

# THE RACKET

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Hi.

Everyone doing okay?

Are we all realizing our collective  
discomfort, awkwardness, guilt,  
anger, sadness,  
the cringing at our past actions,  
the grimacing at the realizations  
of how much we've unknowingly  
been a part of the problem, all of  
this is just a beginning?

All of this is just the first timid  
baby waddles into what  
will be an churning, unending walk  
towards learning and changing and  
coming to grips with the sins  
of our past.

To pull our minds sluggishly  
through this emotional quicksand  
is hard, necessary work.

Will it get easier?

More importantly, will the effort  
lead to permanency?

I don't know.

I just don't.

I hope so.  
I hope you think similarly.

Regardless: let us take note  
of the power of this moment,  
however long it lasts.

Listen and learn and try to find  
understanding in our own  
discomfort.

'Till next time.

- Noah Sanders  
The Racket

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

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This is just the start.  
Learn more about defunding police:  
<https://www.8toabolition.com/>



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*Waves*

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We're just going to leave this blank. Wait.

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM



# WE HAVE A PATREON

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We aren't in it for the money. Believe us.  
Funding or not we'll figure out a way to  
keep getting great writing and great art  
into your sweaty palms at no cost  
whatsoever.

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

And any help with those costs (and with  
the costs of future The Racket endeavors)  
would be greatly appreciated.

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

# THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

CATHY SANDERS	JUSTIN SANDERS
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THE BACK PAGE  
BY  
Laura Jaye  
Cramer

CURATED BY:  
Noah Sanders



# THE RACKET

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SURFACE / MARIA A. GUZMAN CAPRON / 2019



# St. Amni

PAUL CORMAN-ROBERTS

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draw down eyes always  
those always drawn down  
I's I down draw always  
head high, head high  
beneath those drawn eyes

sweet Amniosa moving  
through rips in the fabric  
and she don't know  
don't even see  
draw down eyes  
across continuum

origin traces smoke  
back to your heart.  
head high, head high  
& a mischievous smile.  
draw down always eyes

Elizabethan chakra  
blossoms from your collar  
third eye  
third I



hang low off your heart  
no end or beginning

draw down draw down  
third eye held head high  
always down  
always high  
no end or beginning

# The Open End of a Cul-de-sac

JESSICA SCHOTT-ROSENFELD

---

When I've finally set down a blunt pencil and stirred the grounds in my coffee one too many times to count, I'll sit for real. Vertical will no longer be a hard sound, and I will look forward to the mornings, when I can embrace how well my spine can hold me up. My coffee will have no grounds at all, and I will stir at nothing but know that something used to be there. Lurking in the bottom of the cup will be the best part of the beverage, and I will just have to sit on the porch swing longer in order to reach the end. Turtle hill will shrink back into a mere mountain and climbing it won't mean that I've lost reality again. Our house will be empty sometimes and that will be a good thing. I would swear I broke my arm separating the frame of the living room window from the glass but instead I swear not to tell lies and promise to notice when the weeds growing near the fence get too wild to save from taking over our small front yard. Looking down from my desk, when my spine insisted on curving like a weighed down lemon tree, the only thing I knew for sure was the man who walked past every day with his two dogs, one gray and the other spotted with brown and white. Soon I will see him



and I will remember that he also waved to me once, and I replied with a closed-off smile. And every time I recall that moment I will scan my sweater, or my hands, to remind myself that I existed then and exist more strongly now.



AZAR / ADIA MILLETT / 2012



# All the Arms We Need

KRISTINA TEN

---

“It’s not enough,” you say. We’re in the living room. The upstairs neighbors are vacuuming and the downstairs neighbors have music on and I am holding you. It’s an apartment; it’s how it goes. Sometimes it’s so loud you feel sandwiched between sound and sometimes it’s deafening quiet. Sometimes it’s neither of those and still you feel it, feel it extra lately, the way we, all of us, are surrounded but separate.

Surrounded but separate. You hate it. You hate it. It makes living impossible. You ask to be held.

Of course, I say. Anything.

But it’s not enough. I know what you mean. You mean my arms: only two, ineffectual.

So I go into the bathroom, become a starfish.

I have to grip onto the sink to stay steady, stuff a towel into my mouth so you won’t hear the screams. When my mouth has moved completely to the bottom center of my body, I know the transformation is done. I pinwheel out to you, stiff, sun-bleached, and briny.

You draw me close and I envelop you. Worrying my sandpaper skin will scratch, I try to be light about it, but you pull at me, saying “Tighter,” “More.” I whisper soothing wave sounds into your ear. I ask if you remember seaglass collecting, saltwater taffy, Bodega Bay in the cold summer. I hold you till I feel my new body starving, drying up like it’s been left on the shore.

It’s been this way for I don’t know how long: all of us being surrounded but separate, and this making living impossible for you. We’ve read articles. We’ve gotten opinions and second opinions. You’ve been prescribed exercise and journaling and more time in the sun. Someone has suggested the healing power of touch. Human touch, they said, but—

“It’s not enough.”

I excuse myself again. This time, I try an octopus. When I leave the bathroom, the towel I used to muffle is shredded from the sharp beak of my octopus mouth. As my tentacles drag down the hallway, they make the whoosh-plop-plop of suction cups on the hardwood floor.

“Please,” you say, your arms outstretched. You have been doing things to them, with them. They are crisscrossed with pink lines.

I want to be all the arms you need.

I wrap myself around you, thick, wet, flopping, struggling to



maneuver the weight of all eight limbs. I try to face the suckers away so they don't leave welts. You've tried cupping already, been prescribed acupuncture, meditative sound baths. I sing whale songs, the shanties of drowned sailors, other lullabies of the deep. You hug me back, crying into the nook under my bulbous head. My body reacts to the salt and I feel a violent internal pitch toward the sea. The next time you speak, I'm so startled, I release ink onto the rug.

"Still not enough."

Anything. I would do anything.

You have been doing this lately, with almost manic concentration: organizing the items in our apartment into two piles, smooth and rough. In one pile, a porcelain bowl, an apple, stones from an old aquarium. In the other, a kitchen sponge, a small cactus plant you used to keep at your desk at work.

Every morning, you go and sit with one of the piles. It's a way to tell me how you're feeling, whether you think the day will be smooth or rough.

This time is the worst yet. It's like my sides are splitting open, like I'm being unzipped from the top down. Blood pools at my left and right. In the mirror above the sink, I watch my facial features muddle into a hardened shell, a pair of bristly mandibles.

I emerge from the bathroom, moving quick and slow at once.

“Milli” means thousand, but that’s not quite right. What I have is a few hundred arms, at most. I skitter over to you where you are sniffing between the piles, head in your hands.

When you lift it, I register disgust.

But millipedes have poor eyesight, it turns out, and soon you are nestling into me, hugging me so hard it’s like you’re trying to bury your body into mine, and I realize that look I saw? That raised brow, that shaky exhale? It was relief.

We’re in the living room. Upstairs neighbors vacuuming. Downstairs neighbors—sounds like they’ve moved on to karaoke.

“Enough?” I let my antennae dance through your hair.

You nod, nuzzling against my exoskeleton.

“For now,” you say. “Enough.”





MY SHIFTING ATTACHMENT TO YOU(S) / CASEY BADEN / 2019/2020



# Three Breaths

RANDY PRUNTY

---

1

Is it still  
early?  
Is this a morning?  
I can't parse the vapors  
from the thoughts I ache  
to see in the unseen  
bedroom garden fog

2

What did we speak of?  
The flowers blooming at  
midnight?  
No to all sentences  
I can't remember  
As the mountain occurs  
I remove my hat  
as well as myself

3

Do you need a crystal?  
Would you like a lime?  
Lightly the choices fall

and fail to stick  
I have a great trust in masks  
to reveal the jagged beautiful  
even in my trembling



# alas thus

TOMAS MONIZ

---

simple words meaning    an exclamation    & a result    but so  
much more    it's the inevitability of what must follow    the  
painful acceptance of it    like parenting babies    child cries    &  
alas    we soothe    or lovers    the feel of skin on skin after the act  
    & thus    an intimacy that will be missed more than the person  
more than gender or body part    therefore celebrate    the  
immediate expression of something feral    & the residual  
reminder of what comes    because someday soon we will leave  
this isolation together    soothe & touch    alas    thus

# THE BACK PAGE

BY  
LAURA JAYE CRAMER



# EAT MY SHORTS

AN ILLUSTRATED HAIKU

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## The Business Pitch



It's weird when you say,  
"You must have worked hard on this."  
Because, wow, you're wrong.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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At our monthly events instead of introductory bios, we ask our readers a question and then share their answers.

We'd like to continue the tradition.

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QUESTION:

*Describe the tactile feel of your headspace.*

CASEY BADEN

*My headspace is crowded, dense, over-populated even, with thoughts bouncing around like the inside of a pinball machine.*

PAUL CORMAN-ROBERTS

MARIA A. GUZMAN CAPRON

*A porous raspy tongue of cat ready for action.*

ADIA MILLETT

TOMAS MONIZ

*When you squish a raspberry between the roof of your mouth and your tongue. That feeling.*

RANDY PRUNTY

*The space in my head is almost entirely empty, but taking up a small corner: Lacan's seminar on anxiety and the new Madeline Gins reader.*

JESSICA SCHOTT-ROSENFELD

*My headspace feels like an unbreakable latex glove filled with water, being bitten into relentlessly.*

KRISTINA TEN

*Ten pounds of dog fur, plus those plastic bags of screws that're really pokey and always get holes in them.*



**THE  
RACKET**  
WEEKLY



**BLACK GIRL MAGIC**  
**W / YODASSA WILLIAMS**

+  
NAZELAH JAMISON  
KELECHI UBOZOH  
ROCHELLE SPENCER  
LIS OWUOR

**THURS. 6/11**  
**7PM / ZOOM**

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**MAYBE IT'S OVER.**



