

THE RACKET

15



THE RACKET

Hi.

At the beginning of these introductions
I've always asked
"Everyone doing okay?"

I ask this question all the time.
It's an especially trying time and
every time I speak to someone
I want to know: are they okay?

I've started wonder about it though,
about asking people about their well-being
in a time like this.

A time when clearly,
we aren't okay.

A time where some days are better
then others, but for the most part we're measuring our
well-being
against the recent past.

We're finding joy and hope and the barest sliver
of optimism in the smallest aspects of living.

We're constructing paper thin walls between
living and surviving just to get by.

To ask someone
"you doing okay?" -
feels less good-naturedly inquiring
about an emotional state,
and more putting a fist through these walls
and let the emotional debris come tumbling out.

Maybe we need this,
to keep reminding ourselves
that no matter the level of disassociation
we're enacting to get through a day,
the emotion building up behind it is
proof that "just surviving" is only a
temporary state of being.

Or more so just another part of being alive.

So, even if it hurts a little,
I'll keep asking.

Everyone doing okay?

'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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Cover Image:

Mt Tampalpais (or a sleeping shoulder from a dream)

2016

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"u up?" by Chelsea Davis
previously published in *sparkle & blink*

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It's like a rollercoaster, but only the looping part.

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM

WE HAVE A PATREON

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 & JOHN SANDERS
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CASEY BENNETT
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THE BACK PAGE
BY
Laura Jaye
Cramer

CURATED BY:
Noah Sanders

THE RACKET

15

Bettering Myself

PREETI VANGANI

I rise before the sun. I don't take auto-correct at face value. I honor my dentist's appointment. She wants to know if I found love. I read Dragons Love Tacos to toddlers. Make their valentines. Schedule my pap smear at the women's clinic. They want to know if I am active. I smile to say I am Gatsby without the money. Rinse and scrub all china before the gathering of a dry film. Separate the whites (eggs & linens). Unsubscribe from the daily horoscope. They want to know if I found the missing half of my soul. Fill myself with B6, B12, TED talks and extracts of dandelion. I play pretend dog-family with rich kids. I am on all fours. I am babysitter puppy. I lunge. Spin. Crunch. Cross train. Register for a marathon, a lunch pop up, a protest march. I hold up a banner bigger than me, scream HAVE SOME MERCY. Hit a wall. Drill holes for a shelf on my own. At Halloween, I am Riveter Rosie. I wear a fitness bracelet to know more about me in numbers. It calculates even when I dream. Throw impromptu dinner parties. Compose cheese platters. Scan labels to check how my chicken was raised. I wonder if my eggs are good enough to be donated. Children at the daycare guess my age as either seven or three hundred and twenty-six. Today I am the tickle monster. In the shower, do the macarena to see if I still can shake it. Fold and unfold myself into a flash mob. I scrape mold off the Victorian ceiling. Let the adjustable ladder rest where it stays out of sight. Bring home air plants. I learn something about growing without roots.



GREEN PADRE - LOOKING LEFT
KATIE DORAME
2014

3 AM

ANDY SANO

You had no idea you had no idea.
You can hear a guitar playing,
not beautifully but loud enough
to pick out of the darkness.
Elsewhere, children cheer, and
you can hear youth in their bound
voices, like a bundle of reeds
giving off the smell of cut
green grass, as if ears could
become tongues set free
to return all the junk mail
with interest. That is wrong,
it is a mess and you try to
gather it, fail, look up and see
strangers making the same
movements, even the ones
sitting still as if they can't quite
hear any guitars any more.
Gradually, you feel like a
guest in your own room,

too uncomfortable to just
piss in a jar now, and sleep
is a snicker in the dark
when you need a friend.

The Glass

(On Alcohol, and The Handshake with the Void)

MATT CARNEY

This glass is my glass
the shape of cradled, colored hands
christened in the divine image
of another degenerate artist
overdosing on wonder.

This glass is my glass is
hissing to me in riddles,
humming stories of headaches,
heartache melody about
the wrong lover's room, a subway stop,
toilet bowl for a pillow,
crystalline buzz and
this glass is my glass and
I swill a spirit, as they say,
I pick and ship poison, as they say,
like melted flowers in
a bad angle of a faraway memory,
the wedding day almost forgotten.

This glass is my glass that
lives as an outline of me,
a container, a lip stain,
hand to glass to heart
to heart, to face to face
with my glass and
the shadow of day drowned before five,
the pride of night swallowing itself –
a slut under a streetlamp
glass blown from the sand of
seven deserts,
the glass beads rattling in the night.

Alcohol, alcohol, alcohol –
no space for safety now in our era
but me: Wine, Slut, A Symphony.
Just swilling from my glass now,
a wine that is killing me.
I'm waiting for the handshake.
I'm waiting for a feeling that lasts
at all.

My glass can't laugh
just as yours can't laugh –
but my glass,
it would laugh if it could,
refill itself with
reunions past,
weeping past due,
whining,
tired face melted a mirrored vial
full of inspiration
transmuted to piss,
and if my glass could laugh,
oh, darling,
it would laugh and laugh and laugh.







open your eyes

NAZELAH JAMISON

close your eyes

it is 1843, nighttime in the summer woods

pungent aroma of green moss fills your nostrils

twigs and mushrooms beneath your feet

you hug the cool bark of a sycamore tree

birds trill, frogs belch, waters rushing

dogs are barking - run, they comin

open your eyes

it is 1869

who dat comin up the road

well-dressed man looking mighty fine

what's that you say - we free?

i'm big with child, i can't leave

cotton to pick, washing to do, plus

missus been mighty good to me

freedom seem like a brand new dress

i can't fit nor afford

these rags are worn but they comfortable

and i ain't got travelin shoes

here come missus - you better run

close your eyes

it is 1921

it is warm in the closet, as the house burns around you

in the distance are the agonized screams

of neighbors, family, friends

and other uppity niggers who tried to be somebody

planes fly overhead

bombs drop on your world

mad white folks have turned your reality

into nightmare armageddon

your daddy went to the courthouse this morning

to see bout that boy they say started all this

he ain't never comin back

nothing is ever coming back

mama said, pray, don't cry

so you bow your head, cause you can't run

open your eyes

it is 1955

you were happy that late summer day

whistling down the wrong street

death was a facetious white lady

you were 14

the mob was merciless

now you are the poster child for

violent relentless racist retribution

baby, you didn't run fast enough

close your eyes
it is 1968
they have a rope
old and dirty and frayed and strong
the box they balanced you on
unstable beneath your callused soles
the people are having a picnic
fried chicken as greasy as their smiles
you always wanted to be on a stage
now you are the main attraction
and as they place the final choker around your neck
your savior is killed at a memphis hotel
there is nowhere to run

open your eyes
it is 1999
you are an african immigrant
just in america trying to make your mother proud
just trying to get home
41 bullets later, you couldn't run

close your eyes
it is 2009
you were on your way to celebrate new year's eve
you were handcuffed, prone and
shot in the back before you could run

open your eyes
it is 2012
you love Skittles and your girlfriend
you never saw him coming
you tried to fight instead of run

close your eyes
it is 2014
you are 12 years old
in a public park, just playing with a water gun
you never saw it coming, so
you never started running

open your eyes
it is 2015
you were just trying to get home
who knew it was fatal
to smoke a cigarette at a traffic stop

close your eyes
it is 2020
you were exhausted, from saving lives
your boyfriend made you dinner
you went to bed early
you were dreaming of another day
you didn't have another day
unannounced bullets granted you eternal rest
you would have never had a chance to run

open your eyes
it is 2020
you are running
for health, for life
for your life
behind you, a pickup truck clocks your every move
ahead of you a pickup truck is waiting
citizens with guns cocked, just for you
they will not let you keep running
you stop to lose a fight for your life

close your eyes
it is 2020
you have died, facedown, in handcuffs
with hate's knee on your neck
in front of the entire world
the entire world has responded
it is any year america
you are black, doing anything anywhere
you are done running
it is 2020
open your eyes







COLOR VIDEO STILLS FROM *HERE WE ARE AGAIN, RUNNING OUT OF TIME*
LUCA ANTONUCCI
PUBLISHED BY COLPA PRESS 2018

U up?

CHELSEA DAVIS

I find them in the mornings,
the small hangovers
from last night's needs.

Tuesday, 2:24AM, Facebook message: "U up?"

Thursday, 4:16AM, Instagram DM: "sup?"

Saturday, 11:51PM, a text: "hey How arc yoou?"

Sunday, 12:01AM, a text: "Hey can u talk otp?"

Sunday, 12:05AM, a text: "CHELS I really need to talk to you."

Sunday, 12:07AM: missed call.

12:10AM: missed call.

12:12AM: missed call.

12:12AM: missed call.

No voicemail.

Missed call.

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

Your life, I mean.

You were supposed to

fall in love. You were supposed to

have a friend, or four. You were supposed to

paint or teach or serve coffee or

surf. You were supposed to
leave your house from time to time, maybe
even every day. You were supposed to
know the feeling of the sun on
your face. I was not supposed
to be the sun around which you
spun
and spun
and spun.

But I know you only call me in the night,
brother,
because that is when the voices call
you. And I know that there's some hope
at first, when they start, because they start
so softly. Hardly whispers, quick
static hisses in your ear, so distant they
are almost only in your head. But I know
that they come closer. And I know
they are persistent. And I know they know
your name. And they know that it is
3AM, and you
are up.



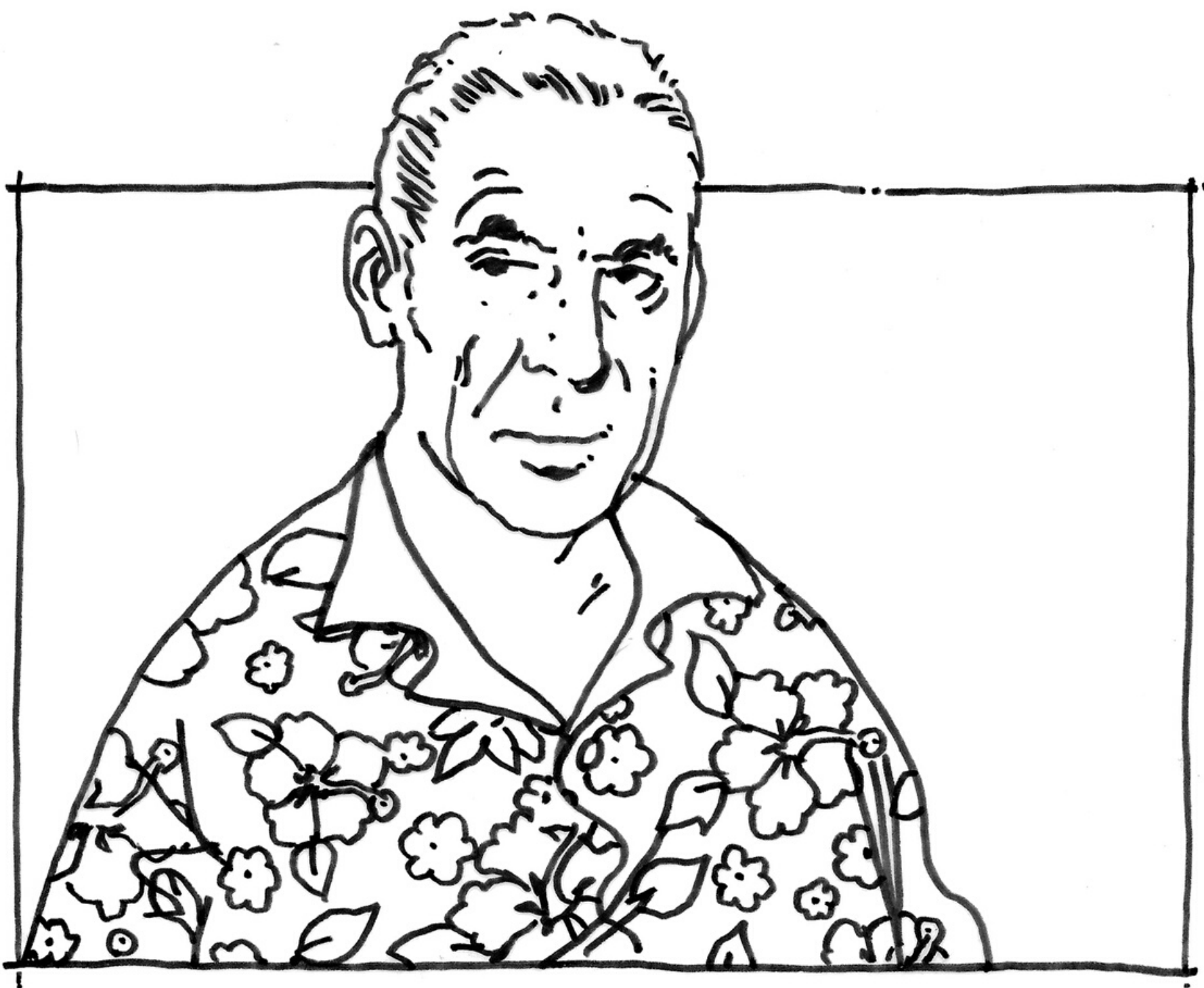
ELEGIA
KEVIN UMANA
2015

THE BACK PAGE

BY
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

EAT MY SHORTS

Dressing For the Job
I Deserve



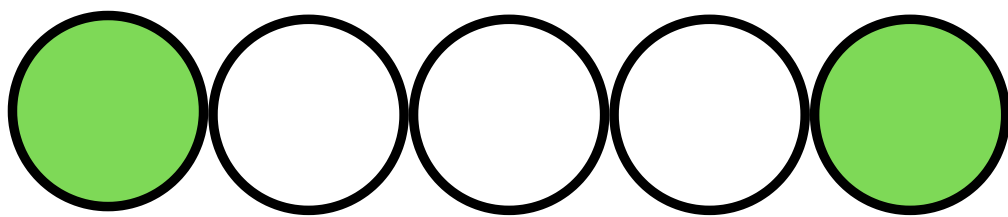
This Hawaiian shirt...
Does it make me look brainy?
Because I am not.

THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

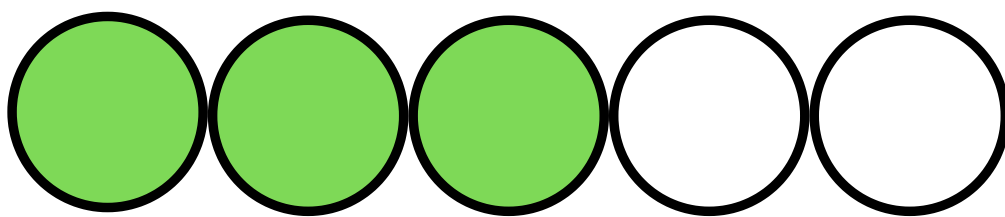
WORD STUFF

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

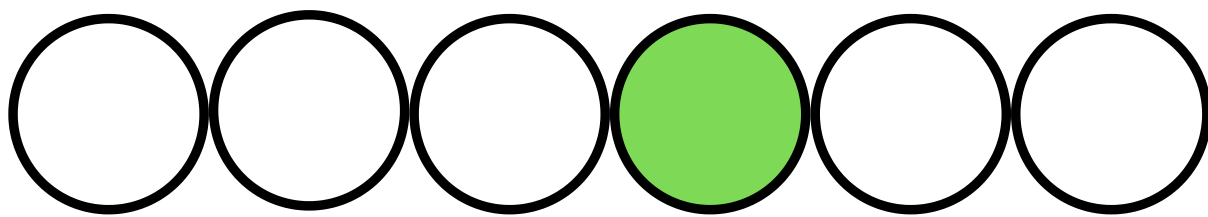
NPTEI



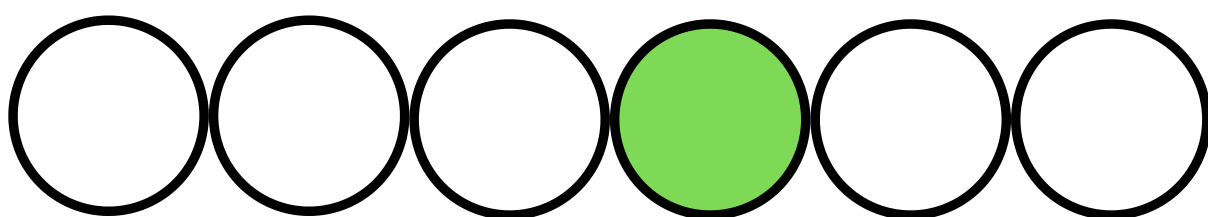
RGEEV



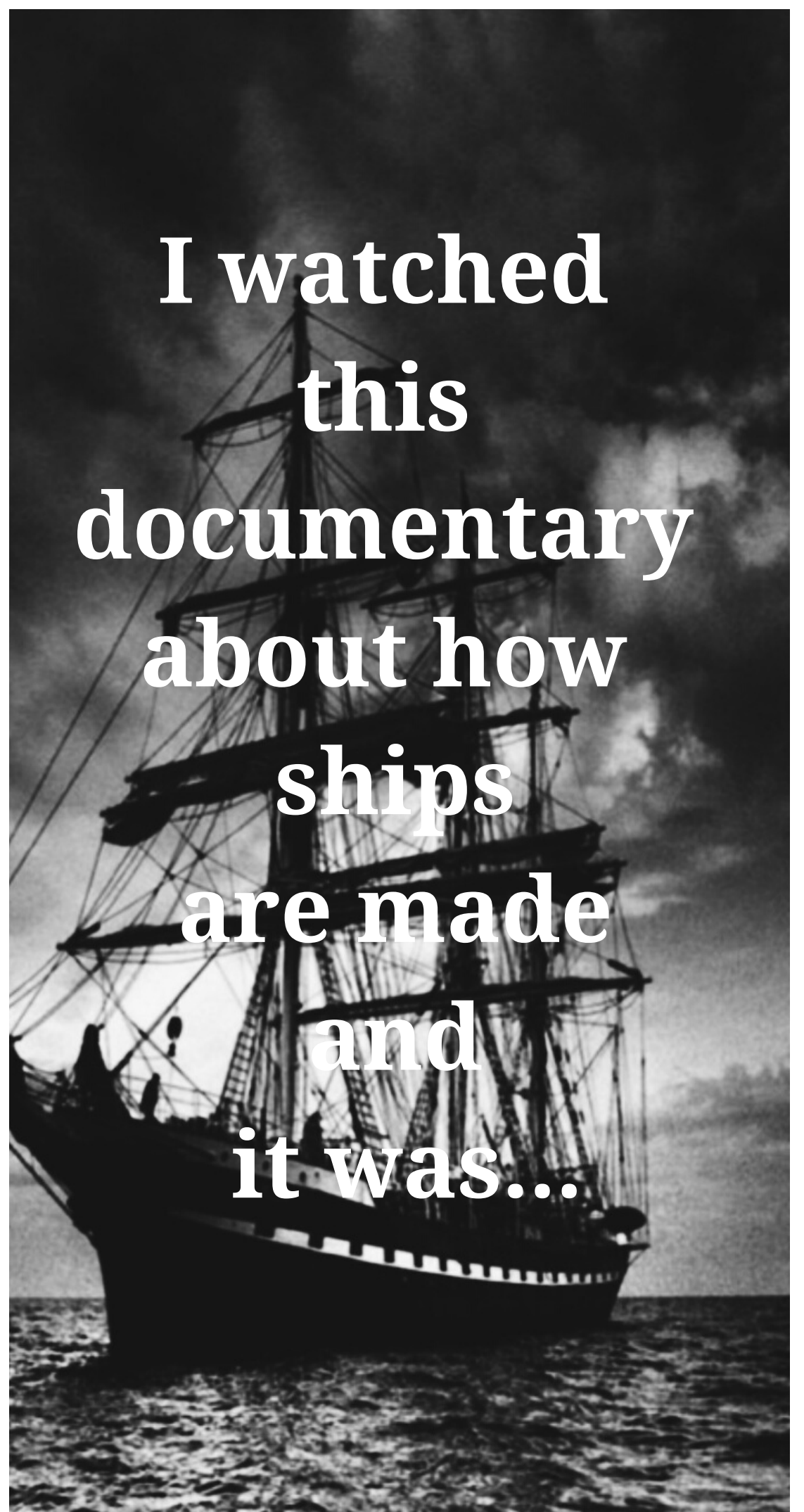
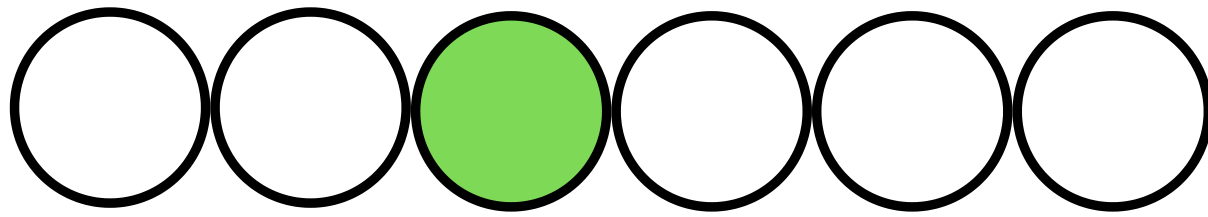
CLPIES



KACYRN



GLEPTI



(Answers next week.)

Last week's answers:

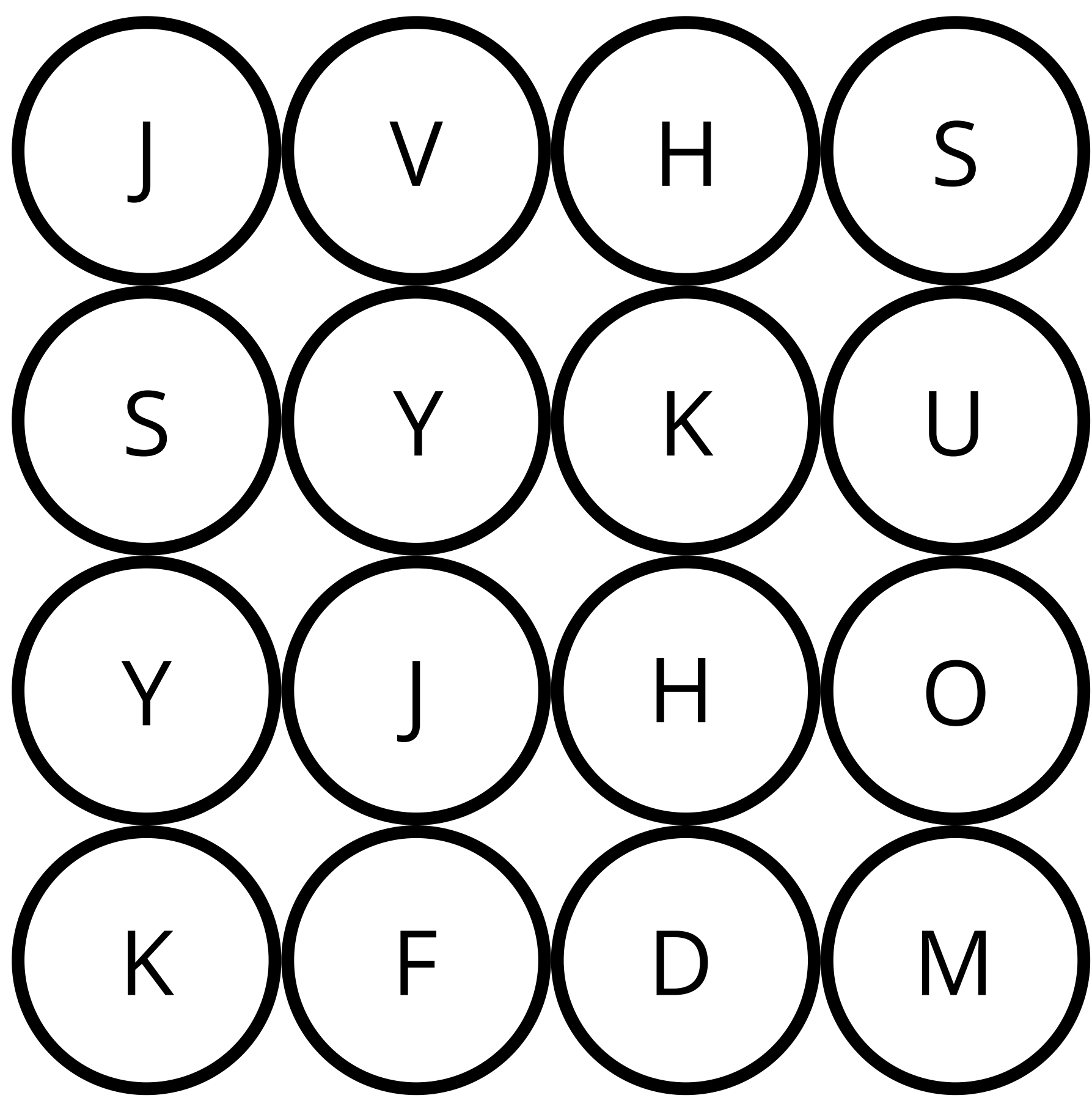
RESUSE, NESTLE, BETRAY, SCULPT, FIBBER

When my toothpaste fell on the ground I was ...
crestfallen.

BONGGLE

Set a timer for three minutes (honor system!) to find as many words as possible within the grid by connecting letters horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

You know, like Boggle.



SCORING (by word):

- three/four letter - 1 pt.
 - five letter - 2 pt.
 - six letter - 3 pt.
 - seven letter - 4 pt.
-

Send your list of words and your score to:
theracketreadingseries@gmail.com

High score gets a shout out in the next issue!

BONGGLE

LAST WEEKS WORDS

blin	fresnel	nine
elf	ill	nines
elfin	iller	ref
elk	ills	refile
ell	infer	refiles
ells	jell	refill
els	jells	refills
else	lei	rei
ens	lens	reif
enserf	lense	rein
erf	les	ren
erk	lie	reninres
err	lief	resell
errs	lien	sei
esne	lier	seif
fell	lies	seil
fells	life	sel
fen	lifer	sele
feni	lifes	self
fer	lin	sell
fes	line	selle
fie	linen	seller
fier	liner	sen
fil	lines	senile
file	nef	ser
filer	neif	serf
files	nelies	serk
fill	nerk	serr
fille	nie	slier
filler	nief	snell
filles	nies	sneller
fills	nife	
fils	nifes	
fin	nil	
fine	nill	
finer	nills	
fines	nils	

CONTRIBUTORS

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.

QUESTION:

What's the first thing you think when you wake up?

LUCA ANTONUCCI

MATT CARNEY

Must I always dream of cocaine and assasination attempts in a fun house setting? And why the silver bell bottoms? And were those coyotes on the roof again, darling, or were you the one howling?

CHELSEA DAVIS

Ugh, must be having that weird dream again where I'm a human. Hope I wake up soon.

KATIE DORAME

Is the baby awake?

NAZELAH JAMISON

Honest answer? I think, "I live in California - yay!"

ANDY SANO

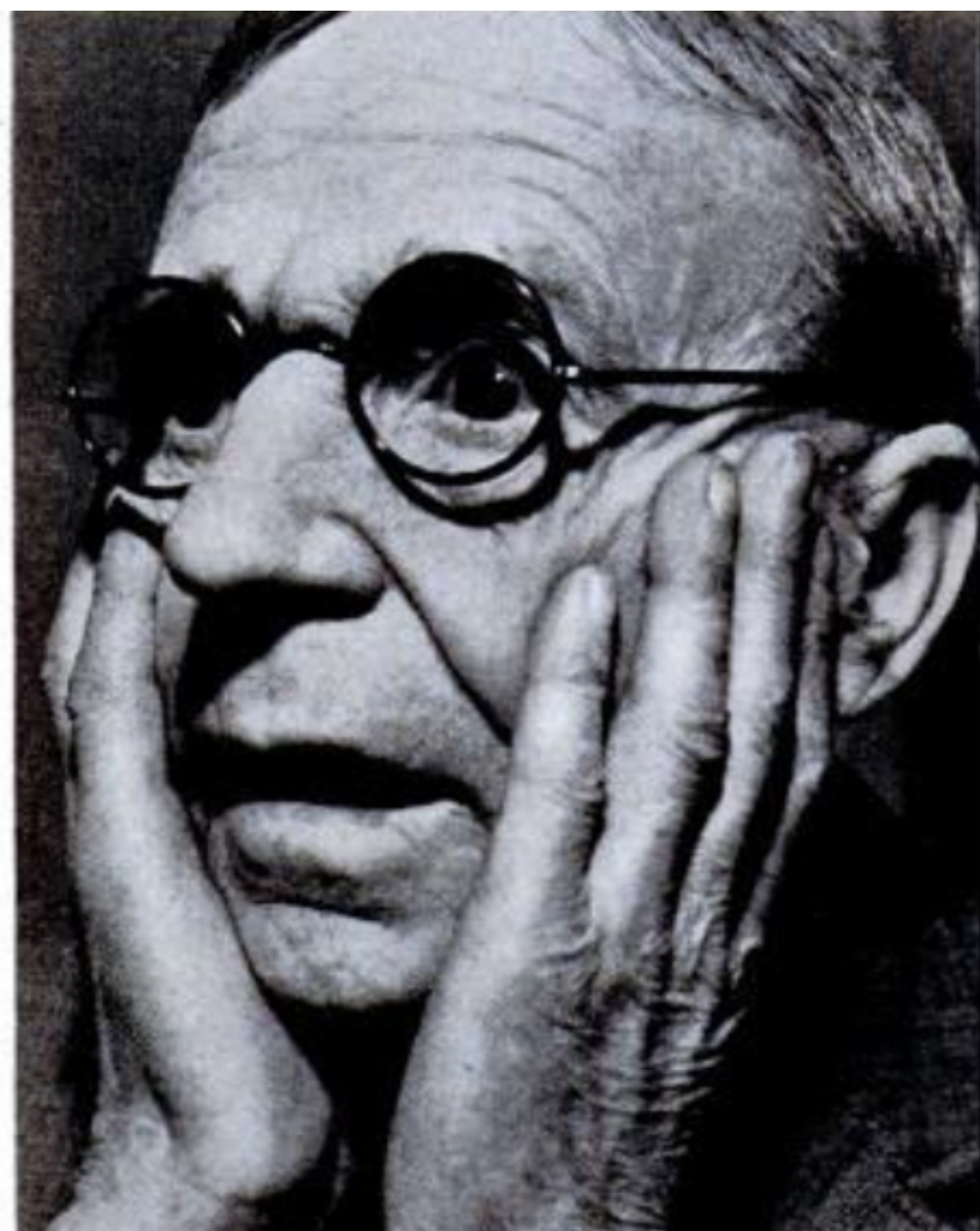
KEVIN UMANA

What was that song that kept playing in my dreams?

PREETI VANGANI

Chai. I always think of chai.

**THE
RACKET**
WEEKLY



ALTERED STATES

+
BARUCH PORRAS-HERNANDEZ
PAOLO BICCHIERI
HALIM MADI
LILIAN WANG
...AND MORE...

THURS. 7/16
7PM / ZOOM

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**WELP.
YOU'VE COME
TO THE END.**

