

# Horse Girl

***Horse Girl*** is a 2020 American psychological drama film directed and produced by Jeff Baena, from a screenplay written by Baena and Alison Brie. It stars Brie, Debby Ryan, John Reynolds, Molly Shannon, John Ortiz, and Paul Reiser.

The film had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival on January 27, 2020. It was released on February 7, 2020, by Netflix.

## Plot

Sarah is a shy, introverted young woman who lives quietly and works at a crafts store. In her spare time she visits the grave of her mother, who died by suicide the year before. She also frequents the horse stable where her former horse Willow is boarded, and where she rode in her childhood; Sarah's recurrent visits visibly annoy the owners.

When Sarah's roommate Nikki finds her home alone on her birthday, she invites Darren, her boyfriend Brian's roommate, over for a double date. The four smoke marijuana and have drinks. Sarah listens eagerly as Darren reveals details about himself and his past relationship, but the date is interrupted by her nose bleed. After Darren leaves, Sarah has a bizarre dream in which she is lying face up in a white room with a man and woman also lying down some distance away from her, unaware of their surroundings.

The following morning, Nikki awakens to find Sarah sleeping on the living room floor and large scratch marks running across the wall. Darren returns to the apartment to retrieve his car and asks Sarah on a date. At work, she has another nose bleed. While recovering, she recognizes a man walking outside who resembles the one from her dream. Later, Sarah spends an afternoon with her childhood friend Heather who suffered a traumatic brain injury in a riding accident causing her recurrent seizures and short term memory loss.

A series of bizarre incidents soon befall Sarah. While driving home, she stops at a red light near a water facility then finds herself in her kitchen with the tap running, unable to account for

### *Horse Girl*



Official release poster

<b>Directed by</b>	<u>Jeff Baena</u>
<b>Written by</b>	<u>Jeff Baena</u> <u>Alison Brie</u>
<b>Produced by</b>	<u>Mel Eslyn</u> Alana Carithers Jeff Baena Alison Brie
<b>Starring</b>	<u>Alison Brie</u> <u>Debby Ryan</u> <u>John Reynolds</u> <u>Molly Shannon</u> <u>John Ortiz</u> <u>Paul Reiser</u> <u>Matthew Gray Gubler</u>
<b>Cinematography</b>	<u>Sean McElwee</u>
<b>Edited by</b>	<u>Ryan Brown</u>
<b>Music by</b>	<u>Josiah Steinbrick</u> <u>Jeremy Zuckerman</u>

the elapsed time. She hears a woman talking indistinctly in another room when no one is home. She finds her car has been stolen from her garage.

Gary, Sarah's wealthy stepfather, notifies her the car has appeared at a tow yard as the registration is still in his name. He brings her to retrieve it, and the tow driver informs them the car was abandoned near a water facility in the middle of the road.

Later, Sarah apparently sleepwalks out of her apartment and awakens standing outside by a telephone booth. When she returns to her apartment, she discovers that somehow only a couple minutes had passed. At work, her boss, Joan, suggests she visit a doctor given her familial history of mental health problems.

<b>Production company</b>	<u>Duplass Brothers Productions</u>
<b>Distributed by</b>	<u>Netflix</u>
<b>Release dates</b>	January 27, 2020 ( <u>Sundance</u> ) February 7, 2020 (United States)
<b>Running time</b>	103 minutes <sup>[1]</sup>
<b>Country</b>	United States
<b>Language</b>	English

Sarah becomes convinced she is experiencing alien abductions. Due to her striking resemblance to her deceased grandmother, Sarah fears she may be her clone. Meanwhile, she tracks the man from her dream, Ron, to a plumbing store that he owns. While on a date with Darren, Sarah manically confides her belief that she is a clone and has him drive her to her mother's grave to dig her up and retrieve her DNA. When Darren becomes disturbed, Sarah accuses him of plotting against her, and threatens him with scissors, forcing him to leave her there.

Sarah takes a shower at home, and after stepping out of the shower door finds herself instead walking through the back door to her work. Joan helps her and calls the police, after which she is admitted to a psychiatric hospital. She awakens in the middle of the night to find the door to her room unlocked. Escaping from the hospital, she visits a number of places, including the crafts store, where she steals the fabric necessary to craft a pair of protective suits for herself and Willow, but she is confronted by the stable owner when she goes to deliver Willow's suit. Fleeing the stable, she visits a sympathetic Darren, and the two begin to have sex, after which he disappears.

She creates a doorway out of fabric and enters through it into the white room from her dream. There, she witnesses shadowy figures tending to unconscious persons, including herself and the two other people from her dreams. She exits through a window into Heather's bedroom and joins her in bed, but the next morning awakens to find herself back in the hospital, implying the preceding scenes were all part of a dream. She recognizes another patient in her room as the woman from her dream; when Sarah describes it, the woman reveals that they share elements in their dreams, such as an alien ramp in the middle of the ocean. Sarah takes this as confirmation of her belief that they are both alien abductees and soon joyfully tells her social worker that she is not delusional. Despite the social worker's reservations, Sarah is discharged after 72 hours.

At home, Sarah dresses in her grandmother's dress. She covertly steals Willow from the stable and walks with her into the woods. In a clearing, Sarah stops and lies on the ground. Moments later, a spaceship appears; she levitates toward the sky and disappears.

## Cast

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- Alison Brie as Sarah
  - Victoria Claire as Young Sarah

- [Debby Ryan](#) as Nikki, Sarah's roommate
- [John Reynolds](#) as Darren, Sarah's love-interest
- [Molly Shannon](#) as Joan, Sarah's coworker
- [John Ortiz](#) as Ron, an owner of a plumbing company
- [Jay Duplass](#) as Ethan, a social worker
- [Robin Tunney](#) as Agatha Kaine, a character in *Purgatory*
- [Paul Reiser](#) as Gary, Sarah's stepdad
- [Matthew Gray Gubler](#) as Darren Colt, a character in *Purgatory*
- [Meredith Hagner](#) as Heather, Sarah's disabled friend
  - [Zoe Saltz](#) as Young Heather
- [Jake Picking](#) as Brian, Nikki's boyfriend
- [Dylan Gelula](#) as Jane Doe
- [Toby Huss](#) as Joe, a horse trainer
- [Angela Trimbur](#) as Julie
- [David Paymer](#) as Doctor
- [Aaron Stanford](#) as Hades, a character in *Purgatory*
- [Dendrie Taylor](#) as Heather's mother
- [Lauren Weedman](#) as Cheryl
- [Luis Fernandez-Gil](#) as tow worker
- [Sharaé Nikai](#) as nurse

## Production

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In June 2019, it was announced [Alison Brie](#) would star in the film, with [Jeff Baena](#) directing from a screenplay he wrote with Brie. [Jay Duplass](#) and [Mark Duplass](#) serve as executive producers under their [Duplass Brothers Productions](#) banner, with [Netflix](#) distributing.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Release

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The film had its world premiere at the [Sundance Film Festival](#) on January 27, 2020.<sup>[3]</sup> It was released on February 7, 2020, by [Netflix](#).<sup>[4]</sup>

## Reception

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*Horse Girl* holds a 71% approval rating on review aggregator website [Rotten Tomatoes](#) based on 58 reviews, with an average score of 6.3/10. The site's critical consensus reads: "*Horse Girl* proves unwilling or unable to explore the deeper themes it addresses, but this unusual drama is anchored by Alison Brie's committed performance."<sup>[5]</sup> According to [Metacritic](#), which sampled 17 critics and calculated a [weighted average score](#) of 61 out of 100, the film received "generally favorable reviews".<sup>[6]</sup>

Nick Allen of [RogerEbert.com](#) reviewed the film out of its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. In a 3-star review: "The sincerity that Brie brings to her full-fledged embodiment of mental illness is major, and in turn helps *Horse Girl* overcome its tricky storytelling."<sup>[7]</sup>

## See also

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- [Mental disorders in film](#)

- Mental illness in fiction
- Schizophrenia

## References

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2. "Horse Girl" (<https://productionlist.com/production/horse-girl/>). *Production List*. 20 May 2019. Retrieved December 5, 2019.
3. Siegel, Tatiana (December 4, 2019). "Sundance Unveils Female-Powered Lineup Featuring Taylor Swift, Gloria Steinem, Abortion Road Trip Drama" (<https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/sundance-2020-unveils-female-powered-lineup-taylor-swift-gloria-steinem-films-1259538?>). *The Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved December 5, 2019.
4. Erbland, Kate (January 21, 2020). "'Horse Girl' Trailer: Alison Brie Can 'Hear the Future' in Jeff Baena's Unpredictable Sundance Premiere" (<https://www.indiewire.com/2020/01/horse-girl-trailer-alison-brie-jeff-baena-sundance-1202204067/>). *IndieWire*. Retrieved January 21, 2020.
5. "Horse Girl (2020)" ([https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/horse\\_girl](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/horse_girl)). *Rotten Tomatoes*. Retrieved October 10, 2021.
6. "Horse Girl Reviews" (<https://www.metacritic.com/movie/horse-girl>). *Metacritic*. Retrieved January 29, 2021.
7. Allen, Nick. "Horse Girl movie review & film summary (2020) | Roger Ebert" (<https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/horse-girl-movie-review-2020>). *www.rogerebert.com*. Retrieved February 12, 2020.

## External links

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- *Horse Girl* (<https://www.netflix.com/title/81060149>) on Netflix
- *Horse Girl* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11388406/>) at IMDb
- *Horse Girl* ([https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/horse\\_girl](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/horse_girl)) at Rotten Tomatoes

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