

get golden ticket

name. "This is fraud. Why is there no punishment? Why are they not deporting them back?"

When she tried to find out where he was living or a phone number to contact him, immigration officials refused to give her any information, citing privacy laws.

Harv could not believe her runaway groom had all the rights — while she had none.

"I am the one who sponsored him," she told them. "I am the one who brought him to this country. And you guys can't tell me his telephone number?"

Harv soon learned she was not alone. Another woman in the South Asian community was on her way to Pearson airport

to meet her Indian groom, her arms filled with flowers, when she got a call on her cellphone.

"Don't bother waiting for me," he told her. "I've just landed in Vancouver and I'm staying here."

Now that he was in Canada, he no longer needed her. He was free to apply for welfare and there was nothing she could do.

"Everybody wants to come to Canada and they know that once they're here, nobody sends them back," Harv argues. "This was a lottery for him. I was the ticket for him to get into the country and now he can bring his whole family here, even his girlfriend. They ruined my life to get into this country."

'So many girls'

"I know so many girls here in Toronto like me," she laughs bitterly. "You can make a whole building with these kind of girls."

Until now, most of these men and women have kept their despair to themselves. After coming forward, Cindy found the response from others so overwhelming that she has formed a support group and wants victims to reach her at StopMarriageFraud@yahoo.ca.

"People feel scared, alone, and have no idea how to pick up and try to continue with their lives," she says. "I strongly believe that we need each other, which is why I am now working on setting up a safe place where victims can meet a couple of times a month to talk openly about their experiences. From there we can work together to build up our lives again."

Until now, jilted Canadians have had little recourse. Immigration says it will investigate marital fraud but little is done. "This inaction is occurring," says immigration consultant Al Moini, "solely due to the sad reality that CIC does not have an adequate budget to deal with the high costs associated with enforcement and removal of foreign spouses who enter Canada under false pretenses. Plain and simple."

Prosecutions are rare. In 2004, a newly arrived bride

from India told her husband at Edmonton airport's luggage carousel that she married him just for his Canadian citizenship. She was sentenced to four months

in jail for communicating false information, a little-used charge under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

With immigration charges so rare, though, more and more duped Canadian spouses are drawing hope from a B.C. bride who successfully sued her Fijian ex-husband for inducing her to marry him under false pretenses.

The recent landmark B.C. Supreme Court decision awarded Madhavi Raju \$11,376 for the costs of the wedding reception, the ring, the government fees, some of her long-distance calls, and another \$10,000 in damages for "hurt feelings, humiliation, inconvenience and postponement of opportunity to marry another man while still capable of bearing children."

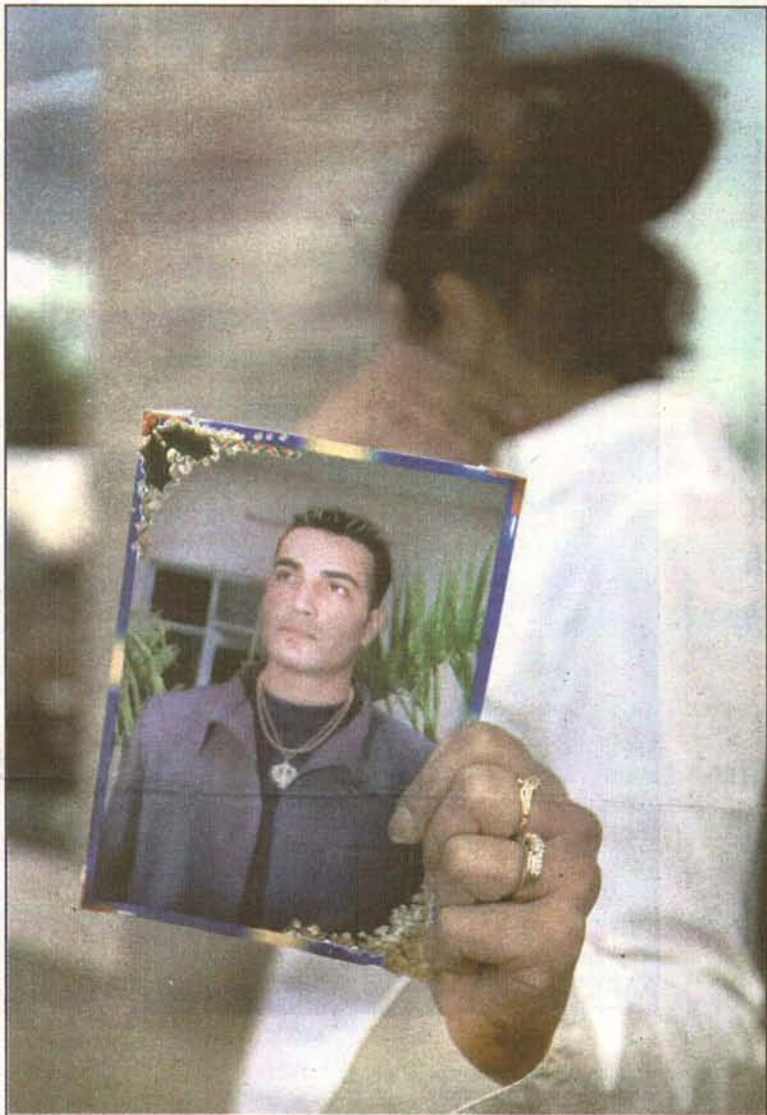
The court agreed that Rajendra Kumar had used Raju to get to Canada even as he was carrying on a five-year affair with another woman.

For Shah, the man who lost his Cuban bride shortly after reading the *Sunday Sun* story, he is left with a broken heart and a litany of unanswered questions.

Flowers every day

After knowing her for five years, he married his bride in Havana on Feb. 28, 2005, and immediately started the paperwork to bring her here. After months of sending her money and gifts, she finally received her visa and arrived here May 6 of this year. For six weeks, he brought her flowers every day and took her to movies, restaurants and city attractions.

And then with no warning, she was suddenly gone.



VERONICA HENRI/SUN

Harv wed a Punjabi man in a marriage arranged by her father, who spent \$40,000 on dowry gifts. Her new husband didn't even contact her when he arrived in Canada.

"To see her do the same thing to me, it hurts, it really hurts. I'm physically wounded, emotionally destroyed. I'm so confused," the 39-year-old says, weeping. "I never imagined someone who you have loved and showed love would be capable of doing such things to another human being."

He now believes that she had it planned from the start of their courtship. Even the police told him as much. "I was so naive. She played me," he says. "They told me, 'This looks like immigration fraud and she used you just to get into Canada.'"

He cannot believe that their entire romance was a lie. He had promised her the world

and she had repaid him with the cruelest of betrayals. "She just sent me an e-mail: 'I'm all right. Just go on with your life.' How am I supposed to go on with my life?"

He loves her still, but he believes our lenient immigration system must change to discourage these runaway spouses.

"They give you this privilege to come to Canada and expect you to do something for your society," says Shah, an immigrant himself. "If they are breaking the law like this, taking advantage of people to come to Canada and breaking their matrimonial vows, they have to be responsible for that. They should have to pay. They

should not have all the privileges of a permanent resident if they lied to get into the country.

"They committed fraud," he argues. "They have to face the consequences of playing with people's lives."

And surely that should mean losing their golden ticket to stay in this country.

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Do you know anyone who was hurt by arranged love?

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