



# THE RACKET

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Hi.

Everyone doing okay?

I went to a park this weekend. You know: green grass, picnic blankets, the warm sun beating down, a few puppies even running around. I wore a mask and my girlfriend and I and our two friends sat at a respectful distance from each other and everyone else.

Prior to the park, the four of us had made an appointment to go inside an actual art gallery and peruse some lovely work. Against all of the necessary fear and the boundaries I've erected in these perilous, strange times, we went inside and we saw art. And there were people there - everyone wearing masks - and dogs and an outdoor area where people, safely and in small numbers, congregated. The host of the gallery offered us water and we gawked at this beautiful space in a city and how it was even possible for anyone to afford it.

It felt like a weekend. It felt like an early fall Sunday in San Francisco. In a different time, it might've ended with dinner on a patio or a fancy cocktail at a bar. I mean, yeah, it felt weird but it also *didn't*.

And please, I am in no way whatsoever advocating for a lax-style of life right now. This pandemic is nowhere near over, and this, *this* is the time when we are tired of wearing masks and we are tired of not hugging our friends and we just want to sit inside a restaurant and pay too much for a glass of wine and a plate of noodles. And this is time when we let our guard down and find ourselves sunk even further in the horror of this disease. Let's not do that.

What I'm saying is that even if my girlfriend and I have been existing in a self-imposed limbo for the last seven months and that even if we can almost convince ourselves someday when we're pointedly avoiding other humans that the world has stopped spinning and everything - emotions, relationships, transition, life - is waiting for the world to start again, it isn't true.

Maybe you know this already, but life is still grinding along.

I can't always say I approve of it but the persistence of human existence is the absolute real deal. There is a global pandemic upending everything and we as human beings will still convince ourselves that we need to put a blanket out and drink a negroni in a park. We will rationalize the risk of possible sickness, even death, to eat a burger in a parklet on the street. We will do whatever it takes to indulge in this small pleasures, because we're humans and that's what we do.

Every time I engage with the world in a way that feels like a part of the before-COVID-time, I wrestle with it. It feels good to be out, to know that life is still moving, but it feels scary too, it feels like I'm bending rules I truly believe in because I'm not strong enough to just persevere until this shitshow is good and truly over.

I sat in a park this weekend with friends. And it felt great. And it felt terrible. And this is the line I'm starting to realize I will walk every day as this pandemic goes on and on and on.

Part of me hopes you're walking this line as well.

'till next time,  
N

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

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**Breona Taylor's Murderers Are Still Free:**  
[https://www.change.org/p/andy-beshear-justice-  
for-breonna-taylor](https://www.change.org/p/andy-beshear-justice-for-breonna-taylor)



THE RACKET : QUARANTINE JOURNAL, Vol. 2, NO. 24

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"Notes Not Scribbled in Juror 6's Steno Pad" by Kathleen McClung originally appeared in *A Juror Must Fold in on Herself*, 2020 Rattle Chapbook Prize winner

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*Knowing there's still something in there is the best part of the day.*

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM

# WE HAVE A PATREON

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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've got weekly micro-playlists, special recommend email and much, much more.

## THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

MATTHEW CARNEY  
CATHY & JOHN SANDERS  
HALLIE YOUNG  
JAMIE ENGELMANN  
CASEY BENNETT  
LILIAN CAYLEE  
LAUREN C. JOHNSON  
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**The Racket Journal is:**

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The Back Page / Laura Jaye Cramer

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# Notes Not Scribbled in Juror 6's Steno Pad

KATHLEEN MCCLUNG

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What is the purpose of a square root?

Alegria needs a new collar.

I can't believe all these high heels.

This trial's like a tunnel.

Pedicure—payday.

RBG earrings—Maeve's graduation.

If I'd gone to law school

I might have a backyard.

Who does he remind me of?

Jim worried about slipping

on the ice outside his courthouse.

I should tip 20%.

This city's like a griddle.

Maybe one of those sky blues.





SLIPSTREAM  
TAMERA AVERY  
2020



# From an iPod found in Canal Park; Duluth, MN

## *Shuffle*

ALEX STOLIS

---

*6:00 AM "Hot love" T Rex*

The furnace hasn't kicked in yet. 1978, lying in the backseat with a girl I just met, on our way to the hospital. Today it would be called active suicide ideation with plan & intent.

*7:02 AM "Where have all the good times gone" Van Halen*

Sent an email to her. No, not her, the other one, the one who throws little bombs. Scar on her back. 1982, Felicia, dyed red hair and motorcycle boots. She wanted to go all the way. I couldn't remember her name.

*8:45 AM "Space [I believe]" Pixies*

I check mail, change the radio station, turn the radio off, check mail, turn the radio back on. 2012, smoke willows between the clouds, grey roots of a forlorn and empty heaven.

*10:55 AM "Lit up" The National*

No answer, reboot, no answer. I give up remembering.  
The earth is illuminated and hungry. I am mortar and stone.  
She is cinder, ash. She is longing; she is thunder, raw  
and ready for anything.





MY CHARACTER  
FRANCIS BAKER  
2019



# Lasagna With the Professor

KIRBY M. WRIGHT

---

We rock twin rockers out on the porch.  
The gray wind fills with rain.

“Hail predicted,” you mutter.  
You have lost at lust again,

This time with a junior in college  
The age of your daughter.

You fake youth with a tan  
And camouflaged hair.

“Nature calls,” you announce, springing up.  
You fantasize our childhood

Fingering blossoms  
Of an African violet

While stuck to the toilet.  
Your Birkenstock’s smell.

I ask you to dinner.  
You nod. The spark leaves your eyes

Converting me from crush to old maid.  
After minestrone soup

I serve hot lasagna with wine.  
You gulp merlot and noodles.

I gulp too, killing that first bottle  
And scraping foil off the second.

Purple-blue veins feed  
Your muscles and brain.

The promised hail comes,  
A riot on my roof.





MY LITTLE SAVAGE  
TAMERA AVERY  
2017



# Great Again

FREDERICK POLLACK

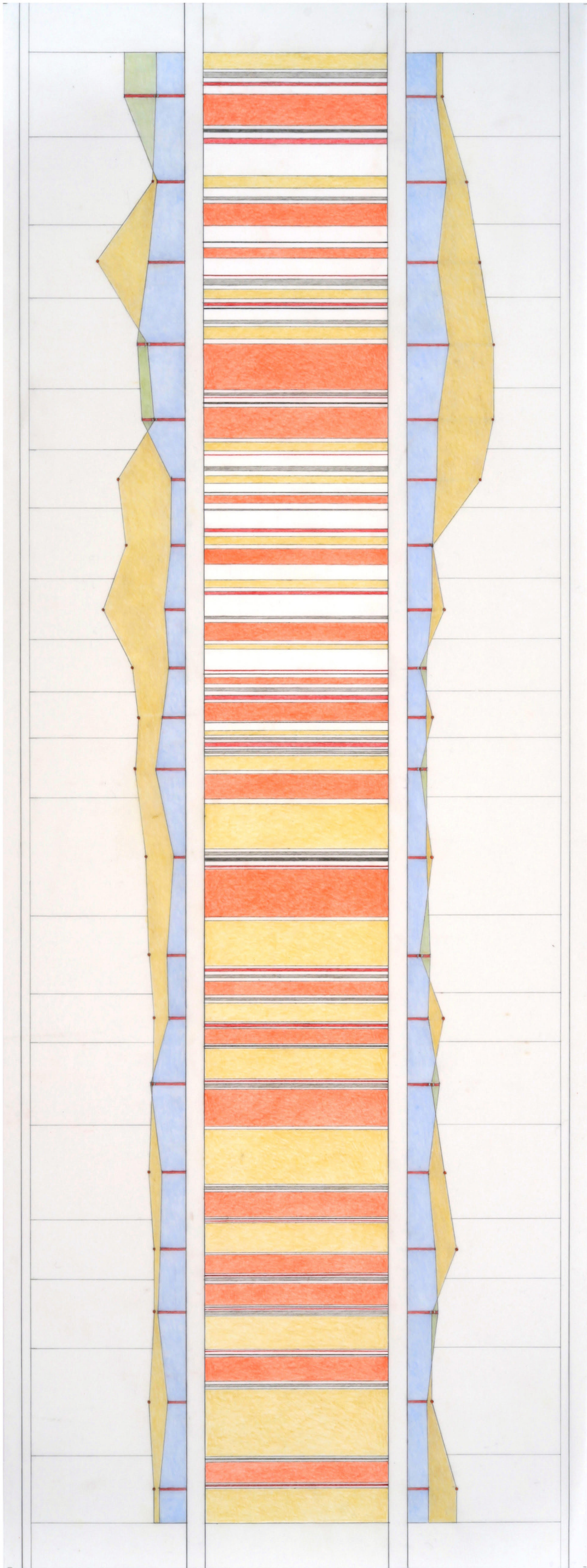
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The killings take all day.  
There's a vague idea  
of trucking the bodies  
to the defunct quarry.  
(Oldsters remember  
the dust that once settled  
on cars and faces.) But tonight, things are  
let lie – everyone needs  
a drink. There's little talk  
of the day, only outrage  
that one or two of *them*  
had guns, some bitch a knife.

The next day they realize  
that using the quarry  
will bring flies and smell.  
But the thought of a fire  
sucks in this weather.

So they commandeered  
a bulldozer, and excavate the dump.  
Eventually decomp  
enters the aquifer. Kids get sick,  
water smells. But folks here have  
too much pride  
to complain, the Lord will provide.





MISSION STREET CORRIDOR  
CARLO ABRUZZESE  
2019



# Quarantine Poems

FRANSIVAN MACKENZIE

---

1. I don't know what day it is  
but I know that my shirt sticks to my skin  
like an eggshell in a first grader's first mosaic –  
hot and clammy.

2. Last night, I glimpsed at the night sky  
and wonder if this was how Cassiopeia's daughters  
felt when I trapped them into constellations as a child.  
I was almost immediately sorry.

3. Hours march in silence  
with my leg barely making any motion  
other than the occasional flinches when flies come close.  
It's the only intimate thing I have with another sentient  
being, lately.  
I would let them swarm me if I didn't already know  
what being swarmed feels like – this,  
a mind with all its exit doors leading to nowhere but Hell.  
When I still haven't ghosted my therapist,  
I named this mental state Purgatory.

4. Dishes clamber out of the sink,  
a tragic train from the kitchen to the bedroom.  
I'm a traveler lost in the cubicle of his consciousness.  
I name each mold growing through the cracks of the floorboard  
after my father's exes. Hannah. Paris. Kate.  
They don't screech when I drop plates.  
They don't tell me to pick up the shards with bare palms.  
They don't call me stupid or useless.

5. I'm out of instant noodles, canned goods  
and reasons to live.

6. I miss the neighbor's greyhound  
I used to pet nine times on my way to the office.  
His favorite spot to sleep on was precisely  
thirty-six steps from my front porch.  
He loved softened bone splinters and chicken skin.  
I loved being needed.

7. I don't watch the news  
because it would require turning the TV on,  
and that would mean an increase on my electric bill  
I have no idea how to pay,  
not to mention it would demand my attention.

8. Last night, my sister left a message in the voicemail,  
asking if I was okay  
since she didn't hear from me since the end of the world began.



Actually, I'm not sure if it was last night or the night before.  
I'm not sure when was the last time anybody checked up on me.  
It's been eons ago since my boss called about my last paycheck.

9. I should go back to sleep.





SCHRODINGER'S CAT  
TAMERA AVERY  
2020



# Student afternoon in an empty flat containing laptop, weed, solid sofa

KEKO PRIJATELJ

---

Oh, the light in my room

Sweet delight

With bitter cocoa filling

Hazeldust

And an almond

I signed two petitions to stop

Bad allow good

If those cows could talk they would cry

I might reinstall tinder

I'll exercise tomorrow

They'll have built that sunblocking skyscraper

When I'm already abroad

# THE BACK PAGE

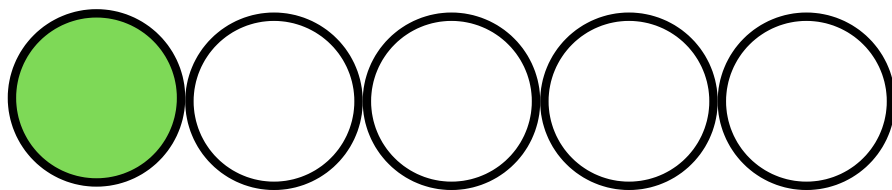
BY  
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

# THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

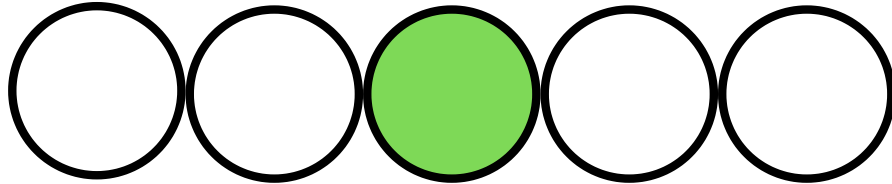
## WORD STUFF

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

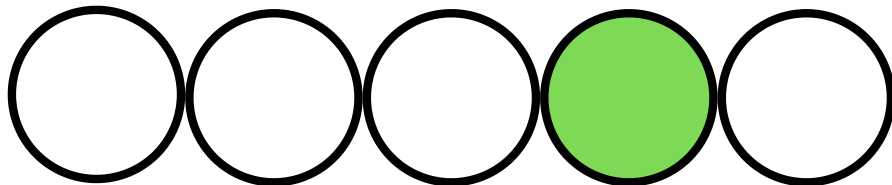
**UESOH**



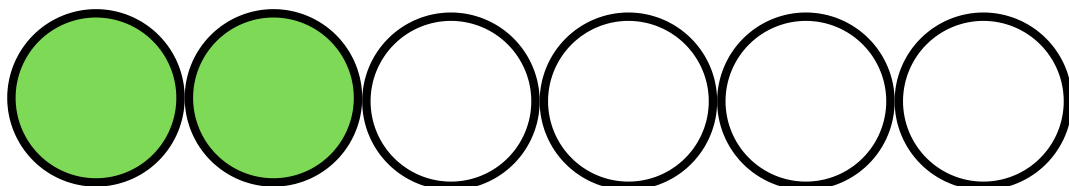
**SLACS**



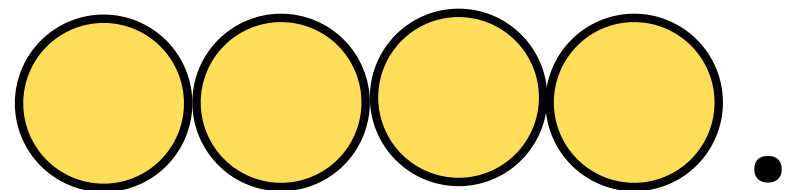
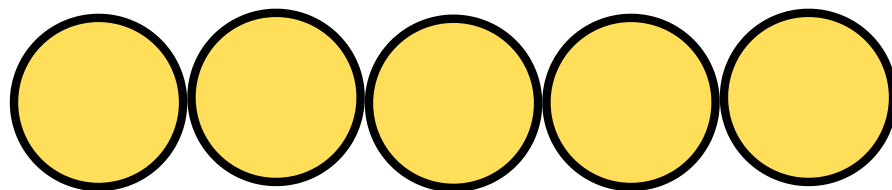
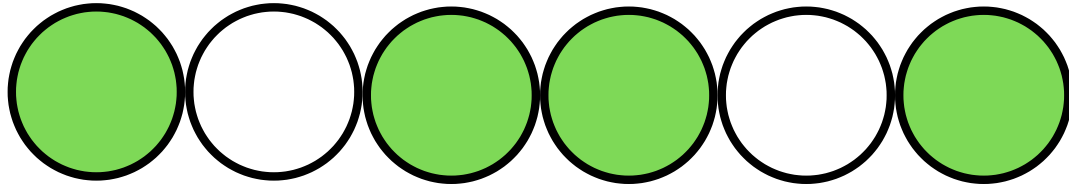
**WTENI**



**BLBOWE**



**NUDSED**



(Answers next week.)

Last week's answers:

*EXILE, HYENA, SPURN, MODEST, DOILY*

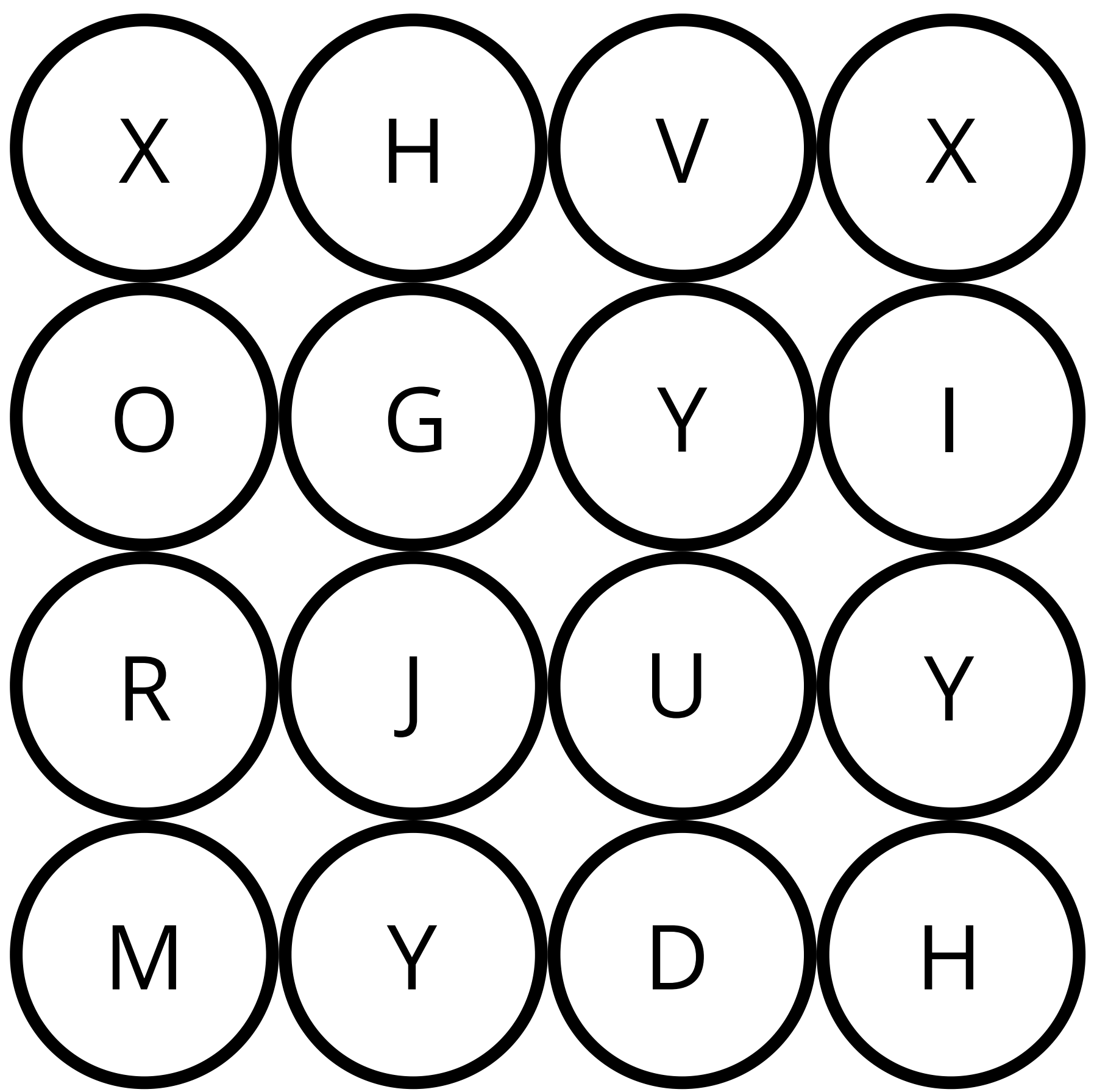
On a scale of one to a hundred, my maturity level is like *sixty-nine*.

# BONGGLE

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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*

alf  
alfs  
alms  
calf  
calfs  
calm  
calms  
lac

*LAST WEEKS WINNER:*  
**Bam Tonista**

*TO BE A WINNER -  
SEND US YOUR  
ANSWERS!*

# CONTRIBUTORS

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CARLO ABRUZZESE

PETER ADAMYAN

TAMERA AVERY

FRANCIS BAKER

KATHLEEN MCCLUNG

FRANSIVAN MACKENZIE

FREDERICK POLLACK

KEKO PRIJATELJ

KIRBY M. WRIGHT

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# THE RACKET

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**THE SEASON  
IS OVER.**

