

PERIOD PIECE

Written by

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A bare stage. A young woman (PERIOD) sits with her legs pulled up into a ball. She turns and looks at the audience, and smiles. She opens her mouth as if to say something, then stops. After a moment, she looks around, then continues to sit silently. After another moment, she looks around, opens her mouth to speak, then stops. From offstage, we hear...

QUESTION MARK

You planning on start sometime soon? Isn't the clock ticking. Say something. Are you trying to look like an idiot.

PERIOD

Stop.

QUESTION MARK

Stop?

PERIOD

Question Mark, stop!

QUESTION MARK

(Entering, slightly bent
into an arc.)

Stop? How about you start?!

PERIOD

Stop.

QUESTION MARK

I don't stop! I pose questions.

PERIOD

Then wait for an answer...for an extended period of time.

QUESTION MARK

I,...?

PERIOD

(She inhales)

Yeeeeeeesssss. Listen to the sound of nothing.

Long pause in which nothing happens.

QUESTION MARK

What does that mean? Are you nuts? Listen to the sound of the nothing? How am I supposed to do that?

PERIOD

Comma....

QUESTION MARK

(Overlapping)

I swear to god, Period, if you tell me to stop one more time. I will kill you. I..I...I will kill you where you...sit. You hear me? I will... (She mouths KILL YOU WHERE YOU SIT!!!- but no words come out)

PERIOD

You can't do that. Stop. No yelling. It's not your style. Please phrase that in the form...of a question.

QUESTION MARK

Shit. (*PERIOD looks at her. Then, as a question*) Shit? (*PERIOD smiles.*) How can I possibly threaten you in the form of a question? Doesn't it make me seem...well, like I'm not sure exactly WHERE I will kill you? You know? Like you could be standing, or leaning, or something, but would it be okay if I killed you then? While you were sitting? Doesn't it sound that way?

PERIOD

I don't know. I wasn't really listening. Endings never bother me. Even my own. They are kind of a way of life for us periods. Besides, I can't be killed...only erased.

QUESTION MARK

Do you ever get tired of listening to your own new age, bullshit?

PERIOD

Not nice.

QUESTION MARK

It was just a me. (PERIOD looks at her) It was just a me?

PERIOD

You don't fool me. I see right through you my friend. We've been waiting here since the beginning. Page 1. We've seen those we love and those we hate go on before us and kiss the mouth of immortality, but yet, we still wait. Here. In this place. We must be getting closer to the twilight of our time here.

QUESTION MARK

You mean like the Vampires?

PERIOD

No - the other Twilight.

QUESTION MARK

The Zone?

PERIOD

No.

QUESTION MARK

Is there another?

PERIOD

Oh, yes. Yes. You see...

She is interrupted by a loud scream from offstage. EXCLAMATION POINT comes charging in. Through out the play she either screams her lines or at times says them with such diverse (albeit not always necessary) and varied intensities.

EXCLAMATION POINT

Hey! You two are not gonna believe what I just found out!

QUESTION MARK

Jesus? You scared me?

(EXCLAMATION POINT stops)

EXCLAMATION POINT

How many times do I have to tell you that my name isn't Jesus!
And are you asking me if I scared you?! If you don't know, how
the hell should I know?!

PERIOD

Language.

EXCLAMATION POINT

You said it!

PERIOD

I was talking to you.

EXCLAMATION POINT

Piss off then! Do you want to hear my news or not?

(Silence. PERIOD AND

QUESTION MARK nod.)

Alright. That's more like it. So, the news. I got a telegram from
my colon.

Silence.

QUESTION MARK

Your butt sent you a message?

EXCLAMATION POINT

That's very funny, QM. I'm a piece of punctuation. I don't have
a butt. The only ass in the room right now is you!

PERIOD

Stop.

EXCLAMATION POINT

She started it!

QUESTION MARK

What are we? In grade school?

EXCLAMATION POINT

I'm ignoring you! You're so fuggin existential! And that upsets me!

PERIOD

Okay, enough. What did your rear end tell you?

EXCLAMATION POINT

Not my rear end, Period. No! I'm talking about Colon. You remember, him? He was the good looking one in that hung out with the prepositions? Remember?

PERIOD

Oh, yeah. He had the two moles?

EXCLAMATION POINT

That's him.

PERIOD

Didn't he always walk around with a...you know?...semi?

EXCLAMATION POINT

Yes! Yes! That's my colon! Made his way into that beautiful paragraph. God, I couldn't keep my eyes off those dangling participles.

PERIOD

Oh, yes.

EXCLAMATION POINT
Got me hot!

PERIOD
Yes.

EXCLAMATION POINT
HOT!
(The others nod)
People forget that before Colon rocked my world, I was a lonely
backslash.

PERIOD
I remember. But what did he tell you?

EXCLAMATION POINT
Oh! Yeah...we're nearing the end!

PERIOD
What?

QUESTION MARK
What end?

PERIOD
The end of the novel. That's why we are the only three left. The
author is trying to decide if she wants to end her book with a
statement, a question, or at the height of excitement. So, we're
all there is.

QUESTION MARK
What? We're it? DO we know what kind of book this is?

PERIOD
No. We only serve the creator. We do not decide.

QUESTION MARK
Okay, see? Does that sound freaky when she talks like that?

EXCLAMATION POINT

Hell yes! She creeps me out anyway! Always talking about death, and the end, and the afterlife and crap like that. Hate that stuff!

QUESTION MARK

So, what do we do?

EXCLAMATION POINT

Simple. We need to make sure we get into that book. We'll live forever! Never die!

QUESTION MARK

Really?

EXCLAMATION POINT

Really.

QUESTION MARK

How do we do that? Get into the book? Can you really insure it?

PERIOD

No. She can't. Our fate is what it is. The great one will stick us where she will. For she and only she can know the time and the place of the end time.

EXCLAMATION POINT

That's where you're wrong, Sweet Cheeks! I have something exciting to show you!

(She races offstage and returns with a magic 8 Ball. She places it on the ground. They all stare.)

Look at that!

PERIOD

Where did you get this?

EXCLAMATION POINT

I made it.

How? PERIOD

I loved it into existence. Who gives a shit? Do you want to know what it is? EXCLAMATION POINT

I know. PERIOD

What is it? QUESTION MARK

You don't want to know. PERIOD

Don't I? QUESTION MARK

You don't. PERIOD

I don't? QUESTION MARK

Of course you do. It's my new invention...I call it...The Oracle of Delphi. EXCLAMATION POINT
 (Silence. The others burst into hysterical laughter)
 What? What's so funny?

Don't you think that's a stupid name? QUESTION MARK

No! Oracle of Delphi is cool? What did you think I should have called it? Ralph the Talker? Syco-Seer? Oracle of Delphi it is. EXCLAMATION POINT

And here's the good part...the Oracle of Delphi will only give good news! Don't you see? If we listen to it! No blood will be spilled.

QUESTION MARK

How does it work?

EXCLAMATION POINT

Simple. It will give us an answer in the window. Or the 8 will whisper to you if you hold it to your ear.

QUESTION MARK

How did you teach it to talk?

EXCLAMATION POINT

Rosetta Stone. Anyway, the point is...if we can get some info on what we need to do to win the writer over, we'll end up in the book. Okay. First question: Will we all be used? (She shakes the 8-ball and looks in the window) It says Cannot Predict Now. SHIT! (She stops) I'll try again. Next Question: Will I make it into the book? (She flips it over and reads) Reply Hazy: Try Again. (She sakes the 8-Ball with a vengeance.) LOOK YOU LITTLE BASTARD! STOP RIDING THE FENCE! WE DON'T HAVE TIME!!!!

PERIOD

Perhaps if you didn't yell and asked the number - some clarity might appear. Let me see it. (Exclamation Point hands over the 8-Ball) What will the last line of the book be? (She holds the 8-ball up to her ear, nods a few times, then kisses it.) Thank you Ralph.

QUESTION MARK

What did he say?

PERIOD

He said, "You're like the blank I never had. Blank, blank, and blank." (Pause)

QUESTION MARK

What does that mean?

EXCLAMATION POINT

It means we each try that line out - if she likes us - we're in the book. So, what kind of book is this?

QUESTION MARK

I thought it was Historical Fiction.

EXCLAMATION POINT

I thought it was a trashy romance.

PERIOD

I think it's a search for meaning in a meaningless world.

EXCLAMATION POINT

Damn! So, who goes first?

PERIOD

I will. If I'm not used, I'm at peace with that....(She looks skyward) You're like the god I never had. Loving, All-knowing, and Merciful! (Pause. Nothing happens.)

EXCLAMATION POINT

See? Not that type of book. It's a trashy romance novel! I just know it! My turn! (She looks skyward) You're like the lover I never had! Rode hard, left wet, and less filling! (Pause. Nothing happens.)

QUESTION MARK

My turn? (She clears her throat.) You're like the dawn I never had? New, sunny, and hopeful?

Silence. Nothing happens. EXCLAMATION POINT walks around the stage.

EXCLAMATION POINT

Is anyone out there?! Hey come on! Which one of us is it? You have to throw us a bone here! (Pause) Hello? Are you out there? (Pause) Hello?

She finally goes completely off and disappears. After a few moments.

QUESTION MARK

Where did you go? (No answer) Can you hear me? Where did you go? (No answer. She turns to PERIOD.) Where did she go? (She picks up the 8-Ball) Where did she go, Ralph? (Silence)

PERIOD

(Standing for the first time)
She went to be with our creator.

QUESTION MARK

We're in a trashy romance novel?

PERIOD

Not necessarily.

QUESTION MARK

Can you please stop speaking in half-answers?

PERIOD

Very well. This is not the first time you and I have been bested by the exclamation point.

QUESTION MARK

It's not?

PERIOD

No. Not nearly the first. (She pauses) You really don't remember any of this, do you? (QUESTION MARK nods). Haven't you wondered why I simply sit and allow things to happen around me?

QUESTION MARK

No. I thought you were just a turd.

PERIOD

No - many people make that mistake because I'm usually just hanging out at the end, but that's not the reason. It's because I've noticed that people can't simply state anymore. They yell, or question, but they seldom talk... and that's where I'm the most effective, in polite casual conversation. But the world doesn't work that way anymore. No one wants me around. It's all questioning everything, no offense, and yelling. Nothing is civil. So, I suppose I'll just sit here and wait until someone decides to end on a simple sentence. Fitzgerald: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." Orwell: "He loved Big Brother." Hemingway: "After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain." and Beckett: "Where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on." They knew how to end on a period - and I new my place and loved being a part of literature. I miss that. But I can wait. (She picks up the 8-ball) I'm going to put him to bed. (She walks offstage.)

QUESTION MARK

Are you saying I'm the problem? (Pause) When do you think we will find out if we're all used? (No answer) Period? Did you hear? (No answer) Are you there? (No answer. She looks around. Pause. She walks around the stage. The 8-ball rolls back on) Ralph? (She goes over and picks it up) Is there no room for questions anymore? (She reads the answer.) Is there no room for questions anymore? (She reads the answer) Is there no room for questions anymore? (She continues reading/repeating as the lights fade out.