## THE RABKET 19

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## THE מаССKET

Hi.
Everyone doing okay?
On the radio this morning a reporter described time as having "gone funny." As if the last five and half months of claustrophobic paranoia has pulled the physical matter of time through a black
hole, leaving it stretched and twisted and knotted in some surrealistic panorama.

Even if we're all just staring into computer screens on most days, the time bends and warps around us, spitting us out at the end of the day squinting into the sunset.

I've started to think that hand-in-hand with the weirdness is a certain loosening of how we interact with time.

The future is a grey cloud, the past a smudge of days rolling into days rolling into days. And as this just keeps being the norm, doesn't it feel like the suffocating grasp of schedules and the harsh adherence to punctuality has softened a bit?

The 9-to-5 (for those who work it) still exists, but it's a bare-bones foundational structure but everything within it conforms to the whims of our own personal habits and routines.

When we aren't working (or whatever you fill your days with), the grounding concepts of social calendars, of social activities, hell, of activities in general have been stripped to the bone and in their place, there's nothing but what we can imagine for ourselves to replace them.

It isn't that time has sped up or slowed down, we just exist differently within it. There's less tying us to the rigid backbone of the structure of time we've created.

Within all this quarantine and shelter-in-place and newfound rules, there's almost a sense of freedom.
'Till next time.
Noah Sanders,
The Racket

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The Racket stands against police brutality, racism and violence perpetuated towards BIPOC communities in all forms.
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Our next big thing is going to be sparkly capes.

## 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
    LAURENC.JOHNSON
        ANGIE MCDONALD
        QUYNH-AN PHAN
        SPENCER TIERNEY
JUSTIN & SARAH SANDERS
```

    ALEX MACEDA
        DAVID SANDERS
    SARAMANDA SWIGART
        DANIELLE TRUPPI
        YALITZA FERRERAS
            TOMAS MONIZ
            KRISTA POSELL
    KURT WALLACE
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\text { PROSE } \\
\text { ART } \\
750 \text { WORDSOR } \\
\text { LESS }
\end{gathered}
$$

## Send to:

theracketreadingseries@gmail.com

## contents

| H.R.GIBS | Grow | 1 |
| :--- | :--- | :--- |
| CASEYGRAY | Trompe l'Oeil with <br> Equine Spirit | 2 |
| VIDAE. FELSENFELD | girls and tuna | 3 |
| KRISTIANACHAN | Meridian Rivers | 5 |
| KATIEKEMPLE | Canvassing | 6 |
| MIGUELARZABE | Zig Zag Peachy | 8 |
| TOMASMONIZ | What'sGood | 9 |
| MIGUELARZABE | About Me |  |
| MIGUELARZABE | Faint Ex | 11 |
| ROHAN DACOSTA | Typa Place | 14 |

THE BACK PAGE BY
Laura Jaye
Cramer

CURATED BY:
Noah Sanders

## THE RACKET

## Grow

## H.R. GIBS

Grow. Like the bristles on your chin, Or the awkward toenail on my left foot. Each morning as you pad downstairs,

You stop to water the pak-choi on the roof Before assuming station at the table by the window.

Send me that virtual newspaper clipping. Gather a veritable feast of sounds -

The crinkle, the crunch, the plop of an olive
Diving back into its jar after sliding off the prongs of a fork.
"Did you hear?" the morse code keyboard.
There used to be trains running
And a street full of engines
Now in the quiet, you cook me dinner
And, after supper, burn your tongue on the tea I pour.


## girls and tuna

## VIDA E. FELSENFELD

three bubbled-eyed sisters
in beehives and bangs
stand in the kitchen corner
while ma in slippers
and last night’s mascara demonstrates
how to tame
the tang
whenever my sister got up from the couch her boyfriend would lean over, take a whiff of her booty air
another sister got beat by the belt ma tracked her stink to a boy in a buick
my pachuca polack sister was gaga for smokey robinson, would sniff the hole in the little black disc-was he in there?
i learned how to snuff butt smell for singers
how it sucked to stink like sex
ma's tuna never smelled
a bowl worth sticking
your finger into
and licking
mornings
hard-boiled eggs mayonnaise oily tuna whipped
white bread spoon-spread lettuce-leaf for crunch double wrapped paper-sacked sealed-in-slop for lunch they queue-up, grab and go. Ma yells out
...and goddammit, don't be giving away your tuna!


## Canvassing

## KATIE KEMPLE

A pair of white canvas sneakers hang from the telephone wireswound tight, pendant in the sky.

Cars fill every space on the street, back to back, parallel parked between red emergency paint.

I hang flyers for my candidate on mental doors, branding each with a white woman and her baby boy.

On an apartment patio, soil bags stacked high, partially opened, there's no garage here.

A mother ushers her children inside, away from (me) danger. They don't have to open up.

Three little girls on bicycles ride by. A woman waters plants.

A man asks: are you lost?

Plastic grass lawns, cement lawns, no lawns. Some homes, I walk around and can't locate a door.

At one house, the mailbox pole
is cemented into a toilet bowla testament to what arrives?

The canvas shoes swing in the breeze—kick me out gently. Nothing will get them down.


# What's Good About Me 

 tomas monizI see the dog first. It looks friendly: about fifty pounds, brindled and thin. Something hungry and desperate but definitely a survivor. Then the homemade leash - what looks like yellow nylon rope - knotted to the security gate outside China Buffet.

The dog doesn't bark but doesn't look happy either. I understand because commute time in Fruitvale is a shit show. Every car rolling by scares the dog. Like it can't get used to the engines accelerating, the headlights and blinking brake lights, the noise of angry commuters right around six o'clock on Coolidge and Foothill. And so each damn thing provokes the same cringe. It's painful to watch.

I enter China Buffet and coo at the dog as I pass: Gooddog. It's face looks at me like: What's good about me? The mean older lady's working the counter. I was hoping for the younger, nicer one. I act like I'm busy on my phone as I give my order: noodles with lemon chicken. But I get waved to the formica table because she's acting like she's busy on her phone and can't get my order just yet.

There are only three tables. A couple teen boys in beige pants and white polo shirts sit on their phones, who probably attend the charter school up the street but by this time most of the students are gone and the China Buffet is empty and all mine.

The man at the third table is drinking a tall boy Tecate and wears a neon blue backpack, half unzipped, stuffed with what appears to be one of those Oakland A's plush blankets. He looks like he's about to sprint out the door. He has a half eaten egg roll in front of him with a little plastic cup of fluorescent red dipping sauce.

The lady shouts at me to come pay before she makes my plate. Like I haven't been there three days a week for the last ten years. Like I'm the one might sprint out the door.

I pay my $\$ 5.75$ and wait for her to give me back the quarter. I make a big deal of dropping it in the tip jar. I stand waiting as she slowly plates my food and then puts it on the far end of the counter and waves me over to pick it up. There's only four pieces of skimpy ass chicken on it so I ask for some more. She says: What? Like she doesn't understand why. I explain: There's just four pieces. There should be at least six. She shrugs as she slowly places two more pieces on my plate.

When I turn around, the guy with the egg roll and beer stands by the door trying to untie the leash. The dog's the one who really wants to sprint away. It backs into the restaurant, pulling at the leash. The man slaps the dog. He yells: BruceBruce. I'm not sure if he's speaking English or Spanish because BruceBruce has to be the worst dog name ever. BruceBruce does this weird butt flip and accidentally knocks the man's beer, which thuds to the ground and rolls quickly away to the gutter leaving a foamy, white trail.

The teens laugh, the mean woman yells to get the dog out, I shake my head and proceed to fork up the perfect balance of salty noodles and sweet lemon chicken.


Before I can get my next bite ready, shit gets crazy. The man must have tripped in between the parked cars chasing his beer and then into traffic because people yell for a car to stop. Then to back up. The teens race to the door. The dog jumps again. The night darkens and the horns begin blaring at the stopped car blocking the lane. I see a group gathering on the sidewalk, everyone on their phones. A woman steps into the China Buffet and demands: hielo. The mean woman hands her a bag so quickly I'm impressed. Like where was the ice? But then sirens build. Music thumps. Someone screams in pain or anger. I presume the man who was rolled over by the car. People mill about the entrance. I hear one person say that he's lucky he had on such a big backpack, that it saved him, that he’s fine.

This is not how I want to eat my meal. I stand and walk to the counter and ask for a to go box. The woman says: It's a quarter.

I say: Really.

She nods her head like: Obviously yes.

I want to reach into the tip jar and grab my quarter back but I know better. I take out a dollar and she takes it and reaches into the tip jar and hands me three quarters and drops the bill inside.

I place the food in the box and walk to the door dodging people. I see BruceBruce still tied-up and huddled against the wall. I open the box and give him one of my five remaining pieces of chicken. I say: Gooddog.

It looks at me like: Yes you should.

So I do. I reach down and yank on the nylon knot till it loosens with just enough slack that the loop around the dog's neck opens up and BruceBruce backs out of it.

BruceBruce runs. No hesitation. No fear. The free dog barrels away across stopped traffic, with impressive agility and a prance that makes me feel like a winner. Like soon the cars will clear and everything will move smoothly again. Like the man will be fine. Like the next time I enter China Buffet the mean lady won't be working and I'll get six pieces of chicken without even having to ask for more.


## Typa Place

## ROHAN DACOSTA

I burned my tongue on an onion ring
I was thinkin' of a prairie
Typa place you take yo' shoes off
"Not in" grandmama’s livin' room
Not so different from that look in yo' eyes
When you done gone mad in a mad city
And you so stir crazy that it hurts lately

All you wanna do is run wild
Like you ain't been taught nuthin'
Typa place I lay my head down
Face to face wit yo' soft side
I be tryna talk some sense to yuh

Befo' I gih yuh duh world I gotta know
What iss hittin' fuh

You suck yo' teef and shiver by the radiator
You say yo’ supervisor don't like yo' attitude

You say you don’t like huh lazy eye
Who duh fuck she lookin' at?
Who duh fuck she think she talkin' to?
She need tuh worry 'bout huh boyfriend
And why his hands got huh
Lookin' like Kung Fu Panda every otha Monday
We agree on "Oh well"

You huff and puff
While standing in the heatwaves
A melting snowflake slides down your neck
"You so pretty
Juss like a chocolate bunny on Easter Sunday"

You put a square to yo’ face
And dream of ancestral planes
You open your eyes to food deserts
Fraudulent niggas and scams
And the only typa pyramids
"They" could manage to arrange

I say quit playin' and come to bed
Let us perform a ritual,
Let us chant with our private parts poking out

We ain't got sage but we got incense

I bet if yuh quit complainin' you could hear da ocean

I stubbed my toe on the auction block
I was thinking about family values
Fantasizing ‘bout Rihanna
I was seeing jets over Mesopotamia
Typa place I lay my head down

## THE <br> BACK <br> 

B Y
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

## eat my shorts

Nothing to See Here


Asking for a friend:
How do I get rid of a body? A big one?

## 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.

## RTFDI



GATYN



CWERYS


SHANBI


## BLEOWB


(Answers next week.)


Last week's answers:
DITCH, PLUMB, NOODLE, EATERY, ALPACA Anyone who believes in telekinesis raise my hand.

## 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

| ais | mets | piso | sit | tip |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| ait | meu | piste | site | tips |
| aits | mpret | pit | situp | tis |
| aitu | mprets | pits | sitz | tup |
| asp | nob | pre | snob | tups |
| asper | nos | prem | sob | ups |
| aster | nova | psi | son | upstep |
| aviso | novas | pst | SOV | upter |
| avo | nox | puer | sox | ute |
| avos | ons | pup | sperm | utis |
| b on | onst | pups | spet | uts |
| bonsai | ostia | put | spit | vas |
| bos | 0 Va | puts | spite | vast |
| box | ovist | putz | spitz | vaster |
| embost | per | rem | spiv | via |
| embox | perm | rep | spue | vias |
| empt | pet | reps | spuer | vis |
| empts | pets | ret | stem | visa |
| is o | petsai | retia | step | vison |
| item | pia | rets | stupe | vite |
| its | pias | sai | temp |  |
| met | piaster | sav | temps |  |
| metis | pis | sip | term |  |

## LAST WEEKS WINNER: <br> Jessica Wagner

big, HUGE, winner.
big prizes
arriving soon.

## 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 are you looking forward to?

MIGUELARZABE
@ miguel.arzabe
KRISTIANACHAN
@kristi chan
I'm really looking forward to being able to reconnect with friends, studio mates, family, and students beyond a screen again.
ROHAN DACOSTA
@unruly dacosta
VIDA E. FELSENFELD
Looking forward to standing at a wooden podium in front of real people reciting pungent poetry.
H.R. GIBS
@hrgibs
To the day she makes a cup of tea and remembers to drink it before it gets cold.
CASEYGRAY
@caseygraysf
KATIE KEMPLE
A point in time when it's safe to travel again - to fly to New York, and be with my grandmother who turns 100 in September.

TOMAS MONIZ
@tomas should be writing
Thursday night at the Cat Club.

# THE hacket <br> WeEkLy 



KEVIN DUBLIN<br>PREETI VANGANI<br>JULIE ROGERS<br>JON HICKEY<br>CALDER LORENZ

THURS. 8/11
7PM / 200 M

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