

Studio One

Volume 39

Article 37

2014

You Always Disappoint

Joseph Giordano

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/studio_one



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Giordano, Joseph (2014) "You Always Disappoint," *Studio One*: Vol. 39, 42-44.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/studio_one/vol39/iss1/37

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Studio One by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csbsju.edu.

You Always Disappoint

Simon was looking at Bronzino's *Portrait of a Young Man*, when Gemma arrived leading a tour group. He caught her eye and smiled as people gathered around the painting.

Gemma said, "Note the cool detachment on the man's face, the sophistication of the pose and the fine clothes. He renders judgment on us. But the carved grotesque heads on the table and chair are like masks. Bronzino's symbolism tells us that the man plays a role, and his haughtiness dares us to penetrate the enigma."

Simon wallowed in Gemma's melodic Italian accent.

He walked up to Gemma when her talk finished. He introduced himself and said, "I apologize for listening when I didn't pay for your time. May I buy you lunch? I have dining privileges upstairs."

"You're not shy, are you?"

"Some opportunities are once in a lifetime."

"Really?" She tilted her head at him.

"Look, it's just lunch. You have to eat. *Per favore.*"

Gemma laughed. "*Va bene.*"

Simon arranged for a window table that overlooked Central Park. Bright orange, red, and yellow leaves signaled a change in the season.

Gemma said, "I've just arrived from Florence. The Metropolitan and the Uffizi exchange personnel. How long I'll stay is open."

"You don't seem excited?"

"Well, it's a change."

"Let me guess. An unhappy love affair?"

Gemma sat back. "He loved the mirror more than me."

"Sounds like an idiot."

Gemma toyed with her green salad.

Simon said, "Let me show you New York."

She looked at his hand. "You're married."

"Like a suit of concrete."

"Then why not divorce?"

"We have kids. They're at a delicate age."

"And does your wife know you see other women?"

"We don't discuss it. She has someone. She doesn't think I know."

"And I thought Italians loved intrigue."

Simon laughed. "We'll go to a Broadway show and have dinner afterwards."

"What will you tell your wife?"

"You're a client, and I'll be quite late."

"You're very sure of yourself."

"In some things."

Gemma put down her fork. "Okay, but just a show and dinner."

After they made love, Gemma turned her face. Simon sensed that she had tears in her eyes.

He put his lips to her ear. "It's a sin to be lonely in a city of eight million people."

“Some sins are mortal.”

“Don’t feel guilty. When I told my wife I’d be late, the libido rose in her voice. She’s in bed with her boyfriend.”

“Do you sleep with other women for lust or revenge?”

“It’s not that way with you.”

“Sure.” Gemma got out of bed and wrapped herself in a hotel, kimono robe.

Simon leaned on an elbow. “Give me a chance, and I’ll prove it.”

Museums, Chelsea art galleries, and trendy restaurants in Manhattan evolved to Westchester woods amid crunching leaves in loam-scented air, and Long Island wanderings on blue-gray, planked docks. Gemma’s scent was white chocolate and mandarin. The nape of her neck was warm to Simon’s lips.

Gemma brought her sketchpad and recorded landscapes, or weather-creased faces of fishermen. On a good-light afternoon, Gemma made rhythmic strokes on her pad. She turned the portrait toward Simon.

Simon’s eyebrows rose. “Well, he’s handsome, but it doesn’t look like me. If it’s a rival, I’m jealous.”

Gemma smiled. “It’s Raphael. He had a long affair with a woman he wouldn’t marry. One night, after they made love, he fell ill and soon died.”

“Poison?”

“Perhaps she told him they were through.”

Simon snuggled close. “Aren’t we having fun?”

Gemma’s eyes wandered. “Yes.”

“But?”

She shrugged.

The first snow chilled the sidewalks. Gemma and Simon sat at a wooden table in a small trattoria in Greenwich Village.

Gemma sipped a glass of Brunello. “The Uffizi would like me to return to Florence.”

Simon put his wine down. “Don’t go.”

“When will there be an us?”

“If I walk out now, Elizabeth will turn the kids against me.”

“I’ll stay in New York for something permanent.”

Simon took Gemma’s hand. “Please, give us more time.”

“I’m stuck at the office.” Simon sat on a quiet Central Park bench with his mobile pressed to his ear.

His wife said, “Don’t forget the charity event at Carnegie Hall. Pick up the dry cleaning on your way home. It’s the dress I’m wearing tonight.”

Simon looked at Gemma’s words on the mauve writing paper. He said, “I need to go.”

Funny, he thought, Gemma wasn’t there, yet he still lied to Elizabeth.

He read the words again. “It’s become too painful... I’m returning to Italy. Please don’t try and find me.”

The paper had the scent of rosewood.

Simon left the bench and walked through Central Park.

On the path he neared a cop with a boyish face. The policeman peered at him.
“Excuse me sir, are you okay?”
Simon stopped. “Yes, why?”
“You have tears in your eyes.”
“It’s the wind.”

Simon arrived at his upper west side Brownstone after dark.
He stepped into the vaulted entranceway. Elizabeth sat in a straight-back chair in the living room. She had on a black slip, bra and hose.
She rose to her feet. “Where’s my dress?”
Simon’s shoulders sagged.
She said, “You always disappoint,” and strode back to the bedroom.

-Joseph Giordano
Austin, Texas



Wedding Nightmare
-Rita Thomas