

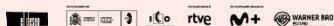
EL DESEO PRESENTA
UN FILM DE ALMODÓVAR



AMARGA NAVIDAD

BÁRBARA LENNIE LEONARDO SBARAGLIA
AITANA SÁNCHEZ-GIJÓN VICTORIA LUENGO PATRICK CRIADO
MILENA SMIT QUIM GUTIÉRREZ

PRODUCTOR AGUSTÍN ALMODÓVAR PRODUCTORA EJECUTIVA ESTHER GARCÍA MÚSICA ALBERTO IGLESIAS DIRECTOR DE FOTOGRAFÍA PAU ESTEVE BIRBA MONTAJE TERESA FONT (AMAE)
DISEÑO DE PRODUCCIÓN ANTXON GÓMEZ SONIDO SERGIO BÜRMANN VESTUARIO PACO DELGADO MAQUILLAJE ANA LÓPEZ-PUIGCERVER PELLUQUERÍA MANOLO GARCÍA
ESCRITA Y DIRIGIDA POR PEDRO ALMODÓVAR



CAST LIST

BÁRBARA LENNIE: ELSA

LEONARDO SBARAGLIA: RAÚL

AITANA SÁNCHEZ-GIJÓN: MÓNICA

VICTORIA LUENGO: PATRICIA

PATRICK CRIADO: BONIFACIO

MILENA SMIT: NATALIA

QUIM GUTIÉRREZ: SANTI

WITH THE COLLABORATION OF:

ROSSY DE PALMA: GABRIELA

CARMEN MACHI: DOCTOR

GLORIA MUÑOZ: ELSA'S MOTHER

AND AMAIA ROMERO

TECHNICAL LIST

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY PEDRO ALMODÓVAR

PRODUCER: AGUSTÍN ALMODÓVAR

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: ESTHER GARCÍA

MUSIC: ALBERTO IGLESIAS

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: PAU ESTEVE BIRBA

EDITOR: TERESA FONT (AMAE)

PRODUCTION DESIGN: ANTXON GÓMEZ

SOUND: SERGIO BÜRMAN

COSTUME DESIGN: PACO DELGADO

MAKEUP DESIGN: ANA LÓPEZ-PUIGCERVER

HAIR DESIGN: MANOLO GARCÍA

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Bitter Christmas tells two alternating stories, one starring Elsa, an advertising director, in 2004, during a long weekend in December. The second takes place in 2026 and stars Raúl, a screenwriter and director who is writing a script that we soon discover is the story of Elsa, her boyfriend Bonifacio, and her friends Patricia and Natalia. Mixed with fiction, Elsa is, in a way, Raúl's alter ego, who resorts to autofiction as a solution to a long period of creative drought. He looks inside himself, and he can't help but also look at the people who make up his most intimate universe: his partner and his assistant.

The film narrates the close relationship between reality and fiction, between inspiration and life, raising the debate about the limits of autofiction.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Bitter Christmas tells two parallel stories (one mirroring the other) and how they interact in the film's final stretch. The first story takes place in December 2004 and the second in the summer of 2026.

At times, it resembles a musical. Elsa meets a man who will love her at a key moment in her life while he is dancing in a strip club. In addition to being a stripper, he is also a firefighter. And there is also a woman, who is Elsa's friend and colleague and who has been repeatedly abandoned and humiliated by her husband. She will find the strength to quit him after listening to a song by Chavela Vargas that is about an abandoned lover. They are joined by a third woman, Natalia. She is a young mother who is still mourning the death of her son.

These stories take place in 2004, during the long a long weekend in early December, with the streets of Madrid taken over by the imminent Christmas season. As a matter of fact, this is really the only Christmas element in the story, the time in which the drama of these friends unfolds. *Bitter Christmas* is the quite the opposite of a Christmas story.

The other story, which alternates with the one set in 2004, takes place in the summer of 2026 and is about a successful fifty something screenwriter and director who is struggling with a long creative crisis. It won't be long before the viewer discovers that Raúl Rossetti, as he is called, is writing on his computer the story of Elsa and of the

other two women: their loves, their losses, their work, and their pains are the elements that fuel Raúl's inspiration, in which he naturally reflects himself. Memory mixed with fiction is always fiction.

Although not in a literal way, Elsa's character is Raúl's alter ego. She is also a director, but of commercials. Ten years earlier, she had directed two films, but they both flopped. Nevertheless, over time, they became cult films.

Seeing the brutalist villa where Raúl lives and the work proposals that his assistant shares with him, we understand that he is not only a successful director but that his life has always been engulfed by the act of filmmaking. As he approaches sixty, his need to create stories is as pressing, if not more so, than when he started working thirty-five years earlier. Writing and directing is the only way he feels alive.

He lives quite a lonely life, alongside his faithful partner Santi, with hardly any social life. At this point in his life and career, he can only find inspiration within himself. So far, he had always refused to do so, but faced with the urgency to continue creating stories, he cannot help but turning to his own life for inspiration. He looks inside himself, but also at the few people who make up his universe, who are his partner and his assistant. In the end, he will have to face reproach for this personal appropriation of the lives of others, however fictionalized they may be in his script.

CREATION/LIFE

Among other matters, *Bitter Christmas* reflects on the connections between creation and reality, with life itself. And how a film can rebel against itself, questioning its *raison d'être*.

This meta-cinematic and Pirandellian game also questions the ethics of the storyteller. In the case of this film, the creator resorts to autofiction. He talks about himself (in a cryptic way) but also about how everything and everyone around him influences him (in a much less cryptic way). Is there anything in the lives of others that is off limits to him or, as a creator, does he have an unlimited right to draw inspiration from everything around him, with the sole justification that the lives of others are part of his own and, therefore, belong to him? What are the limits of autofiction? Do those limits really exist for the creator hungry for inspiration, who

sometimes only achieves it by immersing himself in everything around him, including (and above all) the pain of others?