

The Great Company Adventures • Book 20 of 50

3M THE FACTORY OF TEN THOUSAND IDEAS

A curious girl, three wise mentors, and the little sticky note that unlocks the world's greatest idea factory.

"Discovering the businesses that built the modern world"

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THE GREAT COMPANY ADVENTURES

Discovering the businesses that built the modern world.

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MEET THE CHARACTERS



SIRI



BEN



WARREN



CHARLIE



JUNO

A curious girl named Siri, a wise old teacher named Ben, and his student Warren with Warren's partner Charlie — together discovering the businesses that built the modern world, one adventure at a time.

THE GLOBAL 50

One great company per volume · Fifty adventures, one modern world

SPACE & EXPLORATION

1. SpaceX — *“The Fire That Comes Back”*

MANUFACTURING & ENGINEERING

2. Toyota — *“The River That Builds Cars”*
3. Siemens — *“The Factory That Builds Factories”*
4. Caterpillar — *“The Machines That Move Mountains”*
5. Boeing — *“The Bird With Six Million Pieces”*
6. Airbus — *“The Plane Four Countries Built”*

ENERGY & INDUSTRY

7. Shell — *“The Sunlight Buried at Sea”*
8. ExxonMobil — *“The Ancient Sunlight Machine”*
9. GE Vernova — *“The Wheel That Makes Lightning”*

COMMUNICATION

10. AT&T — *“The Voice Inside the Wire”*
11. Qualcomm — *“The Whisper in the Air”*
12. Ericsson — *“The Towers That Talk”*

TRANSPORTATION

13. Tesla — *“The Car With No Engine”*
14. John Deere — *“The Machine That Feeds the World”*
15. UPS — *“The Promise in a Brown Truck”*

INFRASTRUCTURE

16. ABB — *“The Arms That Never Tire”*
17. Schneider Electric — *“The Guardian of the Grid”*

MATERIALS

18. Corning — *“The Thread of Light”*
19. DuPont — *“The Inventors of Almost Everything”*

SCIENCE & TOOLS

20. 3M — *“The Factory of Ten Thousand Ideas”*
21. Bosch — *“The Spark in Every Machine”*
22. Honeywell — *“The Dial That Tames the Weather”*

MEDICINE & BIOTECHNOLOGY

23. Pfizer — *“The Shield in a Tiny Vial”*
24. Roche — *“The Detectives of the Blood”*

25. Novo Nordisk — *“The Key to a Billion Locks”*

26. Johnson & Johnson — *“The Little Bandage That Grew”*

FOOD & AGRICULTURE

27. Nestlé — *“The Cup That Wakes the World”*
28. Cargill — *“The Invisible Harvest”*

FINANCE & COMMERCE

29. Visa — *“The Handshake Inside the Card”*
30. Mastercard — *“The Two-Second Trust Machine”*
31. Walmart — *“The Store That Never Runs Out”*
32. Costco — *“The Treasure Warehouse”*
33. FedEx — *“The Race Against the Sun”*

CONSUMER INNOVATION

34. Disney — *“The Factory of Dreams”*
35. LEGO — *“The Brick That Builds Anything”*
36. Sony — *“The Pocket Full of Music”*
37. Coca-Cola — *“The Secret in the Red Can”*
38. Nike — *“The Shoe That Learned to Fly”*

LUXURY & CRAFTSMANSHIP

39. Rolex — *“The Heartbeat on Your Wrist”*
40. LVMH — *“The Suitcase That Conquered the World”*

COMPUTING & DIGITAL CIVILIZATION

41. Apple — *“The Glass That Thinks”*
42. Microsoft — *“The Invisible Machine”*
43. Google — *“The Library With No Walls”*
44. Amazon — *“The Box That Crossed the World”*
45. NVIDIA — *“The Brain Made of Sand”*
46. Intel — *“The First Thinking Chip”*
47. TSMC — *“The Invisible City”*
48. ASML — *“The Machine That Prints With Light”*
49. OpenAI — *“The Machine That Learned to Talk”*

THE FINAL DISCOVERY

50. The Company Yet to Be Built — *“The Adventure You Will Build”*

THE NOTE THAT WOULD NOT FALL

Midnight. Homework: unfinished. And Grandpa Ben's old brass compass? Spinning like crazy.

SPIN

The needle stopped. Pointing at... a little yellow sticky note. Curled on the desk. The most boring scrap on Earth.

YOU? You're just a bit of paper!

The magic diary flipped open by itself. Fresh ink. Grandpa's handwriting.

It's never done **THIS** before...

"Time to meet the businesses that built the modern world. Start with the little note that never quite falls."

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Look at a sticky note. Press it — it holds. Peel it — it lets go, clean. Stick it again... and again... a hundred times. No wet glue. No mess. So tonight's mystery: **how does a scrap of paper decide when to hold on and when to let go?**

The note rippled. A whirlpool of golden light grabbed her.

WHOOSH



Here we GOOO!



SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

New mystery!

- ① How does a note **STICK**, **PEEL CLEAN**, and stick **AGAIN** — with no glue-goo?
- ② Grandpa says this scrap built a giant company. A sticky note?! Prove it.

THE WALL OF TEN THOUSAND THINGS

She landed in a lab where thousands of sticky notes drifted like glowing leaves. One giant note hovered like a door.

A young scientist caught a floating note out of the air. "I'm Juno. I figure out why things stick — and why they don't."

Best. Job. EVER.

She spun Siri toward a wall taller than a house. Tape. Sandpaper. Masks. Road signs. Sponges. Sticky notes.

ONE company makes ALL of this?!

Sixty thousand different things. All from a few tricks.

It's SNOWING sticky notes!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Here's the twist: 3M doesn't sell one famous gadget. It sells thousands of tiny, quiet helpers — and each one hides a piece of clever science. Master a few deep tricks, and you can make almost anything.

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

60,000 products. One company. 🖋️ Juno says they all grow from a handful of secrets. First secret up: how does ANYTHING stick to anything?

THE SECRET OF STICKY

3a The grip: a zillion tiny pulls

"Press it," said Juno. Slowed a billion times: threads of attraction reached UP between the note and the desk.

"Nothing is truly flat. Zoom in — every surface is jagged mountains. Sticky stuff FLOWS into the valleys."

So the glue hugs every bump!

"Once they're that close, molecules pull on each other. One pull is tiny. A zillion pulls holds a poster up."

The note is grabbing the wood!

Tiny handshakes... adding up!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Every stick in the world is the same trick, called **van der Waals forces**: molecules that come super close feel a gentle tug. The secret to sticking isn't stronger glue — it's **touching in more places**. Even a gecko walks on ceilings this way. 🦎

"But normal tape flows flat and grabs hard — it won't let go clean. Our note has a secret: tiny SPHERES."

"Balls only touch at their tips. So the note holds gently, peels off clean, and springs back to stick again."

Little balls instead of flat goo?

Weak on purpose — so it's REUSABLE!

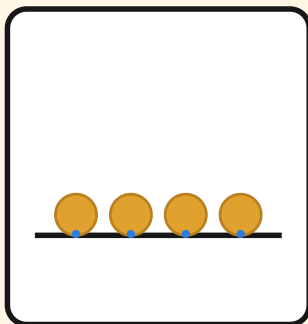
A hundred times over.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

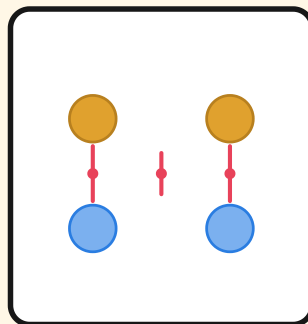
A scientist named Spencer Silver made an adhesive that stuck... but only a little. Everyone thought it was a failure — glue that won't hold?! It was actually the **let-go** the world was missing. Weakness, on purpose. ✨



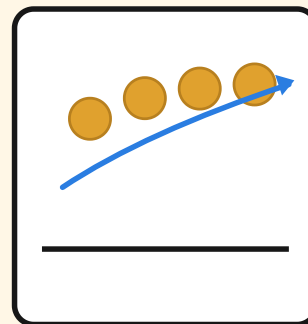
HOW A STICKY NOTE HOLDS ON — AND LETS GO



TINY SPHERES
only tips touch



A ZILLION PULLS
forces add up



PEELS CLEAN
no mess left



SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

- ① Sticking = flow into the valleys → a zillion tiny pulls (van der Waals). 🤝
- ② The note uses tiny SPHERES: touches lightly, peels clean, re-sticks. A 'failed' weak glue = the whole point! ✨

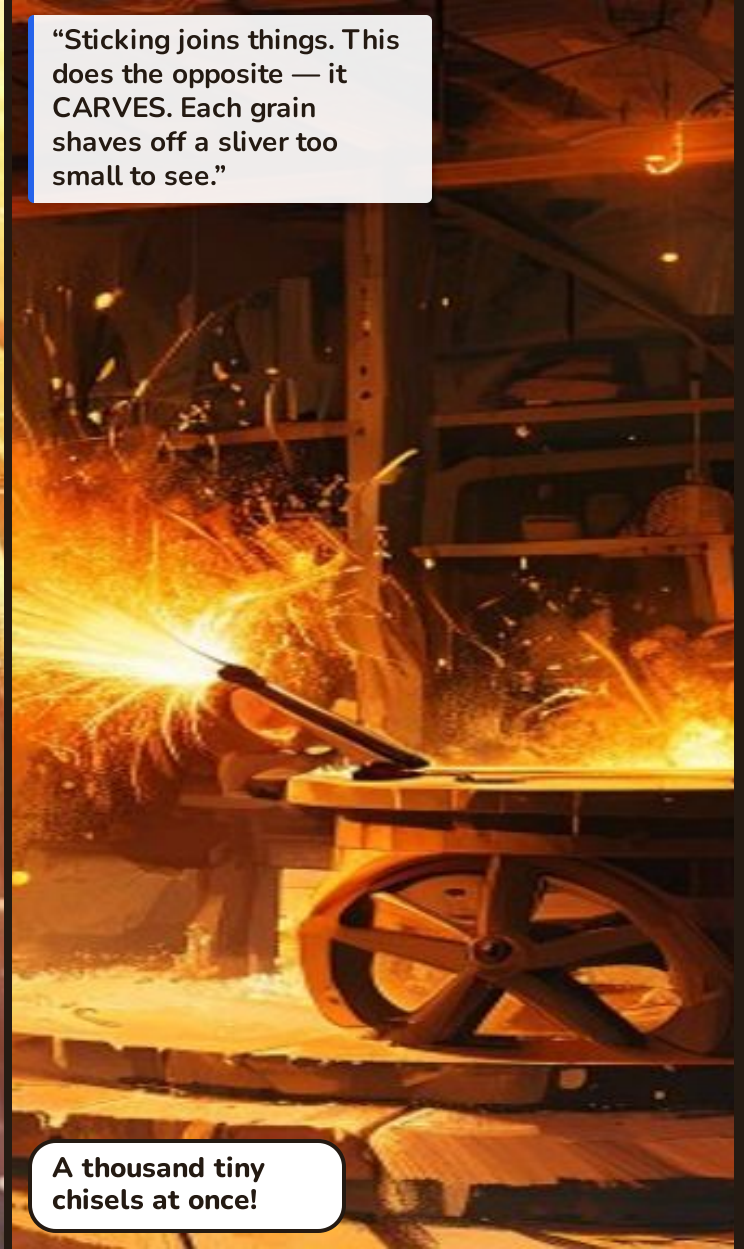
THE OPPOSITE MAGIC: TEETH OF GLASS

Juno flipped a sheet over. Under the microscope: a field of tiny sharp knives.



Sandpaper is a page of KNIVES?!

“Sticking joins things. This does the opposite — it CARVES. Each grain shaves off a sliver too small to see.”



A thousand tiny chisels at once!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

This was 3M's very first job: **abrasives**. To cut something, your grain must be harder than it. Scientists rank hardness on a ladder — soft chalk near the bottom, diamond at the very top. Pick a grain that outranks your target, and it carves. 🛠️

“Climb the hardness ladder. Chalk can't scratch a coin. A nail can. Diamond scratches everything.”



Harder always wins!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Here's the sneaky part: you make something **smooth** by scratching it with something rough — just smaller and smaller scratches until your eye gives up. Polished mirrors are made of tidy, invisible scratches. Same science as the sticky note, flipped: control the touching. 🔍

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Grinding = tiny knives shaving invisible slivers. Rule: harder scratches softer (the hardness ladder). Smooth = teeny scratches too small to see. 3M started here — with rough paper!

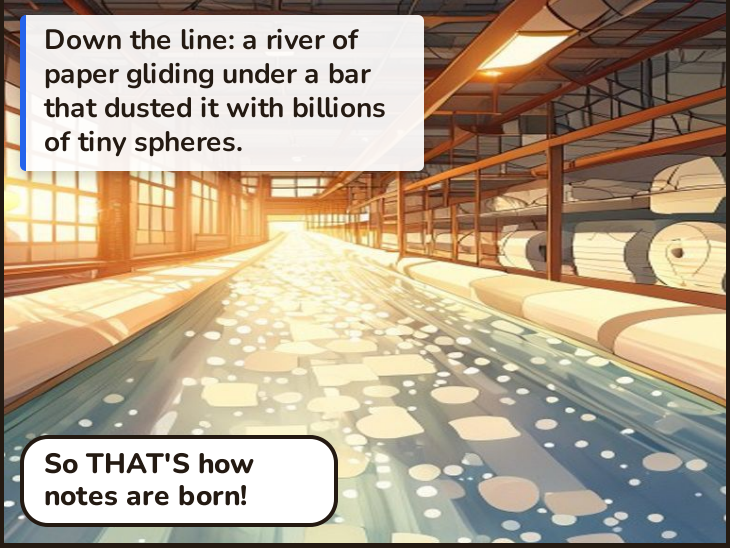
A MILLION SMALL IDEAS



Juno opened a door onto a hall of scientists, each happily chasing their OWN wild idea.

They're all doing whatever they WANT?

One day in seven — to wander. It's the rule here.



Down the line: a river of paper gliding under a bar that dusted it with billions of tiny spheres.

So THAT'S how notes are born!



At dawn, trucks and planes swallowed pallets of tape and notes. Factory to your desk: a few days.

Tiny helpers, going EVERYWHERE!



The chemist. The coater. The inspector. The packer. The pilot. Each did one small, careful thing.

Nobody builds it all alone!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

A great company isn't one genius — it's **thousands of ordinary people**, each solving one small hard problem. Give curious people a little freedom to wander, and once in a while a wander becomes a wonder. 🌱

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

One-day-in-seven to explore! ✏️ Notes born on a river of paper dusted with spheres → trucks → my desk in days. A million small hands, one little product.

WHY THE WORLD SAYS YES

Juno pointed everywhere at once. Tape mending a book. Sandpaper smoothing a chair. A sign glowing in the dark.



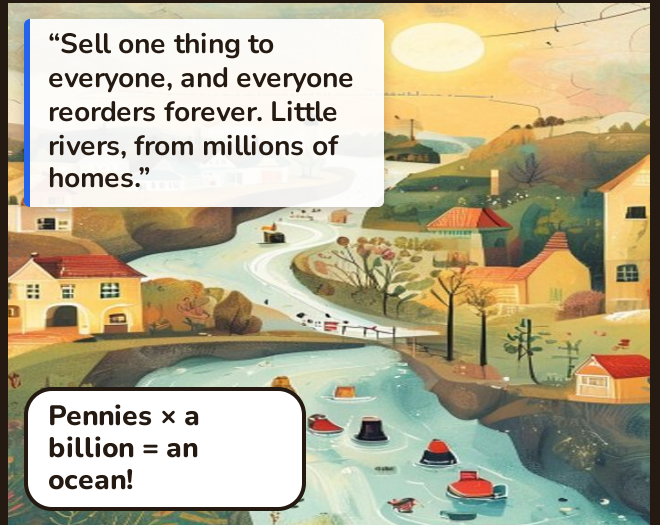
They're **INVISIBLE** — until you need them!

"A sticky note costs pennies. But it saves a forgotten idea, a phone number, a birthday."



Tiny price... **HUGE** help!

"Sell one thing to everyone, and everyone reorders forever. Little rivers, from millions of homes."



Pennies × a billion = an ocean!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Why build a giant company on tiny cheap things? Because **everyone** needs to stick, cut, seal and mend — every day, forever. A product so useful and so cheap that people reorder without thinking is a quiet money machine. 🍷

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

People don't pay for the paper — they pay for the idea it **SAVES**. Cheap + useful + reordered forever = a river of pennies that never dries up. Grandpa's rule: find what people quietly can't live without.

THE MINE THAT FAILED

Through the trees: a glass campus glowing like a hive of ideas. Siri read the name on the gate. Just two letters.



3M! The factory of ten thousand ideas!

"It began in 1902. Five men. A cold Minnesota lake. They dug for a mineral hard enough to make grinding wheels."



A MINE? For sandpaper?

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Then the gut-punch: the rock they dug up was too **soft** to grind anything. The mine was a flop. Nearly broke, they made a choice that saved them: stop mining, start **making** — turn the science of grit into sandpaper. Their failure became their first factory.

"In 1925 a young worker watched painters ruin two-tone cars. He invented a paper tape that peeled off clean. Masking tape."



He fixed it with
STICKY paper!

"And that weak glue? A choir singer, tired of bookmarks falling from his hymnbook, gave it a job. The sticky note was born."



A FALLEN
bookmark started
it all!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Two rules ran through every 3M story: **a failure often hides a better product**, and **a solution with no problem just needs the right person**. The company's real invention wasn't tape or notes — it was a place where ideas were allowed to wander until they found their job. 🧪



THE STORY IN TIME

1902

Five men start a Minnesota mine — for grinding grit.

1905

The rock is too soft. They pivot to making sandpaper.

1921

Waterproof sandpaper — cleaner, healthier factories.

1925

Richard Drew invents masking tape for two-tone cars.

1930

Clear sticky tape — a Depression-era mender's best friend.

1956

Scotchgard: a spilled chemical that repels water and stains.

1968

Spencer Silver makes a glue that sticks only a little.

1980

Art Fry turns it into the Post-it Note. 



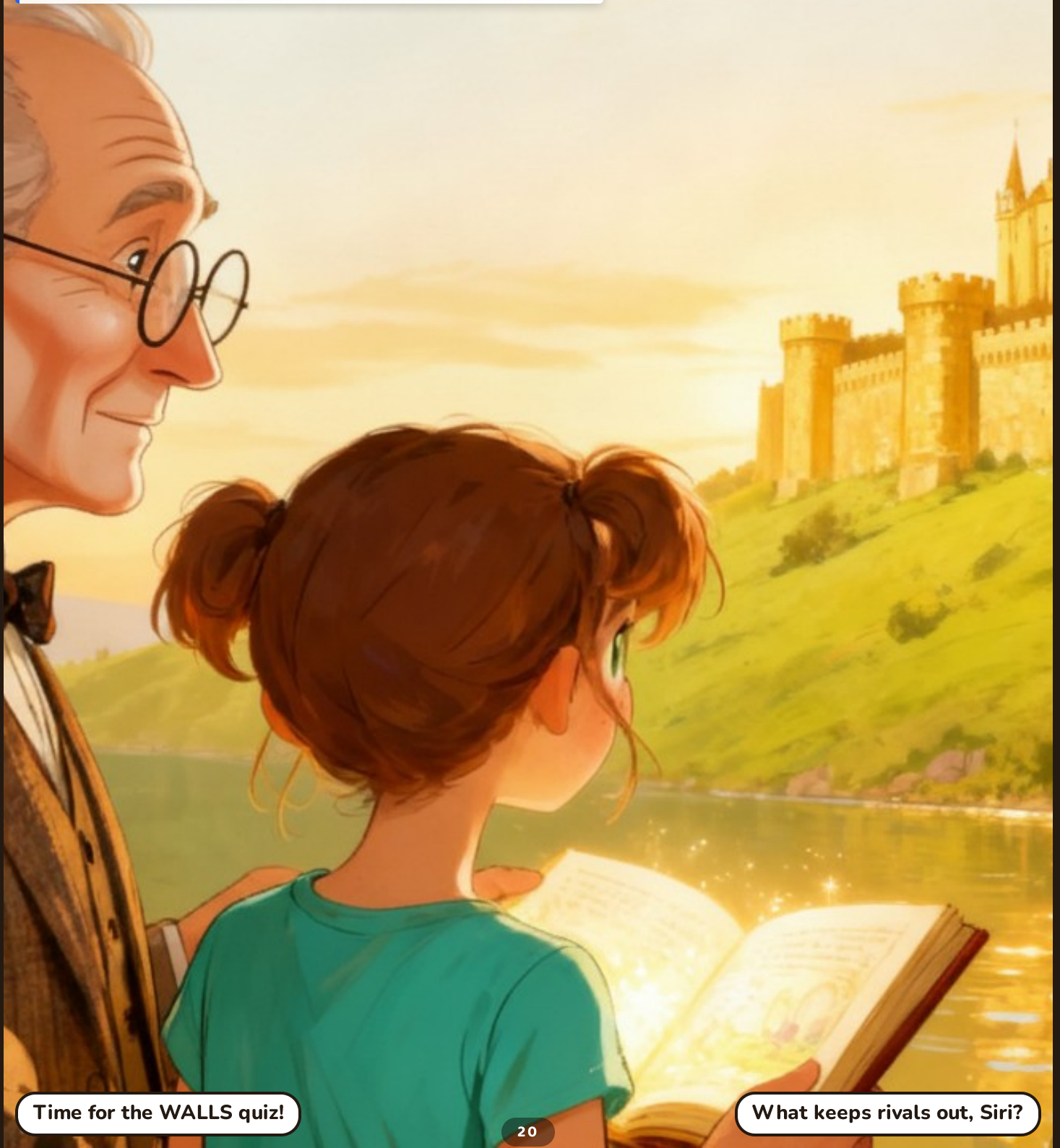
SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Failed mine → sandpaper → masking tape →
weak glue nobody wanted → the sticky note.
Their religion: let ideas wander, and forgive a
good mistake. Two letters, ten thousand ideas.



THE CASTLE OF TEN THOUSAND IDEAS

A warm glow. A smell of cherry cola. Warren and Charlie, the partners from Omaha, stood before a shining castle.



Time for the WALLS quiz!

What keeps rivals out, Siri?



THE CASTLE WALLS • WHY RIVALS CAN'T COPY IT



Wall One: The Idea Machine

Thousands of curious scientists, free to wander one day in seven. A river of brand-new products every single year. You can copy a product — not a habit of inventing.



Wall Two: One Science, Many Doors

A few deep skills — sticking, grinding, coating, films — reused across sixty thousand products. Learn a trick once, sell it a thousand ways.



Wall Three: A Mountain of Know-How

Decades of hard-won recipes and patents. Copying one product is easy. Copying the whole library takes a lifetime.



Wall Four: In Every Toolbox

Workshops, hospitals, schools and factories worldwide trust these little helpers. People reorder without a second thought. Trust is slow to build — and slow to lose.



The Cracks in the Castle

Some old water-repellent chemistries now worry scientists and rule-makers. Big companies can grow slow and careful. And cheap copycats always nibble the simplest products. Castles need defending — daily.

Charlie tapped his glasses. “My trick: don't ask how to WIN. Ask what would DESTROY it. Then don't do that. **Invert, always invert.**”



Find the ways to lose... then don't!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Charlie's checklist for ruining an idea factory: punish every failed experiment. Order scientists exactly what to invent. Cut research to look thrifty. Cling to old chemistry too long. Now — just never do those. Worry, turned into a to-do list.

Warren raised his cola. "A business the whole world quietly needs every day, that keeps inventing its own future. Buy the idea machine — not one idea."



So the treasure isn't the note. It's the **FACTORY!**

SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Walls: idea machine  + one science many doors  + know-how  + every toolbox . Cracks: old chemistry, slow size, cheap copycats. Charlie: INVERT. Warren: buy the factory, not one product. 

THE NEXT THIRTY YEARS

"Last question," said Juno. "What does this become in thirty years?" A street of tomorrow: healing patches, air that cleans itself.



The tricks stay — the shapes change!

On a rooftop at dusk, Siri thought it through the way Grandpa taught her.



Don't bet on the gadget. Bet on the NEEDS.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

The deep currents: kinder glues with no 'forever chemicals.' Bandages that heal like skin. Filters scrubbing dirty air and water clean. Reusable gecko-style tapes. The shapes will change — but sticking, cutting, sealing and protecting? Needed forever. 🌟

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

2056 watchlist: clean green glues, skin-like patches, air+water filters, gecko tape. Rule: bet on needs, not shapes. (Also: I want a healing patch that never hurts to peel!)

COMING HOME

Her own bed. Morning. The compass: quiet. The house: somehow different.

Was it real? It FELT real...

One fresh line dried on the diary's glowing page.

"The modern world is not magic. It is millions of ordinary people doing small hard things, together, for a long time."

At breakfast, a little yellow note clung to the fridge. Van der Waals. Tiny spheres. A failed mine. A million hands.

You're a whole science lesson in a scrap of paper.

She hugged the diary tight. Somewhere far away, a hive of glass windows caught the morning sun.

Show me the next one, Grandpa. 💛

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Next unlock, feel it: a zillion tiny pulls holding on — a weak glue everyone called a failure — a failed mine that became a factory of ten thousand ideas. A sticky note is no longer just a note. **Nothing, from now on, is just anything.**



SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK • WHAT I LEARNED

- ① Sticking = flow into valleys + a zillion tiny pulls.
- ② The note's secret = tiny spheres that let go clean.
- ③ Grinding = harder scratches softer.
- ④ A failure can hide a better product.
- ⑤ Tiny + useful + reordered = a quiet money machine.
- ⑥ Let curious people wander.
- ⑦ Buy the idea factory, not one idea. 🧡



OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe the greatest gift we can give a child is the ability to think.

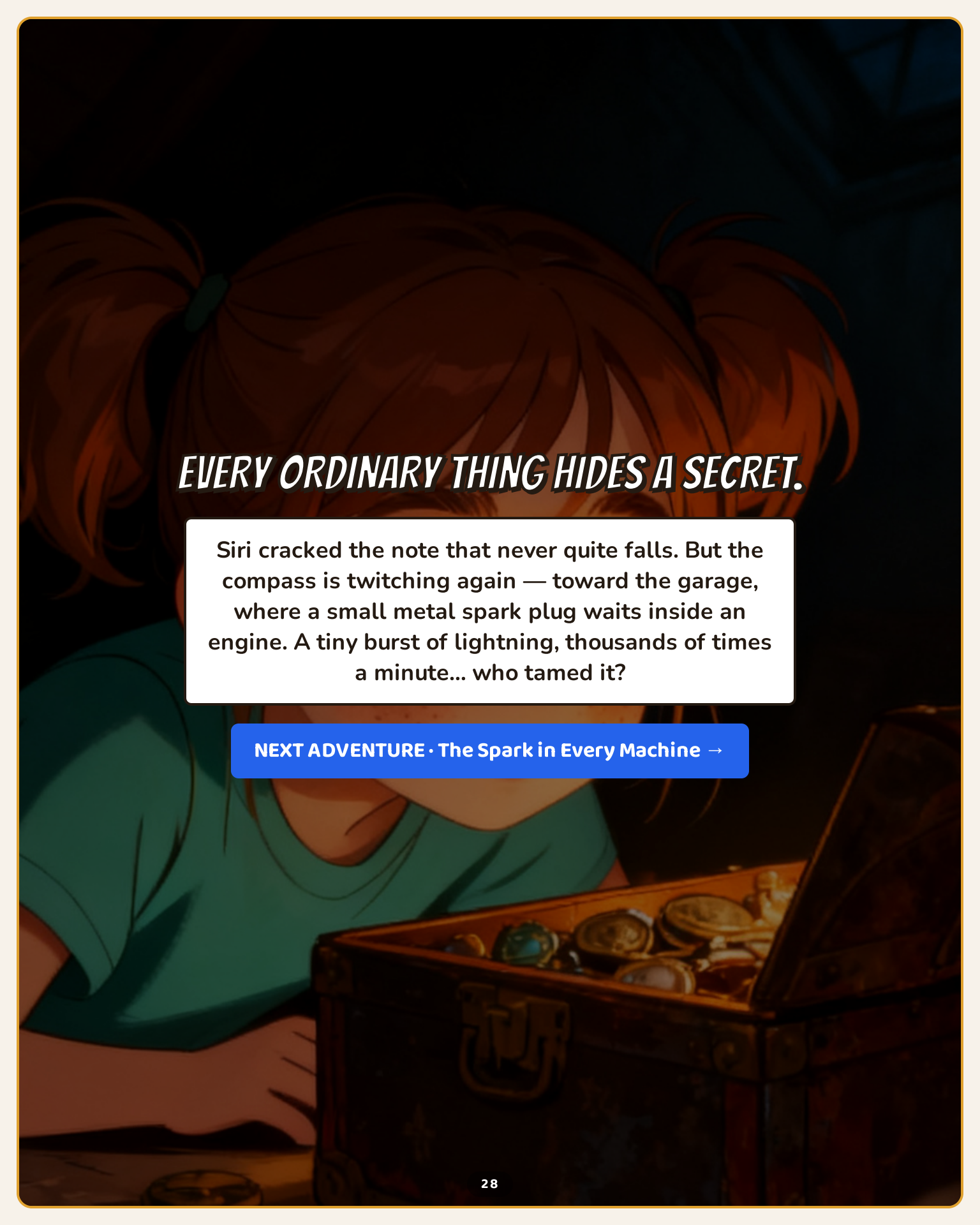
Inspired by the multidisciplinary thinking of [Charlie Munger](#) and the rational, long-term philosophy of [Warren Buffett](#), our comics connect science, technology, business, history, and human behavior to show how the real world works.

Every story begins with a scientific idea and follows its journey into innovation, industry, and the businesses that create value for society. Along the way, children learn that great companies are built on curiosity, experimentation, integrity, and long-term thinking.

Our goal is not to teach children how to invest, but to help them build the mental models needed to understand the world, ask better questions, and think independently.

The companies featured in *The Great Company Adventures* are educational case studies—not investment recommendations. They show how knowledge, innovation, and perseverance turn ideas into products, services, and enduring businesses.

LEARN THE SCIENCE. • UNDERSTAND THE BUSINESS. • THINK FOR LIFE.

A girl with brown hair in pigtails, wearing a green shirt, is looking into an open treasure chest filled with gold coins. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, golden glow emanating from the chest. The background is dark and indistinct.

EVERY ORDINARY THING HIDES A SECRET.

Siri cracked the note that never quite falls. But the compass is twitching again — toward the garage, where a small metal spark plug waits inside an engine. A tiny burst of lightning, thousands of times a minute... who tamed it?

NEXT ADVENTURE · The Spark in Every Machine →