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There are two kinds of Nazis: the ones who show up at rallies and have more in common with a criminal gang than a political party, and the other kind, the pseudo-intellectual, psycho-spiritual elite who attempt to justify their claims of supremacy through an alchemic fusion of racial evolution and occult “science.”

My ex was not in love with Hitler. The brand of Aryanism to which he subscribed was more oblique than the beliefs of the men who showed up in Springfield on Genocide Jimmy’s lawn. Goebbels, Evola, Blavatsky, Henry Ford, Charles Manson and even Martin Luther were thinkers who radicalized my then-husband, both philosophically and spiritually. The man was beyond experimental. He was seeking something and, in so doing, floundering through the dark abyss that is the deep web.

On the surface, my ex-husband was a paragon of civic virtue, an upstanding Eugene resident seemingly immune to the radical potholes of far-flung ideologies espoused by racial theosophists. We’d met as children, grew apart as teens and rekindled our high-school romance amid a flurry of emails that sprang between us while he served in Iraq.

Although we married only a few months into our correspondence, we wouldn’t actually live together until his discharge from the military in 2012. Up until then, everything I knew about my husband barely scratched the surface of his resume.

Similar to Bethany Sherman, he was educated, successful and smart. Born and bred on the SoCal coast and commissioned straight out of West Point, he was removed from economic circumstances that might give rise to the pejorative stereotype of an “ignorant” redneck.

During the day he worked as an unassuming analyst in downtown Eugene; by night he completed his master’s degree through UC Berkeley’s online campus. He’d been to Temple Beth Israel and Ahavas Torah, celebrated Seders, lit up the menorah with my grandparents and donned a *kippah* now and then.

He remarried me underneath *chuppah* and signed a *ketubah*, which stipulated that our children would be raised in the Jewish faith. He even allowed me to pick an apartment on the edge of south Eugene so that I could walk to the nearest synagogue on Shabbat.

Nothing in our courtship had alerted me to the fact that he would fall prey to a pile of manuscripts written by dead

men on the wrong side of history. Once we settled into married life, my husband’s disillusionment with the status quo began to surface.

In the wake of his military service he sought answers. What really precipitated the Iraq invasion? Why were soldiers endlessly sacrificed in a war that took place halfway around the world? Where conventional answers failed to provide comfort, alt-right conspiracies staved off his sense of helplessness. And white supremacy gave more than mere answers: It imbued a sense of meaning.

One some level, he went insane. Like a sleeper agent, he led a double life in which he said one thing but lived another. Racists are like misogynists — they don’t realize that they are the assholes in the room.

The misogynist claims that he’s not sexist — after all, he’s got a mom and daughters (strangely, wives and girlfriends are never rounded up as references against sexism). With all of these social attachments to women, how can a sexist be a sexist when he loves *his* women so?

According to a racist, they can’t be racists because of their proximity to people “of color.” Like Bethany Sherman — who pointed to her associations with diverse peoples as proof she could hold hands with Nazism and still maintain an equitable magnanimity to others, especially those who patronized her business — my ex-husband unflappably maintained that he was neither a racist nor an anti-Semite. He was just a “white identitarian” who wanted rights for other whites like him.

In his ideal world, there were white communities for white kids and all-black boroughs for blacks. Jews would have a Jewish community where they could raise families, far away from everyone else, ad nauseam. He wasn’t a racist, he told me, he was a “cultural preservationist.” He wanted the colors of the rainbow to remain unique and distinct, and to make sure they didn’t bleed together.

After all, my ex reasoned, he was an older brother to a set of adopted orphans from West Africa, so how could he possibly be racist? “They have lower IQs because they’re African,” he clinically explained to me one evening after I tucked his siblings into bed. “It’s genetically been proven blacks aren’t as smart.”

It was precisely that idea in and of itself that made him a racist.

I wish I could say that I didn’t see his affair with Nazism

any more than I noticed the affair he later had with a co-worker. I wish I could say that I was as oblivious to the one fact as I was to the other. I can’t.

Like a frog in a frying pan I stayed in the simmering water until it boiled over, turning my eye away from the obviousness of his habits, subtle and slow growing at first — hours upon hours frittered away on video games that spilled over into real life, chat rooms and gamer boards where he brushed shoulders with the seedy side of Reddit subforums and wound up on sites like 4Chan and 8Chan, embroiled in a conspiratorial rage that absconded with his good sense.

His descent into Nazism was a slow slide, and I almost got sucked into the undertow. If he hadn’t constantly reminded me that I was Jewish, I wonder if I might have gone along with his rhetoric and woken up one day an anti-Semite myself.

HE TRIED TO RED PILL ME. That’s what they call it: “red pilling your woman.” A reference from the Wachowski Brothers’ cult series *The Matrix*, “red pilling” is a term as obnoxious as it is paradoxical. To take the red pill implies that you’re finally manning up to reality and swallowing the truth with a capital T.

But, in recent years, red pilling has become synonymous with gaslighting the unsuspecting political opposition (in most cases, a woman) to your point of view. Red pilling is nefarious because it takes advantage of the preexisting proximity in the relationship — in my case, the trust a wife places in her husband and vice versa — and uses it as a springboard to introduce radical ideas that the victim would never entertain.

The absurdity of a Jewish woman, the grandchild of a man who narrowly escaped Nazi clutches by hiding on a boat bound for Argentina, siding with a neo-white supremacists’ version of history and denying that Hitler had any ill will towards the Jews, let alone ovens with which to bake their bodies, is a goal as difficult as it is outlandish to attain. Yet my ex-husband tried to do just that.

In coming years, psychologists will discover that the age-old adage “you are what you eat” will morph into the unassailable truth that your beliefs are determined by your browser’s search engine. Months after the divorce, I was still mystified how my smart, SoCal ex had stumbled into Nazism.