

I Want Candy

It all started, as so many things do, with a Tootsie Roll commercial and misdirected potential. One unproductive afternoon, I was sitting there, like any other eight-year old, watching *Designing Women*, when during a particularly colorful commercial break I witnessed my first vintage Tootsie Roll ad. For some annoyingly spiritual reason, I could not peel my eyes from the two-dimensional Tootsie Pop. After seeing that famous commercial, most kids wondered, How many licks *does* it take to get to the centre of a Tootsie Pop? I wondered, How many licks of how many Tootsie Pops does it take to get a high fructose corn syrup-induced seizure? Two-thousand seventy-eight, my friend. And worth every spasm.

After that, there was no turning back. I had found my *raison d'être*, and it tasted sublime. The frantic visits to the ER, the exorbitant credit-card bills from the International Candy Shoppe, and the missed soccer practices, dentist appointments, job

interviews, neurosurgeries, marriages: all was sacrificed, with much satisfaction, in the name of candy. Hey, at least I know where my priorities lie, right? Right?

Sometimes my parents call me to ask how I'm doing. Sometimes I respond. For whatever reason, they don't like to hear about my four-hundred-and-eighty-first tour of the Hershey factory, or about the ongoing renovations of my house to make it resemble the one from the Hansel and Gretel tale. Ever since I rejected a full ride at Northeastern for the chance to make internationals in the biannual Candy Land tournament, I've grown apart from them, and closer to lemon drops—and to *Chocolat*, if lemon drops are out of reach. I used to do the whole "social thing," and make up an exciting, fantastical life to hide the fact that I passed my days buying out the candy aisle at the nearby 7-Eleven. Now, I have no shame: I tell the odd person I talk to that my application for taste-tester at Mars



Co. is still in the review process, and that the third Friday of every month is the best time to buy Twizzlers at Piggly Wiggly. I may not have a steady job or insulin count, but at least I have something to live for and work toward—something to keep me going with a smile and the occasional jitter in spite of my lack of furniture and homeostasis. Goobers, Sour Patch Kids, Milk Duds, Glossettes: these are my friends, my inspiration, and I wouldn't give them up for anything in the world. Except an everlasting gobstopper. Still waiting, Wonka. Still waiting.

No, You Don't

My candy-craving friend, it's time to give up those saccharine companions of yours. You're packing so much sugar that you make the Lollipop Guild look like carob-eating hippies as they wish Dorothy well in Munchkin Land. The problem is not so much that you've put your body into shock, but more that you've put your body into constant shock for so many decades that your body doesn't know what it's like to be not in shock and thinks being in shock is normal. But it's not. Do you see where I'm going here?

Take it from someone who knows what it's like to want candy with all your soul and blood sugar; I was once like you. I, too, woke up many a morning at 6 a.m. to take the bus to the International Candy Shoppe the day it opened with the latest flavor of Japanese sushi gum. I, too, asked Santa every year to give me only one gift, a golden ticket, so I could tour Wonka's heaven on Earth. But then one day as



I was lying in the emergency-room bed that had become more like home than my Jelly-Belly-shaped bed at home, an intern

came in and asked me why I was there. And for the first time, I thought to myself, why *am* I here? Not in the sense of how many tons of chocolate-covered chocolates had I eaten in the past hour, but more in the way smart people ask themselves that age-old question, their eyebrows shaped like Nibz and their eyes as small as Sweet Tarts. I lay there until it hit me, in the same way a tenth consecutive packet of Pop Rocks hits you: I am *not* here to devote all of my time, energy, and digestive system to candy.

So I say to you, my friend, don't let yourself hit rock candy bottom before you come to such an epiphany. Save yourself the ambulance rides, the credit-card debt, and the convulsions, and turn your life around, or at least to the side. There are more things in life to want than candy, I swear, and once you realize that you'll be free—suffering from all-consuming withdrawal, but free. ☺