

Please Don't Crack  
March 8th

"Alright, alright, settle down." Our science teacher, Mrs. Beaker, called as we all took our seats. She stood in the front of the classroom, wearing a green dress and brown-rimmed reading glasses.

"As promised, we will start a new project this week, and it will be our introduction to physics. And yes," Mrs. Beaker added, sensing the anticipation, "You can pick your partners for the project."

There were thirty students in our class. We all started looking around at one another, hoping to make eye contact with our friends and nod, silently agreeing we would be partners.

I was glad to see Sophia was mouthing words and pairing up with two nice girls in our class. So, I looked to my friends Simone and Shelby. Within five seconds, we were a confirmed trio—without ever saying a word.

"Well, wouldn't you all like to know about the project?" Mrs. Beaker asked, prompting further curiosity. She continued, "Your job is to build a device to protect an egg. I will then drop the eggs off the school roof, demonstrating a few basic principles of physics. Build something strong and don't let your egg crack!"

My mind immediately began designing. I thought: We could surround the egg with a bunch of pillows and tape them all together—

"But," Mrs. Beaker continued, "The design must fit into a shoebox. Today, you will develop your design, and tomorrow you will bring your materials to build it in class."

We all divided into little sections of the room and planned quietly so the other groups wouldn't steal our great ideas.

Shelby, Simone, and I each had many thoughts, but in the end, we all agreed that Simone's idea was the best. Shelby drew a perfect sketch of our design, and we decided who would bring each material.

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The next day, I could hardly wait to build. Once it reached 10 a.m. and the class bell rang, we all raced into the room. Students unloaded various things from their backpacks and began taping, cutting, and cushioning.

Each pair or trio had its own method. Roger, Amelia, and Ernesto spent the entire time wrapping their egg in duct tape.

Amy Kirkpatrick and Patricia decided the thing they had to do first was paint their egg pink. As she brushed the egg, Amy proclaimed, "Nobody's cracking this thing!"

Mack, Benji, and Devon slid their egg into a toilet paper roll and spent the rest of the class napping.

Zoie, Ruben, and Sophia centered their egg in a shoebox filled with cotton balls and put rubber bands around it.

Dave and Dan pulled out a complicated-looking wooden structure.

The rest looked busy, though I couldn't quite see their projects.

Simone, Shelby, and I each pulled one item from our backpacks, and we had one roll of paper towels, ZoomZoom's bright green hamster ball, and a thin, papery cloth with string. We assembled our contraption and explained to Mrs. Beaker exactly how to launch it.

Mrs. Beaker had a fellow teacher help her bring all the projects up to the roof; our class stood on the lawn below at a safe distance. Mrs. Beaker held the first of the ten egg projects over the roof's edge and then let go.

Roger, Amelia, and Ernesto's big, gray tape ball hit the grass with a thud. They cut open the wrapping to find the egg had been smashed. Three more groups followed, and three more eggs cracked.

Then, Dan and Dave's wooden crate bounced like a frog when it hit the ground; it was surrounded by springs.

We were the last group to go. So far, of the nine, six had cracked, and only three had remained safe.

Mrs. Beaker lifted our contraption and unfolded the white paper, which was a mystery to everyone except Shelby, Simone, and me. The three of us held hands and repeated, "Please don't crack! Please don't crack!"

Then, as our teacher tossed it off the roof, the parachute Simone designed opened up and caught the wind. It was working!

But it was working a little too well! The flying egg crossed over the street and got stuck in a tree branch! People driving by looked confused. We all roared with laughter.

We'll never know if our egg would've cracked...because the answer still hangs, rotting over McCarthur Boulevard.

Your Friend,  
Joanie