

THE RACKET



25

THE RACKET

25

THE RACKET

Hi.

Everyone doing okay?

I've been reading Claire Messud's new book of essays *Kant's Little Prussian Head & Other Reasons Why I Write* as of late. It has, as good writing always does, managed to shift my perspective a bit on my own life and the direction it is currently leaning.

Messud - in an essay entitled "The Time For Art Is Now" - discusses the idea of her biggest passions - writing, art, beauty, etc. - being seen as superficial, and how, obviously and especially in this strange and brutal time, this isn't a true statement. It isn't a particularly original statement either - art, and the creation of it, is superficial only to those who are looking at it superficially. You, reader of online literary journal, I imagine think similarly.

I've been unemployed for going on eleven months now. It has, aside from the daily panic attack over finances and the oppressive state of the collective headspace, been (and I recognize the privilege in this statement) a productive time for me. I've written, I've built, I've created at a fairly breakneck clip and it has been exhausting, but at times, it has also been the only thing grounding me in this hurricane of an era.

This journal is bottomless pit of responsibility in which I can dump an endless amount of time and energy and still feel like there is always more to do. On my best day, I can convince myself that the act of creating this and sending it out into the world is important, that the readers of The Racket Journal are gaining from it. More often than not though I truly wonder if the work dumped into this thing on a weekly basis is worth it. If this isn't just some superficial dalliance I've committed myself to and to keep myself moving in any direction have convinced myself is *doing something* in the world

And this isn't a plea for compliments or assurances that this is untrue. Rather, this is a fairly candid snapshot of where my brain is at this particular moment in terms of The Racket Journal.

I start a job on Monday - a short-term contract position, but paying work nonetheless - and the new job has me fretting over the sudden decrease in available time to do all of the things I've assigned myself (albeit arbitrarily) wondering just how I'm going to accomplish everything. There's a part of me that wonders, "Should I just stop?" Should I just take a breath and a step back and have a spare moment to think about anything but what I have left on the plate to finish? I see a theoretical empty block in my schedule and it almost makes me salivate.

Could I just let it go?

No. No I can't. Because Claire Messud is a much smarter, more eloquent writer than I am and she is correct: the time for art is now, and the time for art will always be now. Because the world is a dark and often times cruel place and 18 pages of art and writing each week may be nearly non-existent in the scope of all things, but nearly is not nothing, and not nothing is, though I can convince myself otherwise, absolutely important.

I guess what I'm saying, is don't give up. I won't either.

'till next time,
N

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

DONATE :

BLACK LIVES MATTER

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

FAIR VOTE

<https://www.fairvote.org/donate>

FAIR FIGHT

<https://fairfight.com/>

VOTE VOTE VOTE

<https://www.vote411.org/>

THE RACKET : QUARANTINE JOURNAL, Vol. 2, NO. 25

Copyright 2020 The Racket

Cover Image: Jonathan Anzalone

Title: *plasteres (colored dots)*

Credit: © Jonathan Anzalone

Website: <https://www.jonathananzalone.com/>

Promotional rights only.

This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form without permission from individual authors.

The scanning, uploading and distribution of this document via the internet or any other means without the permission of the author(s) is illegal.

One grows, one turns brown. Every single time.

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
LILIAN CAYLEE
LAUREN C. JOHNSON
ANGIE MCDONALD
QUYNH-AN PHAN
SPENCER TIERNEY
JUSTIN & SARAH SANDERS
ALEX MACEDA
DAVID SANDERS

SARAMANDA SWIGART
DANIELLE TRUPPI
RUTHIE WAGMORE
RANDY WORKMAN
SASHA BERNSTEIN
ELIZABETH BERNSTEIN
KEVIN DUBLIN
YALITZA FERRERAS
TOMAS MONIZ
NICK O'BRIEN
KRISTA POSELL
DANIEL SCHWARTZBAUM
KURT WALLACE
JUDY WEIL

OUR PATREON:

WWW.PATREON.COM/THERACKETREADINGSERIES

SUBMIT YOUR WORK

P O E T R Y
P R O S E
A R T

750 WORDS OR
LESS

Send to:

theracketreadingseries@gmail.com

CONTENTS

LAUREN SCHARHAG	Veladoras	1
LOIS BIELEFELD	<i>Ramp CA-24W, Pleasant Hill Rd. Lafayette, CA</i>	2
LOIS BIELEFELD	<i>Exit 14B, CA-24E, Pleasant Hill Rd. Lafayette, CA</i>	3
CARLA M. CHERRY	You Gambled	4
JESSICA EASTBURN	<i>L'enfant Terrible</i>	6
CORA LEWIS	Kid Stuff	7
DESIRÉE HOLMAN	<i>Channeling Aura 6</i>	10
JESSICA EASTBURN	<i>La Belle Epoque</i>	13
JARED ROEHRIG	Tegucigalpa	14
LOIS BIELEFELD	<i>Ramp 405N, Sherman Way. Van Nuys, CA</i>	16
LOIS BIELEFELD	<i>Ramp I35E N, E Corporate Drive. Lewisville, TX</i>	17
FABRICE POUSSIN	Brown Bags	18

The Racket Journal is:

Editor-In-Chief / Noah Sanders
The Back Page / Laura Jaye Cramer
Editor, Submissions / Kayne Belul

THE RACKET

25

Veladoras

LAUREN SCHARHAG

At the Dollar General,
they sell saint candles
in the Hispanic aisle
alongside bags of beans and rice:
La Virgen de Guadalupe next to boxes
of Abuelita chocolate,
Sacred Heart Jesus by the Maseca
St. Anthony among the canned nopales.
St. Christopher got demoted,
but is accounted for nonetheless
alongside hominy and St. Jude.
I load my cart with them, a dollar apiece,
comfort and comfort food,
some traditions unkillable even though
I stay far away from the confessional
and the last true believer in our family
died ten years ago.



RAMP CA-24W, PLEASANT HILL RD. LAFAYETTE, CA
LOIS BIELEFELD
2020



EXIT 14B, CA-24E, PLEASANT HILL RD. LAFAYETTE, CA
LOIS BIELEFELD
2020

You Gambled

CARLA M. CHERRY

Pay day.

Booze to glass.

Glass to lip.

Gambling.

Evicted.

House to dumpy house.

When she was a little girl you tried
to play with my mother.

Drunk, you dropped
your only daughter, leaving her bruised.

After Grandma birthed your fifth child,
she had had enough of you and Jim Crow.

Grandma took three of her babies
on the train from Kentucky to New York.

With both her own mother and father Gone to Glory
and money in short supply

she had to leave her two eldest heartbeats with your mother.

For two years Great-Grandmother Lena told my uncles
their mother left them because she did not love them,
never realizing the liquor she gave you to drink as a boy
to make everyone laugh
was the source of the pain,
the failure to provide.

When Grandma got all five of her children to her new
apartment in Queensbridge
she made sure they went to church on Sundays.
Graduated high school and were working.
Three served in the military.
Two got married.
Gave her six grandchildren you never got to meet.
Even as I sit here, your third granddaughter,
in tears as I write this,
I cannot hate you.
How can I,
when my mother inherited the fullness of your cheeks?
If your soul somehow made it up to Heaven
I hope you have hugged all four of your sons
as they cleared the Holy Gate.
Sobbed your sorrow to them,
to Grandma, over all that you surrendered.

All those paydays.
Booze to glass,
glass to lip.

Empty bottles in a yard.



EASTBURN

Kid Stuff

CORA LEWIS

Two yoga moms walk by, on a sweltering afternoon.

“What can I give her here?” one says to the other.

“I can’t give her archery. I can’t give her woodworking, pottery – all of which she gets at sleepaway.”

*

“You’re a hateful person,” I say to Simon before leaving, in another fight over something inconsequential.

“Do you mean full of hate or easy to hate?” he says.

“Hateable, easy to hate.”

“That’s right,” he says, wrapping me up in his arms. “That’s right.”

*

On the subway, at day’s end, some high-schoolers ring a pole, peering at Instagram on one’s phone.

“Maybe she’s a.”

“I don’t think she’s a,” they’re saying.

I assume I’m mis-hearing. Maybe “ace” or “aimed...”

Then: “She’s definitely not a-sexual. Have you heard her talk about Camelia Mendez?”

*

“You didn’t mention to me that you’d seen her,” I said, after Simon let something slip that gave him away.

“When did you see her?”

“What am I, an encyclopedia?” he said, and I knew it would be bad.

*

“My name is J-U-D-E,” a neighborhood boy tells my father’s knees, after the tractor ride, tugging his pant leg.

My father kneels to look his new acquaintance in his face.

“Mind if we call you Jude for short?”

*

When we end things again for good, not long after, Simon says it’s because he doesn’t want to “detain me from my life.”

“What does that mean?” I ask.

“From the things you want,” he says.

And what if what I want is you, I don’t say.

*

"What’s your New Year’s resolution?" someone is asking at the party.

"Oh, you know, carpe diem," says the bore.

"That’s good, mine’s caveat emptor. Buyer beware."

"Mine’s lorum ipsum."

*

*

“Everything interests you,” Simon tells me, the next time I see him. “It’s your best quality. The horizons of your mind are broad.”

“You used to tell me I was too tolerant, too broad-minded,” I tell him.

“I never should have said that.”

*

Another time, after a long stretch of not seeing him, and then seeing him, we exhaust all pleasantries and updates.

"Do you want to talk things out?" I ask at last, because there is so much left unsaid.

"Not like that," he says. "You have to enter at an angle."

*

Now I’m having dinner with a couple, Anne and Tom, and our friend Liz and her young daughter.

“Do you and Tom live together?” the girl asks Anne, making adult conversation, her back straight.

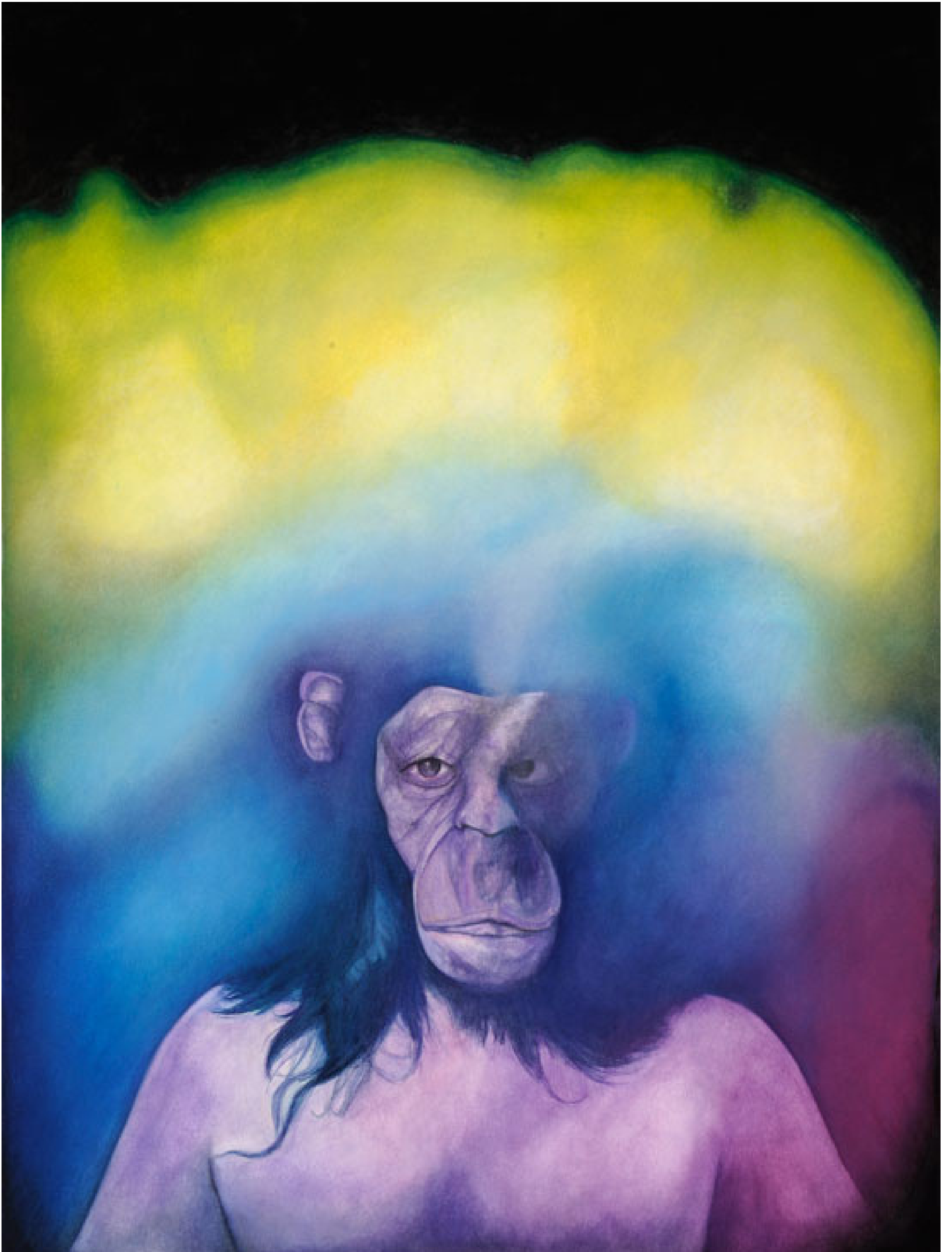
“Yes, we do. Do you and Liz live together?”

“Yes, we do.”

The child chews on this a moment, then asks, “Did you have Tom inside your tummy?”

*

Once, we had fought over internet comments, Simon and I. It began on the merits in good faith and then descended.



CHANNELING AURA 6
DESIRÉE HOLMAN
2005 / 2012

“He’s a clown,” I said at last, waist-deep in an incoherent criticism of a piece.

“I’m trying to make the clown a man,” he said.

“That you would expend energy like that,” I said. “What do you think you are, the sun?”

*

So I go to the Q and A at the bookstore and have a glass of something sweet.

Towards the end, the wildly successful, feminist activist says: “I wish someone had told me this wasn’t a detour from my life – that this was my life.”

“Why is that?” comes the follow-up.

“I would have enjoyed it more,” she says.

*

The one time I slept with someone who had a girlfriend, he said, afterwards, “Don’t take off your earrings.”

At first I didn’t understand, and then I did.

“Leave no trace,” he murmured, like we were camping in a national park.

Later, he’d said they had an understanding, but still double-checked the nightstand before I left.

*

I go home with an actor.

"You'll never get girls with a room like this," I say, clocking the mess on every surface.

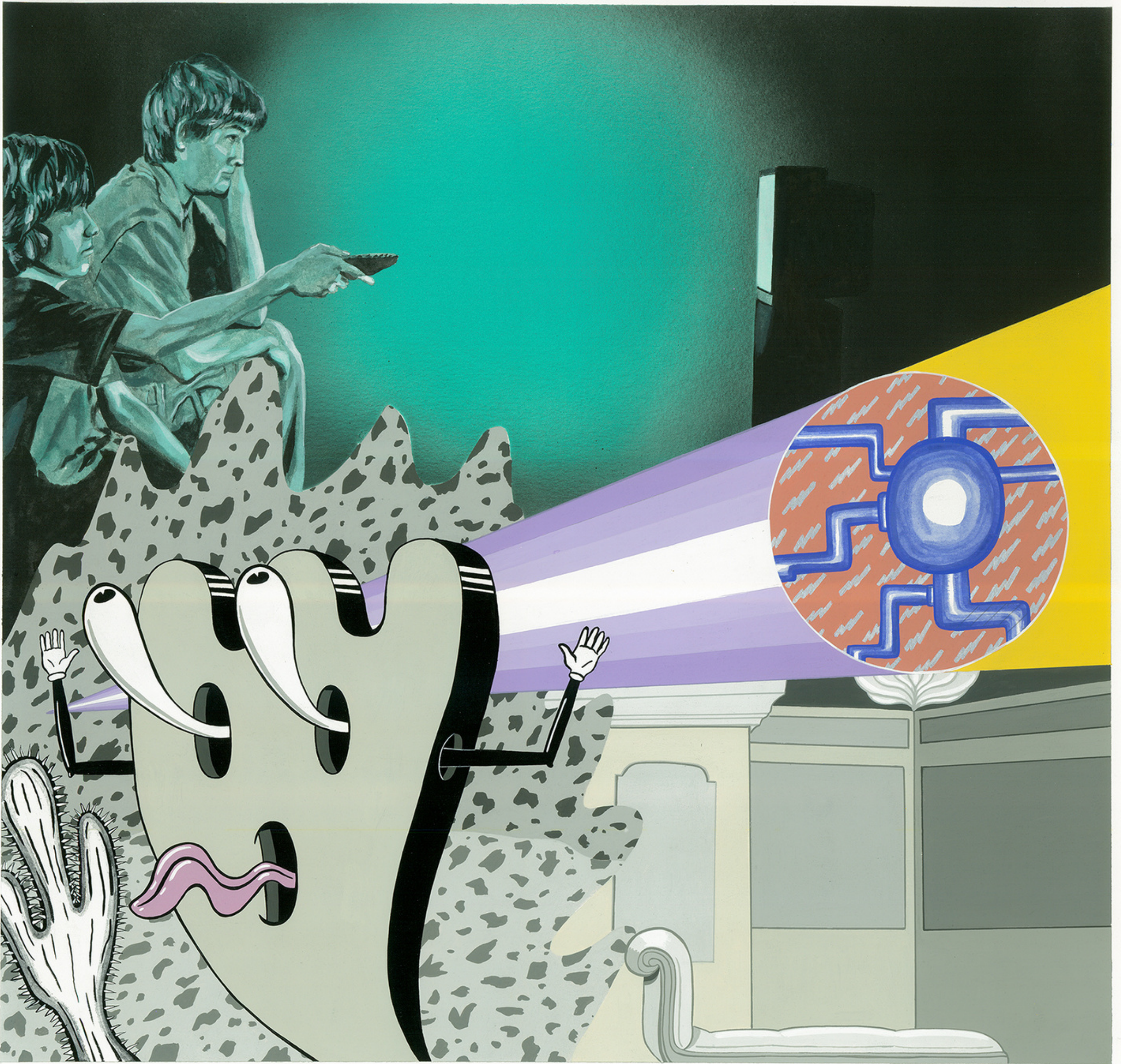
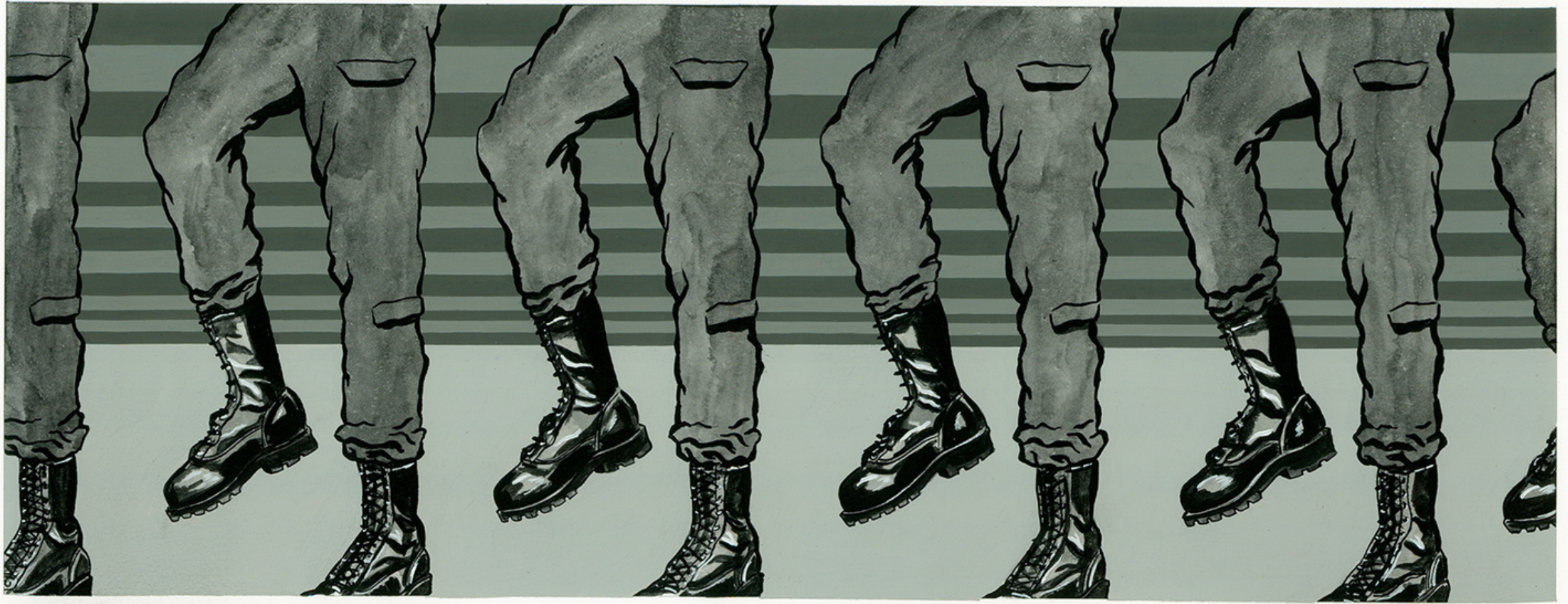
"That's what they tell you," he says. "That's what they want you to believe, the room-cleaning establishment. My experience has been... mixed."

*

"Why are you with this guy, when he's traveling all the time, on location?" Simon asks. I've told him about the actor.

"I trust him," I say. "He made a promise to me."

"What if I make a bigger promise," Simon says, on the subway platform, miming getting down on one knee. And we laugh and laugh.



EASTBURN

Tegucigalpa

JARED ROEHRIG

i reserve my ugliness for
the hunchbacks in my life
who go along the street
with strange parasols
bayonetting the sky
tromping the boulevard
with fevers spilling from
turkey shoes

no matter how many times
you look at your watch
doesn't make it unbroke

this bar is for the criminal
to pay for your drinks
to pick his teeth with
a mason's chisel
to salute the president
and the mirror
when no one else

gives a damn
to look at the chips
dancing on the glass
like a scattering of
priestly roaches



RAMP 405N, SHERMAN WAY. VAN NUYS, CA
LOIS BIELEFELD
2019



RAMP I35E N, E CORPORATE DRIVE. LEWISVILLE, TX
LOIS BIELEFELD
2019

Brown Bags

FABRICE POUSSIN

Armed with a last image of a founding father
dragging a leg dressed in borrowed denims
his gaze may be that of a serial killer.

Wednesdays mimic every one of his Sundays
the hourglass might freeze upon an ungodly hour
the neon open sign his only anchor on time.

No word is necessary behind the unkempt hair
the teenager eager for a wage and a date
fulfills for him the usual order an icy can in a paper bag.

At the gait of a ghost the skeletal apparition exits
a feeble bell greets his departure with great glee
the clueless attendant returns to his mop.

Trucks roar by in hurricanes of diesel fumes
a common sight for this relic of another man's life
his back to the wall of the store he lights up his death.

Testimonial fixture to the a-temporal tragedies
the creature will stand there yet in the rehearsed dusk
the brown paper bag at his feet casualty of his own being.

THE BACK PAGE

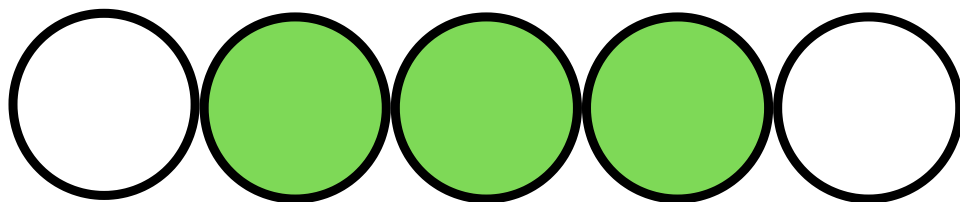
BY
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

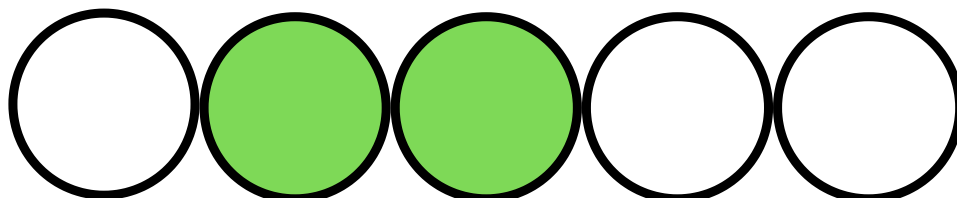
WORD STUFF

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

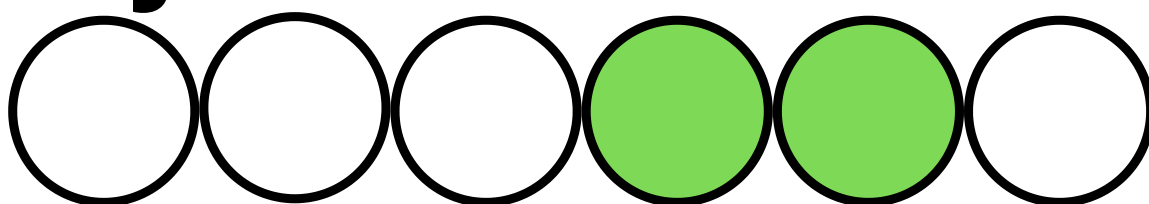
RIV EP



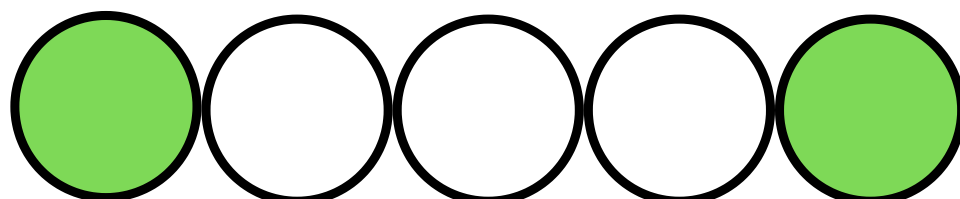
AF CR S



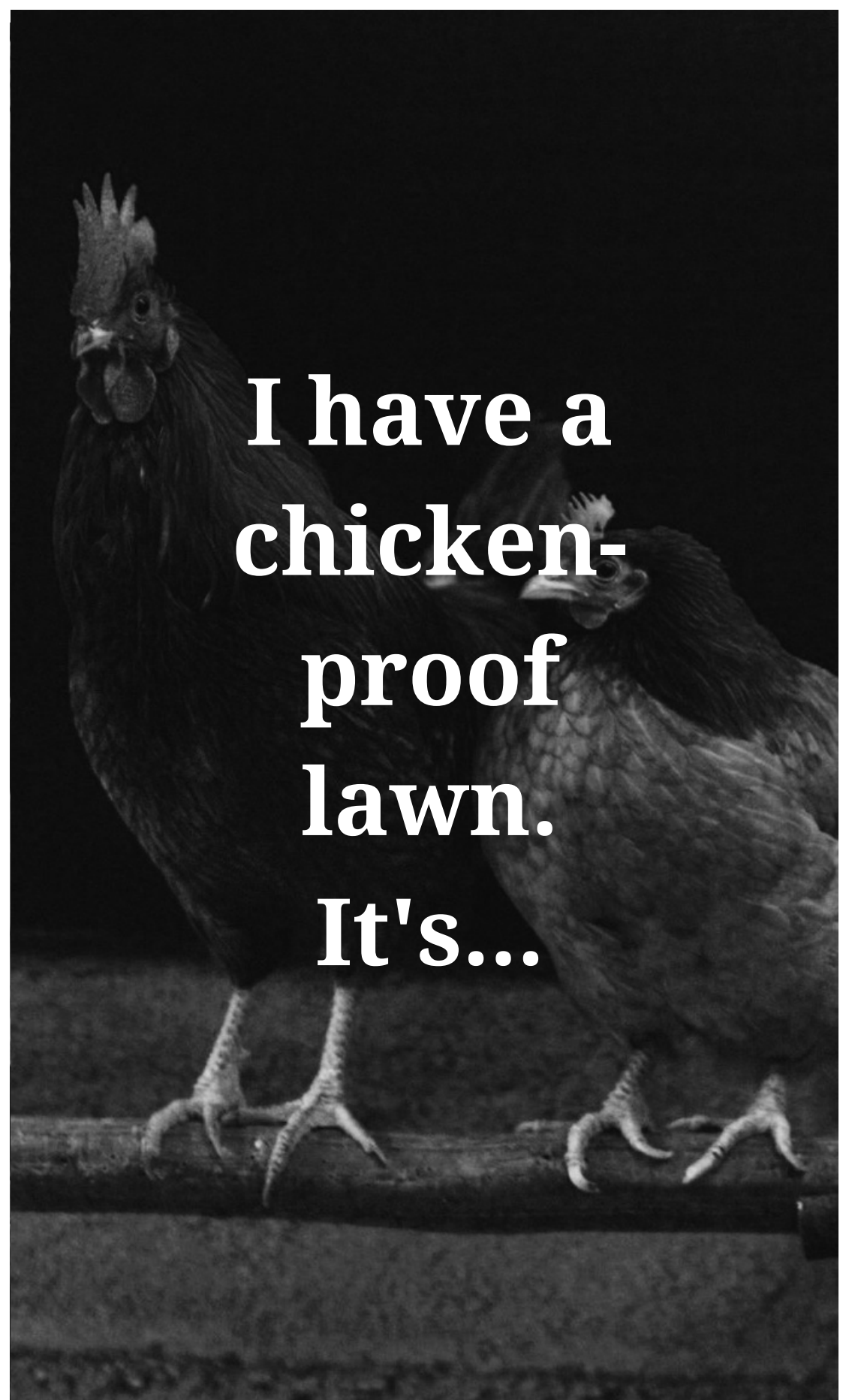
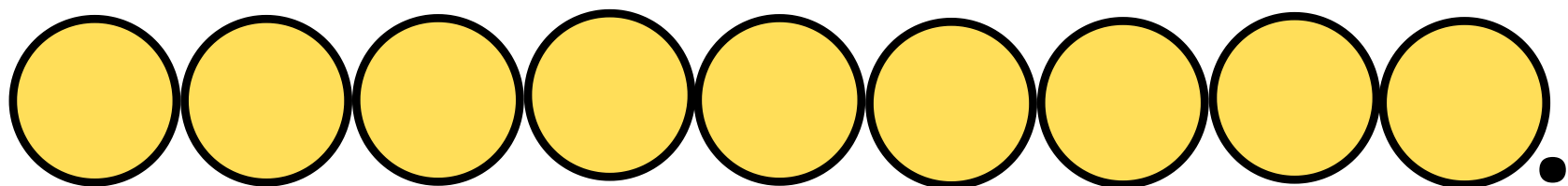
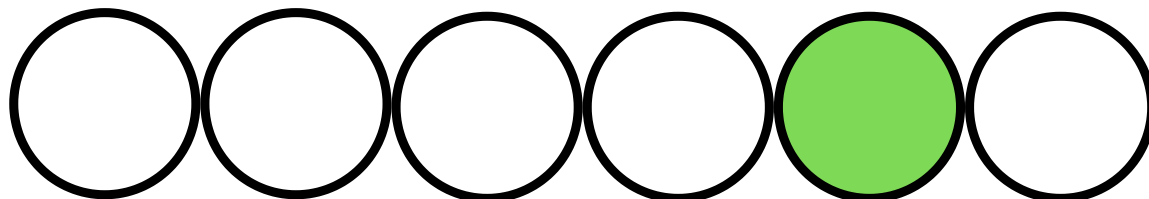
BR EJ AB



CL OG I



TAM UN U



(Answers next week.)

Last week's answers:

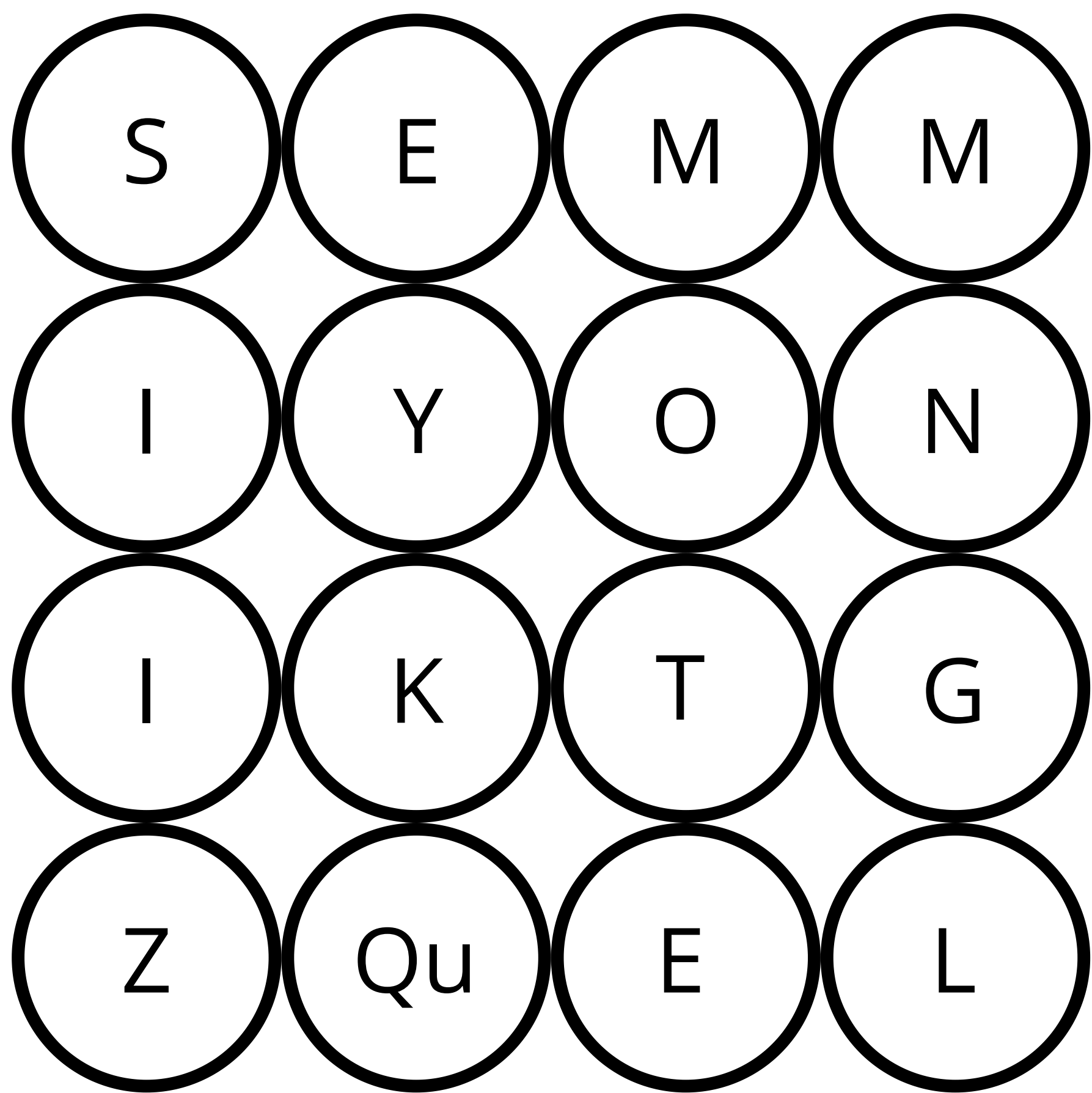
HOUSE, CLASS, TWINE, WOBBLE, SUDDEN

6:30 is the best time on the clock, *hands down.*)

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

dug
duh
dui
gju
gor
gorm
gormy
gory
gox
guy
hog
hox
hug
hugy
hui
ivy
jog
jor
jud
judy
jug
orgy
roguy
ugh
ygo
yug

LAST WEEK'S WINNER:
Mary Ellen Talley

*TO BE A WINNER -
SEND US YOUR
ANSWERS!*

CONTRIBUTORS

JONATHAN ANZALONE

LOIS BIELEFELD

CARLA M. CHERRY

JESSICA EASTBURN

DESIRÉE HOLMAN

CORA LEWIS

FABRICE POUSSIN

JARED ROEHRIG

LAUREN SCHARHAG

**THE
RACKET** + **LIT●QUAKE**
READING SERIES



THE FALL

+

CHRISTINE NO
HALIM MADI
PREETI VANGANI
ROHAN DACOSTA
ELIZABETH STIX

SAT.
10/24
7:45PM
ZOOM

THE RACKET

PATREON

[WWW.PATREON.COM/
THERACKETREADINGSERIES](http://WWW.PATREON.COM/THERACKETREADINGSERIES)

WEBSITE

WWW.THERACKETSF.COM

NEWSLETTER

[WWW.THERACKETSF.COM/
NEWSLETTER](http://WWW.THERACKETSF.COM/NEWSLETTER)

INSTAGRAM

[@THERACKETREADINGSERIES](https://www.instagram.com/THERACKETREADINGSERIES)

SUBMIT YOUR WORK:

<https://theracketsf.com/submissions>

**THE FUSE IS
ABOUT TO
RUN OUT.**

