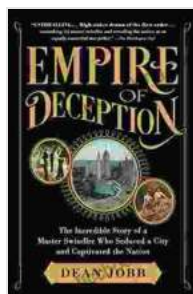


# The Incredible Story of the Master Swindler Who Seduced a City and Captivated the World

In the annals of audacious and cunning cons, the story of Victor Lustig stands out as a masterpiece of deception and manipulation. A man of remarkable charisma and wit, Lustig pulled off some of the most audacious scams in history, leaving behind a trail of bewildered victims and shattered reputations. His most infamous exploit remains the sale of the Eiffel Tower —twice.



## Empire of Deception: The Incredible Story of a Master Swindler Who Seduced a City and Captivated the Nation by Dean Jobb

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 14158 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting: Enabled  
X-Ray : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 353 pages  
Lending : Enabled



## Early Life and Criminal Beginnings

Born in Bohemia in 1890, Victor Lustig grew up in an impoverished family. His father was a tailor, and his mother struggled to make ends meet. As a child, Lustig exhibited a precocious wit and an uncanny ability to get into trouble. At the age of 12, he ran away from home to join a traveling circus, where he developed his skills as a con artist and master of illusion.

Through a series of clever scams, Lustig quickly gained notoriety in the criminal underworld. He impersonated royalty, forged documents, and peddled fake cures, all the while amassing a small fortune. In 1910, he made his way to the United States, where he would find his greatest mark —the Eiffel Tower.

## The Sale of the Eiffel Tower

In 1925, Paris was preparing for the International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts. The Eiffel Tower, a symbol of French pride and engineering prowess, was the centerpiece of the exhibition. Lustig, seeing an opportunity for a grand swindle, devised a plan to sell the tower for scrap metal.

Posing as a government official, Lustig approached several scrap metal dealers and claimed that the tower was in danger of collapse and had to be dismantled. With his persuasive charm and forged documents, he convinced six dealers to pay him handsomely for the rights to the tower's scrap metal.

After receiving the payments, Lustig promptly disappeared, leaving the dealers in disbelief and the French government in shock. The news of the sale of the Eiffel Tower became a national scandal, and Lustig became the most wanted man in France.

Unbeknownst to the authorities, Lustig had already fled the country. He used the proceeds from the Eiffel Tower scam to finance a lavish lifestyle in the United States, where he continued to run his criminal operations.

### **Other Notorious Scams**

The Eiffel Tower scam was just one of many audacious cons perpetrated by Victor Lustig. He also sold a fake "treasure map" to renowned gangsters Al Capone and Arnold Rothstein, promising to lead them to a buried fortune. He swindled millions of dollars from investors with his "Liberty Bond" scam, which involved selling counterfeit bonds to unsuspecting victims.

Lustig's most audacious scam, however, was the "Romanian Box," a device he claimed could duplicate money. He sold the box for large sums of money, promising that it could produce unlimited amounts of banknotes. Of course, the box was nothing more than a clever illusion, and Lustig made off with the victims' money.

## Capture and Imprisonment

For years, Victor Lustig evaded capture by constantly changing his identity and moving from one city to the next. However, in 1935, his luck ran out. He was arrested in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and charged with counterfeiting. Despite his attempts to escape, Lustig was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**  
ORGANIZATION EST. 1892 WASHINGTON

Arrested at: Department of Police City: St. Louis, Mo.  
 Date of arrest: 6/25/31  
 Charge: fugitive and con man.  
 Division of case: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name: Victor Lustig  
 Place of birth: Vienna Austria.  
 Occupation: International con man  
 Sex: M Race: Median  
 Height: 5'8" Complexion: Light  
 Weight: 145 Eyes: Blue  
 Hair: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_




**CRIMINAL HISTORY**

DATE	CHARGE	DATE OF INSTITUTION	STATE	AGENCY	REMARKS
<p>He was arrested at St. Louis, Mo. 6/25/31, when he had in his possession \$20,000.00 worth of Liberty Bonds, which had been tampered with and with which he attempted to swindle two citizens; he was charged with attempted Grand larceny, but later discharged on this, the James Haley, U.S. Secret Service Agent, wired Federal authorities at New York and he was ordered held for the N.Y. authorities. On Feb. 27, 1931, he was admitted to \$10,000.00 bail for his appearance in N.Y. Federal court April 9, 1931.</p>					
<p>This man is an internationally known con man and is wanted by Spokane Wash., Crown Point Ind., Los Angeles and San Francisco Calif., Detroit Mich and Denver Colo.</p>					

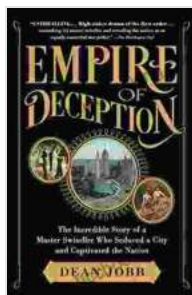
(When filled in by agents) Forward to Bureau and police office of all courts where

## Death and Legacy

Victor Lustig died in prison in 1947 at the age of 57. Despite his life of crime and deception, he remains a legend in the world of con artists. His audacious scams and remarkable wit continue to inspire awe and disbelief.

Lustig's story serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of greed and gullibility. It also highlights the power of persuasion and the importance of critical thinking. While we may never fully understand the mind of a master swindler, Victor Lustig's exploits will continue to fascinate and intrigue for years to come.

The story of Victor Lustig is a testament to the power of deception and the fragility of trust. It is a tale that will continue to be told and retold for generations to come. And as long as there are people willing to believe the incredible, there will always be those who are willing to exploit them.



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