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**Quippage**

*ONE is a Boy. TWO is a girl.*

*ONE and TWO sit side-by-side, not looking at each other. They are on a date. It's very awkward. ONE's knee bounces up and down nervously. He clamps his hand on it to stop the bouncing. TWO sighs.*

ONE: Sorry?

TWO: Nothing.

*There is silence again. ONE slowly, slowly turns to the side, and tries to look at his watch subtly, but TWO catches him. She shakes her head.*

TWO: What time is it?

ONE: (with a start) Huh?

TWO: What time is it?

ONE: I don't know.

TWO: You just looked at your watch.

ONE: Oh. I guess I did.

TWO: What time is it?

ONE: (sheepishly) Ten to two.

TWO: That bad, huh?

ONE: What?

TWO: The date.

ONE: No!

TWO: So why are you looking at your watch?

ONE: No - I - just - It's me. It's not you, it's me. Me.

TWO: Aren't you supposed to pull that out of your hat when you're breaking up with someone? This date isn't even one hour in.

ONE: It is me! I'm screwing things up.

TWO: How?

ONE: I planned this, I thought about it and I had everything planned. I even wrote it out. See?

*ONE pulls a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket and shows it to TWO.*

TWO: That's... organized.

ONE: It's a disaster. (tossing the paper to the side) I screwed up the time for the movie. We're here half an hour early and we could be sitting in there enjoying *The Coffee Dripped Sideways* having a laugh -

TWO: I want to see that!

ONE: I know! I planned it! But now... we're out here and my piece of paper is useless and I don't know what to do. I didn't plan for this... this...

*There is a pause before TWO speaks.*

TWO: Awkward silence.

ONE: Awkward awful silence thing. That's why it's me and not you.

TWO: You don't have to plan everything.

ONE: I didn't plan on awkward awful silence and see how well that's turning out.

TWO: That's not what I meant.

ONE: So what should we do?

TWO: Well, in a situation like this, all unplanned and everything, I think we're supposed to talk.

ONE: (looking horrified) We ARE?

TWO: Don't look so terrified.

ONE: (he lets out a big breath) You must go on a lot of dates.

TWO: (little bit harsh) What makes you say that?

ONE: You're so calm. You suggest talking like it's the easiest thing in the world. (he wipes his forehead) I'm a nervous wreck.

TWO: Oh, you're fine.

ONE: You're just saying that.

TWO: Trust me, I never just say anything.

ONE: (looking at TWO) No, you wouldn't.

TWO: What makes you say that?

ONE: You seem very straightforward. You're not one of those people who say things to make people feel better - (realizing that might have sounded insulting) That didn't sound as good out loud as it did in my head. That was a compliment. Really.

TWO: I'll take it as one.

ONE: (looks at TWO) You're not making fun of me, are you?

TWO: Not yet. We hardly know each other. (she pauses before deciding to speak again) And I never go out on dates. I...in fact... I've never been on one before.

ONE: (very surprised) REALLY?

TWO: Could you try not to make that sound so horrible?

ONE: Sorry, sorry.

TWO: You don't believe me?

ONE: Of course I do.

TWO: Why would I lie?

ONE: Sure, sure. I just didn't expect - never mind. We're both starting from square one then.

TWO: (making fun) What, YOU'VE never been on a date either?

ONE: See, now you're making fun of me.

TWO: The piece of paper kind of gave you away.

ONE: I guess people don't usually do that.

TWO: I wouldn't know.

ONE: Me either. (there is a pause) What do we do now?

TWO: I think the talking part.

ONE: Right. See, I can't believe you've never done this before. You're so calm and collected. I know I look like an idiot. Ok. Talking. (he rubs his hands on his pants and then holds a hand out to TWO) Hi.

TWO: (shaking his hand warily) Hi...

ONE: (still shaking hands) I'm Greg.

TWO: (still shaking hands) I know. What are we doing?

ONE: I thought this would be a good way to break the ice. (pulling his hand away) Isn't this good?

TWO: Maybe we should ask each other questions. To break the ice.

ONE: Ok. (he claps his hands together and talks really fast) Where were you when Jimmy Mellon got his head stuck in the banister of the back staircase by the gym and did you or did you not bet on the outcome of whether he'd have to stay there until he lost enough weight in his face to get out? (Pause. TWO stares at ONE.) Not a good question?

TWO: (she clears her throat) Jimmy Mellon, ever so aptly named...

ONE: Big head.

TWO: Jimmy is a moron of the highest degree, if degrees of moronity existed, and the only thing that surprised me about the whole event is that it took him till senior year to be provoked to sticking his head through the banister.

ONE: That's a good point.

TWO: I was in the library. And no, I didn't bet. Next question?

ONE: Oh. (with a little bit of panic) I don't have a backup...

TWO: I have one.

ONE: Oh good.

TWO: Why did you ask me out?

ONE: Huh?

TWO: Why did you ask me out?

ONE: Is that a trick question?

TWO: No.

ONE: You're not recording this, are you?

TWO: (puzzled) No.

ONE: No one's going to leap out from behind the garbage cans?  
Candid Camera-like?

TWO: What are you talking about?

ONE: Ok. Ok. I asked you out because... (he looks around him  
before answering) I asked you out because I like you. You're  
funny in class. I thought it would be great; we'd be trading quips  
all night.

TWO: Not so much.

ONE: No. (he sighs) So far we're quipless.

TWO: Sorry.

ONE: No, no! It's fine. You can't force a quip. I know that, everyone  
knows that. You can't hem them in to be used at will; you gotta  
let the quips run free.

TWO laughs.

ONE: You see! Let them free and they pop out of nowhere.

TWO: Now, why was that such a big deal?

ONE: What? The quippage?

TWO: No. You went into spy mode before saying why you asked me  
out. Why is it something to keep secret?

ONE: It's not.

TWO: Then why did you -

ONE: I didn't. I just, well, you, you know -

TWO: No.

ONE: Ok. (he takes a deep breath) I'm just, I'm surprised. I'm still  
surprised you said yes. I've been waiting for that friend of yours,  
the one who shaved her head and gets angry when people eat  
hot dogs...

TWO: Sheila?

ONE I keep waiting for Sheila to leap out, pull my underwear up  
over my head and you both go cackling off into the night calling  
'loser, loser.'

TWO: We don't cackle.

ONE: So why did you say yes?

TWO: And atomic wedgies are not our style.

ONE: You're avoiding the question.

TWO: Ordinary wedgies, maybe.

ONE: Julia!

TWO: (she rolls her eyes) Why do you think I said yes? I think you're  
funny too!

ONE: Really?

TWO: Really.

ONE: You're not just saying that?

TWO: Haven't we already established I don't do that?

ONE: Right. Right! That's good.

TWO: Good.

ONE: Great! No wedgies then?

TWO: Not at the moment, no.

ONE: Ah ha! Let the quippage begin!

TWO: Onward and upward!

ONE: Tally ha!

TWO makes the sound of a trumpet call.

ONE: And we're talking. I can't believe it.

TWO: (with a laugh) Amazing.

ONE: I want to tell you, I don't believe a word of what's been going  
round and I think what those guys said was -

ONE stops. His mouth is open in mid-sentence. He closes it. TWO stares at him, but ONE looks down at his knees.

TWO: What?

ONE: Nothing.

TWO: What were you about to say?

ONE: Nothing.

TWO: And I quote: "I think what those guys said was..." Finish the sentence.

ONE: It's nothing.

TWO: It's not nothing to me.

ONE: I took the talking thing too far.

TWO: It's clearly on your mind and I think it's incredibly... (she pauses and lets out a noisy breath) Never mind. It doesn't matter.

ONE: I shouldn't have brought it up. It was stupid to bring up. You're not going to sick Sheila on me, are you?

TWO: (leaping up) Tell me, was Phil Shaw one of "those guys?" One of your friends? I bet he was. That little - (she grunts in frustration) I can't believe I still have to deal with this. It's been over a year! Is that what this is about? This date? Is this why I'm so funny?

ONE: (standing) No!

TWO: (continuing overtop) 'Cause I'm a big joke? (turns to leave) Something to take back to YOUR guys? 'Cause if so, we can end things right -

ONE: First of all, they're not MY guys. They're just guys and I was sitting nearby. Near them, not with them, not in their guy circle...

TWO: But you still -

ONE: What they said has nothing to do with why I asked you out.

TWO: Sure.

ONE: It's the truth. I think you're funny. Truly funny, not a joke. Last week when Mrs. Carlisle said, "What do you do when you see an integer?" and you said, "Run!" I thought, "That's funny." And I decided to ask you out. That's all. I swear. (he puts a hand to his heart) On pain of death.

TWO: Don't be so dramatic.

ONE: On pain of life, then. On pain of wedgies?

There is a long pause. TWO sits.

TWO: Phil Shaw was my science partner.

ONE: (sitting) I don't need to -

TWO: Yes you do. I need you to hear my side. We were working on a project; it wasn't anything close to a date. He tried something. I pushed him. I wish I'd hit him, given him a black eye. I pushed him away, and the next thing I know I'm the topic of conversation. The subject of guy circle - what is a guy circle?

ONE: I don't know. A sewing circle on testosterone?

TWO: Funny.

ONE: Can't force a quip.

Pause.

TWO: Last month I won first place in a piano festival.

ONE: I know.

TWO: You're the only one. How come no one talks about that, huh? I practiced every day. I won. I deserved to win. It was nice being around people who don't know me as Jump-On Julia. (pause) So. Where are we?

ONE: Well, I'm still on a date. Where are you? Still want to go to the movie?

TWO: What if I say I do?

ONE: Then you have to share a box of popcorn with me.

TWO: What if I want my own box?

ONE: That's a hard bargain but I think I can swing it.

TWO: Hey, I pay for my own popcorn.

ONE: What about liquorice? Can I buy you some liquorice?

TWO: Black or red?

ONE: Black, of course. No one with half a brain likes red liquorice.

TWO: I like red liquorice.

ONE: How's life with half a brain?

*TWO laughs and gets up. She looks at ONE.*

TWO: Thanks.

ONE: For the liquorice?

TWO: For not being in the guy circle.

ONE: You're welcome. *(they start to exit)* Now, if it had been a guy hexagon, we might have been in trouble.

TWO: Funny.

ONE: I'm on a roll now. And you're way behind.

TWO: I didn't know we were keeping score.

ONE: I am, 'cause I'm winning.

TWO: Not even.

ONE: Two ahead and pulling away!

*They exit.*

— THE END —

... be of either gender. Mr. Montgomery becomes  
... Montgomery, Mrs. Nelson becomes Mrs. Nelson.

... sits at a table organizing some papers. She is  
... extremely prim with a ramrod straight back. TWO  
... sneaks onstage and tries to get into a chair without  
... ONE seeing. ONE looks up with a frown and  
... narrow eyes, TWO dives to the floor. After a  
... second, ONE goes back to her papers. TWO slowly  
... crawls along the floor. He gets to his seat and slowly  
... starts to crawl into place.

Just as TWO gets into an awkward mid-crawl position  
... around his chair, ONE looks up.

ONE: *(slowly)* Mr. Montgomery.

TWO freezes.

TWO: *(wincing)* Yes?

ONE: Are you trying to sneak into my classroom?

TWO: No.

ONE: It looks to me like you are.

TWO: Does it?

ONE: Indubitably. Are you going to sit?

TWO: Can I?

ONE: Of course. Who am I to deny the youth of taking a seat? What  
... kind of person would I be if I let you crawl there? What  
... kind of cruel person would I be if I made you squirm for the  
... Whole Entire. Class?

TWO: What a yes?

ONE: Sit.

TWO: Thanks.