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Mandragola



Synopsis

A superior treatment of Machiavelli's minor masterpiece! Flaumenhaft's beautifully crafted, literal translation aims to capture the original intent of the playwright. Machiavelli himself distinguished carefully between translations and revisions; thus, Flaumenhaft finds a faithful translation essential to conveying Machiavelli's thought and to allowing direct access to the work. The Prologue explores the relationship between Machiavelli's stage comedies "part of the Comedia Erudita of the Italian Renaissance" and his political books. *Mandragola* focuses on the interplay between personal and political ethics, a major theme throughout his works. The translation includes helpful notes that clarify allusions, language, and context. Names of characters and places, titles and forms of address, and some familiar Italian words and phrases remain in Italian. Passages in Latin, as well as idioms, are reproduced in the notes.

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Customer Reviews

Most people know Niccolo Machiavelli, author of "The Prince (Il Principe)", as the infamous apostle of power politics. But in his own day, Machiavelli was celebrated for his witty, sometimes satirical,

plays. Perhaps the most entertaining of these--"Mandragola" (1518)--is available in this very readable edition. The protagonist is Callimaco, a libidinous young man who sets about to seduce Lucretia, the enchanting wife of a wealthy merchant. Callimaco fortuitously learns that the merchant has tried desperately to father a child, but to no avail. The clever Callimaco thereupon disguises himself as a physician and in this guise examines Lucretia, finding her even more alluring than he has dreamt. He deftly diagnoses her condition and prescribes a curious concoction that he must produce from the root of the mandrake plant--thus "mandragola"--to cure Lucretia of her affliction. If Lucretia drinks this potion, he declares, she will most certainly ! ly conceive a child. The gullible merchant is overjoyed, until he hears that the potion has one very severe side-effect: The first man to join with Lucretia carnally after she has partaken of the drink will die from the potion's effects! The merchant, Nicias, understands immediately: On no account must he be the first to sleep with his wife after she has taken the potion. He knows what he must do: He must find another. He explains the predicament to his wife, and she (reluctantly?) agrees to go along with her husband's plan. As the reader might have guessed, the "physician" Callimaco informs Nicias that he just happens to know a young man who might consent to this indecent proposal. This man is, of course, Callimaco himself, who reappears in yet another disguise.

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