



Get Shorty

Elmore Leonard

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Mob-connected loan shark Chili Palmer is sick of the Miami grind—plus his “friends” have a bad habit of dying there. So when he chases a deadbeat client out to Hollywood, Chili figures he might like to stay. This town, with its dream-makers, glitter, hucksters, and liars—plus gorgeous, partially clad would-be starlets everywhere you look—seems ideal for an enterprising criminal with a taste for the cinematic. Besides, Chili’s got an idea for a *killer* movie, though it could very possibly kill him to get it made.

Get Shorty Details

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Author : Elmore Leonard

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From Reader Review Get Shorty for online ebook

Jamie says

Week before last I took a trip by myself. It's one of my favorite things to do, to disappear off the grid, to land up someplace in a [slightly sketchy; always slightly sketchy] motel. It's not so much a vacation from anything as it is just a change of scenery.

One of the rules, and it hasn't failed yet, is to make as many new friends as possible. I can do this on trips, because there's so much wide open space of solitude that it's hardly an intrusion. I'll talk to anyone. I'll talk to a lamppost.

This time, it was the beach. I made friends with the staff at this cheap old motel to the point where they were letting me have late breakfasts and a free 'suite' (I paid for a double and they gave me a king) and the run of the pool after closing, where I could swim all night if I wanted. I knew their kids' names and grandkids' names. I knew everyone in housekeeping. I was 'honey' and 'sweetheart' in the inviolable rule of southern hospitality.

So yes, this book was covered in sand from the hot salt ocean, it was read in the pool at 1 a.m. (One night it rained. A night swim alone near the ocean in the rain: how could you want that to end?) But more to the point I'm making, I pick the books I read on these trips with a purpose. They have to fit the mood but they have to be friends too, they have to sit by my plate at meals— to show it's okay I'm eating alone— but never read through the meals because they've started too many conversations.

And the whole trip, I didn't eat a meal alone. My favorite spot is this bar on the dock, the best burgers and shrimp on the beach, the local joint for all the retirees and fishermen. They'd tie up their boats right there on the dock and four out of every five meals, there I'd be. "Whatch-you reading?" is like "whatch-you fishing?" The best starter-kit for conversation there is.

I say all this not to say how many people went "Elmore Leonard!" or "Get Shawty?" or "That's the one with Danny Devito?" I say it because I'm not convinced yet there's a soul on the earth, asshole or saint, that can't be won over with a good joke or a good story or someone just being an interesting, real human person. Where that isn't enough to break all the rules and get away with anything and make family out of strangers. I'm sure those people exist. I'm saying I haven't met one yet. And since that seems to be the basic law of Elmore's universe too, well. It makes me feel like I'm not naive. It makes me feel like maybe that's the basic law everywhere. And maybe, the more who believe that: it just might be.

Plus, my room number was 325. Chili Palmer's with the guns and the money and newfound friends was 325. How's that for kicks?

"What you don't understand," Catlett said, "is what the movie is saying. You live clean, the shit gets taken care of somehow or other. That's what the movie's about."

"You believe that?"

"In movies, yeah. Movies haven't got nothing to do with real life."

Jim says

At one point, an alternative title for this book appears in the movie: **Chili Palmer's Adventures in Hollywood**, and that would have been appropriate. I loved his book because I loved the character of Chili Palmer, the worldly-wise loan shark from back East who fit in so well with the crazed world of Hollywood.

Get Shorty by Elmore Leonard is all about Chili, who originally comes out west after a dry cleaning shop owner gets wealthy by **not** being in a famous plane crash, though his luggage was. He left for Vegas leaving loan shark debts piling up, and Chili Palmer in hot pursuit. He catches up with him, and also drops in on a movie producer called Harry Zimm and his attractive ex-starlet mistress Karen. That's when Chili begins to see dollar signs, and the various Hollywood types have a hard time knowing what to make of him.

Along the way, there is great dialog in which the author gets back at Hollywood and all the abortive attempts to make good films out of his novels. And there is some very sophisticated humor, especially regarding a locker at the Delta Airlines Terminal at LAX containing \$175,000 in drug money.

Bill says

I had been meaning to read Elmore Leonard for years, ever since seeing movies like Reservoir Dogs and Pulp Fiction. I knew Quentin Tarantino was a big fan and was heavily influenced by Leonard. So, after much surfing and emailing, I determined Get Shorty was likely the best novel to start with. It was pretty good, but a really light read.

What makes Leonard's writing shine is the dialogue; you've heard the overused "dialogue crackles" rave? Well Leonard really delivers...this is why his novels make such successful movies: they read like them. This is a novel perfect for those who typically prefer movies over novels.

I prefer the depth of Michael Connelly or Greg Iles or Dennis Lehane myself. But this is an entertaining story and certainly holds your attention, and before you know it, it's over. Just like a good movie.

Rob says

What a read. It's so funny I thought my pants would never dry.

The main character, Chili Palmer is just so cool. Chili, a small time loan shark get by by impling violence to non paying customers. The threats are always delivered with Chili's own brand of dry humor.

Did you know it was Chili who first said these immortal words" **look at me**".

This is about Hollywood meets the Mob.

Chili goes to Hollywood chasing a guy who owes him money. Along the way Chili meets some low level movie types and decides the movie life might be the go for him. Before long Chili goes into the movie business and the film producers all want to be mobsters. It's a farce but what an entertaining farce it is. During his life Elmore Leonard was long associated with the movie industry and had some serious run-ins with the moguls of the industry. Get Shorty is Leonard's tongue in cheek finger poke at Hollywood.

Highly recommended.

Michael says

Chili Palmer is a shylock with mob connections working in Miami. However he is sick of the grind and it seems that his friends in the industry have a bad habit of dying. While chasing a deadbeat across America, he eventually ends up in Hollywood, where he decides to stay and start a new life. Besides, he has a killer idea for a movie and this is the town where dreams can come true...or do they?

It is no secret that Elmore Leonard has a bitter opinion towards Hollywood and *Get Shorty* allowed him to vent his feelings. In 1984 Leonard won an Edgar Award (Best Novel) for his novel *LaBrava* and during the hype, Cannon Films brought the rights for a film adaptation. Dustin Hoffman had signed on to play former Secret Service agent Joe LaBrava in what was dubbed “the richest star deal in entertainment history”. Elmore Leonard had to do multiple rewrites (all unpaid) at the request of the star only to have Hoffman terminate his contract citing ‘contract disputes’. The reason behind Hoffman’s departure from the project was due to some advertising; Cannon Films two full page ads in some trade papers which showed him pictured under the heading “Welcome to the Cannon Family Dustin Hoffman”. His contract granted him final approval to all advertising for the upcoming movie.

When reading *Get Shorty* you get a real sense of Elmore Leonard’s bitterness towards Hollywood and the failed movie. According to IMdb Dustin Hoffman is 5’5” and his depiction in the novel is the over compensating Michael Weir (who was portrayed by Danny DeVito in the film adaptation). Despite what Leonard may have thought about the movie industry, *Get Shorty* turned into one of the great satires depicting Hollywood. The film adaptation was the next of his novels to make the transition to the screen, this time with only minor changes to the main plot. This lead the way to a range of great Elmore Leonard adaptations, from *Jackie Brown*, *Out of Sight*, *Be Cool*, *3:10 to Yuma* and the TV show *Justified*.

Get Shorty is probably one of the best modern crime novels I have read in a long time. I tend to find that modern authors in the genre do not explore social issues within their books. Elmore Leonard was one of the best crime novelists and it was sad to lose him back in 2013. I plan to read the next book in the Chili Palmer series, *Be Cool* and I think I should rewatch the movies sometime soon as well.

This review originally appeared on my blog; <http://www.knowledgelost.org/literatu...>

P.S. Winn says

Loan shark Chili Palmer seems like a guy I could sit down and have a conversation with. This book turns mob connections, crimes and the big city perils into quite an adventure.

Mark Dawson says

George Higgins might have been an influence on the late, great Elmore Leonard but, for me at least, there is no-one who nails dialogue quite like Duke. It's a great regret that I never got to meet the man because he's a hero. But it's more than dialogue, isn't it? Opening lines, pacing, plotting - he could do all of it, and it seemed

to be completely effortless. I think he's written better books than this, but it's the one that brought me to him and so I still have a soft spot for it. Chili Palmer is a superb character, perhaps a little unfortunately associated with Travolta now, because, for me, he has a little more hardness and a little less smarm. But that's quibbling. His Ten Rules are in full effect here and they contribute to a rollicking, roller-coastering read that completely blew me away when I read it for the first time (and the second time, and the third). As an entree to the great man's work, this is a good choice. And if it is your first, I envy you. Luckily for us, he was prolific and there's plenty more to enjoy.

Tony says

GET SHORTY. (1990). Elmore Leonard. ****.

This was a re-read for me of a Leonard novel that I first read when it was published in 1990. It was also fortunate that I happened to catch Leonard at a reading/signing for this book. He had lots of stories about Hollywood, which is the setting for this novel. Leonard often said that all of his novels had at least been optioned for films. I think most of them made it to the big screen and were successful – and this included his early Westerns also. The question that always pops up at a signing was, “How did you handle the financial deal?” His response was: “The producers were on one side of a fence and I was on the other. They would throw over a bag of money and then I would throw over the script (novel).” This always got a laugh, but was – in a sense, true. He let the Hollywood folks do their thing, while he did his. “Get Shorty” is an excellent crime novel that was made into a hit film starring John Travolta and Gene Hackman. Recommended.

Diane says

This novel was so much fun! It's only the second Elmore Leonard book I've read, but already I'm a convert.

The story is that Chili Palmer is a Miami loan shark who ends up in Los Angeles, trying to track down a guy who owes him money. Chili has always loved movies, and while in LA he gets to know producer Harry Zimm and actress Karen Flores. Chili has an idea for a movie based on his experiences as a shylock, and a major star likes the story.

What was especially fun about this book was how meta it was about the movie industry. Elmore Leonard wrote the book based on his experiences with Hollywood, and there are some good jokes made about actors and producers.

(Sorry, I was interrupted while working on this and some people saw this review only half-written. I wish Goodreads would add a "save as draft" option.) As I was saying, Leonard's writing is a joy to read. He's funny, clever, has great insight into his characters, and his stories move so briskly that there isn't a wasted paragraph in the book.

Earlier this month I read Leonard's "Out of Sight," which was also a delight, and I picked up "Get Shorty" because I had enjoyed the movie version. Leonard was so prolific that I plan to relish his novels for months to come.

Favorite Quotes

The trouble with this [drug] business, you had to rely on other people; you couldn't do it alone. Same thing in the movie business, from what Catlett had seen, studying how it worked. The difference was, in the movie business, you didn't worry about somebody getting turned to save their ass and pointing at you in court. You could get fucked over in the movie business all kinds of ways, but you didn't get sent to a correctional facility when you lost out. The movie business, you could come right out and tell people what you did, make a name. Instead of hanging out on the edge, supplying highs for dumbass movie stars, you could get to where you hire the ones you want and tell 'em what to do; they don't like it, fire their ass. It didn't make sense to live here if you weren't in the movie business.

"What you don't understand," Catlett said, "is what the movie is saying. You live clean, the shit gets taken care of somehow or other. That's what the movie's about."

"You believe that?"

"In movies, yeah. Movies haven't got nothing to do with real life."

Milo (BOK) says

Elmore Leonard is an author whose work I need to discover more of and having read the first Raylan Givens novel, *Pronto* as well as now *Get Shorty*, he's already turning out to be one of my thriller writers. Like the blurb describes, nobody can write opening lines like this guy and he's just so good. He finds a way of drawing you in, keeping you hooked and telling a compelling story that you won't be able to put down.

Like many of Leonard's novels *Get Shorty* has been adapted into a film and I decided that it would be a good idea to read the book before watching an adaption, unlike the case with the Raylan Givens novels, as to which I saw *Justified* first, and when I inevitably get around to reading the novel that inspired Tarantino's *Jackie Brown*, it will be a similar story. Both are among my favourite films and TV shows respectively so it will only a matter of time before I check out the source material. Here the book explores how crazy Hollywood can get, by taking an outsider and putting him right in the middle of it. I was kind of reminded of Shane Black's incredibly funny and awesome *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* which puts an outsider in the middle of Hollywood, and *Get Shorty* just manages to really work.

The dialogue is excellent and Leonard really has a way of creating colourful characters that are even better than an already good plot. Chili Palmer is a fascinating character to read and a worthy lead, and everything really works well with the pace pulled off perfectly. It's great to see how meta this book can get at times particularly with its focus on Hollywood and it's interesting to learn that Leonard wrote this book based on his own experiences, managing to incorporate good jokes about the people that work in the industry.

The story focus on Ernesto "Chili" Palmer a man in Miami Beach, a loan shark who earned his nickname for his temper, and you can probably guess what problems this means for the character over the course of the book. He's got a problem in that even though he's part-Italian he can never become as well-off as the other full-Italians in the organization, because he also has some Puerto Rican blood in him which naturally means

that he's looked down upon. The characters that we meet are all really well crafted and instantly memorable as a result, with Leonard taking care to flesh out details like these that really makes things interesting.

Here we see Palmer struggling with both a drycleaner who is presumed dead in Los Angeles whilst trying to pitch a movie about his own life. The way this is handled and how both storylines are balanced is played remarkably well, and it's great to see that Leonard manages to wrap this up as an effective standalone even if there is another Palmer-featuring novel out there which I will be checking out for sure.

Get Shorty is a heck of a lot of fun and I'm glad that I decided to get it when I saw it on my local Waterstones shelf because it's not often that they have anything by Leonard. I may need to visit them again in the near future and hope that there's more of his work there, because I can't wait to check out what else the author has written.

Sarah says

8/5 - I had real trouble getting into the plot and unusual dialogue style and ended up giving up at page 95. I'm not sure if it was the book or my preoccupation with my recovery, so one day (hopefully this year) I'll give it another go.

Kirk Smith says

Fast paced, action packed. Never a dull moment. Pretty amused that it captures a screenplay within a screenplay. I never realized it was so Hollywood. Also, more Fun than I was expecting!

Cheryl says

A fast-paced, funny book that's a mix of gangsters and the Hollywood movie scene. Good writing, with interesting characters and dialogue.

S.P. Aruna says

I love just about all the books this guy has ever written. His characters are quirky and colorful, his plots always a bit offbeat. And this story of a small-time hood trying to break into the movie business as a producer is no exception.

Elmore Leonard is considered a crime writer, yet his characters are rarely (if ever) detectives, policemen, or private eyes. Now that's a challenge! He is definitely a one-of-a-kind author. It's no wonder that Hollywood has made so many movies out of his books!

Kemper says

Elmore Leonard had a bad Hollywood experience in the mid-‘80s of working on a film adaptation of *LaBrava* with Dustin Hoffman. Leonard did multiple unpaid rewrites at the actor’s request, but then Hoffman bailed on the project after six months of meetings leaving Leonard with nothing to show for his time. Leonard’s revenge was *Get Shorty* and what sweet revenge it is.

Chili Palmer is a small time loan shark in Miami who once got into a beef with another gangster, Ray Barboni, who has held a grudge against him. Unfortunately, Chili ends up working for Ray who immediately demands that Chili shake down overdue payment from a dry cleaner. A twisted trail eventually leads Chili to LA where he gets mixed up with Harry Zimm, a small-time producer of horror movies who has a new script that flighty superstar actor Michael Weir has expressed an interest in. Harry thinks he can use Michael’s name to get a big studio deal to make something better than schlock for a change, but he’s got a problem with a drug dealer name Bo Catlett who usually finances his movies to launder drug money.

Chili is a big movie buff who thinks he might give up loan sharking for producing, and he sets out to help Harry get a deal with the help of Karen Flores, a former actress known for screaming in Harry’s horror movies who just so happens to be Michael’s ex. Unfortunately, Bo Catlett has also been dreaming of breaking into the film industry and starts trying to drive Chili away from Harry with the idea of taking over the project.

The surface level of this is funny enough with its core idea of a gangster trying to get into the movie business, but where it achieves greatness is the twist it takes once Chili meets Michael. When his pitch for Harry’s movie isn’t getting through, Chili starts talking about his recent adventures, and Michael is intrigued. Without realizing it, Chili essentially begins pitching his story as it’s happening to Michael, and the short actor pounces on the idea of playing a loan shark. The problem is that Chili doesn’t know how it’s going to end yet.

Leonard always had a great knack of playing off the way that people perceive themselves and each other. This pays off even more since so many Hollywood characters are involved that the story is being discussed and thought about as a movie even while it happens. So when Chili confronts a thug of Catlett’s and throws him down a flight of stairs while Karen watches, she’s mentally breaking it down like a film scene instead of being shocked by what she saw. When someone asks Chili who the protagonist is, Chili is shocked that it’s not apparent that the loan shark is the good guy because to him it’s obvious that he’s the hero of this story.

While some writers might have let this idea of a story unfolding and being pitched as a movie at the same time get too clever for its own good and been tempted to push the idea into complete nonsense, Leonard’s brevity and sharp plotting keep it grounded as a crime story with humor rather than letting it turn into some kind of meta-fiction writing exercise. As usual, you also get all the hallmarks of Leonard in his prime with great dialogue and memorable characters.

Of course, the ultimate fitting end to Leonard’s satirizing of Hollywood is that this was eventually turned into a hit film. Dustin Hoffman was not involved.

Elizabeth (Alaska) says

I would call this spoof noir. It has all the noir elements you'd find in a Raymond Chandler novel, but not only none of the darkness, but humor enough for smiles throughout. Chili Palmer is not your stereotypical loan shark. Collecting is just business. Hurting people who don't pay shouldn't be necessary when all you have to do is look at them with that certain look.

Neither is this any sort of stereotypical crime novel. Which are the good guys and which the bad isn't as obvious as it should be. Or at least it isn't as obvious when they are introduced, and, then, well, maybe... But then, maybe being a shylock isn't the only job in the world.

This was just too fun! Pulp fiction that is so much better than pulp fiction. It's a 4-plus or a 5-minus. Because of its genre, I can't quite bring myself to give it 5 stars. I think others might, though, because yes, it's fun!

Joe Valdez says

The 28th novel by Elmore Leonard is perhaps the one the author is best known. Published in 1990, *Get Shorty* might be the book to turn the man on the street from asking, "Elmore who?" to nodding his head and saying, "Oh, Elmore wrote that? Yeah, saw the movie! He's good!" The movie is not only a stellar entertainment, but ended a forty-odd year dry spell in which Hollywood seemed unable or unwilling to balance the explosiveness of Leonard's violence with the sweetness of his characters and their casual, often hilarious, dialogue. A Leonard revival followed with *Jackie Brown* and *Out of Sight* on film and *Karen Sisco* and *Justified* on TV.

The 1995 film version of *Get Shorty* hovers over the source material like an atmospheric disturbance in the Gulf and while far from reinventing the book -- most of the characters, much of the story, a lot of the dialogue and all of the spirit are the same -- screenwriter Scott Frank, producers Michael Shamberg, Stacy Sher & Danny DeVito and director Barry Sonnenfeld definitely improved on it. Fans of the movie might be disappointed, as I was.

The story kicks off in Miami Beach, where Ernesto "Chili" Palmer is looking for his coat. A loan shark nicknamed for his temper in the old days but lately for his cool demeanor, Chili was raised in Brooklyn as an Italian, but due to some Puerto Rican blood, can never become a made guy like the upper level Italians in the organization. Chili is fine with this, dismissive of the respect demanded by certain guys who, in his view, haven't earned it. This includes Ray Barboni, a guy with a barbell for a brain who works for the boss of the local operation. "Bones" helps himself to a coat in a coatroom which not only belongs to Chili and contains Chili's car keys but was a gift from his wife, Debbie.

Chili discusses office politics with his bookkeeping partner Tommy Carlo, who drives Chili to visit Bones and pleads with him not to say anything. *"Don't worry about it. I won't say any more than I have to, if that."* He put on his black leather gloves going up the stairs to the third floor, knocked on the door three times, waited, pulling his right-hand glove on tight, and when Ray Bones opened the door Chili nailed him. One punch, not seeing any need to throw the left. He got his coat from a chair in the sitting room, looked at Ray Bones bent over holding his nose and mouth, blood all over his hands, his shirt, and walked out. Didn't say one word to him.

The coat incident earns Chili a visit from Bones, who takes a couple of shots at him before Chili creases the dumbbell's skull with a bullet from his .38. Thirty stitches later and a discussion between the men's bosses, the dispute is quashed, but has the undesired effect of Chili's wife discovering that he's still associating with "those people." She blames the loss of their baby three months previous on his behavior and leaves him. Chili attracts a wide variety of waitresses, beauticians or sales clerks at Dadeland Mall with his confidence, but most of them play second fiddle to Chili's real love: movies.

If you're thinking, "What a mensch" you're probably alone. More on that later.

Twelve years later, Chili is phasing himself out of the loan shark business, doing collection work for local merchants and a couple of casinos in Las Vegas, as well as handling a few regular borrowers who only need an icy stare to pay up. Ray Bones is promoted and upon inheriting Chili, hassles him over a miss in his books: Leo Devoe, a drycleaner who's late on fifteen grand, plus twenty-seven hundred in interest over six weeks. Chili explains that Leo is late because he's dead, killed in a jet crash in the Everglades. Leo's wife Fay identified her husband's luggage in the wreck and the newspapers listed him as a victim, but when Chili visits Fay to confirm it, he's told that Leo lives.

Fay explains to Chili that her husband tried to duck out on his debt, but got nervous after his plane experienced mechanical problems. Leo was at the airport bar when the plane crashed on the runway. The airline awarded Fay a three-hundred thousand dollar settlement, which Leo disappeared with, most likely to Las Vegas, his dream travel destination. She offers Chili half of what's left of her money if he can get Leo.

The story jumps to Los Angeles, where Harry Zimm is doing some hiding of his own, crashing at the Westwood house of his ex-girlfriend, scream queen Karen Flores. She wakes Harry in the night when she hears the TV downstairs. Harry finds Chili Palmer in his study, here as a favor to the Mesa Casino of Las Vegas, which Harry owes one-hundred fifty thousand on a Lakers-Pistons game. Uncharacteristically, he also dropped a cashier's check he had on him for two-hundred thousand. Chili gets curious why.

"I produce feature motion pictures, no TV. You mentioned Grotesque, that happened to be Grotesque, Part Two Karen Flores was in. She starred in all three of my Slime Creatures releases you might have seen."

The guy, Chili was nodding as he came forward to lean on the desk.

"I think I got an idea for one, a movie."

And Harry said, "Yeah? What's it about?"

Get Shorty has a thrilling conceit: A loan shark from Miami chases a missing, presumed dead drycleaner in Los Angeles while associating with Hollywood people and trying to pitch a movie to a major star about a loan shark from Miami chasing a missing, presumed dead drycleaner in Los Angeles. Chili's movie idea develops as the real-life intrigue he's basing it on develops. Harry gushes to Chili that he's stumbled onto a goldmine, a script titled *Mr. Lovejoy*, a labor of love by the writer of *Slime Creatures*. The project has attracted the interest of Karen's ex-husband Michael Weir, a fickle talent whose commitment can make Harry a legit player.

Weir's agent has demanded half a million dollars in an escrow account before they'll meet with Harry, who lit out for Vegas and lost two-hundred thousand he'd stolen from investors for a schlockfest to be titled *Freaks*. The investors are Ronnie Wingate, a Santa Barbara rich kid who owns a limo company, and Bo Catlett, the hustler who runs the company. After rubbing elbows with enough Hollywood types, Catlett

dreams of being a film producer. In exchange for seeing how a movie is put together, Chili agrees to sit in on a meeting with the limo guys to back them off Harry for a while, but Harry proves a lot dumber and Bo Catlett a lot smarter than Chili hoped for things to be that easy.

The novel is missing a couple of key features from the movie:

-- Ray Bones learns that Leo is alive and tracks Chili down to L.A., but as played by the late, great Dennis Farina in the film, is more of a loose string in the book. He never threatens Chili that much on the page, making him a weak bad guy. In the film, Bones not only beats Harry Zimm to a living pulp and shoots Ronnie Wingate -- both great scenes invented by the filmmakers that feel more "Elmore Leonard" than Elmore Leonard -- but threatens to derail Chili's film project far more viciously.

-- The limo guys have stashed one-hundred seventy five thousand in an airport locker that the DEA is watching, but after Catlett shoots a Colombian mule who refuses to accept this as payment for cocaine Catlett bought, there aren't any consequences. In the movie, the mule's uncle and henchman arrive in L.A., applying pressure to Catlett to make good for what he owes and accelerating the story to even more delightful speeds.

-- Michael Weir, played by Danny DeVito as Martin Weir, is far less interesting on the page, a flaky talent in the mold of Dustin Hoffman. The problem is that Weir was nowhere near as fun to read about as he might have been for Leonard to write. Also, the novel ends without any indication of whether Weir is going to commit to Chili's loan shark project or not. Chili, Karen and Harry just walk off the studio lot after meeting with him. The coda in the movie might be the best thing in it.

To Leonard's credit, when Michael Weir comments that Chili's pitch is the best he's ever heard, I'm inclined to agree. In the book, Chili meets Weir not through Karen but through Weir's girlfriend, a rock musician who remembers Chili from when she worked in Miami. She introduces Chili to her boyfriend, who has to stop the conversation when Weir realizes Chili is trying to pitch *Mr. Lovejoy* to him. The dialogue is golden Elmore Leonard, with each character's voice so distinct that Leonard rarely needs to modify it with the names of characters.

"You think I'm talking about wiseguy money," Chili said. "No way. This one's gonna be made by a studio."

It brought the movie star partway back.

"I'm not connected to those people anymore. Not since I walked out of a loan-shark operation in Miami."

That brought the movie star all the way back with questions in his eyes, sitting up, interested in the real stuff.

"What happened? The pressure got to you?"

"Pressure? I'm the one who applied the pressure."

"That's what I mean, the effect it must've had on you. What you had to do sometimes to collect."

"Like have some asshole's legs broken?"

"That, yeah, or some form of intimidation?"

"Whatever it takes," Chili said. "You're an actor, you like to pretend. Imagine you're the shylock. A guy owes you fifteen grand and he skips, leaves town."

"Yeah?"

"What do you do?"

All right, so I'm interested in Weir a bit more than I thought I was. This scene is wrought with terrific tension because Leonard has laid out how much Chili loves movies, how much he wants to get out of the loan-shark business and how much his life would change if this movie star finds Chili's hustle compelling.

What I didn't like, and was surprised by, is how the female characters in the book are portrayed. Elmore Leonard typically writes such resilient, laser sharp women and while Karen Flores is no dummy, she and almost every woman Chili lays eyes on is appraised by her looks first, her looks second, her mettle third and her looks fourth. Other than Karen mentioning that her father was a rocket scientist, I never felt she had much to offer beyond the image Chili had of her. They had no chemistry whatsoever. I love the way Leonard usually introduces a character, keying in on some unusual facet of their personality, but I can tell when I'm not with a novel when I feel no compulsion to update my Goodreads status feed with a paragraph and I didn't here.

Get Shorty is an old neon sign with five stars, the one in the middle blinking and threatening to leave two stars at any time. I'm giving it the benefit of the doubt because I'm sure if I hadn't seen the movie already, I would've enjoyed the novel a bit more, and it's Elmore Leonard. It doesn't come together in a compelling way, stranding certain characters and letting ideas buzz away, but it's an old neon sign and still completely enchanting to watch.

Here's my list of Elmore Leonard novels ranked from favorite to least favorite:

1. *Stick* (1983)
 2. *Killshot* (1989)
 3. *Pronto* (1993)
 4. *Get Shorty* (1990)
 5. *LaBrava* (1983)
-

Tom Swift says

Really funny, Elmore is great.

Jane Stewart says

I enjoyed watching the character Chili, but I was disappointed with unfinished events at the end.

The value of this book is watching a collection of characters and the shallowness of movie-making. It was different and good. But I can't say I really liked it. Each time I put it down I had no desire to get back to it.

THE DRAW IS CHILI'S CHARACTER:

Chili is a wise guy loan shark. He doesn't use a gun. His style of intimidation is quiet, making the victim imagine bad things will happen if he doesn't pay. Before he makes a loan, Chili tries to talk the borrower out of it saying you really don't want to borrow from me. But they are desperate and do it.

Chili goes to Los Angeles to collect from two of his clients who are hiding. Chili has an intriguing way of tracking them. I was impressed. While there Chili decides he likes the movie business and tells one of his borrowers Harry that they are now partners in Harry's coming movie. Chili doesn't invest money in this partnership, but he has a strange way of making things happen. There are a couple of guys causing problems for Chili. I like the way Chili responds when he's in danger, how he quietly talks or doesn't talk to the threat.

I was intrigued that Chili was able to talk to an A-list movie star when others couldn't get to him. Chili used his typical methods for finding people. Chili had a way that got the guy interested.

PLOTS:

I wanted more of a traditional plot. When I read the last page, I couldn't believe it was over because things were unresolved. Much of the book was planning and discussing two possible movies, but that plot was not finished.

A secondary plot involved Ray Bones who caused problems for Chili. Chili arranged a problem for Ray, but the reader didn't get to see it. I wanted to watch Ray suffer or watch him get out of it some how. I was disappointed. I don't want to make up my own endings.

DATA:

Narrative mode: 3rd person. Story length: 359 pages. Swearing language: strong, including religious swear words. Sexual content: one sex scene vaguely described. Setting: around 1990 mostly Los Angeles, California, plus Miami, Florida, and Las Vegas, Nevada. Copyright: 1990. Genre: wise-guy fiction.

Fabian says

The plot is both simpleish & absurd--the showcase in this baby is truly its characters. Without so much description of their personas as actual lines of dialogue that exposes them richly, Leonard pretty much knew this one had Hollywood adaptation written all over it. Heck, the novel is all about Hollywood adaptations. So, although plenty of the circumstances that ricochet all over the "thematic fabric" seem laughable & flighty in the book, the inhabitants and their zippy, sarcastic, semiShakespearean lines make it an undoubted and resounding success. Also, I must mention that not in a long while in my most recent memory had I thought: Damn it if this novel couldn't've been several (a good deal several) pages longer!
