



**THE  
RACKET | 62**



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# THE RACKET

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Hello.

How's everyone doing?

I'm about to say something I imagine might piss you off. And I say that because when I think about what I'm about to say, it pisses me off. Yet, it still needs to be said.

I think we need to try harder. Each and everyone of us.

I say this as a person who, rightfully or not, believes that he spends nearly every hour of every day trying as hard as he can to do more, better. I'm going to assume that you, like me, are actively making the effort to live the best life possible as much as you can. So I'm sure hearing that you need to try harder is like a poke in the eye with a dull stick.

Still, we can try harder.

We exist in a world where everything has somehow become aimed at making our lives easier. Every app, every product, every piece of advice is a means to allow us to live and learn without all the effort. Learn a language without the hard work of studying to learn a language. Listen to music without all the challenge of flipping a record. Find mindfulness without the work of knowing what mindfulness even is. The world seems hell bent on convincing that as hard as life might be, there's probably a workaround.

Here's the thing: life is hard. It is. There's no actual way around it. It's a roiling miasma of difficult choices, hard work, emotional complexity and shifting relationships. It is, frankly put, a beautiful, horrible, messy shit show. And it should be.

We have convinced ourselves that happiness is found in ease and it is doing irrevocable damage to us as both individuals and as a society. We not only continue to lower the bar in terms of what "difficult" actually refers to, but to diminish our ability to actually do what seems difficult.

We are now in a world where you can tell a computer to tell your lights to turn on. The act of standing up and walking to the light switch was deemed inconvenient enough that a group of, what I think are exceptionally intelligent people used their exceptional intelligence ... to make it easier to turn our lights on without having to get off the couch.

Someone decided that in a world where millions of people died, and are dying in a pandemic, that we should focus energy on making it so the hardship of swiping a credit card at the register no longer exists. Pay what you need with just a tap of your card. Live the good life.

It's nice, right? The possibilities that now exist with the touch of a button or a word spoke into silence are immense and comforting and life is so much easier because of them. But at what cost? If we've made it so we believe as a society that simple, doable tasks are so challenging we need something else to do them for us, we will keep losing perspective on what is truly challenging in life during a time when truly challenging things need to be addressed by everyone.

When we all believe turning on the light in the living room is too difficult how are we ever going to do what needs to be done to confront climate change? Or systemic racism? Or all of the other terrible forces bearing down on us?

So yeah, I'm not saying you're doing a bad job in life, I'm just saying it is time we all started trying even a tiny bit harder.

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

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The Racket

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*Why start with teal?*



# 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.

## THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

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# **THE RACKET**

**62**



*THERE IS A CHANGE*  
LAURA ROEBUCK  
2018-2019



WITHOUT RED  
LAURA ROEBUCK  
2017-2018

# february

REBECCA SAMUELSON

---

an initial brush with death  
at age 17 that never quite  
registered it meant take out  
chicken in waiting rooms  
with families who had members  
that were also declining down  
the hall it meant walking to  
school at lunch time & no one  
asking why I was late it meant  
having a funeral where birthday  
parties were held while texting  
the local boy to meet you on the  
corner to hug briefly in black garb  
it meant prom photos next to  
dazzling frames that twinge in  
your head eleven years later



*HYPOTHETICAL PATHWAYS*  
LAURA ROEBUCK  
2014, 2017

# Late

THARANI BALACHANDRAN

---

My father is a time-zone on the other side of the globe,  
always behind,  
without a hope of catching up.

For someone whose livelihood depends on making careful calculations  
the math of time has always been surprisingly just out of his reach,  
like subway doors closing just he reaches the bottom of the stairs.

My nephew's high school graduation ceremony has started,  
everyone is already seated and there is a slideshow  
of cherubic baby photos superimposed  
with teenagers eager to escape the confines  
of their nine-to-three-thirty high school routine.

The principal is calling the grads to receive their diplomas.  
She is rapid fire moving through the alphabet, almost through the Bs  
and he tumbles into the seat beside me at the last moment, grinning,  
a third-base runner sliding into home plate, declared safe.

The last three graduation programs in his hand,  
the ones my mother and I had missed at the door,  
rushing to get to our seats.

There is a sickly-sweet scent in the air, cologne, which he is painstakingly  
dabbing on a face he started shaving ten minutes before we are supposed to be at dinner.  
My mother patiently waits by the door, in a red and gold embroidered sari  
that she folded and draped for forty-five minutes to achieve perfect pleats,  
heavy dangling earrings that she had to coax into her earlobes with a bit of soapy water,

a necklace made of individual gold coins around her neck,  
all turned to face the same direction.

She has taken time to do all of this  
and somehow she is still waiting for my father.

I have time to count the gold coins on her necklace,  
to add extra pins to her pleats, to sit in comfort of her baby powder  
and Oil of Olay smell for a few minutes longer.

My father shows up late to his brother-in-law's wake, paper plates  
containing crumbs of mutton rolls and cake, already served and eaten.

The people who came to pay respects are gone.

My aunt's head is bowed,  
but immediately raises at the sound  
of heavy footsteps breaking the silence  
sudden and booming

like a grandfather clock striking midnight in a sleepy house.

Her brave face crumples at the sight of her older brother  
as she finally allows herself to give in to tears.

He is right on time  
to hold the heavy weight of her grief on his chest,  
enveloping her in his arms like a final eulogy.



*EPIPHYTE II*  
MATTHEW PRINS  
2021



# Ménière's Disease

ANNA LAURA REEVE

---

My tea is steeping.  
Windchimes clatter whitely on the porch,

banks of bamboo bow  
and shoulder into the wind

The inner ear, its coils  
its mazes

I forget for a moment which way  
the letter z faces, and write it backwards.

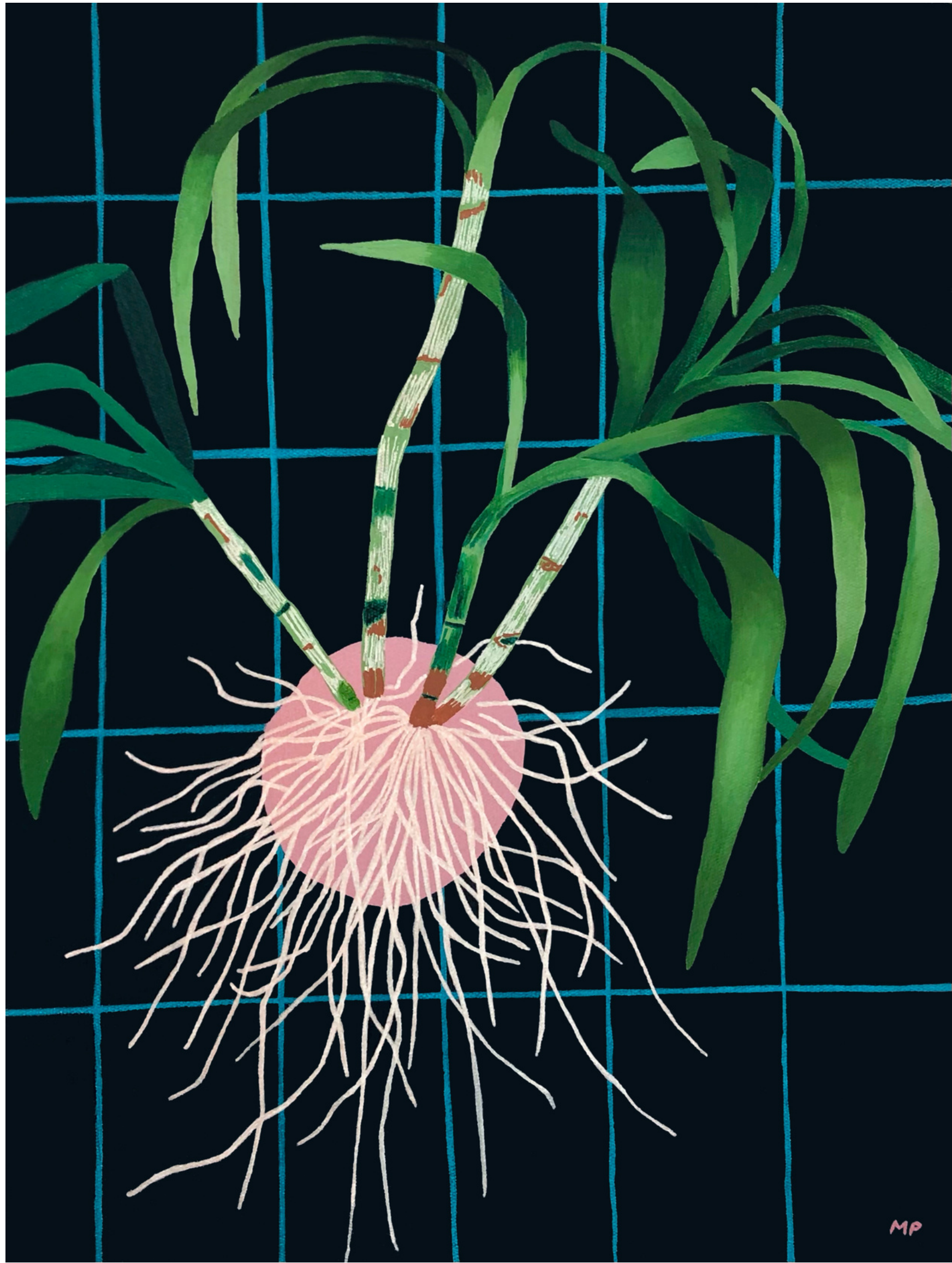
The tiny hairs of the innermost ear,  
so innermost it is almost  
the brain, so innermost we almost don't believe in it,

send messages in Morse code:  
dizzy dizzy vertigo  
nystagmus dizzy ess oh ess oh ess

Husband crouched over the toilet for hours,  
then, recovered, driving to work  
on gray highways, for hours.

*Degenerative* and *idiopathic* means  
he is losing his hearing.  
That orienting light for the eyes  
in the back of the head,

repository  
for the alphabet of degrees between music  
and silence.



EPIPHYTE I  
MATTHEW PRINS  
2021

# My Mona Lisa

RHEA DHANBHORA

---

Enter this muted extent, room within room in the cloister of memories within which I pretend  
I've seen this woman

plucked from some distant native Empire long-forgotten now preserved in daubs, smears,  
the precise brush-strokes of a realist

In her dark element, lips pursed, slight upturn reaching eyes turned away not towards the  
face of her own/my/your identity

my Mona Lisa so similar yet somehow more sombre, stygian gloom eclipsed only by pearls  
snaking three times over flesh and fabric

Imagine those fingers working overtime over yards of whatever material cotton/georgette/silk  
she is wrapped up in

Bordering her sari a symbol of syncretism, the hand-stitched kor—intricate brocade, floral  
vines twisting and turning—affixed to the edges of diaphanous fabric

Enter this quotidian scene suddenly so empty of and still filled with singularity, peculiarity,  
originality—call her identity what you will

You know Leonardo I know Pestonji but I do not really know him—like much else in what  
they call the western-realistic “Portrait of a Parsi Lady,” who I know and don't know

much like myself.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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**WE NEED TO GO.  
SO, BYE.**

