

NELLIE MONOLOGUE, ACT 2
From *Histories Minor*
By Mark Chrisler
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NELLIE

He'd been drinking. Always he'd been drinking, which usually meant some hitting; slapping and pushing, mostly. But that night was different. Maybe he was drunker--he didn't seem it, but then again he hid his drinking well... save for the hitting. Maybe something unknown and adult had transpired. Whatever the case, he came barreling down on me, I'd been practicing my singing, and stopped when I heard his thunder approaching. It was perhaps the music that enraged him. I don't know. And I can't imagine why it'd matter. His foot came down hard on mine, which could have been an accident, and he drove a closed fist straight into my nose. A fist. Like a boxer. I fell back, his foot still concretely tethered atop mine--snapping like a bundle of twigs. My head smacked against the weights of his grandfather clock, creating a marvelous and disturbing din that range--it seemed--for minutes. None of which I remembered. He and my mother both agreed such a thing hadn't occurred. He'd been drinking, yes, always he'd been drinking, but he'd been charming about it; teaching me to dance when accidentally he'd stomped my foot and sent me backwards. And that was that. It's not that I parroted the story, it's that the story was mine. I could recall every detail--the step, the song, my mother's fumbling musicianship. Until one day I heard that awful, clinking, clangor again. The family dog, excited by a rabbit at the window slid

headlong into that damn clock. We all laughed until suddenly my memories were... like an electric-pilot-ave. I ran to the bathroom and vomited until there was but bile and convulsion. And at their divorce I testified against him, the legendary fucker. He deserved prison, for sure. Yet the lesson was a more awful one than the abuse: that I could have lived oblivious to the truth--not even oblivious to it, blindly parallel trotting along thoughtlessly. The only conclusion, I felt, was that I could never, ever trust myself again. I would subject my every thought, feeling, opinion and memory to the seige-like constant bombardment of skepticism. But, you know, I'm a writer. People don't want stories written from a self-suspecting subjectivity. So I bury it. It's confidence people want, and that's what I portray. Even knowing only that I know fuck-all. So what does that make me?

(pause)

Do you know?

(pause)

Are you there?

(pause)

I can't see you , so when you're quiet... what do I know?

(pause)

Hello?