

the keyboard

It all started with a keyboard. And Coca-Cola. It was a few months ago and I was in the middle of the biggest Coke rush I ever had. I drank Coke when I woke up, even before coffee, I drank it for lunch and every time I was thirsty. Every time I was hungry or bored, or I didn't feel inspired. I drank liters of Coke, every day. It was my moment of brake, it was my spoil myself thing. It was my little addiction.

In the office where I work I have a few choices how to get a drink. Water is the easiest. The dispenser stands just a few steps from my desk and nobody really notices if I go and get myself a plastic glass of water with some of that artificial papayawhatever sugar with color. Coffee is on the other side of the office, you walk with the cup around the conference space, give a smile to Antoinette, have short chat with Bas, of course about the project, and you walk back to your desk. But Coke, Coke is difficult. You have to walk to the kitchen. To the refrigerator.

No excuse. The drinks from the refrigerator are meant for the guests.

And you have to open the cupboard with glasses, which makes a lot of noise. Fill up the glass, ok. Walk back, sit down.

That particular time, I want to fetch a glass of Cola because I was in a lack of inspiration. I was trying some new scripts which didn't really work, and I didn't like how the whole thing was starting to look. A glance at the screen, top right corner. Time was crawling like a snail who had too much to eat. 15.47. More than two hours to go. I swapped with my arm to pick up some papers on the other side of the table and BAM! 0.2 liter of sweet sticky beloved drink splashed over the keys. I was watching paralyzed for a second or two, how brown liquid was making quiet bubbly sound while disappearing between the keys. Damn! The whole office suddenly rose out of silence. Anya went to get paper tissues while I was holding the keyboard in the air trying to shake out the liquid. Five, six minutes and everything was clean again.

I went to get a new glass of Coca Cola and continued to work.

It was about ten past four when I noticed that zed is becoming stuck.

Zed is a very important key, together with Apple means "undo". I hoped it would get loose again if I would keep on pressing it - zzzzzzzz zzzzzzzz zz zzzzzz zzzzzzzzzz zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz zzzz zzzzzzzzzzzz, but no. Instead the backspace got stuck too. And most of the rest of the keys as well. Ok, I can't work like this. "Ramzes, I need another keyboard, this one is not working well anymore." "Are you working on Mac?" Ramzes asked from his computer altar with four screens and a two meter high tower of blue Silicon Graphics desktops.

"What do you think?"

"Than I can't help you, I don't have a spare Mac keyboard."

"Are you sure, not even in the cellar?" Our company has a dungeons full of all kind of rubbish. mostly stacks of old CD rams, at least six screens, a few printers and tons of user guides.

"Nop."

"So what can I do? I CAN'T WORK!" Something on the inside smiled, I really just wanted to go home.

"Well, you have to clean it."

"Right. Do you have a screw driver?"

Ramzes was impatiently going through his drawers full of crap, but no screw driver. great.

I went on the other side of the office, silently standing with the damn keyboard in my hand, waiting that Bas finishes the string and gives me a moment of attention.

"Sorry Bas, do you maybe have a screwdriver? I have to open this thing." My fear of opening "this thing" reflected in Bas's eyes as a little sparkle. He accepted the game.

He found the screw driver, I brought cup of water and paper tissues, he explained me how it works, I went to find ear-cleaning sticks, he brought a hair dryer. We had fun. We wiped the plastic foil and I was trying to wipe off the sticky caramel-like stuff from the back of the keys.

Cleaned it, dried it, put it together, and I was back with my G3.

We took that keyboard apart two more times that day. Obviously Coke is a very difficult to clean. Each time, the procedure was more or less the same, each time we were convinced we made it work again. But no, next morning hardly any key was loose.

I was a bit annoyed with the whole situation. I wanted to put the plastic cover with the keys into the wash machine, but Bas thought that might be a bad idea because the temperature in the dish washer can be very high. So I took off all the keys, click-click, one by one. Put them in the bowl with a lot of soap, let them soak

for a while. In the mean time I was scrubbing off years old dirt from the plastic top. You can't believe how many bread crumbs, little hairs and dust lays under your fingers... The whole procedure lasted until lunch, I had to dry it very well and put the keys back in the right order. And it worked again. Perfectly. Much better than before. And it looked like new.

I came home that evening in a rather good mood, laughing while I was explaining the whole story to my friend. That evening he made a remark that lingered in my mind for a very long time.

"How can they let a designer clean stupid keyboard for six hours, when a keyboard like that just cost 20 or 30 Euro? It's a complete loss of money."

He was right. I was wasting company's money by cleaning that keyboard.

But on the other hand, how can you throw away something like that just because it got dirty? Just because it's not new? Just because you can buy better? This thoughts, together with what I saw inside of that keyboard started an interest which is now resulting in the TechnoScrap project.