

HOW LISA'S LIFE WAS RUINED BY 'SOPRANOS' STAR

HE PROMISED he would love her for the rest of his life. He said he wanted to marry her. He told her they would have children – something she had always dreamed of. She had even bought her wedding dress.

But that was before one-time "Sopranos" star Vincent Pastore dragged his lover Lisa Regina from his car on a Little Italy street and beat her, according to prosecutors.

Now she is in hiding, cared for by friends, terrified of the man who shared her life for two years.

Her sense of betrayal is such that she believes she has wasted her life – believing that she was living a fairy tale only to discover she was locked in an abusive nightmare.

For the first time, those closest to Regina have given her account of the fateful day, which led to Pastore being walked from a police precinct house in handcuffs.

The details of their relationship are in equal parts romantic and chilling.

Pastore arranged their Atlantic City wedding himself, booking the venue and hotel for June 18.

Lisa, an effervescent, charming 44-year-old, showed off the engagement ring he had given her. Her happiness was complete when she bought her wedding gown.

Now she remains in seclusion, traumatized by Pastore's claims that he didn't touch her, that he is the victim, that he was never going to marry her.

Regina's longtime friend

and top criminal lawyer Jeffrey Todd Schwartz denies there were no wedding plans.

"The wedding was set for June 18. Everything was in place. She had her wedding dress. They'd booked a hotel in Atlantic City. He's an Atlantic City person. They had the place, the caterer. And he's said they weren't really going to get married – yet the cops found documentation that he was the one who made the reservations for the hotel.

"He gave her a ring, and now he's saying he was just letting her wear it so that he could trick her into meeting his parents. She's crushed ...

"She's embarrassed in front of her family, her nieces, her nephews. Her whole family has been rocked by this."

"She is devastated. She is really, really traumatized."

Pastore may regret his words. Prosecutors have obtained tapes and letters, in which he waxes eloquent about their impending marriage.

They also have tapes in which he talks about the "demons" and the "voices in his head that confuse him," the

Exclusive Inside story of the abusive relationship that left actor's lover battered, in hiding

Daily News has learned.

And a new eyewitness has come forward to describe how Pastore tossed Regina "like a football" onto the sidewalk on April 5. He was charged with two counts of assault, attempted assault and harassment. He pleaded not guilty.

But Regina fears that the burly 58-year-old actor will find her and hurt her again.

As her battered body and spirit heal, Schwartz, who is helping Regina press charges against the man she loved, spoke with The News about her condition.

"She's distraught," Schwartz told The News. "Like many battered women, she is afraid he's going to come after her again."

"He grabbed her by the hair in that car, yanking her head back so hard she bounced forward, hitting the gear shift. We believe that's where she got her black eye. He punched her more on the head. Then he

threw her out of the car.

"She's a petite little woman. She's about 5'5" and 110 pounds. He probably eats more than she weighs.

"She's out of the hospital. She's in hiding. Friends are taking care of her now. Her physical wounds are healing but the mental trauma continues."

He said Pastore's behavior piles on the agony.

"He keeps saying this garbage publicly that he didn't attack her and it's brutalizing her mentally. He's verbally attacking her over and over again in front of the world and she can't believe it."

The actor, who starred in the 1999-2000 seasons of "The Sopranos" as Salvatore (Big Pussy) Bonpensiero, claimed, "I didn't put my hands on that woman" — and that Regina beat him up after, he claims, she said she thought she was pregnant and he said he didn't want to marry her, because he didn't think it was his baby.

Schwartz counters: "There was an eyewitness in the car behind their vehicle. And the witness describes him getting out of the car, coming around and opening her door, and grabbing her by the hair and waist, lifting her and flinging her like a football onto the sidewalk."

It would be the first time Pastore abused her physically.

"But he has abused her emotionally and verbally in the past," Schwartz said. "He's left messages of rage. They're definitely of an abusive nature. I told her to save them because God forbid something would happen. I guess I was a bit prophetic, unfortunately."

Indeed, Regina begged Pastore to get therapy. Schwartz told The News, "He did, and he started taking medication."

But as Pastore wrote in letters to his fiancée, "The demons have returned. ... My insecurity, my jealousy, my rage, my anger — all my demons."

When Regina, who had been Pastore's acting coach when they started dating two years ago, tried to leave him, he turned "stalker," Schwartz claims. "He'd call her 19, 20 times a day. He'd leave messages, and you could hear the rise in the level of frustration. He'd accuse her of seeing someone else."

Regina would try to cut Pastore off completely. "She'd send all his stuff back. That would infuriate him."

Pastore's lawyer, Dominic Barbara, did not respond to specific questions by press time. Pastore is due in Manhattan Criminal Court May 5.

The letters, which the Manhattan district attorney's office has obtained along with the tapes as evidence, reveal a man torn by his love for this woman and his own inner violence.

"I have loved you more than any other woman in my life."

"I asked you to marry me because I wanted to live with you and have a family with you and that was sincere."

"But as time passed, you began to see the 'bad Vinnie,' the screwed-up, insecure person inside that has been destroying my personal life for years."

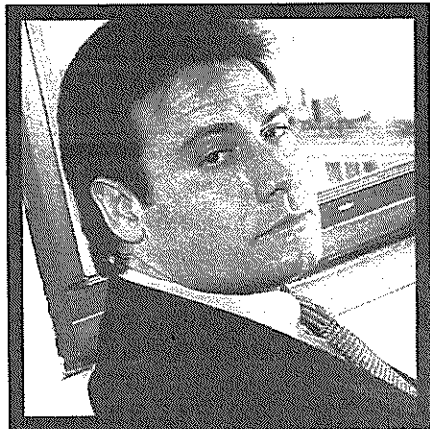
"I take back every bad name I ever called you."

In another letter, Pastore wrote:

"I know I will never find a stronger, sincerer love than



BY JOANNA MOLLOY



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