

BILLY
Sc 1

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

CLOSE ON a GURNEY carrying Nikki's body as it's wheeled out of the funeral home toward a waiting M.E. VAN. Press CAMERAS have been backed down the driveway, but they're capturing every moment.

SAM BAKER joins Peter near the M.E. van.

SAM

You two can't wait for me to find the bodies? You have to go finding your own now?

PETER

You can take that up with Megan.

SAM

I'm not going anywhere near Megan right now.

FUNERAL HOME ENTRANCE --

Megan is still weathering Lillian's obvious displeasure.

LILLIAN

Have you thought at all about what you're doing to my family, Doctor Hunt?

MEGAN

I understand this has to be very upsetting for you.

LILLIAN

Three hundred mourners are due here in less than an hour. Do you have any idea the embarrassment this is going to cause?

Just then, Nikki's brother, BILLY FIELDING, 30, arrives, striding toward Megan with the same sense of indignation. *Start*

BILLY

This has to be a joke. I'm sitting writing a eulogy for my sister, and I get a call that you're seizing her body?

(CONTINUED)

MEGAN

I'm sorry, Mr. Fielding. But there's some question now as to the cause of Nikki's death.

BILLY

I don't care what the excuse, she deserves better than to be paraded out here for the cameras.

KATE MURPHY appears, inserting herself into the fray --

KATE

Mr. Fielding. ~~Mrs. Fielding...~~
~~I'm Doctor Murphy, the Chief~~
~~Medical Examiner.~~ I assure you we'll do everything possible to protect Nikki and your family.

BILLY

Protect us? You're stealing her away so you can cut her up.

~~KATE~~

~~We have a responsibility to do our job.~~

MEGAN

Don't you both want to know the truth about Nikki?

BILLY

You really think we don't already know the truth?! Nikki killed herself...

KATE

And you thought it would be okay to cover up her suicide?

BILLY

(points to the press)
We wanted to keep it private. But now, thanks to you, this is how she'll be remembered. Forever.

Billy angrily leads his mother away. Megan looks conflicted. There's SUDDEN SILENCE and we're --

INT. M.E.'S OFFICE - AUTOPSY ROOM - DAY

Nikki's body is laid out on the table. Megan studies the ligature mark, shooting photos, dictating to the recorder --

(CONTINUED)

MEGAN

I just gave you that much...

ETHAN

(suddenly proficient)
It involves repeated fevers,
inflammation... Symptoms include
abdominal pain, chest pain, joint
pain, skin lesions, all usually
treated with Colchicine, which,
incidentally, is derived from the
crocus flower.

MEGAN

Wow, Ethan, I'm impressed.

ETHAN

Actually, I just looked it up right
before I came in here.

Beat. Megan focuses on Nikki's ankles and knees.

MEGAN

She was living with a lot of pain,
horrible febrile attacks. Hard to
imagine what she was going through.

OFF Nikki's debilitated body --

LILLIAN (V.O., PRE-LAP)

Nikki knew she was dying...

INT. FIELDING HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING (NIGHT 1)

Kate and Sam sit across from Lillian and Billy in the
Fieldings' impressive home. Peter's on his feet, browsing
the shelves -- spies a PHOTO of Nikki alive in happier times.

LILLIAN

Her heart and kidneys were going.
~~That's how it finally gets you.~~

~~KATE~~

~~Was she taking Colchicine?~~

LILLIAN

~~Every day. But Nikki was one of
the small percentage of patients
who don't respond to it.~~

(then)

~~She got depressed and discouraged.
She had seen her father waste away
and die from the same disease.~~

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

She always said she didn't want to end up like that.

BILLY

(off Kate and Sam)

I know what you're thinking, so before you go digging him up, he died in the hospital, surrounded by doctors. Almost five years ago.

SAM

I'm sorry. I have to ask. Who found Nikki that night?

LILLIAN

I did...

The subject overwhelms. She begins to cry. Billy steps in.

BILLY

It was about eleven o'clock. My mother went up to check on Nikki. I heard her scream. I ran up... and Nikki was hanging there. At first I thought I could maybe save her. I struggled to lift her up, tried to untie her...

(shakes his head)

But she was beyond saving...

SAM

What happened next?

BILLY

(pointedly)

I wanted to avoid all this. So we put her in her bed, covered up the mark on her neck and called Doctor Hargis.

KATE

Doctor Hargis didn't know Nikki died from hanging?

BILLY

Nikki died from her disease. Whether it took her heart or her kidneys or her hope. It was the disease that killed her.

Beat. Lillian's still overwhelmed, crying.

stop

(CONTINUED)

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. FIELDING HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - DAY

Lillian sets out tea for Megan and Peter. Billy, meanwhile, paces behind her, annoyed.

BILLY

We don't have to talk to them.

LILLIAN

I want to. ~~The sooner this is done, the sooner we'll have Nikki back. We need to have her funeral.~~

(takes a seat)

So what can I tell you, Doctor Hunt?

MEGAN

Are either of you familiar with Munchausen-by-proxy Syndrome?

LILLIAN

I'm sure I've heard of it... ~~but I couldn't say exactly what it is.~~

PETER

Parents, in some cases, will actually make their children sick in order to get attention...

BILLY

(instantly angry)

Are you going to say my mother gave Nikki F.P.P.? It's a genetic disease. Nikki was born with it.

MEGAN

That's not what I was going to say... Not exactly.

(to Lillian again)

But you did get a lot of attention in your circle, ~~didn't you, because of Nikki's illness? Everyone said, "You poor thing, Lillian." "You're a saint, Lillian..."~~

LILLIAN

(a little uneasy)

I'm blessed to have supportive friends, if that's what you mean.

(CONTINUED)

MEGAN

We checked with the pharmacy, Mrs. Fielding. You signed for all Nikki's medication personally.
(off Lillian)
So why didn't Nikki ever receive it?

BILLY

What? My mother was religious about Nikki's medicine. I saw her dole out the pills every night.

PETER

She gave her pills... but ~~not the Celebicine Nikki needed.~~ They were sugar pills. Placebos.

BILLY

That's ridiculous.

MEGAN

How could you do that to your daughter, make her suffer like that?

LILLIAN

(suddenly emotional)
I didn't want her to suffer. You don't understand.

MEGAN

I do understand. As long as Nikki stayed sick, everyone kept patting you on the back.

BILLY

All right, I've heard enough.

Megan ignores Billy, goes harder at Lillian.

MEGAN

Did Nikki figure it out, ~~Mrs. Fielding, is that it?~~ Did she threaten to tell all your society friends what you'd done to her?

BILLY

Did you hear me? We're done.

MEGAN

(still at Lillian)
Imagine the embarrassment. You had no choice but to kill her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BILLY
(exploding now)
That's enough! I want you out!

He moves toward Megan. Peter steps in Billy's way.

PETER
All right. We're going.

Peter looks at Megan. Finally, she turns for the door.

INT. M.E.'S OFFICE - MORGUE - EVENING (NIGHT 2)

One of the drawers is open. Nikki's. We find Megan standing here alone, lost in thought. Ethan appears.

ETHAN
You all right?

MEGAN
For two years that woman watched this girl suffer through horrible, painful attacks. Her own daughter.
(beat)

If Nikki had been getting Colchicine, the attacks could've been prevented, her amyloidosis controlled... She may have led a fairly normal life.

ETHAN
Instead, she's here.

MEGAN
Yeah. And nobody in her family really seems to give a damn.

They both stand and silently study Nikki... until --

TODD (O.S.)
Megan...?

Todd stands at the door. He keeps his eyes averted from the bodies, clearly uncomfortable around the dead.

TODD (CONT'D)
You mind coming out of there?

Megan goes, joins Todd and they head into --

INT. M.E.'S OFFICE - AUTOPSY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Todd keeps his head down as they walk.

(CONTINUED)