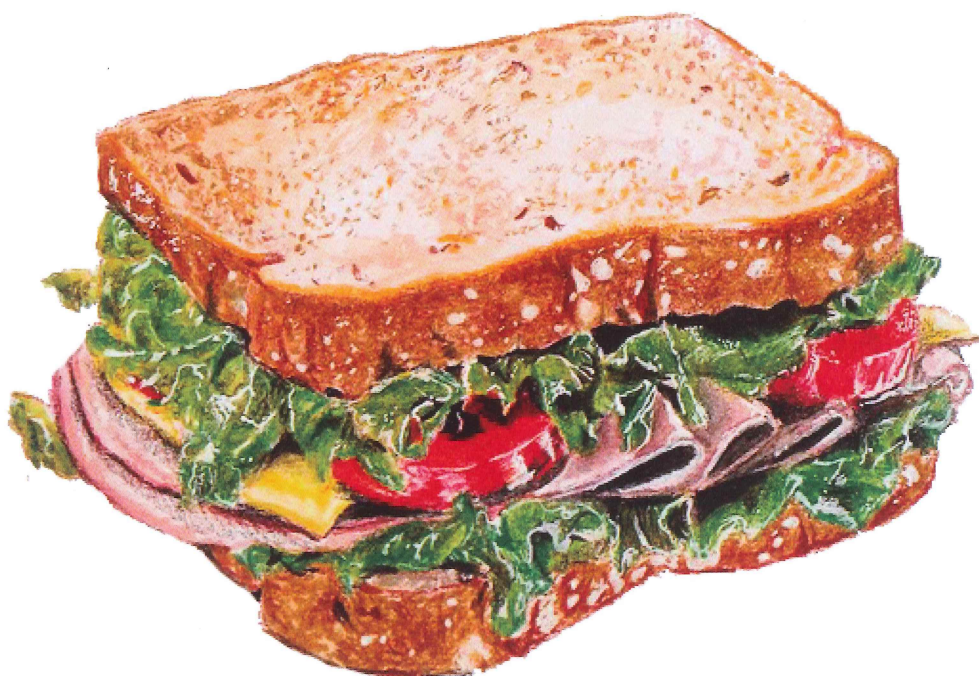


PRISM

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CECI N'EST PAS UN SANDWICH

GREEN-EYED GIRL

Brittany Sandberg

Provost Short Story Winner (Abridged)

Daniel Miller parked his car and remembered the first time Sarah had ever had dinosaur chicken nuggets. She had only been three years old, and they had gone grocery shopping earlier that afternoon. She was wearing her Cinderella dress, her ruby red slippers from *The Wizard of Oz*, and her Minnie Mouse hat. She could never decide which character was her favorite, so she decided to be all of them at once. The bags of little dinosaur-shaped chicken nuggets were in the freezer section between the popsicles and the frozen peas, and when Sarah saw the picture of the dinosaur she wanted to know how a whole dinosaur could fit in one little bag.

"Those are dinosaur nuggets," he had said, "not whole dinosaurs."

She pressed her hands and face against the glass of the freezer door, staring with wide green eyes at the bag of chicken nuggets. "Daddy," she whispered. "What do dinosaurs taste like?" The heat of her breath had fogged up the glass.

"Well," he had said as he pulled her away from the freezer and hoisted her up to sit on his shoulders. "I guess we'll have to find out." He opened the door and put two bags in the shopping cart.

Now, sitting in his car and staring at the bag of chicken nuggets in his hand, Daniel remembered all this and how quickly it changed. She kept telling Daniel that her back was hurting, and finally they were told it was caused by a tumor. That was on Halloween. The oncologist,

Dr. Johnson, had been dressed as a pirate that day, which Daniel was both thankful for and hated.

"Normally we would operate first," the doctor had said. "But it's so close to her spine that we would risk paralyzing her." He paused like he was waiting for a response but Daniel couldn't say anything. "So we're going to do chemotherapy first," the doctor continued. "If it responds well, it will shrink the tumor enough that we can reduce the risk of paralysis as a result of removing it."

He had selfishly wished in that moment that her mother could have been alive to be the one hearing this instead of him. She had had a way with words. But all that remained of his wife was in their child—her green eyes had been her gift to Sarah, and Sarah had been her gift to Daniel.

He remembered her fourth birthday, a year before she started kindergarten. She had been watching the Discovery Channel when a show about sharks had caught her attention. "Daddy, can we go to the ocean so I can see the shark's house?"

He smiled at how excited she had been for their trip to the beach. The heart complications she was born with limited how much she could play, and she had to be careful. That day it had been hard to stop her, though, while she splashed in the waves and crashed through her sandcastles.

The hardest part had been trying to explain to her that she was sick, but to get better they had to give her something that would make her even sicker. "So, this will make me better?" she had asked with the slightest tremble in her voice. The nurse started connecting the tubes for the first bag of chemotherapy.

"Yes, sweetheart," the nurse said with a smile.

"But," she added, "it will make you not feel very good for a little while. But that's because it's working really really hard to make you better." The nurse smiled sweetly and patted her on the arm while she said this. Sarah nodded once and then looked down at the ruby red slippers on her feet and tapped the heels together three times.

Daniel remembered the drug was called the "Red Devil," and that the nurses normally had to wear some kind of hazard suit because the chemicals can damage skin if it spilled. But Sarah had been so afraid of the nurse in the suit that staff had decided to administer the drug without it. He was more grateful for that nurse's decision that day because not only did it relieve Sarah's fears, but it helped him forget that she was injecting poison straight into his daughter's heart.

The doctor and nurses had warned him about how she would react to the drugs, but something hadn't been right. The next day when Sarah had tried to get out of bed, she couldn't walk down the stairs without stopping several times to catch her breath. Daniel found her sitting half way down the stairs with her hand on her chest, breathing heavily. "Daddy," she said, "I'm dizzy."

Daniel still didn't know how he comforted her when inside all he could do was panic, but somehow he had managed to. "Okay baby, let's go to the doctor, okay?" he said, wiping the tears from her cheeks. "We're going to the doctor."

He called the oncologist's office on their way in. The receptionist said Doctor Johnson was on vacation and wouldn't be back for a few weeks, so they would have to see the stand-in.

Doctor Anderson did his examination and said Sarah needed to be admitted because her heart was failing. He opened the door and called for a nurse before he grabbed her chart and flipped through the pages again. "Mr. Miller, did you have pediatrics send her medical history before Dr. Johnson decided on treatment?"

"DANIEL REMEMBERED THE DRUG WAS CALLED THE 'RED DEVIL'"

"Uh, yeah, I believe so. The nurse asked me to sign a form. Wh—uh, why?" Daniel asked as he stumbled out the door behind the nurses and the doctor. "Mr. Miller, what did Dr. Johnson explain to you about your daughter's treatment?"

"Not a whole lot. I mean, he said it was a powerful treatment, that it was sure to get the job done."

"He must have told you about how this type of drug affects the heart?"
And in that instant Daniel knew that he didn't want to hear what the doctor was about to say. P

You can read the entirety of Brittany's award-winning short story to find out what Doctor Anderson has to say online at Oregonstate.edu/Prism