



MONDAY MORNING BLUES

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

It was on a Monday morning that I was running late for work. To compound my problems, traffic was heavier than usual and only later, after it was too late to change direction or take the back roads, did I learn that there was a major accident at the intersection of the feeder highway I was on and the expressway to Boston.

"Why can't the American motorists learn how to drive?" I hiss as I switch from one radio station to another in an effort to release tension and to ease my road rage. As I was contemplating changing lanes again out of frustration at the slow-moving traffic and to get ahead of the sleek BMW in front of me, my cell phone rang. I hesitated for a few seconds before I instinctively reached for the phone in my trouser pocket. I also felt annoyed, and wondered who might be calling at this early hour, even though I knew that on occasions such as these, when one is stuck in traffic and the radio is tirelessly repeating the same news, music or commercial over and over again, the best therapy for road fatigue is company or conversation with a fellow human being. However, as the cell phone kept on ringing, I was having second thoughts since I knew it is unlawful to talk while driving (although the law is hardly enforced in Massachusetts unless you are involved in an accident and caught red-handed using your hands to hold the phone rather than the steering wheel). Another reason why I feel guilty every time I get the urge to reach for my cell phone is, many years ago I promised my daughter after a fender bender that I was involved in while I was talking on the

phone that I would kick the habit of chatting while driving. However, as most drivers in my situation know, it is easier to quit smoking than to give up the habit of fiddling with your cell phone behind the wheels.

Anyhow, when my daughter is not around, i.e., sitting in the passenger seat with me which is rarely since she lives in another city, I reach for the cell phone and often make a few calls when I am stuck in traffic, or just cruising along and there is no possibility of hitting the car ahead of me. She made me promise to buy a Blue Tooth device that you clip on to your ear and allows you to talk hands-free while you drive. However, I am still shopping for this device since I haven't yet found one that I like and in the right price range for me. If my daughter calls while I am driving, I pretend that I am in a place other than my car, or just inform her that I am otherwise busy and call her later.

My cell phone rang again, and this time I couldn't ignore it. "What if it's my office trying to reach me?" I reasoned with my conscience. I took out the cell phone and tried to read the caller ID which is tough since I was not wearing my reading glass. I hate to wear bifocals since it makes me look funny, and so I either squint when reading a small text or change my glasses, which is impossible to do when I am driving. So, I decided to break the promise to my daughter one last time, and answered the call.

"Hello! Is this Jimmy?" the caller asked.
"No, this not Jimmy. May I know who's

calling?"

"I am calling from ABC Auto Dealer. I was given this number to call because we learned that you are looking for a new car."

I knew right then that I shouldn't have given my cell number on the web site that I went to in search of a car. It soon dawned on me that I might have given my cell number to others who then passed it around to the commercial companies who make it their business to build database of phone numbers. These Yellow Page companies are just building a directory of cell phone numbers for commercial purposes. Only a few years ago, we thought that the cell phone will finally free us from the tyranny of telemarketers who call you just as you are sitting down for a quiet dinner to push some product or solicit donations for worthy causes as well as for the usual culprits, Police Association, Fireman's Funds, YMCA, Veterans, etc., etc.

I was about to cut off this caller when I heard a beep, and I wasn't sure whether it was another call or a text message. My anxiety level is now heightened as I noted that the traffic had eased ahead of me, and I needed to change lanes again to take advantage of this passing opportunity. But my right hand was tied down, and now my eyes are drawn to the screen of the phone to check whether the caller is waiting for me to answer. I took my eyes off the road for a split second and noticed two rectangular buttons on my phone one "Answer" and the other "Later". Before I could press either, the calls dropped to my relief.

At last, I reach the final leg of my long journey to work and can see the skyscrapers of Boston from a distance. I felt my mood picked up again, and had the urge to turn on some light music. I pushed a few pre-set buttons on the radio and finally hit a station which plays the Top 40, KISS-108. The talk show host Matt Siegal has good sense of humor and I have enjoyed his daily banter with his sidekick, Billy Costa. The "Matty in the Morning Show" is the top-rated morning show in Boston with a rating of 8.7 meaning 50% of the 25-54 age group tuned to Kiss-108 once during the day. While I am not in this age group (unfortunately), I like to hang out with this group. Or at least my taste in music follows this age group. Matt was on the attack again today just as I tuned in:

"So Billy, why did your wife leave you?" I suddenly felt good and wanted to share my bliss with my old friend, M. I was not sure if he was awake, so I picked up the phone and started texting. With my hands firmly planted on the steering wheel, but with my two free thumbs, I started typing furiously, "Good morning ..."

My next message would have been to my daughter, "Honey, this is my last txt msg while driving. Sorry cuz I broke your injunction!"

Dr Abdullah Shibli writes from Boston, USA.

Fleeting Clouds

MAHMUDUR RAHMAN

Where do they go these white puffs of cloud?
Meandering leisurely in the clear blue sky?
Playing hide and seek with the blue and gold
Of the azure and the golden glow.

At times combining to create an angry grey
Conspiring then to let loose a sprinkle of spray
Sometimes creating castles in the air
That flit and float up above and high.

Casting shadows in their path across the sky
Turning luscious green into darker hues
Or pleasant gold of ripening fields
Into Amber as if in cues.

Where do they go these white puffs of cloud?
Changing shapes of softness so proud
Changing the brightness of blue
Into softer shades of a different hue.

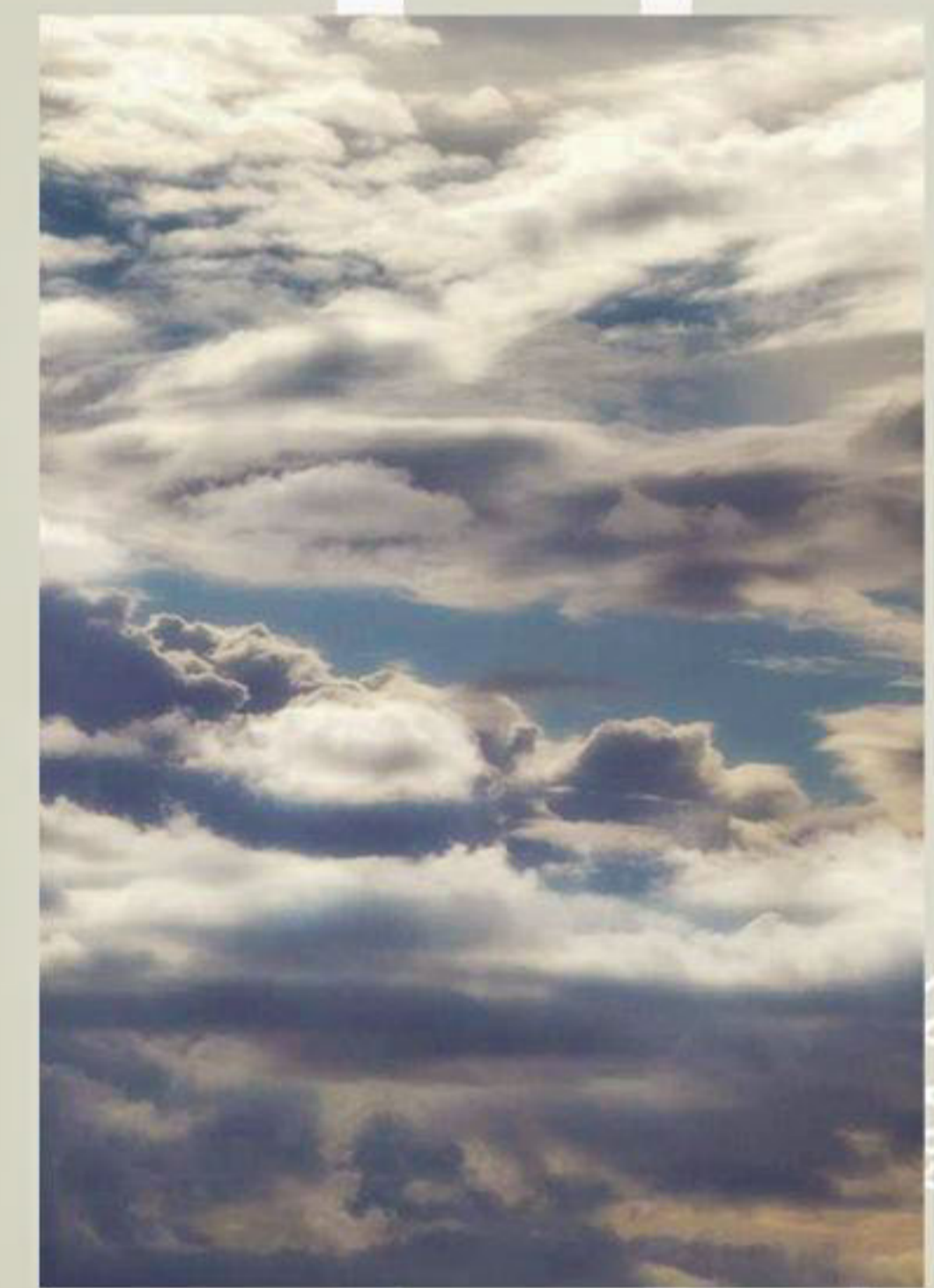
Warming the heart with the Virgin white
Almost like brick on brick
An enigma that defies the physical touch
Just a handful of nothingness.

But is there something beyond what is seen
Of sight beyond sight?
For nothing exists without meaning
Whether it be wrong or right.

Is it the making of creation's wonder
Ravaged by what we do to our world
The purity of white driven asunder
By the impurity of polluted thought.

Nature's wrath explodes in fury
And we often wonder why
Yet the answer is simpler than usury
It is us, we who cō and then deny.

Where do they go these white puffs of cloud?
Across the canvas of the deep
Maybe a reminder to those who proclaim loud
There is much to do to earn our keep.



THE BROKEN HEART

TULIP CHOWDHURY

Dear BH,

Hope this mail finds you still playing to life's songs in perfect beats. However challenging the tunes are, I know that you will bear with me. We cannot do without each other, you know.

Allow me to take you in my arms, to hold you and croon endless love songs into your ears. You shall find sweet sleep close your eyes while dreams flow like the calm blue seas. The melodies shall come in varied tunes, singing of joy and sorrow. Roses and tulips, butterflies and bees will surround us while we dance in the spring wind. You like waltz and that we shall we do, what music to play, my love? Would you like Strauss or Tchaikovsky?

My dear BH, love was foolish and gay while we explored life in its unknown. The fountain of happiness in finding each other at times was too deep to take by itself. What shall we do then? Perhaps bury ourselves within sips of the best wines? Love held magic wings and drunk with it all, we climbed the stairways of the Milky Way and the floated with autumn clouds. Basking in the moonlight can we join Cupid on his trance one day?

While I write, I know that I wait for you full of hope, you did not give a farewell kiss. In your new world on the other side of the world, are you happy? Do you wear your scarlet dress now and then? And do your dark, pool-like eyes look for me? There is no distance and yet endless miles between us, somewhere reason and passion wage



wars in our lives together. Wonder who shall win? I laugh and cry, time and time again. Seek refuge in pills and doctors, no-one rescues me on lonely nights. Darkness deepens, stars come out. Perhaps your eyes are looking at one like mine? Are we together locked in sights?

Dear BH, my Broken Heart, how shall I mend you again?

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