

WHOLE TIME

By Derick Edgren Otero

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS:

*It was the cultural theorist Byung-Chul Han's *The Scent of Time*, particularly the prologue and the concept of 'non-time.' Time is an agreement between people, holding us together, incompletely, forever. That was fun to consider. Hence, this play. (Spacing is playwright's own.)*

Whole Time
(inspired by the concept of "non-time")

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“A long list of events does not produce the tension which characterizes a story, while a very short story may nevertheless possess a powerful narrative tension. And, thus, a very short life can also achieve the ideal of a fulfilled life. The acceleration thesis does not recognize that the real problem today is the fact that life has lost the possibility of reaching a meaningful *conclusion*. It is this fact that leads to the hectic rush and nervousness which characterize contemporary life. One begins ever anew; one zaps through ‘life possibilities’, precisely because of an inability to bring any single possibility to a conclusion. The individual’s life is not informed by a story or meaningful totality. It is misleading to talk of an acceleration of life pursued with the aim of maximizing its possibilities. Upon closer scrutiny, this acceleration turns out to be a nervous restlessness which makes life whizz, so to speak; it hurtles from one possibility to the next. It never achieves rest — that is, completion.”

— Byung-Chul Han, *The Scent of Time*

Characters

B, a woman of the past and present
W, a woman of the future
C, a clocksmith, a woman of all time

Setting

Immaterial.

Time

Oh you'll see.

B holds an old desk clock

B
Time! *Sick* of time—goes and goes where?
Won't make up its mind about itself.

presses clock to side of face, shakes it

B
Now nothing;
Just something, but now nothing

shakes it again

B
Tick-tock.
Tch-tch-tch-tch-tch-tch-tch like that tick-tock.
No tick-tock

shakes it again

B
sound of time, no sound of time

B wrestles with a clock
W enters

W
Stop that noise

B
Well it's broken

W
How so

B
No tick-tock!

W
Ahh

B slams it on the ground, breaks it

W
Good one

B
No hope

W
Ah

B
There was no hope

W
For time—?

B
There was no time

W
Not time or no time?

B
No time

W
So it's gone then it's over it's the end of time

B
It...was a clock

W
and approaching entering non-time, are we

B
No because it was just a clock

W
Out of time, how do we...

B
We get another clock.

W (*really starting to worry*)
Without it...no plans, no purpose, no sense of—

B
No ego! No ego. That's good, isn't it

W
Oh if you don't *shut*—

B
I'll never shut.

W
And that's unsurprising to me because it already happened because everything had happened happened has happened happens is happening will happen will have happened will have been happening would happen

B
Well I had been was was going to be was being am am being will be will have been will be being would be would have been was about to be had been being...so tired of you

W
Well that's marriage

B
Apparently

W
Not time or no time?

B
I wasn't sure

W
You're not sure

B
I *wasn't* sure

W
Same thing now. Exactly the same thing.

B
In some languages

W (*answers finished version of B's thought*)
Not with context—not if you *speak* them

B
All right, all *right!* Sheesh

W
Well, *sensitivity*

B
To language

W
To everything

B
Are you gonna help me fix this?

W
Not my responsibility

B
Then I'll go

W
Where?

B
To the.....clocksmith

W
Oh the *clocksmith* huh?

B
Not the timekeeper

W
Doesn't keep time, is the *wright* of time
like a *craft*;
beautiful, yes.

What's she gonna do?

B
Fix it

W
Oh

B
She'll fix it, she'll fix...*this!*

W
Ah

B
Hm?

W
Us?

B
No *this*

W
You think we're out of time don't you

B
Do you have money?

W
Why

B
Well she's not cheap

W
It's a clock

B
Oh so now we're in agreement about that—

W
I don't believe so...

B
But

W
Clock versus time anyway no
And maybe other things

B
It's a big ask

W
To fix the clock or time?

B
It's a clock!

W
I'm not helping you

B
Won't?

W
Am not

B
Oh but might

W
had not been didn't wasn't going to be are not will not be will not have been *helping* you

B
...ever

W
Not now...so, not Ever

B
Then I guess I should go

W
Huh

B
All right

W
Bye

B
You have *no* money

W
I do but not for you

B
Why not for me?

W
Ha! Been out here all night
with time—why?

B
The tick-tock! Heard it, heard it loud in my ears, siren-loud, sunlight-loud, then it went quiet,
that doesn't concern you? doesn't terrify you? hearing time then time goes quiet?

W
Never happened to me. Can't relate.

B
Money is like time

W (*knows where this is going*)
Noooo no

B
And if you have money

W
Uh uh uh

B
then you must have time

W
You're getting

B
or your money is worthless anyway

W
You think if time is broken—

B
You think time is broken

W
If time is broken which it is then the clocksmith can't work for pay because all payment is an
exchange of time all work all love all being is time, exchanged

B
Different kinds of time but basically yes

W
Maybe I want to see her

B
Well maybe it's not worth it. She can't fix it, right

W
She might

B
What if she refuses

W
I still like seeing her she's nice not everything is about money. Time!

B
Oh you *like* her

W
She's *nice*

B
So now you want to join me

W
Maybe

B
Your time

W
My what?

B
We'll need your money then

W
Fine

B
Where is it

W
I have it

B
You have it?

W (*all at once*)
have had, did have, had, had had, had had had, have, will have, will have had, will have been
having...it

B
This whole time?

W
This. Whole. Time.

*they exit
end of scene*

*in her workshop
the clocksmith holds the broken clock;
she is otherworldly*

C
Oh yeah it's broken

B
I know

C
Pretty broken

B
Can you fix it

C
You wanna know if I can fix it huh

W (*to C*)
I think that's what she wants

B
It's what I would like to happen yes

C
Do you know what a *zine* is?
How is it different than a magazine

W
Independently published, I think

C
Which

W
The *zine*

C
Okay wasn't sure

B
How much?

C
What

B
How much will it *cost*

C
That was so vague, wasn't that vague—

W
It was a little vague given the zine comment

C
I've written down an estimate here

B checks

B
Is that too much?

W
That's too much

B
We can't afford that

C
What do you mean

B
We don't have that much money

C
Do you have time?

B
That's the other issue, according to—

W
It's not just the clocks she broke, Ms. Clocksmith

C
Well?

W
Time, too

B (*about W*)
She's crazy

W
Time is broken

B
Don't listen to her

W
And I'm worried because with time broken how could we pay you at all? How could we pay you with other than time?

C
Well you gals just told me you can't afford my rate anyway so what's your point

W
Oh that's true we're broke

B
But if we give you time we give you money

C
You just said time is broken

B
No *she* said time is broken

W
We don't know if it's broken

B
It's not broken

C
Your clock is definitely broken

B
My fault

C
Why?

B
No tick-tock

C
Ahh

B
So I smashed it to the ground

C
Not a smart move

B
Mmm

C
Prob'ly what broke it

W
It was so noisy all the fixing

B
So quiet, though, too quiet

C
Here's what I'll do

W
Yes

C
Time or no time

B
Mmhm

C
My consulting fee is not cheap

B
Kay

C
but it's cheaper than my hourly rate

W
Oooh

C
I'll give you some advice

W
Oooh!

C
and you can fix it yourself

W
I told you she's nice

B
How much would all that be?

checks

W
We can afford that! Just enough!

B
But what's the advice?

W
Who cares

B
What if it's something we already know

W
Is someone paying you to act this stupid

B
Well imagine giving away your last dime to be told information you already know

W
How would you know what a clocksmith knows

C
You wouldn't

W (*to B*)
See!

B (*dismissive*)
Ahh

W
Not your money anyway. *My* money.

B
But my time!

W
Your *clock*. Both of our times. Together.

B
We won't be able to afford to get home if you're wrong

W
She'll tell us what we need to know we'll fix time we'll make money and life will go on

B
Really

W
I think it's likely yes

B
Well

W
Yeah?

B
Well!

W
You think...

B
Hm

W
You really think it's about time?

B
Always

*W sighs
not the answer she was seeking
but accepts*

W
Okay. Here you go

gives C money

C
Excellent. Okay you've got one minute

B
We need your help

C
With what

B
This clock

C
What about it

B
It's broken!

C
And

B
I can't tell time

C
Ahh there's the problem

B
Oh?

C
Mmhm

W
What is it?

C
No one tells time.

W
Ohhh

B
What do you—

C
Time will tell. You won't tell time. Time will tell. And you must listen.
You must listen to time.

W
Wow. Wow.

B
Stop it.

W
God she's...she's brilliant!

B
No that isn't good advice

C
Anything else? Minute's almost up

B
I want my clock fixed

C
Okay

B
So how do I fix it?

C
You don't need to

B
Well I want to

W
Don't you get it there's no need

B
Time will tell us *what*, then??

C
What should inform time? That which tells it

B
And what tells it? The stars? Or the moon?

C
Time tells all

B
But who told time! Who told time!!!

C
Nope! Your time is *up*, baby

C exits

W
Wow. What a woman.

B
Where is she going!

W
She is so nice

B
Was that it???

W
One of the kindest souls

B
What a waste of money *and* time

W
Do you think she was God?

B
How are we gonna get home

W
Time will tell

B
We have no money now

W
Time will tell

B
Or food

W
Time will tell

B
Please...

W
That's the answer

B
No it's not

W
Okay drop the sass *you* broke the fucking clock in the first place if we wanna be upset about things that are out of our control

B
She didn't tell us anything!

W (*tender*)
But she did, love

B
Go. You want to be with her. Go with her.

W
No. No, no.

B
You think she's *God*, of course you do—how can I compete with that

W
You just didn't listen

B
...I listen

W
Not at all times. Sometimes, but not all times

B
I listen to you

W
Why did you smash the clock?

B
I told you. No tick-tock

W
Well...maybe there was tick-tock...

B (*maybe a small gasp*)
?

W
But you didn't listen

B
No. That couldn't be. I listen

W
You weren't paying attention

B
I was I was *paying* attention

W
Time will always tell. As long as you'll hear it, time will tell.
You can hear it now if you listen

B
No. There's none left for us. You were right...

W
Shhh just listen

B (*crying*)
We won't eat tonight because of a clock

W
Listen to time. Please. You have to listen to time.

B
I wanted to give us time.

W
We *have* time.

B
It's...

W
Don't get upset about it.

B
and you'll never forgive me,
will you?

W
Time will tell

B
But you won't?

W
Time will tell

B
I can't hear it

W
I can.

B
It goes silent. It goes...

W

Just listen. And you'll hear it. There's so much of it. The tick-tock...
We have so much time.

they listen to time

*if the audience applauds,
W shushes it—and there it is,
time*

W

Thank you.

end of play

AUTHOR'S BIO: *Development includes Art Garage, Cherry Lane Theatre, Capital Reportory Theatre, and Rockford New Play Festival. BA, Sarah Lawrence.*