



THERE'S NO EXCUSE FOR DATING ABUSE

A PLAY

CAST

Emily: The girlfriend of Jason; she is experiencing abuse from Jason

Jason: The boyfriend of Emily; he is abusing Emily both emotionally and physically

Derrick: A friend of Emily who needs her help with algebra

Elizabeth: Concerned friend of Emily

Carissa: Concerned friend of Emily

Phil: Breaks up a fight between Derrick and Jason

Kirsten: Concerned friend of Emily

Scene I: A School Hallway

Derrick: So, I'll see you tonight?

Emily: Yeah, don't forget your algebra book, though.

Derrick: I'll try not to.

Emily: Okay.

Derrick: Bye.

Emily: Bye.

Jason: What do you think you're doing?

Emily: What do you mean?

Jason: What is this thing you've got going with Derrick?

Emily: What are you talking about?

Jason: I saw you guys flirting in the hall.

Emily: Flirting in the hall? I was standing next to him, talking about when we're going to work on algebra.

Jason: Oh sure, algebra again. You were probably just setting up another date.

Emily: Another date? Don't be ridiculous, Jason. We haven't even been out on one date. Look, he needs help with algebra, and I can help him. You know algebra is my favorite subject and we were...

Jason: Yeah, we all know you're a brain, but I don't think it's your brain he's after.

Emily: Why can't you trust me? Have I ever given you a reason not to trust me? (*Brief pause, then with a pleading tone.*) You know how much I love you.

Jason: If you really loved me, you'd stay away from him and any other guy who wants to get close to you.

Emily: How can I possibly stay away from all the other guys in this school?

Jason: Oh, so you're saying you don't want to stay away from other guys. . .

Emily: That's not fair! That's not what I said. . .

Jason: What you said is that you can't stay away from all the other guys.

Emily: Look, I have a lot of friends at this school—girls and guys. But you're really special. What's wrong with you? What's wrong with us? Why are you always doing this?

Jason: I don't know. I'm sick of the way all the guys look at you and you're always doing stuff with your friends; you never have time for me anymore. You say you love me, but I don't believe it.

Emily: Stop it! Just stop it! (*She grabs his shoulders.*) You're making this up! You're creating something that's just not real!

(He grabs her arms, throws her against the wall, and exits. She sinks to the floor in tears. Derrick enters and walks toward her.)

Derrick: Emily, are you okay?

Emily: Leave me alone. Jason is really mad and it's all your fault!

Derrick: All my fault? What did I do? What are you talking about?

Emily: Jason thinks you and I have something going on. I tried to explain to him that I was just helping you with algebra, but he just won't listen.

Derrick: That's crazy. Where did he get that idea?

Emily: I don't know. I don't want to talk about it, Derrick.

Derrick: You've got to talk about it. You've got to get a grip on this. I can't stand the way he treats you. He pushes you around and demands all your time. He cuts you off from all your friends. No one else can even begin to get close to you. Even if I were interested in dating you, I'd never have a chance with him around. He'd probably kill me, or worse, he'd hurt you!

Emily: He just did. *(Emily points to her head at the spot where it hit the wall.)*

Derrick: Well, what are you going to do about it?

Emily: I don't know.

(She rubs her head where she hit the wall. She gets up and exits stage left. Derrick exits stage right shaking his head.)

Scene II: The girls' bathroom

(Emily is looking in the mirror, and two of her girlfriends enter. They notice Emily and greet her warmly. As one of the girls washes her hands, the other brushes her hair.)

Emily: Does anybody have some concealer?

Elizabeth: I think I do. *(She looks through her purse.)*

Carissa: So what's up, Emily?

Emily: Nothing much. *(Emily breaks out with a slightly defensive tone.)* So do you have some concealer or not?

Elizabeth: Yeah, sure, here you go. *(She hands her some makeup.)*

Carissa: What happened to you?

Emily: I just hit my head. . .

Carissa: Did you have another argument with Jason? *(She crosses her arms and confronts Emily.)*

Emily: No, well, I mean, he was pretty upset, but it was my fault. I shouldn't have been talking with Derrick in the hall. I know that makes Jason crazy!

Carissa: What?

Elizabeth: What do you mean, you shouldn't have been talking with Derrick in the hall?

Carissa: Yeah, what do you mean? Jason doesn't own you!

Emily: Well, you know how much Jason loves me. He just can't stand to see me talking to another guy, that's all. *(Still applying makeup.)*

Carissa: Get real, Emily. He can't even stand it when you want to have a night out with the girls or to spend time with your family. Does he really believe you're cheating on him?

Emily: I don't know. I need to do what he says; after all, he's so good to me. Nobody else cares for me the way he does. I mean, we have our fights just like any other couple, but it's usually my fault. I just have to try harder not to make him mad.

Elizabeth: Try harder not to make him mad? Emily, what about your feelings? Who does he think he is?

Emily: He's my boyfriend and he loves me!

Carissa: Loves you? And you end up in the bathroom; your mascara is running and you're asking us for concealer? Doesn't sound like love to me. If that's love, I don't want a boyfriend.

Emily: You don't understand, Carissa. He just wants me to . . . *(pause)*. He wants me to . . .

Elizabeth: He wants you to what?

Emily: He wants me to be there for him. That's what you do if someone loves you, right?

Carissa: No! Be there for him? Emily, you're always there for him. What about the time he got suspended for fighting or when he cussed out Mr. Jones? You were there for him, but is he always there for you? How about all the times at night you've stayed home instead of going out with us, just because Jason might call, but then he doesn't. I don't know, Emily. I think he needs help. Looks like he's going overboard.

Emily: He's not. He's really sweet. He's just a little overprotective, that's all. He doesn't need help. We don't need anybody. We'll be just fine. Don't say anything, okay?

Elizabeth: Yeah, hey are you finished with that concealer? Come on, Carissa, we've got to get to class.

(Elizabeth mumbles something about overprotective when it's really overly possessive and controlling. Elizabeth and Carissa exit; Emily looks back in the mirror and starts to cry again.)

Scene III: Boys' Gym Class

(Jason is dribbling the ball and runs into Derrick.)

Jason: Get out of my way, you wimp!

Derrick: Leave me alone, you jerk. What are you going to do, beat me up right here on the court?
Are you going to push me around like you did Emily this morning?

(Derrick pushes Jason.)

Jason: Don't push me; I could take you out right here! And you need to stay away from Emily. I know what you want. Get some other girl to help you with your algebra or chemistry, or whatever it is you brainy wimps spend your time doing.

Phil: Chill out, you guys, before the coach throws you out of class.

(Phil breaks the two apart.)

Derrick: I'm calm; he's the one who needs to chill. I'm just trying to play.

(Derrick exits—Phil turns to Jason.)

Jason: Hey man, I'm cool. He's in my way and he wants Emily for more than just algebra.

Phil: Jason, what is with you, man? Your temper is getting out of control!

Jason: I don't know. My game sucks, my grades suck, my life sucks. Emily doesn't have time for me anymore. She says she loves me, but I feel deserted and I get crazy when I see her with someone else.

Phil: Jason, nobody loves you more than Emily does.

(Phil places his arms on Jason's shoulders.)

Phil: She probably loves you more than your own parents.

Jason: Oh yeah? She's ready to help Derrick with his algebra, but I can't get her to help me with history. And what about all the time she spends with her girlfriends and family?

Phil: Don't you think Emily thinks you're better at history than she is, and what do you mean she spends so much time with her girlfriends? She's a girl; they do those things.

Jason: Yeah, girls, I don't understand 'em.

Phil: Hey, who does? What about the things you're doing, what you're feeling? Don't you think you're losing it way too often? Don't you think you're expecting too much of her?

Jason: Huh? I don't think so. She says she loves me. If that's true, I should be all that matters to her!

Phil: You're not thinking at all. I saw that confrontation you had in the hallway. It looked like you were out of line.

Jason: Really? I was just....

Phil: Just what? You need to talk to her and get it together.

Jason: I'm not sure she'll talk to me. I'm not sure anyone should talk to me.

Phil: Just try it.

Jason: I'll try. I don't really know what to say, but I'll try.

(They both exit and the scene fades.)

Scene IV: A phone call from Jason to Emily

(Emily and Jason are seated on opposite sides of the stage facing different directions. Emily is looking at a picture of Jason when the phone rings.)

Emily: Hello?

Jason: Hello, Emily. It's me, Jason. Look, honey, I'm sorry about what happened today.

(A long pause. Emily is trying to find the words.)

Emily: It's okay. I mean, I guess I shouldn't have been talking to Derrick in the hall. But he really needs my help, and...

Jason: Emily, we need to talk. I need you and I don't want to lose you, but I feel like you're slipping away. I feel like I'm slipping away. Can we meet later on at the park and try to work this thing out?

Emily: Sure, I mean, I guess I can get the car. What if I pick you up and we go for some pizza? My mom would ground me if I tell her I'm meeting you at the park, and you know she's got to know where I am every second.

Jason: Sure, sounds great, but . . .

Emily: But what?

Jason: Look, Emily, I need you.

Emily: And I need you, but we do need to talk.

Jason: Emily, I love you.

Emily: And I love you too. Bye.

*Scene V: Carissa, Elizabeth, and Kirsten are sitting on the steps
studying algebra*

Elizabeth: You guys, I can't believe I got detention for being late to class.

Carissa: I know, but we just couldn't leave Emily in the bathroom.

Kirsten: What happened?

Carissa: Emily was crying in the bathroom between classes. Jason must have slapped her in the hall. Something about Emily helping Derrick with algebra. . .

Kirsten: I heard him screaming at her and later in gym class he and Derrick got into it. Phil had to step in between them. I think Jason's really frustrated because he wants Emily all to himself.

Elizabeth: I don't see why she doesn't break up with him. I mean she's always so sweet to everyone. I think she needs to be with someone who will appreciate her but also give her the space to be with her family and other friends.

Carissa: Yeah, maybe I'll call her tonight. I know she won't listen, but she's got to get some help. I saw this phone number in the guidance office today for a place you can call with problems like this. Well, maybe I can talk her into calling them.

Kirsten: I mean Jason needs help, too, though. His parents are really rough with him. The last time Phil and I were at his house, they were screaming at him about his homework and getting a job. I really like Jason—he's a great guy—but his temper is getting out of control and if he keeps going like this, he'll never have a decent relationship with anybody. Maybe I can talk to him. He listens to me, sometimes.

(Scene fades.)

Scene VI: That evening Jason calls Emily on the phone

(The audience should be able to see both Jason and Emily talking on the phone.)

Jason: *(Dialing)* Come on, Emily, answer the phone.

Emily: Hello?

Jason: Hey, Emily. It's me, Jason. What's up?

Emily: Hey, thanks for the flowers, Jason. They were really beautiful and the card was so sweet, it made me cry.

Jason: I didn't mean to make you cry.

Emily: Well listen, I've got another call. Can you hold on just one second?

Jason: Sure.

Emily: Hello?

Carissa: Hey, Emily. It's Carissa.

Emily: Hey.

Carissa: So how's it going, I mean with you and Jason?

Emily: Fabulous! Last night when we talked, he gave me flowers and this really beautiful card. Listen, he's on the other line, so I probably need to go.

Carissa: Listen, Elizabeth and I just wanted to come over and talk if you're not busy tonight.

Emily: Sure, that'd be great. I know Jason has to study, so we probably won't be on the phone for long. Just come on over whenever.

Carissa: All right, see you in a bit.

Emily: All right, bye. *(Clicking back to Jason.)* Hey, that was Carissa. She and Elizabeth are coming over tonight.

Jason: You sure it wasn't Derrick?

Emily: No, it was Carissa. Why are you always accusing me of talking with Derrick?

Jason: Because you usually are. Look, I'm coming over now so we can settle this.

(He hangs up abruptly. She hangs up and the doorbell rings. Carissa and Elizabeth are at the door.)

Carissa: Hi, Emily. How's it going?

Emily: Well, Jason is really mad. He thought I was talking to Derrick when I was really talking with you on the phone. He said he's coming over right now.

Carissa: You're kidding! Well, I'm not leaving—you shouldn't be alone with him when he's angry like this.

(Jason storms through the front door and sees Emily with Carissa and Elizabeth.)

Jason: What are they doing here? I told you I was coming over so we could talk.

(Elizabeth approaches Jason as if to speak; Carissa pulls her away.)

Carissa: Listen, we'll just go into the kitchen and get something to drink so you guys can talk.

Jason, just calm down. C'mon, Elizabeth.

Jason: Why are they here, Emily? Are you bringing in your bodyguards now? Look, I told you I was sorry and I meant it *(his voice gets louder)*. Why can't we ever be alone?

Emily: Jason, Carissa and Elizabeth are my best friends and they called and said they were coming over before you stormed over here. What am I supposed to do, ask them to leave?

Jason: Fine, if you'd rather be with them, I'll just leave. You choose; it's either me or them!

Emily: Jason, don't make me choose! Don't leave like this!

(She runs to him, trying to hold on. Jason turns around and slaps her and storms out. Emily falls to the chair, crying. Carissa and Elizabeth appear at the door, observing the last bit of the interaction. Carissa tries to comfort Emily.)

Carissa: Are you okay? Look, Emily, you need to get some help. I saw a phone number in the guidance office today of some people who might be able to help.

(Carissa hands the telephone number to Emily, who accepts it.)

Emily: I just don't understand what I did to make him so angry.

Elizabeth: Emily, you didn't do anything wrong. He just slapped you and threw you against the wall; this is the second time in two days. You're going to have to do something.

(Elizabeth hands Emily the phone. Though hesitant, Emily tries to call. When an older woman answers the phone, Emily quickly hangs up.)

Carissa: What's the problem?

Emily: Some old lady answered. It couldn't possibly be the person I was supposed to talk with. I don't need help anyway.

Elizabeth: Let me have the phone. You didn't even tell her why you were calling.

(Elizabeth calls the number and gets the same woman.)

Elizabeth: Hi, I have a friend who's in an abusive relationship. Her name? Her name is Emily.
I'm hoping you can help her.

Emily: What did she say?

Elizabeth: She said someone who's been trained to help teens with dating abuse problems will call us right back.

Emily: Hmm . . . I don't know about this.

Carissa: No problem, we'll just sit here and talk while we're waiting.

(Scene fades temporarily.)

Scene VII: Jason meets Kirsten and Phil on the street

Kirsten: Hey, what's up, Jason? (No response.) Jason, what's the matter? You look terrible.

Jason: Emily and I just got into another fight. I can't believe it. One minute we're talking on the phone, no problem; the next thing I know, I'm screaming and pushing her around. It's like a bad roller-coasterride and I've got to get off.

Phil: What makes you so uptight that you're screaming and pushing?

Jason: I don't know. I just can't stand it when she'd rather be with her friends or family than with me.

Kirsten: So you're angry because she wants to spend time with other people. Is that it?

Jason: I guess that's most of it.

Kirsten: You know there are times when you just want to hang out with the guys. And you and me are always talking. Does Emily get upset then?

Jason: I guess not, but sometimes I feel really tight inside, like I'm gonna explode, and Emily's usually around so she takes the heat.

Phil: Look, Jason, I've felt like that before.

Kirsten: Yeah, like yesterday, Phil, when I told you I am going to be competing against you in the science fair. You didn't lose it with me.

Jason: Well, what did you do?

Phil: I wrote Kirsten a note about how I felt betrayed and how I might drop out of the contest.

Kirsten: You haven't given me any note.

Phil: I know. I was going to tell you about it, or maybe I'll give it to you, or maybe I'll just drop it

altogether. The point is that it gave me time to cool off, step back, do a reality check.

Jason: Yeah, well maybe I can write Emily a note. Look guys, I gotta go.

Kirsten: We'll be here for you, Jason, just call us. We want to help!

(All exit.)

Scene returns to Emily, Elizabeth, and Carissa

(Elizabeth is talking on the phone.)

Elizabeth: I have a friend who's being abused. Sixteen, he's seventeen. Just now, I heard him yelling at her. I was in the kitchen and when I came out, he stormed off. He always wants to control her time and he never lets her be with her friends. Yeah, hold on just a minute.

(Elizabeth hands the phone to Emily.)

Elizabeth: She wants to talk with you.

(Emily is hesitant.)

Emily: Is it the same old lady?

Elizabeth: No, it's someone younger who says she helps teens with dating problems. She seems really nice. What have you got to lose?

(Emily takes the phone.)

Emily: Hello, yes sometimes he gets upset . . . because he's angry. Because I talk with my friends and he wants me to spend all my time with him . . . No, he's never really hurt me physically. Well, it wasn't bad. It's not like he gave me a black eye or anything. Yes, I guess it does hurt emotionally and sometimes when he gets upset, I get upset and sometimes I scream at him and that's just not like me at all. Yeah, he's a really nice guy. I mean, he always apologizes and

then everything is all right, for a while anyway. Have I thought about my options? Well, sure, I guess so. I guess most people would leave him.

(Carissa nods.)

Emily: But I can't. I love him and there's no one else for him There's a support group? They meet next Wednesday? Well, do I just show up? I thought those were just for people who were really in trouble, like into drugs and I guess I never thought anybody else would be in this situation. I don't know if I can talk about Jason; maybe I'll just go and listen. Well listen, I need to go. . .

Yes, my friends are here with me and Jason's gone, so I'm safe now. If I need to talk to you, I'll call. Thank you.

Elizabeth: Well, what did she say?

Emily: Well, she told me about a support group where you go and talk about dating. I don't know if I'll be able to go and talk about Jason. Maybe I'll just go and listen. I know you guys think I should just leave him, but I can't. I love him and there's no one else for him.

Carissa: Emily, I want you to do what is right for you, and only you know that answer. You know I can't stand to see you get hurt physically and emotionally. Well, maybe you need to take a break from Jason for a while and see how that goes.

Emily: Maybe you're right, but I'd really like to talk to him and ask him why he....

Elizabeth: Why he pushes you around and slaps you? Emily, no one should have to put up with that, but you're the only one who can do this; and you can change it. You're smart and you've got a lot of friends who want you to be happy and safe. We'll be here for you and for Jason, too, if he'll let us.

Emily: We'll probably need all of you guys. Listen, can you stay with me tonight? My parents will be home soon, but I can't talk to them about this right now and I really don't want to be alone.

Carissa: Sure, let us call our folks and then we can just talk or chill or whatever you feel like.

Emily: Thanks, you're great friends!

(All hug. Scene fades.)

— The End —

