

LITTLE MR

JAROMIR

BY

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Mushroom Pizza

Little Mr Jaromir lives on the sixth floor. Each time he gets into the lift, he jumps as high as he can and presses a button. He usually reaches the fourth floor and walks up the last two flights.

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## *Mushroom Pizza*

One morning little Mr Jaromir looked out of the window and thought: There's something in the air.

Outside everything was really as it always was: the wide street, the blocks of flats and above that a patch of grey sky. And yet... Mr Jaromir opened the window and breathed deeply in and out. The air smelt of peanuts. There was a nut roasting plant in one of the suburbs and when there was an east wind the whole city was full of the smell of freshly roasted peanuts. "There's something in the air," said Mr Jaromir and he didn't just mean the peanut aroma.

After he had stood there long enough, Mr Jaromir thought about how he could spend this special day. He closed the window and decided to go for a walk. Mr Jaromir didn't need a coat, it wasn't cold. He could leave right away.

When Mr Jaromir opened his front door, there was a man standing outside with a big box. The man said, "Good morning, I'm the technician."

"Glad to hear it," said Mr Jaromir.

"Please stand aside," said the technician. "It's a big box."

Mr Jaromir stepped aside.

The man carried the box past Mr Jaromir and into the apartment.

“Which room?” he asked.

“I don’t quite understand,” said Mr Jaromir in surprise.

“You have to talk a bit louder,” said the technician.  
“Because I’m a little hard of hearing.

“I don’t quite understand!” repeated Mr Jaromir. “I haven’t ordered anything.”

The man looked round.

“Put it anywhere? Well, that’s not so easy. You don’t have much space.”

He put the box down in the middle of the living room.

“Let’s simply assemble it all here,” he decided. “We can always move it around again later.”

It was in the air, thought Mr Jaromir. Now I’ve received a huge package!

He watched the technician, who tore off a couple of lengths of sticky tape and opened the box. Countless little white balls appeared.

“What’s that?” asked Mr Jaromir.

“Those are polystyrene balls,” explained the man.  
“They’re only there as protection. A computer like this is a very sensitive piece of equipment. It has to be well packed.”

“Computer?” asked Mr Jaromir and in his astonishment he forgot to shut his mouth.

“Computer,” said the technician, “because really it does nothing all day except compute, that is, count.”

Mr Jaromir shut his mouth again, but he still didn’t understand what was going on here.

“But I don’t need a piece of equipment that counts,” he said. “Whatever I need to count, I can count by myself.”

The man smiled down at Mr Jaromir. Perhaps he was astonished at how little Mr Jaromir knew.

“I probably have to explain that,” said the technician, as he unpacked a screen and put it on the living room table. “Of course, you don’t just count with the computer, you can also write with it. But the computer counts all time, even while you’re writing something.”

“I don’t need the computer, not to count and not to write,” said Mr Jaromir.

“Is this where it’ll go?” asked the technician.

“I don’t need it,” repeated Mr Jaromir.

“On the living room table, yes that’s all right.” The technician put a box and a keyboard with numbers and letters next to the screen.

“Now all we need to do, is connect it all,” he said.

Half an hour later a number of cables ran across the living room. Mr Jaromir had to watch out that he didn’t trip over them.

“So, that should be it,” said the technician.

He switched on the computer, put a kind of helmet on Mr Jaromir’s head and grinned.

“Now you never need to leave home again.”

The helmet came down below his eyes and blocked Mr Jaromir’s view of the room. Instead he saw a street in a town in front of him. It wasn’t just a film. It was as if Mr Jaromir really was outside in the street. If he turned his head to the right, he saw the houses on the right side of the street, if he turned it to the left, he saw other houses on the left side of the street. Mr Jaromir walked along the street for a bit. Then he leapt aside in fright, because a car was coming straight at him.

“Stop!” cried the technician. “Don’t go any further.”

He put a gadget with a little lever into Mr Jaromir's hands.

"Just stay where you are," he said. "With this joystick you can control where you go."

Mr Jaromir tried it. He remained standing on the spot and only moved the thing in his hands. And he really did feel as if he was walking along the pavement. At the start he zig-zagged uncertainly from side to side, but soon he got the hang of it and could walk straight ahead, turn corners and cross the road.

"You can even do it sitting down," explained the man. "Then you can walk as far as you like, and your feet will never get sore."

"Odd," said Mr Jaromir. "What a strange world!"

"And it's all at your fingertips," said the technician proudly. "Where would you like to go?"

"I would like to go into a forest," said Mr Jaromir.

For a moment everything went black and then he was already in the middle of the forest. A stream babbled, birds twittered, the trees rustled a little in the breeze. Mr Jaromir breathed deeply in and out.

"I don't smell anything," declared Mr Jaromir. "But it's still amazing." He moved the joystick and now it

really looked as if he was walking beside the stream.

“It all seems very real, doesn’t it?” said the technician.

“And all the time the computer is counting.”

Mr Jaromir stepped over a couple of branches and climbed onto a rock. Then he came to a meadow.

“It’s really big,” said Mr Jaromir in astonishment.

“There’s so much room here!”

“And suddenly he began to run across the meadow, his legs moved, he really was running.

“Stop!” shouted the technician. “Don’t run! Watch out, the cable!”

But it was too late. Mr Jaromir stumbled over a wire and crashed into the wall - a painful throbbing in his head and stars and circles in front of his eyes reminded him that he was not in a big meadow but only in his small living room. Luckily the helmet on his head had prevented anything worse happening. Mr Jaromir took it off.

“It still hurts,” he said and looked reproachfully at the technician.

“You have to read the instructions very carefully,” the latter retorted. “I told you: You mustn’t run. At least not, if you’re using the equipment in a small room.

That's really the only thing that's different from a real forest.”

“And the air is different,” said Mr Jaromir and rubbed a painful bump.

“That's true,” admitted the man. “But otherwise everything is just as it is outside. You really never need to leave your flat again.”

Mr Jaromir shook his head.

“But I have to buy something to eat,” he said. “I have to leave the house for that.”

“No problem. We have the mouse.” The technician smiled in a superior way.

“What does that mean?” asked Mr Jaromir.

The technician pointed at a white plastic part, lying on the living room table.

“There's the mouse! We'll use it to order a pizza.”

With one hand he moved the mouse over the surface of the table and with the other pointed at the screen.

“You see!”

A salami pizza now appeared on the screen.

“We're now on the site of Antonio's Lightning Pizza.

That's not far from here. But really the distance is unimportant. If we wanted, we could order our pizza from Italy or America."

"But it would be cold by the time it got here," said Mr Jaromir.

"Very true," said the technician. "So let's just stick with Antonio's Lightning Pizza! Look, with the mouse we can click on and go to the next page. What kind of pizzas do you like?"

"Mushroom pizza," said Mr Jaromir. "But with fresh mushrooms, not ones out of a tin!"

"So go to the next page."

He pressed down on the mouse and other toppings appeared on the screen. That was repeated until a mushroom pizza appeared.

"A click, and it's already been ordered," he said cheerfully "Now I'll just key in your name."

He spelled out loud and tapped the letters on the keyboard.

"B-U-S-C-H-M-A-N-N."

"What's that you're writing?" asked Mr Jaromir in surprise. "Buschmann"?

“Of course I’ve written Buschmann,” said the technician. “One pizza for Buschmann. I have to give your name.”

He wrote the name of the street and clicked the mouse again.

“That’s it,” he said. “The pizza’s coming.”

“My name isn’t Buschmann,” said Mr Jaromir.

The man looked at him in surprise.

“Louder, please. I don’t think I understood you properly.”

“My name isn’t Buschmann!” Mr Jaromir shouted in his ear. “And I haven’t ordered a computer either. I’ve been trying to tell you that the whole time.”

“How can that be?” asked the technician. “I rang the bell for Buschmann. I got the lift up to the seventh floor. You opened the door and let me in. Why are you not called Buschmann?”

“I am Mr Jaromir and live on the sixth floor,” said little Mr Jaromir. “I opened the door, because I was just going out. And you were standing there with your box.”

The technician scratched his nose.

“That’s a nuisance,” he said. “So Mr Buschmann will be getting a mushroom pizza now and he’s still waiting for his computer.”

Grumbling quietly to himself, he took apart the equipment and packed it back into the box.

“Do you know Mr Buschmann?” he asked.

“I’ve never even seen him” said Mr Jaromir.

“You should buy a computer, too,” suggested the technician, as he left the apartment. “Then you might meet Mr Buschmann on screen.”

“And we could go walking in the forest together,” said Mr Jaromir.

“Exactly!” exclaimed the man. “And all of it without leaving home.”

Mr Jaromir shut the door behind the technician. He went to the window and looked out. He saw the streets and the buildings, behind them were other streets and buildings, which couldn’t be seen from this window, and so on. And somewhere, behind all these streets and buildings, was the forest.

What a strange day, thought Mr Jaromir. He opened the window and breathed in the air, which smelled of freshly roasted peanuts. Then he made up his mind,

finally to go for a walk. He didn't need a coat, he went straight to the front door. But when he opened it there was a man standing there with a flat cardboard box in his hands.

“One pizza for Buschmann,” said the man.

Mr Jaromir laughed.

“That's lucky,” he said. “Because I'm feeling hungry.” He paid for the pizza and went back into his flat.

He ate it at the kitchen table. It tasted quite good. But the mushrooms, it has to be said, were not fresh after all, but had definitely come out of a tin.

