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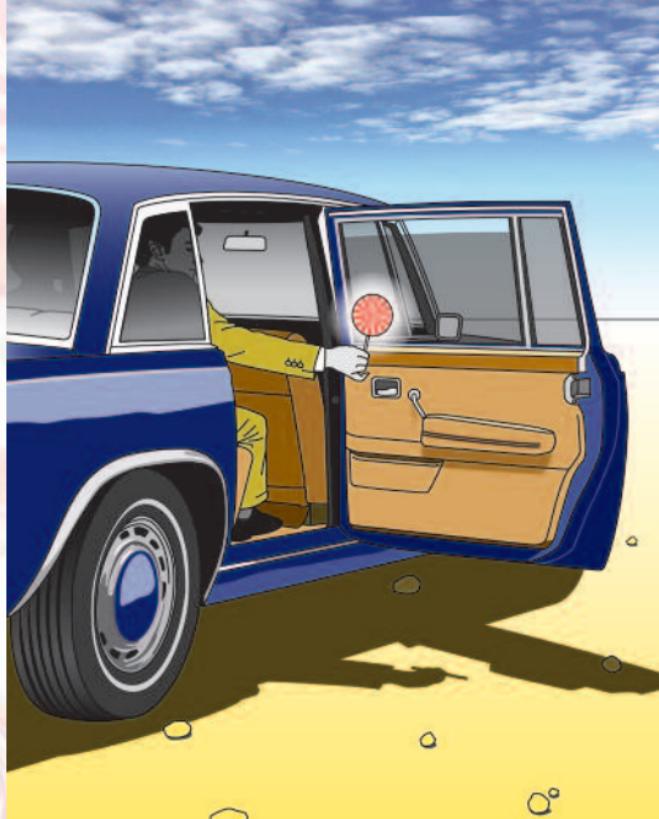
THE KISSE

The first great kisser I ever kissed was Francine. I had kissed other girls, but this was whole new category. Man, could she kiss. I couldn't get enough of kissing her. She fought me off at all the well-known places. She just wanted to kiss. Okay. So, we kissed and we kissed in all the ways we knew, and then some. After while we were just, like, eating each other, you know? She had turned the lights out, so we couldn't see anything. All there was in the world was kissing. When our jaws got tired, she pushed me away and switched on the lamp. We looked at each other in a daze and she took in this big breath and blew it out like she had just finished an impossible task. Then she reached over to the cof

fee table and picked up a half-sucked-on Cherry Tootsie Pop, stuck it back in her mouth and told me she had to go do her homework.

ROSSANA

Grandma always had her Rossana candies on a silver tray. They were, by all accounts, the most disgusting candies ever produced. But she chose Rossana as a vessel for her love for me. That's why I couldn't say no. I just knew I had to take one, unwrap it slowly, put the candy in my mouth, and then try to flatten the red transparent wrapper as much as I could. You might, at times, find yourself having to eat a Rossana. But please, learn to refuse love when it comes wrapped the wrong way.



Die Stimme des Teufels ist süß



Mangled

I hope the candy cane cookies didn't arrive broken, she said. They were shortbread taking on shape of a candy cane, with dead, mangled real canes ground up on the surface. Shortbread fakes destroyed in mail, corpses just like the real candy canes. Live by the sword and turn to sweet dust.

CELEBRATION

I started to light my cigar with a twenty-dollar bill, then changed my mind and lit it with bitcoin.

POISON

Candy is poison for me. I used it too many times to fight off depression. Guess how well that worked. Why, then, is candy now my best friend? Because

it keeps reminding me—like a stern but loving mother—what not to do. The world is a mess, and aging is for the birds: candy says look for your sweetness in the leaves of October just before they are ready to fall from their trees. Look down a lot, Candy goes on: don't fall. Suck on beauty instead of candy. If you fall and end up in the hospital, then ask the nurse to bring you (and right away! It's an emergency.) a Hershey bar. Taste the sweetness. Let the taste linger. Wait a very long time before you brush your teeth. Paradise is where you find it. You no longer need to worry about looking down.

THEORY

I blame our lower standard of living on new-fangled foodstuffs like yogurt and lettuce.

Candy Robbing Scuzzballs

They robbed us of 8 pounds of candy that Halloween eve. So we went home & changed into last year's costumes. Me Zorro. He Lone Ranger. Went door to door again & by bedtime we two kings had laid out our stash on the floor - a colorful mosaic empire of sweets to admire. Meanwhile, third-wheel Norm refused to change out of his Spiderman costume despite his mom insisting on washing it. He eventually hid it, burned it & switched to Batman, never to attend school again as himself. Memorable one moment & then suddenly forgotten the next. What'd he look like other than a pudgy pipsqueak replica of Batman? One day a super-8 movie

popped up out of somebody's basement: Norm with candy corns wedged between his toes. Bright insincere smile for the camera, quoting Batman: "An older head can't be put on younger shoulders." This was later chiseled on his gravestone. Norm grew no taller than 4'10" & always came over as the guy who'd pulled one over on the world by going trick-or-treating until he was 23. Did this make it to his resumé? I don't know. He went on to work for the FBI undercover, posing as a child in costumes of superheroes we no longer saw on TV to break up pedophile rings nationwide. He died last year. Almost nobody went to his funeral. Just me, some family, a neighbor, a co-worker. I looked in the coffin & saw a stranger I'd never really known; one fingernail, the pinkie, painted a candy corn orange.





Barbara Novak Changed My Life

They always say that "candy is dandy," but the more appropriate expression is, "Candy is randy." As in, it makes you *randy* because it's an aphrodisiac. Or a full-stop substitute for sex, love, relationships—if you're playing your cards right. That's what Barbara Novak wanted to impart upon the world with the possibilities of *chocolate*, at least. You know, in that little-appreciated 2003 movie starring Renee Zellweger, *Down With Love*. To some, it might sound like another cockamamie rom-com premise, but the proof is in the science. Choco-

late is a worthy substitute for love (and, yes, even sex). It generates the same release levels of serotonin, oxytocin, dopamine and endorphins that one gets from the feeling that goes hand in hand with falling in love (and the boudoir antics that arise in turn). But unlike falling madly, passionately in love, the feeling that hits as a result of eating chocolate won't dissipate after, at best, a year. There's a reason the phrase "honeymoon period" is meant to connote the idea that one should enjoy the "pawing phase" before it vanishes. And oh, how it *will* vanish (like poor Johnny Gosch). But chocolate, chocolate never leaves you. It will always be there, at your side, in your bed...all over your mouth. And honestly, that's a lot better—a lot less filthy—than cum.



CANDY FOR THE SERGEANT

I always left the red flag raised on my mailbox so that the lovely redhead letter carrier, Kate, would touch it. The sound of her jeep's tires on the gravel awoke me every morning. I would lift my head and look out the window, relishing the sight of her. She would open the box and gently lower the flag. She never seemed to be annoyed if there was no outgoing mail inside. She would just smile.

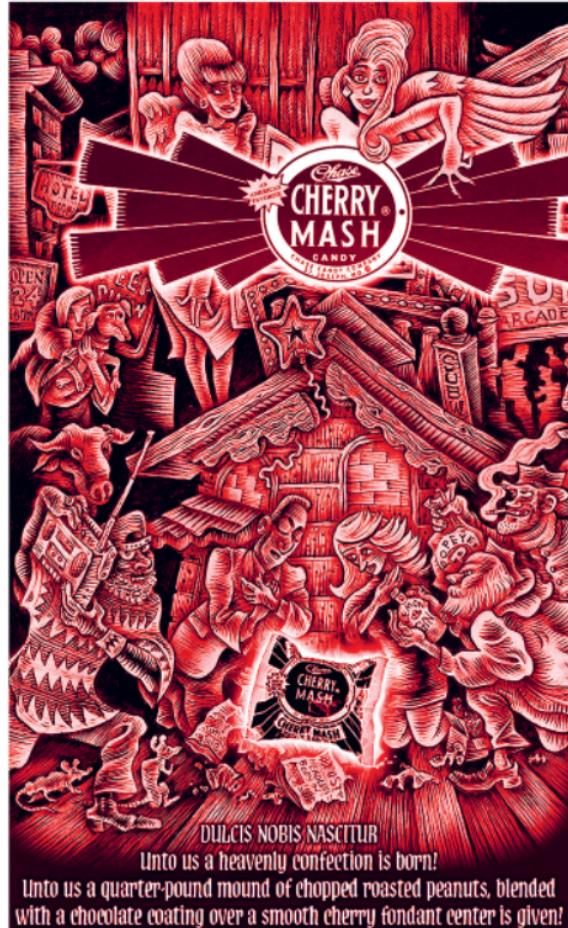
Occasionally it was not Kate, but a very straight, no-nonsense guy whom my neighbors nicknamed The Sergeant. A neighbor had once left a personal note in another neighbor's mailbox, and The Sergeant reported her.

She received an official letter saying that another incident would result in a fine.

One evening, I rolled a fat joint and put it in a small box of candy. I placed it in my mailbox in an envelope labeled "Candy for My Dear Letter Carrier". I looked out expectantly the next morning when I heard the crunch of the tires. It was not Kate. It was The Sergeant. I watched him remove the contents and lower the red flag. He opened the envelope as he returned to his vehicle and drove off. I never received an official letter from the Post Office about this. I hope The Sergeant enjoyed his smoke.

The Neighbor

My neighbor stayed up late last night practicing some blood-curdling screams.





INTERVIEW WITH THE CANDY KING OF AMERICA, MILTON S. HERSHY

I'd been overcome with a childlike joy in anticipation of interviewing the one and only candy king of America, Milton S. Hershey. Having failed in Philly, Chicago and New York as a confectioner, he finally hit it big

when he opened the world famous Hershey chocolate factory in Hershey Pennsylvania. The Hershey Bar, Chocolate Kisses, Reese's Peanut Butter Cup, M & M's, Almond Joy, and the Mounds Candy Bar are some of his greatest creations. It's safe to say America wouldn't be America without him.

Easy Street: It's a pleasure and honor to meet you, Mr. Hershey.

Milton S. Hershey: Call me Milton.

Easy Street: Looking back on your long life, Milton, what do you have to say for yourself?

Milton S. Hershey: (smiles) Life is sweet.

Easy Street: You should know. Why did you build the factory without windows?

Milton S. Hershey: (smile fades, shakes his head sadly) I didn't want the workers to be distracted.

Easy Street: That's pretty harsh.

Milton S. Hershey: Worst thing I ever did.

Easy Street: Is that why you

built Hershey Town to be a worker's paradise?

Milton S. Hershey: Precisely. I wanted my workers to have a good life. And I put windows back in the factory.

Easy Street: How did that work out?

Milton S. Hershey: (his smile returns) Splendiferously all around.

Easy Street: I heard you aren't a fan of caramel.

Milton S. Hershey: (shrugs) It's alright... (looks wistfully into the distance) ... but chocolate is forever.



HARD CANDY

In 1986 I got totally addicted to the New York Mets, a baseball team. I listened to many of their games on a radio, as I walked around the city. I had a small red transistor shaped like a piece of hard candy wrapped in cellophane. The volume was controlled by pretending to unwrap one side, the other side chose the station you wanted to listen to. I would hold it close to my ear so I could clearly hear the announcer. I almost got hit by a truck as I crossed a street engrossed in a game, but it was all worth it — they won the World

Series that year! I don't feel that way about them now, though I continue to enjoy unwrapping and sucking on hard candy

KEEPING IT QUIET

I used to work with the author of the book *Blue Skies, No Candy*. But when we worked together, she was a restaurant reviewer,

not a best-selling nymphomaniac.

We kept our talks to the topic of foods like caviar and foie gras.

I didn't say I knew about the candy. She wasn't offended, and I kept my job, at least for a while.



Nana Nut

FACE-OFF

Granny of Candy Land Universe

Lives in a house made of peanut brittle

Helps children rescue King Kandy from Lord Licoriske

Bakes cakes and carries a basket full of peanuts

Old hag of Slavic folklore

Lives in a hut that spins on chicken legs

Fries and eats children that cross her path

Flies through the forest in the bowl of a wooden mortar and pestle



Candy vs. Chocolate

As a child, it was just a matter of taste but today candy is the devil and chocolate is nearly saintly. I don't mind chocolate but candy is my passion and now a forbidden one. I yearn for the care-free days of cutting open black licorice twists and filling them with red cinnamon dots while reading old comics. I powered my way through adolescence by picking up a box of Mike and Ikes on the walk to my new school. And, as a junior office worker, I spent my lunch hour haunting obscure drug stores looking for those mysterious perfumed licorice rings that I could secrete in the drawer below my Selectric. Young love blossomed on the grimy streets of the city

but nearly imploded over the strawberry licorice twists we could never divide fairly.

Now I am forced to seek out 100% cocoa bars—ethically sourced—while visions of atomic fireballs dance in my head.

BOOK LEARNING

I remember seeing the novel *Candy*

when I was a teenager. The book was in my father's library, along with copies of *The Evergreen Review*.

In every issue of the magazine,

the back cover asked this question:

"Are you avant-garde or derrière?"

I didn't want to be derrière, so I read the book *Candy* and tried not to behave like the derrières I encountered there.

POLICE STORY

The police officer who pulled me over was not impressed when I told him that I was married to the government's daughter.

GRETTA IN THE YUM YUM PALACE

Great Adventure
Amusement Park

Let all the kids go off.
Let the fun begin.
She sits amid the ice cream and the syrups, the toppings and the whipped cream in this palace topped with multi-colored doodads and rainbow acroteria. Cone-colored columns close in, crispy. All day long.

There are the goo-goo clusters, and fluffer-nutter sundaes, the hot fudge

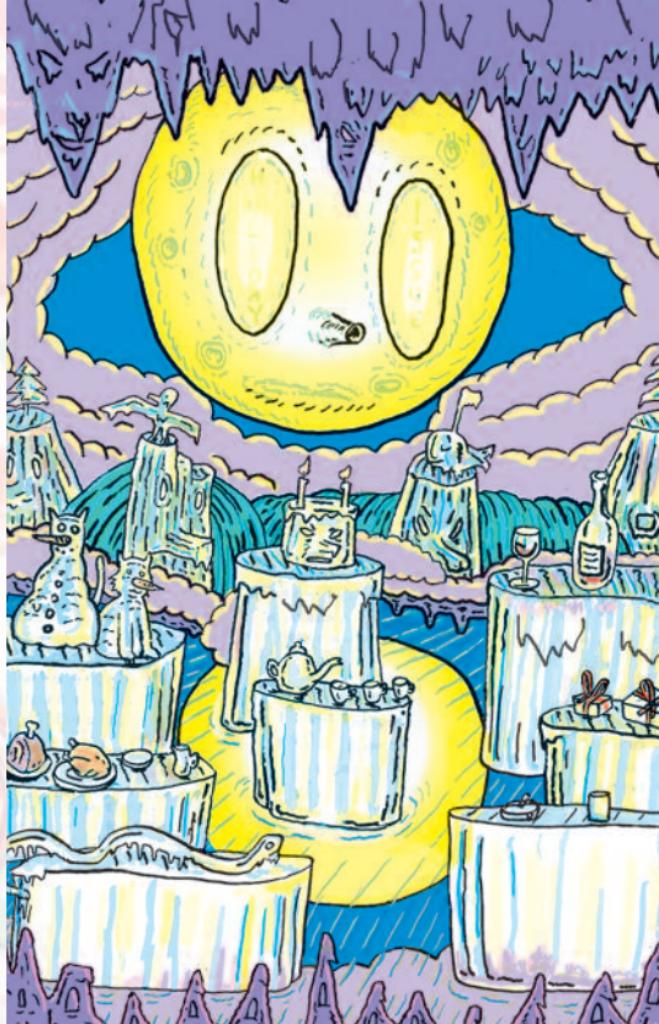
brownies, and there the krispy krunch and krackled krokant.

There the wafer plates you can eat.

She's already found her Mr. Goodbar, Sugar Daddy, the Candy Man, 'cause whatever Gretta wants

Gretta gets. She's the empress of ice cream and dreams of malachite marshmallow mints and amber butterscotch caramels — she knows her ABCs — coral raspberry clusters and ivory white chocolates, jet jimmies and amethyst sugar

plums in Amaretto, confetti, Venus' nipples and amoretti, tutti frutti. She has it all: what Gretta wants, Gretta gets. She sits.... All day long.



coming soon:



next issue's theme:

POWER