

# 1 *Kidnap*

Home was on a hill in Africa, far away from the sea. The sky was blue. The forest was green. The earth under our feet was dry and warm. At dawn, the sun was a huge ball of red.

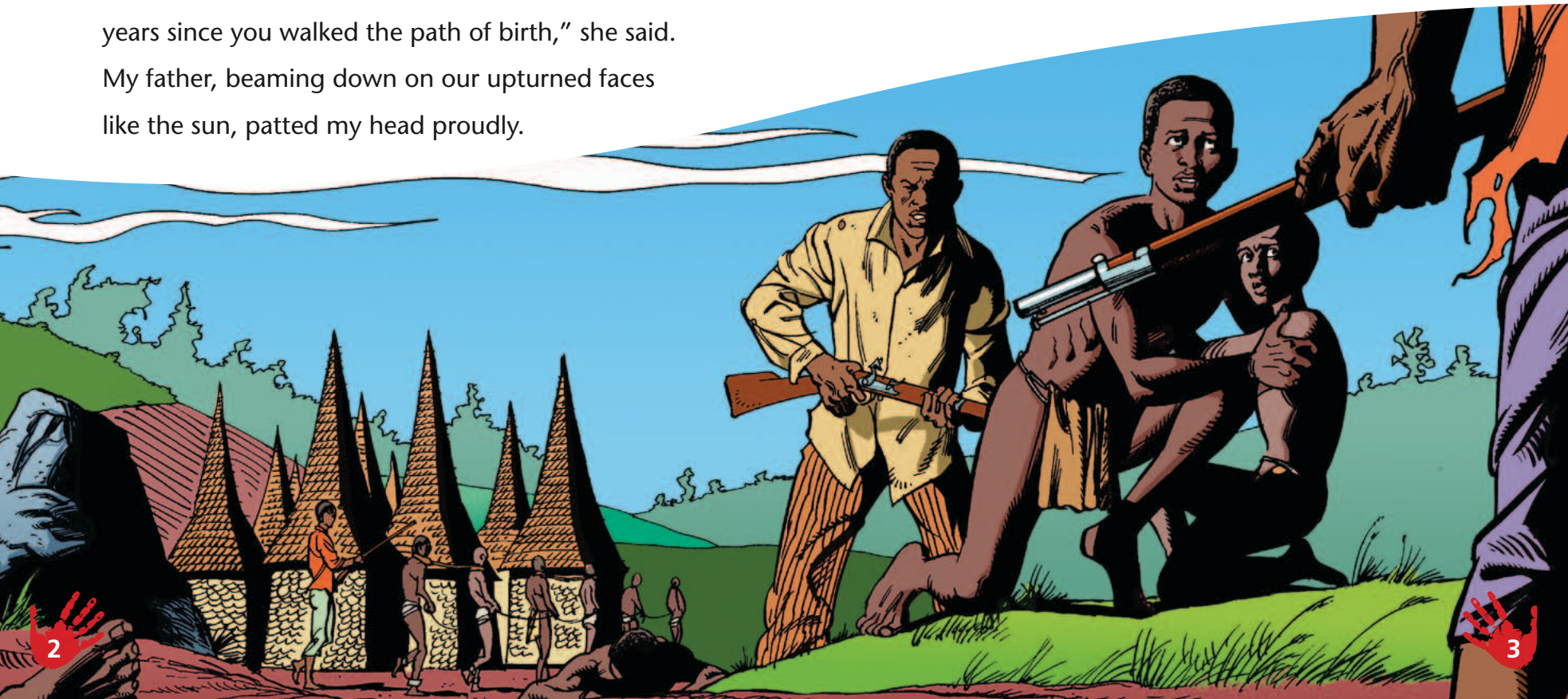
Fresh air filled our lungs. Magic filled my ears.

I was my mother's seventh child. "It is eleven years since you walked the path of birth," she said. My father, beaming down on our upturned faces like the sun, patted my head proudly.

One day, men came. They looked like us, but spoke another language. Their weapons spat fire.

My father tried to fight back. He threw his spear, but they killed him in an instant. His guts spilled onto the dust.

Then they killed my mother. My older brothers and sisters ran. I went back for my younger brother and sister, but our enemies captured us.



Our grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles and aunts were all murdered. The men went into the huts and killed the sick. They killed anyone who fought back. They killed anyone who ran away and anyone who was not young and strong.

The rest of us were tied together.

They marched us down the river path. We marched for two days through the forest until finally we came out of the hills. There we were passed on to another tribe, who gave our captors weapons and rich cloth. The new tribe hit us with whips.

“Not too hard,” their leader shouted. “They have a long journey. We can’t sell them if they’re wounded or weak.”

“They sell us, like cattle,” I said. Tears were in my eyes. Slavery! I was frightened. Selling people was not allowed in our tribe. It made our gods angry.

“March!” shouted our enemies.

