

I have always wanted to be an architect, but I should have realized it in my mother's stare one day. "Little girl, take care of your brother. It's all on you." With those words she dismissed me and left. Left alone, I trod over to the living room to check up on my brother. He was slouched like a throw pillow watching Teletubbies.

Bored, I worked on the I masterpieces in my coloring book, when suddenly a loud thud bellowed from the bedroom. A shrill cry followed that ran through me like a pin. I ran to a skidding halt on the carpet, where my brother was bawling under the side railing of his crib.

As soon as I made sure he wasn't injured, the phrase "it's all on you" seemed to echo through the room. My brother was all right; the crib was not—it had collapsed on the toothy smiles that made up its sides. The problem in front of me was clear: I had to assemble the crib. I had a responsibility to live up to before mom came back—angry.

Fortunately, I had a plan. That plan quickly failed, so I was blessed with follow up plans. In my first attempt, I set up the railings again, only to watch them crash like glaciers onto the cold floor. Whereas my brother had done the crying to start, the thought of my mother discovering this was starting to take its toll on me. A thin sweat broke out as I unfurled string, scissors and Elmer's glue from the box where I kept my crayons. While my second attempt—tying the rails and gluing the string together—had some originality, or so I thought, it failed in more supsepnseful time than the first attempt. Only when the railings hit the floor again did the "obvious" strike.

Hidden underneath the mattress were these things called "nuts" and "screws" which had fallen loose in the initial collapse. So, I set out to understand how they worked. In one arrangement after the next, they seemed to fall apart on me until it just made sense...the bolt went under the screw, and the nut tightened them both. Yes, that had to be it I set out to assembling the crib, my little brother watching me, utterly nonplussed.

After minutes of balancing and coordinating, there was the eureka! moment; the railing held miraculously steady. Well, mostly. Tightening it with pliers was one step beyond my means, so I used my fingers until they were pinched scarlet. One by one I hoisted and bolted in each of the railings, the final design of what had fallen apart easily coming back with each placement of the rail, with each turn of the screw. Finally, it was done, and not a moment too soon, because mom had returned home.

I still had one problem: I had not reassembled the crib around my brother, so he was still inexplicably outside. Furiously red faced and sweating nervously as my mother came home, I lifted him up and with a volleyballer's set quietly launched him back into the crib, which happily held steadily. My mom came in. She looked at me looking at my brother, who in turn was looking at me. Her inimical stare returned. I should have known then that I would not be a good enough liar to be a lawyer; but I knew I had the wherewithal to be a design engineer, especially one under pressure.