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The Brothers Bloom

By Rian Johnson

As far as con man stories go, I think I've heard them all. Of grifters, ropers, faro-fixers, tales drawn long and tall. But if one bears a bookmark in the confidence man's tome, it would be that of Penelope, and of the brothers Bloom. At 10 and 13, Bloom and Stephen, the younger and the old, had been through several foster families. No! Thirty-eight, all told. Mischief moved them on in life, and moving kept them close. For Bloom had Stephen, and Stephen, Bloom, and both had more than most. Another home, another Main Street. Stephen looked around and summed the burg up thusly. Bloom, we've hit a one-hat town. One theater. One car wash. One cafe. One park. One cat, which, through some mishap, had one leg. Sweet Jesus. Look at that. One public school, one tight-knit group of local well-off kids. Their pocket-change bought rocket pops. The brothers... Pixy Stix. They were the they, all well-loved, rooted, happy as you please, always there in every town. Playground bourgeoisies. Could he simply... Talk to her! Just drop his fears and go? Leave his brother in the woods, and join the children? No. So, in the root of Stephen's psyche, something now began. A seed of grand epiphany. A hook. A tale. - A plan. - A fiction, both for profit and to ease his brother's heart. A simple con in 15 steps. And this is where we start. And then, as if a curtain had been pulled back from the sky, some barrier within the younger Bloom was broken. Hi. So Bloom performed his role in Stephen's story to a T. And being who he wasn't, could be as he wished to be. So, the tale. You tell them... There's a hermit in the woods. A one-eyed, steel-toothed vagabond. - With blood-red eyes? - That's good. He stopped you, coming home from school. And told me of a cave. What kind of cave? A cave of wonder. Shut up, Dave. At noon on every Sunday, there appears a ball of light, which flutters, like a butterfly. - A will-o'-wisp? - That's right. It guides you... If you can keep up... ..to where the treasures lay. - So where's this cave? - Yeah, where? The hermit didn't say. He got this greedy, glinting look, the filthy red-eyed leech, and said he'd tell for 30 bucks. Well, that's just 2 bucks each! And so that Sunday, straight from church, into the woods Bloom led. They stopped. Their hearts leapt. There it was. Just like the hermit said. For just one moment, Bloom forgot himself and ran too fast. He'd catch the light and find the treasure, but the moment passed. They didn't catch the will-o'-wisp, but didn't really care. It seems to me that in the end, the perfect con is where each one involved gets just the thing they wanted. Yeah, I guess so. Our fledgling thieves were satisfied. The children's parents, less so. A bitter ending? Maybe. But there's sweetness in the mix. The brothers Bloom had found their calling, as shown in number six. "Cut" meant to negotiate. "Percent," percentage deal. O'Henry's was the town's one dry-clean shop. Pleasure doing business with you. So how's it feel? In truth, young Bloom won't know for 20 years just how he felt. And so, we'll skip ahead now in our story. Let 'em melt. He gets the scarab, you get the money, and I get the girl. So in the end, everyone gets everything he

wants. Victor! Charleston, what have you done? Oh, my God. Oh, God, he's dead! He was the only one who knew where our money was buried, and you shot him! Charleston, you dunce! The man named Charleston that you met four months and 1,000 years ago in a hotel bar in Jodhpur is dead. If we see each other again, it'll be as strangers. As for the money, let it rot. Wow! "Wow" is the word you're looking for! Wow! You're a genius, Stephen. We're genius, Bloom. Now, in defense of that shit-eating grin on my older brother's face, what he just pulled off was pretty amazing. He hinged the entire con on this question. Would Charleston, our spineless mark, would he actually pull that trigger? Maybe. But Stephen wanted better odds. He positioned me in the same spot where, six years ago, Charleston's wife had stood and told him she was leaving. He picked my suit to match her outfit. He even phonetically matched my final words to hers. This is the end, Charleston. You've always been such a dunce. So in the end, everyone gets everything he wants. Tastes like tinfoil. So does real blood. Buy you a drink? Nine months and 1,000 years ago. He was quoting from Kipling. He stole that from Kipling. No, he didn't. So where's this wrap party? Make way, make room for the brothers Bloom! Yeah, yeah! All right, here we go. Gather round, friends and accomplices. Think of a card. You got it? No. If I do it enough, someday it's gonna work on someone. And then it'll be the best damn card trick in the world. It's true you never work with the same crew twice? Well, shit. Except for the... Bang Bang? You know, I'm pretty big into anime. She's our fifth Beatle. She knows the ins and outs. I don't think she speaks more than three words of English. Campari. So, she's with you and Bloom till the end? Till the wind changes. Where is Bloom? There you are. You hiding? Yep. I've been learning. Stephen likes to talk about you. He tell you the cave story? Is it true? What else did he tell you? You two kicked around until your early teens winding up in the grotty outskirts of St. Petersburg, where you learned the big con from an old-school grifter named the Diamond Dog. Is that true? - That was his name? - Yep. And he was your mentor. But I get the sense it ended badly. Stephen took his eye out with an antique rapier. Why did he do that? The brothers Bloom lit out on their own to make their fortune as gentleman thieves. Sounds romantic. It does. You don't understand what my brother does. He writes his cons the way dead Russians write novels, with thematic arcs and embedded symbolism and shit. And he wrote me as the vulnerable antihero. And that's why you think you wanna kiss me. It's a con. I'm going nuts. There's the big two. We missed the sunrise. That would have been nice. Is this the bathroom? No. This is camels. Hold on, I must make piss. At least you're honest. All right, let's do this. Let's just get it done. So, first you say, "I'm quitting, Stephen. I'm out." Then I say... - Do we have to go through this again? - "Go through this again?" And then you make a show of putting on your jacket, and you say, "No, I mean it this time, Stephen. "This time, I'm really out." And then you say, "Let's have a drink," "and in the

morning, Bloom, you'll have come to your senses." It's a major design flaw in fake blood, by the way. - "And we'll be moving on." - Real blood turns brown... - Listen to me, Stephen. I... ..after half an hour. This Scotch cost more than your suit. Listen to me. The flask stopped a bullet in Normandy. Listen! Holy shit. That's my new favorite camel. I hate you. Okay? Oh, God, I can't do this anymore. I can't wake up next to another person who thinks they know me. And I'm 35 years old. I don't... I'm useless. I'm crippled. I don't... I've only ever lived life through these roles that aren't me, that are written for me by you. Tell me what you want. Why? So you can write me a role in a story where I get it? You're not listening to me! I want a real thing. I want a... I just... I want... I... want... - You want an unwritten life. - I want an unwritten life. I'm going away, somewhere where you and Bang Bang won't even be able to track me down. So don't try it, okay? No more stories. I love you. Goodbye. How'd you find me? Bang Bang. How'd she find me? How you been? Great. I've been doing a lot of thinking the past three months, and I've come to the conclusion that you don't want out. You think you do, but you don't. Hey, come here. I wanna show you something. I'm quit, Stephen. Where are we going? New Jersey. Let me grab my coat. So, where are we? The largest private residence on the Eastern Seaboard, home of our final mark. Daddy was an oil tycoon, a Hearst type, built a Xanadu to match, then died hunting quail. Mom followed into the hereafter two years ago, after 10 years of fighting a disease that I can't even pronounce. Thank you. Leaving our sucker all alone on this ludicrous estate with an insane amount of very liquid assets. What the hell is that? What are we, near an airport? What is that? Duck. What the hell? Get the car. - Bloom. - No women. One rule. You know we don't do women. And it's not a morality thing or a thing. It's... Whatever it is, it doesn't matter what it is, it's just our rule. So what are we... Is this a '78 Caddy? Controversial choice. So no, is what I'm saying, all right? I'm quits, anyway. I'll be in Montenegro, drinking. Ah, Penelope Stamp, 33. Lived at home her whole life. An eccentric shut-in rich bitch? You're not helping your case. She's bored. She's a little seed in the snow. We're going to put her on a grand adventure, bring her to life. She needs sprouting. So this is the big plan, huh? Lure me back in with some beautiful, intriguing, elusive girl. Seriously, Stephen. Amateur night. I'm not saying yes, but what's the con? It's actually pretty simple. We're brothers, antiquities dealers. We're traveling the world by steamer ship. Bang! Give her the old cackle-bladder and the brush-off. And that's how it ends in Mexico, burst of violence, then a moment of truth on the beach. What do you think? You got something up your sleeve. This is about me, right? Somehow. Now, this might not be something that you know, but they've all been about you. Maybe that's why they've none been perfect, because I've never been able to give you what you really wanted. This isn't gonna give me what I want. This will be the last one. You'll let me go.

I'll never ask you to do another con again. Make it a Schwinn. There are less painful ways to cut into a mark, you know. Score to beat is 7.9. Keep your head in the game. The Japanese judge is very tough. This is a banana seat, man! Don't give me that blank look, you know what a goddamn banana seat is. Oh! Shit. Shit! There's actually a knack to this. If you're trying to fast track into a mark's sympathies, there's nothing quite as effective as having your first conversation be from a hospital bed they put you in. What? Oh, come on. I actually think this is kind of a great thing, and I'll tell you why. Dostoevsky was an epileptic. His seizures were preceded by an enlightened euphoria, a sort of opening of his spiritual eye. I think the fact that she saw your face the instant before a seizure is a pretty goddamn good foot to start things off on, right? The next step, is to figure out a way to insinuate yourself into their personal life. I think they took my car. Could you drive me home? - Yeah. - Okay. I'm gonna... Step three, engagement. Find a connection with your mark through conversation. Get invited in for coffee. Tell them the full tale. Set your hook. ...didn't really have anyone except each other growing up, and our father was in the antique business. He had a shop in Charleston. We realized one day we saw the dealers who were finding and selling us the antiques coming from exotic countries, around the world, and... The air would, like, before a rain, you know, the ions would line up, and you could just smell midnight trains to Paris and steamer ships and Calcutta bazaars, and... It could... Excuse me, I'm sorry, uh... - Are you okay? - Yeah! - Sorry. - Okay. All right. I'm really bad at talking to people. That's okay. You want me to go? No. No, I really want to talk to you. So... What kind of stuff do you do? Nothing. Maybe you should go. All right, I'll just finish my... I collect hobbies. I see someone doing something I like, and I get books and I learn how to do it. Hmm. Anything interesting? Not really. Like he had a disease He robbed another and another and a... - I really am not comfortable with this at all. - I throw my right chainsaw... - This is a running chainsaw. ...into the air and I will catch. You just learn this stuff here by yourself? Kind of sad? No. So, how do you plan to use all these skills? I don't know. I'm not a planner. I just do stuff. Like, look at this watermelon. It's a pinhole camera. You can make a pinhole camera out of anything hollow and dark. It's gotta warp the image though, right? Yeah, yeah it does. I mean, that's what's good about it. I mean, you could point this baby at the most menial, everyday little thing, like the fabric, or your... Your face, or anything, and depending on how the pinhole eats the light, it's gonna be warped and peculiar and imperfect and odd, and it's not gonna be reproduction, it's storytelling. It's a lie that tells the truth. I don't know about truths. A photograph is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you, less you know. What's changed between now and 20 minutes ago? 'Cause this is sort of like a conversation. Well, shit. Throw my ticket out the window Throw my suitcase out there, too Throw my

troubles out the door I don't need them anymore 'Cause tonight I'll be staying here with you Well... I should... It's late. - So... - So... I meet a lot of people in my job I have to professionally act interested in. It's a good feeling to be genuinely interested in someone. Are you leaving? Yeah. Oh. Coming back? Well, next time I'm in town. We're taking a steamer at noon tomorrow off the docks, to the continent for a few months. Paris and Greece, I think. I've got to get a hat. Well, thanks for the pinhole camera demonstration. And the good conversation. All right. Goodbye, Penelope. Goodbye, Bloom. She isn't coming, man. I need another day with her. You'll have two weeks with her on the boat. I need another day to get her on the boat. She's not hooked. I've had one session, and we mostly talked watermelons and the optics of lensless photography. It's not the talking that hooked her. I think you're wrong. Hey, get out of the street, idiot! Watch it! - Hey. - Hi. What are you doing here? Uh... I wanna give you this money for the bike and for the whole thing. - That's all right. It's not necessary, really. - Oh. Hey, where is this boat going? Penelope, my brother Stephen. Glad to make your acquaintance. Bloom's told me so much about you. You're the epileptic photographer? Sort of. And this is my personal assistant and private masseuse, Mrs. Yueng Ling. Yuengling like the beer? No. So, what are your plans in Greece? - I don't plan. - Good for you. When they begin the beguine It brings back the sound of music so tender You look very nice. It brings back a night of tropical splendor It brings back a memory of green What was your childhood like? I made cameras out of watermelons. Lonely? When I was five, I got really bad rashes and allergies and hay fever. So my mom took me to the doctor, and he did that test where they use needles to prick a grid on your back with different toxins on them, you know, to see which ones you're allergic to. Next day I come in, the doctor lifts up my shirt, and my back is a patch of oily, moldy, blackish-green double-puff marshmallows. I was allergic to everything. So they sealed the house with plastic and a special ventilation system, and I spent the rest of my childhood and adolescence indoors. Alone. Lonely. - Wow. - It wasn't till I was 19 they discovered what I was actually allergic to was the aluminum alloy the hypodermic needles were made out of. Then I was gonna leave, but my mom got sick. So I stayed. She stayed sick a really long time. Do you... Feel cheated? The trick to not feeling cheated is to learn how to cheat. So, I decided this wasn't a story about a miserable girl trapped in a house that smelled like medical supplies, wasting her life on a dying person she sometimes hated. No. This was a story about a girl who could find infinite beauty in anything, any little thing. And even love the person she was trapped with. And I told myself this story until it became true. Now, did doing this help me escape a wasted life, or did it blind me so I wouldn't want to escape it? I don't know. But either way, I was the one telling my own story, so... No, I don't feel cheated at all. I don't suppose in all your hobby-acquiring, you ever

learned how to dance? I went through a phase when I was mildly obsessed with the bolero. Give me a minute. It's a long time since I last encountered the brothers Bloom. Are you in antiques? Antique? I wonder, my dear, if you know the true nature of the men you travel with. A little fear might suit you, I think. It isn't a Spanish band, but they'll do their best. Mmm... And then... This is the really important part. You have to make a little, itty-bitty, little hole. The ship's too small for us to be dancing around each other. We might as well have this out now. Penelope, do you know our friend? Only as the creepy Frenchman. Book-learned. You know your languages but not your accents, mademoiselle. - No, I am Belgian. - Ah. Maximilian Melville, at your service. Also known in certain professional circles as The Curator. Pleased to make your acquaintance. What do you do? I am a curator, presently at the National Muse in Prague. Yeah. And yourself? I'm an epileptic photographer. Good for you. And you boys? What do you do? We run a legitimate antique reselling business. Ah. We've gone straight, Max. Pardon, but why would you ascend to the great heights of the brothers Bloom just to toss it away, huh? To do what? To sell terra cotta to blue-haired weekend antiquers? - I don't think so. - We did. Eat your waffles. You know, the mademoiselle, she seems a little confused. Maybe she is unawares? Eat your waffles, fat man. Unawares that the brothers Bloom, in fact, are the two most respected smugglers of antiques in the Western world. Were. We've been on the straight for three years. So that's that. Oh, oh. Well, if that is that, then that indeed is that. If you say so. Oh. - Your name's Melville. - Oui, vrai. Right. No, sorry, um, 'cause I noticed before but I couldn't place it. This ship is called the Fidele, which is the name of the ship in Melville's novel, The Confidence-Man. - So that's weird. - Oui. I have never read that. Smugglers. It's like an adventure story. Whose idea was it to go straight? Mine. Stephen always loved the life. Then he was almost killed on a run to Jakarta. These two thugs with heads like canned hams worked him beyond all reason. Have at me, you ham-headed bastard! Shit! Sometimes I think he'd love to die on a job. Cornered at midnight on a run to Jakarta. That's his dream, to tell a story so well it fulfills itself. Somehow. It would finally make it real for him. That's kind of the thing we all want. Well, trying to get something real by telling yourself stories is a trap. Trust me on that one. She's different. She knows... Sometimes I feel like she knows everything. Doesn't that worry you? No, but something about her is worrying you plenty. She feels like one of your characters. The day I con you is the day I die, Bloom. How'd you get the Belgian on our budget? He's beautiful, right? I didn't expect him to actually be Belgian. I'm not sure he is. I'm off to bed. Hey. The only real danger in this whole play is that you actually fall in love with her. Hey, look at me. Mexico is closer than you think. Don't fall in love with her, Bloom. Good luck, boys, with the antiquing, huh. My French is a little rusty, but I believe he said, "My

proposition stands." He came out of nowhere last night. Mademoiselle, I will make you a proposition. Oh, Lord. What has he got? An 8th-century prayer book. He steals pieces from his museum in Prague, and sells them off through smugglers. That's what he does. I wonder who's his fence? It's probably his Spanish guy, right? Did he say who's buying? Yeah, an Argentinean. Argentine? Argent... A gentleman from the Argentine. So, The Curator will sell it to a middleman for \$1 million US, and then the Argentine... The guy from South America, he will pay \$2.5. It's not bad. I'm sorry you had to deal with that guy. Where's that cab going? Train station. Where's the train going? Prague. Come on! Let's be smugglers. I mean, I think it'd be fun. We should do this. - No. - Why not? Well, first off, we don't have \$1 million. That's like, I've got, what... That's whatever. I mean, give me a real reason. This is real. It's dangerous. - This could go very bad. - Hmm. Well, I think a little real danger might suit me, so, if you three want to join my smugglers gang, I'll, you know, consider it. This isn't an adventure story. What are you talking about? Well, it totally is! Go, go, go. Go, go. You there, come back here! This is not for free. Wait up. Where are you? Come here. Come here. We're smuggling. From the snack car. She's making a flag for our smugglers gang, man. This afternoon, when she was writing in the observation car, I thought she was writing a letter, a journal. No. Come on, she's getting way too into this. It's not funny. I don't like this Prague con you've cooked up, either. You're just leaving too much to chance. Listen, the whole point of this was to sweep her off her feet. So why don't you let her enjoy it? While it lasts? This came through just now? "Dear Stephen. Stop. Word on the wire is..." "...The brothers B. are bound for Prague. "I'm heading there myself. "Would love to see my boys. Affectionately, D. D." Our old Fagin is back. The Diamond Dog. Wire him back for me. Dear Dog. Stop. Unless you feel an excess of eyeballs left in your skull, I highly suggest you stay far away from me and my brother. Stop. Affectionately... Et cetera. You've taken this train before? - Yeah. - Hmm. So this is all just like, "Whatever" to you. Well, I mean, usually, I'd just, you know, play cards and drink with Bang Bang in the snack car. Bang who? Yueng Ling. - Bang Bang's her smuggler nickname. - Ah. So how about me? Do I get a smuggler nickname? No. I think you're constipated. In your fucking soul. I think you might have a really big load of grumpy, petrified poop up your soul's ass. - What? - Bloom, I know I'm pretending to be a smuggler. Right? But what you don't know is, I am a full-on smuggler. 'Cause I tell it like I own it. You know what your problem is? You just got to stop thinking so much. I mean, just enjoy the ride, man. I mean... I love thunderstorms. Oh, my God. I'm just so horny. Goodnight. Here's the big two. Last time I was in Prague, I was in love. What was she like? Pale skin, long feet. So... And that's mine. Bloom and I will secure lodging. Miss Yueng Ling will scout out the museum. You will go to the bank. That wire should have

cleared if you put it in at Athens. - Cash? - No. Only movie thugs and Russians deal in suitcases of cash. You're gonna get a certified check. Who the hell is that? Who is it? A Candy-gram. Max, it's us, for Christ's sake. Whoa! - Max! Max, it's us, Bloom. - Max! It's Stephen and Bloom. - Jesus, Max, easy... - Jesus, whoa! Whoa, now! Yeah, yeah, yeah. Good morning. Come in. I have been drinking, you know. So, beside the basilica, there are the offices of administration. And underneath them, and otherwise totally inaccessible, there's a little section of catacombs. And of course, the book. But I am the curator, so I just walk in and I pinch the copy girl's babouche. I slip the book into my briefcase, and I leave. About 2:00 tomorrow, say? It is you who I do business with, oui? Right. Oh, right. Your smile is the sun, ma chre. And fallen men, we need the sun. Diamond Dog, carrying a cup and a cane. Bloom. Bloom, Bloom, Bloom. How long has it been? Mmm? Tea. Can you believe it? Tea. Been a long time, huh? If I call Stephen down here, he'll kill you. You're terrified, huh? Don't be scared. I'm an old man with no depth perception. You don't have to be scared of me. You know, it's been a funny thing, watching you boys take what I taught you and eclipse me. I am so proud to be a footnote in the life of the brothers Bloom. But you hate me. You probably won't believe, but I loved you both very much. But love... You know, folks like us, you can always blink and realize that it's a fiction. And like Peter walking on water or Wile E. Coyote running off a cliff, if you look down in doubt, you will fall. That's the price of our lives, the wax in our wings. One day, Stephen's going to fall. It may be glorious, but he's going to fall hard, and he won't be there to tell you what to do, to protect you. And without him, what would you do? I remember all the other boys when I went for the belt. They would run. They would fight. But not you. You were so passive, paralyzed. This is a warning, Bloom, and an offer. When he's gone, remember me. Oh! Stephen. We were just talking about you. Fuck you! I'm sorry I wasn't there. You can't always be there. Yeah, I guess I can't. Max! Aren't we a little early? Well, he's gone, that's for sure. Probably halfway around the world by now. Aren't you a wee bit early... I don't get it. If he was hightailing it, why didn't he just wait eight hours until we traded the book for the million, then he'd a had some walking-around money. Oh, well, back to antiquing. Nothing lost, nothing gained. Oh. "Oh?" The check was cashed yesterday afternoon. He would have deposited it in a Swiss account by now. I'm sorry, Pen. I'm sorry. Such a waste. Poor man. Poor Argentina man. I mean, he's never gonna even see that book now. It's just gonna rot away in those catacombs. No. There is no book, all right. We've been swindled. Well, maybe there is. Maybe it's real. - It's not real, it's a con. - No. You know what? It's my money, so I'm going to find out for sure. He gave us every piece of information we need. Well, we'd have to clear the administrative offices. Some sort of... Disruption. She's an artist with nitroglycerin. It's kind of her thing. I feel like I want to

know more about her. Yeah. A few years back, when we hit the top of our smuggling game, she just appeared. And we figure someday she'll just disappear. Check out the tat on the back of her neck. It's an inky wisp of personal information. Essentially, it means, "When you're done with something, blow it up." The smoke detector is in these empty rooms in the east tower. We're gonna plant and set off a tiny, tiny... Tiny charge. A puff of smoke sets off the fire alarm in the rafters. Fire drill ensues, offices empty. Excuse me. You have exactly four and a half minutes to get through the access hatch, into the catacombs, grab the book and get out before the fire brigade arrives. The abort code, in case we have to abort, is "corned beef." For some reason. Okay, so she blows this one up. This is Yueng Ling's backpack? Yeah. You know what I feel? Horny? Scared. And all my big talk, showing off all the time. But, I mean, this isn't a story, it's real. It's freaky scary. Well, as long as you focus on, you know, second left, third right. Okay. All right? Okay. You know, for the record, I'm still against this. Why send her in alone? Because going in alone is a very important thing to do. Listen, she's walking into a tourism office during a fire drill and taking a phony manuscript from a lousy crawlspace. Worst-case scenario, a file clerk asks her if she's lost, which isn't even gonna happen. Okay, she's in position. Because no one's gonna even know we were ever here. Fuck me. Come on, don't do it. Don't, don't, don't... Abort! Corned beef, corned beef! Wait, wait. We're fine. We're fine. She's fine. Listen, if the soldiers find her wandering the halls they'll assume she's a clerk. They'll just shoo her out. So as long as she doesn't do anything suspicious, she's fine. Oh, no. It's the chief of police. The chief of police! Thank you. I have, at different points in my life, quite literally sold ice to an Eskimo and sand to an Arab. But I have no idea what she could have said to that man to have sweet-talked her way out of that castle. I could ask her. How obtuse. Let her sleep. Train doesn't leave until 8:00. That was real. Yeah, I know. Huh... Freaky scary. Miles from nowhere Guess I'll take my time Oh, yeah To reach there Look up at the mountain I have to climb Oh, yeah To reach there Lord, my body It's been a good friend I won't need it When I reach the end Miles from nowhere Guess I'll take my time Oh, yeah To reach there I creep through the valleys And I grope through the woods 'Cause I know when I find it, my honey It's gonna make me feel good, yes An apple. Yeah, it was part of an epiphany. I love everything So don't it make you feel sad 'Cause I'll drink to you, my baby I'll think to that Yes, I'll think to that I'll think to that Miles from nowhere Guess I'll take my time Oh, yeah To reach there Mexico. Okay, we're rendezvousing with the Argentina guys here, on a isolated beach just south of the Hotel Tampico. A simple handoff. Penelope, you and Yueng Ling stay with the car, Bloom and I will be doing the handing. You guys seem a little tense. Well, I'm not thrilled they set this in Mexico. There could be legitimate reasons, but Mexico's... And I don't like to simplistically

vilify an entire country, but Mexico's a horrible place. So we'll be careful. This is gonna be dangerous tomorrow, right? Yeah. You should sleep at the hotel tonight. I'll stay with Stephen at the beach house. But you'll need sleep. I'm really happy right now. Are you? Right now I am. I wanna be a smuggler smuggle by day, drink by night Oh, hey, hey, hey, hey The last box in our last con. How's it feel? Hey, what's up? Bloom! What? My brother and I are con men. And... Everything since you hit me with your Lamborghini, it's all fake, it's all a con. Stephen's gone into town to prep the Argentina actors. Money's in his place. Money? I don't want the money, let's just go. Come on, come on. You have to switch it on at the base. So, I told her our whole play. And I'm here to take her money back. How does that make you feel? Disappointed. This isn't the ending you wanted? What does that matter? This is the way it ends now. So I might as well just get it over with. - Where's the money? - I ate it. - Give me the money, Stephen. - No. I don't want the money. He's not gonna keep a single piece of you. Give me the money. I'm sorry you fell in love with her. She's a mark. And all of this, all of it is just a con. And every moment you share with her, you're just playing the part of a man falling in love. That's what you're afraid of, isn't it? That you don't know the difference. Or maybe that there really is no difference. That that's what love is, right? Okay, we're leaving. No. You're too scared to leave. You're too scared to ride off into the sunset, because real sunsets might be beautiful but they turn into dark, uncertain nights. No, you're not ready, otherwise you wouldn't be here right now. The money is in my bedroom. It's right behind me. But in my story you don't get the money or the sunset or the girl. Bloom, let's just go. Please. Please? Tastes like tinfoil. I'm sorry. Shh. Shh. Shh. Get out of here. Take the car and go. I'm not going anywhere. The storm is passed There is peace at last I've spent my whole life sleeping Now there's not a sound No one to be found anywhere A shepherd and a sheep will wind you to sleep Where else on earth would you rather go? To a land of wonder when you go under Why would we want to come back at all? Hey. How'd you find me? Bang Bang. How'd you find Bang Bang? She gave me her number when we were in Mexico. Her cell. Bang Bang has a cell phone? Yeah. I think she's kind of selective in who she gives her number to. Why are you here, Penelope? Okay. Well, I... I've had a lot of time, you know, to think, these past three months and I want you to seriously consider this. Go away. Go away. Everything Stephen said was true. I was just playing you as a mark. Okay? Everything between us, none of it was real. Okay. I don't believe you. I let you do your monologue, but you wanna know why? I let her believe everything you said, so she'd never want to see me again. Get her away from all this for good. - You wanna tell me what I'm doing here? - You knew she'd come back. What did you figure she was good for, another million? \$1.75 million. Look, of course she came back. She never got what she wanted. Neither did you. All right, look,

we're gonna end this. You built us into this, you're gonna fly us out, you're gonna end it, so she's done with this. End it all so she can't start up again. Are you sure that's what you want? I love her. I don't want to turn her into me. Well, we can't do the next job until we liquidate our assets from the last job. Uh-uh, you've got my million from the last job, so... That's profit, not capital, the three of us already split that up. So, step number one is to sell the book of ours. Ah. The one that you told me was fake, right? Actually, with all your random expertise, we couldn't risk a flat-out fake. But to get top dollar, we'll have to sell it deep black market. And there's only one place that's deep enough for that. Where? - Who'd you get, anyway? - Hmm? To play the Russians. My boys. I don't understand. We're sending Penelope off into the sunset, that's what we're doing. Why is he here? We need someone to pass for the Russian mob to sell our fake book to. The Dog has his big store right here in Saint Petersburg. All right, stop. I hate him, Stephen. But this isn't that. This is I don't trust him. Yeah, what's he gonna do? Steal our fake money? I have thought this through, believe me. And we can't end it without him. Trust me. It's gonna be okay. Stephen, still the grand architect. Your symbols, red for temptation, white for salvation. And our hero must face the Minotaur before he escapes the maze. Uh-huh. Pickup will be at your store. Scare her, think a movie version of the Russian mob, but don't hassle the girl. The girl? What's her name? You don't need to know her name. I know it. Penelope. I look forward to meeting the lady. All right, here we go. We got the back windshield wired to explode, and there's a large charge underneath the hood. After the handoff with the Dog, we drive out of town. Late that night, we stop at a gas station where our fake Russians double-cross us, and kill us all in a moonlight ambush. We all die. Bloom takes a bullet so Penelope can escape. The end. Okay. You've been awfully quiet. I'm doing this for her, you know. Tomorrow is the big day. Get down! - Out! - Come on, come on. Get out, get out. Bloom! Bloom. What happened? You okay? What happened? Where's Stephen? Stephen? I think... Bloom, I think they might have got him, because I think they double-crossed us or something, because, you know, I think they got Stephen, but... - Stephen's notebook. - They're gonna want money so then we can get him back. Who's got him? Why, I think the Russians got him, Bloom. Stephen, God, please, what's happening? I don't know what to do, Stephen. Shit! If you know what's happening, now would be a really good time to speak up. Oh, please. Please, not now. I need your help here. I don't know what to do. Thanks. I can't believe it. What, that Bang Bang fell for a car bomb? Neither can I. Oh, you mean... You think maybe she faked it to make the Russians think she was dead? Bloom, what do we do now? It's a ransom note. It says they have Stephen. It says they want the money wired to a specific account. They give a bank to do it at, a manager to ask for. Then an address to go to at 2:00 p.m., in two hours. Okay. Well, I'll wire the

money from my account, and we'll go get Stephen. It's a lot. I'll do it. I want to. I've got... Well, how much are they asking for? \$1.75 million. Oh. Oh... No! I'm gonna kill him. I am gonna kill him if that's what this is. If that's all that this is, I will kill him. Kill who? What are you talking about? I will kill him. I will... No! What? I've been an idiot. This could all be a con by my brother to get me to... Oh, God, he wanted me to end it, and he gets your money. Oh, God, I'm gonna be sick. But would he do that? To you? I don't know. Yes. Yeah, of course he would. To tell a story so well it becomes real. The perfect con. That's his whole... God damn it, that's what. You know what? We don't know. - We better transfer the money. - Son of a... It's your brother's life. I'm gonna wire the money. Okay. I'm coming in with you. No, stay here. Going in alone is a very important thing to do. I'm so scared. Anything I can imagine finding in there, I'm scared of. I'm gonna be here when you come out. Stephen? Stephen? Game's up. Come on out. Come on, let's blow this one-hat town. - Stephen! - No, Bloom. Did Penelope wire the money? Yeah. Stephen, tell me what this is. Jesus Christ, Bloom, I'm sorry. I don't need sorry. I need the truth. God damn it, Stephen. You tell me what to do. - Get the hell out of here now! - Tell me the truth. Is this a con or is it real? A con? It's real, Bloom. Hello, Bloom. God damn it, Bloom. It's real, this is not a con. Are you happy to hear from your old Diamond Dog? These are the Dog's men. He's crossed us for revenge. Damn it, Bloom, run! I told you Stephen would fall. And you? You are paralyzed, praying this is just another one of Stephen's stories. Is it? Close your eyes now, sweet child. And I will tell you the truth. No! Bloom! He's got another gun! Please tell me that's makeup. Please tell me that's a cackle-bladder, and you just pulled off the perfect con. Please. You said it, not me. Can I get a "wow" for this? Wow. You son of a bitch. You did it. You're done here. I want you to promise me you'll never come back to St. Petersburg again. Tastes like tinfoil. All right, here's what I want you to do. Bang Bang split? Yeah. Clean exit. How? Car bomb. Good. - Penelope? - She's outside. All right, here's what. Take Penelope to Helsinki, get that flight to Rio. Play out the whole "on the run from vengeful Russians" thing, that'll be fun for her. Play it like I'm dead, actually. That'll add some gravity to everything. And I'll see you when I see you. - When? - I don't know. Not too soon, I hope. Last thing you need is me hanging around. Anyway, how am I going to top this? Bloom, pick a card. - All right. - Got it? Yeah. That's the best card trick I've ever seen. Wish you had a bigger audience. You're the only audience I ever needed. I love you. Bye. Shh. Shh. Shh. It's okay. It's okay. You know, he said this thing to me once. He said to me, "There's no such thing as an unwritten life. "Just a badly written one." Oh, God. I love you, Bloom. You know what we're gonna do? We're gonna live like we're telling the best story in the whole world. Are you ready? And Stephen said something else, once. "The perfect con is one where everyone involved "gets just the thing

they wanted." Well... You came to me In the hospital ward when I blew out my knee But I wasn't there to be cared for or carried 'Cause I was asleep In my bed, in my house at the end of our street While you drove across town at 3:00 in the morning It was fake For the sake Of making you take me for real But I guess you're even less impressed If the world is a stage And we're all of us actors in some cosmic play I am the man at the masquerade Who was fake For the sake Of making you take me for real But I guess you're even less impressed I keep trying to paint a picture 'Cause what I drew Could be improved If I could make you see More flame than flicker These half-truths Could be improved With less of me And more you Believe what I speak At least just keep Speaking to me