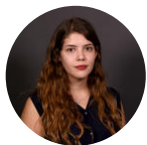


# 'The only thing that I cared about was her,' says man accused of disemboweling girlfriend in gruesome 2015 murder case



Fidel Lopez is accused of killing and disemboweling his girlfriend, Maria Lizette Nemeth, on Sept. 20, 2015.



By **Rebeca Piccardo**  
Sun Sentinel

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'They are all going to think that I'm an animal,' says man accused of disemboweling girlfriend in 2015 murder

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**H**oles were bashed in the walls. Body tissue was found in a closet. The walls were smeared with blood. And Fidel Lopez couldn't explain any of it.

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rlfriend, first told investigators Maria Lizette  
us. They had been drinking shots of tequila in their

new apartment in Sunrise, and she went to the bathroom to vomit, he said.

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Later, Lopez told police he became "a monster" when Nemeth called out someone else's name during sex.

The two versions emerged during hours of police interrogation in a cramped interview room, according to newly released documents and recorded police interviews. The material reveals how investigators picked apart Lopez's account of an evening that began with a meal at his mother's house — and ended with Nemeth bleeding out naked in their bathroom.

Lopez called 911 for help at 3:39 a.m. Sept. 20, bringing officers to an apartment at Colonnade Residences, in the 1600 block of Northwest 128th Drive in Sunrise.

"She's not breathing," he screamed at the dispatcher while crying uncontrollably. "She's going to die, man."

Inside the apartment, police found Lopez kneeling next to Nemeth's body, crying while trying to shake her awake. Blood surrounded Nemeth's body on the bathroom floor.

She was pronounced dead at 4:02 a.m., according to a police report. According to a Broward County Medical Examiner's report, Nemeth died from losing too much blood after she had been eviscerated.

During questioning at the police station, investigators showed Lopez the gruesome crime scene photos taken in his apartment.

"So I know what happened in there is not something you expected to happen, OK?" one of the investigators told Lopez during a taped police interview. "Things went wrong. Things went bad. But it's important for you to be honest about it because there's more to this story and if you really love and care for this girl and you have a  
ire for her."

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3.

"One day you'll show the world that you're not like that," Lopez's mother told him, according to transcripts of Lopez's phone calls from jail. "You're not a murderer, my love."

## **The night of the killing**

Nemeth, 31, and Lopez had been together for about a year, Lopez said. Nemeth was recently separated after an 8-year marriage; Lopez was living with the mother of his two small children when he met Nemeth at a club and they hit it off, Lopez told investigators.

As the relationship became serious, they moved in together — first in Hollywood, then with Lopez's family in Hialeah as they looked for a new place, he said. The couple had moved into a new apartment at Colonnade Residences in Sunrise a week before the killing. Nemeth was the leasing manager there.

After a long day at work on a Saturday, Lopez, who worked as a mechanic at a Davie truck stop, went home to Nemeth. She prepared a meal of chicken with rice and beans for dinner before they drove to Hialeah to spend time with Lopez's mother, he told investigators.

Later that night, Lopez said he and Nemeth went to a Chili's restaurant near their apartment and had a couple of margaritas. Then they stopped by ABC Fine Wine and Spirits, where they bought a bottle of tequila and took it back to the apartment.

Lopez said they hadn't gotten around to buying furniture for the apartment, so they grabbed a couple of cardboard boxes to use as a table. They cut some limes and used some salt as they poured themselves shots while they played music on a cellphone.

The couple had finished half of the bottle of 1800 Reposado Tequila when the evening took a terrifying turn. Something set Lopez off and he tore through the apartment, shattering the sliding glass door, punching holes in the drywall and ripping out the closet door, he told investigators.

He claimed he was too drunk to remember what had made him so angry, but he said he and Nemeth made up and had rough sex inside the closet. Somehow they ended up in the bathroom, where she said she needed to throw up.

"I just remember seeing glass on the floor. I really don't remember when I broke it or why did I break it," he told investigators.

Lopez said he smoked a cigarette outside, then checked on Nemeth and realized she had stopped breathing.

## **'Calling me the other dude's name'**

Detectives told Lopez his story didn't explain why Nemeth's insides had been torn out.

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It's killing you right now, it's burning you up  
You have to be honest and help us put the pieces

together from point A to point B. That time in between ... something happened from the closet to the bathroom that you're leaving out."

After hours of questioning him about what Nemeth might have said or done to trigger the vicious assault, Lopez changed his story.

He told detectives he became enraged after hearing Nemeth utter her estranged husband's name twice during sex. At that point, he trashed the apartment and then went back into the closet, where Nemeth was lying unconscious but still alive, police said.

He inserted a beer bottle, a flat iron for hair and both fists inside of her, investigators said. He inserted his arm up to his elbow and ripped her insides out, investigators said.

"She was calling me the other dude's name. She was confusing me with him," Lopez said. "If I was sober, maybe I would have just left the apartment. But I was drunk."

“

**She was calling me the other dude's name. She was confusing me with him.**

— Fidel Lopez

Lopez said he carried Nemeth to the bathroom and put water on her face, but she did not wake up. He washed the blood off his hands and went outside for a smoke before panic set in.

"I was so f---n' nervous, man," he told investigators. "I wasn't thinking, man. I wasn't thinking."

After confessing to investigators, he asked one of them, according to a video recording: "I know I'm going to jail, but I have two kids, you know. ... How many years do you think this is going to cost me?"

### **Waking up the neighbors**

Neighbor Richard St. Croix told investigators he heard a woman scream while he was walking from the parking lot to his apartment building on the night of the death.

"I couldn't even tell which direction it came from," St. Croix told investigators. "It wasn't a yell, like a word yell. Like it wasn't, 'Ow,' or 'Help me,' or anything like that. It was just a yell. Probably more toward pain, or something in that nature."

Cheryl Lawrence and her daughter Ebony Campbell, who lived below Lopez and Nemeth, said they were  
ent above them.

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"We heard noise above us like banging and we felt, oh, they're probably moving stuff, because it was that loud. But then there was one heavy thud that [we] heard in the ceiling that we thought our fan was going to cave in," Lawrence told investigators.

Another neighbor, Sheryl Futterman, said she was awakened by a couple arguing sometime after 1 a.m. that night.

"It was some type of exchange back and forth and I thought that it would've woken up other people as well," Futterman told investigators. "It was over quickly and I fell right back asleep."

### **'How am I going to sleep?'**

Lopez was still inside the police interview room when he was placed under arrest and shackled to the floor at 1:36 p.m., about 10 hours after he had called 911.

He was taken to the Broward Main Jail, where he has been locked up for a year.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement records show only one other arrest on Lopez's record — a 2014 charge of disorderly intoxication.

His parents and siblings have remained supportive of Lopez, sending him money to buy snacks and a small radio, visiting him regularly and keeping in touch with his lawyers from the public defender's office.

"We're praying for you, honey," his mother reminds him, according to transcripts of their phone conversations. "You have your entire family praying."

Occasionally, Lopez brings up Nemeth and worries about what her family must think of him.

"Did you already talk to Maria's mom and with her family? They are all going to think that I'm an animal, that I'm a monster," he said during a phone call to his mother. "I don't know [how] the mom must feel or anything."

Nemeth's family was stunned when they first found out about her death.

"I still cannot, I cannot process it," Nemeth's cousin, Nelly Cortez, said at the time. "Everything was horrific."

Lopez told his family he has trouble sleeping and was given pills in the infirmary to help him sleep. He also told his mother he had recurring dreams about Nemeth.

"I wasn't able to sleep last night. How am I going to sleep? If each time I close my eyes I have that in mind," he said during a phone conversation with his sister. "The only thing that I cared about was her."

... said they are preparing for trial, but didn't give

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"We are still in the discovery phase and have depositions set," she said in an email Tuesday night.

Lopez told his parents that he worries about spending the rest of his life in prison and never again getting to see his children as a free man.

"I don't want to be in jail for the rest of my life. ... I want to see my kids, I want to see you," he told his mother. "I'm not a murderer, I don't consider myself that."

His mother comforts him, telling him to behave and stay out of trouble in jail.

"That was a moment of craziness, madness," she told him over the phone. "People ask me if things were going good with her, I told them that it was spectacular. [Then] you realize that it was just a moment of darkness.

"These are attacks from the devil. The psychologists don't understand it; the doctors don't understand it. But whoever understands God knows what happened here."

In their phone conversations, Lopez's father reminds him he must be patient and adjust to life in jail while his case is resolved.

"I ask that you have patience, son, because this is going to take a while," Lopez's father told him. "You haven't committed a crime, you made a mistake, OK? And that's the mistake we have to fix."

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