



Abraham Lincoln's Dueling Words



Donna Janell Bowman
Illustrated by S. D. Schindler

To Chris, who knows a lot about breaking up fights and keeping the peace—
all while encouraging a moody writer.

And to all readers who learn from their own mistakes.

—D. J. B.

To Dave Hanson, a model model.

—S. S.



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“It has been my experience that folks who have no vices
have very few virtues.”

—Abraham Lincoln


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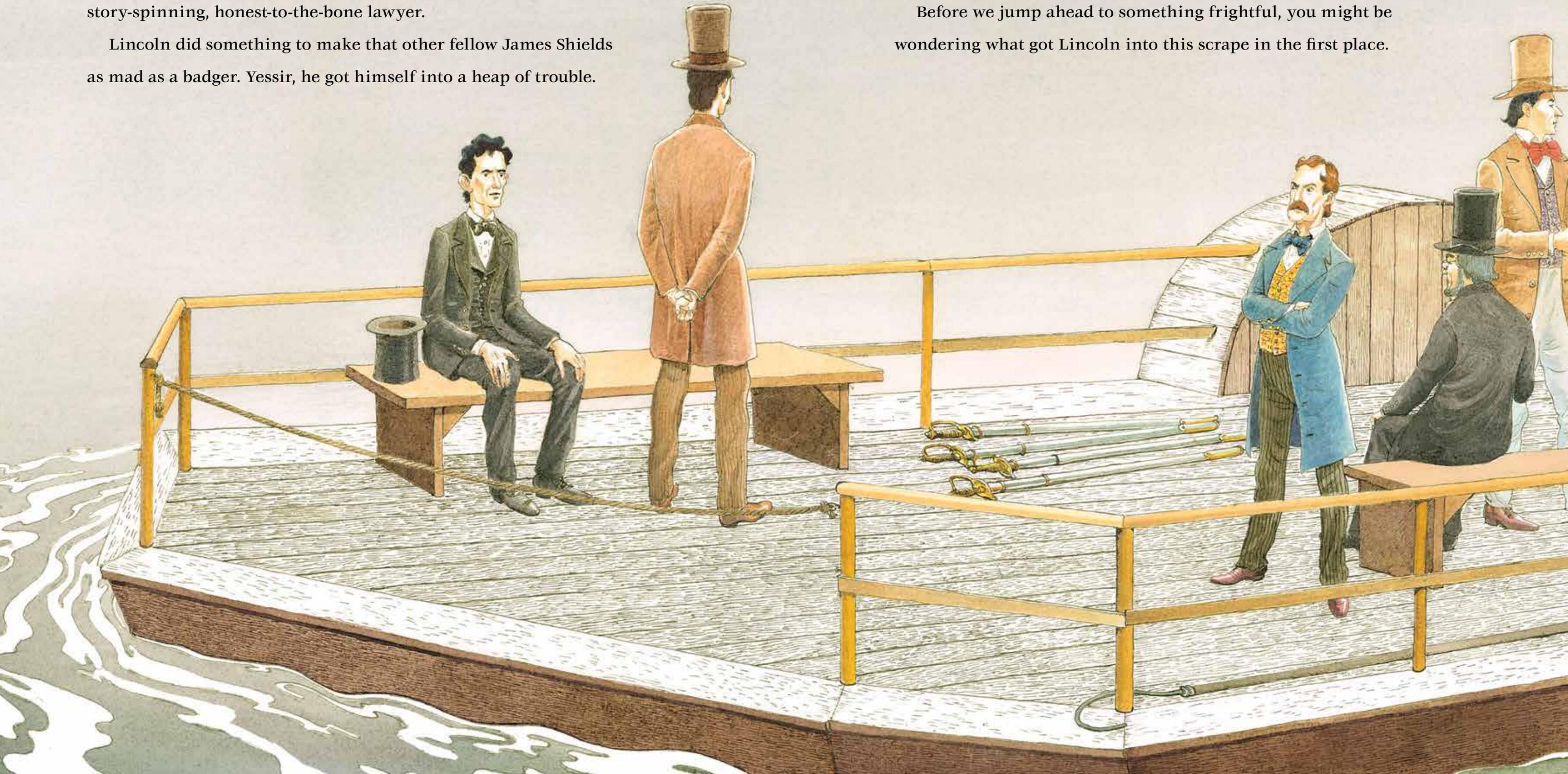
See those two fellows in the boat, looking all grim and serious? Maybe you recognize one of them from your history books.

Yep, that's Abraham Lincoln, Springfield's favorite joke-telling, story-spinning, honest-to-the-bone lawyer.

Lincoln did something to make that other fellow James Shields as mad as a badger. Yessir, he got himself into a heap of trouble.

Now this boat is headed to Bloody Island, where nothing good ever happens. And Shields is fuming over those long, shiny, razor-sharp swords.

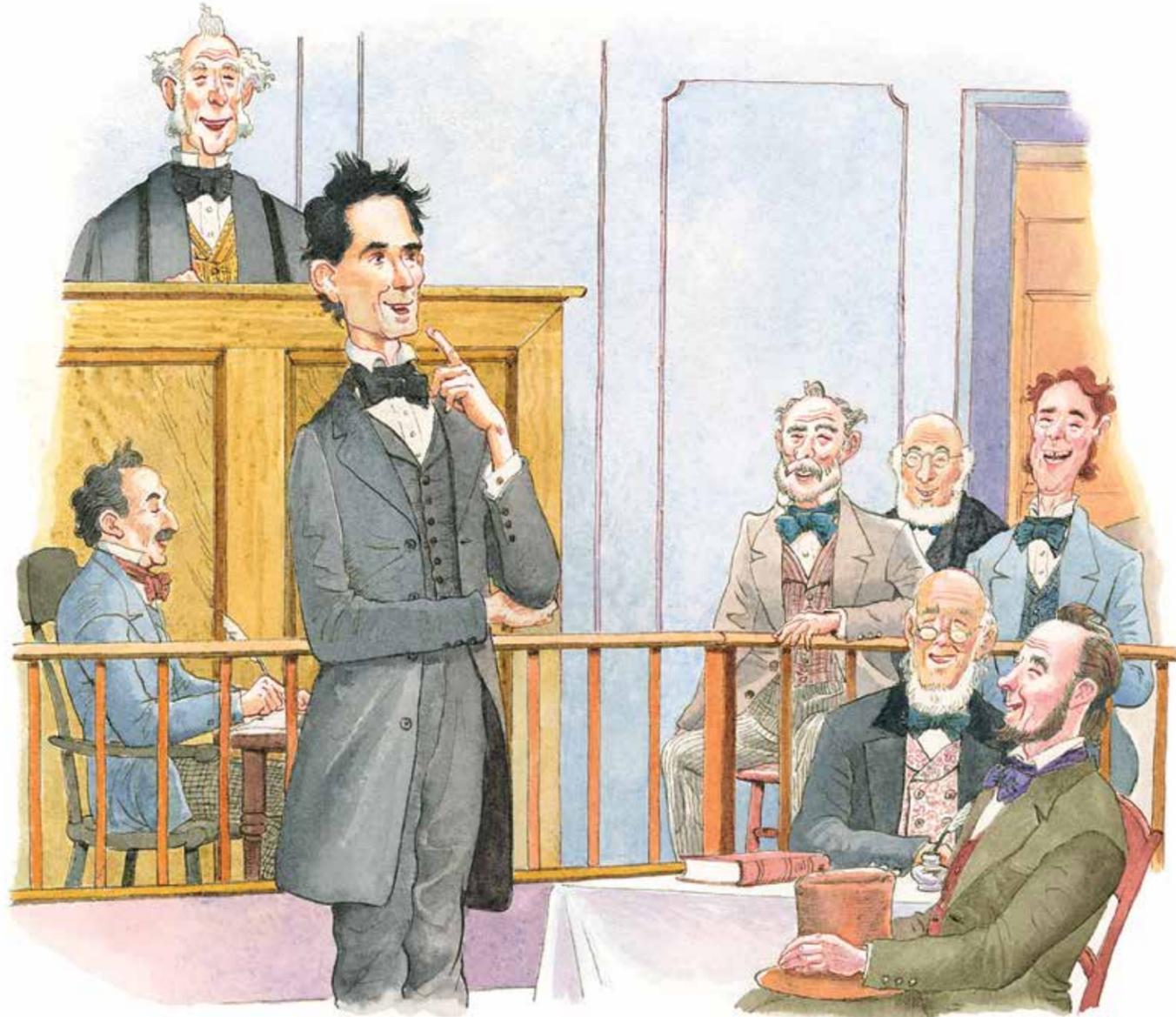
Before we jump ahead to something frightful, you might be wondering what got Lincoln into this scrape in the first place.



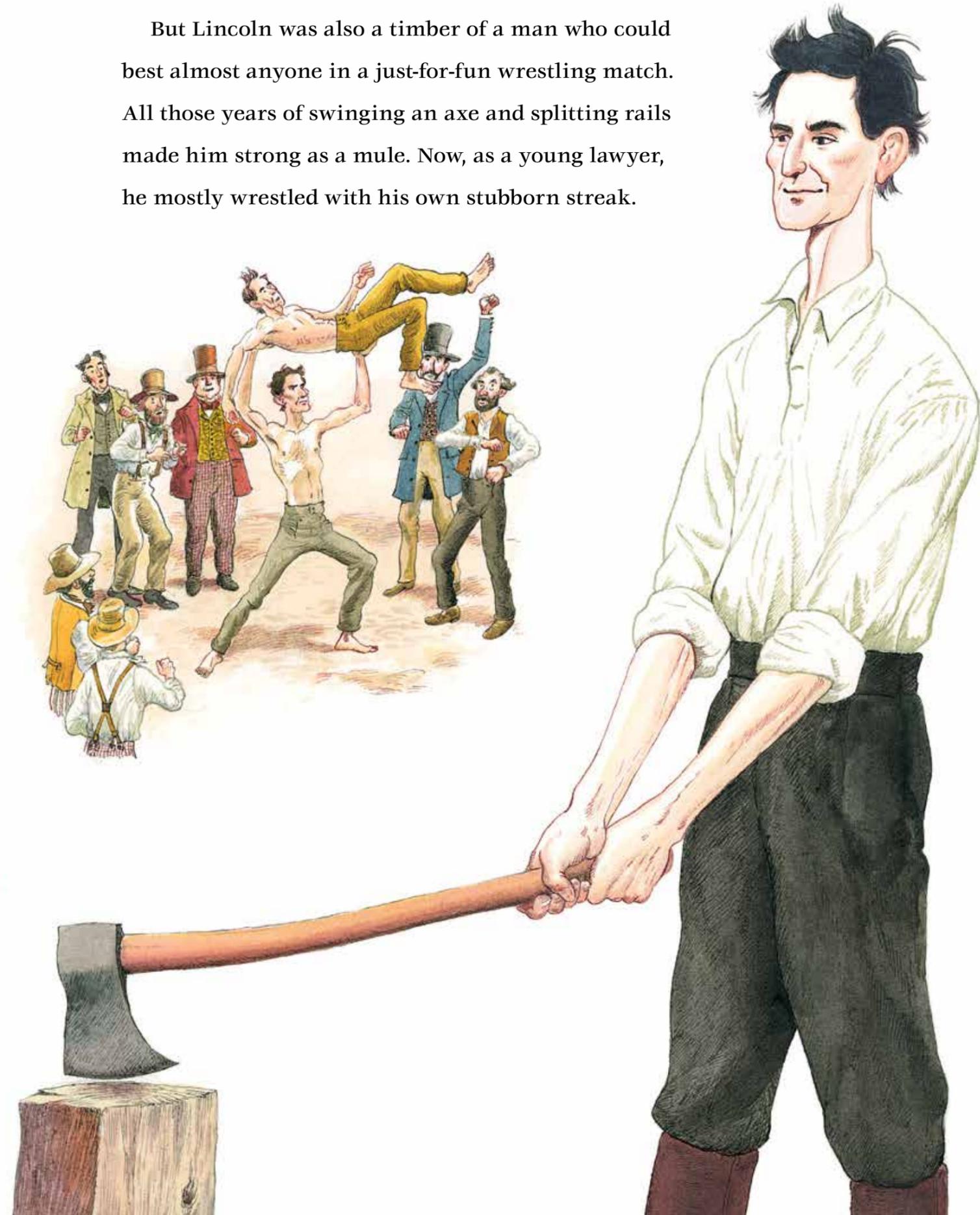
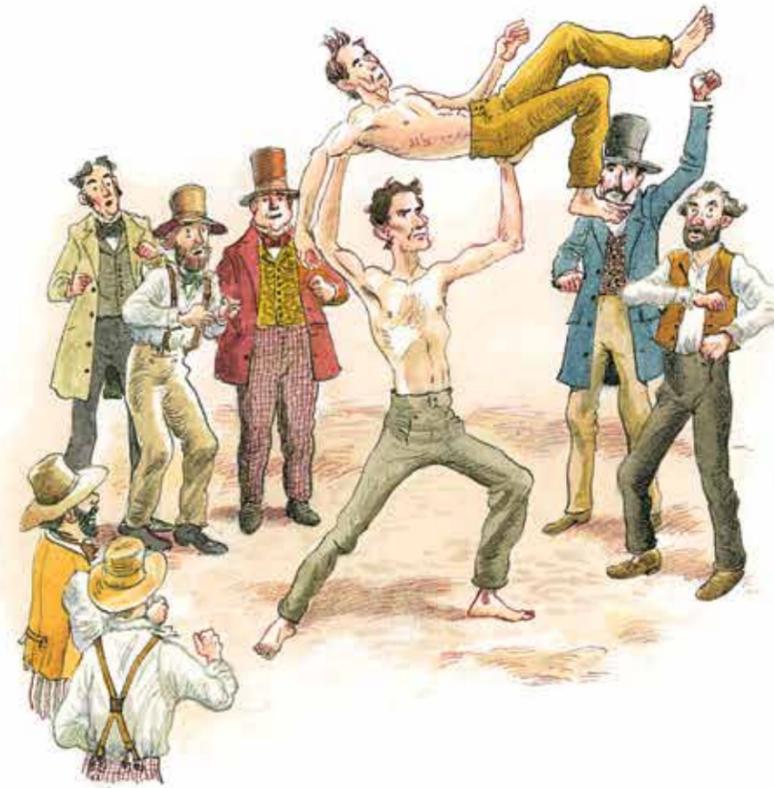
Back in Springfield, folks knew Lincoln for his top-hatted head full of smarts, but also for his friendliness and knee-slapping tales. Any little ol' thing could start a story spinning in his mind. Even in court, which should have been quiet and businesslike, something might tickle his funny bone.

"That brings to mind a story," he would begin. Often, his homespun tale would sway the jury to his side. Sometimes, the judge even busted out laughing.

"If I did not laugh," Lincoln said, "I would die."



But Lincoln was also a timber of a man who could best almost anyone in a just-for-fun wrestling match. All those years of swinging an axe and splitting rails made him strong as a mule. Now, as a young lawyer, he mostly wrestled with his own stubborn streak.





Shields soldiered in the Black Hawk War, just like Lincoln.
He became a Springfield lawyer, just like Lincoln.
And he served in the Illinois Legislature, just like Lincoln.
But unlike Lincoln, Shields was known for his arrogance and his serious side. Some folks thought there wasn't a joke-telling, story-spinning bone in his body.

James Shields was a hot-tempered, well-educated Irishman with a knack for arguing. Everyone knew he was a crack shot with a pistol. He was only fifteen years old when he was challenged to his first duel. It's a good thing the gunpowder was wet that day, or one of them might have been pushing up daisies.

