

Composter Treasure

By: Andrea Hong

Deep down in the rotting insides of a composter, a worm was just wiggling its way through the mounds of decaying food, grass, and dirt. Alan was in the middle of his morning exercise routine. He had to do 2 rounds of inchworm, 30 seconds of high-tail, and wiggle around the whole tumbler until he was too full of the trash in the bins to continue on with his day. In the middle of his training, he came across a strange tunnel leading deep into the bottom of the composter, where he had never explored before. Alan knew he did not dig that deep shaft. He sat on his tail for a while wondering where it may lead him to. He thought of what could be down there, and what he may find. Finally, he decided to set off, even though it meant abandoning his morning warm-up.

Alan squirmed deeper and deeper into the composter, and every inch he went became darker and darker. The smell became mustier and mustier. Larger chunks of food were around, where no worm had gone to eat before. It was quite a sight. As the trail went on, Alan was very tempted to stray off course and take a bite; he HAD missed his morning meal. Once in a while, he stopped because he was too famished to go on. He ate his way through the darkening rot until he was full. During his meal break, he saw some strange things. He saw some things he could comprehend, like grass, peels, and an apple. Several times he would come across a weird object he didn't know about. Once, he thought he saw something called a "bangna" or whatever it was called. He wriggled towards it and took a curious bite, and found that he quite enjoyed the mysterious piece of food. Alan kept wriggling around, helping himself to more delights that filled his stomach with the desire for more. Finally, he was contented with the amount of food he consumed. He checked his little Wormex watch on the tip of his tail and gasped. Most of the air left his body as he saw what time it was. '11:30 AM? That's not possible!' he thought. He was sure that he woke up at 9:00 sharp today! This meant that he spent 2 hours eating. Though he had nothing scheduled for today, it was still crazy that he ate that much food. Sighing, Alan dropped back onto his belly, determined to keep going without any more interruptions this time.

Of course, it was hard to keep his tail to himself in such an interesting part of the composter. It was like the golden age of his life, exploring the bins. He swam in the rich black gold, finding new things everywhere. His light receptors almost bulged out of his head after 30 more minutes of descending. Every time he saw something cool, he would be itching to go nearer to it. It was like everything in the small tunnel was calling his name. Nevertheless, he could only look longingly at the goods, then shake off any curiosity that remained. He had to concentrate if he wanted to find out where this tunnel led.

As he kept going, trouble struck yet again. Alan was just minding his own business when all of a sudden, he slipped and darkness engulfed the space around him. He seemed to fall through a channel, a very long channel. Traumatized, Alan curled up into a big ball, wrapping his tail over his eyes, not daring to see what lay ahead of him. He fell for a very long time until, with a thud, he landed in the soft soil again. After a minute or two, Alan peeled his body back into its former

shape and gazed at his surroundings. Startled, yet unhurt, Alan was trembling from head to tail. Looking up at the shaft he had fallen through, he saw had had fell around 20 cm in the pitch blackness. It looked like a slide from a funhouse, with little bits and pieces of food and garbage in the chute. Apparently, he was supposed to slide down the dark slide, and he would have if he had been paying attention to where he was going. He had been too eager to look around, and he probably missed the slide and fell right down. Now, his body ached and quaked. Stiffly, Alan got back onto his belly, and wriggled forward, this time paying very close attention to where he was going.

On and on he went, and he was getting so close to ending the tunnel, he could feel it. There were bigger gaps and the air quality was fresher than before. It felt as though he was nearing the exit! He had lived in the composter his whole life, yet he had heard about the outside world. Could he finally get out of the composter? With a destination this time, Alan squirmed forward with renewed confidence, something he lacked after the great fall.

After checking his watch, Alan continued to dig through the tunnel. He was very confident about his theory, and he was determined to find out if it was correct. Sliding himself through the tunnel, he kept his eyes straight. He did not take time to look around as before. He had only one goal now: to find the exit. Again and again, he almost got himself into trouble. Once he almost strolled off a cliff again. Thankfully, he did not get into big trouble.

Finally, Alan saw a small light at the end of the tunnel. It shimmered too brightly to look at, but Alan knew that it must be the exit. He wiggled, delighted by his success. He could finally see the world! Suddenly, the ground shifted under Alan's stomach. The whole composter was shaking, rolling around. Someone from the outside had moved it, rolling the contents inside. Alan, terrified once more, tied himself onto a ledge of the composter. He closed his eyes, not in fear, but in defeat. He was so close to escaping the world he had known, and now, he may never see the exit again. Over and over, the dirt, rot, and food swirled up, then fell back down. After about 2 minutes, this whirling stopped, and Alan slid off his perch, full of disappointment. He did not dare look at where the exit had been. He was too sad to think about it. When he looked up, Alan saw dirt and mud that made mountains and valleys covering up the exit. He was very depressed. Slowly, he sank back down on the ground. He was sitting there for a while when he saw something shimmer behind him. Staring over his body, he saw light, far stronger than the one before. His gaze fell straight ahead, and he saw a big gap that he could wriggle through. Carefully approaching the light, he peered out and saw a world of green and blue. He decided there and then that he was abandoning his old life. He slid out of the composter where he had lived all his years and started a new life in a new world.