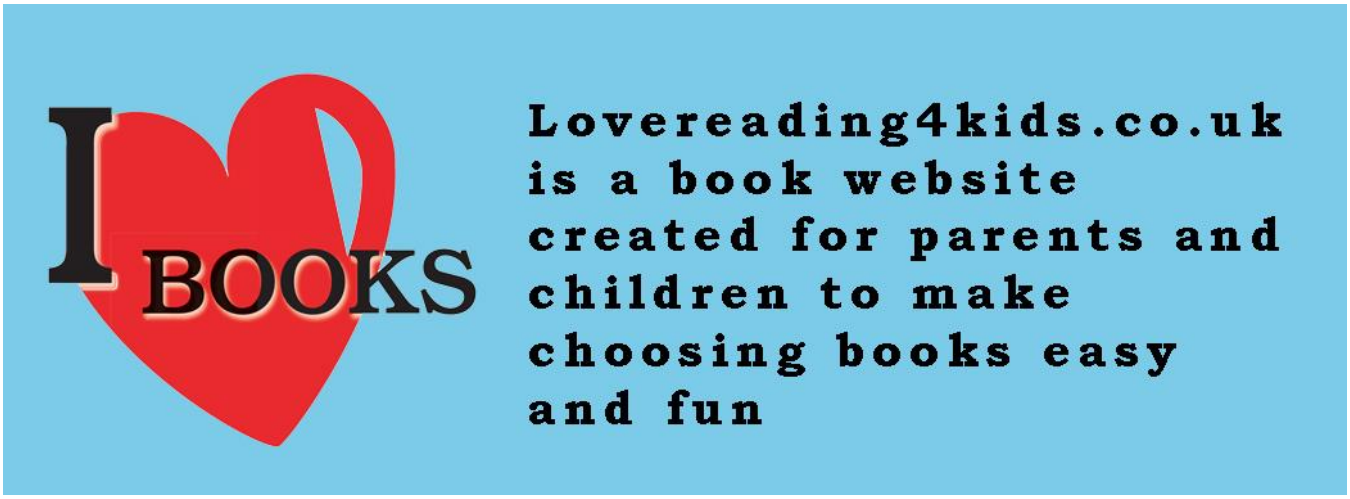


Opening extract from

How to Fool Your Parents

Written by

Pete Johnson

Published by

Award Publications Ltd

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Lovereading4kids.co.uk

‘We know about you falling asleep in Mr Duncan’s lesson,’ Mum said in a low, trembling voice. ‘He rang your dad and myself on Friday afternoon.’

‘But Dunky had had his turn at the parents’ evening. He can’t call you as well. That’s cheating!’ I was outraged.

‘Mr Duncan is very concerned about you. Especially after you told him that since you started vlogging you can’t sleep at night.’

‘That’s rubbish,’ I replied.

‘It’s exactly what you told Mr Duncan, isn’t it, Louis? Tell the truth.’

I felt myself going red, right to my ears.

‘So you realise that what we’re going to do is not because you’ve done anything wrong.’

An ice-cold shiver ran right through me …

Praise for Pete Johnson
and the **Louis the Laugh** books

'In Louis, Pete Johnson has created a boy who makes you laugh out loud.'
Sunday Times

'Pete Johnson is a wonderful storyteller.'
Evening Standard

'Fast, funny, and very readable.'
Carousel

'A rip-roaringly hilarious adventure.'
The Book Trust

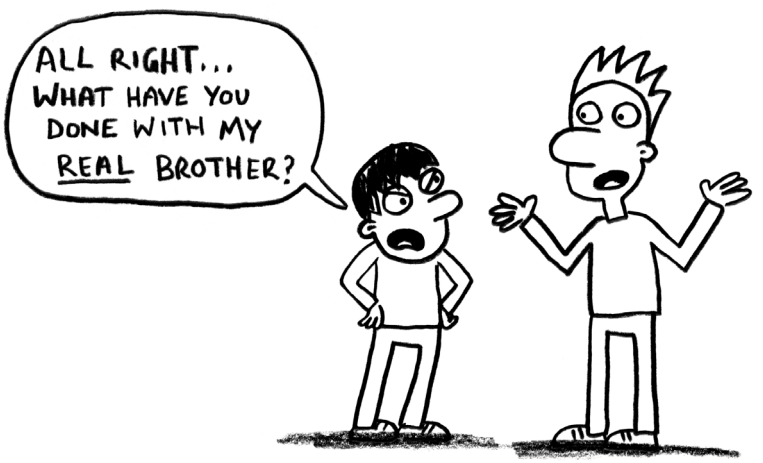
'Funny and light … the humour disguises real emotional truth and depth.'
The Guardian

'A great story for boys and girls alike.'
The School Librarian

'This is such a brilliant book!'
'My daughter LOVED this book.'
'JUST BUY IT. YOU WILL NOT REGRET IT.'
'The best book I've ever read.'
Amazon.co.uk reviews

How to Fool Your Parents

Pete Johnson



AWARD PUBLICATIONS LIMITED

ISBN 978-1-78270-247-4

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First published by Award Publications Limited 2017

Published by Award Publications Limited,
The Old Riding School, Welbeck,
Worksop, S80 3LR

www.awardpublications.co.uk

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Printed in the United Kingdom

The book is dedicated to Valerie Christie – a truly inspiring librarian, whose support means so much.



Chapter One

Power Nap

Tuesday February 25th

4.30 p.m.
I'd like to make a full confession.

I, Louis – full name Louis the Laugh – did, at approximately 3.45 p.m. today, say, 'Sir, I am so incredibly sorry and I would like to volunteer for an extra detention right here, right now.'

Am I ashamed of myself? Totally. But I had no choice. You see, I'm in an incredibly desperate situation. No, really … Just hear me out.

It was the last lesson of the day, physics. Yawn! It was with Mr Duncan (known to all as Dunky). Double yawn.

Well, I was feeling drowsier and drowsier. But I really only meant to rest my eyes for a moment. Most unfortunately my head then slipped down onto my chest …

A power nap is the technical term for what happened next. And if Dunky had left me alone I'd have woken up all refreshed – and ready to learn more. Instead he hissed down my ear, 'You can't sleep in my class.'

'If you didn't speak so loudly I could,' was what I longed to reply. But I knew this was a moment which required tact. So I tried to explain that I'd only taken a very brief power nap. And they are actually very popular these days.

But he wasn't listening. Instead sarcasm dripped from him as he creaked, 'I'm very glad you've decided to re-join us. Your contributions to the class are so vital' – the class all chortled away at this (I never say a word in his lessons) – 'and I will see you at the end of the lesson to discuss your sleeping arrangements.'

And later, while everyone else escaped, I approached Dunky, smiling bravely. He rose up from his desk. He's very tall and immensely thin, with a long but somehow scrunched-up face, a truly mouldy grey beard and the tiniest eyes you've ever seen – like two little raisins glaring down at you.

But here's what you need to know. I had to somehow get on Dunky's good side, as I needed him to do me a massive favour. A truly hopeless mission you might think, and you'd be right. But I had to achieve the impossible.

That's why, when he announced that I had a double detention tomorrow, I gushed, 'Thank you so much, Mr Duncan, I so deserve it.' Then I uttered the words I told you about before and I can't bear to repeat ever again.

And guess what Dunky said after my truly amazing offer. Nothing. He merely pointed a gnarled hand at the desk in front of him.

And ever since, I have been sitting here, filling page after page with lines. And I didn't stop once – well, not until he tottered off for a moment.

HOLD UP. He's coming back.

More soon.

4.50 p.m.

I proudly took my lines up to Dunky. 'Five and a half pages there,' I said. 'And no hardship at all. Just happy to be here with you.' He hardly even glanced at what I'd written. Yes, a bit rude but I knew why. He was still annoyed about me dropping off in his lesson, wasn't he? And as one performer to another I could understand

that. It makes you feel you're not gripping your audience, for a start.

So I said, 'I want to assure you, Mr Duncan, your lesson wasn't any more boring than usual. I mean, it wasn't boring at all,' I added hastily. 'In fact, it was fascinating. Especially …' I tried to remember one thing he'd said and couldn't, so spluttered, 'Well, there were so many highlights I can't just pick one.' Then I smiled winningly at him.

Not a flicker from him. Blankly is the best word to describe how Dunky was scrutinising me. Yet somehow I had to win over this dry husk of a teacher in his crumpled grey suit who skulked about the school like a sinister ghost.

But how?

It seemed I had no choice. I was going to have to take him into my confidence.

So I asked him, 'Sir, would you like to know the real reason I fell asleep in your lesson?'

Was there the tiniest flicker of interest in those tiny eyes? Anyway, he nodded, but extremely slowly like a toy which urgently needed winding up.

'You may know, sir, my ambition is to be a comedian. And that I appeared on satellite television recently for three whole minutes telling jokes on my friend Poppy's show. Perhaps

you even saw me,' I added hopefully.

'No,' he snapped.

'Ah, never mind. Anyway, after that I was invited onto a vlog. Do you know what they are?'

'No,' he snapped again.

'Well, don't feel bad, I bet loads of people in their riper years haven't a clue either. They're videos made by teenagers who then put them up on the internet.' I had my doubts that Dunky even knew what the internet was.

'Anyway, the most popular vlog right now is hosted by Noah and Lily. They've got nearly ten million followers. Just imagine that.' I paused briefly to allow Dunky to do just that. 'So you can imagine how excited I was to be invited onto their show.'

But I had a feeling I was losing Dunky so I rushed on, 'Anyway, I was invited on there to help kids with their problems, and to be funny as well. And would you believe it, I was such a big hit I've been invited back this Sunday. I hardly slept last night I was so happy and that's why I needed a tiny power nap in your lesson.'

That was a lie actually, as I slept perfectly last night even though I am insanely excited about Sunday. But that's me, always trying to spread good cheer and lift people's spirits. 'So you see, my little nap had nothing to do with you, sir,' I

said. 'I bet that's cheered you up. And I'd be so grateful if you could do me a favour now.'

Dunky's eyebrows almost shot off his head.

'You know tonight is a parents' evening, and my mum and dad and I will be trotting along to hear your words of wisdom. Well, of course I want you to feel free to talk about anything you like. Only I'd be incredibly happy if you wouldn't mention my very brief power nap in your lesson, as news like that can do terrible things to parents' minds, especially highly impressionable ones like mine. They might do something drastic – even stop me appearing on Noah and Lily's vlog this Sunday.'

Surely even Dunky could see that a return appearance on the vlog was such an extraordinary and fantastic opportunity.

'In return, I'll do as many detentions as you want. Plus, I'll pick up litter after school.' Teachers love you doing this, don't they? 'You name it, I'll do it. And I know I'll be in your debt.' I'd heard someone say that last sentence in a film once and I liked it so much I repeated it very slowly. 'I'll … be … in … your … debt, Mr Duncan.'

Dunky slowly, jerkily, got to his feet. (He always moves like a life-sized puppet.)

'I am, of course, happy to carry your bag to the car now as well.' I threw that in because I was getting desperate. I had a horrible feeling I hadn't won Dunky over.

But then he actually gave me a tiny smile as he whispered – he never ever raises his voice – 'I am looking forward to meeting your parents tonight.'

'It's a big night for them too,' I grinned.

'I have so much to tell them,' Dunky said gravely.

He left without another word.

I'm not quite sure what he meant.

But I'd say things look bad, don't they?

Very bad.