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Big little lies plot summary season 2

Merie W. Wallace/HBO Big Little Lies capped off a controversial second season with a self-destructive finale that ripped apart the tenuous bonds of the “Monterey Five,” as the city has dubbed its conspiratorial suburban moms. Throughout season two, the show has never seemed to know exactly what its theme really was or, more crucially, how that theme might relate to its ensemble of characters. With Meryl Streep joining the cast, all other characters — with the meme-able exception of Laura Dern’s Renata — seemed to be pushed aside for her character Mary Louise’s personal battle with her ex-daughter-in-law Celeste (Nicole Kidman). That lack of attention elsewhere meant the drama lagged so badly in spots that it seemed to mirror the ways in which the production itself reportedly suffered behind the scenes; the season’s directionless writing was unable to be salvaged by a strong directorial hand. Ironically, director Andrea Arnold may have been subjected to the same kind of male interference, in this case from her producers, that the show’s women characters have spent most of their time trying to escape. And in the last episode, boy, it showed. The custody battle took up too much focal time and left the show struggling to remember what it was doing with the rest of its characters. Because the secret of season one’s sorta-murder is extremely flimsy, this season has tried — and mostly failed — to build tension through the custody battle between Celeste and Mary Louise. But the last-minute gambit of “I Want To Know,” in which Celeste decided to turn the tables and personally interrogate Mary Louise, was flat-out ridiculous. The much-threatened courtroom drama over Celeste’s husband’s death never fully materialized, and the reveal of the oft-hinted-at details behind the death of Mary Louise’s other son turned the in-court boxing match between the two women into the kind of over-the-top soap opera theatrics this show has never quite learned how to balance with its straight-faced tone and deeply earnest acting. As for the other members of the Five, the episode seemed to hand-wave their storylines into the sunset. Renata continued to get mad at her horrible husband without actually leaving him. Madeline’s storyline got a nonchalant resolution. Jane finally had sex with her new boyfriend, Corey — and the less said about that plot point, the better. Bonnie, who was stuck most of the season in the hospital staring at the walls, was the one member of the Five with the most to lose and the least support. This episode saw her lackluster, whatever-ish storyline simply dissipate, all of the strange symbolic foreshadowing that’s accompanied her throughout the season completely abandoned in the end. And as for the titular Big Little Lie? It, too, is resolved without much fanfare — which means it also carries no emotional weight as a season-ender. While the performances were as solid as ever, the writing in this finale continually turned into a slog that often seemed like self-congratulatory circle-jerking on Kelley’s part. The writing overall has been this season’s biggest weakness — tied with the apparent clash in vision between this season’s director, Andrea Arnold, and last season’s director, Jean-Marc Vallée. Arnold reportedly lost her authorial stamp over the season after Vallée allegedly took over the show’s direction and overwrote much of her work without her knowledge. To a large degree, the lost dramatic threads of this season, particularly where characters like Jane and Bonnie are concerned, have felt like casualties of Arnold’s sidelining — as though somewhere in between Vallée’s choppy editing and jump cuts are scenes where we could have gotten a richer sense of each character’s internal stakes. By this final episode, it certainly seemed that season two had spent more time romantically remembering and humanizing Perry (Alexander Skarsgård), Celeste’s abusive and violent late husband, than it had spent with most of the other women in the ensemble. We’ve inexplicably followed the men of the show around as they navigated their rocky relationships with their wives and each other more than we engaged with the erratic trajectories of these women and their friendships. The irony of Bonnie declaring in this episode that her mother, who’s spent the last half of the season in a coma, “is a good listener now” would be funny if it weren’t so painfully obvious that Kelley hadn’t been listening to the elements that made its first season so successful. Even Celeste’s ultimate courtroom victory feels perfunctory, its moments of poignance and dramatic irony weighted down by the season’s palpable disinterest in its own characters. “The lie is the friendship,” Celeste tells Madeline, regarding the five-way friendship formed out of Perry’s death. But the real lie seems to be that Big Little Lies was ever really committed to exploring those friendships meaningfully for longer than a single season to begin with. Finding a cemetery plot is a breeze when you know exactly where to look. Some cemeteries are so large that they hold thousands of graves, making it difficult to find a particular cemetery plot by simply wandering the area. Use this guide to find a cemetery plot you’re looking for.Visit the CemeterySmaller cemeteries make it simple to find a grave by name with computers that offer search options right inside the cemetery’s main building. Check with the cemetery staff if you’re having a tough time viewing the actual cemetery plot, or have a staff member check the cemetery’s plot-mapping software program for you. Larger cemeteries may also offer this type of computer system along with maps of the cemetery itself, marking individual graves in the index using a numbering system. The cemetery’s website may also offer this information, so it’s possible you might be able to browse from the comfort of home.Use the InternetThere are websites designed to help you to find a grave even when you’re not able to travel to the cemetery. Determine where a plot is by logging onto one of these search websites, such as Find A Grave, and entering the deceased person’s name, birth date or other personal information. Use the website to search for similar names and dates of birth and death to pinpoint the cemetery plot that you’re seeking. This type of search is easiest if you have personal information but works for researching cemetery plots dating back even 100 years or more.Use Ancestry Search WebsitesWhile you’re mapping your family tree, you might also use the same ancestry search websites to view cemetery plots. Many of the ancestry search websites also offer information related to death certificates, burial plots and cemeteries, but not in all cases. Use these websites to narrow your search to a particular state or to find a grave in your state that’s related to your family name.Call the CemeteryWhen you want to find a grave by name, speaking with the cemetery staff is a great way to get started. This can also help you get answers without needing to travel to the cemetery to get them. Cemetery workers are often familiar with the layout of the cemetery and even the family names that are found in each area. They can also check their mapping software, if the cemetery has it, to see if they can find a match.Search Veteran WebsitesWhen you’re searching for a particular grave that belongs to a veteran, there are excellent resources to find a gravesite by name. One such website is run by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration. Visit this or a similar website dedicated to deceased veterans to search for a grave by name or to find a particular cemetery plot using the person’s name and date of death. Military cemeteries often offer maps along with information about graves marked by military branch, the person’s name and the date of service. MORE FROM QUESTIONSANSWERED.NET From left, Shailene Woodley, Zoë Kravitz, Reese Witherspoon, Nicole Kidman, and Laura Dern. Photo: Jennifer Clasen/HBO Season two of HBO’s Big Little Lies tells two stories, one unfolding onscreen, the other offscreen. One is about female friendship, complicity, and conspiracy in a world dominated by men. The other is a behind-the-scenes melodrama about the entertainment machine that cranks out high-end dramas like the show you’re watching; its existence was revealed by an IndieWire story in which unnamed sources close to the show’s producers accused two of the series’ executive producers, showrunner David E. Kelley and first-season director Jean-Marc Vallée, of redoing the work of Andrea Arnold (Fish Tank, American Honey), a filmmaker they’d hired to helm all of season two. The onscreen and offscreen stories merge in the mere fact of a second season’s existence. Big Little Lies season two is a genial yet blatant attempt to turn a popular, award-winning stand-alone, adapted from Liane Moriarty’s same-titled novel, into an ongoing TV series, even though the story felt complete at the end of season one. Adapted for television by Kelley (The Practice) and Vallée (Dallas Buyers Club, Sharp Objects), season one told the fragmented, elliptical story of a group of (mostly) rich women in Monterey, California, who come together to end an abusive man’s life. The victim, Perry Wright (Alexander Skarsgård), beat his wife, Celeste (Nicole Kidman), and had previously raped the youngest member of the group, Jane Chapman (Shailene Woodley), impregnating her with a son, Ziggy (Iain Armitage). The group’s lone black character, Bonnie Carlson (Zoë Kravitz), pushes Perry down a flight of stairs during an altercation at an elementary-school costume party, and the entire group, including Reese Witherspoon’s Madeline Martha Mackenzie and Laura Dern’s Renata Klein, conspire to cover up the crime by describing it as an accident. Season two brings in two new major characters, both mothers, to stir up what has become a story about a group of guilty criminals trying to stay out of prison. Bonnie’s abusive mom, Elizabeth (Crystal Fox), is a psychic who has visions of her guilt-ridden daughter immersed in water. Meryl Streep’s Mary Louise Wright, mother of Perry, makes like the world’s most passive-aggressive amateur sleuth, provoking all the women with insinuations, insults, and point-blank queries in hopes of proving that her boy’s death was intentional. Season two wasn’t unwatchable; in fact, despite many nonsensical developments, it was compelling because of the returning cast plus Streep, who turned in one of those weird, prankish, coloring-outside-the-lines performances that Marlon Brando and Jack Nicholson started giving once they fully committed to being character actors. Laughing inappropriately as a form of emotional terrorism, filtering a Northern California singsong accent through pinched prosthetic teeth that she requested for the part, and unleashing a primal scream of maternal grief at a family dinner, Streep’s Mary Louise was pitiable and terrifying, dismantling the show in order to save it. And it did need saving. From the start, something about this season felt off. Kelley’s writing always leaned on saucy exposition, but here it sometimes seemed as if every scene was delivering payloads of pertinent facts. And the show’s copious art-house-style flashbacks — a Vallée signature — often felt intrusive or obligatory; at the very least, they were less intriguing than some of the long close-ups that observed the characters in moments of distress, at times even staying on a woman’s face without cutting to the person talking to her (as in a therapy scene that ends with a long reaction shot of Celeste processing questions asked by her therapist, played by Robin Weigert, whom we barely see). The latter is more common in Arnold’s work, whereas Vallée is more restless with his images. But cinematic forensics will take viewers only so far in their attempt to figure out who did what and whether the season’s moments of inspiration and stiltedness are attributable to one creative person or a combination — as well as when in the production timeline the creative decision might’ve been made. This type of offscreen drama is common in the, well, sausage factory of series TV, and it’s unfortunately an equal-opportunity indignity, one that every director for hire, even a multiple Cannes Jury Prize winner like Arnold, knows is a possibility when he or she signs up for this kind of gig. In contrast to theatrical cinema, which is still mainly a director’s medium, a TV show is driven by a writer-producer who either has some background in directing or else hires people to keep the look and sound of a show consistent over multiple hours. It’s common for parts of episodes, and in some cases whole episodes, to be reshot by a different director, or credited by a new editor or team of editors, either because the showrunners didn’t like the original filmmaker’s work or because they decided to change key elements of the story and the people who had done the previous version weren’t available. Only an agreed-upon stylistic template prevents the aesthetic of a show from becoming cluttered or inconsistent. Ultimately, this method of production isn’t hugely different from the old Hollywood studio system, where a film like Gone With the Wind could have multiple directors even though the end product named only one. Under these sorts of conditions, egos get bruised, sometimes bloodied. But it’s rare for ugly details to spill out immediately into the public sphere, as they have with Big Little Lies. Usually, you have to wait for a tell-all book. The optics of this scandal are uniquely bad, though, because Arnold was supposedly hired to give the show a distinctive vibe that would distinguish it from the work of Vallée. Whether it was intentional or not, hiring Arnold also addressed a criticism of season one: that a show driven by female characters, and co-executive-produced by two of its leads (Witherspoon and Kidman), was written and directed by men. Kelley and Vallée allegedly took Arnold’s work away from her without warning and substantially reedited the season to make it more like season one. Episodic directors get to submit the first cut of an episode, but they always do so knowing that executive producers may reedit or reshoot according to what they believe are the needs of the show. The question isn’t whether the showrunners have the legal right to do what they did here, because it’s standard practice on most shows. The question is whether they should have, and whether the series is as interesting as it would’ve been if they’d left her work alone. Whether sexism was intended or incidental doesn’t matter when the result is a behind-the-scenes story of a brilliant woman who was denied agency. *This article appears in the July 22, 2019, issue of New York Magazine. Subscribe Now! Big Little Lies Had Messy Drama on Both Sides of the Camera

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