

EXPATS: LOS GUIRIS

Written by

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FADE IN

EXT. PARK PANDEROL - EL GRAO DE CASTELLON - SUNSET/NIGHT

Silence. Swallows swarm through the sky above Park Panderol. The fully grown London Plane's green leaves pop in the early summer sunset. More birds emerge from the tree, flying above the beige and brick apartment buildings.

CAMERA SWEEPS down through the sand-filled streets: shoulder-to-shoulder bodies, everyone slick with sweat.

As we continue through the streets, fast-forwarding through time, the sunset turns to night, and more people fill the streets.

The silence gives way to a chaotic orchestra of HORNS, FIRECRACKERS and pounding DRUMS. A PANDEMONIUM of hundreds of SPECTATORS sitting on the wooden bleachers and standing in metal cages surrounding the dozens of CORREDORES (RUNNERS).

Near the barricades, NOE SOLER GARCIA (24) watches, eyes locked on a wooden crate in the middle of the street. She's radiant in the worst and best ways - half-transfixed, half-feral. Her hair is damp, face streaked with glitter and sweat.

She LAUGHS unsettlingly, looking directly into the camera.

NOE

No seas un cagón y métete, coño.

CAMERA CUTS TO:

Then back to her grin that cracks to reveal a seductive sadness.

We hear CHEERS as Noe continues to stare.

We can't see MATEO VAN DE BROEK (32), but his gravelly, sensual voice hints at his cultured intellect and charming demeanour.

MATEO (O.S.)

Vale, vale.

The camera reveals Mateo's POV as he jumps from the bleachers and joins the corredores--some stretch and some laugh.

The crowd CHEERS even louder as the ANNOUNCER (40) walks along the street, holding a microphone.

ANNOUNCER
¡Atención, atención! ¡Se va a
proceder a la suelta del toro
embolado!

EL PASTOR opens the wooden crate, guiding the bull out onto
the street.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
¡Desde del Grao... llega
'Valiente', de la ganadería X! ¡Un
toro con fuerza, con fuego, y con
honor!

El pastor lights the horns on fire, and--

Quick FLASH:

— A discarded religious pamphlet trampled underfoot. The cover
shows a blank-eyed Christ under the words: "Solo los que buscan
serán encontrados."

— A strange symbol graffitied on a shutter: an open eye
surrounded by flames.

— A blurry figure in the crowd — still, watching Noe. Hood
up. Face unreadable. Gone in a blink.

Silence. We only see the people screaming. We can only assume
the announcer says:

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)
¡A la cuenta de tres...
(beat)
Uno!

The crowd joins in.

CROWD
Dos!
(beat)
Tres!

El pastor releases the bull and--

CUT TO:

INT. BAR ALDEA - CASTELLON DE LA PLANA - DAY

Mateo sits at a table with his eyes closed and a drink in his
right hand. His left arm is in a sling.

Across the table sits MARÍA (36), a charismatic Colombian whose compelling presence seems to tower over the others. Beside her is LAILA FLORES RIVERA (28), a sharp-witted local artist with an understated bohemian style. Completing the trio is EMMA SMITH (26), a bubbly yoga teacher with an influencer persona that masks a deeper, emotionally chaotic interior.

MARÍA
(Columbian accent)
Hey Mateo, ¿Donde estas? Are you
okay?

Mateo opens his eyes slowly, wincing. He takes a long sip of his drink.

MATEO
(English & Dutch accent)
Aquí. Estoy aquí. Mi brazo me
molesta un poco, pero estoy bien.

EMMA
(Slight Manchester accent)
Serves you right for being a show-
off, Mateo. What were you thinking,
running with those bulls? Mad.

Mateo waves her off dismissively.

MATEO
Fue... una experiencia. Intensa.

LAILA
(Castellano Spanish)
Intensa es una forma de decirlo.
Parecías un fantasma cuando te
sacaron de allí. Y la Noe, ¿dónde
está ella? Se metió en un lío
contigo, ¿no?

The mention of Noe hangs in the air. A beat of uncomfortable silence. Emma fidgets with her phone. María glances at the entrance of the bar.

Just then, JAKE CONROY (26), a slick remote tech bro, saunters in, eyes immediately scanning the room. He carries a small, professional-looking camera.

JAKE
(American accent)
What's up, team? Just finished
scouting some killer spots for the
next Insta story. Did I miss
anything? Anything... viral?
(MORE)

JAKE (CONT'D)
Or at least anything as viral as
Mateo getting his ass handed to him
by a bull.

Jake takes out his iPhone 16 Pro.

INSERT - JAKE'S PHONE: TIKTOK REEL

VERTICAL VIDEO FORMAT

SFX: Distant firecrackers, cowbells, and shouting. REGGAETON
MUSIC layered underneath, slightly distorted.

CAMERA SHAKES as it follows the chaos of the Toro Embolado run.

ANGLE ON:

A bull barrels down the narrow street, its horns ablaze.

MATEO enters frame - clearly drunk, arms out like he's trying to
impress someone.

SOMEONE OFFSCREEN (O.S.)
¡Está loco, tío!

A split-second later, the bull clips Mateo's side - not a full
gore, but hard enough to send him spinning into a vendor table.

GASPS, SCREAMS, LAUGHTER erupt from all sides. Someone yells,
"¡Hostia puta!"

People crowd toward the camera, laughing, pointing. One woman
fans herself. Another yells, "¡El guiri está vivo, está vivo!"

The camera zooms in on Mateo, sprawled, groaning.

MUSIC CUTS OUT.

END VERTICAL VIDEO FORMAT

Jake grins, but his eyes are calculating. He pulls up a
chair, a little too close to Emma.

JAKE
Absolute fire, Mateo.

Mateo GROANS and takes another sip of his beer.

EMMA

Noe's still gone, Jake. I doubt you care since it's not really content for your feed, is it?

JAKE

Woah, easy there, Emma. Just asking. I'm concerned, you know? She's, like, part of the... community.

TIMA IVANENKO (22, Ukrainian), a brilliant but cold engineering student, enters. He's carrying a backpack and looks preoccupied. He nods curtly at the group and heads straight for the bar, pulling out a small, intricately designed earring from his pocket. He looks at it, a flicker of something unreadable in his eyes, before quickly stuffing it back into his bag. He orders a drink from DAVID ALDEA (41, Spanish/Romanian), the disillusioned academic turned bartender.

David, leaning against the counter, is wiping down glasses. He watches the group with a mixture of amusement and disdain.

DAVID

(Castellano Spanish)
Más vale que no la busquéis, a la guiri esa. Siempre dando problemas. Estos putos guiris vienen en chanclas con calcetines y luego desaparecen.

David glances pointedly at Jake's trendy sandals and socks. Jake doesn't understand Spanish, but he gets the gist of the look.

JAKE

(To Emma)
What'd he say? Something about my... fashion choices?

EMMA

Just David being David. Ignore him.

JAKE

Well, tell him to get me one of the Spanish Sangria things.

EMMA

Sangria is Spanish.

JAKE

Yeah, but the cheap, fruitless version they actually drink here.

EMMA
Tinto de Verano?

JAKE
Yeah, that.
(to David)
Un Pinto de Verano, por favor.

David cringes at Jake's Spanish.

MARÍA
(to David)
Noe no es una "guiri", David. Es de aquí. Y no está dando problemas. Está... desaparecida.

DAVID
(Shrugs, muttering in Romanian)
Acesti straini prosti...

Emma takes a sip of tea.

EMMA
If there's anything that would chase me away, it's the red tape in this country. I tried to get a doctor's note for heat exhaustion last week. They needed a cita previa, two copies of my NIE, and a signature from someone who doesn't exist.

MATEO
You need a miracle, not a médico.

EMMA
I'd settle for a receptionist who doesn't say "vuelva mañana."

MATEO
The real secret is becoming a funcionario, so you can pretty much do whatever you want and not get fired.

Suddenly, the front door of the bar opens, and INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SANCHEZ (50), conservative on the outside, suppressed and perverted on the inside, walks in. He's calm, unhurried, and quietly suspicious. The chatter in the bar dies down slightly.

MATEO (CONT'D)
 (whisper to Emma)
 Talking about funcionarios.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SANCHEZ
 (Calm, professional
 Spanish)
 Buenas tardes. Disculpen la
 interrupción. Solo una visita
 informal. Entiendo que todos aquí
 conocían a Noe Soler Garcia.

He looks directly at the table where the expats are sitting.
 A palpable tension settles over the group.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SANCHEZ (CONT'D)
 (to David)
 Un café.

David doesn't need to look at his hands to know what he's
 doing. His eyes stay fixed on the inspector.

EMMA
 (forcing a smile)
 Inspector. Yes, we all know Noe.
 Lovely girl. Bit quiet, as you
 know.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SANCHEZ
 No entiendo--

JAKE
 Quiet! That bitch be loud AF.

EMMA
 Sarcasm, Jake. It's something you
 Americans don't understand.

MATEO
 Meh, take a Yanks optimism away and
 they're one step closer to sounding
 like you Brits.

JAKE
 I've spent half my life in the UAE,
 Mateo. You're the Canadian--that's
 like half American, half British,
 all nothing.

MATEO
 My mom's Mexican--

MARIA
 But white.

MATEO

And my dad's Dutch. Plus, you went to an American school in Dubai, Jake.

JAKE

Well yeah. You ain't getting me into some Muslim school. I need to be able to touch women.

(to inspector Beltrán)

In a totally respectful and legal way, of course, officer.

Beltrán's amazed at the conversation, not quite sure he understands. He switches his attention to Mateo.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SANCHEZ

Y tu, Mateo. ¿Tuviste algún contacto con ella en el festival? Su brazo, parece... reciente.

Mateo shifts uncomfortably in his seat.

MATEO

Inspector Beltrán, amigo. ¿Cuanto, tiempo, no?

Inspector Beltrán waits for a useful response.

MATEO (CONT'D)

Pues, sí, la vi. En la fiesta del toro. Pero... con toda la gente, ya sabe. Y el brazo... fue un accidente. Nada que ver con Noe.

Beltrán nods slowly, his eyes sweeping over each face at the table. He takes out a small notebook.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SANCHEZ

¿Alguno de ustedes ha recibido algún mensaje de ella? ¿O han escuchado algo inusual?

JAKE

Is he asking us if we know anything?

María nods.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(Too quickly)

Nope! Nothing here. My personal DMs are dry. All business lately. Are you looking to get into crypto?

Inspector Beltrán looks at Jake, both confused and unimpressed.

David brings Inspector Beltrán his coffee, his hand trembling slightly. Inspector Beltrán notices.

LAILA

Yo no. La última vez que la vi fue en el festival. Estaba con Mateo.

Inspector Beltrán Sanchez looks over at Tima sitting at the bar.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SANCHEZ

Señor Ivanenko, su familia llegó hace poco, ¿verdad?

TIMA

¿Cómo sabes mi nombre?

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SANCHEZ

Todas las últimas publicaciones de Noe en las redes fueron con este grupo.

Tima glances at Emma, accusingly.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SANCHEZ

¿Fue complicado el papeleo? ¿Cuenta bancaria, padrón, visado? ¿Noe le ayudó con algo de eso?

TIMA

(dry)
No. Nunca hablamos de eso.

Beltrán doesn't respond. Just sips his coffee.

Then – silently – he picks up a crumpled napkin from the table, smooths it out, and studies it. Meaningless, but he does it intentionally.

His eyes rest a moment longer on MARÍA.

Then on TIMA again.

Emma's phone buzzes. She quickly checks it, her eyes widening slightly. It's a voice note from Emma's Instagram burner account. A shaky, distorted voice.

NOE (O.S., V.O. DISTORTED)

Tuve que pillarme. Ni se te ocurra seguirme.

Emma quickly shoves her phone into her pocket, a panicked look on her face. She tries to maintain a poker face, but her eyes betray her.

EMMA

Voy al baño un momento.

She disappears into the hallway.

Meanwhile, Tima, who has been quietly nursing his beer at the bar, feels the earring in his pocket. He looks at his reflection in the polished bar top, then subtly glances at the group. He hides it deeper in his bag.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SANCHEZ

Es importante que cualquier
información, por pequeña que sea,
se comparta con las autoridades.

María, looking at the Inspector, then at the group, suddenly speaks up, her voice a little too casual.

MARÍA

Bueno, hay mucha gente en España
que... desaparece. Algunos se van con
grupos. Comunidades nuevas, ¿sabes?
Como sectas. Noe... a veces hablaba
de cosas así.

Her eyes flick towards Mateo, who pales slightly.

FLASHBACK - EXT. BAR TERRACE - NIGHT

A hazy night. We only see the back of a MAN leaning toward NOE.

MAN

There's this place in Aragón where the
mountains feed your soul and keep the
sheep out.

Noe says nothing. Just watches him.

BACK TO PRESENT

Mateo gulps his drink, hard.

Inspector Beltrán fixes his gaze on María.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN

¿Tiene algún detalle sobre estas
"comunidades"?

MARÍA
 (Shrugs, feigning
 innocence)
 Solo chismes. De la calle. Cosas
 de... gente buscando algo diferente.

Beltrán sighs, a hint of weariness in his eyes.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN
 Entendido. Bueno, les agradezco su
 tiempo. Si recuerdan algo, ya saben
 dónde encontrarme.

He gives one last, lingering look at the group before turning
 and leaving the bar.

As the door closes, the tension in the room explodes.

MATEO
 ¿Porque le contaste algo sobre
 comunidades nuevas?

MARÍA
 La policia me pone nerviosa.

MATEO
 Pero, ¿Piensas que ella esta con un
 grupo asi?

MARÍA
 No sé... I wish I hadn't said
 anything. I'm not sure I want the
 cops looking for her.

Emma walks back into the scene.

EMMA
 (Whispering, pulling her
 phone out)
 Oh my god, guys. I just got a
 message. From Noe. She said, "Tuve
 que pillarme. Ni se te ocurra
 seguirme."

The group stares at her, stunned.

JAKE
 (Eyes wide)
 No way! Seriously?

LAILA
 ¿Y no se lo has dicho al policía?
 ¡Emma!

EMMA

(Defensive)

Well, what would he do? She said
don't follow. Maybe she doesn't
want to be found. But... she sounded...
troubled.

MATEO

I remember it. That night... at the
festival. There was a man. He spoke
of a community. In Aragon.
Something... spiritual.

María looks at Mateo, her expression unreadable. Tima, from
the bar, watches them intently.

EMMA

(A sudden burst of energy)

Aragón... We have to go after her.
Not the police. Us.

DAVID

(From the bar, scoffing)

¿Vosotros? ¿Ir a buscarla? ¡Qué
tontería! Os vais a meter en un
lío.

JAKE

(Excited, already pulling
out his camera)

A road trip! This could be epic!

LAILA

No sé, Emma. La policía...

EMMA

I'm going. Who's with me?

A beat of silence.

DAVID

(beat, bitter)

¿Y qué vais a hacer? ¿Una búsqueda
espiritual con GPS? ¿Os pensáis que
los perdidos quieren ser encontrados?

MATEO

Simplemente no quieres perder a tus
mejores clientes.

DAVID

Ella no es una víctima. Y vosotros
no sois héroes.

Mateo looks at María, then at Emma.

MATEO

I'm in.

Emma beams.

MARÍA

(A hint of worry in her
eyes)

Yo manejo.

Jake is already filming himself, narrating.

VERTICAL VIDEO FORMAT

Jake looks at the camera/at us.

JAKE

So, looks like we're embarking on
an epic quest. Early stage of the
journey. There's no refusal to the
call when you're with "yes" people.

(whispers)

Hashtag, finding Noe.

END VERTICAL VIDEO FORMAT

María glares at Jake.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'll delete that video right away.

(whisper)

Maybe.

Laila scans the room, a slight smile breaking through her
worry when her eyes meet Mateo's.

LAILA

Vale. Pero si la cosa se pone fea,
yo me bajo.

Tima walks over from the bar, his expression still
unreadable.

TIMA

I don't trust any of you. But I'm
coming. Someone needs to keep you
out of trouble.

LAILA

You're the youngest of all of us.

TIMA

And somehow still the most mature.

EMMA

María could be your mother.

Tima blushes, unable to hide his attraction.

David watches them, shaking his head. He wipes down the bar with exaggerated slowness.

DAVID

(to himself)

¡Por fin! No voy a tener a ese grupo de putos guiris en mi bar.

LATER THAT DAY...

INT. EMMA'S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

Emma reorganizes her living room in a flurry. Books. Yoga mat. Charger cords. Too many essential oils. She mutters to herself as she dumps things into an open duffel.

EMMA

No heavy fabrics. Hydration. Two crystals. Why does everything feel like a bad omen?

Among the rubble in the duffel bag, there's a picture of a TWO-YEAR-OLD BOY sitting in a pile of leaves in a park. She picks it up, a bittersweet look on her face.

A KNOCK at the door.

Emma quickly stuffs the picture in her pocket and opens the door: Maria, holding a paper bag and wearing sunglasses indoors.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Oh--hey.

MARÍA

You texted. Said "logistics." That usually means you're spiralling.

EMMA

I'm not spiralling, I'm... staging.

MARÍA

Mmm. Claro.

María pulls two beers and a tight joint from the bag. Cracks one open.

MARÍA (CONT'D)

We don't need a plan. We just need movimiento.

EMMA

So you're really in?

MARÍA

Obvio. I'll drive. Tengo la furgo, musica, and summer's started, so school's out and I don't need to counsel anymore private school teens.

(beat)

But I'm not babysitting gringos con complejo de salvador.

EMMA

Fair.

María scans the room. She grabs a sarong from the pile

MARÍA

Mija, esta ni tapa ni abriga ¿Para qué?

EMMA

It's for vibes.

MARÍA

It's for Instagram.

EMMA

Exactly.

MARÍA

(sits on the bed)

You're packing like a white girl on a panic trip.

EMMA

That's literally what this is.

MARÍA

You don't need half of estas cosas.

EMMA

Says the woman who packed nothing but eyeliner and duct tape for Valencia.

MARÍA

Oh, I packed a lot more than that.

EMMA
Like what?

MARÍA
Olvidálo.

EMMA
Reckon we all came with a bit of
baggage, didn't we?

Beat.

MARÍA
And none of us really chose to be
here.

EMMA
Who chooses Castellón?

MARÍA
People who can't afford Valencia.

EMMA
I'm actually starting to like it
more here. Better beaches, less
crowded--

MARÍA
Plus, you get to mas guapa que la
mayoría.

Emma is about to rebut, but then realizes it's true.

MARÍA (CONT'D)
But really... why do you want to do
this?

Why are you going?

EMMA
To find her. Obviously.

MARÍA
No.

Emma keeps folding, but her hands are slower now.

EMMA
Because she messaged me.

MARÍA
Because you need to be the one who
fixes it.

EMMA
(sharper now)
You don't know me.

MARÍA
Claro que sí. I do. You're the helper.
The good girl. But also the one who
needs to be needed.

EMMA
And what, you're going just to drive?
To flirt? To what?

Beat.

MARÍA
Maybe she wants to be found. Maybe she
wants to test who will follow.

Emma stares at her bag. Her lip twitches.

EMMA
I just... I can't not go.

MARÍA
That's the only good reason.

María softens, sits beside her, beer in hand.

Emma smiles and raises her can.

EMMA
Cheers to bad decisions.

MARÍA
Los mejores tipos.

CUT TO:

INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Jake stands in front of a ring light, shirtless, applying
beard oil while his phone records.

JAKE
(to camera)
Prepping for the unknown isn't
about fear. It's about freedom.
Mobility. Precision. Three shirts--
okay, ten shirts--Two chargers. One
mindset.

TIMA (O.S.)
And zero self-awareness.

JAKE
Jesus, do you sneak into everyone's
place like that?

TIMA
Your door was open.

He throws a roll of duct tape onto the bed, followed by a
tangled extension cord and a first-aid kit.

JAKE
Fuck, do all Ukrainians pack like
that.

Tima ignores him.

JAKE (CONT'D)
It's like you're at war or
something.

Tima's about to say something, but decides not to waste his
breath.

Jake continues packing, which is mostly brand-new gear,
folded into colour-coordinated cubes.

TIMA
You're treating this like a fucking
content trip.

Jake grabs his ring light.

JAKE
If we get lost, I'd rather have
good lighting.

TIMA
You care more about followers than
facts.

JAKE
And you care more about being right
than being human.
(beat)
Plus, you're a student. Some of us
have jobs.

TIMA

You're a tech bro content creator,
Emma's an influencer yoga teacher,
Laila's an artist with family
money, and Mateauz--what does he do
again?

JAKE

Online sales or some shit. It's
never really clear.

TIMA

Either way, María's the only one
with a real job.

JAKE

School counsellor? I counsel the
world, baby. I'll help those kids
drop out of school with six
figures.

TIMA

You should probably start by fixing
yourself.

JAKE

That's the gayest shit I've heard
you say.

TIMA

You're not supposed to use that
word.

JAKE

You're right. That's the gayest
thing I've heard you say.

TIMA

Well, it's true.

JAKE

Oh yeah, and what can you fix?

TIMA

Pretty much anything with wires.

JAKE

But can you fix being a dick?

TIMA

No, I don't have wires. But I can
fix our van if it breaks down.

JAKE
Vans have wires?

TIMA picks up the beard oil, studies it as if it were radioactive.

TIMA
What is this? Slippery narcissism?

JAKE
Coconut-based confidence.

They lock eyes for a second – both annoyed, both amused.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTELLÓN - PLAZA MAYOR - NIGHT

It's late. The square is empty except for soft yellow streetlights, old stone benches, and two figures hunched over on the edge of a fountain. The Cathedral imposes a powerful presence in the background.

Mateo and David share a small bottle of cheap rum. Mateo's sling is crooked, his shirt half-unbuttoned. David lights a cigarette with his free hand.

MATEO
¿Sabías que me pidió que me fugara
con ella?

DAVID
¿De los toros?

MATEO
De todo, tío. Del pueblo. De la
mierda. De... la vida.

DAVID
¿Y qué le dijiste?

MATEO
Me reí. Le dije que prefería que me
empitonaran.

DAVID
Buena elección. Ya vas por la mitad
del camino.

Mateo LAUGHS, but stops suddenly with a wince of pain as he moves his arm, forgetting it's sprained.

MATEO

¿Tú crees que se fue? O sea... que lo eligió.

DAVID

No la secuestraron, eso seguro.
Castellón no da para tanto.

MATEO

Era rara, sí. Pero no tonta. No del tipo que desaparece así, sin dejar rastro.

DAVID

Nadie lo es. Hasta que lo es.

Pause. David takes a drink. His tone softens.

DAVID (CONT'D)

¿Sabes que mi madre también se fue?

MATEO

Pensé que había muerto.

DAVID

Lo mismo da, cuando tienes ocho años.

Long silence.

MATEO

Recuerdo que... Noe mencionó algo de una comunidad. Un tipo que "veía su potencial". Yo estaba demasiado borracho para escuchar bien.

DAVID

Entonces todo sigue igual, ¿no?

They both LAUGH. The laughter turns to silence.

MATEO

¿Crees que soy un cobarde?

DAVID

Creo que estás pedo.

MATEO

También.

David passes Mateo the ultimate gulp of the bottle. Mateo finishes it in one gulp.

Then promptly leans over and vomits into a nearby planter.

DAVID
 (very dryly)
 Estás listo pa' Aragón.

David lights another cigarette. Mateo wipes his mouth with the sleeve of his shirt.

They sit in silence. Two exhausted men in a town that's shrinking around them.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAILA'S ROOFTOP - AVENIDA REY DON JAIME - NIGHT

A gentle breeze. The city hums below. Laila sits cross-legged on a flat rooftop, wrapped in a blanket. She scrolls through her contacts. Stops. Stares at a number labelled "Nico (Don't)".

She hesitates.

Dials.

LAILA
 (small)
 Hola.

Beat. She listens. Her expression stays unreadable.

LAILA (CONT'D)
 No. No llamo para discutir. Es solo que... Necesito preguntarte algo.

She stands and begins pacing.

LAILA (CONT'D)
 ¿Te acuerdas de aquel sitio en Aragón? El de los tatuajes en círculo y el "ayuno del sueño"?
 (beat)
 No mientas. Sé que te acuerdas.

Long silence.

LAILA (CONT'D)
 Alguien que conocemos puede que haya ido. Una chica. Se llama Noe. Estaba... buscando algo, supongo.

She sits down and pulls out her sketchbook. On the page: a van, flames behind it, and a figure standing in the road, half-shadow, half-light.

LAILA (CONT'D)

No intento meter tu nombre en esto.

(beat)

Tranqui.

(beat)

Basta, en serio. Solo quiero saber
si siguen activos.

She adds a quick line on the page – a second shadowy figure now appearing behind the first. It could be Noe.

Her hand hesitates. She presses the pencil down harder. The line darkens. Too much.

LAILA (CONT'D)

Dijiste que no era una secta. Pero
también dijiste que me querías.

(beat)

Así que.

She hangs up, rips the page out, and crumples it with sudden intensity.

She lets the silence sit and then lights a cigarette with shaky hands.

LAILA'S MOTHER'S figure casts a shadow on the terrace.

LAILA'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Basta ya de fumar, Laila!

Laila quickly stubs out her cigarette.

LAILA'S MOTHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Ven aquí! Vamos a cenar.

LAILA

Mamá, no tengo hambre.

LAILA'S MOTHER

Ahora mismo, flaquita.

Laila stands near the ledge now and takes a look at the city below.

WIDE SHOT: EXT. AVENIDA REY DON JAIME - NIGHT

LAILA stands barefoot on her rooftop, a still silhouette against the low orange haze of Castellón at night. The tiles beneath her are warm from the day.

Street lamps cast stretched shadows over the quiet avenue below. Palm trees sway slightly in the hot air.

The statue of Jaime I looms in the traffic circle nearby, pigeons sleeping at its base.

Cars drift past slowly, windows down, BASSLINES pulsing – reggaeton and pop. A pair of teenagers on a shared scooter weave through the painted lanes, yelling and laughing, nearly dropping a plastic bag of beer.

Down the block, someone argues loudly on a balcony, gesturing with a lit cigarette. Another plays flamenco-trap on a cracked Bluetooth speaker, the bass thin but insistent.

A van honks at an illegal parking job and swerves.

A pigeon lifts off the edge of Laila's roof, wings slicing the warm air.

Laila doesn't move. She's part of the architecture now.

FLASHBACK – INT. LAILA'S STUDIO – DAY

Laila hyperventilates in front of a blank canvas. Noe crouches beside her, calm.

NOE (WHISPERS)
Draw it before it eats you.

She slips a pen into Laila's shaking hand.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. / EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS – MONTAGE (FLASHBACK INTERCUTS WITH PRESENT)

SOUND DESIGN: Bare, textured. The hum of mopeds. A single dog barking. A neighbour yells faintly from an open balcony. No music. Just weather and breath.

INT. EMMA'S LIVING ROOM – APARTMENT – NIGHT

Emma closes her door, picks up two cans of empty beer, and throws them in the recycling.

She stands in front of the mirror. She zips her duffel, then unzips it. Pulls something out. Puts it back in. Her phone screen lights up with a social media notification, but she ignores it.

She looks at herself.

FLASHBACK - INT. YOGA STUDIO - DUSK

Emma demonstrates a pose. Noe, lying on the mat, watches her upside down.

NOE
You're so good at pretending it's not
killing you.

Emma flinches, caught.

EXT. BAR ALDEA - BACK DOOR

David locks up. The empty bar behind him glows with tired fluorescent light. He turns off the switch. The hum dies. He looks at the building for a long moment.

Then pulls a crumpled photo from his pocket. A woman and a young boy on a Romanian street.

He exhales. Folds the photo.

FLASHBACK - INT. BAR ALDEA - VERY EARLY MORNING

David closes up alone. Noe sits at the counter with a cigarette.

NOE (SOFTLY)
La gente solo piensa que estás
amargado porque es más fácil que
admitir que tienes el corazón roto.

She gets up. Leaves a tip in Romanian bills. He's left staring.

INT. TIMA'S ROOM

A small, sterile space. The bed is made with military precision. A YouTube video on car diagnostics plays muted on his laptop.

Tima sits at his desk. His face lit only by the blue glow of the screen.

He opens a metal box. Inside: a perfectly organized array - tools, cables, a mini flashlight, zip ties, a pocketknife.

He checks the charge on the flashlight. Full. He flips the knife open. Tests the edge with his thumb.

Next to the box, his phone screen lights up.

INSERT - PHONE
SCREEN:

Search history:

"transition Europe"

"Can testosterone cause mood swings?"

Missed: MARÍA (1:14 AM)

Tima quickly locks the phone, expression unreadable.

He picks up a family photo from the desk - just him and his parents. A small ribbon pinned in the corner: blue and yellow.

He turns it over. The back is blank.

His jaw tightens. He puts the photo face down.

Back to the metal box. He snaps it shut.

FLASHBACK - INT. GARAGE WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Tima works on a busted scooter. Noe watches silently (she's wearing the same earring as Tima had in his hand at the bar), then hands him a tool--from the same metal box--he didn't ask for, but needed.

NOE (DRYLY)

You're not as cold as you want to be.

He doesn't respond. But he doesn't correct her either.

INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A ring light glows softly in the corner, casting a blue-white sheen across the minimalist setup. Cables, protein bars, and a half-zipped gym bag clutter the edges.

JAKE sits cross-legged on the bed, back hunched, scrolling on his phone.

His thumb flicks through Instagram stories:

A crypto influencer at a villa in Ibiza, shirtless, raising champagne.

A girl dancing in Lisbon, tagged: #GrindSet #LocationFreedom.

He switches to selfie mode. Front camera: his face, perfectly lit by the ring light. He adjusts his hair, angles the shot.

He stops. Doesn't press record.

For a beat, he just stares at himself. The ring light reflects in his pupils, like a target.

For the first time – a crack in the confidence. Not fear exactly. But emptiness.

FLASHBACK – EXT. BEACH AT SUNSET

Jake sets up a tripod, perfecting a selfie. Noe walks past behind him.

NOE (WITHOUT LOOKING)
You always miss the moment when you're
trying to own it.

He lowers the camera, rattled.

INT. MARÍA'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

María stands at her dresser in a silk robe, lighting a candle with a match. Her room is spartan but warm – half lived-in, half guarded.

She opens a drawer and removes a small leather pouch. Inside: cash, a rosary, a single Polaroid of a woman (her? someone else?), and a packet of painkillers.

She adds lipstick, then pauses.

FLASHBACK – EXT. STREET MARKET – NIGHT

Crowds pulse around them. María and Noe walk close.

NOE (LEANING IN)
I know what you are, and it's
beautiful.

María stops walking. Noe keeps moving, slipping into the night and strangers.

EXT. PLAYA PALMERAL – EL GRAO – NIGHT

The horizon is grey-blue, the sky still deciding whether to storm or clear.

MATEO stands barefoot on the cool sand, shirt half-tucked into swim shorts. His hoodie hangs loosely off one shoulder. His face is puffy, eyes shadowed, but more alive than drunk.

Behind him, a row of chiringuitos – the beach bars – sit shuttered and silent. Plastic chairs are stacked. Umbrellas furled.

He holds a half-empty wine bottle in one hand. He stares at it for a long beat. Then places it carefully in a nearby recycling bin.

He pulls out an orange from the pocket of his hoodie.

Sits down in the sand.

Peels it slowly. Juice glistens on his fingertips. He eats in silence, piece by piece. No music. No phone.

Then he stands and walks toward the water. The sea is flat. Muted waves roll in like a pulse.

He walks in up to his knees. Hesitates. Breathes.

Then he dives.

FLASHBACK – NIGHT – ROOFTOP, STRINGS OF LIGHTS

Noe dances barefoot across the tiles, her hair wild.

NOE (SHOUTING)
¡La vida es corta y el mundo es falso!

She pelts Mateo with olives, cackling. He ducks and smiles – the rare, real kind.

INT. POLICÍA NACIONAL – INSPECTOR BELTRÁN'S OFFICE – NIGHT

A small office lit by the blue glow of a computer monitor. Paperwork everywhere. Files stacked like tired metaphors.

INSPECTOR BELTRÁN SÁNCHEZ, mid-50s, methodical, sharp eyes, unmoved by chaos – slowly flips through a manila folder.

INSERT – FILE:

MATEO VAN DE BROEK

Prior Charges:

Drunk and disorderly (Benicàssim, 2022)

Public urination (Castellón, 2023)

Resisting arrest (Valencia, 2021)

Beltrán's pen taps the page rhythmically.

He clicks a key.

A second profile opens:

MARÍA G. CASTAÑO

Photo ID: She's younger. Smiling.

The camera doesn't show the charges. Just the look on Beltrán's face. Slight tension. A small frown.

He closes the file and slides it into a drawer marked: EXPATS / LOS GUIRIS.

Locks the drawer.

Leans back in his chair, thoughtful.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - DAWN

The sun now hangs high, white-hot and oppressive. A few gulls circle overhead. Cicadas hiss in the background.

The van waits by the curb. It's a battered white Fiat Ducato, sun-bleached and dented. The back bumper is cracked.

One sticker near the taillight shows the Colombian flag in faded colours, flanked by the words: "Vivir sabroso."

Just below it, another sticker - this one handmade - features a Virgen de Guadalupe surrounded by tiny drawings of roses, knives, and a hummingbird.

One taillight is taped up with red cellophane. The side mirror rattles in the wind.

María leans against the side of the van, sipping instant coffee, hoodie up. Calm.

Emma approaches, dragging her duffel. She's wearing a fanny pack, yoga pants, and a neck pillow.

EMMA

Morning. I brought snacks. Mostly seeds.

MARÍA

That's not food, Emma. Eso es cebo
para ardillas.

Emma smiles.

She tosses the duffel inside.

Mateo is curled in the back seat, hood over his face, arm in a
sling, out cold.

Tima pedals up on his bike and skids to a stop.

TIMA

Alguien trajo herramientas, ¿no?

EMMA

I have peppermint oil?

TIMA

No es lo mismo, princesa.

He tosses his pack inside, opens the van's side panel, and peers
at some exposed wiring.

MARÍA

Don't start taking her apart.

Jake rolls up, wheeling a sleek suitcase, earbuds in. He's
filming a selfie video.

JAKE

And here we are—dawn patrol. First
light.

He sees everyone.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Wait, why does everyone look mad?

TIMA

Porque existe.

EMMA

We're missing water. And bandages.
And... food food.

MARÍA

Someone go to Mercadona.

David walks up, plastic bag swinging with promise. His hair's
wet from a sink-shower. He glares at the group.

DAVID
Esto no es un viaje. Es un atentado
logístico.

JAKE
Wait, the bartender is coming with
us?

Mateo peeks his head out from the sliding car door.

DAVID
Sí, señor, y si no hay espacio,
estoy seguro de que a nadie le
importa si tú te quedas aquí.

JAKE
What'd he say?

TIMA
The truth.

Laila arrives last. No bag again – just her leather jacket and
sketchbook. She surveys the scene.

MARÍA
You didn't bring anything.

LAILA
Doesn't look like there's much room
anyway.
(beat)
Why's David here?

DAVID
Para ponerlos combustible.

David reveals the bottles of rum and gin in the plastic bag.

LAILA
I thought you didn't understand
Spanish.

DAVID
Solo cuando los guiris están en mi
bar.

María places David's bag in the corner of the trunk.

MARÍA
Alright. Split up. Two for supplies.
Two for beer. One for fuel. Someone
keep the van breathing.

TIMA
Yo me quedo.

MATEO
(muffled from inside)
No! I'll guard... the spirits...

MARÍA
We leave in one hour. Not one hour and
Spanish five minutes. One hour.

EXT. CALLE COLÓN - MORNING

María and Emma walk briskly down the narrow street, passing shuttered storefronts and early-bird pensioners dragging shopping carts.

EMMA
You really think we'll need all this?

MARÍA
Sí. Because I've done this before. And
by "this" I mean surviving seven-hour
car rides with men who don't shut up.

They turn a corner and approach a herbolario.

INT. HERBOLARIO - MOMENTS LATER

A tiny, overstuffed herbalist shop. Dream catchers dangle beside bulk lentils and incense cones.

Emma picks up a bundle of sage and a bottle labelled "Jugo de Clorofila."

EMMA
Do you think the van needs
energetic cleansing?

MARÍA
It needs gas, cariño. And maybe
brakes.

Emma pulls out her phone. Begins to film herself, holding the sage and a crystal.

VERTICAL VIDEO FORMAT

Emma looks at the camera/at us.

EMMA

Okay, fam – prepping for a slightly chaotic but spiritually aligned journey. Protection, hydration, and--

END VERTICAL VIDEO FORMAT

Marí shakes her head, disappointed.

MARÍA

Emma. Esto no es una puta serie de reels.

Emma freezes. Lowers the phone. A beat.

EMMA

I wasn't trying to—

MARÍA

Sí, sí. I know.

EMMA

I know. I just... it's how I cope.

MARÍA

Entonces cópialo sin cámaras.

María hands the sage back to her.

MARÍA (CONT'D)

You can keep this. But no hashtags.

EXT. MERCADONA PARKING LOT – LATER

The two exit with a couple of bags – practical groceries, plus one kombucha and a vegan chorizo that María did not approve.

MARÍA

If someone dies of hunger on this trip, it's on you.

EMMA

At least they'll die cleansed.

CUT TO NEXT
SPLIT SCENE.

EXT. REPSOL GAS STATION – MORNING

Jake is inside paying at the counter, awkwardly flirting with the teenage cashier in Spanglish.

JAKE
(holding up an energy drink)
Esto... ¿tiene taurina? Like... the
strong stuff?

The cashier just blinks.

Outside, Tima crouches under the van's front bumper with a toolbox open beside him. He mutters in Ukrainian, pulling at wires.

Jake exits with a bag of chips and two energy drinks.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Got us the essentials.

TIMA
¿Tienes aceite? Coolant? Break fluid?

JAKE
No... but like, I got electrolytes.

TIMA
(snarling)
Idiot.

Jake rolls his eyes and leans against the van.

JAKE
You know, you're not the only one
who's been through shit. We've all
lost something at some point.

Tima slams the hood shut. Stands up slowly.

TIMA
How many buildings fell on your
friends, Jake?

Jake shuts up.

TIMA (CONT'D)
You talk like pain is currency. But
yours is counterfeit.

Jake looks away, jaw tight. Opens the energy drink.

JAKE
It still depends. Like, I've lost--

TIMA
Your virginity when you were
thirteen to a seventeen-year-old
babe. I know, Jake, you've told me.

JAKE

I was going to say an iPhone, but I'm glad you remembered. Shit was fire, bro.

TIMA

So you got the clap?

JAKE

No, bro. Fire, like that shit slapped.

TIMA

I don't know how you're older than me.

JAKE

It's my strict diet that keeps me young.

Jake takes another sip of his energy drink.

Tima wipes his hands with a rag. Tosses it in the van.

TIMA

I fixed the relay. You can film that for your followers.

He starts to walk away.

JAKE

Why do you even care if we find her?

Tima stops. Doesn't turn around.

TIMA

I don't.

He walks off.

Jake watches him go. Then drinks the whole can in one long chug, burps, and gets in the van.

CUT TO NEXT
SPLIT SCENE.

DAVID and LAILA walk down a quiet street toward a modest cervecería. The OWNER, a wiry older man with a cigarette stuck to his lip, stacks crates outside.

DAVID

Si no tiene Estrella Galicia, nos piramos.

LAILA
Podrías intentar ser simpático por una vez.

DAVID
Soy rumano. La simpatía nos hizo perder fronteras.

LAILA
Pensaba que eres un Español de pura sepa.

DAVID
Enfrente de los guiris, si.

Laila rolls her eyes as they head inside.

INT. CERVECERÍA - CONTINUOUS

A local TV mumbles in Valenciano above the bar – fire warnings, budget cuts, heat waves.

David steps up to the counter confidently.

DAVID
Una caja de Estrella. Bien fría, ¿eh?

The owner doesn't answer. Instead, he looks at Laila.

DUEÑO
(In Valenciano)
Res més?

LAILA
No, gràcies.

DUEÑO
Teniu gelera? Fa una calor de collons.

LAILA
Sí, sí. Portem una. Gràcies.

The owner disappears into the back. Laila glances at David, who looks annoyed.

DAVID
Traidora lingüística.

LAILA
Lo has entendido todo.

DAVID
Ese no es el tema.

LAILA
¿Entonces cuál?

DAVID
Que no pertenezco. Ni aquí, ni allí. Y fingir lo contrario cansa.

Laila studies him. He doesn't meet her gaze.

LAILA
Entonces no finjas. Únete al club de los jodidos

The owner returns with the crate. Laila pays without hesitation. David doesn't reach for his wallet.

They each grab a side of the crate and exit.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

They walk in silence. The sun is already hotter.

LAILA
¿Tú crees que de verdad se fue?

DAVID
Ojalá.

LAILA
¿Por qué?

DAVID
Porque si sigue cerca... ¿Qué sentido tiene todo esto?

They keep walking, the weight of the crate between them and something heavier under the surface.

CUT TO:

EXT. CASTELLÓN - TRANSITIONAL MONTAGE - MORNING (SUMMER VERSION)

A SERIES OF VIBRANT VISUALS capturing the pulse of Castellón in the heat of summer.

EXT. PLAZA SANTA CLARA

Tourists sip cold drinks at shaded terraces. A group of ERASMUS STUDENTS in bucket hats take selfies near the fountain. A child screams - laughter or meltdown, unclear.

EXT. MERCADONA - PARKING LOT

LOCLAS fight for spots under the awning. A MIDDLE-AGED MAN yells into his phone in Valenciano. Someone drops a watermelon; it explodes across the asphalt.

EXT. EL GRAO - MARINA AND PROMENADE

STROLLERS, RUNNERS, ROLLERBLADERS. Seafood grills smoke behind glass. Overpriced paella, cheap vermouth. A BUSKER plays SPANISH POP covers on a battered guitar.

A group of THREE ABUELAS LAUGH and CHATTER in Valenciano as they walk down the street past a bar filled with OLD MEN drinkig beer, wine, and shots.

INT. CHURROS STAND - STREET CORNER

Greasy heat. A WOMAN (50) fans herself with a church bulletin while dipping churros into lukewarm chocolate. A radio plays flamenco. The teenager behind the counter scrolls through TikTok.

EXT. GRAFFITI WALL - HIDDEN SIDE ALLEY

Bright mural art bursts through layers of tags. One section looks vaguely like Noe - or maybe just someone trying to look free.

EXT. ROOFTOP - OVERLOOKING THE CITY

Tile roofs shimmer. The church bell tower looms over it all. You can hear kids shouting, mopeds revving, and cutlery clinking.

This town is awake.

FADE TO:

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - LATE MORNING

The van is still parked under the sun, which now beats down with full Spanish intensity. A small dog pisses on one tire, which Mateo chases away.

He's been cleaning the car and reorganizing everything so there's more space.

María walks over, her arms loaded with bags.

MATEO

Let me get that for you!

MARÍA

Wow, Mateo. Where did you get all that energy from? ¿Ya has tomado unas rayas?

MATEO

No, no. I just--

EMMA

Want to wash away the guilt from drinking so much. We've all been there, mate.

María places the bags strategically — food, beer, tools. Her sunglasses are on, but her jaw is tight. She's sweating through her hoodie.

Jake and Tima walk up, Tima holding two bags, while Jake has one, as his other phone is occupied texting.

JAKE

All that was twelve euros more than I expected. Do we expense this to--

TIMA

Puedes facturar tu ego.

JAKE

That sounded like an insult.

TIMA

Correcto.

María places another bag into the trunk.

MARÍA

We'll calculate the other expenses later.

She smiles at Tima. He smiles back uneasily.

Laila and David arrive next, carrying the crate of Estrella Galicia between them.

DAVID

(putting it down)

Vengo sudando como cerdo, y este no ayuda.

LAILA

Podríamos haber conseguido latas.

DAVID
Latas son para turistas.

MARÍA
Where's Emma?

TIMA
I thought she was with you.

MARÍA
She went back to get some medicine
from her place or something.

As if summoned:

Emma jogs into view, balancing an aloe vera plant and a dreamcatcher.

MARÍA (CONT'D)
You said you were getting medicine!

EMMA
Sorry! I had to.

MARÍA
You're not bringing that plant.

EMMA
I can't just waste it.

MARÍA
You can put on Mateo. El ya es mas
rojo que un cangrejo.

Laila drops her bag.

LAILA
I'll do it.

Everyone pauses.

LAILA (CONT'D)
I mean, Mateo, you're looking
pretty red.

JAKE
And jacked. Dude, how do you do it
with all the beer you drink?

MATEO
I work out the shame every morning,
Jake.

Laila walks over to Emma to grab the plant. Emma hesitates before handing it to her. Her thoughts are unreadable as Laila cracks open the aloe vera and rubs Mateo's back.

MARÍA
Everyone, get in.

JAKE
Shotgun!

Jake runs to the front seat.

EMMA
Fuck no.

JAKE
Shotgun. Whoever says it first gets the front seat. It's the American way.

EMMA
This is Spain!

DAVID
¡viva España!

Jake SLAMS the door.

MARÍA
We'll kick him out of there as soon as we get gas.

Maria heads to the front, and everyone else piles into the back.

INT. MARÍA'S VAN - DAY

Tima and David sit in the very back row. Mateo's about to take the seat behind María, but Emma comes from the other side, forcing him in the middle, between Emma and Laila.

Laila looks over at Emma, agitated.

JAKE
This van has zero airflow. And smells like--

María shoots him a look of death before he can say anything.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Smells like a beautiful Colombian lady.

LAILA
And what does a Colombian lady
smell like, Jake?

JAKE
Mangos?

TIMA
Well, it sure doesn't smell like
mangos in here.

MARÍA
Any complaints, and you can get the
fuck out. Pendejos.

Tima shrugs, "Fair enough."

EMMA
Should we check the route?

MARÍA
No maps. No plans. Aragón is that way.
(points east)
O pa'l oeste. Lo que sea.

A low voice from the van:

EMMA
Are we really doing this?

MARÍA
Already did.

María's about to turn the ignition--

JAKE
(phone in hand)
Wait! Say that again; that was
epic.

MARÍA
No.

JAKE
Oh, come on.
(to Emma)
Emma, I know your game.

Jake turns the phone to Emma.

VERTICAL VIDEO FORMAT

Emma looks straight at the camera/at us.

EMMA
Are we really doing this?

Jake looks at the camera.

JAKE
(low voice)
Already did.

María turns the ignition.

END VERTICAL VIDEO FORMAT

Jake snaps his fingers.

JAKE (CONT'D)
That snatched.

The engine coughs, then rumbles.

JAKE (CONT'D)
... in the video at least.

Finally, the engine starts.

EXT. SIDE STREET NEARBY - SAME TIME

At a shaded terrace, Inspector Beltrán stirs sugar into his cortado. He sips slowly, watching the parking lot from a distance.

From his POV: the van starts moving.

He doesn't write anything down. Just lifts an eyebrow slightly. Lights a cigarette.

Next to his saucer: a folded police file. The label reads:

EXPATS / LOS GUIRIS - CASO: NOE S.G.

He exhales smoke.

BELTRÁN
(en voz baja)
Idiotas románticos...

EXT. HIGHWAY OUT OF CASTELLÓN - MOMENTS LATER

The van rumbles down the on-ramp, tires kicking up dust. It shudders slightly as it picks up speed - nothing fatal, but enough to suggest future problems.

The landscape stretches out – dry fields, distant hills, rows of half-built apartment blocks.

As the van merges onto the highway, it passes a faded road sign:

← MORELLA | TERUEL → | ZARAGOZA ↑

A shadow crosses over the van – not dramatic, just enough to notice. A cloud? A bird? Or something imagined.

Inside the van: silence. Faces turned toward the windows. Tension travels with them.

EMMA'S PHONE BUZZES.

She checks it – one last voice note.

INSERT – SCREEN:

Same burner account. Audio file: "No deberías haber venido."

She plays it. Very low.

NOE (V.O., LOW AND DISTORTED)

I know you're following me.

SMASH TO BLACK.