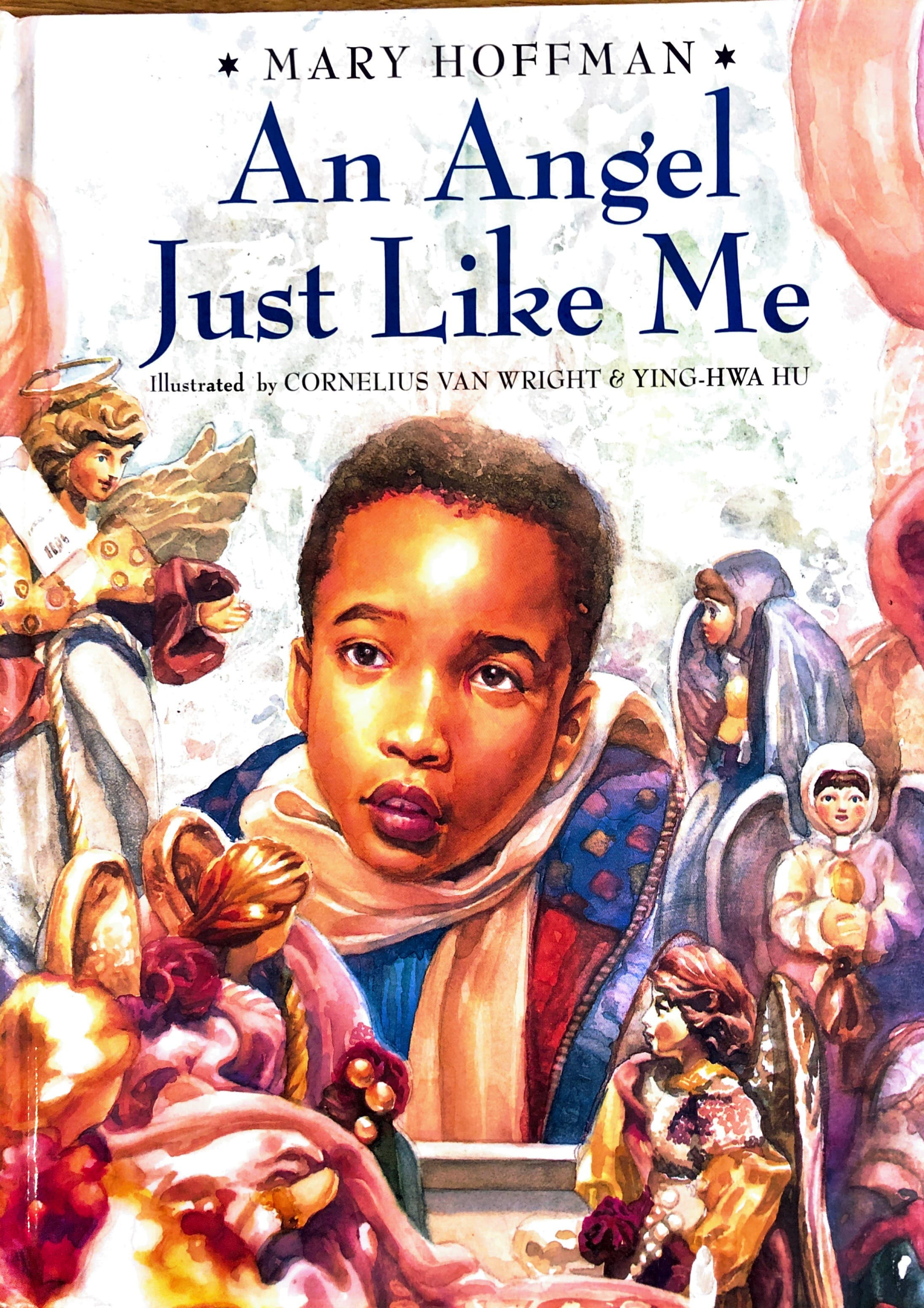


★ MARY HOFFMAN ★

An Angel Just Like Me

Illustrated by CORNELIUS VAN WRIGHT & YING-HWA HU



An Angel Just Like Me

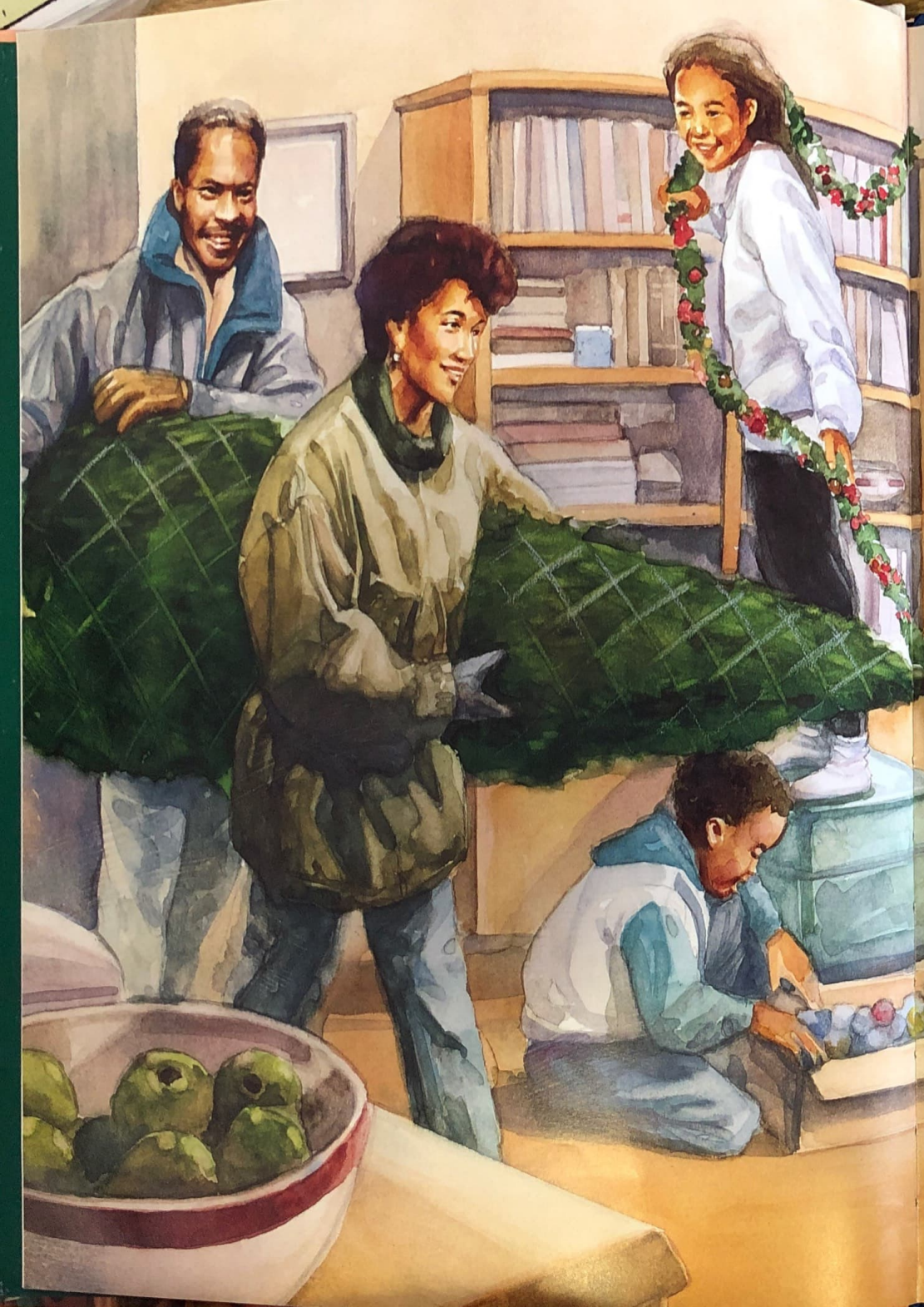
MARY HOFFMAN

Illustrated by

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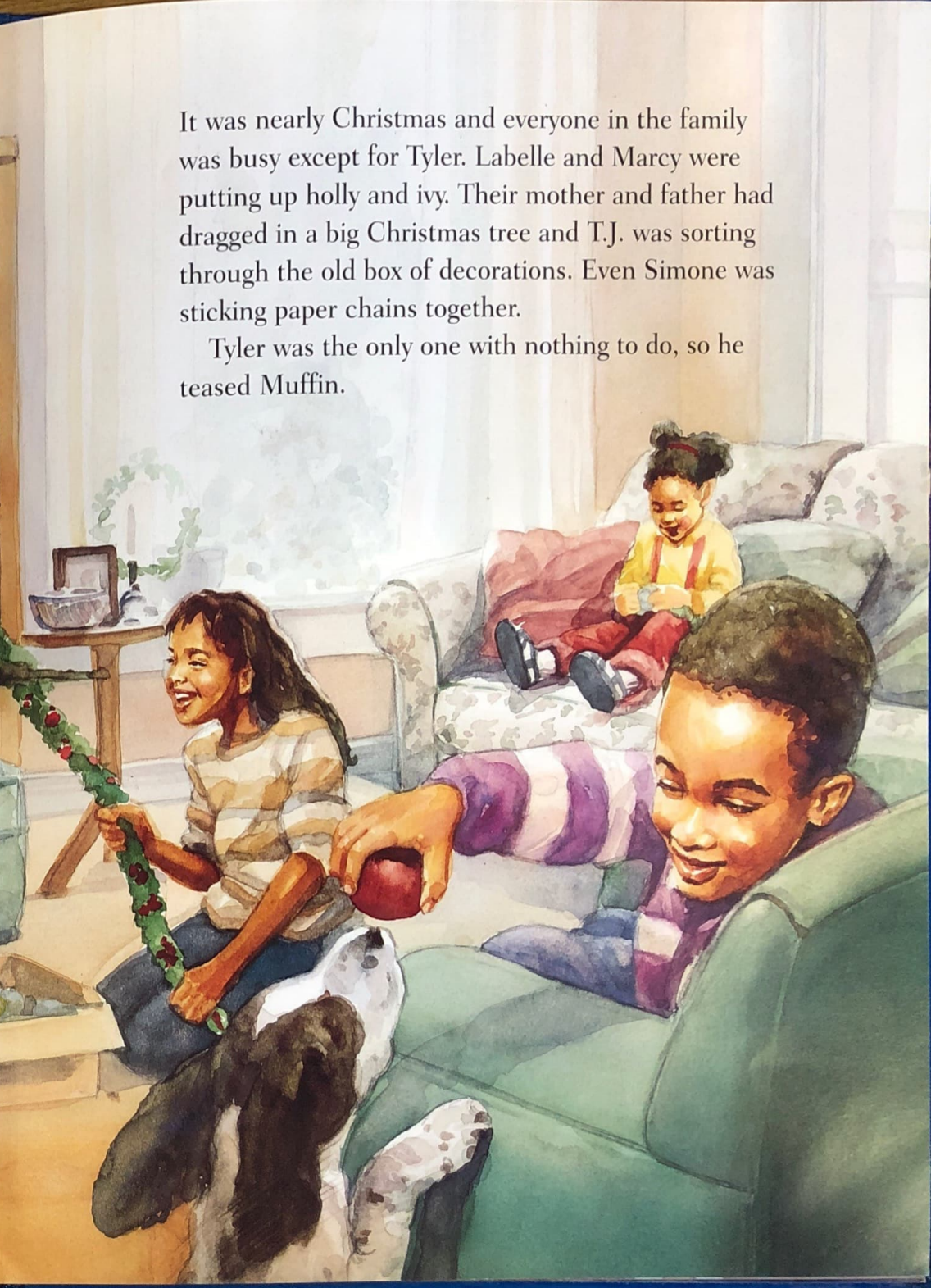


FRANCES LINCOLN



It was nearly Christmas and everyone in the family was busy except for Tyler. Labelle and Marcy were putting up holly and ivy. Their mother and father had dragged in a big Christmas tree and T.J. was sorting through the old box of decorations. Even Simone was sticking paper chains together.

Tyler was the only one with nothing to do, so he teased Muffin.





"Oh no," said T.J. "Look at this angel!"

They looked.

"We'll have to get a new one," sighed Mum.

Tyler picked up the broken angel.

"Why do they all look like girls?" he asked. "Can't boys be angels?"

No one answered. Tyler just couldn't let it rest.

"Why are they always pink?" he asked. "Aren't there any black angels?"

"Good question," said his dad. "I never saw one, but then I never saw a real angel anyway."


"I'm going to find one," announced Tyler. "I'm going to get a new angel for our tree. One that looks just like me."



So every day, Tyler went into a different shop and looked at angels. Some were big and some were small, some were cheap and some were expensive. They all had wings.

But none of them looked a bit like Tyler.



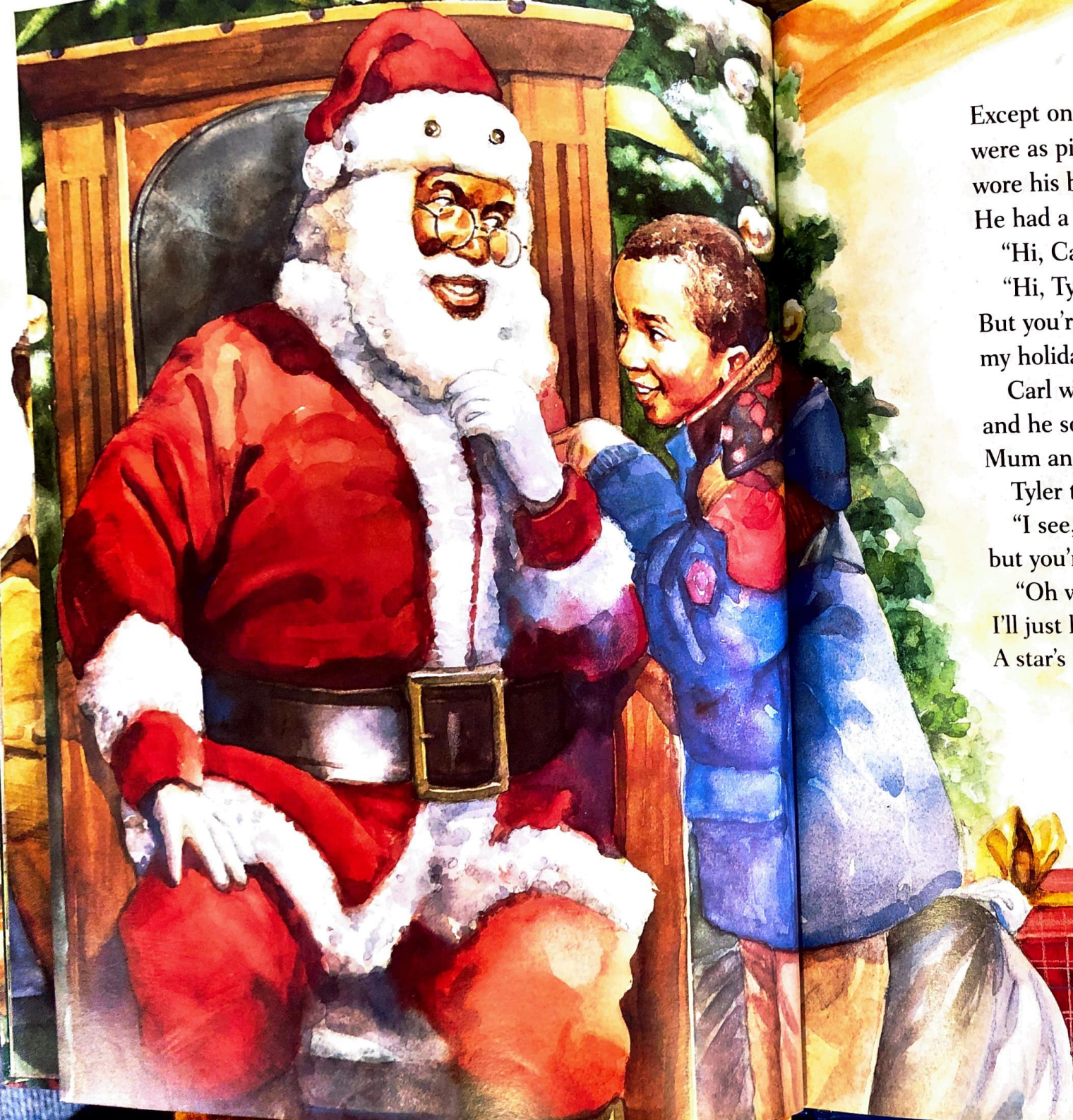


None of the angels on the Christmas cards or wrapping paper looked like him either. Some played beautiful gold harps and trumpets. Some perched on rooftops or lolled on clouds. Lots of them were children and there were even some funny ones with skateboards or roller blades. But none of them looked like Tyler.

Tyler thought maybe Father Christmas could help.
All the big shops had one – but none of them looked
right to Tyler. Somehow, Tyler had always imagined
that Father Christmas would be a bit like his own dad.

But all the Santas in the shops had curly white hair
and beards and red cheeks to match their clothes.





Except one. And he was at a shop where all the angels were as pink and gold as anywhere else. This Santa wore his beard like shaving cream on his brown face. He had a huge stomach. Tyler prodded it.

"Hi, Carl," he said. "Is that all yours?"

"Hi, Tyler," said the Santa. "No, it's a cushion. But you're not supposed to recognise me. This is my holiday job."

Carl was an art student friend of Tyler's parents and he sometimes looked after the children when Mum and Dad both had to work late.

Tyler told Carl his problem.

"I see," said Carl. "I never thought about that, but you're right. There should be angels like you."

"Oh well," said Tyler, "I suppose I'll just have to get a star instead. A star's the same for everyone."



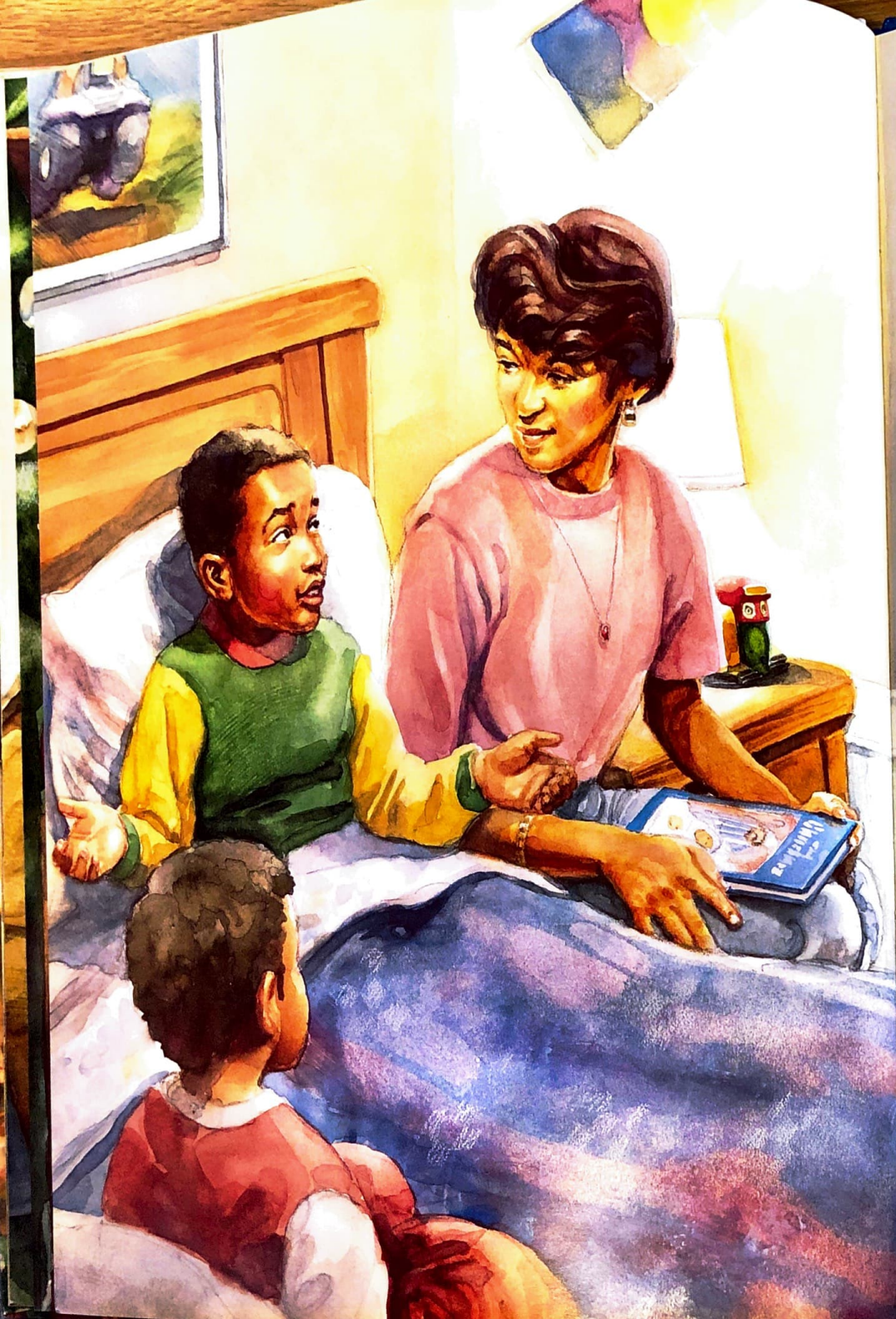


On Christmas Eve, Tyler's family went to church. Inside, there was a crib with the baby Jesus and the animals in the stable. There were other figures too – a shepherd and some kings.

"Hey," said Tyler. "That king looks a bit like you, Dad."

But the angels were just like the ones in the shops, only bigger. And something else was beginning to bug Tyler too.





That night, before the children went to sleep, their mother read them the story of the first Christmas again.

“So Jesus was born in Bethlehem – and that’s in Israel, right?” asked Tyler.

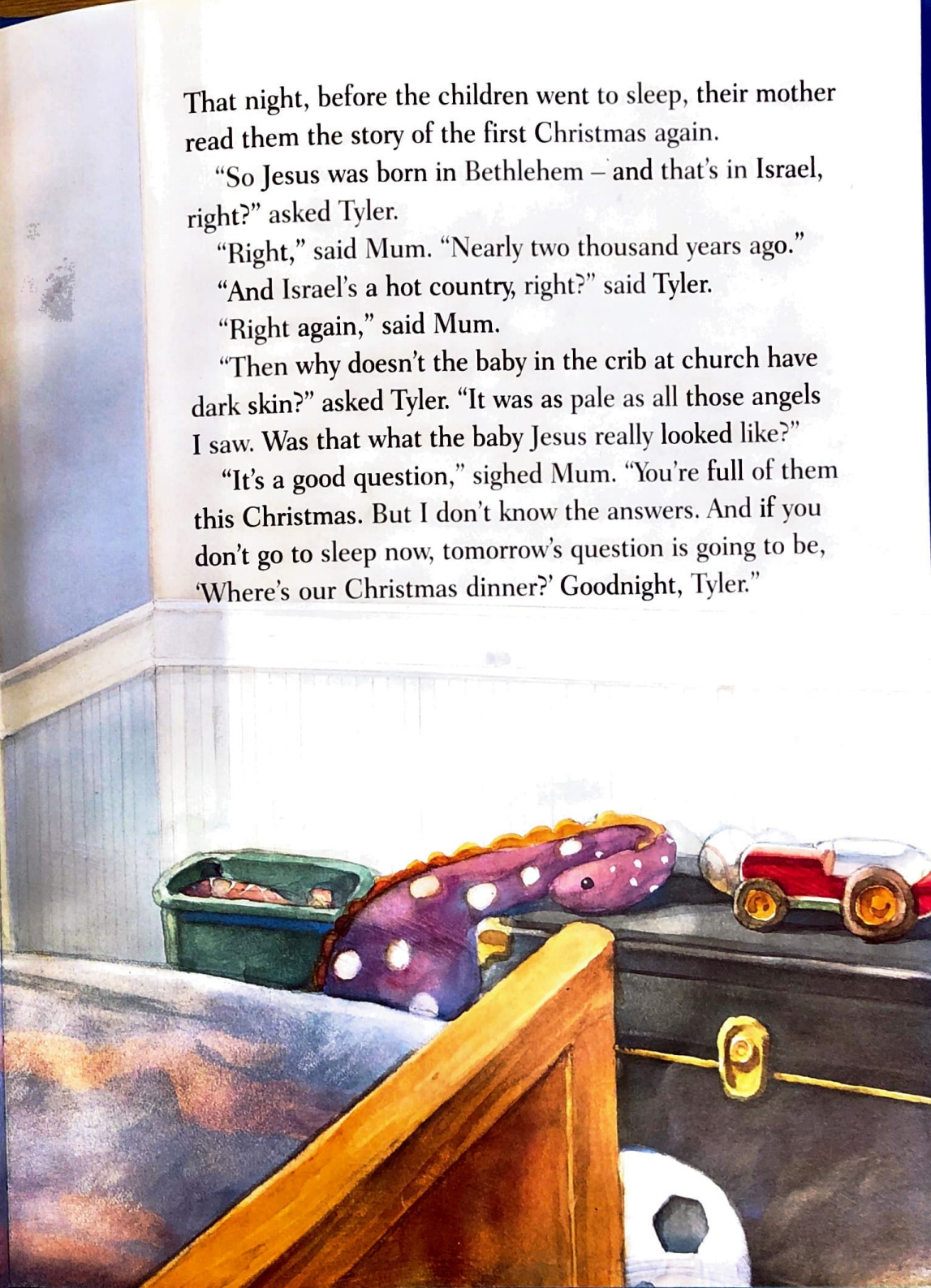
“Right,” said Mum. “Nearly two thousand years ago.”

“And Israel’s a hot country, right?” said Tyler.

“Right again,” said Mum.

“Then why doesn’t the baby in the crib at church have dark skin?” asked Tyler. “It was as pale as all those angels I saw. Was that what the baby Jesus really looked like?”

“It’s a good question,” sighed Mum. “You’re full of them this Christmas. But I don’t know the answers. And if you don’t go to sleep now, tomorrow’s question is going to be, ‘Where’s our Christmas dinner?’ Goodnight, Tyler.”



On the other side of town, Father Christmas
was working late.



Christmas Day was always special at Tyler's house. There were two grandmas and one grandpa, an auntie and three cousins and even a visiting dog for Muffin to play with. It was as crowded as the crib in church.

Tyler looked up at the brand new gold star on the top of the tree and gave a little sigh.

"Stars are OK, aren't they?" said Dad. "Stars are the same for everyone."

"Yes," said Tyler, "But you can see stars in the sky most nights. You don't see angels. They're only for special occasions."

Just then, his Mum came in with a parcel.

"Late delivery from Santa," she told Tyler. "This just came through the letterbox for you."

It was the most beautifully carved wooden angel.
And – apart from the wings – it looked just like Tyler.

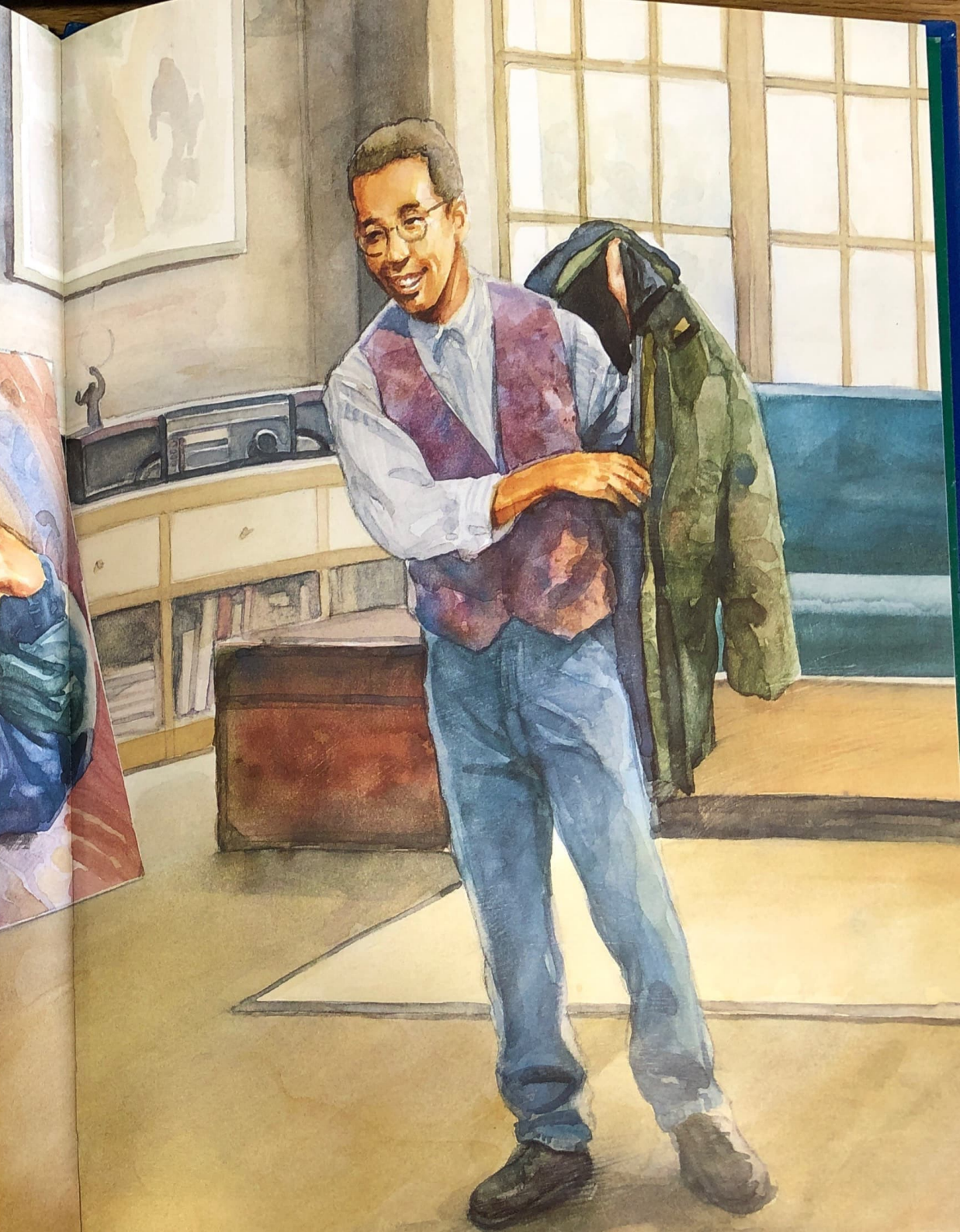


On Boxing Day, Tyler went to see Carl and invite him round to dinner.

"It was my best present," he told Carl. "Only now I want you to make something else."

"OK," said Carl. "What is it?"

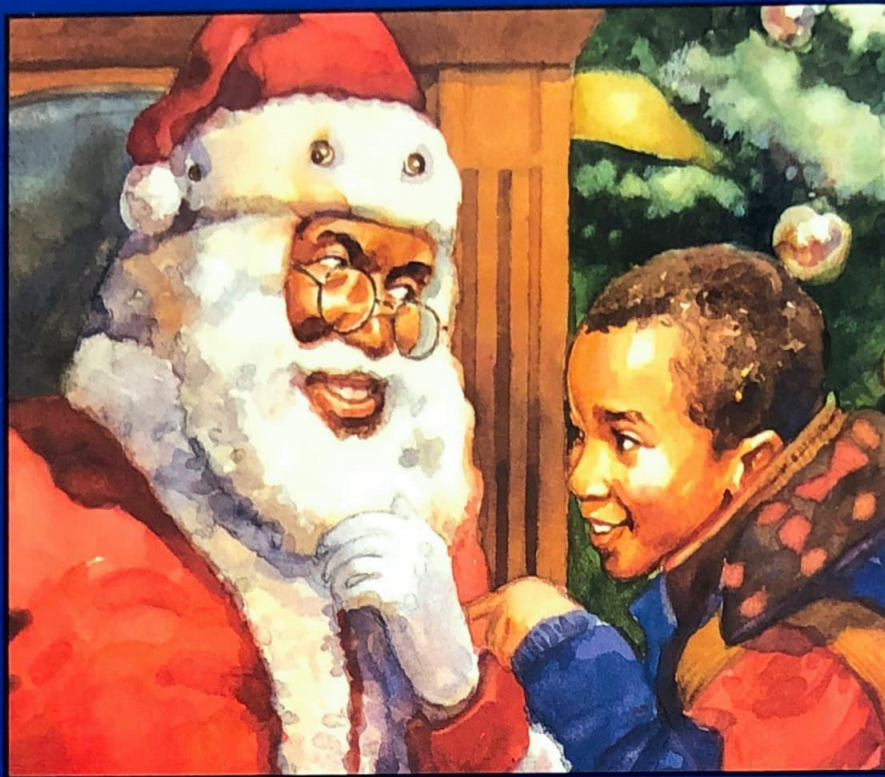
"You see," said Tyler, "now my friends have seen my angel, they all want ...





... angels just like them!"





It is nearly Christmas, and Tyler's family are putting up the decorations. But when Tyler picks up the broken Christmas-tree angel, he can't help asking, "Why are they always pink? Aren't there any black angels?" It's a question no one can answer. And when Tyler goes shopping for a black angel, he can't find a single one – until he tells his friend Carl the problem ...

"This is a beautiful book, with a story that makes you smile and think at the same time. A good read for everyone in the family."

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