

# ***Big Little Lies:***

## **And Along Comes Jane...**

In HBO's *Big Little Lies* (based on the bestselling novel of the same name by Liane Moriarty), series adapter/showrunner David E. Kelley (*The Practice*, *Ally McBeal*, *Boston Legal*) and his stable of amazing performers examine the idea of "tribe mentality." There is the larger tribe of Monterey, California (reset from the novel's Australian setting), an image-conscious community soaked with tech money. Within Monterey there's a school, and within the school there are two factions: those who are with Renata Klein (Laura Dern) and those who are with Madeline Martha Mackenzie (Reese Witherspoon). It's clearly a rivalry set up long before we meet the characters in the pilot—a rivalry heightened by a new girl in town.

There's nothing more dangerous to tribe mentality than an outsider. In *Big Little Lies* that outsider is Jane Chapman (Shailene Woodley). Everything about Jane is different from the other mothers at the school: she's young, irreverent, barely middle class, and a never-married single mom.

While every other one of our female leads shares intimate moments with their husbands, moments where they talk, fight and make up, Jane runs. She runs alone trying to escape the trauma and abuse inflicted on her by her son Ziggy's (Iain Armitage) absent father. Ziggy was not only born out of wedlock; he was also the product of a date rape. This is Jane's deepest secret shame.

Jane's role as "other" extends to Ziggy and is the inciting incident of the series. On orientation day at school, Renata's daughter, Amabella Klein (Ivy George), is attacked by another child. When asked to point out her attacker, she points to Ziggy. Amabella instinctually knows rather than pointing out another member of her tribe for fear of retribution or worse, becoming an outsider herself, it's safest to point out the one that doesn't belong.

As the season moves forward Jane is absorbed into Madeline's group. As Jane becomes more like Madeline and her best friend Celeste Wright (Nicole Kidman), Madeline and Celeste become more like Jane. The three women become unable to keep up the facade required—being a superficially happy woman in Monterey. In an explosive finale, Jane arrives at Trivia Night doing her best to fit in. She's no longer alone, no longer at odds with Renata, and she's even managed to come in costume for the "Audrey and Elvis" themed soiree.

Yet even then, Jane cannot escape her status as “other” with Jane’s *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* inspired but inaccurate little black dress tying her to Celeste, who dons an outfit that’s almost a dead ringer for the real thing. Jane and Celeste are two women trying to escape their problems; one is just much better at hiding hers. In the end, their dark secrets come to light. As Madeline recoils in horror, Jane and Celeste confront their mutual enemy, and hell hath no fury like a (Monterey) woman scorned.