



**THE
RACKET | 38**

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THE RACKET

Hi.

How is everyone?

I am, in a very rare moment, frustrated with The New York Times.

Most of the time I am that person who obnoxiously frames everything as, "Well, I read in article in The New York Times..." I read the Times on my phone, for better or worse, first thing every morning. It's my main (often only) source of news and admittedly I don't really consider anything "newsworthy" until it is posted in the pages of The Grey Lady.

But, all of our heroes fuck up sometimes. And I think The New York Times has done a poor job of drawing a bead on just how horrible and how damning of the United States current political system the news from this weekend was.

Maybe you heard: Donald J. Trump's second impeachment trial ended on Sunday with his second acquittal - this time for charges of inciting a riot. Even though the "impeachment managers" for the prosecution presented reams of evidence and those for the defense presented what amounted to sticky notes with crude drawings of male genitalia scrawled on them - the GOP continued to prop up their orange-haired-king-in-exile, allowing him the opportunity to once again run for office (as soon as 2024) and to further embolden his foam-mouthed and fanatical supporters.

The front page of The New York Times online broadcast the verdict in bold letters with the sub-headline (in smaller, but still bold letters) declaring it a *historically bi-partisan impeachment effort*. As if this glaring example of just how far the concept of government in this country has fallen was somehow alleviated by the fact that seven members of the GOP did something to better their country rather than maintain their political careers.

Yes, it's a fact and the Times is in the business of reporting facts, but somehow its placement felt like trying to make lemonade out of a bubbling pit of acid. As if this pathetic overture, this *effort* somehow provided a silver lining on a truly dark day in this country's history. In twenty years - if our country isn't one non-stop MAGA tailgate party - a headline like this provides a way of seeing the Senate vote as a positive, when in truth it is a clear indicator of how low this country has fallen.

Even if you want to claim this as a victory (and I fully understand needing the small victories these days) how telling is it that the biggest win we can get out of the Senate these days is an almost victory? How eroded are the foundations if weakly pumping our fist because the bad guys didn't win by as much as they could've is what we're clinging to?

If there was any time to draw laser focus on the inability of our political system to do anything but stumble forward into a frankly terrifying new phase, that time is now. Yes, The New York Times lives and dies by unbiased reporting, but yelling out how historical it was that for a brief moment our government failed to do what needed to be done, but did so *together*, it feels particularly galling.

Even worse, it feels dangerous.

'Till next time.

-N

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police brutality, racism and violence
perpetuated towards BIPOC
communities in all forms.

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We aren't in this for the money.

That said: there are costs in doing what we do.

Any help with those costs (and with the costs of future endeavors) would be greatly appreciated.

If not, we get it and we still appreciate you.

If so, we're working on some special rewards. And we know you love special rewards.

THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

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UNTITLED (BLACK BAG, HANGING FEET)
FELICITA NORRIS
2015

Savior

HAYLEY KAY BOWEN

Blessèd be the threadbare couch,
where our long legs tangle
like roots beneath the earth.
Our cold fingertips clasp in conjoined prayer,
the incantation of *just friends* perfumed
by wine-breath and denial.
She anoints my forehead in almond lip balm
and we are baptized by the full moon
we dance under, barefoot in the snow.
What is a lover if not the one
who saves your soul each night before sleep
and again each morning,
knelt at the altar of black coffee
and shared showers?



Aqua Faux Pas

RILEY VASKE

I hesitate for water in new apartments. These places where I feel welcomed and safe, surrounded by a friend or that friend of a friend can turn hostile when the sound of the sink echoes through the one-bedroom flex alerting the host to my crime. I prompt the same response. We have a Britta. They look at me and my glaring faux pas. Do I look too poor to filter my water? Do I look like I can't give myself the same things as the "self-care" girls? The mere mention of tap water can change the tone of an entire room. I feel the silence of the standoff and reach for my holster, waiting for the tumbleweed to roll through the halls and out onto the blissfully unaware streets. Tap is fine, is this glass OK? It was the wrong move. The wrong thing to say. It's always the wrong thing to say though, isn't it. Yeah, that glass is fine, but you can just use the filtered water. It's not a big deal. It feels like a big deal. I stare into the eyes of the girl who just threw back three shots of \$4 vodka and Redbull. Her mouth tells the cheap dive bar beers, late-night tacos from the place on the corner, and the boys from her junior year abroad. And yet she needs it to scream "I would only drink filtered." The cold stare stabbing into my back as I try to discern which way to turn the knob so the running water doesn't scald me again. I wonder what else she filters, what she feels she needs to enforce on the gen pop. We make eye contact as I swallow the first sip. It tastes like iron. But we are made of such things.



ABOUT A BOY
FELICITA NORRIS
2015

The Problem with Invention

CHARLES RAFFERTY

Invention gives rise to invention. The blade demanded a handle; the ark unleashed a flood. It's always been like this. Luckily, under the right circumstances, a maple tree can become a violin. It allows us to utter Vivaldi, and someone is always waiting with a need we didn't know. You'd never guess there was a drought on this side of the dam. Listen, downriver, the sound of everyone you will never hear.

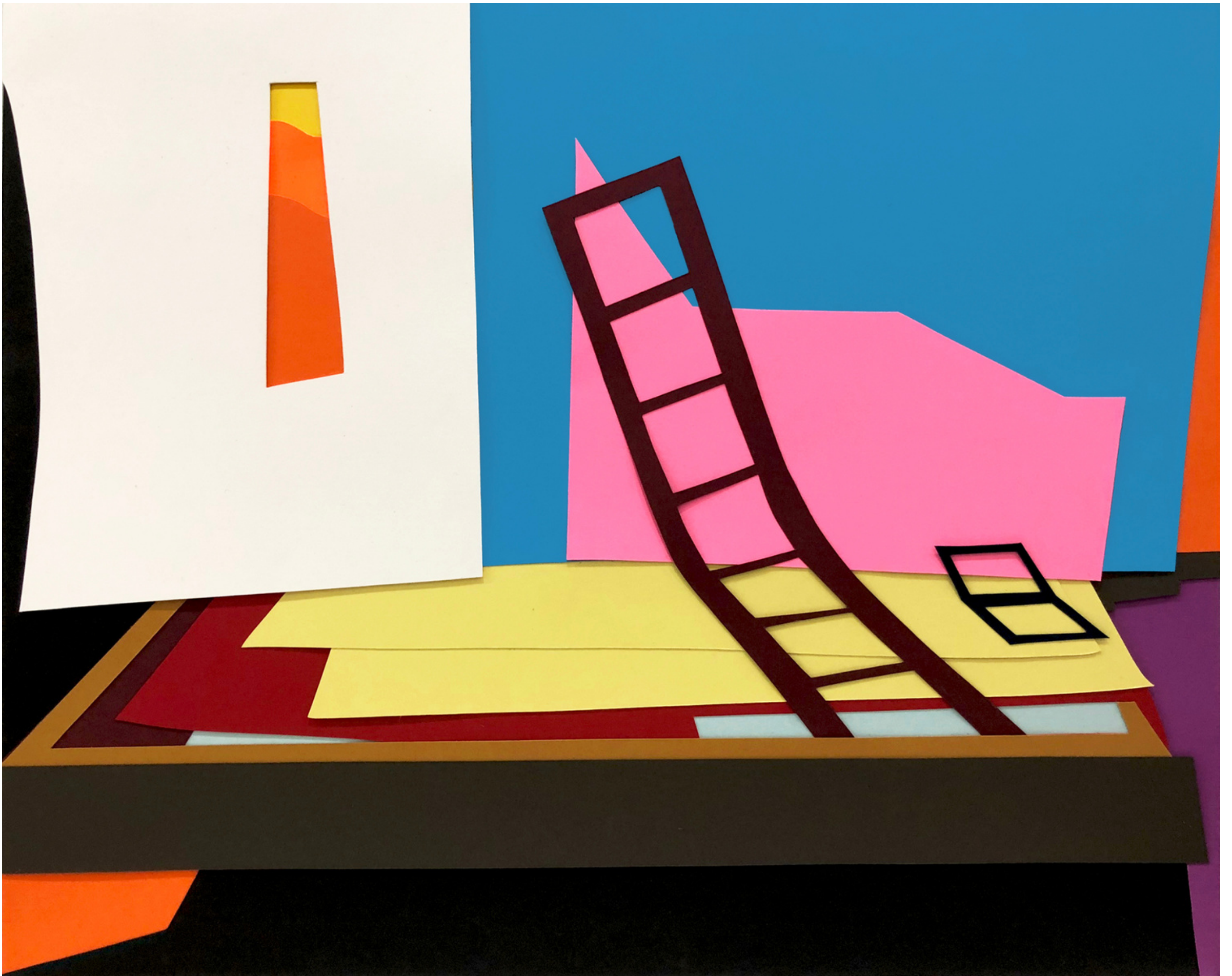




A Pippin in the Spring a Monet in the Fall

SARA POTOCSNY

My three-year old whispered "let's be paintings" into my ear. The wind whispered something too, just afterwards, but I couldn't make out exactly what. No day has ever felt as true to Fall weather as this one, so I can't imagine it was anything stellar. The sun is a damp monster, a gun to the head and the only thing keeping us alive. My son sees a snake in what he's painted, but my son could see a snake in the moon. All of the world can be broken down into Pippins and Monets. All the world is sucked dry by anything wanting badly enough to be seen they can no longer tell the difference between that and being looked at. Between seen and being an example of. Not long ago I lost two friends: one for being too loyal, the other for being not loyal enough. They still flit around town together, making people's days without me, beautiful piping things. They relate to one another only at points. I think, the way a flat stone relates to the lake it's being skipped on, chunks of ice to bigger and more tragic sheets of the stuff. Even I don't know how to say word cold without being confused with the winter myself. It's too warm for a day this autumnal, and I am not a kind girl. I cannot be a kind girl in this sort of danger. All I'm saying is that it may not be pretty later to be pretty right now. That being said, just look at us.



C.C.R. (No, Not That One)
MICHAEL HAMBOUZ
2019

Kosher Prawn Turnovers

HANNAH YERINGTON

My sister's first act as a Jewish Priestess, is to name all prawn turnovers *kasher*, because I balk at steamed pork buns.

After my sister's initiation,
she places all her Levis in the back of the closet, begins to wear only long dresses,
vintage buttons, upcycled prayer shawls.
She tells me there is a first blessing for everything,
so when I pull on new soft pink joggers,
I chant gently under my breath.

My sister suggests a *mikveh*,
I think of warm water and honied walls after our monthly cycles,
but we stand at the nude beach where I swallow sand,
wonder about the relation,
between ritual immersion and drowning.

My sister talks of red thread,
the ocean as body,
she sprays drugstore rosewater on our foreheads,
she tells me the Goddess has joined us.
I scan the beach for women in flowing linen robes.

I share a conspiratorial look,
with the seagull next to me, imagine him wearing a small kippah,
curly sidelocks peaking out from his feathered head.
I leave the beach holding my sister's hand,
unsure if I am more spiritual or more sandy.

Yet Tuesday comes with a full moon,
a moon heavy in Her orbit,
I roll my eyes at Her pockmarked face,
I don't appreciate uninvited visitors.

But I pull out the battered candlesticks my sister gave me,
sway gently as I light Sabbath candles,
And then, I order dim sum.



I NEVER TOLD
FELICITA NORRIS
2015

**THE
BACK
PAGE**

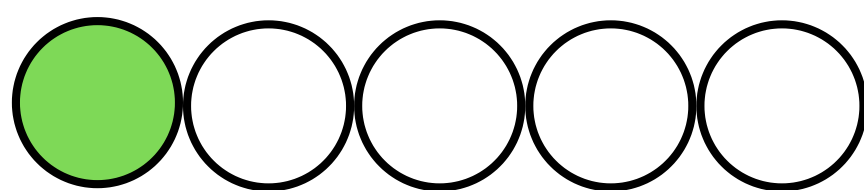
BY
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

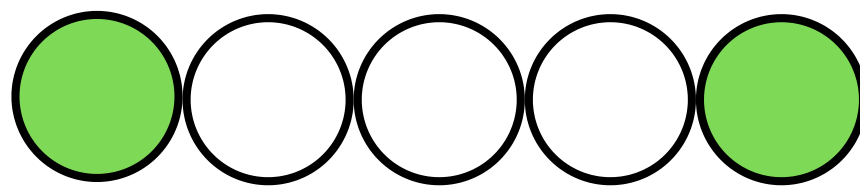
WORD STUFF

Unscramble each Mumble to form five ordinary words.
Then, arrange the green letters in the highlighted spaces to
complete the punchline.

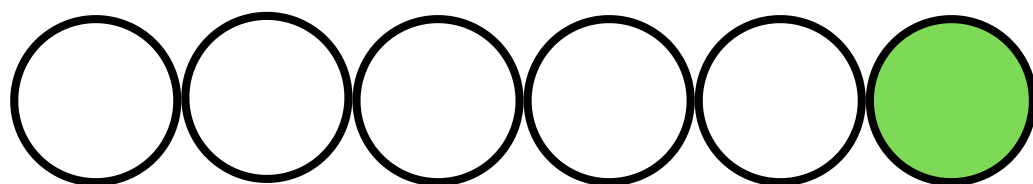
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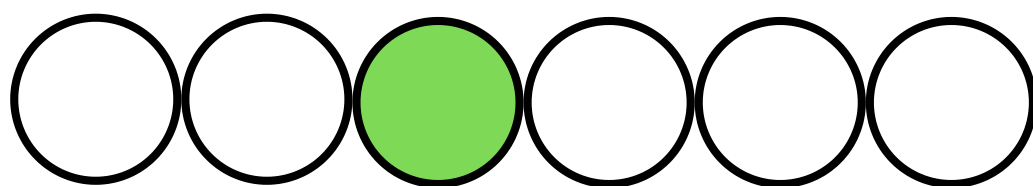
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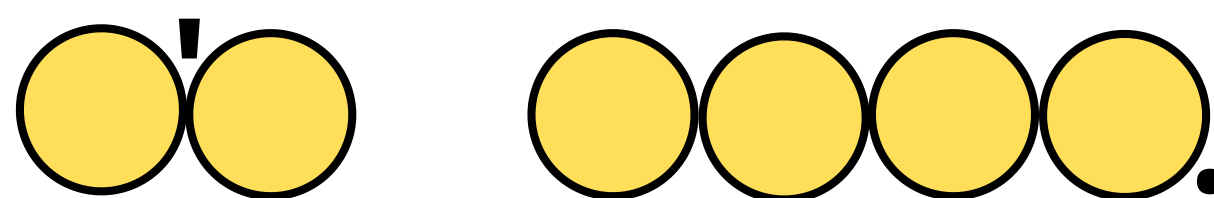
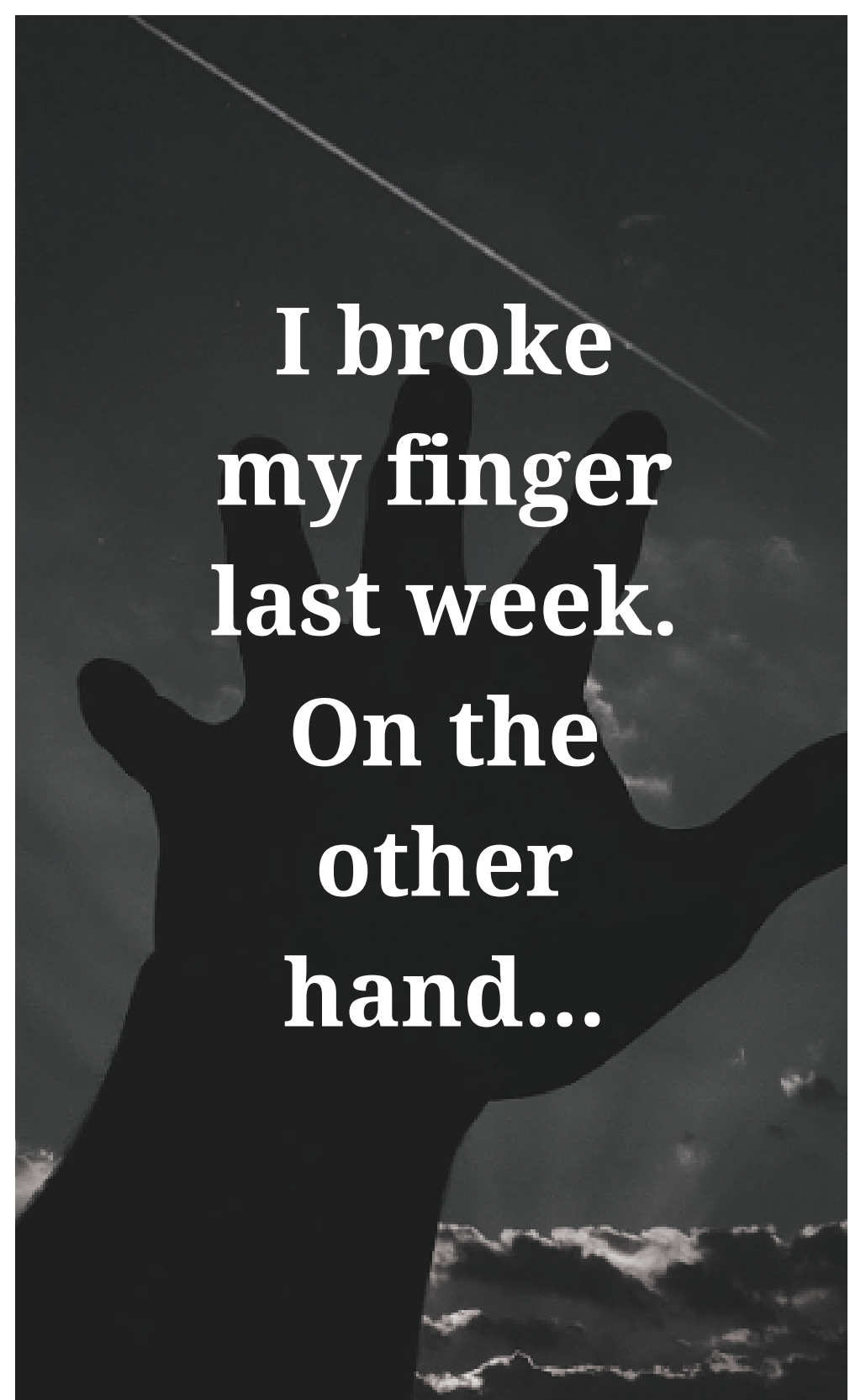
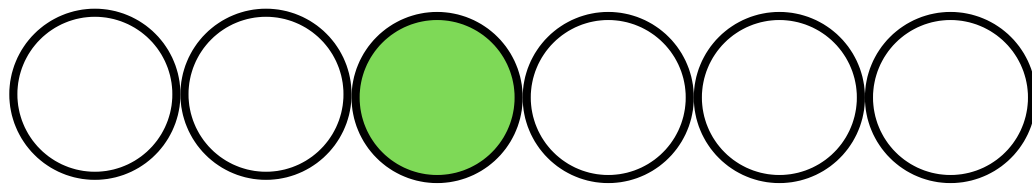
VILYET



RHWOTG



MBEESU



(Answers next week.)

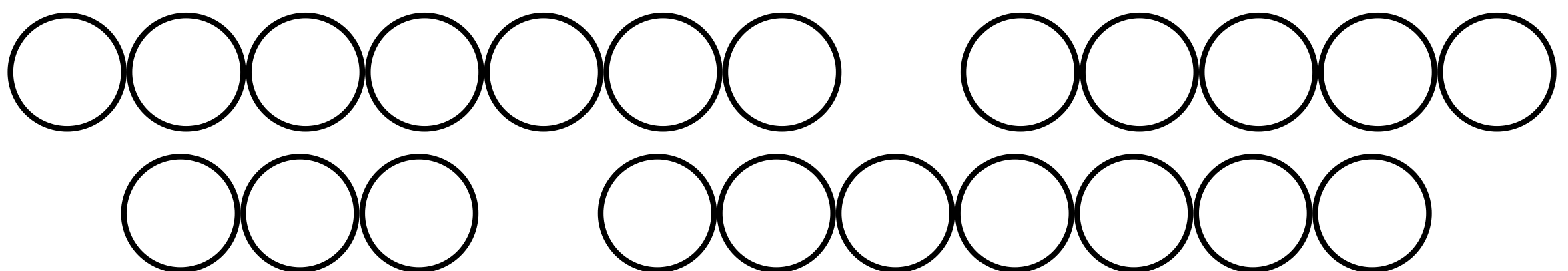
Last week's answers:

PANTS, TROLL, HECTIC, IGUANA, WINNER

When teachers try to explain electricity to me I'm just like, "uh, watt?"

HUSTLE & REBUSTLE

Decipher the rebus to reveal a word or phrase that fits in the circles below.
(Remember: One letter per circle.)



LAST WEEK'S ANSWER

break a leg

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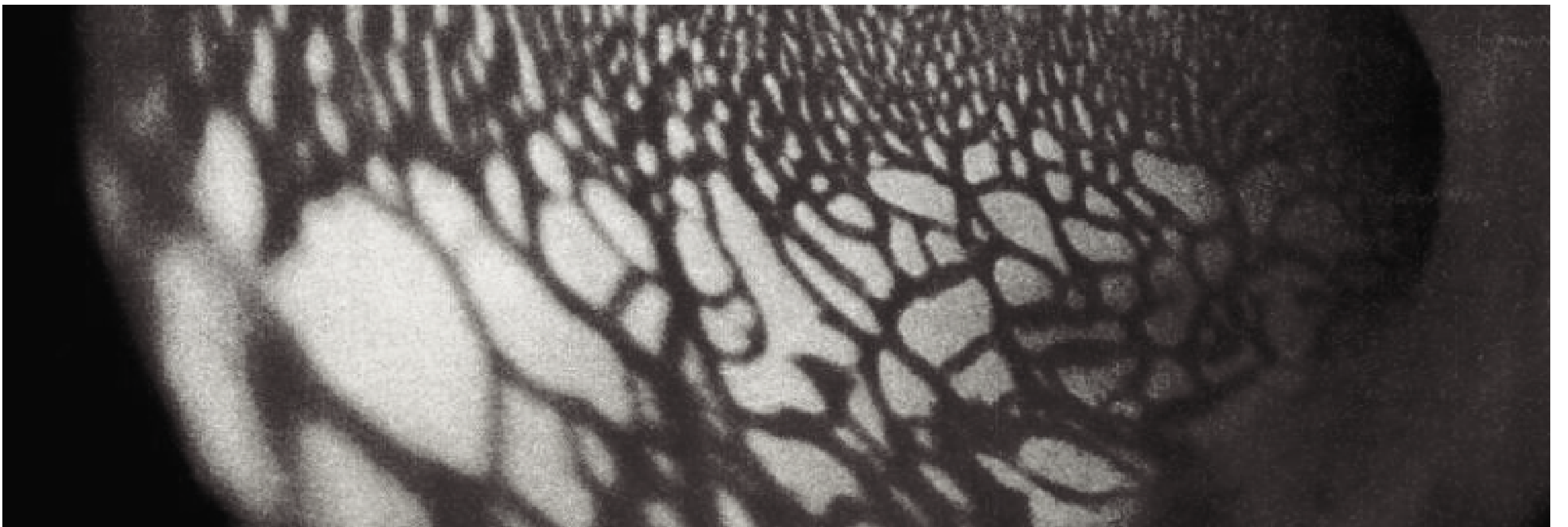
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**THE
RACKET**
READING SERIES



THE VOID

2 / 25
7PM
ZOOM

**THE END IS NIGH.
OH WAIT, IT'S HERE.**

