



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

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

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Jeffrey Harr



If You Can't Make 'em Laugh, Make 'em Cry
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Printed in the USA

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.

Lights up on MISS JOHNSON standing center stage, a chair behind her, on which rests a clipboard with paper and a pen.

MISS JOHNSON: Imagine you're a first-year teacher. You're interviewing with the principal of the school who says, "Ya 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. That's how you end up with a line of about three thousand giddy sixth-graders outside your door, ready to pummel you with tween enthusiasm and torment you with acting they learned from watching Disney Channel. So you take a Xanax or two, mentally prepare yourself for the longest night of your life, and try to remember not to make too many kids cry... if you can. *(checks her watch)* Crap. Ten minutes. Better hit the bathroom before the next Julia Roberts comes in.

MISS JOHNSON exits, leaving the clipboard on the chair. ANNAROSAROSEMARIE enters, takes center stage.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: *(in an exaggerated, hyperactive sixth-grade girl tone/voice)* OmigodOmigodOmigod. I can't believe I'm here—in the room where my acting career will just b-a-h-lossom! Where I'll 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'll 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, moving to the other side of the stage)* Where I inspire fear like Faye Dunaway in *Mommie Dearest*. *(stands straight as a board, insanely)* No more wire hangers! Ever! *(takes 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 Bubblicious, 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 the clipboard, and sits, looking frustrated that a kid has entered before she was ready to begin auditions.

MISS JOHNSON: *(to herself)* Why not? The sooner we start, the sooner I'm outta here. *(to ANNAROSAROSEMARIE)* So, you're the

first audition of the night? (*with mock sincerity*) How exciting for you.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*turning her back to the audience to talk to MISS JOHNSON*) I was the first one in line, Miss Johnson. I came directly from math, next door, and stood outside for the last twenty-five minutes. 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 need you to turn around.

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

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

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*turns around to face the audience*) Well, have it your way, Miss Johnson. After all, 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 you—

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 outta be up here.

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, paces a bit, talks to herself*) Okay, okay. Here we go. Showtime, baby.

MISS JOHNSON checks her watch, sighs, shows signs of serious discomfort while ANNAROSAROSEMARIE is preparing, taking an inordinate amount of time getting down on the floor in a pose that can only be described as a crash position of one thrown from a plane.

There is silence for several seconds as ANNAROSAROSEMARIE, ever-so-carefully, assumes her final position.

MISS JOHNSON puts her head in her hands.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*jumps up, 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: (*gets to her feet, melodramatically works her way around the stage*) 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' feels 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 tending 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 packet?

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

MISS JOHNSON: Yeah, the packet outside the door? It's a clipping from the play we're doing.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*stands, 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 *Gunsmoke*.

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 night, 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—

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*begins to cry*) I know it's not perfect. I'm aware that it's certainly not professional quality. But... but... I worked so hard, blew off my homework for a month, and practiced every night until my parents threatened to kill me.

MISS JOHNSON: (*goes to her*) Hey... um...

*MISS JOHNSON puts her hand on
ANNAROSAROSEMARIE.*

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*utterly blubbers*) |||||||||
SSSSUUUUUCCCCCKKKK!

MISS JOHNSON: (*while ANNAROSAROSEMARIE continues to wail*) No... no, you don't. You don't suck. You're... um... well... you're actually pretty good.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*still wailing*) NO, I'M NOT! I'M NOT GOOD! I'M TERRIBLE! I'M HORRIBLE! I'M—

MISS JOHNSON: (*grabs ANNAROSAROSEMARIE by the shoulders*) Get a hold of yourself! You're not terrible! You're a fine actress. You are!

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: REALLY?

MISS JOHNSON: (*cups ANNAROSAROSEMARIE's face*) Yes, yes. You're phenomenal. Now, stop crying. Please. Just stop crying.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: (*calms*) You're not just saying that?

MISS JOHNSON: Of course not.

ANNAROSAROSEMARIE: 'Cause if I thought you were just saying that to make me feel better—

MISS JOHNSON: I'm not, Annamonalola. I'm not. It's just that... well... the truth of it is...

*MISS JOHNSON moves to her chair and starts
breaking down.*



help@theatrefolk.com www.theatrefolk.com

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