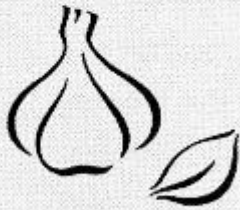


# Chapter Eleven



## PIZZA MENU

Ham and Pineapple	\$6.95
Pineapple and Ham	\$6.95
Hawaiian	\$6.95
Supreme	\$6.95
Ultimate	\$6.95
Beesknees	\$6.95
Pepperoni	\$6.95
Saltaroni	\$6.95
Meatlovers	\$6.95
Vegetablelovers	1960s
Piecelovers	\$6.95
Garlic Bread	free
Garlic Breath	
Tip expected by sweaty pizza man with pimples and garlic breath	\$5.00

**Pat Flynn**

Mum's not home after school. *Good*, I think. It gives me a chance to search the hallway cupboards and I discover a large packet of salt and vinegar chips and a bottle of coke, left over from some old party. It's like finding a hidden treasure.

Having been a health nut for a week, I full-on appreciate the first few mouthfuls of junk food. Salt, oil, sugar and fizz all burst through grateful tastebuds into my grateful belly. *Mmmmmm*, I think as I turn on the telly. Before long, though, my hand makes the journey from lap to mouth with the rest of me hardly noticing. And before long, without me hardly noticing, the food and drink are all gone.

The phone rings. 'Matthew, it's Mum.'

As if I didn't know.

'Listen, things have gone pear-shaped. The whiz-kid's messed up and clients are threatening to leave and take their money with them. Lincoln's having a cow. I'm going to have to stay until it's sorted.'

'Okay,' I say. *Typical*.

'There's some money in the bottom drawer in the kitchen. Order yourself a meal from the phone book. Something healthy, okay?'

'Okay.' *No way*.

I ring for takeaway early. Why wait? Thirty minutes later it arrives, smelling awesome.

'Large meatlovers with barbeque sauce, garlic bread and a coke,' says the pizza boy, leaning left so he can look

**Pat Flynn**

past me into the house. He's probably searching for my non-existent, skinny, pretty older sister.

I give him the exact money. As he passes over the pizza, I notice his shirt is soaked under the armpits. If he asks for a tip, I'll tell him to wear deodorant.

After dinner has disappeared into my stomach, I unpack the freezer. There's frozen spinach, frozen fish fingers and frozen peas. *Yuck!* But at the very back, behind some frozen water, is what I'm looking for. A full tub of chocolate ice-cream.

I don't think I have much at all, but when Mum unlocks the front door and I wake up – on the couch – I look down and notice it's nearly all gone.

Mum sees the pizza box and the ice-cream tub and I can tell she's not happy, but all she says is 'Clean your teeth and go to bed'. By the time I come out of the bathroom she's already plugged in her laptop and opened a bottle of wine.

Old habits die hard.



# Chapter Twelve



## KISSING MENU

Lip Peck	\$1.00
Cheek Peck	\$0.50
Chicken Peck	\$0.50
French (free tongue)	\$2.00
Russian (served quickly)	\$1.50
Hairy Uncle	\$0.20
Hairy Aunty	\$0.20
Soft Lips	\$1.20
Chapped Lips	\$0.80
Dead Fish	\$0.60

**Pat Flynn**

As I line up for tuckshop, two things make me happy:

1. *Jan's back.*
2. *It's Friday, which means fresh meat pies.*

Someone pokes me from behind. I don't turn around. The poking gets harder. Still I ignore it.

Now it's two-finger poking, like someone is typing a book on my back. I spin 180 degrees, angry.

Before I can say anything someone grabs my shoulders and my lips are smacked by . . . lips! It takes a second for me to realise it's Kayla, and that she's planted a kiss right on my kisser!

I'm too shocked to react. She pulls me out of line, and a boy who saw what happened gives me the thumbs-up. We sit at the same table as yesterday, but I'm having trouble thinking straight. I can feel someone else's spit on my top lip.

'Why'd you do that for?' I ask.

'I don't know,' Kayla says. She looks shocked too. 'Felt like it, I s'pose.'

'Couldn't you, like, have asked me first?'

'Yeah, I should've. Sorry.'

'I think it's illegal what you did. It's, like, lip abuse.'

'I said I was sorry.' She looks down. 'So you didn't like it?'

I'm not sure what to say, so I lick my top lip. It tastes like girl.

'Why'd you leave yesterday?' she asks, still staring at the ground.

'Because . . . !'

**Pat Flynn**

'Because why?'

'I didn't win.'

She looks back up. 'You think I care about a free chocolate milk?'

I think for a second. 'Yes.'

She smiles. 'You're right, I do. But I care about you more.'

Hearing that makes me tingle all over, like when I drink frozen coke too fast. Then I remember what she said about me. 'You called me ugly and pathetic.'

'Excuse me?'

'Yesterday. I heard you.'

'When?'

'At the end of lunch. You were talking to Tasha. I came back to apologise and I heard what you said.'

She's quiet for a second, thinking. Then she remembers and her mouth opens. 'I was talking about Craig Withers. Tasha told me he threw a rock at you.'

My mouth opens too. 'Really?'

'Really.'

This is getting mega weird. I suppose it's possible she's telling the truth. But there's one more thing I need to know.

'Why would you even like me?' I ask. 'Especially when I'm . . .'

'Fat?'

'Yeah.'

'I don't care about that.'



***THE TUCKSHOP KID***

It's hard for me to believe. 'Why not?'

She takes out her wallet, and for a second I think she's going to pay me back all the money I've lent her this year. Instead, she takes out a family photo. Her mum and her brother look normal, but her dad's big smile appears out of butt-sized cheeks, and his tummy looks like it has swallowed a small car.

'That's one big bloke,' I say.

'That's my dad.' She looks at the photo and speaks to it, quietly. 'I love him.'

I get up and Kayla grabs my arm. 'You're not leaving again, are you?'

'There's something I have to do.'

By this time the tuckshop line is not long.

'Young Matthew, so nice to see you,' Jan says.

'How are you feeling today?' I ask.

'Much better. I think it was just one of those 24-hour things. How are you going?'

'Good. But I'd be even better if I could have a chocolate milk.' I lean in closer. 'A lucky one, if possible.'

There's a twinkle in her eye. 'You've had a lot of luck lately.'

'I know. But if I could have just a little bit more, I think my life will be perfect.'

When I return, placing the chocolate milk in front of her, Kayla gives me a questioning look.

'Drink it,' I say. 'If it says "Winner" at the bottom I'll let you ask me a question.'

**Pat Flynn**

'Anything?' she says.

'Anything.' Then I hold up my hand. 'Well, *almost* anything.'

We smile together.