

## RIVERHEAD, PROSECUTOR: ACTIONS CALCULATED

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Minutes before slashing his mother-in-law's throat and stabbing his estranged wife a dozen times in the back, Christopher Reynart calmly sipped a cup of coffee in a nearby gas station, prosecutors said on the opening day of Reynart's murder trial in Riverhead.

He also made sure to park several blocks away from his wife's North Bay Shore home, in the most secluded and wooded part of the neighborhood, prosecutors said, and climbed over a backyard fence to approach the house.

Those, Suffolk Assistant District Attorney Nancy Clifford said, were cold, calculated actions, not those of a madman.

"This is what this case is about: It's about jealousy and revenge - not about someone who is out of control," she said.

Reynart, 36, is charged with first-degree murder in the April 11, 2004, slayings of Karina Reyna, 30, and her mother, Azucena Villegas, 63. Reynart's defense attorney, Michael Brown of Central Islip, is arguing that his client was suffering from an extreme emotional disturbance at the time, and therefore may be guilty of manslaughter, but not of murder.

Reyna got an order of protection against Reynart in January 2004 after he bloodied her by whipping her with a computer cord because she had spent the day with another man.

But Reynart was determined to destroy that relationship, Clifford said, even though he had divorced Reyna years earlier, without her consent. "When he realized he could not destroy it, he decided to destroy her instead," the prosecutor said.

After kicking down the back door of the house, Clifford said, "what happens next is nothing short of carnage."

Reynart grabbed a knife from the kitchen and chased the two women through the house and into the front yard, where he first attacked Villegas. Turning his attention to Reyna, he knocked out four of her teeth before stabbing her repeatedly.

When police arrived, they found both women barely alive. Both died

within hours.

More than a dozen relatives and supporters of the victims attended opening arguments in Suffolk County Court and said they were startled to hear details of the killings. "It brings back a lot of bad memories," said Javier Salvador, Reyna's brother.

Reynart has maintained that he was afraid for their two children's safety from Reyna's new male friend when he flew into a rage and killed the two women.

Reynart's attorney, in his opening statement, emphasized that the case "is not a whodunit."

But the conviction, Brown said, should be for manslaughter, not murder.

A manslaughter conviction carries a maximum prison term of 25 years, while conviction of first-degree murder carries a maximum penalty of life without parole.

"He is sitting right there at the table," Brown said, adding, "I'm actually going to stand in front of you and say, 'Come back with a conviction.' "