

Has Anyone Seen My ID?

An Open Rant To The Person Who Stole My Identity

by Jennifer Vivekanand



The Durham police told me that six blank checks could buy a rock of crack cocaine. When I would call to ask about my case, the police told me they were too bogged down with rapes and murders to spare manpower for a simple case of theft. They could only file a report. All I could do was call the three main credit bureaus in the US, and make sure I had an alert placed on my credit. The fraternal order of police called asking for a donation. I told them I would have written them a check, but somebody stole my checkbook.

I had been married just two months when I had to have emergency abdominal surgery. Just four days home from the hospital, I found out what YOU did. I was on painkillers and antibiotics because I had developed an infection, and I was miserable. My husband walked in with a letter from the bank in his hand. "I don't want to worry you," he said, "but there is a problem." The bank said I was overdrawn, but I knew I hadn't written the checks. YOU did. All over my neighborhood, and in the stores I went to. My name was used to get things I wouldn't buy, like cartons of cigarettes and cases of cheap beer. Such a thrifty crook; you even used your grocery shoppers card to save a few bucks.

My first reaction was shock. How did you get a hold of my name? I called the bank. I called the police. I even called that tv reporter. I was afraid, and angry. I couldn't sleep. Would you come looking for me in the night? Should I get a pit bull? Should I move? I wondered who you were. Maybe you were some poor mom just trying to feed 10 kids. But you didn't buy groceries. You bought cheap beer, and cartons of cigarettes.

I got copies of the cancelled checks from the bank. Some came from Philadelphia. That scared me even more. Were you using my name there, too? I started calling the places you went to. I found out you were a woman. I found out you bought a \$680.00 car with a check against our credit card. I found out you got it from my mailbox.



You left the junk mail...

...and you took my
National Geographic.

I found out that in a seedy bar in Chapel Hill, some guy cashed one of my checks, along with someone else's tax refund. The guy at the bar cashed them with no ID to prove who he was, other than a frequent drinker. When I called, the guy at the bar was scared. He knew better than to cash those checks, I could hear it in his voice. I used that fear to get information from him, like any good detective would. He told me what local health food store the guy worked at. He told me where he lived. He told me HIS NAME. He said he would ID him for the cops. I called the detective in Chapel Hill. "I got one!" I said, "Get down there!" He said he couldn't work after five. I was incensed. "You're just going to let him get away?" The detective said he would check it out in the morning. Of course, by the time the detective went there, he had left his job, left his apartment, left town. All I could do was make sure they had a warrant issued for him. I didn't care that I couldn't even sit up in bed. I had nothing but time to lie there and think about how I was going to catch you. Being angry helped keep me from being afraid.





Late one night a prowler looked in my window. I remember the shadow, and not being able to scream because I was so medicated. I finally managed to find my voice, and the prowler ran off. Was it you? We moved the next week. September 11 happened. Suddenly, people cared about ID theft. It was too late for me though.

The Chapel Hill detective called weeks later to inform me the guy from the bar at least was caught. He was arrested in High Point after assaulting an officer. I thanked him for calling. Maybe they could find out from him who YOU were.

YOU were the main user of my checks, and the person who probably stole them in the first place. I fantasized about being in line at the grocery store, and seeing you writing on one of my checks. It would go down like this. Like one of Charlie's Angels, I would get you in a chokehold and wait for the detective to show up, if it wasn't after five. I would get to look you in the eye and say "I CAUGHT YOU."

Only that never happened and they never caught you. The police told me they have people in jail and they don't know who they are. They said these people change identities like we change socks. Maybe they have you and don't know it. Probably not. All I can do is tell my story and hope it doesn't happen again. I hope you get caught one day. You probably won't. But I am not afraid anymore, but I am still angry.