

TAKING A JOKE

MATT: 17, in love and miserable.

EMILY: Also 17, is Matt's best friend, but would like to be more.

SETTING: Setting up stage for a rehearsal of *Odd Couple*, taking chairs, tables, etc. and placing them in the position the actors will use.

MATT: *(Arranging two chairs)* Emily, will you hurry up?

EMILY: *(Entering, carrying a box loaded with hand props)* I'm moving as fast as I can. And by the way, I'd like to thank you for all of your help.

MATT: Just set it down and stop complaining. I swear, all I ever get from anybody these days is complaints.

EMILY: Matt, I was just kidding.

MATT: Well, to be completely honest . . . I'm not in a kidding mood, OK?

EMILY: OK. *(She begins to place props in position while MATT arranges chairs and table. This business will go on for the entire scene.)* So. How are you?

MATT: Fine.

EMILY: *(A beat)* I'm fine, too.

MATT: Good.

EMILY: *(A beat)* You going out tonight?

MATT: No.

EMILY: *(A beat)* I'm not going out, either.

MATT: Oh.

EMILY: *(After a pause)* So, how about those Knicks?

MATT: *(Displaying some irritation)* What?

EMILY: Nothing. *(They continue to set up the scene, EMILY glancing now and then at MATT for some clue as to his emotional state.)* Is Rachel coming to pick you up after rehearsal?

MATT: No.

EMILY: *(With understanding)* Oh.

MATT: And what does that mean? What does "Oh" mean?

EMILY: Oh means Oh. That's all, just Oh. A generic Oh.

MATT: Emily, I know that we are friends, but I just don't need this right now.

EMILY: Need what? I just said "Oh."

MATT: I talk to you too much. I need to keep some things to myself.

EMILY: I said "Oh". I never asked you anything. Keep what you want to yourself.

MATT: Emily, you don't have to get mad. It's just that I'm going through some things that I need to think through.

EMILY: What, for instance?

MATT: I don't know if I can tell you. I don't know how to tell you.

EMILY: Just say it.

MATT: It's something that I've never said to anyone before.

EMILY: Matt, we've known each other since first grade. We have experienced everything from jungle gyms to puberty together. Nothing you can tell me can surprise me. I know about every girl you've ever gone out with and you know about every guy I've ever gone out with . . . all two of them.

MATT: But this is different. I've never felt this before for anyone.

EMILY: Matt, don't be shy, just say what is in your heart.

MATT: I think I'm in love with Rachel.

EMILY: So I was wrong . . . I'm surprised. Why Rachel? I mean, she is not the nicest person in the world.

MATT: Emily, don't start. I know she's not your favorite person, but she happens to be very special to me.

EMILY: Why should I say anything bad about her? I mean it's not like she has ever stood you up on a date. It's been at least a week since she told you you were stupid. I know it's been at least that long since she let Richie Hall drive her home from school and then let him come in the house while her parents were out. He seemed to have quite the conversation going with her the next day.

MATT: Stop it, Emily.

EMILY: I thought they looked rather cute together. Heads bowed close, secret shared smiles.

MATT: I told you Monday that she explained that. They were just working on a scene together for class. That was all it was.

EMILY: Ah.

MATT: Don't give me "Ah," Emily.

EMILY: Then let me give you some advice. Lose this chick.

MATT: I told you, I'm in love with her.

EMILY: No you're not. You're in love with the idea of being in love with a dream.

MATT: OK, Sigmund Freud, what does that mean?

EMILY: It means that you always want what you can't have. Always. You're just like Scarlett O'Hara.

MATT: What?

EMILY: Remember that part when Melanie is dying and Scarlett realizes she could now have Ashley?

MATT: I never read the book.

EMILY: The movie is the same way in that part.

MATT: I never saw it.

EMILY: YOU'VE NEVER SEEN GONE WITH THE WIND? We've been friends since birth and you've kept this secret from me?

MATT: What's your point, Emily?

EMILY: My point, Matthew, is that you, not unlike

Scarlett O'Hara, only want what you can't have.

MATT: I don't understand.

EMILY: Read the book.

MATT: I don't have time. Explain yourself.

EMILY: You, my ignorant friend, have the unfortunate habit of going for girls that will crap all over you, make you look like a fool, and laugh with their friends when you come crawling back for more.

MATT: Thank you so much.

EMILY: I'm serious, they do.

MATT: But Rachel is different when we're alone. She told me she loves me.

EMILY: God, you're stupid.

MATT: Thank you so much.

EMILY: Didn't you wonder what people were smirking about last week when you would walk by?

MATT: No, I didn't notice.

EMILY: Right. I was with you and I saw you notice, you just ignored. But it's eating you up.

MATT: What is eating me up?

EMILY: The fact that this girl treats you like the lowest life form and everyone knows it and you just take it.

MATT: I love her. I know that she treats me like crap as you so elegantly put it, but I love her.

EMILY: And, also like Scarlett, you ignore what is right in front of you.

MATT: What do you mean?

EMILY: Did it ever occur to you that I might care about you?

MATT: Emily, please don't say that.

EMILY: Why?

MATT: Don't tell me that. Don't do this.

EMILY: Do what?

MATT: Turn our friendship inside out.

EMILY: What do you mean?

MATT: I don't need another girlfriend. I need a friend, and you are the best one I have.

EMILY: Isn't that what I am?

MATT: No, you are not my girlfriend. You are my best friend who happens to be a girl.

EMILY: You are a walking ego, you know that?

MATT: I don't understand.

EMILY: You think every girl, except of course for Miss Barracuda USA, is in love with you.

MATT: What are you saying?

EMILY: I was joking, for heaven's sake. God, you are really wrapped up in yourself, aren't you?

MATT: Are you serious? You were joking?

EMILY: I figured you needed something to laugh about, and I decided on the most ludicrous subject . . . you and me together as a couple. It was a joke, jerk.

MATT: Well, I am embarrassed.

EMILY: You should be. Give me some credit, please.

MATT: That is funny, though. You and me as a couple. I mean, picture it, we took baths together when we were kids.

EMILY: I know. Funny, huh?

MATT: Remember all the times we spent the night at each other's house?

EMILY: Remember how we cried when our moms said we couldn't do that anymore?

MATT: And then the next day we compared notes on the birds and bees talk they gave us?

EMILY: God, we were young.

MATT: I'm glad you're my friend.

EMILY: Me, too.

MATT: Don't ever change, OK?

EMILY: I never will. *(Hugs him.)*

MATT: I think we're all set up here. I'll tell everyone we're ready.

EMILY: Do you feel any better?

MATT: Honestly, no. But I laughed, at least for a second or two.

EMILY: Call me tonight, after rehearsal, we can talk. Maybe I can talk some sense into you about this . . .

MATT: Don't say anything bad about her. I'm in love.

EMILY: You're a fool.

MATT: I'll call you tonight.

EMILY: You do that. We can discuss your ego. *(He leaves.)*
I am a fool. I am a fool. I am a fool.