

There was something making noises in the apartment upstairs.

Luke, who was eight, had noticed them a few days ago. Luke lived in apartment 305, on the third floor of their apartment building. For as long as Luke could remember it had been just him, his mum and his dad in their apartment. But things had changed. Luke's mum had a baby, Ally, which meant Luke now had a baby sister. He thought she was the cutest little thing ever. He knew that as an older brother, it was his responsibility to look out for his baby sister.

But these noises were becoming a problem.

They had started one day when Mum and Ally were having a rest and Luke was watching cartoons on TV. Suddenly, there was a loud THUMP THUMP THUMP. Luke jumped off the couch. Ally started crying. Luke ran into the nursery as his mum came in yawning. She looked so tired. Her brown hair was a mess, like she had been tossing and turning in bed. As she shuffled into the room in her fluffy pink elephant slippers, she fumbled with sleepy fingers to tie the sash on her dressing gown.

"Oh my goodness. I don't know what that noise is but it does make it hard to sleep. It woke up poor Ally," his mum said. She picked up the baby and tried to rock her back to sleep.

THUMP THUMP THUMP came the noise again.

"It's coming from upstairs. It sounds like an elephant has moved in up there," said his mum, yawning again – the biggest yawn Luke had ever seen.

For three days it seemed like every time Ally got to sleep there came an enormous THUMP THUMP THUMP from upstairs.

"There it is again. Hello, elephant upstairs," his mum would sigh as the baby woke up again. Luke knew his mum was just being silly. There wasn't really an elephant living in the apartment above them. But someone, or *something*, was making lots of noise up there.

On the fourth day, Luke decided he needed to take action. He waited until his mum was busy with Ally, then he quickly walked through their apartment to the door. He quietly opened it, slipped out into the hall, and then slowly and quietly closed it again. He took a deep breath; he had never been out in the hall by himself. He looked left and right, and both ends of the hall seemed to go on forever. He could still hear the THUMP THUMP THUMP, but it wasn't quite as loud out here. Whoever, or whatever, was making the noise was probably in the apartment directly above his.

Luke ran a hand through his short, straight hair nervously. Walking quickly down the hall, Luke pressed the up arrow on the lift. He waited while the lift slowly rattled its way down from the tenth floor. Did it always take this long?

8...

7...

6...

When the lift finally got to the fifth floor, Luke almost lost his nerve and turned around and went home. But he thought of Ally, so tired and yet not able to sleep, and of his mum, who looked like she hadn't slept for weeks, and he knew he couldn't give up. The lift finally arrived with a shudder and the doors rattled open. Luke slipped in and rode it up to the fourth floor of the building. He stood in the hall and paused. This hallway was different to his, the carpet was a different colour and the lights seemed to be slightly dimmer. Luke thought to himself, "If our apartment is 305, and we are on the third floor, then the apartment above ours must be 405." He took off down the hall. When he got to the door to apartment 405, he stopped.

"Well, it's now or never," he said quietly to himself. He reached out his fist and knocked smartly on the door, KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. He heard plodding footsteps getting louder and louder as someone, or something, came closer and closer to the door.

The doorknob jiggled.

It began to turn.

Luke held his breath.

The door opened slowly, just a fraction. Luke tried to peer inside to see who, or what, was opening the door, but there didn't seem to be any lights on in apartment 405.

"Hello?" Luke said, his voice quivering.

"Who's there?" came a deep voice.

"My...my name is Luke. I live in the apartment below you," Luke stuttered.

"What can I do for you?" asked the voice.

"I've come to ask if you could please stop thumping on the floor. My baby sister is trying to sleep and you keep waking her up," Luke replied, still trying to see who, or what, he was looking at.

"Oh...I am terribly sorry," the voice said. Luke heard a sigh, and the door slowly swung open.

Luke couldn't believe his eyes!

There standing in front of him was an elephant! He had kind looking eyes above a long, skinny trunk. His skin was grey and wrinkly, with lots of little hairs poking out. He was wearing a bright blue bowtie and had a little top hat precariously balanced on top of his head, right in the middle of his enormous baggy ears.

"You're...an elephant!" Luke exclaimed.

The elephant nodded. "Yes. My name is Alfred," he said.

"What are you doing living here? In an apartment?" Luke asked.

"My parents live in the jungle. But I don't like it there. It's hot and dirty and there are bugs *everywhere*. I wanted to move to the city and try to get a job. But there are not many jobs out here for elephants," Alfred replied gloomily.

"Why were you thumping around?" Luke asked.

"I was...practising," said Alfred, sounding embarrassed.

"Practising?" Luke repeated.

"Yes," Alfred blushed, which was an unusual look for an elephant. "I had heard that some animals get jobs doing tricks in shows. I'm not very good though".

"Well, would you mind practising a little more quietly? My sister really needs to sleep," Luke said.

Alfred agreed to try and be quieter in the future.

As he rode the lift back down to the third floor, Luke tried to think of a job that the elephant could do that would keep him quiet. He crept quietly back into his apartment and found his mum cooking dinner. After dinner he sat on the lounge and opened up the newspaper to the jobs section. The newspaper was bigger than him! He searched through the paper, but couldn't find anything in there. He went to bed still trying to think of a job for Alfred.

The next day as he walked to school, Luke saw one of the council workers trying to cut the trees on the side of the road. The man was having trouble reaching the highest branches and, as Luke watched, he gave a startled cry as he almost fell from his ladder.

An idea started to grow in Luke's mind.

While sitting in class, Luke noticed a man outside the school walking, or rather being pulled along, by four dogs. They were big, hairy dogs, and the man was shouting at them to slow down as they strode out in front of him, almost pulling him over every time he lifted his feet. Luke's idea grew a little more.

Walking into his apartment building that afternoon Luke saw the window washers were out washing the windows. He stopped and watched as one of the washers stood up on her tippy toes and stretched as high as she could to reach the very top of the windows. Suddenly, she gave a loud SCREEEECH and toppled over the railing! She didn't fall very far however, thanks to the harness that connected her to the railing. As Luke watched her swinging, and saw the other window washer trying to pull her up, his idea grew even bigger. He ran up the last few steps into his building. Instead of waiting for the lift, which was on the tenth floor again, he raced up three flights of stairs and into his apartment.

An hour later he was on his way up to the fourth floor with a stack of posters in his arms. He knocked excitedly on the door of 405 and called out, "Alfred! It's me! Luke!"

The door opened and Alfred gestured with his trunk for Luke to come inside. Getting inside was tricky, as Alfred had to back all the way back into the kitchen so that there was enough room for Luke to open the front door. Once they were inside and as comfortable as a four-foot tall boy and a nine-foot tall elephant weighing over 4,000kgs can be in a one-bedroom apartment, Alfred asked,

"What's that you've got there?"

Luke handed the stack of posters to the elephant.

"Your new job," and Luke smiled.

Alfred looked down at the poster. There, in large grey letters was: "Do you have trees that need

trimming? Dogs that need walking? Windows or cars that need washing? Call Alfred for any odd jobs.” There was a space for Alfred to write his number in at the bottom.

"Oh, Luke, this is brilliant. I am very good at trimming trees and bushes. They are my favourite snack, after all. I've never walked dogs but I think I could do it. My trunk would come in handy to wash things. Thank you very much, Luke. What can I do for you in return?" Alfred asked.

"Just promise me you won't practise any more tricks," Luke laughed.

The next four days were very quiet. Luke's mum and his baby sister both got lots of sleep. His mum no longer looked like she had spent the night tossing and turning in bed, she had even had a chance to wash her hair and had exchanged her dressing gown and pink fluffy elephant slippers for “real clothes”, as she called them. Then one afternoon while they were all playing on the rug, there came a loud THUMP THUMP THUMP. Luke looked up towards Alfred’s apartment quickly, but then he realised that the noise had come from the front door. "I'll get it," he said.

When he opened the door, there was no one there. However, there was a large bunch of flowers and a pink stuffed elephant sitting by the door. There was no note, but Luke knew who had left them there. He gave the presents to his mum and baby sister.

"I wonder who left these?" his mum said as she put the flowers in a vase.

"Oh, you know Mum, it must have been that elephant upstairs," Luke smiled and his mum laughed.

If only she knew!