

Emoji Problems

by S. Asher Sund

Our problems started with a few back and forth texts of emojis late one night. The next evening, a Friday, typically my poker night with the guys, my girlfriend came to the door.

"You brought over pizza, how nice," I said. "And, oh, gosh, look at that, a Netflix."

"Jerry Maguire," she said, and gave me a kissing face with heart-shaped eyes. "'You had me at hello.'" It was her favorite line from the movie, or so I learned the first, second and third times we'd watched it.

"That's so sweet, but you know, it's poker night. The guys are here." I gave her a frowning face with open mouth.

"But you said you wanted me to come over."

"I did? When?"

"In your texts."

"No, I didn't. They were just emojis."

"But you can communicate a message in emojis. They're pictures, symbols or whatever. They're meant to *say something*."

"That might be true," I said, but again I had to remind her that it was poker night. I gave her an expressionless face.

She gave me a pouting face in reply.

"Come on," I said. I gave her a face in cold sweat, but she wasn't buying it. "Okay." I gave her a little smiling shit pile. "See?" I feel *this* bad. She still wasn't buying it. I said, "Do you want to come in?"

She gave me a face with look of triumph as she stepped through the door.

Nothing that disturbing happened for the next few days, although we continued to send emojis back and forth. It was easier than having to compose actual words, which can be tiring.

She gave me a volcano, and I gave her a snowflake.

She gave me a ring with a question mark.

I gave her a bomb, exclamation point.

She gave me an open lock, a growing heart, a bride with veil.
I gave her a runner, a bell with cancellation stroke, an imp.
Basic gender stuff.
And then one day she called me at work. She had been crying.
"I can't talk right now, honey," I said. "I really really really want to, but I'm in the middle of a meeting."
"This is too difficult to say out loud, anyway," she said. "I'll just text you."
But she didn't mean "text me." She meant "emoji." She wanted to emoji me, and she did.
She gave me a man in turban next to a tropical fish that was going ZZZ.
I gave her a thumbs up, and later when I drove to her place after work, she ran out to greet me. "Thank you for understanding! I was so scared about telling you."
"No problem at all," I said.
"You're not mad?" She gave me a worried face.
"Of course not, no." I gave her a flexing bicep. "Why would I be mad?"
"Well, I guess from our last communication," she said. "Most men wouldn't put up with that."
Over the next few weeks, our emojis progressed.
She gave me a taxi, a crystal ball, a red balloon, a ghost, a shrimp, a needle, a cactus, a dog's head with its tongue hanging out.
I gave her a full moon with face looking to the side.
She gave me a snail, a sunset over buildings, a bikini.
I gave her a dress, a glass of wine, a love hotel.
She gave me kids. Here they were, two loudly crying faces. She gave me that.
I gave her a trophy, a lemon.
She gave me the caution sign.
I gave her a face without mouth next to a thought bubble.
Where was the lightning bolt?
She gave me a cyclone, a collision, a thumbs down.
I gave her a frog.

She gave me a bust in silhouette.

"I don't even know what that means," I tried to text, but by then, we were clearly done with words. And I felt bad about this, for sure, but I gave her, finally, a closed mailbox with lowered flag.

Eventually, in response, she gave me the hammer, and I gave her—am still in fact giving her—a money bag.

