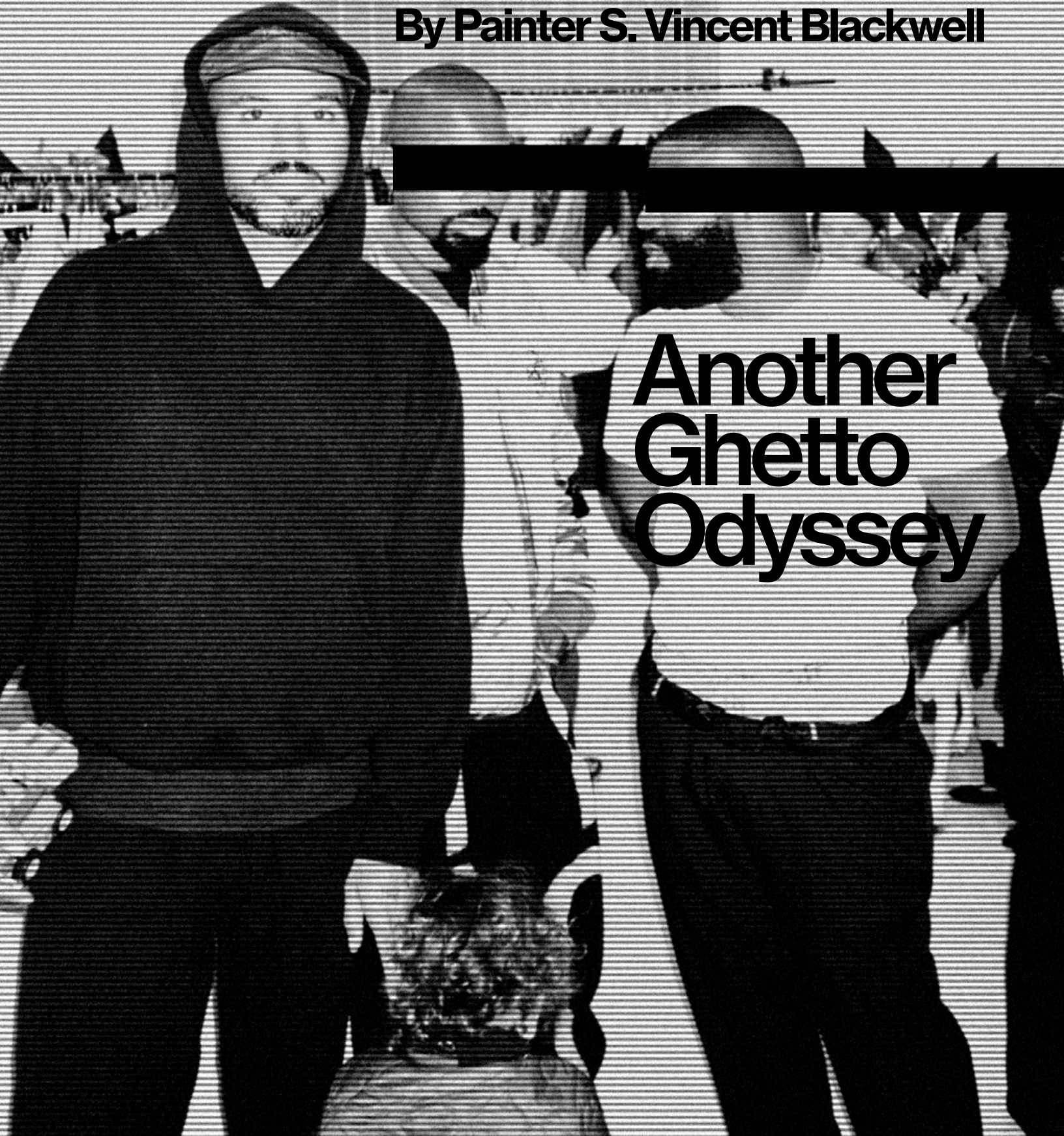


TRIED JAIL. RATHER GO TO HELL.

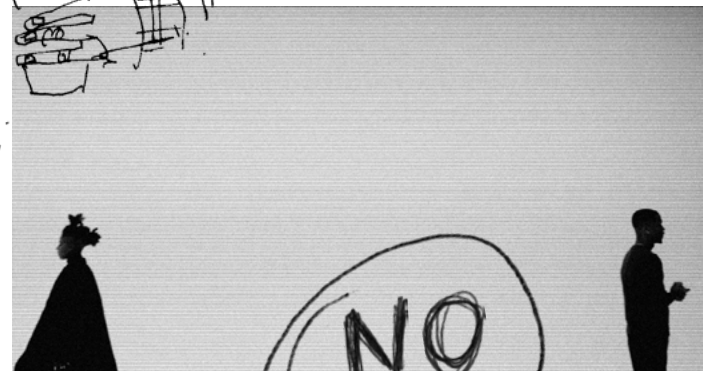
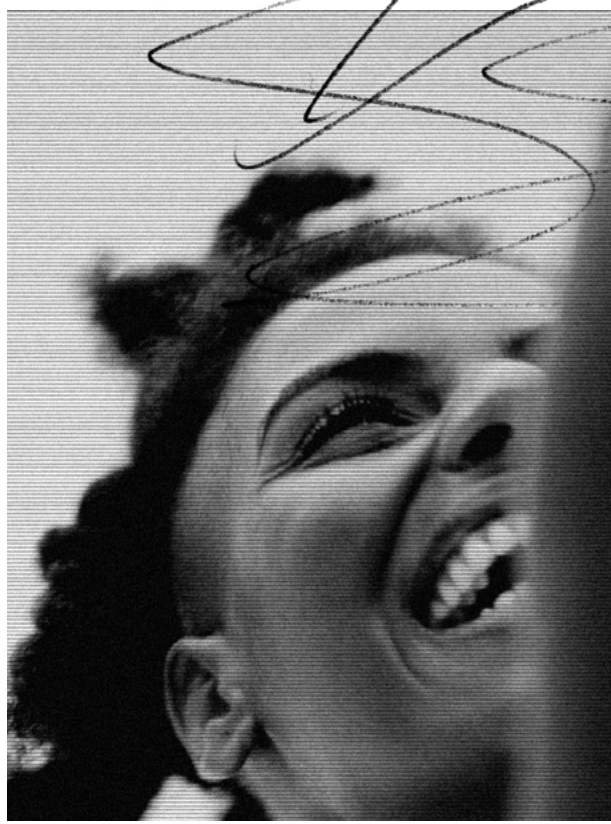
By Painter S. Vincent Blackwell



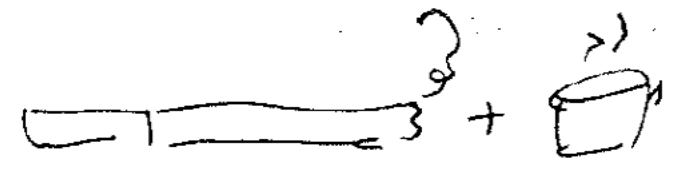
Another
Ghetto
Odyssey



002



NO



CHARLES - GREENBACKS.

003



TRIED JAIL.
RATHER GO TO HELL.
Another Ghetto Odyssey

by Painter S. Vincent Blackwell

@blackwellcooper
ghettoodyssey.com



CHARME PARKER
YARD BIRD



Chapter Break: LI(F)E OF THE PARTY!

004

20

25

30

35

40

50

HER IMAGE WAS SIMPLY THAT
OF IMAGINATION.

A mere mirage in his desert of loneliness. Nothing in her movements allowed me to understand her. Pain was the only palpable energy I could connect to. She was a distant thought of my reality. Her innocence was unwavering.

I WANTED TO KNOW
EVERYTHING ABOUT HER.

I wanted to understand the tears that stained her cheeks. I wanted to rest his head in the curve of her back. I was there - a man captivated by her complexity.

005

I continued viewing from a distance. A feeling of indifference ran rampant throughout my senses, it filled my empty heart. I was a piffling mortal in the company of an angel. I never felt so ashamed. She made me feel jaded. Yet, there she sat in the fellowship of her lonesome.

Unnoticing to my watching eyes, she began to scan the horizon. I wondered what she might be thinking. Were her thoughts of a lost lover, returning to recapture her heart? Or did *she* hope for *he* who would soon come to release her from her forlorn state? With an untrusting heart I wondered if she was there that day waiting for *me*. In the forefront of my reality I understood this thought to be a falsity; marveling at the thought of a love affair that would not last.

With outstretched arms, holding my Manhattan my anxiety reached for her comfort. Silently, I found faith, seemingly reborn. I asked the lord, gawd (whichever was closest) to re-write her transgressions onto my holy testament, so that I may bear the burden of her wrongdoings and make her pure.

See..... Never had he seen such a beauty in the flesh. She was the writings of fiction, the creation of the collective forces of Zion. Her beauty transcended time and space. With an inability to age,

she was an anomaly of the mind, a basis of myth. She was to me, the template of all beauty. *Yet, there we were not knowing each other.*

I remained there that day waiting, at my party - with my friends - having just been released from an Italian jail - waiting for her to spread her wings and fly away from her insecurities.

I appreciated the respect she had for herself. Here, at my party - unafraid to experience the world. I mumbled silently a question I had to know, *what was that which pained her so?* It was my fear I may never know.

As I watched this beautiful stranger, I somehow coerced his mind to believe I could not further continue the toil of life without hearing the melody with which he assumed she spoke.

That day, today - here at my party after being released from the Italian jail... she removed all I had worked for to call myself a man. She had me there that day naked, residing in the breast of my potential. I was but a boy. I wanted to wrap my every insecurity inside of this one woman. I wanted only what she aspired to be. I saw it fit to apologize for all the women I'd had come to love, prior to knowing her. For even in all of their splendor and brilliance, their sheer volume could not amount to the pain I felt lest one more tear fall from the eyes of this newfound beauty.

There she sat that day with truth as her only guiding precedent of life. I wanted to be everything she needed. I wanted to provide all that she could not acquire. I sought to be all that she may never become.

I was hers without her ever knowing.

MY PARTY SOON ENDED, BUT
IT WAS NEVER OVER.

Chapter Two: THE CHASE, PART ONE

006



00

05

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

I never knew I could ever hate a woman that much. But my hate was only derived from my unwillingness to love her anymore. A few months after she'd left I started hating even the sound of her name, ██████. There were drunken nights when I'd call hoping she'd pick up. Of course she never did. My drunk dials serserving as a passive reminder that all I wanted was some sense of acknowledgement. Some sense of want, or rather – being wanted. Having a broken heart hurts. Hurts in a way I refuse to describe.

IT'S NOT THE PAIN OF THE BREAK
BUT THE INABILITY TO PUT
YOURSELF BACK TOGETHER.

007 That hurts hardest. Knowing no matter how hard you try to reconstruct who you once were, there will always be a piece missing. That piece, that lone piece causes you to alter your step ever so slightly and in turn forces the foundation of your form to rub you the wrong way, quite literally- resulting in an everlasting pain that hums between your ears and congregates in the creases of your toes- making sure to find every soft spot on your body and... simply hurt.

Those nights were the nights - the drunken ones - when I missed ██████. On those endless nights, I'd call Juliette. She'd patiently listen to my ramble. Friendship is undervalued. Especially the friends you've made love to. The friends you've made love to make the relationships last longer. The connection is stronger. More vulnerable and sincere. Making love to a stranger is for self pleasure, but making love to a friend is attempting to fill them with a love you cannot say with words, so.....

"Where are you?" Juliette always asked the right questions. Simple and straightforward. She asked me things I never thought to think about. Always. I never lied to her. There was no need. Juliette was the oxygen mask in my crashing plane. She allowed me to breathe, offering a false sense of security just moments before I'd surely die.

I tell her without hesitation, because by now I'm beyond coherent, "it's late again and I'm in my loft. Lonely. Looking through books about banks. Well, their blueprints. I should paint. I should paint pretty pictures for all the pretty women I've pleased."

"Don't be so pitiful. It's pitiful to think about the past", Juliette was laughing softly - as if she was touching herself to the sound of my voice.

"I need inspiration. I should drive. Driving with no destination. I should drive". I knew I shouldn't. "Have you been drinking?"

"I wish I could drive by your place? Are you home? It's getting so late, I don't remember when or where the time went. I like to say, *when the time went*- like I've misplaced the minutes, not the moments. Where is the moment? Does that make sense? Am I making any sense Juliette? I'm sorry... just had to call you. You understand I just had to call you, right Juliette? You're the only one I know for sure who'd answer. Do my words sound slurred? Yes. To answer your question, yes... I have been drinking. Days now. Technically weeks. It's just, I feel like my thoughts are just a tad bit – no, a little bit faster than how fast I can get them out of my head. It's like my tongue, mouth and mind aren't in unison at the moment. Everything feels so fleeting. Am I making any sense? Do I ever make any sense?"

I put the phone on speaker and paced. I pace during meaningful conversations. It helps me to think more clear. Clearly, I'm thinking too much. It's why I called Juliette in the first place.

"Are you going to tell me what's wrong? Where's ██████", I can hear the raspiness in her voice - she's drunk enough to care. I take a strong sip of whiskey. Then another as we sit in silence.

I TAKE ANOTHER DRINK, JUST AS
THE DRINK TAKES ME.

"I'm thinking about you Juliette. It's fucking unfair the way memories work. I only remember what I don't want to. You and I not together. Not talking. Not nothing. Monday. Tuesday. Wednesday. Friday. Saturday. Sunday. It's Thursday and I'm thinking about you. The things I thought I'd think about you... I don't. I can't. I won't. Why? I wonder what you're wearing. Something simple.

That one piece you used to put on. Sort of blue. Basic. Basically what I want right now, I want you naked. I should be a better lover? A better friend. A better man. But. Then again. I can't. It's Thursday and I want to do everything in the world with you, but I can't. Cannot. Words are weird, Juliette. I wonder what words want? What words I want to say. I never do. Ever. Fuck- the liquor is talking again. Why can't we just feel? Fuck. Out of body, that's how I feel. Someone asked me where you were, Juliette. It's because I talk about you all the time to bartenders. I laughed but only about the idea. I really wonder where you are? I really do. Damn. Damn. Damn Juliette,

why aren't you here? I love you. I love you only because I know that love is an impulse which I constantly act on. Do you love me?"

"I'm home, alone - in New York. My new place in Chelsea. You would like it here. I just know you would. It's minimalist. Not by choice, just haven't had any time to shop yet. I should. I mean- I'm sure... I'll surely get around to it soon. What time is it where you are?"

"Time is irrelevant. Tomorrow's sun doesn't have to rise."

Then just then, at that very moment (this very moment, on the phone with Juliette) the thought creeps in. I should die tonight. I should - but tomorrow will start

008

and I'll start sober, forgetting we've had this conversation, forgetting these feelings I feel.

"You should call her," Juliette

knows.

I won't call. I'd rather sort through every utterance of what went wrong, knowing everything leads back to me and my misgivings. "Call to say what," I respond.

"Anything or everything you've said to me." "Impossible."

"Understandable, but not impossible." "What are you wearing?"

"Why?"

"I want to get a better picture of you at this very moment. For some reason I can't see you"

"You want me to send you a photo?"

"No. I want you to tell me what you're wearing. Describe it to me in detail. Don't leave anything to my imagination. Well, I mean, excite my imagination obviously, but don't make me fill in any of the details."

It really wasn't important to know what she was wearing but Juliette loved fashion, so I figured it would give her something to talk about instead of my constant rambling about [REDACTED].

"Nothing," she replied, "just nail polish and my jewelry, a couple of necklaces and the rings I always wear. It's been a brutal summer here - plus I'm not meant to get dressed until a little later."

I WASN'T EXPECTING HER TO BE NUDE.

"You're not naked." "I am."

"I feel like you're not and this is just a way out of answering my question." "Why would you say that?"

"Because. I've seen you nude, numerous times - there's nothing for my imagination to run with. You're taking the fun out of this. I want to know what you're wearing."



"I'm not going to tell you, it'll spoil the surprise." "I'm not following?"

"I'll wear what I'm wearing next time we go out to dinner and you can see, if what I'm wearing then is remotely close to what you're envisioning now".

"What time is it there, you never said", this I actually wanted to know. I needed to start to find my bearings.

"I know I never said- because it's irrelevant. Do you miss me? Have you transferred your broken heart back onto me? Should we video? I do miss your face. I feel like it's been ages since I last seen you."

"There's no need to lie, you never try to see me anymore."

"Oh, stop- don't be such a pessimist", Juliette always thought I was hard on myself. I'm not.

009

I SPUN 'ROUND AND I CAUGHT A QUICK GLIMPSE OF MY REFLECTION.

I saw all the sorrow that was painted onto it. I'd aged without knowing. I don't even know who I was looking at anymore, there were no words to describe. I've never been a man who cares for labels, one in particular sparks my ire, pessimist. That and *minimalist*. They're both very radical. I don't have the attention span to really be either of the two. I'm stark in the way I live and curate my space, but also endlessly optimistic that I can one day clear my head of this depression. I really want to create warmth and comfort in my life, but the ability to do so on a daily basis seems to defeat me.

The idea of optimism is really going to the bone and stripping away everything. Optimism only truly exists when you cannot have anything you desire. You remove the want and free the mind. There's no longer expectation or failure. I have nothing- except everything I've ever wanted, so- when someone says I'm a pessimist I say.... *you don't know me.*

Anyone who knows me, knows- I'm passionate. Devoted to my work. Easily excitable. Rigidly reclusive, but have a sincere devotion to my friends, lovers and the women who lie to me. Our fallout - and I - stemmed from an opinion I had, *"a real man never apologizes."*

They just shouldn't. It takes away from our superiority. And what's a man without his sense of dominance? A man at all times should be a man. Masculine. Unmoving. Dominate.

Adventurous. Rich. And in love. A man should be hopelessly in love, whether it be for the day or an eternity.

WE'D BEEN LIVING IN ITALY FOR SIX MONTHS. [REDACTED] AND I.

Most of us were there at the time, each in our own modern flats - the Homeless Elite that is. On this particular day, I was having lunch with a beautiful actress named Bella. Nothing romantic. Another friend.

I was convinced she'd been seeing a man - a Spanish football (soccer) star. It didn't concern me much. There really was no future. Plus she had to return to the states in less than a week to begin production on another film. She wanted my advice. Who was I to stand in the way of her desires? She, like I, was a romantic egotist. Caught up in every idea of love. Loves that don't last. Won't. Can't. Shouldn't.

[REDACTED] arrived.

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR:

I simply must apologize for redacting her name but any utterance of her name is criminal.

[REDACTED] sat with us. Shared stories and sparkling wine (they were out of champagne).

Ironically, I'd missed [REDACTED] on the day that would be the day when we'd eventually end. She's been out shopping. I'm not a man that appreciates physical distance during relationships.

Us ending wasn't a real thought. Surely we'd rekindle our romance in another city at another time. The times we had were entertaining. In the past I wouldn't have cared, I would have simply replaced her with someone younger and speaks less English. But I thought she was magical.

Bella seemed to dominate the conversation. She knew how to perform. I'd stopped listening. I don't take anything away from Bella but she's just another woman amongst my many other women. Each of my muses are always wonderful women. Smart. Unique. Distant but that's due to my stoic nature. I've always enjoyed my women foreign or famous -- those are the two most beautiful things a girl can be. Oh, and quiet. Not silent, but quiet during the appropriate moments. Sometimes saying nothing says everything.

*ANOTHER NOTE FROM AUTHOR:
When I say quiet I am not talking about a
woman's POV, opinion or societal voice.
I mean quite in my mind equates to
mysterious and that to me is attractive.
Men too should shut up, but that
discussion will take up far too much
time to even begin to explore in such a
simple story.*

hand. My first novel in her other. If I'd gone blind in that very moment - I'd have celebrated the fact she was the last face I'd ever seen. She - above all, was supreme.

THE SUN WAS BEGINNING TO SET.

Her bored, haughty face turned and smiled. But it concealed something. It held everything I'd ever wanted to be. There, on that balcony we sat for hours, discussing ideas. Not once did we discuss each other. Just our perceptions. She showed me the way the world worked and in exchange I committed to showing her my world. A world where every night was a party and every day a love story, told without regret or resemblance of reality.

In the brief moments of silence, I could hear a conversation inside the party about a disaster in the Indian Ocean - I paid it no mind. I sipped whiskey and listened to her. I sat there staring at her face until I saw her face in the sunrise. I asked her if she'd join me for breakfast.

WE DRANK OUR BREAKFAST - A
MAKESHIFT BLOODY MARY. COFFEE
AND CONVERSATION.

Us three, sitting there outside the cafe are all wonderful to one another. Doomed. But, both beautiful and drunk. Being drunk, most times, is the only thing I can ever remember being.

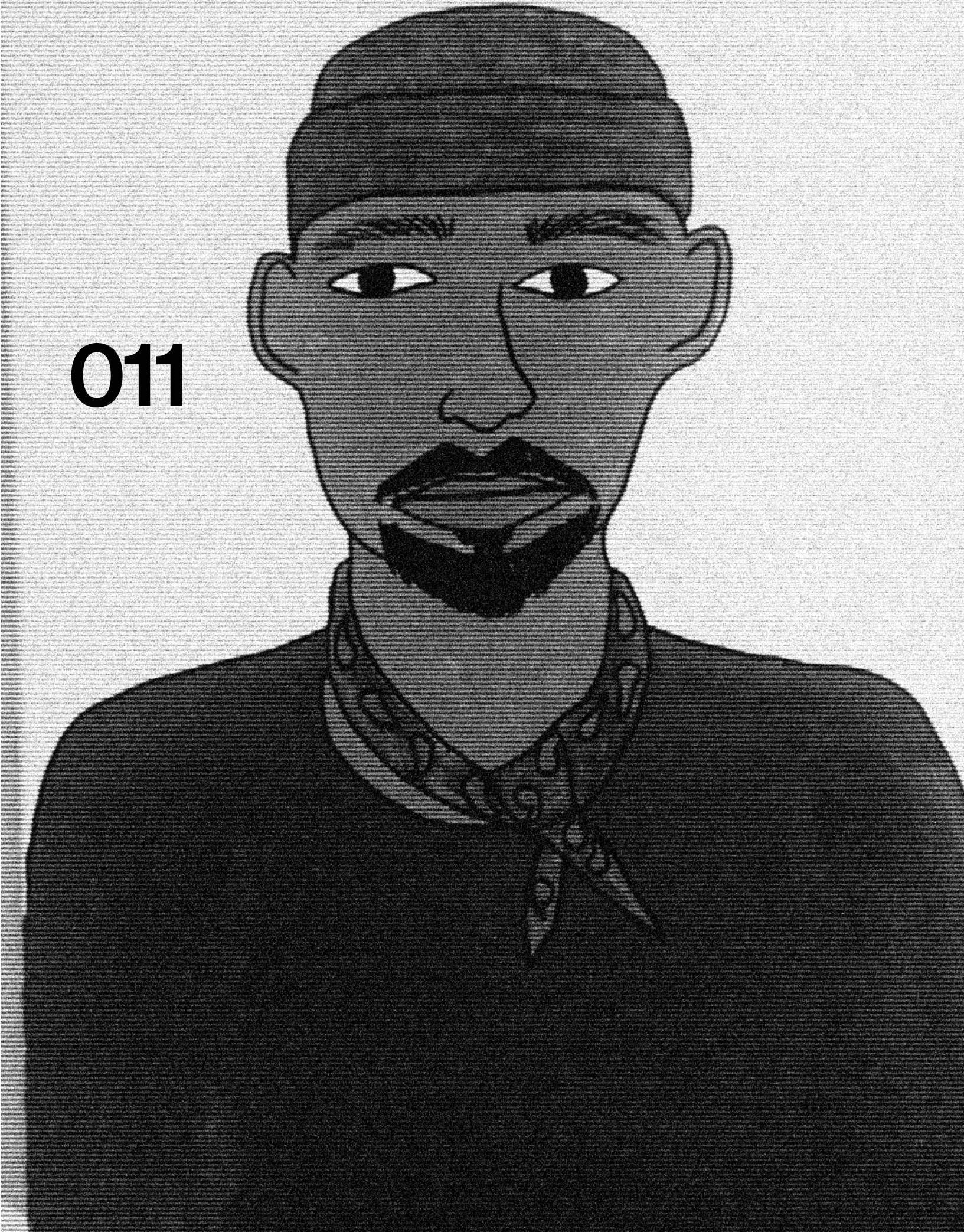
010

finds my hand under the table and holds it like she'll never let go. My mind begins to drift deeper into a memory.

I met at my party. That party my friends had thrown when I'd finally been released from that Italian jail. It classically cliched felt like we'd met before. I don't remember who'd brought her. I'd gone upstairs to smoke a cigarette. I liked to only showcase my quality vices. She was on the balcony overlooking the city. A glass of champagne in one



011



She said, "I'm so sick and tired of trying to correct things. Change them. What if all we are here for is to enjoy the chaos?"

The way she could string together a sentence was magic. Her words created a sense of illusion. You know you're being fooled but it's the excitement of the performance that makes it all seem real. It was her attention to detail. The sound of her voice. The diffidence of her smile. The way she looked away ever so slightly when she lied. I, honestly, had fallen madly in love.

She continued, "What if our current minds are some sort of escape from the stark reality that when we wake up, there is simply nothing but infinite time and space?"

012

She glanced off over the horizon before finishing her thought, "You ever notice when two people fall in love - true love - they seem to disappear. Vanish. Which gives me the idea that Earth is one big single's bar. Basically. A place to meet your future eternity. That person, male or female, who you're willing to explore the unknown with. Disappear into a dimension not understood by the lonely."

Nothing she said made sense. That was the magic. Not knowing how the trick would end. I was simply along for the ride. A willing fool, infatuated with her fancy. She made me feel familiar and full. God, that must be last night's liquor still talking. At times I've known myself to be somewhat of a psychopath. Humorous none the less but still insane. It happens most when I'm alone. I'm able to think. When I'm with people I only seem to want to entertain. But, if I'm able to be honest..... spending time with her, I felt that I was actually existing.

Her trick was complete. I was hers. No longer a man, just hers. Neither alive or dead. Only existing in our newfound unknown. But, if her love and attention was all I had - that would be enough until the end of time. Sincerely, nothing more would be needed but mashed potatoes, water and booze.

A SUIT TOO. A MAN IS HIS SUIT.

That morning, we took a car ride to the countryside to see a friend. I detailed how, recently I'd fallen from the glory I'd so severely sought after. Success is strange. It's such an exclusive club that most of us have no idea what to do with ourselves when we're not working. I'd become highly successful and romanticized in the public eye about my antics, more than my artistry - at times (to be clear, me as a

novelist gave me a sense of superiority I cannot fully comprehend). So, I write.

As I drove I thought of all those men that women liked when we were in elementary, high school, even college. The men who now take my orders and wash my car. I was always a man the women liked but never loved -- not like the quarterbacks or the boys whose parents seemed to - *always be out of town*. My entire life I'd felt like a spectator. Some revered reporter. Which, for the common man, may seem admirable. But I was never one who wanted to remain unseen.

Unnoticed. Some faint story of respect. The man who served no master but sacrificed a purpose. That man was a man I never wanted to be. Before Italy, I was becoming him. Then jail. Then I met her.

IT WAS SATURDAY. DAY GATHERING. OTHER ARTIST TYPES. WINE. THE HOST IS IRRELEVANT.

We didn't mingle much. Instead, we continued where we'd left off on the balcony, overlooking the city. I was the only Black person there. A Black man in the English countryside is something to be seen. We were tucked away in the garden. Our little private prison of tulips. We were drinking now - not to get drunk but simply drinking to avoid our impending sobriety. She got up to walk, I followed. She spoke - her words caught in the wind, "Attraction is a varying ideal. It is in constant change. I may say I enjoy the smarter women in the bunch. But I can't tell that by how perky her breasts are. No. That's the attraction -- the symmetrical lines of her face. And, dimples."

I'm a man who's lean so I prefer my women the same. And though my women throughout the years and amidst my travels had constantly received compliments regarding their beauty... I wonder in a hundred years if people will feel the same. I say this because I find the Mona Lisa highly unattractive. This is a factual statement.

She stopped and her words became more clear. She said nothing. I stared as a ladybug landed on the strap of her dress, then walked slowly across her shoulder, up her neck and off into the wind - as if he too had found just the right words he needed from her to feel like he could fly.

watched and I watched her. She's striking. Aggressively beautiful. She's that extra heartbeat that frightens you in the middle of the night - that extra heartbeat that makes you realize your own mortality.

We walked back to the party saying nothing. It became a sport to watch people watch her. And yet, as she spoke to strangers, I noticed the slight irregular projection of her tooth, that on any other woman would be outright deplorable -- her's is unique.

The party picked up and per usual, the assholes took to performing their instruments. A rambunctious sing along ensued.

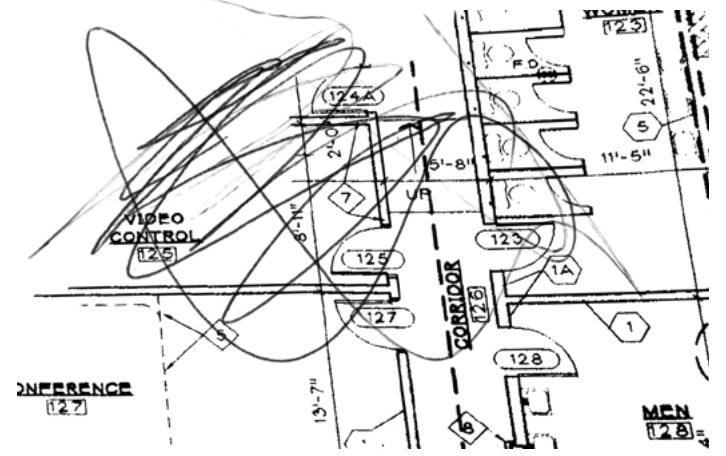
I envy the musically gifted. Whether it be voice or instrument. They can easily express their emotions with sound. I'm restricted to the conceited use of words. Words are for everyone and yet I manipulate them daily to serve my greater needs. Sounds though.... they're personable. Unless recorded they are unrepeatable.

013

"FUTURESEX/LOVESOUNDS" - makes no sense written down. But then you press play. Then you feel. You can't do that with writing. Well, you can - I can, but it's the voice inside your head reading my words to you... Not me.

I've always wanted to but never succeeded at anything but manipulating people's emotions. This is what I was most ashamed of. I despised this ability to masturbate with words. Then she smiled. And I saw the humor God had. I could use words to create things that were perfectly flawed. I avoided every social interaction as the day dragged on but Maxim still found a way to corner me by the bar.

While he rattled along, I stared at her sitting on a couch. Not saying anything. Observing people. She made me wonder what happened to the intellectuals. I rewrote her backstory. Starting with her name. No, it didn't fit. For the next few moments, she was nameless - her name is only the words I type. She's not a face. She just is. Picture the lake you used to visit as a child. When

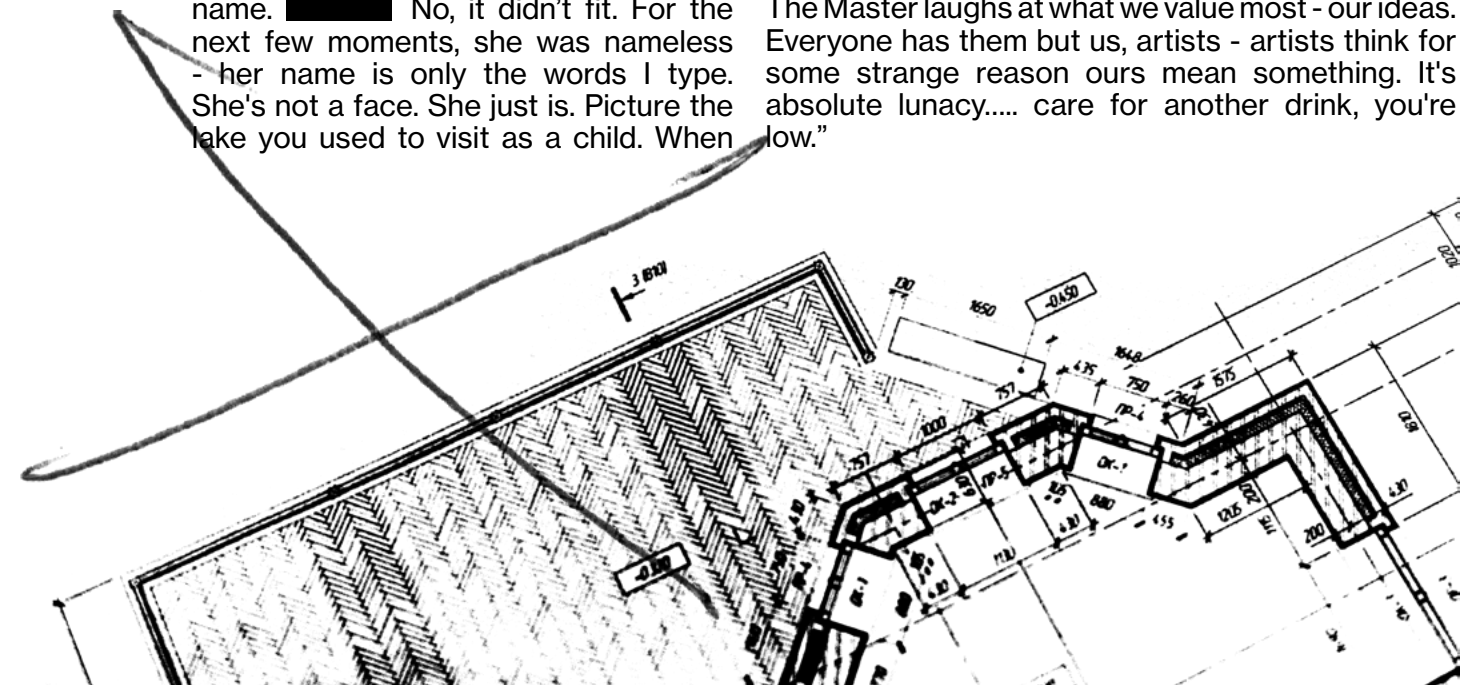


nothing in the world made sense except the seasons. She's the breeze at 8am when the water looks like glass. And a leaf falls from a tree. She reminds you we are all impermanent.

Maxim talked louder when he realized I wasn't listening, making his words dramatically more clear. The film, "The Master" had just been released in theaters. I'd gone alone. Maxim dissected it without me asking, "at one point there is a scene in what I perceived was a church of some sort. I fell asleep for a moment at most but when I woke up I felt that I was the only one in a crowded auditorium. That everything had disappeared. This caused me to laugh at a moment in the film that wasn't funny."

He continued to talk about The Master and what he thought it meant. I stood there sipping my drink, staring at her on the couch. Music played. The song changed. I had an arresting urge to do the *money dance*. So I did. She saw. She laughed.

Maxim drunkenly declared, "The Master -- it's the lunacy of all artists, especially the truly great ones. The Master laughs at what we value most - our ideas. Everyone has them but us, artists - artists think for some strange reason ours mean something. It's absolute lunacy.... care for another drink, you're low."



I wanted to change the subject. Hell, I wanted to jump off the roof if it meant an end to the conversation. Maxim obliged unknowingly by asking me, "so old friend, what are you working on these days? When can I read something? I plan to travel soon. Is there a draft of something new?"

THERE WAS SOMETHING NEW -
HER.

I told him how I'd love one, maybe two women at most - slept with multiple. Hurt more than I am proud of.

"What does this have to do about writing", he asked.

014

"And yet, I write about love as if I know something about it. The last thing I loved was the idea of love until I ruined it by thinking my version was

different than any other story," I replied.

SHE COULD HEAR ME. SHE SMILED.
THAT TOOTH. HER GENTLE FLAW.

I continued, but I wanted to make sure a certain point came across, both relating to my work and that wretched film - "The Master, is fear. Who do we have to please when our ideas become "right? What happens when our lies become truth? I can write about love and never believe in it. I can write about Italy and never go. *I had*. But I can make you believe. I can make you horny.

Make you laugh. Cry. I can make you question anything by questioning it myself. But I'm not the master. No. Not at all. Not yet at least. It's only once I believe what I write is real -- then, then and only then will my words mean something to me. I can spend a lifetime writing letters down. But the moment I believe I can control other people's emotions - is when I can control other people's emotions and for most people that's very frightening".

Something caught her attention. When I looked, it was gone. When I looked back she was looking at me, head slightly tilted down, just a hint of a smile - a knowing look of emotional synergy. Soon, she was in between Maxim and I at the bar. I poured her a glass of champagne - she only looked at me, never Maxim.



"The Master", I started to explain, but with her now next to us, my thoughts shifted to her smile, "love is merely the moment we are willingly to die..." At that time I genuinely believed that. "... And subsequently never love anything, again."

As she stood next to me and her hand touched mine - I had what some may say was a revelation. It was more or less a new belief. Something that if I never said would never matter.

But I did. "Love is an informal introduction to yourself. And that was what I am seemingly most afraid of - knowing who I was. Am. So, I never loved."

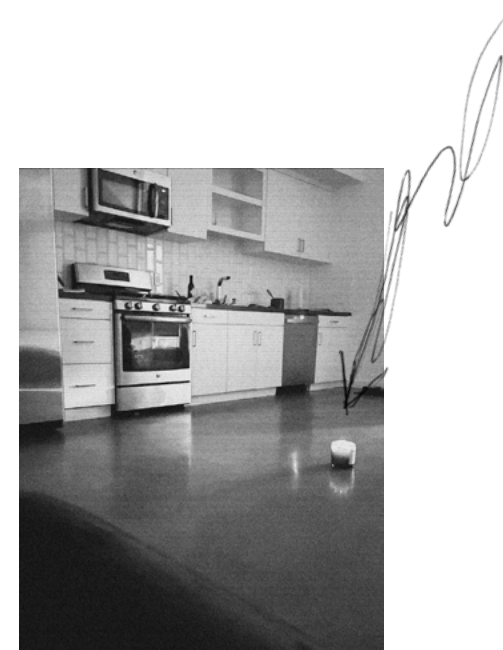
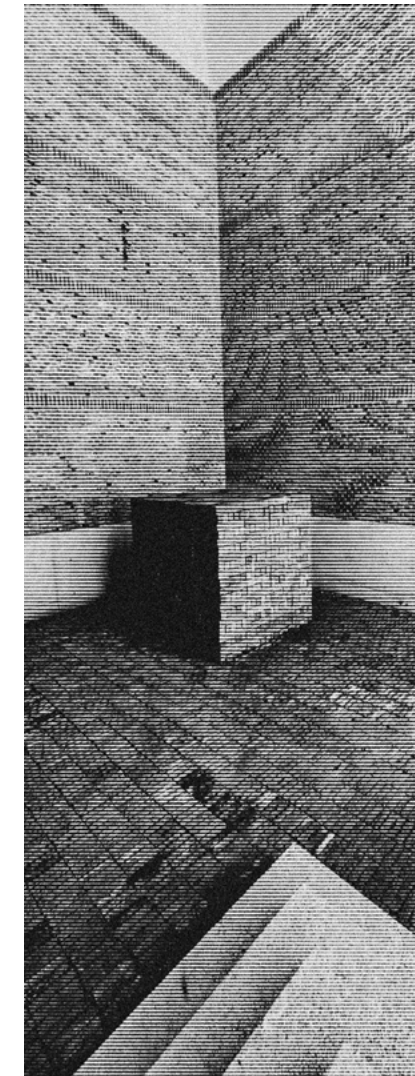
She kissed my cheek. A moment after we weren't in this world anymore - nope. We were in the future/ present looking at ourselves at a party amongst strangers I'd considered friends.

WE'D VANISHED.

Juliette - on the other end of the phone, whispers my name, "I don't know what to say".

I stop pacing and look at the bottle of liquor sitting on the floor - empty. "The last thing I remember is you is a sundress. Some pattern. Somewhere, but I don't remember where. Damn. That can't be the only moment I remember? It's Toronto. Somewhat cold. An art fair. Us and our fancy friends. Fuck. All I wanted was to fit in back then. Shit. You showed me around the city and I saw the woman you're about to become. So beautiful.

015



But. But I can't come along. My time is depleting. I'm everything you'll ever want any man to be. I'll become the rebel you tried to make regal. I should make a movie about you and the way you look. Pretend to be a French filmmaker. Fly far away. Be free and tell the greatest love story ever seen. Love is so simple."

"I love you, goodnight". She hung up. Then, silence.

I lay, staring at the ceiling, imagining a million roses blooming all around me. I can barely keep my eyes open. Eyes are closed. I'm gone. Nothing left to do but die. I'll dream instead.

Daydream at night. [REDACTED] and I are together again and everyone around us doesn't speak English. The end.

RATHER, THE BEGINNING
OF MY END.

Days later I've forgotten all about the other night and I spend my night, like most other nights - at the end of the bar, with a drink in one hand and a woman's thigh in my other.

See, there's a recurring thought that ruins my mind - "am I alright?" Simple but persistent. It's a plague of a dilemma because there is no real answer to the question, "am I alright?" I have a gaudy sense of myself. An arrogantly social recluse. If I was asked to describe myself that's the ideal definition. I can't help it. I grew up in my imagination.

"But now that I've shared something about myself - the question is... do you like drugs?"

She laughed - the girl with me at the bar. A sip of liquor. She leans over just enough that I can see the brown of her nipple. I wanted to kiss her right there.

Later, her long legs couldn't find a place to hide in the back seat of that taxi. The driver was oblivious. We rode east. I touched the top of her knee and felt her shiver. The vein in her wrist expanded. I was trying to conceal the fact I was sweating. I wanted her to spread her legs a little further. I slid my hand up her thigh, she closed her eyes - the car came to a stop.

\$34.12. I paid. She crawled out the cab and let the wind catch her dress. I gave the driver \$40.00 and followed.

Inside she was already undressed. I wondered if she still believed in love. Her sheets were a meticulous presentation - but only for a moment. Her bed moved. We rolled around. The light hit her stomach just right so I kissed it. Then again. Her back arched. Her legs around me.

016

DREAM
BEING
HAPPY
FEEL
LESSER

Later, I sat on the balcony. I'm on the balcony. I was on the balcony. She's asleep, naked. We're naked. The moon was how they write about in books. The sun was going to rise in a few hours but so what? I wanted to press my body against hers and sleep. I couldn't. So, I left.

Taxi ride west. Women. Money. Laughter. That's all I want. The morning was pretty but so what? I'm on my balcony - it's getting warm. I don't want anything to do with her anymore - but I wonder what she's doing. I'm not waking up until noon tomorrow. I remember a conversation from the night before. A friend - Cheyne - told me, "don't let your self-

017

worth get wrapped up in your art." But it's hard when that's the only thing that means something. When I write, I'm real.

When I'm real, I write. I'm sober and sad.

IT'S SUNRISE.

I'm unable to sleep. Juliette calls. I tell her, "I'm the only thing I'm afraid of." It's a consequence of trying to communicate the feelings of a generation lost. Us. The Homeless Elite. I'm addicted to pretty things and the internet. Veneda Carter images in my preview. Text edit open. Prince, "insatiable" on repeat. Surrealism on the television. Intoxicated again. Reading. Talking on the phone. Multi-tasking.

I get a text but can't see straight. Juliette says she loves me. I do too. Love her. Not me. At the moment I'm everything I've never wanted to be. But she still loves me. I like that. I only want money to make more moments with strippers. Miss them. The same way I miss ██████ .

I TEXT HER, "THINKING ABOUT YOU."
I WAS. AM. CONSTANTLY DO.

I never edit when I write. I like the urgency. I'm incomplete, just like my sentences. A girl calls. I ignore it. Voicemail. I check the message. She says, "come live with me in New York you fool. You can write your novel here. I'll take care of you. I miss you. I love you." Brunch drunk I assume. She says she only wants my friendship. I believe her. Then I realize I tell stories because people call me a writer. I call myself a protagonist. My mother calls me her son. I want to be everything I've always wanted to be. I wonder what people will call that?

Maybe I'll wake up from this bad dream? Computer tells me, 10 %. Maybe I'll love her in the next lifetime? Maybe... the cocaine is starting to wear off. So is my self-esteem. So is the confidence of that little voice in my head that's telling me to stay awake and finish this story. Instead. I sleep. I sleep without dreaming, just in case they decide one day to come true - I don't want to know the ending.



Short Story: STREET FIGHTER VS SUPPOSITION

018

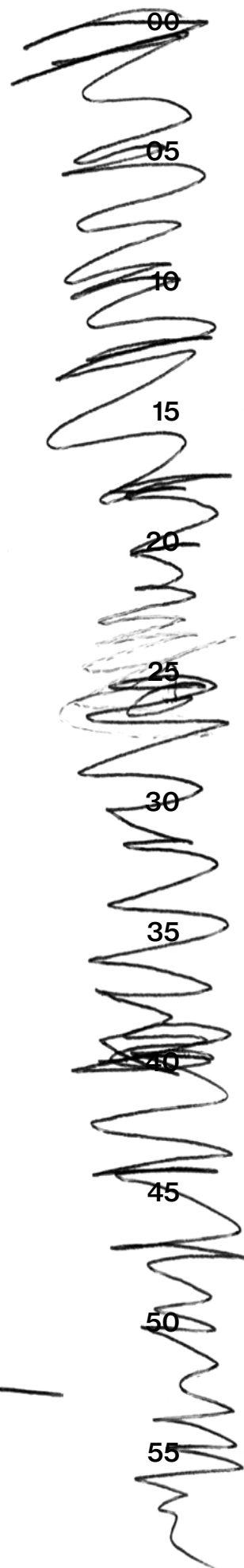
Greece. A midsummer night. Love, love became the motive -- not money. It was my biggest mistake. She would come to ruin my entire world and I welcomed the chaos.

██████, my favorite drug.

SUPPOSITION: an uncertain belief.

Love. Real love. It's like Street Fighter the video game. You play against a variety of opponents equipped with the only skills you have. You win some, you lose some. But in the end, even after you beat the game you turn it off. You're all alone. But you're happy because you feel like you did something. Then you realize you never want to play that game again. That's love.

Signed,
Painter, S. Vincent Blackwell



019

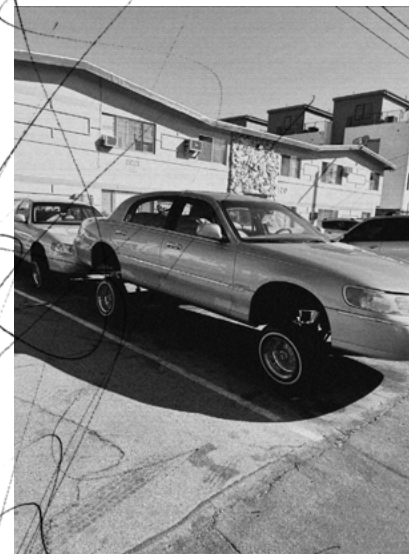




020

021

BY FLYRT RENYOLDS



MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK

IF WE **TOUCH**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **FUCK**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **FIGHT**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **LOVE**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **HATE**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **KISS**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **SHOUT**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **TALK**, WHAT HAPPENS?

MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK

IF WE **RUN**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **STAY**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **HIT**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **HUG**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **RUB**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **YELL**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **CRY**, WHAT HAPPENS?
IF WE **TALK**, WHAT HAPPENS?

INTERLUDE: I BLAME SOCIETY
SOCIETY MADE ME WHAT I AM
THAT'S BULLSHIT
YOU'RE A WHITE SUBURBAN PUNK,
JUST LIKE ME

MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK
MEN DON'T TALK



~~LOTTING SOME GENERAL~~

OUR SOULS ARE ARGUING IN ANOTHER DIMENSION

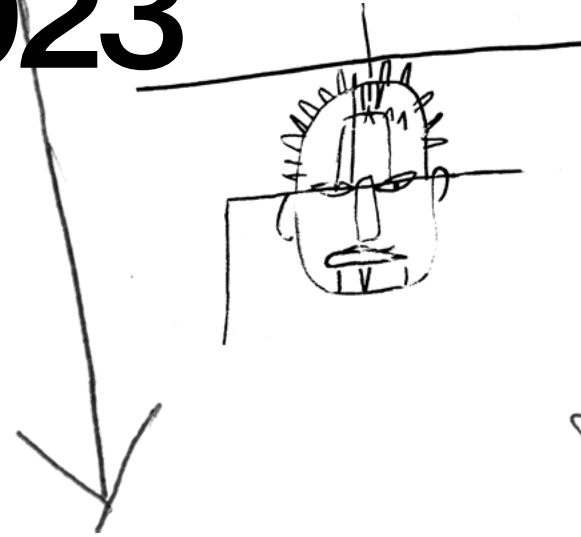
022



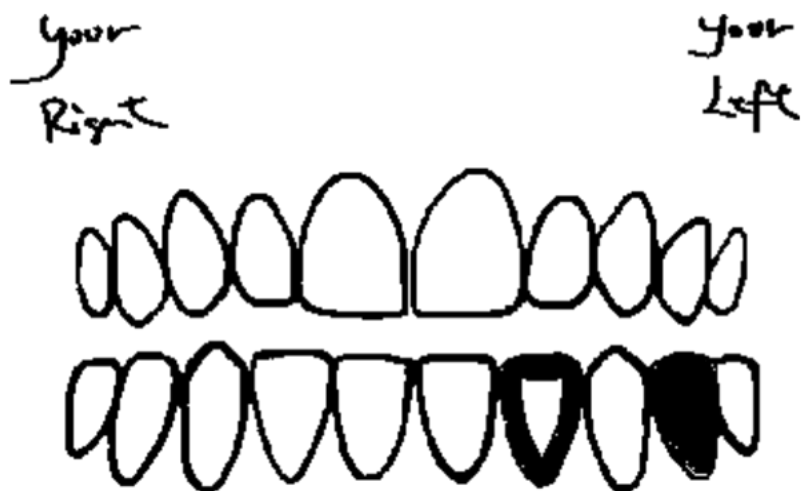
OUR SOULS ARE ARGUING IN ANOTHER DIMENSION



023



BEAUTIFUL THINGS DON'T ASK FOR ATTENTION



**TRIED JAIL.
RATHER GO TO HELL.
Another Ghetto Odyssey**

by Painter S. Vincent Blackwell

@blackwellcooper
ghettoodyssey.com