[Snap Judgment]

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Okay, now you're going to tell me I'm wrong. I know it. There's no need to write me letters. I'm just going to tell you what happened. See, in our old Snap Studio's building, we bring our dogs to work, right? I've got this little three-legged pitbull puppy, Georgie. The nicest, friendliest, happiest Scooby-Snack-loving dog that you're ever going to meet. Maybe not the sharpest tool in the shed, but the best dog, and all was well.

[music fades away]

And then one day, the owner of the building, one of these fellas that wears a suit, but not a bad guy, he comes to me and he tells me, "There's been some complaints." "Complaints? About what?" "Well, about dangerous attack dogs on the premises." "Dangerous? Atta--" Georgie's all wagging his tail, wondering which wall to lick. "Huh?" "And you've got to understand, there are certain breeds that can under no circumstances be allowed. So, if you tell me you have that breed, we can't allow it. So, tell me what breed is your dog?" [scoffs] Well, he's obviously-- Argh. Think carefully before you answer. "Georgie, well, he's a greyhound." "Good. So, I'm going to write down in my notebook here, that I have it on your authority, this dog is a greyhound and not a dangerous animal. You have a nice day." He leaves, but I'm fuming because somebody ratted me out.

If it wasn't for this weird little loophole, Snap Studios would be a far less barky place and that's the how I live my life. Here's the thing. I know who the narc is. I see you're sneering at me every day. "Shouldn't be allowed to bring a dog like that here," she says. "It's not right," she says. "It's a ticking timebomb," she says. Georgie, the dog I'd send into a baby nursery. The puppy who welcomes robbers and bad guys, Georgie. "That's not a greyhound. That's a pitbull." Well, let me see your veterinary license, Dr. Doolittle. [scoffs]

Eventually, we move to another building but I walk by her occasionally downtown and she's still with the evil eye, pointing and whispering. I try to tell Georgie to keep it moving, but he just wants to wag his tail at her like she's an old friend. Bad dog. Then recently, for the holidays, we did one of those dog DNA tests. See what kind of pitbull our greyhound really is. We eagerly rip up open the results. [unwrapping] Border Collie? What? German Shepherd, American Bully? [scoffs] Pitbull, less than 20%, all of this nonsense, trying to play the fine print, just so I can stick a new label on the same old hound.

Today on Snap Judgment, we proudly present The Loophole. My name is Glynn Washington. Pitbull-greyhounds are the very best dogs there are. Well, you're listening to Snap Judgment.

[upbeat music]

Now, have you ever found yourself in a lose-lose situation, where you can't see a way out? This storyteller, he knows that's like. Over 15 years ago, Mohamed, a Somalian refugee living in Canada, he was just a teenager. A very outspoken teenager, and as such, this story may have some strong language, references to sexuality and corporal punishment. In the middle of all this, Mohamed's relationship with nearly everyone around him was reaching a breaking point. Mohamed, take it away.

[upbeat music]

**Mohamed:** We grew up as Sunni Muslims in Ottawa, Ontario, the capital of Canada, from Somaliland. We're in a new country, people are going to night school to learn the language and working during the day and taking care of five kids. We're just bouncing off the walls, trying to figure it out. Friday night, we went to school to memorize the Quran because that was the most important thing. Our parents would drop us off. I would be put in an old, rickety building. You're in class and you're stressing out, and you get called out in front of class, and you have to recite the Quran, which is in Arabic, [chuckles] a language I do not speak.

**Regina:** 12-year-old Mohamed was part of a big first-generation Somali family, who came to Ottawa, Canada, with hopes of raising good, Godfearing kids, which meant that Friday night Quran lessons were nonnegotiable. Or, so his parents thought.

**Mohamed:** I purposely didn't memorize the thing. The teacher was walking towards me and talked to all my friends for the last time when I can, "It's been nice hanging out with you. It's been nice hanging out with you." I remember going up to him and being like, "Yeah, I didn't memorize it." And then he's like, "What?" I was like, "That's right."

**Regina:** Mohamed and his teacher stared each other down. The other kids in class held their breath.

**Mohamed:** He came at me, and I dodged. It was just me running through the aisles and him chasing me and everyone was laughing and screaming and him getting angrier and angrier. I jumped out onto the window.

**Regina:** You jumped out the window?

**Mohamed:** Yeah. Onto the ledge, and then ran down the ledge. And I just jumped off onto the top of a school bus.

[thud]

**Regina:** When you jumped out the window, were you concerned for your physical safety?

**Mohamed:** Oh, hell no. At this age, death isn't real, injury isn't real. Jackie Chan was a huge influence on my life. I knew my escape before I did it. [chuckles]

**Regina:** You Jackie Chaned yourself out of the situation?

**Mohamed:** 1,000%.

**Regina:** For years, Mohamed pushed back, little by little, against everything and everyone. His parents, his religion, and his community.

**Mohamed:** There was no time to have a conversation. Everyone that was talking to me was talking in a way where they had memorized answers. Like, "The Prophet would say that this is the way we should do things, and history shows that we do this. If you want to be the best citizen, you have to become this and you have to do this."

**Regina:** Mohamed lived among adults who answered his questions by pointing to the Quran. They were too busy treading water to spend longer than that, exploring the big philosophical ideas that were always on the boy's mind.

**Mohamed:** And it was never like, "Hey, why are we alive? What are we doing?"

**Regina:** As he got older and navigated high school, there was one kind of question he wanted to ask over and over.

**Mohamed:** "Can we talk about love?" For me, love was just taken over by the necessity to live and thrive and survive in this new world. For the longest time, I thought nobody was real, and I was just dealing with robots.

**Regina:** But there was at least one person who felt real. Crystal.

**Mohamed:** She was the quietest person in the room, yet the loudest. We all knew what her intentions were. I was attracted to that. I was attracted to how kind she was. I was attracted to how tough she was.

**Regina:** Crystal couldn't have been more different from Mohamed. She was Christian, but her parents weren't strict. She'd never been outside of Canada. And yet, they felt drawn to each other.

**Mohamed:** But then, it went to, "What do we do now?" I wanted to be with her, and I couldn't. It would be a dishonor on me and her.

**Regina:** Mohamed still answered to a higher power.

**Mohamed:** If I saw a girl, I would have to avert my gaze. It was just something I was trying to do.

**Regina:** Well, yes, the higher power Mohamed felt accountable to was God. But, there was an even more immediate and omnipotent force that he felt in his life.

**Mohamed:** My mom was Pablo Escobar. She knew everything that was going on in the neighborhood and, honestly, it felt like the entire world. She would be on this couch, and she had her spot never moved. That spot was so indented. The cushion was flat because of how often she sat there, and all she did was talk on the phone. [phone beeping] There was a lot of laughter, but all of it was weaved with information, about what was going on next door, next city, next country.

**Regina:** Mohamed's mom had friends in high places.

**Mohamed:** All of the Somali moms wore hijabs or abaya, and they'd only be showing your face. And they would stand in high spots. They're standing on top of hills, and they're watching over the neighborhood. And our nickname for them was ninjas, just watching over us. If I left the neighborhood, my mom knew.

**Regina:** And if she discovered Mohamed not only dating a girl, but a white nonbeliever, only God might be able to save him from her wrath.

**Mohamed:** I can't look or touch a girl, but I have these wants and feelings, and I'm struggling with myself. Feeling like I'm a terrible person, while at the same time having these needs and wants.

**Regina:** Mohamed confided in his friends as they walked home together from school. His buddies were his go-to in situations like these, because they were just as philosophical as he was.

**Mohamed:** We would debate each other on the concept of religion. School didn't matter if we didn't know why we were alive.

**Regina:** His friends were Shia Muslims from Kuwait and Iraq, who had settled in Ottawa in the 90s. As a Somali Sunni, Mohamed was super into the way his pals broke the monolith of Islam for him. Shia cultural and religious practices felt so different from everything else he had grown up with.

**Mohamed:** My friends I met at the time, they had shown up after the FIRST IRAQ WAR. I was fascinated with how he was explaining the religion to me, where everyone else was telling me what to do and how to act as in like a memorized code that we had to follow, like walk out of the bathroom with the right foot, walk in with the left. His side of religion was all emotional, it was more connected to a spirituality.

**Regina:** So, they set to work on Mohamed's dilemma. Scrolling through theology web forums and listening to scholars on YouTube. And it wasn't long, before they stumbled across.

**Mohamed:** This loophole. [echoes] You can have this thing as called a temporary marriage. Me and my two friends, we worked like a team of lawyers to try to figure out what this all meant. It has a contract, it has witnesses, you and her have to declare to each other that you don't have to declare this relationship to your parents, you don’t have to declare this to the government. It's just between you two.

**Regina:** How did it compare to the kind of marriage that your parents had? Did you see this as that kind of marriage, like where you're going to move out of the house?

**Mohamed:** Nope, [chuckles] nope. Dating is not an option. Find a good family, find a good daughter of that family, and that's it. You marry, have children and move on with your life. And for me, that does not work.

With temporary marriage, it's the same concept as getting married, but it's honorable in the sense that you're clear as to what your needs are and what you would want, and you can communicate about it. And so, to me, this was amazing, because I didn't understand how I could give up my entire life to one person on the basis of physical needs.

**Regina:** I hear that, and you're using the Quran to justify going to third base. Is there any part of that feel-- [chuckles]

**Mohamed:** Wrong? [laughs] No. I wanted to be an honorable person, constantly. And hypocrisy doesn't work for me. Maybe it wasn't well thought out. Maybe it didn't agree with my parents. Maybe it wouldn't be something that didn't agree with the community. And, yet, I found some reasoning I could get behind to fulfill needs that I had, that I wanted to explore.

**Regina:** Mohamed knew he really liked Crystal, but he also wanted to stay true to his interpretation of his religion. With this idea in mind, he asked Crystal if they could talk. They snuck out of their houses and met up at a nearby park.

**Mohamed:** We were sitting on the bench, we started talking, and then all of a sudden, these clouds formed all around us. And it started pouring, and we sat underneath the play structure as it rained. We sat in the sand. We didn't touch each other, but we talked to each other. My hands are sweaty, I was confused, but also excited and terrified. I could see that she was also fidgeting and I didn't know why she was fidgeting, and I didn't know how to get this fidgeting feeling off of us. I blurted out that, I guess I liked her. And she blurted out that she liked me. And that was the hugest relief.

This is the first time in my entire life that I verbalized my attraction to someone, after they had verbalized their attraction to me. It was both exciting and terrifying. That moment when I sat with the girl alone for the first time, and we're sitting into this play structure and we're watching the rain fall around us. There's no one, it was just us in the world.

**Regina:** And then, he proposed.

**Mohamed:** "Hey, I can't be with you. But there is in the religion that's in another sect that you could have a temporary marriage. But the only way it would work is I would have to convert, and you would have to convert into Islam. You have to take some time and think about it for yourself. I want to do it. If you want to do it, we have to do it honestly." I remember her taking a deep breath in and be like, "Okay, well, that's a lot. And I'll have to think about it."

**Regina:** They waited for the rain to clear and the clouds to part, and returned to their separate lives. Crystal weighed her choices. She was Christian, would she convert to Islam? The two teens kept their convo in the park on the DL. And they stuck to hanging out just at the school staircase along with the rest of their friends. But Mohamed notice Crystal did seem to be asking her own questions.

**Mohamed:** And then, she started to hang out with a lot of Muslim girls, and she was taking all of these steps that I totally did not expect her to take. I felt more special to have someone appreciate me and then also be invested enough to ask questions on their own terms.

**Regina:** And then one morning, in the hallway at school, right before the bell rang for home class.

**Mohamed:** She said, "Hey, I'm in."

**Regina:** Crystal had converted. The marriage was on.

**Mohamed:** Oh, man, I'm ecstatic. I'm in a new world. I'm past the veil. I get to touch another human body. So yeah, I'm very excited. And nervous, and worried and confused and anxious and happy and full of wonder. I had all of the feelings. Every period was compounded by 10, and I had more time to think about it. I couldn't stay focused on class. I couldn't focus on gym class or math or chemistry. None of it mattered. It was all like what do we need to do next? And what does it mean for the two of us?

**Regina:** So, they plan the ceremony in secret with their closest friends. And before they knew it, the big day had arrived.

**Mohamed:** We wore our best clothes of course. I mean I'm about to get married. I didn't have a suit. Otherwise, that would have brought too much attention. She had our hair really done up nice. We had my two friends. She showed up with her friend. We went together but not together, and left the neighborhood and met at a different location in a field far away from our home. There was no mosque. There was no synagogue or no temple. We were just in a field with long grass, behind a line of trees, a kind of small forest. No one knew where we went. The ninjas were not watching. Once that was confirmed. We had to loop around double check but once we had that freedom, basically, we were in the field, and we wrote out what our intentions were. It was like on a piece of paper.

**Regina:** The thing about a temporary marriage is that it's temporary. So, they have to decide how long the contract would last.

**Mohamed:** We talked about that our timeline would be six months, and that everything was okay for us to do except for sex. After the six months, our relationship would end. So, I have this clear piece of paper that said what we could do and could not do, and for how long. It was just strange, but also that was such a clear relief, because I didn't know how to talk to a girl. The whole procedure didn't last long. There was no rice in the air, there was no band, it was just two people looking each other in the eyes and their declaration of intent for what they would like to do. And it was really cool. It wasn't like a situation where we were being crafty and we're like, "Yeah, let's do this." It was more like, how could we all experience each other without hurting each other? We wanted to figure this out together. And we were doing the best we could and this was, oddly enough, the best we could do.

And I was able to hold her hand and actually touch her. That was so cool. It was so great, because I hadn't touched the girl like that. The only women I ever touched was my mom and my sisters but that's it. Super pumped, super happy. Ooh, we did it.

**Regina:** And so, in the eyes of the few who had gathered there that day, Mohamed and Crystal became a temporary husband and wife. But their first act as a married couple wasn't a dance or even a kiss. It was to scan the hills beyond their hidden field for Somali moms.

**Mohamed:** If we got seen in the neighborhood holding hands, the consequences of that would be horrible. I would be attacked by adults, and parents like, "How the hell are you with this nonbeliever or whatnot. You're risking your soul."

[somber music]

**Glynn:** Don't go anywhere, Snappers. When we return, Mohamed finds out if eternal damnation is just around the corner. Stay tuned.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Welcome back to Snap Judgment, The Loophole episode. When last we left, Mohamed had just used a technical loophole to enter into a temporary marriage with his high school crush, Crystal. As such, this section does have some strong language, mention of sexuality and corporal punishment, because what could possibly go wrong? Snap Judgment.

[somber music]

**Regina:** Mohamed had officially put an invisible ring on it. He and Crystal were married now.

**Mohamed:** We did the marriage at her house.

**Regina:** By that, he means they could actually spend time together at her place without a lot of questions. Her parents had no idea about the marriage.

**Mohamed:** I got to meet her parents. I got to meet her older brother. I was just a boyfriend that she had. So, it was easier. I was almost expected to exist.

**Regina:** It was Mohamed's first time breaking bread with a white and non-Muslim family.

**Mohamed:** It was just super weird because they had food that didn't make any sense to me. What's that? It's not a lasagna, but it's like--

**Regina:** It's like mac and cheese?

**Mohamed:** Mac and cheese. I've never had mac and cheese in my life. Thank you. [chuckles] I'd never heard of it before. I'm not going to lie, it was good. And then, we would go upstairs after we were done. And she was always done with her parents, immediately. As soon as her parents talk, she's like, "Okay, we're done here." And then, she would take me upstairs to her bedroom, and that was our magical hangout. Um, and you know, that's where all the marriage happened.

**Regina:** And when you say marriage--?

**Mohamed:** [chuckles] Yeah. When I say marriage, I'm talking all bases covered. We cuddled, we talked, but really that wasn't the thing.

**Regina:** I mean, you did not go to home-- you didn't go home base.

**Mohamed:** Oh, no. Third base is as far as we go. It was amazing. I got overwhelmed.

**Regina:** It wasn't just the physical stuff that had Mohamed feeling overwhelmed. He had never been anyone's romantic anything before. How soon should he show up at her locker in the morning? Did she really mean it when she said everything was fine? It was like taking a test he'd never studied for. He was bound to get a couple answers wrong. Like the time he was late to one of their dates.

**Mohamed:** "Hey, it's 8 o'clock. You promised to be there, and you know, we agreed." And I'd be like, "Shit, I was trying out for the soccer team. Ah." And then, I remember finishing the soccer team, and then running as fast as I could, with a bunch of flowers I bought after practice to her house, to try to cheer up. "I have flowers, because I think you like flowers. I saw it in a commercial." Oh, man, I made big gestures, because I thought that was more important than small, consistent gestures. "I want to make sure you're always happy. I want to make sure you're good."

**Regina:** And they were for four and a half months, an eternity in high school dating years.

**Mohamed:** But after a while, she wanted to see my family and be at my house because she didn't want to just have a one-sided experience. I told her that would be a terrible idea, because [chuckles] my mom would hit her with a frying pan, so it wasn't safe. The last people to have come into our house that were white were Social Services. My family didn't invite people in other than religious leaders. Her requesting to come into my house was ridiculous. Not possible. But she kept pushing me. One night eventually, I was like, "All right." This is one of those big gestures. This is the same as maybe to the factor of five or six of me running as fast as I can from school to her house with a bouquet of flowers. This one was for all of the marbles.

**Regina:** But more importantly, in his heart of hearts, he didn't think he was doing anything wrong.

**Mohamed:** Why the hell not? Why can't you come to my house? Why am I living like this? I'm going to bring my wife home.

**Regina:** They needed to prepare.

**Mohamed:** It's like going into a mosque. My house is the most religious place in the neighborhood. So, she had to come in with a hijab and she didn't have a hijab.

**Regina:** Luckily, Crystal had an idea.

**Mohamed:** She put on a blanket. Just grabs that sheet from our house, and she puts on this blanket version of a hijab.

**Regina:** The Abaya that Somali moms wore was clothing. This bedsheet was a bedsheet.

**Mohamed:** I feel like I'm on a walk that's the last I'll ever know of. Everything was going to change it, but I didn't know how. We're not touching. We're not holding hands because we're walking. Now we're standing in front of my house, which is the front of the entire neighborhood. We're looking towards this house, and I'm like, "Okay, we're going in." I open the screen door, then I open the door and then we come in. She has to take off her shoes, I take off my shoes. No one is in the kitchen. No one was by the stairs to the left. This is the first time I'm holding our hand.

So, we walked down the hall into the living room and my family's there. Siblings spread across the living room, some on the floor, some laying on the couch, and my mom is sitting in her designated chair by the phone, and she sees me. Everyone sees me first, and then behind me is this white girl walking in with a sheet on her. I sat her down on the love seat, and everything kind of just stopped.

[music abruptly ends]

There was no air. The TV was on. Everyone was frozen in their positions, in the middle of taking a bite of, I don’t know, some chips. I look to my mom, and she was just sitting there, not moving. I took the remote control and I changed the channel. I'm holding the remote control and flipping through the channel. Tension was stupendously uncomfortable and intense. I've never seen someone spontaneously combust before, but that's what it felt like my mom was doing. There were flames coming off her body with rage, and the flames were through in the ceiling. And I remember looking over to my girlfriend, my wife. I'm looking at my wife, and I could see that she had regretted all of our decisions, because she didn't believe what I said, like it couldn't be as possibly bad or uncomfortable or they wouldn't react the way that I had thought they would.

Eventually, we had to leave. I had to take her home. And then, I came back, and I was arguing with my mom. Maybe we had pushed it super hard with my family. In my opinion, I felt like we had to push. I felt I didn't have any other choice because everyone was just directing. And this is what we do, why? Because of this. That's why, and I do it. This is how you live. I told them I had converted. I told them that they were wrong and that I was right. I told them I was married.

**Regina:** Mohamed's parents didn't ground him after their big blowout fight.

**Mohamed:** I was able to go to school, I was able to go tutoring, I was able to do all my things. But my father wrote me letters on the back of napkins, on the back of receipts. "Mohamed, I am proud of you for this and this. My son, I love you very much. And I am inspired by how you see things on this and this." But then, he would list things that he would be worried about, like how he didn't like that I questioned these things that were not safe to question and he wanted the best for me.

**Regina:** His mom, on the other hand, employed different tactics.

**Mohamed:** My mom ended up using other people to work for her, I guess, or do her things. Had to deal with a lot of the community members coming to me and telling me that I was a follower, that I was a fool, that I was weak. Being told you're wrong by people who are your guides and your point of reference is like a very strange place to be, I felt I was the only being alive. I was in some sort of weird test or simulation.

I doubted myself. Yeah, 100%. 100% doubted myself. Constantly reevaluated. Constantly didn't think I was worthy. Constantly thought maybe that I was a crazy person. Honestly, that was probably the most alone I've ever been in my entire life.

**Regina:** Mohamed's mom wasn't done with him yet.

**Mohamed:** The conversation came within the week. My mom was quietly setting up my passport. I was told that I'd be leaving the country. My mom was, like, "We're going to send you to visit our family. We think it's important that you go back to Somaliland, and go back to our home country and see things for what they are." When a family dealt with a child that committed a crime, you would get sent back to Somalia. This was the thing to do. I didn't know anyone but I've heard stories. He stole a car, got caught by the police, went to court, got bailed and then the family had to send him to Somali so he didn't have to go to jail and waste his life. Instead, he's got to clear his head in the old country.

**Regina:** I mean, but that's stealing a car--

**Mohamed:** Yeah.

**Regina:** How did you feel being compared to that?

**Mohamed:** Ah, I felt confused by it. I have never heard of anyone else do what I was doing. This is unheard of territory. There is no playbook for this. I had told my friends and my wife that the ticket was purchased already, the passport was made. It was just like I had to go. I didn’t have a choice because really, the pressure was so intense.

**Regina:** Mohamed hadn't seen Somaliland since he was five years old.

**Mohamed:** I think a part of me was excited to get on a plane and go somewhere. I have access to where my parents came from. I didn't know that country. I didn't know that. Somaliland is like the top half of what used to be Somalia. But after the war, it's split into two. It's an unrecognized country by the UN, even though it's been functioning for a decade and a half with peaceful transfer of power. But you can't fly there.

**Regina:** He had to fly to Dubai and get on a chartered flight from there.

**Mohamed:** The plane was like a tiny, single-engine-- two-propeller engine. I feel like if we coughed, the plane moved. It was really rickety and scary. It kind of looked like I was landing in a dustbowl. Not at all what I would expect to see Somalia like. I don't know, maybe I thought I would see something more like jungly or more lush, but it was this rocky landscape.

It's a small, beautiful airport. I've never been outside of Canada, as an experiencing human. I remember stepping off the plane and being like, [exhales] Just walked into my living room. It just felt like this is a part of me. I don't know what they say. But maybe your DNA connects to places or whatnot, but I definitely felt connected. I didn't expect to feel so comfortable. And soon as I talked to one person, I completely felt uncomfortable. Things were fast, things were loud. The colors were bright. The pace of conversation was faster, it was harder.

**Regina:** Mohamed was picked up by his aunt and uncle.

**Mohamed:** At night, we drive into the desert. I'm watching the city fall behind us and I'm watching the stars and the moon guide us and the headlights. There's hills of what looks like sand mixed with grass, dustbowls. As we're driving, actually, I ask my aunt and uncle, "Where are we going?" And they don't answer me, and then eventually I get loud enough to be like, "Hey, I need to know where we're going." And they told me, "Okay, we're taking you to the highest-ranking exorcist in the nation, because we think you have a djinn inside of you."

[suspense music building]

**Glynn:** Oh, my. When return, Mohamed faces the music. Stay tuned.

[suspense music]

**Glynn:** Snap Judgment, The Loophole episode. My name is Glynn Washington. When last we left off, 16-year-old Mohamed had just arrived in Somaliland, a country he hadn't seen since he was five years old. His parents sent him back after discovering his secret marriage to his high school girlfriend. Mohamed now finds himself in the back of aunt and uncle's car, driving deep into the desert, minutes away from meeting the highest-ranking exorcist in the nation. Snap Judgment.

**Mohamed:** At the time, I was being told that I was a follower, I was weak, I was stupid, I was corrupted. And all those are just on me. But now, I'm being told that I have a djinn inside me or a demon. And that the person they're talking to, isn't me, but a demon. And that really, really pissed me off, because I wasn't-- like now, they're taking my identity away from giving it to something else. So, all of my actions, all of my thoughts, all of my arguments for-- all of my questions, they were putting onto some other entity. And so now they're going to take me to this dude who's going to [exhales] bring the demon out of me, and save my soul, I guess.

The jeep stops, we get out of the car, and we're in this space of sand dunes. There's this house of sand, of clay. [door creaks] There's a wooden door, and we go in, and this place is just beautiful. It's filled with some of the oldest relics I've seen. It was like a place of wizard would live in. Even though I was taking it all in, I was pissed. I was feeling I was being worn down. I was worried for myself as in, like, maybe I'm wrong. I'm fighting a lot, and a lot of the world is fighting me back. So maybe I'm wrong. He might say that I'm possessed too, because they're paying him to check in on if I'm possessed.

We sat down in front of this man who walked in with his really long beard. And he was skinny and wore big robes. He was wirey. He had a twinkle in his eyes, and he moved slowly, but not because it seemed like he was weak. He just moved as if every movement was meant. He asked me to sit down in front of him on my knees, and I did so. He sat in a chair in front of me, and he put his hand on my forehead. In my mind, I thought about just losing it. Just start screaming, start telling them to go fuck themselves, kick things, just be like, "Ha-ha, fuck that. Fuck you," and just lose it. And then I realized I would be followed by this for the rest of my life. That would be like, "Remember that time you had that demon?" Or, "Remember that time, you had that outburst and the djinn was trying to get it out of you, and you just started calling us all names and stuff? Definitely the demon," and I would have been for the rest of my life. I wouldn't be a person. I would always be this demon that controlled my life and caused all these things.

In that moment when he had his hand on my forehead, I decided to just stay still and not move. I just expected him to be yelling at me or hitting me with some sticks or throw some water, to try to get the demon out. I don't know what the thing would have been. He gently removed his hand and said, "There's nothing wrong with this child. He's perfect."

[pensive music]

[exhales] I wasn’t a fool, or weak, or an idiot, or a follower. He just broke the spell. He gave me validation. It was the most magical, honest experience I've had. I got up, pointed to my aunt and said, "It's your turn." [chuckles]

[pensive music]

**Glynn:** Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Mohamed Ali, for sharing your story with the Snap. In case you're wondering, Mohamed and Crystal, they decided to let the clock run out on their marriage contract and not re-up. Young love. Young love, ladies and gentlemen, but do not worry. Mohamed is doing his thing these days as an artist and comedian. He just got back to Canada after spending the past few years working at performing in Southeast Asia. To find out more about Mohamed's latest projects, make sure to check out the website, *snapjudgment.org*.

Special thanks to Zaiba Hasa, and her crew from the podcast, Mommying While Muslim. And thanks as well to Zahra Noorbakhsh. Original scores by Renzo Gorrio, it was produced by Regina Bediako.

[upbeat music]

Now, today's show, The Loophole, it's a search for the truth, that spirit, the spotlight amazing artists right here in the Bay Area. Jada Imani, her song, *Honest*, check it out.

[Jada Imani - *Honest* song plays]

**Glynn:** That was *Honest* by Jada Imani. It was produced by Snap contributor, Dakim. On all the social media is that song. And other music is on the latest SMARTBOMB copulation, WATER FOR THE TOWN v.4. A project series created to raise support grassroots organizations doing vital work here in Oakland. Proceeds go to People's Breakfast Oakland, links to all that is good available right now at *snapjudgment.org*.

[upbeat music]

Oh yes, who else, dear friends? Who else will take you on adventures around the world? None other than Snap Judgment. Be the most interesting person your enemies know. Follow Snap on any podcast platform for more amazing stories from all over the place. And even better, you can rock Snap Judgment t-shirt and bring all the Snappers to the yard [unintelligible [00:48:03] is better than yours, available right now at *snapjudgment.org*.

[upbeat music]

Snap is brought to you by the team that always plays it by the book, except for the uber producer Mark Ristitch who was actually born in a loophole. Nancy López, Pat Mesiti-Miller, Renzo Gorrio, Shaina Shealy, Teo Ducot, Flo Wiley, John Fecile, Marisa Dodge, Regina Bediako,Davey Kim,Bo Walsh, David Exumé, and Annie Nguyen

[electro music]

This is not the news. No way is this the news. In fact, you could get your own marriage annulled, if I performed on July 16th 2018 at the Silver Oak Winery, because maybe I didn't really have a marriage license, you could do that. And you would still, not be as far away from the news as this is, but this is PRX.

[electro music]