

"ASSASSIN"

FADE IN:

EXT/INT. RUINED INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Three crumbling gray concrete walls and a dented metal table. The forth wall is missing, open to a vast wasteland of desert.

ROBERT JONES, 40, completely government-issue man-in-black, stands in front of the table, staring into the distance. He carries himself with confident authority at all times.

Out of the shimmering heat, a VEHICLE appears. It's a jet black FORD EXPLORER, approaching fast across country.

The vehicle pulls up to the ruined building, stopping six feet short of Jones. Dust swirls around him, yet none of it seems to sully his suit, which remains neatly immaculate.

Two MEN IN BLACK emerge from the Explorer. Like Jones, they are obviously government issue, but younger. They efficiently maneuver ABLE DURST, 30, and menacing despite the prison coveralls and shackles, out of the vehicle.

They hustle Durst into the folding chair opposite Jones and begin a routine of chaining him to the table.

JONES

That won't be necessary.

The MIBs immediately obey, releasing Durst, who glances around a moment.

JONES

(to Durst, amiable)

I think you'll be more comfortable
if we dispense with the chains
while we chat. All right?

Durst scowls, impassive, then sits down casually.

MIB 1

Will there be anything else, sir?

JONES

No. Thank you, gentlemen. I'll let
you know when we're finished.

MIB 1

Yes sir.

The MIBs withdraw to their vehicle, enter and drive away.

Jones sit in a folding chair opposite Durst, ready for a friendly chat.

JONES

My name is Bob Jones, and it's indeed a rare pleasure to meet you, Mister Durst.

Jones reflexively extends a hand to Durst. It is ignored. After a moment, Jones lowers it.

JONES

Ah.

(beat)

Can I get you anything?

Durst glares at Jones. Smiling, Jones lifts a briefcase and places it on the table. He opens it and removes a case of Peanut M&Ms.

Durst stares at the candy. Jones pushes the box across the table.

JONES

Your favorite, I believe.

A realization comes over Durst. He can use this guy.

He pulls the case to his side of the table, opens it, removes a pack. He tears it open, pops an M&M in his mouth, then sits back and gives the agent a long appraisal.

DURST

You've done your homework.

JONES

Indeed, Mister Durst.

(beat)

I've studied you for a long time now. Your life, crimes, psyche profile, family history ... even your medical history. You might say I know you inside and out.

Jones grins at his little joke. Durst is impassive.

JONES

You have intelligence and self-discipline. So I won't insult you with platitudes or flattery...

DURST

Just M&Ms.

Jones smiles.

JONES

A sweet tooth isn't the worst sort of vice.

Durst frowns.

DURST

Not on a par with rape and murder.

JONES

That's not what I meant. I didn't come to torment you.

DURST

What do you want from me?

JONES

What makes you think..?

Jones stops himself.

JONES

You prefer the direct approach. I can appreciate that, so no games.

He reaches into the briefcase and withdraws a folder.

JONES

I want you to kill someone.

Durst considers this, mildly.

DURST

No. But thanks for the candy.

Jones considers the convict, shrewdly.

JONES

I am sorry about the appeal. Your last shot, I believe.

Durst shrugs, indifferent.

JONES

Politics as usual, if you asked me.

(beat)

But maybe - just maybe... I can arrange one more chance for you to cheat the hangman.

DURST

I already gave you my answer.

Jones pulls a photograph from the folder and lays it on the table. Durst looks at it, surprised. He frowns.

JONES

You recognize ...

DURST

Sherrie's the clay pigeon?

Jones nods, sagely.

JONES

Doctor Sheryl Burgess has done quite well for herself since your days as pre-med research partners in the Johns Hopkins virology lab. After she claimed all of your research and dumped you for a more politically useful lover, she landed a plum position at the National Health Conference. She's been a rising star in medical research ever since.

(beat)

A skillful politician and a competent medical doctor, all rolled up in a lovely package. A potent combination, which has served her amazingly well. Your own career pretty much sank without a ripple after she stole your ideas. A shame. A damned shame.

DURST

Why do you want her dead?

JONES

Among her other pastimes, Doctor Burgess has been working for the Defense Department, developing particularly lethal strains of a

number of pathogens, as well as searching for effective vaccines to counter them.

DURST

So?

Jones smiles sadly, shaking his head.

JONES

Unfortunately, Doctor Burgess' ethics have not matured the way her career has. Not all of her research has been for the benefit of the United States. She's been offering some of the nastiest little bugs for sale on the international black market.

Durst raises his eyebrows.

JONES

It's a bit more serious than simple plagiarism, but then again, she's come a long way since her college days.

Jones pulls a paper from the folder, hands it to Durst.

JONES

Two weeks ago, we intercepted this.

Durst reads. It's a faxed letter:

"Dr. Burgess: We are so glad you have decided to accept our offer. The attached documents contain details. I think you will be pleased, as the terms are quite generous...".

The letter is signed: "Sincerely, Dragan Siloviar".

DURST

(finally impressed)

The Dragan Siloviar?

JONES

Father of the new Black Plague, leading advocate of germ warfare as a cheap and effective alternative to nuclear weapons,