

HOSTAGES OF THE ABYSS

Original title: Rehenes del Abismo

Project Dossier

Feature Film · Dystopian Thriller · Action · Noir

Written by

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Based on his novel of the same name

Second draft — Confidential document

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1. LOGLINE

In near-future Barcelona under an authoritarian regime, a lone operative and an undercover intelligence agent join forces with a dying old man to bring down a corrupt official before it's too late — for the city, and for themselves.

2. SYNOPSIS

Act I — The Man and His World

Barcelona, near future. The city has drifted into authoritarianism: propaganda loudspeakers on every corner, police drones patrolling the neighbourhoods, building facades crumbling from years of neglect — plaster falling in slabs, cracks running two floors down — and breadlines that stretch through the night. The Mossos d'Esquadra act as the regime's militia.

KILIAN, forty years old, runs an illegal eviction agency. He lives in the Barceloneta neighbourhood with a triple-lock door and a red spray-painted insult on it that someone renews periodically. Near the market square, he crosses paths with the THERIANS — people who believe they are dogs, subsidised by the Culture Minister — heading toward the Islamic radical zone. JESSY convinces him to warn them. One of them urinates on him. The grotesque brawl that follows ends with Jessy firing two shots into the air. The pack's owner — JUAN — threatens Kilian: 'I know where you live.' Days later, the Therians are found hanging from lampposts with their masks still on. The owner is not among them.

At dawn, Kilian and JESSY stand before the hanging bodies. Jessy recalls a woman beheaded with a scimitar in Lesseps square two years earlier. She makes him promise: when this is over, they leave Barcelona for good. Jessy has spent months tracking PEDRO SÁNCHEZ, Minister of Culture and Justice: fifteen years of false permits, trafficking and Cadiz Cartel commissions. The CNI needs to catch him at a meeting at the Olympic Port. Their opportunity comes in three weeks.

In Mustafá's bar, Kilian and ABDUL receive a commission from FER — a bald old man who looks like a skull, seventy-something, six months to live. A civil servant for thirty years, the last twelve spent being systematically harassed by the Minister's two collaborators. He lost his wife and two children to a machete attack in his building's entrance hall. He filed appeals for two years. Nobody responded. He offers one hundred thousand euros per head. Kilian accepts.

Act II — The Machinery

Kilian adds Fer's commission to Jessy's operation. Meanwhile the neighbourhood grows more hostile. YOUSSEF leads repeated attacks — in the street, along the seafront where the breadline stretches for miles and bonfires burn on the breakwater with meat that cannot be animal meat. Kilian takes his mobiles and recruits him by force. He spends days searching for the Therians' owner through the bars of the Barceloneta until he finds him: JUAN, a drug addict with connections to squatter groups, the last Therian still alive.

Suspicion about SANTI grows to fifty percent. Jessy believes he is leaking to the Mossos. A controlled detonation at the Civil Courts eliminates the Minister's two collaborators — Cloe and Olegaria, who harassed Fer for twelve years — and destabilises him. Three days before the Olympic Port meeting, the Mossos destroy the safe house and arrest the traitor. Kilian is left alone. Jessy, alone in the CNI safe house, calls Valencia and says 'I take responsibility.' They decide to proceed alone.

Act III — The Flight or the Abyss

The night of the operation. In Mustafá's bar, the barman reveals he is not Moroccan but Spanish — from Almería — with someone else's papers. Juan appears with a submachine gun and Kilian disarms him in a second. Kilian crosses the seafront alone to the Olympic Port. Nine minutes of operation. The Minister comes out in handcuffs. Highway chase. Mossos roadblock that Jessy clears with a fake badge and flawless Catalan. A wheat field at dawn. Military helicopter. They cross the border.

Epilogue — One Month Later

Kilian and Jessy are in Spanish territory. Silence without loudspeakers. Fer writes: the Minister is before the military tribunal. Jessy turns on the television. On screen: the FEDOR robots — humanoid military machines partly funded by Fer — advance through the Ramblas, the Diagonal and the Barceloneta, block by block. The machines distinguish the innocent from the guilty. The Minister is judged by the Military Tribunal of Operation Fedor and executed.

We were hostages of the abyss. We didn't know it until we got out. When you're inside, you don't call it an abyss. You call it life. You call it what there is. And one day someone — or yourself — pulls you out. And then you see it from outside. And you understand it was an abyss. And that it no longer is.

Final title card: Fer died at home, reading, two weeks later. He had funded eleven robots.

3. CHARACTERS

KILIAN — Protagonist

Forty years old. Runs an illegal eviction agency — a job that exists because the world he lives in needed someone to invent it. He is not looking to be a hero. He has learned to solve the problems in front of him without asking whether they are just. The promise he makes to Jessy — after the Olympic Port we leave — is the most important promise of his adult life. His arc: from a man who manages chaos to a man who chooses to leave it.

References: Tom Hardy in Locke, Viggo Mortensen in A History of Violence.

JESSY — Protagonist

Thirty-five years old. Undercover CNI agent. Speaks Catalan without an accent, has seven fake licence plate numbers — the seventh doesn't work. She is not a character defined by her relationship with Kilian. She has her own world, her own decisions. The scene in the safe house — alone, deciding to proceed without a team, telling Valencia 'I take responsibility' — defines her better than any line of dialogue.

References: Emily Blunt in Sicario, Noomi Rapace in the Millennium trilogy.

FER — Moral Catalyst

Seventy-something. Bald. Skull-like face. Six months to live. Civil servant for thirty years, the last twelve systematically harassed by the Minister's collaborators. Lost his wife and two children to a machete attack. Filed appeals for two years. Nobody responded. Before dying, he funds eleven military robots. Fer is the moral engine of the film — not the protagonist but the catalyst. The line that defines him: 'I'm glad to die after having seen this.'

References: Anthony Hopkins in The Father, Old Man Logan.

MUSTAFÁ

The barman at the Barceloneta bar. He has spent fifteen years with false papers pretending to be Moroccan because if they know he is Spanish from Almería they will shut down his business. His revelation on the night of the operation is one of the most unexpected moments in the script.

JUAN

The Therians' owner. Drug addict, the only one who didn't end up hanging from a lamppost because he wasn't wearing a mask. Kilian searches for him for days through the

Barceloneta bars in order to recruit him. He reappears on the night of the Olympic Port operation in Mustafá's bar with a new submachine gun he doesn't know how to use.

4. THE WORLD

The script does not name real parties or make directly identifiable political references. The world it builds is a dystopian extrapolation of recognisable tendencies: regional authoritarian drift, technological surveillance, normalised institutional corruption, demographic replacement without real integration.

What makes that world work on screen are the concrete details: the elderly man who looks left and right before taking the first step out of his building entrance. The old woman who takes a detour to avoid walking near the benches. The Minister's posters with two contradictory insults written on them by two different hands. The loudspeakers broadcasting propaganda and attack reports with the same cadence, and people listening with the same expression they would use for a weather forecast.

It is a recognisable Barcelona — crumbling facades, breadlines, bonfires on the breakwater — seen from the inside by someone who has been inside for far too long. The only constant that has not changed is the sea at the end of the street.

5. TONE AND BENCHMARK FILMS

Action thriller with the soul of noir. Violence exists but does not wallow in itself. The dystopian world is the background, not the spectacle. What matters are the people and the decisions they make.

Sicario (Villeneuve, 2015)	Tone, moral density, rhythm. An agent kept inside an operation that exceeds her.
Children of Men (Cuarón, 2006)	Dystopia as everyday texture, not as spectacle.
A History of Violence (Cronenberg, 2005)	The man who carries a past life he cannot leave behind.
El hoyo / The Platform (Gaztelu-Urrutia, 2019)	Spanish genre film on a tight budget with results beyond its cost.
El Reino / The Candidate (Sorogoyen, 2018)	Spanish political thriller benchmark. Rigour and moral weight.

6. TARGET AUDIENCE

Adults aged 25-55 with an interest in genre cinema with political and social depth. The audience profile of Sicario, El hoyo or El Reino in Spain. Viewers who read between the lines and do not need the world explained to them — only shown. Primary market: Spain and Latin America. International access through streaming platforms and festivals.

7. DIRECTOR

The project is in development and is seeking a director. The ideal profile is someone with command of the action thriller with political depth and the ability to build a dystopian world without relying on visual effects. Reference directors: Galder Gaztelu-Urrutia, Rodrigo Sorogoyen, Oriol Paulo (national market); Denis Villeneuve, David Fincher (international market).

8. CASTING — REFERENCE PROPOSAL

Reference casting to indicate the sought tone of performance. This does not imply any contact or commitment with the actors mentioned.

Character	National	International
KILIAN	Mario Casas, Alberto Ammann	Tom Hardy, Joel Edgerton
JESSY	Marta Nieto, Aura Garrido	Ana de Armas, Natalie Portman
FER	José Sacristán, Héctor Alterio	Michael Caine, Ian McKellen

9. ESTIMATED BUDGET

Development and screenplay	€80,000 — €120,000
Direction and executive production	€300,000 — €500,000
Main cast (3 actors)	€400,000 — €800,000
Supporting cast and extras	€150,000 — €250,000
Shoot (35-40 days)	€600,000 — €900,000
Locations and art direction	€200,000 — €350,000
Visual effects (Fedor robots, drones)	€300,000 — €600,000
Post-production (picture and sound)	€250,000 — €400,000
Original score	€80,000 — €150,000

Marketing and distribution	€200,000 — €400,000
Contingency (10%)	€250,000 — €450,000
TOTAL ESTIMATE	€2,800,000 — €4,900,000

Note: The visual effects for the Fedor robots are the most variable item. A tight-budget production can opt to show them primarily through television footage in the epilogue, substantially reducing the VFX cost.

10. FINANCING STRATEGY

- ICAA (Institute of Cinematography and Audiovisual Arts) — Spanish national production fund.
- Europa Creativa — EU MEDIA programme. Development aid (up to €60,000) and production support for European co-productions.
- Eurimages — Council of Europe fund for co-productions between member countries.
- Tax Shelter Spain — 30% tax deduction on the first €10M of investment in film production.
- Streaming platforms: Netflix Spain, Prime Video, Filmin, Movistar+.

11. WHY THIS PROJECT, WHY NOW

The most effective dystopias are not predictions: they are slightly distorted mirrors. The world of Hostages of the Abyss does not require the audience to accept science fiction premises. It requires them to look at what already exists and take it one step further.

Fer is the character that makes this story different. He is not the hero or the villain. He is a man who has been waiting for decades for justice to work, and when it didn't, he decided to change something before he died. With what he had. His presence turns an action thriller into a story about the necessity of things mattering.

12. AUTHOR BIO

Fernando Gracia Ortuño is a Spanish writer and screenwriter. Hostages of the Abyss is the cinematic adaptation of his novel of the same name. The project has a completed second draft screenplay (75 pages), a project bible, a production dossier, and active contacts with Spanish genre production companies. The work is registered with Safe Creative with a certified SHA-256 hash.

HOSTAGES OF THE ABYSS (Rehenes del Abismo) · Project Dossier
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