

The Great Company Adventures • Book 33 of 50

FEDEX THE RACE AGAINST THE SUN

A curious girl, three wise mentors, and the flat paper envelope that crosses a continent while you sleep.

"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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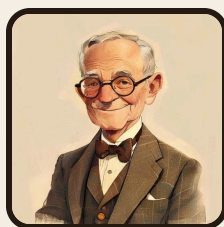
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MEET THE CHARACTERS



SIRI



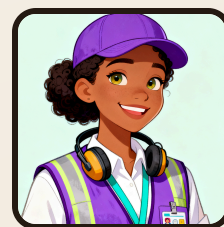
BEN



WARREN



CHARLIE



DELLA

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 ENVELOPE THAT GLOWED AT MIDNIGHT

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

SPIN

The needle stopped. Pointing at... a flat paper envelope. Leaving tonight. Arriving tomorrow morning.

YOU? You're 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 promise that outruns the sun."

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Think about it. Drop a flat envelope in a box tonight — and tomorrow morning it is two thousand miles away, in a stranger's hand, on time. Nobody carried it the whole way. So... **who is racing the sunrise for you?**

The envelope rippled. A whirlpool of blue light grabbed her.

WHOOSH



Here we GOOO!



SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

New mystery! ✉

- ① How does paper cross a continent overnight — every single night?
- ② Grandpa says this built one of the world's great companies. An ENVELOPE?! Prove it.

THE RIVER THAT RUNS AT NIGHT

She landed in a hall so big the far wall vanished. Above her: rivers of moving belts.



It's a **WATERFALL** of parcels!

An engineer lifted her ear defenders. "I'm Della. I run the night sort. We work while you sleep."



Best. Job. EVER.

One giant belt split into streams. Streams into chutes. Chutes into carts. Nothing stopped moving.



How many boxes tonight?

Millions. Every one is somebody's promise.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Look at the clock: 1 a.m. Every shop is shut and every road is empty — and this building is the busiest place on the continent. Overnight delivery happens entirely in **the hours nobody watches**.

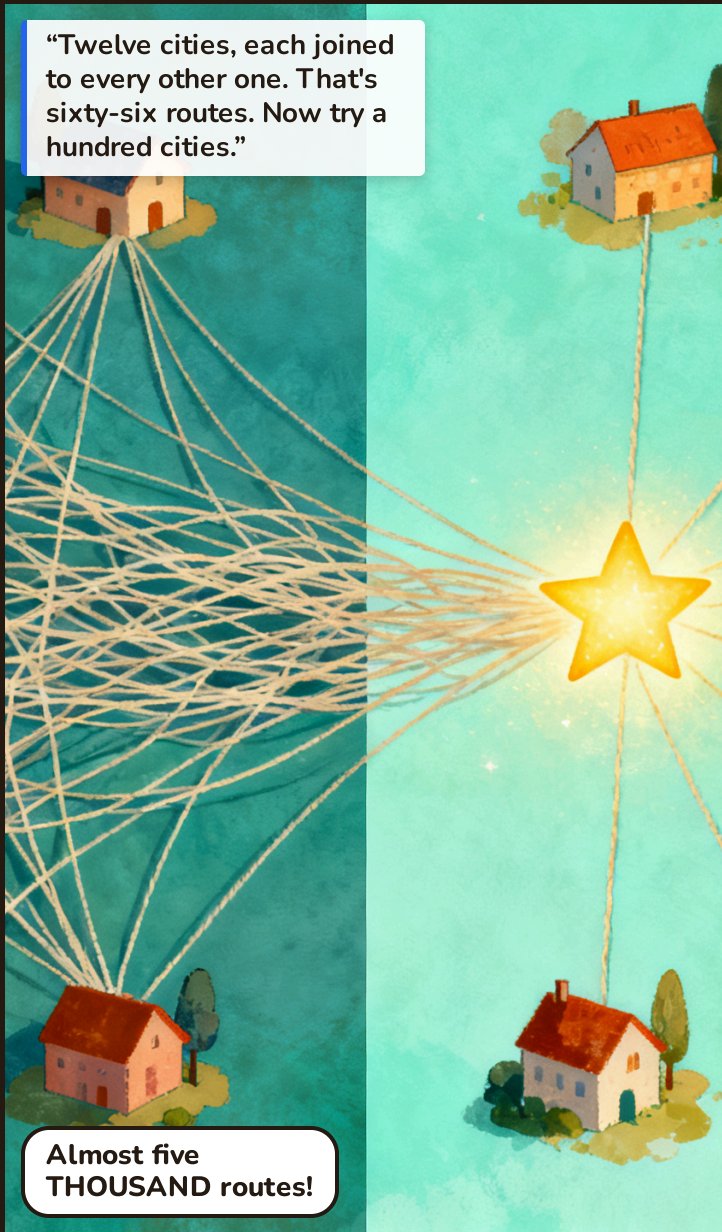
📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Millions of parcels. All night. Then everyone wakes up and it's just... done. 🌙 Della says the strangest part is the shape of the map. Why fly the **WRONG** way first?

THE WHEEL WITH SPOKES

3a The problem: far too many roads

"Twelve cities, each joined to every other one. That's sixty-six routes. Now try a hundred cities."



Almost five THOUSAND routes!

"Or everyone flies to ONE middle place. Swap everything. Fly home. A hundred cities, a hundred routes."

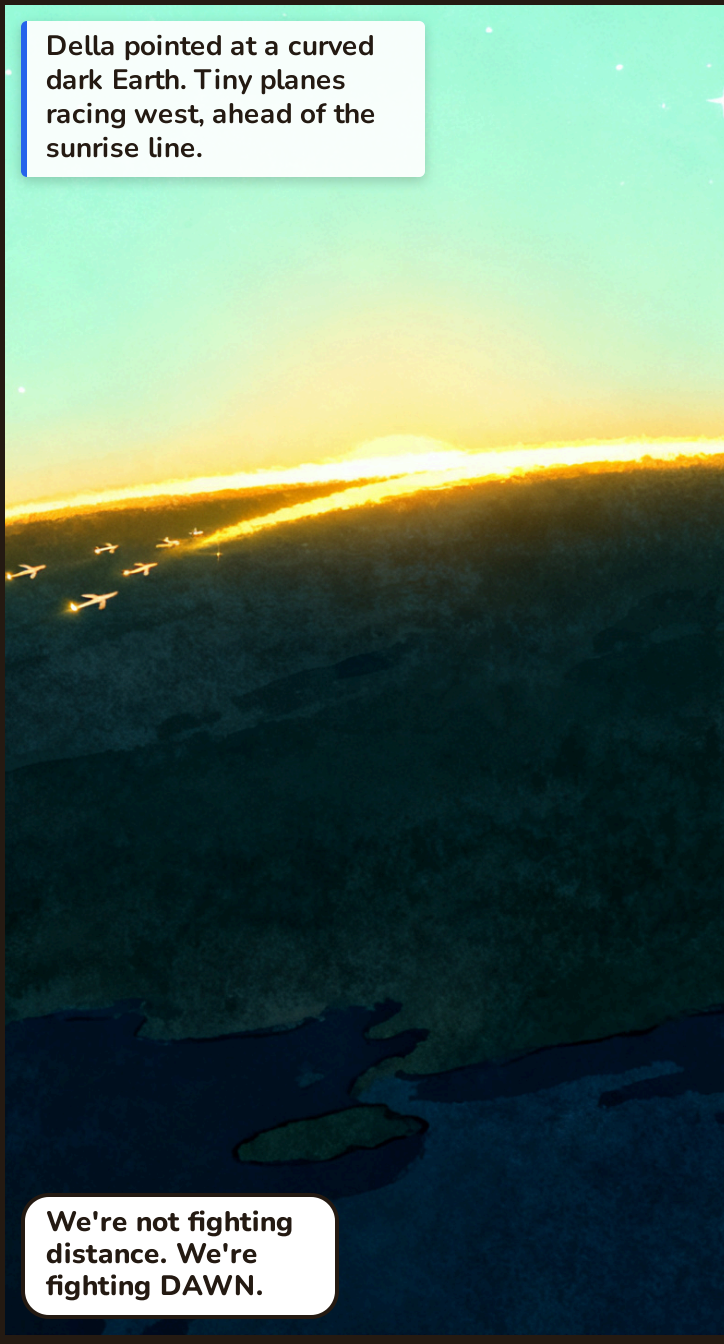


A wheel! With spokes!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

The maths is the whole trick. Direct routes grow as $n \times (n-1) \div 2$ — brutally fast. Spokes to one hub grow one per city. That's why your envelope may fly AWAY from its destination first. Detour by map. Shortcut by **system**. 🌀

Della pointed at a curved dark Earth. Tiny planes racing west, ahead of the sunrise line.



We're not fighting distance. We're fighting DAWN.

"Planes sit idle at night. The sky is empty. And offices are shut anyway — so we borrow the dark."



The night is EMPTY. So we use it!

Every hour of darkness is free runway.

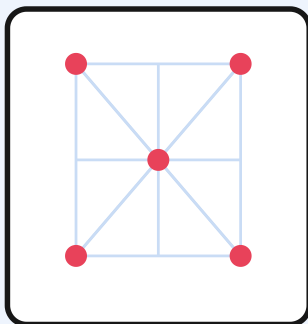
★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Everything is a countdown. Pickups close at dusk. Planes land near midnight. Sorting takes about four hours. Planes leave before 4 a.m. Vans roll at breakfast. Miss one link by ten minutes and the whole night is **late**.



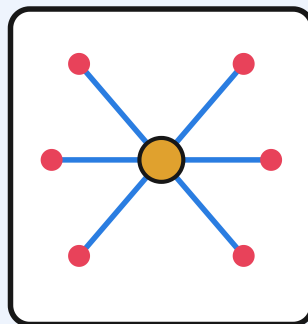


THE RACE AGAINST THE SUN



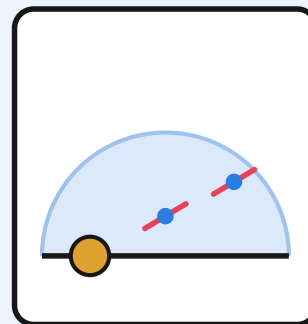
CITY TO CITY

routes explode



ONE HUB

one line per city



BEAT THE DAWN

sorted before sunrise

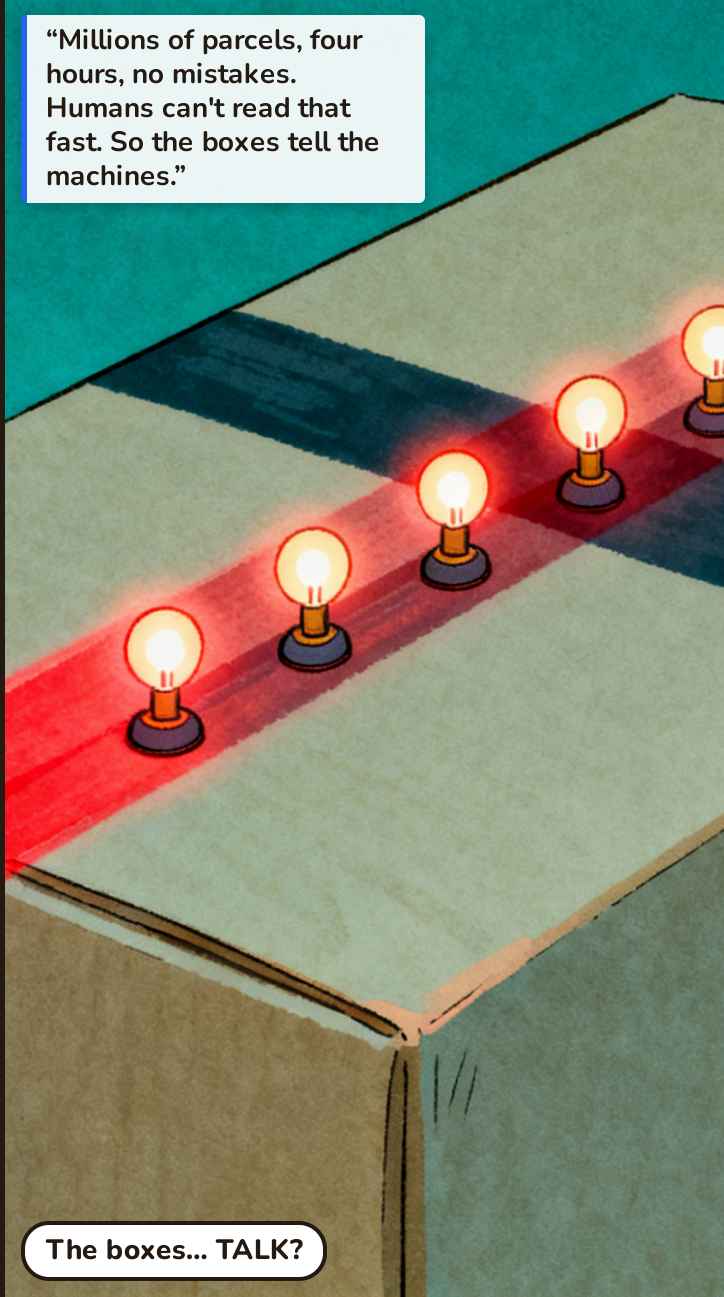


SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

- ① City-to-city = thousands of routes. Hub-and-spoke = one per city. Sometimes the long way IS the short way. 🍷
- ② We race the SUN, not the miles. Night = free runway. 🕒

HOW A MACHINE READS A BOX

"Millions of parcels, four hours, no mistakes. Humans can't read that fast. So the boxes tell the machines."



The boxes... TALK?

A red beam swept a label.
Thick bars, thin bars.
Bounce, no bounce, bounce.



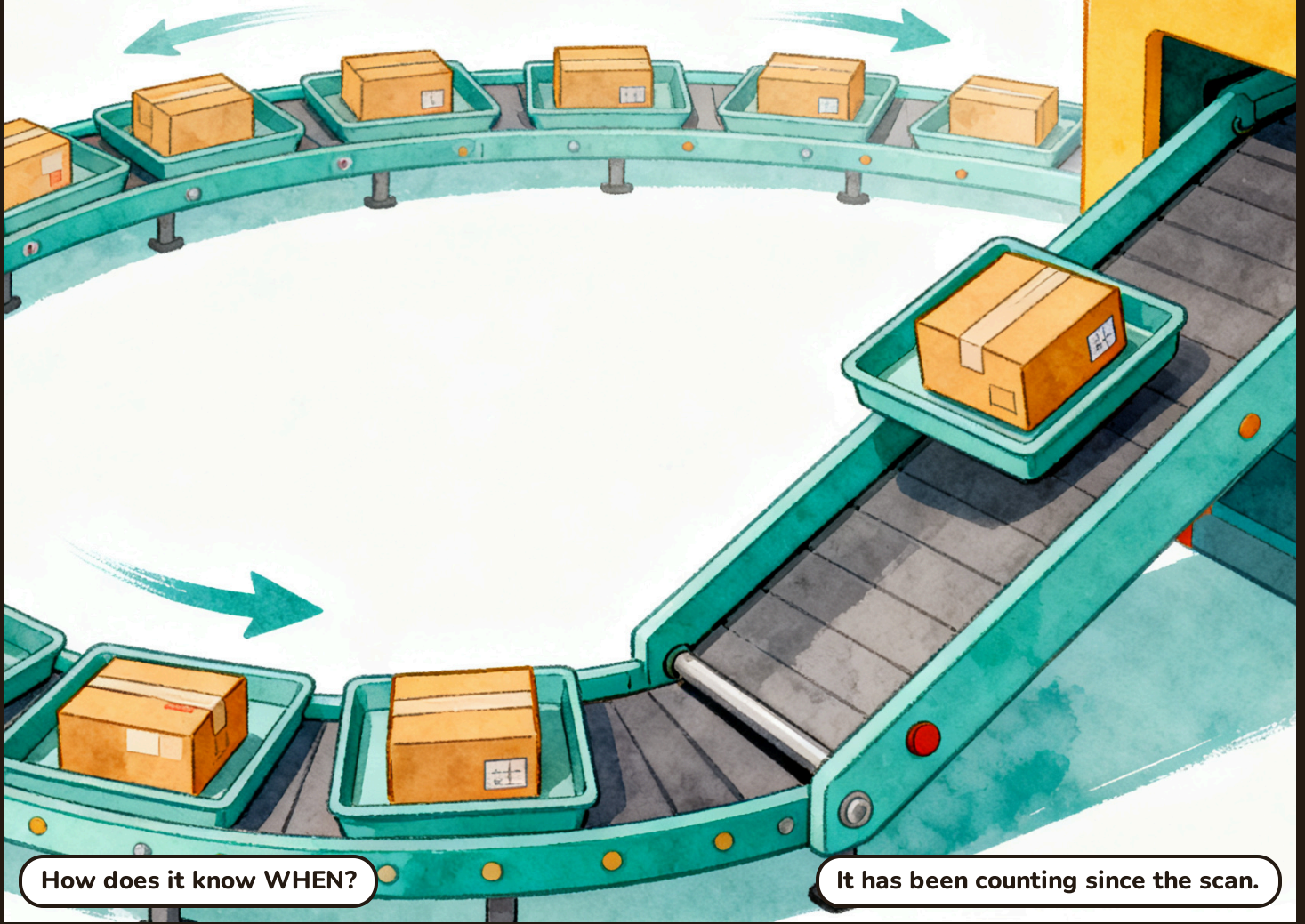
Dark bars eat the light!

And pale gaps throw it back. On, off, on.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

A barcode is **light turned into numbers**. Dark stripes swallow the beam; pale stripes reflect it. Wide, narrow, wide — the pattern IS the number. The same idea as the switches inside a computer, printed in ink. 🔦

Then a loop of little trays. Each tray tipped at exactly the right instant, and the parcel slid home.



How does it know WHEN?

It has been counting since the scan.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Nothing here is clever on its own. A beam. A tilting tray. A chute. Together, at speed, they route millions of objects a night with almost no mistakes. **Simple parts, ruthlessly repeated.** That is most of engineering.

📄 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Barcode = light bouncing off pale gaps, swallowed by dark bars = numbers. Then a tray tips at exactly the right millisecond. My envelope was READ by a beam of light. 🔦

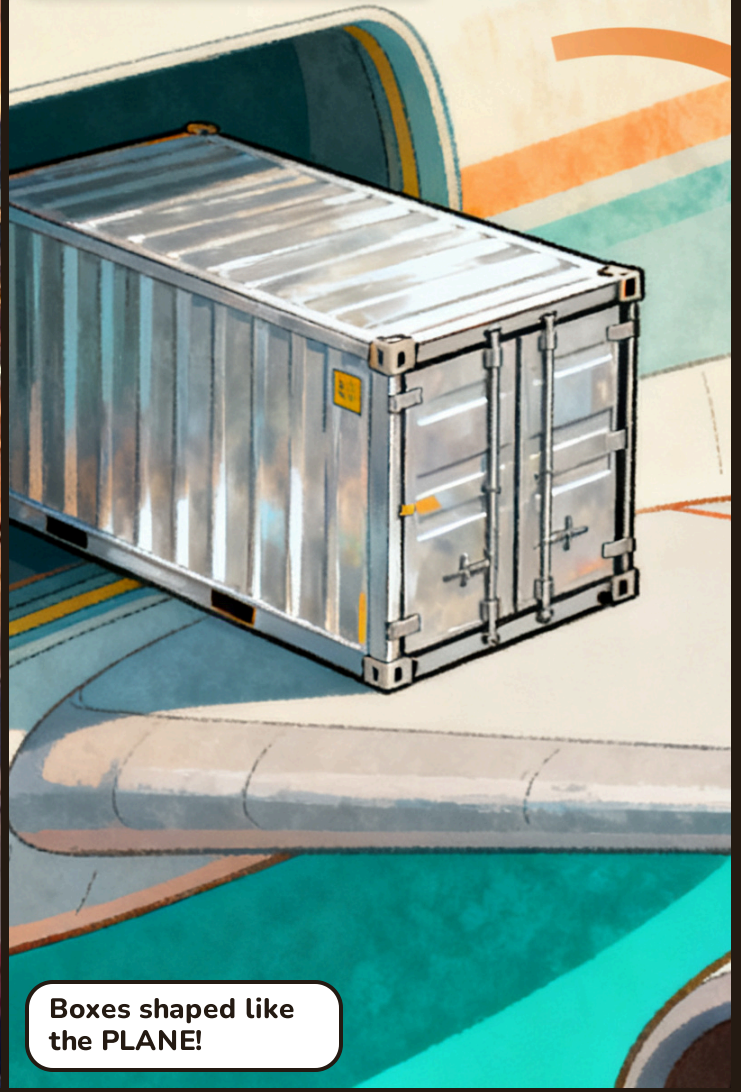
LOADING THE SKY

Outside: cargo jets parked nose-in around the hub like petals. Loaders climbing their ramps.



It's a FLOWER made of airplanes!

"A plane is a tube. So containers get slanted corners — they hug the curve. Wasted air is wasted money."



Boxes shaped like the PLANE!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Aircraft rules are brutal: every extra kilogram burns extra fuel for the whole flight. So loaders balance the weight around the wings like a see-saw. Load it wrong and the plane won't fly right. **Physics accepts no excuses.** ✈️

In the control room, storms spun across the wall maps. A dispatcher drew a new path around them.



Storms don't cancel the promise. They move it.

Della smiled. "Some nights we fly a spare jet completely empty. Just in case one breaks."



You fly an EMPTY plane?!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

That empty jet is the whole business in one picture. It costs a fortune and usually carries nothing. It exists so a promise made to a stranger is **never** broken. Reliability isn't luck — it is **paid for, in advance**.

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Slant-cornered containers hug the tube. Every kilo costs fuel. Storms get flown AROUND. And they keep spare planes flying empty... on purpose. 🤖✈️

WHY ANYONE PAYS FOR SPEED

"A factory of four hundred people, stopped. One tiny broken part. Every hour costs them a fortune."



So the part must arrive TOMORROW.

"A hospital needs a chilled medicine at eight in the morning. Not eventually. Eight."

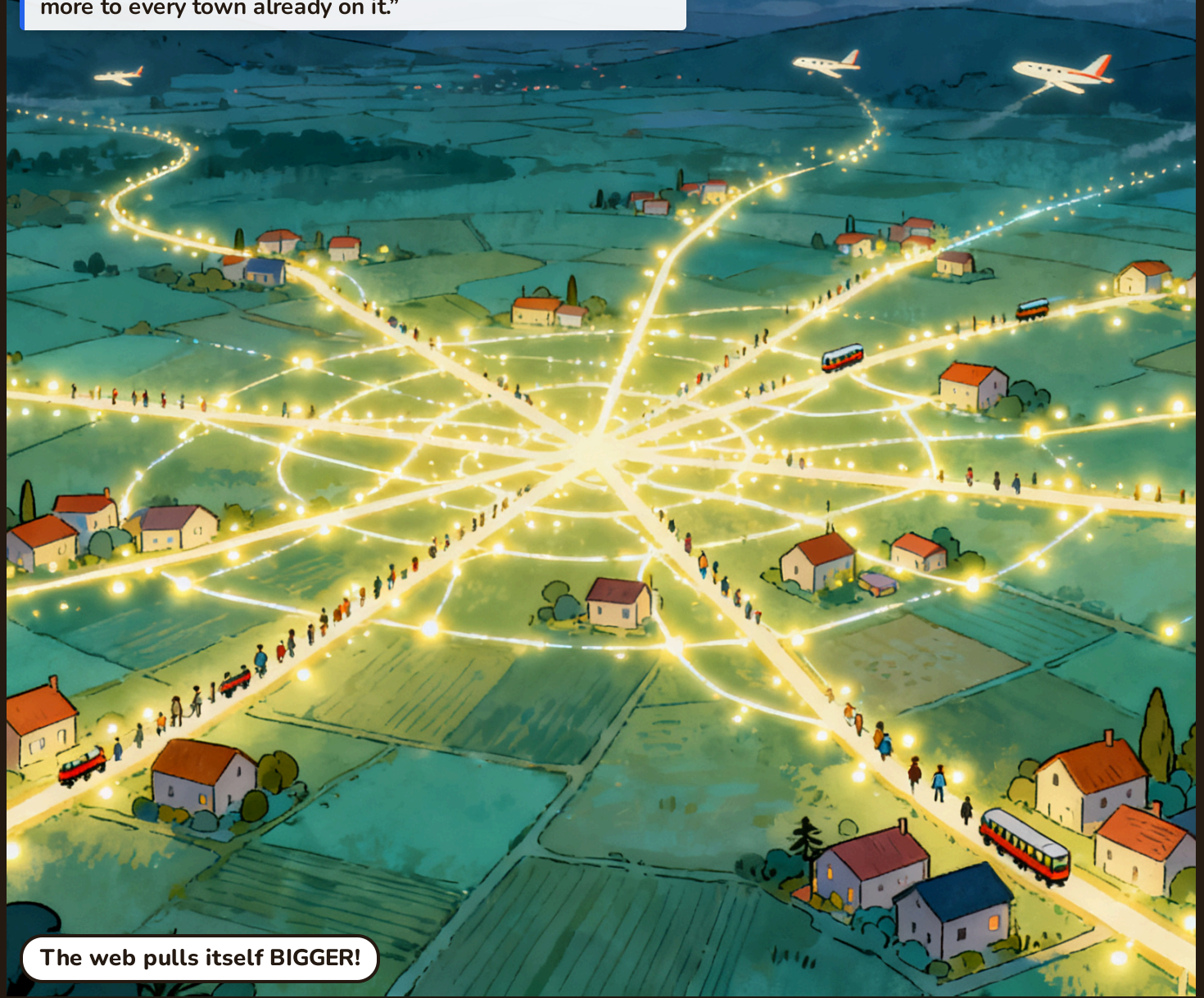


People are WAITING at the other end.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Here's the flip. Nobody pays for a plane ride — they pay for **the expensive thing that stops going wrong**. Beside a stopped factory or a waiting patient, the delivery price looks tiny. Value isn't distance. Value is the **disaster you skipped**. ❤️

“And every new town on our web makes the web worth more to every town already on it.”



The web pulls itself BIGGER!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

A rival can buy planes. Buying a **network** is different: you need every city, every night, from day one — before a single customer trusts you. Half a web delivers nothing. 🕸

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

People don't buy the flight. They buy the disaster that DIDN'T happen. And a delivery web only works once it is already complete. Half a bridge = no bridge. 🕸

THE IDEA THEY CALLED IMPOSSIBLE

Dawn over the great river. Purple and orange on the hub roof. Siri knew the name. Everyone does.



FEDEX! The promise that outruns the sun!

"It began as a college paper in the 1960s. A student named Fred Smith drew a wheel with spokes."



A HOMEWORK idea?!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Legend says the paper earned a poor grade. Smith himself said he honestly could not remember. Either way, keep the useful part: **a new idea rarely looks brilliant while it is still new.** 📄

"First night, April 1973,
Memphis. Fourteen small
jets. Fourteen packages."



**FOURTEEN?! That's
a sad party.**

"They nearly ran out of
money. Then the rules
changed, cargo planes
grew — and the wheel
finally spun."



**From fourteen
boxes to the whole
SKY.**



THE STORY IN TIME

1965

A college student writes a paper about a hub-and-spoke air network.

1973

First night in Memphis: 14 packages, 14 small jets.

1975

Near collapse — the company survives on stubbornness and one good year.

1977

US air cargo rules are freed. Bigger planes, real routes at last.

1978

Customers can telephone and ask where their package is.

1983

Reaches \$1 billion in revenue without buying another company.

1989

Buys Flying Tigers — and inherits a worldwide route map.

1994

Tracking goes on the web. Anyone can watch their own box move.

Today

Millions of shipments a night, hundreds of aircraft, 220+ countries. ✈️



SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

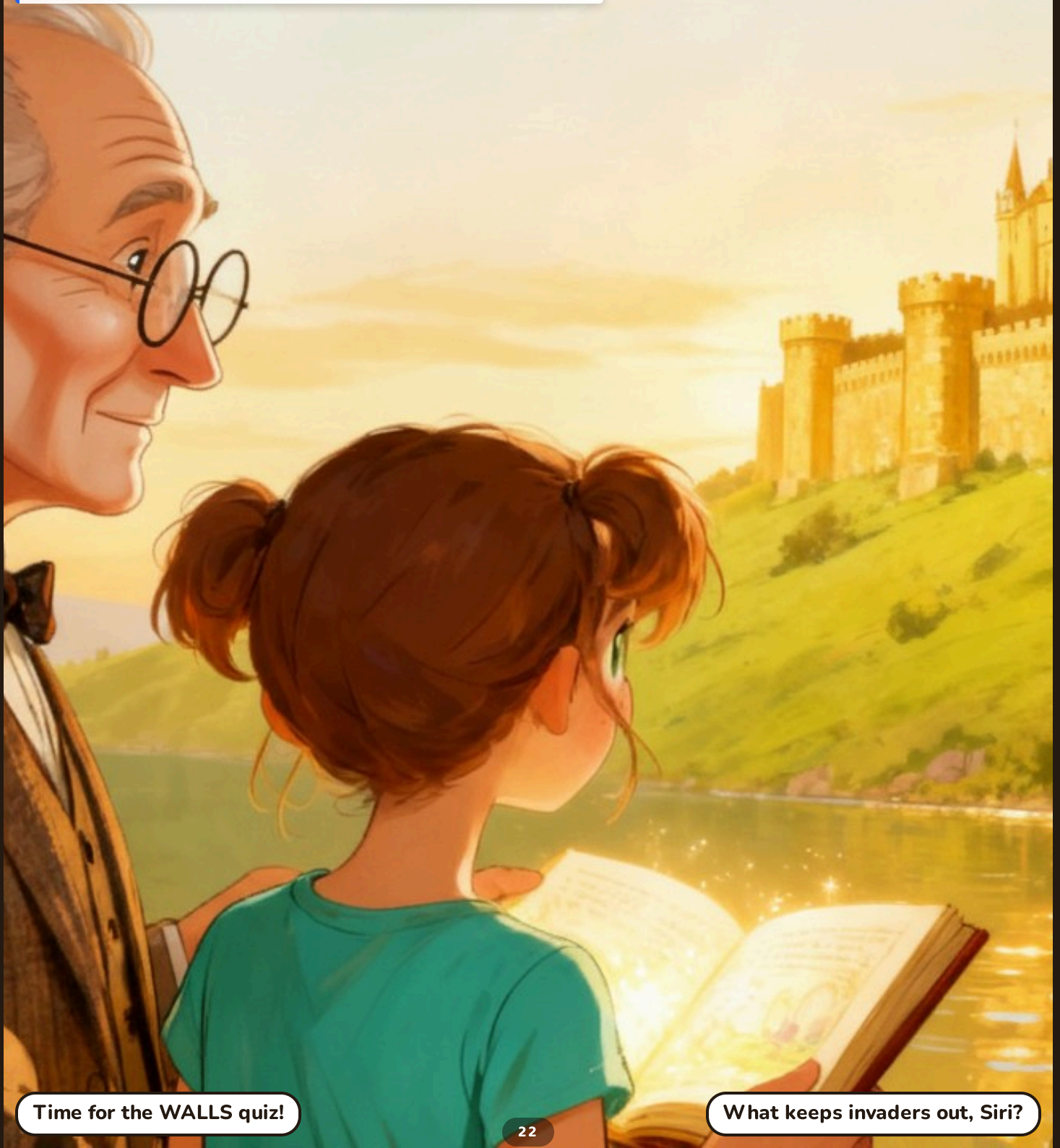
A HOMEWORK paper → 14 packages in 1973 → nearly broke → then the whole planet.

Everything obvious today was ridiculous once.



THE CASTLE MADE OF NIGHTS

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 invaders out, Siri?



THE CASTLE WALLS • WHY RIVALS CAN'T COPY IT



Wall One: The Whole Web

Planes, hubs, vans and a person on every street. A rival must build ALL of it before earning one dollar.



Wall Two: A Promise Kept

Decades of arriving on time. Trust like that is why a hospital dials one number without thinking twice.



Wall Three: The Full Plane

The plane flies anyway. Each extra parcel aboard costs almost nothing — so the busiest network wins on cost.



Wall Four: Knowing Where Everything Is

Every scan feeds a living map of the world's freight. Decades of that data reroutes storms before they bite.



The Cracks in the Castle

Fuel prices bite. Giant customers build their own delivery fleets. Email swallowed the letters. And a network this heavy must fill its planes — every single night.

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 overnight network: break the promise once too often. Fly half-empty planes. Let your biggest customer become your rival. Forget that speed was the only reason anyone paid extra. Now — never do those. Worry, turned into a to-do list.

Warren raised his cola. "Airlines have broken plenty of hearts. But a business the world would *miss by tomorrow morning* — that is rare."



So the treasure isn't planes. It's NIGHTS.



SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Walls: whole web 🕸 + kept promise 🤝 + full planes 📊 + knowing where everything is 🧠. Cracks: fuel, giant customers, email, empty seats. Charlie: INVERT. 🏰

THE NEXT THIRTY YEARS

"Last question," said Della. "What is this in thirty years?" Electric vans. Sidewalk robots. Rooftop drones.



The planes might stop being the loud part!

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



Don't bet on the vehicle. Bet on the NEED.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Grounded currents: electric vans on city routes. Drones carrying medicine to hard places. Robots that can grip soft, silly-shaped parcels. Smarter maps cutting empty miles. Shapes change — but **somebody always needs it there by morning.** 🌟

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

2056 watchlist: electric vans, medicine drones, robot sorters, fewer empty miles. Rule: bet on needs, not vehicles. (Also: I want a sidewalk robot named Kevin.)

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, the envelope lay beside the milk. A hub. A tipping tray. An empty spare jet. A night crew.

You're a whole night of the world, folded flat.

She hugged the diary tight. Far away, a last cargo jet caught the morning sun.

Show me the next one, Grandpa. ♡

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Next unlock, feel it: a wheel of spokes drawn on homework paper — light bouncing off pale ink and turning into numbers — trays tipping in milliseconds — an empty jet flying just in case. An envelope is no longer just an envelope. **Nothing, from now on, is just anything.**



SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK · WHAT I LEARNED

- ① Hub-and-spoke beats every-to-every.
- ② We race the sunrise, not the miles.
- ③ Barcodes = light turned into numbers.
- ④ Reliability is bought in advance.
- ⑤ People pay for the disaster avoided.
- ⑥ Half a network delivers nothing.
- ⑦ Invert! And ideas look silly while new. ❤️



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.

EVERY ORDINARY THING HIDES A SECRET.

Siri won the race against the sun. But the compass is twitching again — toward a dusty attic box, where a small hat with round black ears is waiting. It was drawn by a man who went broke twice... and it made the whole world believe. How?

NEXT ADVENTURE • The Factory of Dreams →