

The background features a large, abstract geometric shape in a vibrant orange color, set against a solid blue background. The orange shape is composed of several flat, angular surfaces that create a three-dimensional effect, with some surfaces appearing to be in shadow. The overall composition is minimalist and modern.

THE RACKET | 44

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RACKET | 44**

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Hi.

How is everyone?

I'm going to talk about myself for a bit here and I don't often use this space to noodle on my own life but there's a lot going on and I don't have much capacity for other thought. My apologies in advance.

I have been, for a while now, unemployed. I'm lucky because Nora has a solid job and this combined with the various economic stimulus packages and an aversion to buying much besides food and books have allowed me to stay, comfortably, afloat. But as big life changes come barreling down the pipe, and the need for a job becomes more and more apparent, I find myself—or how I perceive myself—suddenly, uncomfortably, stretched.

I'm not someone who's ever thought of themselves as attached to any career really. I've always considered myself a writer at the best of times and a vague "creative" all the rest. Work in the traditional sense has always been a means to financially support these identities and nothing else. I haven't thought of my jobs—even the almost 10 years I spent in advertising—as anything but a way to fun the creation of space to, well, create.

I have always just been a person who hasn't wanted to make money from my creative pursuits, so I've just filled the moments where I'm not working to support myself with as much elective "work" as I can muster. It's wonderful and massively fulfilling most of the time but also, frankly, exhausting. To be a person who can happily derive meaning from a 9-to-5 job without the nagging need to do *more* is a dream of mine. I would love to sit down to relax after a hard day of work and not feel the pressure to attack some creative endeavor, to feel like I haven't done enough of the "real" work at hand.

Now I'm nearing 40 and Nora and I are taking some of the Big Steps and I feel like I've landed at a crossroads. I have actively pursued creative success for a long while now and though there have been many, many moments of achievement, I can't eat off it just yet. And as I move forward in life I can already see the need, the joy even, in shifting my energies towards different things and in doing so needing to free up mental space by letting go some of these things I've clung to for so long. I want to be someone who can work hard at a job and just relax when they aren't. And I worry that finding this balance—between work and "work"—might just be too difficult going forward.

If I do make these changes though, who am I? More so, is it even possible for me to make these changes? Am I just always going to be stuck in the grey space between work and "work" trying to decide which I want to dedicate myself wholly to? Do I even need to?

Or maybe I'm just overthinking it all. Maybe the big changes coming faster (and faster and faster...) down the pipe have knocked me for a loop and everything's been thrown out of perspective and when it works itself out, the shifts won't have been nearly as jarring.

Or better yet, maybe all this fretting is just my way of processing the transition from one stage of my life to the next. When I look back this won't even be a bump in the road, it'll merely be a shift from one state to the next.

Guess I'll have to wait to find out.

'Till next time.

-N

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police brutality, racism and violence
perpetuated towards BIPOC
communities in all forms.

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THE RACKET : QUARANTINE JOURNAL, Vol. 3, NO. 44

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Cover Image: Michael Yuan

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Just a touch too much.

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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

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CONTENTS

EVELYN HANG YIN	<i>Chinese Pagoda and Imperial Dynasty</i>	1
EVELYN HANG YIN	<i>Haunted</i>	2
CARSON PYNES	<i>The Tower</i>	3
JULIA INNOCENZA DEPINTO	<i>Lace</i>	4
GRACE DILGER	<i>Groundscore</i>	5
JULIA INNOCENZA DEPINTO	<i>Hands</i>	7
JULIA INNOCENZA DEPINTO	<i>Belly Fat</i>	8
JAMIE TEWS	<i>Forest Floor</i>	9
ROCHELLE YOUK	<i>afterimage</i>	11
ROCHELLE YOUK	<i>grid</i>	12
AMANDA TERLESKY	<i>The Bee Girl</i>	13
ROCHELLE YOUK	<i>toile</i>	15
GABRIELLE GRILLI	<i>Iodine Moon</i>	16
EVELYN HANG YIN	<i>Virginia</i>	17
EVELYN HANG YIN	<i>Chinese Theater</i>	18

THE RACKET

44



CHINESE PAGODA AND IMPERIAL DYNASTY PARKING
EVELYN HANG YIN
2018



The Tower

CARSON PYNES

cheekbone tattooed tears like stars

three jobs no healthcare
trailer no house number

your file says
 previously incarcerated

not genocide occupied lands

she cries tells me
what your math teacher did

 i will be a golden net that eats lightning

your mother's eyes supernova
a polar bear a shrinking path of ice



LACE
JULIA INNOCENZA DEPINTO
2016

Groundscore

GRACE DILGER

Sex is cool and all that but have you ever tried
acquiescing? Plucking their slacks off the vinyl
wood to find them heftier than you'd foreseen?
When I pick your pants off the floor
it's your belt that chokes me up.
An accompanying seagoing *tink* like a destroyer
underway. We use to call them *groundscores*
at concerts where you could whirl and romp yourself
out of nonautonomy. Something beyond price,
the felicity of happenstance. I'd look down to check
if my calves were as unsatisfactorily fat as I'd
obsessed them to be for the one thousandth time
that evening and might find a handheld mini fan, a tasmanian
devil keychain, a bag of blow. You never know.

There's that queasy ripple: this isn't mine but now I'm
liable for it. When I pick your pants off the floor
it's your belt that chokes me up. Starting at the back yoke
I tug the braided leather impelling a jammed lock
to jimmy. Slow going now, the way I've heard planes
flew faster in the past. I slip it out, pass it reverently
through my palm, it and I and our mutual commission.
When I hang it on the nail I'm coming up
like the set is a tasty one, they're playing
everything we'd hope they would, the vibrations
oh that wall of sound, the peach-biting sequence
we've all come here to receive.



HANDS
JULIA INNOCENZA DEPINTO
2015



BELLY FAT
JULIA INNOCENZA DEPINTO
2016

Forest Floor

JAMIE TEWS

We ate pan-fried veggies and rice from bowls. I had a few bites left when he got up from his chair and laid face-down on the floor. I kept eating and looked at him.

If we got stranded in a forest and I passed out on the ground, would you be able to save me? He asked.

I'm not sure, I said.

Will you try?

I took my last bite, dropped my spoon in the bowl, and pushed it away. I stood up, reached down, and grabbed his hands, large and familiar and cold in mine. I tugged his hands toward me, hoping his body would lift like a doll, but it didn't, the tugging just pulled his arms taut.

Try again, he said.

I pulled again and one his wrists cracked. He looked up at me like he thought he was helpless. I tugged his hands one more time, and then told him to get up. I didn't like this game. We weren't in a forest, we weren't stranded. We were sitting together in the kitchen having just had a good meal.

Get up, I said again. I dropped his hands. They thumped against the floor, and he sighed.

That's all I mean to you, he said. Three attempts at saving.

I stepped over him and brought the dishes to the sink. The leftover rice formed clumps in the drain. The veggie pan would have to soak overnight. Night's depth cast a heavy darkness into our home even though we had the lights on, even though I was with a man I loved. I put the dishrag back on the hook beside the fridge and leaned against the counter.

Are you drunk, I asked.

He propped himself onto his forearms. No, he said.

I walked over to him and laid so we were face-to-face. My ribs pressed against the hardwood. His body was perfectly still.

Look at me, I said. He did, his brown eyes thick pools of sorrow. His breath thick with IPA.

Just imagine we are in the woods, he said. There are overgrown trees and vines everywhere and bugs are yelling as loud as they can because they don't think there are any humans around, and we are the only humans around, me and you. I tripped over a root and fell and can't get up because I broke my ankle and maybe part of my leg, and I need to know you could save me if I was hurt in the middle of the forest. If I was stuck in a vat of mud, I need to know you could save me. He reached out and cupped my chin.

When he'd done this before, I'd laughed and called him funny, hoping my giggling would turn him on, would coax him onto his feet and into bed.

I could save you if I tried, I said. If you had fallen prey to mosquitos or monkeys on a rampage, I would try to save you.

He smiled a little, reached his hand toward my chin again.

I would save you if I needed to, I said. But right now, I'm going to bed. I pushed myself off the ground and went into the bedroom.

He came in hours later, still in his clothes, his jeans and flannel. He burrowed in beneath the comforter, easing his body against mine. He wrapped an arm around my waist.

I'm sorry, he said. Are you awake? I'm sorry.

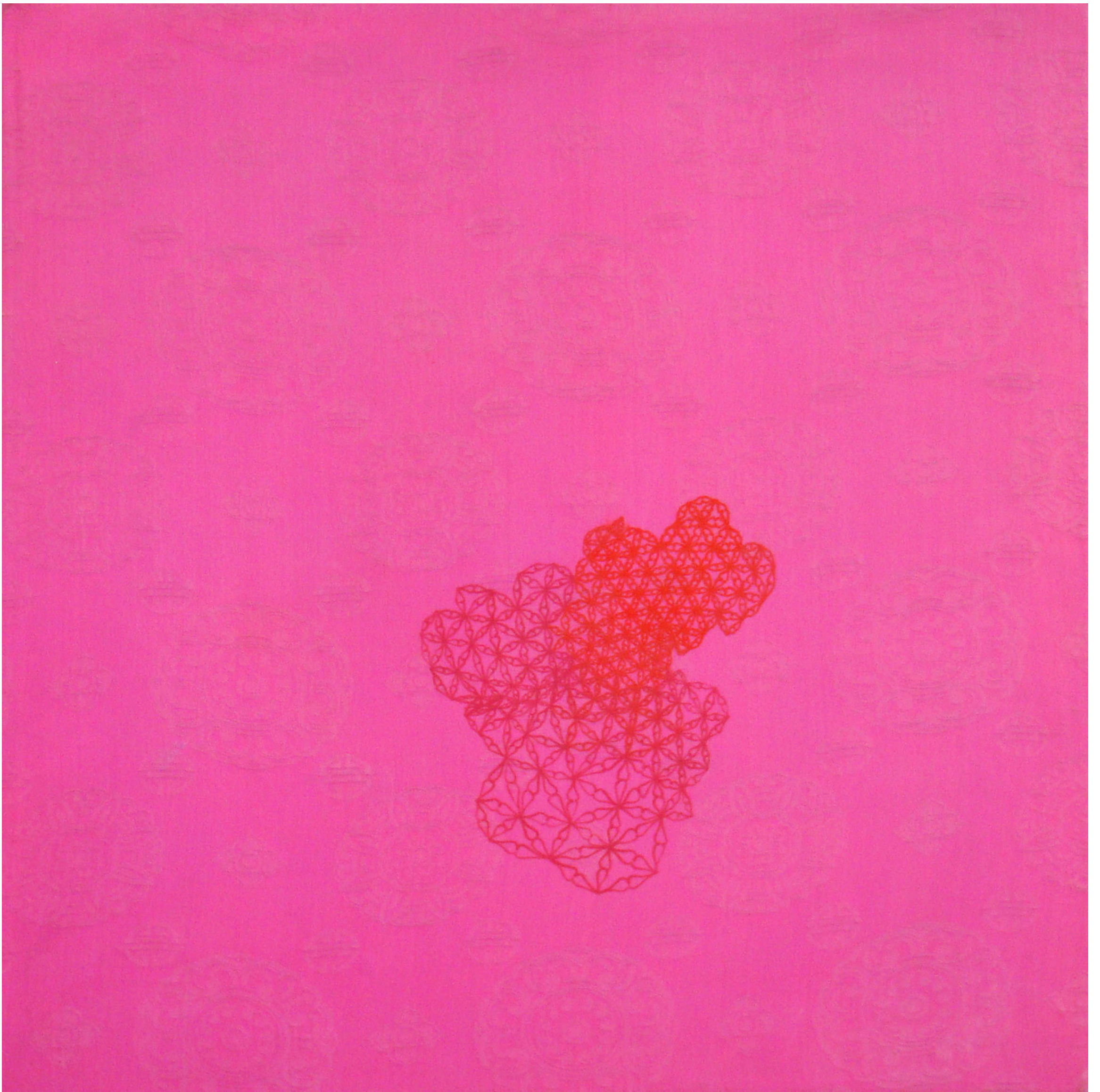
Now he smelled like peppermint. I turned toward him, his hand sliding up the back of my shirt, his fingers finding the familiar knobs of my spine.

I'm sorry, he said.

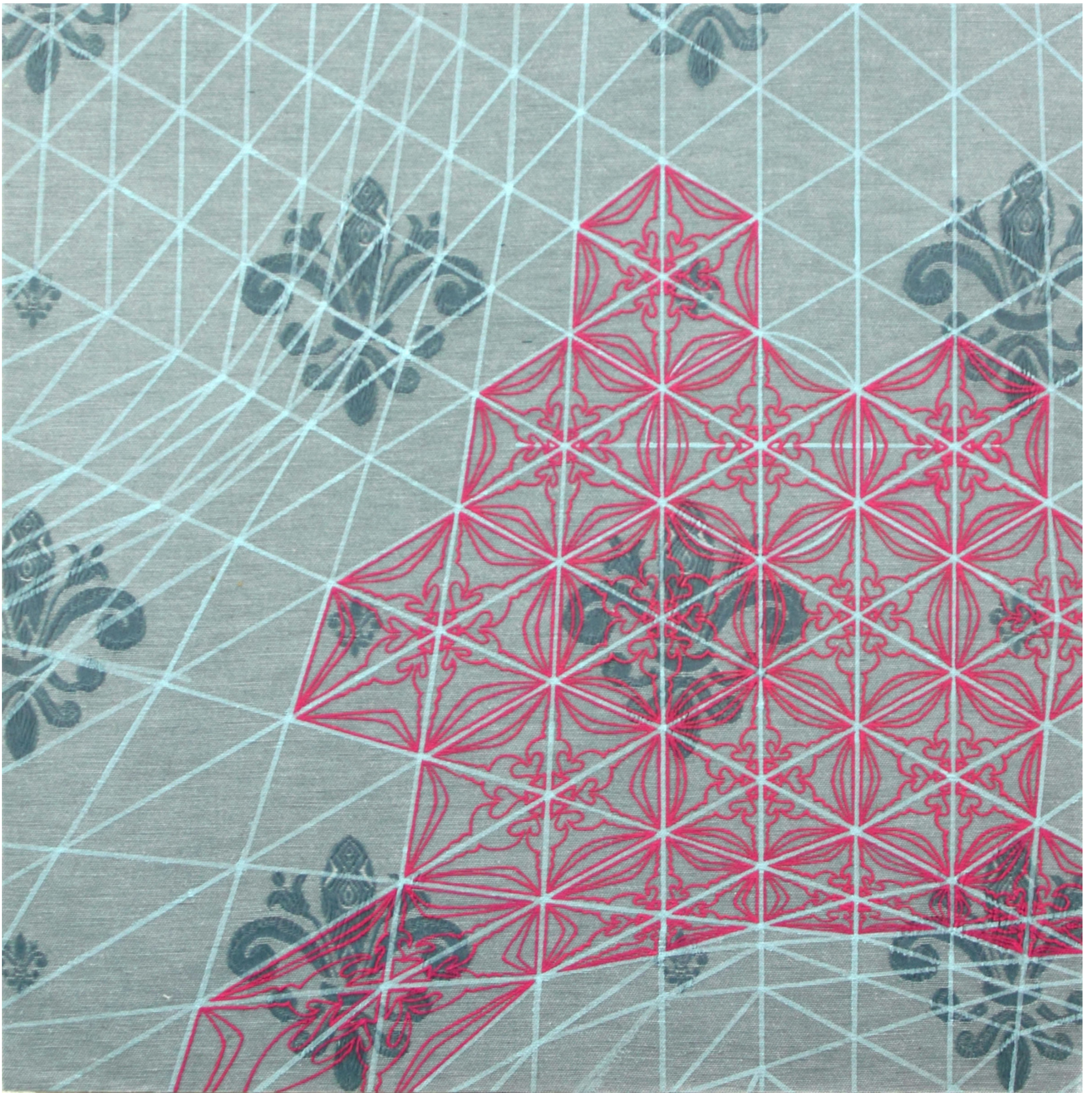
His eyes were shiny in the otherwise black room.

If you were hurt and we were stranded in the forest, I'd save you, he said. Over and over, I'd save you. Okay? Tell me you understand, okay?

We should sleep, I said. I said we'd talk about it in the morning.



AFTERIMAGE
ROCHELLE YOUK
2010



GRID
ROCHELLE YOUK
2009

The Bee Girl

AMANDA TERLESKY

I watch the bloated honeybees
as they violate innocent
roses. Milking them for candied nectar. Weaving between petals
like greedy, hungry men.

I breeze past them, a summer
ghost-girl. Lifting my dress.
Inviting them in with white cotton-girl panties with red lady-
bugs scampering along daisy-chain
seams.

The bees billow under my dress
like wind, until I am floating
along the measure of Summer and Fall. Their barbed sounds
music to my ears, muffled as they
are under my airy frock.

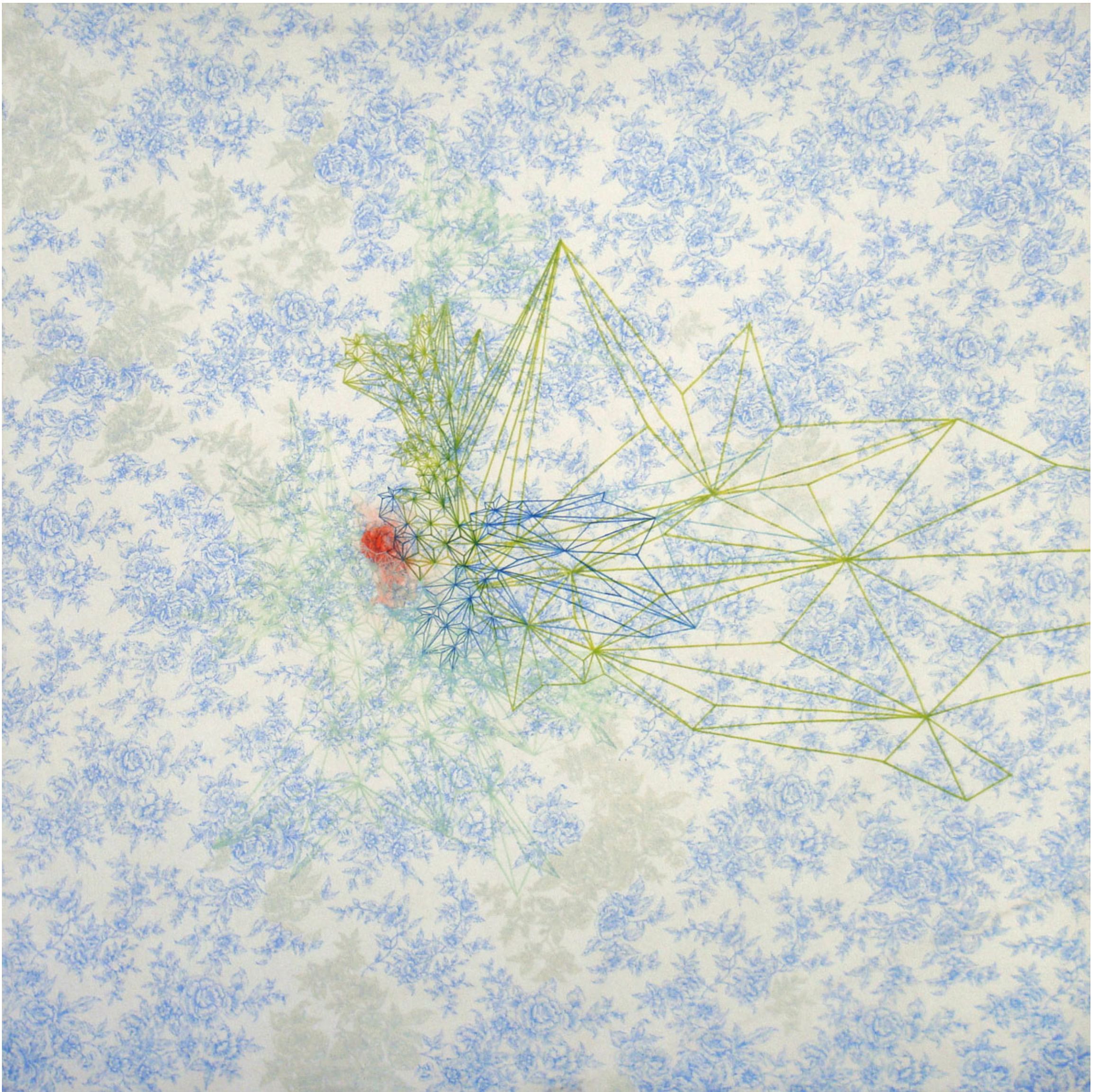
I am the bee girl. A child, soon
to become a woman. Wire
stings beneath the resplendent yellow of my dress. Bees dying,
following subsequence stings
to inner thighs.

Their stingers, embedded within
supple child-flesh, invite me.

I will bleed now. As the bees drop from my ballooned skirts
to hard-leafed ground below.

I fall.

Soft nipple hardening
against frail cotton fabric.



TOILE
ROCHELLE YOUK
2010

Iodine Moon

GABRIELLE GRILLI

The inside of my right foot
was a slice of clementine—
raw flesh stained orange by iodine
pared into a crescent moon.

My foot plunged into the open
pool skimmer hole,
PVC pipe carving
a bright red smile into my heel.

My father paper-towel-patted;
cold water cleared the blood and
hydrogen-peroxide fizzled.
Warm water, pipette bath

of antiseptic, Neosporin,
suture Band-Aids, healthy layer
of gauze. I should have
immediately gotten stitches.

Now, there's not even a scar.



VIRGINIA
EVELYN HANG YIN
2019



CHINESE THEATER
EVELYN HANG YIN
2018

**THE
BACK
PAGE**

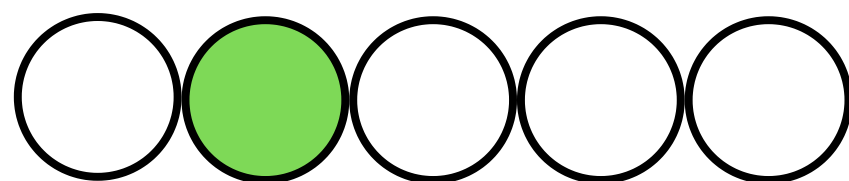
BY
LAURA JAYE CRAMER

THE WEEKLY MUMBLE

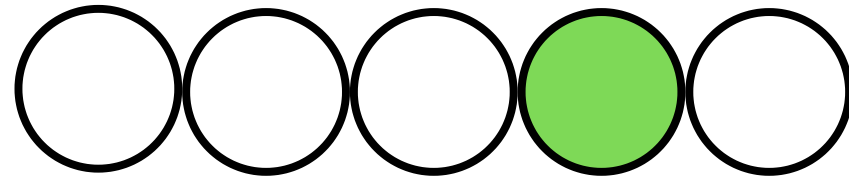
WORD STUFF

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

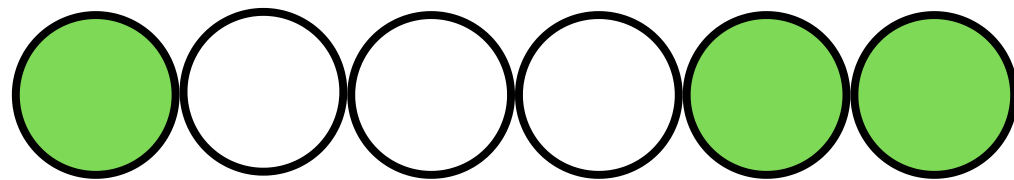
IMCMI



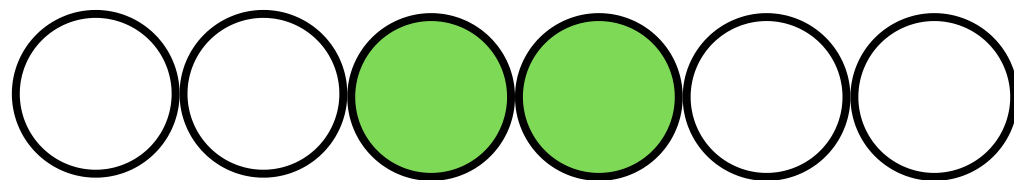
LKUPN



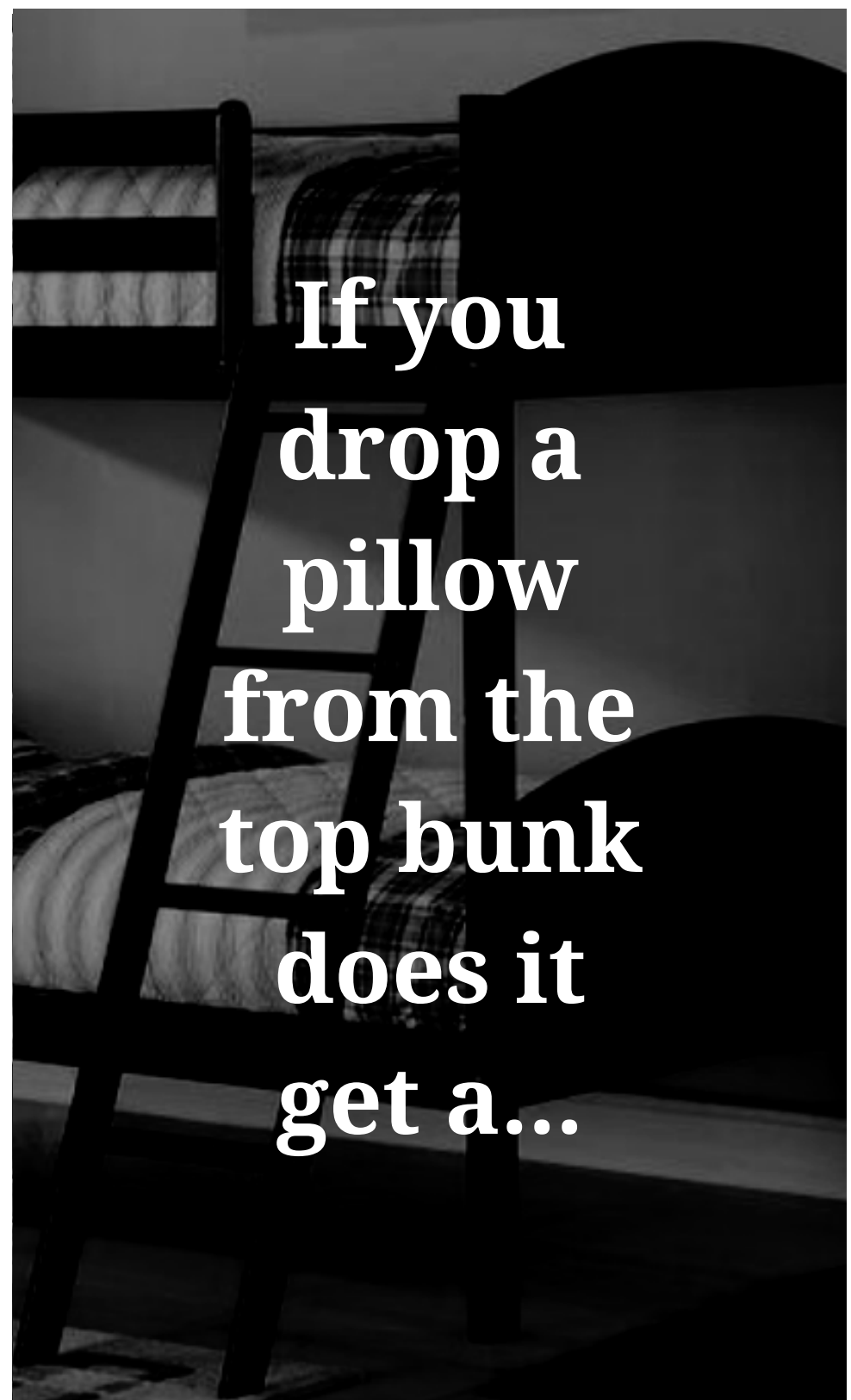
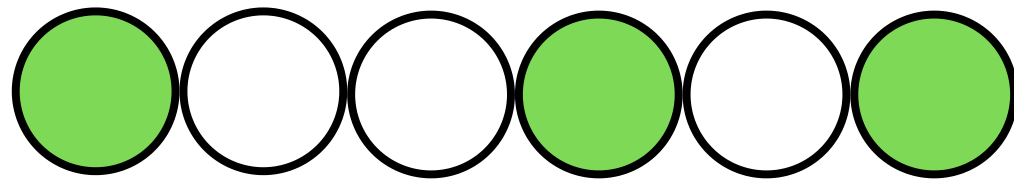
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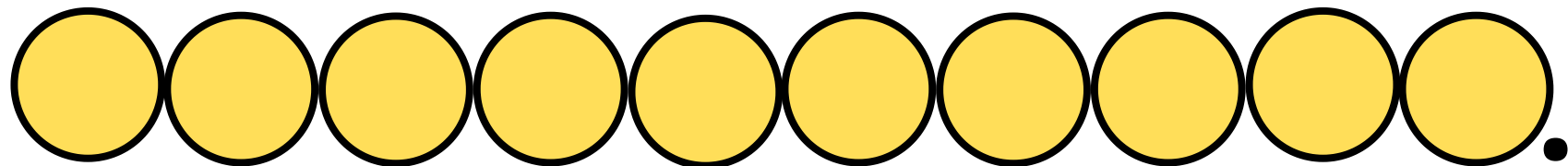
OHMSTO



HCNUCR



If you
drop a
pillow
from the
top bunk
does it
get a...



(Answers next week.)

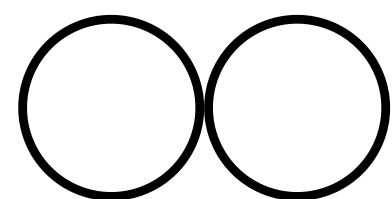
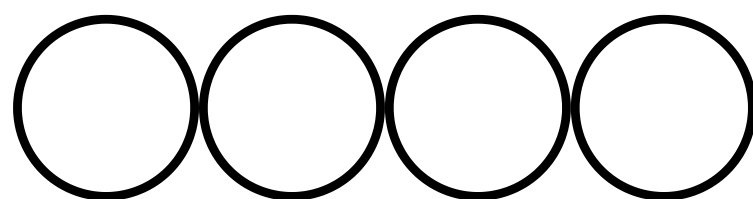
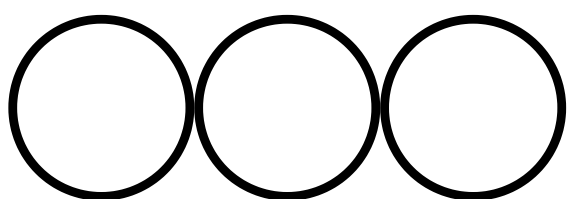
Last week's answers:

PENNY, CAMEO, SOCKET, SHIFTY, STICKY

When organizing my library, I file cookbooks under *nom-fiction*.

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

elephant in the room

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READING SERIES



STATIC

4/15
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ZOOM

**DRIFTIN'
AWAY.**

