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The Mandrake Root

Movie Shooting Script - Draft 5

Adapted by Malachi Bogdanov
from the play *La Mandragola*
by Niccolò Machiavelli



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Details of The Mandrake Root movie can be found at [movie-zine](http://movie-zine.com) where you can also preview the movie or purchase a DVD or Download www.movie-zine.com

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Cast

The cast of the 2008 movie *The Mandrake Root* directed by Malachi Bogdanov and produced by european drama network

Nicia/The Husband **Geoffrey Bateman**

Lucrezia/The Wife **Chara Jackson**

Sostrata/The Mother **Den Woods**

Callimaco/The Lover **Jason Nicoli**

Siro/The Servant **Craig Painting**

Ligurio/The Fixer **Mike Rogers**

Brother Timoteo/The Priest **Jonathan Owen**

The Actor **Jonathan Owen**

The Lady **Emanuela di Biase**

Road Sweeper **Mario Olivieri**

Road Sweeper **Andrea Foddai**

This draft of the script was the shooting version which was used in the movie. Alteration were made whilst shooting and in the post production.

Whilst this script is faithful to the original play it is not simply a translation but an adaptation. All the characters in the play are included in this script, however the road diggers, who became road sweepers in the finished movie are an invention and do not appear in the original play.

FADE IN:

INT. DRESSING ROOM - DAY - MODERN DAY

An ACTOR is preparing to go on stage. We see him putting on make-up. Close up of his hands, his cheek his eye etc. We never see his whole face. He pours himself a glass of water and drinks.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE - DAY - MODERN DAY

The actor walks on stage to rapturous applause. He addresses the audience.

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. See this Sardinian setting right here in front of you? Today it is the Sassari you live in, tomorrow it could be Florence Pisa, Padova or anywhere.

Here you will meet a Doctor of the law who although learned, is not too bright in the ways of the world. You will also get to know, if you stay with us for a while a young man named Callimaco Guadagni who just got back from Paris lives up the street, in a house just after the Palace of Justice. He is known among his friends as a worthy, noble fellow both in looks and deeds. And how he loved too much a certain clever girl. And how she was deceived by him our comedy will explain. How nice for you if you could be tricked in the way she was!

And finally a scheming priest who for a price assists our characters to succeed in their desires.

Our comedy has the title La Mandragola, the Mandrake Route. Why call it this? The story will tell you why as it unfolds.

So...we have a poor unhappy lover, a pretty girl, a stupid lawyer and a priest whose morals are for sale !

If all this seems unimportant, too trivial to come from a man who is wise and serious, excuse the story teller; he is only trying with these little trifles to brighten up your mundane lives.

He expects that his reward for this timeless tale will be for all to jeer and snicker and speak badly of all they see and hear.

No wonder, then, those who see their efforts scorned do not exert themselves to do, no matter what the hardships, the work the snow conceals and wind destroys.

And if by speaking badly of this story teller you think you've got him by the hair, frightened and dismissed him, I warn you that he, too, knows how to be just as malicious, in fact, he is an expert at the art!

But let's ignore those foolish people who speak evil, and get back to our story before it's too late.

Our story starts with one Callimaco and his faithful servant, Siro. They'll fill you in on everything. So... pay close attention and listen carefully.

The audience applaud.

EXT. CHURCH - MORNING - MODERN DAY

The camera PANS down the façade of the church. PEOPLE are applauding as a MOTHER/LUCREZIA and FATHER/NICIA come out of front doors after a christening. The MOTHER/LUCREZIA is holding TRIPLETS. A GIRL on a VESPA passes by. The camera PANS back up the façade of the church and a caption appears on the screen '504 Years and 9 Months EARLIER'.

The camera pans back down the church and picks up CALLIMACO and SIRO walking up a small side street. They are in period costume and the scene has been transformed to 1503. The same girl passes by not on A HORSE not A VESPA.

EXT. PIAZZA DUOMO - MORNING

CALLIMACO

Come on, keep up! I believe you were amazed by my sudden departure from Paris, and you are probably wondering right now why I have been here almost a month without doing anything.

If I haven't told you before what I am about to tell you now, it is not because I don't trust you, but rather because I feel that the best way to keep a secret is to say nothing unless you absolutely have to. Now, since I believe I shall be needing your help, I want to tell you everything.

As they pass the bar we notice a 'For Sale' sign hanging up outside.

CALLIMACO

You know that I lost my family at the age of ten and that 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 come home but to live in Paris, judging life there to be more secure than here in Italy.

And having sold all my belongings except my house, I lived in France for ten very happy years...spending my time partly studying, partly enjoying myself, and partly dealing in business. And I did not let any one occupation interfere with the others. And for this reason, as you know, I lived peacefully, offending no one and pleasing all. I managed to get along with everybody, merchants, nobles, foreigners, townspeople, rich and poor alike.

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

INT. A DINING ROOM IN PARIS - EVENING
(FLASHBACK)

CALLIMACO, CALFUCCI and FRENCHMAN are having a heated discussion over a dinner table. We hear their voices in the background.

CALLIMACO (V.O.)

I often entertained him, as I did other Florentines, 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 Florentine 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.

EXT. PIAZZA DUOMO- MORNING

CALLIMACO

He said her name was Madonna Lucrezia, the wife of Messer Nicia Calfucci. He spoke so highly, praising her beauty and her manners so much that all of us were dumbfounded. I set out to see her: and after my arrival, I found that the fame of Lucrezia's beauty was nothing compared to her real beauty something that rarely occurs.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY - SLOW MOTION (FLASHBACK)

LUCREZIA is sitting in an ORANGE GARDEN. She is surrounded by dark haired servants. She wears a beautiful white dress and is revealed to be blond. The scene could be in soft focus with music underscoring.

EXT. - PIAZZA DUOMO- MORNING

CALLIMACO (CONT'D)

I want her so badly that I am nearly out of my mind.

SIRO

If you had mentioned it 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 also 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:

CUT TO:

INT. NICIA'S HOUSE - EVENING

NICIA and LUCREZIA are having dinner a SERVANT is present. Nicia is gorging himself on a suckling pig and red wine while LUCREZIA has salad and water.

CALLIMACO (V.O.)

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. No workmen are allowed in the house, and all her servants fear her.

DISSOLVE

TO:

EXT. PIAZZA DUOMO/VIA TURRITANA - MORNING

CALLIMACO (CONT'D)

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 a way to do it. Even though such 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, then, what is it that gives you
hope?

CALLIMACO

Two things.

CUT TO:

INT. NICIA AND LUCREZIA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

NICIA is getting ready for bed. He puts on a
nightgown, night cap and eye patches. LUCREZIA
reading Bible, holding a rosary in her hands.

CALLIMACO (V.O.)

The first is the stupidity of Messer
Nicia, who is the dumbest, most
foolish man in Florence (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.

DISSOLVE

TO:

EXT. VIA TURRITANA/STREET - MORNING

CALLIMACO (CONT'D)

A third reason comes to mind as well...

CUT TO:

INT. BAR - NIGHT

SOSTRATA is being egged on by MEN in a bar to
down a pint in one. She has a large cleavage and
wears make-up.

MEN IN THE BAR

Si! Si! Si! Si! Si! Si! Si! Si!

SOSTRATA downs the pint then is given another.

DISSOLVE

TO:

EXT. VIA TURRITANA/STREET - MORNING

CALLIMACO (CONT'D)

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. Because he is good company, Messer Nicia has taken a liking to him, and Ligurio uses him. Though he never gets invited to supper, he does get a bit of money from time to time. 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.

SIRO steals an apple from a fruit and vegetable stall.

CALLIMACO

I know that. But when you need somebody, you have to trust him. If we succeed, I have promised him some money; if not, he will at least earn a meal. Besides, I do not like eating alone!

SIRO

What has he agreed to do so far?

CALLIMACO

He has promised to persuade Messer Nicia to go with Lucrezia to the mineral baths this May.

SIRO

How does that fit in with your plans?

They stop outside a DOORWAY.

EXT. VIA PORCHEDDU/STREET- MORNING

CALLIMACO

What do you mean? Why, such a locale could change her prudish nature, since all one does at a place like that is have a good time. I would go there myself and arrange all sorts of amusing things to do in order to show myself off in the best way; perhaps I could even become friendly with both of them. Who knows? Only time will tell, but one thing does lead to another.

SIRO

It just might work.

CUT TO:

ROAD DIGGERS SCENE

ROAD DIGGERS can be seen in the background digging up the street. They accidentally cut through a water pipe and water fountains into the air.

EXT. VIA PORCHEDDU/PIAZZA COMUNE- MORNING

CALLIMACO

Ligurio left this morning to speak to Messer Nicia about it, and he will let me know how things turn out.

SIRO

Here they both come.

LONG SHOT of LIGURIO and NICIA coming out of the court house. A chicken crosses in front of them.

CALLIMACO

I'll keep out of sight so I can speak to Ligurio when Messer Nicia has left him. In the meantime, go about your duties. If I need you for something, I'll let you know.

SIRO

Arrivederci.

SIRO leaves. CALLIMACO hides behind an extremely SMALL TREE next to a café with tables outside and A HORSE or two.

EXT. CAFE' - MORNING

NICIA and LIGURIO ENTER.

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.

They sit at a café table.

LIGURIO

Why?

NICIA

Because basically I'd prefer to stay at home. And then, to have to move my wife, servants, and baggage with me does not 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.

A WAITER enters.

NICIA (CONT'D)

Due Vini.

LIGURIO

You are probably disturbed more 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.

WAITER enters with the two wines.

NICIA takes on the air of an adventurer. He has a stick and starts using it as a sword narrowly missing the waiter who brings the wine.

NICIA (CONT'D)

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, more than ten, no, more than twenty times bigger. You don't see anything but water and water and more water.

LIGURIO

Well, I certainly am amazed 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 matter. 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 then you and I will meet there.

LIGURIO

As you wish.

NICIA drains his wine and exits.

LIGURIO

(To camera)

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 got 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 enters from behind the extremely small tree.

LIGURIO

Callimaco! What are you doing here?

CALLIMACO

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

CALLIMACO sits down. The WAITER enters.

LIGURIO

Due vini.

He is exactly the kind of man you described: he's got the prudence of a suckling pig. He's not keen on leaving Sassari but I encouraged him, and finally he told me frankly he was

ready to do anything. I think we could get him to leave if we wanted to, 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?

CALLIMACO gets up and starts pacing. He finishes the wine.

Due vini!

CALLIMACO starts to overact. Very melodramatic.

CALLIMACO (CONT'D)

What choice do I have? Where am I to turn? I have to try something, grandiose or dangerous, ruinous or infamous or I'd rather die.

CUT TO:

INT. CALLIMACO'S HOUSE

Dream Sequence. Sad music plays and we see CALLIMACO at home making a noose.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CAFÉ - CONT'D

LIGURIO slaps CALLIMACO around the face.

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

CUT TO:

GARDEN- DAY SCENE WITH LIGURIO - FLASHBACK

LIGURIO is sitting in an orange garden. She is surrounded by dark haired servants. She wears a beautiful white dress and is revealed to be blond. The scene could be in soft focus with music underscoring.

BACK TO:

THE CAFÉ - CONT'D

LIGURIO

You can trust me caro Callimaco.

LIGURIO gestures to CALLIMACO to come closer.

LIGURIO (CONT'D)

Messer Nicia gave me the task of finding a doctor and of discovering

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 have no trouble believing it 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 us send him to whichever bath we choose and enable me to try another plan I have in mind, one which would be quicker, more certain, and more likely to succeed.

CALLIMACO

What are you saying?

LIGURIO

If you 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

(Hugs Ligurio)

You are reviving me. This is too great a promise, and I now have too great a hope. How will you do it?

LIGURIO

You'll learn it all later. There's little enough time for action, much less for talk. Go home and wait for me there, and when I Messer just 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.

LIGURIO leaves. CALLIMACO picks up the bill and pays.

EXT. STREET - DAY

TWO ROAD DIGGERS are up to their waists in a hole. They speak in Italian. The dialogue is subtitled.

DIGGER ONE

This renaissance won't last you know.

DIGGER TWO

Why's that then?

DIGGER ONE

Materials, build cheap build twice. See, it's a false economy use cheap materials and they'll have to build it all again in fifty years.

DIGGER TWO

What, even the great buildings of Florence? The Duomo, the Uffizi, the Palazzo Ducale?

DIGGER ONE

Especially them!

EXT. PIAZZA COMUNE - DAY

LIGURIO and NICIA are walking down the square. There are CHICKENS in the background. A goat is tethered.

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, 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 then leave me holding the bag.

LIGURIO

Don't worry about that; just worry about the possibility of his not taking your case. But if he does take it, he will not abandon you until he sees it through to the 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.

They stop walking and stand in front of a doorway.

EXT. DOORWAY OF A BUILDING/CALLIMACO'S HOUSE-MORNING

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.

LIGURIO Knocks twice and the face of SIRO appears through a peep hole.

SIRO

Who's there?

LIGURIO

Ligurio?

SIRO

Ligurio who?

LIGURIO

Just open the door we want to see
Callimaco.

SIRO

Oh alright then.

SIRO opens the door.

LIGURIO and NICIA disappear through the doorway.

CUT TO:

INT. CALLIMACO'S HOUSE - DAY

CALLIMACO is sitting behind a wooden desk
pretending to study papers.

CALLIMACO

Who is it that wants to see me?

NICIA

Bona dies, domine doctor.

CALLIMACO

Et vobis bona, domine magister.

LIGURIO

What do you say to that?

NICIA

Christ, I'm impressed!

LIGURIO

If you two want me to stay here, speak
so that I can understand you;
otherwise we won't get anywhere.

CALLIMACO

What brings you here?

CALLIMACO gestures to a sofa and Nicia lies down
as if he is a patient.

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 on myself I have come to trouble you.

CALLIMACO

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

CALLIMACO starts examining NICIA'S eyes.

I did not spend so many years in Paris learning my art for any other reason than to serve you and your peers, monsieur.

NICIA

Latin and French!

LIGURIO

Oui, oui. Pot pouri.

NICIA

I am very grateful. Whenever you 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 here has told you our problem.

CALLIMACO

Open wide.

NICIA opens his mouth.

CALLIMACO (CONT'D)

That is true, but in order to fulfil your desire it is first necessary to

know why your wife is sterile, since there are many possible causes. Nam causae sterilitatis sunt: out in semine, out in matrice, out in instruments seminariis, out in viagra, out in causa extrinseca.

NICIA

(To Ligurio)

Ligurio...best doctor in the world!

CALLIMACO

Could you take off your britches please?

NICIA starts to take off his trousers.

CALLIMACO (CONT'D)

Besides these possibilities, her sterility could be caused by your own impotence; if this were the case, there would be no remedy.

NICIA

Me, impotent? Don't make me laugh.

NICIA leaps off the sofa and pulls his trousers up.

NICIA (CONT'D)

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

CALLIMACO

If that is true, then rest assured that 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

Yes, there is one. If I may be so bold Dottori. Callimaco, haven't you told me that you can mix certain potions that guarantee pregnancy?

CALLIMACO grits his teeth and stares at LIGURIO.

CALLIMACO

Yes, I have. But I am careful about discussing them with people I don't know 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 probably have to take a urine sample?

CALLIMACO

Of course, you can't do without that.

NICIA starts to take off his trousers again.

LIGURIO

No! Not from you from your wife. Call Siro. He can go home with the counsellor and get it; and we'll meet you in the square?

SIRO enters.

CALLIMACO

Siro, go with him. Messer Nicia, come back as soon as possible, if it suits you, and we'll think of a solution to the problem.

CALLIMACO gives SIRO a small bottle.

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!

CALLIMACO and LIGURIO exchange puzzled looks.

CUT TO:

EXT. GATES OF NICIA'S HOUSE - DAY

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. Herre 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, IO had to
shit blood to learn a few legal terms;
if I had to liove 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.

NICIA walks through the gates then comes back and takes the bottle from SIRO. SIRO leans against the gate. In a window in the background we see a silhouette of NICIA trying to get LUCREZIA to piss in the bottle.

SIRO

(To camera)

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 I know we'll get away with it; but if we get caught, 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.

NICIA walks through the gate carrying the small bottle.

SIRO (CONT'D)

But here's the lawyer with a urine bottle in his hand. Who wouldn't laugh at this trick?

(To Nicia)

That was quick.

NICIA

She has a weak bladder.

They start walking.

NICIA (CONT'D)

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. She's driving me

crazy. Off you go. tell your master
and Ligurio I'm here.

SIRO

Here they come.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFE' - DAY

LIGURIO and CALLIMACO going towards NICIA and
SIRO, who are already seated in the cafe.

LIGURIO

The lawyer will be easy to persuade,
but his wife will be a problem. Yet I
think I have a way.

CALLIMACO

(To Nicia)

Do you have the specimen?

NICIA

Siro has it covered.

SIRO is sniffing the bottle and is just about to
take a sip. LIGURIO snatches the bottle from
SIROS hand and studies it closely. CALLIMACO
snatches it from LIGURIO.

CALLIMACO

Give it here.

He studies it.

CALLIMACO (CONT'D)

Ah, this urine shows a weak kidney.

CALLIMACO gives the bottle back to SIRO.

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.
Nam mulieris urinae sunt semper
maioris grossitiei et albedinis el

minoris pulchritudinis quam virorum.
Huius autem, in cae-tera, causa est
amplitudo canalium, mixtio eorum quae
ex matrice exeunt cum urinal.

LIGURIO

Just as I thought.

SIRO puts the bottle down on a café table. A MAN
mistaking the bottle for his glass drinks the
urine. A horse is in the background.

NICIA

Oh, in the name of Saint Puccio's twat.
This fellow really knows how to talk
the talk. The more I know him, the
smarter he gets.

After much deliberation.

CALLIMACO

I am afraid that your wife is not well
covered at night, and that's why her
urine is cloudy.

Gives the sample back to SIRO.

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."

CUT TO:

INT. - NIGHT - NICIA AND LUCREZIA BEDROOM

LUCREZIA is on her knees praying in her bedroom.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFE' - MORNING

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 cure, and if your wife
doesn't have a son in her arms within
the year, I'll give you two thousand
ducats. No make that three.

NICIA

Go on and tell me. I'll do anything
you say. I trust you more than my
confessor.

CALLIMACO

Then you have to understand this:
nothing is more certain to make a
woman pregnant than to give her a
potion to drink made from the mandrake
root.

NICIA

The Mandrake Root?

LIGURIO

The Mandrake Root?

SIRO

The Mandrake Root?

MAN 1

La Mandragola?

MAN 2

La Mandragola?

CALLIMACO

Yes, The Mandrake Root. This is a
tried and true remedy I've used
several times and have always found
successful, and 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 drink it?

CALLIMACO

This evening after supper, since the
moon is just right and there couldn't
be a better moment.

NICIA

Prepare the potion, and I'll make her take it, there won't be any problems.

CALLIMACO

There's only one catch, the man who first sleeps with a woman who has taken this medicine will die within eight days, and nobody can save him.

NICIA

Bugger me, that's ridiculous (etc)!

We see NICIA walk through the gates and up to the house mumbling to himself. 'utterly ridiculous' etc. The others wait patiently. After kicking imaginary stones he returns.

NICIA

Jesus Christ. I won't touch that crap. You're not going to pull that on me. You've really fixed me up like a, like a...

LIGURIO

Kipper?

NICIA

Yes, like a kipper!

CALLIMACO

Calm yourself, there is a way.

NICIA

What way?

CALLIMACO

Make someone else sleep with her so that, being with her one night, he will draw out the poison of the mandrake on 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

What are you saying, 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?

He puts his arm around NICIA and quickly explains the following.

CALLIMACO

I'll tell you. I'll give you the potion this evening after supper; you give it to her to drink and put her to bed immediately, about four hours after dark. Then you, Ligurio, Siro, and I will disguise ourselves and go looking in the New Market and the Old Market and the Flea Market and around here for the first likely young loaf...loafer to come along. We'll gag him and force him into your house and into your bedroom in the dark. Then we'll put him in the bed, tell him what to do, and there won't be any trouble at all. Then in the morning we'll ill him... no, we'll send him off before dawn, wash up your wife, and you can use her as you wish without danger.

NICIA

I'm glad you say kings and princes and noblemen use this method, but, more than that, I'm glad no one will find out about it.

CALLIMACO

Who would tell?

NICIA

One important obstacle still remains.

CALLIMACO

What's that?

NICIA

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

CALLIMACO

You are right. But I wouldn't call myself a husband if I couldn't dominate my own wife.

LIGURIO

I have thought of a solution.

NICIA

What is it?

LIGURIO

Her confessor.

NICIA

Her confessor?

SIRO

Her confessor?

CALLIMACO

Her confessor?

LIGURIO

Yes, her confessor.

CALLIMACO

But who will convince him?

NICIA

Yes, who will convince him?

LIGURIO

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

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH /PRIEST SCENE - MORNING

THE PRIEST is sitting in church with his feet on the alter. He is reading the sports pages of a daily paper - 'Vecchio Sardegna'. He smokes a cigarette and puts the ash into a bowl of incense.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFÉ- MORNING

NICIA

I'm afraid that if I suggest it she
won't go and see him.

LIGURIO

There is even a remedy for that.

NICIA

Tell me.

CALLIMACO

And me!

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 with the potion at home two hours after dusk. Messer Nicia and I shall go to persuade her mother, since I know her well. Then we'll go see the priest and let you know what we have done.

NICIA

Until the fifth bridge! (obscure
Sardinian expression!)

CALLIMACO

(aside to Ligurio)

Please, don't leave me alone.

LIGURIO

Just go and mix the potion.

EXT. BENCH OUTSIDE GATES OF NICIA'S HOUSE-
MORNING

SOSTRATA, NICIA and LIGURIO are sitting at a café table talking. LIGURIO and NICIA are drinking coffee. SOSTRATA, hung-over, cracks three raw eggs into a glass and proceeds to drink them.

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, and your son-in-law and I will find Brother Timoteo, her confessor, and tell him of the problem so that you will not have to. Then we'll see what he tells you.

SOSTRATA

Let's do that. You go that way, and I'll look for Lucrezia and take her to speak to the priest and see what happens.

SOSTRATA exits

NICIA

Perhaps you are surprised, Ligurio, that 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, but since 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.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A PRIEST is sitting on one side of the confessional box LUCREZIA on the other. The PRIEST has a small sliding door that he uses to grope unsuspecting women.

EXT. BENCH OUTSIDE GATES OF NICIA'S HOUSE-MORNING

NICIA (CONT'D)

Since then she didn't want to go back and has been as nervous as a hare. Suggest something to her and she'll find a thousand objections.

LIGURIO

I'm not surprised.

THE WAITER brings the bill and NICIA pays it.

LIGURIO

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 both our sins and their own. If you're not experienced and if you don't know how to get them to help you, they have a nasty habit of tricking you.

NICIA

Just tell me what I should 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.

He winks and bites his lip.

LIGURIO (CONT'D)

No, that won't work. Say, how long has it been since you last spoke to this priest?

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 get upset if I say something that appears to be beside the point; I know what I'm doing.

NICIA

Well, until then.

EXT. CHURCH- STONE BENCH -DAY

TIMOTEO and A LADY are sitting on a stone bench outside the church. She has a large chest and TIMOTEO can't help looking at it.

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 chatting with you this way. 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.

She crosses herself and Timoteo does the same and takes the money.

LADY (CONT'D)

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.

Timoteo nods vigorously.

LADY (CONT'D)

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!

He puts his hand on her knee.

TIMOTEO (CONT'D)

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

She exits

TIMOTEO

Go in God's name my beautiful beautiful child.

(To camera)

Women are the most charitable creatures in the world-and also the most troublesome. If you avoid them, you avoid problems, but 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.

LIGURIO, NICIA enter. TIMOTEO gets up.

TIMOTEO

But what brings you here, gentlemen?
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 glad to be here.

TIMOTEO

What brings you here?

NICIA

I'm fine, thanks.

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 not 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 wishes.

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 takes out a small pouch. TIMOTEO reaches for the money but LIGURIO pulls it back.

LIGURIO

But before we give you the money, 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

I don't know if you know Camillo Calfucci, Messer Nicia's nephew.

TIMOTEO

Yes, I know him.

LIGURIO

A year ago he went to France on some 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, the nuns, the daughter, and Camillo but the entire Calfucci family will be disgraced. And Messer Nicia is so worried about the scandal that he vowed to give three hundred ducats for the Lord's work if this is 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 little act: you will preserve the honour of the convent, of the girl, and of her relatives; you will return a maiden to her father, satisfy Messer Nicia here and all his family, and distribute alms to the amount of three hundred ducats. On the other hand, you're only doing away with a piece of unborn flesh without feelings, a thing that might die in a thousand other ways, for I believe that whatever pleases the majority is a good in itself.

LIGURIO holds out the pouch of money and shakes it.

TIMOTEO

So be it in God's name. May everything you wish be done and all of it for God's sake and for the sake of charity. Give me 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 ...

Before he can give him the money LIGURIO pretends to hear a woman calling him from the church.

LIGURIO (CONT'D)

Wait a moment, a woman here in church is calling me. Don't leave Messer Nicia alone. I only have a couple of words to say to her.

LIGURIO leaves. NICIA continues to play deaf.

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

(To camera)

I'm dealing with a madman and a deaf man. One runs away, the other doesn't hear. But if there's a profit here somewhere, I'll be shrewder than they are. Here comes that scoundrel Ligurio.

LIGURIO enters. NICIA is just about to speak.

LIGURIO

(To Nicia)

Shut up. Father, I have wonderful news.

TIMOTEO

What is it?

LIGURIO

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

TIMOTEO

Good. These alms will 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 something else you must do to help Messer Nicia.

TIMOTEO

What is it?

LIGURIO

Something less pressing, less scandalous but more acceptable to us and more profitable to yourself.

TIMOTEO

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

TIMOTEO and LIGURIO exit. Nicia sits on the stone bench.

NICIA

(To camera)

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 else. I have to pretend I am deaf, and I had to stuff my ears so that I couldn't hear all the stupid things he said, to God knows what end! I'm down twenty-five ducats, we haven't even begun discussing my problem, and now they've left me standing here like a dumb ox. Oh, here's Ligurio, and a pox on him if he hasn't discussed my business.

Re-enter LIGURIO.

LIGURIO

(To Nicia)

Brother Timoteo is willing to do everything he can to help us conclude 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.

Re-enter TIMOTEO.

TIMOTEO

Gentlemen, it's perfectly clear what I have to do. You two go ahead into the church, and stay out of sight, and 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 always shine upon you, and may our soles forever

dwell in Paradise...

LIGURIO and NICIA exit. TIMOTEO sits down on the bench and produces a packet of cigarettes hidden inside his bible. He lights one.

TIMOTEO

(To camera)

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 both of them for different reasons. The affairs must be kept secret, since that is as much in my interest as in their own. Come what may, I'll have no regrets. To be honest, I don't give a donkey's turd. There will probably be difficulties, since Madonna Lucrezia is clever and kind, but I shall play on her kindness. And, anyway, women aren't too bright. If a woman is capable of putting a few words together, she is considered a genius, 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.

EXT. CHURCH STEPS - AFTERNOON

SOSTRATA is putting on lipstick And doing her hair. In contrast LUCREZIA is almost virginal in appearance.

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 enters down the church steps. He kisses SOSTRATA'S hand and shakes LUCREZIA'S.

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 I 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!

He sits LUCREZIA down on the stone bench.

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. Here we have a certain good, you will conceive and bear a child, producing 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 will 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 to take pleasure in the act that displeases you. Besides this, in all things one must look to the result:

We cut to LUCREZIA and when we cut back to TIMOTEO he has a choir standing behind him. They sing 'religiously'.

TIMOTEO

the outcome of your act is to fill a seat in paradise and to please your husband. The Bible says that the daughters of Lot, believing themselves to be alone in the world, lay with their father, and because their intent was good they did not sin.

LUCREZIA

What counsel do you give me, 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

I swear to you, Madonna Lucrezia, by this holy cloth I wear, that humouring your husband in this matter will cause 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?

The choir start singing again.

TIMOTEO

I'm leading you toward something for which you will always thank me in your prayers and you will be even more satisfied in about 9 months from now.

SOSTRATA takes TIMOTEO aside.

SOSTRATA

(To Lucrezia)

Silly girl, what are you afraid of? There are fifty girls in town who would thank God to be in your shoes.

LUCREZIA

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

The choir start singing again.

TIMOTEO

Have no fear, my child. I shall pray
to God for you and shall ask the angel
Raphael to comfort you. Go now with my
blessing and prepare yourself for this
holy miracle.

SOSTRATA

Peace be with you, Father.

SOSTRATA kisses him on the cheek leaving a large
lipstick mark.

LUCREZIA

God and Our Lady protect me from harm.

She puts her hand on Timoteo's Bible and crosses
herself.

LUCREZIA and SOSTRATA exit.

TIMOTEO

May God smile upon your endeavours.
May his face always shine upon you.
And may our souls - -

LIGURIO and NICIA enter.

LIGURIO

How did it go?

TIMOTEO

Very well. They went home prepared to
do everything, and there won't be any
problems since her mother went with
her and will put her to bed herself.

NICIA

Are you telling the truth?

TIMOTEO

Jesus, you are cured of your deafness.

LIGURIO

Saint Brian has granted him this miracle.

TIMOTEO

Jubilate Deo!

They all cross themselves.

TIMOTEO (CONT'D)

You will naturally want to donate an ex-voto here to spread the word; this way the church, too, can make a profit.

NICIA

Let's not get off the track. 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 boy, and to hell with those without your luck.

LIGURIO

Father, go back to your devotions. If we need anything else, we know where to find you. Messer Nicia, you should follow your wife to keep her from changing her mind, and I'll ask Callimaco to send the potion. Let's meet after dark in order to arrange what we have to do later.

NICIA

Let's go.

TIMOTEO

May God smile upon your endeavours. May his face always shine upon...

EXT. STREET - DAY

The TWO ROAD DIGGERS digging the street. In Italian with subtitles.

DIGGER ONE

You see they don't use gloss neither.
Take that Michelangelo bloke, uses
water based paints.

DIGGER TWO

Why's that then?

DIGGER ONE

Costs less and it's easier to clean
the brushes.

DIGGER TWO

And that Leonardo Da Vinci?

DIGGER ONE

Colour blind.

EXT. SQUARE/STREET - DUSK

LIGURIO hurries across the square. He arrives at the door of CALLIMACO'S house and bangs impatiently. CALLIMACO answers immediately.

EXT. OUTSIDE CALLIMACO'S HOUSE -DUSK

LIGURIO

Oh, Callimaco. Where have you been?

CALLIMACO

Any news?

LIGURIO

Good news.

CALLIMACO

Really good?

LIGURIO

The best.

CALLIMACO

Has Lucrezia agreed?

LIGURIO

Yes.

CALLIMACO

The priest did his job?

LIGURIO

He certainly did.

CALLIMACO

Oh, what a blessed friar! I'll always pray to God for him.

LIGURIO

He'll want something besides your prayers!

CALLIMACO

What does he want?

LIGURIO

Cash!

CALLIMACO

Give it to him. How much did you promise?

LIGURIO

(Three) - Four hundred ducats.

CALLIMACO

You did well.

LIGURIO

Messer Nicia's already forked over ten of them.

CALLIMACO

Messer Nicia?

LIGURIO

LIGURIO

And her mother took her to the priest and they worked it all out so that Lucrezia has given her consent.

CALLIMACO

Oh, God, what have I done to deserve
such good fortune? I'm so happy I
could die!

CALLIMACO enters his house.

LIGURIO

(To camera)

What is it with this guy? First he's
dying of grief, then of happiness. He
seems to want to croak any way he can.

LIGURIO enters the house.

INT. CALLIMACO'S HOUSE- DUSK

LIGURIO (CONT'D)

Have you got the potion ready?

CALLIMACO

Yes, it's here.

CALLIMACO produces a silver goblet from A
CABINET.

LIGURIO

What are you sending?

CALLIMACO

A glass of hippocras tea. Just the
thing to calm her stomach and to warm
the heart. Oh my god, oh my god, 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

Why? Tell me what's the problem.

CALLIMACO

Don't you see the problem? I told
Messer Nicia that you, he, Siro, and I
would get 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 with you,
he'll discover the trick.

LIGURIO

I see! You're right. But isn't there
a way around this?

CALLIMACO

I don't think so.

LIGURIO

Yes there is.

CALLIMACO

What is it?

LIGURIO

Let me think a bit.

CALLIMACO

You really had everything figured out,
didn't you? I'm really stuffed if you
have to start thinking at this point.

LIGURIO

I've got it.

CALLIMACO

What is it?

LIGURIO

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

CALLIMACO

How?

LIGURIO

We all have to disguise ourselves.

I'll dress the priest we'll change his voice, his face, 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 must I do?

LIGURIO

You wear a short cloak and come by his house with a lute in your hand, singing a little tune.

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 are going to distort your features. (Twist your face with your mouth open, gnash and grind your teeth, and close one eye...)

LIGURIO pulls faces. They both start pulling faces until they find the right one to disguise CALLIMACO.

LIGURIO

That's it! That's it! Remember that. I have a false nose at home; you can put that on too.

CALLIMACO

Okay, but what next?

LIGURIO

When you arrive at his block, we'll grab you and your lute; we'll spin you around, bring you inside, and put you in bed. You have to do the rest on your own.

CALLIMACO

But that's where the difficult part begins!

LIGURIO

That's your problem. Only make sure that you can get back in again.

CALLIMACO

What do you mean?

LIGURIO

That you should take her tonight. But before you leave, let her know who you are, explain the trick to her, show her your love, tell her how much you care for her, how, without any scandal whatever, you can be her lover, and how scandalous it would be to become your enemy. It's impossible that she won't see the light and that she will want tonight to be the last night.

CALLIMACO

You really believe this?

LIGURIO

I'm sure of it. But let's not lose any more time, it's already late. Call Siro, send the potion to Messer Nicia, and wait for me at home. I'll get the priest, disguise him, and bring him here. Then we'll find Messer Nicia and do whatever still has to be done.

CALLIMACO

Fine. Get going.

LIGURIO exits. SIRO enters through another doorway.

CALLIMACO

Siro.

SIRO

Sir?

CALLIMACO

Come here.

Take this silver goblet. Go to Messer

Nicia's and tell him that this is the medicine his wife has to take right after supper, the sooner she eats, the better. Tell him we'll meet him at eleven. And hurry up. And listen, if he wishes, wait and come back with him; if not, return here immediately after giving him the goblet. Do you understand?

SIRO Exits.

CALLIMACO starts dressing. He uses a lot of talc and aftershave. Music plays, he starts to dream.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

CALLIMACO and LUCREZIA in slow motion are playing hide and seek in a beautiful garden. A romantic cheesy piece of music plays. They are both dressed in white linen and laugh. The scene is in soft focus.

EXT. PIAZZA COMUNE- NIGHT

SIRO meets LIGURIO and TIMOTEO who is in disguise.

SIRO

Who's that, Ligurio?

LIGURIO

A very worthy man.

SIRO

Is he lame or just pretending?

LIGURIO

Mind your own business!

SIRO

(Gasps!)

LIGURIO

For Christ's sake, shut up or you'll ruin everything! Where's Callimaco?

CALLIMACO enters.

CALLIMACO

Here I am. Welcome to all of you. Did you give the goblet to Messer Nicia?

SIRO

Yes, sir.

CALLIMACO

What did he say?

SIRO

That he'll be at your service shortly.

CALLIMACO

Ligurio, have you got your disguises?

LIGURIO

Yes. Come on, let's do it in the bushes. (pause as he exits) Siro!

TIMOTEO

Is this Callimaco?

CALLIMACO

Yes, I am Callimaco, at your service. You have myself and my fortune at your disposal just 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 world.

CALLIMACO

You will not be sorry.

TIMOTEO

It is enough that you wish me well.

CALLIMACO

Fare thee well, Friar.

INT. NICIA AND LUCREZIA BEDROOM - NIGHT

LUCREZIA is washing herself. She is naked from the waist up. She brushes her hair then puts on

her night gown crosses herself and then gets into bed. Music underscores.

EXT. PIAZZA COMUNE/VIA PORCHEDDU - NIGHT

LIGURIO and SIRO enter disguised. They are wearing traditional Sardinian costumes.

LIGURIO

How do we look?

TIMOTEO

Unbelievable.

LIGURIO

The lawyer is late, let's go and get him. It's already past eleven.

They move toward NICIA'S house across the square as somebody exits from his door.

SIRO

Someone is coming.

LIGURIO

What the hell's he wearing?

As NICIA walks towards them.

LIGURIO

Good evening, counsellor!

NICIA is scared at the sight of the disguises.

NICIA

Oh, ah, O my ...

LIGURIO

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

NICIA

Oh, you're all here. If I hadn't recognized you, I'd have given you all a whack with my sword. Are you Ligurio? And you Siro? And this other is your master? Good.

LIGURIO

Yes, counsellor.

NICIA examines TIMOTEO's disguise.

NICIA

Let's take a look. Oh, he's 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 put what he thinks is a pebble in his mouth.

NICIA (CONT'D)

Ugh, phew! You dirty bastard!

LIGURIO

Oh, I'm sorry. I thought it was a little brown pebble.

NICIA

Ugh, yech, phew! Curse you. Doctor, aren't you going to say anything?

TIMOTEO

(Mumbling)

I'm 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!?

NICIA

Oh, very good! Oh, very good!

LIGURIO

We're losing time here. I'll be the general and draw up the army for the battle. At the right horn will be Doctor Callimaco, I'll be on the left, and between the horns will be Messer Nicia. Siro will be rear guard and will help anyone who falls back. The password will be Saint Cuckold. (Exit)

NICIA

Who is Saint Cuckold?

LIGURIO (OFF)

He is the most venerable saint in France.

A man appears playing a lute. He is singing the Sardinian 'Aubergine song' in Italian. It is subtitled on the screen.

LIGURIO

We'll set our ambush at this corner. Be quiet. 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

You go, Siro. You know what you have to do. Make inquiries, investigate, then return immediately and report to us.

SIRO

I'm on my way.

NICIA

We don't want to make a mistake here by picking up somebody who is weak or sick, or we'll have to repeat this operation tomorrow night.

LIGURIO

Don't worry. Siro can handle this. He's on his way back now. What did you find out, Siro?

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. Here he comes!

Enter CALLIMACO, disguised and singing. They all jump him. There is a big scuffle as they all roll around on the floor.

LIGURIO

Gag him and put that bag on his head!

They cover his head with a piece of sacking and spin him round.

TIMOTEO

Messer Nicia, I'm going home for a nap; my beard is killing me. And, if you won't be needing me, I will not be back tomorrow morning.

NICIA

Fine, Doctor, we don't need you; we can handle everything ourselves. Very good, very good.

They bundle CALLIMACO through the front gates of NICIA'S house.

EXT. OUTSIDE NICIA'S HOUSE - DAWN

A shot of the sunrise.

TIMOTEO

It's almost dawn and I'm just in time. There's a great commotion coming from Nicia's place. There they are. They're throwing their prisoner out of the door. The lovers must have enjoyed themselves to the last drop. I want to hear what they are saying, but they must not see me. Shh!

TIMOTEO hides in a doorway. NICIA and SIRO are throwing CALLIMACO out of the house.

CALLIMACO

(Obviously fake voice)

Don't hurt me!

LIGURIO

Don't be afraid, just be on your way. Give him another two turns so he won't know where he came from. Spin him around, Siro.

Go on, you wretch, beat it. If I hear you talking about this, I'll cut your throat!

CALLIMACO runs off.

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 hear from the wine cellar.

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...

INT. NICIA AND LUCREZIA'S BEDROOM -NIGHT (BLACK-SCREEN- RECORD ONLY SOUND)

NICIA

(To Callimaco)

Right you! Bend over.

(To Sostrata)

What can you see?

SOSTRATA

Nothing.

NICIA

What can you feel?

SOSTRATA

He has 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.

We hear muffled sounds of CALLIMACO being put into the bed.

NICIA (CONT'D)

Right lets wait downstairs.

SOSTRATA

Shouldn't we stay and watch?

NICIA

E, no.

They leave the bedroom.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GATES TO NICIA'S HOUSE - MORNING

NICIA

We left the room, locked the door, and went downstairs. In the morning, after enjoying his sauce. He finally got up, I called you, and we brought him outside.

LIGURIO

It's all gone perfectly 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.

Exit all but TIMOTEO. He emerges from the doorway.

TIMOTEO

(To camera)

I'm pleased with the way things went, considering how stupid that lawyer is, but the thing that pleased me most was what he said about my reward. I'd best not linger here since they will be looking for me at the church, where my services bring an even higher price.

EXT. PIAZZA COMUNE - MORNING

CALLIMACO and LIGURIO walk towards the cafe (which is shut) CALLIMACO is smiling.

CALLIMACO

As I told you, Ligurio my friend, at first I was rather uneasy but when I explained everything it was marvellous after sighing a few times she said:

CUT TO:

INT. NICIA AND LUCREZIA BEDROOM - NIGHT -
(FLASHBACK)

LUCREZIA and CALLIMACO are sitting up it bed.

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; you can come and go as you will, and we can be together constantly and without suspicion."

EXT. CAFE (SHUT) - EARLY MORNING

CALLIMACO

Hearing those words, I was about to die from happiness. I could not express even a small part of what I felt. I am the happiest and most satisfied man in the world, and if time or death does not take this happiness from me, I shall be more blessed than the blessed, more saintly than the saints.

LIGURIO

I'm happy if you are happy, and everything went just as I told you it would. So what do we do now?

CALLIMACO

To the church,
(exit LIGURIO)
...since I promised to be there to see Lucrezia, her mother, and Messer Nicia. Let's go.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHURCH/ STEPS- MORNING

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 do you mean by that?

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

Bona dies, Father!

TIMOTEO

Welcome, all of you. May Fortune smile
on all of you, and may God grant you a
handsome son, 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 and Ligurio enter.

CALLIMACO

God save you all!

NICIA

Doctor, give my wife your hand.

TIMOTEO

He'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 will become our close friend.

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 stay there whenever they like; they have no women to care for them, poor beasts.

CALLIMACO

I accept with pleasure, and I'll make use of it whenever my need arises.

TIMOTEO

Will I receive the monies for the alms?

NICIA

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

LIGURIO

Won't someone remember Siro?

NICIA

Let him ask. Whatever I have is his. Lucrezia, how much should we give the priest for cleansing you?

LUCREZIA

Give him fifty large ducats.

NICIA

Oh, my God!

TIMOTEO

Lady Sostrata, you seem to be younger today.

SOSTRATA

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

TIMOTEO

Let's all go into the church, and I'll say the required service. Afterward you can go off to eat at your leisure. And may God smile upon your endeavours. May his face always smile upon you and... Arseholes.

They all enter the church. The CAMERA PANS up the façade of the church.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATRE - DAY - MODERN DAY.

The actor is standing on stage.

ACTOR

And that as they say was that.

The audience applauds and the curtain closes. POV of the audience and POV of the actor.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Modern Day.

Everyone exits the church laughing and joking.

CUT TO:

EXT. A LARGE STREET CARNIVAL. MODERN DAY.

The actor leaves the theatre and walks into A LARGE STREET CARNIVAL. He meets the other

characters. Everyone is laughing and joking
joining in the festivities. We see NICIA
standing on the balcony of the theatre with the
mayor of Sassari.

As the credits roll we CUT TO the

EXT. STREET/ TWO DIGGERS SCENE

TWO DIGGERS who are speaking in Italian. They
are without subtitles and we only understand the
odd word.

THE END

The Mandrake Root

Draft 5

Adapted by Malachi Bogdanov
from the play La Mandragola
by Niccolo Machiavelli

