

Gertrude Chandler Warner's

THE BOXCAR CHILDREN

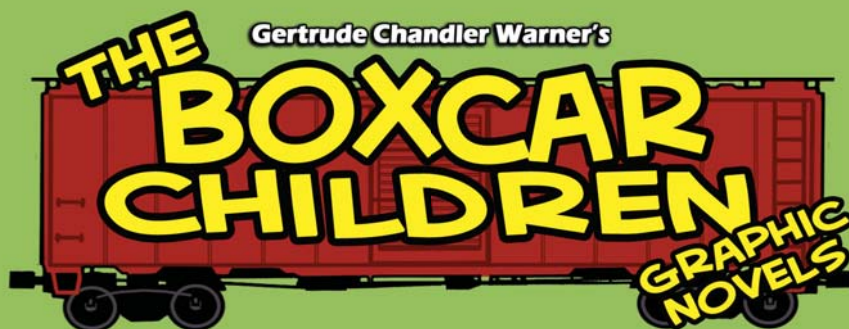
GRAPHIC NOVELS

THE PIZZA MYSTERY



Rob M. Worley

Mike Dubisch



BOOK ELEVEN THE PIZZA MYSTERY

The Aldens are having a delicious time helping out at a pizza parlor! They toss dough in the kitchen and even invent a new kind of pizza. But when a blackout and other problems hurt business, they begin to wonder if someone is trying to shut down the pizzeria. It's a piping hot mystery for the Boxcar Children!

THE BOXCAR CHILDREN

GRAPHIC NOVELS

1. THE BOXCAR CHILDREN
2. SURPRISE ISLAND
3. THE YELLOW HOUSE MYSTERY
4. MYSTERY RANCH
5. MIKE'S MYSTERY
6. BLUE BAY MYSTERY
7. SNOWBOUND MYSTERY
8. TREE HOUSE MYSTERY
9. THE HAUNTED CABIN MYSTERY
10. THE AMUSEMENT PARK MYSTERY
11. THE PIZZA MYSTERY
12. THE CASTLE MYSTERY

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THE BOXCAR CHILDREN

THE PIZZA MYSTERY

Adapted by Rob M. Worley

Illustrated by Mike Dubisch



Henry Alden



Jessie Alden



Watch



Violet Alden



Benny Alden



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“Gertrude Chandler Warner’s The Boxcar Children.”

Summary: When their favorite pizza restaurant almost goes out of business, the Alden children try to help their friends stay open while they find out who is behind all their problems.

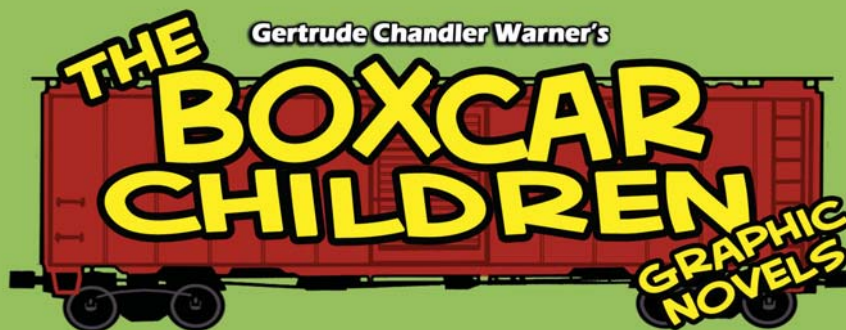
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BOOK ELEVEN
THE PIZZA MYSTERY

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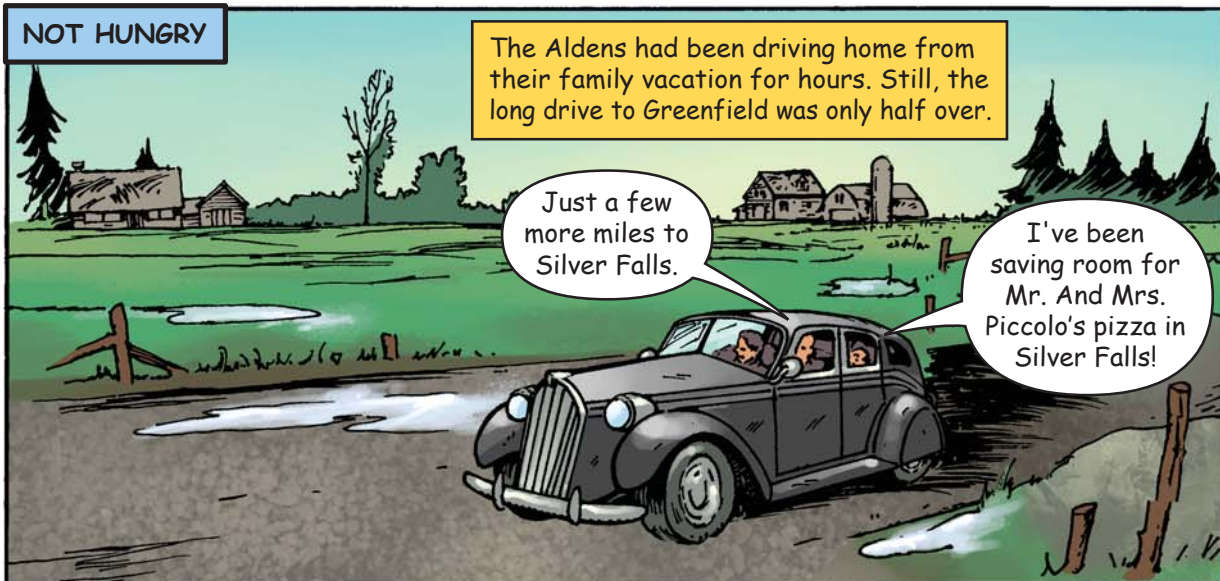
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NOT HUNGRY

The Aldens had been driving home from their family vacation for hours. Still, the long drive to Greenfield was only half over.

Just a few more miles to Silver Falls.

I've been saving room for Mr. And Mrs. Piccolo's pizza in Silver Falls!



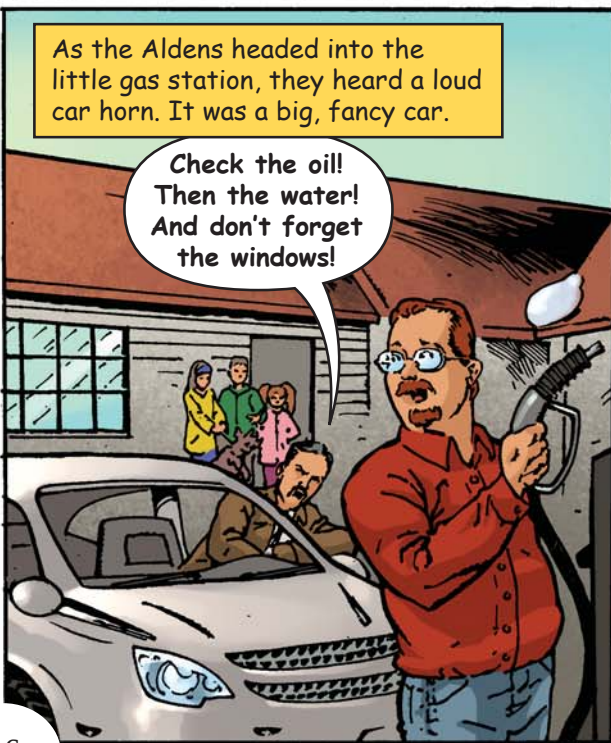
Howdy do, Aldens! Coming back from your latest adventure? Did you solve any mysteries up north?

Naw, nothing happened.

Well, your trip's not over yet.

As the Aldens headed into the little gas station, they heard a loud car horn. It was a big, fancy car.

Check the oil!
Then the water!
And don't forget the windows!



Is there a soda machine in this place?

What's that dog doing in here?! Get it out!



The man snapped at Tom and paid for his gas and soda.

Come on, children.
Let's get going to
Piccolo's Pizza.

You'll
be lucky if it's
open!



That was Mr. Irons,
the new manager of the
Mighty Mufflers factory.
Problem is, he thinks he
runs everything.

But he's right. The
Piccolos are having a
hard time keeping the
restaurant going...



Half the fun of Silver Falls was to visit
Tom's Gas Station. But not that day.

That man
even got mad
about pizza!

Not me! I'm glad
about pizza. Are we
there yet?



I thought we were,
Benny. But I don't
see the Piccolo's
Pizza sign.

Hey! Look
at that!



That billboard
covers the Piccolo's
Pizza sign. We must
have passed the
restaurant.

A FACE IN THE WINDOW

The parking lot was very crowded, so the Aldens parked down the block.

Something's wrong here. Do you notice what's missing?

There's no pizza smell.



At first Mr. Piccolo didn't notice who had come through his door, until...

Oh, my! It's Watch! And the Aldens! I didn't even recognize my old friends!

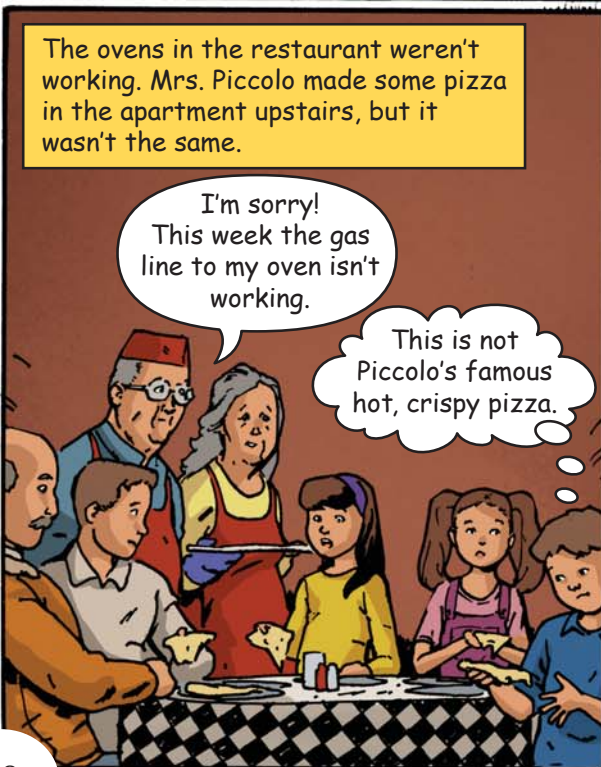
WOOF!



The ovens in the restaurant weren't working. Mrs. Piccolo made some pizza in the apartment upstairs, but it wasn't the same.

I'm sorry!
This week the gas line to my oven isn't working.

This is not Piccolo's famous hot, crispy pizza.



Why aren't you busy with that new factory next door?

We were, at first. Then they moved the factory gate and cut the workers' lunch hour down. Now there's no time to walk and wait for pizza.

And those delivery trucks took our parking spaces.

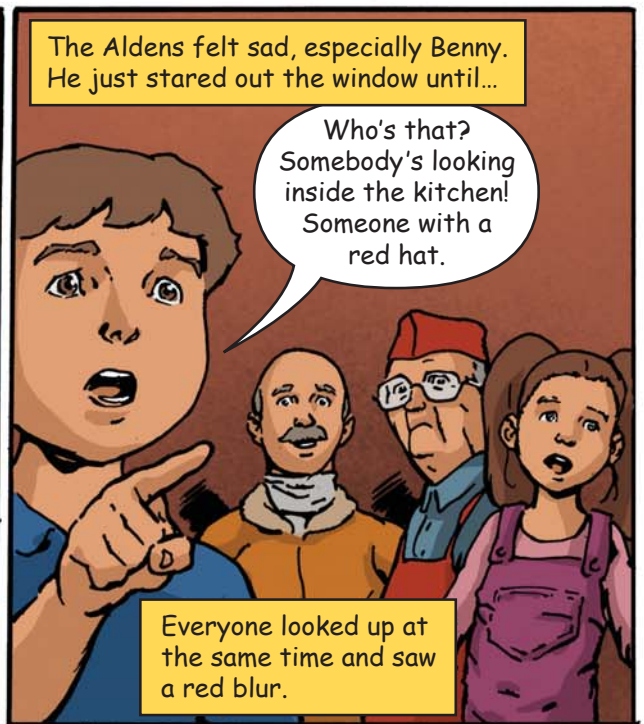




Then our waiter, Nick stopped coming to work.

Nick?
Will he be all right?

We don't know. He moved out of the apartment upstairs, and then he called in sick. We don't know when he's coming back.



The Aldens felt sad, especially Benny. He just stared out the window until...

Who's that?
Somebody's looking inside the kitchen!
Someone with a red hat.

Everyone looked up at the same time and saw a red blur.

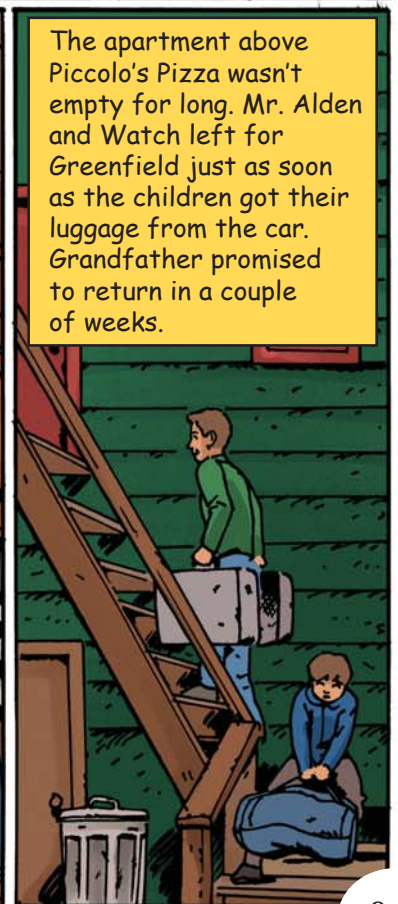


This is not the first time we've seen someone sneaking around.

We're still on vacation, maybe we can help.

What do you think, Mr. Piccolo?

That would be wonderful!



The apartment above Piccolo's Pizza wasn't empty for long. Mr. Alden and Watch left for Greenfield just as soon as the children got their luggage from the car. Grandfather promised to return in a couple of weeks.

JESSIE'S PIZZA PLAN

Just as soon as they were moved in, the Aldens went to work.

I'm going to ride the bike to the gas company.

Mr. Piccolo said someone from Mighty Mufflers called to get the broken line fixed. But what if they forgot?

Well, come back hungry for pizza!

Mrs. Piccolo said the Aldens could help themselves to anything in her kitchen. Soon they had pizza dough, homemade sauce, and mozzarella cheese.

Violet, work some cornmeal into the dough.

Don't eat that cheese, Benny. Save some for our pizzas!

The pizza Mrs. Piccolo made was too big to bake in this oven.

I get it! Small pizzas for a small oven. Then they should get hot and crispy enough!

When Henry returned, Jessie showed him their plan.

I hope those little pizzas work out better than my trip! They said that no one reported the broken gas line. We're on the list now, but it might be days before they come.

One for each person. I know it's not dinnertime, but let's sample them anyway.

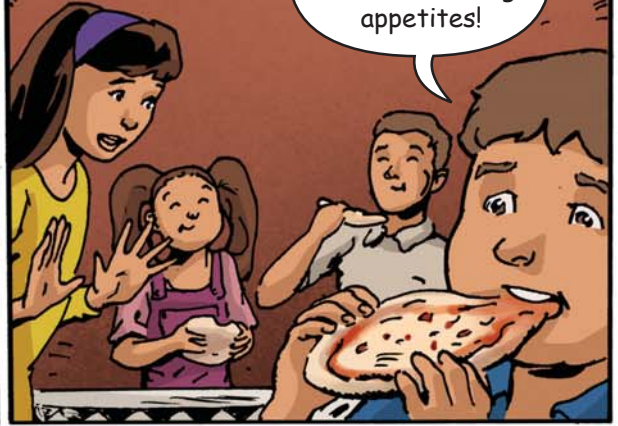
I have an idea!

It's fantastic! If people get a taste of these pizzas, I just know they'll start coming back to the restaurant.



Let's ask the Piccolos if we can make up some coupons that say the same thing. Maybe Henry could go around on the bike and hand them out, while we stay here and make more pizzas.

We may only have a little oven, but we have big appetites!



In a short time, the back stairs to the apartment were busy all day long. Small, unbaked pizzas went up, and hot, steaming ones came back down.



There was one, important job Benny liked best of all.

Try this one.

What are those green things? They don't look like sausages.

Ah, Benny, some people, they like vegetables better.

It's good!



THE TABLE IN THE CORNER

Good for you, Violet. This way we find out which ones our customers like. Then we can make more of them.

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE PERSONAL PIZZA
SUPREME
ZUCCHINI
PEPPER

Then, the lunch hour began. For the next two hours, the cash register rang over and over. Benny made sure each customer had plenty of breadsticks.



Mr. Piccolo told Benny about one special customer.

She was my best customer. She never says too much, and she always sits at the table closest to the kitchen.

Do you know her name?

I call her the Lady in the Red Hat!

Soon, the lunch hour was over.

We'll get the last two checks, Mr. Piccolo. Then we can get started on tonight's pizzas.

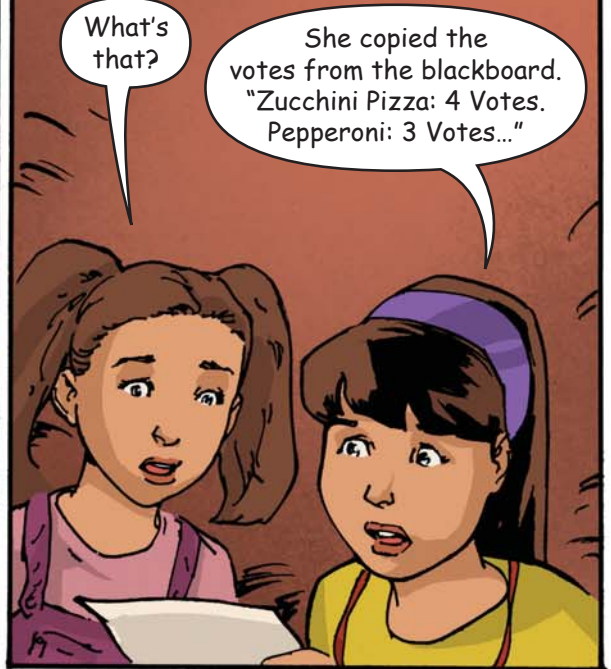




Would you like anything else?

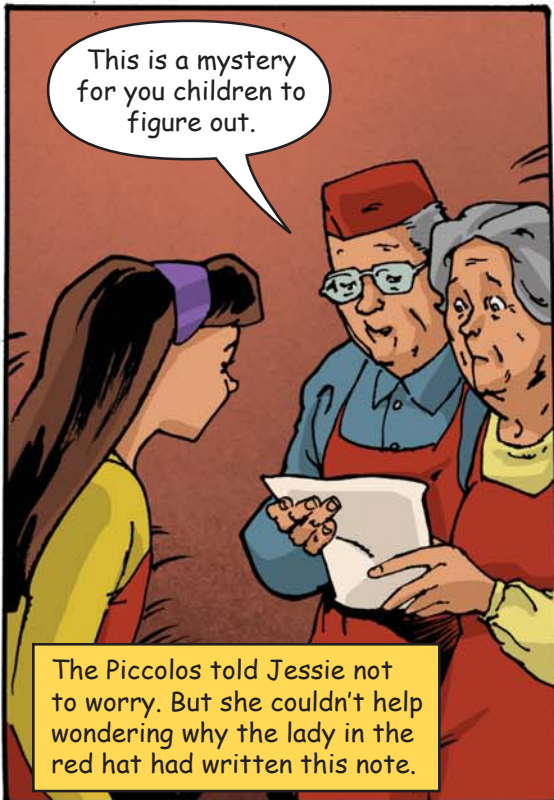
Uh...no, no. Just the bill.

Before Jessie could tell her that she'd left too much money, the woman was gone. Jessie noticed a piece of paper she'd left behind.



What's that?

She copied the votes from the blackboard. "Zucchini Pizza: 4 Votes. Pepperoni: 3 Votes..."



This is a mystery for you children to figure out.

The Piccolos told Jessie not to worry. But she couldn't help wondering why the lady in the red hat had written this note.

Finally, Henry called again to see when the gas company was going to fix the broken gas line. He found out a woman had called and had canceled the repairs.



It's a good thing you called. We thought the repair job was canceled.

Follow me.

THE LADY IN THE RED HAT COMES BACK

What are you doing on Mighty Mufflers property? Move this truck immediately!

We work for the gas company and we're here for repairs.

Fine. Just get off my property as soon as you're done.

Soon, the big brick oven was fixed. By the time the noon factory horn sounded, both the apartment and the restaurant ovens were going full blast.

The lunch rush went quickly. Then a familiar customer came in.

Excuse me? Did I leave my hat here?

Here it is! We put it in the lost and found. Now you're the Lady in the Red Hat again!

Come and share a cup of tea with us.



THE MYSTERY ORDERS



During the busiest part of the lunch hour, strange things began happening...

Hello?
Hello?

Somebody keeps
calling but doesn't
say anything.

Maybe
it's a wrong
number.

I thought you
were delivering
these, Henry.

They were
ordered, but when I
got to the address, no
one was there. Three
wasted pizzas.

A customer just left without paying. I
wrote his order was a large Pizza Supreme.
But he said he ordered a plain pizza and
left without paying!

Maybe you got the
order wrong. We can't
keep wasting food
like this.

I know I
wrote down the
right order.

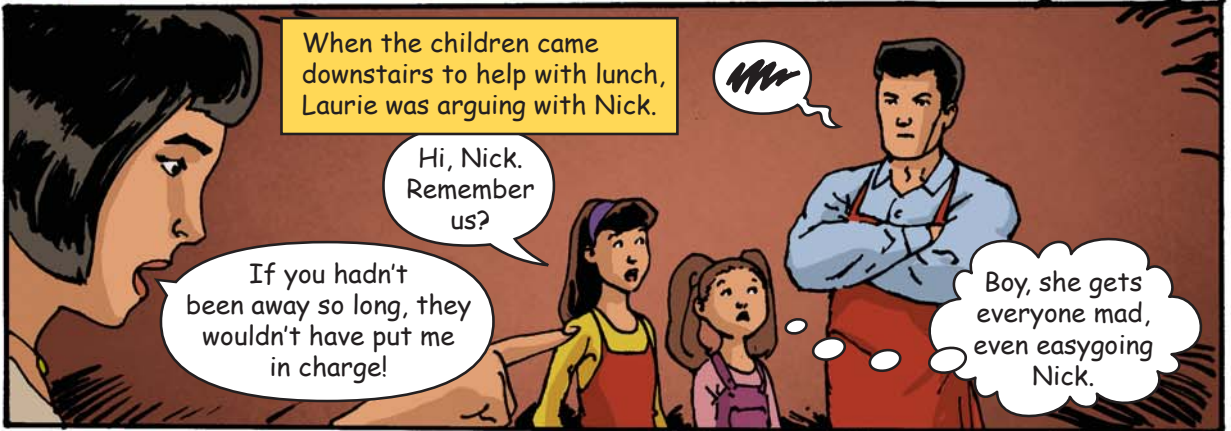
It's okay, Violet.
At least you just
lost one pizza. I
lost three!

EVERYTHING GOES DARK

The next day, the Aldens came downstairs to find Nick was back. The Piccolos were very happy.

Nick, you're back! I'm so glad to see you again,

Me too, Benny.



When the children came downstairs to help with lunch, Laurie was arguing with Nick.

Hi, Nick. Remember us?

If you hadn't been away so long, they wouldn't have put me in charge!

Wrr

Boy, she gets everyone mad, even easygoing Nick.

After the lunch rush, Mrs. Piccolo noticed the children seemed sad.

Something's not right today. Nick wasn't himself.

Laurie, well, she works too hard.

But it's the children, they're too quiet.

And later, Henry tried to pick up his pizzas for delivery.

Stay there! It's too busy in the kitchen!

It seems that the kitchen is off limits to Nick and us Aldens.

By six-thirty, every table at Piccolos' Pizza was filled. Suddenly, the lights flickered, then went completely dark.



No problem. Just a little blackout. I have a couple of flashlights right here. Nothing to worry about.



Oh! You already have a flashlight.

I heard a noise in the cellar. I grabbed a flashlight to check it out.



I wonder if Nick caused the blackout by playing with the fuse box.

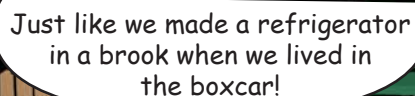
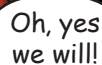
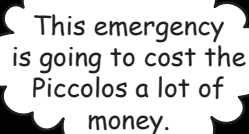
Henry found Jessie and told her what he saw.

...then she tried to blame everything on Nick.

Nick? He was out here when the power went out.

And look outside. It's only the restaurant that lost its power.





A SURPRISE CONFESSION

The next morning...

When did the power come back on?

When I arrived this morning at six, the electricity was back on.

The light company said a truck from the muffler company had backed into the pole last night.

I guess we were wrong to think Laurie or Nick caused the blackout.

I still can't figure out why Laurie didn't seem upset. She almost seemed glad to have to make new sauces.

Soon everything was set for the day. Laurie was there, so Mr. and Mrs. Piccolo went shopping for supplies.

Nick said he can't come in today. He didn't say why.

Fine. It's easier without him underfoot.

Now I need all of you to hand out these flyers. You don't need to come back until eleven.

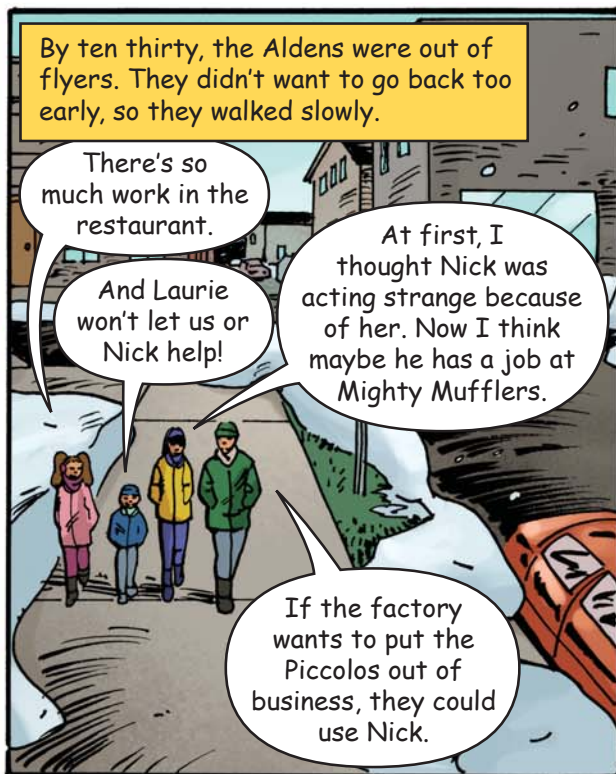


The children handed out flyers to the workers going into the factory.

Here, try our...

...Nick!

But Nick just disappeared into the factory.



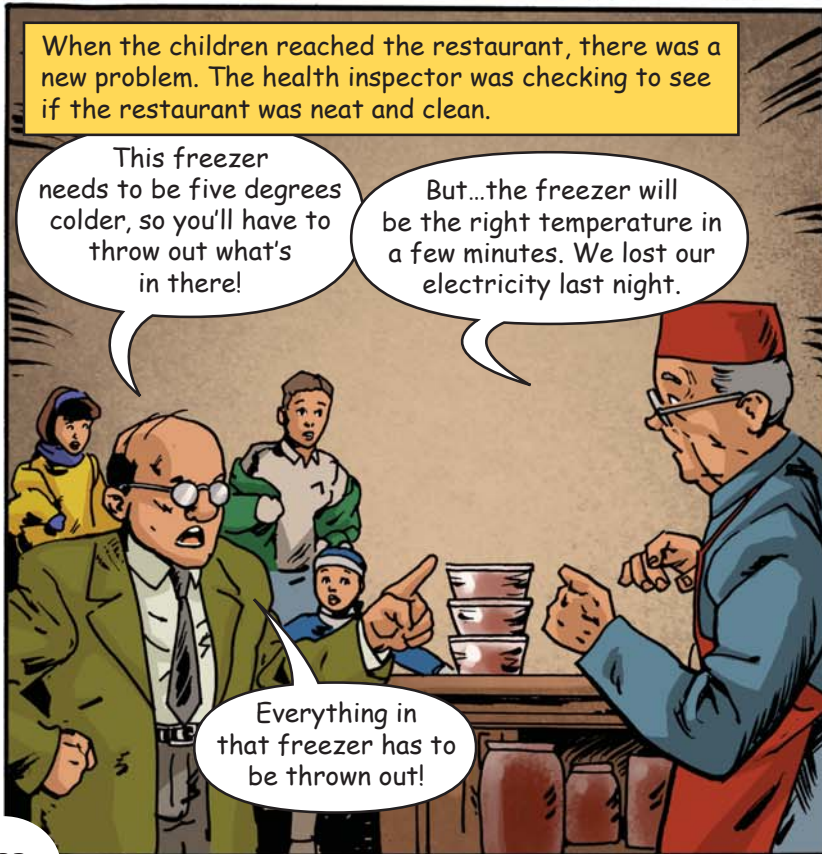
By ten thirty, the Aldens were out of flyers. They didn't want to go back too early, so they walked slowly.

There's so much work in the restaurant.

And Laurie won't let us or Nick help!

At first, I thought Nick was acting strange because of her. Now I think maybe he has a job at Mighty Mufflers.

If the factory wants to put the Piccolos out of business, they could use Nick.



When the children reached the restaurant, there was a new problem. The health inspector was checking to see if the restaurant was neat and clean.

This freezer needs to be five degrees colder, so you'll have to throw out what's in there!

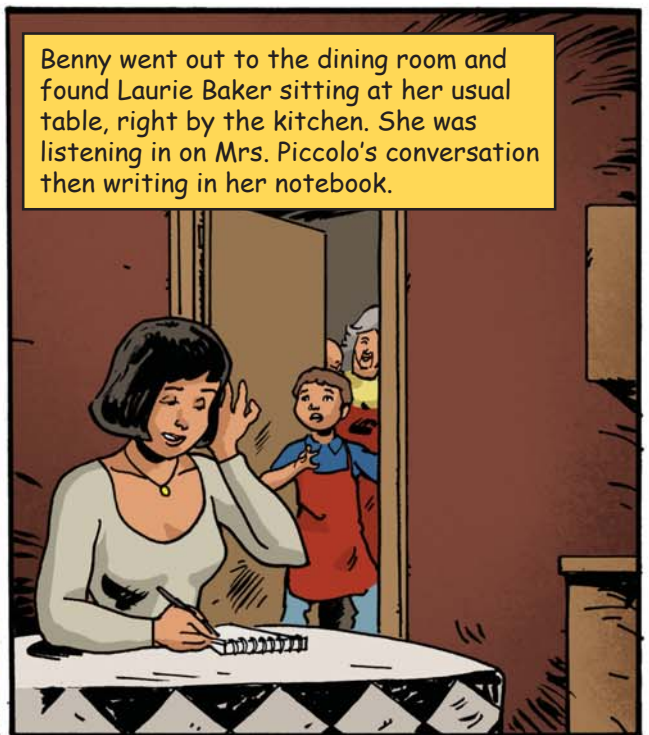
But...the freezer will be the right temperature in a few minutes. We lost our electricity last night.

Everything in that freezer has to be thrown out!



Sir, this food has been packed in ice all night. If you open a few containers you'll see everything is colder than your requirements.

The inspector pulled the tops off a few containers and found that what Henry said was true.





TURNED AWAY

However, Laurie did have one more thing to confess...

I was the one who called the health inspector. I just wanted to find out how to make your sauces. I had no idea he would be so mean.

I'm most ashamed of that. I feel so terrible.

I'll just go. I've caused you enough trouble.

Now, now. You don't get away that easy, young lady.

If you're willing to work for free, we'll teach you about running a pizza restaurant. What do you think about that?

I think I'm a lucky person. I'll make up for everything, I promise!

The restaurant was so busy that everyone soon forgot their troubles. Everyone worked side-by-side in the kitchen and dining room now. Still, someone was missing...

I just saw Nick going into the factory, but he pretended not to see me.

The children spent a quiet afternoon starting to pack. Grandfather Alden was picking them up in just a few days.

I want to see Grandfather and Watch, but I wish things were better here before we left.

I know. I was counting on Nick to be here next week.

Soon an early crowd arrived for dinner...

Nick, he just called in sick again. I'm getting so worried about him.

The Piccolos are so trusting.

In minutes, five or six children stood in the dining room. All of them were waving bright yellow coupons.

We came for the free sodas.

"Buy a slice of pizza, get a soda FREE!" Wha...?

This isn't the coupon we handed out!

This is going to cost the Piccolos a fortune.

I can't believe someone would go to all this trouble to make fake coupons. The Piccolos could lose their business!

Every table was filled with kids who had coupons for a free soda. There was no place for the regular customers to eat.

Sorry, Mrs. Piccolo. My husband and I were planning on eating out. We'll come back another night when it's not so busy.

By seven o'clock, the restaurant had gone through six cases of soda.

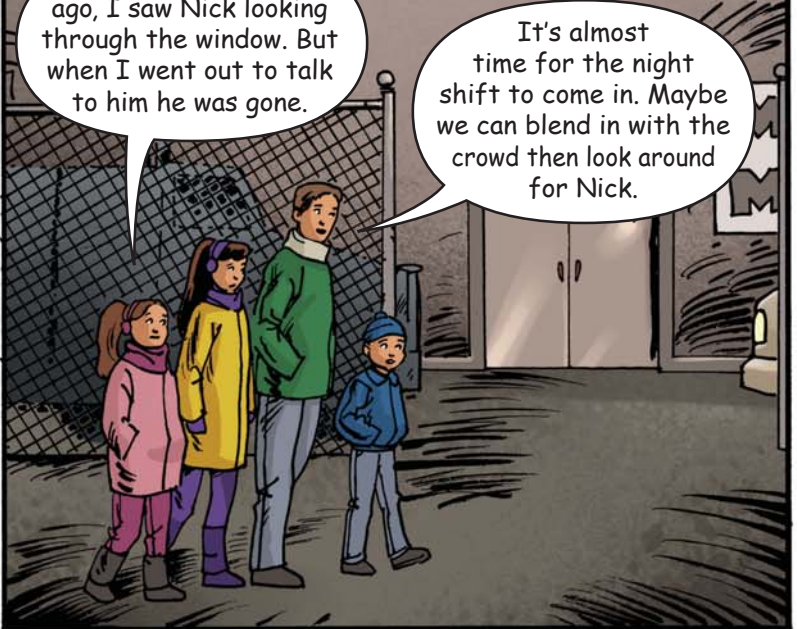
Time to go home and rest. We can take care of things and close up.



Henry wanted to go to the factory to see if they had anything to do with the coupons.

About an hour ago, I saw Nick looking through the window. But when I went out to talk to him he was gone.

It's almost time for the night shift to come in. Maybe we can blend in with the crowd then look around for Nick.



Just as the children reached the front gate, they spotted Nick. He wasn't alone.

Don't keep my secretary out too late. She has to be at work first thing tomorrow morning.



Seeing Nick with Mr. Irons upset the Aldens more than anything else.

I guess I was wrong about Nick. Maybe Mr. Irons hired him because he knows all about Piccolo's Pizza.

There's one thing about Piccolo's Pizza he doesn't know. But I have an idea about how we can fix that.

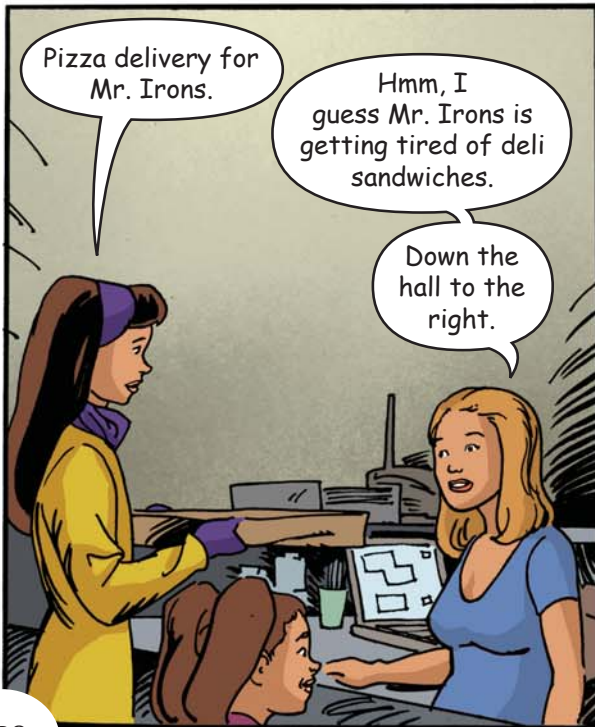
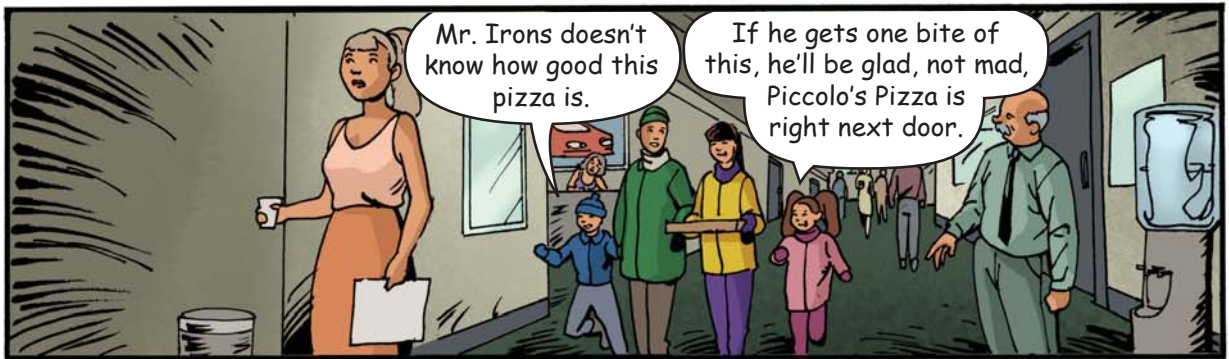


SURPRISES FOR EVERYONE

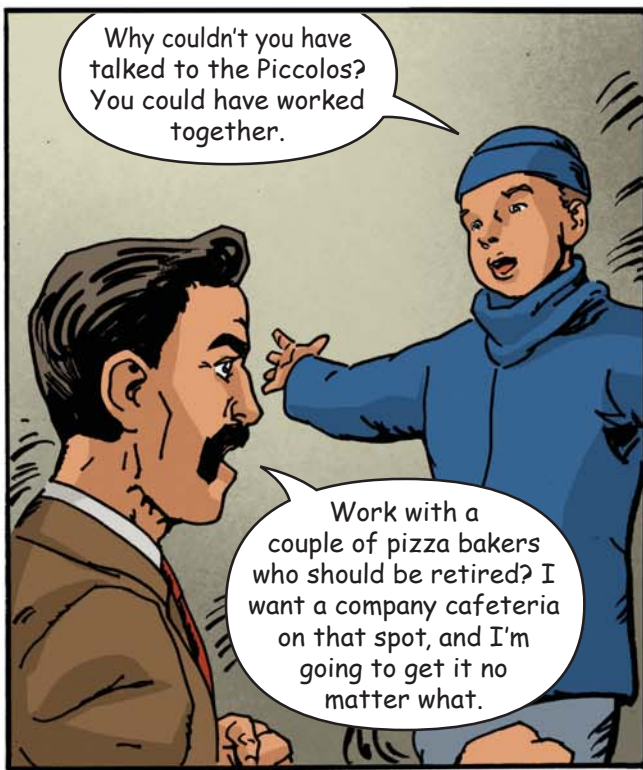
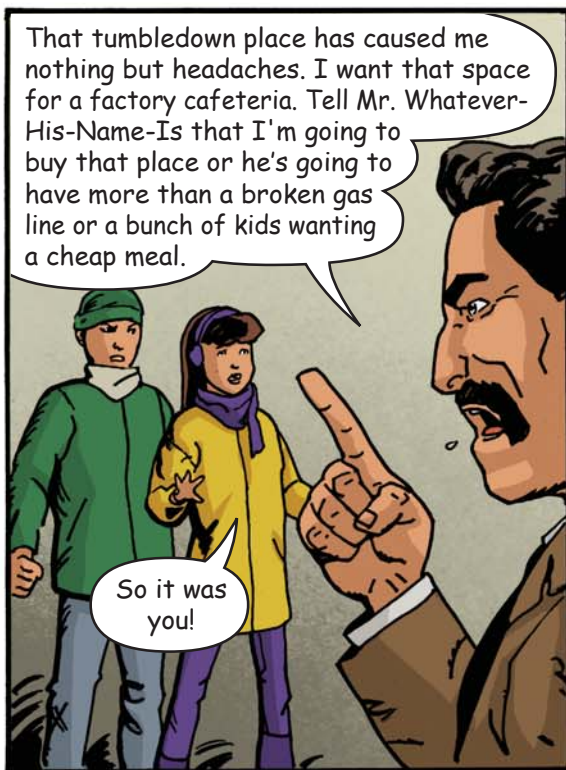
The next day at lunchtime, Laurie was waiting for Henry.

Sorry, Henry, Jessie gave me one more delivery order.

I know all about it. It's a surprise delivery!







On his way out the door, Mr. Irons nearly ran down Ms. Donella and Nick Marra.

Nick explained that he and Ms. Donella were engaged. But Nick stayed away from the restaurant because he was afraid Mr. Irons would fire Ms. Donella.

The next day, Mr. Alden arrived to take the kids back to Greenfield. Nick explained everything to the Piccolos. They were happy to have him back at work, and even happier that he was getting married.

As the children waved good-bye, they saw a crane moving the huge Mighty Mufflers billboard away.

Next time, we'll find Piccolo's Pizza on our first try, Benny.

I could go for some Piccolo's Pizza right now!

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Gertrude Chandler Warner was born on April 16, 1890, in Putnam, Connecticut. In 1918, Warner began teaching at Israel Putnam School. As a teacher, she discovered that many readers who liked an exciting story could not find books that were both easy and fun to read. She decided to try to meet this need. In 1942, *The Boxcar Children* was published for these readers.

Warner drew on her own experience to write *The Boxcar Children*. As a child she spent hours watching trains go by on the tracks near her family home. She often dreamed about what it would be like to live in a caboose or freight car—just as the Alden children do.

When readers asked for more Alden adventures, Warner began additional stories. While the mystery element is central to each of the books, she never thought of them as strictly juvenile mysteries. She liked to stress the Aldens' independence. Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny go about most of their adventures with as little adult supervision as possible—something that delights young readers.

During her lifetime, Warner received hundreds of letters from fans as she continued the Aldens' adventures, writing nineteen Boxcar Children books in all. After her death in 1979, her publisher, Albert Whitman and Company, carried on Warner's vision. Today, the Boxcar Children series has more than 100 books.

