

The background of the book cover is a painting of Iron Man's head and upper chest. The armor is a mix of dark blue and yellowish-gold, with visible brushstrokes. Iron Man's eyes are two bright yellow circles. To the right of the head, a small, thin figure of Tony Stark in a flight suit is standing on the armor's shoulder, looking towards the robot. The sky behind them is a light blue with white clouds.

THE IRON MAN

Ted Hughes
Illustrated by Chris Mould

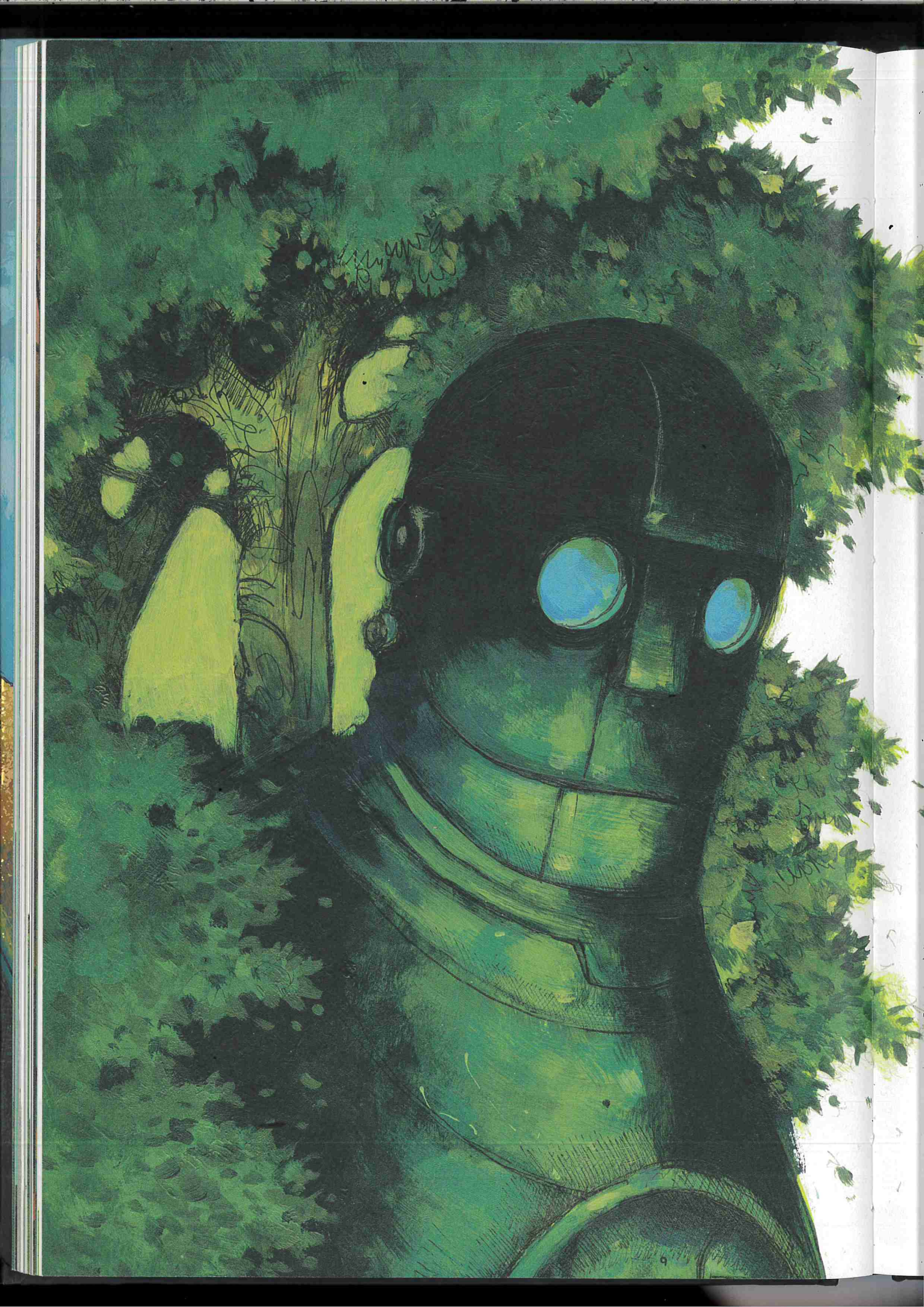
When the farmers realized that the Iron Man had freed himself they groaned. What could they do now? They decided to call the Army, who could pound him to bits with anti-tank guns. But Hogarth had another idea. At first, the farmers would not hear of it, least of all his own father. But at last they agreed. Yes, they would give Hogarth's idea a trial. And if it failed, they would call in the Army.

After spending a night and a day eating all the barbed wire for miles around, as well as hinges he tore off gates and the tin cans he found in ditches, and three new tractors and two cars and a lorry, the Iron Man was resting in a clump of elm trees. There he stood, leaning among the huge branches, almost hidden by the dense leaves, his eyes glowing a soft blue.

The farmers came near, along a lane, in cars so that they could make a quick getaway if things went wrong. They stopped fifty yards from the clump of elm trees. He really was a monster. This was the first time most of them had had a good look at him. His chest was as big as a cattle truck. His arms were like cranes, and he was getting rusty, probably from eating all the old barbed wire.

Now Hogarth walked up towards the Iron Man.





"Hello," he shouted, and stopped. "Hello, Mr Iron Man."

The Iron Man made no move. His eyes did not change.

Then Hogarth picked up a rusty old horseshoe, and knocked it against a stone: Clonk, Clonk, Clonk!

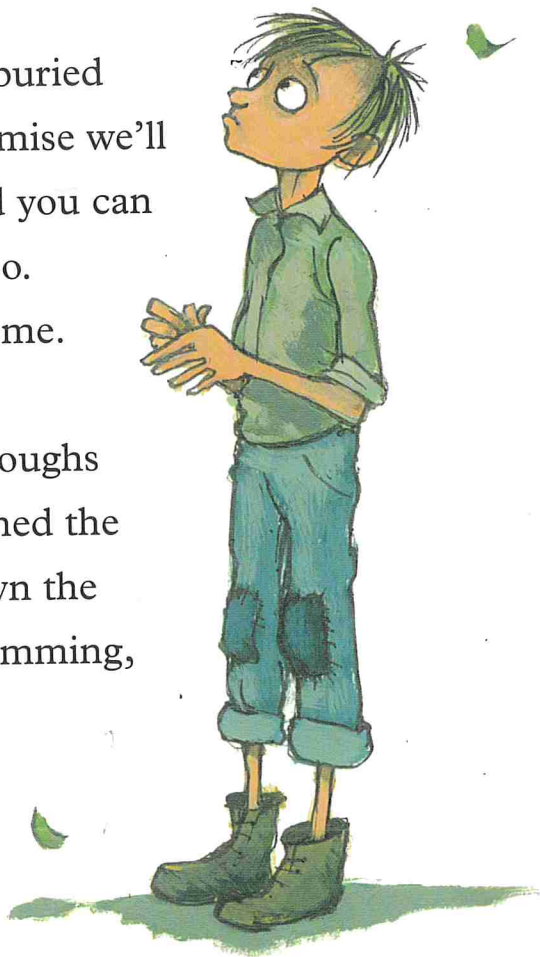
At once, the Iron Man's eyes turned darker blue. Then purple. Then red. And finally white, like a car headlamps. It was the only sign he gave of having heard.

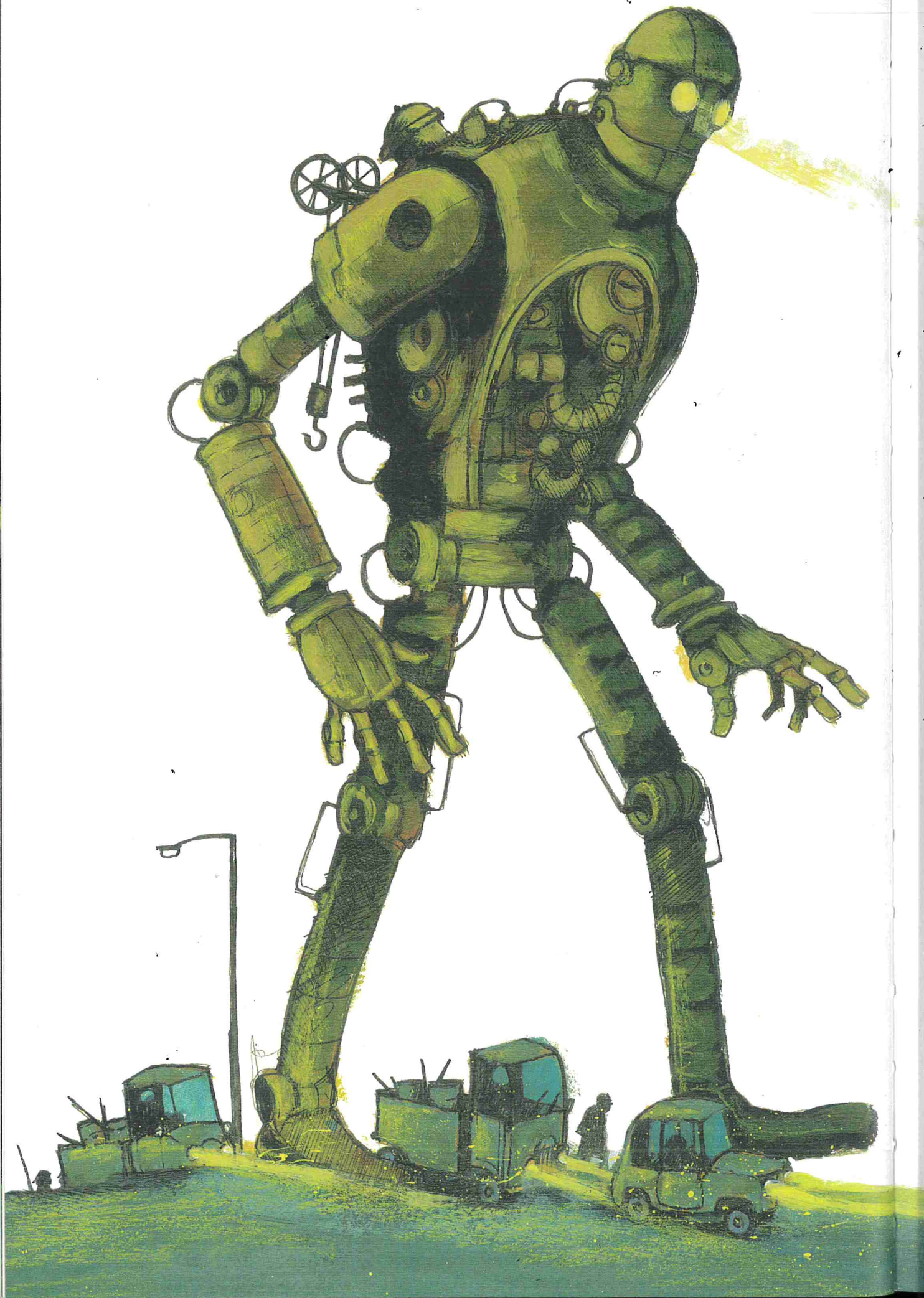
"Mr Iron Man," shouted Hogarth. "We've got all the iron you want, all the food you want, and you can have it for nothing, if only you'll stop eating up the farms."

The Iron Man stood up straight. Slowly he turned, till he was looking directly at Hogarth.

"We're sorry we trapped you and buried you," shouted the little boy. "We promise we'll not deceive you again. Follow us and you can have all the metal you want. Brass too. Aluminium too. And lots of old chrome. Follow us."

The Iron Man pushed aside the boughs and came into the lane. Hogarth joined the farmers. Slowly they drove back down the lane, and slowly, with all his cogs humming, the Iron Man stepped after them.



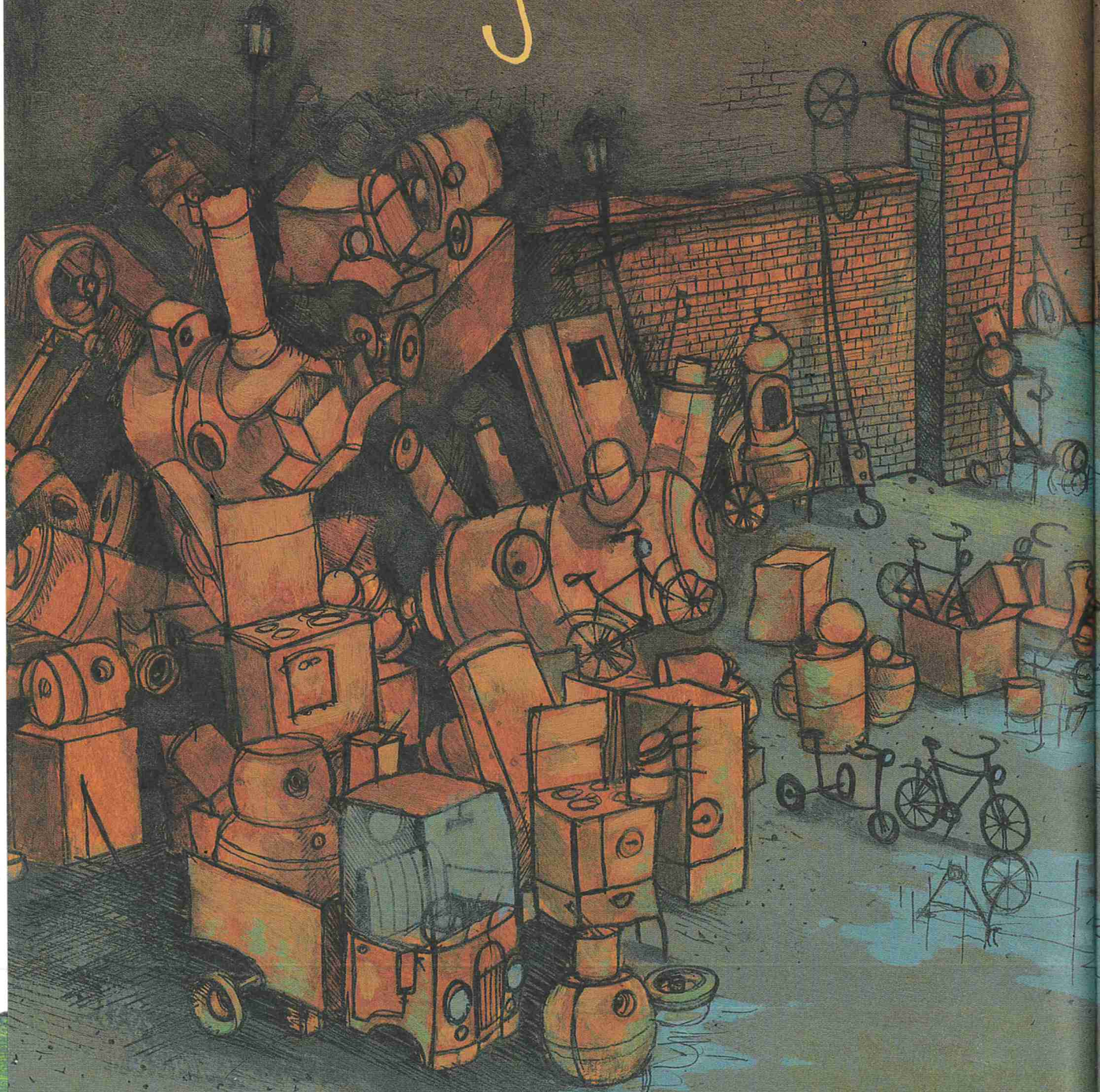


They led through the villages. Half the people came out to stare, half ran to shut themselves inside bedrooms and kitchens. Nobody could believe their eyes when they saw the Iron Man marching behind the farmers.

At last they came to the town, and there was a great scrap-metal yard. Everything was there, old cars by the hundred, old trucks, old railway engines, old stoves, old refrigerators, old springs, bedsteads, bicycles, girders, gates, pans – all the scrap iron of the region was piled up there, rusting away.

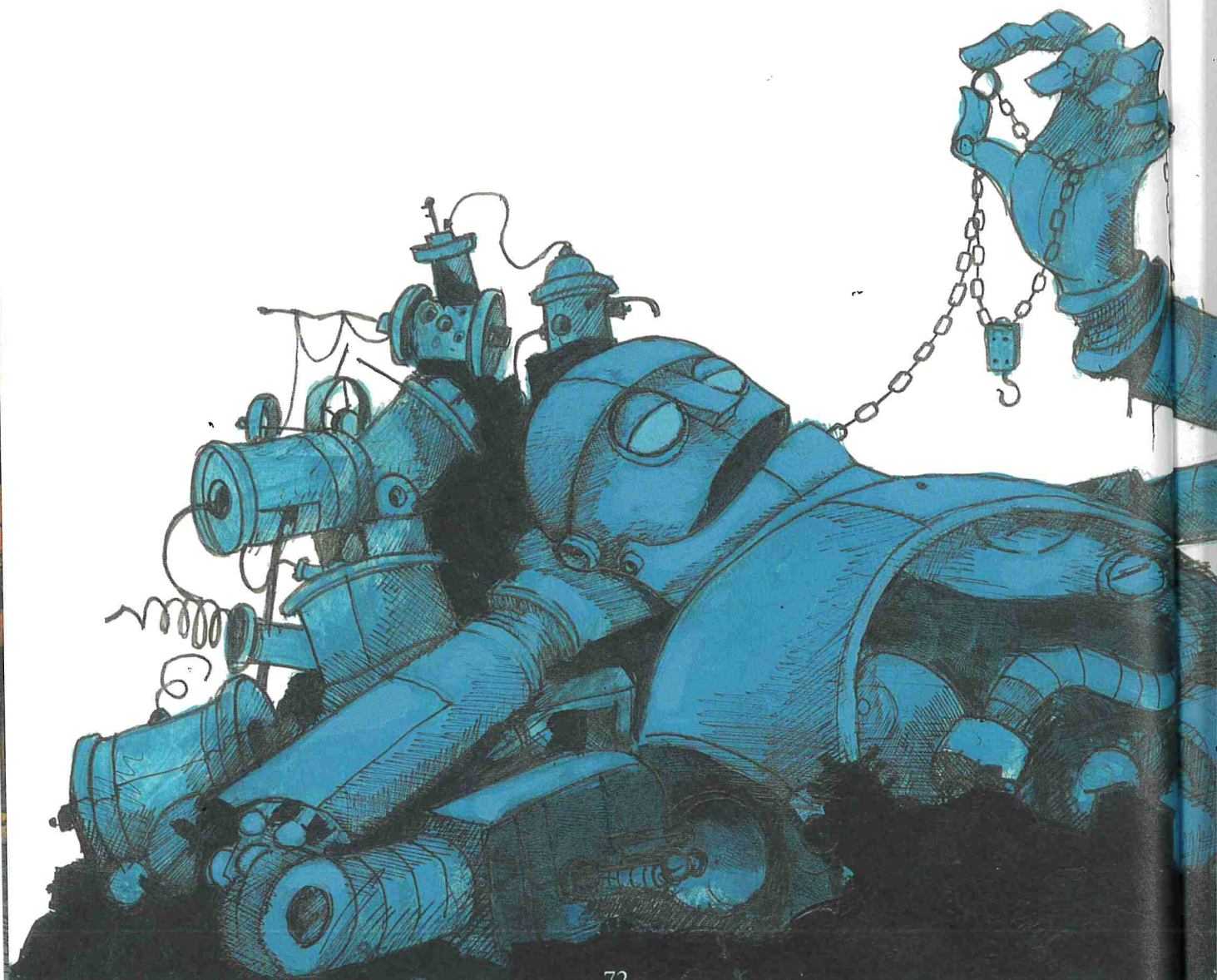


"There,"
cried Hogarth.
"Eat all you can."



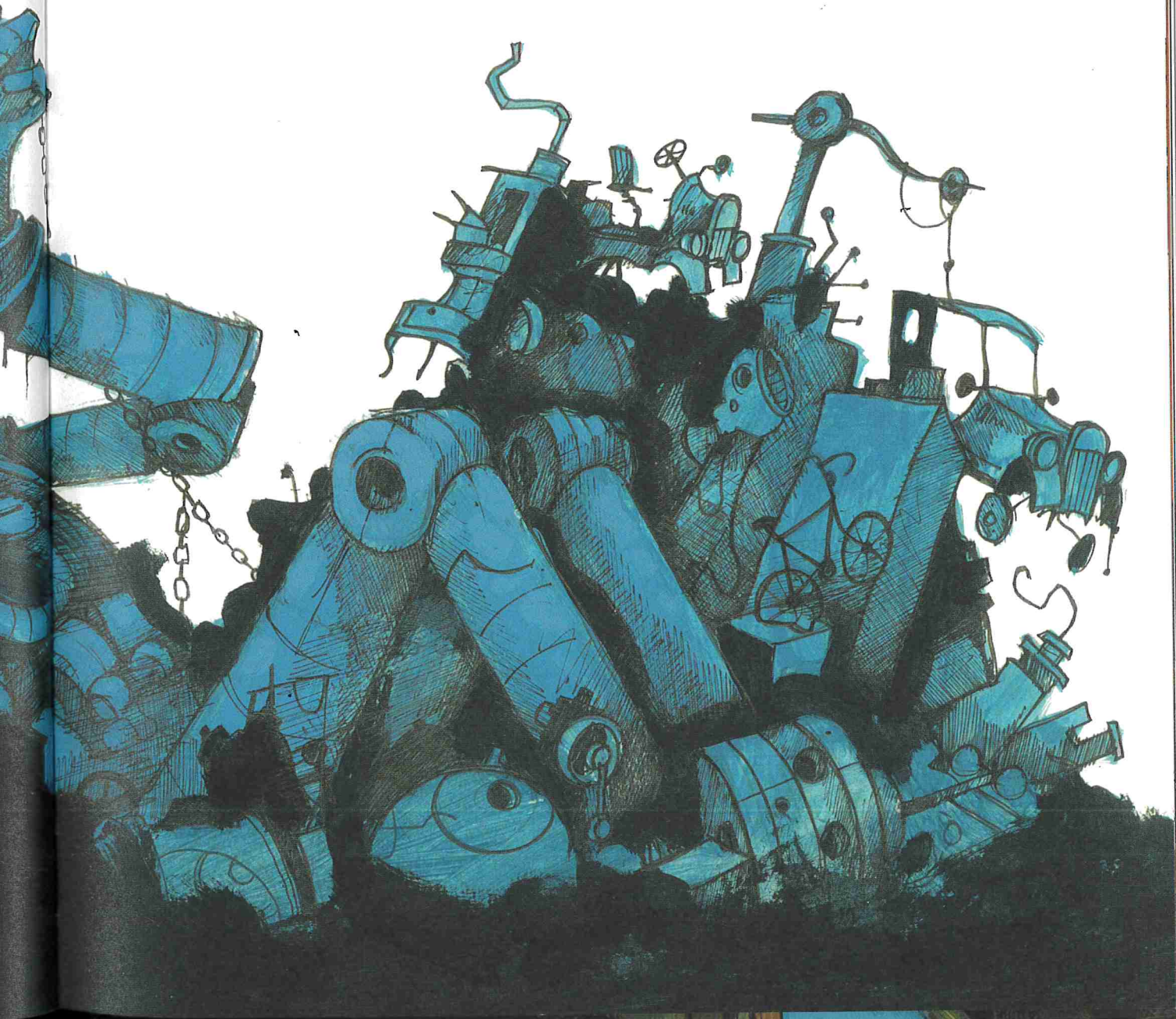


The Iron Man gazed, and his eyes turned red.
He kneeled down in the yard, he stretched out on
one elbow. He picked up a greasy black stove and
chewed it like a toffee. There were delicious crumbs
of chrome on it. He followed that with a double-decker
bedstead and the brass knobs made his eyes crackle



with joy. Never before had the Iron Man eaten such delicacies. As he lay there, a big truck turned into the yard and unloaded a pile of rusty chain. The Iron Man lifted a handful and let it dangle into his mouth – better than any spaghetti.

So there they left him. It was an Iron Man's heaven.



The farmers went back to their farms. Hogarth visited the Iron Man every few days. Now the Iron Man's eyes were constantly a happy blue. He was no longer rusty. His body gleamed blue, like a new gun barrel. And he ate, ate, ate, ate – endlessly.

