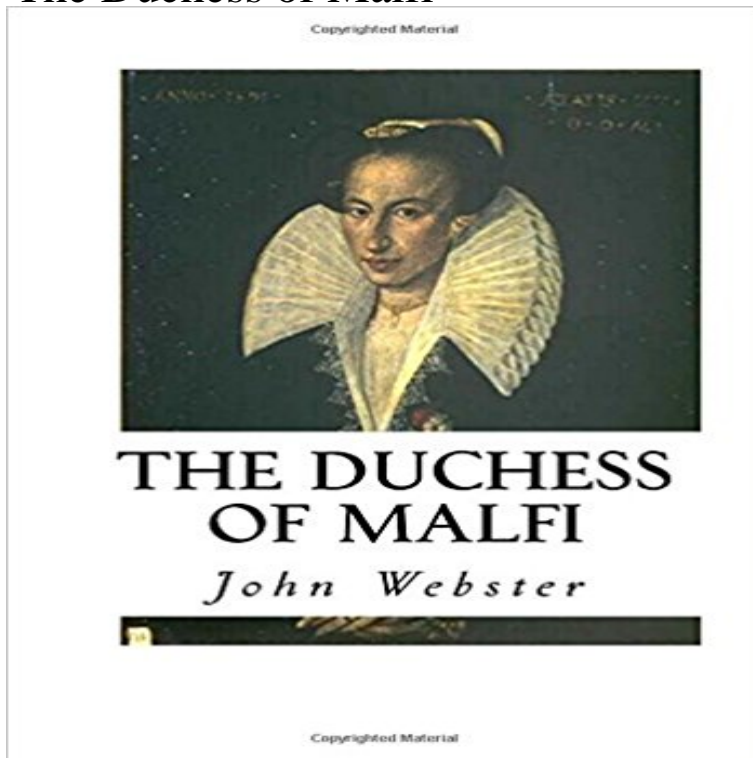


The Duchess of Malfi



The Duchess of Malfi A Macabre, Tragic Play by John Webster The Duchess of Malfi (originally published as The Tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy) is a macabre, tragic play written by the English dramatist John Webster in 1612/13. It was first performed privately at the Blackfriars Theatre, then before a more general audience at The Globe, in 1613/14. Published in 1623, the play is loosely based on events that occurred between about 1508 and 1513. The Duchess was Giovanna d'Aragona, Duchess of Amalfi (d. 1511), whose father, Enrico d'Aragona, Marquis of Gerace, was an illegitimate son of Ferdinand I of Naples. As in the play, she secretly married Antonio Beccadelli di Bologna after the death of her first husband Alfonso I Piccolomini, Duke of Amalfi. The play begins as a love story, with a Duchess who marries beneath her class, and ends as a nightmarish tragedy as her two brothers exact their revenge, destroying themselves in the process. Jacobean drama continued the trend of stage violence and horror set by Elizabethan tragedy, under the influence of Seneca. The complexity of some of its characters, particularly Bosola and the Duchess, plus Webster's poetic language, ensure the play is often considered among the greatest tragedies of English renaissance drama.

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