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.