

Whorehouse of Whorrors!

PROLOGUE.

The sounds of the Hudson River: Lapping water, distant foghorns, a gull or two.

We hear the voice of our narrator, Nellie.

NELLIE.

New York City. 1864.

Every day the Hudson tosses foreigners on our shores like a bucket of shite out its window. On the muddy streets, the overflowin' tenements and empty churches climb on top of one another, clamorin' for prosperity. I dunno, but the only difference *I* ever knew between a church an' any other building was that churches burned faster.

Sounds accompany this narration. Horses clip-clopping in the streets. Babies crying. A church bell.

But to find out why them pews is always empty or why them babies are crying for their daddy's, you only have to go to one place, straight on down the Hudson. All the way down to Nellie's Knocking Knees.

The sound of doors creaking open. An explosion of life - someone on the piano, raucous singing and general saloonery.

For a drink, a song and a little upstairs amusement, nobody does it better or classier than house maven, matriarch, and all around queen o' the Knocking Knees, Nellie O'Dell. And just because I happen to *be* Nellie O'Dell doesn't mean I'm puffin' my chest. Just ask any fella between 16 and the grave an' they'll tell you the same. Ain't nothing holier than walking up them wooden stairs to catch a little glimpse of heaven.

WOMAN'S VOICE.

Right this way, sweetheart.

The sounds of two sets of feet walking up the wooden stairs. A door opens.

NELLIE.

Makes you wonder why anyone bothers to ring that church bell at all.

The door shuts. Maybe some Eastern music?

Up in them rooms, s'like being in one o them picture books 'bout the Orient, with them soft pillows and clouds of that sweet sweet opium smoke creepin' all up an' over ya like a cat's tail.

The sound of water being poured into a washbasin.

And maybe it's the room's natural *heat*, but damn if that washbasin ain't always filled with warmest, clearest water you could ever hope to get wet in before goin' back out into the stink...

WOMAN'S VOICE.

Just give me a second to wash my- Hey! Let go of me! What are you doin'?' *What are you- ?*

Suddenly in the background we hear the sound of a struggle as a woman's head is held under water.

NELLIE.

Yessir. Men know better than to call me or any of my girls a dirty whore. We'll cut you just for thinking it in the abstract.

The sound of a gasp as the woman escapes from the basin,

WOMAN'S VOICE.

You no good murderin'...!

Sound of a scratch to the face.

MAN'S VOICE.

Ow, my face!

Gonna take more than your nails to save you, Nell.

WOMAN'S VOICE.

Help! He's tryin' to kill me! He's tryin to-

Sound of Nellie's head being dunked back underwater.

NELLIE.

I always demand Nellie O'Dell's girls be the cleanest, healthiest, nicest smellin' citizens in all a New York City, hell, maybe even the *Union*.

The thrashing and struggling stop. A dripping sound.

MAN'S VOICE.

Sorry Nellie. Nothin' personal.

NELLIE.

Well. Looks like I got cleaned up somethin' fierce.

Music!

ANNOUNCER.

Whorehouse....OF HORRORS!!!

SCENE ONE.

Back in the room. We hear the distant sounds of the bar downstairs. The sound of a window opening with a grunt.

NELLIE.

The men tend to like the window open when they're upstairs at my place. It's a drunken stumble away from the water, and the sound of a foghorn always seems to help in calmين' their nerves.

A distant foghorn. We hear grunts as Nellie's murderer struggles to lift her body.

MAN'S VOICE.

Jesus, Nell. I know some fellas like em big but this is ridiculous. Come on. Out the window.

NELLIE.

Sometimes the men get a little rough with me and the girls. Comes with the job, I always tell em. Other times, you get a real no good bum who can't get off without gettin' a little blood on his hands. An more often than not, the blood ain't his.

MAN'S VOICE.

Gonna be a real soft landing Nell, don't you worry.

The sound of Nellie's body being pushed out the window, followed by the distant clatter of whatever garbage and bottles she lands on. A cat screeches.

MAN'S VOICE.

You got lucky, cat!

NELLIE.

Well meet *Mister* No Good Bum. Esquire.

The sound of quick steps to the door, which flies open. Noise from the bar comes back. Henry rushes down the stairs.

NELLIE.

He ain't the first guy pushed a body out the back window before. Trouble is ain't nobody ever made it to the front door after they done the push-

MOLLY.

Well well if it isn't Hangdog Henry! Where you going in such a hurry, sweetie?

HENRY.

Hey there Molly. Uhh, you seen Nellie anywhere?

MOLLY.

Well, I thought she was upstairs with you.

HENRY.

She said she'd be right up. I been waiting-

MOLLY.

Heey, *Henry*. Your *face*. It's...bleeding. *Real bad*.

HENRY.

Is it? Oh...it is.

MOLLY.

Yeah, what, did you get clawed by some alley cat or something, sweetie? I mean, geez *Louise*.

LOUISE.

(a gruff man's voice)

What's up dollface?

MOLLY.

Not you Louise, sorry.

LOUISE.

(walking away)

No problem dollface.

HENRY.

I was...shaving. Nellie likes me better that way.

MOLLY.

Oh! You know, I'm the same way. Some of these girls think a little facial hair's nice, like they're makin' it with the President or somethin', but *personally*-

HENRY.

Yes, well if you see her Molly, tell her I'm gone and that next time she owes me a Left Handed Lincoln *on the house*.

Henry pushes through the crowd.

We hear Molly as he goes.

MOLLY.

Take care of that pretty face now!

NELLIE.

Like I said, ain't *nobody* made it out the front-

BOSS TWEED.

Harry my boy!

HENRY.

Ah! Good evening, Mr. Tweed.

BOSS TWEED.

Please Harry, call me Boss.

HENRY.

And call me *Henry*...Boss.

BOSS TWEED.

Right then.

(conspiratorial)

Say, word around Tammany Hall is you're a man of loose morals who can take care of a mess quietly, if asked nicely.

HENRY.

A please and some change don't hurt nobody.

BOSS TWEED.

Ahahahahaha! Very good, Harry! Very good! Well if I may inquire –

HENRY.

(his voice getting distant as he walks away)

If you'll excuse me Boss, but my wife is sick with [*mumbles*], and I'm in a hurry to get her some [*mumbles*]

The sound of the wooden doors opening and closing as Henry leaves.

BOSS TWEED.

To be continued, Harry!

(to himself)

Interesting man. Such an honest face.

(to the room)

Whore, please!

Music!

SCENE TWO.

Behind the whorehouse. The sound of a wild mutt chewing on something. Henry's footsteps approach.

HENRY.

Hey! Hey! Shoo mutt! Shoo!

The dog growls.

HENRY.

Oh yeah? See this knife?

The sound of a blade being pulled out.

Why don't you chew on *this* you no good little-

He swipes, cuts the dogs face. The dog whimpers and runs off.

HENRY.

(struggling, lifting Nellie's body)

Well you hate to see that Nellie. And such a pretty face. I never bit that hard did I? Come on now, let's get your hand round my shoulder and go for a little stroll down to the river. Whaddya say?

Two drunks spill out from the back.

DRUNK #1

Just need some fresh air is all. Hot as the Dickens in there.

DRUNK #2.

Hot as the Dickens? You just make that up?

DRUNK #1

Yeah, I think I did.

DRUNK #2

(to Henry)

Hey fella, you alright? You're girl don't look so hot.

DRUNK #1

Yeah, an I thought *I* was pissed.

HENRY

(walking away from them)

She's fine. Just needs some fresh air. Gonna go for a walk down by the river. Ain't that right, honey?

(does a bad female voice)

Yes, why a walk by the river sounds lovely!

DRUNK #1

(more distant)

Well be careful you don't fall in!

DRUNK #2

(also distant)

Lot of bodies in that river!

DRUNK #1

An' he don't mean the kind that can swim!

HENRY.

(calling back to them)

Oh we'll be careful!

(then quietly)

Won't we, Nellie!

He chuckles, mischievously, but then...

HENRY

Ow, my face!

Music!

SCENE THREE.

A splash. The sound of Nellie's body sinking. A distant foghorn.

He takes a deep breath.

HENRY.

Have a nice swim, Nell. Careful you don't catch anything. That water's *infested*.

Ahh, cleverness. Well, better get a move on.

Starts walking, whistling. Quickly stops.

Ow my face! Her nails must have dug deeper than I thought...I can't even *whistle!* Geez Louise.

LOUISE.

(so so distant)

My *ears* are burnin'!

HENRY.

That's okay. A bit of bandage, a drop of alcohol, and I'll be as good as new. And besides, what's a little scar in memory of sweet sweet Nellie O'Dell.

Music!

SCENE FOUR.

At Henry's house.

Henry opens the door, and is greeted by his two adorable children. The actors playing them should really up the adorability factor.

ADORABLE CHILDREN.

Daddy!!!!!!!!!!!!

Hugs and kisses for and from the children.

ADORABLE CHILD #1.

Ew! Daddy what happened to your face?

ADORABLE CHILD #2.

It's all red and gross.

ADORABLE CHILDREN.

Can we touch it!!!!????

HENRY.

Hahahahaaaa! Of course you can! Anything for my darling children!

They touch his face wound. Squishy sounds.

ADORABLE CHILD #1.

Look at all the yellow stuff coming out of it!

ADORABLE CHILD #2.

It's like mommy's squash pudding!

HENRY.

Alright children that's enough. Haha that's enough.

More squishy sounds. A spurt.

ADORABLE CHILD #1.

Eww! Touch this part over here!

HENRY.

Okay, that's -

ADORABLE CHILD #2.

Eek! I think I just saw it move!

HENRY.

(booming)

I SAID THAT'S ENOUGH YOU SNOT NOSED LITTLE -

ELEANOR.

Children!

A beat.

ELEANOR.
Off to bed now!

*Another beat.
Then the children burst into adorable tears.*

ELEANOR.
Oh don't cry my lovely's. You're fathers just tired from all his...running around.

*The children run off crying.
A moment of silence.*

ELEANOR.
(bitterly)
You have to pay extra for that scratch on your face?

HENRY.
Oh please, Eleanor. Just an angry alley cat is all.

ELEANOR.
And what special business did you have in an alley?

HENRY.
Eleanor, darling, I *swear*-

ELEANOR.
Shut up. Now sit down and let me have a look at you.

*He sits. She takes a look.
Awful squishy sounds.*

ELEANOR.
Oh God. God, Henry! You need to see a doctor!

It almost sounds like it's talking, the squishiness.

The children were right! I can see it...

Eleanor screams.

ELEANOR.
I CAN SEE IT MOVING!!!!

Music!

SCENE FOUR.

A doctors office. The next day.

DOCTOR.

Let me just apply this final leech here...

The sound of a leech being applied, whatever that sounds like.

DOCTOR.

An alley cat you say?

HENRY.

Yeah, Doc. Eight or nine of em. Fire in their eyes. Milk starved they musta been. And one of em, the biggest one, big as a my mother, she just jumped up and scratched me.

DOCTOR.

Hmm.

Unbutton your shirt please?

HENRY.

Sure, sure.

DOCTOR.

Now if you don't mind I'm just going to put these clamps on your nipples...

HENRY.

My /nipples Doc!?

DOCTOR.

Standard procedure. Now I'll just apply the clamps here and...oh my.

HENRY.

What Doc?

DOCTOR.

There's just so many red bumps on your chest. I don't know where to clamp these things.

HENRY.

You think I could be allergic Doc. Can a fella be allergic to nail polish?

DOCTOR.

Since when do alley cats wear nail polish?

HENRY.

You're right, cats, that's what I meant. Sorry Doc, it's just I'm /so messed up from-

DOCTOR.

Well these nipples look as good as any.

HENRY.

Ow!

DOCTOR.

Don't worry it will only hurt for a second-

HENRY.

Okay.

DOCTOR.

-while the electricity pours through your body.

HENRY.

Electricit-aaaagghh!!!

The sounds of electric currents being sent through Henry's body. The Doctor has to shout over the noise.

DOCTOR.

Miracle of modern medicine my boy! Just got this machine in from Germany! Been *dying* to try it out. There that should do it.

Electrical currents subside.

DOCTOR.

Now haven't I seen you at Nellie's Knocking Knees once or twice?

Henry tries to speak but just makes sounds.

DOCTOR.

I only ask because I do regular check ups on all a Nellie's girls and what you have seems awfully similar to...take off your pants.

HENRY.

(dazed, shocked, simultaneously)

Whaaaa?!!

DOCTOR.

Henry, if this hideous boiling skin condition is what I think it is, then you better pull down your pants now and show me what's what, while there's still a what's what to show.

HENRY.

(coming back to)

What are you saying?

DOCTOR.

You said an alley cat did that to you?

HENRY.

Yeah....yeah.

DOCTOR.

An alley cat named *Nellie O'Dell!!!??*

Music!

HENRY.

Wait a sec now, Doc...

DOCTOR.

Nellie's the only other girl I seen with this condition, Henry. Years ago. Nastiest thing I ever seen, and I'm the whore doctor!

HENRY.

What's Nellie got to do with- ?

DOCTOR.

I was visiting in on the girls this afternoon. They said Nellie never came back last night. That last they saw she was going upstairs to see you.

HENRY.

Heey, what are you, a Quack or a Pig? I waited upstairs for Nellie for an hour, she never came, so I left and got scratched up by an alley cat.

DOCTOR.

An alley cat named *Nellie O'Dell!!!??*

Music!

HENRY.

-aaagggghhhh!!!!

The Doctor has turned on the electrical currents again.

DOCTOR.

I'm not even sure what this thing does! Zaps the leeches off, that's for sure!

He shuts the currents off.

DOCTOR.

Now, Henry, please remove your pants. Or shall I summon the police and have them remove them for you?

HENRY.

Sure sure...I'll go right ahead and...*clamp these wires right to your eyeballs!!!*

He does. The doctor screams.

DOCTOR.

My eyeballs! I need them to practice medicine!!!

HENRY.

Yeah that's rough, Doc. How bout a *drink!*

DOCTOR.

Not the leech water!!! Agggghhhh!!!!

Sounds of water being dumped on the Doctor's head. Sound of Doctor being electrocuted. While being electrocuted he manages to say...

DOCTOR.

You're cursed, Henry!! There is no cure!! You're doomed!! And cursed!! And doooooomed!!!!

HENRY.

Oh I'll find a cure Doc, if I have to sizzle every dirty whore at the Knocking Knees to find it! Ahahahahaha!!!!

Sizzling sounds! Music!

Music!

SCENE FIVE.

Nellie narrates. While she does we can hear the sounds of Henry's disease growing and spreading.

NELLIE.

Disease ain't just a part of the job, it's a part of life. When most of the fellas gotta pee sitting down like the rest of us, and a regular bath means every other Tuesday, asking for a clean bill a health is like asking the Pope for a popsicle, I always say. But ain't nothing worse than what I got from a reeal strange fella who didn't do nothin' but scratch me once across the thigh. He said he was giving me a blessin'. That I'd get real sick for a while, but that what I had would pass. And that after I got better I'd be able to give that sickness back to any fella tried to do me wrong. Boy I'll tell ya, I used to spit at the thought of that strange fella an' what that scratch done to me: the boils and the blisters, the scabs and the sores. And the endless oozing, oozing, *oozing*.

Oozing sounds build each time she says the word.

NELLIE.

But right about now I'd like ta have that fella over for dinner.

Back at Nellie's. Same saloonery as before.

Suddenly the doors fly open. Somebody screams and everything, piano included, goes silent.

Gasps and whispers.

HENRY.

What? You ain't ever seen a walking canker sore before?

BARKEEP.

N-now look fella. We don't want any trouble.

HENRY.

Who said anything about trouble? I just want a drink.

Silence.

I SAID I WANT A DRINK!!!

We hear him slam the bar with his hand. It's a squishy slam. More gasps of horror. Someone faints.

BARKEEP.

Hey mister. You're pinky. It just came off on my bar!

HENRY.

That should buy me at least a shot.

BARKEEP.

One shot, coming up.

The piano and bar sounds slowly pick back up as Nellie's tries to get back to normal. Molly approaches Henry.

MOLLY.

Hangdog? Is...is that *you*? Geez! I mean geez *Louise!*

LOUISE.

(from, like, next door)

Burr-ning!

The sound of Henry shooting his whiskey and slamming it down. He grabs Molly's arm, growling.

HENRY.

Molly, now listen to me!

MOLLY.

Hey! Hey, let go of my arm! You're hurting me!

HENRY.

A few years back! Did Nellie have a...condition? A *(whispers) skin condition.*

MOLLY.

Let go of me and maybe I'll tell ya!

HENRY.

Just yes or no, did you know about Nellie's skin condition?!!

MOLLY.

All us girls got a *(whispers) skin condition* or two in our past. I remember Nellie had one worse than the others. Said she got it from a gypsy or something, but I figured him for an Irishman cause his skin was so pale you could almost see his skull I'm sayin'.

HENRY.

Yeah? Then what?

MOLLY.

(scared)

An'...an' she said he just scratched her an' said she was blessed. An' that if she was ever in danger, just give the fella that's wronging her a scratch an- *heey, Henry, you didn't cut yerself shaving at all, did you??*

HENRY.

No I didn't Molly.

Pulls out his blade.

Thanks for remindin' me!!!!

A swipe. He tears her dress with his blade. Molly screams.

MOLLY.

Henry, you're trying to kill me! Let go of me! LET....GO!!!!!!

She pulls away from Henry. A tearing sound, as his arm comes off.

Again, the bar goes silent in horror.

BARKEEP.

Buddy, your arm...it's on the floor.

HENRY.

(hissing)

The whole bottle, then!

MOLLY.

He killed her! Hangdog Henry murdered Nellie O'Dell!

Gasps.

HENRY.

(his blade out)

Back! Everybody back! Don't anybody try anything or I'll –

A squish, tear and thump as the hand with the blade falls off.

GIRL #1.

He dropped his blade!

GIRL #2.

And his hand!

GIRL #1.

He's unarmed!

BARKEEP.

Literally!

GIRL #2.

It's like he's fallin' apart or somethin'!

HENRY.

I'm fine...I just need...to lie down...

Tearing squishy sound as he collapses.

GIRL #1

Should somebody give him a hand.

GIRL#2

And a leg?

Another squishy tearing sound.

GIRL #1.

Oh God, and another leg!

HENRY.

(gurgling)

...s'okay ...I'm think I'm just...dehydrated...gimme a drink...

BARKEEP.

(think Big Tom in Deadwood at his meanest)

Alright mister. We don't take too kindly to stumps in here. Let's take it outside.

Sound of gun cocking.

Or I'll disperse what's left of ya...

Everyone shouts. "Yeah do it!" "Shoot him barkeep!" "Kill him good!" etc.

Suddenly the doors fly open.

ELEANOR.

Stop!!

Everyone stops.

ELEANOR.

That stump is my husband.

HENRY.

(gurgling)

Eleanor...sweetheart...

ELEANOR.

(quiet)

Look at you. My God, Henry. Look what you've done to yourself.

HENRY.

I didn't...a gypsy...a curse...*NELLIE!!!*....

ELEANOR.

No, darling. You did this all on your own.

The piano player starts playing a melancholy sort of song.

HENRY.

Eleanor...I just wanted what was best for you and the children. Give me another chance. A chance to prove to you and the children that I can change. It's not too late. Not for me. For us. For the children. Eleanor. I have money hidden away. For you. For the children. Eleanor. Please. *The children.*

ELEANOR.

I'm sorry, Henry.

HENRY.

Then...can I at least have one last kiss?

GIRL #1

Don't do it!

GIRL #2

Don't touch him!!

GIRL #1.

He'll cut you!!

ELEANOR.

No!

No.

She takes a few slow steps towards him.

HENRY.

Please, Eleanor. All I ask. Just one...last...

Eleanor lets out a cry. A hard thump sound, followed by a squish. Then the sound of something rolling.

GIRL #1

She kicked em!

GIRL #2

She kicked his head clean off!

GIRL #1

Atta girl, Eleanor!

ELEANOR.

Shot of whiskey! Make it double! Drinks are on me tonight!

Cheers as the piano gets back up tempo and everyone starts dancing and singing.

MOLLY.

Hey Eleanor, you need a job? Cause we're in the market for a proprietor...

The laughter and cheers die down a little bit as we get a final narration from Nellie.

NELLIE.

I always thought when I left this Earth, it'd be the Knocking Knees that'd be my legacy. But I'm glad that Irish Gypsy got tossed out the shite bucket with the rest of em and walked through my door. Cause if he hadn't, that murderous Hangdog Henry woulda been laughin it up with the rest a them, buying a drink and a screw and some candy for

the kids with *my blood*. He'd be a happy, healthy body, instead of blinking pus out of his sorry old severed head-

Melon squish.

MOLLY.

Louise, watch where you're stepping!

LOUISE.

I was!

Everyone laughs uproariously. Somewhere Boss Tweed yells...

BOSS TWEED.

Whore, please!

More laughter.

Music!

EPILOGUE

Eleanor tucks her adorable children into bed.

ADORABLE CHILD #1.

Mommy?

ELEANOR.

What is it sweetie?

ADORABLE CHILD #1.

When I was poking daddy the other night, he pushed me and scratched my arm real bad!

ELEANOR.

He won't be pushing you any more, sweetie.

ADORABLE CHILD #1

Yeah but mommy?

ELEANOR.

Yes sweetie?

ADORABLE CHILD #1.

Look.

Adorable child pulls up his sleeve. We hear the moving squishy sounds.

ADORABLE CHILD #2.

Ewww!

ELEANOR.

(horrified whisper)

No...

ADORABLE CHILD #2

Let me touch it!

ADORABLE CHILD #1

I think it's moving! Wheeeee!!

More squishy sounds.

ELEANOR.

(more horrified whisper)

No...

ADORABLE CHILD #2

Aww I want one! Scratch me! Scratch me! Scratch me!

ELEANOR.

NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The children laugh and play squishily while their mother screams.

Music!

End!

