

STILL LIFE WITH ELEPHANT (excerpt)
JOHN SHANAHAN

CHARACTERS

JIM, a man in his late 20s.

ALICIA, a woman in her late 20s.

ELEPHANT, a man or woman dressed in white, with large white elephant ears and a trunk. While this role can be played by an actor of any body size, obviously the larger the actor, the more commanding Elephant's presence is.

SETTING

The living room of Jim's apartment. Bookshelves, vases, other breakable things all over. A couch, a small table with two chairs, a coffee table stacked with magazines. Three doors: one to the kitchen UL, one to the bedroom at R, and the entrance L. NOTE: The apartment can also be simply suggested with framed doors, or simply having the actors leave the stage, but as much set dressing as possible should be made available for the action late in the play.

AT RISE: *The apartment is dark. **ELEPHANT** sits in the armchair, turned to face the door. Off, **JIM** and **ALICIA** approach.*

JIM (off) I thought the play was great, but not quite what I'd expected.

Jim can be heard fumbling with keys in the lock. Alicia speaks as he unlocks the door and enters.

ALICIA I know! It was so raw and challenging! I'd heard good things about it, but it was so far beyond anything I've seen. You know?

They enter. Jim steps DL to the light switch. Alicia, who's carrying a large take-out bag, comes one or two steps in above him.

JIM I'm just glad we didn't waste our time or—

Jim turns on the light. Alicia gasps when she sees Elephant. Jim turns, startled. Elephant waves to them happily. Until he starts getting upset, Elephant's tone is always a bit on the jaunty side. He knows they're avoiding him, and he finds it sort of amusing.

ELEPHANT Hi! Welcome home!

Pause. Jim and Alicia glance nervously at each other.

ELEPHANT I'm guessing you didn't get around to talking about me because...I'm still here. Hi! I'm right here.

Pause. No one's moving. Elephant smiles and looks like he's expecting them to say something. Then, tentatively, Alicia steps toward the kitchen door. When she speaks, it's directly to Jim. Neither of them will ever directly address Elephant.

ALICIA I'm going to...um...put these things way...for now. Unless—unless you want some?

ELEPHANT What did you get? Smells good! Is that kung pao chicken?

JIM (*tearing his gaze from Elephant*) No, that's fine. We can...eat later. If you want.

ALICIA Yeah. Good. That's fine.

Jim starts moving toward the bathroom hallway.

JIM I'm just going to...you know...be right back.

ALICIA Okay. Yeah. Good. (*Pause, then, just as he reaches the door*) Do you want to watch a movie or anything?

ELEPHANT Or you could talk.

JIM We could. I mean, watch a movie. Sure. If you want.

ELEPHANT Or you could taaaaaalk.

ALICIA Yeah. That'd be good.

ELEPHANT (*rising*) My God, how long are you two going to keep doing this? Eat the kung pao, watch the movie, talk about meaningless things. Meanwhile, *I'm still here!*

JIM Be right back.

Zoom—he's gone, into the bathroom.

ALICIA Me too.

Zoom—she's gone into the kitchen. Elephant walks to C, chuckling and shaking his head.

ELEPHANT (*loudly*) For the record, kids, this is *the* most unconvincing dodge I have ever seen.

He walks over to the kitchen door, knocks at it lightly and calls through it.

ELEPHANT Hey, if you two aren't going to eat that kung pao, can I get some out here? I'm starved. You were gone for hours!

Pause. Elephant leans against the door, listening, and laughs.

ELEPHANT *(in a sing-song voice)* I know what you're thinking. I know what you're thinking. *(Regular tone)* If you hurry, if you run right now, you can make it to the door before he's done peeing. One...two... threeeee...

Elephant steps away from the door, moving so that he'll be behind it when she comes out. Alicia enters quickly. She looks toward the bathroom uncertainly, then toward the front door. She lets go of the door and takes a tentative, non-committal step forward. Elephant grabs the door and slams it shut. Alicia shouts in surprise. At the same time, a toilet flushes.

ELEPHANT Too late! Oooh, you had a chance there, you really did. Buuut...it's gone now. Hey, did you get anything besides the kung pao? Egg roll, maybe?

Jim enters. Alicia is still looking frightened. Jim looks toward her.

JIM Are you okay?

ALICIA Yeah. I just...the bottom of the container was sort of hot.

ELEPHANT Jim! Jim, c'mere for a sec, buddy. Got anything you feel like talking about? You know, with Alicia here? Anything been on your mind for a couple weeks now? Anything big and white with floppy ears and a trunk, maybe? Hmm? Maybe? Huh?

Another pause as Jim tries to figure out where to go with this.

JIM You want some ice?

For a complete PDF copy of this script, please e-mail shanahan_the_writer@yahoo.com. Thank you!