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The Adventures of  
Francesca Spaghetti and Poppy Noodle



Happy  
VALENTINE

A Magic Meadow™ Short Story

~ LIFE CAN BE COMPLICATED ~

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By HARALD DAVIDSON

The Adventures of Francesca Spaghetti and  
Poppy Noodle

# Happy Valentine

*A short story about the Magic Meadow – a  
place where anything is possible!*

By Harald Davidson



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The Adventures of Francesca Spaghetti and Poppy Noodle



# Happy Valentine

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*Life can be complicated*

## About Francesca Spaghetti, Poppy Noodle and The Magic Meadow

Francesca Spaghetti and Poppy Noodle are twin girls. They got their nicknames—Spaghetti and Noodle—because they love pasta with cheese. It's their favorite food, and they try to have some at every meal.

Most days after school is over they go to Mrs. Bloom's ice cream shop because they also can't resist her scrummy, homemade ice cream. On one particular day, Mrs. Bloom invited them to play in an old playhouse in the garden behind her shop. They found it half-hidden in the woods and, although it looked dirty and full of cobwebs, they went in anyway discovering to their astonishment that the playhouse was the gateway to the Magic Meadow—a place where anything is possible. It's full of the most wondrous things and home to the wise fairy, Flora.

Flora, who looks like a much-younger Mrs. Bloom, introduced them to Lady Quicksilver, a beautiful and kind flying unicorn who can take the girls anywhere they want to go—in an instant—as long as they say the right Magic words.

After their visit to the Magic Meadow, the girls discovered they had been given some really unusual but brilliant Magical Powers. Not only can Francesca Spaghetti play any musical instrument perfectly, but she can also stop time just by singing. Actually, she makes time go so very, very slowly that it amounts to practically the same thing whereas the objects that Poppy Noodle draws can come to life—even if sometimes it's only for a short time.

As well as being super awesome things to have—these Magic Powers have saved their lives—Flora warned them they should never be used for foolish reasons.

\* \* \*

## HAPPY VALENTINE



## HAPPY VALENTINE

“Well, I got five more Valentine’s cards today so, with the two that I got yesterday, that makes seven...” She counted on her fingers. “Err, yes, seven cards for me. That’s more than any of you have got and certainly more than Spaghetti and Noodle or that loser Billy Benson over there.”

The speaker was the one and only Suzy Quagmyre known to her classmates as Suzy Q. She was holding court and all her followers tittered and glanced over in the direction of Francesca Spaghetti and her sister Poppy Noodle who were sitting together at the science bench waiting for their class teacher to arrive and the lesson to begin. Seated behind them was Billy Benson, a red-headed, freckly boy, who despite “not being entirely hideous-looking” as Poppy Noodle put it, was always driving the girls crazy with silly comments and boring questions like, “did you know that there are over 1 billion sheep in the world?”

In fact, that was the exact question he’d asked a mere thirty seconds ago. Francesca Spaghetti had replied pleasantly, “No, I did not. Thank you for the information, Billy”, whereas her sister had

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been rather more direct, telling him simply to “put a sock in it”.

“You didn’t need to be so...*rude*,” said Francesca Spaghetti, he’s only making *polite* conversation...unlike some people I could name.

“He’s a pain in the neck” replied Poppy Noodle astonished. “He annoys you as much as me. Why are you being so nice about him?”

“I’m just in a good mood, that’s all.” Her eyes directed downwards to an object on her otherwise empty desk. It was hand made from cream-colored card to which a pinky-purple heart had been glued on. Underneath the heart was some scratchy handwriting which said ‘*To F. from...*’ and it was signed with a question mark. Nothing else, just a question mark.

Poppy Noodle narrowed her eyes. “I get it,” she said, “It’s that Valentine’s Day card, isn’t it?”

“I don’t know what you can mean.” Francesca Spaghetti flicked her long brown hair back over each shoulder.

“You do so. You’re showing off.”

“Anyone would think, Poppy, that you’re jealous of the fact that *I* got a valentine and you...didn’t.”

“Hah!” said Poppy Noodle. “Me? Jealous? You’re nuts!”

“You’re sure behaving like it,” answered her sister. “*I* can’t help it if *I* have an *admirer*...” She left off letting Poppy Noodle fill in the obvious conclusion for herself.

“I don’t believe for a minute that an ‘*admirer*’ sent you that card any more than there are seven boys dumb enough to fall for that troublemaker Suzy Q.”

“Don’t be so sour, it’s very *unbecoming*. I’m sure deep down Suzy will have some admirable qualities.” she looked over at Suzy Q who was waddling around performing an impressive chimpanzee impersonation—complete with ‘*ooks*’ and head scratching—to the general amusement of her little gang of hornets. “Yes, there, you see...she’s got a *charming* sense of humor.”

“‘*Charming sense of humor*’, ‘*unbecoming*’, don’t humbug me!



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You're just too pleased with yourself...and, besides it was probably Mama and Papa who sent the card anyway."

"Is that so," said Francesca Spaghetti, "...then why don't you have one?"

Poppy Noodle's face darkened. She had nothing to say and, anyway, before she could even say it the door clanged and in skipped Mrs. Bunsen, the science teacher.

"Morning class," she chirped in her white lab coat and big glasses, "today we're going to be looking at gases and their properties."

Poppy Noodle crossed her arms, and sulked.

"Hydrogen is one of the most dangerous gases we know, just the tiniest spark will set it off..." She reached for a match and a taper.

"You know, you'd be a lot more attractive if you smiled?" said Francesca Spaghetti.

Boom!

Both Poppy Noodle and the hydrogen exploded.

\* \* \*

"I hope you've calmed down a bit," said Francesca Spaghetti as she came out of the science room. "You were lucky Mrs. Bunsen only sent you out of the class and not to Mr. Spud's office or you'd be in detention for sure."

"I made a bit of a scene didn't I," said Poppy Noodle. "I don't know what came over me."

"It's not like you to throw a fit," said Francesca Spaghetti rolling her eyes.

"Hey, Noodle! Happy Valentine's Day" shouted "Tommy the Telescope" the astronomy geek who was walking past with his chortling cousin, Rod Pumpernickel. "Oh, silly me, I forgot, you didn't get any cards."

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“Oh no, I must have been truly embarrassing if I’m being laughed at by nerds.”

“Hmm,” said Francesca Spaghetti laughing. “It was quite spectacular. Anyway, what do you say we make a quick visit to the Magic Meadow this lunchtime? Come on, I’ll even treat you to an ice cream for being unkind to you.”

“Yeah, let’s do it. It will definitely cheer me up.”

The girls unlocked their bikes from the stand and cycled as fast as they could go. As they reached the top of the steep hill that led to Mrs. Bloom’s ice cream parlor they leaned forward and flew down the hill. In a heartbeat they reached the bottom and came crashing to a stop against the thick hedge that surrounded Mrs. Bloom’s shop. Astonishingly, the hedge was as comfortable as a feather cushion and, miraculously or magically, neither they nor the hedge ever seemed to come to any harm from this rough treatment.

Mrs. Bloom was delighted to see them. Her gray-blue eyes twinkled as she greeted them.

“You’re early,” she said. “Is school out so soon.”

“Not yet,” answered Francesca Spaghetti, “we decided to come early and get an ice cream to cheer Poppy up with. You see, she’s a bit down in the dumps because everyone got valentines today except her.”

“Thanks, a bunch,” said Poppy Noodle turning red, “shall we take out an ad in the newspaper so everyone will know?”

“I’m sure your sister meant no harm,” said Mrs. Bloom with a reassuring expression on her face. “Look, I’ve got a special Valentine’s Day flavor in. Why don’t you have some of that?”

Francesca Spaghetti almost always had chocolate ice cream and Poppy Noodle’s favorite flavor was mango but the bright red and white ice cream in the tray looked very tempting indeed.

“I’d love to try some,” said Poppy Noodle and her sister readily agreed.

“It’s a bit more expensive than the other kinds,” said Mrs. Bloom,

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and she told the girls the price.

“Oh,” Said Francesca Spaghetti disappointed. “That’s more than we can afford.”

“Let me give you a big serving in one of these tubs and two spoons so you can share. It’s very rich so there will be enough for both of you and maybe some friends.”

When she said these words the girls remembered their destination.

“Let’s take the tub with us to the Magic Meadow,” Poppy Noodle whispered to her sister once Mrs. Bloom had gone off to fill up the tub with a generous helping and, having paid and said their goodbyes, they dashed out the shop and raced to the little forest at the edge of Mrs. Bloom’s back garden.

Pushing back the little branches that blocked the way in they soon reached the half-hidden, old, shabby playhouse that was the entrance to the Magic Meadow.

Normally, the girls would have gone straight through the little door and into the Magic world on the other side but, today there was an obstacle. It was an orange, fuzzy obstacle to be precise that, at that exact moment, had plonked itself in front of the entrance licking its white paws.

“Lulu!” said Francesca Spaghetti, “What are you doing here?”

Francesca Spaghetti’s cat, Lulu, got up and stretched out its legs raking the earth with its paws. Then it yawned. That was as far as it was prepared to communicate. Lulu was a Maine Coon cat and while that meant she was an excellent hunter, and very big she could sometimes be aloof when she wanted to be. This was one of those times.

“Move yourself, you lazy thing” said Poppy Noodle. “Are you coming in too?”

Lulu perked up. She loved the Magic Meadow as much as the twins did—perhaps even more so—as when she went into the playhouse she turned into a tigress with cold, gold eyes which was

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something she liked being very much indeed. In fact, she thought it was pretty cool. Impolitely she pushed herself to the front to make sure that she'd be the first one through the door when it was opened.

Poppy Noodle put her shoulder to the stiff little doorway and the little group tumbled into the darkness.

After a few seconds the darkness disappeared to reveal the grand interior of the marble hall. Bright candle lights flickered from the rows of gold chandeliers on the ceiling illuminating the strange scientific instruments, the huge library as well as the battered but comfortable Chesterfield sofa which squatted in a relaxed manner in the center of the room.

The hall always looked the same but different each and every time the girls went in. Usually the changes were very small and odd but today they were very obvious, for floating through the entire hallway were small, transparent bubble-like things in the shape of hearts that occasionally lit up like red fireflies.

The little heart-bubbles floated freely and occasionally bumped into each other making a sound like the clinging of tiny bells. It was an enchanting sound like nothing the twins had ever heard before.

Unlike bubbles the little hearts didn't pop and unlike balloons you couldn't grab them either. Francesca Spaghetti and Poppy Noodle tried once but their hands just went through them as if they weren't there. Lulu tried several times before she figured out the bubbles didn't want to be grabbed by a tiger with razor sharp claws.

Another amazing thing happened when they went into the playhouse; the little tub of red ice cream with two little plastic spoons had turned into a gallon bucket which, Francesca Spaghetti, who had been carrying the dessert, could hardly manage to heave across the hall and out the back door into the Magic Meadow itself.

Accustomed as the girls were to this Magic place, they were still

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surprised by the sight that greeted them as they stepped into the Magic Meadow itself.

The table in the rose garden in front of them had been set with all sorts of candies and gooey, chocolatey treats. Francesca Spaghetti plonked the heavy bucket of ice cream on the table happy to be rid of the dead weight. It was impossible not to notice that the big oak tree—normally a kind of green—had turned into a red, heart-shaped tree with heart-shaped leaves. Carved into its trunk was another heart with an arrow through the middle of it and beneath it was a white bench that was perfect for cuddling up on.

The ever-changing sky was also filled with uncountable thousands more of the glowing, drifting bubble-hearts. The roses had left their beds and were milling around a candy apple bush, each of them had a pile of Valentine's cards in their hands that they were waiting to hang from its leaves as part of some traditional rose custom. They were chattering excitedly among themselves wondering loudly about what unknown suitor might have sent them.

A group of purple penguins were busy hanging up decorations and it was clear there was going to be a big party later on. As the twins walked down the steps into the rose garden one of the purple penguins—a tubby character by the name of Norman—waddled up to Lulu and shyly presented her with a Valentine's *fish*. Lulu blushed under her fur, devoured it with one big chomp, and set off to take a genteel stroll to the lake with her new friend.

"Perfect," said Poppy Noodle, "even that lazybones cat got a valentine but nothing for me!"

"Cheer up, for heaven's sake. You don't want to ruin this lovely atmosphere, do you?"

Poppy Noodle harrumphed then jumped out her skin as a voice behind her enquired: "Is everything okay?"

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to frighten you."

The voice belonged to Flora the wonderful and kind fairy who

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lived in the Magic Meadow. The girls greeted Flora then Francesca Spaghetti told her what had happened that morning in school. As she spoke the roses clutching their Valentine's cards huddled closer to listen while Poppy Noodle reddened but said nothing.

"Aw," said a kindly, brown rose with a big sniff. "That's sooo sad. No one sent you a Valentine's card. No one at all."

"You poor thing," chimed in another wiping away a tear. "You must be heartbroken."

Instinctively, the roses clustered around Poppy Noodle's legs and gave her the rose version of a group hug.

"I've got a great idea," said the first rose, "we've got so many cards and Poppy Noodle's got none. Why don't we each give her one of ours? That'll make her happy."

"Oooh!" the roses squealed and rifled through their Valentine's cards to find one to offer Poppy Noodle.

"Here, take this."

"And, this."

"Have mine!"

The little roses jostled and thrust their cards up toward Poppy Noodle.

"Why is this not making me feel any better?" said Poppy Noodle through gritted teeth.

Francesca Spaghetti could tell that her sister was likely to get very grumpy very soon but what could she do? She knew the roses meant well but while she was trying to think of something, Flora spoke.

"Come with me," she said holding out her arms for the twins to take. "Let's go sit on the bench." Together they strolled over and settled themselves down and for a while watched the little creatures and plants from the Magic Meadow rushing about making their busy preparations. It was all so comical and *nice*.

"Look at all of them," said Flora with a giggle. "They sometimes fuss, they sometimes fight but they all want to make each other

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happy. That's why this party is so important to them. This is their family and they love each other."

"They love you two also, that's why the roses in their own, clumsy way wanted to make you happy," said Flora. She squeezed Poppy Noodle who had become a bit tearful but she was still silent.

"Rudi 2 loves you especially," said the fairy.

Poppy Noodle smiled at the mention of the mad little reindeer's name. He had been a present from Santa and although he always got into mischief and on most other people's nerves, she thought he was the cutest thing ever.

"Of course," said Francesca Spaghetti. "and mama and papa love us—and gramps and grammy! That's the most important thing, right?"

"That's right," said Flora. "Your family is there for you every day. You don't need a card from them to know it's true."

Poppy Noodle's smile disappeared. "I know," she said, "this is silly. I don't even want a secret admirer. I just feel a bit...left out. Everyone's making such a big deal out of Valentine's Day and I feel like a chump that nobody likes."

"You've got plenty of time ahead of you to worry about secret admirers, and, if I'm any judge you and your sister are going to have plenty—when the time comes!"

Poppy Noodle sniffed then, finally, she nodded her head and let out a short laugh. "Where is Rudi 2 anyway?"

Francesca Spaghetti and Flora looked at each other. They were both happy that Poppy Noodle had cheered up a bit.

Rudi 2 went with Lady Quicksilver to get some bowls for the ice cream you brought with you for tonight's ball.

"Oh no, I totally forgot about the ice cream! It will be all melted now," said Francesca Spaghetti putting her hand over her mouth in horror.

Flora laughed. "It's fine. It hasn't melted. The rules of the outside world don't apply here. What we need to worry about is that no

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one gets greedy and eats it all up before the party even begins.”

“How...did Lady Quicksilver and Rudi 2 know that we were going to bring ice cream?” asked Poppy Noodle.

“A lucky guess,” said Flora and she winked.

Just at that moment there was the sound of a backfire and a cloud of purplish smoke rose into the sky from behind the oak tree followed by a wheezing sound, as if someone had stepped on some angry bagpipes.

“Oh good,” said Flora, “it looks like our handyman, Pete the Potato, has got our Calliope<sup>1</sup> to work at last. You will come to the Valentine’s ball this evening, won’t you?”

“I don’t know,” said Poppy Noodle. “I’m not sure I’m in the mood.”

“Think about it,” said Flora. “You’re always welcome.”

“Thanks,” said Francesca Spaghetti. “We’ll see how we feel later.”

“One more thing,” said Flora. She reached upward into the air and grasped one of the floating heart-bubbles which turned into a solid, shiny crystal in the fairy’s hand. She gave it to Poppy Noodle and said, “this will remind you of the true meaning of love.”

Poppy Noodle looked at the crystal and turned to thank Flora but she was gone.

“She vanished,” like always said Francesca Spaghetti shrugging her shoulders, then, “Quick! Let’s go we need to be back in school. Lulu..!”

\* \* \*

The twins charged back to the school house on their bicycles while Lulu slinked back to the apartment. She had a date with a nap and she didn’t want to be late.

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1 Calliope: A steam organ consisting of a set of harsh-sounding whistles that are activated from a keyboard.



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“I’ll see you later,” said Poppy Noodle. “I’m going to do some reading in the library. I want to be ready for the test tomorrow.”

“Sure. I’ll come and get you in a bit,” said her sister.

\* \* \*

In the deserted library, Poppy Noodle twirled the crystal in her hand and looked out the window at a group of kids kicking a ball about. She could hear their hollers and the occasional thump as the ball was sent up or down the playing field.

There was no getting away from it. While everything Flora had said made perfect sense and her own head told her that a stupid valentine didn’t matter, she was still jealous. That’s it. She was jealous because her sister got a valentine and she didn’t.

“Who cares about, Suzy Q,” she said aloud then to herself. “Why couldn’t it be me and not Francesca who got the card?”

“I know,” she thought. “Why don’t I just make one? No one’s going to know the difference. Hmm.”

She thought about it for a minute or so longer before deciding, yeah, to do it. “It’s just for fun. I can always throw it away afterward,” she promised herself unconvincingly.

She reached for her pad and pencil and sketched out the materials she would need. Then she sat back waiting and hoping for the Magic to work.

After a few moments, she heard a crackling noise followed by some flashes of light. The sputtering got louder and the lights got brighter and some blue, purple and green smoke started to rise from the page getting thicker and thicker. In the midst of the smoke a glowing bubble began to rise out of the page until with a ‘pop’ the bubble burst and the smoke died down revealing some colored card, some scissors, glue and some dark pink glitter.

“Perfect,” thought Poppy Noodle. “Just what I need to make the

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best Valentine's card ever!"

She set to work cutting and pasting and in only a few minutes she had made a marvelous valentine. It was like her sisters only bigger, more-glittery and more fabulous.

There was only one thing missing. She reached into her backpack, took out a felt tipped pen and wrote: "*To P.N. from your Secret Admirer!*" Then she sat back and admired her handiwork.

"Ahem," said a quiet voice behind her. "Is everything alright?"

Poppy Noodle grabbed the Valentine's card and spun around in her chair. In a panic she tried to stuff the card into the back pocket of her jeans but succeeded only in covering the seat of her pants with glue and glitter.

"How long have you been there?" she demanded.

"Not long," said Billy Benson.

"What have you seen?"

"N...n...nothing," he stuttered. "Well, I thought I saw smoke... Did you just make yourself a valentine card?"

"What are you talking about?" said Poppy Noodle blushing deeply. "I didn't make anything."

"What's that?" he said trying to peer round at the crushed card she was holding behind her back. "It sure *looks* like a valentine card...to yourself."

"Well, it's not. And, don't you say anything to anyone about this, you hear!" She added more softly, "Please. Please, Billy Benson keep this to yourself."

Billy Benson looked at her. "Sure," he said. "I won't tell anyone."

"Won't tell anyone what?" said Francesca Spaghetti.

"Nothing," said Poppy Noodle grabbing her stuff and shoving it—card included—into her backpack and rushing to her feet.

"Has he been bothering you? Have you been bothering my sister Billy Benson?"

"No he hasn't. Let's just go," said Poppy Noodle. She put her hand on her sister's sleeve and tried to drag her out of the room.

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“Stay away from us Billy Benson,” said Francesca Spaghetti. “We’re tired of you bugging us so just leave us alone.”

“Leave it, Francesca. Let’s just go,” said Poppy Noodle and she scuttled out the library with her head down.

\* \* \*

The rest of the school day passed quietly. Francesca Spaghetti was worried. She was worried about her sister, what had been a bit of fun in the morning over a silly valentine card had made her sister very sad and now Billy Benson seemed to have upset her. Whatever had gone on Poppy Noodle hadn’t told her yet which was not like her at all.

Poppy Noodle couldn’t wait for the school bell to go mostly because she had had the most embarrassing day of her life and she wanted it to be over. She had made a fool of herself in science class and now she had been caught making her own valentine card by Billy Benson of all people! She cringed at the memory. “What if he tells anyone? I’ll die,” she thought.

Eventually, the moment arrived and the ringing of the school bell freed them from the classroom.

Unusually, Francesca Spaghetti and Poppy Noodle were the last out and when they stepped into the hallway they found themselves in the middle of a loud commotion.

A voice was yelling, gloating: “She made her own valentines, she made her own valentines.”

Poppy Noodles blood turned to ice. Billy Benson hadn’t kept his word!

“She made her own valentines!”

The laughter of the kids echoed off every wall and Poppy Noodle felt as if she was going to faint.

“What’s happening? Who made her own valentines?” asked

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Francesca Spaghetti.

“Don’t you know?” answered Rod Pumpernickel.

“No, I don’t. Who? Do you know, Poppy?”

“Well—” Poppy Noodle began to answer but was interrupted by Tommy the Telescope who was dancing around waving his cell phone in the air.

“Suzy Q, that’s who! She didn’t see me but I filmed her making her own valentine cards. Ha, ha. What a loser.”

“Give me that phone,” came a shrill voice that could only belong to Suzy Q. “Give me that phone!” She kicked Tommy the Telescope on the shin.

“Ow,” said Tommy hopping about on one leg still laughing. “Try to get it.”

Because Tommy was one of the tallest people in the class and Suzy Q was one of the smallest there was little chance she was ever going to reach it.

“Watch out,” someone yelled, Spud’s coming! Scat!”

“Give me the phone,” Suzy Q wailed pleading but to no avail. Tommy the Telescope was determined to keep hold of it. He didn’t mind being caught by Mr. Spud because it was Suzy Q who would be totally humiliated by the video he had taken.

The Headmaster rounded the corner like a hurricane in Harris Tweed. “What is the meaning of this racket? What’s going on?”

“Suzy Quagmyre made her own valentines and Tommy has got a video of her doing so, sir,” cheeped Rod Pumpernickel.

“Is this true, Pumpernickel,” asked Mr. Spud.

“Yes,” said Rod and Tommy—whose last name was also Pumpernickel—together.

“What?,” said Mr. Spud looking backward and forward between the two boys. “I’m not talking to you,” he said peering at Rod over his glasses, I was addressing this lanky creature.” He pointed at Tommy the Telescope.

“Now, Pumpernickel, is it true that you have a movie of this girl

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making her own valentine cards?”

“Yessir,” said both boys together.

Mr. Spud glared at Rod. “I’m not going to say this again. Interrupt me once more and I’ll send a note home to your parents, now vamoose, you small boy!”

Rod decided it would be wisest to obey and he mooched off to observe what was happening from a safer distance.

“Hand over the phone now, if you please, Pumpernickel.”

“No,” said Suzy Quagmyre. “He shouldn’t have filmed me. I want that video.”

“I’m sorry,” said Tommy the Telescope grinning, “I have to hand it over to the headmaster.” With that he extended his arm and held the phone out to Mr. Spud.

Poppy Noodle put her hand in her pocket and her fingers clasped the hard crystal.

“Stop time, Francesca,” she said.

“What?” said Francesca Spaghetti. “Why?”

“Just do it!” hissed Poppy Noodle. “Please.”

Seeing the determined expression on her sister’s face, Francesca Spaghetti began to sing:

*“Ten green bottles, standing on the wall...”*

Instantly, time began to slow down until it came to a complete stop just as Mr. Spud’s hand closed around the phone that Tommy the Telescope was handing to him.

“Keep singing,” said Poppy Noodle and she walked over and took the phone out of the hands of Mr. Spud and Tommy who—like everyone else—were standing still, as rigid as if they had been carved out of marble.

*“And, if one green bottle should accidentally fall...”*

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Flicking her thumb over the screen she quickly found and deleted the video that Tommy had made of Suzy Q cutting and pasting her own Valentine's cards. Once she was sure that the video was erased she put the phone back in their grip.

*"There'll be no green bottles, standing on the wall."*

"You can stop now," she said walking back to stand beside her puzzled sister.

Francesca Spaghetti finished the song and gradually the 'statues' around them began to move, breathe and talk like before. Not one of them had any inkling at all that time had stopped.

"Thank you, Pumpernickel," said Mr. Spud grabbing the phone. Now, where's the video?"

"It's right there on the home screen," said Tommy the Telescope smugly.

"Where?" said a confused Mr. Spud.

"Right there. Let me see. I know sometimes old people like you can't manage new technology."

The crowd laughed.

"I may be old but I'm not dumb. I can see there is no video here and lucky for you there isn't. You have no right to go around filming people without their knowledge, Pumpernickel. I think a week in detention should help put some sense into you. Get yourself along to my office. The rest of you go about your business unless you want some of the same."

In no time the little crowd dispersed leaving Francesca Spaghetti and her sister alone.

"I don't get it. You stood up for Suzy Q. What did you do that for?"

Poppy Noodle thought about it. "I didn't want any hate on Valentine's Day."

The girls turned and walked in silence down the hallway.

## HAPPY VALENTINE

“Poor Tommy the Telescope,” said Francesca Spaghetti. “Now everyone thinks *he’s* the loser and that he made up that story about Suzy Q.”

“I guess.”

\* \* \*

“What’s he doing outside our apartment?” said Francesca Spaghetti as the twins came around the corner on their way home from school.

“Hey Billy Benson! What are you up to?” she cried out jumping off her bike.

The ginger-haired boy jumped back startled.

“Do you have something behind your back? Were you trying to put something in our mailbox?”

“N..n..no,” he stuttered. “I was just passing. I wasn’t doing anything.”

“I hope not,” said Francesca Spaghetti, “we don’t have any time today for your silly nonsense.”

“Leave him alone, Francesca.” She walked up to the boy and put her hand on his shoulder. “It’s okay, Billy,” said Poppy Noodle. “Go about your business. We’ll see you in school tomorrow.”

“Sure,” said Billy Benson. “He nodded his head to each of the girls and turned and walked down the hill.

Francesca Spaghetti watched him disappear then turned to her sister and said. “I don’t get it. This has been a strange day.”

At that moment, the door of the apartment building opened and their papa stuck his head out. “Oh, good, you’re home” he said smiling. “Get any valentines? Did you check the mailbox?”

“No,” said Poppy Noodle. “It doesn’t matter.”

“Doesn’t matter? Of course, it matters. Take a look.”

## THE ADVENTURES OF FRANCESCA SPAGHETTI AND POPPY NOODLE

Francesca Spaghetti and Poppy Noodle opened the mailbox and looked in. Inside there was a single envelope.

“It’s for you,” said Francesca Spaghetti handing it over to her sister.

Poppy Noodle put in her thumb and carefully prised open the envelope. Inside was a cream-colored card. She took it out and turned it around. On the front was a glued on pinky-purple heart and underneath it was written in scratchy handwriting ‘*To P. from ?*. Nothing else, the signature was just a question mark.

“I’ve seen this handwriting before,” said Poppy Noodle. “Did you make this card Papa?”

“Mama too. Do you like it? Did yours come too, Francesca?”

Francesca Spaghetti’s jaw dropped. “You mean, I don’t have a secret admirer! All the time this card was really from you and Mama. No one else?”

“Err,” said their papa confused. “We thought you’d be happy.”

Poppy Noodle began to laugh. “Oh, we are happy, Papa. Really very happy.” She went to give him a hug.

Once she had gotten over her horror, Francesca Spaghetti joined in the laughter and hugged her sister and Papa too. What a crazy day it had been and they both laughed loud and long while their papa scratched his head and wondered if they were feeling okay.

“I’m feeling great,” said Francesca Spaghetti.

“Me too,” said Poppy Noodle.

“Shall we go to the ball?”

“You bet. We shall go to the ball.”

“By the way,” said Francesca Spaghetti. “Why is your bottom all glittery?”

“I can’t tell you,” said Poppy Noodle. “You’d only laugh.”



HAPPY VALENTINE



THE END

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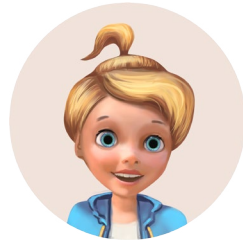
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# About the Author

## Harald Davidson



Harald Davidson is the creator of the Francesca Spaghetti and Poppy Noodle series and The Magic Meadow where so much of their adventures begin. He can't say where the inspiration comes from but he just has a desire to write really good stories that kindle the imagination. He wants his characters to be positive and active role models who take responsibility and do their best. At the same time they're certainly not saints but this makes them more believable, endearing and fun. Indeed the books are full of clever humor and good writing that follow unexpected twists and turns before resolving all the loose ends in practically the last paragraph.

He lives with his family in a big, spooky house by a meadow deep in the woods where he spends his time dreaming up stories for kids of all ages..