

WOA 1.0/Navigation/Location/Silicon Canyon

The only way down to the canyon was a shiny path starting about twenty feet from where I was standing. I approached the edge and hung my head over to assess the situation. The slope was steep and the path took a curve behind a large rock before it disappeared into a hazy cloud rising from the canyon's floor. Light reflecting off the path indicated it was extremely smooth. I reached out and passed my fingers over its edge. The path was smooth as a baby's buttocks. "How disturbingly creepy," I thought to myself. On the interior wall of my forehead I could clearly read the words "Pure Plastic."

A flat rock on the edge of the cliff made a decent seat and I took some time to compose a plan. The title was: "How to use a slippery path to get down into a canyon." I pulled a small piece of fabric out of my pocket that was once part of your red T-shirt (pardon for not asking permission, I stashed the rest of it under the blankets in the guest room's closet, right behind the left door). I was sniffing it lightly. Occasionally, I would do that—sniff for a while. It would calm me down. It didn't contain much of your scent anymore but I preferred to imagine it did. It was probably my own scent I was sniffing. Still, it would calm me down. Meanwhile, between sniffing and composing, a tiny seed of a plan was forming in my mind. I looked over my shoulder, glancing towards the bottom of the canyon. A glare bouncing off the shiny path became entrapped inside the corner of my eye, playing Pong on my retina. It's such a shame how I'm so easily distracted. A minuscule ray of light in the right angle instantly sends my thoughts into a whirlpool of non-related useless brain activity...if any one of these thoughts could take over my entire mind I could have been happy. The retinal Pong unplugged.

Ever since I heard about it, I always wanted to see Silicon Canyon. It held the same kind of interest I had for seeing the first McDonald's. But I never went to see it and as time passed and my sense of mission crystallized the first McDonald's gave way to the power of the lost treasure in the sunset/sunrise. So here I was, standing on the edge of the "Promised Land" quite uncertain how to enter. Meanwhile, my seed of a plan sprouted and induced my impatience. I turned back, closed my eyes and took a deep breath. The remains of your imaginary scent passed through my nostrils on exhaling.

Then without further hesitations, I spread the map open, laid it on the ground and got down on my knees reaching out to my backpack. The tin box I was looking for clicked open in my hand and I started applying a generous amount of mink oil to Moo. I spread the thick oil with my fingers, and with a nervous fondness for detail, I made sure to cover all the edges like I was spreading peanut butter on a fluffy slice of Wonder Bread. As a final gesture, I stuck my tongue out and licked the surface for a smoother coating. Once the map was properly smothered, I turned it over, Moo kissing ground, and took a few steps back to examine my creation. I walked around it once or twice then walked back to the edge of the cliff looking down the slope. I wiped my tongue on my sleeve and took another deep breath. The canyon was fantastically beautiful. If you could only see this—the deep walls were practically glowing in the sunset/sunrise light.

"This better work," I was mumbling to myself, looking at my improvisation: a map smothered with mink oil trying hard to pass as a sled. I don't know why, but for some reason it made sense to me at

the time. Reflecting back, I think that the sprout was bending my reasoning over. I gathered my stuff, taped the backpack and magnifying glass to the map and tied the study case with its treasure crumbs containers to my body.

Once everything was fastened, I sat down in the center of the map and slowly, by digging my fingers into the fluffy dirt, I rowed the bundle towards the edge of the cliff. Nervously I approached the edge knowing that going down like that—sled style—was down right risky. But at that time, no other solution presented itself so willingly and I pushed the premonitions to the back of my mind and the improvisation over the edge.

The first few moments went by just fine and we were speeding up. Moving fast through the air was very refreshing and the canyon looked fifty times as beautiful as before. I admit I felt satisfaction and compliments were offered to the inventive mind (that shamelessly took them). Then the first bad thing happened. Remember the curve in the path I mentioned before? Well, I managed that one safely, but as soon as we took the curve, a bump on the path sent the bundle into the air. I instantly grabbed the sides of the map as tightly as I could to keep the improvisation from tilting over, but the study case got stuck under my left ribs and as we hit the plastic path again, it started bouncing in the opposite direction, me up, case down, nonstop tickle-friction. As much as the situation lacked humor, I was caught in a painful trap of loud, hysterical laughter, desperately gasping for air and totally incapable of helping myself and we were still picking up speed. To add to the atmosphere the treasure crumbs in their little containers went snare drum crazy: tz...tz-tz...tz...tz-tz, which immediately raised my concern that by the time we reached the bottom of that plastic trail they would turn into treasure powder. "Tz...tz-tz...tz...tz-tz" was tzing faster. The landscape turned into a blurry cloud hanging somewhere on the corners of my retinas. Then the second bad thing happened—just when I managed to reposition a bit, a branch sticking out of the ground slapped right into my face sending us into a petrifying spin. Everything was going in circles, my consciousness disappeared in a whirlpool and my stomach shrunk to the size of a raisin pushing the digestive juices into my face until I turned green with nausea. It was approximately three-quarters through the slope that I had an eye crying of pain, another of laughter and a big red nose in the center of my green face. And as if that wasn't enough, it had just become clear to me...oh, so very clear that we were spinning down and directly into an enormous field of large rusty motherboards facing even a greater threat that was forcing its details rapidly, in the shape of a large pile of SCSI cables with their twenty-five pin sockets sticking straight like cobras ready to poke my smothered salty eyes. The danger was so real that it immediately penetrated the vale of tears and in a last chance maneuver I managed to tilt the bundle and avoid the fatal pinning—landing three inches away from disaster!

Shocked, confused and humiliated with a big bloody spot in the middle of my face, I was lying on the ground crying. This time, both eyes collaborated. To the "no one" around me I was crying skin pain and humiliation but between me and myself, I was also crying over the loss of your scent from that piece of T-shirt. An internal pain. A burn in my chest. I was crying over some other losses but there is no point in talking about them. Clearly, a sprout-induced impatience was a terrible incentive for decision-making, nevertheless I was alive. And the pain in the middle of my face certainly reinforced that. I was very much alive.

Whirr

Once my fear subsided, I picked myself up and looked around. Everything was fascinating. The canyon lived up to its name! Gray plastic cases were lying everywhere. It was an action park for the Computer Age presented in excess of decaying plastic—hardware and software galore, and that beauty was spreading as far as the eye could grasp and if I wasn't so sure I was alive, I would have surely thought I was in heaven.

I walked around for a while but my face started hurting badly once the adrenaline rush of the sliding experience dropped into exhaustion. My legs weighed tons and all I wanted to do was lie down and close my eyes. With my last bits of energy, I built a little igloo from the age's dinosaurs bones—monitors, computers and laser printers—then crawled inside pulling my gear behind me. I lay on my back. The first few time increments were strange. The light in the igloo was dim and the seventeen screens I counted stared their dark flat faces at me. After a while it didn't matter anymore. I folded myself into my most favorite sleeping position and closed my eyes. The temperature in the igloo was just right and sleeping webs were forming around me. Good-bye tickle-torture...so long smack in the face...my breath evened...I was diving into sleep.

Then a couple of sprouts showed up. And exactly when I was about to sink deeper into sleep another one fished me up to the surface of the fully awake. I changed into my second favorite sleeping position hoping to get lucky but that only put pressure on my nose. A swig of water didn't help either. My eyes were shut but behind the lids was a brain swarming in ideas. At last I gave up. Frustrated, I pulled myself up and sat there for awhile gazing at a corner created by an old laser printer and Compaq CPU. The corner of the CPUs case was bending from the pressure of the printer. Somehow it bothered me. The way it bent. I crawled out.

Every piece of hardware lying around on the floor of this canyon deserved to be turned over for a closer examination. I was walking around picking components and probing my fingers into parts that complimented the ideas that ruined my nap.

I'm not sure if I mentioned this, but you must have realized by now that going to the canyon was in fact a detour. I wasn't following the map but rather my curiosity. It's a curiosity of a dog, you know—whenever I can sense brain-food, there I am. So easily distracted. There was another reason, which in fact is easier to justify and probably had more significance. You know what the problem with the treasure was. It took me some time to catch on but once I did, I knew I had to come up with a real solution—the lost treasure was constantly relocating. Somehow it was moving around. I don't know what caused it to move because I never found traces of a second party's activities (the typical: footprints, excrement, etc.). But it was definitely relocating and needless to say that nailing down a moving target required a special strategy and reevaluation of some of my old-fashioned techniques for treasure hunting.

You can probably guess what I'm getting at. Well, the engineering muses paid a visit and after a short eon of intensive labor, I had a working machine. How to describe it? It was like a Sun workstation laptop that enabled rendering complex 3D animation in real-time. Hee-haw! No problems at all! Howdy tech! As a treat, I attached a miniature printer to the cover of the laptop that printed type half a millimeter tall. The main purpose of this laptop was the transmission and analysis of data from Eep using the "cobra" cables to consequently recreate the last day's events.

The humiliation by the tickle-torture and smack in the face was diminished by pride in my expertise.

Once I made sure the computer was running properly, I entered all I knew about the treasure. This was the breakdown: 1) The treasure is constantly relocating. (I entered the locations I knew about.) 2) Crumbs found in holes of the lost treasure contained sugar, food dyes, and Carnuba wax, resembling candy sprinkles in their composition. 3) Given that Moo was ancient, the treasure must have been lost for a very long time. This introduced a conflict: I seriously doubted that candy sprinkles existed prior to the 20th century and Moo was certainly older than that. But, then I might have been wrong. This information wasn't a whole lot to go by, nevertheless, I must have been doing something right because the treasure was always on my track...as if I was its shadow or it was my shadow, both inherently nomadic.

That was where my expectations from the laptop came in. I won't exhaust you with the technical details that surrounded the process, but in short I'd say that the plan was to use the laptop to analyze the treasure crumbs in their excavation sites with green information gathered by the map. I was hoping that by processing the combined data I would be able to illuminate some of the factors involved in determining the direction the treasure was heading.

The first report spooled from the laptop came in twenty-nine time increments after importing all the data from the map. I read off the screen:

"The future looks very promising. Plans you made in advance will turn out in your favor. Don't hesitate. The position of the sun favors action. In some time increments you will meet a young lad that will offer you milk and Camembert. Yield. It's a sign. In the future your diet will change dramatically and you'll start looking at your companion in a different light. Look for the fly. In some time (something to do with the number 3) you'll be engaged with semen... no, eggs. It's very important you pay attention. Great discoveries lie ahead of you. The keyword is sugar. Do not hesitate. Catch ya later, alligator!"

Well, you can imagine that this wasn't exactly what I expected from the laptop, nevertheless I was trying to decipher the symbolism. "Catch ya later, alligator!" Must have been some lines of programming code left over from children's software implemented in the hardware I used..." A young lad...eggs...milk..." Maybe a dairy farm? A fly? A whirr past my right ear. My eye followed that whisper up to where it disappeared in a ray of light ejected from a blue star that was shining determinedly in the burgundy sky. In it I lost my train of thought.

I printed the output and wrote your name on the back then folded it into a tiny ball and left it on the motherboard next to me. I sat there for a while...just sat there...mind wandering, gazing into nowhere. A dung beetle climbed on the motherboard. It approached my letter, sniffed my little love ball then got on its forelegs and rolled it away off the motherboard and under an old Pentium 7 Gateway 2300 PC (I recognized it by the udder on its case). I reached out to my backpack pulling out a few strips of dodo jerky and crackers for dinner.

A quiet thought was wondering how long it would take for my message to arrive at its destination.

Tz

It was time to press on.

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