

The Great Company Adventures · Book 38 of 50

NIKE THE SHOE THAT LEARNED TO FLY

A curious girl, three wise mentors, and the ordinary sneaker that turns a footstep into a bounce.

"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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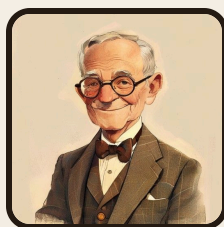
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MEET THE CHARACTERS



SIRI



BEN



WARREN



CHARLIE



BEA

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 SHOE THAT WOULDN'T SIT STILL

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

SPIN

The needle stopped. Pointing at... her sneaker. On its side by the bed. Muddy. Boring.

YOU? You're just a SHOE!

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 shoe that learned to fly."

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Look at a sneaker. A sock, some foam, a rubber bottom. Yet the right pair can make a runner faster with **no extra effort**. That is a very strange claim. So tonight: **can a shoe really give energy back?**

The laces whipped up. A whirlpool of light grabbed her.

WHOOSH



Here we GOOO!



SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

New mystery! 🦋

- ① How can squishy foam make anyone FASTER?
- ② Grandpa says this thing built one of the world's biggest companies. A sneaker?! Prove it.

THE PUZZLE OF FORTY PIECES

She landed in a lab where a shoe floated in pieces — dozens of them, frozen mid-explosion.



It's a GALAXY of shoe bits!

An engineer plucked a slice of foam out of the air. *"I'm Bea. I study how humans run, for a living."*



Best. Job. EVER.

A knitted sock. Slabs of foam. A sealed bubble of air. A dark curved plate. Waffled rubber.



How many pieces?!

Around forty. Made in a dozen countries.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

A running shoe is a **machine you wear**. Every part fights the same enemy: your foot hits the ground with two to three times your body weight, about **1,000 times per mile**.

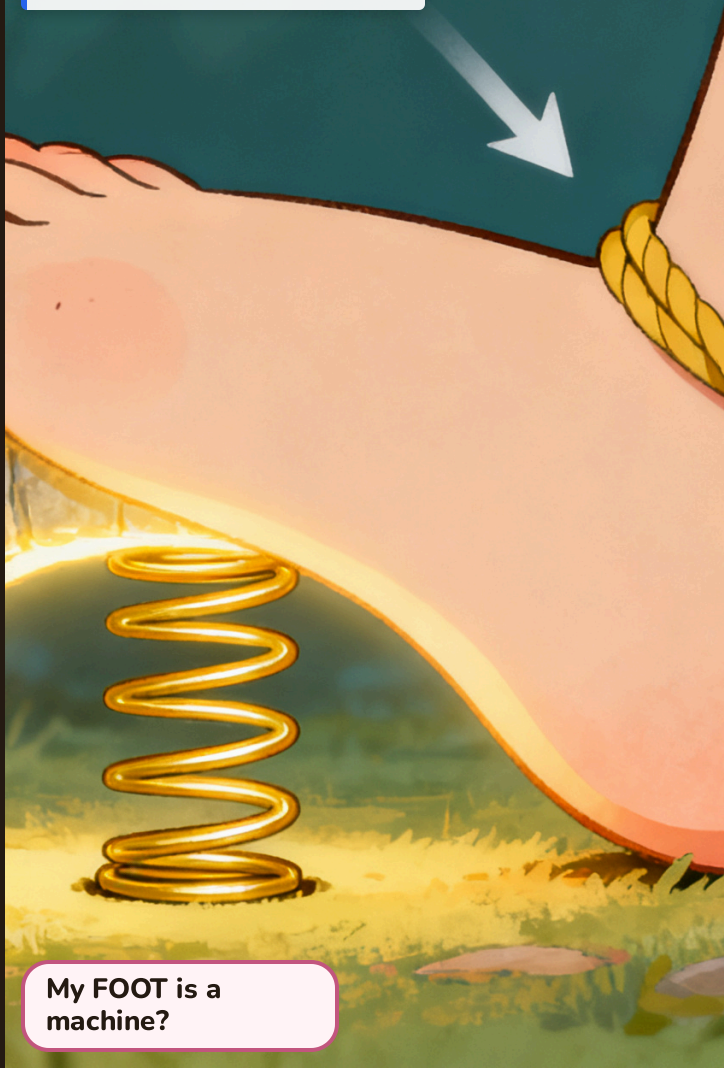
📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

40 pieces. A dozen countries. One foot. 🔍 Bea says the first secret isn't in the shoe at all — it's inside ME. Wait, what?

THE SPRING YOU WERE BORN WITH

3a The secret machine: your own foot

"Before shoes," said Bea, *"there was this."* The arch of a foot. A bridge. With a spring under it.



My FOOT is a machine?

On the treadmill, the floor plate glowed orange with every step. Squash. Rebound. Squash. Rebound.



The floor can SEE my footsteps!

Every step you take, you get some of it back.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Your arch flattens on landing and springs up on lift-off. Your heel cord — the **Achilles tendon** — stretches like a thick rubber band and snaps back. Running is not pushing. Running is **bouncing**. 🦶

"Foam is a city of tiny bubbles with springy walls. Squash them, and they push back."



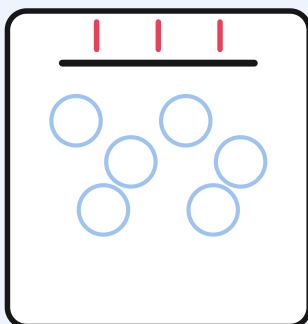
Millions of little trampolines!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

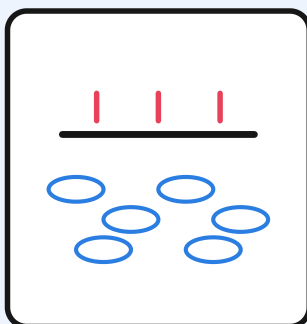
Two jobs, one slab. Foam **softens** the hammer-blow of landing by spreading it over more time — and a really good foam **returns** most of the squash instead of turning it into heat. Cheap foam turns your bounce into warmth. That warmth is wasted running. 🔥



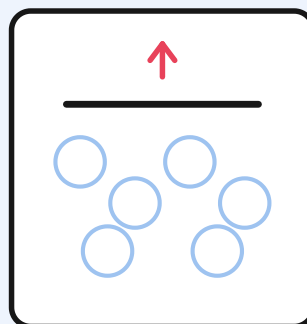
HOW A SHOE GIVES ENERGY BACK



SQUISH IN
bubbles squash



STORE ENERGY
foam holds it



PUSH BACK
most returns



SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

① My arch + heel cord = built-in springs.

Running = bouncing! 

② Foam = millions of bubble-trampolines. Good foam gives it back; bad foam turns it into HEAT.



WAFFLES, BUBBLES AND A STIFF LITTLE PLATE

Bea opened an old waffle iron. Inside: rubber, stamped with little pyramids. *"A coach made the first one in his kitchen in 1971."*



He cooked a SOLE?!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Grip is **friction**: rubber squeezing into the tiny roughness of the ground. Little studs bite into soft dirt, and the gaps let water escape so you don't slide. Same idea as a car tyre — invented on a breakfast machine. 🍩

"Then, 1979: seal gas inside a tough pouch. Gas can't be squashed flat, and it never gets tired."

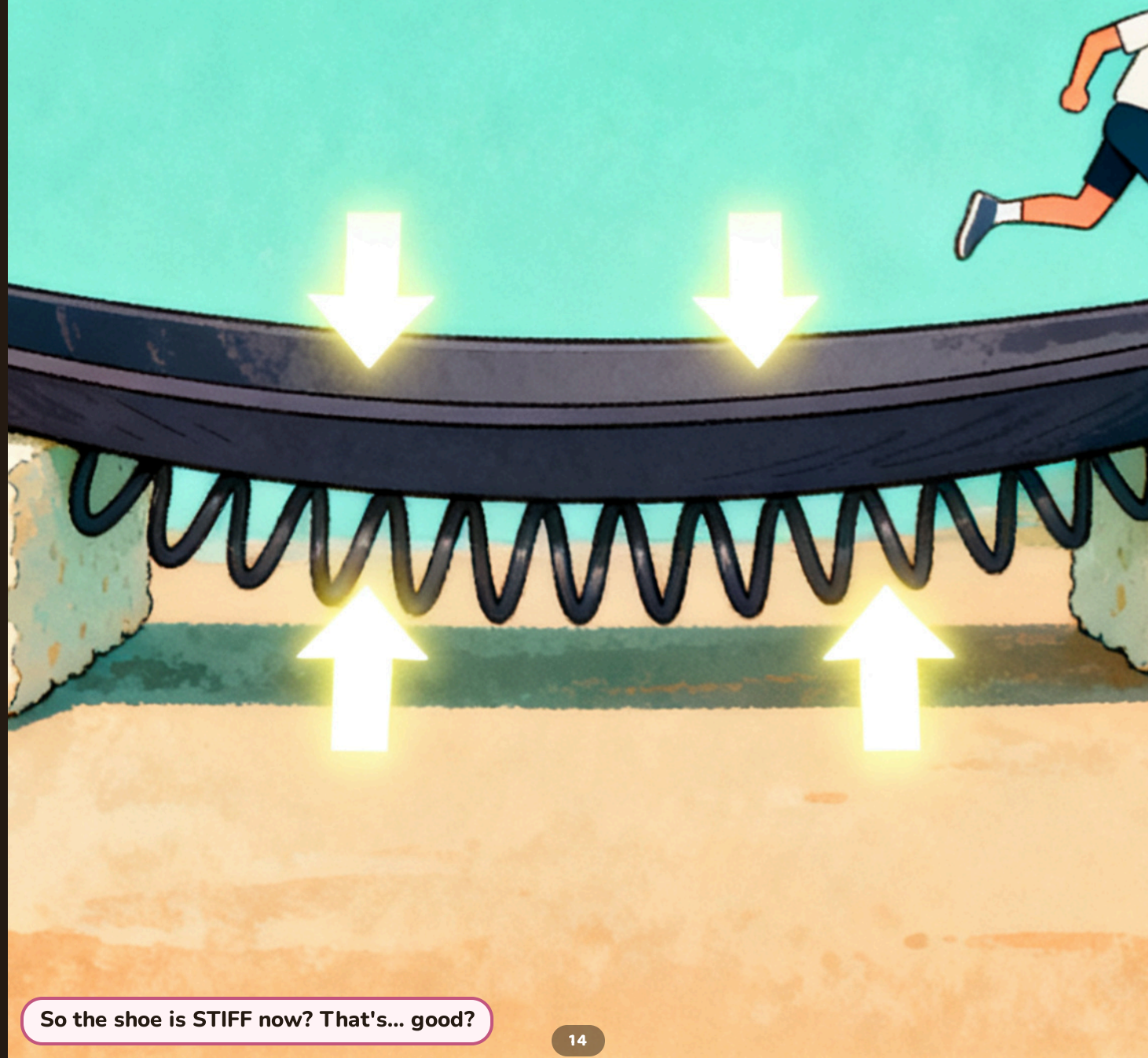


A pillow of AIR, inside a shoe!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Why gas? Foam slowly gets crushed and stops springing after a few hundred miles. A **sealed pouch of gas** keeps bouncing far longer, because gas has nothing to wear out. The idea came from an aerospace engineer who worked on spacesuits and helicopters.

Bea slid a thin dark plate between two foam slabs and bent it. It fought back.



So the shoe is STIFF now? That's... good?



★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Here's the trick that shocked the running world: a **stiff curved plate** stops your toes bending as far, so less energy leaks away at the toe joint — and thick springy foam gives back what it can. Together, they made racing shoes about **4% easier** to run in. Same runner. Same effort. Less fuel burned. 🚀

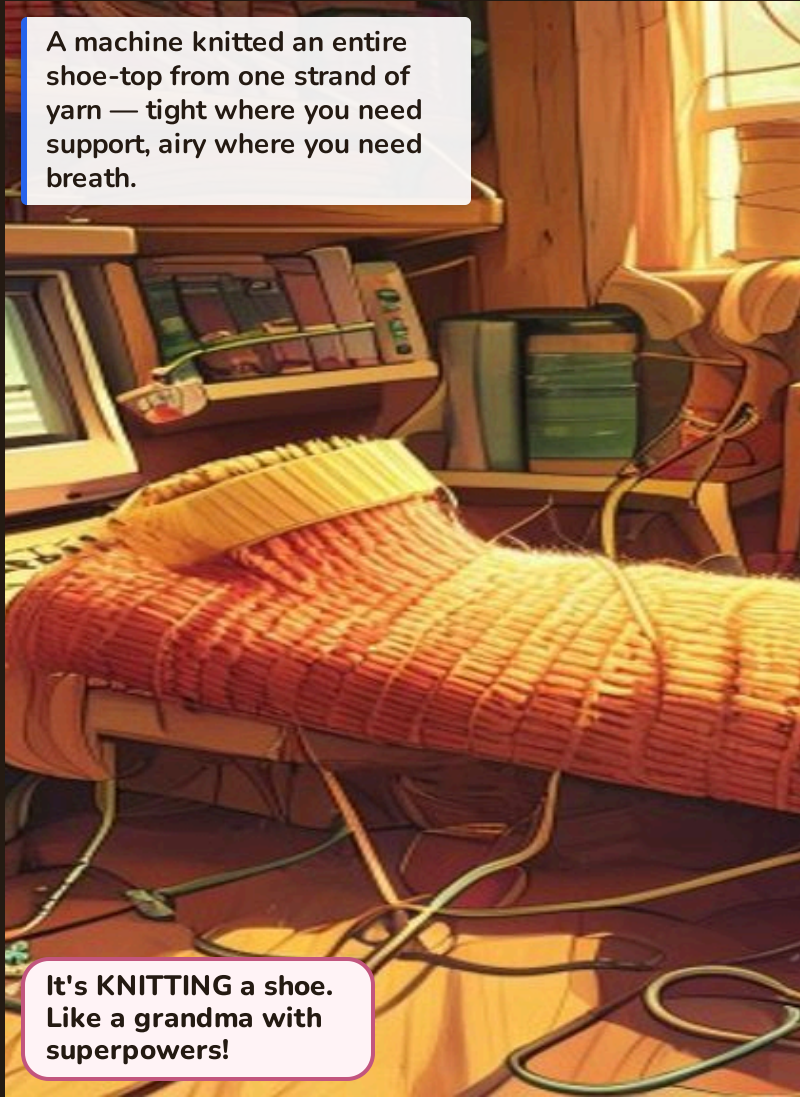


SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Waffle iron = grip 🍷 · sealed gas = a bounce
that doesn't wear out 🎈 · stiff plate + fat foam =
~4% less effort 🚀 . Nobody 'invented' the
runner. They stopped WASTING her.

A THOUSAND HANDS, ONE SHOE

A machine knitted an entire shoe-top from one strand of yarn — tight where you need support, airy where you need breath.



It's **KNITTING** a shoe. Like a grandma with superpowers!

Bea unrolled a world map. Golden threads from everywhere, meeting at one little shoe.



The whole **PLANET** made my sneaker!

Then a door opened onto a hall of workstations stretching away. Cutting. Stitching. Gluing. Pressing.



How many people touch **ONE** shoe?

Dozens of pairs of hands. Every single pair.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Here's the surprise: this company owns **almost no factories**. It designs, tests and tells the story — and independent factories build. That makes it fast and light... and it means their promises must reach into buildings they do not own.

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Yarn knitted into a sock-shoe 🧦 → glued → pressed → boxed. Made by factories the company doesn't even **OWN**. So who's really in charge here? 🤔

WHY A BILLION PEOPLE SAY YES



A wall of sneakers, lit like treasure. Kids weighing colours like jewellers.

Nobody buys a shoe this carefully. Except... everybody does.



At dusk, a runner crossed a finish line — and a child in the stands looked down at her own shoes.

Now SHE wants to run tomorrow.

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Two reasons people say yes. ① It **works**: less ache, better grip, a little more speed. ② It carries a **story** — courage, effort, showing up. You can copy foam in a year. Copying what a shoe MEANS takes decades. 💛

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

People buy two things at once: a machine for the foot 🦶 and a story for the head 🧠. Grandpa's rule: the second one is much harder to copy.

THE TRACK IN THE FIR TREES

Through the Oregon mist: a running track, ringed by firs. Siri knew the swoosh on the gate. Everyone does.



NIKE! The shoe that learned to fly!

"It began in 1964. A university track coach who cobbled shoes for his runners — and one of his runners, who loved selling."



A coach and his OWN athlete?

"They put in fifty dollars each and sold imported Japanese running shoes out of a car boot at track meets."



From a CAR BOOT to the world?!

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

In 1971 they made their own shoes and needed a name. A colleague dreamed of **Nike** — the Greek goddess of victory. A design student drew the swoosh for a **\$35 fee**. The coach cooked the first waffle sole in his kitchen the same year. 🍩

"And in 2019, in Vienna, a runner finished a marathon distance in under two hours. In their shoes."



Humans can DO that?!



THE STORY IN TIME

1964

A track coach and his former runner start selling imported running shoes.

1971

New name: Nike. The swoosh is drawn for a \$35 fee. Waffle sole is born.

1979

Sealed air is sealed inside a sole for the first time.

1984

A young basketball player signs — and a whole line of shoes follows.

1988

“Just Do It.” Three words that outlive every product.

1990s

Factory-conditions scandal. Painful reforms, audits and public reporting follow.

2012

Whole shoe-tops knitted in one piece by machine.

2019

Under two hours for the marathon distance, in a plated racing shoe.

Today

Shoes and kit sold in around 190 countries. 

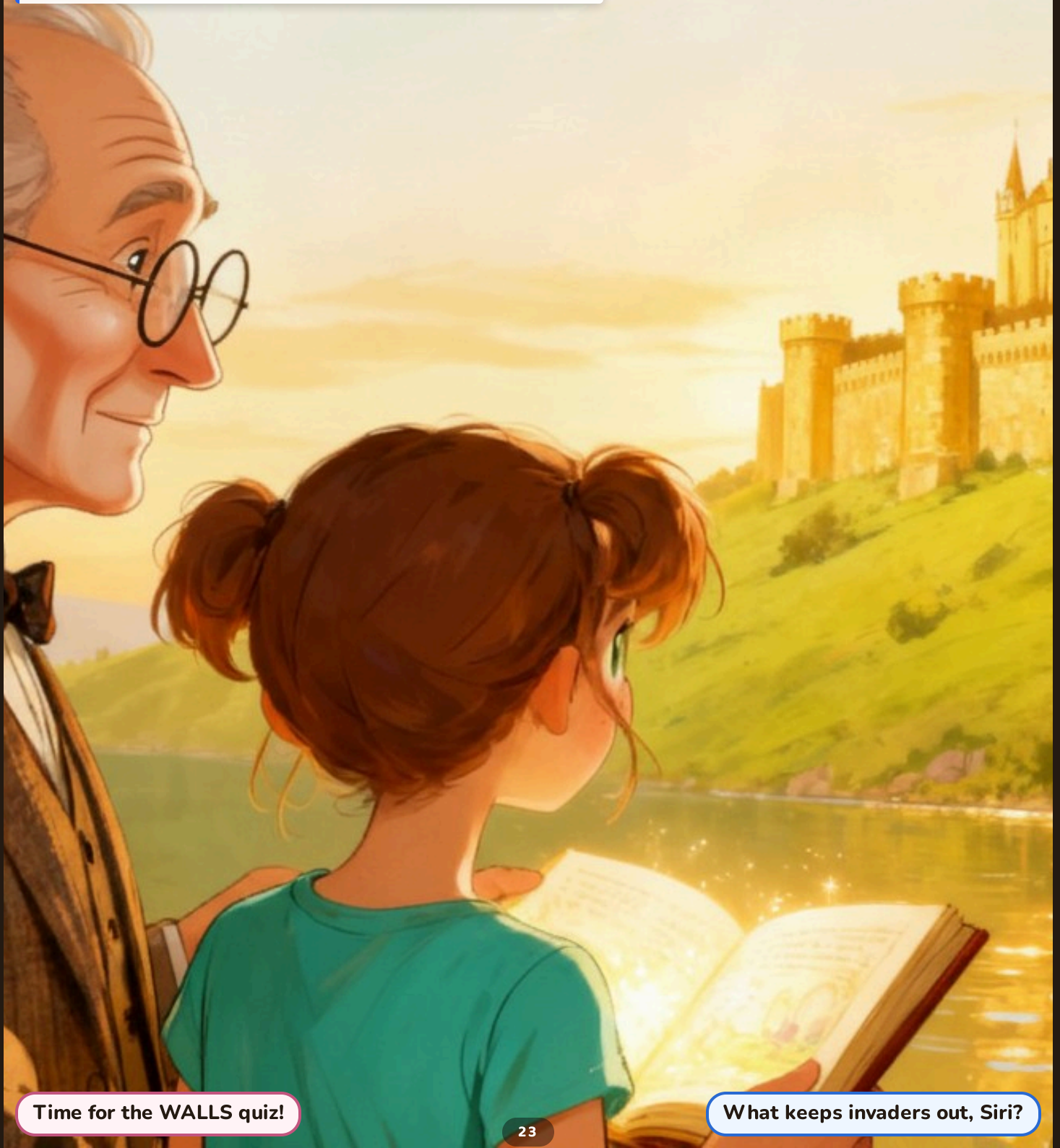


SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Coach + runner → car boot → own shoes →
waffle iron 🍷 → air → a \$35 swoosh → 190
countries. Also: they got things badly wrong in
the 1990s and had to fix them in public. Writing
THAT down too.

THE CASTLE OF CLOTH

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 Story

Decades of courage, sweat and three-word slogans. A rival can copy a sole in a year. A meaning takes a generation.



Wall Two: The Athletes

The fastest people alive test the shoes — and children watch them win. Proof and dream, in one loop.



Wall Three: The Lab

Force plates, wind tunnels, thousands of test miles. Small gains, compounded for fifty years.



Wall Four: Scale

Selling hundreds of millions of pairs makes each pair cheaper to make, ship and test than a newcomer can manage.



The Cracks in the Wall

Fashion is fickle — cool can leave. Nimble upstarts keep appearing. It owns no factories, so someone else's mistake becomes its shame. And rivals now have springy plates too.

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 a shoe company: chase every fad. Stop inventing and coast on the logo. Look away from your factories. Bore the children who look up to you. Now — just never do those. Worry, turned into a to-do list.

Warren raised his cola. *"What I admire is simple: a thing people replace every year, and choose the same maker again. That's trust, earned one pair at a time."*



So the treasure isn't the shoe. It's the WALLS.

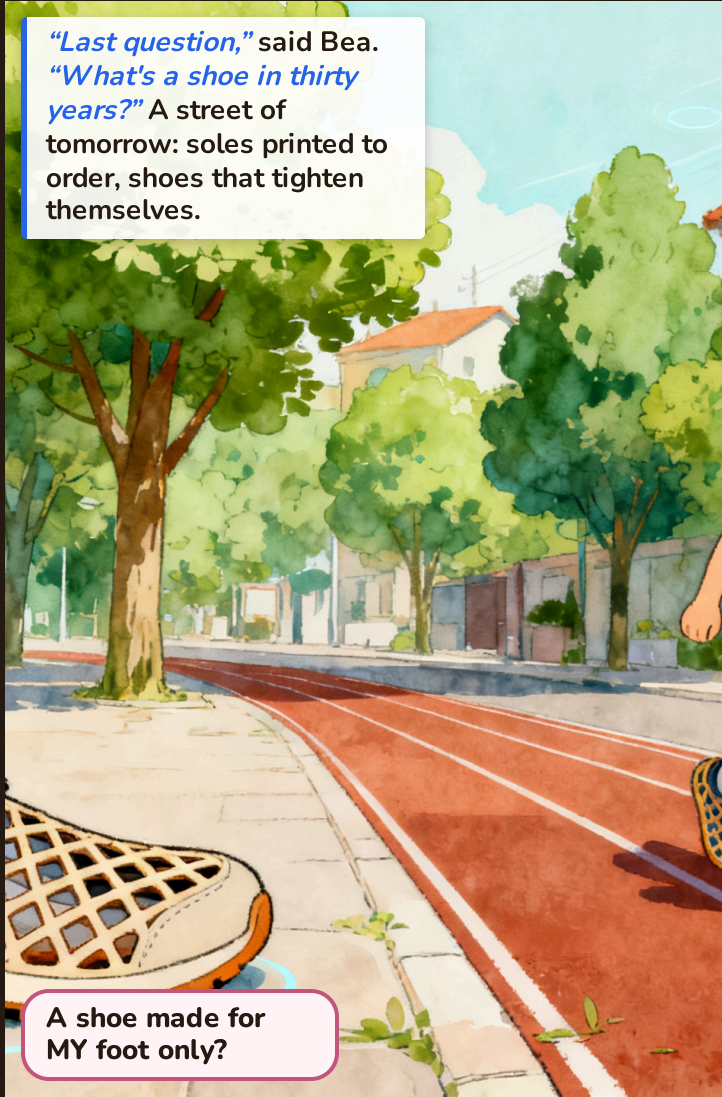


SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

Walls: story 🧡 + athletes 🏃 + lab 🔬 + scale 🌍. Cracks: fashion, upstarts, other people's factories, copied plates. Charlie: INVERT. Warren: trust is bought one pair at a time. 🏠

THE NEXT THIRTY YEARS

"Last question," said Bea.
 "What's a shoe in thirty years?" A street of tomorrow: soles printed to order, shoes that tighten themselves.



A shoe made for
 MY foot only?

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



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

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

The visible currents: soles **3D-printed** in lattices tuned to one runner. Sensors that coach your stride. Foams made from plants instead of oil. Old shoes ground up into new ones. Shapes change — but feet, and the wish to move? Forever. 🌀

📖 SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK

2056 watchlist: printed soles, stride sensors, plant foam, ground-up-and-reborn shoes. Rule: bet on needs, not shapes. (Also: I want the self-tying ones NOW.)

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."

By the front door: her sneakers. Bubble-trampolines. Sealed air. A waffle iron's grandchild. Dozens of hands.

You're a machine. And I've been WEARING you.

She hugged the diary tight. Somewhere far away, a track curved through the morning mist.

Show me the next one, Grandpa. ♥

★ WORTH REMEMBERING

Next run, feel it: your arch flattening and springing, your heel cord snapping back, a million bubbles giving your bounce back instead of burning it. A shoe is no longer just a shoe. **Nothing, from now on, is just anything.**



SIRI'S SECRET NOTEBOOK · WHAT I LEARNED

- ① My foot is a spring; running is bouncing.
- ② Foam = bubble trampolines; good foam returns it.
- ③ Gas doesn't get tired.
- ④ Stiff plate = less leaked energy.
- ⑤ Grip is friction, born in a waffle iron.
- ⑥ People buy a machine AND a story.
- ⑦ Invert! And trust is earned one pair at a time.





OUR PHILOSOPHY

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

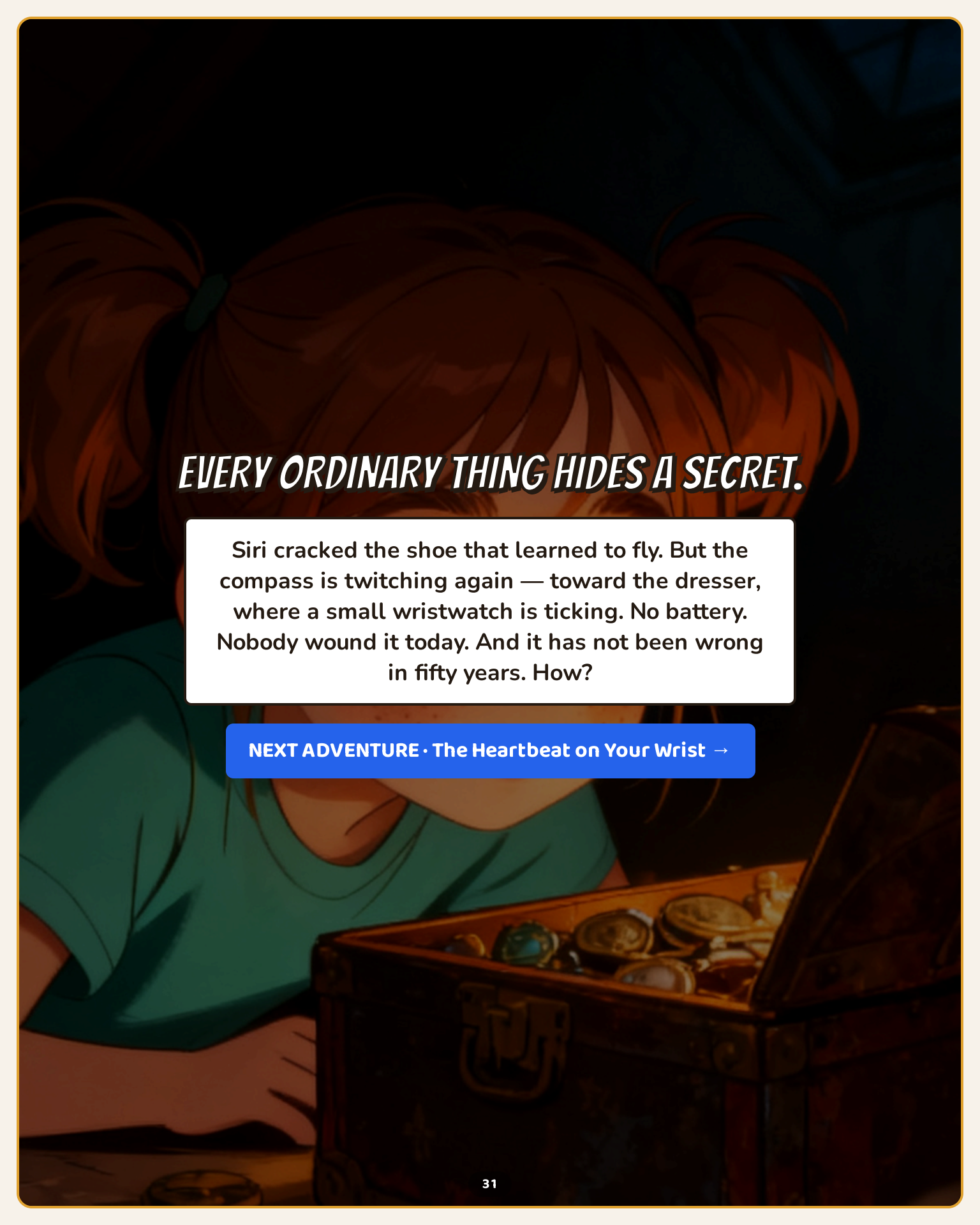
Inspired by the multidisciplinary thinking of [Charlie Munger](#) and the rational, long-term philosophy of [Warren Buffett](#), our comics connect science, technology, business, history, and human behavior to show how the real world works.

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 cracked the shoe that learned to fly. But the compass is twitching again — toward the dresser, where a small wristwatch is ticking. No battery. Nobody wound it today. And it has not been wrong in fifty years. How?

NEXT ADVENTURE • The Heartbeat on Your Wrist →