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A twist in the tale of Amanda Knox

New drama co-produced by Monica Lewinsky set to cause fresh controversy over the infamous case

IT'S BEEN 18 years since the case of Amanda Knox sent the global media into a frenzy. During a study year abroad in Italy, Knox and her then boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito were arrested for the violent murder of Knox's housemate, 21-year-old British student Meredith Kercher. Knox spent eight years on trial and four years in an Italian prison before being released and cleared of the conviction in 2011.

Now, a new eight-part Disney+ drama will retell the ordeal, told from Knox's perspective. *Nine Perfect Strangers* star Grace Van Patten will play Knox, with Sharon Horgan

Grace Van Patten stars as Amanda Knox. Inset: Knox at her trial in 2009



starring as Edda Mellas, Knox's mother. Margaret Qualley was previously attached to the project to play Knox but pulled out due to scheduling conflicts. She is, however, listed as an executive producer of the series, alongside Knox and Monica Lewinsky.

Knox and Lewinsky are good friends, with Knox describing the activist as 'very much like a big sister to me', making her feel 'seen and understood'. Lewinsky previously described the show as focused on 'another young woman who found her life decimated and ripped apart on the world stage, but she somehow managed to survive'. This isn't Lewinsky's first foray into producing, having helmed the 2019 series *Impeachment*, about her involvement with Bill Clinton, with Beanie Feldstein portraying her younger self.

The Twisted Tale Of Amanda Knox is glossy and stylised, with reflective narrations from both Knox and prosecutor Giuliano Mignini. Flashback scenes from Knox and Kercher's friendship are also peppered throughout. The police are positioned as prejudiced villains, bullying Knox into a false confession. The series also depicts the slut-shaming Knox experienced throughout her trial, her sexual history splashed across newspapers after she was falsely diagnosed with HIV while in prison.

According to KJ Steinberg, the show's creator, Knox and Lewinsky worked together to ensure that the series 'helped the audience get to know [Knox] outside of her false imprisonment, exploring who she is as a human being.'

But many have asked, does this tragedy – and its many complexities and multiple victims – need a television dramatisation? After all, Knox has written two memoirs about her experience, also participating in several interviews and a Netflix documentary.

Kercher's family have not supported this

latest – or any – retelling of her murder. When filming started last November, Kercher's sister Stephanie released a statement about the 'indescribable void' that her death has left. 'She will forever hold a lasting legacy in friendship and kindness that no media can change.' Stephanie has previously said that Meredith 'has been forgotten' in the midst of Knox's story. 'It is very difficult to keep her memory alive in all of this.'

The Kercher family's lawyer, Francesco Maresca, described the series as a 'demonstration of a lack of sensitivity... Knox's silence at the moment would have been the most appropriate thing.'

Knox previously told *Grazia* that while she empathises with the Kercher family, she's telling her story to fight a media machine and pitchfork public culture that thrives on misogyny. 'I legitimately went through a nightmare and had to survive a nightmare... so I sympathise that they have a hard time with me talking about my story, because they associate it with Meredith's tragedy, but it's also my tragedy and I matter, too,' Knox told *Grazia*. 'I don't feel any confusion or guilt or regret for telling my story.'

The true crime 'entertainment' genre has soared in popularity over the past decade, particularly with female audiences. But any retelling of a violent, real-life crime raises ethical issues, especially when the story is dramatised, which allows for more bias and stylised tweaks than a docuseries.

Ultimately, the show is exactly what it says on the tin – *Knox's* story. The series is gripping and well-acted, and it brings the full weight of her traumatic story to our screens. Undoubtedly, some will feel it is at odds with the Kercher family's need for privacy and peace. *'The Twisted Tale Of Amanda Knox'* starts on on Disney+ from 20 August

WORDS: CHARLEY ROSS. PHOTOS: DISNEY/GETTY