

# I fired Foxy Knoxy for hitting was to tell the police I raped

IT WAS nearly midnight in Le Chic and the three-floor club was heady with excitement.

The crammed dance floor was a flurry of bodies and the queue for the speciality rum cocktails was growing by the second.

Yet in the middle of it all sat barmaid Amanda Knox, whispering sweet nothings to her latest conquest, her chest pressed against his, their



From  
**Antonia Hoyle**

IN PERUGIA

mouths just millimetres apart and seemingly unaware of the chaos ensuing around her. It was at that moment that the club's owner, Patrick

Lumumba, finally realised he'd had enough and told the brash blonde American he wouldn't be requiring her services any more.

For four weeks he had quietly tolerated her wild mood swings, crass sexual innuendo and complete unwillingness to do any work so terminating her employment was, on the face of it, a wise decision.

It was also, tragically, one that Patrick believes came close to costing him his family, his business and his freedom. For just a week later, he believes, 20-year-old Amanda took her revenge by framing the 38-year-old Perugian club owner for the murder of her British friend, Meredith Kercher, whose half-naked body was discovered in a pool of blood by police on November 2.

Amanda painted him as a violent sexual predator who had raped the 21-year-old student before savagely slitting her throat and left him to languish in jail for a fortnight for a crime he didn't commit.

It was only last Tuesday, when police in the picturesque Italian hilltop town discovered DNA found on Meredith's body

*Meredith was sparkly and she lifted your spirits ... Amanda was jealous*



belonged not to Patrick but to loner Rudy Guede, that he was finally freed.

Now, in an exclusive interview with The Mail on Sunday, Patrick reveals his feelings towards the infamous 'Foxy Knoxy', and tells how the seemingly quintessential American turned into a tormented monster eaten up by anger towards both himself and Meredith.

'She was angry I was firing her and wanted revenge,' he says. 'By the end, she hated me. But I don't even think she's evil. To be evil you have to have a soul.'

'Amanda doesn't. She's empty; dead inside. She's the ultimate actress, able to switch her emotions on and off in an instant. I don't believe a word she says. Everything that comes out of her mouth is a lie. But those lies have stained me for ever.'

'She tried to play the race card. She thought that by pointing the finger at a black person she'd distract attention from herself. She used me as a scapegoat.'

'I've never had so much as a fine for not paying a bus ticket before. But now I've been branded a cold-blooded murderer.'

Knox is in custody on suspicion of murdering Meredith, along with her Italian boyfriend, computer studies student Raffaele Sollecito, 24, and police have arrested Guede, 20, who has joint Italian and Ivory Coast nationality and was found on the run in Germany.

Her statements to police have changed four times, the only aspect of her complex personality remaining consistent being her extraordinary envy of her friend and room-mate, Meredith.

'Meredith was a natural charmer, a beautiful girl who made friends easily, and effortlessly received attention wherever she went,' Patrick explains, sitting beside his pretty Polish-born girlfriend of six years Aleksandra Kania, 28, and their 19-month-old son, Davide.

'Amanda tried much harder, but was less popular. I didn't realise it at the time, but now I see that she was jealous. She wanted to be the queen bee, and as the weeks passed, it became clear that she wasn't. She hated anyone stealing her limelight – and that included Meredith.'

In an explosive account, Patrick Lumumba reveals how a toxic mixture of jealousy and sexual aggression led to him being accused of murdering British student

Patrick, who moved from his native Congo 15 years ago when his family opened a chain of clothes stores in Italy, met Amanda and Meredith, both exchange students at Perugia's University for Foreigners, in late September.

'I'd just opened Le Chic and one of my friends said he knew an American girl who needed work, so I told her to come along to the bar.'

As Amanda, a teacher's daughter educated at a Roman Catholic school, entered his bar that evening, dressed in flimsy trousers and full of bravado, he decided she'd fit the bill immediately.

'She was open and bubbly, and said she'd bring in more customers because she knew everyone. I didn't find her attractive, but she was confident about the way she looked. It was almost as if she didn't need to wear revealing clothes – she thought she was sexy enough as she was.'

The English Language student from Seattle then introduced Patrick to her new flatmate Meredith, a Leeds University student from Coulsdon, Surrey, who had arrived in August for a year's stay in the country on an exchange programme.

'Her Italian was poor, but she smiled and commented on the special make of vodka I kept behind the bar. She said she'd used it herself instead of rum when she was a barmaid making mojitos back in Britain,' he remembers.

'I was surprised she was English as her skin was so dark. She told me she had Indian ancestry.'

'As she and Amanda headed off to chat with the rest of their group of girlfriends, I thought how close-knit they all seemed. It was a Latin and reggae night, and they danced happily, attracting the attention of all the guys around them.'

The following day he employed Amanda to collect glasses for two shifts a week from 10pm to 3am. But he soon realised

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# on customers. Her revenge Meredith and slit her throat



**FREED:** Patrick with Aleksandra and Davide and, top right, Amanda Knox in a pose on her MySpace page



said she was talking to the police and hung up. I was shaken and sick with sadness. Things like this just didn't happen in Perugia.

Over the next couple of days the murder stunned the town's 162,000 inhabitants. 'It was all we could talk about, and we were all subdued,' says Patrick, who handed out flyers for a candlelit vigil in her memory.

'Everyone became tense and suspicious. Everyone except Amanda, who'd gone into a kind of autopilot mode. I saw her a couple of times and all she talked about was the police, and how stressful the ordeal was for her.'

At 6.30am on Tuesday, November 6, the bell to his fourth-floor flat in the town buzzed insistently and a woman's voice outside demanded he opened the door.

He had barely had time to do so when the woman, assisted by, Patrick estimates, 15 to 20 others, barged their way in.

'They were wearing normal clothes and carrying guns,' he says. 'I thought it must be some sort of armed gang about to kill me. I was terrified.'

'They hit me over the head and yelled "dirty black". Then they put handcuffs on me and shoved me out of the door, as Aleksandra pulled Davide away, screaming.'

He was greeted outside by a convoy of seven police cars, sirens blazing, and driven to Perugia's police station, where he was subjected to a ten-hour interrogation.

'I was questioned by five men and women, some of whom punched and kicked me,' he claims. 'They forced me on my knees against the

wanted to have a spell behind the bar when I next had a female DJ playing, as a kind of ladies' night.

'She jumped at the chance, although she'd stopped coming into Le Chic, and I heard she wasn't hanging around with Amanda much either. I wasn't surprised. The two couldn't have been more different.'

Amanda, meanwhile, was becoming increasingly erratic. 'Her moods started swinging from docile and lazy to hyperactive and flighty.'

'I knew she smoked cannabis and it was impossible to predict which one she'd be.'

'I told her I'd asked Meredith to come and work for me and her face dropped and there was a big silence. Then she said, "Fine," and stropped off. I knew then she was extremely jealous of Meredith. She obviously thought she was invading her territory.'

By Tuesday, October 30, his patience ran out. He told Amanda she could carry on handing out club flyers, but could no longer work in the bar. 'She looked at me blankly and walked away,' he says. 'The club was busy and I didn't see her again that evening.'

The next day Amanda attended a Halloween party at the club, knocking back the free red wine. 'She was all over two American boys,' Patrick says. 'There was no sign of Sollecito and I didn't see her leave.'

At 3am he locked up and went on to another club, where he bumped into Meredith. 'I mentioned the idea of her working for me again,' he says. 'She smiled sweetly and said she couldn't wait, and she'd bring all her friends back to my club for me.'

That was the last he heard of either girl, until 6pm on Saturday November 3, when a couple of friends walked into his club. 'They asked me if I'd heard that Amanda's English friend had been murdered. And when they said she was the dark-skinned girl, my heart stopped.'

He called Amanda, who quietly confirmed that Meredith was dead. 'I expected her to be distraught, hysterical and sobbing,' he says. 'Surely, just because they'd grown apart didn't mean she wouldn't care?'

'But instead she sounded weird. Her tone was completely flat and she sounded calm and unaffected. She

*She's not evil. To be evil you need to have a soul*



wall and said I should be in America where I would be given the electric chair for my crime. All they kept saying was, "You did it, you did it."

'I didn't know what I'd "done". I was scared and humiliated. Then, after a couple of hours one of them suggested they show me a picture of "the dead girl" to get me to confess.'

'It might sound naive, but it was only then that I made the connection between Meredith's death and my arrest. Stunned, I said, "You think I killed Meredith?"'

'They said, "Oh, so now you've remembered" and told me that if I confessed I'd only get half the 30-year sentence.'

It wasn't until 5.30pm that – still handcuffed and unfed – he was shown the evidence against him, a statement from Amanda saying that on the night of November 1 he had persuaded her to take him back to the house she shared with Meredith and two others.

He had then, she claimed, gone into Meredith's room and raped her before killing her while she sat and listened to the screams from the

she was more interested in making herself available to his male customers than making herself useful at the bar.

'Every time I looked round she was flirting with a different guy,' he says. 'I'd tell her off, she'd smile sweetly and apologise, and be back at it within five minutes. She'd put her mouth so close to her conquests it looked like they were kissing.'

'Sometimes, when I tried to get her back to work, the men would become rowdy. Once I was told to mind my own business and butt out of Amanda's.'

'She was always causing trouble. Even my girlfriend thought she was strange. Whenever she met her she'd death stare her and turn her nose up. I don't think she was jealous – she never came on to me. She just felt so threatened by other women.'

Economics graduate Aleksandra adds: 'Amanda was so cold. She seemed like a girl who would do anything to get her way, and her man. If

she had wanted Patrick I'm sure she wouldn't have thought twice about pushing me aside.'

As Amanda's flirtatious behaviour continued, Patrick was faced with a dilemma, knowing that to sack her

*Everything she says is a lie... those lies have stained me for ever*



could generate as much negative word-of-mouth publicity as bringing her in had intended to create.

'I decided to put up with it,' he says. 'Even though she'd ask to leave early all the time and got into work late so she could call her American boyfriend. She never told me his

name but they seemed very much in love. He sent her presents and she giggled when she mentioned him.'

It was a couple of weeks before Patrick met Sollecito, a doctor's son from Southern Italy, when he came into Le Chic.

'He was with a couple of friends, drinking rum and pear juice,' he says. 'After about four rounds I spotted Amanda flirting with him. Needless to say, I wasn't surprised.'

What he was surprised to discover, however, was that she had started to date Sollecito.

'I'd always thought her flirting was harmless,' he says. 'But I couldn't believe she was two-timing her American boyfriend.'

He next saw Meredith at a party he threw in the club for his employees a couple of days later. 'She made everyone two rounds of her special mojitos,' he says. 'She was sparkly and cheery and lifted everyone's spirits. I bumped into her again in town soon after. I asked her if she

SUNDAY MIRROR

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