

## UP HERE, DOWN THERE

By Abraham McNeil Adams

*A simple park bench. The sun is shining and there are the sounds of gulls and perhaps the occasional crash of a wave. It is extremely pleasant. A man, WILLIAM, enters eating an ice cream cone. He is dressed very smartly in a cream or powder blue suit with bright yellow tie and tan loafers. He is meticulous in the way he eats, careful not to get any ice cream on his suit or the park bench where he sits.*

*Immediately adjacent to the park bench is a large storm drain cut into the curb. It should be large enough for the actor, CARL, to be seen.*

*After a few moments of WILLIAM enjoying his ice cream and taking in the beauty of the moment, CARL appears inside the storm drain. It is okay if the audience doesn't immediately register his presence. CARL watches WILLIAM eating for a bit and then:*

CARL           Is it good?

WILLIAM       Somebody there?

CARL           Down here.

WILLIAM       Down where?

CARL           The storm drain. Right next to where you are sitting.

WILLIAM       Good heavens! You're down there.

CARL           And you're up there.

WILLIAM       The lower floor.

CARL           It's my home.

WILLIAM       Fabulous.

CARL           *(re: the ice cream)* Is it good?

WILLIAM       The ice cream? Delicious.

CARL           I'm having mushroom salad.

WILLIAM       I beg your pardon?

CARL           Fresh mushrooms? Tossed in vinegar. Delicious.

WILLIAM       You're joking.

CARL           I love your suit. It's festive.

WILLIAM Oh, thanks! Its my birthday suit.

CARL You were born in that?

WILLIAM Don't be silly. I wanted to treat myself to something nice, on my birthday.

CARL Todays' my birthday too.

WILLIAM Well, happy birthday.

CARL I wore my birthday suit today too. Letting myself take in the sunlight.

*At this point, we should be aware that CARL is completely naked.*

WILLIAM Good heavens!

CARL Can I have a lick of your ice cream?

WILLIAM Is that your nipple?

CARL Yeah, I'm self conscious about them cuz they are so tiny.

WILLIAM Nudity is disgusting!

CARL Why? Bodies are the present we keep our whole lives. So how about a lick? I'll give you a bit of my mushroom salad.

WILLIAM You can keep your disgusting body and foul mushroom salad.

CARL Not a fowl salad, I'm a vegetarian.

WILLIAM How can you live like that?

CARL So that's a no on the ice cream then?

WILLIAM And your mushroom salad looks disgusting.

CARL How would you know, you haven't even tried it.

WILLIAM I don't need to try it, I can see it with my eyes.

CARL The eyes can be deceived.

WILLIAM Put some clothes on.

CARL No thanks. I like being free of clothing.

WILLIAM I can't enjoy my ice cream when I know there is a naked man in the sewer eating fungus.

CARL Really? Cuz I'm having a fabulous time watching you in your birthday suit.

WILLIAM Must I call the authorities?

CARL Hey man, I'm just living my life, asking for a lick of ice cream.

WILLIAM You will not be licking anything of mine anytime soon.

CARL That's too bad.

WILLIAM This park has really gone down hill.

CARL I'm sorry?

WILLIAM You people down there.

CARL What do you mean by that?

WILLIAM There's more of you now. A man can't enjoy his ice cream without all of this happening.

CARL And that's a bad thing?

WILLIAM I just don't understand how you can live down there like that.

CARL It's what I know.

WILLIAM There are perfectly fine ways of living up here!

CARL Up there is cool and all but I couldn't deal with the birthday suits.

WILLIAM You said you liked my birthday suit.

CARL I mean, sure, but I wouldn't like, wanna wear one. Looks itchy.

WILLIAM Well you're naked and filthy.

CARL I am naked, but I'm not filthy.

WILLIAM I can *see* that its all filthy down there.

CARL Your ice cream is melting.

WILLIAM (*noticing the drips and drops*) Dammit!

CARL Got a little on your suit.

WILLIAM Where?

CARL All down the cuff there.

WILLIAM Oh, blast!

CARL Here, have a wet one.

WILLIAM A wet what?

CARL A wet one, they're like little nappys, only wet.

WILLIAM I am not taking anything called a wet one from a naked man in the sewer.

CARL They're good for cleaning.

WILLIAM Cleaning what?

CARL Sticky situations.

WILLIAM I'm good, thank you.

CARL But your ice cream?

WILLIAM I'll wait and take my suit to the cleaners, thank you.

CARL You should take a wet one, you don't want that stain to set.

WILLIAM I am not taking your "wet-one."

CARL You know, you should come down here sometime.

WILLIAM Good God, no.

CARL I think you'd like it. I could show you the massive culverts and the Falls of Confluence where all the drains meet and form this huge spray of greens and oranges or the hall of mushrooms where you can pick as many as you like and you could make your own salad and I'll show you a place where we can watch the planes from the airport take off. We'd get so close that the roar of their engines will make your teeth rattle. You gotta look through a grate but the view is still awesome. Sure you don't want any mushroom salad?

WILLIAM This ice cream is all over the cuff!

CARL Gosh, that is awful.

WILLIAM Thanks to you.

CARL To me?

WILLIAM You distracted me.

CARL I only asked you if I could have a lick.

WILLIAM     And I said no.

CARL         But why?

WILLIAM     Because you're down there!

CARL         But I offered you a bite of my mushroom salad.

WILLIAM     I don't want anything from you people down there, I've got all I need up here.

CARL         How can you hate something you've never tried?

WILLIAM     Because I can see that I won't like it.

CARL         You people up there are just nuts.

WILLIAM     Excuse me, what did you say?

CARL         I said you're nuts.

WILLIAM     No, you said "you people".

CARL         What?

WILLIAM     You're a...a... floorist!

CARL         A what?

WILLIAM     You're prejudiced because I'm up here.

CARL         No, I'm not.

WILLIAM     You just said "you people." (*Shouting as if to others offstage*) He just said "You People!"

CARL         I mean, I did, but I meant like you in particular.

WILLIAM     He's a floorist!

CARL         I'm not sure that means what you think it means.

WILLIAM     It means you think I'm inferior because I live up here. On this floor.

CARL         Oh! F-l-o-o-r-ist. I was super confused for a second. Uh, yeah, no, not a "floorist".

WILLIAM     You and your tiny disgusting dirty tiny nipples and fungus salad.

CARL         Not dirty, I use wet ones.

WILLIAM Ugh! Their probably just moist toilet paper!

CARL I just wanted a lick of your ice cream.

WILLIAM You people deserve to be down there.

CARL Are you sure you don't want a wet one? I don't want that stain on your sleeve to set.

WILLIAM Get away, stay down there where you belong! Police! Police! This floorist is attacking me with his wet things, fungus, and nipples! Help! Help me!

*A few beats of the pleasant sounds from the day:*

CARL Gosh, what a beautiful day.

**END OF PLAY**