

Black glass cages a man slowly regaining consciousness, and a small light in the ceiling starts to flicker. Every moment is either in light or in darkness, and the man's head now lifts up off the metal table in front of him. The light stops flickering, and the man's eyes adjust to the dim room.

Suddenly, a metal door near the black glass is thrown open. Two men in suits enter the room, and one of them slams the door closed behind them. They survey the black glass before glancing back at the only entrance and exit to the room.

"Mr. Andrew Gavin." One man pulls out a green folder from under his suit jacket. "Good morning." He takes a seat in front of Andrew. "How are you feeling?" He glances at his partner, who remains standing.

"Where the hell am I?" Andrew looks at the man in front of him before glancing at the other man. "Who the hell are you?"

"Oh, I apologize." It's the other man's turn to speak. "I'm Detective Bishop, and the man sitting before you is Detective Queen." Andrew smirks. "Do you think that's funny, Mr. Gavin?" The smile disappears off Andrew's face. "Did you think last night was funny?"

"Last night? What are you talking about?"

"Where were you last night?" Detective Queen takes a small notepad and pen out of his jacket pocket.

"What else do you carry in there?" Andrew starts to laugh.

"Where were you last night!" The smile vanishes off Andrew's face as he looks at Detective Bishop.

"I was at a party. Now, can one of you tell me how I got here?"

“We’ll ask the questions here.”

“Bishop, be nice.”

“After what he did?”

“Bishop!” His partner glances at him and then nods. “Now, how long were you at this party last night?” Andrew sits back in a metal chair and looks at both men.

“Andrew?”

“What am I being accused of?”

“Are you feeling guilty?” Bishop ignores the glare from Detective Queen. “Is there something that we should know that we might have overlooked?”

“Overlooked? What’s going on?” Andrew watches Queen sigh before opening his folder. “What am I being accused of?”

“You were at a coworker’s party last night, were you not?” Andrew nods.

“And there was a girl there. Her name was... Linda Valor.”

“Yes, she was a girl from the office.”

“A girl that you liked?”

“Yes, Detective Bishop. Look, last night is a blur. All I remember is going to the party, having a few drinks, and talking to her. That’s it. That’s all I remember.”

“And nothing else?” Andrew shakes his head as Bishop takes photographs out of the folder and looks at them. “You don’t remember anything else?”

“No, I don’t.”

“Not even the murder.” Bishop now leans next to his partner. “Do you remember the murder?”

“Murder! What murder!” Andrew looks frantically at both men. “Who was murdered!”

“She was murdered!” Bishop slams the pictures down in front of Andrew.  
“You killed her!”

Photographs of Linda Valor butchered are splayed out in front of Andrew. Her body is cut wide open, revealing her organs. Her eyes are frozen in terror. Blood is everywhere in each photo.

Turning his stomach into knots, Andrew pushes the pictures away from him. He stands up from the chair, knocking it to the floor. After a moment of hesitation, he throws up on the floor.

“Feel better?” Andrew glares at Bishop.

“I didn’t do that.”

“Your fingerprints were all over the scene and all over her.” He now glares at Queen.

“I didn’t kill her!”

“Sit down, Andrew.”

“No, Bishop. I won’t just sit down. I didn’t do that! I didn’t kill her! I don’t remember anything not even being brought here!”

“Then, you shouldn’t have joined the program!” Andrew now stares at Queen.  
“You were one of the ones that answered the ad last month, right?”

“Ad? What ad?”

“Have a seat before you fall down.” Bishop gestures to the chair that is lying behind Andrew.

“What ad?” Andrew grabs the chair and sits down on it. “What ad?”

“The one about finding the meaning of life.” Andrew looks at Queen.

“Remember? The ad was looking for volunteers to discover the meaning of life, and they would be paid a thousand each if they found it. That ad.”

“I remember, but that was a month or so ago. What does that have to do with me and the murder?”

“Is that a confession?” Andrew looks at Bishop, who walks over to him. “Are you confessing now?”

“No.”

“Everyone that has signed up for this bogus ad is now in the same position as you. They don’t remember anything, but they all murdered someone that they loved.”

“I didn’t love her.”

“Did she reject you?”

“It could be a girlfriend, a wife, a sister, a daughter...”

“Why not kill a man?”

“Why not kill a man? Isn’t it easier to kill a female?” Bishop now stands behind Andrew.

“Not always.”

“How would you know that?”

“Each victim claims innocence, but there is enough evidence to put you away for a very long time, Andrew.” Queen folds his hands over the table. “We just need one last thing.”

“What’s that?” He shifts in his chair, uneasy under Bishop’s stare.

“The murder weapon.” Bishop places both hands on Andrew’s shoulders, making him nearly jump out of the chair. “We need to know what you used.”

“I told you that I don’t remember.” He turns to look at Bishop. “Get your hands off me!” He watches Bishop withdraw back to the other side of the table. “Now, get me a lawyer.”

“But you said you were innocent?” Queen sits back in his chair. “I almost believed you.”

“I am innocent!” Andrew slams both his hands on the table. “I didn’t do this!”

“Really?” Andrew glares up at Bishop. “Look at yourself in the glass, Andrew.”

Suddenly, the room gets brighter. Andrew is blinded for a moment. Lowering his hand from the light, he turns to look at his reflection in the glass.

Shaken, he stands up to see that he is covered in blood. His clothes are soaked with her blood. His face has smears of it, and there are cuts on his hands from a struggle.

“Still say that you are innocent?” Queen watches Andrew numbly sit down in front of him. “Andrew, we want to help. How did you do it? How did you kill her?”

“I don’t know.”

“Maybe this will help.” Bishop gestures to the glass.

A moment later, the metal door opens, revealing a man in a white coat. The man hands Bishop a tray with four items: a knife, a gun, a pen, and a metallic box. Exiting the room, Andrew jumps from the metal door sliding back into place.

Placing the tray in front of Andrew, Bishop arranges each item in front of him. The gun is pointed at Queen. The knife is pointed at Andrew. The pen is diagonal. The metal box remains in the middle of them.

“Which one did you use?” Andrew looks at Queen. “Do you remember now?”

“Isn’t it obvious? It was probably a knife.” Andrew reaches for it.

“So, you confess?” Andrew’s hand freezes over it as he looks at Bishop. “You used a knife.”

“I wouldn’t use the knife.”

“Then, why did you say that you would?” Queen looks at the gun. “Was it the gun? Did you use that?”

“If I used the gun, there would not have been such a mess.”

“That sounded like a confession.” Bishop grins from ear to ear. “I say that he used the knife.”

“Why not the pen?” Queen gestures toward it.

“The pen?”

“Yes, the pen. It would be a unique way of killing someone. It’s one of those pens with a gold tip. You could certainly carve someone with it and make them suffer longer than using a knife.” Andrew winces.

“What’s in the box?” Andrew looks at the two detectives. “What’s in there?”

“Open it and see for yourself.” Bishop crosses his arms over his chest. “I’m curious to know what you put in there.”

“Me?”

“We found the box in your arms, and you were lying next to the body.” Queen closes the folder. “I guess it doesn’t matter. You’re just the like rest of them. You wanted to make fast money, so you answered the ad. Now, they took your life. They made you kill this girl, and personally, I don’t want to know what kind of sick trophy you took from her and put into this box.”

“I didn’t kill her.”

“It doesn’t matter. We have enough evidence to put you away, don’t we, Detective Queen?”

“That we do, Detective Bishop.”

“Can’t you go after the people that put that ad out there?”

“We would if we could find them.” Queen stands up from his seat. “I’ll get you a lawyer because you are going to need one.”

“Wait! That’s it! You’re just gonna leave me sitting here!” Andrew looks at the box in front of him. “You’re gonna leave me with that... Box!”

“Would you like to open it?” Bishop stands next to his partner. “We’ve been arguing about leaving it for the trial or just opening it now.”

“But what’s inside of it?”

“You tell us, Andrew.” Queen heads for the door. “If you can’t face what you’ve done, then maybe we’ll just leave the box for the trial.” He looks at his partner. “He won’t open it, Bishop. Let’s go.” Queen puts his hand on the doorknob.

“It’s a shame. Maybe it could have cleared him of all this.” Bishop approaches the door.

“Wait! Wait! Wait a damn minute!” Andrew is now standing up. “I want to see what is inside of it.”

“Are you sure because it was covered in blood originally?” Queen removes his hand from the doorknob. “We know it could be a trophy like the others have taken.”

“Or it might be something else.” Bishop moves away from the door. “Are you going to open it?”

Reaching for the box, Andrew feels his hand tremble. He grabs his wrist and tries to steady his hand, but it starts to shake the closer it gets to the box. He pulls his hand away and holds it against his chest. “I can’t.”

“Then, it’s over.” Bishop moves back over to the door.

“You had your chance.” Queen turns his back on him.

Suddenly, Andrew grabs the box and throws it to the floor. The metallic lid pops open. Inside the box is one single item: a pawn.

“What the hell is that?” Andrew walks over to the box and picks up the pawn.

“Do you know what the meaning of life is, Andrew?” Queen turns to look at him.

“It’s to just play the game.” Bishop smiles at him before glancing at his partner.

“Congrats.”

“On what?”

“On being the first test subject to actually open the box.” Queen looks at the pawn in Andrew’s hand before looking back at him. “You’re free to go.” He opens the door.

“What! What about the murder! What about the girl!”

“What about it? It was all a bad dream.” Bishop walks out into the dark hallway.

“What if I failed!”

“But you didn’t. Just remember. The game is not over until it is in checkmate, so live your life. Don’t wait for life to come to you.” Queen exits the room.

“That’s it? That’s it!” Andrew looks at the pawn in his hand. “Am I nothing but this pawn?”

END.