

Affliction (Working Title)

Genre + Sub-genres

Period drama – folk horror, melodrama, body horror

Logline

A young aristocratic woman in Scotland is set to marry into a new family but falls ill with a mysterious illness a week before her wedding and is accused of being a witch.

Synopsis

Drawing on the real-life experiences of chronic illness, medical misogyny, and the tragedy of womanhood, *Affliction* follows Lydia, a young, wealthy woman with a vibrant life who begins to experience symptoms of a mysterious illness a week before her wedding. Pressured into this advantageous marriage by her controlling father, she attempts to conceal her symptoms from her paranoid family and fiancée, who begin to suspect a jealous witch has cursed her.

Lydia is subject to experiments by their cruel family doctor and taken before the local minister to inspect her state of mind. Lydia attempts to live as before but struggles to adjust to her new reality. Despite her best efforts, her fiancée finds out about her illness, and Lydia realises she must find a way to accept her illness.

To avoid persecution by the Church of Elders, Lydia and her sisters abandon everything they have known to find the freedom they once had and escape their father's patriarchal rule. Once fearful of the accused witches, they find a new home with them who accept Lydia's condition.

Pitch

Affliction deals with heavy subject matter related to the female image, sickness as a woman, and female hysteria. Audiences want to see films that explore the complexities and nuance of the female experience, particularly the unseen, uncomfortable aspects of a changing body, such as in *Poor Things*.

Affliction is heavily inspired by dark romanticism, Baroque and Renaissance paintings, and religious iconography like *The Virgin Mary* and *Joan of Arc*. This gives it a distinct, stylised visual approach to separate it from other period dramas.

Affliction is an important story to tell as someone who has lived with a chronic illness from childhood and experienced the dismissal of female suffering and medical misogyny. It is a film that is for anyone who has ever felt alone in their experience of physical and mental health issues and misunderstood by a society that wants to contain and dismiss complex, traumatic experiences.

References

Spencer, *The Virgin Suicides*, *Little Women*, *The Witch*, *Black Swan*, *The Handmaid's Tale*.