



The Wager

By Donna Jo Napoli

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Don Giovanni was once the wealthiest and handsomest young man in Messina. Then a tidal wave changed everything. When a well-dressed stranger offers him a magical purse, he knows he shouldn't take it. Only the devil would offer a deal like this, and only a fool would accept.

Don Giovanni is no fool, but he is desperate. He takes the bet: he will not bathe for 3 years, 3 months, and 3 days. Beauty is a small price to pay for worldly wealth, isn't it? Unless he loses the wager?and with it his soul.

Set against the stunning backdrop of ancient Sicily, Donna Jo Napoli's new novel is a powerful tale about discovering what truly matters most.

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The Wager By Donna Jo Napoli Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 9 Up—Set in 1169, *The Wager* is a retelling of a traditional Sicilian fairy tale. As the story opens, Don Giovanni is a well-to-do spendthrift who gives little thought to anything but his own pleasure. An earthquake and subsequent tidal wave change his circumstances dramatically, and he is soon wandering the land as a vagrant. In classic Faustian style, the devil appears on the scene to offer a wager: he will provide Don Giovanni endless wealth in exchange for relinquishing his beauty—he may not change his clothes, shave, comb his hair, or wash for three years, three months, and three days. The devil provides the don with a magic purse, and the game is on. Suffice to say, the rot that grows on this hero is truly foul. Readers will be engrossed by descriptions of his decay, including vermin, worms, and open sores. Obviously Don Giovanni undergoes a dramatic change in how he treats the lowliest members of society. Evocative of Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, this marvelous story is well told, and the rich, sophisticated language will grip skilled readers.—Leah Krippner, *Harlem High School, Machesney Park, IL*

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From [Booklist](#)

A fallen nobleman beats the devil in Napoli's latest fairy tale-inspired novel. Based on a Sicilian story and similar to the better-known Grimm Brothers tale "The Bearskin," Napoli's novel begins in twelfth-century Sicily, when handsome, young Don Giovanni loses his wealth in the aftermath of a tsunami. Reduced to begging, he travels the countryside until a stranger offers him a magical, bottomless purse of gold coins if he agrees not to bathe, groom himself, or change his clothes for three years. Realizing that he is wagering his soul with the devil, Don Giovanni nonetheless accepts and begins his long trial. Napoli's vivid descriptions contrast the Edenic landscapes with Don Giovanni's increasingly festering body, from his abscess-covered backside to his lice-infested scalp. The colorful detail, while sometimes stomach-churning, underscores the story's fascinating themes about the importance of appearance, what it means to be civilized, and the line between human and beast. A surprise twist leads to a satisfying love story and closes the novel with more joy, and fewer devilish triumphs, than the original tale. Grades 8-12. --Gillian Engberg

Review

"Napoli expertly sets the scene for this retelling of a traditional Sicilian tale...The lifelike, tactile details of the story make it all eerily real." ?*The New York Times Book Review*

"Readers follow Don Giovanni's journey of the flesh and spirit as he suffers humiliation and physical decay; descriptions of lush feasts and brightly colored brocades give way to wretched scenes described in lurid detail...Napoli never underestimates her audience, depicting human nature at its worst and its best." ?*Publishers Weekly*, *starred review*

"Evocative of Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, this marvelous story is well told, and the rich, sophisticated language will grip skilled readers." ?*School Library Journal*

"A surprise twist leads to a satisfying love story and closes the novel with more joy, and fewer devilish triumphs, than the original tale." ?*Booklist*

"No hero ever deserved a happy ending or a bath more." ?*Kirkus Reviews*

“Napoli ably describes the ensuing tribulations Don Giovanni undergoes as he becomes more offensive to be around even as he longs for companionship for the first time in his life.” ?VOYA

“Impeccable pacing conveys the burden of the three-year ordeal, and even those readers for whom the end is no surprise will breathe a sigh of relief to find Giovanni reclaimed and within reach of happiness.” ?BCCB, *STARRED review*

“There's something rotten at the center of this novel-length fairy-tale retelling, and that's what makes it so delightful.” ?*Horn Book Magazine*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Evelyn Rodrigue:

Do you have favorite book? For those who have, what is your favorite's book? E-book is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim or perhaps goal; it means that reserve has different type. Some people feel enjoy to spend their time to read a book. They may be reading whatever they consider because their hobby is definitely reading a book. What about the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, man or woman feel need book whenever they found difficult problem or perhaps exercise. Well, probably you should have this The Wager.

Susan Brooks:

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Gloria Lafreniere:

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