

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE GAME
CHANGE THE RULES



ALTERNATIVE MODES OF VIDEOGAME PRODUCTION

MARIE LEBLANC FLANAGAN

"IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE GAME, CHANGE THE RULES" IS A FICTIONAL STORY ROOTED IN THE REAL EXPERIENCES OF GAME WORKERS.

THIS COMIC DRAWS FROM 88 INTERVIEWS AND SURVEYS WITH MEMBERS OF WORKER CO-OPERATIVES, GAME DEVELOPERS IN THE PROCESS OF STARTING A WORKER CO-OPERATIVE, STUDIOS EXPLORING CO-OPERATIVE VALUES, GAME UNION ORGANISERS, INDUSTRY LABOUR EXPERTS, AND OTHER PEOPLE WHO MAKE GAMES.

WE HOPE TO ADD TO THE IMPORTANT CONVERSATIONS HAPPENING WITHIN OUR COMMUNITIES ABOUT HOW WE WORK TOGETHER.

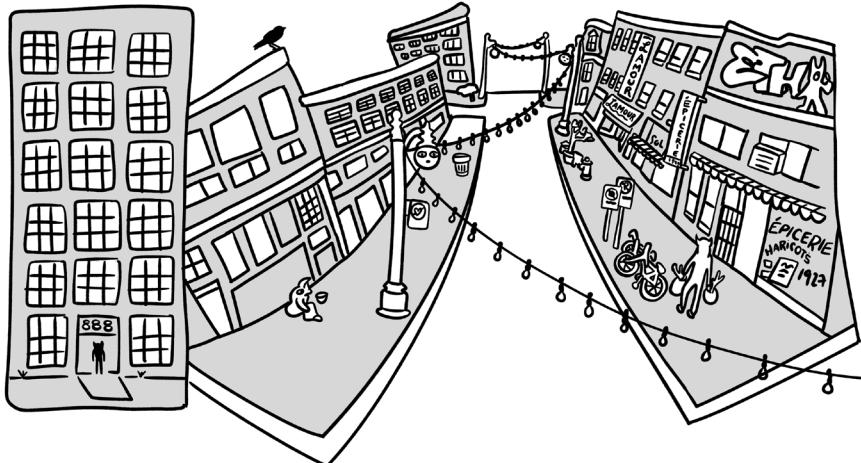
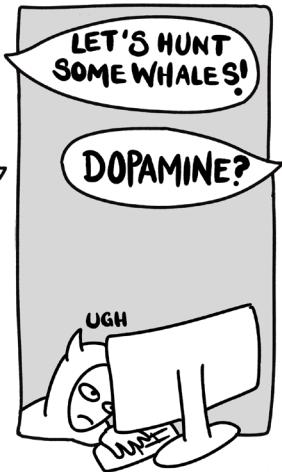
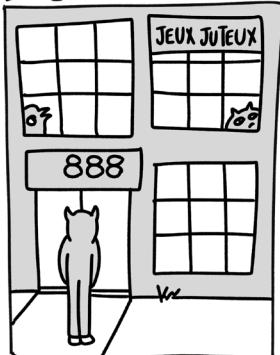
MEET OUR FRIENDS







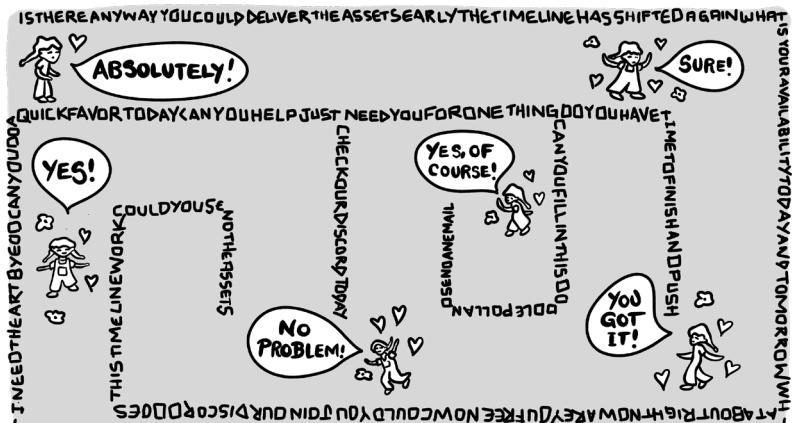
MEET ZED

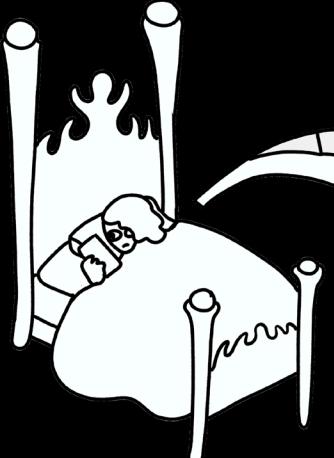




MEET JAY







CO
OPS

EMI
CAL
LABOUR
STRUCTURES

WORKER
OWNED
VIDEO GAME
CO-OPS!

CO
OPS

CO
OPS

4
TUP
TUP

EXTREME
EMAIL
DREAD

HOW
TO
SAY

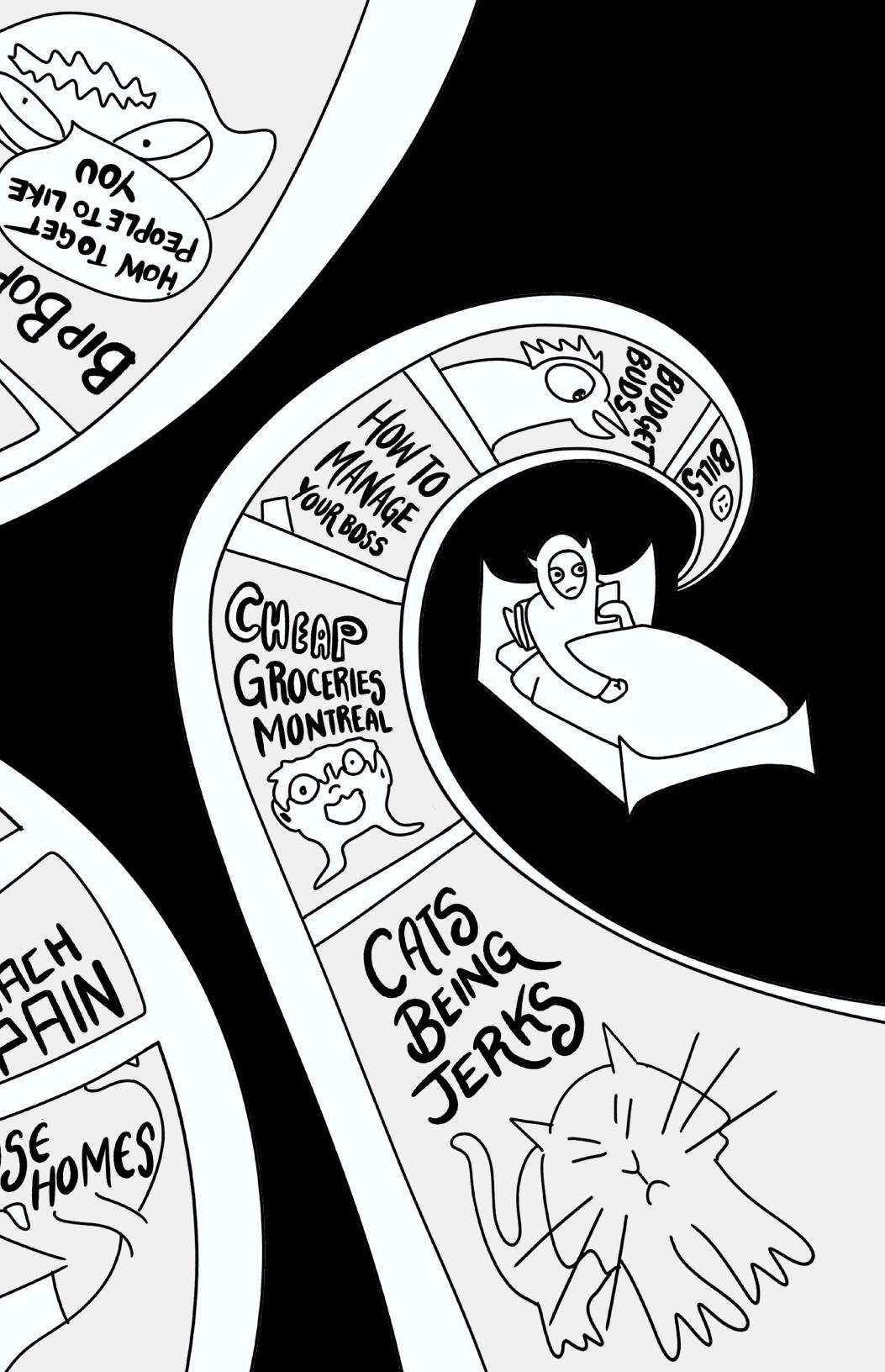
BipBop

When I
say no
I feel like
Timating

10 TIPS
FOR STOM

TREE HOU





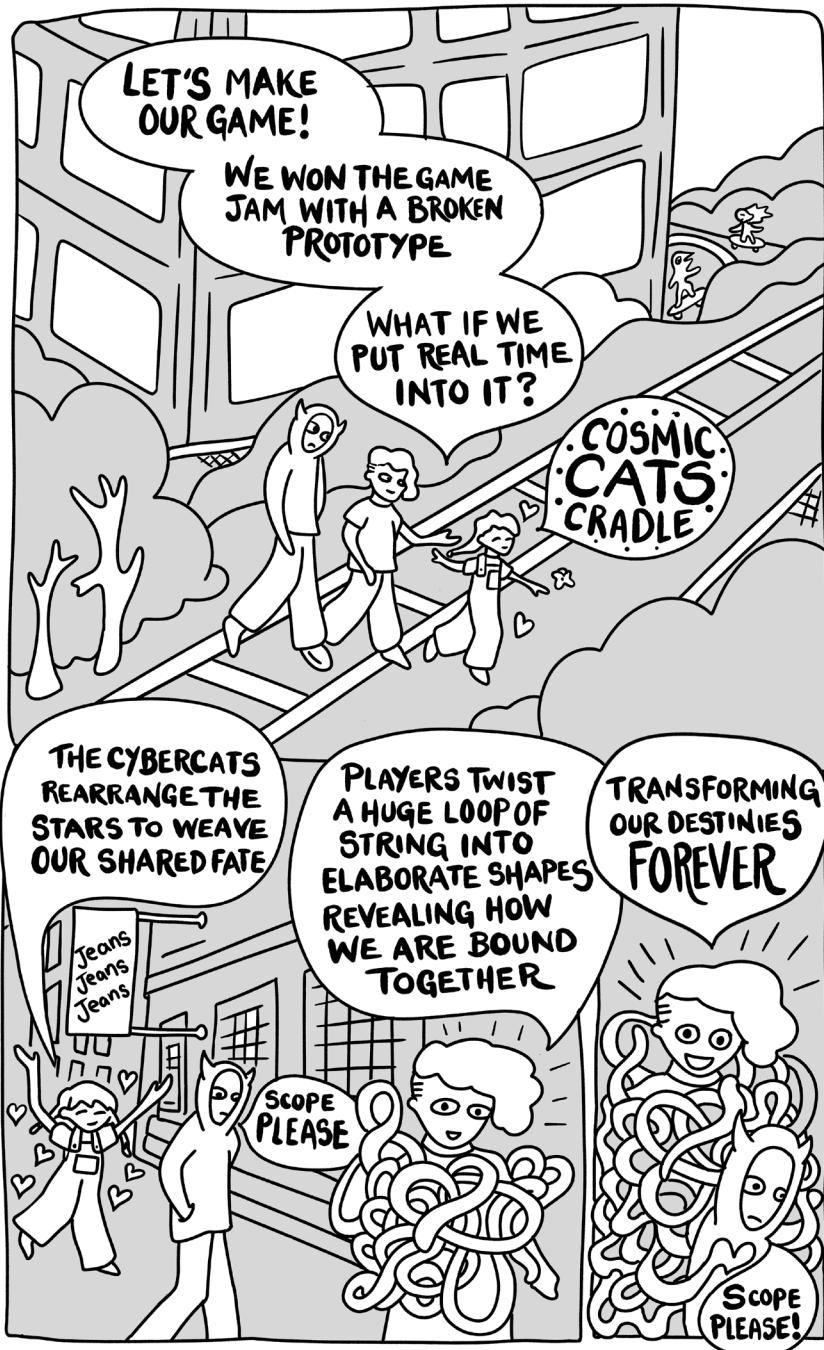
HOW TO
MANAGE
YOUR BOSS

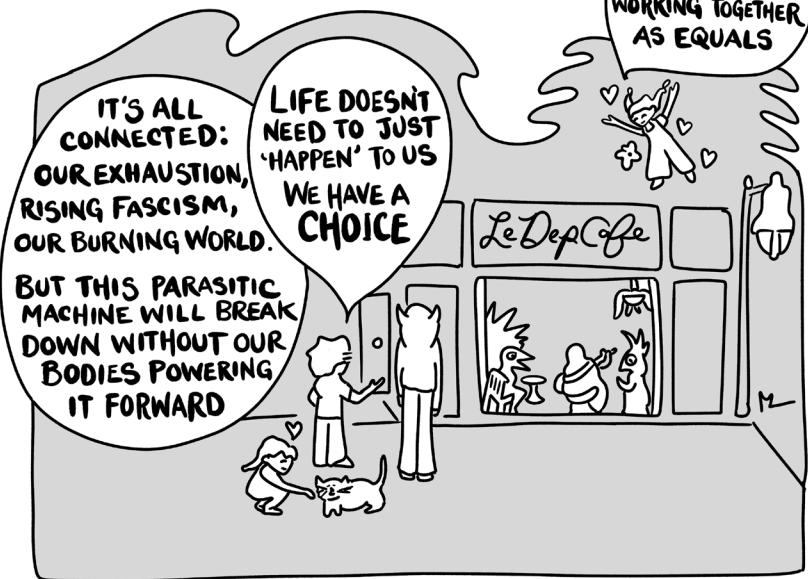
CHEAP
GROCERIES
MONTREAL

CATS
BEING
JERKS

PAIN
RACH
HOMES

DIP BOY
HOW TO GET YOU
PEOPLE TO LIKE

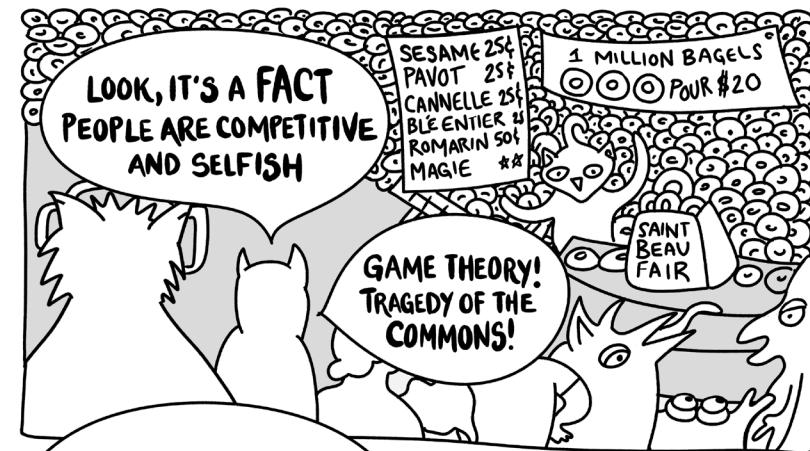




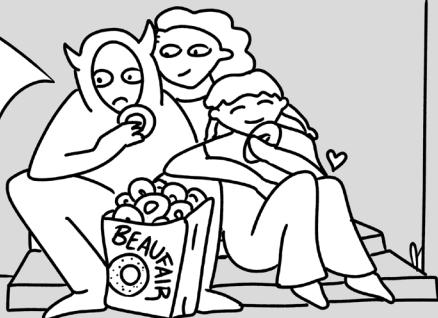
CAFÉ MEETING







FINE, BUT
WE'RE STUCK IN
THE MORASS OF
CAPITALISM
ANYTHING WE
MAKE IS BUILT
INSIDE OF
THIS MESS



IF YOU DON'T
LIKE THE GAME
**CHANGE THE
RULES**

I DON'T
LIKE THE GAME



CHANGE THE RULES

CO-OP 101

WHAT IS A CO-OP?



A WORKER CO-OP IS A BUSINESS THAT IS OWNED AND DEMOCRATICALLY CONTROLLED BY THE WORKERS.

EVERY CO-OP IS UNIQUE, THE MEMBERS DECIDE ON THE STRUCTURE AND CORE RULES IN THE BYLAWS.

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

ALL CO-OPS ARE BASED ON SHARED CORE VALUES: SELF-HELP, SELF-RESPONSIBILITY, DEMOCRACY, EQUALITY, EQUITY, AND SOLIDARITY.

THE CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLES ARE:

- ✓ OPEN AND VOLUNTARY MEMBERSHIP
- ✓ DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL (ONE MEMBER, ONE VOTE)
- ✓ MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION
- ✓ AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE
- ✓ EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND INFORMATION
- ✓ COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES
- ✓ CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY



MYTHS

CO-OP MYTHS



MYTH 1 THERE ARE NO LEADERS IN CO-OPS
WORKERS DECIDE ON ANY HIERARCHIES AND VOTE IN
ANY BOSSSES OR BOARDS.

MYTH 2 CO-OPS REQUIRE INFINITE MEETINGS
WORKERS DECIDE TOGETHER ON DECISION MAKING
AND HOW MANY MEETINGS THEY WANT TO HAVE.

MYTH 3 ALL CO-OPS ARE GOOD AND ONLY DO GOOD
CO-OPS REFLECT THE NEEDS AND VALUES OF MEMBERS.
THEY AREN'T A MAGICAL FIX FOR SOCIETAL PROBLEMS.

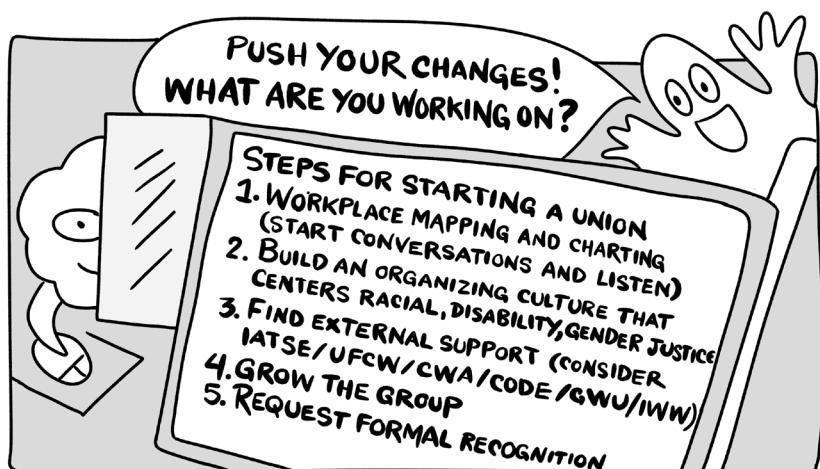
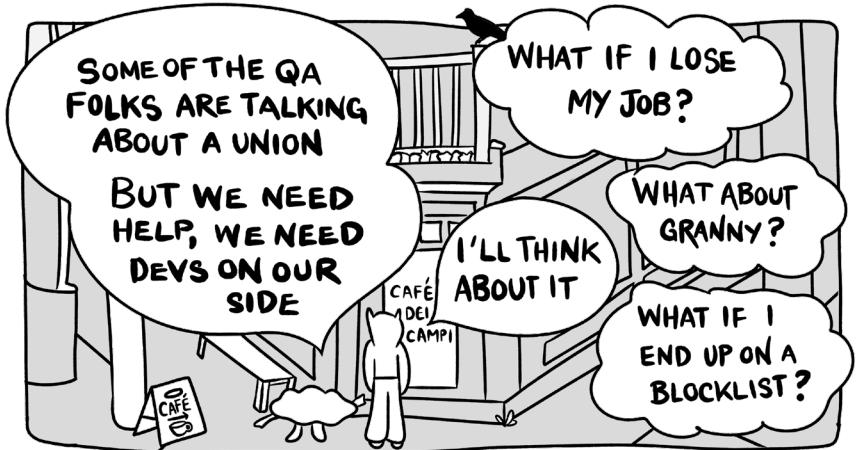
MYTH 4 ALL CO-OPS ARE WORKER-OWNED
ALL CO-OPS INVOLVE SOME SHARED OWNERSHIP, BUT
ONLY WORKER CO-OPS ARE COMPLETELY RUN AND
CONTROLLED BY THE WORKERS! FOR EXAMPLE,
CONSUMER CO-OPS ARE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!

MYTH 5 CO-OPS CAN'T GET FUNDING
CO-OPS CAN GET FUNDING, LOANS, AND SOCIAL FINANCE GRANTS!

MYTH 6 EVERYONE MAKES THE SAME SALARY
WORKERS DECIDE TOGETHER HOW TO DISTRIBUTE MONEY!
SOME CHOOSE FLAT SALARIES, SOME PAY MORE FOR SENIORITY,
SPECIFIC SKILLS, OR HOURS WORKED.

MYTH 7 CO-OPS ARE THE SAME AROUND THE WORLD
EVERY REGION HAS THEIR OWN LAWS ABOUT CO-OPS, BUT
THE CORE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES ARE SHARED WORLDWIDE.





LE NOMBRE D'APPELS
ÉTANT ACTUELLEMENT
ÉLEVÉ, NOUS VOUS
REMERCIOS DE
CONTINUER À
PATIENTER

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ÉLEVÉ NOUS VOUS
REMERCIOS DE
CONTINUER À
PATIENTER

LE NOMBRE D'APPELS ÉTANT - BONJOUR? BONJOUR?

BONJOUR - UM JE VEUX SAVOIR,
UM, UNEMPLOYMENT -UM - I'M SO
SORRY - CAN I SPEAK ENGLISH?

UM - SOLIDARITÉ SOCIALE
CONTRAINTE SÉVERES -

I KNOW EVERYONE HAS BAD
DAYS. YES, I'M WORKING NOW
BUT I'M HEADED FOR A
CRASH

NO, I CAN'T GET A DOCTOR
TO SIGN OFF, I CAN'T
GET A DOCTOR

YOU NEED TO GET YOUR DOCTOR TO SIGN OFF ON YOUR SICKNESS
BENEFITS, THEN WHEN THAT ENDS YOU NEED TO REQUEST FOR
REGULAR BENEFITS, THEN AFTER A YEAR YOU CAN APPLY FOR
WELFARE, AND THEN
TO SIGN A NEW PAPER
PERMANENT DISABILITY
FROM WORKING AND
APPLY FOR SOCIAL
SOME SUPPORTING
COURSE, FROM YOUR

BUT I
DON'T
HAVE
A DOCTOR

THAT PREVENTS YOU
ONLY THEN YOU CAN
SOLIDARITY, WITH
DOCUMENTS, OF
DOCTOR -





WE NEED BYLAWS FOR OUR CO-OP. IT'S WHERE WE DECIDE HOW WE SPLIT PROFITS, MAKE DECISIONS, ADD MEMBERS, DEAL WITH CONFLICT, DEAL WITH **EVERYTHING!**

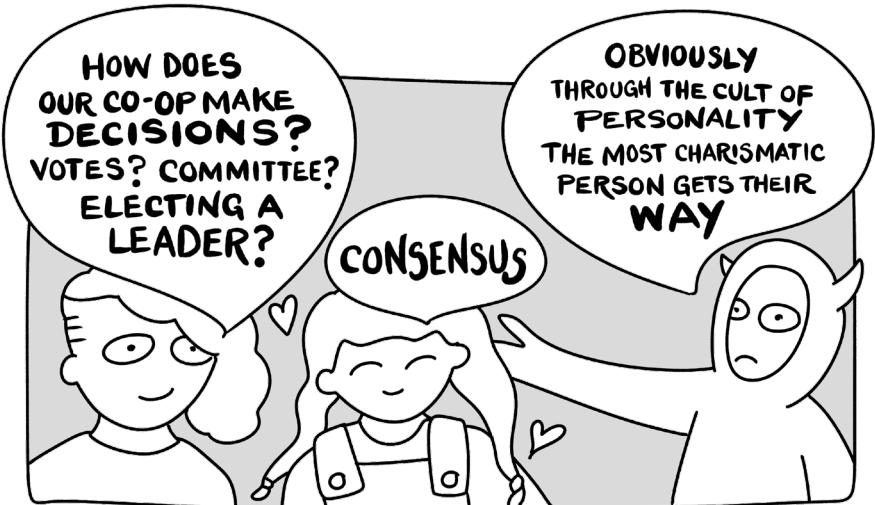
I DON'T WANT A BUNCH OF BORING UNREADABLE RULES CAN WE MAKE IT UP AS WEGO?

=NO=
WE NEED TO AGREE ON HOW THINGS WORK!
OR WE'LL END UP WITH INVISIBLE, TOXIC SYSTEMS

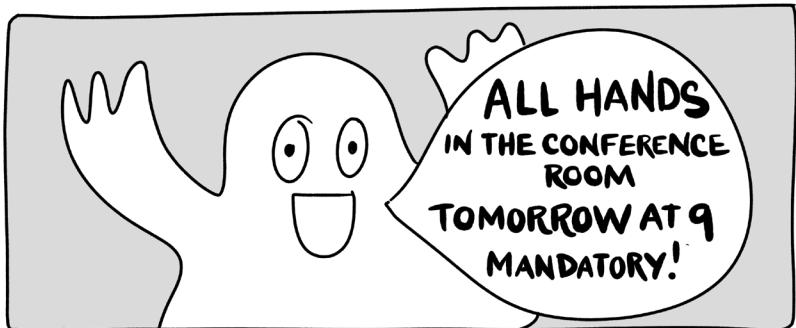
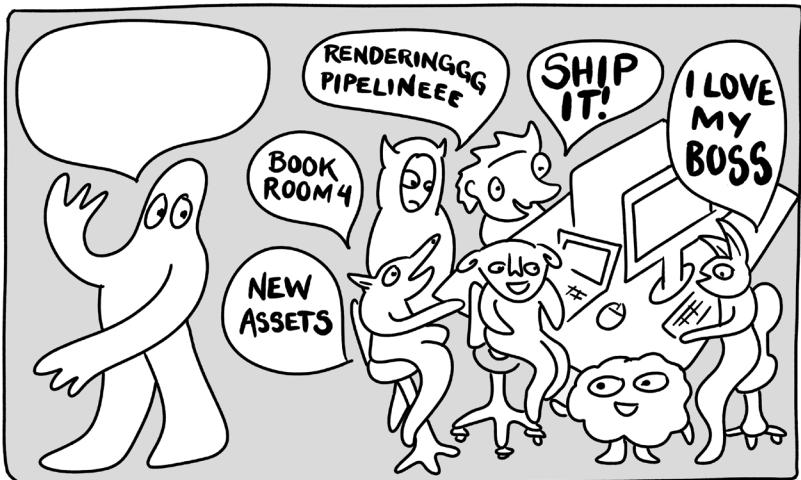
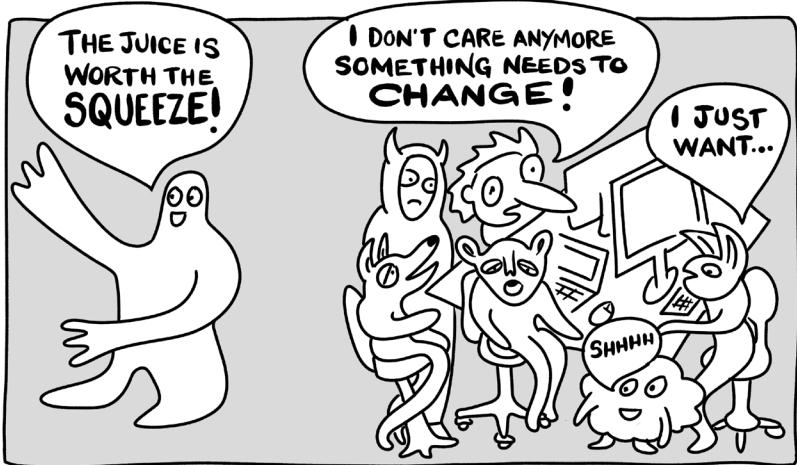
I HEARD ABOUT A STUDIO WITH WEAK BYLAWS SOMEONE VOTED IN ALL THEIR FRIENDS AND TOOK OVER THE WHOLE COMPANY

TYRANNY OF STRUCTURELESSNESS

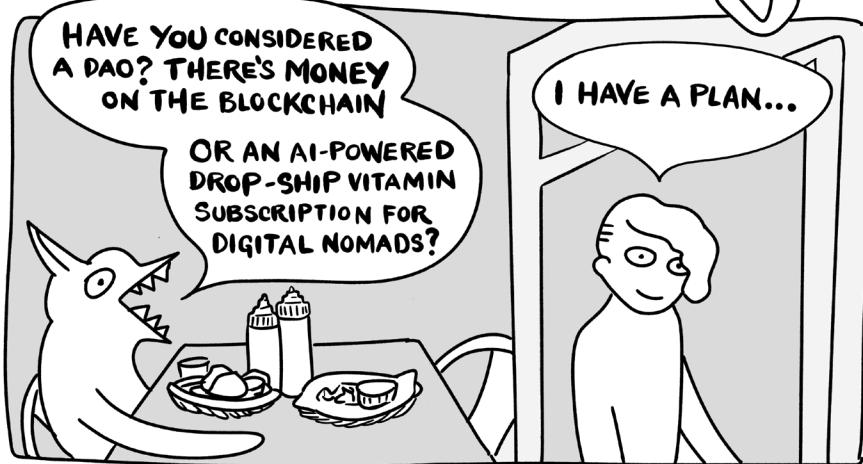
OKAY
OKAY
OKAY







BUSINESS ADVICE FOR BEE

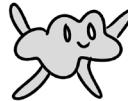


FUNDING IDEAS



PUBLISHERS

- PROS: WILL FUND A CO-OP, NO LOSS TO US IF THE GAME FLOPS
- CONS: PROJECT BASED, COMPETITIVE, TAKE 30%+ OF REVENUE



ANGEL INVESTORS

- PROS: BIG BUCKS! DAD KNOWS SOME
- CONS: WON'T WANT US BECAUSE THEY WANT EXPLOSIVE GROWTH, VOTING CONTROL, AND EQUITY

ARTS COUNCILS

- PROS: CREATIVE FREEDOM
- CONS: COMPETITIVE, PROJECT BASED, PREFER TO FUND INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS, SOME DON'T THINK GAMES ARE ART (UGH!)



CANADIAN MEDIA FUND

- PROS: BIG BUDGETS
- CONS: COMPETITIVE, ADMIN OVERHEAD, HARD FOR A NEW STUDIO TO GET



CROWDFUNDING

- PROS: GET FUNDED BY THE FANS
- CONS: UNPAID WORK, PRESSURE, OFTEN UNSUCCESSFUL

BANK LOANS

- PROS: GET MONEY
- CONS: BIG RISK, WOULD NEED A COSIGNER (UGH, DAD)

BANK OF DAD

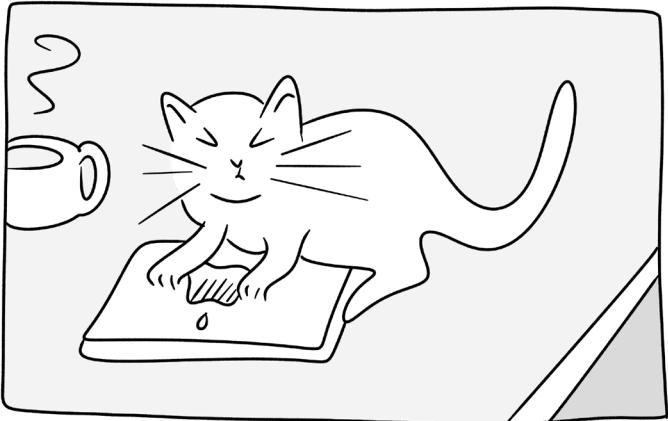
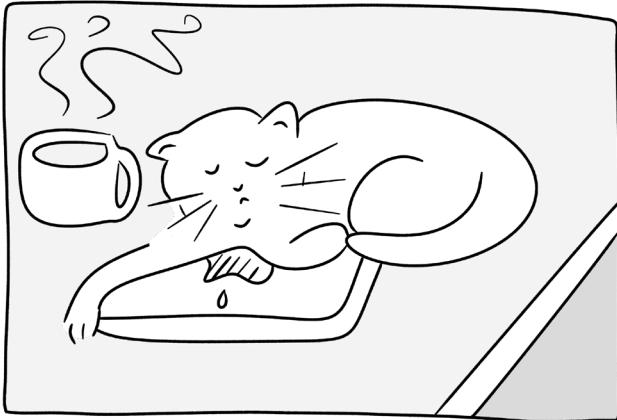
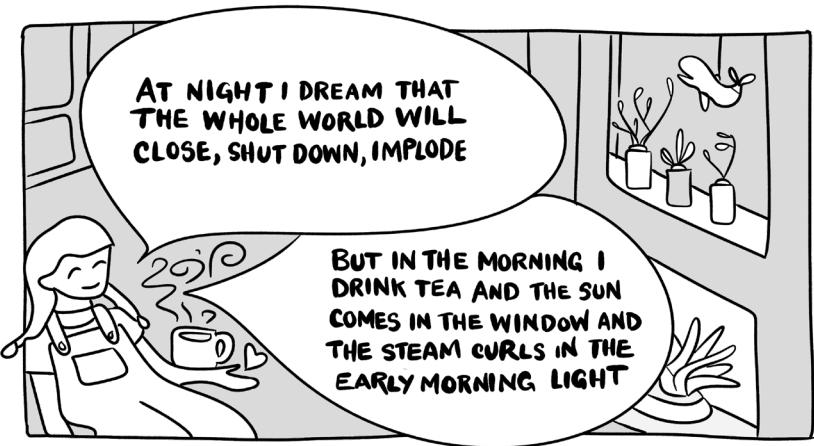
- PROS: NOT VERY COMPETITIVE
- CONS: DAD'S NOT GOING TO SAY YES



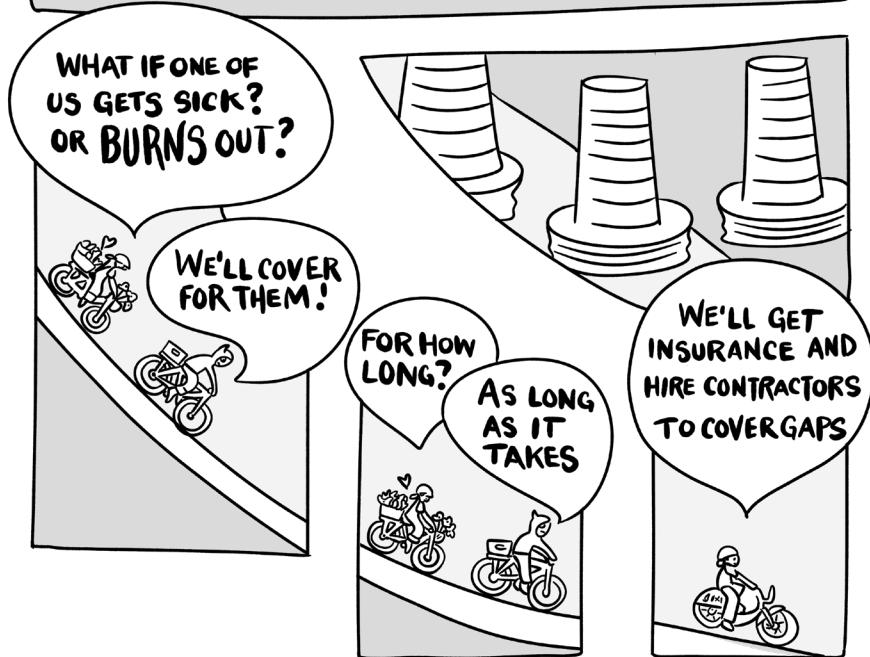
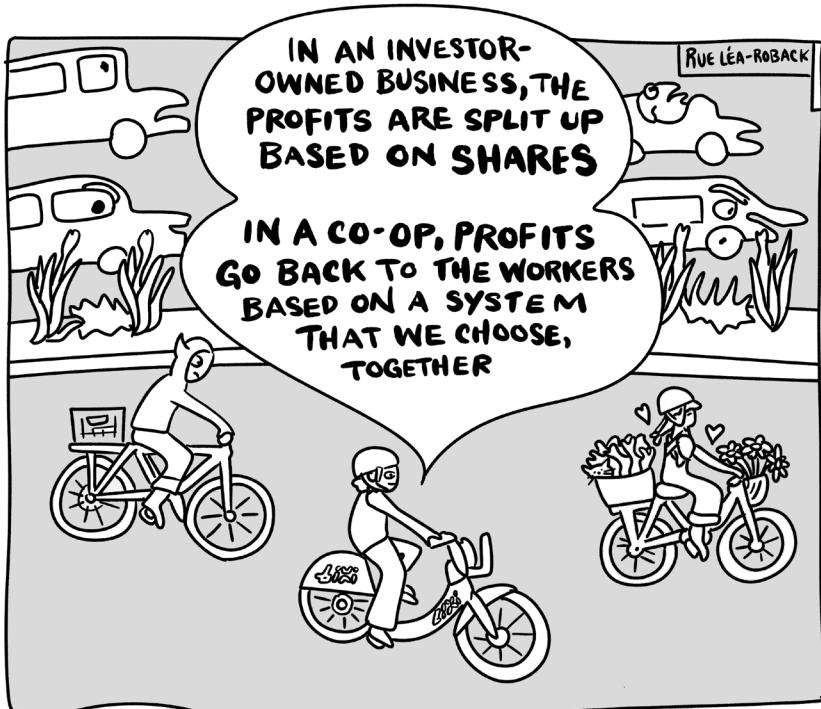
SOCIAL FINANCE FUND? IMPACT FUNDS? PHILANTHROPIC FUNDS?







BIKE MEETING



CONTRACTORS? SO
WE'LL BRAND OURSELVES
AS A CO-OP BUT WE'RE
A THREE-HEADED BOSS
EXPLOITING A PILE
OF CONTRACTORS?

GREEN BOTTLE ST

WELL, MAYBE
OUR CONTRACTORS
SHOULD
UNIONIZE

THE REALITY OF GAME
FUNDING MODELS IS THAT
IT COMES IN LONG CYCLES OF
FEAST AND FAMINE
AND
SOMETIMES
WE NEED
SPECIALIZED
SKILL SETS
AT ONCE
EVERYTHING
MIGHT NOT
EVEN WANNA
JOIN US
WE CAN'T
FIX
CONTRACTORS,
TO JOIN US
WE
AT LEAST WE'RE
MAKING JOBS,
RIGHT?



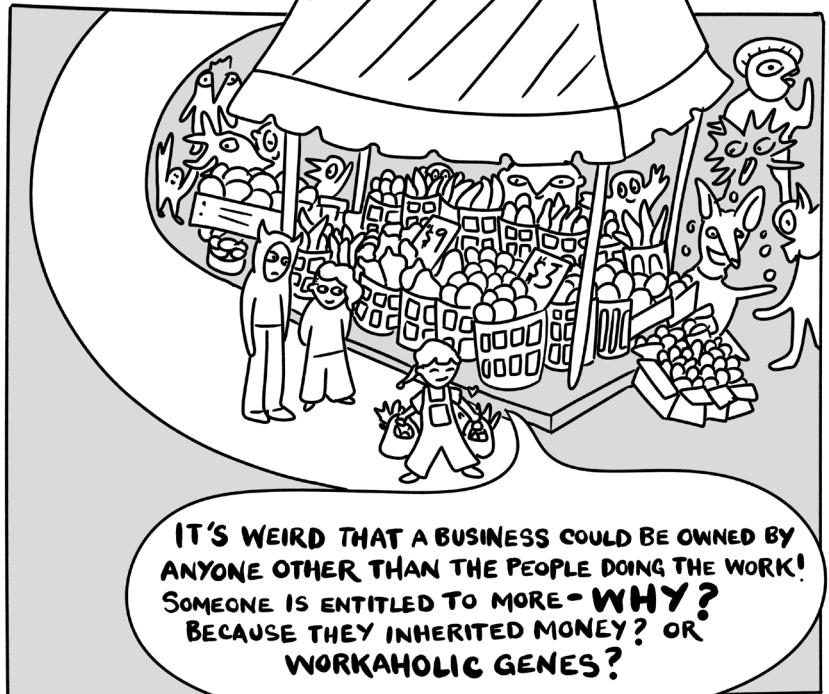
WAIT, WHY
IS IT A GOOD
THING TO MAKE
JOBS?



ISN'T MORE
WORK A BAD
THING?



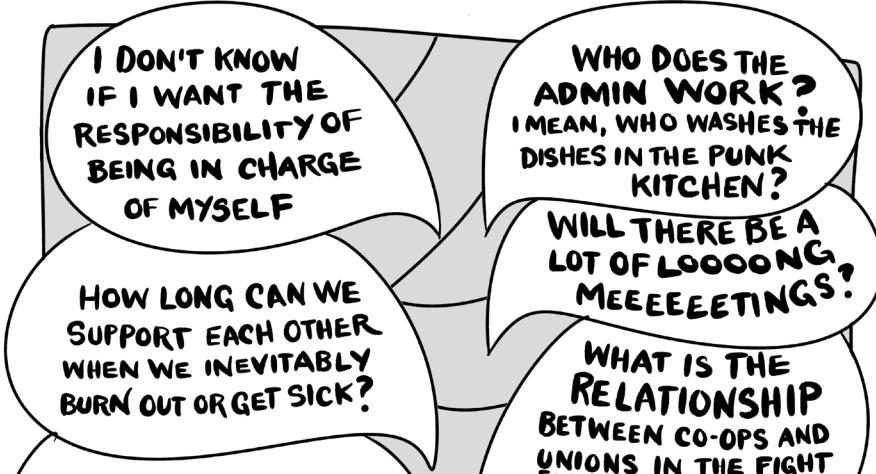
MARKET MEETING





**ARE CO-OPS ONLY
FOR PEOPLE WHO CAN
AFFORD THE RISK?
ARE WE ESCAPING INTO
OUR OWN BUBBLE WHILE
THE WORLD BURNS?**

**MAYBE,
YOU'D FEEL BETTER
IF YOU JUST SAY
ALL YOUR CONCERN
AT ONCE?**



**I DON'T KNOW
IF I WANT THE
RESPONSIBILITY OF
BEING IN CHARGE
OF MYSELF**

**WHO DOES THE
ADMIN WORK?
I MEAN, WHO WASHES THE
DISHES IN THE PUNK
KITCHEN?**

**HOW LONG CAN WE
SUPPORT EACH OTHER
WHEN WE INEVITABLY
BURN OUT OR GET SICK?**

**WILL THERE BE A
LOT OF LOOOONG,
MEEEEETINGS?**

**WHAT ABOUT GRANNY?
WHAT HAPPENS IF I CAN'T
PAY OUR RENT**

**WHAT IS THE
RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN CO-OPS AND
UNIONS IN THE FIGHT
FOR LABOUR JUSTICE?**

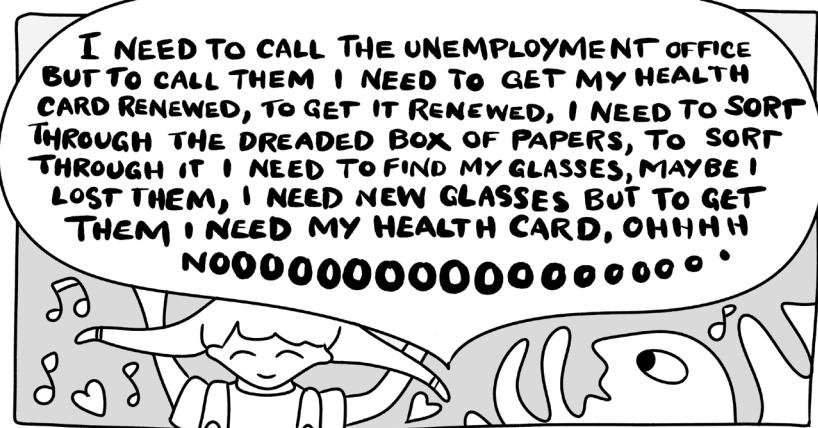
**WILL WE ACCIDENTALLY
EXPLOIT PEOPLE OR
REPRODUCE THE SYSTEM?**

BIG NEWS EVERYONE
NEW RESEARCH SHOWS THAT 4-DAY
WORK WEEKS IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY!
SO WE'RE TAKING FRIDAYS
OFF!

GUICY
GAMES

YAY!

ALSO, PIZZA PARTY TONIGHT
FOR ANY ROCKSTARS WHO WORK LATE!
GET YOUR VEGAN, GLUTEN-FREE, OR ALL
MEAT ORDERS IN BY 8PM!





WHAT ARE YOUR
SECRETS? DO I LOVE
YOU? DO I LOATHE YOU?
YOU MYSTERIOUS CREATURE
WITH SMOOTH METAL
SKIN

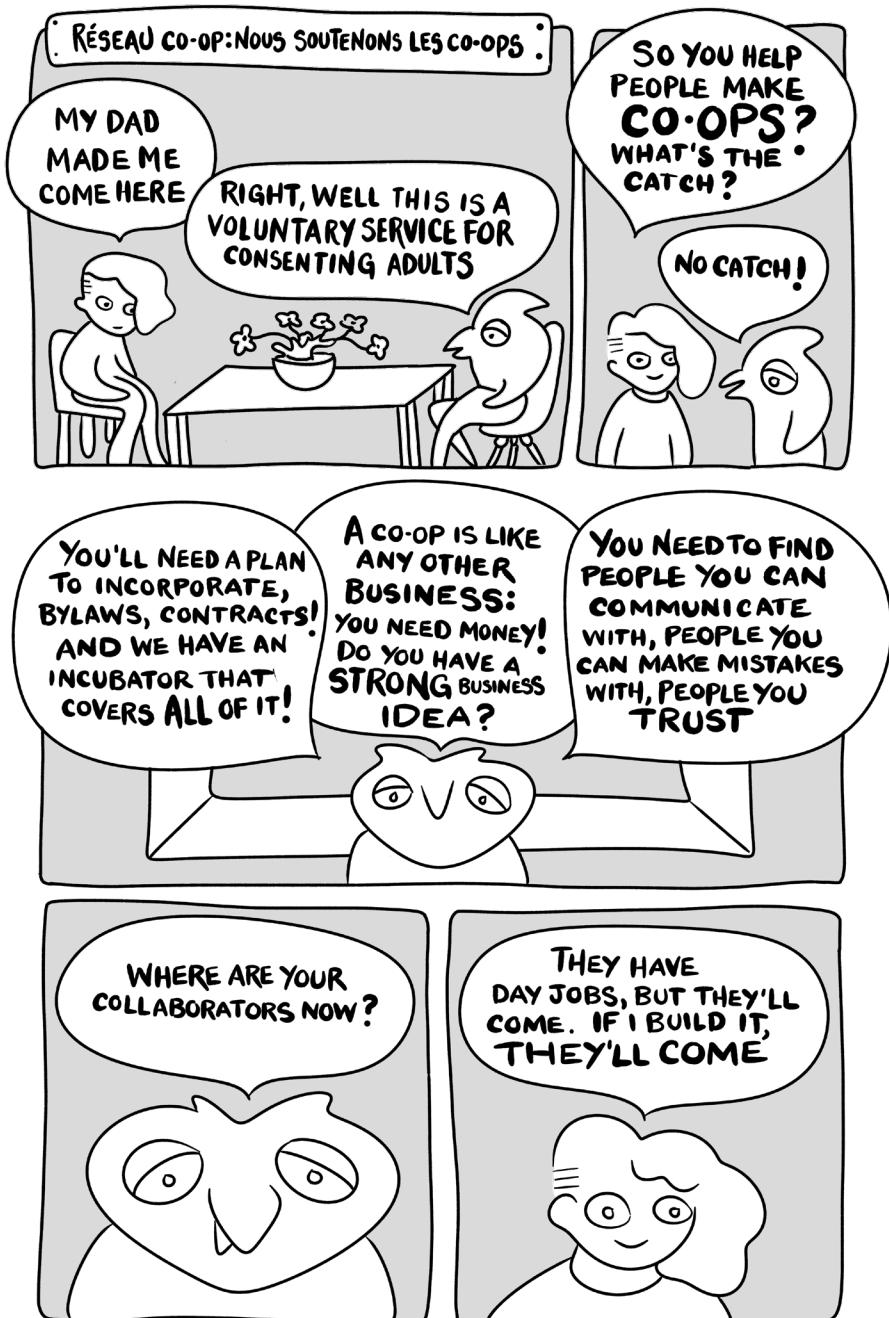


OUR PM IS OOO AND
DESPITE CLEAR RPI'S
AND OUR OKR FRAMEWORK
OUR MAU AND DAU ARE
GOING DOWN! WE NEED TO
GET THAT EXPONENTIAL
CUUURRRVVVE



THIS IS HAPPENING
THIS IS REALLY
HAPPENING





LISTEN UP:
I HEARD A RUMOUR ABOUT A
UNION

WE'RE A FAMILY HERE. WE'RE
DOING THE 4-DAY WORK WEEK
I GOT YOU PIZZA!

IF YOU NEED THINGS, YOU CAN
TALK TO ME DIRECTLY. WHAT DO
YOU NEED?

WORK
FROM
HOME

MORE
CREATIVE
FREEDOM

MORE FLEXIBLE
PAID TIME OFF

BETTER PAY
FOR QA!

NO CRUNCH
POLICY

PAID
BURNOUT
LEAVE!

CHILDCARE!

ZERO
TOLERANCE
HARASSMENT
POLICY

A CLEAR
PROFESSIONAL
PLAN FOR THE
FUTURE



A WALK



WE NEED YOUR HELP WITH A
GAME ABOUT CLIMATE DREAD.
WE HAVE A **HUGE** BUDGET AND YOU'D
HAVE **TOTAL** CREATIVE FREEDOM!

THE DEADLINE IS IN 90 DAYS
WHAT DO YOU SAY?

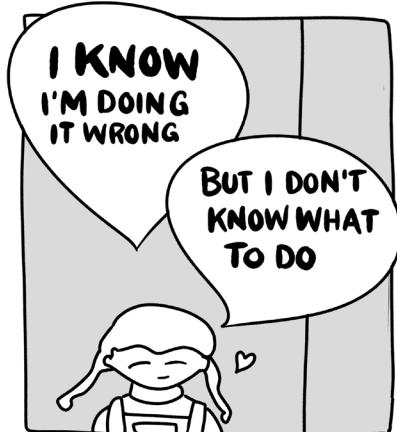
UM

CAN I THINK
ABOUT IT AND GET
BACK TO YOU?

SAY
NOOOOOOOO



JAY GOES TO ZED FOR HELP



I KNOW THIS ISN'T WORKING, BUT AT LEAST FREELANCE LETS ME WORK ON MY OWN TIME, KEEPS ME FREE TO CHOOSE, TO WORK ON THINGS THAT BRING ME TO LIFE



I LIKE DANCING ON THE EDGE,
SPINNING ON THE SHARP BLADE OF POSSIBILITY



OUR WORK IS BEING ATOMIZED,
SMALLER AND SMALLER. FIRST WITH FORD,
AND WORKERS BECOMING COGS IN AN ASSEMBLY LINE. NOW THEY WANT US ON CALL, FOR HIRE, REPLACEABLE, DISPOSABLE.



SOON WE'LL ALL BE MICROCONTRACTORS, HIRED JUST-IN-TIME, BY THE MINUTE OR THE SECOND. THEY USE US, THEY DISCARD US, THEY MOVE ON.

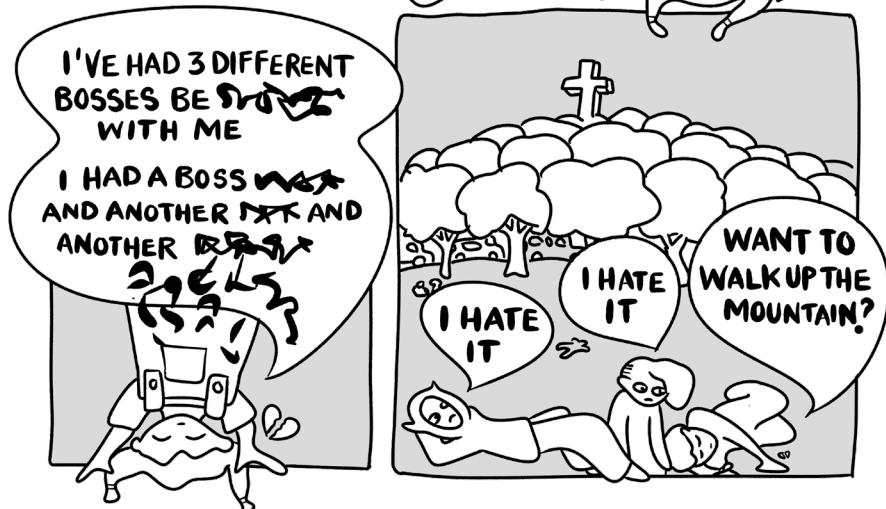
YOU'RE DANCING ON THE EDGE,
AND THE EDGE GETS THINNER
AND THINNER. WILL YOU DANCE UNTIL YOU FALL OFF?

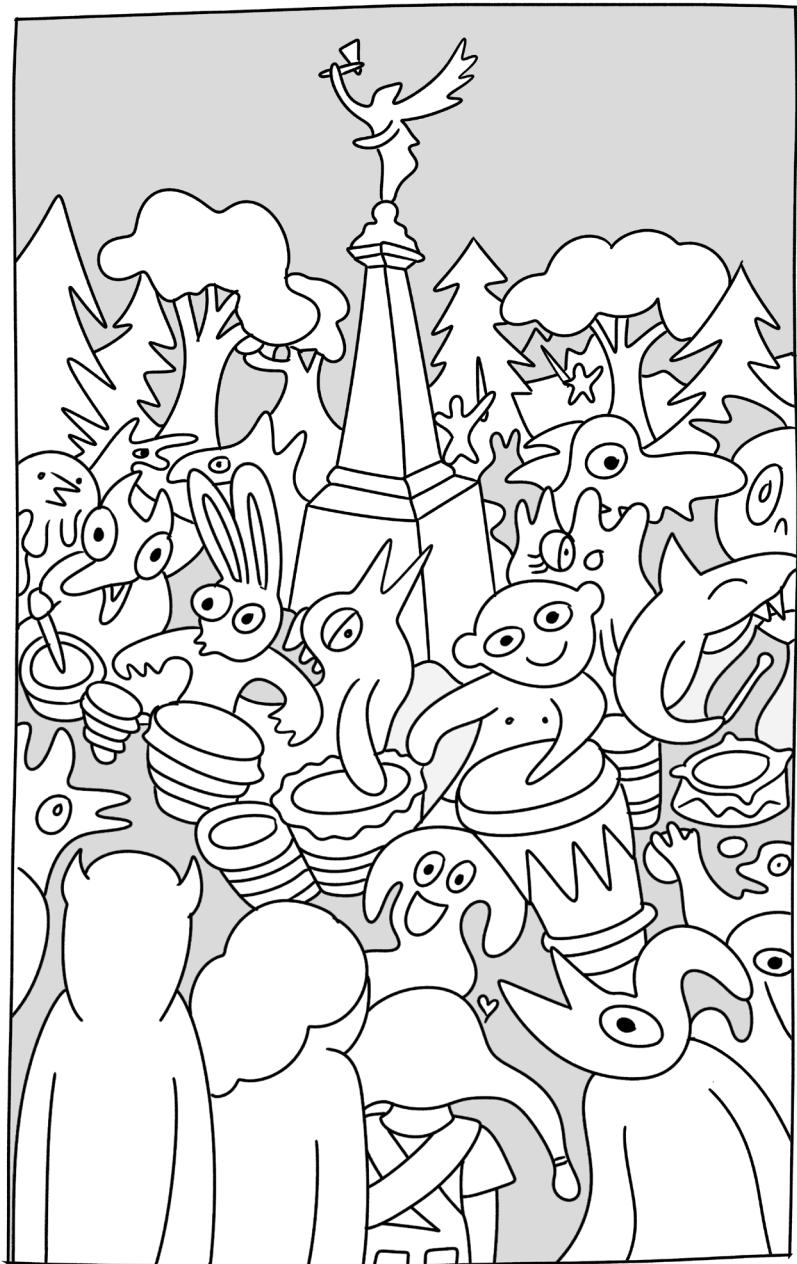


IT DOESN'T MATTER
PEOPLE LIKE ME
ALWAYS FALL OFF,
IN THE END



WEIRD BOSSSES







I DON
TO LOOK
LIFE KNO
COULD HA
FOR SON
RE

IT ALL JUST
FEELS LIKE AN
IMPOSSIBLE
GRIND

I DON'T HAVE
A SAFETY NET!

ALL THIS NOISE KEEPS
US FROM IMAGINING
SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

WE'RE WORLD DESIGNERS,
WHY CAN'T WE DESIGN
A WORLD WE'D WANT
TO LIVE IN?

I ALMOST HAVE
A PITCH READY
FOR THE
INVESTORS

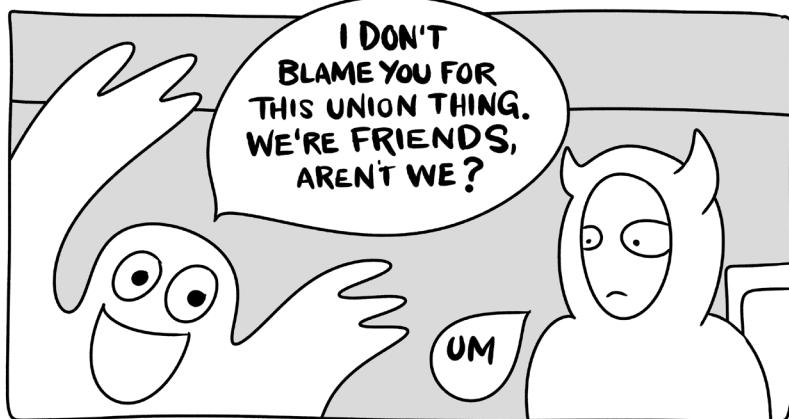
AAAAAAAHHHHH!!!

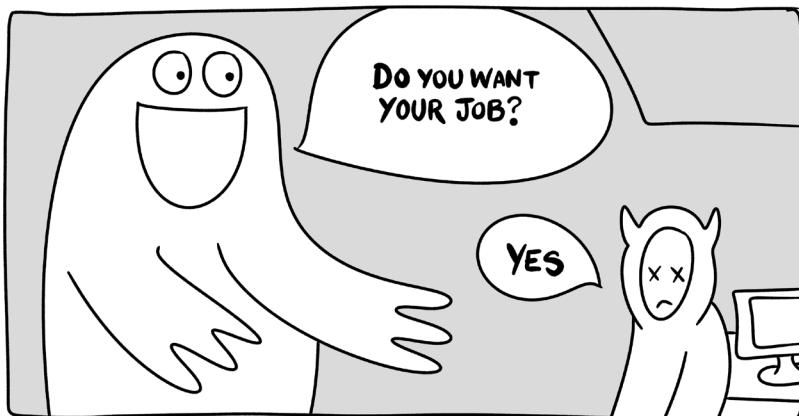
"I WANT
BACK ON MY
WING THAT I
HAVE FOUGHT
SOMETHING
REAL



I DON'T WANT
TO SPEEDRUN LIFE







**THANKS FOR MEETING ME!
OUR GAME IS ABOUT CYBERCATS WHO
USE STRING TO FORM SHAPES AND REVEAL
THE WAYS WE ARE BOUND TOGETHER!**

**OUR CO-OP TEAM INCLUDES A SEASONED
DEV, A FAN-FAVOURITE ARTIST WITH TEN
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, AND ME –
AN AWARD-WINNING GAME DESIGNER!**



I LOVE THE TALENT!

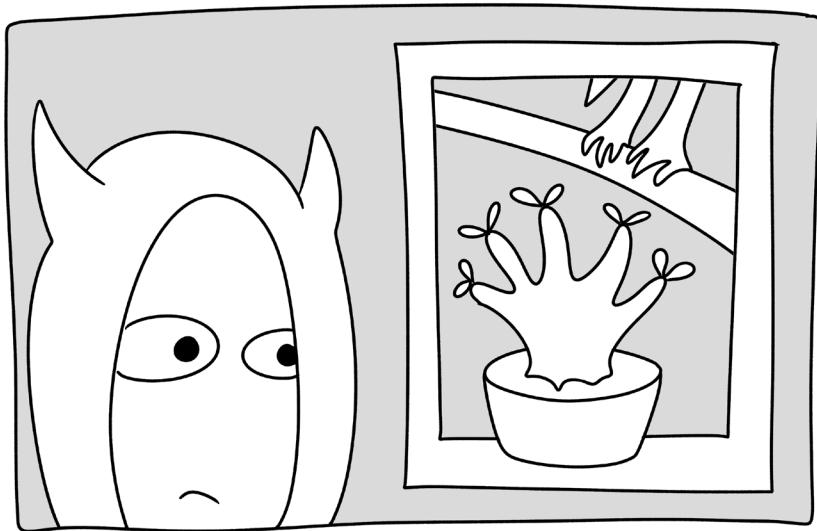
**BUT INVESTING IN GAMES IS
LIKE PLAYING THE SLOTS. I
TOLD YOUR DAD I'D TALK TO
YOU, BUT INVESTING IN A
CO-OP DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
I NEED 100X RETURNS**



EVEN IF YOU WEREN'T A CO-OP
MOST INDIE DARLINGS ARE ON THE
PRECIPICE OF FAILURE, STAYING AFLOAT
WITH FAMILY WEALTH AND SIDE GIGS
FOR GIANT MEDIA MULTINATIONALS.

COULD YOU SPIN IT AND REVOLUTIONIZE
PLAY BY GAMIFYING GIGIFIED WORK THROUGH
AI SOCIAL ENGINEERING ON THE CHAIN?
NOW THAT'S SOMETHING I COULD FUCK WITH

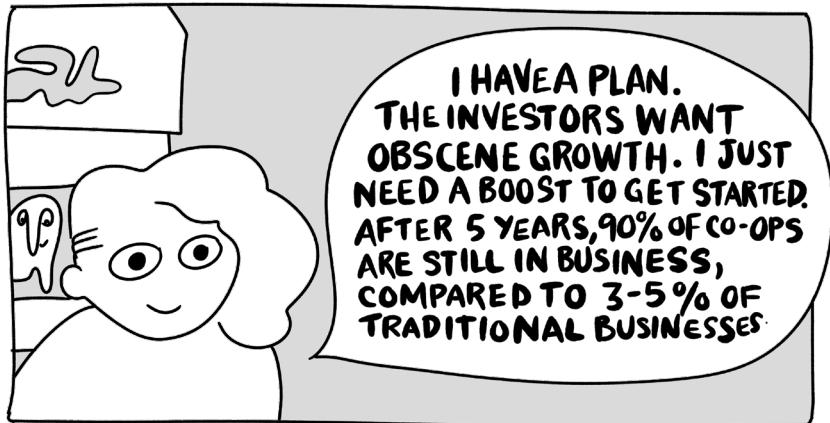
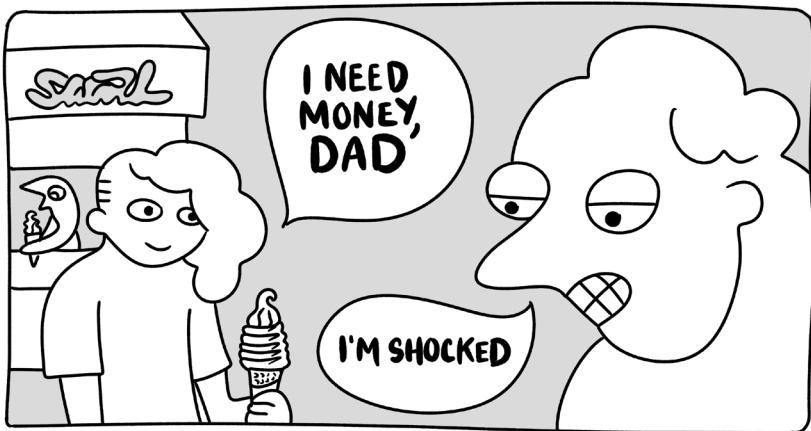


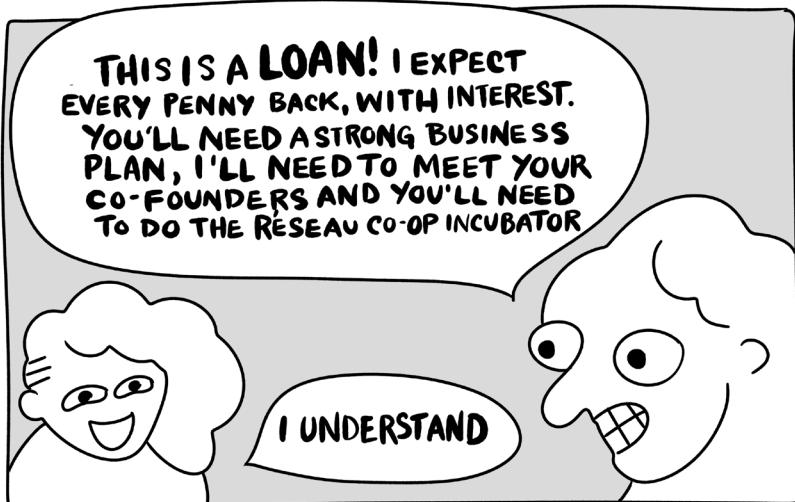
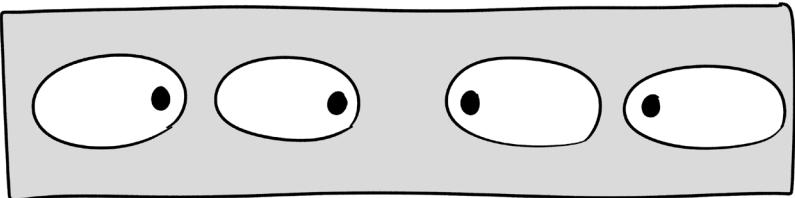
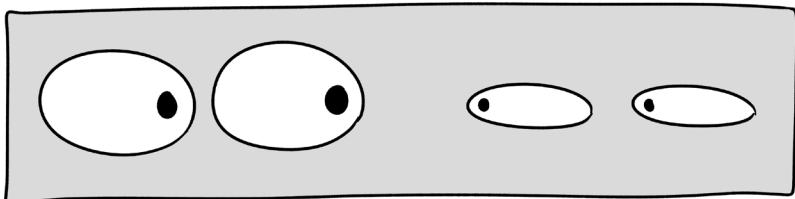


I CAN TRUST MY FRIENDS.
AND IF I FLAME OUT, I'D RATHER
DO IT MAKING OUR DREAMS COME
TRUE THAN SECRETLY WASHING
DISHES IN A ZOOM CALL



ICE CREAM FOR BEE AND DAD







I WANT MORE THAN A 4-DAY WORK WEEK,
MORE THAN A RAISE. I WANT IT TO BE
IMPOSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO OWN
OUR PRECIOUS LIVES. I WANT US TO
RIP THIS WHOLE ROTTED THING
ROOTS. WE
DESERVE
BETTER!

WE JUST NEED 50%
OF US TO SIGN THE UNION
CARDS, AND THEN -

BIG NEWS!
WE'VE BEEN ACQUIRED BY
BOOBYSAFT! WE'LL BE
RESTRUCTURING TO FIND A
SYNERGISTIC MERGE
LOYAL ROCKSTARS HAVE
NOTHING TO WORRY
ABOUT! THIS IS A
WIN FOR ALL OF
US!

WE'LL KEEP
FIGHTING AT
BOOBYSAFT, I
HAVE FRIENDS
THERE

WE WON'T GIVE
UP, WE'LL NEVER
GIVE UP

BEE DOESN'T GET IT.
THEY HAVE A SWIMMING
POOL AND A DOG BUTLER
SERVING THEM NEGRONIS.
THEY'VE NEVER HAD TO
LOOK AFER ANYONE



THANK YOU FOR THIS
AWARD! YES, WHEN WE
STARTED THE CO-OP WE
KNEW WE NEEDED TO
TRANSCEND COSMETIC
SOLUTIONS TO LABOUR
EXPLOITATION

YOU SHOULD ALWAYS
BE A LITTLE BIT
SCARED OF YOUR LIFE
WHEEEEEEEE



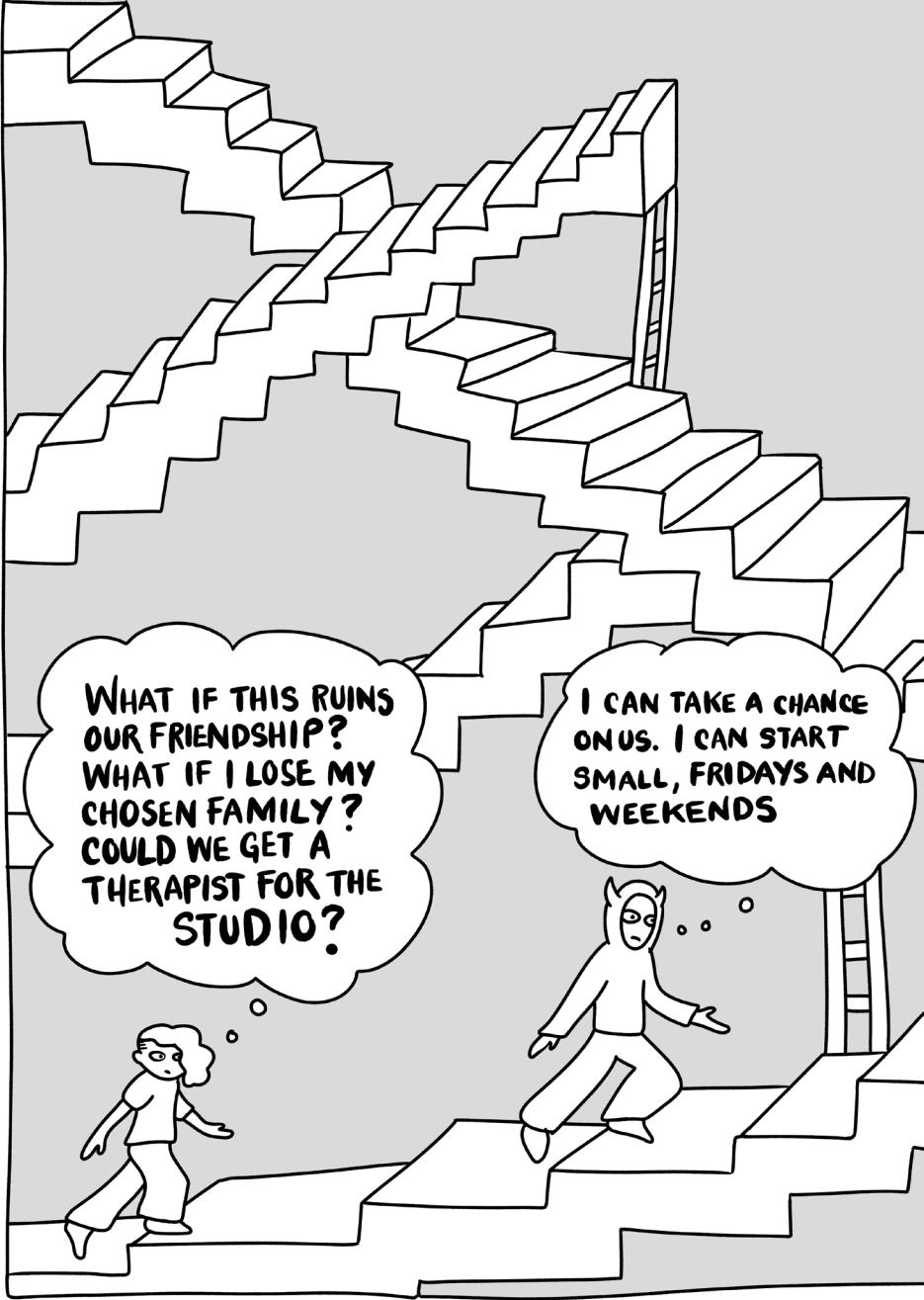
ARE YOU
COMINGGGG?

I COULD DO
THE CO-OP
AND
THE UNION

SOMETIMES I
IMAGINE CRASHING
MY BIKE SO I CAN
GET SOME REST

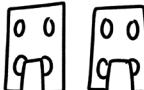
BUT IF WE'RE
GOING TO CRASH, LET'S
CRASH FLYING TO
THE STARS!





NO ACCESS
KEEP CLOSED

A DREAM IS A FORM
OF TRAVEL, A DREAM
CAN REMAKE THE
WORLD





SO WE'RE
GOING TO
DO THIS?

WE DO IT
TOGETHER
OR NOT AT
ALL



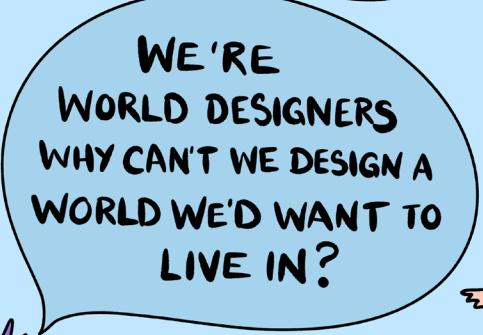
THANKS FOR READING!

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SPECIAL THANKS TO: MICHAEL IANTORNO, JIM MUNROE, SALEEM D, JESS M, HANINE EM, CHRISTIAN S, IRMAK T, AND OSAMA D. THANKS TO AMARVIR S, ANEMONE HUG INTERACTIVE, AUGUST L, BART SIMON, B C, CINDY POREMBA, BLACK FLAG, CANADIAN WORKER CO-OP FEDERATION, DAVID W, ELLEN F, ELLIE, ERIK H, FABIAN S, FLO, FELAN PARKER, FRONX W, FUTURE CLUB, GAMMA SPACE COLLABORATIVE STUDIO, GAME WORKERS AUSTRALIA, GAME WORKERS UNITE TORONTO, GAME WORKERS UNITE MONTREAL, GEMMA L, HALLEY R, HANNAH N, HILLARY P, IDA T, IMAGINARY RESIDENCY, INDOOR SUNGLASSES, JAY P, JEN K, JENN K, JENNIFER R, WHITSON PhD, JULIA E, JUSTINE L, KEYWORDS STUDIO UNION, KOFI O, KO-OP MODE, LEE W, LEE T, LESLIE P, LESS THAN THREE INTERACTIVE, LUKE L, LOWERCASE, GAMES, LUCID TALES, MARTIN K, MARTINA F, MATAJUEGOS COOP, MIA CONSALVO, MARIAM Z, MEDIO INESTABLE, MURDOCH S, NNEKA N, PALOMA D, PAOLO P, PEPIJN, SAGAN Y, SIX, SOFT CHAOS, SOFT NOT WEAK, TRICIA E, RAMI I, RAMSEY N, RAPH, RÉSEAU COOP, ROB L, ROXANE H, SOMETHING WE LOVE, TALESPINNERS, TARIQ J, TIFFANY C, UNSEELE COLLECTIVE, WEIRD GHOSTS, AND OUR ANONYMOUS CONTRIBUTORS. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM MITACS ACCELERATE AND THE TECHNOCULTURE, ART AND GAMES RESEARCH CENTRE AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY.

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WE'RE
WORLD DESIGNERS
WHY CAN'T WE DESIGN A
WORLD WE'D WANT TO
LIVE IN?

GAMEDEV

CRUNCH

CHANGE

CREATIVE
CONTROL



???

Hi



AAA



FREELANCE



SOLO
DEV



UNION?



WORK
WORK
WORK



HELP



INDIE



CO-OP



SO
TIRED

WHY?



BURNOUT



FOUR-DAY
WORK WEEK



GAIN
Game Arts International Network

