



Sample Pages from
If You Can't Make 'em Laugh, Make 'em Cry -
Virtual Version

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IF YOU CAN'T
MAKE 'EM LAUGH,
MAKE 'EM CRY
VIRTUAL VERSION

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Jeffrey Harr



If You Can't Make 'em Laugh, Make 'em Cry

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Cast of Characters

2W

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE
MISS JOHNSON

A version of *If You Can't Make 'em Laugh Make 'em Cry* also appears in *Stereotype High* by Jeffrey Harr.

MISS JOHNSON sits on screen. She has a pen and something to write on.

MISS JOHNSON: Imagine you're a first-year teacher. You're interviewing with the principal of the school who says, "Y'know, Miss Johnson, we sure are impressed by you. And as much as we'd love to see you in one of our classrooms, we have a few extracurriculars we need filled." You really, really want the job so you say, "I would be proud to do anything you need." And that's how it happens. That's how you end up as the middle school drama director. Oh, and here's a fun fact: Since the pandemic, we're doing a virtual show. How do you like that? I can't audition the kids in person, so I have to have a Zoom meeting for each and every kid so they can audition. It's insane. And sixth-graders are the worst—ready to pummel you with tween enthusiasm and acting skills they learned from watching Disney Channel. So you take a Xanax or two, mentally prepare yourself for the longest few days of your life, and try to remember not to make too many kids cry... if you can. If I do, I can always exit the meeting and tell 'em something went wrong with my WiFi. *(checks the time)* Crap. Ten minutes. Better hit the bathroom before the next Julia Roberts comes in.

MISS JOHNSON gets up, leaving her paper/pen on the chair. ANNAROSAROSEMARIE appears, her face super close to the screen; even when she backs away or moves to "act," she returns with her face as close to the screen as possible.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(in an exaggerated, hyperactive sixth-grade girl tone/voice)* Just a few more minutes! OmigodOmigodOmigod. I can't believe I'm here—the audition where my acting career will...just...b-a-h-lossom! Where I inspire tears like Kate Winslet in *Titanic*. *(goes down on one knee, melodramatically)* I'll never let go, Jack! I'll never let go! *(herself, again)* Where I inspire righteous indignation like Vivian Leigh in *Gone with the Wind*. *(takes a dramatic stance, powerfully)* With God as my witness, I will never go hungry again! *(herself, again)* Where I inspire fear like Faye Dunaway in *Mommie Dearest*. *(straight as a board, insanely)* No more wire hangers! Ever! *(taking it down a notch, herself, again)* Oh, yeah. You know I'm rockin' this one out. *(starts doing physical warm-up exercises)* This is my first audition, like, ever, and I'm gonna make it count. Miss Johnson will have no choice but to cast me in the lead role. No choice. I'm gonna tear this up, chew it like Bubbalicious, and spit it out. *(like a cheerleader)* Who's bad? I'm bad. Said who's bad? I'm bad. Oh yeah. That's right.

MISS JOHNSON enters, grabs her paper/pen, and sits, looking frustrated that a kid has popped onto her screen before she was ready to begin auditions.

MISS JOHNSON: *(to herself)* Why not? The sooner we start, the sooner I'm done. *(to ANNAROSAROSEMARIE)* So, you're the first audition? *(with mock sincerity)* How exciting for you.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: I signed up the SECOND I saw the email, Miss Johnson. And then I waited and I waited and I waited for the meeting code and then, yesterday, BAM! There it was. And I told EVERYONE in my family that I needed all the WiFi I could get so STAY OFF the internet, people! I signed in two hours ago and I've been practicing, practicing, practicing and now, actually, I have to pee, like, really bad, but it's cool. It'll help me stay in the moment. Oh. Oh my god. I'm so stupid! I'm sorry. I never told you my name. My name is—

MISS JOHNSON: Um, sorry, there, sweet pea, but I'm going to have to ask you to move back a little from the camera.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(confused)* Move back? But then you won't be able to see my facial emoting.

MISS JOHNSON: That's okay. I'm sure it's fabulous.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(moves back so little it's almost indiscernible)* How's that, Miss Johnson?

MISS JOHNSON: A little more, kiddo.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(moves back a tiny bit more)* How 'bout now?

MISS JOHNSON: More.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(moves back a tiny bit more)* Annnnnnd now?

MISS JOHNSON: *(losing patience)* A foot or so. Move back a foot or so. I can still see the bumps on your tonsils.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE moves back so far she can barely be seen.

MISS JOHNSON: *(about to have a stroke)* That's too far. My god, now I can't see you.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Okay, Miss Johnson, I'm gonna start moving closer and you tell me when it's just where you want it. Here I go.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE, *ever-so-slowly, creeps closer and closer to the screen, saying, "Now? Now? Now?" the whole time, until MISS JOHNSON cuts her off.*

MISS JOHNSON: There! Stop. Good. Now—

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Well, alright, Miss Johnson! We got it! Teamwork makes the dream work! Don't get me wrong—I know my place. You're the director. What you say goes. You have a plan. You have a vision. And you'll see to it that your players mold themselves to suit your—

MISS JOHNSON: (*wrinkles her nose*) Um... yeah... right. I'm glad we're all on the same page, then. Okay. Name?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Oh, that's right. I never got a chance to give you that, did I? Well, Miss Johnson, I have four names, which is funny, really. I mean, you know how most people only have three? Well—

MISS JOHNSON: One. One name. First name. What is it?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Oh. Oh, yes, Miss Johnson. Of course. My first name is Annarosarosemarie.

MISS JOHNSON: I said one name.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Yes, Miss Johnson. That is my first name.

MISS JOHNSON: Okey-dokey. (*writes it down*) Have it your way, Annafofanarosannadanna.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Um, Miss Johnson? It's Annarosa—

MISS JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah. Thanks so much. Look, we need to get rollin' here, kid, so whenever you're ready.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Absolutely, Miss Johnson. I am SO ready for this. I've been waiting for this opportunity ever since I first saw *Sesame Street* and said to myself, "Annarosarosemarie? You need to be an actor. Reach out with your feelings. Speak to people with your—"

MISS JOHNSON: (*rubs her temples*) That's wonderful. Truly. Now, the audition piece, please. Before we all grow old and die.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*laughs*) That's a good one, Miss Johnson. Really. YOU oughta be the one auditioning!

MISS JOHNSON: The audition piece, Annalolafalana, if you please.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: Yes. Yes, of course. My audition piece. Get ready to feel the pain, Miss Johnson.

MISS JOHNSON: Oh, I'm feelin' the pain. Believe me.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*gets ready, maybe even gets up and paces a bit, talking to herself*) Okay, okay. Here we go. Showtime, baby.

MISS JOHNSON checks the time, sighs, shows signs of serious discomfort while ANNAROSAROSEMARIE prepares, taking an inordinate amount of time getting into a seated pose that can only be described as a position of one still seat-belted to the chair after having just crashed in an airplane.

There is silence for several seconds as ANNAROSAROSEMARIE, ever-so-carefully, assumes her final position. MISS JOHNSON puts her head in her hands.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*goes from dead silent and still to wide-eyed, open-mouthed, shrieks*) Ahhhhhhhh!

MISS JOHNSON is almost startled into falling out of her chair. ANNAROSAROSEMARIE goes quiet again.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*suddenly*) Ahhhhhhhhhh!

MISS JOHNSON: (*to herself*) Oh, for the love of God.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*as melodramatically as possible from a seated position*) Why, Johnny, you desperate desperado of desperation! How dare you awaken me from a perfectly perfect slumber just to tell me that you don't need me anymore! Why, it's all a woman can do not to entirely fall apart at a moment like this! Just utterly fall... to... pieces! (*suddenly becomes more sober, head down*) But I've got some news, too, Mr. Johnny Ringo. I surely do. You remember that night, at Rosie's Saloon? We danced all night and drank whiskey 'til the dawn? Oh, I know you remember. There's no need to deny it. To deny those sweet, lovin' feelins you know you once had for me. Because... well, Johnny... I'm not sure how to say this except to just say it: I'm with child. Your child, Johnny. Little Johnny Junior. (*perks up*) Oh, Johnny, won't it be grand? We'll get married, raise little Johnny Junior at a sprawling ranch we'll build ourselves. Well, I mean, you'll build it, my love, and I'll be inside bakin' pies and tendin' to little Johnny Junior. Oh, Johnny, how I do love you! (*dramatic change, suddenly very sad*) Why, Johnny... how... how could you say that... after all we've been through? I mean... (*starts breaking down, cries, acts as if she's*

shooing him away then shouts) Love 'em and leave 'em, huh? Is that what it is, Johnny? Go away! Just go away! If you don't love me, Johnny Ringo, I swear, I'll go find me a man who will!

MISS JOHNSON: Um... Annalalaloosa, why aren't you doing the excerpt?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(still in character, confused)* Excerpt?

MISS JOHNSON: Uh, yeah, the excerpt I provided with the email? It's a clipping from the play we're doing.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(comes out of character)* Oh, uh, I'm so sorry, Miss Johnson. I had no idea we had scripts already. I mean, well, this is my first audition, like, ever, and I guess I'm just unaware of the way these things are done.

MISS JOHNSON: Yeah. Right. So, where on earth did you come up with the western thing?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: That? Oh, I wrote that. I call it *The Love Child of Johnny Ringo*.

MISS JOHNSON: *(laughs)* You wrote that?

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(begins to sense MISS JOHNSON's scorn)* Well... yes, I did. Is... is that bad?

MISS JOHNSON: No. Not at all. It's a sort of *Days of Our Lives* meets *Guns* smoke.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(perks up)* That's what I think, too! I was shooting for something that required the range of emotion I needed to showcase my acting talent.

MISS JOHNSON: *(laughs)* It certainly shows a range of emotion. Ludicrously. Obnoxiously. But it does.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(suddenly downtrodden again)* Ludicrously? Really, Miss Johnson?

MISS JOHNSON: Look, Annamonalola, it's just that this is going to be a really long day, and—

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(more upset)* Did you really think it was... ludicrous?

MISS JOHNSON: *(suddenly realizing that ANNAROSAROSEMARIE's upset)* I'm... look... I didn't mean to say it was ludicrous. I suppose I—



help@theatrefolk.com www.theatrefolk.com

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