



**Sample Pages from
Better Than The Movie**

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BETTER THAN THE MOVIE

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Jeffrey Harr



Better Than the Movie
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Cast of Characters

IW+IM+I Either

BOY, teen

GIRL, teen

DISGRUNTLED MOVIEGOER, male or female

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, very far downstage)* How about here? It's close enough to make you feel like you're in the movie.

GIRL: *(follows)* Sure. Yeah. Sounds great.

They set their chairs down beside one another and sit. Both look horribly uncomfortable. They don't look at each other, but look up at an absurd angle, as if the screen is right in front of them.

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 around DM)* Um... actually, I'm sorry... it's just that... *(whispers)* he's the only other person in the theater and we're... um... sitting right behind him? And he's... um... huge.

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

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

BOY: Oh... um... you know what? We're just gonna move 'cause we'd just annoy you with our constant chatter. Kids. You know.

BOY picks up his chair, grabs GIRL, and moves them to center stage, where they put their chairs down and sit.

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 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 smiles, awkwardly. 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? You look like you 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 pops, and then, I have to go to the bathroom? Stupid, stupid, stupid! I can see it now: We're just getting all snuggly, he leans over, about to kiss me, and BAM! My bladder starts screaming, and I'm forced to make a decision: Unlock myself from his sweet embrace 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 pop 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 with a huge soda in one hand, a booster seat in the other. He hands GIRL the soda and she takes it.

BOY: Here you go.

GIRL: Thanks. Hey, what's with the booster seat?

BOY: (*sheepishly*) Oh, that. Well, you're small, and... well... I just wanted to make sure you could see.

GIRL: (*not sure what to make out of this gesture, takes the booster seat*) Um... thanks. You are so... thoughtful. Let's just put that under here for a bit.

GIRL places the booster seat under her chair. They sit.

GIRL: *(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 two medium sodas, 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!

GIRL and BOY look concerned as both of them 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 starts playing with his hands, trying to figure out a sly way to put his in hers. When he does put his hand on hers, she looks happily surprised, although the both of them stare straight ahead the entire time. Both of them smile like idiots at their hand holding.

Not long after, 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*) Oh. Well, sure, but why don’t you let me get it?

BOY starts to get up until GIRL grabs him and pushes him down.

GIRL: No!

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

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

GIRL runs off with her soda. BOY watches her go; as soon as she’s out, he pops up like a jack-in-the-box.

BOY: (*ecstatic*) Do you believe this? I’m holding her hand, man! Holding... her... hand! (*holds out his hand*) With this hand! This is sooo cool. (*suddenly concerned, holds out his hand, again*) This sweaty, clammy hand. Oh my God. This is the hand of a corpse. A gross hand. Wet, stinky, stupid 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. Ya know, now that I’m thinking about it, she didn’t exactly push me away. Know what I mean? Yeah. She’s down. (*excitement rises, again*) Who knows? Maybe there’ll be a little more than some handholding 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 reenters with a large tub of popcorn.

GIRL sits down, smiling at BOY, putting popcorn between them.

BOY smiles at GIRL before both return their gazes to the screen. After a pause, without moving their eyes from the screen, the two of them reach for some popcorn. After eating three or four kernels apiece, their hands meet in the tub. They stop. Their faces betray their feelings as their hands stop attempting to grab the popcorn and come together in the tub. Big smiles.

After a pause, GIRL breaks her hand free of his and grabs a kernel. BOY's expression becomes instantly disappointed. GIRL holds the kernel up, but suddenly has an idea: She turns to him, holds the kernel up, and offers it to him. He puts his hand out to grab it from her, but with her free hand she gently pushes his down while putting the kernel to his lips with the other. BOY's eyes explode as he chews.

BOY, then, grabs a kernel and places it on her lips. GIRL is ecstatic. The two of them are immeasurably pleased with this new exchange of affection.

After a three or four rounds, GIRL puts a kernel in BOY's mouth and, as the previous times, he smiles and delightedly chews until, 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 sets the popcorn down and starts flipping out. BOY stands and starts convulsing.

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

BOY heaves himself backward into GIRL's lap.

DM: Thank you!

GIRL wraps her arms around his stomach, pulls back in a Heimlich-esque maneuver, and out pops the kernel. Recovering, BOY leans back, somewhat squashing GIRL. Once he realizes this, BOY leaps to his feet.

GIRL: (stands to attend to him) 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 all right.



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