

MARK & RITA: PIZZA SPIES

Saving the world in ten minutes, or your next saving-the-world is free!

A laugh-out-loud action comedy of Service-Counter Espionage for upper-end big kids

Tween siblings Mark and Rita Cornicione are finding their new part time job more fun than they expected – and WAY more challenging. It's not so much having to show up on time and remember customer orders, it's not even having to scrape the burnt cheese out the bottom of the pizza oven – although that *does* suck – it's that the fate of the free world lies in their hands every time they clock on! Because Uncle Cal's rundown restaurant and delivery service *Pizza Pizzazz* is actually a front for a top secret, hi tech spy agency working night and day to save the city from the schemes of enemy agents!

The agency sends coded messages, and help to agents in trouble, via the toppings of their pizzas. Three jalapeños? The High School Principal's been replaced by an android! You want 'special cheese'? Then you're looking to blow a door with its gelignite power! Side of garlic pizza? Good call! One whiff can take out a whole platoon of guards.

You see, Mark and Rita are the newest recruits of P.I.Z.Z.A, the Priority Investigations (Zone Zero) Agency, balancing their school, social and home lives with taking on top secret pizza-based missions across the city. It's the perfect disguise – nobody looks twice at two kids delivering pizzas on scooters, or suspects for a moment that those scooters are tricked out with turbo boosters, laser blasters and passata slicks, that those pizza boxes act as Kevlar shields, those dated uniforms contain stealth-weave fabrics that can render them invisible, or that behind the restaurant's walk-in freezer is a super-cool (literally) operations base!

Everyone's first job is a rite of passage, and for Mark and Rita that's doubly true – they're not just dealing with awkward customers and menial counter duties, they're defusing bombs, foiling assassination attempts, and generally thwarting the wiles of the mysterious master criminal known only as 'Big Bun', the brains behind the criminal syndicate the Bureau of Undercover Rogues, Gangsters and Evil Renegades – B.U.R.G.E.R...

Mark and Rita: Pizza Spies is an off-the-wall comedy of secret agents hiding in plain sight, villainous spies with crackpot schemes, double double double agents and exploding pepperoni. While our stories will be grounded in kid-relatable characters dealing with issues that, however heightened, have their roots in the everyday challenges of our young audience, nothing is taken too seriously – this is a fast, fun-filled world where there might be a different secret base hiding behind every shopfront on the street, and every character on that street may well have some unexpected backstory waiting to be discovered. We're talking action-packed spy thrillers, outlandish plots, and a surreal comic twist – but anchored by believable and sympathetic leads, trying their best, pushing their limits and winning well-deserved victories.

So grab yourself a hot slice of action, loaded with comedy, topped with quirky characters, and seasoned with danger, delivered to your door, secret agent style!

MAIN CHARACTERS

Mark Cornicione (15) – Mark is a leftfield thinker with big dreams, who sometimes struggles to see what's right in front of his nose. Of course, finding out that there's a secret spy base hidden behind a pizza place is the best thing that's ever happened to him – he *knew* there was something they weren't telling us! A big sci fi and fantasy fan, Mark is a keen RPG enthusiast – and has taken to turning his real-life spy adventures into RPG adventures for his mates, including best friend Nala. His Mom thought the new job would force him to deal with the real world for a change - how wrong was she!? Mark loves hanging out with his sister Rita – he's a little socially awkward and admires her easy sociability, although he sometimes wishes she'd listen to him more – I mean, he's the older sibling, right?

Rita Cornicione (14) Breezy and easy-going, Rita has a knack for making friends . Living in the moment, with few cares or worries for the future, Rita can be slapdash, forgetful and a little too direct. Becoming a secret agent is the coolest thing ever – apart from the bit where she can't tell anyone about it, and the part where missions clash with every social commitment in her packed schedule –, she's on the girls' soccer team, plays drums in a garage band, auditions for every school play going – there's a FOMO going on there that can really clash with her saving-the-world commitments! She loves her brother, he can always make her laugh – although sometimes that's not what Mark intended, awkward!

Cal Cornicione (40s) – Nobody would guess that Cal, a larger than life chuckling, twinkling life-and-soul of the pizza party was actually a master spy with a lifetime of action behind him – which of course is exactly the point! It's not an act – Cal really is a lovable, hearty backslapper of a man – but when the need arises, he's all business. He's seen and done a lot in his life as a field operative, which is how he's ended up leading this covert unit, a 'fixer' you can call on when things really have gone wrong and you need an exit strategy. He also makes the best tomato sauce in town – hey, you don't run a pizzeria for twenty years without picking up a few tips!

Nala Gardiner (15) - relaxed to the point of falling over, Nala loves food, good times and kicking back with her friends – so the fact her best buds Frankie and Rita work at a pizza place is the best thing ever, instant hangout spot! When she stumbled into P.I.Z.Z.A. looking for a soda refill, she barely blinked – sure, spies, whatever, now about this soda... Relentlessly positive, she's proven her reliability enough to convince Cal he doesn't need to wipe Nala's memory – 'not that it'd make a whole lot of difference'.

Sarah Cornicione (40s) – single Mom Sarah works long hours as a traffic cop and hasn't a clue about her brother's double life. Her life is an organised chaos as she successfully balances keeping the lights on with caring for her kids – but she can't say it's not a relief that Mark and Rita have finally found a part time job they can hold down, not so much for the money – that's for them to enjoy – but for the 'free childcare' she feels her brother is providing...

SAMPLE STORIES

1) JUST ONE SLICE

Mark and Rita have been trusted with fulfilling an important order – Cal’s left them extremely specific instructions right down to how many slices of pepperoni to use. They’re so focussed they don’t notice Nala sneak a piece of pepperoni off the top before the pizza lid is closed. When they get back from the delivery Cal’s back and Nala smiles – got away with it! Got away with what? Nala reveals what she did and Cal gasps, horrified: You did WHAT?! It turns out the ‘special order’ they just handed to a ‘special customer’ was the agency’s daily report. an odd number of pepperoni slices is the signal that P.I.Z.Z.A. has been compromised and our superiors need to initiate the destruct code on this whole block! With the shop and their apartment on the line, the kids race to catch up with their “customer” on the *Pizza Pizzazz* scooters – with B.U.R.G.E.R. operatives in hot pursuit, determined to get their hands on that report. Mark and Rita are determined to prove to Cal they can be trusted, even if it’s just ‘trusted to fix their own mistakes’!

2) SCOOTER RAGE

Rita’s a natural on the scooters, much to Mark’s annoyance, she hardly seems to be trying at all, whereas the more Mark tries then the worse he seems to do – he’s overthinking everything and getting in a pickle (literally, when he drives into the pickle barrel). Cal asked Rita privately if she wouldn’t mind giving her brother a few lessons – and it’s not going well. The more Rita tries to offer Mark helpful advice, the more he gets wound up until he ends up pressing the wrong button entirely... and launching the scooter into Earth orbit – exactly how far does the P.I.Z.Z.A. delivery zone stretch?! More importantly, can Rita talk Mark down before he either blows the agency’s cover or sparks a city-wide UFO panic?! Mark’s going to have to swallow his pride, keep his cool, and maybe listen to his sister - or risk burning up on re-entry...

3) OBLIVIOLIVES

How has Cal kept this place secret for so long? Rita is finding it hard keeping her mouth shut – she’s got so many besties, it’s cruel expecting her not to tell ANY of them. Cal reveals that P.I.Z.Z.A. created a specially marinated olive that causes short term memory loss – obliviolives – but they’re purely for emergencies. Rita nods – but to her, this IS an emergency, so she swipes a jar and gets to tell ALL her friends all her new job, then they instantly forget about it afterwards. Mark finds out and says this is crazy, he needs to tell Cal – so Rita slips Mark an oblivolive, what he doesn’t know can’t hurt him... Only he KEEPS finding out, so she keeps giving him olives, and soon Mark’s forgetting all sorts of important things - like wearing pants, and who he is... She needs to find a fix and fast – or forget about ever being an agent again!