



By Painter S. Vincent Blackwell

**A
LITTLE ODYSSEY
OUT OF REALITY
AND
INTO A GHETTO
RODEO**

By Painter S. Vincent Blackwell



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“Born into the murky depths of obscurity, Blackwell’s early years remain veiled in the mist of speculation. Some say he emerged from the fog-drenched streets of Paris, while others swear he was raised amidst the crumbling ruins of an ancient African castle.

Realistically, he’s a Black boy from America (insert any major metropolitan area).

Regardless of his origins, one thing is certain: his enigmatic persona.

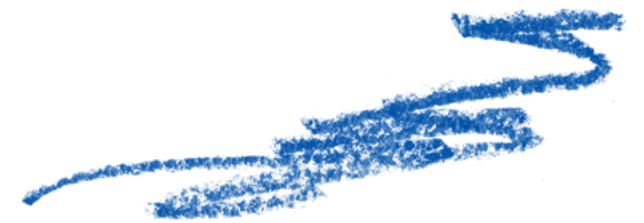
*His zine (story), a cryptic tome of artistic expression, serves as a portal into the depths of his imagination. Filled with esoteric symbolism, **“my vanity of existence”** reads like a love letter to a person unknown. Is it a diary entry? An apology to a former lover or a last ditch effort to remain sane as he roams the streets looking for someone at the bottom of a bottle?*

*Regardless, **this little odyssey out of reality and into a ghetto rodeo-** invites readers to demand more out of an author who purposefully gives so little.”*

@blackwellcooper

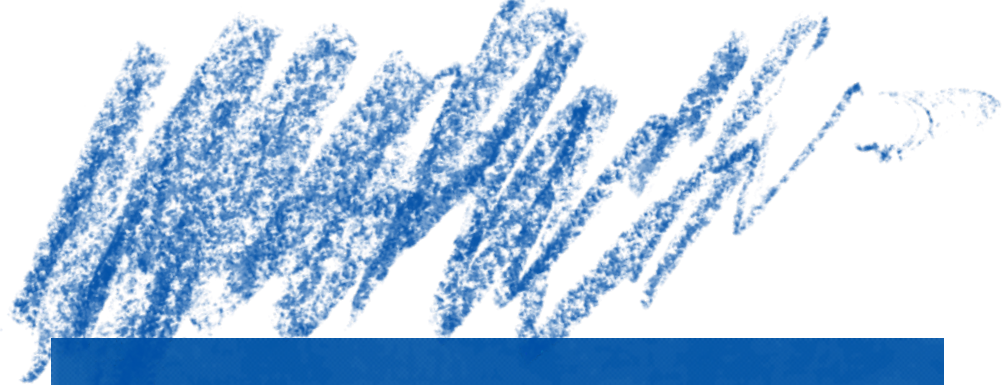


003



VANITY OF EXISTENCE

By Painter, S. Vincent Blackwell



004

—
***At some point, her love will kill me.
But until then... I don't know anything, and neither do you.***

THE HOMELESS ELITE

— an introduction.

Everyone had gathered at my house on this particular occasion, it was a “welcome home” of sorts. I'd just been released from an Italian jail. Apparently it's illegal to domesticate a hyena. *Caroline*. I named the hyena, *Caroline*. Adorable, but dangerous. She was a gift. Or, rather - a debt payment from an Oligarch. A bit unnecessary when I stop and think about it. When he gave her to me, she was just a cub- but they grow up so fast. We'd been drinking buddies. The Oligarch and I, not the hyena. Regardless, the Italians can be so stuck up about their rules and their culture and their artifacts and... *oh it doesn't really matter.*

Also- There was an alleged charge that I'd discharged a firearm in a public square. *Allegedly*. From what I remember, I'm pretty sure they were legally purchased fireworks and it was the makeshift cannon that got me in trouble. All I really remember was cocaine. Too much of it.

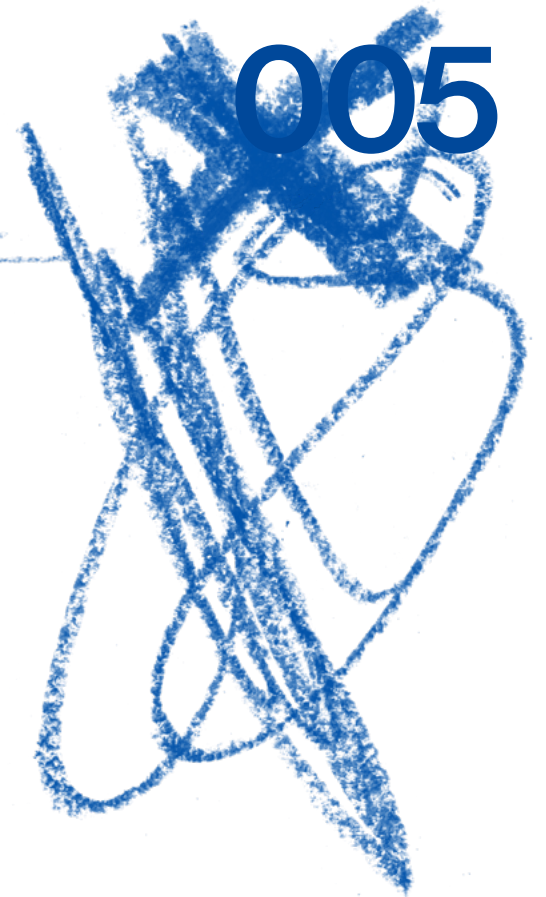
IT WAS THE END OF SPRING.

This party - my welcome home party - was decorated with clippings of my outlandish doings.

The papers in Europe had taken ever-so-kindly to my rebellious nature and followed me with a camera wherever I went. It made it very hard to step out with another woman who wasn't the woman I was seeing - so in a good way it made me more honest. My previous girlfriend would try and convince me I was a *role model* of some sort. I never accepted that notion. I was me. These were my friends. This was our life. We were a sight to be seen. Wild. Opinionated. Drunken. Scrutinized. Idolized. Envied. Rich - some wealthy - men & women. But all of us, friends and acquaintances alike were elitist. Opulent assholes who funneled muted kindness through our charities. The only thing we cared about was each other and our money.

THE HOMELESS ELITE - that's what the papers in London had dubbed us. The year prior we'd all lived in the same high-rise located in the East End. I remember once NEZ, the American musical talent, had come to do some shopping and turned up quite a stir with the clamoring photographers. He was the fashionable sort. The designer, Robert Babbagestalk had a pop up from his most recent show in Paris. They'd been friends for years. I assumed that's why he (NEZ) was in town.

005



006

At the time he was dating the famed supermodel. Her, the one with a name and a face. She and I had actually just recently ended our brief love affair. Well, to be clear it was a friendship with an emotional intimacy that felt like an everlasting summer fling.

This day - the day NEZ was shopping - she was livid I wouldn't join them for lunch. I saw absolutely no need. He was a man I preferred to view from a distance and she was just a woman I preferred to only see in the evening. Our best days were spent drinking together through the night. She was good company to keep. A great conversationalist.

However, lately I'd grown to become quite happy in my isolation. It was true. I very much enjoyed the satisfaction of eating alone. There's a certain sense of freedom that comes with dining alone at lunch. Sitting, facing a crowded street outside a cafe, eating. The people passing by became the conversation. Their constantly changing storylines. Strangers, coming and going. They were the perfect protagonists for me- scribbling a short story that I'd surely leave on the table, to soon forget. My work, much like my thoughts, are often fleeting.



EXAMPLE of a SHORT STORY: "The \$600 Cigarette"

"Indeed", thought the man as he smoked a \$600 cigarette, "what a beautiful day to die". Just minutes earlier he'd spent his very last penny investing in others' ideas. A moment passed and he thought a thought he'd never thought he'd think, "how often do I get a chance to change?" Never. "Routine is what plagues me dearly", thought the man smoking his \$600 cigarette. He was a victim of his own boredom.

That is, until she sat down -- across the way, only a few feet but miles from his heart. "Indeed", thought the man and offered her, his last \$600 cigarette. She smiled. They talked. And he never needed to smoke again.

SHORT STORY - END.

Eating alone was much like attending an afternoon matinee in your own company; there's no expectation to entertain another's unwanted questions; whether it be a whisper during the previews or a mouth full of Tomato Soup as an appetizer. You learn how to listen, alone. I don't mind the silence. I never have. The conversations racing through my mind are enough to keep me entertained.

But disregard all that, it's beside the point. The year before London we all lived in Istanbul. Before that Madrid. We never bought the places we lived in, they were always rented and they were always fully furnished. We didn't have the time to design something we'd surely destroy. We were too busy creating culture -- all of us were either artists, architects or aristocrats. Except Alexander - his parents had invested his inheritance in an IPO of the technology company Apple. *Subsequently, he's never found a way to spend all of his money. So he invests it in us, his friends.*

007





I was the only self-made man in the group - the others were privileged enough that their parents died young. Not to take anything away from any of them - they had all gone on to make a name for themselves but their stories all lacked the ever important tension of, "I was once so poor," portion (only some of that is true, many of my friends are the entrepreneurial type).

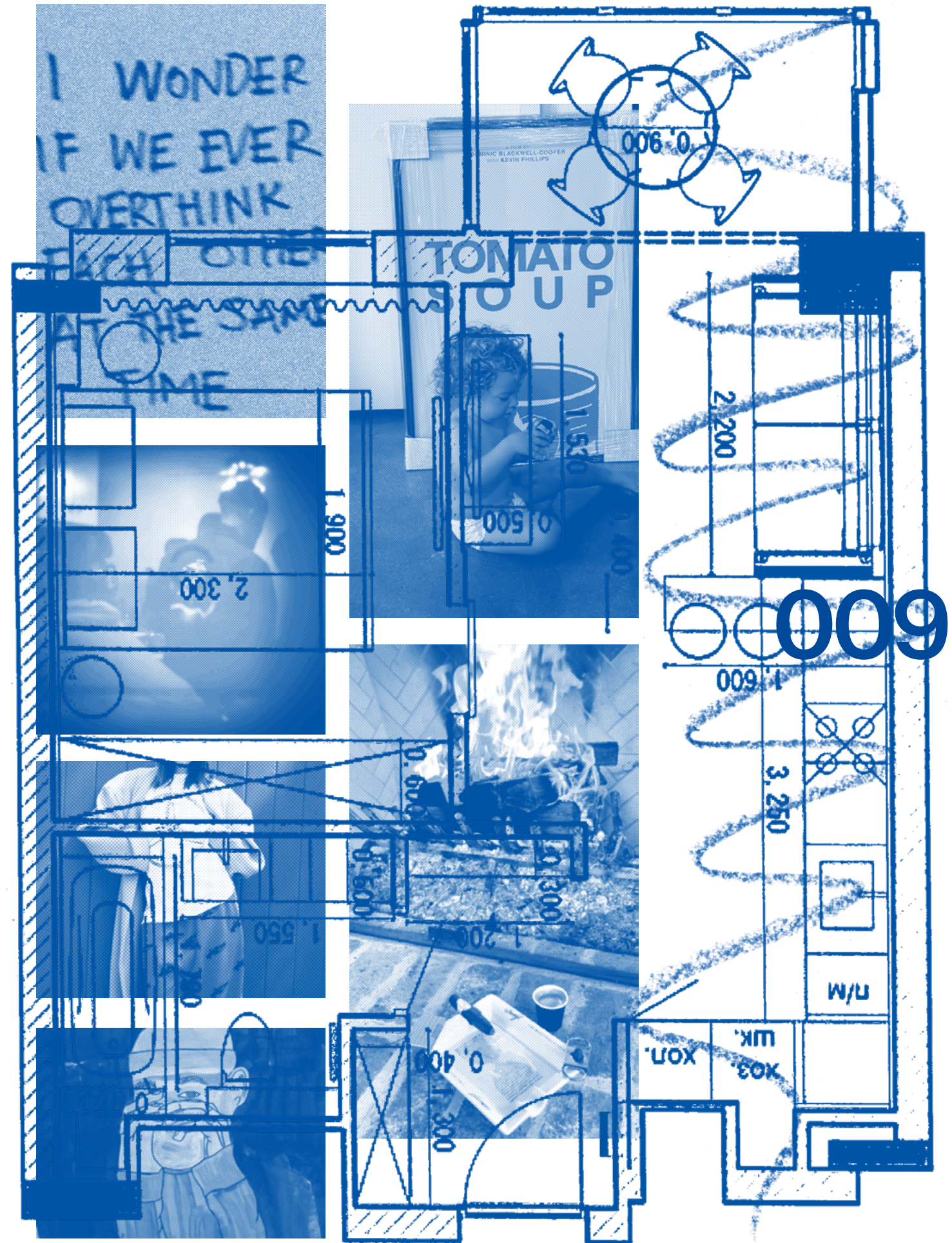
Honestly, I loved my parents for raising me impoverished - it gave me an imagination. They were young when they had me and recklessly allowed me to believe I could be anything - I'm now everything. I miss them at times but I send them money often enough. They sacrificed the prime of their lives to afford me the education to finance the end of theirs.

It's an appropriate trade off.

We, my friends - THE HOMELESS ELITE, are the epitome of the modern American experience. Rich, beautiful liars. Powerful. Educated. Influential. I have no desire to return to who I once was - normal. Normal is too normal. And what's life without an unnecessary sense of privilege?

"It's our parent's fault," Ashton enjoyed talking, not having conversation, "it is, I'm convinced. I never asked to go to college - I was told I had to." Aston was the type to boil pasta with overpriced bottled water and somehow still managed to lack taste in clothing. Money unfortunately cannot purchase style. Personality either. But, a person can always be quiet. Clothes on the other hand- scream for attention.

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THE AFTERNOON HAD JUST BEGUN.

No one remembers being sober that day, because *addiction is a never ending story — far from any climax.*

Weekdays in our world were the same as weekends. See, you must understand that when everyday is spent playing — leisure soon becomes as tedious as work. Here we were, these handsomely entitled fucks. Educated and arrogantly bored. All our frail egos could carry was a sense of superiority— to the world, amongst us and especially in our own minds. The running monologue that goes unheard, was a constant reminder that we - especially me - were nothing more than what we thought about ourselves— and we held onto those ideas with a violent passion. Feigned sense of supremacy must remain guarded at all times. If there's even the slightest hint of humility someone's status could easily be stolen— especially amongst friends. But, who cares? Here, at my party - we drank.

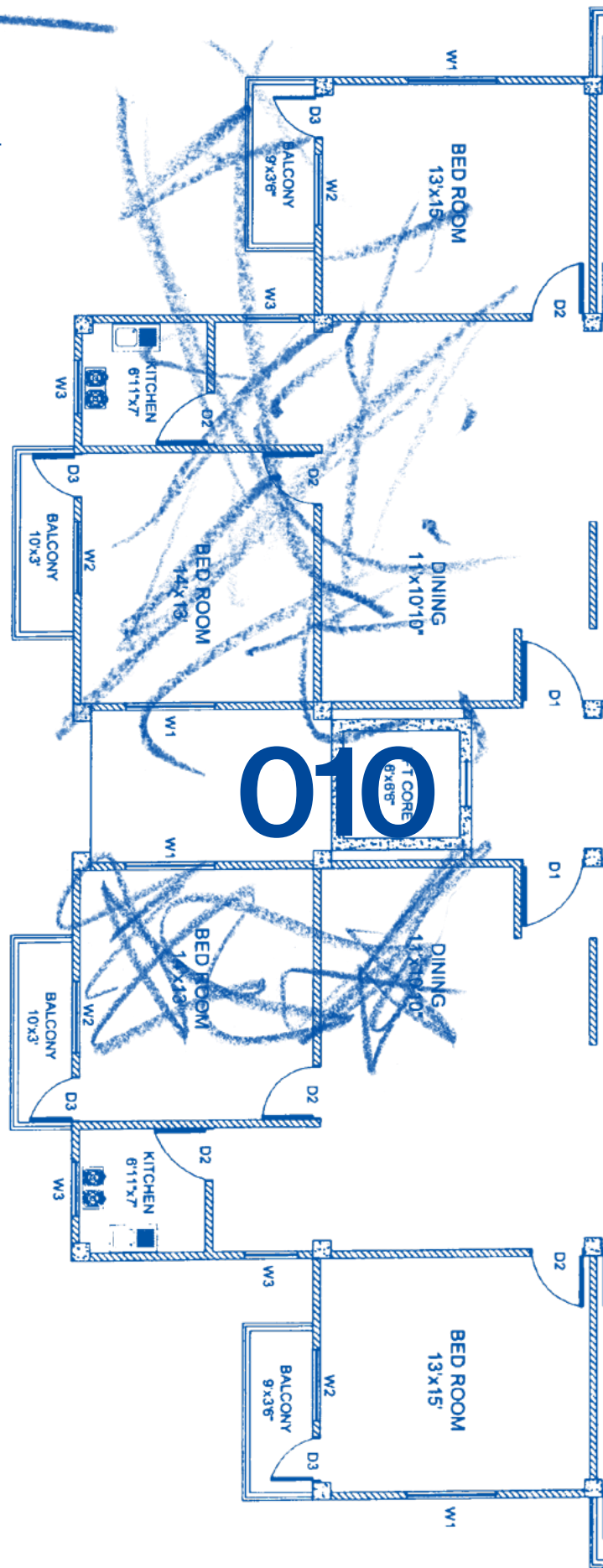
"Half the Italian countryside hates you", said Juliette as she smoked her 600 dollar cigarette.

Gawd, she was classically beautiful. She felt endangered. Maybe mythical is the right word? Her beauty is something you discover. A rare find. A woman you can't help but notice, then notice even more when she speaks - eloquent and concise. You become enthralled with her silence, wondering what words she could possibly be collecting for herself. Or maybe it's that she actually thinks before she speaks— each word perfectly prepared to each individual persona she's speaking to. Nothing contrived. I valued her opinion. Her friendship. She never lied to me. The way she would hold me when the world spun around me after an evening of extravagant degradation and subsequent dehydration the following morning. To her I was troubled, misunderstood and lonely. To the rest of the world, I was a drunk.

"I need to retrieve my property," I replied. I was making us both a version of a Manhattan. I'd never tried to before, but today felt like a proper occasion to try something new. Being incarcerated in that Italian jail gave me time to think. I thought, *to always try something new.* From now on, each day - everyday, one new thing. Today, a Manhattan - tomorrow a gin martini. The next day - doesn't matter, who thinks that far ahead?

"There's a hyena rampaging through my motherland. It destroyed a vineyard near Siena and a grade school garden. Everyone knows the thing was yours, I mean for christ sake you gave the animal a name" she said with a slight smile - possibly turned on. It was hard to read her reactions.

"Allegedly". We both laughed. Drank more. Conversated and carried on about our afternoon without a care in the world. Topics changed but the people didn't. The Homeless Elite were an exclusive bunch, never admitting a new member without proper vetting. We valued privacy. Especially Juliette. Everyone always had this insatiable want to want to be around her. Somewhat Christ-like in that way. She'd amassed a following. People in public seemed to flock to her. Fascinated by the way the strap of her dress hung slightly off her shoulder. She was educated. Traveled. Inaccessible, but approachable.



I remember the day I met Juliette. I was reading a short story, "Pretty Mouth and Green My Eyes", when she sat down at the bar next to me. It was just past noon and I was three days drunk, and she had recently become single - we were a perfect pair. There, sitting at a bar in the middle of the day without a care to give the world. She sat so the sunlight sat on her face creating a shadow that landed on my bar napkin. I traced her, but made sure to make her outline abstract. Everything she did was a work of art.

Luckily, there— that day at the bar we skipped all the silly formalities of small talk - I still don't know where in the world she's really from and what her interests are or where she vacations. No. We didn't need that nonsense to become fast friends.

After our third drink - sitting there, making up romantic backstories about the fellow cafe patrons - she asked me to marry her. Not formally, but we needed an excuse to validate our adventure. Tipsy, we walked the streets of Midtown (Manhattan) in search of the biggest (nearest) department store. There, at the Container Store, we fell accidentally in love by lying. See, we were there to scan items for our wedding registry and had the liquid confidence to tell everyone in earshot. "I LOVE YOU," we shouted across aisles, making up the most outlandish nicknames in the process. It was a charmingly funny affair, fueled with the rum we shared from a flask she kept in her clutch. After an hour we were kicked out. In fear of getting detained for public intoxication, we checked into the nearest boutique hotel. Drank until we couldn't feel our feelings anymore.

Britton - like the country - but not spelled the same; chimed in with Juliette and I — uninvited. I found him useful for his legal expertise, business acumen, great conversation and proximity to acquiring narcotics as needed.

But at this moment I knew his next words were going to be nothing but an exhausting example of his intelligence. Also, I found it strange that each time I chatted up Juliette in any social setting - with or without the company of The Homeless Elite - he found it necessary to interject some sense of his opinion into our conversation. Maybe he'd heard about our brief fling years back? Needless to say that attraction was no more. I'd outgrew my charm with Juliette. We found ourselves much more enamored with one another as friends, sharing secrets and sips of champagne. Now that I think of it, we've always been friends. I've confused her with someone.

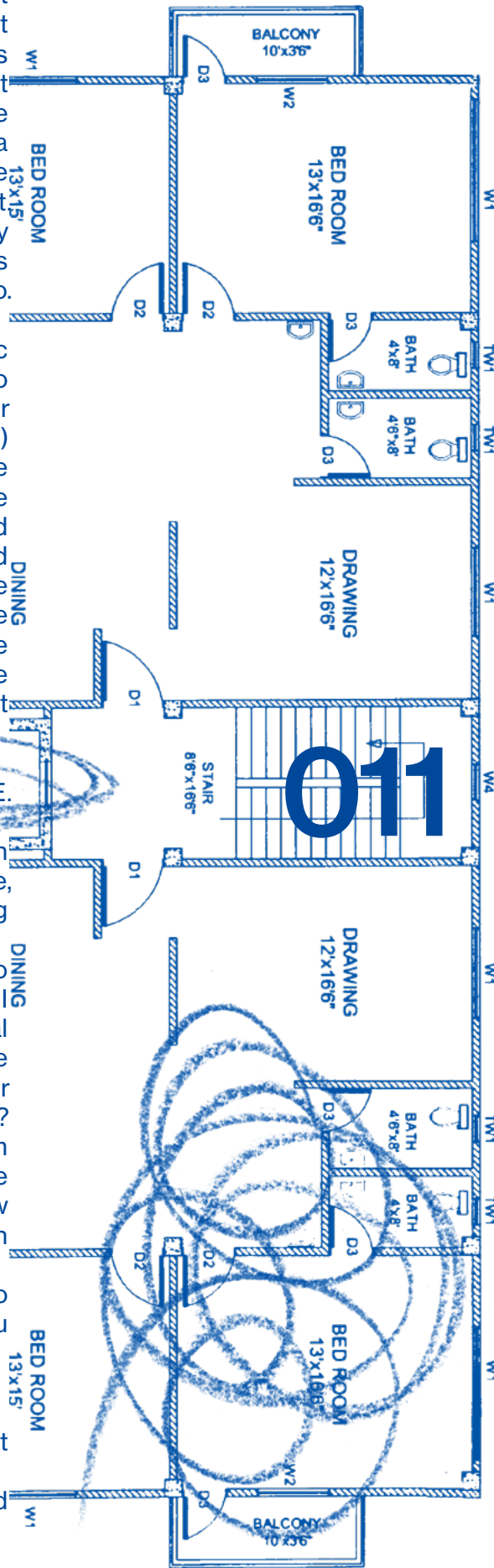
"Hire someone to track down the Hyena and visit Monaco next time," Britton said without any sort of proper invitation, "you should speak."

"About?" I knew exactly what he was referring to. "Your world tour of legal issues," Juliette remarked. "Judge is ordering you to appear in Morgantown next month."

"Morgantown. Remind me?" Juliette smiled... she liked when I lied.

"How could you possibly forget Morgantown?"

I NEVER FELT MORE ALIVE.



Britton pulled out his phone. Scrolled. Found what he was looking for. "Suspect was intoxicated. Got bored. Opened the cabin door, causing the plane to lose cabin pressure and make an emergency. Landing in... Morgantown".

"That was not Morgantown," I said knowing full well it was. It was a long, exaggerated moment of silence as they stared at me; waiting for me to admit my mistake, "whatever... I am not a role model".

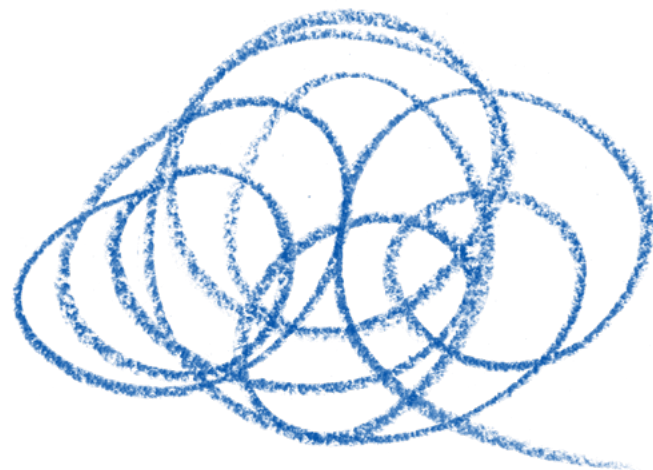
"You're insufferable," said Juliette as she walked away.

To her credit I was. My feigned arrogance made it appear I believed the world revolved around my ego - in a sense it did. As the only professional author in this coterie of misfits - I'd call myself a writer but as of late I spend work hours doing less and less writing and prefer the more leisure activity of drinking and observing - so, I took on their personalities and exemplified the every idea of insurrection they embodied. We-- The Homeless Elite were a wonderful amalgamation of each other, a blended betrayal of responsibility.

OUR ANTICS MADE FOR GREAT CONVERSATION AT DINNER PARTIES.

The greatest lesson the group ever taught me was, "*money is always the motive*". Always. This time just happened to be different. She walked in unannounced - poured herself a drink and then, nothing in the world made sense. The sky turned hunter green and birds flew backwards. No one knew where she'd come from. But I don't remember anyone ever asking. She was probably better left alone and allowed to live out her existence as an enigma. She was simply too dangerous to know.

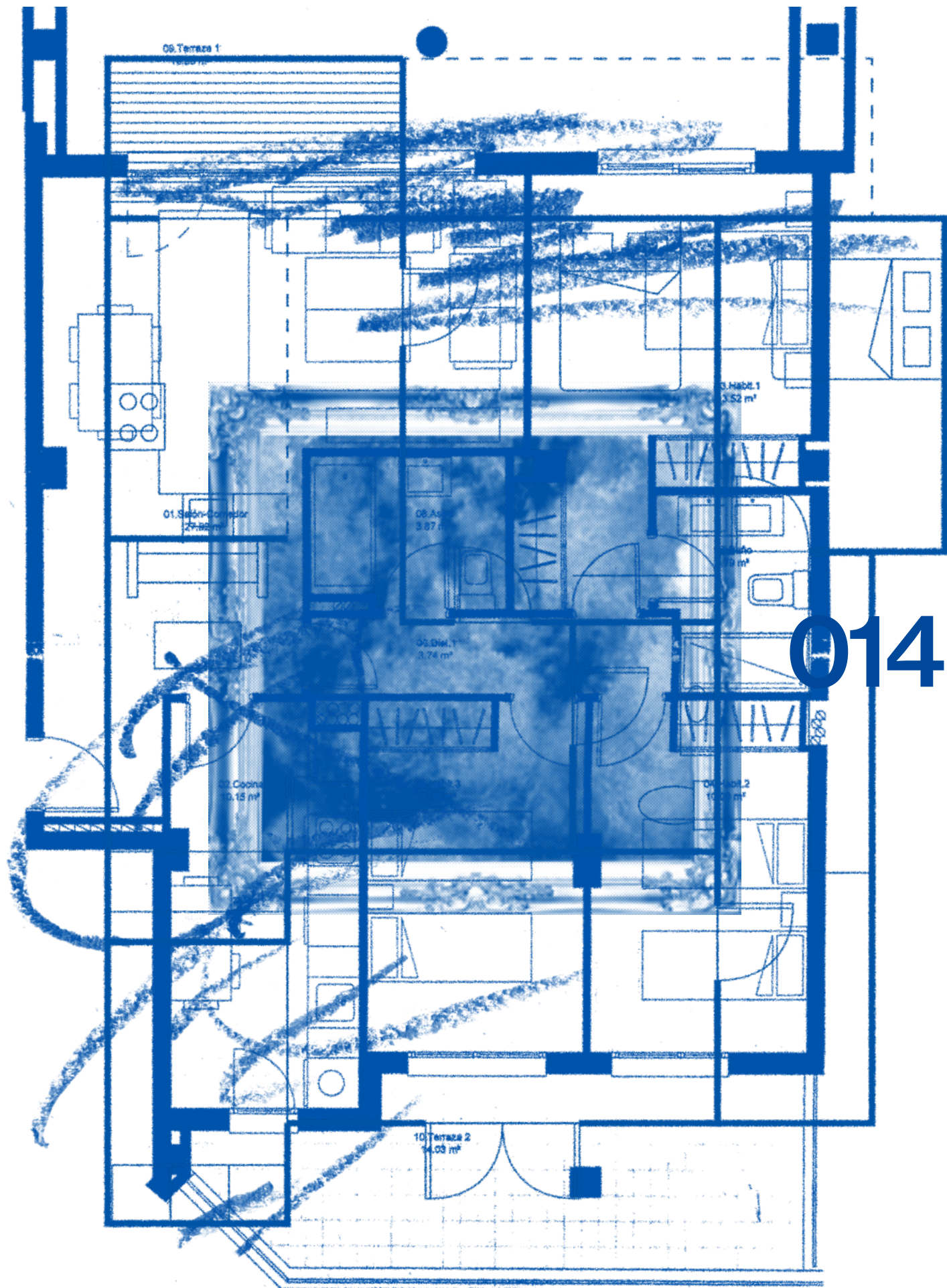
I NOW KNOW. 



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