

# Road Rage Turns Deadly

Driver arrested A5



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# No telling when identity thief will reappear

BY LORI VADALA BIZZOCO

For the past 12 years, I've been a fugitive. The only physical evidence that I am me, and not the impostor who robbed my name, is that my chest isn't scarred with a 7-inch knife wound.

I've reinvented myself more than half a dozen times, so I'm not opposed to the idea. The last transformation took me from a 38-year-old high-powered, public-relations executive to a married, stay-at-home mom in less than 10 months. But, the closest I ever came to stealing someone's identity was when I dressed up



Former Long Islander Lori Vadala Bizzoco now lives in Brooklyn.

as Snow White for Halloween.

Identity theft is on the rise this year — up 22 percent. My purse-snatcher was ahead of her time when she stole my bag off a Huntington restaurant chair in the '90s. She got my credit cards and driver's license.

Learning that she'd charged a few thousand dollars on my card was nothing compared with the experience of having cops come to my house a few weeks later, ready to arrest me for stealing a car. Here I was, working in a career focused on improving images, and my own was disintegrating.

I hired a lawyer to clear the grand larceny charge, but my nemesis was on the run. And just when I thought it was over, my evil twin sister was back. On the last day of a weeklong cruise in the Caribbean, I was startled out of bed by pounding

on the cabin door.

"Who is it?" I yelled from the bunk.

"Customs!" barked a man with a voice deeper than Paul Bunyan's. When I answered the door, Bunyan and his partner, a humorless Rosie O'Donnell look-a-like, walked in. Rosie asked me to identify myself and then gave me five seconds to tell her why I thought they were there.

When I had no response, Bunyan snapped, "What's your social security number?"

After I recited the nine digits — which, thankfully, my identity thief never got — Rosie looked down at her papers. "That's not right," she said, first to him, then to me. "We need you to lift up your shirt."

"What . . . why? What's going on?"

"We have a warrant for your

arrest. If you're the perpetrator, you have a 7-inch scar on your chest." Smuggling an illegal substance was the crime.

My life had become a suspenseful movie and I played a character with amnesia, never knowing what crimes I'd committed. Ironically, growing up in a rural town upstate, I was always in trouble with the law. Drinking and smoking resulted in meetings with the local constable and threats of juvenile detention. My parents' only hope for normalcy was to move to a more populated area and enroll me in Catholic school, where the black-clad nuns and priests could scare some goodness back into me.

It worked. I spent the next two decades building a career to atone for the sins of my youth, creating a good image. Yet, the past won't let me move on.

It's been a few years, but there's no telling when she'll strike again. Where I once felt anger for her, there's now sadness. Sometimes I wonder if she's still around. Maybe she's in jail or dead. Mostly, I think about what would have happened if I'd stayed in my small town, on my earlier unlawful course. Maybe my impostor isn't all that different than I was.

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