

## Christmas in Sicily

Author: M.R. Zanone

Maria lives with her Great-Grandparents, her Grandparents, her Parents and her brothers. Maria's family came here when Maria was eight. Maria is now in first grade and learning how to write and to read English. Today Maria's teacher wanted the class to write a letter to Santa and to ask the students to pick out another classmate to buy a present for - a secret Santa. Maria was so excited that she ran into the kitchen to tell her family about school. Both grandmas' were in the kitchen preparing supper. Maria gave each a hug.

"What's the matter bambina you look all red in the face?" her grandmother asked.

"My class and I wrote a letter to Santa" Maria explained.

"Who?" asked her grandmother.

"Santa, Nonna don't you know about him?" Maria asked.

"I heard about him bambina but in Sicily we don't write letters to Santa we write letters to our parents."

Maria looked from one to the other confused. "To our parents?" she asked. "Sit down - here mangiare" Nonna gave her a cookie. "Let me explain - When I was a little girl in Sicily around Christmas my friends and I would get together and write letters to our mamma and papa telling them how much we appreciate them and how much we love them. We're not taught to write letters or lists of what we want - that would be rude - but was most important was our appreciation of all that our parents did for us throughout the year and these letters would be read after our Christmas Eve dinner. All the children would stand around our parents and read our letters aloud in front of the family."

"Wow, I can't wait to tell how we do Christmas tomorrow at Show N Tell - what about the tree Nonna - when do we put up a tree? or don't we have one?" Maria asked reaching for another cookie.

Nonna looked at Maria and smiled. "Yes, Bambina we too have a tree, although it wasn't until I was expecting your momma that we had one."

"Momma, I remember having a tree when I was about two." Maria's mother said.

"Yes and if you ask you're brothers they would tell you we didn't have a tree until

the year I became pregnant with you.”  
Maria’s grandmother explained.

“Before we had trees we would have the Nativity Scene to celebrate. It was during the Allied Occupation in 1943 that we began having trees and decorating them with candles, but we don’t put them up until the Feast of the Immaculate Conception” Maria’s great grandmother explained.

“When’s that Bisnonna?” asked Maria.

“Around December 8<sup>th</sup>” answered Maria’s Great-grandmother.

“And on Christmas we get our presents, right?” asked Maria excitedly.

“Well our tradition is a little different Maria” stated Nonna.

“How different?” asked Maria.

It was at this time that Maria’s great-grandfather came into the kitchen for his traditional espresso and a cookie.

“What are you women talking about? Is it a female conversation or can an old man get into it?”

Nonna served her husband his espresso and his cookie, gave him a kiss, and said, “of

course you can put your two cents into the conversation. We were just explaining to Maria about our Christmas customs. And I was just going to explain about gifts.”

“Oh, well there’s a story that goes with the giving of gifts. It’s a story that has been handed down from generation to generation.” Maria’s greatgrandfather explained.

“I remember that’s the story – you used to tell me and my brothers at Christmas time” Maria’s grandfather said.

“Yes I used to tell all you children that story.” Maria’s greatgrandfather said.

“What story?” Maria asked. “

“It’s the story of La Befana a witch who was visited the night of Jesus’ birth. On the night that Jesus was born, the wise men stopped at her house one to ask for directions and the second to ask her to join them. But she refused saying that she was too busy cleaning her house. Later, a shepherd came by also asking for directions and she refused to join him too. Later that night she saw a bright star in the sky and thought about going to see the baby Jesus. She still had some toys of her own child who died a few months earlier and she didn’t have the heart to throw them away, so she decided she would give them to the baby

Jesus. But she couldn't find the stable where the baby Jesus lay and the story goes that she still goes around looking for the baby Jesus and leaves toys for those children who were good all year long, and coal for those who were bad. This is said to happen on January 6. That's why children put up their stockings so that La Befana can fill them" said her Greatgrandfather.

"But now that we live in America can't we do it the way they do it here?" Maria asked.

"Yes we can do it the same way, but you have to remember that our customs are very important to us as well. So we're going to have both the American way and the Sicilian way - we will put up a tree with lights on December 8<sup>th</sup>, but January 6<sup>th</sup> is when you will receive your gifts, if you were a good girl all year." Maria's Greatgrandfather said.

"I was bisnonna, I was, really, you can ask momma!" Maria exclaimed.

"Ok bambina okay, I will ask your momma. But for right now why don't you go and write that letter so that your grandmothers and momma can fix dinner so that these old men can eat and not starve!"

"Okay bisnonna I will. Thanks for explaining Christmas to me"

And with that Maria gave everyone in the kitchen a kiss and hug and went into the living room to write two letters - one to Santa and one to her parents telling them how much she loved them.

Grandfather -	nonno
Grandmother -	nonna
Great- grandmother -	bisnonna
Great grandfather	bisnonno

This book was distributed courtesy of:



For your own Unlimited Reading and FREE eBooks today, visit:

<http://www.Free-eBooks.net>

***To show your appreciation to the author and help others have wonderful reading experiences and find helpful information too, we'd be very grateful if you'd kindly [post your comments of this book here](#).***

#### COPYRIGHT INFORMATION

Free-eBooks.net respects the intellectual property of others. When a book's copyright owner submits their work to Free-eBooks.net, they are granting us permission to distribute such material. Unless otherwise stated in this book, this permission is not passed onto others. As such, redistributing this book without the copyright owner's permission can constitute copyright infringement. If you believe that your work has been used in a manner that constitutes copyright infringement, please follow our Notice and Procedure for Making Claims of Copyright Infringement as seen in our Terms of Service here: <http://www.free-ebooks.net/tos.html>