

DUST OFF yer thinkin' cap and throw on yer long johns 'cuz we're goin' on an adventure! That was the catch phrase for my most recent wintery outing to the University of Toronto.

Thoughts of aborting the mission danced through my mind all day long much like the snowflakes swirling around outside my apartment window. Reports of temperatures dropping as low as -35°C and snow accumulating to as much as 20 cm gave even a short trip outside a two thumbs down rating.

The motive for this particular adventure was to attend my first engineering grad school class in the depths of the Sanford Fleming Building off College Street. Luckily for you I did not make an easy Mobility Transit bus booking for this adventure which meant a much more interesting story has transpired from this expedition i.e.: bundling up, wheeling into the bone chilling wind and blowing snow, plowing through snow banks, travelling on the subway and being late for class!

For me the most frightening aspect of attempting such a mission is the possibility of suffering frostbite and not even knowing it. Without sensation I've got to be absolutely sure that I'm protected. Before the really cold weather hit, I realized that my immobility would not be conducive to keeping warm and that I would need to work on some adapted cold weather garments.

I was never fond of shopping, now I absolutely despise it. Rarely does something I buy fit properly. This usually results in epic shopping expeditions in which the items that I've purchased usually have an elaborate plan for modification attached.

Since I can't hold my fingers out straight, attempts to put on regular gloves become a very time-consuming and tedious process. My friend Tom's mom is a creative and crafty occupational therapist and is awesome on the sewing machine. She has helped me create a mitt with a side zipper that allows the mitt to open up like a book.

I lay my hand in the opened-up mitt, fold the top over and zip my way to warm hands... patent pending! I have also invented a pair of wind and waterproof pants that I can put on while remaining in my chair. They resemble the typical tear-away warmup pant; however the bum has been removed.

As well as being oblivious to temperature, much of my body cannot detect pressure. Like Cinderella with a twist, entire days have been spent looking for the shoe that works. My winter boots are two sizes bigger in order for my foot to easily slide in and out and reduce the chance of possible high-pressure areas.

So those are all the special ingredients that make cold-weather wheeling a possibility, topped off with a scarf, my trusty winter coat and toque. On this particular evening however it wasn't just the cold that I had to contend with, but a hefty amount

Luke Soup

by Luke Anderson



of snow that had accumulated during the day.

My attendant Earl was adamant that I should abort the mission, he just closed his eyes and shook his head as I wheeled by him and out the front doors of my building with a little smirk on my face. The smirk quickly disappeared as the wind driven snow pelted my face and made vision almost impossible...

Like a rickety old wooden roller coaster my chair chugged and jostled its way through the slippery mess on the ground towards the subway station just down the street. What only days ago was a simple and smooth route had been transformed by Mother Nature's most evil winter recipe.

Accompanied by my friend Steve, who is also taking the course with me, we trekked like early Antarctic explorers determined to reach the desolate South Pole, except that our goal was to reach the more hospitable warmth of the subway station.

We entered the station covered in snow with noses running, wordlessly reminding everyone leaving the station about the conditions outside. Once we were on board, our frozen faces began to thaw out and I could feel adrenaline surging through my veins.

My excitement, however, was not shared by many other subway patrons, who were undoubtedly thinking about the nasty weather outside. We got off at our stop and I felt much the same sense of shock you get during a warm shower, when you are rudely robbed of hot water by a prankster sibling or perhaps an innocent automatic dishwasher. I yelled out a four letter word and we pressed on into the cold.

We made it to class kind of late and unfortunately the door to the classroom was at the front of the room where the professor was. We had made it, but like those early Antarctic explorers who hoisted their flag once they reached the South Pole, we made our presence known by disrupting the whole class.

I may as well have gone up to the blackboard and run my fingernails across it because the wet, rubbery, squeaking noise coming from my tires against the polished floor was just as bad if not more annoying! Thankfully everyone in class, including the professor, greeted us with understanding warm vibes.

After the two-and-a-half hour class we prepared for our return trip. Our tracks from before had disappeared under a good 5 cm of snow but that didn't seem to have a huge effect on getting through. Other than a few fishtails and side slips here and there the old chair did all right.

With a great sense of accomplishment we rounded the last corner and my building soon came into view. I pulled into the building and coincidentally Earl was downstairs. I wheeled by him with a smirk on my face.

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