

Shell Game  
An Original Screenplay  
by Louise Geraghty

First 15 Pages

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INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

Red. Orangey, fiery, blinding red that coagulates and distils itself into a shiny, spreading lake of blood red. We pull back to see the lake spread out from the shattered head of a man lying very dead on the dirty concrete floor.

The dead man is dressed in an expensive suit and overcoat. Beside him on the floor is an open, black velvet-lined briefcase, and a handgun.

A ball of flames explodes out of an internal doorway nearby.

KAPPA (35), Scandinavian, imperfectly handsome, battered, looks into the camera.

KAPPA  
It's okay. Trust me.

CUT TO BLACK

TITLE CARD, WHITE ON BLACK: TWO YEARS LATER

EXT. CITY OF PARIS, FRANCE - DAY

FADE IN

Classic boulevards of French Gothic architecture radiate in all directions.

SUPER: THE CITY OF PARIS, FRANCE

INT. SIGMA'S PARIS BEDROOM - DAY

Gossamer curtains blow in the breeze from the open tall windows of a classic Haussmann apartment. Street sounds from below waft across the parquet floor to the French antique bed, where SIGMA (45), elegant, precise and American, wakes.

Freeze frame.

SUPER: SIGMA

Action resumes.

She throws back the covers to reveal a silk nightgown and walks barefoot to the window. She parts the curtains and steps out onto the wrought iron balcony to survey the postcard-worthy street below.

EXT. SUBURBS OF DUBLIN, IRELAND - DAY

An irregular lattice of housing estates nestle under soft green hills.

SUPER: THE SUBURBS OF DUBLIN, IRELAND

INT. LAMBDA'S DUBLIN BEDROOM - DAY

A standard three-bed suburban semi. The thoughtfully chosen Ikea furniture lends a budget modernist look. An alarm-clock goes off. In the bed BRIAN (48), greying and genial, turns it off. Lying beside him is LAMBDA (46), content, a little middle-aged padded, Anglo-Indian. She rolls over and snuggles into him.

Freeze frame.

SUPER: LAMBDA

Action resumes.

LAMBDA  
Ten more minutes.

BRIAN  
I've snoozed it for you for five.

He kisses her and gets out of bed.

LAMBDA  
Best husband ever.

BRIAN  
Um-huh.

He waggles his behind and she grins.

INT. SIGMA'S PARIS BATHROOM - DAY

Sigma, body wrapped in a thick towel, bends her head to wrap a matching towel around her hair. We see she has a healed burn stretching from her left ear, down her neck to her shoulder. She opens an expensive jar of eye-cream and looks in the mirror as she dabs it on.

INT. LAMBDA'S DUBLIN BATHROOM - DAY

Lambda, body wrapped in a good-value towel, bends her head to wrap another towel around her hair. She opens a jar of affordable eye-cream and looks in the mirror as she dabs it on.

INT. GRUBBY PUBLIC BATHROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Sigma, hair awry and with a large bruise on her cheekbone, uses a dagger to rip a clean section of cloth towel from the wall-mounted dispenser.

She limps over to the sink, where Lambda has her arm out of her shirt and is rinsing a nasty, bleeding gash on her bicep. Sigma wraps the towel around the wound. Lambda nods to Sigma's limp.

LAMBDA

Can you make it to the bridge?

SIGMA

I'll manage. Can you arm wrestle?

LAMBDA

Name the time, name the place.

They both grin exhaustedly.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. SIGMA'S PARIS BEDROOM - DAY

Sigma is now dressed, her long hair worn down, covering her burn scars. She slides her foot into a hand-made Italian leather riding boot and zips it up.

INT. LAMBDA'S DUBLIN HALLWAY - DAY

Lambda runs down the stairs in her socks.

INT. LAMBDA'S DUBLIN KITCHEN - DAY

Brian, dressed in a suit and tie, is at the island polishing two sets of shoes set out on newspaper. He holds out a pair to her.

LAMBDA

Thanks.

She kisses him. From the ceiling above comes a loud thump. They both glance up, but otherwise ignore it.

Brian passes over a plate of toast. She takes a half-round of Camembert from under a cloche and sits on a tall stool, putting her feet into her boots.

BRIAN

Ah. Can't start the day without cheese. Well, you can't.

LAMBDA

I can, it's just unpleasant.

BRIAN

Yeah, I remember. That was the day my luscious brown locks turned grey and started falling out.

She laughs as she spreads the Camembert on the toast. Upstairs there is the sound of a slammed door. They glance up again, then pretend it never happened.

LAMBDA

Are you bringing the car in today?

BRIAN

Yeah, and I'm going to stand over him until he fixes it properly this time.

LAMBDA

Shall I pick you up on the way home?

BRIAN

No need, either it'll be fixed or I'll be under arrest for having strangled him.

Footsteps clump down the stairs. They studiously ignore them, but the atmosphere tenses.

LAMBDA

Are you going to pay him again?

BRIAN

I am not!

ELLIE (14), stomps in - grumpy and girlie in a school uniform and white trainers tied with pale pink shoelaces. She is scrolling through her phone and doesn't look up.

BRIAN

Morning love.

ELLIE

Morning.

LAMBDA

Morning Ellie.

Ellie grunts at her.

BRIAN

Ellie!

ELLIE

What?

(grudging)

Good Morning Harini.

Brian hands Ellie a pale pink lunchbox and she kisses him on the cheek.

ELLIE

Thanks.

She steals a piece of toast from Lambda's plate. Lambda lets it go.

LAMBDA

I can give you a lift if you like.

Ellie's phone sounds a Pure Bell message notification and she starts tapping out a reply.

ELLIE

You're not my mother.

LAMBDA

But I am a car owner and it is raining.

ELLIE

Tch.

She stomps out. Brian looks at Lambda and goes into the hall after her.

INT. LAMBDA'S DUBLIN HALLWAY - DAY

Brian catches Ellie at the front door, where she is pulling on a pale pink bobble hat decorated with diamanté crystals.

BRIAN

Ellie.

ELLIE

What?

BRIAN

The same "what" we talked about last night and last week and the month before that. Do you have a temperature?

(feels her forehead)

Oh my god, are you losing your memory?

Ellie rolls her eyes at him.

BRIAN

Listen. I didn't think I'd ever be happy again when your Mum died. But I am. Very happy. And if you'd let yourself, you could be too. Trust me.

ELLIE

But she--

BRIAN

Is the only one of the two of you making any kind of an effort. So far.

Ellie pouts.

BRIAN  
You can start small. Not so small that  
nobody notices.

A beat.

ELLIE  
(calls to kitchen)  
'Bye Harini. Thanks for the toast.

Brian smiles and kisses her on the forehead.

BRIAN  
And now build up gradually.

The Pure Bell notification sounds again. Ellie glances at the screen, gives her father a grin and goes out, slamming the door.

INT. LAMBDA'S DUBLIN KITCHEN - DAY

Lambda sips her tea, and she and Brian exchange half-grins as he comes back in.

BRIAN  
Anyway, someone has basketball  
practice tonight.

LAMBDA  
Are we collecting?

BRIAN  
I am not.

LAMBDA  
So she's having dinner...

BRIAN  
They're going for burgers.

LAMBDA  
We get to have fish.

BRIAN  
Will you make your Koliwada?

LAMBDA  
Is that a special request?

BRIAN  
It is. And a bottle of whatever you  
say is good that I don't appreciate.

LAMBDA  
I'll appreciate it for both of us. You  
can appreciate beer.

BRIAN

I've never loved you more.

He kisses her.

EXT. CAFE - PARIS

Sigma sits at a small table, sipping a cup of coffee, a camel cashmere coat over her silk blouse. Two teenagers in red tracksuits pass by. Sigma watches them go.

EXT. CITY OF LISBON - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The city climbs in steep hills, stepping haphazardly up from the blue curve of the harbour.

EXT. PALÁCIO HOTEL - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Seen from a high angle, the Palácio is an expensive hotel, with neoclassical columns framing the entrance. Two women in red tracksuits come out the door and walk down the street. A liveried DOORMAN closes the passenger door of a limousine and the car glides off. The Doorman steps back into position beside the elaborate topiary in huge urns flanking the door.

INT. HOTEL DA CIDADO FOURTH FLOOR ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

An ornate desk has been pushed under the open window. Sigma is bent low over a high precision rifle, eye to the scope, the barrel just lifting the lace curtain. Beside her is Lambda, also with a rifle nudging the curtain. Both are dressed in black jumpsuits and have their hair pinned up under black baseball caps turned backwards. Sigma's visible left ear and neck are un-scarred.

LAMBA

You want left or right?

SIGMA

Left. On my mark.

INT. PALÁCIO HOTEL LOBBY - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Two middle-aged MEN approach the door, flanked by three bodyguards. The FIRST BODYGUARD puts a protective arm out and they stop. The SECOND BODYGUARD advances to the doors and peers out. He knocks on the glass and signals to the Doorman, who in turn raises a finger for their limousine. The limousine pulls up and the First Bodyguard steps back to allow the two men to go through the doors.

INT. HOTEL DA CIDADO FOURTH FLOOR ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Sigma and Lambda squint down their rifle sights.



## SIGMA

After four... Four.

They both fire simultaneously.

EXT. PALÁCIO HOTEL - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

The two men go down like sacks of potatoes, near identical red holes in their foreheads. The Doorman dives for cover. The bodyguards immediately look around for the source of the shots but the Second Bodyguard has already identified the hotel opposite as the source. And he sees the only open window.

## SECOND BODYGUARD

(in German, subtitled)

That window up there!

INT. HOTEL DA CIDADO FOURTH FLOOR ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Sigma and Lambda are up. They dismantle their rifles and put them in double-width tennis racket cases that have been specially adapted. They turn their baseball caps around and we see they both say "POLÍCIA". We now see that their jumpsuits also have POLÍCIA on the back.

EXT. PALÁCIO HOTEL - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

The First Bodyguard bends over the bodies of his charges as the Second and Third Bodyguards race towards the Hotel da Cicado. The Doorman points two POLICEMEN to the window across the road. The Policemen race over, shouting into their walkie-talkies.

INT. HOTEL DA CIDADO FOURTH FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Sigma and Lambda walk out of the room at an even, unrushed pace to the Housekeeping storeroom at the end of the corridor.

INT. HOTEL DA CIDADO FOURTH FLOOR HOUSEKEEPING STOREROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Shelves are stacked with towels and linens, leaving barely enough room for a narrow window. Sigma passes Lambda her racket case and keeps watch as Lambda pushes both of them out the window.

INT. HOTEL DA CIDADO FOURTH FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Lambda and Sigma walk at the same pace from the Storeroom along the corridor to the lifts. They look at the displays -

both lifts are coming up, but the left-hand one is just reaching their floor. They calmly press themselves back against the doors of the other one. The left-hand lift pings and the doors open. Armed Policemen, all dressed in black jumpsuits with POLÍCIA on the back flood out.

Sigma and Lambda step away from the other lift doors and join the pack as they surge down the corridor to the shooter room and fan out at both sides of the door.

Pressed against the wall, Lambda pulls out a walkie-talkie and listens.

LAMBDA

OK.

She taps Lambda on the arm.

LAMBDA

(in Portuguese, subtitled)

They want the two of us on the roof.

They both turn and stride to the stairwell door.

A YOUNG POLICEMAN at the door watches them go, frowning. He turns to a SECOND POLICEMAN.

YOUNG POLICEMAN

(in Portuguese, subtitled)

Do you know them?

The Second Policeman shrugs and turns his attention back to his CHIEF. The Chief signals. A THIRD POLICEMAN kicks down the door. They peer in and find the room empty except for two shell casings to prove it's the right room. The Young Policeman swallows nervously.

YOUNG POLICEMAN

(in Portuguese, subtitled)

Sir.

INT. HOTEL DA CIDADO STAIRWELL - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Sigma and Lambda speed down the stairs. The door at the bottom of the stairwell clangs open and more police swarm up the stairs. A door above them clangs open too, the police from the shooting room. The pair don't miss a beat, but turn and go back up a half flight of stairs to the Third Floor door and go through it.

INT. HOTEL DA CIDADO THIRD FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Sigma leads Lambda at an unhurried pace.

SIGMA  
Different layout on this floor.

They hear a walkie-talkie crackle, and turn a corner to see a LONE POLICEMAN listening to--

CHIEF  
(on walkie-talkie, in Portuguese,  
subtitled)  
...wearing police uniforms.

Sigma and Lambda keep walking towards him at the same pace. He raises his gun.

LONE POLICEMAN  
(in Portuguese, subtitled)  
What station are you--

But Lambda is on him, hand fastened around his gun wrist, she elbows him in the jaw. The Policeman drops his walkie-talkie and Sigma kicks it clear. Lambda bangs the Policeman's arm against the wall until he drops that too. Again, Sigma kicks it clear.

Lambda goes to elbow him in the jaw again but the Policeman reaches up to grab her wrist before she can and suddenly there is a handcuff on Lambda's wrist.

Lambda stares at her wrist as the Policeman punches her in the stomach. Lambda doubles over and the Policeman swiftly locks the other end of the handcuffs to his own wrist, just as Sigma presses the man's own gun barrel pressed to his head.

LONE POLICEMAN  
(in Portuguese, subtitled)  
Dead or alive, you'll have to take me  
with you.

Lambda, realising she is caught, looks at Sigma.

LAMBDA  
Just go.

The walkie-talkie on the ground crackles again.

CHIEF  
(in Portuguese, subtitled)  
First floor clear. All units report.

Sigma slams the Policeman against the wall by the throat.

SIGMA  
If I shoot you through the hand your  
bones will shatter, and I can squeeze  
the pulverised remains through this  
(MORE)

SIGMA (CONT'D)  
handcuff in seconds. It'll hurt. A  
lot.

The Policeman pales. Sigma puts the muzzle of the gun against the man's hand and immediately--

LONE POLICEMAN  
Okay! Okay!

With his free hand he pulls a key out of his top pocket. Sigma takes the key and clubs him on the side of the head. He goes down and Lambda holds up his wrist while she unlocks him.

LAMBDA  
Thanks.

SIGMA  
Rule number one.

They drag the Policeman into the Housekeeper's Store on this floor and shut the door.

LAMBDA  
I thought that was rule number two.

SIGMA  
Not in my rulebook.

They stride down the corridor and turn another corner. Coming towards them are two MEN in blue tracksuits, with US flags on the breast.

SIGMA  
(to the two men)  
Everything's under control Sirs,  
please return to your room.

The two men nod and hurry on. As soon as they have gone around the corner, Sigma and Lambda, still walking, rip off their caps and boiler suits - the seams are velcro - to reveal matching red tracksuits, with the EU flag on the breast.

They pause at a laundry chute to push down the uniforms, walkie-talkie and gun, then continue at the same pace. A CHAMBERMAID, coming out of an open room, looks at them suspiciously.

Ahead of them, the lift doors open and four Policemen rush out, eyes darting to take in the scene. They run right past them and Sigma and Lambda continue to the open lift.

The Chambermaid stops one of the Policeman and points to the lift, our pair now inside, the doors just closing.

FOURTH POLICEMAN  
(in Portuguese, subtitled)  
Stop! Stop now!

He and the other Policemen all run towards the lift, raising their guns.

Sigma and Lambda press themselves against the sides of the lift and the doors close just as the Policemen get to it.

INT. LIFT - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Sigma and Lambda immediately strip off their red tracksuits and turn them inside out to transform them into blue tracksuits with US insignia on the breast. They put them back on and both un-pin their hair so it cascades down, just as the lift doors open.

INT. HOTEL DA CIDADO LOBBY - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

The doors open to reveal Sigma and Lambda, looking cool and relaxed. They step out into a throng of people in tennis whites, blue US and red EU tracksuits. A banner strung over the lifts proclaims "WELCOME AMERICAN-EUROPEAN TENNIS LEAGUE".

Policemen run into the lobby and look around helplessly, as a second lift opens and more policemen stream out, equally flummoxed by the sheer number of red tracksuits.

Sigma and Lambda calmly walk across the lobby and out of the hotel.

EXT. HOTEL DA CICADO - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

The two come out the revolving doors, ignoring the ambulance and police cars. They turn down the side of the hotel.

EXT. STREET AT SIDE OF HOTEL DA CICADO - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

The pair walk calmly down the street, which is lined with open dumpsters. Barely pausing, they reach into one and pull out the racket cases they dumped out the window earlier. They loop them over their shoulders and keep walking.

EXT. LISBON STREET - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

This street has fewer people in tracksuits, but there are still a lot of them. Sigma and Lambda walk into the stream of pedestrians and blend right in.

A tram is idling at a stop and the pair step on.

INT. LISBON TRAM - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Sigma and Lambda strap-hang as the tram moves off, watching out the window as two Policemen stop a couple in red tracksuits. The tram leaves them behind.

A beat.

SIGMA  
I'm thinking of getting bangs.

LAMBDA  
A fringe?

SIGMA  
Yeah, bangs.

LAMBDA  
Why are they called bangs?

SIGMA  
Why is it called a fringe?

LAMBDA  
Because it's a fringe of hair. It makes sense.

SIGMA  
Oh yeah, it does. Well I'm thinking of getting them. It.

LAMBDA  
Yeah, it'd look good on you. And I'm going to google that bangs thing.

SIGMA  
Yeah, me too.

On the street a police car screams past, siren wailing.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. CAFE - PARIS

Sigma sits very still at her table. A man sits at the next table, facing slightly away from her. It's Kappa, wearing the same leather suit-style jacket, all cleaned up but still handsome. And now missing two fingers on his left hand.

Freeze frame.

SUPER: KAPPA

Action resumes.

They sit for a few moments, neither acknowledging the other.

SIGMA  
Did you find her?

KAPPA  
Stop asking me. When I find her, I'll  
tell you.

SIGMA  
As soon as you find her.

KAPPA  
You'll be the first to know. After the  
Belgians.

This satisfies her. They sit in silence for a few seconds,  
still not looking at each other.

Kappa places a tightly rolled piece of paper, about the size  
of a cigarette, on Sigma's table. Still without looking at  
him, she takes it and unrolls it. Through the back of the  
paper we see it has a photograph and lines of text, but we  
can't see details.

SIGMA  
Public example or behind closed doors?

KAPPA  
Public example.

SIGMA  
Mmm. It's a two-hander.

KAPPA  
You can have Theta or Omicron.

SIGMA  
Theta.

KAPPA  
Nobody wants Omicron.

Sigma clicks a gold lighter and sets light to the roll of  
paper, dropping it in the saucer to burn.

SIGMA  
He's slow and you can hear him coming  
a mile away.

KAPPA  
The Russians like that. They call him  
The Thunder.

Still not looking at each other, they both grin.

SIGMA  
I want Theta. I trust Theta.

He knows. He nods. They both finish their coffee in silence. Sigma stands and takes a step towards the door. She turns.

SIGMA

I have the rest of the morning free.

Kappa looks at her. She turns and walks out. He sips his coffee.

INT. SIGMA'S PARIS APARTMENT FOYER - DAY

Kappa slams Sigma against the wall, lifting her as she wraps her legs around him. She holds his head in her hands and kisses him hard. He shifts and she she stretches her head back so he can kiss her throat. She pulls his hair back so she can kiss him on the mouth again.

Their feet dance together across the floor in an elegant staccato rhythm. Items of clothing land in their wake - her coat, his coat, her blouse, her bra.

INT. SIGMA'S PARIS BEDROOM - DAY

Sigma lies naked under ruffled sheets. There is a noise at the door and she looks over.

Kappa, also naked, stands in the doorway with a plate.

KAPPA

The only food in your entire apartment is a jar of olives, a bag of walnuts and three different kinds of ketchup.

SIGMA

I think those olives were there when I moved in.

KAPPA

So do I. I threw them out.

SIGMA

What? I was about to give them names.

KAPPA

You live in one of the culinary capitals of the world.

SIGMA

Yeah, I eat out a lot. You should eat before you come here.

KAPPA

I did, you made me hungry all over again.