

F



Once Upon A Pizza

FEATURING FRANCESCA™

by Laura Leigh Motte

Illustrated by Géraldine Charette



FRANCESCA[™]

ONCE UPON A PIZZA

BY

LAURA LEIGH MOTTE

ILLUSTRATED BY GÉRALDINE CHARETTE

An Our Generation® book

MAISON BATTAT INC. *Publisher*

Prologue

THE STORY OF PIZZERELLA

Once Upon a Time, in a faraway village in Italy, where the pepperoni grew on trees and the volcanoes bubbled over with melted mozzarella, there was a little boy who wouldn't eat his breakfast. Or his lunch. Or his dinner.

"Even a mouse couldn't live on what my son eats," said his mother, as she watched her son, Giovanni, push his morning oatmeal aside.

"Is it an evil spell?" she wondered.

Her husband assured her that it was not an evil spell. Their son was a fussy eater. It would pass.

But it didn't. As Giovanni's cheeks grew thinner and thinner, his mother grew more and more worried. She had to do something!

One day, Giovanni's mother announced to the villagers that she would have a party. She asked everyone



to prepare their favorite dish. The person whose dish tempted her young son to eat would win a golden charm in the shape of a chef's hat.

Meanwhile, a few streets away from Giovanni's house lived a little girl named Margherita. Margherita loved making pizza. She also liked making people happy. When Margherita heard of the contest, she leapt at the chance to make one of her magic pizzas.

After arriving at the party, Margherita stood in the doorway, in awe. On the long buffet table in the center of the room were mountains of meatballs, platters of pasta, and a lasagna as large as a lake! Embarrassed, she left her little pizza at the end of the table and ran home.*

Moments later, following a delicious smell, Giovanni walked past the meatballs and pasta and lake-sized lasagna, finally noticing Margherita's pizza. Curious, he took a bite. Then another. And another.

Before he knew it, there was only one slice left.

"Who made this pizza?" Giovanni asked the guests, as he showed them the last slice. But no one knew.

The next day, holding the slice as if it were Cinderella's glass slipper, he went from door to door in the



village, asking who had made the remarkable pizza. Many of the villagers tried to take credit for it, hoping to win the golden charm for themselves. But when they offered him their pizza, Giovanni took a sniff, and then cast each slice aside.

Giving up hope, Giovanni sat on the edge of a fountain in the town square and cried.

Suddenly, a little girl appeared.

“Why are you so sad?” she asked.

“I finally found something I love to eat,” replied Giovanni, “and now it’s gone forever.”

“Maybe this will cheer you up,” said Margherita, offering him a slice of pizza, still warm, wrapped in brown paper, and smelling delicious.

The boy knew instantly it was the very same pizza.

At last, the evil spell that had been cast over Giovanni’s tummy was broken and a new spell was cast: True Love.

Many years and many pizzas later, Giovanni and Margherita got married and moved from Italy to New York City, where they opened up a pizzeria, and they called it—Pizzerella!





Chapter One

FOR EVERY PROBLEM, THERE'S A PIZZA

“That story can’t be true,” Meagan said, pulling an apron out of her backpack and tying it around her waist. It was after school. We were in my kitchen, making pizza.

“Yes, it is,” I replied. “My grandmother told me so herself. She even has the golden chef’s hat to prove it. She wears the charm on a necklace and never takes it off.”

Meagan shrugged. “She could have gotten that anywhere. Besides, Francesca, everyone knows pepperoni can’t grow on trees.”

I sighed, and then snapped on my swimming goggles. I wear them when I chop onions. They keep the onion juice out of my eyes so I don’t cry.

“A story is like a good pizza,” I explained, dicing my onion into tiny bits. “Sometimes you need to add a little *spice*.”

“Hmmpf,” Meagan frowned.



Wow, I thought. She's really in a bad mood!

Meagan is my best friend and pizza sous-chef*. Normally she loves to hear the story of my nonno and nonna's* famous pizzeria in New York City. She laughs when I add in silly details. But not today. Today she was upset. And it wasn't because pepperoni doesn't grow on trees. It was because of Mr. Pinchy Nose.

Mr. Pinchy Nose is Meagan's downstairs neighbor. We call him Mr. Pinchy Nose because he always pinches up his nose when he's annoyed. Too much chatter in the stairwell, out comes Mr. Pinchy Nose. Too much giggling in the hallway, out comes Mr. Pinchy Nose.

Mr. Pinchy Nose especially doesn't like it when Meagan practices her ukulele. Last night, while she was playing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," he knocked on the ceiling with his broom and shouted, "Stop that racket*!"

The next day, Mr. Pinchy Nose sent an email to Meagan's parents. He said Meagan is only allowed to practice on Tuesdays and Thursdays, when Mr. Pinchy Nose has his bowling nights. Meagan was not happy. She loves her ukulele.

Fortunately, I knew just the thing to cheer her up.



I took the pizza dough, which I had left rising on the counter, out of the mixing bowl and slapped it down on the wood cutting board.

I kneaded*, stretched, shaped, and spun the dough into a perfect circle.

“You’re getting really good at that,” Meagan said, looking impressed.

I shrugged. For me, making pizza is second nature*. Dad says I’ve been doing it since before I could walk. When I was a toddler, I made mud pizzas. When I was old enough to use scissors, I cut pizzas out of felt and glued on the toppings. Now that I’m nine, I make real pizzas. They’re the best because, well, nobody wants to eat mud, right?

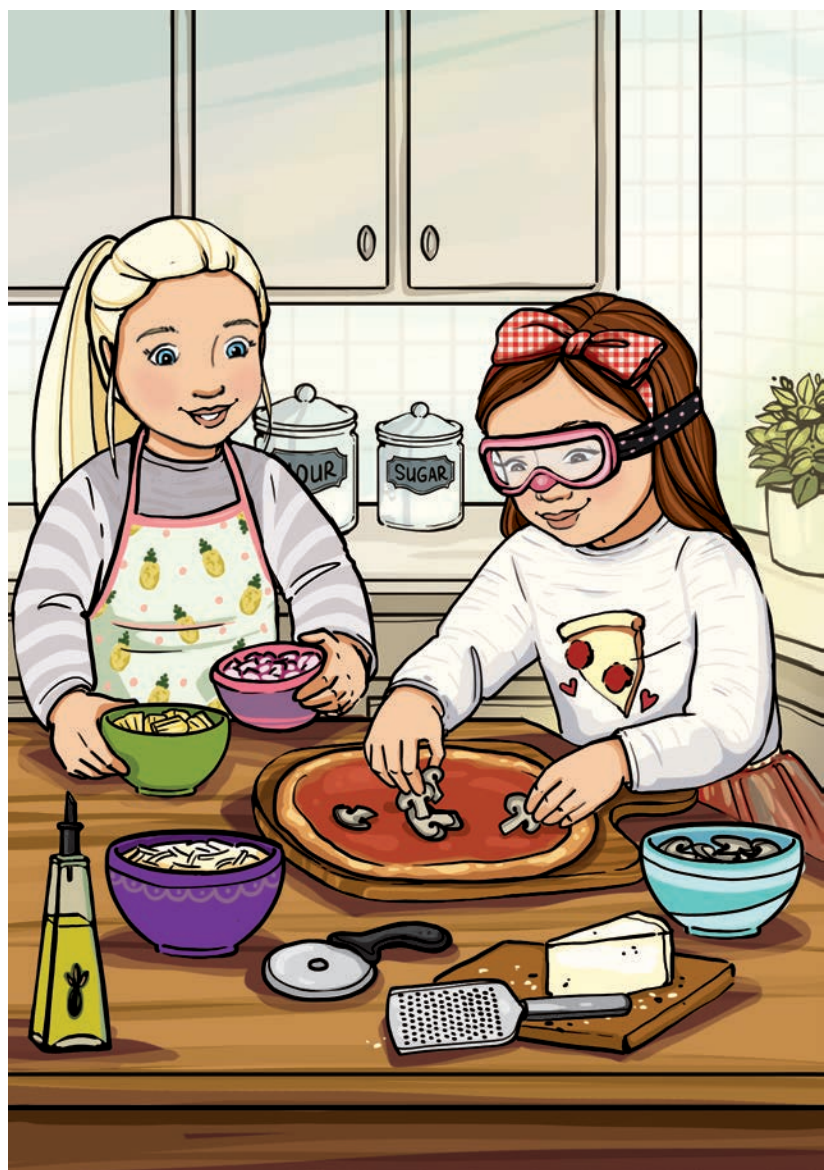
Dad says I get the “pizza gene” from his side of the family. Just like brown eyes, cowlicks*, mistaking d’s for b’s, and loving opera.

“Time for the toppings,” I announced.

Meagan slid over the bowls of sliced mushrooms, pineapples, diced onions, and grated cheese.

“Are you sure this is going to help?” Meagan asked, as I carefully laid out some mushrooms.





“Absolutely!” I replied. “Like magic.”

Meagan smiled, but I could tell she still had doubts.

You see, I believe, with the right toppings, not only can a pizza taste good and be healthy, it can also have special powers. Like a magic potion, but with pizza. It can break an evil spell, make someone fall in love with you, and even stop a bully from bullying. (I know this for a fact because I gave one of my pizzas to Audrey Radakof, and she never kicked me under the table in science class again.)

This pizza was going to have the power to cheer up my friend Meagan. As I sprinkled on the grated cheese, Meagan popped a piece of pineapple into her mouth.

“Mmmm,” she said, smacking her lips. Meagan loves pineapple, which is why I chose it as the main topping.

“Dad!” I called out toward the living room. “We’re ready for the oven!”

“OK, Madame Pizza Chef,” he replied, as he marched into the kitchen and gave me a captain’s salute.

When I make pizza, my mom or dad has to be close by. That’s because making pizza can be dangerous. You need sharp knives to chop with, and a super-hot oven. It’s



not for cowards!

Just as my dad closed the oven door, I remembered something.

“My timer. I have to set it.”

The pizza timer is a very important part of the pizza-making process. When it dings, I know the pizza is ready to come out of the oven. I keep it on a shelf by the stove so it’s always handy. But this time, when I reached for it, the timer wasn’t there.

“Where did it go?” Meagan asked.

The first thought that came into my mind was this:
The Bunhead Brigade.



Chapter Two

THE BUNHEAD BRIGADE

I stormed toward the playroom.

“What’s wrong?” Meagan asked, racing after me.

When we arrived, my little sister, Viola, was doing pirouettes*, twirling round and round in her favorite tutu. Her friends Nia and Valencia were watching.

I call Viola’s friends “The Bunhead Brigade” because, like Viola, they always wear their hair pinned up in tight buns. All they care about is ballet. Sometimes they stuff their tutus and tights in my play pizza oven, which they pretend is a washing machine, which it absolutely is not.

“Eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen...” Nia was counting. That’s when I saw she was holding my timer. It was just what I suspected.

“Hey, that’s mine!” I exclaimed.

“We’re trying to see how many pirouettes I can do



in a minute,” explained Viola.

Nia kept counting. “Nineteen, twenty...” When the timer buzzed, Viola stopped spinning.

“How many was that?” she asked Nia.

“Twenty-two and a half,” Nia declared.

“I can beat that,” exclaimed Valencia,

“Oh yeah? Let’s see you try!” Viola replied.

Valencia and Viola are always trying to outdo each other. Maybe it’s because their names both start with V.

“But it’s *my* timer,” I said.

“Just another minute,” Viola begged, sweetly. “We’re almost done with the competition. Pretty please?”

Viola has this cute way of pouting her lips and batting her eyelashes that make her look like a sweet little baby. You just can’t say no to her. When Viola’s ballet teacher told my parents that she has talent, it got worse. My mom even bought her a ballet barre* that runs along an entire wall of the playroom. I wasn’t happy about it.

“If Viola gets a whole wall,” I argued, “I should get a whole wall, too.”

My parents agreed to divide the playroom in half. We drew a chalk line down the middle. According to the





“Treaty* of Last Saturday,” Viola is not allowed to cross into my section without permission.

But today, Viola was doing pirouettes on my side of the chalk line, right beside my play pizzeria. The Bunhead Brigade were sitting in my restaurant chairs.

I sighed and watched Viola try to pirouette her way to victory. As she spun around, one of her hairpins flew into a mixing bowl, making a loud *ping*.

That’s when Meagan spoke up.

“That’s enough,” she declared. “Why don’t you bunheads use the wall clock? Francesca needs her timer. Now.”

The Bunhead Brigade looked surprised, finally noticing Meagan standing in the doorway.

“Fine,” said Nia. She handed me the timer.

Suddenly, I smelled something burning. I ran back to the kitchen, but already I knew disaster was around the corner. And then I saw it. Smoke was coming out of the cracks in the oven door.

“My pizza!!!”



Chapter Three

THE PANTRY

A black and broken mess, the “Cheer Up” pizza was sitting on the counter where my dad had put it after quickly rescuing it from the oven.

The pineapple looked like lumps of charcoal, not fruit. Nothing about this pizza was cheerful at all. Even though Dad had opened all the windows, the kitchen still smelled like burnt crust when Meagan’s mother came to pick her up.

But Meagan didn’t seem sad. She was actually happy. All the drama with Viola had made her forget about Mr. Pinchy Nose. (See? Even burnt, my pizza totally worked.)

Since I was still hungry, I decided to make another one. There wasn’t any tomato sauce left, so I thought pesto would be a good substitute. Pesto is a mashed-up sauce of olive oil, basil leaves, garlic, and pine nuts. It sounds weird



but it's really yummy.

While I prepared more pizza dough, my parents told The Bunhead Brigade it was time to pack up their tutus and go home. Then they sent Viola upstairs to her room.

"We'll be up in a minute to speak with you about taking peoples' things without their permission," my father told her. He sounded serious.

"But I was just borrowing it," Viola whimpered, as she shuffled heavily up the stairs. All her ballerina bounciness was gone.

I felt bad for her. I love my little sister, even if she is a selfish bunhead. I decided I would share my pizza with her. Viola likes pesto.

As my parents headed upstairs to discuss "The Viola Problem," I went into the pantry to get a jar of Nonna's homemade pesto. I hoped there was one left.

The pantry is like a walk-in closet, but with food stored in it. After the playroom, it's my favorite room in the house. There are shelves upon shelves of glass jars filled with pickles, jam, mustard, and honey, bottles of olive oil, vinegar, ketchup, and soda, spices and sugar, cans of corn



and peas and tuna and beans, and every shape and size of pasta. You get hungry just looking at it all!

It's also the perfect hiding spot for hide-and-seek. When the door is closed, nobody thinks to look in there. That's why my parents had no idea I was in there when they came back into the kitchen.

"What can we do?" I heard my dad say. "Ballet has gone to her head."

"But we don't want to discourage her, either," Mom replied. "She's good at it. Her teacher said so. There's the apartment over the garage. That could be Viola's ballet studio, if Angela moves out one day. It would give her more room to practice."

"Do you think Francesca will be jealous?" my father asked.

At the mention of my name, I gasped and stepped backwards, knocking over a jar of pickled peppers. It's a good thing I caught it. My heart was beating fast.

Viola, my baby sister, with a whole ballet studio to herself?

Would I be jealous?





Chapter Four

NO MORE FLYING HAIRPINS

I had to think about this. I coughed on purpose to let my parents know I was in the pantry before I came out.

“I’m making another pizza,” I said. “I’ll give some to Viola, too. She’s probably hungry from doing all those pirouettes.”

Did my parents know that I had heard them talking just now? I wasn’t sure, but they looked pleased about the pizza for my sister.

“That’s a nice idea, Francesca,” said my mother. “I’m sure she will appreciate it.”

My timer was set, so while my pizza was baking I went into the playroom. I sat my two stuffed animal friends, “Pepperoni” and “Parmesan,” at one of my pizzeria tables and gave them a basket of pretend bread. Then I turned on some opera music. I tried to be happy, but I kept thinking about what I had overheard.



Why does Viola get the whole garage to herself and not me? Why can't I get a whole pizzeria? Does everyone think ballet is more important than pizza?

Then I looked around the playroom. I pictured it without the ballet barre. There would be a lot more room. I could have more tables, bigger pizza parties, and no more flying hairpins in my mixing bowls and tutus in my pizza oven. I realized there might be an upside to what my parents had in mind.

That's when Viola came into the playroom. Her bun was loose and lopsided, and her eyes were red.

"Mom said you made me some pizza," she said softly.

"Yeah. It's called 'The Rascally Ballerina.'" I said. Viola smiled.

When my timer went *ding*, I took out the pizza and cut it into four slices with my pizza cutter (the best tool ever invented). I gave Viola a slice.

"Mmm," she said, pulling strings of gooey cheese into her mouth.

Seeing someone enjoy one of my pizzas always gives me a happy feeling. It really is amazing, the way pizza can



make anybody, even somebody as self-centered as Viola, turn into mushy goo, like mozzarella under a hot broiler*.

“I’m sorry for taking your timer,” Viola said, dabbing pesto sauce from her mouth with one of my red-and-white checked napkins.

“That’s OK,” I replied. I knew she really meant it. “Another slice?”

“Yes please.” Viola licked her lips as she watched me cut the pizza.

Seeing that she was still under my pizza spell, I decided this was the right time to tell her my idea.

“Viola?” I asked. “If you were to have your very own ballet studio over the garage, could I have the playroom as my own pizzeria?”

I told her what I’d heard our parents say when I was in the pantry.

“Yes!” she said, leaping into the air. It was like she had grasshoppers in her knees. “I’m getting my own ballet studio!”

She started spinning and dancing around so fast her tutu was a blur.

“And you’re getting your own pizzeria!” she added.





Viola took my hands. She wanted *me* to dance too.

“Oh no—” I said, as she pulled me into the middle of the room, spinning and shaking me around. I stepped on her toes more than a few times but Viola didn’t seem to mind.

Suddenly, Viola stopped dancing.

“So, when is Auntie Angela moving out?”

I shrugged. It was a good question.



Chapter Five

AUNTIE ANGELA

“Why can’t we just ask her to move out?” Viola asked.

“Because it would be rude,” I said.

We were outside on the driveway, staring up at the garage apartment where our Auntie Angela lives. Aunt Angela is my Dad’s younger sister. She moved here to southern California to go to art school and stayed on. Sometimes she looks after us. She also has two cats, Nifty and Thrifty.

Before Auntie Angela moved in, the room over the garage was a storage space, full of cobwebs and broken brooms. Viola and I never went up there. We were too scared.

After Auntie Angela arrived, she cleaned and dusted everything. She made shelves, put up curtains, installed a flower box in the window, and painted the walls. It went



from scary to charming in less than a week.

“Maybe she’ll just move out on her own,” I said.
“Someday.”

“Like when?” asked Viola. I could see that she was getting impatient.

I thought this over.

“Like when she sells one of her paintings for a million dollars,” I suggested.

“Who would pay a million dollars for one of her weirdo paintings?” Viola asked.

I shrugged. “Maybe somebody who likes weirdo paintings?”

Viola frowned, which is something she does when she’s thinking extra-hard. Then she started doing knee bends. Up and down. Up and down. She looked like she was winding up for a jump to the moon.

“I know!” she shouted, standing up on her tippy toes and raising her arms in a circle over her head. “Sometimes in storybooks, the princesses fall in love and move into castles with their Prince Charmings. That’s what happened in Cinderella, anyway.”

“Fairytale aren’t real life,” I replied. “And what if



she doesn't want to marry a prince? I know I don't want to get married. Boys are icky. What if Auntie Angela feels the same way?"

Before Viola could answer, Auntie Angela opened her apartment window and called down to us, "You girls want to come up for some tea?"



Auntie Angela makes the most delicious tea with fresh herbs and sugar cubes. She serves it in one of her special teapots using pretty cups that don't match. It's like a tea party. She always lets us choose our own cups.

I was sitting on the sofa, sipping from my favorite teacup, called "Little Cabin." Viola had picked "The Ballerina" (of course). As we drank our tea, I could see Viola looking around Auntie Angela's apartment. I could tell from her serious expression that she was already imagining where everything would go in her new ballet studio.

When we finished our tea, Auntie Angela put on some music for Viola to dance to. As Viola swirled toward



the window, my eyes landed on Auntie Angela's latest painting.

I stared at it for a while. It looked like a yellow tent, sitting beside a puddle of melted strawberry sundae. Yes, it was weird. But it was also pretty.

"Checkers?" Auntie Angela asked me.

"Do you even need to ask?" I replied. She knows I love checkers.

Auntie Angela went over to the chest of drawers where she keeps the checkerboard. Thrifty jumped on my lap and started purring. Suddenly, I felt sad. I didn't want Auntie Angela, or her two cats, or her teacups to ever leave. Having the playroom all to myself did not seem nearly as important as having Auntie Angela around.

That's when Viola spoke up. Or rather, exploded.

"Auntie Angela—do you want to fall in love, get married, and move into your very own castle?"

I cringed* in embarrassment. But Auntie Angela didn't look shocked.

"Why? Do you have anyone in mind?" she asked. There was a sparkle in her eye and her mouth curled into a smile.





I was surprised. “Really? You want to meet Prince Charming and move out?”

“Of course,” she said. “Though I’ll take a plain old *Mr. Charming*,” she added. “Princes are for fairy tales.”

Viola leaned over and whispered in my ear.

“See?”

I nodded. It looked like Auntie Angela needed our help as much as we needed her apartment.

Now all we had to do was find her a plain old “*Mr. Charming*.”



Chapter Six

MR. CHARMING

“Drevon Moon Ryder!” Viola blurted out. “He’s the hero in those goofy *Galaxy Battle* movies Auntie Angela likes.”

Viola and I were by our swimming pool, sitting on two patio chairs, under the umbrella. Though it was late September, it was still warm enough to swim. Viola didn’t have a ballet lesson today, so we decided to use our Saturday afternoon to work on Project Mr. Charming.

The first step in our plan was to make a list of possible Mr. Charmings for Auntie Angela. I opened a fresh notebook just for the occasion, to make this official.

“I don’t think Drevon Moon Ryder is a real person,” I said, as I wrote down his name. Actors and the characters they play in the movies aren’t always the same people in real life.

Then I remembered that Drevon Moon Ryder



has a funny accent. He's from England, which is very far away. It's farther than Nonno and Nonna's pizzeria in New York City.

"I think we need to find a Mr. Charming who lives in California," I told Viola, trying not to sound like I thought her idea was bad. I didn't want to hurt her feelings. Ever since we started Project Mr. Charming, we'd been getting along. It felt like we were friends, and not just sisters.

That's when I heard a bell ding-a-ling in the distance. I knew the sound well.

"Mr. Frosty Top!" I shouted, jumping out of my chair.

Moments later, the ice cream truck pulled up to the sidewalk in front of our house. Mom had joined us, and after she had already gotten her usual salted-caramel cone, Viola and I finally decided to order two kid-sized cones: bubble gum flavor for Viola and cookie-dough for me.

Mr. Frosty Top (he's the owner) always puts whipped cream and a cherry on top of his cones. Even my mom, who likes to eat healthy, says his cones are the best.

"Can I have two cherries?" Viola asked.



“What are you trying to do, put me out of business?” Mr. Frosty Top replied with a grin. He put two cherries on Viola’s cone and on mine, too.

“Thank you, Mr. Frosty Top,” I said, elbowing Viola.

“Thank you, Mr. Frosty Top,” Viola said, already devouring cherry number two.

Though his real name is Dermot, Viola and I call him “Mr. Frosty Top” because he has a swirl of white hair on top of his head. He’s very generous and gives us extra toppings for free, like cherries, or sprinkles, or chopped peanuts.

Just as Viola and I walked back toward the house, where Mom was waiting for us on the front porch, I suddenly thought of something. I stopped and turned around.

“Would you like to get married?” I asked Mr. Frosty Top.

Mr. Frosty Top laughed. “My ice cream is that good?”

I could feel my face turning red. “No, I mean...not to me, to someone else. One day.”

“Sorry girls,” he said, “but I already found my





special someone. Isn't that right, Ginny?"

From the back of the truck, a lady waved and came out to join us. It was Ginny, who helps out Mr. Frosty Top on weekends and in the summer when it's extra busy. She has eyes that are the color of mint chocolate chip ice cream, green with specks of chocolate brown. Ginny gave Mr. Frosty Top a kiss on the cheek.

I was happy for them, but sad for Auntie Angela. And for us, too. It would have been fun, having Mr. Frosty Top as an uncle, and we'd probably get all our ice cream cones for free.

I crossed Mr. Frosty Top off my list.

Mom had gone inside and Viola and I were still eating our cones on the front stoop when we saw our next-door neighbors' son, Ricardo, arrive. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lopez, are getting older so he comes over once a week to take care of their yard and pool. He used to live there too, until he finished law school. Now he lives in a condo downtown.

"Hola, señoritas," he said.

"Hola, Ricardo," we both said at the same time. Ricardo speaks Spanish and English.



Viola and I watched as Ricardo unloaded gardening tools from the back of his sports car. He likes to sing when he works. He also likes to tell us silly jokes. He always has a new one to share.

“What direction does a chicken swim in?” Ricardo asked us.

Viola and I looked at each other and shrugged.

“Cluck-wise!” he answered.

Ricardo started to make clucking noises. We both laughed.

“What about Ricardo?” I whispered.

Viola nodded. “Yeah, he’s funny.”

We listened to Ricardo tell a few more jokes while he pulled weeds around the front walkway. I thought he’d be a really fun uncle. It would be easy to introduce him to Auntie Angela. I wondered if she was home. Or had they already met? I couldn’t remember.

Just then, Auntie Angela’s cats wandered over. They were probably out looking for a lick of ice cream. If Auntie Angela sees us in the yard, she usually lets them out for some fresh air and exercise. But Thrifty, an orange tiger-striped cat, sometimes tries to escape. You have to



keep an eye on her.

I watched her bound over to the Lopez's garden. She pranced right up to Ricardo and started to brush up against his pant leg. It was her way of saying, "Pet me, pretty please?" Ricardo didn't seem very happy about that, because he gently shook his leg and backed away.

"What's the matter?" I asked, rushing over. "Don't you like cats?"

"I'm allergic," he replied sadly.

My heart sank. Auntie Angela loves her cats. I was pretty sure she could never fall in love, get married and move in with someone who couldn't be around her "precious kitties."

I scratched Ricardo off my list, and then scooped Thrifty up in my arms.

The first day of Project Mr. Charming wasn't even over and already we had no one left.



Chapter Seven

THE PRINCE OF PLUCK

Sunday night was a school night, so I had to take a break from husband-hunting for Auntie Angela. Meagan invited me to her place. We were going to study for a math test together. It's always fun going to Meagan's because there's an elevator and even a doorman who opens the front doors for you.

To help with the math test, I thought we could make an “Oh No There's a Math Test Tomorrow” pizza. It would have broccoli on it, for brainpower, and sun-dried tomatoes* because they're sweet and chewy and go really well with broccoli. (Math is not my best subject, so this pizza had to be *extra* magic.)

Meagan's kitchen is pretty fancy, with sparkling white cabinets and countertops everywhere. Her parents love to cook and are happy to help with my pizza creations. Meagan's mother watched me make the dough. She says



she wants to learn. Meanwhile, her father followed me around with a damp cloth, wiping up spills, tossing food scraps, and putting away dirty plates. He's a cleaning machine! I certainly didn't mind.

When I finished spreading on the tomato sauce and sprinkling on the mozzarella cheese, Meagan was ready for her job.

"OK" she said, sliding over the bowl of broccoli florets* she'd just finished chopping.

"This pizza will have eight slices. If we want four broccoli pieces per slice, how many broccoli pieces do we need in total?"

I closed my eyes, thinking through the problem. *Four broccoli pieces on eight different slices.* Then it came to me.

"It's four times eight! And four times eight is—thirty-two!"

"Correct," Meagan said. "Let's do another one." Meagan took a sip of juice like it was rocket fuel. She loves studying for tests.

"The 'Oh No There's a Math Test Tomorrow' pizza has been in the oven for four minutes," she said. "If



it takes twelve minutes to cook the pizza, in how many minutes will the pizza be ready?”

I was sure I had this one. “Six!”

Meagan frowned. Even the door buzzer knew I got the answer wrong because it *buzzed* angrily.

Meagan’s mother came into the kitchen. “Meagan, Owen is here with your ukulele.”

Owen is Meagan’s ukulele teacher.

Outside in the hallway, Owen was standing beside a yellow bike. Meagan says he always brings his bike up in the elevator.

For some reason, the bike made me think of Auntie Angela. She rides a blue bike with a basket. I always notice when grown-ups ride bikes. Grown-ups who ride bikes aren’t like other grown-ups. They’re more like kids.

Owen took off his helmet and handed Meagan the ukulele.

“I restrung it for you,” Owen told Meagan. “It’s as good as new.”

I looked at Owen closely as Meagan introduced us, and suddenly realized something. He looks a lot like Drevon Moon Ryder from *Galaxy Battle*, but less



muscle-y and wearing a pair of black-rimmed glasses.

Meagan tested out her new strings. *Twang, twang, twang.*

“It sounds much better. Thanks, Owen,” she said, strumming happily.

Owen turned to me. “Do you play a musical instrument, Francesca?” he asked.

I shook my head. “No. I just make really good pizza.”

He nodded. “Ah, I see. Pizza is your art form.”

This was a complete shock. That’s exactly what my Auntie Angela said a few weeks ago, when I was upset about Viola’s ballet being more important than pizza. She said pizza was my art form.

Suddenly we heard a loud *thump, thump*, coming from the apartment downstairs.

“Here he goes again,” sighed Meagan. She turned to me.

“I forgot. I’m only allowed to play on Tuesdays and Thursdays, when Mr. Pinchy Nose goes bowling.”

“Mr. Pinchy Nose clearly has no taste,” said Owen, putting his bike helmet on and heading back toward the





elevator. As he turned, I noticed the sign on his bike:

The Prince of Pluck
Affordable ukulele lessons!

Prince? The word got me thinking once again about Project Mr. Charming.

“See you at your next lesson!” he said, as he walked his bike into the elevator.

When the sliding elevator doors closed, I excitedly turned to Meagan.

“I think I found Auntie Angela’s Mr. Charming!”

Meagan furrowed her eyebrows.

“You mean—Owen?” She seemed surprised.

“Yes. He talks like her, rides a bike like her, and he even looks like Drevon Moon Ryder, her favorite movie actor. He’s the perfect Mr. Charming.”

Meagan’s mother was listening by the door to their apartment. “Mr. Charming? Like a Prince Charming? For whom?”

She was very curious.

“For my Auntie Angela. We’re helping her find a Mr. Charming,” I explained. “When she gets married and



moves out, Viola will have her very own ballet studio and I'll have the whole playroom to myself."

"I see," said Meagan's mother, grinning. "Well, I do agree that Owen is a very nice young man."

"Except when he's telling me to practice more," Meagan added.

Meagan's mother laughed. Then I remembered Mr. Frosty Top.

"I sure hope that Owen doesn't already have a *Mrs.* Charming."

"Oh no," Meagan's mother assured me.

"Does he like cats?" I asked. This was also very important.

"He babysits Nora when we go away on vacation," said Meagan. Nora is Meagan's cat. She's black and has a really loud meow. "He loves her as much as we do."

"It's a perfect match!" I said.

"But how do you make them fall in love?" Meagan asked me.

I knew the answer to this one right away.

"Pizza!"



Chapter Eight

THE RASCALLY BALLERINA STRIKES AGAIN

You are cordially invited to The Ukulele Ballet!

A Recital at Meagan's

This Tuesday, 6 PM

Pizza will be served!

Meagan and I decided a ukulele recital was the perfect way to get Auntie Angela and Owen together. We chose Meagan's place because Owen would be sure to come.

We added ballet to the program for two reasons.

First, Viola wouldn't like Meagan and her other ukulele buddies getting all the attention.

And second, if Viola were in the recital it would give Auntie Angela a good reason to come. Viola is her niece, after all.

All we needed was the pizza.

Meagan and I were in the playroom, and I was



knee-deep in toys and books from my toy trunk. I usually keep my pizza recipe book on a shelf in my play kitchen. But it wasn't there.

"Where is my recipe book?" I said, starting to panic. The recital was only two days away. I had to be ready. "It was right here, I know it!"

"Why is it so important?" asked Meagan. She stuck her head in my play pizzeria oven to see if it was there.

"There's a recipe in it. I need it," I explained.

During my last trip to see Nonna, I had jotted down some of her best recipes, including, "The Pizzerella Special."

"Why does it have to be *that* recipe?" asked Viola. She was doing leg circles at her ballet barre and not helping us at all.

"It's not just any old recipe, it's legendary," I told Viola. "Don't you remember the story of our grandparents?"

Viola looked blank.

"Seriously?" I stared at her.

"What?" Viola blinked innocently.

"I can't believe it. How can you remember all those



fancy French ballet words, like *plié** and *sauté** and *relevé**, but not something that's truly important like how our nonno and nonna met?"

Viola still had a blank look.

"This is the *same* pizza that made Nonno fall in love with Nonna," I reminded her. "If it could do that for them, it will do the same for Auntie Angela and Owen."

"Oh yeah!" exclaimed Viola, finally remembering. "Like a love potion, but with pizza."

"Exactly." I turned to Meagan. She looked more doubtful.

"A 'Love Potion' pizza? You really think that will work?" she asked.

"For sure!" I replied. "If a pizza can help me in math (thanks to my "Oh No There's a Math Test Tomorrow" pizza, I got my very first A) there's got to be a pizza for True Love. And True Love is probably a lot easier than math!"

Meagan shrugged. "Well we did also study—"

"Here it is," I said, finally finding my pizza recipe book on Viola's side of the playroom. It was hidden underneath one of her tutus, of course.



But when I flipped to the page where I had written down Nonna's famous recipe, I gasped.

"A page is missing!" I cried out. From the ragged edges of the binding, I could see where several pages had been torn out.

Viola looked down at the floor. "I didn't know," she said.

"What did you do?" I asked, sensing trouble.

"I may have crumpled up a few pages to stuff my pointe shoes*,," she explained. "To keep my toes from hurting."

I was too shocked to speak.

"I thought they were all blank," she added. "Maybe there were two pages stuck together and I didn't see."

Viola looked genuinely sorry and those big pale green eyes of hers were already filling up with tears.

"It's OK," I said. There was no reason to make her feel worse. Viola just can't help herself. All the more reason I needed our plan to work. I needed her out of the playroom.

"Where are your pointe shoes?" Meagan asked. She always knows the sensible thing to do in a crisis.



When Viola pulled out her pointe shoes from her ballet dresser, they were *both* empty.

“Maybe it was Nia’s pointe shoe,” she said, scratching her bun. “I can’t remember anymore.”

I sighed. There was no time to be mad. I looked at the clock. There was still time to call Nonna in New York.



“I hope she answers!” I told my mother as we called Nonna on Mom’s phone.

When Nonna picked up her cell phone, I could hear traffic in the street. She was obviously outside the pizzeria. She sounded very rushed.

“Francesca, *bella*, I’m about to go! What can I do for you?”

“I wanted to ask you about the Pizzerella recipe,” I told her. “You know, the famous one that broke the evil spell and made Nonno fall madly in love with you?”

“Of course I know. Did you finally make it? How did it turn out? Did you add a little spice? Or maybe some fresh herbs?”





Nonna was always curious about my pizza experiments and encouraged me to write them down in my recipe book.

“No, I didn’t make it,” I told her. “You see, Viola stole a page from—”

A car horn honked loudly on Nonna’s end of the line. “Margherita, it’s time to go.”

That was my grandfather’s voice talking.

“I’m coming, Giovanni,” she replied to him.

“That’s our taxi Francesca,” Nonna explained, “we’re going to be late.”

“Wait a sec, just one thing—” I pleaded.

I heard a *beep*.

“Oh dear. My battery’s dying!” said Nonna. Then the call ended suddenly.

“Will she call back?” I asked my mother, worried.

“Eventually,” replied my mother.

“If she remembered to pack her cell phone charger!” my father added with a grin. Nonna can be forgetful when she’s in a rush.

“Pack? Where are they going?” I asked my parents.

“Italy. It’s their fortieth wedding anniversary, and



Nonno wanted to do something special this year.”

“Oh,” I replied. I was happy for Nonna to have such a sweet present from Nonno, but also upset.

How would I make a pizza in time for the recital without the magic recipe?



Chapter Nine

LOVE POTION PIZZA

I stood in the pantry, staring at all the ingredients.

Pesto? Garlic? Cinnamon? Oregano? Basil? There was so much to choose from. It was confusing. I had no idea what to put on the pizza. What were the ingredients for True Love? Did anybody even know? Anybody else but Nonna?

“It could be anything,” I said, frustrated.

The pantry felt small with Meagan, Viola, and me, standing there all together. They were eager to help.

“Pineapple?” suggested Meagan, grabbing a can from the shelf. “Everybody loves pineapple.”

“Pesto?” Viola said, holding a jar of Nonna’s Pesto.

I wasn’t sure. Though I liked both of those toppings, were they the magic ingredients I needed for this pizza?

“What about chocolate?” said Viola, pulling down a box of baking chocolate. “That’s popular on Valentine’s



Day. Valentine's Day is all about mushy love stuff."

"Chocolate on a cheese pizza would be very weird," I told her. "Interesting, but weird."

Viola shrugged, and then she started breaking off squares of chocolate. She offered one to Meagan, who refused it. Meagan doesn't like chocolate. I know this because at Halloween she always wants to trade her chocolate bars for my caramels and sour fruit candies.

Then I realized I was looking at this problem the wrong way. Every time I make a pizza I always think about *who* is eating it.

Viola likes pesto. Meagan likes pineapples. My Dad is really into anchovies*. Mom doesn't eat meat. You have to pay attention to these things when you make a pizza for someone.

"Auntie Angela likes cheese," I blurted out. "That's something I know for sure. She likes cheese cubes and cheese platters and cheese sticks and cheese puffs. So maybe I could use two different cheeses on this pizza: grated mozzarella *and* cheddar. A little orange, a little white, both on the same pizza."

"Like two people falling in love!" added Meagan.



I nodded. Yes. Two cheeses on this pizza felt like a good idea.

“What about Owen?” I asked. He was still a mystery to me. I turned to Meagan. “Do you know what Owen likes to eat?”

Meagan tilted her head and thought for a moment. Then her eyes lit up.

“Hot sauce!” she said. “He always carries a bottle of hot sauce in his jacket pocket. It fell out during one of our lessons.”

“Hot? Hmm.” I scanned the shelves and found a small jar of chili flakes. Those are hot. I could sprinkle some on the pizza. Auntie Angela likes spicy foods too.

“We’re off to a good start!” I was getting excited about my pizza.

“I could do something special with pepperoni. Like cutting it into little heart shapes.”

“Yes! Hearts!” chirped Viola. “That would be so cute!” Now she was just as excited.

“And I could add a teaspoon of maple syrup to the tomato sauce. Auntie Angela likes things that are sweet and savory*.”



“Oh my,” Meagan said, rubbing her tummy. “I’m getting hungry just thinking about how good this pizza is going to be!”

I laughed. I didn’t need Nonna’s recipe. I was making my own “Love Potion” pizza and I was sure it was going to work!



Chapter Ten

STEP AWAY FROM MY PIZZA!

“Where is Auntie Angela?” I asked my mother.
“She said she was coming.”

“She’ll be here soon,” my mom replied calmly.

Mom was helping Meagan’s mother arrange the dining room chairs so they all faced in one direction. Meagan’s living room is large and there are pink velvet curtains separating the dining room from the living room. When everything is set up, it looks like a real theater.

Owen had arrived early. He was wearing a polka dot bow tie with a plaid shirt, which you don’t see very often. I was sure Auntie Angela would approve. She always comments when I do something different with my clothes. Like when I wear mismatched shoelaces or a shirt that doesn’t match my pants. She says she likes “the unexpected.”

Owen was helping Meagan and his other ukulele



students warm up* for the recital. He said that warming up was important.

In Meagan's bedroom, Viola and The Bunhead Brigade were doing the same thing, stretching their legs and practicing their pirouettes. You could feel the excitement!

But where was Auntie Angela? All the other guests had arrived. The recital would be starting any minute.

I looked around the room and glanced at my watch. Did she forget? Sometimes Auntie Angela gets so caught up in her painting she stops thinking about what time it is.

I was just about to ask my mother to call her, when she finally arrived. I gasped when I saw her.

I had told her The Ukulele Ballet was going to be fancy. She obviously took it seriously. She was wearing a long dress and high-heeled shoes. She'd even curled her hair. She looked like a real-life princess!

Owen must have noticed her too, because I saw him look at her, and he kept looking at her as Viola escorted Auntie Angela to her seat, right beside him.

"We reserved a spot for you," Viola said. It was really cute seeing her trying not to smile too much. Viola was wearing her ballet costume and makeup. Her bun was



gelled and smoothed so perfectly it glistened. There wasn't a wisp of hair out of place.

When Meagan's parents opened the pink velvet curtains, Viola and The Bunhead Brigade danced while Meagan, and Owen's other music students, played.

The audience clapped and hooted between every number. All the performers did great!

At the intermission*, it was time for *my* special talent. Pizza! When the curtain closed, I dashed toward Meagan's kitchen.

With my dad's help, I took the special "Love Potion" pizza from the oven. I cut it into two slices and put each on a paper plate.

"Your pizza is ready," I told Owen and Auntie Angela. They were glued to their seats, talking. They barely noticed me standing there.

"Hello?" I had to repeat myself. "Your pizza is ready."

"No thanks" said Owen. "I'm not hungry right now."

"I'll wait too," said Auntie Angela. "So what were you saying Owen...?"



I was shocked. Auntie Angela was always hungry when it came to one of my pizzas.

Then Auntie Angela pulled out her cell phone and started showing Owen pictures of her paintings.

“Here’s one I did for my final thesis* project,” she told him. “It’s one of my favorites.”

Owen took the phone to have a better look.

I was worried. This was not the way it was supposed to happen. What if Owen found her paintings as weird as Viola did?

“But this pizza is for you,” I said, still standing there holding the “Love Potion” pizza, complete with heart-shaped pepperoni, which was getting colder with every second that passed.

That’s when the door buzzer *buzzed* and a tall man barged into the living room.

It was Mr. Pinchy Nose, or at least, I guessed it was him, because he had a very pinchy nose and looked upset about something.

“How many times do I have to tell you to stop that racket,” he barked. “And now you’ve added some stomping to the mix. It sounds like a herd of wild





elephants!”

Mr. Pinchy Nose shot a mean look in the direction of The Bunhead Brigade. From the sad look in their eyes, you could tell being compared to a herd of elephants was the worst thing in the world.

“I’m sorry,” said Meagan’s mother. “We thought you had bowling on Tuesday nights.”

“It was canceled,” he replied.

I wasn’t surprised. *Who would want to bowl with such a grump?*

Then Mr. Pinchy Nose looked at me, or rather, at the pizza. His face softened and he smacked his lips.

“Would you like some pizza?” asked Meagan’s mother, seeing a chance to make Mr. Pinchy Nose happy.

“Yes, I would,” he said. “I mean it’s the least you can do for my suffering.” He reached for my pizza like a hungry wolf.

I tried to back away, but I almost knocked over a recital chair. Before I knew it, Mr. Pinchy Nose already had his hands on the pizza and it was heading straight for his mouth!

As Mr. Pinchy Nose started gobbling it up, I



shouted, “Stop eating that!”

Everyone turned to look at me.

“What’s wrong, Francesca?” my mother asked.
“You like sharing your pizza.”

“It’s for Auntie Angela and Owen,” I said, unable to hold back the truth. “It’s for them to fall in love.”

Auntie Angela turned a little red. She seemed embarrassed. Then she got up. A moment later, I heard the door to Meagan’s apartment close. She was gone.

Mr. Pinchy Nose didn’t seem to care about any of this because he finished the entire pizza. Then he took Auntie Angela’s place and listened to the rest of the recital.

It was a total pizza disaster.



Chapter Eleven

THE REAL MAGIC

“I hope Auntie Angela isn’t mad at me,” I said to my mother. She was standing in front of the kitchen sink, doing dishes. I was helping her dry.

“You were just trying to help,” she said, handing me a small pot.

I had already told Mom all about our plan to find Auntie Angela a Mr. Charming. She was very comforting. But I was still worried. I hadn’t seen Auntie Angela since last night’s recital. I wondered if she was avoiding me.

“That pizza was supposed to make everyone’s dreams come true. Now it’s ruined everything.” My eyes filled up with tears. I lifted up my dish towel to hide my face.

“Oh Francesca,” my mom sighed. She took the dish towel out of my hands and gave me a hug. Then she leaned back and looked me in the eyes.



“Pizzas aren’t magic,” she said. “But you certainly are.”

“What do you mean?” I was confused.

“You care about people. You care about Auntie Angela, and you care about your sister, too.”

“I do?”

“Yes,” Mom said. “You love to make food for people because you have a big heart, Francesca. Sometimes Viola gets attention on the stage with her ballet, but never forget that you are a true star too.”

“But my pizza didn’t even work,” I argued. “How is that being a star?”

“Come here. Look at this.” My mother drew back the kitchen curtain.

Outside, Angela and Owen were walking their bikes up the driveway. They parked them against the garage wall, laughing and talking the whole time. Auntie Angela seemed perfectly fine. She wasn’t angry or embarrassed. She looked happy.

“This morning, Owen called her and asked her to go for a bike ride,” my mother explained. “They exchanged numbers at the recital just before that grumpy man with





the pinched up nose showed up. Obviously, Owen didn't waste any time getting in touch. Something tells me he's smitten*."

I was confused. "But he didn't even eat the pizza."

"He obviously saw how special Auntie Angela is. Like you see how special she is. That's all that matters when it comes to Mr. Charmings," my mother said. "And that's why Nonno fell for Nonna too, many years ago.

"It wasn't just the pizza, though I am sure it was the best pizza ever. It was her creative, caring spirit. You have the same thing. So does Auntie Angela. And even Viola, somewhere, wrapped up tightly in her little bun."

Watching Owen and Angela in the driveway, I felt proud of myself. I was right about Owen. He was a good match for Auntie Angela. Even their bicycles looked good together.

But I was still a little sad about my pizza.

"So, pizzas aren't magic," I mumbled softly. A part of me still wanted to believe.

That's when the phone rang. It was Meagan calling.

"Guess what I'm doing?" Meagan asked. I could hear her strumming on her ukulele in the background.



“You’re playing the ukulele?”

“Yep!” she said.

“Is Mr. Pinchy Nose not at home today?” I asked.

“Nope. He’s home,” she replied.

I was surprised. How was that possible?

“Last night, after the recital, he told my mother I could play anytime I wanted. He even apologized for being such a grump. He said he was wrong about the ukulele. He said it was ‘a majestic instrument that made a beautiful sound.’”

“That’s weird,” I said.

“Not at all, Francesca. Don’t you get it?” Meagan sounded very excited. “It must have been your “Love Potion” pizza. Your pizza cast a spell on him and he fell in love with the ukulele!”

“You think?” I said. Now I remembered. After Auntie Angela left, he sat down and watched the entire second half of the recital. He also stood up and clapped at the end. I even heard him say “Bravo!”

“My mother says he was just happy for the company, and that maybe he’s lonely,” Meagan added. “But I know it was your pizza.”



I smiled. I was so happy to know my pizza had helped someone after all.



In the months that followed, Owen and Auntie Angela fell in love and got married. Viola and I were flower girls at the wedding. Nonno and Nonna came all the way from New York City. The bride and groom walked down the aisle to ukulele music, and pizza was served at the wedding buffet. I even helped my nonna prepare it!

It truly was a fairy tale ending, because everybody, including Mr. Pinchy Nose, lived happily ever after.

Everybody except Viola.



Chapter Twelve

ANCHOVIES AND CHOCOLATE

I was on the front lawn, sitting on a blanket, reading a book. I love summer reading because it has nothing to do with school. It's just for me.

Opera music drifted out from Dad's stereo in the garage. The garage door was open. Inside, Dad was tinkering with Mom's old bike. Thanks to Auntie Angela, he and Mom decided to start cycling together. Mom said it would be "romantic."

"*Hola*, Francesca." I heard a voice say.

It was Ricardo. He was back at his parents' house, trimming the rose bushes.

"What did the pink rose say to the yellow rose?" Ricardo asked me as he held up a pair of pruning shears.

I thought for a moment. "I don't know. What?"

"Let's be buds!"

I laughed. I still thought Ricardo would make a



good Mr. Charming for someone. Maybe I could make a magic pizza for him.

That's when Auntie Angela came out of her apartment. She was singing along to the music and carrying a cardboard box. She brought it over to the yellow pickup truck that was parked in our driveway.

"Somebody moving out?" Ricardo asked.

"Nope," I replied. "Somebody's moving in. Right, Owen?" I looked over toward the driveway.

"Yep," Owen replied. He lifted a heavy box of books out of the truck while Auntie Angela put her box inside. She was getting rid of a few things to make room for her new roommate, Owen.

"So much for our fairytale ending," Viola said, joining me on the lawn.

"It's still a fairytale," I told her. "But in this story, the prince moves into the princess's castle."

After all, Owen moving in was my idea. The thought of Auntie Angela leaving just made me too sad. This was the best solution for everyone. Except for Viola. She was still disappointed. The whole Project Mr. Charming started out so she could have her own ballet studio.



“Look on the bright side, “ I told her. “Now Owen and Auntie Angela are going to save up to buy a house, and we get to have our favorite aunt live with us a little longer, along with her two cats and the coolest ukulele teacher ever.”

“I guess there’s always the attic,” Viola said, dancing and twirling around the moving boxes like they were trees in an enchanted forest.

“Is there a special pizza for making Dad renovate the attic into a ballet studio?” she asked me.

“I could try,” I said. “But I may have to use anchovies.”

Viola made a face. “Sounds disgusting.”

I shrugged. As a pizzeria chef, I don’t judge. I know that everyone has their own special taste.

“But for now,” I told her, “I’m making a pizza just for me.”

As I headed back into the house, I wondered what toppings I would put on it.

Anything was possible. Even chocolate.





Glossary

*Many words have more than one meaning. Here are the definitions of words marked with this symbol * (an asterisk) as they are used in this story.*

anchovies: *a small common salt water fish that tastes very fishy and salty*

awe: *amazement, with a feeling of being overwhelmed*

barre: *a handrail at waist level that ballet dancers use for support when doing certain exercises*

broiler: *a part of an oven that cooks food (and melts cheese!) at a very high heat*

cowlick: *a section of hair that won't behave, either standing straight up or lying at a funny angle to the rest of your hair*

cringed: *showed embarrassment with a movement, such as frowning, closing your eyes, and/or shaking your head*

florets: *the flowering stems that make up a head of cauliflower or broccoli*

intermission: *a short break during a recital, play, movie, or concert*



kneaded: *pressed or squeezed dough with
your hands*

nonno and nonna: *“grandfather” and
“grandmother” in Italian*

pirouettes: *spins done by a ballet dancer while
balanced on one foot*

plié: *a common ballet position, when a ballet
dancer bends their knees*

pointe shoes: *specially made shoes worn by
ballerinas to allow them to dance on
the tips of their toes*

racket: *an unpleasant sound, often made with
a musical instrument*

relevé: *when a ballet dancer rises up and stands
“on their toes”*

sauté: *in ballet, a jump off both feet, landing
in the same position*

savory: *having a salty taste*

second nature: *something done easily without
thinking because you have done it many times*

smitten: *extremely attracted to someone*

sous-chef: *the chef who helps and takes orders from
the head chef*



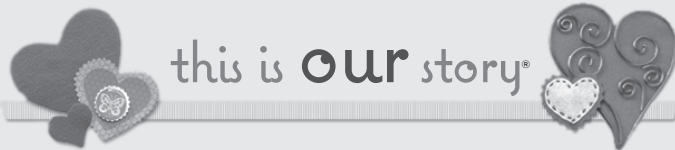
sun-dried tomatoes: *tomatoes that shrink up and become dried out by being placed in the sun, making them tangy, chewy, and even a little sweet. Yum!*

thesis: *a project or essay done at the end of college in order to earn a degree*

treaty: *a written agreement between two countries, or in this case, two sisters, to resolve a conflict*

warm up: *to prepare for a performance by practicing briefly just before it begins*





We are an extraordinary generation of girls.
And have we got a story to tell.

Our Generation® is unlike any that has come before.

We're helping our families learn to recycle, holding bake sales to support charities, and holding penny drives to build homes for orphaned children in Haiti. We're helping our little sisters learn to read and even making sure the new kid at school has a place to sit in the cafeteria.

All that and we still find time to play hopscotch and hockey. To climb trees, do cartwheels all the way down the block and laugh with our friends until milk comes out of our noses. You know, to be kids.

Will we have a big impact on the world? We already have. What's ahead for us? What's ahead for the world? We have no idea. We're too busy grabbing and holding on to the joy that is today.

Our Generation® brings imagination into everyday life, and empowers children to create the narrative of their generation.

Yep. This is our time. This is our story.

ourgeneration.com



About the Author

Laura Leigh Motte is a Montreal-based screenwriter and novelist. Her son, now eight years old, is not a fussy eater (except when it comes to mushrooms, olives, tomatoes, Brussels sprouts, eggplant...hmmm, the list is a little too long for this bio). But one thing he always loves is a good pizza. Once Upon a Pizza is Laura's third Our Generation® book.

About the Illustrator

Passionate about drawing from an early age, Géraldine Charette decided to pursue her studies in computer multimedia in order to further develop her style and technique. Her favorite themes to explore in her illustrations are fashion and urban life. In her free time, Géraldine loves to paint and travel. She is passionate about horses and loves spending time at the stable. It's where she feels most at peace and gives her time to think and fuel her creativity.



Once Upon a Pizza became the book that you are holding in your hands with the assistance of the talented people at Maison Battat Inc., including Joe Battat, Dany Battat, Loredana Ramacieri, Sandy Jacinto, Véronique Casavant, Cynthia Lopez, Laurie Gaudreau-Levesque, Alexandra Bonfà, Ananda Guarany, Jenny Gambino, Arlee Stewart, Natalie Cohen, Joanne Burke Casey and Pamela Shrimpton.

Once Upon a Pizza

For every problem, there's a pizza to fix it. That's what nine-year-old Francesca™ believes. You might even call her a pizza wizard. Her magic pizzas can cheer up a friend, take down the school bully, and even make her annoying ballet-crazy sister, Viola, a little less annoying.

But when a person she adores seeks True Love, Francesca faces her biggest challenge yet. With the help of her best friend, Meagan, Francesca creates a recipe for her most magic pizza ever. Will it do the trick?

It's impossible to separate **Our Generation®** characters from the generation of girls who read about and play with them, for they are one and the same. They're changing the world by making their households greener. They're baking cupcakes to help charities. They're writing in their journals, practicing for recitals, doing cartwheels down the block and giggling with their friends until they can hardly breathe. **Our Generation** is about girls growing up together. "This is our story" reflects the community of these amazing girls as they laugh, learn and create the narrative of their own generation.

Ages 7 and up

Maison Battat Inc. Publisher

Cover art © 2020 by Géraldine Charette

Cover © 2020 by Maison Battat Inc. Publisher

Our Generation® is a Registered Trademark of
Maison Battat Inc.

ourgeneration.com

ISBN 978-0-578-69907-3



9 780578 699073