

Police Interviewer: Today is August 6th, 2023, and we are here with Miss Luana Almeida. Miss Almeida, do you consent to your voice being recorded for the purpose of this interview?

Suspect: Yes.

Police: And will you state for the record that you are waiving your right to have an attorney present?

Suspect: Yes, that's correct. *pause* I just want to help in any way that I can.

Police: Miss Almeida, you've already spoken to us about your past with the victim, which you preferred to remain off the official record. We appreciate your cooperation thus far. We want to ask you about something else. Are you familiar with a substance known as lidocaine?

Suspect: Yes.

Police: What do you know about lidocaine?

Suspect: It's used to numb pain. Fighters use it during fights, or preemptively, on their skin or mouth or anywhere that might take damage.

Police: And Miss Almeida, have you used lidocaine before or during your fights?

Suspect: Sometimes, yes. It's not a banned or restricted substance by the organization.

Police: Did you have a supply of lidocaine in your possession last night?

Suspect: Yes.

Police: Can you describe the state of your supply of lidocaine?

Suspect: *pause* I c---I don't fully understand the question, sorry.

Police: Was it in a tube, or bottle, or what sort of container? Cream or gel; was it full or nearly empty, that sort of thing?

Suspect: Uh... *pause* ...it would be a bottle of gel, I generally keep it in my locker with my other things. I don't know how full. Maybe half full?

Police: Okay, let's say half full. Would it be normal for half of a bottle of lidocaine gel to be used during a single fight?

Suspect: No, not a bottle of that size. And anyway, I didn't use any gel during last night's fight.

Police: *sound of papers rustling* Miss Almeida, during our forensic analysis of the crime scene, we found this bottle of lidocaine in your locker. Does this look like yours?

Suspect: It looks like the one I have, yes.

Police: Miss Almeida, this bottle was found empty. How do you explain that, given your previous statements that the bottle was half full and was not used during last night's fight?

Suspect: I'm not sure. Kirk and my trainer would have both had access to the locker...in fact, I don't usually lock my locker at all.

Police: The WCFO indicated to us that there have been thefts in the locker room recently, and that security procedures had been improved with that in mind. And yet you did not lock your locker holding your belongings?

Suspect: I did know about the new policy...I guess I didn't think I had anything particularly valuable in there. I've never had anything stolen or tampered with in the locker room.

Police: So you can't say how the bottle became empty, is that right?

Suspect: No. I mean yes, that's right. I can't. Sorry.

Police: Are you aware that lidocaine, if ingested in concentrated quantities, is very toxic?

Suspect: *pause* I don't...I suppose so. I wouldn't have thought about it before.

Police: The reason I ask is this. *pause, sound of standing up* The victim collapsed while holding a full bottle of water. The water in that bottle contained concentrated amounts of lidocaine. Enough to kill if consumed. Do you know anything about that?

Suspect: *quickly* No, I don't. That's horrible.

Police: We are still waiting for the full coroner's report, but the cause of death in this case has been confirmed as toxic levels of lidocaine exposure.

Suspect: *no response*

Police: So, we have some missing lidocaine that belongs to you that no one can account for. That lidocaine, we suspect, turns up in the water of the victim. The victim dies from lidocaine poisoning. You had access to the locker room--

Suspect: That was not my locker room. I was in the green locker room, with the other fighters scheduled to fight from the green corner. We aren't allowed access to the other locker room.

Police: You didn't go into the other locker room? Even for a moment?

Suspect: No. I didn't leave the locker room from when I arrived to when I walked out for my fight.

Police: What do you think could have happened, then? What's your alternate explanation for how that lidocaine crossed the locker rooms?

Suspect: I don't know. *pause, voice elevated* Anyone could have taken it. Lots of fighters use lidocaine...lots of people have access to that locker room. Everyone who works with a fighter or is part of the fight card has access to the locker rooms. The ringside announcers, even the emcee, they all change in there. *pause, voice deflated* I'm sorry. I don't know what could have happened.

Police: Miss Almeida, I want to thank you for answering our questions. You are not under arrest, but I must tell you that we do consider your connection to the victim and the circumstances of the evidence unusual. We would like you to stay in town for a few days if possible while we complete our investigation. This will conclude the interview for today.

end of recording