

ANOTHER ROUND OF EXHILARATING GROWN-MAN SHIT FROM GHOSTFACE KILLAH
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THE TWISTED
RELATIONSHIP
OF THE
GOTH GIRL,
HER PREPPY SISTER,
AND THEIR
MURDERED FATHER

EXTERMINATING ANGEL

BY MARIA LUISA TUCKER

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The twisted relationship of the goth girl, her preppy sister, and their murdered father

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It was just after 1 p.m. on a hot July afternoon when Brigitte Harris walked out of her Rockaway home without locking the door. Cell phone in hand, she headed toward the nearest police station, but stopped a block short of the 100th Precinct.

Back at her cozy, third-floor apartment, where she regularly hosted informal parties, her father, Eric Goodridge, was dying. Goodridge was a native of Liberia who spent much of his adult life moving back and forth from Monrovia to Staten Island. On this stint in the U.S., he was attending to a host of medical problems. At 55, he could barely walk, plagued by infected keloids on his legs, as well as kidney stones and a failing liver. But these were not the ailments that would ultimately kill him. Harris dialed 911 as she walked away and asked that an ambulance be sent to her address. Someone was bleeding to death on the third floor, she told the operator. EMTs arrived at a chilling scene. Eric lay with a towel wrapped around his head and stuffed into his mouth, strangled to death. A table had been broken in a scuffle. Nearby was a scalpel that the 26-year-old Harris had bought on eBay just a few weeks before—a tool that friends believe was originally meant for her own suicide. But it was her father's blood that was slowly, steadily pooling under him. He had been castrated, and the severed penis was missing. What did remain were notes that hinted at a history of sexual abuse. "He wrecked my life," read one. "At first, I blamed myself. Now I know it's not my fault," another reportedly said.

Half an hour later, Harris was still on the line with a 911 operator, wanting to know what was going on at her home and if her father was still alive. When the operator asked what happened, Harris was reticent. "Forget it," she replied.



She said only that she was not thinking straight. That she needed to talk to her sister.

Carleen Goodridge and Brigitte Harris, born three years apart, grew up in a sprawling and deeply divided family, traumatized by infidelity, abandonment, rape, war, and now murder. As the elder sibling, Carleen has been both an enemy and a champion for Brigitte. The two battled over whether or not to confront their father about his abuse of them. "My sister, she just always wanted to talk about it. She wanted help. She wanted people to know what he was doing," Carleen says, but "I wouldn't allow her to talk about it. That's what divided us."



Courtesy Alicia Hill

Brigitte Harris's MySpace page portrays a young woman with interests ranging from musical theater and sewing to heavy metal and the occult.

In the aftermath of her father's murder, Carleen has been talking a lot. She launched a public-relations campaign to "Save Brigitte." Within 36 hours of the murder, she had hired star defense attorney Arthur Aidala and told the world that both she and Brigitte had been victims of a pedophile father who regularly and repeatedly raped them from a very young age. Within a week, Carleen had set up a website collecting donations for a defense fund and had held press conferences to round up support. The murder of their "monster" father was simply karma, she told Montel Williams and audiences at a candlelight vigil. If Brigitte snapped, she implied, it was their father who had pushed her.

Thanks to Carleen's efforts, a small crowd of supporters have lined up behind Brigitte, including U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer and New York State Senators Eric Adams and Diane Savino. In addition to shining a spotlight on the case—which may help Brigitte win a lenient sentence—one has also directly assisted Carleen professionally. She was hired as Savino's executive assistant last month, which provided a much-needed income and direction for the struggling single mom.

Meanwhile, as the case heads toward trial—the plea agreement that the defense had hoped for has yet to materialize—Brigitte's family has become increasingly polarized. Carleen and her maternal relatives have portrayed Brigitte as a victim who finally snapped, while Eric's side of the family denies any sexual abuse and say the sisters planned their father's murder for ulterior motives. The family split was apparent during a court date last month. Seven members of Eric's family traveled from Rhode

Island and Colorado to attend a brief hearing at Queens Criminal Court, where they exchanged information and hugs with the prosecutor. Carleen was notably absent; in her place was an advocate from a domestic-violence nonprofit that helps those in trouble for retaliating against their abusers. Lawyers have asked for more time to review evidence before returning to court on January 4.

Hanging in the balance are two sisters whose lives have drastically diverged. Sitting alone in a cell in Rikers psych ward, facing 25 years to life, Brigitte is drugged into a Stepford-like cheerfulness that friends say she never had in her earlier life. Meanwhile, Carleen has been launched into a spotlight she seems to

thrive in, saying she has a newfound purpose as a spokesperson for victims of child abuse. One sister is locked up, and the other has been set free.

"I started speaking out to help my sister and now I just can't stop," Carleen says.

Carleen's story of abuse starts with an automobile ride 25 years ago. "I remember being excited to go home with Daddy," she says during one of several interviews with the *Voice*. But they took a detour. Her father pulled over and forced her to perform oral sex on him. She was just four years old. It was the beginning of years of abuse for both her and her sister, she says.

The girls were vulnerable from the start, born into a chaotic family with an unfortunate set of parents. After their father immigrated to the U.S. as a young man, he became entangled with Lucy-Anna Harris, a fellow Liberian who was four years his junior. By the time Lucy became pregnant with Carleen, Eric was already cheating on her and bringing other girlfriends over. "He was a womanizer, he liked lots of women, especially small girls," Lucy writes in a series of e-mail exchanges from Liberia. When she protested, he kicked her in the stomach and back. Despite the abuse and philandering, the couple had two more children together. Brigitte was born in a car outside a Staten Island hospital in 1981. (Both Lucy and Eric would go on to have many more children by multiple partners. Lucy has had 16 children, only 10 of whom are still living. Eric fathered an unknown number of kids—rela-

tives estimate that it is also in the teens. Neither has a history of taking particularly good care of their offspring.)

At some point, Eric became serious with one of his other girlfriends, a teenager named Joanne.

"I never stopped loving Eric, I only let him go the day he got married to Joanne," Lucy says. With their relationship finally severed, Lucy packed up and went back to Liberia, leaving all the kids with a baby-sitter. She says now that she went home to attend a funeral and simply did not have the money to return to New York.

The children were eventually taken into state custody, where Eric quickly claimed Carleen, whom he and his new bride had always considered their own. They later went back to pick up Brigitte and two other boys that Lucy had left behind.

After he took in the children, including one boy whom he may not have fathered, Eric's reputation as a nice guy was bolstered within New York's Liberian diaspora. The community knew him as a devoted dad and successful entrepreneur who ran a record store, an import-export business, and a taxi and limo service, all based in the Park Hill neighborhood of Staten Island.



Carleen Goodridge with the father her sister would later kill, Eric Goodridge

Behind closed doors, however, Carleen says he was raping her and forcing her to engage in oral sex. She knew her father was also molesting Brigitte the day she saw her little sister touching herself. She said he regularly raped them both in his bedroom with the door closed, or in the basement as the rest of the family slept upstairs. "It would happen two or three times a month, then maybe a month break, or twice a week."

At 10 or 11 years old, Carleen told her stepmother, Joanne, about the abuse. "She told me to get ready to talk to the police, but then my father talked to her and said, 'I was showing her how to clean herself.' And they blew it off. My father was very manipulative.... There were times where our father would say stuff like, 'A dad is supposed to try a daughter out before her husband.' He would say things like, 'It's OK for a father and daughter to sleep together.' People probably heard it, but you're just paralyzed to comment on something like that. I'm sure more people knew, but, like me, people didn't want to say anything."

Carleen and Brigitte's lives diverged in 1994 after Eric and Joanne divorced and the children were split up. Eric had returned to Liberia a couple years earlier, and now sent for Brigitte and her two brothers to join him in Monrovia. Carleen, now 15, stayed behind with

her stepmother and other siblings. For Carleen, the abuse was already becoming a distant memory that she preferred to forget. But for Brigitte, it was about to start all over again.

While Carleen lived with her stepmother, whom she describes as "wonderful, funny, a cornball," Brigitte was in Monrovia in the middle of a civil war.

At 12, Brigitte ran away to stay with her mother, Lucy, whom she had not seen since she was a baby. Lucy took her in, but living in a cramped five-story apartment building with several other siblings, the family had little to eat and struggled to survive.

"We had to help sustain her sometimes," says Wolo Della, a Pentecostal pastor in Monrovia who lived in Lucy's building. "I asked her why she was going through all she was going through... why wasn't [Brigitte] living with her father, or why the father was not supporting them." Lucy told him that Brigitte was being molested by her father and appealed to him for help. But "[Eric] was always one place and very busy, and I was a very busy pastor... so we never talked." Della says he believed the story of abuse, but did nothing about it. "Whenever

Carleen Goodridge and Brigitte Harris grew up in a sprawling and deeply divided family, traumatized by infidelity, abandonment, rape, war, and now murder.

a war takes place, a lot of things happen. A lot of people become so evil and negatively inspired," Della says. "There have been a lot of rape cases around."

Meanwhile, Eric—by now an official in Liberia's transportation ministry—began threatening to have Lucy arrested for kidnapping. Brigitte tried a final attempt at fleeing; she went to the U.S. Embassy to plead that they send her back to the States, away from her father, but got nowhere. Rebuffed at every attempt to get away, Brigitte was eventually returned to her dad.

Afterward, Eric kept her passport hidden to ensure that she didn't try to leave the country again. Brigitte, meanwhile, counted the days until her 18th birthday. As soon as she was officially an adult, she went to the embassy and, this time, they helped her return to the U.S.

For a time, Brigitte lived with the Goodridges in Providence, Rhode Island, where

her relatives noticed something strange about her. "She was reading a lot of Harry Potter and had a lot of piercings," says Debra Clinton, a cousin. "She just seemed different—you know, like dark."

After the story of the murder broke, the media found in Brigitte Harris an irresistible figure: a goth girl obsessed with revenge. She called herself "Dark Angel" on her MySpace page, a nod to the television show of the same name. Newspaper stories noted her attraction to revenge films and her adoration for bands like Otep, a heavy-metal band fond of lyrics about hate and vengeance.

Outside of her work as a security guard at Kennedy Airport, Brigitte dwelled in a world of goth music, frequent drinking, piercing, movies, and art. She shunned romantic relationships, instead surrounding herself to conversations about suicide and family dysfunction. Together, they frequented parties hosted by Hidden Shadows, a group of vampire enthusiasts that meets in Harlem. Studied chokers, brightly colored hair extensions, and a uniform of black, often shapeless clothes are the aesthetics of her circle. They are the kind of group that would get stares from passersby gawking at their baggy pants and black lipstick made all the more unusual because they adorned young African-American women.

Carleen set out to counter the image of her sister as a deranged, cold-blooded goth killer. She is the picture of middle-class preppiness, her makeup flawless, her oversized designer bag matching her stiletto-heeled boots. Photos of her three beaming kids are displayed on her computer next to images of her time at Army Reserve basic training, where she says she was regularly picked for leadership positions. She has a mantra of optimism and upward mobility—"I still have these aspirations and passions and things that I want to do.... I still believe there is a beautiful, beautiful world out there."

Carleen snagged an equally polished lawyer for her sister. Aidala is a guy with a clean-shaven head, a perfectly pressed suit, and a reputation for getting sympathy for killers. His claim to fame is his use of the "battered wife" defense for his client John Pickett, a gay man who suffered months of abuse before stabbing his partner to death in 1997. Once Aidala was hired, he immediately began reframing Brigitte as a victim whose goth look was a "cry for help"—a statement her goth friends did not appreciate.

The duo took the show on the road. Like any public-relations campaign, the one to "Save Brigitte" was painted in broad strokes. Carleen repeated her sound bites at press con-

ferences: Her father was a monster; Brigitte was a victim. When people wondered about the rest of the family—where was the mother? Were other siblings abused? Didn't anyone know?—the details were skimmed over, the family too sprawling and their history too complicated for TV.

They went to news stations to give interviews, held a press conference at City Hall, and shed tears with Montel on a show he titled "Betrayed by My Father." They even got a local women's group to raise money to clothe Brigitte in Rikers (brown and gray only, please). Scores of rape and incest victims also pronounced their support, with some even praising Brigitte for "taking that evil fuck out of this world."

Carleen is more philosophical: "The reality is that she will have to serve some type of time, but she needs help. We're sending a few messages here. Number one, child abuse is wrong, and no one should have to deal with it. Number two, you can't take the law into your own hands."

All the campaigning seemed to have had an effect on its real target, the Queens District Attorney's Office, which waited nearly three weeks before charging Brigitte with a crime: not first-degree murder—which would carry a potential life sentence—but second-degree murder and manslaughter. Aidala says he took this as a sign that the D.A. had an "open mind" and might be willing to negotiate a minimal sentence or confinement to a psychiatric institute.

The morning of Brigitte's arraignment, Aidala paced outside the courtroom, his ear glued to a cell phone. Her arrival from Rikers had been delayed by several hours without explanation. When two newspaper photographers approached Aidala and began snapping shots of him, he shoved his phone into a pocket.

"What are you doing?" he demanded, retreating from the flashes. If he was going to have his photo taken, he said, he wanted to look presentable. He put his pinstriped jacket on and the photoshoot continued, with Aidala attempting a serious-but-friendly pose that was meant to look candid.

Aidala's attempts to sweet-talk the assistant district attorney—"I'm saying good things about you over here!" he called out to an A.D.A. as she left the courthouse later that day—may be hindered by the Goodridge family's increasingly vocal challenges to Carleen and Brigitte's story. In recent weeks, rumors, speculation, and old family hostilities have surfaced, complicating the streamlined story that Carleen has told.

"The uncle I know would never do those things," says Debra Clinton, the most insistent defender of the dead man. "Carleen was very, very close to her dad. It just doesn't make sense."

When Eric returned to the U.S. just two months before his death, it was Carleen who opened her door to him. Despite the history of abuse she has since exposed, she allowed him to stay in her home with her, her daughter, and her two sons. It was Carleen who drove him to and from doctor appointments. Relatives have even suggested that she was the one to take Eric to Brigitte's apartment the day of his murder. (Carleen has declined to comment on any details of the actual day of his death.) So now, some are confounded that Carleen has demonized the father that she loved. *

"Carleen is making all these things up—in my opinion, she's worse than Brigitte," Clinton says, acting as a spokesperson for the Goodridge relatives. "I truly believe Brigitte

could not understand Brigitte's disinterest in men and desire to dwell on the dark side of life. The two maintained a tense relationship that occasionally erupted into outright battles. Twice Brigitte called police to make criminal complaints against her older sister. The first time, she accused Carleen of grand larceny during a dispute over payment for a computer. Later, when the two briefly lived together in 2004, she called police to report that Carleen had assaulted her. The argument erupted when Brigitte spanked Carleen's daughter. "She hit my baby, and I just kind of snapped and attacked her," Carleen says. "It was like, 'Don't hit my kid. This is what it feels like to get hit.'" Carleen ended up spending a night in jail and subsequently kicking her sister out of the house. "I was a little more physically expressive back then."

It wasn't the only time Brigitte picked on someone weaker. She also got in trouble as a



Alana Cundy

Carleen Goodridge has led a public campaign to support her sister, and says she privately struggles with memories of also being sexually abused: "I'm really, really tired of remembering."

has mental problems and believes that she was molested." But with Carleen, "I don't think there's a mental problem there; there's a greed problem. There's a she-wants-to-be-in-the-news problem." Clinton has said, repeatedly, that Carleen is not the sweet person she appears to be in television interviews.

Carleen does know that her media image has been manufactured, in part. At 29, she has three children by three different men—kids she once considered abandoning at her lowest point, and whom she still fears she is screwing up. She has just earned her GED, but has made her way in jobs in real estate and administrative work by doing her best to erase a past as a runaway, dropout, and struggling mom who schlepped her family through shelters and welfare lines. "Sometimes I think I'm the best bullshit artist," she recently admitted to the *Voice* during a wide-ranging interview near her home in Staten Island.

Both she and Brigitte have violent tempers, which have flared mostly at one another. The two occasionally regarded one another as aliens—Brigitte could not understand how Carleen managed to maintain a seemingly normal relationship with their father; Carleen

could not understand Brigitte's disinterest in men and desire to dwell on the dark side of life.

As for the murder, the Goodridge relatives have told the district attorney's office that they believe money was the motive. Debra has only said cryptically that Eric was "getting some money in from Africa"—money she believes Carleen was after. She could not provide any details about where the money was coming from, when he was supposed to have received it, or how much it was. She vaguely suggested it was money for health care.

"What money?" Carleen responded when told of this accusation by a reporter. (She has not seen Clinton since she was a girl and rarely speaks to her.) "It has to be made up." She said she believed her father was broke, and that the only health-care funds he was expecting were from Medicaid—that, in fact, he owed money. New York Department of State records show that Eric had four warrants for his arrest for \$40,600 in unpaid child support.

Whatever the truth may be, Carleen's public accusations against her father have furthered an already-existing rift in the family. When the Goodridges planned Eric's funeral, they didn't tell Carleen when

tion inspires a lot of loyalty—and these days that loyalty is particularly useful.

In the week after Christmas 2006, Trimboli discovered what he describes as a little ball he could roll along his jawline; a few months later he was diagnosed with tonsillar cancer. After 30 rounds of radiation and chemotherapy—along with a surgery less than six weeks ago that's left him with little to no feeling on the right side of his head, neck, and shoulder (not to mention a wicked scar)—Trimboli appears to be in the clear for now: He just received his first clean bill of health. "It's like this aura of numb," he explains to me, waving his hand in circles over his head. "But I should regain it all back. Except my ear. The doctors say I might never feel my ear again."

With no insurance, though—like so many of the culture's most tireless supporters—Trimboli owes mountains of money: to Bellevue, where his treatment took place; to the companies whose credit cards he's maxed out; to the banks who approved his loans; to his landlords, for the rent he got behind on. Even money for his pre-treatment dental procedures: He had to have multiple teeth removed to clear the path for the radiation. "I listened to the surgeons hem and haw over which ones to remove—maybe this one, maybe that one," he recalls. "I thought, 'Well, now we're just shopping for fuckin' lingerie.'"

I ask if he's in real danger of losing the space. "Of course I am," he says simply. "The banks, the credit card companies... I'm in serious debt. But I'm fighting like hell to alleviate it."

Enter Brooklyn's DIY music scene—a chance for all those bands to whom Trimboli first provided a stage and an audience to give back. Unbeknownst to the man of the hour, Glasslands planned a benefit for November 21; Saturday night, Silent Barn hosted one as well. Spearheaded by Russ Waterhouse, a sometimes promoter and one-half of Blues Control ("About the greatest noise people who play" at GBM, Trimboli raves), the Silent Barn fundraiser offered sets by six bands in both the upstairs and downstairs spaces of

the house venue in Ridgewood, Queens. Prior to the show, when I ask Trimboli if he plans to attend, he waffles a little.

"I have a crisis of conscience regarding these things," he says. "You know, the whole time I had Scrap Bar, we only hosted two benefits. The first was for a guy stuck in the hospital; the second was for someone on trial for murder, I think, being held at Rikers Island or something. My understanding has always been that benefits are for people who can't get to where the party is."

In the end he decides to go, and we head over a little after 10 p.m.—sans Trimboli's ubiquitous "Fuck Cancer" cap, since he wants to "blend in." It doesn't matter, of course: The people who are there to support him know exactly who he is. Waterhouse commends GBM's democratic nature toward bands; he later relays news that people are contributing more than the \$15 cap on admission (the lowest suggested contribution was \$5). Upon introduction, John Chavez—a featured performer and Silent Barn resident who helped Waterhouse curate the show—tells Trimboli that GBM was the first place his former band ever played.

"What band?" Trimboli asks.

"Oh, the Punks," responds Chavez, clearly without any expectations that Trimboli might recall a band that played his space one night almost two years ago.

"Aw, hell yeah," Trimboli shoots back, recalling details of the group down to the occupation of the drummer's father. "I have a recording of that show on one of my hard drives." This is a man who books four bands a night, seven nights a week. And while some forgettable acts probably don't occupy such specific space in his memory, the fact that many do speaks to his earlier claim that at GBM, fans are there to really listen to the music. So's the owner.

When I ask Trimboli when he might see the fruits of everyone's efforts, he waves off the question. "I'm just tickled pink that anyone thought about doing it," he says. "I don't expect anything. I've done the best I could. And if it's meant to be, something good will happen."

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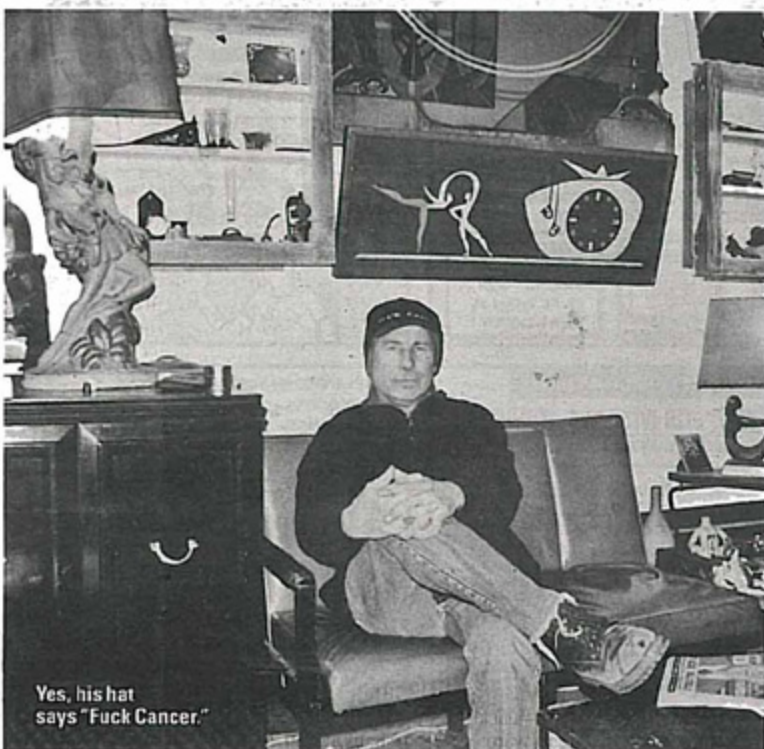
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Yes, his hat says "Fuck Cancer."

or where it was being held. She only found out afterward that the service had taken place on an early morning somewhere in Rhode Island, and hasn't spoken to those relatives since.

This is Brigitte Harris. She has a fucked-up family," Alicia Hill can be heard saying as she points her camcorder at her friend. Alicia has a habit of bringing her video camera everywhere, and on this night, several months before Brigitte would be accused of murder, Alicia was cataloging an evening out with Brigitte and another friend, Bethany Jefferson. The trio were leaving a screening of the ice-skating spoof, *Blades of Glory*, and stood out on a sidewalk, smoking cigarettes. Alicia was decked out in a studded leather collar, her lipring gleaming as she talked to the camera. Bethany, who, like Brigitte, has ever-changing hair colors, wore bright red extensions, a studded hat, black lipstick, and fingerless gloves. Brigitte seemed far away, her expression stony since her family was mentioned. She retreated into silence as the

Carleen set out to counter the image of her sister as a deranged, cold-blooded goth killer.

other two debated the evening's plans. When her silence became uncomfortable, they prodded her into speaking again. "You're gonna laugh later on and say, 'Damn, I was a grouch that night,'" Alicia joked.

Friends say that Brigitte was known for her sullenness, which only dissipated when she drank. In other videos, Brigitte looks calm and content, tipsily meandering through the grocery store trying to decide what to buy for dinner, walking to the beach with friends, or hanging out at her apartment with half a dozen friends and a table of empty bottles of Bacardi and beer.

Those friends never guessed what was behind her usual silence, since Brigitte had long ago stopped revealing her history of sexual abuse; she told them she was a virgin. She never spoke about her father, but would often complain about Carleen and the rest of her family. Alicia said they knew something was amiss but didn't press her.

Now, Bethany and Alicia are Brigitte's main connection to the outside world. They have visited her in the psychiatric ward of Elmhurst Hospital, where she was briefly sent by authorities, and they have sent cards and collected memorabilia of better times for her. They are fiercely protective of their friend, angrily defending her against naysayers who have posted nasty messages on her MySpace page. They bristle when Carleen arrives late or not at all for Brigitte's court dates. They were the ones who spent a couple of weeks cleaning out Brigitte's apartment, which was ransacked by

police ostensibly in the search for the severed penis. Most afternoons, Brigitte calls Alicia and Bethany on the limited phone time allotted at Rikers. On one such phone call, Brigitte agreed to speak briefly with the Voice.

"I'm drugged up, so it's actually pretty easy," Brigitte says about doing time. She mentioned that Rikers is better than the women's shelter she stayed in after Carleen kicked her out several years ago, and better than Elmhurst Hospital, where she was never allowed outdoors. Sounding calm and unperturbed, she named several medications she had been



Alicia Cundy

Bethany Jefferson (left) became friends with Brigitte while both were living in a women's shelter several years ago. Alicia Hill (right) has been collecting cards and photographs to send to Brigitte at Rikers.

given to regulate her mood, sleeping, and suicidal thoughts. She has been in and out of suicide watch since checking herself into the psych ward of Staten Island's Bayley Seton Hospital the day of the murder. At one point, Brigitte was trying to cut her wrists with a toothbrush. That was before the psychiatric drugs took effect. "She's now the most chipper I've ever heard her," Alicia said.

Dr. Nicoletta Pallotta, chair of a non-profit in Brooklyn called Women Against Violence, says that Brigitte likely suffers from

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a dissociative disorder, in which a person becomes disconnected from their emotions or thoughts. Pallotta has been informally counseling Brigitte by phone for several months, and says Brigitte's reaction is common among sexual-abuse survivors whose memories of rape become overwhelming. "She was talking about it as though she wasn't connected to it—about the fact that she killed him," Pallotta says. "She tried to get something from him and didn't get it. She wanted him to apologize."

Carleen, meanwhile, plans to continue investigating her father's actions. She believes her dad may have abused several other children in his care, including a 15-year-old half-sister in Liberia and the daughter of a family friend. "Once this is settled with my sister, I intend to prove full-blast that, look, he was a bastard!" When asked whom she wants to prove it to, Carleen squinted her eyes and growled back, "The Goodridges."