

# THE RACKET | 47



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Hi.

How is everyone?

I'm always waiting to be an "adult." You know? I want to step across some invisible line and be handed a certificate that reads "You've Become An Adult!" and then be ushered into the quiet rooms with cucumber water and leather sofas I've yet to be exposed to.

As someone who doesn't have kids, and isn't married, just yet and hasn't really ever been drawn towards the concept of "career" in the traditional sense, it isn't always easy to mark the big moments I assume everyone else is happily checking off on their way to retirement.

I changed that recently. I got engaged, I bought a house in a small town neighborhood not dissimilar to the one I grew up in. I got a job. I bought a lawnmower. In my mind, in a very short period of time I went from 39-year old kid to 39-year adult.

Why then do I feel like an imposter? I feel like I've taken various pieces from the grown-up costume box and I'm now shambling about my new town, nodding at the locals with a forced smile on my face like, "Nothing to see here. Just another adult totally belonging."

Part of it is the move. Nora and I both were residents of major cities for decades and in the span of a few short months we've picked up our entire lives and shuffled them into a smallish city in Northern California. I grew up in the suburbs of Seattle, so it's not new to me, but it's different. There's a part of me that's pushing back against the flat streets and big trucks and box stores and badly dressed older dudes because there's a part of me trying to hold on to a raggedy hipster image I've been clinging to for years.

This comes from living in San Francisco, a place that proudly self-describes itself as the "City of Perpetual Teenagers." A place where it is financially impossible to tick the boxes of "adulthood" unless your paycheck has six figures on it. It feels sometimes like the upturned hipster noses and snark, San Francisco is known for isn't a "cool" thing, it's a self-defense thing. It's an armor against a place that you love and want to grow in but doesn't for a second love you back and certainly won't provide the space for you to change.

It's clutching at what you were because you're in a place that won't let you be anything else. You can either be okay with it or be somewhere else.

And now I am somewhere else. I'm still wearing skinny jeans and listening to German post-punk and scoffing at just how "different" it is up here, and maybe the feeling of being an imposter is really just me subconsciously clinging because I've been doing so for so long.

I'm not an imposter, I've just suddenly been given some space—physically and mentally—to grow and it isn't a natural feeling.

There isn't a line I've stepped over into adulthood because clearly, that line doesn't exist and I'll die still feeling like a fifteen year old pretending to be a man. More so, there's an expansion of self, a ballooning of potential identity you can either grow into or watch from a distance. Adulthood isn't a destination, it's a choice. And either way you decide, it isn't going to be an easy one.

'Till next time.

-N

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

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## CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

**THE SENTENCING PROJECT**

<https://tinyurl.com/57959c6h>

**PRISON POLICY INITIATIVE**

<https://tinyurl.com/8tuf8jpb>

**RE:STORE JUSTICE**

<https://restorecal.org/donate/>

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

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*From the book Our Specters*

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*Bought a lawnmower. What of it?*

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# 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're working on some special rewards. And we know you love special rewards.

## THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

MATTHEW CARNEY  
CATHY & JOHN SANDERS  
HALLIE YOUNG  
JAMIE ENGELMANN  
CASEY BENNETT  
LILIAN CAYLEE  
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# **THE RACKET**

**47**



ENDURANCE 4  
ANNIKA ROMEYN  
2019

# It's Spitting

ANUM SATTAR

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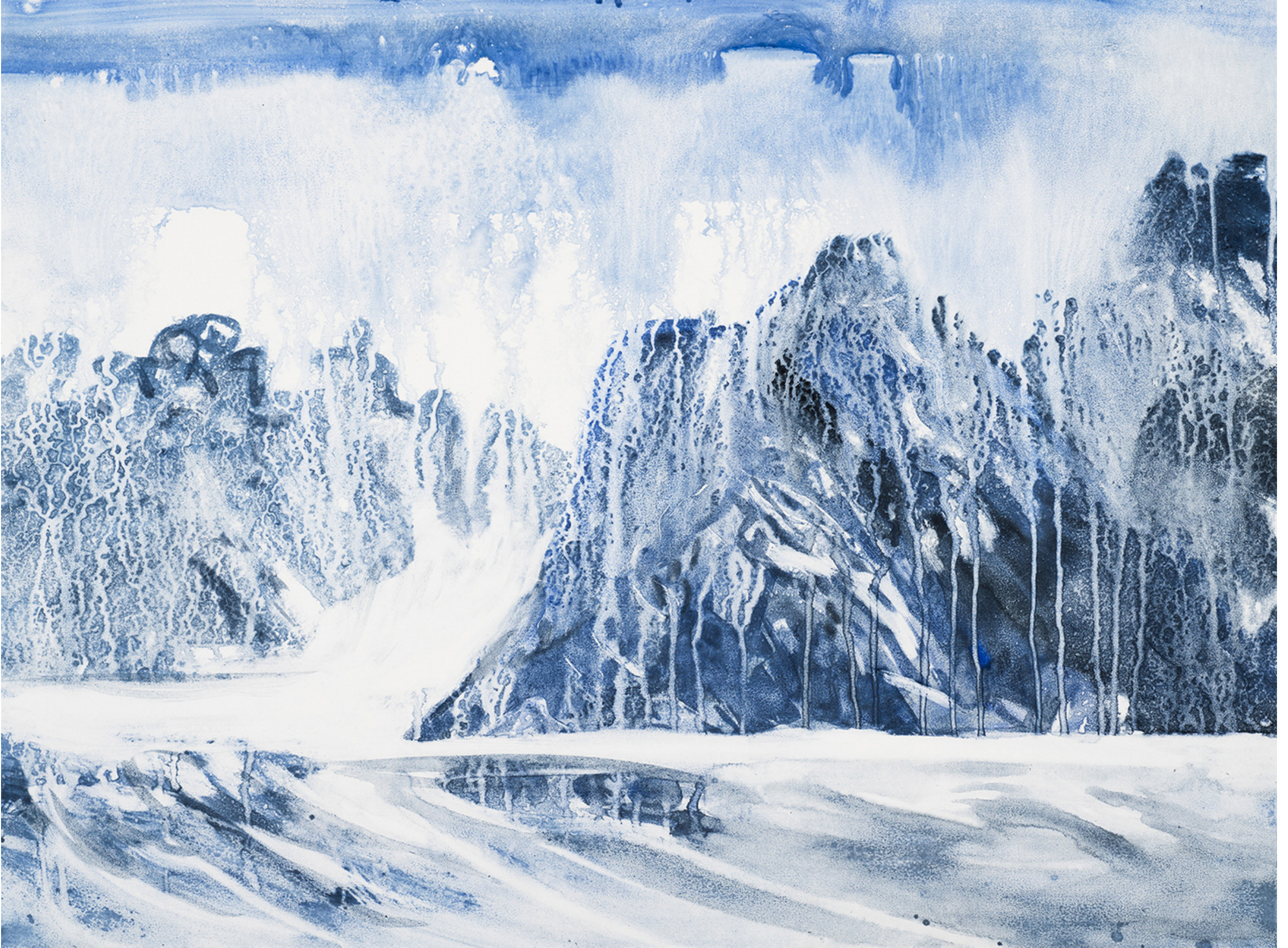
We scarf down Arby's over his cluttered sink. He looks especially handsome in the Ralph Lauren sweater gifted to him by a former partner. I lick cheese sauce from the corner of his mouth. Eugenia wants him badly, now that he rejects her. She moved to Utah while we reside in Texas.

Roderick shall wear what I customised for him when the sky clears. Until then, my pair of gold framed Rayban Aviator sunglasses stays folded in its red leather case.

undecided

he flies to Salt Lake City

to 'catch up' with an ex



HORIZON 2  
ANNIKA ROMEYN  
2019



GUERRILLA BAY 1  
ANNIKA ROMEYN  
2019

# Squirrel Ball

MICHAEL COLBERT

---

When we ride in Ricky's convertible, we keep the top down so the wind ruffles our hair. It's a Beemer his dad bought him, and we drive it along mountain roads like they do in the commercials. At night we go cruising, but not the gay kind. We drive doughnuts in the Target parking lot and creep down the dirt driveway past the mailbox that is a woman holding the mailbox. The goal is to get to the log cabin at the end without chickening out, which we never do unless Teddy's driving. Sometimes when our headlights pour into the cabin, we see the weird kid from our grade, Luke, playing guitar in his bedroom.

After school, we cruise too. We pick up Katie, who Joey has a crush on. She sits between Joey and Teddy without a seatbelt and sips Pepsi from the can. We all shift and watch, except Joey, who pretends to ignore her. Katie drapes her toes on Ricky's thigh and passes a cigarette for us to hit. The buzz is the first step of Squirrel Ball.

The rules go like this:

1. Get a good buzz.
2. Scan the road for squirrels. Call out its location. If you spot a squirrel that leads to a hit, you get one point.
3. The driver has to hit the squirrel. A hit is three points. Attempt with no hit is zero. Touching the brakes is minus ten.
4. The loser is the bitch and sits in the bitch seat, unless he can make Katie sit there. He also has to keep score.

Teddy has eight.

Joey has six, all from spotting, never hitting. He says this is nothing like deer hunting. He'd be winning at that for sure.

Ricky has eighteen, but he's usually driving because it's his car so it's kind of unfair.

Jaden's the bitch with negative twenty. We don't let him drive anymore.

Katie is also good at spotting. She has four points if we count her.

We drive all over town, playing Squirrel Ball. We pass by Luke, who walks to school. He wore Hollister sweatpants in middle school that looked like girl pants and his AIM profile had a palm tree and it said, "I love California," so we yell that at him and throw the Pepsi can his way. Joey spots a squirrel that Ricky hits, and then another darts into the road, weaving through the wheels, and makes it across unscathed.

"Now what?"

"We don't have a rule for that."

"Did you guys know Luke's mom has cancer?" Katie asks, but only Jaden talks to her because today he's in the bitch seat and Katie sits behind Joey, pinching his ear.

We drive to the liquor store where they don't question Katie's fake or the fifty-dollar bills we pay with, and we drive to the lake where sometimes we catch sunfish on the weekends. We shotgun Miller Lites on our way down the gravel path. We step onto the boardwalk through the woods and the light is dimming. Jaden wants to see the stars. With our flashlights glowing, we find the way towards the water. Tonight, we'll get drunk and Joey says he and Katie will make sweet love.

But deer vault over the path ahead. The doe runs last. When she doesn't clear the path, her hoof snags between the slats. Her knee gives, leg twists on her way down. Her head thuds on the planks, the crack twisting us from the inside out. Jaden looks like he might hurl. Teddy gasps. The doe cries so desperately the fawns skitter to her side and nudge her head.

Her leg is twisted, real bad.

"What do we do?"

"Can we call someone?"

"Can we free her?"

"She won't be able to walk again." Katie says it with authority and distance, and we remember she moved here from Idaho in seventh grade. "We have to mercy kill her."

She hands the rock to Jaden first, maybe because she knows he'll turn around and needs an out. He passes to Teddy and we go down the line. Ricky holds the rock over her head, panting, hyperventilating. He screams, "I can't move," so Katie takes it and watches us watch the fawns standing there, none of us knowing what to tell the other once Katie drops the rock on the head. We follow her to the boardwalk's end and watch her swan dive into the lake.



SPATIAL-DIAGRAM G12-22  
SEIKO TACHIBANA  
2019





SPATIAL-DIAGRAM G12-7  
SEIKO TACHIBANA  
2019



SPATIAL-DIAGRAM G12-19  
SEIKO TACHIBANA  
2019

# Wasps' Nest

GEOFF CALLARD

---

We all got up that morning before dawn,  
when the ground was still wet, mist rolling in off the river,  
the little one carrying the rags for the petrol to soak in, jumping  
back from the whoosh of flame when we threw them  
down the hole. We went back up the hill for breakfast,  
and she slipped her hand into mine.

The night before, we all had dinner together  
and her kids asked whether I would be around for long,  
I said *of course, of course* and they asked if I would help  
clean up the orchard tomorrow and kill the wasps' nest  
– the one their grandpa was going to set fire to before the accident.

Later in her bedroom, we had talked and I held her  
for a moment and told her she looked the same  
but she stood in front of the mirror  
and slowly shook her head.  
I lay on the bed and asked  
*how bad was it when it happened?*

She gestured to the window; the evening light shadowing  
the garden – things no longer under his control, peaches  
lying under the trees, wasps burrowing in.

I had worked the farm for years, shared her bed  
when she wanted; drifting apart had been easy,

drifting back not much harder.

That afternoon she took her father his coffee,  
told him I would be staying for a while  
and what we did with the wasps' nest.

He laughed then lay back again as she pulled the blinds open.

She came back to the kitchen and said

*I'm grateful you came but I don't know*

*what I can give you.* She had the same eyes as he did,  
the same way of not quite looking at you  
when she most wanted to.

I said that's ok,

*I've always loved this place.*



*LINES*  
FEDERICO REKOWSKI  
2019



CANTERBURY TREES  
FEDERICO REKOWSKI  
2019

# Man With the Knife

RANIA ETIENAM

---

My lover is moon lit silver obsidian, our queer tongues making queer shapes.  
She asks me to marry her, knee perfect between my thighs. She pushes  
me against the brick of the alley outside of Susy Jane's, the only dyke bar in town.  
Do you hate me? she asks.  
With all my heart, I say.  
This is how we talk.  
One day we'll be in that alley and a beer bottle will shatter  
on the wall beside our heads.  
The glass will rain on our scalps like samurai swords.  
There will be blood, oh yes. There will, there will.  
We'll take turns dabbing cotton balls of rubbing alcohol.  
Her scars will look better than mine.  
One is shaped like a half-moon.  
We'll be afraid to go back to Susy Jane's for months.  
We'll stay inside. Order in.  
For a long time we'll be afraid to kiss each other. A man with a knife  
will haunt our dreams.  
Susy Jane's will be lit on fire, burned to the ground.  
Someone throws a banana at her on the bus.  
A man will grab my breasts in a Dollarama store.  
I say: we have to move.  
I've never rebuilt a life before, she says.  
Here is an intermission: I honestly can't remember what happens.

She stays, I go. I send her postcards from the places I go.  
They start getting returned to sender.  
She's somewhere out there, and I dream of her.  
It's the only thing keeping the man with the knife away.





**THE  
BACK  
PAGE**

BY  
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

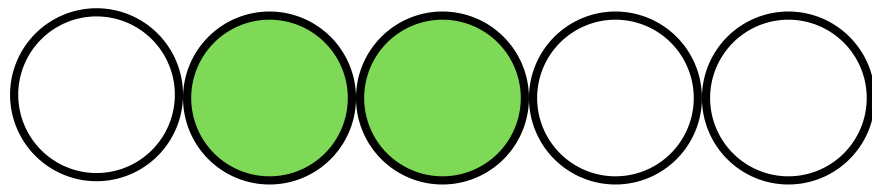
# THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

## WORD STUFF

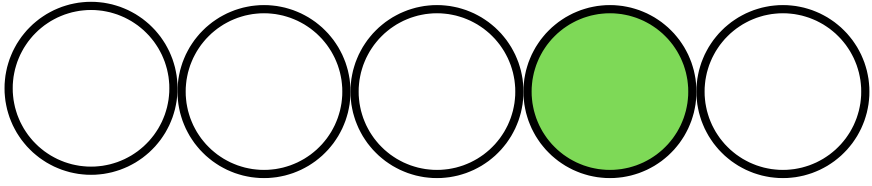
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Unscramble each Mumble to form five ordinary words.  
Then, arrange the green letters in the highlighted spaces to  
complete the punchline.

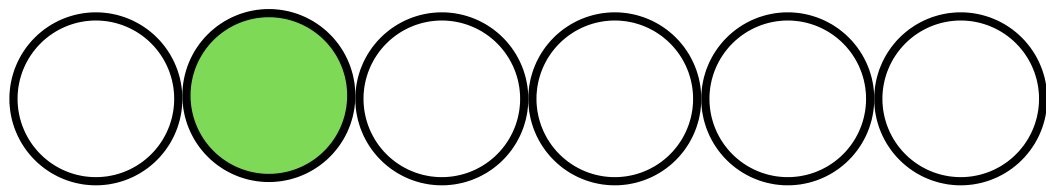
**YRGVA**



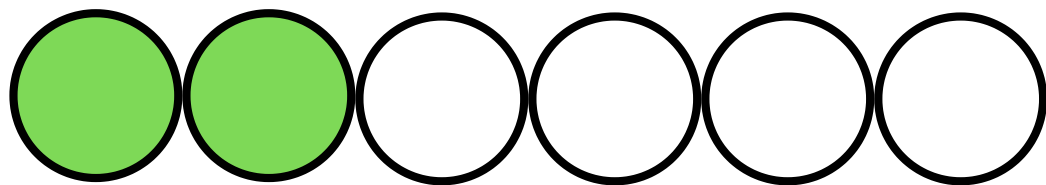
**UEOSD**



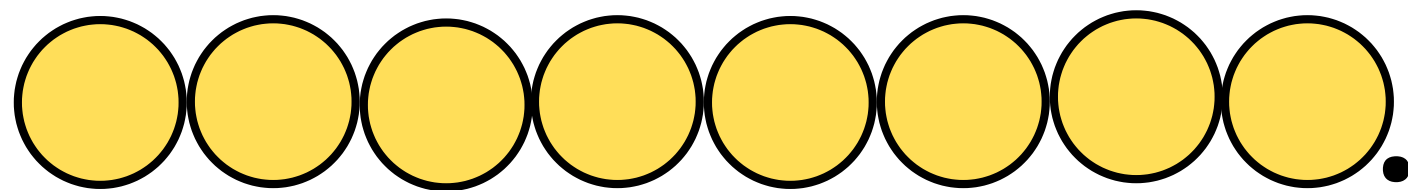
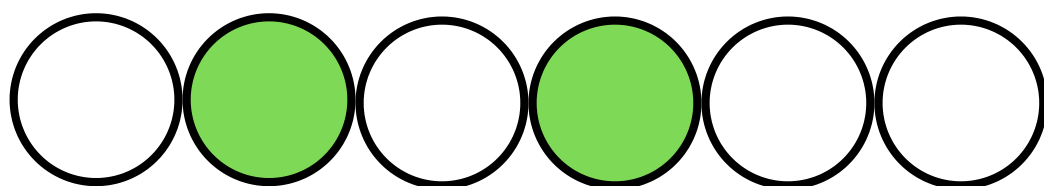
**PSMYIK**



**RAISLO**



**DINAWR**



(Answers next week.)

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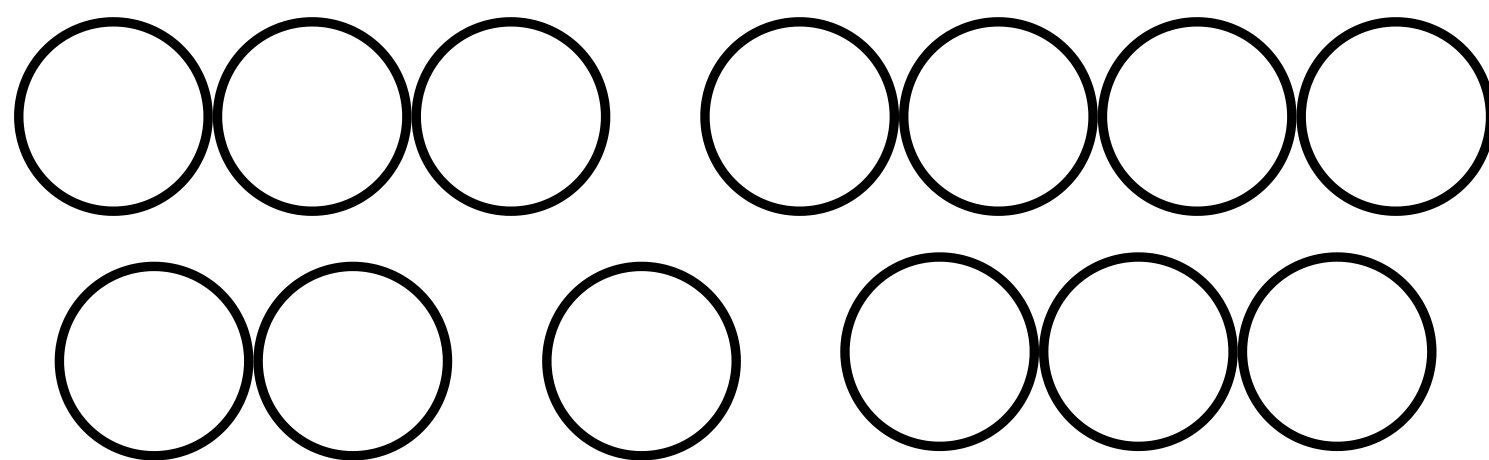
Last week's answers:

*WEIGH, SUEDE, HALVE, DOLLAR, RIPPLE*

What does a sheep tell its wife? *I love ewe.*

# HUSTLE & REBUSTLE

Decipher the rebus to reveal a word or phrase that fits in the circles below.  
(Remember: One letter per circle.)



**LAST WEEK'S ANSWER**

*I'm at the end of my rope*

# CONTRIBUTORS

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GEOFF CALLARD

MICHAEL COLBERT

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FEDERICO REKOWSKI

ANNIKA ROMEYN

ANUM SATTAR

SEIKO TACHIBANA

# THE RACKET

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**END OF  
THE ROAD.**

