



Stan was hopeless at DIY and his comedy routine wasn't much better. So his wife Lisa decided it was high time she intervened...

Stan wobbled up the stepladder. His hand trembled as he slotted the last DVD into the new shelf he had just attached to the living-room wall.

His wife Lisa watched from the sofa and nudged their two sons, Billy and James.

'Take a photo, boys. A miracle has occurred. Your father has done some DIY.'

Stan climbed down to survey his handiwork.

'Now that,' he declared, 'is craftsmanship.'

The shelf gave a squeak. Then one end lurched down and smacked Stan on the forehead. *Volumes 2-21* of the *Laurel & Hardy Collection* cascaded onto the carpet. When Stan tried to put the shelf back up again, *Volume 1* slid down and hit him in the eye.

'Stanley Underwood,' said Lisa in a world-weary voice, 'what are you like?'

'He's funny,' giggled Billy.

'He's a joke,' said Lisa. 'The house might be splitting its sides, but I'm not laughing.'

'I'll fix it,' said Stan, wincing. 'Just give me a little more time. After tonight I'll be...'

'A comedy superstar. I know,

Stan. You keep on telling me.'

That night Stan was doing his stand-up routine at the local club. Lisa had to admire his persistence. He'd died so many times on that stage — any normal person would have given up by now. But, like a zombie, he kept coming back for more.

'When I've finished with that audience, they'll be wetting themselves,' grinned Stan.

'And so will we,' said Lisa completely deadpan, 'if someone doesn't mend the toilet.'

'I'll get a man in, pet. Monday morning.'

'I'm tired of nagging you, Stan. It's lovely you've still got your dreams, but dreams won't buy us a three-bedroom house. In case you hadn't noticed, Billy and James are still sharing a room.'

'We'll find a way,' said Stan,

winking at his sons. 'Didn't you know I was a magician?'

'Which one?' asked Lisa. 'Harry Potter or Tommy Cooper?'

There were a few scattered groups sitting at tables that night in Cinderellas. Stan's audience, hopeful for laughs. Lisa waited anxiously for her friend Tracey to show up.

She knocked back a gin and tonic and ordered another.

The kids were staying at her mum's for the night, so she could afford to get a bit merry for a change.

The MC on the mic had a bad cold. 'It's Sadder-day night,' he croaked. 'See if you lot can cheer me up. Ladies and gentlemen, put your hands together for Trevor Pratt.'

Someone cackled like a witch as a hyperactive man started leaping about the stage.

'I'm a Pratt!' he yelled. 'I come from a long line of Pratts.'

Lisa tried Tracey's mobile but got no reply. Maybe she'd had a row with her husband, Roy. He was a builder — a bit of a cowboy, apparently — and he kept sloping off to 'work' at odd times of the night.

At least Lisa could rely on her

