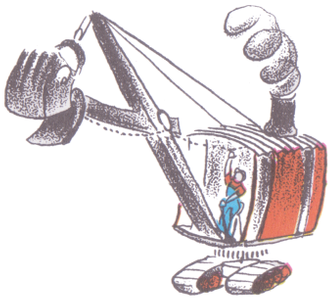
MIKE MULLIGAN

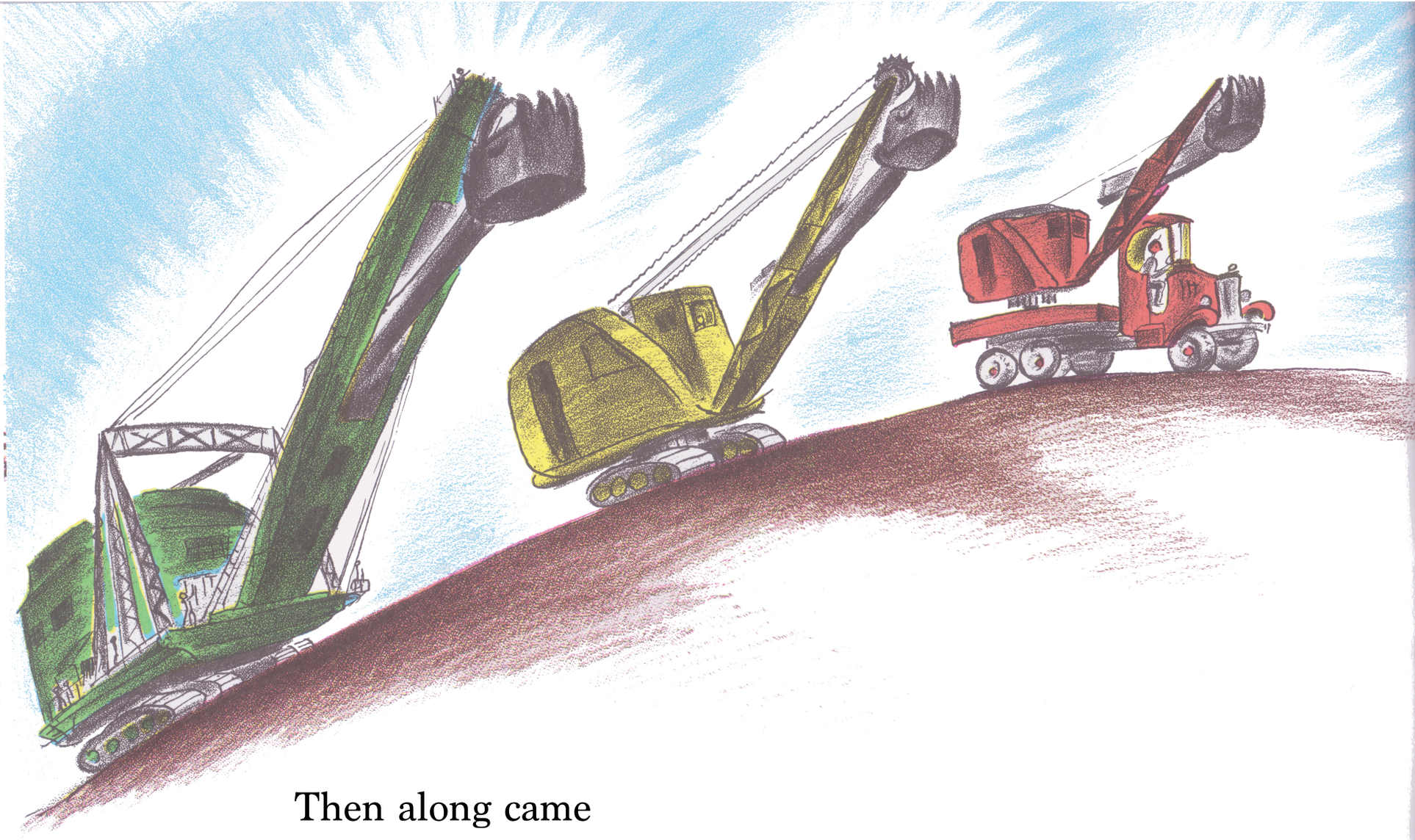


AND HIS OBSOLETE SHOVEL

A parody by Jeff Kaufman, 2016
Original story and pictures by Virginia Lee Burton, 1939



Mike Mulligan had a steam shovel,
a beautiful red steam shovel.
Mike Mulligan was very proud of it.
He always said that it could dig as much in a day
as a hundred men could dig in a week.



Then along came
the new gasoline shovels
and the new electric shovels
and the new Diesel motor shovels.
The government down in Washington
decided to ban the old polluting
coal-burning steam shovels.

Mike Mulligan

was

VERY

SAD

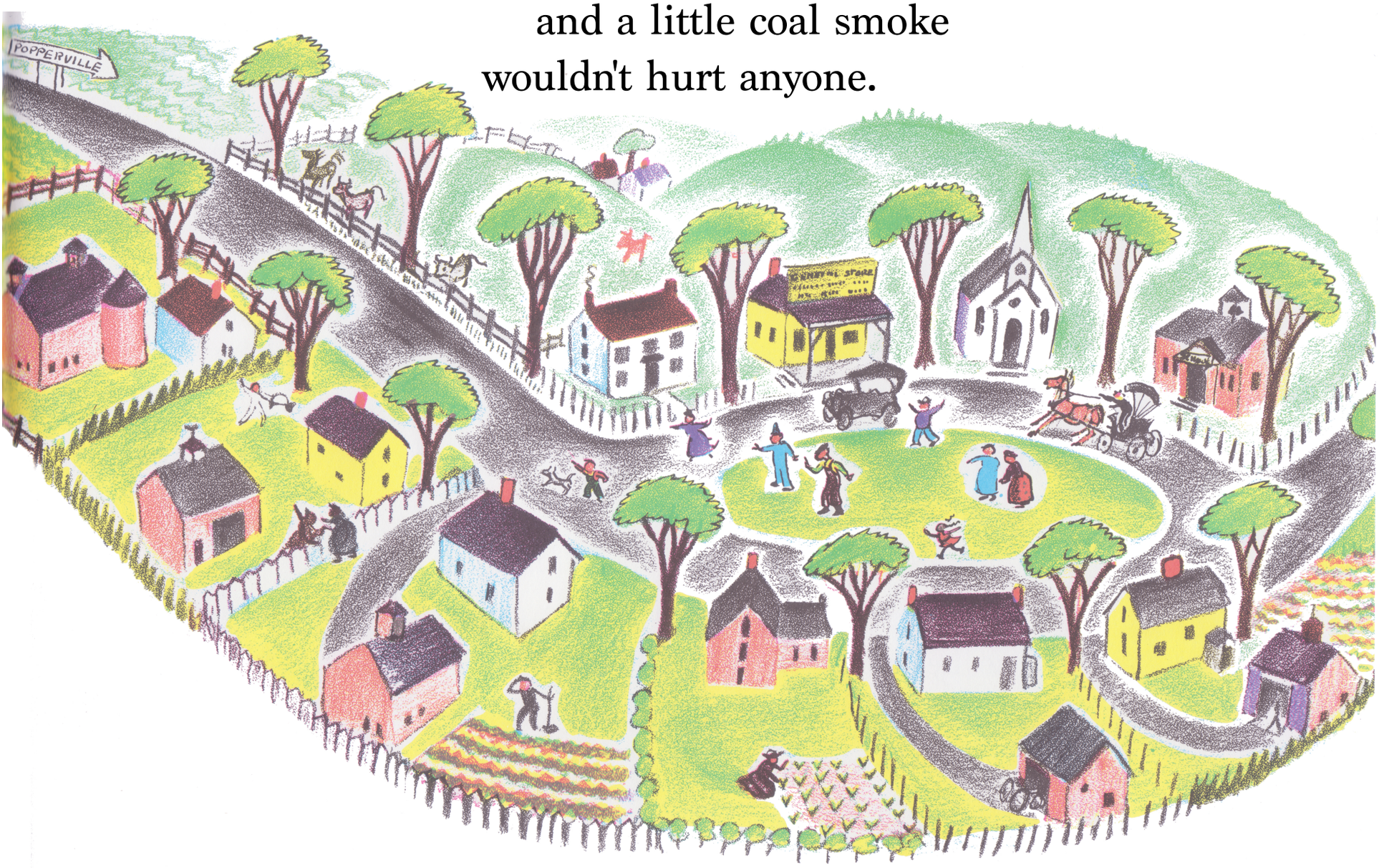




Mike Mulligan was fed up with the big city
and their concerns about
asthma, air quality, and global warming.
He left the canals and the railroads,
the highways and the airports,
where no one wanted his steam shovel anymore,
and went away out in the country,
where pollution laws were poorly enforced.

He crawled along slowly
up the hills and down the hills
until he came to the little town
of Popperville.

The skies were blue,
the grass was green,
and a little coal smoke
wouldn't hurt anyone.





The town needed a cellar
for their new town hall.
Mike Mulligan had arrived
just in time to dig it.



When the little boy who watched all the town meetings heard,
he was worried: digging with coal in the middle of town?
He went to where Mike was starting, and told him to stop!
Mike Mulligan just laughed and kept digging.

The little boy ran off to ask the
person who answers the telephone
to call up the Environmental Protection Agency,
and tell them what was happening in Popperville.
The EPA said they would come as soon as they could,
but that wouldn't be until sundown.



The little boy ran back to where
Mike Mulligan was digging



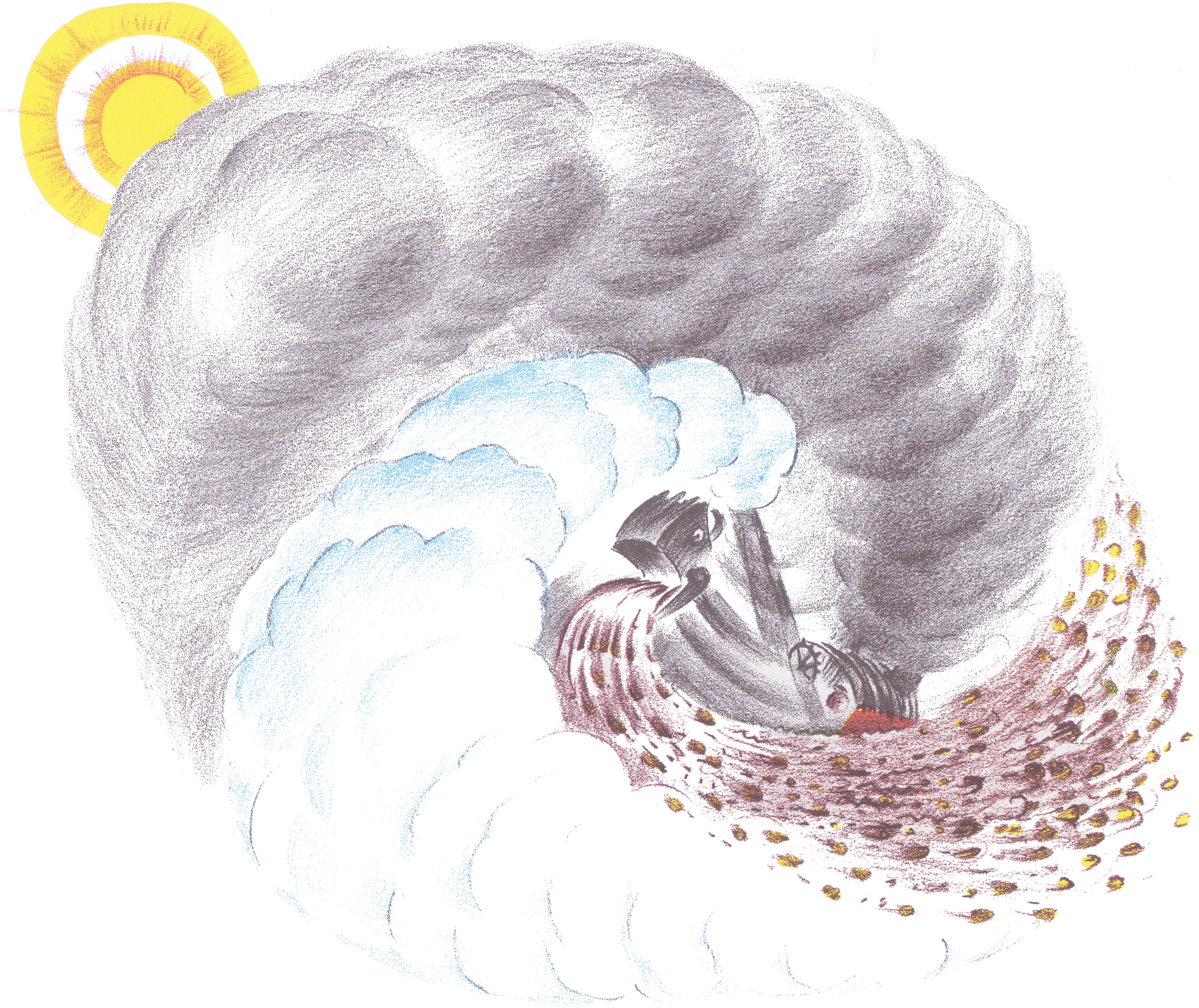
'You stop right now, Mister!
The EPA will be here at sundown,
and when they catch you
illegally operating that shovel
you'll be in for a
large fine!

Mike Mulligan shrugged and laughed again,
'I've always said I can dig as much in a day
as a hundred men can dig in a week.
I'll have it finished by sundown,
and your EPA will be
none the wiser.'


FARM MACHINERY - SEED
SEWING MACHINES —
DRY GOODS — GROCERYS
PLUMMING FIXTURES
FEED - HARDWARE
SHAS ZINK... PROPRIETOR
GENERAL STORE

Dirt was flying everywhere
and the smoke and steam were so thick
that people could hardly see anything.
But listen!

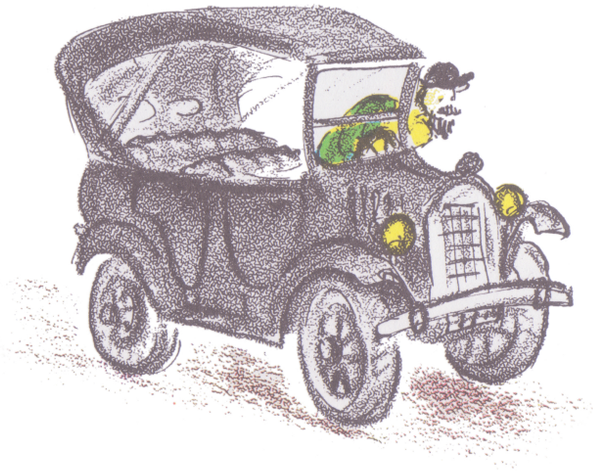
BING! BANG! CRASH! SLAM!
LOUDER AND LOUDER
FASTER AND
FASTER.



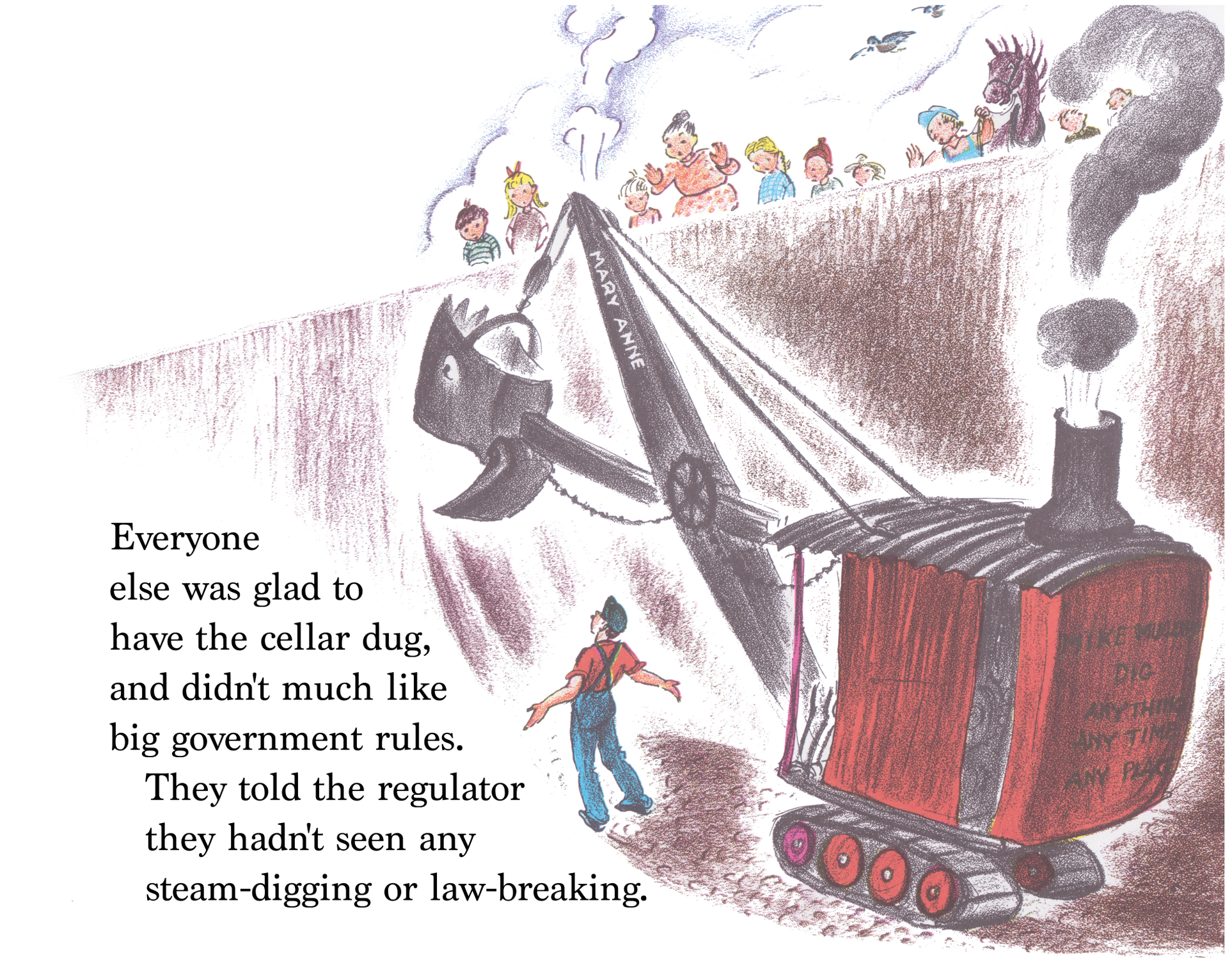
Then suddenly it was quiet.
Slowly the dirt settled down.
The smoke and steam cleared away,
and there was the cellar
all finished.

Four corners ... neat and square;
four walls ... straight down,
and Mike Mulligan at the bottom with his steam shovel,
and the sun was just going down behind the hill.
'Hurray!' shouted the people. 'Hurray for Mike Mulligan
and his steam shovel! He has dug the cellar in just one day.'





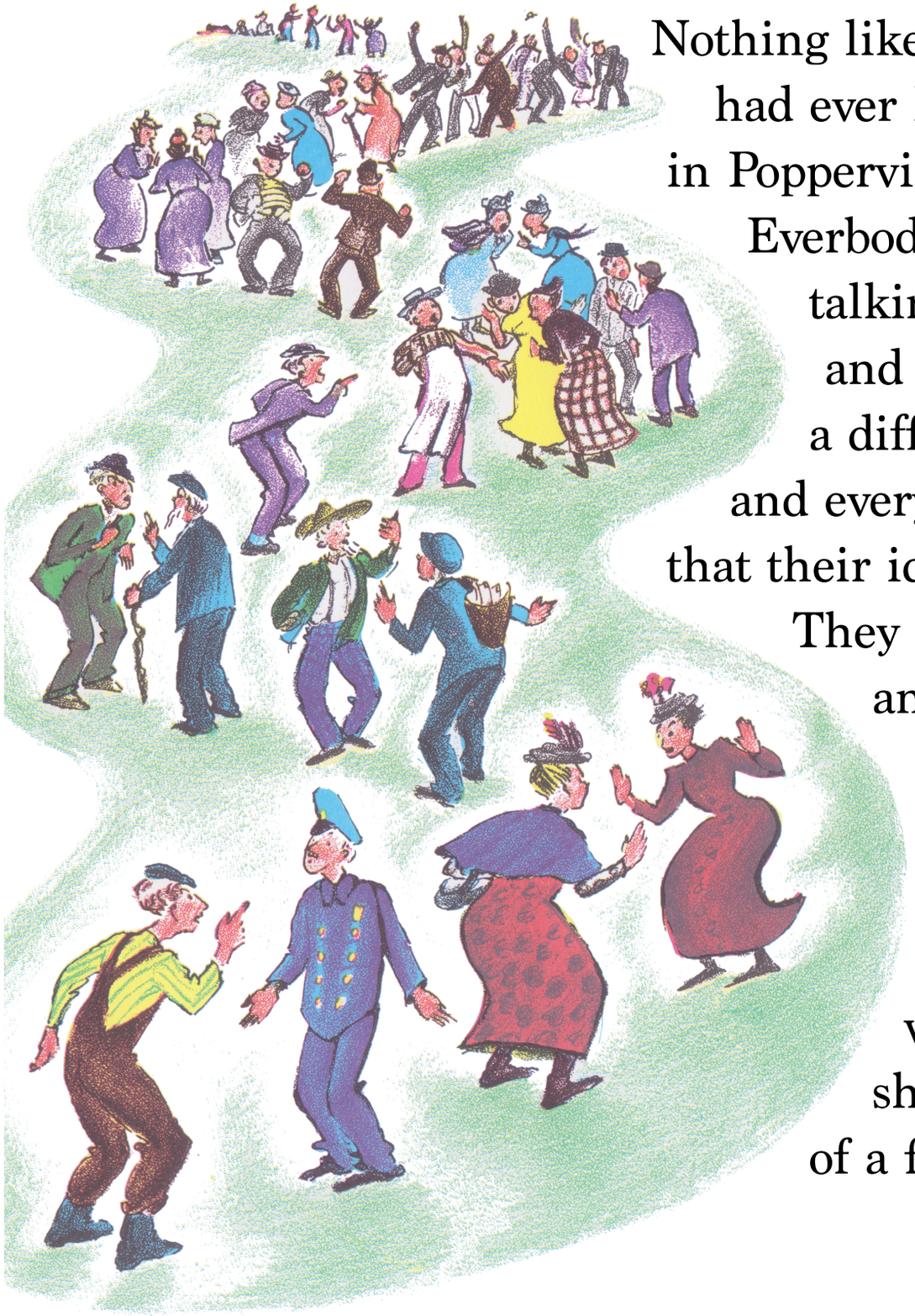
Suddenly the little boy shouted,
'you won't get away with this!
The EPA is here, and they're
going to make you pay!'



Everyone
else was glad to
have the cellar dug,
and didn't much like
big government rules.

They told the regulator
they hadn't seen any
steam-digging or law-breaking.

'Then what is a steam shovel doing
at the bottom of your new cellar?'
the regulator asked.



Nothing like this
had ever happened before
in Popperville.
Everbody started
talking at once,
and everybody had
a different idea,
and everybody thought
that their idea was best.
They talked and they talked
and they argued
and they fought
til they were worn out
and still no one knew
what to tell the regulator
why there was a steam
shovel sitting at the bottom
of a freshly dug cellar.



Now a little girl,
who had been keeping very quiet
reading the Coal Burning Elimination Act
had a good idea.
She said,
'Why couldn't we have chosen to
put the steam shovel in the cellar
as the furnace for the new town hall?
The ban specifically exempts
furnaces in government buildings.'

Everyone thought this was a wonderful loophole,
and they told the regulator that this is why
there was a steam shovel sitting at the
bottom of the freshly dug cellar.
The regulator was skeptical,
but there was nothing they could do.


MARY ANNE



They built the new town hall
right over Mike Mulligan and his steam shovel.
It was finished before winter.

Now when you go to Popperville
be sure to go down in the cellar
of the new town hall.
There you can see the old steam shovel,
burning coal, smoke
rising up the chimney,
warming up the meetings
in the new town hall.

