

## A GENERIC DREAM OF THE SOUTH

*Belle Shoals, in Williamsburg, serves hush puppies and cocktails like the Sunday Tea. But it's more Urban Outfitters flannel than Flannery O'Connor.*

**Belle Shoals** | 10 Hope St., Brooklyn, N.Y. | 718-218-6027

By **Talia Lavin**



Illustration by **Jorge Colombo**

In Williamsburg, around the corner from a shop selling “Western Inspired Goods,” there is a bar that is set in the imaginary Southern town of Belle Shoals. No further geographical specifics are offered—country bacon is served alongside mescal and aquavit. Embedded in a bookcase, in pride of place, is a Wurlitzer jukebox, accepting coins in exchange for the yearning voices of Ella Fitzgerald and James Brown. There’s an antique birdcage and a mellow oak bar, and cocktails like the Sunday Tea (peach moonshine, bourbon, sweet tea, lemon), which might lull you into a generic dream of the South. Nonetheless, Belle Shoals feels more Urban Outfitters flannel than Flannery O’Connor, who once wrote, “Anything that comes out of the South is going to be called grotesque by the Northern reader.” A man in tortoiseshell specs plans out his next tattoo. “Self-deprecation is frustrating to me,” a blonde dressed head to toe in athleisure says. Out on the veranda, there are basil plants in window boxes whose leaves breathe scent through the air, a faint echo of New Orleans jasmine, and the tables are separated by elegant white trellises. But the trailing wisteria strung up on wire is made of plastic, and the October winds pull at sleeves and napkins, signals of Northeastern autumn. Back in the bar, under chandeliers, a Ukrainian woman with black hair orders hush puppies, flattening the vowels to “hash pappies”; they are light and hot and threaded with jalapeño and onion. Neat in a paper tray, like consolation prizes, flaky biscuits come with bourbon butter and a cup of honey, perfect to pair with a glass of Cabernet. ♦