

 **PRAGDA** | SPANISH FILM CLUB

DISCUSSION GUIDE



MY SEXTORTION DIARY

A film by Patricia Franquesa

Spain / 2024 / 64 min
Spanish with English subtitles

www.PRAGDA.com

BEFORE WATCHING THE FILM:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before watching a film, it is important to know the current events and history of the country that film comes from. Learning about the filmmaker is also a relevant way to gain insight on the context in which the film was produced. You can learn more about Patricia Franquesa at <https://pragda.com/film/my-sex-tortion-diary/>

DEFINITION

Sextortion: the practice of forcing someone to do something, by threatening to publish naked pictures of them or sexual information about them.

INTRODUCING THE FILM

A **film synopsis** is a piece of text designed to summarize the film's narrative, genre, style, and key participants in a way that appeals to a wide audience. The synopsis is part of the film's marketing process and tends to follow a traditional format. Read this synopsis for *My Sextortion Diary*:

Trapped in a digital blackmail labyrinth after her computer is stolen, director Pati Franquesa documents the real-time persecution to maintain bodily autonomy and survive.

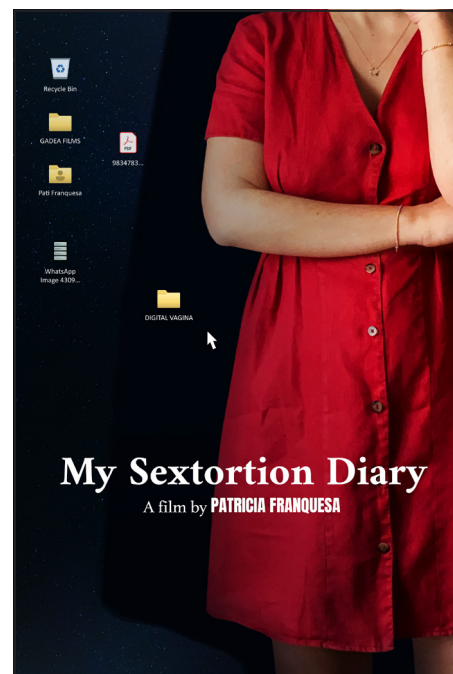
After receiving a chilling threat from an anonymous hacker demanding \$2,400 to stop the mass distribution of her intimate photos, Pati's world crumbles and she turns to the authorities for help—only to find them powerless to act. As the hacker begins leaking her private images, Pati realizes she must take matters into her own hands.

Through text messages, emails, and self-recorded videos, *My Sextortion Diary* reveals a gripping, first-hand account of online blackmail that has become disturbingly commonplace. Combining elements of thriller and mystery, Pati's journey transcends helplessness as she fights back with honesty, humor, and resilience, crafting a powerful story of bodily autonomy, dignity, and the global fight against digital exploitation.

Sextortion, or webcam blackmail, continues to be the most reported issue, followed by intimate images being shared. FBI's security researchers have detected a 178% increase in sextortion cases between 2022 and 2023, marking the category out as a top email threat.

From the film synopsis, can you imagine the genre and tone of the film? From this same text, try to identify the main events of the film's plot and the socio-political context of the film.

- Do you think that the film will have a political message? Cite specific language from the synopsis to support your answer.
- How do the trailer, poster, and still images encourage you to watch the film?
- Viewing the marketing materials alone (i.e. trailer, poster, and still images available at <https://pragda.com/film/my-sex-tortion-diary/>) without the aid of the synopsis, can you make any assumptions regarding what the film is about?



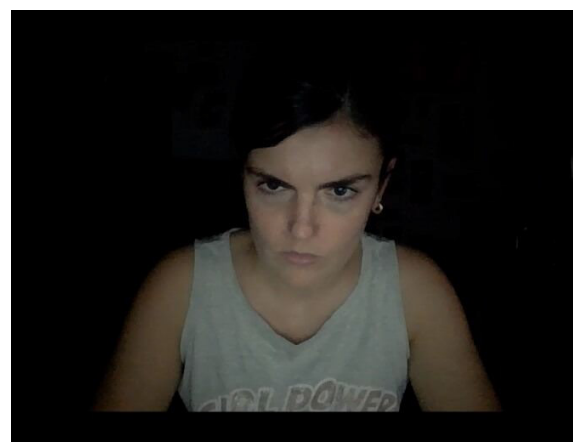
AFTER WATCHING THE FILM:

NARRATIVE

- Who is the narrator of the documentary, and how does their point of view shape the narrative structure?
- How is the first-person perspective used to create intimacy with the viewer, and what effect does this choice have on audience empathy?
- What is the central conflict of the documentary, and how is it developed throughout the narrative?
- What role do digital archives (screens, chats, social media) play in the storytelling, and how do they influence the film's visual style and pacing?
- How is the antagonist represented, and what narrative techniques are used to convey their presence without explicitly showing them?
- What kind of narrative structure does the documentary follow: linear, fragmented, circular...? Why do you think this form was chosen?
- How are visual elements such as animations, effects, or graphics integrated into the storytelling, and what narrative purpose do they serve?
- What role do silence and music play in shaping the narrative tone and building suspense or emotional tension?
- How does the story conclude? Does the ending offer a clear resolution or leave questions open? What might be the narrative intention behind this choice?

CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES

- Larry Fried, POV Magazine wrote: *"My Sextortion Diary flies at a blissful hour and change, a runtime that is paced with an expertly balanced push-and-pull of suspenseful intrigue and meditative slice-of-life. Every progression in Franquesa's relationship with and investigation of her hacker grabs your throat and doesn't let up. The hacker even becomes its own bizarrely fascinating character. Part of this is in the way Franquesa portrays them: with a robotic, two-toned voiceover edited to close-ups on each word of each email, injecting the film with a crafty but troubling energy. The other part is the threatening content of their emails; the digital antagonist appears to put thought and care into their correspondence like a cheeky Bond villain. This tension is palpable and compelling, but is never lost when transitioning to slower long takes of just Franquesa simply staring at her screen, contemplating next steps. The director captures her life through a voyeuristic lens, often using lo-fi webcam videos and selfie-mode cellphone reconstructions to evoke the perspective her hacker may have."* Would you agree with him? What does it tell us about the link between cinema and voyeurism?
- How does the exclusive use of screen-capture: text messages, video calls, emails, create intimacy and tension, compared to traditional documentary styles?
- What techniques are used to depict the emotional evolution of the protagonist, and how are these reflected visually and through sound?
- The film often shows multiple windows or clips simultaneously. How does this collage style influence your perception of digital overload and emotional escalation?
- What effect do keyboard clicks, platform notification tones, and the hacker's altered voiceover have on building suspense and emotional resonance?
- Scenes shot in webcam or selfie mode evoke voyeurism. How does this choice shape your understanding of surveillance, vulnerability, and agency?



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CINEMATIC TECHNIQUES *continued*

- With a runtime of around 64 minutes and unfolding in present tense, what role does pacing play in maintaining narrative urgency? How does this urgency affect empathy?
- How do frantic multi-window montages and quieter, static moments balance each other, and what emotional beats do they each highlight?
- The hacker's voice is robotic and fragmented, with close-ups on their emails. How does this technique humanize or dehumanize the antagonist and elevate dramatic tension?
- How do the evolving shot compositions, from chaotic interfaces to long reflective takes, mirror Franquesa's transformation from fear to control?
- In combining phone logs, chats, browser history, and personal footage, how does the film's diary aesthetic enhance viewer trust and frame this as both personal confession and broader social critique?

THEMES

- What do you think is the central meaning of *My Sextortion Diary*?
- The director of *My Sextortion Diary* shares a deeply personal and traumatic experience through the film. How do you think the act of making a film can serve as a form of personal therapy or healing? In what ways might turning private pain into a public story help a filmmaker, and potentially help others?
- How does the film explore the theme of our digital dependence to computers, cellphones, and social media?
- How does the film explore the theme of shame, and how is that shame shaped by gender, culture, and digital norms?
- In what ways does the protagonist internalize or resist the shame imposed by the sextortion?
- What role does power play in the film, both in the coercion of the hacker and in the protagonist's attempts to reclaim control?
- How is digital power portrayed as uneven, and how does this shift over the course of the documentary?
- How does the film address victim-blaming and society's reaction to female sexuality online?
- In what ways is the protagonist judged for her own behavior, and how does the film confront or subvert these judgments?
- How does *My Sextortion Diary* examine the boundaries between public and private life in the digital era?
- To what extent is the documentary a resilience story, and how does the trauma of sextortion intersect with identity formation?
- How does the protagonist evolve, and what new sense of self emerges by the end?
- How does the film explore solidarity and isolation in digital trauma?
- What support networks are shown, and what does the film say about speaking out or remaining silent?
- What does the film suggest about justice in online crimes like sextortion?
- What dual role does digital media play in the protagonist's victimization and her process of recovery?
- In what ways does documenting the experience become an act of resistance?
- How does *My Sextortion Diary* engage with broader feminist themes?
- How does it fit into ongoing conversations about consent, online harassment, and the right to one's own image and body?

