

# ROOTING THROUGH RUBBISH

THERE'S GOLD IN THEM THAR' DUMPSTERS

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A box of unused Kotex Lightdays spilled out onto the printer, and the biology textbook was jammed in the Nilla Wafer box. The chair I settled in had a crusty, puked-out-scrambled-eggs stain that crunched nicely under the movement of my arm.

I was in the bottom of a cavernous trash bin on my third day of end-of-the-semester Dumpster diving — and I was starting to feel at home.

Two days earlier, I was hot with embarrassment and tight with disgust as I descended into my first Dumpster just south of Farrand Field. Inside, I lost my balance while walking on trash bags and unrolling rugs that bore large, dark, unidentifiable stains.

But then I looked over to the corner, and there it was — a desk chair with its legs in the air. It was much nicer than

the chair I have at home, a \$20, no-arm seat from OfficeMax. My growing excitement hooked me. I knew I could find my own interior decorating treasures within this foul trash.

Here's the skinny: I'm currently living in a shoebox near the Boulder Creek Trail, but it's a furnished shoebox. The lease on the tiny space comes up this summer, and I'm moving up to a two-bedroom, albeit unfurnished apartment. With only a bed and a crappy desktop computer, I need to find stuff to fill up said apartment, and seeing as **dirt** only pays its writers with burritos and thimbles of whiskey, I need to do it on a pretty strict budget.

The University of Colorado is fairly

legendary for its Dumpster offerings during student move-out days, so I decided to hop into campus trash bins during finals week — and scour the goodies thrown to the curb up on University Hill — and grab as much free stuff as I could from the end-of-the-year ditch-fest.

However, after a week of Dumpster diving, I learned that there are some rules to the art of finding freebies.

Before you aspiring divers suit up, arm yourself with these guidelines:

## RULE ONE: DON'T STAY IN ONE PLACE TOO LONG

Finding your first jackpot Dumpster is a double-edged sword. You'll plunge



ABOVE » DUMPSTER DIVING IS A HARSH AND FILTHY MISTRESS. OUR GUESS? BEAN DIP. BELOW » THIS SWEET, SWEET LEXMARK IS ABOUT \$35 WORTH OF INKJET SPLENDOR.



in, pluck out the great stuff — chairs, lamps, desks — but then you'll start to linger. What's under that rotting head of lettuce, you'll wonder. And could the bean dip smeared on that bean bag be steamed out?

Within minutes you'll find yourself with your arm halfway into some trash bag, sifting through sticky, damp Kleenexes and crumpled term papers. Thick caramel-colored juices drip down the sides of Dumpsters. The heat from the sun reflects off the metal, heating up the most pungent of items — week-old salads from McDonald's, sagging pizza boxes and fly-covered cans of beer.

It happened to me; after scoring 15 lamps, a printer and a TV stand in one Dumpster near Farrand Hall, I found myself tossing some wrapped Twizzlers to students passing by — and munching on some myself. I read multiple-choice questions out of a biology textbook. I traced the marbled patterns on