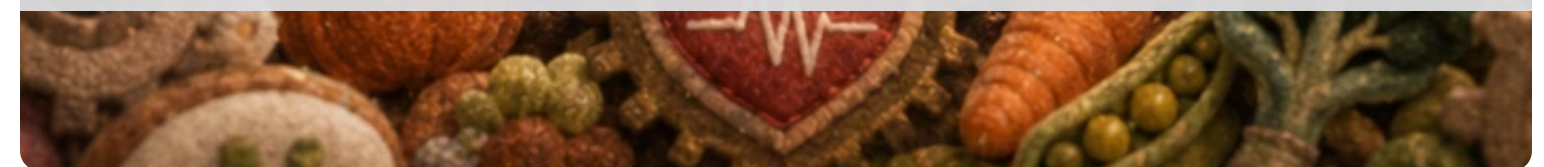




Kevin's Fizzy Fountain

Jalicia Thompson





Kevin loved nothing more than the sharp, sweet fizz of a cold can of cola. Every morning began with a satisfying pop of a metal tab, and a dark, bubbly waterfall poured into his favorite glass.



At school, while his friends drank cool water from their flasks, Kevin always cracked open another sweet beverage. The sugary bubbles danced on his tongue, making him feel energized and ready to conquer the playground.



By afternoon, Kevin's recycling bin was overflowing with empty, colorful aluminum cans. He laughed as he stacked them into a towering pyramid, proud of his fizzy collection but ignoring the slight tightness in his tummy.



Soon, Kevin noticed he had to excuse himself from class to use the restroom more often than anyone else. His teacher looked worried as Kevin dashed out the door for the third time before lunch, his stomach rumbling uncomfortably.



Even at night, Kevin found himself waking up repeatedly to stumble down the dimly lit hallway to the bathroom. The cozy sleep he used to enjoy was replaced by constant thirst and a heavy, restless feeling.



During weekend soccer practice, Kevin felt a deep, heavy exhaustion that he couldn't shake off. He sat alone on the grass, watching his teammates run past, feeling too drained to even kick the ball.



Seeing her son unusually quiet and pale, Kevin's mother gently guided him into the warm, bright office of Dr. Flores. Kevin sat nervously on the crinkly paper of the examination table, holding his mother's hand tightly.



Dr. Flores listened intently, checking Kevin's reflexes and looking at his bright chart while asking about his daily habits. She explained with a kind smile how too much sugar can trick the body and make it work much harder than it needs to.



Together, they made a colorful new plan to replace the sweet sodas with crisp, cold water infused with real slices of juicy strawberries and bright lemons. Kevin looked at the vibrant chart and felt a spark of excitement to try something new.



Weeks later, Kevin raced across the sunny soccer field with a bright smile, full of natural energy and life. In his hand, a clear bottle of fruit-infused water sparkled in the sunlight, a refreshing reward for taking care of his body.