

# So Much for Being Polite

By Reg P. Wydeven

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Identity theft is a scary and common problem today. People generally try to steal someone else's identity for their own personal gain, typically financially. But in an unusual case of a stolen identity, a Canadian woman pretended to be her boyfriend to tank his career, forcing him to stay with her.

Eric Abramovitz was one of the top clarinet players in Canada when he applied for a two-year scholarship at the Colburn Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles. If accepted, Abramovitz would have studied under Yehuda Gilad, a world-renowned clarinetist on the faculty at Colburn. The position would have virtually guaranteed that Abramovitz would have had the choice of a high-paying job performing with almost any symphony in America.

The scholarship would have covered Abramovitz's tuition and room and board, but would also have provided him with a stipend for food and other expenses, valuing it at approximately \$50,000. It would obviously require him, however, to move from Montreal to L.A.

Instead of being happy and supportive, Abramovitz's live-in girlfriend, Jennifer Lee, opted for sabotage. Professor Gilad sent Abramovitz an email informing him that he was awarded the scholarship. Before Abramovitz had a chance to read it, though, Lee deleted the email.

Then Lee set up a fake email address and posed as her boyfriend. She then sent a message to Gilad thanking him for the honor, but notifying him that he had to turn it down. She next set up a fake email address in Gilad's name to inform Abramovitz that the total scholarship was given to someone else. However, she did say that he was eligible for a \$5,000 scholarship, knowing he could not afford to go there without a full ride.

So Abramovitz enrolled at McGill University in Montreal, where Lee just happened to be attending. After graduating, Abramovitz enrolled in a two-year extension program offered through the University of Southern California, which cost him about \$50,000. The program was taught by none other than Gilad. After comparing notes, the pair discovered Lee's ruse.

In addition to breaking up with her, Abramovitz sued Lee, asking for \$300,000 in general damages. According to the Montreal Gazette, David L. Corbett, the judge in Ontario Superior Court, ruled in favor of Abramovitz and even awarded him an additional \$50,000 of damages due to Lee's "despicable interference in Mr. Abramovitz's career."

"I accept and find that Mr. Abramovitz lost a unique and prestigious education opportunity, one that would have advanced his career as a clarinetist," Corbett's decision read. Abramovitz had worked at the Santa Barbara Orchestra and the Nashville Symphony Orchestra. Corbett's ruling continued, saying, "Imagining how his life would have been different if he had studied for two years under Mr. Gilad, and earned his teacher's respect and support, requires more speculation than the law permits."

"I cannot speculate as to how high and how quickly Mr. Abramovitz's career might have soared, but for the interference by Ms. Lee," Corbett's decision read, "But the law does recognize that the loss of a chance is a very real and compensable loss."

Abramovitz apparently drowned his sorrows at a local bar. When the bartender asked what he wanted to drink, Abramovitz just played a B flat, a G flat, and an E flat on his clarinet. "I'm sorry," the bartender said, "but we don't serve minors here."

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