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**ITALIAN
CRIMES**



**AMANDA KNOX
AND THE PERUGIA
MURDER**

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AND THE PERUGIA MURDER

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Meredith Kercher's murder case can be summarized in two expressions: the first is "forensic evidence" with regard to everything concerning the legal process of the incident. The second is a simple word, "biases" and it pertains to the media's handling of this ugly matter.

In modern law, the evidence and the forensic reconstructions have now taken on a much more important role, some would even say, a role that is too important. It is certain that nowadays, prosecution and defense both battle exclusively on that field as they seek to destroy each other's theory through expert reports and comparative expert reports.

As for the media's handling of the tragedy, we cannot help but notice the emergence of some of the most atavistic, unconfessed and at times banal and latent preconceptions and prejudices in the public opinion. This is true of the Italian media that continuously stigmatized college life often depicting it with overly pronounced accents that were borderline ridiculous, but it is also true of the American media and public opinion that persist in seeing imaginary anti-Americanism every time things don't go their way.

Forensic evidence and biases: it would be difficult to imagine two ideas more diverse and antithetic. As a matter of fact, one is practically the negation of the other, but these are the two platforms of this ugly story that originated in Perugia, on Halloween 2007, the night of the witches.

THE FACTS

Perugia is a small town of approximately 160,000 inhabitants nested in the heart of Italy. Contrary to the dozens of Bel Paese's towns with more or less similar history and dimensions, Perugia is home to the most ancient Italian university in the peninsula that caters to foreign students.

It is precisely for that reason that Perugia is somewhat a sort of miniature metropolis, a micro-world where one can meet young people from all over the planet. They all come to Perugia for long-term studies and rightfully so, for some fun as well. But this is not New York or London. This is still a town where people take long walks or bicycle rides and where after three mornings at the same coffee bar, everyone knows you by name. No, Perugia is not a metropolis and despite its 30,000 students, 8,000 of whom are foreigners, it remains a beautiful town in the Italian province.

Amanda Knox is a 20 year old American, born and raised in Seattle, in the west coast of the United States. She arrived in Europe in summer 2007. She first stayed in Germany where she briefly resided with relatives and then, with her sister who had joined her from the US, she moved to Perugia where she has decided to look for an apartment for the imminent academic year.

Amanda is indeed a student with a whole year of study abroad awaiting her, in Italy, where she is to take a course in creative writing.

The two sisters begin apartment hunting and after a little while, Amanda meets Filomena Romanelli by pure chance. Filomena shares a large house with Laura Mezzetti, another Italian girl, at 7, Pergola Avenue.

Two of the bedrooms in the house are vacant and the girls are looking for roommates. The house is perfect for Amanda: it is located at a walking distance from the university and even has a small garden. Amanda does not waste any time: she signs the contract and gives a cash deposit, happy to have easily found a nice place with two girls that she felt compatible with right away. Things seem to be going the right direction leading to believe that the academic year will surely be unforgettable. The two sisters go on a two week vacation a prior to Amanda's return to Perugia for the beginning of the academic year.

During that time, another girl, Meredith Kercher, says goodbye to her parents and friends in Coulsdon, in suburban London. She is also headed to Perugia. She has won an Erasmus scholarship, the European student exchange program that allows students from various nationalities to spend one academic year at an overseas university. The program, founded in the 80s in an effort to encourage cultural integration among diverse nations from the European community, has in time taken on huge proportions: every year, hundreds of thousands of youths participate in the Erasmus program.

Meredith is a straight A student, very focused and organized. Prior to departing for Perugia, she has contacted Filomena Romanelli via email in response to the room vacancy announcement

posted on the university's website. Once in Perugia, Meredith contacts Filomena, tours the house which she likes, and decides right away to rent the last vacant bedroom. The house is now full: Filomena, Laura, Amanda and Meredith are all looking forward to an unforgettable year.

In late summer 2007, Raffaele Sollecito is a 23 year old man, born and raised in Bari, a southern province of Italy. As a student from the University of Perugia he spent the previous year in Germany thanks to the Erasmus exchange student program. Upon his return from Germany, he finds out that the student residence where he usually rented a room did not have any vacancy so he decides to look for a place to stay. He ends up finding one not far from Pergola Avenue.

Rudy Guede is a 21 year old man born in Ivory Coast West Africa where he emigrated from along with his father in 1992 when he was 5 years old. Guede's living conditions were not easy during his first years in Italy: His father worked as a mason and they were definitely not living in the lap of luxury but they still lived a respectable and honest life. Unfortunately, his father was often away for work, obligated to travel to construction sites far away, but all in all, things were going okay for them.

During these absences, Rudy was cared for by different local families who treated him with love and respect. At a certain point, Rudy's father returns temporarily to Ivory Coast to renew his passport. In the meantime however, the civil war has exploded in Ivory Coast, forcing the man to extend his stay in Africa. Rudy is then placed with a family that is able to give him stability and a future.

That is how Rudy ends up at the Caporalis, one of the richest families in Perugia. However, things are not going well: the many changes in Rudy's life prevent him from finding his own dimension. The boy is confused and soon ends up on the wrong side of the law. The Caporalis are able to find him a job as a gardener but Rudy is not up to it. He refuses to live that kind of life.

Rudy does not want to accept the future that seems destined to him. He is probably attracted to those thousands of students from all over the world, young people of his age and with similar interests whom he imagines to be completely versed into amusements and leisure activities. For them, money never seems to be an issue. The reality is very different but Rudy will not have time to understand that and to correct his mistakes.

At work, Rudy does not show up for days. He pretends to be sick but he gets caught and loses his job. It is August 2007.

Let's pause at this precise moment. We are at the end of summer in 2007. This story's four

protagonists don't know each other. It is possible that Rudy and Raffaele have crossed paths before, Perugia is small after all, but it is very probable that they have never hung out.

Amanda returns to Perugia from her vacation on September 21: by now, the days are shorter but the energy brought by thousands of global students is so tangible that it seems to illuminate the town.

Rudy is getting by with the little money he was able to save from his odd jobs. He is looking forward to better days but in the meantime, he mingles with students and people of every color and nationality. Perhaps not even Rudy knows what Rudy wants.

Meredith arrived in Perugia a few days ago. We can picture her putting away the books and heavy dictionaries that she brought along.

Raffaele is getting ready to tackle another academic year in Perugia after his experience in Germany.

All are more or less serene and with great hope for the future.

The Perugia murder case's figure is circumscribed by the forensic evidence and the timetable, the two pivots on which the entire reconstruction of the incident was based. Let's also try to retrace the events following that same perspective.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2007

Halloween, the night of the witches is a recurrent Nordic celebration associated to the rhythm of the earth and seasonal changes. Traditionally, it is celebrated in Anglo-Saxon countries where children and young people, dressed up as monsters and witches, go from house to house asking for treats or playing tricks. The terrifying aspect of the celebration, perhaps tied to the belief that on the night of Halloween there is some type of temporary passage between the world of the living and that of the dead, has now turned into a more folkloric tradition of eccentric parties and binge drinking.

In the last decade, this celebration has also reached Italy: every opportunity is good to party and in the end, who cares whether Halloween belongs to the Italian tradition or not?

A few days prior to Halloween, Amanda had for the first time taken her new boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito to Pergola Avenue. They had met recently but right from the beginning, there

was a strong mutual attraction.

That night, as we mentioned, is a night of celebration. In Perugia, the mood is electrical. The following day also happens to be a holiday in Italy and falls on a Thursday, allowing those like Filomena and Laura who have a job, to enjoy a long weekend off. Both girls have decided to spend the long weekend with their respective boyfriends and are planning on being away for a couple of nights.

Amanda has been spending the night at Raffaele's lately, meaning that Meredith would be home alone.

That evening, Meredith has dinner at Amy's, an English girl like herself. Other English girls are also present at the dinner: Robyn, Sophie, and Natalie. Meredith has gotten very close to these girls in the past few months and the 5 of them often hang out. Meredith enjoys Halloween very much and she never misses the opportunity to dress up in a costume: that October 30, she is dressed up as a vampire.

After dinner, the 5 friends go bar hopping downtown to celebrate. After all, it is what most students do that evening in Perugia.

Amanda goes to club Le Chic whose owner, Patrick Lumumba, is a Congolese musician who has been living in Italy for many years. Amanda is actually a part-time waitress at Le Chic but Lumumba does not particularly appreciate her attitude and he is not satisfied with her work either.

This is how Lumumba talks about Amanda's work during a TV interview on the Italian program "Nero su Bianco":

«I no longer liked the way Amanda worked. A friend of hers had told me that Amanda had told him she wanted to quit her job. That friend told me that he advised her to stay because unlike the other bar owners, I pay well and on time. So I told her friend that next time Amanda tells you about wanting to quit, let her do so because it actually would be to my benefit. I believe that Amanda's work was poor. Our customers unlike restaurant diners can come in with the intention of having one beer but end up drinking five depending on the service they receive. Vice versa, a customer can come in wanting five beers but end up with only one due to a poor service. Amanda's mode of working was just that: a customer would come in, order one beer which she would bring him and she was done. Then sometimes another person would come in and she would start a long conversation with them. Whoever owns a bar knows that we cannot have customers wait while we are chit chatting with someone».

There might be indications of some tension between these two but on that October 31, Amanda was still considered to be one of the waitresses of Le Chic.

That night, Rudy Guede was invited to a party at the house of some Spanish students. At around midnight, the five English girls are headed to Merlin Pub, one of the bars located in the city center.

At around 2am, Amanda leaves Le Chic. She has also decided to stop by Merlin Pub. After a little while, she goes home to Raffaele Sollecito's house.

The Spanish students along with Rudy, also arrive at Merlin Pub. Perhaps Meredith and Rudy talk to each other, perhaps they agree to meet the following night, however, no one remembers having seen them talk to each other.

The English girls and the Spanish students hop to a different bar not too far, the Domus Delirii, where they carry on their dancing and drinking until 5 in the morning. And then, one by one, they all go home. It's been a great night and everybody had fun.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1st

Amanda spent the night at Raffaele's as she had been doing regularly as of late. At around 1 pm she returns home to Pergola Avenue. After a little while, Raffaele joins her and together they start cooking. At that exact moment, Meredith is coming out of her bedroom. Amanda invites her to join them but Meredith has other plans, she has agreed to have lunch with her friend Robyn.

At 3 pm, Meredith is ready. She says her goodbyes to Amanda and Raffaele, and heads to Robyn's where she will stay until 9pm chatting and eating.

After lunch, Amanda and Raffaele smoke a couple of joints. It is around 5pm when they decide to return to Raffaele's place.

At about 5:30pm, a female student from Serbia knocks on Sollecito's door to ask him for a ride that evening after dinner. She is still waiting on the doorstep when Raffaele pulls up: he agrees to give her a ride after dinner, and then the girl leaves.

At that moment, Raffaele and Amanda take a walk to the city center and at 8:18pm, Lumumba sends Amanda an sms suggesting that she takes the night off; he was not anticipating much work at the bar so there was no need for her to come in.

The couple smoke a few more joints and then, at 8:35pm, Amanda replies to Lumumba's text message before turning her cell phone off until the following day.

At around 8:45pm, the Serbian student knocks on Raffaele's door again: this time, she wants to let him know that she will no longer need a ride. The girl talks to Amanda who is at Raffaele's at that moment.

Meredith, as we saw, departs from her Robyn's house at around 9pm. A few minutes later, she makes it home.

At 10pm, Elisabetta Lana, a woman who lives near Pergola Avenue, receives a strange phone call: the person calling warns her not to use her bathroom because in it, there is a bomb. Later investigations will determine that it was a prank call from a kid in search of a good laugh. But Elisabetta, unaware of the prank, gets frightened and decides to call the police.

The police officers go to her house and after having checked to make sure there was no bomb, they suggest that she file a complaint the following day at the police station.

At around 11/11:30pm, but this time remains to be confirmed, Nara Capezzali who lives a few steps down Pergola Avenue gets out of bed to use the restroom. Suddenly, she hears a horrifying scream followed by the sound of rapid footsteps getting away. Here is how she told the story during an episode of the talk show Porta a Porta that aired on January 19, 2009:

«I am sorry but I only remember a few things. I remember having to use the bathroom...I heard a scream that almost sounded inhuman. And then, I heard running down the metal stairs...these people were not walking slowly, they were running».

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2

It is early morning and Elisabetta Lana is getting ready to go file an official complaint as suggested by the police officers the night before. The woman is about to leave when her son finds a Motorola cell phone in the yard. Sometime later, a second cell phone is found, this time, an Ericsson. Elisabetta Lana gets to the police station where in addition to filing a complaint, she also turns in the 2 mysterious cell phones so they can be returned to their owners.

Both phones still contain their SIM cards. After a quick check, the officers identify the people whom the cards are registered to: one of them is Filomena Romanelli residing at 7,

Pergola Avenue, and the other is Meredith Kercher.

The cell phones had been tossed in Elisabetta Lana's yard perhaps in an attempt to make them fall into the nearby escarpment, but the pitch did not have enough power and the phones landed a few meters from Mrs. Lana's doorstep. Once the police officers identify the SIM cards' owners, they personally go to 7, Pergola Avenue to reconstitute the telephones and find out if there was a burglary case involved.

This is a decisive fact in the investigation: had the cell phones been tossed with enough power to make it into the escarpment, the police would not have gone to Amanda and Meredith's house that morning and this story would certainly have taken a different direction.

At around 10 minutes past noon, Amanda calls Filomena who owns 2 cell phones. Only later will it come up that Filomena had lent her second cell phone, the one found by Elisabetta Lana to be precise, to Meredith.

Amanda tells her friend that she had spent the night at Raffaele's and that when she returned to their Pergola Avenue home, she had found the front door open. Yet, Amanda tells her friend, she still got in the house despite her initial concern « *noticed some blood stains in the bathroom...then I took a shower*».

Filomena's heart sank as she heard those words. So many have wondered how it is possible to calmly take shower in such a situation: an empty house, a front door ajar...even blood stains in the bathroom! This can certainly not be called a "normal" situation: however, Amanda has confirmed her version of the facts several times. She walked into the house and took a shower as if nothing was wrong.

Despite the numerous attempts to find an explanation for this strange behavior, nothing particularly convincing has ever emerged.

Filomena tells Amanda to call the police right away and to check if Meredith was fine. The Italian girl is very apprehensive, she understands that something is wrong and she decides to cut her getaway short and to return home immediately.

At around 12:30 pm, the police arrive at 7, Pergola Avenue to reconstitute the 2 cell phones. The officers find Amanda and Raffaele at the gate, surprised to see the police.

The officers inform them of the motive of their visit and Amanda tells them about returning home that morning to find the front door open and a window broken.

The officers accompany Amanda inside the house and walk into Filomena's bedroom. Everything is upside down: sure enough, there is a broken window and a bunch of clothes scattered all over the floor. At first glance, it looks like a case of burglary but something is odd. The pieces of broken glass are on top of the sparse clothes as if someone had broken the window after having scattered the contents of the drawers on the floor. Even more puzzling, if not suspicious, are the many valuable objects in the house like a computer and cameras. Despite the initial appearances, it is clear that this is not a simple case of burglary. In the meantime, there is no trace of Meredith inside the house and her bedroom door is locked.

At 12:45pm, Filomena arrives at the house along with her boyfriend and 2 other friends.

At 12:51pm despite the presence of the police, Raffaele makes an initial attempt to call the carabinieri, another Italian law enforcement institution, but he is not able to get a hold of anyone.

At 12:54pm, he makes a second attempt: he wants to report a burglary but the carabinieri respond that since the police have already intervened, the case is under their jurisdiction. Later on, these phone calls will be interpreted as the young man's attempt to support his and Amanda's version of the facts.

The tension in the house is heavy: the police officers are aware that something is wrong. That locked door is a bad sign. Following a brief consultation, a police officer finally decides to force the door open. Many more minutes go by but at this point, another minute or 2 will not make a difference.

Meredith's lifeless body is lying on her bedroom floor where it has been for hours. Amanda and Raffaele are standing in the back of the group and, apparently, cannot see that pitiful spectacle due to the officers standing in front of them blocking their view.

THE INVESTIGATIONS

Awaiting the arrival of the forensic team, the house and mainly Meredith's bedroom are immediately evacuated. The authorities take the information of all those present at the scene and proceed to an inspection of the building's surroundings. On the grass there are no footprints despite the broken window and neither are there signs of climbing on the walls, leading to believe in a staged intrusion to throw off the investigation.

There are 2 bathrooms in the house: one is where Amanda took a shower and where blood stains were found, and in the other, the authorities found human feces inside the toilet, fact that

had already been pointed out by Amanda to the police prior to Meredith's door being forced opened.

The men and women of the forensic team initiate their tedious task: they systematically and methodically scrutinize every angle of the house, they photograph every detail, and pick up organic traces in Meredith's bedroom, in the adjacent bathroom and in Filomena's bedroom. In the wake of the sad routine usually following the discovery of a dead body, all witnesses involved are eventually summoned to the police station. Meredith's friends who were the last ones to see her alive were also called in for interrogation.

The atmosphere inside the police station is surreal: the group waiting to be heard by the investigators splits into those like Meredith's friends, tearful, in shock, and unable to accept the devastating news, and those like Amanda who react completely differently, laughing and joking.

This is how Robyn Carmel, one of Meredith's friends, talks about those moments during the trial as reported by the press:

«Amanda seemed proud to have been the one to find Meredith. I remember thinking so as I heard her speak. She acted in a very strange manner at the police station, she was not showing any emotions unlike everyone else. Everybody was quite emotional except for her. Everybody was crying except for her. Amanda was talking loudly. I remember her saying something like it could have happened to me...how do you think I feel...I am the one who found her. She seemed proud of that. She told us that Mez had been found in the closet, wrapped in a comforter. When Natalie said that she hoped Meredith had not suffered, Amanda said what the fuck do you think... she bled to death».

With regard to Amanda and Raffaele's behavior at the police station she says :

«They were kissing, joking and also giggling. They had moved their chairs closer to each other and Amanda was resting her legs on top of Raffaele's. I remember that at a certain point, she also stuck her tongue out at him».

Many wonder how Amanda could have known that the girl died from a massive blood loss when the cause of death had not yet been determined and when neither she nor Raffaele had been able to see the interior of the bedroom when the door was open.

One by one, all the young people are interrogated. Amanda tells her version of the events of that last day as she did with Filomena on the phone. She confirms having spent the entire night at Raffaele's and returning to Pergola Avenue the following morning, when she found the front

door open.

Meredith's body has only been discovered for a few hours but the detectives already have quite a clear idea on the matter: they are convinced that the burglary scenario is all staging, a vain tentative to throw off the investigation.

The investigators are immediately convinced that the murderer needs to be traced back to Meredith's friends and acquaintances. There are two possible scenarios: either Meredith knew her killer whom she casually let into the house, or that mysterious person had a copy of the house keys.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3

Following the examination of Meredith's body, the legal physician determines that the girl has vaginal lesions indicative of a sexual activity prior to the murder.

23 wounds are present on the body. 3 knife cuts particularly stand out, 2 of which are located on the neck and one on the hand. The investigators' attention is caught by the 2 wounds on the neck, made with a short blade knife that was thrust in the tip of the chin downward.

Later tests will determine that the stab wound had been inflicted with such violence that it actually cut through the thyroid artery: the blood gushed into Meredith's lungs, suffocating her to death.

Bruises found on her neck suggest a strangulation attempt.

There were also bruises on her right forearm and on her left thigh in addition to scratches and knife cuts on her chin. It is logical to conclude that Meredith opposed resistance by fighting her aggressor.

In the end, the blood tests on the girl don't reveal any trace of alcohol or drugs.

While the legal doctor is performing the autopsy, on the other side of town, Raffaele and Amanda are lingerie shopping.

During those same moments, the forensic team is still performing its daunting task of gathering and classifying the evidence from Pergola Avenue. They pay particular attention to the

blood stains found in the bathroom. Diluted traces of blood are noticed running from the bathroom sink down to the toilet bowl and the bidet. The initial impression is that the killer tried to clean the murder weapon and perhaps also him or herself inside the narrow shower.

Darker shade blood stains are found on the sink and on a box of cotton balls nearby: it is probably blood that dripped prior to the clean-up attempt.

Several traces of blood are also found in Meredith's bedroom. Mainly 2 out of those catch the investigators' attention: they consist of 2 handprints, one on the wall and the other on the pillow where Meredith was found laying. In addition to the footprints all around the room, there is one shoe print on the pillow next to the handprint

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5

Raffaele Sollecito is once again summoned to the police station. There are areas of his version of the events on the day of the murder that do not resonate with the investigators. The young man tries to give details of that day's events:

He claims that Amanda and himself had lunch at Pergola Avenue. They saw Meredith for a few minutes before she left, and then the couple went for a walk in the city center only to return home at around 8:30 or 9pm.

From that moment on, Raffaele claims to have been working on the computer. Under pressure from the investigators, Raffaele makes a somewhat sensational declaration: he says that he is not so sure Amanda stayed with him all night. Perhaps she went out alone and then returned home at around 2am...he does not remember for sure.

This is the first noticeable crack in the couple's alibi prompting the investigators to immediately re-interrogate Amanda.

The girl who had accompanied her boyfriend at the police station was in the waiting room. Witnesses remember that to kill time while waiting for her boyfriend, Amanda was striking yoga poses and even did some acrobatic pirouettes along the corridor. Inspector Ficarra from Perugia's mobile team remembers that night in these words *«found her doing backbends, splits and cartwheels in the waiting area. She was showcasing her gymnastic skills (..) A behavior that I did not find appropriate in that place and situation so much so that I yelled at her»*.

So now, it is Amanda's turn to be interrogated by the police officers who ask her for a detailed reconstruction of the events the day of the murder.

The girl appears serene and remembers that day: she talks about the lunch at home, the walk downtown, Lumumba's text message telling her not to go to work that evening, and how her and Raffaele went back to his house to watch a movie.

She is asked to turn in her cell phone. In the memory of the phone, there is an sms from Patrick Lumumba received at 8:18pm reading "see you later". The investigators mistakenly translate those 3 words literally instead of giving it its intended meaning of "bye". The atmosphere is increasingly tensed at the police station: the investigators are witnessing a worrisome new scenario. Based on the first reconstruction of the events, Amanda and Patrick Lumumba could have had an appointment that evening, appointment that possibly led to a murder.

They try to pressure Amanda who ends up caving in. She confirms that she had an appointment with Patrick Lumumba at Pergola Avenue. Amanda claims that Lumumba was madly in love with Meredith and that faced with her rejection, he had lost it. She tops off the confession by saying that while she was in the kitchen, in utter shock, Lumumba had barbarically killed the poor Meredith.

Here are her declarations as reported by the news in those days:

«I met him (Patrick) the night of November 1st following the text message I had sent him saying "See You Later". We met right away, at around 9pm, at the basketball court on Piazza Grimana. We went to my house. I cannot remember if my friend Meredith was already home or if she arrived later but I can tell you that Patrick and Meredith went into Meredith's bedroom while I believe I had remained in the kitchen. I can't remember how long they had been together in the room but I can only tell you that at one point, I heard Meredith screaming and I got so scared that I covered my ears. And then, I don't remember a thing, I am so confused in my head. I don't remember if Meredith was screaming or if I also heard splashes because I was upset but I could imagine that something had possibly happened. I am not sure if Raffaele was also there that night but I remember waking up at his house, in his bed, and I went back to my place the morning after where I found the door open».

These declarations leave the investigators speechless. Amanda's confessions explode inside the police station like an incendiary bomb. The scenario completely changes and if her claims turn out to be accurate, the case will be closed.

Lumumba the musician, Lumumba the bar owner but above all, Lumumba the African, has allegedly taken advantage of the English girl whom he had not been able to woo with his music and his cocktails. From that moment, the Italian press dives full force into the story that it

successfully propels to new heights and it is even able to somewhat "tranquilize" most Italians. Sexual intrigues among young people seem to always spark off a great interest in the public opinion, and the fact that the murderer in question is a minority, points all responsibility toward the other, the different, therefore, obtaining that so called tranquilizing effect we mentioned earlier.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6

At 5 in the morning, based on the declarations made by Amanda, the police officers barge into Patrick Lumumba's house that he shares with his companion and their young son. Without wasting any time, they handcuff him, convinced to have arrested Meredith Kercher's killer.

That Tuesday, November 6, marks the beginning of a legal nightmare for Patrick Lumumba. For some of the Italian public opinion, he is the perfect killer, someone who lures and charms girls much younger than him coming from all over the world. Moreover, he is a foreigner, detail that was widely broadcasted as well. With regard to that fact, we cannot help but mention a significant detail: Patrick Lumumba, being African, is certainly a non-European Economic Community national but neither is Amanda who is a US citizen. However, throughout the entire duration of the case, Patrick Lumumba will be labeled the "non-EEC national" while Amanda Knox will never be referred to as such. It is clear that in that context, the appellation "non-EEC national" has a strongly negative connotation, alluding to sentiments of racism which are not in the least taken into consideration when the non-EEC national is a US citizen. A detail that speaks to the Italian media's conduct and role in all this affair.

On November 6, the police officially put under arrest Patrick Lumumba, Amanda Knox, and Raffaele Sollecito. While Amanda and Lumumba's arrests are solely based on the girl's declarations, Sollecito's story has too many dark areas in the eyes of the investigators. His involvement is not clear and neither is his alibi unsupported by the activities registered on his cell phone and computer.

A few days later, Sollecito retracts his declarations and claims to remember having spent the night of the murder with Amanda:

«I lied on November 5, I was under pressure. Amanda didn't ask me to say anything. I am sure that she was with me that night».

The investigators' enthusiasm is short lived: they soon realize that something does not add up. Not a single forensic evidence ties Lumumba to the crime scene. Actually, everything leads to believe that he has never set a foot in that house as he has been claiming all along.

The Congolese repeatedly claims to have been at his bar all night but there are apparently no receipts to confirm the bar was open in the moments the murder was committed.

Luckily for Lumumba, there is a witness: Roman Mero, a professor from Zurich University who was in Lumumba's bar at a time compatible with that of the murder. As soon as he hears the news of Lumumba's arrest, the professor rushes to Perugia and provides him with a rock solid alibi. The professor remembers having spent the night talking politics with the number one suspect. Lumumba can finally let out a sigh of relief. Despite such crushing proof of his non involvement in this matter, the African man will be officially acquitted only after 14 days of unjust detention.

A few months later, Lumumba's lawyer, Carlo Pacelli will say:

«It seems evident to me that in Amanda's provocative declarations about Patrick, there are details, elements, and facts that only someone who was present at Pergola Avenue could have known. For example, the police found out about Meredith's screams a long time after the murder. How could Amanda have known that the poor Meredith was screaming before being killed? It is one of the many details that only someone present at Pergola Avenue could have known».

In the meantime, the forensic team is able to identify the bloody handprint left on the pillow where Meredith was laying: it belongs to Rudy Guede.

The police immediately begin looking for the Ivorian but it doesn't take them long to figure out that he is undetectable.

No one knows this yet but Rudy fled right after the murder and is hiding in Germany. A friend of the Ivorian, Giacomo, from Perugia, decides to collaborate with police: on November 20, he contacts Rudy via Skype and successfully convinces Guede to return to Italy to turn himself in. Finally, on December 6, Rudy returns to Italy.

On November 20, via Skype, Guede gives what will be his version of the truth, minus a few modifications.

The young Ivorian says that he had an appointment with Meredith that evening which they had set up the previous night at Merlin Pub. However, none of Meredith's friends present that night remembers seeing her talk to Rudy.

Furthermore, Rudy says that he arrived at Meredith's house at around 9 pm and that they had

sexual contact but no intercourse. In support of that claim, the legal doctors found traces of Rudy's DNA on the girl's genitals.

Then, the 2 young people, as reported by Rudy, had a talk and Meredith had complained about Amanda who according to her, had taken money from a drawer in her bedroom. It was later demonstrated that money did indeed go missing from Meredith's bedroom.

Then Rudy says that at one point, he went to use the bathroom where he listened to music while he was having a bowel movement.

A few minutes later, he heard a noise and came out of the bathroom:

«I must have been in the bathroom for 5 minutes. I heard a scream that was so loud it could have been heard from the main road. When I came out, because we had dimmed the lights, I came out and I saw that person. He had his back turned to me and I said "what the fuck is going on?" That person was not towering over me, I mean that he was not taller than me.

That person had his back turned towards me and I saw...Meredith...who was already losing blood. Her throat was slashed. (...) The person tried to hit me, I also have wounds on my hand, I still have the marks on my right hand...»

During a later interrogation, he will add having heard the man say *«let's go, there is a black guy»* talking to a third person.

Based on Rudy's declarations, after he pushed away the aggressor, he went to Meredith's bedroom where the girl, mortally wounded, was wheezing in her own blood. He tried to rescue her by pressing a towel on her open wound to no avail. Still according to Rudy, the girl was trying to tell him something but he was unable to understand her. Faced with his inability to help Meredith and completely in shock, the young man, instead of calling the police, had spent the rest of the night club hopping in Perugia.

According to the investigators, this version is only partially credible. To support Rudy's claims, there are the multiple scattered prints left at the crime scene and those feces found in the bathroom and later proven to be his, that demonstrate how the young man would have hurriedly left the bathroom without flushing due to a startling noise.

There are grey areas that are definitely unlikely. It is indeed hard to believe in such a precise timing of the events during which the aggressor or aggressors go into action exactly when Rudy is in the bathroom for a few minutes and with iPod headphones on. If the situation was so, why

didn't Meredith try to gain some time to wait for Rudy to come out of the bathroom? The killer acted very surprised to find himself face to face with Rudy, why didn't Meredith let him know of the presence of another man in the house? Something is not right, the investigators are sure so.

In the meantime, it is speculated that "the mysterious man" could be Raffaele Sollecito given that his alibi is not supported by the activity registered on his computer. A specific test allows to verify whether a terminal has been powered on or off during a given time.

The tests are performed on Raffaele's computer and the results show that his computer was off at the time he claimed he had been working on it. It is the first major inconsistency that led to doubting the rest of Sollecito's declarations.

His cell phone proves to have been strangely turned off from 8:42pm the night of the murder to 6 am the following morning.

In addition, a knife was found at his home, recently cleaned with bleach. When the knife is tested for some DNA, the result worsens Sollecito's case: it contains traces of Meredith and Amanda's DNAs. However, we need to mention that later tests will not be able to determine whether this was in fact the murder weapon.

And then there is yet another detail that could possibly place Raffaele at the murder scene: his DNA was found on the clasp of Meredith's bra. However, during the first inspection, that clasp went missing and will not be found for another 40 days after the murder. Raffaele's lawyers argue that the proof could potentially have been contaminated and therefore, could not be admissible.

The investigators now have a clear idea about the case: according to their reconstruction of the events, Amanda was with Raffaele that night. In support of this, there were traces of the American girl's blood mixed with that of Meredith, suggesting that she had cut herself during the attack. The girl's behavior immediately following the murder is also suspect but, as we know, people react differently in front of this type of situation.

The investigators believe that Raffaele, Meredith, Amanda, and Rudy were all together at Pergola Avenue that November 1st. The murder was set off by some sexual battery or an erotic game gone bad.

Immediately following the murder, the group escaped, taking with them Meredith's cell phones so they could get rid of them perhaps to throw off the investigation.

The next morning, Raffaele and Amanda allegedly returned to Pergola Avenue in an attempt to clean up and mislead the investigators by setting up that fake burglary scene when the police unexpectedly showed up. To support this version, there is the testimony of a local store owner who a year after the murder, claimed to have seen a girl that looked a lot like Amanda buy cleaning products very early that morning:

«I arrived in the morning and when I went to open the store at exactly 7:45 am, she was waiting to come in. That struck me because the morning following the weekend of Halloween there was nobody here. She came in and I saw her as she was coming in... she definitely had on jeans, a grey coat for sure... she had a blue scarf I believe, or blue/grey... and she had on a hat... I think she was using that scarf kind of like to cover herself».

Needless to say that after one year, so many details about Amanda and about the detectives' official version were well known and could have influenced anyone.

Naturally, the defense's theory is completely different. According to their reconstruction, the murder was orchestrated by one unique killer, probably a robust man who restrained the victim in a supine position, suffocated her, and finally executed her by stabbing her in the neck.

As time went by, more witnesses come forward, in particular a homeless man, Antonio Curatolo, who often spends the evening at a plaza near Pergola Avenue:

«That night, I was sitting on that bench and once in a while I would raise my eyes and would see people and cars (...). Further down, there were 2 young people, they looked like 2 lovebirds (...) every so often, one of them would go there and would look down as if they were expecting someone... these 2 were Sollecito and Amanda: I had already seen them before because I had been around the university sometime... I sat there from 9:30 pm/10 to midnight and then I left. They had left before me».

Hekuran Kukumani, an Albanese national also comes forward, convinced to have seen Amanda, Raffaele, and Rudy the night of the murder, in front of the Pergola Avenue house. He even remembers being threatened by them with a knife:

«I was driving by, I honked, it was raining. I was passing by and I see something black, right there, and I honk. And then, I stop because I touched something with the bumper and later, they got up. One walks up to me, I punch him... I recognized them both, Raffaele and Amanda and she pulled out a 30 centimeter knife but it could not be seen because it was covered by the hands. After I drive off 15/20 meters, Rudy comes out of the house...»

As we have already mentioned earlier, these types of testimonies have a relative value given that the media's interest in this case has been enormous: for months, newspapers as well as radio and TV stations have analyzed the event, reported every detail and emphasized Amanda's personality who within a short time, has become a true anti-heroin protagonist of TV transmissions.

The media has invaded the web in search of details about Amanda's personal life: every single page of her blog has been scrutinized in search of sensational news, every single photo of her has been slapped on the cover page of magazines, facebook has been examined with a fine-tooth comb in search of something that could somehow reveal an unedited detail about the girl with an angel face.

Indeed, Amanda has become the true protagonist of the event during the process: she has fascinated TV spectators with her girly appearance, she has charmed the journalists who have nicknamed her "angel face", she has become the new media sensation in a country overwhelmed by the economic crisis.

But her case has crossed over the ocean, with the American press that has followed the trial, openly siding with her: there have been many accusations against the police and the Italian judicial system which have been painted in a very negative way by the star spangled banner's media. Anyhow, history has shown us that in such cases, the United States usually rally around their citizens involved in similar cases overseas. This time was no exception.

THE VERDICTS

Rudy Guede will elect the "fast-track" trial and will initially be sentenced to 30 years in prison, later reduced to 16 in appeal, for the murder of Meredith Kercher.

However, Amanda Knox and Raffaele Sollecito have been respectively sentenced to 26 and 25 years in prison during the initial trial. Following the trial, a diplomatic incident with the US was barely avoided: very serious accusations against the police and the Italian prosecutor Giuliano Mignini and Manuele Comodi are coming straight from America. The Italian government however, has addressed these accusations in a radical way, so much as to reward the police officers who handled the case.

Here is the reconstruction of this ugly story as it is presented during the first trial verdict: Amanda and Raffaele who had been dating for barely one week, were having sex in Amanda's bedroom that evening. At one point, they hear Meredith scream and they run to her room: when they walk in, they find Guede trying to rape Meredith. At that moment, they don't rescue the girl but probably stunned from alcohol or marijuana, they join in thinking that this is the case of

some erotic game. According to the verdict, Raffaele was the one who restrained Meredith while Amanda inflicted the deadly blow to the poor girl.

The appeal trial began November 24, 2010. The defense teams have requested that the debate be re-opened on the base of new technical evidence that should exonerate Amanda and Raffaele. The strategy centers around what is seemingly the weak link in the accusation, the genetic evidence. The amount of Amanda's DNA found on the handle of the knife has always been considered too low, so low for the defense that they never even considered it to be reliable. And then, the forensic team has determined that the kitchen knife in question is not compatible with the murder weapon. During the trial, there is talk of 2 blades, one long and one short. But the second weapon, the one with the short blade, has never been found.

For now, all 3 are guilty people in the eyes of the Italian justice. For the judges, there is too much forensic evidence against them just as there are too many inconsistencies in the 3 accused's alibi and reconstructions, so much so that the Prosecutor Manuela Comodi will say that:

«The forensic evidence is irrefutable and superimposable».

However, according to Amanda and Raffaele's defense teams, these elements have been gathered and analyzed incorrectly and therefore do not prove anything. Amanda and Raffaele continue to claim their innocence.

Beyond the forensic and other evidence presented in court, many still wonder what really happened that night.

The official reconstructions are not convincing to everybody. Obviously, they do not convince the defense teams that refute argument after argument nor do they convince many external followers. The sexual plot as presented, is not representative of young people in their twenties. The sexuality described in this reconstruction is just too elaborate and complex and would be more descriptive of people of a more mature age, not kids barely out of adolescence.

In court, there was even talk of a potential resentment that Amanda had toward Meredith because that girl, so different from her, stole the spotlight away from her.

This motive does not seem much more solid than the other.

One of Amanda's lawyers, Carlo Dalla Vedova, stigmatizes the findings in the following words:

«We are running the risk of doing an addition with zeros, with the belief that if we add zero to zero, we can get a concrete result. Only, zero plus zero will not give anything other than null. Nothing has changed with regard to the absence of a motive. At the end of the trial, the prosecution even came up with a new motive different from the earlier one. At first, it was about a sexual adventure and then, it became Amanda's desire to get revenge from Meredith.

No evidence has been shown other than the fact that Amanda did not like Mez' "goody-two-shoes" persona. However these are opinions, to define a motive, there is a need for evidence that is still missing. In the absence of certitude, it is better that the judge exonerate a suspect rather than condemn an innocent».

The Prosecutor Manuela Comodi's responds to these objections:

«There are murders without motive and this one could be one of them».

The analysis of Amanda's accusation against Lumumba days after the murder is also interesting. Many still wonder what to make of it. Was it an attempt from Amanda to put the investigators on the wrong track or perhaps Guede's story is more probable than we think? In other words, we can also think that Amanda knew that there was a black man in the house because the killer had told her so but since she did not see him directly, she simply assumed that it was Lumumba?

Or perhaps as she declared herself, she made those claims, which by the way were extremely precise as later demonstrated by the investigations, because she was under duress, confused and maybe beaten by the police as she claims? Let's remember that Amanda who was not fluent in Italian, was interrogated for hours without a lawyer present.

In any case, Amanda will have to go through a separate trial for defamation to respond to these accusations that she made against the Italian law enforcement. The trial is expected to assert whether the police has any responsibility in this wrongdoing.

The general feeling is that there is still a lot to be said about this story and that the whole truth is yet to be uncovered.

In March 2010, Mario Alessi, little Tommaso Onofri's killer, is locked up in the same prison as Rudy Guede. He claims to have had talks with Guede during which the young man had told him a new version of the story:

«He told me that it was him and one of his friends that went to Meredith's house that evening. Rudy said... he was the one to make advances to the girl, I mean he asked her to have a threesome.

At one point, the friend pulls out a knife, the handle was ivory but it was sharp...pointing it towards the girl... but not intentionally... the girl got hurt on the neck. When Rudy sees the bloody hands, he lets go of the girl. And then, when Rudy turns around, he sees the guy that tells him that they had to finish her off or that whore will make us rot in jail. That guy kept hitting her over and over again until the girl is laying on the floor... and Rudy was holding a cloth on her neck. The guy ran away while Rudy stayed with the girl until he saw that she was no longer breathing and then, he took off. Rudy told me that he had gone to the bathroom and he had left that guy with the girl. He was there for about less than 15 minutes, 10/15 minutes, when he came back in... in the bedroom he found a whole other scene».

This testimony although denied by Rudy Guede, would exonerate Amanda and Raffaele but, let's not forget that Mario Alessi is the same character who, the day after the disappearance of young Tommy, was blatantly lying in front of the cameras, sending messages to the boy's imaginary kidnappers. In reality, he was the one who had killed the child and had buried the body as later determined by the investigations.

In the same year, another convict comes forward. This time, it's Luciano Aviello, a former "camorra" criminal who claims to know who killed Meredith Kercher. According to Aviello, the killer is his own brother, Antonio and Aviello goes on to say that he had hidden the knife himself. His claims are currently under investigation. Anyhow, Aviello had in the past claimed to detain helpful information on another unsolved case, that of the little Angela Celentano who had vanished. That information was later declared to be unfounded.

Since that November 1st, 2007 though, Amanda Knox has been the real protagonist of this incident. As we have told you, the American girl has become a sort of icon for some members of the public that have witnessed the various reconstructions via the media.

Amanda herself, has not stopped claiming her innocence, writing letters and maintaining a direct rapport with the media. Rocco Ghirlanda, an Italian congressman and President of the Italy-USA Foundation, has published the book "Io Vengo con te, colloqui in carcere con Amanda Knox", a book that has increased the interest for the case.

Shortly before the appeal trial began, another controversy blew up, fueled this time by the British newspaper The Sun: a criminal psychologist, Jane Firbank, has analyzed Amanda's drawings done in prison, and according to her, those drawings show that Amanda is guilty. Here

is what was written in Doctor Firbank's report:

«Red is the color of frustration, of anger. The fact that the color red is infused with the yellow attests to the fact that Amanda is incapable of total self-control... I believe that what we gather from these drawings is that due to a high level of testosterone, Amanda essentially has a dominant and aggressive personality».

It is certain that there are many more years to wait before the final word is written about the case now globally known as "The Perugia Murder".

In the meantime, Amanda continuously claims her innocence from the prison of Capanne where she is detained as she waits for the appeal trial. She has also written a letter addressed to the deputy Ghirlanda and to Corrado Daclon, the General Secretary of the Italy-USA foundation, in which she says that she does not want to be forgotten.

In that letter published in the magazine Corriere della Sera in November 2010, we read among other things...

«[...] on one hand, I am glad that so many are interested because I don't want to be locked up all my life for nothing, forgotten as if I was worth nothing. I don't want that easy injustices be accepted. At the same time, I don't want to be made an instrument of hate messages [...] I often try to put myself in others' shoes and so, I understand that something about what happened affected you in some way and that you are working hard to ease a big difficulty for everybody, a big pain for many. For that, I thank you and I respect what you are doing.

With affection, love, peace and rock & roll,

Amanda

P.S.

I know that I am not alone even when I am alone. I am quoting you a song dear to my heart, Little Wing from Jimmy Hendrix:

When I am sad, she comes to me

With a thousand smiles, she gives to me free

It's alright she says it's alright

Take anything you want from me

Anything

Fly on little wing».