

I weed." The cream carpets were stained, the doors had cigarette burns while the neighbours were woken up, almost every night by him and his mates coming back from clubs, shouting and playing music," she said.

Twined, Jade Goody's widower, is now awaiting trial on rape allegations while Balli has changed the locks.

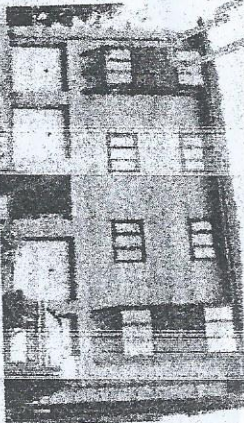
She's not alone... every year hundreds of landlords are forced to go to court to evict tenants and try to recover thousands of pounds in arrears. Many landlords end up with huge debts or have their properties repossessed.

Rogue tenants are finding it easier than ever to find victims thanks to the credit crunch and the rise of "accidental landlords". Their inexperience often makes them easy pickings for serial offenders. In the past 18 months, the



**Fuming** - Twined's kindly Balli

- **USE a good referencing agency**
- **ASK for three months of bank statements to check their earnings**
- **GET references from previous landlords**
- **TAKE out rent guarantee insurance, including legal cover**
- **USE an inventory clerk to check-list contents and condition**
- **GET an Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement, signed by all parties**



**Julia had bought four flats in this block in Sheffield**

JULIA Binns bought four small flats in the hope the rental income would help her cover her own mortgage, but ended up losing thousands after her tenants failed to pay their rent.

Widow Julia, 67, snapped up the one-bedroom flats in the same block in Sheffield between 2000 and 2004. Initially she let them out to students then rented two flats in November to two unemployed people.

With mortgages of £195 and £560 per month on the two flats, the rent of £495 and £575 should have almost covered Julia's total expenses. But after paying their deposits and first month's rent, both stopped



**Julia is owed £7,000 in rent arrears**

year so that housing benefit is now paid to the tenant instead of direct to private landlords. In many cases the tenants simply pocket the cash.

"Professional bad tenants go from one property to another," says Paul Shampine, of Landlord Action. "One landlord we dealt with was owed £30,000 by his tenant and had to sell up. Another tenant owed £125,000 to five different landlords. Unfortunately, there is no register of rogue tenants, due to data protection."

Landlords can apply to a county court to evict a tenant once they are two months in rent arrears - but the legal process usually takes six to eight months. Here we take a look at some landlord horror stories...



**Jack Twined caused problems when he rented a house in Essex**

Barry Gohl was so stressed by his bad tenants he was driven to the brink of suicide. The IT consultant let out his four-bedroom house in Ilford, Essex, two years ago after he lost his job. When a friend recommended a local letting agent, he accepted the tenants they sent him without asking for references.

"The agent said he knew the family, so I took their word," says Barry, 36. The monthly rent of £1,000 covered his mortgage but after a few months the family, who were on benefits, stopped paying.

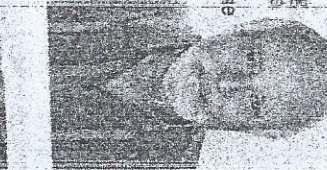
Last September Barry asked Landlord Action to help evict the tenants and they finally left in

David was forced to sell up

Barry's sofa as well as other furniture had been ruined

April, leaving thousands of pounds of damage. "They'd slashed the sofas, ripped curtain poles down and pulled radiators off the walls," says Barry. "One builder quoted me £28,000 to put it right."

While Barry got some money back from the letting agent, he's still owed £5,500. "This whole experience left me so stressed I felt suicidal," Barry says.



**David was forced to sell up**