

## DOUBLE TAKE

On a street in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, Doreen Giuliano, 46, reprises her role as "Dee Madison Quinn."



# MOTHER JUSTICE

When her son was sentenced to 25 years for Brooklyn's 2003 "grid kid" slaying, Doreen Quinn Giuliano was sure he'd been wrongfully convicted. To prove it, she went undercover, testing her sanity, her marriage, and the justice system. It was a desperate move—and it may have worked

BY CHRISTOPHER KETCHAM

**N**ovember 2007, an apartment in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn: Dee Quinn is partying with a man she often identifies in her journal as "Target." Dee is 46 but doesn't look it. She is tiny, girlish, with golden-blond hair. Her breasts are high in a push-up bra. Wearing heels, she arches her back. Target, who is 32 and has a shaved head, doesn't want sex. He's hungry. Dee cooks. They talk at the bar in the kitchen.

Hidden in her handbag on the nearby table is a digital recorder. She will secretly tape their discussion that night, and will eventually gather countless hours of conversation. She cooks Target dinner. They drink wine. They smoke weed. Target likes marijuana. At two A.M., Target leaves the apartment with a full stomach.

Only then does Dee let the mask fall. Her body shakes. She breaks into tears, overcome with the stress of months of decep-

tion. She has had Target under surveillance for an entire year before making contact, going so far as to rent an apartment around the corner from the house where he lives with his mother.

She stops crying, steadies her hand, reaches into the handbag, turns off the tape recorder, tests the sound, douses the lights, sits on the couch, and waits. She waits for Target to get on his way. She can't be seen leaving the safe house, not at this late hour.

When she finally steps into the cold Brooklyn night, she drives five miles—not far, but in Brooklyn that distance can mean traversing cultural continents—to a three-story house in a neighborhood of old Colonial and Victorian homes, an area called Prospect Park South. Her husband, Frank, has waited up for her, as he has for the past six months, worried that she wouldn't make it home.

Dee's real name is Doreen Quinn Giuliano.

"What'd you get outta him tonight?" asks Frank.

"Nothin'," says Doreen. "Nothin' that helps."

They've been married 18 years, but neither has ever experienced

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY SARA JOHNSON;  
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this kind of strangeness, this disquiet of a double life. They lie in bed awhile, but Doreen can't sleep, and by six A.M. Frank has to get up for work. "I'll get breakfast," she says.

Four years earlier, on the morning of October 12, 2003, two blocks from Doreen's home, a 19-year-old Fairfield University sophomore named Mark Fisher was found shot to death, his body splayed on the sidewalk, his face and chest riddled with bullets. He was draped in a yellow blanket and his shirt was torn open, the buttons gone.

The blanket, it turned out, was the property of Doreen Giuliano. It apparently had been given to Fisher by Doreen's son from her first marriage—20-year-old John Giuca—to keep Fisher warm against the night chill. Doreen had been in Florida vacationing with Frank that evening, and her son John had thrown a party while she was gone. Fisher ended up at the party, introduced to John's circle by a friend of a friend. He was, in reality, a complete stranger, far from his home, in Andover, New Jersey. Fisher had too much to drink and by night's end he needed a place to crash. John Giuca would later claim he last saw Fisher around five A.M. falling asleep on a couch in the house, wrapped in the yellow blanket. Sometime between five and seven A.M., Fisher had made his way out into the Brooklyn morning. By seven A.M., police were already retrieving his remains.

New York's tabloids called it the "grid-kid slay" because of Fisher's prominence as a high-school football star. John Giuca would soon become the prime murder suspect. More than 100 articles would run in the dailies, and a book would be published about the case, a supermarket softcover by Robert Mladinich, an ex-N.Y.P.D. detective, and Michael Benson, called *Hooked Up for Murder*. The book bore the tagline "First you party . . . then you die."

According to the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, the strapping Fisher had fallen victim to a penny-ante teen gang, run by Giuca, called "the Ghetto Mafia"—a possible offshoot of the notorious Crips. In the hours before dawn on October 12—so the story went—Giuca sent one of his "capos," a 17-year-old high-school dropout named Antonio Russo, to "get a body" for the gang. The *New York Post* followed the D.A.'s lead and ran a banner headline: GRIDDER SLAIN TO BOOST GANG'S REP.

Investigators lined up several witnesses who said Russo had confessed to being the gunman. What's more, Russo had acted suspiciously immediately afterward, suddenly cutting off his dreadlocks and taking a trip to California. The case against Giuca, however, was circumstantial, fragmentary, contradictory. Almost a year after the killing, in late 2004, two arrests were made: first Russo, then Giuca. A year later they went to trial before two separate juries on robbery and murder charges.

Doreen sat in the courtroom for three weeks during her son's trial. Many of his friends attended in "Free John Giuca" T-shirts. "Six hours a day I was there. And every day I thought the truth was gonna come out," she now says. "I kept waiting for it. Then, day after day, it didn't. And it never did."

What did come out was the testimony of four witnesses against Giuca, each of whom told the court a somewhat different story implicating him in the killing. One witness, a friend of Giuca's who had attended the party on Mark Fisher's last night alive, claimed that Giuca called him at six in the morning the day of the murder and later confessed he'd directed Russo to commit the crime. A second witness said that around the same period Giuca told her he had

lent the gun to Russo but did not order the killing or the robbery. A jailhouse informant, meanwhile, was brought out to testify that while in lockup with Giuca, many months after the murder, Giuca actually admitted to pistol-whipping Fisher and standing by as "one of his other friends" pulled the trigger. Giuca, in fact, admitted to getting rid of an illegal gun after the shooting, though the weapon was of a different caliber than the one used to kill Fisher.

"This case begins, continues, and ends with John Giuca," stated Assistant D.A. Anna-Sigga Nicolazzi, during her closing remarks. "All roads in this case lead back to this defendant. If it were not for this defendant, Mark Fisher would still be alive today."

The jury that heard the Russo case—listening to evidence pointing to Russo as the triggerman—took two days to find him guilty, nearly deadlocking. The jury that deliberated John Giuca's fate had taken just two hours to convict him. Doreen couldn't help thinking that the jury had been primed for a guilty verdict.

The judge sentenced both men to 25 years to life. "This was a callous crime, and the defendants' reactions were callous—brutal, callous, and shockingly senseless. So my sentence will be callous," the judge addressed the courtroom. The date was October 19, 2005, a little more than two years after Fisher's murder. Doreen felt as if she had been through this before. When she was 31 years old, in 1992, she lost her four-year-old daughter, her second-born with Frank, to cerebral palsy. Frank was at work, Doreen was preparing dinner, and Mallory was in her stroller in the living room. Doreen looked up and saw the girl wasn't right. "And I knew then she was dying. I rubbed her head and talked softly to her and held back my tears. She took one last deep breath. Then I laid her down on the sofa and knelt beside her."

#### Hardscrabble Roots

Doreen grew up in an Irish working-class family of eight in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, back when the neighborhood was truly rough. She knew what it was like to see families ruined by drugs, poverty, alcohol. Doreen's first serious romance, at age 18, with Giuca's father, John senior, had many of the rotten ingredients of Red Hook: he was a drug user and a criminal, in and out of jail. (He is now rehabilitated with a new family of his own.) She wanted a better life for her son.

She left John senior and got herself into school, at Kingsborough Community College, in Brooklyn, studying early-childhood development. She started a home day-care business, and for a time worked as a professional clown—painting faces, inflating animal balloons, doing magic tricks, sampling outrageous costumes. When she was 23, she met Frank Giuliano and fell in love. He was in construction. She did the books; he worked the job sites. They had a son, Matthew—John Giuca's half-brother—in 1987, and their business blossomed. They invested in real estate, becoming landlords of some Brooklyn properties, just as the New York real-estate boom of the 1990s came into swing.

John Giuca graduated from high school with good grades and went on to John Jay College to study criminal law. Due to his good

looks, he would land occasional roles as an extra in feature films, most prominently *Spider-Man*, *School of Rock*, and *Sleepers*, and on TV's *Ed* and *Law & Order*. Like many kids in their early 20s, he wasted his time, too: smoked a little weed, drank, juggled girlfriends, slept late, and sometimes hung out with kids who weren't as fortu-

#### 25 TO LIFE

Doreen's son John Giuca, 25, stays in shape in an upstate New York prison.





**ON A MISSION**  
Giuliano reflects on her ordeal during a quiet moment on a neighbor's porch in Brooklyn.



nate as he, kids who got into trouble—among them Antonio Russo.

Much of this was immaterial as investigators homed in on Giuca. Cops started watching him, following him, frisking him. Doreen contends her phone was tapped. When detectives searched her house in the wake of the murder, she says, personal items somehow went missing. Before long, Giuca claims, the cops wanted him to implicate Russo and to testify against others who might have been involved. Giuca says he refused. He stood by his story: he knew nothing about the killing, because he'd been asleep when it happened. (Asked to respond to these accusations, the D.A.'s office refused comment and denied a request for an interview with the prosecutor of the case.)

**B**y the summer of 2005, the Fisher matter had become something of a political liability for District Attorney Charles “Joe” Hynes, who was fighting to get re-elected. The D.A.'s investigators and Brooklyn homicide detectives had joined forces in a special squad to solve the Fisher case, interviewing scores of witnesses and sources across five states, with little to show for it. The tabloids harped on Hynes's failure to bring the killers to trial in an era when murder rates in Brooklyn had dropped to historic lows. Then, just weeks before the election, both Russo and Giuca were tried and convicted.

The dailies covering Giuca's trial, as if taking their cues from Hynes's office, painted Giuca as a mini-Soprano. Giuca, the D.A. claimed, had ordered the hit on Mark Fisher as part of a gang-initiation ritual. Trial testimony, however, suggested that the “gang” was merely a loose group of tough kids hanging out. And while it was indisputable that the alleged triggerman—the dreadlocked Russo—was a friend of the defendant's, during the trial Giuca's lawyers insisted that if Russo had done it, he had acted on his own. (Neither Russo nor Giuca gave evidence or testified against the other, behavior indicative of extreme loyalty, ignorance of the events—despite their proximity to the murder—or gang members' code of silence.)

The tabloids didn't buy Giuca's defense. The *Post* denounced Giuca as a “skinny creep” and the “head of a street gang,” and often misspelled his name. A *Daily News* article erroneously reported that Giuca had once been arrested for drug dealing. Doreen would never believe another word she read in the tabloids. “I hated those fucking [reporters],” she says. “The drugs were one bag of pot and one pill that was found on his friend—not even on John! So there's five guys. What—were they all gonna break the pill apart and sell it?”

While Giuca's arrest record is murky, it is not clean. Prior to the murder, Giuca, then 17, had been written up for an incident which he now insists was benign: he says he was just lighting firecrackers on a Brooklyn street. But following Giuca's arrest in 2004, unnamed witnesses, produced by the D.A.'s office, suddenly came forward to attest that the incident, in fact, had been gunplay. Giuca pleaded guilty to firearms charges, claiming he feared 15 years might be added to his sentence.

One day during a lunch break from court testimony, Doreen's brother Eddie and husband, Frank, were in line at a food wagon parked in front of the courthouse. They heard someone make the comment “Boy, I could sure use a blunt.” They turned around to discover it was a juror with a shaved head and

dark eyes and earrings in both ears. Eddie went over and told Doreen. It didn't seem right, Doreen thought, that a man deciding the fate of her boy wanted to go out and get stoned.

**T**he family of Mark Fisher also came to doubt the veracity of the case presented by the Brooklyn district attorney. Fisher's mother, Nancy, was particularly vocal. A devout Catholic from Colombia who immigrated to the United States, Nancy publicly charged that D.A. Hynes had shied away from going after all the parties who played a role in her son's slaying. In their book on the case, authors Mladinich and Benson write that Nancy believed that “some of those responsible for her son's death were not prosecuted because they had political connections and were able to pull strings.” In

## DOREEN STOPS CRYING, STEADIES HER HAND, TURNS OFF THE TAPE RECORDER, AND WAITS.

October 2006, on the third anniversary of their son's death, the Fishers filed a civil lawsuit against Giuca and Russo, and reportedly claimed that Hynes had held back crucial information from the couple in the course of investigating Mark's murder. "I won't go away until I get answers," Nancy told the *New York Post*. "I know that, and Hynes knows that." At the time, District Attorney's Office spokesman Jerry Schmetterer said, "It is totally inaccurate to say that there's any information that they've asked for that we haven't shared. The D.A. and the prosecutor have both said that if any information developed that would indicate that there were more suspects in this murder, we would move very aggressively." (The lawsuit is ongoing.)

Watching Nancy in the courtroom during the trial, Doreen had thought about what her own mother had gone through when Doreen's brother Brian was murdered, in Park Slope in 1980. Brian was standing on a corner outside a bar at four A.M. when someone jumped him and stabbed him. He made it home, only to collapse in the hallway of the house. He died at the hospital an hour later. "My mother was never the same," says Doreen. "When I remember that pain in my mother, I thought, If my John killed someone's son, he should be in jail forever."

Doreen started having a recurring nightmare. "I've had this dream maybe 50 times," she says. "[There's] the dreaded knock on the door. I'm told my son is dead, and I feel my stomach collapse and the blood drain from my body." In the dream, Mark Fisher transforms into her son Matthew, and Matthew transforms into her brother Brian, and Brian becomes her son John. She wakes up and remembers it's not her son who is gone, but Nancy Fisher's. "And when I wake like this I feel selfish for being grateful my sons are still here," she says. "I sit up in the bed and I wake Frank and he rolls over and puts his arms around me and asks if it was that dream again. I say, 'Yes,' and he asks what can he do, and I say, 'Nothing.' I know Nancy Fisher's pain so well, and there is nothing I can do, nothing."

When John Giuca was hauled away to serve his sentence, he asked his mother, "Mom, what are they doing to me?" Doreen's life went into a tailspin. She smashed up her bedroom. Frank thought she was having a nervous breakdown. The day of Giuca's conviction, his half-brother, Matthew, disappeared for three days, sleeping on park benches. Frank held the family together, going to work every day. Doreen cried herself to sleep, sometimes burrowing in her bed until dark, when she'd emerge to make dinner for Frank. Every other weekend, she would travel eight hours by bus to see her son

at the Upstate Correctional Facility, near the Canadian border.

Giuca went in thin, 135 pounds, weak and tired and scared. The food was "unrecognizable slop, inedible," he now says. "They fed you through a slot in the cell." The drinking water came out rust-brown, sometimes viscous. The showers were freezing. Only three hours a day of recreation were allowed. He double-bunked with a coke-addict burglar, who was doing 12 to life. "A good guy," Giuca recalls. "I was lucky." Another friend was stabbed,

but survived the attack.

Though Giuca's jailhouse world was racially polarized and tense, he managed to stay out of trouble, landing a job in the prison library, working 30 hours a week and making \$7

every two weeks, which was considered generous. He missed his mother's cooking. She tried to compensate, bringing him canned tuna, green tea, grape juice, and as much fruit as the guards would allow, though he claims a good amount was pilfered along the way. (He has since been moved to a less severe environment at Green Haven Correctional Facility, in Dutchess County, New York.)

## THE *NEW YORK POST* RAN A BANNER HEADLINE: "GRIDDER SLAIN TO BOOST GANG'S REP."

### The Sting

It went like this for a long time, Doreen in a daze, doing what needed to be done and feeling hopeless. Then, one day in early 2006, Doreen awoke from her stupor. The jurors, she told herself. Find something on the jurors. It was a desperate thought. She'd watched television cop shows: if you prove a

juror engaged in misconduct, it could overturn the case. She obtained the jury sheet, which listed the names and neighborhoods of the jurors. She got her hands on a transcript of the voir dire, the pre-trial review of potential jurors' fitness to serve on a case. She even managed, through a contact, to come up with a list of some of the jurors' addresses.

And so it began. She called her mission "the Sting."

Over the next eight months she spied on jurors. Mostly it felt like grasping at air. Without explaining her real motives, she asked a good friend, an African-American man, to approach one juror, an overweight black woman. The man flirted with the woman on her way to work. Not much came of it. Another juror, a black man in his 20s, worked in a grocery store in an African-American section of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Doreen decided she would start buying her fruit there. It was an odd scene: Doreen, a bleached blonde, bicycling miles from her home to shop at a far-off Brooklyn grocery. The guy worked in the meat department. "I charmed him and gave him

my number, and he said, 'How about we meet sometime?'" She met him that night in a park nearby. It was dark; she kept her bike close. They got to know each other. She was new to the neighborhood, she said. They had a second date. Nothing came of that either.

Next on her list of jurors was a



### LIFE CUT SHORT

From top: Mark Fisher, who was slain at age 19; Fisher's parents, Nancy and Michael, leave court after Giuca's alleged accomplice, Antonio Russo, is convicted of their son's murder; Russo, 17, outside his home in Ditmas Park, Brooklyn.



31-year-old Brooklynite named Jason Allo. He variously made a living as a truckdriver and a construction worker. He was the same shaved-headed guy Doreen's brother Eddie claimed to have overheard talking about smoking a blunt. She didn't think he would be much different from the others. But a memory began to nag at her. She recalled that a friend of her son's, who had attended the trial for days, later realized that the bald-headed juror was someone from the neighborhood—someone whose circle of friends occasionally crossed paths with John's. Was this a key oversight, she wondered? Before a trial, jurors are asked if they have any connection with the defendant, the kind that might jeopardize their objectivity in reviewing evidence. During the jury-screening process, Allo said he knew nothing about John Giuca. Perhaps the man had lied.

In Doreen's mind—and in the notes she kept—Allo became known as Target. Doreen came up empty when searching for public records on Allo. She knew he was from Bensonhurst, an insular Italian neighborhood. Warily, she sent out friends to snoop. Finally, one of the juror's acquaintances gave up his address.

Her main surveillance spot was the corner nearest his house, at 79th Street and 17th Avenue, where she could see both his front door and the window of his top-floor room. "I went through the seasons watching that house—Halloween 2006, Christmas 2006, Easter 2007," she says. "He decorated his windows to the fullest for every one. His cat sat in the window, so I knew I'd say I was a cat-lover when I met him. He'd leave at 7:15 in the morning, always with a backpack, and get on the train across the street from his house."

She followed Allo everywhere, in her car, on foot, on her bicycle. She discovered where he bought his marijuana; his dealer was the same old Spanish woman frequented by two of Doreen's relatives. She followed him to bars in Manhattan, to the supermarket, to the restaurant around the corner.

If he ate, she watched. When he did nothing, she watched. Most days were long and boring. Target usually didn't return home until four in the afternoon. She learned not to drink coffee, "'cause you have no place to pee. For a woman, this is not good."

One day in summertime, Doreen dressed up in a burka—only her eyes showed—and stood on the corner eavesdropping on a conversation Allo was having with a friend. "When you're in a burka," she says, "people ignore you."

Finally, in October 2007, she realized she was putting off the inevitable. Her son was in prison, and she was dancing around the edges. "Enough," she told herself. "I have to move on this guy." First, she needed to transform her appearance, because Allo might recognize her from the courtroom or from her days tracking him. She went to a tanning salon, got much too dark for her Irish skin. She worked out at a gym, rode her bicycle everywhere she went. She gathered a new wardrobe. "Sexy clothes only," she says. Short-shorts, tight blouses, push-up bras. She dyed her hair dyed blond.

She went to an espionage-supply store in Manhattan and bought the most expensive kind of hidden recording device she could find. She created a fake ID, set up a fake cell-phone account, rented an apartment that Frank paid for. John Giuca's two oldest friends helped her set up the apartment with furniture that she took from her house: a television with a DVD player, a bookshelf filled with books from John's room. She had a small table for the kitchen, and barstools at a countertop; an Oriental rug from her upstairs living room; two smaller tables that she decorated in *découpage*—with newspaper clippings glued together that said "innocent man"

and "freedom" and "a mother's love." Her small refrigerator was usually barren, a façade—like her name, like her cell phone, like the apartment. Her bed was only a futon. It was a playgirl's pad. When the friends hauled in the furniture, they didn't ask why she was moving in, and she didn't tell them, assuming they figured she was splitting up with Frank.

Frank said she was crazy. He was against the whole scheme. Doreen remembers that he started yelling at her one day in their bedroom. "You don't know what you're doing," she recalls him saying. "You're gonna fuck this all up."

"I ain't gonna sit here and do nothing," Doreen replied.

"Well, I know you're gonna do it anyways—you're thickheaded," Frank finally conceded, "so I might as well help you."

The next day, dressed in her short-shorts, she bicycled up and down Target's block, waiting to catch his eye.

Doreen had always put faith in the integrity of the American judicial process. "I was a believer in the system," she says. "What a joke! What a sad joke! How little did I know. This was a crash course in dirty tricks for me, in how the system really works."

The system, as Doreen perceived it, seemed to consist mostly of cops and prosecutors doing whatever it took to get convictions. Prosecutors do this regularly, according to Bennett L. Gershman, a professor at Pace Law School and one of the nation's leading experts on prosecutorial misconduct. "Whereas a prosecutor's motivation should be to vindicate the truth and administer justice," Gershman points out, "too many prosecutors seek to win a conviction at all costs by engaging in conduct calculated to produce a wrongful conviction."

John Giuca's counsel, Manhattan defense attorney Lloyd Epstein, has pointed out some of the most glaring problems in the case of *People v. Giuca*.

## SHE'D STAY OUT TILL FIVE A.M. AND COME HOME TO FRANK SMELLING OF ALCOHOL.

Law enforcement in Brooklyn, Epstein wrote in an appellate brief filed last March, "was under enormous pressure" from the public and the media. As a result, the prosecutors directed by the Brooklyn D.A. did what prosecutors too often do: they "made a mockery of Mr. Giuca's right to a fair trial."

"The prosecution presented the jury with multiple, contradictory theories of Mr. Giuca's role in the crime," according to Epstein. The first theory was that John had lent Russo the gun with which Russo shot Fisher. In this scenario, John provided the weapon but never ordered the shooting or the robbery. A second theory was that John had ordered the shooting, but it's uncertain where the gun came from. A third theory was that Giuca had pulled the trigger himself—for \$20, to be shared with Russo. There was no physical or forensic evidence to back up any of this. (No murder weapon was ever found.) Instead, the prosecution relied on the testimony of its witnesses. The D.A.'s office had subpoenaed 150 people, but the D.A. culled just four to specifically vouch for Giuca's involvement. Their individual accounts were often at odds. Three of the four had cases in the courts pending against them or family members. "All of these witnesses had significant criminal records and/or motives to fabricate," Epstein wrote in his court brief.

### Setting the Trap

During the Indian summer of October 2007, Jason Allo stood on a corner near his apartment as Doreen, in short-shorts, "happened by" on her bicycle. Allo was drinking coffee with a friend, Richie. It was Richie who whistled as she passed.

Doreen wanted to ride on. She was terrified. But she could not back down now. She turned the bike around and pedaled up to

Richie and Allo. Arching her back, she smiled her sweet smile.

She was new in town, she said, just in from California. She gave the impression of a lost and lonely thirtysomething getting to know the neighborhood. Where could she drink at the bars and eat at the restaurants for cheap? Where could she go dancing? She admitted she was a party girl, winking as she spoke. On a hunch, she purposely ignored Target and turned all her attention to his companion. The ploy worked. Within 10 minutes, the prey was asking for her number: "If you need anything," Allo said, "just give me a call."

According to Doreen, Allo suggested he could get her marijuana if she needed it. She saw an opening. "Yeah, I could use a bag," she said before speeding away.

She called him up a week later and arranged to buy \$20 worth. She gave him a fake business card. "Dee Madison Quinn," the card said. "Business Management Specialist." And they were off.

Over the next six months, through the spring of 2008, she became Allo's secret pal. She'd stay out till five A.M. with him and come home to Frank smelling of alcohol and the meals she had cooked in her pied-à-terre. Most nights, Doreen recalled, Frank would listen to the recordings: Had Doreen been able to steer the conversation toward the facts, toward the trial? Had she come up with any hard evidence that Allo or his fellow jurors had railroaded John Giuca? Had Doreen ever gotten just a little too close to this bald-headed stranger?

In Doreen's mind, he didn't have a name beyond Target. Yes, he was Jason Allo, a human being. But to her, he was T., an object, the means to save her son. She was a liar and a fraud and she was deceiving him at every moment. She hated what she was doing.

They'd go out drinking in Manhattan but never in Brooklyn. She couldn't risk bumping into cousins, sisters, aunts, friends. "Nobody except Frank really knew," she says. "I gave up family. I gave up holidays, birthday parties. Most of my family still don't know what I was up to. I lost a lot of friends—they all took it personal." When she finally told John about the ruse, she had to do it in a coded letter—all communication with her son in prison was monitored. She and John had developed a secret language that they embedded in their correspondence. For a desperate mother and son, the Sting provided a semblance of hope.

Doreen says her husband demanded she hew to one rule in her relations with Allo: no sex. "Don't ever cross that line," he told her. Doreen agreed. But in her mind she had already decided she would do whatever was required. "I woulda had sex with him if that's what it took," she says. "But the tension was never there. He was never into me."

"Friends, just friends," Allo would say when she got too close. She was repelled by Allo. She found him shallow, yet she pretended to be interested in everything he said.

Early on in the Sting, she knew very little about digital recorders and computers, and she knew nothing about how to transfer the recordings to a laptop. She relied on her brother Eddie, in upstate New York, to transfer the recordings and keep them safe. The drive up to her brother's place scared her, because she had an irrational fear of losing the tapes in a car wreck. With a black felt-tip marker, she wrote across her body—on her legs, arms, stomach—the name of her brother, his address, his phone number, with instructions that whoever found the tape recorder was to deliver it to Eddie. "It took me three days to wash that off of my body," she says.

One night that fall Allo wouldn't leave the apartment. "I made up every excuse. I had to work in the morning. I had a headache. Finally, he left at two A.M., drunk and high, and I poured the rest of the wine down the sink and threw out all the food, and I took off my aching high-heel shoes, ripped off my stupid tight pants—all woman stuff to fool men—and I locked the place up and was

going home." She was heading to her car with a handful of clothes when Target sneaked up behind her.

"Where are you going?"

She froze.

"I'm . . . dropping off these clothes at the Chinese laundry in the morning," she told Allo. "Keeping 'em in the car so I won't forget." Allo insisted on walking her back to the house, which was locked and dark. She was in flip-flops and jogging pants—no longer the blonde in heels. "I know he sensed something wasn't right."

### "We Convicted the Guy"

A few weeks later, they were in Doreen's Sting apartment at one A.M. The music was loud. She heated up store-bought meatballs and pasta in a wok and told him, as usual, that she had made it from scratch. He said it was one of the best meals she'd cooked. Then he lit up a joint. Doreen says she hates pot. She contends she hadn't smoked in 25 years. But she smoked because he smoked. She told him she was working for a group called Second Look, which advocates for the release of prisoners who have been wrongfully convicted. "You know, I was on a murder case before," said Allo. The recorder, she knew, couldn't pick up everything he was saying—the music drowned their voices. "We convicted the guy," said Allo. Doreen was high from the smoke. She couldn't speak.

But by December they were coming back again and again to Giuca's trial, how glad Allo was to have served on it. "I'll tell you this, but I'd never tell anybody else," Allo said. Cooking at the wok, Doreen hung on every word, knowing the recorder was capturing it all. "I had some type of information [about the case]," he continued, later adding that he "used to hang out with these guys, not these two exactly. But, like, the clique. I know them since high school."

Doreen's brain raced. The juror had admitted, on tape, that he had had some connection with the defendant prior to the trial. This was the opening she had been pursuing. She smiled and drank the wine and felt sick. "Then I pushed every emotion deep into my gut and continued on," she says. "Remember, this guy I am meeting took my son away from me, and I have to laugh at his jokes, agree with everything he says, and all along I want to punch him in his face. One day I went into the bathroom and cried and when I came out he asked me if everything was all right. I said I have allergies."

New Year's Eve came, and Allo wanted to spend it with Doreen. She made her best excuses: she was tired, overworked, staying in. Allo liked the wine that Doreen showered on him. She was a California girl, so she drank the best California Chardonnays and Pinots. When he got drunk now—he trusted her—he went on and on about the Giuca case, how the jury couldn't agree on a verdict. "The funny thing," Allo said, "is I was the first one to be, 'All right, guilty!' They were like, 'I don't know,' they were debating." Doreen trembled. She was in the kitchen cutting garlic and onions. She wanted to stab him.

"Technically, by law, I shouldn't have even been in that jury," Allo said. "Because they ask you in the beginning when you go to jury duty, they read you a list of all the witnesses. . . . And if you know or are affiliated with these people in any way you have to let them know." And Allo hadn't.

"I felt like vomiting," she now says. "I saw stars. I had to lean against the sink not to fall down."

That night, she says, she rushed home to Frank and jumped up and down screaming in the darkness.

"Calm the fuck down. What happened?"

She told him.

"So he said he shouldn't have been on the jury? Well, we don't know the law," said Frank. "We don't know if that's good."

It was, in fact, very good. The law is clear: John Giuca, based on the evidence secretly gathered by his mother—along with other

**ON TARGET**

During their final encounter, "Dee" poses with Jason Allo, 32, in a Brooklyn bar.



discrepancies in witness testimony—may very well be entitled to a new trial. Even if Allo didn't understand the questions during voir dire of a connection to Giuca, under his oath as a juror he was obliged, once their intersecting circles became apparent, to inform the court of this conflict.

In addition, according to Doreen's affidavit, which attorney Epstein has prepared to file in court, Allo also admitted on tape that he used to hang with members of the Ghetto Mafia (the gang prosecutors contend Giuca belonged to), that Allo's cousin had dated a woman whose family's house was used for Ghetto Mafia meetings, and that during the trial this cousin and Allo discussed events related to the case, referring to Giuca as a gang big shot named Slim. "It virtually demands a reversal of the conviction," says Ezra B. Glaser, a legal adviser to Doreen. "There are New York State and U.S. Supreme Court precedents. He [Allo] knew what he did was improper."

### The Endgame

May 3, 2008, was the last time Doreen saw Jason Allo. A few months earlier, she had recruited a media-savvy acquaintance for assistance. The friend told her, "Get pictures of you and Target."

So they did. Doreen arranged a final rendezvous. Allo was out on Long Island, working a construction job, but he'd take the train in to see her. The friend would shoot the photos. They would pretend not to know each other. Doreen didn't expect that Allo would chirp his head off that night.

It was in a crowded Brooklyn bar on a Saturday night, and it took the friend, whose name was John, 20 minutes to land a spot next to Doreen and Target as they drank.

## DOREEN WAS HEADING TO HER CAR WHEN TARGET SNEAKED UP BEHIND HER.

"Hey, mister," said Doreen. John turned around. "Would you mind taking some pictures?" She handed him her digital camera. John took several photos. The three of them started talking. Doreen steered the conversation to lawyers and the courts.

Allo spoke up. He had a braggart's tone. "You know, I served on a high-profile case, the Fisher case," he said. At one point, he leaned forward and said, "Yup, 25 years to life. I got no regrets." Doreen

seemed ready to let the mask fall, as if this final insult would break her. Then, her voice cracking, she threw her arms around Allo and turned to John and the color came back to her face and she was again Dee Quinn: "Isn't he something?" she said. Dee and Target laughed.

Afterward, at four A.M., Doreen sat in her car talking with a reporter about the encounter. She wore a formfitting red chiffon blouse and tight jeans, black suede three-inch heels, chandelier earrings, and a beaded white choker. Soon it was five, and her husband was calling on the cell phone. Then her son Matthew rang. They were asking about breakfast. "Gotta go. I'm old-fashioned," she said after hanging up. "I always have breakfast for my guys."

In October, John Giuca's attorney, Lloyd Epstein, made preparations to file a motion to overturn his client's conviction. And Doreen's own lawyer, Joshua Dratel, working with a private investigator, had her place one last phone call to Allo to get him to repeat some of his admissions, which he did, as a digital recorder caught it all.

"What do I learn from the case?" Epstein asks rhetorically. "Sometimes a mother's love will reveal things that the most diligent lawyers and investigators can never imagine." □