

The three of us walked back to the abnormal house together after the meeting, but Steve was still agitated. He insisted that he should have known that something was shady when the fraternity wouldn't show him their rental contract. "Besides," Steve added, "Rick heard yesterday from some guy who knows some of the frat boys that they expected us to get kicked out because the police would find out that we're stoners. I had to hide pipes and shit after I got those people out of the house and I think they saw it."

I started laughing because I found it enormously amusing. When my two walking comrades asked why I was laughing, I responded, "So, after the fraternity essentially tried to screw everybody involved in this, they actually thought our introduction to the new owners would result in the police determining that we are major drug traffickers, arrest us, search the entire house, and announce the most significant drug bust in the city's history? Is that what they *really* thought?"

"Apparently, yeah," Steve confirmed.

"And you're kicking yourself because all of this could have been avoided if you had insisted that there would be no deal unless you saw their rental contract?" I asked further of Steve.

"That's pretty much it, yeah," he responded.

"Look, man," I started, "it doesn't matter whether you even *asked* about subletting. The mere fact that they advertised the house for rent, when they had no right to do so, means the fraternity committed fraud before you even got involved. *Then*, they compounded *that* major legal error by collecting our September rent and failing to pay the original owners. The law considers *that* theft. And you're worried that the new owners are going to throw away guaranteed rent money so they can get a head start on fixing up the house at their own expense, *in addition*, to paying the legal expenses to have us evicted, which they will never recoup?" I shook my head with extreme disbelief. "No matter what those idiots in the fraternity think, people can end up in prison committing fraud and theft!"

Richard suddenly looked at me like a light bulb had just brilliantly lit up the entire campus. "You know," he calmly stated, "I never thought of it that way until just now."

"This is all going to end up," I predicted, "with the new owners getting the security deposit, every dime of rent we paid, any legal expenses incurred in this process, all paid *in full*, by the fraternity. The new owners will be our new landlords, and the fraternity might even get fined, possibly by the legal system *or* the university, but it just goes to confirm what I've thought all along."

Steve smiled for once as he asked, "What's that?"

As I glanced slowly at one and then the other, I said, "Just because you join a fraternity doesn't make you immune to stupid."

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