

Pretty Little Pills

TREATMENT



LOGLINE:

A headstrong and jaded high school student struggles to combat her clinical depression with ever deepening self-destruction.

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In *Pretty Little Pills*, Harlow, a headstrong and jaded high school student, struggles to combat her clinical depression with ever deepening self-destruction. She romanticizes her own death and the drugs that may bring her closer to it, but ultimately distract from the hollow sadness inside her.

Harlow feels her emotions like electricity; this empathy makes her vulnerable to dark thoughts, anxiety, and self-doubt. She is not easily satisfied and is hopeless about ever reaching a place of stability in her life, thinking it's probably just a matter of time before she finally, truly breaks, and commits suicide. Whether or not she is actually trying to get better, she desperately seeks out ways to feel alive and escape her hellish mind.

Pretty Little Pills explores Harlow's mental illness through stream of consciousness voice over as she drifts off into her own world throughout a difficult day at school. She disappears into thoughts of her strained

relationships: with her best friend Daisy and her mother and therapist, Anne. Harlow envies Daisy's talent, popularity, and overall goodness. She resents her mother's clerical approach to dealing with a depressed daughter. In addition, Harlow feels sorry for her family, stuck with a reckless, messed-up daughter, and guilty for being so selfishly sad when she has had a perfect, privileged upbringing.

As the day unfolds, her feelings of loneliness, sorrow, and hopelessness close in around her. As a means of coping, she goes to a party with Daisy that night, and when she comes home drunk, she takes a handful of prescription pills and loses consciousness in the bath. She finds herself in a heavenly world, a peaceful fantasy of what death might feel like. After her mother finds her and takes her to the emergency room, she must return to normal life and to her irreversibly changed relationships.

The film cinematographically evokes Harlow's dreamlike, ethereal, dissociated world of saturated pinks and blues. Images come in flashes as her mind tumbles through different scenarios. When she disappears into drugs, the world takes on a dewy, technicolor quality. Nature is used as a conduit of her feelings: she lines up blades of grass on her wrist to allude to self-harm, and after she overdoses, she dreams of herself drowning in a lake filled with flowers.

Depression deals out an invisible, deep pain that difficult to verbalize or comprehend. Stigma surrounding depression and other mental illnesses can trap those with depression inside themselves. While it is often perceived – both by outsiders and victims themselves – as a personal weakness, depression is a biological and serious illness that is often difficult to treat. Harlow's story vocalizes the anguish of clinical depression... the mix of sadness, self-hate, fear, anger, panic, and numbness.

Through Harlow's raw, uncensored voice and her abstract departure from reality will give shape to a narrative of dark humor, wistful misery, and warm intimacy. Her search for higher meaning and escape frames a poignant exploration of pain and growth.

MARKETING STRATEGY:

Pretty Little Pills is an important story that young adults and parents need to hear. This film voices a complex struggle with mental illness, one that so many people deal with in the 21st century. A deep-rooted and long-standing stigma lurks behind every victim of mental illness. Finding a path to recovery is often a lifelong battle. This story gives a visual manifestation of what this road can look like and creates a space for a societal conversation about the masked pandemic of mental illness.

WRITER & DIRECTOR BIO:

Nicole Heetland is an award-winning filmmaker from Denver, Colorado. She won national and state awards as a journalist and editor-in-chief for her high school newsmagazine, *The Lake*. It was during this time that she discovered her passion for storytelling. She graduated from the University of Colorado Denver in 2020 with a BFA in Film and Television Production. Now, she resides in Los Angeles, working in art department and as an executive producer for her production company, Riot Van Productions.