



The Mandrake Root – Transcript

Original play by Niccolò Machiavelli
Screenplay by Malachi Bogdanov

Malachi Bogdanov translated the play from a 19th century Italian publication of *La Mandragola*, giving the dialogue a more contemporary feel than in the source material. However, it does remain faithful to Machiavelli's text, although many of the comic inventions, particularly in the visual humour, are entirely Malachi's.

The working title of the movie was *La Mandragola*. It was simply a choice to title the movie *The Mandrake Root* rather than the more common title of *The Mandrake*, but there are a number of translations of the play which use either title.

Script & Transcript

The final draft of the script, version 5, was used as the shooting script. Essentially it is the same as the rehearsal draft, version 4, but developed during the two week rehearsal process when Malachi worked with actors as an ensemble cast. While this is an unusual method of working in film, the process of rehearsal is central to Malachi's comedy. As the rehearsals took place immediately before the shoot, it did create problems for the production team as the choice props and occasionally location would change as the rehearsals developed.

The actual text which appears on the screen has some differences from the shooting script due to decisions by Malachi and the actors to shift the emphasis of a line or phrase. The most notable changes are the shortening of the Prologue and the shifting of the Road Sweepers from their original position, both decisions made during the editing process.

Originally it was hoped to shoot the movie in sequence, but due to location problems, weather and ongoing road works, it was shot out of sequence. Ongoing noise problems from building work required that the schedule was constantly revised during the 14 day shoot.

The transcript provided here was produced after completion of the movie and has been used for the subtitling of the film in English and Italian.

THE MANDRAKE ROOT

TRANSCRIPT

SPEAKING CHARACTERS

ACTOR

CALLIMACO - The Lover

SIRO - his servant

NICIA - The Husband

LIGURIO - The Fixer

SOSTRATA - The Mother

LUCREZIA - The Wife

LADY

ROAD SWEEPERS (Italian)

ACTOR

Welcome friends,
patrons...critics!

If I could have your attention for
a while

I would like you to hear about a
strange event that happened on
this island of Sardinia.

Today you will see the Sassari in
which you live in,

tomorrow it could be Florence
Pisa, Padova or anywhere.

In our story you will meet a
Doctor of the law who although
learned, is not too bright in
the ways of the world.

If you stay with us for a while
you will get to meet our hero,

a young man by the name of
Callimaco Guadagni who has just
returned from Paris and lives in
a house just up the street.

His problem is, he loved too much
a pretty girl. And how she was
taken advantage by him our story
will explain.

Our comedy has the title of La
Mandragola, the Mandrake Root.

And if all this seems
unimportant and too trivial to
come from a man who is serious
and wise, forgive the story
teller;

he is only trying with these
little trifles to brighten up
your mundane lives.

No wonder, then, that those who
see their efforts scorned do not
exert themselves to do the work
that the wind destroys and the
rain washes away.

But enough of those who speak
evil, and let us get back to our
story before it's too late.

Our story begins with Callimaco
and his faithful servant, Siro.
They will explain everything.

So... pay attention and listen
carefully to La Mandragola.

EARLY MORNING

CALLIMACO

Come on Siro, keep up!

I believe you were amazed by my
sudden departure from Paris,

and you are probably wondering
why I have been here almost a
month without doing anything.

As you know I lost my family at the
age of ten and my guardians sent me
to Paris, where I lived for twenty
years.

And when King Charles started those
disastrous wars that destroyed
Italy,

I decided not to return home but to
live in Paris, judging life there

to be more secure than here in Italy.

Having sold all my belongings apart from my house, I lived for ten very happy years in Paris...

spending my time partly studying, partly enjoying myself, and partly dealing in business.

Never letting one occupation interfere with the other, and in so doing, as you know I lived a peaceful life.

Pleasing all, offending no one.

But Fortune felt I was too lucky; and saw to it that one Camillo Calfucci ran into me in Paris.

I often entertained him, as I did other Sardinians, and in speaking to him one day it happened that we began to argue about whether the most beautiful women lived in France or in Italy.

Since I could not argue about Italian women, having left the country as a small boy, another Sardinian at this gathering defended the French, while Camillo took the Italian side.

After much discussion on both sides, Camillo got angry and claimed that he had a relative whose beauty alone could win the argument,

even if every other Italian girl were an ugly monster.

He said her name was Madonna
Lucrezia, the wife of Messer
Nicia Calfucci.

He spoke of her so highly,
praising her beauty and her
manners so much that we were all
dumbfounded.

I set out to see her: and on my
arrival, I found that the fame of
Lucrezia's beauty was nothing
compared to her real beauty,
something that rarely occurs.

I want her so badly Siro, I am
almost out of my mind.

SIRO

Well had you mentioned this to me
in Paris, I would have known how
to advise you, but now I don't
know what to say.

CALLIMACO

I'm telling you, not because I
want your advice, but because I
need to get this off my chest;

and I want you to be ready to help
me

if necessary.

SIRO

I am more than ready, but do you
have any hope of success?

CALLIMACO

Ah, little or none.

I'll explain:

In the first place, she is not the type to go along with the plans I have for her.

She is extremely virtuous and not given to thoughts of love.

She has a rich husband who lets her dominate him, and though he is no longer young he is certainly not over the hill yet.

Nor does she have neighbours or relatives who can escort her to soirees, parties, or to the other usual social occasions for young people.

Its like she is living in a prison. Her character has not the slightest speck of corruption in it.

SIRO

Well, then, what are you going to do?

CALLIMACO

Nothing is ever so impossible that there isn't some way to do it.

Even though my hope may be fragile and vain,

a man's desire and determination to accomplish a difficult task will blind him to the chances of failure.

SIRO

Well, what is it that gives you hope?

CALLIMACO

Two things.

The first is the stupidity of Messer Nicia, who is the dumbest, most foolish man in Sardinia, in spite of his law degree.

The second is the desire of both Nicia and Lucrezia to have children,

for they have been married six years without any. They are rich and do not want to die without heirs.

Come to think of it Siro, a third reason comes to mind as well...

Lucrezia's mother was not exactly a saint in her younger days. She's rich now and I'm not sure how to handle her.

SIRO

Have you made a move yet?

CALLIMACO

Yes, I have, but nothing serious.

SIRO

What do you mean?

CALLIMACO

You know Ligurio, who often comes to eat with us. He used to be a marriage broker; now he simply begs his meals. I've become his friend and have told him of my passion, and he has agreed to help me in any way possible.

SIRO

Be careful that he doesn't trick you, too; these spongers are not to be trusted.

CALLIMACO

I know that. But when you need someone, you have to trust them.

If we succeed, I have promised him some money; if not, he will at least earn a meal.

Besides, I don't like eating alone!

SIRO

What has he agreed to do so far?

CALLIMACO

He has agreed to persuade Messer Nicia to accompany Lucrezia to the mineral baths in May.

SIRO

How does that fit in with your plan?

CALLIMACO

What do you mean?

Such a locale could change her prudish nature. As all one does at such places is have a good time.

I would go there myself and arrange all sorts of amusing things to do to show myself off in the best way; after all I could even become friendly with both of them, perhaps.

Who knows? Only time will tell.

But like I said Siro, one thing does lead to another and another.

SIRO

It just might work.

CALLIMACO

So are you with me Siro?

SIRO

I'm your faithful Siro. I've never

questioned or judged your motives.
I have always served you and will
continue to do so.

CALLIMACO

Good, because Ligurio left this
morning to speak to Messer Nicia,
and he will let me know how things
turn out upon his return.

SIRO

And when is his return?

CALLIMACO

Any time now.

CALLIMACO

I'll keep out of sight.

In the meantime, you go about your
duties. If I need you for
anything, I'll let you know.

NICIA

I think your advice is sound, and
I spoke to my wife about it last
night. She promised to give me an
answer today;

but, to tell you the truth, I, for
one, am not very excited about
going.

LIGURIO

Why?

NICIA

Because basically I want to stay
at home. And then, to have to move
my wife, servants, and baggage
doesn't suit me.

Besides this, last night I spoke
to several doctors. One says to go
to San Filippo, another to
Porretta, a third to La Villa and
so on, I think they are a bunch of
frauds.

To tell you the truth, these doctors don't know what they're talking about.

LIGURIO

I think you are probably more disturbed for the first reason you mentioned:

you are used to having the Duomo of Sassari in view.

NICIA

You are mistaken! When I was younger, I was quite the roamer.

There wasn't a fair in Alghero that I didn't visit, and there is not a castle around here that I have not been to.

What's more, I have even been as far as Pisa and Livorno. What do you say to that?

LIGURIO

Did you see the sea at Livorno?

NICIA

I certainly did see it.

LIGURIO

How much bigger is it than the river Arno for example?

NICIA

Than the Arno?

It's seven, no, ten, no, twenty times bigger.

You don't see anything but water and water and more water.

LIGURIO

Well, I certainly am surprised
that you see so much difficulty in
going to a spa,

since you have passed so much
water in so many other different
places.

NICIA

Don't be simple. Moving an entire
household is an entirely
different.

Nevertheless, I want children so
much, I am ready to do anything.

I'll tell you what, why don't you
talk to these doctors about it and
find out where they would advise
me to go?

Meanwhile, I'll go home to my wife
and you and I will meet up there.

LIGURIO

As you wish.

NICIA

Until then.

LIGURIO

I don't think there is anyone in
the whole world as stupid as he
is; yet Fortune has been so good
to him.

He's rich, he's has a beautiful
wife, who is wise, has good
manners, and is fit to govern a
kingdom.

Why is it that the finest women
always marry the fools?

But from Nicia's stupidity some
good may come:

Callimaco has hope.

Callimaco! What are you doing here?

CALLIMACO

I saw you with Messer Nicia, and waited until you got rid of him to hear what you decided.

LIGURIO

He is exactly the kind of man you described: he's has the prudence of a suckling pig.

He will only leave Sassari reluctantly but I encouraged him, and finally he told me he was ready to do anything.

I am sure we could get him to leave, but I'm no longer sure that it suits our needs.

CALLIMACO

Why?

LIGURIO

All kinds of people go to those baths.

Someone might turn up who is richer and better looking than you.

Then all our efforts would benefit the competition.

CALLIMACO

I realize that what you are saying is true, but what am I to do?

Where am I to turn? What choice do I have?

I have to try something, grandiose or dangerous, ruinous or infamous or I'd rather die, Ligurio.

LIGURIO

Control yourself!

CALLIMACO

I conjure up schemes like this to keep calm, can't you see?

Either we go on with our plan to send them to the baths or else we have to come up with another plan just to keep me from so much torment.

LIGURIO

You are right, and I'm the one to do it!

CALLIMACO

I believe it, though I know that people like you live by deception;

however, I don't think you'll trick me because, if you do, and I catch you, I'll do everything to get even with you,

and then you would lose my hospitality and the hope of everything I promised you in the future.

LIGURIO

You can trust me caro Callimaco.

Listen, Messer Nicia gave me the task of finding a doctor and deciding which of the baths would be the best one to choose.

Now do as I tell you: say that you have studied medicine and have practiced in Paris.

He'll believe you because he's an utter simpleton; and you are learned and can recite a few words to him in Latin.

CALLIMACO

How will this help?

LIGURIO

Use your noggin.

It would help send him to
whichever bath we choose and
enable me to put in place another
plan I have in mind,

one which is simpler, more
certain, and more likely to
succeed.

CALLIMACO

What are you saying?

LIGURIO

You just keep your courage up and
put your trust in me, I'll see to
it that you have your wish before
this time tomorrow.

CALLIMACO

You are reviving me Ligurio.

But this is too great a promise,
and I now have too great a hope.
How will you do it?

LIGURIO

You'll learn all about it later.
There's little enough time for
action, far less for words.

Go home and wait for me there,

But when I arrive with Messer
Nicia just make sure you take your
cue from me.

CALLIMACO

I'll do just as you say,

But I am afraid that the hope you
have given me will go up in smoke.

LIGURIO

Just pay the bill and let's get to work.

LATER THAT MORNING

LIGURIO

As I was telling you, I believe God has sent us this man to help you fulfil your wish.

He has had a great deal of experience in Paris,

but do not be surprised if he has not practiced medicine in Sassari.

He does not need to for two reasons:

first, because he is rich; and second, he may be returning to Paris at any time now.

NICIA

That's what concerns me.

I don't want him to get me in a pickle and leave me holding the bag.

LIGURIO

Don't worry about that; just worry about the possibility of him not taking your case.

But I assure you if he does, he will not abandon you

he'll see it through to the very end.

NICIA

I'll leave that problem to you.

As for his qualifications, as soon as I speak to him I shall be able to tell if he is competent or not.

I am not the kind of man that can be taken in.

LIGURIO

Of course not.

It's precisely because you are the kind of man I know you to be

that I am taking you in

to meet him.

And if you do not think that he is an able man

after examining him, his learning, and his manner of speech,

then I am no longer an honest man.

NICIA

Well, for God's sake, let's get on with it! Where does he live?

LIGURIO

He lives right here in the square, through this door.

NICIA

Good.

You knock.

SIRO

Who's there?

Ligurio who?

LIGURIO

Just open the door

SIRO

Oh alright then.

CALLIMACO

Who is it that wants to see me?

LIGURIO

What do you say to that?

NICIA

Christ, I'm impressed!

LIGURIO

You two are going have to speak so
that I can understand you;

otherwise we won't get anywhere.

CALLIMACO

What brings you here?

NICIA

Well, to tell you the truth, I
don't know where to begin.

I am looking for two things that
most men would avoid

to bring trouble to myself and to
others.

I don't have children and I want
them,

and to bring this trouble upon
myself I have come to trouble you.

CALLIMACO

It never troubles me to serve men
of merit and breeding like your
good self.

After all I did not spend so
many years in Paris studying my

art for any other reason than to
serve you and your peers.

NICIA

French as well as Latin!

NICIA

I am glad of this.

If you ever need my professional
skill I'll help you gladly.

But let us return ad rem nostram.

Have you decided which bath would
be good to encourage my wife to
become pregnant.

I know that Ligurio has told you
our problem.

CALLIMACO

Yes this is true,

but firstly to fulfil your desire
we must ascertain why your wife is
sterile,

as there are many possible causes.

NICIA

Ligurio

best doctor in the world!

CALLIMACO

Sir. Could you remove your Cod
Piece please?

Of course, your wife's sterility
could be caused by your own
impotence;

Now if this were the case, there
would be no remedy.

NICIA

Me, impotent?

Don't make me laugh.

I'm the healthiest and most virile
man in all of Sardinia.

CALLIMACO

If this is true, then rest assured
we shall find a remedy.

NICIA

Can't we find something besides
the baths?

I don't want the inconvenience,
and my wife will leave Sassari
only against her will.

LIGURIO

There is one solution.

If I may be so bold Dottori.

Haven't you told me that you can
mix certain potions that guarantee
pregnancy?

CALLIMACO

Yes, this is true.

But I am careful about discussing
these matters with people I don't

know very well, since they might take me for a charlatan.

NICIA

You can rely on me.

You have impressed me so much that I would believe anything you say or do.

LIGURIO

I suppose you'll need a urine sample?

CALLIMACO

Of course, we can't do without a Urine sample.

LIGURIO

No! Not from you

from your wife.

Call Siro. He can go with the counsellor and get it;

and we'll meet you in the square?

CALLIMACO

Take this bottle and accompany Messer Nicia to his house,

And Sir you come back as quick as possible,

If it suits you?

And we'll find a solution to this problem.

NICIA

What do you mean if it suits me?

I'll be back in no time at all.

I have more faith in you than a Hun in his sword!

NICIA

Your master is truly a worthy man.

SIRO

More than you know.

NICIA

The King of France must hold him in great esteem.

SIRO

Indeed.

NICIA

That must make him happy to live in France

SIRO

Yes it does.

NICIA

He has the right idea.

Here all we have are blockheads who have no idea how to appreciate talent.

If he lived here, no-one would even notice him.

I know what I'm talking about,

I had to shit blood to learn a few legal terms;

if I had to live on that I'd be in bad trouble, I tell you.

SIRO

Do you earn a hundred ducats a year?

NICIA

Ducats? Not even a hundred Lira.

Listen, if you're not working for the government in this town,

you won't even find a dog that
will bark at you.

Wait here, I'll get the piss.

SIRO

If all educated men were like that
one, we would all go mad!

It looks like that rascal Ligurio
and my crazy master are leading
Messer Nicia to disaster.

I'm all for it, as long as we
don't get caught,

If we do my skin is in danger as
well as my master's life and
goods.

He has already become a doctor of
medicine, who knows what his plan
is or where it will lead.

But here's the lawyer with a
bottle of piss in his hand.

Who wouldn't laugh at this trick?

That was quick.

NICIA

She has a weak bladder.

What a job it was to get that
silly woman to give me this urine.

I don't mean that she doesn't want
children, she wants them more than
I,

but whenever I try to do something
about it, she gives me a hard
time.

SIRO

Have patience, with sweet words
you can make a woman do anything
you want.

NICIA

Sweet words, you say?

Christ, I could do with a drink.

LIGURIO

The lawyer will be easy to
persuade, but his wife may be a
problem.

Yet I think I have a way.

CALLIMACO

Do you have the specimen?

NICIA

Siro has it.

CALLIMACO

Give it here.

Ah, yes, this urine shows a weak
kidney.

NICIA

It does look a bit cloudy,

but she just passed it a moment
ago.

SIRO

It's still warm.

CALLIMACO

Don't be surprised by its
appearance.

LIGURIO

Just as I thought.

NICIA

By Saint Puccio's twat. He really knows how to talk.

The more I know him, the smarter he becomes.

CALLIMACO

I would say that your wife's urine is cloudy, because she is not well covered at night.

NICIA

She usually wears a long nightgown,

but before she comes to bed she's like an animal out in the cold-

four hours on her knees muttering "Our fathers."

CALLIMACO

Well, counsellor, either you trust me or you don't;

either I give you a sure cure or not.

If you trust me, you'll take the remedy, and if you don't have a baby boy within the year,

I'll give you two thousand

No three thousand ducats.

NICIA

Go on, tell me. I'll do anything you say.

I trust you more than my confessor.

CALLIMACO

Then first you have to understand this:

The surest way to make a woman pregnant is to give her a potion to drink made from the mandrake root.

NICIA

The Mandrake Root

CALLIMACO

Yes, The Mandrake Root.

It's a tried and true remedy I've used on several occasions with great success,

if it were not so the Queen of France would still be sterile,

not to mention an infinite number of other noble ladies of that country.

NICIA

When should she take it?

CALLIMACO

This evening as the moon is just right and there couldn't be a better moment.

NICIA

Prepare the potion,

I'll make her take it, there won't be any problems.

CALLIMACO

There is one drawback,

the first man to sleep with a
woman who has taken this medicine
will die

within eight days,

and there's nothing anyone can do
to save him.

NICIA

Bugger me, that's ridiculous

Call yourself a doctor.

I've never heard anything so
ridiculous in all my life.

As far as I'm concerned you can
go straight back to France.

You've really fixed me up like a,
like a...

LIGURIO

Kipper?

NICIA

Yes, like a kipper!

CALLIMACO

Calm yourself Counsellor, there is
a way.

NICIA

What way?

CALLIMACO

You make someone else sleep with
your wife,

In doing so that evening he will
draw the poison of the mandrake
upon himself.

NICIA

I wouldn't do that.

CALLIMACO

Why?

NICIA

Because I don't want to turn my wife into a whore and myself into a cuckold.

And then there's the small matter of killing someone.

CALLIMACO

Counsellor? I took you for a smarter man.

You mean to say that you hesitate to follow the King of France and most of the French nobility in these affairs?

NICIA

But who do you think I could find to do such a crazy thing?

If I warn him, he won't agree;

if I don't say anything, I shall trick him and commit a criminal offence.

I don't want to get into trouble.

CALLIMACO

If that's all that worries you, leave everything to me.

NICIA

How on earth can you possibly arrange all this?

CALLIMACO

I'll tell you.

I'll give you the potion this evening after supper;

you give it to your wife to drink four hours after dark.

Then Siro, Ligurio, yourself and I
will disguise ourselves

We'll go looking
in the New Market
and the Old Market
and the Flea Market?

and around here
for the first loaf...loafer to
come along.

We'll grab him
gag him
and force him into your house
and up the stairs

and into your bed
and we'll tell him what to do,
and there won't be any trouble at
all.

When he wakes in the morning we'll
kill him...

no, we'll kick him out

Then you can wash up your wife,
and use her as you wish without
any fear.

NICIA

I'm glad you say kings and
noblemen and princes use this
method,

but, more than that, I'm glad no one will find out about it.

CALLIMACO

Who would tell?

NICIA

One small obstacle still remains.

CALLIMACO

What's that?

NICIA

The wife.

I'm not sure she'll ever agree to it.

CALLIMACO

I wouldn't call myself a husband if I couldn't dominate my own wife, Sir.

LIGURIO

I think have a solution.

NICIA

What is it?

LIGURIO

Her confessor.

NICIA

Her confessor?

LIGURIO

Yes, her confessor.

CALLIMACO

But who will convince him?

NICIA

Yes, who will convince him?

SIRO

Yes, who will convince him?

LIGURIO

You, me, money, human nature, and
the way priests are.

NICIA

I'm afraid that if I suggest it to
her.

she won't go and see her
confessor.

LIGURIO

There is even a remedy for that.

NICIA

Tell me.

CALLIMACO

Tell him.

LIGURIO

Have her mother take her.

NICIA

Good idea she trusts her mother.

LIGURIO

And I know that her mother thinks
the way we do.

Come on, let's hurry, it's getting
late.

Callimaco, you take a walk, but be
sure to meet us two hours after
dusk with the potion.

Messer Nicia and I shall go to see
her mother, since I know her well.

Then we'll go see the priest at
Saint Caterina and tell you what
we've done.

NICIA

Until then!

LIGURIO

Just go and mix the potion.

BREAKFAST

SOSTRATA

I have often heard that a wise man
chooses the lesser of two evils.

If there is no other way to have
children, then you must choose
this method

if it does not bother your
conscience.

NICIA

That's right.

LIGURIO

You go find your daughter,

your son-in-law and I will find
Brother Timoteo, her confessor,
and tell him of the problem.

Then we'll see what he tells you.

SOSTRATA

Let's do that.

I'll look for Lucrezia and take
her to speak to the priest and see
what happens.

NICIA

You are probably wondering,
Ligurio, why I have to go to so
much trouble to persuade my wife,

but if you knew everything you
wouldn't be.

LIGURIO

I think it's because women are suspicious by nature.

NICIA

It's not just that. She used to be the sweetest, most docile person in the world,

then one of her neighbours told her that if she vowed to hear the first morning mass for forty days in a row she would conceive,

she swore to do so and she attended mass about twenty times.

Then one of those horny priests began to pester her.

Since then she didn't want to go back

She's been as nervous as a hare.

Suggest anything to her and she'll find a thousand objections.

LIGURIO

I'm not surprised.

Do you have twenty-five ducats, because you'll have to spend a bit to make this priest our friend

and to encourage him to hope for more.

NICIA

Take it, money's no problem; I'll get them back somewhere else.

LIGURIO

These priests are astute and very clever; it's only natural, since they know our sins as well as their own.

If you're not experienced and don't know how to get them to help

you, they have a nasty habit of
tricking you.

NICIA

Just tell me what to do.

LIGURIO

Just leave the talking to me, and
don't say anything unless I give
you a sign.

NICIA

Agreed, but what sign will you
give me?

LIGURIO

I'll wink and bite my lip.

No, that won't work.

How long has it been since you
last spoke to the confessor?

NICIA

More than ten years.

LIGURIO

Good. I'll say that you have
become deaf, and you are not to
answer unless we shout at you.

NICIA

I'll do just that.

LIGURIO

And don't be surprised if I say
something that appears to be
beside the point; I know what I'm
doing.

NICIA

Good. Until then.

TIMOTEO

If you want to confess, I am ready
to serve you.

LADY

Not today, thanks. I have an appointment.

I just wanted to get a few things off my chest

By the way, have you said those masses to Our Lady?

TIMOTEO

Yes, I have.

LADY

Take this florin and say the mass of the dead every Monday for two months in the name of my late husband.

Even though he was a brute, the flesh is weak, and when I remember him sometimes I can't help but feel a shiver . . .

But do you really think he is in purgatory?

TIMOTEO

Beyond any shadow of a doubt.

LADY

I'm not so sure. You know very well what he did to me sometimes.

Oh, how tired I am of bothering you about him. I kept away from him as much as I could, but he was so insistent.

Oh, Our Lord in Heaven.

TIMOTEO

Oh, Our Lord in Heaven!

Don't worry. Great is God's mercy, if a man's will is not lacking, there is always time to repent.

LADY

Do you think the Turks will invade
Italy this year?

TIMOTEO

They will if you don't say your
prayers.

LADY

My fate. God preserve us from
those devils!

I have a very great fear of being
impaled by these Turks.

I see a friend of mine here in
church who has something for me.

I'll have to go meet her. Good
day.

TIMOTEO

Go in God's name my beautiful
beautiful child.

Women are the most charitable
creatures in the world and the
most troublesome.

If you avoid them, you avoid
problems, but then you also avoid
certain advantages;

but if you deal with them, you
have both the advantages and the
problems.

I suppose it is true that you
cannot have honey without flies.

TIMOTEO

But what brings you gentlemen
here?

Don't I recognize Messer Nicia?

LIGURIO

Speak louder. He has become so deaf that he can't hear a word.

TIMOTEO

Welcome, sir.

LIGURIO

Louder.

TIMOTEO

Welcome.

NICIA

I'm happy to be here.

TIMOTEO

What brings you here?

NICIA

I'm very well, thank you.

LIGURIO

Talk to me, father;

for him to hear you, you'd have to bring down the square!

TIMOTEO

What do you seek of me?

LIGURIO

Messer Nicia here, and another fine gentleman whom you will hear about later,

have several hundreds of ducats to distribute as alms.

NICIA

Oh, blood and shit!

LIGURIO

Father, pay no attention to him.

He doesn't hear, but sometimes he thinks he does and answers without making sense.

TIMOTEO

Go on and let him say what he wants.

LIGURIO

Of these alms, I have a portion with me,

they have decided that you are the man to distribute them.

TIMOTEO

I shall be happy to do so.

LIGURIO

But first, you must help us with a strange case concerning Messer Nicia;

only you can help us.

It is a question concerning the honour of his entire household.

TIMOTEO

Tell me all about it.

LIGURIO

You may know Camillo Calfucci, Messer Nicia's nephew.

TIMOTEO

Yes, I know him.

LIGURIO

A year ago he went to France on business.

Having lost a wife earlier, he left his daughter in the care of a convent,

whose name I'd rather not divulge now.

TIMOTEO

What happened?

LIGURIO

What happened was that either
because of the carelessness of the
sisters

or the stupidity of the girl she
now finds herself two months
pregnant -

TIMOTEO

No?

LIGURIO

Yes.

So that unless we patch things
up with prudence,

not only Messer Nicia, but the
girl, and Camillo and the entire
Calfucci family will be
disgraced.

And Messer Nicia is so concerned
about the scandal that he is
willing to give three hundred
ducats for the Lord's work if
this can be kept secret.

TIMOTEO

That's marvellous!

NICIA

That's ridiculous!

LIGURIO

It's a matter that only you and
the abbess can remedy.

TIMOTEO

How do you mean?

LIGURIO

Persuade the abbess to give the
girl something to make her
miscarry.

TIMOTEO

This is something I shall have to
think about.

LIGURIO

Then just think how much good
would come from this one act:

you will preserve the honour of
the convent and of the girl

you will return a maiden to her
father, satisfy Messer Nicia here,

distribute alms to the value of
three hundred ducats.

On the other hand, you're only
doing away with a piece of unborn
flesh without feelings,

something that might die in a
thousand other ways,

and I believe that whatever
pleases the majority is a good in
itself.

TIMOTEO

So be it in God's name.

May everything you wish be done
for God's sake and for the sake of
charity.

All I need is the convent's
address, the potion,

and, if you want, the money

so that it can start doing some
good.

LIGURIO

Now you are beginning to be the
priest I thought you were.

Take this portion of the money.
The convent is ...

Wait a moment, a woman in church
is calling me.

Don't leave Messer Nicia alone. I
only need two words with her.

TIMOTEO

How much time does the girl have
left?

NICIA

I'm furious.

TIMOTEO

I said, how much time does the
girl have left?

NICIA

Curse him!

TIMOTEO

Why?

NICIA

I hope he breaks his neck.

TIMOTEO

I'm dealing with a madman and a
deaf man.

One runs away, the other can't
hear.

But if there's a profit to be made
here, I'll be shrewder than they
are.

Here comes that scoundrel Ligurio.

LIGURIO

Father, I have wonderful
news.

The woman I spoke to told me that
the girl has miscarried herself.

TIMOTEO

That's marvellous. Then these alms
can go into the general account.

LIGURIO

What do you mean?

TIMOTEO

I mean that now you have even
better reason to give alms.

LIGURIO

The alms will be given in due
course, but first there is another
matter that Messer Nicia can do
with your help.

TIMOTEO

What is it?

LIGURIO

Something less pressing, less
scandalous

more acceptable to us and more
profitable to yourself.

TIMOTEO

Tell me about it? We are on such
good terms and are so agreeable
that there is nothing I would not
do for you.

LIGURIO

I'll tell you about it in church
privately,

Messer Nicia will be happy to wait
for us here. We'll be right back.

NICIA

Is it day or night?

Am I awake or dreaming?

Am I drunk? No, I haven't been
able to touch a drop because of
all this.

We arrange to say one thing to the priest, and then he says something different.

I have to pretend to be deaf

I'm down twenty-five ducats

we haven't even begun discussing my problem,

now they've left me standing here like a dumb ox.

Oh, here's Ligurio, and a curse on him if he hasn't been discussing my problem.

LIGURIO

Brother Timoteo has agreed to do everything he can to help us resolve our little problem

NICIA

That's a weight off my mind.

Will it be a boy?

LIGURIO

A boy it will be.

NICIA

I'm so happy I could cry.

TIMOTEO

Gentlemen, I understand perfectly what I have to do.

You two go and wait in the church, and stay out of sight,

I'll wait for the ladies here when they have gone I'll tell you what their reaction was.

May God smile upon your endeavours... May his Face shine

upon you, and may our soles
forever dwell in Paradise...

TIMOTEO

I don't know who's fooling who.

That rascal Ligurio came to me
with that first story to test me,
so that, if I refused to help him
in that first affair he would have
said nothing about the other in
order not to reveal their true
plans.

Whatever. It's true that I have
been tricked, but this ruse can
still be profitable to me.

Messer Nicia and Callimaco are
rich, and I should be able to get
quite a bit out of them for
different reasons.

Obviously this affair must be kept
secret, since that is as much in
my own interest as in theirs.

But whatever happens, I'll have no
regrets.

In fact, I don't give a donkey's
turd.

Yes. There may problems along the
way,

Madonna Lucrezia is clever and
kind,

so I shall play upon her kindness.

Anyway, women aren't too bright.

Oh come on, if they can string a
few words together, they are
considered a genius,

Remember in the land of the blind
a one eyed man is king.

There she is with her mother;

a woman of loose morals and easy
virtue.

She will be of use to me in
convincing her daughter.

Fun isn't it.

SOSTRATA

I'm sure you realize, Lucrezia,
that I value your reputation as
much as anyone in the world,

and I wouldn't advise you to do
anything that wasn't right.

I've told you before, and I am
telling you now,

that if Brother Timoteo tells you
there is nothing to burden your
conscience about,

you can do it without further
thought.

LUCREZIA

I've always been afraid that
Nicia's desire to have children
would get us into trouble;

because of this, I am always
suspicious whenever he comes up
with a new scheme,

especially after my bad experience
in church, as you know.

But of all the things he's dreamed
up, this is the strangest

to have to submit my body to this
outrage,

to be the cause of a man's death
because of such a disgrace.

If I were the last woman on earth
and the future of the human race
depended on me,

I don't think I could go through
with it.

SOSTRATA

I don't know how to explain
certain things to you, daughter.

Speak to the priest, see what he
has to say, and then do what he
advises

and what we, who love you, advise
you to do.

TIMOTEO

Welcome, both of you!

I know what you want me for, since
Messer Nicia spoke to me.

To tell you the truth, I've been
paging through my books for more
than four hours to study this
case,

and have found numerous entries,
both in particular and in general,
which seem almost made for us.

LUCREZIA

Are you speaking the truth or just
joking?

TIMOTEO

Oh, Madonna Lucrezia. Are these
matters one jokes about? Don't you
know me yet?

LUCREZIA

Yes, I know you, Father, but this is the strangest thing I have ever heard.

TIMOTEO

Madonna, I believe you, but I don't want you to carry on this way.

Many things appear terrible, unsupportable, and strange from a distance;

but when you approach them they become normal, bearable, and quite common,

that's why they say that fear itself is worse than the evil that you fear. This is such a case.

LUCREZIA

I hope to God it is!

TIMOTEO

As far as your conscience is concerned, you should take this as a general rule,

that where there is a certain good and an uncertain evil

the good should never be avoided for fear of the evil.

In your case the certain good, is that you will conceive and produce a soul for Our Lord.

The uncertain evil is that the man who sleeps with you after you take the mandrake potion may die,

but it is also possible that he may not die.

As for the act itself, whether or
not it is a sin is foolish to
discuss,

for it is the will that sins, not
the body;

the true sin is to displease your
husband,

but you will be pleasing him by
taking pleasure in the act that
displeases you.

Besides this, in all things one
must look to the result:

the outcome of your act will be
to please your husband and fill
a seat in paradise.

The Bible says that the
daughters of Lot,

believing themselves to be alone
in the world, lay with their
father,

but because their intent was
good

they did not sin.

LUCREZIA

What is your counsel, then?

SOSTRATA

Just let yourself be counselled,
daughter.

Don't you see that a childless
woman has no security?

If her husband dies, she is left
like a stray animal, abandoned by
everyone.

TIMOTEO

Madonna I swear to you by this
holy cloth,

that humouring your husband in
this way will bring you no more
spiritual grief than would eating
meat on Wednesday,

and that is a sin that can be
removed with holy water.

LUCREZIA

Where are you leading me, Father?

TIMOTEO

I'm leading you toward something
for which you will always be thankful
in your prayers

and you will be even more grateful
in about 9 months from now.

SOSTRATA

Silly girl, what are you afraid
of?

There are fifty girls in town who
would thank God to be in your
shoes.

LUCREZIA

Very well,

but I don't think I shall be alive
tomorrow morning.

TIMOTEO

Don't worry, my child. I shall
pray to god for you and ask the
angel Raphael to comfort you.

Go and prepare yourself for this
holy miracle.

SOSTRATA

Peace be with you, Father. Well
done

LUCREZIA

God and Our Father protect me from harm.

TIMOTEO

May God smile upon your endeavours.

May his face always shine upon you. And may our souls - -

LIGURIO

How did it go?

TIMOTEO

Very well. She's agreed to do everything, and there won't be any problems

her mother has promised to put her to bed herself.

NICIA

Are you telling the truth?

TIMOTEO

Jesus, you are cured of your deafness.

LIGURIO

Yes, Saint Brian has granted him this miracle.

TIMOTEO

You will naturally want to donate an ex-voto to spread the word;

this way the church, itself, can profit.

NICIA

Let's not change the subject. Will she give us any trouble in doing what I wish?

TIMOTEO

No, I tell you.

NICIA

I'm the happiest man in the world.
I could...

TIMOTEO

...Soon be the father of a fine
bouncing boy, and to hell with
those without your luck.

LIGURIO

Father, go back to your devotions.

If we need you, we know where to
find you.

Messer Nicia, you should follow
your wife to keep her from
changing her mind,

I'll ask Doctor Callimaco to send
the potion. Let's meet after dark
to arrange everything that needs
to be done.

TIMOTEO

May God smile upon your
endeavours. May his face shine
upon... and whatever

SIESTA

MORE SIESTA

STILL MORE SIESTA

LIGURIO

Callimaco. What took you?

CALLIMACO

Any news?

LIGURIO

Good news.

CALLIMACO

Really good?

LIGURIO

The best.

CALLIMACO

Has Lucrezia agreed?

LIGURIO

Yes.

CALLIMACO

The friar did his job?

LIGURIO

He certainly did.

CALLIMACO

I'll pray to God for that blessed friar!

LIGURIO

He'll want something beside your prayers!

CALLIMACO

What does he want?

LIGURIO

Cash!

CALLIMACO

How much did you promise him?

LIGURIO

Four hundred ducats.

CALLIMACO

You did well Ligurio.

LIGURIO

Messer Nicia's already forked over ten of them.

CALLIMACO

Messer Nicia?

LIGURIO

And her mother took her to see the priest and they worked it all out

CALLIMACO

What have I done to deserve such good fortune?

I'm so happy I could die!

LIGURIO

What is it with this guy?

First he wants to die of grief, then he wants to die of happiness.

He seems to want to croak any way he can.

LIGURIO

Have you got the potion?

CALLIMACO

Yes, it's here.

LIGURIO

What are you sending?

CALLIMACO

Hippocras tea. Just the thing to calm the mind and to warm the heart.

Oh dear god in heaven, Jesus Christ, I'm ruined.

LIGURIO

What is it? What are you talking about?

CALLIMACO

There's no way out.

LIGURIO

What the hell is going on?

CALLIMACO

We haven't gotten anywhere. And I've painted myself into a corner.

LIGURIO

What's the problem?

CALLIMACO

Don't you see? I told Messer Nicia that Siro, you and I, would find someone to lie with his wife.

LIGURIO

So what?

CALLIMACO

What do you mean, so what?

If I'm with you, I can't be the one who is kidnapped,

and if I'm not the one who's kidnapped, he'll discover the trick.

LIGURIO

I see! You're right.

But surely there a way around this?

CALLIMACO

I don't think so.

LIGURIO

Yes there is.

CALLIMACO

What?

LIGURIO

Let me think a bit.

CALLIMACO

I'm really stuffed if you have to start thinking at this point.

LIGURIO

I've got it.

CALLIMACO

What?

LIGURIO

We'll let the priest take care of this, since he's helped us so far.

CALLIMACO

How?

LIGURIO

We'll all disguise ourselves.

I'll dress the priest we'll change his face, his voice, and his clothes.

I'll tell the counsellor that he is you, and he's bound to believe it.

CALLIMACO

That's fine, but what do I do?

LIGURIO

You can turn up wearing a short cloak and carrying a lute, and sing a little song about an aubergine.

CALLIMACO

Why not a carrot?

LIGURIO

An aubergine is better.

CALLIMACO

Without a mask?

LIGURIO

Of course. If you wore a mask he would suspect something.

CALLIMACO

Then he'll recognize me.

LIGURIO

No, he won't, because you can distort your face.

Open your mouth, close one eye, and lick your eye brow with your tongue.

That's it! Remember that.

I have a false nose at home; you
can wear that too.

CALLIMACO

What else?

LIGURIO

When you arrive at his block,
we'll grab you

and your lute; we'll spin you
around, bring you in the house and
put you in the bed.

You'll have to do the rest on
yourself.

CALLIMACO

That's where the hard part starts.

LIGURIO

One would hope so.

Only make sure that you can get
back in again.

CALLIMACO

What do you mean?

LIGURIO

That you should take her tonight.

And then explain the trick to her,

show her your love,

tell her how much you care for
her, and how,

without any scandal at all she can
become your lover,

and how scandalous it would be to
become your enemy.

It's impossible that she won't see
the light or that she will want
tonight to be the last night.

CALLIMACO

You really believe this?

LIGURIO

I'm sure of it.

Come on, call Siro and send the
potion to Messer Nicia, and I'll
go to the priest, disguise him.

Then we'll find Messer Nicia and
work out what else needs to be
done.

CALLIMACO

Fine. Get going.

SIRO

Sir?

CALLIMACO

Sorry.

Take this to potion to Nicia's
house and don't spill a drop

Just get going.

If he wants, wait with him;

But if not, come back, or

just go

SOMETIME AFTER DARK

SIRO

Who's that?

LIGURIO

A very worthy man.

SIRO

Is he lame or just pretending?

LIGURIO

Mind your own business!

LIGURIO

For Christ's sake, shut up or
you'll ruin the whole thing!
Where's. Callimaco?

CALLIMACO

Here I am. You had the potion and
spoke to Messer Nicia?

SIRO

Yes, sir.

CALLIMACO

What did he say?

SIRO

That he'll be at your service
shortly.

CALLIMACO

Ligurio, you have your
disguises?

LIGURIO

Yes. let's do it in the bushes.

TIMOTEO

You must be Callimaco?

CALLIMACO

Indeed I am, our contract is drawn
and my fortune is at your disposal
and may use it as if it were your
own.

TIMOTEO

I understand everything and
believe in it;

therefore I have done for you what
I would not have done for another
person in the whole world.

CALLIMACO

You will not be sorry.

TIMOTEO

It is enough that you think kindly of me.

CALLIMACO

Fare thee well, Friar.

MEANWHILE AT NICIA'S HOUSE

LIGURIO

How do we look?

TIMOTEO

Unbelievable.

LIGURIO

The lawyer is late. We going to have to get him. It's already past eleven.

SIRO

Someone is coming.

LIGURIO

What the hell's he wearing?

LIGURIO

Good evening, counsellor!

Don't be afraid, it's only us.

NICIA

Oh, you're here.

If I hadn't recognized you, I'd have given you all a whack with my sword.

Ligurio? Siro? And this is your master?

You're disguised so well that not even the sheriff would know him.

LIGURIO

I had him put a pebble in his mouth so that no one would recognize his voice.

NICIA

You are stupid.

LIGURIO

Why?

NICIA

Why didn't you tell me about the pebble in the mouth?

You know how important it is for people not to recognize our voices.

LIGURIO

Here, put this in your mouth.

NICIA

You dirty bastard!

LIGURIO

Well it looked little brown pebble.

NICIA

Doctor, aren't you going to say anything?

TIMOTEO

I'm very angry with Ligurio for doing that.

NICIA

Oh, how well you disguise your voice!

You sound just like that fat priest.

TIMOTEO

How dare you speak to me like that?

NICIA

Oh, very good! Very good!

LIGURIO

We're losing time here. I'll be the general and set up our army for battle.

Doctor Callimaco, you take the right horn.

That's you.

I'll take the left horn,

Messer Nicia you stay in the middle, Siro will be at the rear guard and will help anyone who falls behind.

The password will be Saint Cuckold.

NICIA

Who is Saint Cuckold?

LIGURIO

He is the most venereal saint in France.

LIGURIO

We'll set our ambush here at the corner.

I hear a lute playing.

NICIA

It's a man.

What should we do?

LIGURIO

We'll send a scout to the front to find out who he is and, depending on what he reports back to us, we'll take it from there.

NICIA

Who will go?

LIGURIO

Siro. You go

You know what to do.

Investigate, make inquiries return
immediately and report to us.

NICIA

We don't want to make a mistake
by picking up somebody who is weak
or sick,

or we'll have to repeat this
operation tomorrow night.

LIGURIO

Don't worry. Siro knows what to
do.

He's on his way back now.

What did you find out?

SIRO

He's the handsomest young rake you
ever saw

not more than twenty-five years
old,

alone, shabbily dressed,

and playing a lute.

NICIA

If you are right, he's just what
we need.

LIGURIO

Let's wait until he turns the
corner, and then we'll all jump
him at once.

NICIA

Doctor, you've been so quiet all
evening.

LIGURIO

Let's go!

TIMOTEO

Messer Nicia, I'm going home for a nap; my beard is killing me.

if you won't be needing me, I will not be back until tomorrow.

NICIA

Very good, very good.

That's fine, Doctor, we don't need you; we'll take care of everything ourselves

LIGURIO

Let's get him in the house.

TIMOTEO

The suns up and I'm just in time. There's a terrible commotion coming from Messer Nicia's house.

They're throwing their prisoner out of the door, now.

The lovers must have enjoyed themselves to the last drop.

I want to hear what they are saying, but they mustn't be seen.

LIGURIO

Don't be afraid, just be on your way. Give him a couple of turns Siro so he won't know where he came from.

Go on, you wretch, beat it.

If I hear you talking about this, I'll cut your throat!

NICIA

He's run off.

You and Siro go to find the Doctor
and tell him everything went well.

LIGURIO

But what did happen? We couldn't
anything, we were locked in the
wine cellar all night.

NICIA

I'll tell you what happened.

My wife was in bed in the dark.

I wanted to see if he was healthy.
Suppose he had the pox; where
would that leave me?

Of course I checked everything
with Sostrata...

NICIA

Right you! Bend over.

What can you see?

SOSTRATA

Nothing.

NICIA

What can you feel?

SOSTRATA

He got a very hairy arse.

NICIA

That's my beard!

SOSTRATA

Oh, sorry.

Well, it all feels good to me.

NICIA

Let me have a go.

Oh Sorry.

Let's put him in the bed.

Right let's wait downstairs.

SOSTRATA

Shouldn't we stay and watch?

NICIA

Err, no.

We left the room and locked the door.

In the morning, after enjoying his sauce.

He finally got up, I called you, and here we are.

LIGURIO

It's all gone according to plan.

NICIA

You know, something worries me.

LIGURIO

What's that?

NICIA

That poor young man who has to die so soon;

this one night cost him so dear.

LIGURIO

Oh, you don't have to worry about that, it's his problem.

NICIA

Of course! You're right.

I can't wait to see Doctor Callimaco and congratulate him.

LIGURIO

He'll be here within an hour.

NICIA

I'll get my wife up and have her wash,

and then I'll bring her to church to have her purified.

I'd like you and the Doctor to be there.

We should speak to the priest to thank him

and reward him for all the good that he has done.

LIGURIO

Do you think we should change our clothes?

NICIA

Yes, good idea.

TIMOTEO

I'm rather pleased with the way that went,

considering how stupid that lawyer is,

but the part I liked most was what he said about my reward.

Well, I mustn't linger here since they will be looking for me at the church,

where my services bring an even higher price.

CALLIMACO

As said, Ligurio my friend,

Initially I was quite uneasy but then I explained plan and she went along with it

And then she told me with great clarity what she wanted.

LUCREZIA

Since your cunning, the stupidity of my husband,

the unscrupulousness of my mother,

and the evil nature of my confessor have made me do what I would never have done on my own,

I shall have to believe that it is some divine power that causes me to act in this way.

And since I am not capable of resisting Heaven's wishes,

I accept.

Therefore, I take you for lord, master, and guide:

you must be everything good;

for me you will be my father, my defender;

and what my husband wanted for one night I now want him to have forever.

Become his close friend, then.

Be in church this morning, and from there you can come to dine with us here;

And you can come and go as you will,

and we can be together constantly and without suspicion.

CALLIMACO

On hearing these words, Ligurio I
tell you I can't express even a
small part of what I felt.

I am more blessed than the
blessed,

more saintly than the saints.

LIGURIO

I'm happy if you are happy, and
its all gone just as I told you it
would.

So what do we do now?

CALLIMACO

We must to church,

For I promised Sostrata, Lucrezia
and Messer Nicia that we would
meet them there.

Shall we go?

NICIA

Lucrezia, I think everything
should be done prudently and not
haphazardly.

LUCREZIA

Now what is your complaint?

NICIA

Look how she answers, just like a
proud cock!

SOSTRATA

Don't be too surprised; after ail,
she is a bit worked up.

LUCREZIA

What's that supposed to mean?

NICIA

I'd better speak to the priest and ask him to purify you.

It's truly fitting that you be reborn this morning.

LUCREZIA

Well, aren't you going then?

NICIA

You are really something this morning. Last night you seemed almost dead.

LUCREZIA

That's thanks to you.

SOSTRATA

Go on and find the priest.

No need there he is.

NICIA

Father!

TIMOTEO

May God be gracious unto you and may he grant you a handsome boy, Madonna Lucrezia.

LUCREZIA

May God grant it.

TIMOTEO

Oh, He will, He certainly will.

NICIA

Are Ligurio and Doctor Callimaco on their way?

TIMOTEO

Of course.

CALLIMACO

God save you all!

NICIA

Doctor!

Ligurio.

Doctor, give my wife your hand.

TIMOTEO

Why not, she's had everything else.

CALLIMACO

Most happily.

NICIA

Lucrezia, this is the man who will provide us with a stout support for our old age.

LUCREZIA

I am most grateful for that support, and I hope that he becomes a very our close friend of ours.

NICIA

God bless you.

I want you and Ligurio to dine with us this morning.

LUCREZIA

Of course.

NICIA

I am going to give them the key to the ground floor of the loggia so that they can come and go as they please,

they have no women to care for them, poor beasts.

CALLIMACO

I accept most gladly, and will make use of it whenever my need arises.

TIMOTEO

Will I still get the monies for the alms?

NICIA

You certainly will, Father. They will be sent today.

LIGURIO

Won't someone remember Siro?

NICIA

My friend.

Let him ask. Whatever I have is his.

Lucrezia, what should we give the Father Timoteo for cleansing you?

LUCREZIA

Give him fifty large ducats.

NICIA

Oh, my God!

TIMOTEO

Lady Sostrata, you seem so much younger today.

SOSTRATA

I'm happy. Who wouldn't be today?

TIMOTEO

Let's all go to the Doumo, where I'll say the required service.

Afterward you can all eat at your fill.

And may God smile upon your endeavours.

May his face always shine upon you and...

Arseholes.

ACTOR

So my friends our story's over.

You've seen the tale of Mandragola,

Go forth to live and laugh at
life,

But learn from the lover, the
lawyer and his wife.