鸡蛋不肯浮，我把杯子打翻了

科学老师布置了一个作业：想办法让鸡蛋在水里浮起来。我放学回家就翻冰箱，挑了一枚最大的鸡蛋，又翻出一个玻璃杯。妈妈问我需不需要帮忙，我说不用，这还不简单。

我把鸡蛋放进杯子里，它咕咚一声沉到杯底，躺得平平的，像睡熟了。我往杯子里加盐，一勺，用筷子搅。盐化了，水变浑了一点，鸡蛋一动不动。我有点急，又加了两勺，搅的时候筷子碰着鸡蛋，磕了一下，它翻了个身，还是躺着。

我端起杯子想凑近看，胳膊肘碰到了桌上一摊没收拾的积木。杯子晃了一下，我手忙脚乱去扶，没扶住，哗啦，整杯盐水打翻了。水顺着桌沿往下淌，鸡蛋滚出来，在桌上打了个滚，停在我的作业本旁边。我的作业本湿了一角。

我愣了两秒，眼泪一下子涌上来。忙了半天，鸡蛋没浮起来，杯子还翻了，本子也毁了。我把鸡蛋往杯子里一塞，扭头回房间，把门关上。

过了好一会儿，妈妈敲门进来，什么也没说，把一块干抹布放在我手里。我们回到厨房，把桌子擦干，把湿的作业本一页一页摊开晾在窗台上。妈妈重新倒了一杯清水，说：接着来呗，盐又没洒完。我吸吸鼻子，拿起勺子。

这一次我学乖了，杯子放得离桌边远远的。一勺盐，搅十下，看看；再加一勺，再搅，再看。水越来越浑，杯底积了一层没化完的盐。我数着，第五勺的时候，鸡蛋动了一下，离开了杯底。第六勺，它摇摇晃晃地站起来了。第七勺，鸡蛋浮出了水面，露出一小片湿漉漉的脑门。

我喊妈妈来看，我们俩趴在桌边，看那颗鸡蛋稳稳地浮在盐水顶上。妈妈问：打翻杯子的时候你想过放弃吗？我承认，想过。妈妈说：那你后来怎么又拿起了勺子？我想了半天，说：因为鸡蛋还躺在桌上，它还没浮起来呢。

后来我把这个实验写进科学作业里，打翻杯子的事我也写了。我在结尾写：打翻一杯水不要紧，再倒一杯就是了。盐一勺一勺加，失败一次一次来，鸡蛋总会浮起来的。写完我把湿过又晾干的作业本翻开，那一页皱巴巴的，像一小片晒干的云。它比崭新的本子好看。

The Egg Would Not Float, and I Knocked Over the Cup

Our science teacher assigned homework: find a way to make an egg float in water. The moment I got home I opened the fridge, picked out the biggest egg, and dug out a glass. Mom asked if I needed help. I said no, how hard could it be.

I dropped the egg into the glass. It plopped to the bottom and lay flat, like it had fallen asleep. I added salt, one spoonful, and stirred with a chopstick. The salt dissolved, the water clouded a little, and the egg did not move. Getting impatient, I dumped in two more spoonfuls. Stirring, my chopstick tapped the egg, it rolled over, and lay there again.

I lifted the glass to look closer, and my elbow knocked into a pile of blocks left untidy on the table. The glass tipped. I scrambled to catch it and missed. Splash. The whole cup of salt water spilled. Water ran off the table edge, the egg rolled out, spun once on the tabletop, and stopped beside my homework notebook. One corner of my notebook got soaked.

I froze for two seconds, then tears rushed up. I had been busy for ages, the egg still would not float, the cup had tipped, and my notebook was ruined. I shoved the egg back into the glass, turned around, went to my room, and shut the door.

After a while Mom knocked, came in, said nothing, and placed a dry rag in my hand. We went back to the kitchen, wiped the table dry, and spread the wet notebook open page by page on the windowsill. Mom poured a fresh glass of water and said: keep going, the salt did not all spill. I sniffled and picked up the spoon.

This time I learned my lesson and set the glass far from the table edge. One spoonful of salt, ten stirs, look. Another spoonful, stir again, look again. The water grew cloudier, and a layer of undissolved salt piled at the bottom. I counted. At the fifth spoonful, the egg moved and lifted off the bottom. At the sixth, it wobbled upright. At the seventh, the egg broke the surface, showing a small wet patch of its crown.

I called Mom to look, and the two of us leaned over the table, watching the egg sit steady on top of the salt water. Mom asked: when you knocked the cup over, did you think about giving up? I admitted I did. Mom asked: then why did you pick the spoon up again? I thought a long time and said: because the egg was still lying on the table. It had not floated yet.

Later I wrote this experiment into my science homework, and I wrote about tipping the cup too. My ending line read: spilling a cup of water is no big deal, just pour another. Add the salt spoonful by spoonful, take the failures one by one, and the egg will float in the end. Then I opened my dried, wrinkled notebook. That page was crinkled like a small sun-dried cloud. It looked better than a brand-new page.

妹妹打翻了那杯盐水

妹妹上三年级，科学老师让她回家做浮鸡蛋。她把东西摆在茶几上：一个玻璃杯、一枚鸡蛋、一罐盐、一把量勺。我坐在沙发上看书，她请我当观众。我说好，观众只看不说话。

她先把鸡蛋放进清水，鸡蛋沉底。她开始加盐，第一勺很小心，沿着杯壁倒。第二勺、第三勺，她搅得胳膊都酸了，换左手搅。鸡蛋纹丝不动。她皱起眉，把勺子直接挖了满满一大勺塞进

去，盐堆在杯底没来得及化。她使劲搅，杯子在茶几上挪来挪去。

出事就在第四勺。她倒盐的时候手一抖，半勺盐撒进杯子外面，她慌忙去抓勺子，袖子挂住了杯子的把手。杯子倒了，盐水泼在茶几上，鸡蛋骨碌碌滚到果盘底下。妹妹愣了一秒，哇地哭出声，边哭边说：鸡蛋欺负我，它不肯浮。

妈妈从厨房出来，先擦桌子，没有哄她。我合上书，蹲下来帮妹妹把鸡蛋从果盘底下捡出来，擦了擦，说：观众现在可以说话了吗？她抽抽搭搭地点头。我说：刚才那杯，盐加到第几勺了？她想了想说：三勺半。我说：那你知道该从哪儿接着干了。

妹妹抹掉眼泪，重新接了半杯清水，把鸡蛋放进去。这一次她不让杯子挨着桌边了，把杯子往茶几中间挪了挪。第四勺，第五勺，她搅一下数一下，杯底积了白白的盐。第六勺下去，她突然屏住呼吸，指着杯子：动了动了！鸡蛋离开杯底，悬在水里，像潜水员停住了。

第七勺，鸡蛋慢慢浮上来，顶破水面，湿亮湿亮地躺在杯子顶上。妹妹不喊，她憋着，两只手捂着嘴，眼睛瞪得圆圆的，然后才爆出一声：浮起来啦！她拉着妈妈看，拉着我看，又让门口的邻居看，非要说那是她加盐加出来的。

晚上妹妹睡觉前，跑到我房间问我：哥哥，打翻杯子也算做实验吗？我说算，打翻那一下也是实验的一部分。她想了想，说：那明天我把第七勺记在作业上，打翻的事也记上。我说好。

第二天，她的科学作业本上有一行歪歪扭扭的字：我的鸡蛋浮起来了，用了七勺盐，中间打翻了一次，我没有放弃。老师用红笔在旁边画了一颗星星。妹妹把作业本举给我看，得意得像举着一座奖杯。我知道那座奖杯的底座里，浇进了那杯打翻的盐水。

My Little Sister Knocked Over the Salt Water

My little sister is in third grade, and her science teacher told her to make an egg float at home. She set everything on the coffee table: a glass, an egg, a jar of salt, a measuring spoon. I sat on the sofa reading, and she asked me to be her audience. I said fine, an audience watches and does not talk.

She put the egg in plain water first, and it sank. Then she began adding salt, the first spoonful carefully, poured down the inner wall. Second spoonful, third. She stirred until her arm ached and switched to her left hand. The egg did not budge. Frowning, she scooped one huge spoonful and jammed it in; the salt piled at the bottom without time to dissolve. She stirred hard, and the glass slid back and forth on the table.

The accident came at the fourth spoonful. Her hand shook while pouring, and half the salt landed outside the cup. She lunged for the spoon, and her sleeve caught the cup's handle. The cup tipped. Salt water splashed across the table, and the egg rolled under the fruit bowl. Sister froze for one second, then burst out crying,

saying through sobs: the egg is bullying me, it refuses to float.

Mom came out of the kitchen and wiped the table first, without coddling her. I closed my book, squatted down, fished the egg out from under the fruit bowl, wiped it, and said: may the audience speak now? She nodded, hiccuping. I asked: at the last cup, how many spoonfuls had you reached? She thought and said: three and a half. I said: then you know where to pick the work back up.

She wiped her tears, poured a fresh half glass of water, and set the egg in. This time she moved the glass to the middle of the table, away from any edge. Fourth spoonful, fifth. She stirred once and counted once, and white salt piled at the bottom. After the sixth spoonful she suddenly held her breath and pointed at the glass: it moved! The egg had left the bottom and hung in the water, like a diver holding still.

At the seventh spoonful, the egg rose slowly, broke the surface, and lay wet and shiny on top of the water. Sister did not shout. She clamped both hands over her mouth, eyes round, and only then let out a yell: it floated! She dragged Mom to look, dragged me, even called the neighbor at the door, insisting it was her spoonfuls of salt that did it.

That night before bed, she ran into my room and asked: brother, does knocking over the cup count as part of the experiment? I said it counts. The spill is part of the experiment too. She thought about it and said: then tomorrow I will write the seventh spoonful in my homework, and the spill too. I said good.

The next day, her science notebook had a crooked line of writing: my egg floated, it took seven spoonfuls of salt, I spilled once in the middle, and I did not give up. The teacher drew a red star beside it. Sister held the notebook up for me to see, proud as if holding a trophy. I knew the base of that trophy was cast from the cup of salt water she had knocked over.

打翻杯子以后，全班等他把盐加完

科学课，每组一杯清水、一枚鸡蛋、一罐盐。我们组的加盐任务是马小跳领的——不是跳远那个马小跳，是我们组马小跳，手比谁都快。他第一勺沿杯壁倒，第二勺搅得飞快，水都搅出了漩涡，鸡蛋在漩涡里转了两圈，又沉回杯底。

第三勺、第四勺，杯底开始有盐没化完，白花花一层。组长林小雨提醒他慢点搅，马小跳嘴上说好，手还是快。第五勺他倒得太猛，盐呛进杯壁和鸡蛋之间，他拿筷子去拨，筷子一顶，杯子在桌上滑了半圈，撞上课本，哗——半杯盐水漫出来，淌了马小跳一袖子。

组里一下子静了。马小跳僵在那儿，手还举着勺子，脸涨得通红。按平时的脾气，林小雨早该发火了，水都淌到她的作业本边上了。她没发火，抽出纸巾按在桌面的水上，说：先把水按住。另外两个组员也忙起来，一个扶杯子，一个把作业本往远处搬。

老师从讲台走过来，看了一眼湿透的桌面，只问了一句：杯子还能用吗？林小雨说能。老师说：那接着做。她转身去别的组，从头到尾没提打翻两个字。

杯子里的水洒了小半杯，林小雨把清水瓶递给马小跳：你来续。马小跳续了水，手还有点抖。林小雨说：刚才加到第五勺了对吧，接着数。马小跳点头，把勺子伸进盐罐，压平，第六勺。这一次他搅得极慢，筷子贴着杯底画圈，一圈，两圈。

第七勺下去，杯底的盐开始化得慢了。马小跳的手停在半空，眼睛盯着鸡蛋，不敢搅了。林小雨替他把最后一勺盐送进杯子，说：你来搅最后一下。马小跳的筷子沉下去，慢慢地画了三圈。鸡蛋晃了晃，离开了杯底，悬在半水，然后一点一点往上蹭，蹭到水面，露出半个头。

我们组先没喊，四个人围着杯子屏住呼吸，等鸡蛋躺稳了，才一起欢呼。全班其他组听见动静，呼啦围过来。有人问你们加了几勺，马小跳抢着说八勺，中间打翻过一次。他说打翻那三个字的时候，声音没有低下去，反而挺了挺胸口。

下课收器材，林小雨在实验记录单的失败一栏写：打翻半杯盐水。在原因一栏写：手快。在怎么办一栏写：等他把盐加完。老师巡过来看见，把这一行念给了全班听。那节课最后老师说什么我都记不清了，只记得全班看马小跳的眼神，不笑他，也不可怜他，就是等着，等一个人把剩下的盐加完。

After the Cup Spilled, the Whole Class Waited for Him to Finish the Salt

Science class: one glass of water, one egg, one jar of salt per group. Our group's salt duty went to Ma Xiaotiao, not the long-jump Ma Xiaotiao, just our Ma Xiaotiao, whose hands were faster than anyone's. His first spoonful went down the cup wall; on the second he stirred so fast the water spun into a whirlpool. The egg circled twice inside it and sank back to the bottom.

Third spoonful, fourth. Undissolved salt began piling white at the bottom. Our group leader Lin Xiaoyu told him to stir slower. His mouth said okay; his hands did not listen. On the fifth he poured too hard, salt jamming between the cup wall and the egg. He poked with a chopstick, the chopstick nudged, the glass slid half a turn across the desk, hit the textbook, and splash, half the salt water spilled down Ma Xiaotiao's sleeve.

The group went silent all at once. Ma Xiaotiao froze, spoon still raised, face burning red. In normal times Lin Xiaoyu would have exploded already; the water was

creeping toward her notebook. She did not explode. She pulled out tissues and pressed them onto the spreading water, saying: hold the water down first. The other two members got busy too, one steadying the glass, one moving notebooks out of harm's way.

The teacher walked over from the podium, glanced at the soaked desk, and asked one question: is the glass still usable? Lin Xiaoyu said yes. The teacher said: then keep going. She turned to another group and never once mentioned the spill.

The cup had lost most of its water. Lin Xiaoyu passed the water bottle to Ma Xiaotiao: you refill it. He refilled, hands still shaking a little. Lin Xiaoyu said: we were at five spoonfuls, right? Keep counting. He nodded, dipped the spoon into the salt jar, leveled it, sixth spoonful. This time he stirred extremely slowly, the chopstick tracing circles along the bottom, one circle, two.

After the seventh spoonful, the salt at the bottom began dissolving slower. Ma Xiaotiao's hand hung in midair, eyes locked on the egg, afraid to stir. Lin Xiaoyu delivered the last spoonful of salt into the cup for him and said: you do the final stir. His chopstick sank and traced three slow circles. The egg wobbled, lifted off the bottom, hung in mid-water, then inched upward, inch by inch, until it broke the surface and showed half its head.

Our group did not shout at first. The four of us circled the glass holding our breath, and only when the egg lay steady on top did we cheer together. Other groups heard the commotion and swarmed over. Someone asked how many spoonfuls. Ma Xiaotiao answered before anyone else: eight, with one spill in the middle. When he said the spill, his voice did not drop. His chest straightened instead.

While packing up, Lin Xiaoyu wrote in the failure column of the lab sheet: spilled half the salt water. In the cause column: hands too fast. In the what-we-did column: waited for him to finish the salt. The teacher passed by, read that line aloud to the whole class. I cannot remember what the teacher said at the end of that class. I only remember the way the class looked at Ma Xiaotiao: not laughing, not pitying, just waiting, waiting for one person to finish adding his salt.