

Fleet Fluoride and the Corsairs of the Carbonated Sea

So. Candyland is real. And *terrifying*. The people who know don't talk about it much, and they *definitely* don't talk at all about how to get there, because then some idiot might actually decide to **go**; and you don't visit Candyland without an understanding in place with the local warlords, and armed guards at your back. Candylander species like meat as much as we like sweets, you see. Worse, far too many of the creatures there have not yet learned to forswear human flesh (some of those creatures wear clothes and have the power of speech).

So why go? Well. It's a *land of candy*, no? With an ecology to match. In particular, the seas of Candyland are pure, unadulterated (by our standards) carbonated cola; get out into the open oceans a little with your tanker, start the pumps, and you can bring in over 330,000 gallons of prime cola base for the cost of the trip. It's a no-brainer, really, particularly in this modern era of increased costs and shrinking profit margins. And if means dealing with unsugary Taffy Priests and the Jawbreaker Coast-Hordes, well, it wouldn't be the first time people have had to do business with highly unpleasant sorts, would it?

Unfortunately, humans are not really *welcome* in Candyland on general principles; and the sight of human fleets of crude **meat** and horrible **metal** “draining the seas’ precious life-syrup” gave certain groups the public justification to do what they’d likely happily do anyway. To wit, raid the human tanker fleets. These raids are no joke, by the way: Candylanders have weapons that can harm humans. They gleefully use them, too, given the chance.

After the first ship was taken, and the extent of the atrocities were revealed, a certain soda company showed considerable forethought and wisdom in immediately going out and getting [its own fleet](#) (helped immeasurably by the fact that one of Earth’s own evil empires was collapsing at the moment, and badly needed to sell off some of its surplus naval assets). That was the genesis of Fleet Fluoride.

Today Fleet Fluoride sails above and through the parts of Candyland’s oceans most used by all the cola tankers, keeping the Corsairs of the Carbonated Sea at arm’s length during the harvesting session. All of the soda companies now contribute to the fleet, which operates about a dozen submarines and twenty or so surface naval vessels, including an aircraft carrier (the *John Pemberton*, formerly the *Kitty Hawk*). All of the vessels are officially

listed as scrapped by various national navies -- it goes without saying that various governments know of the existence of Candyland -- and Fleet Fluoride is considered to be a handy place to keep people safely out of sight until their country needs them again.

Or sometimes, safely occupied. Fleet Fluoride sees an almost enviable amount of action, by most navy's standards; the corsairs they face are tricky foes, ready to use Candyland's bizarre ecology against the 'meaties.' Fortunately for the bottom line, most of Candyland's corsairs have bounties on their heads; Fleet Fluoride can make a decent amount of chocolate out of bounties and prize crews. Indeed, sometimes a private contract between one or another warlords and a Fleet asset can be deniably negotiated, to mutual profit (and only occasionally attempted betrayal). All in all, there are worse places to be a mercenary, or a privateer.

Not very *many* worse places, possibly. But it pays well; and, besides, this is indeed the life that they have chosen for themselves.

- © Moe Lane. All rights reserved.
- <http://www.moelane.com>
- <https://www.patreon.com/MoeLane?ty=h>