



The Fat Woodworker

Antonio Manetti

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"The Fat Woodworker" is a delightful story in the tradition of the Italian Renaissance beffe, stories of practical, often cruel jokes. It is the tale of a prank engineered by the great Renaissance architect, Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446), played upon an unsuspecting (and perhaps less-than-brilliant) friend and woodworker named Manetto, in reprisal for the woodworker's social slight. While the prank is indeed cruel, it is so ingenious, and the victim is so comical, that the reader soon forgets the architect's - and the author's - malice and settles in for a delightful turn as part of the unfolding conspiracy set in motion by Brunelleschi's circle of friends. The tale brings the reader into the social world of Florence's craft- and tradespeople, its lawyers and judges, artists, architects and intellectuals and gives a vibrant sense of the city's close-knit social fabric, its packed streets and busy shops and offices. It is as much a portrait of the Renaissance city as of one very befuddled and delightful woodworker. Robert and Valerie Martone provide a solid contemporary translation that carries across the ironic distance of the original. They include an introduction to the story, its author and genre, and to the social and intellectual world of Brunelleschi and Renaissance Florence. Illustrated, introduction, bibliography.

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