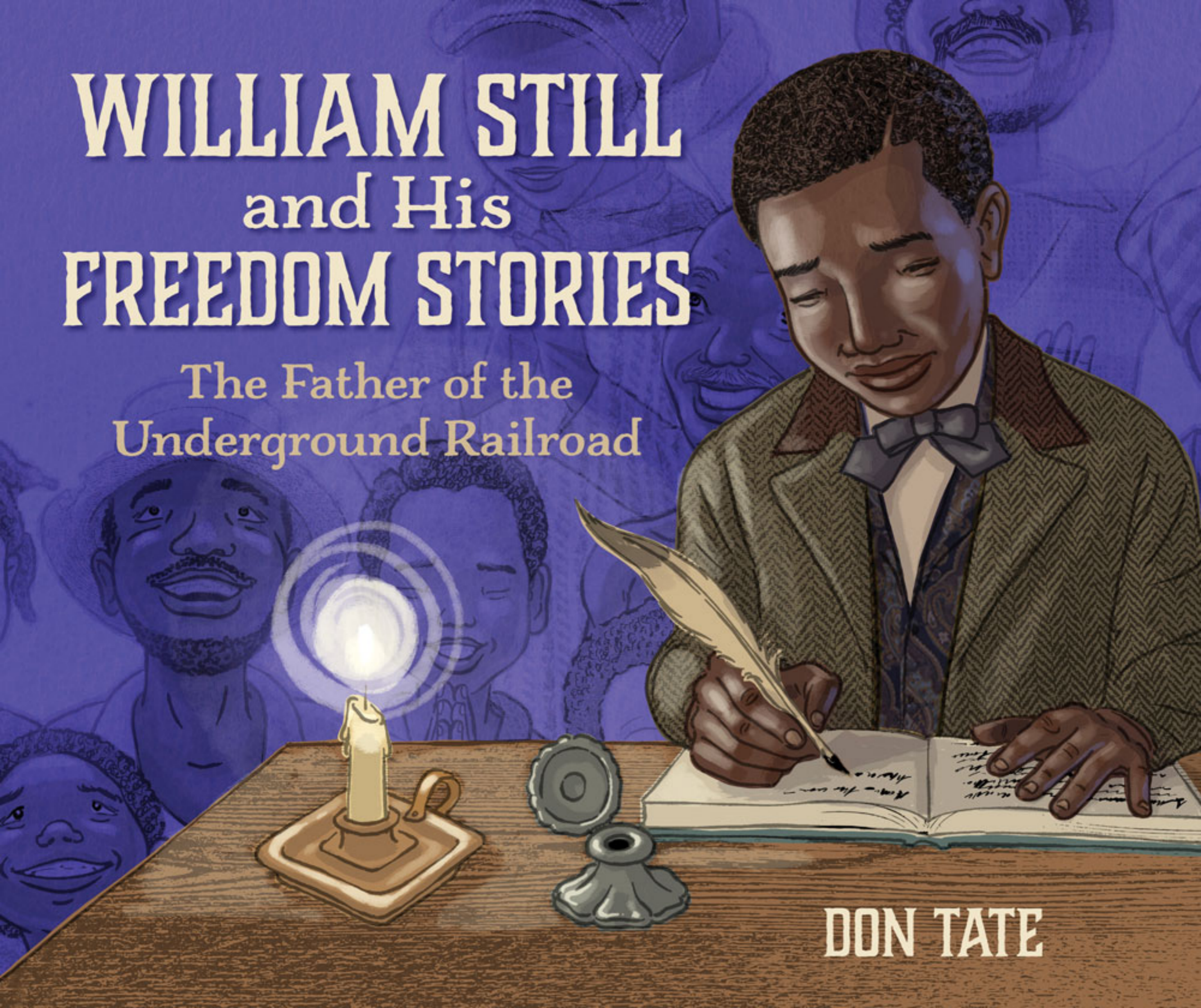


WILLIAM STILL and His FREEDOM STORIES

The Father of the
Underground Railroad



DON TATE

This story begins
at a time when the United States
was split in two.

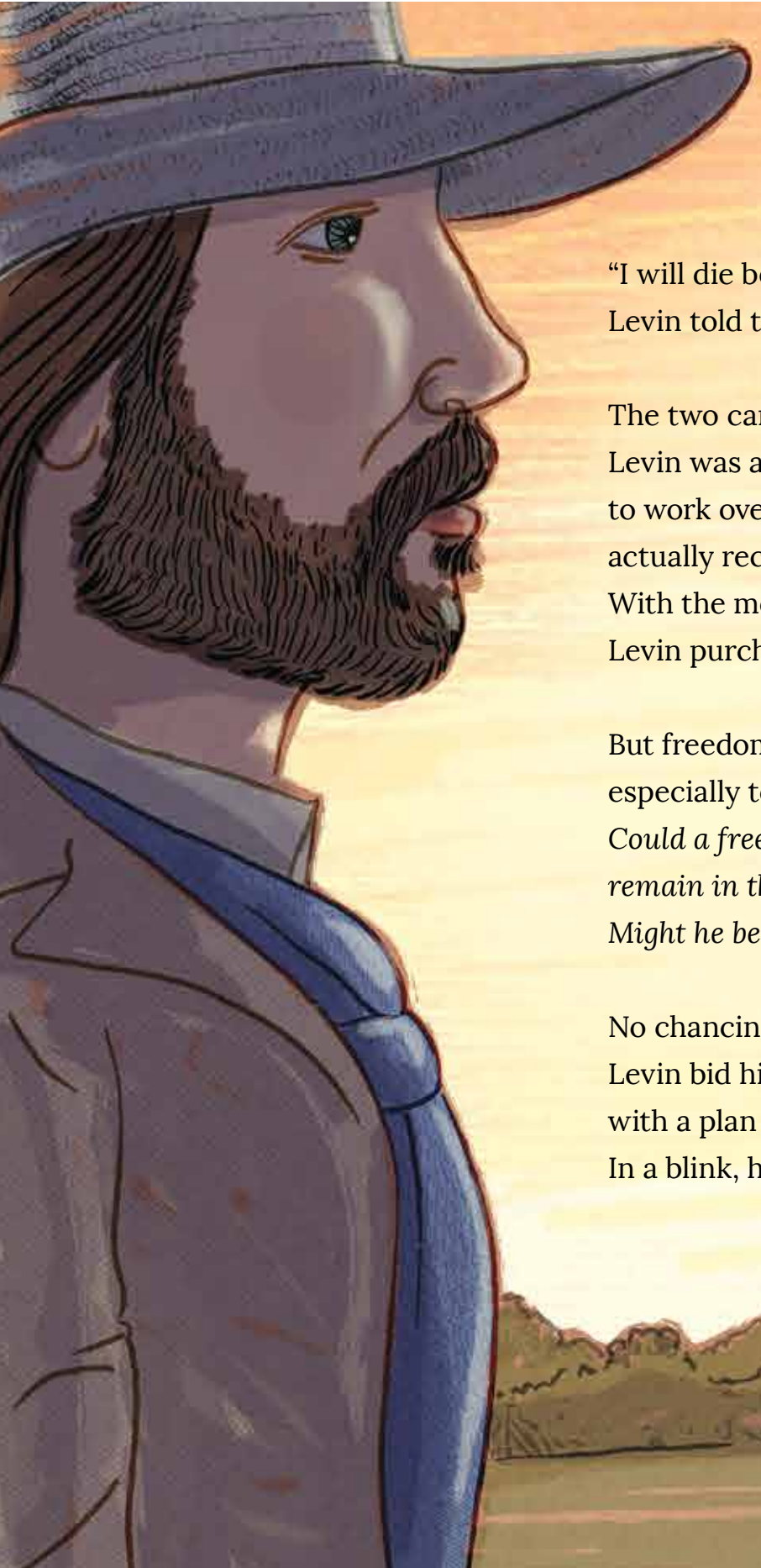
In the North,
Black people were free.
In the South,
they were enslaved by whites.

Slavery was a nightmare—
Backbreaking work under the scorching sun.
Threats of lashing—or worse.
No pay.

Children were separated
from their mommas and poppas,
brothers and sisters.
Sold away at auction,
never to be seen again.

Sometime during the 1700s,
Levin and Sidney Steel were held captive
on a Maryland farm, forced to work.
Their four children were too.
The family yearned to live free.



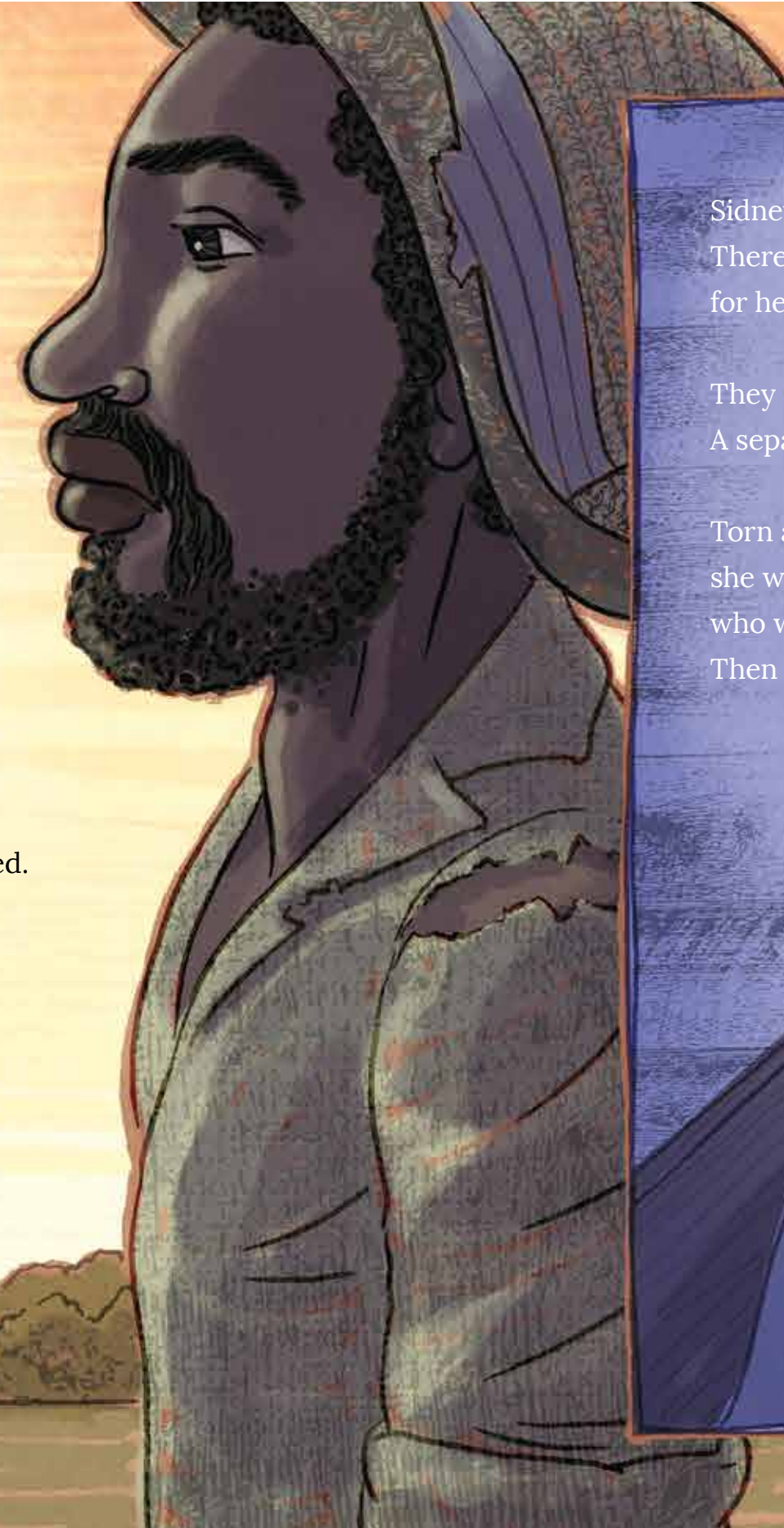


"I will die before I submit to the yoke,"
Levin told the man who enslaved him.

The two came to an agreement:
Levin was allowed
to work over-hours,
actually receiving a small income.
With the money he earned,
Levin purchased his freedom.

But freedom wasn't always fair—
especially to Black people.
*Could a free Black man
remain in the South?* Levin must have wondered.
Might he be enslaved again?

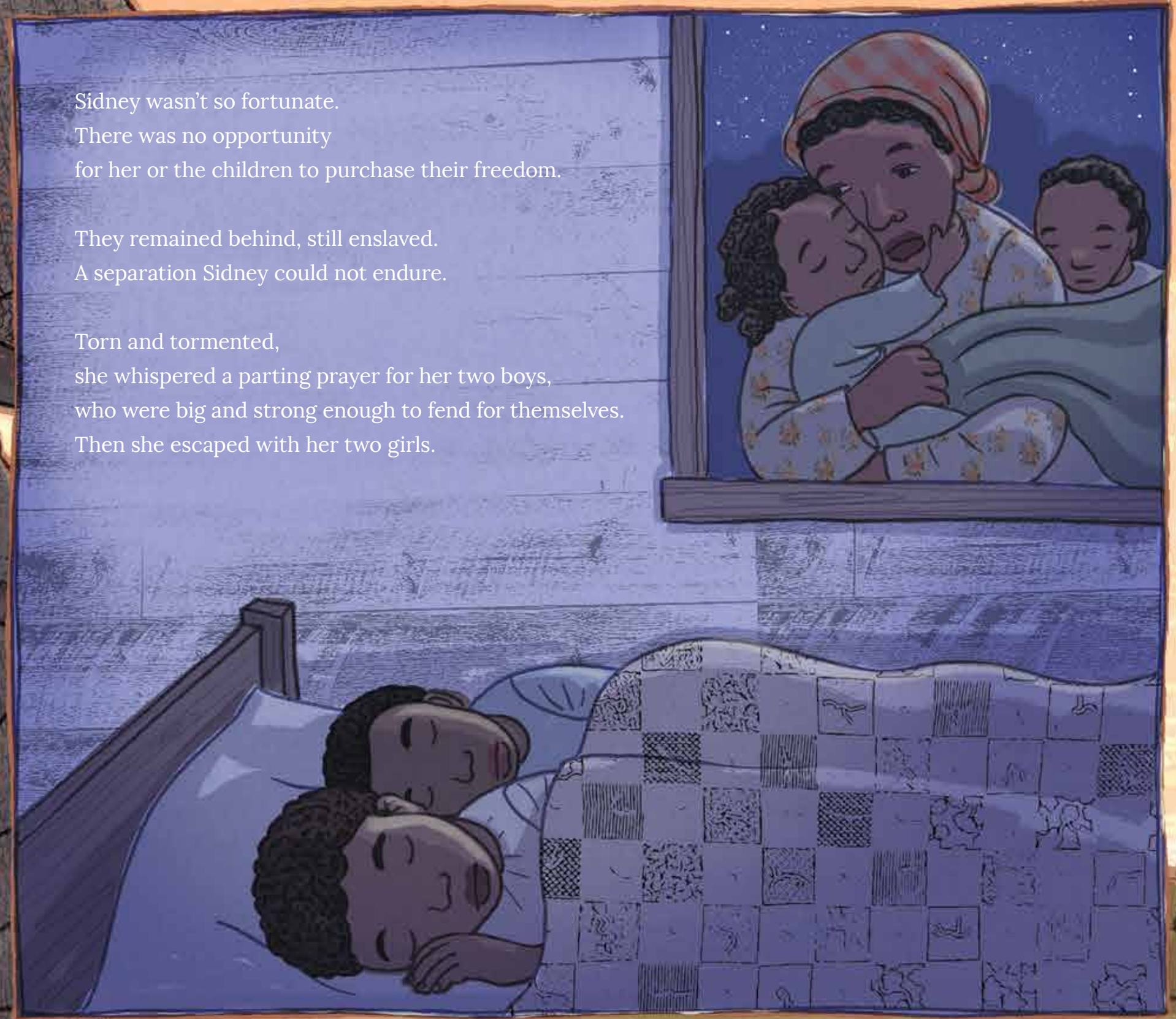
No chancing that.
Levin bid his family goodbye,
with a plan to return to rescue them later.
In a blink, he bolted North.



Sidney wasn't so fortunate.
There was no opportunity
for her or the children to purchase their freedom.

They remained behind, still enslaved.
A separation Sidney could not endure.

Torn and tormented,
she whispered a parting prayer for her two boys,
who were big and strong enough to fend for themselves.
Then she escaped with her two girls.

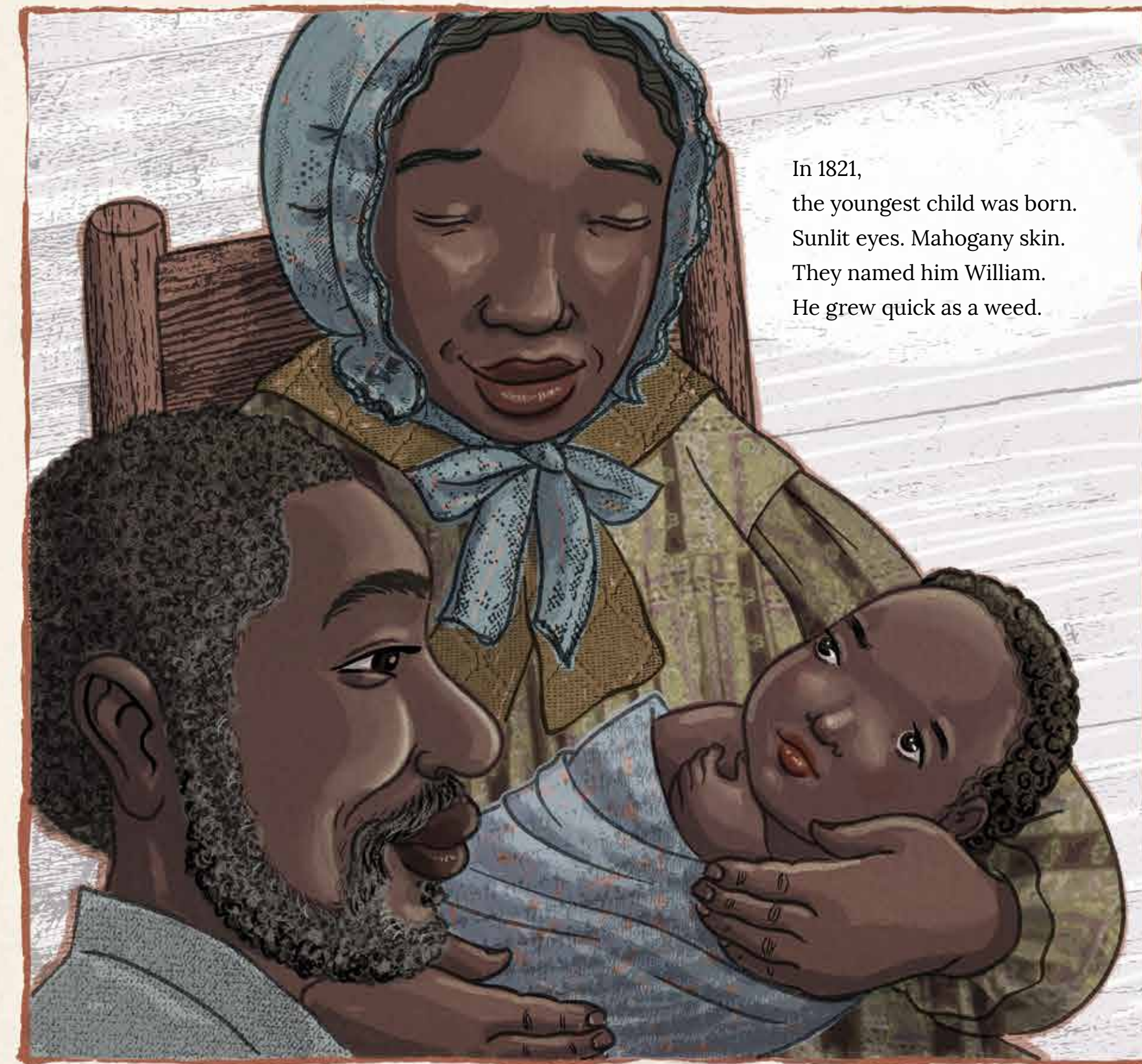
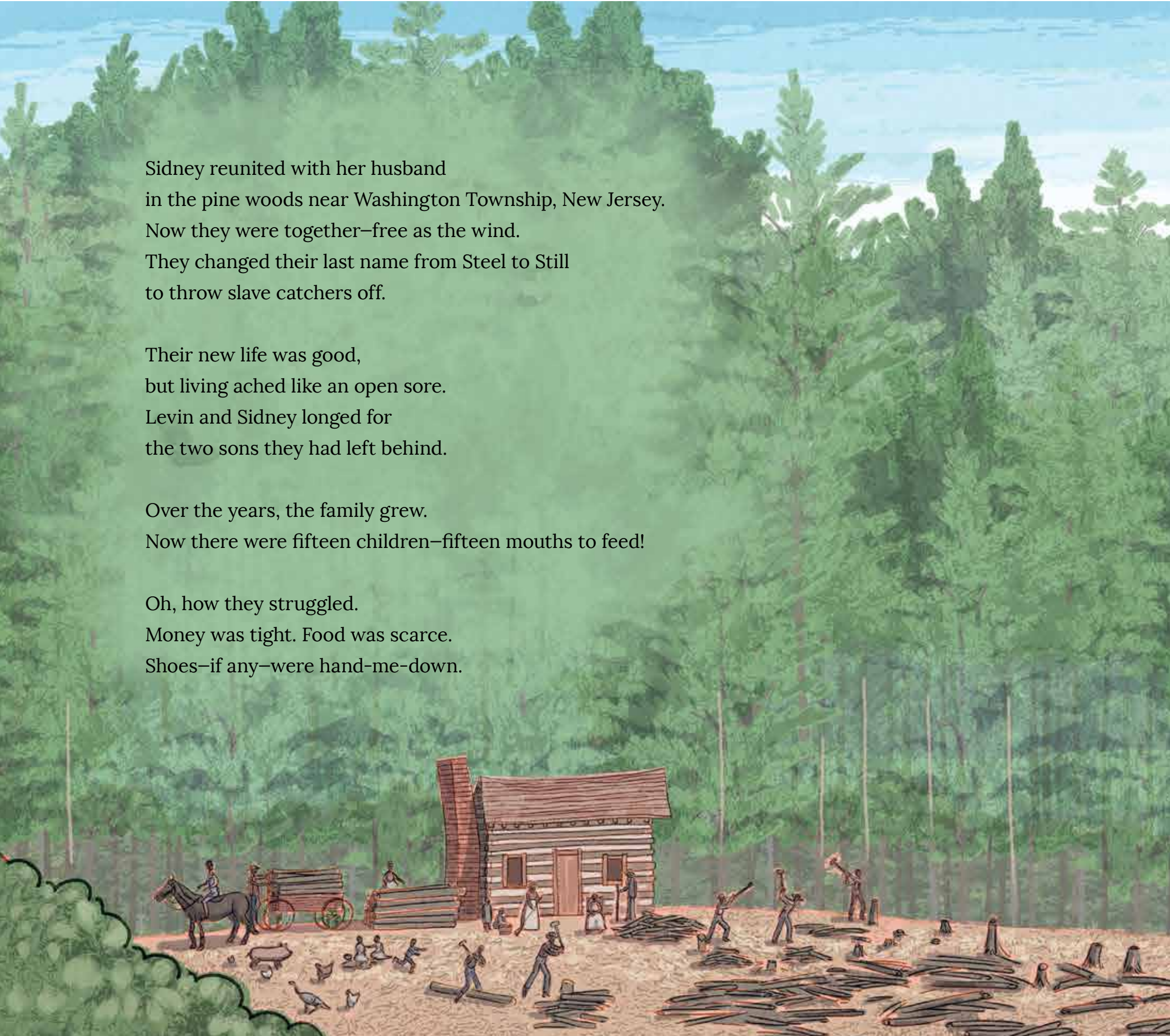


Sidney reunited with her husband
in the pine woods near Washington Township, New Jersey.
Now they were together—free as the wind.
They changed their last name from Steel to Still
to throw slave catchers off.

Their new life was good,
but living ached like an open sore.
Levin and Sidney longed for
the two sons they had left behind.

Over the years, the family grew.
Now there were fifteen children—fifteen mouths to feed!

Oh, how they struggled.
Money was tight. Food was scarce.
Shoes—if any—were hand-me-down.



In 1821,
the youngest child was born.
Sunlit eyes. Mahogany skin.
They named him William.
He grew quick as a weed.