

INT. GONDORFF'S ROOM - DAY

The room inside is small and cluttered, consisting of a bed, a sink, and a bathroom, all covered by a layer of books, dirty clothes and beer bottles. Draped over a chair, fully dressed, but completely passed out is the one and only Henry Gondorff.

HOOKER

(to himself)

The great Henry Gondorff.

GONDORFF

Turn the goddamn thing off, will ya.

HOOKER

You sober?

GONDORFF

I can talk, can't I?

Gondorff struggles to his knees, and slumps back against the wall. The two men just look past each other a second.

GONDORFF

Glad to meet ya, kid. You're a real horse's ass.

HOOKER

Yeh, Luther said you could teach me something. I already know how to drink.

GONDORFF

(quietly)

I'm sorry about Luther.

He was the best street worker I ever saw.

HOOKER

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

GONDORFF

Aw, I conned a Senator from Florida on a stocks deal. A real lop-ear. He thought he was gonna take over General Electric. Some Chantoozie woke him up, though, and he put the feds on me.

HOOKER

You mean you blew it.

GONDORFF

(pause)

Luther didn't tell me you had a big mouth.

HOOKER

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

(Gondorff looks at him coldly)

You played the Big Con since then.

GONDORFF

No, I lammed it around for a while

while things cooled off. Philly,
Denver, Baltimore, nuthin' towns.

Hooker's disappointment is obvious.

GONDORFF

But don't kid yourself, friend, I
still know how.

GONDORFF

(getting up from the floor
You gonna stay for breakfast, or do
you already know how to eat?

HOOKER

I picked something up on the way.

GONDORFF

(sensing something)
Lonnegan after you, too?

HOOKER

I don't know. Haven't seen anybody.

GONDORFF

You never do, kid.

HOOKER

Gondorff, you gonna teach me the
Big Con or not?

GONDORFF

You didn't act much like you wanted
to learn it.

HOOKER

I wanna play for Lonnegan.

GONDORFF

You know anything about him?

HOOKER

Yeh, he croaked Luther. What else
do I gotta know.

HOOKER

(waving Gondorff off, embarrassed at his own outburst)
Aw right, he runs the numbers outta
the south side.

GONDORFF

And a packing company, a chain of
Savings and Loans and half the
politicians in Chicago and New York.
There ain't a fix in the world
gonna cool him out if he blows on ya.

HOOKER

I'll take him anyway.

GONDORFF

Why?

HOOKER

'Cause I don't know enough about
killin' to kill him.

It's the right answer. Gondorff didn't know it himself until
now.

GONDORFF

You can't do it alone, ya know. It
takes a mob of guys like you and
enough money to make 'em look good.

HOOKER

We'll get by without 'em.

GONDORFF

This isn't like playin' winos on
the street. You gotta do more than
outrun the guy.

HOOKER

(incensed)

I never played for winos.

GONDORFF

(going right on,
ignoring Hooker's remark)

You gotta keep Lonnegan's con, even
after you spent his money. And no
matter how much you take from his,
he'll get more.

HOOKER

You're sacred of 'em, aren't ya?

GONDORFF

Right down to my socks, turkey. If
I'da been half as scared a that
lop-ear, I wouldn't a fallen asleep
on 'em. Lonnegan might kill me,
but at least he won't bore me to
death.

HOOKER

Then you'll do it?

GONDORFF

If I can find a mob that'll risk it.
But no matter what happens, I don't
want you comin' back to me halfway
through and sayin' it's not enough...
cause it's all you got.