

DEADLINE

by Derek Sonderfan

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SCENE 1

SETH, a disheveled writer, walks in his door carrying an overstuffed briefcase with papers coming out the top of it, a shoulder bag which also has stuff coming out of it, and even has papers in his mouth. He closes his door and drops his shoulder bag, crosses to his answering machine, and clicks the button. He then crosses to the bedroom and exits. The answering machine plays – a woman's voice.

BRIANNE

Seth, baby, it's me, Brianne. You may not recognize my voice as I haven't heard from you in a million years. To refresh your memory, I'm your agent. I get you jobs. I'm a good person to call. So do it. I got big news.

The machine beeps.

Seth, Brianne. Look, I got a really great lead for you. One of those 'drop everything' type leads. Call me. I'm trying your cell.

Beep.

Brianne here – why is your cell not accepting calls? BIG news. I can't seem to stress this enough. Call me immediately. You had better be in a coma, and in all honesty, I'm not sure that would hold up right now.

Beep.

Seth – here's the deal. Drop everything you're working on. You've got two days to write a play. Call me back.

SETH's head pops in the door. The machine says 'You have no new messages'. Blackout.

SCENE 2

It is a tiny agent's office that is very cramped. There are papers everywhere, and a phone nestled in the middle of it all. BRIANNE sits on a chair, talking on the telephone. She looks like an agent. There's nothing more to be said. She is talking as lights come up.

Seth. It's Brianne. I'm now assuming you have gone deaf *because you're missing the opportunity of a lifetime!* If you want me to even endeavor to represent you anymore, you will call me in the next nineteen seconds.

SETH enters. He is not the happiest of campers.

[into the phone] Seth, you're an idiot.

She hangs up. Then, to SETH:

Where the hell have you been?

SETH

You're out of your mind.

BRIANNE

Good to see you, too. You look well.

SETH

Perhaps you didn't hear me. You're out of your mind.

BRIANNE

Where were you?

SETH

Well, let's see. The first twenty minutes I was home, listening to the multitude of messages you left for me. I then spent a half hour trying to call you, only to have your genetic mistake of a secretary tell me you were on the phone, leaving more messages for me, no doubt. Finally, I was destroying my cell phone, which had managed to get filled up with messages *despite me requesting none be left*. How do you do it?

BRIANNE

I have people, Seth. They know people. And those people know people.

SETH

I'm here. I'm yours. What do you want?

BRIANNE

I got a job for you.

SETH

I'm not doing it. What's next?

BRIANNE

See, here's where you're mistaken. You *are* doing it. It's supposed to be—

SETH

Brianne, can I ask you a question?

BRIANNE

No. You *are* doing this. Everything else you have going for you right now? Meaningless. Peanuts. Shells of peanuts. Those wispy hairs coming out of the shells of peanuts. Am I making myself clear? If you do this and they like it –

you're networked with hundreds of companies, directors, and producers in one fell swoop. This is your chance.

SETH

Let me, for your sake, clarify which projects I am currently doing; projects, I may add, *you* set me up with. I'm doing the two commercials, one for that soap that smells like phosphorous, and the one for the soda that fish like. I have that indy film for that deaf buddy of yours. I have the documentary about how the unicorn became the horse by Darwinian evolution, thank you very much.

BRIANNE

If you do this—

SETH

I HAVE...the rock opera about the Great Depression. I have the filmstrip about novocain, the animated short about the black market exportation of *sand*, and finally, the monologue for the 1st Annual Awards Show award show. Have I left anything out?

BRIANNE

You know, most clients *like* getting leads from their agents.

SETH

Most clients like sex, too, but I wouldn't know. It's been so long that, whenever I want to *write* a sex scene, I usually write 'bracket research later end bracket.'

BRIANNE

I can help you in that department.

SETH

I'd rather eat a hand grenade.

BRIANNE

I've heard worse.

SETH

Take your new project and shove it. I'm finishing some of these old ones first.

BRIANNE

What if I were to tell you that some very important people in the industry could be seeing this showcase?

SETH

I'd say good for them.

BRIANNE

Let me rephrase. What if they were, I don't know, already told you were doing this? *[pause]* Like, I don't know, on a flier. Or a handwritten invitation?

SETH

I don't like you.

BRIANNE

It's cakewalk for you, baby.

SETH

It's not possible. It's not possible. You can't write a good play in two days.

BRIANNE

Well, it's got to be postmarked by Wednesday. So you should probably finish it tomorrow night just to be safe.

SETH

A day and a half. One day and a half. Do you have even a basic grasp of the writing process?

BRIANNE

What about that one show you did? Didn't you write that in two and a half hours?

SETH

I did that once because I had an idea, two characters, and a basic structure already thought up when I sat down. And it was on a bet.

BRIANNE

Fine, I bet you can't write a play by Wednesday.

SETH

You win. What do I owe you?

BRIANNE

Seth, I'm going to level with you. I've made some calls already – people are expecting this from you. We're looking at career suicide if you don't.

SETH

Wouldn't it be career homicide since you orchestrated it?

BRIANNE

It's simple: 10-30 minutes. Minimal characters. Minimal sets. Minimal props.

SETH

You're giving me two days! It's not possible.

BRIANNE

It's simple. It's doesn't even have to be full-length. Comedy or drama, it doesn't matter. A monkey could write that.

SETH

You know what? Get me a monkey. No, I'm serious. Get me a monkey. I'll sit him down at a computer and he can write you a wonderful play. I'll rent a Casio too in case he wants to make it a musical.

BRIANNE

If I get you a monkey, you'll do it?

SETH

You know what? Yeah. If I get a monkey by, what, six o'clock, I'll write your little play. He'll write it. I don't even care. In the meantime, I'm going home to take a nap, and then decide which of my pre-existing thirty projects I should work on. And, Brianne, if you ever propose sex again, I will vomit directly on you.

BRIANNE

You're beautiful. I won't call you until Wednesday. Does three sound good?

SETH

Once I see a monkey, you'll see a script.

He exits. She grins and picks up the phone. She dials.

BRIANNE

Vlad? Brianne. I need a favor. Is Mr. Diggles working on anything right now?

Blackout.

SCENE 3

SETH's apartment. His apartment is pretty simple. There is a couch and a low DS. There are doors on either side, SL leading to outside, and SR to the kitchen. There is a doorway USC. There's a small table USR, behind the couch, on which the phone sits. On the couch is a very attractive woman in lingerie. SETH enters and goes right to the telephone. He pushes the button. "You have no new messages" He is stunned. He walks directly into the kitchen. He comes back out in a second, exhausted. He still hasn't seen the girl. He sits on the arm of the couch, facing towards the kitchen. Finally, he leans back as if to land on the couch. Of course, he lands on the lap of the girl. There is a moment where he isn't sure what to think.

SETH

Hello?

MOUTHWASH

Hello.

SETH

Are you someone I know?

MOUTHWASH

No.

SETH

Okay. *[beat]* Are you here to steal things?

MOUTHWASH

No...

SETH

Good. That's good. *[beat]* Are you here to...*[he rubs the back of his head into her bare abdomen]* Are you wearing clothes?

MOUTHWASH

Brianne sent me. Her message is 'I told you I could help with that.' Said you'd know what that means.

SETH

Can you...can you hold on a minute?

SETH stands up and looks at her, and goes to the phone, putting it on speaker. He dials, it rings.

BRIANNE

Talk to me.

SETH

Brianne?

BRIANNE

Seth, baby. Got my gift?

SETH

Brianne, uhhhh, yeah. Yeah, I got your gift. Now, as much as I appreciate your gesture, and believe me, it is an unbelievably ridiculously thoughtful gesture—

BRIANNE

So you'll do the play?

SETH

No, no. I'm not doing the play. I clearly said "get me a monkey and—"

BRIANNE

Look in your bedroom.

He hesitates for a moment, then goes to the USC door. He comes back, totally bewildered.

SETH

There's a monkey in a cage in my room.

BRIANNE

His name is Mr. Diggles. He doesn't like bananas, he prefers apricot. He can become temperamental when it becomes cool, so keep your thermostat high.

SETH

She got me...a monkey!

BRIANNE

So I will expect to see you in my office on Wednesday with script in hand. Write it, have Mr. Diggles write it – I don't really care. Just so long as the play is in my hands Wednesday and up to your normal irreverent caliber. As for your other gift, just be nice. She's originally from Texas, so she likes the temperature warm as well. You'll have to ask her what she likes to eat. See ya Wednesday, baby.

She hangs up. SETH stands motionless for a minute. The girl on the couch looks at him, quite sympathetic to the confusion he is in.

MOUTHWASH

Have a seat. *[patting the couch]*

SETH

Yes, I think I need one.

MOUTHWASH

Good, sit down. *[he sits]* Scootch forward. *[he does. She starts massaging his shoulders]* So what's this play got to be about?

SETH

Can we...can we not talk about the play? I have a distinct fear that if I think about anything right now, I'm going to...to...to...see what I mean?

MOUTHWASH

Suit yourself.

SETH

How...um...how did you...come... here? Yeah, that's the question I want to ask.

MOUTHWASH

Brianne – she started me out. So when she called, I figured I'd return the favor.

SETH

She did something for you?

MOUTHWASH

I'm the girl from the mouthwash commercial.

SETH

I don't have a TV. I threw it out once reality television took over.

MOUTHWASH

Smart move. I do some rather lascivious things in the ad, and then, boom, mouthwash. Nobody is the wiser. That kind of angle. Huge ad. I have little girls come up to me and say they want to be just like me when they grow up – and then their mothers usually hit them and walk past brusquely, muttering their disgust.

SETH

[taking a look at her] I can't say I recognize you.

MOUTHWASH

It was a killer ad – I got paid tons and all I had to do was groan in four different contexts. *[does an mmmm, like she likes the taste of something]*

SETH

Let me guess – not all the moans were simply enjoying the mouthwash.

MOUTHWASH

You get the picture.

SETH

I wish I did.

MOUTHWASH

[kisses him on the neck] Some day.

SETH

This may seem like an inopportune time to question the recent course of events, but what are you doing here?

MOUTHWASH

Brianne said you might need some company. Get the creative juices flowing.

SETH

I tell you this out of kindness – don't use the sexy innuendo voice. '*Creative juices flowing*' I will laugh at you.

MOUTHWASH

Fair enough.

SETH

Can you hold on...just...just a sec?

MOUTHWASH

Ooohkay.

SETH goes into the kitchen. There are three dull thuds heard. He comes out, clutching his head.

SETH

Okay, I'm definitely not dreaming.

MOUTHWASH

I'm here to help you. If you want help writing, I'm here. If you want me to shop for apricots, I'm here. If you want something else, I'm here. Simple enough?

SETH

You don't have an accent.

MOUTHWASH

Very astute.

SETH

Brianne said you were from Texas.

MOUTHWASH

Do you want me to have one?

SETH

No, no.

MOUTHWASH

A smart answer.

SETH

I guess I should get that monkey going.

MOUTHWASH

Come again?

SETH

[picking up laptop] Would you like to go out to dinner? I was told I should ask you what you like to eat.

MOUTHWASH

Assuming I can change first, I'm game. *[she starts putting on clothes]*

SETH

What are you in the mood for?

MOUTHWASH

Do you like Thai?

SETH

If it doesn't come in a plastic bag or a box, I haven't even tried it.

MOUTHWASH

I know a great place within walking distance.

SETH

[while exiting] All right, Mr. Diggles, let's see what you can do.

He exits. There is a pause. Then, from the bedroom:

Is this a place I should get dressed up for?

MOUTHWASH

No. What you have on is fine. I just didn't want to go in just a bra. Call me a traditionalist.

SETH

It's a good look for you, though. Just thought you should know.

MOUTHWASH

Hey, you're not really going to let the monkey write your play, are you?

SETH

[reentering] No. Haha, that would be great, though, wouldn't it? I'll let him throw down a few pages, then I'll print it out and give it to Brianne, just to scare her. Then I'll do the whole thing tomorrow afternoon.

MOUTHWASH

You're only giving yourself one day?

SETH

Is there really that much difference between a day and a half and a day?

MOUTHWASH

Valid point.

SETH

Are we off?

MOUTHWASH

Is the monkey okay?

SETH

We'll see Wednesday, won't we?

MOUTHWASH

Good night, Mr. Diggles.

Blackout.

SCENE 4

When the lights come up, they are dim; it is nighttime. There are some faint computer sounds being heard from the back room. SETH and MOUTHWASH re-enter, having had a good time. Their apparel is ruffled and they've had a few drinks.

SETH

And when that barkeep told me that he's cutting me off, I told him that we'll still always be connected by the unbiblical cord. I don't think he got the joke.

MOUTHWASH

Don't you mean [*meaning umbilical*] unbiblical? Wait, no wait, the other one.

SETH

Did I even say a joke right then?

MOUTHWASH

You wanna hear a joke that I heard?

SETH

Yes!

MOUTHWASH

What do you get when you cross an umbrella with Elizabeth Taylor?

SETH

I get it.

MOUTHWASH

I haven't told the joke yet.

SETH

And yet, it's still funnier than mine. Gimme some of that mouthwash, baby.

They begin kissing, mainly because it just seemed like the easiest thing to do. They're getting quite intimate. The girl starts to walk SETH back to his bedroom.

SETH

No, we can't. The monkey's in there. *[laughs hard]* The monkey's inI have waited my entire life to say that.

MOUTHWASH

How is the li'l feller doing?

SETH

[looking in his bedroom] He's still plugging away. I'm tellin' ya, he's got more perse...veer...ins than I do.

MOUTHWASH

You better have his tenacity tomorrow if you wanna get that thing done.

SETH

That's way too much syllables for me.

They begin kissing again, making their way to the kitchen. Blackout.

SCENE 5

The lights then pick up again and it's morning. The girl comes out, wearing just one of his shirts and some shorts. She picks up her bag off the couch and she leaves through the front door. A beat passes. The phone rings and the machine picks up.

MACHINE

Hi, it's Seth. I'm being attacked by badgers. Never call again.

Beep.

BRIANNE

Seth, it's Brianne. I know I said I wouldn't call, but I just wanted to see how it was coming. Give me a call if you can pull yourself away from the computer. Oh, and don't forget, apricots and most fruit juices work for Mr. Diggles. I'll talk to you in about, oh, twenty six hours.

SETH lumbers out in boxers. He is just not ready for daylight.

SETH

Hello? Mystery girl? Whose name I never got? Stupid me? Hello? There's NO way that was a dream. There's no way. *[looks in bedroom]* Okay, that's a good sign – monkey still typing in my bedroom. Piecing together the events.

Dials the speaker phone again. BRIANNE appears in her office on the other side of the stage, talking while she's sorting through papers.

BRIANNE

Talk to me.

SETH

Brianne.

BRIANNE

Baby! How's the play coming?

SETH

It's, you know, it's in the works. Uh, about that girl you ummm...loaned me...the mouthwash girl. The girl from Texas. I didn't catch her name.

BRIANNE

What about her?

SETH

How can I get ahold of her?

BRIANNE

Not now, babe.

SETH

What? No, I mean, we had a really great time last night. I'd like to see her again at some point.

BRIANNE

Bring her to the premiere.

SETH

No, I meant I wanted to see her—wait, premiere?

BRIANNE

I've already made some calls. Instead of doing a one-act night, we're setting this up as a showcase. You'll have producers up your wazoo. Who loves you, baby?

SETH

Okay, that's fine. Great. Whatever. Can I get her number?

BRIANNE

Look, I'll level with you. That backfired. She was supposed to make you happy and wanting to write. You weren't supposed to actually like her. For now, write the play, get it to me tomorrow, and I'll give you her number then. Deal?

SETH

I kinda wanted to see her tonight.

BRIANNE

Script equals number. Harsh, baby, I know, but you'll live. See you tomorrow.

Hangs up. He clicks the phone off. Lights down on BRIANNE.

SETH

Damn it! *[he thinks as he starts to get dressed]* Mr. Diggles, I'm going to get some apricots for you. Wherever the hell you get apricots. You just keep typing away. I'm taking over when I get back, hopefully with a pretty girl next to me. A pretty girl who knows where the hell to buy apricots. *[he exits front door, comes back after a second]* A pretty girl who knows where my pants went.

Blackout.

SCENE 6

A spotlight comes on BRIANNE.

BRIANNE

Seth, baby – I knew I said I wouldn't call, but I just wanted to make sure you're doing okay. And my people wanted to make sure you don't feed too much fiber to Mr. Diggles. Stay away from the fiber.

Hangs up. Time elapse. Picks phone back up.

Hi Seth. It's Brianne. I know it's late – I'm half-glad you're not answering. Like that one time you were writing that how-to book about avoiding people. And all that research you were doing for it. So, yeah. I'll see you tomorrow.

Longer pause. She drinks some coffee. Another call.

You know who! It's Wednesday morning. Remember, three o'clock today. No later. Bring the script and Mr. Diggles. I'll make sure to give Mouthwash's number, okay? Phone me. Please.

The lights dim on her, though she is still making calls. Lights up to the apartment. SETH enters, having not slept yet. He comes in with MOUTHWASH and a grocery bag.

MOUTHWASH

So I told her I had a great time with you, but she begged me to wait until your play was done. So I kinda laid low. I figured I'd see you again soon enough.

SETH

I just didn't want last night to be all.

MOUTHWASH

You mean two nights ago?

SETH

It's Wednesday already? Time flies when you're sleep-deprived.

MOUTHWASH

Have you fed the monkey yet?

SETH

Guess what's in the bag?

MOUTHWASH

You're good.

SETH

[while he's in his bedroom] Hit the button on the machine, will you?

She pushes the button. The machine says "You have eleven new messages"

Okay, skip past the first ten.

MOUTHWASH

Are you sure?

SETH

The one thing I've learned about Brianne is that only the most recent message matters.

There are many beeps. Finally:

BRIANNE

WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU? It's 3:15. Your ass better be in my office with that drivel of yours by the time I hang up this phone or you are supporting the crack habit I'm going to start to forget this ever happened. Call me!

SETH

[running out of the room] It's 3?

MOUTHWASH

A little after, yeah.

SETH

Fuckbucket! Grab my keys and my laptop. I'll grab the monkey.

MOUTHWASH

Didn't you write the script?

SETH

I was looking for you. *[picking up the actual phone]* Grab the apricots—Hi, I want to leave a message for Brianne.....No, just give her a message. Yeah. It's Seth. I'm *on my way*. I have a script for her. I'm just going to drop it off, I don't think she wants to look at me right now. Make sure to tell her: I repeat, *make sure to tell her to proofread it* and get back to me so I can make revisions. She must proofread and call me tomorrow. I'll get her a new draft then. Thank you. Bye.

MOUTHWASH

Smooth. *[new thought]* Wait, you're actually giving her what the monkey typed?

SETH

If he can write Hamlet, he can at least write a rough draft for some rinky-dink last-minute project, you know?

MOUTHWASH

I think she was joking about the Hamlet thing.

SETH

Got the laptop?

MOUTHWASH

Got it.

SETH

Superb.

They exit, she carrying a laptop and the grocery bag, him carrying a large, covered cage. The lights again turn to nighttime.

SCENE 7

A spotlight on the answering machine. The machine plays, as if it's a few days later.

BRIANNE

It's your favorite agent in the entire world. Sorry, I didn't get to proofread the piece, but I have no doubt it's just as stellar as your usual material. I gave it

straight to the director—that's right, I already hooked you up with a director friend of mine. He's given it to his actors who are going to put together a staged-reading of it for all the producers. This is—

SETH's voice is heard picking up the phone on the machine.

SETH

Hello? Hello? Brianne?

BRIANNE

Seth! Did you hear my message?

SETH

What do you mean you didn't proofread it? Didn't your garbage disposal of a secretary give you the message?

BRIANNE

Loud and clear. But, baby, I ran out of time. So I gave it to the director. Don't worry, if there's a problem with the play, it'll all iron out with the direction.

SETH

No, I need to revise that play!

BRIANNE

Since when do you ever care about revisions, Seth? It's out of my hands. Don't worry – the producers know it's only been rehearsed for a few days. It's just to see if you have the goods.

SETH

Oh, it's be something.

BRIANNE

It'll be spectacular. The big show goes down this Saturday night.

SETH

I'll be there with bells on. Tied tightly around my throat.

BRIANNE

I'll call you with the details. Ciao, baby. This is the start! *[click]*

SETH

I'm dead.

Spot goes down.

SCENE 8

Lights come up to a closed curtain. It is the premiere. SETH and MOUTHWASH are there in fancy clothes. BRIANNE is there, looking both beautiful and totally ill-prepared.

BRIANNE

Lookin' sharp, baby.

MOUTHWASH

Brianne, wonderful to see you again.

BRIANNE

Mouthwash! You look amazing.

MOUTHWASH

I *do* have a name, you know.

SETH

Brianne, I have to ask you. Has the director mentioned anything about the play?

BRIANNE

Nothing but compliments. He had a few questions here and there, but nothing he couldn't figure out on his own. Would you please relax?

SETH

I'm trying. Believe me.

BRIANNE

Get this man some drinks.

SETH

I'll get them myself.

MOUTHWASH

No, honey. It looks like they're starting.

The lights dim on the curtain, as SETH, MOUTHWASH, and BRIANNE all sit in chairs off to the side. The curtain opens to reveal a slightly smaller version of SETH's actual living room. The first scene happens again, only this time on a slightly smaller scale and with other actors playing the parts of the normal characters. Otherwise, it's the same.

ACTRESS BRIANNE

Seth, baby, it's me, Brianne. You may not recognize my voice as I haven't heard from you in a million years. To refresh your memory, I'm your agent. I get you jobs. I'm a good person to call. So do it. I got big news.

The machine beeps.

Seth, Brianne. Look, I got a really great lead for you. One of those ‘drop everything’ type leads. Call me. I’m trying your cell.

Beep.

Brianne here – why is your cell not accepting calls? BIG news. I can’t seem to stress this enough. Call me immediately. You had better be in a coma, and in all honesty, I’m not sure that would hold up right now.

Beep.

Seth – here’s the deal. Drop everything you’re working on. You’ve got two days to write a play. Call me back.

ACTOR SETH’s head pops in the door. The machine says ‘You have no new messages’. Blackout. Scene opens to a tiny agent’s office that is very cramped. There are papers everywhere, and a phone nestled in the middle of it all. ACTRESS BRIANNE sits on a chair, on the telephone. She looks like an agent. There’s nothing more to be said. She is talking as lights come up.

Seth. It’s Brianne. I’m now assuming you have gone deaf *because you’re missing the opportunity of a lifetime!* If you want me to even endeavor to represent you anymore, you will call me in the next nineteen seconds.

ACTOR SETH enters. He is not the happiest of campers.

[into the phone] Seth, you’re an idiot.

She hangs up. Then, to ACTOR SETH:

Where the hell have you been?

ACTOR SETH

You’re out of your mind.

ACTRESS BRIANNE

Good to see you, too. You look well.

ACTOR SETH

Perhaps you didn’t hear me. You’re out of your mind.

ACTRESS BRIANNE

Where were you?

ACTOR SETH

Well, let's see. The first twenty minutes I was home, listening to the multitude of messages you left for me. I then spent a half hour trying to call you, only to have your genetic mistake of a secretary tell me you were on the phone, leaving more messages for me, no doubt. Finally, I was destroying my cell phone, which had managed to get filled up with messages *despite me requesting none be left*. How do you do it?

ACTRESS BRIANNE

I have people, Seth. They know people. And those people know people.

ACTOR SETH

I'm here. I'm yours. What do you want?

ACTRESS BRIANNE

I got a job for you.

ACTOR SETH

I'm not doing it. What's next?

ACTRESS BRIANNE

See, here's where you're mistaken. You *are* doing it. It's supposed to be—

ACTOR SETH

Brianne, can I ask you a question?

ACTRESS BRIANNE

No. You *are* doing this. Everything else you have going for you right now? Meaningless. Peanuts. Shells of peanuts. Those wispy hairs coming out of the shells of peanuts. Am I making myself clear?

SETH

Oh my God this is bad.

MOUTHWASH

Shhhhhh! Give it a chance.

BRIANNE

Stop being so hard on yourself.

SETH

I'm not being hard on myself at all, believe me.

ACTOR SETH

I HAVE...the rock opera about the Great Depression. I have the filmstrip about novocain, the animated short about the black market exportation of *sand*, and

finally, the monologue for the 1st Annual Awards Show award show. Have I left anything out?

ACTRESS BRIANNE

You know, most clients *like* getting leads from their agents.

ACTOR SETH

Most clients like sex, too, but I wouldn't know. It's been so long that, whenever I want to *write* a sex scene, I usually write 'bracket research later end bracket.'

ACTRESS BRIANNE

I can help you in that department.

ACTOR SETH

I'd rather eat a hand grenade.

ACTRESS BRIANNE

I've heard worse.

SETH

[getting up from his seat] I can't take this anymore. It's bombing.

MOUTHWASH

Maybe it gets better. You don't know.

SETH

It was written by a monkey. This play is not getting any better.

MOUTHWASH

Give it a chance. Hey, you have to admit – it's probably far more comprehensible than you thought it would be.

SETH

Yes. That a monkey can type in complete English sentences is a surprise. But—

MOUTHWASH

Give it a chance. Okay, a new scene is starting.

The curtains have closed. They reopen to see the actor playing SETH and the actress playing MOUTHWASH. SETH stands motionless for a minute. The girl on the couch looks at him, quite sympathetic to the confusion he is in.

ACTRESS MOUTHWASH

Have a seat. *[patting the couch]*

ACTOR SETH

Yes, I think I need one.

ACTRESS MOUTHWASH

Good, sit down. *[he sits]* Scootch forward. *[he does. She starts massaging his shoulders]* So what's this play got to be about?

ACTOR SETH

Can we...can we not talk about the play? I have a distinct fear that if I think about anything right now, I'm going to...to...to...see what I mean?

ACTRESS MOUTHWASH

Suit yourself.

ACTOR SETH

How...um...how did you...come... here? Yeah, that's the question I want to ask.

ACTRESS MOUTHWASH

Brianne – she started me out. So when she called, I figured I'd return the favor.

ACTOR SETH

She did something for you?

ACTRESS MOUTHWASH

I'm the girl from the mouthwash commercial.

ACTOR SETH

I don't have a TV. I threw it out once reality television took over.

ACTRESS MOUTHWASH

Smart move. I do some rather lascivious things in the ad, and then, boom, mouthwash. Nobody is the wiser.

MOUTHWASH

She's horrible.

SETH

I know, where did the director *find* these actors?

MOUTHWASH

Why does she have an accent?

SETH

You want to split and drink until we can't even lie down correctly?

MOUTHWASH

Yes I would.

They get up and start to leave over the next few lines.

ACTRESS MOUTHWASH

Do you like Thai?

ACTOR SETH

If it doesn't come in a plastic bag or a box, I haven't even tried it.

ACTRESS MOUTHWASH

I know a great place within walking distance.

ACTOR SETH

[while exiting] All right, Mr. Diggles, let's see what you can do.

SETH

[exiting] Mr. Diggles can't do *shit*, apparently.

Blackout.

SCENE 9

SETH and MOUTHWASH are in BRIANNE's office. BRIANNE enters with newspapers.

SETH

What's the verdict?

BRIANNE

Not great. I'll let you be the judge, though.

MOUTHWASH

[reading off the paper] Everett Trumbell from the Herald. 'Watching Deadline was the theatrical equivalent to flossing with a cactus.'

SETH

Ouch.

MOUTHWASH

Brooke Jamieson of the Chronicle said, 'It's like M.C. Echer writing a play.'

SETH

I...I will take that as a compliment.

MOUTHWASH

The Western Daily: 'It sounded like it was written by a monkey.'

SETH

Fair enough.

MOUTHWASH

The Post: ‘The highlight of Deadline was its length, because any further subjection to this piece would be considered cruel and unusual punishment.’

SETH

Well, it’s not a total loss.

BRIANNE

You at least got the thing done. A bomb is better than a no-show in this business.

SETH

That’s not what I mean.

MOUTHWASH

What’d you mean?

SETH

I met a great girl in the process. [*he and MOUTHWASH kiss*]

BRIANNE

If she pays your bills, then you’re fine.

SETH

Hey, Brianne, did you stick around ‘till the end of the play?

BRIANNE

No. I left when the groaning got too loud.

SETH

So nobody knows how it ends?

MOUTHWASH

I guess not.

A beat. Blackout. End play.