[Snap Judgment intro]

**Glynn:** Snappas, do you know at one point, I got a call from the powers that be saying Snap was canceled. That was a very, very no good, very bad day but I realized that the powers that be didn't own this show. You own this show, Snappas. That's why I'm asking you to support it. Right now at a level that makes sense for you at *snapjudgment.org*. If you've ever been unable to get out of the car, the kitchen, the office, until you heard the end of the story, please become one of us and support the show that makes it happen at *snapjudgment.org*, because it doesn't happen any other way. You can get Snap stuff, including music, a chance to pitch your story, or a backstage pass to Spooked Live.

If Snap storytelling is in you, if you depend on this show, please stop for just a moment. Stop the show for just a minute and join at a level that makes sense for you. *snapjudgment.org*. I promise you the best sleep ever and a grin on your face when you leap out of bed in the morning. What a deal. *snapjudgment.org*. Thanks.

Snappas, I don't know, maybe it's just looking back at my own life, the connections, the events, the crazy. And knowing that even after several years of Snap, there are stories, personal stories I haven't told you, not because they aren't meaningful to me, not because they haven't changed me. No, I haven't told you these stories because I wonder sometimes if you would believe them. So many things happen that couldn't really have happened, but they happen enough so that when someone tells me, "You're not going to believe this." I often say, "Try me."

[upbeat music]

Today on Snap Judgment, we proudly present Beyond Belief, amazing stories that shouldn't have happened. My name is Glynn Washington. Please understand that accidents are almost never accidental, when you're listening to Snap Judgment.

[upbeat music]

Snappas, have you ever had a memory that just got stuck in your head? Maybe on loop? A memory you just couldn't shake? Well, when Tameer Habaka was just a wee lad, he had a lifetime of them. Snap's Shaina Shealy brings us Tameer's story from the Northern Israeli village of Yanuh. Snap Judgment.

**Tameer:** I was at a wedding with my parents. I was dragged to the wedding, because I didn't like to attend family events. I was a small kid, I wanted to stay home, watch TV, play on the computer.

**Shaina:** Tameer was five years old in a strange village two hours away from his house.

**Tameer:** I was dragged by my mother to sit next to her, and then I told her, I want to go to the bathroom. I walked past other kids. I was the fat kid of the group. We got into this argument. They made fun of my hair and how I look. And then I got into a fight with them. I got a punch in the head. At that point, I'm being controlled from that moment on. I'm feeling dizzy, I'm feeling nauseous, and I have a terrible headache. I was supposed to go back to the table where my mother and father were sitting, but I took the opposite direction and I went out of the wedding. I started sweating, like, this cold sweat. I started feeling, like, I was going to be sick. As a kid, I was afraid of my mother and father.

**Shaina:** He tries forcing himself back to the wedding, but his body isn't listening.

**Tameer:** My body is not responding to my request. It's like, I'm being pushed, it's like a magnet pulling a metal to it. So, now I'm walking on my own without even knowing where I'm going. I was afraid because I didn't know where I was going, but I had this feeling, like, I've been here before. It's like, playing a video game and playing it again, where you know where are you, where you're supposed to go. I'm stopping traffic at a certain point, crossing the streets, and going into alleys. I'm walking in a calm, familiar environment. I'm touching the walls next to me. I'm going around corners and grabbing poles.

**Shaina:** And how does your body feel in that moment?

**Tameer:** I've been here before. It's familiar, it's safe, it's something that I did before. And then I reached this house and I managed to open the gate from the inside.

**Shaina:** So, you open the gate and just walk in?

**Tameer:** Yeah, I even knew how to open it. The locker was from the inside. I knew how to do that. I'm knocking on the door. Lady opened the door, an old lady. At first, she didn't even see me. She was looking around. I'm grabbing her by the dress and I'm talking to her like, "Hello, your name is Dhunia[?], you're my mother." That was weird for me.

**Shaina:** Mm-hmm.

**Tameer:** I think she was more worried because the five-year-old is on his own and he's knocking on doors. [chuckles] She didn't say anything. She invited me in.

**Shaina:** Wow. And so, then you walk in?

**Tameer:** I went down the stairs inside the house itself. I knew how to go down, and I sat on one of the couches. I remember my feet are not touching the ground.

**Shaina:** And he starts talking, listing names out of nowhere.

**Tameer:** Your name is Door[?], your name is Naim. I know you. I don't know how, I don't know where, but I know you. I've been here before. They wanted to hear more, but everything stopped. And then I felt like there's no room inside my body. My head has two people inside it. I remember everything spinning. Afterwards, it's like someone unplugging you. You are talking, talking, talking, and then it's over, the battery is over. And then I felt like sort of a crack, and everything just went black.

**Shaina:** Five-year-old Tameer fainted.

**Tameer:** I blacked out.

**Shaina:** His parents, frantic at the wedding, put out a call for a missing child, figured out where he was, and picked him up from the house.

**Tameer:** And then I woke up in my parents' car, and we were on the way home. From that moment on, I started being having these fevers. I went to a physical breakdown. I was sick for almost a month.

**Shaina:** Tameer got so sick that his parents took him to the hospital. He stayed there for two weeks. Doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong. They thought it might be anxiety or something worse.

**Tameer:** For a five-year-old to have these kind of mental breakdowns, it's weird.

**Shaina:** Yeah.

**Tameer:** Because they didn't know what the cause of this breakdown. They feared that I have other problems, like, a tumor or something.

**Shaina:** Tameer didn't have a tumor. Doctors couldn't find a cause of his illness. It was his friends and family who diagnosed him. They said, "An old soul had been reborn in his body."

**Tameer:** I know it's weird, it's something that you don't hear every day. But I'm going to be honest here. It's even crazier for me.

**Shaina:** Tameer's 23 now. He lives in the northern Israel village of Yanuh and belongs to an ethnic minority called Druze.

**Tameer:** Being a Druze is not an easy thing. We're going to start from that.

**Shaina:** Tameer isn't religious.

**Tameer:** I never touched the Holy Book. Maybe it's blank inside. I don't know.

**Shaina:** The Druze faith is shrouded in secrecy. And to even touch the Holy Book, you have to sacrifice modern comforts, like, TV. Tameer isn't ready for that. He knows that the Druze believe in God and that a main belief is reincarnation.

**Tameer:** What I understood is that when people die, they are born again. At the second that you close your eyes, you're going to open them as a baby. After that you're going to live again, and you're going to live again, you're going to live again, you're going to live again. It's not going to stop. But I see it as a rational explanation of where does the soul go. It doesn't go anywhere. It goes to a different body.

**Shaina:** According to Druze faith, everyone, everywhere is reincarnated, but not everyone remembers their past lives.

**Tameer:** But the thing is, the people who remember, they died in a tragic way.

**Shaina:** Which is why the woman who opened the door to Tameer when he was five years old was ready.

**Tameer:** I think she was waiting for her son to reincarnate, I think.

**Shaina:** Her son Wafaa[?] had died when he was on reserve duty.

**Tameer:** Wafaa died. He was killed in the army, so he's going to talk eventually. So, they waited for a small kid at that age to come.

**Shaina:** And you say they weren't shocked, like, when you opened the door and you said, "You're my mother." Even if she was expecting you, wouldn't she be shocked? If I were the mother of Wafaa, I probably would cry or I would-- I don't know.

**Tameer:** Well, she was very excited. She had tears in her eyes. But I think the people that were inside the house expected that, like, they wanted that.

**Shaina:** There were a lot of people who missed Wafaa. Wafaa left behind sisters, brothers, a child, and a 23-year-old pregnant widow, Hanadi[?]. They wanted Wafaa back. From then on, a parade of people from Wafaa's family started showing up at Tameer's doorstep. Wafaa's sister was the first to visit.

**Tameer:** When she came, she forced words out of me and I was sweating crazy and had fever. After that, they came again. Third visit, my wife came with them.

**Shaina:** So, this weird thing happens when Tameer starts talking about Wafaa's family. He says, his family, his wife. What he means is Wafaa's wife.

**Tameer:** Yeah, she came. I remember she was wearing a black dress, because her husband died. It's been five years, she's wearing all black. She was in her 20s, and she was blonde. I was very shy and nervous. I was shy to answer some of the things that they were asking me. "Do you remember her? She's your wife."

**Shaina:** During that first visit, Wafaa's wife brought a bag of photos with her.

**Tameer:** Me holding my baby, and my wife next to me, and my friends next to me. One of the pictures was in a national park on Independence Day. I remember, like, where was it or when was it?

**Shaina:** Yeah. So, I've noticed when you're talking right now, you interchange the meaning of me, like, when you say "my friends." I'm wondering if that's confusing for you, because as a listener, it's confusing for me. When you say "my," it's like Wafaa or Tameer?

**Tameer:** Well, I always need to explain or to clarify that I'm talking about me or I'm talking about my past life or I'm talking about--

**Shaina:** Yeah. Is that confusing for you? When you're trying to tell people about your experience and you say, "my" or "me," do you know which one you're talking about? Do you know if you're talking about Tameer or Wafaa?

**Tameer:** Well, [chuckles] how can I say it. When I talk, I feel we're the same guy, but in a different story.

**Shaina:** Which was hard, especially as a kid trying to figure out relationships with Wafaa's relatives, like, Wafaa's wife, who was more than 20 years older than Tameer.

**Tameer:** I used to sit in her lap and hug her. I was four or five years old. She always hugged me. I felt warm, like, my mother. She cares about me. I saw that she was desperate.

**Shaina:** The whole family was desperate. They wanted more time with Wafaa. Tameer obliged. He spent a lot of time with Wafaa's family. One day, when he was seven years old, he went with Wafaa's brothers to see a house, Wafaa had been building before he died.

**Tameer:** It's a really dangerous place for a kid to walk in because you could fall or you could break something. So, I remember I walked two floors down, there was this huge red door. I remember opening it. It was really heavy.

**Shaina:** Tameer lost control of his body, like, at the wedding.

**Tameer:** Well, it more feels like someone giving you signs or even whispering in your ear, like, a grown up taking your head and walking you around. I'm grabbing one of the handles on the drawer and I'm taking it out. I took the whole drawer out. Underneath the drawer, I'm grabbing this metal things, this brown metal things. And I'm taking them out. It's live grenades.

**Shaina:** Tameer had found a stash of ammunition, which in any other circumstances would feel dangerous.

**Tameer:** I held them before, so I wasn't scared at all. I've been here, I've done that. So, I'm touching it again. I'm here. So, it's okay. It's safe.

**Shaina:** Tameer explained to the brothers that he, Wafaa, stole the grenades from the army.

**Tameer:** [laughs] I can't get in trouble for saying that because he's dead. [laughs] You can't judge me now.

**Shaina:** And that he had been planning to remove the grenades.

**Tameer:** I told them that I didn't get a chance to because I was killed. Now they're looking at me, they're really shocked. I went back upstairs. It was one of my priorities when I wanted to get back. I think that's why I did that when I first walked in. I wanted to take them away from there or even to throw them away or something.

**Shaina:** Tameer knows this all sounds unbelievable to people outside the Druze community.

**Tameer:** The weird thing is that people here in the Druze community see it as a normal thing. Like, everyone's cool about it, and it's normal. Yeah.

**Shaina:** But Tameer was not so cool about it. In fact, he was freaked out, mostly because he had no control over when Wafaa popped into his life.

**Tameer:** I used to dream a lot of seeing my wife in her wedding dress. Standing in the middle of the ocean, I once tried to catch her, and I fall inside the water, and I suffocate. At the end of every dream, you feel there's stuffing two people inside you, and there's no room. So, you can't breathe. The air is going, leaving your body, and then you wake up sweating. I had a big problem with wetting my bed. Every time that it happened to me, I woke up with a wet bed, like, I couldn't control my body at all.

**Shaina:** As he got a little older, he wanted more control over Wafaa, that Wafaa that showed up without asking in his body, mind, and dreams. He tried summoning Wafaa.

**Tameer:** I tried hypnosis and Ouija boards, and a lot of spiritual guides and people, and ways to communicate with spirits, and everything else. But I'm afraid what's going to happen. Maybe at a certain point, I'm going to have a mental breakdown. I don't know, maybe he's going to take control over everything.

**Shaina:** After high school, he started distancing himself from Wafaa. Wafaa was a big meat eater, so Tameer became a vegetarian.

**Tameer:** I didn't eat meat at all.

**Shaina:** Wafaa was fit and muscular.

**Tameer:** Well, I'm sort of a Seth Rogen kind of a guy. [chuckles]

**Shaina:** The last straw came out of family barbecue, Wafaa's family barbecue.

**Tameer:** I told them, like, "I'm a vegetarian now. I hate meat." They saw it as a weird thing, and they looked at me in a weird way like, "How? Wafaa really liked meat. So, there's something wrong here." I said like, "I'm not Wafaa. I'm Tameer."

**Shaina:** That's when Wafaa's widow, Hanadi, walked out of the room. A few moments later, she returned to the barbecue holding the uniform Wafaa was wearing when he died.

**Tameer:** We opened the whole thing. She gave it to me. I touched it and I felt really awkward. She started crying. I felt that she needs someone now. I wanted to sit and talk as Tameer. I wanted them to talk about normal things, life, and everything else, but no, they kept going back, going back. She just wanted her husband back. She wanted someone to help her. She wanted someone to be there. It was obvious there was a tension in the air. Again, I wouldn't blame her. She was 20 or something when all of this happened and she was really connected to me or Wafaa. She missed him a lot. I felt that slowly and gradually they were changing me to Wafaa. I waited for them to ask me to act like him or to even grow my mustache like him. They wanted Wafaa again, not just spiritually, but from the outside.

**Shaina:** Tameer didn't want to be at Wafaa's barbecue comforting his sobbing wife. So, he stood up and left.

**Tameer:** At least I want to be treated as Tameer. I want to have this chance of living. Give me a chance to live as Tameer, not as Wafaa. Wafaa had his chance.

**Shaina:** He wanted to go as far away as he could to leave Wafaa's family, to leave the tiny Druze community, to leave Israel. He flew into Zurich and enrolled in a study program. He left Wafaa behind in the village.

**Tameer:** He's on the bench now. [chuckles] I'm on the court. [chuckles]

**Shaina:** One of the first things he did in Switzerland was get a tattoo.

**Tameer:** It's a stone. It's like a jewel. Evil hands coming out of it on top and an owl escaping the hands. It's almost being catched by the hands, but it's escaping them with feathers flying everywhere. So, it's like escaping, being suppressed.

**Shaina:** He went back to Israel a year later.

**Tameer:** I came back with a beard and with tattoos everywhere.

**Shaina:** He fell in love with Lillian.

**Tameer:** I was playing the guitar. As soon as she walked in, I stopped playing. I didn't know how. [chuckles]

**Shaina:** When he started dating Lillian, Wafaa wasn't coming around much.

**Tameer:** I didn't deal with it that much. I have a life. [laughs]

**Shaina:** Tameer was living his life. He proposed to Lillian. She said yes. And then after a long break from Wafaa, Tameer and Lillian got an invitation to Wafaa's daughter's wedding.

**Tameer:** My younger daughter's wedding, she's the same age as me now. I was surprised that they invited me, because I haven't talked to them in a while.

**Shaina:** Lillian was also surprised. Imagine, celebrating a wedding with a woman who thinks your fiancé is her husband, the love of her life.

**Tameer:** My fiancée said that it would be awkward if she was at the party.

**Shaina:** Tameer had a decision to make, to go back with the risk of getting involved with a family again or to stay away and disappoint all of Wafaa's relatives.

**Tameer:** I really thought about that, like, "Do I want that again?"

**Shaina:** Tameer didn't want to get sucked back in, and Lillian really didn't want him hanging around Wafaa's wife. But Tameer knew he was different now. He told Lillian, he had things under control.

**Tameer:** So, now I can control it. Like I'm the one who could control everything, like, Wafaa could just be there. I could bound him not to do anything, just to put handcuffs on his hands and just put him in a corner. Like, he can't do anything, and I'm the boss.

**Shaina:** So, they got into the car and drove the two hours to Wafaa's village for his daughter's wedding.

**Tameer:** Did it for the bride, so she wouldn't feel bad.

**Shaina:** He and Lillian walk in a little late and no one's talking to them. Tameer feels awkward and cracks a joke.

**Tameer:** As a joke like, "Do you start the wedding without me?"

**Shaina:** And then the family swarms him.

**Tameer:** Everyone gathered. It was crazy. The father came. [chuckles] Everyone was crying. Even the men, my nephew, who was the first one to come to my house, he was there. I haven't seen him in 10 years. Yeah, he was crying. Like, he was shaking.

**Shaina:** Then out of the corner of his eye, he sees Hanadi, Wafaa's wife, and he has something to get off his chest.

**Tameer:** I told her that Wafaa would want you to know that he's sorry he's not there. I told that to my daughter too that Wafaa says sorry he can't be at your wedding, and he's sorry he wasn't there when you grew up, and when you finished school.

**Shaina:** They put Tameer at the head of the table with the groom and his father.

**Tameer:** I sat at the table where the head of the family sits. And then the picture time after everyone ate. There was this one picture where all of the sons and their wives, and they took me and my wife from other, from the past life, and they put us next to each other. I remember my fiancée was-- [chuckles] she was furious, like, "You're going to die." [chuckles] Like, "Why did you take that picture?" And I'm like, "There's nothing I could do. It wasn't my fault. You can't say no. It would be rude." Can I be honest?

**Shaina:** Yeah.

**Tameer:** I know that maybe this is my last time here with everyone. I'm going to stop going, I'm going to stop meeting everyone. So, this is the last thing. It was for a good cause. I did it to make them feel better, because I always remind them of him for them not to forget.

[intriguing music]

**Glynn:** Thank you, Tameer, for sharing your story with the Snap. And shoutout to Dr. Dr. Raja Saeed Faraj, the author of *Reincarnation in the Druze Community*. The original sound design for that story was by Renzo Gorrio. It was produced by Shaina Shealy.

[upbeat music]

**Glynn:** Now it's about that time. It is, but it doesn't have to be because we've got more Snap just waiting for you right now. Subscribe to the amazing storytelling podcast, *snapjudgment.org*. And this is not the news. No way is this the news. In fact, you could build the most magnificent sandcastle ever made at high tide, confident that it wouldn't be destroyed in low tide. Don’t you realize it, you really don't know what the terms low tide and high tide actually mean, and you would still not be as far away from the news as this is. But this is PRX.

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