

Hello.

Huge thanks to whatever attorney is reading this, I really appreciate it. My friend told me to look up your tenants rights website for some free legal advice. Not sure to what extent you can actually help, and I can't afford to pay for anything like officially legal. I'm not sure how detailed I should be in describing my recent landlord woes, so I'm sorry if this runs a little long.

Approx a few days before last December, I think it was November 27th, there was a new posting tacked over the cluster mailboxes, a small flyer announcing our building was going under new ownership (we live on 3rd Ave, near downtown). Apparently it got bought out by some company named Plexus Real Estate Services. Contact information was listed. Unlike the previous landlords, their office address is way out in the suburbs (my roommate and I don't own a car so it would be difficult for us to reach them, we'd need to haggle a friend to drive us). There were also directions for an app to download for paying rent, although it wasn't properly working during the first four days of December. Up and running on the 5th, but I had already mailed out my rent check the day previous. My first, of many complaints, about this company is they're trying to charge me a \$100 late fee since they didn't receive my check until the 8th. But I don't need to pay that, do I? I mean what was I supposed to do? I would have paid on the first but their app wasn't working. They seem to take this bizarre fee seriously. They emailed an outstanding payment notice that threatens possible eviction.

They're also claiming I owe a \$50 pet fee but I don't know where they get that from. Our lease has nothing in it about a recurring pet fee, we already paid the pet fee. So in total they're saying I owe an extra \$150. I've been talking with a few neighbors and at least three other tenants have also been charged a superfluous pet fee (we've all received eviction threats). One of these neighbors, Omi, is a single mother who already owes back rent that the previous owners were apparently patiently lenient about receiving. Now these new owners are saying they won't renew her lease, and of course they're threatening possible eviction.

A week into the month, they changed the lock system on the doors without providing all of us updated key fobs. Me and at least one other tenant came home one day to discover we couldn't get in and had to be let in. I was stuck waiting for someone out in the subfreezing cold. I tossed a small snowball against a neighbor's window but they weren't home or didn't hear it or ignored it.

Next week they sent me a notice of entry, which was completely useless because it said they'd be doing a walk-through at noon on Friday, November 28th, 2020. Obviously they weren't going to do their walk through three years in the past. I emailed them for clarification but they never replied (also they never answer their phone). They ended up entering my unit around 11:00 am on Thursday, December 15th. I'm an overnight worker and this is my usual bedtime. I had just fallen asleep when I awoke to a squat blonde woman standing over my bed,

right beside my open closet and laundry basket. I think she said something to awaken me, I forget what. I just remember shifting out of sleep and pulling up my sleepmask and there she was, and there was a man waiting at my doorway, I guess he was more hesitant about entering. Mind you, I'm pretty much naked beneath my blankets. I was too groggy to think clearly. The woman says "we need to bleed your furnace" and absolutely out-of-it tired I murmured "just do what you need to do," pulling my mask back down over my eyes and retreating deeper into my blankets, ducking my head in. Then I heard the approaching thud of this strange man's booted footsteps as he proceeded into my bedroom. To access the furnace valve in the corner he needed to push aside my nightstand practically right into my grounded mattress. I could feel it pressing against the cushion. After some grunts and clangs and hissing twists, I hear the man move away from the furnace without bothering to place my nightstand back into its original position.

As they made their way out of my bedroom the woman says to the man "lots of flies in here" with soft disgust and judgment. I've been in contact with the previous owners about the fruit flies, or gnats or whatever you call them. We have cockroaches too. We've done everything we can to cut into these infestations. Bleach down the drains, keeping up with the dirty dishes and taking out the trash. I think they need to spray the place for true results. Is pest management part of their legal obligations as landlords? Like I don't even know how we can still have flies in this freezing weather. Could they be laying eggs in the vents or walls? Sorry I guess you probably don't know that, it's not like you're an exterminator.

But as for that unexpected entry into my bedroom, that isn't legal, is it? Don't they need to get my permission beforehand to enter my bedroom? Or at least they need to send an accurate notice of entry, right? And the notice only mentions a walk-through, they didn't give a heads up about bleeding the furnaces in our unit. I don't know why they did the bleeding by the way, the furnace works fine.

My neighbor right across the hall had a similar experience. They came into her place without knocking and caught her literally naked coming out of the shower. They didn't apologize, just reprimanded her to cover up, as if it were her fault that they intruded on her.

Lastly, when you pay through that app it forces you into setting up an autopay schedule for all forthcoming rent payments. They even sent out a mass email clarifying this was required if we wished to stay. Can they really require autopayment enrollment? Seems sketch to me.

Ok, I think that's it as far as known grievances go. Again, whatever guidance you can provide for any of this is super appreciated.

Endless thanks for your quick reply. I'm relieved you got back to us so soon because I was going to send out another email anyways. I'm attaching the notice of entry and a copy of my lease. Thanks for your willingness to review these documents.

Things have gotten much worse in the short time since I reached out. On the very day I sent my previous email our heat stopped working. I've texted with some neighbors and it seems the heat's out in the entire building. The furnace is constantly emitting odd noises, a random cycle of water whoosing, like it's cycling through drains or something. As I lie in bed either falling asleep or waking up or trapped between the two states, I'm kinda disturbed by these sounds from the broken furnace: it's like the wet cacophony of digestion, like something is at work breaking me down, acidly coursing through me in my restlessness. I don't know, these are the weird thoughts I have when I can't sleep. Sorry. Not relevant.

As you can probably imagine, it's terribly freezing in our apartment. In just a few days already a few layers of ice knitted itself over the windows. It's not thin glittery layers of ice, it's more like thick stacks of increasingly solid white, wavy mottled and harsh like the skin of the moon. We can't see out the windows anymore.

Tensions are high in our apartment and the whole building really. We hear arguments through the walls, sometimes impossible to say for sure which apartment they're coming from. A few different voices, sounds like muffled shouting from all directions. Whenever I've passed a neighbor in the hall, we don't stop and bitch about this situation like we used to; instead, we avoid eye contact, like we're embarrassed for each other. Only an hour ago I passed Omi coming in with her kid and we pretended we were ghosts to each other. I don't mean to flaunt someone else's dirty laundry, but my roommate and I have overheard Omi hitting her kid. At least I'm pretty sure it's her. They live in the unit above ours and we've heard a kid wailing and weeping after adult shouts and the crack of a few slaps. I don't write this with judgment, but maybe I should be judgmental. My roommate was more upset about it.

That very night, my roommate and I got close to a physical fight. Our air fryer went on the fritz while I was using it to prepare a veggie burger. My roommate, who's the owner of the airfryer, blamed me, and I volleyed back with my own petty grievances about dishes. Not that I need to defend myself here, but I didn't do anything to break the airfryer; devices just break down in the intense cold, including brains. This honestly feels unbearable. In just a few days of cold, we've all strayed into a little crazy. We keep ourselves cocooned in layers of clothes and blankets. It stings to pick up a mug without gloves, every little thing is more difficult.

I mention all this to impart the urgency of our landlord woes and put some umph in my pleas for your help. We're at a loss about who to contact regarding this. We've even considered notifying the police, but frankly I despise cops and don't trust them to be helpful for anything. Aren't cops generally on the side of property owners? They're the evictors. Maybe you'll

recommend contacting the proverbial authorities but please note I'm highly unlikely to think that will help.

Unsure what our options are for speedily resolving this issue. We're thinking of contacting a furnace repairman ourselves and hoping we can force the landlords to deduct the cost out of our next month's rent. Would this be possible? We've looked a little into taking up a rent escrow action, but the legal fees associated with this seem to be a lot. And the process seems too long too.

We're probably going to spend the weekend at a friend's place. We just need to find someone willing to take in our cat, who's also been acting strangely in the cold. Her zoomies are out of control, she chases nothing, lunges for nothing, lost in a preyless hunt, always meowling oddly. Like I said, all devices break down in the cold. The sole upshot of this ordeal is the fruit flies have finally entirely died off.

This may be implausible, but I think it's possible the landlords intentionally shut down the furnace. All this began so shortly after they intruded into my room claiming they were bleeding my furnace, but maybe they were dismantling it. I remember Omi saying last week that with all these weird new fees it feels like the landlords are trying to get us all to move. I forgot to mention in my last email, but they have already listed a few of the empty units, which are comparable, if not exactly identical to, our own unit, and they're listed for \$1,550, nearly \$600 more in rent (I'm assuming this doesn't include their pet fee and what else they may charge). To your knowledge, is this a tactic landlords are known for? Like do they utilize disrepair and fees as a way to coerce tenants into evacuating?

Thing is, it's not like we can just up and move. Moving's expensive. Putting rent in escrow is expensive. Hiring our own furnace repairman is expensive. We don't have the money or time. Anyway, please reply as soon as possible with any help or advice. Feeling desperate over here.

Oh almost forgot, yesterday they sent an odd mass e-mail. All it says is, "Going forward, we have all the necessary permits." Literally that's it. Any idea what that means? I haven't the foggiest what they're referring to.

Yet again, I've written more than I intended. Thanks again for going through all this. Eagerly awaiting your reply.

We should have left. There were whole days with the furnace broken and the doors were open. After finishing the final shift I'll ever complete for my job, I willingly returned home, to my cold apartment, my cold, small, grimey apartment, even though I knew it was bad, I knew there was something wrong with the landlords. I came back to find several bins of foodstuff in

the hallway, a kind of makeshift food shelf set up beneath the cluster mailboxes. Initially delighted, figuring this was an apologetic gesture from the landlords, a goodwill offering because it was taking so long to fix the furnace. I should have known this was a bad portent. The items were pretty quickly cleared out but I snagged a few boxes of cereal, milk, canned veggies and beans.

I guess I'll never get your response to my previous email, but I trust it was speedily sent. It's almost reassuring to write in this email thread: writing here reminds me of a time I was hopeful, a time when I thought there were people I could appeal to for help; now, though, I know I can't send this message without the wifi. No cell phone service either. They must know a way to block the signal, which feels somehow expected, because the cellular network feels like such a complex, fragile technology. It's not surprising to wake up and find it severed from us.

They've boxed us in. Alley door locked, the glass front door covered over, all the windows covered over. I heard it happen. They did it during the night's thinnest hours, the equivalent to late afternoon by my nocturnal schedule. I heard the whine of electric drills as thick sheets of what appeared to be corrugated metal were quickly installed onto the building's exterior, the work finished so speedily there must have been at least twenty people on the crew, it must have been highly organized. I didn't see any trace of them, just all of a sudden our icy windows darkened with these brutal shields. I made no attempt at escape during this noisy transition. The harsh shrieking drilling washed over me like the white noise of street traffic. My roommate was awake and she didn't do anything either. We voiced curiosity, asking *now what are they doing*, but we made no moves for escape. It must have woken up some of my neighbors, but I didn't hear anybody stir. I can picture all my neighbors in the same state we were in, frozen and open to whatever horrible escalation was taking place.

We live in unit 102, right by the front entrance, so we overheard neighbors discovering that there was no way out. We heard them shout and curse like it was just another grievance with the building's management, the same way we grumbled and cursed when the hot water stopped working. We haven't discussed our imprisonment with any of them. I don't think any of the neighbors are talking with each other. Speech has left me: my roommate and I don't talk much anymore between ourselves. Don't hear neighbors bicker like we used to. We're all too exhausted. Resignation has sunk into our bones as palpable as the cold. We never attempted desperate escape, we never raged at the metal barriers blocking our windows and the front door, never tried to break through. The most we did was force open the frozen window and press our hands against the corrugated metal sheet, feeling its inflexibility, feeling the hopelessness of trying to overcome it. We didn't work at it with a knife or throw chairs at it in frustration. We sank into depressive weeps, but even that proved too tiring.

Everything's flattened in the inescapable cold, flattened and faded, everything like colors and emotions. Flattened and faded. There's a sterile staleness thinning the air. Everything's quieted, as if it's muffled in snow. The cat doesn't speak and charge into her zoomies anymore, she slinks and curls into a shivering ball. She wheezes sometimes. I don't know how long she'll last like this. I don't know how long we'll last like this. Yet even as we slump into expiration, somehow the fruit flies are back in full force. Impossible in this cold, but I see them hover over the crusty dishes in the sink, the garbage we can't take out, and the shower drain. Maybe it's a hallucination. They can't survive this temperature, I don't think. I would hate it if they could, if they will, if they're really here. I want to recall how I used to kill them. My poison sprays and deadly claps. Crumpled dead and blood dotted on my palm, I always found it odd they had blood in them. Fruit flies appear smaller than even a drop of blood can be.

I wish my mind could wander, but it keeps stalling.

Actually, I now know how long I'll last like this. It's now the start of the next month, weird how time gets flattened in a box of text. At the dawn of the 2nd of February, I heard noises upstairs, a succession of sounds that sounded underwater: two explosive pops flitted through the grey silence, followed by the thud of two heavy entities falling directly to the floor, followed by the knock knock, knock knock of heavy boots treading the floor, which was soon accented with the hiss of heavy objects dragged across the floor. Distinct gunfire, and it was definitely in the unit above ours, where Omi lives with her kid. She probably didn't have enough for the month after paying the back rent. So it all stands before me now. Knowing how much money was left in my account, and factoring in what would be the last auto deposit from my job, I should have enough for two more months of rent.

So two more months left. Two more months left to go. Two more months to go. Two more months to go. I want to keep typing it, I'm scaring myself. Tempted to curl into a loop. Two more months to go, or sooner, we starve or choose. Two more months. Two more months to go. Enough for two more months or sooner. Enough. Enough. Enough. Enough. Enough enough enough enough enough enough enough enough enough enough e nough enough enough eoughn ernough enough enough enough enough e nouhg enough enough e noug enoug enough enougjn enough enouhgn enough enough enough