

# Candy Land by Ellen

Yet another poisoning. Yesterday a child had eaten a wild potato he had found beyond the border. How he got past, puzzled everyone. The mayor was furious with his guards! Rumour has it the boy had a tiny nibble, then just dropped to the floor. No one knows why, but now everyone stays away from carrots and other vegetables just in case. All the shopkeepers are complaining about bad business, but they don't eat veggies either. Since then, the mayor released a statement on broadcast, saying that vegetables are good for us and we should eat them. To prove his point, he took a delicate nibble off the end of a carrot. Although it didn't do anything to calm the public because a camera caught him spitting it out a few seconds later and washing his mouth with a powerful antibacterial mouthwash multiple times.

Ella knew she had to do something. All around her, people were rejecting vegetables. She knew that their bodies would suffer from the lack of this critical food group. They had already rejected fruits the year before, and it wasn't long before everyone would suffer from malnutrition. She couldn't blame them though, why eat veggies and fruits when you could eat a delicious gummy from a nearby tree? Or some fairy floss from the bushes? It's great that food grows everywhere and no one goes hungry, except for the fact that all the food is candy! Coming to the end of her daily run, she unconsciously reached for her favourite mint patties growing on the side of the pavement. As she brought it to her mouth, she realised what she was doing, and although it went against what she was trying to convey to the Sugar Council, she kept eating it.

The only reason that not everyone was dead was because there was a liquid that you could get injected into you, which contained many nutrients. The catch was that it was very costly. Only the rich and famous could afford it, and not everyone had that much money. Everyone else suffered from sugar rushes and crashes and malnutrition. It was unjust, but Ella couldn't do anything about it. All she could do is try to help the more unfortunate people who didn't have buckets of money.

"So you're proposing to cut down one third of all nature and plants, in exchange for fruits? It would never work! What you are proposing would cause an uprising, it would cause chaos!" the mayor spluttered, his face a blotchy red.

"It's the only way to ensure the survival of the sugar people. If not, we will all suffer a slow death," Ella replied calmly. She could see the mayor's gears turning, as he considered his options.

"It would be too expensive," he finally decided.

Ella couldn't believe it, The Mayor was indirectly murdering the citizens of CandyLand by refusing to make their diets healthier. "All we would need to do is put them in the ground and put a little plant growth powder on them!" she exclaimed, but knowing that she had already lost the battle.

"I'm sorry, but there's nothing that the Sugar Council can do for you." The Mayor said smugly, with triumphant eyes.

"There's plenty that you can do!" Ella retorted, slamming the door shut as she left.

The streets were empty, shadows haunting what was once paradise. Occasionally there was a knock on the door, as Ella had managed to convince a few families nearby to eat fruits and vegetables. The Sugar Council had made growing fruits and vegetables illegal, so not many people could know about her secret garden of veggies. It had been a month since her meeting with the mayor, and most people lay weak in their beds, nibbling some "healthy" gummies that the Sugar Council had given out. Ella didn't know what to do. Many were devoted to the Sugar Council and its beliefs, so she couldn't advertise her healthy foods for fear of being arrested or worse. She was deep in thought when there was a quick rap on the door. Grabbing one of her fruit and grain sacks, she silently headed towards the door. Opening the door slowly, she was startled to see an official council guard.

“What’s in the bag ma’am?” the guard nodded towards her hand, which was clutching the sack.

“Nothing, may I ask you why you are here?” Ella demanded, noticing that the guard seemed healthy. She had short hair, dyed pink at the bottom. She seemed fit and well, which meant that she was rich, or she had been illegally eating fruits and veggies.

“The Sugar Council has been notified that fruits are supposedly growing here, in your house,” the guard replied gruffly, eyeing Ella with suspicion with a look that Ella thought resembled admiration.

“I am, and you can’t stop me!” Ella said defiantly, trying to stand as tall as she could. She could not, let anybody stop her from trying to help people. Sarah, as it read on her name tag, seemed conflicted.

After a long pause, she finally said, “Just between you and me, I think that we should be eating healthy too. So I’m going to let you off with a warning, but do it carefully because the next guard might not be so forgiving for you breaking the law.” Sarah winked at Ella, then got into her Candy branded wagon and took off.

Ella watched her disappear into the afternoon light, wistfully thinking. There were still people like that in the world, which meant that not all was lost. It gave her hope for the survival of the Candy People during tough times like this, for who could have foreseen that peoples’ unhealthy diets could lead to the near extinction of the Candy People.

# Below The Above by Molly

Welcome to Dangrantopia.

A land of inventors and creators who live to produce and create more inventions to benefit us all, dangrantopia, a perfect world where everything is a beautiful cycle that flawlessly runs. The supreme dream of humanity, where everything is pure bliss and happiness; except for *us* of course. They keep us underneath the ground, beneath the concrete slabs that the people walk on everyday happily. Down here it's cold and dimly lit, our only light source are old worn candles and gas lights that illuminate the desks we devote our lives too. I sigh to myself; *dangrantopia*, hell and heaven on earth. I've never been able to be above ground, the most I have ever heard is the happy beaming singsong voices of those above. Do they even know we exist? Living our lives out underneath the ground, beneath the entire scheme of it all. . I furrow my brow as I collect eggs from the chicken's coops, I'm a collector and my job is to collect the produce the animals produce, milk, eggs, wool. We all work beneath the ground for those who live above the ground, I glance down at my basket of eggs in anger. Metres above are people living the lives we all have earned down here. "DARIUS!" Thus is shouting my name. I leave the hatchery in frustration and call after him. "THIUS!" I shout in anger after him. None of us have happy content tones, our voices are hoarse from living amongst rubble and dirt, we're all sick to the point where our pale ivory skin is turning yellow, our eyes are bloodshot and hollow of hope. We're all sick from drinking stale milk, rotten eggs and the corpses of dead animals and we're infected with diseases from living underground. Sunlight is not a reality but rather a fairy-tale. I will never escape. They say we've been put in this position because our ancestors promoted war and destruction to the ultimate point where they decided; some were made to serve, some were made to be happy.

Looking up at the rubble above me I think, moving a hand to my face as I feel how dead and worn my flesh is. I'm horrified of looking at my reflection at this point. I close my eyes, and briefly open them to see- a ray of light beaming down on the hatchery through a small slit in the rubble, it slowly closes up again as I reach my hand up to touch it. My breathing quickens. "Sunlight?" I whisper under my breath, I close my eyes thinking of the warm feeling of the light, bright and yellow. I reach up to the rubble and push against it with the little strength I have. Nothing moves. I look at my hands to grasp reality, did I imagine it from the malnutrition I've suffered or is it simply just reality. I wouldn't be surprised if it was a figure of my imagination, I am a human machine. I leave the hatchery with my basket full of eggs, I enter the depository, where we give all our earnings in return for the stale remains that will make us sick. But we must eat them. We have no choice, it's either starving to death or risking execution by stealing the goods you harvest and collect.

Thus comes up beside me and glances into my basket, smiling weakly I take a peek into his basket full of wool and jugs of milk. We line up at the depository as we hand over our goods to the workers there who hand us bags full of leftovers that are rotten and stale, sometimes if we're lucky we get apples, carrots, fruits and vegetables. I've rarely had them though, purely because others harvest them and deposit them. Sometimes Thus and I will sneak sips of milk or crack an egg open, but we pray we don't get caught after. "Have you tried again?" Thus whispers. I shake my head at him. He looks at me sadly and speaks. "Everything is silent down here, talking is immediately silenced by the overseers here. Nobody knows anything about the overseers, apart from the fact they're robotic and have no empathy or understanding, that's how occasionally sound seeps through the concrete slabs from above, that's how we know of what's above. They're programmed a certain way, Continue talking and they'll punish you, disobey them and they'll punish you."

I deposit my eggs and leave Thus. Waving silently at him as I walk to my living quarters, a small 2x3 room a small worn mattress and thin black blanket. There's a sink and small cupboard for my few belongings, a few t shirts and worn pants as well food scraps. Then there's a small tealight holder, at night my only source of light is tea lights. The overseers have said; *our purpose is to serve those above us, no matter what the cost.* Quite deliberately. They repeat; "We sacrifice our eternities so those above can live long, lives of happiness, just think of your affect, and now their world does not have to suffer, they do not have to work, they will live in a utopia" Beneath the surface I have no family so those above can, beneath the surface I live a life of silence whilst those above live a life where they talk until their throats are sore. I drag by every day for the reassurance I'm somewhat continuing for another person, the reassuring feeling somebody above me is living the opposite of my life through some sort of mirror. I'm sick, very sick. My skin has turned into a soft yellow and my skin is raw and peeling and my cuts never heal. I'll soon pass and become part of the catacombs below where I sit. All I can say is Goodnight, and good luck thus. My only escape is death. Though a snickering ray of light appears in my mind, hope. Laughing coldly to myself I think; what has humanity become? Before this we weren't ecstatic we were all, even those above in our own flawless misery, but now that has been concealed by the concrete slabs that conceal my existence, concealed by a thin curtain that protects the repetitive delusions of a perfect happy life for those above, living until they pass peacefully and they finally get to meet us when they're buried 6 feet under.

Leaving my quarters I walk around our underworld more and more, looking for another ray of sunlight. I'm walking until my knees are weak and my legs are sore and bruised, I'm trying to bring an end to it all, I have to keep going. I keep persisting even when I fall to my knees and I have to crawl through the passageways, my breathing becomes intense as I continue to go along the passageway. I begin to shake as cold pierces my skin. I reach a staircase, clawing my way up it, I see a massive ornate doorway. Pushing it open I collapse onto the ground, a light flashes into my eyes as I slam the doors shut to the underworld. I gather a brief glimpse of beaming people with full, healthy faces and smiles, there is colour, bright colour unlike the dull world I've lived in my entire life. A bright light flashes in front of my eyes as I feel myself smile for once. The overseers claw and dig into my body pulling me deeper into the endless hole of the underworld where the working class like me are confined to an eternity of serving those above. "Don't die Darius" The overseer says to me in its airy voice. I collapse and beg it. "Don't" I croak. "I must Darius, you're confined to this" It replies. It calls over another Overseer and they both lift me up harshly. "It's going to be okay Darius" The overseer croons, smiling at me. I close my eyes and soak in the entire scheme of things. "Thank you" I whisper, glancing at my bruised and calloused legs covered in dirt. "Thank you overseer" "I want to go back overseer, I didn't want to be down here, I want to feel the sunlight and happiness again." The overseer smiled at me. "You can't go back Darius, you enjoyed it whilst it lasted at least" He says. Dumping me in the catacombs amongst the decaying corpses of the others. Slamming the door shut, not even letting the flick of a gas lamp seep through the metal door that he slams shut.