

the beginning of

**NELLIE** (from **FUNNY AS A CRUTCH**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

*Time:* When life was more innocent  
*Place:* A small town  
*Human Characters:* NELLIE, an innocent lass with dewy eyes  
THE PUPPETEER, a visibly disabled man  
*Puppet Characters:* MR. PUPPET, a puppet (played by The Puppeteer)  
QUASIMODO  
TINY TIM  
CAPTAIN HOOK  
OEDIPUS

The place in a small town where one might find a puppet show.  
Perhaps the town square. Perhaps the edge of a carnival.  
The only essential item is a puppet stage.

NELLIE, an innocent lass with dewy eyes, stands by herself and sings  
"Nellie's Song" (with apologies to Bronislau Kaper & Helen Deutsch):

NELLIE

*A song of love is a  
very, very, very, very  
very, very, very, very  
very, very, very, very  
very, very, very, very sad song.  
Hi Nellie, oh Nellie, oh no.*

*A song of love is a  
very, very, very, very  
very, very, very, very  
very, very, very, very  
very, very, very, very sad song.  
It's very, very, very sad  
Very, very, very sad  
Very, very, very sad  
And makes a  
Very, very, very, very  
Very, very, very, very  
Very, very, very, very*

(cont'd)

NELLIE (cont'd)

*Very, very, very, very*  
*Very, very, very, very*  
*Very, very, very, very*  
*Very, very, very, very*  
*Very, very, very, very\**  
*Very sad and very bad song.*

*(\*basically, as long as the singer's breath holds out.)*

MR. PUPPET, an adorable puppet, appears on the puppet stage.

MR. PUPPET

What's the matter, Nellie?

NELLIE

(forlorn)

Oh, Mr. Puppet. I'm in love.

MR. PUPPET

That's sad?

NELLIE

The man I desire is a conceited, arrogant, obnoxious, lying, married man.

MR. PUPPET

Why do you love him?

NELLIE

I have low standards.

MR. PUPPET

Do you think you could love someone who was good and true and pure, but less than physically perfect?

NELLIE

Of course. Even though I'm good and true and pure *and* physically perfect, I know it's what's inside that counts, not what's outside.

MR. PUPPET

I see.

(looks at her a moment, then:)

You really laded on the makeup today, didn't you, Nellie?!

NELLIE

Well, yes, but –

MR. PUPPET

Life is not a Hallmark card, Nellie.

NELLIE

I guess not.

MR. PUPPET

Don't guess; it's not.

NELLIE

How do you know?

MR. PUPPET

When you're a *puppet*, having to face the world's prejudices and fears about *puppets*, you become sensitive and insightful.

NELLIE

I see.

MR. PUPPET

People are cruel to puppets, Nellie. They think they're better than us. They make us ride in the back of the bus – in a trunk!

NELLIE

Are you horsing around with me?

MR. PUPPET

Whoa, Nellie. I'm being serious. People may pity puppets, but they never respect them.

A puppet version of QUASIMODO enters the puppet stage.

QUASIMODO

Sanctuary! Sanctuary!

MR. PUPPET

Hey, look. It's the Hunchback of Notre Dame! Either that, or Santa's swallowed his sack.

QUASIMODO

(hurt by the insult)

Oh, if only I was made of stone.

MR. PUPPET

You know, Quasi, I think of you every Wednesday night.

QUASIMODO

You do?

MR. PUPPET

Yeah. Because it's Hump Night!

QUASIMODO

(takes it in, then:)

I'm calling Puppet Equity.

The Quasimodo puppet exits.

MR. PUPPET

As I was saying, people shy away from puppets.

NELLIE

They do?

MR. PUPPET

Oh, yes. Nobody wants a puppet to marry their daughter.

NELLIE

They don't?

MR. PUPPET

It's hard enough to get a one-night stand. Furthermore –

A puppet version of TINY TIM enters the puppet stage.

TINY TIM

God bless my parents, God bless Mister Scrooge, and God bless us every one!

MR. PUPPET

Hey, look, it's Tiny Tim, the world's cutest invalid!

TINY TIM

Merry Christmas?

MR. PUPPET

Hey, Tiny – Okay if you call you *Tiny*? –  
I hear your family's so poor –

(to Nellie:)

As poor as the Dickens!

(to the audience, if they groan:)

*Did I ask for your opinion?!*

(or – to the audience, if they laugh:)

*Oh, good. You read!*

(or – to the audience, if no response:)

*Is this an audience or a sock puppet?!*

(continuing:)

I hear your family's so poor that on Christmas,  
instead of trimming a tree, they just trim your leg!

TINY TIM

(takes it in, then:)

I'm turning atheist.

Tiny Tim exits.

MR. PUPPET

Like I said, when you're a victim of discrimination,  
you learn what love is really about. Just the  
other day, I was at a meeting of the N.A.A.C.P. –

NELLIE

The N.A.A.C.P.?

MR. PUPPET

The National Association for the  
Advancement of Cute Puppets. And –

A puppet version of CAPTAIN HOOK enters the puppet stage.

CAPTAIN HOOK

Has anyone seen that rascal Peter Pan?  
I'm looking for him.