

WHITE SUPREMACIST

HOW MY HUSBAND WENT DOWN THE
RABBIT HOLE OF NEO-NAZISM



hen I woke up that Wednesday, flicked on my phone and read the local news raging like a California brushfire across my Facebook feed, my heart sank. Eugene Antifa had unmasked a wolf among us. Bethany Sherman — local cannabinoid queen, the business darling of the local media, founder, owner and CEO of OG Analytical — was, and in fact still is, a white nationalist.

My partner lay back in bed, incredulous. An acquaintance of Sherman, he could barely believe that someone who frequented the same progressive circles, who was a leader and something of a socialite in the hippy-dippy biosphere of the Whiteaker community had crossed city lines to bake swastika-styled cookies for the likes of a white supremacist with the Twitter handle titled @GenocideJimmy.

Sherman's friends and acquaintances, including her own business partner, chemist Rodger Voelker, also reeled with shock. The questions had yet to be asked, but they simmered in everyone's subconscious: How and when did Sherman morph into a proud white nationalist Mommy? Had she always been one? How had this facet — this glaringly huge and horrible aspect — of her identity escaped the notice of friends and family, not least of all her co-workers and co-owners?

Bethany Sherman had laughed among us, hosted parties in the stronghold of the far-left anarchic neighborhood, and tested the medical efficacy of cannabis for a wealth of Eugene people hailing from all shades of the rainbow: black, brown, white, queer, Latino, Jewish, cis and straight.

Not once did anyone suspect that she had fed and supplied the hateful rally on April 24, 2017, where her boyfriend, Matthew Combs, threw a *sieg heil* from behind the safety of a balaclava.

I wished I shared in the collective shock that was shaking everyone else to the core. As I surveyed the photos of her boyfriend with his outstretched arm raised high, eyes defiant, a familiar feeling — a feeling of dread laced with shame and anxiety — settled in my stomach.

The last time I had seen a *sieg heil* performed by a real person, I was lying on the carpet in my bedroom. The person performing the salute was my husband. He'd pinned me to the floor and planted his foot on the naked space between my breasts and belly. Chest jutting, chin erect, shoulders rolled back to attention, he held his right arm above me and uttered the words "*Deus volt*" (Latin for "God wills it") before striding out of the room in triumph.

I curled up on the floor shivering, trying to understand what just occurred: My husband had forced me to the ground and performed a hate symbol over my naked body.

His salute was not ironic. I'm Jewish. And after years of denial, reality came crashing down. My then-husband of six years was a Nazi sympathizer.

UNLIKE BETHANY SHERMAN, MY EX-HUSBAND'S LOVE AFFAIR with "white identitarianism" — aka Nazism — had been in plain sight all along. How many times had he slung the word "kike" at me from the across the house? At first the slur was a joke, then a tease and, finally, a taunt. His rants escalated: "You Jews are running the show," and "Ever notice all big banks are run by the Jews?"

Finally he skipped his way into full-blown denial: He was convinced Adolph Hitler was trying to protect the German people from avaricious banking monopolies, and that "six million" was an imaginary death toll concocted by a cabal of Christ-killing Semites who wanted to trigger the Apocalypse.

"Hitler wanted Germany to be for Germans," he told me, before explaining that "concentration camps were just holding centers until they [the Jews] could be relocated to Palestine." The gas chambers didn't exist, my husband assured me, and he proceeded to show me "proof" in the form of photos he'd snipped from the internet.

I know what you're asking: How could I have let my marriage go so far and yet remain blind to the fact that my husband had fallen prey to neo-Nazi rhetoric? How did he become a Nazi?

All these questions and more were hurled at me from across the dining tables of restaurants and cafes as I attempted to date in the aftermath of our divorce. Hours of therapy didn't help explain away his behavior, which was borderline insane.

Initially determined to piece together the real reason why America was "no longer great," my ex-husband, armed with a degree in economics, embroiled himself in the big-banking Bilderberg conspiracies that then segued into the New World Order takeover tales peddled by alt-right talking heads like Alex Jones.

While I prepared a Seder brisket in the other room, my ex imbibed alt-right news sources like *Breitbart* before they were "cool." Russian bots weren't to blame for his intellectual compromise: He was more than capable of dredging up obscure doomsday theories on his own. His fascination with pre-war Germany took on a spiritual tone as his research began to delve into the occult side of Nazism.