

# Yellowjackets Review: Lord of the Flies, But With Time Jumps and Plentiful Secrets

The *Yellowjackets* pilot episode begins with a feral, eerily ambiguous few minutes. A girl runs away in terror from something or someone and falls into a well-formulated trap. Out of the snow-covered shadows emerges a person dawned in hunter-like garb standing as an unsettling score amplifies the tension. The *Lord of the Flies-inspired* premise acts as a jarring anchor throughout. Visions of cultish activity, gruesome murder, and cannibalistic undertones hint at something sinister. Under the direction of Karyn Kusama, the horrific aspects are shown to enhance the mystery and make it devoid of any light – both physically and metaphorically. Survival can surely shake the strongest of morals, but with the ensemble of characters, the collective experience is something they cannot surprise.

Divided between two time periods, the pilot episode shows both the before and aftereffects of a traumatic ordeal. At the center, the Yellowjackets are a star girls’ soccer team from Wiskayok High School in New Jersey on the way to nationals. Writers Ashley Lyle & Bart Nickerson walk the delicate balance of giving the past and present iterations of characters’ intentions and relationships. The 1996 period boasts a soundtrack with music from the likes of Hole, The Smashing Pumpkins, and Salt and Pepa. Teen Shauna (Sophie Nélisse) is best friends with Jackie (Ella Purnell), chosen to be team captain because she has the most influence. As the episode goes on, there’s a secret undercurrent to their relationship regarding Shauna’s deceitful deeds manifest in her adult life.

Some team members take the upcoming big game more seriously than others. Young Taissa (Jasmin Savoy Brown) is determined to make life hell for Allie (Pearl Amanda Dickson), a freshman she deems not pulling her weight. A violent moment at practice proves to be a point of contention, fertile to break the team-up. Most flashback sequences strive to show how close all the girls are to each other. Some scenes follow the tropes of everyone patching things up and even a montage of the girls getting ready to board the plane. However, some secrets are sure to come to a head once the plane crashes and the girls have nowhere to run from them.

In 2021, four of the adults take the spotlight (for now). Shauna (Melanie Lynskey) is dazed and lackadaisical, trying to connect with her daughter, who would instead do anything else, and a husband who works late frequently. One day, she gets visited by a reporter from the Star-Ledger (Rekha Sharma) promising a profitable book deal for an authentic account of what happened during the 19 months while the group of girls waited for rescue. Taissa (Tawny Cypress) is poised to put the past behind her with a run for New Jersey Senate. Natalie, a rebel in adulthood (Juliette Lewis), finishes rehab and claims to have rediscovered her purpose at a younger age. Misty (Christina Ricci), a very meek soccer assistant in 1996, takes on a stern persona as a nurse.

The only glimpses the audience gets are the words from blood-stained journals and intermittent imagery of something dreadful and primal happening. The survivors are disturbed in different ways, but can they band together to keep a lid on the horrors of that time? Given their distinct personalities and motivations, that might not be the case.

As the pilot ends during the plane crash, some burning questions remain. In the second episode, “F Sharp,” Misty’s character becomes more of a focal point. Before the trip in 1992, she was made fun of by her classmates. After the crash, Misty’s social standing is elevated because she’s the only one that knows first aid. Given a certain action, there’s a desire to keep that going. In the present, Misty is an awkward adult on a first date until Natalie confronts her.

Each survivor has been receiving a postcard with a mysterious emblem on it. Is it from the supposed journalist? Not sure. One that they would only know from their time on the island. With her impending run for office, Taissa is steadfast in putting the past behind her. Her son, Sammy (Aiden Stoxx), claims a woman watches him through his window at night. With politics of any kind, discovery happens. There are people from all corners trying to dig up any dirt they have. Right now, Taissa is using her experience as a conduit of strength – or it least appears to be. But as the show goes on, that foundation is going to crack.

Shauna’s mandate suburban life gets a shakeup with a fender bender with a new character named Adam (Peter Gadiot). He takes a liking to her, but she resists – electing to be loyal to her husband, Jeff (Warren Kole). While Shauna hasn’t cracked yet, it unlocks an urge to break the monotony inside her. Director Jamie Travis does a brief, but clever foreshadowing between the two periods.

Young Shauna eventually has to come clean to Jackie about her affair with Jeff. Guilt is going to get the best of her. While in the present, at the behest of their marriage counselor, she gives them kinky homework to revitalize their lack of chemistry. One could surmise that Jeff’s potential wandering eye could be a stroke of karma.

The horror elements are dialed back in episode two as Travis elects to go on a more psychological journey with the characters. Not to say that they are completely gone – as with a plane crash, there is death and a leg amputation. Everything may seem ok as the girls use an icebreaker to incur some laughter. However, as we’ve seen with previous survival-style media, once necessities run out, comradery becomes scarce.

There are only four adult survivors on separate journeys. The person who is absent in the present day is Jackie – which is of note because she’s the character deemed to get the group on the same page. Twenty-five years is a long time to keep a story straight. Yellowjackets’ first two episodes give viewers enough rope to untangle for future episodes.

**This review is based on the first two episodes.**

**Yellowjackets** airs Sundays on Showtime and is streaming on [Showtime Anytime](#).

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