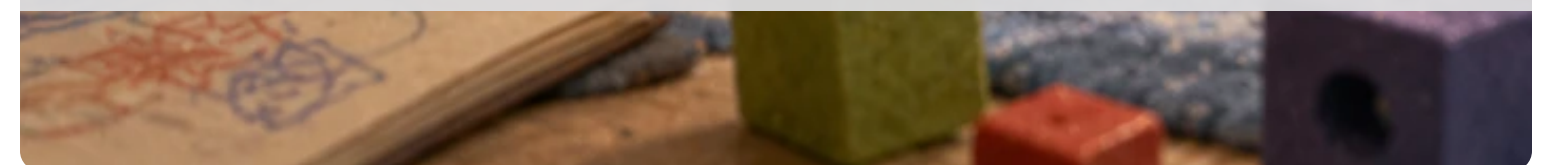




Julius and the Magic Pencil

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Julius sat at his bright blue desk with a brand new notebook and a freshly sharpened pencil. He loved when his drawings were neat and his toys were lined up perfectly. Today, he was determined to write his very first full sentence without making a single mistake.



Carefully, Julius pressed his pencil to the paper to write the word 'SUPER'. But as he drew the letter 'S', his hand slipped, making the bottom loop look like a giant, bumpy balloon. Julius stared at the crooked letter, his cheeks turning bright red as a wave of frustration washed over him.



A hot tear rolled down his cheek, and he threw his pencil across the room in anger. He squeezed his eyes shut, wishing he could disappear because his page wasn't perfect anymore. His heart raced, and he felt like he wanted to give up on writing forever.



Julius's mother gently walked into the room, kneeling beside him and offering a warm, comforting hug. She explained that everyone feels upset when things don't go right, but taking a deep breath can help the stormy feelings pass. Together, they took three slow, deep breaths until Julius felt his heart slow down.



His mother smiled and showed him an old notebook of her own from when she was a little girl. Julius gasped as he saw messy scribbles, backwards letters, and big eraser smudges on every single page. She explained that even grown-ups started out making lots of mistakes, and that is exactly how they learned.



With a calmer heart, Julius picked up his pencil and looked at the bumpy 'S' again. His mother showed him a soft, pink eraser and explained that mistakes just show us where we can try again. Julius gently rubbed the eraser over the bumpy line, watching the mistake fade away into tiny gray crumbs.



Julius tried writing the letter 'S' a second time, guiding his hand more slowly this time. It was still a little bit tilted, but it looked much closer to a real letter than before. He felt a small spark of pride inside his chest for not giving up.



He practiced writing the rest of the alphabet, realizing that each mistake taught his fingers how to balance the pencil better. When a letter turned out wobbly, he didn't cry; instead, he laughed and called it a dancing letter. The notebook was no longer perfectly clean, but it was filled with beautiful effort.



The next morning at school, Julius proudly showed his teacher the sentences he had practiced at home. His teacher beamed with joy, telling the whole class that Julius's hard work and determination were truly wonderful. Julius realized that doing his best was much better than being perfect.



Now, Julius sits happily at his desk, ready to learn new things every single day. He knows that mistakes are just invitations to try again and grow a little smarter. With his pencil in hand, he smiles at the blank page, excited for whatever adventure comes next.