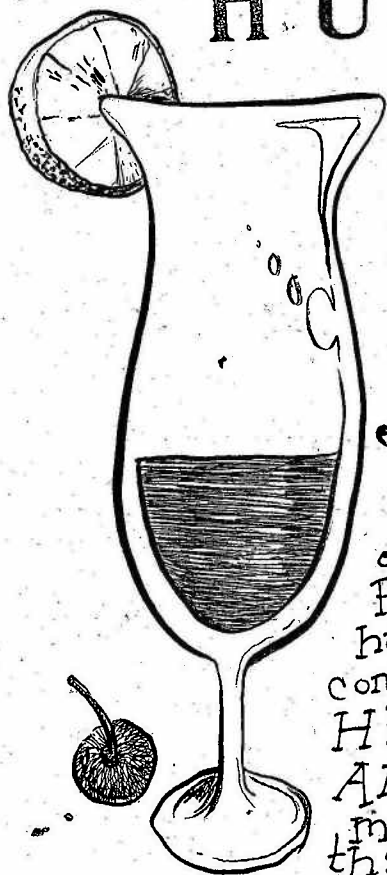


# H U R R I C A N E



1 oz. Lemon juice  
4 oz. Bacardi 151  
4 oz. passion fruit syrup  
Slice of Lime - cherry  
(for garnish)  
(just shake all ingredients  
over ice)

## "G R O W I N G

up, half the glasses in  
our house came from  
Pat O'Brien's. You drink  
hurricane's when a storm's  
coming, to tell it I LIVE  
HERE, FUCK YOU, I  
AIN'T LEAVIN'. And  
maybe to get so drunk  
that you believe all that.

I'm riding back to Jackson on the train and in a two-second flash I see her on the side of the road, straddling the rail of the bridge over Pontchartrain. I ain't worried she'll jump or anything like that. I see the box in her hands and I know what she's going to do, just what she always does when anybody leaves. She's throwing me in that old lake, throwing us in there too, mashing on that big old Jesus Nintendo reset button and I can feel that dirty water lick up around my neck, tickling my ears and then twirling up around my scalp. And I sink deep in the waters north of New Orleans.

## O N E

I sort of know where she hailed from, but not really, some cracker town north of Birmingham. Her dad worked the strip mines, ripping coal from the ground an acre at a time. I met him once: he told me about drooling explosive pink slurry into eighty-foot deep holes. They fucked it up once and when it blew a big rock landed on his left leg and cracked it open like a chicken in three or four places, making it where he could never walk right again. Or do any kind of work. Or get up out of his chair.

He got his worker's comp, which is no substitute for decent pain pills, and proceeded to sit in front of a brand new RCA television and watch John Wayne movies on TNT and bitch about his wife and his daughters, and how they didn't clean the house the way it should be or something, not that he cared before he was suddenly crippled up and then got with God and then was a deacon or an elder or something, which is probably worse than being crippled.

Tulip hated to talk about any of this but it would come up when she talked about her sister. She talked about her the way you see guys talk about quarterbacks or some shit. *She wore these jeans, with the knees ripped out, like a video,* whatever that meant. She smoked Marlboro Reds because of her sister, who had died when she was real little, and she was

always threatening to go down to Barely Legal or Chris Owens and make some cash on the side, because that's how she said her sister did it when things got tight.

When we met she was living in this hotel on Tchoupitoulas. It wasn't very nice but she liked it, it was supposed to be an ex-coffee warehouse, and the floor had these wooden boards that flowed like waves through the room. The window opened up on a brick wall, which I thought was bullshit, and she thought was hilarious. She thought the weirdest things were funny, always taking jokes too damn far. When *Anchorman* came out she saw it three or four times at the movies, just watched it over and over, even got it on DVD later and tried to rig up a player to the hotel teevee, which didn't work, but she kept the tape anyway. Will Ferrell jokes in it about how his arms are guns, it's not funny but it's kind of gross funny because his shirt is off and he is chubby, and one night she went down to a place on Magazine and got AK-47s tattooed on the insides of her fucking arms.

If you don't know what AK-47s are, they are the types of guns the Russians used in Afghanistan during the 1970's, when they were trying to suppress an uprising by the indigenous peoples. They take 7.62 mm ammunition and they are damn straight deadly. They are automatic weapons in the assault rifle form and so are supposed to be illegal in America, although I have seen them at least four or five times since the storm, once right afterwards by a guy wearing a NOPD t-shirt although he didn't look like a cop at all (he had dreadlocks, which I am pretty damn sure is against the rules for cops to have).

So Tulip got these fucking things inked on her arms, she thought it was hilarious because of that movie and because I know about guns because of my dad, who is a weapons specialist for the National Guard (although he is not mobilized, he is also injured like Tulip's dad, which is sort of how I picked her up one night, but I do have 1 cousin in Iraq

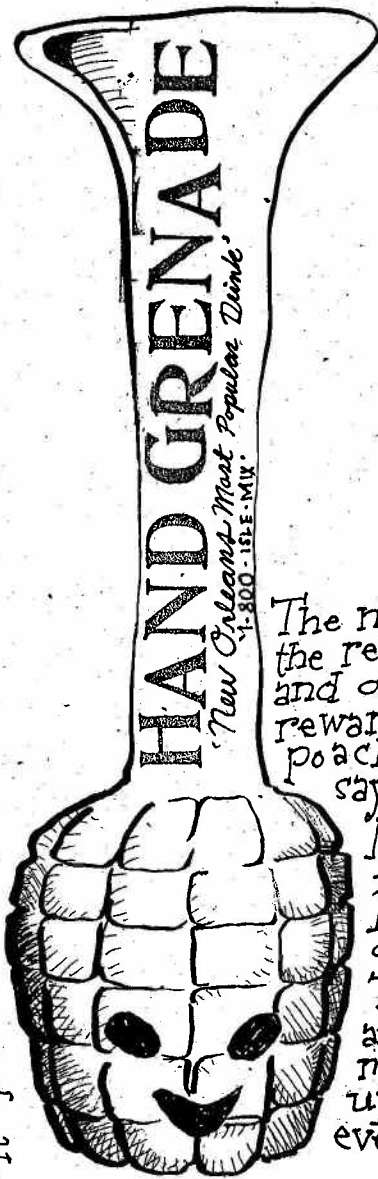
and 2 cousins in Afghanistan, counting a cousin once removed even though Afghanistan isn't on the teevee).

I am not the hottest chick in the room but when I am done up right I can turn any goddamn head, boy or girl, and on the night I met Tulip I was actually trying to snag this boy that was bartending at the Balcony. He had this little bit of fuzz on his chin but was a real big Tom Waits fan, and had real delicate hands. God, but I love a baby college student who wants to be an artist. They are always so excited that you want to fuck them and even though it will not be that good and will end too soon when they drop out you will have a poem or a painting as a souvenir. That is better than you will get from any fucking marriage or shitass ring. You will get the fucking truth and guts of baby love spilled out onto paper about how much they can't live without you, or they have to hold you, or something amazing and making you feel like a goddess. I once had this senior at UNO I was going with write her thesis on my band and how our music was a new style of feminist transgressive. It isn't at all, I know what I'm doing and it's not that special, at least not if you have ever even heard one Ramones record, but to be treated as special is good enough.

So I was trying to impress him with some kind of music shit and talking about Les Pauls, which will more than seriously hypnotize your standard boy, and she walked into the room. And I know I sound like an idiot, like in some shit Jennifer Anniston movie or something terrible on teevee, but I swear the breath was knocked out of me. She was wearing a white button-down dress shirt with "Frustrated Artist" stenciled over the chest, and the little blonde hairs running down the inside of my arms stood straight up on end. She sat down at the end of the bar, and the Balcony, they have this terrible thing where they will throw all the busted mixed drinks and shots into a plastic tub at the end of the night, and they call it Jambalaya, and it's in this tub with a tap on it and a shot is two bucks, like three bucks cheaper than anything real.



**FIRST DRINK** I ever bought my own self was one of these. The B-CUPS were playing down in the Quarter and I bought one from a guy we aking this real H.R. Puff'n' Stuff outfit, he had to be just dying. I threw it up in thirty minutes. I was seventeen.



The makers say the recipe is secret, and offer a \$250<sup>00</sup> reward for drink poachers. I can't say I know it, personally, but I know mixing 1½ ounce each of GIN, RUM, Tsaka, Midori, and Everclear makes me throw up about the same even now adays.

And she orders a double Jambalaya, which is nuts, because first of all it means she knows about the shot, and second of all, it's crazy because she wants more of this Suicide drink. You know, when you were little, and at the ball park, and you'd get a soft-sided Coke cup and drizzle the juice of Dr. Pepper, Mt. Dew, Diet Whatever and Sunkist all in one cup, a Suicide? It never tasted like anything but Pepsi in a Coke cup but that was all right, it was that you could do it, you could order it when you were little and they would make it.

So she orders this and the asshole bartender rings a bell, or something, this terrible and embarrassing tradition that I didn't even know they had, and here I am coming to this place for the better part of a year. I wonder why I hadn't ever seen her before, because that spiky little haircut with those green eyes would have been hard to miss.

So this is right after the storm, and I am still flush with money from sheetrocking every damn house from here to the levee, and I sidle up like John Wayne in one of those stupid old movies and say, *this one's on me*, and I'll be damned if it didn't work.

## TWO

We are laying in her bed on Tchoupitoulas, I realize, and the sun is sneaking through a hole in the curtains, and all I can feel is my head and my left foot, which are pulsing in rhythm like that Cubano techno music they play at the daiquiri joints on Bourbon. I can't find my glasses but I can see pretty okay down to my feet anyway and my little toe on my left foot is blue like somebody snapped a fountain pen over it. I think *shit, I broke it, what did I do*, and Tulip's coming awake, and I start to get that feeling in the back of my throat that tells me that I'm embarrassed because I drank too much and did things I can't remember.

But then she rolls over, pushes her head under my arm, and bites me on the ribs, and giggles, and I feel that broken toe throb, but I don't mind at all.

# THREE

When I was sixteen my momma said we were having a family meeting, even though it was just me and her, and then we sat down in the living room but with the teevee off and she told me that she had made a decision, she was going to follow her dream and pursue a career in show business.

Before I was born, my mom had been in this girl-group type thing that did cabaret shows mainly in New York and New Jersey and then this one bar in Mobile. She had moved up to the city from Gatlinburg and started hanging around at the end of the old rock scene, right when disco became like this big deal, running tables at Max's Kansas City and shit like that. She wanted to sing in a band real bad but she always said all the bands played too fast, that she couldn't keep up, and that the black bands didn't want a white girl out front because they got shit from their girlfriends.

One night when the band didn't show up her and two other girls she worked with jumped up on stage and started singing all these songs by the Angels and Jackie DeShannon and all that kind of shit, the things they sang in the kitchen at night, buzzing along on lousy free coke and counting tips. Everybody got a kick out of it even though it started as kind of a joke, but people are always real into what they liked when they were little, and after sitting around drinking all night just want to hear all those songs that made them feel like when they were growing up, the ones that make you remember falling in love or getting broken up with or wanting to run away. People would all come out and see these chicks in like 1978 wearing floor-length baby blue prom dresses, their hair in these big beehives with little bows in the middle,

coordinated dance steps and everything, even the band wearing rented tuxedos.

There were three girls, who swapped lead, and my mom would take the Diana Ross brassy bits, all those hands-in-the-air strutting parts. They were called the B-Cups, like the Dixie Cups, but you know, actually saying they had breasts and putting that on the sign outside. There were lots of time guys got pissed when they realized it wasn't burlesque and they weren't going to see any tits, that the girls weren't gonna take their tops off while they did real faithful versions of "Where Did Our Love Go" and "When Will I See You Again," and Satch would have to get out in the crowd and settle them down.

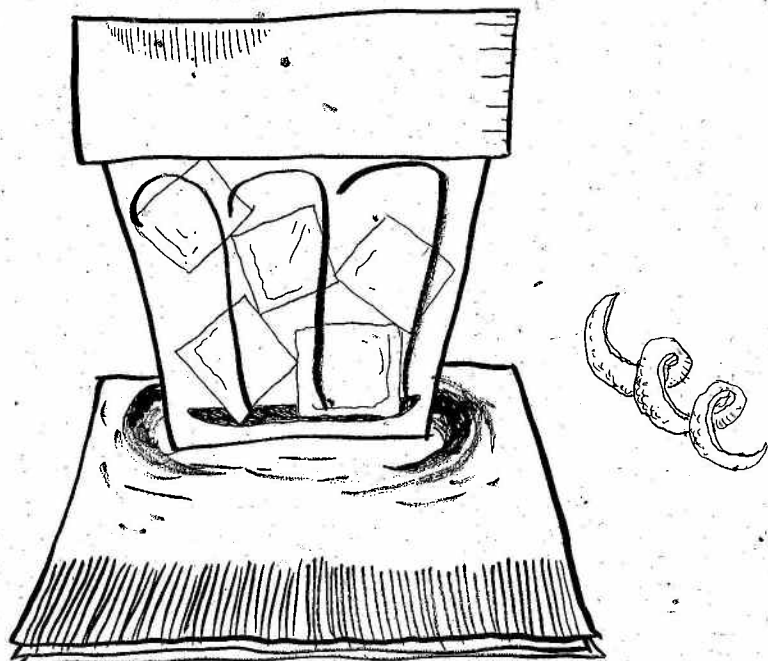
Satch was the B-Cups' official manager. He was this real fast-talking guy that was seriously from Newark, like had slicked-back hair and a little mustache just like some Mafia shit you would see in the movies. I guess my mom was in love with him. I guess Satch is my biological dad but he ain't my dad in terms of ever being around or anything like that, that part was always played by Henry, who was actually my mom's first husband, since her and Satch never got married or even really dated. Henry and my mom got together after she moved back home and things were pretty good until he got hurt.

The only time I remember meeting Satch is once when I was about nine, he dropped by the house on his way to see his folks in Florida, and he shook my hand, like I was a car salesman or something, and he squeezed it real hard and I started crying.

I never saw much of momma after she decided she was going to follow her dream. It was just me and Henry on the couch. When YouTube got to be a thing, momma got to be real sophisticated at that, and so she would send me e-mails that said, *Dearest, you need to go see our song we did at the A.M. in*



# S A Z E R A C



2 oz. RYE · 8 DASH APEYCHAUD  
2 DASH ANGIUSTURA · Tablespoon Simple Syrup  
Splash of Herbsaint (or Pernod at worst)  
(coat the glass with the Herbsaint & pour  
it out) put your mix in — garnish with  
lemon twist.

**THE Y** keep tryin' to make this  
the Louisiana State Drink, but that  
licorice bite ain't for everybody. This  
one server at Pierre Maspero's won't  
sell it to tourists, 'cuz they send it back."

Dayton, we did a Gladys version of *I Heard It Through the Grapevine* and there are over six thousand views. But YouTube ain't for shit on dial-up.

After my momma left and I graduated I toured around myself a little bit, I was already in a band when she left, we were called Black Diamond, only I never wore any goddamn baby-blue prom dresses, I played a Les Paul guitar, and every band I have ever been in was named something I named it, even if maybe the name came from a song somebody else sang. And I never named a band I was in after my tits.

## FOUR

It's damn cold outside, and I hate it when it's cold, and Tulip wants to go on one of her walks, and I just flat refuse and she storms out like Andy Capp in the newspapers. I love her more than just about anything but don't mind it when she leaves, I can't breathe in this little room with her here and all her little things all over the place.

On her walks she picks up the little bits of brick and dirt and metal garbage that she pastes into pictures of flowers on cardboard that she paints. For the most part it is what some people call folk art but every now and then it is really beautiful. I never like to go with her because she is always seeing something like an old pull-tab from an old can of Coke, and saying, *oh man! Don't you just think this will fit perfect in the blackeyed susan I am doing*, and I never know how to answer, because I just don't see that way, and every time she notices that I can't is a terrible thing that hangs in the air between us.

For the past two weeks the moment she has walked out the door to go hunting I go right over to her little hope chest, really just an old piece of cherry wood that is no bigger than a cigar box. When I met her it was empty. Over the past seven months it has gathered all these little bits and pieces of us, of

