

**Killing haunts woman's parents
They regret failing to see 'red flags'**

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Article Text:

Murder suspect Sonia M. Galindo can put only 10 names on her jailhouse visitors' list. She picked her parents, some friends - and ex-boyfriend Alexander Gladkov, the very person she is accused of killing last month outside his downtown apartment. Herb and Debbie Galindo say their 25-year-old daughter had planned to commit suicide in front of Gladkov, 23. They say she does not understand or accept that he is gone. "She asks us every day to call him at work," said Debbie Galindo, who lives in Fort Worth, Texas.

In a brief court appearance Monday, Sonia Galindo pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder and armed criminal action. Her attorney requested a mental examination.

In an interview with *The Kansas City Star*, Galindo's parents described their daughter's childhood, her unusual behavior before the killing and a chilling phone call from her immediately after Gladkov was killed.

Their stories, along with interviews from Galindo's friends and words from her journal, portray a young woman who often was very helpful to others yet sometimes very troubled herself.

She loved animals, took class notes for disabled students and volunteered at the site of the World Trade Center after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Yet as a teen, Galindo grew unruly and twice attempted suicide. Last month she put her affairs in order and drafted two suicide notes before driving from Warrensburg, Mo., to Kansas City the morning Gladkov died, her parents said.

According to court records, Galindo entered the lobby of Gladkov's loft at 127 W. 10th St. and confronted him about 8 a.m. Oct. 28. She allegedly chased him outside and across the street while firing. Some witnesses told police that after Gladkov fell, Galindo stood over him and fired twice more.

A Russian immigrant, Gladkov once worked as a janitor while dreaming of a brighter future. The straight-A student graduated in May with a business degree from Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg. He took a job with the accounting firm Ernst & Young.

Gladkov's family declined an interview request. Galindo's parents said they prayed for them daily.

At least seven witnesses saw part or all of the killing, according to court records. Police arrested Galindo at the scene and recovered two handguns. The number of Gladkov's wounds, plus the witness statements, prompted prosecutors to press first-degree murder charges against Galindo.

"There's some evidence of deliberation," said Michael Hunt, an assistant Jackson County prosecutor.

Galindo's parents say their daughter does not remember.

"She wants to get out of jail so she can go back to the scene, to figure out what happened," Debbie Galindo said.

The Galindos do not want the killing to define their daughter's life.

"This tragic incident is not Sonia," Herb Galindo said. "There is so much more."

Herb and Debbie Galindo think their daughter is suffering a mental problem, one that may have existed for years or been triggered in recent months by diet pills, birth control injections and an inability to sleep.

Police have not questioned Sonia Galindo, and they had no comment about her mental state. But one ex-boyfriend said Galindo struggled in relationships and could have gotten angry at Gladkov.

A journal Galindo began keeping in the days before the killing described a painful breakup with Gladkov and plans to kill herself in front of him "so he will always remember that moment. ... He'll know how bad I hurt."

In one suicide note, she wrote: "I am sorry for leaving, but it was my time. I know it's going to be difficult for you both and that is what I'm sorry for. ... I will pick out an urn, so you don't have to. ... I may want this to stay with Alex for an eternity, which is the reason I did it in front of him."

So why did the planned suicide allegedly turn into homicide?

"That's the million-dollar question," said Galindo's attorney, John A. Picerno. "That's the issue we'll have to tackle at trial."

Ten minutes too late

In the days before the shooting, Sonia Galindo described seeing lines and shadows. She had slept only four hours in 10 days.

"She wasn't making sense," Herb Galindo said. "She kept saying, 'How can I fix this? I can't sleep.'"

Herb and Debbie Galindo packed and left Texas for Warrensburg. It was the night before the killing.

Twenty miles into the trip, their cell phone rang.

"Where are you?" Sonia Galindo asked.

Her parents said they were coming to see her. Sonia Galindo grew angry. She feared they would take her to a "nut house."

Her parents agreed to meet her about 4 a.m. at a Lee's Summit hotel. Debbie Galindo planned to take her daughter to a gynecologist to get her hormone levels checked and discuss her sleep deprivation and emotional distress. She thought her daughter needed mental help but planned the visit to "at least get her in the company of a doctor."

When Herb and Debbie Galindo arrived at the hotel, their daughter was not there. They called her.

"Things had gotten drastically worse," Herb Galindo recalled. "She was talking in a monotone and, alternatively, sounded like a wounded animal, pleading for help. I asked if I could pick her up, and she went berserk."

Sonia Galindo fled, driving east, her parents said, away from their hotel. At some point, she turned around, toward Kansas City. They continued to talk by cell phone.

At 5:15 a.m., Herb and Debbie Galindo begged her to pull over.

"OK. I'll tell you where I am," she said. "I don't know what's wrong with me."

Galindo gave her parents general directions, not her exact location. The Galindos sped north along Missouri 291 to westbound Interstate 70.

Eventually, the Galindos noticed that the background noise from Sonia's cell phone had changed. She had arrived somewhere. Debbie Galindo heard footsteps over the line and asked her daughter where she was going. She did not answer.

"In a million years I wouldn't have thought she would have gone there (to Gladkov's apartment)," Debbie Galindo said. "I was concerned about her well-being, but there was no mention of Alex the whole phone call."

Suddenly, the phone went dead.

About 60 seconds later, a hysterical Sonia called back.

"Somebody help him!" she shouted to her mother. "He's shot. Why won't someone help him?"

Galindo told her mother that the police had arrived. Again, the phone went dead.

At that point, the Galindos' car was barreling the wrong way down a one-way street in Kansas City. A police officer pulled them over. The Galindos explained the situation and pleaded for information.

"He told us she (Sonia) was the shooter," Herb Galindo said. "I asked, 'What about the victim?' He said, 'It looks dim.'"

Debbie Galindo lamented, "We were 10 minutes too late."

A double life

As a child, Sonia Galindo was "a little angel," her parents said.

She helped others. As a young teen, she had a soft spot for injured animals, people with disabilities and the elderly.

Yet in ninth grade, Sonia's grades dropped. She got in trouble at school and home, her parents said.

She ran away. Police took her home. She ran again, driving the family car to see her grandmother in Ohio even though the teen did not have a license. Police intercepted her in Chicago.

Sonia twice tried to kill herself with pills, Debbie Galindo said. One attempt came after a boyfriend broke off a relationship. The second time, she consumed 50 aspirins and spent four days in intensive care.

Galindo's parents took her to a Kansas City psychiatric hospital. She ran. Once, when Herb Galindo fetched his daughter off a dark street, she begged him not to return her. He did anyway. After another escape, Herb Galindo didn't bother.

"They obviously couldn't keep her there," he said.

Debbie Galindo then selected a hospital in Windsor, Mo. Sonia stayed there four weeks. Though she did not finish high school, Galindo earned an equivalency diploma. At 18, she got two jobs and moved to an apartment. She took in injured animals.

She eventually earned a two-year degree. She also completed firefighter training and volunteered. Shortly after the Sept. 11, attacks, Galindo and three other firefighters went to New York.

Galindo stayed one week, helping however she could, including "putting people in body bags," her father said.

Later, Galindo became an emergency medical technician in Sedalia, Mo.

In 2003, Galindo's then-boyfriend suffered an aneurysm. She nursed him and taught him to speak again, do math and recognize colors. The experience sparked an interest in nursing, her parents said. She entered CMSU's nursing program.

Galindo took notes and created study guides for blind and disabled students. Her empathy prompted one professor to write in a recommendation letter:

"Ms. Galindo represents one of the most committed students I have met in my 30 years' association with Central. ... The way she cares about students with special needs touched me deeply."

Her parents moved to Texas after Herb Galindo accepted an engineering job. They helped their daughter buy a house and supported her so she could focus on school full time. Sonia Galindo mowed one disabled man's lawn and nursed another neighbor's terminally ill mother-in-law.

"She has a heart of gold," said former neighbor Wendy Anderson.

At the funeral of Anderson's mother-in-law, Galindo delivered an impromptu, heartfelt eulogy after the pastor struggled in his sermon.

"She was amazing," Anderson said.

Even an ex-boyfriend, who said his relationship with Galindo ended badly a few years ago, admits she cared deeply for others.

Yet the man said that their breakup was so troubled, he and his new girlfriend changed their phone numbers and he quit his job.

Sonia and Alex

Introduced by mutual friends, Galindo and Gladkov began dating earlier this year. In July, Galindo took Gladkov to Texas to meet her parents.

Anderson described the couple's relationship as fiery. They always seemed broken up or on the verge of it. But Gladkov always came back, she said.

"She said he made her feel like no one else had ever made her feel," Anderson recalled.

Galindo told friends she was pregnant, news that displeased Gladkov, Anderson said. "He said he had scrubbed toilets for years to get where he was and she was going to ruin everything."

Galindo said she suffered a miscarriage Oct. 21, a week before the shooting. After the miscarriage, Gladkov ignored Sonia, Anderson said.

About that time, Galindo began a journal after a nursing professor recommended it for therapeutic reasons. In her first entry, Galindo wrote:

"Alex. God I miss him. I don't understand how he could be this way towards me. ... He told me he wants to work things out ... a couple hours later, he says he can't talk to me. ... This isn't him. No one believes me, but this isn't him."

Sonia's despair grew in her second entry.

"The fact is, I want to die. I'm ready to die. ... I thought about overdosing on pills, but too many things can go wrong. It might not work. I thought about crashing my car, but I might accidentally hurt someone else, or not quite do the job for myself."

Gladkov then refused to return Galindo's calls, according to her journal.

"He's never not answered like this before. I bought the gun right afterwards. Well, it took a few hours actually. I took it out to shoot. Good thing I did. It messes up. It won't shoot every bullet. I could just see it. I try to shoot myself, the bullet doesn't go off, someone takes the gun away and I go to the nut house again. It's almost impossible to kill yourself in a nut house. So now I have another gun. (A) bigger gun. ... I have to make sure I don't mess up. I got one chance at this, because I'm going to do it in front of Alex."

Galindo's parents had noticed changes in their daughter, which they said became more profound the week before the killing. She called at all hours and used profanities.

"She was shouting and yelling and then an hour later, she'd call and say, 'Please help me. Something's wrong with me,'" Debbie Galindo said.

The Galindos rushed to Kansas City the day their daughter said she miscarried. When they left two days later, Debbie Galindo said, her daughter appeared to be doing better. She asked, "Do you have to leave?"

"She had never said that before," Debbie Galindo said.

Sonia Galindo mentioned her former boyfriend, the one who had the aneurysm, was coming from New York to help care for her dogs. As they drove home, Debbie Galindo wondered why her daughter needed help with her dogs.

Today, the Galindos kick themselves for missing the "red flags." They said they think their daughter sought out her former boyfriend as part of her suicide plot. She bought him groceries, wrote detailed notes on the dogs' care and left him \$800, plus debit cards to access about \$3,000 in credit-card advances.

"In hindsight, I wish we would have stayed," Debbie Galindo said. "We never thought she would harm Alex or herself."

The Star's John Shultz contributed to this report.

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First glance

Herb and Debbie Galindo think their daughter, Sonia, suffers a mental problem, one that they say led her to fatally shoot her ex-boyfriend, Alexander Gladkov, on Oct. 28.

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