

a model bounty hunter

Domino Harvey was a model turned bounty hunter, the thrill-seeking daughter of a '60s film star. Now, the story of her life is being brought to the big screen, writes **Karen Moline**.

SHE WAS NAMED DOMINO after a character in one of Ian Fleming's James Bond novels. And when she died in mysterious circumstances in June this year aged just 35, Domino Harvey had lived a life every bit as dark and dangerous as any fictional femme fatale.

At the time of her death, the former *Vogue* cover girl-turned-bounty hunter, who regularly toted a 9mm Beretta handgun and a sawn-off shotgun she called Betsy, was out on \$1.73million bail for drug-trafficking after being caught with half a kilo of speed.

The daughter of British '60s heartthrob Laurence Harvey and international model Paulene Stone, Domino was an enigma.

Conceived during a passionate affair between the flamboyant and ruthlessly ambitious Harvey and the British *It Girl* of her era, Domino could have lived the luxurious life of a Hollywood princess, but she craved excitement and the adrenaline rush of the chase.

She was beautiful enough to pose for legendary fashion photographer Helmut Newton, but she turned her back on money and glamour for a life on the mean streets of Los Angeles, hunting down criminals before allegedly turning to crime herself.

According to her friends, Domino

wanted her life to mean something. And that wanting – in the midst of a troubled existence – was her undoing.

Now, Domino Harvey's short and fiercely lived life is coming to a movie screen near you in an \$80million action film starring another British *It Girl* – Keira Knightley of *Pride & Prejudice*, *Love Actually*, *Bend It Like Beckham* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* fame.

"The whole concept of the story, of this girl from an extremely privileged background who completely turns her back on all of it and goes off on this wild path, is an extraordinary idea in itself," says Keira, who met Domino shortly before her death. "She was an extraordinary woman, really amazing. It was fantastic meeting her because she was very intelligent and just incredible."

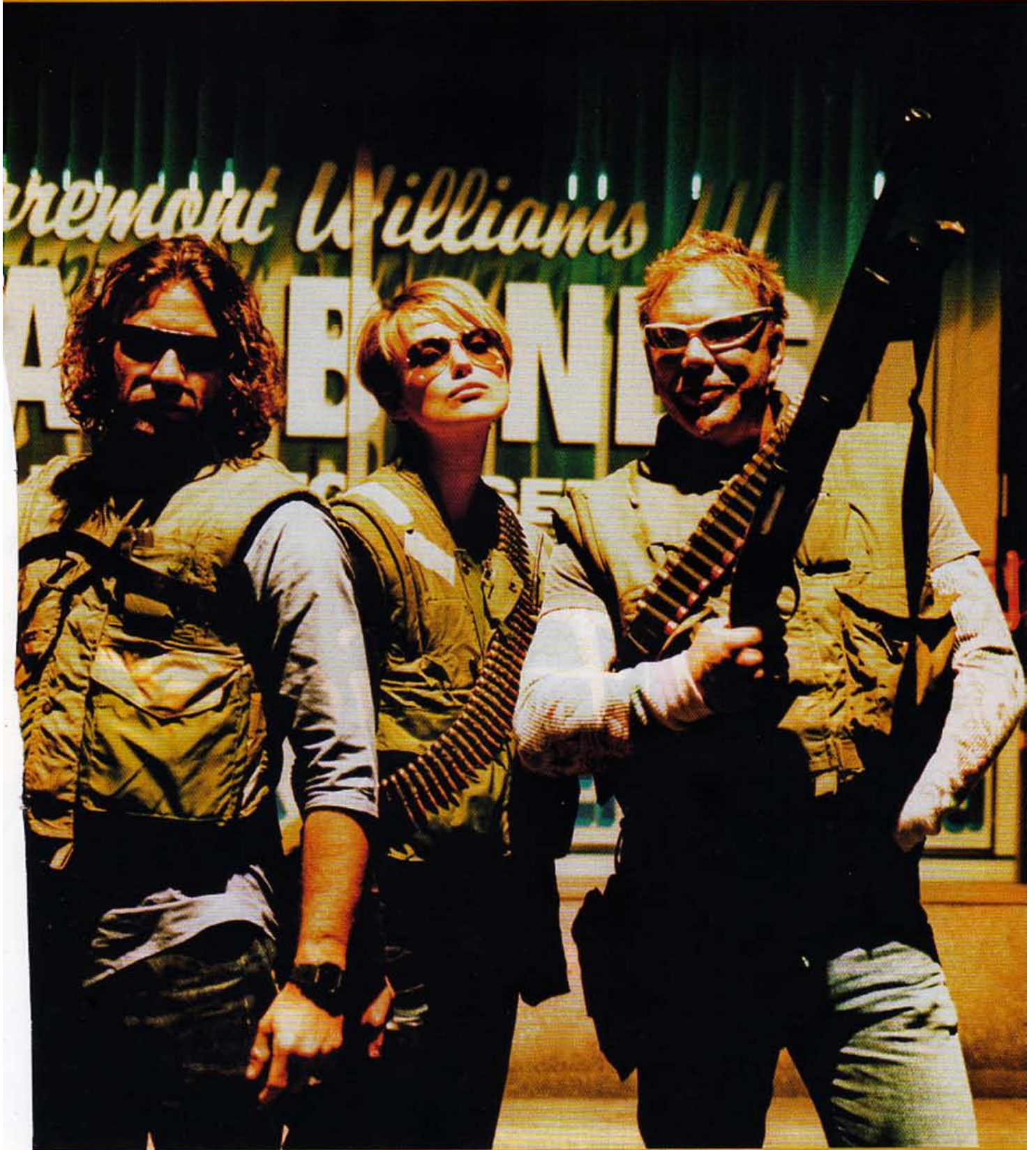
Intelligent and incredible are words commonly used to describe Domino.

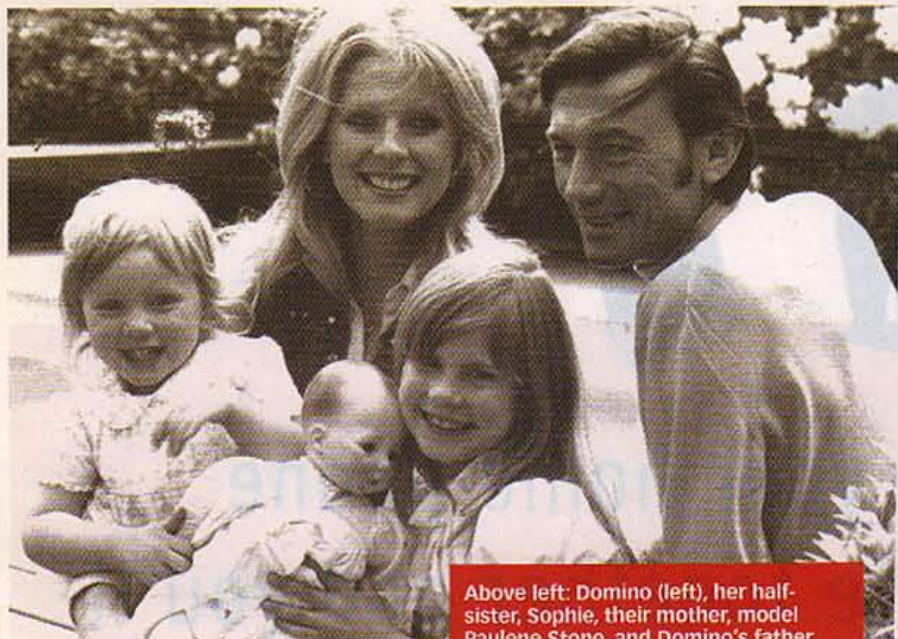
"She was incredible," says her former bounty-hunting partner, Ed Martinez. "I could tell she was exceptional the minute I met her. She was sly, sleek and had a wicked sense of humour, with a beautiful, sexy voice. She loved telling stories. She was so full of life. She was rebellious, but also loyal. She was unique."

Domino was born on August 7, 1969. Her father, Laurence Harvey, was the Oscar-nominated star of *Room at the Top*. >>>

Art imitating life: *Domino*, the film based on model-turned-bounty hunter, Domino Harvey, stars (from left) Edgar Ramirez as Choco, Keira Knightley as Domino and Mickey Rourke as Ed Mosbey.

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Above left: Domino (left), her half-sister, Sophie, their mother, model Paulene Stone, and Domino's father, actor Laurence Harvey, in the early '70s. Right: Domino, 16, during her shortlived modelling career in 1984. Pouting for the camera didn't suit her tomboyish nature.



The Manchurian Candidate and *Darling*.

It would be three years before her parents finally wed at a lavish party hosted by author Harold Robbins on New Year's Eve, 1972. Eleven months later, Laurence Harvey was dead from stomach cancer. He was 45.

His death was devastating to Domino, who was then aged four. "I sort of blame him for dying on me so young," she once said. "Mummy has been wonderful, but I missed him terribly, even though I had no real memory of him to miss."

She hid her pain behind a blustery façade. "When I was two, Dad bought me dungarees in every size. I was a tomboy who wanted to play only with Action Men," she recalled. "If I was given dolls, I cut their hair and pulled their heads off."

At six, she was collecting knives. At 10, she went looking for fights.

She was expelled from three schools before finally settling down to study at the disciplined, but more progressive, Dartington Hall, in Devon. "It was really relaxed. I spent my time making canoes and studying martial arts," she said.

By 1990, she was applying to drama schools. "My ambition was to get into films, but I needed training, an agent – and luck." She found none of it. Instead, she stumbled into modelling, joining Models One agency and landing on the cover of *Vogue*.

Fashion photographer Helmut Newton took a sexually ambiguous photo of her for *Vogue Hommes* – a picture that she loved. However, pouting for the camera

schoolfriend. In such an environment, drugs were an accepted part of the scene.

Then Domino went to California, "looking for the next thrill". She worked at a ranch near San Diego, where she became fascinated with guns, knives and shooting, then went to work for the San Diego Fire Department, where her trademark knife and drink of choice led to the nickname Dagger Baileys.

And then she found her calling, after going to one of Ed Martinez's classes for budding bounty hunters. She could indulge her fascination with weapons and find an outlet for her imagination as she became a real-life danger woman for two Los Angeles bail-bond agencies. One of her mottoes was: "It's a great day to die. Now I gotta go to work."

"Her English accent was disarming. People would never think she was there to

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Domino's inner turmoil and outer angst became more apparent after her mother married millionaire Peter Morton, the brains behind the Hard Rock Cafe chain, in 1978, and moved to Los Angeles.

Eleven-year-old Domino was packed off to Cobham Hall, an exclusive girls' boarding school in the UK. She was not happy. "When you're young and on your own in an English boarding school, you have to fend for yourself," she explained. "I think it was fear of the unknown and being alone that made me so aggressive. I was a natural ringleader and troublemaker."

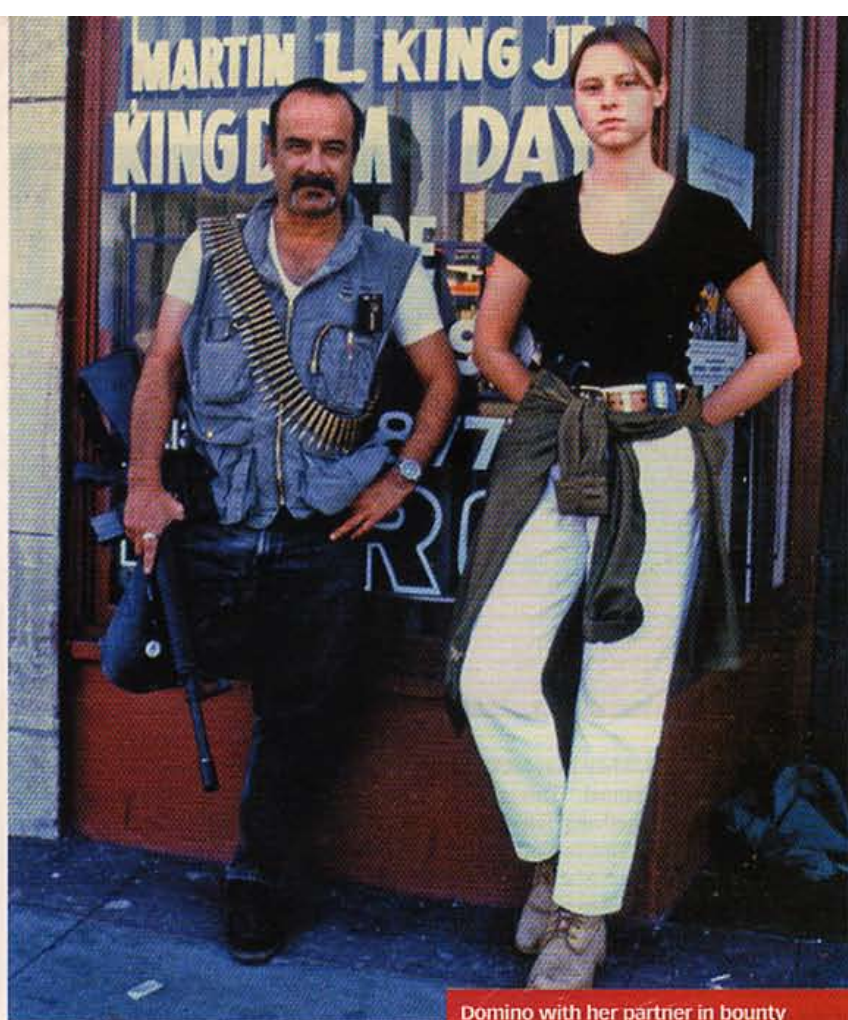
didn't suit her tomboyish nature. "I was so unhappy, trying to be someone I wasn't," she later recalled. "When I was modelling, they were trying to manipulate me. I realised I would never be able to take orders from idiots. I remember thinking one night that my life was meaningless."

For a while during the '80s, Domino worked as a DJ in clubs and even sold T-shirts outside the ultra-hip Love Club on London's Wardour Street. "Everyone who went out in London at that time went to that club and most bought one of her T-shirts," says Annabelle Neilson, a former

arrest them," Teri King, president of the Celes King Bail Bond Agency says. "She got the man 85-90 per cent of the time – drug pushers, wife-beaters and some tough guys accused of murder."

"There's no woman I know who's got more balls," says her ex-partner, Ed. "One minute, she was sweet and shy, and the next she would put the fear of God into you."

Toting her guns, Domino went to work each day, hunting fugitives in Los Angeles' worst, drug-riddled neighborhoods. Yet, even more astonishing, she continued to live at home with her mother in Hollywood. >>>



Domino with her partner in bounty hunting, Eddy Martinez, in the early '90s. "Nobody cared who her daddy was."

Her bedroom was decorated with a leopard-skin carpet and racks of guns, nunchuckas (two sticks connected with a short chain), samurai swords, daggers, and riot-gas canisters.

"For years, I never knew who her parents were," says Ed Martinez. "In our line of work, nobody cared who her daddy was and she never expected special treatment." Even after *Top Gun* director, Tony Scott, read about her in a magazine profile and optioned the story of her and Ed in 1994, originally planning to cast Sharon Stone

Domino risked her life every day for modest earnings.

"If we make a successful arrest, we receive 10 per cent of the value of the bond," Domino explained in one of the last interviews she gave. "Many of the cases I've worked on are worth \$130,000, but if you take in the time it takes to find the person and the expense of team surveillance, I don't earn that much. If I was doing this for the money I would

weight down below 45kg and her mother had to check her into a drug rehabilitation centre in Hawaii. Domino stayed for more than two years, then moved into a small house her mum bought for her in West Hollywood, and kept a low profile.

"Her background was somehow to blame for her addiction," a friend from rehab claimed. "We call it 'enabling', where your parents are always giving you money, but they don't give you firm conditions on how to live your life."

Domino talked about her personal losses in a poignant comment to her godfather, Peter Evans. "I know it's irrational, but I used to think that my dad's death was an act of rejection. The bottom line is, I'm the only child he ever had. That makes me very special, awfully privileged. But I also have a lot to live up to. My job description is to live life to the full, right?"

Laurence Harvey once said, "I never see a boundary I don't want to over-step." Domino Harvey was far more like her father than she ever knew.

Tony Scott bought the film rights to Domino's story and produced and directed the movie, *Domino*, and stayed in touch with her up to her death. "Domino never failed to surprise or inspire me over the last 12 years," he says. "On one hand, she was an adrenaline junkie by the nature of what she did. On the other, she was a bit of a wounded bird. A fascinating little thing."

"I helped her through some hard times, whether it was [with] money or advice. She always liked conducting life wide open and at maximum throttle. She was a free spirit like no other I have ever known."

Domino was still working part-time on cases, Ed Martinez claims, but the months leading up to her death were fuelled by controversy and problems.

Some reports claim that Domino was furious that she was portrayed in the movie as a temptress, to make her more

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as Domino, she was still the same, reticent to discuss her background.

While life as a bounty hunter might seem sexy and glamorous when it is portrayed by a beautiful actress of Keira Knightley's ilk, the world Domino inhabited in real life was populated by the dregs of society. To try and catch the criminals, bail-dodgers and absconders took a phenomenal amount of physical and emotional courage – and guts of steel. (Bounty hunting is legally sanctioned but not regulated by the police in America.)

have stopped a long time ago. The real satisfaction I get is from putting the sleazebags back in jail."

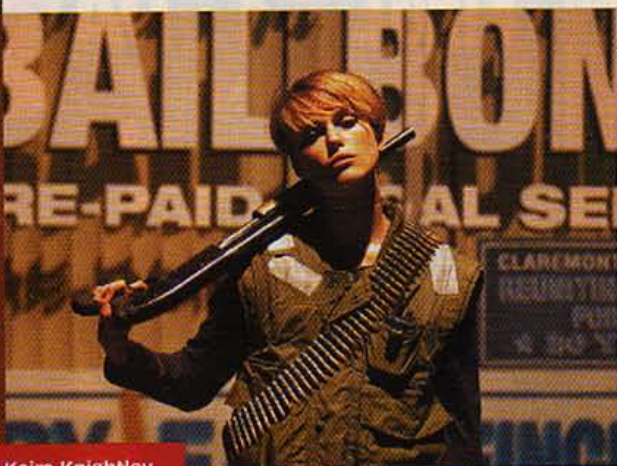
She told friends she was addicted to the adrenaline rush of a job where nights are days and boundaries begin to blur. "It's a bit more of a thrill than working nine to five."

The drug-taking flirtation that started during her clubbing days in London had spiralled out of control by 1993, when she joined the Celes King Bail Bonds agency. Four years later, the pressure of the job plus heroin addiction had driven her

sexually "acceptable" as a character, when in reality she was proudly bisexual.

Her mum was quoted in April this year as saying, "Domino is not happy. She is a recluse and she wants absolutely nothing to do with the film or anyone who has anything to do with it."

Her former partner scoffs at this. "Domino wasn't a recluse," he says. "She was looking forward to the film." She'd also met with Keira, visited the set, came to the wrap party, and wrote and recorded a song to be played over the credits. >>>



Above, left and right: Keira Knightley as Domino in the film based on her life. Keira met the bounty hunter to prepare for the role and Domino had also written a song for the movie.

On May 5 – eight weeks before the film's US release – Domino was arrested in West Hollywood for drug possession. In a twist that must have struck her as ironic, she was taken to the same jail where she had sent so many criminals as a bounty hunter. She was accused of possession with intent to distribute a large amount of methamphetamine, as well as distributing 11 doses of Oxycodone (the tightly regulated cancer drug), conspiracy to distribute, interstate trafficking and racketeering. If found guilty, she faced life in prison.

She was released on bail after putting up her home to make the \$1.3million appearance bond; she had to pay a \$402,000 cash deposit and turn over the property deed to the house. She told friends she was determined to fight the case and clear her name, but was undoubtedly troubled by the prospect of a damaging trial.

On June 19, Domino and a friend drove to Santa Barbara, outside Los Angeles, to

One of her lawyers, Mike Maycock, claimed she had been framed. "This case involved quite a lot of methamphetamine," he said. "Domino was an interesting person who led an interesting life. She wasn't really, however, interested in money."

"That's true. She wasn't. I spoke to her the morning before she died," says Ed Martinez. "We were discussing one of my cases and a documentary about bounty hunting we wanted to make. She told me, too, that she'd been framed. She wanted to clear her name."

"As a matter of fact, we were planning to meet in a few weeks. She joked that she was coming out of a slump and she was ready for her comeback."

Shortly after that call, Domino rang her mother, Paulene. "Oh, Mumsy," she said,

not found drowned in the bathtub, as was reported by the press. She had some prescription medication and she liked to chew it, not swallow it.

"Her friend in the house had ordered some food and when he went to the door to get it, Domino went to take a shower. Her friend got the food and a drink, then knocked on the bathroom door. There was no answer, so he opened it. Domino was lying on the floor, unconscious. She either choked, or had a stroke or a heart attack, and that caused her to choke on her own vomit and fall. It was absolutely not an overdose."

Her friends and family were devastated. Preliminary toxicology tests during the autopsy were inconclusive.

Domino spent much of her life hiding her true self. "I don't want to be remembered as the butch bitch that puts everyone in jail," she once said. Yet as the release date for *Domino* was pushed forward by

"SHE COULD MOVE EASILY BETWEEN TWO WORLDS ... [BUT] HER HEART WAS IN THE GHETTO. THAT'S WHERE SHE FELT MOST COMFORTABLE."

visit Laurence Harvey's grave. "You know," Domino told her friend, "this is where I want to be buried – with my dad."

Eight days later, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's department received a frantic emergency call concerning a woman having been found drowned in a bath. Domino was rushed from her West Hollywood home to the hospital of the stars, Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre. Doctors could not revive her and she was pronounced dead. She was six weeks shy of her 36th birthday.

The press speculated that it was suicide or a drug overdose, and reports stated she had drowned in her bath. Yet, despite her looming legal problems, Domino had been drug-free and in terrific spirits.

"you're not to worry about me. I'm really looking forward to the trial. They can't prove something I haven't done."

There was much that Domino still meant to do before she died. In many ways, her story played out in an eerie parallel to that of her famous father. He, too, was physically fearless, sexually ambivalent and died tragically young. Most of all, he, too, spent much of his life constantly reinventing himself, fueled by self-doubt. Domino, who once claimed she wanted to act, found a profession where she could indeed "act" all day long.

When she died, she had "minders" with her at home – friends from Alcoholics Anonymous. Ed Martinez relates what he was told happened that night: "She was

a calculating studio, that is exactly how she will be remembered.

"And that's too bad," her former partner says. "She could move easily between two worlds – from the alley to the Valley, from street people who were real to high-rolling jet-setters who only wanted to be with her because she had famous parents. Her heart was in the ghetto."

"That's where she felt most comfortable. That explains who she was. On the streets, she could just be Domino."

The woman whose name is now the title of a Hollywood biopic has finally found peace – in a grave beside that of her father on a cliff-top overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Domino will be released on December 1.