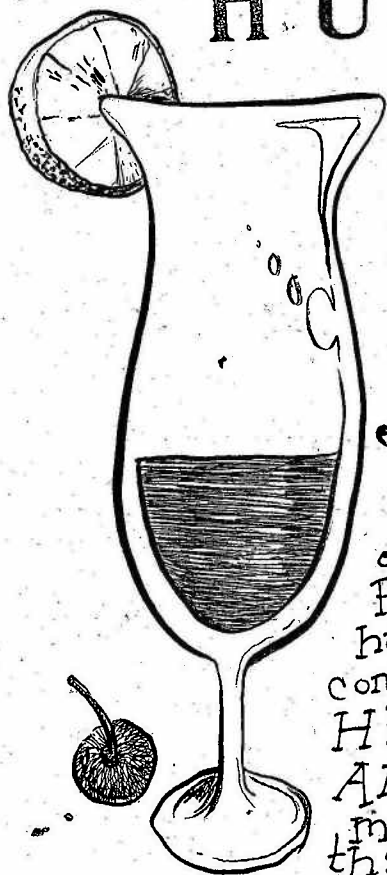


H U R R I C A N E



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).

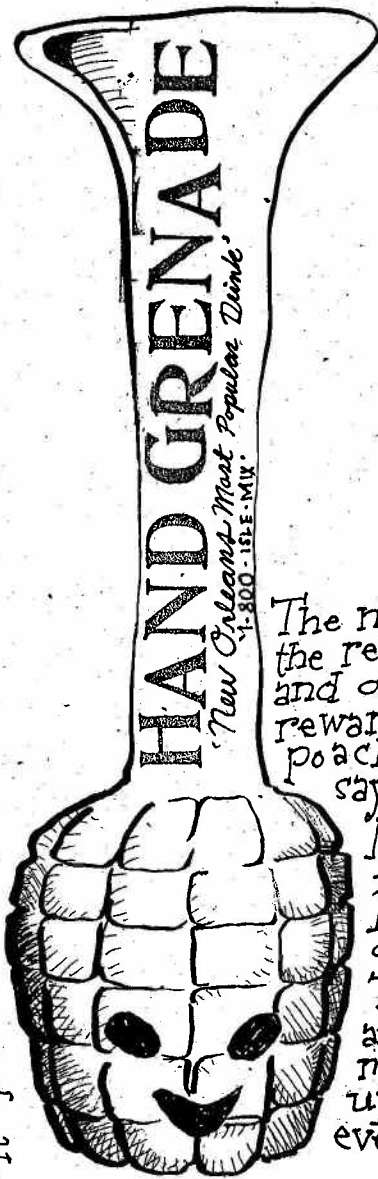
So Tulip got these fucking things inked on her arms, she thought it was hilarious because of that movie and because I know about guns because of my dad, who is a weapons specialist for the National Guard (although he is not mobilized, he is also injured like Tulip's dad, which is sort of how I picked 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 \$250⁰⁰ 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.

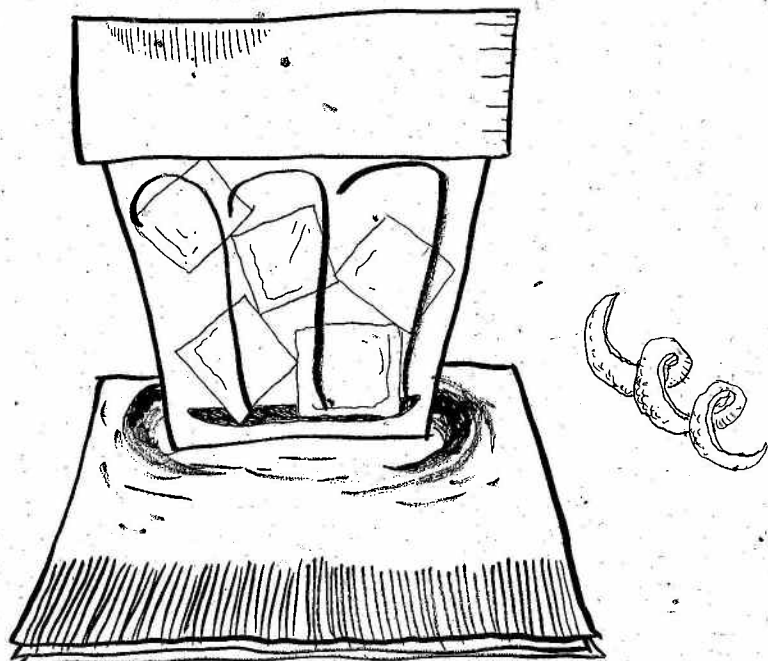
There were three girls, who swapped lead, and my mom would take the Diana Ross brassy bits, all those hands-in-the-air strutting parts. They were called the B-Cups, like the Dixie Cups, but you know, actually saying they had breasts and putting that on the sign outside. There were lots of time guys got 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

me, like napkin rings from places in the French Quarter where we would have lunch, this stupid sketch some Jackson Square con artist did of me riding a cartoon horse, receipts from where we would have drinks at the Balcony, a cork from a bottle of ten dollar wine, Scrabble pieces that spell out my name, just stupid stuff. But things that meant that she was keeping pieces of me.

I wanted to keep looking in the box to see what she was adding, because I worried that one day she would stop putting her little broken prizes in there. Almost more than I wanted her to love me I wanted her to keep pieces of me. I wanted her to want me like you want your favorite song, want to hear it all the time. I wanted to matter to her.

FIVE

The truth is that I have real bad stage fright, always have. I read a thing once where Eddie Van Halen, who is a real American badass (I was once in a band named Diver Down, but you have to be careful about that shit, because people will expect you to be able to play Van Halen songs, and we didn't know anything but a real fast version of Pretty Woman, which doesn't count), and Eddie said he used to drink every time he went on stage because he was so scared, which I thought was crazy, because he is so talented. Also I always thought I could never handle a fucking power drill while I was drunk, although I suspect there's a whole hell of a lot of red-and-white 5150 guitars that had to go in the garbage at the end of the shows.

The first show I ever played was in a barbeque joint in Hueytown, Alabama. My momma and I had only been living there for a few months after she got an insurance job downtown. Black Diamond played real fast, not really punk, kind of metal I guess, and our drummer's uncle ran this restaurant in a little strip mall and they let us play on Monday nights as long as we didn't turn up too loud.

I got so scared I threw up in the bathroom, which was really just this plywood-walled box, and my hands shook so bad that I could barely play the only chords I knew, which were G, A, C, D, F, and G minor, which are really all that you need to know when you play rock and roll. After six songs, which only took us fifteen minutes, this cute longhaired guy in the audience who wore an And Justice For All t-shirt took me aside and told me, *look here, girl, you need to tune that fucking thing, and calm down a bit*, and then he handed me a little glass full of Jack Daniels, and made me sip on it, and after every sip he said *count to ten, hot rod*, and that was weird and kind of funny, and creepy, but after I finished it I had this glow from my throat on down to my knees, I felt strong, I felt like I was grown, I felt like Eddie Van Fucking Halen.

When we were packing up my drummer told me the Metallica boy was a senior, which kind of meant he was from the moon, but I was drunk for the first time and was filled up with noise and beauty, and I went up to him and said *gee, my life's a funny thing, am I too young*, and I swear he almost passed out, then pushed that long blonde hair out of his face and bit his lip. We sat in the backseat of his car and listened to some tapes and I let him run his fingers through my hair and push his face up against my neck, and and and the whiskey buzzed around the base of my neck and and and the next Monday I heard him talking by the senior lockers, his friend with the monobrow said *dude dude! she plays the fucking guitar* and then they highfived and all of a sudden I knew why my momma left.

SIX

A train ticket to New Orleans from just about anywhere is not that expensive. When I came down here from Jackson it was twenty-two dollars. You'd stop in these little places on the way down, in Covich, or in Lincoln County, and you would wonder about the people that would stop and watch you riding the train. You wished that they could get together the twenty



D A Q
U I R I

"Just go to one of the millions of Mango Mangos on Bourbon or find a Fat Tuesday. No sense in making it when you can get one so perfect on the cheap. I once went out with this good-looking X fan, she was from Nashville and she wouldn't drink nothin' but mudslide Dquiris, which are really almost too sweet to drink. Figured out real fast that the Dakshak at the end of Magazine opens at 10:30 in the morning."

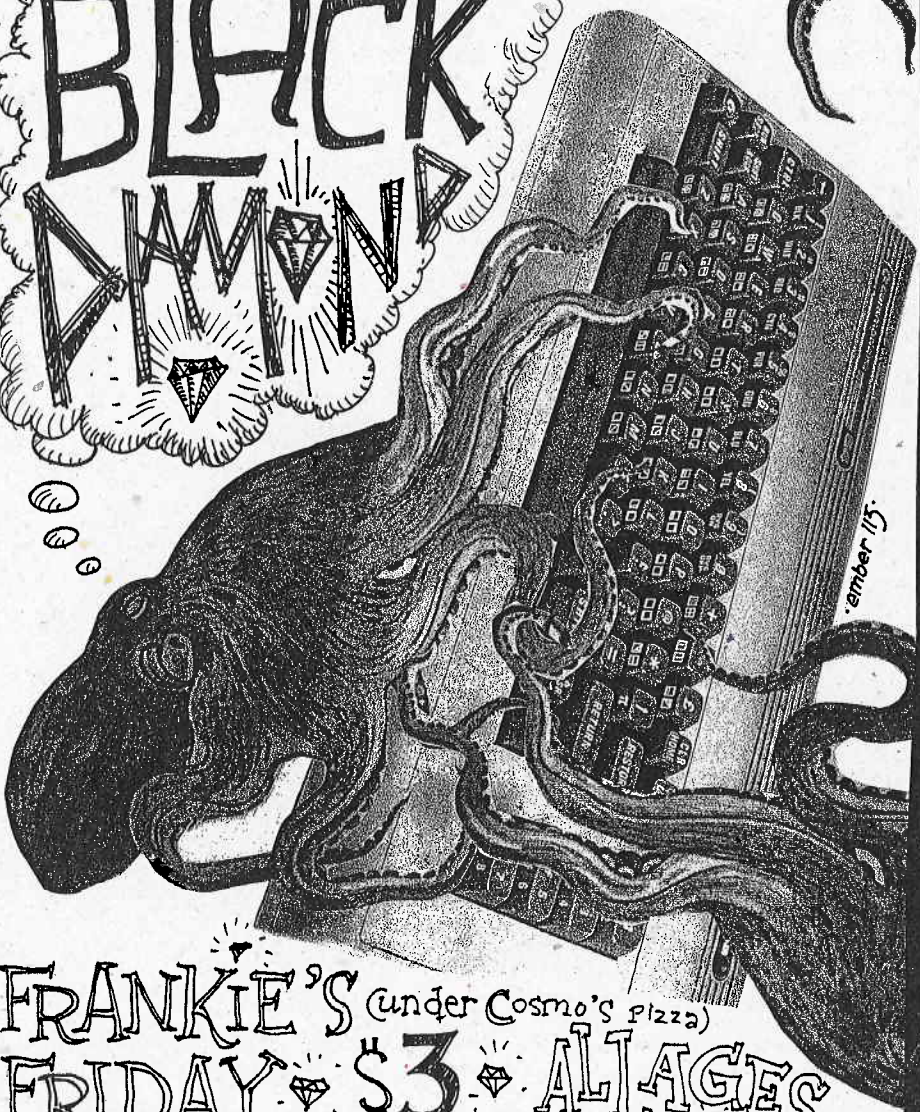
dollars and the old suitcase and change their name, too. It's not running away when you aren't scared.

When I went to the station, the lady said the ticket was forty-four dollars. I said, *it is only twenty-two on the way down*. She stared at me, and I said, *why does it cost more to leave, that don't make any sense*. She kept staring and I gave her the forty-four and then I played a game in the arcade where you shot at what I guess were supposed to be terrorists, because you were sort of in a desert. The gun you used was sort of like an Uzi but when it kicked, in this little plasticky way, it ruined everything, because it wasn't scary or strong or anything, even though Uzis are kind of little in real life. I burned the last of my food money on that damn game but any game where you can shoot rockets at terrorists and helicopters is hard to pass up.

Getting on the train was like getting on plane only without a lot of the idiot bullshit. When I sat down I put on my headphones and turned up my tape of *Zen Arcade* and mashed my right arm against the window, which feels good because it's cold, and my arm's still all rashed out from the new tattoo. There's a family in the seats ahead of me and they had gotten Subway at the station, and the little boy kept chanting to his mom, *Open Chips, Open Chips*, over and over, and he was real little, but probably not too little to open his own goddamned Doritos, and I am getting madder because his mom is ignoring him for some reason and not opening them. Finally his sister, who is probably only like six or seven, opens them for his dumb baby ass.

Then he is pointing at me, in my ripped blue tank top, and saying *she has guns on her arms! Mommy, she has guns on her arms!* And the mommy looks at my arms, not in my eyes, and she has this weird smile, and she says *yes baby, she has guns on her arms*, and I grit my teeth and look her in the eyes and say, *these are not guns, they are AK-47 assault rifles*, and the train hiccups as we begin to move towards Jackson.

BLACK
MAMMA



ember 115

FRANKIE'S (under Cosmo's Pizza)
FRIDAY \$3 ALLAGES

gargus

23/175