

'Stan and Ollie'

A Screenplay
By
Jeff Pope

BLACK.

UNDER THIS this we hear a conversation.

*HARDY (V.O.)
... so Madelyn turned up.*

*LAUREL (V.O.)
Madelyn turned up?*

*HARDY (V.O.)
Completely out of the blue. Haven't
seen her in fifteen years...*

1

INT. DRESSING ROOM/ROACH LOT/STUDIO - DAY

1

Oliver HARDY leans against the door to a dressing room, worried expression, talking to his friend Stan LAUREL. Both are in their late-40s, (at the peak of their movie careers), but to begin with we have no real clue as to who they are, where they are or what they do. They are just two guys in cheap suits talking to each other. HARDY lights up a cigarette as he talks.

HARDY
There she was, all gussied up on
the front door step. And that's
something I never thought I'd see
again.

LAUREL picks up a boot (the right one) with a large hole in the sole. Using a knife he levers off the heel.

LAUREL
What'd she want?

HARDY
Twenty thousand bucks.

LAUREL
Twenty thousand?

HARDY
Fifteen years of back alimony. I
said 'what alimony? When we broke
up I gave you whatever money I had
and you took the car.' We both
agreed that was that.

**
**
**
**

LAUREL
Jeez even Mae wasn't after that
much - and she wanted me to pay for
a chauffeur. It's because our faces
are plastered all over town.
Probably some lawyer's bright idea.

**
**
**

LAUREL levers off the other heel.

HARDY

Well in any case I haven't got it.
Myrtle cleaned me out when we
split.

**

As he pulls the boots on LAUREL considers this but doesn't reply. HARDY picks up his Bowler hat, then LAUREL picks up his and they leave the dressing room (*without putting them on*). In a *CONTINUOUS SHOT* we follow them out to...

A studio corridor.

As they continue on their journey LAUREL finishes fastening a frayed cuff with a paper clip for a cuff-link.

LAUREL
You been down to Tijuana?

HARDY
What makes you say that?

LAUREL
We had a few days off. **

HARDY
I did have a little run down there
with Mysterious Montague yes,
trying to win some back. Not... **
entirely successfully. Which **
reminds me. Would you do me favour, **
don't talk money with Hal today. **

LAUREL
Charlie, Buster, Harold - they get
ten times what he pays us.

They pass through a door and emerge into the bright California sunshine, now making their way along an alleyway between buildings on the Roach lot.

Caption
Culver City California, 1937

HARDY **
Well they own their own pictures. **

LAUREL **
Exactly. And that's what we're **
gonna do. **

As they pass a couple of SCENE HANDS moving parts of a Roman set along on a trolley - starting to give us a sense of the business they are in.

SCENE HAND
Hey boys how's it goin'!

The first SCENE HAND moves his hair up into a mad quiff - Laurel-style. The second fiddles with his tie, just like Hardy. LAUREL and HARDY smile and wave back politely.

HARDY
We're just going shark fishing -
Mr. Laurel doesn't know it yet but
he's the bait.

LAUREL screws his face up into the start of a 'cry'; the SCENE HANDS laugh and they continue on their way. As the BOYS turn a corner we see, in the background, the ranch-fronted main building to Hal Roach's Culver City studios, pure old Hollywood. Still, the conversation continues:

HARDY

How we gonna do that? We're under contract, we can't just change the terms.

**
**
**

LAUREL

We stick together, renegotiate with Hal and get a slice of the pie. Or we walk and we set up on our own.

**
**
**
**

HARDY

Oh I don't know Stan. I'd love to own our pictures but it's just not a good time for this. I have a lot going on, my overhead is killing me.

**
**
**
**
**

Coming towards them is a sweaty, worried-looking young man,
BURGESS, early 20s - a studio runner.

HARDY (cont'd)

Ah Burgess, just the man. Take this
to our friend, put it on Bold
Venture, fourth race at Santa
Anita. On the nose.

**
**
**
**

Hardy give Burgess and envelope and some extra money.

**

HARDY

This is for you.

**
**

A pretty chorus girl walks by.

**

CHORUS GIRL

Hi Babe!

**
**

She waves. Hardy twiddles his tie, flutters his eyes then
turns back to Burgess.

**
**

HARDY

Do it now, it starts soon.

**
**

**

BURGESS

**

Okay. Thank you Mr. Hardy, Mr.
Laurel.

He hurries off in the opposite direction as they continue.

LAUREL

**

Listen Babe we'll be alright. Just
lay off the horses and don't get
married again.

**

**

**

**

HARDY

**

Oh that reminds me. I proposed to
Lucille.

**

**

**

LAUREL

**

Script-y Lucille?

**

HARDY

**

Yeah.

**

LAUREL

**

Damn! That's great news Babe.

**

Laurel hugs Hardy.

**

LAUREL

I'm never marrying again. I'm just
gonna find a woman I don't like and
buy her a house.

**

**

HARDY

That's a good one. But listen, it's
not a good time for me to fool
around with my income. Please don't
antagonize Hal, I don't like to
talk business. Not when we're
working.

**

**

**

**

**

**

LAUREL

**

Alright, I promise I'll be nice as
pie... so long as he doesn't show
up.

**

**

**

**

HARDY

**

Hey I'm chartering a sail boat on
Saturday to Catalina. You want to
come?

**

**

**

**

LAUREL

**

I don't think so. I gotta figure
out the gags for the bar routine
for Monday.

**

**

**

**

HARDY

**

Gonna be a lot of ladies there.

**

LAUREL **
Oh yeah. **

HARDY **
Myrnaloy will be on board. **

LAUREL **
Really? Alright, maybe I'll come. **

Men in Roman costumes walk past Laurel and Hardy. **

HARDY **
What are all these Romans doing **
here? **

LAUREL **
Maybe there's a sale on at the **
Forum. **

HARDY **
Always working. **

The boys enter Studio Two where a busy set is being prepared **
for their latest movie, a western. The hum of activity, the
lights, the camera, a huge back projection screen erected -
all add to the mounting sense of anticipation. Just for a
moment, they are backlit against the studio lights, two
familiar silhouettes - the thin guy and the fat guy - as they **
make their way onto set. **

As they walk on set HARDY sees LUCILLE, late 20s, the script supervisor, sitting by the camera, clipboard on her knees. Director James HORNE, 50s, calls over to her:

HORNE
Lucille you got my sides over
there?

She holds up the director's well-thumbed script and he wanders over to her. HARDY catches her eye and gives her a secret smile, then kisses the tips of his fingers and blows them to her. She smiles back, shyly. HARDY turns to LAUREL:

HARDY
Hey Stan. Why don't we hold off on
leaving right now and just push him
for a raise?

**
**

Actor James FINLAYSON, 50, bald head, big whiskery moustache, walks past them on his way out of the studio having overheard the end of their conversation. HARDY greets him:

HARDY (cont'd)
Hey Jimmie.

FINLAYSON
Give you a raise? He'd rather lower
Hollywood. And that's a Scotsman
talking.

With familiar grumpy face and big eye, he bustles off.

FINLAYSON (cont'd)
Ah'm goin' for a smoke.

LAUREL sees studio boss Hal ROACH, 40s, a bullish native of New Jersey, heading straight for them with a red, angry face.

ROACH
(To LAUREL)
That's it Stan, we're through.

LAUREL
Good morning Hal.

ROACH
I'm pullin' a morals clause on ya.

A couple of MAKE-UP GIRLS - trying desperately to concentrate on their job - start to touch up LAUREL and HARDY. One pulls HARDY'S hair, which was parted at the side, down into a fringe. The other applies pancake-white make up to LAUREL. In CLOSE UP we see some bruising and discoloration around LAUREL'S upper lip, which is swiftly covered up.

ROACH (cont'd)

(To HARDY)

Another fight at his place last night, one of the neighbours sees Ruthie sock him in the mouth so they call the cops.

LAUREL turns to HARDY, embarrassed:

LAUREL

She found out bout Vera.

ROACH

Cost me five hundred bucks to keep it out the papers - and that's comin' out of your paycheck. You signed a contract: 'Second party agrees not to shock, insult or offend the community, or prejudice Hal Roach studios'.

LAUREL

That's the last thing I'd want to do, not when you have so much prejudice already. How's your old buddy Mussolini, the one you were gonna go into business with before he started bombing all those poor people in Africa?

**

See ROACH, fuming. Laurel's MAKE-UP GIRL now arranges his (un-styled) hair into a spiky quiff; Hardy's starts to apply the pancake white make-up to him.

**

ROACH

All he wants to do is fight. How many times you been married Stan?

**

LAUREL

My personal life is my own business - that's one thing you don't hold the rights to.

HARDY

Why can't we all be friends here?

**

**

ROACH

Friends? When were me and him ever friends?

**

**

**

LAUREL

Finally something we agree on!

**

**

**

ROACH

What is it you're still lookin'
for?

LAUREL and HARDY stand on marks in the middle of the set: an exterior of a saloon with a patch of ground prepared in front of them, and that huge back projection screen behind. **

LAUREL

(Needled)

I'm looking for a fair price for a
Laurel and Hardy picture and you
know it.

ROACH

Money. His favourite subject.

LAUREL

Oh right, you don't like money Hal.
You're in it for the laughs. That's
why our pictures sell all over the
world and we haven't got a dime.

**
**
**
**

See HARDY, thinking about protesting this but, actually, knows it's true.

ROACH

Because you keep gettin' divorced!

LAUREL

No. Because you're a cheapskate who
got rich off our backs!

**

HARDY

Stan please-

LAUREL

A cheapskate, a skinflint, and a...
a... parvenu!

He nods, satisfied that he's landed a blow. But ROACH - and HARDY - clearly don't know what a 'parvenu' is.

HARDY

A parvenu?

LAUREL

(To HARDY)

My contract's up and he thinks
because you've still got another
ten months on yours I can't go
anywhere and I'll have to take what
he's offering.

ROACH

(suspicious)

Wait. What's a Parvenu?

**
**
**

LAUREL

It's someone who's come from
nowhere and made a load of money
but has no class. Look it up in the
dictionary Hal, there's a picture
of you.

**
**
**
**
**
**

ROACH

You're such a smart ass. Well guess
what, I'm smarter.

**
**
**

LAUREL

(Back to ROACH, referring
to HARDY)
Has he told you yet? We're setting
up on our own.

**
**
**
**
**

Hardy looks surprised.

**

**

Final touches - Laurel's MAKE-UP GIRL gives him dark eye liner; Hardy's blackens his moustache.

**

HARDY

Hal, it might be better if you could see your way to a modest raise.

**

**

But ROACH ignores him and addresses his response to LAUREL:

ROACH

What happens to Babe when you go off and make movies for somebody else? Like you said, he's still under contract to me. And I ain't releasin' him.

A WRANGLER hands the reins of a mule to HARDY.

LAUREL

You can't have Hardy without Laurel.

ROACH

We'll see about that.

Director HORNE is ready to shoot. He tries to interject:

HORNE

Hal could you maybe continue this some other time? Unless you wanna pay for an extra day?

ROACH is aware all eyes are on him.

ROACH

Go ahead - shoot!
(HORNE looks at him)
Go ahead!

HORNE

(Turning to LAUREL)
Okay, we're on a wide two-shot here Stan, like you wanted, and then-

ROACH

What are you checking with him for - you're the director!

The CREW, COWBOY EXTRAS and a four piece harmony group the 'AVALON BOYS', dressed in cowboy outfits and arranged in readiness on a verandah outside the saloon, watch in stunned silence. HARDY gives LUCILLE a small, helpless shrug.

ROACH **
(As he storms off)
Next person you'll hear from is my **
lawyer! **

ROACH storms out the studio. **

HARDY **
Well that went well... **

LAUREL **
So who else is going to be on the **
boat? **

HARDY **
Clark Gable I think. **

LAUREL **
No... women. **

HARDY **
Carole Lombard. I think she's **
friends with Myrnaloy. **

LAUREL **
Ok. I'm gonna come. **

HORNE
Okay show's over. Let's roll
camera.

This has no impact, everybody just looks at him, dumbstruck.

HORNE (cont'd)
I said roll camera!

As the crew now prepares for a shot, HARDY looks at LAUREL:
They have to be funny now?

HORNE (cont'd)
Ready boys?

A beat, then the boys exchange a nod and pull on their
Bowlers. They are ready. HORNE sees this and knows they are
ready for a take. He touches the arm of the CLAPPER/LOADER,
who marks the take:

CLAPPER/LOADER

Way Out West, scene twelve, take
one.

HORNE

Back projection!

LAUREL

Remember. After the curtseys, knee
down, turn and shake.

**
**
**

HARDY

Got it.

**
**

The screen behind the boys flickers into life, wondrously
creating the illusion of a bustling western main street.

HORNE

Okay, aaaand action!

Now the set comes to life too, with COWBOYS crossing the
street to and fro... and the AVALON BOYS strike up a song -
'At The Ball, That's All'...

**

AVALON BOYS

*Commence advancin', commence
advancin'
Just start a prancin', right and
left a-glancin'
A moochee dancin', slide and glide
entrancin'
You do the tango jiggle
With a Texas Tommy wiggle*

And so with all the elements now in place, all that remains
is for Stan and Ollie - those two guys complaining about ex-
wives and paychecks - to now become the movie stars 'Laurel &
Hardy', the best loved comedy duo in the world. The
transition is apparently effortless; to begin with, smiles on
their faces, LAUREL and HARDY (*in character*) take a few steps
into shot, having just arrived in town. HARDY tethers the
mule to a post and turns to enjoy watching the boys singing.

AVALON BOYS (cont'd)

*Take your partner
And you hold her
Tightly enfold her
A little bolder
Just work your shoulder
Snap your fingers one and all
In the hall, at the ball
That's all - some ball*

They start to nod their heads and tap their toes, letting the music take them. Director HORNE watches, tense, excited. The 'AVALON BOYS' repeat the first verse, adding deep harmonies and yodels, and LAUREL and HARDY now start to perform an apparently impromptu dance routine in time with the song. Building slowly, it is all light steps, twirls and synchronized movement. The watching CREW get caught up in it; LUCILLE seems entranced. Even FINLAYSON has come back to watch, leaning against a wall, moustache twinkling. LAUREL and HARDY come together and hold each other like ballroom dancers, clasping each other close and marching up and down stage. Under this we hear *SFX LAUGHTER...*

2 **INT. PICTURE HOUSE, NEW YORK - NIGHT** 2

A huge New York audience is packed into a magnificent Art-Deco theatre watching 'Way Out West'. As LAUREL and HARDY continue the dance on screen the audience howls, rows and rows of faces full of laughter.

CUT TO:

We follow the dance on screen, (full screen), the extraordinary grace and daintiness of HARDY and the slapstick of LAUREL. But above all they seem to project such a deep dependency and affection for each other, as if nobody else in their world exists. They come together again, LAUREL holds HARDY'S hand and he twirls, then they swap and LAUREL twirls. They skip jauntily up... down... and then back up the steps to the saloon and, with one final kick, enter through swinging doors. The audience in the theatre breaks into thunderous, applause. We feel as if we have witnessed magic.

CUT TO:

BLACK.

Silence. Then, under this, we FADE UP *SFX* of an express train rattling along. Sound gradually increases until we...

CUT TO:

3 **INT. TRAIN - DAY** 3

CLOSE UP: LAUREL and HARDY sitting together on a train, swaying gently with the motion of the carriage as they speed through the English countryside. Sixteen years have passed since we last saw them, and it's a shock to suddenly see them so old and tired, neither seemingly in the best of health. LAUREL is much more skinny, whilst HARDY is heavier than ever - now nearly three hundred pounds.

Caption
England, 1953

HARDY'S mind is pleasantly blank. LAUREL, ever-industrious, reads a script, marking it with his pen. Finally, LAUREL turns to HARDY:

LAUREL

How about if I punch you right on the nose? I haven't done that in a long time.

HARDY thinks about this for a few moments.

HARDY

Can I poke you in the eye?

LAUREL

(Nodding)

Or maybe you could punch me in the throat?

HARDY

(After due consideration)

I think I'd prefer the eye.

LAUREL

(Offering this up)

I can do the tongue if you punch me in the throat?

LAUREL mimes a chop to his throat, sticking his tongue out at the moment of impact (as if caused by it). HARDY laughs - LAUREL can always make him laugh.

4 **EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DUSK** 4

As the shadows lengthen their steam train thunders north through a barren, wintry English countryside. From inside:

HARDY (V.O.)

You know, I'm not so sure of my balance any more Stan.

5 **INT. TRAIN - DUSK** 5

LAUREL is looking at the countryside go by.

LAUREL

That's okay, we can just finish with a song instead of the dance.

HARDY

I'm not talking about the stage show - I mean the scene in this movie, where I cross the river.

LAUREL

But it's historical - Robin Hood has this fight in the middle of a log. We have to do it.

HARDY massages his right knee, obviously in some discomfort. He tries straightening the leg - wincing as he does so.

HARDY

Well, all I can do is give it my best shot...

LAUREL

Is there anything they can give you for that?

HARDY

They put me on these blue tablets. I was on the red ones but Lucille told the doctor they weren't doing any good-

LAUREL

-so he put you on the blue ones.

HARDY

(Overlaps)
-blue ones.

They both nod in agreement.

LAUREL

I'll talk to this producer, Miffin - I'm sure he can cut round you when we shoot it.

HARDY now looks out of the window for a few moments, taking in the view. LAUREL starts scribbling again in his notebook.

HARDY

Maybe I'll punch you in the throat.

6

EXT. GUEST HOUSE, NEWCASTLE - NIGHT

6

To establish a small, shabby guest house in the shadow of the smog-shrouded Tyne Bridge. The street is deserted as a taxi pulls up outside and LAUREL and HARDY get out. HARDY looks at the guest house then turns to LAUREL, his expression betraying his thoughts. *'Is this it?'* Theatre impresario Bernard DELFONT, dapper, 40s - the boys' tour promoter - emerges from the guest house arms outstretched:

DELFONT

Stanley! Oliver! Welcome to England
- welcome to Newcastle!

He hurries up to the BOYS and shakes their hands warmly.

DELFONT (cont'd)

It's so wonderful to see you. How was the journey?

HARDY

It sure takes it out of you, that train ride up here.

DELFONT
(Not listening)
Good good.

DELFONT signals to his DRIVER, waiting in a side street in a black Rolls Royce.

LAUREL
It's swell of you to come up here
to meet us Mr. Delfont.

DELFONT
Bernie, please. This is a
partnership gentlemen, I want to do
everything I possibly can to make
sure this tour starts off on the
right foot.

HARDY
Yes we wanted to talk to you about
that over dinner - we're just a
little concerned that some of the
show dates might clash-

DELFONT
Ah so sorry-

HARDY
-with the Robin Hood picture we're
gonna be doing?

The Rolls Royce is now alongside DELFONT, he opens the door
and gets in.

DELFONT (cont'd)
-such wretched bad luck but I've
promised to drop in on one of my
other acts tonight - Norman Wisdom?
A blazing new talent - huge fan of
yours.

DELFONT shuts the door, leans out through the window:

DELFONT (cont'd)
And we must nurture the next
generation gentlemen, I know you
both feel as passionately about
that as I do. We'll talk anon!

DELFONT waves as he is whisked away in his Rolls Royce.
LAUREL and HARDY look on, nonplussed. LAUREL pulls a beret
from his pocket and puts it on. HARDY looks at him, puzzled.

HARDY

Where d'you get that?

LAUREL

From a shop. It's handy 'cos you
can fold it away in your pocket.

He demonstrates taking it off, folding it up and putting it
in his pocket, then pulling it out and putting it on again -
spreading his hands in a *'what d'you think of that'* gesture.

HARDY

(Somehow irritated by
this)

We're here to make a movie -
Delfont knows that doesn't he Stan?
The tour is just something we do
while-

(Overlapping)
-we're waiting to get started.

LAUREL

(Overlapping)
-waiting to get started.
(Continues)

Don't worry. Our lawyer spelled it
out and it was all agreed up-front,
one hundred and ten per cent.

HARDY

(Thinks about it)
The extra ten is strangely
comforting.

During this the TAXI DRIVER has pulled all their luggage from
the car - a very large trunk (Hardy's), another case
(Laurel's), a small valise each and a set of Hardy's golf
clubs - and drives off leaving them alone on the pavement
with their luggage, nobody coming out to help them.
Abandoned. A look between them.

7

INT. GUEST HOUSE, NEWCASTLE - NIGHT

7

A female RECEPTIONIST, mid-30s, watches as the front door
opens, allowing in smog from outside. Through this enters
LAUREL and HARDY, HARDY carrying just the small valise,
whilst LAUREL struggles with the big trunk and other case,
the golf clubs over his shoulder (*as if he's Hardy's lackey*).
It's a pre-arranged bit of business they like to do in hotels
and shows how they love to 'perform', no matter how small the
audience (*in this case just one person - the RECEPTIONIST*).

HARDY pompously places his valise on the desk; LAUREL heaves
the other luggage behind him and - giving the RECEPTIONIST a
smile - presses the bell for attention. HARDY looks at him,
'irritated'. When LAUREL rings it again he slaps his hand.

LAUREL slaps back HARDY'S hand, they squabble, HARDY gives LAUREL a push, LAUREL gives HARDY a push back and he nearly falls over the trunk which LAUREL has left behind him. He kicks it away angrily. LAUREL rings the bell again and now HARDY pulls the bell away. LAUREL looks at him, blankly 'confused'. HARDY sighs, gestures to the RECEPTIONIST.

HARDY

Now can't you see with your own two eyes this nice lady standing here? There's no need to ring that bell, is there.

LAUREL looks at him, looks at the RECEPTIONIST. He shakes his head, guiltily, starting to 'cry'. HARDY turns back to the RECEPTIONIST, who is spellbound at this 'show' just for her.

HARDY (cont'd)

Please excuse my friend, now can somebody show us to our rooms? You should be expecting us - I'm Mr. Hardy, and this is my very dear friend Mr. Laurel.

The RECEPTIONIST is about to burst.

RECEPTIONIST

You just wait 'til I tell me mam it's you! We never get anybody famous stayin' here - to be honest I thought you'd retired!

HARDY takes the pen from it's holder and with an extravagant flourish signs in to the register.

HARDY

No no, we may be getting old but we're not done yet.

LAUREL

You know, I'm so old now I walked into an antique shop the other day and they bought me.

The RECEPTIONIST laughs.

HARDY

He's exaggerating, of course. But we've come a long way since our first job, selling hot dogs at Custer's Last Stand.

RECEPTIONIST

All me family loves your films - where are yous gonna be appearin' then - the Theatre Royal?

HARDY

No it's...

He's forgotten the name - LAUREL answers for him:

LAUREL

The Queen's Hall.

RECEPTIONIST

(Surprised)

Queen's Hall? That can't be right. All the big stars play at the Theatre Royal. That's where you'll be playing.

HARDY

I'm sure you're right.
(to Laurel)
It is the Theatre Royal?

LAUREL

No, It's the Queen's Hall.

A few moments of uncomfortable silence.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)

Well never mind, here's your room keys.

She hands LAUREL and HARDY their keys.

HARDY

Thank you.
(Looks round expectantly)
Is there a Bell Boy please?

8

INT. CORRIDOR, GUEST HOUSE, NEWCASTLE - NIGHT

8

There are no Bell Boys. LAUREL and HARDY struggle along a corridor to their rooms, HARDY - now with the golf clubs over his shoulder - dragging his heavy trunk behind him. LAUREL stops by his door and, as he unlocks it, turns to HARDY who is in the room opposite.

LAUREL
My room in ten minutes?

HARDY looks at him, aghast. *He still wants to work tonight?*

LAUREL (cont'd)
I thought we could run some lines?

HARDY
(Barely concealed sarcasm)
Sure. Why not.

HARDY opens the door to his room and enters.

9 **INT. HARDY'S BEDROOM, NEWCASTLE GUEST HOUSE - NIGHT** 9

HARDY struggles in with his luggage. He turns the light on and surveys the room: shabby and uninviting, a tatty, candlewick bedspread on the bed. He goes to haul the trunk up onto his bed, but it pops open and a huge cache of tinned food - ham, peaches, potatoes, corned beef, which were on top of his clothes - tumbles out and rolls all over the floor. HARDY sighs heavily.

HARDY

Oh death where is thy sting?

10 **EXT. GUEST HOUSE, NEWCASTLE - NIGHT** 10

Yellow light spills from a curtained, upper storey window. Over this we hear, *SFX the clack clack of a typewriter.*

11 **INT. LAUREL'S ROOM, NEWCASTLE GUEST HOUSE - NIGHT** 11

A meagre coal fire glows in the grate as LAUREL, puffing on a cigarette, taps at a battered portable typewriter by the light of a table lamp. A pot of tea and a plate of dog eared sandwiches has been set out on a coffee table. He pauses, pulls the typed page from the typewriter and reads it back.

12 **INT. JOE SCHENCK'S OFFICE - DAY [FLASHBACK]** 12

A *CLOSE UP* of a contract, the logo of 'Twentieth Century Fox' at the top of the page.

It's 1938 and we REVEAL LAUREL on a chair, an empty one next to him, flicking through the contract. He is in the luxurious office of executive Joe SCHENCK, late 50s. Surrounded by wood panelling, leather, and portraits of stars of the day - Sonja Henje, Betty Grable, Spencer Tracey, Tyrone Power - LAUREL feels uncomfortable, out of place. The man next to him is obviously his lawyer (round glasses, 40s, curly hair slicked back) and LAUREL hands him the contract. LAUREL is acutely aware that he is keeping SCHENCK waiting; he catches him looking at his watch and tries a smile which is not returned.

SCHENCK

You sure he wants to do this Stan?
I mean, Fox would love to have you
here, but...

LAUREL

This is what we've both been
waiting for Joe. I can't imagine
what's held him up.

LAWYER

Why doesn't Stanley sign, then all
we have to do is have Oliver sign
when he gets here.

LAUREL

(Taking out his pen)

That's a good idea, isn't it Joe?

SCHENCK - *who is quickly losing patience - doesn't respond. The LAWYER hands LAUREL the contract back and LAUREL hands him the pen. LAUREL realises he needs the pen and takes it back from the LAWYER, giving him the contract at the same time. Is it genuine confusion, or a little bit of business? LAUREL takes pen and contract back from his LAWYER and signs next to his name, leaving Hardy's blank. He looks up, tries another smile with SCHENCK - again, not returned. We hear HARDY'S voice under this:*

HARDY (V.O.)

I wish I was there with you...

13

INT. FRONT DESK, NEWCASTLE GUEST HOUSE - NIGHT

13

Back to 1953. HARDY is using the hotel telephone to make a transatlantic call to his wife:

HARDY

(Dreamily)

... sitting out the back, watching the sun go down.

LUCILLE (V.O.)

What's the hotel like?

HARDY

It's like a castle, set in the countryside, beautiful grounds...

(Warming to it)

... which go down to a lake, with a little stone bridge over it.

The RECEPTIONIST returns to the desk from a back office. HARDY, a little embarrassed, gives her a polite smile.

LUCILLE (V.O.)

Are you getting enough to eat?

HARDY

The staff lay out little sweetmeats and pastries wherever we turn. Everyone's so happy to see us touring again we're being treated like kings.

LUCILLE (V.O.)

Ida and I received our tickets today so we're just as excited as can be.

HARDY

I am too, and this...

He sees the NIGHT PORTER is watching him so turns away-

HARDY (cont'd)
-is for you, with all my love-

-kisses his finger tips and blows the kiss down the phone.

LUCILLE (V.O.)
I love you too Oliver, you know I
do.
(Beat, slight edge in her
voice)
So... how are things with Stanley?

HARDY
Oh... you know Stan.

LUCILLE
How has he been towards you?

On HARDY, thoughtful for a moment.

14

INT. SOUND STAGE - DAY [FLASHBACK]

14

HARDY, serious expression, walks on set wearing a dark suit but carrying an unfamiliar top hat.

HAL ROACH
Babe! Where have you been? You had
me worried for a minute there...

He gives a (plainly uncomfortable) HARDY a bear hug.

HAL ROACH (cont'd)
What the hell, you're here now.
You're both here.

He gestures and HARDY looks across to someone with his back to us, also wearing a dark suit and top hat, being given a last check over by a MAKE-UP LADY. From his build we assume it must be Laurel. HARDY takes position next to an ELEPHANT with a hot water bottle bandaged to its head. The set is a wooden barn scattered with bales of hay, and he's playing a vet treating a sick circus elephant. As he sits on a stool LUCILLE, carrying a clip board, stops by to reassure him:

LUCILLE
Mr. Hardy, everything alright?

HARDY
You know, first day of school Mrs.
Hardy. I'm glad you're here. Do you
think it's going to be ok?

LUCILLE
It's just a movie Babe.

She squeezes his hand then carries on to her position (as script supervisor) next to the director GORDON DOUGLAS, who is younger than Horne and less assured in his manner. A WRANGLER hands HARDY a mallet and gives him some last minute instructions - though HARDY looks totally preoccupied:

WRANGLER

(Patting the elephant)

When you touch her knee with the mallet, she'll lift her leg like you're checking her reflexes.

ROACH calls over:

ROACH

You wanna go for one you two?

HARDY looks over again to 'LAUREL', and now, as he turns, we see that he's... not Laurel. It is in fact HARRY LANGDON, a Laurel look-alike, who is playing the elephant's owner. LANGDON is of similar build to Laurel and wears the same pancake white make up.

LANGDON

Ready when you are Babe.

We now see that this is Roach's attempt at a new partnership - just with different hats. LANGDON comes over and stands next to HARDY. He puts his hand lightly on HARDY'S shoulder (and he involuntarily stiffens at the touch). As he looks around HARDY becomes aware that various CREW MEMBERS, who have worked on Laurel & Hardy films, are avoiding eye contact with him as they go about their work.

ROACH

This is great, you and Harry are gonna be just great together.

HARDY looks at LANGDON, who spreads his hands and gives him a blank smile, exactly as Laurel would. HARDY returns a polite smile, but we can see he's uncomfortable - that he can't escape the feeling he's betraying Stan. He looks to LUCILLE, who tries to encourage him with a smile.

DOUGLAS

Okay let's roll camera...

He gets the response 'Rolling' from sound and camera. On HARDY, suppressing a sinking feeling:

DOUGLAS (cont'd)

Aaand - action!

ROACH, over-excited, shouts out simultaneously:

ROACH

Action!

15

INT. LAUREL'S ROOM, NEWCASTLE GUEST HOUSE - NIGHT

15

A closed door. SFX KNOCKING from outside. LAUREL, who has been frowning in concentration, looks up:

LAUREL

Just a minute!

He quickly stubs his cigarette out and wafts away the smoke, hides the ashtray in the bin, then unlocks the door to HARDY, who sniffs theatrically, looks at LAUREL suspiciously.

HARDY

Do you realise what you've done?

A beat, then LAUREL - going along with it for fun - nods miserably. HARDY enters and turns to LAUREL:

HARDY (cont'd)

Well, come on - out with them.

LAUREL takes a packet of Chesterfield cigarettes from his inside pocket and HARDY snatches it off him. He takes one, then offers the pack to LAUREL who also takes one. HARDY produces a lighter and they both light up and take deep puffs, HARDY putting the pack back in his pocket.

HARDY (cont'd)

Now isn't that better? Sharing?

LAUREL nods, big smile on his face.

HARDY (cont'd)

And here's something else we're not supposed to have.

He produces a half bottle of Scotch from inside his jacket. LAUREL rustles up a couple of cups and HARDY pours them each a large measure.

HARDY (cont'd)

For medicinal purposes...

They clink cups together and the 'skit' ends.

HARDY (cont'd)

I'm getting a sinking feeling about this place. Did you see her face when we told her what theatre we were playing?

LAUREL

It'll be fine, Queen's Hall is a good theatre.

HARDY

Well we gotta make sure we're in nicer hotels when the girls arrive.

LAUREL

I'll get onto it.

HARDY crosses to the window to peer out into the murky night with a shiver.

HARDY

You heard from Muffin?

LAUREL starts to correct his script by hand.

LAUREL

Miffin.

HARDY

Miffin. Is that really his name? Has he given you our shooting dates yet?

LAUREL

I'm waitin' on a call.

HARDY lets the curtain drop and sits down in one of two easy chairs by the fireside - his leg causing him some pain as he lowers himself. He picks up his cup of Scotch, takes a sip.

LAUREL (cont'd)

What do you think about this for a title: 'Rob 'Em Good'. You know, playin' off 'Robin Hood'? There was a picture used that in the 20s but nobody would remember by now.

During this HARDY takes a sandwich from the plate on the coffee table, peels back the top and looks suspiciously at the filling smeared inside, wrinkling his nose as he sniffs.

HARDY

What is this stuff?

LAUREL takes one, bites into it.

LAUREL

Fish paste. It's the war rationing.

HARDY

Still?

(LAUREL shrugs)

Explains why they looked at me like
I was nuts when I asked for an egg
sandwich.

HARDY looks at LAUREL, already making corrections to the page
he's just typed with his pen as he flicks through his work.

HARDY (cont'd)

'Rob 'Em Good'. I like that Stan.

HARDY takes another sip of his Scotch.

LAUREL

I been workin' on this scene for
the movie where we go into the
castle to rescue Maid Marian, and
we're hiding behind this curtain-

HARDY decides hunger has got the better of him and - after
liberally sprinkling salt over the filling - tries the
sandwich. LAUREL starts to giggle as he tells the story.

LAUREL (cont'd)

-and the guards are lookin' for us-

He's really making himself laugh as he tells the story - and
it's infectious. HARDY starts to chuckle too - even though he
doesn't know the punchline.

LAUREL (cont'd)

-and, I'll show you, turn around...

HARDY turns round; we stay on him as we hear some rustling:

LAUREL (OOV) (cont'd)

Okay...

HARDY turns back and sees LAUREL'S shoes poking out from
beneath the curtains in his room.

LAUREL (OOV) (cont'd)

(From behind curtain)

Now you stab me with your sword-

HARDY looks about, picks up a shoe horn and, getting into
character-

HARDY

A-ha! A-ha! So you think you can
play that game do you - well you
can't hide from me!

-uses it to stab the curtain at about chest height.

LAUREL (OOV)
*And then you pull the curtain back,
and...*

HARDY pulls the curtain back and there is LAUREL on his knees, below where the 'sword' went in to the curtain, kneeling on his shoes like Toulouse-Lautrec, looking at himself in a dressing mirror opposite. He looks so ridiculous that HARDY howls with laughter - which makes LAUREL laugh even harder.

LAUREL (cont'd)
Isn't that silly!

HARDY pulls his shoes off and - with some painful grunting - lowers himself to kneel on them the same as LAUREL. Now they're both doing it - getting a little hysterical with laughter as they look at themselves in the mirror.

HARDY
Now I'm down here - I can't get up
again!

This sets them both off again. LAUREL tries to get up-

LAUREL
Neither can I!
(Gasping for air)
We're stuck!

We go OUT on the boys, howling with laughter at themselves in the mirror.

16

EXT. QUEEN'S HALL THEATRE - DAY

16

A grey day, the rain falling. A provincial English theatre, small and shabby - Hardy's sinking feeling was spot on. An OLD MAN passes, oblivious, as a WORKMAN pastes up a poster:

**Bernard Delfont Presents
The Personal Visit Of
Hollywood's Greatest Comedy Couple
Stan LAUREL & Oliver HARDY**

Under this we hear the incredulous voice of Stan's wife IDA:

IDA (V.O.)
*-you stay in guest house? You
should be in best hotel.*

LAUREL (V.O.)
*Well, beggars can't be choosers can
they my darling.*

IDA (V.O.)
Why are you not play West End? I
don't like this Delfont.

*

As the shot TRACKS we see LAUREL in a public phone box next to the theatre, on a transatlantic call:

LAUREL
Ida, he's put this tour together for us, and we didn't exactly have too many other offers did we? Anyway, we got the movie to look forward to.

He glances at the little Queen's Hall Theatre outside.

LAUREL (cont'd)
Okay the theatre is a little on the small side, but that means it'll be easier to sell it out.

IDA (V.O.)
How is Oliver - is he pulling
weight?

LAUREL
He's doing fine.
(Quickly moves on)
Tell me all the news. How are the ducks?

IDA (V.O.)
Well, I try to get them into duck
house at night but-

The pips sound, he has to quickly insert more coins.

LAUREL
Hello? Ida?

IDA (V.O.)
Stanley?

LAUREL
Oh thank goodness, I thought I'd lost you.

He looks glumly at the rain spattering against the windows of the phone box...

LAUREL (cont'd)
I just wanted to tell you how much I'm missing you, and how cold the bed is without you.

IDA (V.O.)
*I am missing you too. I am trying
not to cry each night...*

17

INT. BACKSTAGE, QUEEN'S HALL THEATRE, NEWCASTLE - NIGHT 17

Opening night. LAUREL and HARDY are in costume, preparing to go on. HARDY sits himself on a hospital bed and a stage hand (BILLY BRADY, 20s) encases his leg in an oversized plaster cast. LAUREL glances through a crack in the curtain and, worried, sees the house is barely half full. BRADY attaches a cable to HARDY'S plaster cast and starts to hoist it up like it's in traction. BRADY glances over to LAUREL and sees he is going through his pre-show ritual of checking his cuffs are held in place by paper clips, and that there are no heels on his boots. BRADY plucks up the courage to talk to him:

BRADY
You worked with my grandad Mr.
Laurel.

LAUREL looks up at him.

BRADY (cont'd)
He told me how you never have heels
on your boots, to make you walk
funny.

LAUREL
Your grandad?

BRADY
Billy Brady, I was named after him.

LAUREL looks at him. BRADY does a wide-eyed, goofy smile and a camp flutter of his hands.

BRADY (cont'd)
'Billy Brady - He's No Lady'?

Suddenly the mists part, and LAUREL realises who this man is.

LAUREL
Oh my goodness, it's like staring
straight into the past!
(Shakes his hand warmly)
You're Billy's grandson... he was a
wonderful comic. Very funny drag
act.

BRADY
(To HARDY)
He always said, Mr. Hardy, that
Stan were obsessed with his comedy.
Never stopped working on his act -
even though he reckoned in them
days it were crap.

HARDY

Nothing much has changed there
Billy.

BRADY laughs - so does LAUREL.

LAUREL

He was a very good friend of mine
your grandad was - how is he?

BRADY

Oh, he passed away a few years ago.

LAUREL seems very moved by this.

LAUREL

I'm sorry to hear that.

The STAGE MANAGER comes out to give them all a heads up:

STAGE MANAGER

Curtain up in one minute Stan?

LAUREL nods his okay.

BRADY

He was on stage right up 'til the
end. Did a panto the night before
he died.

HARDY listens to this as BRADY wheels his bed to centre stage. LAUREL takes a position in the wings and BRADY now comes over and hands him a paper bag and a bunch of flowers.

BRADY (cont'd)

He was very weak but he was
determined to get through it.

This seems to hit home with LAUREL who, as the lights dim, falls quiet. He looks to HARDY, alone in bed in the backstage gloom.

18

INT. QUEEN'S HALL THEATRE, NEWCASTLE - NIGHT

18

There's a buzz of expectation out front, then the orchestra strikes up '*The Dance Of The Cuckoos*', Laurel & Hardy's instantly recognisable theme tune. LAUREL looks across to HARDY and they exchange that same nod. Then, stage lights up, curtain open, and loud applause as the audience sees HARDY on stage in the bed. LAUREL silently counts in his head, then-LAUREL strides on stage to another round of warm applause, clutching the bunch of flowers and paper bag, blank expression. The sketch begins:

LAUREL

Hi Ollie, how are you?

*
*

HARDY

Never mind how I am - what took you
so long to get here?

*
*
*

LAUREL

Well they said no visitors so I
said I was your son and it worked
like a charm.

*
*
*
*

HARDY

My son! You have a lot of nerve
telling them I was your father.

*
*
*

LAUREL

I couldn't tell them you were my
mother.

*
*
*

HARDY

Of course you couldn't. I've never
even been married...

*
*
*

Big laughs - the audience are loving it.

*

HARDY

What have you got there?

*

LAUREL

I brought you some hard boiled eggs
and some nuts.

HARDY looks to the audience, exasperated, and they laugh. The reaction is warm and genuine, but the theatre is only half full - there are empty seats everywhere.

HARDY

Now you know I can't eat hard
boiled eggs and nuts! If you wanted
to bring me something why didn't
you bring me a box of candy?

LAUREL

Well, they cost too much.

HARDY

What has that got to do with it?

LAUREL

And you didn't pay me for the last
box I brought you.

Laughter. LAUREL offers HARDY the bag:

LAUREL

Have one?

HARDY

No. I'd rather not.
(To the audience, with
disgust)
Hard boiled eggs and nuts...

LAUREL ignores him, takes an egg out and starts to peel it and eat it. HARDY watches, incredulous, as Laurel pulls a salt cellar from his pocket and sprinkles some on.

19

INT. BACKSTAGE/STAGE, QUEEN'S HALL THEATRE, NEWCASTLE - NIGHT

Helped by BRADY and another STAGE HAND, LAUREL and HARDY - who winces as he jars his knee - do a quick change into their crumpled suits and Bowler hats, ready for the finale.

HARDY

(Dismayed)
What's going on out there? All
those empty seats...

LAUREL, though also concerned, doesn't respond - he nods to the STAGE MANAGER.

19aA

INT. QUEEN'S HALL THEATRE, NEWCASTLE - NIGHT

19aA

'*The Dance Of The Cuckoos*' plays again, and the curtain rises. LAUREL waits for a particular note, then steps out on set... but he only manages two paces before HARDY reaches out and pulls him back. He goes out first in this partnership. Laughter. But as HARDY strolls out self importantly, LAUREL kicks him up the ass. More laughter. Finally they both walk out together to warm applause. They go into a bowing routine, to the side, to the front, then towards each other - clashing heads. Laughter. LAUREL sees HARDY put his hand on his knee to push himself straight again - sees a flash of pain across his face. HARDY covers it well as he fiddles with his tie; LAUREL takes his hat off and scratches his hair underneath.

LAUREL

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for making us feel so welcome on our first night back in England. We hope you've enjoyed our bit of fun this evening - we've sure enjoyed ourselves haven't we Ollie?

HARDY

We certainly have Stanley, we've been made to feel right at home here in Newcastle, and now we'd like to finish-

He gives LAUREL a brief nod of reassurance about his knee-

HARDY (cont'd)

-with a little dance routine we like to do. Music please maestro.

The tune to *'At The Ball, That's All'* strikes up.

HARDY (cont'd)

Stanley.

Formally, HARDY holds his hand out and LAUREL takes it, as if he were his dance partner, and they begin to perform the same dance routine we saw in *'Way Out West'*. Though older and slower, they still dance beautifully, the affection their characters have for each other shining through. They come together to finish, hold hands and take a bow. They look out at the half full auditorium, but still keep up their smiles.

CUT TO:

19A

EXT. STAIRWELL, TRAIN STATION - DAY

19A

LAUREL and HARDY puff and blow as they clamber up a long staircase carrying their luggage. HARDY, golf clubs again over his shoulder, drags the heavy trunk behind him.

LAUREL

It was a little slow last night, wasn't it.

HARDY

Slow? We could have invited the audience back for a party in our hotel suite - there'd have been plenty of room.

LAUREL smiles, HARDY is struck with a sudden thought:

HARDY (cont'd)

We got to be careful Muffin doesn't come see us 'til the houses pick up - we don't want him getting cold feet about the movie.

LAUREL

You're right. I'll put him off 'til we get to London...

LAUREL reaches the top, rests his case, looks about for where to go next.

LAUREL (cont'd)
 (Takes out a slip of
 paper)
 Glasgow train... 8.05 Platform
 Four.
 (Looks about)
 Which way is Platform Four..?

HARDY
 (Still struggling up the
 stairs)
 8.05? What time is it now?

LAUREL looks at his wrist - he's not wearing a watch:

LAUREL
 I don't have my watch on.

HARDY instinctively brings up his left wrist to look at his watch - but in doing so he lets go of the heavy trunk... which promptly slides away down the staircase. A moment as they both watch it trundle to the bottom and come to a stop - an inescapable echo of the piano famously plummeting down those long flight of stairs in their movie *'The Music Box'*.

HARDY
 You know one of us is going to have
 to get that.

LAUREL
 It's me isn't it?

HARDY
 It certainly is.

20

INT. RESTAURANT CAR, TRAIN - DAY

20

HARDY lies back in his seat, bad leg propped up, dozing. LAUREL brings back two Scotches from the buffet bar. He sets them down, then resumes his seat, the remains of some sandwiches and tea in front of them. LAUREL glances at HARDY, takes a sip from his Scotch, then nudges him.

LAUREL
 Babe.
 (No response, so louder)
 Babe.

HARDY wakes up, sees LAUREL. With a grimace of pain he sits up, bringing his leg down from the seat opposite.

HARDY
 What is it?

LAUREL
 I got you a drink.

HARDY sees the Scotch, takes it and downs it.

HARDY

Thank you.

LAUREL now hands him a few typed pages of script. HARDY looks at them, confused for a moment, then takes them.

LAUREL

I been workin' on some new scenes
for 'Rob 'Em Good', thought we
could run 'em?

HARDY sees a pot of tea and some cups in front of them, puts
the script down and pours himself a cup.

LAUREL (cont'd)

We don't have to if you don't want
to.

HARDY

No no...

(Almost as an aside)

I know my place.

It's a little barb he throws out but LAUREL doesn't take it. With great delicacy HARDY begins a long ritual: dropping four cubes of sugar in, then milk and carefully stirring, making sure the lumps dissolve. He then spills some red tablets from a bottle onto the little table in front of him.

LAUREL

Knee still bad?

HARDY nods as he counts out four and puts the others back in the bottle.

LAUREL (cont'd)

I thought you were on the blue tablets?

HARDY

I already had the blue ones and it's still killin' me. I thought I'd give the red ones one more chance.

LAUREL

Well won't the blue ones get upset about that?

HARDY

I never thought about it.

LAUREL

It's got to be one or the other, you can't keep both of them on the go at the same time...

Finally, after one last emphatic stir, HARDY puts the first tablet in his mouth, picks his cup up with a crooked little finger, and takes a sip to wash it down.

LAUREL (cont'd)

-they'll get jealous and start fighting over you.

HARDY immediately reacts, pulls a face, but is forced to swallow.

HARDY

Why didn't you tell me it was cold?

LAUREL

I thought you knew?

HARDY looks at him, exhales in frustration, and downs the other three tablets quickly with another gulp of cold tea.

He shudders with distaste, then picks the script up again and starts to read through it. But he's distracted, can't concentrate. He turns to LAUREL:

HARDY

That guy who went on stage the night before he died....

LAUREL

Billy Brady?

HARDY

Yeh.

LAUREL

Wasn't that something, to still be working in his old age like that?

HARDY

That's what's been bothering me. He wasn't working, he was dying. Didn't you find it sad?

As LAUREL thinks about this, HARDY takes the flask from him and has a sip.

LAUREL

Well... look at Jimmy Finlayson.

HARDY

What about him?

LAUREL

Nobody even knew he'd died, just lay there in his bed, all alone. He finished too soon - same cafe every morning, reading the papers, trying to make that stretch to midday so he's only got the afternoon to kill? Who wants that?

*

HARDY has another sip.

HARDY

Maybe he was happy doing nothing. There's an awful lot to be said for it...

21

EXT. EMPIRE THEATRE, GLASGOW - DAY

21

A grey morning, the wind whipping across the Clyde. HARDY smokes a cigarette as he stands down the street from the boys' next venue - the 'Empire Glasgow'. Under this we hear:

LAUREL (V.O.)

*Mr. Miffin please... Yes this is
Stan Laurel... Well that's very
nice of you to say so...*

Shot TRACKS to REVEAL LAUREL making another call in a public phone box. HARDY, out of earshot, waits for him.

LAUREL

Mr. Hardy? Oh he's indisposed right now-

(Sees HARDY outside)

-he's working in a Swiss cheese factory. He got a job putting in the holes-

(He obviously gets a laugh, listens some more)

He's in a meeting? Okay, it's just that I need to confirm a date for him to come see us in London.

(Listens)

No please don't interrupt him, I'll try again another time.

(Listens)

No that's fine... you too.

He hangs up and emerges from the phone box, joins HARDY and they walk away together.

HARDY

How was Ida?

LAUREL

Fine. Ducks were fine...

LAUREL suddenly stops and pulls out another beret from his coat pocket and hands it to HARDY.

LAUREL (cont'd)
Here, I got you a present.

HARDY takes it and, delighted, puts it on immediately (*LAUREL is already wearing his*).

HARDY
How does it look?

LAUREL
Swell.

WIDE SHOT: the two of them walk off towards the theatre.

HARDY
We're two peas in a pod.

They pass a WOMAN pushing a pram and both politely doff their berets to her.

ELDERLY WOMAN (V.O.)
*-yes but we just wanted to know
who's going to be playing Laurel
and Hardy please?*

22 **DELETED** 22

23 **INT. FOYER, EMPIRE GLASGOW - DAY** 23

An ELDERLY COUPLE are at the box office with the MANAGER:

MANAGER
They're playing themselves.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Who are?

MANAGER
Laurel and Hardy. '*Here In Person*'
the poster says - they're here in
person.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Yes but they've been retired for
years. Before we buy any tickets we
want to know the names of the
actors who are going to be playing
them here? In this actual theatre?

MANAGER
(Exasperated)
They are playing themselves!

At this point LAUREL and HARDY walk through the foyer on their way into the theatre. They spot the ELDERLY COUPLE and once more politely doff their berets:

LAUREL AND HARDY
 (Smiling politely)
 Good afternoon.

Out on the ELDERLY COUPLE'S astonished expressions. UNDER this we hear...

HARDY (V.O.)
... Ladies and gentlemen, we'd like to thank you for making us feel so welcome here in Glasgow...

24

INT. EMPIRE, GLASGOW - NIGHT

24

The audience tonight is again, disappointingly, only half full - though they are enjoying seeing the boys resplendent in kilts especially for their Scottish fans. We pick out DELFONT in the audience, looking around, noting the gaps.

LAUREL
 Not just Glasgow, the whole of Wales.

Hardy points to the kilts they are wearing

LAUREL (cont'd)
 Why aren't we wearing any trousers? *

HARDY
 Because we're in Scotland. *

LAUREL
 Yes but why aren't we wearing any trousers? *

HARDY
 Never mind. Ladies and gentlemen we'd like to finish with a dance. *

Laurel throws him a knowing look - Hardy's not well enough to do the dance number. *

HARDY
 No? *

LAUREL
 No. No, you sing a song and I'll do a dance. *

HARDY
 Alright, have it your way. What song would you like to do? *

LAUREL
 We'd like to perform 'Shine on Harvey Moon'. *

HARDY
'Shine on Harvest Moon'.

LAUREL
Alright, we'll do that one then.

HARDY
Maestro, may I have a ukulele?

*
*

*
*

*
*
*

HARDY starts to play on his ukulele then sings the song in his beautiful tenor voice, LAUREL harmonizing, his gentle, flat voice a perfect foil. At the same time LAUREL performs a little soft shoe shuffle around the (*stationary*) HARDY.

LAUREL AND HARDY

(Singing)

*Oh, Shine on, shine on, harvest
moon*

Up in the sky...

I ain't had no lovin'

(MORE)

LAUREL AND HARDY (CONT'D)

*Since January, February, June or
July
Snow time ain't no time to stay
Outdoors and spoon
Shine on, shine on, harvest moon
For me and my gal...*

Enthusiastic applause; they go into their 'bowing routine' (ending with them banging heads in the middle). They get laughs, but we see how pale and sweaty HARDY is - the physical demands of this type of touring taking a toll.

25

INT. GLASGOW PUB - NIGHT

25

That evening. LAUREL and HARDY, glum and apprehensive after another poorly attended show, sit in a corner booth with DELFONT, who tucks into a pub meal of sausage and mash. LAUREL and HARDY don't eat but have pints of beer in front of them and both smoke heavily, a thick haze hanging over the booth. Nothing is said until, finally, DELFONT finishes his last mouthful and dabs vigorously at his mouth with a napkin:

DELFONT

Now then, gentlemen...

(More dabbing, puts napkin
down)

Terrific though the show is, and it
really is terrific-

HARDY

Thank you.

DELFONT

-we really do have to have a little
think about where we go from here.

Sweating profusely, HARDY pours himself a glass of water from the ever-present jug he has at the dinner table.

HARDY

We have new material we can work
in, don't we Stan.

LAUREL

We have a double door routine we
can do, set in a railway station,
and as soon as Babe's leg is better
we can bring back the dance number
at the end.

HARDY

It's getting better all the time.

DELFONT

Yes, I think that would all help
enormously. And of course it's
early days and all that but,
unfortunately, the houses have thus
far been extremely disappointing.

HARDY

But that's because we're playing in
all these little theatres.

DELFONT

Yes and I'm absolutely furious
about that.

HARDY

But you booked us in them? What happened to the big ones we played last time we were over?

DELFONT

Well we couldn't be sure how ticket sales would go you see, and-

LAUREL, suddenly getting it, looks thunderstruck.

LAUREL

Wait a minute, wait a minute... you want to close us down?

DELFONT

Absolutely not. That's the last thing I want to do.

HARDY

We haven't even done a week!

LAUREL

When do you want us to finish?

DELFONT

I thought it would be best if we wrapped it up before you got to London?

HARDY

What!

DELFONT

That would give us another ten shows or so. With a bit of a push - 'last shows', that sort of thing - and the advance bookings we already have, we should just about be able to wash our hands.

HARDY

But the producer of the movie's coming to see the show in London next month, isn't he Stan?

LAUREL

And Lucille and Ida are coming over in a couple of weeks - we can't finish early.

HARDY

We made it perfectly clear-
(Grasps at the figure)
-one hundred and ten per cent clear, that the only reason we came over for this tour was to be available for that movie.

DELFONT looks at them both, considering the situation.

DELFONT

I thought you'd jump at the chance.
Neither of you looks particularly
well?

HARDY

I'm in perfect health.

LAUREL

And so is he.

HARDY

Mr Delfont, we need this tour to
continue.

DELFONT

And of course I'm enormously
sympathetic. Enormously. But your
audience doesn't quite seem to be
what it was, and advance bookings
are very slow. It's a wonderful
show, very charming and sweet, but
perhaps... tastes have changed? All
good things must come to an end,
that sort of thing?

LAUREL

We can turn it around.

DELFONT

The public moves on. So many don't
even come to the theatre now, just
stay at home watching their
television sets... watching your
films on their television sets,
come to think of it - and you not
even getting any residuals.

(Shakes his head and tuts)

Filthy business.

HARDY

Just tell us what you want us to do
and we'll do it.

DELFONT looks from HARDY, who wipes the sweat from his
forehead with a napkin, to LAUREL, who looks at him
expectantly.

DELFONT

Well... if you *really* want to keep
this tour going, then all I can
think of... is you're going to have
to get out there and publicize it.

(He looks at them both)

(MORE)

DELFONT (CONT'D)

Which would mean a very large amount of extra work for you both, making personal appearances, opening shops, meeting local dignitaries and so on and so forth. And for, broadly speaking, very little extra money.

LAUREL

I take it that 'very little'
actually means no extra money at
all?

HARDY

That we would have to flog
ourselves half to death for
nothing?

DELFONT

Well...

(Sees in their eyes that
there's no point lying)

Yes.

LAUREL and HARDY exchange. A beat, then:

HARDY

Well okay.

DELFONT

Sorry?

LAUREL

We'll do it.

DELFONT is taken aback by how upbeat and defiant they seem.

26

EXT. STREET - DAY

26

BLACK AND WHITE NEWSREEL FOOTAGE: On a freezing cold day, a good-sized crowd has gathered to watch LAUREL and HARDY pose for some shots with local PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS. The boys are wearing uniforms of white overalls and black peaked caps with scarves wrapped round their necks to keep them warm, and they are surrounded by young SCHOOL CHILDREN.

NEWSREEL COMMENTARY (V.O.)

Taking time out from a nationwide
tour of music halls - tickets still
available - Messrs. Laurel and
Hardy were in Merthyr Tydfil this
week for to lend their support to a
new road safety programme.

JUMP CUT TO:

The BOYS now stand in the middle of a Zebra crossing holding 'Lollipop' signs saying 'STOP CHILDREN CROSSING', as they wave the CHILDREN cross the road [NOTE - LAUREL'S SIGN IS BIGGER THAN HARDY'S].

NEWSREEL COMMENTARY

On a bitterly cold day the boys had
luckily come prepared.

As the CHILDREN cross HARDY stamps his feet and blows his hands to keep warm. Meanwhile LAUREL pulls a hot water bottle from inside his coat and a cup from his pocket then - to laughs - pours some tea into it from the hot water bottle. HARDY rolls his eyes in exasperation - then suddenly notices that Laurel's sign is bigger than his. Annoyed, he grabs it off him and hands LAUREL his smaller one.

NEWSREEL COMMENTARY (cont'd)

Although with these two around
nothing ever goes quite to plan...

Looking at his smaller 'Lollipop', LAUREL decides to get revenge by bopping HARDY on the head with it. HARDY howls and touches his head gingerly, then responds in kind - and a squabble quickly develops, the two of them attacking each other with their 'Lollipops'.

END NEWSREEL FOOTAGE.

27 **EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (MONTAGE SEQUENCE)** 27

A steam train thunders across country; underneath this a 1950s vintage graphic shows the progress of the tour, from Glasgow to Manchester, Liverpool, and then finally starting to head south, to Nottingham, Leicester, Birmingham...

28 **INT. THEATRE - NIGHT (MONTAGE SEQUENCE)** 28

LAUREL is stood next to HARDY'S bed, his arm resting on the iron headboard. But, unknown to LAUREL his arm is looped through the rope holding up HARDY'S leg. *

HARDY *

If you really want to help me, why
don't you get me a nice glass of
water. *

LAUREL turns round to the bed side table but in doing so pulls HARDY'S leg up even higher and the counterweight lands on HARDY'S head. HARDY lets out an 'oohhh'. LAUREL quickly turns back to HARDY. *

LAUREL *

What's the matter? *

HARDY *

My head hurts. *

LAUREL *

I'll get the doctor. *

LAUREL again turns around, lifting HARDY'S leg and landing the counterweight on his head. HARDY lets out another 'oohhh'. LAUREL turns back to HARDY again. *

HARDY

Never mind the doctor, just get me
my glass of water.

*
*
*
*
*
*

LAUREL turns around for a third time to get the glass of water, but this time HARDY pushes his leg down hard quickly pulling LAUREL back round to face him and accidentally throwing the glass of water all over HARDY.

29 **EXT. VARIOUS THEATRES - DAY (MONTAGE SEQUENCE)** 29

Various shots of posters being pasted up outside theatres. We see the poster headings - 'Hippodrome Birmingham'; 'Alhambra Bradford'; 'Palace Hull'...

30 **INT. CHIP SHOP - DAY (MONTAGE SEQUENCE)** 30

A small crowd has gathered as the BOYS pose for photos for the local paper in a chip shop. The boys each hold bags of chips, then HARDY is handed a bottle of vinegar by the chip shop owner. He starts to sprinkle vinegar on his chips but allows himself to be 'distracted' and turns away to one side, smiling to fans, and doesn't see LAUREL put his bag of chips over Hardy's so he gets all the vinegar instead. LAUREL takes his bag away just as HARDY turns back, and starts to eat his chips with a big smile. HARDY looks at him suspiciously.

31

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY (MONTAGE SEQUENCE)

31

The train has arrived and LAUREL steps down from the carriage, waving to fans on the platform before turning to help HARDY down. HARDY looks pale and - frankly - exhausted.

He's wobbly on the steps with his bad knee but once he's safely on the platform he also turns and waves to the fans. The boys then go into their bowing routine: to each side, to the front, then to each other - banging heads. Big laughs.

32 **INT. THEATRE FOYER - NIGHT (MONTAGE SEQUENCE)** 32

A queue of fans in the foyer; we snake along the line until we reach the box office, where money is slapped down hand over fist for tickets; demand seems to be growing.

33 **DELETED** 33 *

34 **EXT. STREET - DAY (MONTAGE SEQUENCE)** 34

Another PA - PHOTOGRAPHERS snap away as LAUREL and HARDY, each with a conductor's ticket machine strapped to his chest, manually wind out tickets from their machines for PASSENGERS boarding a trolley-bus. Inevitably LAUREL winds out a ticket, hands it to HARDY and he accepts it - before realising what it is and - to laughs - angrily screwing it up and throwing it away.

JUMP CUT TO:

The BOYS - now on the trolley bus - wave goodbye to everyone from the rear as it rattles off down the street.

35 **DELETED** 35

36 **EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT (MONTAGE SEQUENCE)** 36

*An express sleeper, the engine's headlamp illuminating swirls of steam as, even at night, the boys keep on moving, moving. The graphic map shows the tour stopping at Cardiff, then Bristol, then Exeter before reaching Plymouth. **END MONTAGE.***

37 **INT. HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE, PLYMOUTH - NIGHT** 37

All the hard work leads to here. HARDY sits on a bench in an unfamiliar set - a railway platform - looking at his watch impatiently. The auditorium is jam-packed full; the audience - spread across all ages - happy, expectant.

On stage HARDY can wait no more, gets up and exits through a door into the waiting room. At this exact moment LAUREL comes out onto the stage through another door next to the first door. LOUD APPLAUSE as he looks around, puzzled, for Hardy.

LAUREL checks his watch, then decides to go and look for him - but once again at the precise moment he exits through his door HARDY enters through the other one. BIG LAUGHS.

The sketch builds through multiple exits and entrances, the split second timing impeccable, their reactions and expressions supremely skilful. As the sketch continues the laughter builds, the audience loving what they see. At one point they both exit the stage, then enter together. The CHILDREN in the audience are HOWLING, but LAUREL and HARDY 'don't notice' each other, turning in the wrong direction to look for each other and exiting together. A moment, then they enter again and walk smack bang into each other - bringing the house down. The audience is on it's feet APPLAUSE, CHEERS and CRIES ringing down. They beam in appreciation, blowing kisses as the curtain falls.

38

INT. BACK STAGE, PALACE THEATRE PLYMOUTH - NIGHT

38

As LAUREL and HARDY come offstage to huge applause, dripping with sweat, they turn to each other and from their expressions they know that tonight has gone well. Really well. DELFONT is in the wings waiting for them.

DELFONT

Gentlemen - we're back in business!
Well done, well done - we've turned
it around! I never doubted we
would...

HARDY

Your faith sustained us.

LAUREL

Our wives arrive next week Mr.
Delfont, we'd sure like to still
have a show when they get here.

DELFONT

Not only will you still have a
show, but it will be playing in
London!

HARDY

For real?

DELFONT

The Lyceum was free so I have
booked a two week run, beginning a
week on Sunday.

**

LAUREL

(Delighted)
The Lyceum?

**

DELFONT shakes both of their hands, vigorously.

DELFONT

Hearty felicitations - we must
celebrate!

He snaps his fingers and a STAGE HAND brings over a tray with two glasses of champagne on it; DELFONT hands them out.

LAUREL

(Taking his)

Thank you very much, our wives will be delighted. How about dinner tonight, on us?

HARDY

(Taking his)

That's a good idea. I'm having steak. A big, thick juicy steak smothered with onions.

LAUREL

I'm having the same as he's having. Except I want fish. And no onions.

DELFONT

(Smiling thinly)

Ha - yes let's do that. Can't make it tonight I've said I'll say hello to Danny Kaye after his show - huge fan of yours of course. But we *must* celebrate. We'll talk anon!

He leaves. On LAUREL and HARDY watching him go. A beat, then they turn to each other and HARDY holds up his glass:

HARDY

To us.

LAUREL smiles, and clinks his glass against Hardy's.

LAUREL

Bottoms up.

39

INT. TRAIN - DAY

39

LAUREL and HARDY read from scripts as they rehearse some lines from the movie.

LAUREL

You're on the log with Robin Hood and he asks what it is you want to see him about, and you say:

HARDY

(As 'Friar Hardy')

We're going to give him a piece of my mind, aren't we Stanley.

LAUREL

(As 'Stanley-A-Dale')

We sure are.

HARDY

(As 'Friar Hardy')

We'd give him a piece of his too,
but he doesn't have any to spare.

HARDY smiles at this, comes out of character.

HARDY (cont'd)

Yeh, that's a nice line.

(Beat, thoughtful)

Is this movie happening Stan?

LAUREL

(Taken off guard)

Yes. Of course it is. Why d'you ask
that?

HARDY

Oh... it's just that Lucille will
ask me about it, and I know you've
been struggling to get through to
Muff-

(He remembers)

-Miffin.

LAUREL

I'm meeting him next week, it's all
lined up.

HARDY

I mean, I'm enjoying how the show's
going, but... it's the movie we're
doing this for isn't it.

LAUREL

That's right - and then one thing
leads to another.

HARDY

Because we can't keep touring like
this forever, can we.

Before LAUREL can answer, a GUARD walks past their
compartment, calling out to passengers:

GUARD

London terminus, next and final
stop.

They look at each other, then get up, excitedly. They go out
into the corridor and pull down the window on the door so
they can lean outside. It's a bit of a squeeze, but - hair
blowing in the wind - they can see the unmistakable London
skyline fast approaching. With excited faces they shake
hands, delighted to have made it to the capital.

40 **EXT. SAVOY HOTEL, LONDON - DAY**

40

Next morning, LAUREL exits the hotel dressed in unfamiliar business attire (*smart overcoat and Homburg hat*), smiling and nodding to the BELL BOYS. He takes in the air, full of energy and expectation, then strolls off down the Strand.

41 **EXT. WEST END CINEMA - DAY**

41

Taxis and red buses weave past, with adverts for Bovril, Players cigarettes and Schweppes on the side. Men in hats and ladies in heels bustle along this busy corner of the west end. LAUREL walks along, (*to where we don't yet know*), then pauses to study a poster outside a cinema: '*Abbott & Costello Go To Mars*'. The blurb tells us they are 'Hollywood's No. One Comedy Duo'. This is the double act that has effectively replaced Laurel & Hardy in the affections of modern moviegoers. LAUREL looks at their young faces, the silver space suits, the shiny rocket, *the future...*

A MAN walks up and stands next to him, also to look at the poster. A few moments then LAUREL, aware of the MAN standing on his shoulder, turns to look at him. At the same time the MAN turns to LAUREL and gives him a polite smile. LAUREL goes to smile back but realises the MAN is tremendously boss-eyed - his eyes literally looking in opposite directions. LAUREL double takes. The MAN politely raises his hat, then walks away. OUT on LAUREL.

42 **EXT. STRAND TUBE STATION - DAY**

42

Wearing his beret, a smiling HARDY - full of the joys of life - strolls down the street singing softly to himself, humming some of the words he can't quite bring to mind:

HARDY

(*Singing*)

*Let me call you Sweetheart, I'm in
love with you*

*Let me hear you whisper that you
love me too*

*Keep the da-da hmm hmm in your eyes
so true*

*Let me call you Sweetheart, I'm in
love with you...*

He passes a little florist's stall outside the tube station, is about to go down the stairs when he decides he's feeling so good he wants a buttonhole. He selects a red carnation and, with great delicacy, pulls a shilling from his wallet to pay for it. Back to the song, he hums and whistles as he carries on jauntily into the tube station, pinning the carnation to his lapel as he goes.

43 **EXT. WEST END - DAY**

43

LAUREL strides up to a building with brass business plates outside, checks the address against a slip of paper, enters.

44

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION - DAY

44

LAUREL removes his hat and approaches the RECEPTIONIST, an insipid-type, mid-20s.

LAUREL

I'm here to see Mr. Miffin.

RECEPTIONIST

And your name please?

LAUREL

Mr. Laurel.

She starts to write everything down.

RECEPTIONIST

Do you have an appointment Mr.
Lauren?

He doesn't pick her up on mispronouncing his name.

LAUREL

We keep missing each other on the
telephone so I thought if I dropped
by that would be the easiest thing.

RECEPTIONIST

Because he's not here right now.

LAUREL

(Beat, thinks about this)
That's okay, I can wait. I think
I've been speaking to another girl
on the telephone about this - I've
been speaking to her for a while?

RECEPTIONIST

She's left. Are you sure you want
to wait? He may be quite a while?

LAUREL

Well, I'm here now aren't I.

RECEPTIONIST

Take a seat over there Mr. Lauren-
(Indicates a row of
chairs)
-I'll let his office know you're
here.

He still doesn't pick her up on the name thing. As she makes
an internal call he sits down. He looks over to a door at the
far end of the reception area. Another closed door.

45 **EXT. JEWELLERS, BURLINGTON ARCADE - DAY** 45

A tray of diamond bracelets are removed from a shop window.

46 **INT. JEWELLERS, BURLINGTON ARCADE - DAY** 46

The tray is set down by a (male) ASSISTANT in front of HARDY.
The ASSISTANT indicates a bracelet in the middle of the tray.

ASSISTANT

A beautiful piece sir.

HARDY looks at it, but his eye is taken by one above it which
is much, much classier with alternating diamonds and rubies.

ASSISTANT

Mr. Laurel not with you today?

HARDY, preoccupied, answers without looking up:

HARDY

Oh he's just got himself a new job,
mending broken biscuits.

The ASSISTANT laughs.

ASSISTANT

I think it's wonderful you're still
going.

HARDY

Rigor mortis hasn't set in just yet-

He points to the expensive bracelet.

HARDY (cont'd)

-I'm very taken with this one?

The ASSISTANT takes it from the tray and lays it out on a small patch of velvet cloth.

ASSISTANT

One of our best pieces, diamonds and rubies set in a gold bracelet.

HARDY

My wife's arriving from overseas today and it's a gift, you see.

ASSISTANT

It's the most expensive item on the tray. One hundred and fifty pounds.

HARDY smiles at him.

HARDY

Pardon me for just a moment.

He takes his wallet from his back pocket, turns away from the ASSISTANT, opens it and counts through the notes inside with his fingers. He doesn't have enough. Not nearly. A thoughtful frown for a moment, then he turns back to the ASSISTANT:

HARDY (cont'd)

I wonder if you could just hold it for me and I'll be right back with the full amount...

(Motions 'hurrying feet' with his fingers)

... 'tout suite'.

47

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION - DAY

47

LAUREL, patient as ever, is still being kept waiting. He catches the eye of the RECEPTIONIST and gives her a familiar ruffle of his hair into a mad quiff. But this produces no response - she simply thinks him rather odd. So he tries something else: putting his hat back on, he puts his finger in his mouth and blows it like it's a valve. He can see the RECEPTIONIST trying not to look, but finding herself wondering what on earth he's doing. He puts his finger in again and blows harder; by leaning the brim of his hat back slightly against the wall behind him, he makes it look as if his hat is lifting off his head. She watches this, but there's *still* no laugh - she just looks vaguely uncomfortable, embarrassed even. LAUREL gives up.

48

EXT. PHONE BOX - DAY

48

HARDY is in a public phone box making a call. The pips go and he inserts a coin to connect.

HARDY
 Concierge please...
 (Waits)
 Hello? Raymond..?
 (Listens)
 Ray it's Mr. Hardy from room 430-
 (Listens)
 -I'm very well thank you - now that
 discussion the other day about our
 four-legged friends...
 (Listens)
 Yes I wonder if you could speak to
 your man and place a bet for me...

He puts the phone in the crook of his neck, pulls out his wallet, and takes out a slip of paper with a name and meeting scribbled on it:

HARDY (cont'd)
 ... it's Hometown Boy, in the 2.30
 at Kempton. Five to one shot.

As he listens he opens his wallet again and counts with his fingers five of the ten pounds notes in there (*leaving another tenner and a fiver*).

HARDY (cont'd)
 Fifty.
 (Fingers the last tenner
 and the fiver)
 ... let's make that sixty.
 (Amount repeated to him)
 Yes sixty. On the nose.
 (Listens)
 Thank you so much. Yes, tally-ho to
 you too.

He hangs up and nods to himself, confident, certain.

49

INT. OFFICE RECEPTION - DAY

49

LAUREL is fixated on the closed door. Something snaps and he gets up and walks over to it. As he passes the RECEPTIONIST:

RECEPTIONIST
 Hello? Can I help you?

He ignores her, goes up to the door and knocks.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)
 I have asked you to wait...

LAUREL knocks again.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)
 -please you're not allowed in there-

LAUREL grips the handle, opens the door and strides into...

50

INT. MIFFIN'S OFFICE - DAY

50

... an empty office. Desk and chair, leather sofa facing; posters from various low budget British movies from the 40s and 50s on the walls. He looks around. Empty. From behind:

CYNTHIA (OOV)

You're here to see Mr. Miffin?

He turns round, sees CYNTHIA, 50s, glasses, a formidable-looking production executive, standing in the doorway.

LAUREL

Yes. Sorry, I... Yes.

CYNTHIA

I'm his production executive,
Cynthia Clarke.

LAUREL

Hello Cynthia.

CYNTHIA

Mr. Miffin is still detained, but I've just spoken to him on the telephone and he wanted me to explain the situation to you.

(LAUREL swallows)

He says he's sorry, but he's been unable to raise the finance needed to proceed with the film.

LAUREL

(Beat)

Oh... I see.

CYNTHIA

He said he made it clear in a cable he sent to you before you left the United States, that all the finance wasn't in place?

LAUREL

Yes but I thought he'd have it all lined up by now.

CYNTHIA

He wanted you to know that he did everything he could to bring the project together, but he feels sure you'll understand that the market is very challenging at the moment, and that it just wasn't possible.

LAUREL looks at her, crushed, as the enormity of what she's saying now starting to sink in. But he remains polite.

LAUREL

Yes. Thank you. Thank you very much
for your time...

51 **EXT. STRAND TUBE STATION - DAY**

51

HARDY - in coat and beret, cigarette hanging from his lips - hurries out of the tube station and makes for a newspaper vendor who is opening some bales of freshly-arrived evening papers. He pays for one, feverishly turns to the racing pages and scans the 'Stop Press'. He finds his race, and... he's lost. We see his bitter disappointment. He screws the paper up and is about to angrily hurl it into a litter bin when he sees some SCHOOL KIDS, in uniform, staring at him shyly. A beat, then he forces a smile, calmly drops the paper in the bin and flutters his tie at them.

52 **EXT. SAVOY HOTEL - DAY**

52

Late afternoon now. LAUREL and HARDY, each glum for different reasons, smoke cigarettes as they wait outside the hotel by the taxi rank. The boys savour deep puffs, as if their last. HARDY'S attention is caught by a NEWSREEL CREW setting up to cover the entrance. He looks puzzled...

LAUREL

Delfont's idea, thought the girls
arriving would be a good excuse for
some free publicity.

(Beat)

I'm sure lookin' forward to seeing
them again.

HARDY

I been countin' the days.

LAUREL

Forty six.

(HARDY looks at him,
puzzled)

Since we got here. Forty six days.

(HARDY still puzzled)

I thought you said you been
countin' them?

HARDY

I just meant the last few. Seven or
eight.

LAUREL

Oh.

HARDY

Not forty six. Who counts from
forty six?

LAUREL shrugs, blankly.

HARDY

You know, I been thinking... they don't need to know about everything we been doing, do they? Like, for instance, all the personal appearances...

LAUREL

No sense in getting them all worked up.

HARDY

In a way, it's a kindness keeping them in the dark.

LAUREL

It certainly is.

HARDY

Well that's settled. We'll just talk about how well the tour's going.

(Afterthought)

And the movie.

LAUREL can't bring himself to break it to Hardy - not yet.

LAUREL

Yeh. The movie.

LAUREL takes another deep puff on his cigarette. He glances over to the MOVIE TONE CREW and an idea forms:

LAUREL (cont'd)

Hey, if the car pulls up there-

(Indicates in front of them)

-maybe we can do the door thing?

HARDY

Will you give it a rest Stan?

A limousine sweeps up to the front of the hotel.

LAUREL

Here they are!

Like naughty schoolboys LAUREL and HARDY quickly throw their cigarettes away; the PHOTOGRAPHERS and NEWSREEL CREW spring into action. As the car pulls up in front of them LAUREL gives HARDY a look and he reluctantly nods, 'okay'. He goes to the side of the car nearest the wall and from there opens the rear door whilst LAUREL goes to the other side of the car and opens that. LAUREL leans in and in the back are LUCILLE HARDY, a pretty, unfussy Southern belle, 40s, and Laurel's wife IDA, same age glamorously dressed, of Russian descent. He gives IDA a kiss:

LAUREL (cont'd)
Hiya sweetie pie. Girls, can you
both get out this side - I got
something I want to do.

IDA
(Thick Russian accent)
Of course dahling, where do you
want me? I give them my good side.

LUCILLE isn't as thrilled at the idea of a bit of 'business'
after her long journey-

LUCILLE
Oh no Stanley... we just got here?

-but she follows them out.

53

EXT. SAVOY HOTEL - DAY

53

BLACK AND WHITE NEWSREEL FOOTAGE: LAUREL leads IDA and
LUCILLE around the back of the limousine to HARDY'S side,
where their progress is blocked by his open door.

NEWSREEL COMMENTARY
Comedy duo Laurel and Hardy were
joined in London this week by their
wives. But even in a simple
situation like this, trouble just
seems to follow them around.

LAUREL feigns 'confusion'. What does he do now? We...

CUT TO:

HARDY waits by the door, with his back to LAUREL and the
GIRLS, wondering where they are.

NEWSREEL COMMENTARY (cont'd)
Oliver Hardy, Bachelor of Arts,
always seems to have the situation
under control... but somehow things
never seem to work out that way.

CUT TO:

LAUREL now leads the girls back round to the other side of
the limousine, takes them through the driver's compartment
and out Hardy's side, where HARDY 'jumps' in surprise and
gives the GIRLS a coy flutter of his tie in greeting. The two
couples hold hands and enter the hotel together, stopping by
the entrance for a cheery wave to camera.

NEWSREEL COMMENTARY (cont'd)
Yes they're reunited again, and now
everyone can start making up for
lost time.

For the camera HARDY takes LUCILLE'S hand and kisses it, then does the same to IDA. LAUREL kisses IDA'S hand then LUCILLE'S, and finally LAUREL offers HARDY his hand and HARDY kisses that too - before slapping it away in 'distaste'.

54

INT. SAVOY HOTEL - DAY

54

The two COUPLES enter the foyer.

HARDY

Did they get all that okay?

LAUREL

It was fine, it'll get a laugh.

LUCILLE

(Sarcastic)

Well I'm awfully glad about that I'm sure, but it would have been nice to say hello to my husband after eight weeks without immediately being pressed into one of your skits Stanley.

IDA

It was just small funny.

LUCILLE

Is that what it was.

55

INT. RESTAURANT, SAVOY - NIGHT

55

The LAURELS and HARDYS dine together, IDA and LUCILLE taking the opportunity to both dress glamorously.

LUCILLE

Can't we visit the Tower Of London? And Saint Paul's. And Harrods.

HARDY

Of course.

LUCILLE

And Buckingham Palace, where that darling new queen lives.

HARDY

Of course my angel, you can visit wherever you like.

IDA

Winter Palace at St. Petersburg, this is Palace. Buckingham is little dog house.

LUCILLE

To think of her in there, with all those rooms, and the soldiers outside looking after her. Isn't she's just the sweetest little doll?

LAUREL

What about if we knock on the door and ask for a cup of sugar?

LUCILLE

Don't you dare!

But then she laughs when she realises LAUREL is just kidding.

HARDY

You know, we been counting the days 'til you got here. All forty six of them.

LUCILLE

Oh Oliver, that is the sweetest thing.

HARDY can't look at LAUREL. He busies himself sprinkling more salt on his food.

LUCILLE (cont'd)

How's the movie coming along Stanley?

LAUREL

It's all set up, for when we finish the tour.

HARDY

The producer is this fellow called Muffin, and Stan's re-written the script for him, and then-

LUCILLE

Oliver that's enough salt.

HARDY immediately stops.

LUCILLE (cont'd)

You know it's bad for your blood pressure.

HARDY

Sorry honey, just force of habit. Anyway, the producer's going to come and watch the show next week isn't that right Stan?

LAUREL

Yeh, he said he'd try and get along.

LUCILLE wonders about this response. Why is he only going to 'try' to see them?

HARDY

And Stan's been looking after me wonderfully, making sure daddy takes all his tablets.

He kisses the ends of his fingers and blows them to her, like he always does.

LUCILLE

Has he been taking the blue ones Stanley?

LAUREL

Blue? I been giving him green ones.

LUCILLE

Green! Oh my goodness what are they?

She looks at HARDY, worried. He just smiles nervously.

HARDY

He's just kidding.

LUCILLE

(quietly to herself)
I'm not finding that funny.

HARDY secretly glares at LAUREL - *not the time or place to joke!* Suddenly, IDA announces:

IDA

I was dancer. I dance for Preston Sturges I dance for Harold Lloyd.

LUCILLE

(Rolling her eyes)
Really Ida? You've never mentioned this before?

IDA

When my knee hurt, I dance some more, I go faster, I jump high - and the hurt go away. I forget pain. Pain is only in your mind Oliver.

LUCILLE

It's not in his mind Ida, it's in his knee.

(MORE)

LUCILLE (CONT'D)

And there's no way Stanley, that he
can do the scene in this movie
where he falls into the river.

LAUREL shoots a glance to HARDY, who looks embarrassed.

HARDY

I was telling her about the script...

IDA

They can use double?

HARDY

That's what I told her.

IDA

Preston Sturges use double.

LUCILLE

And it's okay for him to sit about in a river all day is it, catching his death of cold? Honestly Stanley...

IDA

Why you keep say Stanley?

LUCILLE

What?

IDA

Anyway, show must go on. And don't worry about river jump, it's easy as cake.

HARDY

Easy as pie.

LAUREL

It's a piece of cake.

IDA

That's what's I say.

LUCILLE thinks about biting back, but decides against it. She places her cutlery on her plate, finished.

LUCILLE

Well, I'm ready for an early night. I'm pooped. And I don't suppose it'll do you boys any harm either - goodness knows what you've been getting up to while we were away.

IDA

(Wagging finger at LAUREL)
Yes. If I find out you been drinking and smoking oh boy, you in big trouble.

They both try to look innocent and offended.

56

INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

56

Back up in their room, LUCILLE is busy arranging flowers from a huge bunch Hardy has bought her, into a vase.

LUCILLE

Oh Oliver they're lovely, you
really know how to spoil me.

She looks to HARDY, who is lying on the bed watching her.

LUCILLE (cont'd)

I was so worried you were going to
go out and buy me something we
couldn't afford.

HARDY

In future I am only buying you things I don't have enough money for.

He tries to joke about it, but she can see he's downcast. She goes over to the bed, sits next to him.

LUCILLE

You don't have to buy me anything, you're everything I could ever want.

LUCILLE takes off her dressing gown and gets in bed with HARDY, who cuddles up to her, arms around her.

HARDY

This is what I've been waiting for.

LUCILLE smiles, squeezes his arm contentedly.

HARDY (cont'd)

Why are you interested in a fat old man like me?

This is clearly an old joke between them.

LUCILLE

Hey you, that's my husband you're talking about. I love you and you can't stop me.

LUCILLE shuts her eyes and tries to relax.

HARDY

How was the trip over with Ida?

LUCILLE

You know Ida, exhausting. When she gets something in her head she won't let it go 'til she's worried it to death, and God forbid anyone should raise the slightest criticism of Stanley.

Hardy laughs.

LUCILLE (cont'd)

Has he been pushing you too hard Babe?

HARDY

(Tired sigh)

Well, it's more difficult than I first thought.

HARDY closes his eyes. She looks at him, worried how hard he's pushing himself. She strokes his forehead.

57

INT. BAR, SAVOY HOTEL - NIGHT

57

LAUREL finishes making an order at the hotel bar and comes back to sit with IDA at a table.

IDA

Oliver is like cat on hot roof with Lucille. She wear pants in Hardy house.

LAUREL

He's been like that with all his wives. Jumps around after them the whole time, trying to please them.

IDA

You can learn this.

LAUREL smiles.

LAUREL

But she's been good for him, considering the state he was in.

(Thinks about this)

That we were both in.

(Turns to IDA)

But now we don't smoke and we don't drink and we're much happier.

IDA

He should say 'thank you' to you, for all you do for him. You could have said long time ago, 'goodbye Oliver'.

LAUREL

That's all in the past, where it should stay.

A WAITER brings them over cups of coffee each and also places a Scotch in front of LAUREL.

LAUREL (cont'd)

Thank you.

IDA

Are you crazy! Take it back.

LAUREL

(To WAITER)

It's okay.

(To IDA)

I'm not going to drink it...

LAUREL holds the tumbler up to his nose:

LAUREL (cont'd)

I just wanted to smell it.

LAUREL breathes in the aroma of the Scotch

IDA
Bad for diabetes.

But LAUREL continues to toy with it. Annoyed, IDA snatches it from him and downs it in one.

IDA (cont'd)
Now you can't drink.
(Beat)
I don't want to lose you Stanley.

He puckers up and she gives him a kiss.

LAUREL
And nobody even knows you're really
a man.

She gives him a weary smile and a little shove.

58 **EXT. PALLADIUM THEATRE, LONDON - NIGHT** 58

To establish the boys' opening night in London, their names up in lights outside the iconic London Palladium, the country's premier theatre.

59 **INT. BACKSTAGE PALLADIUM THEATRE, LONDON - NIGHT** 59

Backstage, almost ready to start the show. HARDY paces about, nervous. LAUREL, checking the paper clips on his cuffs, peers out through a crack and this time sees the auditorium is packed. He allows himself a smile. He checks - no heels on his boots.

60 **INT. AUDITORIUM, PALLADIUM THEATRE - NIGHT** 60

DELFONT, all hand-squeezes and big smiles, takes his seat next to LUCILLE and IDA just in time for the start. He looks about, very happy.

DELFONT
A sell out!

The house lights dim and the orchestra strikes up '*The Dance Of The Cuckoos*'.

LAUREL walks out on stage followed by HARDY. HARDY turns, looking to the applauding audience, but LAUREL continues into the wings on the other side of the stage. HARDY gestures for him to come back onto the stage. LAUREL slowly walks out, pretending to argue with someone in the wings.

A lone guitarist picks out the intro to *'Trail Of The Lonesome Pine'*. The BOYS sing together in harmony:

HARDY

(Singing)

*On a mountain in Virginia
stands a lonesome pine
Just below is the cabin home
of a little girl of mine
Her name is June and very, very
soon she'll belong to me
For I know she's waiting there for
me 'neath that lone pine tree*

LAUREL AND HARDY

*In the blue ridge mountains of
Virginia
On the trail of the lonesome pine
In the pale moon shine our hearts
entwine
Where she carved her name and I
carved mine
Oh, June like the mountains I'm
blue
like the pine I am lonesome for you
In the blue ridge mountains of
Virginia
On the trail of the lonesome pine*

Suddenly LAUREL hogs the vocal, singing in such an impossibly deep voice that HARDY is put off:

LAUREL

(Singing)

*In the blue ridge mountains of
Virginia
on the trail of the lonesome pine*

HARDY, annoyed, gestures to the wings and a STAGE HAND hurries on with a mallet for him. HARDY tests the weight with a few practice swings as LAUREL continues-

LAUREL

(Singing)

*In the pale moon shine our hearts
entwine
Where she carved her name and I
carved mine
Oh, June like the mountains I'm
blue
like the pine I am lonesome for
you...*

-at this precise moment HARDY whacks LAUREL on the head with the mallet. LAUREL looks like he might fall over, but as HARDY prepares to take over LAUREL now continues 'soprano':

LAUREL

(Singing)

*In the blue ridge mountains of
Virginia
On the trail of the lonesome
pine...*

He sways, then falls over with 'delayed' concussion. Big laughs all round.

61

DELETED

61

62

INT. BAR, PALLADIUM THEATRE, LONDON - NIGHT

62

LUCILLE and IDA have been left by themselves in a corner. DELFONT has arranged a little after-show party but is firmly with the money - variety club patrons LORD and LADY WARLEY and another well-heeled couple, the BROCKETT-SMITHS. Ever the attentive host he fills their glasses and laughs at their jokes - but has forgotten about the girls.

LUCILLE

I wonder when the boys will be up?

IDA

Why don't we ask for someone to go get them?

LUCILLE looks over to DELFONT.

LUCILLE

He seems a little preoccupied...
with his lords and ladies.

IDA

Come - we stand like lemon.

IDA heads for DELFONT and his GUESTS, LUCILLE follows.
DELFONT spots them approaching:

DELFONT

Ladies! I'm so sorry - I was just on my way over to ask what you wanted to drink. Mrs Laurel and Mrs Hardy, may I present Lord and Lady Warley and Mr. & Mrs Brockett-Smith.

General greetings between everybody.

LUCILLE

Did you enjoy the show?

LORD WARLEY

Yes very good, stuff and nonsense wasn't it.

On LUCILLE, not entirely sure this is a compliment?

LUCILLE

Mr. Delfont told us that you-

IDA

(Abruptly cuts across her)
I have many offers to perform on London stage, but Hollywood call me.

LORD WARLEY

You're an actress yourself?

LUCILLE

(Interjecting)
More of a dancer really. With a very high pain threshold.

IDA

I make film with Preston Sturges and Harold Lloyd. No time for London stage.

LUCILLE

And I'm sure the London stage has been kicking itself all these years-
(Looks around, desperate to get away)
I wonder where those boys are?

INT. DRESSING ROOM, PALLADIUM THEATRE LONDON - NIGHT

HARDY, full of energy, is on his feet, clutching his script. Still on a high from how well the show went, he (*and this time not Laurel*) has insisted on running lines from 'Robin Hood'. LAUREL, by contrast, sits at his dressing table finishing removing his make up. He is guilty, downcast, struggling with the knowledge that the movie has been canned - and that he hasn't yet told HARDY.

HARDY

This line Robin Hood has when he says he steals from the rich and gives to the poor - there's a gag in there somewhere Stan...

LAUREL

Babe, the girls are waiting. And Delfont's got some people he wants us to meet from his charity.

HARDY

We just gotta work it up some more. What day's Muffin comin' to watch the show?

LAUREL

He didn't say.

HARDY

He should have been here tonight. Went big tonight.

LAUREL decides that the time has finally come to tell the truth about the movie.

LAUREL

Babe, there's something I gotta tell you-

HARDY

(Suddenly stopping pacing)
How about we tell Robin Hood he's got it all wrong and he should steal from the poor and give to the rich? Or something like that?

LAUREL

The thing is...

LAUREL'S voice chokes. Is he still going to tell him?

HARDY

You can play around with that Stan, can't you?

LAUREL

Well, you see...

LAUREL had every intention of confessing all... but now that HARDY has planted this thought in his mind, the chance to create something takes over. As he thinks about the scene, slowly LAUREL'S expression changes from a frown to a smile.

LAUREL (cont'd)
How about, we give to the poor by
stealing from the poor, and cutting
out the middle man?

HARDY
That's it!

HARDY heads for the door, continuing as 'Friar Hardy':

HARDY (cont'd)
Stealing from the rich to give to
the poor - who ever heard of
anything so ridiculous?

As LAUREL follows him out we see that he has abandoned all thoughts of confessing - his creative juices are flowing.

64 **DELETED** 64

65 **INT. BACKSTAGE PALLADIUM THEATRE LONDON - NIGHT** 65

The BOYS make their way through the backstage area towards the (darkened) stage.

HARDY
('Friar Hardy')
It's obvious - steal from the poor,
and give to the poor, and thereby
cutting out the middle man.

LAUREL
('Stanley-A-Dale')
And the rich need never be any the
wiser.

HARDY
('Friar Hardy',
emphatically)
Precisely.

They emerge into the wings of the theatre. They continue their journey across the empty stage towards an exit at the side of the auditorium leading up to the bar - where they know everybody is waiting for them.

HARDY (cont'd)
(Out of character)
That's great Stan, that's funny.

But as they cross the stage HARDY - still excited and animated - sees a couple of brooms and stops to pick one up. He throws LAUREL the other:

HARDY (cont'd)
Hey Stan, let's just play it
out/run through it. You be Robin
Hood.

He turns to face LAUREL.

HARDY (cont'd)
(As 'Friar Hardy')
I'm warning you now - let me pass.

HARDY takes a swipe over LAUREL'S head.

HARDY (cont'd)
('Friar Hardy')
I'm an expert at this...
(Tries the line
differently)
I have excellent staffing skills.
(Tries for a better line)
I am noted for my staff play.

LAUREL
(As Stan)
I've got great stick work.

HARDY
(As 'Friar Hardy')
I'm warning you, I've got great
stick work.

HARDY swipes at LAUREL'S legs, he steps over it.

LAUREL
(As Stan)
Then one more swish underneath -
Robin Hood will jump.

LAUREL positions himself behind HARDY, as if standing on the
log behind him.

LAUREL (cont'd)
And I'm standing behind you, I tap
you on the shoulder and say "watch
he doesn't hit you on the leg"
(Getting into it)
And then he cracks you one-

LAUREL mimes crashing his 'staff' across HARDY'S head. HARDY
howls in pain and gingerly touches his sore skull.

CUT TO:

LUCILLE and IDA enter through a side entrance into the stalls
and - unseen in the dark by their husbands - quietly approach
the stage, watching all the time.

CUT TO:

LAUREL hurries back to HARDY'S side, becoming 'Stanley-A-Dale' again, and they start a shoving match.

LAUREL (cont'd)
-and because I laugh, you get mad
and take a swing at me and I duck
and you unbalance and fall off the
log into the river-

HARDY
(Out of character)
Give me a hand here Stan.

LAUREL helps HARDY by holding his arm as - with great difficulty - he lowers himself to the ground.

CUT TO:

LUCILLE watches, appalled, about to say something but holding back for now. IDA is, again, engrossed in the sketch.

CUT TO:

LAUREL

So you're down there in the water,
and you look into the lens-

HARDY mimes wiping his eyes and spitting out some water-

LAUREL (cont'd)

-then you feel something wiggling
about inside your cassock and you
reach inside and pull out a great
big salmon-

HARDY mimes feeling a fish flapping around inside his cassock and pulls it out. He looks up at LAUREL-

LAUREL (cont'd)

-and I just go-

LAUREL spreads his hands in a helpless gesture.

LAUREL (cont'd)

"I didn't put it there" -and then
I'll give you a line from there to
finish, and that's the scene.

A silence, then LUCILLE speaks up from the stalls:

LUCILLE

Stanley he's not going to fall into
that river and that's all there is
to it.

They both turn to look at her. She is angry, determined.

66

INT. CORRIDOR/BAR, PALLADIUM THEATRE - NIGHT

66

LAUREL and HARDY and LUCILLE and IDA approach the bar, HARDY still trying to calm LUCILLE down:

HARDY

Come on honey, if the script says I
fall in the river, that's what I
have to do.

(Suddenly remembers)

It's historical - right Stan?

LAUREL is plunged back into his guilty secret - and now Babe and Lucille are arguing about something that he knows won't be happening. Delfont's drinks party is in full swing - lots of furs and tuxedos on show - and as LAUREL and HARDY enter DELFONT throws his arms out grandly:

DELFONT

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Stan
Laurel and Mr. Oliver Hardy!

Everybody breaks into applause; the BOYS acknowledge this, embarrassed. They exchange another of their tiny, private nods - compelled, in spite of the situation, to offer a little bit of business. HARDY steps forward to address everybody formally, LAUREL alongside him:

HARDY

Well, Stan and I would just like to express how very pleased and humbled we are to meet you all-

LAUREL taps his shoulder like he wants to say something.

HARDY (cont'd)

Would you be quiet for a moment-

(Back to GUESTS)

Mr. Delfont has told us about the wonderful work you do for deserving causes-

(LAUREL taps again)

I am trying to speak to the honoured guests-

(Back to GUESTS)

And we're looking forward to saying hello to everybody here tonight in person-

(LAUREL taps again and he snaps)

What do you want!

LAUREL

You're standing on my foot.

Laughter. DELFONT beaming that the boys have done a little routine for everybody:

DELFONT

Two wonderful legends of comedy, thank you so much gentlemen.

A round of applause which allows everybody to return to their private conversations. As LAUREL turns back to IDA he grabs - without thinking - a glass of champagne from a WAITER:

IDA

(Sternly)

Stanley.

He hands it to her and she drinks it.

LAUREL

I think we got something here - the more I drink, the drunker she gets.

HARDY takes a glass of champagne for himself and LUCILLE, but she refuses hers, obviously still worked up. IDA watches this.

HARDY

Won't you loosen up angel? *

IDA

Yes loosen. This movie could be big break for boys. *

LUCILLE

A big break? Oh please... Oliver is sixty one years old. He's made a hundred and fifty films. *

HARDY, embarrassed with how loud she's speaking, tries to 'Sssh' her. She lowers her voice but is getting really angry:

LUCILLE (cont'd)

And please tell me how can they be a matter of weeks away from making this movie and *still* not had any shooting dates confirmed Stanley? This is just such a ridiculous situation.

IDA feels compelled to defend her husband.

IDA

Maybe ridiculous, but situation is not Stanley's fault. *

LAUREL

Ida please let's just go back to the room. *
*
*

LUCILLE

Whose fault is it then Ida? What are you trying to insinuate?

HARDY

(Trying to calm things)
Oh come on now-

LUCILLE

No, I'd like to know how this-
(Lowers her voice)
Nuttier tour which, let's face it, they're only doing for the money, is anything to do with Oliver? *
*
*

All eyes on IDA. *
*

IDA

Because Oliver make elephant film.

Nobody knows what to say, she has - literally - referred to the elephant in the room. A horrified silence. At this precise moment DELFONT brings over LORD and LADY WARLEY.

DELFONT

Gentlemen may I introduce two huge fans of yours, Lord Angus and Lady Mary Warley.

LORD WARLEY

My wife loves your films, I don't really watch them. I remember the one about the piano though. You pushed it up those stairs didn't you.

(to LADY WARLEY)

Have you seen that one?

LADY WARLEY

No.

LORD WARLEY

It's very good they push this piano up the top of the stairs you see, and it's a long way, it goes all the way to the top, and then the bloody thing goes all the way down to the bottom again. And then you've got to push it all the way back up and would you believe it goes down to the bottom again?

HARDY

Yes, that's what happened.

LADY WARLEY

Was the piano damaged?

HARDY

Would you excuse us for a moment?

HARDY steers LAUREL away.

DELFONT

(To LUCILLE and IDA)

Now I'm being a terrible host - won't you please come and have a few nibbles from the buffet before it all goes?

LORD WARLEY

They've got langoustines. Haven't seen a langoustine since 1939.

LUCILLE and IDA allow themselves - reluctantly - to be led away by DELFONT.

CUT TO:

HARDY has found a quiet corner where he and LAUREL can talk alone.

HARDY

What was that Ida said about the elephant film? Are you still carrying that around with you?

LAUREL

Oh you know how it is, sometimes I just like to let off a little steam. She doesn't really know what she's sayin'.

HARDY

Well that's obviously what you think, because you're still talking about it with her.

LAUREL

This is a load of baloney - It's just too silly for words.

HARDY

You think this is all my fault because I went off and did a movie with someone else sixteen years ago? Is that what you think? You weren't there any more. You left the studio.

LAUREL

I was fired.

HARDY

Because you were a pain in the ass. You wouldn't negotiate with Hal. I was under contract, I had to do that movie without you.

LAUREL

Well, that's not how I see it.

HARDY

How do you see it Stan?

LAUREL

Well, if we're puttin' our cards on the table, the only reason we're in this situation is because when I was trying to get a better deal with Hal you were nowhere to be seen.

HARDY

I had no choice and you know it. I was broke.

LAUREL

You did have a choice. You chose to spend your time at the country club or the race track.

HARDY

We had a good thing going with Hal but you had a big chip on your shoulder because you weren't being treated like Chaplin.

LAUREL

You're damn right. And you didn't have the guts to ask for what we deserved. I'm getting a drink.

CUT TO:

LUCILLE and IDA are walking around the buffet choosing bits of food for themselves.

LUCILLE

Look Ida, I don't want to fight, I just want to do what's best for Babe.

IDA

Oliver agreed to tour. Life is not easy - it does not come on dinner plate.

LUCILLE

Are you implying that Oliver and I aren't hard working?

IDA

(Shrugs)

You live in Hollywood.

LUCILLE

So do you and Stan!

IDA

I may live in Hollywood but I am not Hollywood.

LUCILLE

You are the epitome of Hollywood.

IDA misunderstanding.

IDA

Don't you pity me.

LUCILLE rolls her eyes at IDA'S confusion. *

IDA (CONT'D) *
I've worked my whole life to get *
where I am. *

LUCILLE *
Well, I had a job. *

IDA *
(Dismissive) *
Yes, script lady. *

LUCILLE *
How's your acting career? *

LORD WARLEY *
(OOV, from behind) *
Aren't they marvellous... *

LUCILLE and IDA turn around to see LORD WARLEY behind them, *
getting some food for himself. *

LORD WARLEY (CONT'D) *
They just never stop do they. *

He gestures to LAUREL and HARDY, gesticulating at each other *
animatedly. And, yes, from a distance it really does look *
like they are in a sketch. *

LORD WARLEY (CONT'D) *
So funny... *

CUT TO: *

HARDY is rubbing his painful knee as LAUREL continues: *

HARDY *
Look, if you want to accuse me of *
trying to get along with people *
then I'm guilty. I'm an actor. I do *
want people to like me, I want *
people to hire me. *

LAUREL *
You wouldn't say boo to a goose. *
Everybody loves Babe. Go and play a *
round with Babe - while I'm *
sleeping on a couch in the editing *
suite. *

HARDY *
That's the way you wanted it. You *
cared about that stuff. I didn't. *

LAUREL

You can't have - or you wouldn't have gone off and worked with somebody else. I couldn't sleep for days when they told me what you'd done.

HARDY

And I couldn't sleep when I did it.

LAUREL

But you still did it. You betrayed me, you betrayed our friendship.

HARDY

Friendship? We're only friends because Hal Roach put us together. And the only reason we stayed together was because the audience wanted it. I have real friends and yes, we play golf together and we go to ball games and we have sauerkraut with our bratwurst.

LAUREL

People will remember our films long after you've finished your hotdog. You know something? You're just plain lazy Babe, and you're dead lucky because you met me.

HARDY

Lucky!? To spend my life with a hollow man who hides behind his typewriter? You're not a real person Stan. You're hollow. You're empty.

LAUREL

I loved us.

HARDY

Well, you may have loved us, but you never loved me.

LAUREL

So what.

HARDY takes the beret LAUREL gave him from his pocket and throws it at him. It hits him in the chest and lands on the floor. HARDY starts to leave. LAUREL picks up a bread roll, looks at it, he throws it -

CUT TO:

- the bread roll hitting HARDY on the back of the head. He turns to look at LAUREL, HARDY's expression: 'Really?' Keeping his dignity, he decides not to retaliate, and he and LUCILLE exit.

*
*
*
*

We hear a smattering of applause. We CUT to see they have had an audience.

*
*

LORD WARLEY

Bravo.

*
*

IDA approaches LAUREL.

*
*

67

INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

67

HARDY is cooking hot dogs in their tin (*from his stash*) over the fire in his room. LUCILLE sits at a dressing table brushing her hair, getting ready for bed.

LUCILLE

What are you going to say to him?

HARDY

Nothing. I have nothing to say.

68

INT. LAUREL'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

68

LAUREL and IDA sit next to each other on the bed.

IDA

You are in big demand always. Maybe Oliver hold you back... Maybe you don't need him anymore?

LAUREL

(Beat)
You're right.

69

INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

69

HARDY sits at the table eating his hot dogs; LUCILLE is at the table with him but doesn't eat anything.

LUCILLE

Oliver, I would go to the ends of the earth for you, I would do anything for you, but I won't stand by and watch Stanley put you in a wooden box and nail the lid shut. There, I've said it. I'm sorry, but it's true.

HARDY appears to come to a momentous decision.

HARDY

You know, you're absolutely right.
(Bite of hot dog)
Just as soon as we've finished up here-

70

INT. LAUREL'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

70

It's like LAUREL finishes his sentence:

LAUREL

-as soon as we've finished our commitments here, that's it. It's over-

71

INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

71

Now HARDY finishes Laurel's sentence:

HARDY

-I'm done with him, once and for all.

72

INT. FOYER, SAVOY HOTEL - DAY

72

Next morning. LAUREL walks up to the CONCIERGE.

CONCIERGE

Your taxi is outside Mr. Laurel.

LAUREL

(Looking around)
Have you seen Mr. Hardy at all?

CONCIERGE

He left about fifteen minutes ago sir.

LAUREL

He did? By himself?

OUT on LAUREL.

73 **EXT. HOLIDAY CAMP, WORTHING - DAY**

73

A classic 50s holiday camp. HOLIDAYMAKERS sit round a pool or on the grass eating sandwiches. An open-air stage has been set up in front of the pool, a little band to one side. A banner tells us a 'Bathing Beauty Contest' will be judged 'in person' by 'Laurel and Hardy'. The turn-out is impressive.

74 **INT. TENTED AREA - DAY**

74

A tented back stage area: LAUREL enters to find HARDY already seated at the far end of the tent, avoiding his gaze.

LAUREL

Why d'you leave without me?

HARDY doesn't answer. An ORGANIZER enters at Hardy's end.

ORGANIZER

Is there anything I can get you gentlemen?

HARDY

Would you be so kind as to get me a cup of tea.

There are some tea things on a table by LAUREL.

ORGANIZER

Of course.

LAUREL gets up and starts to pour himself a cup:

LAUREL

I'll do it.

HARDY

(To ORGANIZER)

Thank you, if it's all the same I'd rather you did it.

For a split second she is confused, then works out that all is not well between the boys.

ORGANIZER

Of course.

She goes over to the tea things and pours a cup out for him.

HARDY

Milk and four sugars please.

The ORGANIZER stirs in the sugar, takes the tea up to HARDY and hands it to him.

HARDY (cont'd)

Thank you so much.

ORGANIZER

Well I think it's amazing that you
two are still going strong, still
doing the same old material.

A back-handed compliment, if ever there was one.

LAUREL

Thank you.

HARDY

(Looking in a different
direction)

Thank you.

She notes how the two men are obstinately and frostily turned away from each other as they sip their tea.

75 DELETED 75

76 EXT. HOLIDAY CAMP, WORTHING - DAY 76

But now, in public, LAUREL and HARDY are a picture of (on-stage) friendship and togetherness, seated at the judge's table as a line up of BATHING BEAUTIES files past them. Slipping into stage 'business' with practised ease, HARDY does a lot of simpering and twiddling of his tie to the GIRLS; but when LAUREL does a goofy smile and waves to one of them an 'annoyed' HARDY slaps him down. Laughter - it all seems to be going well.

77 INT. TENTED AREA - DAY 77

Late afternoon, the sun starting to set. LAUREL and HARDY are to the side of the stage, at the bottom of some steps, out of view of the audience - and once again ignoring each other. On stage PHOTOGRAPHERS snap away as the three beauty contest FINALISTS parade for the crowd. Eventually:

LAUREL

I was talking to this fella about eggs... I know you're interested in eggs. He said they get dried powder to supplement the ration.

(HARDY ignores him)

You get a packet a month, same as twelve eggs. Doesn't taste too good, but you can make omelettes with it.

(Still no answer)

That's what he said.

HARDY

I have nothing to say.

LAUREL

Well I have nothing to say to you either. And you can forget what I just said 'cos I won't be repeating it.

HARDY

Good.

LAUREL

Good.

LAUREL gets a nod from the ORGANIZER, cutting the conversation short. A moment, then he bounds up a few steps onto the temporary stage. HARDY goes to follow him but pauses on the steps. LAUREL takes the microphone to enthusiastic APPLAUSE.

LAUREL (cont'd)

Hello everybody. Mr. Hardy and I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome today here in Worthing, one of my favourite seaside towns...

Applause. He sees HARDY, still on the steps.

LAUREL (cont'd)

Don't forget we're appearing next week at the Lyceum...

**

He looks to HARDY, waiting for him to join him - but he doesn't move.

LAUREL (cont'd)

Tickets still available.

Weak laughter.

LAUREL (cont'd)

Well all that remains is to crown today's lovely winner-

The ORGANIZER hands him an envelope, then the winner's tiara. LAUREL gives him back the envelope so he can take the tiara - realises he doesn't have the envelope so gives him the tiara so he can take back the envelope. All good business and he's getting laughs, but still HARDY doesn't join him.

LAUREL (cont'd)

(Harsh whisper)

Will you quit sulkin'?

But HARDY just doesn't move. LAUREL opens the envelope.

LAUREL (cont'd)

And the winner is...

The BAND strikes up a fanfare; LAUREL looks to HARDY, sure that he will now grab the envelope from him and read out the winner's name himself. But HARDY stares ahead, glazed eyes, then sways and with a last, anguished look to LAUREL, loses consciousness - *for real*. He slumps down the steps and slides to the ground below. At first the crowd assumes it's part of the act and laughs - but when LAUREL jumps down off the stage to tend his friend the mood becomes fearful and the music stops. A couple of REDCOATS push the crowd back.

LAUREL (cont'd)

Give him some air - please!

LAUREL helps HARDY into the recovery position.

LAUREL (cont'd)

What is it Babe - what is it?

HARDY
I felt faint Stan... like somebody
turned the lights out.

78 **EXT. SAVOY HOTEL, LONDON - NIGHT** 78

A taxi pulls up outside the hotel and the TAXI DRIVER hurries round to help LAUREL get HARDY - who looks absolutely terrible - from the back of the cab.

79 **INT. SAVOY HOTEL, LONDON - NIGHT** 79

LAUREL and the TAXI DRIVER get HARDY inside.

LAUREL
(To TAXI DRIVER)
Thank you so much, I can take it
from here with the Bell Boys.

Watched with great amusement by a couple of BELL BOYS, LAUREL goes to hand the TAXI DRIVER a half crown.

LAUREL (cont'd)
Thank you so much this is for you.

But he hands the TAXI DRIVER the money round the back of HARDY, whilst the TAXI DRIVER goes to receive it round the front. It's entirely accidental and quickly corrected, but the BELL BOYS assume it's a bit of impromptu entertainment.

TAXI DRIVER
(Now taking the coin)
Thank you sir.

The TAXI DRIVER leaves and LAUREL turns to the BELL BOYS.

LAUREL
Could you help me get Mr. Hardy up
to his room please, he's not
feeling too good.

But the BELL BOYS think it's a set up, and just smile at him. HARDY almost falls and LAUREL has to grab him quickly to keep him upright. The BELL BOYS just laugh - assuming this is more 'business'. LAUREL is getting desperate:

LAUREL (cont'd)
I need some help here!

The BELL BOYS look at each other - neither wanting to be the butt of what they assume will be a prank. One of them wiggles his tie at them, 'Hardy-style', waiting to be entertained.

LAUREL (cont'd)
No, I really...

But, exasperated, he sees they are not going to help him. And so - alone - LAUREL is forced to stagger across the foyer to the elevators, using all his strength to keep HARDY upright. As the elevator doors open and LAUREL eases HARDY inside, the BELL BOYS still think something's going to happen. LAUREL pokes his head out before the doors shut:

LAUREL (cont'd)
I really did need some help you know.

And the BELL BOYS fall about laughing. He pulls his head back in and the doors shut.

80

INT. CORRIDOR, SAVOY HOTEL - NIGHT

80

The seriousness of Hardy's condition, and the poignancy of LAUREL having to help his friend all by himself, is brought home as we see LAUREL struggling desperately to get a semi-conscious HARDY back to his hotel room, inching painfully along the corridor a step at a time until, finally, he manages to knock on his door. LUCILLE - in her dressing gown - opens it, sees the state HARDY is in and blanches.

LAUREL
He took a funny turn.

81

INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

81

LAUREL and LUCILLE get HARDY to the bed and lay him down.

LUCILLE
Oh my goodness...

LAUREL
We were about to go on stage and he said he wasn't feeling too well, and he sort of collapsed.

LUCILLE
Collapsed!

LUCILLE makes a grab for the phone.

LUCILLE (cont'd)
I need to get a doctor right now.

HARDY
(Weakly)
No doctor...

LAUREL
I got him back here as fast as I could.

LUCILLE

You should have taken him to a hospital - look at the state he's in-

LAUREL

I tried-

LUCILLE

(She gets through)
-yes hello this is Mrs Hardy in room 430 I need a doctor to attend to my husband right away please.
(Listens)
Mr. Oliver Hardy, yes.

As LUCILLE waits on the phone:

LAUREL

I'm really sorry Lucille.

LUCILLE

Thank you Stan, I'll take it from here...

LAUREL looks miserably at his stricken friend on the bed, LUCILLE on the phone. A moment then he turns and leaves, shutting the door behind him.

82 **INT. CORRIDOR, SAVOY HOTEL - NIGHT** 82

LAUREL walks along in a daze, all the worries of the world on his shoulders.

83 **INT. LAUREL'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT** 83

LAUREL sits on the edge of his bed, loosening his collar and tie, dumbstruck. IDA kneels at his feet, silently unlacing his shoes and taking them off for him. She looks up at him, knows there's nothing she can say.

84 **INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT** 84

A DOCTOR finishes listening to HARDY'S heart with his stethoscope. He listens intently, then removes the instrument from his ears and folds it up.

DOCTOR

I can get you admitted to hospital tonight-

HARDY

No!

LUCILLE

Oliver don't be ridiculous.

HARDY

(Weak, distressed)

I'm not going to hospital. I'm in the middle of a very important tour and we also have a movie scheduled to go into production. I just had a funny turn.

LUCILLE

Oliver please!

DOCTOR

Mr. Hardy I believe you've suffered a mild heart attack today. I also believe that there is some evidence of congestive failure.

LUCILLE

Oh dear God, I knew it-

DOCTOR

If you won't admit yourself to hospital here, I suggest you go home as soon as you possibly can to seek specialist treatment in the United States. You cannot possibly go on stage again in your current condition.

HARDY stares at him, dumbfounded.

85

DELETED

85

86

INT. RESTAURANT, SAVOY - DAY

86

LAUREL has met with DELFONT for breakfast. He toys with his food, no appetite; DELFONT again tucks in enthusiastically.

DELFONT

What's the latest?

LAUREL

Lucille won't let anybody near him.

DELFONT

So we can't expect him back any time soon?

LAUREL

I don't think so.

DELFONT

Shame, the advance London bookings are very strong. Everybody wants to see you. The show's a huge success.

LAUREL

It's not Babe's fault he got sick.

DELFONT

Of course not, of course not.

He cuts off a strategic slice of smoked salmon, wolfs it down. A few moment's silence, then DELFONT 'casually' changes tack.

DELFONT (cont'd)

Stanley am I right in thinking that before you teamed up with Oliver you worked with other partners?

LAUREL

Well, I had lots of different partners in Vaudeville yes, I once worked with Charlie Chaplin, but...

DELFONT

And of course Oliver made his elephant film with a different partner?

LAUREL

What's that got to do with anything?

DELFONT

Oh.. I don't know, random thought - there's a very popular double act here called Cook and Baker, I know them very well. Cook is the Hardy to Baker's Laurel, if you see what I mean.

(Takes a sip of orange juice)

I was just wondering whether you might not consider trying a couple of shows with Nobby Cook, just to keep things going until Babe can return?

LAUREL

You mean, go on without Babe?

DELFONT

No no. Silly idea.

DELFONT glances at LAUREL and can see he's got him thinking; that he's planted a seed.

87

INT. CORRIDOR, SAVOY HOTEL - DAY

87

LAUREL walks nervously up to Hardy's hotel room. He knocks. A moment, then LUCILLE answers. She looks at him coldly:

LUCILLE
Please don't tire him out.

LUCILLE grabs her bag and exits. LAUREL goes inside.

88

INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - DAY

88

HARDY is propped up in bed with pillows, looking pale. He sees LAUREL enter and gives him a weak smile. LAUREL takes his coat off, sits on the bed.

LAUREL

I got you a present.

He pulls two boiled eggs from his pocket and holds them out.

HARDY

Eggs?

It looks like Laurel is echoing the moment on stage when he visits Hardy in hospital - but he's perfectly serious.

LAUREL

I went down to the kitchen to see if they could spare any. Cost me three shillings each.

HARDY takes them, delighted.

HARDY

I'll have one now if I may.

He starts to peel the shell off one straight away; sees LAUREL looking enviously at the other one.

HARDY (cont'd)

Go ahead.

LAUREL needs no further encouragement, and takes the other egg, also starting to peel it.

LAUREL

I'll get you some more.

The two men peel the shell off their eggs contentedly.

LAUREL (cont'd)

Where's Lucille gone? She could have stayed, it was just a silly row about nothing the other day. Just... nothing.

(Beat)

I got something to tell you Ollie-

HARDY

(Overlapping)

I'm retiring.

LAUREL

-about the movie... what?

LAUREL falls silent, cut off in mid-sentence.

HARDY

The doctor's told me I can't go on
with the tour, and I've promised
Lucille I won't.

LAUREL stares at him - no words will come out.

HARDY (cont'd)

So I'm retiring Stan. I've promised
Lucille and that's all there is to
it. I'm sorry.

LAUREL

I should never have made us take
this tour.

HARDY

Je ne regret rien. And you
shouldn't regret rien either.

LAUREL

Can't you rest, and then we can
start again when you're better?

HARDY

(Shakes his head)
He's told me my heart won't stand
it. I'm going back home as soon as
we can arrange a crossing.

A long beat. HARDY can see LAUREL'S finding this so
difficult. Both of them hold their half-finished eggs.

LAUREL

You're retiring...

HARDY

Yes. Retiring.

HARDY looks at his friend, his head down, clearly devastated.

HARDY (cont'd)

I know how much this tour, and...
doing the picture meant to you.

LAUREL

Oh that's... forgotten.
(Long beat)
You're retiring.

It's like he has to say it out loud again, as if this will
somehow change things. HARDY can see he's in distress.

HARDY

(Beat)
What have you been working on?

LAUREL

What?

LAUREL takes out a handkerchief from his pocket.

HARDY

What new scenes for the movie have you been working on?

LAUREL

(Loudly blows his nose)
Oh... nothing really.

HARDY gives LAUREL a hard stare. Silence. Finally LAUREL meets his gaze.

HARDY

Now aren't you ashamed of yourself?

LAUREL

What?

HARDY

Lying to me, your oldest and dearest friend, here on my sickbed.

LAUREL

I don't know what you mean?

HARDY

I haven't seen you for two days, and you're trying to tell me you haven't been working on any new material in that time?

A beat, then LAUREL has to smile.

HARDY (cont'd)

Come on then, out with it.

LAUREL

(Long beat)

I did think of this romantic scene. You're pining for Maid Marian, who has been holed up in the castle by the Sheriff of Nottingham-

LAUREL even feels sufficiently cheered to take another bite of his egg. Through a mouthful he continues:

LAUREL (cont'd)

-so we hear this sad violin music.

HARDY starts to hum some sad, sweet tune to LAUREL.

LAUREL (cont'd)

And it's all too much for you, and you begin to cry.

HARDY starts to look upset as he hums, wiping away a 'tear'.

LAUREL (cont'd)
And the tears begin to fall. And they fall pretty heavy, splashing down your cheeks... but I'm not upset one bit and I don't know what to do, but you're crying so much... so what I do is move a pot plant under you to catch them, so the plant gets a good watering, and it starts to grow like crazy...

HARDY slaps his thigh and laughs, LAUREL is thrilled.

HARDY
The props guys can fix me up so the tears are like two little waterfalls - it'll be a riot! That's great Stan, that'll go big.

As he laughs HARDY is gripped by another coughing fit; LAUREL quickly hands him a glass of water but HARDY has to find his breath first before he takes a sip; he slumps back against his pillow, exhausted.

HARDY (cont'd)
Can you get me another blanket, I feel so cold.

LAUREL grabs another blanket and throws it over him.

LAUREL
Your hands are like ice.

He gets under the blanket with him to warm him up, lying right next to him - *just like they did in their films.*

LAUREL (cont'd)
There, is that better?

The two men lie together happily side by side, each envisaging the 'pot plant' scene - but knowing they'll never get to perform it. A beat, then:

HARDY
Have you spoken to Delfont?

LAUREL
Yeh I saw him this morning.

They are both gazing up at the ceiling rather than at each other as they talk.

HARDY
What'd he say?

LAUREL

Well he didn't know you were retiring of course but he asked me, since you were sick, how I felt about carrying on the show with somebody else.

HARDY

Who?

LAUREL

English comedian, called Nobby Cook.

HARDY

That makes sense.

LAUREL

I haven't said I would yet.

HARDY turns to LAUREL.

HARDY

Why not? You didn't get sick.

(Beat)

It's for the best Stan.

LAUREL

Yes. Maybe it is.

HARDY returns to gazing at the ceiling.

HARDY

Well, that's it. I'm retiring, and you're going on with a new partner.

LAUREL

Yes. That's it.

OUT on the two of them in bed together, accepting the end.

89

INT. PALLADIUM THEATRE, LONDON - DAY

89

The auditorium is empty, a rehearsal in progress. Nobby COOK, 50s, not Hardy's size but a big, stout, northerner, is on stage lying on the bed in the hospital set we are now so familiar with. DELFONT brings LAUREL onto stage and introduces him to COOK.

DELFONT

Stanley can I introduce you to Nobby Cook, one of our finest music hall comedians.

COOK looks nervous, but LAUREL shakes his hand warmly.

LAUREL

Very pleased to meet you Nobby - I heard a lot of great things about you.

COOK

How do you do Mr. Laurel, I'm a big fan of yours - watched all your films.

LAUREL

Come on now, we'll have none of that - I'm Stan and you're Nobby. I'm looking forward to working with you.

COOK

Thank you very much, very nice of you to say so. How's Mr. Hardy?

LAUREL

Oh he's doing fine, and sends you his very best wishes.

COOK

That means a lot to me.

DELFONT

This is terrific. You two are going to be just terrific together...

DELFONT allows himself a satisfied smile. LAUREL is trying very hard to be positive.

DELFONT (cont'd)

Shall we have a run through?

COOK

If you like - it's up to Stan.

LAUREL

(Beat)

Why don't I go out and then come back in and we can run it from the top.

DELFONT

Good idea.

LAUREL walks back to the wings. He picks up a bunch of flowers and a paper bag that has been put there for him. He sees COOK readying himself in the hospital bed, his leg in the plaster cast which is then hoisted up on pulleys.

COOK

Beltin' this. Guaranteed laugh here Stan.

COOK gives LAUREL a smile and a thumbs up, which LAUREL returns, trying to reassure him. COOK then briefly runs some lines in his head, saying them quietly to himself:

COOK

What have you got there? Hard
boiled eggs and nuts. Hard boiled
eggs and nuts? Don't be so daft!
What's the matter with you - you
know I can't eat them...

As we see LAUREL listening to him, we see he's as uncomfortable about this as Hardy was all those years ago...

DELFONT (OOV) (cont'd)
Okay and... cue Stanley!

90 **INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT** 90

LUCILLE feeds HARDY, laid up in bed, some soup from a bowl - like he's a sick child.

91 **EXT. PALLADIUM THEATRE, LONDON - NIGHT** 91

That same poster tells us that 'Hollywood's Greatest Comedy Couple' are appearing; but a pasted-on banner strip reads: 'Tonight featuring Nobby Cook - the Lancashire Hot-Pot'...

92 **INT. DRESSING ROOM, PALLADIUM THEATRE, LONDON - NIGHT** 92

LAUREL is alone in his dingy dressing room, applying his usual pancake-white make up. Something causes him to pause for a moment, deep in his thoughts. Under this we hear:

GUARD (V.O.)
Open up - we know they're in there!

MAID MARIAN (V.O.)
Quick, hide...

93 **INT. CASTLE - DAY [ROBIN HOOD 'MOVIE']** 93

A door is smashed open and half a dozen GUARDS burst in.

GUARD
Where are they?

MAID MARIAN
I don't know what you're talking about.

One of the others attracts the GUARD'S attention, nodding to a curtain with two sets of feet poking out from the bottom. The GUARDS gesture amongst themselves to 'sshhh' and creep over to the curtain. Two of them draw swords, and...

GUARD
A-ha! A-ha! So you think you can play that game do you-

-they both stab viciously through the curtain at chest height. A moment's confusion, then they pull the curtain back to reveal LAUREL (Stanley-A-Dale) and HARDY (Friar Hardy) on their knees looking up at them, shoes tucked under them like Toulouse-Lautrec. [Note: the boys are physically in their prime, just like they looked in 'Way Out West'].

94 **INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT** 94

HARDY, now alone in bed, smiles, as if thinking to himself of the same piece of material. Under this we hear:

HARDY (V.O.)

We're on our way to give him a piece of my mind, aren't we Stanley?

LAUREL (V.O.)

We sure are.

HARDY (V.O.)

We'd give him a piece of his too, but he doesn't have any to spare.

95

EXT. SHERWOOD FOREST - DAY [ROBIN HOOD 'MOVIE']

95

And there are LAUREL and HARDY, standing on one end of a log across a river running through the forest, attempting to cross. ROBIN HOOD blocks their way. HARDY is dressed as 'Friar Hardy' in a cassock, his hair in a monk's tonsure; LAUREL is standing next to him, as 'Stanley-A-Dale' with a feather in his hat. Again it's the 'Robin Hood' movie that didn't happen, brought to life in Laurel's imagination.

ROBIN HOOD

And what, pray tell, has Robin Hood done to inspire such wrath?

HARDY

Well, we've heard that he steals from the poor to give to the rich, isn't that right Stanley?

LAUREL

Isn't that stupid? That's just robbing Peter to pay Paul - he's got the whole thing the wrong way round.

HARDY

Exactly. Our idea, you see, is to give to the poor by stealing from the poor. And thereby cutting out the middle man.

LAUREL

The rich need never be any the wiser.

HARDY

Precisely. So, if you'd please stand aside we have important business afoot...

HARDY steps forward but ROBIN HOOD bars the way with his staff, jabbing him in the belly with it. They look at each other, sizing things up.

HARDY (cont'd)

*So that's the way you want to play
it?*

LAUREL

*Didn't you hear what he said about
his foot?*

HARDY

*I'm warning you, I've got great
stick work.*

*
*
*
*

*

HARDY takes a sudden swipe at ROBIN HOOD, who deftly avoids it; he tries another, same result. LAUREL positions himself behind HARDY and taps him on the shoulder.

*
*

LAUREL

Watch he doesn't hit you on the leg.

*
*
*

Then ROBIN HOOD brings his staff crashing down on HARDY'S head, snapping it in half. HARDY howls in pain, drops his staff, gingerly touching his skull. LAUREL, standing behind HARDY, starts to laugh. HARDY gets really annoyed with him because of this and punches him in the throat - making his tongue come out. LAUREL retaliates by punching HARDY on the nose; HARDY howls with pain, they get into a shoving match and HARDY ends up in the river.

*

He sits in the water, spits some out of his mouth, wipes his eyes. There's some heavy flapping from inside his cassock and he wriggles around until he pulls out a huge salmon and throws it away. He LOOKS TO CAMERA, full of utter frustration with what he has to put up with, then he looks up at LAUREL, on the log, staring at him blankly.

HARDY

Well, here's another nice mess you've gotten me into.

LAUREL spreads his hands, guilty face, beginnings of a 'cry'.

96 **INT. DRESSING ROOM, PALLADIUM THEATRE, LONDON - NIGHT** 96

LAUREL looks at his reflection in the mirror, his face old and tired. There are tears in his eyes.

97 **INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT** 97

On HARDY in bed, tears rolling silently down his cheeks. LUCILLE, her back to him as she writes a letter, chatters away oblivious.

LUCILLE

Isn't this so much nicer, all the worry gone, just you and I relaxing together. I spoke to mother today and she passes on her love, she's knitting you a scarf...

98 **INT. PALLADIUM THEATRE, LONDON - NIGHT** 98

A decent-sized audience is in for tonight's performance. DELFONT takes a seat next to IDA, ready for the show. The lights dim, the orchestra strikes up a breezy introductory number. DELFONT looks excited, eagerly anticipating this new partnership. IDA looks more nervous.

99

INT. BACKSTAGE, PALLADIUM THEATRE, LONDON - NIGHT

99

LAUREL, in costume, waits in the wings to go on, he looks through a crack in a curtain to check the size of the audience. We can see how anxious and troubled he is by what he is about to do. He turns, sees COOK getting into the hospital bed and having his foot encased in the comedy plaster cast.

As he turns to LAUREL, COOK strokes a little Hardy-style moustache he's been given by the make-up department:

COOK

What do you think Stan - I thought
I'd try and look the part?

LAUREL returns a nervous smile.

LAUREL

That's fine. That's fine.

LAUREL makes a cursory check of his heels and cuffs, trying to convince himself he's perfectly fine with this.

100

INT. PALLADIUM THEATRE, LONDON - NIGHT

100

DELFONT and IDA wait patiently for curtain up. And they wait... but it doesn't lift. Some restlessness in the audience. *What's going on?* Finally, after a few more moments, the orchestra stops and the THEATRE MANAGER walks out on stage into a spotlight.

THEATRE MANAGER

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid
due to circumstances beyond our
control tonight's performance has
been cancelled...

A large murmur of discontent. DELFONT looks around at the full house, in despair.

DELFONT

Cancelled!

IDA realizes straight away what has happened.

IDA

Oh Stanley...

101

DELETED

101

102

INT. SAVOY HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

102

IDA enters the bar. She sees LAUREL, by himself, a tumbler of Scotch in front of him, smoking a cigarette. She goes over to him, sits down next to him.

She gently takes his cigarette and stubs it out; and as before takes his Scotch and drinks it, to stop him drinking it.

*

LAUREL

(Beat)

When you watch our movies, nobody else in the stories knows us. And we don't know anybody either. It was just the two of us, the only thing we had was each other. And that was the way we wanted it.

(Beat, looks at her)

I love him Ida.

IDA looks at him and gently smiles. She nods, accepts his decision.

IDA

We go home?

LAUREL nods.

LAUREL

Don't tell Babe. Tell him I'm going to continue with the dates in Ireland... it'd upset him to think of me cancelling the tour.

(Beat)

I'm sorry my darling...

*

103

INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - DAY

103

LUCILLE brushes her hair in front of a mirror as she chats away to HARDY, who stares ahead, thoughtfully.

LUCILLE

... the doctor thinks you should be well enough to travel tomorrow, which is wonderful. Now I'm going to go down and see if there's any mail, and then the Laurels will be stopping by to say goodbye - I do hope it's not going to rain today when that wind gets up the chill cuts right through to the bone...

She stands up, final check of her appearance in the mirror-

LUCILLE (cont'd)
I won't be long papa.

She kisses him on the forehead and leaves. HARDY, lost in his thoughts, doesn't say a word.

104

INT. LAUREL'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - DAY

104

LAUREL sits in a chair, three packed suitcases nearby, ready to go downstairs. He concentrates gloomily on the door as IDA flits about picking up the last few bits from the room. Soon, when the Bell Boy comes through that door, it'll all be over.

IDA
You have money for Bell Boy?

LAUREL nods. He looks at the door. There's a knock.

IDA (cont'd)
Answer please I need bathroom. You give him five shillings only. No more.

As IDA disappears into the bathroom LAUREL hauls himself up with a sigh, fumbles through his pockets for change and opens the door... to find a fully dressed HARDY standing outside. He's pale and a little unsteady on his feet, but his eyes are clear and his expression determined. LAUREL looks at him, speechless.

105

INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - DAY

105

LUCILLE lets herself in.

LUCILLE
One of the Bell Boys down there, Raymond I think his name was, said to tell you he had a good tip for you on a horse...

She walks through to the bedroom.

LUCILLE (cont'd)
Have you been gambling Oliver Hardy?

She sees the empty bed, Hardy's crumpled pyjamas on it. And instantly, she knows what has happened.

106

INT. LAUREL'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - DAY

106

LAUREL and HARDY face each other over the doorstep. Finally, HARDY speaks:

HARDY

Come Stanley, I believe we have
some engagements to fulfil.

On LAUREL, a long beat. Then, he understands what this means. He and HARDY don't need to say any more, they just look at each other.

107 **INT. HARDY'S SAVOY HOTEL ROOM - DAY** 107

LUCILLE sits on the bed, upset but not angry. Deep down she knew this was inevitable.

108 **EXT. DECK, STEAMER - DAY** 108

The sun shines in a clear, bright sky but it's bracing up on deck. HARDY is lying on a deck lounge wrapped in a blanket, LUCILLE next to him. IDA and LAUREL (wearing his beret) walk back to them from a trip around deck.

LUCILLE

I think we should all get below now, out of this wind.

IDA

Dahling I agree.

LUCILLE

Oliver? Will you at least listen to me about this? Or are you determined to catch pneumonia?

HARDY

I'm enjoying the fresh air honey. Stan come and sit with me - you girls go ahead.

LUCILLE hesitates for a moment, not happy.

LAUREL

I'll bring him down.

She nods, gives LAUREL a smile. Then she and IDA depart. LAUREL takes a beret from his pocket and hands it to HARDY.

LAUREL (cont'd)

Here. Thought you might want this back.

HARDY looks at him, smiles, takes back the beret he threw at Laurel during their big argument and pulls it on his head.

HARDY

Thanks.

LAUREL sits down next to him, takes a pair of gloves from his pocket and pulls them on, finger by finger, carefully making sure each one is pulled on tight. HARDY watches with increasing exasperation. Then, finally:

LAUREL

Babe... I lied to you.

HARDY

(Stern expression)
What do you mean?

LAUREL

There is no movie.
(Beat)
Miffin told me a couple of weeks ago it had fallen through. I guess... nobody wants a Laurel & Hardy picture any more.
(A few moments as this sinks in)
But if I'd told you straight away... well maybe we could have finished the tour early and you wouldn't have got sick.

HARDY

(Beat)
You knew *two weeks ago* that there was no movie?

LAUREL

Yes. And I been feelin' terrible about it.

On HARDY, a long beat. Then...

HARDY

Stan, I knew.

LAUREL

What?

HARDY

I knew.

LAUREL

Why didn't you tell me you knew?

HARDY

I thought you already knew I knew.

LAUREL

How could I know that you knew I already knew.

HARDY

(Flounders for a moment)
What's the next line?

LAUREL

'I thought you already knew I knew, but you were pretending you didn't know I knew'.

HARDY

Thank you.

LAUREL

So if you knew, why did you let me
keep rehearsing the movie with you?

HARDY

What else are we gonna do?

They exchange a smile. HARDY pulls his coat up around his neck against the cold.

109 **EXT. COBH HARBOUR - DAY**

109

Caption
Cobh harbour, Ireland

The steamer heads into Cobh harbour, an old seaport on the southern coast of Ireland dominated by St. Coleman's Cathedral, towering over the quay from its hillside perch.

We see feet, small feet - some with no socks, just in clogs - running. We see CHILDREN emerging from street corners to make their way down to the quayside - where a crowd is gathering.

110 **EXT. STEAMER, DECK - DAY**

110

The LAURELS and HARDYS make their way up out of the ship's interior on to the gangplank, LAUREL with two big cases and HARDY just a small valise (*their old trick whenever they arrive somewhere*). But they stop as they look out at the quayside. We now...

CUT TO:

-what they see: a huge crowd of people of all ages has gathered to greet them, standing patiently, silently. IDA and LUCILLE drop back so that LAUREL and HARDY can walk down the gangplank together. Once the crowd sees them, the big guy and the little guy from the movies, a great cheer erupts. As they descend the gangplank hats are thrown in the air and the crowd surges forward to greet them. Then, just as they reach the bottom of the gangplank, something extraordinary happens. From the cathedral bells at the top of the hill, '*The Dance Of The Cuckoos*' - the boys' theme tune - is rung out from the bell tower. LAUREL and HARDY look at each other, unable to quite believe what is happening. They both weep openly, amazed at the reception, at the warmth and love which engulfs them.

111 **EXT. OLYMPIA THEATRE, DUBLIN - NIGHT**

111

Tonight's performance by '*Hollywood's Greatest Comedy Couple*' has '*SOLD OUT*' banners pasted over the posters.

112 INT. OLYMPIA THEATRE, DUBLIN - NIGHT 112

A full house, all ages; the audience impatient to see their heroes. We see LUCILLE and IDA in the front row, DELFONT next to them, beaming with pride. His hands are clasped firmly together, a small sign of how nervous he is. Of how much, deep down, he really does care about the boys.

113 INT. WINGS OLYMPIA THEATRE, DUBLIN - NIGHT 113

HARDY is having his leg hoisted up in 'traction', LAUREL checks his cuffs and heels. Their eyes meet, and they exchange that nod.

114 INT. OLYMPIA THEATRE, DUBLIN - NIGHT 114

The house lights go down, an expectant hush. '*The Dance Of The Cuckoos*' begins, curtain goes up and there is the hospital room set, HARDY in bed, leg in plaster. Applause. LAUREL enters stage left with the bunch of flowers and paper bag and at the sight of the two men together there is renewed applause, whistles and even cheers. LAUREL waits for it to die down.

LAUREL

Hi Ollie, how are you?

HARDY

Never mind how I am - what took you so long to get here?

LAUREL

Well they said no visitors so I said I was your son and it worked like a charm.

HARDY

My son! You have a lot of nerve telling them I was your father.

LAUREL

I couldn't tell them you were my mother.

HARDY

Of course you couldn't. I've never even been married...

Big laughs - the audience are loving it.

HARDY

What have you got there?

LAUREL

I brought you some hard boiled eggs and some nuts.

HARDY looks to the audience, exasperated, and they laugh.

HARDY

Now you know I can't eat hard
boiled eggs and nuts! If you wanted
to bring me something why didn't
you bring me a box of candy?

LAUREL

Well, they cost too much.

HARDY

What has that got to do with it?

LAUREL

And you didn't pay me for the last
box I brought you.

Laughter. LAUREL offers HARDY the bag:

LAUREL

Have one?

HARDY

No. I'd rather not.
(To the audience, with
disgust)
Hard boiled eggs and nuts...

LAUREL ignores him, takes an egg out and starts to peel it
and eat it. HARDY watches, incredulous, as Laurel pulls a
salt cellar from his pocket and sprinkles some on.

We see DELFONT smiling at what he sees on stage but, as ever,
twisting his head round to make a quick mental calculation on
the size of the house. Business is business...

We see LUCILLE, next to IDA. LUCILLE is worried, but trying to smile through it. IDA seems calm.

115 DELETED 115

116 INT. OLYMPIA THEATRE, DUBLIN - NIGHT 116

The double door routine. HARDY sweaty, but still on his feet, his and LAUREL'S timing slick as ever as one goes in one door, the other emerges through another.

117 INT. BACKSTAGE, OLYMPIA THEATRE, DUBLIN - NIGHT 117

LAUREL and HARDY, helped by their DRESSERS, hurriedly change into their battered suits and Bowlers for the finale. Outside there is clapping, cheering and whistling. As they wait in the wings, ready to go on, LAUREL is concerned with how exhausted HARDY looks - drenched in sweat, breathless from the effort he's put in already, struggling to even get on his jacket.

LAUREL

You look tired out Babe - why don't we just go out and say goodnight and finish it there? We don't have to do the song...

HARDY

I'm fine...
(Sudden thought)
Listen, I had this idea for the picture. How about I grab Robin Hood's staff and go to hit you with that, but instead I knock down this bees' nest and it lands on my head?

LAUREL

(Smiles)
That's a swell idea. That'll go big.

The *'Dance Of The Cuckoos'* strikes up out front, and the curtain starts to open.

HARDY

It was fun while it lasted, wasn't it Stan.

LAUREL smiles, then waits for his cue. On that same note he walks out - only to be hooked back by HARDY-

HARDY (cont'd)
I'll miss us when we're gone.

LAUREL
So will you.

Now HARDY walks out on stage, and LAUREL kicks him up the ass as he goes.

118

INT. OLYMPIA THEATRE, DUBLIN - NIGHT

118

HARDY and then LAUREL walk on together to a storm of clapping and cheering; they wait patiently for it to die down.

HARDY

Ladies and gentlemen we hope you've enjoyed our bit of fun tonight, we've sure enjoyed ourselves haven't we Stanley?

LAUREL

We certainly have.

HARDY

We'll never forget the warm welcome we've received here in Dublin.

LAUREL

Not just Dublin, but the whole of Scotland.

HARDY

Dublin isn't in Scotland.

LAUREL

(thinking)

I was wondering why we got on that boat.

(realising, whispering to

HARDY)

We must be in Ireland.

HARDY

(sarcastically)

We must be in Ireland!

Another burst of applause.

HARDY

We'd like to finish tonight with a little dance...

HARDY and LAUREL share a look.

HARDY

From our film 'Way Out West'.
Maestro... Stanley.

Then, just as LUCILLE looks like she's about to pass out with worry, she feels IDA'S hand reaching for hers. She's shocked. She turns to her, and IDA smiles. LUCILLE smiles back, and squeezes IDA'S hand warmly, grateful that she's there to support her at this moment. They both turn back to the stage, still holding hands.

On stage HARDY, in that very proper way of his, extends a hand which is taken by LAUREL - and now they are also holding hands. They bow to the audience then wait for the music cue.

As the orchestra starts '*At The Ball, That's All*', the BOYS tap their feet, then begin their dance routine once again - and we are transported back to the magic of '*Way Out West*'. In spite of HARDY'S physical problems and illness, his light footedness is as exquisite as ever. And although both men are now looking old, their grace and elegance defies their years. LAUREL matches HARDY every step of the way, the two dancing together like the loving couple they most surely are.

We finish behind LAUREL and HARDY, silhouetted against the lights, looking out at the audience. As they come together and hold each other's hands, we FREEZE...

Captions

Laurel and Hardy returned to America after the tour, but they never performed together again. Hardy's health went into decline and, after a long illness, he died in August 1957.

Laurel refused all offers to perform without his old partner and went into retirement. But he continued writing comedy material for Laurel and Hardy right up until his death in February 1965.

The End