

Now and Then

By

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ACT I

Scene 1 - Now

Stage Left, Now. The lounge of a flat with a set of shelves containing books, CDs, DVDs. The space of Now takes up around two thirds of the stage.

SIMON is here, sorting through them, putting some into a cardboard box. ANGELA is here checking through the contents of another box on the floor, which SIMON packed earlier. They are splitting up after a few years of marriage.

Conversation is slow with plenty of silences. They just want to get this over with.

Silence.

ANGELA

(Holding a CD toward SIMON without looking at him.)

I think this one's yours.

SIMON

(Taking the CD, putting it on a shelf.)

Oh yeah. Thanks.

SIMON continues looking at ANGELA for a while before turning back to the shelves.

Silence.

SIMON (cont'd)

(Holding a book out to ANGELA.)

Was this yours or mine?

ANGELA doesn't care and doesn't even look. SIMON waves the book around a little as if to attract her attention. She doesn't look.

SIMON (cont'd)

Alright.

SIMON turns back to the shelves again and puts the book into the box.

Silence.

ANGELA

I'm just going to check the stuff upstairs.

ANGELA picks up the box, places it Upstage and walks toward Upstage Right. She freezes momentarily before she reaches the set of Scene 2.

SIMON

I started sorting the drawers out but I haven't looked in the cupboards yet.

(He trails off before finishing as ANGELA has already left the room.)

Scene 2 - Then

Stage Right, Then. A cafe, a table with two chairs outside in the sun. The chairs are facing downstage and angled slightly towards each other, with a small table between and slightly upstage of them. Then takes up one third of the stage.

ANGELA has frozen for a moment on leaving Now and enters Then, walking behind the table and chairs to far Stage Right.

Her mood is lighter than before and she looks around as if expecting to meet someone. Unable to see them she decides on sitting at the table, the Stage Right chair. She continues looking around expectantly for someone, although she isn't sure what he looks like.

SIMON and ANGELA have never met and have been set up on this blind date by a mutual friend, Gillian.

Their nervous energy creates a faster and lighter rhythm than that of Scene 1, despite the slightly awkward pauses here. While they are uncomfortable in this situation they are also falling in love from the moment they both sit down.

SIMON, still in Now, finishes sorting through the books etc after ANGELA has had a chance look around. He turns to face Then and walks neutrally across the stage pausing for a brief moment as he reaches Then. He looks at the scene and then enters it with a much lighter energy than he had in Now. He approaches ANGELA.

SIMON

Angela?

ANGELA

Yes. Oh, hi!

SIMON

Simon.

ANGELA

Yes.

ANGELA stands, they kiss cheeks hello. SIMON only expects one kiss, and begins to sit, but ANGELA offers her other cheek, which SIMON belatedly kisses.

SIMON

Sorry.

They both sit.

Pause.

SIMON (cont'd)

So...

ANGELA

So...

Pause.

SIMON

I wasn't sure what to expect.

ANGELA

Oh.

SIMON

I mean, the café! No, this is fine! Great.

Pause.

Have you been waiting long?

ANGELA

No, I just got here.

SIMON

Great. Is there a waiter...?

ANGELA and SIMON look left, right and upstage together as ANGELA and then SIMON says their next lines...

ANGELA

I'm not sure, I haven't seen one...

SIMON

Oh well...

They smile at each other.

Pause.

ANGELA looks up slowly.

ANGELA

I can't believe how warm it is today.

SIMON

(Relief, big reactions.)
Oh, yes, it's great isn't it. Finally some sun!

ANGELA

I know! Finally. Summer's here!

SIMON

Yes. About time.

Pause.

ANGELA

How's your weekend been?

SIMON

Great, great. And you?

ANGELA

Oh, fine... I went to a wedding yesterday.

SIMON

Oh really?

After saying this SIMON is no longer in Then. He stands, neutrally, and then turns to Stage Left and walks back to his position in Now.

While this happens, ANGELA continues talking as if SIMON is still with her in Then.

ANGELA

Yeah, it was my friend's wedding. It was really lovely. She had the most amazing dress. It was on a boat.

SIMON

(He doesn't speak this line, but ANGELA responds as if he had.)
Oh, I went to a wedding on a boat once.

ANGELA

Really?

SIMON

(Also not spoken.)
Yes, and they had a woman vicar.

ANGELA

Oh really? No, this was a civil wedding.

Scene 3 - Now

As SIMON speaks his first lines, ANGELA stands and walks toward her position in Now, upstage and to the right of SIMON. She is mentally in Now from her first line.

SIMON

(Loud, facing the shelves.)
We have to try.
(Softer, turning to face ANGELA.)
Look. I know... it was my fault.

I don't know how it happened. It didn't start serious.

ANGELA

I can't believe I'm married to you.

SIMON

(Walking to ANGELA.)
I'm sorry.

ANGELA walks directly downstage, away from SIMON, stops facing away from him.

ANGELA

But it was going on for over a month Simon. And you couldn't even tell me the truth.

SIMON

I was going to tell you. I wanted / to tell you but I could never find the right time.

ANGELA

(Interrupting on / and turning to face SIMON)
I had to find out from bloody Gillian. Do you know how stupid that makes me feel?

ANGELA turns away from SIMON again.

SIMON

I know. It's stupid but once we'd started it was harder to stop. I mean it got too, sort of, complicated. / Unstoppable.

ANGELA

(Interrupting.)
I don't believe this. All that time and you couldn't just tell me. Once.

SIMON

(Walking downstage to hold ANGELA.)
I wanted to / but it was so hard Angela.

ANGELA

(Pulling away from SIMON, walking
Upstage Right where she stops.)

I shouldn't have trusted you from the start.

SIMON sees Then and walks neutrally towards it, sitting down in his chair. ANGELA looks at him from Now.

Scene 4 - Then

The cafe, Then. SIMON and ANGELA (who isn't physically back yet) are sitting slightly closer together than in Scene 2 and become more relaxed with each other during this scene.

As SIMON starts speaking ANGELA leaves Now and walks reasonably quickly to her seat, arriving in time for her first line.

SIMON

...she was a bit worried she'd be sea-sick and so she took all these travel sickness pills but they just made her sleepy. I was worried she'd nod off as she walked down the aisle or something.

ANGELA

(Laughs.)

Pause.

ANGELA (cont'd)

Have you been away anywhere recently?

SIMON

I went to a cottage in Wales. Just with some friends for a long weekend.

ANGELA

Where in Wales?

SIMON

Er, it was quite near Hay-on-Wye?

ANGELA

I went there once with my parents when I was a kid.

SIMON

Lots of bookshops.

ANGELA

Yes!

SIMON

It must have been quite boring when you're small. Going round lots of bookshops.

ANGELA

Yeah, it was a bit, but there was this road on the way there and it was all bendy and I used to love going along it in the car because it would go woooo woooo woooo... (*While indicating the swinging movement of the car.*) It was great!

The "woooo woooo woooo" helped to break the thinning ice between them and the conversation begins to flow.

SIMON

(Laughs.)

I had one of those toy steering wheels in our car and I'd pretend to drive us.

ANGELA

I always wanted one of those but my parents said it was just for boys!

SIMON

Awww.

ANGELA

But I used to play this racing car computer game a lot.

SIMON

Oh right, we had a Spectrum...?

ANGELA

Yes! Space Invaders.

SIMON

Yeah.

ANGELA

And that weird thing with a turtle crossing the road. Or a frog?

SIMON

'Frogger'!?

ANGELA

Yes!

SIMON

Or 'Horace Goes Skiing'?

ANGELA

Oh my God!

ANGELA stands and leaves Then. She walks neutrally toward a position downstage, to the Right of the Now area.

SIMON

Yeah, it started out like 'Frogger' and he has to cross the road to get the skis and then the other level is him skiing down the mountain, doing the slalom while you make him avoid the trees.

Scene 5 - Now

ANGELA is in Now. She's just realised SIMON's affair started much longer ago than she first thought.

ANGELA

It was Crete wasn't it?

SIMON, in Then, turns, sees ANGELA, and begins walking toward the shelves in Now, ending with his back to her well before his first line.

ANGELA (cont'd)

That's when it started.

SIMON

...

ANGELA

That was a year and a half ago!

SIMON

...

ANGELA

That day we all went into the mountains but you and Gillian stayed in town.

SIMON

(Turns to face ANGELA.)

Look, it's in the past. / Let's not think about all that.

ANGELA

Wasn't it!

SIMON

It's finished. It doesn't matter when / it started.

ANGELA begins walking slowly toward SIMON.

ANGELA

Tell me! Wasn't it!

SIMON

Stop it Angela.

ANGELA

Tell me!

SIMON
Stop it.

ANGELA
Tell me!

SIMON
(He doesn't need to say anything for
ANGELA to know it's true.)

ANGELA
I'm going to go now.

*ANGELA turns away from SIMON, facing Upstage
Right, and begins walking back to Then, pausing
briefly at the threshold as SIMON speaks:*

SIMON
Don't Angela.

Silence.

Scene 6 - Then

*The cafe, Then. ANGELA and SIMON (not yet back)
are even more relaxed now, with all awkwardness
gone.*

*ANGELA, walking more quickly than in previous
transitions, possibly begins her first line
before she's even back in her chair.*

*As soon as ANGELA sits down, SIMON is back in
Then, listening to her talk, and walks quickly
back to his chair only just in time for his
first line.*

ANGELA
Yes, yes, and that scene where she's got a paper
plane or a toy plane or something and she's making it
fly while that song plays... Not 'Daydream
Believer'...

SIMON
'California Dreaming'!

ANGELA
Yes!

SIMON
It's so great isn't it? I can't believe you've seen
it.

*By this point, if not before, each has a hand on
the table between them.*

ANGELA

I know. Gillian said we had similar taste in films.
She never wants to go with me any more.

SIMON

(Reaching to touch ANGELA's hand in
excitement.)

"No more subtitles!"?

ANGELA

Exactly.

*SIMON realises he's touched her hand and looks
at it, as does ANGELA.*

They look at each other.

SIMON pulls his hand away apologetically.

ANGELA smiles and offers her hand.

SIMON smiles and holds it.

Lights fade out.

THE END.