



THE RACKET

26

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Hi.

Everyone doing okay?

I consider the first Thursday of November The Racket's birthday. Aside from an inaugural show in an almost empty Adobe Books where I set up a microphone and deafened the two or three people who'd shown for free beer and a place to rest for a bit - Thursday, November 10th, 2016 was our *first* show.

Four years ago next week, just two days after Donald J. Trump was elected as the President of the United States of America, five readers - Miah Jeffra, Baruch Porras-Hernandez, Sarah Bardeen, Sarah Heady and Shideh Etaat - came together, a nationwide emotional pall hanging over *everything*, and read their writing to a small crowd.

I don't remember every part of every piece. I remember Baruch read an early version of "Love in the Time of Pinatas" that ended with a hand made of glowing butterflies floating into a cosmic space. Miah Jeffra read something - the specifics are lost to time - that now lives in my mind as a singular pang of emotion so strong just typing about it makes my eyes water.

I remember walking into the tiny space of Adobe Books, feeling swollen with a combination of dread and sadness and fear, my mental space filled to bursting with a corrosive mixture of shock and awe and betrayal I just couldn't figure out what to do with. I had spent Election Night lying on the rough wood of my kitchen, listening to Leonard Cohen and crying. I had spent the nights afterwards wandering the streets of San Francisco - like so many others - in a fugue state, slapped senseless by the surprise of just how awful our country really was, had always been.

The event that night was, for me and I still believe for the readers and for the audience - a hot needle slid into what was becoming a quickly, festering blister. It was relief, it was release, it was the sudden, eye-opening, breath-taking realization that no matter how bad everything seemed, everything good had not ceased. Writing, and community, and shared grief and the healing that comes with it, were buried, but alive. And if this was true, what else might pull itself from the wreckage of our country's idealism?

A week from today, we as a country, once again have the opportunity to push back against fascism and racism and the continuing awfulness of what the American Experience has devolved into for so many. We have the chance to give two middle-fingers to Donald J. Trump and a hard kick in the ass as he stumbles towards the exit.

As much as I want to believe this is what will happen - that a truly broken country might come together to do what seems such a necessary thing - I just don't know. I have over the last four years found strength in my cynicism, in my belief that if it can happen, it probably will. I continue to hope, but it is tempered with fear. My expectations are at their very very lowest.

Regardless, wherever we are come Thursday, November 5th, The Racket will be here, just like we were four years ago, as a place to come together to grieve or take deep, shaky breaths or hold hands across the virtual void.

Or maybe, and I'll believe it when I see it, to celebrate.

'till next time,
N

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

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[https://www.lwv.org/voting-
rights/fighting-voter-suppression](https://www.lwv.org/voting-rights/fighting-voter-suppression)

VOTE VOTE VOTE
VOTE VOTE VOTE
VOTE VOTE VOTE

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It's just too many stories.

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM

WE HAVE A PATREON

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've got weekly micro-playlists, special recommend email and much, much more.

THANK YOU TO THESE FOLKS

MATTHEW CARNEY
CATHY & JOHN SANDERS
HALLIE YOUNG
JAMIE ENGELMANN
CASEY BENNETT
LAUREN C. JOHNSON
ANGIE MCDONALD
QUYNH-AN PHAN
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California is not the only beautiful place to live

AMELIA FURLONG

I visited, years later,
drove my car out hours through the hills
of flint, the canyons red as ribbon,
past bearded palms languishing in
spiky heat, begging for a smoke.

over the cinder block highway
one sign said Barstow & another
was graffitied. I turned left. near Fontana
the mountains lingered over the rooftop
of a Chili's. in the parking lot
I felt so close to god
my skin rippled, despite the heat
that turned my spit to sand.
inside I took selfies in the bathroom,
drank iced tea in a vinyl booth
raked with stretch marks.

I thought I'd lived in San Francisco long enough
to forget my small-town longings,
the way I feel most at ease
with laminated menus & cardboard coasters
neck sunk deep in virgin margaritas
& where there isn't a craft cocktail list
in sight.



ON AND OFF (*EVERYTHING HAS PUSHBUTTONS*)
SARAH BORRUSO
2019

Yells in the Night

JULIA HALPRIN JACKSON

The trip starts a half whispered wish: the country's not so big.
Not when you have a 1999 Volvo & a face like yours.

I-10 unwinds before us, an unfurled spool of thread
just begging us to follow her east, beyond the sunrise.

We put our feet in the Rio Grande & the current's strong.
Where I walk, you follow, although you make it look like

we accidentally end up in the same place. As if it isn't your little car
that took us here together, as if we've just met,

as if the Rio Grande were neither that big nor that wet.
Let's pretend I don't read that murder mystery out loud

two hours before we camp out in mountain lion country.
Let's rewind to where I curl up next to you,

& this time I won't shiver & put your hand over my staccato heart,
& this time I'll be good, and I'll let you sleep.

We pass eight "As Seen On TV" stores en route to the Great Smoky Mountains,
a re-creation of the sinking of the Titanic, an Upside-Down Museum,

stores selling frog jam. We are not in California anymore.
We beat the system and camp in Brooklyn.

Don't ask how, or if you do, remember the way Puerto Rican men
yell in Spanish late into the night, & the quality of their yell:

never a statement of alarm, but rather a dizzy fever
that echoes the mood inside the tent. Secretly I still practice that yell.

We roll into Chicago & Wrigleyville is drunk on baseball,
the streets slick with liquor and sweat, & there is a saccharine abundance

of red, white and blue. Sometimes, America, I love you for your love of yourself.
Lake Manawa, Iowa, has more mosquitoes than people,
and there are a lot of people—

including a few who masturbate in public restrooms &
warm crystal meth over camp stoves.

We swipe & swat & swear. We are alpine cowboys, I say to you.

You laugh because you know how I hate horses.

The Colorado Rockies don't mess around—they take up the whole sky and more.

You are happy to be somewhere cold, happy to see me nesting,
then molting, when the sun returns. We are in the reddest, rawest desert,

canyons and gulleys so wide the earth opened its
big mouth & let all the lizards fall in.

When we finally cross the California state line, 30 days and 25 states later,

the rain starts & we turn off the radio and travel soundlessly,
digesting America, letting it simmer in our bellies, eyes, ears and legs.

And even now, with you & I still one hundred miles apart,
I practice my yells in the night, perfecting my pitch & timbre,

trying to be good, trying to be kind, as if maybe
you'll hear me out here, waiting for the road to unfurl for us once more.



PSYCHSCAPE 08 (PEACH SPRINGS CANYON, AZ)
TERRI LOEWENTHAL
2018



PSYCHSCAPE 35 (LONE ROCK, AZ)
TERRI LOEWENTHAL
2018

The Mayor's statement to the people of Amity announcing that the beaches will remain open despite a precipitously rising shark attack death toll

After Jaws

CHELSEA DAVIS

They say the god of death
has come to Amity.
They say the final thing you see
is a smile of ten thousand teeth.
If so, I'll grin back at that smile as I die.
In our all-American town, we tremble not
before some deity we cannot see,
some pale pathetic beast
who keeps his ancient body
buried in the deep.
What coward god is that,
too scared to show his face?
In Amity,
we like the things we worship
to be visible.
And so we kneel and praise
the sole divinity we see—
he, that great god, Economy.
His hand may be invisible,
but his works, we know, are not.
Each bright pink ice cream sold,
each flamingo-themed hotel room rented,

each beach-day sunburn charred across a neck,
makes His will flesh.

And yes, at times
this mostly loving master
demands a sacrifice:
a screaming maiden
made to bleed,
a child or three dismembered
in the water.

What of it?

If anything, this proves the power of Economy—
proves that we are but His servants,
and that His love, like all His workings,
has a price.

Besides, a wise old man once said: one person's death
is tragedy; a million deaths are just a number.

What that means for Amity
is that with each new loss
we grow a bit less oversensitive to
these regrettable but necessary deaths.

Throughout it all,
we smile at Him,
sweet god of future fortune,
and so that he may see our white-toothed grins,
we wear no masks.

A Strong Man's Load of Incense

MARK J. MITCHELL

Cold pierced his bones with artistry. Stiff rain
bounced off glass. He was blind as St. Paul
and deafened by music on metal. The fall
of water erased traffic's off-key song.
He shoulders this burden he can't explain—
an offering that he knows must arrive
to an empty apse. Holy smoke will rise
through stained glass light. It's a soundless song
only God will hear. No one else will come—
the Mass will be high but the church empty.
He carries the traditional spices.
His father did this. Same truck. It gets done.
Incense will be delivered. No one breathes
it but God. He'll get it there if he freezes.



JUST INVITE THEM ALL
REBEKAH GOLDSTEIN
2013



HOT THING
REBEKAH GOLDSTEIN
2012

Grateful

ANDY SANO

The sun rises,
again,
as the world sags
seven billion ways,
not mocking
but bucking up,
says an unrare child
of usual misfortune,
raising his head
at expected
blue skies,
in the well between
unheralded breaths.



THE MORNING AFTER
REBEKAH GOLDSTEIN
2012

THE BACK PAGE

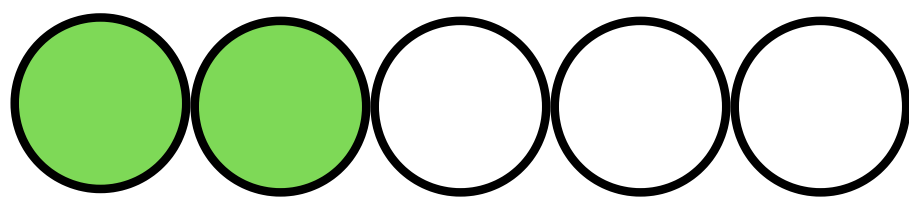
BY
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

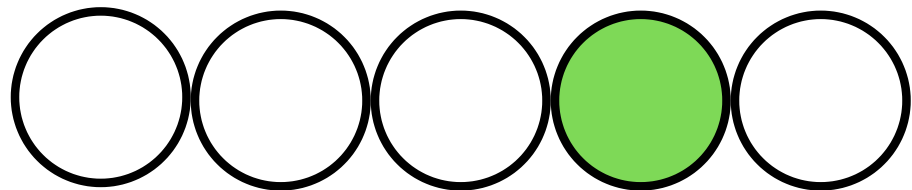
WORD STUFF

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

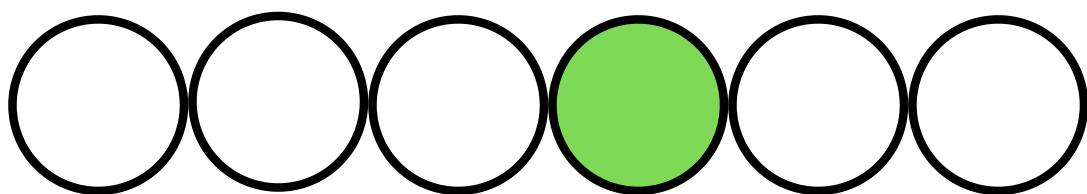
CIDHT



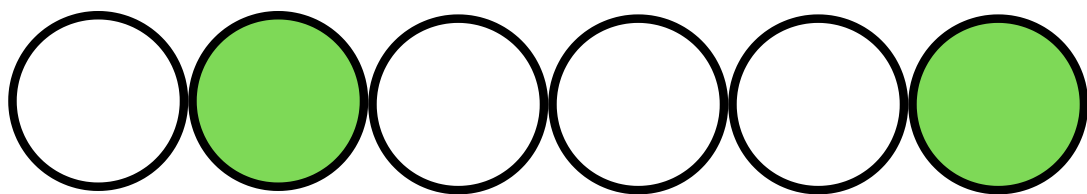
KDRNA



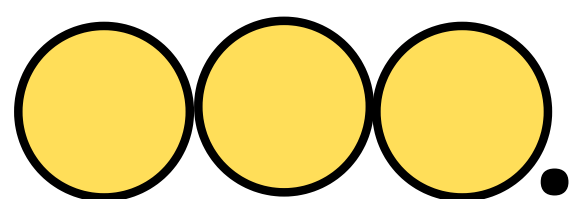
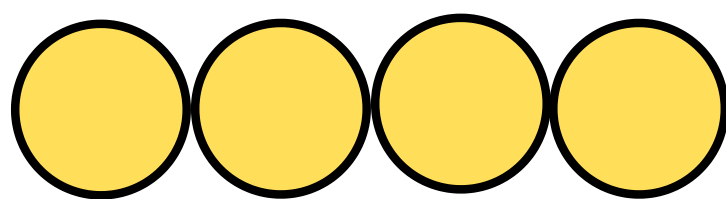
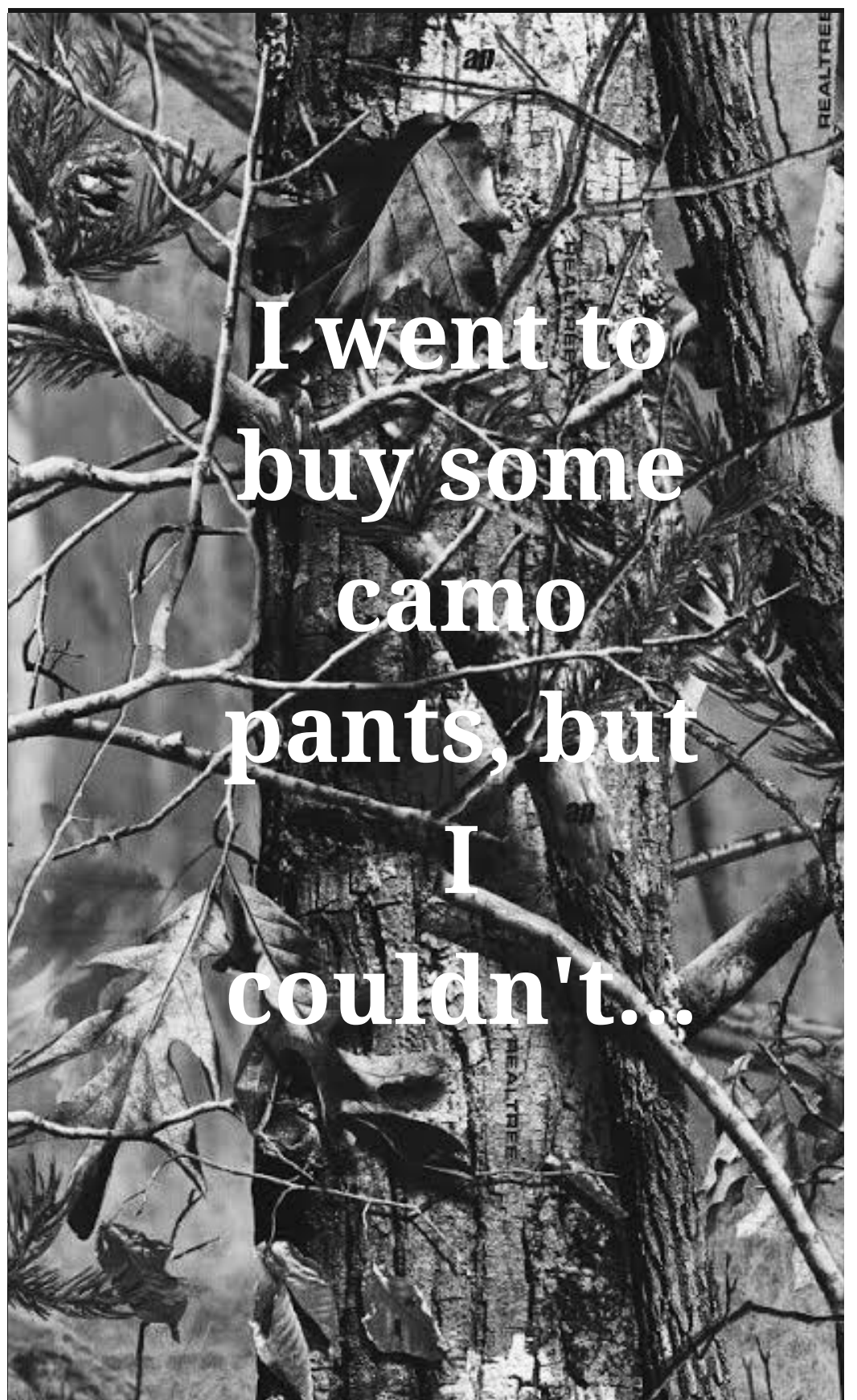
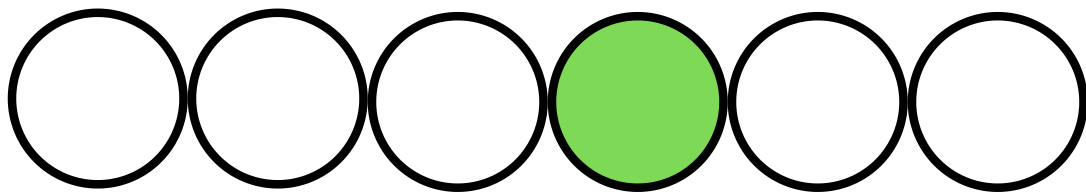
UFOWEL



TYREEA



ELOGUN



(Answers next week.)

Last week's answers:

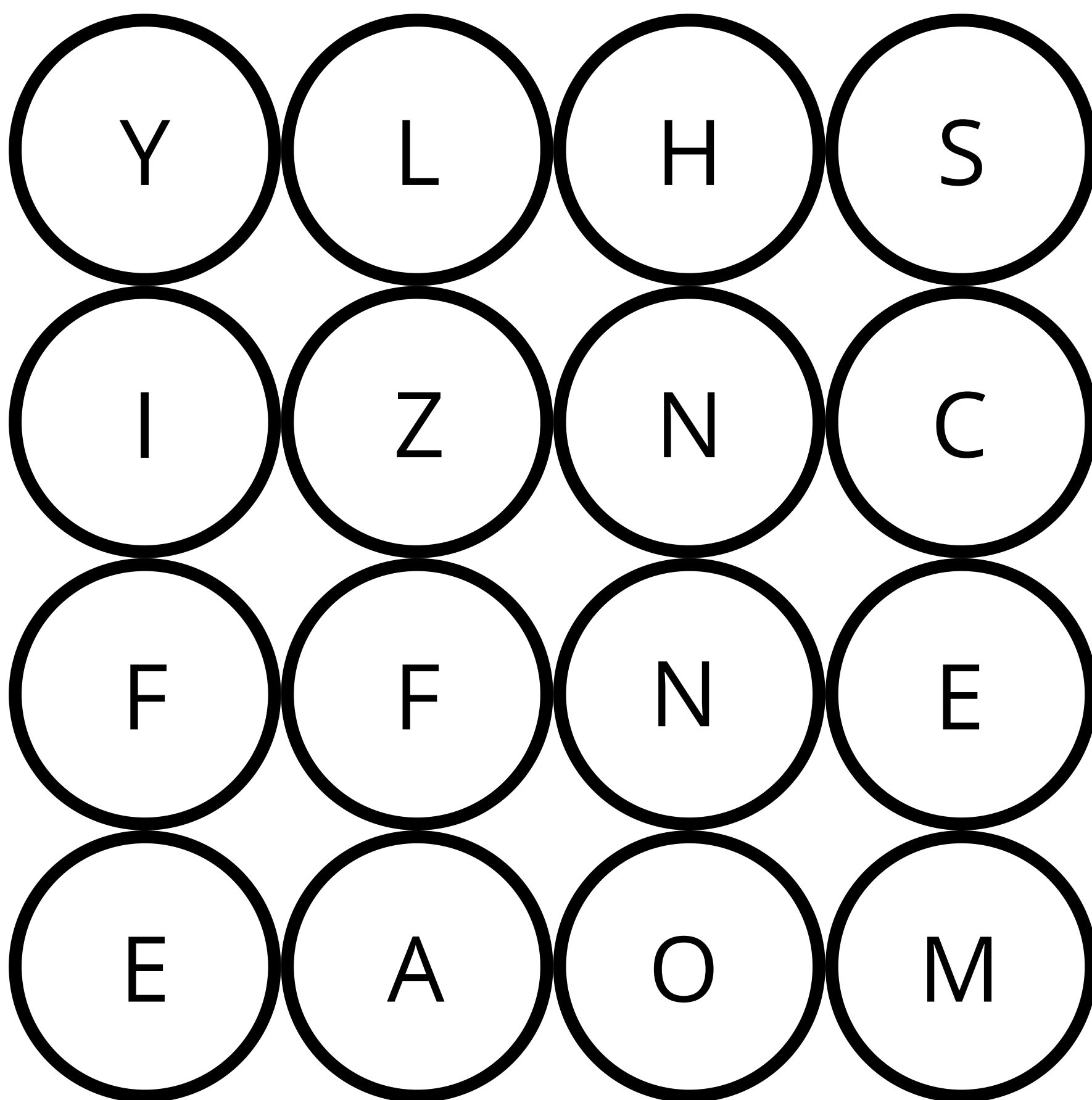
VIPER, SCARF, JABBER, LOGIC, AUTUMN

I have a chicken-proof lawn. It's *impeccable*..

BONGGLE

Set a timer for three minutes (honor system!) to find as many words as possible within the grid by connecting letters horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

You know, like Boggle.



SCORING (by word):

three/four letter - 1 pt.
five letter - 2 pt.
six letter - 3 pt.
seven letter - 4 pt.

Send your list of words and your score to:
theracketreadingseries@gmail.com

High score gets a shout out in the next issue!

BONGGLE

LAST WEEKS WORDS

ego	kyte	kyte	oes	yes
eik	leg	leg	ogle	yike
eikon	lek	lek	oke	yok
elt	let	let	oye	yoke
emo	mes	mes	oyes	yokel
emong	moe	moe	oys	yom
emote	moes	moes	quiz	yon yont
emys	mog	mog	sei	
eon	moke	moke	seik	
etymon	moki	moki	sey	
eyot	mokis	mokis	sik	
gel	mom	mom	sike	
gelt	mome	mome	sye	
get	momes	momes	syke	
gnome	mon	mon	teg	
gnomes	mong	mong	tel	
goe	monte	monte	toe	
goes	monty	monty	toes	
goey	mot	mot	toey	
gon	mote	mote	tog	
got	motel	motel	toge	
goy	moy	moy	toke	
goys	moys	moys	tom	
ikon	noes	noes	tome	
keg	nog	nog	tomes	
kelt	nom	nom	tommy	
kelty	nome	nome	ton	
ket	nomes	nomes	tong	
keto	not	not	toy	
kis	note	note	toys	
kon	noy	noy	tye	
kye	noyes	noyes	tyes	
kyes	noys	noys	tyke	

LAST WEEKS WINNER:
Freya Goldrick

TO BE A WINNER -
SEND US YOUR
ANSWERS!

CONTRIBUTORS

SARAH BORRUSO

CHELSEA DAVIS

AMELIA FURLONG

REBEKAH GOLDSTEIN

JULIA HALPRIN JACKSON

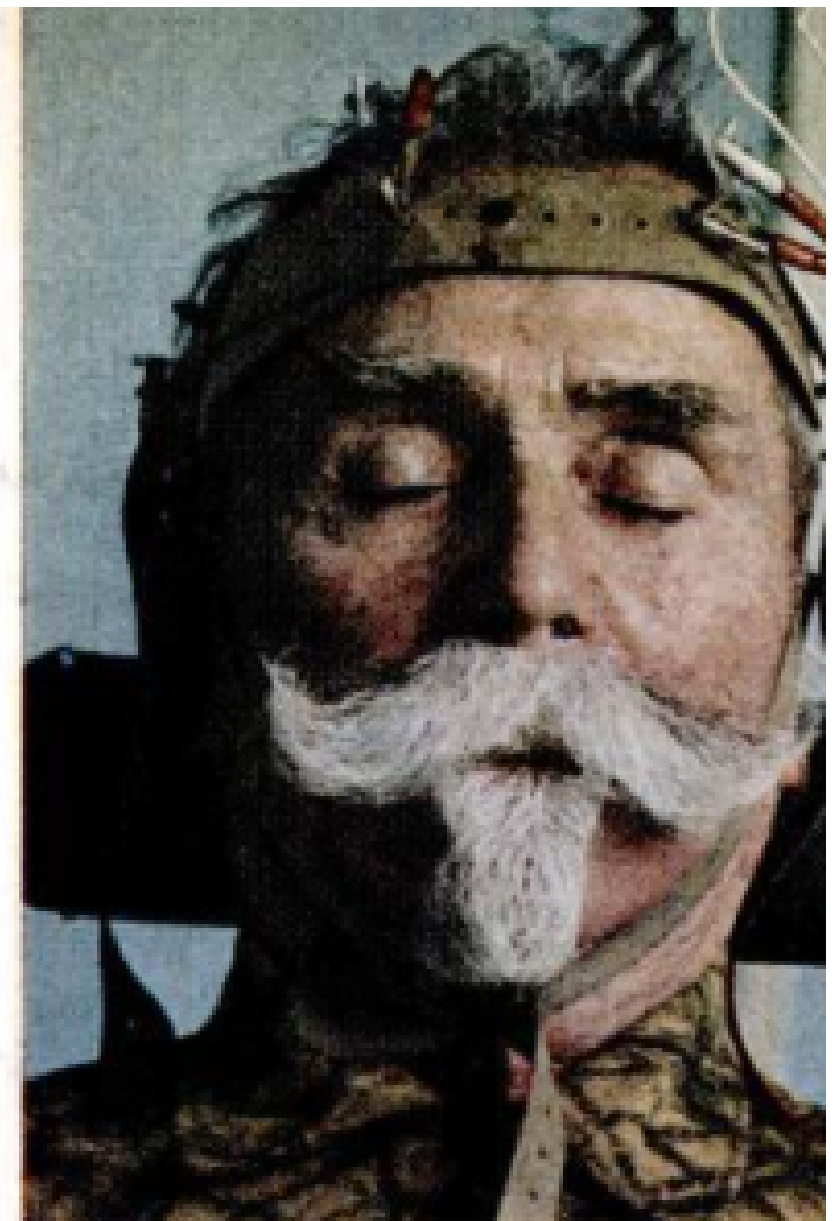
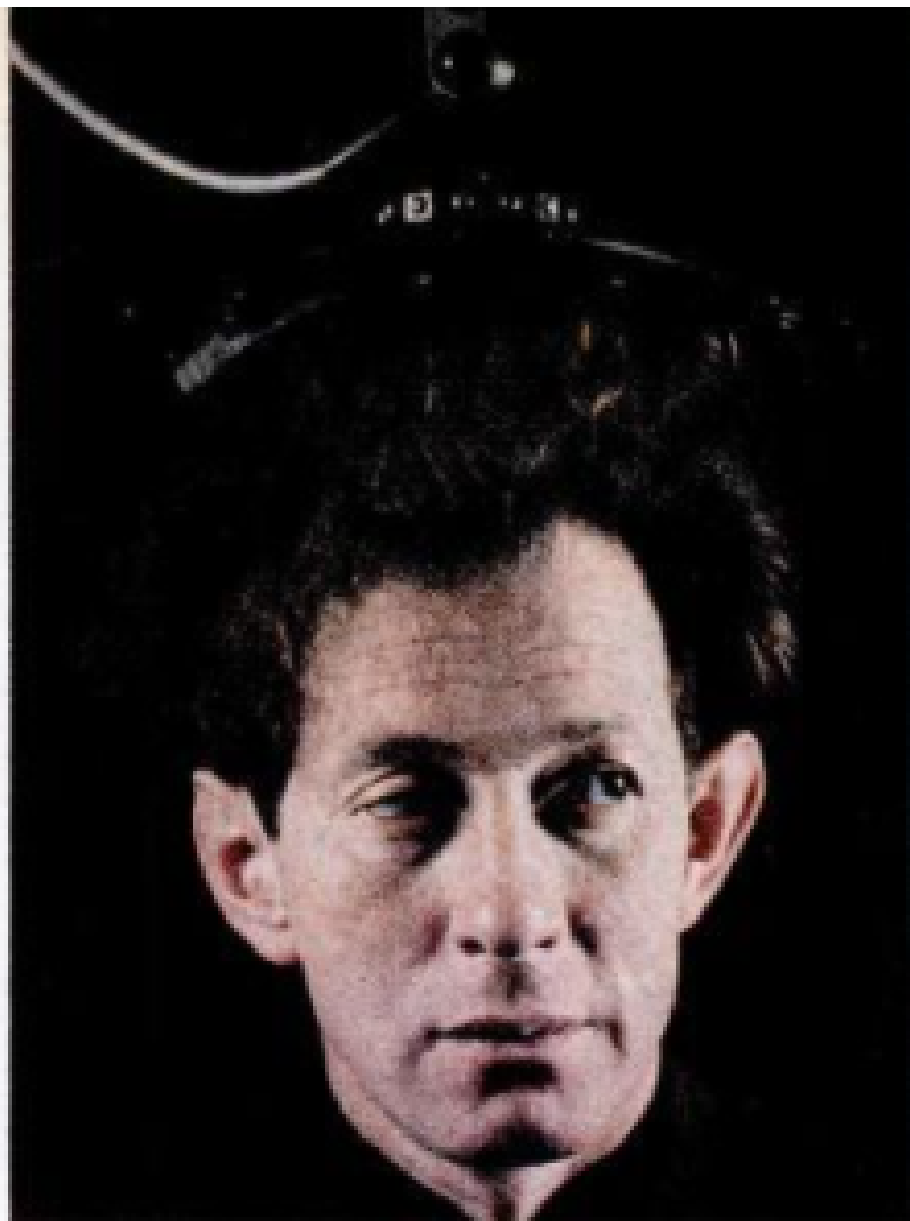
TERRI LOEWENTHAL

MARK J. MITCHELL

ANDY SANO

CARLOS VALENCIA

THE
RACKET
READING SERIES



NIGHTMARES

+

ALEX MACEDA
LUIZA FLYNN-GOODLETT
LAUREN PARKER
VERNON KEEVE III
...AND MORE...

THURS. 10/29
ZOOM

THE RACKET

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**DON'T LET THE
DOOR HIT YOU
ON THE WAY OUT.**

