



Don't Kill the Birthday Girl: Tales from an Allergic Life

Sandra Beasley

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A beautifully written and darkly funny journey through the world of the allergic.

Like twelve million other Americans, Sandra Beasley suffers from food allergies. Her allergies—severe and lifelong—include dairy, egg, soy, beef, shrimp, pine nuts, cucumbers, cantaloupe, honeydew, mango, macadamias, pistachios, cashews, swordfish, and mustard. Add to that mold, dust, grass and tree pollen, cigarette smoke, dogs, rabbits, horses, and wool, and it's no wonder Sandra felt she had to live her life as "Allergy Girl." When butter is deadly and eggs can make your throat swell shut, cupcakes and other treats of childhood are out of the question—and so Sandra's mother used to warn guests against a toxic, frosting-tinged kiss with "Don't kill the birthday girl!"

It may seem that such a person is "not really designed to survive," as one blunt nutritionist declared while visiting Sandra's fourth-grade class. But Sandra has not only survived, she's thrived—now an essayist, editor, and award-winning poet, she has learned to navigate a world in which danger can lurk in an unassuming corn chip. *Don't Kill the Birthday Girl* is her story.

With candor, wit, and a journalist's curiosity, Sandra draws on her own experiences while covering the scientific, cultural, and sociological terrain of allergies. She explains exactly what an allergy is, describes surviving a family reunion in heart-of-Texas beef country with her vegetarian sister, delves into how being allergic has affected her romantic relationships, exposes the dark side of Benadryl, explains how parents can work with schools to protect their allergic children, and details how people with allergies should advocate for themselves in a restaurant.

A compelling mix of memoir, cultural history, and science, *Don't Kill the Birthday Girl* is mandatory reading for the millions of families navigating the world of allergies—and a not-to-be-missed literary treat for the rest of us.

From the Hardcover edition.

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