

[Transcript] Dateline NBC / Talking Dateline: Losing Faith

Hello, everyone. This is Andrea Canning. This is another episode of Talking Dateline, and I have the honor today of interviewing Josh Mankiewicz, or Mank, as you may know him, for his episode called Losing Faith.

Hi, Andrea.

Hi.

So, this story, Losing Faith, is, if you haven't heard it or seen it yet, it's right below this one in the list of podcasts. So, you can go there and listen to it and then come right back here.

Yes. I'm very excited to talk about this episode because it was so wild. And also, I am coming to you right now from a shoot.

Yes.

So, for anyone who may end up seeing this on video, maybe not. If you do, I look like I'm in a black hole because all the lights are off because they're setting up for our next interview.

Let me just say, I'm at home now, but I'm just back from CrimeCon.

Oh, yeah.

Where you and Dennis and what's his name were really missed.

Oh, that Keith guy.

Yes. That's his name. I could not remember. Yes. That's right.

Well, that's so nice to know. Was it fun?

It was great. It was great. It was a lot of people. Yeah, it was good.

That's wonderful.

Let's go.

Let's go on to Losing Faith. And the title is Losing Faith because of the last name of this couple, Faith.

Right. And because...

Because we lost Jamie Faith.

And because Jennifer lost Faith in, you know, I guess her marriage. And because Darren, the killer, lost Faith in the woman that he had, that was sort of the one that got away all those years ago, who we thought he had another shot at. And it turned out, you know, she was manipulating him all the way.

Yeah. There's a lot of meaning to Losing Faith. A lot of meaning in the title.

You know, the thing that's great about this episode and the thing I like about all stories that are like this is that there's a point where you think to yourself, you know, if you're a regular Dateline viewer, you think like, oh, yeah, I know what's going on here.

Right. And then you're like, oh, wait, I didn't realize that. And then you think, okay, now I understand what's going on. And you're like, whoa, wait a minute, really?

You know, this was a wild one.

Really was.

This is like the kind of Dateline that makes you lose faith in humanity for a moment.

I agree. It is astonishing. A lot of questions are answered in our story and a lot of questions were answered, you know, in the investigation. Like what really happened? Okay, now we know what really happened. But why she wanted to do it that way and why this is some kind of like lifelong thing of hers, you know, which she did with her ex-husband, which

she, you know, one of the things that came out in the trial that's not in our story is that she, she did this kind of thing in high school, didn't try to get anybody killed. But I think God's persuaded one boyfriend to like, you know, beat up the, the old, the new boyfriend, beat up the old boyfriend. I mean, there's this.

This is her MO.

Yeah. And it's, it's not just that she wanted her husband dead. It's that, you know, she wanted to manipulate someone else into doing it and thinking that they were on the side of the angels for doing that. And that is a weird, creepy thing that I can't remember seeing before.

And also I thought to myself, how does she get these men to just do what she wants or consider doing what she wants? What is it about her that they seem to be under her spell?

I mean, she's clearly very smart because she knew exactly sort of what, what buttons to push with Darren Lopez to get him to think not only I'm going to drive 640 miles, 10 hours, whatever it is to Dallas from my home and kill this guy, but I'm going to feel good about doing it because I'm protecting someone. I'm not, I'm not, you know, I mean, I might be technically breaking the law. He's thinking to himself, but I've got a defense here, which is this guy is a horrible, horrible guy who's, who's bringing in other men to rape his wife. And he completely bought into that. That plan only worked because she knew what to say to him and how to say it.

Yeah. And, and I think she really preyed on his vulnerability that, you know, this is a guy who's so highly decorated in the military. And, you know, the poor guy clearly, and I say poor guy, I don't, you know, I don't want to make him a victim because he did do something incredibly horrible. However, I do feel like she preyed on, you know, that, that PTSD or the trauma that he had likely experienced from all those years in war and all those horrible things that he would have seen over there. So, you know, well, yes, he did a very bad thing. And there's no excuses for that. She found the right kind of guy to carry out, you know, her evil deeds.

I don't think there's any question that this wouldn't have happened without her lying to him about what Jamie did. I mean, the prosecution made a couple of arguments. One is they argued, no, he didn't think he was on the side of the angels. He just wanted her after all these years and he'd had so much misery in his own life. And he thought like the universe owes me a debt. And the debt is I get to finally be with this woman that I've been thinking about ever since high school, right? Because he had been thinking about her in the military. There's a form you have to fill out, which tells them some of the military, our military, some secret things about you that won't be on your dog tags and that you won't reveal, like not like your middle name or your hometown, but like something like, you know, like the security questions your bank asks you, right? And she was one of his security questions, like, who's your first girlfriend, Jennifer Faye? You know, right? So I mean, she was, she was a part of his life. She was on his mind. And this, yeah, for many, many years, this wouldn't have happened if she hadn't known exactly sort of how to apply that pressure. So, you know, one of the prosecution's arguments was he wanted her back. This wasn't about anything she did. This is about his seizing an opportunity, killing the guy, killing Jamie, and that now he's going to be in. But the other argument is sort of the that she twisted him into her sort of remotely controlled weapon. And yeah, I think that's accurate. I mean, like, he's the gun, but it's, it's, you know, it's her hand on the trigger, even though, you know,

Darren's holding. Yeah, highly manipulative. Their argument was, even if you believe everything that Jennifer said, even if it turns out that it is true, right, that Jamie was going to bring in other people to rape her and maybe, you know, kill her in the process and that that was his plan and how it happened before. And the bruises and the cut lip and all the stuff that turned out to be so utterly, totally phony, even if that is true, there's a million steps between not doing anything and calling the police. Like this is a, this is, you know, you can, you know, just because Jennifer says, don't call the cops, it'll get worse. That doesn't mean you don't call the cops. Right. You know, the argument could be you call the cops and you say, look, she says, don't call the cops and she says it'll get worse and she says she'll deny it. So you got to be ready when you go over there. Yeah, absolutely. Dateline, of course, is very serious, serious content, but occasionally we do get moments of humor. Yes. That, you know, bring some levity in a very dark and serious situation. And there were, there were actually quite a few in this episode. First of all, you know, there's party favors at the funeral. Okay, that was very bizarre. That was quite something. But it was, it was that book that she made. And then one of the ladies that you interviewed who was quite funny, she said, like, however long they'd been married. And she's like, yeah, I'm not doing a Valentine's book for my husband at that point. And I thought to myself, yeah, I probably wouldn't do one. I love my husband, but I probably wouldn't do one of those either. Now you realize, you know, it was, it was very likely all for show, you know, for all of her friends and family to see, look how much I cared about him. You know, because it's not like the kind of thing you announce on Valentine's Day, I'm giving this to my husband, right? I mean, it's a private thing between the couple. Right. Yeah. And your other funny line was, yeah, how do you arrest Rambo? Yeah, because this is, he's got to be the most decorated, I feel like, person suspect that we've had on Dateline. He was fearless and he was, you know, great on the battlefield. And he was, you know, he took care of injured Iraqis as well as injured, you know, American soldiers. And he was a guy with a big heart, which is one of the things that kind of got used against him. And, you know, he'd had this miserable time, his marriage broke up, he was really isolated during pandemic. So she comes along at exactly the right time. Now that was Serendipitous. I don't think she, I don't, I don't think she knew his previous situation. But once she figured it out, she definitely used all of that against him. And yeah, he's, he's exactly the last kind of guy that you want to approach on, on ground and, you know, walk up to the door of his place and knock on the door. Yeah. And who knows what's on that property. Right. I mean, this was one of the messiest houses I've ever seen on a Dateline. And it, and I wondered if it's sort of, yeah, it goes to like his, his, his mental state almost. Yeah, the way the police looked before the search warrant and the way it looked after the search warrant really weren't terribly different. You know, normally, like after, after law enforcement executes a search warrant, you can definitely tell stuff moved all over the place. But in this case, yeah, I mean, that house was a, it looked like a bomb hit it. And I mean, I think it was a huge, huge relief to law enforcement that he happened to leave his property, you know, in a, in a truck with one of his daughters, you know, and clearly wasn't expecting anything. And then he got stopped and it ended up being, he was taken into custody without any issue, without any, any shot fired, which was a great good for everybody. But yeah, I mean, that, that house, I mean, that tells you a little bit about how he was living, about sort of how, how much he helped, how much he'd let himself go during that time. And, you know, I'm sort of surprised because you had, you know, you had daughters living with him.

Yeah, which is sad. So, I mean, I'm wondering whether they at some point said to him, like, you know, they saw that as a sign that something was wrong with him, you know. I think something was wrong with him. Oh yeah, no, no. I mean, I mean, look, he had a, there's no question. He had a traumatic brain injury, which he suffered overseas and he suffered from PTSD. I mean, those things are not an issue. He was an injured vet. That ended up getting used against him. Definitely. Now, I mean, should he have made different choices? Prosecution would say, yes, as I said before, there's a lot of stops on that train between doing nothing and killing Jamie. And he didn't take any of them. Yeah. One of the interesting things about this story too is, you know, he goes out to walk his dog, Jamie, with Jennifer and, you know, he's gunned down. And there's so many witness accounts of, you know, because this is a busy neighborhood and, you know, people are out starting, you know, going about their day. And one of the clues that was, really just stood out, that was so misleading in the beginning, was the T in the back window, because you're in Texas, you're in Dallas, you're thinking Texas Rangers. Has to be. And it was like, it was so wrong. Yeah. And it was, it was leading them in the wrong direction. That was one of the things we, we sort of like, that made us like, like pay attention to the story right away was that, you know, it looked like it was, it was, it was T for Texas, but it was T for Tennessee. You know, all you sort of need to know about what kind of neighborhood Oak Cliff is, is that people heard the shots and they didn't, you know, lie down on the floor and cover their ears. They came outside immediately, you know, and they, like, like one of the neighbors like took a picture of the truck driving away with his camera, you know, and they, those are the neighbors you want by the way. Those are the neighbors you want. And they stayed with Jennifer until the ambulance and the cops got there. And then afterwards they made all this food for the family. And then they set up that GoFundMe, you know, a good chunk of which ended up going to the actual killer. But the neighbors hearts were absolutely in the right place from the beginning. They were, they were great. And wasn't Jennifer one of the ones, she was one of the ones who was saying that there was the Texas Ranger sticker, right? Oh yeah. Well, that was the, that was so bad. That is so bad. That was one of the great moments was the, the, you know, the TV interview in which she goes on with Maria Guerrero from NBC five in Dallas. And she says, you know, I'm afraid this isn't going to get solved. This truck with the Texas Ranger sticker, you know, let's all find it. And, you know, in law enforcement needs help. And then like that day, she's calling down that day. Take it down, take the sticker off. I think there's a part of her too that just loves, and I'm just, I'm just guessing here loves the attention, you know, that you get from, from like her being this victim, quote unquote, victim. You know, I, yes, clearly there's something going on there. It wasn't just that she wanted her husband dead or she wanted out of the marriage. It was that she wanted him dead in some violent way that involved somebody standing up for her, even though that turned out to be absolutely 100% untrue. Like her white knight or something, you know, was going to come and someone, you know, someone in your story, they really said exactly what I was thinking, you know, and it goes to what we've been talking about. Jennifer, just dump the guy, get divorced. You know, what is this? This is so traumatic and convoluted and, you know, and evil and he doesn't have to die. You can just leave him. Right. But that, I mean, one sense is that that clearly wasn't the agenda. This wasn't about getting out of the marriage. This was about whatever it is, some kind of way that she feels when somebody stands up and defends her, even if the reason that she's, the things she's being

defended for doesn't really exist. And, you know, Darren tried to make that his defense, and the prosecution's rebuttal of that was, okay, yes, you can kill someone if somebody else, if that third party's death or significant injury is imminent, not the next day, not hours from now, not, you know, tomorrow, like imminent, like it's happening right now. Yes, you can shoot another person. But in this case, the argument was it didn't qualify. Yeah. And just when I thought I had heard all the, you know, he or she could light up a room, you know, we got a new one, lit up the bowling alley. Yeah, that's right. That's right. Yeah. I mean, you know, it turns out that Jamie Faith was exactly the guy that everybody thought he was. He was this like sweet guy, kind of goofy, loved Hawaiian shirts. Hawaiian shirts, dog tracks, gold chains. Yeah. You know, it was friends with these two very attractive women, but like, like nothing, not a chance in the world that anything would have happened between them, because he just wasn't that kind of guy. And, you know, he was like

this sweet, nice, faithful guy, which he almost certainly was. Faithful. There you go again.

Yeah. Well, this, this one, I mean, this was, wow, this was a crazy one.

This is, I can't think of too many others, which are this crazy. It's this kind of thinking, you know, the, the instead of divorce, let's come up with an insane plot to get out of this marriage.

And you know what? It's one of those episodes that really makes you think, you know, about like, there's so many layers to it about why is she doing this? You know, what's wrong with her? Does she have personality disorder? Even after she was convicted, she wrote Jamie's family a letter from the slam saying, no matter what you hear, I had to agree to certain things. I took this plea to protect my daughter. So I'm not really admitting anything. You know, I love Jamie. I could never hurt him, that kind of thing. Like, you know, okay.

Oh, I'm sure they so much appreciated that letter.

Yeah, man.

Not. Yeah.

Well, losing faith was a, gosh, an interesting one. Thank you so much, Josh, for giving us your insight into this incredibly twisted story.

Thank you for taking time away from a shoot to talk Dateline with me.

Always.

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