

you want to kill my dog, but I think we have always have something between us.

INEZ: We have. Anger. Did you find a vase?

ALEXANDER: Yes, but it is my parent's special gift. I want to give you my lips instead.

INEZ: But I want to break something, not kiss something.

ALEXANDER: OK, you break my lip, then you kiss.

INEZ: You are — You're — You are — OK, give me your lips.

ALEXANDER: Well, don't act bored — I am hot catch.

INEZ: Maybe I'll bite you instead.

ALEXANDER: Ohhh, you are spicy.

INEZ: Ohhh, shut up and kiss me!

ALEXANDER: You shut up!

INEZ: You!

ALEXANDER: OK, I shut up.

(He moves and kisses her passionately. Then he pulls her in tightly.)

INEZ: Just what do you think you're doing?

ALEXANDER: What? I hold you. Do I have to go through process for this too?

INEZ: Like you wouldn't believe. But being that I am condo president, perhaps I can make an exception just once.

ALEXANDER: I knew I like you. *(He growls at her.)*

SNIFF SNIFF, AHH AHH

Aaron and Kim, late twenties, work for a very young, up-and-coming advertising firm in Chicago. Aaron heads up a team in the creative area. Currently, he is working on the new Inhalo nasal spray campaign. Kim is the Inhalo account manager. Aaron and Kim have both moved ahead quickly — Kim for her selling abilities, Aaron for his success on last year's "feel the rush" mint copy. Aaron and his team, unbeknownst to the very busy Kim, have been stuck on the nasal spray copy. Kim has come to look at preliminary workups the night before the presentation is due, only to find that there is no copy written. Kim, who has always had a little thing for Aaron, enters his office in a "calm" panic.

CHARACTERS

Aaron: late 20s, a copywriter for an ad firm

Kim: late 20s, an account manager for an ad firm

SETTING

Aaron's office

TIME

The present; early evening through to the following morning

AARON: *(To audience.)* Five PM. End of the workday.

KIM: *(Containing her complete panic.)* Aaron, I just saw the Inhalo Pharmo campaign —

AARON: *(Overly friendly.)* Kim, hi! Oh good. That's good. Very good. Did you like it? I think Chuck did some bang-up work on it. He's so good. Isn't he good?!

KIM: He's good. Are you all right, Aaron?

AARON: I'm fine. I'm great! I'm good! Why?

KIM: You're about to down a mug of pencils.

AARON: *(Noticing.)* Oh. *(Laughs.)* That's no way to get the

lead out. Ha. Ha. I guess it's been a long week, huh? I just need a little java joe.

KIM: Yeah — so about the Inhalo campaign?

AARON: You look like you lost weight, Kim. You look terrific. Have you lost weight?

KIM: Thanks. I have been working out a little —

AARON: I wish I could get to the gym but my hours — whew.

KIM: Yeah, so anyway! It's not that I mean to be critical about the design of the campaign, Aaron, but it's just that —

AARON: How could you be? Chucky really got the misty green jungle thing in a hip urban sort of way like we described.

KIM: Yeah, he did, but it seems to be missing something.

AARON: Oh really? What could be missing?

KIM: Well, um, *words?!!*

AARON: Oh. Oh yeah. That. Well, that's no problem, Kimmie.

KIM: No problem? Yes, Aaron, I think that is a problem, a big problem, especially since we are supposed to have Lisette Cole here tomorrow morning to review our preliminary ad design and *copy*. And you told me not to worry all week!

AARON: Oh, words are overrated.

KIM: She's a word person. A word lover. She sleeps with her Webster's CD ROM. She told us that the very first day we met her.

AARON: Well . . . So she's into words . . . you know, that doesn't mean we need a whole bunch of them. Less is more kinda thing. Besides, we have the design. We're halfway there. Ya got to look at the half-empty thing.

KIM: Don't you mean the half-full thing?

AARON: (*Beat.*) That too!

KIM: Aaron, she is going to see the sample of the nasal spray bottle sitting naked in the jungle with no words around it. She'll ask, "Where are the words? Where is the caption?" Then I will say, "I don't know." We have no context for this misty nasal spray thing in the middle of the jungle. "But isn't it wonderful? It's so nicely hippy green."

AARON: It's nasal spray, Kim. How much context do we need?

The bottle says it's nasal. It says it's spray. People automatically intuit that it's a bottle to sniff, to clear the nose. Will people think it's for their armpits? No. Will they mistake it for anti-anxiety medication? A brand new car? A VCR? No. Do we have to spell everything out?

KIM: In a word. Yes.

AARON: We need to teach people to think for themselves! Lead them away from their mindless MTV states of being! Let them ponder the sociological ramifications of the naked nasal spray! They'll talk about it on the buses, they'll muse at the watercoolers, they'll—

KIM: Ignore it completely.

AARON: No, no, it will inflame their tiny minds and override their stupefied senses! Then we'll follow it up with — something!! (*Beat. Kim stares at him.*)

AARON: If we really need words, why don't we get them from her in our brainstorming session tomorrow?

KIM: So what is she paying two hundred thousand dollars for?! She's not paying two hundred thousand to write her own ad!

AARON: Oh come on, she just wants support. She needs reassurance. We listen and give her two thumbs-up. It's all good. That's what she really wants. Does she not make us make it say what she wants it to say in the end anyway? Huh?! (*Kim is confused.*) Or we could come up with something like . . . now?

KIM: We? As in you and me?! You're the creative person. You're the one with the team.

AARON: Who have all been working till midnight every night on the Nifty-Swifty Mop! We are intellectually drained!

KIM: Why didn't you tell me before the end of the day today that you were stuck?

AARON: Stuck? I'm not stuck! Stuck? I've never been stuck in my life! I'm just a little . . . blocked.

KIM: OK then. Sure. I understand. I've been under amazing pressure myself. It does render one useless.

AARON: Useless? I'm not useless! I just need to get some ideas moving — to clear my head.

KIM: Well, then you better clear your head because I've been working my head off! *(She massages his shoulders.)* I had Reid Michaels and his pimple cream to deal with all week. You think my job's easy?! *(Starts pounding on his back.)* Just because I'm off to expensive dinners and lunches does not mean I'm not working. You talk about exhaustion. I have Harry breathing down my back to bring up the numbers, and keep the clients satisfied. But always keep it bubbly. They expect it. I have to be like *(Full of bubble.)* "Hey! How are ya?!" all the time. It's sick! And of course Reid wanted me to be incredibly enthusiastic about the intricacies of his Zit Zapper. I was eating. *(Squeezing his shoulders hard.)* He went on in detail about the sebaceous glands. That's against the rules!

AARON: What? No glandular talk during dinner?

KIM: Exactly. And I told him it made me sick. I told him but he still went on. I hate that!

AARON: Oww!! *(She stops.)*

KIM: Sorry. *(She begins massaging again.)* What I'm saying is of course you're . . . blocked a little, Aaron. Is there anything I can do to get the juices flowing?
(His eyes widen, but he is not sure how to respond.)

KIM: Oh my! I didn't mean —

AARON: No, no, of course not — nor do I . . . although, if you — I, uh . . . You want some coffee?

KIM: No. Thank. You. I think that's the problem. We've had too much. You're shaking from here to Kansas. Now, let's just sit down here and think things through. I'm sure if I go through the objectives, you'll come up with something brilliant in no time. You're the "feel-the-rush" breath mint guy!

AARON: *(Pridefully.)* That's true. You're right, Kimmie. With two heads bouncing around ideas, we'll be out of here in thirty minutes.

KIM: Sure. Or even less!

AARON: *(To audience.)* Three hours and a large pepperoni with double cheese later . . .

KIM: So let's go over what we have so far.

AARON: I hate how they cut pizzas in Chicago. In little squares like that. It ruins the experience! It's a pizza pie. It's round, no?

KIM: So the nasal spray is in the jungle. Mist happening. Caption reads "Feel the Mist."

AARON: So why do you people cut it in squares? Can you tell me that?

KIM: It's easier to eat. *(Saying it over.)* Feel, feel the mist.

AARON: For who? Then you have pieces with no crust and tons of gunk that get your hands all greasy and pieces that are heavy crust with no gunk.

KIM: It's got a decent depth to it.

AARON: If you are going to get all geometric about it, make square pizzas. Or do you actually like pieces that are gunk-heavy and crust-deprived?

KIM: Can we get back to "Feel the Mist"?

AARON: Sure. But it stinks!

KIM: It does?

AARON: Yes! And doesn't it sound just a wee bit familiar?

KIM: Familiar? Oh. Oh yeah. I didn't notice that. *(Thinking.)* Oooh, I got one! How about "Mist the Mist"?

AARON: Uh-huh. OK. Let's be sure to write that one down some time. Would you look in my third drawer? I have a new pen in there next to the big bottle of scotch.

KIM: OK, sure. Wait a minute! You are not drinking, Aaron!

AARON: Why not? It's my muse finder. I need it to come up with something amusing.

KIM: How's this? You just better think of something fast or you'll be out of a job, pal!

AARON: Well, that's inspiring. I've given you three perfectly good ideas tonight and you've shot them all down.

KIM: Well, forgive me if I'm not thrilled with, "Wow, Inhalo

is amazing,” or “Inhalo helps you inhale better,” or “I inhale better with Inhalo.” Come on, Aaron.

AARON: (*Looking at spray bottle.*) Have you noticed the side effects listed for this thing?

KIM: Yeah. So?

AARON: Do you know this could cause seizures and an oily discharge? What is that?

KIM: They’re just little side effects.

AARON: Little? Side effects? No. Side effects are drowsiness, nausea. These aren’t side effects; they’re frontal attacks.

KIM: Well, you can address them in small print on the print ad and hide them in a deep, fast voice-over at the end of the TV spot.

AARON: How can you hide oily discharge and seizures?

KIM: Look, other companies have done it! I just saw an ad for Promac where people were dancing around and then suddenly in the voice-over, you find out you can get stomach cramps and bad breath.

AARON: Well, bad breath isn’t as bad as a seizure.

KIM: They were dancing around, kissing.

AARON: (*Looks at her.*) At least they weren’t spraying their noses and collapsing!

KIM: The drug sold.

AARON: Well, sure, if you were a depressed, suicidal person and suddenly you take Promac and you’re dancing with Mr. Right and he kisses you and likes it, do you think you’d be upset about your bad breath?

KIM: These are *possible* side effects. Anyway . . .

AARON: I thought the grumpy gorilla with the cold was a great idea. But nooooo!

KIM: Gorilla with a cold? What grumpy gorilla?

AARON: I came up with the idea a week ago. I can see it now. It’s part of the jungle theme. (*Acting it out.*) It’s all misty and hot. Misty, misty, hhhhot, hhhhot. The grumpy, sniffily gorilla with the stuffed up nose growls (*Growls.*) at the poor chirping birds. (*Chirps.*) You be the birds, Kimmie. (*She has*

no idea what this entails.) He scares them. (*Growls at Kim who jumps a bit, trying to be a bird.*) Then ta-da! He spies the Inhalo Nasal Spray among the coconuts. Curious, he smells the bottle and his strong hand squeezes it —

KIM: Do gorillas have hands or paws?

AARON: (*He looks at her.*) I’m on a journey here. And then he inhales. (*Inhales.*) Ahh. It is good. He sniffs again. Ahhhh, he can breathe again. Suddenly, he becomes this gorgeous tan Tarzan with bulging muscles. The birds gather round him, singing, and a scantily clothed woman smiles from behind a palm tree. The music. The caption. “Inhalo — get back to your real nature.” (*He relishes the moment.*) Huhn? Huhn?

KIM: Well . . . it’s humorous.

AARON: (*Insulted.*) Humorous?!

KIM: But when I think of colds, I don’t really think of gorillas and Tarzan. And it has a sort of drug-induced weird thing to it.

AARON: Inhalo *is* a drug! Sure, shoot down my ideas, but can you think of anything? No! *You* come up with a jungle with nasal spray — oh, of course! But suddenly when I add a gorilla and Tarzan, it’s all wrong!

KIM: Now, now, now, don’t take offense. The jungle idea was about water or misting. The idea of trying to make our noses less dried up.

AARON: Less dried up? That’s it? That’s all you want?

KIM: More or less. With a little jungle.

AARON: OK. OK. How about this, the spray bottle stands in the mist and then begins to dance to like a *jungle* beat. And then we just hear the bottle squeeze and a man appears between the trees. He inhales the Inhalo and breathes. And he says, “Sniff, sniff. Ahh, ahh!”

KIM: Uh-huh. (*Pause.*) And then . . . ?

AARON: That’s it.

KIM: “Sniff, sniff, ahh ahh?” That’s the end? That’s the entire copy?

AARON: I thought you just wanted less dried up with a little jungle?

KIM: "Sniff, sniff, ahh ahh." I see the jungle, but where's the less dried-up part?

AARON: (*As if obvious.*) The ahh ahh! It's simplistic, but it has a ring to it. Say it with me. (*He encourages her.*) Come on.

AARON and KIM: "Sniff, sniff, ahh, ahh." (*He nods as if to say, see?*)

KIM: Are you trying to tell me that we are announcing to Lisette Cole, the marketing director of Pharmo, a billion dollar pharmaceutical company, that she is spending over two hundred thousand dollars on copy that reads "Sniff, sniff, ahh, ahh?!"

AARON: You think it's a little flat?

KIM: Flat? I think it's flatter than a thirteen-year-old Calista Flockhart! To be honest, I think it sucks. I think it blows. I think it's the worst thing I've ever heard!

AARON: But it's catchy, right?!

KIM: In a diseased kind of way! And why is the man in the jungle?

AARON: Because you picked the jungle! I'm weeding through your jungle!

KIM: (*To audience.*) Closing in on the three AM hour.

KIM: (*A little drunk.*) Can you pour me another glass of that scotch?

AARON: (*A little drunk.*) You're supposed to be the sober one.

KIM: Oh, you take all the fun out of it.

AARON: You're cute when you're like this.

KIM: You're cute when I'm like this too.

(*Aaron laughs with what's left of his energy.*)

KIM: You were so good on that mint thing . . . what was that thing?

AARON: "Oooh, ahh. It's massive mint. Oooh —

AARON and KIM: (*Lifting their arms.*) "Feel the rush!"

AARON (*Realizes.*) That was good.

KIM: It was fantastic! It was incredible! It was — (*She suddenly grabs him and kisses him.*)

AARON: (*To audience.*) Several scotches and a few Inhalo sniffs later . . .

AARON: I think you're discarding the "sniff sniff" thing too quickly. Sometimes things have to grow on you.

KIM: I don't like things to grow on me. And neither do most people or we wouldn't have a multibillion dollar market for Nair.

AARON: I know it sounds simple, but simplicity is the root of all good advertising. "Coke Is It." "Pepsi Is." "Do the Dew." These are classic. They are not complicated. You know how much that firm probably paid for "Pepsi Is"?

KIM: Yes, but those are beverage campaigns. This is medication. It's serious!

AARON: It's nasal spray! We're not talking about curing cancer.

KIM: Oh Aaron, we talked about this! We aren't emphasizing the truth here. We want the fantasy.

AARON: Oh my God! It's almost eight AM.

KIM: What?! Lisette will be here any minute.

AARON: Don't panic! We just need to work a fantasy around nasal deblockage!

KIM: Oh my God! Go for the little purple pill kinda thing.

AARON: But it's not purple and it's not a pill.

KIM: Oh God! This is terrible!

AARON: Don't worry. We can tell them it temporarily relieves the swelling of nasal membranes!

KIM: People don't want membranes in their ads! Just like I don't want glands during dinner!

AARON: Well, what do you want? A crowd of various people staggered on the tops of jagged rocks out in mountainous terrain reciting testimonials to the Inhalo Nasal Spray with Enya playing in the background?!

KIM: (*Beat.*) My God! That's it! That's brilliant! That's what I want! (*Beat.*) But in a jungle!

AARON: What?!! But what about the copy? What about the words?

KIM: Ah, words are overrated!

AARON: All right done. Let's do it. Jungles and Enya it is. I'm too tired to live.

KIM: *(To audience.)* Of course Lisette listened to the entire Enyaesque presentation. She was not impressed. Aaron quickly segued to the gorilla-Tarzan concept. She thought gorillas had paws. Finally, in desperation, I spouted out "Sniff, sniff, ahh, ahh."

AARON: *(To audience.)* She loved it. She said "Sniff, sniff, ahh, ahh" was the best ad campaign she had heard since "Plop, plop, fizz, fizz." She only made one adjustment.

AARON and KIM: "Sniff, sniff, ahh, ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh."

THICK 'EM UP

Out of desperation Troy, mid-twenties, decides to mug someone tonight to pay for a few Christmas gifts for his young son. Recently divorced and out of work for months, Troy is frantic to bring his son some happiness and some much-asked for presents when the boy comes into town for a short visit. Unfortunately, Troy picks Janice, also mid-twenties, to mug this evening. She is a very angry lady who has just lost her job due to her hot temper. As the scene begins, Troy watches Janice from the alley in a tough neighborhood in Chicago. Janice lags behind the crowd as she gets off the El train.

CHARACTERS

Troy: mid-20s, a mugger

Janice: mid-20s, an angry commuter

SETTING

Urban street near the subway station

TIME

The present; evening

(Suddenly, Troy jumps out of the alley.)

JANICE: *(Screams.)* Ahhhhhh!

TROY: Shh, shh, shh!

JANICE: Don't shhh me! What is your problem? You shouldn't jump out of alleys in front of people.

TROY: I'm thorry. I'm thorry. I wasn't thrying to sare you, sare you — *(Shaking his head.)* scare you!

JANICE: OK. Fine. Apology accepted. *(Mumbling to herself.)* Be patient. Do not blow up. Obviously from the state facility.

TROY: *(Following.)* Hey, I juth need to athk you thomething.

JANICE: Oh great. Look, I can tell you right now, you will not