

Chapter Six: Welcome to the Land of Opportunity...

Extending their commute by a couple hours, Lucy and Layle saw more of what the ocean had to offer. However, the fun had to end at some point, and around ten A.M. Lucy had finally arrived....

In, Decaloro!!!!

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“Lay you gotta make a promise to me, alright?”

“A promise to do what?”

Lucy pointed at herself. “I already told you I’m gonna take over Decalore, and when I do I’ll tell everyone about your business.” Lucy held her fist out. “But until then, you’ve gotta keep fightin’ aight?”

Laeye smiled “I appreciate it, I really do, but I don’t wanna feel like it was handed to me ya know?” She smirked and leaned closer to Lucy. “I might reach my dream first and have to put YOU in the limelight!”

“Ok, then it’s a race! You and I are rivals now!”

“Gehehe then this dock is our starting line!”

Lucy got down into a three-point running stance. “You ready?”

“Of course slowpoke!”

“Three!”

“Two!”

“One!”

"GO!"

Layle watched Lucy run off.
 “Maybe I’ll give her a head start.”



(Crowd Chatter)

“Yooooo!!”

Yelling from atop a large dune of brown sugar an excited brown girl sprinted towards a gathering of “Old heads!”

“Is that Tania’s daughter?” An older man in thick overalls asked.

“It couldn’t be!” A woman scolded. “She left with the rebel group!” Sitting atop a shiny pink camel she squinted hard. “That girl doesn’t look like she’s from around here.”

A man holding two large white jugs threw in his two cents. “I think I did hear somethin’ about a new delivery driver.”

Kicking some brown sugar from her boots another woman spoke. “She looks new...” “C’mon get off!” Lucy’s bag had gotten caught by the peppermint spines of a gummy cactus.

CHFI CHFI CHFI Huffing and puffing she asked. “Y’all know where I can find that Walter Igba guy?”

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The crowd stared in silence, only their white containers spoke up. **SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS!!!**
“What’re y’all trippin’ off the desert heat? I ain’t a mirage.”

CHFI CHFI CHFI Walking to the group’s forefront an older woman presented herself. “I’m sorry, we just haven’t seen your kind in a long time.”

“Um, like half of y’all are minorities what you mean?”

“I mean a young person, forgive them for bein’ awkward as all Hell.” She extended a hand. “Names Kimberly. Yours?”

“Lucy, I just came from the States.”

With very relative ease Kim picked Lucy up and plopped her onto the back of one of the group's many camels. "It's not too often we get visitors, if you don't mind can I ask what you came for?"

"I'm the new sheriff."

"HUUUUUUUUH! PIP!"

(+ Other shocked crowd noises)

The crowd erupted. "W-We didn't think anyone would actually apply. Aside from deliveries and pickups no one ever comes out here to the boonies."

"I'm from a lil small suburban town so I get the vibes." **TUNK! TUNK!** Lucy kicked the white jar hanging from the camel's saddle. "Y'all make the candy and soda, right? Boy we tear these things up back in the States."

Kim grew a shit-eating grin. "Glad to hear that." She wrapped her arm around the shoulder of another older woman. "My cohorts and I work very hard! But c'mon let's take you to meet boss man. Walter will do enough talking for all of us, and then some." Kim led the steady charge towards the only town in all of the Sweet Sands.... "Welcome to your new home young lady!"

The town of Sugar Stop didn't even have a sign denoting its name. From a first glance, there weren't any homes either, unless the inhabitants slept in diners or general stores. Splitting from the group, Kim walked Lucy through town, there were two strips of wooden buildings that faced each other...Or rather faced **him**.

"Alright, Ms.Lucy this is where I geatta skedaddle. I gotta meet back up with the others to deposit today's haul." Kim pointed towards a large water tower in the distance. Grasping her hand she helped Lucy down from her camel.

"Which one is Walter's office or whatever?" Lucy asked.

Walking off, Kim looked over her shoulder. "Ask the statue." Smack dab in the center of town a light blue crystalline statue of a man stood. He looked to be a massive man, in both stature and muscle mass. The jagged edges of his smile shimmered in the sunlight, slinging a pickaxe over his shoulder he pointed to his left with his free arm. At the statue's base, there was a podium that read.

Walter Igbah

"If you have any issues just follow my finger!"

Kim looked off into the distance. The brown sugar sand dunes seemed to stretch on forever. "Wonder how she'll feel after she learns the truth...?"



Walter O-Tero Igbah, just as large as his statue would suggest. He was big as hell, he barley fit into his own office... He himself and him were taking up all the damn space. The walls were covered in magazine covers, articles, and newspaper clippings...all about, Walter.

“Walter sure does rock doesn’t he?”

“Meet Decalore’s sweetest man!”

“31 Things you should do to be more like Walter.”

With a window just beside his desk, the beaming light accentuated the grays in his black hair, but that wasn’t all...Being on the second floor the very same window put Walter at eye level with his statue. Jeez, which came first, his ego, or the window?

Besides that, he ran through the usual boring basics of any job orientation. Ethics, integrity, commitment, all the usual shit. It didn’t take long to reach what Lucy knew was inevitable.

“Ya know when I first saw your application, I was a bit skeptical, but after meeting you in person, you two look almost identical...” The floorboards damn near shook under the weight of Walter’s voice. “A-Are you related to The Goddess by any chance?”

“Shit, unfortunately I am.”

“So, what is it like?”

“That isn’t why you brought me in is it? Blood is the **only** thing that connects she and I.”

“Oh no no no not at all, I was impressed by your credentials. But with the Goddess’s rise to power, I’m sure some eager parents swiped the name, not that she goes by it anymore. HAHAAHA! I mean who knows? There might be some extra Igbahs running around HAAAA!”

“Nah nah I understand I getcha I getcha, but I want you to know, that I plan to protect this place with 100% of my own merit, backed by my own name! If something happens it’ll be **me**, **Lucy Lovebeat on the frontlines!**”

Walter smirked. “I like your attitude Ms.Lovebeat!”

“Alright Mr.Igbah, if we’re on the same page can you show me around?”

“I’d be happy, to oblige.”

Stop 1 ***Work and Play***

The tour started at the statue. “Now ya see I originally fashioned the town into two sections. Work.” **THUD!** Walter jokingly elbowed Lucy **way** too hard for it to be socially acceptable “And play! HARHARHAR! Now, the buildings on the side of town my glorious statue points at are places people typically aren’t excited to enter. Well my office is the exception, but we’ve got the bank, the hotel, and depository for the day’s harvest.”

“Why wouldn’t people be excited to go to the hotel, y’all got white chocolate mice or something?”

Walter grinned like he was hoping she’d ask that. “Well, only two types of people go there, outsiders... AND FELLAS IN TROUBLE WITH THE MRS. HARHARHAR! Giddies aside, the town’s other side holds our general store, diner, housing district, and bar, not that it means anything to you just yet HARHARHAR! Also since you’re now a part of the force protecting our livelihood, you get your own place in the housing district and eat for free at the dine-OH! I was far too excited for you to join our family, I forgot to invite your senior.”

“NAAAAAAAAANNNNNNGCCCEEYYYYY!”

SPLA-SPLATT!!! Statue Walter’s face was *defaced* by a thick white liquid that hardened quickly.

“C’mom c’mom! NOT THE STATUE!” The strange substance trailed up towards the water tower. **KASSSSSSSTTSTSS!!!**



Baking in the sun a thin silhouette shouted. “Heeeeerreess Naaaaannnceeeeyyyy!” Sliding in on the rail they created the locked character waved. **JUMPI** Before they reached the rail’s end they leisurely leaped off and plopped themselves right in front of Lucy. Snatching the ten-gallon hat from their head “Nancey” showed Lucy its interior as she bowed “nice to meet ya!” With a **SNAPI** Walter’s statue was vandalized no more.

Now she didn’t say anything, but Lucy noticed something odd about the tall cowgirl. It wasn’t her dated aesthetic, or the holstered revolvers around her thighs. It wasn’t her long dark hair. It wasn’t the cool, unphased expression she wore. It wasn’t that she was the youngest person in Sugar Stop so far, but still appeared to be a couple of notches above Lucy. It was...It was...It was...

“Hey kid you kinda look like...?”

“**Lucy**, I look like **Lucy**.”

Soda Sea & The LoveWay

SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS!!!

Walter had led the girls back to the dock Lucy had come in on. “And here we have the great Soda Sea! While one country overall, each LoveZone of Decalore is separated by a great sea and ours is soda! By her grace, the kind Goddess of Decalore, Ms.Galexia allows us to harvest the environment. A respectable amount of our monetary profits go to her, but we keep more than enough to survive.”

“If you look just over that way.” Nancey’s cool voice broke in. A lonely strip of asphalt trailed off into the Soda Sea. “Now that, is the only way out of Sweet Sands. At the week’s end, someone comes and picks up the harvested sweets and distributes them throughout all of Decalore, and even worldwide.”

Now I'll warn you, the soda may be alluring, but it is very acidic in its base form, that's why the harvesters wear thick protective gear. And while soda is a sizable part of our income the real star of Sugar Stop is... Ya know, it'd do you better to just show you."

Stop 3

(Elevator noises)

Not too far from the water tower, Walter and co dove into the Earth via an old lift. As they descended the small box was overtaken by darkness. Throughout the Sweet Sands, it's commonplace to find holes that lead underground, but the people here just call them cavities. Now the dimensions of a cavity vary, some are potholes, and others are meteor impact sites.

“...Woouuuuow...No damn way...”

A subtle blue light illuminated the cage as they reached the cavity's core. The zigzagging cavern was made entirely of glimmering crystal. The left behind helmets and pickaxes broke up the almost unanimous light show.

“And this...I could almost cry, is our pride, our joy, and how yours truly got his start. The **Rock Candy Mines!** At first, this land was written off as useless before I got my hands on it! As reward for my hard efforts, The Goddess granted me the blessing of naming the rock candy...WalteR-OCKS!” ***CRACK!*** He slammed his fist into the wall, making the cave shudder.

TINKI TINKI TINKI A few free samples dropped into Lucy's hands. "But unfortunately things aren't always sweet around here... Just the other day, a little before you came, one of our family members got hurt, and she's a very important cog in our machine we've got going here. She both mines, and runs the diner. But, we look out for each other and someone's covering her spot while her son and husband take care of her. Just keep that in mind little lady, everyone here looks out for each other, and now, *you* included.

Final Stop *Home*

The sun must have been aware that the tour was ending, to entice the scene it softly began to set. Also aware of the tour's conclusion, the town's version of street lights turned on. The front of each building had a small collection of WalteR-ocks jammed into a lantern. The series of lights almost resembled peering eyes giving each building an illusion of a face.

"Lucy, I'm happy to welcome you to our family! From tomorrow on you'll be Nancey's protégé! Hahaha Now don't put her on too many coffee runs now Nan! HARHARHAR!" Within his large hands, Walter presented a brown cowboy hat and vest identical to Nancey's.

"Can I wear my tracksuit under?"

"Look, as long as you've got the badge hat and vest, you could dress up as a Mallow-Man for all I care! HARHARHAR!"

"A Mallow-man?"

"They're exactly what you think they are. They're marshmallows who act and move as a unit, sometimes they pass through town every here and again, they're harmless. And they wear these, graham cracker masks and they use WalteR-ock spears and tools.

Walter placed a hand on the new sheriff's shoulder, "You've got a big day ahead of you! Nan show her to the housing district for me why don't cha?" **CHFI CHFI CHFI** Walter walked off towards his office. "I'll catch you girlies later. It's been fun" **THUD!**

"Welp Lucy, you're not in Kansas anymore, things are preeettttty quiet here, you'll get the hang of things quick."

"So you've been here for long Ms.Nancey?"

"Phew, wayyy toooo looong to remember kid." She raised the brim of her hat and put on a nonchalant smile. "But eh, what can ya do? C'mon kid, I'll show you to yer room alright."

Inside the housing district building was a single room that housed a **large** cavity. There was a staircase and an elevator that plunged deep into the ground. Aside from the crystalline aesthetic the interior looked no different than any old apartment building. **KER-CHAKI** Even Lucy's room looked standard, just enough room to where she didn't feel like she was living in a closet, but still small enough to be humbling.

She stepped inside and plopped her stuff down. Nancey leaned in the door frame, once again morphing into a silhouette. "Alright kid, make yourself at home, you know they say there's no place like it....Now tomorrow morning be ready by eight A.M. sharp...I'm gonna come get ya, then we'll start your first day alright."

Lucy hit a stiff salute. "Yes ma'am! My new life starts **tomorrow!**"

"Yes it does..."

KER-CHAK!