

THE RACKET



NO. 3

**THE
RACKET**

**QUARANTINE
JOURNAL**

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Hi.

Everyone doing okay?

At what point do we start to
redefine the idea of "okay"?

Everything is not normal, but not
normal is the new normal. So, if
we're talking about our baseline for
"okay" - and what used to be "okay"
is not okay - it might be time to
start playing with the meaning of
the term.

I'll leave that up to you though.
It seems a little personal

And I'm just here to give you a free
journal with some fantastic art and
writing (and that cover by
Alana Perino, wow).

If you could hold it, it would be in
your hands, right now.

Which is something, and something
is pretty damn good right now.

Onwards.

'Till next time.

- Noah Sanders, The Racket

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A bowl of chips is just a bowl of chips. Or is it?

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CURATED BY
Noah Sanders

QUARANTINE JOURNAL

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ISOLATE / CÉLESTE CEBRA / 2018

Day One

KAYNE BELUL

If I have to sit Through one more dinner where my
parents argue lockdown law...I'll do it, But I'd rather
not, And given that I've got A couple weeks to wait
Until the date When all of this will end, My friend, I
might not make it.

If I don't, I hope you won't Avoid the funeral
because my corpse might carry The disease. A
little earlier, we'll bury What's left of me (that is,
before you all arrive) So nothing will survive.

And if you're still demanding Social distance
when you're standing On my grave, you'll
find this little tidbit neat: They dig those
things to be six feet.

Metaphorical Fruits

MICHELLE SCHLACHTA

The constant underlying stress has finally gotten to me.

I started recording short voice memos in the mornings to send to my mom. I normally would call but she prefers phone chats around 10 pm when I'm wiped out from the day lately. I've been waking up between 5-7 am so I start fading by like 10 pm, especially if I've had booze. For the last two days, I've been drinking like a mom who has 7 kids. I caught myself saying, "Shut up, Ethan, where's my god damned martini?!" But, nobody was there.

My nose is always super stuffed up for the first hour of the day, so I sound sick on these recordings. Which is hella not cool right now. Anyway, I text the files to my mom so she can listen to my thoughts at the beginning of the day, which is generally going to be nicer and more positive. I just want her to know that I'm OK and give her some communication that she can have control over. It feels very "Felicity" to record myself talking to a specific person. Remember that episode when someone accidentally put one of her confessional cassette tapes in the boombox at her poppin' dorm party, and everyone heard her talk about being a virgin? That was gold. Many life

prompt me to refer to that specific story more often than you'd expect. I hope to include it in a TED Talk someday.

I haphazardly bought apricot jam last week when the store was sold out of all the other flavors during the initial food scarcity panic. I fucking hate apricots and every time I look at that jam jar in my pantry I have some kind of feeling about it. Here are a few thoughts that come up:

“Do I really need this? There's probably someone out there wishing hard for apricot jam and unable to find it.”

“Will I eat it, or wastefully let it sit there? What if I just think I hate it but haven't actually tried it? I don't remember. What if it tastes better than an apricot on its own?”

“This is an example of fear-based decision making, and I'm not proud of that. Better to have done that on a low stakes game. Maybe this has prepared me for a more serious situation and will empower me to make a wiser choice next time. If I had a do-over, I would have held out for orange marmalade when the store restocked (yes, I checked, and they have marmalade again).”

“Should I force eat the nasty apricot jam before I allow myself to go out and get the jam that I know my heart truly wants?”

If anyone wants apricot jam, I'll leave it on your doorstep.



LET'S DO THE TWIST / SANAA KHAN / 2019

Expansive Nature/ Narrow Quarters

PETER BULLEN THOMAS

1.

"Can you to go into the bathroom for a minute so I can gather my thoughts," she says. "I don't need to go," he says. "I know. This is not about me reminding you to relieve yourself as if I was your mother, and we were about to leave for a family picnic. It's about space and the possibility of the creative moment."

He knows he should be offended, or that someone other than him would be offended, but he is no one other than him, and the request, while not exactly qualifying as promising from the usual romantic perspective, feels a little bit lovely. After all she could have asked him to leave. And the bathroom is very close to where they are standing right now, which is close to each other and therefore not as innately mysterious as being close to her by not being close to her. Why more people who were considering being lovers didn't have their dates spend a little time in a bathroom was beyond him. Maybe he'd suggest it to friends, depending of course on how things turn out. And it would be nice to have a unique dating experience to report. Everyone knows the basics of how this sort of thing generally goes and were probably sick and tired of hearing the tried and true details, some of which probably weren't even true, much less tried.

2.

"Will you stay in there until I knock?" she asks. It seems to him the most reasonable of requests. The reasonableness of the request takes on a life of its own within him. Its thoughtful if unusual music spreads through his insides and make him want to hasten his entry into the bathroom, in no small part because that would demonstrate, in a way she would be unable to miss, the ardent nature of his responsiveness. And why shouldn't he show his appreciation in a physical way? For one thing it would save her the trouble of reading his mind, if in fact she had an interest in reading his mind, which he hopes she does. The last thing he wants is his rapid-fire sprint to the bathroom to make him appear less interesting.

"I sure will," he says, then darts into the bathroom.

3.

The bathroom is very small. He thinks this is what it must be like to be in solitary. He has seen movies and also real-life documentaries on solitary confinement. There is no bed in the bathroom which is proof that it is not solitary, or if it is, it's solitary of the cruelest kind. On the other hand there is a woman on the other side of the door seeking out the creative moment and none of the boys in lock-up have that going on. It's unfortunate that images of the boys in lock-up, which naturally remind him of the sadder aspects

of human life, are filling his head because he knows as well as anyone that romance should flood the mind with lyrical images. He has no device on him to help him gauge the time. He might have been here for hours. They have the room for the night so it's not like the urgency of time has to intrude, but he wishes it would. More time passes, who knows how much. He hears her moving around. It is like waking in the middle of the night and thinking a burglar or a stray animal is inexplicably close at hand, only he's been awake the whole time. He should say something. Is that allowed? What will that do to the creative moment?

4.

"Jacqueline," he says because that's her name and to call out another woman's name from the bathroom would be bizarre, but he thinks right after doing it, that to have called out another woman's name from the bathroom might contribute to the creative moment. For him there was the surprise of the confinement, for her, why not the surprise of another woman's name.

"Shh," she says. It is so great to hear her voice. It gives him courage. "Penelope," he shouts out.

"Who?" she says.

"Penelope," he says, more quietly this time. "Okay whatever," she says. He has a lot of confidence in the future, regardless of location.

case number: 0819998

DENA ROD

missing: craving surprises
runaway? yes it chased
itself down the street
with no known aliases.
i no longer expect nor
want surprises, only
the sure step against
the earth.
any scars
marks
tattoos
piercings?
only a line in its forehead
from a needle scratch 10
years ago from sitting up
too fast in bed when
shadows flew in too close.



THERE'S NO WARNING SYSTEM FOR IT / CAROL ELKOVICH / 2015

Sheltered in place

PAOLO BICCHIERI

There's a piece inside the rumbling heart
it's small, a shiny ball like a fishing rod's bearing
it's iridescent like it were made of polished quartz
pushed into a toy
there's a piece inside the rumbling heart for you to
find
for you to decide what best to do with
for you to pick up and put down and prize without
any awarding

There's a piece inside the rumbling heart
it's a gun, the piece you'd find in my brother's gun
safe
it's black and empty because we don't leave ammo in
the cartridge
when I was a boy on the farm we'd fire on crooked
cans with Nonno's pride
as though we might envelope that pride and become
it ourselves just by firing after trash
as though if we learned to shoot a handgun we'd
become state patrol officers as though
that were ever going to be the fate as though we'd
ever say our piece
there's a piece inside the rumbling heart that is a
weapon unregulated and unseen
for an unlucky unknown to draw a finger along its
umber
for any aberration to take and make my chest and
my arms a war zone

There's a peace inside the rumbling heart
it's calm like peace between midnight laughs
it's somewhere in the cavity of the piece and the
piece,
nestled, burrowed, submerged, within the sinew.
there's a peace inside the rumbling heart that
looks up at the California night sky
and smokes a pipe so it might act out masculinity
so it might find a new place for generational hate
to live so it might see along Orion's belt a place for
the men who did so much worse than not know how
to love because wouldn't it be best if they only
didn't know how to love.

the pieces of peace inside a rumbling heart.
fragments. fractals.

leave my lungs beside the Bay windows
so they might be splashed in the lemon and the
brine.

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 object best describes your current experience?

KAYNE BELUL

This book my friend lent me that I definitely have time to read, but haven't even started.

PAOLO BICCHIERI

A campfire stove sums it up. I'm happy to ignite, but I need fuel to keep off the gloom.

PETER BULLEN

An object that lingered with sometimes startling vividness in our bathroom was a tube of toothpaste with its head cut off, probably for practical purposes. I noticed it daily in a way I have never noticed a tube of toothpaste before. It's no longer there and now I miss it. Quite a bit.

CÉLESTE CEBRA

The front door is the main portal through a building's façade. In a house, this is the shared entry point from a public exterior to an inherently private sphere, that of the home. Each time I must exit and re-enter my home I dread the feeling of my fingers wrapped around the cold brass knob and keys turning in the lock. I have become hyper aware of this door and its surfaces of shared touch.

CAROL ELKOVICH

I would say the stationary bike in my studio. I ride the damn thing a lot but that involves getting nowhere.

SANAA KHAN

Sweatpants.

ALANA PERINO

DENA ROD

The cut open tube of lip balm I'm scraping every last bit from.

MICHELLE SCHLACHTA

A tiny pebble stuck in the mud - hoping that the tread of a better shoe will lift me up soon, and erase the affliction that brought me here.

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OVER AND DONE.

ALL OF THE THANKS.

