LEAN ANGLE
EPISODES 1 & 2 (REFORMATTED)
PILOT & OFF WEEK

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11.1.26

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BLACK.

The BUZZ of tiny engines.

EXT. MALLORCA - MINI-MOTO CIRCUIT - DAY - CIRCA 2010

SUPER 8 FOOTAGE. Warm, grainy, slightly unsteady.

Faded colors. A childhood memory.

A swarm of CHILDREN on 50cc motorcycles tears past. BUZZZZZZZZZZ. At the edge of the track, LITTLE XAVI VEGA, five, stands beside a tiny motorcycle. Full leathers. Boots. Gloves. Helmet. He watches the other kids fly past. Doesn't move.

Through the visor -- scared eyes. A tear rolls down his cheek. Another pack BUZZES past. Xavi takes a small step back from the bike.

LAIA VEGA, late 20s, Xavi's mother, approaches and kneels in front of him, eye level. She doesn't tell him not to be afraid. Doesn't tell him he has to ride. She places both hands against his helmet. Forehead to forehead. Their eyes close.

They speak softly in CATALAN. SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH:

LAIA
Mare de Déu de Lluc. (Mother of God of Lluc.)

LITTLE XAVI
Donau-nos força i salut. (Give us strength and health.) Força per ses mans. (Strength for the hands.)

LITTLE XAVI
Salut per tornar. (Health to return.)

LAIA
Ulls oberts. (Eyes open.)

LITTLE XAVI
Cor tranquil. (Heart calm.)

They open their eyes.

LAIA
I ara? (And now?)

Xavi looks toward the track. The little bikes SCREAM past. He's still scared. Then -- a tiny smile.

LITTLE XAVI
A córrer. (Let's race.)

Laia grins. Together, they DRUM furiously on the little seat.

LAIA / XAVI
OLÉ!

Xavi laughs. Fear gone -- or enough of it. He swings his little leg over the bike. Laia steadies him. Xavi looks at her. She nods.

He FIRES the engine. BUZZZZZZZZZZ.

Xavi eases forward — WOBBLES. A flash of fear. Laia's hand catches the back of the seat, steadies him. Xavi looks back at her. Laia smiles. A gentle PUSH. Her hand lets go. Xavi finds his balance.

RIGHT HANDER -- Xavi rounds onto the circuit, now one of them, easing into the pack from the entry lane. He STANDS on the pegs. Bounces. Looks to the left, over his shoulder, clocks traffic. Turns to look back toward Laia.

LAIA -- still where he left her. Watching. Xavi holds the look for a beat. Then -- VISOR DOWN. He drops onto the seat. THROTTLE. BUZZZZZZZZZZ. Into the pack. Gone.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. DUCATI DEALERSHIP - CARMEL, CA - MORNING

9 A.M. Coastal fog. A battered pickup rumbles into the empty lot. ERV, 50s, Japanese, calm, tired, drives. XAVI (Cha-Vee) VEGA, 21, helmet bag, race leathers half-zipped, looks at the dark dealership. They Speak in Catalan.

XAVI
Tell me this is a joke.

ERV
Wish I could.

XAVI
Qualifying's in two hours.

Erv kills the engine.

ERV
Roger's one of our best customers.

XAVI
That's comforting.

ERV
Pays the bills.

INT. DUCATI DEALERSHIP - SERVICE BAY - MOMENTS LATER

A pristine DUCATI PANIGALE. Too clean. Too expensive. ROGER, 50s, Carmel money, stands beside it.

ROGER
Front end's unstable. No corner speed. Brakes are vague. Tires moving around all over the place.

Xavi squeezes the brake lever. Again. Looks at Erv.

XAVI
(in Catalan)
Brakes are fine.

Roger looks up.

ROGER
I know enough Spanish to know that's not Spanish.

ERV
No. It's not.

Xavi crouches beside the bike. The MICHELINS. He runs his thumb across the rear tire, stops at the untouched rubber near the edge.

XAVI
(in Catalan)
This thing's never been at a lean angle of more than fourteen degrees.

ROGER
What's he saying?

Xavi squeezes the tire.

XAVI
(in Catalan)
Check the pressure.

Erv checks it.

ERV
Low.

Erv grabs an air pump, corrects the tire pressure.

ROGER
I'm telling you, the bike's shit. I was riding Laguna yesterday --

Xavi looks at the tire.

XAVI
(in Catalan)
No, you didn't.

A beat. Erv smiles.

Roger catches the tone. Takes out his phone. Opens a GPS ride-tracking app.

ROGER
Carmel to Laguna. Twenty-three minutes.

He shows Erv the screen.

ROGER
Let's see him beat that.

ERV
It could use an upgrade.

Roger turns. Erv opens a parts drawer, removes TWO BOLTS and places them side by side.

ERV
Ducati factory.

He taps the other.

ERV
Ducati Corse. Handmade titanium. Same supplier that made them for the Superbike team last season.

Roger picks it up.

ERV
Fourteen of those, titanium bar ends -- I've got a set stamped with a factory rider's initials.

ROGER
How much weight?

ERV
Almost two-point-two pounds.

Erv turns the terminal toward him.

ERV
Eighteen thousand, three hundred forty.

Roger looks at the terminal. Takes out a credit card. But, then looks at Xavi.

ROGER
Tell you what. Double or nothing.

Erv looks up.

ROGER
Carmel to Laguna. I beat him, I pay nothing. He beats me, I pay double.

ERV
Roger—

ROGER
What's the matter? Don't like the odds?

Xavi looks at Erv. Then the Panigale.

Xavi attaches a tiny CAMERA to the Panigale. Then another, facing the rider.

ROGER
What's he doing?

ERV
Time to ride.

XAVI
(in Catalan)
Maybe he's right. Back end slides. Brakes need work.

Xavi grins.

XAVI
(in Catalan)
One way to find out.

ROGER
So?

Beat.

XAVI
Deal. Nothing or double.

Roger puts his credit card back in his wallet.

Xavi looks around the service bay. In the corner, an old DUCATI 748. Yellow. Well-used.

He walks over. Pulls off the cover.

ROGER
You're taking that relic?

Xavi attaches a camera to the 748. Another facing him. He pulls on his helmet. Gloves.

XAVI
(in Catalan)
See you there.

Erv exhales.

ROGER
Is he good?

Erv looks at him.

ERV
Good?

A beat.

ERV
That's Xavi Vega.

Roger looks at Xavi.

ROGER
You?

A beat.

ROGER
Vega? Lio Vega's kid?

Xavi looks at him.

ROGER
Your father was fast.

A beat.

ROGER
Let's see if it runs in the family.

Xavi swings a leg over the 748. Erv looks at Roger.

ERV
See you there.

ROGER
Where?

ERV
Laguna.

Roger pulls on his helmet. Swings onto the Panigale. Two Ducatis FIRE.

The Panigale ROARS.

The 748 HOWLS.

ZOOM.

EXT. CARMEL BACK ROADS - MORNING

DUAL POV. Intervals. Fragments.

ROGER VISION. The Panigale's digital display. His eyes behind the visor. The road opening ahead.

XAVI VISION. Analog instruments. Front wheel. Xavi's eyes. The yellow 748 knifing through the coastal hills.

Roger accelerates. The Panigale pulls ahead.

A fast left.

Xavi closes the gap.

HARD ON THE BRAKES -- the 748's rear moves. Xavi lets it. Slides IN. Throttle. Slides OUT.

ROGER VISION. The yellow Ducati appears in his mirror.

Roger accelerates harder.

XAVI VISION. A fast right. Trees explode past. Another braking zone. The rear steps sideways. Xavi is loose. Almost casual.

The 748 sweeps past.

ROGER VISION. Yellow fairing. Gone.

Roger pushes harder. The Panigale has the power. On the straight, he closes the gap.

Another corner. Xavi disappears again. Roger leans harder. Tries to follow the line. He can't.

XAVI VISION. The road opens. Hard wheelie out of a corner. Xavi settles the front wheel. Effortless.

ROGER VISION. The 748 pulls away.

Smaller.

Smaller.

Gone.

The cameras see everything.

EXT. LAGUNA SECA RACEWAY - PADDOCK - MORNING

Transporters. Teams. Mechanics. Race bikes. The yellow Ducati 748 sits outside the garage. Xavi sits on the bike. Helmet off. Drinking coffee.

Waiting. Erv is in the bed of the pickup truck, coffee in hand.

Roger finally rolls into the paddock on the Panigale. Roger brakes. Stops. Kills the engine. Helmet off. He looks at Xavi. Then at the old 748.

A long beat.

Roger gets off the Panigale. Walks over to Xavi.

ROGER
That was something.

Xavi takes another sip of coffee. Roger looks at the 748 again.

ROGER
Hell of a rider, your father.

A beat.

ROGER
You too.

Roger looks at Erv.

ROGER
Put it on my card.

ERV
Thirty-six thousand, six hundred eighty?

ROGER
A bet's a bet.

Xavi looks at Roger. For the first time, Xavi addresses Roger directly in English.

XAVI
Bike's fine.

Xavi gets off the 748. Tosses Erv the keys. Erv catches them. Xavi starts toward the garage.

XAVI
Let's go. Work to do.

Erv looks at Roger.

ERV
We'll take care of her. Leave her here.

Roger nods. Still looking at the 748.

ROGER
How much, for this 748?

ERV
For this one? That story? Twenty Grand.

ROGER
Put it on my tab.

Erv starts after Xavi.

ERV
(to Roger)
Qualifying starts in an hour. Stick around.

Roger looks out at the paddock. Erv catches up with Xavi. They walk toward the garage.

ERV
I'll send him the video. Just in case he missed something.

Xavi hides a laugh.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAGUNA SECA RACEWAY - TRACK - DAY

Qualifying. Xavi roars toward the infamous Corkscrew — a three-story drop. He downshifts, brakes, throws the bike in. It slides — too much — rattling violently.

INT. DUCATI PADDOCK

Erv has his headphones on and looks at a data readout — telemetry data from the bike.

Xavi brings in his Ducati, parks it and steps off the bike, agitated, takes off his helmet. ALYSSA, woman in her early 40s, Australian, the team manager, stands off to the side, arms folded and keeps an eye on the situation.

XAVI
We went out too soon, I told you, bike wasn't ready.

ERV
The bike's trying to throw you, you saved it, next time...

XAVI
A lot of slide...

ERV
You're muscling it...

XAVI
I'm riding it, committing — big difference.

ERV
That wobble out of turn three...you got on the gas too soon, too much...

XAVI
I need the drive to set-up for turn four, it's fine.

ERV
You have to manage the tires in the race. The data doesn't lie.

He points to the screen.

ERV
Too aggressive.

Xavi stands, closes his eyes.

XAVI
Erv, out there, I feel it before it goes. I don’t fight the bike. I stay with it.

Alyssa steps in.

ALYSSA
Despite all that we’re still second on the grid — front row. We have a race to run in a few minutes. The bike’s on edge. Make one change, then no more talking — we have a race to win.

XAVI
I want it tighter in the corners...

ERV
Tighter?!

ALYSSA
Erv. If it fights him, that’s on him. Xavi, bring it home in one piece.

Erv bites his lip.

ERV
Tighter it will be.

Erv moves off. Alyssa moves off, Xavi sits in his chair and takes a big swig of water and watches Erv work on the bike.

INT. DUCATI PADDOCK - LAGUNA SECA - LATER

The chaos has passed. Mechanics work quietly.

Alyssa sits alone behind the hospitality unit. Plastic cup of red wine. Five minutes. That's all she's got.

She looks at her phone. A TIMER counting down. She takes a sip. Silence.

A vibration. Alyssa ignores it. Another. Another. Finally, she sighs and checks her phone.

GIACOMO: The television in my motorhome stopped working. BUZZ. Never mind. It works. BUZZ. Also where is the credential for the Michelin dinner? BUZZ. And my printer says "paper jam." I am making a copy. Is that different than printing?

Alyssa stares at the screen, takes a drink and types: CALL TECH SUPPORT.

She hits send. Immediately -- BUZZ.

GIACOMO: What is the number for tech support?

Alyssa closes her eyes.

ALYSSA: Never mind. I'll call them.

She hits send. Alyssa looks at the timer. She drains the wine, stands, pulls up Tech Support in her contacts and hits call.

ALYSSA
Well. Guess break's over.

And walks back toward the paddock.

EXT. CANNERY ROW - MONTEREY - SATURDAY NIGHT

Tourists. Neon. Ocean air. The Superbike weekend party is on.

Xavi and Erv move through the crowd. Xavi's got a bounce in his step now. Big smile. Aviator sunglasses despite the hour. Ducati team jacket half zipped. Less athlete. More rock star arriving backstage.

People notice him immediately. Phones come out. Whispers travel. A few COLLEGE KIDS spot him.

COLLEGE KIDS CHANT: VE-GA! VE-GA! VE-GA!

Xavi points at them. Laughing. Feeds it naturally.

ERV
You ready?

XAVI
For what?

ERV
Being someone.

They reach TURN 12 BAR & GRILL. Banners. Posters. A folding table set up near the entrance. A small line has already formed — autographs and photos.

INT. TURN 12 BAR & GRILL - NIGHT

Loud. Casual. Packed with race fans.

Xavi enters and the room immediately reacts. A few people clap. Others whistle. Xavi clocks the energy and smirks. He hops up onto a chair beside the autograph table.

XAVI
Alright, alright —

The room settles.

XAVI
Only question everybody should be asking about tomorrow's race...

A beat.

XAVI
Who's coming in second place?

The crowd ERUPTS. Huge reaction. Cheers. Phones recording. Beer glasses raised. Xavi grins, soaking it in.

ERV watches from the back. Small shake of the head. Not angry. Concerned. Xavi drops into the autograph chair like he owns the place now. Fans immediately swarm the table.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANNERY ROW - LATER

The event's over. The crowd noise fades behind them now. Ocean underneath it.

Xavi and Erv walk side by side through the neon glow. Xavi still riding the energy.

XAVI
Did you see those people?

ERV
I saw them.

XAVI
They want somebody.

ERV
Careful.

XAVI
About what?

ERV
Believing your own mythology too early.

Xavi laughs that off.

XAVI
I belong at the next level, Erv.

ERV
Maybe.

XAVI
Not maybe.

A beat.

XAVI
These guys — they're good.

He gestures vaguely back toward the track.

XAVI
But they're not at my level.

Erv studies him carefully now. Not judging. Listening.

XAVI
I just need a chance to prove it.

ERV
MotoGP is not Superbike.

XAVI
Good.

ERV
You think that now.

Xavi smirks.

XAVI
You worried?

Erv considers that honestly.

ERV
I'm attentive.

That makes Xavi grin.

XAVI
That’s a yes.

They keep walking. Ocean air. Neon reflections. Young confidence moving faster than wisdom.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. LAGUNA SECA RACEWAY - GRID - DAY

Sunday. Xavi stands beside the bike. Helmet on. Erv steps in, places both hands on Xavi's helmet. Forehead to forehead. They close their eyes. Their pre-race ritual, before every race.

They speak softly in CATALAN. SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH:

ERV
Mare de Déu de Lluc. (Mother of God of Lluc.)

XAVI
Donau-nos força i salut. (Give us strength and health)

ERV
Força per ses mans. (Strength for the hands.)

XAVI
Salut per tornar. (Health to return.)

ERV
Ulls oberts. (Eyes open.)

XAVI
Cor tranquil. (Heart calm.)

They open their eyes.

ERV
I ara? (And now?)

XAVI
A córrer. (Let's race.)

Together, they DRUM their hands across the seat -- BUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDABUDDA!

XAVI / ERV
OLÉ!

Xavi swings onto the bike. The engine FIRES.

EXT. LAGUNA SECA RACEWAY - DAY

The sound arrives before the image. A WALL of engines rolls across the hills, then disappears. Then comes back. Then disappears again. The race is already happening.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - SAME

Fans on their feet, bodies leaning forward like they're willing something into existence.

TRACK COMMENTARY (V.O.)
And here comes Vega again — look at the speed out of turn six — folks he is right there.

EXT. DUCATI GARAGE - SAME

No one watches screens. Erv stands at the open garage door, headset on, eyes closed, listening to the Doppler shift of engines as they pass. Alyssa stands behind him, arms crossed, not breathing.

A bike screams past — close. Another — closer.

ERV
(quiet)
He's second.

ALYSSA
How do you know?

ERV
I hear it.

EXT. TRACK - FRAGMENTS

A rear tire chirps under braking — A knee hovers, never touches — A bike shakes violently, then steadies.

IN-HELMET AUDIO drops us inside XAVI's world.

XAVI (V.O.)
Okay. Okay. Easy.

His breathing is loud. Too loud.

XAVI (V.O.)
Don’t fight it. Don’t fight it.

TRACK COMMENTARY (V.O.)
Final lap — Vega’s still there — still looking — he’s not backing out — he’s not backing out —

EXT. DUCATI GARAGE - SAME

Erv opens his eyes.

ERV (INTO HEADSET, CALM)
Last lap. He’s going to blink. You don’t.

Xavi breathes once — deep.

XAVI (V.O.)
Copy.

EXT. TRACK - FRAGMENTS

A bike slides, catches — Another bike right beside it — Fairings kiss, then separate — The sound is wrong now — too loud, too close.

XAVI (V.O.)
He’s there. He’s there.

TRACK COMMENTARY (V.O.)
They’re touching — they’re touching — this is insane —

XAVI (V.O.)
Not here. Not here.

ERV (V.O. / RADIO)
Now.

A beat. A breath. The engine note changes — higher, then lower — then silence.

EXT. DUCATI GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

The sound that passes the garage is different now. Clean. Alone. Erv nods once.

ERV
He’s through.

Alyssa exhales for the first time.

EXT. GRANDSTANDS - SAME

A roar explodes. Too big. Too sudden.

TRACK COMMENTARY (V.O.)
Vega’s got it — Vega’s got it — the other Ducati’s off — he’s in the gravel —

EXT. TRACK - FRAGMENTS

A lone bike crests the Corkscrew — The sound pulls away — No one chasing it anymore.

TRACK COMMENTARY (V.O.)
Unbelievable — unbelievable from Vega —

EXT. DUCATI GARAGE - SAME

The final engine pass — slower now. Finished. Silence after.

No cheering. Erv lowers his head. Alyssa doesn’t move.

ALYSSA
Jesus.

ERV
Yeah.

EXT. TRACK - DISTANT

The checkered flag waves somewhere we can’t see. We only hear the crowd.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. LAGUNA SECA — SUPERBIKE GARAGE — DUSK

Xavi’s paddock. Golden hour. The vibe is coming down. Noise dissipating. Xavi is in his shorts, t-shirt, flip flops. He rides the adrenaline but is quiet. The win lingers rather than explodes.

Off to the side, Erv breaks down his tech gear but side-eyed keeps looking at Xavi. Alyssa's iPhone rings, she stares at the phone number a beat. Then, she steps away out of the garage, out of earshot but we do hear one word.

ALYSSA
Pronto?

Alyssa takes the call, walks away from the garage — she listens. She asks only one question, then nods once. Her posture changes, more focused, tense. She turns slightly and looks at Xavi.

She hangs up, takes a breath, and then strolls back into the garage slowly. She and Erv exchange a look. Then she and Xavi stare at one another.

ALYSSA
MotoGP. Austin.

Xavi lights up instantly.

XAVI
About goddam time.

A beat. Alyssa stares at him.

ALYSSA
I think you mean thank you.

That lands. Not harsh. Professional. Xavi recalibrates slightly.

XAVI
Right.

A beat.

XAVI
Thank you.

Xavi lights up — controlled.

ALYSSA
Mick Stoner is out.

Alyssa is managerial, composed. Erv is stunned, but gives nothing away.

ALYSSA
One weekend. Wildcard ride. No promises. Your shot.

Erv nods once. Xavi stands up.

XAVI
What about our shifts, at the dealership?

Alyssa pauses.

ALYSSA
I'll take care of it.

Xavi sits.

ERV
We'll head out tomorrow. Walk the track. Get data.

Alyssa clocks the phrasing — a beat — but lets it go. She moves off.

ERV
We impress at Austin, no more selling parts at the dealership.

Xavi nods, steps to the edge of the garage. The track is empty now. Quiet. He takes it in.

Xavi sits on a folding chair, helmet at his feet. Still vibrating from the win. Erv checks his phone. Frowns.

ERV
We're gonna be late.

Xavi looks up.

XAVI
For?

ERV
Flat track. Silver Dollar, you forgot? 8pm start time.

XAVI
Do we have to?

ERV
Obligation. We already committed.

Xavi exhales. A half laugh.

XAVI
We just got MotoGP.

ERV
I know.

A beat. This is the moment.

ERV
Alyssa can’t know.

That lands differently. Heavier. Xavi nods once.

XAVI
So we go. Then we run for the airport.

Erv studies him — uneasy, but resolved.

ERV
Get your stuff, gonna be late.

Xavi stands. Grabs his helmet.

CUT TO:

EXT. SILVER DOLLAR SPEEDWAY - NIGHT

The sound is wrong here. Not clean. Not sharp. Loose. Violent. Alive.

A dirt oval carved into the ground. No curbing. No runoff. Just dust and consequence.

Engines cough in a ragged line. Locals. Beat leathers. Bent bars. This isn’t racing. It’s survival.

Xavi sits on a flat track bike — steel shoe on his left boot, no fairings, no protection. Erv stands by the fence, stopwatch in hand. Not watching the track. Listening.

A FLAG snaps — backwards.

TRACK COMMENTARY (V.O.)
Last lap — last lap — if you’ve got something, you better use it now —

The pack explodes. We don’t see it. We hear it. A wall of sound tears past the fence. Dust hits Erv’s face. He doesn’t flinch.

IN-HELMET AUDIO drops us inside Xavi.

XAVI (V.O.)
Okay. Let it go.

The rear steps out — the sound goes sideways. Ugly. Alive.

XAVI (V.O.)
Don’t catch it. Ride it.

Another engine surges beside him. Too close. Angry.

TRACK COMMENTARY (V.O.)
They’re leaning on each other — this is flat track — nobody gives you room —

Metal scrapes. Elbows hit.

The crowd roars like it’s personal. Xavi breathes once — sharp.

XAVI (V.O.)
Now.

The sound changes. Lower. Deeper. Committed.

Erv closes his eyes just for a beat — listening for the pitch shift.

ERV
(quiet, to himself)
There.

TRACK COMMENTARY (V.O.)
Final corner — they’re side by side — this is going to be dust —

The engines rip past one last time. So close the sound blurs into one.

Silence follows. Heavy.

Then — the crowd explodes.

TRACK COMMENTARY (V.O.)
He got it — Vega got it — by nothing — by nothing —

Xavi rolls off toward the fence. Kills the engine. Dust settles around him. He’s breathing hard. Smiling without meaning to.

Then he hears the crowd. VE-GA! VE-GA! VE-GA!

A local band near the beer tent finishes a song. The singer spots Xavi.

SINGER
Get over here!

The crowd erupts again.

Xavi laughs. Still sweaty. Still wired from the race. He hops up onto the small plywood stage. Beer cans raised everywhere.

The singer shoves the microphone into his hand.

SINGER
Say something!

The crowd roars. Xavi looks around — feeds off it instantly.

XAVI
Austin, Texas.

Huge reaction.

XAVI
MotoGP.

The place gets louder.

XAVI
Let’s go scare the shit outta the Europeans.

Absolute chaos now. Beer spraying. People pounding tables. Dust hanging in the lights.

ERV watches from the edge of the crowd. Not smiling now. Watching the mythology form in real time.

Erv looks down at the stopwatch. Writes the time. Doesn’t look up yet.

ERV
Yeah.

Xavi looks at him through the dust. They share a look — not celebration. Recognition. The kind you earn.

ERV
You didn’t have to do that.

XAVI
Yes, I did.

Erv finally shows him the stopwatch.

ERV
Fastest race yet.

Xavi nods. Not proud. Not surprised.

XAVI
It’s easier when the bike moves.

Erv studies him — really studies him now.

ERV
MotoGP doesn’t forgive that.

XAVI
It doesn’t have to.

The sun drops behind the trees. The track goes quiet. Erv closes the stopwatch. Takes out his keys.

ERV
We gotta go. Miss this flight, we miss Austin.

Xavi looks back at the dirt one last time. Like he’s leaving something behind. Then follows Erv into the dark.

EXT. HIGHWAY 99 - SUNSET

Cherry orchards. Miles of them.

The last light catches the rows. Xavi looks out the window. Quiet. For once.

ERV
You know what happens to these?

XAVI
What?

ERV
When they stop producing.

A beat.

XAVI
Cut them down?

ERV
Yeah.

Silence. The orchards continue forever.

Erv slams the gas.

EXT. CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS - AUSTIN - DAY

A different scale. Grandstands stretch wide. Hospitality units rise like glass fortresses.

Teams move with purpose — choreographed, credentialed, efficient. TV MONITORS glow everywhere.

EXT. CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS - AUSTIN - DAY

MotoGP paddock. Different world.

Factory hospitality units tower over the garage lanes like corporate embassies. Spanish. Italian. French. Japanese. English. All overlapping.

Clean polos. Factory logos. Political smiles.

Xavi and Erv move through it carrying their helmets. Xavi clocks the energy. Feeds off it automatically. Still carrying Silver Dollar Speedway in his bloodstream.

A small crowd gathers near one of the hospitality entrances. Media. Crew members. Sponsors.

Xavi smirks. He steps right into it.

XAVI
Alright — same question as last weekend...

A few heads turn.

XAVI
Who’s coming in second place?

Silence. Then scattered laughter. Not admiration. Dismissal.

A FRENCH CREW MEMBER looks him over.

FRENCH CREW MEMBER
Who are you?

BRITISH ENGINEER
New mechanic?

A few chuckles.

SPANISH MECHANIC
Maybe bus boy.

More laughter now. Xavi’s smile fades slightly. Not wounded. Processing. An older ITALIAN CREW CHIEF studies him.

ITALIAN CREW CHIEF
Vega...

Recognition.

ITALIAN CREW CHIEF
Your father was fast. Crazy. But fast.

Another voice from deeper in the group:

SPANISH MECHANIC
Almost killed Alonso’s father.

That lands harder.

SPANISH MECHANIC
Then killed himself.

Silence. Not cruel. Matter-of-fact. Paddock memory. Xavi doesn’t react. Can’t.

The same mythology that made him a hero back home suddenly hangs around his neck differently here. Same coin. Different side.

Erv watches all of it. Doesn’t step in. Erv appears beside Xavi quietly.

ERV
Funny, isn’t it?

Xavi glances at him.

ERV
Back home that story makes you mythology.

A beat.

ERV
Here it makes people nervous.

That lands.

Xavi looks around the paddock again. Different now. No longer entering as the hero. Entering as the outsider.

ERV
MotoGP remembers everything.

A beat.

ERV
And nobody cares what happened at Laguna Seca.

A nearby Ducati rider fires up an engine. The sound cracks through the paddock. Conversation over.

Welcome to MotoGP.

EXT. COTA - DUCATI PADDOCK - DAY

ON SCREEN — SPENCER, MotoGP commentator and former racer, calm, authoritative, stands alongside GIACOMO (50s-60s), Ducati boss. Silver-haired, handsome, charismatic. Unmistakably Italian.

Giacomo is all smiles. Animated, expressive, speaking English with a rich Italian accent, his hands rarely still. Entirely at home in front of a camera.

He greets Spencer like an old friend, clasping his hand, patting him warmly on the shoulder.

GIACOMO
Spencer! My friend! Always a pleasure!

SPENCER
Giacomo, another strong weekend for Ducati here at COTA. First, what's the latest on Mick Stoner?

GIACOMO
Mick is recovering very well. Very well!

He gestures enthusiastically with both hands.

GIACOMO
But you know Mick. The doctors say six weeks, Mick says three. We tell him three, he says tomorrow!

Giacomo laughs, Spencer smiles with him.

SPENCER
And now you've got Xavi Vega. Son of Lio Vega. Twenty-one years old. Never raced at COTA, never ridden a MotoGP bike, and he's coming from Pirelli tires to Michelins. Quite a learning curve.

GIACOMO
Ah, yes! But listen, we have every confidence in the boy. He's been surprisingly fast right out of the gate.

He opens his hands, palms up.

GIACOMO
Of course, MotoGP is another world. The tires, the electronics, the brakes, the power. Everything is different!

SPENCER
So what are your expectations this weekend?

GIACOMO
Laps! Data! We learn the motorcycle, we learn the rider.

A broad smile.

GIACOMO
And hopefully he brings back all the expensive pieces!

They laugh.

SPENCER
One last question. Could Xavi replace Stoner for the remainder of the season?

Giacomo grins. A little shrug. Both hands open.

GIACOMO
Spencer, my friend...

He pats Spencer's shoulder again.

GIACOMO
Anything is possible!

That enormous Italian smile. Spencer laughs.

SPENCER
Thank you, Giacomo. Good luck.

GIACOMO
Grazie Mille.

CUT TO:

Xavi, helmet under his arm, walking the paddock. Eyes forward. Taking it in. He passes a monitor carrying Spencer's broadcast.

SPENCER (V.O.)
There you have it. Xavi Vega, son of Lio Vega — a rider remembered for speed, commitment… and crashes.

Xavi slows. Just slightly. He doesn't look at the screen.

SPENCER (V.O.)
Talent was never the question. Control was. And for Xavi, the stakes couldn't be higher. Wildcard riders rarely turn a single weekend into a full-time ride.

Erv hears it. Stops. Alyssa clocks Xavi's reaction — or lack of one. Erv reaches the monitor. MUTES it.

The paddock noise fills the space instead — engines warming, radios crackling, data techs moving fast. Xavi exhales. Not rattled.

XAVI
Where do they want me?

Alyssa gestures ahead — toward the Ducati garage.

ALYSSA
This way.

Xavi nods and moves on. Behind him, the monitor keeps rolling — muted now. History still talking.

EXT. COTA PADDOCK - DAY

KEVIN SCHWANTZ — 62. MotoGP legend. Funny, instinctive, fearless. An old-school rider with a dry sense of humor and a feel-first approach to racing — leans against a golf cart, coffee in hand, watching Xavi take in the circuit.

No credential flex. No entourage. Just Kevin.

KEVIN
You know the dangerous thing about this place?

Xavi looks over.

XAVI
Turn One?

KEVIN
Everybody thinks it’s Turn One.

A beat.

KEVIN
Track like this, people come in wanting to prove they belong.

Kevin points out toward the circuit.

KEVIN
That hill into one? Everybody tries to win the race there.

XAVI
And?

KEVIN
And the race is tomorrow.

A beat.

KEVIN
Be boring the first three laps. You'll still be here when the interesting stuff starts.

Xavi nods.

KEVIN
And if you scare yourself?

XAVI
Back it down?

Kevin smiles.

KEVIN
No. Just know you found the edge.

INT. DUCATI MOTOGP PADDOCK - DAY

Order. The Ducati garage runs like a system already in motion — engineers at terminals, mechanics moving in lanes, data flowing quietly.

Xavi steps inside. He feels it immediately. This isn’t a garage. It’s an organism.

Eyes flick toward him — brief, assessing — then back to work. No greetings. No welcome.

Alyssa leads. Her credential opens space. Xavi follows. His doesn't. Erv takes in everything.

Across the garage — DIEGO ALONSO.

DIEGO ALONSO (21), Catalan. Reigning MotoGP World Champion. Current points leader. Composed beyond his years. Economical. Precise. His image is everywhere — packed stadiums, Barcelona streets, the Ducati factory in Bologna.

Son of SETE ALONSO, whose career ended in a catastrophic crash in the same era as Xavi's father.

Diego notices Xavi. A beat. He crosses over — not rushing, not avoiding.

DIEGO
Xavi Vega.

A handshake. Professional. Brief.

XAVI
Diego Alonso.

Diego's eyes drift — past Xavi — to Alyssa. Then beyond her.

Giacomo watches from the back of the garage. Unmistakably in charge. He doesn't step forward or raise his voice. The garage adjusts around him. Authority without display.

Diego clocks the look. Returns his attention to Xavi. They speak in Catalan.

DIEGO
Benvingut.

XAVI
Gràcies.

Diego steps away — already pulling on gloves. Already somewhere else. Xavi watches him go. Takes it in.

Giacomo doesn't approach. Doesn't nod. Just observes — collecting data that isn't on a screen.

A mechanic gestures toward Xavi's assigned area. Efficient. Impersonal. Erv leans in.

ERV
Don't touch anything yet.

Xavi nods. He stands there — inside the machine now — aware he's being measured, not embraced.

EXT. CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS - MOTOGP QUALIFYING - DAY

The sound hits first.

A MotoGP engine tears down the straight — then disappears — then returns, closer, angrier. The circuit breathes in violent pulses.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

No one watches screens.

Faces glow with moving data we never see. Numbers reflect in eyes, not monitors.

Erv stands still, head tilted slightly — listening for change.

A bike screams past. Too early on the gas. Too late on the brake. Erv winces. Just a fraction.

IN-HELMET AUDIO drops us inside Xavi.

XAVI VEGA (V.O.)
Too much. Too fast.

The bike bucks under him. Unforgiving.

XAVI (V.O.)
Okay. Again.

The sound shifts as he passes again — different, but still wrong.

Erv hears it immediately.

ERV
(quiet, to himself)
He’s fighting it.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - LATER

The bike rolls in. The engine cuts. Sudden silence.

Xavi removes his helmet. Breathing steady. Eyes clear.

XAVI
Give me time.

Erv doesn’t answer. He’s still listening to the echo of the lap in his head.

Xavi swings back onto the bike. No drama. No frustration.

XAVI (V.O.)
Just calibration.

The engine fires again. The sound leaves the garage — unfinished.

Erv watches the space where it was. Not the track. Not the screens. Listening for what comes back.

INT. MOTOGP PADDOCK - CONTINUOUS

Xavi walks through the Ducati garage. Diego Alonso sits nearby, already suited up. Composed. Efficient.

Their eyes meet. Just a glance.

Diego clocks the attention around Xavi — cameras lingering, team whispers, credentials flashing. It's not the speed that unsettles him. It's the noise.

Giacomo watches from a distance. Doesn't intervene. Doesn't react.

Inside the garage, a Ducati engineer murmurs to Erv. Low. Technical. Erv listens. Doesn't argue. Xavi doesn't notice any of it.

EXT. CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS - FINAL QUALIFYING - DAY

Track evolution. Rubber down. Times dropping.

Xavi finds a rhythm. Pushes deeper. Purple sector. Then another. The garage reacts — controlled, alert.

On the monitor: Xavi goes provisional P1. Brief. Electric. Unsettling.

Diego responds immediately. Clean. Efficient. Others follow. Xavi's time slides down the order. Fourth.

In the garage, the reaction is muted. Erv studies the lap trace. The variance.

Giacomo notes the inconsistency. Alyssa approaches.

ALYSSA
He's fast.

GIACOMO
But is he controllable?

Giacomo walks off.

CUT TO:

Xavi pulls in. Removes his helmet.

XAVI
Fourth.

Not defensive. Certain. He reads it as proof. They read it as volatility.

A beat.

ERV
Dinner.

Xavi nods. Already thinking forward.

INT. AUSTIN, TX DINER — NIGHT

Late. An old-school diner. Fluorescent lights. A few other customers.

Xavi and Erv sit across from one another in a booth, playing backgammon. Their food arrives. Steam rises. Neither touches it.

Xavi rolls the dice. Moves two checkers. Takes a gulp of water. A beat.

ERV
Starts matter here.

Xavi nods, casual.

XAVI
I know.

Erv rolls. Makes his move.

ERV
You don’t fix starts at this level.

XAVI
If you have the pace...

ERV
(interrupts)
...you spend it.

Xavi stops, looks at Erv.

ERV
Every correction costs something.

A waitress fills Xavi's water glass and sets a Michelob Ultra beside Erv. He thanks her and takes a sip.

Xavi rolls. Makes his move.

XAVI
I don't need everything to be perfect, I can make up for...

ERV
I'm not saying perfect. I'm saying repeatable.

Erv rolls. Moves a checker.

XAVI
You're talking like I'm chasing it.

ERV
I'm talking like it's chasing you.

That lands like a gut punch. Xavi doesn't yield.

He rolls the dice. Studies the board. Makes his move.

XAVI
Tomorrow, I'll be clean.

Erv rolls. Makes his move.

ERV
Tomorrow, be fast.

XAVI
I've got margin.

Xavi digs into his food. Erv watches him.

ERV
That's how I know we're close to the edge. Listen, we crash this weekend, we're not in MotoGP — ever — we're back at the Ducati dealership fixing bikes.

Xavi rolls. Moves a checker.

XAVI
Depends. You crash mid-pack, nobody calls. You crash from the front, pushing — they remember.

Erv takes a bite of his food. He picks up the dice. Rolls.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS - MORNING

Early. Low sun. Cool air. The track still waking up.

Engines fire one at a time. Then together. A broken rhythm.

Xavi rolls out for warm-up. Measured. Controlled.

The Ducati sounds calmer now — but not forgiving. Short runs. Then silence. Then another run.

IN-HELMET AUDIO drops us inside.

XAVI
(V.O.)
Easy. Easy.

A bike passes the garage — cleaner than before. Different.

Erv tilts his head. Listening.

Across the garage lane, Diego stands with Sete. They watch from distance. No words.

Sete doesn't look at screens. He studies body language. The way Xavi corrects. The way he commits.

SETE
(quiet)
That's not panic.

Diego clocks his father's focus. Files it away.

The bike rolls back in. Engine cuts. Silence.

Xavi removes his helmet.

XAVI
Good?

Erv doesn't answer. He looks at the bike. Then at the space where the sound disappeared.

ERV
(quiet)
Not yet.

EXT. CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS - DAY

The sprint race arrives without ceremony. Twelve laps. No forgiveness. Engines settle into a single tone. Tight. Waiting. Xavi sits on the grid, fourth. Second row. Still.

IN-HELMET AUDIO

XAVI
(V.O.)
Don’t rush.

The lights go out — but we don’t see them. We hear the world break open.

The first engine pass is chaos. Wrong rhythm. Too loud. Too close.

SPENCER (V.O.)
Bad start for Vega — he’s swallowed — he’s way back —

Xavi breathes once.

XAVI
(V.O.)
It’s fine.

The sound changes. Becomes deliberate. Controlled.

Another bike passes — then doesn’t. Xavi’s engine note replaces it.

SPENCER (V.O.)
He’s finding space — there’s nothing there — he’s making it —

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - SAME

Erv closes his eyes, listening.

ERV
(quiet)
He’s moving forward.

EXT. TRACK - FRAGMENTS

A bike lifting under braking — A rear stepping out, caught — A gap appearing, then gone.

SPENCER (V.O.)
That’s another one — Vega’s through again —

Lap after lap, the sound shifts forward. Closer to the leaders. But never reaches them.

SPENCER (V.O.)
At the front, Diego Alonso is in another race entirely —

The final engine pass. Finished. Silence follows.

SPENCER (V.O.)
Alonso takes it — Vega comes home sixth —

EXT. COOL—DOWN LAP - SAME

Xavi sits up. Breathing heavy. Not angry. Confused.

IN-HELMET AUDIO

XAVI (V.O.)
Okay. What was that?

The bike hums beneath him. No answers.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - LATER

Sprint aftermath. Quiet efficiency. No celebration. No disappointment.

Erv scrolls through data. Lap consistency. Tire management.

ERV
That was correct.

Xavi looks at him. Waits for more. Nothing.

XAVI
Sixth.

Not pride. Not defense. Statement of fact. Alyssa notices the exchange. Says nothing. Xavi pulls off his gloves. Sits.

Around him, the machine resets — fuel drained, tires swapped, systems checked. The weekend keeps moving.

Xavi feels it. He did what they asked. And it didn't matter.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. PADDOCK - LATE AFTERNOON

Xavi walks alone. Helmet bag over his shoulder. Not angry. Just annoyed.

Kevin Schwantz sits on the tailgate of an old pickup. Beer in hand.

JORGE JORENZO — 38. MotoGP icon. Precise, calm, analytical. A master of discipline, patience, and emotional control — stands beside Kevin.

Also beer in hand.

KEVIN
You listened.

Xavi stops.

XAVI
Finished sixth.

KEVIN
Exactly.

JORGE
You finished.

XAVI
Barely moved forward.

KEVIN
Wild card ride. Sprint race. Learn something.

JORGE
You do not win championships on Saturday.

KEVIN
No. You win 'em Sunday.

A beat.

KEVIN
Take what you learned today and sprint in the race tomorrow.

JORGE
Not immediately.

KEVIN
No. First three laps — boring.

JORGE
Then attack.

KEVIN
That's right.

XAVI
Take it slow, huh?

Kevin grins.

KEVIN
Slow is not the same thing as stupid.

JORGE
For Kevin, sometimes it is.

KEVIN
Fair.

A beat.

KEVIN
Now you know what this thing is.

Xavi looks between them.

XAVI
You guys?

KEVIN
We got old.

JORGE
And bored.

KEVIN
Mostly bored.

Xavi shakes his head and walks off. Kevin watches him go.

KEVIN
He'll be alright.

JORGE
Maybe.

Kevin reaches into the cooler beside the truck. Opens two more beers. Hands one to Jorge.

EXT. CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS - DAY

Race day. The sound is bigger today. Heavier. A hundred thousand people breathing at once. Grandstands hum like power lines.

Xavi sits on the grid, fourth. Helmet on. Still.

From a distance, GIACOMO and ALYSSA watch Xavi and Erv.

Erv steps in. Hands on Xavi's helmet. Forehead to forehead. Eyes closed.

Too far away to hear the words. A few quiet exchanges in CATALAN.

Then their eyes open.

Together, Erv and Xavi DRUM furiously on the seat.

XAVI / ERV
OLÉ!

Xavi swings onto the bike. Giacomo watches.

GIACOMO
What's with the drum roll?

ALYSSA
Legend has it, Xavi's mum used to do that when he was learning to ride.

A beat.

ALYSSA
Got him to get on the bike.

Giacomo takes that in. The engines FIRE. Race time, waiting for the lights to go out.

IN-HELMET AUDIO

XAVI (V.O.)
Wait.

Just wait. Engines rise together. A single animal.

The lights go out — but we don't see them. We hear the world tear open. The first pass is clean. Different from the sprint. Confident.

The sound that comes back past the garage is better. Stronger. Calmer.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Erv stands at the open door, eyes closed. Listening.

ERV
(quiet)
That's right.

SPENCER (V.O.)
A good start doesn't feel like speed. It feels like silence. Everything unnecessary falls away.

EXT. TRACK - FRAGMENTS

A brake squeal, late and controlled — A downshift snapping perfectly — A rear tire breathing, not breaking.

Xavi's engine note moves forward. Closer to clean air.

SPENCER (V.O.)
He's not chasing Alonso. He's waiting for him. Xavi Vega persecuting all comers.

IN-HELMET AUDIO

XAVI (V.O.)
Not yet.

The sound ahead changes. Diego's rhythm. Measured. Untouchable.

Then — not.

The engine note shifts again. Xavi's is in front now.

SPENCER (V.O.)
That's the moment. Not the pass. The decision before it.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - SAME

Erv opens his eyes.

ERV
He’s leading.

EXT. PADDOCK EDGE - SAME

IN-HELMET AUDIO

XAVI (V.O.)
Okay...hold it.

The bike responds. On edge. Alive. Too alive.

SPENCER (V.O.)
The danger of the lead is believing it belongs to you. But you don’t forget a wildcard who leads a GP.

The sound sharpens. Higher. Angrier.

A sudden break in rhythm. A scream that doesn’t resolve.

IN-HELMET AUDIO

XAVI (V.O.)
No!

Silence.

Then chaos returns all at once.

EXT. DUCATI GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

The next engine pass is wrong. Incomplete.

Erv’s face changes. He doesn’t move.

ERV
No.

SPENCER (V.O.)
When a bike lets go, it doesn’t ask permission. Vega out. But he was leading his first GP — we won’t forget that.

EXT. TRACK - DISTANT / FRAGMENTS

Yellow flags snap in the wind — A crowd gasps as one — Carbon clatters across asphalt — An engine spins, alone.

EXT. PADDOCK EDGE - SAME

SPENCER (V.O.)
Diego goes by. And then he’s gone.

EXT. DUCATI GARAGE - LATER

The sound finishes without Xavi in it. Silence stays.

Erv lowers his head.

SPENCER (V.O.)
Some lessons arrive fast. Some arrive hard. This one arrives both.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL TENT - LATER

Xavi sits on the gurney. Helmet off. Breathing heavy. Scuffed. Shaken. Alive.

Erv stands nearby. Silent.

Xavi stares at his hands. The cost is clear now.

Certainty has a price.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. DUCATI PADDOCK - LATER

Post-race. The garage has reset. New tires. Fresh data. No emotion.

Xavi sits alone. Wrapped. Quiet.

Alyssa stands at the edge of the garage, on her cell phone. Listening, nodding.

She hangs up, approaches. Measured.

ALYSSA
They saw what you’re capable of.

XAVI
Crashing.

ALYSSA
From the lead.

Pause. She grins.

ALYSSA
You don’t lead a GP and disappear.

Pause.

ALYSSA
Mick Stoner is out indefinitely.

A beat. It lands for Xavi and Erv.

ALYSSA
Ducati wants to keep you.

Xavi looks up.

ALYSSA
Full-time. Factory seat. We’ll be based in Barcelona.

Pause.

Erv registers it. The implication lands before the words finish. Erv hugs Xavi.

ERV
Your mom got you here.

Xavi doesn’t answer. He looks out at the track.

ERV
That was always the plan.

EXT. PADDOCK - CONTINUOUS

Xavi steps outside. Diego Alonso waits nearby. Helmet off. Unhurried. They speak in Catalan.

DIEGO
You were fast.

No compliment in it. No warning either. Xavi nods.

XAVI
I felt good.

Diego studies him. Just long enough.

DIEGO
That’s the dangerous part.

A beat.

DIEGO
Control isn’t feeling ready.

Then he’s gone. Xavi watches him disappear into the paddock.

INT. DUCATI HOSPITALITY - NIGHT

Mostly empty now.

Caterers clearing glasses. Chairs half-stacked. TV monitors still running silent race coverage no one is watching.

The expensive version of exhaustion.

Xavi steps inside. Bandaged. Quiet. Looking for water. Silence. Maybe both. Then he sees her.

PENELOPE, 21.

Near the espresso machine.

Dark jeans. Boots. Smudged eyeliner.

A Ducati team jacket over her shoulders that definitely does not belong to her. Press badge clipped to her belt that definitely should not get her in here. A cigarette tucked behind one ear.

She is making herself a double espresso.

A half-finished bourbon sits beside the machine. Definitely not hers. Until now.

She pours the espresso into the bourbon. Stirs it with the little wooden stick. Only then does she look up.

They speak in Catalan. English subtitles.

PENELOPE
You know they’ve already given you a nickname.

Xavi glances at her. Then at the jacket.

XAVI
Should I be worried?

PENELOPE
(smiles)
El Foraster.

He laughs despite himself.

XAVI
You're not allowed in here.

Penelope takes a sip.

PENELOPE
Heard that more than once.

A beat.

PENELOPE
And yet.

She lifts the cup slightly.

PENELOPE
Still here.

Xavi gestures at the jacket.

XAVI
That yours?

Penelope looks down at it.

PENELOPE
Not originally.

XAVI
You steal it?

PENELOPE
Borrowed.

A beat.

PENELOPE
From someone less interesting.

She takes the cigarette from behind her ear. Lights it. Long drag. Exhales slowly.

XAVI
Who are you?

PENELOPE
Penelope. Journalist. Sort of.

XAVI
Sort of?

PENELOPE
Depends who’s asking.

She extends her hand. They shake.

PENELOPE
Catalan News. Some newspaper work. DJ at night. Occasional criminal trespassing.

XAVI
That explains the badge.

PENELOPE
This?

She looks down at it.

PENELOPE
This gets me into the media center.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Everything else is personality.

She spots a phone docked into the hospitality sound system. Walks over. Hits play.

Low, downbeat house music fills the empty room. Not loud. Just enough.

XAVI
You just put music on?

PENELOPE
Too quiet in here.

A beat.

PENELOPE
I work better with music.

They keep walking through the mostly empty hospitality space.

XAVI
Nice to meet you Penelope.

PENELOPE
Xavi Vega. Son of Lio Vega.

XAVI
No comment.

PENELOPE
You arrive mid-season. You get attention. And you don't look nervous enough.

XAVI
I'm fine.

PENELOPE
That's what unsettles them.

A beat.

XAVI
Them?

PENELOPE
Italians. Spaniards. The French. Aussies, Brits. Riders who've been here long enough to know where they belong.

She looks over at him.

PENELOPE
And here comes El Foraster.

She smiles. Sharp. Amused.

XAVI
I'm gonna win Barcelona.

Penelope smirks.

XAVI
Sprint and the race.

A beat.

XAVI
Then Mugello. Then Assen.

He's rolling now.

XAVI
Then I'm just gonna keep steamrolling these fools until I take the title.

A grin.

XAVI
Wildcard rookie. Missed the first two rounds.

Penelope studies him. Not impressed. Not dismissive. Just honest.

PENELOPE
That confidence may have worked for you Americans in the eighties.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Maybe even the nineties.

Xavi’s smile fades slightly.

PENELOPE
But this paddock eats people alive.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Especially the loud ones.

That lands.

PENELOPE
Anthony Gobert had more talent than half this grid combined.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Didn’t save him.

Silence.

PENELOPE
And right now?

She gestures toward the paddock.

PENELOPE
Europe doesn’t want another loud American telling them he owns the sport.

A beat.

PENELOPE
So maybe listen for a while before you announce yourself.

That one lands hardest.

Xavi doesn't answer immediately. Thinking now. For once.

In the distance — a MotoGP engine fires up.

Penelope watches him carefully now. Watching the first crack in the armor form.

PENELOPE
That confidence? That's either going to make you famous...

She steps closer.

PENELOPE
...or very lonely.

A beat.

XAVI
Should I be worried?

PENELOPE
Probably.

She turns. Starts walking away.

PENELOPE
Your Catalan is good.

XAVI
Mom was Mallorcan.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Was?

A beat.

XAVI
Yeah.

Penelope clocks that. Doesn't push.

PENELOPE
Welcome to Europe, Xavi Vega.

She flicks the cigarette into the dark.

Gone.

Xavi watches her go. For the first time, he looks like someone far from home.

ANGLE ON:

Kevin Schwantz and Jorge Lorenzo. Leaning against the pit wall in the distance. Watching him.

KEVIN
El Foraster.

JORGE
Good nickname.

KEVIN
Sounds like a guy who shows up in a black cape and burns down your village.

JORGE
That is because you are American.

KEVIN
No, seriously. Sounds like a dark lord in Catalan.

JORGE
Maybe.

A beat.

JORGE
Or maybe just someone they are afraid of.

Kevin watches Xavi standing there alone.

KEVIN
That too.

A beat.

KEVIN
Kid’s gonna have fun.

JORGE
No.

Kevin looks over.

JORGE
But he will have a story.

Kevin smiles.

KEVIN
Fair.

They walk off into the paddock.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BARCELONA-EL PRAT AIRPORT - DAY

Early afternoon. Bright. Functional. Passengers spill out in waves.

Penelope moves fast through them — small bag, no checked luggage. Phone already at her ear. She doesn't slow for anything.

INTERCUT - PHONE CALL

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - BARCELONA - DAY

Old. Stained walls. Papers stacked everywhere. A window cracked open. Smoke drifts out.

PABLO (60s) sits behind a desk buried in printouts, cigarette in hand.

The paper's masthead behind him: DIARIO VELOCIDAD.

An old-school Spanish motorsport paper.

Back to Penelope - walking.

They speak in Catalan. English subtitles.

PENELOPE
I've just landed.

PABLO (V.O.)
You said that ten minutes ago.

She cuts through a family blocking the path. Doesn't break stride.

PENELOPE
I was taxiing.

PABLO (V.O.)
You were thinking.

A beat. She smiles. He’s not wrong.

PENELOPE
I’ve got something.

PABLO (V.O.)
You always do.

She pushes through the sliding doors. Sunlight hits. Already lighting a cigarette.

A SECURITY GUARD nearby clocks it immediately.

SECURITY
No smoking.

Penelope keeps walking.

PENELOPE
These don’t count.

She winks, takes a drag. Doesn’t even look back. Blows smoke. A beat. The security guard watches her go. Knows her. Smiles.

SECURITY
Penelope—

She turns just enough.

PENELOPE
I’m putting it out.

She isn’t.

PABLO (V.O.)
What’s real this time?

PENELOPE
Xavi Vega.

PABLO (V.O.)
The American?

PENELOPE
The problem.

PABLO (V.O.)
They’re all problems until they start winning.

She hangs up. No goodbye.

EXT. AIRPORT TAXI RANK - CONTINUOUS

She slides into the back of a cab.

INT. TAXI - MOVING - DAY

Barcelona unfolds outside. Not postcard — functional, lived-in. She watches. Thinking. The DRIVER sees her in the mirror.

DRIVER
Moog tonight?

Penelope looks up.

PENELOPE
You coming?

DRIVER
Too old.

PENELOPE
That's what old people say.

Her phone buzzes — notifications: article views, reposts, comments. Her COTA piece on Xavi Vega.

She doesn't open them. Instead — Notes app.

She types: "Xavi Vega — speed vs control"

Stops. Deletes it. Looks out the window. The cab slows. A familiar block. Neon sign: MOOG nightclub. Closed now. Quiet.

But — a massive POSTER on the exterior wall: PENELOPE — LIVE DJ SET — TONIGHT. Stylized. Not her journalism identity. Different version of her.

She notices it. Doesn't react at first. Then — a small smile. Private. Gone quickly.

INT. DIARIO VELOCIDAD - DAY

Old newsroom. Phones. Paper. Noise. Not digital-first. Not modern. Penelope moves through — people know her but don't stop her. She doesn't stop for them either.

A COPY EDITOR lifts an espresso. She takes it from him in stride.

COPY EDITOR
You still owe me fifty euros.

PENELOPE
No, you lost fifty euros.

She keeps moving. Knocks back the espresso. Tosses the cup into the trash.

INT. PABLO'S OFFICE - DAY

Door half open. She doesn't knock. Pablo doesn't look up.

PABLO
If it's not finished, it's not late.

She closes the door behind her.

PENELOPE
It's finished.

Now he looks up. A beat. He studies her — not the pitch, her.

PENELOPE
Xavi Vega.

Nothing from Pablo. She steps closer. Places her notebook down.

PENELOPE
Wildcard. Austin. Now Ducati.

Still nothing.

PENELOPE
Father was—

PABLO
I know who his father was.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Did you know his mother was Mallorcan?

PABLO
I did not.

Beat.

PABLO
Was?

PENELOPE
Cancer.

He leans back. Smoke hangs.

PABLO
Dead parents of riders make good stories.

She doesn't react to that.

PENELOPE
He's replacing Mick Stoner.

That lands a little more.

PABLO
Temporary.

PENELOPE
Everything in MotoGP is.

A beat. That one registers. Pablo studies her again. Then:

PABLO
I saw the poster.

She doesn't answer.

PABLO
MOOG.

He gestures vaguely.

PABLO
Tonight.

PENELOPE
Yes.

PABLO
That pay better than this?

PENELOPE
Yes.

PABLO
Good.

A beat.

PABLO
I hope so.

Silence. Then—

PABLO
Rumor is you did a remix of La Perla.

She shrugs. Controlled.

PENELOPE
Rumors travel faster than bikes.

PABLO
Rosalía — that's a story.

PENELOPE
I'll stick to MotoGP.

PABLO
Of course you will.

He stubs out the cigarette in an ashtray. Penelope immediately picks it up. One last drag. Pablo watches her. Not surprised.

PENELOPE
You should quit.

PABLO
You first.

She smirks. Leans against the desk. Now engaged.

PABLO
I'll make you a deal.

She doesn't move.

PABLO
You want Vega.

PENELOPE
Yes.

PABLO
I want her.

A beat.

PABLO
Photos. Video. Something no one else has.

She exhales smoke slowly.

PENELOPE
You’re blackmailing me.

PABLO
I’m editing you.

A longer beat. She considers. This is the system. Same as Ducati. Different room.

PABLO
She’s going to be there?

PENELOPE
Maybe.

PABLO
Maybe’s not a plan.

She doesn’t answer.

PABLO
Neither is your rider.

A beat. She nods. Decision made.

PENELOPE
If I get you something—

PABLO
If.

PENELOPE
The Xavi Vega feature runs.

PABLO
Maybe.

She turns. Starts for the door.

PENELOPE
It’s already in your inbox.

That stops him.

PENELOPE
Back page. Tomorrow.

She opens the door.

PABLO
She shows, you get me some content you can have front and back page.

She doesn’t turn back.

PENELOPE
Then I'll see you in the morning.

She exits.

HOLD ON PABLO

He looks at his screen. Clicks. Opens her Xavi draft. Starts reading. No expression.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. MOOG - NIGHT

Low ceiling. Tight room. Heat. Sound is felt first, not heard cleanly. No wide establishing shot.

Fragments: hands on mixer, LEDs flickering, bodies too close, sweat, not glamour, vodka tonics, cigarette smoke drifting in from the alley by the back door.

DJ BOOTH - PENELOPE

She's not "performing." She's working.

Oversized black tee. Old leather jacket hanging off the back of the chair. Half-drunk whiskey soda beside the mixer. Cigarette burning in the ashtray.

Head slightly down. Listening more than reacting. Adjusting. Controlling tempo.

The track shifts. Not announced. Recognizable to the crowd before it drops: La Perla — but altered. Her version. Crowd reaction is delayed, then sharp. Not chaos. Recognition. Phones come up - but not all at once. Penelop doesn't smile big. Just registers: This is working.

She takes a drag from the cigarette. One hand still on the mixer. Never misses the transition.

A SHIFT IN THE ROOM

Subtle. People turn — not toward the booth. Toward the entrance. A pocket opens. Movement against the flow. ROSALÍA enters. No announcement. No spotlight.

People clock it in waves. The energy changes — tighter, more focused. Penelope sees her. That's the moment. Not excitement. Calculation.

She doesn’t stop the set. Doesn’t acknowledge. Lets the track carry.

LATER - EDGE OF BOOTH

Rosalía near the booth now, talking to someone. Penelope finishes a transition — clean. Steps down. A promoter leans in, kisses Penelope on the cheek.

PROMOTER
You’re late.

PENELOPE
I’m working.

No big intro. Just:

PENELOPE
(low)
Thanks for coming.

ROSALÍA
Heard the remix.

A beat. That’s the approval. Penelope lifts her drink. Rosalía steals it. Takes a sip. Hands it back.

ROSALÍA
Too much whiskey.

PENELOPE
Not enough.

THE CONTENT MOMENT

No posed shoot. No selfie montage. Instead: one photo, one short video, one moment of them together, with the crowd behind. Quick. Efficient. Intentional. She’s not fangirling. She’s capturing an asset.

BACK TO BOOTH

She goes right back up. Set continues. Nothing stops for this. She slips the cigarette back between her lips, makes another adjustment. The room follows her.

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI / STREET - LATER

Night thinning out. Penelope in the back seat. Leather jacket back on. Window cracked. Cigarette out the side. Phone out.

She selects the photo, the clip. Attaches.

Email:

To: Pablo

Subject line: La Perla.

Send.

Then a text: “Check your inbox.”

She takes a drag. Looks out at the city sliding by. Still awake.

INT. PABLO’S OFFICE - NIGHT

Dark. Just desk lamp.

He opens the email. Sees: Rosalía and Penelope. Crowd behind them.

A beat. Then he scrolls. Finds the Xavi draft. Already there.

He drags it. Front page. Then duplicates. Back page. No reaction. Just decision.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BARCELONETA BEACH - DAWN

Muted light. The sea flat and gray-blue. XAVI and ERV lie on the sand, towels half-draped, clothes nearby. They’ve slept here.

Xavi stirs first. Sits up. Blinks at the horizon.

XAVI
What time is it?

Erv checks his watch. Freezes.

ERV
Not good.

Xavi’s already on his feet. He smells himself.

XAVI
We swim.

ERV
We’re late.

He sniffs Erv.

XAVI
Trust me - a swim. One minute.

Before Erv can stop him, Xavi runs straight into the water. Cold. Sharp. He dives under.

Erv watches, irritated — then sighs. Kicks off his shoes. Follows. They swim out a short distance. Strong. Silent. Controlled. Xavi floats on his back, staring at the sky.

ERV
You didn’t sleep.

XAVI
I slept.

ERV
You rested.

Xavi turns over, grins.

XAVI
Last one to shore buys breakfast.

Xavi laughs. They race to shore.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DUCATI CORSE - BARCELONA - MORNING

Glass. Steel. Silence.

The Ducati space is immaculate. Engineers already at work. Screens alive with data. Espresso cups aligned.

The doors open.

Xavi and Erv enter — damp hair, slightly rushed, each holding a cardboard coffee cup. Too casual for this room.

Erv actually slips and almost falls. Xavi saves him.

They are late. Pause as the others all look at them.

An ENGINEER looks up. Checks the wall clock. Doesn't say anything.

ERV offers a small, polite nod. Xavi lifts the coffee like an apology.

XAVI
Brought coffee. I'm told it's really good.

No one moves.

XAVI
Nespresso.

They step forward. Shoes squeak faintly on the floor. Too loud.

ERV
Traffic?

No one asked. Giacomo stands at the far end of the room, mid-conversation. He finishes his sentence calmly. Then turns.

A warm smile. Professional. Measured.

GIACOMO
Good morning.

XAVI
Morning.

GIACOMO
Did you sleep well?

Xavi answers without thinking.

XAVI
Yeah. It was awesome. Jet lag.

Erv glances at him.

GIACOMO
Good. Because here, mornings matter.

Giacomo gestures toward a table. Not a reprimand. Not forgiveness. Just procedure.

GIACOMO
Let's begin.

Xavi sets the coffee down. A small ring of water forms on the table.

An engineer notices. Wipes it away immediately. No one looks at Xavi. Erv leans in slightly.

ERV
(low)
Next time we're early.

XAVI
(low)
Next time we don't swim.

Erv almost smiles. Almost. Across the room, data scrolls. Unimpressed. Unforgiving.

Xavi straightens. The room doesn't adjust. The room settles.

Monitors flicker with telemetry. Numbers scroll. No one explains them.

Giacomo takes his place at the head of the table. Not dominant. Central.

GIACOMO
We like confidence here.

Pause.

GIACOMO
But we don't confuse it with freedom.

No one reacts. Everyone hears it.

GIACOMO
MotoGP works because the system works.

He gestures lightly toward the screens.

GIACOMO
Talent enters. Structure keeps it alive.

Xavi nods. A fraction too fast. Giacomo notices. Doesn't comment.

GIACOMO
You arrive mid-season. That means opportunity.

Another beat.

GIACOMO
It also means attention.

He lets that sit.

An ENGINEER steps forward, hands Xavi a tablet. Data already queued.

ENGINEER
These are your baselines.

Xavi looks at the numbers. Focused now.

GIACOMO
We don’t rush mornings.

XAVI
Understood.

Giacomo studies him. Just long enough to register something.

GIACOMO
Good. Because here, impressions last.

A final beat. Giacomo stands.

GIACOMO
Welcome to Ducati.

He offers his hand. Xavi shakes it. Firm. Correct. Giacomo releases first.

GIACOMO
Let’s work. Catalan GP next week.

Giacomo exits. The room exhales — barely. Erv leans in.

ERV
(quiet)
That was the warning.

XAVI
(quiet)
That was the welcome.

They turn back to the screens. The system hums on.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DUCATI CORSE - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Glass walls. Quiet. They walk the hallways.

Giacomo walks a few steps, then slows. Alyssa joins him without being called.

A beat.

ALYSSA
He’s late once.

GIACOMO
He’s late once in front of them.

She nods.

ALYSSA
He won’t do it again.

GIACOMO
No. He will. Just not like this.

Alyssa studies him.

ALYSSA
You like him.

GIACOMO
I like him fast.

A beat.

ALYSSA
We tighten access?

GIACOMO
Not yet. Let him feel the room first.

He looks back through the glass of the simulator rooms. Xavi now focused on a tablet watching video.

GIACOMO
If he learns structure, he stays.

If he fights it, he burns.

ALYSSA
And us with him.

Giacomo gives the faintest smile.

GIACOMO
Then we’ll know quickly.

He straightens his jacket.

GIACOMO
Three days before the press sees him again.

ALYSSA
Understood.

He moves off down the corridor. She stays a moment longer, watching Xavi through the glass. Then turns. Back to work.

INT. DUCATI SIMULATOR ROOM - DAY

Dark. Controlled. Screens everywhere.

Xavi sits in the simulator rig — a real bike, fixed, alive in place. Still. Locked in.

A subtle shift of weight — knee pressure, hips adjusting. The rig responds. Slight. Mechanical.

Data scrolls. Telemetry alive. ENGINEERS watch numbers. Nods. Approval. One ENGINEER stands with Erv. Precise.

ENGINEER
His entry speed is strong. Stable.

Erv doesn’t respond. He’s not looking at the screens. He’s listening.

A faint mechanical whine under the rig. He tilts his head slightly.

ERV
Stop.

No one moves.

ERV
Stop.

Xavi lifts his head. The rig powers down. Silence — almost. That same faint tone hangs in the room.

ENGINEER
There’s no issue.

Erv walks past him. Straight to the rig. Listens again. Closer now.

ERV
It’s off.

ENGINEER
The system is calibrated.

ERV
Not for this room.

A beat. Mild irritation now.

ENGINEER #2
We ran diagnostics this morning.

Erv doesn't engage. He's already moving. He spots a plug-in power meter on a nearby cart. He turns off the simulator.

ENGINEER
What are you doing?

Erv unplugs the simulator. Plugs the meter into the outlet. Watches. Numbers flicker.

ENGINEER
Erv?

No answer. Erv unplugs the simulator.

ENGINEER #2
Hey—

Xavi, from the rig — calm:

XAVI
Let him.

A beat.

XAVI
Trust me.

Erv checks the reading. Doesn't announce it. Just a small exhale. He moves to another outlet. Tests again.

Stillness in the room now. Even Giacomo is watching. Erv plugs the simulator into the second outlet. Steps back.

ERV
Again.

Xavi settles back onto the bike. The rig powers up. Same movement — but cleaner now. Quieter. Tighter response.

The engineers watch their screens. Something shifts. Subtle — but there.

ENGINEER
(quiet)
Run that again.

They do. More nods now. Less certain. Erv stands off to the side. Not looking at them. Just listening.

A beat.

ERV
Some of us hear numbers.

Another beat.

ERV
Some of us everything else.

No one responds. But the room has changed. Giacomo steps forward. Measured.

GIACOMO
We adjust.

A beat. He looks at Erv. Noted.

GIACOMO
We continue.

The simulator hums back to life. Different now.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DUCATI CORRIDOR - DAY

Xavi and Erv walk. Xavi loosens his shoulders. Still wired.

ERV
You stopped performing.

XAVI
Was I performing?

ERV
Yes.

A beat.

ERV
Most riders never stop.

Beat.

ERV
They'll come around. Or they won't.

XAVI
They will.

They pass a DUCATI STAFF MEMBER. Friendly. Casual.

STAFF
Off week. Mallorca’s nice this time of year.

Xavi answers instantly.

XAVI
Can’t.

Too fast. The staff member shrugs, keeps walking. Erv notes the speed of the answer. Doesn’t comment. They keep moving.

INT. MEDIA ROOM - DAY

Bright. Neutral. Flags. Logos.

A long table. Multiple riders seated beneath sponsor backdrops. Xavi at one end. Diego a few seats down.

They don’t look at each other. They don’t need to. Cameras hum. The room settles.

Spencer stands with mic in hand. Relaxed. Familiar. The kind of man who knows where every pressure point is.

SPENCER
Xavi — first full week with Ducati.

Settling into Barcelona okay?

XAVI
(smiles, in Catalan)
Yes.

Same bike, different place. A few light chuckles. Some nods.

SPENCER
Quite a lot for a twenty-one-year-old to take it in. New team. New city. New country. New pressure.

A beat. Xavi glances at him.

XAVI
Did you know by twenty-one Mozart had composed around three hundred works?

The room shifts slightly.

Spencer blinks.

SPENCER
…I did not.

XAVI
Around thirty symphonies. Eighteen concertos. Ten operas.

Beat.

XAVI
Two dozen string quartets.

Another beat.

XAVI
A lot of chamber music.

A pause.

Down the table — Giacomo snorts out a laugh before catching himself. Even Diego's expression almost shifts.

SPENCER
No need to keep going.

XAVI
(smiles faintly)
Okay.

The point lands. Spencer resets.

SPENCER
The data looks strong. Finding your feet quicker than expected?

XAVI
(in Catalan)
Data's useful. Racing's personal.

A ripple. Spencer smiles — just slightly.

SPENCER
Off week, though. Plenty of options around here.

A beat.

SPENCER
Beach not far. Islands very close.

The room clocks it. Xavi does too.

XAVI
(in English — calm, firm)
Spencer, I'm good.

A beat. Not hostile. Just closed.

Spencer lets it hang. Then pivots.

SPENCER
Diego — you've had a front-row seat. Thoughts on the wildcard?

For the first time — Diego looks directly at Xavi.

DIEGO
He's fast.
(beat)
We'll see.

Nothing more. Spencer nods. Back to Xavi.

SPENCER
Catalan GP next. Home crowd's loud.

A half-smile.

SPENCER
They tend to notice when one of their own doesn't visit.

Closer. Sharper.

XAVI
(in Catalan)
As he said—
(beat)
We'll see.

Clean. Final. Alyssa enters quietly from the side. Watches. Registers the exchange.

Diego allows himself the faintest smile. Gone instantly. Cameras click. The room moves on.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. MEDIA CENTER - NIGHT

The press conference breaks. Cameras power down. PR teams move fast. Riders disperse.

Penelope stands just outside the room. No badge. No seat.

Leaning against the wall with a cigarette she definitely should not be smoking in here.

Senior reporters pass by, laughing, trading notes. One older reporter nods toward her.

OLDER REPORTER
You get anything?

PENELOPE
Not yet.

He moves on. Alyssa exits with a Ducati communications rep. Focused. Professional.

Alyssa's eyes flick to Penelope. Just long enough. Penelope meets the look. Doesn't smile. Doesn't look away.

The Ducati rep leans in, whispers something. Alyssa nods and moves on. Penelope exhales smoke. Back to work.

Xavi exits the room alone. Relaxed. Almost relieved.

PENELOPE
Xavi.

Xavi stops. Turns.

XAVI
Penelope.

They speak in Catalan throughout.

PENELOPE
Off the record.

XAVI
Everything in there was on the record.

PENELOPE
Exactly.

That gets a small smile.

PENELOPE
Funny.

XAVI
What?

PENELOPE
I watched your interviews.

A beat.

PENELOPE
You’re quieter in person.

XAVI
America liked the show.

PENELOPE
And here?

Xavi watches the paddock.

XAVI
They already have enough stars.

XAVI
What do you need?

PENELOPE
A quote.
(beat)
Something human.

XAVI
About?

PENELOPE
Whatever they didn’t ask.

Xavi shrugs.

XAVI
Barcelona’s great. The bike’s honest. I sleep when I can.

Penelope writes quickly.

PENELOPE
You’re calm for someone everyone’s watching.

XAVI
That’s the trick.

A beat.

PENELOPE
You’ve got something, Xavi Vega.

He looks at her.

PENELOPE
You know that, right?

XAVI
Something like what?

PENELOPE
The thing they can’t teach.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Speed helps.

Another beat.

PENELOPE
But people like stories more than speed.

XAVI
I’m not a story.

PENELOPE
Not yet.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Back home your father was a hero.

That lands.

PENELOPE
Here he is a warning.

Xavi doesn’t answer.

PENELOPE
That’s interesting.

XAVI
To you.

PENELOPE
To everyone.

A beat.

PENELOPE
You’re fast. You’re American. Mallorcan. Ducati. Deceased father.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Mallorcan mother.

A beat. Xavi moves.

PENELOPE
People understand that.

XAVI
Sounds simple when you say it.

PENELOPE
That’s because it is.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Popular helps.

XAVI
Popular with who?

PENELOPE
Fans. Media. Sponsors. Team owners.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Popular helps you keep your seat.

Xavi studies her. Not offended. Just registering that she sees the game clearly.

PENELOPE
I wasn’t invited inside.

XAVI
Why not?

PENELOPE
Too young. Too local. Not useful yet.

XAVI
Their loss.

Penelope closes her notebook.

PENELOPE
I’ll trade you.

XAVI
For?

PENELOPE
I'll show you the city.
(beat)
Not the brochure version.

XAVI
And the cost?

PENELOPE
You stay off the record.

Xavi considers. Easy.

XAVI
Deal.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Mozart?

XAVI
(smiles faintly)
Too much?

PENELOPE
No. Just not many twenty-one-year-olds walk into Ducati quoting a child prodigy like it's a pressure management strategy.

XAVI
It worked.

PENELOPE
Maybe.

Beat.

They start walking.

Penelope glances down. Xavi's phone screen is still lit in his hand. Music app open.

She catches it. Stops.

Without asking, she snatches the phone cleanly from his hand.

XAVI
Hey—

Too late. She's already scrolling. Brows lifting.

PENELOPE
Wait.
(beat)
Mozart?

Scroll.

PENELOPE
Puccini?

Scroll.

PENELOPE
Front 242?

Beat.

PENELOPE
Cocteau Twins. Okay, now we're getting somewhere.

Another scroll.

PENELOPE
John Coltrane. Miles Davis.

She gives him a look.

PENELOPE
Segovia. Paco De Lucia.

Scrolls.

PENELOPE
Tame Impala. Rufus Du Sol. Brutalismus 3000?

She looks at him.

PENELOPE
What the fuck is this?

Xavi takes the phone back. Calm. Amused.

XAVI
A playlist.

PENELOPE
No.
(beat)
This is psychological warfare.

XAVI
It works.

Penelope studies him. Actually recalibrating now.

PENELOPE
You're either much smarter than people think - or completely insane.

XAVI
Both can work.

A beat.

For the first time — Penelope genuinely laughs. Not performative. Not strategic. Real.

PENELOPE
Okay.
(beat)
Now I'm interested.

EXT. EL BORN - NIGHT

Old city. Narrow streets. Old stone. Uneven ground. The city presses close. Xavi and Penelope stroll side by side. No rush.

Music drifts from somewhere unseen. A guitar. Footsteps. Laughter.

Penelope stops briefly at a tiny corner store. The OWNER already has a pack of cigarettes on the counter.

OWNER
You still owe me six euros.

PENELOPE
Put it on my tab.

OWNER
You don't have a tab.

PENELOPE
Then start one.

She takes the cigarettes. Keeps moving.

XAVI
You know everyone.

PENELOPE
No.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Just the useful ones.

They pass tourists arguing over a map. A local slips past without looking.

XAVI
People think this is the old city.

PENELOPE
It's just the part that refused to

leave.

XAVI
That happen a lot?

PENELOPE
Depends who you are.

They turn onto a tighter street. Cobblestones slow them.

XAVI
You bring everyone here?

PENELOPE
No. Just people who ask questions without realizing it.

XAVI
That sounds like a warning.

PENELOPE
It is.

They walk in silence.

XAVI
Everyone looks like they belong.

PENELOPE
They do.

A beat.

PENELOPE
They stayed.

She stops at an unmarked door. Music leaks through the cracks. A guy on the door sees her. No ID. No wait.

DOORMAN
You disappeared.

PENELOPE
I had a job.

He steps aside immediately.

PENELOPE
Come on.

INT. FLAMENCO CLUB - NIGHT

Tight space. Low ceiling. No stage. Just a circle. A dancer stomps. Hard. Precise. Unforgiving.

The guitar cuts sharp. Cajon beats abound. Palms clap in rhythm.

Penelope lights a cigarette. Watches the room like she knows exactly how it works. Xavi watches, locked in.

Whispers:

XAVI
They don't hold back.

PENELOPE
They hold everything.

A beat.

PENELOPE
They play with passion. The blood.

The dancer stops. Silence. Then applause. Immediate. Earned.

Xavi exhales, realizing he was holding his breath.

PENELOPE
You see it?

XAVI
Yeah.

PENELOPE
Good.

INT. OLD-SCHOOL CATALAN COUNTER BAR - NIGHT

Standing room only. Late. Loud. Lived-in. Plates slide down the counter. Wine poured without asking.

Penelope walks in. The bartender already has a cigarette waiting behind one ear for her.

BARTENDER
You quit yet?

PENELOPE
Constantly.

She takes the cigarette. Lights it.

Xavi watches all of this. Clocking it.

They lean against the bar. Close, but practical.

Two small glasses of vermouth appear. No order. No menu.

XAVI
This city doesn't let you hide.

PENELOPE
It lets you try.

They drink. No rush.

XAVI
You know everyone.

PENELOPE
No.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Just everyone worth knowing.

Xavi smiles.

PENELOPE
That sounded worse than I meant it.

XAVI
No.

A beat.

XAVI
It sounded honest.

A plate lands in front of them. Anchovies. Bread. Tomatoes. Jamon.

The bartender points at Xavi.

BARTENDER
You pay.

PENELOPE
See?

A beat.

PENELOPE
Everyone likes you already.

They eat. The bar hums around them.

XAVI
People always ask why I ride.

PENELOPE
Do you know?

Xavi thinks. Shrugs.

XAVI
I know when I don't.

She notes that. Says nothing.

PENELOPE
You staying long?

XAVI
That's the idea.

PENELOPE
Ideas change.

A beat.

XAVI
Not mine. Not here.

A beat.

XAVI
Yours?

PENELOPE
Sometimes.

She takes a drag. Studies him.

PENELOPE
You know what your problem is?

XAVI
I have one?

PENELOPE
You still think being good at

something protects you.

Xavi looks at her.

PENELOPE
It doesn't.

A beat.

PENELOPE
People love talent.

Another beat.

PENELOPE
Until they don't.

XAVI
That sounds optimistic.

PENELOPE
That sounds like Barcelona.

She signals the bartender. Two small glasses appear. Clear liquor. No explanation. They clink softly.

PENELOPE
(to the bartender)
He's paying.

Xavi laughs.

EXT. EL BORN STREET - NIGHT

The street is alive - but uneven now. Clusters of people. Tourists laughing. Locals not.

A sudden spray of water arcs across frame —

REVEAL:

A protester with a cheap, brightly colored toy water gun. Not aggressive. Almost absurd.

Another spray — from somewhere else. More of them now. Water guns. Protesters.

Not organized. Not random.

Phones come up. Voices rise. Still not chaos. But not normal.

Xavi stops. Watching. Trying to understand the pattern.

Across the street — Giacomo. Immaculate as ever. But displaced.

A drop of water hits his jacket. He looks down at it. More annoyed than anything. Beside him — Alyssa. Already moving. Calculating exits. Reading space. She doesn't react to the water. She reacts to the shift.

Penelope sees them. Instantly. Her hand finds Xavi's wrist. Not urgent. Not soft. Directive. She turns slightly. Changes their angle. Not hiding. Just no longer in line of sight.

Xavi resists for half a beat. Still watching. Another spray. Louder reaction now. A voice cuts through. Not words. Tone. Something turning.

Penelope leans in, low:

PENELOPE
Don't. That’s enough.

Xavi lets go of the moment. They move. Not fast. But gone.

Behind them, the sound swells — then fragments. Water. Voices. Laughter. Something else underneath.

The city recalibrating. They disappear into the next street.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. BARCELONA STREETS - EARLY MORNING

Barcelona is just waking up. Delivery vans. Street sweepers. Cafés lifting shutters.

Penelope rides. Road bike. Clean cadence. She climbs toward Park Güell, then higher toward Pedralbes. The city thins. The gradient holds. Breath steady — then heavier.

She’s at pace now. Working. Shoulders still. Legs burning. She doesn’t slow. A sound — above her. Not behind. Coming down the hill. Fast. Too fast for this road.

She looks up — Xavi drops through the frame. A missile. Head down. Full descent speed.

At the last second he clocks her — tips the bike in and lets it slide a fraction, dirt-track style, rear stepping just enough to arc tighter than the road allows — then hooks it up and shoots past, inches to spare.

Gone. The sound lingers a beat after him.

PENELOPE
(mutters)
Fucking Xavi.

She resets. Keeps climbing. Holds the line.

A beat.

She checks her mirror — Xavi is on the brakes. Hard. The rear lifts. A clean stoppie.

He pivots the front end and drops it, already pointed back uphill — coming at her. She sees him in her rear view.

PENELOPE
(under her breath)
Oh, fuck.

Xavi looks past her. A sound above them. Different. Faster.

Two riders appear at the top of the descent. Penelope sees them descending.

Kevin Schwantz and Jorge Lorenzo. Flying downhill toward them. Much faster than Xavi had been.

Kevin low over the bars, weaving, attacking the road like it owes him money. Jorge smoother. Cleaner. But somehow just as fast.

They blow past Penelope. Even Xavi freezes for a second. No room. No chance they make it.

Kevin and Jorge hold the line. Then — at the last possible second they split around Xavi. Kevin left. Jorge right.

Like fighter jets breaking formation around a target.

KEVIN
(shouting as he flashes by)
Too slow!

JORGE
You brake too much!

Gone. Xavi watches them disappear down the hill.

XAVI
Fucking guys.

Then he pushes off uphill. Closes the gap too quickly on Penelope. Then he's there. Upright. No hands. Pedaling easy. No strain. No show.

He draws level, glances at her — then edges past, still climbing faster than her like it costs him nothing. Pro athlete.

Penelope clocks it. Recalibrates. She crests. They turn into the descent. Narrow streets. Stone walls. Speed builds.

Penelope commits to her line. Xavi matches. Effortless. No wasted movement.

They come out of a turn — Erv stands at the edge of the road. Waiting. Watching.

They roll to him. Speed falls away. Breath returns.

ERV
You always ride like that?

Penelope looks at Xavi. Xavi doesn't answer.

PENELOPE
Only when he thinks no one's watching.

ERV
That tracks.

A beat.

Penelope pushes off again, already moving.

ERV
Now we work.

EXT. BARCELONETA BEACH - LATE MORNING

Sun higher now. Warm. Bright. The city is fully awake.

Xavi and Erv sit at a small beachside table. Plates between them. Coffee sweating in the heat.

Xavi still carries the ride — wired, precise. Erv watches him.

ERV
That wasn't riding. That was qualifying.

Xavi shrugs.

XAVI
City wakes up slow.

ERV
Cars don’t.

Waves roll in behind them. Tourists already crowding the sand. Erv pulls out his iPad. Onboard video — Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya.

ERV
Watch turn five again.

Xavi leans in. Focused. The descent translates.

ERV
Everyone wants to be early there.
That’s where races disappear.

XAVI
Or get made.

Erv doesn’t disagree.

ERV
Only if you leave yourself an exit.

Xavi watches again. Slower. More precise. A waitress drops the check without asking.

ERV
Penelope called earlier.

Xavi looks up.

ERV
She has tickets. Camp Nou.

Xavi nods. Neutral.

ERV
Barça.

Nothing.

ERV
That a problem?

Xavi takes a sip of coffee.

XAVI
Depends on who’s asking.

The beach hums. The city presses in.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL MANDARIN ORIENTAL - PRIVATE LOUNGE - DAY

High above the city. Glass. Calm. Controlled. Barcelona laid out below — beautiful, indifferent.

Alyssa sits at a small table, tablet open. Giacomo stands near the window, espresso in hand. They speak quietly and in Italian. This is not secrecy. It's habit.

ALYSSA
Catalan GP puts him everywhere. But, I pulled Xavi from two sponsor appearances, local media interview. We keep him visible - not accessible.

GIACOMO
That's unavoidable.

ALYSSA
So is interpretation.

Giacomo turns from the window.

GIACOMO
We don't sell surprise. We sell intention.

Alyssa scrolls. Headlines queued but not published.

ALYSSA
Wildcard becomes local story. Local story becomes expectation.

GIACOMO
Expectation is fine.

A beat.

GIACOMO
Confusion isn't.

Alyssa nods. She understands the difference.

ALYSSA
We frame it as opportunity.

GIACOMO
And scrutiny.

ALYSSA
And narrative.

Giacomo allows a small smile.

GIACOMO
Narrative belongs to whoever stays calm.

Alyssa looks out the window now. Camp Nou visible in the distance.

ALYSSA
He doesn’t like being managed.

GIACOMO
No one talented does.

Pause.

GIACOMO
That’s why we don’t manage him.

Alyssa looks back.

ALYSSA
We manage the room.

Giacomo nods. Approval.

GIACOMO
Exactly.

He takes a sip of espresso. Sets the cup down.

GIACOMO
He rides.

Alyssa closes the tablet.

ALYSSA
And we speak.

They stand in silence for a moment. Below them, the city moves on — unaware.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP NOU - MATCH NIGHT

Floodlights blaze.

A river of people in blaugrana moves as one — chanting, laughing, already unified.

Penelope and Xavi are carried with them. They speak in Catalan, disappearing into the crowd.

She hands him an FC Barcelona scarf. Casual. Xavi takes it. Doesn't wrap himself in it yet.

Erv follows a step behind, hands in his jacket pockets, watching everything — not the match, the system. Inside, the scale hits Xavi.

Ninety thousand voices rise together, singing Cant del Barça. No hesitation. No self-consciousness. Belonging without effort.

Then — silence.

Not empty. Anticipatory. The crowd watches shape. Spacing. Movement developing before it happens. Like an orchestra waiting for resolution.

Xavi watches the crowd more than the pitch. A chant rises. Everyone knows it. Everyone joins.

Xavi doesn't.

He feels it — the pull, the weight, the inheritance of it — without owning any of it. A run develops down the wing. The stadium quiets again. Breath held at scale.

Then — GOAL. The stadium convulses. Xavi absorbs it — instinctive. Penelope clocks it.

PENELOPE
You feel that?

Xavi nods. Doesn't answer.

He places the scarf beside him instead of around his neck. The noise rolls on without him. Erv finally speaks — almost to himself.

ERV
That's not noise. That's timing.

Xavi looks at him. Erv watches the crowd again.

ERV
Good crowds know when to stay quiet.

A beat.

ERV
No data. Still works.

Xavi turns back to the pitch. Different now.

The chant swells again. For a moment — Xavi hums along under his breath.

No one hears it.

CUT TO:

INT. MOOG NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

LEDs. Bass. Money.

International anonymity. Xavi fits immediately. Laughing now. Loose. At ease.

Here, no one cares where he's from — only that he's here. Penelope watches him from across the bar.

He's different in this room. Comfortable. Unburdened. No legacy. No expectation. Just motion.

She moves toward him —

A SECURITY GUARD clocks her. Steps aside. A quick fist bump.

At the bar — the BARTENDER sees her. Already pouring. A nod. No transaction.

She moves through the crowd — a quick hug. A hand on her shoulder. Recognition without interruption.

DJ BOOTH
She steps up.

A DJ mid-set glances — recognition — a quick half-hug. No words. No pause. Xavi watches. Clocking it.

BACK TO FLOOR

She rejoins him. Same calm. No acknowledgment of any of it.

PENELOPE
This easier?

Xavi smiles. Shrugs. Doesn't answer. The music swells. They disappear into it.

INT. MOOG - LATER

Same room. Different hour. Penelope watches Xavi now — not the crowd. She's not judging. She's measuring.

PENELOPE
You adapt fast.

Xavi takes that in.

XAVI
I have to.

A beat.

PENELOPE
You don't have to everywhere.

That lands. Xavi looks around — phones out, faces half-lit, nothing anchored. Comfort without history. He steps back.

XAVI
We should go.

Penelope nods. No argument.

EXT. QUIET STREET - NIGHT

They walk. Slower now. The city has thinned.

PENELOPE
Mallorca's close.

Xavi stops.

XAVI
No.

Not sharp. Not defensive. Just final.

Penelope studies him.

PENELOPE
Just the island. Palma.

A beat.

Xavi shakes his head. Slower this time. Still no explanation. Penelope lets it go. She doesn't ask again.

They stand there — the space between them clearer now. Xavi looks down the street.

PENELOPE
Check the paper tomorrow. Diario Velocidad.

He looks at her.

PENELOPE
Back page.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Maybe front, too.

She holds his look — then lets it go.

XAVI
See you.

Penelope nods. He walks off alone. She stays.

EXT. BARCELONA STREET / NEWSSTAND - EARLY MORNING

Delivery trucks. Bundles dropped. Routine. Stacks of papers slapped onto a stand.

Xavi approaches. Still in last night's clothes. He slows. Sees the masthead: DIARIO VELOCIDAD.

He takes one, pays the man.

BACK PAGE

Photo: Xavi. Leathers. Track.

Headline (Catalan): "EL FORASTER DESCENDEIX SOBRE MOTOGP"

He reads. No reaction. He flips the page.

Front Page. Photo: Penelope + Rosalia at Moog. Crowd behind them. Energy contained in the frame.

Headline dominates. Cultural. Larger. Xavi takes it in.

Back page. Front page.

A beat.

He folds the paper. Keeps walking.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. TEMPORARY APARTMENT - NIGHT

Quiet. Modern. Unfinished. Suitcases half-open. Bottled water stacked by the counter. Xavi drops his keys. Doesn’t turn on the lights. His phone buzzes.

CALL FROM: ERV.

Xavi looks at it. Lets it ring. The call stops. No voicemail. Xavi sets the phone down.

He steps out onto the terrace, takes a seat, opens his laptop. CatalanGP video. The same lap Erv showed him earlier.

Turn five. Xavi scrubs back and forth. Rewinds. Plays again. The corner where races disappear.

Xavi leans closer. Studies braking points. Body position. Exit line. Not rushing. Not impatient. Obsessive.

The sound of the bikes fills the room. Xavi watches, again. Doesn’t blink.

Inside, the phone vibrates once more. He doesn’t go back for it. The onboard footage plays.

And plays. And plays. Catalan GP approaching.

Xavi finally closes the laptop. Not satisfied. Not afraid.

Just unfinished. He stands, looks over the city light, grips the railing.

The city waits.

FADE TO BLACK.