



THE RACKET

18

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Hi.

Everyone doing okay?

As these abnormal times become shockingly more and more, well, normal times, we've found the jarring oddities of early days slowly coalescing into rout, mundane routine.

It hasn't been the easiest realization.

We've been holding on to the thin, grisly thread of hope that just over the near horizon, a few minutes past the midnight hour, everything was going to get better.

Things were going to change.

And yeah, things have changed.

Instead of a drastic slamming of a door though, life - all of it, every single layer and micro-layer - has ground slowly forward, evolving microscopically as it cedes to the demands of a viral predator.

Part of me wakes up each and every morning and brushes my teeth and walks the dog and drinks my coffee and just goes about like things are still February 2020.

The rest of me, with increasing weariness, realizes that the routines of my past may look and feel similar, may produce emotions I can still recognize if I just squint my eyes hard enough, but all of - *all of it* - now exists in a steadily shifting, amorphous shell of total upheaval.

Yet, as the world lurches back and forth and we stumble trying to right ourselves, the daily routine is just about all we have.

The dog, the coffee, the 5:30 beverage on the stoop - it may be boring, but in a world suddenly gone blandly psychedelic, I'll take what I can get.

'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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<https://www.8toabolition.com/>

THE RACKET : QUARANTINE JOURNAL, Vol. 1, NO. 18

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It's not the size of a football anymore, just the sickly green of zombie flesh.

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
HALLIE YOUNG
JAMIE ENGELMANN
CASEY BENNETT
LILIAN CAYLEE
LAUREN C. JOHNSON
ANGIE MCDONALD
QUYNH-AN PHAN
SPENCER TIERNEY
JUSTIN & SARAH SANDERS

ALEX MACEDA
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THE BACK PAGE
BY
Laura Jaye
Cramer

CURATED BY:
Noah Sanders

THE RACKET

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Maintaining Law and Order

MILTON JORDAN

One pandemic day in a suburban
Texas county two deputies drove
their well-marked county sheriff's van slowly
onto the cracked asphalt lot near the old gym
behind Strong Middle School where lines of people
stood in circles chalked for social distancing,
waiting for the Salvation Army's free
distribution of fifty pound boxes
of produce donated by city merchants.

Half the crowd abandoned their places
and disappeared across the grass playground,
to retrieve their pick-ups at safer times
while the deputies laughed at the repeated
success of this experiment they'd tried
before on the other side of town.



21 GRAMS - KACY
KACY JUNG
2018-2019

The Invasion of Pantomime

TIM XONNELLY

Calling all monsters

I love you do to my heart like cardboard cities

Tear it up you giant reptiles

Stomp my school to pudding

Calling all green things

Swamp things and Hulks

Calling all insects bigger than my hand

Calling all Mothra

Do me baby

Pollinate my home fucken town

Rise from the sea

Mil

Gestic

Why I'm Here

DORENE O'BRIEN

My parents remembered the Cuervo but forgot the condom.
I wasn't flattened by that bus when I was five.
I didn't go with Thom and Mick to the ravine that night.

My dad fled to Canada.
I don't bug rabid dogs.
Mick flashed his .38 in homeroom.

I'm here because my mom refused to go to the clinic.
Where the hell else would I be?
The witch told me the trees at the ravine smelled of death.

My father took my mom to emergency after that fall down the stairs.
I hatch escape plans in movie theaters.
I told them I was too stoned to go.

My mom never put arsenic in my apple pie.
I check the seal on my aspirin.
The witch drew the King of Swords.

Because my brother's the one who drove his
Harley off the Chittinaw Bridge.
I drive a piece of shit only a moron would jack.
I lied to the police.

My father never hit me hard enough.
I don't bungee jump.
I followed them to the ravine that night.

My mom didn't need smokes the day the party store was hit.
Eve ate the apple.
My sister lied to the police.

There's no room in hell.
I don't bank at the ATM.
The witch's cards said they'd kill me.

I never landed after that fall in my dream.
I exercise and drink plenty of fluids.
I threw the clothes and the knife off the Chittinaw Bridge.

I'm here because my aunt dumped my father.
I'm here because I quit shooting up.
I'm here because they're not.



KEEP THE HEAT
TROY CHEW
2019

El Santo Contra La Invasion de los Marcianos

ELWIN COTMAN

Earth, I knew of you: wandering cousin where men struggled, glorious. I knew of El Santo before saint was a word. When gods strode the waters he radiated from atop a pyramid. He was the rustle in the grass that pulled strings from conquerors' hearts. Splash of courage to awe a red planet.

I am twenty thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine Earth-years old. You named our planet for a bloody god, because red to you means death. To me it means the shifting sands, my russet sanctum on the slope of Olympus Mons. It means my honored ancestors who crawled from lava, red as oxidization. Time made us green as verdigris.

From my observatory I watched worlds pirouette. The Flavian feats when gore made mud of the sand. The derring-do of the wrestling match. If I had lungs I would have held my breath at the glory of Rey Mysterio. I wept emeralds for Eddie Guerrero.

And El Santo! Conqueror of los vampiros, el mundo de los muertos, el cerebro diabolico. His wars with Blue Demon and Mil Mascaras.

“Why Earth?” ask my pod-mates. Waterlogged rock with no resources. Celestial sponge.

“Humans only have one heart,” they say, “and it breaks all the time.”

In my silver ship, I jump between moons like a luchador off the turnbuckle.
Phosphorescent shattering of physics. Deimos, Phobos, Oaxaca, Juarez.

“Bring me El Santo,” I tell your leaders. “Like gentlemen, we will wrestle for
the fate of Earth.”

I park my flying saucer on cinder blocks. Here the sun is arrogant, a
capitalist, collector of sweat and curses. Heat like breath from a dog’s black
gums burns my skin from lichen to pastoral. Peddlers sell lucha masks and
stuffed Martians. I am made a piñata spilling intestinal taffy. I occupy every
room in their minds, flickering forward to legend, rivering back to ancestry,
to conquistadors (the first alien abductors). Girls in puebla dresses walk on
sea foam, on roses. Mothers suck ice cubes and swat invulnerable insects.
Long shadows loosen the old men’s tongues. We drink tequila and bask in
the shade of our own bullshit. They ask, “Why El Santo?”

“Because I am older than you,” I tell these men with peach pit faces.
“Because I remember, he will be your champion.”

Meanwhile, old rivals call truce. Dressed in his gray suit and cream-colored
turtleneck, El Santo visits los vampiros, who teach him to look for arteries.
Los muertos train him to defy the three-count, to make his body rise from
the canvas when all of nature is telling him to rest.

Cornstalks sown over burial mounds open husks to flower cotton-shrouded
ghosts. On feet made of prayer they take to the highways. They hitchhike to
the match and buy their ticket with jade from beneath their tongues. I learn
why you of all planets did not take a name to worship as holiness rolls in off
the gulf.



GOD HAS NO SPAM FOLDER NO. 3
JESSALYN AALAND
2015

Only children note El Santo is getting on in years, his tapestry of wrinkles over steel cable muscles, his thickness in the waist, his pectorals sagging. They are too young to know that with age comes vastness. Violence caged in the man in the ring whose brown flesh so resembles their grandfathers, who frowns like their mothers when they knead pan dulce. His eyes are like their own.

Luchadors attend, tigers and dragons and spiders and kings. Ixchel in her bone skirt, her claws the sun's nimbus; Q'uq'umatz coils in his folding chair among goddesses masked in the warts of abuelas. In the crowd my people are verdant pillars, cold and still. El Santo and I, the square-ringed us. Silver and white versus green and green.

The bell rings and we collide. Shattered glass screams cloud the air. Clenched, fraught, we fight. Bam! A dropkick. Pow! A clothesline. Sweat flies from our skin like pieces of soul. We shine, beings of light. And how popcorn does fly! How the gods ululate!

A headlock from El Santo. My neck bends until my head pops off like a dandelion. (Because of course my head can come off. I'm a Martian.) I float to the rafters as my body still grapples. I tell it to suplex him. Kick him in the balls. Thumb him in the eye. (One day I will be a mask. El Marciano will rule the ring.) When his back is turned I descend to drive my bulbous cranium into El Santo's spine. The old man falls to his knees with a grimace of pain. They boo my dastardly ways. Que horror! Que rudo! My body goes for the pin.

El Santo kicks out and their cheers explode like fireworks.

I dig my fingers in his eyeholes to tear off his mask. Give him a face and take his honor. Herculean, he back-body-drops me. Now the crowd rises like a sea. A hush as El Santo climbs the turnbuckle. He is old but he reaches down to his very guts where warrior sprit dwells. Atop the world he posses with arms outstretched.

I tell my body, *Stay down*. Like the Joker jobs to Batman, like Moriarty jobs to Holmes, like death jobbed to Jesus.

Flying senton off the top. An orchestra of cheers. I take my bow on my back, curtained by El Santo, enshrined within the pantheon of vanquished.

Nunca renunciar a la misión, El Santo. To you all honor is given.



21 GRAMS - SANDRA
KACY JUNG
2018-2019

The forever war

AN GRACE

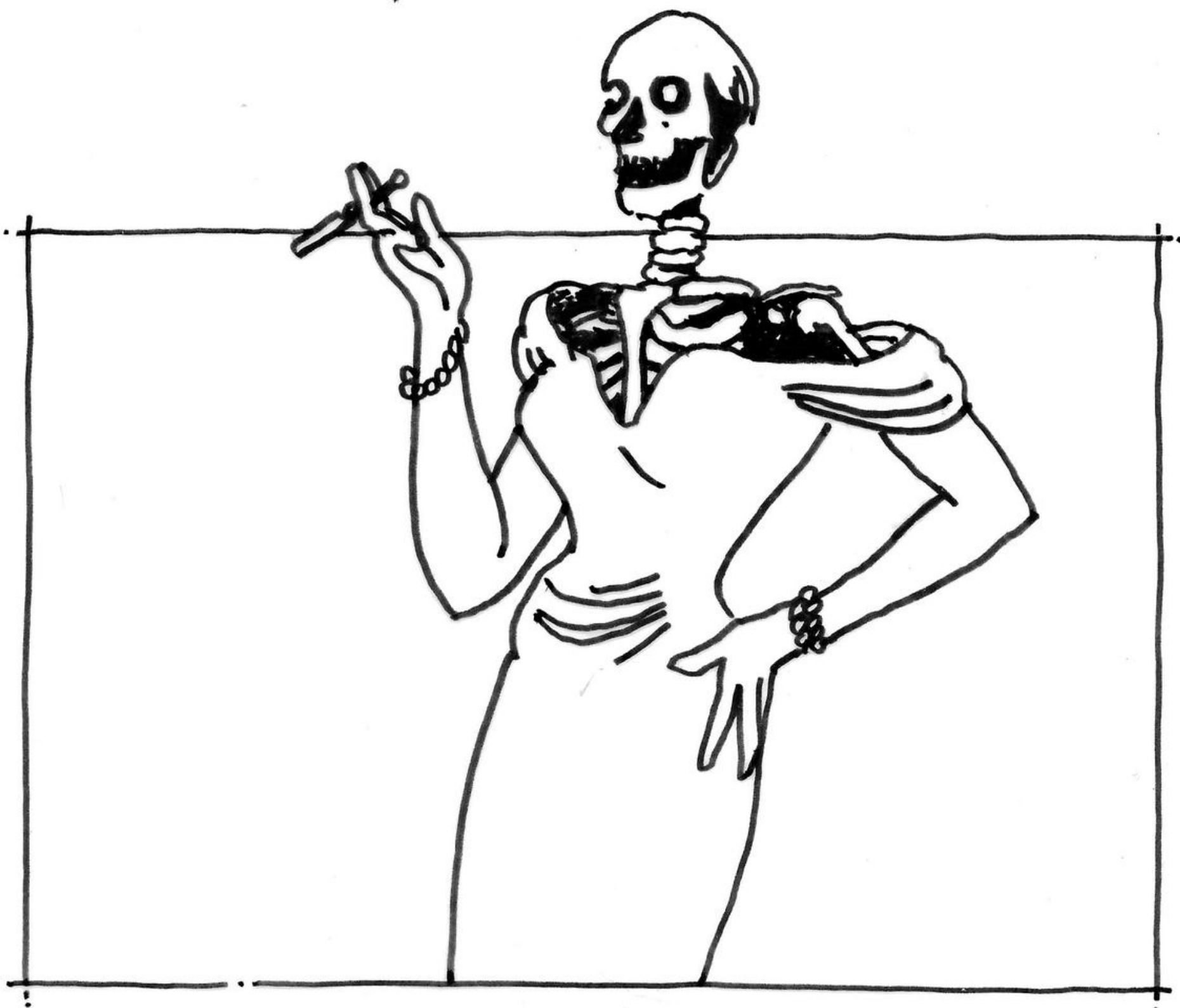
It doesn't take much
to frighten up the sky
a flock of egrets keening
over loved ones unbelieving
of a fate worse than not flying

THE BACK PAGE

BY
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

EAT MY SHORTS

My Roommate



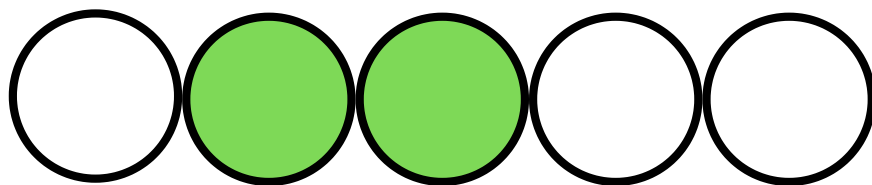
There's a skeleton
living inside me. I hope
she's cozy in there.

THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

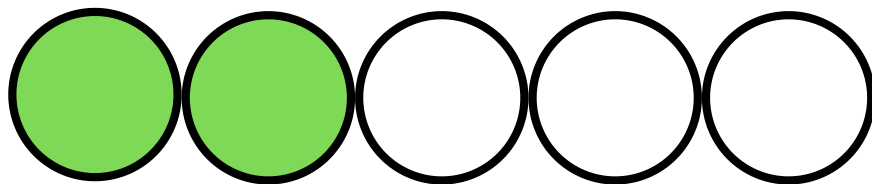
WORD STUFF

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

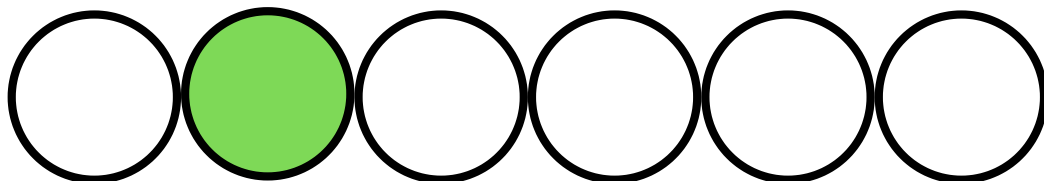
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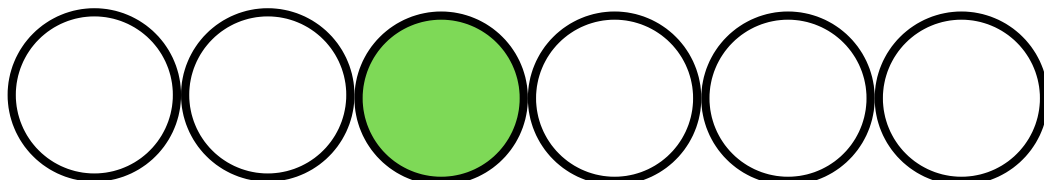
MUBLP



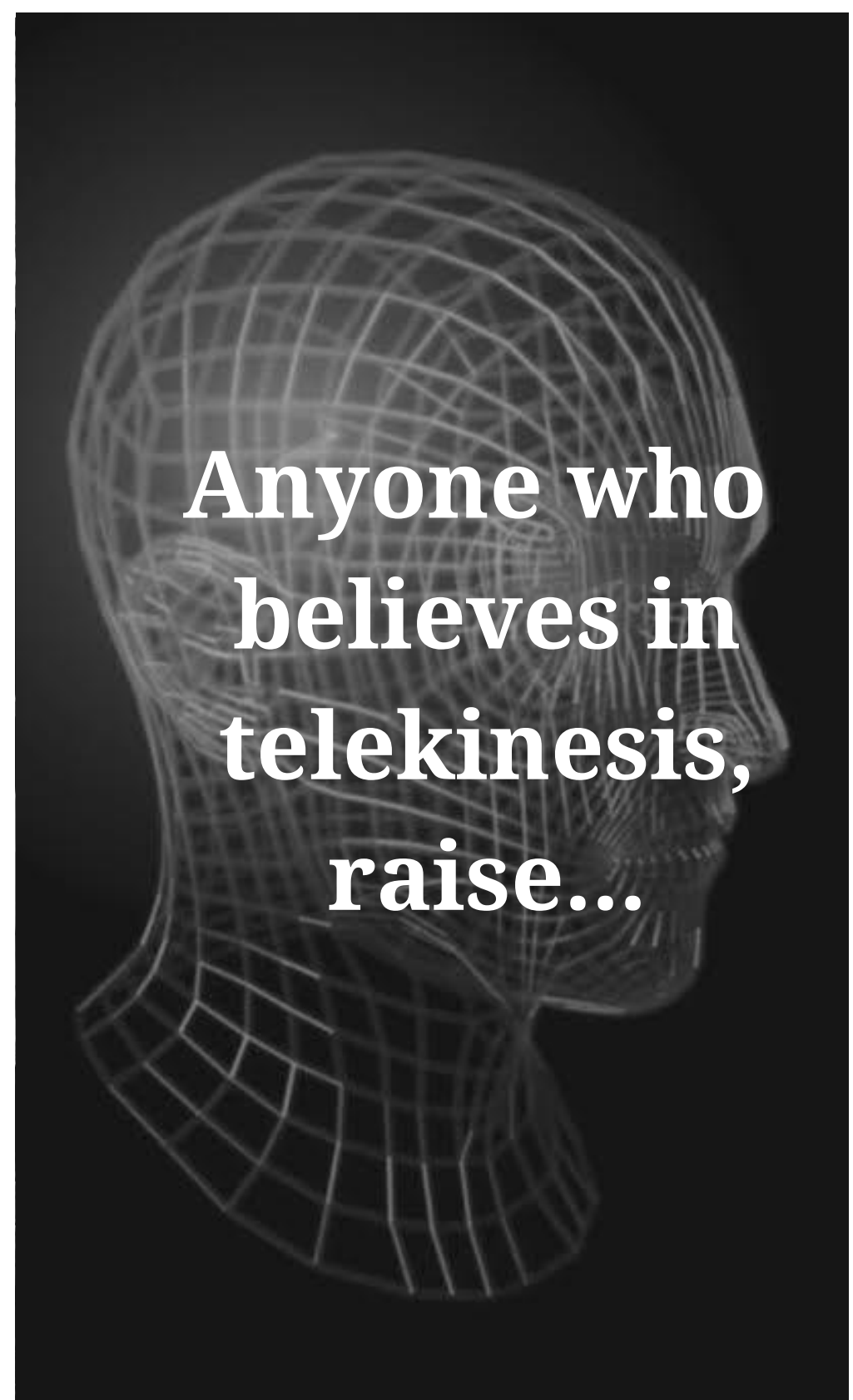
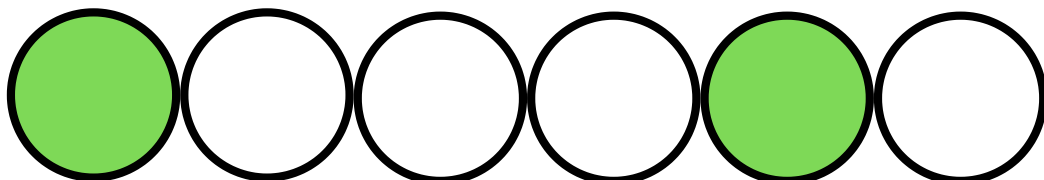
OLNDEO



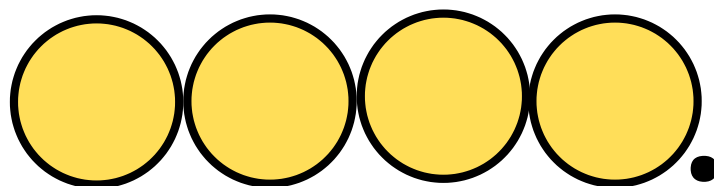
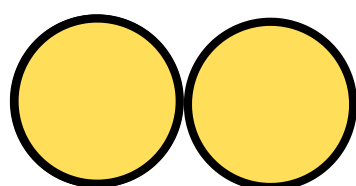
TAEYR



CPAAAL



Anyone who
believes in
telekinesis,
raise...



(Answers next week.)

Last week's answers:

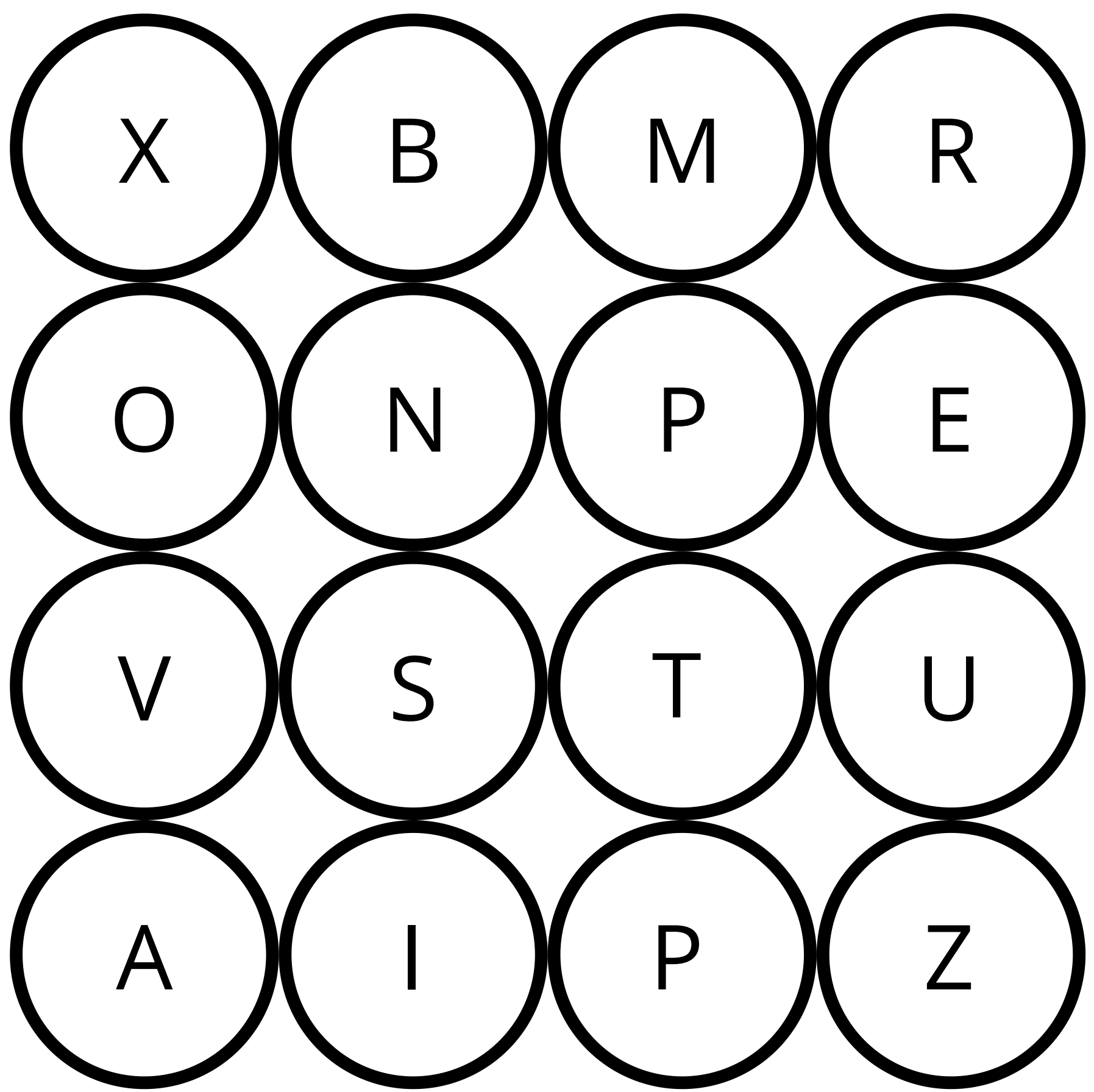
PITCH, INDEX, NUTJOB, DONKEY, FRENCH

I submitted ten puns into a contest hoping one would win,
but no *pun in ten* did.

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

abo	beano	kae	oba
abut	beat	kana	obe
aeon	beau	kanae	obi
aia	beaut	kane	obia
ain	boa	kaon	oka
aine	boak	kea	oke
ait	boat	keb	one
aitu	boi	koa	ono
ake	bok	koan	oon
ana	boke	kob	tab
anata	bon	koban	tabi
ane	bona	koi	tabu
ani	bone	koine	tae
anoa	bonita	kon	tai
atabek	buat	nab	tain
atua	but	nabe	tan
bait	butane	nae	tana
ban	ean	naoi	tane
banak	eat	nat	tao
bane	eau	nit	tau
bani	ebon	nob	taube
bania	eoan	noo	tin
bat	eon	nooit	tine
beak	ion	oak	tinea
bean	ita	oat	tuan
tub	tubae	tui	uta
tuba	tube	tuina	

LAST WEEKS WINNER:
Caz Bemski

*hold on to your horses,
YOU WON!
prizes forthcoming*

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:

Describe the air around you.

JESSALYN AALAND

TROY CHEW

ELWIN COTMAN

The air around me wants me to live.

AN GRACE

Suffocating

MILTON JORDAN

The air in our third floor, three room apartment is well air conditioned, comfortably breathable even in a Texas August. It is the walls that suffocate us.

KACY JUNG

DORENE O'BRIEN

TIM XONNELLY

The air around me is full of flies.

**THE
RACKET**
WEEKLY



OH GOD

+
READERS
TO BE
ANNOUNCED

THURS. 8/11
7PM / ZOOM

THE RACKET

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**TAKE
SMALLER SIPS
NEXT TIME.**

