

BARTHOLOMEW BROCCOLI

By,

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What if I told you that there is a place...
A town full of candy that is inside your face?
But where in your face is this town full of candy?
Why, it's inside your mouth! Now, isn't that dandy?
Yes, this is a place where no one can frown.
A town full of sugar. They call it Candy Town.
Life in this town just cannot be beat
With all of its people so sugary sweet.
From chocolates to gumdrops all its residents
Are jawbreakers, gummies, and sweet peppermints.

This town looks quite different. That is a given,
But it's not really different from the town that you live in.

This town, it has buildings. It even has cars
And schools, and big churches, and dive-candy-bars.

But one major difference, you might think is neat.

All of the buildings are made of strong teeth.
Every house, every building, is a tooth strong and bright
Except for one molar settled waayy.... to the right.

It is the furthest of mouth-based abodes
At the very tail end of the town's longest road.
And yet, at this house, at the longest road's end,
On the outskirts of town, our story begins.
Yes, Candy Town was a candy monopoly,
But in this lone house lived Bartholomew Broccoli.
He kept his house tidy. He kept his house clean.
Any dentist would look, and say, "This tooth is pristine."

Did he live alone? No! You should be aware
He lived with Clarice, his dog-chocolate éclair.

She was his buddy. A bark with a spark,
And on many weekdays they went to the park.

The air? It was great! The wind? It was crispy
As Bartholomew threw her a chocolate-chip-frisbee.

Yes, their adventures were one for the books,
And although he smiled, he noticed their looks.
At the park other candies would stop and would stare.
Kids would ask, “What’s with the green, puffy hair?”
For in his mind, he had little doubt.
In a town full of candy, he really stood out.

Did that bother him? Some, but do keep in mind,

Bartholomew Broccoli was a veggie so kind.

If sharing a bed, he'd give you the covers

For Bartholomew Broccoli loved to help others.

One day Bartholomew walked down the street
Admiring tooth buildings. They all looked so neat!
He gazed at the clouds, and looked to the skies,
And suddenly heard the loudest of cries.
The loud cries, they rang from his ears to his tummy.
These were the loud cries of a boy sour gummy.

He followed the cries and found a great tragedy.

The boy? He was stuck in a cavernous cavity.

Yet, he wasn't scared. This veggie was brave

As he rescued the boy from the cavernous cave.

Every candy in town gathered. Every candy cheered.
This boy had been saved from a cavern most feared.

Bartholomew was proud. He stood very tall.
The mayor gave him a ribbon at Candy Town Hall.
He said, "Here's your ribbon, dear Bartholomew.
You went far beyond what we'd expect from you."

"I appreciate that," he said. The town clapped.
He looked, and he felt something didn't feel apt.

The mayor had been nice to this veggie green,
But something felt off, like the mayor had been mean.

"Maybe I'm crazy," he thought. "What the hay?

A snide little comment can't ruin my day.

I love every candy in my neighborhood.

So now it's my duty to keep doing good."

A few days later, he walked with Clarice.

He spotted an uncle gumdrop with his niece.

They both looked quite happy. In fact, they felt groovy
As they walked down the street with their strawberry smoothies.

But to the dismay of Bartholomew,

Clarice had a sweet tooth and wanted some too.

Right towards the gumdrops, she leaped happily.

Their smoothies? They fell on the street, messily.

Bartholomew said, "I feel sorry, galore.
Here is ten dollars. Go buy yourselves more."

The uncle then said, "Just forget it buddy.
Folks around here? We don't want YOUR money.

Take you and your dog that you'll never tame.
Go and get lost to back from where you came."

The uncle kept walking. He walked on ahead,
But his niece stayed behind and in comfort she said,

"Don't listen to him. His brain's frozen cold.

I sometimes forget that he's just really old."

"Oh, that's ok," Bartholomew said.

"He just drank a smoothie. He's a brain-frozen head!"

The girl walked away. Her uncle had bolted.

Bartholomew Broccoli felt mildly insulted.

“What did he mean, ‘Back where I came’?”

Our house is so far. That walk is a shame!”

He then had a thought inside of his head.

“This feels kind of like what the candy mayor said.

I tried to make good and do something nice,

And yet I was treated like a head full of lice!

I love to bring joy. I love to bring laughter.

But maybe to some that just doesn’t matter.”

And so he went home, his heart feeling empty.

His home was a molar for a quite lonely veggie.

Without a goodbye, without making a sound,

He stayed in his house for weeks, he soon found.

He stayed in his molar feeling beside himself

Not knowing the town would soon need his help.

In town was a building worth many a stare.
This fancy-tooth home was home for the mayor.
From pools to pool tables, all things one could wish,
There never was doubt that this mayor was rich.
His son was quite spoiled. Anything he sought,
If he couldn't earn it, it'd simply be bought.

One night after church (a cherry was their Pope)
The mayor's only son looked through his telescope.

He looked over town. Said, "Now! There! I see!"

He spotted the house of the lone broccoli.

He called for his father, his wealthy mayor dad,
And said, "Poor Bartholomew. He looks very sad."

"Why should he be sad?," the mayor asked his son.

"He should be grateful for all I have done!"

The son then thought something inside of his head.

"Dad, maybe it's something... Something that you said."

The mayor questioned, "Son, how could that be?

I'm kind and jovial towards veggies like he.

He should be lucky I would even call

A veggie like him to our Candy Town Hall.

I am a great mayor. I've said what I said.

Now gather your toys, and run straight off to bed."

His son went to bed. The mayor looked and smiled,
And said, "He'll soon learn, for he's only a child."
The mayor went to bed. He slept through the night
Not knowing tomorrow would bring the town plight.

Like any day, the next morning begun.
The teeth-buildings glistened in the bright rising sun.
Katy, the niece, her uncle, the fool,
Got on the bus and headed for school.
This gumdrop loved school and hoped it wouldn't end,
But like Bartholomew, she hadn't a friend.
Not one single person she felt she could trust
As she sat there, alone, on the yellow school bus.

The things the kids said were all kind of mean
About Bartholomew, a veggie so green.
Some said his mom left him with a frown,
And that's why he lived alone outside town.
Others thought his green armpits were truly quite dusty
And laughed at his broccoli hair that was puffy.
"You all are wrong," Katy said, once or twice.
"Bartholomew Broccoli is really quite nice!"
The kids simply laughed. They snickered and jeered.
Katy's kind words seemed to fall on deaf ears.

As the bus kept moving, something felt strange.
The candy town's buildings? They started to change.
The bus did a jerk. Katy felt a rumble
As all the town's buildings started to crumble.
The teeth buildings rotted far as the eye could see
From offices, arenas, to the town library.
Each building crumbled. It seemed none were spared,
Not even the home of the too-wealthy mayor.

The mayor grabbed his son with a worry-filled face
As the ceiling collapsed by their golden staircase.
Mayor cried, "What will happen? Oh, what shall we do?
This is worse than the time that I dyed my hair blue!"
"But Dad," said the son as they wept by the stairs,
"Go talk to the people, since you are the mayor."
"I must help the people," Mayor said, feeling pity.
So he and his son headed out to the city.

This old candy town, once so full of laughter,
Looked like a wasteland. It was a disaster!
What once was a city that was so full of sweets
Now had very sour candies walking down the streets.
Everyone felt blinded, as if sprayed with mace.
The mayor's son then looked at his dad's puzzled face.
"With all of our money, with all of our cash,
Our home is now nothing. Just rubble and ash.
It's sad," said the mayor. "As I look around,
It took our house crumbling to find common ground."

They began helping people. Asked, "What do you need?"

The mayor and his son put aside their greed.

Yet all of the candies who were beside of themselves

Were not so receptive to the wealthy mayor's help.

He offered some money to a candy so blue

Who said, "I need no help from someone LIKE YOU."

The mayor said to his son, "From someone LIKE ME?"

Why not? I can help with all my money!

I have so much money, more than I need to live.

What more can I do? What more can I give?"

The duo walked home, Mayor lost in his thoughts,
When they spotted a house that had zero rots.
It was the cleanest tooth they had both ever seen.
The son recognized the tooth-house so clean.
Would they find friendship? Would they find hope
In the house he had seen in his old telescope?

They pondered these questions, and a few questions more,

As Bartholomew Broccoli answered the door.

“Hello, my friend,” the guilty mayor said.

“You look quite tired. Were you just in the bed?”

Bartholomew said, “I was fast asleep.

It’s been very quiet around here. Not a peep!”

Clarice, the sweet dog, then let out a yip.

Bartholomew said, “Come in guys, take a sip.

I’ve never had guests who would come visit me.

So, sit down, relax, and enjoy some green tea.”

They entered the house before they could think
And took several sips of the veggie's green drink.
The group of foods smiled. Their spirits were up
Like dogs at a park. Like Clarice, the sweet pup.
Then the mayor said as he swallowed his pride,

“I am a bit shocked that you let us inside.”

Bartholomew asked, “And just why is that?
Are you bothered by something like a real natty gnat?”
Mayor said, “The towns' gone. I'm beside of myself.
That's why we're here to ask for your help.”

The vegetable said, "I get it. I see.
Why would you want help from someone LIKE ME?"
The mayor's son was right. It had been his words.
What he meant to say was not what was heard.
"I'm sorry," he said to Bartholomew.
"Here's why I need help from a good soul LIKE YOU.
Our buildings are gone, all homes, big and small.
Yet your abode still remains standing tall.
Our home is gone. It fell from the skies.
So that's why I'm here... to apologize."

Bartholomew stood, smiling at the mayor's face
And without hesitation gave a big, warm embrace.

“It's ok,” he then said. “A very nice thought,
And I know in my heart you've thought it a lot.
Now stop all your crying. Get a hold of yourself.
I'm a very tough veggie, and I'm here to help!
I know you mean well. You have a good heart.”
Bartholomew then asked, “So where do we start?”

The mayor's son said, "Forget money and greed.

Let's go into town and see what folks need."

Bartholomew said, "That's great. I insist.

Let's talk to the people and make a big list!

Clarice! Lead the group coming to our town's aid.

You'll be the grand marshal of our helping parade!"

Clarice in the front, the mayor's son in the back,

They left for the town that was all out of whack.

They found some sweet gumdrops sitting on big rocks.

All they really wanted was a nice pair of socks.

They found two old candies feeling several pains.

As they walked, they sure needed walking-candy-canes.

They passed barefoot gumballs walking in the street.

These gums NEEDED shoes they could wear on their feet.

Several chocolates were cold, not warm full of laughter.

The strong winds had taken their coat-candy-wrappers,

And they certainly couldn't use fire, they felt.

Because they were chocolates, they would surely melt!

All through Candy Town folks were in somber moods

Not usually found in such high-sugar foods.

The problems kept coming. They went on and on
‘Til Bartholomew’s list was 60 miles long!
They looked at the list. Mayor and son felt tested.
“Just look,” the mayor said. “So many things requested.”
Yet, in his heart, the mayor felt sharp stings.
“It is a long list, but I’ll buy all these things.
Soon, this whole town will start feeling fine.
I’ll spend lots of money and buy things online.”
Bartholomew said, “With all your resources
We could also buy food and serve it by the courses!
We’ll go through the town and serve many meals.
We’ll have to move fast though, so we’ll need some wheels.”

So what did they do for the town that was stuck?

Mayor invested money and bought a food truck.

The candies were hungry. That was understood

As they drove the new food truck through each neighborhood.

Most candies were sad. Not so hard to tell.

Yet they would soon smile as they smelt that warm smell.

The candies all flocked. They arrived by the tons

To the food truck called “Broccoli, Clarice, Mayor, and Son’s.”

The warmth from their food truck heated the streets.
They served mashed potatoes with warm soups and meats.
They served many salads, and sandwiches too,
With Swiss cheese, and cheddar, and cheese colored blue.
The lines all backed up beyond what one could see.
The best part of it was all this food was free.
For many miles, the candies would flock,
But it wasn't just food that the truck kept in stock.

The candies kept coming. They came by the droves
Since our friendly heroes were handing out clothes.
From hats for their heads, to socks for their kittens,
They warmed the town's hands with free pairs of mittens.
Everyone got clothes, from Mom gals to Dad guys,
Who even were thankful for free ugly neckties.
They handed out t-shirts. They handed out shoes
Which many enjoyed with the warmest of stews.

As the day went on, how a guitar keeps strumming,
Mayor just couldn't believe how many kept coming.
"What's wrong?" his son asked. The mayor now understood.
"For once in my life," Mayor said, "I've done good."
Bartholomew said, "Mayor, you have, I must say.
But we can't save the whole town in just one simple day.
In fact, I'll be honest. I know in my heart.
This food truck? It's helpful, but it's still just a start."
"I know," the mayor said. "I know that is true.
What more can I give? What more can I do?"
Bartholomew said, "Sometimes, the best help
Comes when you give up a part of yourself."

Mayor said, “I have money, but no place to live.

What more can I help? What more can I give?”

Mayor gave it some thought. He claimed, “There’s money, and

Where my big house once stood lies a huge plot of land!

Our mouth town needs help, like a new pair of dentures!

So why don’t we build our first town helping center?”

Bartholomew said, “I like that a lot.

There is tons of space on that big, empty plot.”

With all in agreement, and with no obstruction,
Just a few days later, they started construction.
The building was crumbled like the soggiest cereal.
Mayor said, “We can’t do this. We have no material!”
Son said, “We CAN do this. Bartholomew is brave,
Like the day he rescued me from inside that cave.”
Bartholomew thought. His brain was quite skilled.
He said, “Oh, I know what we will use to build.
That cave is four hundred and sixty years old.
I bet, at the bottom, we’ll find lots of gold!”

“I’m NOT going down there,” Mayor said. “It’s too dusty.
That cave has no gold in its depths. You can trust me.”

Clarice felt annoyed and started to strut
Towards the grumpy mayor and bit him in the butt!
“Youch!” the mayor screamed with a pain in his frown.
“Fine then. I’ll do it. Let’s go all the way down!”

The mayor was in pain, and everyone laughed
As they returned to the place where his son had been trapped.

With a lot on the line, and much more at stake,
The mayor's son was nervous and started to shake.

Bartholomew saw this. He said, "You can do it.
You were trapped in here once. You can surely go through it."

So without moments being wasted or spent,
Down into the cave the helping group went.
Clarice led the way, knowing nothing could hurt her
As they traveled deep down, going further and further.
Until finally... finally, it was a long while,
They found heaps of gold in several large piles.

They used all their muscle. They used all their might

To carry the gold to their construction site.

The whole town was watching. They thought they were fools.

How could they build something without any tools?

To help build a building that would reach towards the skies,

The mayor used his money to buy building supplies.

So many supplies! The cost was no factor.

Mayor bought a whole fleet of peppermint-wheeled-tractors.

They were supplied well. They were supplied good

As they got several batches of cinnamon plywood.

To aid them some more with their gold building troubles,

In came six truckloads of bubble gum shovels!

“This makes me so happy,” Mayor said to his child.
He looked all around, and just stood there and smiled.

Bartholomew smiled. He said, with a grin,
“Mayor, that’s the spirit! Let the building begin!”
“But wait,” Mayor’s son said. “This might be a chore.

Have any of us ever built something before?”
Bartholomew pondered. Bartholomew thought.
With a sad looking face, he said, “No, I have not.”
Both lost in their thoughts, digging deeper and deeper,

Mayor and son realized that they hadn’t either.
Clarice had once bitten through a fruitcake log,
But she couldn’t build things since she was a dog.
They all just sat there, feeling sad and ho-humming,
But then the ground shook, like a really loud drumming.

“Oh no,” the mayor said with frowns, not a grin.
Surely the town couldn’t crumble again?
The ground was just shaking with little resistance.
The mayor couldn’t see what was off in the distance.

The town saw the group trying to do better.
So, unlike their buildings, they all came together.
From gumdrops to licorice to sweet gummy snacks,
Like candy at the movies, they all came in packs!
The mayor was surprised. He had little words.
Like groups of dinosaurs, they all moved in herds!
Candies came together to help those in need.
They charged towards the group. A true candy stampede!
To help our dear friends with their building plunders,
All candies in town arrived by the numbers!

Bartholomew, shocked, then fell to his knees
As he saw the rude uncle with Katy, his niece.

Her uncle felt very beside of himself,
Saying, “Bartholomew, I’m sorry, but I’m here to help.”
They embraced in a hug. Both hearts were now filled.

The newly nice uncle said, “I know how to build.
I work in construction, so there is no doubt,
I’d love to do something to help my town out.”

Bartholomew loved this. The mayor felt so proud.
He quickly stood up to address the whole crowd.
“What can I say?” said the mayor with no podium
To the town full of candies, and sugar, and sodium.
“Tell us what we’re building,” Katy’s uncle said.
“This town needs instructions so we won’t be misled.”
“Well,” said the mayor, “if I’m being true,
It isn’t just me who wants to help you.
With that in mind, it would only be fair
To make Bartholomew your broccoli mayor.
So, go ahead, tell them, dear Bartholomew.
Share our idea so bold and so new.”

Bartholomew shook. He felt very edgy.

This town never had a mayor like a veggie.

And yet, spreading kindness, for him, was no chore.

Now as the new mayor, he could help even more.

Bartholomew got up and spoke to the crowd.

Their noises were quiet, but their silence was loud.

Bartholomew said, "As mayor, my first deed

Shall be like my others, to help those in need.

We're taking this land where Mayor's house once stood,

And we plan to build something that will do lots of good.

I'm a smart veggie, and I'm in the know

On how many of you have no place to go.

So as your mayor, it is my first adventure

To use all this gold for a town helping center."

The candies applauded. They yelled happy screams.

Their nightmares could stop. They could have happy dreams.

Bartholomew said, "Such cheery replies!

Build all that you need! Let's reach for the skies!"

So, after the new mayor had spoken enough,
The down-trodden-town began to build up.
They gathered the gold and shovels galore,
And before they knew it, they'd built the first floor!
Little time passed. They said barely a word.
The first floor was done, and the second, and third!
Four, five, and six soon passed, and then seven.
The town helping center now reached towards the heavens!
They built many more. The building looked great.
They stopped at the top floor, two hundred and eight!

Two hundred and eight? That sounds like lunacy,
But each of these floors had helping opportunities.

The center had libraries with books to be read.

It even had bedrooms to lay down one's head.

It had many food courts with places to eat,

Where families could gather and friends could all meet.

For kids, there were playgrounds and arcades for enjoyment.

For adults, there were helpers to help them find employment.

Candies of all ages, from old age to youth,

Now could all seek solace in this giant gold tooth.

What did they call it, this new place in town?

The gold-helping-center was called "Candy Town Crown."

The candies were happy. All giddy and frolicky,

But how ends the tale of Bartholomew Broccoli?

Well now, dear reader, for this veggie man,

Our story must end right where it began.

With town candies happy, and giddy with flirts,

Bartholomew still lived on the town's outskirts.

Clarice still lived with him. A dog with her bone.

But unlike last time, these two weren't alone.

Soon came the days they would cherish and favor.

The mayor and his son became their new neighbors.

If you looked across Bartholomew's street

You'd see the mayor's house, a tiny red beet.

Candy Town never faced one more erosion,
But one Sunday morning Mayor felt an explosion.
He looked in his yard, and what did he see?
Bartholomew driving their food truck with glee.
Bartholomew said, “We have food galore.
Let’s go to the center and hand out some more!”
They sped towards the town that glistened in the sun.
They knew helping others was a job never done.
Help others, dear reader, with a smile, not a frown,
And one day, you too, will be town’s golden crown.

THE END