

## **"The Lady Hid Many Secrets"** **(A Fan Fiction based on Good Omens, by Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett)**

*Leonardo da Vinci's Workshop -- Florence, 1503*

They'd been having a high-spirited debate about the possibilities and merits of flight, and what it would take for humanity to achieve it. Maybe that was what had precipitated his thinking about Aziraphale, to begin with. Crowley had never had this sort of understanding with anyone except his angel, before. Yeah, he'd inspired -- or tempted, as he creatively twisted the words whenever he reported in -- many humans one way or another in their endeavors, over the years. The wheel was one of his earliest achievements, though he was by far prouder of the nudge he gave Caecus on how to solve the problem of getting clean water into Roman cities. He loved aqueducts, to this day.

Still, he hadn't actually sat down and debated science or art with any human, before now. Leonardo reminded him of Aziraphale, with his insatiable love of knowledge, and that stirred up all sorts of feelings of loneliness. It'd been so long since he'd seen his angel. Combine that with far more cheap, potent wine than he probably should have imbibed, and it wasn't long before his slurred words followed his hazy thoughts, and he found himself blathering on in great detail about cerulean blue eyes lit like a sun-drenched afternoon, the curve of cherubic cheeks, the constant, gentle, indulgent smile on lips made to tempt even the fallen, the regal posture -- always so proper he wanted to do something scandalous just to ruffle it...

Leonardo looked up from the easel where he'd been leisurely sketching while Crowley talked, and prompted, "And...?"

Crowley blinked at him. "And what?"

"This woman you describe is of great beauty and mystery. I am trying to sketch her, from your words alone. Tell me more, my dear friend."

Crowley blinked. Woman? "Oh, it's not..."

He shrugged helplessly, unsure how to describe the arrangement, of if he even wanted to. *Forgive me, angel.*

Pouring himself another goblet of wine, he propped his head up on the heel of one hand, and recounted every minute detail of the face he knew better than his own, until the sun came up and he found his voice hoarse from use.

Finally, Leonardo sat back from his workbench with a smile and a nod, his gaze going between two nearly identical images -- one a faint sketch, and the other a contour painting in strokes of red ochre. Setting the latter back on his workbench, his brush flashed over the canvas again, before he sat back, picked it up, and presented it to Crowley.

"For you, my dear Anthony. To always remember your lady."

Staring down at an artistic rendition of Aziraphale's face, presented through Leonardo's mistaken understanding of the angel's nature, Crowley swallowed hard, feeling unaccountably vulnerable, as a familiar pain built behind his breastbone.

His head snapped up as he recalled the other sketch, and he nodded warily toward it. "What do you intend with that?"

Leonardo smiled. "To paint it, of course."

"No blue eyes. No blond hair."

"As you wish." Leonardo inclined his head. "If I might inquire about a name?"

Crowley frowned for a moment, before a smirk crossed his face. Oh, he would enjoy this little secret, whenever he looked at the painting over the years to come. "My lady Lisa."

He saw Leonardo's brow lift in question, but simply grinned as he wove drunkenly to his feet and gathered up his prize. Just like Aziraphale would never imagine he was the inspiration of a lady's portrait, no one except Crowley would ever know the pun behind the name. Because if there was one thing his angel most definitely was, it was hopelessly devoted to God.

Pity, that.

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*Crowley's Flat, Mayfair, London -- The Night After Armageddon't, Mark I*

Aziraphale glanced around warily as he stepped inside the front door of Crowley's flat. He wasn't quite sure some demonic threat wasn't awaiting *both* of them, despite Crowley's assurance Hell wouldn't come knocking quite so soon. According to the demon, his former lot would be too busy sorting themselves out to bother with either of them for some time.

Aziraphale wasn't so sure, but he decided to trust Crowley on this. After all, who better than a demon to understand the workings of Hell?

"Well? Come on, angel," Crowley prompted from deeper inside the flat. "There's nothing in here that's going to bite."

Aziraphale lifted one brow at the choice of wording.

"You *were* a serpent, once," he muttered in response to the demon, even as he wandered into the flat, following the sound of Crowley's voice.

The door closing behind him with a sudden *thunk* startled a jump out of him, even as he called himself silly. There was no way Crowley would lead him somewhere that might be dangerous.

He seemed quite capable of finding *those* types of situations all on his own, if recent events were held as evidence.

As he entered what looked like it was meant to be the main family room of the flat -- in Crowley's case, it contained nothing but a desk roughly the size of King's Cross Station, a dramatically tasteless throne-style chair, and... Aziraphale squinted as he approached the framed sketch on the wall. It hung so it could be easily seen from the chair if facing the ostentatious television on the perpendicular wall -- and looked to be a faithful reproduction sketch of...

"Oh, my." The words escaped Aziraphale in a breath of surprise as he realized it wasn't a reproduction at all. It was a contour painting of one of the most famous pieces of portrait art in all the world, signed in Italian to *my friend Anthony* from Leonardo da Vinci himself.

The clearing of Crowley's throat behind him was almost anxious. "What're you looking at, angel?"

He spun around to face the demon. "When you said you knew da Vinci, I thought you were lying!"

The expression on Crowley's face now looked almost as frightened as he had that moment after Aziraphale threatened to stop talking to him, back at the airfield. Only, he looked a little greener about the gills, as the humans called it, this time.

"I wasn't. It's not a big thing, angel," Crowley was suddenly before him, no doubt to strategically block his ability to see the artwork. "Come on, angel. I--"

"What are you hiding?" Aziraphale fisted his hands on his hips and tried to look stern, waiting Crowley out.

"I'm not... It's not what you... Oh, for Satan's sake," Crowley finally muttered and stepped aside. "Go ahead, then."

Aziraphale leaned closer, looking the artwork over, before frowning at Crowley. "I don't understand. It's an early contour painting of the Mona Lisa. Absolutely recognizable. I saw the original in Paris, in 1804, right after it got hung in the Louvre."

Crowley narrowed his eyes. "You're telling me you don't see it?"

Aziraphale's brow furrowed. What was Crowley on about, now? He sighed, lifting one hand to rub his forehead. "It's been a long day, dear. I don't know what you're on about, but I don't have the energy for any more puzzles or games. Did you know the young lady, as well?"

A wry chuckle left the demon, drawing Aziraphale's attention once more. "In a manner of speaking."

This was all too much. He was just weary from the day's events, Aziraphale told himself, rubbing absently at the dull ache in his chest. It wasn't the thought of Crowley forming any fondness for a human -- not that he ever saw any evidence of Crowley forming attachments of any kind, but then, the signature on the contour painting made a lie of that, didn't it?

"Aziraphale," Crowley's voice was suddenly soft -- softer even than the night wee Moraig died -- as the demon reached out and, in one of his extremely rare motions, touched the side of Aziraphale's face.

It was only when Crowley's fingers came away wet with the evidence of it that Aziraphale became aware of the tears rolling down his own face. Not that he could explain them to Crowley. The demon would laugh at him, just like he had after the Job incident. He'd laugh at the naïve angel who didn't know better than to love a demon.

"Do you know why I hung to there?" Crowley continued, his hand closing into a loose fist as it fell away to his side again.

Aziraphale shrugged. "I assume to look at it."

"Yes." Crowley's goldenrod eyes flickered to the painting, and the softness that came over his face made Aziraphale's heart ache. "Do you know why?"

Aziraphale sighed. He so didn't want to play this game. "To be reminded."

"Absolutely." Crowley cocked a long look his way before continuing. "Of you, angel."

Aziraphale froze, and true anger pulsed through him. This was cruel. *So cruel.* Drawing a breath, he summoned up a smile to cover the pain, and did the one thing he was certain Crowley would hate, but that made *him* feel better. He forgave the demon.

Oh, he didn't say it out loud. He was hurting too much. He simply repeated it, over and over, in his head. Like a mantra capable of undoing the stab of Crowley's lie. *I forgive you. I forgive you. I forgive you.*

With that, he shoved everything into a mental box and slammed the lid shut, his smile stretching wider as he said, "We have more important matters to discuss. We need to decide what to do about that final prophecy."

And just like that, the discussion of paintings, reminders, and old acquaintances was pushed aside in favor of the more practical concern of staying alive. Heaven knew, Agnes's prophecies already proved only an idiot would ignore them.

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*A.Z. Fell and Co. Booksellers, Soho, London --  
2 Weeks After Thwarting Armageddon, Mark II*

Crowley heard a small, distressed sound, muffled too late, from behind him as he extricated Leonardo's sketch carefully from the box of belongings he'd brought in a few moments ago. Concerned, he half-turned toward his angel. "Alright there, angel?"

He caught the stretch of Aziraphale's cover-up-what-I-really-feel-with-a-smile that didn't reach his currently dulled cerulean eyes, and froze along with his pulse, even as Aziraphale nodded. "Quite all right."

Which was a fucking lie. Setting the painting down on the bed, he followed his angel out of the upstairs flat and down the circular wrought-iron stairs, before finally catching

him at the bottom, one hand wrapping around Aziraphale's wrist to bring the angel back around to face him.

"We agreed to stop running away from each other, angel. Talk it out, remember? That was *your* rule."

Aziraphale still wouldn't meet his gaze. Crowley tightened his hand around the angel's wrist slightly -- not enough to hurt, but enough to drive home how serious he was -- and leaned his forehead against Aziraphale's. "Talk. To. Me. Angel."

A sigh puffed out of Aziraphale, and he sagged in Crowley's grasp, leaning into the tactile contact as Crowley's arms wrapped around him. The warm weight of his angel's arms returned the embrace. Crowley could hear the soft tick of the old clock on the other end of the shop as the moments passed, just him and his angel, locked in a familiar embrace they found themselves in more and more often, these days.

After a few more moments, Crowley sighed, and nuzzled the soft, blond curls along the side of his angel's head. "Aziraphale. You have to speak to me, sooner or later."

Another sigh -- this one Crowley felt the entire length of his body where Aziraphale's touched his -- then, "I'm being silly, and jealous. You'll laugh at me."

Crowley cocked one brow in surprise. This was new from his angel. He cracked a small smile. His angel could always surprise a smile to his face. "Over wot, angel?"

"The painting. I don't like it."

Crowley froze. Had it really upset Aziraphale that much? He'd loved having that sketch near him, where he could look at it and feel connected to his angel, no matter how long they were separated or how far apart they were. He'd loved knowing he could look his fill, and never have to worry someone would rip it away, because everyone else just saw a work of art with no connection to Aziraphale or the feelings they weren't allowed to have, back then.

"I don't understand, angel. What's--?"

"I know I should forgive her, whoever she really was. But she was important to you, and I..."

A laugh worked its way free of Crowley as he realized what this was about. That was his angel -- always able to make him laugh with the silliest of unintentional, innocent thoughts. Slipping his long fingers beneath Aziraphale's chin, he tipped the angel's face toward him.

"My sweet, sweet angel. You still don't see it, do you? I thought for sure you found me out, that night after Tadfield." He dropped a little kiss on Aziraphale's lips just because he could. He liked knowing he could do that whenever he wished, now.

Aziraphale pulled back, frowning at him in confusion. "Don't see what? Explain yourself, Anthony J. Crowley."

A grin cracked Crowley's face at that. "Guess that means business. Angel, Leonardo sketched the original for the Mona Lisa off my description. Of *you*."

The cerulean eyes locked on his darkened further, and Aziraphale huffed. "Don't be silly. We look nothing alike!"

"Well, no, not the finished painting," Crowley allowed. "I made him promise to not make her eyes blue or her hair blonde. And he drew a woman because, well, apparently, I was very poetic describing you, and he saw right through me, and knew I was in love, just like every other bloody person on this planet except for you -- and me, I guess. I just never corrected his assumption I was describing a woman." He shrugged. "Figured it was safer than telling him I was describing an angel."

"But, it... I mean, how... Crowley, art historians say the Mona Lisa is a portrait of Lisa del Giocondo."

Crowley snorted. "Not bloody likely, angel. Ever meet her? Woman was a hag."

"Don't be rude." Aziraphale pulled away completely, already looking over a shelf full of what were no doubt old art books. "Why *else* would he call it the Mona Lisa?"

Crowley chuckled under his breath, stepped up behind Aziraphale, and leaned to nuzzle his face into the valley of neck created by Aziraphale reaching up for a book. Against his angel's soft skin, he whisper-hissed, "Mona Lisa. My lady, devoted to God."

The volume Aziraphale had been lifting from the shelf crashed to the floor at their feet, and Crowley was treated to the whirl of his angel's body between his own and the bookshelf, and the most beatific look of love to ever grace an angel's face.

That look was absolutely worth the four-day-long hangover that followed a night spent drinking piss-poor Renaissance wine in a dusty, paint-pungent studio in Florence and describing the love of his damned life to a man with no real grasp of eternity, or the love it could foster.

THE END