

## FUSILI

Hi. My name is Francesca and I used to be the straightest noodle in town. I followed the rules. I got straight A's. I did all my homework. I went to bed on time. I brushed my teeth in the morning AND at night, and I ALWAYS looked both ways before crossing the street. What I'm saying is, I was a goody two shoes. A teacher's pet. A classic Angel Hair through and through. At least I was...until I met Ravioli.

Ravioli. So full of mystery. Meat, cheese, ... heartache. Once I started hanging out with Ravioli, I got all twisted up. All of a sudden, I wasn't such a straight noodle anymore. I stayed out late. I started skipping class. I even let a scary looking Linguini give me a knife and a fork tattoo behind Mama's Meatball Cafe.

It was all for Ravioli. It was all about Ravioli. And then, one day, all the other noodles started calling me Francesca Fusilli. Because that's what I was. I was all curled up into myself, sprung around like a Slinky, bent to the bad side of pasta.

It took a long time for me to realize I was heading down the wrong path. I almost lost everything. But just in time, I found my truth. And now I am ready to bounce back.

I pulled into school on the back of Ravioli's motorcycle, and saw everybody crowded around in a circle. It was Mac and Cheese, the celebrity couple of Parmesan High. Cheese had had enough. "We are breaking up!" she yelled at the top of her lungs. "We have been dating for years now and it has always been Mac and Cheese. Mac and Cheese! I am just as important you in this relationship!" she screamed. "Maybe even more!" "It is 2022, and it's time for this couple to be called Cheese and Mac!"

But Mac wasn't having it. He was used to all of his classmates calling them Mac and Cheese. So he said no. "Well then I am done with you!" said Cheese, before pushing her way through the circle. "Good luck finding someone who only likes Mac!"

Cheese had made a scene as usual, the diva that she was. I felt really bad for Mac, since I had always liked him as a person and would definitely be on his side. I looked closely at his face to see how torn up he was, and thought about going over there to make him feel better. But to my surprise, he wasn't sad at all. He looked like the same old, confident Mac. He didn't need Cheese to know who he was as a person. He knew they would get back together someday, somehow. But he wasn't going to change who he was for her. He was going to be Mac.

I ran to the bathroom and looked at myself in the mirror. Who had I become? I wasn't the same pasta, that's for sure. In addition to the curling and twisting, I was wearing pomodoro makeup and sausage boots. And way too much salt. I had changed who I was for Ravioli, just to get him to like me. But it was not the real me. The real me was a straight noodle. I got straight A's. I did all my homework. I went to bed on time. I brushed my teeth in the morning AND at night, and I ALWAYS looked both ways before crossing the street. That's who I was. I was not a Fusilli. I was Angel Hair.

And that's ... okay.