

The Perfect Likeness



Earl was giddy with anticipation as he entered Ye Olde Head Shoppe. The city had commissioned Bernice, the shoppe's chief sculptor, to carve a bust of Earl in appreciation of his 24 years of service in the Sewer Department. (That's 24 perfect attendance *and* vacation-free years, after all!) It was to be displayed in the city's prestigious Hall of Sewagery alongside the animatronic finger puppets of the movers and shakers of the sewer industry. But when Bernice unveiled the bust, Earl's heart sank. It didn't look at all like him! The nose was too big, as was the ear – and why only one ear? Earl had a full mop of hair, but the sculpture's pate was as smooth as a Cuban cucumber. Worst of all, though, was the dour expression on the carving's face. It was entirely out of character with Earl's cheery disposition! "You like?" Bernice asked in her nearly impenetrable Flemish accent as she chucked the figure on the chin. "Um, it's different, that's for sure," Earl said, not wanting to offend her. Just then, Mayor Beezer swept into the room accompanied by an entourage of reporters. "Here it is, boys," he crowed, gesturing at the sculpture. "It's that bust I was tellin' ya about." The photographers dutifully snapped its picture. "And, look who's here!" gushed the mayor as he spotted Earl. "Why, it's Carl, right? Boys, here's the man of the hour. Carl, why doncha pose by your bust. Say, are they two peas in a pod, or what?!" As the flashbulbs went off, the oddest thing happened. Earl's countenance began to change. His nose swelled. So did his ears; then one of them dropped off. His eyes retracted into their sockets, giving him a hooded look. But when his hair abruptly fell out, his mood soured, and he couldn't help but scowl. "Ya see, boys?" exclaimed the mayor. "A *perfect* likeness!"