The hand's quicker than the eye. It's all about *distraction*. Bernard Hopkins should be in the Three-Card-Monty Hall of Fame. Had he planned a heist as smooth as this, he'd never have spent a day at Graterford.

Stretching through the ropes for Emanuel Steward at ringside -- before his route of Tarver was announced – the head of acquisitions for Golden Boy, with words worthy of Camp David for Jermain Taylor, put designs on the middleweight king and planted the seeds of insurrection without leaving a fingerprint. (Where's CSI when you need them) …Not a bleat from Lou DiBella, Taylor's promoter. Not an accusation in the media, or screed on the web… And it's two weeks.

The Lufthansa job would still be unsolved if there was less suspicion.

(Only if you re-play the clip with the sound up can you hear Bernard say, "… Leave the gun. Take the cannoli.")

In fact, with that one calculated beau geste beamed round the world, prisoner Y4145, in his guise of mandarin and Philly "Ambassador of Peace," is being lauded from every quarter – *distr action.*
The way a sullen George Foreman came back a cuddly bear after 10 years.

Sure he did.

Bernard's out there glad-handing, basking in the well-deserved glow of doing what idol Sugar Ray Robinson couldn't: winning the light heavyweight crown -- just a magnanimous class act on the rubber-chicken circuit.

And I gotta bridge I'd like to sell you.

Probably coincidence that there's an exhibit on Benjamin Franklin as a spy at Philly's National Constitution Center.

Taylor, interviewed on TV, remarked about X's gracious comments: "I respect that man for leaning over the ropes saying what he said about me." The hook's in…Hearing footsteps, Lou?

The Israelis didn't do it better at Entebbe.

Now, *ever so slowly* to reel him in…Let it be Jermain's idea – no rush, Bernard's in it for the long con. Putting a stake through the heart of DiBella's company and profiting, to boot, would be icing on the cake and eating it too, considering DiBella won a $610,000 libel judgment against him.

In D Block rep's *everything*, but Bernard's a *statesman* now. I'm sure he's let it slide.

'…and I'm sure Brutus is an honorable man'

Phillip Seymour Hoffman could take lessons from Hopkins, seeing him shape-shift from chilling thug to genial jock in understated designer threads encouraging questions from scribes he has no more in common with then the dentist living next door to Tony Soprano.

But he sells it – body language pliable -- charm from a spigot -- leans in one-on-one -- talks *to*, not
at
--
listens
– uses first names -- asks about
family
–
slam dunk
!
…And that in spite of a diamond-crusted watch that only a heavyweight could lift.

But for those who think sashes and keys to the city will mellow an aging lion into a tabby, they're confusing the photo-op smile with the man. *Distraction.* He's Roberto Duran with restraint; the kind learned where a misstep gets you shanked.

His education's street, but he's never misunderstood. That's not to say: What you see is what you get – *distraction.*

He's a chess player -- always a couple jumps ahead. Picks his battlefield – circles, surveys, feints for mistakes. Doesn't mix no matter how many catcalls -- listens only to his own council. Waits waits waits for the opening. Pounces, as if placing a dagger, and back out of danger. His anthem should be "My Way."

You don't keep a 27-inch waist at 6'1" for 17 years without accepting: 'If you can't do the time, don't do the crime.'

Archie Moore could better pull off sage-emeritus; he was born middle-aged – always a sensei. Hopkins is like Barbie: in his 40s but looks half it. Forget Mackie Shilstone; check Dorian Grey.

Hopkins won't go gently into the good night. *'What are you rebelling against? What've you got?* MySpace over eharmony.

So while every '75-pounder shouts to get at grandpa, and the rumor mills work overtime -- *distr action*
. DiBella should be listening for the theme from "Jaws."

It's not a deal till Taylor's name's on the dotted line, but if Hopkins gets a gig at the Magic

Castle, DiBella might think about Satchel Paige's advice: 'Don't look back. Something may be gaining on you.'

The coda of any police procedural: Just follow the money.