

Cinnamon Doughnuts and a Neenish Tart

by Adam Byatt

“Good morning, Mr. Robertson. It's good to see you. Would you like your regular order?”

“Good morning, Angela. It is good to see you, too. As fond as I am of the cinnamon doughnuts, I shall have a neenish tart in honour of Mrs. Robertson.”

“I am sure she would have approved. How long has it been?”

“Just going on two years, my dear.”

Angela finished scribbling down the order, uncertain of what to say, but slipped back into her business manner, “Take a seat and I'll bring your order out.”

Mr Robertson took a seat near the window of the coffee shop and carefully placed his trilby on the left hand corner of the table. Drawing his pocket watch from his waistcoat he checked the time against the Town Hall clock.

Angela placed her hand lightly on his shoulder as not to startle him, letting it pause before placing the tray in front of him.

“I added a little extra something,” she said indicating the second paper bag. “I'm sure Mrs Robertson wouldn't mind.”

Mr Robertson chuckled gently as he caught the aroma of freshly cooked cinnamon doughnuts and watched the oil leave its fingerprints. He began arranging the silver tea pot, milk jug and sugar bowl with a measured deliberateness and shaky hands.

Finishing his tea and tart, Mr Robertson prepared to leave. He checked the time on his watch before donning his hat. Lastly he reached for the bag of cinnamon doughnuts. Preparing to fold the top he noticed a slip of paper. It was the stub of a receipt from the café and it simply said, “Sorry.” He folded the note and slid it into his pocket beside the watch.

On his way passed the front counter, he doffed his hat to Angela,
"Thank you."

