CASE FILE — MANSFIELD, TEXAS · 1995

The Killer Cadets

Adaptation Report

Based on the *Texas Monthly* article by Skip Hollandsworth

THE VICTIM
Adrianne Jones
16, honors student and cross-country runner

THE CADET
David Graham
JROTC battalion commander, bound for the Air Force Academy

THE CADET
Diane Zamora
Top of her class, bound for the Naval Academy

> **"Something has changed in this town—you can feel it."**
>
> — A LOCAL REPORTER, QUOTED IN THE ARTICLE

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Anisha Krottapalli

§ 01

Summary

The Killer Cadets, an article originally published in *Texas Monthly* by Skip Hollandsworth, is a chilling and detailed true-crime account of two high-achieving Texas teenagers, David Graham and Diane Zamora, whose obsessive, intense relationship led to the 1995 murder of 16-year-old Adrianne Jones. David Graham and Diane Zamora were high-achieving, high school sweethearts who were both obsessed with each other and shared a dream of attending U.S. military academies. However, when David confessed to Diane that he had a one-night stand with Adrianne Jones, Diane became enraged. According to their confessions, she demanded that David kill Adrianne. The article details the night of the murder and how the next morning, a farmer driving by thought he had spotted roadkill until he realized it was a human body —Adrianne's.

The article goes far beyond the crime itself, offering backstories of all three teens. Adrianne is introduced first as an outgoing, ambitious girl known for her charm and vibrant personality. She thrives on attention, but is academic and hardworking. Diane Zamora is depicted as fiercely disciplined and academically gifted, a top-of-her-class student obsessed with achievement and control. David Graham is introduced as a student at Mansfield High School who stood out not for popularity, but for his discipline, military-style haircut, and strict adherence to rules and routine, especially through his deep involvement in the school's Junior ROTC program. Throughout the piece, the article charts Diane and David's obsessive relationship that turns lethal.

The article draws from a wide array of voices—friends, parents, classmates, ROTC peers, and investigators—creating a full 360-degree view of how these teens lived, loved, and were perceived. The ripple effects of Adrianne's murder extended far beyond the crime itself. The article delves into the psychological toll the murder had on the town of Mansfield. The story became a mirror for broader anxieties about youth culture, sparking conversations among residents about whether teenagers were more influenced by violent media and angry music than by the moral lessons of their parents. Shockingly, it was revealed that some of David's close friends had quietly suspected his involvement but said nothing, reinforcing a disturbing sense of misplaced loyalty and silence among teens. After the arrests, the entire community entered a state of grief and disorientation. Students struggled to process what had happened; teachers and administrators tried to rebuild a sense of safety. A local reporter remarked, "Something has changed in this town—you can feel it." The article captures that shift: in the weeks that followed, a junior at Mansfield High was shot and killed, and a former teammate of Adrianne's died by suicide.

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 02

Adaptation Formats

There are three strong ways this story could be adapted for screen.

OPTION 01

Limited Series

SINGLE SEASON

A true-crime drama/thriller series in the vein of *The People v. O.J. Simpson* or *Impeachment: American Crime Story* (stories that explore not just what happened, but how and why), structured as a slow-burn psychological thriller that blends procedural elements with deep emotional character work.

This would include:

- The lives of Adrianne, David, and Diane
- The unraveling of David and Diane's relationship
- The murder
- The guilt building during boot camp
- The explosive confessions
- And the emotional fallout for the families, school, and town

OPTION 02

Limited Anthology Series

THREE SEASONS

This format allows for a deeper, more segmented exploration of the story across three seasons, each with a distinct focus:

S1 · The Build-Up
The individual lives of David, Diane, and Adrianne before the crime.

S2 · The Crime
The planning, execution, and unraveling of the murder.

S3 · The Fallout
The emotional and cultural aftermath.

FULL SEASON BREAKDOWN → P. 04

OPTION 03

Trilogy Anthology Series: Crimes of Obsession

FRANCHISE LAUNCH

This story could be the first installment in a launch of a broader anthology series that explores high-profile, real-life crimes where love, jealousy, obsession, pressure or ambition among teenagers leads to violence.

Installment examples:

1. *The Killer Cadets*
2. The 2012 Skylar Neese murder
3. The 1992 "Honor Roll Murder" in Orange County
4. 2009 Rachel Wade vs. Sarah Ludemann

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 02 · OPTION 02 · LIMITED ANTHOLOGY SERIES

Three Seasons

S1

The Build-Up

Focus: The individual lives of David, Diane, and Adrianne before the crime.

A character-driven season told through shifting POVs:

- **Adrianne** as a vibrant, socially magnetic teen seeking attention and navigating self-worth, desire, and the contradictions of growing up under strict rules
- **David** as a self-disciplined overachiever—driven not by external pressure, but by an internal code of routine, control, and emotional restraint, even as he begins to slip under the surface
- **Diane** as a high-achieving perfectionist fixated on order, morality, and an idealized future she's determined to control
- This is also where we meet classmates, families, and teachers to build out the ecosystem that shaped them.

TONE

Emotionally rich and quietly foreboding.

S2

The Crime

Focus: The planning, execution, and unraveling of the murder.

Can be told through a non-linear structure that weaves together:

- Flashbacks of the murder night
- Boot camp pressure
- Diane's unraveling at the Naval Academy
- Friends and roommates piecing together the truth
- And finally, the confessions and arrests

S3

The Fallout

Focus: The emotional and cultural aftermath.

This season becomes more thematic, exploring:

- The shock, grief, and silence across Mansfield
- The guilt of friends and classmates
- Teachers and parents reflecting on teenagers
- The community grappling with a loss of innocence

Includes chilling moments like:

- The classmate who painted Adrianne's portrait—then unknowingly showed it to David
- The silence among David's friends, who suspected him but said nothing
- The additional suicides and tragedies in the months following the arrest

TONE

Reflective, haunting, and socially resonant.

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 03 · CHARACTERS

Adrianne

1 OF 3

PROFILE

Adrianne Jones, 16

Honors student

Dedicated cross-country runner

Standout employee at a part-time fast food job

Raised in a strict household with enforced rules and curfews

“Any adaptation should resist flattening her into a one-note tragedy.”

Adrianne is far more than just the victim; she is a richly complex character. Raised in a strict household with tightly enforced rules and curfews, she lived under the watchful eye of protective parents who believed discipline would keep her on the right path. And in many ways, it worked: she was a high-achieving student in honors classes, a dedicated cross-country runner, and a standout employee at her part-time fast food job, where her energy and quick wit made her a favorite with her boss.

She was charismatic, driven, and socially magnetic; someone who thrived on attention. Though she projected confidence, there were also moments of insecurity and rebellion. She put hours into her appearance, flirted, and allegedly cheated on her boyfriend. These decisions didn’t define her, but they complicated her. She was a teenager navigating pressure, identity, and desire all while still figuring out who she was.

Any adaptation should resist flattening her into a one-note tragedy. Adrianne’s full humanity—her ambition, contradictions, and deep need to be seen—deserves to be portrayed with empathy, not judgment.

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 03 · CHARACTERS

David

PROFILE

David Graham, Mansfield High School

Battalion commander, Junior ROTC

National Merit student

Secured a spot at the U.S. Air Force Academy

“The cadet who stood still during the national anthem, and the boy who shot a girl in close proximity in the dark.”

At Mansfield High School, he was known for his military posture, calm demeanor, and commitment to excellence. He was the battalion commander of the school’s Junior ROTC program, a National Merit student, and had secured a coveted spot at the U.S. Air Force Academy. David was a self-disciplined overachiever, driven not by external pressure, but by an internal code of routine, control, and emotional restraint. To adults, he was polite, respectful, and goal-oriented. To classmates, he was quiet and slightly unknowable.

But behind his “model cadet” persona, David was emotionally immature and deeply dependent on Diane. His relationship with her was obsessive and all-consuming, defined by constant contact, control, and a shared fantasy of a perfect future. When he confessed to Diane that he had a one-night stand with Adrianne, he made it his mission to make things right and rather than face loss or shame, he allegedly chose to kill to preserve the illusion of love and loyalty.

David’s character is not just about the crime; it’s about how someone so outwardly composed could become complicit in something so brutal. His story is a chilling study of pressure, ego, and how ambition without emotional maturity can turn into something monstrous. Any adaptation should lean into that duality: the cadet who stood still during the national anthem, and the boy who shot a girl in close proximity in the dark.

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 03 · CHARACTERS

Diane

3 OF 3

PROFILE

- Diane Zamora
- Top student and class leader
- Cross-country runner
- Marching band flutist
- National Honor Society
- Dreamed of becoming an astronaut
- Bound for the Naval Academy

“If I can’t be Mrs. David Graham, I’ll die Miss Diane Zamora.”

She is the most chilling and psychologically complex figure in the story. On paper, she was extraordinary: a top student, class leader, cross-country runner, marching band flutist, and member of the National Honor Society. She dreamed of becoming an astronaut, kept a notebook tracking her GPA goals, and was laser-focused on getting into a military academy. When her family struggled financially, she studied by candlelight, showing her ambition wasn’t casual: it was survival. Yet, beneath her achievements was a growing emotional volatility, tightly controlled by discipline, structure, and determination to control.

Diane was religious and held strict views on sex, relationships, and success. She had vowed not to lose her virginity until marriage, that is until she met David. After their relationship turned physical, she became consumed by it. She reportedly told her family, “If I can’t be Mrs. David Graham, I’ll die Miss Diane Zamora.” Her love for David morphed into obsession. When he confessed to a one-night stand with Adrianne, Diane didn’t just react with heartbreak, she allegedly demanded revenge. Whether fueled by rage, betrayal, or a desperate need to restore control, she is said to have convinced David that Adrianne had to die to restore the purity of their bond. She wasn’t just complicit in the murder; according to confessions, she helped plan it and struck the first blow.

Any adaptation should lean into the following duality: Diane is not simply “the jealous girlfriend.” She is both a high-achieving young woman and a chilling study in repression, perfectionism, and the emotional danger of tying one’s identity to another person. Her character shouldn’t be reduced to a stereotype, but portrayed as someone whose brilliance and rigidity collided in the worst possible way.

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 04

Settings

The story moves between three key environments:

01
The suburban neighborhoods of small-town Texas

02
The high school

03
The hyper-disciplined, high-stakes U.S. Air Force and Naval academies

From a production standpoint, the settings offer a thematic power. The series moves between suburban homes, fast food jobs, and high school hallways into the cold, formal environment of military institutions, creating a visually and emotionally striking contrast. This shift, from bedrooms lined with stuffed animals to institutions obsessed with order, control, and performance, emphasizes the contrast between ordinary teenage life and the rigid systems of order and performance the characters aspire to.

In addition, the Civil Air Patrol and JROTC settings, with their drills, uniforms, and rigid codes, not only elevate the production value, but also serve as visual metaphors for the story's core themes: ambition, repression, and identity under pressure. The friction between the mundane and the militarized becomes a driving theme of the narrative.

Themes

01 The pressure to be "perfect"

02 How societal expectations can warp young minds

03 Obsession disguised as love

04 How ambition, love, and control can become dangerously entangled

05 The performative nature of teenage morality—how teens know the assignment but fail to follow through

06 What it means to be "promising"

07 When the drive to succeed becomes self-destructive

08 The unseen emotional strain driving high achievers

09 The fragility of teenage identity

10 The lasting ripple effects of violence and the way a single act can fracture families, schools, and entire communities

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 05

Why Now

Cultural relevance

01 **Ongoing cultural fascination with true crime and toxic relationships**

02 **Heightened interest in the private lives and public downfalls of ambitious, high-achieving youth**

03 **A growing appetite for stories that deconstruct systems of perfection**

04 **Collective curiosity about how stress and pressure can unravel even the most composed individuals**

05 **Continued exploration of image, identity, and the disconnect between how people are seen and who they truly are**

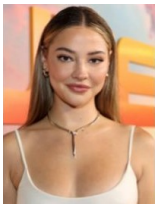
06 **Increasing focus on the ripple effects of tragedy and how a single violent act fractures families, schools, and entire communities**

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 06 · CAST · ROLE

Adrianne Jones

(F) feature · (SR) series regular · (REC) recurring



Madelyn Cline

REP

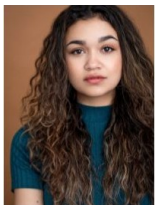
Lorrie Bartlett, Sean Leibowitz (CAA), Carla Hough (Bold Talent Agency)

CREDITS

OUTER BANKS (SR), GLASS ONION: A KNIVES OUT MYSTERY (F), I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER (F), THE GIANT (F), BOY ERASED (F), MAID TO ORDER (F), STRANGER THINGS (REC), THE ORIGINALS (REC), VICE PRINCIPALS (REC)

NOTES

Experience playing charismatic, attention-seeking teens with emotional complexity. Experience in thrillers and emotionally grounded teen dramas. Strong screen presence and range.



Madison Bailey

REP

Andrea Weintraub, Tracy Brennan (CAA)

CREDITS

OUTER BANKS (SR), TIME CUT (F), COUNCIL OF DADS (SR), IMPOSTERS (REC), CONSTANTINE (F), BLACK LIGHTNING (REC), CREEPSHOW (F), AMERICAN HORROR STORIES (F), MURDER CHOSE ME (REC)

NOTES

Experience playing a confident, headstrong teen with emotional depth. Strong presence in high-stakes teen narratives.



Angourie Rice

REP

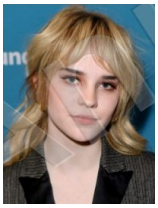
Catherine Poulton (CP Artist Management)

CREDITS

THE LAST THING HE TOLD ME (SR), MEAN GIRLS (F), MARE OF EASTTOWN (REC), HONOR SOCIETY (F), SENIOR YEAR (F), SPIDER-MAN: NO WAY HOME (F), EVERY DAY (F), THE NICE GUYS (F), BLACK MIRROR (REC)

NOTES

Experience playing bright, layered teens navigating pressure, popularity, and identity. Brings emotional nuance and relatability to complex young characters.



Sophie Thatcher

REP

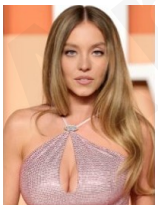
Andrew Kurland (CAA)

CREDITS

YELLOWJACKETS (SR), COMPANION (F), THE BOOK OF BOBA FETT (REC), WHEN THE STREETLIGHTS GO ON (SR), PROSPECT (F), HERETIC (F), THE BOOGEYMAN (F), THE BOY BEHIND THE DOOR (F), COMPULSION (F)

NOTES

Experience playing emotionally complex teens in dark, high-stakes stories. Brings rawness, vulnerability, and intensity.



Sydney Sweeney

REP

Jennifer Millar (Paradigm)

CREDITS

EUPHORIA (SR), THE WHITE LOTUS (SR), ANYONE BUT YOU (F), MADAME WEB (F), REALITY (F), THE VOYEURS (F), SHARP OBJECTS (REC), THE HANDMAID'S TALE (REC), EVERYTHING SUCKS! (SR)

NOTES

Proven ability to play emotionally layered, attention-seeking teens navigating insecurity and desire. Her roles often explore the tension between outward confidence and inner fragility.

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 06 · CAST · ROLE

David Graham

(F) feature · (SR) series regular · (REC) recurring



Drew Starkey

REP

Alexander Yarosh (Gersh)

CREDITS

OUTER BANKS (SR), THE OTHER ZOEY (F), LOVE, SIMON (F), THE HATE U GIVE (F), HELLRAISER (F), OZARK (REC), SCREAM: THE TV SERIES (REC)

NOTES

Has portrayed intense, emotionally restrained characters with charisma and volatility. His performance in *Outer Banks* shows he can embody quiet control while hinting at something darker beneath.



Riccardo Mandolini

REP

N/A

CREDITS

BABY (SR), MASCARPONE: THE RAINBOW CAKE (F), MIA (F), SPACE MONKEYS (F)

NOTES

Has experience playing emotionally conflicted, high-achieving teens navigating control, pressure, and obsession. Brings quiet intensity and restraint.



Jacob Elordi

REP

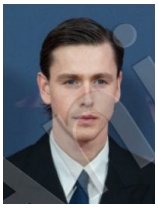
Matt Vioral (Gersh)

CREDITS

EUPHORIA (SR), SALTBURN (F), PRISCILLA (F), THE KISSING BOOTH (F), DEEP WATER (F)

NOTES

Known for portraying brooding, emotionally volatile characters beneath polished exteriors.



Harris Dickinson

REP

Randi Goldstein (Gersh)

CREDITS

THE IRON CLAW (F), TRIANGLE OF SADNESS (F), WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING (F), BEACH RATS (F), COUNTY LINES (F), TRUST (SR), CLIQUE (REC)

NOTES

Often cast as composed, intense young men with hidden emotional fractures. His work in *Beach Rats* and *Triangle of Sadness* shows he can portray characters teetering between control and collapse.



Cooper van Grootel

REP

Hallie McKeig (Creative Soul Management)

CREDITS

ONE OF US IS LYING (SR), ONE TRUE LOVES (F), GO! (F), MYSTERY ROAD (REC), SAVAGE RIVER (REC), USER NOT FOUND (SR), SNOW VALLEY (F), COLLAPSE (REC)

NOTES

Brings intensity and restraint to teen roles with a dark edge. In *One of Us Is Lying*, he plays a high schooler with secrets and a brooding, closed-off energy.

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 06 · CAST · ROLE · 1 OF 2

Diane Zamora

(F) feature · (SR) series regular · (REC) recurring



Maia Reficco

REP

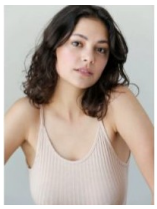
Kevin Lin, Nicole Brookman (CAA)

CREDITS

PRETTY LITTLE LIARS: ORIGINAL SIN (SR), DO REVENGE (F), LA DOLCE VILLA (F), KALLY'S MASHUP (SR)

NOTES

Has played high-achieving, emotionally intense teens in both thrillers and dramas. Her performance in *PLL: Original Sin* shows she can portray fierce ambition, vulnerability, and unraveling characters.



Blu Hunt

REP

Fatmata Kamara (IAG)

CREDITS

THE ORIGINALS (REC), THE NEW MUTANTS (F), SHERLOCK AND DAUGHTER (REC), GROWN-ISH (REC), ANOTHER LIFE (SR), STUMPTOWN (REC), BUNK'D (F)

NOTES

Strong presence in emotionally intense and supernatural-tinged dramas. Known for portraying stoic, tightly wound characters with inner vulnerability.



Isabella Ferreira

REP

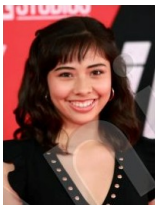
Maia Katz, Thomas Cushing (Innovative Artists)

CREDITS

LOVE, VICTOR (SR), ALMOST POPULAR (F), INCOMING (F), ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK (REC), GOOSEBUMPS (F), CRUSH (F), GRAY MATTER (F)

NOTES

Strong track record of playing emotionally complex teens. Her work in *Love, Victor* shows she can handle intensity, vulnerability, and inner conflict.



Xochitl Gomez

REP

Stella Alex (Savage Agency)

CREDITS

DOCTOR STRANGE IN THE MULTIVERSE OF MADNESS (F), THE BABY-SITTERS CLUB (SR), SHADOW WOLVES (F), RAVEN'S HOME (REC), GENTEFIED (REC)

NOTES

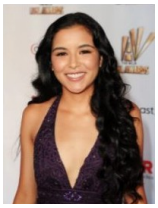
Brings a youthful intensity and strength. Her work balances confidence with emotional depth.

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 06 · CAST · ROLE · 2 OF 2

Diane Zamora

(F) feature · (SR) series regular · (REC) recurring



Emily Rios

REP

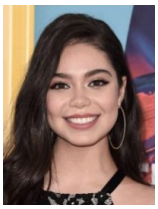
Robbie Kass, Roxanna Raanan (Kass Management)

CREDITS

QUINCEAÑERA (F), THE BRIDGE (SR), BREAKING BAD (REC), FROM DUSK TILL DAWN: THE SERIES (REC), IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK (F), MADE FOR LOVE (F), CRIMINAL MINDS (F), SCANDAL (REC), BIG MOMMAS: LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON (F)

NOTES

Rios has a commanding presence and proven skill in portraying intense, emotionally driven characters. Her performances are grounded and her roles are morally complex.



Auli'i Cravalho

REP

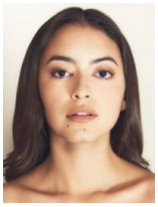
Allison Band, Samantha Clark (Gersh)

CREDITS

MOANA (F), RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET (F), MEAN GIRLS (F), CRUSH (F), THE POWER (SR), RISE (SR), WEIRD CITY (REC), THE LITTLE MERMAID LIVE! (F)

NOTES

She brings a unique mix of warmth, intensity, and control. She has a great ability to portray driven young women with deep emotional currents.



Keana Lyn Bastidas

REP

Domina Holbeck, Sloane Fizgerald (CESD Talent Agency)

CREDITS

THE HARDY BOYS (SR), EVERYDAY (F), FESTIVAL OF THE LIVING DEAD (F), SUPERBABIES: BABY GENIUSES 2 (F), FRIDAY NIGHT SEXT SCANDAL (F), DESIGNATED SURVIVOR (F), CREEPED OUT (REC)

NOTES

Experienced in playing sharp, ambitious teens with a controlled edge. Her performances often balance intellect, emotional intensity, and a quietly commanding presence.

Anisha Krottapalli

§ 07

Writers

(D) director · (EP) executive producer · (CP) co-producer
(P) producer · (W) writer



Megan Abbott

REP

Robyn Meisinger (Anonymous Content)

CREDITS

DARE ME (EP, W), THE DEUCE (W), THE LAST ONE LEFT (EP, W), HERE IN THE DARK (EP, W)

NOTES

Expert in psychologically rich stories centered on young women, obsession, ambition, and hidden violence. Her work, especially *Dare Me*, proves she can capture the intensity, repression, and emotional unraveling.



Sarah Burgess

REP

Derek Zasky, Erin Junkin, Ryan Feldman (WME)

CREDITS

IMPEACHMENT: AMERICAN CRIME STORY (EP, W)

NOTES

Her work on *Impeachment* shows a talent for unpacking the emotional and institutional dynamics behind headline-making stories.



Liz Hannah

REP

Dan Erlij, Keya Khayatian (UTA)

CREDITS

THE POST (CP, W), THE GIRL FROM PLAINVILLE (EP, W), MINDHUNTER (P, W), LONGSHOT (W), THE DROPOUT (EP, W)

NOTES

Excels at character-driven adaptations of true events, especially those involving media, psychology, and public perception. Her nuanced storytelling in *The Girl from Plainville* and *The Post* makes her a strong match for layered emotional and cultural themes.



Sam Levinson

REP

Andrew Finkelstein, Ryan Feldman (WME)

CREDITS

EUPHORIA (EP, W), THE IDOL (W), MALCOLM & MARIE (D, P, W), ASSASSINATION NATION (D, W), ANOTHER HAPPY DAY (D, W)

NOTES

Known for his bold, stylized exploration of youth, obsession, and emotional unraveling. Levinson's work on *Euphoria* proves his ability to portray the volatility and intensity of teenage life.



Nic Pizzolatto

REP

Connor Armstrong, Jill Gillett, Philip Raskind, Sylvie Rabineau (WME)

CREDITS

TRUE DETECTIVE (EP, W), THE GUILTY (EP, W), THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN (W), GALVESTON (W)

NOTES

Renowned for brooding, atmospheric storytelling and psychologically driven crime narratives. His exploration of moral decay, obsession, and the hidden darkness in seemingly ordinary people aligns seamlessly.

Anisha Krottapalli