



# Double Down: Reflections on Gambling and Loss

*Frederick Barthelme, Steven Barthelme*

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"So each night begins. One of us picks up the other and we drive into the Mississippi darkness, headed for a place where everything is different." This first nonfiction book by Frederick Barthelme, author of *BOB THE GAMBLER*, and his brother and colleague Steven is both a story of family feeling and a testimony to the risky allure of casinos. Within a year and a half, the authors had lost both of their parents, less than a decade after their brother Donald died. Their exacting father had been a prominent modernist architect in Houston; their mother, the architect of this family of seven, which she "invented, shaped, guided, and protected." "We were on our own in a remarkable new way," the Barthelmes write, "and we were not ready." What followed was a several-year escapade during which the two brothers lost close to a quarter million dollars in the gambling boats off the Mississippi coast. They played to enter that addictive land of possibility. Then, in a bizarre twist, they were charged with violating state gambling laws, fingerprinted, and thrown into the surreal world of felony prosecution. For two years these widely publicized charges hung over their heads, shadowing their every step, until, in August of 1999, the charges were finally dismissed. *DOUBLE DOWN* is the sometimes wryly told, often heartbreaking story of how Frederick and Steven Barthelme got into this predicament. It is also a reflection on the pull and power of illusions, the way they work on us when we are not careful.

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