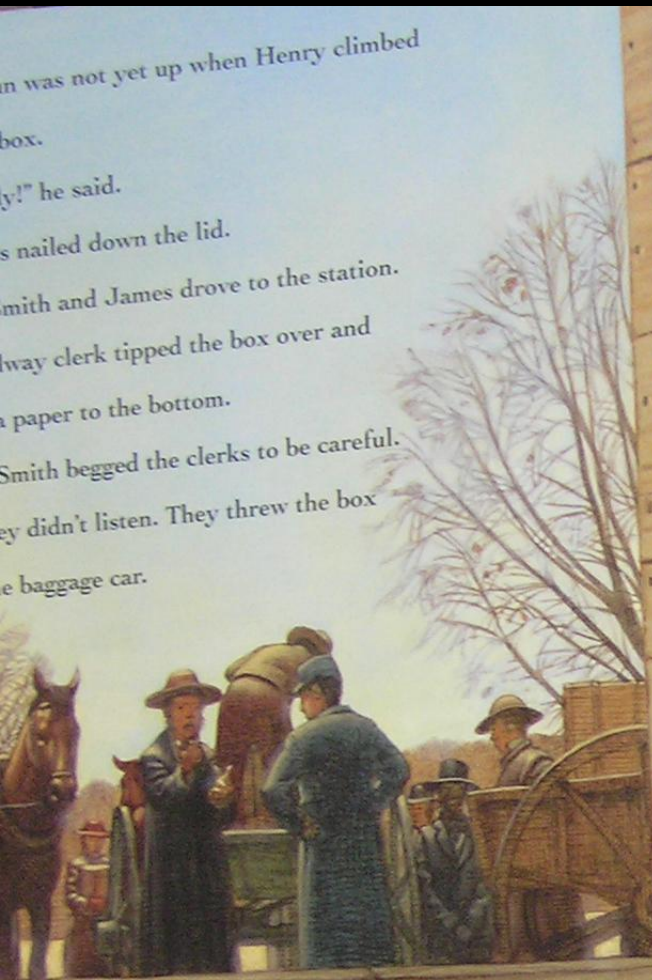


The sun was not yet up when Henry climbed into the box. "Ready!" he said. James nailed down the lid. Dr. Smith and James drove to the station.





**The railway clerk tipped the box over and nailed a paper to the bottom. Dr. Smith begged the clerks to be careful. But they didn't listen. They threw the box into the baggage car.**



... was not yet up when Henry climbed  
... box.  
... y!" he said.  
... s nailed down the lid.  
... Smith and James drove to the station.  
... lway clerk tipped the box over and  
... paper to the bottom.  
... Smith begged the clerks to be careful.  
... ey didn't listen. They threw the box  
... e baggage car.



Philade  
THIS S

Hours passed.

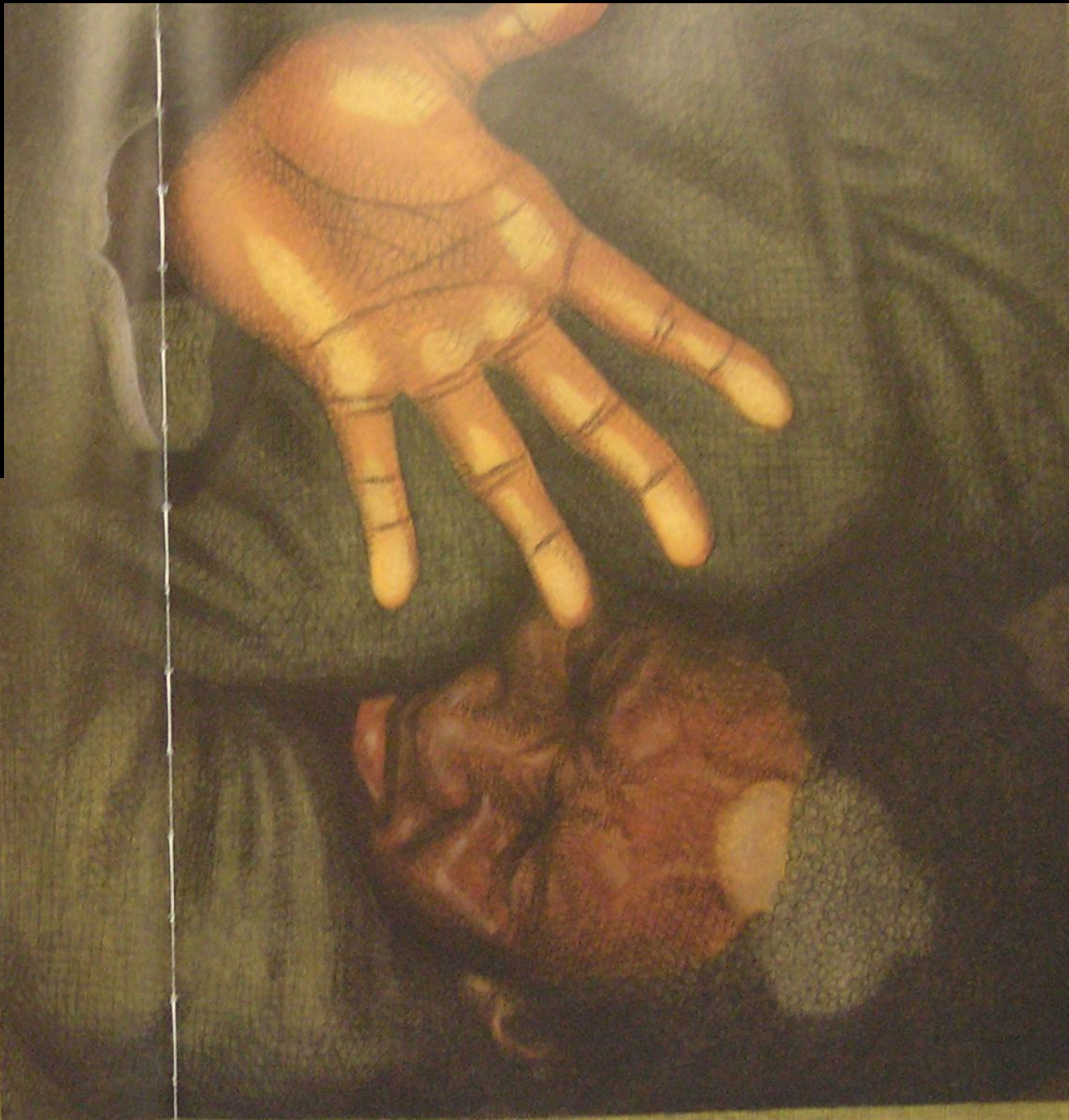
Henry was lifted up and thrown again.

**Upside down!**

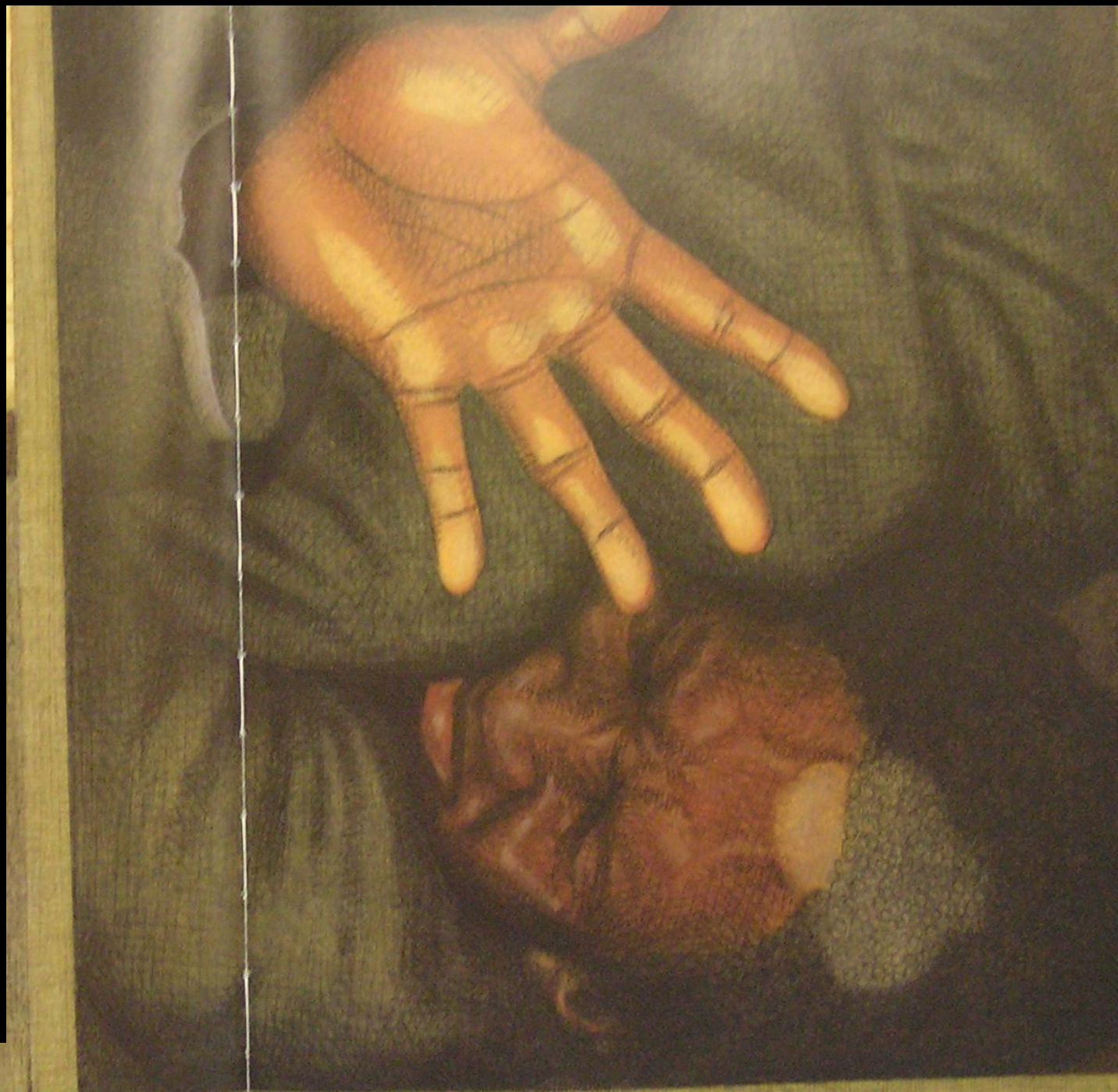
He heard waves splashing.

This must be the steamboat headed  
for Washington, D.C.

**The ship rode smoothly, but Henry was still upside down.**



**Blood  
rushed to his  
head. His  
face got  
hot. His  
eyes ached.  
He thought  
his head  
would burst.  
But he was  
afraid to  
move.  
Someone  
might hear  
him.**



**“I’m tired of standing,”  
someone said.**



**“Why don’t we  
move that box  
and sit on it?”  
said another.**

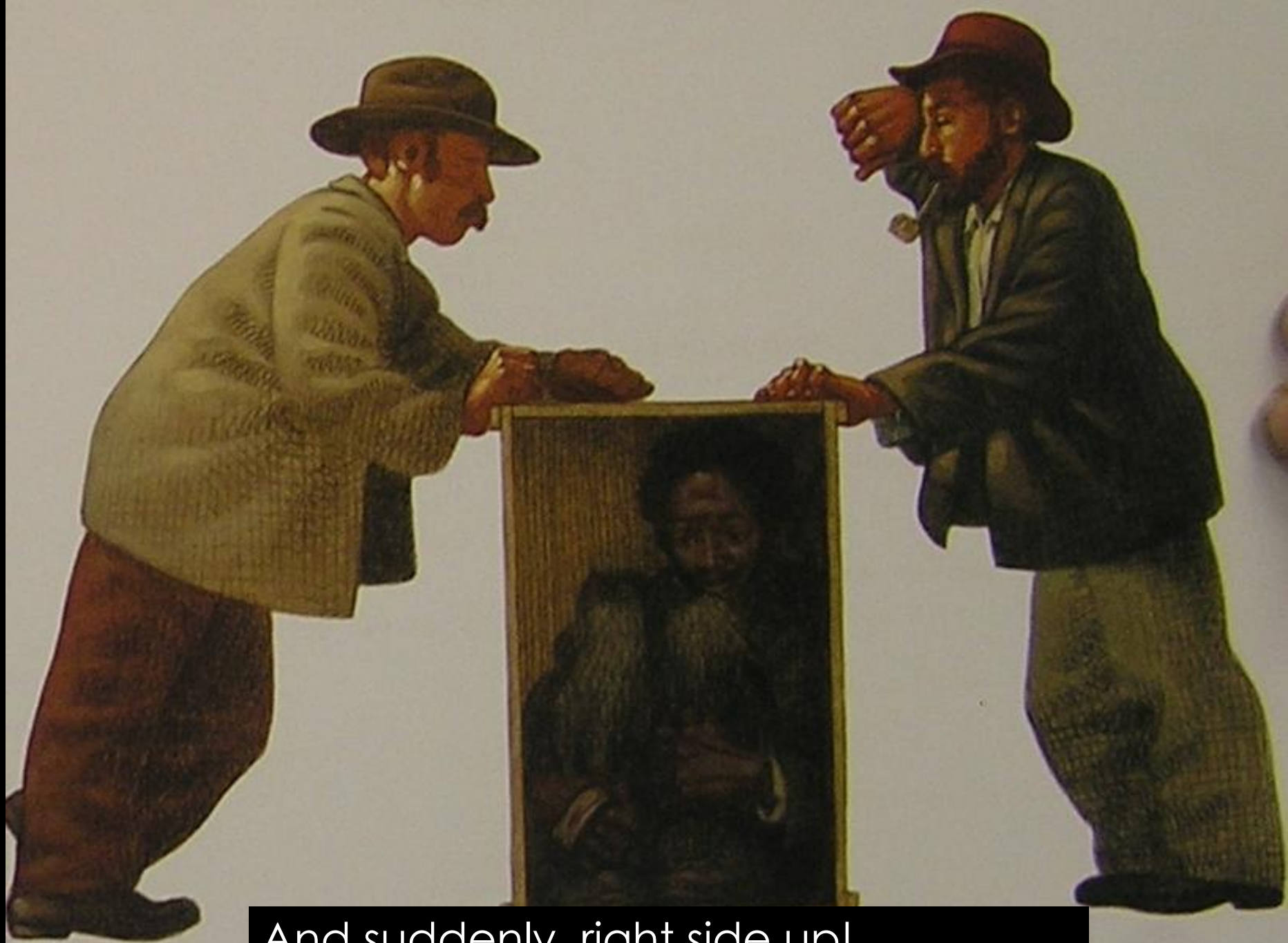
**Henry held  
his breath.  
Could they be  
talking about  
his box?**



**Henry was pushed.  
The box scraped  
the deck. Now he  
was on his right  
side! Now on his  
left!**







And suddenly, right side up!

“What do you think is in here?” said the first man.

“Mail, I guess,” said the other.

I am mail,

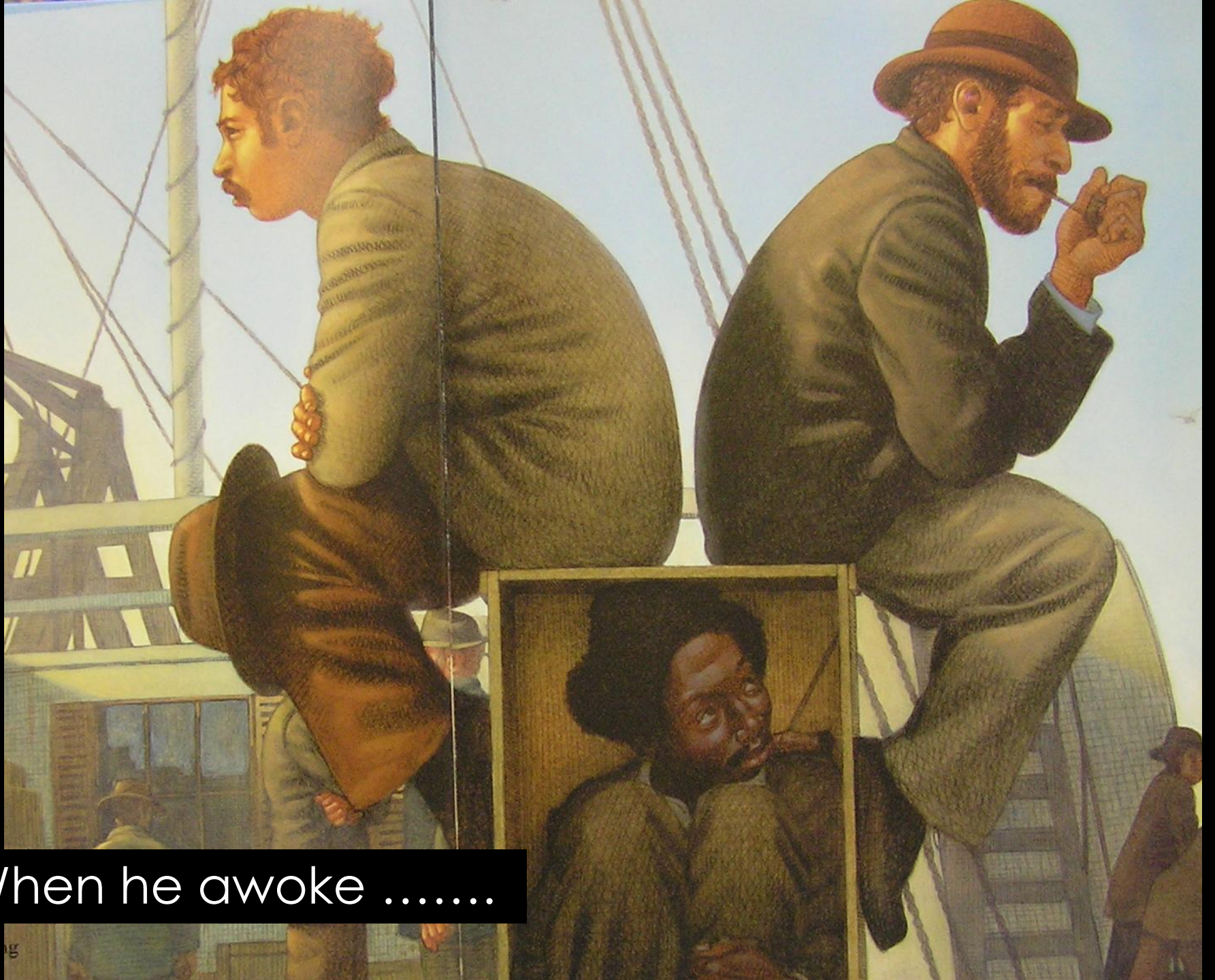
said Henry. But not the kind they imagine!



Henry was carried off the steam boat and placed in a rail road car, this time head up. He fell asleep to the



rattling song of the train wheels.



When he awoke .....

“Henry, are you all right in there?”

He awoke to loud knocking.

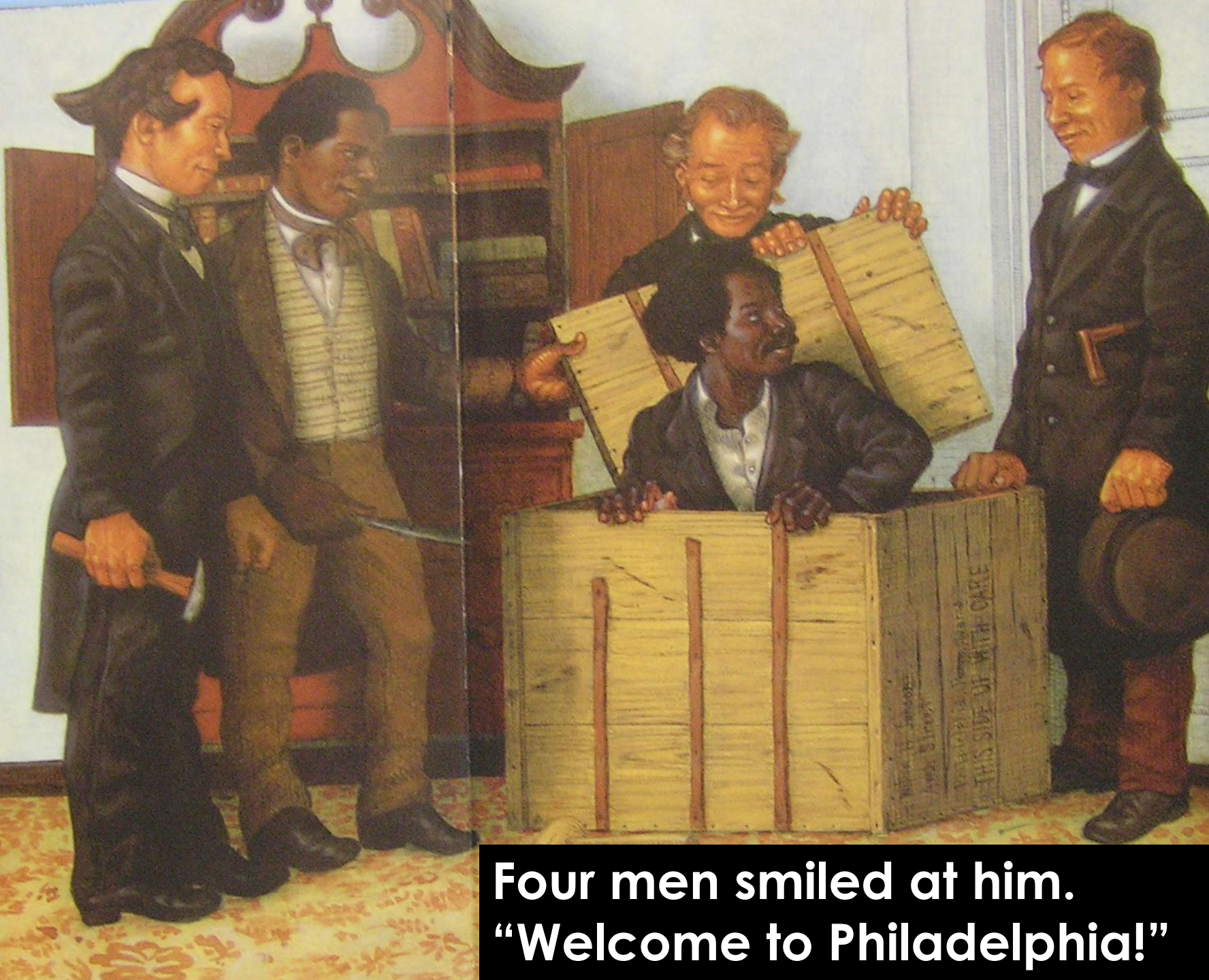
“All right!” he answered.



The cover was pried open.  
Henry stretched and stood up.

day  
e.



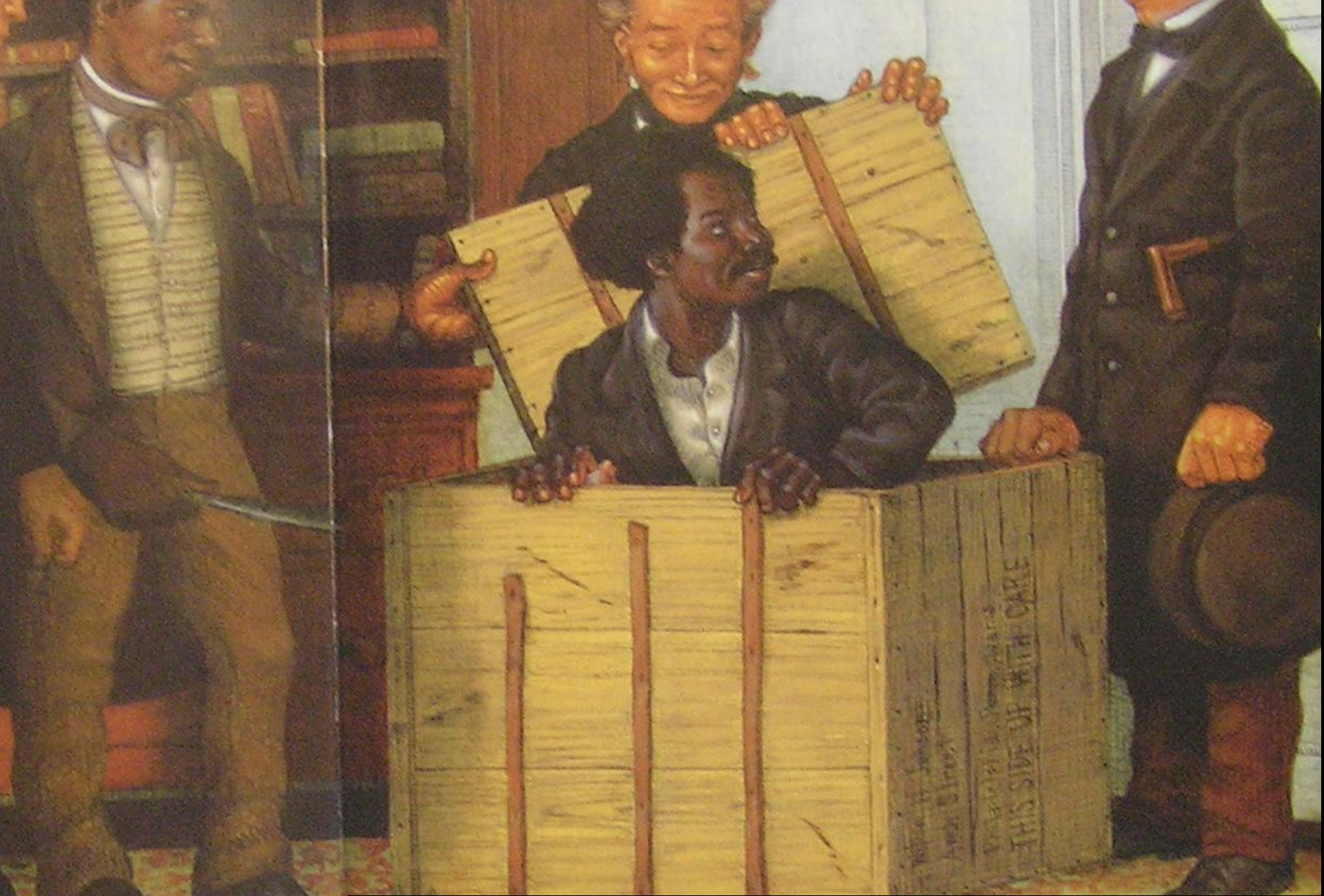


**Four men smiled at him.  
“Welcome to Philadelphia!”**

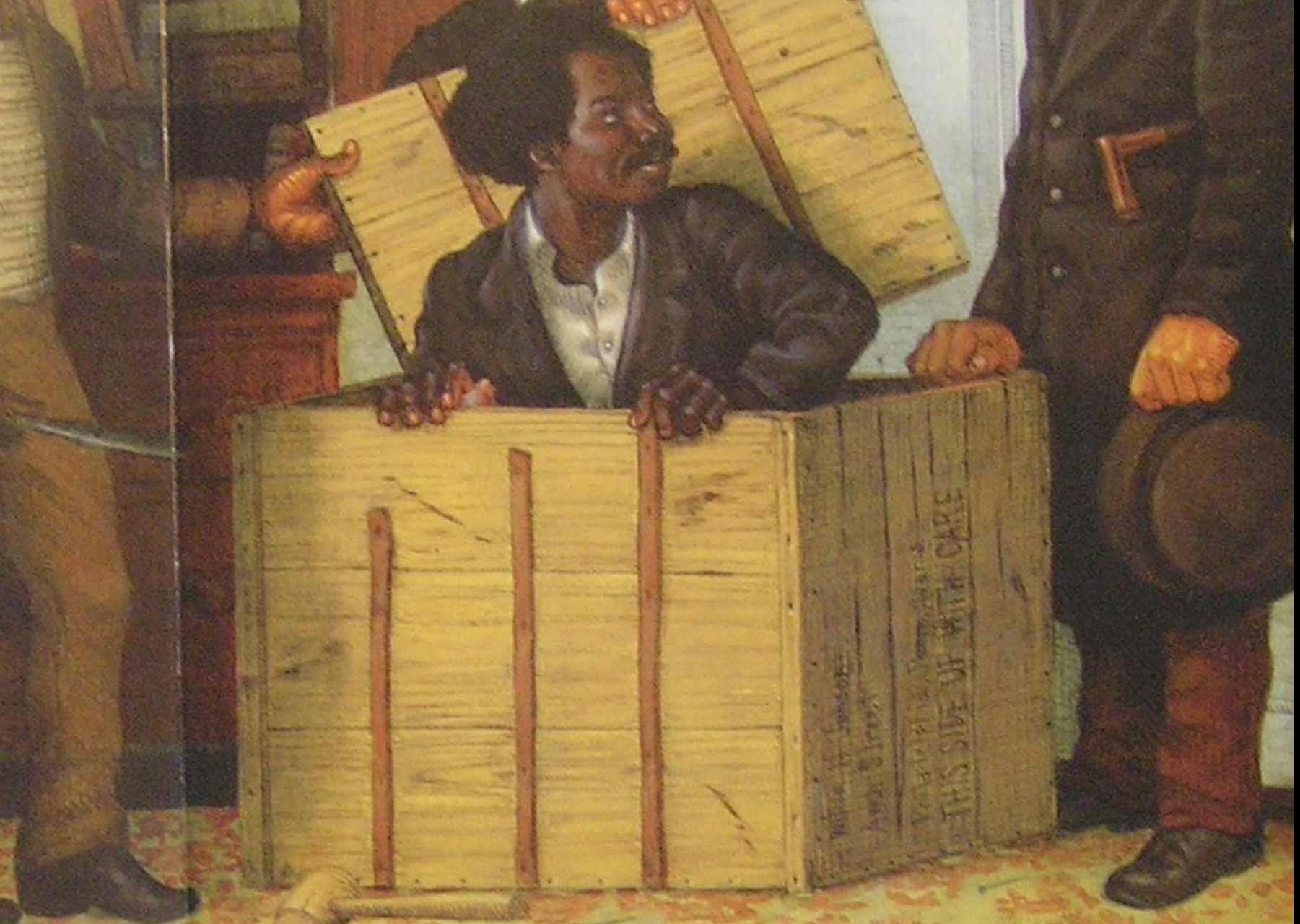


At last Henry had a birthday –  
March 30, 1849, his first day of freedom!

At last Henry had a birthday – March 30, 1849, his first day of freedom!



And from that day on, he also had a middle name.



Everyone called him Henry "BOX" Brown.

THE END

of the book but...

**NOT  
THE END  
OF THE TRUE STORY**

Did you know?

**After Henry became free, he told his story and because he couldn't read or write, someone else wrote it down for him.**

**It is called the "Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown" and contains 60 pages in 7 Chapters.**



**The author of *Henry's Freedom Box*, Ellen Levine, researched and found the information to write the book.**

**Here are some things that were not included in her book, but were in Henry's Narrative.**

**When the 1<sup>st</sup> Master died, his property was inherited by his four sons. Henry's family was divided equally among those four sons. It separated him from his mother, father, brother, and sister. He was only 15 years old, but he said this: "It is as present in my mind as if but yesterday's sun had shone upon the dreadful event."**

**When Henry was taken to work in the tobacco factory at age 15, his new master told him if he would behave well he would take good care of him and give him money to spend. He bought him a new suit of clothes and gave him money to buy things to send to his mother, who remained at the plantation with his father.**

**Henry was a member of the First African Baptist Church, where he sang in the church's choir. He had a friend, Mr. Smith, who also sang in the choir.**

**Mr. Smith was also a conductor of the underground railroad.**

**Henry was 21 when he married Nancy. And he had been married to Nancy 12 years when she and the children were sold. Sometime later it was discovered that at that time Nancy was pregnant with a fourth child.**

**He actually walked with her 4 miles hand in hand not saying anything to her. He said “our hearts were so overpowered with feeling that we could say nothing.”**

**He said, “My tongue was only able to say, we shall meet in heaven!”**

**...his last words to Nancy.**

# Henry prayed to the Lord.

He said: “One day while at work, my thoughts were eagerly feasting upon the idea of freedom. I felt my soul call out to heaven to breathe a prayer to Almighty God. I prayed and prayed when the idea suddenly flashed across my mind of shutting myself up in a box.”

**When Henry climbed into his Freedom Box, he hoped that he would be carried to a safe world.**

**Mr. Smith attempted another shipment of slaves from Richmond to Philadelphia on May 8, 1849, but was discovered and arrested. That November he was sentenced to 6 ½ years in the state penitentiary. James had aided Smith in the attempt but avoided arrest until September 25, 1849. By December, James was also in the state penitentiary.**



Henry arrived safely in Philadelphia, having traveled 350 miles from Richmond, Virginia, in 27 hours.

# UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

c. 1860



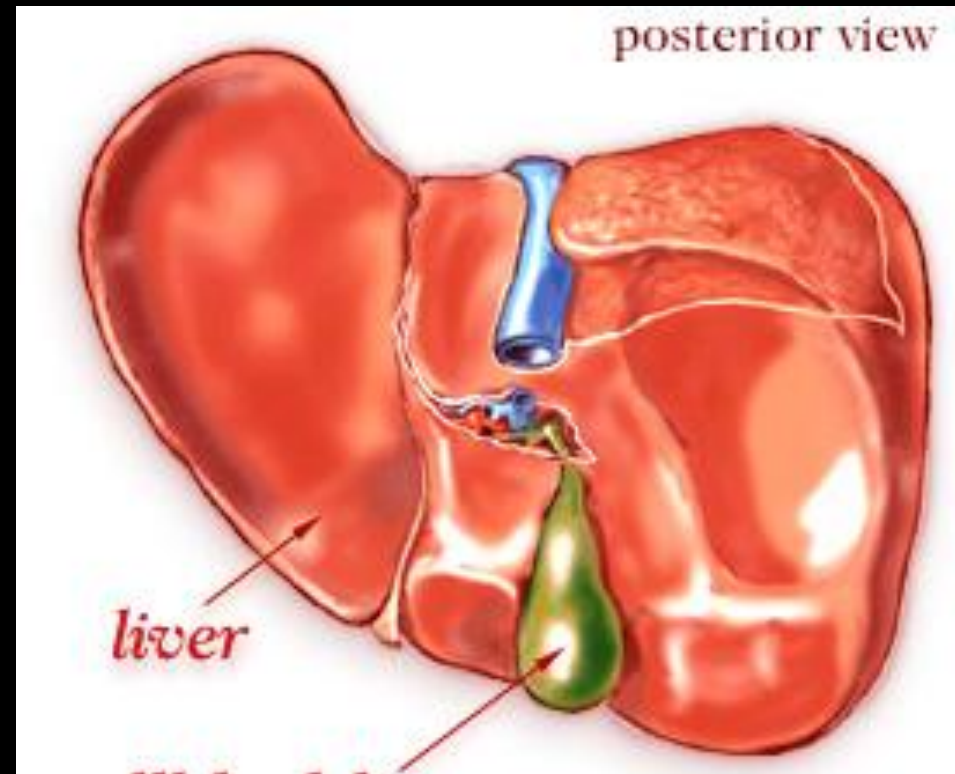
ORGANIZED & UNORGANIZED TERRITORIES

Atlantic Ocean

Gulf of Mexico

Generalized routes of slaves seeking freedom

Henry brought along a small tool to make air holes in the box, a little water, and a few biscuits. The tool he called a gimlet. He took it “in order that I might bore more holes if I found I had not sufficient air.”



**Henry “Box” Brown became  
one of the most famous  
runaway slaves on the  
Underground Railroad – the  
man who mailed  
himself to freedom.**

THE END