

The Floor Bangers

The apartment complex at number seven Douglas Street was made up of twelve units, and within one of these lived a floor banger.

It all started three weeks back when the locals first experienced the tremors. The powerful thudding and smashing sent vibrations up and down the common walls, interfering with the well-being of everyone living in the building.

The only comparison that the long-term residents could make, as far as a reading on the Richter Scale went, was ten years ago when a drunken Rob Smith from unit four made an ill-fated attempt to drive into his downstairs garage.

Putting his car into reverse and not drive, combined with polishing off an entire bottle of red, resulted in his Toyota Prius destroying a section of the brickwork next to the driveway and denting the unit five carport door.

The rumble from that impact could be felt as high as the units on the top floor. Poor Rob claimed from that afternoon onward until the day he sold his unit two years ago that his accelerator jammed. The building insurance ended up covering the cost of the fool's irresponsible actions and for the best part of the last decade, there had been no more accidents nor bone-jarring fiascos on the property.

Until the floor banging started.

We all enjoy our private time in the comfort of our homes.

Watching Netflix, reading books or playing on our phones.

But that all changed late one night when the first explosion came.

When you give a key to Floor Bangers, things will never be the same.

The initial shockwaves took place almost exclusively in the evenings, sounding out with a similar force to someone knocking out a wall. One or two bangs a few seconds apart, becoming a nightly feature for the best part of a fortnight. When the third week rolled around, the thumps had increased in intensity, prompting the three members of the strata committee living on site to begin exchanging text messages.

Only minutes into that initial correspondence, the trio of residents each admitted they had been perplexed by the blasts, mainly by their strength and spontaneity. What puzzled them the most was the unusual time for what they could only identify as spur of the moment renovations. Between eight and ten at night was an odd period for anyone to be violently taking out a wall or smashing out bathroom tiles. It was agreed that an early morning phone call to the building management would be undertaken, endeavouring to discover if anyone had sought recent approval to carry out such work.

It came as no surprise to the vigilant owners that the strata management had no record of any repairs or upgrades scheduled for any of the units. Their advice was to discover who was causing the disruptions as soon as possible, so the office can send out a cease-and-desist letter. Following that suggestion, the three owners arranged to meet in person that evening in the downstairs garage area.

“I know it’s not me, and I know that it’s not you.” John Davis reassured his fellow committee members.

“For argument’s sake, we can eliminate our three units. That leaves nine.” Sally Roberts added.

“And unit five has been empty for months, so it can’t be them.” Davis pointed out.

“Even then, most people have lived here for years and have never made a sound. We know everyone on the body corporate, and there’s no way they would start renovations without telling us.” Ravi Shetty surmised.

The three owners had been friends for over ten years, and during that time had worked together on many important building issues. From vandalism to break-ins, dumped rubbish to stolen plants; there had never been a problem this trio could not handle.

The semi-retired John Davis was aged in his sixties and lived with his wife Dora in unit one on the ground floor. John’s door was always the first knocked upon whenever building issues arose or if any advice was needed. Although he would never accept the accolades, Davis was widely considered to be a community leader.

Sally Roberts in number eleven and Ravi Shetty in twelve were next-door neighbours on the top floor. Sally was a forty-something single female who lived alone, whilst Shetty was of a similar age but with a family of five, including three school-aged children.

As the nightly banging took place within a two-hour window, the investigators had been waiting every evening from around seven thirty for the disturbances to begin. Even before they first exchanged texts on the subject last night, the three had already theorised the possible origins of the terrible thuds, and therefore shared an early opinion as to where the epicentre was located.

John Davis was certain the noises were coming from somewhere above his unit. Shetty and Roberts believed the rumbling was taking place below them. On that basis, and after taking number five out of the equation, the possible suspects were narrowed down to units six, seven and eight on the middle floor. This would be the logical place to start their investigation, except there was one slight hitch.

“What do we do about the man in number six?” Davis asked his colleagues.

“I’m happy to speak with everyone except him.” Sally replied.

“I think we should stay away from that guy. He didn’t take too kindly to those complaints about him parking his van.” Shetty reminded his friends.

The incident in question involved the relatively unknown tenant in number six, who just so happened to be the most recent arrival in the building. Two months ago, and only days into his tenancy, the young male of Mediterranean appearance developed the antisocial habit of parking his work van in front of other residents’ garages.

Tired of being parked in or out, those living in the building quickly became fed up with having to ring the unit six intercom and ask the tenant’s permission to access their own property. Although the fellow did come downstairs promptly to move his vehicle, he always did so in a belligerent and abrasive manner. There was never a smile nor an apology, and his poor attitude led to numerous complaints with supporting photos being sent to the building managers.

To be fair, the practice stopped immediately, but every resident still felt the bad vibes coming from their newest neighbour. The strata committee was privy to the correspondence from the real estate responsible for unit six, where it was noted that they went to great lengths to defend their tenant. The agents added that the young man, who went by the name of Jeezey, was polite and remorseful over any inconvenience caused. Residents of the building

found this testimony hard to believe, as the garage-blocker had been staring daggers at every neighbour since being made aware of the complaints against him.

“I reckon it’s him. Without a doubt.” Sally got straight to the point.

The elder of the three rubbed his chin, pondering the merits of such a bold accusation before offering his own thoughts.

“He’s the only one we don’t know. We never heard these noises until after he moved in. Maybe we can ask the owner if he’s allowed this guy to do some work in there. It’s possible he could be paying cheaper rent in return for fixing things inside the unit.”

Following the wise words of John Davis, the meeting concluded. A firm plan was in place to speak to as many residents as possible over the next day or two. This would involve concocting chance meetings at the letterboxes, or whilst taking out the rubbish, or when parking their cars as opposed to formally knocking on anyone’s door. Contacting the landlord of the unit pencilled in as the early suspect would also be undertaken as a courtesy. It was hoped that this turned out to be nothing more than handyman capers at irregular hours, but the three owners’ instincts were telling them otherwise.

On and on the noises went, now heard beyond midnight.

Neighbours woken from their sleep, being given such a fright.

Those below say it’s from above, those above say it’s below.

Those living on the middle floor say it’s just too loud to know.

With a few residents spoken to within the following three days, the committee members correlated what they were told and were left looking solely at number six. There was no direct proof, but certainly enough smoke to point toward a most probable fire.

The testimony from Betty Ramirez in unit two was the most compelling, considering her apartment was positioned directly below the accused. She was convinced that the banging sounds were coming from right above her ceiling, as her light fittings would sway following every impact. The elderly woman, who lived with her granddaughter, was visibly shaken as she tried to explain in her heavy Spanish accent.

There were others as well who pointed their finger at number six without hesitation, but for a very different reason. Odd behaviour was occurring in the middle of the night, where the tenant in question would leave his apartment with an enormous boom that echoed up and down the stairwell. Those light sleepers in the building often made their way to the nearest window, where they witnessed the man approach a car idling on the road outside. In what was a quick transaction, their new neighbour would make some kind of exchange through the passenger side window. The car would then drive away, and the man promptly returned to his unit, followed by another mighty slamming of his door.

If the fellow from number six was buying and taking drugs as the committee members now believed, then this could be what was triggering the nightly blasts. Even though the locals may have uncovered a motive of sorts, there was still no conclusive evidence connecting the middle floor resident to the devastating noises.

A succession of five catastrophic explosions at around ten thirty on a Tuesday night prompted the three investigators to walk out onto their respective balconies. With two on the top floor and one on the lower floor all within sight of each other, the building was then hit

again by a second volley of rumbles. The follow-up blasts brought two more neighbours outside, both appearing visibly dismayed by these unnecessary late-night disruptions.

Denise from number seven and Zhang from eight had to lean awkwardly around their opposite-facing terraces in order to see John, Sally and Ravi standing quietly in the shadows. The latest arrivals shook their heads and both held up six outstretched fingers, indicating who they believed was responsible. The upper residents reacted by signalling downward, whilst the ground floor occupant pointed up. Another tremor then sounded out, and the five whom stood in clear sight of each other at the time would now be eliminated as suspects.

With units one, seven, eight, eleven and twelve all struck off the list, this shortened the field considerably. The vacant lot five was also added to the club and it was a safe bet to rule out Betty in number two as well.

The phenomenon that now engulfed the building was the topic on everyone's lips. Neighbours began offering each other more than just a daily greeting, pausing instead for a few minutes to discuss these unprecedented events.

During one of these chats, it was discovered that Lucy Ruddick from number three had only heard the odd bang and thought little of it. She was far more annoyed by the door slamming taking place in the middle of the night that had woken her up on multiple occasions. Lucy was unaware of the latest nightly escalations as she had been working the evening shift at the nearby hospital, and this solid alibi ensured her name was promptly removed from the list of potential thumpers.

Lucy's next-door neighbour in unit four was quite aware of the noises but was of the view that someone was performing renovations. Eric, who hailed from Taiwan originally, was perhaps going off the lax rules and regulations from the country where he grew up. After being politely advised to read the by-laws on the notice board in the foyer, Eric very quickly

changed his opinion. The next neighbourly conversation he would engage in revealed his new standpoint; that being, the smashing was being done maliciously.

There were two units whose occupants were yet to be spoken with or at the very least ruled out, and they were both situated on the top floor. Sally and Ravi would usually bump into one or both of them perhaps once a week, but as luck would have it, their paths were yet to cross since their probe into the noisemaking began.

The man living alone in unit nine was named Richard, and he pretty much kept to himself. It was hard for anyone to get a word out of him, let alone an entire conversation. The two committee members living on the same floor assumed that this neighbour worked irregular hours on rotating shifts. Certain that he was not home when most of the banging took place, they were happy to put a line through his name for now, albeit in pencil.

It all came down to Harinder Singh in number ten, who ended up being the last resident interviewed. John Davis saw the rather large Sikh through his loungeroom window one Wednesday evening, as he was moving his garbage bin out to the kerb for pickup. Seizing the moment, Davis grabbed a half-filled rubbish bag from the kitchen and rushed outside, hoping to catch the top floor tenant in time.

It was just as well he did, for everything John and his friends had learned from their investigation to date was about to be turned upside down.

“Yeah, that guy’s been knocking on my door. He’s been up twice now. He thinks I’m making those noises.” Harinder calmly informed his inquisitive neighbour.

“You’ve heard the bangs, right?” Davis asked.

“Shit yeah! It sounds like someone’s smashing their floor with a dumbbell or something. I thought it was coming from somewhere downstairs.”

“What did he say to you?” The elderly resident continued.

“First time was on a Saturday morning. He looked wasted. All he said was that he was hearing banging noises, or something like that.”

“And what did you say back?”

“Only that I could hear them too, but it wasn’t coming from my unit.”

John Davis took a moment to digest what was being said to him. Any plan to send unit six a letter regarding the noises was now put on hold. But before the old man could assemble a follow up question to his neighbour, Singh continued with more gossip.

“The next time he came up was about a week later and he was fuming. He banged on my door really hard and started to get in my face. He backed off pretty quick when I stepped forward and told him where to go.”

Harinder grinned, appearing quite pleased with himself. However, the formidable Indian wasn’t finished there and continued rubbing his unwelcome guest.

“He thinks he’s some kind of gangster, but he hides his face under a hood and wears three layers of clothing to make himself look big. I reckon I’ve got twenty kilos on him, so next time I’m going to send him flying down the stairs.”

This was not a good situation, and after thanking Harinder and wishing him a good night, John was immediately on his phone to Sally and Ravi. It was agreed that this had to be reported as soon as possible before it escalated into violence.

Later that night, three emails were sent to strata by each member of the committee. The content of each correspondence was remarkably consistent; informing the managers again of the continuation of the noises, with the added information that finding the culprit was proving to be difficult and that some residents were now blaming others.

The owners' instructions were that a generic letter be sent out to everyone living in the building, ordering those responsible for the smashing to cease the practise immediately.

Floor Banger. Floor Banger. Who could you be?

I hear you almost every night whilst trying to watch TV.

Crash! Bang! The noise so loud: – Whatever are you doing?

We need to find this person fast, as there is trouble brewing!

The floor banging saga then hit a little closer to home, when on a Sunday night the Shetty family dinner was interrupted by four violent knocks on their door. Ravi suspected who it would be straight away, and a quick look through the peephole revealed the hooded figure of the mysterious man from number six. Taking a deep breath and directing his wife to start recording on her phone, a nervous Ravi then slowly opened his door.

“Stop making those noises!” The man from downstairs screamed out.

“What noises? We’re having dinner.” was all Ravi could manage in reply.

“You’re banging the floor. You’ve been doing it on purpose for weeks now!”

This was now a serious problem, more so considering that no such noises were heard prior to this angry man grumbling his way upstairs. Ravi had no idea how to respond to such aggression and momentarily lost his train of thought, until an unlikely saviour from below intervened.

“You’re wasting your time. Don’t speak with him. He’s a liar!”

A shrill female voice echoed up the stairwell, causing the man making the accusations to quickly turn around. Edging her way up the flight of stairs was a young woman, perhaps aged in her early twenties and of a similar ethnic background to the angry unit six tenant. Ravi tilted his head in order to look past the man in his doorway and saw that the girl decked out in gym gear was speaking directly to his unwanted visitor.

“Come back inside, Jeezey. Don’t waste your time on him!”

The brute did not say another word and lurched his way back down the stairs, giving his door an almighty slam after returning to his unit. Ravi did not feel too shaken up over the incident, which he found pleasantly surprising. Shetty was disappointed that Sally next door was not home at the time, for his friend would have jumped right into the fight.

Ravi’s wife Preeti did indeed record the confrontation, catching it all including the young woman’s intervention at the end. This was an unexpected twist in the tale, for there was no mention of a girl living in that unit from anyone Ravi or his partners had spoken to. Could she be a floor banger as well?

Immediately the soundbite file of the incident was sent out via SMS to both Sally and John. Once it had been listened to, the three owners agreed that this issue had gotten entirely out of hand, and it was time to send another email to the owner of the unit. But this communication would outline more than just the threatening behaviour of his tenants, for the troublemakers had now added loud music to their repertoire.

Jeezey was an angry man who knocked on neighbours’ doors.

Even when no noises were heard and there really was no cause.

His girlfriend blasted music and things soon became intense.

When she started abusing neighbours; now none of this made sense!

Nightclub beats were now being played into the wee hours of every night since the knocking on Ravi's door, with a female voice screaming at the top of her lungs added into the mix. Despite having an out-of-control tenant, both the owner and the real estate chose to deflect every grievance directed their way. Even with video evidence of ear-bursting music being played at three o'clock in the morning, both the landlord and agents stated that they would only take action following a police report.

Word quickly passed around the building that there was no civil solution in sight to the main problem, which was now the pulsating dance tracks being pumped at ungodly hours. The police had been called a number of times over many nights regarding the exact same noise complaint, but not once had a patrol car turned up.

The female living inside unit six was fast becoming a familiar face. She was often seen and heard on her balcony raining down abuse on neighbours whenever they attended their garages. It was believed that these meltdowns were triggered by the sound of a carport door opening or that of a car idling in the driveway. Her blood-curdling screams were also a common feature of day-to-day life in the building, usually heard in conjunction with the obscenely loud rhythms played at all hours.

The only positive was that Jeezey had stopped knocking on people's doors. Having given up on asking his neighbours to stop causing the thuds and bangs, he and his girlfriend embarked on a vengeful quest of noise pollution and name calling. But interestingly, during the time these alternate forms of aggravation had risen to the fore, the banging noises had ceased entirely.

The conversations between residents were still taking place, with stories being shared about the behaviour of the rogue tenants. Everyone agreed that things were worse now and seemingly the situation was not about to be solved any time soon. Putting up with the odd deafening thud was vastly favourable to the music playing and yelling of abuse that every occupant was now suffering.

With the real estate unwilling to act and the police not responding to calls, it was time for added vigilance from everyone in the building.

An extraordinary meeting of the committee was held via a zoom call, which featured not only the three owner-occupied lots but four more landlords of which the unit six owner was not one. It had been decided at this point to keep whatever was discussed a secret from both the landlord of the noisy unit and his warmongering tenants.

The idea of installing cameras had often been raised at previous meetings, but now this issue would be catapulted toward a consensus. As luck would have it, one of the owners had some contacts in the security industry and asked the conference to be put on hold whilst he made a few calls. The outcome was a most favourable one; with cameras to be hooked up around the building early the next morning and all labour costs charged at mate's rates.

The trick was to get the job done and dusted before the disruptive elements in the building might notice. Considering Jeezey and his partner were observing a vampiric lifestyle; partying all night and sleeping all day, it was a safe bet that if the installation work was carried out before midday, then the two hoodlums would be none the wiser.

Therefore, for now only one recording device would be mounted above the stairwell window near the top landing. This angle would capture the doors of all four top floor units as well as unit six. Any stairwell shenanigans from Jeezey or his drugged-out girl would now be captured as evidence. Best of all, the design of camera chosen matched the wall colour

perfectly and was unlikely to be noticed by anyone who was constantly under the influence of weed or meth.

The other four cameras would be set up around the garage area downstairs, following the continuation of the late-night drug deals. At least once a week Jeezey had been spotted making these exchanges at the strangest of hours, with his shady contacts now boldly driving their loud vehicles onto the common property. It was hoped that the next time the rascally renter buys his weekly hit, the quartet of lenses would clearly capture the crime taking place and bring his lease to an abrupt end.

It was agreed by the strata committee that any evidence of criminal behaviour on the premises by the unit six tenant would be forwarded to the police. The owners would insist on charges being laid and then demand the landlord enforce a twenty-four-hour eviction. It was therefore crucial that immediate access to the footage was granted to someone on-site. John Davis volunteered for this job and would be able to retrieve this important data through his personal laptop. All that he needed was an eyewitness to provide him with the exact time of any offense committed.

The installation of the cameras went smoothly, but more than two weeks elapsed without any suspicious activity taking place downstairs. The committee assumed that Jeezey had spotted the new security measures around the building, for instead of dealing with a parked car, he was now loudly opening his garage in the early hours of the morning and driving away. Within five minutes he would return, nonchalantly slamming not only his carport door but the entrances to the main building and his own apartment as well.

But all was not lost, for Zhang from unit eight knocked on John's door one Monday evening, bringing with him some incredible intel. It was all rather serendipitous, for the middle floor resident should have been at work but had decided to throw a last-minute sickie

instead. What happened next was nothing short of bizarre and luckily someone in the building was home at the time to witness it all.

The diligent Zhang gave his neighbour the exact time of thirteen minutes past one. Davis then logged onto the security server and checked the recording from the stairwell camera at that precise moment. There in plain sight was the unit six tenant quietly opening his door and skittishly tiptoeing up the stairs to the top landing.

The troublemaker stood for an extended period of time adjacent to the four doors, appearing as though he was listening out for any movement or sign of anyone home. He then leaned over the railing and scoped the depth of the stairwell, again as if on the lookout for any residents. In a flash, he then hopped around and laid a tremendous kick into the unit nine door.

Next was number ten, with Harinder's entrance struck by a violent flat-footed right boot almost as high as the doorknob. John thanked his lucky stars that the big man was not home at the time, and thought it wise not to inform his neighbour about the incident. Jeezey continued his tantrum with a left-footed strike to the door of eleven, before finishing with a much stronger kick with his right boot to number twelve.

Copies of the evidence were sent to the building management and passed on to the landlord and his inept representatives. Sally and Ravi were both shown the video file and despite finding the violence quite disturbing, could not detect even the slightest scratch on any of the four doors. The police were called that night and managed to turn up late on Thursday afternoon, when statements were taken from both John and Zhang and the footage was forwarded to an officer's mobile device. The constables then headed upstairs to inspect the outside of the doors, and like the owners could not find any visible signs of damage.

When it was time to question the perpetrator, all the residents who were home at the time held their ears up to their doors to try and catch what was being said. Zhang had a perfect view of the police interview and quietly held his phone to the peephole and recorded the exchange.

In what was a disturbing affair, Jeezey showed no fear toward the law enforcement standing at his door, screaming obscenities mixed in with nonsensical claims of innocence. When shown the video recording on the tablet, the ruffled suspect cocked his head around to look up at the camera mounted high on the wall. Changing tact, the vandal then challenged his uniformed visitors to prove he had damaged any of the doors, which unfortunately they could not. The confrontation quickly lost momentum and the police left the building without speaking to any other resident.

Just how long could the locals survive?

As it took the police three days to arrive.

Jeezey swerved and ducked, avoiding the noose.

And then sprayed the cops with a ton of abuse.

In a deflating postscript, the real estate managing unit six contacted the strata committee asking for details of any charges being laid against their tenant. It was added that if no hard evidence could be provided, then they were spruiking little more than hearsay against their lessees. To add insult to injury, the door-kicker and his girlfriend were now claiming to be the victims; a narrative that the property agents swallowed hook, line, and sinker.

It seemed Jeezey wasn't going anywhere and celebrated his invincible status by indulging in record-breaking celebrations of loud music, screaming and the occasional seismic blast for everyone to share. These banging noises were noted by every other resident to have a similar sound and proximity to the ones that started all this trouble weeks ago. There was not one person in the building able to have a decent night's sleep anymore, for these parties would commence just after midnight and end at around sunrise.

The long-suffering residents had reached their lowest ebb. Those renting were now seriously considering not renewing their leases if these jerks were allowed to continue unpunished. It was pure madness, as the floor banging was now well and truly back on the scene, with the bone-jarring thuds returning to be a nightly feature in the building. The post-midnight revelry did ease ever-so-slightly, with long stretches of silence rudely broken by short bursts of horrendously loud music. This was no doubt a strategy applied by the villains to allow their neighbours to fall asleep before intentionally waking everyone up.

But Jeezey's great run of luck was destined to end sooner rather than later, especially with the reports of his unruly and disorderly behaviour piling up against him. With emails of complaints nearing the century mark, the landlord and real estate could no longer defend their favourite client. Although there was not enough evidence for an eviction, the owner offered some consolation by announcing that his tenants would be gone after their lease expires in four months' time. Evidently, the troublemakers had already been informed of this, for there was a sudden spike in both loud music and the violent smashing of walls and floors.

It was therefore no surprise that the door knocking of other residents resumed, albeit by a more camera wary Jeezey. But this time around, occupants of the lower floor units would also be treated to a visit from their charming neighbour. On more than one occasion, the unsuspecting hosts had opened their doors to find the middle floor tenant already

recording them on his phone. Forgoing his usual routine of threats and abuse, the man was instead projecting a contrived calmness which the locals found to be both phoney and menacing. But underneath it all was the same tired old routine, with the bad actor accusing people of deliberately smashing their floors and making his life a misery.

Every instance was reported back to the landlord directly, who with each passing day was bombarded with even more emails, videos and photos. The tsunami of correspondence was now impossible to ignore. The unit owner and his real estate completed their one eighty degree turn and finally accepted that four months was too long for their unhinged tenants to remain in the building. In what was a remarkable change of heart, a promise to commence eviction proceedings was made if some stronger evidence could be provided. According to the estate agents, even a confession in front of witnesses would be enough.

The following Saturday, on a bright and sunny afternoon, the moment finally arrived.

Seven earth-shattering explosions came out of nowhere and shook the building to its foundations. John Davis was out of his door in a flash, as were Sally and Ravi from the top floor. The unit six door also opened immediately after the blasts, and the female occupant with eyes looking like a raccoon stepped out onto the landing. She began abusing the two committee members as they passed her on their way downstairs, and amidst the maniacal screaming, a few words could be made out suggesting that the tremors had woken up her boyfriend.

The junkie girl did not realise that those living around her were already one step ahead, for an arrangement was in place for every resident in the building to meet downstairs in the garage area following the next burst of violent banging. Proving who the culprit was once and for all and the incentive now to pin it on unit six ensured everyone's involvement.

John, Sally and Ravi would be joined outside by Denise and Zhang, who delayed their arrival until their angry neighbour had shut her door. Besides the five, there was no one else home at the time, except for the couple in unit six. It was looking good now, for by the power of elimination it was a certainty who the architects of this latest calamity were. But the good guys needed solid proof and judging by the abuse and accusations being hurled down at them from the middle floor balcony, they weren't about to get it.

Jeezey and his partner were in full swing, with cursing of a most filthy nature being shouted loud enough for everyone in the street to hear. Once more, amidst the slurs and swearing were passionate claims of victimhood, alleging that one or more members of the downstairs gathering had inflicted this suffering upon them. Both Sally and Ravi held up their phones to record the tirade, but as antisocial and unacceptable as the couple's behaviour was, it would probably not be enough to result in their eviction.

John realised that it was folly for them to stand there and cop this verbal spray. There was no doubt that these troublemakers had manufactured this entire incident and what was needed now was to not give them any more oxygen.

"Let's continue away from their rubbish." The reluctant leader suggested, before guiding his friends to another section of the front lawn.

The abuse hardly dropped in decibels, such was its intensity, but surely had to be near its end as the group had now moved out of sight. Moments later, the swearing and cursing did indeed stop and the loud sliding and slamming of a balcony door was heard.

"Hopefully they stay inside and cool down for a while." Ravi wished aloud.

Seconds later, the sound of the main door closing echoed along the driveway, causing those at the meeting to stall for a moment. As every resident was currently downstairs and accounted for – except for two – the folks gathered on the front lawn already knew who was

about to join them. So, it came as no surprise when none other than Jeezey himself strode from around the corner, giving every member of the group a piercing stare. He was hoodless today, which allowed the neighbours to behold their nemesis outside and in the glorious sunshine for the first time in months.

The tenant was carrying a garbage bag, which he disposed of incorrectly into one of the nearby recycle containers. It was an odd time to be throwing rubbish out, more so that he chose not to use the regular bins around the other side of the building. The group members were not born yesterday and realised that this fool was stumped when his enemies disappeared from view. Unable to help himself, he just had to come up with any excuse to walk downstairs and find out where everyone had gone.

Enter Sally Roberts who was quickest to pounce.

“We’re trying to work out where the banging noises are coming from. Why don’t you join us and let us try and help you?”

Jeezey became instantly frozen to the spot. The man who was a free-flowing waterfall of abuse only five minutes ago was now showing no signs of resuming his crude act. Instead, the halfwit was now staring mindlessly toward the woman who addressed him, clearly stunned by her words of kindness.

“We have to find out who is making the banging noises. We can’t have you all upset like this.” Sally continued, sensing her adversary’s confusion.

Jeezey still did not move. His attention dropped to the ground momentarily before raising his head again to face the group. It was at this point when the redness and glassiness of his eyes was truly noticed, prompting John to capitalise on the man’s poor state by adding a few words of his own.

“These banging noises have been bothering all of us.”

John’s statesmanlike delivery must have hit a nerve somewhere within the slow-ticking mind of Jeezey, for at last he managed to stumble out a reply.

“What banging noises?”

The same noises you were just abusing us over! The same ones you accused us of making only five minutes ago! The reason you’ve been knocking on everyone’s doors!

As tempting as it was for every member of the group to reply in such a fashion to their deteriorating foe, they instead needed to get their heads around what the idiot had just said. They were close to the end now, knowing that one well-constructed sentence could seal the deal. Poor Jeezey began pulling strange faces, possibly as a result of not knowing what had just occurred. He was also naively unaware that he was being recorded on no less than two phones.

“I did it in retaliation to you.”

The next sentence that battled its way out of the young man’s tongue-tied mouth was as puzzling as it was ludicrous. The group stood back in amazement as Jeezey, still standing in the very same spot, appeared to be now unsteady on his legs. He held the tragic expression of a boxer who had just woken up from being knocked out and was completely unaware that the fight was over and the crowd had already gone home.

Without realising, the neighbours had been staring silently at the young man for a little longer than they intended, unable to hide their utter bewilderment. As a result, their dazed and confused guest who clearly could not handle the scrutiny, fired back as best he could.

“Stop looking at me like I’m dumb!”

The lines just kept coming from Jeezey, who continued to dig a deeper hole for himself the longer he stuck around.

“How do you expect us to look at you? Five minutes ago, you were up there swearing at us and accusing us of making the banging noises!” Denise exploded.

“You knocked on my door twice accusing me of ruining your life. Now you’re saying you don’t know what the banging noises are. Which is it?” Ravi then upped the stakes, hoping his words might corral this pest into a corner.

“That was scratching noises!” Jeezey raised his voice in answering.

“Scratching noises? You’ve never said anything about scratching noises! Now you’re just making things up as you go along!” Zhang quickly added his piece.

“So, who was doing all the banging?” John gruffly addressed the bumbling fool.

“Who was making the noises today?” An annoyed Denise fired off.

“Just now! Five minutes ago! Who was it?”

Ravi’s raised voice ended a quick flurry of questioning that was too much for their opponent to handle. Jeezey’s eyes were darting everywhere, with his confusion clearly about to overwhelm him. There was still a way out, provided he shut his mouth and walk away right now, but this character had lost all self-control. Anchored hopelessly to the spot, the scourge who had tormented the building for months was ready to be cut down. The five interrogators shot each other sideways glances, each unsure as to who would take that final step.

As it turned out, Sally Roberts would deliver the coup-de-gras.

“So, who exactly is making these banging noises? *Tell us now!*”

Jeezey covered his mouth with his right hand, as if a tiny voice in his head was telling him not to answer. But the battle was over and the last remaining flicker of common sense still alight between his ears would soon be snuffed out for good. Once a fool, always a fool and now embarrassingly out of his depth, poor Jeezey pulled his hand away and uttered the final, fateful words.

“It was me.”

The good folks had tried so hard to be this neighbour's friend.

But all it took was a slip of his tongue for this drama to abruptly end.

The landlord acted quickly and showed this man the door.

The nuisance and his girlfriend were residents no more.

For the one who played the victim and claimed to have been wronged.

Turned out to be a liar and was the Floor Banger all along.

THE END