



**Sample Pages from
Better Than The Movie - Socially Distanced
Version**

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BETTER THAN THE MOVIE

SOCIALLY DISTANCED VERSION

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Jeffrey Harr



Better Than the Movie - Socially Distanced Version
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Cast of Characters

IW+IM+I Any Gender

BOY: Teen

GIRL: Teen

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER: Any gender, with a huge hat and a huge tub of popcorn

A version of *Better than the Movie* also appears in *Stereotype High* by Jeffrey Harr.

Lights up on an empty stage, except for a single chair on which sits DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER, toward the back of the stage.

BOY and GIRL enter, each with a chair. BOY leads them to one side of the stage, close to the audience.

BOY: How about here? It's close enough to make you feel like you're in the movie.

GIRL: Sure. Yeah. Sounds great.

They set their chairs down six feet apart and sit. After a beat, they look at one another as the socially distanced seating becomes a bit strange.

BOY: Six feet. Weird, huh? I mean, gotta be safe, right?

GIRL: Oh. Right. Definitely.

As they turn to look up at the screen at an absurd angle, as if the screen is a few feet in front of them. Both look horribly uncomfortable.

BOY: (after an awkward pause) Well, this is nice. I mean, I don't even need my contacts to see.

GIRL: Um... I'm really sorry, but... would it be okay if we moved? I mean, it's nice to be close and all, but my neck hurts already and the previews haven't even started yet.

BOY: (totally accommodating) Oh, oh yeah. Absolutely. No big deal. How about we move back?

GIRL: Thanks. That... that'd be great.

They pick up their chairs and move back, setting them down again not far behind DM, who's sitting with a tub of popcorn.

BOY: Oh, yeah. That's a lot better, don't you think?

GIRL: (strains to see past DM's hat) Um... actually, I'm sorry... it's just that... (whispers) he's the only other person in the theater and we're... um... sitting behind him? And his hat is... um... huge.

BOY: Oh. Oh. Got it. You can't see over the Jolly Green Giant's hat.

GIRL looks uncomfortable at BOY speaking so loudly. DM's head slowly rotates backward. He did hear it.

BOY: (*notices that DM heard him*) Oh... um... you know what? We're gonna move 'cause we'd just annoy you with our constant chatter. Kids. You know.

BOY picks up his chair and GIRL follows his lead. He moves them center stage where they put down their chairs and sit. Because they're six feet apart, they can sit on either side of DM.

BOY: How's this? This is good, right?

GIRL: Sure. Yeah. This is great.

BOY: (*relieved*) Oh, look. The pre-previews. (*to himself*) Thank God.

GIRL: Oh. Yeah. I like these.

GIRL is frozen, watching the screen in front of her.

BOY: (*stands, to the audience*) Okay. I'm pretty much flipping out. My panic attacks are having panic attacks. I've wanted to go out with this girl since I first set eyes on her. So I'm in study hall, telling my buddy for the eight-hundredth time that I like her, and he goes, "If you don't ask her out, I swear to God, I'm going to ask her out. And then you'll be totally screwed." You know what? He's crazy. I believed him. So I did it. I asked her out. I didn't think she'd say yes. I mean, why would she? She's the most beautiful girl in the world, and I'm... well... I'm me. Seriously. Look at me. I'm not the guy girls look at and go, "Oh, yeah. I've gotta have me some of that!" And you know what? I'm cool with that. I've come to terms with my lack of hotness. But at the same time, I just wanted this one thing. This one shot. With this one girl. (*pauses, smiles*) And I got it. I have no idea why she said yes, but she did. And now we're here. At the movies. The quintessential first date. Might even go out for some food, afterwards. (*pause*) If I don't have a heart attack.

BOY sits, freezes, watches the screen.

GIRL: (*stands, to the audience*) Okay. I'm totally freaking out. If my nails could bite themselves, they'd be biting themselves. I've wanted to go out with this guy since the first time I laid eyes on him. So I'm texting my girlfriend last night, telling her for the eight-hundredth time that I like him, and she goes, "If he doesn't ask you out, I swear to God, I'm asking him out for you." You know what? She's loco. I believed her. But then, he did it. I couldn't believe it. I mean, he's the dreamiest guy in the universe, and I'm... well... I'm me. Seriously. Look at me. I'm not the girl guys gawk at and go, "Oh, yeah. I've gotta get me some of that!" And you know what?

I'm okay with that. I've resigned myself to my lack of hottiness. But at the same time, I just wanted this one thing. This one shot. With this one guy. (*pauses, smiles*) And I got it. I have no idea why he asked me out, but he did. And now we're here. At the movies. The ultimate first date. Might even go out for some food, afterwards. (*pause*) If I don't vomit from nerves.

GIRL sits back down. BOY looks at her and awkwardly smiles. She smiles back.

They sit, staring at the screen for a few seconds. BOY looks at her with a sincerely loving look until she notices, and he suddenly jerks his head back toward the screen.

They sit, staring at the screen for a few more seconds. GIRL looks at him longingly, biting her lip a little, until he notices, and she suddenly jerks her head back toward the screen.

BOY: Would you like a drink? I could really go for a drink.

GIRL: Oh... Oh yeah... sure... That'd be great. If you don't mind. Thanks. But, you'll miss the previews.

BOY: Oh, that's all right. I don't mind. If you're thirsty, you should definitely have a drink.

BOY pauses, gives her a cheesy, aw-shucks smile, and exits.

GIRL: (*stands, to the audience*) I wonder if he's as nervous as I am. He sure doesn't seem like it. Oh my God. What if he brings back one of those fifty-thousand ounce sodas, and then I have to go to the bathroom? Stupid, stupid, stupid! I can see it now: Our eyes lock across the dark, social distance in a romantic gaze, and BAM! My bladder starts screaming, and I'm forced to make a decision: Unlock my eyes from the gaze of those sweet, limpid pools of blue and go to the bathroom or try to hold it and run the risk of peeing myself. Yeah, that makes a good impression. Wonder how long this movie is. (*thinks for a second*) Maybe I could just sip it. Yeah. That'll work. But what if he realizes I didn't drink it and wonders why he paid five bucks for a soda I obviously didn't want? How could I be so stupid? What am I supposed to do now?

Very frustrated, GIRL sits down. BOY enters wearing surgical gloves with a huge soda in his hand. BOY approaches GIRL and, as soon as he gets within six

feet, stops, immediately aware of social distancing. Awkwardly, BOY sets the soda on the floor by his chair.

BOY: Here... here you go.

GIRL stands and watches as BOY starts yanking the gloves off his hands, comically struggling a little bit, looking over at GIRL as if to say, "Oh, these crazy gloves! You know how it is." Once he removes them after a great deal of effort, he awkwardly stuffs them into his pockets.

Now, GIRL takes a second to figure this out—having to get up to go over and get the stuff while he's standing there. She stands and they look at one another for a second. She lurches toward him, trying to physically indicate that he's got to move for her to come over and get the stuff. He's just not getting it. Just smiling like an idiot, so proud of himself.

GIRL: Thanks. I really appreciate the gloves. That's... um... very thoughtful.

BOY: Can't be too careful. That's what I always say.

GIRL: *(sort of waiting for him to move so she can come over and get the soda)* And for the soda, too. Very, very thoughtful.

BOY: Absolutely my pleasure.

A few awkward beats as GIRL takes a half-step toward him and stops, trying to send the message that she can't come any closer.

GIRL: I am soooooo thirsty, too, so it's really, really nice of you. But... you know... with you standing there...

BOY: *(suddenly realizes the social distancing thing)* Oh! Geez! Duh. Six feet. Right.

In an awkward dance, BOY retreats, GIRL advances until they're far enough apart. She grabs the soda, goes back to her chair, and sits. He returns to his chair and sits.

GIRL: *(making a big show of it, takes a huge sip of soda)* Mmmm. That's really good. I really, really wanted this. Thanks for getting it.

BOY: It was nothing, really. I just went up there and, you know, the girl at the counter was like, "Hi. Would you like the extra-value

combo meal with a large popcorn, extra-large soft drink, and complimentary candy selection?" I said, no thank you.

GIRL: That was very polite of you.

BOY: Well, thank you for noticing. I've always believed in being polite. So, then, I said, "I would like a medium soda, please," medium, because, you know, the extra-large is enough to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

GIRL: You are so right about that. *(she takes another long sip, moans)* So... good. This may, in fact, be the best soda I've ever had in my entire life.

BOY: That's great. I'm glad you like it, because, as you can see, I ended up with the extra-large anyway, because she said, "For just a quarter more you can get the extra-large." And, well, I've always been one for a bargain, so I had to say yes.

GIRL: There's certainly nothing wrong with being a bargain-hunter.

GIRL takes another long sip while he speaks.

BOY: Thanks, but as big as it is, don't feel like you have to drink the whole thing. There's nothing cool about a sugar coma.

GIRL: *(pulls her lips from the straw)* Oh. Well, okay. I appreciate your concern for my health.

DM clears his throat, indicating his annoyance. BOY and GIRL look back.

BOY: Um... no problem. No problem at all.

DM: Shhhhhhhhh!

BOY and GIRL look concerned as both of them try to slink down in their chairs a bit.

GIRL: *(whispers)* Oh, look—the movie's starting.

BOY: *(whispers)* Cool. Guess we better stop talking, huh?

GIRL: *(smiles at him, whispers)* You are so polite.

BOY gestures as if to say, "What can I say? I guess I'm just that kind of guy."

They look at each other, again, for a long enough time to become awkward, then look back at the screen.

After a time, BOY turns his head toward GIRL, staring at her with eyes of love. After a second of his staring at her, she turns her head toward him and, BOY, embarrassed, quickly turns away.

After a bit, GIRL turns back toward the screen and, the second she does, BOY goes back to staring at her, lifting his arm ever-so-slightly, reaching out, longingly, in her direction as if he were close enough to reach out and take her hand.

After a beat, she turns her head back toward him and, mortified, he turns away, thrusting his outstretched hand to his hair, acting as if he has a terrifying itch to scratch, trying to act casual, and failing miserably.

GIRL looks at him strangely and smiles. She thinks it's cute. The second she turns back toward the screen, he turns to her, again. After a few beats, GIRL starts acting as though she really has to go to the bathroom. As she becomes more and more visibly uncomfortable, BOY looks at her strangely.

GIRL: (*whispers*) You know what? I am so hungry. How 'bout I get us some popcorn?

BOY: (*whispers, starts to get up*) Oh. Well, sure, but why don't you let me get it?

GIRL: (*jumps out of her seat, yells*) No!

DM: Down... in... front!

GIRL: (*embarrassed, whispers*) I got it this time. My treat.

BOY: (*yanks a glove out of his pocket*) Want the gloves?

GIRL: (*on her way out, hurrying*) Nope. I'm good. I promise not to touch the popcorn.

GIRL runs off with her soda. BOY watches her go and puts the glove back in his pocket. As soon as she's out, he pops up like a jack-in-the-box.

BOY: (*ecstatic*) Do you believe this? This is soooo cool. I was THIS close. THIS CLOSE! (*holds out his arm, hand extended, reaching out*) My hand, outstretched. Her hand... well... y'know. Right there. Sorta. Like, six feet away, but still. (*holds up his hand, looks at it*) This very hand. (*suddenly changes*) Oh my God. This sweaty, clammy hand. This hand that probably smells like latex, now. This

is the hand of a corpse. A gross hand. A wet, stupid, stinky hand! Who, in their right mind, would want to hold this hand?! I mean, seriously! (*slaps himself with the hand, stops*) Thanks. I needed that. Y'know, now that I'm thinking about it, she has kinda been givin' me the eyes. Know what I mean? Yeah. She's down. (*excitement rising, again*) Who knows? Maybe somebody'll be breaking social distancing tonight. (*all studly now, takes a breath spray out of his pocket and shoots it into his mouth*) Yeah. (*puts it back, looks ultra-confident until going on a coughing jag*) Well... maybe.

BOY sits down as GIRL re-enters with a popcorn. In a re-creation of the soda scene, she approaches him, remembers that she can't just hand it to him, and sets it down. They're just standing there, again, awkwardly.

BOY: None for you?

GIRL: Oh, no. Thank you. That soda was really filling.

DM: Down in front, huh?!

They are still awkwardly staring at one another for a few beats until it dawns on them, again, that they have to move for him to get the popcorn.

GIRL: Oh! Right.

They do the dance, again, her retreating, him advancing and picking up the popcorn.

GIRL: Enjoy!

BOY: Oh, I will. Thanks.

They return to their seats.

After a few beats, BOY puts a few kernels in his mouth. Chews. He turns his head to see her watching him. He makes a gesture as if to say, Mmm. This is really good popcorn. She smiles. He smiles. All is good with the world.

Their eyes locked, he puts another kernel in his mouth. Chews. Makes a cute face at her. She chuckles a little. They're having a moment.

He puts another kernel into his mouth and makes the face again. She chuckles, again. This is just so stinking cute. But this time, while he's chewing, suddenly, his face changes, and he begins showing signs of choking.

It takes GIRL a second to figure it out, but when she does, she stands and starts flipping out. BOY stands and starts convulsing.

DM: For the love of God, down in front!

Gasping for air, BOY falls into the chair, dropping the popcorn on the floor.

Thank you!

GIRL: Oh my God! He's choking! (to BOY) The Heimlich! Do the Heimlich! On the back of the chair!

BOY pulls himself up and pushes his stomach into the back of the chair a few times until the kernel pops out of his mouth. He stands, catching his breath. So relieved.

GIRL: (totally mesmerized by this) Oh my God! Are you okay?

BOY: I'm good, I'm good. Thank you. I... I don't know what I would have done if—

GIRL: Let's not think about it, okay? I'm just glad you're alright.

DM: D-O-W-N... I-N... F-R-O-N-T! Ahhhh!

BOY: (sweetly, totally ignoring DM) Really?

GIRL: (just as sweetly) Well... yeah. Of course.

The two of them simultaneously look away from each other with goofy grins.

DM: Hey, down in front! We're all super-stoked that you're okay. Now, sit down!

Aware, suddenly, that they're standing, they sit and get comfortable again, staring at the screen.

BOY: (after a pause, picks up the popcorn like he's going to eat some more, then stops himself) Oh, maybe I should cool it on the popcorn.

As BOY turns toward GIRL to set the popcorn down on the ground, he notices her staring at him with a loving gaze, and stops, popcorn in hand. Suddenly, just as he did before, she outstretches her arm to him. He can hardly contain his excitement. He's so moved by this, he raises his arm to return the gesture as if their hands could meet in the space between them and, just



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