

THE SUSPECT'S ACCOUNT, SAYS HE WAS FIGHTING DEMON

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Christopher Reynart, who has been charged with the murders of his wife and mother-in-law, gave his account yesterday of the Easter Sunday killings to a Newsday reporter.

Drunk and blinded by rage, Christopher Reynart drove from Brooklyn to North Bay Shore before dawn on Sunday, he said, thinking only about his children.

In several collect telephone calls from the Suffolk County jail to a Newsday reporter yesterday, Reynart said he killed his wife because he suspected Karina Reyna - his wife of 10 years - had placed her needs before their children's by taking up with another man.

But Reyna's family said Reynart physically abused her throughout their marriage and that she had never cheated on him.

Reynart killed his mother-in-law, too, he said, because she had undermined their marriage for years by telling her daughter that Reynart was never good enough, rich enough, to be her husband.

That Sunday morning, he was determined to make things right, he said. He would come home and save them.

"I remember in my mind, before I entered the house, I was thinking, 'God, please help me take care of my children,'" Reynart, 34, recalled. " 'Help me take care of them.'"

As he stood outside the back door of his house on Rhode Island Avenue at 4:40 on Easter morning, he said he felt as if he were facing down a nightmare, or a demon he had known his entire life but never confronted.

Reynart kicked open the door and reached for a kitchen knife, he said.

"It was like I was fighting Satan. I felt like I was fighting demons and I could not control myself.

"Then, all of a sudden the nightmare was over."

Reynart has been charged with two counts of second-degree murder for killing Reyna and her mother, Azucena Villegas, 63. He is being held without bail in Suffolk County jail.

"I feel deeply sorry for what I have done," he said. "What I did I did on impulse. I was out of control.

Growing up in the Dominican Republic, one of five sons and three daughters, Reynart said he too had been the victim of domestic violence. "Violence affected me as a child," he said.

It was something he talked with Reyna about when the two got married. "I mentioned that I did not wish to pass that on to our children. I told her that if she would see me mad or angry, she should leave and come back when I feel better," he said.

Suffolk police were called to the couple's home on Rhode Island Avenue four times between 1996 and 2003 on complaints of domestic violence. One complaint came from Reynart. None of the incidents led to an arrest.

Reynart physically abused Reyna consistently throughout their marriage, her relatives have said.

"I believe that she lit the fuse in me," he said yesterday.

But while he admitted to abusing his wife, he insisted he never hurt his children, Christopher, now 10 and Kevin, who is 8.

Reynart said he felt slighted by his mother-in-law too. On the first day he met her, she made derogatory remarks about his race, hair, and ethnicity, he said.

Reynart worked as a waiter, made extra money repairing computers and doing other odd jobs. But it was never enough for Villegas, he said.

In 1999, he said he learned that his mother-in-law had wanted his wife to abort their first child. Instead, Christopher was born and the couple married. Two years later, Kevin was born.

In mid-January, he said he caught her talking with another man on a cell phone in their sons' bedroom.

Reyna's father Manuel Villegas has said his daughter never cheated on her husband and remained committed to the relationship long after he began abusing her.

Reyna denied she was unfaithful, but the man's telephone number was displayed on the cell phone, so Reynart called him, and the man confessed his interest, Reynart said.

In January, he beat her with a computer cord. He was arrested and later convicted of assault. The couple decided to split. Reynart moved out.

Over the next two months Reynart spoke several times with the New Jersey man and also chatted online with him. He said he learned that Reyna had introduced the Jersey man to his sons and that he wanted her to move there.

On Saturday, after a day of drinking Coronas and whiskey, Reynart called the man. Reynart said the man told him that he meant no harm, but that he had continued to see Reyna after she was beaten in January. Reynart said he wanted to settle the problem once and for all. "I feared that my children were being endangered," he said. "I knew I had to do whatever it took to protect them."

As he brought the knife down again and again into his wife and mother-in-law Sunday morning, Reynart said he heard his children's screams.

"I told them from far away that I was there to protect them. I was there to care for them. That everything would be fine."