

Nonno

by Gayelene Carbis

"Do I have to?" I said.

"One day you'll be sorry you didn't appreciate him while he was here," said Mum.

"I hate going there. He argues with everyone!" I said. "It's embarrassing."

It wasn't only the arguing. Lots of people argued at the market. It was the Italian.

"You have to watch out for him anyway," said Mum. "You know what he's like."

Mum's warnings always hung over my head: *his life is in your hands*.

Nonno had diabetes and a sweet tooth he insisted on satisfying. And he was sneaky.

"You must be hungry, bella," he'd say. "You want a donut? So cold isn't it? Freezing. You have the hot jam, make you warm."

I'd succumb, because who could ever refuse one of those hot donuts covered in sugar and oozing with strawberry jam in the middle, all hot and doughy and making you feel hungry even if you hadn't been before you smelt them.

"Just *one*, Nonno," I said firmly. "I have one – you have one."

"Si, si," he said. Then, "I have sex donuts," in the next breath to the boy standing there behind the counter looking bored.

"Nonno!" I said.

"Bargain!" he said. "Look how many you get – same as two! Can't buy two when you can get sex!" he said in an outraged tone.



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"Okay, okay!" I said. I stared back at the boy as if I thought the boy was an idiot for being amused by something so juvenile. The boy blushed, hurriedly handing over a big brown paper bag filled with donuts.

Nonno rushed me away, as if we needed to get out of there fast.

When we were barely out of earshot of the donut stand boy, Nonno whispered: "Look! Seven donuts! He make mistake. Stupido!"

Nonno's face lit up and he held the bag of donuts to his chest, as if he'd found unexpected treasure.

It suddenly came to me though: I'd heard Nonno say six before. He never had trouble with saying six.

"The Aussies, they think I'm stupid because I'm Italian. Huh! I show them. I show them!"

When we went back next week, I was glad to see the same boy at the donut stand. This time, it was me smirking as I stood there.

I was still smirking as I walked away with Nonno and our big bag of doughnuts.

Eight of them.



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