

The interrogation and arrest of Amanda Knox

Following the murder of Meredith Kercher on November 1, 2007, suspicion fell on her American housemate, Amanda Knox, and Knox's new boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito. In part this was because Knox and Sollecito were at the residence when police arrived and broke down a door to discover the body. The authorities also relied on behavioral observations in reaching their conclusion that Knox had been involved in the murder.¹ To police, Knox seemed cold and detached, which they interpreted as evidence of guilt, although others have suggested Knox may have been in a state of shock.

On the night of November 5-6, police interrogated Knox at length and obtained her signature on a document implicating both herself and the man she worked for, Patrick Lumumba. Knox says she had been asked to consider hypothetical scenarios and was describing a dream or vision, not a real memory, but police were satisfied they had something approaching a confession.²

A few hours later, after having a chance to rest and consider her situation, Knox composed a hand-written note to police. In it, she attempted to reconcile her signed statement with what she actually believed was the truth, a discrepancy she summarized as follows:

[I]t was under this pressure and after many hours of confusion that my mind came up with these answers. In my mind I saw Patrik in flashes of blurred images. I saw him near the basketball court. I saw him at my front door. I saw myself cowering in the kitchen with my hands over my ears because in my head I could hear Meredith screaming. But I've said this many times so as to make myself clear: these things seem unreal to me, like a dream, and I am unsure if they are real things that happened or are just dreams my head has made to try to answer the questions in my head and the questions I am being asked.

She went on to explain that, after what she had been told by the police, she felt she could no longer trust her memory:

The police have told me that they have hard evidence that places me at the house, my house, at the time of Meredith's murder. I don't know what proof they are talking about, but if this is true, it means I am very confused and my dreams must be real.

If Knox doubted the accuracy of her account, the police did not. On the strength of her signed statement, they arrested her, Sollecito, and Lumumba for the murder of Meredith Kercher. Lumumba was later released after numerous witnesses confirmed his alibi.

1. Edgardo Giobbi, a police officer involved in the investigation, offered the following explanation for a UK television documentary called *Sex, Lies, and the Murder of Meredith Kercher*: "By using specific interrogation techniques, this meant asking many questions, we could then test the answers given by all the witnesses, above all we could evaluate the behavior of the witnesses during the interrogations. This led us to identify Amanda Knox and Raffaele Sollecito."
2. This "dream statement" has a number of well-known precedents. *The Dreams of Ada*, a book by Robert Mayer, examines the case of two men who were convicted of murder after one of them described a dream that police took to be a confession. In another case, police asked a farmer named Gary Gauger to give a hypothetical description of how he could have gone about killing his parents. When Gauger obliged, he was charged with murder and convicted. He might have been executed had US federal investigators not stumbled upon evidence that proved his innocence. A third example is that of Steven Linscott, a theological student who told police about a dream he had on the night a woman in his apartment complex was murdered. Police treated the statement as a confession, arrested Linscott, and charged him with murder. Linscott was convicted and spent several years in prison before an appellate court overturned the conviction.