

THIS IS AN ONLINE SAMPLE  
OF THE FIRST TEN PAGES OF

NUTSHELL  
By Callie Kimball

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O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell  
and count myself a king of infinite space—  
were it not that I have bad dreams.

*Hamlet, William Shakespeare*

*For Bridget, because she loves the elephants so.*

## **PRODUCTION HISTORY**

NUTSHELL was produced by DC DOLLIES & THE ROCKET BITCH REVUE at the DC Fringe Festival in July 2007. It ran for four performances on the Woolly Mammoth mainstage under an Equity Capital Fringe Code. It was directed by the playwright and featured Kimberly Gilbert, Selene Faer, Parker Dixon, Daniel Eichner, Brandon Ferraro, Rachel Lee Poole, Tricia McCauley, Sunshine Cappelletti, Simone Zvi, Regina Aquino, Tori Miller, Frank Britton, Jay Hardee, Shelby Sours, Steve Lee, Heather Haney, Gwen Grastorf, Ashley Robinson, Jessica Lynn Rodriguez, Anastasia Wilson, Patricia Williams, Mundy Spears, Michael Willis, Rusty Clauss, Fatima Quander, Matthew Eisenberg, Abby Wood, and Erin Kaufman.

## **SETTING**

A dank, gray, cheap office of a non-profit organization in Dupont Circle dedicated to saving African elephants. And Kenya.

## **CHARACTERS**

### **THELMA**

20s-30s, office manager and default tech support for Elephants Now!  
No-nonsense and in a wheelchair with some physically obvious disability.

### **KIMBERLY GILBERT**

Actor who is starting a part-time temp job at Elephants Now!

### **MILES**

Late 20s, an idealistic ambassador for Elephants Now!

### **ELIOT**

Early 30s, his wily cohort.

### **LOUISE**

Mid-40s, founder of Elephants Now!

### **SPAM 1**

Any age/race. Voice-activated spam on THELMA's computer.

### **SPAM 2**

Same.

### **PALU**

Blind old bachelor elephant.

### **BOKLI**

Bull elephant perpetually in heat.

### **CHO**

Rebellious male adolescent elephant.

REE-REE  
Baby girl elephant.

MAMA JUG  
Matriarchal grandmother elephant.

LEE-NA  
30s, MAMA JUG's daughter and REE-REE's adoptive mother.

MEE-NA  
30s, CHO's mother.

ZEE-NA  
30s, pregnant.

TINA  
30s, REE-REE's birth mother. Lowest in the hierarchy.

TALL WHITE BIRD  
any age/race. Graceful. Helps the elephants.

SCAVENGER 1  
A sanitation manager in DC, the head hyena in Kenya.

SCAVENGER 2  
A sanitation worker in DC, a hyena in Kenya.

SCAVENGER 3  
Same.

LION 1

LION 2

A SLEW OF ZEBRAS

## SCENES

### I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

Friday, April 13, 2007, 11:28pm.

The non-profit offices of Elephants Now! in Washington DC.

### II. A GAME OF CHESS

Saturday, April 14, 2007, Elephant Time

A watering hole near Mombasa, Kenya.

### III. THE FIRE SERMON

Monday, April 16, 2007, Elephant Time

A savannah near Mombasa, Kenya.

### IV. DEATH BY WATER

Later that night.

The same watering hole as in Scene 2.

### V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

Friday, May 4, 2007, 6pm.

The offices of Elephants Now! in DC.

## TEXTUAL NOTES

Where there is a virgule (a slash like this: /) that is the point at which the next character's lines should begin to create an overlapping effect.

Lines in Arial font are directly from the poetry of TS Eliot, or they are close paraphrases needing attribution.

Lines in *Comic Sans* are directly from *Hamlet*.

## NUTSHELL

*[Lights to half.]*

## VOICEOVER

Thank you for coming to the world premiere of “Nutshell.” There is no intermission, so please get comfortable. Please take a moment to turn off your cell phones, alarm watches, cameras, beepers, Blackberries®, blueberries, strawberries, mangoes, bananas, and any other foodstuffs that might attract the animals or even, heaven forbid, cause a stampede. Please keep your hands and feet inside the performance at all times, as we do not have liability insurance. Please take note of the exit signs. Hopefully you won’t need to use them. Thank you and enjoy the show.

*[As the lights go to black, sounds of drums and of wild animals grow into a scream that transforms into DC traffic sounds. Then the sounds are muffled as lights come up on Scene 1.]*

## I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

*Friday, April 13, 2007, 11:28pm, lights up on the non-profit offices of Elephants Now! in Washington DC.*

*THELMA sits alone, typing in great thought. It is late at night on a Friday and she is trying to get everything squared away for her three colleagues who are heading to Kenya the next day. The only light that is on is the one at her desk. The sound of a door slams, then footsteps.*

THELMA

Who’s there?

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Kimberly Gilbert. Am I in the right place. Is this *Elephants Now!* ?

THELMA

Yes. Are you from the temp agency?

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Yes. Stand and unfold yourself.

THELMA

I can’t.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

No I mean it’s the first lines of Hamlet. You just said Who’s There and the next line is Stand And Unfold Yourself.

THELMA

I'm in a wheelchair.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

No I mean. Nevermind. Long live the elephants! So. What can I do.

THELMA

You were supposed to be here eight hours ago. It's nearly midnight.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

I got stuck at rehearsal.

THELMA

Rehearsal.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

I'm an actor.

THELMA

An actor.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Yeah. I'm playing Ophelia in this punk rock adaptation of *Hamlet* set in a 1980s nighttime soap opera. Like *Dynasty*. Takes place on an ostrich ranch in Nevada. Hamlet's this spoiled alcoholic with an inexplicably British accent and everyone's hair is really big—anyway we were rehearsing my burial scene (except instead of drowning I die trying to stick my head in the ground like an ostrich, you know, 'cause I'm crazy) and tonight was the first night we were working with the stuffed ostriches which were kind of unwieldy and so things ran late I'm sorry I ran all the / way from the metro—

THELMA

All righty. Pull up a chair there. I've pretty much done everything. We've got a team of three flying to Kenya in the morning and I've loaded this laptop with the new PowerPoint presentations and satellite / transmitter—

KIMBERLY GILBERT

What's your name?

THELMA

Oh sorry. Thelma. All righty so if you can just grab that checklist there take a gander make sure each of the three packets has all those items in it. Double-check their itineraries, too.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Okay.

THELMA

I spent the better part of this afternoon at the Embassy getting their visas straightened out. We've been trying to have a sit-down face-to-face with this particular family of elephants for over two years but their matriarch has a thing against Americans. Thinks our main competition (I won't name names) shouldn't be saving Asian elephants when the African elephants are so much more at risk.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Why?

THELMA

Firstly, the Asian female elephants don't even grow tusks, um, so they're not killed in as many numbers. I dunno it gets really complicated with the various classifications for conservation purposes but the end result is you really have to be a diplomat with them or else they get their trunks bent out of shape. Bottom line is these aren't your average circus elephants.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Right.

THELMA

Anyway, this is a real coup for us because our competition (I won't name names) has a ton more grant money to establish this type of program but we were the agency chosen to implement it, which means we'll be eligible to compete for bigger and better grants down the road.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Cool.

THELMA

And of course we'll also be able to help the elephants.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

What kinda program?

THELMA

Saving them from poaching. For the ivory. Their tusks.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Yeah, I remember hearing about that. On NPR I think.

THELMA

NPR runs stories about elephants like every month. All righty you take care of those packets and I'm just gonna finish this up before they get back. [*They both work in silence.*]

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Is it always this quiet?

THELMA

When the boys are gone. Miles and Eliot. Watch out for Eliot.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Not even a mouse stirring.

THELMA

We actually do have mice, the cleaning people only come on Fridays so if you eat at your / desk—

KIMBERLY GILBERT

No I mean another line from the play. Nevermind.

THELMA

Oh. Yeah well Miles is nice he's our science guy. Eliot shoulda been gone long ago but his daddy's donations kept us afloat last year so we were able to keep our doors open—

[*SPAM 1 and 2 "activate" at the word "open."*]

SPAM 1

So easy a monkey could do it.

SPAM 2

Enjoy it as I do.

THELMA

Delete. Delete.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

You talk to your computer?

*(During THELMA's response, SPAM is talking at the same time so THELMA has to shout.)*

SPAM 1

You'll love the new non-obese you.

SPAM 2

I was turning in overweight psycho.

SPAM 1

And the sex is fantastic, too.

THELMA

Voice-recognition software but there's a bug so sometimes it opens my bulk folder. On top of that, its default setting is for the blind and hard of hearing / so it's really loud.

SPAM 2

But we were young and therefore allowed to be cruel.

THELMA

Huh. Delete all.

SPAM 1

On Rwanda by seething.

SPAM 2

Next of Kin.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

O I hate these! Open!

THELMA

It only recognizes my voice. Fine. Open.

SPAM 2

My name is Collins, Mr Jones a well known philanthropist who work for an oil firm in Nigeria, before he died, he made a will stating that fifteen million, US dollars only should be donated to / any philanthropist of our choice oversea and your email was picked as the beneficiary of the said funds.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

I wrote one of these guys back once and he was so excited. I just wrote like I was a crazy person and he bought it.

THELMA

Delete. Close Folder.

SPAM 2

I am Spam.

SPAM 1

Spam I am. [*They work in silence for a bit, though KIMBERLY doesn't fully understand her assignment.*]

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Are you gonna march on Monday?

THELMA

For what.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

You live in the District?

THELMA

Yeah why.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Voting rights. You should march. [*Realizes THELMA's in a wheelchair.*] I mean...

THELMA

This thing is pretty fast.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Great! Then come with me and my crazy actor friends 'cause we're gonna march and then go shoot some pool. I mean...

THELMA

I gotta do my taxes anyway. April 17 right?

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Yeah. "April is the cruelest month." [*ELIOT and MILES enter, LOUISE trailing behind.*]

ELIOT

The IRS.

MILES

TS Eliot.

ELIOT

Eliot.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Right. TS Eliot.

ELIOT

No, I mean, Eliot. It's my name. [*Shaking KIMBERLY's hand.*]

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Oh! I thought—Kimberly.

MILES

Miles.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Kimberly.

ELIOT

And this is our fearless leader Louise.

LOUISE

Not so fearless. I don't feel so good.

MILES

She puked all the way from the bar.

THELMA

I told you you shouldn't a got all those vaccines. You don't need 'em to go to Kenya.

LOUISE

Better safe than sorry. Excuse me. [*Leaves.*]

ELIOT

So, Kim.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Kimberly.

ELIOT

Kimberly. That's a pretty name. Kimberly.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Thanks.

ELIOT

Kinda rolls off the tongue. You look like someone I know. Have we met?

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Omigod tell me you're kidding. (*Realizes he's not.*) I don't think so.

ELIOT

I thought maybe we dated.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

I don't think so.

ELIOT

I'm totally kidding. Gotcha! Seriously I remember all the girls I've dated. [*THELMA snorts.*]  
No seriously you do look familiar though.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Do you go to the theater?

ELIOT

God no. Why. You an actress?

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Yeah. You hear of Woolly Mammoth Theatre?

ELIOT

Nah.

MILES

I been there.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

What'd you see?

MILES

That one with the really dysfunctional family.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Uh, that's every play at Woolly.

MILES

It had a ghost.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Yeah, nnno.

MILES

And a cross-dresser.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

Yeah. Again, that's pretty much every play there.

MILES

Oh. Well it was good.

THELMA

Look Miles the hyacinth you gave me is still blooming.

MILES

Cool.

THELMA

It's purple.

NUTSHELL

/ Cool. MILES

So you any good? ELIOT

KIMBERLY GILBERT  
I'm up for a Helen Hayes Award on Monday night. [*No one reacts.*] It's like the Tonys for DC. Well, it's not really like the Tonys, not really at all, but, um, it's just a big party really and I'm up for an award. It's not like I care if I win but it'd be cool to be able to thank my family and all. Awards don't really matter of course they're just silly and everyone knows it but alla sudden people know your name and stuff so...

Cool. MILES

Hey so Thumbelina, got all our stuff ready? ELIOT

It's Thelma. THELMA

Whatev, Tiny. ELIOT

Okay Smelliot. You leave Dulles at 9am—should we wait for Louise? THELMA

Nah we can catch her up. I wanna hurry up and get back to the bar. Wanna be as drunk as possible so's I can just pass out on the plane. ELIOT

You took care of the peanuts right. MILES

I ordered a half-ton from a place in Alabama. They're already on their way so they'll be waiting for you at the reserve. THELMA

Perfect. MILES

You sure they're real? Last year Munchkin here ordered styrofoam peanuts for our meeting at the Chicago Zoo. ELIOT

THELMA

All righty. You've got an eight-hour layover in Newark. Sorry 'bout that. It was the cheapest flight.

ELIOT

Awesome.

MILES

Excellent.

ELIOT

I love working for a non-profit.

THELMA

Then it's Amsterdam.

ELIOT

We got an eight-hour layover in Amsterdam?

THELMA

Sadly no. Then it's Nairobi then Mombasa. Thirty-one hours total. On the way back you get to go through Brussels.

ELIOT

I love Brussels. You been to Brussels man?

MILES

Actually, this'll be my first trip outta the country.

ELIOT

[*Still trying somehow to impress KIMBERLY.*] Really? You're serious? You've never been outta the country. That's sad. Well. Anyway. Dude. Brussels is great. It's in Belgium you know. Normally I go south in the winter, Rio, but this one winter we visited my cousin Marie—she had this awesome sled. Could fit four people on it. We just hung out all day, drinking coffee, talking.

KIMBERLY GILBERT

I love coffee. I work in a coffee shop on Sundays, were the hipsters drink PBR from a can and pretend to read the New York Times.

ELIOT

I read a lot.

THELMA

Who *are* you.

NUTSHELL