

Tickless Time

BY SUSAN GLASPELL
A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

(In Collaboration with George Cram Cook)

First performed by the Provincetown Players, New York, December
20, 1918

ORIGINAL CAST

IAN JOYCE, *Who Has Made a Sun-dial*
ELOISE JOYCE, *Wedded to the Sun-dial*
MRS. STUBBS, *a Native*
EDDY KNIGHT, *a Standardized Mind*
ALICE KNIGHT, *a Standardized Wife*
ANNIE, *Who Cooks by the Joyces' Clock*
EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

TICKLESS TIME

SCENE: *A garden in Provincetown. On the spectator's right a two-story house runs back from the proscenium--a door towards the front, a second-story window towards the back. Across the back runs a thick-set row of sunflowers nearly concealing a fence or wall. Back of this are trees and sky. There is a gate at the left rear corner of the garden. People entering it come straight toward the front, down the left side and, to reach the house door, pass across the front of the stage. A fence with sunflowers like that at the back closes off the left wing of the stage--a tree behind this left fence.*

The sun-dial stands on a broad step or pedestal which partly masks the digging which takes place behind it. The position of the sun-dial is to the left of the center of the stage midway between front and back.

From behind the tree on the left the late afternoon sun throws a well-defined beam of light upon the horizontal plate of the sun-dial and upon the shaft which supports it. On this shaft is the accompanying diagram: two feet high and clearly visible.

[Illustration]

On the plate of the sun-dial stands the alarm-clock. A huge shovel leans against the wall of the house-corner at the back.

IAN is at the sun-dial. He sights over the style to some distant stake left rear, marking the north. He then sights over the east and west line toward the six o'clock sun. Looks at shadow. Looks at alarm clock. Is intensely pleased.

IAN

[Turning toward house and calling excitedly.] Eloise! Oh, Eloise!

ELOISE

[Inside house.] Hello!

IAN

Come quick! You'll miss it.

ELOISE

[Poking her head out of the second-story window; she cranes her neck to look straight up in the air.] What is it?

IAN

Come down here quick or you'll miss it.

ELOISE

[Disappears from window. A moment later comes running out, one braid of hair up and one braid down. Again looks wildly up in the air.] Where is it?

IAN

[*Absorbed in the sun-dial.*] Where's what?

ELOISE

The airplane.

IAN

Airplane? It's the sun-dial. It's right. Just look at this six o'clock shadow. [*She goes around to the other side of it.*] It's absolutely, mathematically--you're in the way of the sun, Eloise. [*She steps aside.*] Look! the style is set square on the true north--this is the fifteenth of June--the clock is checked to the second by telegraph with the observatory at Washington and see! the clock is exactly nineteen minutes and twenty seconds behind the shadow--the precise difference between Provincetown local time and standard Eastern time.

ELOISE

Then the sun-dial's really finished--and working right! After all these, weeks! Oh, Ian!

[*Embraces him.*]

IAN

It's good to get it right after all those mistakes. [*With vision.*] Why, Eloise, getting this right has been a symbol of man's whole search for truth--the discovery and correction of error--the mind compelled to conform step by step to astronomical fact--to truth.

ELOISE

[*Going to it again.*] And to think that it's the sun-dial which is true and the clock--all the clocks--are wrong! I'm glad it is true. Alice Knight has been here talking to me for an hour. I want to think that something's true.

IAN

That's just it, Eloise. The sun-dial is more than sun-dial. It's a first-hand relation with truth. A personal relation. When you take your time from a clock you are mechanically getting information from a machine. You're nothing but a clock yourself.

ELOISE

Like Alice Knight.

IAN

But the sun-dial--this shadow is an original document--a scholar's source.

ELOISE

To tell time by the shadow of the sun--so large and simple.

IAN

I wouldn't call it simple. Here on this diagram I have worked out--

ELOISE

Dearest, you know I can't understand diagrams. But I get the feeling of it, Ian--the sun, the North star. I love to think that this [*Placing her hands on the style*] is set by the North star. [*Her right hand remains on the style, her left prolongs its line heavenward.*] Why, if I could go on long enough I'd get *to* the North star!

IAN

[*Impressively.*] The line that passes along the edge of this style joins the two poles of the heavens. [*ELOISE pulls away her hand as one who fears an electric shock.*] Look at this slow shadow and what you see is the spin of the earth on its axis. It is not so much the measure of time as time itself made visible.

ELOISE

[*Knitting her brows to get this: escaping to an impetuous generality.*] Ian, which do you think is the more wonderful--space *or* time?

IAN

[*Again sighting over his east and west lines. Good-humoredly.*] Both are a little large for our approbation.

ELOISE

[*Sitting on the steps and putting up the other braid.*] Do you know, Ian, that's the one thing about them I don't quite like. You can't get very intimate with them, can you? They make you so humble. That's one nice thing about a clock. A clock is sometimes wrong.

IAN

Don't you want to live in a first-hand relation to truth?

ELOISE

Yes; yes, I do--generally.

IAN

I have a feeling as of having touched vast forces. To work directly with worlds--it lifts me out of that little routine of our lives which is itself a clock.

ELOISE

[*Catching his exultation.*] Let us *be* like this! Let us have done with clocks!

IAN

Eloise, how wonderful! Can the clocks and live by the sun-dial? Live by the non-automatic sun-dial--as a pledge that we ourselves refuse to be automatons!

ELOISE

Like Alice Knight. [*She takes clock from dial and puts it face downward on the ground.*] I shall never again have anything to do with a clock!

IAN

Eloise! How corking of you! I didn't think you had it in you. [*Raising his right hand.*] Do you solemnly swear to live by the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

ELOISE

[*Her hand upon the sun-dial.*] I swear.

IAN

Bring them!

ELOISE

Bring--?

IAN

The clocks! Bring them! [*Seizes the spade over by the house; begins to dig a grave behind the sun-dial.*] Bring every one! We will bury the clocks before the sun-dial--an offering, a living sacrifice. I tell you this is *great*, Eloise. What is a clock? Something agreed upon and arbitrarily imposed upon us. Standard time. Not true time. Symbolizing the whole standardization of our lives. Clocks! Why, it is clockiness that makes America mechanical and mean! Clock-minded! A clock is a little machine that shuts us out from the wonder of time. [*A large gesture with the shovel.*] Who thinks of spinning worlds when looking at a clock? How *dare* clocks do this to us? But the sundial--because there was creation, because there are worlds outside our world, because space is rhythm and time is flow that shadow falls precisely there and not elsewhere! Bring them, Eloise! I am digging the graves of the clocks!

[ELOISE swept up by this ecstasy, yet frightened at what it is bringing her to, hesitates, then runs to house. IAN digs with rhythmic vigor. A moment later ELOISE is seen peering down at him from window, in her arms a cuckoo clock. It begins to cuckoo, startling ELOISE.]

IAN

That damned cuckoo!

[A moment later ELOISE comes out, bearing cuckoo clock and an old-fashioned clock. IAN'S back is to her; she has to pass the alarm clock, lying where she left it, prone on the ground. She hesitates, then carefully holding the other two clocks in one arm, she stealthily goes rear and puts the alarm clock behind the sunflowers. Then advances with the other two.]

IAN

[While digging.] Into these graves go all that is clock-like in our own minds. All that a clock world has made of us lies buried here!

[ELOISE stands rather appalled at the idea of so much of herself going into a grave. Puts the old-fashioned clock carefully on the ground. Gingerly fits the cuckoo clock into the completed grave. With an exclamation of horror lifts it out of the grave. Listens to its tick. Puts her ear to the sun-dial; listens vainly.]

ELOISE

The sun-dial doesn't tick, does it, Ian?

IAN

Why should it tick?

ELOISE

Do you know, Ian, I [*Timidly*] I like to hear the ticking of a clock. [*No reply. ELOISE holds up the cuckoo clock.*] This was a wedding present.

IAN

No wonder marriage fails.

[*He moves to take it from her.*]

ELOISE

I wonder if we hadn't better leave the cuckoo until tomorrow.

IAN

Flaming worlds! A cuckoo!

ELOISE

Eddy and Alice gave us the cuckoo. You know they're coming back. I asked them for dinner. They might not understand our burying their clock.

IAN

Their failure to understand need not limit our lives.

[*Puts the cuckoo clock in its grave and begins to cover it.*]

ELOISE

[*As the earth goes on.*] I liked the cuckoo! I liked to see him popping out!

IAN

[*Kindly.*] You will grow, Eloise. You will go out to large things now that you have done with small ones.

ELOISE

I hope so. It will be hard on me if I don't.

[*IAN reaches for the other clock.*]

ELOISE

[*Snatching it.*] Oh, Ian, I don't think I ought to bury this one. It's the clock my grandmother started housekeeping with!

IAN

[*Firmly taking clock.*] And see what it did to her. Meticulous old woman!

[*Puts it in its grave.*]

ELOISE

You were glad enough to get her pies and buckwheat cakes.

IAN

She had all the small virtues. But a standardized mind. [*Trampling down the grave.*] She lacked scope. And now--a little grave for little clocks. [*Takes out his watch, puts it in the grave.*] Your watch, Eloise.

ELOISE

[*Holding to her wrist watch.*] I thought I'd keep my watch, Ian. [*Hastily.*] For an ornament, you know.

IAN

We are going to let truth be your ornament, Eloise.

ELOISE

Nobody sees truth. [*With a fresh outburst.*] This watch was my graduation present!

IAN

Symbolizing all the standardized arbitrary things you were taught! Commemorating the clock-like way your mind was made to run. Free yourself of that watch, Eloise. [*ELOISE reluctantly frees herself. IAN briskly covers the watches. Moves to the unfilled grave.*] Is there nothing for this grave? [*ELOISE shakes her head.*] Sure--the alarm clock!

ELOISE

[*Running to the sunflowers and spreading out her skirts before them.*] Oh, Ian, *not* the alarm clock! How would we ever go to Boston? The train doesn't run by the sun.

IAN

Then the train is wrong.

ELOISE

But, Ian, if the train is wrong we have to be wrong to catch the train.

IAN

That's civilization. [*Stands resolutely by the grave.*] The alarm clock, Eloise. The grave awaits it.

ELOISE

[*Taking it up, her arms folded around it.*] I wanted to go to Boston and buy a hat!

IAN

The sun will fall upon your dear head and give you life.

ELOISE

[*About to cry.*] But no style! It ticks so loud and sure!

IAN

All false things are loud and sure.

ELOISE

I need a tick! I am afraid of tickless time!

[*Holding the clock in both hands she places it against her left ear.*

IAN

[*Spade still in his right hand, he places his left arm around her reassuringly.*] You will grow, Eloise. You are growing.

[*He takes the clock as he is saying this. She turns her head backward following the departing clock with surprised and helpless eyes. Disconsolately watches him bury it.*

ELOISE

[*An inspiration.*] Ian! Couldn't you fix the sun-dial to be set and go off?

IAN

[*Pained.*] "Set and go off?" [*Pause; regards the sun.*] *Sine sole sileo.*

ELOISE

What did you say, Ian?

IAN

I said: *Sine sole sileo.*

ELOISE

Well, I don't know what you say when you say that.

IAN

It's a Latin motto I've just thought of for the sun-dial. It means, "Without sun, I am silent." Silence is a great virtue. [*Having finished the grave, he looks around, making sure there are no more clocks. Joyously.*] Now we are freed! Eloise, think what life is going to be! Done with approximations. Done with machine thinking. In a world content with false time, we are true.

ELOISE

[*Sitting on the steps.*] Yes, it's beautiful. I want to be true. It's just that it's a little hard to be true in a false world. For instance, tomorrow I have an appointment with the dentist. If I come on sun-time I suppose I'll be twenty minutes--

IAN

[*Eagerly. Going to the sun-dial and pointing.*] If you will just let me explain this table--[*ELOISE shrinks back. IAN gives it up.*] Oh, well, tell him you are living by the truth.

ELOISE

I'm afraid he'll charge me for it. And when we ask people for dinner at seven, they'll get here at twenty minutes of seven. Or will it be twenty minutes *after* seven?

IAN

[*Smoothing down graves.*] It will be a part of eternal time.

ELOISE

Yes,--*that's* true. Only the roast isn't so eternal. Why do they have clocks wrong?

IAN

Oh, Eloise, I've explained it so many times. You--living in Provincetown, three hundred miles to the eastward, are living by the mean solar time of Philadelphia. [*Venomously.*] Do you *want* to live by the mean solar time of Philadelphia?

ELOISE

Certainly *not*. [*An idea.*] Then has Philadelphia got the right time?

IAN

It's right six miles this side of Philadelphia.

ELOISE

We might move to Philadelphia.

[*Enter through gate, MRS. STUBBS, a Provincetown "native."*]

MRS. STUBBS

Now, Mr. Joyce, this sun clock,--is it running?

IAN

It doesn't "run," Mrs. Stubbs. It is acted upon.

MRS. STUBBS

Oh. Well, is it being acted upon?

IAN

As surely as the sun shines.

MRS. STUBBS

[*Looking at the sun.*] And it is shining today, isn't it? Well, will you tell me the time? My clock has stopped and I want to set it.

IAN

[*Happily.*] You hear, Eloise? Her clock has stopped.

MRS. STUBBS

Yes, I forgot to wind it.

ELOISE

[*Grieved to think of any one living in such a world.*] Wind it!

IAN

Do you not see, Mrs. Stubbs, where the shadow falls? [*She comes up the steps.*] From its millions of spinn--You're in the way of the sun, Mrs. Stubbs. [*She steps aside.*] Its millions of spinning miles the sun casts that shadow and here we know that it is eight minutes past six.

MRS. STUBBS

Now, ain't that wonderful? Dear, dear, I wish Mr. Stubbs could make a sun clock. But he's not handy around the house. Past six. Well, I must hurry back. They work tonight at the cold storage but Mr. Stubbs gets home for his supper at half past six.

[*Starts away, reaching the gate.*]

ELOISE

[*Running to her.*] Oh, Mrs. Stubbs! Don't get his supper by sun time. It wouldn't be ready. It--[*With a hesitant look at IAN*] might get cold. [*MRS. STUBBS stares.*] You see, Mr. Stubbs is coming home by the mean solar time of Philadelphia.

MRS. STUBBS

[*Loyal to MR. STUBBS.*] Who said he was?

ELOISE

[*In distress.*] Oh, it's all so false! And arbitrary!

[*To IAN.*] But I think Mrs. Stubbs had better be false and arbitrary too. Mr. Stubbs might rather have his supper than the truth.

MRS. STUBBS

[*Advancing a little.*] What is this about my being false? And--arbitrary?

ELOISE

You see, you have to be, Mrs. Stubbs. We don't blame you. How can you live by the truth if Mr. Stubbs doesn't work by it?

MRS. STUBBS

This is the first word I ever heard said against Johnnie Stubbs' way of freezin' fish.

ELOISE

Oh, Mrs. Stubbs, if it were *merely* his way of freezing fish!

IAN

Since you are not trying to establish a direct relation with truth, set your clock at five minutes of six. The clocks, as would be clear to you if you would establish a first-hand relation with this diagram, Eloise, are slow.

MRS. STUBBS

You mean your sun clock's wrong.

IAN

All other clocks are wrong.

ELOISE

You live by the mean solar time of Philadelphia.

MRS. STUBBS

I do no such thing!

ELOISE

Yes, you do, Mrs. Stubbs. You see the sun can't be both here and in Philadelphia at the same time. Now could it? So we have to pretend to be where it is in Philadelphia.

MRS. STUBBS

Who said we did?

ELOISE

Well, [*After a look at IAN*] the Government.

MRS. STUBBS

Them congressmen!

ELOISE

But Mr. Joyce and I--You're standing on a grave, Mrs. Stubbs. [*MRS. STUBBS jumps.*] The grave of my grandmother's clock. [*In reply to MRS. STUBBS look of amazement.*] Oh, yes! That clock has done harm enough. Mrs. Stubbs, think what time is--and then consider my grandmother's clock! Tick, tick! Tick, tick! Messing up eternity like that!

MRS. STUBBS

[*After failing to think of anything adequate.*] I must get Mr. Stubbs his supper!

[*Frightened exit.*]

IAN

[*Standing near house door.*] Eloise, how I love you when feeling lifts you out of routine! Do you know, dearest, you are very sensitive in the way you feel feeling? Sometimes I think that to feel feeling is greater than to feel. You're like the dial. Your sensitiveness is the style--the gnomon--to cast the shadow of the feeling all around you and mark what has been felt.

[*They embrace. EDDY and ALICE open the gate.*]

EDDY

Ahem! [*He comes down.*] Ahem! We seem to have come ahead of time.

ELOISE

Oh, Eddy! Alice! [*Moving toward EDDY but not passing the dial.*] We are living by sun time now. You haven't arrived for twenty minutes.

EDDY

We haven't arrived for twenty minutes? [*Feeling of himself.*] Why do I seem to be here?

ALICE

[*Approaching dial.*] So this is the famous sun-dial? How very interesting it is!

ELOISE

It's more than that.

ALICE

Yes, it's really beautiful, isn't it?

ELOISE

It's more than that.

EDDY

Is it?

ELOISE

It's a symbol. It means that Ian and I are done with approximations arbitrarily and falsely imposed upon us.

EDDY

Well, I should think you would be. Who's been doing that to you?

ELOISE

Don't step on the graves, please, Alice.

ALICE

[*Starting back in horror.*] Graves?

ELOISE

[*Pointing down.*] The lies we inherited lie buried there.

EDDY

Well, I should think that might make quite a graveyard. So the sundial is built on lies.

ELOISE

Indeed it is not!

ALICE

Does it keep time?

IAN

It doesn't "keep" time. It gives it.

EDDY

[*Comparing with his watch.*] Well, it gives it wrong. It's twenty minutes fast.

[*IAN and ELOISE smile at one another in a superior way.*]

ALICE

You couldn't expect a home-made clock to be perfectly accurate. I think it's doing very well to come within twenty minutes of the true time.

IAN

It *is* true time.

ELOISE

You think it's twenty minutes fast because your puny, meticulous little watch is twenty minutes slow.

ALICE

Why is it, Eddy? [*Comparing watches across the sun-dial.*] No, Eddy's watch is right by mine.

IAN

And neither of you is right by the truth.

ELOISE

[*Pityingly.*] Don't you know that you are running by the mean solar time of Philadelphia?

EDDY

Well, isn't everybody else running that way?

ELOISE

Does that make it right?

EDDY

I get you. You are going to cast off standard time and live by solar time.

ELOISE

Lies for truth.

EDDY

But how are you going to connect up with other people?

IAN

We can allow for their mistakes.

ELOISE

We will connect with other people in so far as other people are capable of connecting with the truth!

EDDY

I'm afraid you'll be awful lonesome sometimes.

ALICE

But, Eloise, do you mean to say that you are going to insist on being right when other people are wrong?

ELOISE

I insist upon it.

ALICE

What a life!

EDDY

Come now, what difference does it make if we're wrong if we're all wrong together?

IAN

That idea has made a clock of the human mind.

[*Enter ANNIE.*]

ANNIE

Mrs. Joyce, can't I have my clock back now? I don't know when to start dinner.

IAN

[*Consulting dial.*] By true time, Annie, it is twenty minutes past six.

ELOISE

[*Confidentially.*] By false time, it is six.

ANNIE

I have to have my kitchen clock back.

[She looks around for it.]

IAN

We are done with clocks, Annie.

ANNIE

You mean I'm *not* to have it back?

ELOISE

It lies buried there.

ANNIE

Buried? My clock buried? It's not *dead!*

IAN

It's dead to us, Annie.

ANNIE

[After looking at the grave.] Do I get a new clock?

ELOISE

We are going to establish a first-hand relation with truth.

ANNIE

You can't cook without a clock.

IAN

A superstition. And anyway--have you not the sun?

ANNIE

[*After regarding the sun.*] I'd rather have a clock than the sun.

[*Returns to her clockless kitchen.*

IAN

That's what clocks have made of the human mind.

EDDY

[*Coming to IAN.*] Of course, this is all a joke.

IAN

The attempt to reach truth has always been thought a joke.

EDDY

But this isn't any new truth! Why re-reach it?

IAN

I'm reaching it myself. I'm getting the impact--as of a fresh truth.

ALICE

But hasn't it all been worked out for us?

IAN

And we take it never knowing--never *feeling*--what it is we take.

ELOISE

And that has made us the mechanical things we are!

ANNIE

[Frantically rushes in, peeling an onion.] Starting the sauce for the spaghetti. Fry onions in butter three minutes.

[Wildly regards sun-dial--traces curved line of diagram with knife. Looks despairingly at the sun. Tears back into house.]

IAN

You get no sense of wonder in looking at a clock.

ALICE

Yes, do you know, I do. I've always thought that clocks were perfectly wonderful. I never could understand how they could run like that.

ELOISE

I suppose you know they run wrong?

EDDY

What do you mean "run wrong?"

ELOISE

Why, you are running by the mean solar time of Philadelphia! And yet here you are in Provincetown where the sun is a very different matter. You have no direct relation with the sun.

EDDY

That doesn't seem to worry me much.

IAN

No, it wouldn't worry you, Eddy. You're too perfect a product of a standardized world.

[EDDY bows acknowledgment.]

ANNIE

[*Rushing out to look at dial.*] Add meat, brown seven minutes.

[*Measures seven minutes between thumb and finger, holds up this fragment of time made visible and carries it carefully into the house.*

EDDY

That girl'll get heart disease.

IAN

Let her establish a first-hand relation to heat. If she'd take a look at the food instead of the clock--!

EDDY

Trouble is we have to establish a first-hand relation with the spaghetti. [*EDDY now comes down and regards the sun-dial. Moralizes.*] If other people have got the wrong dope, you've got to have the wrong dope or be an off ox.

IAN

Perfect product of a standardized nation!

EDDY

[*Pointing with his stick.*] What's this standardized snake?

IAN

That's my diagram correcting the sun.

EDDY

Does one correct the sun?

ELOISE

[*From behind the dial.*] Ian! Correcting the *sun*!

IAN

You see there are only four days in the year when the apparent time is the same as the average time.

ELOISE

[*In growing alarm.*] Do you mean to tell me the sun is not right with *itself*?

IAN

I've tried to explain it to you, Eloise, but you said you could get the feeling of it without understanding it. This curve [*Pointing*] marks the variation. Here today, you see, the shadow is "right" as you call it-- that is, average. It will be right again here in September and again on December twenty-first.

ALICE

My birthday!

ELOISE

Ian, you mean to say the sun only tells the right *sun*-time four days in the year?

IAN

It always tells the "right" sun-time, but here the said right sun-time is fifteen minutes behind its own average, and here it is sixteen minutes ahead. This scale here across the bottom shows you the number of minutes to add or subtract.

ELOISE

[*With bitterness.*] Add! Subtract! Then you and your sun are false!

IAN

No, Eloise, not false. Merely intricate. Merely not regular. Machines are regular.

ELOISE

You got me to bury the clocks and live by the sun--and now you tell me you have to *fix up* the sun.

IAN

It was you who said bury the clocks.

ELOISE

I suppose you have to do something to the North star too!

IAN

Yes, the North star is not true north.

[*He starts to point out its error, sighting over the style of the dial.*]

ELOISE

What *is* true? What *is* true?

IAN

[*With vision.*] The mind of man.

ELOISE

I think I'd better have a clock. [*A new gust.*] You told me I was to live by the sun and now--after the clocks are in their graves--what I am to live by is *that snake*.

[She points at diagram.]

IAN

You are a victim of misplaced confidence, Eloise. Sometimes when one feels things without understanding them, one feels the wrong thing. But there's nothing to worry about. The sun and I can take care of the sun's irregularities.

EDDY

Take heart, Eloise. It's a standardized sun.

IAN

It's not a blindly accepted sun!

ANNIE

[Who comes as one not to be put aside.] What'll I do when it rains?

IAN

You'll use your mind.

ANNIE

To tell time by? *[Looking to ELOISE.]* I think I'd better find another place.

ALICE

[Coming forward, regarding this as a really serious matter.] No, don't do that, Annie.

ELOISE

[Tearfully.] You don't *know* the wonders of your own mind!

ANNIE

No, ma'm. [*After a look at the sun, becomes terrified.*] It's going down!

EDDY

Yes, it goes down.

ANNIE

How'll we tell time when it's dark?

IAN

Sine sole sileo.

ANNIE

Is that saying how we'll know when it's time to go to bed?

IAN

The doves know when to go to bed.

ANNIE

The doves don't go to the pictures.

ELOISE

[*Hysterically.*] You'll grow, Annie!

ANNIE

I'd rather have a clock!

[*Exit.*

IAN

She'd rather have a clock than grow.

ALICE

Now why can't one do both?

IAN

One doesn't--that's the answer. One merely has the clock. I'd rather be a fool than a machine.

EDDY

I never definitely elected to be either.

IAN

One can be both without electing either.

ELOISE

I want to hear the ticking of a clock!

EDDY

It's a nice thing to hear. The ticking of a clock means the minds of many men. As long as the mind of man has to--fix up the facts of nature in order to create ideal time I feel it's a little more substantial to have the minds of many men.

ALICE

As I've told you before, Eloise, you can't do better than accept the things that have been all worked out for you.

IAN

You hear them, Eloise? You see where this defense of clocks is leading?

ELOISE

Ian, I'm terribly worried--and a little hurt--about the sun. [*As one beginning a dirge.*] The sun has failed me. The North star is false.

IAN

[*Going to her.*] I am here, dearest.

ELOISE

Sometimes you seem so much like space. I am running by the sun--that wobbly sun [*Looking at it*] and everyone else is running by Philadelphia. I want a little clock to tick to me!

IAN

You will grow, dearest.

ELOISE

There's no use growing. The things you grow to are wrong. [*Pressing her hands to her head.*] I need a tick in time!

IAN

[*Striding savagely from her.*] Very well, then; dig up the clocks.

EDDY

Now you're? talking!

[*ELOISE springs up.*]

IAN

Dig up the clocks! And we spend our lives nineteen minutes and twenty seconds apart!

[*ELOISE is arrested, appalled. Dreadful pause.*]

ELOISE

You mean we'd never get together?

IAN

Time would lie between us. I refuse to be re-caught into a clock world. It was you, Eloise, who proposed we give up the clocks and live in this first-hand relation to truth.

ELOISE

I didn't know I was proposing a first-hand relation with that snake!

IAN

It's not a snake! It's a little piece of the long winding road to truth. It's the discarding of error, the adjustment of fact. And I did it myself. And it puts me *on* that road. Oh, I know [*To EDDY and ALICE*] how you can laugh if you yourself feel no need to *feel* truth. And you, Eloise, if you don't want to feel time--return to your mean little clock. What is a clock? A clock is the soulless--

[The alarm clock enters a protest. Smothered sound of the alarm going off underground. ELOISE screams.]

ELOISE

The alarm clock! It's going off!

ALICE

Buried alive!

ELOISE

Oh, no--oh, no! How terrible! Ian, how terrible!

[She runs to him. Alarm clock, being intermittent, goes off again.]

IAN

Eloise, if you listen to the voice of that clock--!

EDDY

How bravely it tries to function in its grave!

ALICE

The death struggle--the last gasp!

[With another scream ELOISE snatches spade, begins to dig; alarm clock gives another little gasp; spade is too slow for her: in her desperation goes to it with her hands. Gets it and, as she holds it aloft, the alarm clock rings its triumph.]

ELOISE

[Holding it to her ear.] It's ticking! It ticks! It ticks! Oh, it's good to hear the ticking of a clock!

[As he hears this, IAN, after a moment of terrible silence, goes and unscrews the plate of the sun-dial. All watch him, afraid to speak. He takes it off, holds it above the grave from which the alarm clock has been rescued.]

ELOISE

Ian! What are you doing? *[He does not answer, but puts the sun-dial in the alarm clock's grave.]* Ian! No! No! Not that! Not your beautiful sun-dial! Oh, no! Not that!

[IAN, having finished the burial of the sun-dial, sees the alarm clock and puts it on the pedestal from which the sun-dial has been taken.]

IAN

We bow down, as of old, to the mechanical. We will have no other god but it.

[He then sits on the step, sunk in gloom. ANNIE appears, in her hand a pail of water.]

ANNIE

This liver has to soak five minutes. I'll soak it here. *[Sees the alarm clock; with a cry of joy.]* My clock! My clock! *[Overcome with emotion.]* Oh! My clock! My clock! Can I take it in the house to finish dinner?

ELOISE

[In a hopeless voice.] Yes, take it away.

[Beaming, ANNIE bears it to her kitchen. ELOISE now kneels behind the grave of the sun-dial.]

EDDY

Let us leave them alone with their dead.

[Leads ALICE to the corner of the house; they look off down the road. ELOISE and IAN sit there on either side of the grave, swaying a little back and forth, as those who mourn.]

ELOISE

[Looking at grave.] I had thought life was going to be so beautiful.

IAN

It might have been.

ELOISE

[Looking at empty pedestal.] I suppose it will never be beautiful again.

IAN

It cannot be beautiful again.

[Suddenly, with a cry, ELOISE gets up and darts to the house: comes racing back with the alarm clock, snatches spade, desperately begins to dig a grave.]

ELOISE

Ian! Ian! Don't you see what I'm doing? I'm willing to have a first-hand relation with the sun even though it's *not* regular.

[But IAN is as one who has lost hope. EDDY and ALICE turn to watch the re-burial of the alarm clock. ANNIE strides in.]

ANNIE

[In no mood for feeling.] Where's my alarm clock?

ELOISE

I am burying it.

ANNIE

Again? *[Looks at sun-dial.]* And even the sun-clock's gone?

EDDY

All is buried. Truth. Error. We have returned to the nothing from which we came.

ANNIE

This settles it. Now I go. I leave.

[Firm with purpose re-enters the house.]

ALICE

[*Excitedly.*] Eloise! She means it!

ELOISE

[*Dully.*] I suppose she does.

[*Continues her grave digging.*

ALICE

But you can't get anybody else! You can't *get* anybody now. Oh, this is madness. What does any of the rest of it matter if you have lost your cook? [*To IAN.*] Eloise can't do the work! Peel potatoes--scrub. What's the difference what's *true* if you have to clean out your own sink? [*Despairing of him she turns to ELOISE.*] Eloise, stop fussing about the moon and stars! You're losing your *cook*!

[*ANNIE comes from the house with suit-case, shawl-strap and hand-bag on long strings. Marches straight to left of stage, makes a face at the sun, marches to gate left rear and off.*

ALICE

Eddy, go *after* her! Heavens! Has *no* one a mind? Go *after* her!

EDDY

What's the good of going after her without a clock?

ALICE

Well, get a clock! For heaven's sake, get a clock! Eloise, get off the grave of the alarm clock! [*ELOISE stands like a monument. To EDDY.*] Well, there are graves all around you. Dig something else up. No! You call her back. I'll--

[*Snatches spade, which is resting against sun-dial pedestal, begins to dig. EDDY stands at back, calling.*

EDDY

Annie! Oh, Annie! *Wait*, Annie!

ALICE

[*While frantically digging.*] Say something to *interest* her, imbecile!

EDDY

[*Stick in one hand, straw hat in the other, making wild signals with both.*] Come home, Annie! Clock! Clock! [*Giving up that job and throwing off his coat.*] You interest her and I'll dig.

[*They change places.*]

ALICE

She's most to the bend! Eddy, don't you know how to *dig*?

[*EDDY, who has been digging with speed and skill, produces the clock with which ELOISE'S grandmother started housekeeping. Starts to dash off with it.*]

ELOISE

[*Dully.*] That clock doesn't keep time. Annie hates it.

IAN

[*As if irritated by all this inefficiency.*] What she wants is the alarm clock. Get off the grave, Eloise.

[*He disinters alarm clock and with it runs after ANNIE. ALICE draws a long breath and rubs her back. EDDY brings the clock he dug up and sets it on the pedestal. Then he looks down at the disturbed graves.*]

EDDY

Here's a watch! [*Lifts it from the grave; holds it out to ELOISE; she does not take it. He puts it on the pedestal beside the clock.*] Here's another watch. [*Holds up IAN'S watch.*] Quite a valuable piece of ground.

[*Now is heard the smothered voice of a cuckoo.*]

ALICE

[*Jumping.*] What's that?

ELOISE

The cuckoo. I suppose it's lonesome.

ALICE

[*Outraged.*] Cuckoo! [*Pointing.*] In that grave? The cuckoo we gave you? [*ELOISE nods.*] You buried our wedding present? [*ELOISE again nods. EDDY and ALICE draw together in indignation.*] Well, I must say, the people who try to lead the right kind of lives *always* do the wrong thing. [*Stiffly.*] I am not accustomed to having my wedding presents put in graves. Will you please dig it up, Eddy? It will do very well on the mantel in our library. And my back nearly broken digging for your cook!

[*She holds her back. While EDDY is digging up the cuckoo, ANNIE and IAN appear and march across from gate to house, ANNIE triumphantly bearing her alarm clock, IAN--a captive at her chariot wheels--following with suit-case, shawl strap and long strings of bag around his wrist. A moment later IAN comes out of the house, looks at each dug-up thing, stands by the grave of the sun-dial. Enter MRS. STUBBS.*]

MRS. STUBBS

Oh, Mr. Joyce, I've come to see your sun-clock again. Mr. Stubbs says *he'll* not be run from Philadelphia. He says if you have got the time straight from the sun--[*Sees that the sun-dial is gone.*] Oh, do you take it in at night?

IAN

The sun-dial lies buried there.

MRS. STUBBS

You've *buried* the sun-clock? And dug up all the *wrong* clocks? [*With a withering glance at ELOISE.*] That's how a smart man's appreciated! What did you bury it for, Mr. Joyce?

[*EDDY gives the cuckoo clock to ALICE.*

IAN

It cannot live in this world where no one wants truth or feeling about truth. This is a world for clocks.

MRS. STUBBS

Well, *I* want truth! And so does Johnnie Stubbs! If you'll excuse my saying so, Mr. Joyce, after you've made a thing that's right you oughtn't to bury it, even if there is nobody to want it. And now that *I* want it--[*MRS. STUBBS takes the spade and begins to dig up the sun-dial. IAN cannot resist this and helps her. He lifts the sun-dial, she brushes it off and he fits it to its place on the pedestal.*] Now there it is, Mr. Joyce, and as good as if it had never seen the grave. [*She looks at the setting sun.*] And there's time for it to make its shadow before this sun has gone.

IAN

The simple mind has beauty.

ELOISE

[*Coming to him.*] I want to be simpler.

MRS. STUBBS

Now what time would you say it was, Mr. Joyce?

IAN

I would say it was twenty minutes of seven, Mrs. Stubbs.

MRS. STUBBS

[Looking at EDDY and ALICE and the cuckoo clock.] And *they* would say it was twenty minutes past six! Well, *I* say: let them that want sun time have sun time and them that want tick time have tick time.

[ANNIE appears at the door.]

ANNIE

[In a flat voice.] It's dinner time!

(CURTAIN)