

Murder, She Says. Woman pleads guilty in slaying of Nesconset lawyer, says case was more than a botched robbery

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The fatal shooting of a Nesconset lawyer wasn't a botched robbery but a murder for hire, said a woman charged in the death of James DiMartino as she pleaded guilty to second-degree murder yesterday in Riverhead.

In exchange for a minimum sentence of 15 years to life in prison, Monique Randall, 19, said in Suffolk County Court that she helped arrange the Oct. 20 killing at the behest of DiMartino's friend and business partner, Ronald Thornton, 37, of Nesconset.

Randall, who met Thornton while she was working as an exotic dancer, said in court he enlisted her to help him find people to "do the job."

"And 'do the job' meant what?" Suffolk prosecutor Nancy Clifford asked her.

"To kill him," Randall replied.

She said Thornton supplied her with a gun that she gave to two men from her St. Albans neighborhood. One was her boyfriend, Donovan RAYSOR, 20, and the other was Darnell Festus, 23, the man police say pulled the trigger, killing DiMartino in a parking lot outside a restaurant in Commack.

Police arrested Thornton, Randall, RAYSOR and Festus earlier this month and charged each with second-degree murder. The three men have pleaded not guilty.

The day of the killing, Thornton lured DiMartino to the parking lot with the false promise of a business meeting, police said. RAYSOR and Festus were waiting there instead, police said, adding that Festus shot DiMartino in the head.

Randall's lawyer, Anthony La Pinta of Hauppauge, declined to comment outside court.

Thornton's lawyer, Gerard Donnelly of Hauppauge, did not return requests for comment.

RAYSOR's lawyer, Michael Brown of Central Islip, said Randall approached his client, but, when he refused

to become involved, Festus agreed to do it instead.

"My client wanted to have nothing to do with this incident," Brown said. "He is innocent. He was not at the scene of the murder, he did not purchase the murder weapon, he didn't touch the murder weapon."

Festus' lawyer, Jason Bassett of Central Islip, also continued to say his client was innocent. Bassett called Randall's admissions in court today "one of several" spurious versions of events that she had given authorities so far.

"Who knows if it's going to be the last one?" Bassett said. "She's now saying anything she can to save her own skin."

Judge C. Randall Hinrichs ordered Randall held without bail and scheduled her sentencing for Jan. 29.