

# The Flying Deuces.

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

September 2025 Edition. Volume 1, Issue 7





# 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?"*

## A Timeless Tug-of-War: Deconstructing the Legacies of Laurel and Hardy vs. Abbott and Costello

In the vast annals of comedic history, few debates spark as much fervent discussion among aficionados as the question of which iconic duo truly reigns supreme: the gentle, bumbling charm of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, or the rapid-fire, exasperated wit of Bud Abbott and Lou Costello. Both teams achieved unparalleled success in their respective eras, leaving an indelible mark on the entertainment landscape and shaping the very fabric of screen comedy. To understand "who was better" is not to declare a definitive winner, but rather to delve into their unique comedic philosophies, their historical contexts, and the enduring qualities that have cemented their places as titans of laughter.

### Laurel and Hardy: The Architects of Gentle Mayhem

Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, perhaps the most universally recognized comedy team of the early 20th century, emerged from the fertile grounds of vaudeville and silent film. Stan Laurel, a British emigrant with a background in music hall and a brief stint as Charlie Chaplin's understudy, was a meticulous gag writer and a master of deliberate, childlike expressions. Oliver Hardy, a robust American with extensive experience in early film comedies, brought a pompous, often exasperated, but ultimately loyal persona to the partnership. Their pairing under the savvy direction of Leo McCarey at the Hal Roach Studios in the late 1920s proved to be comedic alchemy.

Their signature comedic style was deeply rooted in character. Laurel was "The Thin One," the childlike simpleton whose innocent blun-

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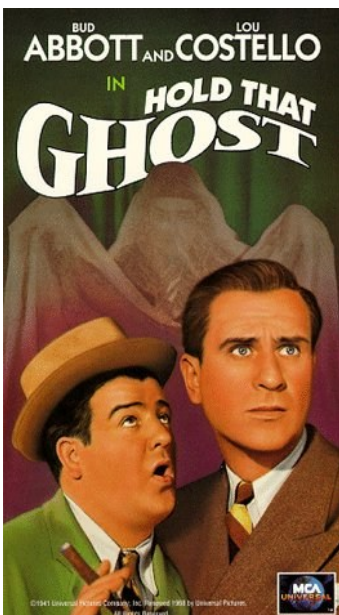




ders often escalated into catastrophic scenarios, punctuated by his trademark whimpering cry. Hardy was "The Fat One," the self-professed intellectual and leader of the pair, whose attempts to maintain dignity and order inevitably collapsed, leading to his iconic tie-widdle and exasperated stare directly into the camera. Their humour was largely visual and situational, relying on escalating predicaments, reciprocal destruction (where one's accidental damage was met with deliberate retaliation by the other), and subtle, drawn-out reactions. Their dialogue, though memorable for catchphrases like "Another fine mess you've gotten me into!" and "Here's another nice

mess you've gotten me into!", was often secondary to their physical interaction and expressions.

Transitioning seamlessly from the silent era to the talkies, Laurel and Hardy demonstrated an innate understanding of how to adapt their visual gags to the new medium. Films like the Academy Award-winning *The Music Box* (1932), where they struggle hilariously to move a piano up a ridiculously long flight of stairs, or *Sons of the Desert* (1933), a masterclass in marital deception and fraternal loyalty, showcase their meticulous timing and character-driven narratives. Their comedy transcended language barriers, making them immensely popular worldwide.



## A TIMELESS TUG CONTINUED

The innocence of their characters, perpetually trying their best but failing miserably, resonated with audiences globally, creating a timeless appeal that continues to captivate new generations. Their legacy lies in their humanistic portrayal of friendship, their masterful exploitation of the "helpmate" dynamic, and their ability to extract profound humour from the simplest of situations, often through slow-burn reactions and a focus on the characters' relatable struggles.

### Abbott and Costello: The Maestros of Verbal Acrobatics

Roughly two decades after Laurel and Hardy found their stride, another duo was revolutionizing comedy from the burlesque stage to the airwaves and finally the silver screen: Bud Abbott and Lou Costello. Bud Abbott, the "straight man," was a seasoned showman and emcee from Asbury Park, New Jersey, known for his crisp delivery and ability to set up gags. Lou Costello, born Louis Francis Cristillo, was a boisterous, childlike comedian from Paterson, New Jersey, whose high-pitched voice and perpetually bewildered persona would become instantly recognizable. They officially teamed up in 1936 and quickly ascended the ranks of vaudeville and burlesque, propelled by their unparalleled verbal dexterity.

Abbott and Costello's comedic genius lay primarily in their command of language. Unlike Laurel and Hardy's character-driven physical comedy, A&C's humour was built on rapid-fire patter, misunderstandings, and ingenious wordplay. Bud Abbott reliably played the exasperated, logical foil, attempting to explain increasingly convoluted situations, while Lou Costello embodied the childlike, literal-minded innocent who drove Bud to distraction with his incessant questions and misinterpretations.

Their most iconic routine, "Who's on First?", is a masterclass in verbal absurdity and a testament to their perfect timing. The routine, which sees Lou unable to grasp that a baseball team's players have names like "Who," "What," and "I Don't Know," is a symphony of linguistic confusion that builds to a crescendo of comedic frustration. It's a routine so perfectly constructed that it has been enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame. This routine, along with others like "Mustard," "Two Tens for a Five," and "Lent a Hundred," showcased their ability



## A TIMELESS TUG CONTINUED

to create entire comedic worlds out of linguistic traps.

Their move to radio in the late 1930s cemented their national fame, leading to their explosive film debut in *Buck Privates* (1941). Throughout the 1940s, they were Hollywood's biggest box office draw, starring in a string of successful films that often blended their classic routines with slapstick and genre spoofs, notably the popular "Abbott and Costello Meet..." series, where they confronted classic Universal monsters. Their influence revitalized the straight man/funny man dynamic, providing a blueprint for countless comedic duos that followed.

### The Great Debate: Contrasting Styles and Enduring Appeal

Comparing Laurel and Hardy with Abbott and Costello is akin to comparing two different, yet equally delicious, comedic cuisines. Their core approaches to humour were distinct.

Laurel and Hardy operated on a slower, more deliberate cadence. Their comedy was an observational study of human foible, often unfolding in a 'slow burn' as their characters spiralled deeper into self-inflicted predicaments. Their appeal was universal because their struggles and reactions were largely visual and emotional, transcending verbal barriers. They were a pair of lifelong friends, perpetually in sync in their shared misfortune, even as Ollie outwardly expressed exasperation with Stan. Their humour was rooted in empathy, making audiences laugh *with* them as they navigated a world often larger and more complex than they could comprehend.

Abbott and Costello, by contrast, thrived on speed and verbal precision. Their humour was a high-wire act of linguistic gymnastics, with rapid-fire exchanges and escalating misunderstandings. Their dynamic was more transactional: Bud was the frustrated instructor, and Lou was the befuddled student. While Lou also had physical gags, often







## A TIMELESS TUG CONTINUED

involving tumbles and pratfalls, these were usually consequences of his verbal confusion or Bud's exasperation. Their comedy leaned more into the absurdities of language and the frustration of logical minds meeting illogical ones. While "Who's on First?" has a universal appeal, much of their other material was deeply rooted in American English idioms and cultural references, which might have initially limited their international reach compared to Laurel and Hardy's visual universality.

Both duos were masters of consistency and character. Laurel and Hardy never broke character, maintaining their childlike innocence and puffed-up self-importance throughout their careers. Abbott and Costello also maintained their distinct personas, with Bud's frustrated logic and Lou's innocent bewilderment remaining constant. Each member was indispensable; remove either Stan, Ollie, Bud, or Lou, and the magic evaporates.

### Who Was "Better"? A Subjective Assessment

The question of "who was better" is inherently subjective, deeply influenced by personal comedic taste, cultural background, and even the era in which one first encountered their work. There is no definitive answer, only an appreciation for their distinct contributions.

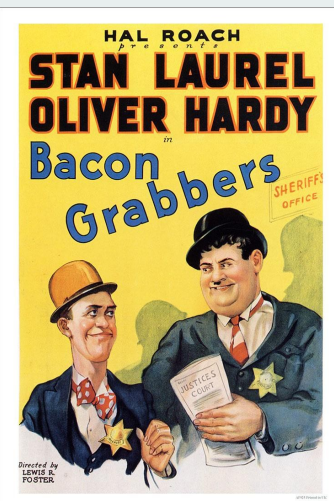
Those who value a more character-driven, observational, and universally accessible form of comedy might lean towards Laurel and Hardy. Their enduring global appeal, their ability to elicit laughter without relying heavily on dialogue, and their timeless portrayal of friendship and shared struggle make them appear

foundational to many. Their films are still widely screened and appreciated in countries across the world, a testament to the universality of their physical comedy.

Conversely, those who appreciate sharp wit, ingenious wordplay, and the brilliant execution of complex verbal routines might find Abbott and Costello more to their liking. "Who's on First?" is often cited by comedians and critics alike as one of the most perfectly constructed comedy routines in history, a benchmark for linguistic humour. Their influence on the pacing and structure of radio and film comedy during the Golden Age was immense, defining the "straight man/funny man" dynamic for generations.

In essence, Laurel and Hardy perfected the art of the slow burn, the visual gag, and the empathetic struggle, making them international icons whose humour transcends language. Abbott and Costello, on the other hand, revolutionized verbal comedy, mastering the rapid-fire patter and the art of miscommunication, defining a distinctly American brand of comedic genius that resonated profoundly with audiences of their time.

Ultimately, the debate over "who was better" serves not to diminish either team but to highlight the incredible breadth and depth of comedic talent that flourished in the early and mid-20th century. Both duos were innovators, masters of their craft, and enduring sources of laughter. Their legacies are not in competition but rather stand as complementary pillars in the grand edifice of entertainment history, proving that laughter, in its many brilliant forms, truly is timeless.



## LAUREL & HARDY. SHOULD MARRIED MEN GO HOME

Should Married Men Go Home? is a silent short subject co-directed by Leo McCarey and James Parrott, starring comedy duo Laurel and Hardy. It was the first Hal Roach film to bill Laurel and Hardy as a team. Previous appearances together were billed under the Roach "All-Star Comedy" banner. It was released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer on September 8, 1928. McCarey is also one of the script writers for the film.

The film entered the public domain in the United States in 2024.

Ollie and his wife are enjoying a quiet Sunday at home until Stan shows up, eager to play some golf. After Stan breaks the chair, the blind, and nearly sets fire to their house, and Oliver breaks the Hardys' Victrola, Mrs. Hardy chases the boys out. At the golf course, they are partnered with a pair of young women to complete a four-some. The girls want to be treated to sodas, but the boys are short of money. Stan leaves his watch to settle the thirty-cent bill. On the course, they tangle with rude golfer Edgar Kennedy, and wind up in a mud-throwing battle with several other linksters.

### Cast

#### Credited

Stan Laurel as Stan

Oliver Hardy as Ollie

#### Uncredited

Kay Deslys as Mrs. Hardy

Edna Marion as Blonde Girlfriend

Viola Richard as Brunette Girlfriend

Charlie Hall as Soda Jerk

Edgar Kennedy as Golfer

John Aasen as Very Tall Golfer

Chet Brandenburg as Caddy

Dorothy Coburn as Muddy Combatant

Jack Hill as Muddy Combatant

Sam Lufkin as Shop Manager

Lyle Tayo as Lady Golfer

Should Married Men Go Home? was filmed in March and May 1928. On-location footage has recently surfaced on YouTube. The film's working title was Follow Through.

7-foot-1 actor John Aasen appears as "Very Tall Golfer."

The soda fountain routine was reworked during the sound era in the film Men O' War, with Jimmy Finlayson assumed the role inhabited by Charlie Hall.

The gag of Stan slipping a note under the door, only to see it get pulled further in from the inside where the Hardys are hiding from him, was reused during the sound era in Come Clean (1931) when the Hardys again pretend not to be home when the Laurels come calling.

Several oil derricks from the Los Angeles City Oil Field are visible during golf course scenes.

The lag time between the primary filming in March and the September release of Should Married Men Go Home? was unusually long. When the company reconvened in Los Angeles in Autumn 1928, the fame and popularity of the Laurel and







## LAUREL & HARDY. SHOULD MARRIED MEN GO HOME

Hardy team had grown.

British film critic Leslie Halliwell gave the film a lukewarm reception, commenting that the "preliminary domestic scene is the funniest." while The Films of Laurel and Hardy author William K. Everson wrote in 1967 that the film was "one of the best of the 'forgotten' Laurel and Hardy films, *Should Married Men Go Home?* admittedly overlaps with several other of their films but is no less funny because of it." He cites Ollie's collapsing of the front fence, the soda fountain routine and Edgar Kennedy's toupee woes as high spots.



## CATHERINE N. DOWNS (MARCH 3, 1926 - DECEMBER 8, 1976)

Catherine N. Downs (March 3, 1926 - December 8, 1976) was an American film actress. Downs was born in Port Jefferson, New York. She was the daughter of James Nelson Downs and Edna Elizabeth Newman.

A model for the Walter Thornton Agency, she was brought to Hollywood in 1944 by a 20th Century Fox talent scout. The studio initially used her as a model, giving her limited opportunities to act.

She began her film career with small roles in *State Fair* (1945) and *The Dolly Sisters* (1945). In 1946, she played the title role in *My Darling Clementine* and Clifton Webb's unfaithful wife in *The Dark Corner*. Following the success of *My Darling Clementine*, Downs was cast in a prison drama *For You I Die* (1947), an Abbott and Costello comedy *The Noose Hangs High*, and several Western films. In 1947, Downs was dropped by Fox for unknown reasons, and was never employed by another major studio.

In 1949, she participated in a later famous *Life* magazine photo layout, in which she posed with other up-and-coming actresses, Marilyn Monroe, Lois Maxwell, Suzanne Dalbert, Laurette Luez, Jane Nigh, and Enrica Somma. By the early 1950s, she was appearing in low-budget films, including some science-fiction (sci-fi) stories, including the 1958 sci-fi/fantasy *Missile to the Moon*. She appeared in a television episode of *The Lone Ranger* in 1952.

She portrayed Ann Howe in the syndicated TV series *The Joe Palooka Story* (1954). In 1959, she portrayed "Amelia Roberts" in the episode "Marked Deck" (S1E21) of the western TV series *Bat Masterson*. Downs worked sporadically on TV during the 1960s, with her final appearance in 1965 on *Perry Mason* as murder victim and title character Millicent Barton in "The Case of the Hasty Honey-mooner".

Downs has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for her contribution to television, at 6646 Hollywood Boulevard.

On October 8, 1949, in Las Vegas, Downs married Joe Kirkwood Jr., who played the character Joe Palooka in films and on TV. The couple divorced on February 24, 1955. On July 21, 1956, Downs married Robert M. Brunson, an electronics executive. They divorced on July 29, 1963.

Downs died December 8, 1976 of cancer in Los Angeles, California. She is interred at Woodlawn Cemetery, Santa Monica, California.





## ABBOTT AND COSTELLO IN SOCIETY

*In Society* is a 1944 film starring the comedy team of Abbott and Costello. It was the first of five Abbott and Costello films to be directed by Jean Yarbrough. It was re-released in 1953. Eddie Harrington and Albert Mansfield are plumbers who receive a call about a leak in the private bathroom of Mr. Van Cleve, a wealthy businessman. The grumpy man, though his costume is ready, does not attend the ball but goes to bed instead. The leak is keeping him awake, but the costume ball that his wife is throwing downstairs is not.

Eddie and Albert enlist the aid of a friend, Elsie Hammerdingle, a taxi driver, to take them to the mansion. While they are upstairs attempting to fix the leak-but flooding the room instead-Peter Evans, a guest dressed as a cab driver, mistakes Elsie for another costumed guest, despite her insistence that she really is just a cab driver. He winds up inviting her to another gala event, Mrs. Winthrop's estate Briarwood, where a valuable painting, *The Plunger* (a heavy gambler), is to be unveiled.

Mrs. Van Cleve was intending to send Eddie and Albert a letter of complaint for the devastation that they inflicted on her home. However, she is distracted for a moment while doing her mail, and instead sends them her own invitation to the unveiling of the *Plunger* at Briarwood. They think it is a reward for a job well done and look at it as a chance to meet other wealthy clients. Albert, being a plumber, can only think of a plumbing tool and is amazed at the value of the painting. However, a loan shark named Drexel to whom they owe money (they borrowed money from him to start their business and are balking at repaying him), demands they steal the painting while they are there. When they refuse to go through with the plan, Drexel and Marlow, a crooked chauffeur at the party, attempt to steal the painting themselves. When the painting is discovered to be missing, Gloria Winthrop, accuses Elsie, Eddie, and Albert of being the thieves. However, they clear their names when Eddie and Albert, in a fire truck, capture Drexel and Marlow and recover the painting.

At the end, some guests claim that Eddie and Albert stole their tuxedos and the two are chased across a field. The credits at the end of the movie has George Dolenz and Steven Geray roles switched. This film includes the classic "Bagel Street" scene-itself adapted from the vaudeville routine "Floogle Street"-during which Abbott and Costello attempt to deliver straw hats to the Susquehanna Hat Company, but everyone they meet along the way has a reason for hating that compa-



ny, including a lunatic who claims that he was killed on Bagel Street, and each of them destroys a hat until there are none left.

This is followed by another scene where the two men go careening down a steep street on a sofa, barely missing collisions, and causing havoc until the sofa lands in the river. Another classic routine at the end of the movie was the throwing of rocks to stop the boys in their tracks at a tremendous distance. The point of comedy was no one could throw anything at that distance to hit their target with accuracy. This routine was "borrowed" from earlier comedies such as Laurel and Hardy and later with The Three Stooges.

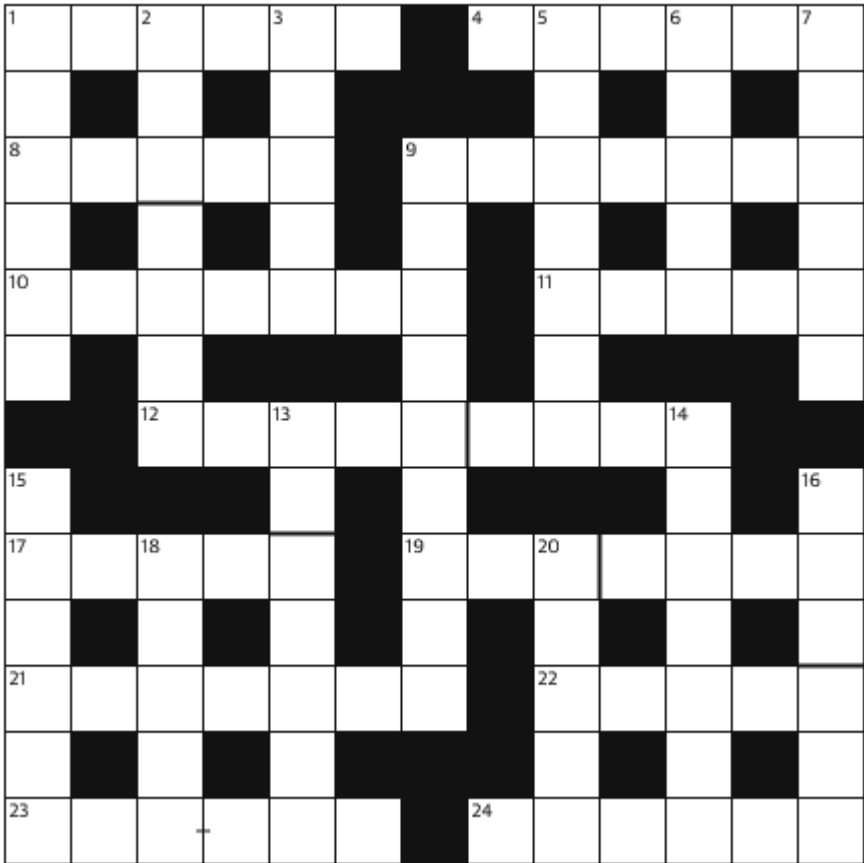
Filmed from June 12 through July 21, 1944, with much of it being filmed at the Jewett Estate on Arden Road in Pasadena, California. Although Abbott and Costello made this film for Universal Pictures after they filmed *Lost in a Harem* for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, this movie was released first.

Lou Costello had recently returned to work following a battle with rheumatic fever. As a result, Universal wanted to release this film as quickly as possible. To save time, much of the climactic fire engine chase was lifted from W.C. Fields' *Never Give a Sucker an Even Break*.

### Cast

Bud Abbott as Eddie Harrington  
Lou Costello as Albert Mansfield  
Marion Hutton as Elsie  
Kirby Grant as Peter  
Margaret Irving as Mrs. Winthrop  
Anne Gillis as Gloria  
Arthur Treacher as Pipps  
Thomas Gomez as Drexel  
George Dolenz as Count Alexis  
Steven Geray as Baron Sergei  
Murray Leonard as Marlow  
Thurston Hall as Mr. Van Cleve  
Nella Walker as Mrs. Van Cleve  
William B. Davidson as Parker

September  
2025  
Crossword



Across

- 1 Hymn-writer and founder of Methodism (6)
- 4 Attacks - wading birds (6)
- 8 Country of 14 down (5)
- 9 Novelists, essayists etc (7)
- 10 Hot coal holder (7)
- 11 Ne'er-do-well (5)
- 12 It gets your engine racing (5,4)
- 17 Derides - preparatory exams (5)
- 19 Anger at altitude (3,4)
- 21 Clothing - harrowing 1984 TV film (7)
- 22 Intends - resources (5)
- 23 These fellows never say no (3-3)
- 24 Sliced and seasoned sausage (6)

Down

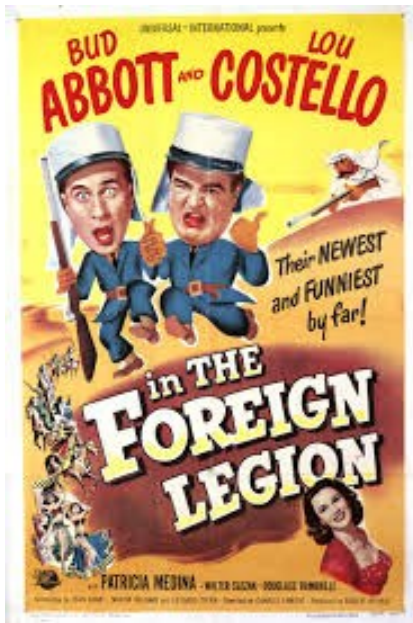
- 1 Pungent green paste (6)
- 2 Percoid marine fish (3,4)
- 3 French name for the blues (5)
- 5 Unforced - not artificial (7)
- 6 Part of an antler or spork (5)
- 7 Harry's dukedom (6)
- 9 Language developed from Dutch (9)
- 13 On the line (2,5)
- 14 Alhambra's home - creator of Coronation Street (7)
- 15 Covered in soot - suggestive (6)
- 16 It's motorbike-like (3,3)
- 18 The \_\_\_ (family band from County Louth) (5)
- 20 Lively ballroom dance (5)



## FAN CLUBS

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

## AUGUSTS CROSSWORD ANSWERS



1	J	A	2	V	A		3	S	4	P	A	5	C	E	6	B	A	7	R
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24	N	I	H	I	L	I	S	T			25	L	E	V	Y				



## COMPUTER HELP—TOP TEN SCAMS

### Navigating the Digital Minefield: The Top 10 Internet Scams and How to Protect Yourself

In an increasingly interconnected world, the internet offers unparalleled opportunities for communication, commerce, and knowledge. However, this digital landscape is also a fertile ground for malicious actors seeking to exploit trust and vulnerability. Internet scams are a pervasive and evolving threat, costing individuals and businesses billions annually and inflicting significant emotional distress. Understanding these prevalent schemes is the first crucial step in safeguarding your digital and financial well-being.

This article outlines the ten most common internet scams circulating today and provides essential strategies to protect yourself and your loved ones.

#### The Top 10 Internet Scams and Proactive Protection

##### 1. Phishing Attacks (Email & Smishing)

**The Scam:** Malicious emails or text messages (smishing) designed to trick recipients into revealing personal information, such as usernames, passwords, or bank details. They often impersonate reputable entities like banks, government agencies (e.g., tax offices), social media platforms, or delivery services, using urgent warnings or enticing offers to prompt immediate action.

**Protection:** Always scrutinize the sender's email address and look for inconsistencies or misspellings. Hover over links to see the true destination before clicking. Independently verify any urgent requests by contacting the organization directly via official channels (not through links or numbers provided in the suspicious message). Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) on all accounts.

##### 2. Tech Support Scams

**The Scam:** Scammers falsely claim to be from well-known technology companies (e.g., Microsoft, Apple) and contact victims via pop-up messages, unsolicited calls, or emails. They allege a virus or critical issue with the victim's computer, then co-

erce them into paying for unnecessary "fixes," installing malicious software, or granting remote access to their device.

**Protection:** Reputable tech companies will not proactively contact you to fix a non-existent issue. Never grant remote access to an unsolicited caller or download software at their instruction. If you suspect an issue, contact your tech provider using official contact information from their website.

##### 3. Romance Scams (Catfishing)

**The Scam:** These emotionally manipulative schemes involve scammers creating fake online personas on dating sites, social media, or even gaming platforms. They build strong emotional connections with victims over weeks or months, often claiming to live abroad or be in difficult circumstances. Once trust is established, they concoct a crisis (e.g., medical emergency, travel expenses, business failure) and request money.

**Protection:** Be highly skeptical of individuals you've only met online who quickly express intense feelings or avoid video calls. Never send money or financial information to someone you haven't met in person. Research their photos and background; reverse image searches can often reveal fake profiles.

##### 4. Investment & Cryptocurrency Scams

**The Scam:** Preying on the allure of high returns, these scams promote fake investment opportunities, often involving cryptocurrency, forex trading, or "get rich quick" schemes. Scammers create elaborate fake platforms, provide fabricated returns initially to build confidence, and then vanish with larger investments. They may also use social media or messaging apps to lure victims.

**Protection:** Exercise extreme caution with any investment promising unusually high returns with little risk. Thoroughly research any investment platform or advisor, verifying their credentials with official regulatory bodies. Be wary of unsolicited investment advice, especially from new online acquaintances.



## 5. Job & Employment Scams

**The Scam:** Targeting job seekers, these scams offer enticing "work-from-home" or high-paying positions that require little experience. Victims might be asked to pay an upfront fee for training, background checks, or equipment that never materializes. Another variant involves "overpayment" for supplies, with victims instructed to forward the excess money, only for the original payment to bounce.

**Protection:** Be suspicious of job offers that seem too good to be true, require upfront payments, or request sensitive financial information early in the application process. Verify the legitimacy of the company and the recruiter. Never accept an overpayment for a job and be wary of job offers that don't involve an interview.

## 6. Impersonation Scams (Government, Bank, Utility)

**The Scam:** Scammers pose as representatives from government agencies (e.g., IRS/tax authority), banks, or utility companies, often threatening legal action, service disconnection, or immediate penalties if payment or personal information is not provided. They create a sense of urgency and fear to bypass critical thinking.

**Protection:** Government agencies, banks, or utility companies will never demand immediate payment via gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency. They will not threaten arrest or service disconnection over the phone without prior official notification. If in doubt, contact the organization directly using a verified phone number from their official website or bill.

## 7. Prize, Lottery & Inheritance Scams

**The Scam:** Victims receive notifications (email, mail, or social media) claiming they've won a substantial lottery, sweepstakes, or inherited a large sum from an unknown relative. To "claim" the prize or inheritance, victims are asked to pay "administrative fees," taxes, or legal costs upfront. The promised winnings never materialize.

**Protection:** Remember, you cannot win a lottery or sweepstakes you didn't enter. Legitimate lotteries do not require upfront payments to release winnings. Be deeply skeptical of unsolicited claims of large sums of money.

## 8. Online Shopping & Classified Scams

**The Scam:** This broad category includes fake online stores selling non-existent or counterfeit goods, sellers

on classified sites who take payment but never deliver the item, or buyers who send fraudulent payments (e.g., fake checks) and then request a partial refund before the check bounces.

**Protection:** Shop from reputable retailers with secure websites (look for "https://" and a padlock icon). Use secure payment methods like credit cards, which offer fraud protection, rather than direct bank transfers or gift cards for online purchases. When using classifieds, meet in a public place, inspect the item thoroughly, and never release an item until payment has cleared your bank.

## 9. Malware & Ransomware Attacks

**The Scam:** Scammers trick users into clicking malicious links or downloading infected files, often disguised as legitimate software updates, attachments, or enticing content. This can install malware that steals data or ransomware that encrypts your files, demanding payment (often in cryptocurrency) for their release.

**Protection:** Be extremely cautious about what you click and download. Use robust antivirus software and keep it updated. Regularly back up your important data to an external drive or cloud service. Never open suspicious attachments or click links from unknown senders.

## 10. Emergency/Grandparent Scams

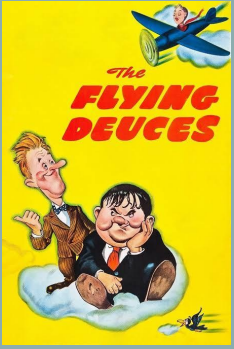
**The Scam:** Scammers contact victims, often elderly individuals, posing as a grandchild or relative in distress (e.g., arrested, in an accident, needing urgent medical care) in a foreign country. They plead for immediate financial help, urging secrecy and demanding funds be sent via wire transfer or gift cards, making it difficult to trace.

**Protection:** If you receive such a call or message, verify the story by contacting the "relative" directly using a known, trusted phone number. Ask questions only the real relative would know. Never send money or gift cards based on an unverified emergency plea.

## General Principles for Online Safety

Beyond these specific scams, adopting a proactive and skeptical mindset is paramount:

## COMPUTER HELP—TOP TEN SCAMS



**Verify Everything:** Do not take unsolicited contact at face value. Independently verify the identity of the sender and the legitimacy of their claims.

**Be Skeptical of "Too Good To Be True":** Offers of easy money, high returns with no risk, or sudden windfalls are almost always scams.

**Protect Personal Information:** Never share passwords, PINs, social security numbers, or bank account details with unverified sources.

**Use Strong, Unique Passwords and MFA:** Implement complex, unique passwords for all accounts and enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) wherever possible.

**Keep Software Updated:** Ensure your operating system, web browser, and antivirus software are always up to date to patch known vulnerabilities.

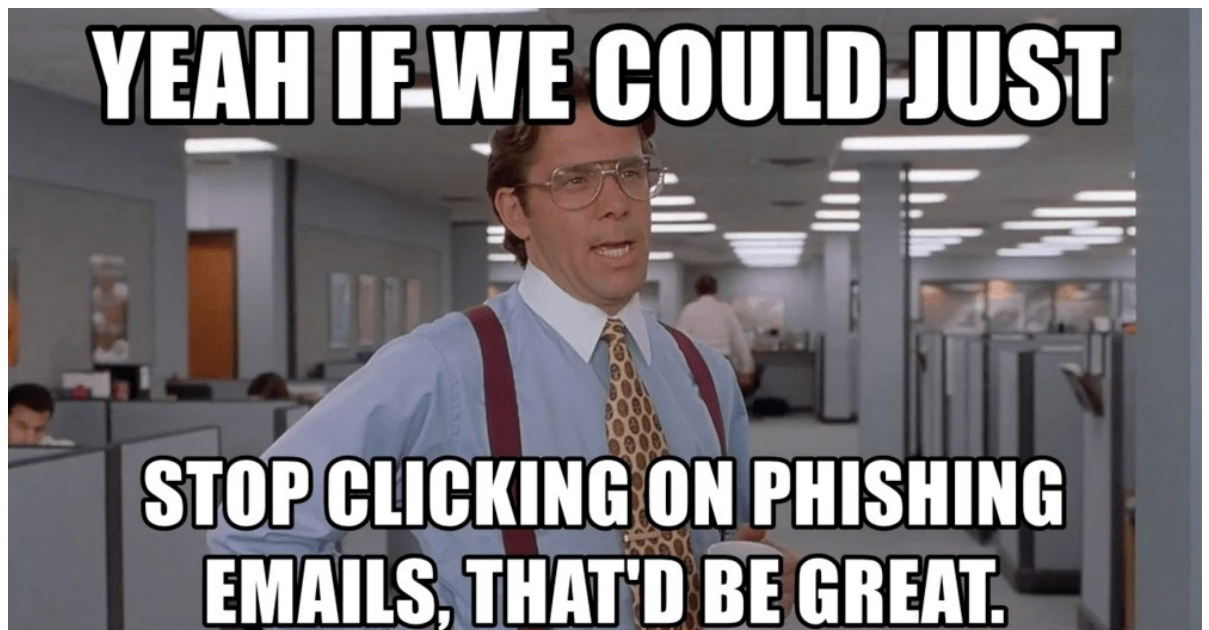
**Monitor Your Accounts:** Regularly check your bank statements, credit card activity, and credit reports for any suspicious transactions.

**Educate Yourself:** Stay informed about new scam tactics. Knowledge is your strongest defense.

**Report Scams:** If you encounter a scam, report it to relevant authorities (e.g., FBI's IC3, FTC, your local police) to help protect others.

The internet, while a powerful tool, demands vigilance. By understanding common scam tactics and implementing these protective measures, you can significantly reduce your risk of becoming a victim and navigate the digital world with greater confidence and security. Stay alert, stay informed, and stay safe.

And remember. If you get an email saying you have won some state lottery, when you know you've never purchased a ticket—Don't respond. They will need an admin fee before they can transfer the money.





## ABBOTTS AUTO EMPORIUM. A SHORT STORY



"Abbott's Auto Emporium" – a slightly dated car dealership, circa mid-20th century. The showroom is brightly lit by harsh fluorescent tubes, making the chrome glint perhaps a little too aggressively. A few polished, but visibly aging, cars are strategically placed on rotating platforms. The air smells vaguely of new car scent and old ambitions. Behind a glass-walled office, Bud Abbott is on the phone, his voice a smooth purr.

**(The scene opens with LOU COSTELLO shuffling hesitantly through the double-glass doors of Abbott's Auto Emporium. He pauses, looking around with a mix of awe and trepidation, as if he's just entered a high-tech alien spaceship. His hat is tilted slightly to the side.)**

**LOU:** (To himself, whispering) Well, here we go. A car. Just... a car. How hard can it be?

**(Bud Abbott, a man whose smile seems permanently etched onto his face, hangs up his phone with a flourish. His eyes, sharp and predatory, lock onto Lou. He straightens his tie, adjusts his jacket, and glides towards Lou with the practiced ease of a shark spotting a particularly plump seal.)**

**BUD:** (Voice like warm honey) Welcome, welcome! Step right in, my friend! You've stumbled into the finest purveyor of automotive excellence this side of the Mississippi! Bud Abbott, at your service! And you, sir, look like a man in dire need of a set of wheels!

**LOU:** (Startled, takes a step back) Oh! Uh... Mr. Abbott? I... I'm Lou. Lou Costello. And... yeah, I need a car. My Aunt Millie says I can't keep borrowing her tandem bicycle. Says it chafes her... dignity.

**BUD:** (Chuckles, a practiced, hollow sound) Lou! A pleasure! And you've come to the right place, Lou. Abbott's Auto Emporium doesn't just sell cars, Lou, we sell dreams! We sell freedom! We sell... well, we sell cars. So, Lou, tell me... what kind of dream are you looking to drive away in today? A sleek sedan? A rugged roadster? Perhaps a family-friendly... uh... family-friendly model?

**LOU:** (Scratching his head) A dream, huh? Well, as long as it's got four wheels and goes forwards. And backwards, if I get lost. My Aunt Millie says I get lost a lot. She says I could get lost in a phone booth.

**BUD:** (Forces a broader smile) Four wheels, forward, and reverse. Excellent criteria, Lou! We can certainly accommodate that. Now, let's talk specifics. Are we thinking new or pre-loved? A compact cruiser for the city streets, or something with a bit more... *oomph*?

**LOU:** Oomph? What's oomph? Is that extra? Because Aunt Millie said I gotta stick to a budget. She said, "Lou, don't you dare buy anything with 'oomph' unless it comes with a free hat rack."

**BUD:** (A slight flicker of annoyance in his eyes, quickly masked) Oomph, Lou, is... power! Performance! The feeling of the open road beneath your tires! The roar of the engine!

**LOU:** (Eyes wide) Roar?! Like a lion? I don't want a lion-car! What if it bites me? Or worse... what if it bites Aunt Millie's dignity? She's very particular about her dignity.

**BUD:** (Claps his hands together, too loudly) Right! No roaring lions! Understood! Perhaps something a little more... docile. Lou, let me show you our premier model, the 'Majestic Monarch'! It's quiet as a church mouse, yet powerful as... well, as something *not* a lion.

**(Bud steers Lou towards a gleaming, impossibly long sedan, its chrome shining under the harsh lights. It's clearly the most expensive car on the lot.)**

**LOU:** (Circling it cautiously) Whoa. That's a lot of car. Does it come with a chauffeur? Because I

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don't know if I can drive all of that car by myself. Looks like it needs a pilot, maybe two.

**BUD:** (Beaming) Lou, with the Majestic Monarch, *you* are the chauffeur! You are the pilot! Look at this, Lou! Three hundred horsepower under the hood!

**LOU:** (Peering at the hood) Three hundred horses? Are they little ones? Do they eat oats? Because I'm allergic to oats. They make me sneezy. And Aunt Millie says a sneezy driver is a bad driver.

**BUD:** (Rubbing his temples imperceptibly) No, Lou, not actual horses. Horsepower is a unit of measurement for the engine's... well, its *power*. It's a figure of speech. Nobody puts horses *in* cars.

**LOU:** Oh. So it's a lie? You just told me there were horses, and now you say there aren't? Mr. Abbott, I don't like being lied to. Aunt Millie says liars usually smell like old cheese. And you don't smell like old cheese. (Sniffs the air suspiciously near Bud) No, you smell like... car wax.

**BUD:** (Through gritted teeth) It's a *metaphor*, Lou! A metaphor! Now then, notice the automatic transmission! No clumsy clutch, no fiddling with gears! Just put it in 'Drive' and you're off!

**LOU:** (Pokes the gear shifter gingerly) Automatic? Does that mean it drives itself? If it drives itself, what do *I* do? Do I just sit here and yell directions? Like, "Go left, car! No, the *other* left!"

**BUD:** (Forces a laugh) No, no, Lou! You still steer! You still operate the pedals! But the transmission shifts gears *for* you! Effortless driving! And feel this upholstery, Lou! Top grain leather!

**LOU:** (Pats the seat, then sniffs his hand) Smells like a cow. Did they skin a cow just for this car? Poor cow. Did it have to give up its dignity too?

**BUD:** (His smile is now a thin line) Let's... let's move on. See this button here? This is your cruise control! Set your speed and the car maintains it automatically!

**LOU:** Cruise control? Like a boat? So if I hit a big puddle, does it float? Because if it floats, then I could go fishing in it! But I don't have a fishing license. Does the car come with a fishing license?

**BUD:** (His voice is rising a half-octave) It's not for water, Lou! It's for *crusing* on the *highway*! And no, it does not come with a fishing license! Now, with all these incredible features, the Majestic Monarch is a steal at just—

**LOU:** (Puts his hands over his ears) Whoa whoa whoa! Too much! Too much! I think my brain just got a flat tire! This car is too... too... *Majestic*! And I'm just Lou. I think the Monarch would look down on my hat.

**BUD:** (Takes a deep breath, counts to three) Alright, Lou. I understand. Perhaps the Monarch is a bit... grand. Let's look at something more... practical. Something sensible. Something that won't challenge your hat's self-esteem.

**(Bud leads Lou to a much smaller, faded blue sedan, clearly a budget model.)**

**BUD:** Now, Lou, this is our 'Reliable Rambler'! A true workhorse! Fuel-efficient, easy to park, and simple to operate!

**LOU:** (Squinting at it) Simple, huh? It looks... tired. Like Aunt Millie on a Monday morning. Does it snore?

**BUD:** (Massaging his temples again) No, Lou. It doesn't snore. But it *does* offer unparalleled fuel economy! It's a four-cylinder!

**LOU:** Four cylinders? Like a stove? Does it cook food? What if I want to make soup? Can I make soup in the car? Aunt Millie says I shouldn't eat store-bought soup. Says it's got too many... things.

**BUD:** (Voice growing strained) No, Lou, it doesn't cook food! The cylinders are part of the engine! They make the car *go*! It's very efficient! And look, manual windows! You save on electricity!

**LOU:** Manual? You mean I gotta... *crank* 'em? With my hands? What if my hands are tired? What if I'm eating a sandwich? Am I supposed to put my sandwich down just to roll down a window? That's not very efficient for my sandwich.

**BUD:** (He's starting to twitch) It's a... a minor inconvenience for major savings, Lou! And notice the standard shift! For the driver who likes to feel connected to the road!

**LOU:** Standard shift? What's *not* standard about it? Is it like... a non-standard shift? Or a standard non-shift? I'm confused about the standards. Aunt Millie says if it's not standard, it's probably a fad.

**BUD:** (His voice is now a low growl) It means you shift the gears yourself, Lou! Like *this*! (He gets into the car, grabs the stick shift, and demonstrates the motion vigorously) First! Second! Third!

**LOU:** (Eyes wide, watching Bud's arm flail) Whoa! Are you doing a dance, Mr. Abbott? I didn't know cars came with dances! Can it do the Charleston? Aunt Millie loves the Charleston, but her knees aren't what they used to be.

**BUD:** (Flings himself out of the car, breathing heavily) No, Lou, it's not a dance! It's *how you drive*! It's intuitive! Tell you what! Let's take the Rambler for a spin! You'll see what I mean!

**LOU:** (Turns green) A spin? Outside? With actual traffic? What if I hit something? What if I hit a squirrel? Do I have to pay extra for squirrels? Because I don't think my budget covers squirrel.

**BUD:** (Grabs Lou by the arm, pulling him towards the driver's side) No squirrel fees, Lou! I'll drive! Just sit back and re-

lax! You'll get the feel for it!

**(Bud forces Lou into the passenger seat, then slides into the driver's seat himself. He starts the engine – a surprisingly loud roar for a "Reliable Rambler." Lou shrinks into his seat.)**

**LOU:** (Clutching the dashboard) It *does* roar! It's a lion after all! I knew it!

**BUD:** (Puts the car in reverse, slams the pedal down unexpectedly hard) Just a little... enthusiasm, Lou!

**(The car lurches backwards, scraping a pillar. Lou screams.)**

**LOU:** We hit something! Did we hit a squirrel?! Oh, Aunt Millie's going to be so mad!

**BUD:** (Swerves, narrowly avoiding a display stand) Just the pillar, Lou! Happens all the time! Now, watch the acceleration! (He guns it forward, jerking Lou's head back) See how it picks up speed!

**LOU:** (Eyes squeezed shut, whimpering) It's picking up *me*! I feel like my insides are trying to escape! Are my eyeballs still in my head?

**(Bud careens around the lot, taking corners too fast, braking too late, demonstrating what he thinks is "spirited driving." Lou is a crumpled heap of fear in the passenger seat, occasionally letting out a high-pitched shriek.)**

**BUD:** (Slamming on the brakes, stopping abruptly back at the starting point) See, Lou? What did I tell you? Smooth as silk! Right, Lou? Lou?

**LOU:** (Slowly lifts his head, green-faced, hat askew, eyes spinning) I think... I think I swallowed my tongue. Does that cost extra?

**BUD:** (Slaps Lou on the back, making him jump) Ha ha! Just a little joke, Lou! You see? The Rambler is solid! Dependable! Now, let's go inside and talk numbers!

**(Bud practically drags Lou back into his glass office. He pulls out a large**



## VIVIEN OAKLAND

### **contract and a pen.)**

**BUD:** Alright, Lou! Now for the easy part! The price! We've got the Reliable Rambler, priced to move at just \$1,899!

**LOU:** Eighteen ninety-nine? Is that a year? Am I buying a car from 1899? Because Aunt Millie says cars from back then run on coal and smell like burnt socks.

**BUD:** (Leaning forward, voice conspiratorial) No, Lou, that's the price! And with our flexible financing options, we can get you into this beauty for a mere \$99 down payment!

**LOU:** Down payment? Do I just throw the money on the floor? Because I don't like throwing money on the floor. Aunt Millie says it's disrespectful to the Queen.

**BUD:** (Points emphatically at the contract) No, Lou, it's the initial payment! And then just small, easy monthly instalments!

**LOU:** (Eyes bulging) Instalments? Like a house? Am I buying a house too? Because Aunt Millie said if I buy a house, it better have a spare room for her dignity.

**BUD:** (Nearly shouting) No, Lou! Just the car! It means you pay it off a little bit each month! And it comes with our exclusive Abbott's Auto Emporium five-year warranty!

**LOU:** (Gasp) A warrant?! Did I do something wrong? Am I going to jail? What did I do, Mr. Abbott? Did I break the pillar? I told you it wasn't my fault! It was the lion-car!

**BUD:** (Slams his hand on the desk) It's a *WARRANTY*, Lou! It protects you if something breaks! It means we'll fix it! For free!

**LOU:** Oh. So it doesn't come with a bail bondsman? Because I heard they're expensive.

**BUD:** (His last shred of patience is unravelling) No bail bondsman, Lou! Just sign here, here, and initial here! And this Rambler is all yours!

**LOU:** (Picks up the pen, looks at the contract, which seems to have a million tiny words) Whoa, this is a lot of words. Are these all the rules? What if I break a rule? Will the car arrest me?

**BUD:** (Stands up, pacing frantically) No, Lou!

Just sign! It's standard procedure!

**LOU:** (Looks at the signature line, then at Bud) Mr. Abbott, what's this little line here? It says, "Purchaser is hereby responsible for all road-side assistance for any wild animals accidentally encountered."

**BUD:** (Stops pacing, frozen) What? Oh, that's just... boilerplate, Lou! Standard legal jargon! Doesn't mean anything!

**LOU:** (Drops the pen as if burned) It says *wild animals*! And *accidentally encountered*! Mr. Abbott, you told me there were no horses in the car! But what if a bear jumps in? Or a moose? What if I run into a whole *herd* of dignity? I don't have a moose budget! Or a dignity budget!

**BUD:** (Eyes wide, staring at the contract) Lou, I assure you, that's just a general clause! It's for liability!

**LOU:** (Scrambles out of the chair, knocking it over) Liability?! Is that like... liable to break down? Or liable to get me into trouble with the moose police? No, sir! I can't buy a car that's gonna make me responsible for bears! My Aunt Millie says bears are very particular about their personal space!

**(Lou, in a panic, bolts out of the office, tripping slightly but regaining his balance, and sprints out the showroom doors. Bud Abbott stands motionless behind his desk, eyes glazed over, staring at the empty doorway.)**

**BUD:** (Muttering to himself) Bears... moose... dignity... I need a drink. A very, very large drink.

**(A few seconds later, Lou's head pops back through the doors, looking sheepish.)**

**LOU:** Oh! Mr. Abbott! Just one more thing! Do you happen to sell bus tickets? Because my Aunt Millie says the bus is very reliable. And it comes with its own driver. And usually, no bears.

## BELA LUGOSI

**(Bud slowly slumps into his chair, covering his face with his hands. The sound of a bus horn honking outside can be faintly heard.)**

**(FADE TO BLACK.)**



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For some reason there doesn't seem to be a lot of fan clubs dedicated to Abbott and Costello. This is a shame as they gave so much to comedy.