

OTIS: Consumers' Guardian Angel - Part 2

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This is a continuation of the Basic Survival Kit for anyone considering an apartment at University Park. OTIS is Organization for Town Independent Students.

YOU WANT AN APARTMENT, SOO. . .

Go to the landlord and fill out an application form. It asks several questions about yourself. This is nothing more than applying, you can be refused. The application fee is usually half a month's rent. If they refuse, your money is refunded, but if you decide you don't want the place after you are accepted, they keep the money.

Anything you and your landlord agree on as far as the lease goes should be in writing! Avoid anything verbal. A written lease is binding and will hold up much better than someone's word.

If your apartment is furnished, get a list and know what to expect. This will help you against fines the landlord may impose for missing stuff.

A security deposit, usually a month's rent, is given to the landlord before you move in, to assure him/her that the four walls and furniture will be there and any damages won't. So before you're settled, make a damage list and go into detail about holes in walls, scratches, stains, what works and doesn't and have everyone living there sign it along with witnesses and the landlord. Even if the landlord refuses to sign, have it notarized and at least three copies made. When you move out, return keys and clean the drapes, rugs, bathroom, kitchen, everything! Be sure to keep receipts for these, and if no receipt is possible, take pictures and have them and the receipts notarized. Sounds like a lot of trouble, but a guy from a place that shall remain nameless (ask me sometime) got a "shaft job" and was charged for already cleaned drapes and rugs. Another, wiser lad got a similar deal from the same people but had proof. Again, check with OTIS for such information on where you want to stay.

Send your forwarding address by certified mail and get a receipt as proof that he/she has it and can send your security deposit. Within thirty days the landlord should send 1) a list of damages and 2) what the balance is. If not returned after forty days, the landlord pays double the security deposit. If no bill is given, you pay for nothing.

THINK YOU'RE INTERESTED?

We got a little ahead of ourselves. Let's get down to one of the most important things you'll deal with...the lease.

RENT ESCALATION CLAUSE

When reading the lease, watch out for the rent escalation clause. This means they can raise your rent whenever they want. Some complexes stipulate that their costs have to go up fifty percent before they'll raise yours. Find out.

What about the landlord's "right of inspection"? This means he/she can come in at anytime he/she wants. Do you want?

AUTOMATIC RENEWAL CLAUSE

Does your lease have an automatic renewal clause? This means if you don't notify the landlord within sixty days of your lease expiration date, you must live there for three more terms.

How about co-habitation? If more people are living in an apartment than is

stated in the lease, the landlord can evict you.

SUBLETTING

What if you're interested in something shorter than a nine or twelve-month lease. Well, if you're coming up for one term, you can get an apartment by subletting. The same thing goes for students who find one of their room-mates is leaving. However, if you plan to come up and stay, you'd be interested in assignment.

The difference is whether a middleman is involved or not. In subletting, there are two landlords and two tenants. The original tenant (one leaving) is still responsible to the original landlord while

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Spring has sprung, the grass is riz, I wonder where George is? With all this sunshine, she's probably somewhere soaking up some sun or stealing eats from those who are. Hey look! I see a black hat coming down that path, and if I'm not mistaken, those are pointed ears sticking out of the top. Poor kid, no wonder he's wearing a hat. Wait a minute! That's George! Let's see what she's up to.

ME: Hey, George! What's the special occasion?

GEORGE: Well, I'm trying out to be a can-can girl for Monte Carlo.

ME: How much does he pay an hour?

GEORGE: It's not a he, it's a benefit.

ME: But with YOUR legs, George. . . A can-can girl?

GEORGE: Why not? What I lack in quality I can add in quantity.

ME: In your case, you'd need an octopus.

GEORGE: Well, at least I'm helping to support Keystone.

ME: Now, what's Keystone?

GEORGE: The Keystone Society. They're running Monte Carlo.

ME: What is it, a locksmith organization?

GEORGE: LOCKSMITH! Remember the Bloodmobile?

ME: Yea

GEORGE: Well, that was Keystone's way of getting enough blood to support the kids on campus and their families in case a need arose. Remember the car wash?

ME: Yea.

GEORGE: That was Keystone's way of helping the Guatemala victims. Remember the bake sale?

ME: Which one?

GEORGE: Well, Keystone had one to

help raise money for the Easter Seal Society. Remember the Marathon Coffeehouse?

ME: Oh yea!

GEORGE: That was to help Chris Wall. Remember the Alamo?

ME: Oh, come on now, don't tell me it was Keystone!

GEORGE: No. Just thought I'd throw that in for the history buffs.

ME: Then Keystone is out to help where it's needed. So who is this Monte Carlo Guy?

GEORGE: It's not a guy. It's a night of gambling where you pay for and play with "Bank Money," and in the end, prizes are auctioned off.

ME: "Bank Money?" Hey, come on! If we're gambling, how about real money? How about benefitting us for a change?

GEORGE: In a way you are. It's giving you a chance to say "I care" to a fellow student.

ME: The one who wins all the money?

GEORGE: No, the one who never will. He's a student, from here, who was stricken with brain cancer. Keystone is helping us help him and his family by holding this benefit.

ME: Can anyone come?

GEORGE: Sure, the more the merrier.

ME: With you as a can-can girl, it's gonna be more of a laugh.

GEORGE: OK. OK. So maybe I won't show up the other girls, but I'll be there, just like I went to all the Coffeehouses, Parties, Dances. . .

ME: So that's why all those donuts kept disappearing!

GEORGE: I know when something good is cooking.

ME: Well, before you retire your hat and cane, do you have any parting words?

GEORGE: Life is like a bubble bath. You can sit and enjoy the bubbles, but nothing will work till you get down to the scrubbin. It takes a little effort to show you care.