

PIZZA PLACE

A Play in One Act

by

Larry Ryals

Cast of Characters

- Palmer: A man in his early 20s; manager of Mama Mao's Pizza.
- Megan: A woman in her early 20s; Mama Mao's employee.
- Chloe: A woman in her early 20s; Mama Mao's employee.
- Jason: A man in his early 20s; Mama Mao's delivery driver.
- Robert Bile: A man in his early 40s; Mama Mao's district supervisor.
- Diego: A man in his early 20s; Robert Bile's assistant/yes man.
- Clerk: A man in his early 20s.
- Hotel Guest: A man in his early 40s.

Scene

Mama Mao's Szechuan Pizza store.

Time

The present.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

SETTING:

Mama Mao's Szechuan Pizza franchise store. Front counter faces audience. A phone rests on top of counter. Hotbox with pre-made, boxed pizzas inside is behind front counter. A glass door is located to side. A large, easily-visible menu sign with large block letters is located above the counter. The sign reads:

MAMA MAO'S SZECHUAN PIZZA

"IF WE DON'T GET IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME, WE'LL PROBABLY TRY AGAIN." - MAMA MAO

ALL PIZZAS PRE-FABRICATED FROM THE FINEST SYNTHETIC INGREDIENTS.

TRY "YO MAMA" FOR JUST \$29.99.

NOTE: ALL PRICES IN BASE 19.

AT RISE:

MEGAN, CHLOE, and PALMER are all resting on floor. MEGAN is sitting with legs crossed playing a game on her cell phone. CHLOE is sitting with legs crossed reading "Scientific American" magazine and blowing bubbles. PALMER is lying down sleeping with an empty Jack Daniels bottle near his head. He's using an empty pizza bag as a pillow. The store phone rings. CHLOE gets up and answers phone.

CHLOE

(disinterestedly) Thank you for calling Mama Mao's where we use only one hundred percent real goat cheese from only psychologically well-adjusted free-range goats with absolutely no bovine growth hormones and our sauce is made from only the freshest, choicest Roma tomatoes harvested four times daily from our proprietary tomato vineyards in Napa Valley and rushed via high-speed, armored tomato transport to a holding facility near Ogden, Utah, where each tomato is hand-inspected by a high-ranking official of the United States Department of Agriculture before continuing on its journey to...Hello? Moron.

(CHLOE hangs up and sits on floor.)

(Phone rings again.)

(CHLOE gives an exasperated look.)

MEGAN

I've got this one.

(MEGAN stands to answer phone.)

(cheerfully) Thank you for calling Mama Mao's where we use only one hundred percent real goat cheese from only psychologically well-adjusted free-range goats with absolutely no bovine growth hormones and our sauce is made from only the...(looks shocked) Oh, okay. (hangs up.)

(to CHLOE and PALMER) It's Robert! He's on his way here!

(CHLOE jumps up from floor. PALMER wakes up and sits up momentarily, then lies back down to sleep.)

CHLOE

Holy mother of God! Robert's coming! We'd better start cleaning.

(PALMER stirs again, then lies back down, pulling his pizza bag/pillow over his head.)

CHLOE

Didn't you hear? Robert's coming. How can you just lie there on the floor? What kind of manager are you, Palmer?

(PALMER calmly sits up and yawns.)

PALMER

(calmly) Robert isn't even real. He's just a formless, amorphous gaseous plasma seeping through the crevices of Satan's underbelly. Pure evil has no substance.

CHLOE

Maybe. But all I know is if I lose this job, I may have to quit school. A full scholarship in biochemistry only goes so far. If I just got a fat inheritance like you, maybe I'd rest easier. But Bunsen burners and Petri dishes don't exactly grow on trees, you know.

MEGAN

Yeah, I'm with you, Chloe. I can't afford to get fired. When I hit five gigs of data, my phone reverts to sub-light speed. The Angry Birds will die. Not to even mention my mobile Netflix. And besides, you guys are the only family I have since my One Direction Forever Facebook group deleted me.

PALMER

Nobody's gonna get fired. Robert can't afford to lose us. We're the only sentient, intelligent life forms who'll work for the so-called wages he's willing to pay. He's just a shill for the international banking cartel that is Mama Mao's Pizza, a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Illuminati. If he could run this store with trained parakeets, believe me, he would be all over that. But he needs us.

MEGAN

Okay, but I'm not taking any chances. Let's at least try to look like we're doing something.

CHLOE

You're right, Megan. Let's start cleaning.

(PALMER lies back down to sleep. MEGAN and CHLOE grab spray bottles of cleaning spray and begin spraying it on countertop and hotbox and wiping with towels.)

MEGAN

Wow, this stuff works awesome! What is it? Formula Four Oh Nine?

CHLOE

Nope, it's my own invention, Formula Four Thousand Nine, pure concentrated sulfuric acid.

MEGAN

Wow, it sure gets off those grungy pizza sauce stains. But it appears to be eating away the countertop.

(Doors fling open. ROBERT enters wearing a business suit. DIEGO follows behind him, wearing an identical suit.)

ROBERT

Well, well, well. What have we here? Temp agency rejects attempting to create the illusion of work?

(MEGAN and CHLOE give friendly waves and smiles to ROBERT.)

CHLOE

Hi Robert!

MEGAN

Yeah, hi Robert!

ROBERT

Don't "hi Robert" me. Diego, bring me my white glove.

DIEGO

Yes, Mister Bile.

(DIEGO hands ROBERT a white glove and ROBERT puts it on. ROBERT ceremoniously runs his gloved finger over the top of pizza hotbox.)

ROBERT

Well, well, well. Very interesting. Very interesting indeed. A layer of soot with a land mass roughly equivalent to Asia.

(ROBERT picks up the bottle of cleaning spray.)

Is this cleaning spray?

CHLOE

Uh, no. That's actually men's cologne. A concentrated compound of llama musk derivatives. Very powerful aphrodisiac. I got it on eBay for my boyfriend.

ROBERT

Interesting.

(ROBERT walks to PALMER, who is still lying on floor. DIEGO follows behind.)

Palmer, what in the name of hell do you think you're doing?

PALMER

I'm trying unsuccessfully to recover from a very bad hangover. I might add, the shrieking bat sounds emanating from your mouth aren't helping my efforts at all.

ROBERT

Palmer, get off that floor.

(PALMER stands up.)

You are the most pathetic, utterly useless excuse for a manager I've ever seen in my life. What do you have to say for yourself?

(PALMER burps loudly. MEGAN and CHLOE giggle, then smile sheepishly at ROBERT.)

MEGAN AND CHLOE

(in unison) Sorry.

ROBERT

Very amusing. We'll see who's amused when I inspect one of your pizzas for quality assurance. Diego, hand me a test pizza from the hotbox.

DIEGO

Yes, Mister Bile.

(DIEGO opens the hotbox and hands ROBERT a pizza. ROBERT opens the box and looks at the pizza.)

ROBERT

Well, well, well. Very interesting. This would appear to be a gelatinous, amoeboid mass of shapeless goo. Diego, call nine one one. Tell the police we've found Steve Irwin's murderer.

DIEGO

Yes, Mister Bile.

(DIEGO takes out his cell phone.)

ROBERT

No, you idiot. It was a joke.

DIEGO

Yes, Mister Bile. I mean no, Mister Bile. I mean yes, Mister Bile.

(ROBERT shakes his head in disgust.)

ROBERT

All right. Now for the real test. Let's see how it tastes.

(ROBERT ceremoniously picks up a slice of the pizza, closes his eyes, and takes one bite. He then pauses for a few moments, his facial expression unchanged. MEGAN and CHLOE look anxious and cross their fingers.)

ROBERT

This is delicious. This is the best pizza I've ever eaten. It has a pungent, vaguely Romanesque quality reminiscent of the post-Modernist pies of Central Sicily.

(He sniffs pizza.)

And that nose! Pure heaven!

(ROBERT takes another bite of pizza.)

ROBERT

Yes, yes, the sauce is robust, yet not arrogant. I am submitting this pie to Pizza Monthly for inclusion in the Pizza Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

MEGAN

Wow, are you serious?

ROBERT

No! I'm not serious. This is the worst pizza I've ever eaten. I've eaten pizza from cesspools that tastes better.

PALMER

I don't doubt that.

(MEGAN and CHLOE giggle uncontrollably, then they force themselves to stop and look at ROBERT in a contrite way.)

MEGAN AND CHLOE

(in unison, to ROBERT) Sorry.

(JASON enters through door carrying a pizza hotbag containing a pizza order. Gasping for breath, he sets the hotbag on the counter.)

JASON

That was stupid! First time I've ever been attacked by gigantic tarantulas on a delivery. Chihuahuas are bad enough. But wow, that was ridiculous!

MEGAN

Jason! Are you okay?!

JASON

Yeah, didn't get bitten or anything. Just scared the living shit outta me.

CHLOE

They said it was for the Community College biology lab, but who could have foreseen a tarantula attack?!

JASON

It was crazy. It was like that movie Little Shop of Horrors. The lab assistant stood on a chair and screamed her lungs out just as they escaped from their cage. But lots of girls react to me that way, so who knew.

ROBERT

Don't even think about filing a workmen's comp claim. Spiders are not the company's responsibility.

JASON

Thanks for your concern, Robert. I can tell you were really worried there, buddy.

ROBERT

Employee safety is always one of my top priorities.

PALMER

Yeah, right after your four oh one K plan, paid vacation, and the service contract on your company car.

MEGAN

There's actually another delivery going out, Jason. Do you think you'll be okay to take it?

JASON

Sure, why not? Where's it going?

MEGAN

They said they're in the alley behind the Seven Eleven at Third and Oak. And they need change for a thousand dollar bill.

JASON

Oh, okay. I'll stop by the bank on the way and make a withdrawal from my savings account. I can put it back in when I get the thousand, so no worries. But I'm putting on some Off just in case there are more tarantulas. Better safe than sorry.

(JASON grabs a can of Off from the counter and sprays it all over himself. Then he picks up the hotbag with new order and exits through door.)

ROBERT

Palmer, is this the kind of idiot you have working for you? No wonder your store's sales are even lower than your average employee I Q. If that's even possible. This store is a pathetic shambles. I'm giving you three days to show me this store can turn a profit. Three days. If you don't post an average of one thousand per day in sales by then, I'm turning this store into a tomato holding annex and firing the whole lot of you. Three days. Capisce?

(ROBERT grabs the bottle of spray cleaner.)

I've got a date tonight, so I'm taking this. Let's go, Diego.

DIEGO

Yes, Mister Bile.

ROBERT

Three days.

(ROBERT and DIEGO exit.)

PALMER

And, in three, two, one...

(Offstage, ROBERT screams in painful anguish. PALMER, MEGAN, and CHLOE laugh.)

PALMER

Nice.

CHLOE

Oh my God, Palmer. We're all gonna be fired. I think he really means it this time.

PALMER

I highly doubt it. Robert is the hot air equivalent of twelve political conventions, plus the Albuquerque Balloon Festival and El Nino. But still, he did seem slightly more rabid than usual. I don't think I've ever seen his face quite that shade of red before. I thought he was gonna spontaneously combust there for a minute. And me with no marshmallows.

(JASON enters through door carrying hotbag with pizza still in it. He sets the hotbag on counter.)

JASON

The A T M machine said I've only got like seventeen dollars in my savings account. Oh well. It was pepperoni and bean sprouts. Anybody hungry?

PALMER

Maybe later, but we've got more important fish to fry right now. We've gotta come up with a plan to get sales up. A thousand a day? Really? Why not a million? Or a trillion? What does he think we are? I B M or something?

CHLOE

For real. If we do five hundred, we're like "We Are Spartacus!"

PALMER

So, any ideas? Shoot.

CHLOE

How about having a liquefied pizza smoothie from a blender with fresh fruit and oat bran? We can open a booth at Planet Fitness.

MEGAN

Yeah, with gluten-free crust and fish oil coupons!

PALMER

That sucks.

JASON

Frozen pizza on a stick.

PALMER

Lame.

CHLOE

Eco-awareness pizza in the shape of an Amazonian rain forest.

MEGAN

Or Donald Trump's hair.

JASON

Or his hair in a rain forest.

MEGAN

Or the rain forest having sex with his hair.

CHLOE

Or his hair being deforested by multinational lumber corporations.

JASON

Or the lumber corporations having sex with his hair.

CHLOE

Or his hair, the lumber corporations, and a Petri dish of mold having an orgy.

MEGAN

Bad mental picture. Get out of my mind!