

= Normal Is the Watchword =

" Normal Is the Watchword " is the season premiere of the second season of the American mystery television series Veronica Mars , and the twenty @-@ third episode overall . Written by series creator Rob Thomas and directed by John Kretchmer , the episode premiered on UPN on September 28 , 2005 .

The series depicts the adventures of Veronica Mars (Kristen Bell) as she deals with life as a high school student while moonlighting as a private detective . In this episode , Veronica reveals the events that transpired over the summer after the resolution of the murder of Lilly Kane (Amanda Seyfried) . Meanwhile , Veronica investigates a scam involving students ' forged drug tests , and a school bus mysteriously goes off a cliff .

" Normal Is the Watchword " featured several casting changes to the show , including the introduction of Kendall (Charisma Carpenter) and Gia (Krysten Ritter) , as well as the promotion of three actors to series regular status . The episode received mostly positive reviews , and Thomas was nominated for a Writers Guild of America Award for his writing .

= = Synopsis = =

One day before senior year , Veronica is working a job at a restaurant . Soon , a boy named Kelvin (Charles Duckworth) comes into the restaurant and says that he failed his drug test , even though he has been clean for ten months . Veronica sees an interview with her father , Keith (Enrico Colantoni) , on TV , and it is revealed that he wrote a book about the Lilly Kane case . The episode then flashes back to the romantic cliffhanger at the end of season one , and it is revealed that Logan was at the door . Logan reveals that the biker gang beat him up after he kicked Weevil (Francis Capra) in the face . Although he woke up with a knife wound and found one of the gang members was stabbed , Logan tells Veronica that he did not stab the gang member , and Veronica believes him . However , Leo (Max Greenfield) comes and arrests Logan . Wallace (Percy Daggs III) says that he and Meg (Alona Tal) also failed their drug test . Wallace informs Veronica about the details of the drug test , and the episode flashes back to show the details of Veronica and Logan starting to date over the summer . Veronica talks to all the students who were framed in the drug test , and they all say some people might want to harm them . Veronica has become estranged from Meg , and Veronica reveals that Logan was released from prison soon after he was arrested .

Veronica connects the five people who were framed to an incident where a student was publicly harassed in gym class . Keith is still dating Alicia Fennel (Erica Gimpel) . Veronica and Wallace spend the night investigating students , and Veronica eventually deduces that Wallace ingested a small amount of an illegal substance , most likely in a gift basket earlier that year . In a flashback , Veronica and Logan make out in the car until the PCH bikers shoot out the car 's windows . Veronica asks Keith for help in finding out the names of a company 's shareholders . Veronica believes that one of the lab assistants was paid off to forge the results . The previous summer , Logan was involved with an arson crime . Logan sunbathes with Dick (Ryan Hansen) and Beaver (Kyle Gallner) poolside , and they ogle at the brothers 's stepmother , Kendall Casablancas (Charisma Carpenter) . Veronica sets up the parents and has Principal Clemmons listen in , and it is revealed that Duncan is now dating Veronica . In a flashback , Veronica breaks up with Logan . When Logan starts to get angry , Keith barges in and makes him leave . Logan is carrying on a relationship with Kendall .

On a field trip , Veronica meets Gia (Krysten Ritter) . On the bus home , Veronica talks to Meg one more time , but she is still passive @-@ aggressive . Veronica explains to the audience that she and Duncan are dating . At a rest stop , Veronica sees Weevil and they debate about the stabbed gang member . Meanwhile , Veronica 's bus drives away without her . Instead , Weevil takes Veronica on his motorcycle before they run across the limo with Duncan , Gia , and the others in it . They tell Veronica that the bus full of students drove off the cliff and into the sea , and they look over at the crashed bus .

= = Production = =

When it was renewed for a second season , Veronica Mars became the lowest @-@ rated show in network history to be renewed and the only UPN drama from the 2004 @-@ 05 television season to be renewed . Starting in the second season , Veronica Mars was moved to Wednesday nights , placing it in direct competition with ABC 's popular Lost . Rob Thomas said that , " I wish the juggernaut that is Lost wasn 't our direct competition . " At the same time , Veronica Mars was placed after UPN 's America 's Next Top Model . On the date of the airing of this episode , Bell and Thomas talked to The New York Times , where Thomas commented , " We let Veronica say things that , if you get all day to think about it , would be the perfect retort . "

The episode was originally titled " Urine Trouble " , a joking pun on " You 're in trouble . " The episode 's title refers to a phrase said by both Veronica and Wallace , indicating that things are supposedly " normal , " though they are not . The episode was written by series creator Rob Thomas and directed by John T. Kretchmer . This episode marks Thomas 's fourth writing credit for the series (after " Pilot " , " Credit Where Credit 's Due " , and " Leave It to Beaver ") and Kretchmer 's fourth directing credit for the series . In the episode , Logan mentions that producers wanted Tara Reid to play Trina Echolls (Alyson Hannigan) in casting for the film adaptation of the Echolls ' story . During casting of the role of Trina , Reid was actually almost cast in the part .

In the episode , Logan makes an obscene hand gesture known as the shocker , something that the UPN censors did not notice . Before the filming of " Normal Is the Watchword " , Rob Thomas informed actor Teddy Dunn , who played Duncan Kane , that he was planning remove the character from the show . Dunn has said that he was not too upset by the news , as he almost did not return for the season at all . On his role in the season , Dunn stated , " And so I knew going in that I had a finite amount of episodes , so it was like any other job . It was week @-@ to @-@ week and then I went on my merry way . "

The episode features a brief cameo by Julie Chen , wife of UPN executive Leslie Moonves . The cast members did not know important plot information before they received the script for the episode , including who was at Veronica 's door and that Veronica and Duncan would resume dating . " Ashes " by Embrace plays during the bus crash scene .

= = Casting = =

" Normal Is the Watchword " introduces several new characters and series regulars to the show . On casting the new season , Thomas explained that he " conceive [d] the show as a one @-@ year mystery " and decided that he needed to introduce and eliminate several characters to be able to create an " equally fascinating mystery " for the series ' second season . Thomas felt that he could not bring back the Kanes and the Echolls and " have them all involved in a new mystery " ; he needed " new blood " . In the opening credits , three new actors are given star billing . Two of these actors , Ryan Hansen as Dick Casablancas and Kyle Gallner as Cassidy " Beaver " Casablancas , served as recurring characters in the show 's first season . In addition , this episode marks the first credit of Jackie Cook , played by Tessa Thompson , despite the fact that she does not appear in the episode .

Several important recurring characters of the show 's second season are also introduced in " Normal Is the Watchword . " Kendall Casablancas , portrayed by Charisma Carpenter , best known for her role as Cordelia Chase on Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel makes her first appearance in the episode . During casting , Heather Graham was considered for the role . However , Graham was filming Emily 's Reasons Why Not . Carpenter said that she wanted to play the role because " the name is really spectacular . " The episode also introduces the character of Gia Goodman , played by Krysten Ritter , who would later become known for her roles in Breaking Bad , Don 't Trust the B---- in Apartment 23 , and Jessica Jones . Ritter would reprise her role in the film continuation of Veronica Mars and called her role on the series " her first big acting job . " Ritter was a fan of Veronica Mars before her role on the show , and she unsuccessfully auditioned for a guest role in the first season . However , the producers enjoyed Ritter 's performance , so they told her that she "

would be on the show at some point . "

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its original broadcast , " Normal Is the Watchword " garnered 3 @. @ 29 million viewers and ranked 97th out of 112 in the weekly rankings . This was an increase over both the previous season 's finale , " Leave It to Beaver " , which received 2 @. @ 99 million viewers , and the previous season premiere (the pilot episode) , which garnered 2 @. @ 49 million viewers . At the time , the episode was the highest @- @ rated episode of Veronica Mars in the show 's history . However , this ratings high would be surpassed by " One Angry Veronica " .

= = = Reviews = = =

The episode received positive reviews . Rowan Kaiser , writing for The A.V. Club , gave a glowing review , saying that it had all the components that a season premiere should have . After praising many aspects of the episode , the reviewer wrote , " What ties it all together , though , is a storytelling form that indicates complete confidence from the show about what its viewers can deal with . It 's half present @- @ day , half @- @ flashback . But the two different halves , combined with Veronica 's voiceover , combine to present the information in pleasantly deceptive fashion . "

Price Peterson of TV.com also gave a positive review , writing in his episode verdict that " It 's frankly amazing how much information this episode packed into 42 minutes while still feeling breezy and funny ? The episode also ended with that breathtakingly horrifying ending , a multiple @- @ death shocker that served to remind me just how murder @- @ lute Season 1 was . " Television Without Pity gave the episode a " B + " . Alan Sepinwall wrote that the season premiere was " a little heavy on the exposition " while also commenting that the same could be said about the pilot episode . Sepinwall went on to state , " I 'm really enjoying all the new storylines and characters . "

Cynthia Fuchs of PopMatters , gave a positive review , noting the various new storylines and how the characters , especially Veronica , handled this new set of events . " Like most adolescents , Veronica understands and anticipates this mix , even if she doesn 't always deal with it in the most effective way . Even if you don 't want to pick sides , you 're bound to be assessed as having done so . And once you 're labeled ? 09er or not ? you can either spend your time fighting rumors or finding alternative measures . Veronica , so precociously and brilliantly aware of alternatives , makes this familiar process seem worth pondering one more time . "

BuzzFeed ranked the episode 23rd on its ranking of Veronica Mars episodes , writing " take a close look at this episode ; all the answers are right there . " On a similar list , TVLine ranked the episode 18th , writing that it was notable for its introduction of characters and the bus crash plot line .

= = = Accolades = = =

For his work on the episode , Rob Thomas received a Writers Guild of America Award nomination for Best Episodic Drama . However , Thomas lost at the Writers Guild of America Awards 2005 to Lawrence Kaplow for the House episode " Autopsy " .