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### **Session 1: Value**

**5/15/1993**

“Welcome, Faith.”

My soft words ricochet off the blonde curls and collide with the particles of silence that fill these pale gray walls. Again, using a voice that gives more attention to the pale gray walls: “Welcome, Faith.”

The sparks of silent collision sprinkle in front of my eyes and seem to pile up on these little girls’ fingers. They tighten with rouge that shows life, while the release of short-lived tension white cascades over her frail hands. Nothing but a sweet exhale, in and out, from this child’s mouth as her curls bounce in reaction to her sweet breath. Her hands seem to continue clutching the particles of silence and releasing only for a few brief moments. But honestly, this is a reaction no one would have or would have not ever predicted.

Blazes of orange and red break the horizon light; plumes of smoke from both concrete and flesh alike fill the air; and the odor of toxins fills the landscape of quaint farmland. The inches of glass and plastic that separated me from the vision of the bright inferno was thick but not opaque. Though if one were to move their gaze slightly, that movement could erupt the wall’s static neon blue, green, and purple, and the image of death hangs onto the screen.

That stark image of that establishment burning down hangs in my mind as only a few hours had passed before a ring from the landline thundered in my apartment. The pale yellow phone tremors with each trill of its musical tune. When I picked up that phone, it was from an old colleague of mine. As if I could smell the fresh smoke, from the rasp in his voice as he begged for my assistance. Dr. William Perry’s voice was heavy with the burden of trauma and true grief as he uttered in his smokey voice: “You need to come down to Waco.”

Perry wasn’t one to ask for help, not even from one of his closest peers, but from echoes and slight hesitation in his deep bass voice, this wasn’t something I had time to waive my decision on. I ran as fast as my new Ford Taurus could’ve taken me. As the wheels of my blue vehicle turned and peddled across the smooth and sometimes jagged highway and streets of this

state, the wheels of my brain may have been going faster. Though Perry hadn't told me the specifics, we as child psychiatrists knew if someone, especially a peer of yours, asks for help, you don't have time to hesitate. We aren't the ones saving the children out of the broken homes and houses that they've been trapped under; we don't spend hours investigating a trail of clues to find a child stolen off the streets; more notably, we don't fix their problems. Psychiatry isn't about the therapists and doctors taking your mental issues and diagnosing them with a cure. There is no cure--simply, there is just a coping mechanism we design to protect our patients. We don't cure the brain, but simply allow it to function more healthily. The graphic image of Malcolm McDowell is bound by white straps as his eyes are peeled open while a doctor administers meditation still looms over society. Because of this, we, medical professionals in the field of psychology, have had to clear up the stigma and prejudice with people with actual polarizing problems that have very few coping mechanisms that we've discovered.

By the time the wheels of my car had consumed its fill of the industrial highway and moved on to the quant and hilly roads of farmland, I reached Methodists Children's Home in Waco. The car screeched to a complete stop in front of the red brick establishment with polished greenery surrounding the lonesome building. Though I had parked the car, my brain was still running along that highway of possibilities that ran far as the eye can see in my mind. Perry strolled out of the home with blue and purple bags latched underneath his eyes, his face sunken in with the loss of liveliness, and clothes loosely tapered to his lanky body and moving in response to the calm winds of Waco

With the muttered greeting as he opened the door for me, the devastation had an odor that still lingers heavily around me. Immediately, the silence wrapped around me in an icy embrace that crawled its way into my bones. Nurses donned in pastels paraded around children in slow steps, taking each one as if there was a bomb under each splinter of wood on the floorboards. A group of children huddled together, all with blonde curly hair huddled together with their hands locked into one another as they glared at me - except for one. A girl, no younger than at least ten, kept her eyes down and simply breathed rather than exert her energy for the intruder.

A loud smack of plastic met the wall a few feet from me as a yell of fury and rage erupted, "I want Father!!!"

A child - no older than eight - with matted brown hair and brown eyes that spoke of great distress was immediately rushed by a flurry of pastels that raced by me and was wrapped in a

cloak of stress that executed these women. The child flung another plastic toy aiming for the nurses and was able to get hit by a woman in a lavender cardigan with a cream blouse right in the head. Blood flowed from scratch and started to drip along the woman's forehead. However, she didn't notice or show if it hurt or not as she continued her march and clutched the child in her arms. The dark shadows of wrath masked the oath of this child and enraptured its influence over the child's voice as it screamed for help, "Father!!! Where is Father!!! I want Father!!!"

Tears flowed down the red cheeks of the child's face in a fountain, but only a shine of one tear appeared on the nurse of the lander's cheek. I felt the touch of my old friend's palm greet my shoulders as his fingers lightly squeezed. No words needed to be spoken between us as these children were not only traumatized, but they weren't even children any more. These were husks of youthfulness, like the last flower in bloom finally detaching itself from hope to live another day as cold begins to settle into its roots.

One of these last flowers sat in front of me now. Her petals began to unfurl around her and I knew she couldn't understand or care why I was trying to bring warmth back into her life. The clock ticks away our one-hour session and after another 16 ticks, I simply say, "Faith."

Not a word breaks the barrier of her thin lips, but only her breath begins to grow more irregular, and this is the only sign of a soul I can register from her.

"Do you know why you're here, Faith?"

Finally, a deep exhale of frustration emerges from this little girl and my heart skips a beat as I hold my breath as the anticipation clings to my lungs.

"Because the bad guys won."

I have to wrangle my breath like a wild horse and I have a piece of thread as a lasso. I try to keep my breath in a *lento* rhythm because Faith has not said a word to anybody but only speaks in nods and one-words. Perry said she has not said a word since she was rescued over three weeks ago. Many of the nurses thought she was mute, but I could see her struggle not to explain her feelings in challenge to her sibling's feelings.

"What do you mean by that, Faith?" I questioned.

Her blonde curls shake a bit almost as if she is trying to catch her breath in the sea of the trauma she's endured. *We're back here...again.* I take my own inhale and exhale, hoping to catch her head bobbing over the water and help her up.

"Bad people hurt Father." her rasp breaks through the white foam of the sea.

Recollecting on how the child a couple of weeks ago, with dark hair and even darker eyes, claimed to be missing his father. But the thing was, there was no informality when they spoke about their father. They lacked the comfort of claiming that parental figure they keep claiming to, no “my” father - simply father.

“Who’s your father, Faith?” I gave inquisitive guidance and curiosity about my thoughts.

“No. They were dogs!!!” Lightning strikes the sea and electricity begins to sizzle as the curls sway to see her emerald eyes meet mine. “She was a dirty dog!!! He was a disgusting, filthy dog!!!”

Soon enough, the sea drowns her and begins to spill over her jewel eyes and start streaming over her cheeks. Fevered tremors race through her feeble frame as her body begins to pale. Quickly, there was a teddy bear that the patient before Faith had left and I snatched it from its place of rest and I placed it on her side of the table. All of the instinct to hold this girl in my arms fought the logical side of my brain with the fury of a welterweight boxer in the first round. Her sobs become so fierce, they become silent. Nothing but erratic and sharp breathing Her arms extends to entrap the soft stuffed animal and clutch it to her abdomen as her sobs come back down the octaves and the tears begin to slowly seize to a stop.

We had only been in session for twenty minutes and this little girl was continuing to break in front of me. Pieces of her lit soul begin to dim as a cold wind travels through her and the light begins to push and pull only briefly flickering to keep the soul light alive. From what I could tell, her soul had once been alright with this Father she keeps referring to and he was the one who fought off any darkness as a father would. Now that he’s gone, the dark begins to not fear this bright soul any longer and slowly begins to tease the soul’s will to live without the fighter anymore.

A solemn scratching voice that tears at the silence that had built once again, Faith breaks through with haunting words, “I want him.”

*Him...if it's not her father... who could it-*

“I love him.”

*No.*

“I love Father.”

*It's not, please do not let it be.*

“I love David.”

And there it goes. The realization hits me square in the goddamn chest. Now, it's my turn to struggle with my breath. That thing was not this girl's father, he was the "Father" of the Waco Branch Davidians. The reincarnation of King David, the messiah sent by God himself. This thirteen-year-old girl loved a man who was a liar and a thief. He wasn't fighting the darkness in her soul, he created the darkness and coned his way into her heart. He stole her dreams and hopes of being anything without him. I can't give up on her. I cannot break his inky talons away from her soul, but only allow her to break them off, one by one, if that's what it takes to see a smile from such a young girl. Though it hit me hard the damage inflicted on Faith, there was no way I was leaving this girl as he had and not giving her a chance to have the right to breathe life rather than fiction.

## Session 113: Saturation

8/2/1996

“Hello, Faith.”

“Hello, Dr. Jacobson.”

The once blonde curls have now faded to a light cedar brown at the roots with hints of youthful fair hair growing out at the end. The once mute child has developed into a young woman who has taken silence as an ally, but not a close companion in trusted quarters. Her eyes choose not to meet mine many times, but I have understood that those pale walls can be as dark as midnight and can swallow a person whole in its confinement. Though it took a while, Perry and I have realized that taking the children out for walks in nature and giving them all the freedom we can afford on this immense acreage has an impact on the kids. Like many of the children, they have begun to exit out of the hate and violence that they wielded after the siege and have turned over to look into ways of truly grieving their losses. Faith, for one, has begun to refer to David Koresh simply as David rather than the great messiah Father. As well, she’s begun to mature in a way that makes her become her creature rather than another body for David Koresh to have played with.

“How was Jilly?” Faith breaks the calm sounds of winds fluttering and leaves shivering in response.

“She’s your sister, but she is also my patient which means I cannot disclose that type of stuff to you, Faith.” I chuckle lightly at her inquisition.

“I was simply trying to create conversation, Doctor.” A blush creeps over her neck and face.

I quickly reassure her, “Well this is about you, Faith. There’s no need to talk if you don’t want to.” I smile, “I needed to get a walk in anyways.”

The perfect autumn weather has set in over the property and in my office, and I don’t see any rays of sunshine greet my hollow bland office. By the time I get to leave the building, dusk has already breached and night begins to drift over the sky.

We walk a few more paces before she engages in conversation again, “I had a dream last night.” I remain silent as she insists, “Well, I am not sure if it was a dream.”

“A nightmare, perhaps?”

“It wasn’t a pleasant dream, but it felt too familiar...” Faith begins to stutter, “I-I think it may have been a memory.”

*Alright, Faith. Keep going...*

“Oh? Alright, how would you describe this dream or memory?” This walk and repeated sessions over these last years have been about putting gas in the tank of her mind and trying to rev the engine hoping to hear the engine roar. Over the last couple of weeks, these dreams have had a large frequency in mentions in our sessions and the more she shares, the more can be resolved as a collective rather than on her lonesome which is extremely destructive to someone in her state.

Faith begins, “I mean, the last couple I have had seemed to be stuff I can relate to. It feels as if they aren’t fictional and fantastical as one might hope dreams may be, but the biggest thing is, I don’t remember my dreams when I wake up.” She begins to tell me about her dream.

*So, the dream usually begins with me sitting on my bed in our room. Jilly’s bed was right beside mine, my friend Sara was in front of me, then Sara’s sister, Amy, was in front of Jilly’s. Jilly, Amy, and I were all giggling about something - I really can’t remember what it was about - but I remember how good it was to laugh. Jilly’s smile was toothy and irregular; Amy’s laugh was cute and meek like a mouse, and mine was so boisterous I had to hold my hand over my mouth in an attempt to mute them. Sara was the only one whose laugh didn’t echo in that room. She sat there with tear-stained cheeks, and she wasn’t sad, but she looked hurt, like a wounded puppy. My hand muffled any laughter that slowed out of my mouth as Jilly and Amy realized what I had been seeing.*

*“Sara, what’s wrong?” Amy urged her sister.*

*“Nothing - it’s just I hadn’t cleaned off the tables enough and Father wasn’t too happy with that.” Tears slid down her cheeks in silent pain.*

*Jill exclaimed in empathy, “Oh no...the handler?”*

*Sara nodded her head and Jilly swarmed her as Amy and I watched with stunned eyes. Sara was only a few months younger than me, but I never knew her to be lazy or anything ever in our lives, let alone forgetful. This immediately struck me as odd.*

*I saw Jilly’s eyes briefly glisten and shine in the dim lights in the room. I had heard about the handler, but I had never seen it before with my own eyes. Jilly couldn’t sit for a few days when she had been dealt with by Father after she had skimmed on one of her chores. I wasn’t*

*allowed to talk to her either as Father told me to, it was very sad for both of us. But like Sara, Jilly wasn't one to forget or be lazy so it must've been an off-day for both of them or something.*

*All of the sudden, the door that was cracked open slightly began to creak and groan as heavy footsteps slapped against the wooden floors. With his beautiful jagged smile in disarray and his umber mullet slightly out of its social order with a smudge displayed on his glasses, Father wasn't happy.*

*"Jilly, baby...step away from her." His voice is soft but stiff with command.*

*As she should, my little sister stepped away from the hurt Sara. His slightly shielded eyes followed Jilly as she sat in her bed and her skirt raised slightly to reveal the damage from the handler on the back of her legs. A slight hint of happiness may briefly touch his lips and was only enhanced when Father saw me - the old one.*

*"Hey, little Faith."*

*A blush covered me from ears to toes, "Hi Father."*

*His teeth show as his grin deepens, "Have you done your prayers?"*

*"Yes, Father."*

*"Good. Have you completed your chores?"*

*Almost seeming bored, "Of course, Father. I made sure to clean the baseboards too!" I exclaimed, "It's important to have a clean house for you as the son of God."*

*"That is right, little one, but God has many sons," Father reaches out and clutches my chin in his big callused hands, "But better, he has daughters like you to serve his sons."*

*He squeezed my chin slightly with his pointer finger and his thumb making me giggle. "I am happy one of my little girls is obedient and perfect." He digs at Sara with his voice but puts our foreheads together as he lets out one of his sweet laughs. "So obedient." He whispers to me.*

*He leans in for a moment only to release himself as he reaches into his back pocket and reveals a little star, "A gift to you, little one."*

*I squeal in excitement, "For me?"*

*"Of course, my Faith. You've been a very good girl and I think it's time you should be rewarded for that." He reveals the star to be a pin and he attaches it to the brim of my cardigan right above my heart.*

*After he places it on me, his hands and eye linger to where that star catches the light and lets his hand hover, and slowly leaves his warmth crawling on my chest.*



*“I have to go now, little one.” Father leans into me and places a sweet kiss on my red cheek, but quickly otters to me to hear, “but I’ll be back for you, Faith.” His smoke-filled breath fans over my face and I almost breathed it in to remember that he truly does exist.*

*He steps away from me and movies on to pat Amy on the head in which she lets out her sweet giggle at Father’s touch. Sara skimmers away from him like a cockroach under the light. Jill keeps her head down never to dare meet his glorious gaze. Father leaves our room and I am so glad he did because as soon as he escaped my sight I immediately pounced on Jill, “Look! I got a star, Jill! I’m now his! Jill! Can you believe it?”*

*I guess my squeals seemed to dampen any chance of somberness that may have begun to pool around me, but I was floating on Father’s great words that left me breathless.*

*“...I was so happy...so happy.”*

Our pace had seemed to slow, almost to a complete stop. We had almost breached our entire circuit around the plot around the house’s wooden area and moved closer to the roads. Faith’s voice choked up and almost ceased to exist as the notes of sorrow began to disrupt the symphony of nature around us. Faith’s right hand touched that same spot where the star rested at one point. I remembered when I saw those star pins on some of those little girls and expressed my curiosity to Dr. Perry.

*We were sitting on the bench in the gazebo a hundred yards from the house and sharing a smoke. In between puffs, I remembered the star pins on the girls, one including Faith, but the fact that none of the boys had them. “Perry, did we give those stars to those girls?”*

*“No, Jacobson. Koresh did that.” Anger came into full view on his face and irritation coated his voice so thickly. He pulled a long draft of smoke into his lungs. “That fucker did that to girls he deemed to be ready to be wives and ready for wifely duties. They were no little that eleven and twelve years old.”*

*“Fucking hell...” I exclaimed into the darkness and pulled a long drag of nicotine into my body, trying to cover the bile farming in the back of my throat. It didn’t work and I pulled the cigarette out of my mouth quickly to rush over the banister of the gazebo and hurl.*

*Perry continued, “He was a monster to those children. The girls were seen as his toys and the boys were seen as little soldiers for him to fight with.”*

*The bile threatened to boil over again, but I managed to choke it back down. Perry began to shuffle behind me and stopped as his blue handkerchief danced in front of my eyes. I reached out with a shaky hand and grabbed it and wiped the bits of vomit that stuck to my chin.*

*"I know man...I know."*

"Faith, when did this happen?" I tried for a moment to fight against the sorrowful tsunami that was bound to break for her.

"I had just turned twelve years old, Dr. Jacobson. I thought it to be my birthday gift or something. It turned into a series of nightmares, Doctor, you know why?"

"No, Faith." I could feel the tide beginning to turn.

"That night, Fa-" She stopped herself, "David and I got married, and an hour after that, we- he-he-" The ocean of heartbreak swirled into a tsunami and begin to fill her body with fierce violence that caused her to shake and son as she turned into my arms and hold on tightly.

In violent and muffled whispers as I could feel her tears soaking my jacket, "Three days after that - the military came. I thought it was a sign that I wasn't a good enough wife to him and I was the reason why our peace on Earth had come to an end."

Rather than remaining at a doctoral distance from a parent emotionally, I felt my arms lightly embrace her as my motherly instincts took over, "No, Faith...no, no, no, no..."

Her sobs only further escalated

With the rush of travel being smothered by tires and the wind breaking against steel, Faith's sobs broke only for a moment to hear a siren's song take us for a moment before all hell broke loose. An orchestra of the sweet crooning of Nancy Sinatra and the terrible timing that fate wrought on this poor child began to surround us.

*You keep samin' when you oughta be a-changin'*

*Now what's right is right but you ain't been right yet*

*These boots are made for walkin'*

*And that's just what they'll do*

*One of these days these boots are gonna walk all over you*

Faith's almost choreographed sobs that were typically routine in most of our sessions started to seize and grow immensely violent. Her small stature suddenly swelled with great power and anger as her gentle hands suddenly became fists of iron as they beat against me. I

could almost feel bruises beginning to form and I tried to hold onto her, not to let her go, but Faith's adrenaline shot through her arms and into her fist that connected to my chin, shocking me into trying to protect myself. I cursed as my lip began to bleed from my teeth breaking through the skin of my lip, and cursed again once I saw Faith fleeing from my arms and running into the woods.

Faith was escaping me as Koresh taught her to, the once shy shadows that had grown to fear Faith's hope now weren't scared of anything anymore. I began to run after her with all the might that I could muster hoping to not let Faith out of my sight, but I could only see a few flashes of wisps of her hair being caught up in the wind.

*Faith...don't go....*

**Session: 239: Space**

**3/23/2019**

*It's been a while, Faith.*

I look down at my mail and in a plain white envelope, a name all too familiar appears in swooping letters, "Faith Letterson." I had never had another Faith in practice as a patient, but I never had her last name. I look beneath the name to notice the address, "Pittsburg, P.A." Definitely different than Texas, was my only thought.

With the rest of my postage forgotten, I slip into my black leather chair, forgetting about the perspiration that begins to sink in with my overcoat still on me. I pull out my letter knife and carefully split the seam of glue and paper to reveal notebook paper covered with lines and dots in blue ink.

*Dear Dr. Jacobson,*

*It's been a while, I understand that, but like you, I needed time away from that place and that time of my life. As you know, I had no one when I left that home. My mother was a runaway and my father's parents were dead so my siblings and I had no family. Now that I am approaching my 40th birthday soon, I was left to realize what the hell I went through. My husband, Dan, has been so careful with me for the last twelve years we've been together, but what I realized so quickly is how not normal I am. Dan grew up with his mother and stepfather, but is practically his father, he has one older sister, and they had a dog named Lucy. Dan grew up in a peaceful home, went to his sister's soccer games, and went out to the local arcade every other Saturday to go play Pac-Man with his friends. He came home to his working mother and stepfather who never yelled or hit him but would scold him real well. Dan grew up normal.*

*I had started dating Dan when I was twenty-seven years old and up until that point, I had only had a few flings, but nothing too serious. When Dan and I went out together, it felt nice. There wasn't any fakeness or persona either of us put on - more importantly, I felt safe. I felt at home with Dan and I didn't love him because he was nice, I knew I loved him because Dan was my balance and protector. He didn't force the conversation of "You were in a cult! Jee-wow! That must've been so dope! Wait- you were abused - hold on, I think my friend Jeff is calling me..." He had waited for me to talk about it, he was there to hold my hand as I told Dan about him.*

*Weirdly, I felt as though you were there too. You were there watching over me and calmly nudging me to open up at my own pace and put my guard down at a reasonable time to be in the moment with Dan talking about my past.*

*I'll admit, as soon as I turned 18, I left that house with a replica of my dust still hanging in the air like in the cartoons. That place scared the crap out of me as it was a complete 180 of what I was used to at the compound. I still get nervous when Dan doesn't like a meal I make and almost brace myself for impact; I never let my house go above 72 degrees and I filled our fireplace with cement within the first days of moving in, and I have never let my children alone with a man other than Dan in the house ever.*

*Jilly and I speak on occasion and never about our childhood. My little brothers visit sometimes, but without a beat, wake up at 5:30 every morning and simply pace around my house until I wake up, sometimes until the early afternoon. We only talk about our lives now, never before my youngest brother was 9 years old. However, we briefly mentioned how lucky we are. Out of the 41 children at that compound, we along with 16 other kids were the only ones to make it. The biggest thing is, the children that did make it out are not living. Sometimes I catch myself getting through life with that survival instinct on the wheel. My youngest brother Jared, drinks; My other brother eats; Jilly has boyfriends, and I work. I pile the work of my small business on top of everything, I participate in the P.T.A for my kids' school, I go to every freakin 'youth sports game that my kids have and I always sleep when I have to - 11:39 pm to 8:08 am. Sometimes I wake up with night terrors that Dan always wakes up to and soothes me back to sleep. I truly think his ghost comes by at night and lies beside me just to see how much I would squirm and cry.*

*It's been 28 years since that damned siege and I can't survive without him. I have built my life on repressing my trauma and working so hard to get those first 11 years of my life that I can't imagine my life without them. But there's no way I could live with him. I do catch myself wiping down the baseboards with vigor, but I think if he were to physically appear as promised, there'd be a doubt that I would beat the shit out of him. Honestly, it would either be me or Dan beating the crap out of him, but either way, he'd be done, never gone, but dealt with in some way that I think I could close him up and file him far away from me and my family.*

*I don't know if this is what your treatment was supposed to be about, but I think I am okay as I can try to be. I think you are what has helped me through the years. I haven't forgotten*

*you, but I want to try to move away from being that 11-year-old girl who had been a wife to a raping madman; a traumatized teenager terrified of human contact, and a woman in a girl's body. I want to be my person without David, without that compound, without that house, without Waco...*

*Thank you for your patience and care for me and my siblings, but I think it's time we grow up together, not apart.*

*Much luck,*

*Faith Letterson*

Now, it was my turn to cry. I'm sitting in my office at 8:30 in the morning, crying over pieces of paper bearing such sweet and conquering sentiments. I was crying over how Faith was no longer in that sea flailing her arms around and waiting for David to save her. I was sobbing for how Faith was no longer a flicker in a damp cave. I was weeping over how Faith was willing to fight her shadows with a sword of flames. I was babbling over how Faith had finally found love for herself and others after Waco. I must admit, I catch myself saying aloud, "Without Waco." I realized that my patient was my way of therapy, that we together faced our fears and that it's time to realize we can be more than Waco and without that man deemed the supposed Messiah.

He is never truly gone, but we cannot give him any more of our life for our lives are ready to live

*It's time...*