

**ARTHUR:** Listen, all those people . . . I want you to know something, they did a terrific job on ya. *Silence.* You really look . . . fine. Just fine. *Silence; he comes down the stairs, picks up his coat, stands behind her.* Here. You're shivering. Please take this. . . . *She does not respond; he drapes the coat very delicately over her shoulders.* When it gets windy you can put the hood up, O.K.? *She reaches behind her head, letting her longish hair fall outside the coat. He assists her carefully with a strand or two.* Very real; the hair. . . . *She continues to look the other way. He touches her shoulder gently:* I'm sorry that I upset you. You mustn't take it personally . . . Believe me, you're a pretty girl. You must be a pretty girl because I can't talk to you. I can't talk to you people . . . There's a special code. Some guys know the code. I don't know the code. . . . *Silence.* Please, give me your number. I'll call you. I'm terrific on the telephone. *No reply. He shrugs sadly, turns to leave.* I know I could have a great life if there was just some way to phone it all in. *Starts to walk slowly away.*

**NANCY, quietly:** The hair, y'know . . . the hair *is* real. *He stops, delighted to hear her voice.*

**ARTHUR:** I thought so. It had to be.

**NANCY:** It's just the color that was changed, see.

**ARTHUR:** Well, it's very suitable.

**NANCY, after a moment:** Thank you.

**ARTHUR:** I think it's *all* very suitable.

**NANCY:** Thank you. *After a moment:* It's just the nose, actually, that's not mine.

**ARTHUR:** Really? It certainly *looks* like—

**NANCY:** I know it's not mine because yesterday at Bloomingdale's I saw another girl with it. Dr. Graham, he does a certain style of nose and it turns out there's a goddamn *army* of us walking around New York with it. *They both laugh at this for a moment.*

**ARTHUR:** Coats . . . *(looks up at the sky)* Tall coats, you've got six of them . . .

**NANCY:** Yes, I—

**ARTHUR:** The old guy . . . the old guy, you said he was your father . . .

**NANCY:** I thought you didn't hear that.

**ARTHUR:** I didn't. I just heard it now. It takes about twenty

minutes for sound to reach me. . . . *She laughs, enjoying him.* See what you're doing? You're listening. How do ya do that? You even look like you're listening. That's the hard part. I gotta work so hard on that part I can't hear a thing . . . there's one now . . .

**NANCY:** What?

**ARTHUR:** A gap. And that's just the beginning, that was just a little one—

**NANCY:** Hey, Arthur—

**ARTHUR:** Wait'll the big ones come, they can kill ya—

**NANCY:** Take it easy, we've got plenty to talk about—

## YOU KNOW I CAN'T HEAR YOU WHEN THE WATER'S RUNNING

by Robert Anderson

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### SCENE 2

Robert Anderson's comedy is a quartet of one-act plays, each dealing with the topic of sex. The scene included here is from "The Footsteps of the Dove."

The setting is the basement of a bedding store. George and Harriet have come to pick out a new mattress. Harriet has decided she wants twin beds to replace the old double bed they have used during the twenty-five years of their marriage. George protests. As the salesman continues to explain his merchandise to the couple, George tries to convince his wife of the virtues of their old bed. The salesman, who has witnessed similar scenes before, discreetly leaves them alone for a while. In the

ensuing scene George and Harriet reveal the nature of their relationship and the state of their married life.

**HARRIET**, *turning on George*: You're drunk.

**GEORGE**: On two martinis at lunch? And you drank most of the second one.

**HARRIET**: Yes, to try to prevent something like this. Stop acting like a baby.

**GEORGE**: I am not acting like a baby.

**HARRIET**: Well, like a damned clown, then. We had this all out, over and over again at home. We've discussed it for months.

**GEORGE**: I've changed my mind.

**HARRIET**: It's too late to change your mind. My mind is made up. My God, humiliating me here in front of that man.

**GEORGE**: That man is of no importance to me. My marriage and my sex life are.

**HARRIET**: Yes. The whole store heard about your sex life in graphic detail. You painted me as a bitch who turns you down all the time, and yourself as a man very unsure of his power.

**GEORGE**: I did not.

**HARRIET**: That's the way it sounded. When it wasn't sounding like that, it was like babes in the woods, going to sleep all wrapped around each other. *She sits on the foot of a single bed.*

**GEORGE**: Well, that's the way we do it. You know damned well you pull my left arm up over your shoulder like a blanket. It's your damned night-night, and you couldn't sleep without it. *He demonstrates, sitting beside her.*

**HARRIET**: Night-night or no night-night, I haven't slept soundly in twenty years.

**GEORGE**: I'm fighting for our marriage, Harriet. You may not think I'm serious about it, but I am. Nietzsche said the big crises in our lives do not come with the sound of thunder and lightning, but softly like the footsteps of doves. That is not exact, but it is close enough.

**HARRIET**: Oh, honestly!

**GEORGE**: A man of forty-seven. It's a dangerous age. In a double bed he's got his wife there all the time, just the touch of her, the warmth, is exciting. After twenty-five years the image of the beloved wife is not always sexually stimulating in and of itself. But the touch always is.

**HARRIET**: The image of the beloved husband is not always so stimulating either.

**GEORGE**: I understand that. And I say we're taking a big chance. Across the room alone, a man could lie there night after night saying to himself . . . "Do I really feel like it? It's cold out there." And soon he just forgets about it more and more, and then that distance between them is like the Persian Gulf. And he finally decides he doesn't want to get his feet wet sloshing from bed to bed . . . and then they've had it. The family that lies together dies together.

**HARRIET**, *trying to reason with him, appealing*: George, we've discussed this.

**GEORGE**: We've also discussed divorce. . . . Three times. But when we came up to it, we couldn't do it. And I can't do this. *He gestures at the twin beds.*

**HARRIET**: Well, I've got to. My back. The doctor said. . . .

**GEORGE**: —That damned quack. *Our* doctor didn't say anything about it. But you trekked around to doctor after doctor till one told you . . . some faggot, no doubt . . . to get a single bed.

**HARRIET**: He's a perfectly good doctor.

**GEORGE**: He's a quack and a faggot who thinks it's disgusting for you to sleep with me anyway. What's he know about it? What are you going to do when you get up and go to the john?

**HARRIET**: Oh, for God's sake.

**GEORGE**: You know damned well you hurry back and snuggle up to me and say, "Oh, warm me up." You pull that old left arm over like a blanket. *He hugs her in demonstration.*

**HARRIET**: George, that was all lovely. I'm not regretting any of that. Only times change. People change.

**GEORGE**: People change, and go through changes. I know. And I'm trying to be sympathetic about that. I know right now you feel kind of . . . you want to be left alone. But, Harriet, that's temporary. I know.

**HARRIET**: How do you know and what?

**GEORGE**, being very considerate and delicate: A woman comes back later with fierce desires!

**HARRIET**, amused: Who told you that?

**GEORGE**: I read it. *The Ladies' Home Journal*. (Defensively) . . . I like to know. I like to be informed . . . what's going on inside your head. It's been very helpful to me on several occasions. "Can This Marriage Be Saved?"

**HARRIET**: —Now, George, please. Let's stick to facts. First, my back is breaking. Second, my nerves are shattered from sleeplessness. Third, you are a morning person, and I am a night person. I like to read in bed and sleep late. You like to go right to sleep and get up early. For twenty years I have turned out the light for you, and . . . Oh, this is nonsense. We've been over it all. *She rises and goes to the single beds.*

**GEORGE**: What about a queen size or a king size?

**HARRIET**: We've discussed that. It won't fit in the bedroom. A fifty-four or twins along each wall is all that will fit.

**GEORGE**: Under the windows?

**HARRIET**: And drafts blowing down our necks?

**GEORGE**: Then let's sell the house.

**HARRIET**: Stop being ridiculous.

**GEORGE**: The house is meant to serve *our* purposes, not the other way around. That damned house. I've been breaking my ass to support it, and now it's going to separate me from my wife . . . I want a divorce!

**HARRIET**: All right.

**GEORGE**: You don't care. You don't take me seriously.

**HARRIET**: You have a right to say "I want a divorce" three times a day. I have a right not to take you seriously. Besides, you keep looking at it from your point of view. . . . Old cuddly bears under a quilt . . . a couple of soup spoons nestled in a drawer . . . old night-night. A very romantic picture. Old ever-ready. . . . Subconsciously I may be rebelling against that. I may want the space so that you'll have to make the effort, wade across the Persian Gulf. Get your feet wet. . . . Not just suddenly decide you might as well since you hardly have to move to get it.

**GEORGE**: That's damned unfair. I have never taken you for granted. I have scrupulously concerned myself with your moods and preferences and responses . . . I could have been like

some husbands who just use their wives . . . bang-bang! Thanks for the use of the hall. That's what some husbands do, in case you're interested.

**HARRIET**: Not in our cultural and educational bracket. I've read the articles too . . . so stop congratulating yourself.

**GEORGE**: You sound as though you'd had a miserable time.

**HARRIET**: I haven't, and you know it. Now stop acting like a martyr.

**GEORGE**: A martyr . . . a baby . . . a clown. . . . It's lucky I have a fairly firm image of myself. It will be a miracle now if I can function at all.

**HARRIET**: Really. . . .

**GEORGE**: Lying in a single bed . . . with seven feet between us. How do I feel tonight? She's lying there thinking of me as a baby, a clown, a martyr . . . and I've never given her anything more than every other man in my cultural and educational bracket gives his wife. . . . Better not risk it.

**HARRIET**: Please decide what firmness of mattress you want. Because I would like to order and get this over with and get back to our right minds.

**GEORGE**: What happens six months from now when you return to combat with fierce desires? But I'm over the hill from disuse. Muscles atrophy, you know.

**HARRIET**: People will hear you.

**GEORGE**: I want people to hear me. Specifically, you!

**HARRIET**: I hear you.

**GEORGE**: You hear me, but you're not listening.

**HARRIET**, low: We'll get the thirty-nine-inch width. If you insist, we'll start the nights wrapped around each other . . . and then when you've decided what's playing or *not* playing that night, you can either stay for a while or go back to your own bed.

**GEORGE**: I get the cold bed!

**HARRIET**: I'll go to the other bed. My God!

**GEORGE**: How long do I get to make up my mind each night? Do we set an oven timer?

**HARRIET**: Now, I'm going to look at headboards. You decide on the firmness you want for your mattress. *She moves toward another showroom.*

**GEORGE:** I warn you, Harriet. We are at the Rubicon.

**HARRIET:** I thought it was the Persian Gulf.

**GEORGE:** I can hear the doves!

## DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES

by JP Miller

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### ACT III

Joe Clay is working in the fast-moving and hard-drinking world of Madison Avenue when he meets Kirsten Arnesen. They fall in love and marry. Both have found in each other the perfect drinking companion, and soon their increasing drinking habits become a serious problem for them. Before they can admit to themselves that they are alcoholics, Joe's career collapses, their marriage fails, and they lose the respect of friends and family. In the midst of this deteriorating situation Joe finds the courage and strength to try again—without alcohol and with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous. But Kirsten cannot stop drinking despite Joe's help and encouragement. He realizes the only way he can conquer his alcoholism is by separating from her.

In this final scene of the play Kirsten returns to beg Joe to take her back. Their daughter, Debbie, is asleep in the bedroom.

**JOE:** Kirs . . . *She smiles wanly, he motions her in. She enters, unable to disguise the slight sag of her shoulders and the hint of shuffle in her walk.*

**KIRSTEN,** *looking about her furtively:* Debbie asleep?

**JOE,** *nodding:* It's after eleven.

**KIRSTEN:** I didn't want her to see me.

**JOE:** You don't look— *(he stops himself)*

**KIRSTEN:** So bad? Not as bad as you imagined I would.

Thanks for trying. But I know how I look. This is the way I look when I'm sober. That's enough to make a person drink, wouldn't you say? *Joe answers her little joke with a smile.* Joe—I haven't had a drink in two days.

**JOE:** Well, that's—that's terrific.

**KIRSTEN:** It wasn't easy. But—I wanted to talk to you, so I thought I would try to make myself deserve it, at least a little. Sort of a penance, you might say.

**JOE:** You'd be surprised how much fun you can have sober, once you get the hang of it.

**KIRSTEN:** And you've got the hang of it.

**JOE:** I think so. And believe me, it's the greatest. *She turns away, barely able to keep herself in check.*

**KIRSTEN:** I want to come home.

**JOE,** *finally:* It's been a long road, a lot of detours. I can forgive you, I can try to help you, but I don't know if I can take you back. I don't know if I can forget enough. I thought I could, but now I don't know.

**KIRSTEN:** You're talking about them. Yes, there were plenty of them. But they were nothing. I never looked at them. They had no identity. I never gave anything out of myself to them. I thought they would keep me from being so lonely, but I was just as lonely, because love is the only thing that can keep you from being lonely, and I didn't have that.

**JOE:** I'm listening, Kirs. *Points left:* There's a little kid in there asleep who sure would like to wake up and find you here, so all you have to do is say the right words.

**KIRSTEN:** I don't know if I have the right words. That's why it took me so long to get here. You see—the world looks dirty to me when I'm not drinking—like the water in the Hudson when you look too close. I don't think I can ever stop drinking, Joe—not completely, like you, I couldn't.

**JOE:** You could—

**KIRSTEN:** —if I wanted to, really wanted to. But I don't. I know that now. I want things to look prettier than they are. But I could control it if I had you to help me. I know I could. I know I could be all right if we were back together again and things were like they used to be and I wasn't so nervous. But I need to be loved. I get so lonely from not being loved, I can't stand it.