

A FEATURE FILM WRITTEN BY ALANA GERDES

CELLOPHANE SHELLS



LOGLINE

An introverted CIA agent is forced to come out of her shell to chase a general's mysterious wife across Europe to stop a major arms deal that will decide a civil war.



INTRODUCTION

"Cellophane Shells" is a feature film about two diametrically different women whose cat-and-mouse game forces them to come out of their comfort zones and confront their traumas, covering the themes of the use of fake news for political gain, the rise of autocracies, and the underestimation of women. Comps are "The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo" and "The Bourne Identity".

Set against the backdrop of some of Europe's most beautiful and exciting cities that are often overlooked, this action thriller ends with a surprising twist that holds a mirror against today's society that has lost the ability to separate the truth from the lie.



MAIN CHARACTERS

ANA HERNANDEZ

This introverted CIA analyst is forced to leave her comfort zone when a mysterious woman piques her interest, forcing her to confront not only her trauma but also the truth of what it takes to win a war.

STEVE BARNES

Restless CIA operative Steve comes to learn that busting arms smugglers makes little difference in the grand scale of warfare, especially when the weapon is not what he expects it to be.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR JOHNSON

Despite being weary of his job and the responsibility that comes with it, this vocal yet supportive CIA trouper's instincts are on point when pushing his people to save innocent lives.

MARIYA VELKOFF

Oozing the glamor of the rich and powerful, this former oligarch's wife enjoys her jet-setting lifestyle despite being hunted across Europe, knowing that the truth will set her free.

VICTOR CAROLI

Believing in a simple deal, this European weapons dealer doesn't expect to find himself chased atop a vertiginous tower by a relentless CIA agent who is determined to bring a year-long manhunt to an end.

MIN XIAO

Proving that hackers come in all shapes and sizes, model-like Min plays a small but vital role in the master plan that no one sees coming.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

In present-day Washington D.C., recluse CIA analyst Ana Hernandez learns that an eastern European country is experiencing political unrest following an election that has been rigged by using fake news. The country's defence minister and initiator of the misinformation campaign, General Velkoff, plans to buy a highly effective missile to use against protesters but is unable to get it due to sanctions. Ana realizes that his ex-wife Mariya could travel abroad to buy this weapon and smuggle it back into the country, and she decides to report her suspicion to her superior Deputy Director Johnson who sends her to Zurich to talk with a journalist to find out more about Mariya's dealings.

Finding nothing that helps her case, Ana is just about to leave Switzerland when she bumps into charming CIA field agent Steve Barnes who is following a weapons dealer and associate of Mariya named Victor Caroli. Noticing that their cases might be linked, Ana joins Steve's team, and together they go undercover at a fashion show in Milan that Mariya and Victor are supposed to attend. On-site, Ana strikes up a conversation with Mariya and subsequently gets invited to her yacht. At the same time, Steve's team finds a note with Mariya's instruction to Victor to steal the missile in Hamburg.

SYNOPSIS

ACT II

Ana, who suffers from panic attacks whenever confronted with open water, gets anxiety medication and boards the yacht in Portofino where she meets hacker Min Xiao who has studied with Mariya's son Nikita at MIT. Later that evening, Ana and Mariya discuss the art of war only to be interrupted by Mariya's lover who accuses her of being involved in her husband's plan to violently put an end to the protests in their home country. As Mariya gets distracted Ana sneaks into her cabin and finds childhood photos of Mariya with her deceased sister. Meanwhile, Steve chases a suspect missile seller across Hamburg, only to find him to be innocent. Ana and Steve reconvene in St. Tropez where she gets a call from the journalist claiming to have found important information about Mariya's past.

Ana, Steve, and the team travel to Amsterdam to meet the journalist, only to coincidentally find Mariya and Nikita at the same event. The journalist reveals that Mariya used to be a member of the liberal party and was sent undercover to Velkoff, who was already a high-ranking military member at that time, to assassinate him. Suddenly the journalist gets shot by Nikita. Ana pursues him through Amsterdam's canals until she suffers a panic attack as he jumps on a boat to flee. The team picks her up, and Ana sees the note they found in Milan. She correctly deciphers it to be a meeting date, leading them to travel to Blackpool where they find Victor and Mariya.

SYNOPSIS

ACT III

Steve follows Victor onto the Blackpool Tower where they engage in a vertigo-inducing fight until Steve kills his nemesis. At the same time, Ana follows Mariya and confronts her. Mariya reveals that she infiltrated Velkoff's office under her dead sister's name, but then cut ties with her liberal roots when she fell in love with him. However, once he started to behave more autocratically she decided to put an end to his regime. Instead of obtaining the missile on his behalf, Mariya smuggled a computer virus that Min programmed and gave her while on the yacht, which Mariya in turn handed over to Nikita in Amsterdam. Said virus can detect and destroy manipulated data, wiping out fake news from the internet.

As Mariya confesses Nikita sneaks into a data centre in Dublin with the help of an access key that Victor gave Mariya back in Milan. Nikita plants the virus in the system and manages to escape just as it starts spreading through the internet. Suddenly Mariya gets shot by her ex-lover seeking revenge for her supposed support of Velkoff his regime. Ana overcomes her fears and chases him by boat until he pulls the trigger on himself, accidentally causing his boat to crash into hers. Ana falls into the water and is about to drown when Steve turns up and saves her. They travel back to the beach where Mariya dies in Ana's arms, making her promise not to reveal Nikita's involvement in their conspiracy against his father. Velkoff is arrested and the people in his country get to have a fair re-election. Ana is promoted to field agent and, having opened herself up to the world, finally asks Steve out.

MOOD BOARD











COLLABORATION

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Willem Elzenga is a director and producer who studied at The Netherlands Film Academy. His thesis project won the Dutch award for best student film of the year 2000. Willem's company Plinq produced dozens of films and games including the award-winning short Roadkill and the documentary A House of Orange. Both films were distributed internationally.



For development, Willem has worked at Jan de Bont's production company Blue Tulip and several film markets, including EFM and AFM. He received a bid for his artwork from a major studio in 2007. Currently, Willem is working on his company FireStarter Film Studio which has gaming and film projects in development for the international market place.

ABOUT THE SCREENWRITER

Alana Gerdes is a Swiss-Australian citizen with a background in financial crime compliance who specializes in writing feature film scripts in the genres of crime, action, comedy, and romance. Her stories are driven by complex yet relatable characters, engaging the audience with sharp dialogues and current themes.



Self-motivated and committed to developing original material, she gained recognition in multiple screenwriting competitions, including the Emerging Screenwriters Action & Thriller Screenplay Competition, Filmmatic Inroads Screenwriting Fellowship, Screencraft Feature Competition, and the Big Apple Film Festival Screenplay Competition.

“You of all people should know that it’s not the gun that decides a war.
It’s the brains behind it.” – MARIYA VELKOFF



THANK YOU FOR READING

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE REACH OUT TO ALANA GERDES BY EMAIL
(A.GERDES@GMX.CH), PHONE (+41 79 548 77 03), OR SKYPE (ALANA GERDES).