

(HELEN + JAMES) x 2

This sketch aims to involve as many people as possible without them having to overcome the hurdle of learning lines. There is plenty of opportunity for improvised mime. Ideas for this have been included in the script (in red) but actors should be encouraged to try out their own ideas.

CHARACTERS: NARRATOR 1, NARRATOR 2, MUM 1, DAD 1, MUM 2, DAD 2, JAMES 1, JAMES 2, HELEN 1, HELEN 2, VICAR, GLADYS 1, GLADYS 2. (Gladys 1 and Gladys 2 are "over the top" characters desperate for the limelight. They could be played by males, pantomime-dame-style.)

SCENE: Empty stage – no props – everything is mimed. The NARRATORS stand to each side of the stage.

COSTUME: The Mums, Dads, James's and Helens are dressed in mime-artist black tops and trousers with a single distinguishing feature, as follows (or similar):

- MUM 1 – a red shawl
- DAD 1 – a plain red tie
- MUM 2 – a blue shawl
- DAD 2 – a plain blue tie
- JAMES 1 – a red baseball cap
- JAMES 2 – a red baseball cap
- HELEN 1 – a blue scarf or "scrunchy"
- HELEN 2 – a blue scarf or "scrunchy"

The VICAR wears a white dog-collar.

With GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 – anything goes!! (Big flouncy dresses, multicoloured blouses, brightly coloured scarves, huge hats, etc.) If played by males, then "think pantomime dame"! (Wigs, balloons, the works!)

NARRATOR 1

Once upon a time there
lived a Mum

and a Dad

and they had two sons,
whom they called Jimmy

and Jimmy.
But, for the purpose of
this story, ...

We will call them James

and James

NARRATOR 2

MUM 1 enters to take a bow

DAD 1 enters to take a bow

JAMES 1 enters to take a bow

JAMES 2 enters to take a bow

*JAMES 1, slightly confused, steps
forward to take another bow*

*JAMES 2, also confused, steps
forward to take a second bow*

*MUM 2 enters to take a bow
DAD 2 enters to take a bow*

So that you don't get
confused

Living next door to the Mum
and the Dad were a Mum
and a Dad

and they had two
daughters, whom they

	<i>HELEN 1 enters to take a bow</i>	called Eleanor
	<i>HELEN 2 enters to take a bow.</i>	and Eleanor. But for the purpose of this story,
So that you don't get confused	<i>HELEN 1, confused, steps forward to take another bow</i>	We will call them Helen
	<i>HELEN 2, also confused, steps forward to take a second bow.</i>	and Helen.
Now the Mum and the Dad	<i>MUM 1 and DAD 1 step forward</i>	
	<i>MUM 2 and DAD 2 step forward - as MUM 1 and DAD 1 step back</i>	No, the other ones
Also had a daughter, whom they called ...	<i>GLADYS 2 prances on theatrically and takes several sweeping bows.</i>	Gladys!
And, by coincidence, the other Mum and Dad also had a daughter whom they called ...	<i>MUM 1 and DAD 1 step forward</i>	
	<i>GLADYS 1 also enters theatrically and takes several sweeping bows.</i>	Gladys!
And what is even stranger is that Gladys and Gladys...	<i>GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 come together, arm in arm.</i>	Were twins!
	<i>ALL look puzzled.</i>	
As time went by, James and James both grew	<i>JAMES 1 and JAMES 2 step forward - looking "cool", combing hair, etc.</i>	More handsome
Whereas Helen and Helen both grew... And Gladys and Gladys both grew..	<i>HELEN 1 and HELEN 2 step forward – both look coy</i>	Lovelier
	<i>GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 step forward, hopeful of compliments</i>	Potatoes
	<i>Both look disappointed and disgruntled.</i>	
When James and James saw Helen and Helen the chemistry of love began to work and James fancied Helen	<i>JAMES 1 makes advances towards HELEN 2</i>	
	<i>HELEN 2 looks disappointed. HELEN 1 looks pleased.</i>	No, not that Helen, the other Helen
<i>(With increasing pace.)</i> Which was just as well because Helen fancied the other James – and the other Helen fancied	<i>There is a general melee of bodies - both JAMES's, both HELENs –</i>	

James and the other James fancied Helen.

Which is just as well because if James had fancied Helen and the other James had fancied the other Helen, with Helen fancying the other James and the other Helen fancying James, it could have got a bit ... er

with both GLADYS's getting in the way

ending with

*JAMES 1 and HELEN 1 paired off;
JAMES 2 and HELEN 2 paired off.*

Confusing?

ALL nod.

Needless to say, Gladys and Gladys fancied...

GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 look admiringly at each other.

A nice cup of tea!

Soon, wedding bells were chiming for the happy couples.

The VICAR stands centre stage with MUM 1, DAD 1, JAMES 1 and JAMES 2 to one side.

MUM 2, DAD 2, HELEN 1 and HELEN 2 stand to the other side.

GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 start to "tum-tum-ti-tum" to the tune of "Here Comes the Bride" ... and continue to do so with increasing relish, to the annoyance of the NARRATORS, who have to speak louder and louder.

In response to the vicar's question

Mum and Dad gave Helen to James

VICAR: "Who gives this woman?"

*MUM 2 and DAD 2 usher HELEN 2 towards the VICAR and JAMES 1.
(GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 still "tum-ti-tumming")*

No, not that one, the other one

*MUM 1 and DAD 1 retrieve JAMES 1 while MUM 2 and DAD 2 usher HELEN 2 towards the VICAR and JAMES 2
(GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 still "tum-ti-tumming")*

And Mum and Dad gave the other Helen to the other James

Play the scene for laughs – even having JAMES 1 arm-in-arm with JAMES 2 at one point – or with MUM 1 and DAD 2 together, etc.

GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 stop "tum-ti-tumming" and take a bow, etc.

And Gladys and Gladys gave everyone ... a headache!

Helen and James went to live with Mum and Dad. *JAMES 1 and HELEN 1 move across stage to stand with MUM 1 and DAD 1*

JAMES 2 and HELEN 2 move across stage to stand with MUM 2 and DAD 2 Helen and James went to live with Mum and Dad.

And Gladys and Gladys went on a tour

GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 are ushered offstage (by the NARRATORS?)

(Pointedly) Round the world. For a long time.

In the course of time, Helen and James decided to have children

JAMES 1 indicates HELEN's bulging belly to MUM and DAD

JAMES 2 indicates HELEN's bulging belly to MUM and DAD

And so did Helen and James

Mum and Dad had a drink or two to celebrate

MUM 1 and DAD 1 raise a toast.

MUM 2 and DAD 2 raise a toast And so did Mum and Dad

Gladys and Gladys had a whale of a time...

GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 try to make a re-appearance singing "I'm going to be an aunty, I'm going to be an aunty," but are ushered offstage again.

In Timbuctoo!

James and James were overjoyed.

JAMES 1 and JAMES 2 congratulate each other. HELEN 1 and HELEN 2 are "instantly pregnant"

Helen and Helen were oversized.

Mum and Dad were overcrowded

And so were Mum and Dad.

Dad and Dad had a quiet word with James and James

Just as James and James had a quiet word with Dad and Dad

NARRATOR 1 and NARRATOR 2 in unison: And they said...

Big build up.

MUM 1, MUM 2, HELEN 1 and HELEN 2 hold up large hand-shaped signs saying "speaking part", pointing to the lips of the four male characters - who say their lines simultaneously.

DAD 1 & DAD 2 Listen, son. I think it's about time you went and built a house of your own.

JAMES 1 & JAMES 2 Listen, Dad. I think it's about time I went and built a house of my own.

Much applause from female characters at successful delivery of line.

NARRATOR 1

And so

James

Went off to find a suitable spot to build a house.

Hmm

This looks nice

Near the sea

Pleasant view

Nice and sandy

Easy to dig

Think I'll build here

Meanwhile James

Went off to find a suitable spot to build his house

He hummed

He felt

He pondered

He reckoned

He decided

And...

(Horse-race-commentary style.)

James is already laying the first layer of bricks whereas James is only just starting to dig. James is settling into his stride and is putting another layer of bricks on

NARRATOR 2

Off they went

That, is, the James that's married to Helen

He hummed

He said

He considered

He saw

He thought

Stand by! Decision coming up

At last

The one married to Helen

Hmm

Nice and firm

A bit rocky

Could be hard work

But it's worth it

Think I'll build here

They're off

JAMES 1 acts out narrator's commentary

Strokes chin

Dips toe in water.

Looks out to sea

Ruffles the "sand"

Presses heel into ground

Points down.

JAMES 2 acts out narrator's commentary

Strokes chin

Stamps into ground

Shakes head

Holds "ache-y" back

Big smile

Points down

JAMES 1 (sand) and JAMES 2 (rock) both act out the NARRATOR's commentary.

JAMES 2 lags behind JAMES 1 (as is clear? From the commentary)

(Throughout the commentary, NARRATOR 2 is trying to get a word in edgeways but is thwarted by the speed of NARRATOR 1's delivery and his/her reluctance to pause for breath.)

top of the first, and
James is still digging.
James is making good
headway and is almost
up to window level ... but
James is making heavy
weather of the rough
going on the far side and
is still digging. Now
James has got the
windows in and James
has just started to put the
concrete in place.
Meanwhile James has
bricked around the
windows and James is
just starting to lay bricks,
and James is up to the
top of the windows, and
James is still bricking,
and James is at roof
level – and James is
putting the windows in –
and James is securing
beams – and James is
still bricking. Now James
is putting on the roof and
is coming up to the
finishing straight but
James is lagging behind
desperately now as
James crosses the
finishing line. Well done
James – and hard luck,
James

*(Although NARRATOR 1 is the
commentator, at the end of this
commentary NARRATOR 2 is out of
breath and panting heavily.)*

NARRATOR “ mops their brow.

*NARRATOR 2 manages to recover
and is just about to speak when
NARRATOR 1 continues.)*

A few days later, James
carried Helen
triumphantly over the
threshold

*JAMES 1 carries (piggybacks)
HELEN 1 “across the threshold”*

Without the aid of a crane!

And they invited
everyone to a
housewarming party.
Mum and Dad

General bonhomie

And James and Helen

And Mum and Dad

And the vicar

*GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2
arrive with party hats,
streamers, etc.*

Everybody except
Gladys and Gladys

*GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 are
ushered offstage again.*

Who were in Australia!

Unfortunately, as they were dancing the night away, a nasty storm came along and it began to rain	<i>JAMES 1, HELEN 1, JAMES 2, HELEN 2, MUM 1, DAD 1, MUM 2, DAD 2 all on stage dancing and generally having a good time. Vicar in the corner, drinking, getting sloshed.</i>	
		Pitter-patter, pitter-patter
And pour		
		Splish-splash
Even more		
		Cats-and-dogs, cats-and-dogs
Rain in buckets		
		Clank, clank
The wind blew		
		Huff-puff, huff-puff
Lightning flashed	<i>Scared looks</i>	
		Flash, flash
And the sand underneath		
	<i>A few begin to stagger</i>	Trickle, trickle
Began to wash away		
		Oh dear
And the walls began to crack	<i>Everybody sways</i>	
		Creak, creak
And they crashed		
	NARRATOR 1 and NARRATOR 2 in unison: CRASH!	
	<i>ALL crash to ground</i>	
Oops!		
		Deary me!
From the rubble of the house built by James		
		For Helen
Wiping dust from their eyes and picking bricks from their hair, came James and Helen and made their way home to their warm snug house built firm upon the rock	<i>JAMES 2 and HELEN 2 get up slowly, dust themselves down and head off to left-front of stage – where they squat down and warm themselves in front of a fire.</i>	
		Picking through the bricks and beams, searching for somewhere to stay the night
Came James and Helen	<i>JAMES 1 and HELEN 1 stagger to their feet</i>	
	<i>So do MUM 1 and DAD 1</i>	And Mum and Dad
And Mum and Dad	<i>So do MUM 2 and DAD 2</i>	
	<i>The VICAR struggles to get his balance.</i>	And the vicar
And Gladys and Gladys	<i>Enter GLADYs 1 & GLADYS 2</i>	

And the moral of the story is ...?

Everyone adopts "thinking positions" – hands to chin – looking in air, etc.

And the moral of the story is ...?

I don't think so

General shaking of heads

Tell him, someone

ALL: Build your house on a firm foundation

And do the same with your life

Much nodding, shaking of hands etc.

The end

Much applause from all – and cavorting from GLADYS 1 and GLADYS 2 as cast leave the stage

END

(Sarcastic)

Who just happened to get a plane all the way home from Australia just in time to make the end of the party, what a coincidence, oh how fortunate – just because they want to be here to take a bow.

Moral? Nobody said anything about a moral.

(uncertain, quizzical)

If you build your house too well, you end up having all your relations living with you?

(struggling)

Steer clear of girls called Gladys??

Well, there you go