LEAN ANGLE
EPISODE 5 – LE MANS

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BLACK.

Street sounds.

Not postcard Paris.

A delivery scooter. Metro brakes. A market shutter rolling upward. French. Arabic. Wolof. Vietnamese. Traffic. Footsteps.

A CAMERA SHUTTER.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS - MORNING

ALYSSA BAYLISS walks toward camera, a compact Leica slung over one shoulder.

No Ducati uniform.

Jeans. Boots. Small backpack.

Behind her, Paris is waking up.

ALYSSA
I'm Alyssa Bayliss, Ducati Corse Team Manager. Usually when you see me, I'm standing in a Ducati garage trying to control things that are, well, hard to control. Looking like this.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP - Alyssa.

Her Ducati death stare. Stone-faced. Unblinking.

A beat. She smiles.

ALYSSA
This is different.

TITLE:

MOTOGP: BEYOND THE APEX

Paris. Alyssa walks.

ALYSSA
Welcome to my new MotoGP Entertainment series, Beyond the Apex. Each race weekend, I'm getting away from the racetrack for a day to explore what else is out there.

She stops.

ALYSSA
This week — Le Mans.

A beat.

ALYSSA
Which means Paris.

She looks around.

ALYSSA
But not postcard Paris.

Quick flashes —

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Not the Eiffel Tower. The Louvre. Champs-Élysées.

The Eiffel Tower.

The Louvre.

The Champs-Élysées.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
You've seen that Paris. Everyone's seen that Paris.

A MAP OF PARIS.

The PÉRIPHÉRIQUE encircles the city.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Paris has a line around it. The Boulevard Périphérique. Thirty-five kilometers of asphalt that doesn't just separate roads. Its separates ideas of what Paris is.

A beat.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
So today we're going beyond the brochure. Beyond the postcard. And occasionally...

She smiles.

ALYSSA
Beyond the Périphérique.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHÂTEAU ROUGE - MORNING

The Metro exhales Alyssa onto the street.

Instantly —

COLOR.

MOVEMENT.

African fabrics. Produce. Fish. Cosmetics. Phone shops. Hair salons. People negotiating. People laughing.

Alyssa raises her camera.

CLICK.

CLICK.

She photographs buildings first. Then people inside them.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
I grew up in Sydney. I went to University for architecture. Which is a very expensive way to learn that buildings aren’t really about buildings.

CLICK — a storefront.

CLICK — apartments above it.

CLICK — laundry against old Parisian stone.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
They're about people. Who built them. Who gets to live in them, work in them.
(MORE)

ALYSSA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And, what happens after the architect leaves. And, this Paris has a lot more to offer than just Haussmannian architecture.

She enters MARCHÉ DEJEAN. Fish. Okra. Plantains. Spices. A vendor catches her photographing his display. He gestures — go ahead.

CLICK.

ALYSSA
Château Rouge sits beside Montmartre. Same arrondissement. Completely different Paris.

She walks.

ALYSSA
North African immigration changed this part of the city decades ago. West and Central communities changed it again. And, they're still changing it.

A WOMAN chooses fabric. A tailor measures cloth. Two OLD MEN argue over something completely unimportant.

Alyssa smiles.

CLICK.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Architecture people talk about adaptive reuse. Normal people call it living.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUE DES GARDES - DAY

Alyssa moves past African fashion shops and designers.

ALYSSA
This is what I like about cities. Nobody asks permission before adding another layer. (Click) French building. (Click) African textiles. (Click) Arabic signs. Yamaha scooter?

She sees a parked Yamaha scooter.

ALYSSA
Well, I won’t be taking a photo of that.

Smiles.

ALYSSA
Some things follow me everywhere.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS 13TH ARRONDISSEMENT - DAY

Hard transition. Different geometry. Towers. Concrete.

Modernist housing. Elevated infrastructure.

Alyssa looks upward. This is her language.

ALYSSA
Now this is where the architecture student comes back.

She raises the camera.

CLICK.

ALYSSA
When most people imagine Paris, they imagine Haussmann. Six stories. Stone facades. Iron balconies. Perfect repetition.

She turns.

Modern towers fill the frame.

ALYSSA
Paris also did this.

She walks toward OLYMPIADES.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
The thirteenth arrondissement became one of the city's great experiments in modern urbanism. And, one of its great immigrant neighborhoods. Different century. Different Paris. Same questions.

She photographs people moving through the space.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
How do you make millions of individual lives work inside one system?

A beat.

ALYSSA
Turns out I never really left architecture.

CUT TO:

INT. THAI YIM 2 RESTAURANT - PARIS 13 - DAY

Small. Warm. Unpretentious. Alyssa sits at a table. Food arrives.

Som tam lao. Laap. Khao kluk kapi. She looks at the camera.

ALYSSA
Thai food in Paris. Delightful. Here's my rule when traveling. If everybody in the restaurant looks like me, I've probably made a mistake.

She tastes.

Stops.

Looks at the dish.

Another bite.

ALYSSA
That's ridiculous.

The OWNER laughs from nearby.

ALYSSA
Thai Yim has been here since 2011. Northeastern Thai. Lao influence. And, apparently no interest in protecting Australians from chili.

She takes another bite anyway.

ALYSSA
Which I respect.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Alyssa walks with camera.

ALYSSA
Photography came after architecture.

She shoots.

CLICK.

ALYSSA
Motorcycles came after photography.

CLICK.

ALYSSA
And somehow photography got me into MotoGP.

A beat.

ALYSSA
Then somebody made the terrible mistake of giving me responsibility.

She smiles.

ALYSSA
And now I manage a MotoGP Ducati team.

She thinks about it.

ALYSSA
Architecture. Photography. Project management. MotoGP. Australian in Bologna, Italy.

A beat.

ALYSSA
Actually...not that different. Buildings fail when people stop paying attention to how the pieces work together. So do racing teams.

She raises the camera.

CLICK.

CUT TO:

INT. BELLEVILLE CAFÉ - AFTERNOON

Small. Worn. Unpretentious. Nothing here was designed for a travel show.

Four OLDER MEN sit around a table. Coffee. Water glasses. A deck of cards worn soft at the edges.

Cards SLAP against the table.

French. Arabic. Laughter. An argument about the last hand that clearly began several hands ago. Alyssa enters with her camera. She doesn't interrupt. Watches first.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
This is the Paris I came looking for.

One man deals. Another immediately objects. The others laugh.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Where Jewish. Muslim. Tunisian. Parisian men gather around the same tables to play an age-old French game.

A card hits the table.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Belote.

CLICK.

Weathered hands holding cards.

CLICK.

Espresso glasses beside a half-finished game.

CLICK.

A man studies his hand like the fate of France depends on it. His opponent plays a card. Instant outrage. Everyone talks at once.

CLICK.

A finger accusing.

CLICK.

A shrug.

CLICK.

The argument dissolves into laughter. No narration now. Alyssa moves quietly around the room.

Faces. Hands. Cards. Coffee. A hand lands on another man's shoulder.

CLICK.

One of the men catches Alyssa photographing him. He points to the camera. Then himself.

MAN
Me?

Alyssa lowers the camera.

ALYSSA
You.

The man straightens his jacket. Sits taller. Suddenly very serious. His friends erupt in laughter. He tries not to laugh. Fails.

CLICK.

Alyssa lowers the camera. The men are already back to the game.

Cards shuffle. Deal. Another hand. Another argument. Another afternoon in Paris.

CLICK.

CLICK.

CLICK.

CUT TO:

EXT. MONTMARTRE - LATE AFTERNOON

Cobblestones. Rue Lepic.

Alyssa stops. Looks directly into camera.

ALYSSA
Okay. I lied.

A beat.

ALYSSA
One tourist stop.

She starts uphill.

ALYSSA
My favorite movie set in Paris is Amélie. And yes, I know. This is exactly the Paris I've spent the entire day avoiding.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFÉ DES DEUX MOULINS - DAY

The café from AMÉLIE. Alyssa stands outside.

ALYSSA
AMÉLIE - one of my favorite films. Café des Deux Moulins. Fifteen Rue Lepic. Where she worked.

She photographs it.

CLICK.

ALYSSA
Still here. Still a cafe. And now absolutely impossible to pretend nobody knows why you're photographing it.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUE DES TROIS FRÈRES - DAY

The grocery.

ALYSSA
Maison Collignon. The grocery from the film. Still selling groceries. Which somehow makes me happier than if it were a museum.

CLICK.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO 28 - EVENING

Alyssa stands outside the little cinema.

ALYSSA
Studio 28. Opened in 1928. Amélie comes here alone in the film.

She looks at the building.

ALYSSA
I love that scene. Not because she’s lonely. Because she knows how to be alone.

A beat. That lands somewhere personal. Alyssa lifts the camera.

CLICK.

CUT TO:

EXT. MONTMARTRE - SUNSET

Alyssa walks downhill. Paris spreads beneath her.

ALYSSA (V.O.)
Maybe that's what I like about Amélie. It’s an imaginary Paris made out of real places. The place that exists. The place tourists think exists. And the place each of us carries around in our head.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS - NIGHT

Alyssa beside her Ducati motorcycle. Helmet in hand. The travelogue is ending.

ALYSSA
Tomorrow, Le Mans. Noise. Rain, again. Twenty-two motorcycles trying to occupy the same piece of France at the same time.

She puts on her helmet.

Then looks back to camera.

ALYSSA
Today was better.

A beat.

ALYSSA
I'm Alyssa Bayliss. And this was Beyond the Apex -

She glances toward Paris.

ALYSSA
Parisian style.

VISOR DOWN.

Engine fires.

She rides into Paris traffic.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. PADDOCK WALKWAY - MORNING

Le Mans. Paddock life: trucks, scooters, team members with lanyards, fans pressed against barriers like they're trying to absorb the sport by osmosis.

PENELOPE moves fast, phone in hand, headset around her neck. She's juggling: — a MEDIA REQUEST — a PR text — a notification storm from Xavi's @ELFORASTER account.

She catches up to Xavi and Erv.

PENELOPE
Okay. We're officially in "people yelling your name" territory.

XAVI
I liked the quiet.

PENELOPE
You had quiet. For like... four days. Congratulations.

ERV
What do they want?

PENELOPE
Everything. A quote. A smile. A secret. A mistake.

Xavi looks at her.

XAVI
You okay?

Penelope clocks that he noticed.

PENELOPE
Yeah. It's just... this place feels like it's vibrating.

ERV
It is.

PENELOPE
Great. Love that.

Penelope unscrews a small silver flask. Xavi clocks it.

XAVI
Whiskey?

PENELOPE
Tea.

XAVI
Good call.

PENELOPE
Le Mans.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Honey. Lemon. Cinnamon.

XAVI
You look like you want a cigarette.

Penelope laughs — caught.

PENELOPE
Maybe later.

Penelope's phone BUZZES again. She looks at it, winces.

PENELOPE
Olivier requested media. Fabio requested media. Ducati requested "our image to remain consistent."

ERV
"Our image."

Penelope looks at Erv.

PENELOPE
What's Ducati's image?

ERV
Control.

XAVI
What's my image?

Penelope smirks.

PENELOPE
You tell me, El Foraster.

Xavi's mouth twitches — he likes hearing it now. Annoying.

PENELOPE
Also — autograph signing in thirty.

XAVI
Already?

PENELOPE
France doesn't do "later." They do “now.”

Erv looks at Xavi like: this is where it starts.

CUT TO:

EXT. PADDOCK FAN ZONE - DAY

Autograph signing. A folding table. Marker pens. A Ducati rep hovering. A security guy trying to look casual. The LINE is absurd. Like concert absurd.

It’s bigger than anyone expected — bigger than Diego’s line across the way.

Xavi sits, composed, signing calmly like he's doing homework. Penelope stands nearby, watching the crowd. Alyssa stands off to the side.

A FAN leans in, excited, half-drunk:

FAN
You are the new Schwantz!

Xavi looks up.

XAVI
That's… not safe.

The fan laughs.

OLDER FAN
Hope you don't crash like Schwantz!

The crowd laughs. Nervous admiration.

XAVI
Dude had 25 wins, 51 podiums in 105 starts — world champion — I'll take that any day of the week.

ANGLE ON:

Kevin Schwantz and Jorge Lorenzo. Sitting on the tailgate of Kevin's old Ford pickup. Small portable grill. Smoke drifting up. Two beers open.

Kevin looks offended.

KEVIN
One hundred and five starts?

JORGE
One hundred and five.

KEVIN
I had one hundred and five podiums.

JORGE
No. Ninety podiums.

KEVIN
Still.

JORGE
And twenty-five wins?

KEVIN
Twenty-five wins by lunch.

JORGE
That is not true.

KEVIN
Feels true.

JORGE
Thirty-four wins. One world championship.

Kevin cracks his beer.

KEVIN
Thank you.

JORGE
You are welcome.

A beat.

KEVIN
Kid gets one podium and suddenly nobody knows history.

JORGE
That is social media.

KEVIN
That’s why I like fishing.

JORGE
Nobody talks when you fish.

KEVIN
Exactly.

CUT BACK TO:

Xavi signs another helmet visor. Looks up. Sees Kevin and Jorge. Weird feeling. Like someone just walked over his grave.

XAVI
What the hell is it with these guys?

Penelope doesn’t love that.

PENELOPE
Okay, we’re not manifesting crashing today.

A Ducati REP bristles — corporate smile.

DUCATI REP
He’s very… popular.

Erv’s eyes flick to Giacomo across the paddock — Giacomo clocks the line. His jaw tightens.

ERV
(to himself)
Here we go.

ALYSSA
(to Ducati Rep)
Cap it at twenty more. Then pull him.

Ducati rep nods. Xavi signs another helmet visor. The kid is trembling.

KID
Will you win?

Xavi pauses — sincere.

XAVI
I’ll try not to lose.

The kid beams like he was blessed. Penelope watches the moment — something in her softens. Then her phone BUZZES again — hard shift back to reality.

PENELOPE
We’re on in ten. Ducati wants you in the garage.

Xavi hands the marker back. Stands. To Erv, quietly:

XAVI
That line is… insane.

ERV
Don’t enjoy it.

XAVI
I didn’t say I enjoyed it.

ERV
You did with your face.

Xavi walks off. Erv follows. Behind them, Giacomo keeps staring at the crowd. Pressure quietly doubles.

CUT TO:

EXT. LE MANS - DUCATI PADDOCK - DAY

ON SCREEN — Spencer stands alongside Giacomo for the interview. The paddock bustles behind them.

SPENCER
Giacomo, Xavi Vega's become quite a story. Bigger crowds, faster lap times. How's he fitting in alongside Diego Alonso?

GIACOMO
Ah, Spencer! Two young riders, both very fast. For Ducati, a beautiful problem to have!

SPENCER
And rumors are Mick Stoner's recovery is ahead of schedule.

Giacomo smiles.

GIACOMO
Rumors, yes.

SPENCER
Anything you'd care to share?

GIACOMO
When Mick is ready, we will know. Until then, we race!

SPENCER
And Xavi's future?

Giacomo opens his hands.

GIACOMO
First, Le Mans, my friend!

Spencer smiles.

SPENCER
Fair enough. Thanks, Giacomo.

GIACOMO
Sempre un piacere!

CUT TO:

INT. DUCATI TEAM HOSPITALITY - DAY

Diego sits with Sete — his father. Quiet power. Old racer energy. Calm in the storm. On a monitor, Giacomo finishes his interview with Spencer. The broadcast cuts to Fabio's bike snapping through a chicane.

SPENCER (V.O.)
Meanwhile, the French riders are flying early — Fabio especially. The crowd energy here is… rocket fuel.

Diego smiles.

DIEGO
They always do this here.

SETE
Home races make idiots of us all.

Diego looks at his father.

DIEGO
You think I'm an idiot?

Sete sips espresso.

SETE
No.
(beat)
You're worse. You're confident.

Diego laughs.

DIEGO
That's a compliment.

SETE
It's a warning.

Diego watches the screen again — then Xavi appears in the background of a shot, walking into the garage.

DIEGO
He's calm.

SETE
He's young.

DIEGO
So am I.

Sete looks at him.

SETE
No.

A beat. Diego doesn't like that.

CUT TO:

INT. PADDOCK CORRIDOR - DAY

Alyssa appears like a knife — controlled, precise, eyes that don't waste time. She watches the French media swarm Fabio.

Penelope is mid-text when Alyssa steps in front of her.

ALYSSA
Penelope.

PENELOPE
Alyssa.

They both smile politely. No warmth.

ALYSSA
We're going to have to work together now.

Penelope holds Alyssa's gaze.

PENELOPE
We already are.

ALYSSA
Not officially.

PENELOPE
Oh. That's what this is?

Alyssa glances toward the garage.

ALYSSA
Xavi's visibility is… increasing.

PENELOPE
Yeah. That's what happens when someone's good.

ALYSSA
And when someone is… useful.

Penelope's smile tightens.

PENELOPE
Say what you mean.

Alyssa leans slightly closer. Low voice.

ALYSSA
You don’t work for Ducati.

PENELOPE
No.

ALYSSA
So when you sit at tables you weren’t invited to—

PENELOPE
I’m invited by the people who actually matter at those tables.

Alyssa’s eyes flash. She recovers immediately.

ALYSSA
This is a manufacturer. Not a band.

PENELOPE
Funny you say that. You’re kind of acting like a label.

Alyssa almost laughs. Almost.

ALYSSA
What do you want?

Penelope considers — then decides to be direct.

PENELOPE
I want him to survive.

ALYSSA
That’s not your job.

PENELOPE
It is if no one else is doing it.

Alyssa’s smile is a blade again.

ALYSSA
Be careful. You move fast.

PENELOPE
So does he.

Alyssa watches her.

ALYSSA
This paddock eats people like you.

PENELOPE
People like me?

ALYSSA
People who think proximity is power.

Penelope steps closer — equal.

PENELOPE
Proximity is access.

Alyssa holds her gaze a beat too long.

ALYSSA
Then learn the difference between access and influence.

Penelope's phone buzzes — a TEXT from Xavi: "Where are you?" Penelope doesn't look away from Alyssa.

PENELOPE
I'll learn. Fast.

She steps around Alyssa and walks off. Alyssa watches her go — not threatened, exactly. More like… recalculating.

INT. PADDOCK MEDIA SCREEN - LE MANS - DAY

A broadcast feature plays on a hospitality Jumbotron — in French. French commentary underneath. On screen: FABIO GODDARD. Relaxed. Direct. No theatrics.

FABIO
My name is Fabio Goddard. I grew up in Lyon. I ride for Aprilia.

Cut to: Kids in Aprilia colors. French flags. Fans crowd surfing. Fanatics.

FABIO (V.O.)
In France, you grow up watching this race.

FABIO
You don't win Le Mans. You belong to it. You live for it. As my mom used to say - Merde.

Cut to: Fabio in the garage. Calm. Methodical. APRILIA CREW focused. Confident.

Cut to: Xavi in the Ducati hospitality area, catching the screen mid-pass. He watches. Not threatened. Measuring.

ERV
Home cooking. House money.

XAVI
Yeah.

A beat.

XAVI
Good for him.

The screen loops. Xavi watches. Measuring. The paddock hums.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRACK - AFTERNOON

Practice / Qualifying: We don't "cover" the practice like broadcast.

We see: — LOW-ANGLE CAMERA near the curb as bikes SLASH past, doppler ripping the sound field — RIDER BOOTS on pegs, micro-movements — TIRE EDGE shimmering with heat — FANS on hills watching on phones / Jumbotrons — GARAGE TV showing Fabio's lap time lighting up purple.

SPENCER (V.O.)
Fabio is absolutely flying. Home Grand Prix. Home crowd. And sometimes that gives you wings — sometimes it gives you a knife.

In the garage: Xavi on the bike, helmet on. His breath is calm.

IN-HELMET AUDIO: the world becomes internal. Mechanical. Intimate.

XAVI (V.O.)
Okay. Okay. Don't rush. Don't force.

A quick glance at a dash light.

XAVI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Listen.

ERV stands by monitors but he's not watching them like a fanatic. He's listening for something.

He leans closer as Xavi goes by — the sound of the engine changes for a half-second. ERV's eyes narrow.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - LATER

Dark clouds stack outside. A wet sheen starts to appear on the pit lane. On monitors: weather radar. Wind. Temperature.

Engineers talk fast. Giacomo arrives — suit jacket off, sleeves rolled, like he's trying to cosplay urgency.

GIACOMO
What's the call?

ENGINEER
Rain in minutes.

GIACOMO
That's not a call.

Erv watches the radar. He looks at the Session Clock: 06:12 and ticking.

ERV
Rain in twelve minutes means rain in… maybe.

Giacomo looks at Erv — annoyed already.

GIACOMO
We need a plan.

Erv doesn't look up.

ERV
Plans are what you make when you don't want to pay attention.

A beat. Giacomo points at the screen.

GIACOMO
Fabio is going now. Diego is going now.

ALYSSA
(to Giacomo, low)
If he sits and it dries, we look afraid. If he goes and it rains, we look reckless. Pick your headline.

Erv finally looks at Xavi. Xavi is quiet, helmet on his lap, listening.

ERV
You want to go now?

Xavi shrugs slightly.

XAVI
If the track's lying, I'd rather catch it lying early.

Penelope appears at the edge of the garage — tension in her face. She's trying not to show it.

PENELOPE
What does that mean?

Xavi smiles at her.

XAVI
It means…I'm going.

Erv nods. Decision made.

GIACOMO
He needs a banker lap.

ERV
He doesn't do banker laps.

Giacomo steps in closer.

GIACOMO
He does today.

Erv's stare is flat.

ERV
Or what?

Giacomo smiles thinly.

GIACOMO
Or we learn the hard way.

A beat. Xavi stands.

XAVI
Let's learn.

Penelope watches him go — she hates how calm he is.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRACK - CONTINUOUS

Quick, tactile cuts: — visor down — clutch hand — throttle — rumble strip — rain drops on camera lens — a French flag whipping like it's angry.

SPENCER (V.O.)
If this rain hits mid-lap, it's a roulette wheel. Fabio's still pushing — Olivier too — and that's the thing about home races… you can't let the crowd down.

IN-HELMET AUDIO: Xavi breathes.

XAVI (V.O.)
Okay. Feel the grip. Don't look for it — feel it.

A beat.

PIT RADIO (Fictionalized but plausible for drama):

ERV (V.O.)
In-coming rain. Track is changing. Don't chase Fabio's line.

XAVI (V.O.)
Copy.

He tips into a corner — stable. Then down the straight — rain starts to pepper heavier.

XAVI (V.O.)
It's fine.

Down the straight, full throttle. And then — a violent, sudden SNAP from the rear.

Not a rider error. Not a lean mistake. A mechanical betrayal.

Xavi is airborne for a fraction — then SLAMS and the sound of carbon fiber sliding across the tarmac at 200mph.

Silence. The sound cuts out like someone pulled a plug.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Controlled chaos. No screaming — just fast bodies moving. Replay on loop: rear end snaps on a straight.

Giacomo paces, furious, trying to assign blame to regain control.

GIACOMO
He pushed. I told you he pushes.

Erv turns. Sharp. Fast. Unexpected.

ERV
No.

The garage stills. Even engineers freeze.

Erv steps toward the screen, points with a finger like a knife.

ERV (CONT'D)
That's a straight. No lean. No throttle spike. No correction.

He looks directly at Giacomo. No theater. Just truth.

ERV (CONT'D)
A bike doesn't snap like that unless it fails.

Giacomo flares.

GIACOMO
We don't have time for—

ERV
(cutting him off)
Calm the fuck down.

Absolute silence. Alyssa is there now — eyes locked, reading everything. Erv's voice doesn't get loud — it gets final.

ERV (CONT'D)
This happens. This is racing. And if you don't know that...

Beat.

ERV
...you shouldn't be here.

Alyssa steps between Erv and Giacomo.

ALYSSA
Enough.

Beat.

ALYSSA
Find the data. Find the cause. No statements until we know.

Erv doesn't let up.

ERV
That wasn't pilot error.
(beat)
And you know it.

Erv turns away. Heads for the medical tent. Not waiting.

As he passes Alyssa, he mutters under his breath — not for her, not for anyone.

ERV (UNDER HIS BREATH)
Fucking suit.

Alyssa clocks it. A micro-smile — gone instantly.

The system has been challenged. And everyone felt it.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCATI TRANSPORTER - LE MANS - LATER

The noise from the paddock is distant now. Muted.

Giacomo stands at the small counter, jacket off, sleeves rolled. A tablet rests face down beside him. Alyssa enters. Closes the door behind her.

A beat.

ALYSSA
They're already asking.

GIACOMO
Of course they are.

He pours a glass of water. Doesn't drink it.

ALYSSA
What do you tell them?

GIACOMO
Nothing tonight.

A beat.

ALYSSA
They'll want changes.

GIACOMO
They always do after a fall.

Silence. The weight of it.

ALYSSA
You pushed him.

He meets her eyes. No denial.

GIACOMO
I push the system. He rides inside it.

A beat.

ALYSSA
And now?

Giacomo finally takes a sip of water.

GIACOMO
Now we wait.

ALYSSA
They won’t give you long.

GIACOMO
They never do.

He turns slightly toward the window, looking out at the dark paddock.

GIACOMO
He’s still fast.

Alyssa watches him.

ALYSSA
Yes.

GIACOMO
Then we stay with him.

Silence. Decision made. Alyssa nods once.

ALYSSA
I’ll hold the line.

Giacomo picks up the tablet. Turns it over.

GIACOMO
Data first. Emotion later.

He moves past her toward the door.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL TENT - LATE AFTERNOON

Bright, clinical. Paper curtains. Rubber gloves.

Xavi sits shirtless, wrist being examined. He's calm — but the calm is practiced. Not natural. Penelope stands near the curtain, trying not to pace. She fails.

PENELOPE
I hate this part.

XAVI
Which part?

PENELOPE
The part where you pretend you're fine so nobody panics.

Xavi looks at her.

XAVI
Are you panicking?

Penelope laughs once — bitter.

PENELOPE
No. I'm just…simmering.

XAVI
That's worse.

A doctor tapes his wrist.

DOCTOR
Slight hairline fracture. You can ride if you tolerate pain.

Xavi nods like that's normal. Penelope stares at the doctor, incredulous.

PENELOPE
That's insane.

DOCTOR
It is MotoGP.

The doctor steps away. Penelope steps closer to Xavi — low voice.

PENELOPE
You scared?

Xavi considers.

XAVI
Not of crashing.

PENELOPE
Of what then?

He meets her eyes.

XAVI
Of them making it mean something.

Penelope swallows. That hits.

PENELOPE
They already are.

Xavi leans back, exhale.

XAVI
Yeah.

A beat. Penelope sits on the edge of a chair, finally letting some humanity show.

PENELOPE
I thought Mallorca was you becoming…free.

XAVI
It was.

PENELOPE
So what is this?

Xavi's face is still. Then:

XAVI
This is the bill.

Penelope nods slowly.

PENELOPE
Okay.

XAVI
Okay what?

Penelope stands — steel returns.

PENELOPE
Okay. Then we don't let them write the whole story.

Xavi watches her — he trusts her. Erv enters, calm but charged.

ERV
You good?

XAVI
Wrist is…annoying.

ERV
Yeah. That's a medical term.

Penelope looks at Erv.

PENELOPE
Was it the bike?

Erv doesn't hesitate.

ERV
Yes.

A beat.

XAVI
Will they say that?

Erv's mouth tightens.

ERV
No.

Penelope swears softly in Catalan.

PENELOPE
Of course not.

Erv looks at Xavi.

ERV
You ride Sunday?

Xavi doesn't answer immediately.

Then:

XAVI
Do I have a choice?

Erv's silence is the answer.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCATI HOSPITALITY - EVENING

Giacomo has Sete cornered. Polite. Predatory. Alyssa is nearby, listening but not participating.

GIACOMO
Diego is our anchor. We need stability.

SETE
Stability is not a rider. It's a fantasy.

Giacomo smiles thinly.

GIACOMO
Your son is…emotionally affected by Xavi.

Sete looks at him.

SETE
My son is emotionally affected by racing. That's why he's good.

Giacomo tries again.

GIACOMO
Xavi's situation is…complicated.

SETE
No.
(beat)
It's simple. He's fast.

Giacomo's patience cracks slightly.

GIACOMO
He brings noise.

Sete's eyes sharpen — calm, but lethal.

SETE
Noise is not danger.

Giacomo leans in.

GIACOMO
He's making Diego look…

Sete cuts him off — gentle, devastating.

SETE
Stop.

A beat.

SETE (CONT'D)
You want control. He wants survival. Those are not the same thing.

Giacomo exhales like he's irritated at reality.

GIACOMO
Your loyalty is admirable.

Sete smiles. Small.

SETE
It's not loyalty.
(beat)
It's understanding. Something you'll never have.

Sete stands, done.

SETE
Don't try to wedge my son into your fear.

He walks off. Alyssa watches Giacomo — the wedge failed. That matters.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL ROOM - NIGHT

Diego sits alone, watching replay of Turn 1 crashes from past Le Mans races. He sees riders wiped out. Riders standing. Riders carried.

He hates what racing does to time. Sete enters quietly. Sits beside him. No immediate words.

Finally—

DIEGO
He's going to ride?

SETE
Yes.

DIEGO
With a broken wrist.

SETE
Yes.

Diego clenches jaw.

DIEGO
Why do they let him?

Sete looks at his son.

SETE
Because the system does not care what it costs.

DIEGO
It should.

SETE
It won't.

A beat. Diego looks away.

DIEGO
I don't like him being…so popular.

Sete almost laughs.

SETE
That's honest.

DIEGO
I'm honest.

SETE
No. You're competitive.

Diego looks at him.

DIEGO
What's the difference?

Sete thinks.

SETE
Competitive wants to win.
(beat)
Honest wants to be true.

Diego absorbs that. Doesn't love it.

DIEGO
He’s not true. He’s…curated. Penelope. Social media. Brands.

Sete’s eyes narrow.

SETE
Don’t confuse tools with lies.

Diego looks down.

DIEGO
Turn 1 tomorrow… it’s going to be chaos.

Sete nods.

SETE
Then don’t be chaos.

Diego looks up.

DIEGO
Is that your big wisdom?

Sete smiles.

SETE
It’s enough.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - MORNING

Weather maps. Radar. A cold wet wind. Teams scramble like ants before a storm. Erv studies everything with monk focus. Xavi stands nearby, wrist taped, helmet under arm. Giacomo enters with Alyssa.

GIACOMO
We choose now.

ENGINEER
It’s fifty-fifty.

GIACOMO
That’s not a choice. That’s a coin toss.

Erv points at the radar.

ERV
It’s not fifty-fifty. It’s…French.

Giacomo stares.

GIACOMO
What does that mean?

ERV
It means it will wait until you commit. Then it will embarrass you.

A beat. Even Alyssa almost laughs. Diego enters, already suited, calm. Sete behind him. Diego looks at the tires laid out.

DIEGO
Hard rear.

Erv looks at Diego.

ERV
Hard rear if it stays cold and wet. If it dries, you'll have a stone.

Diego shrugs.

DIEGO
I like stone.

Xavi looks at Erv.

XAVI
What do I like?

Erv watches him. The wrist. The eyes. The stillness.

ERV
You like…options.

Giacomo steps in.

GIACOMO
No options. We split strategy. One hard, one medium.

Alyssa nods.

ALYSSA
Game theory.

Xavi looks at Erv — quiet question.

XAVI
Medium rear?

Erv doesn't answer instantly. He listens to the wind outside the garage. The sound of distant engines. The mood of the day.

ERV
Medium.

Giacomo bristles.

GIACOMO
Medium will fail.

ERV
Hard will fail too. Just slower.

Giacomo points at Xavi's wrist.

GIACOMO
He cannot manage a failing tire today.

Erv's eyes snap.

ERV
He can manage anything. That's why he's here.

Silence. Giacomo doesn't like being seen.

Erv steps closer to Xavi.

ERV (CONT'D)
If it dries, medium lives. If it rains harder, medium dies.

Xavi nods.

XAVI
So we race the sky.

ERV
Welcome to Le Mans.

CUT TO:

EXT. START GRID - DAY

A flash of motion. Engines rise. The sound of release. We never see the crash.

We CUT HARD TO:

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Every eye on the monitors — but we never see what they see.

The sound hits first. A sudden spike in engine pitch. A collective intake of breath from the room. Then —

SILENCE.

Sete freezes. An engineer's hand goes to his mouth. Alyssa stands — too fast.

GIACOMO
No. No—

Sete's voice cuts through, sharp and controlled.

SETÉ
Diego.

Radio crackle. Chaos bleeding through walls.

SPENCER (V.O.)
And Diego's down — Turn 1 takes another one—

A chair scrapes back. Someone swears in Italian. Another in Catalan. Erv doesn't move. He listens.

A beat — then:

ERV
Xavi's still up.

Everyone snaps to him.

ERV
He threaded it. He's through.

Relief and fear collide in the same breath. Sete closes his eyes. Just for a second.

Alyssa already recalculating. The system adjusts — instantly.

Outside, the race continues. Inside, something has broken.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRACK - LAPS 5-24 - DAY

We do not show a race. We show a duel.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Most of it is watched here on TV monitors. Faces lit by monitors — we never see the monitors. Bodies leaning, recoiling, holding breath. An engineer whispers numbers like a prayer. Alyssa's jaw is locked. Sete doesn't blink.

Erv listens. The sound of engines bleeds through concrete — distant, violent, alive.

EXT. TRACK - INSERTS (INTERCUT)

Only fragments: — A LOW ANGLE: bikes tear past, doppler scream ripping the air — ONBOARD: Xavi's visor, eyes steady, unblinking — A FLASH of blue: Fabio ahead, aggressive, glorious — A FLASH of red: Xavi behind, patient, predatory.

Nothing continuous. Nothing safe.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

The room moves as one organism. A collective inhale. A collective flinch. Someone claps once — stops themselves.

EXT. PADDOCK HALLWAY - SAME

Penelope paces. She tries to watch on her phone. Can't. She shoves it in her pocket. Walks faster. Lights a cigarette with shaking hands.

She listens instead. The sound tells her everything.

EXT. TRACK - INSERT (ONBOARD)

Xavi leans. The bike chatters. He doesn't.

His voice, low, inside the helmet:

XAVI (V.O.)
Easy. Wait.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE

Erv nods — once.

ERV
Now.

No one hears him. But Xavi does.

EXT. TRACK - FINAL INSERT

Fabio glances back — just once. Xavi is still there.

Closer now.

INT. DUCATI GARAGE

The room holds its breath — again. We never see the pass. We only feel that it almost happens.

XAVI (V.O.)
He brakes late. He wants the hero moment.

Spencer VO layered like a documentary narrator:

SPENCER (V.O.)
Fabio is on one today — but Xavi Vega… he's the kind of rider who can make you feel like you're not riding fast enough even when you are.

Radio:

ERV (V.O.)
Medium is heating. Don't cook it.

XAVI (V.O.)
I know.

He closes in under braking — impossible late. Fabio looks back mid-corner — shocked.

XAVI (V.O.)
He sees me.

The wrist hurts. Xavi hides it from himself.

XAVI (V.O.)
Not today.

Near pass — Fabio defends. Clean. Respectful violence.

SPENCER (V.O.)
This is what makes MotoGP different — you're close enough to feel each other's mistakes. And somehow… you trust each other anyway.

Final laps: Xavi pushes. The medium starts to go.

ERV (V.O.)
Tire is dropping. Bring it home.

XAVI (V.O.)
Copy.

Xavi chooses restraint — a decision with cost.

He finishes P2. The crowd erupts.

CUT TO:

INT. PARC FERMÉ - DAY

Sweat. Noise. Cameras. Spencer steps in with mic.

SPENCER
Disappointed?

Xavi shrugs. Honest.

XAVI
Sucks for me and Diego.
(beat)
But it’s great for Fabio.

He nods toward the stands.

XAVI
Great for France.

Crowd ROARS. Spencer smiles — impressed.

SPENCER
You’re popular here.

Xavi glances at the chaos of cameras.

XAVI
Yeah. That’s…weird.

Penelope watches from the edge — proud and terrified at the same time. Giacomo watches too — but his face is different.

He’s calculating how to use this.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

French bistro. Warm light. Too many forks. Expensive restraint.

The table is split: — Giacomo + Alyssa on one axis — Xavi + Penelope nearer Erv — Diego quiet, Sete beside him.

Wine pours. Food arrives. Everyone pretends it’s normal. A waiter pours Penelope wine. She lets him.

PENELOPE
One glass, no more.

The flask sits beside her chair. Xavi notices.

XAVI
What's in there tonight?

PENELOPE
Tea.

XAVI
Still?

PENELOPE
This is France.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Tiny bit of whiskey if I've earned it.

XAVI
Have you?

Penelope looks around the table. Giacomo. Alyssa. Ducati. Diego. Sete. Erv.

PENELOPE
Ask me after dessert.

Giacomo raises a glass.

GIACOMO
To a strong weekend.

No one echoes. It hangs. Alyssa jumps in — smooth.

ALYSSA
To Fabio. And to our team.

Diego doesn’t drink. Sete watches him. Penelope tries to lighten.

PENELOPE
To France for being…aggressively French.

A small laugh. Even Erv smiles.

GIACOMO
We don't need to charm them. We need results.

Xavi looks at Giacomo.

XAVI
Results like finishing?

Giacomo's eyes tighten.

GIACOMO
Results like championships.

Erv sips wine.

ERV
We're mid-season.

GIACOMO
We are never mid-season. We are always in threat.

Penelope can't help herself.

PENELOPE
That sounds exhausting.

Alyssa shoots her a look.

ALYSSA
It's professional.

Penelope smiles politely.

PENELOPE
Right. Sorry. Professional exhaustion.

Erv chokes a laugh. Xavi smiles. Diego almost smiles — then stops. Sete looks at Penelope — he likes her.

Giacomo re-centers, aiming at Xavi.

GIACOMO
Your popularity is useful. But it comes with obligations.

Xavi nods.

XAVI
I know.

GIACOMO
Do you?

Xavi meets his eyes.

XAVI
Yeah. You're going to ask me something?

Silence.

Giacomo smiles like a man who thinks he's mentoring.

GIACOMO
I'm going to ask you to be aligned.

Erv's face: here it is. Penelope watches Xavi — trying not to show fear.

Diego finally speaks, low.

DIEGO
Alignment is a nice word for control.

Giacomo turns to Diego.

GIACOMO
Careful.

Sete cuts in, calm.

SETE
Let him speak.

Giacomo looks at Sete — doesn't love that either. Xavi sets his fork down.

XAVI
Can I ask something?

Giacomo gestures.

GIACOMO
Of course.

Xavi's tone is gentle — which makes it worse.

XAVI
When I crashed…you blamed me.

Giacomo's smile stiffens.

GIACOMO
I reacted.

XAVI
Yeah.
(beat)
So…what happens when you react publicly?

Alyssa shifts — tension. Giacomo leans back, measured.

GIACOMO
We will handle narrative.

Penelope's eyes narrow.

PENELOPE
That's a terrifying sentence.

Alyssa snaps — not loud, but sharp.

ALYSSA
Penelope.

Penelope looks at Alyssa, smiling.

PENELOPE
Yes?

ALYSSA
You don't get to editorialize.

Penelope holds it.

PENELOPE
I'm a journalist. It's literally my disability.

Erv laughs. Xavi smiles. Alyssa doesn't. Giacomo stands — polite but final.

GIACOMO
We're done.

He leaves. Alyssa follows after a beat. The table exhales. Diego stares at his plate.

Sete looks at Xavi.

SETE
You did good today.

Xavi nods.

XAVI
Thanks.

Sete looks at Penelope.

SETE
He will need you.

Penelope swallows.

PENELOPE
I know.

Erv watches them — this is becoming a team whether Ducati likes it or not.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - NIGHT

Quiet above the chaos. Penelope smokes. Xavi steps out onto the balcony. Sees the cigarette.

XAVI
Rough country?

PENELOPE
Only the stressful ones.

She takes a drag. Then reaches for the flask. Xavi watches.

XAVI
Tea again?

PENELOPE
Hot toddy.

XAVI
That's very old person.

PENELOPE
That's because I don't want to wake up feeling like Le Mans.

XAVI
So...all of them.

Penelope laughs — then it breaks.

PENELOPE
I don't know how to protect you from this.

Xavi leans on the railing.

XAVI
You're not supposed to.

PENELOPE
I know, but —

XAVI
But you're trying anyway.

Penelope nods, tears threatening. She hates that too.

PENELOPE
They're going to turn you into...a thing.

Xavi looks at her.

XAVI
I'm already a thing.

PENELOPE
No. You're...you.

Xavi studies her. Soft.

XAVI
You're scared.

Penelope exhales.

PENELOPE
Yeah.

XAVI
Of me crashing?

PENELOPE
No.
(beat)

PENELOPE
Of you surviving and it being worse.

Xavi's eyes narrow — he understands.

XAVI
Yeah.

A beat. He reaches out and takes the cigarette from her — not to smoke, just to hold.

XAVI
Mallorca felt like...oxygen.

PENELOPE
This is carbon monoxide.

XAVI
Still breathing.

PENELOPE
In Mallorca people drink because they're happy.

A beat.

PENELOPE
Here they drink because they don't want to feel anything.

Penelope leans into him slightly — not a hug, not nothing.

PENELOPE
Promise me something.

XAVI
No.

Penelope laughs.

PENELOPE
Okay, fine. Promise you'll lie to me.

Xavi looks at her.

XAVI
What?

PENELOPE
If you're scared, you lie. Just to me.

Xavi considers, then nods once.

XAVI
Okay.

Penelope smiles through fear.

PENELOPE
Good.

Xavi hands the cigarette back. Doesn't smoke.

XAVI
Go to bed.

PENELOPE
You?

XAVI
I'm going to... listen.

Penelope looks at him.

PENELOPE
To what?

Xavi looks out at the night.

XAVI
To the silence.

XAVI
Before they take it.

Penelope nods. Goes inside.

Xavi stays.

CUT TO:

INT. DUCATI GARAGE - LATE NIGHT

Empty now. Lights low. The smell of rubber still in the air. Erv stands in front of a monitor. Replays the crash once more.

Rear snap. Straight line. Wrong.

Erv closes his eyes and listens — like the engineers of old did. He hears the engine in memory. The change.

He opens his eyes, whispers to no one.

ERV
Not pilot error.

He exhales, then under his breath — pure truth, no polish:

ERV (UNDER HIS BREATH)
Fucking suit.

He kills the monitor.

Dark.

FADE OUT.