LEAN ANGLE
EPISODE 4 - MALLORCA

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EXT. PALMA AIRPORT - DAY

Heat shimmers off the tarmac. Salt air. Light that feels older than time. XAVI and PENELOPE step down from the plane stairs.

Xavi stops without realizing it. Breath deep. Slower. Different. Penelope notices immediately.

PENELOPE
You breathe differently here.

XAVI
(smiles)
I think the island does that.

They walk toward baggage. No rush. No phones.

EXT. OLD TOWN PALMA - DAY

Narrow streets. Stone walls warm from the sun. Laundry lines sway overhead. Shadows slide like water.

Xavi and Penelope roll bags over uneven cobblestones. The wheels complain. The street doesn't care. Xavi keeps looking up — balconies, ironwork, cracked shutters, centuries of use.

PENELOPE
You're walking like you're on a museum tour.

XAVI
I'm trying not to miss anything.

Actually, trying to remember things.

PENELOPE
You've been here before.

XAVI
Yeah.
(beat)
My mom used to make me walk slow here.

PENELOPE
Make you?

XAVI
Like it was a law. Slow walking.

Slow eating.

She said if you rush, the place closes itself. Penelope smiles.

PENELOPE
Did it work?

XAVI
No.

He grins, then —

XAVI
But she won every fight anyway.

A beat. Penelope clocks the weight behind the joke — but doesn't touch it yet.

They pass a small wine shop. Wooden crates stacked outside. Dusty bottles. Xavi slows. Again.

PENELOPE
You do this everywhere?

XAVI
Only places that remember me.

Penelope lets that land. He peruses the wine, grabs two bottles and pays in cash.

PENELOPE
Two bottles.

XAVI
It's good wine.

EXT. EL LLORENÇ PARC DE LA MAR - DAY

Old stone hotel. Quiet luxury. No show. No flex. The sea hums below the terrace.

Xavi stops walking. Just one beat. This place asks nothing of him. Penelope watches him soften. He rubs his hand across the stone.

PENELOPE
You okay?

XAVI
Yeah.
(confused)
I think so.

They enter.

INT. EL LLORENÇ - ROOM - DAY

Light pours in. White walls. Stone floors. Windows open to the bay. Boats drift, unbothered by ambition.

Xavi drops his bag. It lands heavy. He opens the balcony doors. Breathes.

PENELOPE
This is… very not Ducati.

XAVI
That’s the best part.

He sits on the edge of the bed. Looks around.

XAVI
My mom grew up not far from here. Finca in Puigpunyent. Vineyards. She made wine before she made plans.

Penelope sits opposite him.

PENELOPE
Did you ever visit it?

XAVI
Once. She made me taste everything. Said, “If you can taste it, you can remember it.”

PENELOPE
That’s a dangerous philosophy.

XAVI
(grins)
She was dangerous.

They share a quiet smile — the kind that carries a whole life behind it.

Penelope stands, opens the mini-fridge, pulls out water, hands it to him.

PENELOPE
Okay.

Rule of the island.

XAVI
There are rules?

PENELOPE
Only one. We don't rush anything.

Xavi nods.

XAVI
She would've liked you.

Penelope looks up — caught.

PENELOPE
That's a big compliment.

Xavi realizes what he said. Shrugs. He opens the two bottles of wine like a pro. Pours two glasses - 4-ounce tasting pour — swirls them. Hands Penelope a glass.

XAVI
She trusted people fast. Then tested them forever.

Penelope raises the glass in a mock toast.

PENELOPE
I'm ready.

XAVI
Ever had Priorat?

PENELOPE
Don't think so.

XAVI
Catalan. Grenache and Carignan. Planted on Llicorella soils in the hills.

PENELOPE
Anticipation builds.

XAVI
These are 2019 vintages.

PENELOPE
Lemme guess. Good vintages.

XAVI
Very. Not as mature as 2001, 2010. Taste.

Xavi clinks. They drink.

PENELOPE
Wow.

XAVI
What do you taste?

PENELOPE
Berries? Oh wow, licorice.

XAVI
You’re good. And, some violet, slate.

Penelope bottoms up, holds up her glass for more.

PENELOPE
Not a tasting pour, sofa pour, please.

Xavi smiles — full pour for them both.

The island breathes. And for the first time in a long time so does he.

DAY TIME MONTAGE — ACTIVE RECOVERY

Sauna - Cold plunge. Xavi gasps. Laughs. - Stretching on the terrace. Breath counted. - Light gym work. No urgency. - Espresso overlooking the bay. No screens. - Rooftop pool. Still water. Xavi floats, eyes closed.

Stillness is harder than speed.

EXT. OLD TOWN PALMA - LATE AFTERNOON

Golden light cuts across stone. Shops closing. Locals talking from balconies.

Xavi and Penelope walk without destination. Xavi slows again. Always slowing here.

XAVI
My mom hated tourists.

PENELOPE
You’re technically one.

XAVI
Yeah. She would’ve hated me too.

They stop at a small plaza. Kids play football with a flat, battered ball. Xavi watches. Smiles despite himself.

PENELOPE
You miss it?

XAVI
I miss not being watched.

A beat.

PENELOPE
You are. Just differently.

Xavi considers that. They keep walking.

EXT. MERCAT DE L'OLIVAR - DAY

The market hums. Locals. Fish. Meat. Fruit. Noise.

Xavi moves through it like he belongs here. Touches produce. Smells bread. Nods at vendors. Speaks Catalan easily. Penelope struggles to keep up.

PENELOPE
You're annoying like this.

XAVI
Like what?

PENELOPE
Competent.

He smiles.

XAVI
My mom made me shop. Said if you cook, you can survive anything.

PENELOPE
That's not true.

XAVI
It is for riders.

They stop at a cheese stall. Xavi tastes. Shakes his head. Moves on.

PENELOPE
You don't even hesitate.

XAVI
I hesitate all the time. Just not here.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Why here?

Xavi thinks.

XAVI
Because food doesn't lie.

She picks up yellow onion.

PENELOPE
And what is this saying, Xavi Vega?

He grabs it from her, puts it back.

XAVI
It says it's very good for caramelized onions on a cheeseburger, not for what I'm going to prepare.

PENELOPE
And, what are you going to Chef up?

XAVI
Wait and see.

She watches him — really watches him now. A LITTLE KID of 7 years old or so approaches with glee, sporting a Ducati hat and a sharpie.

LITTLE KID
Xavi Vega.

Xavi smiles, sees the kid's MOM approaching with a smile. Xavi signs the hat, gives the Kid the sharpie and the Kid runs off.

XAVI
My first autograph in Spain.

PENELOPE
Get used to it.

XAVI
Not sure I will.

PENELOPE
Everything lies. You just choose what you trust.

what you trust.

XAVI
That's depressing.

PENELOPE
That’s adulthood.

They laugh. He hands her a knife at a butcher stall.

XAVI
You cut.

PENELOPE
I’m a journalist. We don’t cut, we bleed.

XAVI
That explains a lot.

They move on, still smiling.

INT. EL LLORENÇ HOTEL KITCHEN - NIGHT

Music: Albéniz - Asturias, classical guitar. Quiet. Precise.

Xavi cooks like he rides: calm, loose, improvisational, absorbed. Penelope sits on the counter, wine in hand, watching.

PENELOPE
If you weren’t a racer, what would you be?

XAVI
F1 driver.

She laughs.

PENELOPE
No you wouldn’t.

XAVI
Okay.
(beat)
Classical guitarist.

She stops laughing.

PENELOPE
Seriously?

XAVI
Why is that funny?

PENELOPE
It’s not.
(beat)
It’s… sad.

XAVI
Why?

PENELOPE
Because it’s the same life.

A beat. Xavi considers that.

XAVI
Yeah.
(beat)
Alone. Lots of practice. Lots of listening.

PENELOPE
And no one claps unless you’re perfect. But, hey - maybe you could’ve been the next Charo.

XAVI
Or Segovia.

PENELOPE
No.
(beat)
Don’t be absurd.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Favorite?

XAVI
Dvořák. Cello concerto in B minor.

Penelope looks at him.

PENELOPE
Jesus.

XAVI
Sibelius. Violin Concerto. D minor.

She exhales, amused.

PENELOPE
That’s aggressively dark.

XAVI
It’s honest.

PENELOPE
It’s Finland.
(beat)
Dark.

XAVI
Good point.

PENELOPE
Minor keys.
(beat)
Very on brand.

XAVI
You?

PENELOPE
Brahms.

XAVI
Which one?

PENELOPE
Double Concerto.
(beat)
Violin and cello.

Xavi glances over.

XAVI
Also minor.

PENELOPE
I know.

XAVI
A minor. Opus one-oh-two.

Penelope smirks.

PENELOPE
Aggressively specific.

XAVI
You started it.

A beat.

XAVI
Funny thing about that concerto.

PENELOPE
Wait. Don’t tell me.

She points at him.

PENELOPE / XAVI
(simultaneously)
Joachim.

They stop. Laugh.

XAVI
Make-up gift.

PENELOPE
Which is honestly the most Brahms thing imaginable.

XAVI
Emotionally catastrophic but with excellent orchestration.

Penelope laughs. A small beat. They drink. She studies him more carefully now.

PENELOPE
And Bach?

Xavi glances over.

XAVI
Which Bach?
(beat)
Johann Sebastian? C.P.E.? J.C.?, Wilhelm?

Wilhelm?

PENELOPE
Okay, wiseguy.

XAVI
Important distinction.

PENELOPE
Johann Sebastian. Papa!

XAVI
Good.

PENELOPE
Though counterpoint-wise, the whole family was frankly insane.

XAVI
Fair.

PENELOPE
The fifth-species counterpoint at that level can be a bit overwhelming.

Beat.

PENELOPE
Hence the unaccompanied Cello Suites.

XAVI
Suite No. 5?

Penelope nods.

PENELOPE
C minor.

XAVI
BWV 1011.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Of course you'd know that.

XAVI
That Sarabande...
(beat)
...feels like discipline pretending to be grief.

Penelope studies him, genuinely caught off guard.

PENELOPE
That may be the darkest thing you've said yet.

XAVI
It's Bach.

Beat.

PENELOPE
You really would've done it.

XAVI
What?

PENELOPE
Music.

XAVI
I didn’t have the technique.
(beat)
Started too late.

Beat.

XAVI
I listened to your SoundCloud.

That catches her off guard.

PENELOPE
You did?

XAVI
Some YouTube videos too.

A beat.

XAVI
You don’t just make music.

Penelope watches him now.

XAVI
You perform.
(beat)
Curate experiences.
(beat)
Build atmosphere.

A beat.

XAVI
Most people aren’t morons.
(beat)
They’re tone deaf.

That lands.

PENELOPE
That may be the best thing anyone’s said about my work.

XAVI
Most people don’t listen closely enough. To them, it’s background music.

Penelope smiles.

XAVI
And, truth be told I use your music for my workouts.

PENELOPE
Good answer.

XAVI
I worked kitchens before this.

Penelope raises an eyebrow.

XAVI
Crappy ones. Okay ones.
(beat)
One Michelin place. One summer.

PENELOPE
Seriously?

XAVI
French Laundry.

That lands.

PENELOPE
Thomas Keller.

XAVI
Yeah.

PENELOPE
That's not "okay."

XAVI
No.
(beat)
When it's run right—

He adjusts the pan. Loose. Instinctive. Precise.

XAVI
—it's actually kind of lovely.

A beat.

XAVI
Quiet.

Discipline. Timing.

PENELOPE
Still sounds like racing.

XAVI
Probably why I liked it.

Penelope smiles.

PENELOPE
Of course you liked the militant luxury prison.

XAVI
I like systems that work.

PENELOPE
That tracks.
(beat)
I DJ'd eBulli once.

Xavi looks up.

XAVI
Seriously?

PENELOPE
Costa Brava. Closing party.
(beat)
Far more cocaine. Slightly less structure.

Xavi laughs. Real.

PENELOPE
So apparently—
(beat)
—we both romanticize impossible professions.

He plates food. Slides it to her. She tastes. Freezes.

PENELOPE
Oh fuck you.

XAVI
That good?

PENELOPE
That's illegal.

XAVI
Restaurant life is awful.
(beat)
No time. No quiet. No money unless you're famous.

A beat.

XAVI
But if you build it right—
(beat)
small room. Good kitchen. Good wine list. No bullshit.

He shrugs.

XAVI
Could be perfect.

A subtle beat. Future, buried quietly inside the present.

PENELOPE
So you only do impossible things.

XAVI
Apparently.

She looks at him differently now. Not racer. Not wildcard. Something larger.

PENELOPE
You know you’re already a brand,

right?

XAVI
I hate that word.

PENELOPE
Too bad.
(beat)
It’s happening without you.

A beat.

XAVI
Then help me do it without becoming an idiot.

Penelope raises her glass.

PENELOPE
Deal.

They clink. Silence. Not awkward. Intimate. They move slightly closer— without noticing.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Sheets. Skin. Quiet laughter. After, they lie still. No need to talk. Wind through open doors. Island breathing for them.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

Xavi awake. Penelope asleep. He sits on the edge of the bed, looking at his hands. Not shaking. Just still.

Penelope opens one eye.

PENELOPE
You run?

XAVI
Only when chased.

She smiles. Goes back to sleep. Xavi lies down again.

Doesn’t sleep.

EXT. MALLORCA ROADS - MORNING

A VINTAGE DEFENDER 90 (1992 — no top) trails a bike. Xavi rides smooth, not fast. Penelope drives, sunglasses, hair wild.

She pulls up beside him at a stop.

PENELOPE
Is that your pace? You think Diego goes this slow?

Xavi grins — then opens the accelerates and disappears uphill. She swears, laughs, floors it.

EXT. TRAMUNTANA MOUNTAINS - CONTINUOUS

Cliffs. Wind. Sky. Xavi rides like he’s listening, not attacking. At the summit he stops. Penelope pulls up, breathless.

PENELOPE
Okay. That was rude.

XAVI
You started it.

They look out at the sea and Isla de sa Porrassa. Something shifts in him. He feels it.

EXT. CHICHO LORENZO TRAINING FACILITY - AFTERNOON

Dust hangs in the air. Kids train. Discipline everywhere.

Three dirt bikes rip around the track. Xavi. Jorge Lorenzo. Kevin Schwantz. Different styles.

Kevin loose. Aggressive. Rear wheel always moving. Jorge precise. Clean. Quiet. Xavi somewhere between them.

A couple corners too hot. One rut too deep. The rear steps out. He saves it.

The three bikes roll back toward the fence line. Engines cut. Helmets come off.

JORGE
You ride like you're listening to something I can't hear.

Xavi shrugs.

XAVI
I'm trying not to talk.

Jorge nods. Approving.

JORGE
Good. Don't.

KEVIN
Kid rides dirt like an American.

JORGE
He rides asphalt like a Spaniard.

Kevin grins.

KEVIN
That's a dangerous combination.

XAVI
Which one of you should I listen to?

KEVIN
Me.

JORGE
Not him.

Kevin laughs.

KEVIN
You know what the problem is with guys like Jorge?

JORGE
Too many championships?

KEVIN
Exactly.

Jorge almost smiles.

JORGE
Kevin thinks every lap is qualifying.

KEVIN
Because every lap is qualifying.

JORGE
No.

A beat.

JORGE
The fast riders know how to go fast.

Another beat.

JORGE
Champions know when not to.

KEVIN
Yeah, well… more laps, more data.

JORGE
Real data.

KEVIN
Your ass and your head — old school data.

JORGE
And still the most important kind.

XAVI
I can feel when it’s right. In my feet, my calves, my hands - my ass.

Kevin points at him.

KEVIN
See? That's why I like Xavi. Kid's got vintage data.

A beat.

KEVIN
You're young. Be fast. Have fun. You're in MotoGP, man.

JORGE
And if you want to stay in MotoGP…

Jorge looks directly at Xavi.

JORGE
Finish races.

Kevin points at Jorge.

KEVIN
That's why he's still alive and walking around with fewer injuries than the rest of us.

Jorge nods once.

JORGE
Correct.

Kevin laughs.

KEVIN
Fair.

Penelope has been standing off to the side, taking this all in.

PENELOPE
Do you guys mind if I get a little video of this?

Kevin looks at Jorge.

KEVIN
What do you think? You ready for social media, Jorge?

JORGE
No.

Kevin grins.

KEVIN
Perfect. In Austin, that means yes.

Penelope lifts her phone.

PENELOPE
Nothing polished. Just real.

KEVIN
Good. Nobody wants polished.

JORGE
Social media is not real.

PENELOPE
Social media is surreal. Very Peter Lindbergh. Don’t photograph subjects pretending to do something, have them actually do something.

Kevin walks over to his dirt bike. Mounted to the side is a small leather saddle bag. He opens it. Inside — three more cans of beer.

Xavi sees it. Starts laughing.

XAVI
You ride with beer?

KEVIN
Texas.

JORGE
But we’re in Mallorca.

KEVIN
True. But missing Texas.

Kevin tosses Jorge and Xavi each a beer. Xavi shakes his head.

XAVI
I feel like I’m in an episode of Seinfeld.

Kevin cracks his beer. Takes a big sip.

KEVIN
Now that’s real data.

The three of them clink cans. Penelope captures it on her phone. No autographs. Just lineage.

EXT. PORT DE SÓLLER - SUNSET

Fish. Bread. Wine. Quiet harbor.

Xavi finally speaks about his mother. Just once.

XAVI
My mom — she absolutely loved it here. Some wine, baguette, brie and she was home again.

Penelope listens. No notes. No recording. Just presence.

EXT. HOTEL TERRACE - NIGHT

Penelope on her phone. Low voice. Intense.

PENELOPE
No, he's not a product.
(beat)
Because he's real. That's why.

She ends the call. Turns. Xavi is watching her.

XAVI
You good?

PENELOPE
Yeah. I just fought three grown men in blazers.

XAVI
You win?

PENELOPE
I don't often lose.

She sits beside him.

PENELOPE
But you have to decide if you want to be seen.

Xavi looks out at the dark water.

XAVI
I just want to ride.

PENELOPE
Then let me protect that.

He nods. Penelope remembers something, breaks out her laptop.

PENELOPE
Oh, shit.

XAVI
What?

PENELOPE
I forgot to email out some info to my editor.

XAVI
Info?

PENELOPE
Business stuff — numbers, budgets, expense reports. Invoice heavy, cash light lifestyle.

Xavi watches her work. It’s serious.

XAVI
How much do they pay you?

She hesitates.

PENELOPE
Enough to pretend I’m stable.

He sits.

XAVI
Work for me.

She laughs.

PENELOPE
You don’t even have a manager.

XAVI
I do now.

She stops laughing.

PENELOPE
You’re serious?

XAVI
You already are. I just want you protected.

A beat.

PENELOPE
You know Alyssa will kill me.

XAVI
She already hates you.

They stare at one another.

XAVI
We'll make it official, a contract, iron-clad, with a good severance package so no risk - make it safe.

They both smile — nervous.

PENELOPE
Okay.

XAVI
Okay?

PENELOPE
Okay.

It's not romantic. It's intimate. It's dangerous.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Penelope steps away to take a call. Xavi watches the water. Still.

She returns — energized.

PENELOPE
I sold you. A little.

XAVI
That's not comforting.

PENELOPE
Surf brand. European. They want you. Not Ducati.

He absorbs it. Uneasy. Thoughtful.

XAVI
That's worse.

She smiles.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Penelope sits on the bed, laptop open. Xavi paces. Restless now. Energy returning. On screen: a rough cut of the weekend.

PENELOPE
You hate it.

XAVI
I don’t hate it. I just don’t trust it.

She turns the laptop so he can see.

PENELOPE
You trust me?

A beat.

XAVI
Yes.

PENELOPE
Then stop trying to control it.

He exhales. Nods. She clicks POST.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Phone buzzes immediately. Likes. Shares. Comments climbing fast. Xavi flips the phone face-down like it’s hot.

XAVI
This feels like cheating.

PENELOPE
(smiling)
Welcome to the new race.

EXT. EL LLORENÇ - MORNING

Xavi alone on the terrace. Coffee untouched. He takes out his phone. Almost calls someone. Doesn’t.

Instead, he takes one last photo of the water. Deletes it immediately.

EXT. PALMA AIRPORT - MORNING

Backpacks. Sunglasses. Quiet goodbye to the island.

Xavi looks back once. Long look. Penelope notices.

PENELOPE
You'll come back.

XAVI
I know. Until next time.

He doesn't say why.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - NIGHT

Erv sits on a crate, eating from a paper container. Old onboard footage of Xavi plays on a small monitor — Superbike days. Younger. Looser.

Rewind. Pause. A small smile. Alyssa enters. Quiet.

ALYSSA
Mallorca is a reset.

ERV
Three days.

ALYSSA
Three days. No press. No sponsors. No sightings.

Beat.

ALYSSA
He comes back intact.

ERV
It's Mallorca.

She watches him.

ERV
I'll bring him back.

A beat.

ALYSSA
He won't be the same.

ERV
Good.

That lands. Alyssa studies him — not disagreeing.

ALYSSA
Three days.

ERV
Great Jane’s Addiction song.

She turns to leave. Before she does she notices the video monitor — younger Xavi.

ALYSSA
Le Mans is loud.

ERV
So is he.

A flicker of approval. She exits.

Erv sits a moment longer. Then turns the footage back on. Watches one more pass. Pause. He stands. Grabs his jacket. Kills the monitor. The garage goes dark.

EXT. DUCATI FACILITY - NIGHT

Erv steps out into the Barcelona night. Doesn’t look back. Walks. A moment later— Alyssa exits the building. Sees him ahead. Not close. Not far.

She hesitates. Then follows. Not hiding it. Not calling out. Just curious.

INT. SMALL JAZZ BAR - NIGHT

Low ceiling. Dim light. No stage. No audience energy. Just players. A piano sits off to the side.

Erv is already there. At the keys. No introduction. No acknowledgment.

He plays—quiet, precise. Not leading. Listening. Dolphin Dance, Herbie Hancock.

A drummer brushes lightly. Upright bass hums underneath. Erv adjusts—half a beat early, then late—then finds it. Corrects. Refines.

Alyssa enters. Stops just inside. Doesn’t approach. Doesn’t interrupt.

Erv doesn’t see her. He’s not performing. He’s working something out. A phrase repeats. Changes slightly each time. Searching. Then—it settles. Not perfect. But right.

The drummer nods. Barely. Erv lifts his hands from the keys as the tune ends. Smiles. Applause.

Alyssa stays where she is. Watching him. Understanding something she didn't before.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - DAY

The garage hums back to life — tools, air guns, monitors waking up.

Xavi drops his helmet bag on the workbench and opens it. Sand spills out of the vents. Light. Pale. Out of place.

Erv clocks it immediately.

A beat.

ERV
You went.

Xavi doesn't look up.

XAVI
Yeah.

Erv nods once. Not surprised.

ERV
First time back, right?

Xavi hesitates. Then:

XAVI
Since my mom.

Erv lets that sit. No rush.

ERV
Did you go to the market?

Xavi looks up now. Surprised.

XAVI
Yeah. The Olivar.

ERV
(smiles)
She loved that place. Said if you can shop there, you can cook anything.

Xavi exhales — a small laugh escapes.

XAVI
I cooked.

Erv freezes — just a fraction.

ERV
You haven't cooked in years.

XAVI
I know.

A beat.

XAVI
Man… it was liberating.

ERV
Good?

XAVI
Really good.

Erv nods — satisfied. Then shifts tone, gentle but firm.

ERV
Alright. Vacation's over.

Xavi smiles, already bracing.

ERV
Le Mans doesn't care how good you cook.

Xavi nods. Erv grabs the helmet, turns it in his hands. Sand still falling.

ERV
But it helps you remember who you are.

Xavi meets his eyes.

ERV
Now let's get you ready.

Erv sets the helmet down — deliberate, ceremonial. They walk toward the monitors together. Work resumes.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Glass. Water bottles. A screen waiting to be turned on. Brand reps on one side. Ducati people on the other.

Xavi sits between worlds. Penelope sits at the table — invited by the brand, not Ducati. Alyssa notices immediately. Giacomo notices too. Neither likes it.

BRAND REP
We're really excited about this partnership. What we want is - authenticity. Not polish.

Xavi relaxes a fraction. Almost smiles.

XAVI
Good. I'm terrible at polish.

A polite laugh from the brand side. Penelope leans in, casual, dangerous.

PENELOPE
Okay, but we're banning that word now.

A beat.

BRAND REP
Sorry?

PENELOPE
Authenticity. It's the new synergy. Everyone says it until it stops meaning anything.

Silence. Then:

Xavi laughs — unexpectedly, genuinely.

XAVI
One rule. No one uses that word again. We have no synergy with synergy.

PENELOPE
So, 90s...

The room shifts. Energy changes.

BRAND REP
(smiling)
Fair.

Alyssa leans forward, cool.

ALYSSA
We're very protective of Xavi's image.

PENELOPE
Of course you are. That’s your job.

Alyssa stiffens — that landed too cleanly.

PENELOPE
My job is making sure people believe him when they see him.

Giacomo finally speaks. Calm. Measured. Dangerous.

GIACOMO
Belief is fragile.

Penelope turns to him — respectful, unafraid.

PENELOPE
So is control.

A beat.

Xavi watches them. First time he’s seen adults argue *for* him instead of *about* him.

BRAND REP
So what does this actually look like.

Penelope looks to Xavi. Gives him the floor.

XAVI
I surf. I skate. I cook. I disappear when I can.

The brand rep nods, writing.

XAVI
No scripts. No speeches. No pretending I’m something I’m not.

PENELOPE
He won’t sell anything he wouldn’t us.

ERV (FROM THE BACK, DRY)
That eliminates half the internet.

Laughter — real this time. Even Alyssa cracks. Barely.

BRAND REP
So… no bikes?

Giacomo’s jaw tightens. Xavi answers before anyone else can.

XAVI
Leathers and helmet. That’s it.

Penelope jumps in, quick.

PENELOPE
And when he skates. And when he surfs. And when he’s not racing. That’s the point.

ERV
And not betting or predictive markets.

XAVI / PENELOPE
Definitely.

A pause. The brand rep nods slowly.

BRAND REP
That’s actually…perfect.

Giacomo doesn’t love it. But he doesn’t stop it. The deal is happening. Xavi glances at Penelope — grateful, a little stunned. She doesn’t look back. She already knows.

INT. DUCATI HALLWAY - DAY

Alyssa catches up to Penelope.

ALYSSA
You’re overstepping.

PENELOPE
I was invited.

ALYSSA
By people who don’t understand what we do.

PENELOPE
I understand exactly what you do.

Alyssa stops walking.

ALYSSA
You don’t work here.

PENELOPE
I work for him.

That lands.

ALYSSA
This is a team.

PENELOPE
Then act like one.

Alyssa leans in — quiet, controlled.

ALYSSA
This system destroys people like you.

PENELOPE
Good. I was getting bored.

ALYSSA
You won't win.

PENELOPE
We'll see about that.

Xavi appears at the end of the hall. Hears the last line. Alyssa clocks him. Adjusts instantly.

ALYSSA
(smiling)
We'll talk later.

She walks away. Penelope exhales — shaken, but standing. Xavi approaches.

XAVI
You okay?

PENELOPE
No. But I am right.

He nods.

EXT. SKATE PARK - BARCELONA - DAY

Concrete. Sun. Kids. Noise. Music.

Xavi rolls in on a board — effortless, loose, real. Penelope films. Laughing.

PENELOPE
Okay, this is actually you.

A VANS REP steps forward.

VANS REP
No bike logos. No rules. Just you.

Xavi looks at Penelope. She nods once. Decision made.

EXT. SKATE PARK - LATER

Photos. Clips. Motion. Xavi lands a trick badly. Laughs it off. The camera loves him because he doesn’t care.

Penelope lowers her phone.

PENELOPE
This one’s going to work.

Xavi nods. For once, he believes her.

INT. DUCATI OFFICE - NIGHT

Giacomo pours wine. A second glass without thinking. Hands it to Alyssa. They don’t sit. Just stand with the glasses between them.

GIACOMO
He’s becoming a story.

ALYSSA
He already was.

GIACOMO
Not one we place.

A beat.

ALYSSA
Do you want results or obedience?

He considers that. Not defensive. Measuring.

GIACOMO
Results make stories. Obedience makes reports.

Alyssa studies him.

ALYSSA
And this one?

Giacomo looks out through the glass toward the dark paddock.

GIACOMO
We let it run.

A beat.

GIACOMO
For now.

He takes a sip.

GIACOMO
They want certainty.

Alyssa understands exactly what that means.

ALYSSA
They won’t get it.

GIACOMO
No.

Another sip.

GIACOMO
So we give them time.

Silence. Strategy.

ALYSSA
And him?

Giacomo watches the empty track.

GIACOMO
Structure. Then speed.

A flicker of something like approval from Alyssa. They drink. The office hums quietly around them.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DUCATI SIMULATOR ROOM - NIGHT

Xavi rides. Smoother. Calmer. Less force. The data finally adapts to him. Erv watches — proud, contained.

A rare smile.

INT. TEAM DINNER - NIGHT

Wine. Plates. Forced calm.

Penelope and Alyssa sit far apart. Giacomo barely eats. Erv watches everything.

Xavi feels it — the split. The pressure.

EXT. BALCONY - LATE NIGHT

Xavi alone. City below. Erv steps out beside him. Doesn't crowd.

XAVI
I didn't ask for this.

ERV
No one does.

A beat.

ERV
That's why it works.

Xavi nods — not comforted, but steadied.

INT. XAVI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Penelope packing a small bag. Xavi watches.

XAVI
You leaving?

PENELOPE
Just giving you space.

XAVI
I didn't ask for space.

She stops.

PENELOPE
Yes you did. Every time you go quiet.

They hold that.

XAVI
Stay.

She does.

INT. XAVI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Half-unpacked. Still temporary. Penelope sleeps.

Laptop open: onboard video of the next race. Erv's voice echoes in memory.

ERV (V.O.)
Numbers end here.

Xavi closes the laptop. City lights below. Phone buzzes. He turns it off. Looks out at Barcelona.

The next race is coming. He’s ready.

FADE TO BLACK.

INTERLUDE - ERV - KYOTO

SUBTITLED JAPANESE THROUGHOUT

BLACK.

SUPER:

KYOTO PREFECTURE, JAPAN

WINTER, MID-1980s

SOUND —
Wind through the trees. Distant water pipes rattling softly. A heater clicks unevenly somewhere in the dark.

Minimal Zen-like ambient music. Sparse. Breath-based. More resonance than melody.

Snow falls softly. Not hard. Constant.

A narrow road winds through cedar trees toward a secluded mountain resort. Steam rises faintly through the cold.

A small BOY pedals uphill on an old bicycle —

ERV, 12.

Flip flops despite the snow. A bundle of folded towels tied to the back of the bike.

He rides without strain. Listens more than looks.

The world hums around him: wind through bamboo, distant train brakes, water moving beneath stone, a loose road sign vibrating softly in the cold.

He hears all of it.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RESORT - CONTINUOUS

The resort sits quietly against the mountainside. Wood. Stone. Warm light beneath snowfall. Minimal. Perfectly maintained.

Guests arrive silently beneath umbrellas.

Erv's MOTHER (40s) stands at the entrance in resort uniform attire. Composed. Precise. Hospitality as choreography.

She bows gently as guests enter. Never rushed. Never performative.

Erv slips past carrying towels. No words needed.

INT. RESORT SERVICE CORRIDOR - MORNING

Narrow hallways behind the beauty. Laundry steam. Pipes humming. Boilers vibrating beneath the floor.

Invisible systems.

Erv moves through them naturally.

His FATHER (50s), weathered and practical, repairs a leaking circulation pipe beneath an access panel. Tools carefully arranged beside him. Not mechanic chaos. Ritual.

The father hears Erv approach without looking up.

FATHER
(Japanese; subtitled)
Late.

ERV
(Japanese; subtitled)
Snow.

The father smirks slightly. Not disagreement.

Erv kneels beside the open panel. Listens. A faint oscillation inside the pipe vibration. He adjusts a valve slightly. The hum settles.

His father clocks it. Says nothing. Just continues working.

EXT. RESORT SERVICE ENTRANCE - LATER

A wealthy GUEST in an expensive winter coat struggles beside a small TWO-STROKE SCOOTER. The engine sputters unevenly. Trying to idle. Failing.

Erv's father kneels beside it now. Tools open. Polite frustration.

FATHER
(Japanese; subtitled)
I'm sorry.

The guest forces a smile. The scooter coughs again. Erv stops walking nearby. Listens.

The rhythm is wrong. Not broken. Wrong.

He slowly steps closer. Watches the throttle vibrate. The idle hunts unevenly.

His father notices him watching. A beat.

Erv points gently toward the carburetor. His father adjusts it.

Still wrong. The sputter remains.

Erv kneels beside the scooter now. Small hands. Careful movements.

He adjusts the idle screw slightly. Listens. Another small adjustment.

The engine settles instantly. Smooth now. Clean. Correct.

The guest smiles in relief. His father stares at the engine. Then at Erv.

Not surprise. Recognition.

FATHER
(Japanese; subtitled)
You heard it.

Erv shrugs. Like it was obvious. Snow continues falling.

INT. RESORT - NIGHT

Quiet. Guests eat in near silence. Tea poured carefully. Water steaming against cold windows.

Erv sits alone near the back hallway floor beside an old portable radio. A classical station plays faintly.

The pitch drifts slightly. Almost imperceptible. Erv looks up immediately. Annoyed.

He taps the side of the radio once. The pitch settles. Correct again.

He goes back to listening.

EXT. KOI POND - NIGHT

Snow drifts across black water. The resort glows softly behind the trees. The koi pond steams faintly in the cold air.

Erv stands at the edge in only shorts now. Freezing. Grinning.

His mother watches from beneath the walkway overhang. Half concerned. Half amused.

FATHER
(Japanese; subtitled)
He'll get sick.

MOTHER
(Japanese; subtitled)
No.

A beat.

MOTHER
(Japanese; subtitled)
He listens.

Erv slides into the pond.

Koi scatter beneath him. Then return, brushing against him in flashes of orange and white.

Erv bursts upward laughing. Real laughter.

Snow falling around him. Steam rising off the water. The koi circling gently in the dark beneath him.

For the first time — completely weightless.

FADE OUT.