

# THE RACKET | 43



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# THE RACKET

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Hi.

How is everyone?

I was out walking the other day and I was, as I tend to do, overly observing everything around me and I noticed the way we walk has changed. Where in the past, if I can even remember the past anymore, people walked shoulder to shoulder with whomever they were out and about with, now we walk with a distinct, noticeable space between us. We have absorbed the six-foot precaution thrust upon us by the fear of disease and now, well, now we walk like cars on a multi-lane highway, moving in the same direction but with just enough space to avoid any dangerous collisions. And we do so naturally, just a regular part of living in a pandemic.

The looming presence of sickness has forced us to evolve our behavior at lightning speed. And I wonder what else have we quietly adjusted to.

I was sitting in the car waiting for Nora to come out of a store and I realized I had, without thinking, pulled my mask up over my nose and mouth. I hadn't even noticed myself doing it. I hadn't been noticeably worried - I was sitting in a sealed vehicle - but had, regardless, just slipped my mask on. Maybe it was because I could see people on the sidewalk outside of the car and my subconscious was just like, "danger, danger". Or maybe, maybe I have in small, near invisible increments become more comfortable with a mask on then without.

I see my reflection in a window sometimes and I'm surprised to see myself wearing a mask. As if this piece of fabric pressed against my lips, tied to my head, has become such a part of my daily existence it doesn't even physically register anymore.

I'm starting to see how much I've changed, by how much I now find normal.

And it works in the reverse as well. There are people eating inside of restaurants now. I stroll past the window of a local eatery and there's a handful of people seated *inside* of a public space, faces exposed, gleefully eating food prepared by others. And to be one hundred percent truthful with you, I cringe when I see it. I am *appalled* by the idea of human beings sitting together, enjoying a meal in an enclosed space. So much so that I am, again, glad to be wearing a mask if only to conceal my distasteful expression.

We have been in this for so long that the adjustments I balked at a year ago have slowly been absorbed until I can barely recall what used to stand in their place.

How can I even think about reengaging with normal social situations when I have gotten to the point that when I see someone I might, *might*, make the air hug motion and mumble something about how "I can't wait until we can hug again" when really I have just grown so used to not touching other people that acknowledging it in any way feels like an inauthentic show.

I want this pandemic to end for so many reasons but quickly climbing to the top of the pile is the want of getting a better idea of what it all looks like when the dust has cleared. I don't think anything is ever going to back to whatever it is we used to think of as normal, but I at least want to a clearer idea of what we're working with so I can start the process of readjustment.

'Till next time.

-N

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

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## SUPPORT AAPI COMMUNITIES

**STOP AAPI HATE**

<https://stopaapihate.org/>

**ASIAN PACIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK**

<http://apen4ej.org/>

**SAVE OUR CHINATOWNS**

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

**BLACK LIVES MATTER**

<https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

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

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*It creates a steady beat.*

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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  
LAUREN C. JOHNSON  
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FRANCESCA ROBERTSON  
DANIEL SCHWARTZBAUM  
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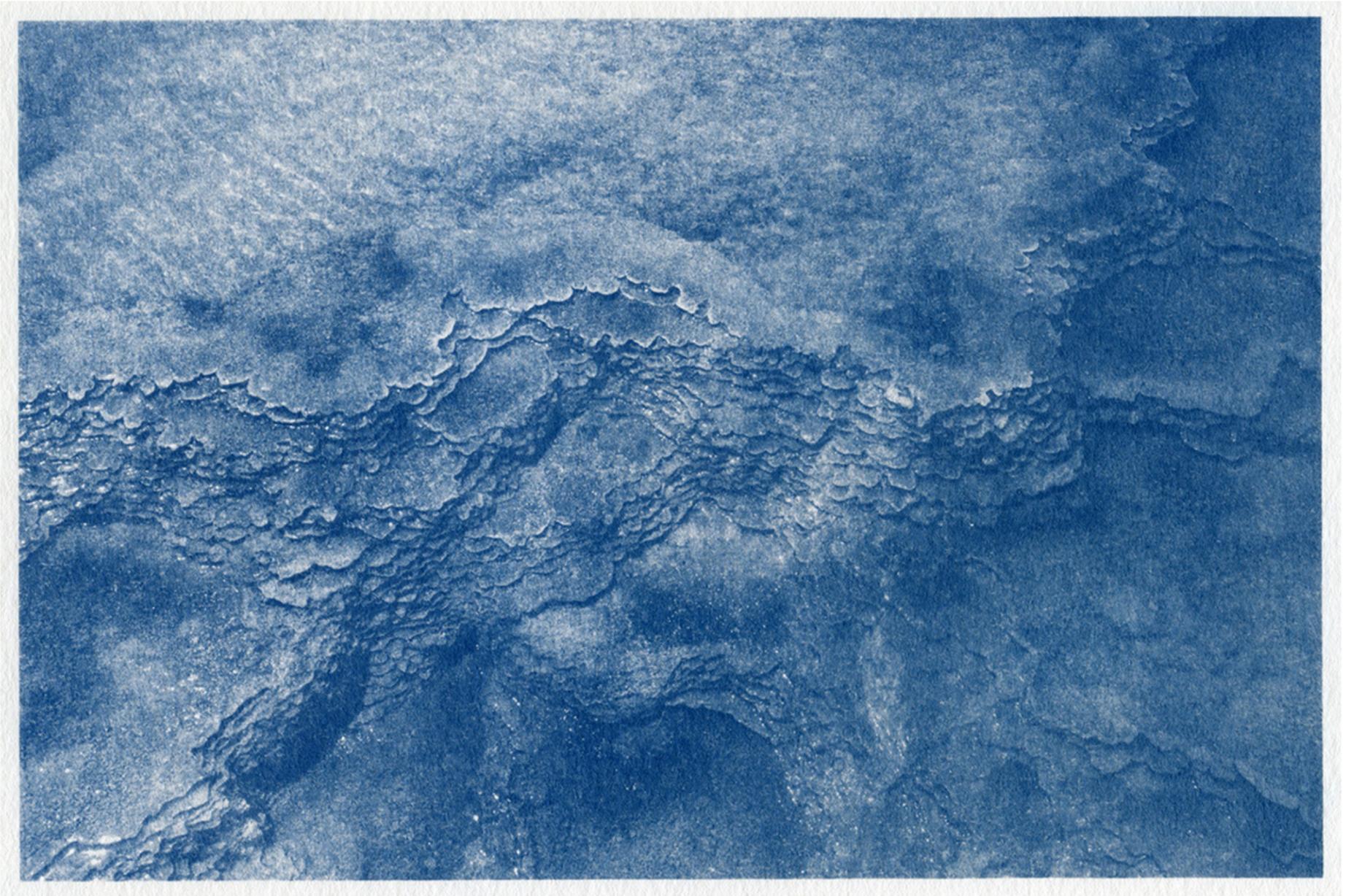
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# **THE RACKET**

**43**



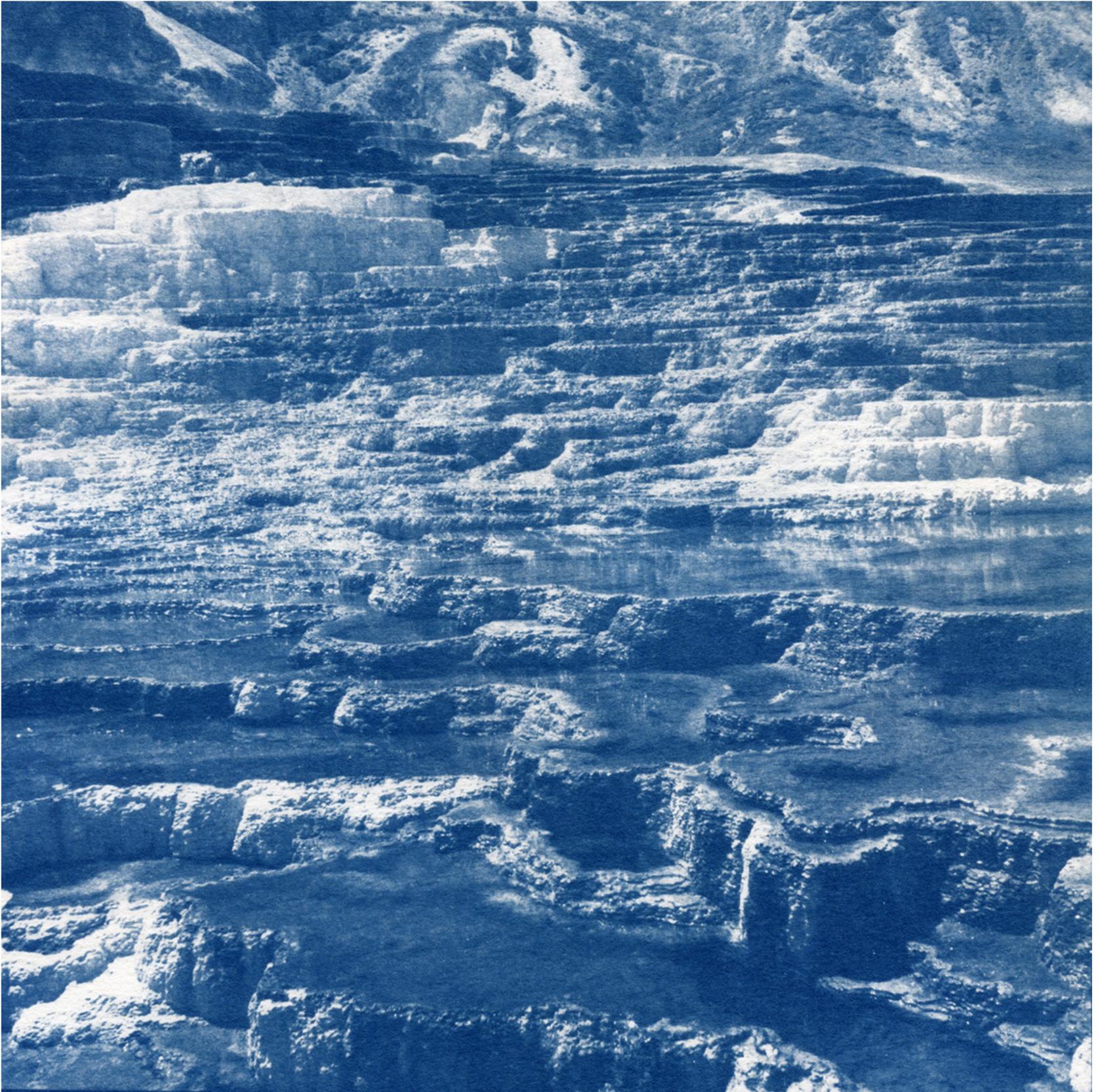
*HOT SPRINGS POOL, YELLOWSTONE NP.*  
CHRISTINE HUHN  
2020

# Worst Case Scenario # 6

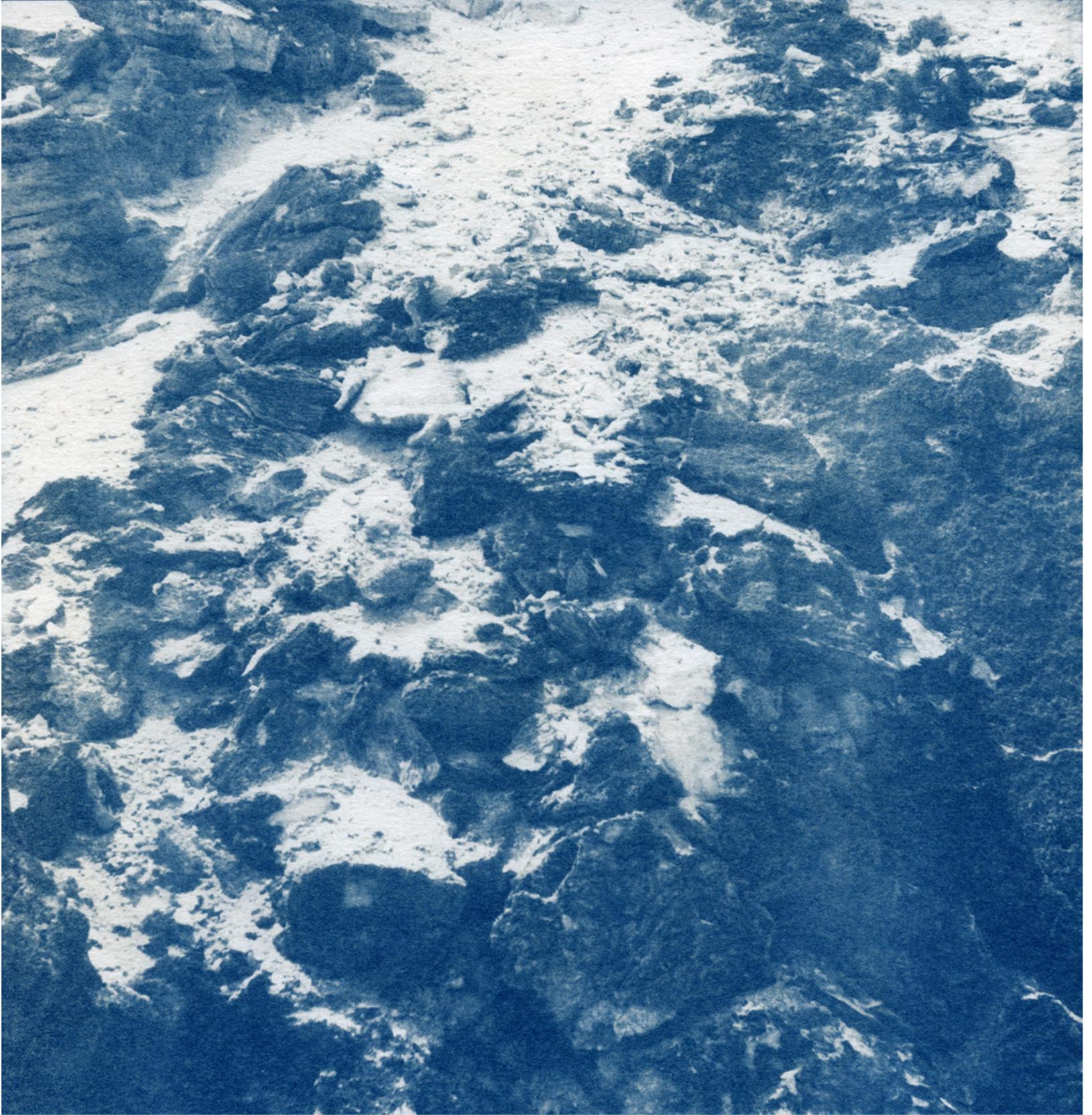
EILEEN T. WINN

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What if my father found calm along his waistline? What if contentment in long threads like seaweed beached itself on his belly? What if my dad calls the paparazzi on himself just so he can get captured, shirtless, at his best angle? Every angle? What if my father wears a crop top to show off his body loving a breeze? What if he has rose jelly on his toast every morning to gift a bouquet to his tongue? What if he has learned a joy for movement that springboards off love? If the anxiety behind his free throwing & bike pedaling evaporates in sweat off his brain? What if he delights in his toes & his ears at the promise of Chinese food? Cherishes it because it feeds his new son? Folds soft dumpling dough around meat like safe arms around a child? What if children's mouths are no longer wastes of money? What if milk spills across the counter & it doesn't sound to him like a fistful of diamonds wasted in dirt? What if he pours out chicken stock & melted lard upon the ground for his thirsty dead? Doesn't think of his own thirst first? What if my father wakes up hungry for flavor? Determined to bite into peppers? To swim through a market's bright spices? What if he digests all this happiness & it nourishes him at the cellular level all the way back through time so I can be born into a body enough like light that my father lets it spill, hot and soft, into any humming shape?



TRAVERTINE TERRACES NO. 1, YELLOWSTONE NP.  
CHRISTINE HUHN  
2020



*FORMATIONS NO.1, YELLOWSTONE NP.*  
CHRISTINE HUHN  
2020

# Duplex

COURTNEY JUSTUS

---

As a teenage girl, she lived in a three-story duplex on the north end of Buenos Aires, just off the corner of Goyena and Paraná, where the red and green 707s, narrow-bodied and swaying with each stop, would make their circuits, on which the girl squeezed through the aisles, between schoolboys in their white guardapolvos and Nike sneakers, between dark-eyed boys with earbuds looking out each dust-smearred window, but the red 707 came either right when she got to the school bus stop, or not for another thirty to forty more minutes, or not at all; thus, she often took the green 707, which left her to walk six blocks home along Castro Barros, shouldering a large violet Wal-Mart bag containing all her binders and workbooks – a bag which prompted questions like why such a big bag – a bag from which the boys stole her periwinkle cloth pencil case, her Motorola phone, her Environmental Science notes, a bag which she had to lock because the boys kept stealing things, the bag in which she once brought her silver Dell laptop (once her mother’s) for a project without telling anyone, only to find that Marta nearly threw it out the window, had posed for a picture on a classmate’s BlackBerry while doing so—Marta whom the girl once admired for her long fishtail braid and sweet laughter, for the fact that Marta often brought lemon cookies and Chocolinas to school and would give her some, for the fact that Marta tried to include her in outings to drink mate cocido at the river or go ice skating downtown or out dancing to the boliches in San Isidro, where you couldn't really dance because all the people swarmed and swam and pressed around you like tentacles of a sea anemone, pinched your bottom, tugged at your skirt (once, they pulled the girl’s black skirt up, her friend’s ex’s green eyes watching, girl’s mouth and eyes swallowing flashes of gold light before looking to her pudgy legs, the concrete floor under her boots) —all this until junior year when Marta didn't call her unless she needed help with something, until junior year when the girl started writing short stories in the light blue bedroom of her duplex and Marta didn't wear her hair in a braid

anymore, until junior year when the girl came home to find out her orange tabby was missing, a rescue cat her mother had found at a shelter in Mississippi, a tabby for whom they went searching through the red and yellow española plants in the backyard, though the tall grasses where the cat loved to roam at all hours (even at night, eyes aglow); sometimes cats slipped into yards then got stuck between houses, like another sandy orange cat named Garfield, who looked almost exactly like the girl's tabby, who had to be lifted back to his respective owners on the other side; or the skinny, dun kitty who slinked through the right side neighbors' dirt yard and slipped over the top of the rickety side fence—all these cats who were not where they were supposed to be, and here the girl and her mother calling over and over again, walking the block, Goyena to Moreno to Juan Bautista Justo to Paraná to Goyena again, the girl crying to herself that night because he was her first and only kitty and could not be found—until the girl's mother uncovered the tabby the next morning in the girl's younger brother's linen closet, behind the sliding wood door, sleeping on a pile of light blue pillowcases and sheets, a spot where no one else had ever found him, which didn't make sense until it did, because it was a space that was quiet and clean and soft...and why wouldn't you want to go to a place like that, to a place of comfort where you could rest without hesitation and didn't have to be seen?



JANGLE  
TAVARUS BLACKMON  
[HTTPS://ART-MUSIC-LIT.SPACE](https://art-music-lit.space)  
2019

# Quarantine Diaries

HO-MING SO DENDUANGRUDEE

---

*1 October 2020*

Do you ever look around at everyday things and imagine the corporate teams responsible for their creation?

Your television remote design, the colors of your Tupperware, or the design on your candy wrapper.

On Microsoft Teams, the chat function has different categories of stickers. The best one is “Broccoli.” It’s a series of maybe 20 stickers of broccoli doing various office-related tasks: filing, going to a meeting, complaining. I think of the team that made these stickers often. They were a cross-functional team of at least ten. They indexed competitors’ stickers and benchmarked against best practices. It probably took at least a year. The corporate uncles patted the team on the back and told them they were doing a Yeoman’s job. Then they downsized.

That’s how we have all these important things. And jobs.

Who made all of this? (me, and you)

Who made all of this up? (it was an accident)

*1 November 2020*

Words and phrases loved by corporate uncles, global edition:

1. “I am pleased.”
2. “I am displeased.” (Why are they never run-of-the-mill disappointed?)
3. Anything General anything says (they read *The Team of Teams*, so I did, too. It’s not about about defying The Executive?)
4. Yeoman’s job (We had to look this up)
5. Football analogies (They are largely golf players)

*23 December 2020*

Words and phrases that should not be used at home by normal people, in normal conversation:

1. “Three points...” (One is enough, probably too many. Better to be pointless)
2. Indexing (is this a real word?)
3. Teaming (is this a real word?)
4. Yeoman’s job (We had to look this up)
5. Broccoli (just kidding, this is a real and great word)

*9 February 2021*

“A sheen was observed at 9 am on Wednesday. 200 gallons of petroleum and water mixture leaked from the wharf. The Department of Air Quality Management says the spill **has been contained** and clean up is ongoing. An investigation of the incident is ongoing. The public is advised to remain clear of the area in order to allow crews to quickly contain and clean up released volumes.”

I want to talk to you about your feelings, about mine. (Honestly, not really)

Even when airplanes crash, they have black boxes to learn more to try to prevent crashes. But there are black boxes, which accepts there's the possibility of crash, and a pathway for improvement and reduction of harm.

Pipelines are small. Smaller than sewer pipes. Pipes leak, because they're made by people, and people are imperfect. Just like internet cables strung across the oceans break.

Why are things so rudimentary? Even my desk has wire organizers. Why isn't there Wi-Fi for the whole planet yet?

*14 February 2021*

Around 1:15 this afternoon, at least one of us realized it was Valentine's Day.

"Happy Valentine's Day." One of us says.

"Congratulations." Says the other.

Does this need more joy?



BABY BAND  
TAVARUS BLACKMON  
[HTTPS://ART-MUSIC-LIT.SPACE](https://art-music-lit.space)  
2019

# Tituba<sup>1</sup> Sestina

CANDICE RALPH

---

Black witch

Negro slave

Caribbean mother

South American servant

Arawak wife

Indian woman

Negro woman

Caribbean witch

South American wife

Arawak slave

Indian servant

Black mother

Caribbean mother

South American woman

Arawak servant

Indian witch

Black slave

Negro wife

South American wife

Arawak mother

Indian slave

Black woman

Negro witch

Caribbean servant

Arawak servant

Indian wife

Black witch

Negro mother

Caribbean woman

South American slave

Indian slave

Black servant

Negro woman

Caribbean wife

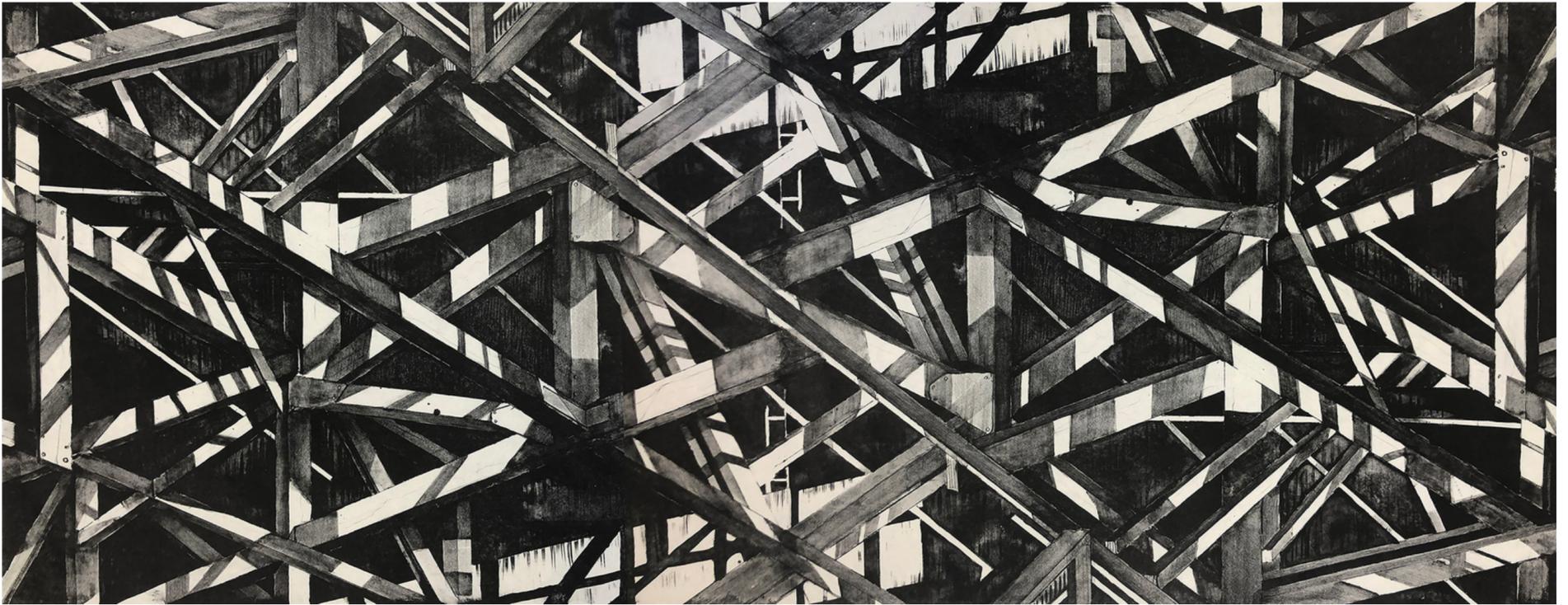
South American mother

Arawak witch

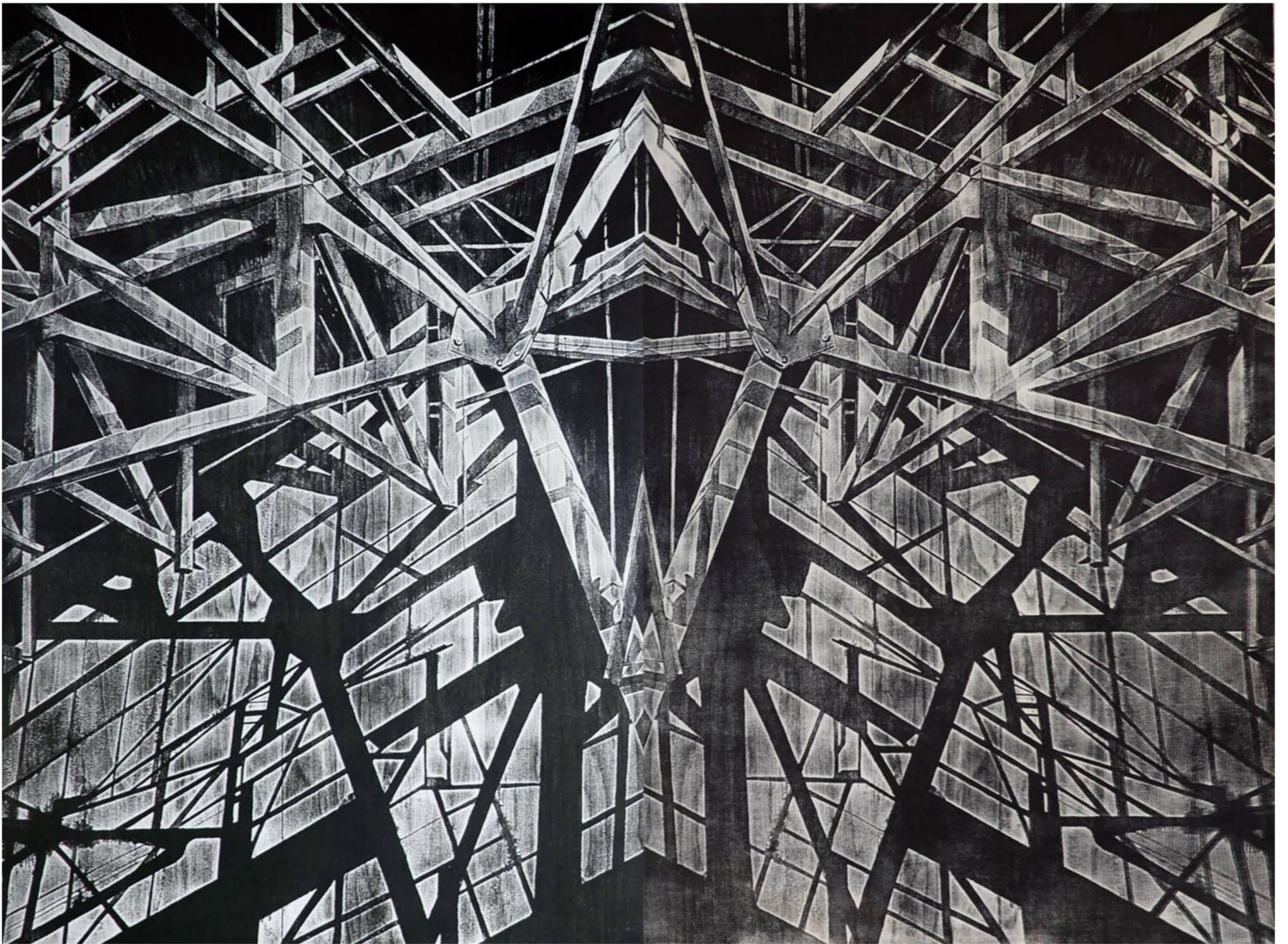
Dear mother earth, who was this woman  
in your great hearth, where rests her life? Or to enigma is she forever slave and servant  
Salem's witch the Landlord's wife.

---

1. This piece is based on the historical narrative of Tituba, the enslaved Indigenous [Carib-South American] woman, owned by Samuel Parris, whose criminal charge of witchcraft is widely recognized as being the ignition of the 1692 Salem witch trials, but whose personal life remains an unrecorded enigma.



*WINTERS LIGHT, HUNTERS POINT*  
JENNY ROBINSON  
2018



COUNTERPART  
JENNY ROBINSON  
2018

# I Brought A Lamb to a Knife Fight

ALEXIS OLSON

---

I brought a lamb to a knife fight, offered it up to my challenger, arms outstretched.

*Where is your knife?* They asked.

*Baaaaa. Baaa. Baaa.*<sup>1</sup> The lamb answered.

They shrugged and folded open their blade. The pocket knife slid like the pulling of ribbon down the length of stomach, undoing the lamb. Handfuls of wool spilled out—crochet intestines. I could see blades of undigested grass poking out from the interlocking loops.

*Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa,*<sup>2</sup> cried the lamb.

I placed my hand on the lamb's side and felt its plush heart pumping through embroidered veins.

*Thank you,* I told the Lamb.

*Baaaa-aaa-aaa.*<sup>3</sup>

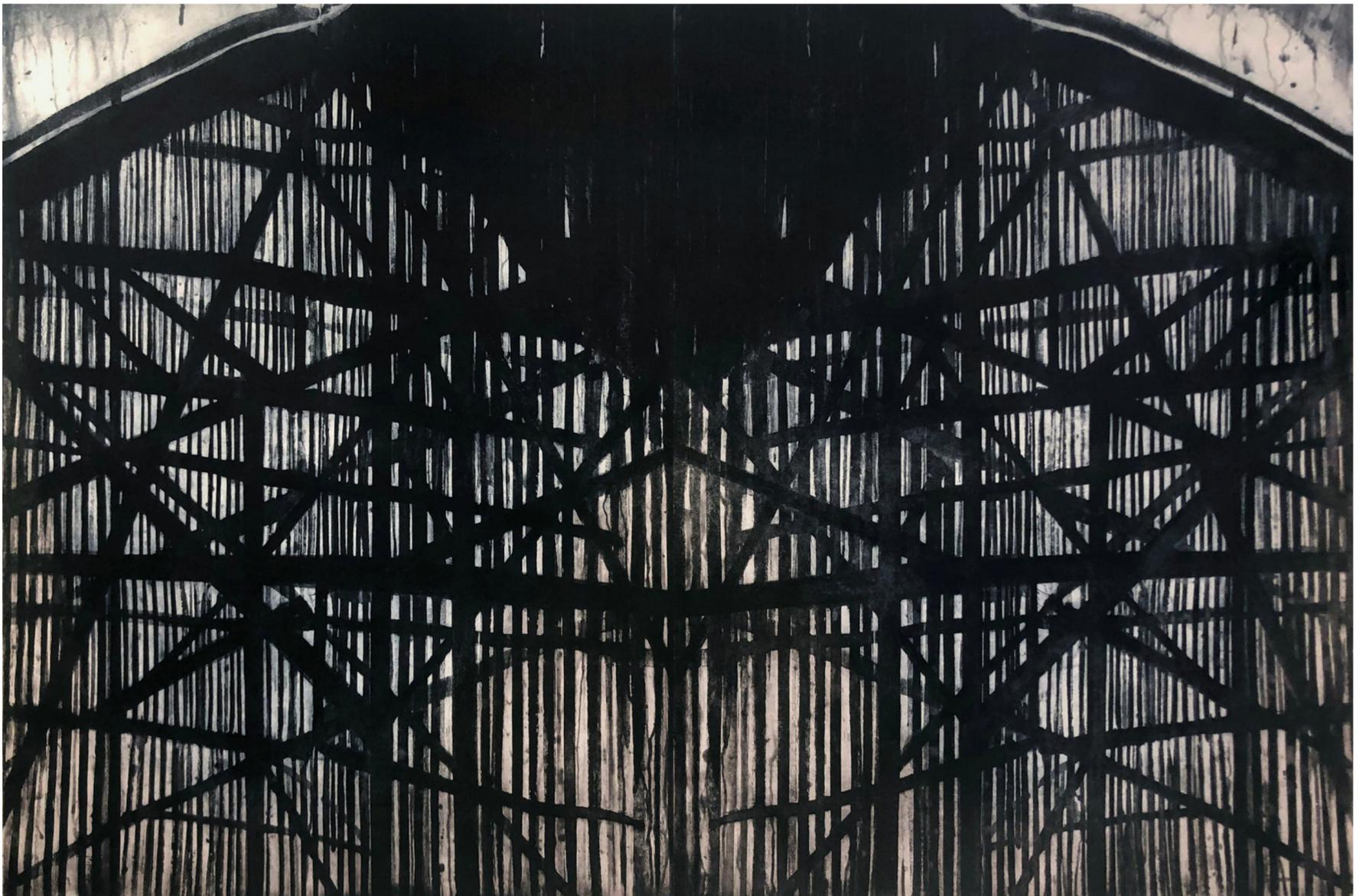
I began stuffing the clumps of unspooled yarn back in. The fabric felt damp and weighed-down compared to the lamb's hot fleece. I needled up and through, connecting left to right. The new seam made the lamb look handmade.

---

1. I am a knife.

2. Sew me up.

3. I was born for this.



COCKATOO ISLAND #1  
JENNY ROBINSON  
2018

**THE  
BACK  
PAGE**

BY  
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

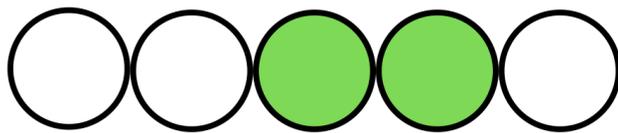
# THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

## WORD STUFF

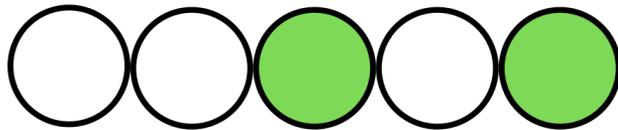
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Unscramble each Mumble to form five ordinary words.  
Then, arrange the green letters in the highlighted spaces to  
complete the punchline.

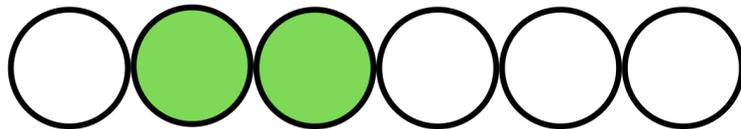
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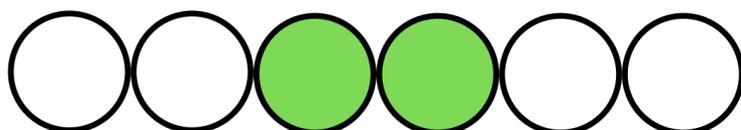
**OMAEC**



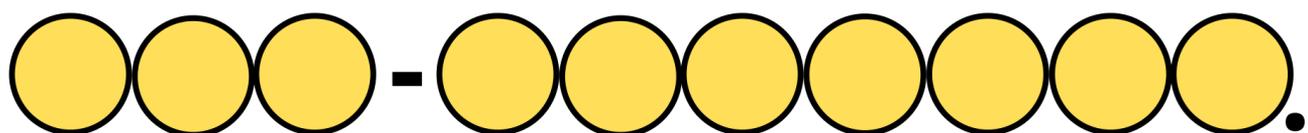
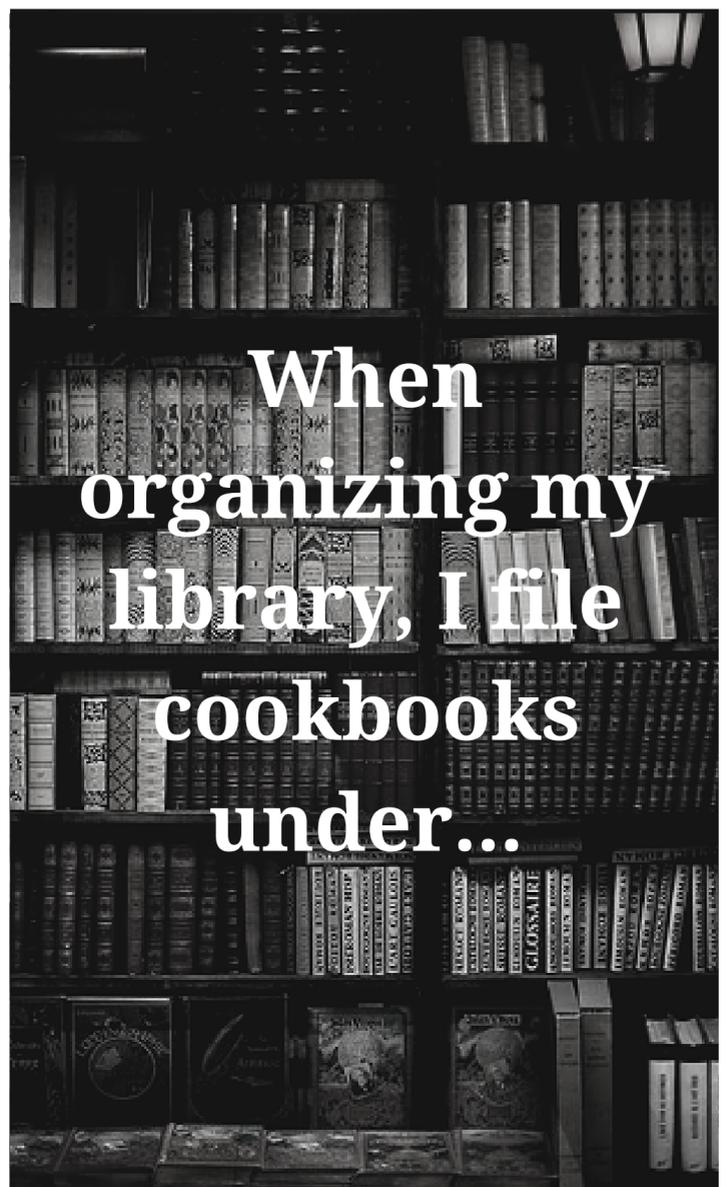
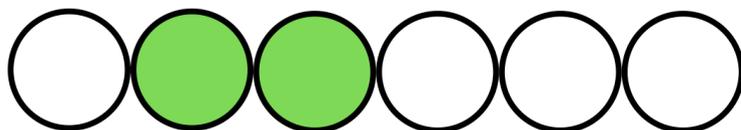
**ETCSKO**



**YSTIHF**



**IKYSTC**



(Answers next week.)

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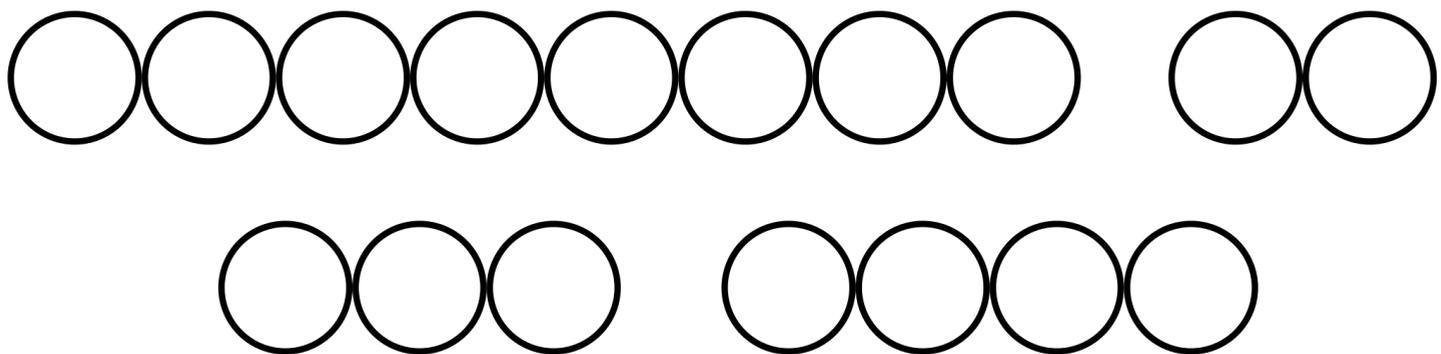
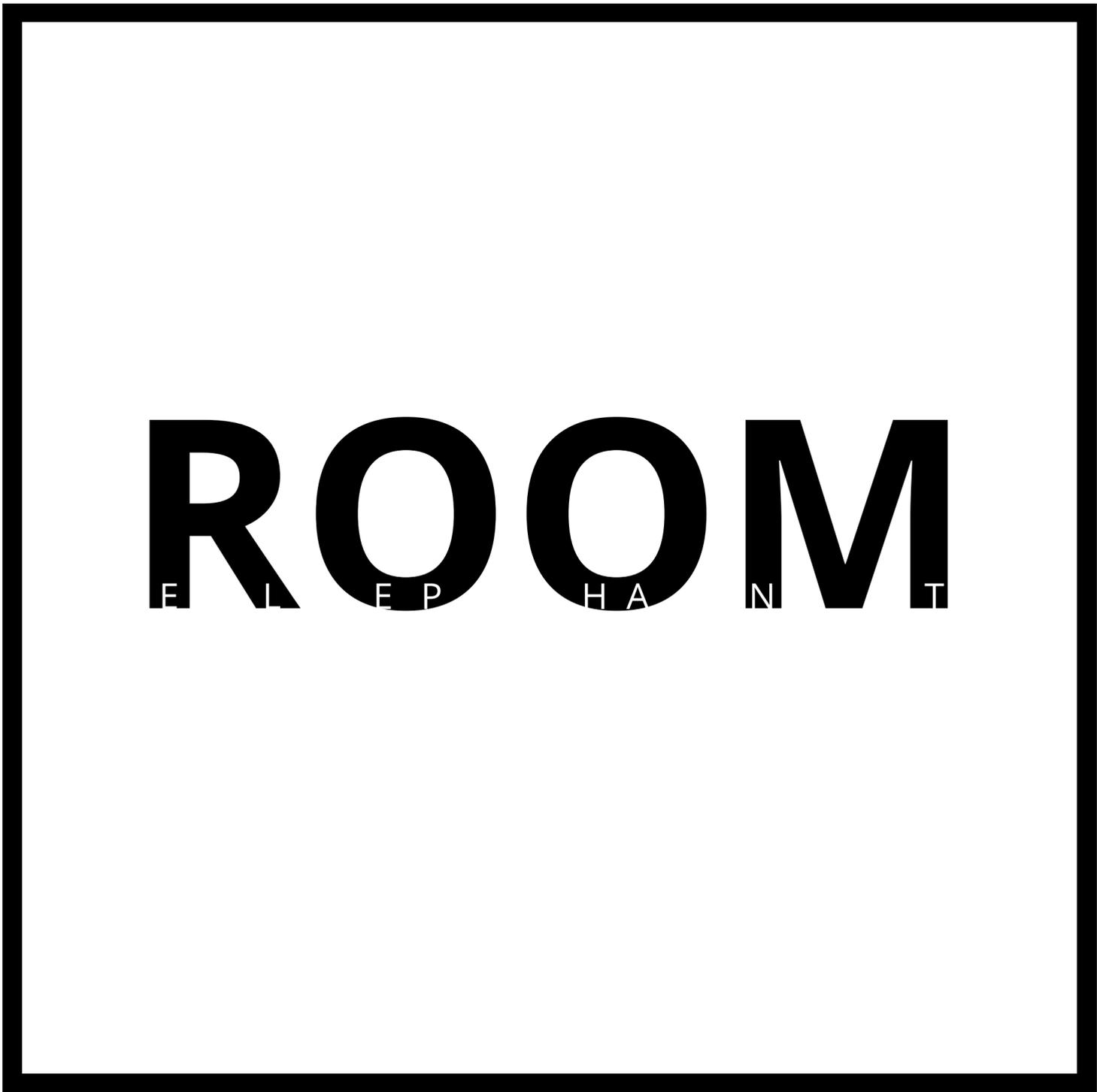
Last week's answers:

*STEEP, RAISIN, CLINCH, ENGAGE, OPPOSE*

Hey, if you want a burrowing rodent for a pet, I say *gopher it*.

# 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**

*the last straw*

# CONTRIBUTORS

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TAVARUS BLACKMON

YERRIE CHOO

HO-MING SO DENDUANGRUDEE

CHRISTINE HUHN

COURTNEY JUSTUS

ALEXIS OLSON

CANDICE RALPH

JENNY ROBINSON

EILEEN T. WINN

# THE RACKET

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# BLOOM

+

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**4/1**  
**7PM**  
**ZOOM**

**WAVE THE  
CHECKERED  
FLAG.**

