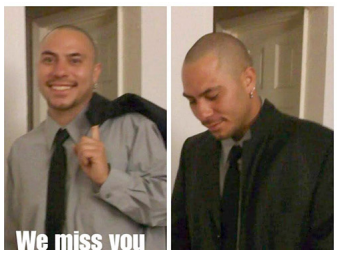
Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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A car burglary can be upsetting enough on its own, but it became a highly emotional and troubling experience for a Rio Rancho woman.

Artie Ortega and her boss attended the Gallup Gun Show as vendors. The pair stopped for dinner at Cracker Barrel April 5 when her boss’s car, a red 2014 Ford Escape, was broken into in the parking lot.

According to the police report, the burglary occurred about 6:50 pm. The front passenger window was broken, and multiple items were taken.

The police report says surveillance footage shows a man, who looks to be Native American and in his 30s, dressed in black and wearing a hood, walked around the parking lot and broke the front window of the Ford Escape. He then got into another vehicle that drove off.

Two 1917 Colt Revolver .45 US Army Edition firearms and Ortega’s purse were missing. The guns are valued at $2,000 a piece according to the owner.

But the biggest loss for Ortega was a pouch inside her purse that contained the ashes of her late son, Anthony J. Romero, who passed away Feb. 26, 2012. He was 30 years old.

Ortega spoke with the *Sun* April 10 in hopes of getting the word out about finding this constant reminder of her son she carried with her at all times.

"He told me, 'I want to be cremated because I don't want anything crawling on my body,'" Ortega said in a phone call about her son.

Ortega described the process of going to her friend's husband, who was familiar with blowing glass. She spoke about taking the colors of her son's favorite football team, the Miami Dolphins, and making a small bottle and maroon velvet pouch, she used to carry her son's ashes in her purse.

In an email to the *Sun*, Ortega said she was distraught because it felt like she lost her only son once again.

"I know he's with our dear Lord up above. I just have my days where I miss him," Ortega said. "For someone to take that away is really painful."

The fact that the perpetrator could be Native hit Ortega hard.

"I am Indian from Laguna Pueblo, and just the thought that another Native Indian could do such a thing, sickens me to the very core of my stomach," she said, in an email.

At this point, what Ortega wants most is for someone to tell her where the perpetrator and her purse could be. She said that all she wants returned to her, is her son's ashes, or at least to know for sure what may have happened to them.

"That alone hurts the most, not knowing where he's at," she said.

The surveillance footage shows the suspect leaving the parking lot in a newer model white Chrysler 300, with tinted windows, a sun roof, and front silver grill.

If you have any information, contact the Gallup Police Department at (505) 863-9365.

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