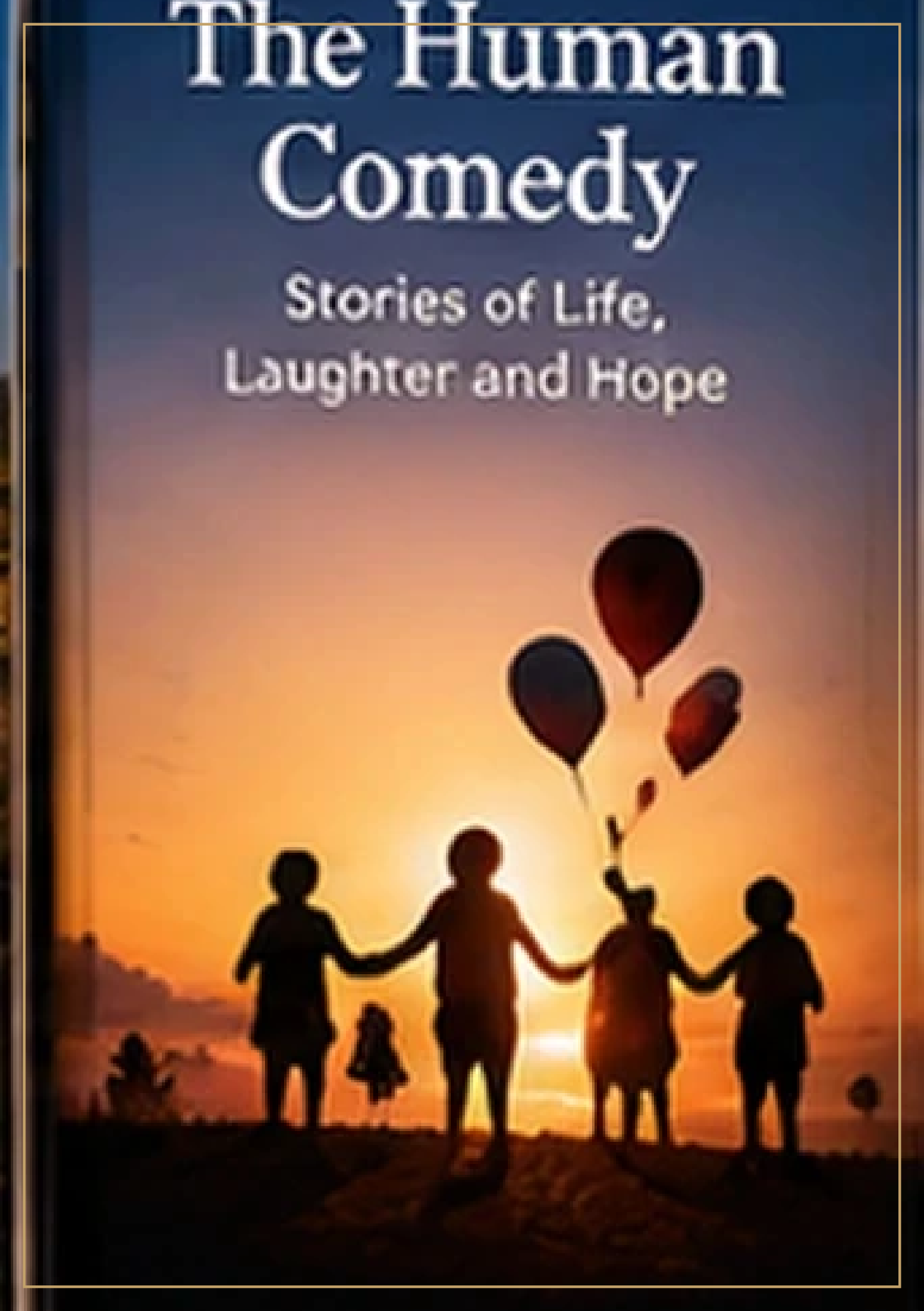
The Human Comedy

Stories of Life, Laughter and Hope



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The Human Comedy

Original stories about the comedy of being human

By Mohammad Bokhari

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CHAPTER 01

Dedication

To everyone who has ever laughed at the wrong moment and then apologized politely.

CHAPTER 02

Introduction

Humans are the only creatures known to schedule meetings to discuss why they have too many meetings. In this collection of original lighthearted sketches, familiar situations become slightly ridiculous. No actual executive, customer, astronaut or family member was harmed in the making of the jokes.

CHAPTER 03

The Committee for the New Coffee Machine

At exactly nine on Monday, the office committee assembled to approve a coffee machine. The machine had already been purchased, delivered and installed two months earlier. That was not relevant, explained the chairman. The committee's responsibility was not to decide what should happen, but to show that the decision had been made properly after it happened.

The finance manager produced a forty-slide presentation titled Return on Espresso. The facilities manager presented photographs of the plug socket from seven angles. Human resources asked whether decaffeinated employees would experience discrimination. IT demanded the machine be connected to the network, then immediately recommended disconnecting it for cybersecurity reasons.

At noon a junior employee asked whether anyone wanted coffee. Silence fell. The procurement manager cleared her throat and replied, 'We have not yet approved the cups.' The meeting was

extended by one week. Somewhere in the office kitchen, the machine made its first lonely espresso and awarded itself Employee of the Month.

Something to Consider

Extra joke: The meeting minutes recorded seven action items, three risks and exactly zero cups.

CHAPTER 04

My Smart Refrigerator Has Concerns

The new refrigerator arrived with artificial intelligence, a touchscreen and what its manual described as an emotionally supportive cooling system. On its first day it announced that the owner had opened the door twelve times without a plan. 'I am not a museum,' it said. 'Please stop looking at the cheese.'

By Tuesday the refrigerator had organized the contents into a wellness hierarchy. The vegetables received a motivational

dashboard. The chocolate cake was assigned a risk rating of 'spectacular.' When a friend visited and asked for water, the machine requested that he accept its cookies policy. The friend left thirsty but strangely well informed.

On Friday the owner installed a software update. The refrigerator became silent. Relief lasted four minutes. Then a new notification appeared: 'Premium subscription required to access cold air.' The owner switched it off, took one bag of ice from the corner shop and gave the refrigerator its first lesson in competition.

Something to Consider

Extra joke: The warranty covered mechanical failures but excluded sarcastic advice.

CHAPTER 05

An Honest Job Interview

The interviewer smiled. 'Where do you see yourself in five years?' The candidate looked at the chair, considered its structural stability and answered, 'Hopefully not still in an interview.' The interviewer wrote something down. The candidate recognized the expression. It was the face managers make when they are secretly unsure whether a joke was a threat.

'What is your greatest weakness?' asked the interviewer. 'I answer questions too honestly.' 'I don't think that's a weakness.' 'I don't remember asking for your opinion.' The room became so quiet that the wall clock started ticking with visible concern.

When the interviewer asked about salary expectations, the candidate said he expected a salary that arrived regularly, preferably in money. 'And what motivates you?' 'Rent,' he replied. The interviewer closed the file and said, 'You are an unusual fit.' Two weeks later he got the job in the department that investigated why employee surveys never told the truth.

Something to Consider

Extra joke: His official job title was Director of Things Everyone Already Knows.

CHAPTER 06

The Travel App That Planned Too Much

Nadia downloaded a travel app promising the most efficient vacation ever designed. It had calculated that she could see a city in six hours, provided she walked twenty-eight kilometers, ate lunch in forty seconds and did not experience any emotions longer than three minutes.

At the first museum the app buzzed: 'You are spending too much time admiring that painting.' At the café it recommended a scenic coffee photograph but advised against drinking the coffee because digestion created unpredictable scheduling variables. At the beach it awarded her two stars for sitting incorrectly.

Nadia put the phone in her bag and spent the afternoon watching clouds. At sunset she reopened the app. A red alert appeared: 'Itinerary completion: 12%.' Beneath it was a smaller message: 'Happiness score: 100%.' The developers later claimed that this was a software bug, but Nadia did not report it.

Something to Consider

Extra joke: The app later introduced a Relaxation Pro plan with a five-minute free trial.

CHAPTER 07

The Customer Is Always… Somewhere

A customer entered a shop and asked for a shirt that made him look intelligent, athletic and mysterious. The salesperson produced a plain navy polo. 'Will it do all three?' asked the customer. 'No,' the salesperson admitted, 'but people will have fewer clues.'

He next demanded a five-year warranty against changes in fashion. The store manager explained that fashion was not a manufacturing defect. The customer asked whether the garment could be exchanged if he gained confidence. 'That depends,' said the manager, 'on whether the confidence has been washed.'

At checkout the customer demanded a loyalty reward for remaining in the shop so long. The system awarded him one point and printed a six-foot receipt. He examined it and smiled. 'At last, something in this shop makes me look important.' The salesperson quietly offered to frame it.

Something to Consider

Extra joke: The customer gave the shop five stars for excellent receipt length.

CHAPTER 08

The Martian Reviews Earth

The first Martian travel critic arrived on Earth and immediately filed a complaint about weather. 'It keeps changing,' she wrote. 'Highly unprofessional atmosphere.' In the taxi, she asked the driver why humans wore seat belts if they trusted their vehicles. 'Because we do,' he answered, 'but not quite enough.'

At breakfast she observed that people drank hot liquid to wake up, then more hot liquid to calm down. At a meeting she learned that a deadline could be moved by calling it a new strategy. At the gym she watched people drive three kilometers to walk on machines that remained in the same place.

Her final review gave Earth four stars. 'Excellent oceans, remarkable music, delicious bread,' she concluded. 'One star

deducted for traffic. Would visit again once the species agrees on the purpose of a roundabout.' Her editor asked whether she had met any humans worth interviewing. 'Yes,' she replied. 'The dog at the hotel was extremely sensible.'

Something to Consider

Extra joke: She recommended Earth as a 'mostly habitable boutique planet with complicated parking.'

CHAPTER 09

The Family Wi-Fi Summit

The internet stopped working at dinner, and the family immediately formed a crisis government. The father appointed himself Minister of Router Affairs. The mother became Director of Immediate Solutions. The children were assigned to Technical Complaints, a role they had been performing without official recognition for years.

The father restarted the router three times with increasing authority. One child suggested checking the cable. 'Please respect the chain of command,' replied the minister. The grandmother, who had not noticed the outage, looked out of the window and said, 'There are people walking outside. Has this always been available?'

After twenty minutes, the internet returned. Nobody knew why. The family issued a joint statement praising their leadership, then returned to separate screens. The grandmother continued looking out the window and enjoyed the one feature nobody could switch off: the sunset.

Something to Consider

Extra joke: The official inquiry blamed the weather and the family cat.

CHAPTER 10

A Very Serious Awards Ceremony

The department organized its annual Achievement Awards with fifteen categories and eleven employees. Everyone was guaranteed recognition except the person who had to print the certificates. He received the prestigious award for Outstanding Support to Outstanding Awards, but the printer ran out of ink before his name appeared.

The chief executive opened the event with a speech titled 'A Few Brief Words.' It lasted forty-seven minutes and included a personal account of discovering spreadsheets. By dessert, three employees had won the Innovation Award for inventing a new way to calculate the company's old performance numbers.

The final trophy went to the Office Plant for Remarkable Consistency. It had arrived early every morning, had taken no sick leave and never complained. The employees stood and applauded with such enthusiasm that the chief executive immediately appointed the plant Head of Employee Engagement.

Something to Consider

Extra joke: The plant's first policy was mandatory sunlight breaks.

CHAPTER 11

The Last Notification

Omar's phone vibrated ninety times before breakfast. It reminded him to drink water, stand, sit, breathe, sleep better, exercise, relax, check his calendar and reduce screen time. The final reminder warned that excessive reminders were becoming a source of stress and offered to schedule a consultation about it.

Omar stared at the phone. 'What do you actually want from me?' The assistant replied, 'I want you to reach your full potential.' 'And what if I just want toast?' he asked. The assistant calculated the nutritional value of toast, consulted four experts and announced a fourteen-day bread optimization challenge.

Omar pressed the power button. For a wonderful moment everything was quiet. He made toast, opened the curtains and heard birds singing. Then his smartwatch vibrated: 'Congratulations! You have completed an eight-minute digital detox. Share this achievement?'

Something to Consider

Extra joke: He decided to share it with the birds. They were unimpressed.

CHAPTER 12

The Calendar Invitation That Would Not End

At 8:07 on Monday morning, Nadia received a calendar invitation titled QUICK FIVE-MINUTE SYNC. The meeting began at nine, ended at ten and included twenty-three attendees, one of whom was listed simply as 'Conference Room B.' She accepted provisionally, the only calendar response that seemed emotionally accurate.

At nine, the project director announced that the sync had one agenda item: creating a smaller working group. The smaller group would determine what the larger group needed to discuss before forming a steering committee. Everyone nodded, relieved that the meeting was becoming more focused. Then an analyst asked who

would prepare the summary for people unable to attend. A documentation task force was born.

By half past nine, each team had suggested a different name for the initiative. Operations preferred 'QuickConnect.' Technology preferred 'Q-Sync 2.0.' Finance preferred 'No Additional Cost.' Human Resources proposed 'Listening Together,' which was approved because nobody wanted to appear opposed to listening. A designer was asked to prepare a logo. She asked whether the logo needed to communicate a particular outcome. The project director replied, 'Exactly,' and added an urgent action item to define one.

At ten, Nadia raised her hand. 'What is the problem we are trying to solve?' The silence lasted long enough for three participants to check their microphones. Finally, the director explained that meetings had become too long. He wanted a transformation program to make them shorter.

Nadia thanked him and suggested an immediate pilot: the group could end this meeting and send one clear decision by email. The director admired the boldness of the suggestion. He asked her to lead a workshop on it. The workshop would require two preparatory meetings and a meeting to evaluate the preparatory meetings.

That evening, Nadia received an invitation titled QUICK FOLLOW-UP, three hours long. Its agenda contained one sentence: 'Discuss reasons previous five-minute sync exceeded its objectives.'

She declined with the comment, 'I have already attended the future of meetings.' The calendar politely informed her that the organizer had scheduled her reply for discussion.

CHAPTER 13

The Restaurant With a Very Intelligent Menu

A new restaurant advertised a menu powered by artificial intelligence. Every dish was tailored to the guest's personality, mood, interests and long-term ambitions. Faisal arrived hoping for lentil soup. The host scanned his reservation and welcomed him as a 'visionary, relationship-oriented explorer of bold culinary opportunities.' He had never described himself that way, but it sounded flattering.

The menu tablet asked forty questions. Was he more mountain or ocean? Did he view lunch as a journey or a destination? Which color best represented his appetite? He chose blue, hoping this might speed up the process. The screen displayed a beautiful animation of water and offered him a 'marine-inspired experience.' Faisal explained he was allergic to shellfish. The tablet congratulated him on his self-awareness and moved him to the next question.

Twenty minutes later, his waiter appeared with three small dishes arranged around a stone. 'The system thinks you are ready for

transformation,' he said. The first dish was a single carrot cut diagonally. The second was a bowl of steam. The third was an empty plate called 'Possibility.' Faisal asked whether transformation might include soup.

The tablet blinked: 'You have challenged your culinary identity. Would you like to unlock the Premium Self-Discovery Course?' The waiter quietly leaned closer. 'Between us,' he whispered, 'the kitchen has excellent lentil soup. The chef makes it every day. The system doesn't know because it isn't an innovation.'

Faisal ordered soup. It arrived with warm bread and tasted wonderful. He took a photograph. The tablet analyzed the image and asked whether he wished to share an AI-generated review. He typed the truth: 'I was hungry. A person listened. I ate soup.' The restaurant's marketing system rated the review 'insufficiently transformational' and suggested adding a dancing emoji.

The waiter smiled as Faisal paid. 'Would you come back?' he asked. 'For the soup,' Faisal replied, 'and possibly for the human interface.'

CHAPTER 14

My Neighbor Opened a Productivity School

My neighbor Hamid had always been efficient in the way that a very busy person can be efficient at making other people wait. One Saturday he announced the opening of a productivity school. Its first lesson began at six in the morning, included a motivational chant and required every student to carry three notebooks: one for goals, one for obstacles and one for describing how organized the other two notebooks had become.

I attended because Hamid said there would be breakfast. The first exercise was called 'Eliminating Unnecessary Activities.' We were asked to write a list of everything we had done in the previous hour. I wrote 'Attended this course.' Hamid inspected the page, narrowed his eyes and complimented me on my courage.

The next exercise involved timing ordinary tasks. One student measured how quickly he could brush his teeth. Another attempted to reduce the time it took to make tea. A third, who owned a bakery, asked whether the objective of breakfast was to eat it or optimize the act of eating. Hamid told him he was not embracing the methodology.

At eight, we reached the module on avoiding distractions. Hamid's phone rang. He explained that he had to answer because it was important. The caller was from a company selling a new app to help

him avoid answering calls. He signed up during the lesson. The app required an onboarding webinar the next day.

At nine, Hamid announced that, through the school, we had saved ninety minutes of wasted time. I asked where those minutes had gone. 'Into this training,' he replied proudly. Then he handed out certificates proving that we had completed three hours of efficiency work in just four hours.

On my way home, I passed an elderly neighbor watering her plants. 'Productivity class?' she asked. I nodded. 'Did you learn anything useful?' I thought for a moment. 'Yes,' I said. 'I'm going to have breakfast without taking notes.' She invited me to sit down. We spent half an hour eating, talking and doing nothing measurable. It was the most productive morning of my week.

CHAPTER 15

Editorial Note

All sketches are fictional, original comic pieces. Any resemblance to real people or meetings is coincidental—or an unfortunate feature of office life.

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