

# THE RACKET



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Hi.

Everyone doing okay?

Everyone staying connected?

Even if connection these days  
looks like a particularly grainy  
game of Hollywood Squares  
where all the celebrities  
are your relatives and co-workers  
and high school friends who  
just decided to "check in."

Even if every conversation is a  
calamity of clicks and echoes,  
sonic disruption spilled  
across the localized cosmos.

I'd never thought of the  
poetic nature of a bumbled  
video chat. The emotion and the  
music just between the lines.

Philip Harris's "Are You There?"  
(on page 5 of this issue)  
made it readily apparent for me.

Anyways, stay connected.  
It'll be better now  
and it'll be better  
when the clock turns to later.

Stay reaching out.  
Stay inside.

Reach out if you need anything.

Until next time.

- Noah Sanders  
The Racket

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Our legs are burning. All of them.

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM



# WE HAVE A PATREON

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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

CATHY SANDERS	JUSTIN SANDERS
HALLIE YOUNG	DAVID SANDERS
JAMIE ENGELMANN	DANIELLE TRUPPI
ANGIE MCDONALD	KURT WALLACE
QUYNH-AN PHAN	JUDY WEIL
SPENCER TIERNEY	

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# CONTENTS

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NINA SCHUYLER	Standstill	2
JAMES CAGNEY	During the Parade	3
NASIM MOGHADAM	Self Portrait	5
PHILIP HARRIS	Are You There?	6
LENA GUSTAFSON	Bloom Sequence #2	9
HEATHER BOURBEAU	The Telling	10
JAMES CAGNEY	Hug	11
YEN YEN CHOU	Mochi Man	13
ANNETTE SCHLICHTER	Self-portrait with supermarket	14

## THE BACK PAGE

BY  
Laura Jaye  
Cramer

CURATED BY:  
Noah Sanders

# THE RACKET

**7**





*OUTSIDE FOR INSIDE* / TRAVIS WELLER / 2019



# Standstill

NINA SCHUYLER

---

It's not that serious it's horribly serious people are dying people are fine go to the grocery store don't do wear a mask a cough sneeze words spoken have it delivered it could be serious or nothing [the earth sighs, stretches, rolls on its back] at all stay inside behind glass don't wear do a mask wear it's going to it's not going to ever [and the bears gallivant in Yosemite, and the orange starfish kiss wet gray rocks] it's not bad it's terrible an invisible nightmare on door knobs light switches grocery carts metal plastic paper cardboard wear don't go your shoes shirt hair skin [in the hush, out of the shadows, waltz the goats and wild turkeys and javelina] get you but not you you're young you're old sick vulnerable waiting waiting waiting to kill or do nothing at all.

# During the Parade

JAMES CAGNEY

---

It was startling to see you  
staring out from a touchpad  
on the ground.

Your mouths' silent cloud.  
You blinked bewildered, a  
patient newscaster.

You appeared engaged even  
as people stepped over you  
and confetti misted.

I wept picking up the screen.  
*How'd you get here*, I asked. *My*  
*mom dropped me off*, you said.

You smiled. You wore a 1950's  
fedora. You looked nice. I scanned  
the crowd for your mother

but it blurred with strangers. I wondered if  
she were somewhere drunk and relieved. I  
held you like an empty plate.

I couldn't look in your face.  
I wanted to position  
you up high somewhere  
  
so you could see everything.  
But you only asked me to  
hold you.





*SELF PORTRAIT / NASIM MOGHADAM / 2016*

# Are You There?

PHILIP HARRIS

---

Hello. I'm here. Can you hear me?

I can't hear you.

There you are.

I can see you.

Oh—oop—ohp;

I can hear you, but now

I can't

See you.

You froze.

Try disconnecting your mic & cam.

Try connecting again.

Make sure to use the link in the event invite.

I'll wait for you here.

I don't mind waiting.

I'll be here.

Ok, there you are.

Oh—oop—ohp;

But now I'm getting feedback.

I can hear myself.

Nothing worse than hearing yourself.

Sorry about my quality.  
My equipment is outdated,  
Nearly 5 years old.  
I need a new cam.  
I'll try connecting again.

Okay, back.  
Can you—  
    Oh—oop—ohp  
—shift your cam a bit?  
I'm looking up your nose.

    Thanks.  
Also, if you don't mind,  
If you're not talking, put yourself on  
    Mute.

I hear too many things during these meetings:

(babies, dishwashers, lawn mowers,  
planes, street sweepers, sirens, washing machines)

In fact, I can see someone behind you now.

    Who is that?

    What are they saying?

    I can't make out what they're saying,  
    but I can hear them.

Okay, I'll put you on mute until they leave.

Ok, so now we're just waiting for \_\_\_\_\_to log on.

Hello, \_\_\_\_\_!

    You made it!

    Welcome.

We're already here. Let's get started.  
Oh—oop—ohp;  
You're freezing. Yeah, you're frozen.  
We can hear you but can't see you.  
Oh, now you're both gone.  
Try connecting again.  
Can you hear me?  
Guys?  
Hey guys, log out then log back in again, please.  
Yeah, let's try to reconnect.

I'll wait for you here.  
I don't mind waiting.  
I'll be here.



BLOOM SEQUENCE #2 / LENA GUSTAFSON / 2019

# The Telling

HEATHER BOURBEAU

---

Antennae caressing, tongues and feet touching  
we pause before placing her outside the hive,  
stroke her body, our birthplace, our refuge,  
now corrupted and bulbous with mites and mold,  
growths we cannot understand, fights we cannot win.  
Powerlessness overwhelms.

Some retreat to the bottom of the hive,  
suppress the drive to please, to feed, to suck  
the nectar they will not find today.  
Some begin to waggle, the dancers become  
town criers, singing her praises,  
mourning our loss.

Another young larva will be chosen,  
as if we had a choice.  
We will feed her our finest royal jelly, as if this  
could redeem us, could bring our mother back,  
could make us whole. And in time, not now,  
it will.

# Hug

JAMES CAGNEY

---

Both visiting days he asked for this  
his prophetic eyes / body a Catherine wheel going nova

first, vaulting off the parallel bars of his walker

next, holy ghost dismounting the  
bed

a 10-point stick landing on the terrace  
of my chest.

In the agreed upon silence of my arms

he felt fractional  
his spine floating

in his over-cooked skin

We whispered

as if healing  
were a current  
directed by harmonized wavelets  
of breath

anyone watching might've expected  
us to kiss  
since we appeared to eclipse something.

Pulling open the door,  
I turned

how quiet + humble he looked

hollow,  
drowsy as a toddler

The white-marble room

glittered

a stainless steel fish-tank

he, a betta crown-tailed by illness.

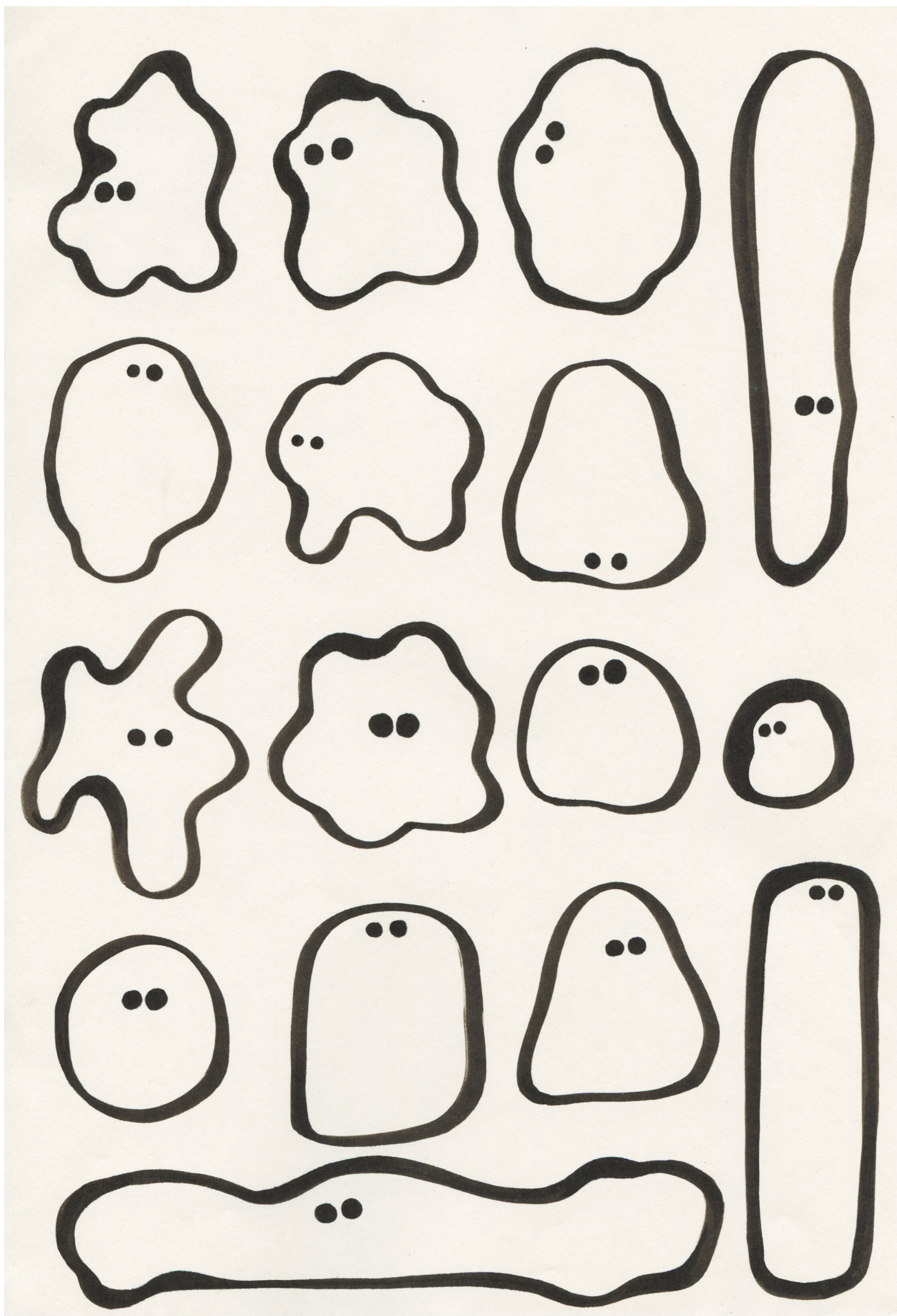
seeing him centered

floating

gulping air

like that





MOCHI MAN / YEN YEN CHOU / 2017



# Self-portrait with supermarket

ANNETTE SCHLICHTER

---

Stale breath inside cotton.

Rubber band taut against black bobby-pins.

Skin prickled. Hair unimpressed.

A strand falls over my eye.

Grey roots stare at empty shelf.

# THE BACK PAGE

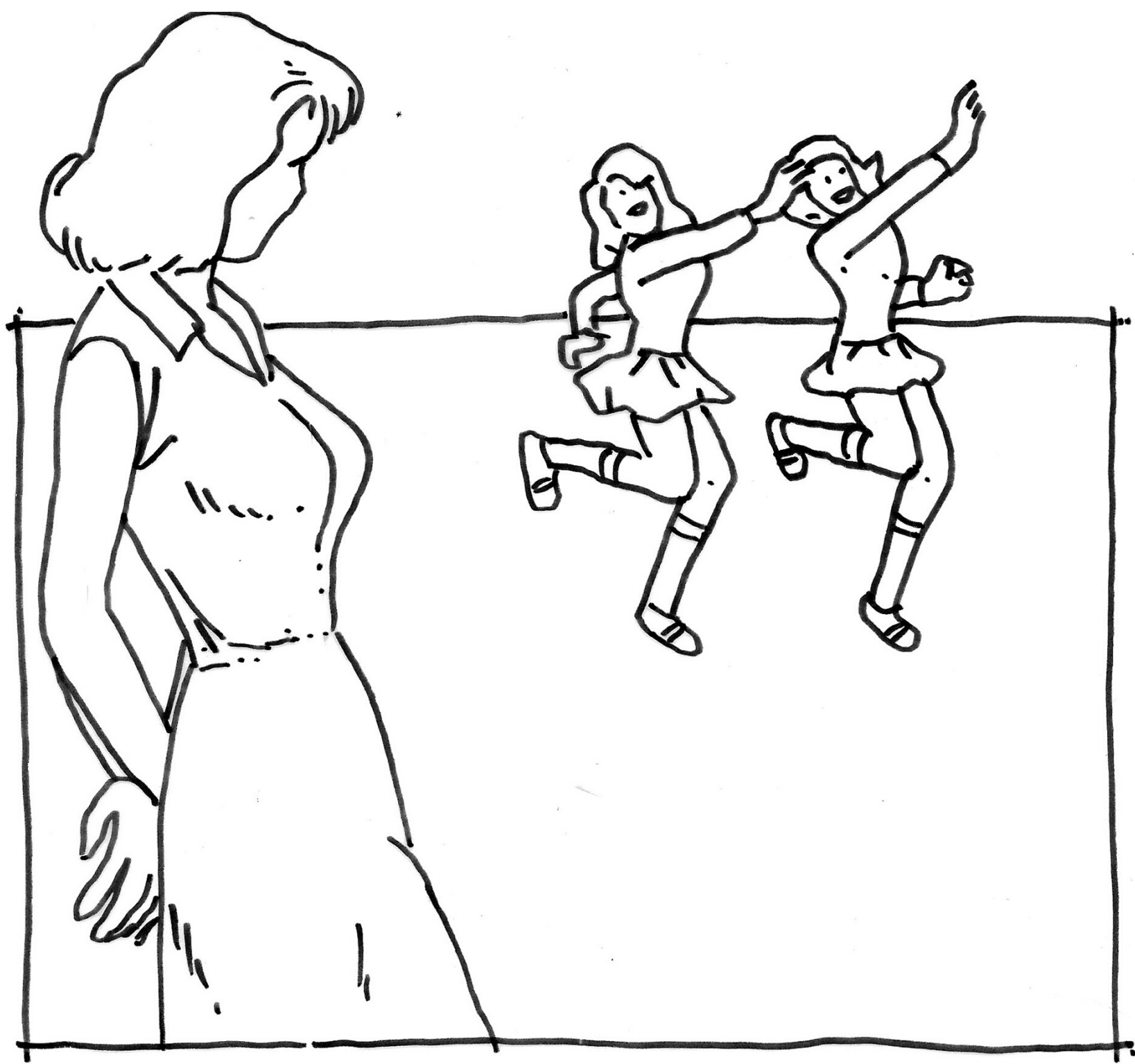
BY  
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

# EAT MY SHORTS

AN ILLUSTRATED HAIKU

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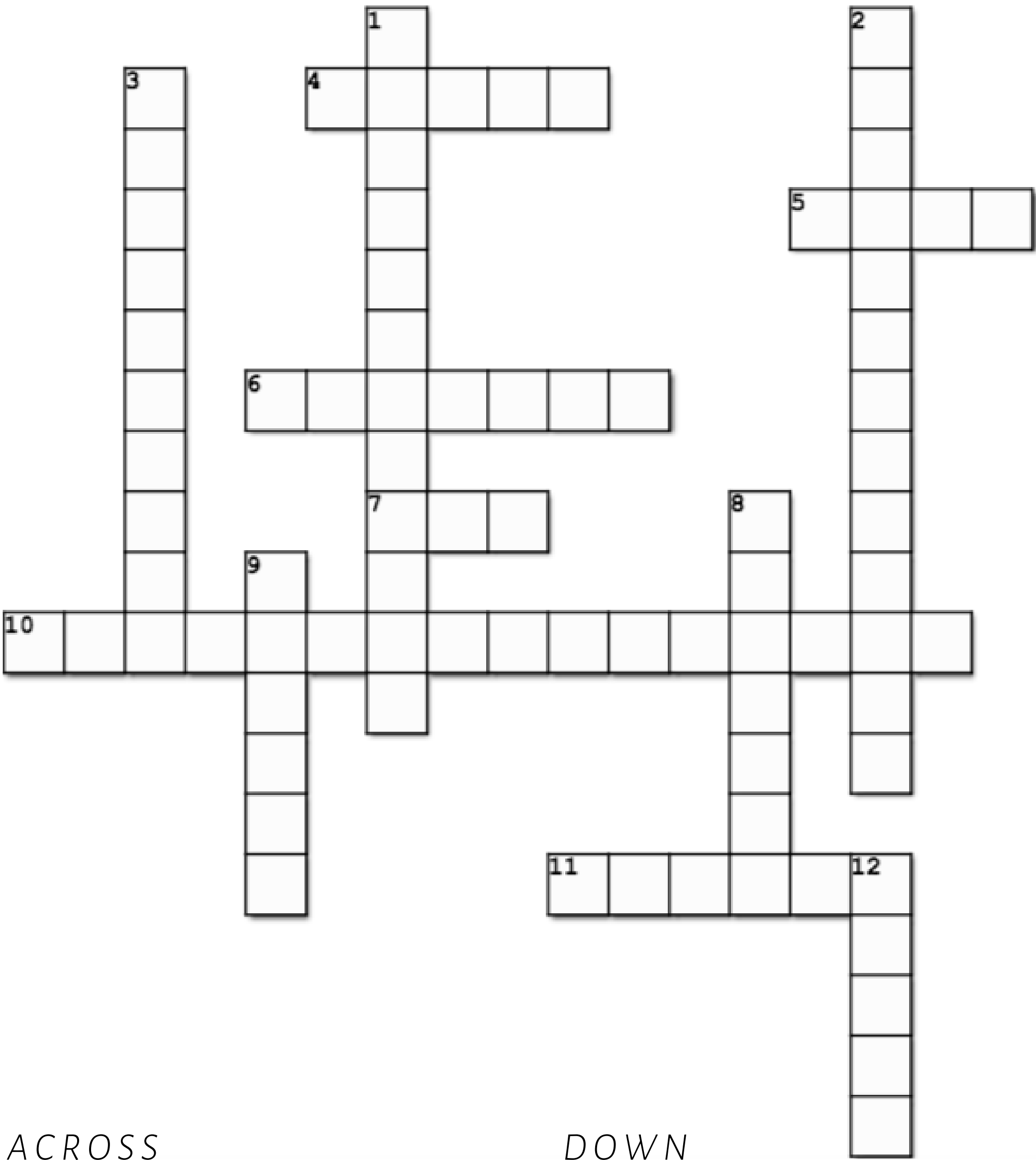
## The Big Game



I never made the  
cheerleading team. Then again,  
I am always sad.

# CROSSWORDZ

A CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 4. 1979 sci-fi/horror film featuring a chestburster
- 5. To flash one’s butt
- 6. New Mexican alien crash site, allegedly
- 7. Unidentified flying object, abbrev.
- 10. Being from outer space
- 11. The seventh planet or one’s butt

DOWN

- 1 Disc-shaped transportation
- 2. Traditional greeting for alien overlords
- 3. Outer space vehicle
- 8. A pal from Mars
- 9. Soccer team in Los Angeles
- 12. “\_\_\_\_, they’re just like us!”

# THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

## WORD STUFF

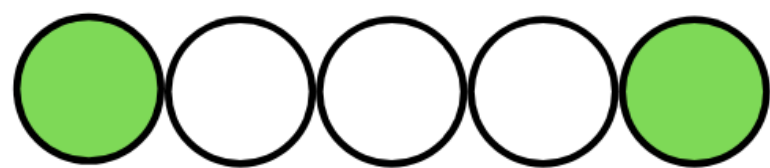
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Unscramble each Mumble to form five ordinary words.  
Then, arrange the green letters in the highlighted spaces to  
complete the punchline.

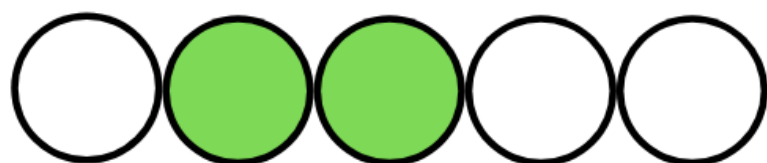
**THARGE**



**RHSTI**



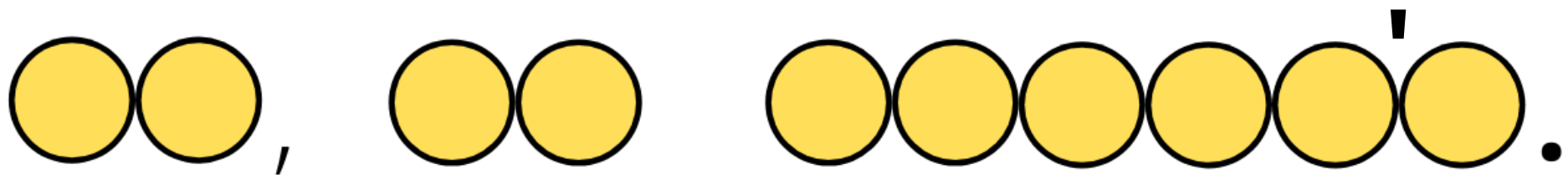
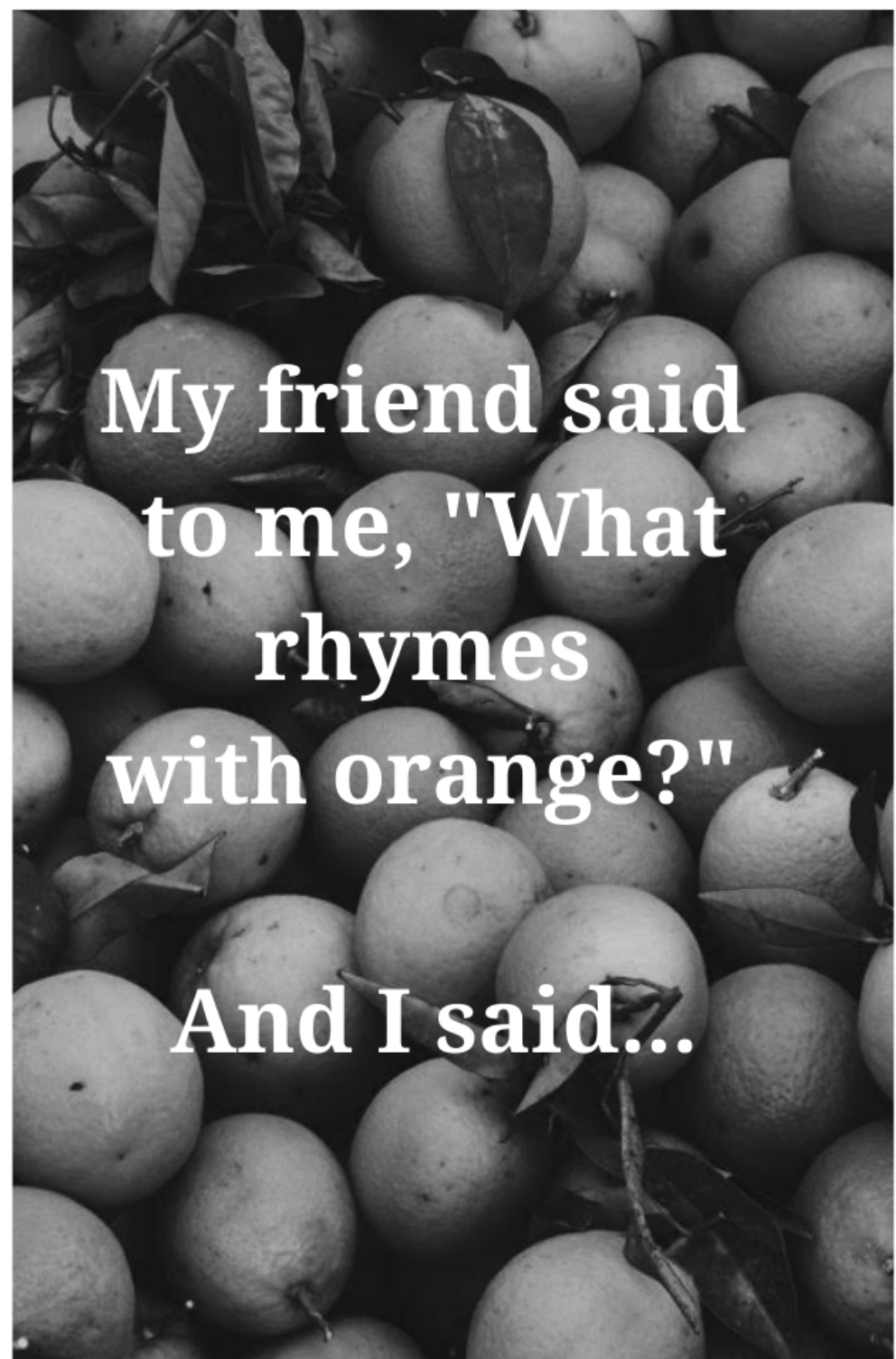
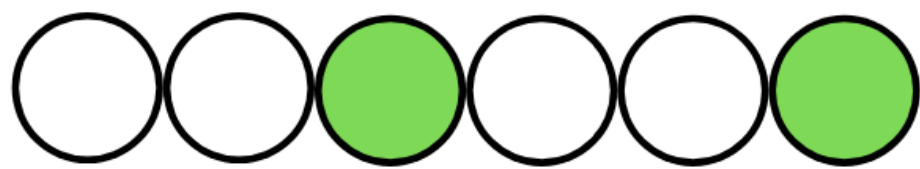
**ITONJ**



**ROODCT**



**NNESKU**



(Answers next week.)

# CONTRIBUTORS

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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.

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QUESTION:

*Describe the color of the  
current situation.*

HEATHER BOURBEAU

*The red of my heart that expands with compassion for people I will never meet, red of the berries that are coming in and the joy they will bring, and red of the blood that we all share.*

JAMES CAGNEY

*Green as my houseplants, leaning towards the sunlight. They appear unaffected by the current crisis.*

LENA GUSTAFSON

*muddy brown with a bit of fluorescent green*

PHILIP HARRIS

*The current situation is frustration colored, the color of waiting.*

NASIM MOGHADAM

ANNETTE SCHLICHTER

*vortex in primary colors*

NINA SCHUYLER

*The grayish-blue of fog with the occasional strikes of searing lightning.*



# THE RACKET

WEEKLY



# THE LONG GONE

W/KEITH S. WILSON

CHRISTINE NO  
KEVIN DUBLIN  
SYDNEY VOGL  
KRISTINA TEN

**5.21**  
VIA ZOOM



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