



THE RACKET

23

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Hi.

Everyone doing okay?

If you picked up last week's issue of the journal (Issue Twenty-Three, grab it [here](#)) you were privy to my angry scree regarding the death Ruth Bader Ginsburg and the thought that somewhere Republicans were popping champagne over the death of one of the truly great humans of the last 100 years.

And then President Donald J. Trump was diagnosed with coronavirus and I literally stopped in mid-sentence to utter a little whoop of joy because this utterly vile human being had a disease that could possibly kill him.

After a day of just letting myself feel good, the hypocrisy of my elation started to wear on me.

Now, I get it, *very* different situations. RBG worked 'till the end to better the world for the underserved. Donald Trump has done nothing for anyone but himself and his repulsive cronies.

He is self-aware monster and in my worst moments him getting the sick with the disease that he actively played down to the tune of 200,000 American deaths over the last six months, well, it seemed like divine retribution. It seems like something to celebrate.

It seemed like an upbeat note in a true downer of a year.

Which, after some thought, just makes me realize what a piece of shit year this has been. How much we've all gone through, how often when things seem at their craziest and that we can't possibly hold another unprecedented event in our increasingly traumatized gray matter, something else comes up to push us a little closer to the edge.

In any other year it wouldn't even cross my mind to think another person's suffering is a thing to be happy about.

Let me reiterate: I think our current president is a truly awful human on the scale of some of our greatest political monsters. I worry that he's just revving up and that if he gets another four years, an already ailing country is going to take an even greater nose-dive. I wholly with all of my heart believe that Donald Trump deserves legal punishment for his actions (and inactions) over the course of the last six months, let alone the last four years. He's an the worst of what we a human can be, no doubt about it.

At the end of the day though, I'm not. Trump will keep being a horrible human and all we can do is shake our heads and spit on the ground is try and to be better and to make this crazy, fucked-up world just one mote better.

This isn't a judgement on the party hats and RBG-won-her-first-case-in-the-afterlife memes. Not at all. I get it. Oh lord, I get it.

I just think we've got more to offer.

'till next time,

Noah Sanders, The Racket

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

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

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Breona Taylor's Murderers Are Still Free:
[https://www.change.org/p/andy-beshear-justice-
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IG: @brooksanderson_art

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Turns out, history isn't something you can count on.

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
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THE BACK PAGE

BY

Laura Jaye
Cramer

CURATED BY:

Noah Sanders

THE RACKET

23

Visiting

PAUL CORMAN-ROBERTS

There will come a time
when you will love me
but it will be too late
or maybe it already was

maybe you said that
a long time ago

we the damage
our families build into us
slow marinated over smokes
agave shots & bloodline tragedies
half buried on the beach.

My father snores sweetly
a man tired tired tired
of a life descending out his body
making sure to align his third eye
with the center of the event horizon.

Better to face it headfirst
than struggle like a particle

snagged in a hungry God's teeth

maybe we just go home

like we always do

and it's not so bad because it's home and

you're not

quite

yet.

Because home is a place

that is not on fire.

Don't get me wrong:

I'm not saying you're not.



(UN)FALLEN No. 38
EDWARD LEE
2012

Molotov Mother

KOSS

in your yellow Beetle
with shot-out windows
you escaped me
devoted as I was
lighting the rags
in the passenger seat
while you hurled them
through the glass
of strangers' buildings
my manual dexterity
at age seven
far surpassed my peers'
and what a way to kindle
my youthful love of fire



VACATION WASTELAND (BEAR)
ANDREA BERGEN
2016

The Aisle with the Toilet Paper at Food 4 Less is Blocked by an Armed Guard

MATT FOWLER

Cut the bleach with water

Cut the line at the supermarket

Steal a box of single use gloves from a different supermarket

Steal more from work later that night

Sleep on a couch, then another couch, then on a

floor with an inflatable camping pad

The floor is carpeted and rough like a let-down

Then the new house with new roommates

Add new paint to the walls in my room

Paint over the black mold and ignore it

I eat gluten free breadcrumbs for lunch most days

When the WiFi repairman comes over we both wear n95 respirators

The hospitals are out of respirators

They are offered nothing

I offer him nothing at first, but then offer him water from the spigot
outside, he gets it

Use gloves

My dog shits blood before I spend \$500 to stop it

I think about having a child one day

My credit card gets declined at the bodega down the block

I apply for food stamps and the county assigns me a case number
I'm afraid they'll find the evidence of my previous fraud case,
but they don't

There's not much food left at the store when the lockdowns begin,
and EBT hits different when there's nothing left

There's no bleach left in the city

Cut the bleach at home with more water

Z's boyfriend uses too much cocaine gets upset and uses
his most recent relapse to trap her at his house for another week

Do a load of laundry in the lime-stained bathtub

Wash the produce with vinegar in a set of plastic buckets

Fill out summary dissolution papers on a grey computer

Go through a shoebox of memories, throw a lot of them out

Flip through hospital records from my birth

Baby boy W.

Born: 12:30pm - San Bernardino County

Try to figure out where my mother is buried No luck

No less luck though

Later I'll find out her ashes were spread over Hermosa Beach

Make care packages for IV drug users

Hand them out on El Cajon Boulevard

Get gifted some hand sanitizer

The courts are closed so the waiting period gets pushed back

Get to waiting

Period

The community fridge project is threatened

by a landlord and removed

A dog attacks my dog
\$400 and a week later I flip the bloody bedsheet
over and count it as clean
Trap music
Trap house
Online graduation
Teach a couple of online classes
T & L do drugs, and try to go viral

Three cases of La Croix
Innumerable cases of disassociation
*Child is currently withdrawing from a combination of heroin and
methadone* Some lawyer at the Los Angeles courthouse files the
adoption papers *Child has been shaking for three days*

L lives in a van outside in the driveway
I think about having two kids
Someone in Decatur, Georgia uses my debit card to buy
\$400 worth of Domino's pizza
In the afternoon, Z carries around a bottle of pinot noir,
sipping it and looking through the metal bars crossing each window
Drips it on the kitchen tile and watches T
hang Playboy centerfolds on every kitchen cabinet
All the women are white like a process

Vet bills
Blood on the floor again
Blood on the porch for the first time Talk to my sister
Talk to a friend in West Virginia for the first time in a decade

Talk to V most nights

E lives on 160 acres of property in Shasta County, California

Rifles in the closet

Muzzle and shock collar

A public execution and a few broken windows

in every city spanning a continent of stolen land

Where is the line between liberatory praxis

and merely steeping tea in a pot on a crooked stovetop?

An ounce of weed from E

Steep the tea-bag, press the matcha darker

black pepper, turmeric, chili, and cayenne

Fire cider ferments in the back of the dark pantry

V leaves a voicemail in morse code

It's been raining so much, it's surprising when the sun comes out

The rain swells most things

The wood in the house is a trap too

No less violence in an act like that

Wait for the government stimulus check

More drugs

The ceiling collapses after a hard rain

More drugs

More violence

Mental health fluctuations, and I can't stop itching my ears

Long periods of my life are missing from too much trauma

or too many drugs or some other process

Wet ceiling is wetter than an hour earlier, it collapses after another

hard rain, drenching everything in the room

Mental health goes up, goes down again
Health goes down
I look in the mirror one morning and don't recognize my body
A cockroach comes out of the burner where I'm warming a tortilla
Multiple friends go through break-ups
There's a hiring freeze

The floor in T's room is always wet
She self mutilates in response
When the handyman comes over to fix it, he sees beer bottles,
fifty empty whippets, blood on the floor, two dildos on the bed
The roof cracks upstairs before he leaves
The porch caves in and sets itself up to collapse
We break the lease three weeks after signing it
Fall in love, debts and loans
Fail more, and fail the process until it looks like flying or

Wildcat Canyon

YOUSSEF ALAOUI

Like a blotted circle in a crusty ash tray
the moon is out and we drive to chase it
across the bridge and into the night
roll down the window I need to puke
I leave pink racing stripes down the side
of your ripped up four door
these drugs set my teeth on edge
I can hardly feel them
your radio sucks like always can
we listen to that old station from the forties
not top forty? you say the forties
gives you the creeps
all whites there's no going back there, man
no I say but the times we know better
but we don't know you say we don't
know any better than we did and when
I say we I do not mean we but I mean
our country tis of them not thee or me
it's their memory even in the days of memory
they were remembering other memories

and you speed up the curvy mountain road
toward the clouds yes now I just wish it would
rain like it did when we were young
when that storm asked to come in all night
but I was too afraid to answer
so alone after they cut my arm
on the way home from school
and you swerve to avoid a deer with your headlights off
stop the car stop the car I say
but you keep going and the mountain
will never end so I am going to build
a fort back here and light a candle
for me to stare at then close my eyes
and hope my brain stops spinning
as my breaths become lives and I
become one with the speeding car
and the night and through me these
breaths pass and you aren't looking
for the end of that crazy road wandering
up to the sky in the deep of the dark
not at all and I give up wanting
I think of the lives I am breathing
in and out in my fort of coats and dead bags
taking account of the lungs this air has
passed through in a day and feel a
state of grace swell within mere
leasing all artificial guilts
so meaningless and at last you
park the car by tugging the e-brake
cranking the wheel hard left

we slide in a spiral
I am thrown against the door
losing more of that take-out dinner
when I realize
your friends and family will leave you
one by one until finally you die.
You know that, right?



LIBERTY
KATE BARRENGOS
2019

Down to the Sea

NORMA SMITH

Insomnia is a symptom.
Biting your nails to the quick
is a symptom
and a strategy. You consume

your only protection. Sleep
restoreth the
grocery shopping
is a way

to greet your neighbors,
the ones behind their masks.
What are they hiding?
The dentist

won't polish your teeth.
The machines, she points out,
create aerosols. You try
to go out for fresh air,

but the shelves
are empty. The roads

up into the hills
wind uselessly

between leaves and needles,
sigh their begrudging welcome.
They have no choice. If they did
they would bar your way.

You're on your own now,
they'd wave you along,
point you toward the sea
you crawled out of,

claw over claw
you spent millennia
growing for this moment.
And now it's here. Wake up.

Que viva el mar.
Or is it too late?

**THE
BACK
PAGE**

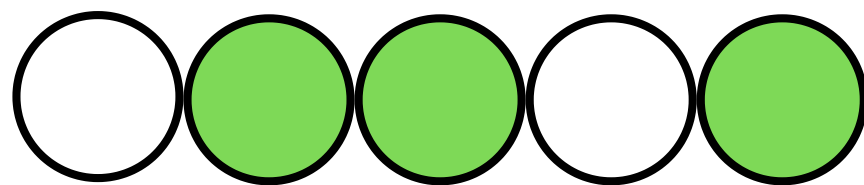
BY
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

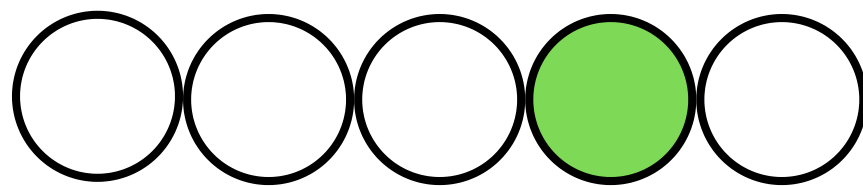
WORD STUFF

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

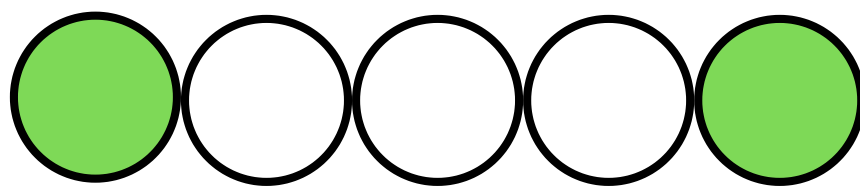
LIEEX



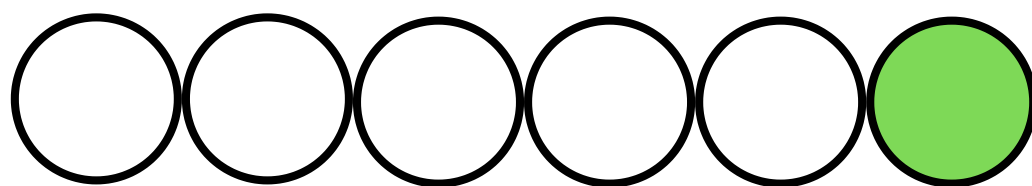
EAHNY



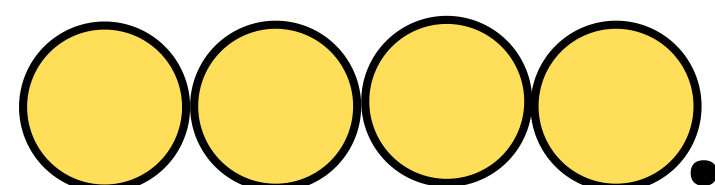
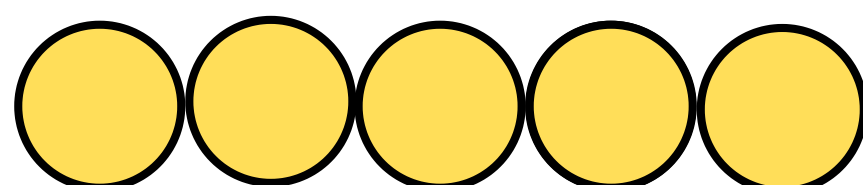
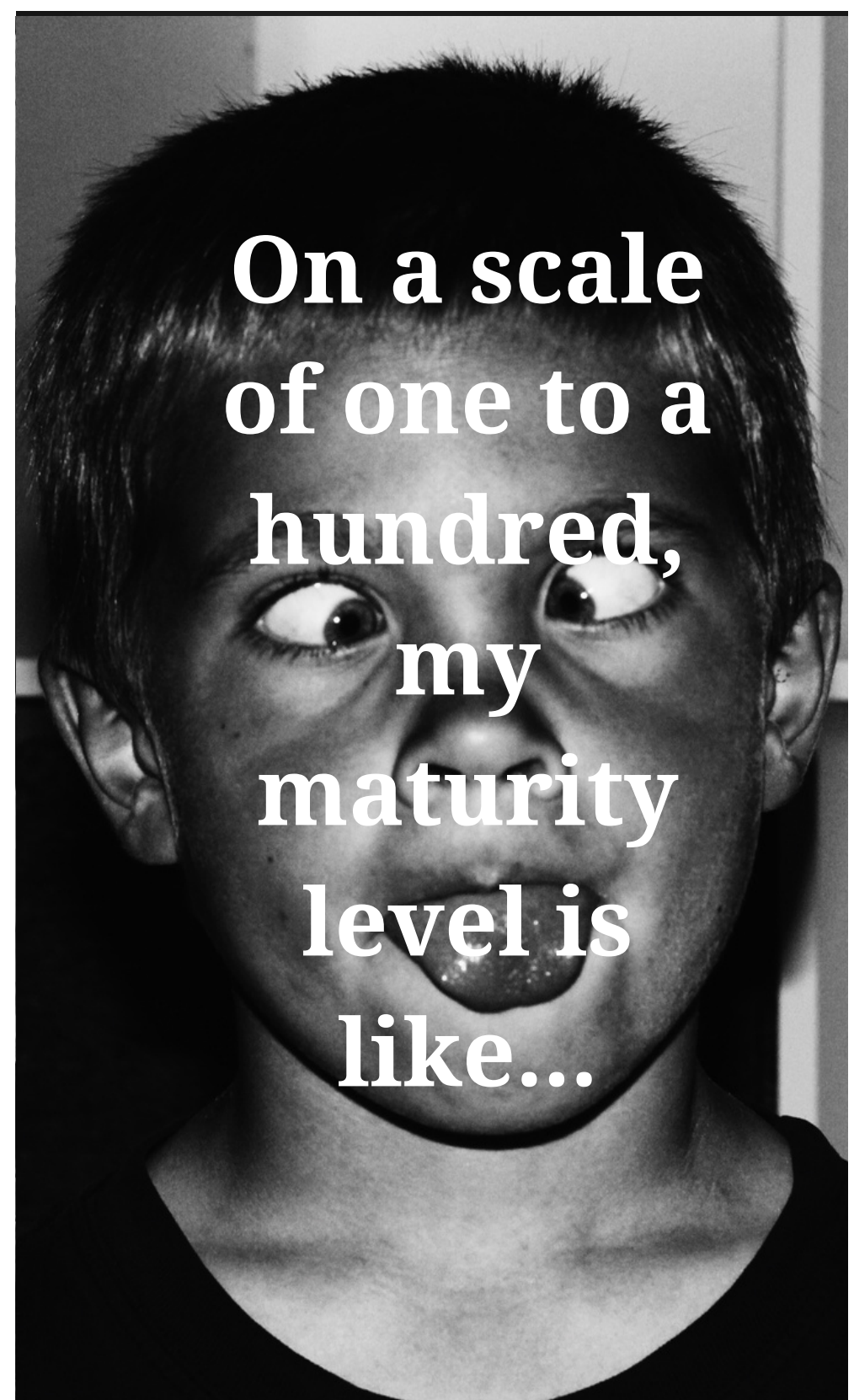
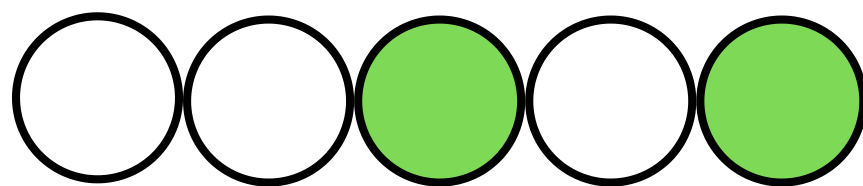
RUNPS



TOESMD



LYODI



(Answers next week.)

Last week's answers:

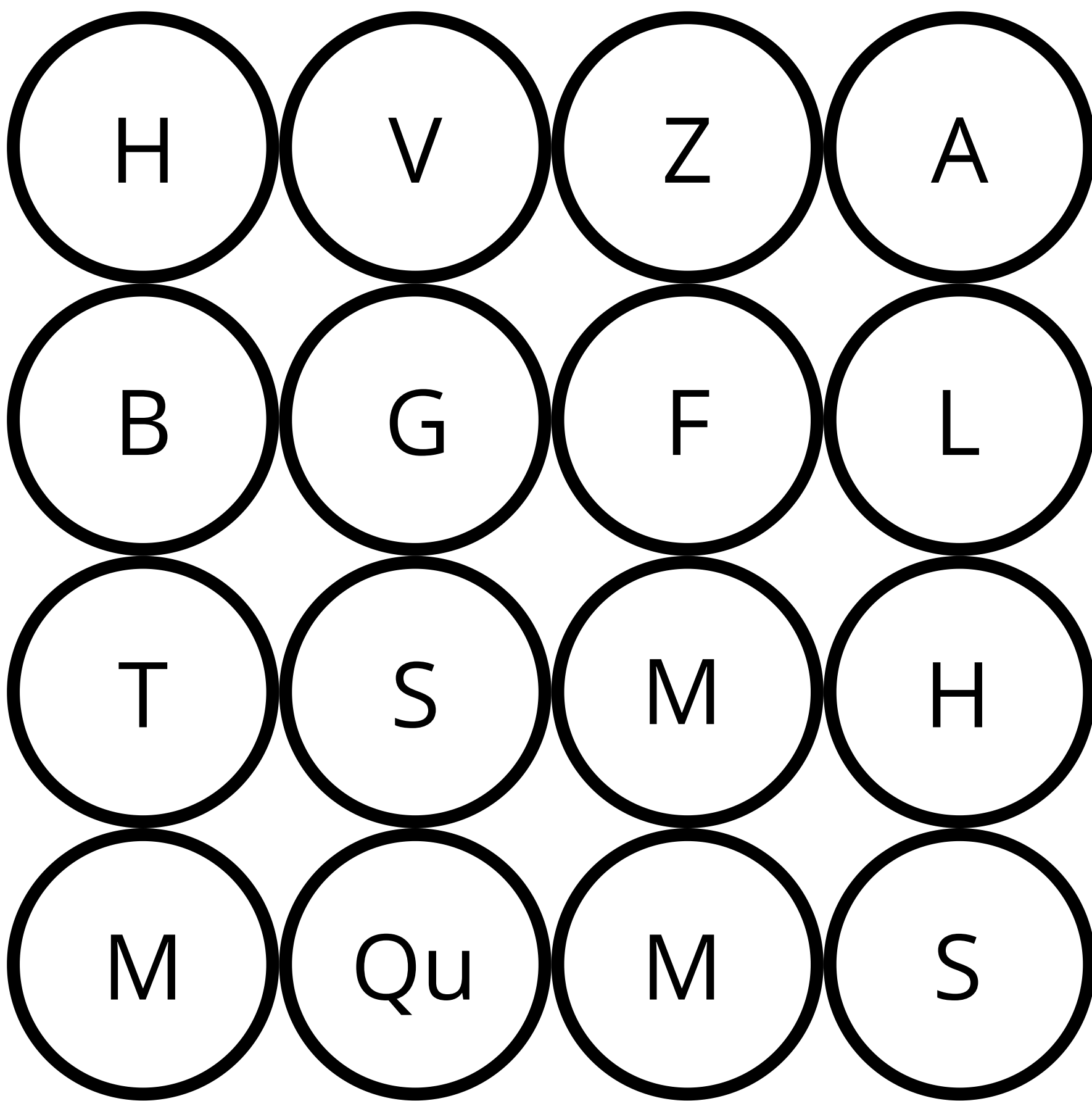
EXERT, DWARF, PERKY, BISECT, BUSHEL

At any given time the urge to sing "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" is just a whim away.

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

deg
due
duet
duh
dui
edh
eds
eth
ged
geds
get
het
hue
hued
hui
ide
ids
jud
juds
ted
teds
teg
the
thud
thuds
uds

LAST WEEKS WINNER:
Melissa Thenort

*YOU
COULD BE
A WINNER
TOO.*

CONTRIBUTORS

YOUSSEF ALAOUI

BROOKS ANDERSON

KATE BARRENGOS

ANDREA BERGEN

PAUL CORMAN-ROBERTS

MATT FOWLER

KOSS

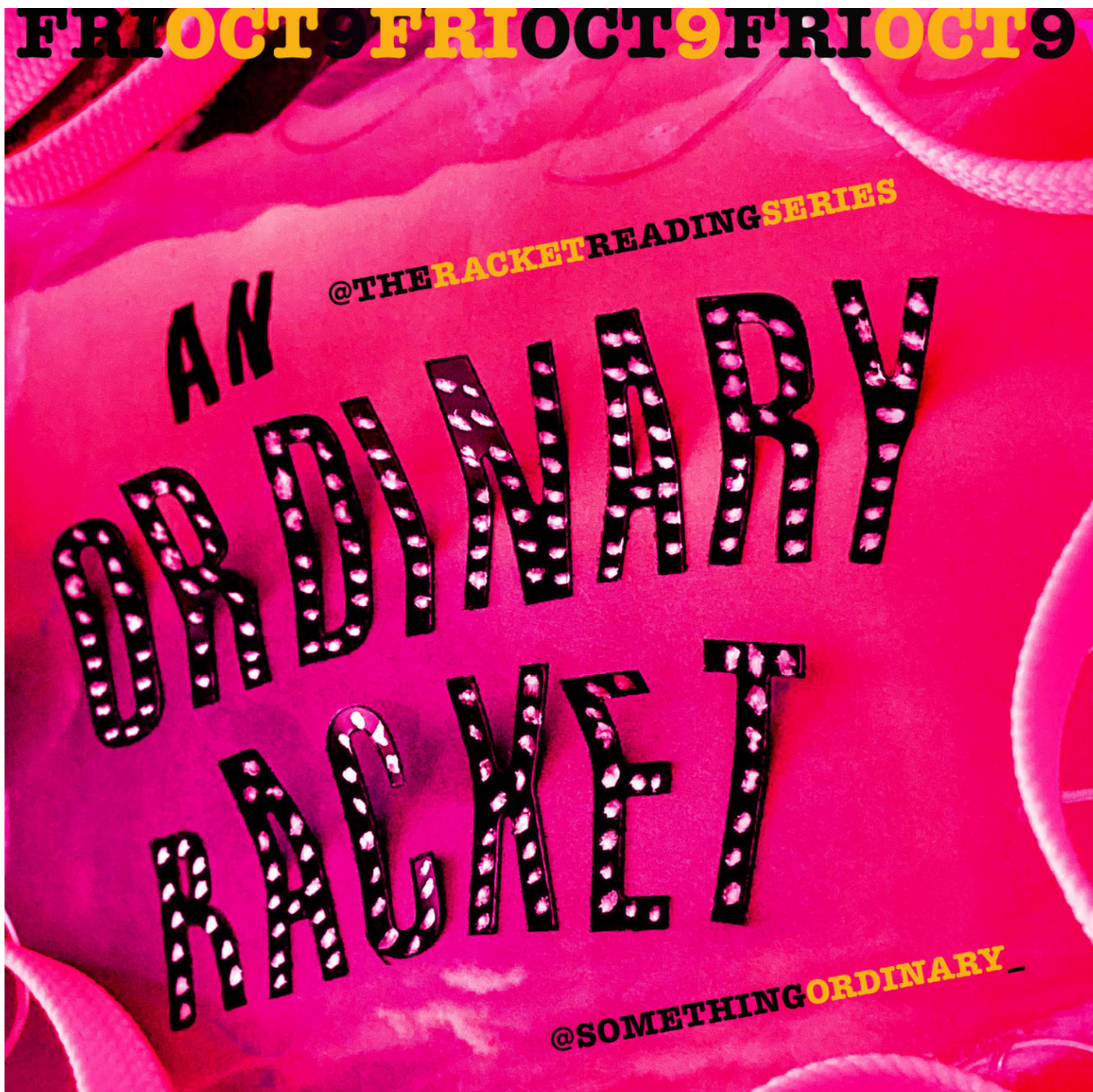
EDWARD LEE

NORMA SMITH

**THE
RACKET**
READING SERIES

+

**SOMETHING
ORDINARY**



+

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KRISTINA TEN
JAMES CAGNEY
SAVANNAH ABRISHAMCHIAN
HALIM MADI
JESSICA SEMAAN
COLE SARAR
TANEUM BAMBRICK

FRI. 10/9
ZOOM

THE RACKET

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**'LO & BEHOLD,
WE'VE COME TO
AN END POINT.**

