

The Mandrake Root

The Story

Adapted and directed by Malachi Bogdanov
from the play *La Mandragola* by Niccolò Machiavelli
written in 1518

The Mandrake Root was originally set in Florence, Italy in 1504 but the film relocates the story to Sassari in Sardinia, in a similar period. The action takes place over a 24 hour period and the comedy's main theme is the use of deceit. The plot revolves around each character thinking they are shrewder than the next. The movie begins like the play with a prologue, written by Machiavelli.



The story tells of Callimaco, a young Sardinian who returns from Paris and is overcome by the beauty of Lucrezia, the virtuous and beautiful wife of the rich and foolish lawyer Nicia. In his desire to bed her, he engages the services of a dubious fixer Ligurio who knows that Nicia and Lucrezia are desperate for a child.

With Ligurio's help, Callimaco masquerading as a doctor, convinces Nicia that the surest way for his wife to conceive is by taking a potion made from the Mandrake Root, with the dire warning that the first man to sleep with her will die within eight days. Nicia agrees to a plan to kidnap an unsuspecting man to sleep with his wife and thereby draw out the poison, but of course it is the disguised Callimaco who is kidnapped.

To persuade his virtuous wife to agree to the plan, Nicia enlists the help of her mother, a woman of questionable virtue, and her confessor, a priest of equally dubious morals. Ultimately Callimaco succeeds in sleeping with Lucrezia and confesses all. She decides that due to the stupidity of her husband and deception of her mother and confessor, she will continue to be his lover and 'what her husband wanted for her to have for one night, she now wants him to have forever'. The story concludes with everyone getting what they want and believing that each has outwitted the other.



Produced by European Drama Network
www.europeandrama.com