

THE
RACKET



CHELSEA
RYOKO WONG
2019

▲
**THE
RACKET**

**Q U A R A N T I N E
J O U R N A L**

THE RACKET

Hi.

Everyone doing okay?

Here we are again.

Together. Kind of.

Which is good.

Boring and lacking in the physical
warmth and social energy all of us
introverts are realizing we need
more than we ever claimed.

But this is okay. The kind of.

The drinks in the backyard.
The conversations in digital boxes.
The sudden strange societal want of
baking bread.

Alone, but together.

Kind of.

It's not forever.

It's just a moment.

We'll blink and it'll be over.

For now though:
together, kind of.

'Till next time.

- Noah Sanders
The Racket

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Praying Outside the Jokhang Temple

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Man, ordering a burrito feels like finding a treasure chest.

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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

HALLIE YOUNG
JAMIE ENGELMANN
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CURATED BY
Noah Sanders



QUARANTINE JOURNAL





PALETAS (POPSICLES) / LIZ HERNÁNDEZ / 2017

Untitled

ANNA MCCONNELL

A tangerine smoke screen
Of a childhood memory
Or possibly a dream
The wind mocks
The tall, dead grass
As it passes through
A promise of life
That fails to deliver
The hollow stalks
Tickle my ankles
As I run through them
I have yet to learn
It is disrespectful
To walk on graves

Thanksgiving in Space

JULIA HALPRIN JACKSON

Thanksgiving in the space shuttle is not so special. Ken wants yams but there are none. The potatoes are so mashed that the starch molecules combust into fine particles in the cabin. The dried turkey flakes off in even sheets. Bridget wonders if they can get the game, but all they hear is space static. Is that the sound of planets shifting? Ken asks. Bridget doesn't answer. Instead she rips open a bag of marshmallows and out they spiral, tiny congealed globs of sugar that spin like stars. Ken turns off the light and the astronauts bob in the dark.



IS ANYONE OUT THERE? / M. PINCHUK / 2019

20 / 20
ANN DE FOREST

Crocuses bloomed with unearned
brightness. Daffodils followed, vibrant
narcissus, open throats
bobbing with self regard.

Cherry trees exploded overnight,
spattering pink across the concrete.

Spring came early that year
the world ended. We didn't
know.

Or we did, and
didn't want to.

Warmth and birdsong stirred us too.
How could we resist?

We were as feeble as the flowers
roused by false alarms,
trumpeting our splendor,

misreading every clue.

This Easter it snowed all day

JANE DICKERSON

and we ate take-out ham, collards, and cheese potatoes
from the creole place, ate in solitude because of the world's isolation,
and in the afternoon watched the 1978 version of *Death on the Nile*
starring Peter Ustinov whom I mistook for Rod Steiger, who
put his hand through a filing spindle in *The Pawnbroker*,
which I saw at the University theater in the fall of '65
with Paul, the high school exchange student from Luxembourg,
with whom I argued passionately about the accepted,
though incorrect usage of "It's me," so sure, so American,
while he persisted in saying "It is I," sincerely, and, lo, properly,
no matter how I tried to convey how uncool it sounded, and
I so wanted him to be cool because we were hopelessly straight,
and probably because of that stubbornness he became a doctor,
and I didn't, and then the man who wrote letters for a year
on that light blue airmail paper in his excellent script after one
small shaky kiss on the porch before he returned home, and who
said he hoped one day to marry a girl like me, and, perhaps,
did or didn't, but has left me ever to wonder, and this 2020.



OF LIONS AND WOMEN / MARY ROLL / 2018

Birthday in Quarantine

ERIKA GALLION

I add another tally to the dry erase board. Day 14. It is my birthday.

My computer dings with notifications from Microsoft Teams, my still-new officemates wishing me happy birthday, sending me pictures of their cats. I feel nostalgic for things I hate: office birthday parties, obligatory walks to Starbucks with officemates, bus rides through Koreatown.

-

It is my birthday, I whisper to the apartment, whose sounds I know now, intimately. The way the water creaks when my upstairs neighbor turns their shower on, the spots in the walls where water is twisting itself through pipes. I've never known a house like this, not since childhood. Not since I laid aimlessly across different sections of flooring. Days of nothing but lying there, listening, imagining. I knew where crickets liked to roost and from which corners their wails would come. I knew the thump of the gravel as someone pulled into the driveway, the echo of my brother's basketball dribbling on the cement.

Outside the bedroom window at 4PM two gray birds perch on our neighbor's roof. Their heads are orange as if they've been

dipped head-first into sunset. They sound happy. For two weeks now I have watched them from inside, drinking coffee and smoking. I don't do anything else from 4-5 but watch the birds, listen to them. They file their beaks by throwing their heads against the rain gutter and it's so loud against the inactivity of Los Angeles that I worry they might scare themselves away. But they stay. Perhaps they like being the loudest.

-

The backyard of my childhood trained my imagination into a muscle. Once my father built me an igloo in the snow and I didn't leave it until nightfall. I loved the silence of the white walls, the coldness, the chance for the space to become something, anything.

I no longer have a yard. Or a basement. I have two doors in my apartment and a man, both of us here all day, every day.

Is the air quality really that much better? My mom asks over Facetime and I tell her yes. She's been watching the news, reporting to me the death count as if I don't already know it. She's trying to make a point of goodness, of hope. Less cars on the road, nicer air. I feel her reaching to make conversation, to extend the length of our call. She hates not being with me on my birthday. She hates not being with me during this pandemic. She hates not being with me.

Look at the sky, I say, and turn my phone's camera away from me. *It's Ohio blue.*

-

Hans makes us spaghetti; my birthday dinner. I watch him chop the carrots and think of marriage.

It's April now. Hans asked me to marry him in August. On a Friday. I had just walked out of a job I hated. My eyes were swollen with the ripe kind of crying and together we'd stumbled into a conversation that became very serious. We talked of ambitions, the ones we had as individuals and as a couple; we talked of health insurance and bills; at one point he said I want to marry you. And then he was crying. He said, I'm serious. Marry me. Yes, yes, of course, yes. The simplicity of that decision, its arrival so perfect and sure. I will watch him chop carrots indefinitely, I realize. The thought brings me to hot, happy tears.

-

We take MDMA. We both need to work in the morning but *fuck it*, we say, *time is nothing*. Time is nothing.

The drug pulses and we pull the back cushions off of our couch, make this West Elm piece look like a futon from college. We tangle our legs and our arms and it feels like our bodies are infinite, our legs are growing longer, our arms

rollercoaster loops of holding and being held.

Behind us the television pans open to an underwater shot of fish. A school of large, blue-grey fish stalk the ocean floor, their lips moving. Smaller fish swim out of what we guess are their homes, holes in coral or rocks. They seem frightened.

We kiss like we're the last people left on earth. The last fish, hiding. His fingertips rub my back and when he pulls his hand away I imagine morning dew on the grass, morning dew on his fingertips, morning dew in each crevice of my spine.

-

It's 3AM, no longer my birthday. I add another tally to the whiteboard, this time a diagonal line across the four verticals. Fifteen days. I can barely remember the sound of the Red Line bellowing into 7th Street Metro Center.

Hans is asleep in the bed but I can't sleep, maybe because of the 4PM coffee, maybe the drug. Maybe because it's been fifteen days.

I know my brain wants to ask the question again. Some kind of amorphous question that begs to know how much longer. *If I could just get an idea*, my brain tries bargaining with nothing, *I could stop worrying. I could settle into this, I could let myself love this and not feel as guilty for loving it. If I could just-*

Oh. The cat is on my lap now. He wants to be held.

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 beverage has been keeping you afloat?

ANN DE FOREST

I've just discovered yerba mate. It's enlivening and calming at the same time.

JANE DICKERSON

A much-craved instant double-chocolate hot chocolate mixed into my coffee reminds every Tuesday me which day of the week it is.

ERIKA GALLION

Coffee. The process of grinding beans, boiling water has become part of my routine twice a day. I look forward to my afternoon cup of coffee so much- it's a beacon of hope that the days are passing and in each day there's something, somewhere in the deep recesses of my brain, maybe, I can be grateful for. Or that I can write about in order to find gratitude.

JULIA HALPRIN JACKSON

I may or may not be taking small sneaky sips of Costco margarita mix to get through quarantine.

LIZ HERNÁNDEZ

A little embarrassed, but have to confess I enjoy making the viral Dalgona coffee!

ANNA MCCONNELL

cold brew by morning, cheap beer by night

M. PINCHUK

Gin and tonics. Definitely. When the weather was cooler, whisky or grappa. When working, coffee. Cheers!

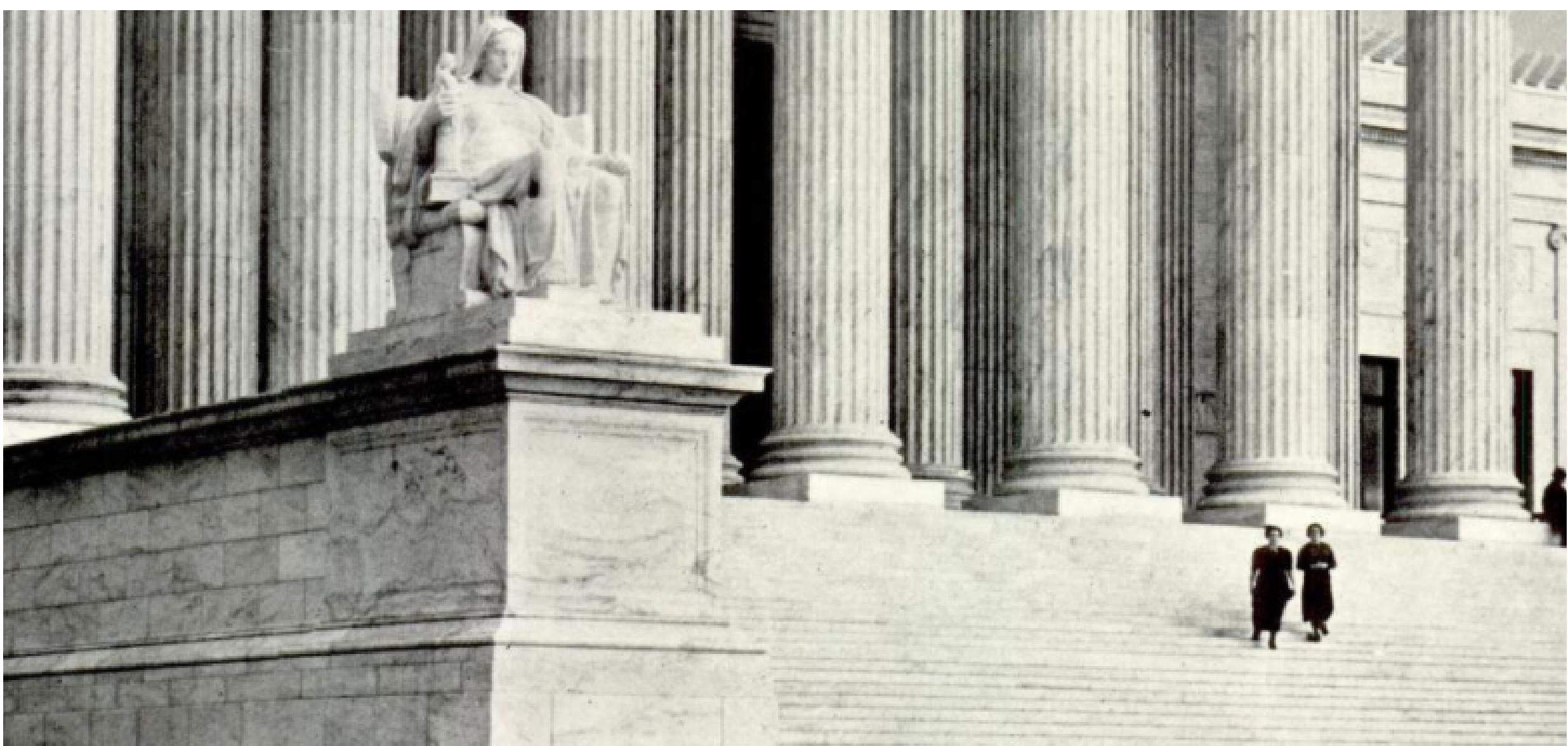
MARY ROLL

Yerba Mate, as always hahaha.

CHELSEA RYOKO WONG

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WEEKLY



YOUR MOM
5.14 / VIA ZOOM

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**WAIT A MINUTE.
HOLD ON.
THANK YOU.
OKAY, YOU CAN GO.**

