



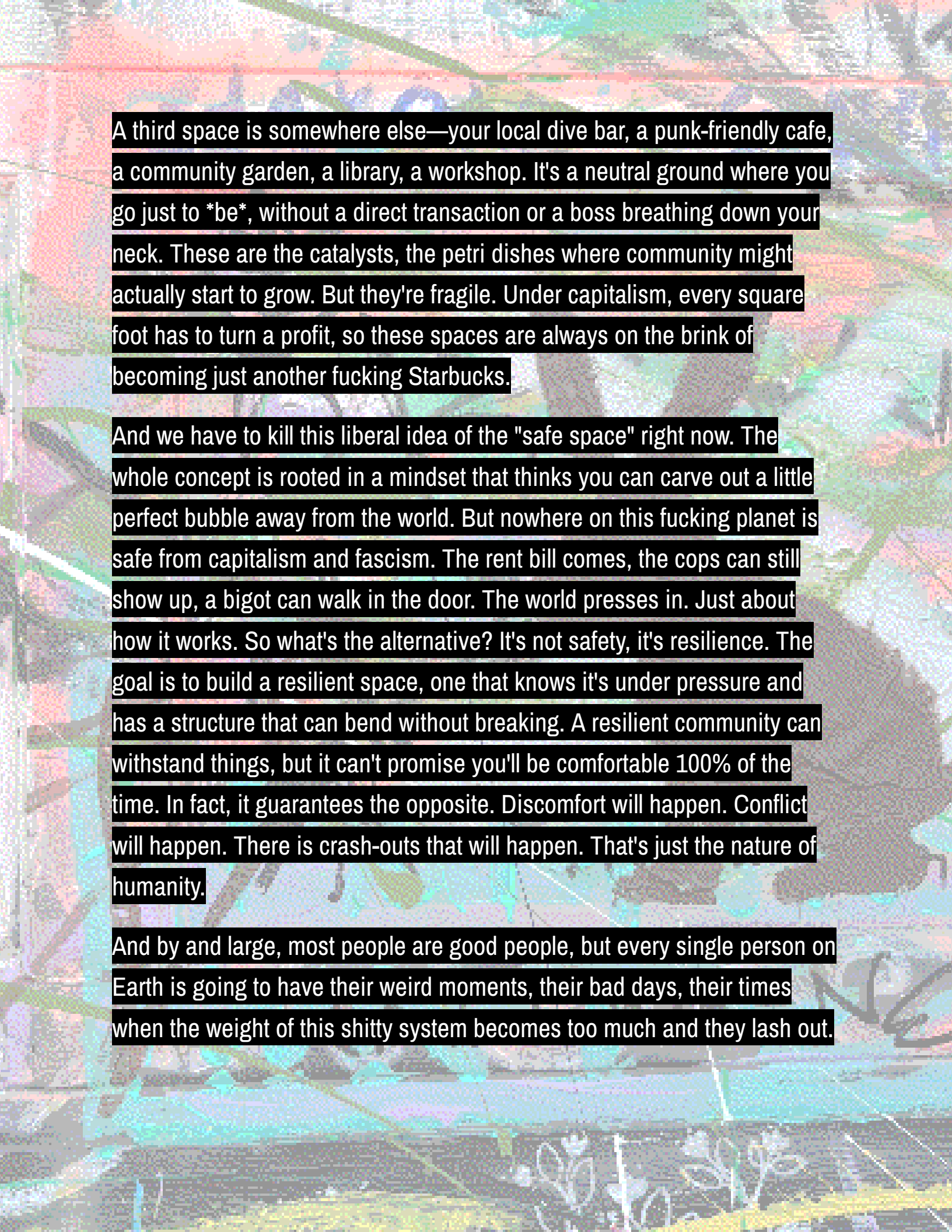
Community. Is.

Hard.

Community is difficult. Let's just start there. It's hard, and it's new to a lot of us, because if we're being completely honest, we act like communities are

this inherent thing that we're just given. But we live in a hyper-alienated, late-stage capitalist, already-collapsing empire where your neighbors are strangers and your real friends might be scattered across time zones. So it's really not. I guarantee you, you can have no community, and a lot of people do. A lot of people are doing whatever they can to seek it out, but they often get tricked by the online substitutes that offer a cheap dopamine fix instead of the real thing. When was the last time you truly relied on someone who wasn't family or a partner? When was the last time you had a disagreement with a friend and had to work it out face-to-face because you knew you'd see them next week regardless? That's the muscle we've all let atrophy.

This is where third spaces come in. You hear that term a lot, but what does it actually mean? Think about it: your home is your first space. Your job, or school, that's your second space. Both are defined by obligation and, let's be real, often by hierarchy.



A third space is somewhere else—your local dive bar, a punk-friendly cafe, a community garden, a library, a workshop. It's a neutral ground where you go just to *be*, without a direct transaction or a boss breathing down your neck. These are the catalysts, the petri dishes where community might actually start to grow. But they're fragile. Under capitalism, every square foot has to turn a profit, so these spaces are always on the brink of becoming just another fucking Starbucks.

And we have to kill this liberal idea of the "safe space" right now. The whole concept is rooted in a mindset that thinks you can carve out a little perfect bubble away from the world. But nowhere on this fucking planet is safe from capitalism and fascism. The rent bill comes, the cops can still show up, a bigot can walk in the door. The world presses in. Just about how it works. So what's the alternative? It's not safety, it's resilience. The goal is to build a resilient space, one that knows it's under pressure and has a structure that can bend without breaking. A resilient community can withstand things, but it can't promise you'll be comfortable 100% of the time. In fact, it guarantees the opposite. Discomfort will happen. Conflict will happen. There is crash-outs that will happen. That's just the nature of humanity.

And by and large, most people are good people, but every single person on Earth is going to have their weird moments, their bad days, their times when the weight of this shitty system becomes too much and they lash out.

In an ideal community, in an ideal world, when someone crashes out—when they burn a bridge, when interpersonal drama explodes—there should be a path for them to come back.

This is where the idea of restorative justice, not carceral punishment, comes in. It's not about being soft; it's about being smart. It hinges on accountability, not banishment. The question isn't "How do we punish this person?" but "What was the harm done, and how can it be repaired?" Yeah, you fucked up, but we all fuck up, and we all want the same goal. We like you on your good days. We enjoy your friendship. But if there's an expectation that there can never be conflict, that any conflict is inherently bad and we have to remove anyone who creates it, you create a sterile box. That's not a community at all. It's just recreating the same disposable, corporate logic we're drowning in. Being able to handle the conflict is part of the struggle. It's the fucking work.

This is where the capitalist algorithm driven online world fuckin' ruins everything. It gives us the illusion of community without any of the friction that actually builds trust. Is a Discord server a community? Maybe, in the most ideal way, but it's not the same. You can just log off. You can block someone. Is an Instagram following a community? Are the people commenting on your posts really your friends? Do they have your back when you're sick and need groceries? Would they spot you twenty bucks until payday? I would say no. But the illusion is there, and it's powerful. These algorithms are just mirrors, showing you what you want to see. If

you're feeding it your own terrible tendencies, you'll find terrible people to amplify them. That's not community. Because in a real, in-person community, someone is able to call you out on your flaws, on your bullshit, and give you the space to improve. That's why you have to allow conflict.

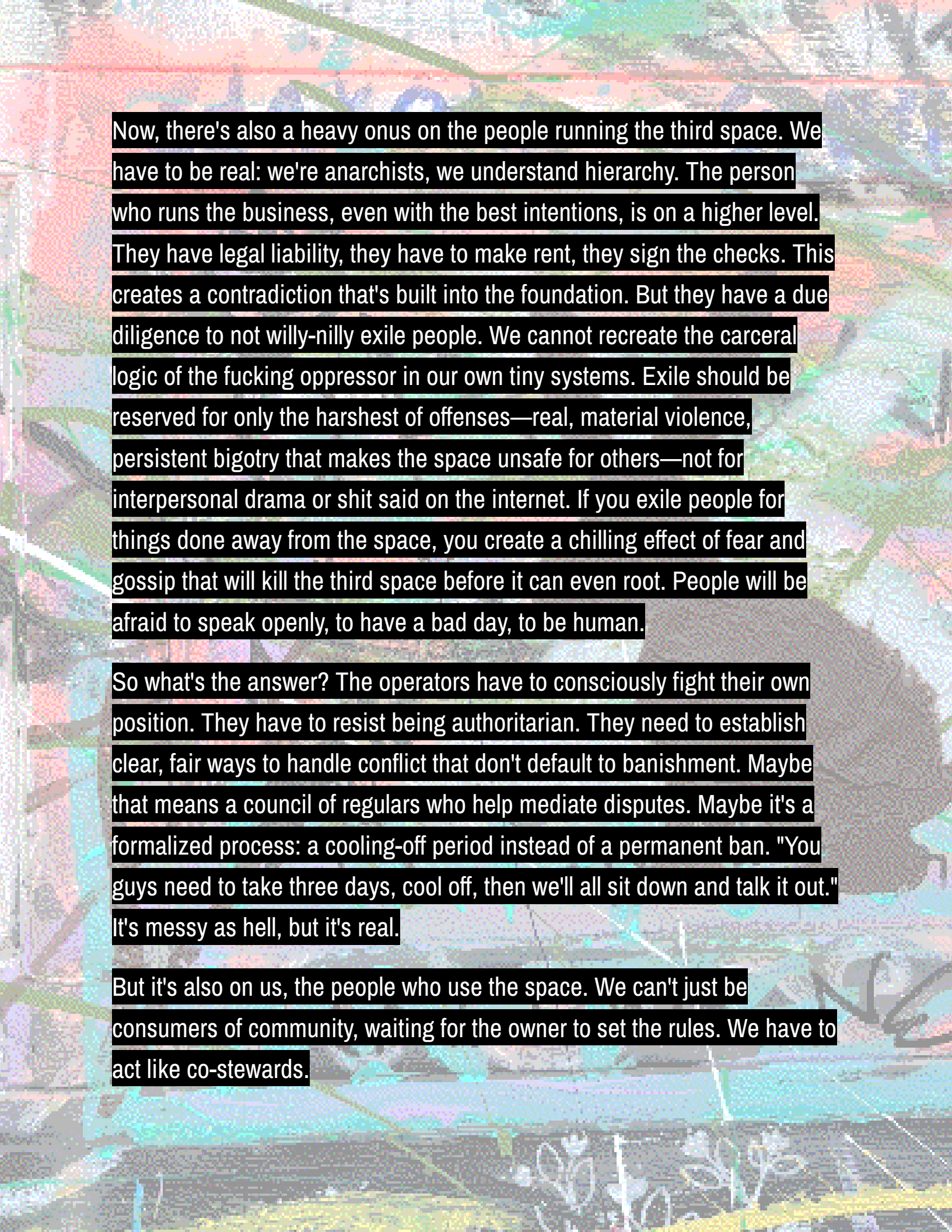
You can crash out really hard, honestly, and you can come back from it if you're willing to step up, be an adult, apologize, and squash the beef. The beef can almost always be squashed because we all want the same thing: to not be so goddamn alone.

But people don't seem to understand how rare a real third space is, and one that actually forms a community is even rarer. Your local Starbucks might be a third space, but it doesn't have a community. It has customers. And I think people take that block-button logic from the internet and apply it to real life. You have to be able to exist in the same room as people you don't like. You don't have to be best friends, but you have to be cordial. You have to be decent. You can't just block them in real life. What does that even look like? Pretending they're a ghost? It's childish.

And this is crucial: you have to contain the conflict within the space, not export it. Let's say you and your friend get into a fistfight in the parking lot. It happens. One option is you both keep showing up, give each other a wide space for a bit, and let time heal the wound. The other option, the worst thing you can do, is to get on the internet and tell a one-sided story to try and get people to stop coming to the location. You're not solving the problem; you're weaponizing a mob of outsiders, people not even part of

your drama, and you're destabilizing the whole commons. You're killing the thing for everyone because you can't handle the discomfort of a real-world conflict. You're treating a physical space like a Twitter thread.

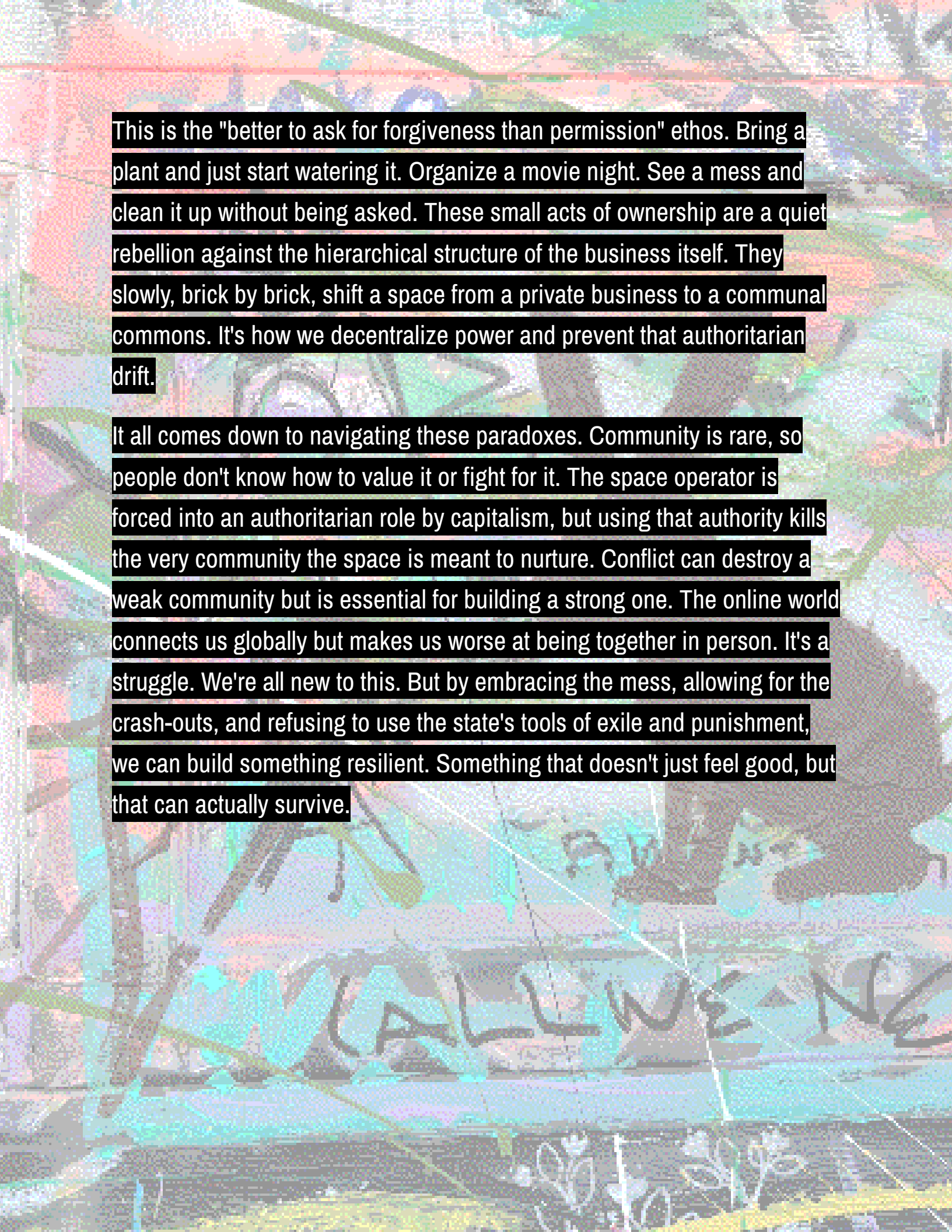




Now, there's also a heavy onus on the people running the third space. We have to be real: we're anarchists, we understand hierarchy. The person who runs the business, even with the best intentions, is on a higher level. They have legal liability, they have to make rent, they sign the checks. This creates a contradiction that's built into the foundation. But they have a due diligence to not willy-nilly exile people. We cannot recreate the carceral logic of the fucking oppressor in our own tiny systems. Exile should be reserved for only the harshest of offenses—real, material violence, persistent bigotry that makes the space unsafe for others—not for interpersonal drama or shit said on the internet. If you exile people for things done away from the space, you create a chilling effect of fear and gossip that will kill the third space before it can even root. People will be afraid to speak openly, to have a bad day, to be human.

So what's the answer? The operators have to consciously fight their own position. They have to resist being authoritarian. They need to establish clear, fair ways to handle conflict that don't default to banishment. Maybe that means a council of regulars who help mediate disputes. Maybe it's a formalized process: a cooling-off period instead of a permanent ban. "You guys need to take three days, cool off, then we'll all sit down and talk it out." It's messy as hell, but it's real.

But it's also on us, the people who use the space. We can't just be consumers of community, waiting for the owner to set the rules. We have to act like co-stewards.



This is the "better to ask for forgiveness than permission" ethos. Bring a plant and just start watering it. Organize a movie night. See a mess and clean it up without being asked. These small acts of ownership are a quiet rebellion against the hierarchical structure of the business itself. They slowly, brick by brick, shift a space from a private business to a communal commons. It's how we decentralize power and prevent that authoritarian drift.

It all comes down to navigating these paradoxes. Community is rare, so people don't know how to value it or fight for it. The space operator is forced into an authoritarian role by capitalism, but using that authority kills the very community the space is meant to nurture. Conflict can destroy a weak community but is essential for building a strong one. The online world connects us globally but makes us worse at being together in person. It's a struggle. We're all new to this. But by embracing the mess, allowing for the crash-outs, and refusing to use the state's tools of exile and punishment, we can build something resilient. Something that doesn't just feel good, but that can actually survive.