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UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

GRAVITY OF ABUSE

MAY 30 '12

LEWIS

A woman, a man, a child: A family in crisis



Photo by Kate Baldwin

Brandy Sweeney dreams of a better life. Then she meets Richard Duncan. Together, they plan for a future, one with a family. But no matter where they travel — from Boise, Idaho, to south Seattle, from a one-man tent to a two-bedroom apartment — substance abuse, poverty and domestic violence press down on their lives. After a dangerous altercation causes Brandy to flee Richard with their infant son, Ian, she makes a decision: She'll face her own fears to keep herself and her child safe.

"Gravity of Abuse" tells their story. It begins on Page 5

May 9: Chapter One
HONEYMOON PHASE
Brandy and Richard battle substance abuse and confront their relationship as they move from Boise to south Seattle.

May 16: Chapter Two
NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH
A motel provides a not-so-safe haven as pregnancy and violence complicates Brandy and Richard's relationship.

May 23: Chapter Three
NO CONTACT
A court order demands Brandy and Richard, new parents, must stay apart. But the pair reunites — with violent results.

May 30: Chapter Four
THREE STRIKES
An arrest for assault sends Richard to jail and places Brandy on the witness stand. Will the jury find him guilty?



This is the first installment in the four-part series "Gravity of Abuse," which examines how domestic violence and substance abuse affect the lives of a family and the people around them. The subsequent installments will run on May 16, May 23 and May 30.

Brandy Sweeney, left, met Richard Duncan outside of a drop-in center for homeless people in Boise, Idaho, in December 2008. Within weeks, the relationship turned abusive.

GRAVITY OF ABUSE

On a south Seattle street, a tale of domestic violence unfolds

By ROSETTE ROYALE | Assistant Editor

Photography by KATE BALDWIN

Anywhere. He could be anywhere.

Around the corner of the apartment building where they live. Across the street at the construction site where he works. At the nearby bar where he sometimes goes for a beer. She looks around, nervous. What if he sees her?

But she can't wait. Not anymore. She tightens her grip on the baby stroller, and heads off into the night.

She has a plan: make it three blocks, to the shelter for women and children. Borrow someone's cell phone, call 911. She tried to dial the number back at the apartment, but he yanked the phone out of her hands and broke it to pieces.

She zooms the stroller down the sidewalk of South Othello Street, heading west toward Martin Luther King Jr. Way South, a busy intersection in a diverse, yet gentrifying, south Seattle neighborhood. On her right, an abandoned lot and taco truck, on her left, an unfinished luxury apartment complex. By this time of evening, heading on midnight, hardly a car drives by; the light rail station sits empty. She's all alone.

Except for her son. *Their* son. Tomorrow he'll turn seven months old. About 90 minutes ago, shortly after the

yelling and screaming drew her neighbors into the hallway, the child cried while she splashed water on her face in the bathroom of Apartment 21. Now he sits in his stroller, bundled up in a blue, fuzzy snowsuit.

In a rush, she forgot to grab her own coat. Not that she minds. She barely feels the chilly spring air rushing over the red mark on her throat.

But she can feel her right cheek throb. In the bathroom mirror, she saw the knot, the swelling, the purplish-maroon hematoma that formed under her eye. But it's weird. Because when he hit her, she couldn't really feel it. It was like she lost consciousness ... Did she? Did she black out?

Outside, she hustles the stroller down the sidewalk. Streetlights cast an orange halogen glow, throw shadows that pile up under bushes, shadows large enough to hide a grown man. If only she knew where he went when he left the apartment.

Nearly 16 months ago when she met him, back in Idaho, she had wanted to change her life. He'd told her the same. They would do it, together. But things got in the way. The poverty, the drug use, the drinking, the yelling, the fighting, the

GRAVITY OF ABUSE

GRAVITY, Continued from Page 5

fists, the fear — all of it clouded their vision. All of it weighed on their lives.

And other lives as well. The best friend. The neighbor. The roommate. At some point, each witnessed parts of their turbulent relationship. People in close contact will feel transformed by the experience of violence.

But none more so than the woman who flees the relationship's fury: Brandy Sweeney, 28, racing a stroller down a sidewalk on April 29, 2010.

It's taken her some time, since each abusive relationship exerts a unique gravitational pull. Not only does it draw in the abused and the abuser, it also attracts the attention of those closest to the couple.

Due to under-reporting, the true number of people caught in abusive relationships is unknown. The Centers for Disease Control estimates 1.3 million women a year in the U.S. experience some type of physical assault by a partner. Not every woman survives.

But for the woman who pulls free, aided by those around her and her own ingenuity, she may find, waiting on the other side, a peace that seemed impossible when the weight of the relationship pressed down upon her. That's what Brandy seeks now — to end the gravity of abuse.

So she rushes to the shelter. She can see the building up ahead, illuminated, a beacon several hundred yards away. A light in a city where she hopes to find a better, peaceful life.



Morgan Price, left, and Brandy Sweeney met in early 2004 in the East Boise Community Work Center, a program run by the Idaho Department of Correction. Both had been arrested for crimes related to meth use.



Watch Brandy and her friends talk about meth use in Idaho. Visit rosetterroyale.com

Chapter One

HONEYMOON PHASE

Treasure Valley

On a brisk, winter morning in mid-December 2008, Brandy Sweeney, 26, stepped off a Greyhound in downtown Boise, Idaho, looking for an emergency shelter for women and children called City Light. Boise lay four hours from her hometown, Pocatello, a place she hadn't seen in months. But simply being in Idaho opened up a grab bag of emotions tied to two words: "meth" and "Skye."

The first tie happened by accident. She'd had too much to drink at a party, and, when she wasn't throwing up, she was close to passing out. Someone offered her a line of crystals and said, "Here, do this, you'll feel better. Brandy snorted. "And it was one extreme to the next," she recalls. Her stomach settled, her mind cleared. So she kept drinking. She was 14.

From that point on, Brandy snorted and smoked meth whenever it came around, and the drug, easily "cooked" in neighborhood meth labs, turned up on a regular basis in rural Pocatello. But snorting and smoking get old, so she switched to needles, injecting into veins in her arm. The off-white crystals made Brandy's teenage troubles seem to disappear. For a while, anyway. But meth, which stimulates production of a neurotransmitter called dopamine, ignites the brain's reward center. Rushes

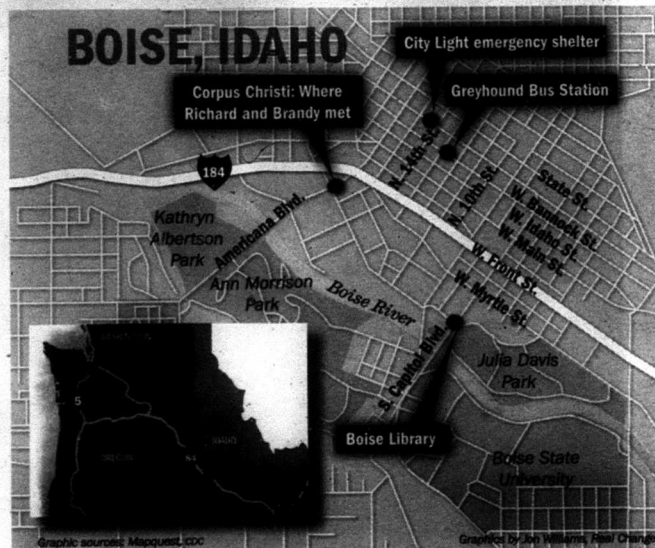
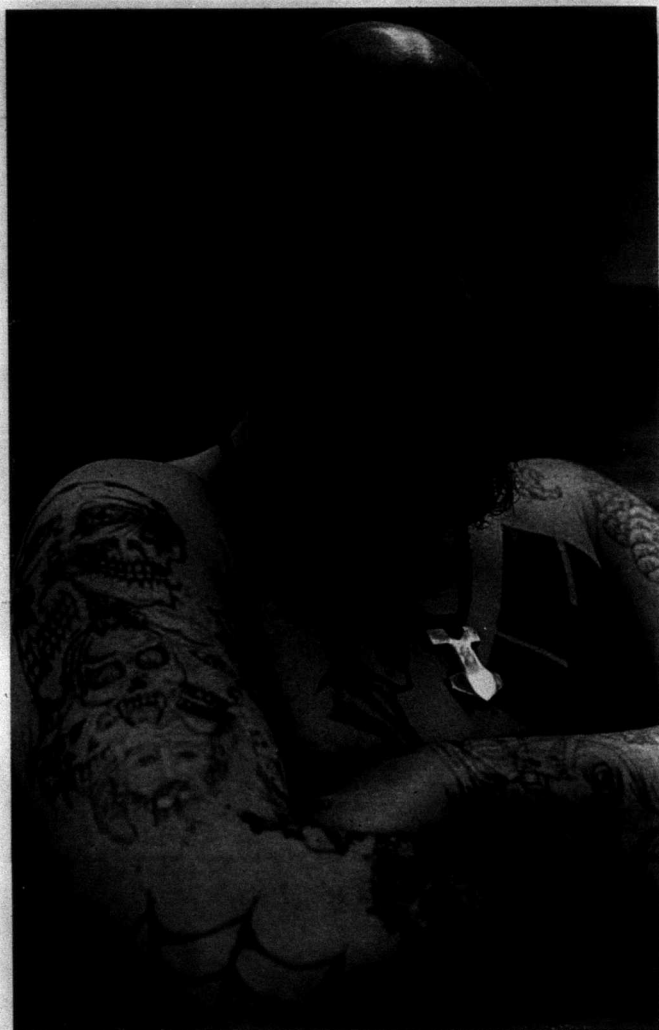
of euphoria and invincibility result, but they come with a cost: the likelihood of long-term addiction.

The second tie occurred when Brandy developed a delirious fever. Her mother rushed her to the hospital, where she underwent an examination. Brandy listened to the results. "I was pregnant." Eight months later, she gave birth to a daughter, Tyranny Skye. Brandy was 19.

A young mother, Brandy loved her child, caring for her the best she could. But meth — it haunted her with its siren song. As Brandy gave in to its addictive call, her mother and brother obtained joint custody of Skye. When Brandy tried to visit, her mother wouldn't have it. She left food on the porch, locked the door, drew the blinds. Humiliated, Brandy stopped visiting the house.

Her visits became impossible in early 2004, when she was arrested for burglary. Paroled six months later, Brandy entered a mandated treatment program and devised a remedy for sobriety: "I need clean, sober friends." Those friends eluded her. When she started shooting meth and drinking again, she broke parole. Thirty-eight more months in prison.

Back on the streets, estranged from Skye, high on meth, Brandy knew she needed help. Fast. A friend from prison, Morgan Price, had hightailed it to Seattle

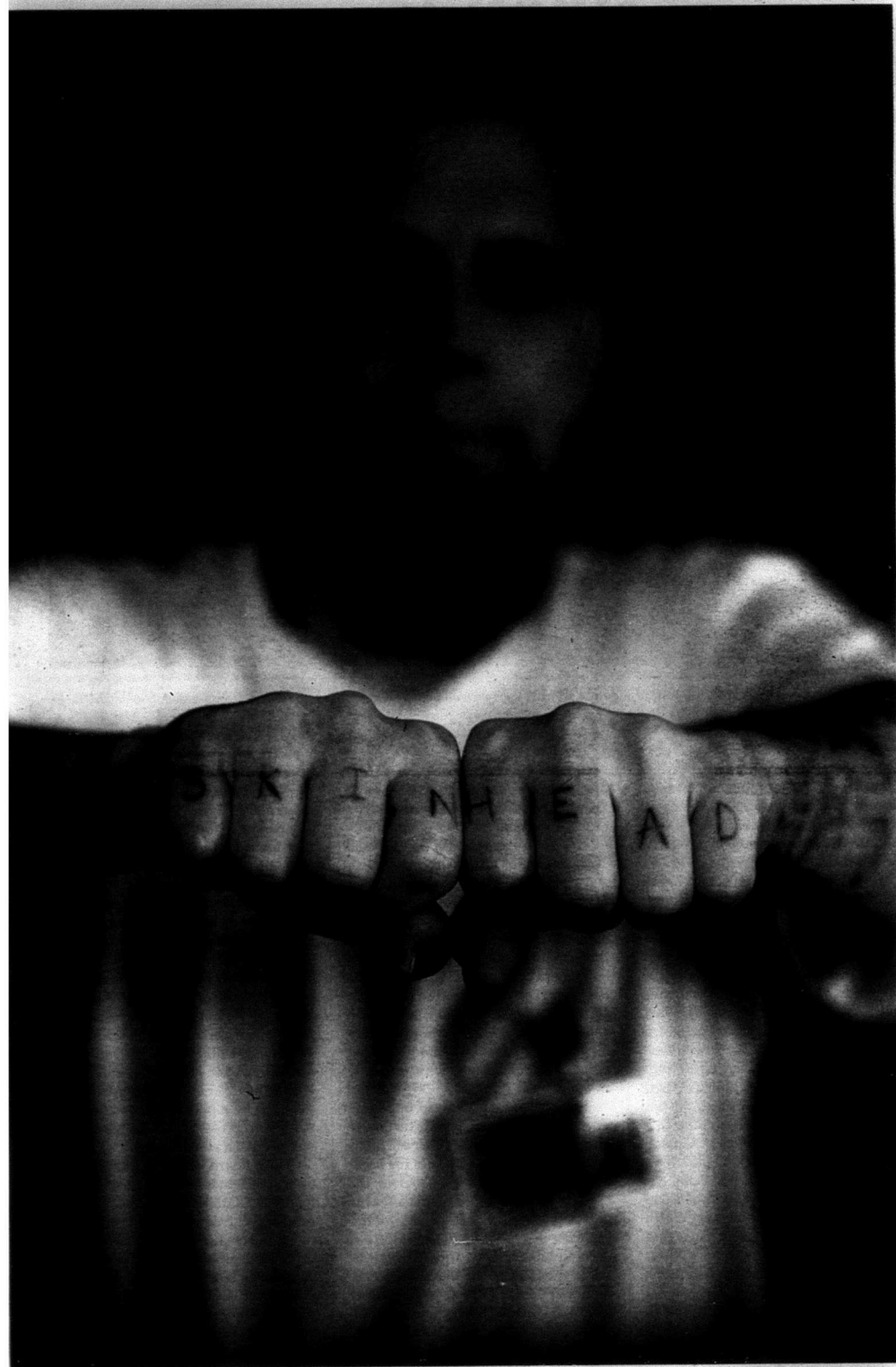


in August 2008 to kick meth and had remained clean. Maybe it would work for Brandy. Morgan bought her a bus ticket. But in the Emerald City, Brandy couldn't find her groove: After failing treatment programs and sleeping on the Seattle streets, Brandy hopped on an overnight bus bound for Boise.

Brandy consulted the map with the

address to the shelter that sits three long blocks from the bus station. She walked through the bus station's glass doors and into the cold Idaho night.

Even after years of meth, Brandy still carried an air of small-town wholesomeness. She had a plump, oval face. Deep brown eyes. Smooth lips. A cascade of auburn hair. She moved her full figure



Photos by Kate Baldwin

Richard Duncan, left and above, cycled in and out of the Nevada prison system in his 20s and 30s. Inside, he aligned with inmates who followed Odinism, a spiritual practice that honors the Norse god Odin. The Odinists in prison were part of a white supremacist group. Many of Richard's prison tattoos — a profile of Adolf Hitler, a swastika and the word "SKINHEAD" — testify to his past.

with a take-your-time gait, as though she didn't know the meaning of hurry.

City Light occupies a remodeled church. At the front desk, Brandy asked if the shelter had space. It did, a mat on the floor in a room filled with women and children. That night, she listened as women whispered, kids snored — the white noise of a place full of people with

nowhere else to go. By 8 a.m., at last exit call, all the women and children were required to go somewhere. Brandy walked out into the Idaho morning.

Boise, the state's largest city, marks the eastern fringe of an enormous flood plain called Treasure Valley. To its northeast, snow-frosted mountains. Within its borders, stands of cottonwood, maple,

sweet gum. And meandering through downtown, the Boise River.

Upon a square-mile grid of downtown streets, a small number of shelters and public spaces host Boise's homeless population. Nearly every day they trudge a circuit from drop-in center to library to shelter. Nearly every day, Brandy considered contacting Skye, but she knew her

mother wouldn't allow it.

One afternoon, Brandy wandered into the library. Homeless people sat at tables, some asleep. That's when she noticed him: shaved head, blue eyes, beard, a few tattoos. Cute and seated alone. She caught his eye. He looked back, then averted his gaze. Neither spoke. They went their separate ways.

A couple days later, Brandy stood outside a drop-in center with her cup of coffee. Homeless people huddled in the cold. Breath and steam merged. The guy from the library stood nearby. Sensing he was shy, Brandy went up to him.

Hi, Brandy said.

Hey, he said. His name was Richard, Richard Duncan, but sometimes he went by Auto. Their eyes locked.

Wanna go hang out tomorrow? Richard asked.

Sure, Brandy said.

The next morning, Brandy and Richard reconnected. Each brought along a friend, and, piling into Richard's buddy's old SUV, they went for a joy ride. They stopped for gas and stocked up on Joose, a caffeinated malt alcoholic beverage in a 23.5-oz. can, before they drove to the Boise foothills. All four tipped back cans as they gazed out over Treasure Valley. It was barely 9 a.m. Brandy had failed to find clean, sober friends.

Brandy talked with Richard. He made her laugh. She found him nice, sweet. Plus, they had things in common. He'd been released from prison in November, the month before. She'd been released in July. Richard had a teenage daughter, in Boise, but he barely knew her. Brandy had a 6-year-old daughter, in Pocatello. He told her people sometimes called him Auto because he stole cars.

As her mind absorbed information about Richard, her eyes drank in his appearance. He had a pair of small lightning bolts tattooed near his left eye. Across his upper fingers, displayed like a pair of brass knuckles, was a word: "SKIN-HEAD." Brandy's father was of Native descent, so the tattoo made her wonder. But once, two male friends who had done time in California told her that just because someone got tattoos while on the inside, it didn't mean he was a white supremacist outside. "I was just really thinking it was a prison thing," Brandy remembers.

Still, she asked him, It's not going to be a problem, me being part Native?

No, Richard said.

When his buddy left, Richard, Brandy and her friend bused back to town and bought beer. They sat near the greenbelt, the area hugging the northern banks of the Boise River. There, Brandy kissed Richard for the first time.

If you wanna back out of this, he said, that's fine.

Brandy thought it a strange thing for Richard to say. Back out? Of what? She didn't know what he meant, so she told him, No, I'm sticking with it.

As Brandy's friend visited a job center, Richard and Brandy tagged along. The pair sneaked into a bathroom together. They kissed again. Passions rose. Clothes came off.

It's a vulnerable moment, undressing in front of someone the first time, the body revealing its secrets. When Richard removed his shirt, Brandy saw more tattoos on his arms and neck. Then she saw the two on his chest.

GRAVITY OF ABUSE

An estimated 1.3 million women a year in the U.S. experience some type of physical assault by a partner

GRAVITY, Continued from Page 7

Covering most of his left pec, in blue-green ink, was an enormous swastika. On his right pec sat a likeness of — Adolf Hitler? “I was just like, ‘Wow,’” Brandy remembers, stunned by the imagery. Northern Idaho had a reputation for white supremacy, but Brandy had grown up in the southeast. She had little experience with it. The story the two guys told about tattoos came back to her: probably just a prison thing.

Brandy, drunk in a bathroom in Boise, fumbled to remove her clothes. True, she felt a little uncomfortable about the tattoos. But by that point, she and Richard had hit the ground running, and she didn't think there was any reason to stop.

The illustrated man

Richard might never have hit upon those tattoos as an adult if he hadn't learned of Odin as a child.

Richard grew up in Salinas, Calif., the son of a Vietnam vet and a home day care provider. As a kid, he entertained himself with, among other pursuits, the role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons*. Diehards call it *D&D*. The game allows each player to embody a mythical being: dragon, wizard, giant, troll or even a dungeon master.

Players gain a deeper understanding of *D&D* through reference books, and one book described the pantheons of numerous mythologies. Drawn to the text, Richard became enthralled with the gods who lived in the Norse myths: the father god Odin, the trickster god Loki, the warrior god Thor. That mythology had inspired author J.R.R. Tolkien as well, leading to his “*The Lord of the Rings*” series, books Richard stole from the library — and loved.

The fantastical realm of childhood suffered a dose of reality when Richard's father split. His relationship with his mother disintegrated, and when she kicked him out, he became a ward of the state, bouncing between group homes and juvenile detention centers. He longed for the stable family he felt he never had.

In a group home one day, Richard read a sign: Witchcraft is not a state-recognized religion. “Of course they said we can't have it,” recalls Richard, “so I got into it.” He discovered Wicca, a Neo-Pagan religion that blends respect for nature, herbal magic and benevolent witchcraft. He loved it. Together, Norse mythology and Wicca shaped his spiritual beliefs.

The restrictions he experienced in juvenile homes created a longing for freedom, which accompanied a frustrated desire for family connection. As an adult, he moved to Sacramento, to be near his mother. She didn't want to see him. Richard hung out at friends' places sometimes, slept on the streets other times; developing, over the course of a year, a bad heroin habit. His mother relocated near Reno, Nevada, and again seeking connection, he followed. He lived outside the Biggest Little City in the World, where he dropped his heroin habit and fell big time into meth. On a search for important family papers at his mother's place, he stole his step-

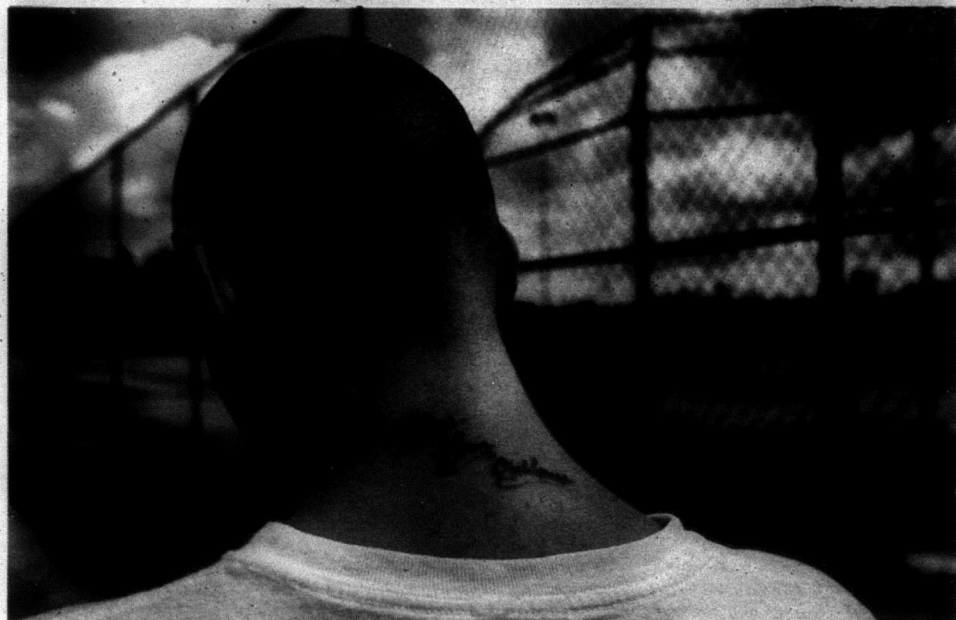


Photo by Kate Bakwin

“Ladies Love Outlaws.” Before Richard and Brandy met, he had been released from a Nevada prison on an assault-with-a-deadly-weapon charge.



Hear part of the Norse epic poem “The Hávamál” in Old Icelandic. Listen to Richard Duncan describe his tattoos at rosetheroyale.com

dad's safe and found, instead, money. Once Richard had pocketed the cash, he tried to return the safe, but it was too late. He was arrested. On his 22nd birthday. Grand larceny. Five years.

In prison, life fragmented along racial lines. White this side, black that side, Latino over here, Native over there. Within these groups, more fisures emerged. Richard noticed that among white inmates, there were long-haired druggies, sometime druggies and we're-not-druggies, and the last group, with their full beards, resembled modern-day Vikings. He gravitated toward the druggies, but as he met more neo-Vikings, he felt pulled in their direction. He discovered the group not only stayed clean, but they clung to a unique belief: They practiced Odinism.

Odinism follows spiritual principles spelled out by the Norse god Odin. His words form the body of an epic poem dating from the ninth or 10th century called “The Hávamál” or, in English, “Sayings of the High One.” The poem offers a folksy blend of divine prescriptions that touch upon topics ranging from self-respect to ethical conduct. Richard admired its principles. “If I could ever adhere to, them like I'm supposed to,” he recalls, “I'd never get in trouble.”

Unlike most Odinists on the outside, those practicing Odinism within Nevada's prison system were a gang whose members also clung to another belief: white supremacy. They called themselves the Aryan Warriors. For them, Odinism and white supremacy went hand-in-hand — and all over the body as well. The prison tattoos that decorated their skins blended pagan symbolism with Aryanism. Not that Richard's first tattoo evoked either. On his right hand, between thumb and

forefinger, someone inked a heart. Years later, he covered it with an iron cross, a German military honor.

Released from prison in 1999 and away from his Odinist brothers, Richard couldn't make the principles of “The Hávamál” stick. He guzzled beer and malt beverages and ping-ponged between heroin and meth, addictions that opened the gates to multiple, lengthy prison terms. Eight months for carrying a concealed weapon; 24 months for possession of a stolen vehicle; 24 months for attempted battery causing substantial bodily harm; 22 months for assault with a deadly weapon.

Richard shaved his head in prison. The more time he served, the more tattoos he acquired: the words “Ladies Love Outlaws” on the nape of his neck; a *D&D* dragon on his left shoulder; the term “PURE BLOOD” on his left forearm; near his left eye, “SS,” the insignia for Hitler's elite defense corps. Others tattoos decorated his neck, his arms and his legs.

By the time he left the Nevada Correctional Center in Reno in November 2008 and boarded a Greyhound to Boise, his skin had become a living canvas. A pastiche of illustrations that touched upon paganism, white supremacy, pop culture and prison life, Richard's flesh told his life story in cerulean ink.

The illustrations also evoked an important concept to him: family. Through Odinism he'd learned that a man was a provider. In this regard, he'd failed. His teenage daughter's name once adorned his left pec, but the tattoo artist had screwed up the lettering. So Richard covered it up with an enormous swastika. And like that messed-up swastika, he'd messed up with his daughter: He'd been in jail at her birth. If he ever started an-

other family, he'd do better and be there at his child's birth.

In Boise, Richard, 35, decided to provide for Brandy. True, they didn't have a family together. Not yet. But no matter what Brandy needed — shelter, food, cigarettes, money — he'd provide. He'd protect her. That's one rule he swore he'd never break.

The lady and the outlaw

Shortly after their bathroom encounter, Richard suggested he and Brandy always follow a rule: stay together. His Odinist principles told him a man must keep his family safe, so he left the men's shelter to ensure Brandy wouldn't be alone. It touched her. “He wanted to protect me,” she says. They just needed a place to stay.

They heard about a guy with an unheated house who let people crash for free. To make ends meet, Richard smashed car windows and stole cigarettes and change. He convinced Brandy to panhandle. She hated it. Together, they pooled their resources and injected meth, riding the rush, pulled by addiction.

Like any couple that spends time together, the pair forged a bond of intimacy. Richard told Brandy he wanted to leave his white supremacist past behind, even as he carried a handwritten copy of “The Hávamál.” In the unheated house or out on the streets, they talked of a future together, maybe one with kids. Christmas came, then New Year's passed. Happy 2009.

Not long into January, when Mr. Unheated House started acting like a pervert, Richard and Brandy shoved their clothes into their backpacks and split. With two borrowed sleeping bags

See GRAVITY, Continued on Page 9

GRAVITY OF ABUSE

In 2003, physical assaults caused by domestic violence resulted in an estimated \$6.2 billion in health care costs

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they trudged to the greenbelt near the Boise River, close to where they'd first kissed. Richard guided Brandy to a spot under a bridge. They inchwormed inside their sleeping bags. The temperature dropped. Wind blew. Snow fell; by morning, three inches covered the ground.

The next night, with a low in the 20s, Richard led Brandy to a multistory garage. In a stairwell, they huddled together. He gave Brandy his coat, but it barely helped. He held her close as she shivered all night.

Then Brandy cried uncle. They needed another solution, somewhere warm. The couple ran into another guy. "And he let us stay in his motel room," Brandy says. Unlike the old guy, Mr. Motel didn't want anything, except company. But Brandy didn't intend to stay.

Back in Seattle, Brandy had been accepted into a Washington state program called GA-U, Government Assistance-Unemployable, that provided her \$339 each month. She planned to use her January payment to buy bus tickets to Seattle for herself and Richard.

In Richard's mind, they were a couple — a family — and he worried she might back out of the relationship. So he agreed. He'd move to Seattle.

When the GA-U funds hit her account, the pair packed up and headed to the bus station. Once again, Brandy sat on a Greyhound, this time bound for Seattle. With a boyfriend who she realized she didn't really know. But he'd told her he'd protect her. He wanted to change his life, like she did. It seemed easier to do it together. Besides, Brandy figured, what was the worst that could happen?

Emerald City

From the moment he arrived in January 2009, Richard thought Seattle was the worst place in the world.

He followed Brandy from the Greyhound station at 811 Stewart St. on to Third Avenue. As they trudged into downtown Seattle, a city three times the size of Boise, Richard stared. Homeless people, drunk people, drugged-up people: They were everywhere. Surely someone would jump the two of them, beat the crap out of them. To Richard, it felt like a midnight walk down Crack Alley. But what really spooked him was a fear that Brandy might dump him, in a city where he didn't know a soul. "I just couldn't handle it," Richard says.

Insisting they weren't safe downtown, he prodded Brandy to find somewhere less dangerous. So Brandy and Richard walked, south to Pioneer Square, north to Belltown, then backtracked to the end of the Alaskan Way Viaduct. They tucked themselves under the off-ramp, with the traffic rattling overhead. They crashed until morning.

Over the course of a week, they wandered throughout downtown, Richard sure to keep Brandy by his side. During the day the pair visited drop-in centers; during the evening the couple searched out warm, dry spaces. Part of what vexed them was the inability to stay together as a couple, since shelters separated men and women. Then someone suggested



Tent City 3, a legal encampment for up to 100 people, set down stakes at Calvin Presbyterian Church in Shoreline in the winter of 2008-2009. Brandy and Richard moved in January 2009.

Photo courtesy Calvin Presbyterian Church

RESOURCES

If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship, call: the Washington State Domestic Violence Hotline, 1.800.562.6025; the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 1.800.799.7233
You can also contact the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, wscadv.org

Tent City 3.

A legally-sanctioned homeless encampment for up to 100 people, it shifted locations every few months. In January 2009, Tent City 3 was in Shoreline. The pair hopped on the 358 bus and rode north, Richard thankful the dangerous city lay behind them.

Oftentimes, area churches, honoring Christian tenets to care for the poor and the hungry, hosted Tent City 3. Brandy and Richard bused to Calvin Presbyterian Church. Set on a tract of land that hugged the corner of Northwest Richmond Beach Road and Third Avenue Northwest, the church was a sprawling house of worship. Just south of the sanctuary rose a hill, mostly flat, its crest a large square of frozen, grassy earth. A chainlink fence ran along the southern edge. From the hilltop's mesa rose a motley crew of tents, some draped with tarps, others exposed. The pair approached.

Everyone who entered or left Tent City 3 had to pass a welcome desk. Brandy and Richard asked about space. The encampment had room for couples, but it also had rules. No drinking or drugs. No violence. Everyone pitched in. A 24-hour security patrol dealt with any problems. Even with addiction issues, the couple agreed to abide, spending their first night stuffed into a one-man tent. They tried to settle in.

But Brandy couldn't really settle into her relationship with Richard because, truthfully, things had gotten a little weird. When the couple sneaked beer and malt beverages into their tent, sometimes a little argument would flare up. Was she messing around with other guys? Was he looking at other girls? Once, Richard punched her. Another time, he kicked her. Of course, she didn't show her best side when she drank or used meth. And yes, she yelled, too. But no one had ever struck her before. "It wasn't enough to make me think I should do anything about it," she says. So she kept quiet.

Sometimes when she tried to meet fellow Tent City 3 residents, Richard would interrupt, pulling her away. He told her it was to protect her. "But it started to feel isolating," Brandy recalls. The sense of isolation grew when it came to her good friend from

Pocatello, Morgan Price. In January 2009, she lived in Shoreline, less than five miles from Tent City 3.

Morgan had come to the Seattle area in August 2008 seeking sobriety, and she had triumphed — until Christmas Day, when she celebrated the holidays with wine. After Brandy contacted her, Morgan sneaked beer into Tent City 3 to welcome Brandy back to Washington. Brandy unzipped the yellow tent, and Morgan entered.

When Morgan saw Richard for the first time, she thought: He is not a good character. She couldn't explain it, exactly. "I just had a really bad feeling about him," she says. She sat down. Richard was so quiet, Morgan thought that maybe he wasn't too happy she'd shown up. She was right.

Since Morgan and Brandy were old friends, old *dope* friends, that meant they'd do stuff together — without Richard. "And I didn't want Brandy ditching me," Richard remembers. Having Morgan hang around was a bad idea.

Whenever Morgan bought all three of them beer or meth, Richard drank and used, then sat silent. Whenever Morgan and Brandy hung out together, Richard bad-mouthed Morgan when Brandy returned. Slowly, but surely, he eased Morgan out of Brandy's life. He felt that like most of the residents of Tent City 3, Morgan couldn't be trusted.

The only thing Brandy could trust was her sense that something had shifted in the relationship. Richard's protection didn't feel like protection any longer. "What if I would have done something else and followed my first instinct and not pursued a relationship?" she remembers. Along with that instinct, Brandy had another feeling, one she couldn't ignore. She needed to address it, and the way to start was to head to the store.

The intuitive woman

Brandy and Richard strolled the aisles of Fred Meyer, a supermarket-department store, until Richard found what they needed: an early pregnancy test. He tore open a box, shook out the plastic test stick and handed the stick to Brandy. She carried it to a bathroom; where she urinated on the stick's absorbent end. Without the directions,

Brandy picked up the stick too soon and, unable to read the results, shoved it into her purse. When she looked again, the results were inconclusive.

Richard stole another one. This time, Brandy followed the directions. The small test windows on the stick revealed faint symbols, but she didn't trust the results. So on Jan. 26, 2009, they trekked to Planned Parenthood.

After paying \$20, Brandy provided a urine sample. The pair sat in the reception area. Neither spoke for 15 nerve-wracking minutes, but it seemed like hours. A patient educator directed Richard and Brandy into a private room.

Yes, Brandy was pregnant. About five weeks. The educator handed her a sheet of paper with an estimated due date: early October.

A baby. She was going to have a baby. Brandy felt a surge of happiness. She'd be a mother again. Skye would have brother. Or maybe a sister...

A baby? She was going to have a baby? In Tent City 3? And with a man she'd known barely six weeks? If only they could find somewhere inside, somewhere warm so —

Richard. She looked at him. Was he ... crying?

Do you want to discuss options for your pregnancy? the patient educator asked.

I'm keeping the baby, Brandy said. Richard folded the due date paper and slid it in his wallet. Outside, Richard cried again. Finally, another chance at the family he craved. Then Brandy saw what looked like anger replace his joy.

I need a beer, Richard said. What? she said. You're supposed to be happy.

I am happy. That's how men celebrate, he said.

Back at Tent City 3, Richard went out with a friend. He returned, a little drunk, with a few impulse buys he'd picked up at a store. Brandy derided him for the frivolous purchases, especially now. An argument broke out. The tension rose. She said they needed to save money.

Richard's fist hammered into her stomach. Brandy fell to her knees. Richard turned, unzipped the tent flap, walked out.

Brandy held her stomach. What had happened? One minute, they were yelling, the next, she was on the ground.

What should she do? She wanted to tell someone. Morgan, perhaps? But would Richard get angry? Besides, the other times he hit her, she'd never said anything.

Had she brought it on? She didn't think so. But he'd never hit her that hard before. So she cried. Alone in the tent, she cried.

Richard came back later that night. He didn't say a word. A big, silent whatever. Drunk, he plopped down next to her. She lay there, quiet, as he breathed, and she waited for sleep to come.

The next day Brandy wondered if Richard would say anything. He didn't. He acted like it hadn't even happened. She decided not to mention it either. Instead Brandy moved into an I-need-to-get-

If you want a lesson in revolution, just take a page from history

As you know, baby boomers like me won the Vietnam War, lost it, ended it and made a mess of it. The movement to end the war started out as a political movement and ended up with the Doors, Steppenwolf, Fritz the Cat and Dennis Hopper.

Fact: A lot of the people were already high before they knew the anti-war movement had started. I know because I wasn't one of them. I refused to get high the whole time.

I made the decision, for ill or for good, that I would deliberately not be "where it was happening" so that I could be conscious and know what was happening.

The anti-war movement did not begin with boomers. Most boomers were playing the alternate universe game "Davy Crockett saves the Alamo" while Catholic Prime Minister Diem of South Vietnam was using the communist threat to suppress his political opposition, which he apparently took to include the entire Buddhist majority of the nation he was ruling.

The first two casualties listed on the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., died the day before my tenth birthday, in 1959. In the following 12 months only six U.S. servicemen died there. But the next twelve months it was 13. The next, 42. Then 73, 153, 531, and by 1965-66, there were 4,596. Deaths on all sides by reports at the time, including civilians, were much higher.

For each American, whenever enough was enough was when the

Adventures in Irony

Dr. Wes Browning



anti-war movement began for them. Not everyone, not even every boomer, waited until boomers got to draft age. There was opposition before it was called a war, when it was a police action, conducted by military advisors.

Finally, though, boomers started getting drafted in droves, and protests became common on college campuses. At first, you'd never see more than 300 people at an anti-war rally in Seattle, but around about 1968, protesting got popular.

Now, protesting had just had some big successes in ending segregation, which was pretty cool. Plus, folks were taking courses in college and learning about stuff they never thought about before, such as the French Revolution, and Indian Wars, and Camus, and Ginsberg, and all. They finally started connecting the dots, and they wanted to be cool, too.

They wanted to be revolutionaries, too.

Here's an example. On May 5, 1970, about 7,000 UW students, faculty and staff engaged in a "spontaneous" march down I-5 from the University District, to protest the Vietnam War and the Kent State massacre.

Well, not exactly spontaneous. For months before, organizers wanted students to march down the freeway, and no one wanted to do it but them. Then, the Kent State massacre happened, and people set aside their reservations and marched en masse toward the general direction of Roosevelt Way. Next thing you know we were being egged onto the freeway, and we shrugged, collectively, and went there.

But it was stupid.

Fortunately, the Seattle police saved us from ruining a great protest. The SPD formed a wall blocking us at the Boylston-Roanoke exit, and their guns and mean looks convinced us to get off the freeway and onto Eastlake, where the protest should have been in the first place and where it was a rousing success. What made it a success was that we were now marching in front of residences. People in apartment buildings were cheering us on from their windows or running out and joining us.

Let me put it this way. Those who want to be real revolutionaries need to put away the attitude. Put away the masks and the posturing. Put the stupid revolutionary rhetoric away.

Revolution is not about winning skirmishes; it's about reaching supporters. You aren't reaching them by breaking through windows. ■

Sound off and read more:
drwesb.blogspot.com

Let's practice listening to one another, for our own families and for the common good

Last week my wife and I went to visit the right-wing side of the family. This is always an odd experience because, on the one hand, we really love the folks. They are great, salt-of-the-earth people who have integrity and kindness as part of their character. But start talking religion and politics and suddenly it's like we are transferred into Bizarroland. In their world the economic crash happened because too many people without resources made a run on loans to buy houses. In their world austerity is a needed reform. In their world God is pissed and is about to slaughter the human race, saving only those who pledge to support the magical mantra, "Forgive my sins, Lord Jesus."

So, like most families we stay away from any matters of substance. I think we spend lots of time as if we're in an old Seinfeld episode. But last week we stayed calm and took turns listening to each other. Nothing was resolved, but, later, dinner tasted a bit better.

This scenario is not unique. Folks are always talking with me about similar episodes in their own family and friendship networks. We're worried

Faith, Culture, Politics

Rev. Rich Lang



that, as a people, we're losing our capacity to actually talk with each other about important civic matters. We're worried that segregating each other behind silo-identities like blue state or red state, conservative or liberal, spiritual or atheist, is only creating a cage that imprisons us in a powerless and ultimately hopeless void characterized by an every-dog-for-itself mentality. We're worried that as we the people become smaller, corporate persons become bigger, war increases, corruption rules and the earth slips away into a coma.

We need to break down these walls of segregation. As the political season heats up we'll all be tempted to get sucked into the false consciousness of "us versus them." Beginning at 7 p.m.

Thursday, May 10, a group of us are opening up a place for conversation. We call it the Common Good Café, a space to talk about matters of politics, spirituality and culture. We're starting off with a seven-week series focused on corporate power. Later, in the autumn, we'll expand to sessions on cultural and spiritual matters, bringing together opposites to help us listen and speak with each other. The goal is to relearn how to have civil, civic discussions knowing that we are one family, crazy uncles and all.

The format is to listen to a presenter, break into small clusters for group discussion, then return with the presenter for a brief give-and-take. Each evening will end with a call to act on what you've learned. These are simple steps to reclaim our democracy. The Common Good Café is located at 1415 NE 43rd Street, and you can find out more at utemple.org ■

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things-done mode. Drinking and meth were out, but the cigarettes? She had to quit them, too? Maybe just a couple a day. That's all.

Richard, ready to provide, concentrated on finding work. He asked around Tent City 3. These two guys he knew, one promised him a job, once the recession ended. The other, who worked, invited Richard and Brandy out for a drink. His treat.

Inside the bar, Brandy had an idea on how she could drink without hurting the baby. She'd order a beer, take a sip, then pass it to Richard. Order, sip, pass, order, sip, pass.

They moved on to another bar. Order, sip, pass, order, sip, pass. On to a nightclub. It was ladies' night. Richard expected the same routine, but Brandy, sipping a cocktail, passed it to the guy who treated them. Order, sip, pass. Brandy stepped outside for a few frags. When the door swung open, Richard saw her talking to a group of women.

Once she came back, Richard was pissed. What were you doing out there? he yelled. Bar patrons watched. The bartender ordered him to leave.

Richard turned to Brandy. We're going, he said.

No, I'm not, Brandy said.

As drunk as he'd ever been and lost to boot, Richard somehow stumbled back to Tent City 3. He staggered to their tent, then crashed.

He awoke to a voice. Brandy. He saw her silhouette pass the length of the yellow tent. She fumbled at the zipper and entered. Richard lay still in the sleeping bag. Scoot over, Brandy yelled, pushing him with her foot. "That's when he freaked out," Brandy remembers.

Richard stood, caging her in his arms. She resisted. Don't touch me, she yelled.

Richard grabbed her by the throat. He threw her down. Brandy slapped him. He punched her in the head.

Stop! she screamed. Get off!

They wrestled. They slapped. They hit. She screamed.

Security staff and residents barged into the tent. They pulled Richard off Brandy, hauling him out. Leave now, they said.

Richard stood outside Tent City 3 and bellowed. Minutes later, a squad car pulled up. Officers subdued him, then shuttled him to a nearby hospital. Richard spent the night in detox.

The next morning, Brandy was still a little dazed but remembered the fight. And she reconsidered what she'd known for so long. The relationship, it wasn't good. She was done, even with a baby. No more. Maybe a shower would help wash away the memory.

The only showers available to residents, however, were in a nearby gym. Brandy prepared to catch a bus. As she walked across the carpet liners that covered the pathways of Tent City 3, she saw someone standing across the street: Richard. He stared. It took Brandy a moment to realize why he was there:

"He was stalking me." ■

"Gravity of Abuse" grew out of a three-month 2010 Seattle University fellowship to study family homelessness in Washington state. The fellowship was funded by the Gates Foundation. All quotes, thoughts and feelings of individuals stem from interviews, personal correspondence, police reports and court documents. Research for the series lasted 22 months.