

I Used to be a Landlord

By [Bill Corden](#) (March 2024)



The Rent Collector, by John Ritchie, mid 19th C

I never wanted to be a landlord; it sort of fell into my lap when I got married for the second time just 23 years ago. I had an apartment and my new wife had one, too. Before I knew it, we owned two properties. She somehow talked me into buying

two more houses. Don't ask me how I did it, I'm not rich by any stretch and I was only making peanuts at my job.

My wife, though, was and is a great planner and she felt we needed a house to accommodate her Mom and her daughter who were coming from China to live with us, so we had to have somewhere we could all fit into.

By some sort of financial legerdemain, we got the house we live in at the moment and bought another one while holding on to the two apartments. At that point, I became a landlord with tenants and my troubles started.

Tenants cause you grief because many don't want to do anything for themselves and think that all landlords' wallets are fat with money. They want to be your friend until you have to make some decision for the benefit of your own survival. Then, all bets are off.

I'm not particularly well-off and I'm absolutely hopeless at any sort of repairs, so my new position began to stress my fragile psyche.

Me? I pay my bills on time, I pay my mortgage and faithfully report my meagre income. I feed my family and keep them warm and dry, live a very modest lifestyle, hardly ever buy new clothes and we manage the family's affairs quite well, I would say.

Before I go on, I should let the reader know that I have long since unburdened myself of the 2 apartments and the extra house, mainly because a landlord's life is a never-ending cycle of problems with tenants and emergencies. Those who've been in my situation will understand immediately. Those who haven't? Well, you're lucky.

We live happy and stress free now. Me, my Wife, and her 92-year-old Mom in a home that's called a "Vancouver Special" here. Our daughter is living comfortably with her two kids in

her own house in Edmonton.

Of course, you can only live in one house at a time so we had to rent out the other properties, lower than the going rate because we're "nice" people, to cover the costs.

Here is where you find out that other people's priorities and responsibilities are widely different from your own.

Here's the highlights of the lessons we learned in our one year of the excruciating experience. Here's where you learn that people mistake "kindness" for "softness" and so take advantage for their own comfort.

Our most troublesome renter was a visitor from outer space.

He pays for his cable, he pays for his mobile phone and internet, all with every additional gizmo and app you can possibly fit in.

He takes two weeks vacation down in Mexico or wherever, twice a year, has a new Lexus, pays \$750 a ticket for a rock concert at the local amphitheater. but he can't pay his freakin' rent?

A card carrying member of the RnR party (aka rights with no responsibilities).

He is too stupid or lazy to do even a minimal repair like tightening a screw or replacing a light bulb or unblocking the sink that they themselves blocked. He doesn't know how to cut the grass, but wanted to dig over the lawn to put in a vegetable garden.

Talk to my friends about it and the reply is monotonous, "that's tenants for you!"

Lesson number two that we learned was "never rent a place to a girl whose parents come with them and guarantee the rent if she should miss it." (For some reason it's never, ever done with the son.)

The guarantee means they're trying to get rid of the troublesome girl from their own house because she's been bringing her druggie/loser boyfriend home in the middle of the night and he's been nicking anything of value that's been left unguarded.

The boyfriend invariably works at a coffee bar or The Bread Garden, or some trendy breakfast place and, in the parents' eyes, is a total waste of space.

Your suspicions are validated when you get a call from the apartment building supervisor alerting you to the fact that there's all sorts of undesirables coming in and out of the building at all hours of the night. Yeah, you're right. He's dealing. No wonder he's as skinny as a rake.

Lesson Three: Nonsmokers are just a joke. They will lie straight-faced to you, swearing on a stack of King James' that they are nonsmokers.

Of course, smoking weed isn't legally smoking so you can't count that. It's only when the neighbours on the next balcony complain to the supervisor about the fog of smoke that wafts their way every night about midnight that you find out. Others think that they can get away with a sneaky puff by taping duct tape around the bedroom door in the belief that it's all held in by reverse air pressure.

Lesson Four: Pets. You say no pets because they stink the place up, leave hair all over the carpets and scratch all the paintwork. They growl at the other residents' illegal pets and leave their business in the carefully manicured gardens of the complex.

I've got news for you, If you say "no pets," the pets are a coming. Because pets can't speak, your renter can always deny they own them, especially cats. The pets don't usually show up until the renters have got the lie of the land and cotton on to the comings and goings of the owner. When they move out,

they leave half of their mangy dog's coat (along with the pet smell) behind them.

These are but a few of the rocks on the road, blasting loud music and parties 'til the break of dawn, trashing the place etc. are way down the list.

So there I was—the squarest peg in the roundest hole, raised by a Mum who knew that even in the slum we grew up in, the rent was the first thing you had to pay to keep a roof over your head and you used what was leftover to feed and clothe yourself.

Not these guys. Cell phones, Luxury SUVs, brand name clothing, garbage cans full of Uber eats and Door Dash packaging, the front yard overgrown with weeds, and the venetian blinds bent and battered half across the windows.

Giant TV screens in most of the rooms, the same garbage cans overflowing inside, because they're too enervated to meet the garbage collection schedule. Litter, trash, and toys strewn over the property.

We couldn't take it any more! We both decided at the same instant that the property/landlord game wasn't for us We sold all three of them off in the space of a month. Oh the relief!

We sold out just before there was a huge uplift in market prices but we didn't care—we didn't have to deal with tenants any more.

The moral of the story? Don't get into it unless you are able to separate business from friendships. Don't touch it unless you have the financial resources and mental toughness to weather the storms. (I don't, that's for sure.)

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