

Suspected cannibal refuses to make plea

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MEXICO CITY --

An aspiring writer who left a horror scene of body parts in his apartment was arraigned on Thursday on charges of murder and desecrating a corpse after he allegedly cut up and ate part of his girlfriend's body.

Jose Luis Calva - better known in tabloids as Mexico City's "cannibal" - refused to make a formal plea, saying "I can't get my thoughts together right now."

Police say he had previously acknowledged killing 32-year-old girlfriend Alejandra Galeana, and prosecutors believe he killed and dismembered two other girlfriends, but have not charged him for those crimes.

"He killed her because he was high on cocaine," said defense attorney Humberto Guerrero Plata. "He didn't eat her, he just cut her body up."

Calva told police he cooked the flesh in order to feed it to neighborhood dogs, as a way to get rid of the body.

But city coroner Rodolfo Rojo has described how Calva carefully separated and de-boned Galeana's arm, sliced away the skin and fat, fried the flesh and seasoned it with lime juice - not pains one usually takes with dogs.

With graying good looks and a dark, penetrating stare, Calva made his first public appearance since his arrest on Oct. 8, when police discovered Galeana's rotting, mutilated torso stuffed into a closet, a leg in the freezer and bits of arm meat on a fork and plate.

Calva, 38, met his girlfriends - several were single mothers and drug store attendants - while passing himself off as a playwright, television personality, reporter, novelist, actor and poet.

"He must have had a super personality, to charm me the way he did," recalled Veronica R., 40, a drugstore employee who said he read his poetry to her when they dated in August. The woman asked that her full last name not be used to protect her family.

Soledad Garavito, Alejandra's mother, described him as "a very vain person ... everything was me, me, me."

"I am going to imagine myself as a balloon the size of the sun, and I'm going to roll around in the cosmos that is me," he wrote in one of his short works, "The Night Before," a strange mix of introspection and self-help exhortations.

Experts said he may have courted drugstore workers - including Veronica Martinez, who was killed and dismembered in 2004 - to get access to clonazepam, an anti-seizure medication also used to treat anxiety.

But prosecutors say he focused on drugstores because he was looking for working women who were relatively poor, vulnerable or easier to impress - and dominate.

"The way in which he treated his girlfriend, it seemed like a classic dominant-submissive relationship," said an acquaintance who co-signed Calva's apartment lease. "He would say things like 'Who told you you could talk?'" said the man, who asked not to be identified because the lease is now a court matter.

Police say sadomasochistic literature and films found in his apartment, and Calva also had a lengthy affair with his alleged accomplice in the Martinez killing - a man named Juan Carlos Monroy, who described their relationship after he was arrested this month for his alleged role in the murder.

Calva purportedly bought drugs and alcohol with the money one surviving girlfriend made selling his poetry and crudely bound, photocopied "books" on the street.

Police said Calva described a traumatic childhood - that he was practically abandoned by his mother, his father died when he was 2, and around age 7 he was raped by a male friend of his brother.