



The Pope's Rhinoceros

Lawrence Norfolk

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The Pope's Rhinoceros is a vivid, antic, and picaresque novel spun around one of history's most bizarre chapters: the sixteenth-century attempt to procure a rhinoceros as a bribe for Pope Leo X. In February 1516, a Portuguese ship sank off the coast of Italy. The Nostra Senora de Ajuda had sailed fourteen thousand miles from the Indian kingdom of Gujarat. Her mission: to bribe the "pleasure-loving Pope" into favoring expansionist Portugal over her rival Spain with the most exotic and least likely of gifts -- a living rhinoceros. Moving from the herring colonies of the Baltic Sea to the West African rain forest, with a cast of characters including an order of reclusive monks and Rome's corrupt cardinals, courtesans, ambassadors, and nobles, The Pope's Rhinoceros is at once a fantastic adventure tale and a portrait of an age rushing headlong to its crisis.

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