

The Sting

(Drama/Comedy) (1974)
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Major Characters

- Johnny Hooker (“Kelly”).....Robert Redford
A charming young con artist (a small-time criminal who tricks people out of their money), who lives in Joliet, which is just outside the gangster-filled city of Chicago.
- Luther Coleman.....Robert Earl Jones
Hooker’s African-American partner, who decides he is getting too old to continue being a con artist.
- Henry Gondorff (“Mr. Shaw”).....Paul Newman
A very intelligent and charming con artist, and a friend of Luther’s, who helps Hooker carry out “the big con” against Doyle Lonnegan.
- Doyle Lonnegan.....Robert Shaw
A very powerful, humorless and cruel New York City gangster who cheats at everything he does (business, poker, horse racing, etc....)
- Lieutenant Snyder.....Charles Durning
An unpleasant and completely corrupt Joliet police detective who is always trying to take money from Hooker.
- Billie.....Eileen Brennan
Henry Gondorff’s female partner, who lives with Henry and runs both a children’s merry-go-round and a house of prostitution.
- Kid Twist.....Harold Gould
A friend and assistant to Gondorff who is in charge of organizing the big con against Lonnegan.
- FBI Special Agent Polk.....Dana Elcar
A federal detective who is in charge of fighting organized crime in the Chicago area.

Plot Summary

This film is the story of a likeable small-time thief and con artist named Johnny Hooker (A con artist is a clever person who tricks people out of their money. Another word for the same thing is a “grifter,” which is widely used in this movie, though it is rarely used today). The action takes place in and around Chicago in 1936, when this second biggest city in the United States was known as the gangster capital of the country.

Hooker teams up with a well-known and very intelligent con artist named Henry Gondorff, a friend of Hooker’s partner Luther Coleman, in order to trick the New York gangster Doyle Lonnegan out of \$500,000 dollars (which, of course, would be worth many millions today). Although virtually all the major characters are criminals, it is clear that we want Hooker and Gondorff to succeed in their plan, because Lonnegan is such a cruel and unpleasant character, and the other two are such likeable guys. Of course to safely steal half a million dollars from a big time gangster, somebody has to create a complex plan that will fool the victim without him even knowing he’s been fooled. Gondorff is just the right man to create that plan.

Gondorff, Hooker and their team of loveable criminals set out to convince Lonnegan that he can make millions of dollars by betting on horse races that have already been run, minutes before the results are announced. The plan itself is complicated and filled with dangers, and all the while, Hooker must stay one step ahead of both various gangsters and the cruel and corrupt Lieutenant Snyder, all of whom are out to get him. Still, both Gondorff and Hooker plays their roles perfectly, and with a little luck, move toward a successful conclusion of the biggest con either man has ever tried.

Another Note on the Story: There are many twists and turns in this plot, and while it is quite complicated, it is possible to follow if you play close attention. You should just be aware that one of the people listed in the Major Characters section above is not at all who he appears to be....

Some Gangster Vocabulary that is Important in this Film:

A bookie: A person who helps other make illegal bets, usually on various horse races and other sporting events.

A con artist: A person who tries to steal money from others, often by tricking them into making fake or fraudulent investments, or perhaps by cheating at various games of chance.

A dick: A slang word for the police, but this is no longer used.

A grifter: Another word for a small-time con artist, who makes a living by tricking others out of their money. This is a widely used word in this movie, but it’s never used today.

A mark: The person who is a target or victim of a con artist. This word is rarely if ever used like this today.

A runner: A person who physically carries money between locations, usually for a mob or gangster family.

The big con: As used in this film, a complicated scheme (plan) to fool a person out of a huge amount of money without the victim knowing it.

Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

Hooker and Coleman get very lucky with an old con game.

Beat it! :: Mr. Granger, Chicago is on the line.

“Beat it!” is a much loved way to say “leave!” If a person is “on the line,” they are on the phone.

The mayor promised to get **tough** on the rackets again.

In this case, “tough” means strong or forceful. “Rackets” are organized crime families involved in such things as illegal drugs and gambling.

You’ve been making your payoffs, have you?

A “payoff” is a bribe, or payment for protection, or something illegal.

It looks like we cleared over 10 grand this week.

In business, “to clear” \$100 dollars is to make that much in profit, after paying expenses. A “grand” is a slang term for \$1,000 dollars.

What the hell. You’ve got the whole Chicago South Side.

“What the hell” is a colloquial way of agreeing to accept something, even if you don’t like it. The South Side of Chicago is a well known part of the city.

How do you expect those eight lousy spots I got to compete with that?

“Lousy” is an excellent adjective which means bad, or of poor quality.

A “spot” is member of a criminal gang, but this is never used today.

It looks like you’re bringing up the rear, Granger.

If a person is “bringing up the rear,” they are the last ones in a race.

They’ll be waiting at the Clearinghouse.

In this case, a place where bets are made and paid out.

Get a cab over on 7th.

Another word for taxi.

Aw, **cut it out!**

An excellent expression which means “stop that!”

Goddamn nigger-lover.

“Goddamn” is a vulgar filler word used to express anger or other emotion, and “nigger” is horribly racist word for a black person.

You need a doctor. I'll call a cop.
A very colloquial word for policeman.

Are you nuts, carrying a wad like that in a neighborhood like this?
“Nuts” is a slangy word for crazy, and a “wad” is a small bundle or package, in this case, of money.

I'm obliged to you.
If a person is “obliged” to somebody, they are grateful to them and perhaps owe them a great debt.

You ain't going now. I got to run some slots in West Bend for the mob here.
“Ain't” is a vulgar way of conjugating the verb “to be” (You should avoid it). “Slots” are gambling machines (like those in Las Vegas), and the “mob” is another word for the Mafia, or an organized crime family.

I got a little behind in the payoffs, so they figure I've been holding out on them.
“To figure” is another way of saying to think or believe.
“To hold out on” a person is to refuse to pay them, often by claiming that you don't have the money you owe, when in fact you really do.

They gave to 4:00 to come up with the cash.
“To come up” with something is to find or get it. “Cash” is everybody's favorite word for cold, green money.

That mug that hit you is mad enough at me already.
A rarely used word for an abusive or violent person. A bully or thug.

I'm sorry pal, I'm going to maybe help you get fixed up.
“Pal” is another word for friend. In this case, to get “fixed up” is to clean up or feel better.

How about you? All you got to do is put it in the door slot.
A narrow rectangular hole or space for letters.

He didn't do shit!
A very crude way of saying that he didn't do anything.

Hey, butt out, chicken-liver.
“Butt out” is a very direct way of telling a person to stop interfering in something that isn't any of their business (Chicken liver, as a way of referring to a person, is never used).

OK. I'll make your drop for you. And don't worry, you can trust me.
In this case, a “drop” is the act of dropping off a letter someplace.

If these goons decide to search you, you ain't gonna get far carrying it there.

A "goon" is a very slangy word for a gangster or somebody hired to kill or terrorize others. "To get far" means to travel far or accomplish a lot.

Stuff it down your pants like that, got it?

"To stuff" one object into another means to forcefully push it inside, even if it is too big to be done easily. In this case, "got it?" is away of asking if the person understands.

Ain't a tough guy in the world that's going to frisk you there.

"A tough guy" is a thug, gangster or just a guy who is mean or not easily scared. "To frisk" a person is to search their clothes or bodies, the way the police search a person they suspect has a gun or drugs on them.

I just made the world's easiest five grand!

A "grand" is a very slangy way of saying \$1,000.

Come on Luther, hustle!

"Come on" is the most versatile phrasal verb in English, and here means "go faster." If you tell a person to "hustle," you are also telling them to move faster or hurry up.

I thought for sure he was on to us.

If a person is "on to" somebody else, they know what that person is planning (even if it's secret or illegal).

We had him all the way.

Luther's way of saying they were able to fool their victim without him ever suspecting anything wrong.

Did you know that he was loaded? :: Hell no!

If a person is "loaded," they are either completely drunk, or as in this case, have lots of money. "Hell no" is one way of saying absolutely not.

I would have settled for pawning one of them shoes.

"To settle for" something is to accept it, even though there could be something better in the future. "To pawn" something is to give it as security for loan money, though here it is used to simply mean steal.

We'll split it up tonight.

"To split up" something is to divide it into two or more parts.

For Christ's sake...

One interesting way of expressing emotion such as anger or disgust.

He drops four beats in the middle of my goddamn routine.

This is Luther's way of saying that Hooker got nervous and did not do exactly what he was supposed to while Luther was acting out his role in the con job (A "routine" is a worked-out part in a play or show).

How long do I got to put up with that?

"To put up" with something is to accept it, even if it's unpleasant.

I've come into some dough.

A dated slang word for money (and of course, flour for bread).

You've seen one, you've seen them all.

A cliché which means that all of whatever type of thing is being discussed are all alike (It can refer to anything, from Australian people to horror movies to baseball games. Of course, it's almost never true).

All those years of training, right down the drain.

"Training" is the act of practicing to master a skill (such as a sport or musical instrument). If something goes "down the drain," it is seen as completely wasted (A drain is the pipe beneath a kitchen sink).

Just a little hard times. Everything is jake, now.

In this case, "hard times" is a reference to difficult economic conditions caused by the 1930s Depression. "Jake" is an old and dated word for OK.

\$3,000 on the red. :: Are you nuts?

A great little slang word for crazy.

It's too big a bet. There's a house limit.

This refers to the maximum amount that a casino is willing to accept as a bet (The casino is the house).

Tough luck, kid.

A common way of referring to something bad that has happened.

Lucky for me it came up black. A fellow could get in big trouble here, losing a bet like that.

If a color "comes up," it appears. A "fellow" is a slightly old-fashioned word for man or guy.

They found Moletta, drunk in a dive in Joliet.

A "dive" is a slangy word for a small and dirty bar or nightclub.

He lost it to a couple of con artists on his way out of the spot.

A "con artist" is a person who tries to steal money from others often by tricking them into making fake or fraudulent investments, or perhaps by cheating at various games of chance.

I better get on the phone to New York to see what the big Mick wants to do about it.

Note that “better” is the only word in English that functions both as a modal verb and an adverb (“The big Mick” is the way some of Lonnegan’s gangster’s refer to him).

Hooker finds out who the \$11,000 victim was, and soon both Luther and him face the serious dangers of Lonnegan’s gangsters.

Ace/Deuce/Spades.

Types of playing cards. An ace is the highest valued card, and a deuce is a card with two on it. A spade is one of the four card types, along with hearts, diamonds and clubs.

One of our runners got hit for 11 grand.

A way of saying that a money carrier was robbed of \$11,000 dollars.

What makes you think he just didn’t pocket it?

If a person “pockets” some money, they keep it for themselves.

We checked his story with a tipster. He was cleaned by two grifters.

A “tipster” is a person who gives secret or hard to find information (“a tip”). If a person is “cleaned out” of some money, they are robbed of it. A “grifter” is a type of con artist or small-time thief.

We’re running that down now.

In this context, a slangy way of saying “were trying to find that out.”

Have some local people take care of them. Nothing fancy.

Lonnegan’s way of saying “kill them, but make it simple.”

You follow?

Lonnegan’s favorite way of asking “Do you understand?”

If you ain’t shaper in them linens!

Alma’s way of saying “You look great in those clothes” (If a person “looks sharp,” they look good or even fashionable. Linens are clothes, or the cloth that clothes are made from).

If I didn’t know you better, I’d swear you had some class.

In this case, “to swear” is to know for sure, and “class” is elegance, style or grace.

I got to get faster tying up that bundle.

A “bundle” is a small group of things that are tied together in order to be able to be transported more easily.

Bushwah! I used to make that switch with slower hands than you got.

“Bushwah” is a very dated and never used word for bullshit, which is widely used for lies, nonsense, etc... In this case, the “switch” refers to the quick exchanging of two different things before anybody can see it.

Me and Luther didn't make much of it, but it wasn't so touchy.

“To not make much of” something means to not consider it very important. Here, “touchy” means sensitive or overly emotional.

Them marks can beat you awful bad when they catch you making the switch. In this film, a “mark” is a victim of a con artist, whose money is stolen.

They were closing in on Machine Gun Kelly!

“To close in on” a person is to get closer to them, or even surround them, while in the process of trying to catch or kill them (Machine Gun Kelly was a well known 1930s gangster).

Who are you rooting for, anyhow?

“To root for” a sports team is to emotionally support them.

You can't beat the house.

A way of saying that a gambler can never win against a casino.

Since they started late bingo, I'm going to ask the Lord for some of that cash while he's still paying off.

“Bingo” is a numbers game that older people like to gamble on. “The Lord” is one way of referring to God, and if a person is “paying off,” they are paying money to those people with whom they have a debt.

There's your cut. Guy turned out to be an oil well. The bastard!

In this case, a person's “cut” is their share of money that was earned by a group of people. “The bastard” is a way of calling a man an ass, jerk or any other word for an abusive or mean person.

What are you spraying around money like that for?

“To spray” water is to spread it in little drops, the way a hose might do. If a person is spraying money, they're wasting it.

You could have been nailed!

In this case, if a person is “nailed,” they are caught, or possibly beat up or even killed.

You're a con man, and you blew it like a pimp!

A “con man” fools people into giving up their money. If a person “blows it,” they do something very badly, or in this case, they throw their money away on stupid bets. A “pimp” is usually an unpleasant and abusive male who manages female prostitutes.

What the hell is eating you? I've blown money before.

A slangy way of saying “Why are you in such a bad mood?”

No class grifter would have done it, that's all.

This seems to be a true contradiction in terms!; If a person has "class," they gave elegance, grace or style, but a "grifter" is just a small-time thief or con artist.

I'm getting too old for this racket.

In this case, "racket" is used as another word for a profession (though the profession in question is that of professional criminal).

You hang on too long and you start embarrassing yourself.

"To hang on" to a job is to keep doing it, even if you are too old or no longer qualified to do so.

We just took off on the biggest score we've ever had.

Luther's grammatically strange way of saying they just made more money than they ever had before.

You played the big con... You told me yourself it was some big game for mama's boys and flakes.

In this film, "the big con" is a plot to fool a very rich person out of a lot of money. A "mama's boy" is a sensitive man who was spoiled by his mother, and a "flake" is a great word for a person who is irresponsible and can't be trusted (or in certain contexts, a strange person).

I hung around and picked up a few things.

"To hang around" a place is to pass time, often not doing anything in particular. In this context, "to pick up" some things is to learn them.

Now I have a chance to step out when I'm ahead

This is Coleman's way of saying that he should quit his life as a criminal, now that he has some money to live on.

I have a brother in KC who runs a freight outlet. I can go halvesies with him.

KC is Kansas City. A "freight outlet" is a warehouse for the shipping of various goods, such as furniture. "To go halvesies" in a business is to split the costs and profits 50/50, but this is rarely used.

Henry Gondorff. I want you to look him up, because there ain't a better inside man alive.

"To look up" a person is to find out where they live and usually go and visit them. An "inside man" is a person who usually knows a lot about an organization, often from working within it.

To hell with that!

A crude way of saying "No way!"

He knew he was holding you back. :: Yeah, but we were partners.

In this case, "to hold back" a person is to prevent them from

being able to do all that they can do if given the chance.

If it weren't for Luther, I'd still be hustling pinball at Giralli's.

"To hustle pinball" is to try and make money by beating people at pinball games (which are large slanted boxes in which small metal balls are used to try and hit various targets).

You ain't gonna have anything if you don't lay off the games of chance.

"To lay off" something is to stop doing it. A "game of chance" refers to games on which people gamble, such as poker or bingo.

There's a depression on, you know.

A reference to the economic depression of the 1930s.

Things a little slow down at the bunco department?

That part of the police department or FBI that deals with con artists who illegally trick people out of their money, on occasion through complicated and fraudulent investment stories.

Suddenly lose the dominos? :: You scored blood money and you need a friend.

"Dominoes" are small rectangular cubes with one to six dots on each side. "You scored blood money" is Snyder's way of saying Hooker stole money from a dangerous person who may get violent because of it.

Go find yourself a shoplifter to roll.

A "shoplifter" is a person who takes things from stores without paying for them. In this case, "to roll" a person is to force them to pay protection or bribe money so that they won't get hurt or harassed.

You can stake out my toilet, if you want.

"To stake out" a person is to follow them or continually spy on them.

You tied into a loaded mark.

Gondorff's way of saying that Hooker stole money from a person who had a lot of money on them (In this film, a "mark" is a target or victim, and if a person is "loaded," they have a lot of money).

You and Coleman played the switch for him and blew him off to a cab on 49th.

Here, "to blow off" a person is to get rid of them or force them to leave.

I ain't stupid enough to play for no racket's money.

In this case, a "racket" is an organized crime family.

Not intentionally, maybe. That don't cut no ice with Lonnegan.

If something "doesn't cut any ice" with a person, it's not important or relevant to them. Very slangy and rare.

He'll swat you like a fly.

"To swat" a person is to forcefully hit or slap them.

Nobody can buy you a prayer if I put the finger on you.

In this context, "to put the finger" on a person is to order them killed.

I figure your end of the score was at least three Gs.

"To figure" something is to think it. Here, "the score" is the money that Hooker stole, and a "G" is a slangy way of saying \$1,000 dollars.

You're a smart egg, Hooker. No sense getting dead over 2 grand.

This is Snyder's very ungrammatical way of telling Hooker that a smart guy like him should not risk getting killed just to keep \$2,000.

Relax, Eerie, I'll bill ya.

"To bill" a person is to send them a bill that must be paid later. Note that you----->"ya" in rapid speech.

The stuff I gave him is counterfeit.

"Stuff" is a very general word for things, though here it refers to money. If money is "counterfeit," it is fake or not real.

He'll spot it the first place he tries to spend it.

"To spot" something is to notice it.

What the hell are you going to do if Snyder puts the finger on you?

A common filler added to Wh questions to show emotion such as anger or frustration.

I want my nickel back for that telephone.

A "nickel" is a coin that's worth five cents.

Hooker goes to Gondorff looking for revenge against Lonnegan, and soon plans are made to do "the big con."

You sober? :: Turn it off, will ya?

If a person is "sober," they're clear headed, and not drunk.

You're a real horse's ass.

An interesting but rarely used alternative to ass, asshole, jerk, etc.

He had you down as a big-timer; What happened?

This is Hooker's way of saying Luther described Gondorff as being much more important and successful than he seemed to really be.

I conned a Senator from Florida on a stock deal;

He thought he was going to take over GE.

“To con” a person is to fool them out of their money. In this case, a “stock deal” is probably the selling of company stock that was not worth what it was supposed to be. GE is the General Electric Corporation.

Some chanteuse woke him, though, and he put the feds on me.

“He told the FBI to go after me” (A chanteuse is a French word for a female singer, but Gondorff totally mispronounces it here).

You mean you blew it.

“To blow” something is to it very badly, or perhaps to screw it up completely or completely fail at it.

He didn't tell me you was a screw-up either.

A “screw up” is a person who does things poorly or is perhaps a failure in life in general (Note ‘to be’ is not conjugated correctly).

I lammed around a bunch of bohunk towns, one kick ahead of the G-men.

“To be on the lam” is to be on the run from the police, and thus to “lam around” is to be constantly running (though this is never used today). A “bohunk town” is small and boring, but this is rarely used (“Podunk” is!) A “G-man” is an FBI agent or other type of police officer.

I would be still, if Billie hadn't set me up here.

“To set up” a person in a particular place is to help them get settled in order to live or work there comfortably.

Don't kid yourself; I still know how.

“Don't lie to yourself.”

They staked out the other guy's place last night, but he never showed.

“To stake out” a place is to watch over it secretly for a long period of time. If a person doesn't “show,” he doesn't arrive or come (Be aware that “show up” is much more common).

They figure maybe he skipped town.

If a person “skips town,” they decide to leave quickly in order to avoid being arrested or hurt. An old-fashioned but excellent expression.

You see that fella in the red sweater...he works a few of the protection rackets.

A “fellow” is another word for a guy. The “protection rackets” are organized crime families that demand money from local businesses who pay in order to avoid being hurt or harassed.

If he finds out that I can be beat by one lousy grifter, I'll have to kill him and every other lousy hood who wants to muscle in on my Chicago operation.

“Lousy” is an excellent adjective meaning of poor quality or worthless.

A “hood” is a gangster, thug or bully. “To muscle in on” an organized crime family’s business is to try and force them out of the area, or to become the dominant force in that business.

Good lad.

A British way of saying good boy.

Check the main gear, will ya? Man-of-War started rattling and threw a kid on his head.

“Gear” is another word for machinery or equipment. If something starts to “rattle,” it begins to shake or vibrate noisily (Here, “Man-of-War” is one of the wooden horses on the children’s merry-go-round).

Great little countess, that Billy. She runs a spiffy house up there, too.

A “countess” is a European noble, or member of the ruling class during the middle ages. If a house is “spiffy,” it is neat and clean.

He croaked Luther; Anything else I got to know?

“To croak” is a very slangy word meaning to die, though it is no longer used, as here, as a transitive verb meaning to kill.

He owns a packing house, a few banks....
and half the politicians in New York and Chicago.

A “packing house” is a factory where meat is cut up and packaged for sale (Gondorff is telling Hooker how powerful Lonnegan is).

Not a fix in the world is going to cool him out if he blows on you.

In this case, a “fix” is a bribe or payoff. “To cool out” is to calm down, and here, “to blow on” a person is to order them killed.

It’s not like playing winos in the street.

A “wino” is a homeless person who drinks too much (wine or other liquor). Gondorff is saying it’s going to be very hard to con Lonnegan.

You can’t outrun Lonnegan.

“To outrun” a person is to run faster than them, often in the hopes of escaping them.

You got to keep his con even after you take his money. He can’t know that you took him.

This is Gondorff’s way of saying that even after they get Lonnegan’s money, Lonnegan must never know that he was in fact fooled.

You’re talking about a guy who would kill a grifter over a chunk of money that wouldn’t support him two days.

A “chunk” is a large quantity, or a thick piece or lump.

I just don’t want a hot-head looking to get even, coming back saying “it ain’t enough,” cause it’s all were going to get.

A “hot-head” is a person with a violent temper. “To get even” with a person is to get revenge against them after they have done something bad to you.

Can you get a mob together?

A group of violent people (although “*the mob*” refers to the Mafia).

Lonnegan gets most of his money....from the numbers, even though he’s putting more and more money into his savings and loan business.

In the case, “the numbers” refers to illegal gambling activity. A “savings and loan” is a bank that loans money to home buyers.

He came out of Five Points, but he’s been telling everybody that he was born in Forest Hills.

“To come out of” a place is to be from that place (Five Points is a New York working class neighborhood while Forest Hills is very rich).

He knows the market. I don’t think we can take him on a stocks deal.

In this case, “the market” refers to the stock market, and “to take” a person is a con them out of their money. A “stocks deal” is a business agreement involving the sale of a company’s stock.

What about the numbers? Tipsters say it’s run out of a packing house on 14th by a guy named Combs.

A “tipster” is a person who provides secret or hard to get information (Here, he’s saying there’s an illegal gambling operation on 14th).

He stays away from the day to day stuff in case its raided.

“The day to day stuff” of a business refers to the ordinary details of that organization’s daily operations. If a place is “raided,” it is surprised and forcefully searched by police who are looking for illegal activity.

These are two of Comb’s favorite torpedoes; Riley and Cole.

A “torpedo” is a deadly missile, or here, two vicious criminals.

They found him in a quarry with a knife in his eye.

A place for obtaining building stone or other materials in the ground.

Lonnegan has had seven or eight people rubbed on his way up.

If a gangster “rubs out” an enemy, he kills them (Here, “on his way up” means on his way toward becoming the head of the crime family).

His pattern has been to get close to a racket boss, learn the operation, and then move in on it.

Here, a “pattern” is a consistent way of doing something. A “racket boss” is the head of a crime family, and to “move in on” another crime family is to work to defeat it or take it over.

He's vindictive as hell, Henry.

If a person is "vindictive," they always want to get revenge against anybody who they think has hurt them. "As hell" is a filler expression that is used to intensify the adjective.

He kills for pride. Doesn't add up to let Hooker just get away from him.

If something "doesn't add up," it doesn't make sense.

If they put you on the spot, we got to fold the con. You got that?

"To put a person on the spot" is to force them to answer very personal or embarrassing questions. "To fold" a plan is to close it. Gondorff is telling Hooker that if Lonnegan suspects a con, they have to stop it.

That's a Joliet badge, Snyder. It don't cut much up here.

A "badge" is a metal device that is worn to identify people such as police officers. If it doesn't "cut much," it's not considered very impressive (i.e....people in Chicago are not scared of the Joliet police).

I'm looking for a guy on the lam for a counterfeiting rap. Thought he might have come up here.

If a person is "on the lam," they are on the run and trying to escape from the police. A person who has a "counterfeiting rap" has been accused of making or spending fake money.

I always bounce the lamsters.

"To bounce" a person is slangy way of saying to kick them out of a club or party (A "lamster is a person on the lam, but this is never used).

He's an Irishman who doesn't drink, doesn't smoke and doesn't chase dames.

A "dame" is silly and dated word for an attractive women.

Just him against the house.

In a gambling context, "the house" is the casino.

The porters say he runs a braced game on the Century Limited.

A "porter" takes care of the luggage on a passenger train. In this case, "braced" means unfair or corrupt, but this is never used. The Century Limited is a train that goes between New York and Chicago.

\$100 minimum, straight poker. And a lot of high rollers ride that train just to play with him.

A poker game that is "\$100 minimum" means that each bet must be at least that amount. "High rollers" are rich people who gamble a lot of money at casinos (They are much loved in Las Vegas).

I'm going to check all the joy houses until I find him.

A very dated term for a whorehouse, or house of prostitution.

You'd be busting in on the chief of police just up the hall.

"To bust in on" a room is to violently enter it by surprise, often by pushing down the door.

With no fix, we're going to need a con with a sure-fire blow off.

This is Gondorff's way of saying that they will have to create a plan (or con job) where the victim (Lonnegan) doesn't know what has happened to him.

It's the tightest game we got, and it's not all over the papers yet.

In this case, "tightest" means the best, or most likely to be successful. If a news story is "all over the papers," its being widely written about.

We'll use the wire. I haven't known a poker player yet who didn't want to beat the ponies.

Here, "the wire" refers to the telegraph wire that delivers information. A "pony" is a young horse, and thus this refers to the horse races.

It will take two of us working the inside;

Any objection to Hooker as second man?

In this context, "working the inside" means to get into an organization and pretend to be someone you aren't. An "objection" is the act of being opposed to or against a plan.

We'll give Lonnegan the hook on the train and play him here.

A hook is a small metal device that can pull things, though here it is used to refer to anything that can seduce or attract a person.

All you got to do is show up with a lot of money and look like a sucker.

A "sucker" is a good word for a person who is easily fooled or tricked.

Any of you guys passing bad money?

A person "passing bad money" is trying to spend counterfeit money.

If he comes in again, stall him, so I can get a look at him.

"To stall" a person is to try and slow them down, or prevent them from leaving.

Watch your step. There's a dip down to your left.

"Watch your step" is a way of telling a person to walk carefully. A "dip" is an inclination down, or perhaps a decline in a surface.

That building at the end of the alley---Do you manage that?

An "alley" is a narrow street found behind houses or buildings.

All we'll need is the bookie set up for now.

A “bookie” is a person who places illegal bets. In this case, a “set up” is an artificial or fake building, much like what’s used in a movie studio.

That will give you phones, cages, black boards and ticker gear.

“Ticker gear” is the electronic tape that rotates around, giving information on such things as stock prices and horse races.

If you want a counter and bar, that’s another grand. :: Pretty steep, Benny.

A “counter” is a long and narrow piece of furniture where people eat at a restaurant. A “grand” is \$1,000. If the price of X is “pretty steep,” it’s considered pretty expensive (A steep angle points up high).

Gondorff’s still a hot item; Where would I be if he gets hit?

In this case, a “hot item” is a person who has a lot dangerous enemies, and if he is “hit,” he is probably attacked or killed.

How do you want to work this? Flat rate or percentage?

Note that in a business deal, a person could choose to get paid a flat rate, which is an agreed upon figure such as \$1,000, or a set percentage, such as 20% of the total profits, whatever they happens to be.

He’s not as tough as he thinks. :: Neither are we.

Here, “tough” is strong or dangerous (though it often means difficult).

Goldie, you old son of a gun.

An affectionate alternative to son of a bitch.

You heard about Luther Coleman? Yeah, some of the boys were passing the hat for Alma and the kids.

“To pass the hat” is to collect money for a good cause.

I never seen the guys so worked up.

If people are really “worked up” about something, they are extremely angry or upset about it.

Gondorff is setting up a wire store. I’m going to need a 20 man boost, right away.

A “boost” is an increase, in this case in the number of workers.

Take your pick.

A way of telling a person to choose the one that they want.

He packed it in and enrolled in a detective school.

“To pack it in” is to quit what you were doing. “To enroll” in a school is to officially register for it. A “detective” is a person who investigates crimes, and is often a member of the police or an FBI agent.

That son of a bitch.

A classic insult for mean or abusive people.

We're going to run the route tonight.

In this case, "to run the route" means to practice the con game.

If this thing blows up, I can't do you no good downtown.

"To blow up" means to explode, though here it means to fail because either the victim or the police find out about the con.

If this thing blows up, the feds will be the least of our problems.

The "feds" is a way of referring to the FBI or other law enforcement people that work for the federal government.

***Gondorff joins Lonnegan for poker on the train, and
Hooker follows afterward with an irresistible proposal.***

I gave the him a c-note. :: Did you find out the deck?

A "c-note" is a \$100 bill. A "deck of cards" has 52 cards total.

He likes to cold-deck low, eights or nines.

A slangy way of saying that he likes to cheat using the 8 and 9 cards.

She picked him clean. He never missed it.

In this case, "to pick a person clean" is to pickpocket their wallet without them ever noticing.

Just worry about your end, kid.

This is Gondorff's way of telling Hooker to stop worrying about others and to make sure he does his own part of the con as well as possible.

You sure you checked this guy out? :: He seems like a pleasant man, a lot of cash, expensive suit. I'll vouch for him.

"To check out" a person is to investigate them to make sure they are OK or acceptable. "To vouch for" a person is to give personal assurance that their behavior will be fine.

Always drink gin with a mark.

A type of hard liquor.

Sorry I'm late guys, I was taking a crap. The name's Shaw.

A very crude way of saying to go to the bathroom, or more specifically, to defecate.

This is a gentleman's game. We assume you're all good for your debts.

A "gentleman's game" is a snobby way of saying a game for rich people.

If a person is “good for their debts,” they’ll be able to pay whatever money they owe to others.

I can still shill, board, anything you want.

“To shill” is to pretend to be a person that you are not
(There are many shills involved in a big con).

I don’t run with riffraff, and I only drink on weekends.

“Riffraff” is an excellent word to describe people who are seen as uneducated, disreputable, violent or just likely to cause trouble.

We got a rack of suits. Pick yourself out a nice tweed one.

A “rack” is a metal bar for holding clothes. “Tweed” is a type of cloth.

I’ll call and raise \$300. :: Fold.

In poker, “to call and raise” is to agree to bet what was bet before, and then to add even more money to the original bet. “To fold” is to get out of the poker hand, which means you lose the money you already bet.

Tough luck, Lannehan, but that’s what you get for playing with your head up your ass.

This is Gondorff’s way of trying to anger Lonnegan after he just beat him at poker. Obviously, it is very insulting to accuse a person of doing anything with their head up their ass!

We brought you a tap into the wire. You’ll get race results, odds, scratches, pole positions, everything, and just as fast as Western Union gets them.

A “tap” is a device that allows a person to collect data from a wired telegraph (or to secretly listen into a phone conversation). In horse racing, the “odds” are the chances a horse will win a race (2-1, 7-2, etc), “scratches” are those horses that withdraw from the race, and “pole positions” refers to the lane the horse will start in. Western Union is (still!) the biggest telegraph company in the world.

You got moxie, Eerie. Get yourself a suit.

“Moxie” is an interesting little word for courage or determination.

They wouldn’t let you in here if you weren’t a chump.

A fool or dupe, who can easily be tricked out of their money.

Tempers seems to be running a little high.

A person’s “temper” is their tendency to become angry, and if it is running high, they are already angry or very emotional.

I’m gonna bust that bastard bookie in one play.

In this context, “to bust” a person is to take all their money so that they go bankrupt. A “bastard” is a crude word for a mean or abusive person (though here it’s actually used as an adjective), and a “bookie” is a person who places illegal bets.

Hey, where's your ante?

In poker, an "ante" is the minimum amount of money that a player is required to bet in order to play in the game.

Four jacks. You owe me 15 grand, pal.

A "jack" is the 4th most valuable card. A "grand" is \$1,000 dollars.

Don't hand me any of that crap; When you come to a game like this, you bring your money!

"Crap" is a very vulgar word for lies or nonsense (and is similar to bullshit, though not as common).

How do I know you won't take a powder?

Here, "to take a powder" means to leave, though this is rarely used.

You better have the money, or it's going to be all over Chicago that you welched.

"To welch" on a person is a slang term meaning to refuse to pay them what you owe, though this is fairly rare.

Cash me in for the rest of these bums.

In poker, "to cash in" your chips is to exchange your poker chips for cash. A "bum" is poor, homeless or disliked street person.

You're on kid, but I got to tell you. It's a hard act to follow.

In this case, if a person is "on," they are the one performing for an audience or on stage. If a performance is "a hard act to follow," it was so good that the person who has to entertain the audience afterward will have a hard time in comparison.

He's steaming. Watch yourself.

If a person is "steaming", they are very angry. "Watch yourself" is another way of telling a person to be careful.

He's been waiting for you to cheat him so that he could clip you.

In this case, "to clip" is to steal or rob, but this is never used (To clip literally means to cut or trim).

Who do you think you're talking to, errand boy? Nobody sets me up!

An "errand boy" is a low-paid assistant who does small jobs such as the laundry or paying bills for an employer. In this context, "to set up" a person is to put them in a situation where they are easily fooled.

There were four witnesses!

A "witness" is a person who has seen the carrying out of a crime.

There's better ways of taking him down!

In this case, to "take down" a person is to financially destroy them.

Why the rat? :: I want to take over his operation and I need you to help me break him.

"To rat" on a person is to tell their secrets to somebody else (though it's never used as a noun, as Lonnegan does here). In this context, a gangster's "operation" refers to the illegal business they run and the mobsters who help him run it, and "to break" a person is to destroy or at least severely hurt them.

We're pulling in.

If a train or bus "pulls in" to a station, it is in the process of arriving.

I'm giving you a lift home.

"A lift" is the act of being driven in a car.

I know his organization backwards and forwards and I need someone respectable, but not completely legit.

To know something "backwards and forwards" is to know or understand it very well, or in great detail. If a person is "legit," they can be trusted and are who they claim to be (though here it's used more in the sense of a good member of society).

I keep his books. He trusts me.

"To keep the books" in a business is to take care of the financial records, or accounting.

I'm going to have to keep you away from this guy; You're liable to get ideas.

If a person is "liable to" do something, they are likely to do it (Lonnegan is worried Floyd will get the same ideas Hooker's had).

"The big con" moves forward as Lonnegan sees the horse racing fraud in action, while Hooker himself keeps just one step ahead of Snyder.

What about Lonnegan? :: I gave him the breakdown, just like you said.

A "breakdown" of a story is a detailed summary of the facts.

He threatened to kill me. :: If they don't do that, you're not getting to him.

"To threaten" a person is to warn that you may hurt them. In this context, "to get to" a person is to emotionally upset them.

Somebody must have wised him up.

Here, "to wise up" a person is to tell them some important information (If a person is wise, they show good sense or judgement).

Put Salino on to it. :: Why waste our best people on a small-time job?

“To put a person on a job” is to have them take care of it.

This is a nickel and dime grifter were after.

If a grifter or con man is “nickel and dime,” he is a small-time and unimportant criminal (A nickel is five cents, and a dime is 10 cents).

He won't be coming in; Not to be getting bounced off a job, anyway.

If a person is “bounced off,” a job, they are removed or taken away from it (A ball that bounces off a wall springs or moves back from it).

If Cole wants to muscle in, that's his business, but he's breaking the rules and Salino won't like it.

“To muscle in” on a Mafia operation is to try and take it over.

Those odds on the 3rd race are wrong.

The “odds” in a horse race refers to the amount of money you will win if the horse you bet on wins (3-1, 7-2, etc).

All you have to do is take this two grand across the street to Shaw's place and bet it on that pony.

A “pony” is a young horse.

You'll not break him with a \$2,000 bet.

In this case, to “break” a person means to take all their money, or more specifically, to bankrupt them.

The horse is Blue Note to win.

When gambling on horse, a person bets on a horse “to win” (finish first), “to place” (first or second) or “to show” (first, second or third).

Lady Scott by a length!

In horse racing, a “length” is the distance between the front and end of a horse (Here, Lady Scott is the name of a horse).

Into the stretch, it's Lady Scott ahead!

In horse racing, “the stretch” is the last part of the race.

Blue note is 7 to 1.

In this case, for every dollar bet on Blue Note, you will get \$7 back, if Blue Note wins.

Make sure you can see the cash. He's got a name for betting money he doesn't have.

Here, “to have a name for” something is to have a reputation for it.

The flag is up, and they're off and running.

The words that an announcer says to start every horse race.

Lady Higloss is a hell of a finisher. Chancey is going to have to open up.

If a horse is “a hell of a finisher,” they are well know for coming from behind and winning at the very end. If a horse needs to “open up,” it needs to run more quickly if it is to have a chance of winning.

Probably there just to round out the field.

If a horse is in a race just to “round out the field,” they are put in just because one more is needed to have enough horses in the race.

Great tip you handed me, kid.

A “tip” is a piece of very useful information.

And Blue Note wins it by a nose! :: Who in blazes is Blue Note?

If a horse “wins by a nose,” they literally finish ahead of the second horse by the length of their nose. “In blazes” was a filler expression for Wh questions like “the hell,” but it is no longer used.

Get them out of here and don’t bring them back; This is a class joint.

If a bar or club is a “class joint,” it has elegance, grace or style (Joint is a slangy way to refer to any kind of small public place).

Don’t give me any of your lip, kid. Now, run them out of here.

This is a very direct way of telling a person to not talk back or say anything that can be seen as offensive.

What do you say, pal?

One way of saying friend, though note it is often used sarcastically when talking to people who are clearly not friends.

We’re going to put down 400 grand next week. At 5-1, that’s \$2,000,000.

“To put down” money is to spend it, or in this case, to gamble it. “400 grand” is \$400,000 dollars.

20 percent of that is yours if you stick with it. :: Got a system, Kelly?

“To stick with” something is to continue to do it. In this case, a “system” is an organized plan for winning at the horse races.

You’re past-posting, aren’t you? :: Could be.

Here, to “past-post” is to release the results of a race several minutes after it is run, so people with that information can bet on those races.

He runs the control office at Western Union. Race results from all over the country come in and go across his desk to the bookies.

Western Union was the biggest telegraph company in the US.

All he does is hold them up for a couple minutes so he can call us and get a bet down on the wire.

“To hold up” a person is to delay or stall them.

We clean up on a race that’s already been run.

“To clean up on” a business deal is to make a lot of money on it.

Besides, if your set-up is as good as you say it is, there’s plenty more to come.
A “set-up” is a system or plan, in this case to bet on horse races where you already know the results.

You’ve been waiting a long time for this. Don’t ruin it for yourself.
“To ruin” something is to badly damage or destroy it.

Twist, I told him the tale, but he didn’t go for it.
A “tale” is a story or account, often that is untrue. “To go for” a story is to believe it (though again, it often is not true).

We’ll never get a telegraph store set up by then. Any chance of talking him out of it.
“To talk a person out of” something is to convince them not to do it.

All right, we’ll have to play him on the fly.
To do something “on the fly” is to do it spontaneously, or with little or no planning.

You can’t play your friends like marks.
“You can’t treat your friends like the people you’re trying to con.”

All we need is a couple of days and then we can get the son of a bitch and nail him.
A “son of a bitch” is a mean or abusive person.
“To nail” a person is to trap, destroy or kill them.

I teach you stuff that maybe five guys in the whole world know.
A widely used word for things.

All I’m asking for is two days; I can stay clean that long.
In this case, to “stay clean” means to avoid getting in trouble.

Christ, they’ll probably miss you and hit me.
A common way of expressing anger or other emotion.

***Hooker falls for a waitress, Snyder faces the FBI,
and Lonnegan prepares to bet it all.***

What will you have? :: Give me the Blue Plate special.
A common way for restaurants to refer to the special meal of the day.

I guess I should have had the meat loaf.
A type of hamburger meat which is typical of old-fashioned American food.

I'm filling in for a fellow worker for a couple days until I get a train out of here.

"To fill in" for a worker is to do their job for them.

I got a work order for a paint-job.

Note the construction; A job that requires painting.

You ought to lay off the skirts. You don't find any of my boys messing around with that kind of trash.

"To lay off" something is to stop doing it, and "skirts" is a ridiculous way of referring to women (A skirt is short dress).

"To mess around" with a person is to get involved with them.

He's like all the supervisors. They think they're too good for regular people.

A "supervisor" is a person who manages other people in a business.

I was in here a while ago and the place was a mess.

If something is a "mess," it is very dirty, cluttered or disorganized.

We've got to cover the floor, the furniture, everything, so we don't spill on nothing.

"To spill" a liquid is to accidentally pour it out on to something.

If you want to sit in here with a tarp over your head, you're welcome to it.

A "tarp" is a piece of plastic or rubber for protecting exposed objects.

We got 400 grand coming in from the coast next week; You're gonna risk that on a lousy 15 Gs?

A "G" is a gangster's way of saying a grand, or more specifically, \$1000.

If it works again tomorrow, I'll finance the whole thing.

"To finance" a project is to provide all the necessary money for it.

Half a million dollars. 60-40 we split.

"To split" the profits is to divide them, in this case 60% and 40%.

We can't keep going into Shaw's place and cleaning up on long-shots.

One way of saying to make a lot of money on horses that are considered very unlikely to win their races.

He's bound to get wise. :: All right, we'll go for short odds.

If a person is "bound to" do something, he is likely to do it.

A person who is "wise" has good judgement, or in this case, begins to realize what is actually happening. If a horse has "short odds," it is thought to have a good chance of winning the race they're in.

Sit down and shut up and try not to live up to all my expectations.

If a person "lives up to your expectations," they are as smart and

nice (or stupid and horrible!) as you thought they would be.

We've been told you know a hustle-artist named Johnny Hooker.

A "hustle artist" is another rare word for a con-artist, grifter or thief.

He's chumming around with a big C named Henry Gondorff; Ring any bells?

"To chum around" with somebody is to pass time with them as friends (a chum is a pal). In this context, "a big C" is a major criminal, but this is never used. If something "rings a bell," it sounds familiar.

Every bunco squad in the country knows Gondorff.

The "bunco squads" of the police are those policemen that deal with con artists, fraud and similar types of thievery.

We've got a year old Florida warrant on, but it's a thin beef.

Here, a "warrant" refers to an official document approved by a judge that allows the police to arrest a suspected criminal. "A thin beef" is Polk's way of saying the charge in the warrant isn't very serious.

He can beat it in court unless we can catch him cold.

This is Polk's way of saying Gondorff will not be convicted of a crime unless they can catch him in the actual act of doing it.

If word gets out that the feds are in on it, Gondorff will fold up the whole thing.

If "word gets out," it means that a secret is exposed to lots of people. If a person is "in on it," this means that they are involved in it, and if a person decides to "fold up" a plan, they shut it down.

Don't crack wise with me, flat foot.

To say a "wise crack" is to say something sarcastic or cynical in a joking manner, but to "crack wise" is never used.

I've spent too much time in dumps like this eating Gondorff's dust while you guys in the bunco squad get rich tipping him off.

A "dump" is a dirty and unpleasant place. "To eat a person's dust" is to fail to catch them because you arrive too late. "To tip off" a person is to tell them some critical news (such as the fact the police are after them).

If you do a good job and keep your mouth shut, they'll be some reward bucks in it for you.

A "buck" is a dollar. This is Polk telling Snyder that if he cooperates with the FBI, he'll get some money.

I had a good one on the lead at Lincoln field, but he faded.

If something "fades," it grows weaker or more distant (In this case, a horse that was in the lead started to slow down and lost the race).

All the long-shots are coming in today.

This is to say that all the horses that have long odds against them (10-1, 20-1, etc) are now winning.

You can forget the boodle. He could hit us for 15 grand at 4 to 1. We can't handle that.

A "boodle" is a lot of money, though this is rarely used. This is Gondorff's way of saying he can't accept the bet, since if he loses, the casino wouldn't have enough money to pay it off.

Give him the shut-out.

In this case, the act of preventing a person from betting by claiming that they have made their bet too late.

To win...place....and show.

A horse that comes in first wins, if it comes in second, it places, and if it comes in third, it shows.

The weather's threatening, but the track is fast there in Salem, New Hampshire.

If weather is "threatening," there is a good chance that it may rain. If a race track is fast, it's believed the track conditions will allow the horses to run very fast.

Here's a late jockey change.

The "jockey" is the person who rides the horse in a race.

It's five and half furlongs. They're at the post, the flag is up, and they're off.

A "furlong" is a unit of distance about 200 yards. The "post" is the starting point of a race, where the flag is raised once it starts.

There's a late scratch.

If a horse is "scratched," it is decided that it won't enter the race.

I'll have half a million by post time tomorrow. Lay it on the first race when the odds are four to one or better.

"Post time" is the time at which a race begins. "To lay money" on a race is to bet on it, though this not really used.

Figure it out for yourself, Kelly.

"To figure out" how to do something is to learn how to do it.

Do what I tell you and everything will be jake.

"Jake" is fine or OK, though this is no longer used.

Hey there, Snyder. **Long time, no see**.

A good way to greet a person who you have not seen in a long time!

Chuck, get this off to the department, right away.
 In this case, “to get off” a message is to mail or send it.

Lieutenant Snyder doesn't know shit.
 A very crude way of saying that Snyder doesn't know anything.

You ain't got nothing on me. :: How about counterfeiting?
 If the police don't “have anything on” a suspect, they don't have enough evidence to charge them with a crime.

All you've got to do is tell us when he's going to make his chump.
 A “chump” is an easily fooled or victimized person. Thus, this is a way of saying to carry out a con game, but it is never used.

We come in at the sting, make the pinch, and you walk out free as a bird.
 “The sting” is the moment the victim loses his money in a con game, and here, the pinch is when a criminal suspect is arrested.

You want to spend the next 20 years in a federal penitentiary?
 A “penitentiary” is a prison (Both the 50 states and the federal government run them).

I'll make parole. :: Like hell. You won't even get a review.
 To “make parole” is to be released from prison early for good behavior.
 “Like hell” is a slangy way of saying “no way,” and in this case, a “review” is a hearing to see if a prisoner should be released early.

I'll chance it. :: Ok, we might even provide you with a little company on your way up the river.
 “To chance it” is to take the risk. If a criminal is “sent up the river,” they are sent off to prison.

Pretty fair grifter in her time. Snyder's given us quite a folder on her.
 If a person is “pretty fair” at what they do, they're pretty good at it.
 Here, a “folder” is a file with information on a criminal record.

Put them all together, and it could add up to a lot of years.
 This is Polk's way of saying that Alma might have to spend a lot of years in jail when all of her small crimes are combined.

You stink, mister. :: Don't be a sap.
 If you tell a person that they stink, you're saying that they are disgusting or revolting. A “sap” is an interesting word for a foolish, gullible or easily fooled person.

If you're too dumb to save yourself, there's no sense dragging her down with you.
 “To drag” something is to pull it, though to “drag down” a person

is to bring them down and force lots of problems on to them.

Hell yes, we don't care about the mark. He deserves what he gets.

"Hell yes" is a slangy way of saying absolutely, or for sure.

OK, but if you try to take it on the lam, we'll shoot you down on sight.

This is Polk's way of telling Hooker that if he tries to escape, they'll shoot him immediately (To be "on the lam" is to escape from the law).

You're not saying much. :: I just got the jump, that's all.

In this case, Hooker's way of saying he is impatient to start the con.

Chicago was a rigged town. The fix was in, and the dicks took their end without a beef.

If a town is "rigged," the police and politicians are corrupt and paid off by the Mafia. In this context, a "fix" is a bribe or pay-off and "dicks" are the police. If a person "doesn't have a beef," they have no complaints.

Nothing's going to make up for Luther. Revenge is for suckers.

If something "makes up for" the death of a person, it at least makes it easier to deal with that death, or more specifically, it compensates for it. "Revenge" is the act of doing something bad to somebody who has done something bad to you. A "sucker" is a slang word for a person who is easily fooled, or more generally, a loser.

Why are you doing it? :: It seems worthwhile, doesn't it?

If something is "worthwhile" it is worth the cost in money, time, effort or anything else.

I was wondering if you might want to come out for a while. Maybe have a drink or something. :: You move right along, don't you?

"I was wondering if" is the safest way to begin a request when you want to ask out a person for a date. "To move right along" is to act quickly.

Come on, Henry. :: Knock off.

A fairly rare way of telling a person to go to sleep.

Everything's all set. They'll be a guy or two at the door, but nobody's carrying any heaters, so you shouldn't have any trouble.

If everything in a plan is "set," it is prepared and ready (Here, "heaters" is a slang word for guns, but this is not used).

Hooker escapes one last time and Lonnegan walks into Gondorff's trap....

Lonnegan's people set her up in the diner.

If a person has been "set up" at a place, she has been assisted in getting settled there by others. A "diner" is a casual restaurant with a counter.

Gondorff asked me **to look after** you.

“To look after” a person is to watch them over a period of time, to make sure that they are OK.

Get him out of there fast, before the reporters **show up**.

A widely used phrasal verb meaning to arrive or appear.

I don't want any **big shots** around to **mess this up** for me.

A “big shot” is a person who is important, or at least thinks they are. “To mess up” something is to hurt, damage or destroy it.

Place it on Lucky Dan, 3rd race, at Riverside park.

Note the ambiguity!: “To place” a bet is to make it, but if you bet on a horse “to place,” you are betting that it will finish just 3rd or better.

Not only are you a **cheat**, you're a **gutless** cheat as well.

Although it's usually a verb, note that a person can *be* a cheat.

If a person is “gutless,” they are a coward or easily scared or intimidated (If you have a lot of guts, you are brave. Guts are stomach intestines).

Into the **back stretch**, it's Lucky Dan by a **length**...

The “back stretch” of a horse race is after the final turn.

A “length” is the distance between the front and end of a horse.

To win? I said place it on Lucky Dan to place!

Note how the ambiguity is explained.

Make sure they're not carrying anything.

This is what a police officer would say when he is worried that the person they are arresting might have a hidden gun.

There's a couple of dead guys in there, too, and you can't **get mixed up in** that.

To “get mixed up” in something is to become involved in it.

Can you believe it?! :: We **pulled it off!**

One of the truly great phrasal verbs: In this context, “to pull off” a difficult project or assignment is to successfully accomplish it.

Snyder **went for it** all the way!

If a person “goes for” a story or con, they believe it.

OK, you can pick up your **splits** from Eddie at Brudeau's tonight.

“To split” the profits or a sum of money is to divide it, though here the money that is owed is used as a noun.

Nice going, JJ.

A common thing to say to a person who has just done something well.

You're not going to stick around for your share? :: I'd only **blow** it.
"To stick around" for something is to stay and wait for it.
In this case, "to blow it" means to waste or lose money.

The Sting

Possible Topics for ESL Class Discussion

1. What made the plot so difficult to follow? Was it too complicated?
2. Is it possible that career criminals can really be so likeable?
3. Are there gangsters and organized crime in your country?
Do you think there still is in the United States?
4. Was “the big con” that Gondorff organized realistic?
Could it have truly worked in real life?
5. What did you like and not like about this movie?