

Unlearned Lesson

By Jacque Khan

Jamie Von Miller grew up in one of the most exclusive neighborhoods San Francisco, California has to offer, Pacific Heights. The people in this privileged community have many advantages in life, but walking around in public looking like a vagabond, was not one of them. Jamie was on her way to her grandparent's 50th wedding anniversary weekend extravaganza, where she would be expected to look and act dignified. It was beneath the Von Millers to leave their homes without the minimum business casual dress code. This particular weekend's accouterments would be amplified by a thousand percent with ballgowns, tuxedos, cirque du Soleil performers, and the original cast of Aladdin for the Arabian Nights element of the party. Jamie's family never missed adding that theme to their lavish parties. Jamie supposed they saw it as some sort of a memento to Robin Williams, who had been their neighbor for several years before he passed.

As Jamie walked alone through LaGuardia airport at 4:30 am, she felt it was a sign that she had done something wrong in life. The airport itself was overcrowded, poorly lit, and filthy. Most of the people there looked like they had just taken a mug shot or were on their way to Walmart. Today, Jamie fit right in like the centerpiece of a jigsaw puzzle. She was wearing an oversized, white long-sleeved thermal shirt and a pair of green sweatpants with the matching top tied around her waist. Her eyeliner was runny, leaving dark black lines above her cheekbones. Her faded red lipstick, which had been applied the night before, was smeared on the left side of her face. Her matted, bleached blond hair was pulled up into a loose ponytail, covered by a neutral-colored baseball cap. Her entire ensemble was giving off a tired Squid Game contestant look, which Jamie was effortlessly pulling off. As she walked the length of the airport to her terminal, Jamie ran her tongue across her front teeth. She realized because she had been in such a

hurry to get to the airport this morning, she hadn't even brushed. "Gross," she thought as she glanced at her reflection in the glass of a closed Starbucks window. "Jesus, if my mother catches me like this, she will disown me," realizing just how terrible she actually looked. "Why is the airport even open with no way to consume caffeine?" Jamie hit the window in frustration and let out a loud yelp. "Shit, that hurt!"

"Excuse me, lady, you are going to have to step away from the window," the port authority police officer commanded. Jamie turned around with an attitude. "No, excuse me, officer, what's the problem?" She asked in a disgusted voice.

"The problem is, you need to keep it moving and get the hell away from that window before I arrest you," the officer said. "I don't know what shelter you crawled out of, but we don't try to vandalize or rob closed establishments here in my airport. Let me see your ticket. Where are you going anyway, Kentucky, Detroit maybe?" He said in a condescending voice.

"I have never been so disrespected. I am on my way to San Francisco, where my mom will have your badge for talking to me like this. What is your name SIR?"

"Yeah, that sounds about right, you look like you should probably be on your way out there; I understand that place has a massive homeless epidemic going on. My name is, Sergeant, Get the hell away from the window like I told you to." The officer said as he pulled his baton out to point in the direction Jamie should go.

Jamie was boiling on the inside. "Who does this guy think he is, Paul Bart?" Jamie looked in the window again and imagined herself smoking; she blew her fumes out the side of her mouth like some kind of paraplegic joker and then put the cigarette out on the cop's forehead. As Jamie snapped back to reality, she heard the cop say, "I said, keep it moving and get away

from that window." Jamie rolled her eyes and walked away like the incident hadn't happened. "Fine, Sir!" Jamie exclaimed. "But just know, I did get your badge number, Sergeant, Get the hell away from the window like I told you to."

Jamie face-timed her mom to tattle on the rude cop, forgetting her current fashion status, which was garbage-pail-kid-esk. This topic turned out to be the only subject Jamie's mother wanted to discuss. After hanging up from the butt chewing, Jamie finally made it to her terminal. She scanned the perimeter a few times, looking for a secluded place to sit. Her nerves became agitated when her probe landed on the NYU Row Team. "Oh no! What are these losers doing here?" She wondered and feverishly whipped her head from side to side, looking for Brad. Once she located him, Jamie attempted to race past her designated sitting area when she heard the cop's voice again. "Slow down; there is no running in here. What did you just steal?" Before Jamie knew what was really going on, she fell on her face as her right flip flop bent under her toes, and a mild current of electricity flowed through her body.

"Oh, Dear, wake up, are you alright?" A concerned voice asked as she slapped Jamie two more times. Jamie blinked her eyes five or six beats, trying to get the airport back in focus, with no luck. "You got tased and hit your head pretty hard," said the same voice. The woman sat on the floor with Jamie's head in her lap. She had dark brown shoulder-length hair that was lightly graying around her face. Her layered bangs swooped across her forehead, just out of reach of her left eye. The woman smelled like the same expensive perfume her mother wore.

"What did you say? What happened to me?" Jamie asked in a groggy voice without opening her eyes. Even with all the different pain sensations, Jamie was feeling, the woman's warm hands stroking her hair felt mildly comforting. Just as the woman started to speak, Brad interrupted. "Did that cop just tase her? I think she goes to my school. What did she do? Is she

okay? Hey everybody, look over here; this girl just ran from that cop, got tased, and peed on herself. Come on! Get over here; she looks really nasty like a broke-down version of Beetle Juice." As the rest of the rowing team started to gather around and record Jamie on their cell phones, Jamie interrupted Brad's broadcast with a plea to God. "Lord, just take me now! How could you forsake me like this? Oh Lord, that is Brad San Jack, the most handsome captain any row team has ever had. I have had a crush on this guy since freshman year, and now you let him see me like this! What have I done? Is it because I am selfish or arrogant most of the time? Whatever it is, Lord, I will admit it and change my ways. Just please, if you love me at all, just make this situation go away, please!

Suddenly, Jamie wakes up from a sound sleep to hear an announcement on the overhead speaker. "Flight 711 to San Francisco now boarding." After a quick survey, Jamie notices she is sitting all alone in the terminal. There was no NYU Row Team, no mall cop, no lady with shoulder-length brown hair, and no Brad. Jamie stood up and peered at her boarding plane on the tarmac through the oversized airport window. As she finished her gaze of the 747 outside, her attentions turned to her reflection. The first thing Jamie noticed about her appearance was the strand of South Sea pearls her grandmother had given her. Jamie was actually wearing a pair of nice fitting blue jeans, a button-up long sleeve white shirt with a navy-blue sweater tied around her neck. "It was all a dream!" Jamie exclaimed as she grabbed at her grandmother's pearls to confirm. Not being completely convinced that her terrible morning had all been a hallucination, Jamie conducted an unladylike test. She discreetly touched her crotch to check for moisture. "Thank you Jesus, no pee," Jamie uttered.

Jamie snatched her Louis Vuitton bag off the floor and walked toward the first-class boarding line. As her ticket was being scanned, Jamie snapped at the flight attendant. "What took

you guys so long? There better be champagne and a big breakfast waiting for me when I get to my seat." Jamie said in a snotty tone, having learned nothing from her nightmare. As Jamie disappeared into the passenger boarding bridge, the NYU Row Team, lady with shoulder-length brown hair, an air marshal, and Brad started showing up one by one, getting in line for the 711 flight to San Francisco.