

the block

By Dana M. Petric

May 1998

THE BLOCK

Premise: Zoe Row is allowed one year to come up with an idea. All hopes are placed on the concept of a great idea. The result of her pontificating is the physicalization of a creative block.

**Style
of the**

setting: 3 dimensional - cartoonish style - checkered floor with illusion of perspective.
Colours - red and yellow.

Costume: pants with suspenders, t-shirt (**Writeous**), cap

Props: computer keyboard (needs to be amplified or have pre-recorded sound of typing on a keyboard)
large, flexible letters
large clock
Photocopies of large images of each character - (each image has a sticky backing. At one point all the alter-egos of Zoe are stuck to her)
slanted ramp structure

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:

ZOE ROW: has short hair and is Woody Allen-like. She has a nasally voice - is dorky, yet smart, and slightly neurotic. She loves computer games. **[Cleans obsessively. Astronomy is her passion? Loves space and time theories. English major.]**

ALTER EGO CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:

BERNIE, THE BRAIN: Southern accent, opinionated, overbearing, brash, bullying

DERGO, THE DEPRESSED: obviously depressed, heavy mannerisms, unmotivated

FILLILA: Flighty, ethereal, new age-ist

CHARLIE: character created by Zoe - she is aware of her existence
- determined, physically strong

CHUCK: tough, streetwise guy who plays in a band

VIRGINIA WOLF: Defined by a mask, the lighthearted side of Virginia

SCENE I.

LIGHTS UP

SOUND CUE: #1

VOICE-OVER

Bye, Zoe.

Sweeping off stage

ZOE

Yeah, okay, bye Miranda. I'm leaving soon. See ya tomorrow.

ZOE sweeping with a broom. A DUST CLOUD FORMS. CHOKING, ZOE SPINS & STUMBLES, COUGHS & FREEZES IN A GAGGING POSITION).

LIGHT: A BRIGHT LIGHT SHINES ON ZOE

SOUND: CUE #2

AUNT FLEND A (ON TAPE)

"Come up with that great idea and write that book you have longed to write. I will give you \$17,432 26 and a deadline of one year to complete it. If you don't, the money must be returned. Fulfill your dream and create your masterpiece, Brenda."

MOVEMENT: ZOE COMES OUT OF THE FREEZE POSITION

ZOE

BRENDA?

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE II.

LIGHTS UP

MUSIC: 3 PLUCKING NOTES

IMAGE: ZOE MIMING BANGING HEAD AGAINST WALL (3 TIMES)

LIGHTS OUT FOR 1 BEAT, LIGHTS UP FOR 2 BEATS

MUSIC: stretched chord - 2 beats

IMAGE: ZOE LYING ON BACK WITH FEET OVER HEAD

LIGHTS OUT FOR 1 BEAT, LIGHTS UP FOR 2 BEATS

MUSIC: down scale - 2 beats

IMAGE: ZOE CROUCHING, STRAIGHTEN LEGS, LOOKS AT AUDIENCE FROM BETWEEN LEGS

LIGHTS OUT FOR 1 BEAT, LIGHTS UP FOR 3 BEATS

MUSIC: feet tap to groovy tune - 3 beats

IMAGE: LEANING AGAINST WALL - HEAD BACK - FEET SPLAYED OUT IN FRONT- continue while lights out)

LIGHTS OUT FOR 1 BEAT, LIGHTS UP

IMAGE: ZOE SQUATTING ON GROUND HOLDING HEAD

MUSIC: twang - head up - wait a beat

ZOE

But I'm *not* Brenda!

MUSIC: twang - head up - wait a beat

LIGHTS OUT

SCENE III.

LIGHTS UP

ZOE face down on ramp - 3 loud sighs

ZOE

Beginning is half the thing..., (*music responds*)

beginning is half the thing..., (*music responds*)

beginning is *half* the thing..., (*music responds*)

beginning is half the *thing*... (*music responds*)

ZOE suddenly jumps to her feet, and turns to audience

ZOE

Beginning is half the thing! If I begin, then I am half finished. But if I never begin, then I will never be finished, and without beginning there is no end to the beginning of the thing. Right? Right. But what is the THING? Thing, thing, thing.

MUSIC CUE: Loud, ominous music

LIGHTS DOWN

SOUND CUE #3: sound of footsteps is heard

LIGHTS UP

Jump/turn - look stage right (do crossover step - look stage left (do crossover step)- take a few steps and stop

ZOE

Did you see it? It was brash, brilliant and full of... substance. Could the thing fit?

LIGHT CUE: flashing

Chase after it - using a Chaplinesque style of movement with old movie music - lights flashing to simulate sped up movement - hop on one foot - grab onto "IDEA" or "IT" object and run behind wall...

MUSIC SOUND: Echo chamber effect

ZOE

(yelling) I try ***the thing*** on in the fitting-room of my mind. My mind, a cubicle marred with black scuff-marks - a buzzing fluorescent light stuck on the wall with a rusty nail hanging below it. Trying ***the thing*** on is like squeezing myself into a bikini in the middle of winter. The harsh lighting reflects every ripple of my mind. I stand stunned.

**Struggle with material with the word "IDEA" written on it. Grapple with it while trying to put it on in front of wall - go back and
Poke out head & say:**

ZOE

(desperate) I need to see how ***the thing*** looks. The mirror is just outside the curtain. But those vultures disguised as people won't leave. An ill-fit is what they're waiting for. Will it fit without messing up my hair? If I undo the gist, suck in my concept, reverse the premise, and turn ***the thing*** inside out - ***the thing*** just might fit.

SOUND CUE: end music

LIGHTS OUT

SOUND CUE #4: sound of ripping is heard

SOUND CUE #5: A bell rings

VOICE OVER

I stand on the balcony of a mogul palace at sunset. A slight breeze wafts through my diaphanous gown as I wait for the vultures to swoop down and devour me.

MUSIC CUE: Bernie's theme - Sentimental Journey

LIGHTS UP

go to under keyboard to pick up Bernie

ZOE

Bernie! There you are. You're looking quite grey today.

BERNIE

My usual pallor.

ZOE

Pal or what of mine?

MUSIC STOPS

... Chasing after empty ideas is all I do lately. Where are you when I need you?

BERNIE

Where am I? As always, in your head.

ZOE

But you're not helping me. You feel so vacuous, empty...

BERNIE

Therefore, the fitting-room metaphor. How simplistic. I am sorry to break it to you, but your brain is a brain. Time to re-write that piece of vapid nothingness.

ZOE

No, it isn't! Even if it is, it's my vapid nothingness. And I like it.

BERNIE

Don't be so positive. You'll never get anywhere by being self-indulgent. Be more... critical.

ZOE

NO! Don't push me! I have to be positive to write something. And then I will revise and revise until there is nothing left to revise. And I am stuck with one word imprinted on the blank page that is you, my brain. Now, you are a blank page. So ponder that.

BERNIE

You don't think much of me, do you?

ZOE

Not much. All you do is constantly criticise. **(mimic Bernie)** *"Too linear, too analytical, too dull. Not enough emotion, passion. More fantasy, illusion, abstraction"...* stop it! What do you want from me? Prodding and pummelling me till my skull is pounding. Leaving me a babbling blob. You know Bernie, if you continue to annoy me I will cut you in half - the right side of you is all I really need. **(pause)** Remember *that!*

BERNIE

You talk the way you write. Like a floofler

ZOE

What does that mean? That I *floofle*? Are you implying I am vague and obscure? Are you picking a fight? Fine, it's time we had it out. **(Look at Bernie)** I expose you for what you

are - an undisciplined, corrupt, sabotaging, lump of wetness,... so impressive with your lobes, fissures, hypothalamus, etc., yet all you are is a mass of ...

(Start wind-up motion) muscularity...oozy, messy matter with activating synapsis!

Smash down to ground, slowly bring up and begin turn & punch full circle - punch up in the air - grab with both hands bring down to chest - do circles, knee bends. End with pose of Bernie imprinted on right side of Zoe's head

MUSIC: boxing music - the blues - twangy, sharp, music softens and fades on pose

LIGHTING CUE: Lights fade to black

SOUND CUE #6: a bell rings

VOICE OVER

I see the empty room - stone walls - long, narrow, barren - void of all things and thoughts like my brain. He tells me it has been cleaned out, but I don't trust him. I know he was in my brain. Get out of my brain! I should tell the big boy that my brain is full of cream of wheat. He knows already - that is frightening. I am afraid to tell him that I have no thoughts.

