

The Court of Capricorn

Christopher Range

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A group of powerful figures based on the Zodiac squabble, debate, love, and kill each other while deciding the fate of humanity in Christopher Range's play *Court of Capricorn*.

Capricorn, Lord of the Southern Realm of Earth, has invited the rulers of the Eastern, Western, and Northern realms to his court for their first meeting in a long time. Cancer, Libra, and Aries arrive with their children and aides. A series of interactions full of intrigue, emotion, and action ensue. Tensions are heightened following a scene featuring Virgo, Capricorn's daughter, and a conflict escalates between Capricorn and Aries, hinging on their role in their world and that of humans.

The play consists of four acts that include a compelling mix of romance, philosophy, humor, sword fighting, mystery, and magic. The dialogue is excellent and minimizes lengthy exposition; while some characters speak in a high, formal style, modern slang is also mixed in, making the conversations unpredictable and dynamic. Stage directions help to fill in the gaps. Each of the twelve characters is distinguished in terms of their appearance, and by attributes including their arrogance, aggression, or youth.

The play is a fascinating melange of influences and homages: the Zodiac Aries shares characteristics with the Greek god Ares and is called "God of War," while Cancer is compared to Aphrodite. When Cancer's child is taken to the wilderness, there are echoes of Moses and references to Genesis, but the book also includes nods to *Star Wars*, including Biggs and Wedge meeting Sagittarius on the road, talk of the child "destined to bring balance," and of not falling into the "dark-side." Other playful references and wordplays incorporate Shakespeare, rock music, and Dungeons and Dragons. There are some missteps, though: the pop culture references are pervasive to the point of being distracting, and they draw attention away from the play's central, dramatic events. Some strange word choices slow the book's rhythm, too, and obscure its meanings.

Anchored by its steady exploration of the foibles and failings of its characters, and perhaps more so by their displays of nobility and love, the book's satisfying resolution includes an alternate origin story for modern humanity. Packed with cultural references, *Court of Capricorn* is a mighty play that draws upon myths and traditions well.

PETER DABBENE (July 24, 2020)

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