

A Phlatulent Phable!

Synopsis for a Serio-Comic Scenario

Our Author has little to commend himself save for a remorseless compulsion to invent humorous verse. His desperate search for rhymes leads him to spend more and more of his creative hours in his favourite drinking establishments scattered around London. It is clear that he is what the sturdy William Cobbett called a ‘university-bred man’, a distressing condition that almost sends him to his ruin, and certainly ‘mother’s ruin’! He lives in a state of deprivation in a basement flat in Chelsea, leased from the iniquitous Bunn family by the widow of Ivor Hunch, the political forecaster, who has come to grief. Our Author’s unrequited passion for his landlady only adds to his pathetic state of mind. He finds himself in even more of a pickle than his own ‘Upside-Down Man’! But will he succeed in turning himself into a ‘Right-Side-Up Man’ in the end?

Our Printer, Ivor Grudge, is desperate to get Our Author’s book ready for the Christmas trade. He is driven to extremes by Our Author’s erratic life-style and his periodic uncontrollable outbursts of ‘comic-rhyme disease’. He lives on the top floor of the very same house in which Our Author resides, but, as they have quite separate front doors, they never meet — unless at the Editor’s office. In the course of time, he is bound to catch the humour bug and be laid low.

Our (Sole) Reader is the last of his race, since the rest have taken to their beds, suffering from a sore case of ‘comic cuts’! He bravely carries on because he has a secret admiration for Our Author’s genius.

Our Editors, whose untimely ends are told in a series of *Fatal Fables*, sink helplessly beneath a cloud of comic miasma.

Our Cleaning Lady, Mrs. Rhoda Bristle-Broome, has an extensive family mostly living on the criminal fringe. Her ‘bruvver’ is fond of playing illegal smuggling games on an international scale. Her ‘muvver’s bruvver’, ‘Arfer’ Bunn, in the guise of a pastry-cook, is something big in the mafia. As Rhoda is frequently seen riding her broom through the corridors of power, she is referred to by the staff as ‘that nosy old witch from Bethnal Green’. She has, however, an abiding admiration for Our Author’s genius, and constantly tries to persuade him to write ‘serious stuff’!

Our Publisher wisely reigns from a position of complete anonymity. Concerned rather with general policy than the minor peccadilloes perpetrated by Our Author, he nervously steers clear of the ‘humour bug’ until the final pages, when he suffers from a miserable bout of *la grippe comique*, the deleterious effects of which cause him to cobble a wedding into rhyming couplets for *The Sunday Peep-All*. He maintains, throughout, an insane belief, in common with the Cleaning Lady, that this comic verse lark is really a serious business after all, and that Our Author is some sort of cranky genius in the *genre*.

Peevish Printer’s Sore Foot-note

Doo let’s get on! I havant gott al day, you kno! My landlady’s getting my super erly tenite. She duzn’t like to be kopt waiting! What is moor, she puts the lites out at ten and licks the bathroom door to save the hot woughter. I’ve a hunch she’s going to put the wrent up two! I only hope I don’t get annuther of my gruggies and call her bluff! The only way round it is to mary the wooman and live wrent phree!

P.S. I haven’t had time to poof-read the last paraграф. I can’t wait to reed about the ranting rhino and the skwirmy ‘thing’ at the foot of the bed!