



2009

# The Wager

Tessa McMillan

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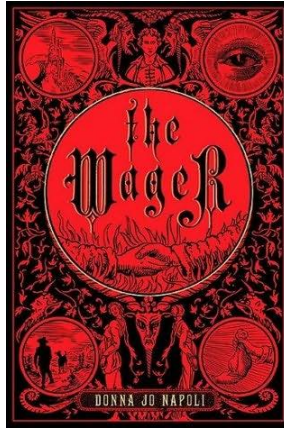
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Napoli, Donna Jo. *The Wager*. Henry Holt, 2010. ISBN 9780805087819. \$16.99. 262 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fiction; Fairy tales;

Subject: Conduct of life--Juvenile fiction; Wagers--Juvenile fiction; Italy--History--12<sup>th</sup> century--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

After Don Giovanni's country is ravaged by a volcano eruption, an earthquake, and a tsunami, the wealthy, handsome youth is reduced to a beggar, wandering the country for work, food, and shelter. An early storm arrives in September, causing work and food to stop. During this time, the devil disguises himself as well-dressed man and seeks out Don Giovanni. He offers Don Giovanni his wealth again, but there is a stipulation. Don Giovanni must not wash or groom himself for three years, three months, and three days. Don Giovanni accepts the offer and a special purse that will give him any amount of money he wishes. Don Giovanni tries to live out his sentence quietly, but soon people get suspicious of his money and his foul smell. He travels to a new town where he buys a villa. Instead of using the money for himself, he soon uses his money for charitable projects. News of his generosity reaches the king. After Don Giovanni gives a large sum of money to the king, the king offers his sister's hand in marriage. By this time, only a few months remain of his filthy sentence. Don Giovanni perseveres and marries the king's sister.

Napoli's story is not for the weak-hearted, but her storytelling is engaging. Don Giovanni's filthiness and the aftermath of the tsunami's destruction are described in full detail. Even so, Don Giovanni's narrative is thought provoking and enlightening. The story is taken from an old Sicilian fairytale, "Don Giovanni de la Fortuna."

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