

## Phlegm's Journey!

act i !

"You're a complete waste of space!"

"Sorry," replied Phlegm in a blanched, sheepish tone, deeming it best not to antagonise his mother lest her present good humour should wane.

"You'll never amount to anything, you pathetic piece of dribblepiss."

"I know."

His mother paused and pursed her serpentine lips, a trickle of venomous saliva oozing slowly from the corner of her crooked mouth. She resumed,

"Your father wrote you this letter of recommendation. You're to take it to the florist in the city and see if you can get an apprenticeship; it's all you're fit for."

She proffered the letter with a sneer: Phlegm gingerly prised it from her talon-like grasp and placed it in his pocket.

"And don't dare do anything half-arsed like trying to eat it or use it as toilet paper: I know you. I just hope you appreciate how much effort it took your father to find something nice to write about you. He'd give you the letter himself, incidentally, but he's busy skinning the cow."

"That's OK."

"Go away."

"Righto. Pip pip."

"Yes."

Phlegm stepped outside and gulped in the fresh evening air, its scent a pungent and heady mix of lavender and cut grass, tinged with the scent of blood, tantalising and exhilarating, wafting by from the garden. Behind him he heard the scraping of a satisfied bolt drawing shut; and from his father's vicinity droned a distressed moo, which then ceased abruptly. Phlegm strolled down the garden path towards the lane, threading his way amongst the russet-tinted boulders strewn along its course. He paused to hop airily over the corpse by the gate and continued ebulliently along the lane for another twenty seconds or so until he reached the edge of the hamlet, where he was greeted by the vicar.

"Good morning, young Phlegm."

"What ho, vicar!"

"Off to seek your fortune in the big city?"

Phlegm nodded vigorously, a look of constipated glee disfiguring his countenance.

"Well, good luck. I wish I had something to give you, by way of a keepsake..." He patted his pockets pensively, his rather ugly features knotted in consternation, then smiled. "Ahh. Here you are, young Phlegm."

Phlegm regarded the potato, deeply intrigued. "Is it magical?" he asked eagerly.

The vicar, a simple man, had clearly not anticipated this line of interrogation. "Erm, not...not as such, no. Not exactly 'magical' per se..." He brightened, feeling that a little inventive encouragement could do no harm. "However, the sorcerer who bestowed it upon me did mention that it would bring good fortune to whomsoever should bear it."

"Gosh! Thanks, vicar!" Phlegm pocketed the potato and trotted affably off along the path towards the city. The vicar waved, following him with a gaze of paternal bemusement.

Act ii !

Phlegm bounded into the city two days later, his buoyant spirits but slightly dampened by the trifling **unpleasantries** which he had encountered en route. Phlegm you see, had been born with the sort of face that one simply couldn't forbear to forcibly rearrange; the inevitable upshot was, of course, that whenever he had What **Ho'd** at the lumbering and less articulate elements of the peasantry, their primal instincts had brooked no civilised protest of restraint, but insisted that Phlegm's incisors should be made to protrude in a most unflattering fashion from the back of his silly little face.

And so it was, as noted, a surprisingly unruffled Phlegm that sauntered along the thronging cockroach warrens of the city. He gawped in astonished admiration at the enormity of the buildings, his mouth agape in awe and his tongue lolling **flaccidly** like a plump, pink slug. Phlegm was also pleasantly surprised at the hospitable amicability of some of the local businesswomen, who stationed themselves on comers so as to welcome as many people as possible.

Eventually he made his way to the bustling city square, and stopped. Having made it thus far, he was keen to scurry off and seek his fortune as a florist and would have done so promptly and briskly had he, in fact, known what a florist was. There had never been a florist in Phlegm's hamlet, and his hamlet was as far as Phlegm had previously travelled. Nor could he have **learned** what a florist was from books, since he had not been encouraged to read: on the rare occasions when he had tentatively ventured the proposal of acquiring some reading material, his mother had kicked him cursorily then replied "Don't be such a greedy little **pigshit**. Paper's for burning cows with."

Phlegm resolved, therefore, to seek assistance, and entered into a nearby tavern with a view to doing so.

It proved to be a cramped, dingy establishment, such as an optimist might term "rustic", and staffed by a burly, but cheerful, barman who sported a truly repugnant aroma of drudging sweat and rat urine and who looked, in short, as though his family **brain cell** was under a mattress for safekeeping.

"Hallo," said Phlegm. "My name's Phlegm."

"Phlegm?" rejoined the barman incredulously.

"Phlegm." affirmed Phlegm.

"Well, you'll probably be wanting a drink of **cough-ee**, then. **Hur hur hur.**"

The surrounding gaggle of inebriates chorused the chuckle.

"**Um**, no. Actually, I was wondering if you could tell me 'a' what a florist might be and 'b' if one could be found nearby."

"Well, Phlegm, a florist is someone who sells flowers, and there just happens to be one right next door to this fine alehouse. Quite a spot of luck for you, I'd say."

"Oh of course it is, sir: I've got a potato," Phlegm replied earnestly. He thanked the barman and left.

Finale !

This crisis of uncertainty resolved, Phlegm stepped timidly into the florist's shop and was met by the sight of a smallish man with delicate features and excessively blonde hair. Phlegm cleared his throat (haha!)

"Excuse me, sir. I'm Phlegm and I was hoping that you might be needing an apprentice and that, if you'd be so kind, you might allow me to be that apprentice. My mother says it's all I'm fit for. Oh, and I also have this letter of recommendation from my father."

"Oh yeah, thooper, fantathtic. Wow, yeah, I wath jutht looking for an apprentith, tho u'll do jutht fine. You can thtart thtraight away."

"Golly! The potato really did bring me luck!"

And Phlegm and the floritht lived happily ever after...

