



The Spaghetti Is Missing

Jane Matyger

Leo Silva, Illustrator

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Unconventional, assertive, and brave, Gabby is on top of a spaghetti mystery.

Jane Matyger's *The Spaghetti Is Missing* is an action-packed children's picture book involving disappearing pasta, purple pooches, and magical travel. Beyond the delightful caper of a story, all ages will appreciate the refreshing cast of characters as a young girl ventures abroad and saves the day.

The Spaghetti Is Missing begins when Gabby, a character based on the author's niece Gabrielle, receives a letter from her uncle who has just moved to Italy. Deciding it's time for a visit, she reaches down into her sandbox to retrieve her magic purple helmet that instantly transports her to his restaurant abroad. All of her uncle's spaghetti is missing, so Gabby must decipher clues left on crushed pasta boxes. By the end, she discovers that a young boy has used all of her uncle's spaghetti to fortify Italy's Leaning Tower of Pisa. "When I eat your Uncle Pauley's delicious spaghetti ... I feel strong," he explains. "So I thought wrapping the leaning tower in his spaghetti would make it strong too. Then it won't ever fall down!"

Matyger's story is a humorous take on a well-known and curious landmark. And her choice of characters puts a much needed spin on old tropes: She chooses a young girl to travel alone, unravel a mystery, and save male characters in trouble. The author also bypasses any mention of traditional parents, as Gabby leaves her grandmother's house to visit her uncle—thereby paying tribute to extended family members who often play a central if unacknowledged role in children's upbringing.

The text is complimented by illustrator Leo Silva's bright, dynamic drawings of Gabby and her uncle's purple dog, Noodles, as well as of scenes of Italy and the "leaning tower of pizza," as the young characters mistakenly call it.

In *The Spaghetti Is Missing*, Gabby is unconventional, assertive, and brave. Young readers will look forward to learning where her magic purple helmet takes her next.

AMANDA MCCORQUODALE (July 30, 2014)

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