



The Brothers Bloom

a con man movie

by

Rian Johnson

EXT. DIRT ROAD - SUNRISE

Dawn with her rose-red fingers rises over a dusty country road. A car chugs over the horizon.

NARRATOR

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,
twould be that of Penelope,
and of the brothers Bloom.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - MORNING

The car deposits two shabby boys (10 & 13) in front of a country house.

Both in black. Each with a suitcase.

NARRATOR

At ten and thirteen Bloom and
Stephen (the younger and the old)

INT. KITCHEN (FLASHBACK)

The two brothers and an oafish FOSTER FATHER sit eating breakfast.

NARRATOR

had been through several foster
families.

The FOSTER FATHER slaps Bloom upside the head. Stephen LAUNCHES across the table, tackling the dad and beating the crap out of him.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Thirty eight, all told.

INT. CHILD WELFARE OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON - A CHILD WELFARE FILE COVER

"Bloom" stamped on it. It opens, and dozens of reports flip by. Under the "REASON FOR RETURN OF MINORS" field we catch different entries: "BEHAVIOR INAPPROPRIATE", "UNMANAGEABLE", "MOLESTED CAT", "SOLD OUR FURNITURE", "CAUSED FLOODING".

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR

Mischief moved them on in life, and
moving kept them close.

EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE PORCH

The brothers on the porch, suitcases in hand.

NARRATOR

For Bloom had Stephen, Stephen
Bloom, and both had more than most.

The front door opens, and a pair of FOSTER PARENTS eye the
brothers suspiciously.

EXT. SMALL TOWN SQUARE - LATER THAT DAY

A wide dusty Main Street, which the two brothers survey.

NARRATOR

Another home, another main street.
Stephen looked around,
then summed the burgh up thusly:

STEPHEN

Bloom, we've hit a one hat town.

NARRATOR

One theater. One car wash. One
cafe. One park. One cat. Which,
through some mishap, had one leg.

The cat sits on a roller skate, rowing itself down the street
with its one leg.

STEPHEN

Sweet Jesus. Look at that.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

A group of children flee the school joyfully.

NARRATOR

One school, which meant one tight-
knit group of local well-off kids.

EXT. CANDY SHOP

The children run out of the candy store, all slurping Rocket
Pops.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR

Their pocket-change bought rocket
pops,

INT. CANDY SHOP

The brothers at the counter. Bloom watches the children go,
while Stephen counts out pennies.

NARRATOR

The brothers,

Stephen slaps the change down angrily and points with a
scowl.

STEPHEN

Pixie Stix.

EXT. PARK

The children play, resplendent with their Rocket Pops.

NARRATOR

They were the 'they'. All well
loved, rooted, happy as you please.

Bloom and Stephen sit off to the side of the park, none too
happy nursing their Pixie Stix.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Always there. In every town.

Stephen glares, flicks the Stix away like a cigarette.

STEPHEN

The playground bourgeoisies.

He storms off. Bloom lingers, staring silently at the
children.

EXT. FOREST

The brothers amble down a wooded path. Bloom stops, staring
into the trees.

Through the dense thicket of foliage... the children playing.
And one gleaming eye framed perfectly through a small open
patch in the leaves.

Bloom pushes the leaves aside. A girl. Golden curls.
Summer dress. Standing in the distance on a wide lawn.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Bloom gazes. Stephen places his hand on Bloom's back.

EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS

Bloom stumbles from the trees (very much as if he's been shoved) and regains his footing and freezes, not shielded at all now from the playing kids and the girl.

NARRATOR

Could he simply

STEPHEN (O.S.)

Talk to her!

NARRATOR

Just drop his fears and go? Leave his brother in the woods, and join the children?

The girl makes eye contact, twisting a daisy chain between her tiny fingers. Bloom's adam apple convulses.

He turns tail and runs back into the woods.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

No.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brothers in bed. Bloom gazes window-ward. Stephen gazes Bloom-wise, shuffling a pack of cards.

BLOOM

What's doing?

STEPHEN

What?

BLOOM

You shuffle when you're thinking something through. So whatcha thinking?

STEPHEN

Not a thing.

NARRATOR

This wasn't really true. Cause in the root of Stephen's psyche, something now began. A seed of grand epiphany. A hook. A tale.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

STEPHEN

A plan.

Stephen spreads out a hand-drawn flowchart on a stump, and talks Bloom through it.

NARRATOR

A fiction made for profit, in which
both boys played a part.
A simple con in fifteen steps.

STEPHEN

And this is where we start.

Stephen runs his finger backwards down the connected boxes, each neatly numbered, stopping at #1.... "Bloom Talks To Girl"

EXT. PARK - DAY

Children and the gold haired Girl playing. The wall of foliage where the forest begins shimmers.

NARRATOR

And then, as if a curtain had been
pulled back from the sky...
Some barrier within the younger
Bloom was broken.

Bloom bursts through the trees and strides across the wide lawn, confident, glowing, stopping face to golden face with the girl.

BLOOM

Hi.

They talk. They run. They laugh. They play.

NARRATOR

So Bloom performed his role in
Stephen's story to a T.

BOX #2 on the flowchart - "Bloom wins the kids' trust"

EXT. TOWN SQUARE

Bloom does indeed, sitting and laughing with a circle of kids, suddenly a natural born charmer.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR

And being who he wasn't, could be
as he wished to be.

The Golden Girl smiles at him.

From the shadows of an adjacent alley, Stephen watches,
pleased. He slinks away.

SERIES OF SHOTS-

EXT. CAVE - DAY

BOX #3 - "Stephen finds a cave" dissolves to Stephen scouting
out a cave deep in the woods.

EXT. PARK - DAY

In the park, Bloom runs with the kids, laughing.

INT. HARDWARE STORE - DAY

BOX #5 - "Stephen buys supplies" dissolves to: Stephen in a
hardware store, pointing. A flashlight, snow boots and
several large coolers are purchased.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Back in the park, Bloom says goodnight to the kids and walks
homeward in the warm twilight.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

BOX #8 - "Stephen scouts church" dissolves to: Stephen's
eyes poke up from behind a pew in a church. He manages to
look devious as he snags a SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bloom enters, hears running water from the bathroom. He
glimpses down at the flowchart on the bed, scanning down to:

Box #10 - "Bloom comes home to find Stephen filling the
coolers"

Stephen backs out of the bathroom trolling a heavy cooler.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

STEPHEN

Oh - kay. How's it going on the
playground front?

BLOOM

It's great.

STEPHEN

So, on to step eleven, then. The
Tale. You tell them -

BLOOM

Wait...

Bloom's lip quivers, obviously conflicted.

NARRATOR

Must the numbers rattle on? Must
the fiction end?

BLOOM

I think I need more time to win
their-

STEPHEN

Bloom. They're not your friends.
They're part of this, and this aint
real. Remember, it's a con.
And when it's done, we've just got
us. And we'll be moving on.

(beat)

So, the tale. You tell them
there's a

EXT. PARK - DAY

Bloom holds court with the kids.

BLOOM

hermit in the woods. A one eyed,
steel toothed vagabond...

INT. ATTIC

Back to Bloom and Stephen in the attic

BLOOM

...with blood red eyes?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

STEPHEN

(nods)

That's good. He stopped you coming home from school...

EXT. PARK - DAY

BLOOM

...and told me of a cave.

GIRL

What kind of cave?

BLOOM

A cave of wonders.

BOY

Pffft ha.

GIRL

Shut up, Dave.

BLOOM

At noon on every Sunday, there appears a ball of light, which flutters like a butterfly...

GIRL

A will-o-whisp?

BLOOM

That's right. It guides you

INT. ATTIC

STEPHEN

...if you can keep up...

EXT. PARK

BLOOM

...to where the treasures lay.

BOY

So where's this cave?

GIRL

Yeah, where?

INT. ATTIC

STEPHEN

Ah-hah. The hermit didn't say.
He got this greedy glinting look,
the filthy red-eyed leech... and
said he'd tell for thirty bucks.

Something in Bloom's face falls.

EXT. PARK

The girl's bright, trusting face looking at him. A moment of
silence. Then, triumphant, an excited boy leaps to his feet.

EXCITED BOY

Well that's just two bucks each!

The kids all rejoice, and fist-fulls of dollars are thrust at
Bloom. He looks almost crestfallen as his eye catches the
girl's joyful gaze.

NARRATOR

So Sunday came...

EXT. WOODS

Children in their bright Sunday clothes run through the dark
woods, led by Bloom.

NARRATOR

...and straight from church, into
the woods Bloom led.

INT. CAVE

In the dim light of a cave, Stephen overturns the coolers of
water and retreats into shadow. A flood soaks into the dirt
floor, as outside the mouth of the cave the group of panting
children come into sight.

NARRATOR

They stopped. Their hearts leapt.
There it was.

EXT. CAVE

The children look at the craggy mouth of a forboding cave.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

GIRL
Just like the hermit said!

Deep in the cave's dark maw, a spark of light.

The children gasp collectively. The Girl grabs Bloom's arm.

Bloom stares, transfixed as any of them.

The spark becomes a glowing, fluttering point of light, which hangs in the mouth of the cave for a tantalizing moment, then recedes deeper into the gloom.

With a cry the children, Bloom included, dash into the cave.

INT. CAVE

The light glows just around the next corner... the children run after it, slipping in the mud, laughing, turning the corner...

And the light glows just around the next corner. They scramble, they slip and slide, they can't catch the light, but they're all having the time of their lives.

Bloom included. Holding the girl's hand, laughing, eyes full of wonder.

NARRATOR
For just one moment, Bloom forgot himself and ran too fast.

He puts on a burst of speed, gets ahead of the crowd.

NARRATOR (cont'd)
He'd catch the light and find the treasure...

Turning a corner, he (alone) sees the rather tawdry image of Stephen, flashlight in hand, shooing him back as he turns the next corner.

Bloom stops running.

NARRATOR (cont'd)
But the moment passed.

The other kids and the girl pass him, but Bloom stands dead still, a strange expression on his face.

The girl turns back towards him, still running, and holds out her hand for him to follow.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

But he doesn't. He stays behind, and is soon left alone.

EXT. PLAYGROUND

NARRATOR

They didn't catch the will-o-wisp,
but didn't really care.

The muddied children walk home, laughing, while Bloom leans against a lamppost. Stephen appears behind him, counting their money.

STEPHEN

It seems to me that in the end, the
perfect con is where
each one involved gets just the
thing they wanted.

BLOOM

Yeah I guess so.

NARRATOR

Our fledgling thieves were
satisfied.

EXT. FOSTER HOUSE - DAY

A front door opens, revealing a porch-full of 30 angry parents holding 15 muddied kids by their ears.

NARRATOR

The children's parents, less so.

The Foster Parents exchange a glance.

QUICK SHOTS -

Stephen is smacked.

The wad of money is snatched from a grubby small hand by an angry big one.

A telephone slams down.

On a form, the field "Reason for return:" is filled with "Larceny."

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Two suitcases on a bed are snapped closed and pulled away. The bed sits solid and vacant in the dusty afternoon sunlight.

NARRATOR

A bitter ending? Maybe. But there's sweetness in the mix.

Beneath the bed, forgotten, a piece of paper. On it, the con flow-chart. Numbered boxes.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The brothers Bloom had found their calling.

One of the boxes... number six...

NARRATOR (cont'd)

As shown in number six.

BOX #6: "Cut % O'Henry's"

NARRATOR (cont'd)

'Cut' meant to negotiate, 'percent' percentage deal.

EXT. SMALL TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Through a storefront window - rows of the children's muddy Sunday clothes hang, each tagged.

NARRATOR

'O'Henry's' was the town's one dry clean shop.

And striding out of the store beneath the 'O'Henry's Cleaners' sign is Stephen, fifty dollars in hand, sucking a Rocket Pop. The OWNER leans out of the door, looking a little nervous. Stephen throws him back a salute.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - DAY

Bloom sits against a wall, suitcases beside him. Boxes of Rocket Pops, and one in each fist. Stephen plops down beside him.

STEPHEN

So how's it feel?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Bloom's eye catches the children, and the girl, playing in the distance.

NARRATOR

In truth, young Bloom won't know
for twenty years just how he felt.

HONK! A 'Child Welfare' car waiting out on the street. The brothers pick themselves up.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

And so, we'll skip ahead now in our
story.

Stephen tosses his Rocket Pop.

STEPHEN

Let 'em melt.

The con man team of the brothers Bloom, suitcases in hand, strides down the alleyway.

Stephen in front.

Bloom a few steps behind, stealing one last glance back at the children playing in the sun.

CUT TO:

OPENING CREDITS

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Flames spread over a wall of bookshelves.

TITLE CARD: BERLIN, 25 YEARS LATER

A YOUNG MAN in a nice suit and bowler hat steps in front of the flaming books.

YOUNG MAN

He gets the scarab, you get the
money, I get the girl... so in the
end, everyone gets everything he
wants.

Three gunshots, two bloody holes in the nice suit and the young man folds to the ground.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

A sweaty man named CHARLESTON (40s) lowers his gun, while behind him the rest of the library roars in flames.

VOICE (O.S.)

Wha - Charleston, what - oh my god
are you... oh god he's dead,
Victor's dead... you've killed us!
We had it he was right it was all
in the bag and now we're dead, why?
Why, you stupid son of a bitch?

The owner of the voice, a MAN a bit younger than Charleston in a derby cap, snatches the gun away and slaps Charleston hard.

CHARLESTON

Cause the Turk was right. After
seeing her, after that night on the
airstrip, after Cairo everything
changed, and he couldn't see the
play through that one milky eye,
but the Turk was right about one
thing, that there's nothing
beautiful about money. She's
beautiful.

MCGUIRE

This isn't happening...

CHARLESTON

He'll never have her now. She's
free. And I'll never see her in
scarlet again, her chestnut hair,
but it's worth the money and my job
and his life and the rest of my
life that she's free.

MCGUIRE

Charleston. I can't be here...

CHARLESTON

You're not here. Neither of us
are. It's Mowcher's gun.

MCGUIRE

Mowcher is at the bottom of the
Spree with a cowl in his neck!

Charleston gets to his feet.

CHARLESTON

They won't find him for a week, and
the Albino will chalk it up to
Davey, he won't talk. We're clean.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

MCGUIRE

Listen to you - four months ago you were an investment banker! Now you're nothing. The Scarab's lost. The money's gone. It'll rot in the Peruvian earth. It's gone.

Charleston limps to the flaming doorway.

CHARLESTON

The man named Charleston you met nine months and a thousand years ago at the hotel bar in Jodhpur is dead. If we see each other again it'll be as strangers. As for the money... let it rot.

He exits, leaving McGuire stooped beside the crumpled form of Victor. A long beat. The distant roar of an engine, tires squealing.

Then through the smoky doorway steps a beautiful ASIAN WOMAN, early 20s. She gives a nearly imperceptible nod.

MCGUIRE

Wow.

He pats Victor, who sits up, spitting blood. McGuire looks to Victor and the woman for a reaction. Gets none.

MCGUIRE (cont'd)

Wow is the word you're both looking for. Wow.

The Asian woman nods slightly.

VICTOR

(un-wowishly)

You're a genius, Stephen.

For McGuire is, of course, Stephen.

STEPHEN

We're a genius, Bloom.

Just as Victor is, indeed, Bloom. He spits.

BLOOM

Tastes like tin foil.

STEPHEN

So does real blood. Buy you a drink.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

Stephen escorts the Asian woman out, while Bloom wipes his lip.

EXT. HOUSE - PRE-DAWN

A stately house in the middle of nowhere, on fire. Stephen holds the door of a car open, while Bloom steps from the flaming house.

STEPHEN

"Nine months and a thousand years ago." That's Kipling, isn't it? He stole that from Kipling.

BLOOM

No.

EXT. BERLIN - PRE-DAWN

Hazy light over the sprawling city.

INT. DEUTCH MARK

A low, cozy basement level bar. A dozen people crowd it, all expectant in a surprise-party type way.

A TURKISH GENTLEMAN in a white linen suit and eye patch raises his drink when Bloom, Stephen and the woman enter.

THE TURK

Make way, make room for the brothers Bloom!

The bar bursts into cheers.

INT. DEUTCH MARK - LATER

A DWARF dances on the bar. Stephen plays cards with the Turk, an ALBINO and a small crowd of character types.

THE TURK

Nine months, six countries, three faked deaths, for one mark. You're a beautiful antique, my friend.

They clink glasses.

ALL

Proust.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

THE TURK

One thing baffles me. The entire con would have fallen apart if Charleston had walked away. How did you know he'd pull the trigger?

Stephen riffle shuffles a pack of cards.

STEPHEN

Just think of any card. Got one?

Stephen cuts the deck randomly - 2 of spades.

THE TURK

No.

Stephen shrugs.

STEPHEN

But if I do it enough, eventually it'll work on someone. And then it'll be the best card trick in the world.

Wink. The dwarf slips, plummets from the bar. Stephen kicks a chair across the room, into which he lands with a crunch.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Ante up.

THE TURK

It's true you never work with the same crew twice?

STEPHEN

That's true.

THE TURK

Well shit. Except for the uh, for her?

STEPHEN

Bang Bang?

THE TURK

Yeah.

Back at the bar - the Asian woman, Bang Bang. Being hit on by a weasly ROMANIAN.

ROMANIAN

Yeah, I'm pretty big into anime.

She almost imperceptibly rolls her eyes.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

STEPHEN

Our fifth Beatle. She knows the ins and the outs, and so far as I can tell, speaks three words of English.

She taps on the bar.

BANG BANG

Campari.

BARTENDER

Soda?

She says 'no' with a look.

THE ALBINO

So she's with you and Bloom till the end.

STEPHEN

Just till the wind changes.

Stephen makes a gun with his finger and shoots at Bang Bang.

She flicks a champaign flute to make a 'DING!' and mimes the bullet bouncing off her.

THE TURK

Where is Bloom?

In the corner of the bar, in a private booth with drawn velvet curtains, Bloom sits alone playing solitaire. Stuck with a queen of hearts he can't play.

A beautiful woman in scarlet with auburn hair pokes her face through the curtains.

ROSE

There you are. Hiding?

BLOOM

Yeah.

ROSE

I've been learning. Stephen likes to talk about you.

BLOOM

Did he tell you the cave story?

ROSE

Is it true?

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

BLOOM

What else did he tell you?

ROSE

I'm not going to tell it as good as Stephen. You two kicked around till your early teens, then stowed away on a merchant marine freighter and ended up on the grotty outskirts of St. Petersburg, where you spent five years under the tutelage of a shadowy old swindler named the Diamond Dog. And he was your Fagin and Stephen was his Artful Dodger, but it ended suddenly and badly.

BLOOM

Stephen took his eye out with an antique rapier.

ROSE

Why did he do that?

BLOOM

And then the Brothers Bloom lit out on their own to make their fortune as gentleman thieves. Sounds romantic.

ROSE

It does.

She pushes the cards aside and slides clumsily onto the table, her face inches from Bloom's, eyes closed, expecting a kiss.

Bloom's eyes stay open.

BLOOM

You want to know how Stephen did it? With Charleston?

ROSE

It's not the first thing on my mind.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A replay of Bloom in front of the flaming bookshelf.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM (O.S.)

He positioned me in the same spot
where, seven years ago,
Charleston's wife stood and told
him she was leaving.

The room transforms, becomes daylight, not on fire, seven years
ago, a WIFE standing in Bloom's place.

BLOOM (O.S.) (cont'd)

He chose my outfit to mirror her
suit.

Sure enough, the colors and shape of Bloom's suit matches the
Wife's outfit.

BLOOM (O.S.) (cont'd)

He even phonetically matched my
final words to hers.

WIFE

This is the end. Charelston, you've
always been a dunce.

Everything snaps back to Bloom in the flaming room.

BLOOM (IN FLASHBACK)

So in the end, everyone gets
everything he wants.

BANG.

INT. DEUTCH MARK

BLOOM

That's what he does, he writes his
cons the way dead Russians write
novels, with thematic arcs and
imbedded symbolism and shit. And
he wrote me as a vulnerable anti-
hero. And that's why you think you
want to kiss me. It's a con.

He leaves Rose lying on the table and sweeps through the bar
towards the exit, passing Stephen.

BLOOM (cont'd)

I need air.

STEPHEN

Who doesn't?
(plays a card)
That's the big 2.

EXT. BERLIN STREET - EARLY MORNING

Bloom stumbles up stone steps to street level. A THOUSAND YEAR OLD MAN sweeps up across the square.

Bloom sits wearily on the curb, bowler hat in hand, shirt bright red with fake blood, face long as hell.

Putting the broom aside a moment, the old man walks painfully across the street to Bloom. Standing nearly toe to toe with him, the man pulls a huge joyful smile across his grizzled face.

He then smears his hand over his mug, pulling the smile off his face and rubbing it on Bloom's mouth. When he takes his hand away, Bloom plays along and has the same big joyful smile. The old man winks at him and walks back to his broom.

As soon as the old man is away, Bloom drops the smile.

Stephen paces out into the street.

STEPHEN

We missed the sunrise. That would've been nice.

They walk across the street to the Tiergarten.

EXT. TIERGARTEN - EARLY MORNING

Berlin's Central Park and zoo, dead and brown. The brothers stroll through the woods, Stephen a few steps ahead, Bloom trailing behind, lost in thought.

Camel heads poke over a wall with 'Kamelhaus' painted on it. Stephen throws open the wall's gate.

STEPHEN

Is this a bathroom? No, this is camels.

(to camels)

Back to the swamps, boys.

The camels are unimpressed. Bloom slouches into a bench.

Stephen shows the deck of cards to Bloom, who nods. Stephen cuts the deck, shows him a card. Bloom shakes his head, no.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

At least you're honest.

Bloom stares into space.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

STEPHEN (cont'd)
 Alright, let's do this. Let's just
 get it done. So first you say 'I'm
 quitting, Stephen. I'm out.' Then
 I say...

BLOOM
 'Do we have to go through this
 again.'

STEPHEN
 Then you make a show of putting on
 your jacket and say 'no I mean it
 this time Stephen, this time I'm
 really out.'

BLOOM
 Then you say 'let's have a drink,
 and in the morning Bloom you'll
 have come to your senses'

Stephen pulls a flask, unscrews it.

STEPHEN
 (re: Bloom's bright red
 blood stain)
 That's a major design flaw in fake
 blood, by the way.

BLOOM
 'and we'll be moving on.'

STEPHEN
 Real blood turns brown after a half
 hour.

BLOOM
 Listen to me, Stephen.

STEPHEN
 This scotch costs more than your
 suit.

BLOOM
 Listen to me.

STEPHEN
 And the flask stopped a bullet from
 a black powder rifle at Appomattox.

BLOOM
Listen.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

Bloom bats the flask away. A camel catches it, tips its camel neck back and gulps it down.

STEPHEN

That's my new favorite camel.

BLOOM

I hate you. I hate this life, I hate it, I hate that you won't fucking listen to me for one goddamn second. Just listen.

Stephen listens.

BLOOM (cont'd)

I can't wake up next to another stranger, who thinks they know me, or even wants to know me, cause I don't know - who - I'm thirty five years old, and I, 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.

STEPHEN

Tell me what you want.

BLOOM

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 wanna do things how I don't know are gonna work out, a, I, want, a...

STEPHEN

(sotto)

You want an unwritten life.

BLOOM

I want an unwritten life!
(realizes Stephen just wrote that line for him)
Aauuugghh god!

The camel belches. Bloom makes a show of putting on his jacket.

BLOOM (cont'd)

I'm going away. Somewhere you or even Bang Bang won't be able to track me down, so don't try. No more stories.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

Bloom tosses Stephen the bowler, and storms off. He gets about ten feet, then hesitates.

BLOOM (cont'd)
I love you. Bye.

Then goes.

The camel nudges Stephen's jacket, looking for more scotch. Stephen puts the bowler on its camel head.

STEPHEN
Sorry bud. I'm dry.

Stephen watches his brother walk off into the rising morning mist, lost in thought.

His hands mechanically begin shuffling the pack of cards.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. ITALIAN COAST - DAY

A stony cove. Some distance out to sea a spire of rock juts from the waves, with a small church perched precariously on top.

TITLE CARD: Northern Italy - 3 months later.

A tiny red motorboat inches its way towards the island.

EXT. ITALIAN CHURCH - DAY

The tiny stone porch outside the church. A rotund GRANDMOTHER finishes tying the red boat to a dock far below.

On a small wood table, empty booze bottles and a loose pack of cards. Fingertips spread the cards, then the fingertips' owner heads for the church door.

INT. ITALIAN CHURCH - DAY

Stephen steps in cautiously, surveys the apartment.

A goddamn mess. Empty bottles and glasses, very little light. Stephen opens the curtains, light streams in the window. A groan of displeasure comes from the gloom.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Bloom stirs, passed out in a hammock. Unkept beard, a few extra pounds. Crushed cigar hanging on his lip.

The Grandmother waddles in, cleaning up bottles and berating Bloom in a constant stream of angry Italian.

STEPHEN

She's right, you know.

BLOOM

Why are you here, Stephen?

STEPHEN

Put on your face, let's eat.

EXT. ITALIAN CHURCH - LATER

Stephen guides a dressed Bloom out the door. The grandmother follows them, still barking angry Italian at Bloom. At the last moment she says a few kind words, kisses him on the cheek and sends them off.

EXT. ITALIAN CAFE - DAY

Back on the mainland, a few tables on a stone walkway overlooking the cove. Stephen eats, Bloom stares.

BLOOM

How'd you find me?

STEPHEN

Bang Bang.

BLOOM

How'd she find me?

Stephen's eyes: "Are you joking?"

STEPHEN

How've you been?

BLOOM

Great.

STEPHEN

I've done a lot of thinking the past three months. You don't want out. You think you do but you don't. Here, c'mere. I want to show you something.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM
I'm quits, Stephen.

Stephen stands, strolls off. Bloom wearily follows.

BLOOM (cont'd)
Where are we going?

STEPHEN
New Jersey.

BLOOM
(sighs)
Well lemme get my jacket.

CUT TO:

EXT. AN AIRPLANE ROARS RIGHT TO LEFT

CUT TO:

EXT. LUDICROUS MANSION - AFTERNOON

A long private road through a tunnel of trees leads to a ludicrous mansion. Our trio watch it from the road.

BLOOM
Sorry, where are we?

STEPHEN
The biggest 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 ten years fighting an illness that I can't pronounce, leaving our sucker all alone in this ludicrous estate with an insane amount of very liquid assets.

BLOOM
How much?

Bang Bang writes a number in the dirt with a stick. Just when we think she's done, she adds several more zeros.

BLOOM (cont'd)
Jesus.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

STEPHEN

Look out.

They duck as a cherry red Lamborghini roars past them, down the private road.

BLOOM

What the hell was that?

EXT. MANSION DRIVEWAY - DAY

Our three scamper up behind a clump of trees just into to see the Lamborghini roar up the drive and crunch painfully into a fortified wall, kicking up a cloud of dust and smoke.

Thumping bass from the audio system turns off, and from the dust cloud emerges PENELOPE, early 30s, beautiful but in a non-Lamborghini way.

Bloom watches her through the trees, none too happy.

EXT. THICKET - LATER

Bloom walks at a brisk pace away from the mansion, with Stephen and Bang Bang in tow.

BLOOM

(to Bang Bang)

Get the car.

STEPHEN

Bloom.

BLOOM

What am I doing here, Stephen? I have one rule, and you've never even tested it.

STEPHEN

Stick with me.

BLOOM

No women. One rule. You know we don't do women, I don't, and it's not a morality thing or- a thing-it's, whatever it is it doesn't matter what it is, that's just our rule. So what are we,

Bang Bang pulls up in their car, an old school Cadillac.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM (cont'd)
 Is this a '78 Caddy? Hm.
 Controversial choice. So no, is
 what I'm saying. I'm quits anyway.
 I'll be in Italy. Drinking.

The front door of the mansion slams, and they watch Penelope
 drag a harp around into the back yard.

STEPHEN
 Penelope Stamp. Thirty three.
 Lived at home her whole life.

Bloom's eyes never leave Penelope.

BLOOM
 An eccentric shut-in rich bitch.
 You're not helping your case.

Bang Bang silently hands Bloom a retractable spyglass, he
 watches Penelope drift atop a hill and sit on a stump.

STEPHEN
 She's bored, a seed in the snow.
 We're going to put her through a
 grand adventure, bring her to life.

In the background, a tow truck arrives with a brand new
 Lamborghini, and leaves towing the old one.

BLOOM
 So this is the big plan. Lure me
 back into things with some
 beautiful intriguing elusive girl,
 stir up old memories with the
 prospect of redemption and rebirth.
 Seriously Stephen. Amateur night.

Bloom watches her play Clash songs on the harp.

BLOOM (cont'd)
 I'm not saying yes. But what's the
 con?

Stephen spreads a folded piece of paper on a tree stump, with
 a flowchart on it. Numbered boxes.

Bloom doesn't take his spyglass off Penelope.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

STEPHEN

It's actually pretty simple. We're brothers, antique dealers, perusing the Americas for antiquities en route to someplace exciting via luxury steamer, say Greece. You tie into her and work your magic...

Penelope plays on.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Very late. Bloom and Stephen in armchairs, collars loosened, drinks drunk. Bang Bang's Chuck Taylors stick up over the back of a chair.

Bloom holds the con flowchart.

STEPHEN

...and so that's how it ends, in Mexico, a burst of violence then a moment of truth on the beach. What do you think?

Bloom idly looks over the chart.

BLOOM

You've got something up your sleeve. This is about me, right? Somehow.

STEPHEN

This might not be something you know, but they've all been about you. Maybe that's why they've none of them been perfect, I've never been able to give you what you really want.

BLOOM

I want outta all this. So by definition, this is not going to give me what I want.

Stephen answers by letting an ace fall from his sleeve.

BLOOM (cont'd)

This will be the last one. You'll let me go.

Bang Bang's inert sneakers come to life and she's on her feet, silently going to Stephen's side.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

STEPHEN

I will never approach you to do
another con again.

(to Bang Bang)

Let's make it a red Schwinn.

Bloom stares at #1 on the flowchart - "BLOOM MEETS PENELOPE."

EXT. HILLTOP - MORNING

A grumpy Bloom perched on the red Schwinn, an ill fitting
Styrofoam helmet on his head.

Stephen sits in a lawn chair watching the highway below.

Bang Bang sets up a lawn umbrella, a chair for herself, and a
cooler with Coronas.

BLOOM

There are less painful ways to cut
into a mark.

STEPHEN

Wahk wahk wahk wahk wahk wahk wahk.
Score to beat is 7.9. Keep your
head in the game, the Japanese
judge is tough.

BLOOM

This is a banana seat, man!

He directs this to Bang Bang, who blinks with innocent
incomprehension and opens two Coronas.

BLOOM (cont'd)

Don't give me that blank look, you
know what a goddamn banana seat is.

Stephen spots something and blows a whistle. With a grunt,
Bloom launches the Schwinn forward.

Gaining speed, bumping over weeds and gopher holes, down the
steep steep hill.

At the bottom of the hill, a two lane highway. Cruising down
the highway, a cherry red Lamborghini.

Whose front right fender Bloom expertly smashes into.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY / SKY - DAY

Silent and blue. Time slows to a crawl as Bloom sails through the air, arcing over the Italian luxury car's hood and past a horrified Penelope, face frozen mid scream behind the wheel.

BLOOM (V.O.)

There's actually a knack to this. You want to avoid dying or breaking anything that won't grow back, but you don't want to roll out of it and come up roses. If you're trying to fast track into a mark's sympathies, there's nothing quite as efficient as having your first conversation be from a hospital bed they put you in. I usually like to try for a dislocated shoulder.

Several things happen at once.

Bloom hits the pavement shoulder-first, hard. The bent bike follows suit.

Up on the hill, Stephen and Bang Bang raise score cards. 8.9 and 5.6.

The Lamborghini screeches to a stop.

Everything is still.

Then the car jolts forward. Then stops. Then again, jolts and stops. Rolls forward a few feet, lazily drifting, then jolts and stops.

Bloom painfully stands, as confused by the car's behavior as us.

Stephen and Bang Bang lower their cards, equally confused.

One last long beat of silence, then the car jolts forward, veers drunkenly to the left, tips into a ditch and chunks to a stop. The horn blares.

Bloom looks up to the hilltop for guidance.

Stephen stares blankly. Bang Bang raises a new score card - 7.8.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Penelope sleeps, bruised and battered. Bloom sits bedside uncomfortably, arm in a wimpy sling. She stirs. Bloom leans forward.

Slurred with sleep and drugs, she painfully barely breathes

PENELOPE
Are you alright?

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bloom consults with Stephen and Bang Bang, both in scrubs.

STEPHEN
Bang Bang had it - I'm telling him,
I know, thank you - in her report,
I missed it. This is actually kind
of great, I'll tell you why.

Bang Bang lights a cigarette.

BLOOM
You missed it?

STEPHEN
Dostoevsky was an epileptic.

BLOOM
I know.

STEPHEN
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 out on, right?

Bloom stares blankly. Bang Bang burps into her stethoscope.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Bloom slumps in a chair, watching Penelope sleep.

BLOOM (V.O.)
The next step is to figure out a
way to insinuate yourself into
their personal life.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Bloom drifts off, then wakes with a start.

It is MORNING. Penelope is shaking him.

PENELOPE
I think they took my car. Could
you drive me home?

BLOOM
Uh. Yeah.

She walks away, the back of her gown wide open, then turns.

PENELOPE
I'm Penelope Stamp.

BLOOM
Bloom.

INT. CADILLAC - MORNING

Bloom drives, Penelope gazes stiffly out the window.

BLOOM (V.O.)
Engagement. Find a connection with
your mark through conversation.

BLOOM (cont'd)
I'm sorry about your Lamborghini.

PENELOPE
S' ok.

Silence. He notices her playing with the side mirror knob,
angling it to stare at him while looking out the window.

BLOOM
Nice area.
(beat)
Jersey.

More silence.

PENELOPE
This car is like riding in a huge
marshmallow.

And still more silence.

BLOOM (V.O.)
Having now deftly set your hook in
the mark's psyche, this would be
the perfect time to tug the line,

EXT. LUDICROUS MANSION - MORNING

They pull up in the car. A tow truck is dropping off a new Lamborghini.

BLOOM (V.O.)
Get invited in for coffee, and tell them the full tale.

Bloom looks about to launch into something, when Penelope drops a stack of cash bound in a green rubber band on his dashboard.

PENELOPE
For the bike, and the whole, thing.
This was a big shit sandwich. Ok.
Bye.

The car door slams and she's gone. Bloom sits a moment.

BLOOM (V.O.)
However, there are advantages to playing it cool. Letting it lie for a day or two, then casually re-establish contact.

Bloom starts driving off, and adjusts the passenger side mirror so it points back to the road. As he does he sees Penelope in it, sprinting after his car.

He stops. A moment later she appears at his window, heaving.

PENELOPE
I realized... I should have...
invited you in... for coffee...
right?

INT. PENELOPE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Bloom and Penelope sit in a luxurious stone-based kitchen, neither touching their coffee. Bloom talks.

This is how Penelope listens: she starts with her eyes on Bloom, then very quickly drifts away into her own thoughts, then recognizes she's doing it and makes eye contact again and gives an overbaked "oh yes go on" smile/nod, then does it all again. Three or four times.

BLOOM
...didn't really have anyone except each other growing up, and our father was in the antique business, he had a shop in Charleston.
(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM (cont'd)

So we stuck together, my brother Stephen and me, we and just took over the shop when dad died. Then we realized one day, we saw the dealers who were finding and selling us the antiques coming from exotic countries all over the world, and there was a, almost a scent they had, when they'd come in the dusty shop we worked nine to five in since we were nineteen, the air would, like before a rain, the ions would line up, and you could just smell midnight trains to Paris and steamer ships and Calcutta bazaars, and we made the decision, we just did it, that we want to have that sort of life. So we did, and we've been travelling and treasure hunting the world ever since, and could you, I'm sorry, stop doing - that, you're, I'm, ok. Alright, look.

PENELOPE

I'm really bad at talking to people.

BLOOM

I told you, that's alright. You want me to go?

PENELOPE

No! I want to talk to you. Fuck.

She storms out.

INT. PARLOR

Victorian, expensive. Penelope leans against the window, looking out. Sulking. Bloom enters.

BLOOM

So what kind of stuff do you do?

PENELOPE

Nothing. Maybe you should go.

BLOOM

Alright. I'm just gonna finish my coffee first.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Very slowly, he sips it. Each sip becomes a noisier and noisier slurp.

PENELOPE

I collect hobbies. I see someone doing something I like, and I get books and learn how to do it.

BLOOM

Hm. Anything interesting?

PENELOPE

Not really.

HOBBY MONTAGE

In which Penelope demonstrates the following with exacting seriousness and skill for Bloom:

Playing the piano. The classical guitar. The fiddle. The banjo.

Putting the finishing touches on a ship in a bottle.

Executing a perfect ollie on a skateboard.

Juggling various items. Riding a unicycle. Juggling while riding a unicycle.

Playing ping-pong against a wall with ungodly speed.

Karate chopping through too much wood.

Breakdancing.

Playing the accordion.

Rapping to a drum machine.

Creating a perfect origami dragon.

END HOBBY MONTAGE

On Bloom's shell-shock face.

BLOOM

Is that it?

PENELOPE

No. I know a lot of stuff.

BLOOM

You just learned this stuff, here by yourself?

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PENELOPE

Kinda sad.

BLOOM

No. So you just thought, 'so I want to learn this and this,' and you just did it? How do you plan to use all these skills?

PENELOPE

I dunno. I'm not a planner. I just do stuff. Here, look at this watermelon. It's a camera. You can make a pinhole camera out of anything hollowish and dark.

BLOOM

It's gotta warp the image though, right?

PENELOPE

No, yeah it does. That's what - the Taj Majal taken by a fat tourist with diarrhea and a point-and-shoot camera can be the flattest, dullest, "here's us at the Taj Majal," "Oh lovely lets go stick our thumbs up our asses" picture. But you can look at the most menial everyday thing, and depending on how your pinhole camera eats the light, it's warped and peculiar and imperfect. It's not reproduction, it's storytelling.

BLOOM

It's a lie that tells the truth.

PENELOPE

I dunno about truth. A photograph is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you, the less you know.

BLOOM

What's changed between now and twenty minutes ago? Cause this is kinda like a conversation.

PENELOPE

Huh. Well shit.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Bloom and Penelope walk and talk, finally rounding the house and ending up at the driveway.

BLOOM

Well, I should, uh, it's late. 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.

PENELOPE

Are you leaving?

BLOOM

Yeah.

PENELOPE

Are you coming back?

BLOOM

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.

During this, Bloom very naturally moves his hand to the small of Penelope's back. The edge of his thumb comes to rest on a small slit of exposed skin.

Penelope's expression does not change, but a noticeable blush crosses her still face.

When Bloom removes his hand, the blush falls.

BLOOM (cont'd)

Paris and Greece, I think. I've gotta get a hat. Thanks for the pinhole camera demonstration. And for the good conversation. Goodbye Penelope.

PENELOPE

Goodbye Bloom.

He drives off. She stands in the doorway, watching him go.

EXT. THE DOCKS - DAY

A jaunty steamer ship docked and ready. Bloom watches the access road, Stephen makes notes, Bang Bang whittles.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM

She isn't coming, man. I need another day with her.

STEPHEN

You'll have two weeks on the boat.

BLOOM

I need another day to get her on the boat, she isn't hooked. I've had one session, and we mostly talked watermelons and the optics of lensless photography.

STEPHEN

It isn't the talking that hooked her.

Bloom turns from the road.

BLOOM

I think you're wrong.

A screech of distant tires and a crash. Bloom doesn't look.

BLOOM (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Though every time I say that, you end up being comically right. That's her, isn't it? Yeah.

Penelope pulls a clumsy steamer trunk that never could have fit in her Lamborghini, which is bent around a pylon.

Bloom meets her.

PENELOPE

Hey.

BLOOM

Hi. What are you doing here?

She holds out the stack of bills in the green rubber band.

PENELOPE

You left this money in my kitchen.

He doesn't take it.

BLOOM

Yeah, I didn't want it, but thanks.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PENELOPE

Oh.

(beat)

Hey, where's this boat going?

EXT. THE ATLANTIC OCEAN - DAY

The good ship Fidele breaks the waves Greece-ward.

EXT. DECK - DAY

Bloom and Penelope stroll the deck.

BLOOM

Why did you decide to come?

PENELOPE

Well I'd never been to Greece. Or Europe. Or outside New Jersey.

BLOOM

It just seems like a big leap. From where you were at yesterday to being a world traveler.

PENELOPE

It looked like fun. I wanted to do it.

BLOOM

A new hobby.

Up ahead, Bloom spots a large man in a fur collared cape gazing out to sea. He quickly turns Penelope away.

BLOOM (cont'd)

Here, this way.

EXT. SHUFFLEBOARD DECK - DAY

Bang Bang and Stephen play shuffleboard. Bloom leads Penelope to them.

BLOOM

Penelope, this is my brother Stephen.

STEPHEN

Pleased to make your acquaintance. Bloom's told me about you, you're the epileptic photographer?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE

Sort of.

STEPHEN

This is my personal secretary and
masseur, Mrs. Yuengling.

A nearly imperceptible glare from Bang Bang.

PENELOPE

Yuengling like the beer?

STEPHEN

Heh. No. So what are your plans
in Greece?

PENELOPE

I don't plan.

STEPHEN

Good for you.

Bang Bang hits a damn near impossible shuffleboard shot, then
gives Stephen a pointed deferential giggle-bow.

INT. STATE ROOM - NIGHT

The brothers dress for dinner.

BLOOM

You named Bang Bang 'Yuengling?'

STEPHEN

I was writing in a bar. And
Penelope doesn't drink, how does
she know a Philly beer?

BLOOM

She knows a lot of stuff.

(beat)

Was that who I thought it was on
the East deck this morning?

STEPHEN

Yes it was. Did he spot you?

An ominous glance.

BLOOM

Not yet.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Several small tables scattered about the moonlit deck, Bloom and Penelope sit with flutes of champagne. Penelope, in an elegant but understated dress, shuffles a pack of cards.

BLOOM
You look very nice.

She laughs as if at a joke she doesn't think is funny.

BLOOM (cont'd)
What was your childhood like?

PENELOPE
I make cameras out of watermelons.

BLOOM
Lonely.

PENELOPE
Lucky guess.

Penelope's hands move faster. She knows how to shuffle cards.

PENELOPE (cont'd)
When I turned six I started getting allergies, hayfever, rashes, really bad. So my mom took me into the doctor, and he did that test where they use needles to prick a grid on your back with all the different toxins, to see which ones you're allergic to. The next day I came in, the doctor lifted up my shirt, and my back looked like 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 my entire childhood and adolescence indoors. Mostly alone. Lonely.

She pulls the Queens out of the deck and lays them face up on the table.

BLOOM
Wow.

PENELOPE

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

It wasn't `til I was nineteen they discovered what I was actually allergic to was the aluminum alloy the hypodermic needle was made out of. Then I was going to leave, but my mom got sick. So I stayed. And she stayed sick, a long time.

BLOOM

Do you feel cheated?

Penelope does an amazing card trick using the four queens.

PENELOPE

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. It was about a girl who could find infinite beauty in anything, any little thing. And do anything she decided to do. And love the person she was trapped with. So I told myself that story until it became true. Now did doing that let me escape a wasted life, or did it just 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 I don't feel cheated.

She finishes the trick.

A single pair of hands clapping turns their heads. At the far end of the deck, alone at a table, the large man in the fur collared cape, who for reasons unlikely to become clear at the moment will be called THE CURATOR.

THE CURATOR

And a magician is just an actor playing the part of a magician. My compliments.

Bloom takes Penelope gently by the elbow and guides her up and away.

EXT. BOW - NIGHT

They stroll out onto the moonlit bow of the ship.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE

Who is that man? You avoided him earlier on the deck.

BLOOM

I don't know, but he's carrying a knife up his sleeve and wearing a cape. Do me a favor and steer clear of him.

A waltz drifts through the air from a band unseen.

BLOOM (CONT'D) (cont'd)

I don't suppose in all your hobby acquiring you ever learned how to dance?

PENELOPE

I went through a phase when I was mildly obsessed with the Bolero.

BLOOM

Give me a minute.

He leaves her alone. Clouds obscure the moon, shadows deepen. She shivers.

A match strikes. She jumps.

The moon re-emerges, and she is no longer alone on the deck. The Curator lights a dapper briar pipe, shakes out the match.

THE CURATOR

Mademoiselle.

PENELOPE

Monsieur.

THE CURATOR

(in French, subtitled)

I didn't mean to startle you.

PENELOPE

(in French, subtitled)

Yes you did.

THE CURATOR

(in French, subtitled)

Apologies, but the deck was dark, and I had to approach.

(English)

It's been such a time since I've encountered the Brothers Bloom.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PENELOPE
You're in antiques?

THE CURATOR
(Cheshire grin)
Antiques. I wonder, my dear, if
you know the true nature of the men
you travel with?

The band strikes up a Bolero. The Curator flicks his wrist,
and a long thin blade falls into his hand.

THE CURATOR (cont'd)
A little fear might suit you, I
think.

He raises the blade... it is in fact a fine mustache brush,
which he delicately employs.

THE CURATOR (cont'd)
Bon soir, ma cherie.

With that the Curator backs into the shadows, and is gone.
Moments later Bloom trots up to her, oblivious.

BLOOM
It isn't a Spanish band, but
they'll do their best.

He hands her a single blood red rose. She puts it in her
teeth, and they dance. If there is a tinge of tension in the
air, the Bolero suits it.

The moon ducks behind a cloud once more, and they dance on in
the dark.

INT. STATE ROOM - MORNING

Bloom wakes with a start. Morning light pours in through his
porthole. He opens it, looks out to sea.

His dinner jacket draped over a chair. The rose in its
lapel. He fishes it out. Runs his fingers over the teeth
marks on the stem.

Then raises an eyebrow at a lump in the breast pocket, and
pulls out the stack of bills in the green rubber band.

EXT. DECK - MORNING

Bang Bang and Penelope lie on their stomachs on the deck, a
beer can pinhole camera between them.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Penelope gives a lesson on how it works.

Bang Bang appreciates her.

EXT. BREAKFAST DECK - LATER

Bloom escorts Penelope to breakfast.

PENELOPE
How'd you find Yeungling?

BLOOM
Who? Oh. She found us.

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING (FLASHBACK)

Bloom cooks breakfast in his bathrobe.

BLOOM (O.S.)
A few years back, when we hit the
top of our art dealing game, she
just appeared.

A door opens and slams. Bloom turns. Bang Bang sits at his place at the table, suitcase beside her, smoking a cigarette.

BLOOM (O.S.) (cont'd)
She's stuck with us. We figure
when she gets bored she'll vanish
with the same lack of noise.

Like feeding a strange animal, Bloom pours her coffee. She drinks it without looking at him.

EXT. BREAKFAST DECK

PENELOPE
I like her.

BLOOM
Good.

They smile when they see Stephen and Bang Bang at a table.

Their smiles drop when they see the Curator sitting with them. Bloom glares at the Curator, but speaks to Stephen.

BLOOM (cont'd)
What's he doing here?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

STEPHEN

I invited him, sit down. This ship's too small to dance around each other for a week, we might as well have it out now. Bloom. Sit. Penelope, do you know our friend?

PENELOPE

Only as the creepy Frenchman.

THE CURATOR

Book-learned. You know languages but not accents, my dear. I am Belgian. Maxmillion Melville, at your service.

BLOOM

Also known in certain professional circles as the Curator.

PENELOPE

Pleased to make your acquaintance. What do you do?

THE CURATOR

I'm a curator, presently for the National Museum in Prague. And yourself?

PENELOPE

I'm an epileptic photographer.

THE CURATOR

Good for you. Boys? What do you do?

STEPHEN

We have a legitimate antique reselling business.

THE CURATOR

Baissez le rideau, la farce est jouee.

STEPHEN

We've gone straight, Max.

THE CURATOR

Pardon, but you do not ascend to the grand heights of the Brothers Bloom only to toss it all and sell terra cotta to blue haired weekend antiquers.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

STEPHEN

We did. Eat your waffles.

THE CURATOR

But Mademoiselle appears...
confused. Perhaps she is unawares?

BLOOM

Eat your waffles, fat man.

THE CURATOR

Unaware that the Brothers Bloom are
in fact the two most highly
respected *art smugglers* in the
western world?

STEPHEN

Were. We've been on the straight
for three years. So that's that.

THE CURATOR

Well, if that is that, then that is
indeed that. As you say.

Penelope snaps her fingers. Everyone looks up.

PENELOPE

Your name's Melville?

THE CURATOR

Maxmillion Melville, Esquire.

PENELOPE

Sorry, no, cause I noticed but I
couldn't place it, this ship is the
Fidele, which was the ship in
Melville's novel "The Confidence
Man." So that's weird.

Everyone glances at Stephen, a little uncomfortable.

STEPHEN

Huh.

INT. DECK - NIGHT

Bloom paces, Stephen shuffles cards.

BLOOM

I know you like to throw those
clever little details in, but
you've gotta watch that shit with
her Stephen.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM (cont'd)

She had a lot of time alone in that house, and she used it. She did the best Double Dutch Queens I've ever seen up on the deck last night.

STEPHEN

Double Dutch Queens uses gaffed cards.

BLOOM

She had them in her purse and cut them in while I was folding my napkin.

STEPHEN

Jesus.

BLOOM

That's what I'm saying. She's different, she knows, sometimes it feels like she knows everything. Doesn't that worry you?

STEPHEN

No. But something about her is worrying you plenty.

BLOOM

She feels like one of your characters.

STEPHEN

The day I con you is the day I die, Bloom.

BLOOM

I know that.

(beat)

How did you get the Belgian, on our budget?

STEPHEN

He's beautiful, right?

BLOOM

I didn't expect him to actually be Belgian.

STEPHEN

I'm not sure he is. I'm to bed.

Stephen stands to go, then pauses.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

I've always protected you, right?
The only real danger in this whole
play is that you'll actually fall
in love with her. Look at me.
Don't fall in love with her.

EXT. UPPER DECK - CONTINUOUS

Bang Bang sits smoking her whittled pipe, watching Bloom
alone on the deck. Stephen passes her, and she stops him
with a look.

STEPHEN

Shut up. I know what I'm doing.

She hands him a thin piece of paper. He looks it over.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

This came through just now?

The paper is a telegram with the Fidele's imprint, received
from St. Petersburg. Stephen reads it.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

"My dear Stephen STOP Word on the
wire is the Bros B are bound for
Prague STOP Am heading there myself
would love to see my boys STOP
Affectionately DD." The Diamond
Dog.

He crumples the paper, looks down at Bloom.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Wire him back for me. "Dear Dog
STOP Unless you've lately felt an
excess of eyes left in your head
kindly stay the fuck away from me
and my brother STOP Regards,"
etcetera.

EXT. THE MEDITERRANIAN SEA - MORNING

The good ship Fidele rounds the Rock of Gibraltar.

EXT. DECK - MORNING

Bloom and Penelope lie on the deck, watching dolphins.

She says this word like she's eating chocolate:

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE

Smugglers. It's like an adventure story. Whose idea was it to go straight?

BLOOM

Mine. Stephen always loved the life. Then he was almost killed on a run to Jakarta, two thugs with heads like canned hams worked him beyond all reason.

EXT. JAKARTA PIER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Stephen is set upon by two thugs. He rushes them.

STEPHEN

Have at thee, you ham headed bastards!

EXT. DECK - MORNING

BLOOM

And I called it, no more smuggling.

PENELOPE

Scary.

BLOOM

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 his story so well it fulfills itself. It somehow would make it finally real for him.

PENELOPE

That's kinda the thing we all want, right?

He looks at her in the sun.

BLOOM

Trying to get something real by telling yourself stories is a trap. Trust me on that one.

EXT. GRECIAN PORT - DAY

Kalamata, if it matters.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

The Fidele docked in bright blue water. Our intrepid heroes stand aside a dusty road, surrounded by their luggage.

The Curator approaches, tips his hat to them.

THE CURATOR

Best of luck with the antiquing,
boys. Au revoir, Chinois.

(to Penelope)

Mademoiselle. Mes restes d'offre.

With a wink, he is gone. A beat. Penelope stands apart.

BLOOM

My French is a little rusty, but I believe he just told you 'my offer stands.'

PENELOPE

He came out of nowhere last night.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Penelope taking air on the moonlit deck. The Curator dissolves out of the darkness.

PENELOPE (V.O.)

Whatever's in his pipe, it made me thick.

He brings her face close to hers, smoke twisting, and speaks unheard words low and fast.

EXT. GRECIAN PORT - MORNING

BLOOM

Oh lord. What has he got?

PENELOPE

An 8th century prayer book.

EXT. PRAGUE STREETS - DAY

We fly through the city streets...

PENELOPE (V.O.)

From his museum in Prague, stashed in the castle.

Up to the base of the castle, through a grated hole in an ancient wall, into...

INT. MUSEUM VAULT

A stunning illuminated manuscript lies open on a stone table. The Curator's hands close it gently and take it away.

STEPHEN (V.O.)

A book of hours.

PENELOPE (V.O.)

Yeah. Medieval art bores the crap out of me, I don't know it that well. So that's what he does, he makes pieces in his collections disappear, then sells them off via a trusted middleman.

EXT. GRECIAN PORT

BLOOM

That's what he does.

STEPHEN

Wonder who's his fence?

BLOOM

Probably his Spanish guy, right?
(asks Penelope)
Did he say who's buying?

PENELOPE

An Argentinian. Argentine?
Argentinian?

EXT. DECK - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

THE CURATOR

A gentleman from Argentina. He's quite sick, cancer in his bones, and desperate for sentimental reasons to own this piece while he may.

EXT. GRECIAN PORT

PENELOPE

He'll sell it to a middleman for one million, US. The Argentin...a guy will pay two point five.

STEPHEN

Not bad.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE

Is he legit?

STEPHEN

The Curator? That's a relative term. He's telling the truth.

BLOOM

I'm sorry you had to deal with that guy.

Behind Penelope, two porters load her steamer trunk into the back of a taxi.

BLOOM (cont'd)

Where's that cab going?

PENELOPE

The train station.

BLOOM

Where's the train going?

PENELOPE

Prague.

Bloom breathes.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

Let's do it. Let's, just, I want to try this. Let's be smugglers. I think it'd be fun. We should do this.

BLOOM

No.

PENELOPE

Why not?

BLOOM

Well first off, we don't have a million dollars.

PENELOPE

I do, I've got, that's whatever. I mean a real reason.

BLOOM

This is real, it's dangerous, it could go very bad.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

PENELOPE

I think a little real danger might suit me. I'm gonna do it. So if you want to join my smugglers gang, you know, I'll consider it.

She walks off towards the taxi.

BLOOM

This is not an adventure story.

PENELOPE

What are you talking about? It totally is.

EXT. HUNGARIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

A train roars through the night towards Prague.

INT. STEPHEN'S SLEEPING CAR - NIGHT

Stephen reclines, hat on his face. Bloom paces.

STEPHEN

Take it easy. She's having fun, that's the point of this.

BLOOM

She's making a flag for our "smugglers gang," man. She made me learn a secret smugglers handshake. Unhealthy. This afternoon, when she was writing, in the observation car? A letter? A journal? No. She is getting way too into this.

Bloom fishes a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket and thrusts it in front of Stephen's face.

On it are written dozens of variations in stylized fonts of "Penelope the smuggler."

BLOOM (cont'd)

She's been singing the Smuggler Song since Athens.

STEPHEN

What Smugglers Song?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM

You know, the one from whatsit, the Disney thing, that Smuggler Song, the 'We're a band of smugglers hey, la la la la la, we smuggle by night and drink by day, smugglers ho, ho ho, smugglers...' there, this isn't... there isn't a Smuggler Song, is there? Ok. She made up a Smuggler Song. With hand motions.

STEPHEN

The whole point of this was to sweep her off her feet. Let her enjoy it.

BLOOM

While it lasts.

STEPHEN

Nothing lasts.

Exit Bloom. Stephen sighs and drops his hat back on his face.

INT. BLOOM'S SLEEPING CAR

Bloom reads. Footsteps pound by outside. Penelope and Bang Bang run past his door. A moment later a uniformed ATTENDANT runs past.

A beat, then the footsteps come back, and the girls duck into Bloom's cabin, slamming the door. Sacks in their teeth.

Off Bloom's quizzical look:

PENELOPE

Smuggling. From the snack car.

They pull bags of chips and tiny liquor bottles from their sacks.

Bloom glares at Bang Bang, who tries to avoid his gaze.

INT. SNACK CAR

Bloom pays the SNACK CAR ATTENDANT from a stack of Euros, while Bang Bang gives him counts on her fingers.

BLOOM

Fourteen gins? Are you kidding me?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BANG BANG

Campari.

BLOOM

I'm not paying for that.

She holds up two fingers, the Attendant pours two.

ATTENDANT

Soda?

She says no with a look, they drink.

BLOOM

She made up the Smuggler Song.

Bang Bang nods. Bloom pays for the Campari.

BLOOM (cont'd)

I thought it was a Disney thing.

INT. PENELOPE'S SLEEPING CAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

The lights are off. Penelope reclines on the bed, surrounded by empty tiny gin bottles. Drunk.

Bloom sits on the floor, both framed in a big window looking out on a breathtaking moonlit landscape rolling hypnotically by.

PENELOPE

Gin is fuckin fruity. Have you taken this train before?

BLOOM

Yeah.

PENELOPE

So this is all like fuckin 'whatever' to you.

BLOOM

I usually drink with Bang Bang in the snack car, play cards.

PENELOPE

With the who?

Oops.

BLOOM

Mrs. Yeungling. That's her smuggler nickname.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE
That's offensive.

BLOOM
I think if it were offensive to
her, she'd let us know.

PENELOPE
Do I get a smuggler nickname?

Bloom quietly slips the stack of cash in the green rubber
band into Penelope's luggage.

BLOOM
No.

PENELOPE
I think you're constipated. In
your fuckin soul.

Bloom makes several attempts to form a response to this
before giving up.

BLOOM
What?

PENELOPE
You've got a big load of grumpy
petrified poop up your soul's ass,
I'm just calling you out on it.
Yeah I'm pretending I'm a smuggler,
so you know what? I'm a fuckin
smuggler. If that's your thing,
fuckin tell it like you own it.
When you've got a fuckin whats the
thing a spotlight or what in front
of your feet, man, fuckin jump into
it and dance the shit out of it.
Stop fuckin thinking so much.
Enjoy the fuckin ride. Fuck.

A roll of thunder and spectacular flash of lightning ignites
the landscape, and rain starts to patter. Penelope stiffens.

PENELOPE (cont'd)
Whoa.

BLOOM
Look, I'm not-

PENELOPE
Shh. I love thunderstorms.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

Another crash. Lying on her stomach, Penelope slowly starts feeling something which makes her undulate. Bloom stares, confused.

PENELOPE (cont'd)
Whoa ha. Oh ho ho. Ohhhhhh whoooo
ha ha ha ha.

Beneath her, the train wheels rhythmically clack and vibrate against the tracks. Another flash of lightening, the rain falls harder.

Penelope writhes. Bloom silently shrinks back in terror.

PENELOPE (cont'd)
Oh hoooooooooooo ha ha ha ha ha ha
ha oh my GOD, ha whoooo.. whee...
ha... hoo. I... am... so horny.

BLOOM
Nite.

The door to her car latches, and Bloom is gone.

INT. SNACK CAR - NIGHT

Bloom sits drinking and playing cards with Bang Bang. He spaces out, she snaps her fingers to wake him up.

BLOOM
(playing a card)
That's the big 2.

EXT. HUNGARIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The train steams onward into the growing storm.

EXT. CHARLES BRIDGE, PRAGUE - MORNING

Our intrepid four stroll the bridge, the city's castle looming before them.

Penelope slumps pale faced in dark glasses.

STEPHEN
The last time I was in Prague, I
was in love.

PENELOPE
What was she like?

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

STEPHEN
Pale skin. Long feet. So.

He winks.

INT. PRAGUE HOTEL ROOM - DAY

STEPHEN (V.O.)
Bloom and I will secure us lodging,

The brothers set their suitcases on the beds. Bloom finds the stack of bills in the green rubber band in his.

INT. NATIONAL MUSEUM - DAY

STEPHEN (V.O.)
Mrs. Yeungling will scout the castle museum.

Bang Bang, in ridiculous tourist garb and a "PROPERTY OF KGB" t-shirt, takes pictures with one of several cameras around her neck.

EXT. CHARLES BRIDGE, PRAGUE

STEPHEN
You will go to the bank, that wire should have cleared if you put it in at Athens.

PENELOPE
Cash?

INT. PRAGUE BANK - DAY

STEPHEN (V.O.)
Only movie thugs and Russians deal in suitcases of cash. Draw a certified check.

A cashier hands over an elaborate check, which Penelope signs and puts in an envelope.

INT. APARTMENT STAIRCASE - DAY

A baroque spiral staircase, the spine of a high apartment building. Our intrepid four ring the bell beside an apartment door.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

THE CURATOR (FROM INSIDE)
Who the hell is that?! Who is it?!

STEPHEN
Candy-Gram. It's us, Max.

Stephen pushes open the door, and an instant later a SHOTGUN BLAST takes out a chunk of the landing beside his head.

They all dive onto the floor, piling on top of each other.

THE CURATOR (FROM INSIDE)
Who the hell are you, what do you want, who the hell!!!!?!

BLOOM
Max! Max! It's us, Bloom, Stephen, Jesus, Max, easy, whoa!

STEPHEN
Max! Max! It's Stephen and Bloom, easy, whoa, Christ, whoa now!

The Curator stands in the smoky apartment hallway, sloppily draped in a ratty bathrobe, bottle in one hand and shotgun in the other. He squints at them.

THE CURATOR (cont'd)
Ah. Good morning. Come in. I have been drinking.

INT. THE CURATOR'S APARTMENT - LATER

A schematic of the castle laid on the kitchen table. The Curator looks even worse in the light, red rimmed eyes, heavy skin on his face.

THE CURATOR
Here, off the Basilica, are offices of administration, and beneath those, an otherwise inaccessible section of catacombs. And the book.

BLOOM
Administrative offices. So how do you steal the book?

THE CURATOR
The book is already stolen. The stealing is in the bureaucracy, in the filing, red tape. As far as the museum is concerned, the book does not exist.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

THE CURATOR (cont'd)

I am the curator, I walk in, pinch the copy girl's baboosh, put the book in a briefcase and walk out. Tomorrow, say, at two.

STEPHEN

Today.

THE CURATOR

Today is not a good day.

STEPHEN

Tomorrow. Now what about this Argentinian.

THE CURATOR

(blank, then realizes)

Ah, the Argentine? Senor Luise Belguta Rioso. I get his file.

INT. CURATORS APARTMENT BEDROOM - LATER

Penelope and Bloom wander into the bedroom, looking at an array of beautiful paintings on the wall.

PENELOPE

Gin is slow death, man.

Stephen and Bang Bang poke their heads in, leaving. The Curator strolls in.

STEPHEN

We'll see you back at the hotel.
(glances at the Curator)
Soon.

They go, leaving Bloom and Penelope, who squints at an unframed oil on canvas, of a lonely stone well in a primeval forest clearing. It sits at the foot of an unmade bed.

THE CURATOR

From a private collection on the island of Ikaria. That one.

BLOOM

Who painted it?

THE CURATOR

I don't know.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE

Why is it the last thing you see every night, and the first thing you see every morning?

THE CURATOR

That's a story. You have a minute?

He closes the blinds and sits on a stool in front of the painting. Setting the stage.

THE CURATOR (cont'd)

My daughter travelled with me when she was very young, and I'd show her the places and the art, all the most joyous and terrifying things in the world.

Memories of his daughter's hand in his, flashing against the sun.

THE CURATOR (CONT'D) (cont'd)

I wanted that the world was alive in the most fantastic way for her. To built her a pair of wings. Make these things real. But maybe more than any other *objet d'art*, she loved to hear she'd ask to hear the story of the stone golem. From a painting in a small private collection on the island of Ikarria.

He motions to the painting, and we move into it. As he tells the story the scenes are shown in the painting, just as still images, which we move across like a picture book.

THE CURATOR (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Well Rachel, like most monsters the Golem was once a human. A boy, about your age. And one day the boy was walking home, and he quarrelled, he fought, with a good friend of his. They got very angry and his friend pushed him a certain way and the boy fell and struck his head and died. The boy's friend was very sad but also very frightened. So instead of telling the boy's parents, he did something awful. He pulled the body into a quarry, a pit of broken rocks, and hid the boy beneath a pile of large stones. Well.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

THE CURATOR (CONT'D) (cont'd)

Years went by, and the boy's friend became a young man, and one day while drinking in town (which in his guilt he did quite a lot of) he heard that a well was being built near the forest... with the stones from the quarry. He ran to the quarry to find it nearly empty... no stones, no body. He ran to the well where the masons were finishing their work. 'Did they find anything strange in the quarry?' he asked, expecting, maybe hoping they'd arrest him for the awful crime on the spot. But no, they said, motioning to the well. Nothing strange. Just stones. They left him alone there at the well, and he stood looking into it as the sun fell behind the mountains and twilight set the world in a deep, still silence.

The last image we land on is the well, alone in the clearing.

Its dark innards loom ominously in the long pregnant silence that follows.

Then, with a piercing ROAR, a living monster of stone lunges out of the well, animated and terrifying, grabs the friend by the throat and with a crunching of bones and one last roar pulls him back down into the depths of the well.

Silence again. We pull out of the painting, back to the Curator, sitting very still.

THE CURATOR (cont'd)

My daughter died nineteen years ago today. She was six. She went out to play one afternoon and vanished. The next morning we found her, in a stone well on a neighboring property. I climbed down to her, but slipped and broke my leg, and while we waited for the rescue team to pull us out she died in my arms. If you've had a child... my whole everything just focused down to one thing, to hold her and make her feel safe. But no matter what I said to her, I couldn't stop her shaking, crying. Her last moments on this earth were filled with terror. Of a stone golem.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

He stands, opens the blinds, pours another drink.

THE CURATOR (cont'd)
It was the first painting I
'acquired.' I keep it maybe hoping
some night the golem will come for
me.

INT. APARTMENT STAIRCASE - MOMENTS LATER

Bloom trots out, ahead of Penelope.

THE CURATOR
Mademoiselle.

Bloom keeps going, anxious to leave, but Penelope lingers on the staircase. The Curator comes out.

THE CURATOR (cont'd)
It is you I do business with, yes?

PENELOPE
Right. Oh, right.

She gives him the envelope with the certified check. He shakes her hand, then deftly adjusts his grip so that just for a moment he holds her hand as you would hold a child's.

He lets go, and smiles apologetically.

THE CURATOR
Au revoir.

EXT. PRAGUE STREETS - DAY

Penelope and Bloom stroll home in silence through crowded, vibrant cobblestone streets.

PENELOPE
You aren't constipated. You're
scared. What are you scared of?

They walk on, suddenly somehow holding hands.

As they approach the hotel, Bloom deftly breaks their hand holding off. Penelope notices why.

INT. PRAGUE HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Stephen, up in the window watching them approach. He recedes into the room.

EXT. PRAGUE STREETS - NIGHT

The sun sets against the castle, taking us into night.

INT. PRAGUE HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Bloom drinks alone, sketching Penelope's face with a pencil. A smell breaks his concentration.

BLOOM

Diamond Dog, carrying a cup and a cane.

Standing behind him, a soft old man in an ashy suit and eyepatch. The DIAMOND DOG.

DIAMOND DOG

Bloom. How long has it been?

(sits, orders)

Tea.

(to Bloom)

Can you believe that? Tea? Been a long while.

BLOOM

If I call Stephen down he'll kill you.

DIAMOND DOG

Well then please don't call Stephen down. Look at you, you're terrified. C'mon now, look. Take a look. I'm an old man with no depth perception. You don't have to be scared of me.

The Dog plays with a heavy gold lighter, making sparks.

DIAMOND DOG (cont'd)

It's been a funny thing, watching you boys take what I taught you and eclipse me. I'm so proud to be a footnote in the lives of the Brothers Bloom. And you hate me. The curse of all bad fathers - that my presence on this earth after I die will not live on the lips of admiring men, but will sink into the murky backwaters of my children's psyches.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM

Is this profundity? Cause you can skip it.

DIAMOND DOG

Ha! Ha ha. Piss and vinegar.

The Dog scoots next to Bloom.

DIAMOND DOG (cont'd)

When I first took you boys in, showed you the ropes, haunting St. Pete's, piss and vinegar. I still crave that youthful joy. Even today.

The Dog's hand touches Bloom's leg. There is something horrible about this.

Beneath the bar, Bloom grips the sharp pencil like a knife.

BLOOM

Don't touch me.

DIAMOND DOG

You probably won't believe I loved you boys very much.

BLOOM

You're going to take your hand away or I'm going to break your arm, there's nothing between.

He does, but Bloom's fingers don't loosen on the pencil.

DIAMOND DOG

But love, you know. We know, folks like us, you can always blink and realize that it's a fiction, and like Peter walking on water or Wiley Coyote running off a cliff, if you look down in doubt you'll 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 and protect you. When he's gone, remember me.

The Dog has moved in very close to Bloom, his breath hot on his face, and his hand comes to rest fully on Bloom's leg.

Bloom's hand with the pencil quivers, about to strike-

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

When Bloom is pulled from the bar stool by a heavy hand. Stephen, his eyes burning through the Dog.

DIAMOND DOG (cont'd)
Hello Stephen.

Stephen smashes a bottle from the bar and slashes it across the Dog's hand.

Waiters and porters tackle him, the Dog howls, holding his bleeding hand. Bloom stands numb, and puts the pencil in his pocket.

EXT. PRAGUE HOTEL - NIGHT

Bloom watches the Dog get into a waiting black Mercedes. For an instant the car's interior light shows an 11 year old boy behind the tinted glass, as the Dog slides in and puts his arm around him.

The Mercedes drives off.

INT. PRAGUE HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

A JANITOR sweeps up the mess from the fight.

Bloom sips coffee from a china cup, spinning a paper in his hands. Stephen joins him, with a matching cup.

STEPHEN
I'm sorry I wasn't there.

BLOOM
You can't always be there.

STEPHEN
No, I guess can't.

A beat.

BLOOM
That was a real tonal shift. The Curator's tale.

On one side of the paper is the sketch of Penelope, on the other is the con flowchart. "#12 - The Curator's Tale." "#14 - Castle Break-In."

STEPHEN
I'm a big fan of tonal shifts. I didn't write it for him, though.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM

He made it up on the spot?

STEPHEN

I don't know.

INT. BLOOM'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Bloom flops into bed. He turns and looks at the wall.

Right on the other side of it...

INT. PENELOPE'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Penelope lies in bed, looking at the wall also. She closes her eyes.

INT. BLOOM'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Bloom's breathing slows. He closes his eyes.

A beat. Then light snoring breaks the silence, coming through the wall. Penelope snoring.

Bloom smiles slightly. What a cute snore.

The snoring deepens slightly.

The clock on the wall advances from 1:30am to 5:50am, and through the window the horizon glows with the approach of dawn.

Bloom lies wide awake on his back, red rimmed eyes wide open, the guttural snoring ringing in his ears.

INT. APARTMENT STAIRCASE - MORNING

Our four at the Curator's door. Bloom knocks, and they all step judiciously back. No response.

STEPHEN

Max?

BLOOM

We're a little early...

INT. THE CURATOR'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Still and silent in the breaking light of morning.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

And totally empty. Picked clean down to the bare walls.

The only thing left in the apartment is the painting of the well... broken on the floor.

Our intrepid four stand in various states of thoughtfulness. Penelope stares at the painting, Bloom at the window.

PENELOPE

Last night I dreamt that the Golem came for him. Crawled out of the painting and killed him in a horrible way.

BLOOM

Well at least he had the decency to just skip out on us, not do something tacky like fake his own death.

Poking around the room, Bloom opens a closet. The Curator stands pressed against the back wall in his pajamas.

THE CURATOR

(sotto)

You're a little early.

Bloom quickly closes it.

STEPHEN

I don't get it. If he was hightailing it he could have waited eight hours till we traded the million for the book, and had some traveling money. Well. Back to antiquing. Nothing gained, nothing lost.

(to Penelope)

And you got to see Prague, which is nice.

Penelope's eyes widen with realization.

PENELOPE

Oh.

BLOOM

You should stay in the city for awhile, they have these amazing puppet show opera things-

But Stephen raises a hand to shut him up.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

STEPHEN

Oh?

EXT. SIDEWALK BAR - DAY

Several empty glasses of wine, one full one in Penelope's hand. All heads are slumped.

PENELOPE

Oh.

BLOOM

It's my fault. I can't believe I left you alone with him.

Bang Bang hands Stephen a piece of paper. He glances at it.

STEPHEN

The check was cashed yesterday afternoon, he'd have deposited it in a Swiss account. I'm sorry Pen.

PENELOPE

What a waste.

Bloom puts his hand on her arm, sympathetic.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

That poor man. What a waste.

Bloom's expression turns quizzical.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

That poor Argentina man. He'll never see the book now, it'll just rot in the catacombs. What a waste.

When Penelope lifts her suddenly brightened eyes in a moment of divine inspiration, Bloom meets her gaze with fear.

EXT. RIVERSIDE, PRAGUE - DAY

Bloom paces, Penelope looks up at the castle with binoculars. Bang Bang and Stephen stand by.

BLOOM

No. No no. Can't you see what happened here, there is no book, we've been swindled -

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE

But maybe there is, maybe it's
real, we don't know!

BLOOM

It's not real, it's a con.

PENELOPE

It's my money, I'm going to find
out for sure. He gave us every
piece of information we need.

She spreads the castle floor plan out on a bench.

Bloom turns to Stephen and Bang Bang with a "this is crazy
right?" expression and gesture. They give him nothing back.

STEPHEN

We'd need to clear the
administrative offices. Some sort
of disruption.

Bang Bang strokes her chin in mock-thoughtfulness.

PENELOPE

(to Bloom)

C'mon. Help me break into this
castle. It'll be fun.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A Barbie Doll set up in the middle of the field explodes in a
theatrical plume of fire.

Several others follow suit.

Bang Bang pops up from behind a mound of dirt in her aviator
goggles, cigarette dangling from her lip. She leans on a
detonator plunger.

Bloom, Stephen and Penelope crouch nearby, watching her work.

STEPHEN

She's an artist with nitroglycerin.
It's kind of her thing.

PENELOPE

I feel like I want to know more
about her.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Penelope and Bang Bang do their elaborate handshake, and she gives Stephen and Bloom a finger snap thumbs up.

INT. PENELOPE'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Bloom and Penelope, up late at the table. Going over the floorplan one more time.

BLOOM
So straight down the corridor,
again, tell me where.

PENELOPE
Second left, third right, access
hatch behind the copier, I need to
sleeeeeeeep...

BLOOM
The abort code if we need to abort
is "corned beef." For some reason.

PENELOPE
Bloom, I need to sleep.

He folds up the plans, she wraps up the brick of dynamite and bomb components and spots a black leather backpack beside an open handbag on the table.

PENELOPE (cont'd)
Is this Yeungling's backpack?

BLOOM
Yeah.

She gently puts the brick of stabilized nitroglycerin inside the front zipper compartment, and sets the tiny petri-dish bomb beside the handbag.

PENELOPE
You know what I feel?

BLOOM
Horny?

PENELOPE
Scared. All my big talk. But this
isn't a story, it's real. Fuckin
scary.

She kisses him. He kisses her back.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

The pure whole hearted sensuality with which they attack each other and the deluge of almost child-like need let loose in this one simple act quickly reaches a point where as a viewer we no longer feel comfortable intruding with our gaze.

Fifteen seconds after this point, we FADE OUT.

EXT. PRAGUE - DAWN

The sun arcs into the sky above the castle.

INT. PENELOPE'S PRAGUE HOTEL ROOM - DAWN

Bloom half wakes.

Across the landscape of the bed, Penelope sleeps. Sunlight on her body and her sleeping face.

Distant KNOCKING. From the next room over.

Bloom's eyes snap open. He scampers.

EXT. PRAGUE HOTEL WINDOW LEDGE - DAWN CONTINUOUS

In his boxers, holding trousers and shirt in his teeth, Bloom swings over the ledge from Penelope's window into his.

INT. BLOOM'S PRAGUE HOTEL ROOM - DAWN CONTINUOUS

He opens the door for Stephen, who regards him narrowly.

STEPHEN

Ready?

INT. PENELOPE'S PRAGUE HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Bang Bang picks up the backpack, handbag and petri dish bomb.

INT. PENELOPE'S PRAGUE HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Penelope folds a plastic bag and puts it under her jacket.

EXT. CASTLE ADJACENT STREETS - DAY

A little alcove with a good view of the castle.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Stephen trains his gaze on one set of windows high in the Eastern tower. Bloom paces.

INT. EASTERN TOWER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An empty storage room, half under construction. Bang Bang walks in, wearing the backpack and carrying the handbag. She goes straight for a spot just under a smoke detector.

EXT. CASTLE ADJACENT STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Stephen, Bloom and Penelope are joined by Bang Bang.

STEPHEN

Ok.

He looks through his binoculars again.

BLOOM

Alright?

PENELOPE

Ok.

They share a brief moment with their eyes, and Penelope trots off. Bang Bang caught it. She looks at Bloom slyly.

BLOOM

For the record, I'm still against this. Why send her in alone?

Bang Bang finds a way to casually smell Bloom's fingers.

STEPHEN

Because going in alone is a very important thing to do. She's walking into a zero security tourism office during a fire drill and taking a five hundred dollar manuscript replica from a utility crawlspace. Worst case scenario, a file clerk asks if she's lost. Which isn't even going to happen.

(to Bang Bang)

She's in position.

He spots Penelope casually waiting beside an unmarked door.

Bloom notices Bang Bang looking at him with a knowing grin. She mimes sealing her lips and tossing the key.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

She then takes the ballpoint pen detonator... *out of the handbag dangling at her hip.*

STEPHEN (cont'd)
Cause nobody's going to know we
were ever here.

Bloom spots the handbag. Something's not right.

BLOOM
Uh-

Bang Bang clicks the pen.

INT. EASTERN TOWER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The black backpack, sitting under the smoke alarm, beeps.

EXT. CASTLE ADJACENT STREETS - CONTINUOUS

A THUNDEROUS EXPLOSION blows a massive ten foot wide chunk out of the side of the Eastern tower, spewing a painfully dramatic ball of fire and debris.

Screams. Shouts. Panic.

Our three look up at the tower, agape.

BANG BANG
Fuck me.

Bloom grabs the binoculars from Stephen, looks for Penelope.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

Panicked tourists stumble away from the descending dust. Penelope sees what's happened, but holds her ground.

The unmarked door opens, and a dozen business people pour out.

EXT. CASTLE ADJACENT STREETS - DAY

BLOOM
Don't do it don't do it Penelope
don't-

STEPHEN
They're locking down the castle,
she won't get in.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

She takes a step towards the door.

EXT. CASTLE ADJACENT STREETS - DAY

Bloom drops the binoculars and sprints.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

A burly SECURITY GUARD trots across the courtyard, herding tourists and smoking a cigar.

SECURITY GUARD

To ze back, no panic, to ze back...

He blocks the office door, and sets his cigar down for a moment. Penelope spots it.

EXT. CASTLE ADJACENT STREETS - DAY

Bloom nears the courtyard, sees Penelope up ahead.

BLOOM

Pen! Don't - abort! Corned beef!
Corned beef!

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

Penelope deftly spins the cigar 180 degrees.

The Guard absently picks it up and puts it back in his mouth, fire-side first. He howls, doubles over.

She dashes into the door.

Bloom bursts out of the crowd and lunges for the door, but a SECOND SECURITY GUARD stops him.

Dozens more security guards swarm in. Overhead, an army helicopter buzzes by. Bloom stares into the doorway, helpless and scared.

EXT. SECONDARY COURTYARD - DAY

Penelope creeps across the nearly empty castle courtyard.

EXT. INNER COURTYARD - DAY

A flaming chunk of tower smolders in the square. Penelope tip-toes around it, dodges a guard, and sneaks into an iron doorway.

INT. TOURISM OFFICE HALLWAYS - DAY

Water rains down from the ceiling sprinklers. Penelope weaves through the halls.

INT. COPY ROOM - DAY

Cramped, ill lit, and with its own sprinkler.

Penelope dashes in, shoulders the massive cold war era copy machine and with a Herculean effort pulls it away from the wall.

PENELOPE

I'm in Prague. I burned a man's
lips off to break into a castle in
Prague.

Revealing an access hatch.

INT. CRAWLSPACE

Tiny, earthy. Penelope shuts the hatch behind her.

Light from a barred window illuminates a rectangular shape lying on a stone slab. Penelope approaches the small BOOK OF HOURS reverently.

EXT. CHARLES BRIDGE - DAY

A full view of the castle reveals just about the worst case scenario. The entire area swarms with army helicopters and tanks, soldiers with rifles, yellow tape, news crews.

Stephen, Bloom and Bang Bang sit behind the police line on the bridge with the rest of the crowds. Heads in their hands.

INT. CRAWLSPACE

Penelope is broken out of her stupor by heavy footsteps all around her, soldiers searching the castle.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Voices right outside the hatch. She slides the wimpy little bolt shut. It rattles.

She looks up - a moldy vent in the muddy ceiling.

EXT. CHARLES BRIDGE - DAY

Bloom suddenly stands.

BLOOM

Wait. Wait, we're fine. She's fine. 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.

INT. VENTILATION DUCT

Penelope wriggles on her belly through a tin ventilation duct barely big enough for her. The book, encased in the plastic bag, hangs from her teeth.

Sounds of soldiers searching the offices come from below her.

Up ahead she sees a point of light. With a gleeful grunt she shimmy faster - she's nearly made it!

INT. TOURISM OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A dozen SOLDIERS and the CHIEF OF POLICE have their eyes (and guns) trained on the tin ventilation duct above their heads.

It is very very obvious not only that a person is crawling through it, but exactly where that person is.

The Chief of Police pointedly coughs to get her attention.

INT. VENTILATION DUCT

Penelope freezes. A beat of silence.

The tin gives way, and she plummets...

INT. TOURISM OFFICE - DAY

...hitting the ground hard, then springing to her feet and through some knee-jerk primal instinct kicking a nearby soldier in the head.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Eleven rifles cock and aim at her.

And that's how she's caught, frozen in a kung fu stance, plastic bag in her teeth.

She locks eyes with the Chief of Police. Lets the bag drop from her teeth.

And opens her mouth to speak.

EXT. CHARLES BRIDGE - AFTERNOON

The hubbub has died down considerably, soldiers march away from the castle in formation. Bloom Stephen and Bang Bang sit watching for some sign.

Three police cars, sirens blazing, drive down the length of the bridge.

BLOOM
The Chief of Police.

As the last one passes, Bloom sees the Chief of Police riding shotgun, and Penelope sitting with a soldier behind caged mesh in the back seat.

His face falls.

Then Penelope spots him, points and says something.

Very suddenly, the police car stops.

The Chief of Police gets out. Nods at our intrepid three.

And opens the door for Penelope. As she climbs out he motions for the passing soldiers to stand at attention and salute her.

He kisses her hand.

CHIEF OF POLICE
(in Czech)
It has been a privilege, madame, to behold even briefly such a strong, beautiful flower.

PENELOPE
(in Czech)
Thank you sir, I will not soon forget your kindness.

She blushes and smiles, then does an unhurried victory strut back to Bloom, Stephen and Bang Bang.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

The police cars drive off.

Penelope pulls the book out from under her jacket and sets it on a bench. A moment of victorious silence.

Clapping her hands, she does a little shuffle dance of joy.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

(sings)

We're a band of smugglers hey,
la la la la la,
we smuggle by night, drink by day,
smugglers ho, ho ho...
Everybody!

EXT. SIDEWALK BAR - LATE AFTERNOON

Bloom and Stephen sit among empty wine glasses.

STEPHEN

I have, at different points in my life, quite literally sold ice to an Eskimo and sand to an Arab. And I have no idea what she could have possibly said to that man to sweet talk her way out of that castle.

BLOOM

I could ask her.

Bang Bang approaches, gives Stephen a hand gesture.

STEPHEN

How obtuse. Let her sleep. Train doesn't leave till eight.

BLOOM

That was real.

STEPHEN

Yeah, I know.

BLOOM

Fuckin scary.

EXT. PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

Bloom walks pensively through a green park. Cat Stevens' "Miles from Nowhere" plays from a nearby radio.

His eye catches something. A shiny red apple on a fruit seller's cart.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

He approaches it slowly, face flushed, breath shallow, eyeing the elderly vendor with a thin semblance of nonchalance.

Holy shit. He is going to steal that apple.

Deftly he passes, lifting and pocketing it just as the Vendor turns away. Bloom has done it. His pale face tightens.

And turns.

And sees a five year old boy. Giving him a stare of infinite judgement.

Bloom turns on his heel and RUNS HELL FOR LEATHER.

The vendor shouts. The little boy chases him, pointing and screaming. Dogs bark. People stare. And Bloom sprints, apple in hand, a joyful smile forming on his lips.

INT. PRAGUE POLICE STATION - EVENING

Stephen bails Bloom out.

STEPHEN

An apple?

BLOOM

Yeah, but it was part of an epiphany.

EXT. HUNGARIAN COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The train thunders South, towards Greece.

INT. TRAIN SLEEPER CAR - NIGHT

The SNACK CAR ATTENDANT runs by outside, furious.

Bloom and Penelope crouch beneath the door, pulling bottles of gin and packs of snacks out of their pockets, kissing furiously as beneath them the train wheels rumble on the tracks.

INT. SHIP STATE ROOM - MORNING

Bloom holds a sleeping Penelope, watching the sun stream through the window and slipping the green rubber band cash into her suitcase.

A low horn blows, and Bloom's face darkens.

EXT. THE ATLANTIC OCEAN - DAY

The good ship Fidele breaks the waves, blowing its horn.

Stephen stands on the deck. Bloom joins him.

STEPHEN

Mexico.

He strolls off, leaving Bloom watching the horizon gloomily.

EXT. DECK - DAY

Our intrepid four sit around a small table (except for Bang Bang, who lies on a deck chair in a bikini and Chuck Taylors, sunning herself.)

STEPHEN

Oh-kay. We're rendezvousing with the Argentina guys here, on an isolated beach just south of the Hotel Tampico. A simple handoff. Penelope and Yeungling will stay with the car, Bloom and I will do the handing.

PENELOPE

You guys seem a little tense.

STEPHEN

Well I'm not thrilled they set this in Mexico. There could be legitimate reasons, but Mexico's - and I don't want to simplistically vilify an entire country, but Mexico's a horrible place. So we'll be careful.

EXT. MEXICO BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

Bang Bang fires an automatic pistol eight times into the dead center of a target pinned to a palm tree. She re-loads.

EXT. TAMPICO HOTEL GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

The beach sprawling below them, Penelope and Bloom meander.

The hotel itself feels very old, red ruinous stone.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE

Is this going to be more dangerous
than I think, tomorrow?

BLOOM

Yeah. You should sleep at the
hotel tonight, I'll stay with
Stephen at the beach house. You'll
need sleep.

On the distant beach, following the faint rapport of gunfire,
a palm tree falls over.

PENELOPE

I'm really happy right now. Are
you?

BLOOM

Right now I am.

She kisses him and runs off along the cliff side, singing the
smuggler song.

BLOOM (cont'd)

Penelope...

But she's too far away now, and the ocean is too loud. She
can't hear him, and he can't hear her, and in another moment
she has vanishes into the green brush and white flowers.

Behind Bloom's pained face, the sun dips towards the beach.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Stephen packs for tomorrow, Bloom stares out the black
window, drinking. Flower in his lapel.

Stephen picks up the con flowchart.

STEPHEN

The last box in our last con. Let
them begin the beguine. How's it
feel?

BLOOM

She's something special, Stephen.

STEPHEN

Uh huh.

BLOOM

Can I...

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

He stares at his drink.

BLOOM (cont'd)

Can I just have a little more time?
Just a few days. I want to keep
her, like this, I don't want this
to just end. Don't make me do
this.

STEPHEN

Be angry at me, you son of a bitch.
Don't be pathetic. Make you?
Jesus. I told you not to fall for
her-

BLOOM

I'm not gonna do this.

Stephen comes very close to Bloom's face, looks him straight
in the eye. Finds his answer.

STEPHEN

I don't believe you.

He goes back to packing.

EXT. TAMPICO HOTEL GROUNDS - NIGHT

Bloom stands, the beach behind him, the glowing lights of the
hotel before him. Growing determination.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bloom knocks on a door. Penelope answers, in her bathrobe.

PENELOPE

Hey.

BLOOM

I know what I've gotta do. I've
gotta talk to you. Are you wearing
shoes?

PENELOPE

What's up?

He pulls her out of the room.

EXT. TAMPICO HOTEL GROUNDS - NIGHT

Bloom pulls Penelope by the hand, but she stops.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE

Bloom. What?

Deep breath.

BLOOM

My brother and I are con men. All things considered, we might be the most respected con man team working today. And everything since you hit me with your Lamborghini, all of this, it's all fake. It's all a con.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

The waves break angrily on the beach. In the distance, Stephen finishes his drink on the beach house porch, goes inside and turns out the light.

EXT. TAMPICO HOTEL GROUNDS - NIGHT

BLOOM

No, we were going to blow you off tomorrow using the cackle bladder, it's a, term, we have actors playing the Argentina guy's men, when we showed up the deal would go bad, they would open fire on us, Stephen and I would pretend to be shot using blood packets, squibs. That's - cackle bladder, in the old days they put fake blood in chicken bladders, so... So you'd escape with Yeungling, whose name isn't Yeungling by the way, we don't know what it is, but she'd send you off with a little travelling money and that would be that.

PENELOPE

Wow.

BLOOM

But that's not how this one's going to end. I love you now, and I want to get you out of this. I'm going to do what I have to do to get you out of this, away from all this for good. Are you ready?

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Bloom leads Penelope down the beach by the hand.

BLOOM

Stephen's gone into town to prep
the Argentina actors. Your money's
at his place.

PENELOPE

Money? I don't want the money,
let's just leave.

For a moment he's tempted. The dark beach house looms ahead.

BLOOM

C'mon.

INT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Dark. Bloom leads Penelope in, stumbles in the dark,
switches on a lamp. Click, click - it doesn't come on.

STEPHEN (O.S.)

You have to switch it on at the
base.

A beat. Bloom does.

Stephen sits in an easy chair, not looking happy. But not
angry. Much more sad than angry.

BLOOM

So I've told her our whole play.
And I'm here. To take her money
back. How's that make you feel?

STEPHEN

Disappointed.

BLOOM

This isn't the ending you wanted?

STEPHEN

It doesn't matter now. This is the
way it ends. So let's get it over
with.

BLOOM

Where's the money?

STEPHEN

I ate it.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM

Give me the money, Stephen.

STEPHEN

No.

PENELOPE

I don't want the money.

BLOOM

He's not going to keep a single piece of you.

Stephen stands.

STEPHEN

I'm sorry you fell in love with her. But she's a mark. And all of this, all of it is a con. Every moment you shared with her, you were just playing the part of a man falling in love. That's what you're afraid of, right? That you don't know the difference? Or maybe that there is no difference. That that's what love is.

PENELOPE

We're leaving.

STEPHEN

(to Bloom)

No. You're too scared to leave. You're scared to ride off into the sunset, if you were ready for that you wouldn't be here. The money is in my bedroom. Right behind me. But in my story you don't get the money or the sunset or the girl.

A long beat. The dark bedroom doorway looms behind Stephen.

PENELOPE

Bloom. Let's just go. Please.

Bloom LUNGES, cracking Stephen in the jaw.

Stephen goes down, Bloom leaps past him - but Stephen grabs Bloom's leg and brings him down.

Then they are fighting. Penelope watches, horrified.

A frightening, brutal brawl that tears the small beach house apart, thirty years worth of a fight.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

Until Stephen throws Bloom to the ground at Penelope's feet.

Upsetting a small table. Bang Bang's pistol, lying on the holey paper target, falls and strikes the ground.

And goes off with a deafening rappid.

Blood spreads just beneath Stephen's collarbone.

Penelope screams.

Stephen stays standing for a moment, shocked. A dribble of blood out of the corner of his mouth. He half grins.

STEPHEN

Tastes like tin foil.

And sinks to the ground.

Bloom's eyes glaze. He crawls to his wounded brother. Takes him in his arms.

BLOOM

Stephen.

Penelope watches the brothers holding each other. Tears in her eyes, but she backs away a step, very conscious of not being a part of this moment.

Bloom looks up at her, almost taking a moment to recognize her.

PENELOPE

Bloom...

He doesn't move from his brother.

PENELOPE (cont'd)

I'm sorry.

She leaves.

For a long moment the Brothers Bloom lie in each other's arms in the middle of the broken room.

Then Bloom stands, goes to the window and watches Penelope walking off into the distance down the beach.

From the darkened bedroom doorway steps Bang Bang, her face a mask.

Stephen stands. Lifts his shirt and removes the squib and blood packets.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

Bloom steps outside.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

A wood patio with steps leading down to the sand. Bloom watches Penelope, now very distant, almost gone.

Stephen comes out, pulls out a flask.

STEPHEN

Hey.

(nothing)

I think that was the most honest conversation we've ever had.

(more nothing)

You actually connected on a few of those punches.

BLOOM

Did you expect me to do it? To come here tonight, end it the way you wrote it? Or were you really disappointed I didn't run off with her?

STEPHEN

I was disappointed. But I wasn't surprised.

Bloom turns and SLUGS him in the jaw. Stephen falls to the sand.

BLOOM

I let you do your monologue, but you wanna know why I did it? I did it so she'd never want to see me again. To get her away from all this for good.

Without looking back Bloom walks off down the beach, in the opposite direction of Penelope, leaving Stephen bleeding in the sand, alone in the dark uncertain night.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD - 3 months later.

EXT. LUDICROUS MANSION - DAY

Penelope's home, bucolic on a lazy Spring day.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

At a picnic table at the far edge of the front lawn, Penelope sits writing with intense concentration on a piece of paper.

After awhile she raises her head, regarding what she's written thoughtfully. Folds it up, puts it in her pocket.

Clicks the seemingly innocent ballpoint pen.

BEEP.

The mansion EXPLODES, completely.

She walks away without looking back.

EXT. ITALIAN COAST - DAY

The same cove, with the same spire of rock and church on top of it. A tiny white motorboat creeps out towards it.

EXT. ROCK OUTCROP - DAY

Bloom sits on the side of the rocky spire, tossing playing cards into the ocean. He hears voices, stands and sees the white boat docked down below.

He steps around the rock and sees the Italian Grandmother and Penelope up at the church door, berating each other with Italian curses and hand gestures.

Penelope sees Bloom, and freezes.

PENELOPE

Hello.

BLOOM

Hey.

The Grandmother keeps up her barrage, but as soon as she's behind Penelope's back she gives Bloom a wink, points to her and gives a thumbs-up of approval.

EXT. TINY WHITE MOTORBOAT - DAY

Grandmother mans the motor, ferrying Bloom and Penelope back towards the cove.

BLOOM

How did you find me?

PENELOPE

Bang Bang.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM

How did you find Bang Bang?

PENELOPE

She gave me her cell when we got to Mexico.

BLOOM

I didn't even know she had one.

PENELOPE

I think she's kind of selective in who she gives the number to.

EXT. ITALIAN CAFE - LATER

They sit with wine and bread.

BLOOM

Why are you here, Penelope?

PENELOPE

Why did you decide to stay with your brother instead of coming with me in Mexico?

BLOOM

Everything Stephen said that night was true.

PENELOPE

I've been doing a lot of thinking the past three months. I want you to consider something.

She takes a piece of paper from her pocket, unfolds it and slides it across the table to him.

On it, written over and over in a dozen different stylized fonts, is "PENELOPE THE CON ARTIST."

Bloom sets the paper down with a snap.

BLOOM

Go away. Everything Stephen said was true. I was just playing you as a mark. Everything between us, none of it was real.

She leans in close to him, her hand on his leg.

PENELOPE

I don't believe you.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

It's obvious even before she kisses him that she's right.

EXT. ITALIAN STREETS - DAY

Bloom dials a pay phone. He's been crying. It rings.

BLOOM
Pick up... c'mon...

INT. MONTE CARLO CASINO - CONTINUOUS

Lush, Edwardian. In a private room, a card table is overturned. Stephen lies on the ground in a defensive posture, a RAVISHING WOMAN in red lunging at him with a curved dagger. A BEARDED MAN with an eyepatch holds her back by the wrists, while a MONOCLED MAN in an antique wheelchair holds his tear stained face in his hands.

This whole scene is frozen like a tableau, as Stephen's cell phone chirps away.

Annoyed, the Bearded Man gives him a 'go ahead' nod.

Stephen hastily answers it.

STEPHEN
Hello?

EXT. ITALIAN STREETS - CONTINUOUS

BLOOM
How quickly can you get to Italy?

STEPHEN (ON PHONE)
Uh... Nine-ish?

Bloom fishes out his pocket watch.

BLOOM
Alright.

Click. As he's putting his pocket watch back, he finds the stack of green rubber band money in his breast pocket.

INT. ITALIAN CHURCH - SUNSET

Penelope sleeps in the hammock, snoring.

EXT. ITALIAN CHURCH - SUNSET

Stephen and Bloom sit on the little landing outside the church.

STEPHEN

So she comes back wanting to work with us. Honestly? I think we'd be lucky to have her. If you called me to hear my opinion on the matter. Which I'm getting the feeling you didn't.

BLOOM

I did what I did in Mexico to get her out of all this. I would rather die than bring her into the con.

STEPHEN

So maybe you want to tell me what I'm doing in Italy.

BLOOM

You knew she'd come back. What did you figure she was good for, another million?

STEPHEN

One point seven five.

BLOOM

We will play her again, one last con, but not for money. I'm gonna tell you how this one's gonna end. You built us into this, you're gonna fly us out, end it so she's done with all of us. End it all so it can't start up again.

STEPHEN

You want me to plan a con whose sole purpose is to blow her off for good?

BLOOM

I love her. You owe me this. I don't want to turn her into me.

INT. ITALIAN CHURCH - NIGHT

Bloom enters wearily. Sits in a chair. Watches Penelope sleep.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Stephen leans in the doorway. He shuffles a pack of cards, watching Bloom.

A lovely tune sung in Japanese plays over this, segueing us into...

INT. KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT

On a television screen, images of the Tokyo skyline.

TITLE CARD - Tokyo

A wall of monitors, which Bang Bang steps in front of, singing the climax of the song. Beautiful and sad.

As the song ends, she sees through the spotlight Penelope, Bloom and Stephen at a table. Penelope waves.

Bang Bang's face betrays just the slightest hint of disappointment.

INT. KARAOKE BAR PRIVATE BOOTH - LATER

The four sit with drinks.

PENELOPE

So what's the next job?

STEPHEN

Before we do the next job, we need to liquidate our assets from the last job.

PENELOPE

But you've got-

STEPHEN

Your money from the last job, well that's profit, not capital, the three of us have already split it up. So step one: sell the book of hours.

PENELOPE

I thought it was fake.

STEPHEN

With all your random expertise we couldn't risk a flat out fake.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

STEPHEN (cont'd)
It isn't worth two point five million, we could maybe catch four hundred grand for it, but it's real. Who'd we buy it from?

BLOOM
Minskie.

STEPHEN
Perfect, we'll sell it right back to him.

Bang Bang hands him a piece of paper.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
If he wasn't dead.

BLOOM
Well there's Demarco or Boyer. Or Roche, if we want to go state-side.

STEPHEN
All traceable. With Minskie out we'd have to go deep black market if we wanted to be a hundred percent clear. There's only one place that's deep enough for that.

Bloom and Bang Bang know exactly what he's talking about, and they don't look happy.

PENELOPE
Where?

INT. KARAOKE BAR BACK ROOM - LATER

BLOOM
Russia. It's like 'cancer', I don't even like saying the word.

Bloom, Stephen and Bang Bang drink in a cramped little concrete room adjacent to the bar's kitchen.

STEPHEN
We're obviously not going to deal with real Russians. They'll be our guys in a phony set up, they'll take our phony book and give her phony cash, a closed loop. Safe and simple.

Bloom looks to Bang Bang for an opinion. Gets a blank face.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

STEPHEN (cont'd)
So. We go to St. Petersburg.

At the mention of St. Petersburg Bloom looks sharply at Stephen, but Stephen presses on.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
She does the hand-off with our fake
"Russians." But while we're
driving out of town, everything
goes bad.

He lays a simple flowchart, drawn on a napkin - three boxes.
He points to the first, "Penelope sells book to 'Russians'"

STEPHEN (cont'd)
We discover we were sold a
counterfeit book in the first
place, which we've now sold to
Russian smugglers. We discover
this when the Russian mob starts
taking us out one by one. Oh shit.

He points to the second box, "Red Dawn."

STEPHEN (cont'd)
First they ambush our car,
destroying the money. Then they
take me out, then Bang Bang, and
finally you Bloom, in a heroic
death that allows Penelope to
barely escape with her life.
Devastated but reborn with the
knowledge that you loved her so
much you died so she could live,
she drives off into a romantic life
of adventure and peril, on the run
from imaginary Russians.

He points to the third box, "The End."

STEPHEN (cont'd)
What do you think?

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG - SUNSET

The blood red sun sets over the city.

INT. ST. PETERSBURG HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Penelope snores on the bed, while our intrepid three unpack.
The phone rings. Stephen answers it, listens, hangs up.

STEPHEN
Our "Russians" have arrived.

INT. RUSSIAN HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Stephen, Bloom and Bang Bang come down the stairs to the lobby with a red suitcase.

BLOOM
Who'd you get, anyway?

STEPHEN
Hm?

BLOOM
To play the "Russians?"

At the bottom of the stairs... the Diamond Dog.

DIAMOND DOG
My boys.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

Empty. The Dog leans against the bar with several LACKEYS, waiting patiently, making sparks with his gold lighter. Sounds of shouting come from the adjoining dining area.

INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM

BLOOM
I don't understand. Tell me so I understand. Three months ago you were ready to blind the old bastard-

STEPHEN
We need someone who can pass for the Russian mob to buy our fake book. The Dog's got his big store right here in St. Petersburg.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM

Alright, fuckin stop. You want this to finish in St. Petersburg, you want this to end with the Dog for some what thematic something? Fine but don't tell it like a story, let's say it. Twenty three years ago and I can still smell, that blood red apartment of his, the smell of that place. I hate him Stephen but this isn't that, this is I don't trust him.

STEPHEN

What's he gonna do? Steal our fake money?

(beat)

I've thought this one out, believe me. And we can't end it without him. Trust me. It's gonna be ok.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

The red leather suitcase on the bar.

DIAMOND DOG

Stephen, still the grand architect with your symbols. Red for temptation, white for salvation.

The Dog opens it, revealing US hundreds. Examines it with a loupe.

DIAMOND DOG (cont'd)

Impressive, boys.

BLOOM

It's trash. There's visible cross hatching in Franklin's eye.

Sure enough - obvious jagged misprints cut into Ben Franklin's eye on the bills.

DIAMOND DOG

Hm. I'll be damned.

(closes case)

Ruskies wouldn't be caught dead handing over a rag bag like this, it should be a steel attache.

STEPHEN

This'll do. We'll do the drop off at your store.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

STEPHEN (cont'd)
Make it scary, think a movie
version of the Russian mafia, but
don't hassle her.

DIAMOND DOG
Alright.

The Dog closes the case, and for a moment Bloom's eyes rest
on his bandaged hand.

He then takes the case and quickly moves off with his crew.

DIAMOND DOG (cont'd)
I look forward to meeting the lady.
Take care, boys.

Leaving his gold lighter on the bar.

INT. HOTEL CAR PORT - NIGHT

Bang Bang leads Stephen and Bloom around the brown Peugeot.

STEPHEN
So. Our fake Russian attack. One
small charge will simulate a bullet
hit, and blow out the back window.

Bang Bang points with an extendable pointer to a small nub on
the rear windshield.

STEPHEN (cont'd)
So that one bang, then we roll off
the road. Once we get clear of the
car Bang Bang sets off the final
charge, incinerating the car and
the money in the trunk. This'll
all happen exactly twenty seconds
after we cross the main bridge out
of town. After the bridge.

Stephen makes a note in a manila envelope, tucks it in his
jacket.

BLOOM
Ok.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - LATER

Bloom and Bang Bang walk back to their rooms. Bang Bang is
expressionless.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM
You've been awful quiet.

She doesn't react.

BLOOM (cont'd)
I'm doing this for her.

But a door clicks shut, and Bloom is alone in the hall.

INT. PENELOPE'S HOTEL ROOM

Penelope in bed. Her door cracks open, and she sleepily looks up. Bloom stands silhouetted in the doorway.

PENELOPE
Tomorrow it all starts.

She lifts the sheets. He gets into bed, and as she drifts into peaceful slumber Bloom is very conscious of holding her for the last time.

When her snores begin, he has ear plugs ready.

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG - SUNRISE

The Peugeot drives into the heart of the city.

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG ALLEY - DAY

Bloom, Stephen and Bang Bang parked in an alley, watching a doorway across the street with a pair of binoculars.

Bloom breathes uneasily, checks his watch.

BLOOM
She gives the Dog the book, he
gives her the fake money. This is
taking too long.

Just then Penelope trots out. Metal attache case in hand.

EXT. RUSSIA HIGHWAY - MORNING

On the outskirts of town, parked beside a murky little lake. Our heroes gather around the metal attache case on the hood.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE

He hassled me. I had to hard sell him on buying it, then he haggled the price. Wanted to pay me in Rubles.

Stephen smirks, then opens it. The money's there.

STEPHEN

Alright. Let's get the hell out of Russia.

Bloom pulls the Dog's gold lighter from his pocket, takes one last glance at St. Petersburg and tosses it down into the lake.

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG HIGHWAY - MORNING

The brown Peugeot drives towards the climbing sun.

INT. PEUGEOT

Bang Bang drives, Stephen rides shotgun.

Bloom and Penelope in the back seat. He looks weary.

He sees the bridge approaching, maybe a half mile ahead.

She pulls his head down into her lap, fingers in his hair. He breathes, closes his eyes.

An explosion shatters the front passenger window.

Bloom's eyes snap open, he bolts upright.

The bridge is still a quarter mile away.

In the next moment the car becomes a din of breaking glass, screams, tires screeching.

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG HIGHWAY

A BLACK MERCEDES roars out on to the road, machine gun fire blazing from its windows, literally shredding the Peugeot.

The car spins, tires flapping, and hits a highway embankment full speed, launching into the air.

INT. PEUGEOT

A moment of strange silence as the car flips mid-air. The brothers lock eyes for a split second.

EXT. FOREST BESIDE ST. PETERSBURG HIGHWAY

The car slams into the steep grassy embankment, manages to flip upright, and rolls into a thick forest, coming to an abrupt stop against a stout tree.

STEPHEN

OUT!

They all four dive out of the car, Bloom shoving Penelope, tumbling into the thick forest an instant before the car becomes a roiling ball of flame.

Bloom lies shell-shocked, his vision blurry. He vaguely sees Penelope passed out beside him, Stephen on the other side of the car.

A DARK FIGURE comes trotting into the woods, shining a flashlight on the charred car. Goes to Stephen. Reaches down to him...

Bloom's mind flutters away into darkness.

INT. FOREST - DAY

Bloom wakes. Rain splattering. Slumped against a tree. Penelope hunches over him.

BLOOM

What happened?

PENELOPE

Are you alright?

BLOOM

What happened?

PENELOPE

Yeungling went to get another car.

BLOOM

Where's Stephen?

PENELOPE

We don't know. He was gone.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

Bloom stands shakily, goes to the charred car. Runs his fingers over the dozens of bullet holes.

Goes to where Stephen fell. Lying in the grass, a manila envelope.

PENELOPE (cont'd)
We're going to find him. If he
escaped, he'll contact us. If
they've got him, it's for ransom.

BLOOM
Who's got him?

PENELOPE
The Russians.

Bang Bang pulls up in a green VW bug, headlights catching Bloom's face against the dark forest depths.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

A desolate gas station parking lot. Bloom sits in the Bug, loading his revolver with shaky fingers. Penelope stands outside.

BLOOM
Stephen, god please what's
happening. I don't know what to
do. I don't know Stephen please.
Please. What's happening. Please.

A long black sedan screeches to a halt in the parking lot outside the window, Bloom bolts out of the car, pistol ready.

But Bang Bang climbs out of the black sedan.

PENELOPE
Where does she get all these cars?

Bloom motions for Penelope to stay back, then goes to meet Bang Bang in the middle of the parking lot.

BLOOM
If you know what's happening, now
would be a really good time to
speak up.

She sets a suitcase down beside her. Bloom takes this in.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM (cont'd)

No, please. Not now. I need your help here now, I don't know what to do.

The slightest smile communicates all the compassion in the world. But she's leaving.

She hands him a small slip of paper, their fingers touching for an instant.

She gives Penelope a quick little "call me" gesture, picks up her case and walks off.

A truck blocking our view of her car pulls away, and she gets in.

Bloom looks down at the slip of paper. A short phrase, in Japanese.

BLOOM (cont'd)

Thanks.

The engine turns over, and Bang Bang's car EXPLODES in a dramatic fireball.

The paper flutters out of Blooms's fingers a moment before he and Penelope are thrown to the pavement by the shock wave.

Bloom and Penelope lift their heads, absorbing what just happened.

EXT. CHICAGO - DAY

A busy street, which a title card identifies as "Chicago, Illinois."

On the corner, an unassuming Japanese restaurant.

INT. JAPANESE RESTAURANT - DAY

A dive. The chef on the phone.

CHEF

Ah, ah yes, Mr. Bloom. Yes, ok.

ALL THE COOKS

Bloooooom!

He puts the phone down and goes to the fax machine, which is spitting out a facsimile of Bang Bang's slip of paper.

INT. ST. PETERSBURG COPY SHOP - EARLY MORNING

Bloom on a pay phone, scribbling on a piece of paper.

BLOOM

Uh huh. Assholes. Ok. Um, ok.
So I've got "We are all assholes in
our own theatrical enterprises."
You sure?

This phrase, written on Bloom's paper.

CHEF

And then it end with "Goodbye shit
head."

BLOOM

Shit head?

CHEF

But it is different meaning in
Japanese, uh, endearing. "Shit
head" if you have affection for
shit.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

The Bug parked nearby. Penelope sits on the curb, crying.
Bloom sits next to her.

PENELOPE

What did it mean?

BLOOM

I don't know.

PENELOPE

What did it say?

BLOOM

"We're all of us marks in our own
cons." And she said goodbye.

PENELOPE

I still can't believe it.

BLOOM

That Bang Bang fell for a car bomb?
Neither can I.

PENELOPE

(hopeful)
What?

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE (cont'd)

Oh, oh god do you think she faked it? So the Russians would think she was dead?

Bloom stands, paces away. He leafs limply through the manila folder - addresses, pictures, information...

A paper with the Dog's photo clipped to it. An address in St. Petersburg.

The napkin Stephen wrote the con flowchart on. The third box - "The End."

PENELOPE (cont'd)

What do we do now?

Scrawled on the inside of the manila envelope - "An unwritten life." Bloom's face clears. He wipes his eyes.

BLOOM

Ok.

Bloom goes to the Bug.

PENELOPE

Where are you going?

BLOOM

This wasn't Russians. This was done by an old mentor of ours who wants us off the map. He has an apartment in St. Petersburg. So this is, yeah. I've gotta go back to that apartment to face the Dog and get my brother back. That's how I'm gonna end this.

Penelope's eyes gleam. She jumps up to the passenger door, and Bloom stops her with a weary look.

PENELOPE

We can skip the whole you-sending-me-nobly-away-and-me-refusing-to-leave-your-side-thing.

BLOOM

Thank Christ.

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG STREET - LATE MORNING

A narrow alley between tall apartments. Bloom parks, pulls his gun and checks it.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM

If there are shots you run to the car and drive, with or without me.

INT. APARTMENT ENTRYWAY - DAY

A badly lit apartment hallway. Bloom enters, his eyes wide, Penelope behind him. Approaches a staircase.

His breathing becomes hard. His face contorts. He needs air. He dashes out-

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

-gasping for breath, kneeling in the filthy courtyard, surrounded by bad memories. Penelope goes to him.

PENELOPE

What's in there? Tell me who this guy is.

Bloom's breathing steadies.

BLOOM

He's just an old man.

He looks up at the apartment windows, strengthened.

INT. DIAMOND DOG'S APARTMENT - DAY

Blood red walls.

Dark, neglected and to all appearances empty. Bloom enters, Penelope behind him. They creep down the darkened corridor, Bloom with his gun outstretched. He breathes through his nose, chokes.

BLOOM

Dog! I came back.

He kicks open a door, revealing a large living space. Empty.

He lowers his gun, switches on the light.

Penelope enters. Sniffs the air.

PENELOPE

Moth balls.

Bloom almost laughs.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM

Is that what that smell is?

BAM! A closet door smacks open, revealing the business end of a double barrel shotgun.

Bloom spins, gun drawn. Penelope screams.

Then a moment of stillness. The shotgun barrel quivers.

It's held by the 11 year old boy Bloom saw in the Dog's Mercedes in Prague. Malnourished and scared.

Penelope approaches him slowly.

PENELOPE

(in Russian)

It's okay. Honey, it's alright.

The shotgun sinks to the ground. Penelope strokes his hair back from his face.

Bloom lowers the gun, trembling.

BLOOM

Ask him if anyone else is here.

She does.

BOY

Nyet.

BLOOM

Ask him where the Diamond Dog is.

PENELOPE

Diamond Dog?

(in Russian)

Where is the Diamond Dog?

BOY

(in English)

The Dog of Diamonds is gone.

Bloom does a quick search of the rest of the room. As he does Penelope asks the boy one more question in Russian, and gets a quick answer.

BLOOM

Get the car started.

PENELOPE

What about him?

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

BLOOM
It's alright.

She believes him, and goes. Bloom kneels in front of the boy.

BLOOM (cont'd)
You don't need to be afraid of him anymore. Or angry at him. Or ever come back here again. He doesn't concern you anymore. Understand? It's gonna be ok.

The boy nods. Bloom hands him the stack of bills wrapped in the green rubber band. The boy snatches it and runs off.

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG STREET - DAY

Bloom trots out of the apartment building, and sees two things: Penelope working the VW's starter, and a black Mercedes speeding down the narrow street towards her.

He sprints towards her, screaming

BLOOM
Get out! Get out of the car!!

She sees the approaching Merc, too late, and ducks down.

A hand hurls something from the darkened window. It smashes through the Bug's passenger side window, showering Penelope with glass.

The Mercedes roars off down the street.

Bloom reaches the Bug and throws the door open.

Penelope lies covered in safety glass, holding a Russian nesting doll.

INT. BUG - LATER

The seven progressively smaller dolls lie open on the back seat, Bloom holds the two halves of the final tiny doll, and Penelope holds a note.

PENELOPE
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 and a manager to ask for.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

PENELOPE (cont'd)

Then an address to come to, at two p.m. In two hours.

BLOOM

I'll wire the money from my account, and we'll go get Stephen.

PENELOPE

It's a lot.

BLOOM

How much?

PENELOPE

I'll do it, I want to, I've got plenty-

BLOOM

How much are they asking for?

PENELOPE

One point seven five million.

A cold pit opens in Bloom's stomach.

BLOOM

Oh. Oh oh. No no NO.

He punches the dashboard.

BLOOM (cont'd)

No I'll kill him. I'll kill him if that's what this is, if that's all that this is, no NO NO.

PENELOPE

What are you talking about?

BLOOM

There's another possibility that I should of, I'm a fucking idiot. This might all be a con. By my brother. To get me - oh god - he wanted me to face the Dog, to end it, and he gets your money. Oh god. I'm going to be sick.

PENELOPE

Would he do that? To you?

BLOOM

I don't know. Yes. Yes of course he would. To tell a story so well it becomes real. The perfect con.

(MORE)

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

BLOOM (cont'd)

That's his whole, goddammit, that's what.

PENELOPE

But you don't know. Let's transfer the money. You don't know.

BLOOM

Son of a bitch.

PENELOPE

You don't know. This is your brother's life. I'm gonna wire the money.

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG BANK - DAY

Bloom sits in the car, alone. He punches the dashboard again, helpless enraged and scared.

Penelope gets in, looks at the address on the note.

PENELOPE

Ok.

EXT. BURNED OUT THEATER - DAY

Penelope and Bloom sit in the car, parked in front of the impressive facade of a closed, burned out old theater.

The clock on the dashboard reads 1:50.

BLOOM

I'm so scared. Anything I can imagine finding in there, I'm scared of.

PENELOPE

I'm going to be here when you come out.

She kisses him.

He puts his hand on the door. Hesitates. Then goes.

Walks up the stairs to the inky maw of the theater door. Goes in alone.

INT. THEATER LOBBY

No lights. Moldy dust. A genuinely creepy place. Bloom steps lightly, deeper into the theater.

BLOOM
Stephen!

INT. THEATER AUDITORIUM

A few lights flicker on the walls, fitfully illuminating the broken dusty seats and bare ruined stage.

Bloom walks down the aisle, trying to keep his voice steady.

BLOOM
Stephen!

A spotlight snaps on from the mezzanine, right in Bloom's face. He spins, trapped in its glare.

A guttural command is shouted in what might be Russian.

When Bloom doesn't respond, the spot swings up to the stage.

Bloom gingerly follows it, up onto the splintered stage and through a split in the tarpaulin backdrop.

INT. THEATER BACKSTAGE

Giant fossils of antique stage scenery. Utility lights high above, cut by scaffolding, patch everything in dim jagged forms of light and black.

BLOOM
(unsteady)
Stephen. Game's up. Come on out.
Let's blow this one hat town.

Silence. Then a harsh utility lamp snaps on, cruelly lighting Stephen's face.

Shockingly bruised and battered, old and new blood.

Bloom cries and rushes towards him...

STEPHEN
No! No Bloom, freeze.

He obeys. Stephen is tied to a chair. A dark figure behind him holds the lamp with a black gloved hand.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

BLOOM

Stephen, who is it? Is it the Dog?

STEPHEN

Did Penelope wire the money?

BLOOM

Yeah.

STEPHEN

They're calling to check right now.
Don't move. I'm alright.

The dark figure's cell phone rings, he holds it to his ear for a moment then flips it closed.

Something happens in the blackness, and Stephen shakily stands, cut loose.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Stay where you are, Bloom. I'm
coming to you.

He takes a couple wobbly steps.

Behind him, Bloom sees the dark figure raising his gun towards Stephen's back, pulling the hammer...

And the utility lamp switches off.

BLOOM

No!

Bloom's revolver pops out of his sleeve and he's firing into the blackness.

Stephen drops flat to the ground.

The fiery rapport of a big pistol flashes from the blackness, strobing the scene like stage lightning.

Bloom reloads behind the cover of a heavy flat, but Stephen lies on his stomach out in the open.

BLOOM (cont'd)

Stephen!

STEPHEN

Stay back!

But Bloom makes a dash for his brother, out into the open, unloading three more rounds into the dark.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (2)

The dark figure returns fire on Bloom, who is sprinting full on his feet in a large pool of light. A sitting duck.

Stephen launches himself up, tackling Bloom backwards.

Just before they fall behind the safety of the flat, a red burst of blood flowers from Stephen's left lower back.

Bloom sets him down gently, and hears heavy footsteps behind him.

He turns, firing, but only sees a blur of dark coat go by, through the torn backdrop.

Bloom runs out on stage, tearing the tarpaulin, and fires after the dark figure limping up the aisle and away into the lobby.

Silence.

Bloom walks back to Stephen, who lies behind the flat, breathing heavy. Blood soaking through his shirt.

BLOOM

Please tell me this is all gonna be ok. Tell me that's a squib, and that's makeup, and that you just gave me what I always wanted and pulled off the perfect con.

A long, long moment.

Stephen coughs, spits. Then a wry grin spreads across his face.

STEPHEN

You said it, not me.

He stands, the shakiness gone.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Can I get a 'wow' for this one?

BLOOM

You son of a bitch.

Bloom looks like he might hit him, but his face breaks and he embraces him, crying. The Brothers Bloom stay like that for a long while, holding each other in the spotlight's glow.

Finally Stephen pulls away, tears in his eyes. He wipes them, wipes blood from his lip.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (3)

STEPHEN

Tastes like tin foil. Alright
here's what I want you to do. Bang
Bang split?

BLOOM

Yeah. Clean exit.

STEPHEN

How?

BLOOM

Car bomb.

A hint of relief in Stephen's face.

STEPHEN

Good. Here's what. Take Penelope
back to Helsinki, take that flight
to Rio. Lay low like we said.
Play out the 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, that'll be
nice. And I'll see you when I see
you.

BLOOM

Soon?

STEPHEN

I hope not. Last thing you need is
me hanging around. Anyway, how
could I top this?

Bloom hugs him again.

BLOOM

I love you. Bye.

He turns to go.

STEPHEN

Hey. Think of any card.

Stephen pulls out a pack of cards.

BLOOM

Alright.

Stephen cuts, to the Queen of hearts.

(MORE)

CONTINUED: (4)

BLOOM (cont'd)
Stephen. That's it.
(grins)
That's the best card trick I've
ever seen. I just wish you had a
bigger audience.

STEPHEN
You're the only audience I've ever
needed.

Wink. Bloom leaves.

Stephen watches him go.

EXT. RUSSIA HIGHWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Rumbling towards Finland.

In the Bug, Bloom sleeps in Penelope's arm while she drives.

She looks at his hand on hers, his shirt cuff bright red with
Stephen's "blood." She strokes his shoulder sadly.

Off Bloom's sleeping face...

INT. THEATER STAGE

Stephen pulls a chair out onto the stage, sets it right in
the spotlight's glare.

Trembling as if it takes all his last strength in the world.

Sits. Looks at the Queen of Hearts, moves his fingers over
it.

Then slides is up his sleeve.

Blood trickles down his hand.

INT. BUG - SUNSET

Bloom wakes with a start.

PENELOPE
Hey. Hey, it's ok. The bridge is
coming up, we're almost at the
border. Were you dreaming about
Stephen?

She strokes his hair back from his face.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

He nods, and looks down at his sleeve.

Stephen's "blood" on his white cuff.

Now a dark shade of brown.

Bloom looks at this shirt. All the blood, it's all brown.

He looks up at the road, nearly panicked.

Maybe a quarter mile ahead is the bridge.

BLOOM

Pull over. Pull over!!

EXT. ROADSIDE - SUNSET

She does.

He bursts out of the car, and run/tumbles down the grassy hillside till he finds the car tracks.

He follows them to the charred remains of the Peugeot.

Penelope stumbles down after him.

PENELOPE

What is it? You're scaring me-

BLOOM

What did you ask the Russian kid,
in the Dog's apartment? He said
the Dog isn't here, then what did
you ask?

Bloom kicks open the trunk. Pries open the blistered attache case. Sifts through the charred pile of cinders that was the money from the "Russians" till he finds what he was looking for and brings it out into the dying light.

PENELOPE

How long had he been alone.

BLOOM

And what did he say?

A scrap of unburned money. A fragment of Ben Franklin's face.

PENELOPE

Since yesterday morning.

A single eye gazing up at him, the green grass behind it.

(MORE)

CONTINUED:

The eye is perfect. No cross hatching.

Bloom sinks to his knees.

BLOOM

This is real. They hassled you.

PENELOPE

Bloom-

BLOOM

The Dog was gone before we got there. They hadn't cleared out of their apartment, they had been cleared out.

INT. DIAMOND DOG'S APARTMENT - DAY FLASHBACK

RUSSIANS in black overcoats burst in, shooting the Dog's men with silenced pistols.

The BOY shuts himself in the closet, terrified.

EXT. ROADSIDE - SUNSET

BLOOM

Real Russians. Took his store. They didn't know about his deal with us, but you haggled with them. You really sold the book to real Russians. The Diamond Dog was gone.

EXT. RUSSIA HIGHWAY - FLASHBACK

The scene beside the lake, our four heroes checking the money in the attache case.

STEPHEN

Let's get the hell out of Russia.

Bloom tosses the gold lighter, it splashes into the lake. We follow it, plunging beneath the surface.

Deep deep down, among weak tendrils of light, the Diamond Dog sinks into watery blackness, a long blade in his neck.

EXT. ROADSIDE - SUNSET

BLOOM

And they came after us. And
Stephen...

Penelope holds him tight.

PENELOPE

I know.

BLOOM

Stephen saved my life.

PENELOPE

I know.

BLOOM

He's gone.

Bloom folds into Penelope's arms, but she doesn't let him.
She holds his crying face up.

PENELOPE

And he did it so you could live.
Your brother loved you. He loved
you so much. Look at me. Stephen
said something once, I got the
feeling he'd rather be telling it
to you. He said there's no such
thing as an unwritten life. Just
badly written ones. I love you.
We're gonna outrun these bastard
Russian mafia, and we're gonna hide
out in Rio, then we're gonna live
like we're telling the best fucking
story in the world. Are you ready?

She holds his face close to hers for a long beat. Then
smiles and pushes away, launching up the grassy hill.

Bloom watches her.

Time slows as she turns back towards him, still running, and
holds out her hand for him to follow.

BLOOM (V.O.)

I was thinking of something Stephen
said too. "The perfect con is one
where everyone involved gets just
the thing they wanted." Well.

He takes the girl's hand, and runs with her towards the point
of light breaking over the hill.

EXT. HIGHWAY - SUNSET

Sunset with her wine-red fingers falls over the road ahead.
The rumbly old VW chugs away from us, towards the horizon.

FADE OUT.