



## The Golden Ass

*Gaius Julius Caesar (100 BC - 44 BC)*

|           |                                     |          |                    |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| Read by:  | Multiple readers                    | Format:  | MP3 CD in DVD case |
| Length:   | 9 hours 51 minutes                  | Catalog: | DB-1244            |
| Language: | English                             | UPC:     | 0701236969641      |
| Style:    | Collaborative                       | MSLP:    | \$9.99             |
| Genre:    | Classics, Fiction, Humorous Fiction |          |                    |

*The Metamorphosis of Apuleius*, which has come to be called *The Golden Ass*, the name given it by St. Augustine, is the only novel written in Latin from the time of ancient Rome to have survived intact. It tells the story of a young man fascinated by magic who accidentally transforms himself into an ass while performing a spell intended to transform himself into a bird. This leads, of course, to a long journey, full of tales of trials and tribulations, before his eventual rescue and salvation by the goddess Isis. Lucius' lot is often cast with thieves, murderers, slaves, and wretched freemen, and the book is the only surviving work from antiquity to depict the wretched conditions of the lower classes. The style is innovative, mannerly, and exuberant,

and the writing imaginative, witty, and sexually frank, unlike the more formal and sedate Latin we get in the school-room. *The Golden Ass* is a picaresque novel, with frequent inset stories, some interlocking with the plot, and others independent of it. The longest of these is the tale of Cupid and Psyche, its first appearance in Western literature. As such, the book is a precursor to works by Rabelais, Boccaccio, Cervantes, Chaucer, Voltaire and Defoe, among others.

**Apuleius** (c. 124 – c. 170 AD), also known as Lucius Apuleius Madaurensis, was a writer, philosopher, and rhetorician best known for his bawdy picaresque novel *Metamorphosis, or, The Golden Ass*. He was born in Madauros, a colonia or Roman outpost in Numidia on the North African coast, now Algeria. His father was a well-to-do provincial magistrate whose legacy enabled his son to study in Carthage and Athens before journeying to Rome to study Latin rhetoric. He was an initiate in several Greco-Roman religious schools, including the Dionysian Mysteries, and was a priest of Asclepius, god of medicine, and later a priest of Carthage. He traveled extensively North Africa and Asia Minor after his time in Rome. While in Alexandria he was encouraged to marry the mother of a former schoolmate, a wealthy widow. He was subsequently charged by the father-in-law of his schoolmate with seducing the widow by means of charms and magic spells, a ridiculous case that resulted in Apuleius' spirited and triumphant defense known as the *Apologia*, which dates from 158/159 AD and is still read today. While little is known of his life thereafter, his literary output was prolific, and his occasional public speeches were well-attended. He was in charge of gladiatorial contests and wild beast events in Carthage. Statues were erected in his honor in Carthage and elsewhere after his death, believed to have been as late as 180 or 190 AD.