Alaska Triangle

Vol. I: The Double

By Abbas Mousa
After The Alaska incident, Jamal returned to DC hoping to hear from his friend Greg. He asked his taxi to stop at his friend’s house first, and when Greg opened the door, the first thing Jamal said was, “Oh my God Greg, you’re okay.” And while he leaned in to give him a kiss, he asked, “Why didn’t you answer my calls?”

And before their lips met, Greg held Jamal at arm’s length with his hands and said with a shocking voice, “Jamal! What are you doing here?”

There was a moment of silence. “What happened to you in Alaska? You never came back to the hotel, never answered my calls?”

“What happened to me in Alaska, and why would I go back to your hotel?” There was another moment of silence broken by Greg continuing: “Jamal, we never spoke since high school graduation. Are you okay? And what’s with the kissing?”

Jamal was confused with Greg’s words. “What are you talking about? We went on a few dates and we went to Alaska together.”

Greg giggled a bit sarcastically and said, “Are you using drugs or something? Is that why you’re wearing a wig? Look, I’m pretty sure members of congress aren’t allowed to be using drugs.”

Jamal was a white, 27-year-old man who was named Jamal by his half Arab mother. Jamal was also the name of her father, meaning “Beauty” in Arabic. His nickname in high school was ‘Jamal White’ because he was the only white Jamal in school. A year ago he won a million dollars with a lottery ticket. He quit his job to pursue his dream of becoming an artist. He and
Greg were friends in high school and few months earlier they had re-connected and went on few dates. Just last week they took a trip to Alaska together.

He knew this. But he didn’t know what Greg was talking about now. A confused and sad look covers his face. Then he remembered how at the airport in Alaska he was told that he called and changed his flight and left a day early and the system showed he boarded the plane. He’s just now realizing that something is wrong. He then runs back to the taxi heading home. He closed his eyes trying to re-live the fall from the hiking trail in Alaska, he thought the fall only gave him the frequent headaches and drowsiness but now he thinks it gave him more than that.

When he gets home, the concierge lady stands in shock as he entered his building; her eyes were fixed on him as he headed to the elevators. As he approached his apartment, he noticed the door was ajar, with voices coming from the inside. Cautiously he pushed the door open slowly and entered his apartment. Two men were talking, with one of them showing the apartment to the other as if he’s showing a rental unit. When they turned to him, Jamal asked while pointing his finger at both of them left and right, “Who are you and what are you doing in my home?”

The tenant guy gives a confusing look to the guy in the black suit while the guy in the black suit stands in shock & silence. Then the tenant guy looked at the guy in black suit and said “Oh, Mr. Petty, I didn’t know you had a twin brother.”

“What?” Jamal said, shocked.

The guy in the black suit quickly said to the tenant, “Mr. Raegan, can we re-schedule the showing please, I need to deal with this.”

Jamal is in disbelief. He didn’t have a twin brother, nor did he have any brothers. Before he could say anything, the guy in the black suit looked at him and said “Shushhh, we’ll talk about it.”

Then the guy in black suit escorted the tenant out and locked the door. “Okay, who the hell are you? And why are you posing as me?”

“Posing as you?” Jamal responded.

“Yes, in Alaska, my friend found you in our hotel room claiming to be me, then you left.”

“So you were in Alaska too? Were you with Greg? Did he came back to the hotel because I waited outside and he never showed up”

In a wondering voice the guy in a black suit said, “Greg? Who’s Greg?”

“Greg Turner …from high school.”
“What? I haven’t spoken to him in years… again, who are you and why do you look a lot like me?”

Jamal was so confused by this new weird world that he didn’t notice how alike they were. Same height, same body tone, jawline, a perfect shaped nose and thick eyebrows, the only difference was that Jamal had a long hair. Then the black suit guy said: “You know you are messing with someone who was just elected to congress. You will get in a lot of trouble.”

Was this a dream? Jamal wondered. The world he left before his trip to Alaska was different from the world he returned to.

“Slap me,” Jamal said.

“What?”

“Stop saying WHAT, just slap me… NOW!”

“No, no, no, no, did someone send you here to ruin me? Was it Senator Brown?”

“Slap me like you wanted to slap Aaron. Remember when he humiliated you in the hall where the whole school was watching? Remember how you wanted to slap the shit out of him? Remember how weak you felt when you couldn’t? Remember how much of a coward you were? Remember ….” And all the sudden the guy in the black suit slapped Jamal really hard, and screamed angrily

“How do you know about Aaron?”

Jamal almost fell to the ground from the slap; he closed his eyes for a second and then said, “Because he was my bully too. Ok, Mr. Petty, that’s what the man called you right?” and before he gets an answer he adds, “my name is Jamal Petty, and this is my apartment. I just returned from a hiking trip in Alaska, where I lost my friend Greg after falling a few yards down from a hiking trail. Things have been weird since I got back. Greg doesn’t know who I am, and now I find a short-haired guy who looks exactly like me trying to rent my home? What do you think I’m going through right now?” He turned around and walked past the guy in the black suit and said “FUCK” with a frustrated voice.

Mr. Petty, the guy in black suit then said, “My name is Jamal Petty too, and my female friend, “Not Greg” told me she saw you in our hotel room, but I dismissed it since she said you ran out and nothing was missing.” His face looked a bit confused and his voice had a sound of fear in it.

Then he added, “Look, I need to know who you are. I just started my political career and I’ve been very popular; I can’t afford any scandals or negative coverage, so you need to work with me on getting to the bottom of this because this is my apartment too, and I do not have brothers, let alone a twin brother.”
Jamal then asked, “What are your parents’ names?”

“My mom’s name is Layla and she’s half Lebanese, and my Dads name is Dan,” The congressman responded.

Jamal looked shocked and quietly said, “Mine, too.”

Congressman Petty puts his left hands on face covering his eyes, and as his hand was going down he said in a quiet frustrated voice “For God’s sake this sounds more like a parallel universe movie”

Jamal turned his head to the Congressman quickly with his eyes wide open and said “OMG what if it was? Whatever this is, it all happened after my fall from the hiking trail”

Congressman Petty responded “You really believe in that?”

“I don’t know what to believe, but this makes sense” Jamal replied

Jamal then asked him to pull his pants up on his left leg to see his knee, and it turned out the Congressman had the same scar that Jamal has and both got the scar after falling on a pavement while playing in the neighborhood as kids. Then they shared stories from their lives which were almost identical except for few different events but those were not very significant.

Then Congressman Petty said: “So are you saying that you are me, but from a different world?”

“I don’t know, but it’s the only answer that make sense of all of this” Jamal responded

Congressman Petty was in denial, he didn’t know what to make of all of this; he pulled his phone and called his lawyer who is also his best friend and asked him to come to his place immediately.

The lawyer was also in disbelief of what he heard but his main focus was to keep this away from the media and the public until they know what happened; he then looked at them both and said to Jamal “you cannot be seen in public, you will be staying here until we can move you somewhere safe and hopefully we will have more answers by then”

Jamal quickly rejected “What? You want me to be locked up here? No no no I don’t agree …….”

And then the lawyer interrupted him and said “if the media learns about this theory, you both will become lab rats to the US government and you might be locked up for a lot longer”

Then he looked at Congressman Petty and said “You will need to have an explanation for flying twice from Alaska under the same name, and you need to think of a story of why you went to Greg in case he speaks of it publicly”
Congressman Petty looked at Jamal and said “Please, let us figure this out together, let us all try to fix this before things go out of hands, let’s not ruin our lives, you can stay here, this is your home too”.

Jamal closed his eyes for few seconds and took a deep breath then nodded in agreement.

To be continued…