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THE RACKET

Hi.

How is everyone?

I've been down lately. I have. I've been trying to figure it out. It's a mix really: continued unemployment and the dehumanizing process that is looking for work in an online society; a general lack of focus leading to a general lack of ambition leading to a general inability to make heads or tails of the passage of time; and some *big* life changes reminding me how poorly I do with *big* life changes.

It's a lot. And I'd blame my glumness on these contributing factors entirely, but, mainly, it's this: one year from this coming Thursday, March 11th, the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

We have been in this shit for an entire year.

One whole year of our short existences spent in the continuing grip of this disease. One year of having our lives reduced to the simplest, smallest routines. Of spending our days just coping with how different everything has become. Of bearing the weight of possible, or actual, *death* - our own or our loved ones - on our shoulders at all times.

After all this time it is possible for us to convince ourselves that wearing a mask when we go outside, standing six feet from those we once embraced, interacting through our computers is normal, routine even. That this strange, horrible alternate reality is just life.

This is not routine. This is roughly 365 days of trauma we have experienced - to varying degrees, but experienced as a whole, nonetheless.

Yes, there is vaccine-fueled glimmer of hope way, way, way off in the distance and maybe, *maybe*, that can convince us that it's time to throw off the emotional baggage of living in quarantine and just get back to how we were before.

It isn't going to be that easy.

This last year has left its mark. If you can see it or you can't, there is damage done to each of us, and there will be more and more until this is over, whatever that might mean. We may be able to point at the wounds we can see - mental or physical - but we can't even begin to identify all of the effects of this thing because we are still so deeply in it.

My parents got their second dose of vaccine a few weeks back and I felt lighter because unbeknownst to me I had been carrying the weight of their health on my shoulders. I had, for so long, been worrying about them without even knowing it.

We've all been carrying burdens for so long, we don't even know they're weighing us down anymore.

I've started to let myself believe this might actually have an end. Until it does though, let yourself recognize how much you've been through, how much has changed, and how you've been affected by it all.

Simply put, take care of yourself.

'Till next time.
-N

The Racket stands against
police brutality, racism and violence
perpetuated towards BIPOC
communities in all forms.

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IG: @mary.roll

No, I can't set an amount of tax.

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM

WE HAVE A PATREON

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

MATTHEW CARNEY
CATHY & JOHN SANDERS
HALLIE YOUNG
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LILIAN CAYLEE
LAUREN C. JOHNSON
ANGIE MCDONALD
QUYNH-AN PHAN
SPENCER TIERNEY
JUSTIN & SARAH SANDERS
ALEX MACEDA
DAVID SANDERS
SARAMANDA SWIGART
DANIELLE TRUPPI
RUTHIE WAGMORE
RANDY WORKMAN

SASHA BERNSTEIN
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Editor, Submissions / Kayne Belul

The Back Page / Laura Jaye Cramer

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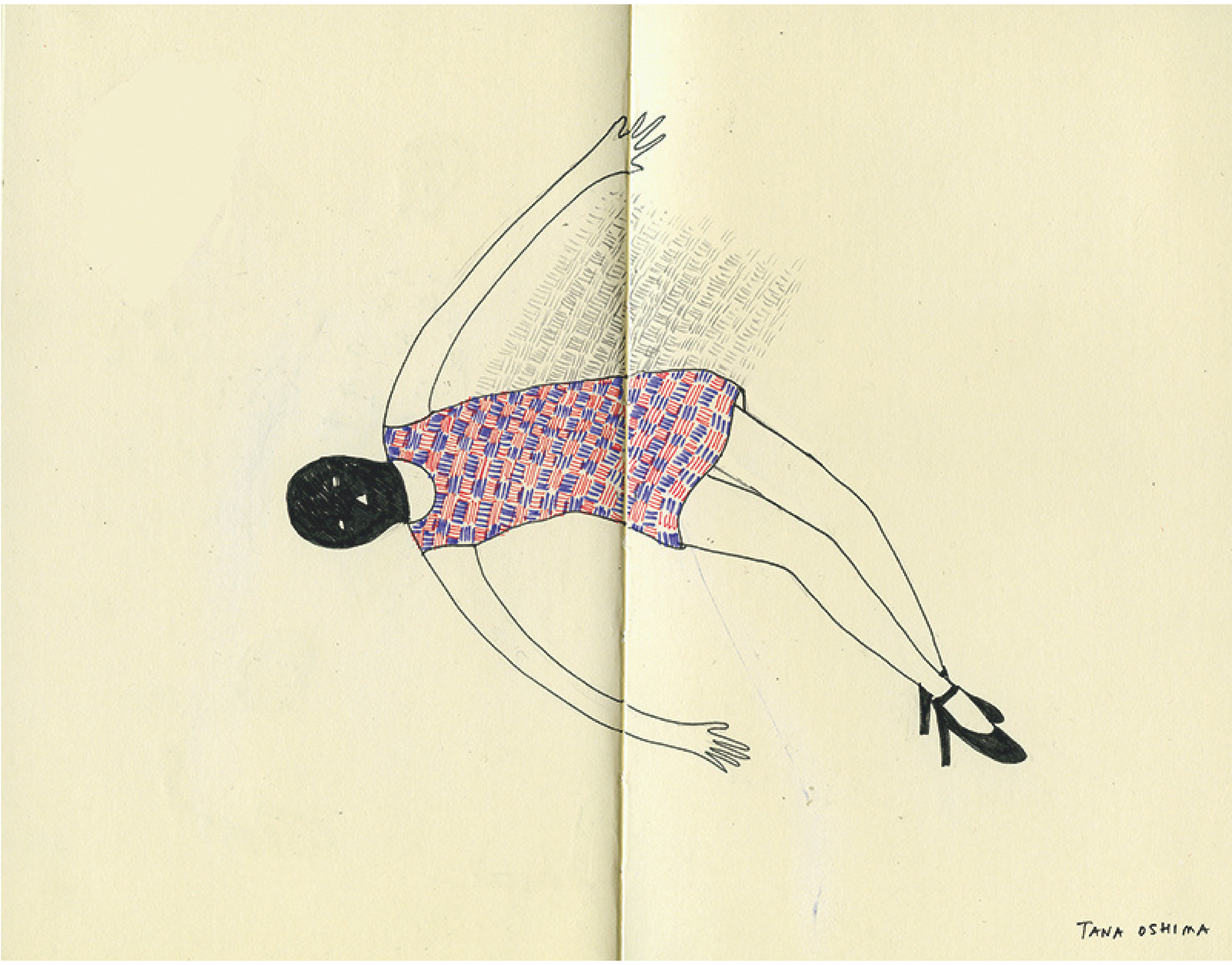
What We Said, All of Us, Together, When Evan Slapped Her at the Party, and She Turned to You and You and You and You and Me, and but We Were All Very Young, and also the Music and the Drinks, Remember, and Everything Was Loud, and You Didn't See It, and I Didn't See It, Certainly, and but It Was Dark, and There Was Nothing So Suddenly Different as You or I Might Have Expected in Such a Moment, and the Music Was Very Loud, Remember, and There Was a Game, and He Left Soon After with Her, and but We Watched Them Leave, and One of Us Picked Another Song, and You and I

Won Later, and You Were Scared, and You Were Relieved You Were Scared, and I Was Scared and Relieved Too, and That and It Was Loud, All of It, and but There Was Not Even the Thinnest Gasp of Moon That Night; What We Said When It Happened, Remember, in Answer, to Her, to Him, If We're Being Honest

GUNNAR OHBERG



Falling With Grace
Tana Oshima
2010

The Lovers

CARSON PYNES

remember I smashed a champagne glass on the street outside the haunted hotel
you ordered us into the bathtub with all our clothes on
admitted I can't stay kissed you stinging nettle split lips spilled I never
believed you ghosts surround I made a liar out of you

Mosaic I
Pablo Manga
2017

Mosaic II
Pablo Manga
2017

Mosaic III
Pablo Manga
2017

Stick & Poke

GABRIELLE GRILLI

black-licorice-bite
of disassociation sitting

bottom-bellied leaving you

throat-heavy, eyes unfocused,

thoughts half
molded, scratching along

milk-glass-naked-flesh
Your lips
struggle to carve
out words
like a dull saw, jagged enough
to leave a sting.

your sighs
shatter bones—
rub flesh raw;
let them out slowly,
skin
scraped
softly in your inner cheek,

mouth puckered-pink against
the feeling of feeling nothing—

let them pick away
at the frayed bits

let sinew unravel,

flesh
sink
downwards
what's a few pin pricks

when the whole body's been sewn

Untitled from the series Sentimental Education
Hiroyo Kaneko
2008

Untitled from the series Sentimental Education
Hiroyo Kaneko
2008

My Mother Tells Me About the First Boy She Ever Loved

ALEXIS WILSON

First, she talks about street names. Highways
which cut into highways like bodies cut into bodies.
Dry summers and oil rigs which probe the land
heavy with machinery. As we drive over a hill filled with wheat
she points out a distant, starry-eyed cow aimlessly grazing
in an open field. The kernels of her childhood.

She talks about slipping into the grain of a large silo. Stripping
off plaid in front of a gentle boy with rough hands.
She let him watch as she undressed in the yellow heat
of hay stacks, horses resting their heads against the cool metal,
braids sticky against her neck in the tangled flowers he blew into,
to amuse her, a warm puff of air against the white petals.

She talks about love like it is hers,
the landfills releasing methane gas, and there, among the hills,
I can see the outline of her body which has the same build as mine.
Late January, like her, I let my own body bend below another body.
roads intersect like our legs, the shadow of our bodies
against the wall, a warm green, our mouths fitted together.
Suddenly, I am in her New York, her meadow, her silo—
in the hay; the heat; the flowers, opening.

There, within the seed of her memory,
I see our likenesses in everything, our bodies assembling into
a landfill, the quick bunnies fucking in the flowers,
the pasture, the field itself. The single quiet cow with its blank stare,
grass anchoring itself to the roof of her mouth.
I bend down for more.

Untitled from the series Sentimental Education
Hiroyo Kaneko
2008

Untitled from the series Sentimental Education
Hiroyo Kaneko
2005

PET!

NORMA SMITH

The dog sleeps
or snores with her eyes open.
She finds herself

lying beside my desk all day.
In the middle of the night
I feel a muzzle—soft

but insistent—
letting me know
she needs comfort.

Day and night she wonders
what her person is doing
at home all day.

She is not complaining
but wants an explanation
that includes a reassuring

and nearly constant
caress.

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.

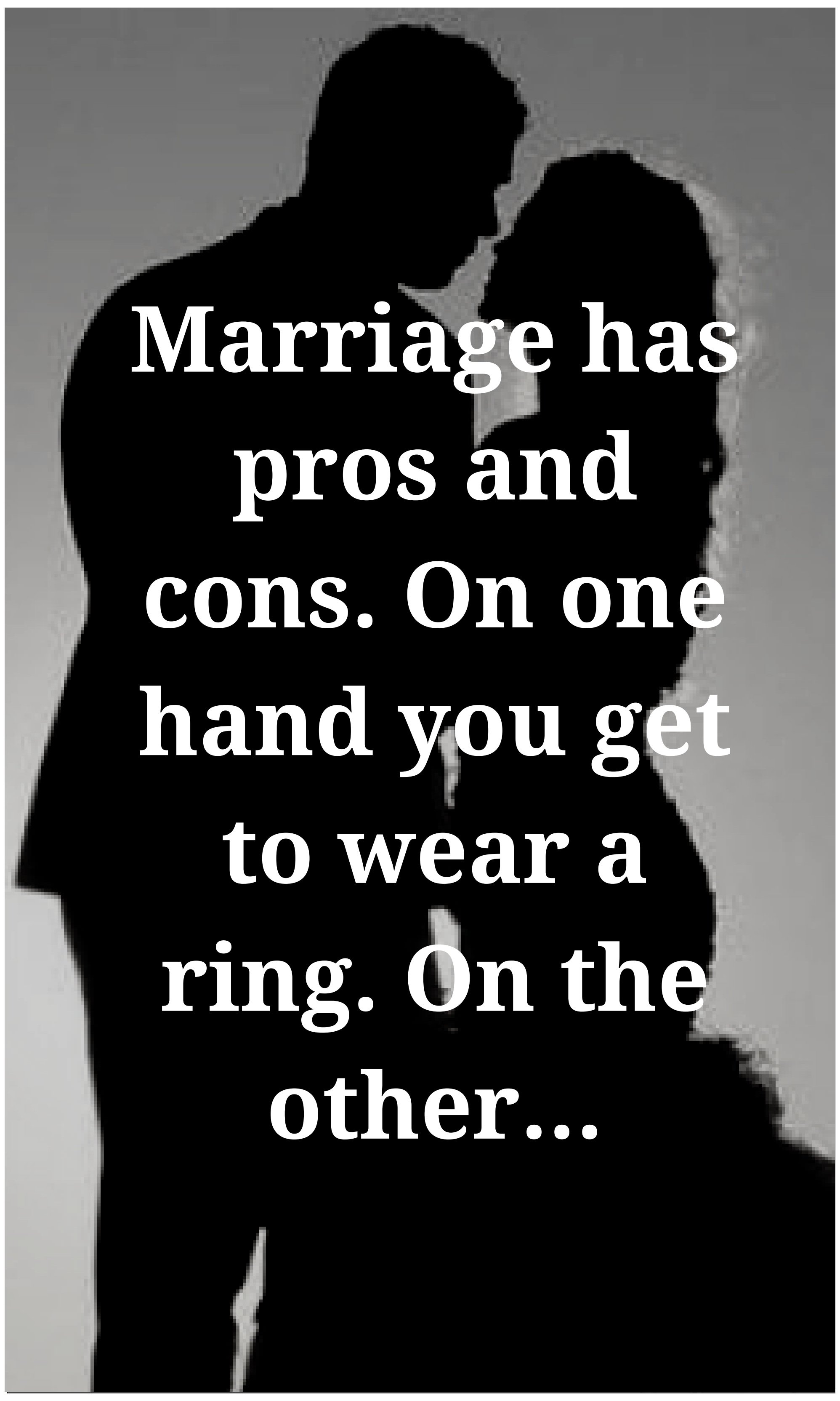
ILTRF

EHOWS

OURRPA

GTYOSD

LOGOBN



(Answers next week.)

Last week's answers:

ABYSS, NICER, IMAGE, TUSSLE, REMAKE

The first rule of Mime Club is you don't talk about *Mime Club*.

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

one bitten, twice shy

CONTRIBUTORS

GABRIELLE GRILLI
HIROYO KANEKO
PABLO MANGA
GUNNAR OHBERG
TANA OSHIMA
CARSON PYNES
MARY ROLL
NORMA SMITH
ALEXIS WILSON

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CARSON BEKER
MICHAL MJ JONES
BARUCH PORRAS-HERNANDEZ
SOMA MEI SHENG FRAZIER

3/11 - 7PM - ZOOM

RUN IT OUT.