

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

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Tonight on the season premiere of DateLine.

A man was out walking his dog with his wife and he was gunned down.

He turned around and saw this person shoot.

Shot three times in the head, three times in the chest and one time in the groin.

It seems like overkill.

There's gotta be something more to this than meets the eye.

A black pickup truck left the murder scene.

This individual was walking around dead residents.

He told me about a kiss that they shared in front of the Eiffel Tower over 30 years ago.

It just unfolded and unfolded and unfolded.

Like out of a movie.

The text messages, the fictitious email addresses.

The level of manipulation was extraordinary.

Kind of the definition of two-faced or three or four-faced.

It's hard to keep up.

Never seen anything like this?

No. And I hope to never see it again.

Maybe some people are better left in your past.

Did a kiss in Paris lead to murder in Dallas?

30 years later.

I'm Lester Holt and this is DateLine.

Here's Josh Mankiewicz with Losing Faith.

Most people never know when their last day on Earth will come.

What their last act will be.

For Jamie Faith, it was October 9th, 2020.

A sunny morning in Dallas.

Walking his dog Maggie.

Here's Jamie leaving his house.

Right behind his wife Jennifer.

So much of a routine, his neighbors knew their daily route.

And then...

Jamie Faith was dead at only 49.

Gunned down in front of his home, his neighbors, his wife.

Friendly, funny, Jamie Faith.

Who hadn't had an enemy in the world.

This is one of the, like I say, the craziest stories.

That's going down in history.

Cyrus Cesar was the first reporter on the scene.

To his million-plus followers on Facebook,

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he's better known as Smash the Topic.  
How'd you find out about this story?  
I was listening to the scanner.  
And when I was listening to the scanner,  
I heard the streets and I heard a shooting going on.  
Right away, Smash found an eyewitness.  
I heard gunshots. Five gunshots loud.  
Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.  
We're on the scene of a shooting homicide.  
A guy walking his dog with his wife.  
Oh man, it's cold world out here, man.  
Cold world.  
I woke up that morning and I checked our Oak Cliff Ladies Club page  
and Smash the Topic was reporting that there had been a shooting.  
Jennifer Svelin didn't know the faiths,  
but she lived in the same Oak Cliff neighborhood in Dallas.  
So I immediately posted on that page to all the ladies to let them know,  
hey, be careful, there was a shooting nearby.  
Jenna Schmidt Wilson was in her backyard  
with her dogs and her morning coffee.  
And I noticed the police helicopter,  
which ordinarily wouldn't draw my attention,  
but it was unusual how long it was hovering  
and how close and the low elevation.  
So of course I grabbed my phone and I look on my neighborhood page,  
which my go-to is our Ladies Club page,  
and there was already some posts saying there had been a shooting nearby.  
I saw the man.  
He looked very, very out of place.  
Like he was up to no good.  
His eyes were really big and black.  
We come out.  
The man was still standing in front where the dude got shot.  
So we took off running inside.  
So the suspect's still loose right now.  
Suspect's still loose.  
It sounded like it could have been a robber,  
but I'm going to tell you something.  
But I did think, like,  
how would somebody know these people  
walking their dog every day?  
Dallas PD homicide detective Chris Walton  
was wondering the same thing.  
You can see him right there on Smash's feed.

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The detective went straight to his best witness, the victim's wife, Jennifer Faith.

When I arrived, Mrs. Faith was sitting right here in the porch area of her residence.

There were others around her that were comforting her. Trying to get her the treatment and the aid that she needed.

Did she tell you what happened?

Why you were here?

Well, I was here when I made contact with her. She informed me that there was an individual who came up behind them.

He pointed the gun at her husband, Mr. Faith, and shot him several times.

Didn't say anything?

No, sir.

Just opened fire.

That's correct.

Jennifer described the gunman as medium build with black eyes and a blue surgical mask, the kind you saw everywhere during the pandemic.

I'm guessing she was probably shattered.

She was.

She had just observed her husband getting killed.

Shot several times.

Then the individual who committed this horrible crime duct taped her wrist and tried taking her property as well.

Tried to get her wedding ring.

I believe so, yes, sir.

Cartridge casings from the killer's gun still littered the street.

Some of those stunned neighbors turned out to be helpful.

They spotted the gunman drive away in a black pickup.

We were able to get a photo of the vehicle from one of the witnesses.

It had a picture of the tea sticker in the back.

Yes, sir.

The team made sense.

The local baseball team is the Texas Rangers.

So now the question was, who in Dallas wanted Jamie dead?

Police wanted to talk further with Jennifer Faith, but she was so distraught she had to be taken to a hospital.

Once doctors gave her the all clear, she handed police her phone and headed to the station where she added vital details to this awful gut-wrenching story.

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Several shots.

Well, a lot of shots.

Six, five, six, maybe I feel like.

It was a neighbor's security camera that recorded those horrific sounds.

And he just kept going.

And I was like, well, this is stopping me.

And then he shot at me.

And then I got his expression.

And then I saw the birds turn and like just dark eyes and coming toward me.

She said the killer then turned on her.

He was hitting my face and kept trying to turn me over.

And then he hit my side and back and hitting.

And then all of a sudden I saw a flash of the, it was silver, the guy put silver.

Later in the interview, Jennifer and Detective Walton used her phone to access the family's home security system, which had a camera that faced the empty house next door.

They saw this image.

It's a man walking alone around that abandoned property in the pre-dawn hours before the killing.

I don't know, that house is empty.

It's unhappy.

Certainly something to pursue.

Detective Walton alerted his fellow investigators and continued the conversation.

Were there any problems lately with anyone?

We never had disagreements with anybody.

We developed a really nice community.

I mean, I love our neighbor.

I love our neighborhood.

Jennifer confirmed what everyone else had said,

that Jamie was well liked,

a nice neighbor, loving dad and husband.

Whatever this was, it had to be random,

a robbery that became murder.

And then, autopsy results came back.

That does not feel like a robbery.

That feels like something else.

What details there were of Jamie Faith's murder hit the news pretty quickly.

About nine gunshots.

The victim, James Faith, shot multiple times.

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Maria Guerrero covered the story for NBC5 in Dallas.  
We knew that a man was killed  
while walking his dog with his wife.  
And this sounds like what, robbery?  
That's exactly what we thought it was.  
And that's what police were initially looking into this case  
as a robbery.  
Then the autopsy results came in,  
and suddenly Jamie's killing didn't seem so random.  
We learned that he was shot three times in the head,  
three times in the chest, and one time in the groin.  
That does not feel like a robbery.  
That feels like something else.  
It was overkill.  
To me, it was very personal.  
So how could Jamie Faith generate that kind of rage?  
The killing made even less sense  
when police took a closer look at him.  
What kind of guy was he?  
What did he do for a living?  
He was one of those guys who you would want to be neighbors with.  
I learned that he was from Wisconsin.  
He also loved the Green Bay Packers.  
He was a huge fan.  
He was an IT director for American Airlines.  
He was one of those guys where everybody just loved.  
Played video games on Thursday nights.  
Jamie also played pool and really liked bowling.  
Nobody knew that better than twin sisters Monica and Monique Flores.  
They'd known Jamie for more than 20 years  
from when they all lived in Arizona.  
Was Jamie as good as you guys are?  
No.  
Well, yes.  
He was way better.  
We liked him so much that we had so much in common  
that he ended up getting on the team with us  
when we needed a player.  
He was not dating either of you.  
No.  
No.  
What made him an ally with you?  
He was like one of those friends.  
Friend's own.

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Yeah, he was a good guy, like a nice guy.  
He was always happy.  
Jamie like always lit up the bowling alley.  
And so that's what got us to like him.  
And then of course me and her and our personalities.  
He lit up the bowling alley.  
It's not something I hear very often.  
You know, he did.  
Jamie was smart, resourceful and quirky.  
This is his friend, Teresa Jensen.  
When we were in college, we would go to the dog track  
and he had a whole computer set up where he would take  
the information for the dogs and plug it into his computer  
and that would be how he would make his bets.  
And he'd go up to the window with a big wad of money  
and he'd win.  
So not nerdy at all.  
No, not at all.  
What?  
Just a little nerdy.  
But he made money on it.  
He made enough money where I'm pretty sure he ended up  
buying his own Cadillac with his winnings.  
You know, here's a 21, 22 year old guy driving around  
in a Cadillac.  
What color?  
It was like a maroon, maroon red.  
He wore Hawaiian shirts and gold jeans.  
He did.  
And cologne.  
He did.  
He did.  
Oh, he wasn't missing a beat.  
Investigators learned Jamie was living in Phoenix in 2005  
when he met Jennifer on a blind date and something clicked.  
Jamie started working at US Airways in 2008.  
Four years later, he and Jennifer married.  
Jennifer was working as a speech therapist, a good one,  
according to her friend and colleague, Rob Schmidt.  
She's very intelligent.  
She's a great speech therapist.  
And she just kind of fit in with our group.  
I guess being a speech therapist,  
I mean, you know, you've got to have a lot of patience

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and you've got to be, you know, sort of really caring with other people.

Right, right.

And then when we met Jennifer, we were like, oh my God, you guys are so cute together.

Like they were so, just so cute and like all, you know what I mean?

Lovey-dovey.

Lovey-dovey.

And I'm just like, I love her, Jamie.

I love her.

Like you, that's a keeper for you.

And he goes, oh, I know, I know.

Jennifer had been married twice before with a daughter, Amber, from her first marriage.

Jamie adopted Amber in 2016.

By 2017, US Airways had been swallowed by American Airlines.

Jamie accepted a promotion,

and then the family relocated to Dallas,

where Jamie started working as an IT executive at American.

Now flash forward to October 9th, 2020,

and the news no friend wants to hear.

I got a call, and seeing it was from Jennifer, automatically picked up.

And she's trying and, you know, having trouble speaking.

And she let me know that Jamie had been shot.

Had Jamie at any time in your relationship with him mentioned being afraid of anyone?

No.

Or concerned about his safety in any way?

No.

Not one time.

Days into their investigation, police scramble for more details about a murder out of the blue.

The biggest clue so far, that truck, with what looked like a Texas Rangers decal.

Everybody, I mean, everybody was on the lookout for this black truck.

So, find the truck and find the killer?

Hours after Jamie Faith's murder,

Dallas detectives were pursuing their biggest lead.

A black Nissan truck caught on a witness's phone camera.

Police were sure that in the driver's seat was the killer.

The biggest clue was that it had a T decal on the back windshield.

Police put out an alert for the truck.

Before long, they'd assembled multiple shots of the pickup

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moving out of the neighborhood.

We checked all the residences.

We saw some had cameras, some didn't.

And from there, it's like a puzzle.

So if one camera showed the vehicle at 734,  
we received another camera at 735 and 736.

And you put together this little movie?

Yes, sir.

We did that for approximately three miles  
until we were able to catch the vehicle hitting north  
on I-35 from Illinois.

And that's where you lose it?

Yes, sir, on the highway.

At any point, you can't get a plate number  
and you can't see who's inside.

Everybody was on high alert that there was a killer  
in our neighborhood.

Walking your dogs are now looking behind you  
and watching to see who's coming down the street  
and you're, you know, watching out for your neighbors  
and, you know, even more so.

Everybody, I mean, everybody was on the lookout  
for this black truck.

And we knew it was a Nissan Titan black  
with a T in the rear window.

And so there were many pictures of trucks  
being posted online, even without any kind of a T.

Is this the truck?

Could this be the truck?

The faith's neighbors wanted to pitch in and help.

Jenna reached out.

Everyone had that same sense that I had,  
which is, you know, this could have been me.

So I texted Jennifer Faith and said,

I know you don't know me,

but there's a lot of people that want to help if we can.

And she almost immediately responded and said  
that she would love that

and could I come over tomorrow to talk?

So I was over there the day after the murder  
to meet her.

Jennifer Faith was there, their daughter, Amber Faith,  
as well as Jamie's extended family.

When Jenna saw all those people at the Faith's home,

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she thought they're going to need some food.  
You know, you've got to eat every day,  
but you're dealing with that kind of a trauma.  
You might not be up for cooking for a while.  
So we began delivering lunch and dinner every day  
for however many people were going to be at the home.  
Dozens of people, from neighbors to high-end chefs,  
delivered meals for months.  
They wanted to do more  
because a widow with a daughter would have bills to pay.  
The GoFundMe was set up, I think, the next day.  
We already headed up and going.  
The idea was just to help with any expenses,  
funeral expenses, daily living expenses.  
She was very grateful.  
Detective Chris Walton wanted to help too  
because when he's not chasing killers,  
he's a Baptist minister.  
You went to pray with the family?  
Yes, I did.  
We wanted to make sure that, you know,  
we let Jennifer know that, hey, we were here for you.  
You do that on all the investigations?  
I do it quite often.  
I'm a strong believer in the good Lord  
and a strong man of faith.  
I also wanted to make sure that she felt  
that we were trying to do everything that we could  
to find out who did this to her husband.  
Police were learning a lot about Jamie,  
his life as a family man,  
and his life as a boss.  
Jamie didn't sound like one of those guys  
who is sort of counting down the hours till the weekend.  
Like, he liked his work.  
Yes, yes, for sure.  
100%. He loved his work.  
He loved the people he worked for.  
He ever had a problem with anybody that you know of at work?  
Absolutely not.  
Or anywhere else?  
Mm-mm. Not that I know of.  
Well, there was one problem.  
Jennifer told detectives Jamie had recently laid off

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some people at American.

Wouldn't be the first time an ex-employee got angry enough to kill.

I met with the American Airlines director who was able to give me access to the employees that were laid off.

It was COVID during that time.

Right, and so a lot of people were losing their jobs.

Approximately 18 to 20 during that time.

So the plan was to talk to all those people.

Yeah.

The detective was also looking at something else.

That man, they spotted on Jennifer's security camera walking around the empty house next door.

This individual was walking around that residence around about 2.30, 8 in the morning.

So who was that guy?

Maybe one of those just fired employees?

All of a sudden, police had as many new leads as a company picnic.

It was the night of the awful discovery.

The apartment was dark.

The faint, coppery scent of blood hung in the air.

I remember telling the boys, don't touch anything.

We don't know what's happened here.

I'm Keith Morrison, and this is Murder in Apartment 12, our new podcast from Dateline.

It's a story about a local beauty queen who'd been keeping her eyes open for a long time.

It's about gossip, public opinion, and a tortured search for a killer.

I think they've got the wrong guy.

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or subscribe to Dateline Premium on Apple Podcast to access new episodes one week early.

So Lord, I pray that as we celebrate his life, he'll be glorified and honored.

A week after Jamie Faith was gunned down, friends and family gathered in Dallas for a funeral.

One of two services Jennifer had organized.

I would like to thank you for the gift of this amazing man.

The service was live-streamed from the funeral home.

The service was live-streamed from the funeral home.

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Friends and family from across the country were watching, along with Dallas neighbors Jennifer and Jenna. I remember at one point, you know, we both were talking about how emotional it was, and we were brought to tears when the camera went up to the front and just capturing everything, all the emotion that was taking place there.

Yeah.

Rick Calvert had never heard of Jamie Faith before the murder, but he was also watching.

Rick is a federal prosecutor, in the northern district of Texas.

Dallas detectives asked him for help on the case.

The description that Jennifer Faith gave of her husband during that funeral basically is consistent with what every individual that we talked to, how they described Jamie Faith.

He was the best husband that you could possibly ask for.

They had the perfect marriage where other couples were jealous of their relationship because they were so close.

Jamie's old friend, Teresa Jensen, was watching the funeral service, too.

She was struck by the attention devoted to a book Jennifer had given Jamie for Valentine's Day, a love book they called it.

Happy Valentine's Day.

This is from Jennifer to Jamie.

Packed with memories of the couple's good times together.

This love book was very elaborate, many pages, and they went through it.

Touching as it all was.

There were moments when Teresa tried not to roll her eyes.

And it would say,

I love you every day when I wake up.

I love that you're the first person I talk to.

I love that we travel together.

So, I mean, okay, maybe that's a little over the top, but...

A little over the top.

Plus, you know, and just the simple fact that and maybe this is just me,

they had been together for 15 years.

I've been with my husband for 18 years.

He's not getting a love book like that.

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The people I interviewed were not supposed to be more cynical than I am.  
I'm sorry.

Jamie and Jennifer's friends and neighbors noticed  
how expensive the service was.

I guess I had never seen anything like that  
where you had, you know, coasters  
and matchbooks and memorabilia.

And it was almost like a...

I mean, I hate to say it was almost like a party  
where you have takeaway gifts.

Like party favors.

Like party favors. That's a great way to put it.

Like party favors to take away from a funeral.

The women knew those extras weren't cheap,  
but at least Jennifer had that go fund me.

It could help cover costs.

And that fund?

It just kept growing.

We were shocked that it went up to over 15,000  
in a less than 24-hour period  
and less than a week, it was over 60,000.

So I think our takeaway from that  
really attests to how much Jamie was loved.

Yes, I think initially a lot of the support  
that for the go fund me came from the Oak Cliff community,  
but I think a whole bunch of that  
came from the American Airlines community.

While Jamie's friends and family grieved,  
investigators were working hard.

Remember the guy caught on security camera next door  
hours before Jamie was shot?

Jennifer first told detectives she didn't know who it was.  
Then she called them back.

She told me that neighbors had informed her  
that there was another neighbor who had often  
gotten into it with his wife and got drunk  
and would walk around the neighborhood like that.

And what about the theory that a former American Airlines  
employee might have had it in for Jamie  
after that round of layoffs?

No indications that anyone was blaming him for layoffs.

We could not find any suspects  
that would have an axe to grind with him.

By then, the investigation had taken off

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in a whole new direction.

And all of a sudden you're not really looking at this grunt old American Airlines employees anymore.

No.

All of a sudden they're taking another look at that marriage, the one that was so flawless.

It made other couples jealous.

That was the first evidence that there was a crack in the facade of this perfect marriage.

Jamie Faith had been dead for two months and his widow Jennifer decided to speak out.

She talked with NBC5 in Dallas.

Her fear was that this case was going cold and she really wanted to finally come forward.

My hope is that someday perhaps the person will realize the gravity of what they've done and what they've taken from myself and my daughter.

During the interview, she said that based on witnesses and what she remembers, a big clue will be this black pickup truck, she said.

It's a black Nissan Titan, extended cab, has a Texas Ranger sticker in the back window.

Any information leading to the arrest would be fantastic and it would help give me the closure that I'm really looking for.

What Jennifer didn't know was that all this time, investigators had actually been moving ahead with evidence that might not provide the kind of closure she was hoping for.

And it all started with her phone.

I believe without that phone, we probably wouldn't be sitting here today.

That's because something on that phone at least appeared to refute everything Jennifer had said.

What kind of marriage do you have?

It's perfect.

Perfect, yes, that's what she says.

And that's the Jamie and Jennifer we went into this investigation believing was the case.

Well, that was before.

Now, investigators read a series of texts dated April 2020.

Six months before Jamie was killed, Jennifer and a friend named Tina were chatting.

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Included was this stunner from Jennifer.  
So I'm pretty much having a full blown emotional affair.  
An emotional affair, you know,  
the kind that's just texts and calls.  
It's been crazy and I know I'm so stupid for doing this  
and I know you're at work  
and I'm probably blowing your mind right now, LOL.  
Then a surprise admission about her perfect marriage.  
Tina, we haven't had sex in four years.  
Tina asked why Jennifer's answer.  
I told him I feel like we love each other  
but we are not in love with each other.  
I don't know.  
I constantly try to initiate.  
I give you credit for being upfront.  
I finally gave up about a year ago.  
I couldn't lie to him.  
He deserves better than that.  
He won't give me a reason.  
I thought he was having an affair for a little while,  
Tina had a question.  
Does Jamie say he's in love or is he content too?  
How can a person be in love but no sex or passion?  
He says he is in love.  
That was my question.  
He says it is a timing thing.  
Whatever.  
For four years, that's just it.  
No passion.  
Very little physical affection at all past a hug  
and nothing romantic from him.  
Flowers on Valentine's Day, typical stuff  
but I don't feel wanted by him at all other than to be his partner.  
Well, that kind of changes things, doesn't it?  
Yes, it does.  
Jennifer had never mentioned to you  
that she was having an affair emotional or otherwise with anybody.  
No.  
She wasn't having an affair and neither was her husband.  
No, she said the relationship was good.  
The only thing that they were as intimate as she would like  
but other than that, he was a great man,  
provider and also a loving father.  
So maybe this fling was just an innocent online diversion.

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A harmless way out of the middle-aged doldrums.  
Nothing in person, nothing physical.  
After all, as Jennifer told Tina,  
things with Jamie were still kind of good.  
We are super great friends and a good team  
and great parents to Amber  
and honestly, I would have been content  
living out the rest of my life that way.  
And then this.  
No issues until this guy came back and OMG.  
The emotions and the connection,  
I feel like I am being torn in two.  
So, who was this mystery man?  
Detectives had to find out.  
Jennifer helpfully had sketched in his background for Tina.  
This guy I dated in high school and college.  
We broke up because I was finishing school  
and after he got out of basic training,  
he was deployed to South Korea.  
He ended up going special forces and served 26 years.  
Just retired and found me.  
We were going to get married at the time.  
Then I met Amber's biotaid right after he left.  
At the end of the thread, Tina sent hugs.  
Jennifer responded.  
Thank you, but I am also not making any moves  
or doing anything rash anytime soon.  
But I am not going to stop talking to Darren either.  
So now investigators had a name, Darren.  
They also knew from other texts between Jennifer and Tina  
that Darren had mentioned what he called a five-year plan  
to start a new life with Jennifer.  
Then about two months before Jamie was murdered,  
came this text exchange.  
You still talking to that guy?  
I put the brakes on with him so hard.  
I have such strong emotions for Darren.  
How did Darren feel about her foot on the brake?  
Investigators had no way of knowing.  
They did know this.  
Darren had been dumped.  
And he knew his way around a weapon.  
The Jamie Faith murder investigation had taken a surprising turn.  
Police learned the grieving widow was involved in what she called

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an emotional affair.

By then, Detective Eric Barnes had joined the case.

He and Detective Walton were drilling down on Jennifer's text messages about a guy named Darren.

The main thing that stuck out to me was that he had a five-year plan on how they would be together. I guess one part of that could be getting Jamie out of the way.

That's correct. You know, for a five-year plan, that's a very long-term patient plan.

Somebody has to be pretty dedicated to wait for something over five years.

Logic suggests a love-struck guy with a five-year plan might become at the very least unhappy and at the very worst, furious

if his beloved decided to change the schedule and forsake him for the sake of her husband.

She talks about this full-blown emotional affair.

She's having with this guy Darren, but she also at some point says she's cutting it off.

That's correct.

Were there any texts from Darren on the phone?

No. None that I could find.

They did have Jennifer's phone contacts.

That's where they found a Darren whose last name was Lopez, along with his phone number.

A search warrant later, they also had Jennifer sell records from the phone company.

Police still didn't have the actual texts, but now they could see the text and call logs showing how often Jennifer and Darren had been in touch.

There was a tremendous amount of contact between her phone and his phone in her phone records.

That's correct.

They averaged almost 500 communications a day through phone calls and texts.

I believe a total of about 13,000.

We love 13,000 contacts.

More than 13,000 calls and texts in just one month around the time of the murder.

For an emotional affair, that's a lot of emotion.

It's also a lot of deletion.

None of those calls or texts were on Jennifer's phone when police saw it.

One more thing.

Darren Lopez lived in Tennessee.

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An interstate investigation now brought the feds on board.  
So, you know, we come up with an address for Darren Lopez  
in a town called Cumberland Furnace, Tennessee.  
Andrew Cheromey is a supervisory special agent with the ATF.  
He learned a lot about Darren Lopez,  
a 48-year-old retired Army Special Forces medic  
who lived about 640 miles northeast of Dallas.  
He has got quite an extensive military record.  
He had six deployments to Iraq.  
He is a Purple Heart recipient, has a bronze star.  
So this is a man who is a highly decorated war veteran.  
And then we also find out during the investigation  
that he was injured in combat  
and suffers a traumatic brain injury.  
They learned Darren Lopez was separated  
and living with two of his teenage daughters.  
Investigators started tracing his activities  
in the days leading up to the murder.  
So Darren's banking records tell you a little bit about where he's been.  
That's correct.  
That's the biggest thing we're trying to do.  
We're trying to place him in Dallas, from Tennessee.  
The day before the killing, Darren's debit card put him here,  
buying gas about 20 minutes south of his home.  
That debit card was used in Dixon, Tennessee  
early in the afternoon on October 8th.  
Several hours later, that same debit card was used  
at a pilot gas station in West Memphis, Arkansas,  
which would have been him traveling in the direction of Dallas.  
West Memphis, Arkansas is 200 miles southwest of Darren's home.  
Now, two months later,  
Detective Barnes wondered if there were any photos of that pit stop.  
I reached out to the pilot gas station  
just in a long shot chance to see if they still had video surveillance.  
Because nobody has video that long after the fact.  
No, if we had video for two weeks, we're doing well.  
Right.  
But in this case, you got lucky.  
Yeah, sure did.  
What do you see in that video?  
In the video, Darren is wearing a dark-colored polo shirt, blue jeans,  
but he also has the blue mask that matches the description  
that Jennifer gave on the day of the murder.  
More important is what Darren Lopez was driving,

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

a big black Nissan pickup.

Okay, but who could say for sure where Darren was heading?

Well, actually, Google could.

We saw that he typed in the victim's address while he was in Tennessee and got map directions to the route of Dallas.

This feels like you're moving closer and closer to an arrest.

Yes, sir.

Okay, but what about that tea decal?

The one clue everyone had been focused on.

We were able to reach out to the Tennessee Bureau of Investigations and get a flyover over Darren's property.

And we were hoping that we'd be able to find this truck and get a good look at his Nissan Titan to see if it actually had the decal.

And you did?

Yes, we did.

And it did?

It sure did.

Just one pass.

You're not circling.

You're not doing anything that's going to attract attention.

No.

That's what they hoped anyway, except a couple of weeks after they spotted Darren's truck from the sky, something changed on the ground.

Agents in Nashville were doing surveillance and they observed Darren's pickup truck and it no longer had a T on the windshield.

Which suggests he's onto you guys.

That's right.

Wondering if Darren Lopez had gotten wise to them, agents wanted to move in quickly.

That came with some difficult questions.

Like, how do you arrest Rambo without the Hollywood body count?

He's a trained military operative.

This is not some guy who spent a couple of years in the Army filing forms.

That's correct.

And a firearm was used in the murder of Amy Faith.

One would assume that that was his weapon and he probably still has it.

So going to get him is going to involve some significant planning.

Planning that would not typically take place in a normal operation.

Also, Darren Lopez was more than a Special Forces veteran with a very particular set of skills.

His 20-acre home also gave him an edge over anyone approaching on the ground.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

He may have booby traps, clandestine devices, motion sensors.

He may have his own cameras on the property.

Creeping up and knocking on his door is not going to happen.

Exactly.

Also gnawing at Agent Sharon was the memory of that calamitous 1993 raid on the Branch Davidian Sect in Waco, Texas.

We think about the tragedy that happened in Waco, where four of our agents were lost.

Not a dissimilar approach.

And he's got his two daughters living in there with him.

So worst case scenario is he ends up barricaded in that house.

Worst case scenario.

And the worst case scenario was not an acceptable one.

Someone would have to blink.

It was early 2021 and an alphabet soup of law enforcement agencies was gearing up for a full-scale operation to arrest Darren Lopez.

You can tell here from the aerial photographs

that this is a very wide-open piece of property

and that would make any sort of covert approach to the house extremely dangerous.

How many people are we talking about here?

I would say approximately 75 people.

Wow.

It was pretty much all the resources of the federal government.

On an icy January day, agents were preparing to launch their takedown when a surveillance team reported Darren Lopez was in a Toyota, leaving his compound with one of his daughters.

The order came back, grab him.

The team blocked his truck and moved in with guns drawn.

Darren Lopez was arrested without incident.

He was taken into custody safely.

He wasn't injured.

His daughter wasn't injured and none of our agents were injured.

And not a shot fired.

And not a shot fired.

In this business, that's a great day.

Detective Barnes made sure Darren's daughters were taken in by family friends.

Barnes had more than one role in this investigation.

He's also an ATF task force officer.

That's why he joined the arrest team.

And Barnes served with the U.S. Army's 16th signal battalion in Iraq.

So when he sat down across from Darren Lopez in a Tennessee lockup, he was able to talk with Darren, soldier to soldier.

Being miles away from home, it makes you grow up faster.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

Then Barnes got to the point.  
Have you ever been to Dallas?

No.

I think I flew through there.  
I haven't been to Dallas itself.  
And you know that's not true.  
I knew it wasn't true.

Do you say to him, no, we know you're in Dallas?  
No.

I let him lock himself into that story.  
Darren admitted knowing Jennifer and shared some misty-eyed memories of his youth.  
We grew up together.  
High school friends and we'd contact each other almost a year ago.  
I looked her up and I got her email address and stuff like that in her quick eye.

I said, go now.  
And so we started reconnecting.  
Yeah.

He talked about how they met in high school.  
He told me about a kiss that they shared in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris over 30 years ago.  
To hear Darren talk about it, his relationship with Jennifer is all in the past, not the present.  
Right.

He said that they communicate now just because he's going through a divorce  
and she recently lost her husband.

And so they kind of help each other through their hard time.  
She convinced me and I can let her vent and then it makes her feel better.  
And so she's been using that a lot more to help get through.  
Telling therapy.

Right.

I get to have to, you know, rekindling that old flame.

That's a strong thing.

She told me she was married.

Okay.

You know, and I saw that.

I was like, oh, yeah, cool.

And stuff.

So I mean, we never breached, you know, that, I never thought we crossed like, you know,  
a threshold where it was inappropriate.

And like I said, I've never been down there.

So it's like, I've never had any physical contact.

It's just kind of like more of an emotional thing.

You don't believe a word of that.

No.

Then Barnes asked Darren about the tea sticker on his pickup.  
The vehicle had a tea on the back of it.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

It doesn't have one on it today, but it did have one on it at the time of the offense.

Okay.

What happened to the tea?

It started just tearing off.

Yeah.

Okay.

Once I started confronting him on some of the lies that he told, he immediately shut the interview down and asked for an attorney.

Three months after Jamie Faith was shot seven times, the detective told Darren Lopez he was going to be charged with that murder.

Are you going to get booked into the jail here?

We just ran in front of the judge in Dallas.

Now with Darren behind bars, officers descended on his chaotic mess of a home, searching for evidence.

In my 22 years on the job, I don't know that I've ever seen a house that was in that deplorable of a living condition.

This man is here with these two teenage daughters, animal hair, food on the counter.

You know, something's not right here.

The condition of that place suggested to you more than just messiness or poor housekeeping.

Yeah.

So we do our best to search the home.

I noticed on the front porch was a large FedEx box.

What's in this huge box?

It was a big screen TV.

And the label on the FedEx box was addressed to Darren Lopez.

And the return address was Jennifer Faith.

She sent him a TV.

Send him a TV.

And then amidst the trash, the old food, and that 55-inch TV, investigators landed on a piece of evidence almost too good to be true.

One of the agents called out and said, hey, I found something.

And it was a military-style rucksack, backpack.

Inside the backpack was a .45 caliber semi-automatic pistol.

That's the same caliber as the murder weapon.

And upon closer examination, we could see on the slide of the gun which appeared to be a small smear of blood.

It's like, hey, get it back to Dallas.

It took just a couple of days for the Dallas crime lab to process and test fire the blood-smearred gun and then compare those casings to the ones recovered from the crime scene.

And the gun matches the cartridges.

Yes.

And that blood comes back to...

Jamie Faith.

So in your view, anyway, game over and convicting Darren of murder.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

We felt that we had a solid case.

What happens on the story and what coverage does it receive here in town generally?

All of a sudden, there's this announcement of an arrest made of Darren Lopez out of Tennessee and you're left stunned.

When Jamie's friends heard someone named Darren had been arrested, they were stumped.

They didn't know who he was.

You never heard that name?

No, never heard that name.

We just tried to figure out who Darren was and why he did that to Jamie.

Well, we want to hurt Jamie.

Why do they keep talking about this, Darren?

Why don't they shoot Jamie down, you know, in front of his home, in front of his wife.

Now investigators needed to know if Jennifer and Darren were more than just a couple of long-distance shoulders for each other to cry on.

And who better to answer that question than Jennifer Faith herself?

Have you ever heard of a name, Darren?

Investigators were certain Darren Lopez had murdered Jamie Faith.

But now they were wondering why Jennifer Faith had never mentioned Darren's name.

Maybe there was a reasonable explanation.

When you have a husband or wife whose spouse has been murdered and you know they're having an affair and they won't admit to it, it's pretty plausible that that's because I don't want to admit to an affair at all and second, I particularly don't want to admit to it now because now it's going to look like I did something about that.

Absolutely.

Absolutely.

So did she do something about it?

Investigators weren't sure.

On the same January day Darren Lopez was arrested in Tennessee, detectives in Dallas asked Jennifer to come sit down with them.

We were playing cat and mouse with Darren and Jennifer and I wanted to see if there was anything that maybe Jennifer said that I could use against Darren.

We put together a game plan.

The game plan was to talk to Jennifer and Darren at the same time.

So they can't call each other.

So they can't call each other.

I appreciate you coming down here.

Federal prosecutor Rick Calvert appreciated it too.

You're watching that interview.

I'm outside the room watching on a television set.

You're trying to get some kind of read on her.

I am and she gave the same story that she'd been giving for the past two or three months.

All I can really remember are his eyes, the black eyes.

Why would somebody want to do something like this?

If I knew that I would tell you, it drives me crazy.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

Then Walton asked the question that seemed to hit a nerve.

Have you ever heard of the name Darren?

Darren, Lopez, yeah.

I asked her who was Darren.

Her whole demeanor changed.

He was one of my best friends.

We dated in high school, but he doesn't know Jamie.

She told me that, oh, he's the guy I used to date back in high school in college.

And then that's when I asked her, why didn't you tell me about Darren?

And what's her answer?

She paused and she got a little bit angry.

Why do you even bother listening to me about all these other people who I thought might have something to do with it?

Do you know how much I've been racking my brain if you knew this all along?

Tell me a little about Darren.

Okay.

Let's see.

I lost contact with him in 1993.

We broke up.

She says that we haven't seen each other in over 25 years, which is true.

That they talk all the time.

But they haven't met.

Correct. And that's the truth.

Detective Walton needed more.

I know that there's more to you and Darren's relationship.

I don't know what more you're talking about.

Personally, in my heart, I believe that you knew what happened that day.

I'm going to tell you like this, gentlemen.

I know that Darren committed this offense.

I know that Darren killed your husband.

He told you we have a five-year plan.

We were caught up in old emotions, but I put the brakes on it.

But you did put the brakes on it.

How could you talk to somebody that killed your husband?

I didn't know he killed my husband.

I still don't know that he killed my husband.

I wouldn't do that.

Why would I do that?

And that's the question I have for you.

The interview became even more tense when the detective accused Jennifer of giving him false leads, like those American Airlines employees.

I'm looking at all these other people.

What do we need anybody to have against Jamie?

Why do anybody want to kill him?

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

If you are so in love with Darren, just dump the guy.  
I wasn't.  
Just tell him I was in love with my husband.  
I'm telling you the truth.  
So she claimed her digital footprints said she was lying.  
Her calls and texts with Darren had continued at a crazy rate,  
even after Jamie was murdered.  
The same guy that killed your husband, Jennifer,  
is the same guy that you communicate with every day.  
You had over 24,000.  
Six Mississippi calls.  
24,000.  
I don't work.  
He's retired.  
We talk throughout the day.  
This guy killed your husband.  
How do you know that?  
Because I have proof.  
And guess what?  
Darren right now is currently in jail locked up for murder right now.  
Oh my God.  
She had already been mirandized and she locked it up.  
She didn't want to talk anymore.  
Jennifer's story seemed to be falling apart,  
but investigators wanted to know what she would do next,  
so they let her walk out the door.  
Instead of locking her up on the same day that Darren gets locked up,  
is there some value to letting Jennifer kind of continue to play the part of,  
you know, I had no idea any of this was happening?  
Absolutely.  
One of the cute bills in the case,  
there was still a lot of things that we didn't know.  
Like maybe Jamie wasn't the nice guy everyone thought he was.  
Jamie's emails tell Darren,  
I'm punishing Jennifer because she's talking to you again.  
Yes, in some of the most sadistic ways you can possibly imagine.  
Yes.  
It was the night of the awful discovery.  
The apartment was dark.  
The faint coppery scent of blood hung in the air.  
Remember telling the boys don't touch anything.  
We don't know what's happened here.  
I'm Keith Morrison and this is Murder in Apartment 12,  
our new podcast from Dateline.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

It's a story about a local beauty queen who'd been keeping secrets.  
It's about gossip, public opinion and a tortured search for a killer.  
I think they've got the wrong guy.  
Listen to the latest episodes of Murder in Apartment 12 each week completely free  
or subscribe to Dateline Premium on Apple Podcast to access new episodes one week early.  
And then there's a cut to commercial.  
But now there's Dateline Premium on Apple Podcasts.  
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Really?  
Well, try Dateline Premium on Apple Podcasts now.  
Jennifer Faith was back on the street but not off the hook.  
Evidence against her was piling up.  
So were her communications with Darren.  
By the time he was arrested, phone records showed more than 130,000 texts and calls  
between Darren and Jennifer in less than eight months.  
This was a couple with a lot to say to each other.  
Except during a couple of days in October.  
There was one period of time where more than a 10-hour period elapsed where Jennifer and Darren  
Lopez were not texting each other  
and that just happens to fall on the day before the murder and the day of the murder.  
That was the only period of time.  
That wasn't all.  
Remember that appeal on TV?  
And somebody must know who has a truck like that.  
It's a black Nissan Titan, extended cab, has a Texas Ranger sticker in the back window.  
On Darren's phone, investigators found a text from Jennifer.  
From that same day she made her heartfelt appeal.  
She texts him, you need to get that tee off the truck.  
He responds back, I will.  
She goes, you need to get it off right now.  
He responds back, tee is gone.  
I've removed the sticker and her response is yay, I feel so much better.  
Time to arrest Jennifer Faith.  
Well, at that point you have text message clearly obstructing justice.  
And so detectives arrested Jennifer Faith for obstruction of justice.  
Reporter Maria Guerrero was as shocked as anyone.  
I texted Jennifer and I said, please tell me you did not know about this.  
Do you want to clear your name?  
And she texted back, please contact my attorney and give me his name and number.  
That was the last time that she spoke with me.  
Well, nice try.  
Yeah.  
It feels to me like you guys are getting near the end of the road at that point.  
It seems to be a love triangle that ended up costing Jamie his life.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

At first, maybe it's random.

Then maybe it's connected to somebody who's got a grudge against Jamie because of the way he's shot.

Then the affair comes out.

Maybe Darren wants Jennifer for his own and he's acting to make that happen.

Then maybe Jennifer's in on it with him and they're going to live happily ever after.

What you find after that, I'm pretty sure you've never seen before.

No, the case takes a dramatic twist for sure. Absolutely.

It happened five months after the murder while Darren and Jennifer were both in jail.

Early March of 2021, Darren's ex-wife told me that she was taking care of some of Darren's financial affairs

and she needed to access some of his account information from his email.

As Darren's ex looked through the files, she realized Jamie seemed to have known about the affair with Jennifer.

And she saw several emails coming from Jamie Faith and they detailed information about an abusive relationship

that was going on between Jamie and Jennifer.

Those emails showed the victim, Jamie Faith, started emailing Darren.

Jamie was also texting Darren using Jennifer's phone.

It started six months before the murder.

Jamie Faith is advising Darren that Jamie is abusing sexually and physically his wife as a punishment for them reconnecting.

Jamie's emails tell Darren, I'm punishing Jennifer because she's talking to you again.

Yes, in some of the most sadistic ways you can possibly imagine.

There was sexual acts of gang rapes and torture that were described to be carried out by Jamie through these emails.

Rapes of Jennifer by other men in front of Jamie.

That's correct.

In case Darren had any trouble believing that, Jamie sent him photographic evidence of the abuse.

Multiple injuries, burns, bruises, Jennifer's cut lip, and Jamie actually seemed to be bragging about it.

How does Darren respond to that?

Darren responds that he's going to go to police.

He responds that he's going to tell Jamie's employer.

Jennifer offered another solution, asking Darren to contact her friend Rob Schmidt.

We actually saw the original email that Darren sent to Rob Schmidt saying, hey, Rob, I got your email address from Jennifer.

She asked that I reach out to you for guidance.

Jamie is abusing Jennifer.

And how does Rob respond?

Rob responds, this is terrible.

I will do whatever I can to assist you in this to make sure this abuse stops.

Rob Schmidt says in the emails that he spoke to Jamie?

Multiple times, yes.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

And maybe things have turned to corner?

Correct.

And things started to slow down as far as the abuse for a period of time.

For a while, things seemed to calm down, but that didn't last.

Jennifer told Darren the assaults had resumed.

By then, Darren was already considering a more permanent solution to Jennifer's problem.

He wrote to Rob.

I still feel he is very apt up in the head.

I know I won't feel better about her situation until she is out of the house away from him, or she lets me put a bullet in Jamie's head.

And Rob wrote back.

Thanks for the update.

I'm also very concerned, and if it were up to me, I would tell you to go for it with your idea.

LOL.

I'll give you an alibi.

Then just weeks before the murder, Darren received another email from Jamie.

It was threatening a sexual assault that could kill Jennifer.

It was something Jamie said he was planning for October 9th, and the couple's 15th anniversary.

That was also the day Jamie was killed.

If Darren really is this guy who sort of saved Jennifer from this horrible abusive relationship, that's a little easier to understand why maybe she wasn't too anxious for you guys to arrest Darren, because he's helping her out.

And it also could kind of explain why someone who had never broken the law in his life had never been arrested

would be willing to possibly drive to Dallas to save someone that he believed was being abused.

Suddenly everything looked different, seen through a lens of pain and abuse.

Maybe Jennifer Faith was a victim of sexual assault,

and Darren Lopez a soldier on a mission to rescue his long lost love.

In the interviews that Jennifer gave, she ever talked about her husband being anything other than a wonderful guy.

Absolutely not.

Before investigators found all that sickening evidence of abuse, all anyone had known about Jamie Faith was sunshine and rainbows.

In the interviews that Jennifer gave to you, to other stations, she ever talked about her husband being anything other than a wonderful guy.

Before investigators found all that sickening evidence of abuse, to other stations, she ever talked about her husband being anything other than a wonderful guy.

Absolutely not.

So no hint of their problems in the marriage.

Not one word.

Now when investigators poured over those graphic emails, everything they'd believed about Jamie Faith seemed dead wrong.

The ultimate nice guy IT geek with the cheesy Hawaiian shirts appeared after all to be a sadist who'd acted out his darkest impulses on his wife.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

Maybe that's why Darren Lopez wanted to kill him,  
and why Jennifer's friend Rob Schmidt seemed to be offering Darren an alibi.  
We asked Rob to explain himself.

I'm going to read you some emails here.

Okay.

This one's dated about five months before Jamie's murdered.

Darren is emailing Rob Schmidt.

I still feel Jamie's very effed up in the head.

I know I won't feel better about her situation until she lets me put a bullet in Jamie's head.

And Rob Schmidt writes back,

if it were up to me, I would tell you to go for it with your idea.

LOL, I'll give you an alibi.

Yeah, it's very funny to have words be put into my mouth that never existed that I never typed.

You didn't write that email.

You didn't communicate with Darren by email.

Never.

That's exactly what Rob told investigators when they asked.

Their next question was,

if he didn't write those emails, who did?

The investigators had sent Jennifer's computer to the FBI,

and when it came back, the Fed's analysis left little doubt.

It was Jennifer, all of it.

We knew that Jennifer Faith had created those false accounts,  
and that gave us a clear picture of what was going on.

Well, just a second.

What about those photos of Jennifer's injuries?

She was involved in a car accident in Phoenix, Arizona.

The photographs were taken in 2012.

She sent them to Darren claiming that that was abuse that Jamie was inflicting on her.

That picture of the bruised lip.

That's not Jennifer's lip.

No, she uploaded that off the internet at Shutterstock.com.

So all her claims of abuse are invented?

All of them.

Jamie wasn't abusing her?

Never.

That feels like the moment where you stop thinking of Jennifer as victim of the murder  
and victim of abuse and start thinking of her as perpetrator of everything.

I think that was one of the defining moments that just clearly hit us  
that the only true victim in this case was Jamie.

That Jennifer's hands were just as dirty as Darren's were in this murder.

Or maybe dirtier.

Under the guise of helping Darren, Jennifer had convinced him to give her his psych records.

Those would have shown her Darren suffered from PTSD and a traumatic brain injury,

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

both from combat.

You think his war injuries made Darren easier to manipulate?

I do. I do.

And I think that once Jennifer learned that, that's probably something that she took advantage of. The more you learn about this case, the worse she sounds.

Absolutely. Absolutely.

And if the phony abuse story didn't work, investigators say Jennifer had another plan.

Their emails were filled with 50 shades of TMI, about phone sex, bondage, and other things we don't really talk about on network TV.

Investigators say it was all designed to twist Darren into Jennifer's willing assassin.

Whatever it was, Jamie never saw any of it coming.

No. How did he not notice Jennifer on the phone constantly?

My wife's on the phone constantly.

But my mind does not go to, she's planning to kill me.

Right?

Nobody would think that without significant warning and significant reason to think that.

Right. Here she is living a double life.

But it was really a triple or quadruple life, wasn't it?

It was.

Because she wasn't just being herself. She was also being Rob Schmidt.

She was also being Jamie. It was like a Broadway one-person show.

It was. I mean, she lied to everyone. She's lying to her husband.

She's lying to Darren. She's lying to her best friend.

She's lying to Jamie's parents.

Sitting in a Texas jail, Darren Lopez refused to believe it.

He was convinced killing Jamie had protected the woman he loved.

Even his court-appointed attorney Juan Sanchez had trouble getting through.

It was really hard. He almost didn't trust me because I was trying to confront him with the truth.

The world he was living in was not the reality.

You'd say to him, by the way, she made this up.

Those emails weren't from her husband. They were all from Jennifer.

Exactly.

You'd say, no, no, you're wrong.

He was just adamant that Jennifer was being abused physically and sexually.

It took Sanchez months to convince the former soldier he'd been used as a remotely controlled weapon in a murderous scheme.

Darren eventually agreed to speak with investigators again, and this time gave them a detailed confession of what went down.

They recorded the audio.

He told me that he had her tied up in the closet, and he was going to do different things with her.

Prosecutor Rick Calvert asked about the messages Darren thought were from Jamie.

That text message you're talking about, was that from Jennifer's phone?

Yes, she had told me that he would take her phone. He was mad that I was back with her.

And because of that, he started hurting her.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

And she was like, I think I'm just going to kill him.  
And I was just like, you can't do that, you know?  
And so that's where I guess the idea kind of started.  
This son of the volunteer state says he made her mission his own.  
Darren told me that and a whole lot more when I asked him.  
Was it hard to pull a trigger?  
No.  
Their high school romance fizzled in the early 1990s.  
And from then on, Darren Lopez thought of Jennifer Faith as the one that got away.  
You really never stopped thinking about her, did you?  
No, I didn't.  
He had Darren at the Dallas County Jail, his home for 30 months while he waited for trial.  
Hello.  
Can you hear me okay?  
Yes, I can.  
In our interview, Darren was by turns remorseful, reflective, and regretful about his relationship with Jennifer,  
one that started with a kiss by the Eiffel Tower on a high school trip to Europe.  
And why didn't it last?  
We lasted for three, four years.  
I tried to go to college.  
I had to drop off after a year.  
And then during that timeframe is when I joined the reserves.  
Sounds like maybe she stopped thinking about you, but you did not stop thinking about her.  
No, like I said, because before each deployment that I have to take, you know,  
I have to fill out these forms, questions where if I ever get captured,  
you know, rescuing force, can't ask me specific questions that only I'm going to know.  
Something personal that no one would be able to guess or look up.  
Exactly.  
So I used Jennifer.  
So before each deployment, she was with me.  
Along the way, Darren married, helped to raise five daughters.  
He says his life grew bleak after he left the Army.  
Then in March 2020 came that reconnection with Jennifer at a short burst of happiness.  
Followed by a descent into hell.  
It was her telling me these things over and over again after the stuff that happened,  
her crying about everything.  
That's what I believed.  
I trusted her.  
Darren told me he finally decided to do what soldiers are trained to do.  
Take out the enemy, the mission, protect Jennifer and her daughter Amber.  
Jennifer is in danger.  
She's going to be hurt, possibly killed Friday night.  
If you don't do something.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

If I didn't do something, she was going to die.

Even if you believed every single thing she said and were fooled by all the emails, why not go to the police?

Amber, Jennifer, every single time I tried to bring it up, she wanted to protect Amber's memory of Jamie has a good father.

Don't tell me the only way out of that is killing them.

At the time, yes, I truly believe it, because I believed in her.

I was trusting her.

So he got in his truck, drove 10 hours to Dallas.

He said Jennifer told him to hide in the yard of the vacant home next door.

Yes, that was Darren on the video Jennifer showed police the day of the murder.

What was that?

I don't know.

That house is empty.

She knew all along Darren waited until morning.

Was it hard to pull a trigger?

Well, yes, I mean, it was, I mean, it was on, like, on mission in the military, but I was in the same type of mindset with it.

But I was doing what I had to do to protect Jennifer.

Now, keep this in mind.

After the shooting, when he shoved Jennifer onto the pavement as a staged robbery, that was the first time Darren had touched her or even seen her in close to three decades.

It was also the last time.

You think she was ever in love with you?

I don't know.

When I got arrested, I went to jail, truly believing I saved Jennifer and Amber.

When your attorney showed you the evidence that Jennifer wasn't abused, Jamie wasn't this monster.

He wasn't beating her up.

The threats weren't real.

You said that's not true.

You didn't want to believe that.

No, no.

When my lawyer first told me, you know, it was just that thought never registered in my mind that she could use me this way.

She told me that we were soulmates.

Why would she put me through all this torture?

Good question.

Months later, as Darren cooperated with the U.S. Attorney's Office, Jennifer was charged with the federal crime of murder for hire.

Darren was left to wrestle with the awful truth.

He had assassinated an innocent man.

She used me.

I became her weapon.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

I understand it.  
And I don't have to live with what I did for the rest of my life,  
no matter if I'm in here or if I'm out.  
It might be easy to write off Darren Lopez as another casualty of war.  
A damaged veteran turned stone cold killer.  
His band of brothers says it's not that simple.  
I just couldn't believe it.  
There's somebody that we trust with everything.  
And it's not the person that we know that we do this.  
Phil Heil and Greg Underwood know a different Darren  
after serving alongside him as Green Berets in the Iraq War.  
They witnessed Darren's courage and kindness  
as a medic who cared both for his fellow soldiers  
and for injured Iraqis.  
He was always out there with the children and talking to them  
and their parents and making sure everything was good,  
seeing if there was anything he could do for them.  
They remember a day in 2005 when twin truck bombs exploded  
just outside their base south of Baghdad.  
Darren took a serious hit to the head  
and then saw Greg was out cold and in real danger.  
Darren pretty much brought me back to life.  
He saved my life.  
And, I mean, he was a close friend and brother before that.  
But after that, I could never repay Darren for that.  
They also know how Darren himself suffered,  
the brain injury, the PTSD, the breakup of his marriage.  
Then in the late spring of 2020,  
Darren's friends say they caught a glimpse of the man they used to know.  
He said, I reconnected with an old girlfriend.  
He said, I'm just talking to her.  
This was something that just really gave him that glow of a,  
you know, okay, well, this is good for him.  
Thank you, Sheriff. You all may be seated.  
She wasn't in the courtroom,  
but Jennifer Faith's presence hung over the trial  
as Darren faced a jury in the summer of 2023.  
And while he'd confessed to pulling the trigger,  
he pleaded not guilty.  
Here's why.  
Darren killed James Faith.  
But Darren did that because  
Jennifer led him to believe that she was being abused,  
beaten.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

James is going to kill me is what Jennifer told Darren.  
In Texas, it's called the third party defense.  
Darren's lawyer laid it out for the jury.  
He felt at that time in order to save her,  
he had to act immediately and take care of the threat.  
You can use deadly force to defend someone  
if you believe that they're in immediate harm,  
or you can do it to prevent them from committing a murder  
or an aggravated sexual assault.  
In Texas, doesn't that have to be true for you to raise that?  
Not necessarily.  
Darren Lopez testified that he believed Jennifer's lies  
about Jamie's abuse.  
Did you feel she was in danger that day?  
Yes, I did, mortal danger.  
Maybe and maybe not argued prosecutor Brandy Mitchell.  
Even if Jennifer was manipulating Darren, she said,  
he was all in.  
He is pursuing her.  
He wants her to come visit him.  
These texts, emails get increasingly sexual in nature  
and increasingly graphic in nature.  
How graphic?  
Well, those emails were read aloud in court,  
resulting in a deeply cringe-inducing two-person command  
performance by prosecutor Mitchell and detective Barnes.  
Here's a PG sample.  
I love you.  
I so love you, totally in love with you.  
Later, a steamier exchange.  
Glad to see you are wearing clothes.  
No panties, though.  
My sexy bra.  
I'll just bend you over my lap and give you a quick spanking.  
It gets way racier.  
Just take my word for it.  
By the end, we all kind of, honestly, we kind of needed a shower.  
It was not good.  
More important was the question of third-party defense.  
The prosecutor said under the law,  
the killer would have to believe the action was necessary  
to save a life and the danger imminent.  
That means now, right this moment, action is needed.  
Fear of future danger is never enough.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

Ladies and gentlemen, Darren Lopez had so many options that he did not take.

They didn't deliberate long.

No, they weren't very long.

We, the jury, unanimously find and defend Darren Lopez guilty of murder as charged in the indictment.

Darren's defense had always been a long shot.

You knew.

As a matter of fact, I think if they would have come back with an acquittal, you probably would have to pick me off the ground.

And the day that it happened, we celebrated.

We all celebrated.

We all celebrated his life.

What'd you do?

We all got together.

Yeah, we all got together and had some drinks.

It was a good time.

Darren Lopez was sentenced to 62 years in prison.

He's appealing the sentence.

He's a murderer, but maybe he wouldn't be a murderer if he hadn't hung on to that memory of Jennifer Faith.

It's very possible.

It's a cautionary tale that maybe some people are better left in your past.

And someone in Jennifer's past has a story that will sound very familiar.

She specifically said I wish my husband was dead.

Yeah.

And what would happen when Jennifer faced justice for Jamie's murder?

Jennifer Faith, wife, mom, speech therapist, and maybe the biggest mystery in this whole tale of murder and betrayal.

Remember what the twins said about her?

I love her, Jamie.

I love her.

That's a keeper for you.

Jamie Faith loved her too, probably still did, even at the moment he was murdered.

This way.

Here's someone else who loved Jennifer.

His name is Rick Erlob.

I feel like a fool.

I know you were a little reticent to sit down here because of that.

Sure.

You don't want to look bad in front of the world.

When Rick heard about Jennifer's role in the murder, he says he was horrified.

Back in 2000, he and Jennifer had an affair while she was still married to husband number one.

Rick says she pursued him.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

Not your plan, but there you are.

Yes.

Now stop me if you've heard this, but he says Jennifer told him her marriage was hellish and her husband a monster.

He would have friends come over and rape her.

He would torture her with implements.

So this was a woman in a terrible place.

Yes.

And you could help her?

Yes.

Was that your idea or her idea?

It's her idea until she makes it think that it's your idea.

Tell me.

She'll tell you about it and just say, you know, I wish I could get out.

I wish he was dead or...

She specifically said I wish my husband was dead.

Yeah.

Together, he says they came up with a plan.

I was supposed to shoot him when he was tending his garden.

It was to that point.

Was this a real plan or was this some kind of like fantasy that the two of you were talking about?

A what if?

It was close.

I think it was close.

He says the talk of murder ended abruptly when Jennifer got a divorce.

And then Rick became husband number two.

Before long, he says he started receiving emails from a couple of strangers.

One was a surgeon, the other an airline pilot.

Each man talked about how hot Jennifer was and how Rick didn't appreciate her.

You never met the surgeon?

No.

You never met the pilot?

No.

Finally, Rick said enough and got a divorce.

Today, Rick believes the pilot and the surgeon were phantoms and Jennifer sent all those emails.

He also believes her first husband was not the monster Jennifer described.

That guy declined an interview with Dateline.

And police in Arizona told us there's no evidence he ever abused Jennifer.

You got pretty bruised by that whole thing, didn't you?

You know, I wasn't hurt physically, but I lost that time that I could be doing something different that really mattered.

And not be swimming in a sea of lies and manipulation and pain.

Maybe she thought she'd always get away with lying and manipulating.

Truth is, she almost did.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

Until Darren reappeared.

He pulled the trigger.

Yes.

But she pulled the strings.

Yes.

This murder doesn't happen without both of them.

Jennifer Faith declined our request for an interview.

So we're left to wonder why she wanted Jamie killed and right in front of her.

Maybe it was about more than getting him out of her life.

Maybe it was also about greed.

How much was the life insurance?

I believe it was \$639,000 plus an additional almost \$400,000 in benefits from American Airlines.

So a total in excess of \$1 million.

Jennifer never got that money.

She did not.

If you're wondering, she did try.

And remember how her nice neighbors started that GoFundMe?

It raised \$60,000.

A lot of that money went to Darren.

Jennifer gave him two credit cards and some expensive gifts.

They're still talking about that.

She sent money from the GoFundMe to him to buy airplane tickets or something.

And a TV.

And I was like, are you kidding me?

Because immediately what flashes in my mind when I read that part was remembering her messaging me and saying, I don't know how to access the GoFundMe.

I can't do it.

She played computer illiterate.

And she was able to create two fake email accounts.

So I physically went to her house.

Oh man, I felt like an idiot.

Jennifer ended up draining that GoFundMe account.

She never did pay for those splashy funerals.

Long after her arrest, Jennifer insisted she'd been just a helpless bystander in Jamie's killing.

Then once Darren confessed, she folded.

Jennifer pleaded guilty to the federal crime of murder for hire and was sentenced to life without parole.

And after that, she sends a note to Jamie's parents saying she still loves him.

Correct.

Yes.

That she did nothing but love Jamie and she would never do anything to harm him.

Yes, she did.

All evidence to the contrary.

## [Transcript] Dateline NBC / Losing Faith

Correct.

For those who did love Jamie's faith, this remains the final image of him.

His last act, a daily routine.

Walking the dog with his wife.

Except she was leading Jamie to his death.

And she knew it.

What kind of person does that?

I don't know.

A crazy person, obviously.

But it's so much more than that.

Poor Jamie.

I mean, he really had no idea what he was getting into.

Yeah.

Sad.

He let his heart go to her and she took his life.

That's all for this edition of Dateline.

We'll see you again Thursday at 10, 9 central for the premiere of Dateline Thursday.

And of course, I'll see you each weeknight for NBC Nightly News.

I'm Lester Holt for all of us at NBC News.

Good night.

Hi, everyone.

I'm Jenna Bushhaker from Today with Hoda and Jenna and the Read with Jenna Book Club.

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