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BOMBARDIERS

By Po Bronson

Random House. 336pp. \$22.

Promising newcomer Po Bronson hits the bond trading market hard and often in this brisk debut satire. The stressed-out bond peddlars at Atlantic Pacific Corp. spin fortunes from cotton candy foundations of ignorance and dreams. Sid Geeder, 34, is top salesdog because he pushes mortgage bonds, "brand new and nobody understood them, so they were easy to sell because no client wanted to admit they lacked the intellectual brainpower to understand these complex, variable cash flows."

This high-pressure world is so slimy that one veteran trader must floss his teeth after every sale: "Success was only a question of how much they could lie before they felt guilty, and then how much guilt they could take before they suffered psychological malfunction." When bilking a few million from individuals proves too petty, they raise their sights to entire countries. The Dominican Republic, up to its Cordilleras in debt, has non-liquid assets of \$7 billion. By buying up its debts and foreclosing, our bondsmen can engineer a hostile takeover of the country.

A former bond analyst with First Boston, Bronson writes with a vigor that becomes frenetic, and his chapter format of focusing on individual topics (numbers, addictions, time, filth, etc.) grows increasingly formulaic. Similarly, his characters—Eggs Igino, Lisa Lisa and Coyote Jack—are blatant *Catch-22*-rip-offs who feel like cardboard caricatures thrown hastily onto the stage. Still, however unbridled, Bronson's talent is impressive, and his lampooning has the clear, loud ring of truth.