

Dog Day Afternoon

(Drama) (1975)

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Major characters

Sonny.....Al Pacino

A loving father, a veteran of the Vietnam war, a "good Catholic," and a bank robber.

Sal.....John Cazale

Sonny's partner in the bank robbery.

Mulvaney.....Sully Boyar

Manager of the bank that Sonny and Sal decide to rob.

Moretti.....Charles Dunning

The lead police detective who has to negotiate with Sonny in order to protect the hostages in the bank.

Leon.....Chris Sarandon

Sonny's homosexual "wife," who wants money for a sex-change operation that will make him a woman.

Angie.....

Sonny's wife, and the mother of his two children.

Sheldon.....James Broderick

The head FBI agent brought in to negotiate with Sonny.

Margaret.....Beulah Garrick

The head bank teller, and unofficial leader of the hostages.

Plot Summary

This movie is based on a true incident that took place in August 1972, in Brooklyn, New York (Brooklyn is a part of New York City). Sonny and Sal are unemployed Vietnam War veterans, and former prisoners, who decide to rob a bank. Unfortunately, the robbery quickly goes bad, and the police arrive with Sonny and Sal still in the bank.

Although they had no intention of doing so, Sonny and Sal suddenly find themselves taking a dozen hostages in order to be able to negotiate with the police. Quickly, the bank robbery becomes a "media circus," as TV and other reporters bring live coverage of the event to the city of New York.

Over the course of the next several hours, Sonny desperately tries to hold on to his freedom, while simultaneously satisfying the various demands of his partner, the various hostages, the police and his not- so-typical family. Eventually, it is agreed that Sonny and Sal will get to fly out of the country on a jet in exchange for the release of the hostages, but not before Sonny has final conversations with his wife, homosexual lover and frantic mother.

Words and Expressions that You may not Know

A bank robbery begins in Brooklyn...

It requires downtown approval.

A reference to the bank headquarters (for a loan approval).

I'm getting really bad vibes.

"Vibes" is short for vibrations, or a "feeling" that people get when trying to analyze a situation.

We should take something smaller.

Here, meaning to rob a smaller bank.

Freeze! Nobody move!

What a person with a gun says to a person about to grab one.

Get away from the alarms.

System of bells or other noises that alert the police.

If he moves, take his head off!

A colloquial way to say "shoot him in the head"

Oh, fuck me.

A good place to point out that this movie will show you almost every possible way that the word "fuck" is used in English:

Imperative command: Fuck you, fuck me, go fuck yourself.

Noun: You are such a fuck, that fuck, I'm a fuck-up.

Noun in set expressions: What the fuck are you doing?

Why the fuck did you do that?

Adjective: A fucking idiot, a fucking mess.

Adverb: We're fucking doing it!

A crude verb meaning to have sex: Actually, this is the one meaning not used in the film! (except in a very sarcastic sense).

He can't make it.

Here, meaning he won't survive.

Let them go! Let them out!

Note that in rapid speech, "let them" and "let him"---->"let'em"

"Stevie."

The 3rd bank robber who decides to leave out of fear

We're moving along, just moving along.

A colloquial way to say that "we're making progress."

What's this? A squirrel?

A small rodent that many people think is cute.

Knock out the TV!

A boxing term, meaning to disable, or make unconscious.

No replay, no alarms.

The term for the film that can be played back later.

Vault.

A room where banks keep money and other valuables.

Are you trying to trip the alarm?

Here, meaning to set off or trigger, perhaps secretly.

I must have been out of my mind.

A common colloquial term meaning crazy or insane.

The head teller.

Bank tellers serve customers at a bank. The "head teller" is the one in charge of all the others.

Don't play games.

Here, it means "don't try to psychologically manipulate me ."

Decoy money. It's marked.

"Decoy money" is marked with tiny symbols as a way to later catch robbers when they try to spend it (A "decoy" is a person or thing that is used as a trap).

Cheer up, you'll be the veteran of a bank robbery.

Someone experienced in a particular skill or situation, as well as a word to describe people who had served in the military.

I bark, he bites.

People talk, and dogs "bark." This is Sonny's way to tell the others that Sal will do what he says.

Watch your language!

What parents tell their kids: "Don't use dirty words."

The registrar.

Where official records are kept

What the hell are you doing?

Note the grammar of these "Wh questions:" In such expressions, "hell" and "fuck" are interchangeable, though "fuck" is much cruder.

Put out the fire.

The much more common phrasal verb for "extinguish."

Get rid of him!

Here, a common way to say "make him leave, any way possible."

Cigarette butt in the wastebasket.

The remains of a cigarette after being smoked.

On the verge of leaving, Sonny and Sal suddenly realize that the police have surrounded the bank.

Asshole, we've got you completely by the balls.

Very crude: An "asshole" is generally a jerk, and the expression that follows is a clever but very nasty way of saying that "we can do whatever we want to you" (i.e...."balls" refer to testicles).

Cops.

Common and colloquial for "police."

What did you do, just barge in on a whim?

To "barge in" is to enter in a great hurry, while to do something "on a whim" is to do it without any preparation.

That fuck Jack gave me the wrong information

"Fuck" as a noun!: Rare, but used, and very crude.

Listen, **bastards**, keep away from this bank or we'll throw bodies out the door one at a time.

"Bastard" is a vulgar insult for a mean or unpleasant male
[Listen carefully: This sentence is said very quickly].

It's for the squirrel.

Here, referring to the phone call for the girl hiding under the desk.

WNAW plays all the hits.

Four letters like this refer to American radio stations
(In this case, one that plays "hit songs").

He wants to know what time you'll be **through**?

To be "through" with something is to be done, or finished with it.

Come on!

Put here to remind you that "come on" may be the greatest and most used phrasal verb in English, and can mean everything from "be serious" to "let's go," depending on the context.

There's **a way out** of this.

In this context, a "way out" is a way to find a solution or escape.

I meant it.

"I was very serious about what I said."

One step at a time.

A good expression to explain how one hopes to accomplish a big goal.

Asthma.

A disease that makes it difficult to breath.

Hold it!

Here, it means "stop what you're doing."

No complaints, whatsoever.

When used at the end of a negative sentence,
"whatsoever" means absolutely, or completely.

They don't give a fuck about your bank insurance.

A crude and common way to say "they don't care."

See what they did at Attica?

The name of a prison in New York where over
40 prisoners died during a prison riot in 1970.

You won't fuck with me, will you?

"To fuck with" somebody is lie to, or to try to manipulate them.

The FBI.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation: The very famous police for the Federal Government (as opposed to city government).

An error in judgment.

Another way of saying a miscalculation, or strategic mistake.

We thought the sons of bitches would be overwhelmed with remorse by the sight of a police officer.

Said sarcastically: "Sons of bitches" (or SOBs) is crude and common for a mean or bad person. "Remorse" is guilt.

Hostages.

People who are being held against their will.

Perpetrator.

A legal term for the person committing a crime.

Fire escape.

The outside stairs in a building that lead from the roof to the ground.

Its being set up now

A good way to say arranged, built, or taken care of.

As communications are established, the robbers, the hostages, the police and the media establish a working relationship.

Do you got confederates?

A rarely used word for partners, often used in a criminal context.

We're Vietnam vets, so killing don't mean anything to us.

"Vet" is short for "veteran," or a former soldier.

[Note the double negation: There's lots of bad grammar spoken in the film. Don't use it, just understand it!]

Let's work out a way to see ourselves out of this mess.

"Let's find a solution to this situation."

You can frisk me.

"To frisk" someone is usually to search their pockets and clothes.

The police often frisk people when looking for guns or other weapons.

What do you think you're dealing with, a fucking idiot!?
A colorful way of asking "Do you think I'm stupid?"

Talk to me straight.
"Tell me the truth. Don't manipulate me."

I'm not going to be packing nothing.
A slangy way for a policeman to say "I don't have a gun."

Don't fire!
Used in reference to guns (shooting).

I don't give a fuck.
The classically obscene way to say "I don't care."

What the fuck is going on?
A crude and common version of "What is happening here?"

I want you to see what you're up against.
This is Moretti's way of telling Sonny how many policemen he will have to fight against.

Take it easy.
Good way to say "relax," and now, an overused way to say "good-bye."

You got the militia out here.
A term for the citizen-army.

All you've got is attempted robbery.
Note that in most state laws, there is a difference between the attempted crime and the crime itself.

Kiss me. When I'm being fucked, I like to be kissed.
A truly clever play on words!: In this case, "being fucked" means being manipulated, or lied to, though obviously in other contexts, it is simply a crude verb meaning to have sex.

They got me on kidnapping and armed robbery.
Note the endless uses of the verb "to get." Sonny's fear is that even if nobody is hurt, he will be charged with at least these crimes. "Armed robbery" is robbery that is committed with a gun, which is considered a more serious crime than if no weapon were involved.

They're going to bury me.
Here, meaning to imprison him for years.

I don't want to talk to some flunky cop.
A disrespectful way of referring to a policeman without real power.

Attica! You got it, man!
What Sonny is screaming amid all the noise:
"Remember what happened at Attica..."

Why rob a bank when you got a sucker for a mother?
A "sucker" is a common word for a fool.

We're **holding up**.
In this context, to "hold up" is to be surviving OK (though note that you can also, obviously "hold-up a bank"!).

You're on the air.
The expression used when you are broadcast live on TV or radio.

A union.
Refers to a union of workers.

You'll see our brains on the sidewalk, instead of "As The World Turns."
This was famous show that played on afternoon TV (a "soap opera").

You could give up.
A critical phrasal verb that means to surrender.

Sonny has a brainstorm: They will release the hostages one at a time, in exchange for food, phone calls, a limousine, and a plane to Algeria.

They might deal with us.
Here, meaning to negotiate, or talk seriously.

Either we get away clean, or we kill ourselves.
In this context, "to get away clean" means to escape without conditions.

We fly the fuck out of the country!
Another grammatically colorful use of the most versatile obscenity in the English language!

I'll fly you to the tropics. Fuck the snow.

Refers to tropical islands with sunny weather. "Fuck the snow" is actually a fairly common construction for saying "I don't like snow."

Call home, or whatever.

Note this very common way of ending sentences when you don't really need to say anything precise.

Wyoming.

A big state in the western US with very few people.

Put it in your holster.

The leather pouch around your hips in which you place guns.

You look all squeezed out.

This means exhausted, but it is rarely if ever used.

Some creep says "kill everybody."

A good word for "jerk, asshole, bastard, etc." (A "creepy" person is scary, while "that gives me the creeps," means "that scares me").

Jet.

A very fast plane.

Piano lounge.

A large bar with a piano

Asphalt.

A material like black cement that is used to pave streets.

It will break through the roof.

Here, meaning the weight will cause the roof to collapse (A "break-through," used as a noun, can refer to major progress).

We don't always see eye to eye.

"To see eye to eye" is to agree on some topic of conversation.

There's no talking to you.

Sonny's way of saying "we can't talk without you always lying to me."

The police agree to call Sonny's wife, hoping that she may be able to convince him to surrender. They end up very confused, when two very different people turn out to be his wives.

It aien't him to rob a bank.

"Aien't" is very ungrammatical for "isn't." "It isn't like him to do" something means "It's not something you would expect him to do."

Things are adding up in my head.

"Things are starting to make sense to me."

Kiddie rides with little kids.

The small rides at amusement parks for little children

I hit him with a jack hammer.

An extremely loud and heavy tool used to dig holes.

I have a bruise from here to here.

An injury which is usually seen as a brown spot on the skin.

What's your grudge against me?

A "grudge" is a form of resentment or anger.

One person can "hold a grudge" against another.

Basement.

A room under a house for storage or living space.

Get me the bullhorn.

A device used to amplify voices when talking to a crowd.

What the fuck is the matter with you?

A crude but common way to say "What's wrong with you?"

Don't give me that shit.

"Don't lie to me."

Bullshit.

The most common obscenity for lies and distortions, as in "that's such bullshit." A truly useful and very cool word, though be very careful if you decide to use it.

God dam it!

A common and crude expression of anger.

We got a jet coming into Kennedy.

The international airport for New York City.

Holster that weapon!

This is the first time I have ever heard "holster" used as a verb (To put into a holster, or pocket).

Don't fucking con me.

"To con" is to manipulate or cheat someone. A "con man" is someone who cheats or manipulates. Also note that "a con" is an abbreviation for "a convict," or a former prisoner.

I'm in enough trouble as it is.

"To be in trouble" is a very common way of saying that you have one or more big problems.

A foolish thing, you did.

Here, meaning very stupid and dangerous.

You're **getting on my nerves**.

A very common way to say that "You are irritating me."

I'm a fucking star.

Short for a movie star, or a celebrity in general.

Scared to death.

An interesting way to say "very scared."

The body is the temple of the lord.

An interesting line by Sal (A "temple" is a church or synagogue).

We went to Bellevue.

A famous psychiatric hospital in New York.

He's a queer?!

A very pejorative term for homosexual, though now used by gay people to describe themselves.

He's a little groggy right now.

"Groggy" is a good word for tired or disoriented, often felt by people right after they wake up from several hours of sleep.

Jesus Christ.

Extremely common expression of anger, fear, or amazement. Often, just "Jesus" or "Christ" is used alone.

His mother and father are like a bad car wreck.

"A car wreck" is a bad auto accident," and thus here, it is Leon's way of saying that Sonny's parents always argue.

I was going insane.

The best alternative word for crazy.

Sonny was frantic.

A powerful adjective meaning extremely excited or emotional.

He was in hoc up to his ears.

This is an interesting slang term meaning very deeply in debt.

1/2 pound of pills. Blues, reds, uppers, downers.

Colloquial terms used for illegal drugs in pill form.

Don't you owe it to him to get him out of it?

"To get someone out of a situation" is help them solve their problem.

You're up to your neck in it. You're an accessory.

To be "up to your neck (or ears)" in a situation is to be deeply involved in it. An "accessory" is a legal term for a participant in a crime.

Barber shop.

Where people get their hair cut.

Seven bride's maids in the ceremony.

The best friends of the bride in a wedding.

The priest was defrocked.

The word for when a priest is ejected or kicked out of the church.

Some condemn him for sheer exhibitionism.

An expression that refers to when people show off something about their lives that many feel should be kept private.

Jets are always screaming overhead.

In this case, in the air or sky.

It's about time.

A common way to say "It took you too long."

I checked it all out.

"I Looked to make sure everything was OK."

You got guts.

"Guts" are intestines, but often used colloquially to mean "courage."

If we slit their throats, we're going to let you out?

"To slit" is a violent verb meaning to cut open.

I hope the guy who kills me does it because he hates my guts.

"To hate someone's guts" is to very strongly hate or despise them.

A lot of men would've choked.

"To choke" is to gag or suffocate on food, but it is colloquially used to mean panic, or stop functioning because of extreme fear.

We'll handle Sal. You just sit tight.

"Stay calm, and stay where you are."

You think I'd sell him out?

"To sell out" someone is to betray, sacrifice or turn against them.

Diabetes.

A disease where you don't have the right amount of blood sugar.

Sonny and Leon finally get to talk, as the Police and FBI make final plans for a jet. The media circus continues...

I'm a little shaky.

A good word for scared or tired, especially if the person is truly shaking.

They say you're crazy, and then they shoot things in your arm.

Referring to shots given at hospitals to sedate the patients.

I don't need that "deep" shit now.

In philosophy, something "deep" is important or profound.

To pull the trigger.

The verb used when shooting a gun.

What am I supposed to say to that shit?

Here, meaning "How am I supposed to respond to all of that?"

I'm not putting this on nobody.

"I'm not trying to make anyone feel guilty (for what I did)."

(A common expression is he's "trying to put a guilt trip on me.")

Algeria.

An Arab country in North Africa.

They got a Howard Johnsons.

An American hotel and restaurant chain that has decent hamburgers.

They got masks.

A covering worn on the face to conceal your identity.

You'd be better off giving up.

"It would be better if you just surrender."

They think I'm part of the plot to rob the bank.

A "plot" is a conspiracy or crime planned by many people.

They're bullshitting you! It's a snow job.

"To bullshit" someone is to lie to them, and a "snow job" is an interesting term for lots of lies and distortions.

Don't lay it on me.

"Don't make me feel guilty about this."

Get the fuck off the phone!

Another common grammatical construction with "fuck" as a noun!

Bon voyage.

A French expression used in English: "Have a nice vacation."

You said a mouthful, sweetheart.

Spoken the way a glamorous 1940s movie star would speak:

"You just said some pretty amazing things..."

The wisest of the wise.

A "wise" person is very smart.

It aien't like you.

"It isn't your style to do this...." ("Aien't," like double negatives, is very poor grammar).

You're yelling at the kids like a mad man.

"A crazy person" (Note that "mad" can mean both angry and crazy).

Something just fell out of me.

Here, meaning "something just made me feel so sad & horrible."

He's going to dump bodies in the river.

Words used to make a threat with a "Mafia style."

Shut the fuck up!

Common and crude for "Be quiet!"

Did I ever turn you down or anything?

Here, referring to sex (ie... "Did I ever reject you?")

I better take him back for a cardiac check.

A medical check-up for the heart.

A precautionary measure.

Something done to prevent a bad occurrence in the future.

It's awfully warm here.

A fairly common adverb that generally means "very."

You trying to be a hero, or what?

A common way to end sentences (when the speaker is not sure of the answer, or of what he is talking about).

You're no angel of kindness.

A sweet expression (though here used in the negative).

"Out of the closet and into the streets."

A slogan of the Gay Right's movement in the early 1970s ("To come out of the closet" means to admit you are a gay).

"Sonny, all the way"

What some of the protesters are shouting.

"The F word."

How prude (very conservative) people refer to the word "fuck."

All of Brooklyn is here

A famous burrough (section) of New York City.

I'm trying to get you out of this.

"I'm trying to help you escape this situation."

I told them we were Goldwater in '64.

Sonny's mom's way of saying they were a good conservative family since they voted for Goldwater for President in 1964.

Don't get on Angie!

Here, to "get on" means to blame.

You got two kids on welfare.

Welfare is the system of government assistance for the poor.

Where's pop?

A colloquial word meaning "dad."

He's pissed off at you.

"To get pissed off" at somebody is to get very angry at them.

A truly great phrasal verb, that can be used, as here, as an adjective.

I'm a fuck-up and an outcast.

A "fuck-up" is generally a loser at life (it can be a verb).

An "outcast" is someone who is shunned or isolated by society.

Being of sound mind and body....

The legal language used to start a will (which is the document a person writes to say how he wants his possessions distributed after he dies).

I hope you look after them for me.

A gentle way of saying "to take care of them."

I want a military funeral. And I'm entitled to one.

"To be entitled" to something is to deserve it, due to previous acts.

May god bless you, and watch over you.

This is solemn, religious language used before dying.

The hereafter.

A religious term for life after death.

Sonny, Sal and the hostages prepare for the ride to the airport.

Bolted.

"Connected with a bolt" (or nail or other type of fastener).

My old lady.

A crude and stupid term for one's wife. Don't use it!

What makes you think you can say shit to me?

Sonny's way of saying "I have the power, so I talk and you listen."

Take a walk, cop!

An interesting way to say "get lost," or leave.

Everybody is a con man.

A person who is out to cheat people. Sonny's way to say

"Everybody is trying to manipulate everyone else."

At least I know who I'm dealing with.

"At least I know the person I'll be working with."

I'll be a son of a bitch, we did it!

An interesting grammatical construction to show amazement or shock.

If we hit a bump, the gun will go off.

If a gun "goes off," it starts to shoot, even if nobody pulled the trigger.

I want no trouble en route.

An educated and French way to say "while on the road."

Let's move it!

"Let's go."

Spread them!

Police slang for "spread your legs apart."

Note that in rapid speech, "spread them"---->"spread'em."

You have the right to remain silent....

What every criminal suspect must be told in the United States after being arrested by the police....

Dog Day Afternoon

Some Potential Questions for ESL Class Discussion

1. Was Sonny "a good guy" or "a bad guy?"
2. How would you describe Sonny to a friend? Did you sympathize with him? Why or why not?
3. What do you think most of the hostages in the bank thought of him? What about Sal?
4. What did you like or not like about this movie?
5. Can you think of other events in real life that became a "media circus?"

