

## THE PIZZA BOY.

We all prepare for the first time we do something, whether that is our first day at school, our first ride in a plane or, most significantly, the birth of our first child. But for Franco, his first was the first time he had a meaningful physical encounter with a pizza.

Franco had an unusual upbringing. His parents were Italian and, for them, the eating of pizza was a sign of respect to their forbears. Every Sunday, Franco's mother, Lucia, would prepare a pizza, rotating the ingredients according to the day of the month and the sign of the zodiac, before offering it to the members of the family, eyes closed and head down. Franco's father, Lorenzo, would receive the offering before paying homage to the creator of the pizza, Lucia, and then the creator of heaven and earth, the great God almighty.

For some reason, Franco, even from a small child, would refuse to eat any pizza, spitting it out and yelling. 'No!'

This pizza-phobia, later the subject of study by medical academics, resulted in great problems for Franco as he grew into adolescence. When the other teenagers would go out for a few drinks before retiring to the local Pizza Hut, Franco sloped off home. His phobia was so great that even that young person's rite of passage, driving lessons, was denied him, as the thought of encountering a pizza-delivery driver *en route* filled him with horror.

Then Franco moved on to university. In his first week, he set eyes on a young woman. It was 'Love at first sight', but Franco feared rejection, and so did not approach her.

Then one evening, during a musical event, Franco, after a few drinks, plucked up the courage to approach the vision of loveliness, asking her for a dance before they sloped off to the bar.

'I hope you don't think I asked you for a dance because I have had too much to drink,' he slurred. Then the alcohol took over. 'Because I have always found you very attractive, even when I am sober. And I am not just talking about your physical appearance. It is your brain, your mind, your philosophy of life itself. You are such a meaningful person.'

Franco felt he had made a good start, and thought that his words would show that he was not like other boys. He had a deeper and more meaningful outlook on life.

Just at that moment, the young lady noticed that there were free slices of pizza at the bar. She stood up, announcing that her name was Pia and that pizza was her favourite food, before offering a slice to Franco.

Despite the fear coursing through his veins, Franco plucked up the courage and sank his teeth deep into the food. That one step of courage was to signal a future of happiness and contentment for Franco.

He was now a pizzaterian, joining many others for whom Pizza Hut was a place of divine worship.

Amen.