

SHIFTING EMOJIS

A Ten-Minute Satire
by Robin Caroline

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Cast of Characters:

SOPHIE: teenage girl, feminist

APRIL: Sophie's mom, feminist who tries to be diplomatic, not dressed to go out

AMBER head of the local women's club, a Stepford wife, dressed to convey "money," casual nice but expensive.

Place

Suburban USA

Time

A Saturday morning, early 2017

SETTING: A bedroom used as a computer room. There is a desk with computer and chair, and at least one other chair.

AT RISE: APRIL is sitting at the computer.

(SOPHIE knocks on the door. APRIL doesn't answer; she's absorbed. SOPHIE enters.)

SOPHIE

Mom, there's someone here to see you.

APRIL

Okay.

(APRIL doesn't move. SOPHIE moves to APRIL's side.)

SOPHIE

Mom, the doorbell rang. There's someone here at the house, a Mrs. Daugherty.

APRIL

What did you say, sweetheart?

SOPHIE

(shouts) Mom!

(APRIL looks up.)

SOPHIE (cont'd)

There is a Mrs. Daugherty here at the house to see you.

APRIL

(confused) Mrs. Daugherty?

SOPHIE

From that woman's club you're a part of.

APRIL

(slow recognition) Mrs. Daugherty. (panic) Amber!

(APRIL is suddenly conscious of what she's wearing and her hair!)

APRIL (cont'd)

Amber Daugherty is here?!

SOPHIE

Waiting for you in the living room.

(Enter AMBER.)

AMBER

Not any more. I hope you don't mind.

(Sophie exits.)

APRIL

Amber! Good to see you. Did I forget about a meeting?

AMBER

No. Don't worry. I just thought I'd pop in. I need to talk to you about something.

APRIL

Oh, okay. Well, you're catching me "as is." I don't normally... Can I get you something to drink? A sparkling water with, um, lime maybe? I'm not sure if I have-

AMBER

--No. Don't go to any trouble.

APRIL

Shall we go out to the living room?

AMBER

No, this is fine. It's actually perfect.

APRIL

Have a seat!

(AMBER sits on a chair in the room.)

APRIL (cont'd)

How is it perfect?

AMBER

I want to talk to you about how you're using the Internet.

APRIL

How I'm using the Internet? Does the club need help with the webpage? I don't know that I have the skills to--

AMBER

No, it's not that. Helene does the webpage. She's a professional.

APRIL

Oh, okay. I wondered whether she might be sick or something.

AMBER

No, she's fine. I'm here to talk about your use of the angry emoji on Facebook.

APRIL

(confused) Excuse me?

AMBER

We've noticed that you've been using the—

APRIL

--Who's we?

AMBER

Oh, just me and some of the girls, the leadership team.

APRIL

Okay.

AMBER

We've noticed that you've been using the angry emoji quite a bit, and we would like to recommend that you return to—

APRIL

You've taken note of which emojis I'm using?

AMBER

Well, the angry emoji is quite startling.

APRIL

Okay.

AMBER

And we'd like to recommend that you return to using the sad emoji. It's much less (beat) provocative.

APRIL

(Chuckles to herself trying to figure out what to say) Uh—

AMBER

This is not a joke.

APRIL

No, I'm... Uh, I...I'm just flummoxed. I'm not sure what to think about the club trying to dictate to me whether I should feel sad or angry.

AMBER

As a general rule, anger is frowned upon.

APRIL

(repeating to let it sink in) As a general rule, anger is frowned upon.

AMBER

Yes.

APRIL

So you never get angry?

AMBER

Well, it's about how you express it. Speaking for myself, I tend to get frustrated or disappointed or discouraged but anger is such an ugly emotion. (beat) And as a woman's club, we don't want to get characterized as "angry feminists," would we?

APRIL

Oh.

AMBER

Image is important, and we wouldn't want to do anything to jeopardize or lose the good will of the community.

APRIL

(pauses trying to figure out how to approach this) So, the woman's club is a community charitable organization volunteering and fundraising to help those in need but we're not supposed to get angry at the system or the circumstances that caused these people to be in need in the first place?

AMBER

Getting angry at the people we serve is never acceptable.

APRIL

I didn't say get angry with the people, I said get angry at the system that causes the people to be underprivileged.

AMBER

(rolls her eyes) Well, that's debatable and beside the point. I'm here to talk about Facebook.

APRIL

This is surreal.

AMBER

You're new to the club, and—

APRIL

Have you done a lot of these visits?

AMBER

I haven't had to, but the current political climate seems to have—

APRIL

--brought up a lot of anger.

AMBER

Yes, and it's very unbecoming. Angry feminists give all women a bad name. This visit is to simply or just gently encourage you to—

APRIL

And if I don't stop using the angry emoji what happens?

AMBER

We discussed it, but it was over drinks, not at an official meeting, so we decided to wait and see what you say.

APRIL

Oh, really. And it's just me?

AMBER

Well, no.

APRIL

Who might the other angry emoji women be?

AMBER

I'm not sure it would—

APRIL

(as an aside) I think I might like to get together for drinks with them.

AMBER

Well, again, I don't think that would be proper.

APRIL

To go for drinks or for you to tell me who you've been monitoring on Facebook? No offense, but I think the kids call that "stalking."

AMBER

(testily) I don't stalk.

APRIL

I'm sorry. Are you getting frustrated? Disappointed? Discouraged?

AMBER

If these women are on your friends list, you can look yourself.

APRIL

So is this an official visit putting me on notice?

AMBER

(sighs) It's not an official visit yet.

APRIL

Yet. (fake sighs) Okay. Here's the thing: the "sad emoji" makes me feel powerless, and the "angry emoji" motivates me to want to change things. Sad is resolute. Angry asks the question, "What are we going to do about this?"

AMBER

Choosing an emoji does absolutely nothing to affect change.

APRIL

(pause) And that's the most insightful thing you've said. You're right.

AMBER

Of course, I'm right.

APRIL

Of course, you are.

(AMBER stands.)

AMBER

Excellent. So, agreed? Sad emoji, good; angry emoji, sends mixed messages.

(APRIL stands.)

APRIL

Before you leave, I didn't think the women's club was a partisan organization.

AMBER

It's not.

APRIL

Because that's mostly what I use the angry emoji for—political happenings. It's not like I'm angry about cat videos.

AMBER

It's not always political.

APRIL

What do you mean?

AMBER

I've noticed-- Well, it's nothing.

APRIL

I doubt that it's nothing.

AMBER

My brother is a police officer.

APRIL

And?

AMBER

The club may donate money to have a blue line painted on Main Street.

APRIL

Oh. Black Lives Matter.

(AMBER crosses her arms and raises her eyebrows.)

AMBER

I think you mean, Blue Lives Matter.

APRIL

Maybe we should discuss that as a club. I'd be curious to see where people come down on the blue line idea. Maybe we could have someone help lead a discussion so that we can really listen to one another. We could host someone from Black Lives—

(SOPHIE enters.)

SOPHIE

Mom! Look what arrived!

(SOPHIE brings in a box and they watch as she opens it and pulls out two tee-shirts. They say, "Persist. Resist.")

SOPHIE (cont'd)

These are awesome. We should wear them to the rally tomorrow.

AMBER

Rally?

APRIL

If you'd like to join us, we're headed to a rally to support women running for elected offices.

AMBER

No, thank you.

APRIL

I find them very uplifting. People are there to support a cause, and usually the tenor is upbeat. It makes you feel good to be doing something, more than just hitting the angry emoji. You know what I mean?

AMBER

Well, as I said—

APRIL

It's okay. I understand.

SOPHIE

Understand what?

APRIL

I'll explain it to you later.

AMBER

No, I don't mind. (to Sophie) Angry women are very often written off. You have to learn how to work the system with a smile to succeed.

SOPHIE

That's a crock of shit.

APRIL

Sophie!

SOPHIE

Look at history! Did the suffragettes smile their way to the voting booth?! That's ignorant.

APRIL

Sophie. (Puts on a smile.) I think we might be sending Sophie to diplomacy school over the summer.

SOPHIE

Wait. What? You're sending me where?

APRIL

It's a joke.

SOPHIE

Oh. Okay. Mrs. Daugherty, did you study the suffragette movement in high school?

AMBER

That was a long time ago. I think we've progressed a lot since then.

SOPHIE

I just learned that the leaders of the movement didn't allow women of color to participate. Isn't that sad?

AMBER

I've never heard that.

SOPHIE

And what do you think about gerrymandering? Laws are being struck down across the country because it's become clear that they were trying to make it harder for minorities to vote.

AMBER

I was taught that one doesn't discuss politics or religion outside of one's family.

SOPHIE

So what do you talk about?

AMBER

Anything else.

SOPHIE

But nothing important.

AMBER

Well, I wouldn't say that.

SOPHIE

What would you say?

AMBER

That I think I need to be headed out. I'm sorry for the intrusion.

APRIL

Well, it's been--

AMBER

--You signed up to lead the winter coat drive.

APRIL

Oh, I'll fulfill my commitment.

AMBER

That's okay. We'll find someone else.

APRIL

I'm sorry to hear that.

AMBER

And, no offense, but you should expect to be unfriended by—

APRIL

(sound of disgust) That's ridiculous (beat) and ironically makes me very sad.

AMBER

But you can't expect us to—

APRIL

--respectfully disagree with one another and still work together for the common good?

AMBER

I think you're being naïve.

APRIL

(pause, makes a gesture to bring attention to her face) Sad emoji.

AMBER

Angry emoji.

SOPHIE

(looks from one to the other) Wow emoji. (beat) With a side of WTF.

AMBER

Goodbye, April, Sophie. I'll see myself out.

(AMBER exits.)

SOPHIE

So what are you going to do?

APRIL

I'm going to stalk my Facebook friends and find out who the other angry emoji women are and we're going out for drinks to discuss this proposed blue line and what we're going to do about it. (gestures to her face and puts on a big smile and gives a thumbs up)

(SOPHIE makes a heart symbol with her hands.)

(Curtain.)

THE END