

KURT CYRUS

**SLOW
TRAIN**

TO OXMON

Slow Train To Oxmoor

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Edwin Blink comes to enjoy his unusual trip on a slow train.

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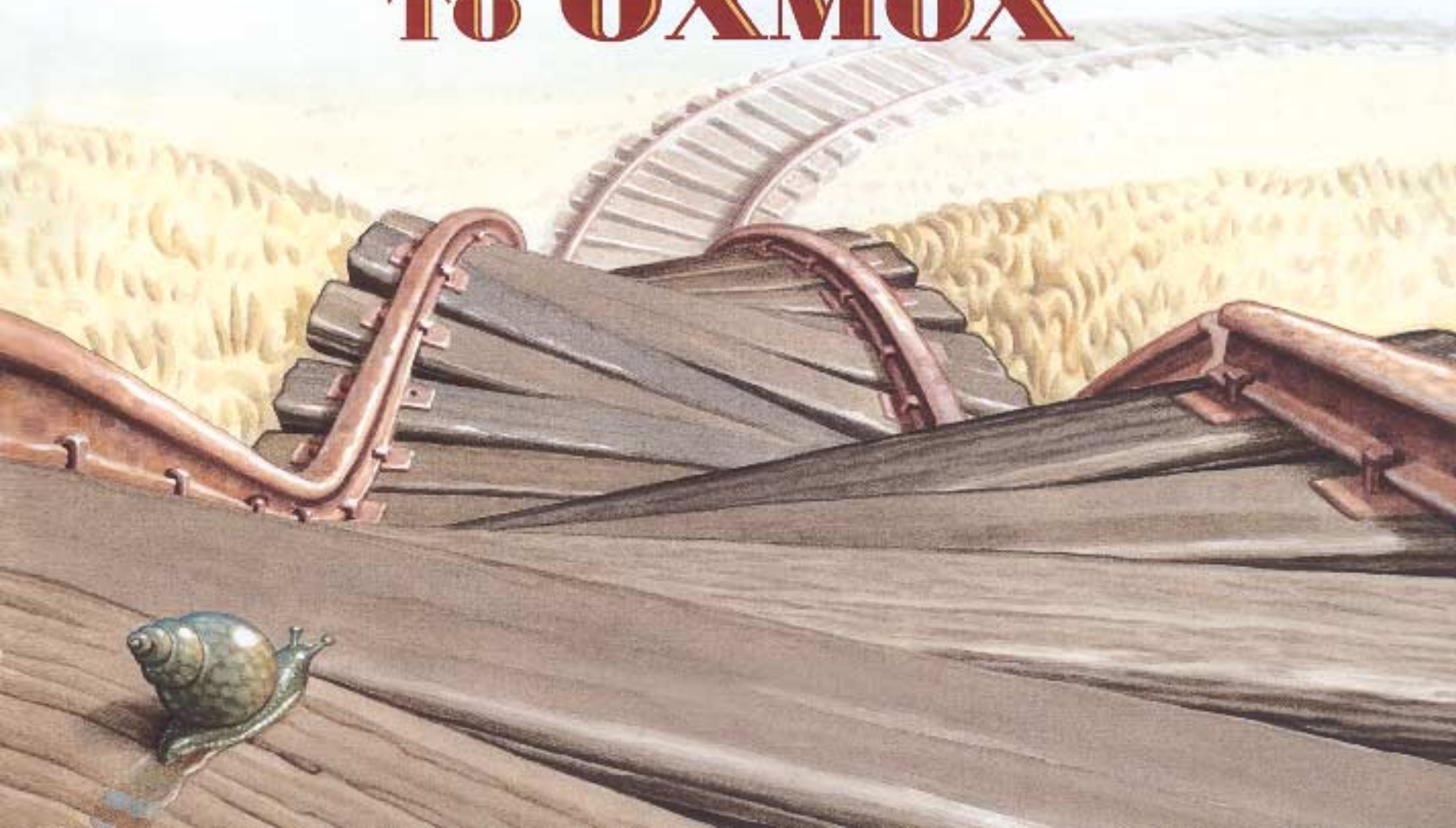
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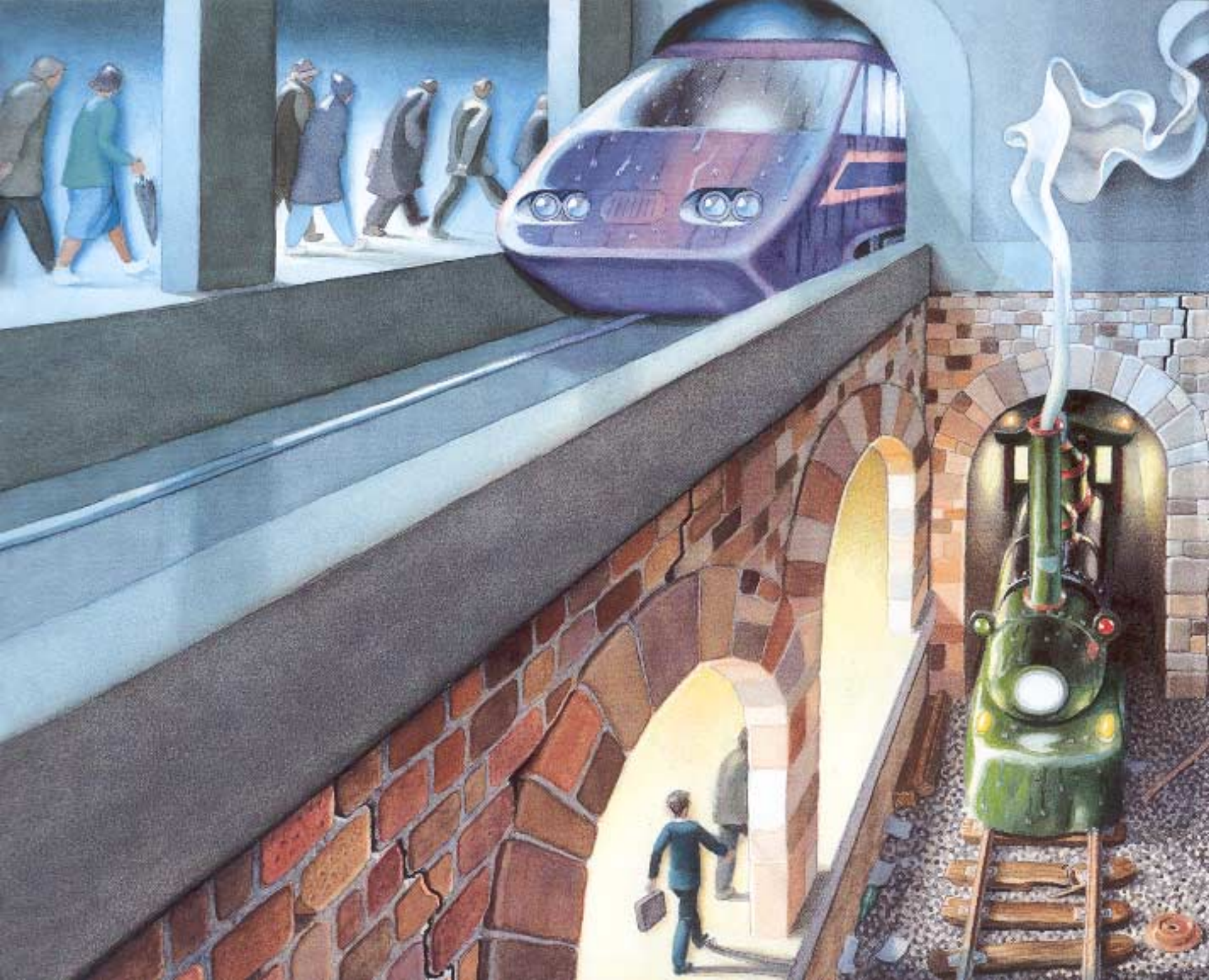
SLOW TRAIN TO OXMOX





Very early one fall morning, a cold drizzle dripped down from the sky and speckled the glasses of Edwin Blink.

“Let it rain,” said Blink, squinting through the spots. “I’m a busy guy with a first-class ticket on the Oxmox Express. Nothing can slow me down!”



By the time he reached the station, Edwin couldn't see a thing. He simply followed the person in front of him, click-clacking up the platform and onto the train.

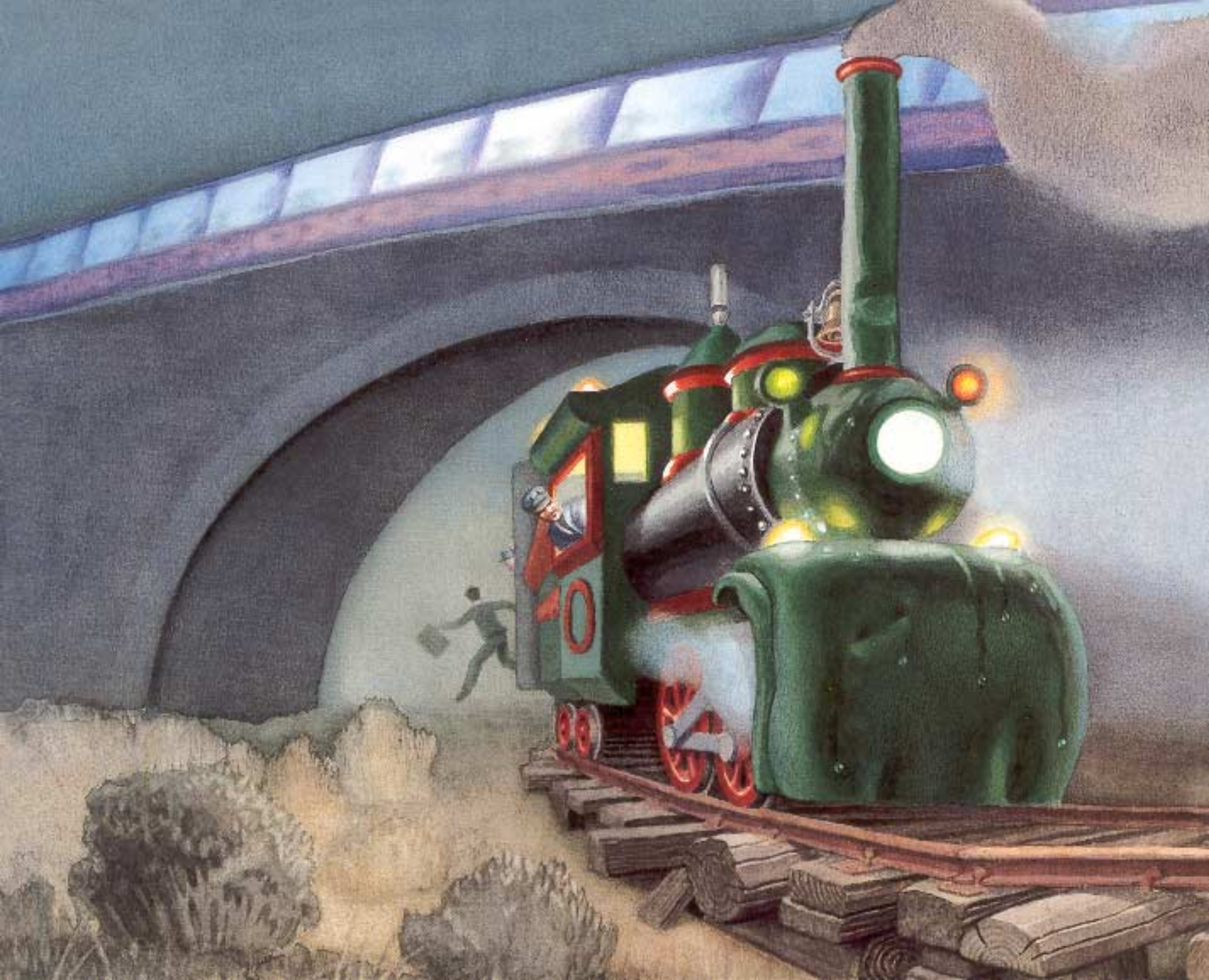
The wrong platform. The wrong train.

Edwin found an empty seat and settled in. “Well! I wasn’t sure I’d make it,” he said. “The Oxmox Express waits for no one. It’s the fastest train around!”

“Slow Train to Oxmox,” announced the conductor. “With stops at Loblolly and Twigtwist. And who knows, maybe a few other places. Tickets, please.”

“Huh?” said Blink. *Clank! Clank!* went the cars. And the train lurched into motion—slowly. Very slowly.





Suddenly, with a squeal and a bump, the Slow Train stopped.

“Short delay,” announced the conductor. “Geese on the track. Who wants to help out?”

Edwin jumped up. “Good! I’m in luck,” he said. “Maybe I can still catch the Express.” And he jumped off the train—just in time to watch the lights of the speeding Express go racing by.

It was gone in a flash, the blaring honk of its horn echoing in the mist.

Honk! Honk! answered the geese.



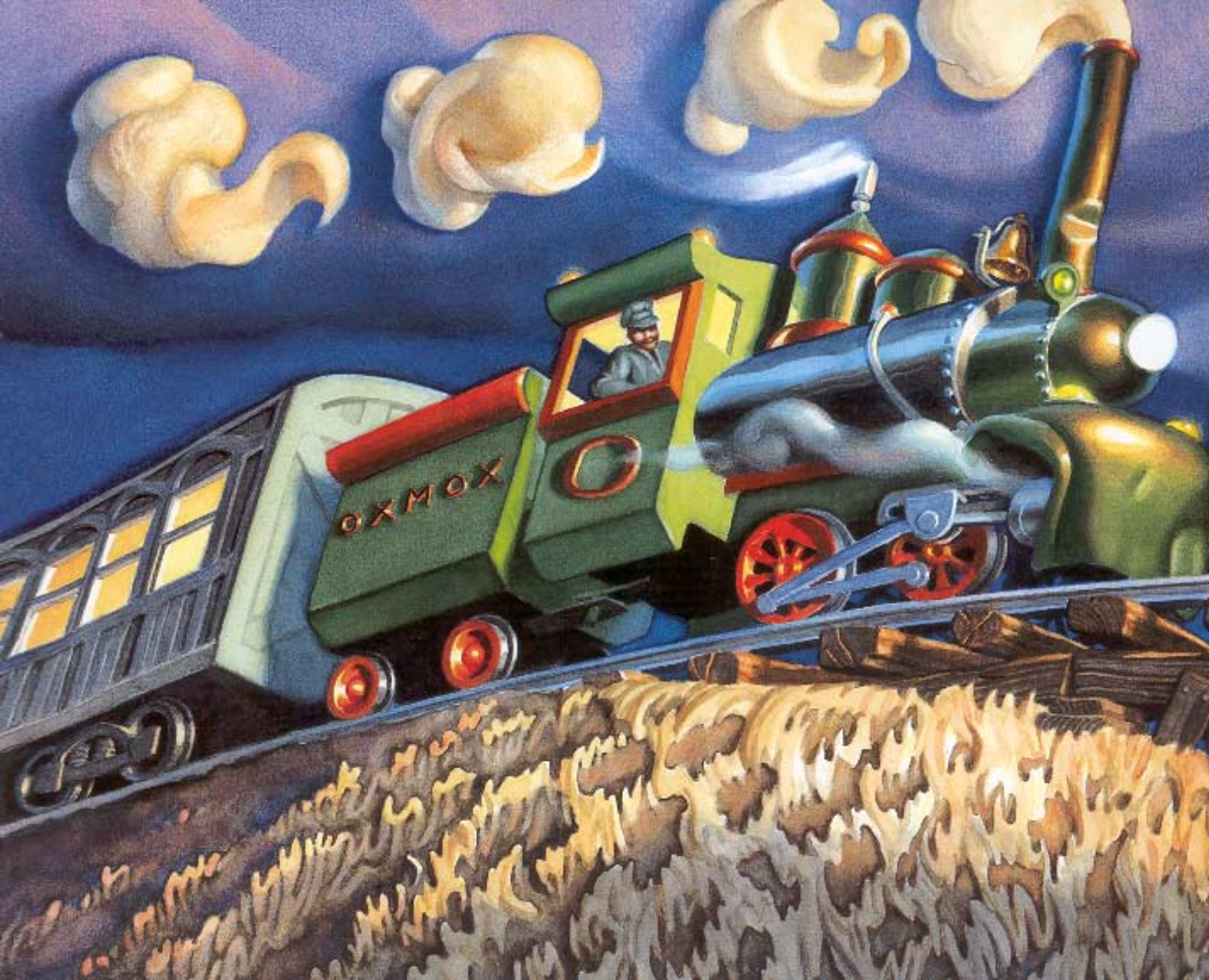


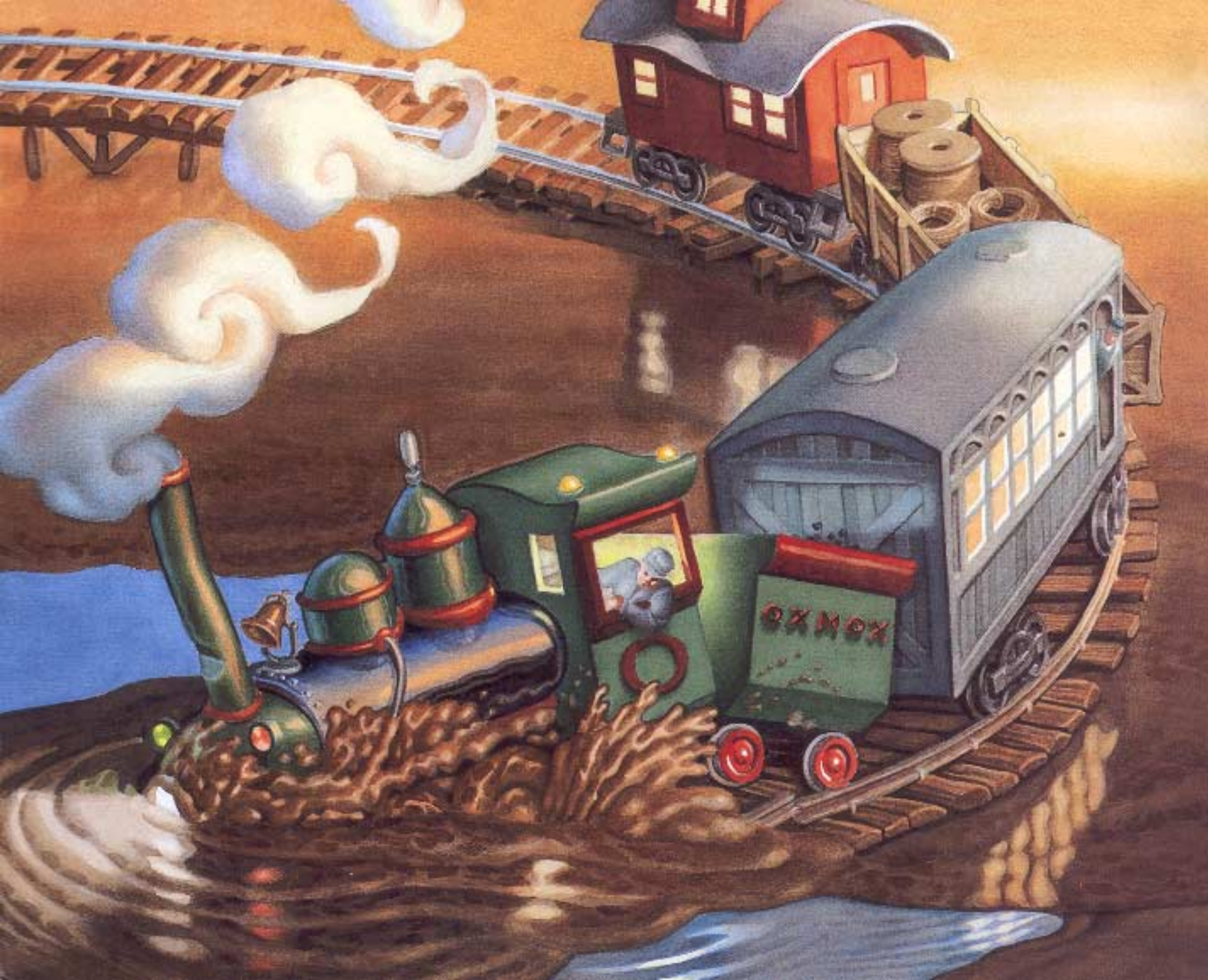
“Good morning, little honkers,” chuckled the conductor. “Why don’t we make this a bit easier for you?”

Edwin gaped. “Geese? We stopped for geese? Listen, I’m a busy guy. I’ve got a first-class ticket to Oxmoor. Could you put the track down so we can go? Please?”

They did put it down, but only after the last goose had waddled through. “All aboard,” called the conductor, and they were on their way again.

Into the sunrise chugged the train, its whistle blowing, its pistons pushing. “Geese. Geese! I can’t believe it. Let’s go, let’s go!” urged Edwin Blink. The whistle blew—the pistons pushed—a little bit faster—a little bit faster—





Sqquiisssh! The train stopped, its wheels spinning in mud.

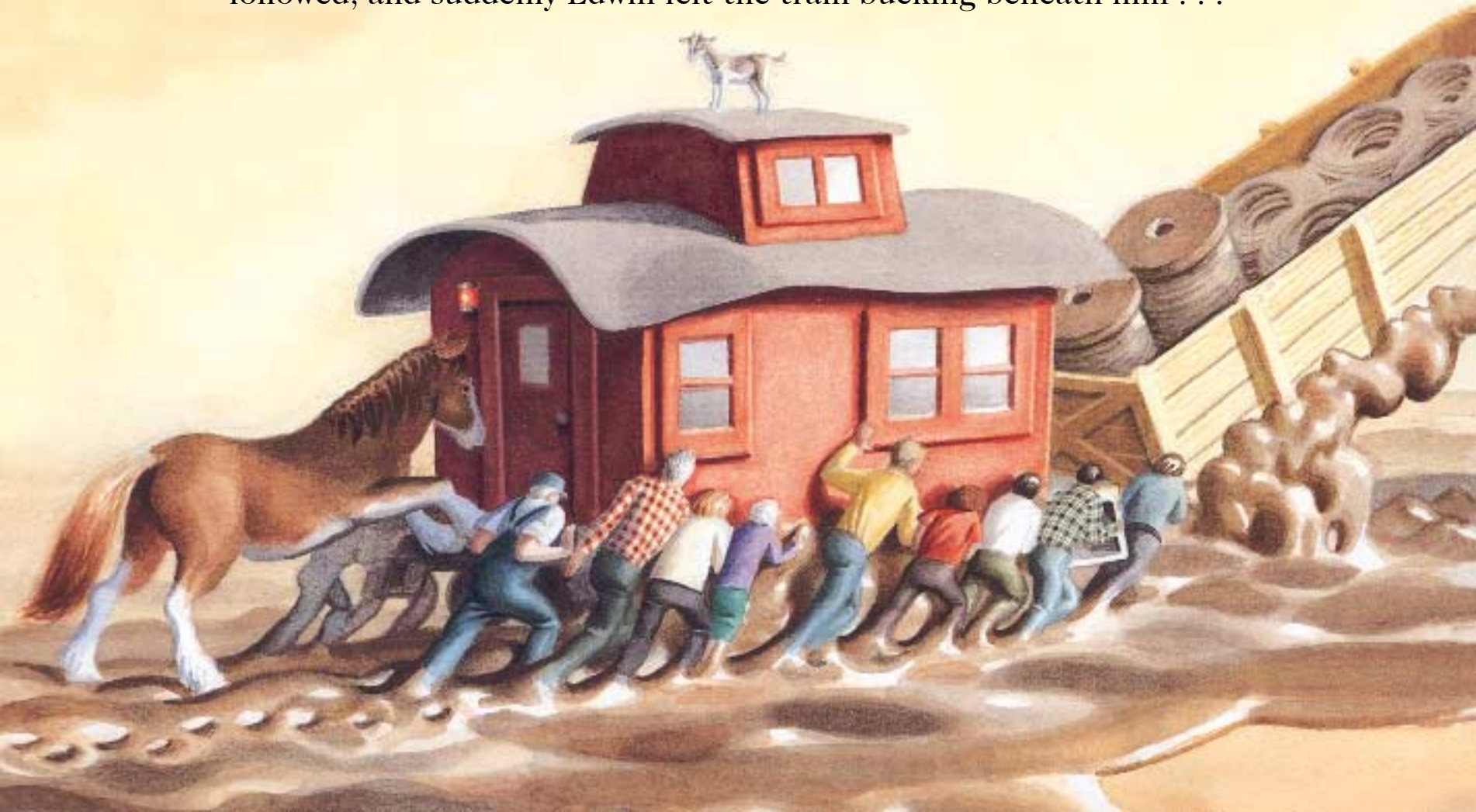
“Loblolly,” announced the conductor. “Short delay, who wants to help push?”

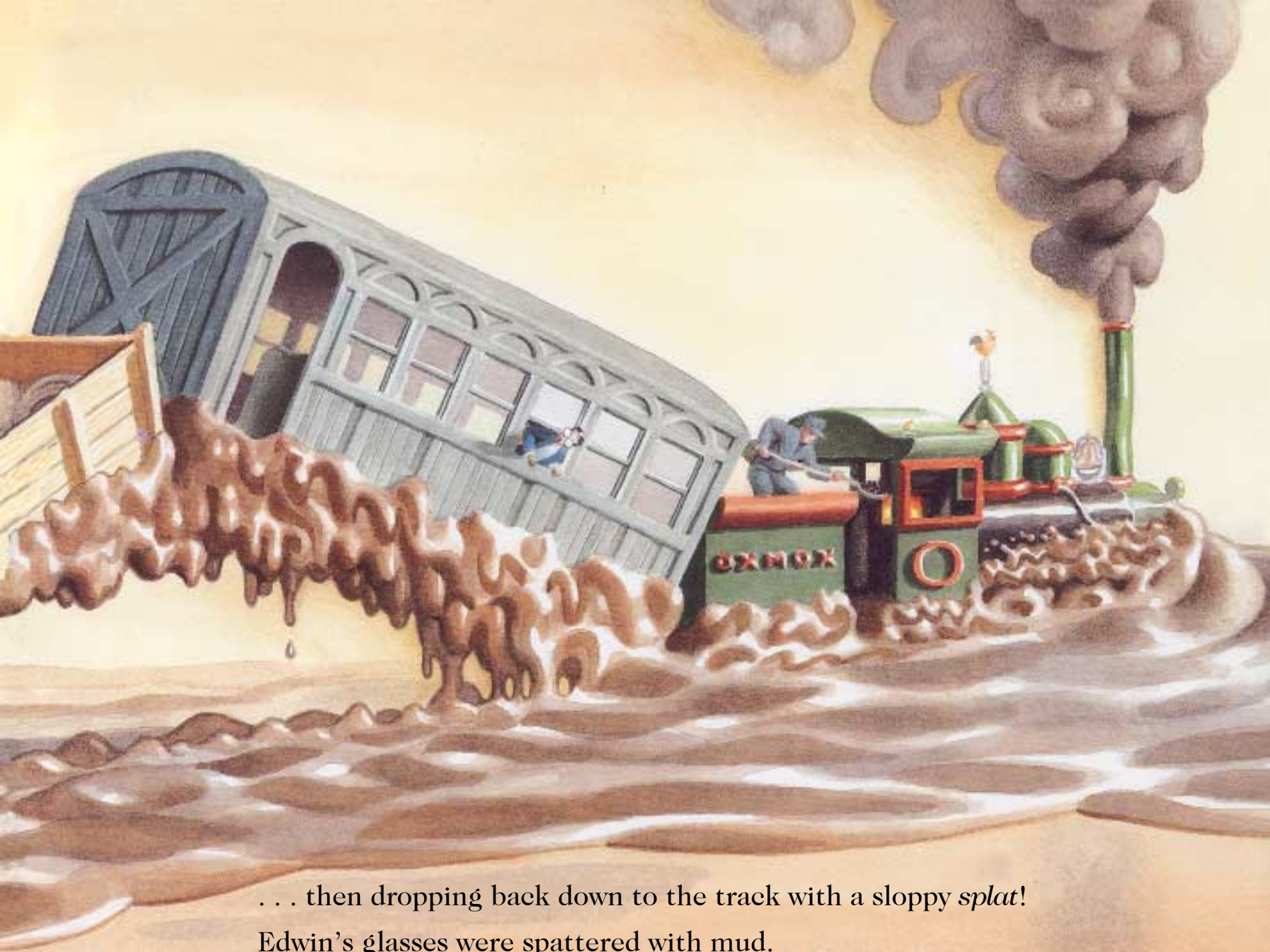
Everyone jumped up and clambered off the train, except Edwin. “Push?” he grunted. “*Push?*” His face turned red. “PUSH?”. . .

. . . and he thrust his head out the window.

“Hey!” Blink hollered. “I bought a *first-class* ticket to Oxmox! It’s *your* job to *take* me there! *I’m a very busy guy!* And I won’t—you can’t—I—”

“All together now,” called the conductor. “*Push!*” A loud slurp followed, and suddenly Edwin felt the train bucking beneath him . . .





. . . then dropping back down to the track with a sloppy *splat!*
Edwin's glasses were spattered with mud.

When the other passengers returned, they found Edwin slumped in his seat. “I’m late,” he moaned. “I’ve never been late before. Oh, blah. We’ll never get to Oxmox.”

“Of course we will,” a kindly woman assured him. She gently dabbed the mud from his glasses. “This little train always gets us there, even if we have to drag it. We’ll all pull together!”

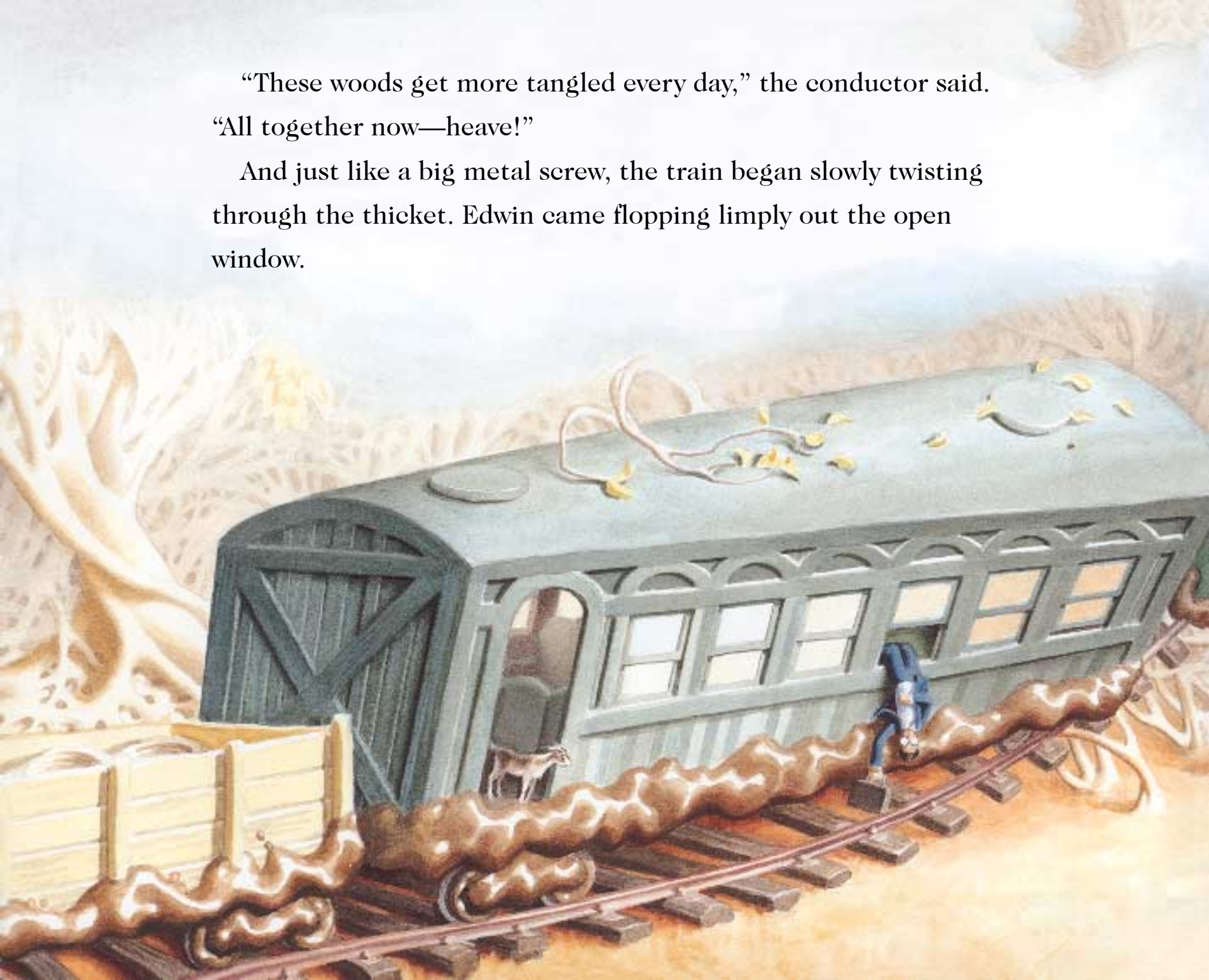
The train pattered along. Then a tree branch scraped against the roof and they clunked to a stop.

“Twigtwist,” announced the conductor.



“These woods get more tangled every day,” the conductor said.
“All together now—heave!”

And just like a big metal screw, the train began slowly twisting through the thicket. Edwin came flopping limply out the open window.





“Did you come out to help?” the conductor asked.

“I guess so,” mumbled Edwin. “Whatever.”



Together they pushed and pulled and struggled. “Wow,” Edwin panted. “Why doesn’t—someone—trim these trees—and straighten out this track?”

The conductor shrugged. “No one comes this way anymore but us. I guess we’ve been forgotten.”

Through the snarled trees twisted the Slow Train, huffing steam and clanging its bell, until it had worked its way to the other side. “Okay, all aboard!” the conductor shouted. The weary passengers cheered.

“Well,” declared Edwin, “maybe now we’ll have a smooth trip the rest of the way.”

The smooth ride didn't last long. A sudden jolt sent all the passengers and all their baggage tumbling—*FLIBBLE-KA-FLABBLE!*—to the front of the car, where they landed in a big heap. From the bottom of the pile came the conductor's voice: "Dip Creek. Short delay."





“Ooh,” said the conductor. “Huh! Well, get out the ropes, and put on your wading shoes. We’re going to get wet. *Brrrrr!* Who wants to help?”

This time, nobody moved.

“Wait,” said Edwin. “You say you have ropes? Let me think for a minute.” He opened his briefcase, took out a notebook and pencil, and began sketching.

“Hmmm . . .” he mumbled. “If we rig up a tilt-lever swing pulley . . . okay . . . pivot hoist? . . . hmmm . . . No! A double-action jimmy-spindle with a flip-flop toggle! That’s it! Okay, everyone. We’re inventing a new kind of bridge. Who wants to help?”

They all helped. Across the creek and up the bank swung the Slow Train to Oxmoor, dripping mud, snails, and duckweed. Everyone stayed dry, except Edwin.

“Now we’re tootin’,” piped the conductor. “Young fellow, it’s good to have you aboard. You’re a genius!”

“Actually, I’m a mechanical engineer,” Edwin replied.







“So, on to Oxmox,” announced the conductor. “With stops at Tumblerock, and Corklepop Tunnel, and who knows? Maybe a few other places. All aboard!”

SSSS—ptoo! The smokestack spat. The whistle gurgled. The engine rattled and sneezed, spraying Edwin’s glasses. He blinked.

“Wow,” said Edwin. “That felt like the biggest, wettest, sloppiest kiss ever! You know, I think this train likes me.”

And the autumn sun shone down, drying up the speckles on the glasses of Edwin Blink.

