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What Poor People Do In A Hurricane

Dr. Bones

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gether in a party under the weight of some ideological discipline, had not only confronted but bested the dark and predatory nature entire civilizations were built to hide.

If the people could remember these moments, if Anarchists pounced on them like they do call-outs and activism, the State would be a footnote in history followed quickly by Capital.

As my wife and I left later in the evening there were still no lights on, and every business was closed. The relentless march of consumerism had been halted and the night shift abolished. Car lights swam under forgotten traffic signs as folks used the flashes of blinkers to alert one another when it was their time to go. Spontaneous. Informal. We got around by getting along.

We weren't stock clerks or accountants or workers merely trying to get by. We were free, making our own decisions, and even in the momentary cessation of all we were told we "needed" a new world seemed on the cusp of being born.

But can it really be born when it was inside us all along?

We've got to remember. Yes, we've got to remember...

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may never know. What I do know is what I witnessed: an instantaneous and visceral response in the assembled. Almost immediately there was mobilization of every adult male in the apartment block. Alan, still clutching the crude sword with three fingers, cautioned the girl that they *“had ways to deal with”* such people that *“didn’t make a lot of noise.”* The girl was visually distressed, but overjoyed at her safety. Alan grabbed Dick and together they stood guard, the girl explaining her father was out on an errand. I don’t think I’ll forget the look of relief in her eyes and how they contrasted with the black pits Alan’s had become.

I fully believed this was going to be the second time I watched someone get killed, and this time no reptiles would be involved.

The girl stayed on the steps and a sharp eye was kept out, the glinting and razor-sharp blade reflecting in the sunlight as Dick and Alan remained on high alert. Eventually the girl’s father returned, and upon hearing the news, shook hands with Alan, immensely grateful. Another neighbor, a balding man who otherwise was never really seen by his neighbors, joined the band and nodded in agreement, ready and willing to lend a hand should the need arise. Every few minutes he went inside to do shots. Stories of violence done and planned were swapped, as plans were drawn out for an immediate response should the car show up again. For the next two hours the small space between the four buildings, normally merely a footpath to get inside or stand around for a smoke, became a village center. Spontaneously and without political motivations a community had sprung up out of a shared need for common defense and a human commitment to the protection of children.

The impossible was in full effect. No law, no council, no commune had been established yet people who normally might nary share more than a few sentences in a week were prepared to kill if need be to keep each other safe; individuals free to unite or separate as they pleased, rather than being held to-

Well, attempted anyway.

One of the commonly hurled insults against Anarchism is that, free from the pulverizing fist of Daddy State people will turn into wild animals and begin killing each other, as if the regular execution of black people by sanctioned slave-catchers was the only thing keeping mass rape from happening. Many communally minded folk in the Anarchist world mirror these objections and fears when they hear of individualist ideas, shaking and swaying as they assert without the assemblies and the commune's laws the Free Territory will devolve into banditry.

People are always being paved over, human beings always tools to be molded in service to a better world. But what do they do when left alone to desire?

In the mid-afternoon a car unknown to the neighborhood and driven by an adult approached a 16 year old girl walking down the sidewalk. He followed her over a large distance, drawing ever closer, repeatedly asking if she wanted to come get drunk with him and "party." The girl, fearing for her life, kept her head down and kept walking, the car maintaining chase.

Eventually she reached Alan.

Alan can be described as "ex-military, got-his-fingers-cut-off kinda' crazy" according to Dick. "*He's got three and three-quarters fingers on one hand and three fingers on the other hand.*" Alan was the girl's downstairs neighbor, and though they didn't "know" each other she knocked on his door and was quickly brought inside.

A word of wisdom dear reader: you do not fuck with a three-fingered man.

Alan, long hair and beard swaying drunkenly, would return with a beer in one hand and a sword larger than my forearm in the other. Charon would inform me it cost \$500 and was apparently capable of cutting a car hood in half.

Whether the sheer sight of such a thing was enough to scare them or Alan's no doubt very clear intentions of violence we

*I wonder how long I'll be able to see the moon like this, every store and workshop closed by the fist of the goddess Irma. The night shift has been abolished and I'm playing outside with my friends simply because I can. I know it'll end eventually, that the power will come back, so I've got to write down what it feels like. **I have to remember what people are like after a hurricane, when the poor have nothing but each other to rely on. I have to remember how that girl almost got kidnapped and how big the blade was that saved her life. Have to remember before the commercials come back and I'm made to wonder how I lived without them. Have to remember...have to remember...***

NIGHT OF

Temperature 77 Degrees

As the wind howls around us I can't help but stare into the street. From torn and slightly battered black drapes I watch a world thought indestructible brought to a standstill. There are no shops open, no lights on, and nobody in the street save for the few police officers driving threateningly by, intent on making sure they don't surrender their power; even here in the middle of the storm the vague promise of force looms in an attempt to keep the proles off the streets.

"Jesus CHRIST," a loud slam startles me and turns my head from the window. "Did you hear that?"

"Is it something on the roof? Is the roof being hit with something?" My wife is in bed and packing a bowl, her hands moving from cellphone light to the darkness surrounding us. Green flashes pierce through the holes in curtains, the flames of another blown transformer obscured by sideways shooting rain.

"It's...it's the fucking tree. That oak next to the house, it's slamming into it."

"Are we going to be okay?"

“Yeah, yeah. As long as it doesn’t spawn any tornados. A little earlier I thou-LOOK! Look there! Hoooooly shit look at that.” A sudden gust of wind rips a fence through the river that used to be our driveway, branches following like launched projectiles. The air doesn’t howl but screams, as if the very act of dragging itself along the land was painful.

As we stood in awe I struggle to take notes under the candles. No written description can capture the full gravity of what a hurricane is.

Folks who’ve never tasted alligator and never will like to believe a hurricane is just like any other big storm. Nothing could be further from the truth. A tornado strikes out of nowhere, disappears and leaves a confused or dead populace; a blizzard pours sheets of sleet and snow but never gains a personality, never gains a spirit.

A hurricane is a different beast entirely. From the moment it is born on the coast of Africa it is named, tracked, and plotted by nearly 20 million Floridians, an energetic focus that might convince most chaos magicians to call it a goddess. It is alive, in every sense of the term, and power is added to it with each word spoken in hushed tones of fear and worry. A hurricane lingers long after the damage it leaves behind. Big storms will be spoken about like dragons seen once in a lifetime, plywood saved for the inevitable next storm bearing the names of previous combatants; these wood shields are often scrawled with dire prayers for the storm to spare them or intimidating calls to “go fuck yourself.”

There we were, members of the same species that dared to walk on the moon, huddled in darkness as wind and water took everything we built for its own. We don’t have money for plywood, and we can’t afford a generator. Whether we live or die may be a forgone conclusion. All we can do is arrange the details.

Or to put it another way, Hurricane Irma is now “the boss.”

off his chest, *“and no water.”* He seemed stoic about the whole thing, and stared at a tv that had no intention of coming on. Was this heat exhaustion, I thought, or old habits dying hard?

Charon shifted uncomfortably in black pants and a t-shirt with no sleeves. *“Goddamn this fucking heat.”* He pushed the sunglasses back onto his face.

“There’s no air in here,” I said, pushing through an atmosphere hot enough to make a shadow stick. “That’s the problem. You can trust me, I’m a doctor.”

Mindless silence followed, or perhaps empty small talk, as we simply sat inside and sweated. Time dripped together and my notes on things become disjointed. Some rednecks came by, and I can’t remember if they were trying to buy drugs or venomous reptiles. We had both. As a python sniffed the air our visitors talked about the joys of working outside.

“Ya get up in that tree thair, ya know, and it’s hotter then shit, and yer version starts goin’ black and white ’cause uh heat e’x’austion and it’s like...’wooooooah’ cause yer about ta fall outta the damn tree. But, I mean, it’s a job.”

“So was sharecropping.” They stare at me confused, unaware of the history.

We smoked, and the rednecks departed shortly after. The Man with Two Names returned to his island, and we shuffled outside in an attempt to stay alive. The concrete slab that served as a “porch” was cooler than the den Charon, Ash, and Dick were forced to live in. Cheap plastic seats, a few of them stolen, became our sole relief. I remember thinking we had it easy all things considered, that nothing too bad had really happened. We weren’t homeless, and the town remained intact. Many exploited peoples in the Caribbean, whose economies were designed to serve rich tourists just as ours were, would never be as lucky. What if this went on for months? How might people react?

As the others stared into space I furiously wrote down notes. Maybe that’s why we didn’t see the kidnapping.

“We have to work,” she says, “and after six hours on my feet with no break I don’t want to do anything but rest.”

“They’ll either give us the time or the money, never both. And they can’t pay us in time.”

After two hours dragging each other through the tide and playing the time comes to go and ride back inland, past the empty patches where seafood markets once were, around the barren flats where women skindove and could raise a family by catching shellfish. There was nothing but polluted water and Burger Kings now, and as a large office building blocked out the sun we rolled back to the pine woods and cattle, trading seashells for the unmarked graves of pauper cow-hunters.

Florida Crackers, as the cowboys who once lived here were called, would spend up to 12 hours in the saddle and weeks outdoors to protect and manage the herds of cattle owned by wealthy ranchers. They got the name “cracker” due to the large whips whose snaps they’d use for directing the animals, communicating with each other, or taking the head off a rattlesnake. Some of their children have held on to the outdoor life but many haven’t, trading the open Florida prairie they never owned for the florescent lightbulbs of Walmarts they still didn’t control. Others work as landscapers, tending the lawns of Harris or Northrup-Grumman employees. The distinctive horse they bred for Florida’s climate and its insect resilience has fewer than 800 surviving members.

There was nothing else to do but check up on Charon and the others, and we found them in a most dire condition.

The door was wide open, though nobody was outside. As we turned the corner, there in the darkness, four motionless bodies seemed sprawled out on a second hand couch, as if a crazed gunman had struck them down. The Team was there, as well as The Man With Two Names, a friend of the group from Merrit Island.

His condition was even more difficult than our own. *“No power,”* he said pulling the wet rag that had once been a shirt

“If it gets like that again for more than three minutes we need to go into the downstairs bathroom. That last gust had to be 130. If it stays that way for a set amount of time that’s a fucking tornado.”

Primeval conditions have brought about the abandonment of the merchant class’ territory. Everything seemed open to possibility. I wanted to be out there, wanted to do many things I could never write about publicly, the creative urge to destroy drowning my senses like a beach at high tide. I couldn’t shake the feeling that under this liminal time between worlds scores could be settled and new powers seized. Irma had, if only temporarily, halted Capital in ways most Anarchists could only dream of.

Instead I spent my time running downstairs to fervently mop the water coming up from the floor tiles and the streams of rain pouring through my door. We squeezed out mops by hand and cleaned what we could in the light of small flames; at one point we both held the windows, fearful of them flying away or breaking.

We paced and whispered as the candles flickered, trapped in the structure we were surrounded with. We could only monitor the leaks, tape the holes, and stare out at a watery and hostile realm where streets used to be. Through it all bangs, cracks, and snaps kept our anxiety at a max, hopes and prayers rising that whatever was making the noise would do no permanent damage to my jeep outside. If the gods were cruel we’d be unable to get cheap food or enjoy ac on the way to work; if they were kind I could continue to pay insurance and fear a rogue cop’s ticket destroying the meager savings we depended on.

After awhile it all became too much, and we flopped into bed, putting our faith in whatever dice rolls the spirits had in store for us. I remember praying, right before my eyes closed and I wiped sweat from my brow, that “someone” would watch over us.

BOOM BOOM BOOM

What. The. FUCK. Was. That? What time is it? 3:30am? No no doll, just wait. Let me listen. See? Nothing. Probably just a tree. Now if it were to happen again-

BOOM BOOM BOOM

FUCK! Okay, okay, who is that? Look at that wind! Those trees! That was a piece of goddamn fence right there, nobody's out in that. What? The two-meth heads that tried to break into a neighbors house. You think? Or maybe the guy who robbed the elderly couple in broad daylight at the mall before that? Decided to try his luck under the cover of Irma? Who else would be out knocking on doors at 3:30am in the middle of a goddamn hurricane?

"What are you doing?" my wife asks as I make my way to the closet.

"Nothing," I say, "nothing at all." Six rounds slip into my revolver. "I'm just going to see who's at the door. Might be somebody who needs my help."

Silently head downstairs. Draped in darkness, nothing but memory and a heightened sense of adrenaline to guide me. I peer out the front door's peephole. Nothing, nothing at all. Must have left. I'll just go back-

BOOM BOOM BOOM!

Okay you fucks, here goes. Carefully now, duct tape peeling away from the edges of the door, water spilling out from behind them. A shadow in the crack, my finger on the trigger, look me in the eye as I make your head into a canoe you goddamn motherfu-

"Hey man, are you okay?"

"What?" The winds are still raging well past 100mph and I can barely make out the voice in front of me. Flying hair and glowing eyes. It is bigfoot?

"Are you guys okay?"

"D-Dick?"

"Power could be back on by Sunday."

"SUNDAY? It's TUESDAY!"

"200,000 people are out of power in a county of 300,000. AND, and, they aren't giving updates."

"This was a minor one. Can you imagine if we had our own Katrina? Power out for weeks, electricians kidnapped at gunpoint to work and traded like commodities. Roving packs of rednecks search for hospitals to take care of their no doubt two-headed and inbred babies."

"What now?"

"Migrate."

We drive down highway A1A right along the Atlantic, discount sunblock and thrift store towels hiding more alcohol and illegal substances. Our view alternates between enticing waves and palm trees being pulled off of million dollar mansions. Passing a beach purported to be the landing site of Ponce de Leon I turn up the radio.

"En los años mil seiscientos, cuando el tirano mandó

Las calles de Cartagena, aquella historia vivió.

Cuando aquí llegaban esos negreros, africanos en cadenas

Besaban mi tierra, esclavitud perpetua

Esclavitud perpetua

Esclavitud perpetua"

Shortly thereafter our toes are in the sand and our bodies wet with the same ocean once sailed by pirates. The heat feels non-existent here, save for just enough to keep the water comfortable, and after more beer my wife and I sit back and stare at something that hasn't yet been bought.

Cool breeze, calming waves, free ions that have been proven to improve your mood. Salt in the air makes everything smell clean and fresh. We ask ourselves why don't we come out here more often, the one location that hasn't been settled; even though it can be cut by property lines it was still open to anyone.

any privacy.” The fire pops. “*We don’t really have nature. We have concrete. You go outside and sit on concrete and look at concrete.*” Everyone agrees and Charon notes the lack of community such conditions create.

“*You’re around all these people, and you’re looking at them when they come out in the morning and you’re like ‘okay, there’s a person there.’ But you don’t always take the time to be like ‘okay, but who is this person?’ Like if you take away the walls that person is right there.*”

“*I just find it funny that here we are, Floridians, and most of the property around here is priced outside our range.*” I paused, my hands grasping at air. “*We can barely afford to live where we’ve been born.*”

“*Fuck that.*” Dick shakes his head. “*I’m getting my quarter acre.*”

Dreams fly like sparks off the Florida oak we’re burning. I go to get my djembe and the rest is lost to blackout.

TWO DAYS AFTER

Temperature 90 degrees.

The wind was gone and so was the water which had formed the new lakes and rivers. Nothing but raw naked heat now, no breeze, and enough humidity to make it feel like you didn’t so much inhale as swallow and chew the air. My wife and I wake up drenched in sweat, peeling off the sheets like bandaids.

We eat bananas at the dinner table, the only food we have left, and I drink more beer.

“*Already?*”

“*What? No coffee, and besides I have to keep hydrated. I’m a journalist knee-deep in a story. I have to keep my mind... limber. You call FPL?*”

“*Yeah.*”

“*What’d they say?*”

“*Yeah man.*” He held his hair back so I could see his face, glassed from what I could only assume to be enough booze to choke a crocodile.

“*Uh...yeah. A little water but nothing major. What uh...*”

“*Cool, cool. I was out so I wanted to come and check up on you and XXXX. Don’t open the door all the way, it’s windy’er than SHIT out here.*”

“*What uh...what are you doing?*” The revolver now hides behind the door as I struggle to hear Dick shouting into the wind.

“*Wanted to check shit out. Crazy out here, water everywhere. I wanted to check out 192 with a few friends. You know, check it out.*” The beer can in his hand almost flew out into the river.

“*Oh. Uh, okay. Well thanks. We’re all good, thanks for checking up on us buddy.*” A tree branch skidded along the sidewalk.

“*No problem man. Have a good night!*”

I closed the door and went back inside.

“*Who was it?*” my wife asks.

“*Dick got super drunk and is wandering around waist deep in sewer water.*”

“*Oh,*” she rolls over, “*how nice. I’m surprised you didn’t go out with him.*”

DAY AFTER

Temperature 88 Degrees

Before we go any further some explanations of the Floridian disposition during times of emergency need to be explained. It is a mainstay of the traditional Florida culture to get as absolutely fucked up as humanely possible during a hurricane. This is such an accepted practice that Budweiser has a specific pallet of booze it ships to Florida grocery stores in the grips of hurricane season, a towering thing jammed with cardboard packs labeled “18” and “24.” Children are raised through these storms on wasted knees, telephone lines climbed “just for fun,” and all

manner of madness not only accepted but encouraged. Like the Caribbean tradition of Carnival, God himself looks away and free reign is given to those throat-deep in winds that can tear a roof off.

Dick was blind drunk when he stopped by in the middle of a storm, and as the morning came and the sun shined on our new riverfront property I decided to return the favor.

It was a short drive over to the apartment Dick, Charon, and Ash shared, the development a brown collection of roach-ridden structures to house the folk who cooked, cleaned, and serviced engineers working at Harris. The distant hum of generators rose from wealthy neighborhoods like a horde of angry insects, nests of technology and power too ornery to die. The streets were thigh-deep in water and debris.

"I bet there used to be a marsh here at one point. You know, before they built over it." We trudged slowly through the water, watching for glass, gators, and feces.

"Probably. And it looks like there's one now."

"Charon said it does this every time it rains. The complex is too cheap to fix it. They could afford to destroy what was supposed to be here but can't seem to muster the will to make it livable." I reached for a toothpick and tilted my hat to keep out the sun.

"Of course. We aren't worth that kind of money."

Our safety check on the comrades was short lived, the inhabitants passed out and unable to answer. By the time we got home it was still morning, but already the house felt like an oven. Like most storage units for the working poor the place had been constructed with an eye for ease and economy; nothing about the townhouse hinted it resided in Florida, nor acknowledged its dangerous climate.

The heat will kill you anywhere, but Florida distinguishes itself by its humidity. At a certain point the sweat on your body will no longer evaporate due to the amount of water in the air, knocking out the one way your future corpse has to cool itself

After eating and smoking Charon mentions a bottle of whiskey he has stashed at the house. I make mention of my recently completed hobo shelter and some wood I kept inside for a fire. We roll to my place in the dark, nothing but headlights to guide us, the mattress in the back making the mobile dark womb feel like a cave. He goes to get the bottle, I start the fire. Spontaneous organization. Pass the bottle, the makeshift shelter a temporary home. Outside and under the tarp talk turns to the buildings we pay to live in.

"We hate it," says Dick.

Charon, his roommate, agrees. *"We're always on top of one another."*

"And there's no room to go outside," says Ash. Her piercings glimmer in the firelight. *"Like if you just want to go out and chill."*

"What happened to the fucking American dream?" I take a huge swig from the whiskey bottle. *"Get a job, buy a house,"*

"Yeah."

"Live in it for 40 years."

"Yeah."

"Do your thing."

"Mhm."

"Now, now... you know--"

"And they have the gall to tell us it's our fault, that we haven't worked hard enough." Caroline tosses a stick in the fire.

"Yeah, and like, nobody has--"

"Fuck all that shit." Dick has the whiskey bottle. *"I fucking hate it. The minimum wage in 1976 is worth ten dollars an hour now, not no fuckin'... \$7.15."*

"Yep."

"Oh the minimum wage was never supposed to be a living wage, listen to the person who fuckin' created it, yes it was."

"Like if I'm upset I like to go outside because it makes me feel better, but you can't do that without having people all around you." Ash takes a swig, a rare sight. *"You can't go outside with*

In unison and unprompted everybody else said they did the same. We wait for everyone to finish before asking if anybody wants seconds.

There was truth here, I could smell it. These people were not militants or radicals. In a home more devoted to Rick and Morty than Lenin or Marx I watched spontaneous free exchange arise and property lines disappear; before me an impromptu communism born out of necessity and friendship had taken shape, devoid of theory or high-minded idealism. The politics were personal in the total sense of the word, yet had an unspoken history all their own.

“The illegalists, however, in the example provided by their activity began with the question what shall we do, what activity is required for the successful realization of this project. Then based upon what it is that a group is seeking to accomplish, the structure required to realize the activity comes into being... The raiding parties of the Great Plains tribes were comprised in a very similar manner.

Each of the individuals involved understood their various responsibilities and that knowledge allowed for tasks to be completed quickly and completely without the need for oversight (administration) nor the attendant operationalizing factor of oversight – discipline, and its sustaining hierarchy motivating principles – punishment and/or reward.”

Hurricane Irma had brought about the consciousness so longed for by revolutionaries yet much of the window dressing was absent. No hammer and sickles, no cries of “long live the revolution.” I was a little disappointed I hadn’t gotten to shoot anybody. Yet there it was, “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need” right out in the open and moving about without a second thought, without an over-arching ideology or organization; we did this for us as individuals, because we cared for one another, not because we saw in each other a “fellow worker” or idealized image.

down. Here in the house you could cut the air with a knife, and we were at a loss for relief.

We didn’t know it then, but the Rehabilitation Center at Hollywood Hills, providing health care for low-income individuals and families, would end up killing 11 old people in such a manner. Under state law, the temperature was not supposed to exceed 81 degrees, but the storm blew up a transformer and the place was magically transported to Florida’s natural habitat. The center called the governor four times on a number he gave them in case of this exact occurrence. Every voicemail ended up being deleted. The deceased would be found to have body temperatures between 107 and 109 degrees.

Some strange and reptilian force took a hold of me as I sat in the backyard trying to get cool, a whispering voice both within and without me. I quickly began building a shelter from a loose screen door, a ladder, some tarps, and hemp wick. Rather than compelled my motions seemed natural, like a part of my DNA waking up; a bird suddenly aware that winter had come. In short order and six beers a working patio was constructed, complete with a fire pit. I sat in a chair enjoying the cool breeze against my skin. Success. Bad news: I’m out of beer and the days are going to be long.

Another knock at the front, though much softer.

Justin, a tall and well-built Floridian with a pony-tail running down the length of his back was grinning at the door. I welcomed him inside and was handed a cardboard box larger than I was.

“Make sure to support the bottom.”

“Eels hips,” I struggled to remain upright, *“what’s all this?”*

“Well it’s your birthday. XXXX said you were about to run out of booze. I figured I’d give you the rest of mine. I’m heading out tomorrow. I got an offer to get back on a boat for a month and after the foreclosure I need the money.” We both moved to the couch and ignored the heat, cracking open grapefruit beer with a bottle opener from Haiti.

“Will it actually be a month?”

“Nah,” he laughed and took a pull from the bottle. *“Man that’s good.”*

“Yeah,” I said sipping my own. *“Shandy’s are built for hot weather. Normally I don’t like grapefruit but this is alright. So, how long-“*

“I figure it’s all a scam to get me on board. Once we hit the ocean there’s little I can do to get off. They barely let me leave last time after the doctor said I was doing permanent damage to my bones. I told you about the benzine poisoning.”

“Yeah.”

“Yeah, so, they only let me go last time because I told them that the lawsuit I was going to file was going to be way more expensive than stopping at port and buying me a plane ticket. You know what’s the fucked up part?” I passed him another beer. *“Other members of the crew acted like I was the asshole.”*

“Slave mentality, man. They think the captain’s the hero and you’re just causing trouble.”

We talked for a little while longer, from how the country was decaying to the history of Santa Muerte, and after a time with hearty farewells he set off. Not a single dollar exchanged hands and I found myself sitting on two 16-packs, two bottles of wine, and a random jug of V8.

My first desire was to share them.

Charon, now awake and tearing into his own alcohol supply, called us and said a mutual friend had somehow retained power. My wife gathered what food we could and a bottle of wine as Charon’s van pulled up still dripping water. Dick, my wife, and I packed in on makeshift seats crafted from mattresses and stolen pallets. Charon drives as his girlfriend Ash rides shotgun. We are a motley crew and between us run conflicting opinions, different personalities, and opposed intoxicants. Dick and I are drinkers, the rest smoke, save for Ash who prefers to get wrecked on pure DMT. Our makeshift vessel careens past stoplights that have ceased to function, a blend of tribal chants,

sci-fi noises, and didgeridoos known as Digi Christ Super Drum the soundtrack of choice.

*“We are all filthy,
and it’s gonna take a whole lot of rain
to make this scene clean”*

The Andersons, as they’ve asked to be called here, are friends of the assembled. We poured out of the van like a traveling circus and were immediately offered anything anybody needed. Shower, food, water. Phone chargers hit every outlet. A bong quickly began rotating among the assembled and my wife cooked sausages and rice, the wine flowing freely and mixing with a white pulled from the cupboard. I was too drunk and opted to slowly drink the wine to keep from throwing up.

“Fuck.” Charon laughs as the sausages begin to sizzle. *“If I had known it was going to be jambalaya time I would’ve brought a can of black beans.”* Conversation turns to his time in N’orleans after the hurricane there. *“It was amazing, like, so many different groups of people were coming together and getting shit done.”* He adds *“That’s why I was excited when everybody started gettin’ along and hanging out, we got like... a little team going on here.”*

I try to add something witty. Nothing good comes out.

The conversation moves to the Andersons and they tell us about how they’re making synthesizers out of dildo parts. They recently bought a theremin. They’re forming a band and hope they can make enough to quit their jobs. Hell yes, and why not? Nobody here has been to college and our futures are pretty grim. Far better than aspiring to middle management and a slow cancerous death. When dinner is ready we form a line, and I notice everyone prepares themselves small, little plates.

“You aren’t hungry?” my wife asks.

“Oh, I am. Very much so. I just wanted to make sure everybody else gets enough.”