



# THE RACKET | 61

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Hello.

I've been thinking a lot about the government as of late. I've been sifting through the horror show of the daily news and cringing particularly hard when I flip the page to whatever article is laying bare the most recent half-hearted stumble we're calling governance.

I have, as much as one can, come to grips with the fact that the ruling powers of the United States are not driven by a want to actually improve the lives of their constituents, but rather a mixture of political self-preservation and lip-licking addiction to power and control. As much as I can be, I have become inured to the fact that the blustery fucksticks who make up our government spend most of their time scraping about clinging to power any way they can while occasionally some bastion of light manages to slip through a bit of legislation that actually does something positive.

It's awful, but it's what we've got.

What I am not okay with is the continuing trend in the American government of stasis. Of the two sides of the governmental binary we've somehow landed on either actively doing nothing to improve upon the burning hole in the ground our country is becoming or, even worse, actively working to prevent other members of the government from doing anything. It's a two-sided coin of halted progress that amounts to a country in free fall only falling faster.

Never before in the history of this society are there more problems we have less time to deal with and more awareness that these problems exist. And what is our government doing? Arguing over filibusters. Locking horns not over the actual important issues—climate change, healthcare, everything, etc.—but over the way they argue amongst themselves when it comes to deciding upon those issues. Instead of putting their heads down and hammering out the solutions to problems that will, literally, eliminate our species (or even getting us to a point where these solutions can be attempted) they are squabbling in the aisles over how best to slow down the act of governance.

It's always been my belief that what lacks in government the constant reminder that the job at hand for those lucky enough to be elected is to serve the people. The point of government—especially the American government—is to provide a functional structure in which a country and those who live within it can thrive. Yet here we are, 250 years into this fucked-up experiment, and the halls of Congress are filled with bullheaded power mongers who want nothing but to argue over the minutia of governance. We have a group of people who have lost sight—intentionally or not—of their purpose as political figures.

It's more than disheartening, it's gross and it's terrifying.

More and more what I read in the paper indicates the true theater of politics we are all bearing witness to. And though in some sick sense there is entertainment to be found in watching political collapse in real time, I cannot, for a minute longer it seems, stomach the fight over who can do less.

Yet it seems everyday there is less and less option to do anything else.

Until next time.

N

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

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THE RACKET : QUARANTINE JOURNAL, Vol. 4, NO. 61

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*Otherworldly 26 and Otherworldly 30 by Jing Wei*  
*originally published in The New York Times Book Review*

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*Above and below that tree.*

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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.

## 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  
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SARAMANDA SWIGART  
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# THE RACKET

61



FEEDING RITE  
MATILDA FORSBERG  
2019



FEEDING RITE II  
MATILDA FORSBERG  
2020

# Memory of what came after what might have been

KATE STRONG STADT

---

when I ate strawberries after his beloved teacher's funeral  
while he (summerdream ghost?) moaned, head-in-hands,  
moaning to be green-eyed, not dead -  
was it me (my very self?) who thought  
*how constant a pleasure this taste of my beloved fruit,*  
*how cold my fingers do feel in my mouth?*  
not moaning. alive. and green-eyed towards ghosts.



AND THEN THE SUN CAME OUT  
MATILDA FORSBERG  
2019

# Johnny Fix-It

LILA CUTTER

---

Johnny fixes the faucet. Johnny rings our doorbell and he is the only  
Johnny to ever ring. He fixes our heater. He fixes our heater again  
again til it's June in Oakland. Johnny fixes our heater so the heat  
is always on like we like it. Johnny is our house  
guest but instead of appetizers we offer Johnny half our faces  
hidden. Johnny fixes his face hidden, checks the pilot light  
til it's 80 degrees like we like it. Hot enough to excuse  
not fixing the peace lily back alive. Johnny is the only Johnny  
he is our fix for the outside world. We invite Johnny over just to see  
a new pair of shoes. One day when Johnny comes to fix the heater  
he enters the floor below a below we've never seen a below of  
floorboards creaked with friends, full party-mode an ice cream cake  
with "Happy Birthday Johnny" written in blue and white icing and  
St. Vincent popping out, ice cream melting her piano serenade

now Johnny won't come back I've broken

the faucet, I've broken the heat I've broken  
my silence my slackjaw hangs open  
practicing how to smile.



OTHERWORLDLY 26  
JING WEI  
2020

# 13 Unsolicited Emails From the Not So Distant Past

BRITTANY ACKERMAN

---

1)

Are you here in LA yet?

How about 7 PM to meet up?

2)

Your book was published on my birthday. There's something in the stars.

3)

Yes, I'm still dreaming of publishing a memoir of some sort, but it's still...a long way from becoming a reality. Right now, I just want to stay out of jail and finish the semester. Then, we'll see.

I hope things are going well for you in LA. I imagine you would fit in there, with all those...movie stars...

4)

If you happen to have those old stories you wrote about us...would you mind sending them to me. I would love to reread and relive them. Pretty please.

Thanks a lot.

5)

right now, i am in the IMU: Sunday, Dec. ? i heard music coming down the hall, investigated, found a guy playing jazz standards. on a nice grand piano...i asked one of the waitresses if i could have a piece of pie (there was a breakfast buffet set up in the room)

she said *yes. i began to eat it-* mistake- with my hands. then a woman came up to me and said: *do you want me to get the manager of the building?* i said, no, dont do that. but she did anyway. so, i left, out the front door of the IMU. then, i came back, to check my email, and here i am. sorry to bug u....

6)

so, you said keep me posted, so, here's what happened. on Feb. 6 or 7, i left jail and moved into a halfway house in anderson, indiana. my assignment: find a job, go to meetings, stay sober, etc...i found a job, at **red lobster** washing dishes. not a bad job, [\$9 an hour, no breaks] but i ended up working 2 days a week, and hating it [hectic! lobster sauce, old plates, etc.!] and in the end i ended up *pulling the emergency chute-* relapsing- it turned out to be worse than jail: just depressing, i'm sure you can imagine. now, there's a 'warrant' out for my 'arrest' why is that is quotes? no idea. my plan: turn myself in, and go from there. on the plus side, the Monroe County Jail has a library- lots of books,...and the orange jumpsuit isn't so bad, after all...

7)

Well hello little one, though it may seem only a couple hours have passed since we last spoke, I find myself wishing we were texting and talking shit quite frequently. I know that this trip is going to be such an incredible experience for you so stop racking your beautifully crafted brain with all of the what ifs.... What if you come back and everything was just how you left it? Though I am frightened by the closeness we have accrued these last few days I hold just as much anticipation as I do fear for what is to become...

8)

I know were not supposed to be friends anymore but can you fill me in? I'd like to know you're okay.

9)

Do you still want to talk to me?

By the way *Ray Donovan* Season 2 started if you haven't already been watching it. I'm like Ray, and you're like Bunchy.

Nice talking to you.

10)

You did. You did block me.

11)

Read your book, and it's full of lies and you didn't even mention me. So it makes me feel lack of value and forgotten.

Besides that...it was a good read. Learned a lot about you.

12)

I never really believed in the "aura" you know the ways chicks who love energy crystals and LSD believe in it. The aura I use and believe in involves colors. Your color is sports car red. I can imagine you paint your tiny little fingernails that color from time to time without realizing the significance.

Do u want to know why? I'll admit (and you can corroborate this) that my high school memory is overall shit. Other than flashbulbs and auras. It was summer or I don't know spring? It was bright as heaven when I pulled up in my white Jetta to your two-story home in...Delray? Or Boca... I walked toward a large door noting an open garage with a candy red BMW parked in a carpeted garage and knocked. You answered. 16 years old tiny bite sized full of excitement normally found in school sporting a gray hoodie with the hood up (I don't know why I guess we were all a little less confident then) and a blue skirt. But no, you greeted me in red boy shorts and a blinding white top. You grabbed my hand... I think u know the rest, do you? Little red corvette. Red is your color, the color of passion and not like that one-dimensional passion that's physical. The passion that runs to your core.

13)

Do you remember when you wrote this in an interview: "Sometimes the light will catch in-between the folds of my blinds; this may cause me to stay awake all night composing a text based on a bout of emotion"?



# Many skies and what I said

*after Khadijah Queen*

ABB EY CLIFFE

---

The day before yesterday's sky was a wall of white flowers and I said let's reemerge into this world together. The sky's undancing petals reflected the sun dutifully the whole atmosphere smelled like gardenias: like cream and spice and the day's changes. And I said let's come back together into being I said let's be together again while the sky kept flowering and growing whiter.

Yesterday's sky was a friendly gesture, the wave of a delicate hand and I said, we'll always feel things intensely like a strong grip like a pounding I said we'll never lose that. Strong feelings don't drown the rest they pull the strings of other feelings taut. That's what I said when the sky was waving its delicate hand. It was being so polite and pink and waving to us and I was talking about how feelings have strings attached to them and I was waiting for its hand to reach down so I could not touch it.

Today's sky a fountainous thing an overflowing river of a thing and I said, I want to get high and eat sushi. The sky was open and brave and youthful in an ancient kind of way and I said I want to walk around the small rooms of my home, thinking of loneliness but not being lonely, chopsticks arriving at my lips again and again and again.



THE LOCK TURNED BACK  
CYNTHIA PAREJA DUBIN  
2021

# Sacred Ritual of Steak

C.D. BAILEY

---

A celebration of eating. A dinner table. My mother makes my favorite meal.

My father says *there isn't enough salt*.

Salts his potatoes like a wound.

My mother believes this

gathering means something

we all want it to mean something.

My father still smells like garage

something between oil and sweat

he says there *isn't enough salt* and he pretends his

food is that man in Kroger

who looked at him funny

and maybe this is god

or something like god

I hate god and I still can't

remember a time my mother made an amazing steak or a dinner

that had enough salt. We all want this to mean something. We are quiet. Our silverware does

enough talking and we're trying to thank god for this meal but none of us really know how to

pray

and I'm eating like the end of the world is in an hour and my father smells like a '67 Chevelle

and my mother cries because there's never enough salt on the steak.



*I HAVE BECOME A BOUQUET*  
CYNTHIA PAREJA DUBIN  
2021



*I HAVE COLORS INSIDE MY POCKET*  
CYNTHIA PAREJA DUBIN  
2021

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**HANG UP YOUR SPURS.  
THE DAY IS OVER.**

