

= Mars , Bars =

" Mars , Bars " is the fourteenth episode of the third season of the American mystery television series Veronica Mars , and the fifty @-@ eighth episode overall . Directed by Harry Winer , with a story by Phil Klemmer , John Enbom , and Joe Voci and a teleplay by Klemmer and Enbom , the episode premiered on The CW on February 20 , 2007 . The series depicts the adventures of Veronica Mars ( Kristen Bell ) as she deals with life as a college student while moonlighting as a private detective .

The episode is the second of two to deal directly with the death of Hearst 's basketball coach , Tom Barry ( Matt McKenzie ) . In this installment , Veronica and Keith ( Enrico Colantoni ) search for Tom 's missing son Josh ( Jonathan Chase ) while investigating a variety of alternate suspects . In addition , they continue to question Mindy O 'Dell ( Jaime Ray Newman ) and Hank Landry ( Patrick Fabian ) with regards to the death of Dean Cyrus O 'Dell . Meanwhile , Logan ( Jason Dohring ) , Parker ( Julie Gonzalo ) , Mac ( Tina Majorino ) , and Bronson ( Michael Mitchell ) attend a scavenger hunt for Valentine 's Day .

" Mars , Bars " marks the final appearance of series Michael Muhney , the actor of Sheriff Lamb , after the death of his character . Muhney was not informed of his character 's death until the filming of the episode ; he was surprised and saddened at the decision . Spoilers about the scene were not leaked prior to the episode , something about which Muhney was happy . In addition , Mac was initially scheduled to be taken advantage of by a professor in this episode , but a romantic relationship with Bronson was chosen instead . The episode garnered 2 @.@ 27 million viewers and positive reviews from television critics , with many praising Muhney 's performance and viewing it as a return to form for the show , while some were more critical of Logan 's subplot .

= = Plot synopsis = =

At the end of the previous episode , Postgame Mortem , Veronica is arrested by Sheriff Lamb ( Michael Muhney ) on the suspicion that she helped the now @-@ missing Josh Barry to escape from prison . This episode opens with Lamb questioning her and learning little , as she had nothing to do with his disappearance .

Keith , Veronica 's father and owner of Mars Investigations , their detective firm , visits Veronica in jail . Cliff McCormack ( Daran Norris ) , a local public defender , also arrives , and tells Veronica that she has been all but cleared , but Sheriff Lamb will keep her in custody for as long as he can because he still believes she was involved in Josh 's disappearance . Keith returns to Mars Investigations , where Hank Landry arrives and says that he found a bugging device in his phone . Landry had been implicated in the ongoing investigation into the death of Cyrus O ? Dell , dean of Hearst College where Veronica is a student . Keith denies that he or Veronica placed the device in his phone , but Hank becomes angry , telling him to stop investigating him .

Keith brings his findings on the death of Coach Barry to Sheriff Lamb and provides an alternate explanation ; that Coach Barry had discovered his wife was having an affair . Lamb agrees with him that it was a murder . Lamb calls Mindy O 'Dell , the dean 's wife and a main suspect , to his office . Logan , Veronica 's on @-@ again , off @-@ again boyfriend , visits Veronica in her cell and they are civil to each other . After being released from jail , Veronica is stopped on the street by Josh , who has Mason ( Robert Ri 'chard ) in the trunk of his car , frantically telling Veronica that Mason is the culprit . When Veronica disproves this claim , she tells Josh to call her using a disposable phone within 24 hours . Veronica releases Mason from the trunk .

Logan takes a wireless card to Mac as a favor , and she , Piz , and Bronson invite him on a night out . Logan , Mac , Bronson , and Parker take part in a Valentine 's Day scavenger hunt . The quartet find their last clue at a beach . Mac and Bronson kiss , while Parker and Logan bond while swimming . The scavenger hunt ends , and they come in third place . Logan and Parker leave , and Mac and Bronson have sex for the first time .

While reviewing the O 'Dell case , Veronica notices that the TV station the dean was watching the night he was murdered had moved its programming back an hour , meaning their estimated time of

death was wrong . The forensic results about the prints in O 'Dell ? s room come back , and they are the fingerprints of Steve Botando ( Richard Grieco ) . Steve Botando is investigated by Sheriff Lamb .

Keith investigates the Coach Barry case more , finding that the Coach had Creutzfeldt @-@ Jakob disease . His wife took out a life insurance policy several days before his death with a double indemnity clause . Keith talks to Coach Barry 's wife , who pulls out a gun on him . It is a Colt .45 , the gun that was used to kill Coach Barry . However , she claims that she was not intending to shoot Keith and that it is a relic of the Coach 's army days . Sheriff Lamb receives a call about a robbery at the O 'Dell house . It is Steve Botando , who bludgeons Lamb until he is mortally wounded .

Veronica gives Josh a new ID , and he successfully unlocks his safe @-@ deposit box at a bank . Inside is a DVD of Coach Barry telling Josh about his condition and that he was planning to have a friend kill him to avoid futile medical expenses and give his family the insurance money . Josh flees the country until he is old enough to receive the money his father left aside . Veronica shows Keith the DVD . Keith calls the Sheriff 's office and finds that Sheriff Lamb has just died from his wounds . Veronica sees Logan and Parker talking .

Keith , now acting Sheriff , questions Mindy with new evidence , claiming that Mindy is protecting Hank or Hank is protecting Mindy . The story continues in the next episode , Papa 's Cabin .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing and filming = = =

" Mars , Bars " features a story by Phil Klemmer , John Enbom , and Joe Voci and a teleplay by Klemmer and Enbom , marking Klemmer 's fourteenth installment of the series , Enbom 's fifteenth episode for the show , and Voci 's second and final writing credit ( after " Postgame Mortem " ) . It was directed by Harry Winer , marking his fifth and final directing credit for Veronica Mars , after " Meet John Smith " , " Blast from the Past " , " Wichita Linebacker " , and " Of Vice and Men " . The scene on the beach was the work of Winer , whom Thomas referred to as a " visual stylist " . He enjoyed the scene for showing Neptune as a California beach town while distinguishing itself due to the cold weather , a visual characteristic that he felt was not portrayed often enough .

" Mars , Bars " features the reappearance of the character of Bronson , who had previously appeared in " Show Me the Monkey " . Mac loses her virginity to Bronson in the episode . However , the writers had initially planned a storyline in which Mac would be taken advantage of by a professor due to her fragile emotional state following her romance with Beaver ( Kyle Gallner ) . However , the storyline was removed , partially due to the fact that Thomas and the crew wanted Mac to have something positive happen to her . Prior to the filming of this episode , Thomas counseled Jason Dohring and Julie Gonzalo , who play Logan and Parker , respectively , on the two characters ' interpersonal chemistry in the episode . Specifically , he did not want them to make their flirting obvious , but rather give " a whiff of connection " .

= = = Acting = = =

This episode marks the final appearance of series regular Michael Muhney , who plays Don Lamb on the show , after his character is bludgeoned to death by Steve Botando , played by Richard Grieco . Muhney did not know about his character 's death until receiving the script for the episode . This was roughly six weeks before the episode 's airing and during filming . Muhney did not know the rationale for killing the character , but when he found out , he stated that " I felt like a piece of me was dying as well . " He also stated that he was also heartbroken because he had grown attached to the character over the course of three years playing him . Muhney also expressed surprise over the writing decision .

Because the crew shoots scenes out of order , the last scene that Muhney filmed was the one in which Keith offers to help Lamb in investigating the break @-@ in at the O 'Dell residence . He

enjoyed acting with Grieco , calling him " very approachable . " He was also pleased with the character 's sendoff , stating that it was appropriate . He wished that he had more time to say farewells to each cast and crew member individually . Lamb 's last words were " I smell bread " ; Muhney explained that it was a reference to a minor character death on M \* A \* S \* H. He stated that it was an in @-@ joke among the crew and that the words had " no significance within the borders of Neptune . " However , Muhney thought of it as his character 's last burst of sarcasm .

The reveal of Sheriff Lamb 's death was not leaked anywhere online prior to the airing of " Mars , Bars " , something about which Muhney was happy . He stated that " the surprise was the best part " and that he disliked it when spoilers from other series were released early . After the episode 's initial airing , Muhney reported that his inbox was flooded with emails from press members seeking interviews , stating that new messages came after the airing in each U.S. time zone . Some fans were upset about his death , and debate occurred online . However , Muhney also received messages of support for the character , commenting " it 's nice to know that he will be missed . " With the announcement of the Veronica Mars film in 2013 , Zap2it speculated that Muhney might return ; however , this was later revealed not to be the case when the official casting was announced . Thomas praised Daran Norris 's performance in the episode , particularly his voice in the scene in which he defends Steve Botando in front of Sheriff Lamb . Thomas noted that Norris was also a voice actor and that he was particularly well @-@ liked on the set for his humorous performances .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its original broadcast , " Mars , Bars " received 2 @.@ 27 million viewers , ranking 96th of 99 in the weekly rankings . This was a decrease of 100 @,@ 000 viewers from the figures of the previous episode , " Postgame Mortem " , which garnered 2 @.@ 37 million viewers .

= = = Reviews = = =

The episode received generally positive reviews from television critics . Eric Goldman , writing for IGN , gave the episode an 8 @.@ 8 out of 10 , indicating that it was " great " . He referred to " Mars , Bars " as one of the finest episodes of season three , praising the Valentine 's Day subplot , the development of the mystery of Dean O 'Dell 's death , and Muhney 's performance . Regarding Logan , he opined that although he did not like him moping after his breakup with Veronica , this episode fixed that by including him in the Valentine 's Day subplot and setting up a romantic relationship with Parker : " it 's just a huge relief to see Logan in a different light and interacting with different people , finally . " He also praised Lamb 's death scene as being devoid of clichés by not giving him an act of heroism for his dying moments . Reviewer Alan Sepinwall , on his blog What 's Alan Watching ? , lauded the episode . He saw the episode and the previous episode as a return to form for Veronica Mars , writing , " it 's episodes like these last two that remind me of what this show looks like when it 's really cooking . " He also enjoyed the lack of a redemptive moment for Lamb at the end of his life as well as the comedic value of some scenes in the episode .

BuddyTV wrote that " Mars , Bars " was an example of the best the series could get . The reviewer praised all of the interconnecting subplots , Jason Dohring 's performance , and the episode 's pacing , writing , " Anybody who was kvetching over the slow pace of the last few weeks of Veronica Mars got a huge payoff tonight . " Rowan Kaiser , writing for The A.V. Club , gave a mixed review . While he was positive towards Lamb 's death , he criticized the subplot involving Mac , Logan , Parker , and Bronson . Regarding Lamb , he opined that it made him realize how much he had enjoyed the role ; however , he thought that " knowing that the show is almost finished limits its impact . " He was positive towards Keith 's role in the episode but referred to the Valentine 's Day plot as out of character for the show for its happy feel . " It 's cute . And cuteness in an episode with

the shocking death of a recurring character seems out of place . " Television Without Pity graded the episode a " B " .

BuddyTV also ranked Sheriff Lamb 's death 7th on its list of the seven saddest TV deaths of 2007 . On a ranking of all 64 Veronica Mars episodes , Anais Bordages of BuzzFeed ranked the episode 13th . After the series was announced as being cancelled by The CW , fans collectively sent nearly 10 @, @ 000 Mars bars to Dawn Ostroff , the president of the network as a reference to the show , but the attempt was futile .