



## The Piping-Hot Pizza Mystery

by Elizabeth VanSteenwyk



**B**rad hurried to Eatza Pizza. It was ten minutes past four and he was late for his after-school job. Brad liked to deliver pizzas on his skateboard and didn't want to be fired for being a few minutes late. He knew he had one of the best jobs in town.

Brad went in the back door of Eatza Pizza. "Sorry I'm late, Sam," he called to the owner.

Sam turned from the counter. He was mixing pizza dough. "Okay, Brad, but try not to let it happen again."

"Any pizzas to deliver?" Brad asked.

"Not yet, but we'll get busy pretty soon."

"Has Mr. Light called?" Brad asked.

Mr. Light was an old man who lived in a run-down house at the end of Main Street. He had called every night, Monday through Friday, since Brad had started working. Every night, he ordered the same thing—one pizza, piping hot, with everything.

Brad had been delivering a piping-hot pizza to 500 West Main Street

for nearly a year. Sometimes Brad wondered why Mr. Light didn't order something different from some other place. Even Brad would get tired of **devouring** pizza five nights a week for nearly a year.

Soon the telephone began to ring. People placed orders for delivery or carryout. Sam and his helper rolled pizza dough and twirled it into circles. Then they painted the circles with tomato sauce and sprinkled cheese and sausage on top. Then they placed them into the oven to bake.

At 5:15, the telephone rang. "I'll bet that's Mr. Light," Brad said.

Sam took the call, listened for a moment, then hung up and started making another pizza. "You were right, Brad," he said. "That was Mr. Light. He wants one pizza, piping hot, with everything."

"Have you ever wondered why he eats so much pizza?" Brad asked.

"Yes, I have," Sam said. "I think he's lonesome and likes to see you every day."

"That can't be it," Brad said. "He never says a word. We never **communicate**. All I see is his hand as he gives me the money and takes the pizza."

"Maybe he's too shy to talk," Sam said.

When the pizza was ready, Brad put it in a cardboard box and went outdoors. He hopped onto his skateboard. He went skimming down the street, over the **pavement**, dodging in between people. Brad really knew how to make the skateboard move, and in no time he was at 500 West Main Street. With the pizza balanced in one hand, he hopped off his skateboard. The pizza was still piping hot and smelled good. When Brad knocked at the front door, it opened right away. One old, wrinkled hand and arm reached around the door and handed Brad the money.

"Thanks a lot, Mr. Light," Brad said. "See you tomorrow." He hopped onto his skateboard and rolled down the sidewalk.

The following afternoon, Brad wasn't busy at work, so he had time to read the newspaper. The front-page headline told about the new freeway to be built on the edge of town. The story said that all the houses on the 500 block of West Main Street would be torn down.

"Look, Sam," Brad said, showing him the newspaper. "They're going to tear down Mr. Light's house."

"That's too bad," Sam said. "He'll have to move, I guess."

When Brad delivered Mr. Light's piping-hot pizza that afternoon, he said, "I'm sorry about your house being torn down. Where are you going to move?"

Mr. Light didn't say a word. He just closed the door.

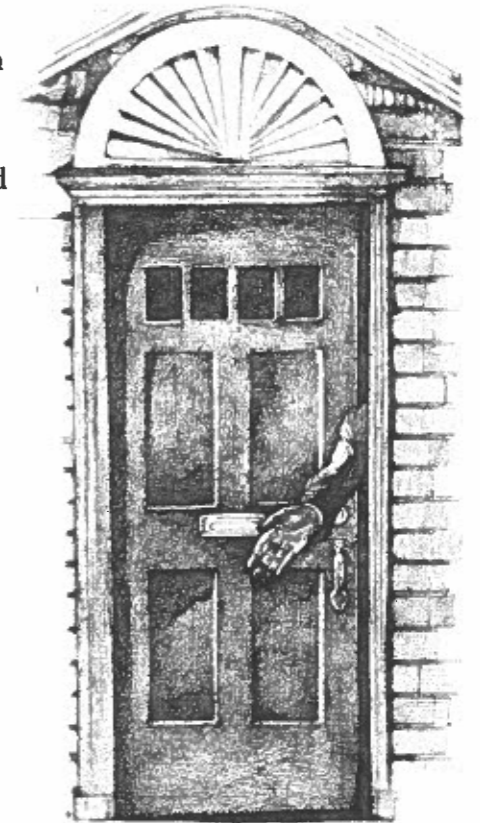
Brad worried about Mr. Light for several days. When Brad delivered the pizza to him each evening, Mr. Light wouldn't talk about moving. Maybe he doesn't understand, Brad thought.

A week later, Brad read in the newspaper that the houses would be torn down the next day. When he went to Mr. Light's house that night, Brad said, "Where do you want your pizza delivered tomorrow?"

Mr. Light said nothing as he closed the door.

Maybe he has no one to help him, Brad thought. I'll come back early tomorrow morning and see if I can help him move out before the wreckers come.

Brad woke early the following morning and rode his skateboard over to 500 West Main Street. He knocked on the door, but no one answered. Then he looked in the windows, but he couldn't see anything. All the shades were down. That's funny, Brad thought. He should be up and packing.



A couple of trucks rumbled down the street and stopped in front of the house. Several workers got out and walked up to the front porch.

"What are you doing here, kid?" one of them asked Brad.

"I came to help my friend move out of his house, but I can't wake him up."

The workmen began to laugh. "Of course you can't," one of the men said. "He died about a year ago."

Brad looked at them and wondered if they were playing a joke on him. "Are you talking about Mr. Light?" he said.

"Yes," answered the man.

"He can't be dead," Brad said. "I've been delivering pizzas to him for nearly a year."

"Let's go inside and find out," one of the workers said.

"Okay," said Brad. "Let's investigate."

They tried the door, but it was locked. "Get a crowbar and chop it down," one of them said. "The whole house is going to be torn down pretty soon anyway."

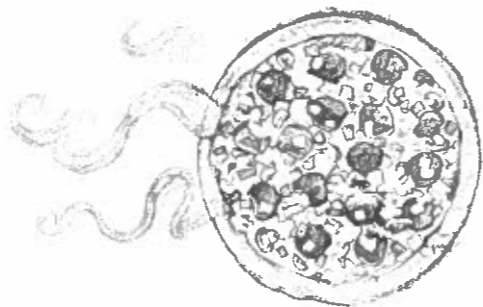
They chopped the door down and went inside, as Brad watched from the front porch.

"Boy, does it smell good in here," one of the workers said.

As he stood on the porch, Brad smelled something good, too. It almost smelled like . . . but it couldn't be. He climbed through the hole in the door. The workers were standing in the living room, looking puzzled.

"What's going on here?" one of them said.

Brad looked around the room. Stacked against the walls were all the pizzas he had delivered for nearly a year. They were still piping hot.



**GETTING THE MEANING OF THE STORY.** Complete each of the following sentences by putting an *x* in the box next to the correct answer. Each sentence helps you get the meaning of the story.

- Brad delivered pizzas  
 a. by car.  
 b. on his skateboard.  
 c. by walking or taking a bus.
- Every night, Monday through Friday, Mr. Light  
 a. stopped in at Eatza Pizza.  
 b. ordered a piping-hot pizza.  
 c. thanked Brad for delivering a pizza.
- According to one of the workers, Mr. Light  
 a. moved away about a week ago.  
 b. died about a year ago.  
 c. really didn't like pizza.
- When Brad entered Mr. Light's room, he found  
 a. Mr. Light, asleep in a chair.  
 b. cartons filled with Mr. Light's things.  
 c. stacks of pizza.

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**REVIEWING STORY ELEMENTS.** Each of the following questions reviews your understanding of story elements. Put an *x* in the box next to the correct answer to each question.

- What happened last in the *plot* of the story?  
 a. The workers chopped down Mr. Light's door.  
 b. Brad arrived late for his after-school job.  
 c. Brad read in the newspaper that Mr. Light's house would soon be torn down.
- Which sentence best *characterizes* Mr. Light?  
 a. He was an old man who never said a word to Brad.  
 b. He was very friendly and said hello to Brad every night.  
 c. He was very wealthy and lived in a fancy house.
- Where is the beginning of the story *set*?  
 a. at Brad's house  
 b. at a house on Main Street  
 c. at the Eatza Pizza
- What kind of *mood* does the ending of this story create?  
 a. a sorrowful mood  
 b. a mysterious mood  
 c. a joyful mood

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**EXAMINING VOCABULARY WORDS.** Answer the following vocabulary questions by putting an *x* in the box next to the correct answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. If you wish, look back at the words before you answer the questions.

- Brad thought he would get tired of devouring pizza five nights a week. The word *devouring* means
  - a. cutting
  - b. eating
  - c. selling
- The workers broke down the door to investigate what was inside. Which of the following best defines (gives the meaning of) the word *investigate*?
  - a. to examine or search
  - b. to fix or repair
  - c. to purchase or buy
- Mr. Light never said a word to Brad, so they were not able to communicate. What is the meaning of the word *communicate*?
  - a. see clearly
  - b. wave good-bye
  - c. exchange information
- Brad hopped onto his skateboard and went skimming down the street, over the pavement. What is a *pavement*?
  - a. the surface of a sidewalk or road
  - b. the top of a mountain
  - c. the waves at an ocean or lake

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**ADDING WORDS TO A PASSAGE.** Complete the following paragraph by filling in each blank with one of the words listed in the box below. Each of the words appears in the story. Since there are five words and four blanks, one word in the group will not be used.

Although it was first made in Italy, \_\_\_\_\_ is eaten today in countries all around the world. There are many \_\_\_\_\_ kinds, or varieties, of pizza. However, just about every type of pizza contains cheese and \_\_\_\_\_ sauce. These are \_\_\_\_\_ on top of a flat layer of dough which is then baked.

placed	pizza
different	
tomato	busy

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**THINKING ABOUT THE STORY.** Each of the following questions will help you to think critically about the selection. Put an *x* in the box next to the correct answer.

- What was the amazing thing that took place in the story?
  - a. Brad was a few minutes late for his job.
  - b. Brad went to Mr. Light's house to help him move.
  - c. All the pizzas that Brad had delivered were still hot.
- Which one of the following statements is true?
  - a. Brad could not ride his skateboard very well.
  - b. Mr. Light never gave Brad any money for the pizzas.
  - c. It is hard to tell whether Mr. Light was dead or alive.
- Most people would probably consider Brad's story
  - a. very easy to believe.
  - b. quite strange.
  - c. something that happens fairly often.
- At the end of the story, Brad probably felt
  - a. confused.
  - b. pleased.
  - c. sad.

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**Thinking More about the Story.** Your teacher might want you to write your answers.

- This story is called "The Piping-Hot Pizza Mystery." Do you think it is a good title? Explain.
- In the story, Brad never saw Mr. Light. Why do you think the author purposely kept Mr. Light hidden from Brad?
- Suppose that Brad *had* seen Mr. Light. How do you think Mr. Light would have looked? Explain your description.

Use the boxes below to total your scores for the exercises.

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