

Tribal- Episode 6: Assignment ©



Leather Man hands Bill a Zippo lighter with the Boca Juniors futbol club logo on it.

19 EXT. STREET, IQUITOS - LATER

Bill and Leather Man walk away from El Pappagallo. Bill is visibly upset. Leather Man hands him a cigarette which he lights.

LEATHER MAN

Wow, that was invigorating!

BILL

What the hell just happened?

LEATHER MAN

What do you mean?

BILL

What do I mean? His head just exploded. What do I mean!

(a few beats)

And what are you doing here? Are you following me?

LEATHER MAN

No I'm not following you. I had to be here as well...for an entirely different reason. However, we got word that your original contact got held up and couldn't make it so they asked me to brief you. Why Horacio met you and how he knew you were here is beyond me. You knew him?

BILL

No, I just started...

LEATHER MAN

Please don't lie to me. It insults my intelligence.

BILL

OK, yes. From prison.

They stroll in silence for a few beats.

LEATHER MAN

He was part of the same program. Quite unfortunate really. He was quite promising but then his methods became...unsound.

They walk through back streets, finally stopping at a secluded sidewalk cafe. A waiter approaches.

LEATHER MAN

Dos cafecitos, por favor.

BILL

What happened to him just now?

LEATHER MAN

It looked like a massive stroke. Of course, they won't know for sure until the autopsy.

BILL

Stroke? Stroke, my ass! My father died from a stroke. I don't recall his head exploding.

LEATHER MAN

Yes, well, there are different degrees of strokes I suppose. Horacio had other health issues, I'm sure he mentioned to you, which probably caused additional complications.

BILL

(skeptical)

Yeah...I guess. Something...I don't know what.

LEATHER MAN

Tell me, what did you and Horacio discuss?

BILL

Nothing in particular.

LEATHER MAN

Nothing in particular?

BILL

Well, he asked me about my health. My mental health. Does this really matter?

LEATHER MAN

I'm afraid it does. You see, Horacio became somewhat unglued recently. To the point of becoming a security risk. We were actually on the verge of releasing him.

BILL

Releasing him?

The waiter brings the coffees.

LEATHER MAN

Thank you. Retiring him from the program. He did some good work for us but he had outgrown his usefulness in this neck of the woods.

(beat)

And, like I said, he was slipping, both mentally and physically.

BILL

I see. So what happened tonight...was that what you call being released? Are you going to release me too?

Leather Man smiles, sipping his coffee.

BILL

Or am I too good at what I do?

Bill lights a cigarette and pushes the pack to Leather Man who takes one.

LEATHER MAN

Did he tell you about Pablo Escobar?

BILL

Now how would you know that? Was the bar bugged?

LEATHER MAN

Don't worry, it doesn't matter. But enough of this small talk. I'm sure you're dying to know what we have in store for you this time.

BILL

Can't wait.

Leather Man pulls an envelope from his jacket and hands it to Bill.

LEATHER MAN

Go ahead. Open it.

Bill spills out the contents of the envelope, looking at a black and white photograph of a tough looking man in a sport jacket.

LEATHER MAN

If I were to ask you what nationality this man is what would you say?

BILL

I don't know. A little dark so probably not Argentine or Uruguayan. Maybe Columbian?

LEATHER MAN

Good guess. That's what I would have said. He's actually Iranian. His name is Farhad Zarin. He's an agent for VAJA.

BILL

VAJA?

LEATHER MAN

That's their intelligence agency. It's what replaced the old "evil" SAVAK after the Shah was overthrown back in 79. Only, truth be told, VAJA is a hundred times worse. They drive a lot of the terrorism in the world and are much more dangerous now that we brilliantly created a power vacuum in Iraq.

Leather Man takes another sip of coffee.

LEATHER MAN

But enough of me pontificating. Zarin, as you so aptly observed, has quite the Hispanic features. He's also educated and fluent in Spanish. It is for that reason he was sent here. He's going by the name René Palacio, masquerading as Spanish journalist.

BILL

Why?

LEATHER MAN

Arms propagation and cyberterrorism. He's actually here in Iquitos as we speak. Tomorrow, he and a small entourage will be embarking on a cruise down river to Manaus to make a heavy arms sale to some Venezuelan agents working for our lunatic friend Chavez in Caracas.

BILL

Manaus? Isn't that like 1,500 kilometers from here? Why didn't they just go directly to Manaus?

LEATHER MAN

The mouth of the Amazon is heavily patrolled. Easier to smuggle the stuff in via Peru.

BILL

So what do you want me to do?

LEATHER MAN

You'll be going on the same cruise. And when you arrive in Manaus, you'll trigger a bomb which will blow the whole shipment, and Zarin, sky high.

BILL

How long is this cruise? And how the hell am I supposed to detonate it?

LEATHER MAN

Five days, four nights. The bomb is already planted. All you have to do is detonate it.

BILL

If it's already planted why not just blow it here in Iquitos?

LEATHER MAN

Because there are a few other operatives meeting him in Manaus so we're hoping to get them all in one fell swoop.

BILL

And how do I detonate it?

LEATHER MAN

With this.

Leather Man hands Bill a Zippo lighter with the Boca Juniors futbol club logo on it.

BILL

Nice. I certainly hope you're not going to ask me to infiltrate River Plate.

LEATHER MAN

(James Bond Q imitation)
Do pay attention 007.

Bill's not laughing so he reverts back to normal voice.

LEATHER MAN

There are three steps, so as to minimize the likelihood of accidental detonation. First you press down on the wind screen which completes the first of two circuits. Then you flip up the spring toggle lever. This completes the second circuit. Then you just light a cigarette and pow! It works up to three kilometers away. The thumbwheel is the trigger. Pretty cool, eh?

BILL

Brilliant. When do I do this? Not when I'm still on the boat, I hope.

Leather Man laughs.

LEATHER MAN

No, no, no. When the boat arrives in Manaus it will stay in port overnight, unload the cargo. The Venezuelans are planning on hauling the stuff up Route 174 from Manaus to Ciudad Guayana where it will be stored until they're ready to stir up trouble. Our sources say Zarin won't be leaving the boat and will continue on the next morning to Santarem where he'll pick up a plane back to Teheran. You, however, will be disembarking in Manaus. Once you're a safe distance away, you'll detonate it and then contact us to let us know.

BILL

Sounds simple enough but I have a question. Since this boat ride is five days, chances are I may run into this guy or his crew. If I do what's my story?

LEATHER MAN

(annoyed)

I don't know. How about you're an environmental tour guide from Iquitos going to visit your sister in Manaus. How's that? Just try not to talk to him, OK? But if you do, keep your story consistent. If he suspects you're bullshitting him you're dead.

BILL

Got it.

LEATHER MAN

OK, you can go now. But listen to me. It's important that you get him, not just the weapons. That will send a clear message to Teheran to stay out of our hemisphere. After it blows you'll need to stay in Manaus for probably a few days or maybe a week, until the story hits the news that Zarin is dead. In any event, you'll have until noon November 2 to call us. If we don't hear from you by then it could get ugly.

BILL

What do you mean ugly? You mean if he somehow survives?

LEATHER MAN

Just hope he doesn't.

Bill's eyebrows raise. Leather Man smiles.

LEATHER MAN

Don't worry. If he slips out, you'll get support. Just stay in touch. If this all goes down as planned we may be able to retire you.

BILL

Like you retired Horacio?

LEATHER MAN

That had nothing to do with us. You know what I mean.

BILL

Not really but...alright, can I go now?

LEATHER MAN

Yes, good luck.

BILL

Thank you.