

Lisa Cochran

EDITH WHARTON BUSINESS SCHOOL

The Second One to Quit the Band took a lit cigarette to the drums. It wasn't like the Third One to Quit, who actually tried to light the studio on fire but only managed the corner of a David Byrne banner. The Fourth One, stirred by some marijuana-induced prophecy, decided to stray away from theatrics. After that, the Fifth One — a persimmon-cheeked xylophonist who often stewed in ennui because he'd never look like Kurt Cobain — wrote "asshole" on the lead singer's bass. Then he quit. The lead singer, Jude, was the sole remaining member. With or without him, the quitting crescendoed. It was all in solidarity with the First One To Quit the Band. She hadn't even been a member.

Jude wore a lot of corduroy button-downs. They pooled over his belted canvas pants, which struck a clumsy balance of being too tight at the hip and too loose everywhere else. Jude wasn't well-liked, but he didn't pay much attention to that. He didn't see why he had to be adored if he could be admired.

He was talented. A two-year stint in a children's choir plus a series of sensual guitar lessons from a vaguely foreign family friend named Therese had instilled in Jude a desire to perform. More importantly, having a business executive for a father opened every possible avenue for Jude to flaunt his artistic merits. He started

with solo acts in malls and coffee shops, which mostly consisted of two hour-long loops of *Eleanor Rigby* on his little guitar. He pictured the sounds emanating from him, covering the audience in shapes and colors (a fantasy which harkened from watching Fantasia too often too late at night).

After graduating from high school with ease, he enrolled at an unremarkable but agonizingly expensive liberal arts college in the midwest. In his dorm elevator, he met a fellow student with chin-length hair and an unflattering chin. He would ultimately become The Second One To Quit The Band. The initial basis of their meeting was that the Second One was wearing a Weezer t-shirt and Jude liked that.

“Weezer is better than The Beatles,” Jude said, gesturing toward The Second One’s shirt. The Second One nodded.

They started to jam together late at night, dousing their endocrine systems with marijuana and Miller Lite. They’d stumble sideways across the spartan dorm, feverishly clawing at their guitars as old Christmas lights formed a halo on their shaggy heads. This was friendship, Jude thought.

After Jude changed his major to philosophy, he met The Third, Fourth, and Fifth Ones To Quit The Band. Once they discovered they all liked music, they became official, playing at college events and frat parties under the name of *Burning Sanders*. “We are Burning Sanders!” Jude would shout, redundantly, after every introduction. Then, he’d go on to clarify that despite the potentially negative connotation of flames, they were an *incredibly* progressive band who all voted for Bernie in the primaries. Because out of the five of them, four exclusively played guitar, Jude forced The Second One to learn the drums and the Fifth One to learn the theremin. At the time, the music world was on the crest of a theremin craze and *Burning Sanders*’ producer had recommended it. Jude, of course, did not step up to the job, citing the importance of his shoulders for

maintaining good posture when playing the guitar (the more *important* instrument, he said). The Fifth One already *had* bad posture, and so was apt for the undertaking, according to Jude. They secretly (but very, *very* vehemently) resented him from then on.

Jude often weaved his humanities education into his music. Despite his diatribes on the importance of writing about complex, intellectual topics, it was purely an outlet for showing off. To the other members, it was never about Jude wanting to teach his audience obscure philosophy, but instead about the indelible thrill of being *able* to do it.

Burning Sanders miraculously (and a bit unbelievably) became famous within three months. A producer was sent a video of them performing at an Oktoberfest celebration and contacted them immediately, arranging for headliner events, record deals, and music video shoots. Their shows became less sporadic and began to occur in halls outside the members' tiny liberal arts school radius. At their fifth gig — a slot during a popular music festival — the group's final song moved the audience into one large form, rising and erupting in a clamor. Jude beamed. It was his first standing ovation.

They initially performed with a set of five songs, all written by Jude. The Fourth One To Quit was allowed to arrange the instrumentals for one — a song titled, “Two And a Half Waves.” It was about feminism.

Jude and Greta met at one of *Burning Sanders'* earlier performances before they'd gained fame in all the correct circles as an indie band and before they became a frequent topic of Reddit and Twitter threads.

She had long green hair the color of a Haribo gummy bear and was wearing a cropped suede jacket and yellow mini skirt when he first saw her. She came to the event with her friend Sarah, a laconic girl who

overlined her lips and had cartoon aliens on her phone case. Jude and Greta made eye contact as he carefully removed the mic from its stand. After a rendition of *Burning Sanders'* song "Squiggly, Van Gogh, Hamster", the nightclub host requested an hour-long pause to sell more drinks. It was then that Jude approached Greta for the first time. Their conversation went like this:

"Hey, I like your hair," Jude said.

"Thank you," Greta said. "I like your shoes."

"Thanks. Digging the show?"

"Yeah." She curled a strand of hair around her finger, trying to appear dainty. "Except, you sound like Morrissey."

"You know *The Smiths*?"

"Obviously."

"But, yeah, everyone who likes *The Smiths* hates Morrissey."

"I don't like *The Smiths*."

"Haha. How old are you? I don't meet a lot of college-aged girls who know *The Smiths*."

"I doubt that's hardly true. Maybe you don't try hard enough." As they attempted to talk through the cold, sparkly stimulation of the club, Jude noticed how pronounced her eyebrow and cheekbones were, the overtly feminine swatch of salmon color on the tip of her nose. "Anyway, I'm *sixteen*."

He lifted his eyelids in emphasis and then slowly cracked his neck.

"Well. You should follow me on Instagram. I post stuff about our gigs. You could pull make a cameo again."

With that single exchange, then the subsequent months of frequenting *Burning Sanders'* shows and Jude's apartment, Greta would become The First One To Quit The Band.

List of Potential New Song Names:

The Phallic Sea of Composition¹

Confirmation Buyers²

The Sisters Karamazov³

The Death of Venus⁴

The Death⁵

Of⁶

Venus⁷

¹ "Why does everything have to be about your dick, Jude?" - Third One To Quit The Band. "Anyway, why are we doing this? Did someone call a band meeting?"

"We have to pick a title for the last song on the tour album." - Jude

"I don't see why we're trying to come up with a song title before we've even written the lyrics." - Fourth One To Quit The Band.

"The lyrics will stem from the title." - Jude

² "This sounds very pro-Capitalism" - Third One To Quit The Band

"You're right, I hate rich people." - Jude

"You *are* rich people, Jude." - Second One To Quit The Band

³ "Have you even read *The Brothers Karamazov*? I don't think anyone's gonna get the pun." - Second One To Quit The Band

⁴ "Hahaha, that's kinda sick but doesn't really fit our brand, does it?" - Fifth One To Quit The Band

"I like it." - Greta

"It's not up to you." - Jude

"Stop being an asshole to Greta, you invited her to this." - Second One To Quit The Band

⁵ "What's this song even gonna be about?" - Third One To Quit The Band

"An abusive relationship." - Jude

"Why?" - Fourth One To Quit The Band

"Awareness. Shit like that." - Jude

⁶ "What?" - Fourth One To Quit The Band

⁷ "That's already a song." - Second One To Quit The Band

"You could, like, reinvent it." - Greta

"No, he's right, it's no good. Babe, could you grab my Bowie sweatshirt from the other room?" - Jude

Most of the band members were discomfited by the presence of a minor, especially one they were pretty sure Jude had been sleeping with. She would come to every band meeting after high school track practice and flop onto the tweed couch, her long, fishnetted knees dangling over an armrest. She listened quietly as the band members composed music, got high, argued, and got high again. To Greta, it was a gleaming, anthropological thing, but one that was volatile. She felt blessed, as though she must have done something right to be privy to an event as sacred and intimate as a band practice. She dutifully played the role she thought she'd been assigned as a *Burning Sanders* fan. She memorized song lyrics, reposted their BandCamp links on social media, provided input (only praise!) when prompted, and brought them *White Claws* she stole from her older sister's mini-fridge. She even pretended to like their songs.

It wouldn't matter if she didn't, though. Despite her meticulous study of and deep-rooted interest in indie, punk, and rock music, her expertise would never be vocalized. Anything she could say about it as a seventeen-year-old groupie was an affront to Jude.

She formed a rapport with The Second One To Quit The Band, who took her along on various errands while Jude was being temperamental. She found him physically unattractive, further fueling her infatuation with Jude because she could pride herself on landing "the hot one." Still, The Second One was a good friend, didn't ask much of her, and bought her Twizzlers.

Years of social media use made Greta an exhibitionist. This transpired in stealing candles from churches, dyeing her hair green, eating only spicy foods or not eating at all, and secretly bringing her cat, Lou Reed, to school in her backpack. Her relationship with Jude, a burgeoning 22-year-old rockstar, was the magnum opus of her rebellion.

Greta deemed her romantic pursuits pre-Jude childish and fruitless. In her freshman year of high school, a maladroit basketball player tried to kiss her and missed her lips by an inch. When she made a face at him, he swiftly told their classmates she was a prude. A year later, she was asked out by a boy in her Psychology class. They attended one soccer game together sitting three feet apart and then walked around a local pond. Within a month, he stopped talking to her, which he attempted to justify to others by saying, “She just doesn’t put out.” Greta didn’t know what that meant.

Jude never took her on dates but she didn’t really care. She would’ve felt bad if he did, anyway, and saw the opportunity to attend *Burning Sanders’* practices as more than enough. The fact that his compliments to her were sparing made her like him even more. She decided that she probably even loved him, not unlike the way she loved that expensive leather jacket she always kept in her DollsKill Shopping Cart. She constantly made far-fetched connections between their relationship and the lyrics of his songs and analyzed shifts in his eye contact during certain lines. Greta felt as though they had everything in common, or that if she worked really hard, they might one day.

One night, as she and Jude sat on his futon, watching *The Big Lebowski* and cuddling, he told her she was magical. It was uncharacteristic, but pleasant, at least for the time being.

“What do you mean?”

“I’m constantly trying to impress you during practice and it actually makes my music better.”

“Really? Well, I’m glad to help.”

He kissed her ear and then softly poked her cheek.

“Sometimes, secretly, I feel like a terrible person,” Greta said, hugging her knees.

“What? That’s ludicrous. I wouldn’t invite you to watch us practice if I thought you were a bitch.”

“Thanks, but, it’s hard to explain. I just don’t think I’m a kind person. Not inside.”

“You’re so cute.”

“Maybe, but am I good?”

“Absolutely. You’re a radiant human. I do think it’s easy to feel poorly of ourselves in our own company.

But I also think the fact that you’re questioning whether or not you’re a good person shows you’re a good person.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.” His tone amplified the ensuing silence.

He tugged gently at the zipper on her skirt without looking up. *The Big Lebowski* whirred in the background.

When the band’s record company announced their first North American tour, they decided to throw a rager. Jude loved throwing parties, because planning them amounted to power and executing them, to praise. He’d thrown plenty of them before, but never once as a semi-famous person. He bought dozens of kegs,

distancing them in his new and spacious bedroom like a forest of metal tree trunks. He filled his fridge with seltzers of all varieties, and his freezer with enough hard alcohol to sustain a dive bar on a Thursday night.

He circulated invitations in all the right places and even managed to employ his wiles to discount the catering company. He was prepared and terribly excited. If only he knew it'd be the last night of *Burning Sanders*' existence.

List of Potential New Band Names:

The Phallic Sea of Composition

Confirmation Buyers

The Sisters Karamazov

The Death of Venus

The Death

Of

Venus

Shredipus Rex¹

¹ "This feels illegal." - Third One To Quit The Band

"I think it kinda fucks, *actually*." - Jude

"You would be incorrect in thinking that." - Second One To Quit The Band. "Also, where's Greta?"

"Fuck you dude." - Jude. "And I dunno. At cheer practice or something."

"She doesn't do cheerleading." - Second One To Quit The Band

"Why do you wanna fuck her so badly?" - Jude

"I don't. I don't have sex with minors, unlike you." - Second One To Quit The Band

"Whoa, fuck you." - Jude

"No, fuck you. What the hell is Shredipus Rex? What are you trying to say?" - Fourth One To Quit The Band

"It's edgy, it's intellectual." - Jude

"You want our band name to reference some dipshit who fucked his mom?" - Fourth One To Quit The Band

"It's subversive." - Jude

"No." - Second One To Quit The Band

"No." - Third One To Quit The Band

"No." - Fourth One To Quit The Band

"No." - Fifth One To Quit The Band

"Go to hell, all of you." - Jude

Greta didn't want to go to the party. She'd become scared of Jude, which confused her because she loved him. She felt he had hurt her in some way but she couldn't remember how.

When she finally got there, Jude handed her a vodka-Redbull. She was in no mood for alcohol but he'd insisted. He said, "Stop being a prude." Then, she downed it. Then he made another one and she swore she heard him say "prude" again. In the end, she drank five vodka-redbulls. Then, there was mascara on her cheeks. Then, on The Second One's t-shirt. White t-shirt. She was an idiot! She started saying things she couldn't believe, but things she knew were true. Someone whacked her subconscious with a hammer. Smashed it open in slow motion like one of those videos with piggy banks. Why did they do that? Why did she let them? Why did she constantly let people do things to her that she didn't want to be done to her? Why didn't it matter whether or not she did? Why didn't it matter? She was going to have to pay. It didn't matter. The unbelievable true things didn't matter. It didn't matter. It doesn't matter. ~~it doesn't matter~~ ~~it doesn't MATTER~~ ~~it doesn't matter!!!!!!~~

Just like that, the band had been *quit*.

List of Potential New Song Names:

The Phallic Sea of Composition

Confirmation-Buyers

The Sisters Karamazov

The Death of Venus

The Death

Of

Venus

Shredipus Rex

Panopticum¹

¹ “We need to talk. I don’t care about your fucking pretentious shoegaze song titles.” - Second One To Quit The Band.

“Where’s everyone else?” - Jude

“It doesn’t matter. You’re lucky they’re not here. You fucked up. Greta dude? She’s literally the sweetest person to ever exist and also a MINOR. Do you realize how messed up that is?” - Second One To Quit The Band

“What the hell are you talking about?” - Jude

“You know exactly what I’m talking about.” - Second One To Quit The Band. “You’re a monster.”

“OK so we banged, so what? Sixteen is the age of consent in most Midwestern states.” - Jude

“Don’t lie to me about what you did to her. Anyway, the age of consent doesn’t work as an argument if there wasn’t actually consent.” - Second One To Quit The Band

“Calm down.” - Jude. “Who are you going to trust? Me or a literal child? You were my first real college friend. I trust you with my life, man.”

“We were never friends. I quit.” - Second One To Quit The Band

“Whoa, whoa, whoa. Let me remind you who paid for those expensive drums you’re dangling that cigarette over. Move that shit an inch closer, I dare you!” - Jude

“Oh, if you insist!” - Second One To Quit The Band

The North American tour was indefinitely paused. The record label held discussions.

“So, where did it all go wrong?”

“Once word became endemic across Reddit and Twitter, band members around the world — much like us — stormed out of garages, bar/bat mitzvahs, house parties, artful porn magazine promotion events, dive bars owned by Eastern European women, Chuck E. Cheese’s, I mean, you name it. I was amazed by how much of an impact we had. This girl released a video of herself pouring, like, hundreds of bouncy balls out of a trash bag. She captioned it, ‘One bouncy ball = one sexual assault allegation against an emo band.’ For crying out loud! There were articles written, interviews conducted, ticket stubs rescinded. It was this whole wave. We felt like there’d maybe finally be justice. We wanted the world to see it wasn’t us, it was all him.”

“Wow, well-said. And you were the first band member to actually quit the band, right before the news had come out, is that correct? If you don’t mind me asking — is that why you quit? And how long did you know before everyone else did?”

“I mean, I knew for about two days before I made a whole scene of quitting. He got her really drunk at our tour party and then abandoned her, typical. I saw she was crying, so I took her into another room. She was barely coherent but she told me all kinds of awful things. Among the sexual assault itself, there was coercion, he threw cigarettes, kicked her, spat on her, made her dress up in weird things, bossed her around, shit like that. She kept blaming herself too, that he told her she just wasn’t assertive enough or something. I mean she was

seventeen for Christ's sake. I didn't want to disrespect her privacy, though, obviously, so I didn't tell anyone else for a while. Eventually, word got out. Everyone in the band was very upset. They kept trying to light things on fire."

"That's a great deal of pressure on you. I can imagine how you all might feel betrayed after all of that."

"We knew Jude was a vile person. Greta's the only one who deserves to say she was betrayed."

"And my heart goes to her, and every young person who's been afflicted by this dark side of the music industry. Well, thank you so much for sitting down to speak with me today. I greatly appreciate it and will reach out with any follow-up questions. Do you have any final details you'd like to add?"

"I mean I guess I would just reiterate that old saying, you know the one from the Jenny Holzer work."

"Yeah?"

"Abuse of power comes as no surprise."

Jude continued writing the final tour song as if the tour had not been paused indefinitely and no one quit the band. Though most of the instruments had been damaged in frustration, Jude wiped "asshole" from his bass and polished it with the care of a mechanic. He contacted the record company several times. Discussions were still being held. He started canvassing for local politicians, donating money to social justice movements. Jude even went back to class, participating in discussions on *Antigone* and Kierkegaard. The other band members switched their schedules to avoid any interactions with him. He acted as he normally did. After all — guilt is hardly ever external.

List of Potential New Song Names:

The Phallic Sea of Composition

Confirmation Buyers

The Sisters Karamazov

The Death of Venus

The Death

Of

Venus

Shredipus Rex

Panopticum

Edith Wharton Business School¹

¹ "Give it up. None of us want to be associated with a rapist." - Fifth One To Quit The Band. "We're done."

Hello. I would like to address the rumors that have been circulating in recent weeks. While I apologize for my various past behaviors and any hurt feelings I may have caused, I wholeheartedly deny the allegations. The relationship between me and Greta Knies was entirely consensual and a learning experience for both of us. I still respect and care for her and am hurt to see her accusing me of something so grave. I am aware that I might have lost the trust of many of our audience members, but I hope that, in time, I can gain it back.

-Jude

“Hello everyone! We’re here today with Jude Coen, lead singer and bassist of *Chewy Sunday*, who's ranked in the top 10 on the 2024 Indie Rock A-List and whose new album — *Our Summer Rats* — went platinum this week!”

“Oh, thank you, thank you. I’m glad to be here.”

“So it’s been five years since you formed *Chewy Sunday*, and you guys have gone absolutely viral since then. It’s bonkers! What have you learned?”

“Well, I’ve been in bands in the past and I’ve gotta say it’s all about trust, and really feeling that connection. You know? That connection is what does it.”

“Haha, of course! What would you say to your fellow band members right now?”

“I love you guys. I wouldn’t be here without you. I’ve come a long way since going to a tiny liberal arts school in the Midwest and it’s all thanks to you.”

“You’re an unbelievable talent. Don’t deny it! Haha! Not everyone gets to play Carnegie Hall.”

“Thank you.”

“So where do you get your inspiration for your music?”

“Actually, I get more inspiration from philosophers than from other musicians. My degree was in philosophy. I believe in songs you can learn things from. I’m a lyricist through and through. My dad is a constant inspiration to me. He works really hard. ”

“So, what’s next for you?”

“Well, we care a great deal about our fans, so I’m *thrilled* to announce that this summer, Chewy Sunday is going on tour!”

There is no mention of Greta nor *Burning Sanders*. Following Greta, other women came forward with similar allegations against Jude. No one acknowledges this, nor seems to care. Jude’s fame has only grown. As the talk show ends, the other members of *Chewy Sunday* materialize from behind the stage and embrace him. The indiscernible, grey and purple faces of audience members bob, exuding passionate, animalistic cheers.

The camera pans to them.

