

Welcome to Hell

Hell is good. To live here, it is good. I really like it. It's the best thing that ever happened to me. It's the crowning joy of my life to exist in Hell. It's amazing. It's so perfect and gorgeous. That may shock you, but that's OK. I'm not gonna lie. In fact, I can't. I can't do it. It's just not in me. It conflicts with my sense of integrity, with my belief in the truthful execution of one's own passions. I have to be honest—It's just in my character. And it's not just temperamental. It can also get physical: If I try to lie, I get all worked up. I shake—I start hyperventilate and sweat. I break out into hives. My mouth goes itchy and dry and my joints ache. My palms go clammy and I start to vomit, and I can't stop vomiting until I'm allowed to say something truthful. I'll vomit for hours, maybe even days (though I haven't pushed it that far), until I can utter out that one perfect phrase, inarguable. Like, "the sun is hot," or "the sea is vast," or "Hell is a super rad spot of amazing fun where you can really cut loose and be yourself." So believe me when I say that I'm not going to sit here and make up some story about how I hate Hell. Why subject myself to that? I'm not going to fake a lecture about how it's actually not a really excellent place to be. I know that's maybe what some people want to hear, but whatever—that's too bad. I'm just not that kind of person: a sycophant, a foul fucking dog, groveling after their approval. What have these people done for me, that would ask of me this betrayal? That would require of me the forfeiture of this dear conference, this coexistence with the gracious amity of Hell? They can go fuck themselves. I don't need them. I have Hell. I have this beautiful Hell that I live in, that I sleep in. I have Hell to hold me tight, to keep me warm. It calms me, Hell. It relaxes me. My beautiful Hell. My beautiful, spreading wave of Hell. I love you. I love being in Hell. It's like a nuzzle to my chest. It's like a brume of dew upon my brow, a swirl of cinnamon in my milk. It lifts my spirits just to describe it. I could go on: Hell is like the roiling scent of a lamb laying down in grass; Hell is like the last few fatigued breaths before the sweet drift of sleep; Hell is kind; Hell is munificent. Try and argue with me. Just try and tell me otherwise. You think I haven't heard what you have to say? What, that I'm about to be surprised? Thrown off keel and sent spinning into melodramatic spasms of self-doubt? "Hell is not good. You should not live in Hell." Oh, wow— what a fresh perspective. What a novel hypothesis. You must have really dug deep for that one. Please, tell me more. Enlighten me. "Hell is a rancid place of fear where terrible accidents are never far from befalling one's children." You think I don't hear that every day? That there isn't always, every day, that moment, in the middle of breakfast, that ghastly moment, just as I'm finally able to shovel one dense corner of toasted bread into my mouth, when some joker smashes their face through the window above my sink to vociferate righteously about the failure of Hell to provide adequate housing that conforms to code while remaining tastefully in-context with the surrounding neighborhood's architectural profile; or attract visionary entrepreneurs willing to invest in unique and quirky local businesses; or lobby for stricter parking laws that give the streets a more open, inviting feel; or efficiently organize the Annual Holiday Lights Contest; or institute school choice programs that give parents the resources to choose the education experience that best fits their child's needs; or update the farmers' market to accommodate a wider range of commodities that can meet the demands of a new, youngish, more discerning demographic of weekend shopper; or finally give our

cops the permission to really crack down on those unsavory elements whose misanthropic intransigence has for far too long held our community back from fulfilling its true potential, unlock its charms, polishing this all up and finally showing the world the kind of value that exists here—they go on, their jaw gumming out this litany. Their bloodied face swings to and fro. Their eye, slashed, deflates in its socket, dripping ooze. Their throat dangles dangerously close to the shards that line the window's damaged frame. Glass flecks dislodge from where they'd broken off in their cheek, in their eyebrow, in their forehead, to plink against my kitchen tiles while their voice, hoarse by now, rambles into an especially impassioned defense of the two party system as a modulating dialectic that prevents any one ideology from dominating the whole of society, therefore providing a fertile middle ground upon which progressive political development can take root and naturally flower at a pace that reflects the complexities of such a diverse and often contradictorily determined citizenry. It's disgusting. They're so loud. They're going to freak out my neighbors. Plus they're getting spittle everywhere. They're fucking up the clean dishes drying on the rack. I'm going to have to wash them all over again. I'm going to have to sweep up the broken glass and get this place into some semblance of shape before I have to leave for work, which I'm already late for after having spent the last 20 minutes or more listening to this bullshit. And then, on top of everything else, I'm going to have to fix the window. I'm going to have to call my landlord and explain that "it happened again, that thing with the window," which, even though it isn't my fault, is still for them an imposition, which imperils the stability of my lease because it creates in their mind an association of 1) me being in the apartment, with 2) the semi-regular occurrence of someone smashing their face through the kitchen window. This is not an association you want your landlord to have. It gets them into "problem solving mode," which is dangerous because of the supremely degraded set of incentivizing mechanisms a landlord's reality rests upon. Before you know it, they're calling you back, they're saying, "hey, look, that's a real bummer. I'll of course get someone over there to take care of it. But I think maybe this whole situation might require something more than just a quick fix, a new window and, ta-da, that's it. This might be a sign, you know? That it's time to modernize the whole rig—a new frame, state-of-the-art locking system, double-thick sound-cancelling security glass. And why stop there? We should look into remodeling the kitchen as well: new appliances, granite countertops. The works. Let me talk with my contractor and I'll get back to you. Of course, these improvements will have to be reflected in a renegotiated agreement between the two of us. It wouldn't be fair for me to bear the costs of this maintenance and not, in turn, be given the opportunity to recoup my expenses through a modest increase in allowable rent. Nothing too extravagant, I promise you. Just enough to cover the hugely significant cosmetic overhaul I'm about to rain down on you, plus all the infrastructural improvements that will have to happen simultaneously. Plus whatever they break, the contractors. You should probably cover that too. Oh, speaking of which—of course you'll have to let the contractors come in and work on it all, at a time that's most convenient for them. Because they've got other things to do. They've got other kitchens to build out. They're busy guys. Because they're the best! Everyone wants to have them. We're lucky, I'm telling you. Charmed. These guys are real masters of the craft. This could've gone to some morons. Some cheap assholes. You should count yourself lucky. I'm doing you a

damn favor, here. When it's 4AM and the doorbell rings, and you let these guys in and they start jack-hammering into your floor and throwing fixtures and appliances around, filling the air with dust and debris, and the smell of scorched wood and gas, you should be lying there in bed, just taking in the experience. Cause that's living, man. That's the shit. That's real life, right there—experiencing the pure artisanship of a great contractor ripping your kitchen to shreds hours before you have to get up for work. I'm sure you understand. I'm sure you get it. Right? You get, right? It's all good, right? It's all cool? We're good, yea? We're copacetic? We're on the same page? We see each other, here? Eye to eye? Hell yea we do." Hell yea we do.