

MASTER BEDROOM

by Berty Cadilhac

Treatment

A battered Volkswagen Beetle trundles along a narrow, isolated road deep within the woods. Inside, CHARLIE (40), his wife VERONICA (40), and their daughter JOY (11) are locked in a heated argument about the car's malfunctioning music player. Joy, exasperated, complains about their inability to afford nice things. Charlie assures her that their frugal days are numbered; once he secures \$150,000, the application he created will go live, making them rich. Or so he claims, Veronica and Joy, having heard this before, roll their eyes in disbelief.

Suddenly, the old car's engine begins to make ominous noises. Joy, seeking escape from the tension, puts on her headphones and drifts into a surreal daydream.

In her mind, the family is wealthy, enjoying a life of luxury. They laugh and play while cleaning a high-end SUV parked outside a magnificent lakeside house. The scene is reminiscent of an 1980s soft drink commercial, but with a darker undertone. The noisy VW Beetle intrudes upon this idyllic vision, and two worlds collide. The poor family meets their wealthy counterparts: ERIC (40), Charlie's twin brother, and his wife MARILYN (40), Veronica's twin sister. Their daughter SKYE (11) is strikingly similar to Joy. Two mirrored families, living in starkly different realities.

Charlie, Veronica, and Joy are impressed by the stylish house, the expansive garden, and the exclusive lake access. However, their admiration turns to humiliation when Eric points out the holes in Charlie's socks as they remove their shoes before the house tour.

The girls run excitedly through the massive house, while Eric proudly shows off various expensive items. The house is tastefully decorated, save for a tacky portrait of Eric with laser beams shooting from his eyes, symbolising his self-proclaimed visionary status. Charlie lingers behind, avoiding Eric's boasting. He examines framed pictures in the corridor, revealing the brothers' competitive history and the couples' joint wedding, and nine months later the simultaneous childbirth of their respective daughters.

Jealousy consumes Charlie as he touches the brushed brass door handles, smooth walls, and full-grain leather sofa. He even kneels to smell the expensive hardwood floor, only to be humiliated by Eric, who jokes, "Lost something?"

The massive room dedicated to a superb French billiards table is impressive, but Eric slaps Charlie's hand away when he touches the green velvet cloth. "No touching", Eric admonishes.

More impressive still is the master bedroom, with a priceless lake view and an ensuite bathroom featuring a massive jacuzzi. The wives joke about sharing a bath when they were kids. The brothers cringe at the thought of a similar memory. Charlie stays behind, needing the bathroom. Once the door is closed, he expresses his jealousy by urinating in the jacuzzi.

Night falls, and after a barbecue, the four adults relax on reclining garden chairs, sipping rare brandy and gazing at the moon's reflection on the lake. Eric shares his views on life,

success, and the cryptocurrencies that made him rich. Charlie, unable to tolerate the self-congratulatory nonsense, excuses himself to use the bathroom.

The girls, meanwhile, play a "scary game" in the dark basement, telling each other horror stories. Skye suggests a chilling experience, making Joy promise to keep it a secret. She unlocks a wooden box containing pictures of conjoined twins, connected at the top of their skulls. Joy cringes at the creepy sight, but the most disturbing element is the revelation that the twins are their fathers, Eric and Charlie.

A sound in the basement terrifies the girls. Two red eyes shine in the dark, and Joy freaks out as a massive Doberman starts barking at her. Skye calms her, introducing Bozzi, the family's sweet-natured dog.

Upstairs, Charlie sneaks into the dressing room, marveling at the designer shirts. He tries on a flamboyant Versace shirt and admires his reflection in the frameless mirror. As he plays a childish game, lifting his leg to appear as if he's flying, his reflection begins to distort. The image of conjoined twins flashes in his mind, and in a fit of anger, he punches his own reflection in the mirror, shattering it.

Eric enters, stupefied and angry. Charlie, feeling stupid and guilty, apologises and begins to remove the shirt. Eric shouts at him as Charlie's bleeding knuckles stain the precious fabric.

Outside, Veronica and Marilyn, tipsy on brandy, play a balancing game on the lake pontoon. Marilyn slips, hitting her back and head before falling unconscious into the water. Charlie and Eric rush to the pontoon, but the water is too dark to find her. Skye brings a diving torch, and they finally locate Marilyn, bringing her to the surface. Eric performs mouth-to-mouth, and Marilyn regains consciousness, spewing water. Despite the bruise on her back, Marilyn insists she is fine. They all congratulate Eric for his heroic action. With their hair wet, the brothers' scalps are now more visible. Joy spots an old scar on both her father and her uncle's skull. This seems to prove that they used to be joined by the sky, proving Skye's story right.

Before going to bed in the stuffy guest bedroom, Charlie makes a disturbing comment. Their daughter Joy would have a replacement family if he and Veronica were to die. Veronica finds the remark tasteless and dark.

Charlie wakes up in the middle of the night to find his wife straddling him, making rough love to him while half-suffocating him. This seems very out of character. He is shocked to see their niece Skye staring at them from a dark corner of the bedroom. Veronica eventually turns around and spots Skye. She comforts the child and escorts her back to her bedroom.

As they leave the guest bedroom, Charlie notices a bruise on Veronica's back, identical to Marilyn's following her fall on the pontoon. Confused and alarmed, Charlie wonders if he had just made love to Marilyn, his brother's wife. When Veronica returns, the bruise is gone, leaving Charlie to question his perception.

The following morning, Charlie finds everyone in the kitchen. Marilyn's dress reveals the bruise on her back. Joy has left her bacon and eggs untouched, convinced by Skye to become a vegan like her. Eric rolls his eyes, telling Charlie, "Welcome to my world". When Skye makes a sarcastic remark about meat-eaters being "murderers", Eric snaps, shouting at her and reducing her to tears. Charlie is petrified by Eric's abusive behaviour.

The mothers and daughters leave for a posh hair appointment, leaving the husbands at home. Before leaving, Veronica discreetly reminds Charlie of his "mission", a reference to Charlie's need for investment in his company. The brothers are now alone, and Charlie seizes the opportunity to pitch his startup to Eric. It's a comprehensive programme to help teens understand their career options. Eric, uninterested, suggests a swim in the lake. As they swim, Charlie struggles to keep up, blabbering his business pitch. Eric turns him down a second time.

The ladies return, their identical haircuts making them indistinguishable. The cousins, Joy and Skye, also look like twin sisters now. The two young girls are preoccupied with saving a wounded bat they found by the side of the road. Eric, annoyed by this "bleeding heart nonsense", calls a local wildlife conservationist. The prognosis is pessimistic, and the bat needs to be put down by a local vet. Eric, unwilling to make the three-hour drive to the vet, puts the bat out of its misery by crushing it with his massive SUV.

The girls, devastated and enraged, attack Eric's car. Marilyn is furious too against Eric, demanding that the bloody mess be removed from the yard. Charlie picks up the bat's remains with his t-shirt, claiming they will give the animal a proper burial. The two brothers drive away. Once out of sight, Eric grabs the t-shirt containing the dead bat and throws it all out the window.

Charlie is surprised and furious. They had promised the girls they would bury the bat! And that was a good t-shirt; he demands that Eric stop the car so he can pick it up. Eric stops the car but grows impatient as Charlie can't locate his t-shirt. Eric loses his temper, insisting that the old, messy t-shirt isn't worth the trouble. If Charlie wants a replacement, he can take Eric's expensive Versace shirt, since he apparently loves it so much. Charlie feels humiliated but loves the shirt, so he accepts the deal. Eric also offers him the chance to drive the car, claiming it's a great experience of "pure power".

The two drive away, Charlie at the wheel, Eric shirtless on the passenger seat. Charlie appreciates the driving experience, and this feeling of "power" pushes him to give his investment pitch another try. However, Eric declines for a third time, claiming the project is a waste of time and advising Charlie to invest in crypto instead. He tells his brother to stop being such a "loser", adding demeaning comments about his "shitty life".

Devastated and humiliated, Charlie wants to hurt his brother, and calmly claims that he had sex with Eric's wife. Enraged, Eric demands he take this back, and the ensuing tussle causes the car to veer off course, hitting an oncoming truck.

Charlie momentarily regains consciousness in a surgery room, wishing he hadn't. The surgeons discuss which limbs to salvage and which to amputate.

When he wakes up again, he discovers a horrendous vision: he and Eric have been stitched together side by side, sharing one pair of arms and legs.

Panicked, they both try to separate, tearing the stitches and bleeding heavily. Charlie wakes up, realising it was just a horrifying nightmare. The accident was real, though, his head hurts tremendously. He finds himself in the master bedroom, alone and confused.

Skye enters, amazed and shouting the good news that "daddy woke up". The family gathers around Charlie, but there seems to be some confusion. His own daughter Joy calls him "uncle Eric".

A couple of flashbacks confirm a misunderstanding: prior to the accident, Eric was driving and Charlie was shirtless. When the crash took place, Charlie was driving and Eric was shirtless. The identities of the two brothers seems to have been mixed up.

Charlie learns that his brother is in a deep coma and might never wake up. Seeing an opportunity, Charlie decides to take Eric's place. He will have blind spots, but can blame any inconsistencies on mild amnesia. The doctor prescribes "memory pills" to Charlie, warning him not to take more than one a day. They taste weird, and even though Charlie has no memory issues, he takes them to avoid raising suspicion from Marilyn.

The hospital sends a bag containing Eric's mobile phone and the bloodied designer shirt. Charlie burns the shirt in the garden, symbolising the end of his brother's era. Charlie can unlock Eric's phone, the facial recognition is easily fooled as the brothers look identical. He finds a message from someone called Vince suggesting a catch-up on Friday. By scrolling through their message history, Charlie understands that Eric and Vince are very close friends.

Bozzi, the Doberman, barks at Charlie, and chases him across the garden. He finds shelter in Marilyn's car, a Mini Cooper. Charlie calls from there, it's Skye who comes to control Bozzi and liberate Charlie. Humans can't seem to tell the brothers apart, but the dog is not so easily fooled.

The real Eric is still in a coma. He is moved from the hospital to the house, set up with a drip and electrocardiogram (ECG) in the guest bedroom. The doctor explains that his coma could last for years or might as well end abruptly in a few days. Charlie inquires about the possibility of brain damage and the risk of amnesia for his brother. "Will he even remember his own name, his identity?" The doctor is unable to give definite answers.

When Charlie finds himself alone with his bedridden brother, he gets a few things off his chest. All the resentment from the bullying he suffered as a kid comes up. Eric treated his brother poorly, always having the upper hand and winning all the fights. As a kid Charlie was more sensitive and prone to crying.

The daughters, Skye and Joy, behave strangely with Charlie, avoiding eye contact and cringing at his displays of affection towards them. Marilyn reminds him of the very unfortunate "bat incident" and the tragic death of Skye's pet bunny. Apparently, Eric had run over the poor rabbit by accident.

Joy indirectly blames Charlie for her father's health condition. This makes Charlie sad, and he tries to comfort her, saying, "I'm here for you", but he can't explain that he's the real father. Charlie's paranoia grows as the girls stare at him while practicing archery.

Marilyn behaves normally in public, but when she is alone with Charlie, she seems very distant and cold. She pushes back on hugs and recoils from his touch. It seems that her relationship with her husband was very conflicted, but Charlie cannot ask about it.

Charlie is still anxious about being exposed. He starts having flash hallucinations, seeing his brother in the garden, in the lake, or whispering in his ear, "loser". After a few drinks to calm his nerves, he looks at himself in the mirror and sees his own reflection smiling at him with Eric's typical arrogant smirk.

In the middle of the night, Charlie wakes up. Marilyn is not by his side. When he goes downstairs, he finds both women making love to a very awake Eric. They all look at Charlie and laugh. He wakes up; it was just a nightmare. As he reads the side effects of the memory pills, he realises that they're probably the cause of these reactions, so he stops taking them.

Using the pretext of "mild amnesia", Charlie manages to justify not remembering where things are or past events. He almost gets caught a few times but always manages to giggle his way out of situations. Using Eric's mobile phone, Charlie manages to reset most of his computer passwords. But one access remains locked: Eric's crypto wallet. That's where most of his assets are kept. After a couple of attempts, he stops, fearing he might get permanently locked out of his accounts. His wife mentions that "Vince" might be able to help, as he is a "crypto bro" like Eric.

Vince is Eric's friend, and he's been texting and calling on Eric's phone. Charlie knows that avoiding Vince entirely could raise suspicion, and meeting him might help unlock the digital wallet situation. So the two arrange to meet at the lake house when the wives and kids are away.

From the moment Vince arrives with his convertible sports car, Charlie has a bad feeling about this guy. Vince's frat boy macho energy annoys Charlie, and he struggles to hide his fear of being exposed.

Charlie tries to fish for information related to Eric's password for his crypto account, but he can't tell whether Vince is joking when he makes suggestions. Vince's advice on reshuffling his crypto portfolio makes Charlie nervous; some tokens are about to plunge, and potential losses are huge.

Eric and Vince apparently have a few routines and secrets. Vince reveals a hidden cocaine stash inside the large billiards table. Charlie giggles, and pretends that he didn't remember its existence due to the car accident. He then changes his version and pretends that he was just joking.

Charlie pushes back on taking cocaine, claiming it might clash with his current medical treatment. But Vince insists, cocaine is the best medicine, he claims. To avoid raising suspicion, Charlie finally accepts. He has never used drugs before, and the effect is unexpectedly strong.

Charlie is on edge, and he has little patience for Vince's jokes about "the brother". It seems that Charlie was often the butt of their jokes, and this gets on Charlie's nerves. When Vince jokes about Charlie's failed attempt at creating his own business, Charlie can't stand it anymore. He states that creating a business is much more noble than investing in stupid crypto, "we" got lucky in this game but never created anything valuable.

Vince is puzzled, this is really out of character, he never thought "Eric" would say anything like this.

Another red flag raises suspicion. Charlie is terrible at playing billiard. He even tears the table cloth with a terrible shot. Forgetting the rules is one thing, but forgetting how to play seems odd. It's just like cycling, you never forget how to ride a bike.

Suspicious, Vince tricks Charlie. He mentions a "memorable" night when they went to a strip club and ended up in a police station. Charlie claims that he remembers that crazy night, how could he forget?

Except that this night never happened. Vince is now convinced that he's talking to Charlie.

Outraged, he gets back to his car and starts leaving the premises. Charlie wants to stop him and "talk", he uses Skye's crossbow to attempt to puncture a tyre.

But the arrow lands on Vince's back, through the driver seat.

Vince's car hits a tree and stops. He is still alive and in pain. He screams at Charlie, calling him a loser.

At first Charlie considers calling the emergency services. As the insults flow, he changes plans, and pushes Vince's car through the garden. He then precipitates it into the lake, with a panicked Vince still stuck inside.

"Who's the loser now?" asks Charlie as the car sinks slowly.

Minutes later, the mothers and daughters return. "Why has Vince left already?" they ask.

"Why does Charlie look so worked up?" Charlie quickly makes up a story about Vince bringing and using cocaine. He claims that the man was high and destroyed the billiards table cloth. The men had a fight, which explains the blood on his shirt. He kicked this "junky" out of the house, telling him to never show up or contact him again.

They do find a damaged pool table and cocaine, which matches Charlie's story.

Charlie is still full of adrenaline from the drugs and the death of Vince. He shares an idea he had. Charlie, he explains, had pitched a business idea to him. He thought it was a great idea and he would like to support him. Veronica confirms that this was Charlie's intention, and they all agree that it's a noble plan. If, "when" Charlie wakes up he would be delighted to hear that his business has made progress.

This is done quickly, as Charlie knows exactly who to transfer the \$150,000 to. The developers are paid, they release the code and the application can now go online.

Charlie also pays a person to market and promote the application, he is delighted to see that his business is finally on track. He doesn't even need the money, Charlie just wants to clear his name and make sure no one calls him a loser.

Killing Vince has empowered Charlie, he feels more confident and powerful than ever. This "boss energy" helps him step in Eric's shoes, he progressively embraces his brother's personality.

Skye still behaves awkwardly in Charlie's presence. He confronts her, asking if it's about the bat or the rabbit. She won't answer. When he asks Marilyn, she just shrugs and seems a bit uncomfortable.

In the middle of the night, Charlie wakes up and discovers both girls in his bedroom, pointing at him. A terrifying vision, they seem to be sleepwalking, so he takes them back to their bedroom without waking up Marilyn.

Once they are back in their bed, Charlie goes to the garden. He picks up small broken parts near the tree that stopped Vince's car.

He goes to throw them in the lake. The reflection of the moonlight on the lake surface is beautiful. Suddenly, a body emerges from the water. It has an arrow planted in the back. It's obviously Vince.

Panicked, Charlie swims to the dead body and brings it back to the shore. The body is full of water, it weighs a ton, it's impossible to transport.

Charlie brings an axe from the shed and dismembers the body, then buries it in the garden.

The current bank account is dry, and the mortgage payment is due. Marilyn asks Charlie to sell some of his tokens.

But the account stays locked. Just one more attempt before it's forever locked. Furious and worried, Charlie throws everything that was on his desk to the ground.

He tries to calm down, and picks everything up. When he gets under his desk to collect some pencils, he spots a post-it note stuck under the desk.

It's the missing wallet password. It works! Charlie is ecstatic, the platform is unlocked, Charlie can finally access his accounts, everything will be fine. Except that it won't. Most of his assets were put into one specific cryptocurrency that turned out to be a scam. \$18 million dollars are gone; the family is broke.

Charlie has to confess about the terrible fiasco. Everyone is horrified. The two women decide to go and meet an old friend who might be able to help them with the next mortgage payment and avoid losing the house. They will be gone for twenty-four hours, leaving Charlie to take care of the daughters and his bedridden brother.

The girls don't want to have dinner with him. Charlie eats a pasta salad leftover prepared for him in the fridge. It tastes weird, maybe it's just the bitterness of the whole situation. He spots an image of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian on the fridge door, depicting a man pierced by multiple arrows. This is weird and creepy, why put it here among the family pictures?

As he looks through the kitchen window towards the garden, Charlie spots the dog dragging something unusual. Charlie shrieks; it's an arm, Vince's arm.

Charlie rushes outside and has to fight the dog to get the limb back. He hides it in the shed. When night falls, Charlie buries the limb deeper in the garden.

He feels increasingly feverish and lightheaded. He goes to take a shower but feels worse and worse. Charlie experiences a series of flashbacks and hallucinations. Suddenly, the taste of the pasta salad seems familiar. It's the same weird taste as his "memory pills". He finds the pillbox in the bathroom bin; it's empty. The girls might have crushed the pills into his pasta salad.

The hallucinations he experienced when he was taking the pills are coming back, this time much stronger. In the bathroom in front of him, his brother Eric smiles and calls him a loser.

Charlie punches him in the face. He breaks the bathroom mirror, realising he punched his own reflection.

Charlie calls the emergency services, asking for advice about poisoning. He mentions the name of the pills but explains he is unsure. The operator on the phone reassures him, this is not a lethal drug; he might just suffer from strong hallucinations, but should just go to bed as he will feel better the next day.

Charlie hangs up and goes to the daughters' bedroom. The door is locked; he bangs and asks whether they played a trick on him. It's not a big deal, he explains, but he needs to know. They won't open, and he looks through the keyhole but can't see them. Suddenly, next to his face, an arrow lands on the wooden door.

Charlie gets on the floor, panicked. He crawls to the billiards room and shuts the door behind him, grabbing a billiards cue as a weapon. Another arrow arrives from the open window, destroying the billiards cue he was holding. He grabs the three heavy billiards balls from the table, ready to use them as weapons, but he can't see this invisible enemy.

He leaves the room and hides in the living room, trying to spot the attacker. He sees Eric behind a window and throws a billiards ball, breaking the window. He turns around and sees Eric again, very near him. He throws another ball, breaking a window. Are these reflections? Hallucinations? Or is his brother awake and playing with him?

Charlie looks for his mobile phone, unable to find it. He grabs a landline phone, but there's no tone.

Feverish and confused, he opens the door of the guest bedroom, finding Eric lying on his back, still in the coma. The ECG keeps beeping at a regular pace. The beeps of the ECG seem to accelerate, triggering a hallucination: Eric and Charlie are on the slab of a surgery room. The surgeon approaches his medical saw to the skull, ready to separate the twins. Blood blood splatters on the white wall. But this happens in real life, not from the surgery, but because an arrow has hit Charlie's arm. He snaps out of his nightmare and leaves the house, seeking shelter in the garden shed.

Charlie stops the bleeding with a strap, but the loss of blood makes him lightheaded. He experiences another hallucination, this time on a train platform, where a little girl discovers conjoined twins in a baby stroller. The stroller falls on the train tracks, the twins both pull in opposite directions, unable to move away from the incoming train. The train stops inches away from their joined skull, but the pressure on the brakes was so strong that smoke comes out of them.

Charlie is awakened by the smell of smoke, in real life. He spots flames through the shed window. He then realises that this is happening in real life, someone has set the shed on fire.

The door is locked, he can't escape. Charlie grabs the axe and breaks the window. He escapes through there.

Bozzi the dog attacks him. Just like he did previously, Charlie finds shelter in his old Beetle car. This is the only car on the property; his SUV was destroyed in the accident, and the women took the Mini Cooper. Charlie tries to start the engine, but a loud bang marks the end of this option to escape the property. He shouts in frustration: "I'm not him! I'm me!".

Someone whistles, and the dog runs away. Charlie leaves the car and runs back to the house. But just before he reaches the door, he gets hit by an arrow in the leg. He crawls inside the house.

He goes to the bathroom on ground level, and manages to stop the bleeding and dress both wounds.

Charlie realises that one of the girls is just outside. She talks to her cousin who is not far away. Charlie can hear them say that they need to grab additional arrows from the basement, which is accessible from the garden only.

He quietly follows them and, once they're down the basement stairs, locks them in. From there, he asks, "Why?" but only hears Skye say: "You know why".

Charlie is puzzled; it can't just be about the rabbit or the bat. He limps to their bedroom and manages to unlock their door. He looks for clues there and finds the reason behind his violence in Skye's personal diary.

Drawings depict domestic violence against Marilyn. Skye was the witness of this abuse. Behind the perfect picture of a successful family, lies a dirty secret of a despicable man.

Furious, Charlie goes to the guest bedroom and shouts at his brother. How could he be such a terrible person? And now Charlie has to live with these past actions and shame, even though he is not the perpetrator of these acts. He wishes he had stayed poor and dignified.

Emergency vehicles arrive. They don't bother with the shed on fire, it's almost turned into ashes now.

They spot the arrows and blood everywhere, and draw their guns. They hear the girls call for help from the basement. They explain through the door that there's an ongoing home invasion. The police can't open the door, and advise the girls to keep calm and stay there for now.

The police start to carefully search the house, room by room.

In the guest bedroom, they find two males and. One is bedridden, with a drip in his arm and an ECG monitoring his heart rate.

The other one is lying in a pool of blood, they assume he's a victim of the house invasion.

The day has dawned. Police are still here, and the mothers are back. The body of a dead man in a black body bag is being taken away in a stretcher.

The forensic expert who is in the guest bedroom notices that the bedridden man slightly opens his eyes. She lets the family know, and soon everyone gathers in the small bedroom.

The man can hardly remember his name. "Charlie, you're Charlie", they say. He does the women and girls faces but can't tell them apart, which makes them giggle.

They have to break the bad news though. His brother Eric died by his side. He bled to death, a femoral artery was hit by an arrow. It's a long story, a home invasion, a car crash.

The man weeps. They share good news to cheer him up, his app went live and just went viral. Money is flowing in, which can be used to cover the mortgage. In other words he is now the house owner and will move to the master bedroom.

The man seems exhausted, and a doctor suggests they give him a break, he needs more rest for now. Once they're all out, the man stops weeping. He checks that his wounds are not bleeding.

He then smiles, and says to himself: "who's the loser now?".

Charlie has swapped with his brother. Again. He is the real Charlie, a good husband, a caring father, an entrepreneur. And he won, he won this competition against his brother.