



LAUREL AND HARDY

**THE CASE OF THE
CORPORATE CRUMPET**

Screenplay by Phillip Chandler

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FADE IN:

SCENE 1 INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - DAY

A dusty, second-floor office. Sunlight streams through a window, illuminating floating dust motes. On the frosted glass of the door, painted backwards, are the words:

LAUREL & HARDY CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATIONS "The Mind of a Holmes, The Price of a Watson"

STAN LAUREL, thin and with a perpetually bewildered expression, is attempting to dust a globe with a feather duster. He spins it, then tries to dust it while it's moving, succeeding only in sending a cloud of dust into his own face. He sneezes, a tiny, almost apologetic sound.

OLIVER HARDY, portly and self-important, sits behind a grand, albeit scarred, wooden desk. He wears a rumpled tweed suit and a bowler hat, which he has not removed. He is trying, with immense concentration, to light a large, curved calabash pipe. He strikes a match, brings it to the bowl, and inhales deeply. Nothing happens. He frowns, shakes the pipe, and tries again.

STAN (Wiping his nose) Did you get it lit, Ollie?

OLLIE (Waving the match out) Patience, Stanley, patience. A great mind requires the proper ambiance to ruminate. Sherlock Holmes never rushed his three-pipe problems.

Ollie strikes another match. He puffs dramatically. A small, sad wisp of smoke emerges, followed by a shower of sparks that land on his tie. He yelps, frantically batting at his chest.

OLLIE (CONT'D) Doh!

He glares at Stan, as if it were his fault. Stan offers a helpful smile and blows on Ollie's tie, sending a plume of soot directly into Ollie's face. Ollie sputters, his face now smudged with black. He fixes Stan with a long-suffering stare, then turns his head to look directly into the CAMERA, sighing with the weight of the world on his shoulders.

The door opens. A well-dressed, anxious man enters. This is MR. PERCIVAL PUMBLE, owner of "Pumble's Patent Puddings."

MR. PUMBLE Are you the investigators? Laurel and Hardy?

Ollie immediately straightens his sooty tie and puffs out his chest, the picture of professionalism.

OLLIE The very same, sir. At your service. I am Mr. Hardy, the brains of this organization. And this is my associate, Mr. Laurel.

Stan, hearing his name, turns and gives Mr. Pumble a little wave with the feather duster, sending another dust cloud wafting through the office.

MR. PUMBLE (Waving the dust away) Quite. I have a matter of the utmost delicacy. It requires discretion, cunning, and surgical precision.

OLLIE You've come to the right place. We are the very embodiment of delicatessen. Precision is our middle name.

STAN I thought your middle name was Norvell, Ollie.

Ollie shoots Stan a withering glare before turning back to the client with a strained smile.

OLLIE A mere... nom de plume. Please, sir, state your case.

MR. PUMBLE It's my wife, Beatrice. I suspect she is a spy.

Stan's eyes go wide. Ollie leans forward, intrigued.

OLLIE A spy? For a foreign power? A dastardly imbroglio of international espionage!

MR. PUMBLE No, no, nothing so... exotic. I believe she is secretly working for my chief competitor, Fitzwilliam's Fantastic Flans!

Ollie deflates slightly.

OLLIE Ah. Industrial espionage. Just as dastardly. Proceed.

MR. PUMBLE For weeks, our company secrets have been leaking. Our new formula for Self-Rising Rice Pudding, our Perennial Plum Duff... Fitzwilliam announces a similar product days after our internal meetings! Beatrice has been acting strangely. Leaving the house at odd hours, being secretive about her appointments... I need you to follow her. For one month. Find out if she's meeting with Fitzwilliam. I need proof!

OLLIE Consider it done, Mr. Pumble. We shall stick to her like glue. She will not make a move without our knowledge. The game, as they say, is afoot!

Stan, trying to look thoughtful like Ollie, puts his finger to his temple. He misses and pokes himself in the eye.

STAN Ouch.

Mr. Pumble hands Ollie a thick envelope of cash and a photograph of a handsome, smiling woman.

MR. PUMBLE My Beatrice. Be careful. And for heaven's sake, be discreet.

OLLIE Sir, you wound me. Discretion is the foundation upon which this agency is... founded.

Mr. Pumble, looking only partially reassured, nods and exits. Ollie counts the money with a flourish.

OLLIE (CONT'D) Stanley, our ship has come in! This is the case that will make our reputation. To the disguise trunk!

SCENE 2 EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

A pristine, tree-lined street. MRS. BEATRICE PUMBLE exits her large, stately home. She is carrying a large, wicker picnic basket. She gets into her shiny automobile and drives off.

A moment later, Laurel and Hardy's vehicle sputters around the corner. It's a battered Model T Ford.

They are in "disguise."

Ollie is wearing a painfully false, bushy black mustache that is glued on crooked, and a pair of dark spectacles. Stan is wearing an identical mustache, but he has put it on upside-down, so it looks like a furry smile above his lip. He is also wearing a deerstalker cap.

OLLIE (Pointing) There she goes! After her, Stanley! But maintain a safe, inconspicuous distance.

STAN Right, Ollie. Inconspic... incons... far away.

Stan floors the accelerator. The Model T lurches, backfires loudly (SFX: A-OO-GAH! BANG!), and shoots forward, rocketing past Mrs. Pumble's car and cutting her off. Mrs. Pumble slams on her brakes, startled.

Stan, realizing his mistake, slams on his own brakes. The car screeches to a halt. Ollie flies forward, his face planting squarely in the dusty windshield. His fake mustache is left perfectly stuck to the glass.

(SFX: SQUISH)

Ollie slowly peels his face away, now clean-shaven again. He turns to Stan, his expression a mixture of fury and pain. Mrs. Pumble, meanwhile, shakes her head at the two strange men in the ridiculous car and drives around them, continuing on her way.

OLLIE Well? What are you waiting for?

Stan stares at the mustache on the windshield, then back at Ollie's bare lip. He scratches his head, genuinely confused.

STAN Did you have a shave, Ollie?

Ollie closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and then points tremblingly down the road.

OLLIE Just... drive.

SCENE 3 EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

A montage of surveillance failures over the next few weeks.

- Laurel and Hardy try to hide behind a single, thin sapling. They stand one behind the other, Ollie's considerable girth visible on both sides of the tree. Mrs. Pumble walks by with her basket, giving them a curious glance.
- They follow her to a department store. They attempt to hide in a mannequin display for ladies' foundation garments. Ollie gets his head stuck in a girdle. Stan, trying to help, pulls on it, stretching it like a slingshot. He lets go. (SFX: BOI-OI-OING! THWACK!) It snaps back, spinning Ollie around and knocking over the entire display.
- They follow her to a library. They try to listen to her conversation from the next aisle by using a long tube made of rolled-up newspapers. Stan puts his ear to one end. Ollie, at the other end, sees a spider and blows it down the tube to get rid of it. The spider shoots out the other end, directly into Stan's ear. Stan yelps and smacks himself on the head, destroying the listening device and toppling a bookshelf. (SFX: CRASH!)

Each time, Mrs. Pumble seems to notice the commotion but pays them no mind, as if they are merely part of the city's chaotic background noise.

SCENE 4 INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Three weeks later. The office looks even more chaotic. Ollie is pacing, his suit now featuring a prominent rip in the sleeve. Stan is trying to glue Ollie's original fake mustache back together.

OLLIE It's no use, Stanley! Three weeks and what have we discovered? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! She goes to the park, she goes to the library, she goes to the market. All we know is that she carries that blasted basket everywhere!

STAN Maybe she's a spy who likes picnics, Ollie.

OLLIE (Stops pacing) A spy who... Stanley, that is the most ridiculous, addle-pated, nincompoop idea I have ever...

Ollie pauses. His eyes narrow in thought.

OLLIE (CONT'D) Wait a minute. The basket... Of course! It's a dead drop! She's exchanging information via the basket! Stanley, your simple-minded buffoonery has stumbled upon the truth! We must intercept that basket!

STAN (Beaming) Did I do good, Ollie?

OLLIE You've done nothing! I am the one who deciphered your babbling. Tomorrow, we put Operation 'Badger the Basket' into effect!

SCENE 5 EXT. WINDOW LEDGE, FITZWILLIAM'S FLANS HQ - DAY

Ollie's new plan is, somehow, even worse. They are disguised as window washers on the third floor of the "Fitzwilliam's Fantastic Flans" building, which is directly opposite the park where Mrs. Pumble is currently sitting on a bench.

They are on a rickety wooden platform, suspended by ropes. Ollie is trying to watch Mrs. Pumble through a large pair of binoculars. Stan is supposed to be washing the windows.

STAN (Scrubbing listlessly) Are you sure this is a good idea, Ollie? It's a long way down.

OLLIE Silence! This is the perfect vantage point. We can observe the subject and the enemy headquarters simultaneously. It's elementary, my dear Laurel. Now, hand me the telescopic lens.

Stan, confused, looks around. He sees a long-handled squeegee. He hands it to Ollie. Ollie, not looking, takes it and tries to attach it to his binoculars.

OLLIE (CONT'D) It won't fit... What is this?!

He looks at the squeegee in disgust and tosses it away. It flies through the air, end over end, and disappears through an open window on the second floor of their own building.

(SFX: WHIZZ... CRASH! MUFFLED YELL)

A moment later, MR. FITZWILLIAM, a portly man with a monocle, sticks his head out the window below, sputtering with rage, a wet squeegee mark across his bald head.

MR. FITZWILLIAM You hooligans! You nearly decapitated me! I'll have your jobs for this!

OLLIE (Leaning over the edge) A thousand pardons, my good man! A momentary... lapse in judgment!

While Ollie is distracted, Stan leans over to get a better look. His foot gets tangled in the rope that controls the platform's height. As he shifts his weight, the platform gives a violent lurch and begins to descend rapidly.

(SFX: RATCHET-RATCHET-RATCHET-WHOOSH!)

Ollie yelps, dropping the binoculars and grabbing onto the ropes for dear life. Stan flails, making it worse. The platform swings wildly, like a pendulum. On one swing, it swoops past Fitzwilliam's window, and Ollie's flailing foot kicks a pot of geraniums off his windowsill.

(SFX: KICK! CRASH!)

On the swing back, it passes Mrs. Pumble in the park below. She looks up, sees the two men swinging in the air, and shakes her head with a small, amused smile before picking up her basket and walking towards the Fitzwilliam building.

OLLIE (Spotting her) Stanley! She's on the move! She's going in! We were right!

The platform finally jolts to a stop just a few feet off the ground. Ollie, dizzy and disheveled, tumbles off. Stan follows, landing on top of him.

(SFX: WHUMP!)

OLLIE (CONT'D) (Muffled) Get off me, you clumsy oaf! This is it! The final confrontation! To the lobby!

SCENE 6 INT. FITZWILLIAM'S FLANS HQ, LOBBY - DAY

Laurel and Hardy scramble into the ornate lobby, looking completely out of place in their window-washer overalls. They see Mrs. Pumble talking to the receptionist.

OLLIE (Whispering) We need a place to hide! Behind that potted palm!

They dive behind a large fern. Peeking through the fronds, they see Mrs. Pumble being led down a hallway. They tiptoe after her.

They follow her to a large conference room. The door is slightly ajar. Ollie puts his eye to the crack. Inside, Mrs. Pumble is standing at a long table. Across from her is none other than MR. FITZWILLIAM. On the table between them is the wicker basket.

OLLIE (Whispering triumphantly) I knew it! The exchange is happening now! We have them red-handed!

STAN (Peeking under Ollie's arm) What's in the basket, Ollie?

Ollie pushes Stan's head down.

OLLIE State secrets, you dunce! The formula for Pumble's puddings!

Suddenly, Stan feels a familiar tickle in his nose from a fern frond. His face contorts.

STAN Ah... ah... ah...

OLLIE (Hissing) Don't you dare! Stanley, if you...

STAN AH-CHOO!

The sneeze is monumental. It's so powerful it blows him backwards into Ollie. The two of them stumble, lose their balance, and crash through the door, tumbling into the conference room in a heap of flailing limbs and landing at the feet of Mrs. Pumble and Mr. Fitzwilliam.

(SFX: CRASH!)

Just then, the main doors of the lobby burst open and MR. PUMBLE storms in, his face purple with rage.

MR. PUMBLE A-HA! I couldn't wait any longer! I knew I'd find you here, Beatrice! Consorting with the enemy! Handing over my puddings!

He points a trembling finger at his wife.

Mrs. Pumble doesn't look guilty. She looks exasperated. She calmly opens the wicker basket.

MRS. PUMBLE Percival, you are a dear, sweet, wonderful fool.

She pulls out of the basket not secret documents, but a magnificent, glistening, perfectly formed Crème brûlée.

Mr. Fitzwilliam adjusts his monocle and smiles.

MR. FITZWILLIAM Indeed. Your wife, Pumble, has been taking advanced baking lessons for the past month. She wanted to enter the Annual Inter-Corporate Charity Bake-Off... as a surprise. To win the trophy for your company. I happen to be the head judge. We were just conducting the preliminary tasting.

Mr. Pumble stares, dumbfounded, at the crème brûlée. Ollie, slowly getting to his feet, looks mortified.

MR. PUMBLE B-b-baking lessons? But... my secrets! The Self-Rising Rice Pudding! Who has been leaking my formulas?

Stan, who has finally untangled himself, stands up. He pats down his overalls. From his pocket, he pulls a crumpled, grease-stained piece of paper.

STAN Is this one of them, Mr. Pumble? It got stuck to Ollie's shoe the first day we met you. I've been using it as a coaster for my tea.

He hands the paper to Mr. Pumble. Pumble's eyes go wide.

MR. PUMBLE My God... it's the formula! The original copy!

All eyes turn to Ollie. He freezes. He remembers stepping on a loose paper in Pumble's office. He has been the leak all along, completely by accident. The "secrets" were literally following him around.

Ollie's face goes from shock, to embarrassment, to utter humiliation. He looks at Stan. He looks at Mr. Pumble. He looks at the crème brûlée. Finally, he turns his head slowly and looks directly at the CAMERA with an expression of pure, defeated agony.

OLLIE Well... Here's another nice mess you've gotten me into.

Stan, ever helpful, smiles brightly. He reaches into his other pocket and pulls out a squashed, lint-covered crumpet.

STAN Would anyone care for a pastry?

Mr. Pumble faints dead away.

(SFX: THUD!)

FADE OUT.

THE END