

SHELL GAME

an original screenplay by

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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 briefcase, lined in black velvet, and a handgun.

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

CAPRICORN (35), imperfectly handsome, battered in a leather suit-style jacket, looks into the camera.

CAPRICORN
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.

CAPTION: THE CITY OF PARIS, FRANCE

INT. SCORPIO'S BEDROOM, PARIS - 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 SCORPIO (45), elegant, precise and American, wakes.

Freeze frame.

CAPTION: SCORPIO

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.

CAPTION: THE SUBURBS OF DUBLIN, IRELAND

INT. LIBRA'S BEDROOM, DUBLIN - 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 LIBRA (46), English, domesticated, content. She rolls over and snuggles into him.

Freeze frame.

CAPTION: LIBRA

Action resumes.

LIBRA
Ten more minutes.

BRIAN
I've snoozed it for you for five.

He kisses her and gets out of bed.

LIBRA
Best husband ever.

BRIAN
Um-huh.

He waggles his behind and she grins.

INT. SCORPIO'S BATHROOM, PARIS - DAY

Scorpio, 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. LIBRA'S BATHROOM, DUBLIN - DAY

Libra, 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)

Scorpio, 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 Libra has her arm out of her shirt and is rinsing a nasty, bleeding gash on her bicep.

Scorpio wraps the towel around the wound. Libra nods to Scorpio's limp.

LIBRA

Can you make it to the rendezvous?

SCORPIO

It's not that far. Can you arm wrestle?

LIBRA

Best out of three?

They both grin exhaustedly.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. SCORPIO'S BEDROOM, PARIS - DAY

Scorpio 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. LIBRA'S HALLWAY, DUBLIN - DAY

Libra runs down the stairs in her socks.

INT. LIBRA'S KITCHEN, DUBLIN - DAY

Brian, dressed in a suit and tie, is at the island buttering toast.

BRIAN

I polished your shoes, they're by the back door.

LIBRA

Thanks.

She kisses him and slips her feet into the shoes. From the ceiling above comes a loud thump. They both glance up, but otherwise ignore it.

Brian passes over a plate of toast.

LIBRA (CONT'D)

Mmmm.

She takes a half-round of something more expensive than Camembert from under a cloche and sits on a tall stool.

BRIAN

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

LIBRA

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 puts the soft cheese on the toast. Upstairs there is the sound of a slammed door. They glance up again, then pretend it never happened.

LIBRA

Are you bringing the car in today?

BRIAN

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

LIBRA

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.

LIBRA

Are you going to pay him again?

BRIAN

I am not!

ANNIE (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 (CONT'D)

Morning love.

ANNIE

Morning.

LIBRA

Morning Annie.

Annie grunts at her.

BRIAN

Annie!

ANNIE

What?

(grudging)

Good Morning Heather.

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

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Thanks.

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

LIBRA

I can give you a lift if you like.

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

ANNIE

You're not my mother.

LIBRA

But I am a car owner and it is raining.

ANNIE

Tch.

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

INT. LIBRA'S HALLWAY, DUBLIN - DAY

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

BRIAN

Annie.

ANNIE

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?

Annie rolls her eyes at him.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

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.

ANNIE

But she--

BRIAN

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

Annie pouts.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
You can start small. Not so small
that nobody notices.

A beat.

ANNIE
(calls to kitchen)
'Bye Heather. Thanks for the toast.

Brian smiles and kisses her on the forehead.

BRIAN
And now build up gradually.

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

INT. LIBRA'S KITCHEN, DUBLIN - DAY

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

BRIAN
Anyway, someone has basketball
practice tonight.

LIBRA
Are we collecting?

BRIAN
I am not.

LIBRA
So she's having dinner...

BRIAN
They're going for burgers.

LIBRA
We get to have fish.

BRIAN
Will you make your bouillabaisse?

LIBRA
Is that a special request?

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

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

BRIAN

I've never loved you more.

He kisses her.

EXT. CAFÉ - PARIS

Scorpio 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. Scorpio watches them go.

EXT. CITY OF LISBON, PORTUGAL - DAY (FLASHBACK)

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

EXT. HOTEL PALÁCIO, LISBON - 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 ROOM, FOURTH FLOOR, HOTEL DA CICADO - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

An ornate desk has been pushed under the open window. Scorpio is bent low over a high precision rifle, eye to the scope, the barrel just lifting the lace curtain. Beside her is Libra, 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. Scorpio's visible left ear and neck are un-scarred.

LIBRA

You want left or right?

SCORPIO

Left. On my mark.

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

Scorpio and Libra squint down their rifle sights.

SCORPIO

After four... Four.

They both fire simultaneously.

EXT. HOTEL PALÁCIO - 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 ROOM, FOURTH FLOOR, HOTEL DA CICADO - DAY
(FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

Scorpio and Libra 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. HOTEL PALÁCIO - 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. CORRIDOR, FOURTH FLOOR, HOTEL DA CICADO - DAY
(FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

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

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

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

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

Libra and Scorpio walk at the same even 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.

Scorpio and Libra 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, Libra pulls out a walkie-talkie and listens.

LIBRA

OK.

She taps Libra on the arm.

LIBRA (CONT'D)

(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 (CONT'D)

(in Portuguese,
subtitled)

Sir.

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

Scorpio and Libra 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. CORRIDOR, THIRD FLOOR, HOTEL DA CICADO - DAY
(FLASHBACK,

Scorpio leads Libra at an unhurried pace.

SCORPIO
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.

Scorpio and Libra keep walking towards him at the same pace.

He sees them and raises his gun.

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

But Libra is on him, hand fastened around his gun wrist, she elbows him in the jaw. The Policeman drops his walkie-talkie and Scorpio kicks it clear.

Libra bangs the Policeman's arm against the wall until he drops that too. Again, Scorpio kicks it clear.

Libra 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 Libra's wrist.

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

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

Libra, realising she is caught, looks at Scorpio.

LIBRA
Just go.

The walkie-talkie on the ground crackles again.

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

Scorpio slams the Policeman against the wall by the throat.

SCORPIO
 (in English)
 If I shoot you through the hand
 your bones will shatter, and I can
 squeeze the pulverised remains
 through this handcuff. It'll hurt.
 A lot.

The Policeman pales. Scorpio 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.

Scorpio takes the key and clubs him on the side of the
 head.

He goes down and Libra holds up his wrist while she unlocks
 him.

LIBRA
 Thanks.

SCORPIO
 Rule number one.

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

LIBRA
 I thought that was rule number
 two.

SCORPIO
 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.

SCORPIO (CONT'D)
 (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, Scorpio and Libra, 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 Scorpio and Libra 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.

Scorpio and Libra 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)

Scorpio and Libra 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. LOBBY, HOTEL DA CICADO - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT'D)

The doors open to reveal Scorpio and Libra, 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".

Policeman 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.

Scorpio and Libra 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. Scorpio and Libra 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)

Scorpio and Libra 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.

SCORPIO

I'm thinking of getting bangs.

LIBRA

A fringe?

SCORPIO

Yeah, bangs.

LIBRA

Why are they called bangs?

SCORPIO

Why is it called a fringe?

LIBRA

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

SCORPIO

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

LIBRA

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

SCORPIO

Yeah, me too.

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

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. CAFÉ - PARIS

Scorpio sits very still at her table. A man sits at the next table, facing slightly away from her. It's Capricorn, the man from the burning warehouse.

He's wearing the same leather suit-style jacket, all cleaned up but still handsome. And now missing two fingers on his left hand.

Freeze frame.

CAPTION: CAPRICORN

Action resumes.

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

SCORPIO

Did you find her?

CAPRICORN

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

SCORPIO

As soon as you find her.

CAPRICORN

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.

Capricorn places a tightly rolled piece of paper, about the size of a cigarette, on Scorpio'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.

SCORPIO

Public example or behind closed
doors?

CAPRICORN

Public example.

SCORPIO

Mmm. It's a two-hander.

CAPRICORN

You can have Gemini or Virgo.

SCORPIO

Gemini.

CAPRICORN

Nobody wants Virgo.

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

SCORPIO

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

CAPRICORN

The Russians like that. They call
him The Thunder.

Still not looking at each other, they both grin.

SCORPIO

I want Gemini. I trust Gemini.

He knows. He nods. They both finish their coffee in silence.

Scorpio stands and takes a step towards the door. She stops,
still not looking at him.

SCORPIO (CONT'D)

I have the rest of the morning
free.

Capricorn looks at her. She walks out. He sips his coffee.

INT. SCORPIO'S APARTMENT FOYER, PARIS - DAY

Capricorn slams Scorpio 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 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. SCORPIO'S BEDROOM, PARIS - DAY

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

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

CAPRICORN

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

SCORPIO

I think those olives were there
when I moved in.

CAPRICORN

So do I. I threw them out.

SCORPIO

What? I was about to give them
names.