**THE MANDRAKE**by Machiavelli

I'd be surprised if there's a stupider person in the world than this worthless man. And yet look how Fortune has favored him! He's disgustingly rich. His wife is ravishing; she's elegant; she's smart. She's clever enough to rule a kingdom, as a matter of fact; and instead, she's the wife of a fool. That's why I really hate that old proverb, "God makes men and women in a heap, and they sort themselves into sweet little pairs." God-when I think how often I've seen really good men getting married to pigs, while the intelligent women give themselves willingly to maniacs and clowns…All the same, sometime I get such exquisite pleasure out of listening to the man talk-it's just so perfect, I really enjoy it-you know Lord Nicia, my friend. He's a very pinched and petty little man, and he's afraid to leave the city. But I inspired him a bit. He ended up saying that he'd do what I think best. So we could certainly get him to one of those resorts, if you still like that plan. But you know-I'm really no longer so certain that that our plan would best serve our interests. Well-I'm not quite sure. It's a feeling I have. You see, people of every kind come to these resorts. What if someone showed up there to whom this strikingly delicious -looking girl seemed just as exciting as she does to you?-I mean, someone let's say with a lot more money, or some devastating, irresistible charm-I mean, I don't know. But there's always that danger in a place like that-you wouldn't want to go through all that trouble just to benefit some other chap, if you see what I mean. Callimaco-please-please don't doubt me, Callimaco! Even if this situation should turn out not to have in any way the financial benefit for me that I believe it will have and certainly hope it will have, nonetheless there still would be a reason to trust me, you see, because-I feel we're people of the same kind, the same blood, Callimaco. Yes, my blood flows together with your, it really does, and my desire for you to achieve your chosen prize is, truly, almost as great as your own could ever be. -But let's not discuss this anymore. The professor has asked me to find him a doctor in order to determine which bath he ought to go to, and this provides us with a certain opportunity. But you must allow yourself to be guided by me. Believe me-I know what I'm doing. You must be that doctor. You only have to say that you've studied and practiced exclusively in Paris. The professor will certainly believe you if you behave like an educated man and manage to address him a few words in Latin.