

New Canaan Jennifer Dulos case: Norm Pattis tells author to ‘be gone, girl’

By John Nickerson



Fotis Dulos, center, is accompanied by his attorneys Norm Pattis, left, and Rich Rochlin after making an appearance at state Superior Court in Stamford, on June 26.

The search for Jennifer Dulos has continued amid a backdrop of sparring attorneys and a defense team’s controversial strategy to improve her estranged husband’s image.

Defense attorney Norm Pattis

has shot back at novelist Gillian Flynn, who criticized him last week for using the storyline of her book “Gone Girl” as a possible theory for Jennifer Dulos’ disappearance.

In a statement released Tuesday,

“Gillian Flynn’s ignorant fulminations about the Dulos case play to the very impulses she exploited in her book. So here’s a message to Gillian. Be gone, girl ... This isn’t fiction. It’s reality,” **Norm Pattis** said.

Pattis told Flynn: "Be gone, girl."

It was the latest in a series of verbal sparring spurred by Pattis and his defense team's strategy to repair Fotis Dulos' image while casting alternative theories to his wife's disappearance.

Fotis Dulos, 51, and his girlfriend, Michelle Troconis, 44, have been charged with tampering with evidence and hindering prosecution in the May 24 disappearance.

Rich Rochlin, who is representing Fotis Dulos in his criminal and divorce cases, defended the legal team's strategies, saying any lawyer has an affirmative duty to defend a client. Rochlin said that's particularly important in a case like this where he said Fotis Dulos has been negatively impacted by the media and the state's accusations.

"There are rules that require that we step forward and get the client's story out and paint him in the best possible light so that when the time for trial arrives, the potential pool of jurors has not been completely tainted by a one-sided effort to smear his name and tell only the state's side of the story," Rochlin said.

New Canaan criminal defense attorney Matthew Maddox said he's been thinking a lot about advocacy because of the Dulos case.

But he said while there is no

such affirmative duty that Rochlin talks about; attorneys take an oath to zealously represent their clients.

"But being a zealous advocate does not mean being an irrational advocate. There is a balance between the two. I believe that truly dedicated and competent lawyers are required to be the narrators of our client's story, but you better be sure your narrative is consistent and it can be substantiated. Not just in the immediate sense, but when you go before a jury, because jurors remember," said Maddox, who is not involved in the Dulos case. "You have to be very careful about what you put out there and theorizing about a missing mother who has mimicked a piece of fiction and has abandoned her children to live some other life is ultimately not something that is going to favor your client."

Pattis said last month that Jennifer Dulos once wrote a 500-page manuscript similar to Flynn's 2012 "Gone Girl" novel and could have used her "florid imagination" to frame her estranged husband.

Flynn responded Friday, saying Pattis' theory "absolutely sickens me that a work of fiction written by me would be used by Fotis Dulos's lawyer as a defense, and as a hypothetical, sensationalized motive behind Jennifer's very real and very tragic disappearance."

"Gone Girl" is about a woman involved in a troubled marriage disappearing on the couple's wedding anniversary. The woman fakes her own death to frame her husband while she goes into hiding. Flynn's book was converted into the 2014 movie by the same name that starred Ben Affleck, Rosamund Pike, Neil Patrick Harris and Tyler Perry.

"Gillian Flynn's 'Gone Girl' is the best book I've ever read on the misleading nature of circumstantial evidence. She made a fortune in royalties from the book and movie adaptation," Pattis said in a statement released Tuesday. "Just how her fictional aptitude translates into expertise on an actual criminal case is an even greater mystery, however.

"Candidly, Gillian's ignorant fulminations about the Dulos case play to the very impulses she exploited in her book. So here's a message to Gillian. Be gone, girl. There's serious work to be done here. This isn't fiction. It's reality."

Pattis and his team's strategy has bothered those close to Jennifer Dulos. A spokeswoman for her family said Pattis, who also claimed his team was investigating a "revenge suicide" theory, has made "irresponsible allegations" that hurt the five Dulos children "now and into the future."

Jennifer Dulos' divorce attorney,

Reuben Midler, said he felt it was “not appropriate” for the defense team to organize others to contact the media to “convey the defendant’s position.”

Last week, Fotis Dulos’ sister, Rena, reached out to media organizations, offering interviews to support her brother and also released a statement. Last Tuesday, Fotis Dulos agreed to his first one-on-one interview where he spoke to NBC New York, but refused to talk about specifics of the case.

Rochlin released a statement this week from a leader of a Greek water skiing association in support of his client. Nancy Mastrocosta, secretary general of the Hellenic Waterski and Wakeboard Federation in Athens, said Fotis Dulos “is not the person portrayed in the media.”

Rochlin said the defense team looks for people who have known Fotis Dulos for years, who find the allegations and charges against him to be completely out of character, and who feel compelled to tell their story.

“We will help them do that so their story can be heard,” Rochlin said. “His wife’s story is being told and that is an important story to be told, but there is another story to be told about what kind of a dad Fotis is and what kind of a person he is.”

Jennifer and Fotis Dulos have been involved in a contentious

two-year divorce that mostly centered on custody of their children. Jennifer Dulos’ mother, Gloria Farber, has been caring for the children since the disappearance and is seeking legal custody of them.

Fotis Dulos has been banned from contacting his children as part of the conditions of his release on \$500,000 bond. But Rochlin, who has filed a motion to suspend the divorce proceedings since Jennifer Dulos is unable to participate, said his client wants to have some form of communication with his children.

The charges against Fotis Dulos and Troconis stem from video footage showing two people matching their descriptions in Hartford the night of the disappearance. Fotis Dulos was seen on video surveillance dumping bags that contained his wife’s blood, according to arrest warrants. State’s Attorney Richard Colangelo said Fotis Dulos’ DNA was also found mixed with his wife’s blood on the faucet of her kitchen sink. ■