Story: Science Fair Disaster

The Lakeside Middle School Science Fair came every year and only the best and most scientific inventions received the top prizes. Both Madi and her twin brother, Ray, had received the announcement about the science fair the first week of school. The announcement said:

> The Lakeside Middle School Science Fair will be held at 7:00 p.m., November 15th. You may work in teams. First place will receive $100,

second place will receive $50, and third place will receive $25. Each entry must be accompanied by a poster and each student must explain their invention. If the invention does not work, the entry will be disqualified.

The weeks passed. It was now October. Madi said to Ray, "I have a great idea for an invention and have already started. Have you started yours?"

Ray lied. He replied, "Umm-Yeah, I started weeks ago."

"Hmmm." Madi thought to herself, "His voice sounded shaky and I haven't seen him working on anything. But do I want to help Ray?" she wondered.

"Hey, Ray," said Madi the next day, "Do you want to work in teams for the science fair?"

"No," Ray replied. "What boy would want to work with a weird girly-girl like you."

"But," Madi started to say when Ray cut her off.

"Oh, fine, but on one condition," Ray said. "I get to choose the invention."

Madi thought about Ray's offer. It was a tough decision. Madi finally agreed.

However, Ray still did not have a single idea for an invention. So he asked Madi, "What is your invention all about? I suppose it has to do with all of your silly cameras."

"Well, actually it does," answered Madi. "I thought I would figure out a way to make one of my digital cameras follow someone around without them realizing they are being photographed."

"Isn't that what you already do when you pretend to be Nancy Drew and you take all of those pictures pretending to collect evidence?"

"Nancy Drew is the best sleuth there is, but even she has a hard time not being seen when following a suspect. I want to think of a way to have a remote-controlled camera follow someone."

"You mean like a camera with wings?" Ray asked. "Why don't you just put your camera on one of my remote-controlled planes and add a wireless device to the remote to operate the camera's shutter."

"That's it! Brilliant idea Ray—we'll build a spy plane," squealed Madi.

So over the next month that is exactly what they did. They were busy with wires, camera parts, controls, and devices. They tested the plane at the park and took photographs of a girl on a swing and a boy kicking a soccer ball.

It was almost time for the science fair. There was just one more thing to do—make the poster. They got posterboard from their mom and glued information and some photographs onto it. Madi also made little pamphlets that included a description of how the spy was built and pictures it had taken during their test flights.

Finally, the day arrived for the science fair. Their mom and dad drove Madi and Ray to the science fair. When they had checked in with their principal, Mr. Steinway, he gave them permission to set up their invention in the gymnasium so they could demonstrate how their spy plane could maneuver to take photographs. Madi set up the poster display and set out the pamphlets. Ray took the plane out of the box and began flying it around the school gym. Many people came to see their invention and to watch their spy plane. One of Ray's friends told Ray that their invention was the best invention at the science fair and even thought they would win first place.

But, just when the judges were coming down the hall and were stepping into the gym, Ray's hand accidentally slipped on the control and then the plane dropped—down it went all the way to the ground. Ray hid his head in his hands. "Oh, no!" Ray cried out! "It's a disaster!"

Mr. Hartford, one of the judges, helped Ray and Madi pick up the pieces and put them in the box. The rest of the judges came over and said they were sorry that the plane had crashed. The judges looked at their poster and asked Madi and Ray many questions. They each took one of their pamphlets before they left.

Finally, Mr. Steinway was heard on the intercom saying, "The judges have reviewed each entry and have reached a decision. Please come to the auditorium for the announcement of the winners and presentation of awards."

Everyone shuffled to the auditorium and excitedly took their seats. Madi whispered to Ray, "Who do you think won?"

Ray answered unhappily, "I know it's not us—we can't win with a smashed-up invention."

Madi said sadly, "I know."

After the crowd had quieted down, Mr. Steinway said, "The first place winner of the Lakeside Middle School Science Fair is George Hudson and his robot. Second place goes to Madi and Ray Thorn for their spy plane. Third place goes to Jenny White and her solar-powered racecar. Students, please come up front to receive your prizes."

Madi and Ray both exclaimed, "Yeah, we got a prize!" They bounded up front.

Mr. Steinway handed an envelope containing the $50 prize to Ray and shook Madi's hand. Madi asked Mr. Steinway, "I thought we were disqualified because our invention broke."

Mr. Steinway replied, "No, Madi. The judges determined that since your invention worked the way it was supposed to, and the crash was just because of

human error, your invention was not disqualified. Congratulations on second place."

As the car pulled out of the school parking lot, Ray said, "We're a team Madi. How about using the $50 prize money to build a better invention for next year's science fair."

Madi replied, "It's a deal Ray, as long as our next invention is disaster-proof."