



Mirae and the Red Marks That Turned into Flowers

On a day like any other, when the world feels both big and small, this story begins...

Mirae sat at her wooden desk in the sunny classroom, her heart doing tiny somersaults as Mrs. Light walked between the rows, handing back the math tests.

“Good work, Emma.” Smile.

“Nice job, Alex.” Smile.

“Here you go, Mirae.” Pause. Gentle look.

Mirae’s stomach dropped. She knew that look.

She turned the paper over slowly, and there they were: two bright red Xs staring at her like disappointed eyes. Her throat felt tight.

8 out of 10.

But all she could see were those two red marks, bold and embarrassing, whispering that she had messed up.

She quickly folded the paper and tucked it deep into her backpack, her cheeks warm. Around her, other kids were smiling at their papers, whispering about their scores. Mirae just wanted to become invisible.

At lunch, she sat quietly at her usual table, picking at her sandwich. The folded test paper felt heavy in her backpack, like it was glowing red through the fabric.

I'm bad at math, she thought. I got it wrong. I should have gotten them all right. I should have been more careful.

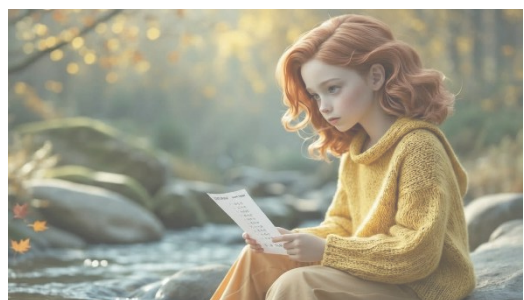
By the time school ended, Mirae felt small and heavy, like a gray cloud had settled inside her chest.

On the Familiar Forest Path

On her way home, Mirae followed the familiar path through the tiny forest, where the trees always seemed to listen. She paused at her favorite thinking spot – a smooth boulder beside a babbling creek.

She finally pulled out the crumpled test paper.

“Stupid mistakes,” she whispered, smoothing the wrinkles from the paper.
“Stupid, stupid me.”



“That’s interesting.”

Mirae looked up, pulled suddenly from her thoughts.

There was a scrabble in the ferns, and Sage came up the bank in three bounds — russet-red with cream patches, bright as a struck match in the afternoon light. He landed on the fallen log beside her, overshot it, and caught himself with his tail.

“What makes a mistake stupid?” he asked, a bit breathless.

“What?”

“Well, I want to know. You called them stupid.” He settled himself properly, his eyes on the paper in her hands. “What did they do to earn that?”

“They’re wrong,” Mirae said.

Sage tilted his head. “Wrong and stupid are the same thing?”

Mirae frowned. “What? Wait, now you’re confusing me. You said yourself that you make lots of mistakes. So you should know how stupid they are.”

“Oh, I know they can be a pain in the a... oops. I’m not supposed to say that,” Sage said. “And sometimes I’m surprised I made a mistake when I was sooo sure something would work. Oh, and they can be truly embarrassing. Especially when other foxes are watching.”

A hint of mischief appeared in his eyes.

“But stupid? I’m not sure about that.”

“I knew the answers,” Mirae insisted. “I should have gotten them right. I should have known better.”

“Who says?”

Mirae blinked. “What?”

"That you should have known better," Sage said. "Who says so?"

"I do. Because everybody says it."

"Such as?"

Mirae opened her mouth, then had to stop and actually think about it.

"Mrs. Light says you should check your work before you hand it in," she said. "And Mom says you should take your coat when it looks like rain."

"Okay, I get those," Sage said. "They make a sort of sense, I have to admit, although they are truly annoying. I hear them often enough myself. 'Sage, you should wipe your paws before you come into the den. Sage, you should look where you're going instead of watching butterflies.'"

"See, and Grandma says you should eat something before school. And I should have known better because... well, because I should," Mirae finished stubbornly.

"*Should*," Sage repeated. "*Should, should, should...* So many things that should be this or should do that. It seems to be a very, very busy little word."

Mirae looked at him, waiting for him to go on.

"It should rain when the ground is dry. The sun should shine when everyone needs cheering up. The clouds should move out of the sun's way instead of barging right in front of it. And they should let go of their water before they become so full that they spill it everywhere in one great downpour and soak me from the tip of my nose to the end of my tail."

His ears flattened at the memory.

"And even after the rain has stopped, the trees keep leaking their leftover water onto me for hours. Quite deliberately, I'm sure. To spite foxes. Possibly everyone."

Mirae burst out laughing.

Sage managed to keep a solemn face for half a heartbeat before he exploded into laughter too.

“Perhaps I got a little carried away,” he admitted when they could breathe again.

He glanced up through the branches.

“Still, the clouds don’t seem to care what they should do. They hold their water for as long as they please. The sun keeps shining behind them anyway, and the earth keeps turning without waiting for anyone to get everything right.”

“That isn’t the same,” Mirae said. “Sometimes we really should have done better. Or we should have known.”

“True,” Sage agreed. “Sometimes we could have been more careful. Sometimes we did know, but then the knowing slipped away at exactly the wrong moment. I found out knowing can be surprisingly slippery.”

Mirae looked down at the two red Xs.

Sage flicked one ear and looked up at the sky.

“Meanwhile, time is carrying on without caring one fox whisker about what should have been.”

He looked back at her.

“My grandpa says what happened has already happened. He has one white ear and whiskers that point in six different directions, so naturally he knows these things.”

Then Sage’s ears came forward.

"He also told me something about *should*," he said. "I only half understand it, but I remember every word."

"What did he say?"

"He said a *should* is small when it first arrives. But if you aren't careful, it grows."

"Grows how?"

Sage screwed up his face, trying to remember every word.

"First it says, 'I should have gotten that right.' Then it grows into, 'I always get things wrong.' And after that comes the last one."

"What's the last one?"

"You said it," Sage told her. "Before I got here."

Mirae grew quiet.

"Stupid, stupid me," she murmured.

"That's the one Grandpa said to watch for." Sage nudged the edge of the test paper gently with one paw. "A *should* can remind you about something you did. But it doesn't get to tell you who you are."

He thought about it.

"I didn't understand that part when he first told me," he admitted. "But I think I do now."

Mirae studied the paper again. "But the answers are still wrong."

"They are," Sage agreed cheerfully. "So why don't we make the mistakes clever?"

Mirae looked up from the paper. “How can a mistake be clever?”

Sage’s eyes brightened. “I have an idea. Come and see.”

The Tower

He hopped down from the log and trotted toward a little tower of stones beside the creek.

“But promise you won’t tell anyone,” he said, glancing around to make sure no one had followed them.

“Tell anyone what?”

“That I build stone towers.” He grinned brightly at Mirae. “Proper foxes aren’t supposed to.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t know,” he answered, rolling his eyes. “Proper foxes seem to have many rules and very little fun.”

Then he turned back to the tower and puffed out his chest proudly.

“Look. It needs to be a little taller, but it’s nearly finished.”

He carefully placed another stone on top of the tower.

It wobbled once.

It wobbled twice.

Then the entire tower collapsed with a clatter.

One round stone rolled between Sage's front paws. He tried to stop it with one paw, missed, tried with the other, and ended up spinning in a complete circle before finally trapping it beneath his tail.

Mirae laughed. "Are you making mistakes?"

"Many," Sage said proudly. "A truly remarkable number."

"You told me that before."

"I did. But everyone says I'm a clever fox, so I decided my mistakes must be clever too."

His eyes glinted with mischief.

"That isn't how it works," Mirae said.

"Not all by itself," Sage admitted. "First I have to ask what the mistake can show me. That works much better than calling myself stupid because I didn't get something right the first time. Or the second. Or the third..."

"Or the fourth?" Mirae suggested.

Sage glanced away. "Let us not be stingy with the numbers."

Mirae smiled.

"And if I really can't work something out," he added, "I ask one of my clever friends."

"Which one?"

"The one who knows everything."

"Everything?"

“She’s a fairy.”

“Oh, you mean Bria.”

“Exactly.”

“Yes,” Mirae agreed. “She does seem very clever.”

Sage glanced down at his tail as though he had forgotten what was beneath it. He lifted it, and the round stone rolled free.

“The bottom stone was round,” Mirae noticed. “That’s why it kept rolling.”

Sage’s ears lifted. “You’re right.”

He nudged the round stone toward her, then chose another from the fallen pile — broad and flat.

“Which one would you try?”

Mirae picked up the flat stone and placed it on the ground. “This one. It won’t roll away.”

Together, they rebuilt the little tower, beginning with the broad stone. Sage added the final pebble and quickly pulled his paw away.

The tower stood.

Sage circled it, his eyes shining.

“I learned something very important on my way to becoming a master tower builder,” he announced. “Always start with a flat stone.”

Mirae smiled. “So using the round one at the bottom was the mistake.”

“Exactly,” Sage said. “It was wrong for the bottom of the tower. But it isn’t wrong for being round.”

He picked up the stone that had caused all the wobbling.

“This one has earned a place in my Learning Collection.”

The Learning Collection

Sage led Mirae to a small clearing where smooth stones were arranged in careful patterns.

“My Learning Collection,” he announced proudly. “Every stone represents something I discovered when I didn’t get it right the first time.”

“These are all your mistakes?” Mirae asked.

“Not all of them,” Sage said. “We would need a much larger clearing.”

Mirae giggled. She looked at all of them. “That’s a lot of mistakes.”

“It is,” Sage agreed. “Though I’ve gotten far more things right than wrong. Those don’t need a stone.”

He picked up a gray stone with silver flecks.

“This one taught me something about myself. I kept trying to catch fireflies, but they always flew away. When I finally stopped chasing them, I realized I didn’t want to catch them at all. I only wanted to dance with their light.”

A dark, smooth stone caught Mirae’s eye. She picked it up and turned it over in her hand.

“What about this one?”

“I thought I should become the fastest fox in the forest,” Sage said. “I really tried. But then I spotted a shiny green beetle. And after that,

something rustled beneath a pile of leaves. Then I found a pawprint I had never seen before.”

“So you stopped running?”

“Of course. I had to investigate.”

“And the race?”

“I forgot all about it,” Sage admitted. “That’s when I discovered I would much rather explore than be the fastest.”

Mirae held out the stone. Sage took it and placed it carefully back among the others.

Then he looked across his collection with a bright grin. He did not seem embarrassed by all those mistakes. He looked proud of them.

“You really don’t mind showing them to me?” Mirae asked.

“Why would I?”

“I’d rather hide under my bed for the rest of my life than show someone all my mistakes.”

Sage blinked. “But I worked hard for these.”

“At making mistakes?”

“No. That part was surprisingly easy,” he said with a laugh. “I worked hard at finding out what they had to show me.”

Then she looked down at her crumpled test.

“Could these be clever mistakes too?” she asked. “Maybe they aren’t telling me I’m stupid. Maybe they’re trying to show me something else.”

"Let's find out," Sage said.

The Red Marks Transform

Mirae sat in the soft grass and spread the test paper in front of her.

At first, she saw the same thing she had seen all day: two bright red Xs.

Sage lowered his head beside hers.

"Oh, wow, those red marks are nearly popping right out of the paper," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"They're so in my face that I can barely see anything else."

"Yeah. Me too," Mirae said.

"But there's a lot of other stuff on that page too," Sage said. "And if I'm seeing it right, there's a h... heck of a lot more than those two red marks." He paused. "Ooh. Caught that one. I'm not supposed to say the other word."

"Of course not," Mirae said, trying not to smile.

But when she stopped looking only at the red marks, the rest of the paper slowly came back into view.

Eight green checkmarks. Eight problems she had solved correctly. Eight times her thinking had led her to the right answer.

Mirae stared at them. For the first time, eight felt much bigger than two.

"I got eight right," she said. This time, the words sounded different.

“Eight out of ten?” Sage’s eyes brightened. “That’s eighty percent. Ha! I am sooo good at math.” He looked at her. “And apparently, so are you. Eighty percent is impressive.”

Then he grinned. “Told you — I’m a clever fox.”

“And look at that,” he added. “Eight green marks saying, ‘Good to go,’ and only two red ones saying, ‘Stop and look again.’”

Mirae’s eyes widened.

“So the red marks are like your stones,” she said. “They remind me there’s still something to discover. And the green marks remind me how much I already know.”

Sage’s tail swished happily. “Now those red marks don’t look nearly so loud.”

Mirae pulled her colored pencils from her backpack. Carefully, gently, she drew petals around each red X until both red marks had turned into little daisies.

“Thank you,” she said to the marks, “for showing me what to learn next.”



Then she drew small golden suns around each green checkmark.

“And thank you for reminding me what I already know.”

Mirae looked at the paper, now covered in flowers and suns, and started smiling again.



"I'm not bad at math," she said. "I got eight right, and now I know what to practice next." Her smile widened. "My mistakes just got clever. That's pretty cool."

"You got it!" Sage said with a grin.

Together, they started back toward the path.

"Well, it's getting a little late now, and I think you really should be going home," Sage said.

Then he stopped dead in his tracks, one paw raised in the air. Mirae nearly stumbled into him.

"Did I just say *should*?"

Mirae's mouth opened.

"No. No, I did not." He looked at her. She looked back. "I should not have said that."

They both exploded into laughter.

Sage pressed one paw dramatically against his chest. "I am the worst fox in the entire universe!" he cried, falling sideways into the leaves — but he was already laughing so hard that the words came out in pieces.

Mirae laughed even harder. Each time one of them nearly stopped, the other started again, until their sides hurt and tears ran down their cheeks.

When they finally caught their breath, Mirae wiped her eyes with her sleeve and looked toward the stones arranged in the clearing.

Just like Sage's stones helped him remember, Mirae wanted her own way to keep track of her learning.

The Practice Book

That evening, Mirae sat at her bedroom desk with a brand-new notebook. On the cover, she wrote: *Mirae's Practice Book*.

Inside, she made two columns:

Getting Better At... (things to practice)

Already Good At... (things she understood)

She thought about the day and wrote:

<i>Getting better at:</i> Checking my work more carefully before finishing.	<i>Already good at:</i> Solving most of the math problems — I got 8 right!
--	---

The next day at school, when Mrs. Light announced a test, Mirae didn't feel the familiar knot in her stomach. Instead, she felt curious.

What will I learn today?

Later, as she quietly circled what was right with suns or stars and put flowers beside what she wanted to practice, Mrs. Light passed by.

"That's a beautiful way to see your learning, Mirae," she said gently.

"Always celebrate what you already know and what you're still discovering — because mistakes help you see what doesn't work, and that's just as important as finding out what does."

Bedtime... Just Before Falling Asleep

That night, as Mirae nestled into her soft blankets, she looked at her test paper on the nightstand. The red Xs surrounded by little wildflowers looked gentle now, like quiet teachers showing her the way.

She thought about Sage and his Learning Collection. Tomorrow, she decided, she would remember that every learner needs both mistakes to learn from and discoveries to celebrate — just like her Practice Book with its two columns.

“Every mark on my paper is helping me grow,” she whispered to the stars outside her window.

Mirae drifted off to sleep, dreaming of treasures collected and lessons discovered, learning that felt as natural as breathing. And just as she drifted into dreamland, she thought she saw the stars gently winking at her, as if they agreed.

...and in the quiet, something small had bloomed and settled.



A Little Heart-to-Heart:

A few gentle questions you can explore together — to help your child separate mistakes from who they are, and discover the treasures hidden in every miss.

(These questions build on each other, following your child's story.)

Can you think of something you tried today — big or small — that didn't work the way you hoped?

Depending on how it feels, you can either let them share first, or you go first with your own moment: *"Today I... and it didn't work out the way I wanted."*

Then acknowledge their feeling: *"It's okay to feel upset about that. That's completely normal. But here's something important: getting something wrong doesn't mean YOU are wrong. YOU are completely all right! It just means that way didn't work this time."*

Then continue normalizing it: *"You know what? I'm still learning too. Every day I make mistakes, I choose wrong. I make the wrong decision. It never stops – and that's how we keep growing."*

So when [the specific thing they mentioned] didn't work, what did that help you figure out? Let's look for the treasure in that mistake together.

Like Sage using the round stone at the bottom of his tower – it showed him why the tower kept falling and helped him discover that a flat stone worked better!

What's one thing you got right or felt proud of today – even a tiny thing?

After they share: *"See? Learning isn't just about what didn't work – it's also about the things that went right. Both matter."*

Celebrate everything you see them doing well. Depending on your child, that might be tying their shoes, getting dressed, taking care of their teeth, or something entirely different.

Parent Tip:

When your child brings home work with corrections or talks about something that went wrong, first acknowledge that it genuinely hurts to see red marks, to hear that you got it wrong, and to feel judged. That sting is real, and it's okay to feel it.

Then help them separate the action from who they are:

"Getting this wrong doesn't mean YOU are wrong. You're completely okay. This just shows which way didn't work – and that's actually useful information."

Show them how to look for the treasure:

"So what did this mistake help you figure out? What does it tell you about what to try next, or what you need to practice?"

Then share your own recent miss:

"You know what I got wrong today? I... It felt frustrating, but it helped me figure out that... I'm still learning every day, just like you."

The gift you're giving is this: when you acknowledge the pain, separate their worth from their performance, and normalize your own ongoing mistakes, you teach them that getting things wrong isn't failure — it's how humans learn and grow at every age.

Journal Page Prompt:

Create your own Practice Book — just like Mirae's.

On one page, write or draw the things you're getting better at.

On another page, write or draw the things you already do well and feel proud of.

You can use words, doodles, or little symbols — whatever helps you remember that learning and growing never stop. Both pages are treasures.

From my heart to yours — may this story bring light to the quiet places.

The Mirae Tales Blessing Cards

A heartfelt collection for kids learning to love who they are

MIRAE BLESSING CARD

From Story 3 • Card 3 A

Your Mistakes Are Not You

You can learn from them,
but they do not define
who you are.

*“First I have to ask what the
mistake can show me.”*

– Sage (Mirae Tale 3)



MIRAE BLESSING CARD

HOLD THIS WHEN...

...a mistake makes you
feel bad about yourself.

You made a mistake.
You are not a mistake.

Ask what it can show you.

And remember all that's
good about you.



From “Mirae and the Red Marks
That Turned into Flowers”

The Mirae Tales Wisdom Cards

A heartfelt collection for kids learning to love who they are

MIRAE WISDOM CARD

From Story 3 • Card 3 A

Your Mistakes Are Not You

You can learn from them,
but they do not define
who you are.

*“First I have to ask what the
mistake can show me.”*

— Sage (Mirae Tale 3)



FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

THE GIFT OF PERSPECTIVE

*“A should can remind you about
something you did. But it doesn’t get to
tell you who you are.”*

— Sage

Children can quickly move from 'I got
something wrong' to 'I always get things
wrong' and finally to 'I am stupid.'

Acknowledge the disappointment first.
Then help them separate the mistake
from who they are.

A mistake can show what needs more
practice, another look, or a different
approach. It is useful information — not a
judgment of their intelligence or worth.

Help them notice what went right, too. The
whole picture matters.

“Mirae and the Red Marks That Turned into Flowers”

A Note for Parents, Caregivers, and Educators

The Mirae Tales are designed to nurture connection, confidence, and self-awareness in children — whether shared as bedtime stories, daytime reading, or during quiet moments of togetherness.

The little heart-to-hearts, parent tips, and journal prompts included with each tale can be used at any time of day — morning, afternoon, or before sleep. There is no "right" moment — only the one that feels right for you and your child.

Let these tales become gentle companions, helping you build meaningful conversations and celebrate every child's unique light.

© 2026 Tanja May / The Mirae Tales

All rights reserved. No part of this tale may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the creator, except in the case of brief quotations used in critical reviews or articles.

*The Mirae Tales is a heart-born series created to nurture self-love, quiet courage, and the joy of becoming who you are meant to be.
Thank you for reading and respecting the spirit of this work.*