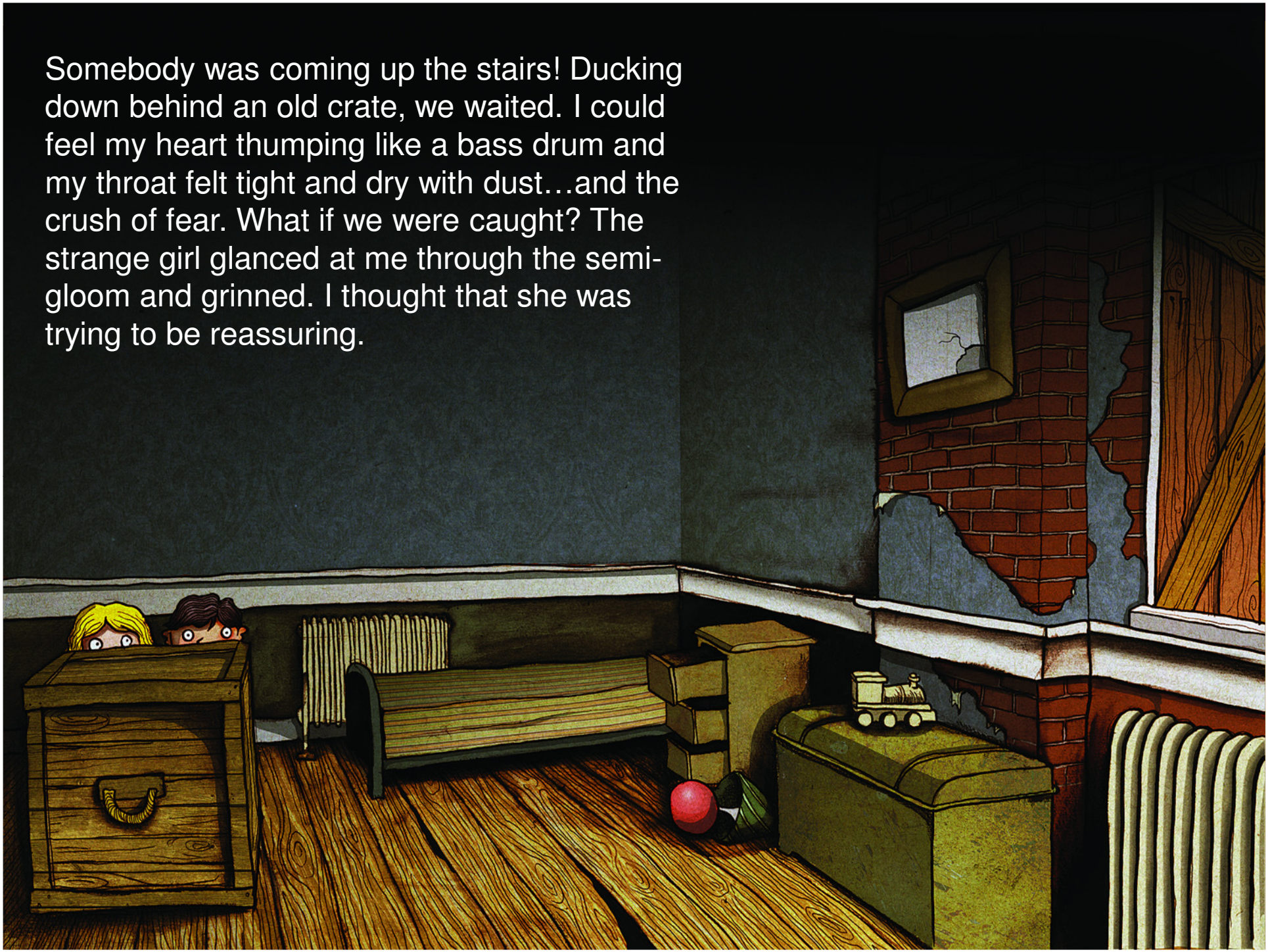
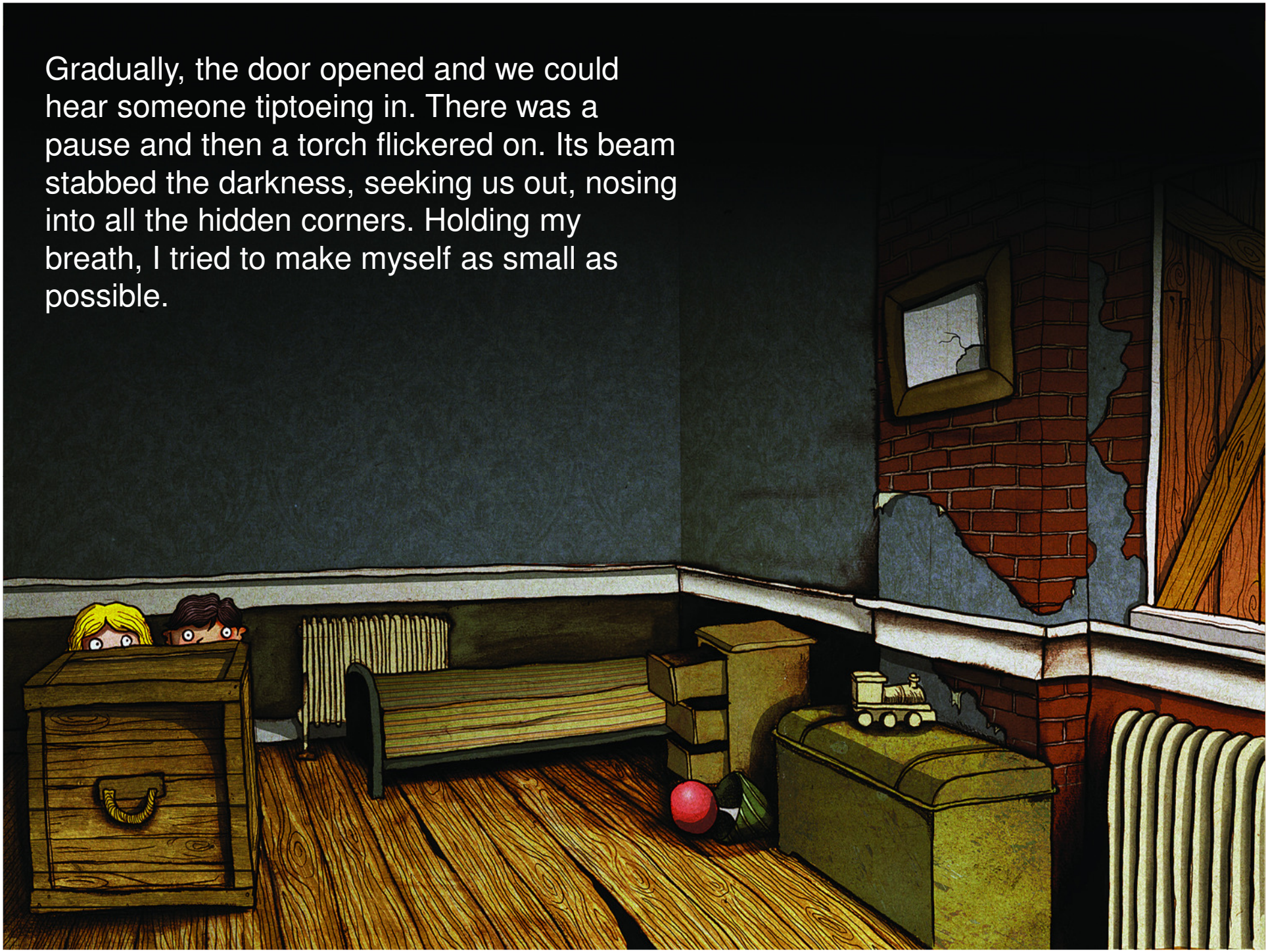
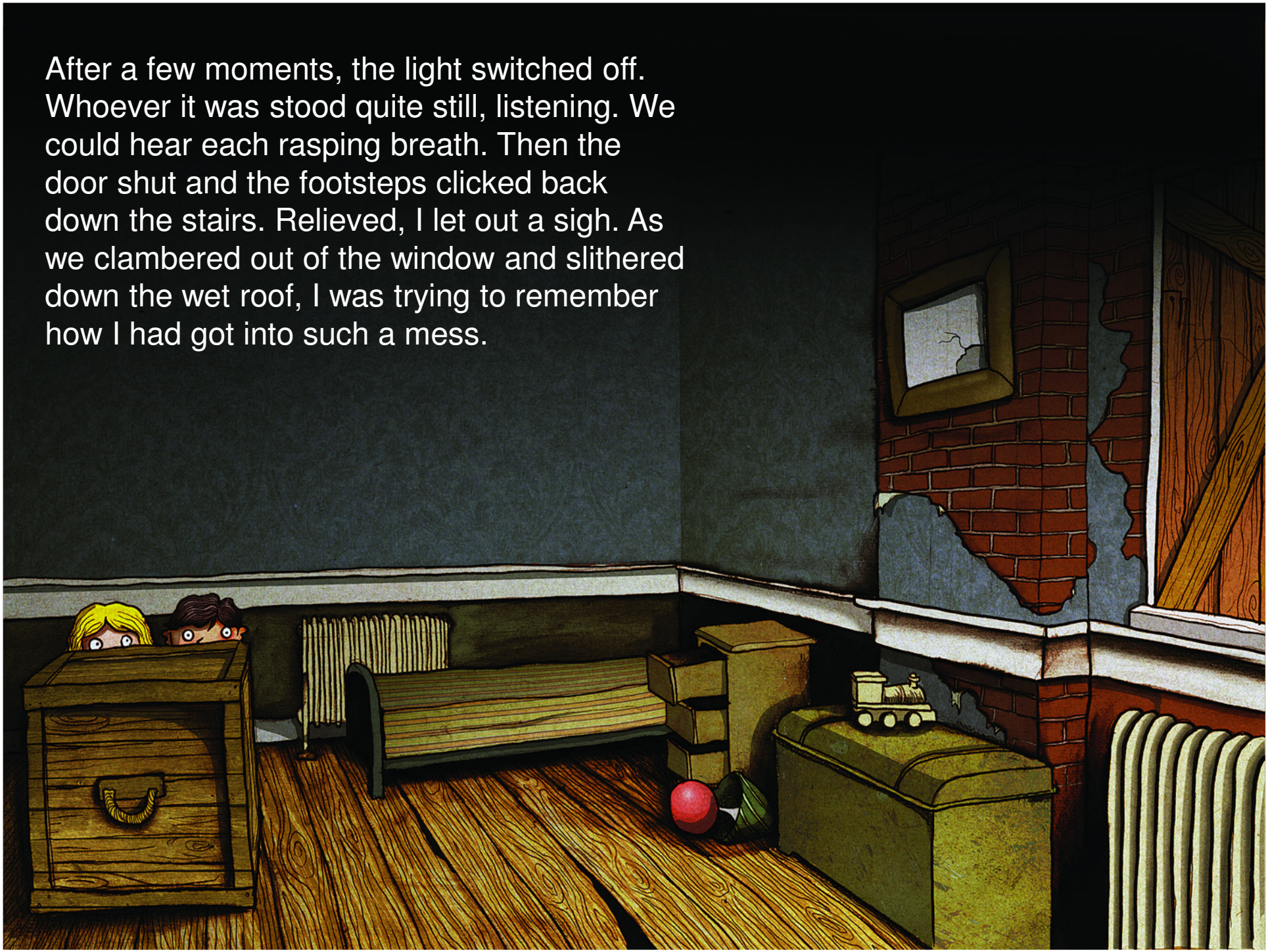
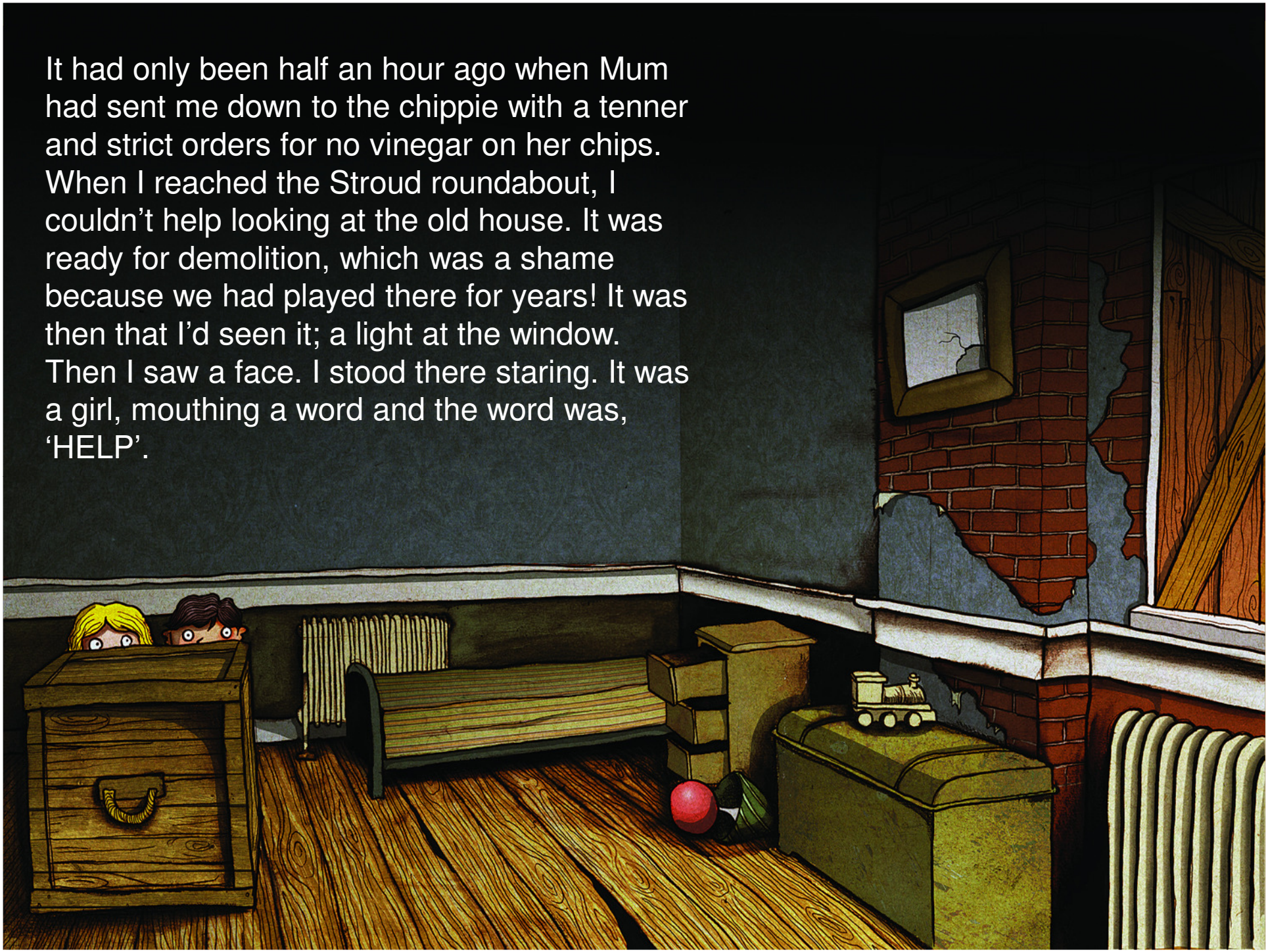
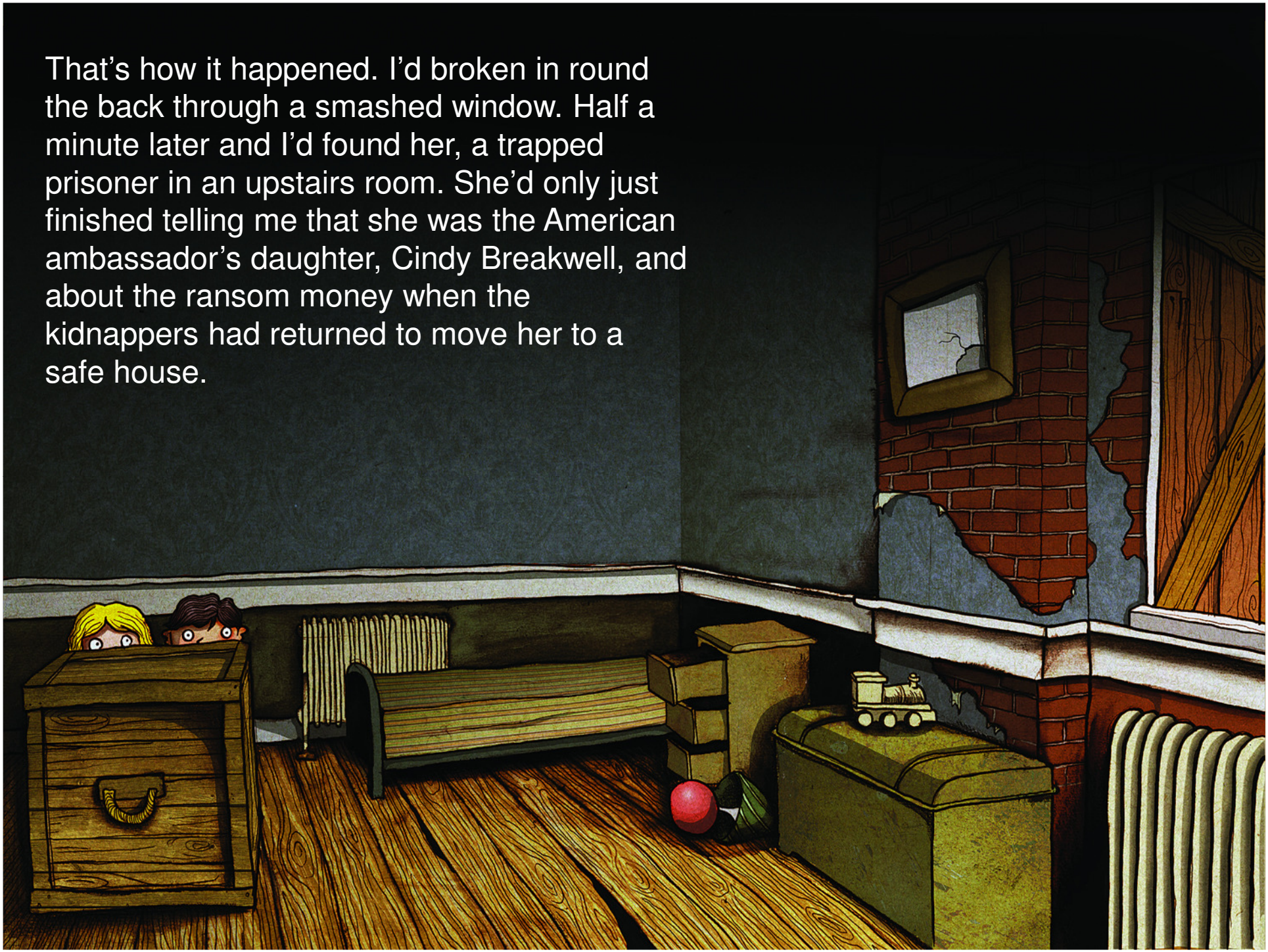
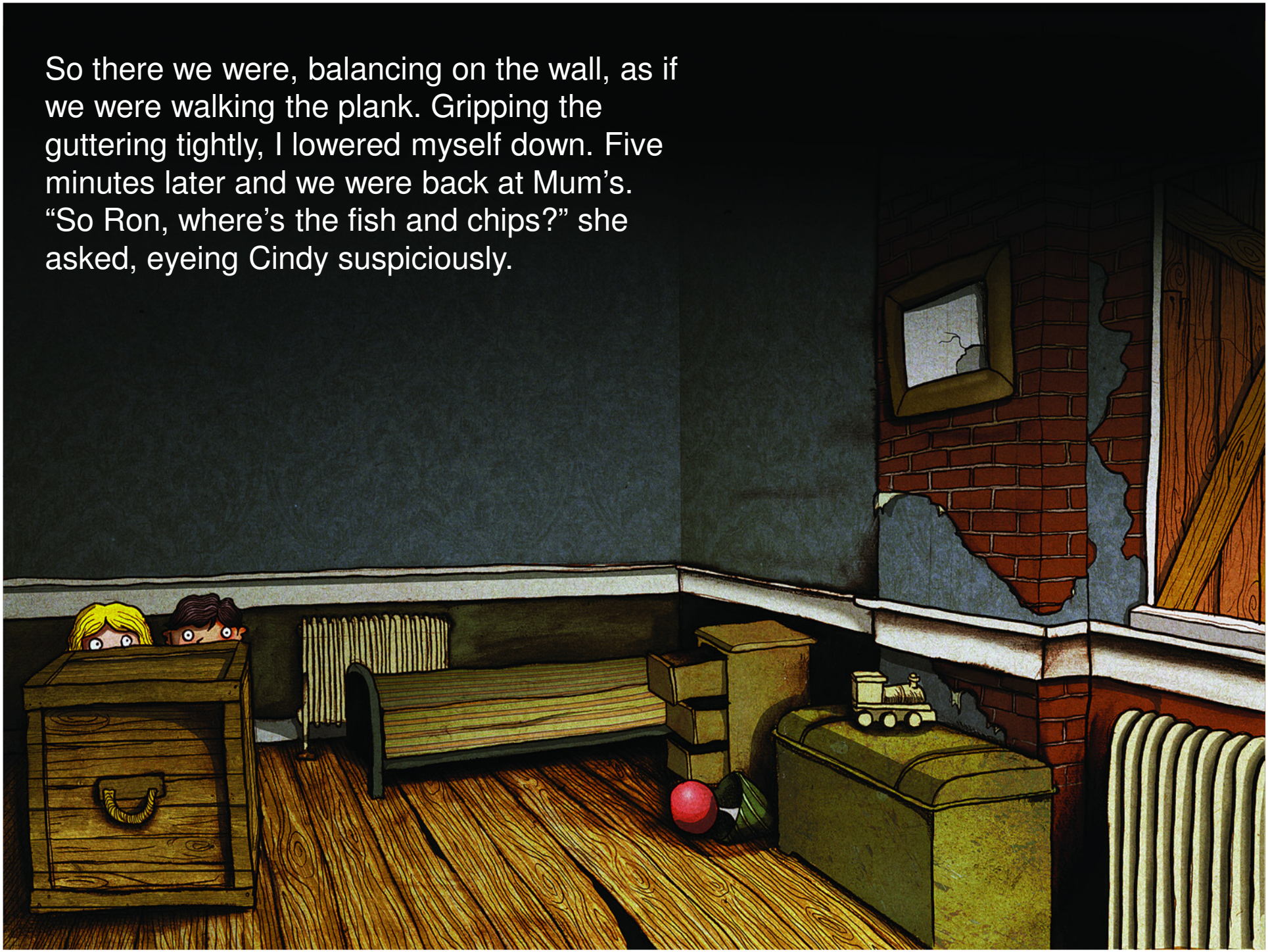

Somebody was coming up the stairs! Ducking down behind an old crate, we waited. I could feel my heart thumping like a bass drum and my throat felt tight and dry with dust…and the crush of fear. What if we were caught? The strange girl glanced at me through the semi-gloom and grinned. I thought that she was trying to be reassuring.

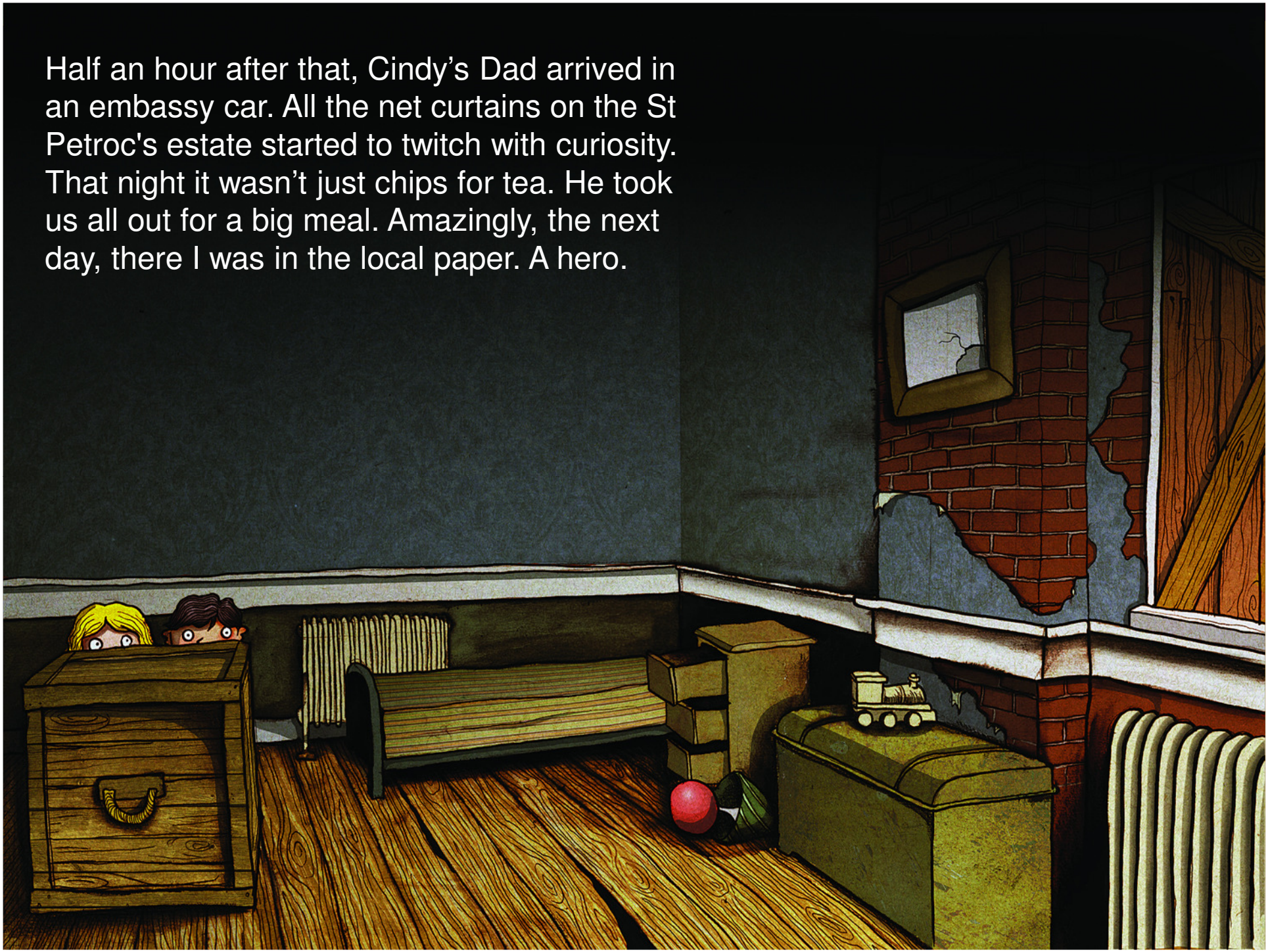

Gradually, the door opened and we could hear someone tiptoeing in. There was a pause and then a torch flickered on. Its beam stabbed the darkness, seeking us out, nosing into all the hidden corners. Holding my breath, I tried to make myself as small as possible.


After a few moments, the light switched off. Whoever it was stood quite still, listening. We could hear each rasping breath. Then the door shut and the footsteps clicked back down the stairs. Relieved, I let out a sigh. As we clambered out of the window and slithered down the wet roof, I was trying to remember how I had got into such a mess.


It had only been half an hour ago when Mum had sent me down to the chippie with a tenner and strict orders for no vinegar on her chips. When I reached the Stroud roundabout, I couldn't help looking at the old house. It was ready for demolition, which was a shame because we had played there for years! It was then that I'd seen it; a light at the window. Then I saw a face. I stood there staring. It was a girl, mouthing a word and the word was, 'HELP'.


That’s how it happened. I’d broken in round the back through a smashed window. Half a minute later and I’d found her, a trapped prisoner in an upstairs room. She’d only just finished telling me that she was the American ambassador’s daughter, Cindy Breakwell, and about the ransom money when the kidnappers had returned to move her to a safe house.


So there we were, balancing on the wall, as if we were walking the plank. Gripping the guttering tightly, I lowered myself down. Five minutes later and we were back at Mum's.
"So Ron, where's the fish and chips?" she asked, eyeing Cindy suspiciously.


Half an hour after that, Cindy’s Dad arrived in an embassy car. All the net curtains on the St Petroc's estate started to twitch with curiosity. That night it wasn’t just chips for tea. He took us all out for a big meal. Amazingly, the next day, there I was in the local paper. A hero.