

JESSICA: But you could never do it, my poor little lamb, would you like me to kill him for you? I'll go offer myself to him and then—

HUGO: Thanks, and anyhow you would fail! I shall act for myself.

JESSICA: But why do you want to kill him? You don't even know the man.

HUGO: So that my wife will take me seriously. Wouldn't you take me seriously then?

JESSICA: Me? I would admire you, hide you, feed you, and entertain you in your hideaway. And when the neighbors turned us in I would throw myself on you despite the police, and I would take you in my arms crying: "I love you."

HUGO: Tell it to me now.

JESSICA: What?

HUGO: That you love me.

JESSICA: I love you.

HUGO: But mean it.

JESSICA: I love you.

HUGO: But you don't really mean it.

JESSICA: What's got into you? Are you playing?

HUGO: No, I'm not playing.

JESSICA: Then why did you ask me that? That's not like you.

HUGO: I don't know. I need to think that you love me. I have a right to that. Come on, say it. Say it as if you meant it.

JESSICA: I love you. I love you. No: I love you. Oh, go to the devil! Let's hear you say it.

HUGO: I love you.

JESSICA: You see, you don't say it any better than I.

HUGO: Jessica, you don't believe what I told you.

JESSICA: That you love me?

HUGO: That I'm going to kill Hoederer.

JESSICA: Of course I believe it.

HUGO: Try hard, Jessica. Be serious.

JESSICA: Why do I have to be serious?

HUGO: Because we can't always be playing.

JESSICA: I don't like to be serious, but I'll do the best I can. I'll play at being serious.

HUGO: Look me in the eyes. No. Don't laugh. Listen to me. It's true about Hoederer. That's why the party sent me here.

JESSICA: I believe you. But why didn't you tell me sooner?

HUGO: Perhaps you would have refused to come here with me.

JESSICA: Why should I refuse? It's a man's job and has nothing to do with me.

HUGO: This is going to be no joke, you know. He seems to be a hard guy.

JESSICA: Oh well, we'll chloroform him and tie him across a cannon's mouth.

HUGO: Jessica! I'm serious.

JESSICA: Me too.

HUGO: You are playing at being serious. You told me so yourself.

JESSICA: No. That's what you're doing.

HUGO: You've got to believe me, I beg you.

JESSICA: I'll believe you when you believe that I'm serious.

HUGO: All right, I believe you.

JESSICA: No. You're playing at believing me.

HUGO: This can go on forever!

THE GOODBYE PEOPLE

by Herb Gardner

Act I

If plays had mottoes, the motto of *The Goodbye People* would probably be Dreamers of the World Unite! And unite they do in this funny and touching play by Herb Gardner. Dreamer number one is Max, seventy years old, who "decided *not* to die" of a heart attack so that he could resurrect his once-successful but long-defunct Coney Island restaurant (Max's Hawaiian Ecstasy). His reason: "I gotta leave something you should know I was around, somethin' says I was alive, somethin' terrific, somethin' classy . . . somethin' beautiful." Dreamer number two

is Arthur, an artist who loves beauty (even to the point of going out to the Coney Island beach at 6 A.M. in February to watch the sunrise) but hates his job as a Christmas-display designer, and who, at the age of forty-one, realizes that "I can't remember what I'd meant to do with it . . . my, y'know, life." Dreamer number three is Nancy, Max's daughter, who a year ago left her husband, changed her name (from Shirley), fixed her nose, dyed her hair, got a therapist and a theatrical agent, and rode off on her ten-speed Peugeot bicycle to discover her life. Unfortunately, the search was taking her somewhat longer than she had anticipated.

The following scene takes place on the beach in front of Max's boarded up restaurant. A few moments earlier Arthur and Max met and talked. During their conversation, and before the sunrise, Arthur fell asleep on his beach chair. Max went off to raise money for his business and Nancy came riding up. Arthur muttered something in his sleep about wanting to quit his job; so when Arthur's boss telephoned for him at the nearby telephone booth (the call was prearranged by Arthur on the hope that while watching a magnificent sunrise he would find the courage to quit his job), Nancy, answering the phone but unable to wake Arthur, told the boss that Arthur was quitting. She then sat on the sand near Arthur and fell asleep. The scene opens with Arthur awakening, startled at finding a strange girl sleeping at his side.

ARTHUR: Oh . . .

NANCY, opens her eyes, also startled: Oh . . .

ARTHUR: Hello. Hello there . . .

NANCY: Arthur, you're awake.

ARTHUR: Yes, Yes, I am. Yes.

NANCY, rising: Hello.

ARTHUR: Hello. How are ya? *Rising:* Good morning. *Stumbling over the bicycle:* Your bike?

NANCY: Yes.

ARTHUR: Nice bike.

NANCY: Ten-speed Peugeot with handle brakes.

ARTHUR: Hey, the old guy . . . the old guy, Silverman, where's—?

NANCY: It's a curse. All night long I'm an old Jewish man and

in the morning I turn into the beautiful girl you see before you.

ARTHUR, to horizon: Oh, God. Oh, my God—

NANCY: What—

ARTHUR: The sun! Looka that! It's up! It's up already! Goddamn sunrise, they slipped another one right past me . . . *(chumps defeated in beach chair)* Looka that. Six mornings in a row . . . *(jumps out of his chair)* Excuse me. You wanna sit down? Forget it, stranger on the beach; who knows, right? I don't blame you. I'm Arthur Korman, I'm harmless, how-are-ya? *Holds out his hand—withdraws it before she can respond.* Right. Watch out, I could be anybody. A nut. This city; I know how you feel. *She sits down on the beach chair.* Beautiful. Look, you sat down. I'm Arthur Korman; I'm completely, completely harmless. *Shakes her hand vigorously.* Don't worry about it. You're free to leave any time. You're a very pretty girl. Exceptional.

NANCY: Thank you, I—

ARTHUR: Don't worry about it. *Sits opposite her, on sand alone.* I'm just going to sit here and you sit there and everything'll be beautiful. You want some coffee?

NANCY: Great; yes.

ARTHUR: Oh; I don't have any. How did you know my name? You must be freezing. Hey, I'll give you my coat.

NANCY: Truth is, I am cold, if it isn't—

ARTHUR: Beautiful. Beautiful. *Taking off his coat:* Situation like this, believe me; you know how to handle yourself. May I ask your name?

NANCY: Nancy Scott.

ARTHUR: Beautiful. I like the way you handle yourself. *He has forgotten to give her the coat.*

NANCY: Excuse me . . .

ARTHUR: Right, baby.

NANCY: Your coat, I—

ARTHUR: Oh, my God, of course—*(rolls it up, tosses it to her like a basketball)*

NANCY: Thank you.

ARTHUR: So what're ya doin' around here? I come to see the sunrise, but I fall asleep.

NANCY: Don't worry; great thing about the sun is that it comes back every morning.

ARTHUR: Even fell asleep on this crazy old guy today . . .

NANCY: He's my father.

ARTHUR: Weather like this, how come you don't wear a coat or something?

NANCY: That crazy old guy, he's my—

ARTHUR: I mean, it's February.

NANCY: Well, when I go to buy coats I think I'm very tall. I've got six tall coats and they all look terrible on me.

ARTHUR: Beautiful.

NANCY: So if I was tall I'd be warm. Meanwhile I'm short and cold.

ARTHUR: Beautiful. Beautiful. See what we're doing? We're talking. Opening up. This is terrific. *After a moment:* You got to let it happen. Letting it happen is what it's all about. *Silence; he picks up his banjo case, opens it, takes out banjo.* This is called a Whyte Lady, this banjo. Great sound. Haven't made 'em for thirty, thirty-five years. *Sits next to her on chunk of driftwood, holding the banjo with great affection.* See this here; carved bone pegs . . . pearl inlay on the frets . . .

NANCY: Would you play something for me? *He holds the banjo in playing position; plucks one of the strings, listens to it critically, tightens it. Silence for a moment. He puts it back in the case.*

ARTHUR: Tell ya what, it wouldn't be a good idea.

NANCY: Why not?

ARTHUR: Because I don't play the banjo.

NANCY: What are you doing with it?

ARTHUR: Carrying it. I carry it.

NANCY: Oh.

ARTHUR: I carry things. Idea is you carry something around long enough you become obligated to it, see; to learn what to do with it. Got the instruction book in there too. And my sculpture tools. Used to do sculpture and I'd like to get back to it, so I carry my tools in there and it reminds me. Of my obligation. *He snaps the case shut. He looks off at the horizon for a few moments; sings softly to himself:*

"If you don't get a letter

Then you'll know I'm in jail . . ."

Silence. Well; 'bye now. *Rises; picks up banjo case.* Yessir, that ol' clock really ticks away, doesn't it? *Shaking her hand vigor-*

ously: This was great. Talking to you. Beautiful to meet you. Beautiful experience here. *Walking briskly to the stairs:* Right; but now it's time to start the ol' day goin', huh?

NANCY: Your . . . your coat, I . . .

ARTHUR, *going up the stairs:* Keep the coat. It's your coat. I want you to have it; it's February.

NANCY, *unbuttoning the Mackinaw:* Take your coat. I don't want it . . .

ARTHUR, *at the top of the stairs; he turns to her:* Please. Please keep it . . .

NANCY, *holding the coat out to him:* I really don't want it. Here . . .

ARTHUR, *a casual wave of his hand:* Hey, keep the coat . . . *(suddenly, desperately, clutching the banjo case)* Please . . . Keep it . . . Keep the goddamn coat, will ya? Lady, I gotta leave now. The gaps. The gaps in the conversation. The gaps are coming! Get out while you can! Believe me, you're in for a losing experience. That's it, lady; that's all I do. You've just seen everything I do. That was it. I don't follow up with anything. I'd like to play you a song on my banjo or invite you for a swim but I don't play I just carry and it's too cold. Forgive me, I'm sorry; goodbye—*(he starts to exit left down the boardwalk)*

NANCY, *shouting:* This is a four-thousand-dollar nose! *Throws his coat down on the sand.* You're walkin' out on a four-thousand-dollar nose here, dummy! *He turns, startled by her outburst.* Don't stand there! Go away! Alla you! I don't need any of you! This is Dr. Graham's nose! A top nose! This is Mr. Gaston's hair! Mr. Gaston of Lexington Avenue! This is my agent's name and this is Dr. Berman's attitude and this voice I'm talking to you with is from Madame Grenier, the vocal coach! I'm not just a pretty girl, I'm a crowd of pretty girl! A convention . . . a parade . . . a . . . *(There are tears in her eyes. She turns away from him, sits down on the beach chair.)* So who needs you; I got company . . . *(she hugs herself against the cold, trembling)* Go away, goodbye; we're goin' over great here . . . Graham, Gaston, Berman, my agent, the madame and me. . . *Silence. A gust of wind.*

ARTHUR, *gently:* Lady, I . . .

NANCY: You still here? *She remains seated with her back to him.*

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

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