

The Flying Deuces.

Magazine for fans of Laurel & Hardy and Abbott & Costello.

August 2025 Edition. Volume 1, Issue 6





Pardon My Sarong

"I know there's no such person as Dracula. You know there's no such person as Dracula. But does Dracula know it?"

The Unassailable Crowns: Why Abbott & Costello and Laurel & Hardy Reign Supreme as the Two Best Double Acts of All Time

The landscape of comedy is dotted with countless brilliant duos, but few have achieved the universal recognition, enduring appeal, and profound influence of Laurel & Hardy and Abbott & Costello. These two pairs, operating in slightly different eras and employing distinct comedic methodologies, perfected the art of the double act. Their unparalleled chemistry, meticulously crafted character dynamics, and lasting cultural impact firmly establish them as the two greatest comedic duos in the annals of entertainment history.

Laurel & Hardy, the pioneers of visual and situational comedy, epitomized the "idiot and the know-it-all" dynamic, albeit with a unique, endearing twist. Stan Laurel, the innocent, perpetually befuddled child-man, often the instigator of chaos through sheer naiveté, was perfectly complemented by Oliver Hardy, the pompous, self-important, yet ultimately hapless "leader." Their comedy was a slow-burn masterclass in escalating frustration and mutual destruction. Ollie's exasperated tie-twiddle, his mournful glances directly at the camera, and Stan's slow, confused blinks escalating into a high-pitched wail or a mischievous grin were visual shorthand for their unique interplay.

Their genius lay in their physical precision and the meticulous choreography of their slapstick. Routines like the never-ending tit-for-tat destruction in "Big Business" or the Sisyphean struggle of moving a piano up a treacherous flight of stairs in "The Music Box" are testament to their mastery of physical comedy. They didn't rely on

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Abbott and Costello Short Story

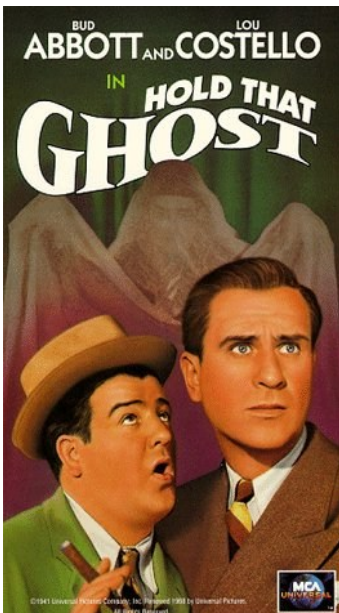


rapid-fire dialogue or complex wordplay; their humour stemmed from character, situation, and the profound, almost childlike, affection that existed between them, despite Ollie's constant exasperation. They transcended language barriers, making their comedy universally understood and beloved, solidifying their status as global icons and influencing generations of physical comedians.

Conversely, Abbott & Costello redefined the double act through their unparalleled mastery of verbal comedy and rapid-fire routines. Bud Abbott, the fast-talking, cynical, yet vulnerable straight man, served as the perfect foil for Lou Costello's frantic, childlike,

and easily confused persona. Their humour was a whirlwind of misunderstandings, miscommunications, and escalating panic, often driven by Lou's literal interpretations of Bud's increasingly exasperated instructions.

Their seminal routine, "Who's on First?", stands as the gold standard of verbal comedy. Its intricate wordplay, impeccable timing, and the comedic tension between Bud's frustrated clarity and Lou's utterly bewildered innocence make it a timeless masterpiece. This single routine encapsulates their genius: the ability to build an entire comedic edifice purely on the ambiguity of language. Beyond "Who's on First?", their films and radio shows



THE UNASSAILABLE CROWNS

were replete with similar routines where the humour derived from identity confusion ("A Peach of a Pair"), convoluted instructions, or Lou's terrified reactions to monsters and ghosts. Their performances were a masterclass in pace and delivery, making them kings of radio and the big screen during their peak.

What elevates these two duos above all others is not just their individual brilliance but their complementary perfection of distinct comedic styles. Laurel & Hardy perfected the art of the visual gag and the slow-burn situational comedy, creating characters whose inherent flaws and affections drove the humor. Abbott & Costello perfected the art of the verbal routine and fast-paced character interplay, leveraging the power of language and misunderstanding to create comedic chaos.

Both duos also shared an undeniable, intrinsic chemistry that went beyond mere performance. Their roles were so deeply ingrained that one could not exist without the other; their reactions, expressions, and timing were so synchronized as to appear almost symbiotic. They presented relatable human archetypes: the put-upon everyman and the naive dreamer (Laurel & Hardy), or the sharp-witted pragmatist and the innocent fool (Abbott & Costello). This relatability, combined with their consistent excellence, allowed their humour to resonate across generations, proving its timelessness.

In conclusion, while many comedic duos have graced the stage and screen, Abbott & Costello and Laurel & Hardy stand as the undisputed champions. Laurel & Hardy's genius in physical comedy, their endearing character dynamics, and their universal appeal solidified the power of visual storytelling. Abbott & Costello's unparalleled mastery of verbal trickery, their lightning-fast delivery, and their iconic "straight man/funny man" dynamic revolutionized comedic dialogue. Together, they represent the absolute pinnacle of the double act, offering two distinct yet equally brilliant blueprints for comedic success that continue to inspire laughter and influence comedians to this very day. Their crowns remain unassailable, testament to their enduring legacy as the two best double acts of all time.



ABBOTT AND COSTELLO BIO

Abbott and Costello were an American comedy duo composed of comedians Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, whose work in radio, film, and television made them the most popular comedy team of the 1940s and 1950s, and the highest-paid entertainers in the world during the Second World War. Their patter routine "Who's on First?" is considered one of the greatest comedy routines of all time, a version of which appears in their 1945 film *The Naughty Nineties*.

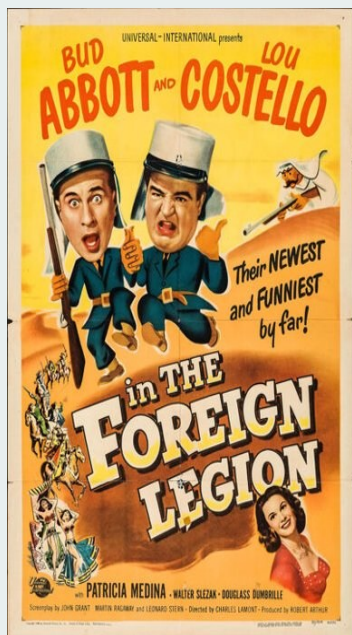
Abbott and Costello made their film debut in the 1940 comedy *One Night in the Tropics*. The following year, they appeared in three armed service comedies: *Buck Privates*, *In the Navy*, and *Keep 'Em Flying*. They also appeared in the 1941 horror comedy film *Hold That Ghost*, and went on to appear in several other horror comedies, including *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), *Abbott and Costello Meet the Killer, Boris Karloff* (1949), *Abbott and Costello Meet the Invisible Man* (1951), *Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1953), and *Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy* (1955). Other films starring the duo include *Pardon My Sarong*, *Who Done It?* (both 1942), *The Time of Their Lives* (1946), *Buck Privates Come Home* (1947), *Africa Screams* (1949), and *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars* (1953).

Burlesque

The two comedians had crossed paths a few times previously, but first worked together in 1935 at the Eltinge Burlesque Theater on 42nd Street in New York City. Their first performance resulted from Costello's regular partner becoming ill, and Abbott substituting for him.

Other performers in the show, including Abbott's wife, encouraged a permanent pairing. The duo built an act by refining and reworking numerous burlesque sketches with Abbott as the devious straight man and Costello as the dimwitted comic.





ABBOTT AND COSTELLO BIO CONTINUED

Decades later, when AMC moved the old theater 168 feet (51 metres) further west on 42nd Street to its current location, giant balloons of Abbott and Costello were rigged to appear to pull it.

The team's first known radio broadcast was on The Kate Smith Hour on February 3, 1938. At first, the similarities between their voices made it difficult for radio listeners (as opposed to stage audiences) to tell them apart during their rapid-fire repartee. As a result, Costello affected a high-pitched, childish voice. "Who's on First?" was first performed for a national radio audience the following month. They performed on the program as regulars for two years, while also landing roles in a Broadway revue, The Streets of Paris, in 1939.

After debuting their own program, The Abbott and Costello Show, as Fred Allen's summer replacement in 1940, Abbott and Costello joined Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy on The Chase and Sanborn Hour in 1941. Two of their films (Hold That Ghost and Buck Privates) were adapted for radio that year. Hold That Ghost was presented as a half-hour adaptation on August 1, 1941 on Louella Parsons' Hollywood Premiere, and Buck Privates was presented on Lux Radio Theatre as a one-hour adaptation on October 13, 1941. Their program returned in its own weekly time slot starting on October 8, 1942, with Camel cigarettes as sponsor.

The Abbott and Costello Show mixed comedy with musical interludes (by vocalists such as Connie Haines, Ashley Eustis, the Delta Rhythm Boys, Skinnay Ennis, Marilyn Maxwell and the Les Baxter Singers).

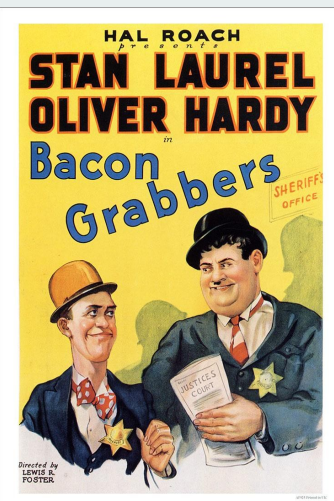
Among the show's regular and semi-regular performers were Joe Kirk (Costello's brother-in-law) as the excitable Sicilian immigrant Mr. Bacciagalupe, Artie Auerbach as Mr. Kitzel, Elvia Allman, Iris Adrian, Mel Blanc, Wally Brown, Sharon Douglas, Verna Felton, Sidney Fields, Frank Nelson, Martha Wentworth and Benay Venuta. Guest stars included Cary Grant, Frank Sinatra, The Andrews Sisters and Lucille Ball.

Ken Niles was the show's longtime announcer, doubling as an exasperated foil to Costello, who routinely insulted his on-air wife (played by Elvia Allman). Niles was succeeded by Michael Roy, alternating over the years with Frank Bingman and Jim Doyle.

The show went through several orchestras, including those of Ennis, Charles Hoff, Matty Matlock, Matty Malneck, Jack Meakin, Will Osborne, Fred Rich, Leith Stevens and Peter van Steeden.

The show's writers included Howard Harris, Hal Fimberg, Parke Levy, Don Prindle, Eddie Cherkose (later known as Eddie Maxwell), Leonard B. Stern, Martin Ragaway, Paul Conlan and Eddie Forman, as well as producer Martin Gosch. Sound effects were handled primarily by Floyd Caton.

In 1947, the show moved to ABC (the former NBC Blue Network). During their time on ABC the duo also hosted a 30-minute children's radio program (The Abbott and Costello Children's Show on Saturday mornings. The program featured child vocalist Anna Mae Slaughter and child announcer Johnny McGovern. It finished its run in 1949.



ABBOTT AND COSTELLO BIO CONTINUED

In 1940, Universal Studios signed them for a musical, *One Night in the Tropics* starring Allan Jones and Nancy Kelly. Cast in supporting roles, Abbott and Costello stole the picture with several classic routines, including "Who's on First?". Signed to a two-picture contract, their second film, *Buck Privates* (1941), directed by Arthur Lubin and co-starring The Andrews Sisters, was a massive hit, earning \$4 million at the box office and launching Abbott and Costello as stars.

Their next film was a haunted house comedy, *Oh, Charlie!*; however, *Buck Privates* was so successful that the studio decided to delay the release so the team could hastily film and release a second service comedy. In the Navy (1941), co-starred crooner Dick Powell and the Andrews Sisters, and initially out-grossed *Buck Privates*. Loew's Criterion in Manhattan was open until 5 a.m. to oblige over 49,000 customers during the film's first week.

Oh, Charlie went back into production to add music featuring the Andrews Sisters and Ted Lewis. The film was eventually retitled *Hold That Ghost* (1941). The duo next appeared in *Ride 'Em Cowboy* (1941), with Dick Foran, but its release was delayed so they could appear in a third service comedy, *Keep 'Em Flying* (1941). This was their last film directed by Arthur Lubin. All of their 1941 films were big hits, and Abbott and Costello were voted the third biggest box office attraction in the country in 1941.

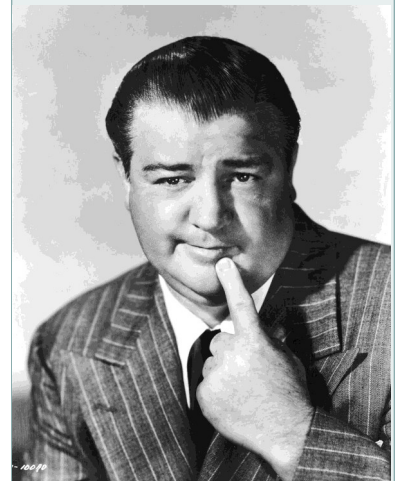
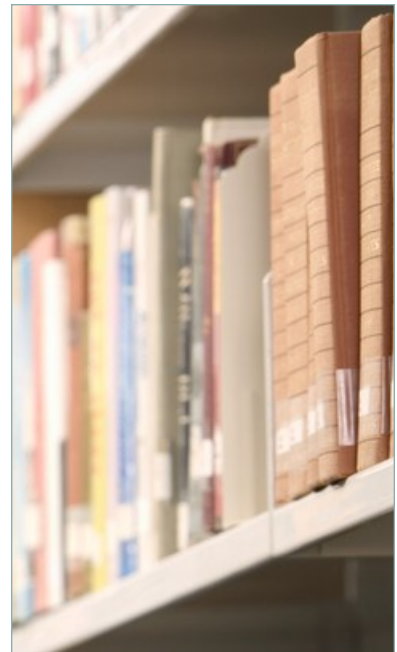
Universal loaned the team to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer for a musical comedy, *Rio Rita* (1942). During filming Abbott and Costello had their hand and foot prints set in concrete at what was then "Grauman's Chinese Theatre". Back at Universal they made *Pardon My Sarong* (1942), a spoof of South Sea Island movies; and *Who Done It?* (1942), a comedy-mystery.

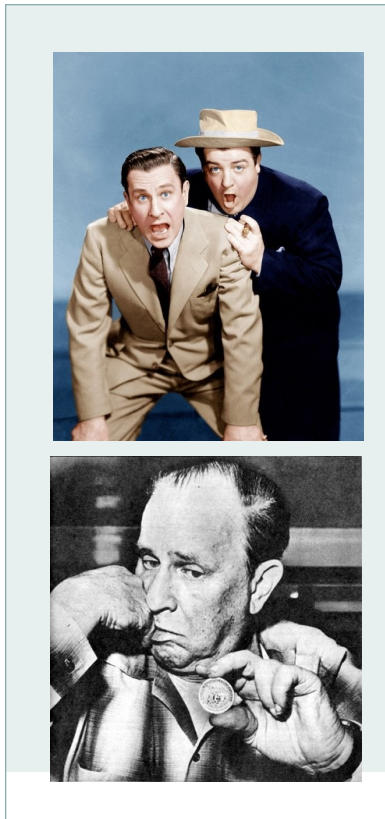
In 1942, exhibitors voted them the top box office stars in the country, and their earnings for the fiscal year were \$789,026. The team did a 35-day tour during the summer of 1942 to promote and sell War Bonds. The Treasury Department credited them with \$85 million in sales.

After the tour the team starred in *It Ain't Hay* (1943), from a story by Damon Runyon; and *Hit the Ice* (1943).

Costello was stricken with rheumatic fever upon his return from a winter tour of army bases in March 1943 and was bedridden for approximately six months. On November 4, 1943, the same day that Costello returned to radio after a one-year hiatus due to his illness, his infant son Lou Jr. (nicknamed "Butch" and born November 6, 1942) died in an accidental drowning in the family's swimming pool. Maxene Andrews remembers visiting Costello with sisters Patty and LaVerne during his illness, and remembered how Costello's demeanor changed after the tragic loss of his son, recalling, "He didn't seem as fun-loving and as warm...He seemed to anger easily...there was a difference in his attitude".

After Costello recovered, the duo returned to MGM for *Lost in a Harem* (1944) then were back at Universal for *In Society* (1944), *Here Come the Co-Eds* (1945) and *The Naughty Nineties* (1945). Their third and final film for MGM was *Abbott and Costello in Hollywood* (1945).





ABBOTT AND COSTELLO BIO CONTINUED

In 1945, a rift developed when Abbott hired a domestic servant who had been fired by Costello. Costello refused to speak to his partner except when performing. The following year they made two films, (*Little Giant* and *The Time of Their Lives*), in which they appeared as separate characters rather than as a team. This was likely the result of the tensions between them, plus the fact that their most recent films had not performed as well at the box office. Abbott resolved the rift when he suggested naming Costello's pet charity, a foundation for underprivileged children, the "Lou Costello Jr. Youth Foundation." The facility opened in 1947 and still serves the Boyle Heights district of Los Angeles.

Abbott and Costello reunited as a team in *Buck Privates Come Home* (1947), a sequel to their 1941 hit. In *The Wistful Widow of Wagon Gap* (1947) they were supported by Marjorie Main. They signed a new contract with Universal which allowed them to appear in films outside of their studio contract. The first of these, *The Noose Hangs High* (1948), was distributed by Eagle-Lion.

The team's next film, *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), co-starring Bela Lugosi and Lon Chaney Jr, was a massive hit and revitalized the duo's careers. It was followed by *Mexican Hayride* (1948), an adaptation of a Cole Porter musical without the songs. They followed with *Africa Screams* (1949) for Nassour Studios, an independent company which was released through United Artists. Back at Universal, they returned to horror comedy with *Abbott and Costello Meet the Killer, Boris Karloff* (1949).

The pair was sidelined again for several months when Costello suffered a relapse of rheumatic fever. They returned to the screen in *Abbott and Costello in the Foreign Legion* (1950). They returned the following year in *Abbott and Costello Meet the Invisible Man* (1951); then *Comin' Round the Mountain* (1952), a hillbilly comedy.

Their first color film, *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1952), was an independent production distributed by Warner Bros. After filming *Lost in Alaska* (1952) back at Universal, they made a second independent color movie, *Abbott and Costello Meet Captain Kidd* (1952) co-starring Charles Laughton, which was also distributed by Warner Bros.

At Universal, they starred in *Abbott and Costello Go to Mars* (1953) and *Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1953). They were forced to withdraw from *Fireman Save My Child* in 1954 due to Costello's ill health, and were replaced by lookalikes Hugh O'Brian and Buddy Hackett along with Spike Jones and his *City Slickers*. Their last two films for Universal were *Abbott and Costello Meet the Keystone Kops* (1955) and *Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy* (1955). In 1956, they appeared in their final film together, *Dance With Me, Henry*, an independent production released through United Artists.

In January 1951, Abbott and Costello joined the roster of rotating hosts of *The Colgate Comedy Hour* on NBC. (Eddie Cantor and Martin and Lewis were among the others.) Each show was a live hour of



ABBOTT AND COSTELLO BIO CONTINUED

vaudeville in front of an audience, revitalizing the comedians' performances and giving their old routines a new sparkle.

From the fall of 1952 to the spring of 1954, a filmed half-hour series, *The Abbott and Costello Show*, appeared in syndication on over 40 local stations across the United States. Loosely based on their radio series, the show cast the duo as unemployed wastrels. One of the show's running gags involved Abbott perpetually hounding Costello to get a job, while Abbott was happily unemployed. The show featured Sidney Fields as their landlord and Hillary Brooke as a neighbor and sometime love interest for Costello. Other regulars were future Stooge Joe Besser as Stinky, a whiny child in a Little Lord Fauntleroy suit; Gordon Jones as Mike the cop, who always lost patience with Costello; Joe Kirk, an Italian immigrant caricature whose role varied with the requirements of the script; and Bobby Barber, who played many "extra" parts.

The simple plot lines were often an excuse to recreate comedy routines from their films and burlesque days, including "Who's on First?" Since Costello owned the series (with Abbott working on salary), this allowed them to own these versions of the classic routines as well. The 2nd season was more story-driven. There was no continuity. Although *The Abbott and Costello Show* originally ran for only two seasons, it found a larger viewership in reruns from the 1960s to the 1990s. The shows have also been released in three different DVD sets over the years.

"Who's on First?" is Abbott and Costello's signature routine. *Time* magazine (December 26, 1999) named it the best comedy routine of the 20th century. The sketch was based on other earlier burlesque wordplay routines. They began honing the routine shortly after teaming up in 1936, and performed it in vaudeville in 1937 and 1938. It was first heard by a national radio audience on March 24, 1938, when the team were regulars on the Kate Smith radio show. By then, John Grant had been writing or adapting other sketches for the team and may have helped expand "Who's on First?" prior to its radio debut. He stayed on as their head writer into the 1950s.

Depending upon the version, Abbott has either organized a new baseball team and the players have

nicknames, or he points out the proliferation of nicknames in baseball (citing St. Louis Cardinals sibling pitchers Dizzy and Daffy Dean) before launching into the routine. The infielders' nicknames are Who (first base), What (second base) and I Don't Know (third base). The key to the routine is Costello's mounting frustration set against Abbott's unyielding formality. Audio recordings are readily available on the Internet.

A notable version is the first television performance on the 1951 *Colgate Comedy Hour*.

"Who's on First?" is believed to be available in as many as twenty versions, ranging from one minute to up to ten minutes. The team could time the routine at will, adding or deleting portions as needed for films, radio or television. The longest version is seen in "The Actors' Home" episode of their filmed TV series, running approximately eight minutes. A live performance commemorating the opening day of the Lou Costello Jr Youth Foundation in 1947 was recorded, and has been included in numerous comedy albums. The team's final performance of "Who's on First?" on TV was on Steve Allen's variety show in 1957.

Abbott and Costello both married performers they met in burlesque. Abbott wed Betty Smith, a dancer and comedienne, in 1918, and Costello married a chorus girl, Anne Battler, in 1934. The Costellos had four children; the Abbotts adopted two. Abbott and Costello faced personal demons at times. Both were compulsive gamblers. Costello attended horse races and raised horses at his ranch in Canoga Park. Additionally both had serious health problems. Abbott suffered from epilepsy and turned to alcohol for seizure management. Costello had occasional, near-fatal bouts with rheumatic fever.

In the 1950s, Abbott and Costello's popularity waned with the emergence of Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis. Another reason for their decline was overexposure. Each year they made two new films, while Realart Pictures re-issued their older hits; their filmed television series was widely syndicated, and the same routines appeared frequently on the *Colgate* program.

ABBOTT AND COSTELLO BIO CONTINUED

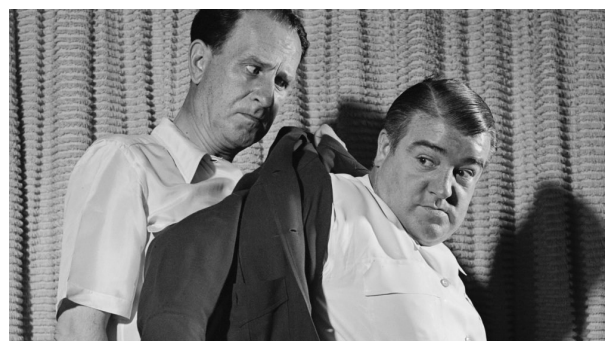
(Parke Levy, a writer, told Jordan R. Young, the author, in *The Laugh Crafters: Comedy Writing in Radio and TV's Golden Age*, that he was stunned to learn that the pair were afraid to perform new material.)

In 1952, Abbott and Costello sued Universal for breach of contract for \$5,000,000. Universal dropped the comedy team in 1955 after they could not agree on contract terms. In the early 1950s, the Internal Revenue Service charged them for back taxes, forcing them to sell their homes and most of their assets, including the rights to most of their films.

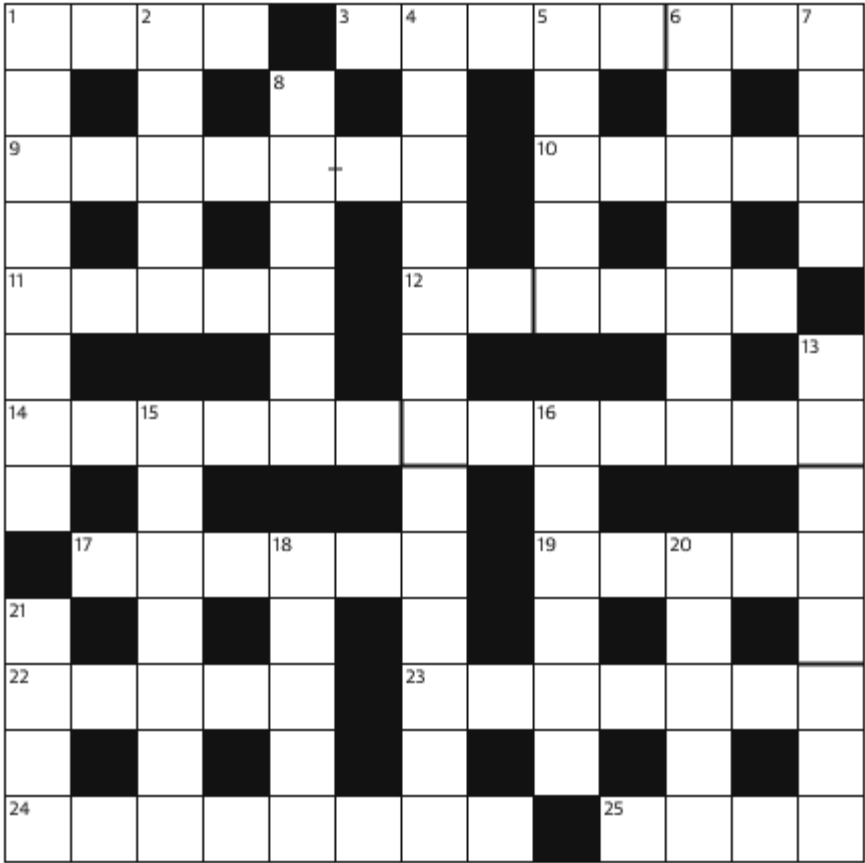
In 1956, they made one independent film, *Dance with Me, Henry*, and Costello was the subject of the television program *This Is Your Life*, then formally dissolved their partnership in 1957. In his posthumously published 1959 autobiography, *My Wicked, Wicked Ways*, Errol Flynn claims that he triggered the breakup. Flynn, a chronic practical joker, invited them, along with their wives and children, to his house for dinner, and afterwards, he commenced to show a home movie that "accidentally" turned out to be hard-core pornography. While Flynn pretended to be baffled, Costello and Abbott each blamed the other for the film's substitution.

In his last years, Costello made about ten solo appearances on *The Steve Allen Show* doing many of the old routines without Abbott. Costello performed stand-up in Las Vegas, and appeared in episodes of *GE Theater* and *Wagon Train*. On March 3, 1959, not long after completing his lone solo film, *The 30 Foot Bride of Candy Rock*, he died of a heart attack three days short of his 53rd birthday.

Abbott attempted a comeback in 1960 with *Candy Candido*. Although the new act received good reviews, Abbott quit, saying, "No one could ever live up to Lou." Abbott made a solo, dramatic appearance on an episode of *General Electric Theater* in 1961. In 1966, Abbott voiced his character in a series of 156 five-minute Abbott and Costello cartoons made by Hanna-Barbera. Costello's character was voiced by Stan Irwin. Bud Abbott died of cancer on April 24, 1974.



August
2025
Crossword



Across

- 1 Computing language - world's most populous island (4)
- 3 Long key (5,3)
- 9 Cinema or restaurant for motorists (5-2)
- 10 Gas in layer (5)
- 11 Interweave (5)
- 12 (Payment) as goods or services, rather than money (2,4)
- 14 Mug shot collection (6,7)
- 17 Satisfy (thirst) (6)
- 19 Nothing at all (5)
- 22 Proclaim the glory of (5)
- 23 Flying staff (7)
- 24 Complete disbeliever (8)
- 25 Tax (4)

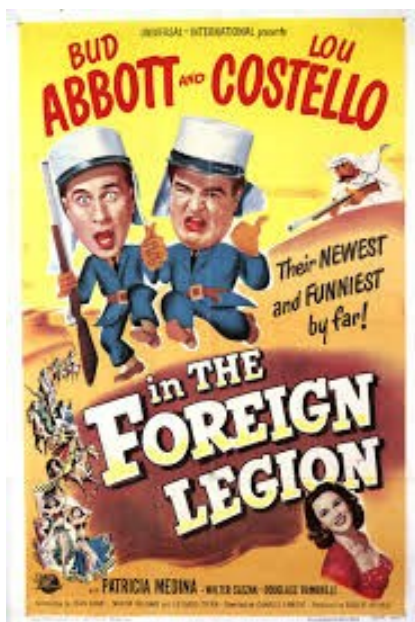
Down

- 1 Rider's garment (8)
- 2 I present this to you! (5)
- 4 Zigzag-edged cutters (7,6)
- 5 Sleeveless overgarment (5)
- 6 Chocolate treat - trainee girl guide? (7)
- 7 Great Barrier ledge? (4)
- 8 Backbone (6)
- 13 I almost forgot to say (2,3,3)
- 15 Budapest stew? (7)
- 16 Reptile (6)
- 18 Of birth (5)
- 20 Prodigious (5)
- 21 Evil (4)

FAN CLUBS

We will be listing other fan clubs relating to the famous double acts, both local to the UK and world-wide.

JULYS CROSSWORD ANSWERS



1	P	O	2	S	E		3	A	4	R	M	5	C	H	6	A	I	7	R
	U		A		8	M		E				O		T				O	
9	B	E	T	W	E	E	N					10	S	A	L	E	M		
	L		I		R			E				T		A				E	
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14	A	B	15	S	E	N	T			16	F	17	A	C	A	D	E		
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		19	S	A	F	20	A	R	I			21	C	O	22	A	C	H	
23	B		N		R				V			H		N				A	
24	L	O	D	G	E			25	A	V	E	N	G	E	R				
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26	C	O	L	L	A	P	S	E			27	G	L	E	E				



ABBOTT AND COSTELLO RIDE 'EM COWBOY



Ride 'Em Cowboy is a 1942 film starring the comedy team of Abbott and Costello, Dick Foran, Anne Gwynne, Johnny Mack Brown, Ella Fitzgerald (in her first film appearance), Samuel S. Hinds, Douglas Dumbrille, Morris Ankrum, and directed by Arthur Lubin. The film focuses on Abbott and Costello as they play the role of two peanut vendors on the run from their boss. Despite their lack of knowledge in the trade, they get jobs as cowboys

on a dude ranch. The film is set in the West.

The author of best-selling western novels, Bronco Bob Mitchell, has never set foot in the west. A newspaper article has exposed this fact to his fans, and his image is suffering because of it. He decides to make an appearance at a Long Island charity rodeo to bolster his image. When a steer escapes while he is riding a horse nearby, he is thrown. Not knowing what to do, a cowgirl, Anne Shaw, comes to his rescue and saves his life by bulldogging the steer.

During the rescue, she is injured and cannot compete and loses her chance to obtain the \$10,000 prize. Although Bob is grateful, she quickly becomes angry due to his city slicker hot-shot personality and returns to her father's dude ranch in Arizona. Bob follows her with the hopes of making amends, and actually learns how to be a real cowboy.

Meanwhile, Willoughby and Duke are vendors at the rodeo. They are not very good at their job, and soon cause enough havoc that they hide from their boss. Their hiding place winds up being a cattle car and they soon find themselves on their way out west. When they arrive, Willoughby accidentally shoots an arrow into an Indian tepee. Custom says that this is a proposal, but

Willoughby and Duke soon run in fear when the Indian maiden inside the tent turns out to be plump and unattractive. They wind up at the same Dude ranch that Anne and Bob are at, and soon given jobs by the foreman, Alabam.

Anne concedes and begins to instruct Bob on the ways of cowboy life, while Willoughby and Duke are still menaced by the Indians. Eventually Anne decides that Bob has improved enough to enter him on their team at the state rodeo championship. Unfortunately a gambler, Ace Henderson, has made large bets against the ranch and has his gang kidnap Bob and Alabam. Willoughby and Duke unwittingly come to the rescue while they are running from the Indians, and everyone returns to the rodeo in time. Bob, finally a true cowboy, rides a bronco long enough to win the championship. The Indians catch up to Willoughby there, but as a joke, his bride turns out to be Duke.

Ella Fitzgerald, in her first screen role, plays Ruby, who fills several roles as one of the employees of the ranch. At the opening rodeo, she is dressed as a rodeo clown, and comes to Anne's side when she is hurt. Later in the film, she can be seen removing an apron before singing. Ella sings "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" in the bus, as the ranch crew drives from the railway station to the ranch. Ruby and the other employees interact playfully during the song.

The film also introduced the song "I'll Remember April", sung by Dick Foran. During the 1950s and 1960s the song became a favorite of jazz musicians based on chord changes that particularly lent themselves to improvisation.

Musical numbers were staged by Nick Castle.

The burlesque routine, "Crazy House", appears in the film where Costello enters a sanitarium for "peace and quiet", only to have his rest disturbed by a succession of bizarre visitors.

Ride 'Em Cowboy was filmed from June 30-August 9, 1941 on location at both the B-Bar A and the Rancho Chihuahua dude ranches. It was originally intended to be the third starring film for Abbott and Costello, but its production was delayed so that the team could make In the Navy, and then its release was delayed so that Keep 'Em Flying could



be filmed and released. Dorothy Dandridge appears in the film as a dancer (uncredited). The song "Cow Cow Boogie" (written by Bennie Carter) was cut from film, but it was later sung in a Dandridge short film of the same name.

Cast

Bud Abbott as Duke

Lou Costello as Willoughby

Dick Foran as Bronco Bob Mitchell

Anne Gwynne as Anne Shaw

Johnny Mack Brown as Alabam' Brewster

Judd McMichael as Tom (as The Merry Macs)

Ted McMichael as Harry (as The Merry Macs)

Joe McMichael as Dick (as The Merry Macs)

Mary Lou Cook as Dotty Davis (as The Merry Macs)

Ella Fitzgerald as Ruby

Samuel S. Hinds as Sam Shaw

Douglass Dumbrille as Jake Rainwater

Morris Ankrum as Ace Anderson



COMPUTER HELP

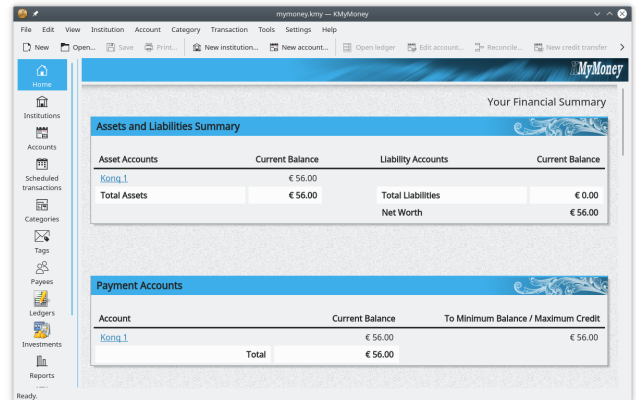
Financial Planner Asks—Is there a free financial package for Windows that works well, is complete, no restrictions, no 30 day trial, no limited functionality, and has all the functions of a paid-for package.

Nerd Replies—Yes there is !!!!! There are some great software packages that were originally just for Linux, but have been ported to Windows and work properly. The package for you is called “Kmoney” and can be downloaded from <https://kmoney.org/>

You can export your accounts for your current package as qif and then import into Kmoney.

The financial summary gives you an overview of your finances, including overdue and upcoming scheduled transactions. The summary also shows your accounts and their current balances. You can also customize this page, adding your favourite reports for example.

The functions are basically amazing and has a good documentation section. But this package is so simple to use despite being feature packed, that it won't take you long to get to grips with it.



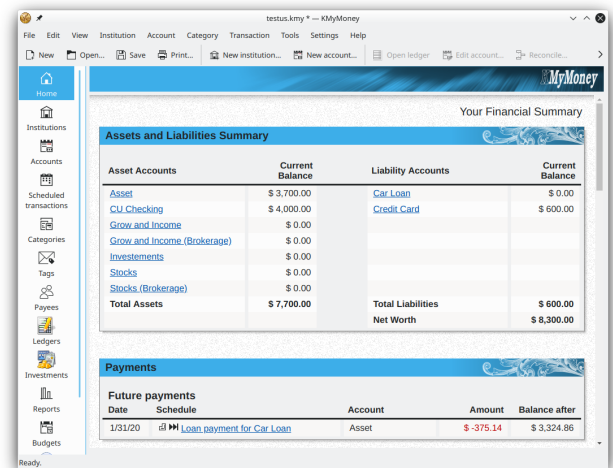
Your Financial Summary

Assets and Liabilities Summary

Asset Accounts	Current Balance	Liability Accounts	Current Balance
Kong 1	€ 56.00		
Total Assets	€ 56.00	Total Liabilities	€ 0.00
		Net Worth	€ 56.00

Payment Accounts

Account	Current Balance	To Minimum Balance / Maximum Credit
Kong 1	€ 56.00	€ 56.00
Total	€ 56.00	



Your Financial Summary

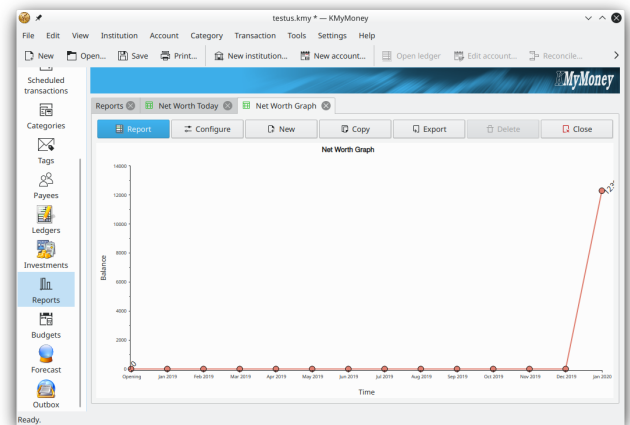
Assets and Liabilities Summary

Asset Accounts	Current Balance	Liability Accounts	Current Balance
Asset	\$ 3,700.00	Car Loan	\$ 0.00
CU Checking	\$ 4,000.00	Credit Card	\$ 600.00
Grow and Income	\$ 0.00		
Grow and Income (Brokerage)	\$ 0.00		
Investments	\$ 0.00		
Stocks	\$ 0.00		
Stocks (Brokerage)	\$ 0.00		
Total Assets	\$ 7,700.00	Total Liabilities	\$ 600.00
		Net Worth	\$ 8,300.00

Payments

Future payments

Date	Schedule	Account	Amount	Balance after
1/31/20	Loan payment for Car Loan	Asset	\$ -375.14	\$ 3,324.86



LAUREL AND HARDY—THE FLYING DEUCES

The Flying Deuces, also known as Flying Aces, is a 1939 buddy comedy film starring Laurel and Hardy, in which the duo join the French Foreign Legion. It is a partial remake of their short film Beau Hunks (1931).

During their sojourn in Paris, Ollie and Stan, temporarily distanced from their usual fish market work in Des Moines, Iowa, find themselves entangled in a romantic imbroglio. Ollie becomes enamored with Georgette, the daughter of an innkeeper, yet remains oblivious to her matrimonial ties to Francois, a Foreign Legion officer. Rejected by Georgette due to her existing marital commitment, Ollie experiences despondency, contemplating drastic measures until he is dissuaded by Stan's musings on reincarnation. Following Francois' suggestion, the duo enlists in the Foreign Legion, purportedly to alleviate Ollie's romantic woes.

Their legionnaire duties entail menial labor, met with resistance owing to their aversion to the meager wages offered. Subsequently sentenced to rigorous tasks, Ollie gradually relinquishes his romantic affliction amid the toil. Eventually, disillusioned by their laborious predicament, they incite chaos, inadvertently setting the laundry ablaze before expressing their disdain through a defiant letter.

Encounters with Georgette reignite Ollie's hopes, leading to a misunderstanding culminating in his arrest upon Francois' revelation of Georgette's marital status. Sentenced to death for desertion, Ollie and Stan find themselves incarcerated, their fate seemingly sealed until a fortuitous escape opportunity emerges. Inadvertent actions by Stan, however, divert their path to Francois' abode, igniting a pursuit culminating in an airborne escapade that concludes with Stan encountering a talking horse, purportedly embodying Ollie's reincarnated spirit.

Cast

Stan Laurel - Stan

Oliver Hardy - Ollie

Jean Parker - Georgette

Reginald Gardiner - François

Charles Middleton - Commandant

Jean Del Val - Sergeant

Clem Wilenchick - Corporal

James Finlayson - Jailor

Michael Visaroff appears uncredited as Georgette's father. Charles B. Middleton reprises the Legion Commandant role he played in Beau Hunks (1931), while Laurel and Hardy's frequent co-stars James Finlayson, Arthur Housman and Rychard Cramer also appear, respectively, as the jailor, a legionnaire who appears drunk, and the legionnaire who delivers the truckload of vegetables for the boys to work on.

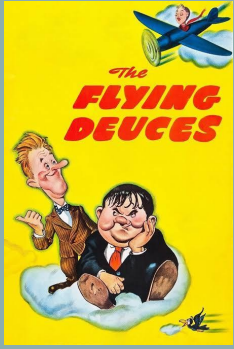
As Laurel and Hardy did not have an exclusive contract with Hal Roach, they were able to appear in films for other studios as they pleased. A remake of Beau Hunks, The Flying Deuces was released by RKO Radio Pictures and was made by independent producer Boris Morros. Director A. Edward Sutherland and Stan Laurel did not get along during filming, with Sutherland having reportedly commented that he "would rather eat a tarantula than work with Laurel again".



At the beginning of the film, the innkeeper's daughter is seen looking at a framed photograph of Ollie. The same photograph can also be seen in the short film Our Wife (1931), where the sight of it prompts the father of Ollie's fiancé to forbid the wedding.

The "laundry scene" in The Flying Deuces was filmed on the Iverson Movie Ranch in the Chatsworth section of Los Angeles, California, considered to be the most often used outdoor shooting location for films and television shows. In the scene, the characters played by

LAUREL AND HARDY—THE FLYING DEUCES



Laurel and Hardy, having disrupted training camp soon after joining the Foreign Legion, are forced to do a massive amount of laundry—seemingly the laundry for the entire Foreign Legion. For the shoot, a facsimile of a huge pile of laundry was built on top of one of the giant sandstone boulders of Iverson's Garden of the Gods, which is now a park. Aerial footage of the scene, including a large spread consisting of laundry hanging on lines, was shot for the movie, and was used briefly in the final flying scene as the set-up for a gag where the pair's cockpit is pelted with laundry. The footage later turned up in a number of other productions, including the Republic serials *Manhunt of Mystery Island* (1945) and *Radar Patrol vs. Spy King* (1949), along with the Allied Artists movie *The Cyclops* (1957).



LAUREL AND HARDY—A FINE MESS ON FIRST BASE.



Imagining Laurel and Hardy's "Who's on First?"

Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First?" is not just a comedy routine; it's a linguistic ballet, a masterclass in escalating absurdity that has befuddled and delighted audiences for generations. Its genius lies in its simplicity: names that sound like questions, leading to an ever-looping cycle of misunderstanding. But what if this iconic routine had fallen into the capable, yet perpetually confused, hands of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy?

The very thought conjures images of bowler hats, a quivering lower lip, and a frustrated tie-twiddle. While Bud Abbott's straight-man exasperation was legendary, and Lou Costello's innocent bewilderment unparalleled, a Laurel and Hardy rendition would infuse the routine with their unique brand of physical comedy, pathos, and that inimitable "fine mess."

Stan Laurel, with his wide-eyed innocence and childlike literalism, would be the perfect foil to the increasingly flustered Oliver Hardy. Where Costello's confusion was often loud and energetic, Stan's would be quieter, more internal, expressed through a slow blink, a head tilt, or a dawning realization that somehow, despite his best efforts, he was utterly lost. His signature whimper, or the frantic pulling of his few strands of hair, would replace Costello's frustrated "I don't know!"

Oliver Hardy, ever the self-appointed intellectual and the one striving to maintain dignity, would start with a patient, almost patronizing air, explaining the baseball positions. His initial confidence would slowly erode into a magnificent display of pompous exasperation. The tie-twiddle would become more vigorous with each exchange, his eyes rolling skyward in silent appeal to a higher power, or a frustrated plea to an unseen camera. He might even attempt to physically demonstrate the positions, only for Stan to misinterpret his gestures entirely, perhaps ending with Ollie accidentally tripping over his own oversized shoes.

An Imagined Scene:

Setting: A dusty, sun-baked baseball field. Oliver, looking slightly too formal in a light suit and bowler hat, holds a clipboard, trying to explain the team's lineup to a thoroughly bewildered Stan. Stan, in his trademark ill-fitting suit, fidgets with his own hat.

OLLIE: (Clears throat, tapping the clipboard with a pencil) Now, Stanley, we've gone over this. It's really quite simple. We're running this baseball team, and you need to know who's where.

STAN: (Nods earnestly, then frowns slightly) Yes, Oliver. I'm trying very hard.

OLLIE: Good. Now, the man playing first base... his name is "Who."

STAN: (His eyes widen slightly, he tilts his head) Who?

OLLIE: (Sighs, a minor, preparatory eye-roll) Yes, Stanley. Who.

STAN: (A slow blink, then a little shake of his head) But... but who is it, Oliver?

OLLIE: (Massaging his temple, a nascent tie-twiddle starts) I just told you, Stanley! The man's name on first base is Who!

STAN: (Lower lip begins to tremble ever so slightly) You didn't tell me who it is, you just said "Who!" Are you asking me, Oliver? Because I don't know.

OLLIE: (Forces a strained smile, twiddling his tie more purposefully now) Stanley, dear boy, listen to me. His name is Who. As in, W-H-O.

STAN: (Pulls at his earlobe, genuinely distressed) So, "Who" is on first. But... but who is he? What's his actual... what's his name?

LAUREL AND HARDY—A FINE MESS ON FIRST

OLLIE: (His smile vanishes, replaced by a look of profound suffering. He points an accusatory finger at Stan) His name is Who! Are you being deliberately obtuse?!

STAN: (Wringing his hands) No, Oliver! I just want to know so I can write it down properly! Because I'm very particular about names.

OLLIE: (Takes a deep, shuddering breath) Very well! (He points to an invisible second base) And the man on second base, his name is "What"!

STAN: (His jaw drops slightly) What?!

OLLIE: (Exasperated) Yes, What! What's on second!

STAN: (Confused frown) I asked what's on second!

OLLIE: (Throws his hands up in despair) And I told you! What!

STAN: (Near tears, looking to the heavens) So, "What" is on second... and "Who" is on first... (He points a trembling finger) But who is on first, Oliver?!

OLLIE: (His tie is now thoroughly disheveled, he looks directly at the camera with an expression of utter defeat) Well, here's another fine mess you've gotten me into...

Why It Would Endure

A Laurel and Hardy "Who's on First?" wouldn't just be an imitation; it would be an interpretation. Their unique chemistry, Stan's innocent literalism fueling Ollie's escalating, yet ultimately futile, attempts at logical explanation, would elevate the routine into something uniquely theirs. The physical gags – Stan accidentally knocking over a watercooler while trying to "demonstrate" first base, Ollie collapsing onto a bench in sheer frustration – would punctuate the verbal sparring, adding another layer to the classic.

It's a testament to the enduring power of both the routine and the duo that we can so easily imagine this perfect comedic marriage. It would be less about speedy patter and more about the slow, agonizing, yet ultimately hilarious, unraveling of Oliver Hardy's composure in the face of Stan Laurel's unshakeable, endearing bewilderment. And like all their best work, it would likely end with a whimper, a glare, and the beloved catchphrase that perfectly encapsulated their delightful, never-ending "fine mess."



VIVIEN OAKLAND



Vivien Oakland (born Vivian Ruth Andersen; May 20, 1895 – August 1, 1958), was an American actress best known for her work in comedies in Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s, most notably with the Hal Roach Studios. Oakland appeared in 157 films between 1915 and 1951.

Born Vivian Ruth Andersen in San Francisco, California, she was the daughter of Norwegian immigrants Edward Andersen and Anna Marthine Olsen. Her siblings' names were Edward, Herbert (née Hagbart), and Edna. She was one half of the vaudeville team "The Oakland Sisters" with her younger sister Edna, who later performed in motion pictures as Dagmar Oakland. After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, Anna Andersen, a widow since 1898, moved the family to Oakland, California. In 1917, she married actor John T. Murray (1886–1957). Oakland performed on Broadway and with the Ziegfeld Follies.

She supported Laurel and Hardy on several occasions, and sometimes played the wife of Edgar Kennedy and Leon Errol in their series of short films. She played mostly bit roles in feature films in the 1940s before making her last film, an Errol comedy, in 1951.

She retired from acting in 1951, settling in Sherman Oaks, California. She died seven years later and was buried in Chapel of the Pines Crematory.

Partial filmography

Destiny (1915)

Madonna of the Streets (1924)

The Rainbow Trail (1925)

The Teaser (1925)

Wife Tamers (1926)

Tony Runs Wild (1926)

Along Came Auntie (1926)

Mighty Like a Moose (1926)

Say It with Babies (1926)

Redheads Preferred (1926)

Two-Time Mama (1927)

Love 'em and Weep (1927)

Uncle Tom's Cabin (1927)

Wedding Bills (1927)

We Faw Down (1928)

The Man in Hobbles (1928)

That's My Wife (1929)

The Time, the Place and the Girl (1929)

In the Headlines (1929)

Personality (1930)

The Florodora Girl (1930)

Back Pay (1930)

VIVIEN OAKLAND

The Matrimonial Bed (1930)

Oh Sailor Behave (1930)

A Lady Surrenders (1930)

Many a Slip (1931)

Gold Dust Gertie (1931)

A House Divided (1931)

The Age for Love (1931)

Cock of the Air (1932)

The Tenderfoot (1932)

Secrets of the French Police (1932)

Scram! (1932)

They Just Had to Get Married (1932)

Neighbors' Wives (1933)

Merry Wives of Reno (1934)

The Defense Rests (1934)

Money Means Nothing (1934)

Rendezvous at Midnight (1935)

Star of Midnight (1935)

Keystone Hotel (1935)

Lady Luck (1936)

Way Out West (1937)

Should Wives Work? (1937)

Amateur Crook (1937)

Double Danger (1938)

Rebellious Daughters (1938)

Slander House (1938)

A Chump at Oxford (1940)

Pop Always Pays (1940)

The Man in the Trunk (1942)

Laugh Your Blues Away (1942)

The Girl Who Dared (1944)

The Man Who Walked Alone (1945)

Utah (1945)

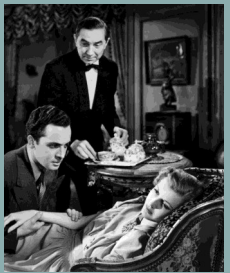
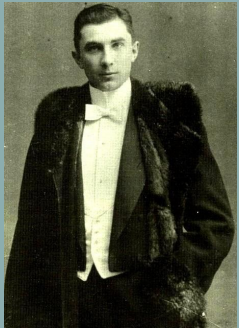
Night and Day (1946)

Bunco Squad (1950)

Punchy Pancho (1951)



BELA LUGOSI



Blaskó Béla Ferenc Dezső; October 20, 1882 – August 16, 1956), better known by the stage name Bela Lugosi, was a Hungarian–American actor. He was best remembered for portraying Count Dracula in the horror film classic *Dracula* (1931), Ygor in *Son of Frankenstein* (1939) and his roles in many other horror films from 1931 through 1956.

Lugosi began acting on the Hungarian stage in 1902, appearing in more than a hundred productions. Beginning in 1917, he performed in Hungarian silent films. After the failed Hungarian Communist Revolution of 1919, Lugosi was forced to immigrate to Germany due to his socialist activities. He acted in several films in Weimar Germany, before arriving in New Orleans as a seaman on a merchant ship, then making his way north to New York City and Ellis Island.

In 1927, he starred as Count Dracula in a Broadway adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel, moving with the play to the West Coast in 1928 and settling down in Hollywood. He later starred in the 1931 film version of *Dracula* directed by Tod Browning and produced by Universal Pictures. Through the 1930s, he occupied an important niche in horror films, but his notoriety as Dracula and thick Hungarian accent greatly limited the roles offered to him, and he unsuccessfully tried for years to avoid typecasting.

He co-starred in a number of films with fellow horror icon Boris Karloff, including *The Black Cat* (1934), *The Raven* (1935), and *Son of Frankenstein* (1939).

After 1948's *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, Lugosi experienced a career decline and mostly appeared in low-budget films, some of which were directed by Ed Wood. His collaborations with Wood include a brief appearance in *Plan 9 from Outer Space*, released posthumously in 1957.

Lugosi married five times and had one son, Bela G. Lugosi (with his fourth wife, Lillian).

Through his association with *Dracula* (in

which he appeared with minimal makeup, using his natural, heavily accented voice), Lugosi found himself typecast as a horror villain in films such as *Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1932), *The Black Cat* (1934) and *The Raven* (1935) for Universal, and the independent *White Zombie* (1932).

Lugosi auditioned for many roles in an attempt to break from typecasting. He lost out to Lionel Barrymore for the role of Grigori Rasputin in *Rasputin and the Empress* (also 1932); C. Henry Gordon for the role of Surat Khan in *Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936), and Basil Rathbone for the role of Commissar Dimitri Gorotchenko in *Tovarich* (1937), a role Lugosi had played on stage. He played the elegant, somewhat hot-tempered General Nicholas Strenovsky-Petronovich in *International House* (1933).

Regardless of controversy, five films at Universal – *The Black Cat* (1934), *The Raven* (1935), *The Invisible Ray* (1936), *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), *Black Friday* (1940), plus minor cameo performances in *Gift of Gab* (1934) and two at RKO Pictures, *You'll Find Out* (1940) and *The Body Snatcher* (1945) – paired Lugosi with Boris Karloff. Despite the relative size of their roles, Lugosi inevitably received second billing, below Karloff. There are contradictory reports of Lugosi's attitude toward Karloff, with some claiming that he was openly resentful of Karloff's long-term success and ability to gain good roles beyond the horror arena, while others indicated the two actors were amicable. In interviews, Karloff stated that Lugosi was initially mistrustful of him, but they were eventually able to work together amicably. Others have commented that Karloff's on-set demand to break from filming for mid-afternoon tea annoyed Lugosi. Lugosi played a few heroic leads, as in Universal's *The Black Cat* where Karloff played the villain; *The Invisible Ray*; and a romantic role in producer Sol Lesser's adventure serial *The Return of Chandu* (1934).

Lugosi addressed his plea to be cast in non-horror roles directly to casting directors through his listing in the 1937 *Players Directory*, published by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. In it, he called it "an error" for directors to believe he was only suited for horror films.

Lugosi developed severe, chronic sciatica, ostensi-

BELA LUGOSI

bly aggravated by injuries received during his military service. He was initially treated with benign pain remedies such as asparagus juice, but was eventually prescribed opiates. His chronic pain and increased dependence on opiates, particularly morphine and methadone, led to the dwindling of Lugosi's screen offers. The problem first manifested itself in 1937, when Lugosi was forced to withdraw from a leading role in a serial production, *The Secret of Treasure Island*, due to constant back pain.

Historian John McElwee reports, in his 2013 book *Showmen, Sell It Hot!*, that Bela Lugosi's popularity received a much-needed boost in August 1938, when California theatre owner Emil Umann revived *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* as a special double feature. The combination was so successful that Umann scheduled extra shows to accommodate the capacity crowds, and invited Lugosi to appear in person, which thrilled new audiences that had never seen Lugosi's classic performance. Lugosi later said of Umann, "I owe it all to that little man at the Regina Theatre. I was dead, and he brought me back to life." Universal took notice of the tremendous business and launched its own national re-release of the same two horror favorites. The studio then rehired Lugosi to star in new films.

Universal cast Lugosi in *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), appearing in the character role of Ygor, a mad blacksmith with a broken neck, in heavy makeup and beard. Lugosi was third-billed with his name above the title alongside Basil Rathbone as Dr. Frankenstein's son and Boris Karloff reprising his role as Frankenstein's monster. Regarding *Son of Frankenstein*, the film's director Rowland V. Lee said his crew let Lugosi "work on the characterization; the interpretation he gave us was imaginative and totally unexpected ... when we finished shooting, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that he stole the show. Karloff's monster was weak by comparison."

Also in 1939, Lugosi made a rare appearance in an A-list motion picture as a stern Soviet

commissar in the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer romantic comedy *Ninotchka*, starring Greta Garbo and directed by Ernst Lubitsch. Lugosi was quite effective in this small but prestigious character part and he even received top billing among the film's supporting cast, all of whom had significantly larger roles. It could have been a turning point for the actor, but within the year he was back on Hollywood's Poverty Row, playing leads for Sam Katzman at Monogram Pictures. At Universal, Lugosi was usually cast for his name value; he often received star billing for what amounted to a supporting part.

Late in his life, Bela Lugosi again received star billing in films when the ambitious but financially limited filmmaker Ed Wood, a fan of Lugosi, found him living in obscurity and near-poverty and offered him roles in his films, such as an anonymous narrator in *Glen or Glenda* (1953) and a mad scientist in *Bride of the Monster* (1955). During post-production of the latter, Lugosi decided to seek treatment for his drug addiction, and the film's premiere was arranged to raise money for Lugosi's hospital expenses, resulting in a paltry amount of money. According to Kitty Kelley's biography of Frank Sinatra, when the entertainer heard of Lugosi's problems, he visited Lugosi at the hospital and gave him a \$1,000 check. Sinatra later recalled Lugosi's amazement at his visit and generosity, since the two men had never met before.

Lugosi was married five times. In June 1917, Lugosi married 19-year-old Ilona Szmik (1898–1991) in Hungary. The couple divorced after Lugosi was forced to flee his homeland for political reasons. He risked execution if he stayed, but Ilona did not wish to leave her parents. The divorce became final on July 17, 1920, and was uncontested as Lugosi could not appear for the proceedings. In December 1920, Szmik married wealthy Hungarian architect Imre Francsek, with whom she had two children.

After living briefly in Germany, Lugosi left Europe by ship and arrived in New Orleans on October 27, 1920. He underwent his primary alien inspection at Ellis Island, N.Y. on March 23, 1921.

In September 1921, he married Hungarian actress Ilona von Montagh in New York City. She filed for divorce on November 11, 1924, charging him with adultery and complaining that he wanted her to abandon her acting career to keep house for him. The divorce was finalized in October 1925. In 1935,

BELA LUGOSI



Lugosi learned that von Montag and a female friend had been arrested for shoplifting in New York City, which was the last he heard of her.

Lugosi took his place in Hollywood society and scandal when he married wealthy San Francisco resident Beatrice Woodruff Weeks (1897–1931), widow of architect Charles Peter Weeks, on July 27, 1929. Weeks subsequently filed for divorce on November 4, 1929, accusing Lugosi of infidelity, citing actress Clara Bow as the "other woman", and claimed Lugosi tried to take her checkbook and the key to her safe deposit box away from her. Lugosi complained of her excessive drinking and dancing with other men at social gatherings. The divorce became official on December 9, 1929. 17 months later, Weeks died at age 34 from alcoholism in Panama, with Lugosi not receiving any money from her estate.

On June 26, 1931, Lugosi became a naturalized United States citizen. In 1933, the 51-year-old Lugosi married 22-year-old Lillian Arch (1911–1981), the daughter of Hungarian immigrants living in Hollywood. Lillian's father was against her marriage to Lugosi, as the actor was experiencing financial difficulties at the time. The couple eloped to Las Vegas in January 1933. They were married for 20 years and had a son, Bela G. Lugosi, in 1938. Lugosi eventually had four grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren, although he did not live long enough to meet any of them.

Lugosi and his family vacationed on their lakeshore property in Lake Elsinore, California (then called Elsinore), on several lots between 1944 and 1953. Lillian's parents lived on one of their properties and Lugosi frequented the health spa there. Bela Lugosi Jr. was boarded at the Elsinore Naval and Military School in Lake Elsinore, and lived with Lillian's parents while she and Bela were touring.

After almost separating in 1944, Lillian and Bela divorced on July 17, 1953, at least partially because of Bela's excessive drinking and his jealousy over Lillian's decision to take a full-time job as an assistant to actor Brian Donlevy on Donlevy's radio and television series *Dangerous Assignment*. Lillian obtained custody of their son Bela Jr. One night after Lillian left him, Lugosi called the police and threatened to commit suicide. When the police showed up at his apartment, he denied making the call. Lillian married Brian Donlevy in 1966.

In 1955, Lugosi married Hope Lininger, his fifth wife; she was 37 years his junior and had been a fan. While he was in the hospital for his drug addiction, she had written letters to him, which she would sign "A dash of Hope". Although they discussed divorce, they were married until Lugosi's death in 1956.

At age 73, Lugosi died of a heart attack on August 16, 1956, in the bedroom of his Los Angeles apartment while taking a nap. His wife discovered him when she came home from work that evening. According to the medical examiner, he died peacefully in his sleep around 6:45 p.m. The rumor that Lugosi was clutching the script for *The Final Curtain*, a planned Ed Wood project, at the time of his death is not true.

Lugosi was buried wearing a Dracula cape, his full costume, and his Dracula ring in the Holy Cross Cemetery in Culver City, California. Contrary to popular belief, Lugosi never requested to be buried in his cloak; Bela G. Lugosi confirmed on numerous occasions that he and his mother, Lillian, made the decision but believed that it is what his father would have wanted.



THE MAP IN THE MARGIN. ABBOTT AND COSTELLO SHORT STORY



The brass bell above the door of Abbott & Costello Antiquarian Books chimed its familiar welcome as the morning sun filtered through the dusty windows, casting long shadows across towers of leather-bound volumes that seemed to reach toward the tin ceiling like literary skyscrapers. Bud Abbott looked up from his ledger, adjusting his wire-rimmed spectacles as he watched his business partner Lou Costello attempt to reorganize a particularly precarious stack of Victorian novels that threatened to topple at any moment.

"Lou, for the love of all that's holy, please tell me you're not trying to alphabetize those by the colour of their spines again," Abbott said, his voice carrying the weary tone of a man who had witnessed far too many of his partner's unconventional organizational methods over the years.

Costello paused mid-reach, a thick volume of Dickens balanced precariously in his pudgy hands. "No, no, Bud, I'm organizing them by weight. See, the heavy ones go on the bottom, and the light ones go on top. It's like building a pyramid, but with books instead of rocks."

"That's not how libraries work, Lou."

"Well, this isn't a library, it's a bookshop. And in my bookshop, books are organized by the laws of physics, not the laws of the alphabet."

Abbott rubbed his temples, feeling the familiar onset of what he had come to call his "Costello headache." Their little shop on Bleecker Street had been operating for nearly three years now, and while they had managed to build a modest clientele of collectors, academics, and the occasional tourist looking for a first edition of something impressive to display on their coffee table, Abbott often wondered how they had managed to stay in business despite Lou's creative approach to retail management.

The bell chimed again, and both men turned to see Mrs. Pemberton, an elderly woman with silver hair pulled back in a tight bun and wearing a black wool coat that had seen better decades, struggling through the doorway with several large cardboard boxes.

"Mrs. Pemberton!" Abbott exclaimed, rushing to help her with the boxes. "You should have called us. We would have come to pick these up."

The elderly woman waved dismissively, though she gratefully allowed Abbott to take the heaviest box from her arms. "Nonsense, dear. I may be eighty-three, but I'm not helpless. Besides, I wanted to see your lovely shop again. It reminds me of the

THE MAP IN THE MARGIN

bookstore where my late husband proposed to me, back in 1962."

Costello had abandoned his pyramid project and waddled over to help with the remaining boxes. "What's in here, Mrs. Pemberton? Feels like you've got the entire Encyclopaedia Britannica in this one."

"Close, dear. These are the books from my husband's study. He was a professor of history at Columbia for forty-seven years, and he never met a book he didn't want to own. After he passed last month, I realized I simply don't have room for all of them in my apartment. I thought perhaps you gentlemen might be interested in purchasing the collection."

Abbott's eyes lit up with the particular gleam that appeared whenever he sensed a potentially profitable acquisition. Professor collections were often goldmines for antiquarian book dealers, filled with rare academic texts, first editions, and the occasional manuscript that could fetch a handsome price from the right collector.

"Of course, Mrs. Pemberton. Why don't you have a seat while Lou and I take a look at what you've brought us? Lou, put the kettle on. I'm sure Mrs. Pemberton would appreciate some tea."

As Costello bustled off toward the small kitchenette they had installed in the back of the shop, Abbott began carefully removing books from the first box. The collection was impressive: leather-bound volumes on European history, several first-edition works on the American Civil War, and what appeared to be a complete set of Gibbon's "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" in pristine condition.

"Your husband had excellent taste,

Mrs. Pemberton," Abbott said, handling each volume with the reverence of a man who understood the value of knowledge preserved in paper and ink. "These are beautiful specimens."

Mrs. Pemberton smiled sadly. "Harold always said that books were the closest thing to immortality that humans could achieve. He believed that as long as someone was reading the words, the author was still alive in some small way."

Costello returned with a steaming cup of tea, which he presented to Mrs. Pemberton with a flourish that would have been more appropriate for serving champagne to royalty. "Here you go, Mrs. P. Earl Grey, two sugars, just like my mother used to make."

"Thank you, dear. You're very kind."

Abbott continued his examination of the collection, making mental notes about potential values and market demand for each title. He was reaching into the second box when his fingers encountered something unusual. Wedged between a biography of Napoleon and a treatise on medieval architecture was a slim volume bound in cracked brown leather, its spine so faded that the title was barely legible.

"The Maritime Adventures of Captain Ezra Blackwood," Abbott read aloud, squinting at the worn gold lettering. "Published in 1847. I'm not familiar with this one."

Mrs. Pemberton looked up from her tea with interest. "Oh, that old thing. Harold found it at an estate sale in Connecticut about fifteen years ago. He said it was probably some sailor's memoir that never sold very well. He kept it more for its age than its content, I think."

Abbott opened the book carefully, noting the brittle pages and the musty smell that spoke of decades spent in various attics and basements. The text was printed in the small, dense typeface common to mid-nineteenth-century publications, and as he flipped through the pages, he could see that it was indeed a memoir of sorts, filled with tales of voyages to exotic ports and encounters with pirates and storms.

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It was when he reached approximately the middle of the book that something caught his eye. Tucked between pages 127 and 128 was what appeared to be a piece of parchment, yellowed with age and folded several times. Abbott's heart began to beat a little faster as he carefully extracted the document and unfolded it on the counter.

"Lou," he called, his voice tight with excitement. "Come here. You need to see this."

Costello hurried over, still holding a dishrag from his tea-making duties. "What is it, Bud? You look like you've seen a ghost."

"Better than a ghost, Lou. Look at this."

The parchment, when fully unfolded, revealed itself to be a hand-drawn map. The paper was covered with intricate illustrations: a coastline dotted with small islands, compass roses indicating direction, and various symbols that appeared to mark specific locations. But what made Abbott's pulse quicken was the text written in faded brown ink across the top of the map: "The True and Accurate Chart of the Treasure of Captain Ezra Blackwood, Hidden in the Year of Our Lord 1846."

Costello's eyes widened as he leaned in for a closer look. "Is that what I think it is?"

"If you think it's a treasure map, then yes, that's exactly what it is."

Mrs. Pemberton, drawn by their excitement, rose from her chair and approached the counter. "What have you found, boys?"

Abbott showed her the map, watching as her expression shifted from mild curiosity to genuine amazement. "Mrs. Pemberton, did your husband ever mention finding anything unusual in this book?"

The elderly woman shook her head slowly. "No, never. But then again, Harold had so many books that I don't think he ever read them all cover to cover. He had a habit of buying collections and then getting distracted by other acquisitions before he could properly examine everything."

Costello was practically bouncing on his toes

with excitement. "Bud, do you realize what this means? We could be rich! We could be famous! We could be rich and famous!"

"Slow down, Lou. First, we need to determine if this map is authentic. It could be a reproduction, or someone's idea of a joke, or—"

"Or it could be the real deal," Costello interrupted. "Come on, Bud, look at this thing. Look at the detail, the way the ink has aged, the way it was hidden in that old book. This isn't some tourist souvenir from a gift shop. This is the genuine article."

Abbott had to admit that his partner had a point. The map certainly appeared authentic, from the quality of the parchment to the style of the illustrations. The coastline depicted looked familiar, though he couldn't immediately place it, and the various symbols and notations suggested a level of detail that would be unusual for a fake.

"Mrs. Pemberton," Abbott said carefully, "I think we need to discuss the terms of our purchase. This map could potentially be quite valuable, and I want to make sure you receive fair compensation for the entire collection."

The elderly woman waved her hand dismissively. "Oh, nonsense. I came here to sell Harold's books, and that's exactly what I'm doing. Whatever you find in those books is yours to keep. Harold would have loved the idea of his collection leading to some grand adventure. He was always reading about explorers and treasure hunters. This would have delighted him."

Abbott felt a pang of conscience. "Mrs. Pemberton, I really think—"

"I insist," she said firmly. "Besides, at my age, what would I do with a treasure map? Chase pirates around the Caribbean? I think I'll leave that to you young men."

After Mrs. Pemberton had accepted their payment for the book collection and departed with promises to visit again soon, Abbott and Costello found themselves alone with the map spread out on the counter between them. The afternoon sun had shifted, casting the shop in a golden glow that seemed to make the parchment almost luminous.

"So," Costello said, breaking the silence that had settled over them, "what do we do now?"

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Abbott was studying the map intently, using a magnifying glass to examine the finer details. "Well, first we need to figure out where this is supposed to be. The coastline looks like it could be somewhere along the Eastern seaboard, but I can't be certain without doing some research."

"Research, schmesearch," Costello said, waving his hand dismissively. "This is a treasure map, Bud. You don't research treasure maps, you follow them. You get a boat, you get some shovels, you get some of those fancy metal detector things, and you go find the treasure."

"Lou, we can't just drop everything and go chasing after what might be a wild goose chase. We have a business to run, responsibilities—"

"What responsibilities? Mrs. Henderson comes in every Tuesday to look for romance novels but never buys anything. Professor Williams stops by on Fridays to argue about the price of our Civil War books but never makes an offer. And that weird guy with the beard comes in every other week to ask if we have any books about UFOs, which we don't, and which he knows we don't, but he keeps asking anyway."

Abbott had to concede that their customer base was not exactly overwhelming. The shop provided them with a modest living, but it was hardly the thriving enterprise he had envisioned when they first opened their doors.

"Besides," Costello continued, warming to his theme, "when was the last time we had a real adventure? When was the last time we did something exciting, something that didn't involve dusting off old books and arguing with customers about whether a first edition with a torn dust jacket is worth fifty dollars or forty-five dollars?"

Abbott looked at his partner, seeing the genuine enthusiasm in his eyes. Lou might be impractical and prone to hare-brained schemes, but he was also the one

who had convinced Abbott to open the bookshop in the first place, and despite all the headaches and near-disasters, it had turned out to be one of the best decisions Abbott had ever made.

"All right," Abbott said slowly, "let's say, hypothetically, that we decided to investigate this map. What would be our first step?"

Costello's face lit up like a child's on Christmas morning. "Really? You're actually considering it?"

"I'm considering considering it. There's a difference."

"Okay, okay. First step: we figure out where this place is. You're good with maps and geography and all that brainy stuff. You can figure out where this coastline is supposed to be."

Abbott nodded, already mentally cataloguing the reference materials they would need. "That's reasonable. And if we can identify the location, then what?"

"Then we pack up the shop, put a sign in the window that says 'Gone Treasure Hunting, Back When We're Rich,' and we hit the road."

"We can't just abandon the shop, Lou."

"Why not? It's not like we're making a fortune here. And if this treasure is real, we won't need the shop anymore. We'll be independently wealthy. We can travel the world, buy rare books from exotic locations, maybe open a chain of bookshops in every major city."

Abbott found himself caught up in his partner's enthusiasm despite his natural inclination toward caution. There was something undeniably appealing about the idea of leaving behind their routine of cataloguing inventory and dealing with difficult customers in favour of a genuine adventure.

"Let me do some research first," Abbott said finally. "If I can identify the location and find some historical evidence that Cap-

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tain Ezra Blackwood was a real person who might have actually hidden treasure somewhere, then maybe we can discuss taking a trip to investigate."

"How long will that take?"

"Give me a week. Maybe two."

Costello groaned dramatically. "Two weeks? Bud, by the time you finish researching, someone else might find the treasure. These things are time-sensitive."

"Lou, if this treasure has been sitting wherever it is for over a hundred and seventy years, I think it can wait another two weeks."

Over the next ten days, Abbott threw himself into research with the dedication of a scholar working on his doctoral dissertation. He spent hours at the New York Public Library, poring over maritime records, ship manifests, and historical accounts of piracy and privateering along the American coast in the mid-nineteenth century. He consulted nautical charts, compared coastlines, and even reached out to several maritime historians at Columbia University.

What he discovered was both encouraging and troubling. Captain Ezra Blackwood had indeed been a real person, a merchant sailor who had operated along the Eastern seaboard in the 1840s. However, the historical record suggested that Blackwood had been involved in some questionable activities, including possible smuggling and at least one documented case of what might charitably be called "aggressive salvage operations" against ships in distress.

More intriguingly, Abbott found a newspaper account from 1847 describing the mysterious disappearance of Blackwood and his ship, the "Salty Sarah," somewhere off the coast of North Carolina. The article mentioned rumours that Blackwood had been carrying a substantial cargo of gold and silver coins, payment for a large shipment of goods that had been delivered to a wealthy plantation owner just before his disappearance.

The coastline depicted in the map, after care-

ful comparison with historical charts, appeared to match a section of the North Carolina Outer Banks, specifically an area near Cape Hatteras that was known for its treacherous waters and numerous shipwrecks.

When Abbott presented his findings to Costello, his partner's reaction was predictably enthusiastic.

"I knew it!" Costello exclaimed, slapping the counter with his palm. "I knew this was the real deal. So when do we leave?"

"Hold on, Lou. Just because Captain Blackwood was real doesn't mean the treasure is real. And even if the treasure is real, that doesn't mean we can find it. This map is over a hundred and seventy years old. The landscape could have changed dramatically. Storms, erosion, development—any number of factors could have altered the area beyond recognition."

"Or," Costello countered, "the treasure could be sitting there waiting for us, just like it was when Blackwood buried it. Come on, Bud, what's the worst that could happen? We take a little vacation to North Carolina, we do some exploring, we get some fresh air and sunshine. If we don't find anything, we come back and reopen the shop. If we do find something, we're set for life."

Abbott had to admit that the prospect of a change of scenery was appealing. The shop had been feeling increasingly confining lately, and the idea of spending some time outdoors, away from the dust and mustiness of old books, was genuinely attractive.

"What about the shop?" Abbott asked, though he could feel his resistance weakening.

"We'll close it for a couple of weeks. Put a sign in the window saying we're taking inventory or something. Our regular customers will wait for us, and if they don't, well, maybe that tells us something about how essential our business really is."

Abbott looked at the map again, studying the careful illustrations and detailed notations. There was something about it that spoke to him on a level deeper than mere intellectual curiosity. Perhaps it was the romantic notion of hidden treasure, or perhaps it was simply the appeal of solving a historical mystery, but he found himself genuinely excited about the possibility of following the map to its des-

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tion.

"All right," he said finally. "Let's do it."

Costello let out a whoop of joy that probably startled every customer within a three-block radius. "Really? We're really going to do this?"

"We're really going to do this. But we do it properly. We plan the trip carefully, we bring the right equipment, and we approach this like a legitimate archaeological investigation, not like a couple of weekend treasure hunters with metal detectors and dreams of easy money."

"Absolutely," Costello agreed, though Abbott suspected his partner's definition of "properly" might differ significantly from his own.

The next few days were a whirlwind of preparation. Abbott researched the best routes to the North Carolina coast, booked them a room at a small inn near Cape Hatteras, and compiled a list of equipment they would need for their investigation. Costello, meanwhile, threw himself into the task of acquiring said equipment with the enthusiasm of a child preparing for summer camp.

"I got us metal detectors," Costello announced, struggling through the door of the shop with several large boxes. "Top of the line models, guaranteed to find treasure up to six feet underground."

"Lou, we don't even know if the treasure is buried. It could be hidden in a cave, or in the ruins of a building, or—"

"I also got us shovels, pickaxes, rope, flashlights, camping gear, and one of those fancy GPS things so we don't get lost."

Abbott examined the pile of equipment with a mixture of admiration and concern. "How much did all this cost?"

"Don't worry about it. I put it on the shop's credit card. When we find the treasure, we'll pay it off and still have plenty left over."

"And if we don't find the treasure?"

Costello waved dismissively. "Then we'll have some really nice camping equipment."

On a crisp October morning, Abbott and Costello loaded their rented SUV with their equipment and supplies and set out for North Carolina. The drive south was pleasant, taking them through the changing autumn landscape of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia before finally bringing them to the flat, sandy terrain of the Outer Banks.

Their inn, the Blackbeard's Rest, was a charming two-story building that looked like it had been constructed sometime in the 1950s and hadn't been significantly updated since. The proprietor, a weathered man in his sixties named Captain Murphy (though Abbott suspected this was more of a nickname than an official title), greeted them with the kind of enthusiasm typically reserved for long-lost relatives.

"Treasure hunters, eh?" Captain Murphy said, eyeing their equipment with obvious interest. "We get a few of those every year. Most of them go home empty-handed, but every once in a while, someone finds something interesting. You boys have any particular area in mind?"

Abbott showed him the map, watching as the old man's eyes widened with genuine surprise.

"Well, I'll be damned," Captain Murphy muttered. "That's a real old one, isn't it? And look at that detail. Most of the maps people bring me look like they were drawn on a napkin by someone who'd never seen the ocean. This one, though... this one looks like it was made by someone who knew what they were doing."

"Do you recognize the area?" Abbott asked.

Captain Murphy studied the map more carefully, tracing the coastline with his finger. "Could be anywhere along here, really. The Outer Banks have changed a lot over the years. Storms, erosion, development... what was dry land a hundred years ago might be underwater now, and what was underwater might be a sand dune."

"That's what I was afraid of," Abbott said.

"But," Captain Murphy continued, "there are a

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few spots that haven't changed much. Protected areas, places where the geography is stable. If I were you, I'd start with the area around Buxton Woods. It's been pretty much the same for the last couple hundred years, and it matches the general shape of what you've got on this map."

He gave them detailed directions to several locations that might match the landmarks shown on the map, along with advice about tides, weather conditions, and local regulations regarding metal detecting and excavation.

"One more thing," Captain Murphy said as they prepared to leave. "You boys be careful out there. The Outer Banks can be dangerous if you don't know what you're doing. Sudden storms, shifting sands, rip currents... and that's not even counting the local wildlife. We've got everything from wild horses to alligators out there."

"Alligators?" Costello squeaked.

"Just a few. Probably won't bother you if you don't bother them. Probably."

Their first day of searching was both exhilarating and frustrating. Armed with their metal detectors and copies of the map, they explored several locations that seemed to match the landmarks depicted in the old chart. They found plenty of metal objects—bottle caps, fishing lures, coins from various decades—but nothing that suggested the presence of a substantial treasure.

"Maybe we're looking in the wrong place," Costello suggested as they took a break for lunch on the beach. "Maybe the map is oriented differently than we think, or maybe the scale is off."

Abbott was studying the map again, comparing it to the modern topographical charts he had brought along. "It's possible. Or maybe the treasure was found years ago by someone else. Or maybe it never existed in the first place."

"Don't talk like that," Costello said firmly.

"We've only been looking for one day. Rome wasn't built in a day, and treasure isn't found

in a day either."

"Actually, Lou, treasure is usually found in a day. That's kind of the point of treasure hunting. You either find it or you don't."

"Well, we're going to find it. I can feel it."

Their second day was more promising. Following Captain Murphy's suggestion, they focused their search on the area around Buxton Woods, a maritime forest that had remained relatively unchanged for centuries. The landscape here seemed to match the map more closely, with several distinctive features that corresponded to the illustrations on the parchment.

It was Costello who made the first significant discovery. His metal detector began beeping frantically near a cluster of old oak trees that formed a rough triangle, just as depicted on the map. Excited, they began digging, and about three feet down, they uncovered a metal box, heavily corroded but still intact.

"This is it!" Costello shouted, dancing around the hole they had dug. "We found it! We're rich!"

Abbott was more cautious, carefully extracting the box and examining it in the fading afternoon light. It was clearly old, made of iron that had been eaten away by decades of moisture and salt air. When he finally managed to pry it open, however, his heart sank.

Inside the box were several items that were undoubtedly from the mid-nineteenth century: a few coins, some jewellery, a pocket watch, and what appeared to be personal papers. But the total value of the contents was probably no more than a few hundred dollars, hardly the substantial treasure they had been hoping for.

"This isn't the main treasure," Costello said, his initial disappointment giving way to renewed optimism. "This is just a decoy, or maybe a sample, or maybe Blackwood's personal stash. The real treasure is still out there."

Abbott wanted to argue, but he had to admit that the discovery of anything at all was encouraging. It proved that the map was at least partially accurate, and that someone had indeed buried something in this location many years ago.

They spent the next three days expanding their

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search area, using the location of the first box as a reference point and working outward in increasingly large circles. They found several more small caches—coins, jewellery, and other personal items—but nothing that could be considered a substantial treasure.

It was on their sixth day that they made the discovery that changed everything.

Abbott was working alone in a section of the woods about a quarter-mile from their previous finds when his metal detector began producing a signal unlike anything he had heard before. Instead of the sharp beeps that indicated small metal objects, this was a low, steady tone that seemed to go on and on as he moved the detector back and forth.

"Lou!" he called. "Get over here!"

Costello came crashing through the underbrush, his own metal detector bouncing against his hip. "What is it? Did you find something big?"

"I think so. Listen to this."

Abbott demonstrated the signal, showing how it extended over a large area, suggesting something substantial buried beneath the sandy soil.

They began digging with renewed energy, taking turns with the shovels as the hole grew deeper and wider. About four feet down, Abbott's shovel struck something solid with a metallic clang that sent vibrations up through the handle.

"That's not a rock," he said, breathing heavily from the exertion.

They cleared away more sand and dirt, revealing the corner of what appeared to be a large metal chest, much bigger than the small boxes they had found previously. Working carefully to avoid damaging whatever was inside, they gradually exposed the entire container.

The chest was massive, easily three feet long and two feet wide, made of iron

and bound with heavy metal straps. Despite its age and the corrosive effects of its underground environment, it appeared to be in remarkably good condition.

"How are we going to get this thing out of here?" Costello asked, staring at the chest with a mixture of awe and practical concern.

"Very carefully," Abbott replied. "And probably not today. This thing must weigh a couple hundred pounds, maybe more. We're going to need help."

They spent the rest of the day carefully excavating around the chest and taking photographs from every angle. Abbott was particularly interested in the markings on the metal straps, which appeared to include initials and possibly a date, though the corrosion made them difficult to read.

That evening, back at the inn, they showed their photographs to Captain Murphy, who examined them with the intensity of a scholar studying ancient manuscripts.

"Well, boys," he said finally, "I think you might have found something significant. That chest looks like it could be from the right time period, and the construction is consistent with what a ship's captain might have used to store valuables."

"How do we get it out of there?" Costello asked.

"Carefully, and legally," Captain Murphy replied. "You're going to need to contact the state archaeological office and probably the Coast Guard. If this is a significant historical find, there are procedures that need to be followed."

Abbott felt his heart sink. "Does that mean we don't get to keep whatever's inside?"

"Not necessarily. But it does mean you can't just haul it out of there and crack it open like a piggy bank. There are laws about archaeological discoveries, especially ones that might have historical significance."

The next morning, Abbott made the necessary phone calls, and by afternoon, their quiet treasure hunt had become a much more official operation. Dr. Sarah Chen, a maritime archaeologist

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from the University of North Carolina, arrived with a small team of graduate students and enough equipment to conduct a proper excavation.

"This is quite exciting," Dr. Chen said as she examined the chest in its sandy grave. "We don't often get the opportunity to investigate a find like this with such clear provenance. Your map is a remarkable document."

"Does this mean we can't open it?" Costello asked, looking like a child who had been told he couldn't open his Christmas presents.

"Oh, we're definitely going to open it," Dr. Chen assured him. "But we're going to do it properly, with documentation and conservation measures in place. Whatever's inside, we want to preserve it for historical study."

The excavation took two more days, with Dr. Chen's team carefully removing the chest from its resting place and transporting it to a temporary laboratory they had set up in a nearby building. Abbott and Costello were invited to observe the opening, which was conducted with all the ceremony of a royal coronation.

Dr. Chen used specialized tools to carefully pry open the corroded lock, working slowly to avoid damaging the contents. When the lid finally swung open, everyone in the room gasped.

The chest was filled with coins—hundreds of them, gold and silver pieces from various countries and time periods. There were Spanish pieces of eight, American gold eagles, British sovereigns, and coins from countries Abbott couldn't immediately identify. Nestled among the coins were pieces of jewelry, silverware, and what appeared to be several small ingots of precious metal.

"My God," Dr. Chen whispered. "This is incredible. The historical value alone is immeasurable, and the monetary value... well, let's just say you gentlemen are going to be very comfortable for the rest of your lives."

The process of cataloguing and appraising the treasure took several weeks, during which Abbott and Costello found themselves

minor celebrities in the archaeological community. Their story was picked up by local newspapers, then national media, and eventually by several television programs devoted to historical mysteries and treasure hunting.

The final appraisal valued the contents of the chest at just over two million dollars, with the historical significance adding considerably to its worth. After negotiations with various government agencies and academic institutions, Abbott and Costello were awarded ownership of approximately sixty percent of the treasure, with the remainder going to museums and research institutions.

"So what do we do now?" Costello asked as they sat in their hotel room, looking at legal documents that officially made them millionaires.

Abbott considered the question seriously. They could return to New York, reopen their bookshop, and live comfortably on the interest from their newfound wealth. Or they could use their treasure hunting experience as the foundation for a new career, perhaps writing books about their adventure or consulting with other treasure hunters.

"You know what I think we should do?" Abbott said finally.

"What's that?"

"I think we should open a new kind of bookshop. One that specializes in maps, maritime history, and adventure stories. We could call it 'The Treasure Map' or something like that. We could display some of the artifacts we found, tell our story, maybe even organize expeditions for other people who want to try their hand at treasure hunting."

Costello's eyes lit up with enthusiasm. "That's a great idea! We could be like those guys on TV, except instead of just looking for treasure, we could help other people find their own adventures."

"And," Abbott added, "we could make sure we do it properly. With research, and planning, and respect for historical preservation."

"Absolutely. We'll be the most professional treasure hunters in the business."

Abbott smiled, looking out the window at the ocean where Captain Ezra Blackwood had sailed more than a century ago. Their adventure was ending, but in many ways, it felt like it was just beginning.

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Six months later, Abbott & Costello's Maritime Adventures opened its doors in a larger space in Greenwich Village. The shop featured an extensive collection of maps, nautical charts, and books about exploration and treasure hunting, along with a small museum displaying artifacts from their North Carolina discovery. The original treasure map was mounted in a place of honor behind the counter, and visitors often spent hours studying its intricate details and imagining their own adventures.

Business was better than it had ever been at their old shop. They attracted customers from around the world—historians, treasure hunters, adventure enthusiasts, and curious tourists who had heard their story. They consulted on several other treasure hunting expeditions, though none proved as successful as their own.

But perhaps most importantly, they had discovered something more valuable than gold or silver: the knowledge that sometimes the most extraordinary adventures begin with the most ordinary moments, and that the greatest treasures are often found not in the ground, but in the courage to follow a dream wherever it might lead.

As Abbott often told visitors to their shop, "We thought we were just buying a collection of old books. Instead, we found a new life."

And Costello, never one to be outdone, would add, "Plus, we got really good at digging holes."

The treasure map that had started it all remained on display, a reminder that adventure could be found in the most unexpected places, and that sometimes the best way to discover treasure was simply to believe that it was out there, waiting to be found.

